

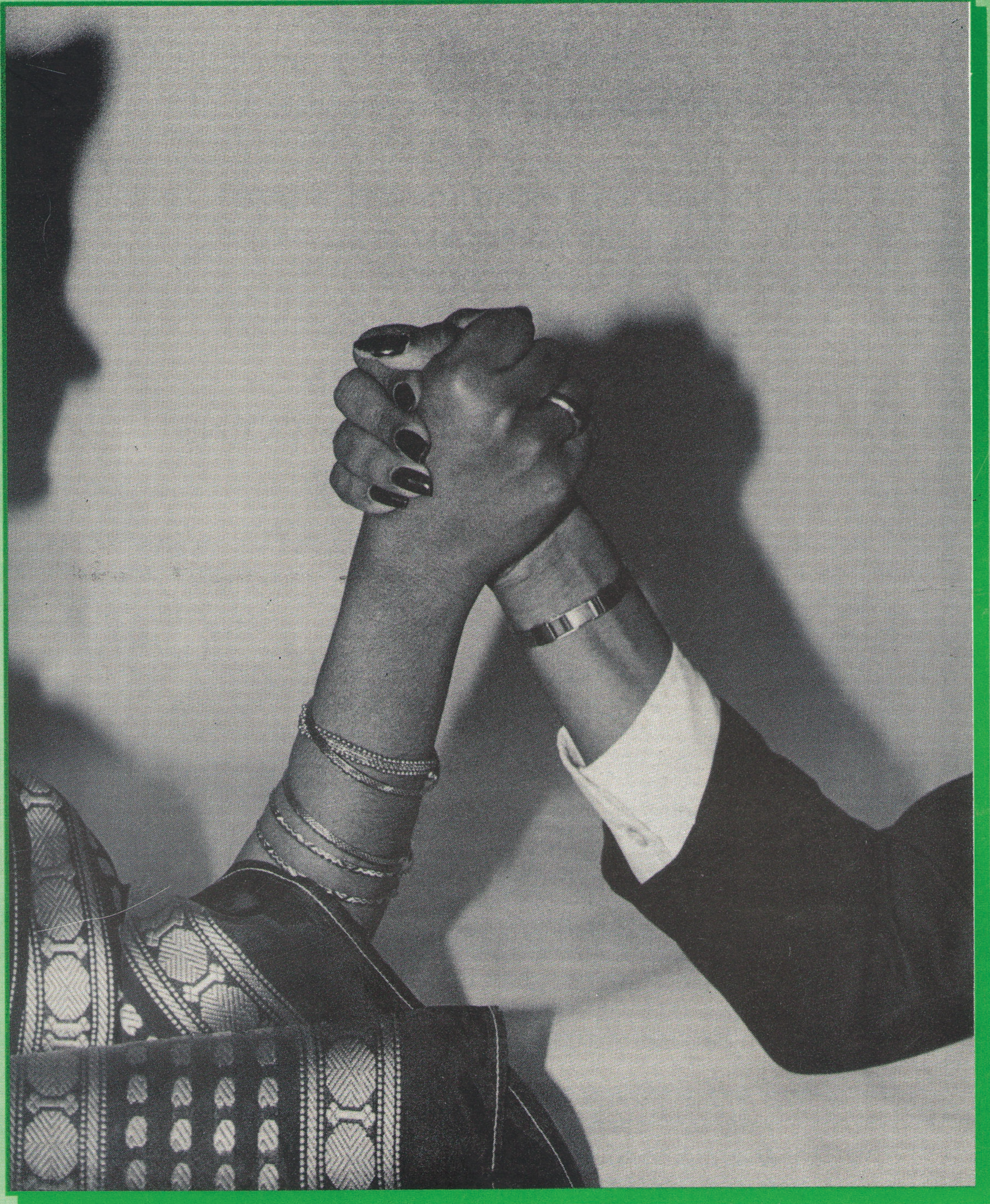


M A R T H O M A
MESSENGER

VOL. 10 NO. 2

APRIL 1991

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & U.K.



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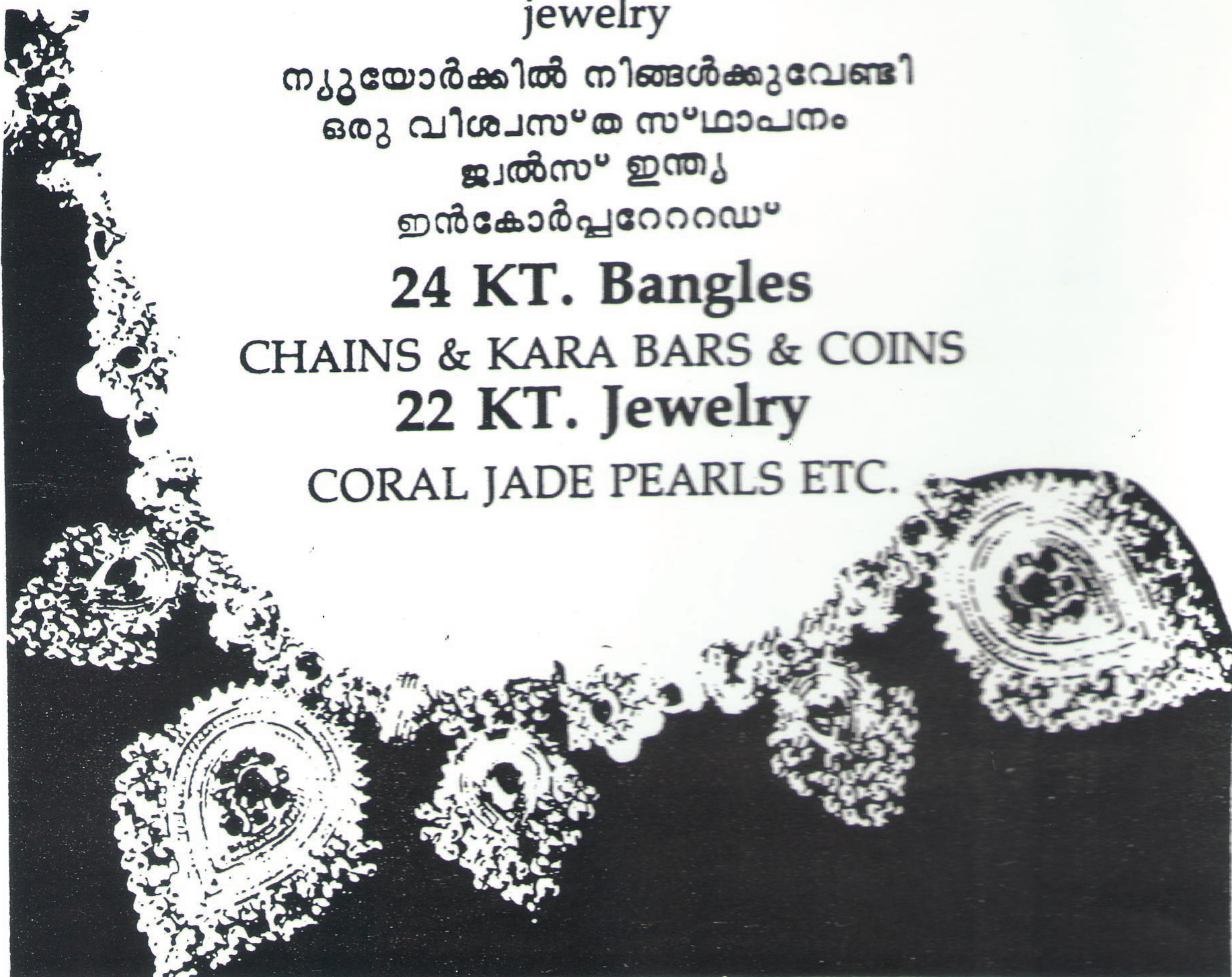
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*The official publication of the
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VOL. X No. 2
April 1991

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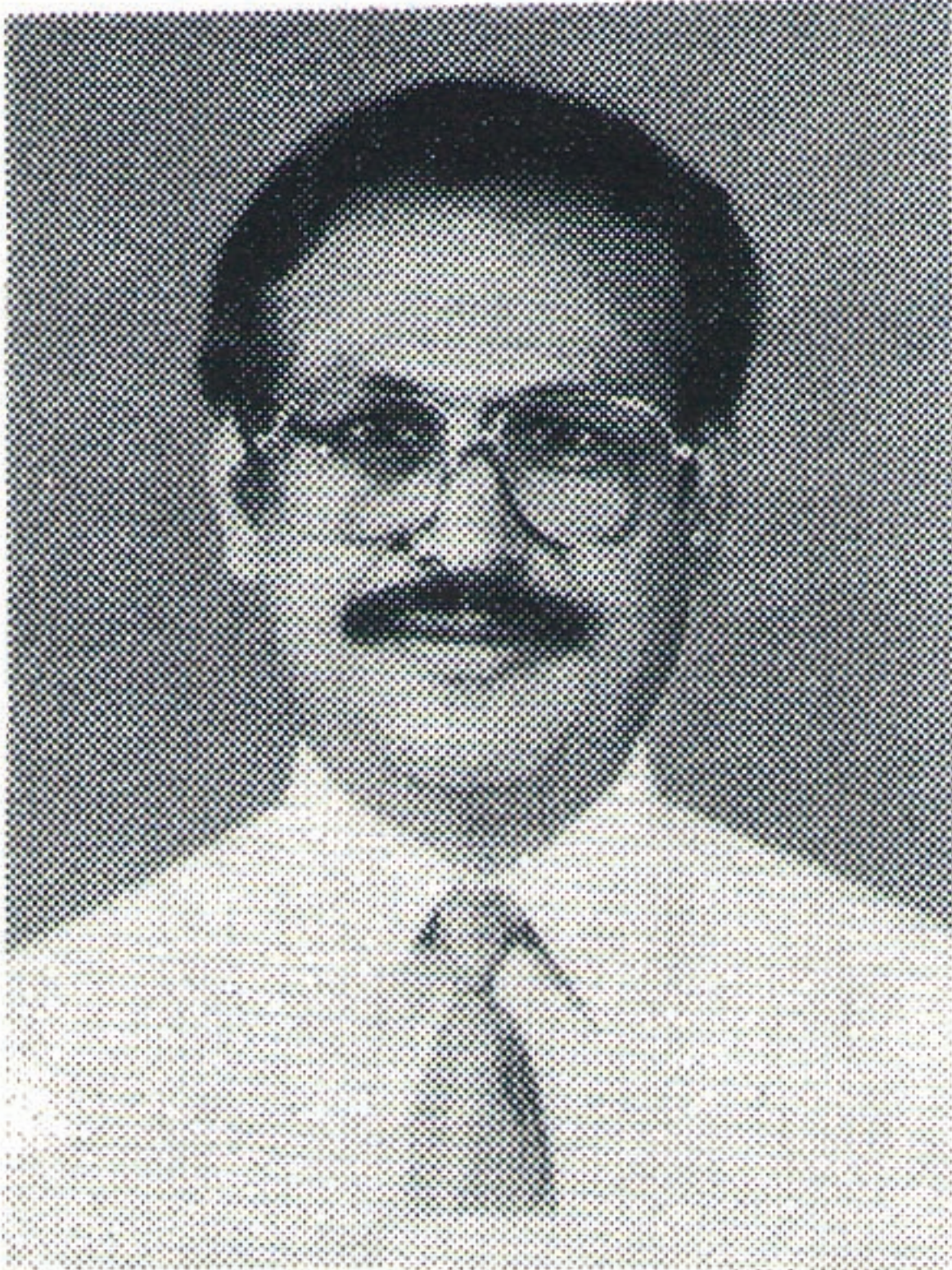
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FROM THE EDITOR



A cartoon caption in a local newspaper during the Gulf war read "How did our bombs get so much smarter than our kids?" No doubt, the cartoonist was alluding to American kids in our schools and universities. Much has been said and written about the deteriorating standards in American public schools and the increasing number of student drop-outs particularly among Blacks and Latinos. On second thought, I realized that the cartoon caption could very well be alluded to our children too.

By and large, the first generation Indian Americans are more profession-oriented than perhaps any other group of immigrants. Without exception, we are all proud of our children. They do generally well in school. Some of them are hailed as model students by teachers and administrators alike. We proudly display in our homes the awards and merit certificates received by our children from elementary school level on. We make sure that our children should not lack anything that we parents lacked when we were students. We make castles in the air about our children taking the highest degrees in Engineering or Medicine. We buy our children electronic typewriters, computers, educational labs and so on. We want to see our children mastering the art of playing musical instruments. We provide them with pianos, guitar, violin, saxophone you name it. We visualize the day when our son or daughter would play his or her favorite instrument in our church or musical groups. However, the final outcome of our time, money and efforts falls far short of our expectations and few of our dreams for our children come to fruition.

From an informal and unscientific survey of our Marthomite youths in the United States and Canada, it appears that only less than 10% of our university students are pursuing a professional degree or are interested in joining Masters or Ph.D program. A good number of youths complete their undergraduate studies in four to five years and in some cases even six years. A large number of our children major in Computer Science which affords them quick and relatively easy access to the job market upon graduation. While the children of poor and uneducated Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees, some of whom did not even know how to read and write English upon arrival in this country, continue higher education at prestigious colleges and universities such as Stanford, Berkeley, Harvard and M.I.T., a majority of our college graduates have no motivation or determination to climb the ladder of success. Little do they realize now that very soon they would be competing not only with Orientals but also with Latinos in the job market. For example, Brian Naranja, a 17 year old Mexican-American senior in Garden Grove, California, sick with influenza, recently took the Scholastic Aptitude Test and scored a perfect 1,600. Only 10 of the 1.8 million American students who took the SAT last year had perfect scores, with the average score being 900 points.

Selfish as it may sound, I often find the name of a Chatterjee, Patel, Saxena, Subramaniam or Ramachandran whenever the newspapers publish the names of outstanding student achievers or the result of the annual Westinghouse Science Talent Search. I wish I could find a Mathew, John or Thomas on that list. I am not suggesting that every student will soar to Westinghouse success but Brian Naranjo reminds us that any student can indeed excel. Without calculators and computers, without easy access to library books and reference books, we have come thus far. We are still struggling to see that our children should lack nothing but in the process, let us not neglect to understand that a major purpose in life should be the exploration and development of talent in our children.



LETTERS

To

THE EDITOR

Dr. George K. Zachariah in his article "Mar Thoma Church and its Mission in North America - Where do we go from here?" asks some fundamental questions which affect our church and future generations. I found the article fascinating, incisive, diagnostic and timely. In the United Kingdom, we have started asking similar questions and a study is currently undertaken called "The vision for the 90's". We certainly need the wind of change blowing through our church - the wind of the Holy Spirit. Nature teaches us that where there is no change life organisms deteriorate and die. Unless we adapt to our new environments and cultures and make the church relevant and meaningful to our second and third generations, we may not have a viable and vibrant church in the future.

Surely, the model of our church mission is the same as that of Jesus Christ and the New Testament Church. We can only give the Good News and make the mission to the people in the lands we live, if we are born of the Spirit and are exposed to the works of the Holy Spirit through regular Bible Study, Prayer and Worship and our daily personal relationship with Jesus. Some spontaneity in worship is essential for the sovereign moving of the Holy Spirit. While structures, organizations, plans and methods help, we can only achieve results, as Dr. George Zachariah rightly mentioned, by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty. (Zechariah 4:2)

We have an incredible opportunity for the advancement of the Gospel in the materialistic countries of U.S.A, Canada, U.K. and Europe besides taking it back to the unevangelised India. I hope and trust that there will be an opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the article at the forthcoming Diocesan Assembly meetings and move forward.

V.T. Abraham, London, England.

Who can act with total belief in themselves? Who crosses bridges with their imagination? Achievers! You and your colleagues have displayed that ability and imagination, and therefore, deserve more than just applause for your unprecedented efforts. The "Mar Thoma Messenger" is the product of total

dedication of mind, and body. Deep in mind, at one time, I had an 'idyllic' vision. You have given life to that vision. Now my wish is that this publication, as its name implies, orates the Western Marthomites perspective to our church headquarters. In addition, I strongly believe that this publication will persuade the Western Marthomites to stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles; instead, to climb more mountains and to cross more bridges. Let us remind ourselves that the rules of the game are constantly changing, and only those who change with the rules have any hope of winning.

Mathew Abraham, League City, Texas.

Congratulations to all of you for a job well done! Both the October and January issues were great. It was nice to hear from women and their issues. Often we hear from our leaders that women should be encouraged to get involved in church activities. However, proponents are often surprisingly passive about women's involvement in the church affairs. Present strategies within the church do not give women an important place. I would like to see more women's participation in Diocesan Assembly Council.

The Mar Thoma Community being a male dominated one, issues brought out by women are not always followed through. Even though authoritarian leadership continues in our families, security and affection are being threatened. Women are forced to take any roles for survival. Cheriyan K. Cheriyan of Long Island wrote, "It is often after her death her Kith and Kin would realize that she was the true head of the family." I wish we all could give her the credit while she is alive.

Sara Philip, Livonia, Michigan.

I am very happy to see that now we have a publication for our diocese with each issue focused on a theme. Although the themes for the future issues were listed in the October publication, I suggest to include the theme for the next publication in the current issue. The quality of the previous two issues were excellent. The members of the editorial board deserve to be commended for their hard work and dedication in taking up such a large project.

My appreciation also goes to the writers of the various articles. I also wish to commend this time the previous committees for the good work they have done.

Sam Phillip, Washington D.C.

The decision to have a publication like 'The Mar Thoma Messenger' is a step in the right direction in bringing people and communities together. It provides a forum to express views and suggest solutions to common problems, whether it is church or family related. The chief editor and the board are doing a fine job in accomplishing the main objectives of what this publication is meant for. Keep up the good work.

The article by Dr. George P. Zachariah in the January issue is profoundly fascinating. In his article Dr. Zachariah proposes some radical reforms in our thinking as a church. Although I do not personally agree with some of his views, such as church's role in encouraging its members in participating in local party politics (I do not disagree with individual participation on their own) and the like, I fully agree with his vision of what the Mar Thoma Church needs to do here. His suggestions for developing lay leadership, modifying worship and diocesan affairs should be given due consideration at both parish and diocesan level.

Thomas Mathew, Arlington, Texas.

MATRIMONIAL

Inviting proposals from parents of Syrian Christian professional boys for a Marthomite girl, 27 years old, U.S. educated Electrical Engineer. Please send details to Box No. A 598 c/o The Editor.

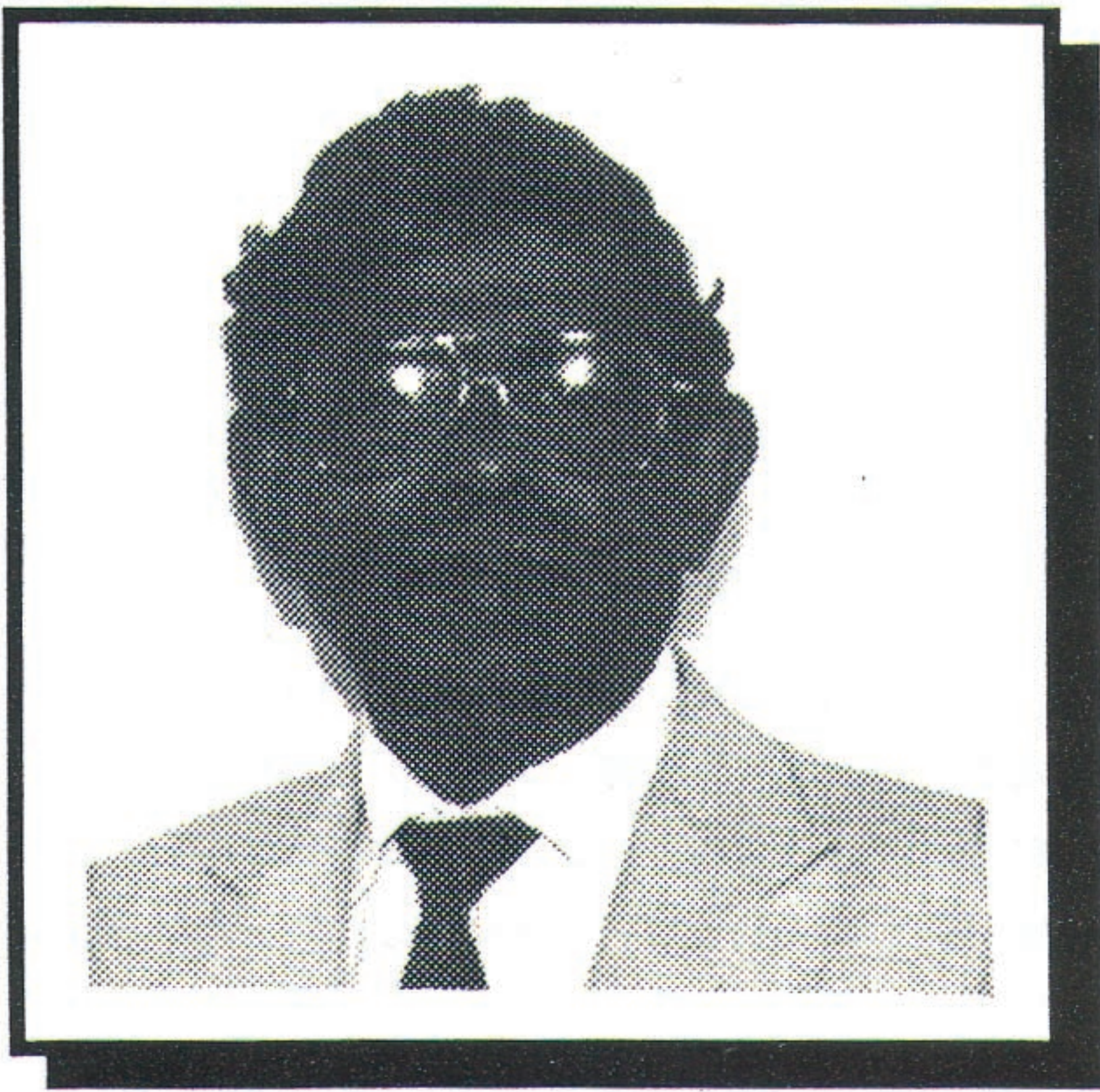
Proposals invited from boys with professional qualifications for a Marthomite girl, 23, from a respected family, very fair, 5'4" U.S. immigrant B.S. (Elect. Engineering) currently employed by a major corp. Please reply to Box No. A H4 c/o The Editor.

Marthomite parents invite proposals for daughter 23, Ht. 153 cm, Canadian citizen completing Master's Degree in Biomedical Sciences. Please send details to Box No. A 39 c/o The Editor.

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FAMILY CONFLICTS

Dr. P. M. Mammen, Orefield, PA.



[The members of our Church community, who are now settled down in Europe, Canada and the U.S.A., have come from rural, agricultural backgrounds in India. But it is unusual in that they are highly literate and many belong to professional groups. They valued education even before they arrived in their new lands of adoption. As a result, their children experience an unusual push into modernity. However, they are not themselves acculturated into modern values of individualism and equalitarianism in family relationships. This cultural lag is well-pronounced in their daily lives and causes conflicts in their inter-personal relationships. At present, we do not have any empirical studies on this problem. We ought to make a beginning to use sociological tools to conduct case-studies to understand the nature and magnitude of it. This study seeks to present merely a preliminary survey of the problem. Only a few concepts are presented here, which should enable us to get a cursory view of the subject matter.]

Family: The Great Burden-Carrier of Society

Family is a system of shared values and beliefs that give meaning and purpose to life. It is also the province within which society maintains its institutionalized patterns of regulating sex, reproduction and socialization of the young. It makes the family the great burden-carrier of society. No family is, therefore, completely free of tension-causing conflicts. The family is, in other words, the bottleneck through which all troubles pass. No other association so reflects the strains and stresses of human life.

Family in Modern Times

This conflict-prone family system becomes crisis-oriented in modern times when traditional values in family life-- such as: loyalty, obligation, deference and self-sacrifice-- are slowly replaced by the standards of happiness, companionship, erotic satisfaction of both sexes, equalitarianism and compatibility, which are advanced in modern urban societies. Furthermore, when science and technology advance in such societies to promote rational thinking, religion declines in its influence over human minds-- thus challenging the very basis of the spiritual sanctity of family life. The human interaction within a family system, as a result, becomes the realm of legally defined contractual obligations instead of a spiritually defined organic interdependence.

