

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church's COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church is always at the forefront in times of calamities and extends its helping hand whenever the situation has demanded. Many integrated efforts towards alleviating the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic have been undertaken by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian churches across the world. Due to the high tourist inflow as well as due to the movement of expatriates and their families in general, the population in Kerala had seen the very early impact of the 'Corona' virus.

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church:

Working with the proactive government administration & healthcare ecosystem in Kerala, the many arms of the Orthodox Church in Kerala had done very early efforts to alleviate the effects of this fast-spreading virus. Multiple dioceses across the world, especially those in US/New York area, UK/London as well as the entire Middle East, Australia and Singapore have done localised efforts to both support their faithful as well as their local communities.

In Kerala, individual parishes and the many organizations have organized Sanitizers, posters & educational material, Relief material once lockdown was enforced, etc as part of the "Break-The-Chain" cleanliness initiative by the Kerala Govt. Healthcare workers in many parts of the world are members of our extended community, and many hospitals and clinics are either run by community members or have very active members running the same. Some of the healthcare workers have, as part of their heroic service, also been affected by the same, and we thank all their efforts and remember them in our prayers.



The church, in general, has been organizing Prayers and Psychological supportive efforts and utilized the locked down Passion Week to organize online prayer services from major churches and special prayers in each parish.

Bombay Diocese:

After an early impact in Kerala, COVID-19 has impacted the Maharashtra/Mumbai Region the most, in India. The Diocese of Bombay has taken on the mantle of working towards **Awareness, Availability of sanitizing/protection material, Distribution of Relief Material, Psychological support to the isolated and the poor and Care of the elderly and the marginalized.**

As per the instructions of the Diocesan Metropolitan H. G. Geevarghese Mar Coorilos Metropolitan, the diocese has been implementing various COVID-19 Relief Activities in different spheres of the society.

Awareness about the Pandemic:

Early information from the effects in Kerala helped in formalizing very early communication to parishes. Effective communication was also given using Whatsapp and other media to convey the message to the faithful. All priests had also been given instructions by the Diocese Metropolitan as well as the administration to avoid crowding religious places, reduce lent prayers at individual homes, postpone all administrative meetings and affairs – even before the National Lockdown happened.



Availability of sanitizing/protection material:

Individual teams at various parishes and the various arms of the church have been working at making available sanitization material and protection equipment.



Distribution of Relief Material:

Multiple teams at many churches are actively participating to distribute food kits to the needy.

The diocesan centre at Vashi, Navi Mumbai, the Gregorian Community, Roha and parishes under the diocese like Vashi St. Thomas, Chembur St. Gregorios, Mulund St. George, Kalyan St. Thomas, Malad St. Thomas, etc. are distributing the kits in their nearest slums and to other marginalized people every week.



The Diocese of Bombay has already distributed 1,000 kits which include rice, wheat powder, sugar, salt, dal, tea powder, oil etc. The faithful sincerely contributing to this good cause.

Psychological support to the isolated:

Many Parish priests have been organizing group prayer sessions over Facebook live and Whatsapp, calling up individual members and checking after the psychological health of the parish members – especially those affected by loved ones staying alone abroad and those affected due to loved ones unable to come back home during this period.



A formal **COVID-19 Counselling Cell** has been set up under the leadership of the diocesan metropolitan, able to take calls from 4-6 PM, Mon-Fri. The COVID-19 Counselling Cell has H.G. Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Rev. Fr. Kurian Baby, Rev. Fr. Vineeth Koshy, Rev. Fr. Joemon Thomas & Rev. Fr. Basil Kuriakose as its members.

Care of the elderly and the marginalized:

Individual reach-outs have been done to ensure relief kits reach some of the elderly who are not mobile enough to meet the restriction rules. Efforts are being organized to reach the slum areas in the vicinity of each church. Various arms of the church are making their units in the far-flung churches reach a limited, manageable number of elderly/marginalized families so that our efforts are not restricted to the large central areas.



Fr. Thomas K Chacko
Mumbai Diocesan Secretary
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