**The Catholic Council of India (CCI) Come Together at Palai**

More than 175 participants —Bishops, Priests, Religious Men and Women and Lay Faithful—gathered in session from 15 to 17 November 2024 at Alphonsian Pastoral Institute, Pala (Kerala) to discuss about the Vital Role of Laity in the Socio-Political Context of India’ The meeting commenced with a Eucharistic Celebration led by Cardinal Oswald Gracias, who highlighted the gathering as a model of Synodality. In his homily, Cardinal Oswald emphasized the laity’s transformative role in society, stating, “The Holy Father, in the recent Synod, emphasized the importance of the laity within and outside the Church. They are called to imbue the world with the Spirit of the Gospel. Jesus came to transform the world, and Synodality must influence areas such as political life, ensuring everyone progresses together.”

Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, President of CCI, echoed the Second Vatican Council’s vision of co-responsibility, calling on all baptized members to collaborate in fulfilling Christ’s mission. He stressed the Church’s duty to uphold the Constitution, protect minority rights, and safeguard religious freedom, particularly in the face of challenges like Dalit Christian marginalization and Christian persecution.

On the Second day of the session, the participants gathered together to celebrate mass at the tomb of Saint Alphosa, at Bharananganam. Dr Peter Machado, Archbishop of Bangalore urged the participants in his homily to imitate the suffering life of the saint in carrying out our responsibilities in the Church.

The three-day meeting was concluded on a positive note by unanimously deciding to promote constitutional values, encourage more active participation of the faithful, to be more concerned about the vulnerable communities, to work for ensuring justice to Dalit Christians and Tribals etc. In light of the Synod on Synodality, the CCI reaffirmed the critical role of the laity in shaping the mission of the Church. The members resolved that they will journey together with all people of goodwill, sharing in each other’s joys and sorrows.

Fr Joby Mathew attended the CCI meeting representing the National CRI Priests’ section.

The Catholic Council of India is the only recognized Church Body of Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful with representation from all the three Ritual Churches in India. Established by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI), CCI acts as the National Pastoral Council to discuss matters affecting the Church and matters concerning the interests of the Church in India. Its goal is the renewal of the mission of the Church by discerning the signs of the times and by nurturing a truly participatory Church. CCI makes recommendations to the CBCI on the vital issues concerning the Church and the country. Generally CCI meets a few months before the CBCI plenary assembly.

**Fr. Joby Mathew**