Family Structure: Nuclear vs. Extended Family

The rational behavior of modern man and woman has affected their family structure. The modern family of urban environment is essentially a two-parent family with two or three children living under the same roof. This nuclear family is isolated with no relatives within easy visiting distance. In this conjugal family, the marital tie is paramount. As opposed to this, traditional families of rural agricultural backgrounds have extended (or consanguinal) descent as the primary fact of family life. Its pattern of extended family contacts may survive in most of the modern families to some extent-- but in much modified and attenuated forms.

In extended families, cultural and social conditions reduce or exacerbate feelings of psychological conflicts between generations and particularly between parents and their adolescent children. In nuclear families, however, potential mediators and buffers-- such as grandparents, uncles and aunts-- are removed from the daily interacting family units. This intensifies both positive and negative feelings.

Lonely Women

Extended family contacts provide a network of stable social relationships. When such networks are lost in the nuclear setting, loyalties and commitments shift inwardly-- leaving the members cocooned and cloistered. Such families tend to become "lonely crowds" without external safety valves to let out internal pressures. These nuclear families lack integration with meaningful external networks and are cut off from any

ascriptive relationships, which formerly supplied basic cultural and structural elements. Women suffer the most in this situation, Without meaningful participation in external networks, most of them become narrowly circumscribed within the company of a few relatives and friends, the bosses at work-places, some work-mates, the places of worship and television sets. Needless to say, they do not enjoy full membership in soc-iety. Loneliness, isolation and boredom set in, as a result. Particularly, working women of such nuclear families in modern industrial societies, who have moved away from their mothers and sisters of extended family contacts, have become the loneliest of women.

".....working women... have become the loneliest of women. "

Expressive and Instrumental Functions

By and large, in extended families wives and mothers have performed what has been called expressive functions-- more involved in reducing conflicts and in providing comfort and emotional support to family members. Husbands and fathers have usually performed instrumental tasks-- requiring leadership, authority and disciplinary powers. In nuclear families of modern industrial societies, the expressive instrumental division of labor blurs. In fact, the nuclear family becomes largely an expressive unit-- with shared authority patterns. This leaves behind an "instrumental vacuum" in the "shared" atmosphere.

Unguided Missiles

This problem assumes critical proportion since the role of family itself changes. In modern industrial societies, the province of family in the protective, economic, religious, educational and recreational spheres is contracted and its function is delegated, in part, to outsiders. To this extent, parental authority over the adolescent children becomes a fuzzy area of unguided missiles shooting at each other.

Romantic Love of the Adolescents

In the modern industrial societies, when the province of family in the life of the young thus shrinks, romantic love becomes the basis for marriage. This implies free choice and a disregard of traditional needs. Such "love marriages" emphasize modern values in family life, such as: companionship, intimacy, deep and intensive communication, and mutual and emotional support. These modern marriages are a source of anxiety to the parents, who have recently emerged from their extended family system, which conducted arranged marriages in stratified, traditional ways.

" These modern marriages are a source of anxiety to the parents"

The Economic Variable

The increasingly protracted economic dependence of adolescents on their parents also causes conflict and mutual resentment-- particularly when independence and self-reliance are stressed in the modern value system. Meanwhile, when many adolescents have opportunity to change the economic circumstances of their lives in modern industrial societies, they become impaled on a series of contradictory cultural values and experiences of severe role conflicts.

Role Conflict

Roles are explicit or implicit guides or blueprints for thought, emotion, and behavior that spell out what a person can or cannot, should or should not, and must or must not do. In modern industrial societies, the content of roles-- particularly values, attitudes, beliefs and norms-- is constantly changing; and the number of roles is expanding. The traditional role of the husband, for example, to be a bread-winner is incompatible with the role of a working woman with restricted activities at home. As a result, role conceptions and expectations are not mutual any more in industrial societies. Demands of various roles overlap. This is a serious source of role conflict, which arises due to lack of economic resources to fulfill role obligations. Traditional values still persist in the face of changed economic circumstances, subverting the mutuality in role expectations that make for smooth family functioning.

According to the ideal pattern of the past, the husband ought to enjoy the privileges of the master

of the household with a faithful and submissive wife serving him. In the present time, there is outward compliance to the ideal of the past but few husbands are the dominant figures, which they seek to be, and few wives are completely submissive as they pretend to be.

"...few husbands are the dominant figures, which they seek to be, and few wives are completely submissive as they pretend to be."

Many marriages reveal conflicts, as a result, on the question of authority and roles of the spouses. Basic discrepancy arises between the actual roles and the ideal ones. Even where the wife is assumed to be subordinate to her husband, it is she who has the central role within the household. This creates unresolved conflicts and marital dissatisfaction.

Generation Gap

At some point, minors must have some right to their own views and needs for their independent and painful transition from minority to adulthood. Children have never been exactly like their parents. They become adults through learning about and assimilating the culture taught to them by their parents and many "significant others." The conception of "generation gap" expresses a concern for the problem of communication between the generations. But most young people do not have problems communicating with their parents. What bothers parents is the problem of "those kids" and not their own kids.

The older generation is upset-- the generation that is in the saddle, using society's rules and regulations to keep the status quo, to keep the norms, which have been outmoded by the progress of time. When some young people say, "I have had enough," and start shouting, "Hell, no I won't go," the parents say, "This is the generation gap. " Maybe, there is a generation gap; but we are not the first generations to be gapped. Adolescents of every generation have passed through normative crisis during which the young adults were permitted to experiment with various adult roles without having to pay the consequences of full public responsibility. Parent-youth conflict is nothing new to any generation of human society.

But this conflict in our time assumes special dimension because of the prevailing social complexity. Specialization of the profession, aloofness of educational system, inability to understand the problems of social mobility, acute competition for socio economic gains, new values surrounding sexual morality, society's lingering taboo on sex as a "proper" topic of discussion between parents and children, etc. contribute to turning any generational gap into a generational gulf. The rural-reared parents and their urban-reared children cannot coexist without complex adjustment problems.

Conclusion

Under these conditions, there will be both potential and actual conflicts in families. Some conflicts are inevitable and normal. The speeding up of social mobility, industrialization, urbanization and secularization leads us into confused and inconsistent cultural standards that cause conflicts, which we have to live with. There is a popular notion that conflict is detrimental and harmful. Any expression of conflict in the family, as a result, becomes a cause of alarm. But conflict often has a definite functional value. Strong differences in beliefs, values and attitudes of husband and wife as well as of children may be expressed without hostility or clash of wills. They may talk their differences over to the point of consensus, or they may develop the art of tolerance even when agreeing to disagree on fundamental points.

" They may talk their differences over to the point of consensus, or they may develop the art of tolerance even when agreeing to disagree on fundamental points."

In analyzing the difficulties in marital and familial relationships, it is important to differentiate between conflicts, which are solved, and those which persist. Unsolved conflicts may lead to tension. An accumulation of resentments and irritations may lead to tension, which disturbs the normal functioning of family life.

Dr. P. M. Mammen was a professor of Political Science and International Relations. Several of his studies have been published in India and abroad.

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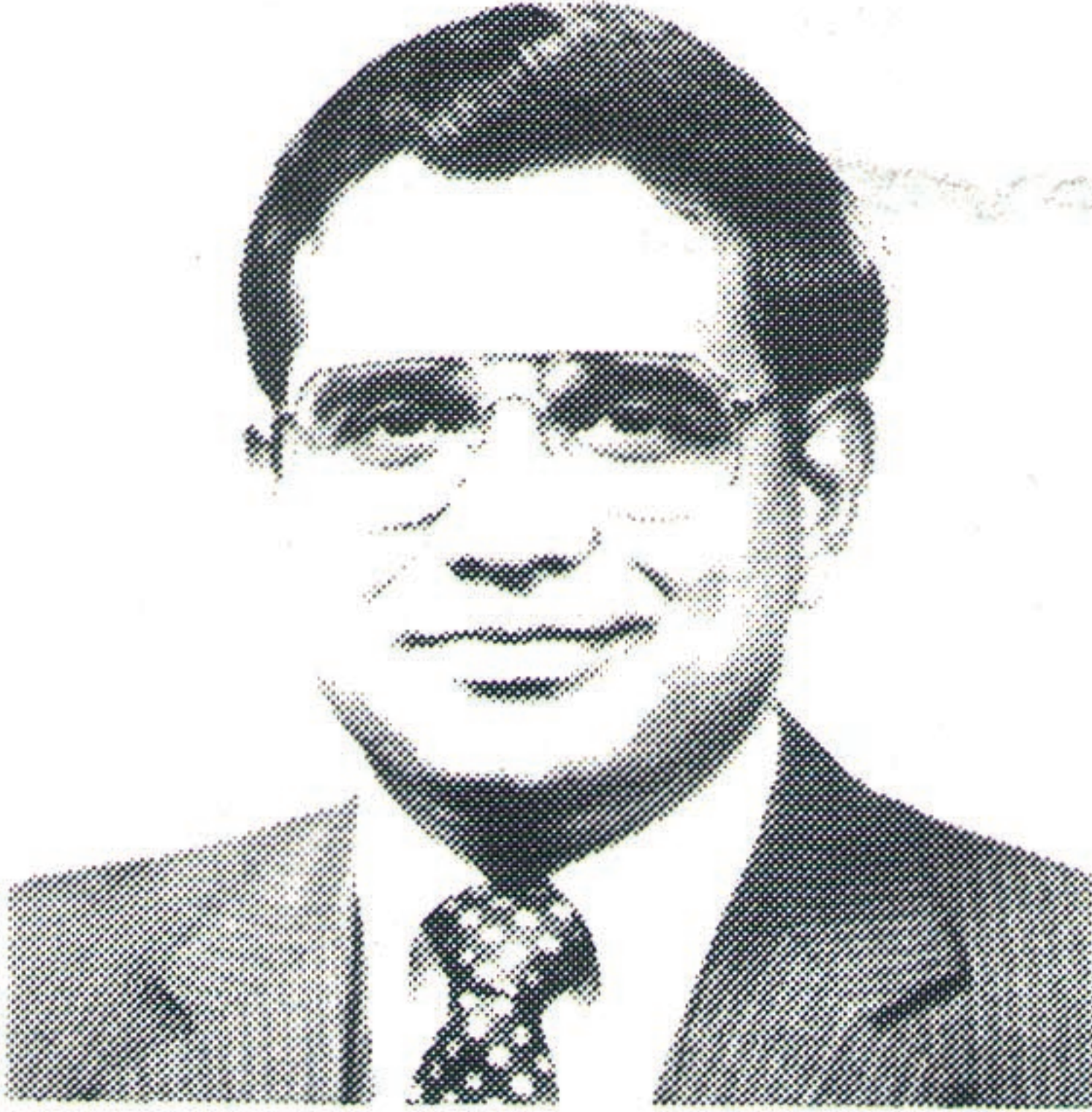
"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation".

(2 Cor. 5: 17)

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KERALITES IN AMERICA : INTERGENERATIONAL CULTURE CHANGE

Dr. George P. Alexander, Pasadena, California.



"We are Indian Americans, not American Indians," perhaps best expresses the sentiment of the Keralites living in the United States of America. Change has become the cultural reality of our modern technological age. The rapid change results in future shock. The Chinese proverb, "I curse you to live in an age of change" is very relevant for our times. However, change is not always a curse, but may be a blessing or an opportunity. To recognize change and to hold on to it will make life more rewarding. Both change and conflict are realities of life that have special significance for Keralities in America.

The Keralitie parents in America attempt to transit to their children the cultural heritage. At the same time, children may resist many traditional practices. A conflict between the parents and children thus results. These conflicts, however real they are, should not prevent us from recognizing that the concern of the parents is the success of their children in the host country. It is true that many parents assume that a successful life in America is to be achieved through adherence to their traditions, while most children do not see such a relationship. The two generations do not see eye to eye on many specific questions; and in this article, I would like to share some specific areas of change and conflict among Keralities living in America.

Modern sociologists use the expression "acculturation" to indicate changes that take place in the area of external cultural pattern such as language, dress, ethnic food, and the less tangible aspects of culture such as values, sentiments and religious ideals. When Keralites stop speaking their mother tongue, Malayalam, and begin speaking English, they practice acculturation. When Keralities start eating 'hot dogs', it is also acculturation. This sort of change proceeds rather fast with most Keralities, individually and collectively.

To a great extent, Keralities in America have believed at first that their knowledge of English was in many ways an aid in securing jobs and in dealing with other English speaking Americans. Compared with other non-English Asian immigrants like the Koreans and the Taiwanese, Keralites have a definite advantage on the job market with their command of the English language. However, they soon found out that their Indian English, though adequately intelligible, was not the typical American English phonologically and idiomatically, that they would never be able to speak exactly like the Americans, and that their professional advancement would be hampered by their poor English speaking skills. All these inhibitions in no way dampened their enthusiasm for their pursuing the American dream, for securing a good education for their children, and leading a higher standard of living.

As for dress, men quickly learn to dress like the rest of Americans; they often go to extremes in their eagerness to be more American outside the home. But as soon as men return home from work, they retreat to "little India" and wear *dhoti* or *lungi*. They do this perhaps because they find blue jeans more restrictive of freedom or because they use this to feel more at home with their spouses. It may seem that during the day and at work the males act like Americans, but at night and in the privacy of their homes, they retreat to the security of the mother country.

The second major type of culture change Keralites experience is known as "assimilation," which affects the relationships members of an ethnic group have for one another and with members of other ethnic groups. For instance, Indians will begin to associate more with Whites or Blacks than had been possible before their arrival in America. Keralites may develop friendships with Whites or Blacks and it may affect their relationship with other members of their own group. The Keralites who develop some strong friendships with Whites or Blacks or even marry them will find that their relationship with other Indians have been altered and that they may have time for fewer relationships within their own group. Many parents object to their children's close contact with "Americans" on the ground that they become too Americanized, very strong-headed, too independent, less submissive and less accepting of a husband dominated family structure. Thus assimilation refers to the changes that affect an individual's relationship with his own community and with other communities.

DUAL ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnicity remains very important, at least, for the first generation Keralities in America. Even though,

like the rest of Americans, they speak the same English language, live in the same type of houses and apartments and even have switched to American churches, they are "different" from the rest; they speak with an accent; their skin color is brown; they have close ties with the extended family; their social patterns, interests, values and general view of life continue to remain different. Even after twenty years of living in America, they have not been able to exchange their former identity. Ethnic identity helps to remove the sense of aloneness and isolation Keralites might feel in a large society like the United States of America. Ethnic identity provides the individual with a quick answer to the question of personal identity and it gives an additional sense of personal worth.

EMPLOYMENT : ENTRY INTO AMERICAN LIFE

Keralites usually come to America with a dream to be realized in a land of greater opportunity. This land of opportunity opens the door by providing work for people reaching its shores. Differing sharply from several other previous immigrants and compared to the unskilled laborers who reached this land in the past, the Keralities secure relatively high level entry jobs.

FAMILY IN TRANSITION

The two most important elements in the dream of a newly arriving Keralite are a good job that brings high income and guarantees a better standard of living, and the future of their children based on educational and job opportunities in America. Keralities are characterized by the attitude "We live for our children". or "everything we do is for our children." The success and failure of children are shared by parents at an intimate personal level, as if these happened to themselves.

The family life - style that Keralites bring with them is different in several respects from the one that is practiced by the majority of Americans. One major differences is the importance placed on kinship ties and the closeness of relatives. Family stability is maintained even when the husband - wife relationship is undergoing a fundamental change. In Kerala, men are expected to be dominant while women are submissive. Currently among the Keralites in America, a shift is taken place toward a more "equalitarian, companionship, democratic and open family". Here the wife is not expected to submit to the dictates of the husband. Thus, out of necessity, Keralites are in the process of changing the traditional husband - wife relationship toward greater equalitarian and democratic style.

Few social facts attract so much attention and generate so much concern to the Keralites living in America as the divorce rate and degree of stress the members of this community are experiencing. In the traditional ceremony of Kerala, the newly-weds and their witnesses take it for granted that a lifelong commitment has just been made: "When therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder".

The rising divorce statistics among Keralites can be interpreted as evidence that many people today are unwilling to stay in emotionally unsatisfying relationships. Keralites have always received advice on how to choose partners and how to form intimate attachments by accepting marital roles sacredly. They now recognize the need to learn how to break off partnership when it is no longer satisfactory in an environment. During the last decades, however, the Kerala community in the United States has been changing very rapidly. The impact of this new orientation on children is evident in the child - rearing practices among the Keralites in America.

CHILD - REARING PRACTICES

Kerala culture encourages expressions of affection to infants through hugging, cuddling, smiling, talking and so forth. In an extended family infants receive these expressions of love not only from mother or father, but also from grandparents and other close relatives. Bottle feeding based on a scheduled time is discouraged so that mothers can be quite informal and affectionate with their children. In America child rearing practices lead to independence which agrees with the individualistic approach, while in Keralite culture these practices result in dependence which agrees with the group orientation. A new model has to be evolved combining the strengths of both the above approaches, thus achieving interdependence which would advocate as the goal of child - rearing practices.

The busy life of America, the demands of work on the part of both parents and the lack of close relatives or servants for help, have great impact on child - rearing among Keralities in America. Out of necessity, Keralites accept the practice in America by entrusting their children with baby sitters or by sending them to day care centers. Kerala culture encourages parents to take infants with them to church meetings and other occasions. An invitation to parents usually implies bringing children if it is from another Indian family. This close informal association with children, not found among most Americans, should be

maintained by Keralites since there are advantages; this practice enhances a sense of acceptance and security among children.

DATING SYSTEM AND MATE SELECTION

Among the socializing practices found in western society, perhaps the most controversial for Keralite parents living in the United States are dating and self-choice marriages based on romantic love. The responses regarding dating show that most parents are not inclined to let their teenage sons and daughters date, and when dating is approved of, it is more for the sons rather than the daughters. The attitude towards dating and marriage shown by Keralite children born in America was very different from the attitude of the Keralite children born in India, but brought up in America. The concept of "caste" and "arranged marriage" are simply unknown to American born Keralite children. They place greater importance on "love" rather than other considerations, which may be of significance to the parents.

The difference between self-choice marriage and arranged marriage is the relative emphasis on expectations in marriage. In a typical western self-choice two people fall in love and get married. One might claim that love precedes marriage in modern urban industrial society. The young man and woman tend to idolize each other to a great extent which is very important for maintaining their emotional ties, Therefore, when they get married, they have very high expectations of each other. But when they start living together, problems might arise. Those problems can precipitate into some amount of disillusionment in each other. This disillusionment is inevitable because both have great expectations of each other and these expectations are unlikely to be realized in daily life. This situation is the beginning of serious strains in their relationships. At times the strain builds up and reaches a point at which it is impossible to make adequate adjustments.

In addition to these problems, the survival of western self-choice marriages depends to a great extent on the continuation of love and common interests. Once these are weakened, the couple will seriously consider the possibility of separation or divorce. This problem is becoming more common among American born Kerala young people who choose self-choice self marriages.

FUTURE IN AMERICA

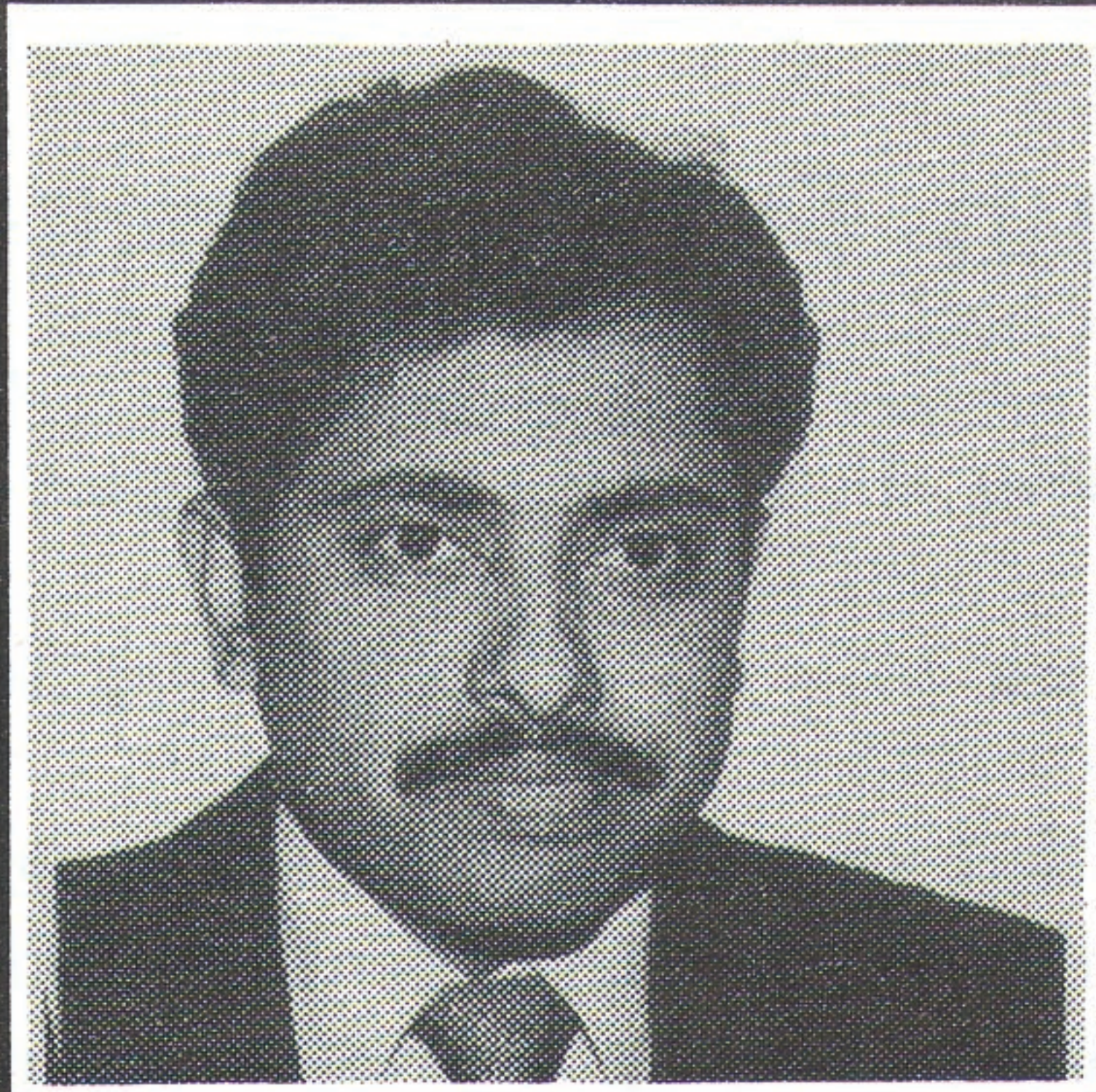
Will some people in America remain together and be known as "Keralities" in the future? This question focuses on the ethnic nature of the group and the sense of peoplehood. Keralites, who came from India, came as professionals and technicians responding to the demands of the host society. Hence there has been greater prospects for this group. But how about the future of the children born in America? Unfortunately, it has been noticed that, generally speaking, the second generation is less motivated, and only a low percentage is pursuing for high academic excellence in America. There are practices to be preserved in the rich cultural tradition of Kerala, while at the same time necessary changes are to be made to suit the conditions of America. What to preserve and what to change is finally a matter of wisdom because of the difficulty to convey it in a formula.

Children are transmitters of culture. They come across two types of expectations rooted in two cultures. They are in between "two cultures". parents should understand the situation and make demands accordingly. This understanding does not mean that parents are to be permissive. There are values of life that a person is committed to, and they are to be insisted in the context of family. These life values are to be distinguished from specific cultural practices which may be modified depending upon the situation. In short, we should insist on life values while being flexible in cultural practices. There is no formula as to what we should accept from each other. An atmosphere of love in the family is the best guarantee for a bright future. It will be achieved by preserving the spiritual outlook which is an integral part of the Kerala culture.

CONCLUSION

Can a Keralite American, who was born and brought up in the United States go to India again? Yes, for a while. Can a person occupy the parent's native village? Not really, for most of the Keralite children in America, Kerala is 'a great place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there". They are constructing a place for Kerala in their mental map of the world different from the Kerala of their parents.

