

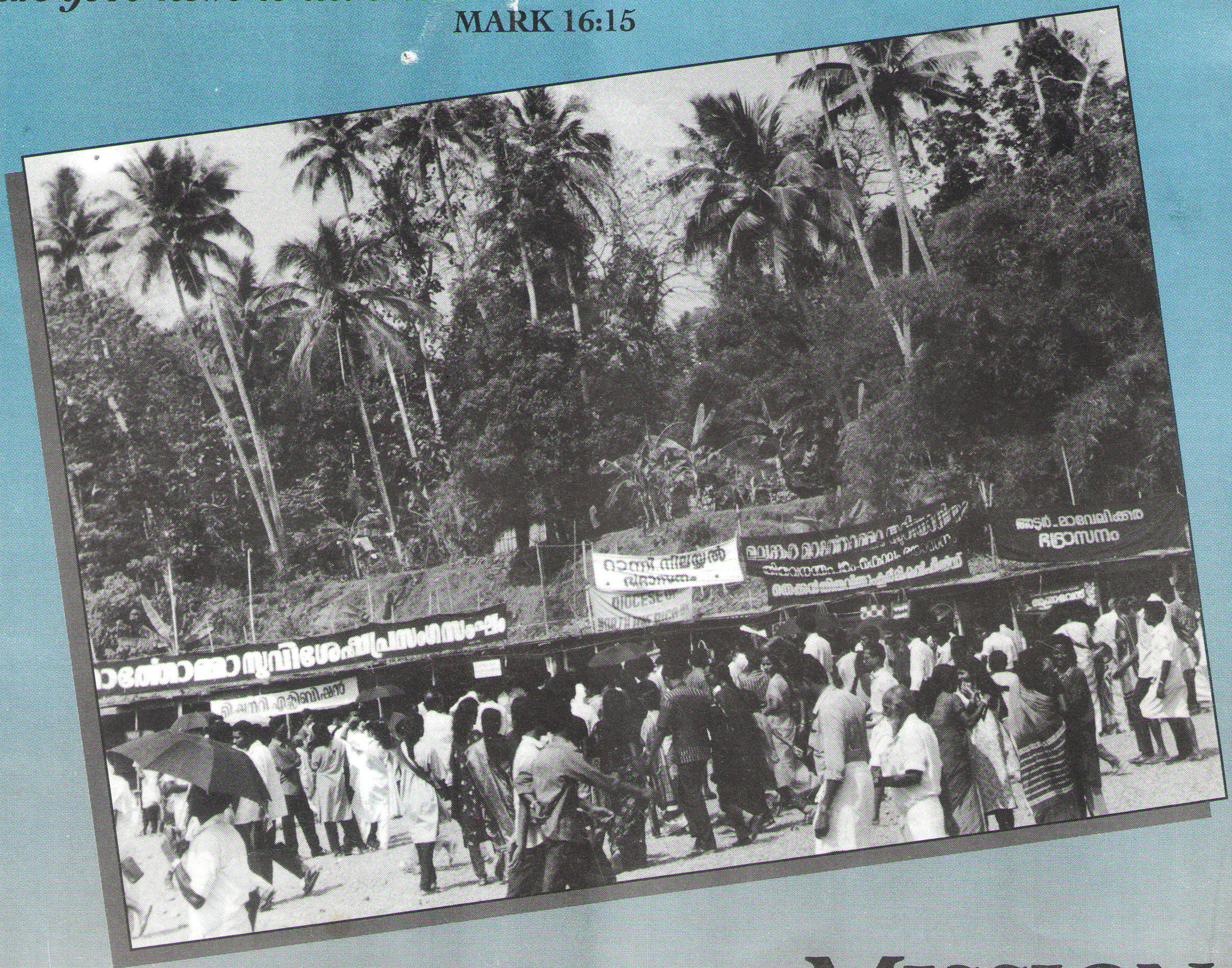
MAR THOMA

# MESSENGER

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

APRIL 1992

*"Go into all the world and preach  
the good news to all creation"*  
MARK 16:15



# MISSION



Mr. K. V. Thomas

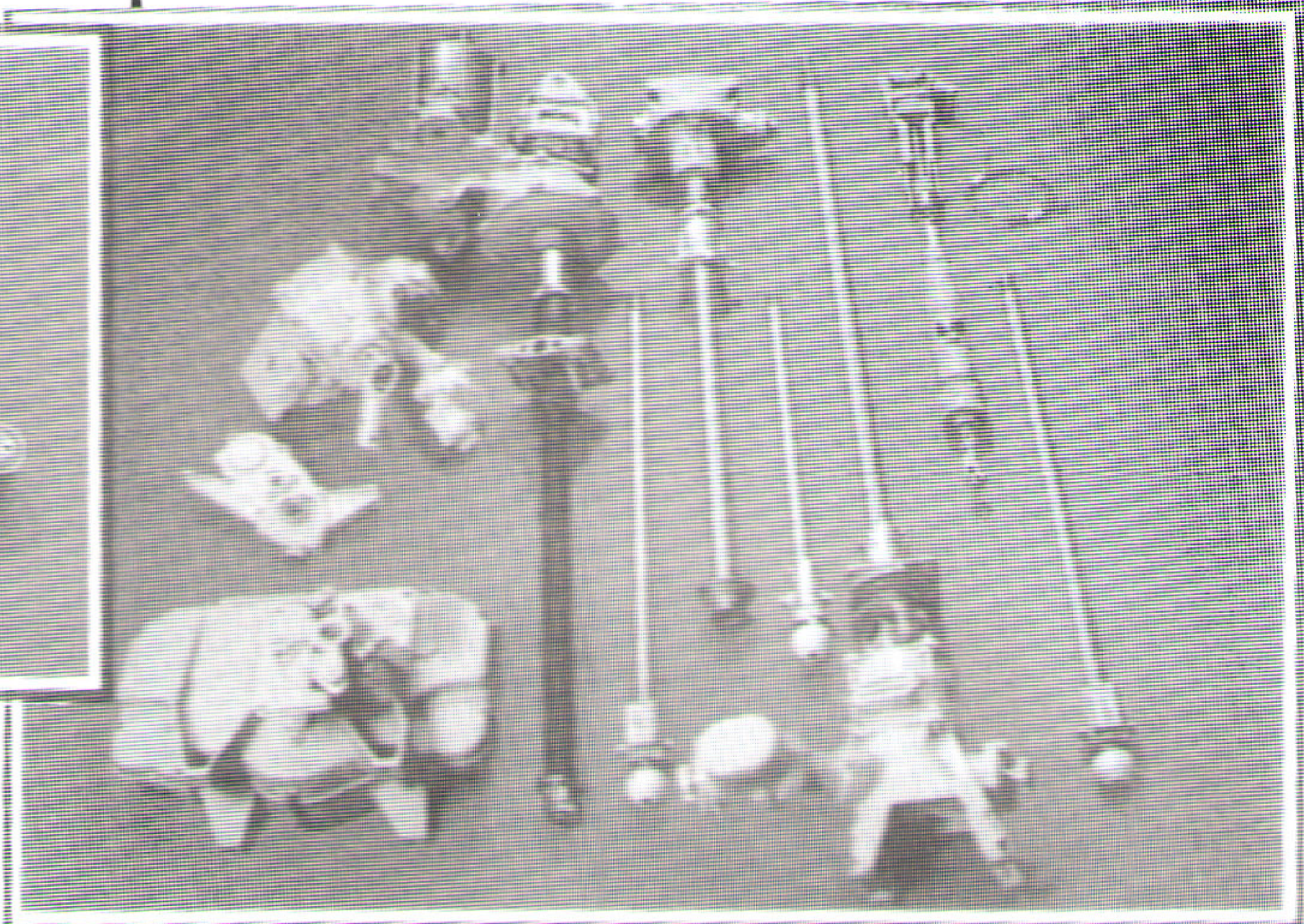
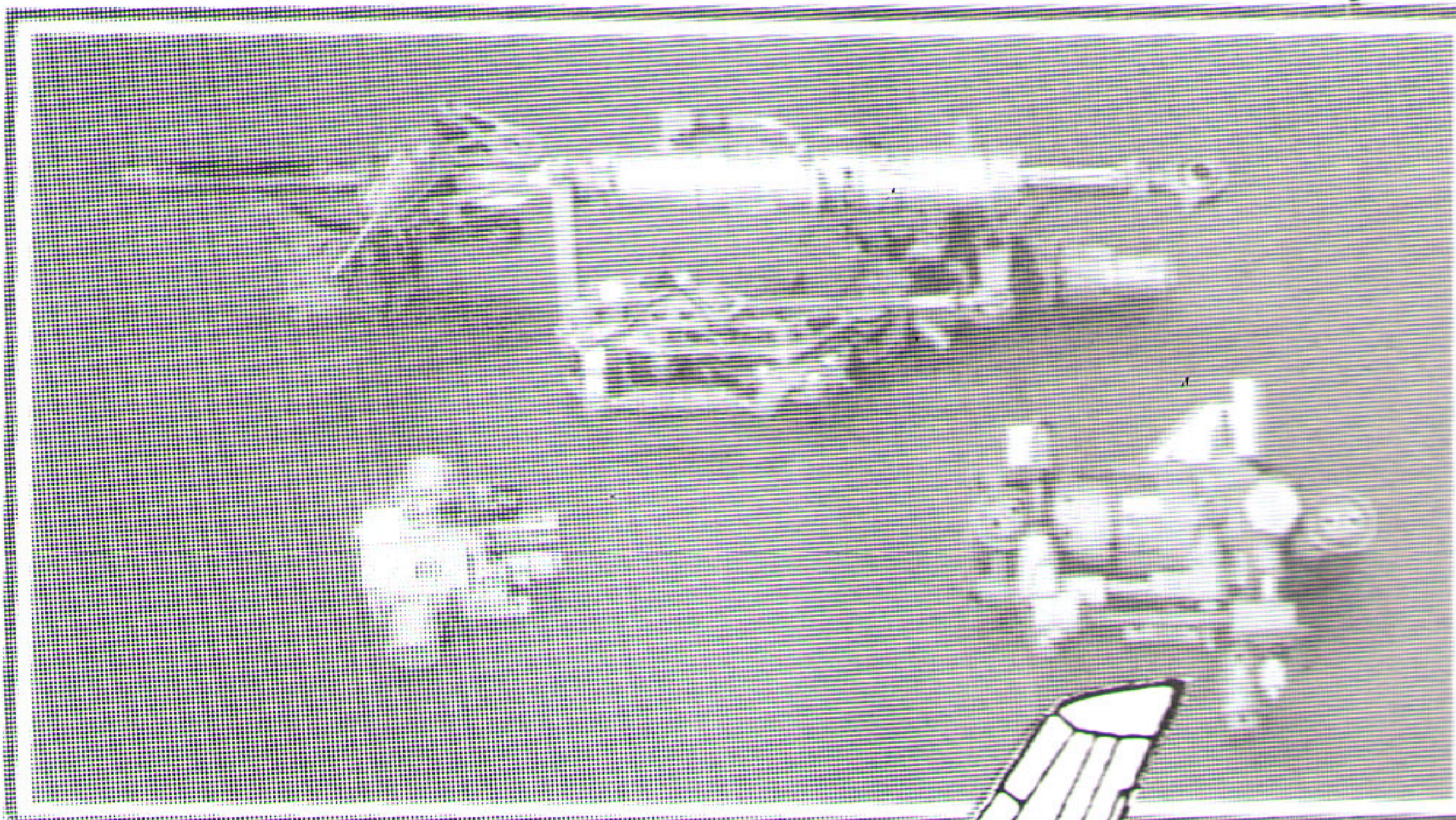
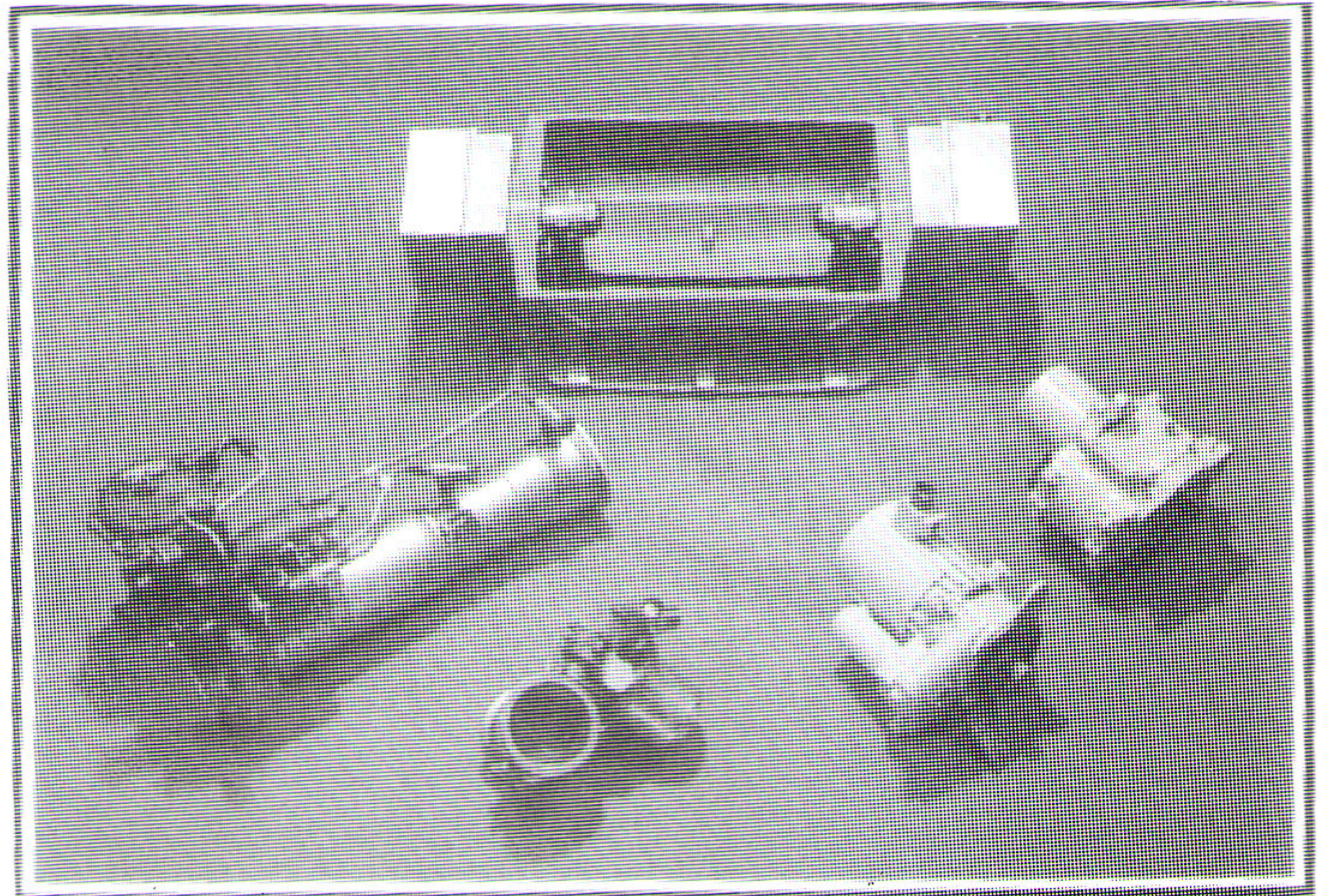
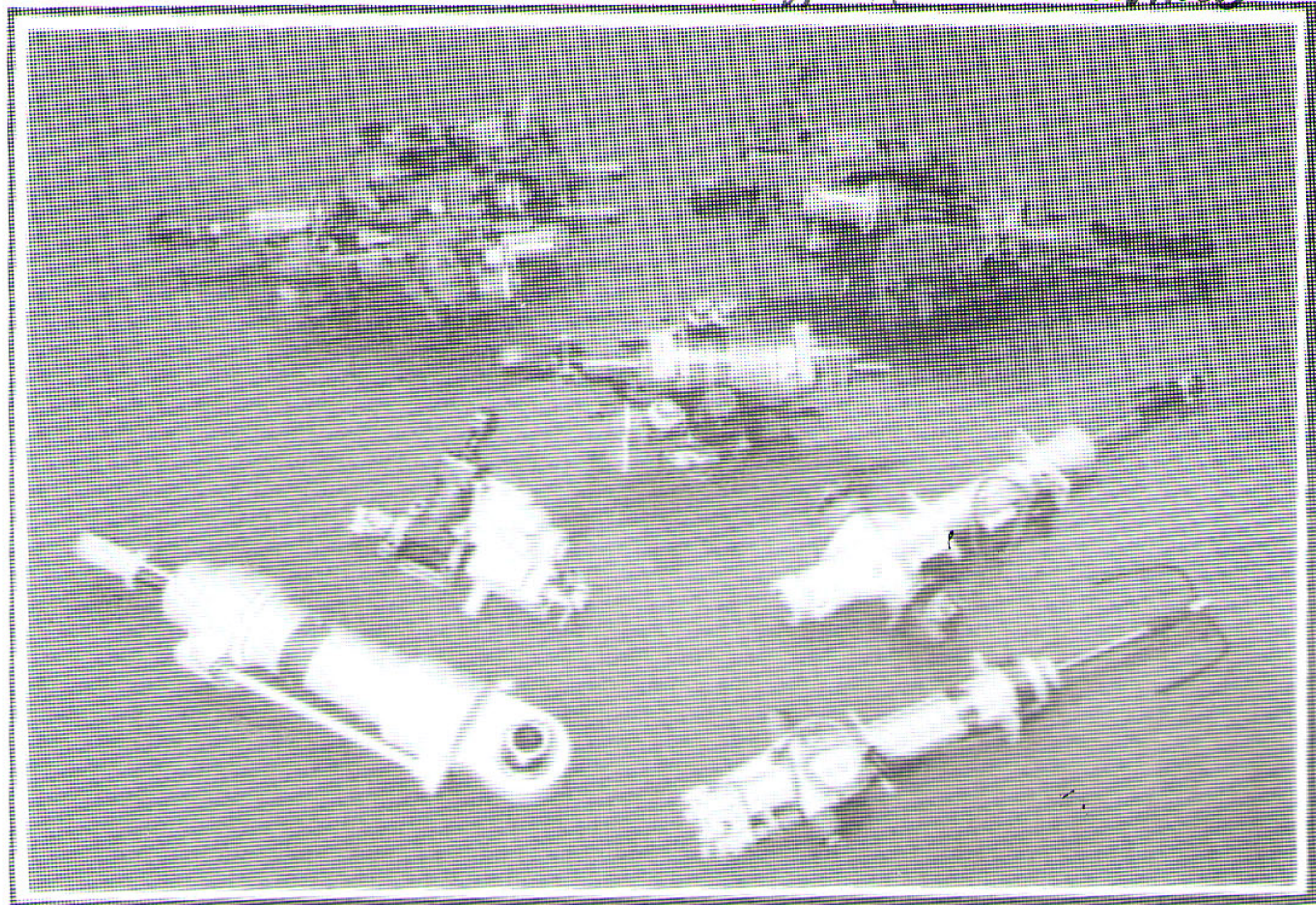
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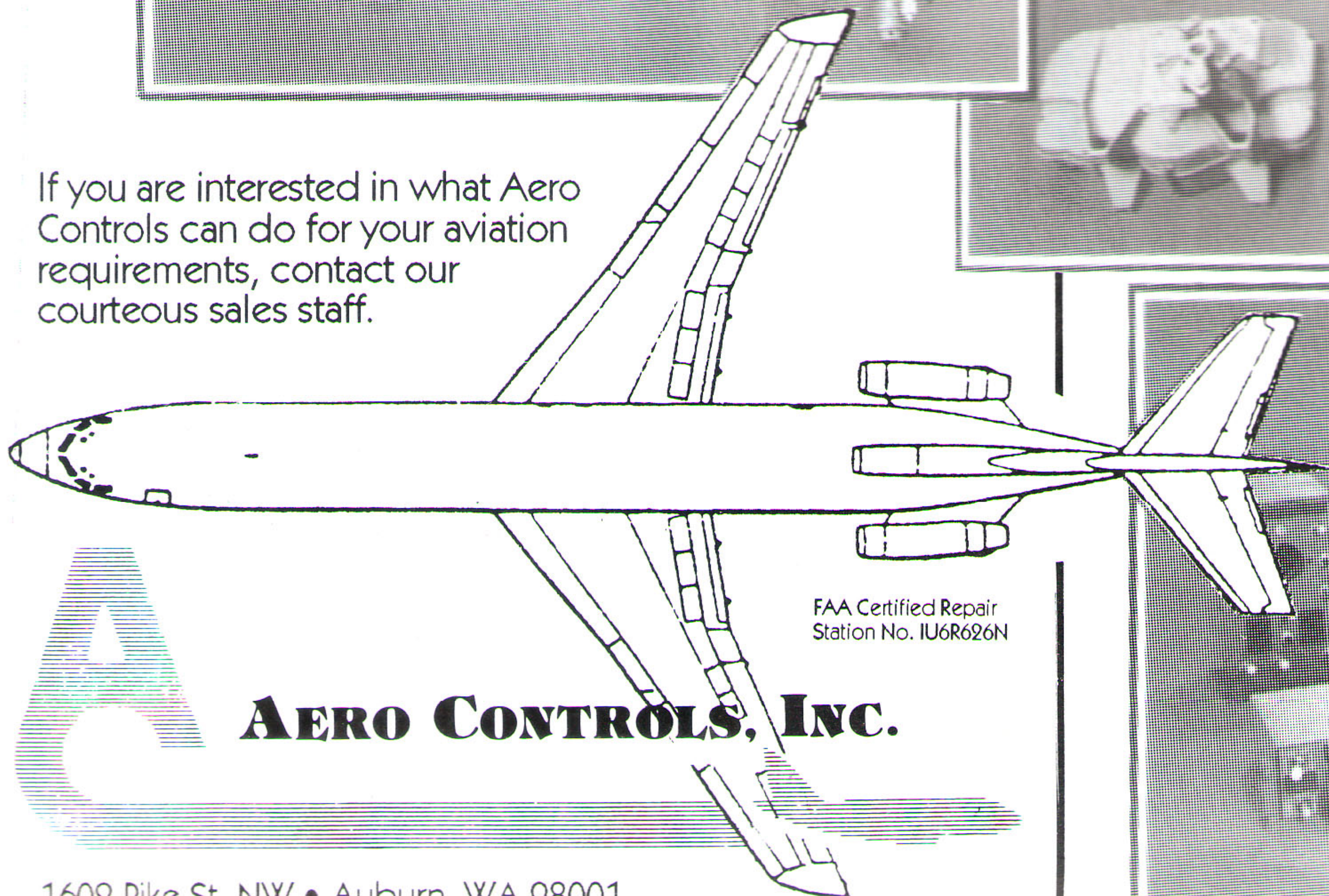
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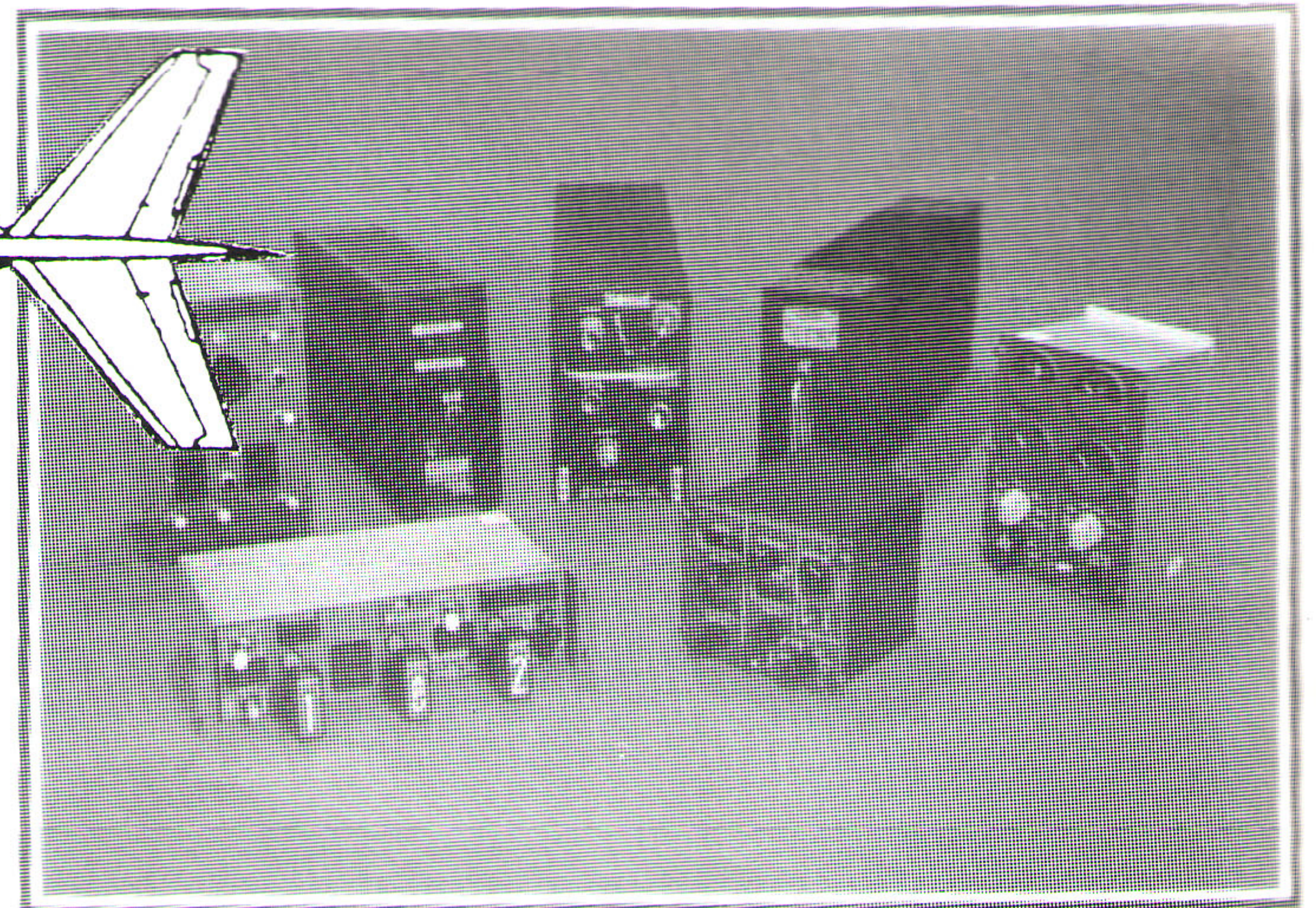
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# MAR THOMA MESSENGER

