



A Tribute to a Maestro: Fr. Jose Chiramel a Canon Law Scholar Embodied with Gentleness

One of the greatest gifts that God has given to each one of us is our memory. Because of it, the beautiful images of those people and things that touched our lives in the past are alive in our lives. Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel was such a person who gained eternal memory in us. Therefore I consider it as my privilege and commitment to pay a fitting tribute to my beloved maestro and predecessor, Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel. He was born on 24 April 1952 at Manjapra, Kerala, India and ordained priest in 1980 for the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly. He graduated from the University of Kerala, India. He obtained doctorate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome in 1991 and Diploma in Ecclesiastical Jurisprudence from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. He has served his Archeparchy as Judicial Vicar, pastor of different parishes and Rector of the Cathedral Basilica church Ernakulam.

He was the President of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Ordinary Tribunal from the year 2014 May 13 to 2019 June 18 as well as the Chief Editor of the *Eastern Legal Thought* during the

course of time. He served as the President of the Oriental Canon Law Society of India and the Postulator General of the Syro-Malabar Church. He has published several books and articles on Canon Law and was a regular columnist in the periodicals “Karunikan” and “Sathyadeepam”. He was professor of Canon law at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, St. Peter’s Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, *Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram*, Bangalore and Institute of Eastern Canon Law at *Paurastya Vidyapitham*, Vadavathoor, Kottayam. Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel faithfully fulfilled his ministry up until the last few months of his life, when ill-health finally overcame him. After his admirable service both in the Syro-Malabar Church and in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam, he was taken for eternal bliss on 18 June 2019.

Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel is one of the kindest Church personnel I have ever met: a true caring pastor, always full of joy, and deeply rooted in personal prayer. He was a renowned scholar, teacher and speaker; but more important, what he wanted to be and what he became through a life so fruitfully lived, he was a faithful man of God and loyal son of the Church.

Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel was indeed a man of gentleness and punctuality. He was always at the service of the Lord and the Church through his words, deeds and scholarly writings. As a maestro of Canon Law, he loved the Syro-Malabar Church unto his death. He was a calm and deep ocean of wisdom with practical sense, a resourceful genius with correct thinking and creative imagination. Nobody can replace Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel who is acknowledged as an impartial judge and a man of integrity. His nobility is enhanced by his unassuming attitude and simplicity. Even amidst his administrative responsibilities he continued his teaching at various major seminaries across the country. His clarity of thought coupled with the practical sense reached at its helm while he was the president of the Major Archiepiscopal Ordinary Tribunal. He could very well handle various ecclesiastical legal issues, in particular that of the Syro-Malabar Church. He could interpret the provisions of Canon Law from the perspective of Jesus’ teachings. He knew the purpose of the law thoroughly, and therefore, he could clearly interpret various provisions of Canon Law from a human perspective, as well as divine mercy.

We always remember Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel with affection and respect. He was indeed a learned, generous and wise pastor of souls, and I did learn a great lot from him as his successor in the office. I find it remarkable that Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel was so deeply appreciated and loved by so many people of good will. Like so many faithful priests, Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel lived his priesthood with all his heart, not seeking any recognition, yet, his light shined bright for all to see. The thing that stands out in my own mind about Rev. Dr. Jose Chiramel is his fidelity to the Church teachings and doctrines.

The Lord once told his disciples, “You are the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13). With this expression, Jesus refers to all Christians, but especially to those called to labor in His vineyard. Through his fidelity, the life of a priest serves as salt in the eyes of God, making the whole people of God pleasing to Him. But what keeps the salt salty and useful is not just the faithfulness of the priests to their own vocation, but also the prayers and sacrifices and aid offered in support of them. Jesus Himself prayed for His Apostles, the first priests. Fr. Jose Chiramel was keenly aware of his need for the prayers and support of others during his life. He would often ask people to pray for him and many people in fact did pray for him.

Although he was very ill during the last days of his life, he was still very alert and very much himself. His parting is a huge loss, but it is a loss that will be filled by the people he inspired to the same kind of fidelity and excellence he personified. We commend his noble soul to God and give thanks for all he offered to the Lord and His people as a holy priest and scholar of Canon Law.

May his soul departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

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