



Christian Conference of Asia

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Congratulatory Message to Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Dr Joseph Mar Thoma, on 90th birthday

Your Beatitude,

On the eve of the 90th birthday, the *Navathy* of Your Beatitude, it is our great pleasure and privilege to extend greetings on behalf of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). As a former President of the CCA who served on various committees at different times, you have accompanied the CCA for three and a half decades in its ecumenical journey. On behalf of the CCA, we take the opportunity on this special occasion to acknowledge and recognise your valuable contributions to the Asian and global ecumenical movement in manifold ways.

We came to know that a special Eucharist and thanksgiving service will be offered on 27 June 2020 as a sign of thanksgiving, and special prayers will be offered by many people across India and in the diaspora, which will be live-streamed. It is with profound happiness that we will also join many around the world to pray for you, and thank God for your life and ministry. Under normal circumstances, a large number of people from all walks of life would have gathered at the headquarters of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church on 27 June 2020 to celebrate and pay respects to their shepherd and spiritual leader. However, we are aware that such a celebration is cancelled as it is inappropriate at this time of the spread of the pandemic.

Your Beatitude, God Almighty has enabled you to guide and lead the church and the ecumenical movement during the past several decades. Your ecclesiastical leadership at the local level started with your ordination as a priest in 1957, and subsequently expanded to wider areas; your consecration as a Bishop in 1975, Suffragan Metropolitan in 1999, and your enthronement in 2007 as the Supreme Head of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, and the 21st Malankara Mar Thoma Metropolitan to occupy the Holy Apostolic Throne of St. Thomas after the re-establishment of the episcopacy in the 17th century.

Your much-appreciated services to the Church and humanity in so many ways have spanned four and a half decades of Episcopacy, including now as the Mar Thoma Metropolitan at the helm of ecclesiastical affairs. You have been providing leadership not only to the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, but also to the ecumenical movement at the local, national, and international levels. Your leadership as President of the Kerala Council of Churches, National Council of Churches in India, and the CCA has been of great value. During your tenure as the President of the CCA and even before that, the CCA has greatly benefitted from your insights, prudent counsel, and pragmatic leadership. You have represented the CCA in different special task forces. You have served as one of the first directors of the newly-formed CCA Charitable Company when the CCA headquarters was moved to Hong Kong and provided valuable advice from time to time. As a Co-Chair of the Asian Movement of Christian Unity with the CCA and the Catholic Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) as constituent bodies, you promoted and emphasised the need for greater ecclesial unity in Asia. Your most recent contribution to the CCA was evinced during your participation at the Asia Mission Conference and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the CCA held in Myanmar in 2017.

Your leadership in various international ecumenical events over half a century have been deeply appreciated and valued by the ecclesial and ecumenical communities around the world. You have participated and provided leadership at the CCA's General Assemblies held in Seoul in South Korea, Manila in the Philippines, Colombo in Sri Lanka, Tomohon in Indonesia, Chiang Mai in Thailand, and Jakarta in Indonesia. Your participation at the World Council of Churches' Assemblies held in Canberra in Australia, Harare in Zimbabwe, Port Allegro in Brazil, and Busan in South Korea as well as at other Asian and global ecumenical events have always stimulated and asserted the need for an Asian ecumenical identity in the global ecumenical arena. Your passion and concern in building bridges between churches and in promoting unity, together with your faith, commitment, and strong conviction, as well as your zest for instilling hope in the minds of people at times of despair, are admired by many beyond ecclesial boundaries.

Your Beatitude, as you reach your 90th birthday on 27 June 2020, on behalf of the Christian Conference of Asia, we offer our prayers that God's richest blessings may continue to strengthen you in your life and ministry.

Yours in His Service,

Archbishop Dr Willem T.P. Simarmata
Moderator, CCA

Dr Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA