

Special 10:45 Mass May 28, 2017

Syro Malabar Mass

Next week we will have a special 10:45 mass. It will be a Syro Malabar Mass, which is common in India. We will have Fr. Thomas Kalapurackal as Main Celebrant, Fr. Shibi as Homilist and Fr. Jeelson V. Stephan as Con-celebrant. Also, we have a choir from Pittsburgh.

Most of us in the U.S. will never have the opportunity to travel to India. This mass is a special opportunity to experience the mass from a very different cultural perspective. Although the style is different, it is a valid Catholic mass belonging to the Catholic Church and is approved by the Vatican.

Within the universal Church, the Churches of the East and the West not only have distinct liturgical rites, but they also have characteristic theologies, spiritualities, disciplines and law, and customs to distinguish them. Each has its own heritage and tradition, its own distinct identity as a particular Church within the communion of Churches. Each tradition refers to a specific patristic heritage and origin. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church stems from the Syriac spiritual tradition following the East Syrian liturgical rite rooted in the ancient Christian community of Edessa (Syria).

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is one of the 22 Eastern (Oriental) Catholic Churches in full communion with Rome. It is the second largest Eastern Catholic Church after the Ukrainian Church and the largest of the Saint Thomas Christian (Nazrani) denominations with 4.6 million believers. Another Eastern Church, the Syro-Malankara church, also is centered in India. All other Indian Catholics are "Latin" rite, because their liturgical tradition is the Roman rite, celebrated in local languages.

The Vatican assigned the name Syro-Malabar Church to this particular Christian community in the 19th century. It is governed by a Major Archbishop (somewhat similar to a patriarch), who is head of the Major Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly in Kerala, India.

The original liturgical language of the Syro-Malabar faithful is Syriac (a form of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus). The vernacular languages of Malayalam and English are now commonly used.

Since St. Thomas and his followers preached to Hindus in India, the Christian communities adapted to the local culture and many Malabar churches are designed in Indian or Hindu architectural style. Their churches have no pews or chairs or kneelers. People stand with the priest in prayer for the entire length of the Mass. Kneeling and genuflection are not part of the Indian culture. The Eucharistic liturgy is understood as walking in the path of Christ, so all stand.

There is but one Mass, celebrated for the glory of God. There are no special Masses for special intentions (e.g., for the deceased, for a special occasion, etc.) or votive Masses. An ordinary Mass lasts about one and a half hours.

The Catholic Voice Online Edition -

<http://www.catholicvoiceoakland.org/2007/07-10-22/inthisissue6.htm>

<http://www.syromalabarchurch.in/syro-malabar-church.php>

<http://www.catholicsandcultures.org/eastern-catholic-churches/syro-malabar-catholic-church>

