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Pastoral Letter on Syro-Malabar Jesus Youth

Dear Reverend Fathers, Trustees, Committee Members and brothers and sisters in Christ,

Praise be to Jesus Christ!

As a church community, it is our important and urgent duty to cater to the proper faith formation of our young people in their contemporary life situations, which are very different to the ones that most of us have been through.

Often our youth are burdened with the complex demands of life, be it studies, part-time jobs, or other extra-curricular activities they undertake to develop their talents. The constant peer pressure and cultural differences can take a toll on their individuality. It is crucial that they develop a deeper and intimate relationship with GOD at this important juncture of their life.

Helping Youth by training and formation to transform their lives, and equipping them to become missionaries of Christ and His Church in their life situations, has been the focus of the Jesus Youth Movement over the past 30 years. Jesus Youth is an International Association within the Catholic Church with a focus on evangelising young people and nurturing missionary initiatives. It had its beginnings in Kerala, India and evolved as an active part of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the state in the late 1970s. It gradually spread to different regions of India and is now active in more than 30 countries worldwide across five continents.

The Syro Malabar Synod of Bishops recently issued a letter confirming the unique charism of the Jesus Youth movement in the wider church. The Jesus Youth movement has approval from the Vatican and is focussed on evangelising today's youth, promoting an active Christian way of life, and commitment to mission.

A Diocesan Jesus Youth Team has been constituted for the Syro Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne with a vision to work in the Syro Malabar communities in Australia. The Diocesan Jesus Youth Team strives to provide formation to the young for nurturing their ecclesial identity in the Church. Rev. Fr Sabu Adimakiyil VC has been appointed the chaplain of this team, which is coordinated by Jento Arakkal, from Melbourne.

The team with its members who belong to the various Syro Malabar communities in Australia will help with the pastoral plans of the relevant parish with regards to the youth. It aims to work very closely with the parish priest in organizing activities such as:

- Initiation retreats for Teens and Youth
- Forming small study groups and prayer groups in parish communities where young people can come together in prayer and fellowship. E.g., YouCat Study, Bible study, etc.
- Parish based Jesus Youth Prayer Group.
- Prolife initiatives
- Promoting vocations

We have already seen its fruits in a few Syro Malabar communities in the Eparchy where active Jesus Youth groups are catering to our young ones who have completed catechism and are regularly coming back to the parish to study more and deepen their faith through initiatives. The team has also conducted teens and youth retreats in Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney as per the request of the parish priests in the respective parishes.

Our Youth can only benefit in this faith formation, as they are well aligned with other ecclesial entities that also try to gather the young to express the Syro Malabar traditions in the present cultural context. It will be extremely beneficial for us to promote such initiatives within the parish, as it is vital to the faith formation of a young person who may have had little exposure to the richness of our faith.

As you all know, the Australian Catholic Church has declared 2018 as a year dedicated to youth and is holding the Australia Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) in December. It is important for our young people to take part in these festivals and I strongly encourage you to send them to this event. Jesus Youth, who have been regularly participating in the previous ACYF events can guide and lead us in this endeavour.

Hence, I most warmly invite all of you to actively promote Jesus Youth in our parishes and mission centers.

Yours in Jesus,



Bishop Bosco Puthur