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Please note that we now have a fax/answering machine for the Messenger and the number is 310-431-1111. The area code for the main number is also changed from 213 to 310. - Editor



# FROM THE EDITOR

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Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it and understand from our youth themselves that they too are concerned as we parents are, about their own spiritual development, while growing up in a society with profoundly disturbing problems. Their hope, their vision and above all their undaunted faith in God make us feel elated and proud as parents and as a community. They are frank in their assessment, open in their criticisms and patient in their frustration. The document they prepared, after a three day Leadership Training Workshop in Philadelphia, appears in this issue under the title "Reflections! Affirmations! Proposals!" During this conference, they pondered and discussed issues such as spiritual development of the youth, effective leadership in youth ministry, communication between parents and youth, current issues facing our Church and making Mar Thoma Church "our" church. It is their sincere hope that the above document would initiate and spark meaningful and honest dialogue in our parishes leading to renewal and change. They are urging us parents and also leaders of our church to set aside time to carefully consider the suggestions and concerns raised by them.

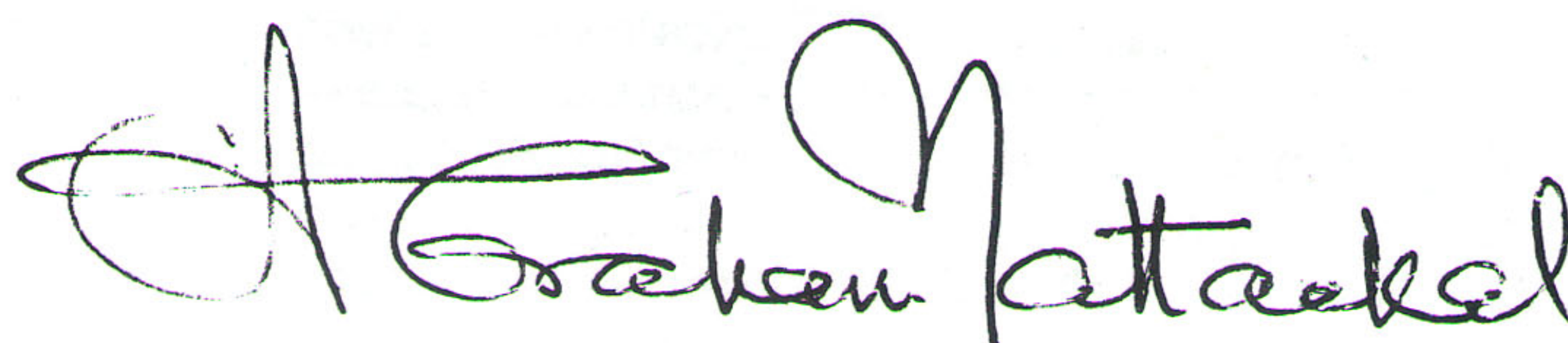
Perhaps, we have become a sort of immune to advice as we have heard too many sermons and received too many pieces of advice from parents, uncles, aunties you name it. Perhaps, we refuse to believe that life is a series of contradictions and inconsistencies and that the future of our children may bring us unpleasant surprises as we begin to see in almost every parish. Deep within their hearts our youth have a lot to tell us, but they seldom do. Echos of their pleas towards us could be heard through their writings as is evident from the article, "The Mission of Youth Groups; A Youth's Perspective" or through their leaders such as the article written by the Rev. K.U. Abraham "A Vision of Youth Ministry" both being published in the current issue of the Messenger. Some of us do not have the time to read these words of wisdom and experience, even those written by our children. While we have no hesitation to buy a \$60.00 athletic shoe for our child, we refuse to spend \$8.00 towards Messenger subscription or for some literary

magazines. Unless we parents set apart at least forty-five minutes every day for reading good materials, how could we develop reading habits in our children from their early childhood?

I wish every youth and every parent in our diocese would read the Messenger regularly. Providing all the comforts and luxuries of life to our children may require us to sacrifice our valuable time and energy but the end result would be far from satisfactory. Discipline and sacrifice go hand in hand. When Nancy Kerrigan received the bronze medal in Figure Skating in Albertville, France during the recent Winter Olympics, her blind mother Brenda Kerrigan was shedding tears of joy in a moment of indescribable ecstasy. It is an example of a real sacrifice and discipline. A blind mother getting up at 4 A.M. every day of the week for years to take Nancy to the skating rink for practice, with her husband and then drop her off at school in time! "My mother's strength has given me so much inspiration and brought me thus far" Nancy said just before her final skating performance.

Now is the time to rethink our priorities. Now is the time to listen to our youth. They look amongst us for a role model. Just as we keep high expectations on them, they too have expectations on us- they want us to practice what we preach. Finding no role models amongst us, they might search for one outside the boundaries of our community. If that happens, we could only pray that they find the right one!

It's only a matter of coincidence that the editorial in the April 1991 issue of the Messenger also dealt with the not-so-high achievements of our youth. I wished then if I could find the name of a Mathew, John or Thomas when the newspapers published the names of outstanding student achievers or the result of the annual Westinghouse Science Talent Search. Well, I was delighted to find the name of John Alexander Abraham, 17 of Staten Island, New York as a finalist in this year's Westinghouse Science Talent Search. A report about John appears elsewhere in this issue.





the diction "want"). By the same token, who among us had a Ph.D in the "American mode of living" before our departure to the West. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed are king, however, we should not forget sometimes good 'old Homer himself nods.' The point is that learning the "required skills" for the American lifestyle before their departure to the West is not a foolproof measure that ensures the vicar's successful term in the West. **Rather, it (learning those skills) is a function of time, and it is coupled with adequate but legitimate input and feedback from the laymen.**

Moreover, selection of vicars to the West should be made well in advance and must have provided orientation was another choice. Selected books or audio visual media is not the befitting tool for the intent. The old saying "You cannot see the forest for the trees or you cannot see the shallow pond for the deep sea" seems domesticated? The condition can only be unraveled by practical experiment. Otherwise the outcome is Ignotum Per Ignotus.

Another propensity was that the achens should enroll in the local seminaries or serve the local Episcopal churches upon their arrival in the West for a short period of time and learn the problems facing the youth and Western church administration. The intention is good but the timing is not right. Moreover, the dilemmas facing the American Episcopal Churches are poles apart from the ones we are faced with.

As noted by many, the controversies about standardized salary, benefits, donation, and gifts are not part of the mystery the achens carted into the Western parishes. **There are a few who are faithful in their covenant and defy the philosophy, "Make hay while the sun shines"**. On the other hand, the contention is analogous to someone rubbing the one side of the windshield in their futile attempt to improve their vision while the streak is on the other side of the windshield.

Don't misunderstand my disposition. I am not totally opposed to the concepts of providing the achens with orientation before their departure to the West, or requiring them to enroll in local seminaries and church periodically. In addition to that, **we should allow them to arrive at least six months prior to the existing vicar's departure. This will not only provide a smooth transition, but also give the new achens time to recuperate from the cultural shock.** It will give them a chance to learn, expound, and evaluate various cultural diversities and problems facing the members without misapprehension, misgiving, and misconception. Most of all, their frustration resulting from the cultural shock will not be overshadowing the administrative decisions.

While the attitude, aptitude, and dispositions break up and disrupt the veteran, stereotyped, Western Mar Thomites in their persuasions, isn't it rather supernatural or ironic to expect the new achens to be "fiber optic in quality" in all his dealings right from the first day of his administration.? However, the speculation that the plight was "long recognized but glossed over for the sake of easy administration" is relevant. Yes! Everyone is aware of the problems but proceeding with the habitual procrastinating pace to find a solution. If we are expecting our stereotyped orthodoxy, democratic modernization, nonconformity, and "young generations promiscuity" to converge at a common ground, a transformed vision is the key. Being on the opposite ends of the spectrum, Traditions, Expressions, and Strife alone will not alleviate our dilemma, but with Transformation, it is affirmative.

**Mathew Abraham, League City, Texas**

"Letters to the Editor" in the January 1992 issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger had many statements about our priests in North America and U.K. which, I feel, are unfortunately true and should have been expected. At the same time, we as ordinary people should realize that we are part of the problem also. Everybody should realize that we are trying to deal with structural, organization, behavioral, cultural and priority issues here.

