

Grade 12 Catechism Lesson Plan

Chapter 2: My Syro-Malabar Church

Duration: 45–60 minutes

I. Learning Objectives

- ❖ By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:
- ❖ Explain the origin and historical journey of the Syro-Malabar Church.
- ❖ Identify the unique characteristics of the Syro-Malabar Church.
- ❖ Appreciate the contribution of Mar Thoma Sleeha in establishing Christianity in India.
- ❖ Analyze the significance of preserving the identity and heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church.
- ❖ Develop a sense of belonging and responsibility towards their Mother Church.

2. Introduction (10 minutes) – Part I

Ask:

"How many of you have an Instagram, Facebook, or WhatsApp profile?"

Then ask:

"What information do people usually put in their profile?"

(Name, photo, interests, bio, etc.)

Continue:

Every profile tells others who we are. Churches also have an identity. If the Syro-Malabar Church had a profile page, what would it say?

Founder?

Mission?

Culture?

Traditions?

Unique features?

Today's lesson is about discovering the 'profile' of our Mother Church and understanding what makes us unique among the Catholic Churches of the world.

OR

Hold up a passport or show an image of one.

Ask:

"Why is a passport important?"

(Expected answers: It identifies us, tells where we belong, gives us citizenship.)

Then continue:

Every person has a national identity. Similarly, every Church has an ecclesial identity. The Syro-Malabar Church is not simply one denomination among many; it has a distinct history, spirituality, liturgy, culture, and mission.

Today we will explore the 'passport' of our Mother Church and discover what makes us uniquely Syro-Malabar

3. Presentation of the Lesson

I. The Church Founded by Jesus

Explanation

- Jesus gathered disciples, taught them, and entrusted them with His mission.
- Before His Ascension He commanded:
"Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."
(Mark 16:15)
- The apostles carried this mission to different parts of the world and established Christian communities.
- The Catholic Church today is the communion of all these Churches united in Christ and in communion with the successor of St. Peter.

Teachers Question

- Why did Jesus establish the Church instead of leaving only a book or teachings?

(Expected responses: To continue His mission, guide believers, celebrate the sacraments, preserve unity, etc.)

2. The Origin of the Syro-Malabar Church

Explanation

- The history of our Church begins with Mar Thoma Sleeha.

Key Historical Facts:

- First missionary journey to India: AD 44–50.
- Arrival at Muziris (Kodungallur): AD 52.
- Establishment of the Seven and a Half Churches.
- Martyrdom at Mylapore: AD 72.
- Through St. Thomas, Christianity took root in Indian soil and developed its own unique identity.

Discussion:

- What does it mean for us that our Church traces its origin directly to one of the Apostles of Jesus?

3. The Historical Journey of the Syro-Malabar Church

Briefly explain the milestones:

- Connection with the Persian Church.
- Arrival of Knanaya Christians.
- Portuguese influence.
- Synod of Udayamperoor (1599).
- Oath of Coonan Cross (1653).
- Restoration of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy (1923).
- Elevation as Major Archiepiscopal Church (1992).

Teacher explains:

Despite many challenges, external influences, divisions, and struggles, God continuously guided the Church and preserved her identity.

4. The Unique Identity of the Syro-Malabar Church

Ask students:

"What makes one Church different from another while remaining Catholic?"

Write on the board:

- ❖ Liturgy
- ❖ Theology
- ❖ Spirituality
- ❖ Governance
- ❖ Culture

Explain the distinctive features:

Oriental Identity

The Syro-Malabar Church belongs to the family of Eastern Catholic Churches and follows the East Syriac tradition.

Liturgical Identity

- ❖ Rich liturgical heritage.
- ❖ Holy Qurbana centered on the Paschal Mystery.
- ❖ Strong emphasis on Resurrection.
- ❖ Devotion to Mother Mary.
- ❖ Yaama Prarthana (Liturgy of the Hours).

Linguistic Identity

- ❖ Syriac language heritage
- ❖ Language connected with Jesus and the apostolic tradition.

Administrative Identity

- ❖ Archdeacon system.
- ❖ Palliyogam tradition.
- ❖ Participation of clergy and faithful in administration.

Cultural Identity

The Church became fully Indian without losing its Christian faith.

Examples:

- ❖ Thali in marriage.
- ❖ Indian architectural style.
- ❖ Traditional customs and celebrations.
- ❖ Adaptation of local culture.

Lifestyle Identity

The Mar Thoma Christians were:

Christian in faith,

Oriental in worship,

Indian in culture.

Their way of life was called Mar Thoma Margam.

4. Application

The Syro-Malabar Church teaches us that we do not need to abandon our culture to follow Christ. Instead, Christ transforms culture and gives it deeper meaning.

5. Bible verse

Read John 11:16

"Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'"

6. Choose any Activity

Activity 1: Heritage Museum Walk (Very Creative)

Tell students:

"Imagine a museum being built to preserve the history of the Syro-Malabar Church. Your group has been asked to select only ONE exhibit."

Groups choose one:

- Mar Thoma Sleeha
- Seven and a Half Churches
- Mar Thoma Cross (Sleevea)
- Holy Qurbana
- Syriac Heritage
- Coonan Cross Oath
- St. Thomas Christian Culture

Task:

Prepare a museum exhibit card:

Title:

- Historical significance
- Why future generations must know about it
- One symbol or image representing it

After 5 minutes, students walk around and observe each "museum exhibit."

**Debrief: Ask: "If only one exhibit could remain, which should it be and why?"
This creates excellent discussion and deeper appreciation.**

Activity 2: News Channel Interview

Role-play a television interview.

One student becomes a news anchor.

Others become:

Mar Thoma Sleeha

A Nasrani Christian of the 1st century

A participant in the Coonan Cross Oath

A modern Syro-Malabar youth

The Major Archbishop

The anchor asks:

Why is the Syro-Malabar Church unique?

What challenges did the Church face?

What message do you have for today's youth?

This becomes both educational and entertaining.

Activity 3: Personal Reflection Activity

Give students a sheet with the heading:

"Being a Syro-Malabar Catholic Means..."

Ask them to complete:

- ❖ One thing I learned today...
- ❖ One tradition I admire...
- ❖ One challenge facing young Catholics...
- ❖ One way I can preserve our heritage...

Collect responses anonymously and read a few aloud.

7. Resolution

" I will cherish, preserve, and proudly live the heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church and pass it on to the next generation."