George P. Alexander received his Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1990. Currently, Dr. Alexander is teaching at Biola University, La Mirada, California.



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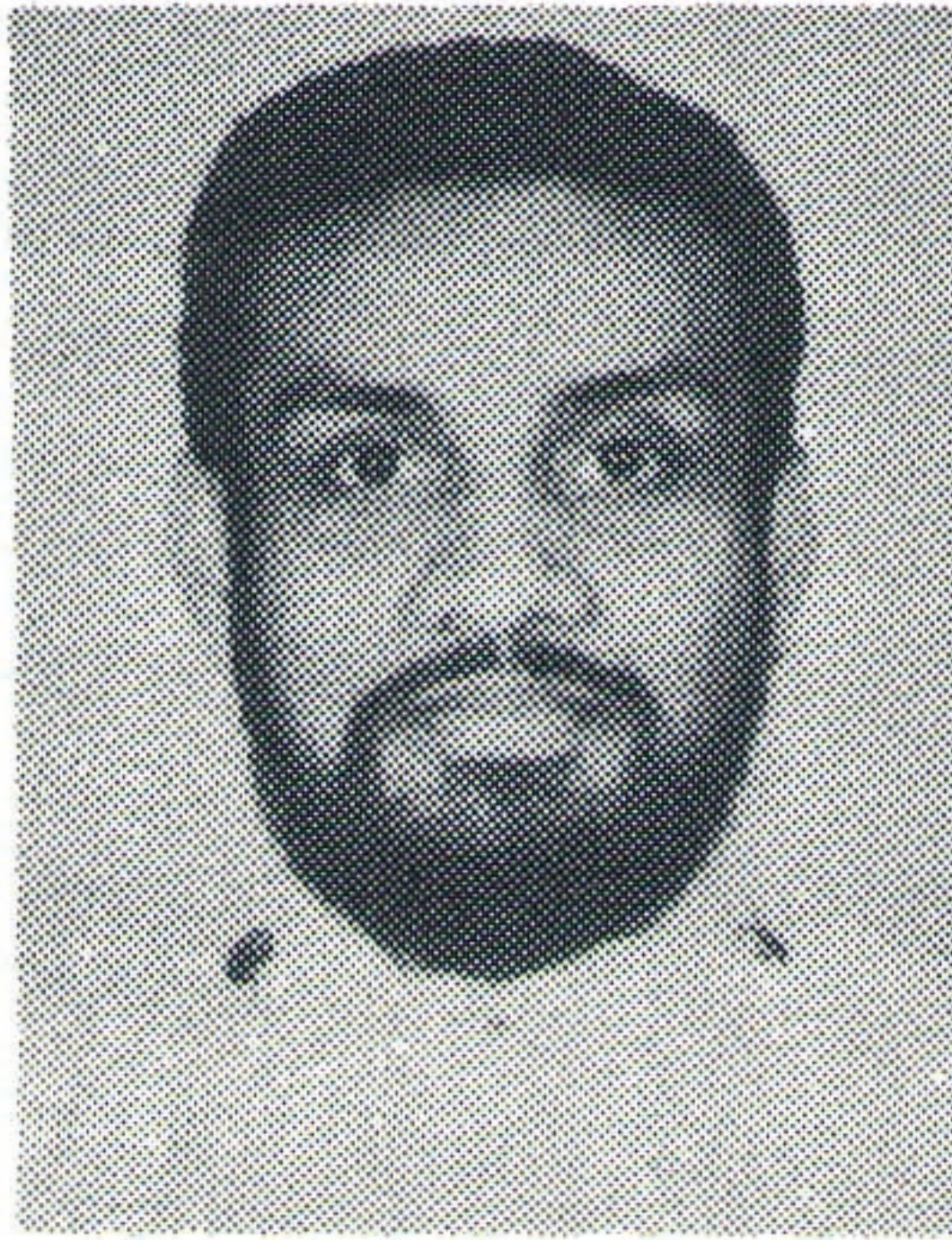
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MINISTRY IN THE WEST - PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES



Rev. George Mathew, M.A. B.D. M. Phil London, England.

It was truly a privilege for me to minister to the United Kingdom Mar Thoma Church for the past five years. It has proved to be a rich and rewarding experience. Here I am trying to evaluate the problems and possibilities of ministry in Western society based on my pastoral and sociological experience. Though the opinion expressed here are not free from subjective bias, I hope it will provide some light towards our Church's ministry abroad.

BACKGROUND: Unlike the Mar Thoma Church in North America, majority of the Mar Thoma diaspora in UK are not direct migrants from India. Many of them were in Singapore, Malaysia and different African countries for several years. Later they came and settled in this country. Of course some of the members came directly from India for higher education and employment. Because of this unique situation, not all the members have sufficient exposure to the faith and practices of our Church exactly as it is practiced in Kerala and we cannot expect them to be so. We need to take these facts into consideration while ministering to this Church.

PROBLEMS WE ARE FACING: Eventhough UK is considered to be a Christian country, it is moving more towards secular and materialistic values. Traditional Christian values are at stake. The established churches have very little impact on the moral and spiritual life of the people. Only a minority take their faith seriously. The very concept of family is collapsing. The breakdown of marriages, increased divorce rate, men and women living together without marrying, permissive sexual life etc. are now becoming an accepted way of life in the Western society.

Our people especially the younger generation are living, studying and growing in the midst of all these negative cultural influences. There is a tension between the western cultural environment outside and Indian culture at home. The Church here has a great responsibility to provide proper guidance and counselling to it's members in such a situation. We should also emphasize the Christian values and moral standards particularly in the areas of marriage and family life. People should benefit from the positive aspects of both cultures.

The Western mind is more rational. The explosion of knowledge through scientific advancement and electronic media make people think and act more objectively, and question whatever lacks proof. This include faith and worship. The Church should be ready to answer questions regarding our faith and explain the meaning of our worship, symbols and it's significance to our life. In addition worshipping in the language familiar to them is also very important.

Another issue which needs our concern is in the area of worship. In this country, our people, namely youths have access to other Christian denominations which are different from our way of worship. Short and spontaneous ways of worship is desirable. Freedom in worship is to be given. It should be contextual and relevant to their own situations. New forms of worship and variety of liturgy within the framework of our own liturgical traditions is to be experimented and encouraged.

Presently in most of the British schools, multifaith worship has been introduced (so far there had been only Christian worship). Here, the Church has to teach the children about the uniqueness of Christian faith through Sunday school and other Bible study groups. Otherwise they will be confused or end up in syncretic religion. The Church has to take this challenge seriously.

Along with this, now multifaith marriage (taking partner from other faiths) is also increasing in the Western society. The Church here again has a major role to play in teaching it's members about the importance of Christian marriage as an institution ordained by God.

THE POSSIBILITIES: It is a good sign in our Church that more and more people are actively taking part in the worship and spiritual life. Youths are also interested in the Christian life. People come from far away places for worship and fellowship meetings. They need proper guidance, encouragement and teaching about our faith.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: The second and third generation of children are born and brought up in this country and have no exposure to Indian culture and our ways of worship. They need to be treated separately. Special programmes should be introduced such as Sunday school, teaching about our faith and practice, Bible study etc. They should not be carried away by the materialistic and individualistic culture.

ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT: We can not keep aloof from the rest of the Christian community of this country. Our full Communion status with the Church of England is to be expressed more visibly through joint worship and programmes. Along with other Churches, we should take an active role in the evangelistic work. We should also associate with local Christians in achieving social justice, peace and eradicating racism.

The Mar Thoma Church has also a responsibility towards other Asian Christians in this country who came from the Indian subcontinent. Some of them are not well organized and are without proper leadership. We should extend our right hand of fellowship to those who are in need. Several Asian people are responding to the gospel positively and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord. The Mar Thoma Church as an evangelical Asian Church has a missionary role to fulfill in this land. So far we did not make any progress towards this end.

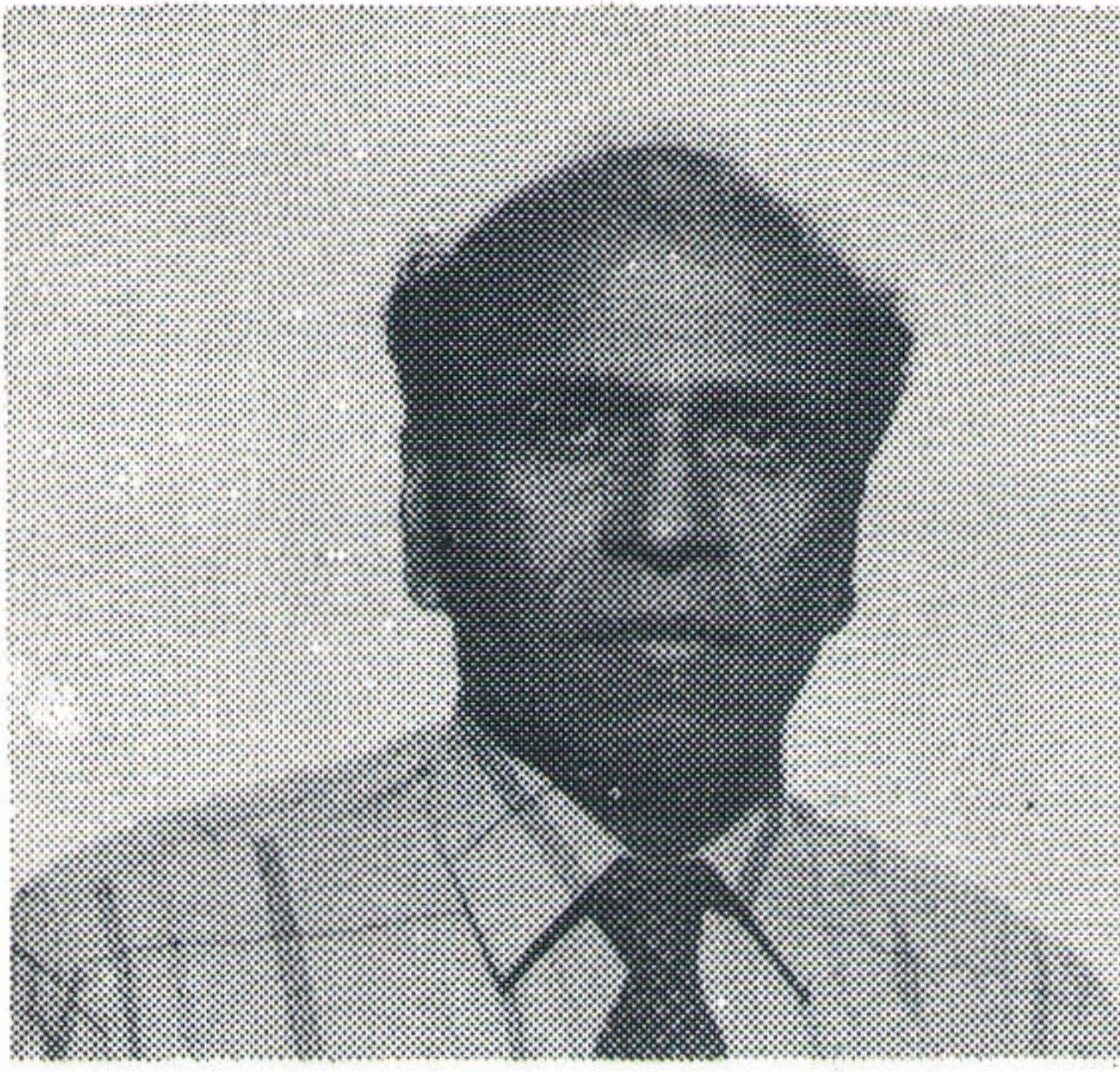
MINISTERIAL TRAINING: Recently I have received a questionnaire from the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry of the Church of England, in which it is asked 'What kind of special training did you have when you came to minister your Church in the West'? The answer was "no training" at all. This question made me think about the importance of ministerial training to serve in a Western parish. Our Church needs a training department especially for the clergies posted in the West or outside India. This can be included in our seminary's training programme. We can no longer consider our parishes outside India similar to that of the Kerala parishes. We need to know the cultural and social setting of each parish for effective ministry. A special training programme is to be introduced for overseas ministry. It should not be based on the subjective reflections of ministers who have served outside or been abroad, but on the basis of objective study, reports and review of the recent trend in the Western Churches. Analysis of a particular culture, theological reflections, etc. are also to be considered.

STUDY CENTRE: We need a study centre which will provide sufficient study materials, literature and books about the faith and history of our Church not only for our own members but for outsiders too. The Western Christians are showing great interest in the eastern way of worship and traditions. We should furnish adequate information about our traditions, liturgy, faith and practices. For this purpose we also need a journal or magazine in English. It will be a good idea if we could develop the 'Mar Thoma Messenger', the official organ of the Diocese of North America & UK as a standard magazine of the Church.

A HOSTEL: Several people from our own Church and other Churches come from India and other countries for studies and short training. Some others come as visitors. They may feel lonely and homesick for a while. Some people will feel cultural shock and alienation when they arrive in a foreign land. If we can provide them with accommodations and a Christian family atmosphere for a short while, they can more easily cope up with the situation and can progress in their career. The Church needs to enter into this kind of ministry.

TOWARDS THE FUTURE: Unless we are prepared to move with the times and respond positively to the challenges before us, our future as 'Mar Thoma Christians' is bleak. Since the migration from India is restricted by the British Government, we can not expect church growth in that way. If we are ready to adapt the ministry in order to meet the demands of our people, we have relevance as a worshiping community and body of believers. Are we ready to take this challenge?

Rev. George Mathew is returning to Kerala in May 1991 after serving the United Kingdom parish for the last five years as its vicar. He got his M.Phil. degree in liturgy from Trinity College, Bristol. Rev. George Mathew has originally written this article for "Chalanm", the annual of our Theological Seminary, Kottayam in December 1990.



Saint Valentine's Day, 1991

Dr. V. John Mathew, Dallas, Texas.

It seems that yesteryear passed
like a day. The sun's golden slippers echoed
in the corridor, his routine serenade at dawn
that ends at dusk. Time goes fast relentlessly
on its glinting, parallel rails like a noiseless
train. Another St. Valentine's day will arrive
at dawn. The ageless Saint of Love like Aurora!

Yes, Dear, Saint Valentine shouldn't age. He should
forever be young. The Saint of Love that ably
represents all the women of the world. Women are Nature's
Darlings that keep the world replenished, Love
that outwits the indomitable warrior that kills
furiously like wrathful Achilles. You, Time's
favorites, have grown younger by another year, Deathless
blooms on the aging tree of Life, harsh of bark, severe
as crusty old men. Beauty and Time are foes forever!
Women through love, through procreation keep Beauty
young and Time at bay. You alone can vanquish Time
and shame shameless Death!

The guns of uneasy Gulf
blindly devastate, mow down young and old without
mercy. Love needs to prevail and silence the incoherent
mouth of Lunacy. Let every day be Saint Valentine's day.
Let guns become plowshares and bombs be the manna
that nourishes life. Let scud missiles be the
undimmed torches that pass by night. Let the armed
waters be the cool, eternal springs of love. Let Saint
Valentine live, prevail, and bring sanity and love to us!

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Lubbock, Texas.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES: CANBERRA ASSEMBLY, 1991.

Rev. K. U. Abraham, Boston

"Land of the Spirit" was the name given to a mythical southern continent by a Portuguese mariner in the early seventeenth century. Unknown to him and many others then and later, there indeed was a land whose inhabitants had a deep sense of the sacred and the spiritual. All life was-- and is -- sacred to the Aboriginal people. So is all nature, and the land itself.

The Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Canberra, Australia, "Land of the Spirit", from February 7-20, 1991. The main theme was "Come Holy Spirit - Renew The whole Creation". The sub-themes were: (1) Giver of Life - Sustain your Creation; (2) Spirit of Truth - Set us Free; (3) Spirit of Unity - Reconcile your People, and (4) Holy Spirit - Transform and Sanctify Us. The Assembly opened with a ceremonial welcome given by the Aboriginal people. The large white tent, under which all worship was held, was full beyond its 3,500 seat capacity. Following the welcome, worship continued with a traditional Aboriginal cleansing ritual in which participants entered the tent through the smoke of burning branches. During the joyful celebration the congregation danced and clapped as they sang a South African hymn, "We are marching in the light of God." Calling the delegates "people of hope" Sir Paul Reeves, former Governor General of New Zealand, said in his opening sermon that "ultimately the earth will be saved only when its creatures are reconciled and healed."

The worship life in the Assembly continued to be an enriching experience because people from all over the world participated fully by bringing their religious experiences under one large tent: language, music, spiritual richness and day to day life experience. During worship one always experienced a mood of celebration. Small group Bible Study, a feature of Assembly life, was especially meaningful considering the differing backgrounds of the participants. The Bible study was not simply a textual study, but a life-sharing event. A highlight of the Assembly was that for the first time the North Korean and the Chinese Christians attended a W.C.C. Assembly. We all shared in a historic moment, Friday February 8, when these delegates were greeted by the Assembly and the China Christian Council was accepted as a W. C. C. member. The presence and participation of people of other faiths-- Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Shintoism-- added to the richness of the Assembly and gave opportunity for further dialogue. Considering that the Assembly wanted to accept and acknowledge the leadership of young people, the Seventh Assembly decided that one of the next presidents would be a person under the age of thirty. Priyanka Mendis, a twenty five year old Anglican from Sri Lanka, was elected as a president.

The Right Reverend Dr. Joseph Mar Iraneus Episcopa, The Right Reverend Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, Mrs. Rachel Mathew, Mr. Abraham Karicom, the Rev. John John, the Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph, Dr. Mammen C. Jacob, and the Rev. K.U. Abraham represented Mar Thoma Church in the Seventh Assembly. During the Assembly we had the opportunity to meet with the Archbishop-designate of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Dr. George Carey, at his Camp Office in Canberra. The Right Reverend Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa was elected as member of both Central & Executive Committee of the W. C. C.

Ecumenism is indeed faithful to the traditions of the past as well as to the issues of the present: continuity and change. My experience at the Assembly was an enriching and empowering one. May the Holy Spirit renew our church and strengthen us to respond to the ecumenical task before us.



Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Iraneus, Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph and Rev. K. U. Abraham with WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Emilio Castro.

WCC - A WORLD ORGANIZATION OF CHURCHES

Dr. Mammen C. Jacob, Sunrise, Florida.

The vision of church unity was never completely lost during the many centuries of schism and conflict among Christians. In the late nineteenth century, however, the conviction began to take hold in several places that something must be done to heal the divisions which have always hampered Christian witness. That marked the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement in which the unique fellowship of the WCC is rooted. Following a world missionary conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910, the drive towards unity began to take organizational shape. Three related movements were founded in the 1920's. The International Missionary Council (1921) brought together foreign missionary societies and national Christian councils for study and common action on Christian witness.

In 1937 church leaders decided that the time was ripe to merge the faith and order and Life and Work movements into a World Council of Churches. The outbreak of the second world war delayed the implementation of that decision for eleven years -- until August 1948, when representatives of 147 churches met to constitute the WCC at its First Assembly in Amsterdam. Although several Orthodox churches decided against joining the WCC in 1948, ecumenical contact with them continued, and after the Third Assembly (New Delhi, 1961) all of the Orthodox churches in the world had become WCC members.

Most of the 147 churches that came to Amsterdam in 1948 were European or North American. Since then, the number of member churches has more than doubled. WCC has now 317 member churches from more than 100 countries, incorporating nearly all Protestant and Orthodox denominations except adventism and the Salvation Army. Many of these churches have a long history, but the WCC membership also includes "younger" Pentecostal bodies and independent churches in Africa and Asia. Successful union negotiations have sometimes replaced two or more previous member churches with one united denomination. At the same time, women, lay people and youth have taken an increasing role in WCC leadership. Although the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, it works together ecumenically with the Council in several important ways.

For the seventh time since its inauguration in Amsterdam, member Churches of the WCC met in assembly. Nearly 4000 delegates, observers and guests from all over the world came to Canberra the federal capital of Australia to spend two weeks in worship and debate on issues both theological and political.

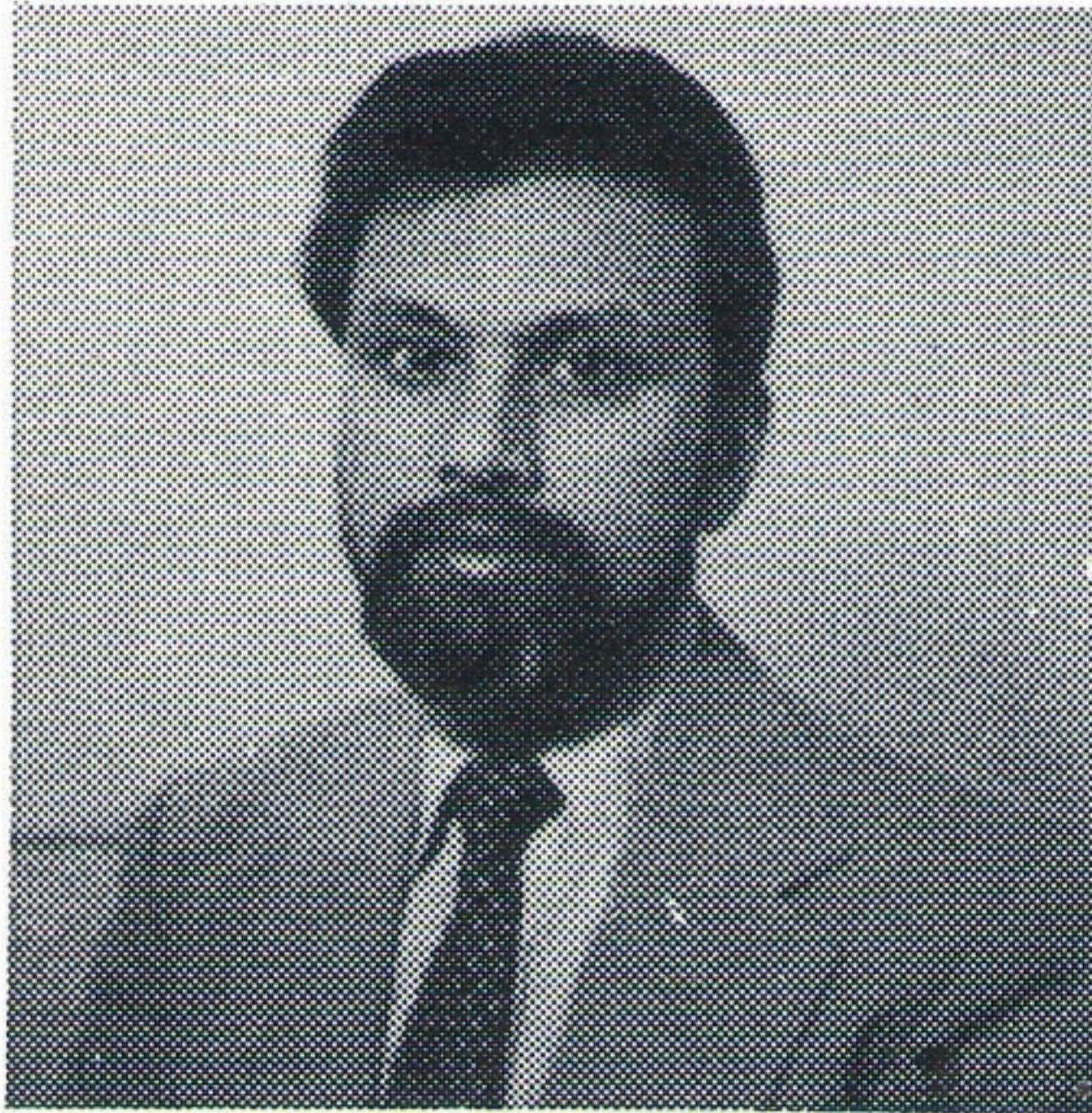


Mar Thoma Church delegates to the 7th Assembly.

(From left to right) Rev. John John, Mrs. Rachel Mathew, Dr. Mammen C. Jacob, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharies Mar Theophilus, Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Iraneus, Rev. K.U. Abraham, Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph and Mr. Abraham Karikom.

A QUESTION OF CONFLICT

Dr. Zac Varghese, London, England.