In my opinion, resistance to change is seen more in people than in the church hierarchy. The question each first time adult immigrant should ask himself or herself is the following: "Am I willing to learn the culture of our children, adapt to it within reason, change my thinking where needed, have an open mind to it and take some risks?". Mar Thoma Church is not equipped yet to deal with some of the current needs that exist in North America. This means for the majority, it is like "the blind leading the blind".

What I see is a wide gap between what is needed and what is being delivered. I also notice a large gap between the expectations and reality. **The third issue I observed is the unwillingness of our people to contribute as much as that of a typical American family with the same level of income.** Two American sayings are relevant. The first one is, "You have to spend/invest money to make money" and the second one is, "Nothing is free". In most American churches with 100 or more active families, they have two or more ordained ministers and a paid office staff. In the American system, the local parish has a lot more control and say in what is going on.

What we can realistically expect from our priests coming from India is limited. They are capable of satisfying the sacramental needs of the first time immigrant adults (Malayalam speaking). If you are lucky, the priest may be a good speaker (sermons in Malayalam) and a good liturgist in Malayalam. When it comes to the needs of our children, teenagers, young adults, general counseling needs, legal issues, etc., they (achens) are at a loss in general. It is not fair to expect any drastic changes/improvements at this time while recognizing the fact that the needs are current. **It is unrealistic to expect the Mar Thomite Church to fulfill some of these needs satisfactorily in the near future unless the parishioners of North America are willing to take more risks and contribute more money.**

There are many ways to handle this issue, but the one method tried and proven to work requires at least three things from the families - time, money and a good comfort level in an English speaking environment. After a good search, the families select a warm local American church which has a good Sunday School and Youth Program. Another condition they might entertain is the preaching/teaching orientation/ability of the clergy at the church. When they find one that satisfies all their prioritized major needs, they start going there while keeping a nominal/formal relationship with the local Mar Thoma Church (if they have one in the area). They consider their relationship with the local American church as a necessity and the association with the Mar Thoma Church as a social necessity. In financial terms this means, they give many times more to the local American church. As time goes by, the priorities may change and they may intensify their relationship with the Mar Thoma church or vice-versa. If we are trying to build the Kerala culture here through our religion, we should be prepared for a big surprise. On the other hand, if we try to instill our value system in our children through our witness, we can expect some success.

**V.G. Kattapuram, Boston, Massachusetts**

**-To Our Readers:**

The Messenger encourages readers to write letters on important Diocesan issues in addition to comments on editorials or published articles. These letters, however, are to be signed by the writers and should contain their address and telephone number. We received a letter for publication from a 'subscriber' in Texas, criticizing some of the letters published in the last issue and informing us that he had sent copies of his letter to all our achens in our Diocese and our Bishops. We would have gladly published this letter to balance the view points expressed in these columns but could not do so without the writer's signature or address. Our policy is not to publish fictitious letters.

- Editor.



# THE MISSIONARY IMPERATIVE OF THE CHURCH

Rev. Dr. M. V. Abraham, Kottayam, Kerala



## The Basis of Mission

"As fire exists by burning, the Church exists by mission" (Emil Brunner). This statement amply describes the inseparable link between church and mission. Mission is not an activity that the church engages in, but it is true to the very nature of the church. The modern ecumenical movement affirms the

church's unity and church's mission. This two-fold commitment is rooted in Christ's prayer in John 17 - "that they may all be one (John 17:21) " so that the world may believe" (17:23) The word "ecumenical" comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth. It is used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole church to bring the Gospel to the whole world. That is what mission is all about. Thus the obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world (mission) and the obligation to draw all Christ's people (unity) both rests upon Christ's work of redemption, and the two are indissolubly connected. Any attempt to separate the two tasks violates the wholeness of Christ's mission to the world. Both these tasks are essential to the being of the Church and the fulfillment of its function as the Body of Christ.

The Triune God is the subject of mission. In mission the first actor is God. The English word 'mission' comes from the Latin root *-mittere*, meaning "to send". Therefore, mission means 'to be sent'. The Greek word *apostello* (I send) also suggests the sending activity of God. Christ is the "apostle" (the one sent) of God, and thus God is the subject of mission. In so far as the church is the body of Christ, the church is the agent of God's mission and God's mission in action. The Church is apostolic because the church is sent to the world to carry on the reconciling work of God in Christ.

This God-inspired and church-grounded quality of Christian mission is evident in all the five so-called "dominical" commissions (commanded by the Lord himself) in the four Gospels and in Acts. The combined witnesses of these sayings offer us a comprehensive picture of the early church's vision of its God-sent mission: "Go---make disciples... baptize... teach (Mathew 28:19-20); "Go--preach--signs will accompany those who believe" (Mark 16: 15-18); "You are witnesses... I send the promise of my Father... clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:48-49); "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.." He breathed on them, and said to them "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22); "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

The sending of the church to the world is a continuation of the Father's sending of the Son and the Spirit. It is the aim of these sending operations to awaken faith, to baptize and to start new communities of discipleship. The Holy Spirit leads the church to open new fields of mission,

continuing the apostolic history that began at Pentecost in Jerusalem. At the beginning, the church was nothing else than the mission of the gospel driven onward by the Spirit. As Robert Jenson says: "The first gatherings of believers were gatherings of missionaries." ( Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, p.29) The church that gathers all its members around the Word and Sacraments will not be confused about whether the Lord's commission to evangelize the nations is still valid. "To question the permanent validity of the church's call to mission is to tear it out of its proper trinitarian and christological framework." (Carl E. Braaten, *Missiology*, vol.18.4 (Oct. 1990) p. 426) Emphasizing the church's mission to all the nations is a participation in the work of the triune God.

The church (*ek-klesia*) means literally the people of God "called out" in order to be "sent forth" to the world, not so much to be identical but to identify with the world which has to be reconciled to God. The Christians are the witnesses to the redemptive work of God in Christ for the world. The church is called to proclaim and prefigure the kingdom of God. It accomplishes this by announcing the gospel to the world and by its very existence as the body of Christ.

## Social and Cosmic Dimensions of Mission.

In spite of the New Testament evidences, mission has been restricted to the realm of the individual as if mission involved only the conversion of the individual. True, the New Testament speaks of the conversion of the individual (for example, "dying and rising with Christ" in Rom.6:4-6, and so on.) But the greater stress is on the corporate or communitarian dimension of mission. In Christ there is a new creation (Cor. 5:17); "the whole creation is waiting with eager longing" (Rom. 8:19); "the new heaven and new earth" (Rev. 21:1,5), are all examples of the cosmic significance and redemption. If the work of salvation encompassed the whole world and the created order, then mission also would have to be on a cosmic plane. This cosmic dimension of mission necessitates a 'paradigm shift' and a shift in focus. While the individuals are important, the community and the world are equally important, if not more.

If mission and unity are inseparable, then the cosmic vision of mission calls for a larger *koinonia* or fellowship with all God's children (the unity of human kind). **Instead of viewing the people of other faiths only as potential converts to Christianity, they should be told of God's reconciling work in Christ which includes all humankind and the whole creation. The emphasis must be on breaking down all man-made barriers in order to experience the fruits of reconciliation ( Eph. 2 ).** Mission is also sharing the good news that Christ died for the ungodly, which include those who find the cross too offensive or as a stumbling block and those who refuse to look at the cross dispassionately.

A world reconciled by God in Christ assumes a reconciled humanity. Therefore sharing the good news of salvation (mission) calls upon the followers of Christ to be



peace makers and those striving for reconciliation. Another aspect of the cosmic dimension of mission is the reconciliation of the whole creation, a concern for preserving the integrity of creation.

The work of reconciliation in Christ is also a reconciliation of humankind and that involves a renewal of humanity. The renewal of human race is not just a "spiritual" exercise (limited to the realm of the spirit) but something which involves the whole of human life and life in community. New humanity, by its very definition, also means a new social order. Hence, mission cannot be envisaged without the concern for peace and justice in the world. This understanding of mission is not a novel discovery of our time. It was there in the preaching of Jesus (Luke 4:18). The gospel of the kingdom talks of a kingdom to be realized in this world. Therefore, Mission is to impart values of the kingdom in the affairs of the world. The kingdom of God is not an unattainable utopia but a quality of life in this world where signs of the kingdom are evident. (Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven"). Jesus offered salvation to sinners. He preached good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed. Christ established a new access to the Father. Living in this communion with God, all members of the church are called to confess their faith and to give account of their hope. They are to identify with the joys and sufferings of all people as they seek to witness in caring love. The members of Christ's body are to struggle with the oppressed towards that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the kingdom. Thus mission needs to be carried out in varying political, social and cultural contexts. This would require relevant form of witness and service in each situation. In so doing they bring to the world a foretaste of the joy and glory of God's kingdom.

