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Letter of the Holy Father to His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry

The following is the letter of the Holy Father Francis to His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry:

Letter of the Holy Father

*To My Venerable Brother
His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry§
Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly
of the Syro-Malabar Church*

As you celebrated last year your fiftieth anniversary of priestly ordination and twenty-fifth anniversary as a Bishop, I was pleased to join you in giving thanks to the Lord, expressing as well my gratitude for the dedication shown over the course of those years by your many pastoral and educational efforts and initiatives. In particular, since 2011, the year of your election as Father and Head of the Major Archiepiscopal Church of Ernakulam-Angamaly, the signs of your zeal and generosity were numerous, as you laboured unceasingly for the achievement of various important milestones in the life of this Particular Church.

In this regard, I think of the recognition of the All-India jurisdiction, the establishment of the offices of the Procurator in Rome and the erection of Eparchies in Australia, Canada and Great Britain. It is also encouraging that various provisions for the pastoral care of the faithful in the Arabian Peninsula are under serious consideration. You have attended to all this without neglecting the ordinary path of the Church, in considering, together with the Synod, pastoral care in catechesis and the liturgy, formation of the clergy and accompaniment of young people, especially in the diaspora, while not forgetting to give attention and service to the poor and those most in need.

The year 2022 witnessed another important event in the life of the Saint Thomas Christians as well as in the universal Church: the 1,950th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Apostle who, according to tradition, brought the proclamation of the Gospel to India. There, as a martyr, he conformed himself totally to his Lord and God (cf.

Jn 20:28) through the supreme sacrifice of his life. Guided by this example of Saint Thomas, and out of love for the risen Lord and his Church, in 2019 you offered to step away from the pastoral governance of the beloved Syro-Malabar Church when faced with divisions and protests. Yet at that time, the Apostolic See accepted the judgment of the Syro-Malabar Synod of Bishops, which did not consider it the suitable moment. The Synod, however, could not fail to recognize in your request the heart of a Pastor who set the unity and mission of the Church above everything else.

Now that you have reached two significant jubilees and accomplished the pastoral objectives set for the flock entrusted to your care, I consider your resignation not as the conclusion, but the fulfilment of your service. Indeed, this step represents a further witness of fidelity to the Gospel and a new way of serving the Church, above all through contemplative and intercessory prayer, as well as by continuing to offer your counsel to the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia of which you are a member.

In light of these considerations, together with the occurrence of the centenary of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy, and always mindful of the good and unity of the People of God, I have decided to accept your resignation as a sign of your openness and docility to the Holy Spirit. Invoking the intercession of Saint Thomas the Apostle and assuring you of my prayers, I impart my blessing to you and to the whole Major Archepiscopal Church of Ernakulam-Angamaly.

Rome, from Saint John Lateran, 29 November 2023

FRANCIS