For most of us it is difficult to think of Church without all sort of expectations, preconceived notions, and prejudices which we have acquired in one way or another and which can create all kinds of conflicts. For some people, the Church is hopelessly obscure, originating in ages and minds with assumptions and interest so removed from ours that the gap is unbridgeable. How do we cope with some of the attitudes expressed to us in confidence about the state of health of our church? The kind of attitudes expressed will depend on whom we talk to, but I doubt if it is too much of a caricature to draw up of some of their statements, thus:

"There is a good deal too much of that airy-fairy stuff in church. What is needed is good old-fashioned preaching about Heaven and Hell. We have lost the sense of mystery and awe in our worship. We are not sufficiently committed in the expression of our faith. The church is full of doubting clergy and uncaring laity. We are too arrogant in our beliefs, expecting people of other faiths to accept as fact what are actually matters of faith. The language of our service is old-fashioned and obscure. Nobody, particularly young people, understands what they are talking about. The church is unfair to women. The church is allowing ordination of woman and allowing them to get out of hand. The clergy do not have the basic human humility and think highly of themselves and their authority. Clergy, you know, like confident lunatics emerge from their sheltered theological colleges; they put on a cloak of holiness, sanctity and piety. At the grand old age of 26 or 27, they climb up into the pulpit and look down and preach to folks who have a lifetime of Christian service and devotion. These gracious folks treat them with respect because they respect the role and authority of a priest. They also make them believe that the respect is theirs by right and their wisdom is worthy of wonder. The church should be more involved in political and social issues."

We could go on adding to the above contradictory statements but it would not get us to the heart of the problem. A way into this dialogue and a way to understand the apparent conflict is first to admit our own involvement in creating these problems as members of this body called Church. The people who have got it almost right are those who say that the responses of the Church to the gospel teachings are simply not relevant to the current world problems. Sometimes these criticisms are meant to imply that the faith should be re-packaged in a chocolate tin so that it becomes printable and user-friendly. But in the broader sense, what is being said is that Christianity's concern with eternity and truth and self-sacrificing love is hopelessly at odds with the general human concern for immediate answers, material well-being, expediency and self-centred happiness. Of course, the church is not immediately relevant in such a world as ours. In fact, it never has been. Only to those in desperate need can the gospel of new life be preached, and only by such can it be heard.

John's realization of lukewarmness of the church in Laodicea was rooted in the fact that its members were rich and had prospered and apparently needed nothing. In other words, they seemed to be successful people and being successful they had lost their initial passion for the gospel and Christ (Rev. 3:15-18). It is a well-attested fact that nothing seems to destroy our capacity for a deeply religious response to life more than the achievement of success which leaves us a little smug. Therefore, from this perspective there is something rather sad about successful societies, such societies seek to eradicate all sense of personal incompetence and failure. Religious experiences spring from human needs and a need like dependence has become in political, social and even in religious circles, a dirty word. It is the ultimate human arrogance to think that we have the ability to eliminate every human need. Ever since I came across the quotation, "Human needs are beyond human help", I have begun to appreciate the need to seek more and more humility in my own lifestyle.

This idea of worldly success being a hindrance to religious experience is very touchingly demonstrated in Peter's denial of Jesus. Peter had been a model of strength, courage and loyalty in the past and this lifted and placed him above his peers. He needed nothing, but his own strength, and his own

single-minded determination made him say, "Though all the others forsake, I will never leave you." But three times he found his courage faltered as he claimed he never knew the Lord. And at that very point, Peter realized himself for what he really was - "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked". However, we should never forget that it was to Peter that Jesus gave the pastoral charge to tend and feed His sheep. For Jesus must have known that only those who taste the bitterness of failure can ever know the value of His saving Grace. This sense of failure does three things for us and our communities: first, it removes our pride and all sense of self-importance; second, it helps us to share needs and pains of other people; finally, it removes the gap between us and our Saviour. For Jesus, too, knew failure. He, too, on His earthly pilgrimage had known what it was to be stripped of anything that might appear to be success. He simply understood our weakness and if the incarnation means anything it must be that: God in Jesus understands the questions relating to conflicts. Krishnamurti, a free spirit from India, wrote that, "The division between the observer and the observed is the source of conflicts." But his solution to the problem of avoiding conflict is to avoid any thought process leading to movement of change, but to accept the status quo and live with "what is" and not with what should be. He goes on to argue that where there is order there is no conflict.

How does the church portray Jesus? What kind of a picture of Jesus do we carry within ourselves? The distortions in our perception of Jesus are the cause of all our conflicts. Paul had a total understanding about conflicts in his own life and in the churches that he helped to build. "What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial. Then it will be complete - as complete as God's knowledge of me. Meanwhile, these three remain: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love". Could it be that Tagore also had a perception of the same reality when he wrote:

"I boasted among men that I had known you. They see your pictures in all works of mine. They come and ask me, "Who is he?" I know not how to answer them. I say, "Indeed, I cannot tell." They blame me and they go away in scorn. And you sit there smiling. I put my tales of you in lasting songs. The secret gushes out from my heart. They come and ask me, "Tell me all your meanings." I know not how to answer them. I say, "Ah, who knows what they mean!" They smile and go away in utter scorn and you sit there smiling.

God is always mysterious and always beyond us. It is just that we feel the force of His Presence upon us from time to time in our lives. In order to capture and express what we experience, we paint pictures in words and these pictures are often distorted. And then we share our pictures with other people who have distorted pictures of their own. In addition, we have a tendency to exaggerate our importance in these encounters with God. It is not surprising that Joseph's brothers dropped him into a hole in the ground and rather hoped that he would not get out again. He was smug and tactless in telling his brothers of his dreams of his own superiority over them. One of the truths, and only one, which Christians have glimpsed as they have gazed upon the picture of Jesus on the cross, is this: that if God has been the creator and father, then forever at the heart of this universe there has been a giving, a receiving, an exchange of love between man and God. In the establishment of this communion between man and God there is no conflict.

"Christ has made us His own and He is not divided. In seeking Him, we find one another". Thus runs part of the message issued in 1948 by the Amsterdam Assembly of WCC. It is appropriate that we who live in the West should be thinking about issues of culture, conflict, and resolution. This may help us to realize that we are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. May it also help us to realize that "human needs are beyond human help".

Dr. Zac Varghese is the Associate Director of Renal research at the Royal Free Hospital Medical School, London. He is also the Director of the Tissue Diagnostics laboratory at the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, London.

"There is no question that conflict does darken the world around us, and it is entirely human to recognize and try to avoid it. But in meeting conflict, we need to understand that the process doesn't end once we solve a problem; there will be more ahead. The positive aspect of this is that in those experiences there also exists great potential for growth."

*Leo Buscaglia, world renowned author of 'Loving Each Other' and 'Bus 9 to Paradise'.



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LIVING IN TWO CULTURES: CONFORMITY AND CONFLICT

Dr. V. T. Samuel, Louisiana.

Living in two cultures is one of the inevitable aspects of social life in a multicultural society like the American society. The norms and values of the American society are mostly shaped and influenced by the dominant White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant (WASP) culture. Those who fall outside the purview of this culture must still conform to the norms and values of the dominant culture while exercising their rights to uphold and continue their old cultural practices as long as these practices do not oppose the main trends of the major culture. This, according to social scientists, is known as the practice of cultural pluralism. It is clearly attested to by the existence of subcultures like the Black, Hispanic, Asian, Italian, Irish and the like in a free and democratic country like the United States of America.

Immigrants from the third world countries have to go through a period of culture shock and adjustments while the European immigrants would find the process much easier as their cultures are closely related to the American Culture. On the other hand, Asian Indians like the Kerala Christians, especially the adult immigrants, are likely to view the extremes of the dominant culture and generalize it with their own ethnocentric perspective. Our youths, who are raised in the American cultural context, are thus caught between the values and norms of two cultures: the parental culture and the American culture. While the grown-ups are cherishing the old culture as the ideal culture, the youngsters are looking at it the way any other American youth would look at it. Often, the question posed by our youngsters is this: How can we develop a wholesome personality as we grow up in this type of conflict-ridden cultural context? Since most of the personality traits are nurtured, shaped, and influenced by early life experience, the above question is a legitimate one and it should be given proper consideration by parents as well as other leaders whose judgment and opinions are so crucial for our inquisitive youths. Having physically lived in two cultures almost the same number of years, I would like to suggest the following for the benefit of the readers of this article.

First, it is possible to develop a healthy personality in spite of the conflicts and tensions within and without. The first step in resolving the conflict and adjusting to the new environment is the acceptance of our parents as they are with their strengths and weaknesses. It is often difficult for the parents to resocialize themselves and change their norms, values, attitudes and beliefs after they have internalized and cherished it over a period of several years in their native culture. As they try to socialize their offspring in their own "expert" ways, it is only appropriate to be sympathetic and sensitive to the parents' economic thriftiness and competitive spirits. For many, these are necessary ingredients of a "good life" for them as well as for their growing children and they should follow the norms of their parental culture. As children are socialized by the schools, peers, mass media and other work places, they also have responsibility of helping their parents to resocialize (a process of reverse socialization) them into this culture in order to help them understand and accept its positive aspects. This two-way conformity is what I call "reciprocal conformity" or accepting the good and positive aspects of two cultures and conforming to them by the parents as well as their children.

Second, conflict is not an evil in itself. Often, the resolution of conflicts results in change, growth and renewal. Conflict of values, especially of moral values, is pervasive in the American family system. In recent years social scientists have identified strong discipline, motivation, and inculcation of deep moral values as few of the strengths of the Asian American families. At the same time, erosion of discipline and moral values in the family system are pointed out as factors affecting the deterioration of the American family. Different sexual orientations and the permissive attitude toward it have resulted in the increase of venereal diseases, unwanted pregnancies, illegitimate births, and the alarming number of teenage parents. Our Christian youths should be concerned about what is happening around them in the society and should play a significant part as role models for others. Although free discussion on moral and sexual issues are uncommon in our families, our youths should try to understand the parents' good intention in their attempt to enforce the moral norms of our family and community systems. Parents would want the children to be "innocent" until their marriage. Mar Thoma youths who are increasingly reaching marriage age may find the mate selection practice of their parents' at odds with the norms of their peers and the American culture. In many families, this is one of the critical areas of conflict which should be given proper attention by the parents, priests and other church leaders.

Resolution of conflicts in any given area requires accommodation and the reaching of a middle ground which we often call compromise. This is crucial and essential if we have to survive as a stable family group in this culture. Let me illustrate this with reference to the mate selection process of our youths. The traditional pattern of parents selecting the spouses for the children is losing its ground even in India although the value of such practice should not be overlooked. The mate selection process in America includes a period of courtship (dating, going steady, and engagement) which leads to the consummation of marriage. I suggest that there can be a middle-ground or compromise in this cultural life process. A prospective partner in whom one is interested could be referred to the parents by their children for their consideration, input and approval. The parents also can take the initiative in referring prospective spouses for the serious consideration of their children. Thus, both the parents and the adult children become active participants in the selection process but the final decision making power would rest with the prospective "bride and groom-to-be". I call this mutually agreed marriage(MAM) process. In this process, parental love toward their children is enhanced and the "love" between the marital partners becomes the deciding factor along with other matching qualities.

Finally, an area where our youths must be challenged is in the adherence to the Christian principle of sustaining faith in God and in their commitment to the teachings of Christ. Faith in God must permeate all areas of one's life, whether it be academic, professional, personal, social, religious or community life. Christ must become the role model and biblical teachings must become the reference and guide for our life in this society. There is nothing unchristian in becoming successful in professional life through aggressive competition. But the real life goal should be based and nurtured in the Christian principles, not dominated by the desire of amassing instant material wealth. All of our youths do not have the "call" to be doctors and engineers even if most parents would like them to be professionals. Regardless of one's chosen profession, one must become a transformed-active participant (TAP) in the society and play his/her role in the elimination of the social evils which beset many million Americans. Remaining as Mar Thoma Christians in an enclosed ethnic community church is comfortable but not for too long because in the "Valley" there are opportunities for action. Unless we join hands with others in the fight against injustice, oppression, racism, prejudice, exploitation and the denial of basic human rights, we cannot be called Christians. As followers of Christ, we are expected to be agents of change towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 12:2. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

In conclusion, I may say as young Christians, let us strive to be transformed to do the will of God as we all face conflicts and tensions and pressures for conformity to this worldly values in this new found land which is becoming home for most of us in the earthly sense. All of us have a call in life to play different roles in the midst of conflicting values and norms, and in different cultural context, but let us look unto Christ who has called us to the various tasks associated with our life roles as true Christians.

SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The 1991 Diocesan Sunday School examination is scheduled for May 5, 1991. Registration forms and other relevant information/guidelines were mailed to all Sunday Schools. Parents are requested to encourage their children to study for the exam.

A curriculum for the Post-Graduate course (Sunday School) has been developed. This will be mailed to all Sunday Schools by the end of March, 1991. This curriculum is intended to be used throughout our Diocese.

Arrangements are being made to register all Sunday Schools in our Diocese with the Sunday School Samajam, Kerala. Arrangements are underway to conduct a teacher preparation (training) program for a limited number of teachers from each Sunday School in the Eastern Region so as to utilize them as resource persons.

Mr. P.T. Mathew of the Dallas Mar Thoma Church has been selected as Sunday School Supervisor for the Western Region. Mr. Mathew has already visited a few Sunday Schools in The region.

The date of the 1991 Mar Thoma Regional Junior Conference (Eastern Region) is July 12-14, 1991. The Conference (1991) is sponsored by the Staten Island (New York) Mar Thoma Church Sunday School.

Daniel Thomas, Secretary, Diocesan Sunday Schools.

ജീവിതഭദ്രതയ്ക്കൊരു പുതിയ മാനം



ഫിഡിലിറ്റി യൂണിയൻ ലൈഫ്

ജീവിതകാലവും അതിനുശേഷവും കൂടുതലായും സേവനനിഷ്ഠ യോടുകൂടി

എക്കാലവും നിങ്ങളോടൊപ്പം ഉണ്ടാകും. വ്യക്തിഗത സേവനവും ആവശ്യാനുസൃത പോളിസി രൂപവും വേണ്ടി വിശ്വസനീയമായ “ഫിഡിലിറ്റി യൂണിയൻ ലൈഫ്” ലോകത്തിലെ 10 പ്രമുഖ ഇൻഷുറൻസ് കമ്പനികളിലൊന്നായ അലയൻസ് ഓർഗനൈസേഷന്റെ ഘടകമാണ്.

സാമ്പത്തിക ഭദ്രതയിലും സേവനനിഷ്ഠയിലും അതുല്യമാണ്

ഫിഡിലിറ്റി യൂണിയൻ ലൈഫ്

1927-മുതൽ സംതൃപ്തരായ പോളിസി ഉടമകളിലൂടെ കരുത്താർജിച്ച ഈ കമ്പനി ഇന്ന് 1600 കോടിയിൽപ്പരം ഡോളറിന്റെ പോളിസികളിലൂടെ ലക്ഷക്കണക്കിന് പോളിസി ഉടമകളുടെ ജീവിത ഭദ്രത ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തുന്നു.

നിങ്ങളുടെ വിശ്വസനീയമായ സ്ഥാപനം



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General Manager

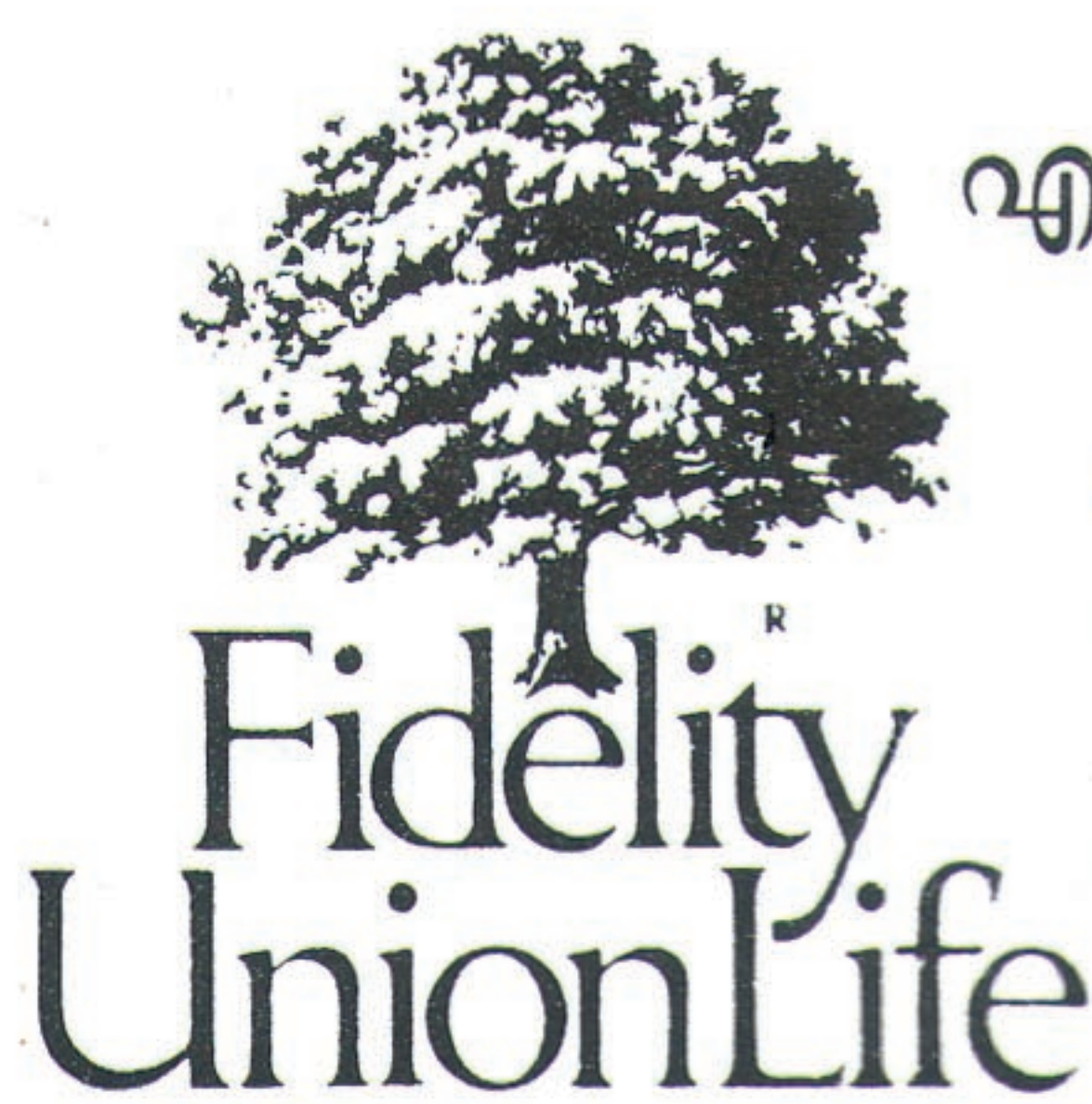


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മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ കത്ത്

കർത്താവിൽ പ്രിയരെ,

എല്ലാവരും ഒരുപോലെ ആത്മാർത്ഥമായി പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചപ്രകാരം യുദ്ധത്തിന് വിരാമം ഉണ്ടായതിനായി ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കാം. കവൈറ്റു വീണ്ടും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം പ്രാപിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇത് സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യചടങ്ങുകളായ ഏവർക്കും ആശ്വാസം നൽകുന്ന വാർത്തയാണ്. ഇതിനെ കൊടുക്കേണ്ടിവന്ന വില എത്രയെന്നും ഉറപ്പിക്കുവാൻ പോലും കഴിയുന്നില്ല! എത്ര ആയിരം സൈനികരുടെ ജീവനും യുദ്ധോപകരണങ്ങളും നഷ്ടമായിരിക്കുന്നു. നഗരങ്ങളിലെ സാധാരണ ജീവനക്കാർക്ക് ഉണ്ടായ നാശവും വിലയിരുത്തുവാൻ കഴിയുന്നതല്ല. നശിപ്പിക്കപ്പെട്ട നഗരങ്ങളുടെ പുനർ നിർമ്മാണം എടുപ്പും സാധിക്കുന്നതല്ല. ദുഃഖനിശ്ചയത്തോടും വറ്റാത്ത ക്ഷമയോടും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ വിജയം ലഭിക്കുമെന്ന് രണ്ടാം ലോക മഹായുദ്ധത്തിനുശേഷം ജർമ്മനിയുടെയും ജപ്പാന്റെയും അനുഭവം നമ്മെ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

പശ്ചിമേഷ്യയിൽ സമാധാനം സ്ഥാപിക്കപ്പെട്ടാൽ മാത്രമേ മേൽപ്പറഞ്ഞ കാര്യം സാധ്യമാകുകയുള്ളൂ. പല സ്ഥിതിയിൽ യിസ്രായേൽ പ്രവർത്തിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള ആക്രമണങ്ങൾക്ക് നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ തീരുമാനം ഉണ്ടാകാതെ ആ പ്രദേശത്തു് സമാധാനം കൈവരുകയില്ല. ലോകനേതാക്കൾ ഈ കാര്യത്തിൽ ശ്രദ്ധപതിപ്പിക്കുമെന്ന് ആശിക്കാം. വൻ രാഷ്ട്രങ്ങൾക്ക് എണ്ണപ്പാടങ്ങൾ കൈയടക്കുവാൻ ഉള്ള താല്പര്യവും വിസ്മരിക്കാവുന്നതല്ല. ഈ പ്രശ്നങ്ങളെല്ലാം ഐക്യരാഷ്ട്രസംഘടന വേണ്ടവണ്ണം അപഗ്രഥിച്ചു്, നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന സമാധാനത്തിനുള്ള മാർഗ്ഗങ്ങൾ നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുവാൻ ദൈവം വിവേകം നൽകട്ടെ എന്ന് പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കാം.

1991-ലെ മാറാമൺ കൺവെൻഷൻ സഭയ്ക്ക് അനുഗ്രഹമുഖാന്തരമായി കഴിഞ്ഞ ഞായറാഴ്ച സമാപിച്ച യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിനെ സ്വന്തരക്ഷിതാവായി സ്വീകരിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ആഹ്വാനം ഓരോ സന്ദേശത്തിലും മുഴങ്ങിക്കേട്ടു: പരിശുദ്ധാത്മ നിറവിലുള്ള ജീവിതത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് സമാപന ദിവസം ബിഷപ്പ് ജോൺ ആർ റീഡ് ഹൃദയാകർഷകമായി പ്രതിപാദിച്ചു. റവ. ഡോ. ലിയനാർഡ് ഗ്രിഫിത്തിന്റെ ബൈബിൾ ക്ലാസ്സുകൾ വളരെ പ്രയോജനകരമായിരുന്നു. ആദിവാസം രാവിലെതോറുമുള്ള ബൈബിൾ ക്ലാസ്സുകളിലൂടെ സുവിശേഷകനായ ലൂക്കോസ് യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ജീവിതം വിവിധ രംഗങ്ങളിൽ ചിത്രീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന 4 മുതൽ 9 വരെയുള്ള ആറ് അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങൾ അദ്ദേഹം സുവ്യക്തമാക്കി. സുവിശേഷങ്ങൾ എല്ലാവരും വായിക്കുന്നുണ്ടെങ്കിലും ഓരോ രംഗത്തിന്റെയും പശ്ചാത്തലം ശരിയായി മനസ്സിലാക്കി ആഴമായ പഠനം നടത്തുമ്പോൾ ഇനിയും എന്തുമാത്രം ഗ്രഹിക്കാനുണ്ടെന്ന് ബോധ്യമാകുവാൻ ഈ വർഷത്തെ ബൈബിൾ ക്ലാസ്സും സഹായിച്ചു.