### **Mission and Sacraments.**

Baptism and Eucharist are not mystery rites or special experiences meant only for a few, but they are signs of the kingdom of God inaugurated in Christ. The Church is called to witness to the kingdom. Thus Baptism and Eucharist have missional significance.

In so far as Baptism is for incorporation in to the body of Christ, baptism is for mission. We are not baptized into Christ, as if it were our private experience. We are baptized into the already existing community of Christ, the community which comprises of those who believe in Christ as well as those who are yet to believe. Thus the community of Christ is an open community, a community without frontiers ("other sheep I have which do not belong to this fold" John 10:16; "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one" - John 17:20-212). If baptism is for discipleship, then discipleship is for mission, that is, to bring others also into the discipleship of Christ.

The Eucharist (Lord's supper), again, is not just a rite for the spiritual growth of the Christian. It too has social and missional significance. Eucharistic participation in Christ is also a call to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become

the signs of the love of Christ. The Eucharist enables the Christians to grow more and more into the likeness of Christ, making them his effective witnesses. Participation in God's mission is an integral dimension of the Eucharistic celebration. It is also a challenge to the Eucharistic assembly (church) to be concerned about the gathering into the one body of Christ all those who are present beyond its visible limits, because Christ invited to his feet all those for He died for. **It must be painfully and shamefully acknowledged that in so far as Christians cannot unite in one fellowship around the same Table, their missionary witness is weakened.** However, the church cannot afford to delay its witness in mission until the eucharistic unity of all Christians is achieved. The recognition of the social and missional dimensions of the Eucharist should not be lost sight of.

### **Mission in Christ's way.**

Mission is much more than proclamation. It is a witness and a way of life. The church has to say "no" to that kind of mission in which proclamation is confused with words alone, or numerical growth is stressed rather than spiritual depth, or the church speaks of justice and righteousness, but ignores or persecutes those who try to live out true justice and peace. The conference on mission held at San Antonio, Texas (USA) in 1990 has the following statement at the end of its "Message": "Proclamation of the Kingdom of hope for the whole creation, of a mission in Christ's way is not just an affirmation, but a way of life. We are called to concrete acts of faithfulness, a living expression of the prayer that Christ taught us; Your will be done."

### **Trinity as the basis of mission.**

The trinity provides us with the most comprehensive framework for understanding the place of the church in world history; to interpret the forces of secularization, science and technology; to motivate concern and loving care of the earth; to stimulate dialogues between religions; and to promote international trends towards a peaceful world embracing justice and freedom. The Trinity as basis and motive for mission has its centre in the Christ-event, that is what God has done in Christ. Trinitarian theology calls the church to the frontlines of mission that will distinguish, but refuse to separate, the two dimensions of mission. Jurgen Moltmann speaks of a quantitative and qualitative aspect of mission. The quantitative mission is the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and that must always continue; the qualitative mission aims to influence the conditions under which people live, "directed towards an alteration of the whole atmosphere of life." (J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 152)". "Within a Trinitarian framework, the church understands itself to be driven by the Spirit in every direction and into every dimension of life, but always knowing that its center and criterion are given in the gospel. It is the task of the Spirit to make the person and work of Christ present in the world, to bring history to its goal in the kingdom of God, when in the end God will be all in all" (Carl E. Braaten, *Missiology*, vol. 18.4 (Oct.90), p. 426).



# MAR THOMA MISSIONS AND INDIA - A great challenge and a great opportunity!

Mrs. V.T. Abraham, London, UK

Ever since the Lord called us into His service six years ago, my husband and I had the urge to visit India and see for ourselves the work of our Mar Thoma Missions in India. He has also placed into our hearts a particular burden for the Syrian Christians and the people of India. In answer to this call, we visited many parts of India during the last four years. **Wherever we went, we could hear a cry for help, a cry for love and a cry for healing from the lost, suffering, the sick, and the hungry.** In the course of our visits, we were privileged to visit some of our Mar Thoma mission fields and institutions. These visits opened our eyes to see the sacrificial life and work of our Achen and Missionaries. What is it that drives these people to leave a life of comfort, security and riches? We found out that it is "God's Love" that motivated them to risk their lives and go into the service of our Lord. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many: (Mark 10:45)

**The Mission of our Lord:** The Mission of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth was (Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18)

- to preach good news to the poor
- to bind up the broken-hearted
- to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind
- to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus preached the message of the good news of the kingdom, justice and peace. He healed the sick, delivered the demon-possessed and set free those living in bondage. Jesus was a friend of sinners; his love and compassion flowed to the people. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10)

Jesus sends us out with the same mission today. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21) The apostle Thomas in obedience to the Lord's command came to India and preached the gospel. Our Church Fathers showed the same vision in establishing so many mission fields all over India. Our church is playing its part; but it is not enough in a country like India where two-thirds of the population has not even heard the gospel. The Lord wants more workers to go out into the fields. One day the Lord appeared to me in a vision and showed me a field full of thorns and weeds. The fences were all broken down with cattle and people trespassing. He looked at me with his eyes full of compassion and love. When I looked into His sinless eyes, I melted. Then he pointed to the unploughed and uncultivated ground and said, "I need more workers. Will you go for me?"

Yes, it is Jesus' love for us (because He first loved us) and our love for him that motivates us to do his mission on earth. If we are chained to our possessions, our positions of power

and security, we cannot give this love. We have to make a deliberate and conscious choice to follow his humble and meek way, his lifestyle, humility and sacrifice. Jesus challenges us to choose his path of lowliness and disgrace. A fool for Christ, like Paul. It was this manifestation of his love that we found in the work of our missions.

**The Madras-Kunnamkulam Diocese Missions:** In December 1991, we visited the Christu Dasa Ashram at Coyalmannom, Palakkad where a four-day Madras-Kunnamkulam Diocesan Conference for all the mission workers was held. We were privileged to meet and hear first hand from the missionary Achen, Evangelists and Sevinees the work being carried out in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Tamil Nadu and the Malabar Area of Kerala (see area reports below). Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa presided. Guest speakers included Rt. Rev. K.J. Samuel, CSI East Kerala Diocesan Bishop, Rev. K. Thomas Mathew, Diocesan Secretary, Rev. T.A. Koshy, Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association General Secretary, Rev. Viswanathan Achen of CSI and Evangelist Prasad Cherian. The Palakkad Mission with Rev. Sam T. Varghese Achen in charge played the host for the 120 or so people who attended the conference. The theme of the conference was: **"I am not ashamed of the Gospel"** (Romans 1:6) The gist of Theodosius Thirumeni's message was that God loves us. He relates to humanity in love and compassion. He is also a sending God. God sent His only son as missionary. He called and used many people. When He sends us, He leads and guides us. He makes us valuable in His hands. "If we want to serve him, we must be prepared to deny ourselves and to give our best to others. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Rev. Viswanathan Achen's testimony was real challenge to all Syrian Christians. Born and brought up in a prominent Nair family at Thirumoolapuram, Thiruvalla, it was only through another Hindu convert Sathynathan Achen that he heard the gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. A number of our evangelists working in key missions are from other faiths and have suffered persecution, attacks and rejections. The conference, held for the first time, helped everyone to see each other, share experiences, get refreshed in the Word of God and go back to their missions in the fullness of power and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

K.J. Samuel Bishop spoke of the transforming power of God. We are asked to transform India and the world by becoming missionaries - people who are able to die and resurrect as Jesus did. Will you be that missionary? What makes us extraordinary is the anointing power of the Holy Spirit, the power



ended from on high. The Lord wants you. You are God's best. You are part of God's master plan for India.

**The Palakkad Mission:** The Palakkad Mission was founded in the year 1928 and comprised the Christu Raj Ashram, The Abraham Mar Thoma Jubilee Memorial hospital, three schools in different villages and seven evangelists operating from five mission fields. The Ashram serve as a nerve center for all evangelistic activities in the Malabar area. Many Sevinees reside in the Ashram and support the medical, education and evangelistic work. The hospital with a Medical Superintendent and other staff is able to minister to the needy and poor people and has twenty beds. Missionary training classes are held every week where the evangelists discover the task ahead for fruitful evangelism and gospel outreach. Adjacent mission fields are at Attapadi (Tribals area) and at Guruvayoor.

**The Hoskote Mission:** The Hoskote Mission is located 27 kms. from Bangalore on the old Madras Road. The Mission runs a Hospital with 50 beds, a Leprosy Ministry with 300 registered patients, a community health and craft training centers and a home for disowned aged (*Shanti Mandiram*). The work of the Mission is evangelistic, medical and social in nature and has 12 Worship Centers with 400 baptized members. The Center has two Missionary Achen and ten Evangelists. The Easow Mar Timotheos Memorial Evangelists Training Institute has this year nine students who are receiving training in Kannada and English.

**The Devanahally Mission:** The Devanahally Mission is also located in Karnataka state which in recent times has seen so many converts. The work of the mission has expanded rapidly into 35 villages where some 843 members were baptized into our church. There are three missionary achen and 13 evangelists. The aim of the mission is to reach the unreached with the gospel, heal the sick, educate the uneducated, uplift the downtrodden and develop the community through awareness programs in health, cultural, social and spiritual values.

Within the Madras Kunnankulam Diocese, other Missions are at Ankola, Mundgodu, Kharwar, Honovar, Secunderabad, Goa, Pollachi etc.

**Other Missions:** Mission in other parts of Kerala include the *Malayalapuzas Navajeeva Kendram* which works among alcoholics and drug addicts. Through this project many are delivered from their addiction and are drawn to the Christian faith who, in turn, are actively bringing healing and comfort to

other addicts and their families. **The Munnar Santhanpara mission** works among estate workers. Other major Mar Thoma Missions outside Kerala are at Madhya Pradesh (Sihora, Satna, Bhopal), Bihar (Samasthipoor), Gujarat (Vapi), Maharashtra (Wardha), Tibet, Nepal and Andamans Islands.

**How can we help?** There are many ways we can help.

1. **Pray** - for freedom of worship and for the gospel to spread to unreached areas. For the Lord of the Harvest to send more workers into the fields. For the protection of the missionaries from abuse, attack and danger.

2. **Give** - The Missions need resources e.g. Bicycles, Motor Bikes, Jeeps, TV and VCR sets, Projector and Generator for Film ministry, Hospital Equipment. The Missions also need money for salary, medical help for the needy, educational help, shelter for the homeless, marriage of poor girls, etc. So give generously. From him to whom much is given, much is required. **Send your donations to the Diocesan Bishop concerned who will know the priorities and the urgent requirements.**

3. **Visit** - Visit the Mission fields while in India and encourage the mission workers.

4. **Become a Missionary** if you have the call. Rev. T.A. Koshy Achen, General Secretary, Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association wrote in his letter to the parishes that only 21 million people out of the 850 million people of India are Christians. "the field is white unto harvest but the laborers are few". A great challenge and a great opportunity is before us. The Lord said to Abraham "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.... and all people on earth will be blessed through you".

We are called to serve. On the night he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus, **"who did not come to be served, but to serve", washed his disciples' feet.** John writes:

" When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his own clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for You?" he asked them. "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, Your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (John 13:12-7)

Mr. and Mrs. V.T. Abraham run an itinerant ministry called "St. Thomas Mission" together with the members of their family.

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# AN INVITATION

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Theme:

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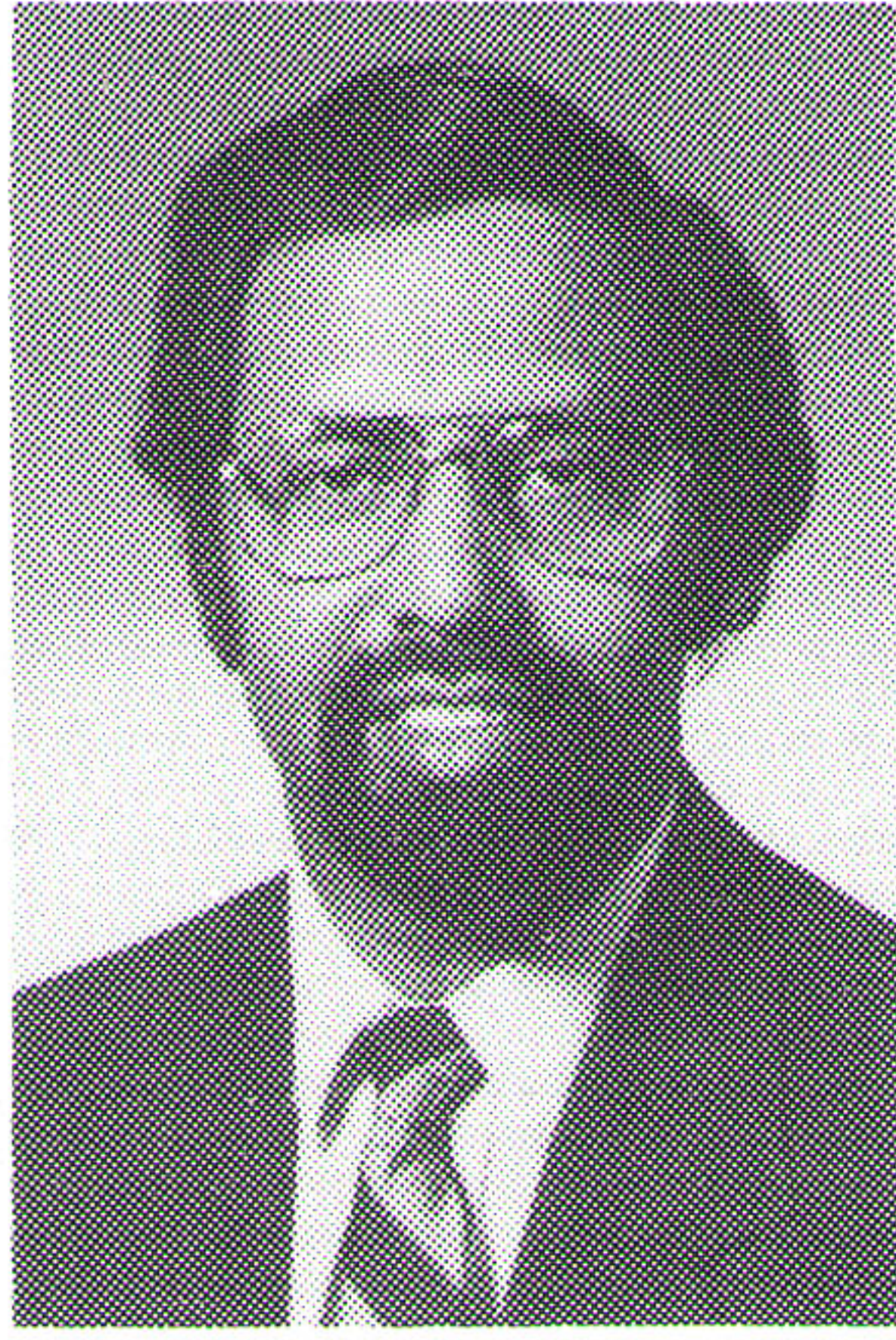
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*A time to rejoice, celebrate and prepare...*





# EVANGELISM - NOT A CASUAL OPTION!

Dr. T.V. Thomas, Regina, Canada

One of the most important biblical mandates given to the Church by Jesus Christ Himself is in Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB).

And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to Me in

heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This biblical mandate of the church is actually two-fold - reaching out to the unchurched with the Good News of Jesus Christ and the equipping of the followers of Christ to personally know God and share Him with others. It is beautifully summarized in the commonly heard statement "To know Him and make Him know". Jesus Christ promises in His challenge that obedience to the church's mandate will produce disciples.

The global range of this biblical mandate is the impetus behind "world mission" or "world evangelization" that the church is to be engaged in. In this article, the emphasis is not on world evangelization in a global sense but the church's responsibility of evangelism in a local sense. Therefore, before going any further it is important to define the term "evangelism". The working definition of evangelism used in undergirding this article is taken from a minimally modified definition presented by the 1918 Archbishop's Committee of the Church of England:

*To evangelize is to so communicate Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that people shall come to place their complete trust in God through Him, to receive Him as their personal Savior and serve Him as their Lord in and through the fellowship of His Church.*

To ensure the ministry of evangelism and disciplinmaking one must hold onto some non-negotiable convictions. There are three biblical convictions which are fundamental in making such a ministry effective.

## 1. Evangelism is NOT an option for a disciple of Christ.

Christ's last command just before His ascension was "be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). It is more than evident in the Book of Acts that the early disciples of Christ put a priority on evangelism in their ministry agenda (2:42, 5:14, 6:7, 9:21, 13:48,49). The persuasive appeal of the apostle Paul is that Christians have been entrusted with *the ministry of reconciliation* (2 Corinthians 5:14-20). It is an obligation of every believer to be involved in evangelism. It can be concluded from a biblical standpoint that any disciple who makes evangelism an option is simply disobeying his Lord.

Unfortunately, there are many myths about evangelism that have discouraged Christians from involvement. Many lay persons have concluded that evangelism is the job of the

professional clergy - evangelists, pastors and missionaries. Some have been alienated by bad examples of evangelism while others have been crippled by a certain method of outreach that does not suit their temperament and personality. Since the overwhelming biblical exhortation is that no Christian believer is exempt from participation, it is imperative to challenge, encourage and release all Christians to develop their own style of outreach.

## 2. Equipping Christians for evangelism is NOT an option for the discipling church.

In today's church, participation in evangelism is a casual option for most Christians. This has resulted primarily from Christian leadership personnel who have taken the equipping task as a casual option themselves.