കൺവെൻഷനിലെ സാധാരണ പരിപാടികളെ കൂടാതെ ബുധനാഴ്ച കാലത്തു് എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ സമ്മേളനവും, ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞു് സാമൂഹികദോഷങ്ങൾക്കെതിരെ ആഹ്വാനം നൽകുന്ന സമ്മേളനവും നടത്തി. ഓർത്തഡോക്സ് സഭയിലെ നിയുക്ത കത്തോലിക്കാബാവ, റോമൻ കത്തോലിക്കാ സഭയിലെ ഗിവർഗീസ് മാർ തിമോത്തിയോസ് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ, സി. എസ്. ഐ. പൂർവ്വ കേരള മഹാഇടവകയുടെ ചുമതല വഹിക്കുന്ന ബിഷപ്പ് കെ. ജെ. സാമുവേൽ എന്നിവർ എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ സമ്മേളനത്തിൽ പ്രഭാഷണങ്ങൾ നടത്തി. തദ്വസരത്തിൽ സഭകളെ എല്ലാം യോജിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഘടകങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റിയും, അവയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ ഒരു മിച്ച് ക്രിസ്തീയതേത്യം നിർവഹിക്കുന്നതിനെപ്പറ്റിയും ദൈവവചന വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ നൽകിയ ഉറപ്പാക്കലുകൾ ശ്രദ്ധേയമായിരുന്നു. ചങ്ങനാശ്ശേരി ആർച്ച് ബിഷപ്പ് മാർ ജോസഫ് പഴവത്തിൽ, സിസ്റ്റർ ഡോ: ജോവാൻ ചുങ്കപ്പൻ എന്നിവർ കേരളത്തിൽ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ രംഗത്തുണ്ടായിരിക്കുന്ന അധഃപതനത്തെക്കുറിച്ചും, മദ്യം, മയക്കുമരുന്നും ആഭിയായവയുടെ ഉപയോഗത്താൽ അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്ന നാശത്തെക്കുറിച്ചും, ഇവയ്ക്കു പരിഹാരം കണ്ടെത്തേണ്ട മാർഗ്ഗങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചും പ്രതിപാദിച്ചു. യുവവേദിയുടെ യോഗങ്ങളിൽ മുൻവർഷങ്ങളിലെപ്പോലെ വ്യാഴം, വെള്ളി, ശനി എന്നീ ദിവസങ്ങളിൽ വൈകിട്ട് 4 മണിക്ക് 'സമാധാനം' എന്ന വിഷയം അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി പഠനങ്ങൾ നടത്തി. വേൾഡ് സ്റ്റുഡൻസ് ക്രിസ്ത്യൻ ഫെഡറേഷന്റെ രണ്ടു ജനറൽ സെക്രട്ടറിമാരിൽ ഒരാളായ ജീൻ ഫാൻസോയ് ശനിയാഴ്ച വൈകിട്ട് യുവജനങ്ങളെ അഭിസംബോധന ചെയ്തു് പ്രസ്താവ്യമാണ്.

ഇന്ത്യയുടെ പല ഭാഗങ്ങളിൽനിന്നുള്ള മിഷൻഫീൽഡുകളിലെ പ്രവർത്തകർക്ക് ഒരുമിച്ച് വന്ന് അനുഭവങ്ങൾ പങ്കിടുന്നതിനും സാധ്യതകളും ആവശ്യങ്ങളും അറിയിക്കുന്നതിനും ലഭിക്കുന്ന അവസരം മാറാമൺ കൺവെൻഷനിലെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട ഒരു ഘടകമാണ്. വിവിധ ആശ്രമങ്ങളിലേക്കും ഫീൽഡുകളിലേക്കും പ്രവർത്തകരെ ക്ഷണിക്കുന്നതിനും, കൂട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടുപോകുന്നതിനും ഇവിടെ അവസരം ലഭിക്കുന്നു. സഭയിലെ വിവിധ സംഘടനകളുടെ മിഷനറിയോഗങ്ങൾ വ്യാഴാഴ്ച മുതൽ ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞു് നടത്തുന്നത് കൂടുതൽ പ്രവർത്തകരെ കണ്ടെത്തുവാൻ സഹായകരമാണ്.

വിവിധ ഭദ്രാസനങ്ങളുടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ പ്രദർശിപ്പിക്കുന്ന സ്റ്റോളുകളും ഭവനഭാനപ്രസ്ഥാനം, മന്ദിരങ്ങൾ ആഭിയായി സാമൂഹിക സേവന സംഘടനകളുടെ സ്റ്റോളുകളും സന്ദർശകർക്കു് വിജ്ഞാനപ്രദവും ആകർഷണീയവുമായിരുന്നു. ബാലശുശ്രൂഷാ സംഘത്തിന്റെ ആഭിമുഖ്യത്തിൽ കുട്ടികൾക്കുവേണ്ടി നടത്തുന്ന യോഗങ്ങളുടെ പ്രാധാന്യം ഒരിക്കലും വിസ്തരിക്കാവുന്നതല്ല. ബാല്യകാലം മുതലേ യേശുവിനായി ജീവിത

സമപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും, ദൈവവചനം ക്രമമായി ദിനംതോറും പഠിക്കുന്നതിനും ഈ യോഗങ്ങൾ അനേകായിരങ്ങൾക്ക് സഹായകരമായിത്തീർന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. വെള്ളിയാഴ്ചയും ശനിയാഴ്ചയും കാലത്ത് കോഴഞ്ചേരി പള്ളിയിൽ വെച്ചു നടത്തുന്ന പ്രതിഷ്ഠാ ശുശ്രൂഷകളും മേല്പറഞ്ഞ ഉദ്ദേശ്യത്തിന് ശക്തിപകരുന്നു. പ്രതിഷ്ഠിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന വർഷവേണ്ടി നടത്തുന്ന follow-up മീറ്റിംഗുകൾക്കായി ക്രമീകരണങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യുവരുന്നു.

സഭയിലെ ഡിപ്പാർട്ട്മെന്റ് ഓഫ് സേക്രഡ് മ്യൂസിക്സിന്റെ ചുമതലയിൽ വിവിധ ഇടവകകളിൽ നിന്നും തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത 101 പേർ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്ന ഒരു ഗായകസംഘം ഗാനശുശ്രൂഷകൾ നടത്തുന്നു. പഴയ പാട്ടുകളും, പുതിയ പാട്ടുകളും രചിച്ചതും പല മാസങ്ങളിൽ പരിശീലനം നടത്തി നിർവ്വഹിക്കുന്ന ഈ ശുശ്രൂഷ അനഗ്രഹകരമാണ്. പ്രധാന മീറ്റിംഗുകളുടെ ആരംഭത്തിൽ അരമണിക്കൂർ സമയം നടത്തുന്ന ഗാനശുശ്രൂഷ യോഗങ്ങളെ ഭക്തിനിർഭരമാക്കുന്നു. എല്ലാദിവസവും രാവിലെ അരമണിക്കൂർ മധ്യസ്ഥ പ്രാർത്ഥനയ്ക്കായി വേർതിരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത് ബഹുശതം ആളുകളുടെ വിവിധ ആവശ്യങ്ങളെ ഓർമ്മ പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നതിനും ലഭിച്ച ദൈവകൃപകൾക്കായി സ്തോത്രം അർപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും ഉള്ള അവസരമായിരുന്നു. ഒരോ വിഷയങ്ങൾ പ്രസ്താവിക്കുമ്പോൾ അവയെ ഓർമ്മ പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നതിന് പ്രാർത്ഥനയായ ഉത്സാഹം എടുക്കാൻ കഴിയുകയായിരുന്നു.

പല ആഴ്ചകളായി മഴയില്ലാത്ത വണ്ടരകാലാവസ്ഥ മൂലം ചൂടും പൊടിയും അധികമായി വന്നു. എങ്കിലും നദിയിൽനിന്ന് ഉയിർന്നുവന്ന കളിർകാറ്റു പന്തലിൽ ഇരുന്ന ബഹുസഹസ്രം ജനങ്ങൾക്ക് ആശ്വാസം പകർന്നു. ക്രമീകരണങ്ങൾ എല്ലാം തക്കസമയത്ത് വിവിധ കമ്മറ്റികളുടെ ചുമതലയിലും ഗവണ്മെന്റിന്റെ നിർദ്ദേശപരമായ സഹകരണത്തിലും നിർവ്വഹിക്കപ്പെട്ടു. കൺവൻഷനിലെ സുപ്രസിദ്ധമായ അച്ചടക്കം പാലിക്കുന്നതിൽ ബഹുമാനപ്പെട്ട പട്ടക്കാരുടെയും, സുവിശേഷകരുടെയും, വിജിലൻസ് കമ്മറ്റിക്കാരുടെയും സേവനം സഹായകരമായി. മീറ്റിംഗുകൾ തക്ക സമയത്ത് സമാപിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിന് പ്രത്യേക ശ്രദ്ധിച്ചതും പ്രയോജനകരമായി. ഈ വർഷം കേരള വാട്ടർ അതോറിറ്റിയുടെ സഹായത്താൽ മണൽപ്പറമ്പ് പലസ്ഥലങ്ങളിലും കുടിവെള്ളമെത്തിക്കുവാൻ സാധിച്ചത് പ്രത്യേകം പ്രസ്താവ്യമാണ്. ലഭിച്ച എല്ലാ ദൈവകൃപയ്ക്കും പ്രത്യേകം സ്തോത്രം അർപ്പിക്കാം.

സഭയിൽ ദീർഘകാലം വിവിധ രംഗങ്ങളിൽ ശ്രേഷ്ഠമായ സേവനം നിർവ്വഹിച്ച ശേഷം ജോലിയിൽ നിന്ന് വിരമിച്ചു വിശ്രമിക്കുന്ന വികാരി ജനറാൾ എ. എ. പൈലി അച്ചനും, കെ. പി. ഫിലിപ്പ് അച്ചനും, തുസ്തമൻ എൻ. വി. ജോർജ് അച്ചനും ഇന്നു രോഗത്താൽ ക്ഷീണിതരായി അവരുടെ ഭവനങ്ങളിൽ കഴിയുന്നു. ഇടയ്ക്കിടെ ആശുപത്രികളിൽ പോകേണ്ട ആവശ്യവുമുണ്ട്. അവർക്കുവേണ്ടി പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നതിൽ എല്ലാവരും ശ്രദ്ധിക്കുമല്ലോ. ജോലിയിൽനിന്ന് വിരമിക്കുന്നതിന് മുൻപുതന്നെ രോഗം മൂലം പ്രവർത്തനം തുടരുവാൻ കഴിയാതെ Disabled ആയിട്ടുള്ളവരും ചിലവുണ്ട്.

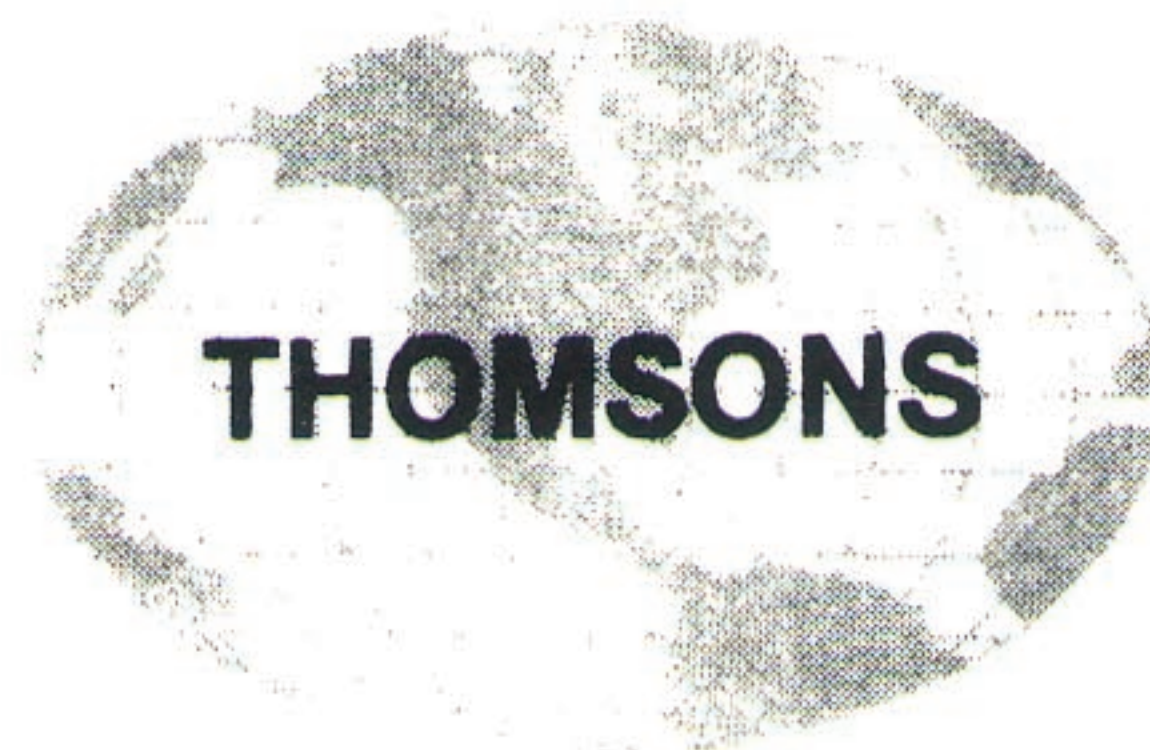
എ. റ്റി. ഫിലിപ്പ് (നിരണം), കെ. തോമസ് പണിക്കർ (കണ്ടാ), കെ. റ്റി. മാത്യു (വെണ്ണണി), എസ്. വൈദികർ ഈ വിധത്തിൽ പ്രയാസപ്പെടുന്നവരാണ്. ജോലിയിൽനിന്ന് വിരമിച്ച ശേഷം വാർദ്ധക്യ സഹജമായ ക്ഷീണത്തിൽ ഭവനങ്ങളിൽ വിശ്രമിക്കുന്ന പലരുണ്ടല്ലോ. അവരേയും ഓർമ്മ പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കണം. കർത്താവിൽ ഉള്ള വീശ്വാസത്തിലും പ്രത്യാശയിലും തളരാതെ മുൻപോട്ടു പോകുവാൻ ദൈവം ഇവരെ സഹായിക്കട്ടെ. കിഴക്കൻ മുത്തൂർ ഇടവക വികാരി ആയ സി. കെ. വർഗീസ് കശ്ശീശ്ശ വെല്ലൂരിൽ ഹൃദയശസ്ത്രക്രിയയ്ക്കായി പോയിരിക്കുന്നു. അച്ചനേയും ഓർമ്മ പ്രത്യേകം പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കാം.

സഭകളുടെ ഏഴാമത്ത് അസംബ്ലി ഓസ്ട്രേലിയയുടെ തലസ്ഥാനമായ കാൻബറായിൽ നടക്കുന്നതിനെപ്പറ്റി കഴിഞ്ഞ കുത്തിൽ എഴുതിയിരുന്നല്ലോ. നമ്മുടെ സഖറിയാസ് മാർ തെയോഫിലസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായെ W C C -യുടെ സെൻട്രൽ കമ്മറ്റിയിലും, എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മറ്റിയിലും തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്തു എന്നത് അഭിമാനകരമാണ്. തുടർന്നുള്ള ഏഴു വർഷം വിവിധ സഭകളിലെ പ്രതിനിധികളോട് ചേർന്ന് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുവാനുള്ള അവസരം നമ്മുടെ സഭയ്ക്കും മറ്റുള്ളവർക്കും അനഗ്രഹകരമായിത്തീരണമെന്ന് പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്നു.

നമ്മുടെ ഇടവകകളിൽ ഗായകസംഘങ്ങളുടെയും യുവജനസഖ്യത്തിന്റെയും പ്രവർത്തനത്തെപ്പറ്റി ചുമതലക്കാർക്ക് ചിലപ്പോൾ അത്രപ്പി ഉണ്ടാകും. അതിന് തക്കതായ പരിഹാരം കണ്ടെത്തുവാൻ ആ സംഘടനകളുടെ അദ്ധ്യക്ഷന്മാരായ വികാരിമാർ പ്രാർത്ഥനാപൂർവ്വം പരിഹാരം കണ്ടെത്താറുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ ഉദ്ദേശിച്ച ഫലം പെട്ടെന്ന് കാണാത്തപ്പോൾ ആ സംഘടനകളുടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ നിർത്തിവയ്ക്കുന്ന ഒരു പ്രവണത ചിലയിടങ്ങളിൽ കണ്ടുവരുന്നു. ഇത് ആശ്ചര്യമല്ല. പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകുമ്പോൾ പരിഹാരം കണ്ടെത്തുവാൻ സാധിക്കാതെ വന്നാൽ, കൈസ്ഥാനസമിതിയിലും ഇടവക സംഘത്തിലും ആ കാര്യങ്ങൾ വിഷയമാക്കരുത്. അത് പലപ്പോഴും ഭിന്നത വർദ്ധിക്കുന്നതിന് മുഖാന്തരമാകും. ആവശ്യമെങ്കിൽ കുറെ ദിവസത്തേക്ക് പ്രവർത്തനം നിർത്തിവെച്ചു, എത്രയും വേഗം ഭദ്രാസന എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായെ വിവരം അറിയിച്ചു പരിഹാരം നേടേണ്ടതാണ്. സേവികാസംഘം, സഭയ്ക്കുള്ളിലും, ഇടവക മിഷൻ എന്നിവയെപ്പോലെ മേല്പറഞ്ഞ സംഘടനകളും പ്രാധാന്യം അർഹിക്കുന്നതാണ്. ഭദ്രാസന എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായുടെ സഹായത്തോടെ എത്രയും വേഗം പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്ക് പരിഹാരം കണ്ടെത്തി പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ തുടരുകയാണാവശ്യം. നമ്മുടെ യുവജനങ്ങൾക്കു ദൈവം നൽകിയിട്ടുള്ള വിവിധ കഴിവുകൾ ദൈവമഹത്വത്തിനായി ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുവാൻ പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് സഹായിക്കട്ടെ.

തിരുവല്ല, എന്ന് കർത്തൃ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ,
1-3-1991. (അലക്സാണ്ടർ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ)

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ക്രൂശ്

'ഭയമുണ്ടാക്കുന്ന എന്റെ പിന്നാലെ വരുവാൻ ഇച്ഛിച്ചാൽ തന്നെത്തന്നെ ത്യജിച്ചു', തന്റെ ക്രൂശ് എടുത്തു എന്തെങ്കിലും അനുഭവിക്കട്ടെ.'

ക്രൂശ് മനുഷ്യചരിത്രത്തിലെ ഒരു യഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ്. നിഷിദ്ധവും ശാപഗ്രസ്തവുമായിരുന്ന ക്രൂശ്, യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശുരണത്തോടെ മനുഷ്യചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രമായിത്തീർന്നു. ഇത് എങ്ങനെ സംഭവിച്ചു എന്നതു ധ്യാനപുർവ്വം പഠിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. അതിനായുള്ള ഉദ്യമമാണ് നോമ്പ്.


ക്രൂശിൽ മരിച്ചവനെ ആരാധിക്കുന്നത് യവനർക്കു പുഷ്പമായിരുന്നു. യഹൂദന്മാർക്ക് അതു മനസ്സിലാക്കുവാൻ കഴിയാത്തതുകൊണ്ടു തടങ്കൽ പാഠ്യമായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ വിശ്വാസികൾക്ക് അതു ശക്തിയായിത്തീർന്നു. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നവർക്കു മാത്രമേ ക്രൂശിന്റെ ശക്തി മനസ്സിലാക്കി അനുഭവമാക്കുവാൻ കഴിയൂ. മറ്റൊരാൾക്കുമായി വിശ്വാസികളുടെ കൂട്ടായ്മയോടെ സഭയാണ് തങ്ങളുടെ കൈപ്പറ്റിയ അനുഭവത്തിന്റെ നടുവിൽ ക്രൂശിക്കപ്പെട്ടവനെ ഉത്ഥിതനായ യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശിന്റെ ശക്തിയെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത്.

ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ക്രൂശിനു, പാപം മൂലം വികലമാക്കപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യചരിത്രത്തോളം പഴക്കമുണ്ട്. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ജന്മം പരസ്യശ്രദ്ധയിലും ക്രൂശിന്റെ അനുഭവം വളരെ യഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ്. കൽവരിയിലെ ക്രൂശ് ഇതിന്റെ നിവർത്തകരണമാണ്. യേശുക്രിസ്തു ഏറെപ്പഴയ ക്രൂശ് തന്റെ ജീവിതശൈലിയായിരുന്നു; എവിടെയെല്ലാം ക്രൂശിന്റെ ശൈലി ഇന്നു നിലനിൽക്കുന്നുവോ അവയെല്ലാം യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ജീവിത ശൈലിയാണ്. സഭ യേശുവിന്റെ ശരീരമാകാൻ ദൈവജനത്തിന്റെ ജീവിതവും ക്രൂശിന്റെ ശൈലിയിലാണ്. അതുകൊണ്ടാണ് ക്രൂശു സഭയുടെ പിതൃനവം മുദ്രയായിരിക്കുന്നത്.

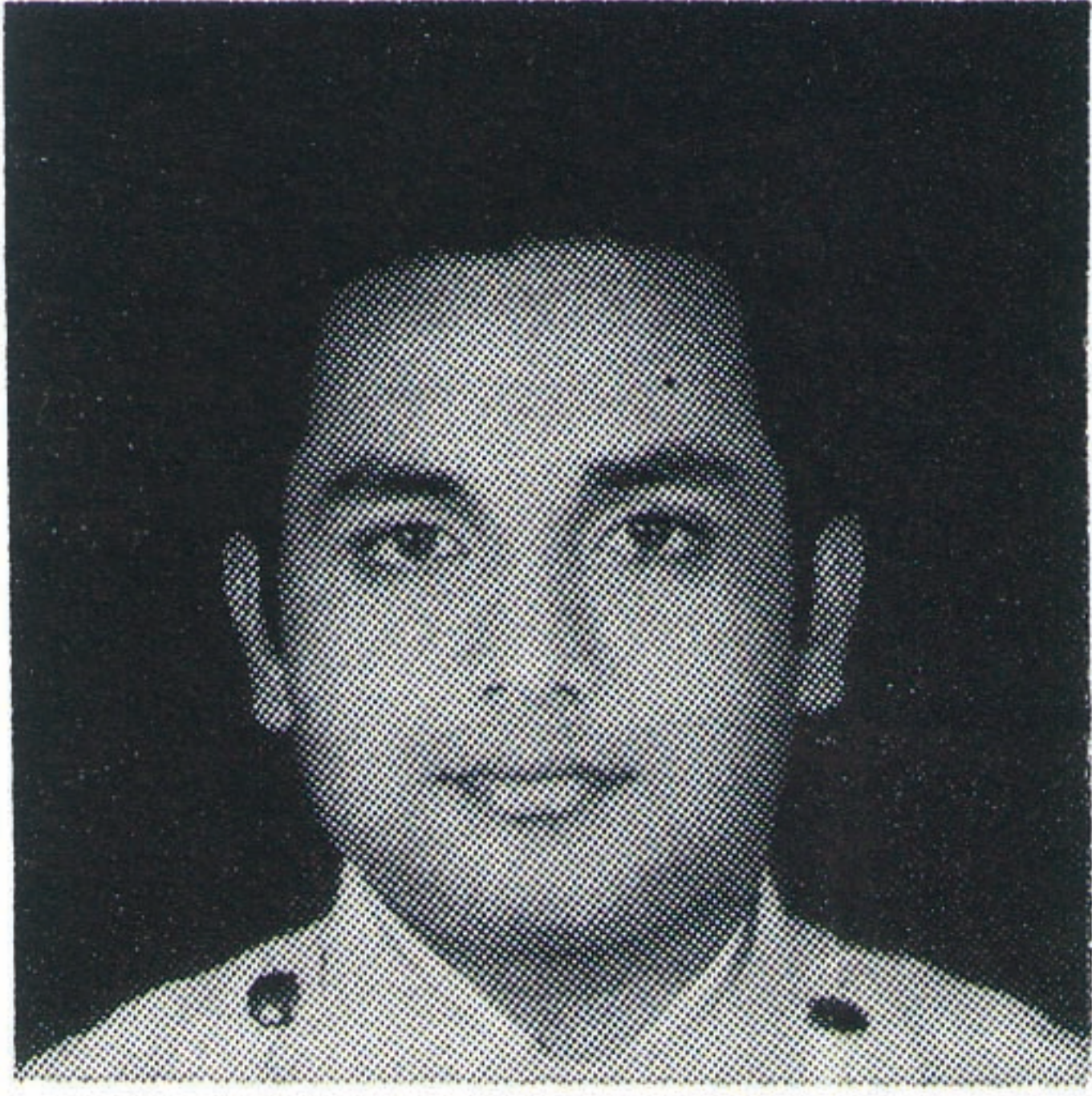
യേശുക്രിസ്തു ക്രൂശിലൂടെ രക്ഷാപ്രവർത്തനം പൂർത്തീകരിച്ചു. സഭ അതു ലോകത്തോടു വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെയും അനുരഞ്ജനത്തിന്റെയും തിന്മയുടെ മേലുള്ള വിജയത്തിന്റെയും സുവിശേഷമായി പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്നു. 'അങ്ങനെയോ ക്രൂശിക്കപ്പെട്ട യേശുവിനെ പ്രസംഗിക്കുന്നു.'

യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിലും ക്രൂശു മരണത്തിലും കാണുന്നതു ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ കവിതയോടുകൂടി പാപത്തിന്റെയേകരത്വവുമാണ്. കൽവരിയിൽ മതശക്തികളും രാഷ്ട്രത്തിന്റെ ശക്തികളും സമ്മേളിച്ച യേശുവിനെ ക്രൂശിക്കുന്നു. ഇന്നും അതേ അധർമ്മം യഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ്. ഈ ദുഷ്ടശക്തികൾക്ക് യേശുവിനു അനുയായികൾക്കും നൽകാവുന്ന വലിയ സമ്മാനം ക്രൂശു മാത്രമാണ്. 'ലോകം' ക്രൂശിക്കണമെന്നുള്ള യേശുവിന്റെ ദൈവരക്ഷാ പ്രവർത്തനം അവസാനിച്ചു എന്ന് പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചപ്പോൾ ദൈവം ഉയിർപ്പിലൂടെ അതു തുടരും എന്ന് ലോകത്തോടു പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചു. അത് ഇന്നും തുടർന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

മനുഷ്യചരിത്രത്തിലെ ദാരിദ്ര്യം, ക്രൂരത, സാമ്പത്തിക ഉച്ചനീചത്വം, വിവേചനം, ചൂഷണം, അനീതി തുടങ്ങിയ തിന്മകൾ കണ്ടു അറച്ചു തിരിക്കാതെ ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പിന്റെ പ്രത്യയം, അതായതു ദൈവത്തിന്റെ തുടരും എന്ന ഈസ്റ്റർ പ്രഖ്യാപനം ലോകത്തിനു തുടർന്നു നൽകുവാൻ ദൈവജനം വിളിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. ആ വിളി ശ്രവിക്കാൻ അതിനു അനുക്രമമായി പ്രതികരിച്ചു കൃതജ്ഞരായി. ഈസ്റ്റർ ആശംസകളോടെ.



നിങ്ങൾ ജീവനുള്ളവനെ,
മരിച്ചവരുടെയിടയിൽ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നതു
എന്തു? അവൻ ഇവിടെ ഇല്ല
ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേറ്റിരിക്കുന്നു.



വെല്ലുവിളി ഉയർത്തുന്ന ഈസ്റ്റർ

ഡോ. അലക്സാണ്ടർ എ. തോമസ്, ലോസാഞ്ചലസ്

'ഈസ്റ്റർ' എന്ന പദം ആഗ്ളോസാക്സൺ ഭവതയായ 'ഇസ്റ്ററിന്റെ (Eostre) നാമത്തിൽനിന്നു. ഉത്ത്തിരിഞ്ഞതാണ്. ഉഷ്ണിനെയും, പുമൊട്ടുകൾ വിരിഞ്ഞത് ശോഭ പരത്തുന്ന വസന്തകാലത്തെയും സൂചിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ ഈസ്റ്റർ എന്ന പദം ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരുന്നു. വൈവിധ്യമാർന്ന ഉള്ളടക്കമാണ് യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ പുനരുത്ഥാനമെന്ന മഹാസംഭവത്തിനുള്ളത്. ഇതിനെ വിശദീകരിക്കുവാൻ ഈസ്റ്റർ എന്ന പദം ക്രൈസ്തവചിന്തയിൽ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു. പുനരുത്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ അർത്ഥവ്യാപ്തിയെ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുവാൻ കഴിയുന്നില്ലായെങ്കിൽ ഈസ്റ്റർ ആചരണം ഒരു ഉത്സവം മാത്രമായി പരിണമിക്കും.

ആധുനികലോകത്തിന്റെ നിറന്ന പ്രശ്നങ്ങളുടെ നേർക്ക് ഈസ്റ്റർ എന്ന പുതുജീവന്റെ പെരുന്നാടം (Feast of the new life) ശാന്തിദായകവും ശാശ്വതവുമായ ചില ചിന്തകൾ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഈ ചിന്തകളുടെ വ്യാപ്തി ലോകത്തിന് ആകമാനം അവകാശപ്പെട്ടതാണ്. അതോടൊപ്പം ലോകം ഉയർന്നു വെല്ലുവിളികളെയും എതിർപ്പുകളെയും നേരിടാൻ പര്യാപ്തമാണ്. ക്രൈസ്തവ ഭർഗനത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനം നിലകൊള്ളുന്നത് യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഉയിർപ്പ് എന്ന സത്യത്തിന്മേലാണ്. അവ നൽകുന്ന ചില സന്ദേശങ്ങളിലേക്ക് നമ്മുടെ ശ്രദ്ധയെ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കാം.

മരണത്തെ തോൽപ്പിച്ച ഉത്ഥാനം

ചരിത്രോദയം മതൽ മനുഷ്യനെ മമിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു പ്രശ്നമാണ്, മരണം. മരണത്തെക്കുറിച്ചും മരണാനന്തര ജീവനത്തെക്കുറിച്ചും ഒരു ഉത്തരം കണ്ടുപിടിക്കുവാൻ എക്കാലത്തും ശ്രമിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. മനുഷ്യൻ മരിക്കുന്നതോടൊപ്പം അവന്റെ ചരിത്രം അവസാനിക്കുന്നു എന്ന യുക്തി ചിന്തയുടെ നേർക്കുള്ള ശക്തമായ വെല്ലുവിളിയാണ് ഈസ്റ്റർ. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ പുനരുത്ഥാനം യെഹൂദന്മാർക്ക് ഇടർച്ചയും, ബുദ്ധിജീവികൾക്ക് ഭോഷത്വവും ആണെന്ന് വി. പൌലോസ് പറയുന്നു. എന്നാൽ 'ഈ ഭോഷത്വത്തിൽ' വിശ്വാസം അർപ്പിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് അതിന്റെ അനുഗാമികളാകുവാൻ ജനലക്ഷങ്ങളെ പ്രേരിപ്പിച്ച ശക്തി വിശേഷം ഉത്ഥിതനായ യേശുവാണ്. മരണം എന്ന കടംകഥയുടെ ഉത്തരം യേശുവിന്റെ ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പിൽ നാം ദർശിക്കുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ടാണ് വി. പൌലോസ് ഹേ മരണമേ, നിന്റെ ജയം എവിടെ? ഹേ മരണമേ നിന്റെ വിഷമുള്ള എവിടെ? (1കൊരി. 15:55) എന്ന് ചോദിക്കുന്നത്. വേദശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞനും, ദാർശികനുമായിരുന്ന ബോൺഹോഫർ കൊലക്കയറിലേക്കു പോകുമ്പോൾ തന്റെ സമീപംനിന്ന പടയാളികളോട് പറഞ്ഞത് 'നിങ്ങളുടെ ഇതൊരന്ത്യം, എനിക്കൊട്ടു അതിമഹത്തായ ഒരു ആരംഭം ആകുന്നു!! ഈ പ്രഖ്യാപനം ചെയ്യുവാൻ

ബോൺ ഹോഫറെ പ്രേരിപ്പിച്ചത്, യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പിൽ താൻ ആഴമായി വിശ്വാസം അർപ്പിച്ചതിനാലാണ്.

ലോകത്തിന്റെ വിവിധരംഗങ്ങളിൽ ജീവൻ നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട ഒരു പശ്ചാത്തലം ഇന്ന് കാണുന്നുണ്ട്. യുദ്ധഭീഷണിയും, ഭീകരപ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും, വർഗസമരങ്ങളും, മതഭ്രാന്തും ധർമ്മച്യുതിയും ജീവൻ നശിച്ച സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷണങ്ങളാണ്. എവിടെയും മരണം ആശ്ശിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പ് മരണത്തെ വെല്ലുന്ന ജീവശക്തിയായി ലോകത്തിൽ വ്യാപരിക്കുന്നു. നിർജീവമായ ലോകത്തെ ചൈതന്യവത്താക്കുവാൻ ഉത്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ശക്തികളൊഴിഞ്ഞു മറ്റൊന്നിനും കഴിയില്ല. 'അവർക്ക് ജീവൻ ഉണ്ടാകുവാനും, സമൃദ്ധിയായിട്ടു ഉണ്ടാകുവാനും അത്രേ ഞാൻ വന്നിരിക്കുന്നത്' (യോഹ. 10:10, എന്ന് യേശു പറയുന്നതിന്റെ പൊരുൾ ഇവിടെ പ്രസക്തമാണ്. വേദശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞനായ ഷർട്ടാന്റെ അഭിപ്രായം ഇപ്രകാരം ക്രിസ്തുവിലൂടെ ദൈവിക മനുഷ്യരുടെ ഒരു സമൂഹം രൂപംകൊള്ളുമെന്നും അങ്ങനെ ദൈവരാജ്യം ഭൂമിയിൽ സ്ഥാപിതമാകുമെന്നുമാണ്. നിർജീവമായ അസ്ഥി കൂമ്പാരങ്ങളുടെ താഴ്വരയിൽ പുനരുത്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ശക്തിപ്രാപിച്ച സഭയ്ക്കുള്ള ദേഹ്യം വളരെയൊണ്. അവയ്ക്ക് ജീവനും, ആളത്തവും നൽകുവാൻ സഭ കടപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

തിന്മകളെ വെല്ലുവിളിച്ച ഉത്ഥാനം

യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ക്രൂരമരണത്തിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലേക്ക് നോക്കുമ്പോൾ പല കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളെ നാം കാണുന്നുണ്ട്. സത്യം, നീതി, കറയറ്റംസ്സഹം, തുടങ്ങിയ ദൈവികദർശങ്ങളെ ഉയർത്തിപ്പിടിച്ചുകൊണ്ടാണ് കത്താവ് തന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനം ആരംഭിച്ചത്. മഹാപുരോഹിതനായ കയ്യോഫാവിന്റെ കാപട്യവും, പീലാത്തോസിന്റെ തന്റോടമില്ലായ്മയും, പരീശന്മാരുടെ വികലമായ മതതീഷ്ണതയും, യൂദാസിന്റെ പണക്കൊതിയും, പത്രോസിന്റെ ചാഞ്ചല്യവും, ജനങ്ങളുടെ 'ചിന്തയില്ലായ്മയും, യേശുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശമരണത്തിൽ വഴിയൊരുകിയ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളാണ്. മാനുഷിക തിന്മകളുടെ പ്രതീകങ്ങളാണ് ഈ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ. ലോകത്തിന്റെ ഈ സ്വഭാവത്തെ ജി. കമാരപിള്ള അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിങ്ങനെയാണ്. 'പരിശുദ്ധ സന്തോഷത്തിൽ വിഗ്രഹത്തെ കരിശിൽ തറക്കുന്നതാണു ലോകം. ഉടലാർന്ന സേവനവ്യഗ്രതയെ വെടിവെച്ചു വീഴ്ക്കുന്നതാണ് ലോകം. പരിണിത സത്യമൊഴിഞ്ഞുനാവീൽ വിഷധാര വർഷിപ്പതാണു ലോകം. സത്യത്തിനും, നീതിയ്ക്കും സാക്ഷ്യം വഹിക്കുന്നതിനും

ഭാതിൽ അധിഷ്ഠിതമായ വൈരാജ്യ പ്രഖ്യാപനത്തിനാണ് യേശുക്രിസ്തു ലോകത്തിൽ അവതീർണ്ണനായത്. എന്നാൽ വെളിച്ചത്തേക്കാൾ ഇരുളിനെ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന മനുഷിക സ്വഭാവം യേശുവിൽ ഒരുകിയത് ക്രൂശാണ്. തിന്മയ്ക്കു ആത്യന്തികമായ വിജയമില്ല എന്ന പ്രഖ്യാപനമാണ് പുനരുത്ഥാനത്തിൽ നാം കാണുന്നത്. തിന്മകളുടെ വിളയാട്ടം ദുഃഖം ഉളവാക്കുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ ഉയിർപ്പ് ആ ദുഃഖത്തെ പ്രത്യാശയാക്കി മാറ്റുന്നു. ലോകത്തെ വികലമാക്കുന്ന തിന്മകളുടെ നേർക്ക് സഭയുടെ പ്രതികരണം ശക്തിമത്താക്കണം.

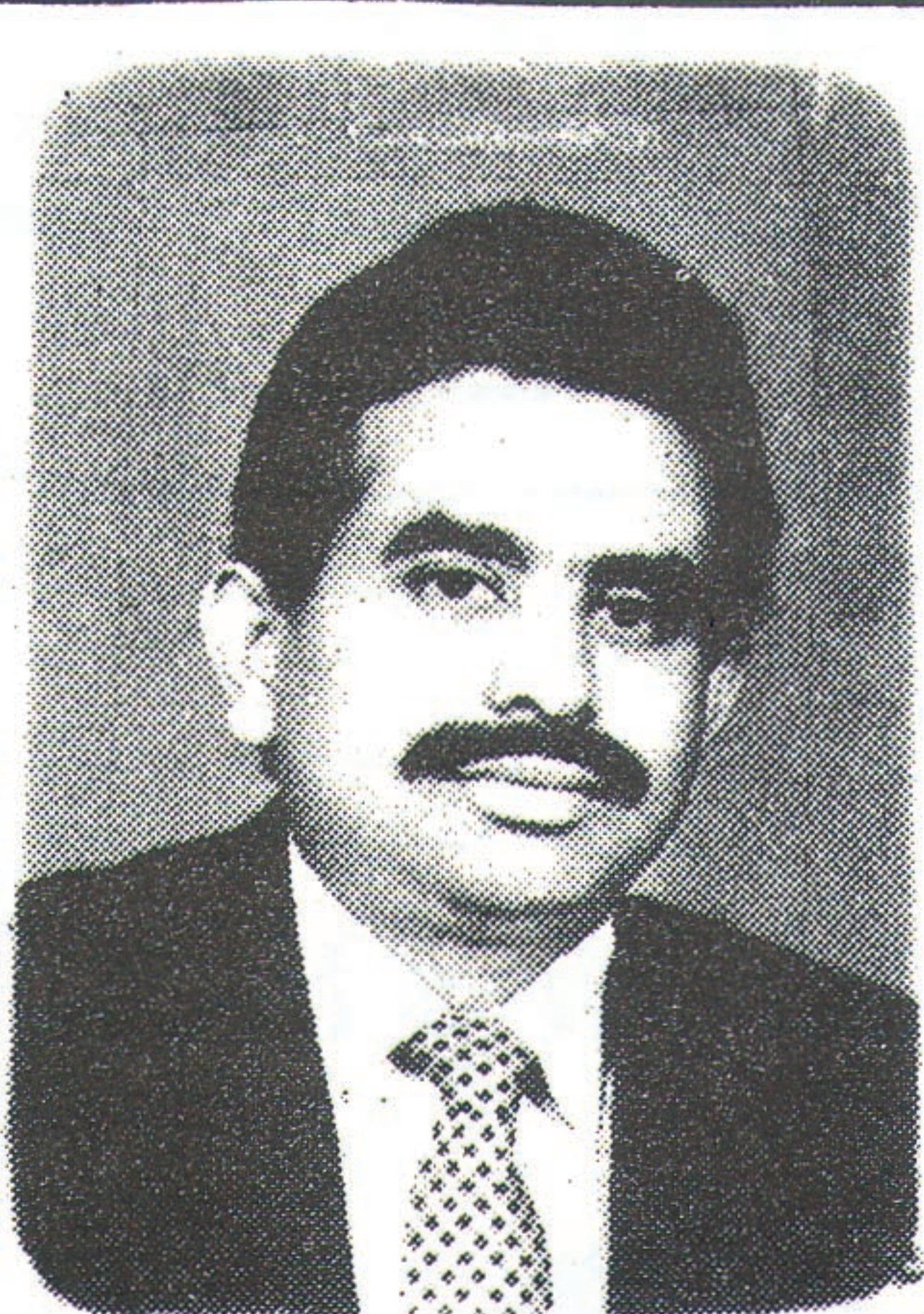
ഭയത്തിൻമേൽ ആധിപത്യം നേടിയ

ഉത്ഥാനം

യേശുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശുമാണം ശിഷ്യന്മാരിൽ കനത്ത ആഘാതമാണ് ഏല്പിച്ചത്. മരണത്തിനുമുമ്പു തന്നെ നാൻ സഹിക്കേണ്ട ക്രൂശിനെക്കുറിച്ചും അതിൽ കൂടെ ലഭ്യമാകുന്ന അനുഗ്രഹത്തെക്കുറിച്ചും ശിഷ്യന്മാരെ പഠിപ്പിച്ചിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ അതിന്റെ മർമ്മത്തെ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുവാൻ ശിഷ്യന്മാർക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞിരുന്നില്ല. യേശുവിന്റെ മരണത്തെ നേർ ആവശ്യകത അവരുടെ ചിന്തയ്ക്ക് വിഷയമല്ലായിരുന്നു. അതുതംപ്രവർത്തിച്ച അനുഗ്രഹീത വചനങ്ങളാൽ ആശീർവദിച്ചും നന്മചെയ്യും കൊണ്ട് നാടെങ്ങും ചുറ്റിസഞ്ചരിച്ച യേശുവിനെ പ്രതീക്ഷകളുടെ പുത്തികരണമായി ശിഷ്യന്മാർ കരുതി. പുനാൽ അവരുടെ ആശകളെ തകർത്തുകൊണ്ടുള്ള യേശുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശുമാണം ശിഷ്യന്മാരെ ഗോശരാക്കി. ഏകാന്തതയും, ഭീതിയും മോഹഭംഗവും ശിഷ്യന്മാരുടെ മർമ്മശേഷിയെ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തി. ഈ സ്ഥിതിവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ നടുവിലേക്ക് ഉത്ഥിതനായ കർത്താവ് കടന്നുവരുന്നു. (യോഹ. 20:9) കർത്താവിന്റെ പ്രത്യക്ഷത അവരുടെ ഭീതിയെ അകറ്റി. ജീവിതത്തിൽ ഉരുണ്ടുകൂടിയ കാർമ്മേലപടലങ്ങൾ മാഞ്ഞുപോയി. വി. ലൂക്കോസ്. 24:13-35 ൽ നാം കാണുന്നത് യേശു ലേമിൽനിന്നും യെപ്പെട്ട് ഓടിയ ശിഷ്യന്മാർക്ക് ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേറ്റുപറന്ന കർത്താവിന്റെ സാന്നിധ്യം ഭീതിയെ അകറ്റുന്ന പരമാർത്ഥമായി തീർന്ന ഒരു സംഭവമാണ്. അവർക്ക് ഒരു പേടിസ്വപ്നമായിരുന്ന യേശുലേ, കർത്താവിനെ സാക്ഷിക്കുന്ന ഒരു വേദിയായി രൂപപ്പെട്ടു; യുദ്ധവും ഭീകരപ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും പ്രകൃതിയുടെ സത്തുലിതാവസ്ഥയെ തകർക്കുന്ന അന്തരീക്ഷം മലിനീകരണം തുടങ്ങിയ അസ്വസ്ഥതകൾ മനുഷ്യജീവിതത്തെ യെത്തിന്റെ തുറകുകളിൽ അടച്ചിട്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്. ഇത്തരം സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിലൂടെ നിരന്തരം കടന്നുപോകുന്ന രാജ്യങ്ങളിലെ കണ്ണങ്ങളുടെ മാനസിക നിലവാരത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് പല നേ:ശാസ്ത്രപഠനങ്ങളും നടന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. വിയറ്റ്നാം, ഇറാക്ക്, ഇറാൻ, ക്ഷിണാഫ്രിക്ക, നിക്കരാഗ്വ തുടങ്ങി അനേക രാഷ്ട്രങ്ങൾ തലമുറകളായി ഭീതിയുടെ നിഴലിലാണ്. സ്ത്രീ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ ഇടയിൽ നടത്തിയ ഒരു സർവ്വേയിൽ 'what is the basic feeling that you have towards life' എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിന് 'we fear to grow up' എന്നായിരുന്നു അവരുടെ മറുപടി. ഈ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ പുനരു

ത്ഥാന സന്ദേശത്തിന്റെ പ്രസക്തി നാം ഗൗരവമായി അന്വേഷിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഉത്ഥിതനായ യേശു 'യെപ്പെട്ടേണ്ട' എന്ന് അരുളിച്ചെയ്തു. യെംനിറഞ്ഞ ലോകസാഹചര്യങ്ങളെ ഇന്ത്യൻ സന്ദേശത്താൽ യേവിമുക്തമാക്കുവാൻ സഭ പ്രതിജ്ഞാബദ്ധമാണ്. ഈ ഭരതം തന്റെ ശിഷ്യവർഗത്തെ ഏല്പിച്ചിട്ടാണ് കർത്താവ് തന്റെ കർമ്മ രംഗത്തുനിന്നും വിരമിച്ചത്. ഒരു കഥ ഉണ്ട്: ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേറ്റു സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിൽ ചെന്ന കർത്താവിനോട് ഗബ്രിയേൽ ദൂതൻ, മനുഷ്യാവതാരം കൊണ്ട് എന്തു സാധിച്ചു എന്ന് ചോദിച്ചപ്പോൾ യേശുവിന്റെ മറുപടി 'ഞാൻ ഉദ്ധാരണവേല തുടങ്ങിവെച്ചതേയുള്ളൂ; അത് തുടന്നുചെയ്യുവാൻ ഒരു സംഘം ശിഷ്യരെ ഏല്പിച്ചിട്ടാണ് പോന്നത്' എന്നായിരുന്നു. ആകർഷകവും അവർ നിറവേറ്റിയില്ല എങ്കിൽ' എന്ന ദൂതന്റെ മറുചോദ്യത്തിന് 'ഞാൻ മനുഷ്യനായി അവതരിച്ചതും ക്രൂശിൽ മരിച്ചതും വ്യർത്ഥമാകും' എന്നായിരുന്നു കർത്താവിന്റെ മറുപടി. സഭയുടെ ക്രിസ്തീയ ധർമ്മത്തെ യല്ലേ ഇത് ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിക്കുന്നത്. ആരാധനയിൽ 'അതേ കർത്താവ് ഉയർത്തിരിക്കുന്നു' എന്ന പല്ലവി നാം ആവർത്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ അതിന്റെ പിന്നിലുള്ള ഭരതവ്യം നാം ഏറ്റെടുക്കുകയാണ്.

Reprinted from March 1991 Malankara Sabha Tharaka



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THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

Laughter - The Best Medicine

James Cherian, Philadelphia.

The new Army recruit was given general duty at 2 a.m. He did his best for a while but about 4 a.m. he went to sleep. He awakened to find the officer of the day standing before him. Remembering the heavy penalty for being asleep on guard duty, this smart young man kept his head bowed for another moment then looked upward and reverently said, A-a-a-men.

Billy watched his new baby sister in the crib as she screamed and kicked. He finally asked where did she come from? "Heaven", was the reply from his mother. "No wonder they let her go," Billy responded.

A Sunday school teacher had just concluded a talk on the creation account as given in Genesis, when one of the children said "My father says we are descended from monkeys."

"After class," replied the teacher. "we will discuss your private family problems."

A new preacher had just begun his sermon. He was little nervous and about ten minutes in to the talk his mind went blank. He remembered what they had taught him in seminary when a situation like this arise-repeat your last point. Often this would help you remember what is coming next. So he thought he would give it a try. "Behold, I come quickly", he said, still his mind was blank. He thought he would try it again. "Behold I come quickly." Still nothing. He tried it one more time with such force he fell forward, knocking the pulpit to one side, tripping over a flower pot and falling into the lap of a little old lady in the front row. The young preacher apologized and tried to explain what happened. "That's all right, young man". said the little old lady. "It was my fault, I should have gotten out of the way. You told me three times you were coming!"

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LOVE, WISDOM, LEGEND AND HUMBLENESS

Mrs. Leelamma Chacko, Sevika Sanghom, Long Island MTC.

God created man and women in His own image, and God made it clear that authentic humanity is a coordination of the male and female. All of us are familiar with the biblical narrative of the formation of the woman from the rib of the man, whom God put into a deep sleep. When God takes the woman to the man, his words show every indication that he is delighted. To him, she seems a work worthy of God, something that is more than man's loss of the part of his body. Women play a very important role in bringing fresh color, new hope and special touches of spring in the pages of history, especially in the Bible, in a way that no one on earth could possibly provide. Let us search a few women from the Bible and learn from them their love for God, their wisdom and humbleness.

The story of Ruth is a beautiful one. It has become a legend. In Ruth, we read about her wisdom. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law and Ruth return to Bethlehem in Judah. There Ruth gains the favor of Boaz and eventually marries him. This relationship gives both Naomi and Ruth, the providential alliance and she is exalted to the royal line. The son born to Ruth is the grandfather of David. The love and wisdom of this Moabite woman led her to become one of the ancestors of Christ.

Hannah, as seen in I Samuel, is the ideal mother. Her prayerfulness and humbleness is seen in her weeping and praying in Shiloh. When she is praying in her heart, her lips are moving but her voice is not heard. Eli asks her if she is drunk. Hannah replies, "I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:15). The Lord does answer Hannah's request and blesses her with a son. Hannah brings her son, after he was weaned, to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. Hannah cries the song, "There is no rock like our God (1 Samuel 2:1-2). The unceasing prayer life and humbleness in the presence of the Lord is passed on to Samuel who is used as a great prophet of Israel by God.

Esther, the self-sacrificing woman is a legend. Esther was faithful to God. Her beauty, and Mordecai her foster father's tact makes her the queen of Xerxes (Ahasuerus). The promotion of Haman, and the failure of Mordecai to do him honor so enrages Haman that he decides to destroy all the Jews (Esther 3:1-15). The Jews mourn on the discovery of Haman's plot. Esther sent a reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf and neither eat or drink for three days, night or day. my maids and I will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king though it is against the law and if I perish, I perish (Esther 4: 15-16). Esther acknowledges her faith and sets her vision clear. She preserves and appears before the king with a plan in her mind to foil the plot of Haman. Esther's courage and her patriotism (Esther 8:3-6) lifts her up and thus Esther remains a legend always.

The women's contributions to the society today is often undervalued, but the fact is that society is void without the influence of women. They are the ones who primarily pass the culture and values; they shape and mold the youth, and also make a great impact on community and the nation by their love, wisdom and humbleness. The fullness of Christian womanhood is the reflection of the image of God to the world around us. First, the Christian women should learn who they are and this search with the help of God will begin a response to God. We are called to listen to God and to proclaim His word. So we must humble ourselves, grow in intercessory prayer with faith in God. We should seek God's light to the world. As God is light, it will confront the darkness. Some people will see the light and follow it naturally but some will try to put it out. As Christian women, we all must see the light and follow it till the end.

TO OUR READERS

Deadline for **July issue is May 31, 1991**, the theme for which is 'Resolution'. We invite articles from children, youths' and adults for publication in the 'Messenger'. The articles may not necessarily be on the theme. There is no guarantee that all articles sent to us shall be published. Also please send us your honest view points on articles and editorials that have been published. If any of our children or adults are talented in drawing cartoons, please send cartoons of good taste for publication. If you haven't received any copy of a particular issue, please advise any one of the Board Members or your Assembly member. Please let us know if you have changed your address. Malayalam articles may please be forwarded to us for publication after you get them printed in Malayalam first.

Editor.

DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & U.K. SEVIKA SANGHOM ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 1990

Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, Hockessin, DE.

Eastern Region: Two Regional meetings were held in 1990. The first one was hosted by Long Island Mar Thoma Church in May 1990. The Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Suffragan Metropolitan was the main leader. Mrs. Mariamma Abraham spoke on the role of women in family stability. A quiz competition based on the gospel of St. Mark generated much enthusiasm and interest. The second Regional meeting was hosted by Staten Island Mar Thoma Church. Mrs. Leelamma Johnson was the main leader. Her speech focussed on "Women in Family, Church and Society." In the afternoon, time was allocated for 'witnessing and dedication'. A one day conference for married couples was hosted by St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York. Rev. Geevarghese Mathew was the keynote speaker. He gave a very informative talk on "God's design for the family". The Regional Committee decided to collect \$10,000.00 for youth work in the Eastern Region. About \$4000.00 have been collected in 1990 and efforts will be made to collect the remaining balance in 1991.

Western Region: On October 20, 1990 the Western Regional Sevika Sanghom meeting was held at the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. Rev. P.J. Alex led the Bible study. Dr. John T. Seamands was the guest speaker and spoke on the theme "Role of Women at Home, Church and Society." About 80 women from the Western Region attended the meeting. Many women gave testimonies. At the close of the oneday retreat, a meeting of the Executive Committee was conducted. Since the Western Region is geographically scattered, it was felt that frequent meetings might not be feasible. Hence it was decided to hold at least one meeting a year along with the Regional Youth Conference. During the meeting the following decisions were made:

1. To collect one day's salary and any donations from each working woman. These funds are to be used for maintaining youth workers and their activities.
 2. To collect \$1.00 (One dollar) from all adult ladies above the age of 18 years. This fund is to be used for regional work.
 3. To involve in activities such as: Prayer groups engaged in chain prayer, Bible study using a common syllabus, visiting the sick in hospitals and homes, help the elderly, collect canned food, collection and distribution of old clothes to the needy and celebrate Grandparents' Day in the parish.
 4. Help different organizations in India.
-

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE

The Diocesan Bishop the Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom will be visiting our Diocese from April to July 1991. Thirumeni will reach London on April 11 and New York on April 23, 1991.

Our Family Conference this year will be held at the Diplomat Hotel, Hollywood, Florida from July 25 - 28. The Conference theme is "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor.5:17) Leaders for the Conference are-

Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Suffragan Metropolitan:
Dr. Samuel Moffet, Rev. Geevarghese Mathew, Rev. K.U. Abraham

Diocesan Assembly Decisions:

1. A total amount of \$7000.00 is to be collected and sent for Diocesan Bishop's Aramana Chapel. Each parish is to collect their contribution towards this purpose and send it to the Treasurer Mr. M.K. Thomas, 1219 River Road, Teaneck, N.J. 07666 (U.S.A.) before March 31, 1991.
2. 50% of the Special Day Offertory of Sunday School, Edavaka Mission, Youvajana Sakhyam and 100% of the Sevika Sanghom day offertory will be sent to the various Diocesan Organizations.

Rev. P.J. Alex, Dallas, Texas.

Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelistic Association Diocese of North America, Eastern Region

The regional committee of M.T.V.E.A. of Eastern region which consists of the president (Vicar of the Parish), elected representative, and secretary of Edavaka Mission, met on October 23, 1990 from the membership of the committee the following office bearers and two representatives to the Diocesan committee were elected.

President:	Rev. Johnson P. Mathew, St. Peters M.T.C., N.J.
Secretary:	Mr. Thomas K. Mattappalli, M.T.C., Staten Island
Treasurer:	Mr. P. T. Mathew, Bethel M.T.C., Philadelphia
Repres.:	Mr. Poikayil Mathew, St. Peters M.T.C., N.J. Mr. P. V. Varghese, Ephiphany M.T.C., N.Y..

The regional committee resolved to conduct at least 3 Regional meetings of the Edavaka Mission members in different areas. The first meeting was held at St. Peters M.T.C. Teaneck, N.J. on November 17, 1990. The Rev. Dr. John T. Seamands former Maramon convention speaker and Rev. K.V. Varkey were the speakers. About 300 people attended the meeting. Message was inspiring and useful to many.

PROGRAMME FOR THE YEAR 1991

The regional committee met again on January 28, 1991 and planned the following program for 1991.

1. Regional meetings: Three regional meetings are planned one in April at Long Island M.T.C., one in June at Philadelphia Bethel M.T.C. and one in October at St. Thomas M.T.C., New York.
2. Parish visit program: Visit parishes and give guidance to function Edavaka Mission more effectively, visit houses and strengthen fellowship.
3. To sponsor a Mission work In India.
4. To work with local community.
5. Teaching Mission: Arrange study classes, to prepare and send parishes study materials.

Thomas K. Mattappally, Secretary.

Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelistic Association. Diocese of North America, Western Region.

The western regional committee of the M.T.V.E.A met at 2.00 P.M. on March 17, 1991, to elect the office bearers for the Region and discuss the various programs that can be carried out by the parishes and Region. The following office bearers were elected and they shall represent the region on the diocesan level committee also

President: Rev. Alexander A. Thomas, Los Angeles **Secretary:** Mr. P. V. John, Dallas Mar Thoma Church
Treasurer: Mr. T. A. Abraham, Chicago Mar Thoma Church.

The secretary was requested to visit as many churches as possible within the year and encourage the strengthening of the parish level activities of the association. Some of the programs suggested are: fellowship meetings, fasting and prayer meetings, house visit of parish members as well as Hindu friends from India. The committee also may find out ways of working with local churches in areas of common concerns.

Abraham C. Thomas, Secretary, ad hoc committee.

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CONFLICTS WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Sherine Elizabeth Thomas, Houston, Texas.



Every individual spends his entire life establishing an identity that meets the expectations of others as well as creating a self-image that withstands self-judgment. Psychologists will attest to the fact that the core to a person's identity is the balance between these expectations and the individual's own value system. In order to maintain a healthy self-image and to avoid inner turmoil, a consistency must exist between these expectations and the value system used in making decisions. A lack of consistency manifests itself in the form of conflict with others and with one's self. Often we see these conflicts magnified in the relationships of Indian-Christian families because of inconsistencies between the American ideology of life and the Indian-Christian approach. These conflicts reflect the fact that each individual constructs his self-concept by adapting to social expectations while retaining parts of his value system. This value system is a combination of cultural norms and religious affiliation. Sometimes society's expectations collide with one's value system; thus a struggle occurs because in order to cope with the inconsistencies, changes must be made in one's self-concept. The need for change is a threat to one's identity and causes conflict because the individual instinctively will try to protect his way of life and identity.

The parents of our community have been socialized to define their self-worth according to their occupational standing, material possessions, and private and public success. Similarly, the children that we often label as extremists or rebels use these same standards to create and to maintain a self-image that can withstand the blows of private and public scrutiny. For parents and children material possessions play an important part in establishing self-worth. For parents the quality of their home and the type of car they drive may constitute one aspect of their self-image. The younger generation, however, bases self-worth on the latest clothing trend or a new compact disc. Although these value systems may seem completely independent of each other, they are not. Many times Indian parents want to impose their own tastes and thereby impede their children from participating in the American youth subculture of which they are a part. Along the same lines, the youth prevent the adults from achieving their networks' expectations. Parents are often judged by the way their children act and dress. Therefore, since parents classify themselves as caretakers, they formulate their self-image on the success of their children. Children, then are covered into conforming to the standards by which their parents are judged.

The biggest conglomeration of conflicts can be seen in the Indian church. Differences in social standards between the American and Indian way of life are blatantly obvious within the church. Traditional views on women's roles, marriage and social activity are continually challenged. The young men and women in our community must coordinate the cultural norms of both societies while maintaining the stability of their self-image. However, this process is very difficult when two contradicting value systems are forced on them. Women, for instance, do not utilize their potential fully in the church. As a matter of fact, they are limited to the traditional roles characteristic of a lifestyle with which the youth in this country are ignorant. Many object and claim women play a vital role in policy making. On the contrary if women play such a vital role in church politics, why must a separate and specific women's group exist within the church? A men's group would be unheard of because it is unnecessary. Why, when more than 50% of the church population is female, only a handful of women serve on the executive committee? Why do particular executive committee posts have to be pre-designated as female? The young ladies of our community live with a discrepancy in expectations between the church community and the general society. They are told to be the best that they can be, but are denied a place to be the best in their own community. This may seem trivial now, but if the church does not provide an outlet for self fulfillment, these promising young women will find something gratifying outside the church in order to construct a self-image that is consistent with their value system and their actions. The society that they live in demands proof of one's capabilities. In order to earn respect and to have self-respect, one must be reinforced by earning society's respect. Both of these elements are essential in maintaining a healthy self-image.

The young men also face conflict when establishing their identity. Socially the young Malayalee man must somehow intertwine two contrasting gender stereotypes and come up with a self-image that makes sense. Our traditional background requires the young man to be strong silent, physically aggressive and independent, but these same traditions prevent him from reaching these goals. For instance, these men, who are legally adults and are allowed to drink, marry, vote and be drafted are discouraged from participation in the church on the adult level and are confined to the youth group. Conflict exists because in the American culture autonomy is very important, but is looked down upon in our tradition. A young man proves himself through achieving independence in this country and more often, than not the young men in our community are denied the chance to prove themselves. Thus, they are forced to cope with feeling of helplessness and are pressured to make excuses. And this very often leads to a great deal of role confusion and lack of self-esteem because a stable self-image is difficult to accomplish when two different worlds must be combined.

Conflicts arise in every aspect of our lives, even in our faith. Christianity has given us set of guidelines by which we are to live our lives. As our culture slowly becomes assimilated into the mainstream of society, we have to make decisions as to which part of the American culture we will absorb. When we pick and choose our values, not only do we need to balance our social obligations, but also our spiritual concerns in order to form a healthy and productive self image. A person with a healthy self-image defines himself as successfully incorporating both societies and Christianity into one's actions.

The youth of our community live in a world of inconsistency. Everyday they are subject to a set of values that are different than that which they are taught to believe in church. Pre-marital sex, for instance, is thrust upon the youth in the form of advertisement, entertainment, and peer expectations. Sexual stereotypes and innuendos are a common occurrence. Certainly education on sexually transmitted diseases and birth control is essential in this day and age, but so is education on morals. The youths have to come to terms with the social pressures of believing in a higher power, God, This inner conflict can not be avoided, but it can be diluted. The community must be aware of this problem and must be empathetic. Measures must be taken to help the young learn that family and sex are gifts from God which require commitment, love, and responsibility. These are acts that must not be taken lightly. These beliefs must become almost inherent to withstand the pressures of society.

Another social and spiritual conflict commonly faced is divorce. Socially it is accepted, but God sees marriage as a lifelong commitment which isn't to be terminated because someone forgets to take the trash out or because someone drinks out of the milk carton. However, one must be able to recognize when marriage oversteps the boundaries of sacrifice and enters exploitation. The soul is an extension of God and should not be subject to humiliation or degradation. Sometimes, divorce is the only viable option.

As we pass through life, we will find that sometimes we will collide not with society or ourselves, but we will collide directly with the decisions that God makes for us. These are probably the hardest to deal with because no explanations are offered and faith is the only comfort available. No matter how much consolation is given, the disappointment of having your plans changed for no apparent reason is difficult. Job is an example of keeping one's faith. Everything Job was proud of, everything he built his definition of self around, was taken away-his family, his social standing (people thought he was being punished for his sins), and his worldly possessions. Although it was against Job's plans, he kept believing in God and was eventually rewarded. Even though he was inflicted with unnecessary sorrow and anxiety, he survived and became a better man through these experiences. In the same way we must take what is given and remember God in every thing that we do. His decisions may conflict with our plans, but we must remember that God sees things that we do not. As a song says "Thank God for unanswered prayers. Remember when you're talking to the man upstairs, just because he doesn't answer, doesn't mean he doesn't care. Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers."

No easy solutions exist when dealing with conflicts of cultures and beliefs except awareness. Knowing the reasons behind a person's actions and being able to respect those reasons is the way to minimize the confrontations. Sometimes you may have to agree to disagree.

Sherine is a Junior at the University of Texas, Austin.

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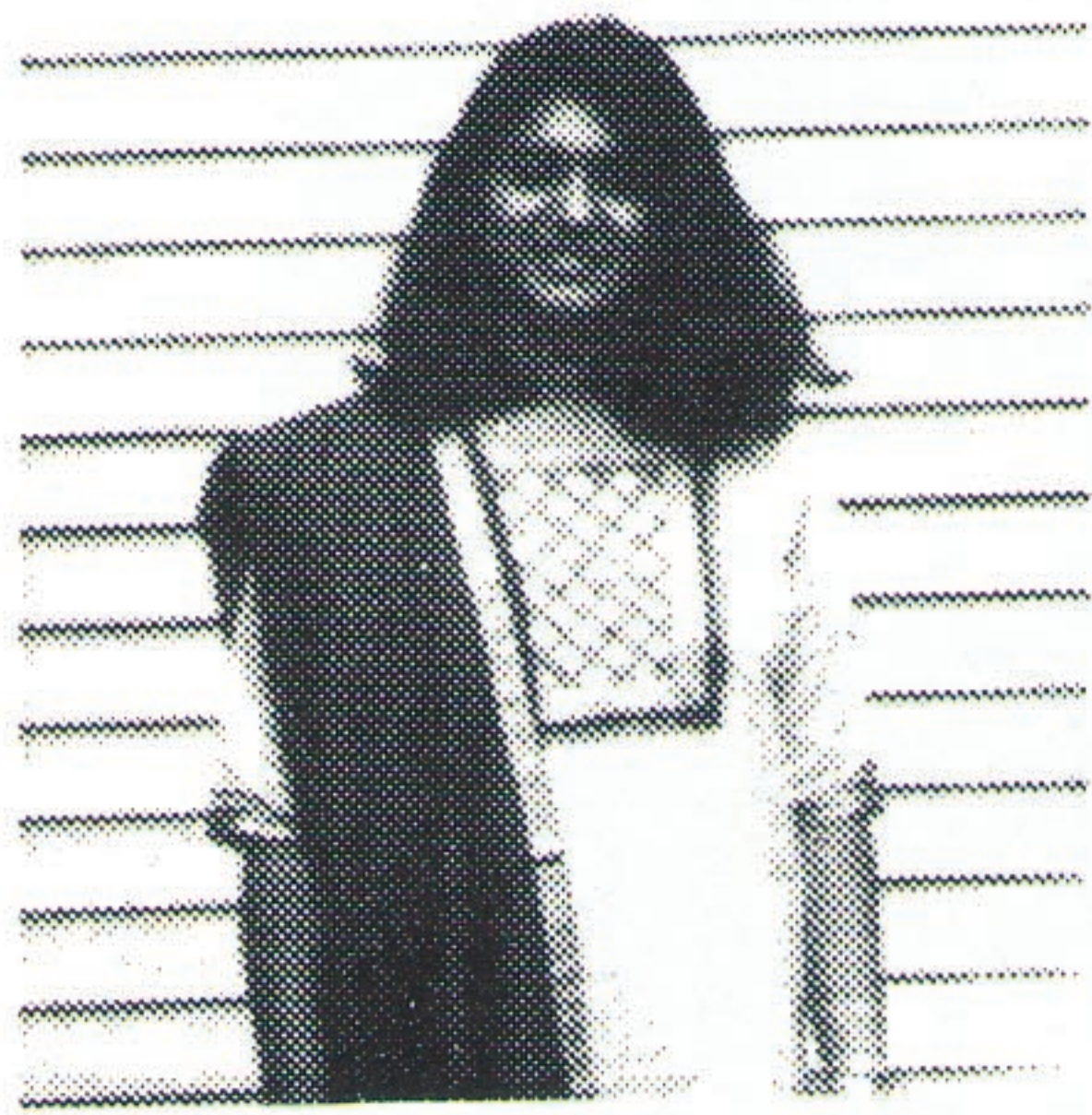


James K. Abraham
Vice President, Investments
2500 Lake Cook Rd., Suite 100
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CONFLICT: IN OUR LIVES, COMMUNITY, AND THE WORLD

Anita George, Boston.



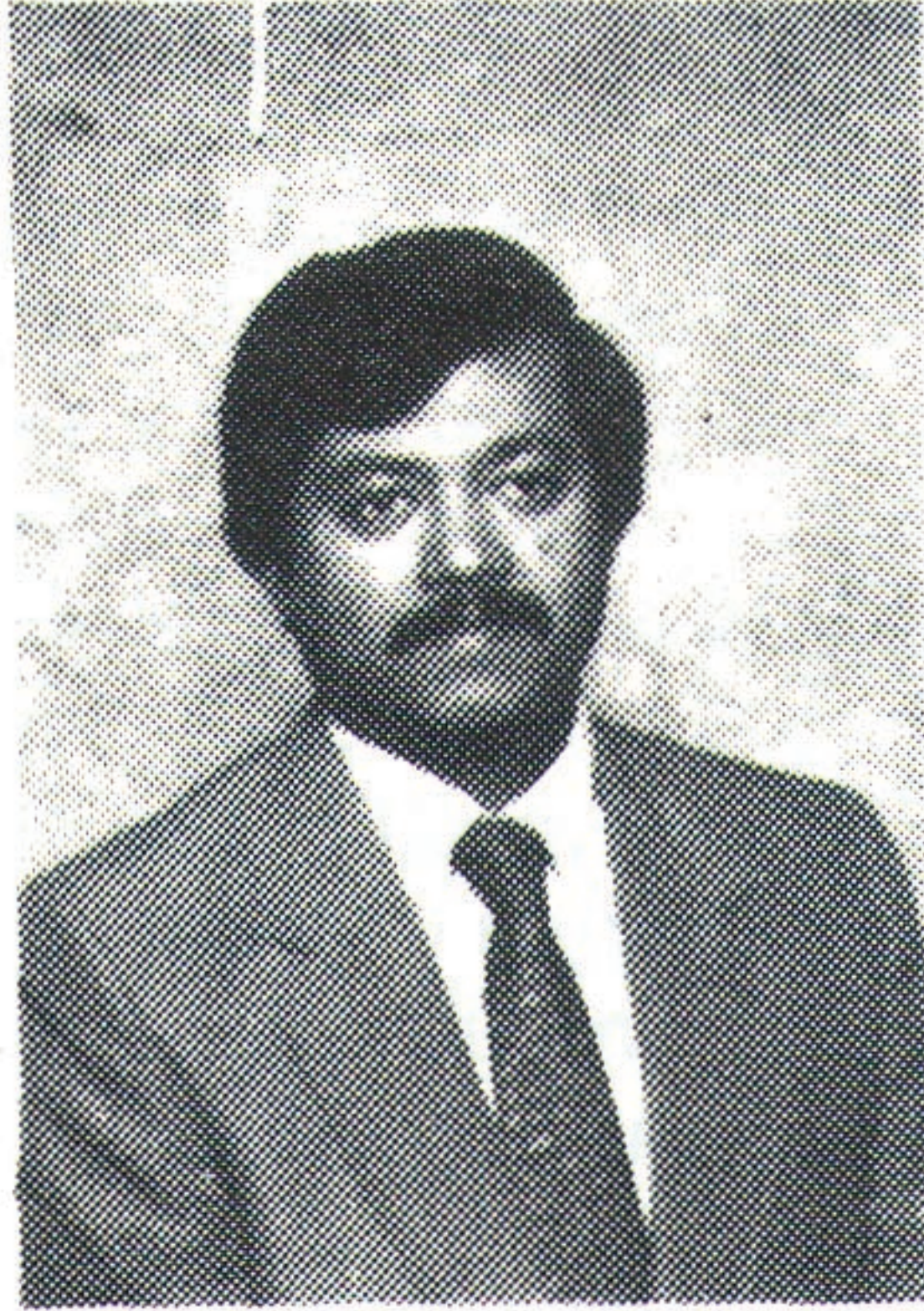
Where is peace? The quest goes on. All the way back to the first family of God's creation, mankind has searched for peace. Men and women have fought for it, marched for it, prayed for it, talked about it, and yet... we are still trying to find it. Where do we find the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and build a better life for their children. This includes not only merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women and not only peace in our time but in all times to come. Clearly the world today offers a fearful and complicated picture of the future. It is inevitable that there will always be conflict in the world, in life, and even inside ourselves and therefore, there is always a quest for peace. And peace will always be challenged.

To day we see world peace threatened when one nation attempts to dominate another, or when more than one nation strives to acquire the same territory as evidenced by the power struggle in the Middle East. We have seen national peace destroyed when one race refuses to accept another as their equal, when major political and social issues cannot be resolved, or when deceit and corruption creep into the core of governmental process. With so much conflict evident in the world today the desire for peace in the world is stronger and shared by more people. We have seen the contributions of our brave men, women and our allies in Saudi Arabia, not to mention the innocent Iraqi civilians who have died and those who yet to experience the struggles that lie ahead. Yet, in spite of efforts by numerous world leaders, we know that peace cannot be legislated and cannot be given to a people. We know this today as we watch the fearful changes within the government of the Soviet Union. What is even more appalling is the realism of terrorism yet to come.

What is this elusive peace; is it possible?. Perhaps peace can begin in the heart of an individual. How can we have this peace, when perhaps we ourselves are involved in our own personal quests for definition. Do we not sometimes feel lost, feel the tension between our Eastern and Western influences. Having spent the formative years of our lives in the U.S. and having been raised also in a home where Indian culture predominates, we have become a people with two-fold sets of values - one set from our natural ethnic heritage and the other from our American environment. This is the conflict of living between cultures - the joy, and the pain, and the tension.

Our goal in life is to reduce the tension and pressures from our two conflicting cultures and to retain the best of both. As we settle in this country, I am reminded of God's words to Abraham, "Leave your native land, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a country that I am going to show you". Abraham took on God's challenge and he journeyed, explored, and renewed his life with God. Yet his journey was a continuous process in this new land and during this journey he faced difficult questions of faith, courage, risk, and obedience to God. Like Abraham, we too are continuously journeying, exploring, and renewing our life with God in this country. As Indians living in this country, it is easier for us to recognize this process as we have all left a familiar land for an unfamiliar one. Like Abraham, we left behind a familiar setting for a land whose customs we were not familiar with. Along this journey there were many risks that we as families have to face, such as, most obviously, leaving loved ones and our native land experiencing disadvantages as an immigrant living in the United States and abandoning a culture that values the virtues of family life, and caring for the young and the old. Moreover, there are consequences in bringing up children in an impersonal and nontraditional society.

But despite the risks involved in our day to day journey with God, we have the opportunity through faith to explore the tremendous possibilities and blessings in God. I think most of us would agree that God has been good to us in our journey through this life as He was to Abraham. In the midst of troubles and crises in our lives and in the world, we must remember that God will never abandon us in our journey with Him. Let us journey, explore, and renew our love and faith in Him, for He is calling us to deeper levels of commitments.



CONFLICT

Dr. Prasad Mathew M.D., Cleveland, Ohio.

Definition: According to the Webster dictionary, conflict refers to "clash, competition or mutual interference of opposing or incompatible forces or qualities (as ideas, interests, wills); to show variance, incompatibility, or opposition". When a conflicting situation arises, one goes through different stages:

Stage 1: Alarm reaction: Physically, there occurs a mobilization of the body's defensive forces and activities of the "fight-or-flight" mechanism. Conflict, of necessity, leads to frustration because activity designed to achieve one good frustrates the attainment of the other. Psychologically, there occurs, therefore, an increased level of anxiety and sometimes maladaptive behavior. When a soldier first encounters the stress of a combat, even though he may not agree with the reason for the combat, a conflict arises and he may show behavioral changes as increasing irritability, disturbances of sleep and recurrent nightmares. Spiritually, when a conflict arises between a Christ-centered life and a devil-alluring life, a person experiences this stage initially. He does not know how to react - whether to face it or run away from it.

Stage 2: Stage of Resistance: In this stage there is optimal adaption to the conflict, within the person's capabilities. There is an increased and intensified use of coping mechanisms. Coping mechanisms may be affected/guided by past experiences, parental influence, peer pressure and worldly allurements. In the spiritual realm too, the way a person copes with a conflicting situation is dependent on the mechanisms he has evolved to reduce the stress of the conflict.

Stage 3: Stage of Exhaustion: This is a stage in which there is loss of ability to resist stress/conflict because of depletion of body resources. There is disorganization of thinking and personality. Spiritually if one has given into the hands of the devil, the devil and his allies do the march of victory.

Pathogenesis: Have you ever bitten into a shiny red apple and discovered at times a rottenness inside? If that's happened to you, then you understand a little how Adam and Eve must have felt when they bit into a beautiful looking lie and ended up with a bad taste in the mouth. ["Appeal of the new age movement" Pg.5]. Sly and smooth talking Satan invaded their paradise and fooled them with his cheap, counterfeit, self-serving brand of spirituality. And he's been doing the same thing to people ever since, and the gullible people keep on biting onto satan's bait.

A life of faith in Jesus Christ is a life of conflict. Being born and nurtured in a world which has fallen prey to satan's grip (the New Testament refers to him as "the God of this age" 2 Cor. 4:4) - a child of God is constantly at war with Satan and his followers - the Bible refers to them as "the sons of the wicked one" (Mathew 13:38). The devil influences multitudes both through his demonic followers and through a system of thought - the Bible calls "the world" (1 John 2: 15-17). The "world" in this context is a way of thinking that dominates the life of every human being. The characteristics of this thought system may vary from one cul-ture to another, but these differences are relatively insignificant when the common denominator is a conflict between values of a Christ-centered life and the values which this world has to offer. What is consistent, is an emphasis on the temporal rather than eternal. An example, would be, the youths.

It is increasingly difficult to hold the unity, love and values of the family in today's society. Christian youths of Malayalee families today, many born here in the USA, are facing a conflicting world as they grow up. On the one hand is their parents with Kerala heritage and culture and value system, and, on the other hand is the permissive world of the American youths. Satan presents a rosy picture of these youths. However he does not mention the consequences - drugs, sexual immorality, teenage pregnancy, suicides etc. How can our youths face these challenges and survive the conflicts which plague upon their maturing minds?

Treatment: On the basis of the salvation God has provided for us, we can defeat Satan and his alluring allies by the following:

1. Trust God: We must acknowledge our helplessness, sinfulness and lost condition, and then accept the free gift of salvation which Christ has offered us. 2. Be aware of Satan's strategies: Because Satan can take advantage of us if we are "ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). Study the Bible and in God's word are mentioned the things we must avoid. Talk to parents, elders and counselors of the church - they may have had similar experiences. 3. Resist Satan by putting on the "Armor of God" (Eph. 6:11-28). With this, we will be prepared to fight Satan's lies, his deceiving, accusing and possessing nature and his ruling over us. We will be able to resolve the conflicts, as they arise, with God's wonderful armour. 4. Be in constant prayer; prayer expresses our dependence on God and opens a path of communication by which God can "direct our ways". 5. Form and join the "coalition forces": join friends who have the same hunger and thirst for God and Christ's value system. Sit together, discuss, question, question and inquire and obtain answers by studying the Bible together.

How often do you take these medications? As often as you need it, even many times a day. They are safe and have no side effects !!

Follow-up Appointment: When one feels drained and exhausted fighting the devil and needs rejuvenation, call the Great Physician to help you resolve the conflict. There is no waiting period, and the "call is free" - already paid for by Christ's blood on the cross.

GOD IS OUR SHEPHERD

Sherry Susan Varghese, Grade IV, Union, N.J.



The dictionary defines the word SHEPHERD as "one that tends sheep". What does it mean when we say "God Is Our Shepherd". A sheep is an animal. Are we all animals? No we are not!! The Gospel of John 10:11 says "I am the good Shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep". Even though we are human, the Bible refers to us as sheep, why? The answer to this question is sheep wander away to find pasture unless the Shepherd keeps them together. We all do wander like sheep, but it is because of sin. God is our Shepherd because He tries to keep us together by sending Jesus to die on the cross.

Cecil Francis Alexander quoted that:

"There is green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was Crucified,
Who died to save us all".

According to the Bible we are one family, in other words one flock. I will explain the duties of a good SHEPHERD:-

1. Make sure the sheep are protected which shows in Rev: 21:4 "There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain"
2. The Shepherd will do anything for his flock John 10: 14-15 "I am the good Shepherd. As the father knows me and I know the father in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them".
3. The Shepherd will care for his sick flock. Mark 1:34 "Jesus healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases".
4. The Shepherd will rescue his flock if they are captured somewhere which shows in Exodus 3: 7-8 "Then the Lord said, I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt and so I have come down to rescue them".

Jesus does much more for us, so we should be thankful. Jesus is our good Shepherd!. In conclusion I would like to quote from Tennyson which is :-

"For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friend".

There is no better **SHEPHERD** in the universe than **OUR LORD JESUS**.

KIDS' CORNER

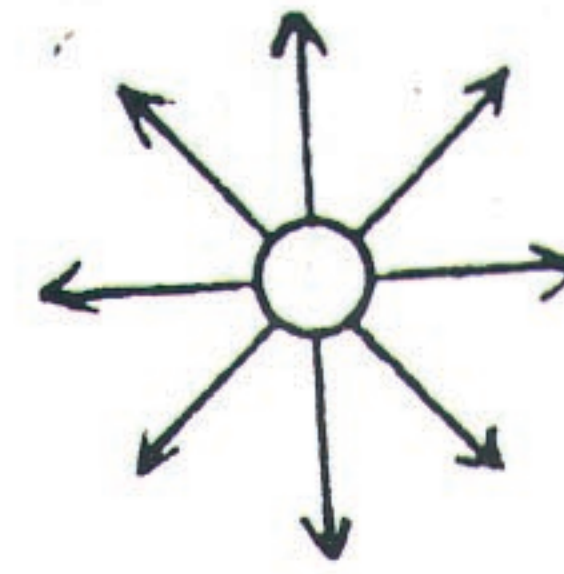
BIBLE WORD SEARCH

For ages 6 - 12

This Bible Word Search is based on I Samuel chapters 16 & 17.

I	B	N	U	T	E	N	U	D	W	Y	S
Q	R	A	G	U	H	V	O	P	R	A	H
L	B	M	D	S	C	G	P	K	N	X	A
H	A	H	A	A	D	R	I	L	U	Z	M
T	L	U	V	G	N	L	G	E	R	O	M
A	L	M	I	E	V	I	F	U	E	D	A
I	B	R	D	N	K	Z	B	M	N	O	H
L	J	E	S	S	E	L	I	A	B	N	Y
O	I	G	C	L	O	P	I	S	A	K	Q
G	U	X	V	K	I	W	H	A	L	E	Z
H	V	Y	U	L	J	N	O	B	M	Y	S
I	W	Z	X	O	V	I	G	O	N	Y	A

The words go in all directions.



Questions:

1. David's father was _____.
2. _____ was the oldest brother of David.
3. _____ was the second eldest brother of David.
4. _____ was the third eldest brother of David.
5. _____ was the youngest son of Jesse.
6. _____ anointed David.
7. An evil spirit tormented _____.
8. _____ was with David always.
9. Jesse sent a _____ loaded with bread.
10. David played _____ for Saul.
11. Jesse had _____ sons.
12. David took _____ loaves of bread for his brothers.
13. The Israelites camped in the valley of _____.
14. _____ was champion of Philistines.
15. David chose _____ stones from the stream.
16. _____ was the commander of the Israelite army.
17. David used _____ and a stone to strike the Philistine.

You may send your answers to Bible Word Search, c/o The Editor of Mar Thoma Messenger. You may make a copy of this page to send your answers. The names of children who give all correct answers will be published in the next Messenger. Please give your name, address and the name of the parish. The deadline for all entries will be May 31, 1991.

Sajina and Sajeev Pothen.

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

FOR AGES 13 AND ABOVE

(Based on Luke chapters 22, 23 & 24)

1	2			3		4				5	6				7
		8					9								
		10					11					12			
13								14					15		
		16						17			18				
		19		20										21	
	22														
						23									
		24													

ACROSS

3. They appeared and strengthened Jesus
6. Simon called Jesus this
8. Make fun of
9. He and Pilate became friends
10. He and Peter prepared Passover
13. Jesus and disciples had this last meal
14. Rest day
16. Give thanks
17. He denied Christ
22. Member of the Council
23. Released instead of Christ
24. Jesus was taken up here

DOWN

1. Rise again from death
2. He is of Nazareth
4. Place of Skull
5. Jesus's body was kept here
7. Feast of Unleavened Bread
11. Jesus was crucified on this
12. Magdalene's first name
15. Number of disciples
17. He sent Jesus to Herod
18. A village seven miles from Jerusalem
19. Peter denied before it crowed
20. Curtain of the temple
21. He betrayed Christ

Mrs. Saji Pothan, Los Angeles.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE "BIBLE WORD SEARCH" FINDERS JANUARY 1991.

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Jincey, Clement, Wincy | - | Chicago Mar Thoma Church. |
| 2. | Sherril Mohan | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. |
| 3. | Jamie Mary Thomas | - | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York. |
| 4. | Susan George | - | Detroit Mar Thoma Church. |
| 5. | Arun B. Thomas | - | New Jersey Mar Thoma Church. |
| 6. | Sybil Abraham | - | The Mar Thoma Church of Philadelphia. |
| 7. | Jenny Chacko | - | Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington. |
| 8. | Jerome Mammen | - | Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles. |
| 9. | Elizabeth Vargis | - | Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles. |
| 10. | Lesly Varghese | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. |
| 11. | Larry Philip Varghese | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. |
| 12. | Stephen Philip | - | Detroit Mar Thoma Church. |
| 13. | Tony & Tobi John Panicker | - | Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma. |
| 14. | Reena M. Philip | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. |
| 15. | Suby Abraham | - | Long Island Mar Thoma Church. |
| 16. | Leena Mary Eappen | - | The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto. |
| 17. | Justin Sadhu | - | Chicago Mar Thoma Church. |
| 18. | Julie Mary Sadhu | - | Chicago Mar Thoma Church. |
| 19. | Eugene Mathew Sadhu | - | Chicago Mar Thoma Church. |
| 20. | Samuel Thomas | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. |
| 21. | Sabu Abraham | - | Long Island Mar Thoma Church. |
| 22. | Joe M. George | - | Chicago Mar Thoma Church. |
| 23. | Jency Abraham | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. |
| 24. | Christie Abraham | - | Mar Thoma Church, London, U. K. |
| 25. | Camilla Louis | - | Mar Thoma Church, London, U. K. |
| 26. | Mathews George | - | Mar Thoma Church, London, U. K. |
| 27. | Annie K. Thomas | - | Mar Thoma Church, London, U. K. |
| 28. | Jinu Thomas | - | St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey. |
| 29. | Rayan Jacob | - | Long Island Mar Thoma Church. |
| 30. | Ronny Jacob | - | Long Island Mar Thoma Church. |
| 31. | Roy, Roni, Roshen Mathew | - | Long Island Mar Thoma Church. |

THE HUSBAND MAN

Rachel Joseph, London, England.

Endless is the list of men,
There are blind men,
There are godly men,
There are handsome men.

Where is the one I search for?
There are doctors,
There are engineers,
There are business men.

Where is the one I search for?
There are happy men,
There are suffering men,
There are giving men.

Where is the one I search for?
There are fighting men,
There are praying men,
There are faithful men.

Endless is the list of men,
The one I search for
Is a simple man;
The one I search for
Is a man who 'hurts'.

Where is the one I search for?
The one I search for
Is a man who can share,
The one I search for
Is the Prince of Peace.

Where is the one I search for?
The one I search for
Has yet to come,
The one I search for
Has a Kingdom.

Where is the one I search for?
The one I search for
Will be looking for a bride,
The one I search for
Is the **HUSBAND MAN**.

THE PLAIN TRUTH

Selena Thomas, Age 9, Washington D.C.

You might think that God is only a regular old person.
But that's a lie, a pure wicked lie without reason.
God is the best and the purest person.
Now that's the truth, the pure truth with reason!
Do you know why that's the truth?
Because, He's our Savior of divine birth.
I am so lucky that I know this truth,
that He gave His life for our spiritual birth.

NEWS FROM PARISHES

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

The Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church acquired a beautiful place of worship in December 1989, and was blessed and dedicated by the Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan on the 9th of June 1990. Church has 180 families and over 750 members. 20 families took membership in 1990. Rev. Joseph Ayrookuzhy is the vicar.

SEVIKA SANGHOM: We are proud to point out that Mrs. Nirmala Abraham was elected as the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary and Mrs. Kunjumole Cherian was elected as the Eastern Region Sevika Sanghom Secretary. Sevika Sanghom sponsors a child in Thelliyoor, Kerala (mentally retarded children's home) and contributed \$500 to the youth work of the region this year.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Consists of 250 students and 48 teachers. Our Sunday School won overall championship in the Eastern Regional competition held at St. Thomas Church, New York. Sunday School has an endowment of \$3,000 to sponsor a child at the Deaf and Dumb school at Kasargod, Kerala.

YOUTH LEAGUE: Publishes youth magazine called "VOICES" every year to air their voice. "VOICE OF PRAISE" the music team of the Youth League presented a music concert in connection with church dedication. Youth League organized a Youth Convention during the youth week. Rev. William P. Barker (Maramon Convention Speaker) was the speaker.

EDAVAKA MISSION: Supports one missionary in India from January 1991. Mission meets every first Sunday evening for Bible classes, prayers and discussions.

DEMISE: Mrs. Susammia Mathew (38) 121 Pocassett, N.E. Philadelphia passed away on November 24, 1990. She is survived by her husband Thomas Mathew and daughter Smitha.

James Cherian

MAR THOMA CHURCH, GREATER WASHINGTON

The Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington is represented by sixty families from the Greater Washington metropolitan area. The Rev. Geevarghese Mathew is the vicar of our Parish. Our Achen is actively engaged in providing an enthusiastic leadership in the worship, the day-to-day administration and the pastoral, spiritual and social activities of the parish. We conduct worship services and Sunday School on all Sundays. We have two communion services in a month out of which one communion service is conducted in English for our youths. In addition, every year we have a joint communion service with the local Episcopal church. We also arrange combined services on special occasions with the Baltimore congregation. We conduct prayer meetings twice a month in the homes of our members. We have active participation of our members in various organizations such as Sunday School, Sevika Sanghom and youth fellowship. We conduct annual picnics and retreats with the leadership of our Achen and other invited guests. We have an active choir under the leadership of a Choir Master. Last year's Youth Conference was jointly hosted by Washington and Baltimore parishes. During the Christmas season, we visit all our member families within a radius of approximately 40 miles by caroling.

Now we have also started programs/sessions for both men and women for discussing the issues relating to family, youth, church and society. Our church publishes a monthly newsletter of all activities. One of the great accomplishments of our church recently was the fulfillment of our goal of purchasing land for a church building of our own.

George Varghese

MAR THOMA CHURCH, UNITED KINGDOM, LONDON

The fourth Kerala Christian Convention was held at St. Katharine Cree Church from October 19-21 1990. The speaker was Dr. P.P.Job (New Delhi), Director for Rev. Wurmbrand's mission for Asia and Africa. A large number of people from the Mar Thoma and sister churches attended the meetings. Many were blessed, refreshed and touched by the word of God and the moving life experiences of Dr. Job spoken in the power of Holy Spirit. During the altar call a number of people came forward and dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ.

Christmas Carol Services: The candle lit service held on 23rd December 1990 was attended by some 250 people. Rev. Oliver Simon, Vicar, St. Michael's Anglican Church, Newhamstead, Berks gave the Christmas message. The choir lead by our Choir Master Roy Thomas sung a number of melodious carols in both Malayalam and English. The service ended with a children's matinee play, Father Christmas presentation to children and refreshments.

The Watchnight and New Year service was held at the Indian YMCA Mahatma Gandhi Hall. Rev. John P. Robinson (CSI) lead the Praise and Fellowship session. Several people shared their testimony and committed their lives to Christ. This was followed by the Holy Communion Service celebrated by the Vicar Rev. George Mathew.

The Sevika Sanghom anniversary and general body meeting was held on 3rd march 1991. Sister Ammini Philipose, Bethel Ashram, CSI was the guest speaker.

Episcopal Visit: Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan, our Diocesan Bishop will be visiting the Parish from April 11-13 in connection with the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. George Carey.

Rev. George Mathew

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church has started the new year with a new vigor under the able leadership of our Achen Rev. Alexander A. Thomas. As we look forward we have great expectation about our Church as the Sunday School and Youth League are showing great potential in spiritual growth. The executive committee has already chalked out various programs for this 15th anniversary year. We are working to achieve great things from God during the year.

Our Sunday School anniversary was celebrated on January 20, 1991. The Rev. Alexander A. Thomas presided over the function. Dr. George P. Alexander was the keynote speaker. Prizes were distributed to all the winners of the annual Sunday School competition held in November 1990.

A one day retreat was arranged by our Sevika Sanghom on March 9, 1991. Dr. Sakhi Athyal, who was the leader, talked on "Mission Evangelism - As women, are we responsible for Mission Evangelism?" A film on Evangelism was also shown during the retreat.

Abraham C. Thomas

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON

Western Regional Youth Conference was held at the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston from March 22-24, 1991. About 200 youths participated in the conference. The Rev. Paul D. Jagoe, Chaplain, Episcopal High School, Bellaire, Houston was the main speaker. The theme for the Conference was "Christian commitment - the need, relevance and response today"

Mar Thoma Youth Conference of North America 1991 shall be held in Houston from August 14-17, 1991. The venue for this Conference is same as that of the 1988 Family Conference - Delago Resort and Conference Center. "Man in the image of God" (Gen:1:27) is the Conference theme.

In response to our notification in the Sabha Tharaka of October 1990, we received 165 applications for Housing Aid from and outside Kerala. House construction for the poor and needy is a humanitarian project

undertaken by the Edavaka Mission of our parish. 26 families were selected from 165 applications and each family was given \$600.00 for house construction, bringing the total disbursement to \$15,600.00.

TMC Library was inaugurated on Easter Sunday, The library was set up with the collections from 1990 Christmas caroling. TMC has also purchased an electronic organ costing \$12,000.00

Rev. Jayan Thomas

ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK

St. Thomas Church celebrated its Parish Day and Tenth Anniversary on Sunday, January 20, 1991 in the newly acquired Church building at 34 Morris St., Yonkers, NY. This happy and blessed occasion began with the Holy Communion service celebrated by the Rev. K.U. Abraham at 4.00 P.M., which was followed by a public meeting to mark the celebration. Also, Rev. K.U. Abraham presided over the meeting. The Honorable Henry J. Spallone, Mayor of Yonkers and His Excellency Daya Perera, Ambassador and permanent representative of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, were the Guests of Honor. Representatives from City of Yonkers, The Episcopal Church, Yonkers Council of Churches, Yonkers Clergy Council, sister parishes, other denominations and community leaders were present and conveyed their greetings on the auspicious occasion.

After prayer, Rev. Johnson Varghese, Vicar, welcomed the guests and audience. During the presidential address, Rev. K.U. Abraham emphasized the fact, that the parish need to have a vision for the future, a program and an agenda for action. Mr. V.P. Abraham read a brief report on a decade of life and developments of the parish. Mr. Y. Varghese invited His Excellency Daya Perers who released the Souvenir Mug to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Parish. The secretaries of various Organizations gave short reports on their activities. The awards for outstanding and dedicated service were given to the out-going office bearers (Dr. T.M. Thomas, Vice President, Mr.V.P. Abraham, Secretary, Mr.Raju Varghese, Treasurer and Mr. Thomas Vaidian, Accountant and Mr.. G. Kochumman Convenor of Church building Committee. Out-standing leadership and dedicated service award was presented to the Rev. Johnson Varghese. Mr. M.C.Chacko, introduced the award recipients to audience. An interlude of songs and children's programs added more color to the occasion.

M.C. Chacko

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS

The new Executive Committee for the year 1991 has taken charge on January 1st. We have decided at a General body Meeting held in February to renovate the existing Church building at a cost of approximately \$200,000.00. This would give added space for Sunday School and other Church activities.

A member of our parish Mr. P. J. Abraham who has been teaching adult Sunday School published a book in Malayalam the title of which is "Baptism - an independent study" - Copies of this book can be made available directly from Mr. P. J. Abraham.

Dr. John Mathew

New Parishes

Two new Mar Thoma parishes were formed in the New York area effective Dec. 1, 1990 by a Kalpana of the Diocesan Bishop.

St. James Mar Thoma parish is formed in Rockland County with Rev. M. Varghese as the vicar. St. Johns Mar Thoma Church is formed in Queens Village with Rev. Oommen George as its vicar.

Both parishes had elected the Office bearers in separate General Body meetings held in December 1990.

P.T. Thomas, Member Diocesan Assembly and Messenger Editorial Board.

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