Equipping, like evangelism, is clearly part of the biblical imperative that Jesus envisioned. Webster's Dictionary defines equipping as "making ready or competent for service and action." It is a well-accepted fact that the Christians in the pew is neither confident nor effective in sharing his/her personal faith with is/her world of contacts. That is not to be the case. The apostle Peter expected he early Christians to always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks (1 Peter 3:15-16). An unequipped disciple displays a strong tendency to shirk from his/her responsibility in evangelism.

Fundamental to the concept of equipping is the New Testament precept and precedent-- every Christian is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit and is a minister of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:7-14). Spiritual gifts are given to believers in Christ for the service of the Kingdom of God. The tragedy is that there are what Roland Griswold refers to in *The Winning Church* (Victor Books, 1986) as "frozen assets under the steeple." The spiritual gifts of many are yet to be "unpacked" and released for use for the glory of God.

The equipping ministry has never been more needed in the church than now. Church leadership needs to heed the biblical challenge of equipping the saints still "sitting on the bleachers." Lay people need to be convinced of the significance of equipping for their growth and effectiveness in outreach. **Christian parents need help to foster the Christian faith in their own children. Theological training institutions need to upgrade their effort to prepare clergy to mobilize laity for evangelism and discipleship.** Only such a concerted and multi-faceted thrust will be able to overcome the apathy of the past and present.

## 3. Evangelizing its Jerusalem is NOT an option for the local church.

Many Christians and churches are committed to world evangelization but they have a tendency to neglect their Jerusalems, their Judeas and their Samarias. They excuse themselves of their responsibility to reach out to people within their reach by their financial gifts to the missionary enterprise overseas. They have contributed to the widespread evangelism-by-proxy syndrome in the pew. This, in turn, has hindered the growth and impact of the local church on its own soil.



An examination of the last command of Jesus in Acts 1:8 is conclusive about his expectations of his disciples to a commitment to world evangelization. This means simultaneous involvement with people who are distant and those who are near. The biblical obligation of the Church is both global and local. The unchurched in a given area is the immediate and direct responsibility of the Christians of the local churches in that community.

Yes, there are challenges to evangelizing the residents of a local community. One obvious challenge is to seek to understand how to effectively relate to the highly pluralistic society. Another is the need for careful analysis of the rapid inflow of various religions and ideologies from around the world. Biblical commitment and prayerful resolve to evange-

lism by every Christian believer and by the local church are key ingredients for its success.

**Conclusion:**

Evangelism is seldom accidental! To achieve Christ's mandate to evangelize requires an intentional thrust. This intention is born in the hearts of the obedient. Obedience to reach out to the unchurched is the only proper response that will please the Head of the Church whose desire is that no one will perish. The promise of the Holy Spirit's powerful enabling is readily available to those Christians who joyfully obey in evangelism. May the ongoing task of world evangelization first begin in one's Jerusalem.

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*Dr. T.V. Thomas is Professor of the Murray W. Downey Chair of Evangelism and Director of the Center for Evangelism at Canadian Bible College/Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Dr. Thomas is a member of the Board of Directors of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and also has a global ministry of preaching and teaching.*

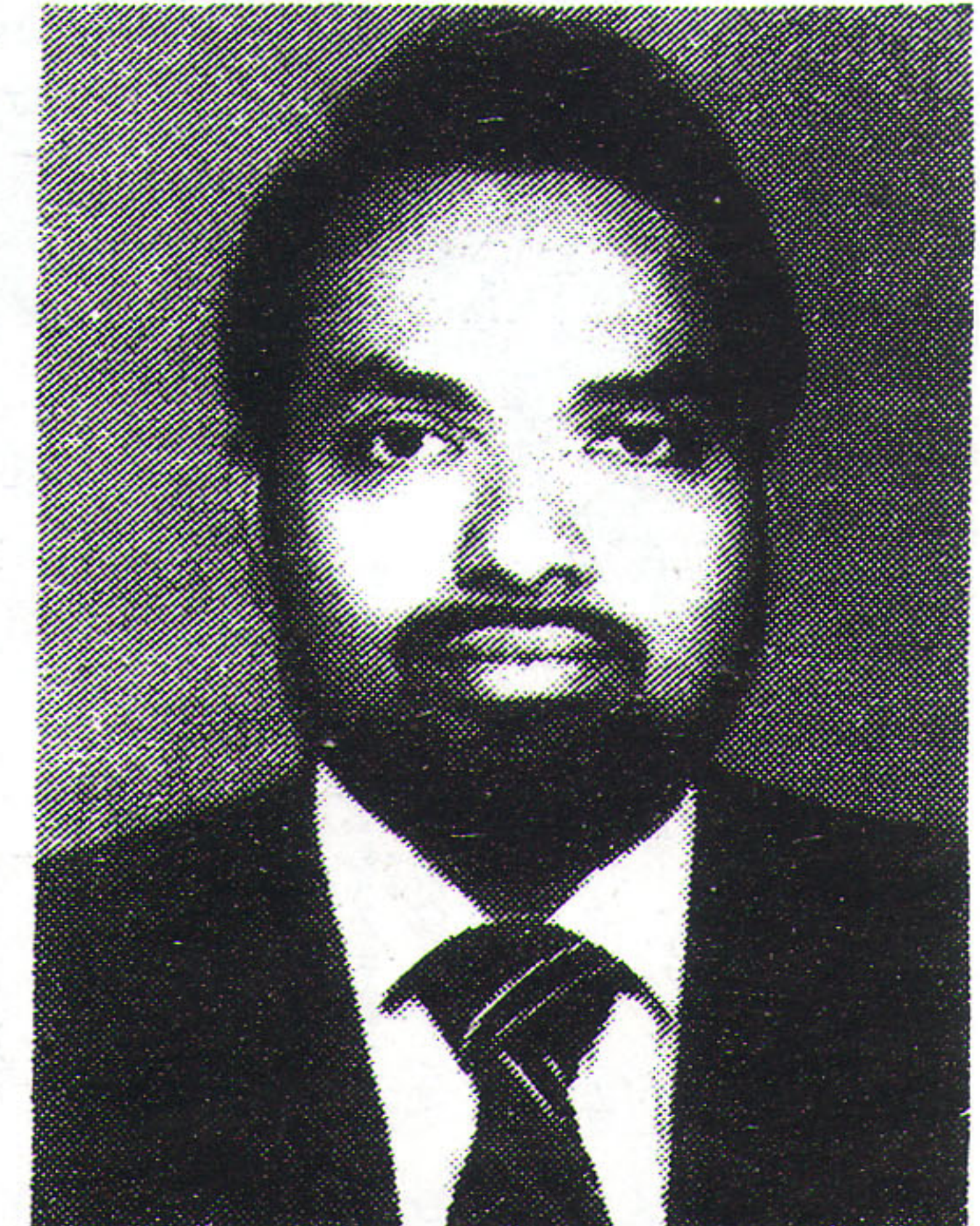
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# THE MARAMON CONVENTION

The 97th Maramon Convention began in Maramon, Kerala, on Sunday, 16 February 1992, and came to a close on Sunday 23rd February. Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan and all our other Bishops were present in the meetings.

The meeting was inaugurated by the Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan at 2:30 PM on Sunday the 16th February. Thirumeni in his inaugural address said that Mar Thoma Church was the first Indian Church to take up the responsibility of evangelization of India. With the goal of evangelism and mission, the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association was formed in 1888. Through the work of the Evangelistic Association 120 new parishes have been formed. Recently about 1200 people have become the members of the church in North Karnataka.

Thirumeni said as we are drawing to the close of this millennium, we have to make renewed efforts to take the Good News of Jesus Christ to every part of India. In this effort, all our parishes with more than a hundred families must raise finances for the support of one evangelist. Rev. Dr. Theodore Williams,

President, Indian Evangelical Mission and Chairman of the World Evangelical Fellowship was the main speaker at the meeting. He reminded the listeners that when God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, God set them apart as holy people for Him. It is the same privilege that God has given to all of us. We are a chosen generation. Thus we need to have a renewed vision of the kingdom of God. We cannot envisage a kingdom without a king. Through such a message Dr. Williams invited the audience to renew their commitment to God.

Through the one week of convention, all our Bishops, Rev. Dr. Theodore Williams, Dr. Ramesh Richard (Dallas Theological Seminary) and Dr. Ajit R. Fernando, Regional Director, Youth for Christ (Sri Lanka) gave the messages. There were also special meetings for the youth and women. Other special meetings also were held focusing on ecumenical relations, mission and evangelism. The morning Bible studies for men and women were conducted by Dr. Williams and Dr. Fernando respectively. One week of meetings concluded in the afternoon, on Sunday, 23rd February.



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan inaugurating the 1992 Maramon Convention.



Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius, Rt. Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Euakim Mar Coorilos and Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom are also seen in the picture.



Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Rt. Rev. Euakim Mar Coorilos and Rt. Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan are also seen in the picture.



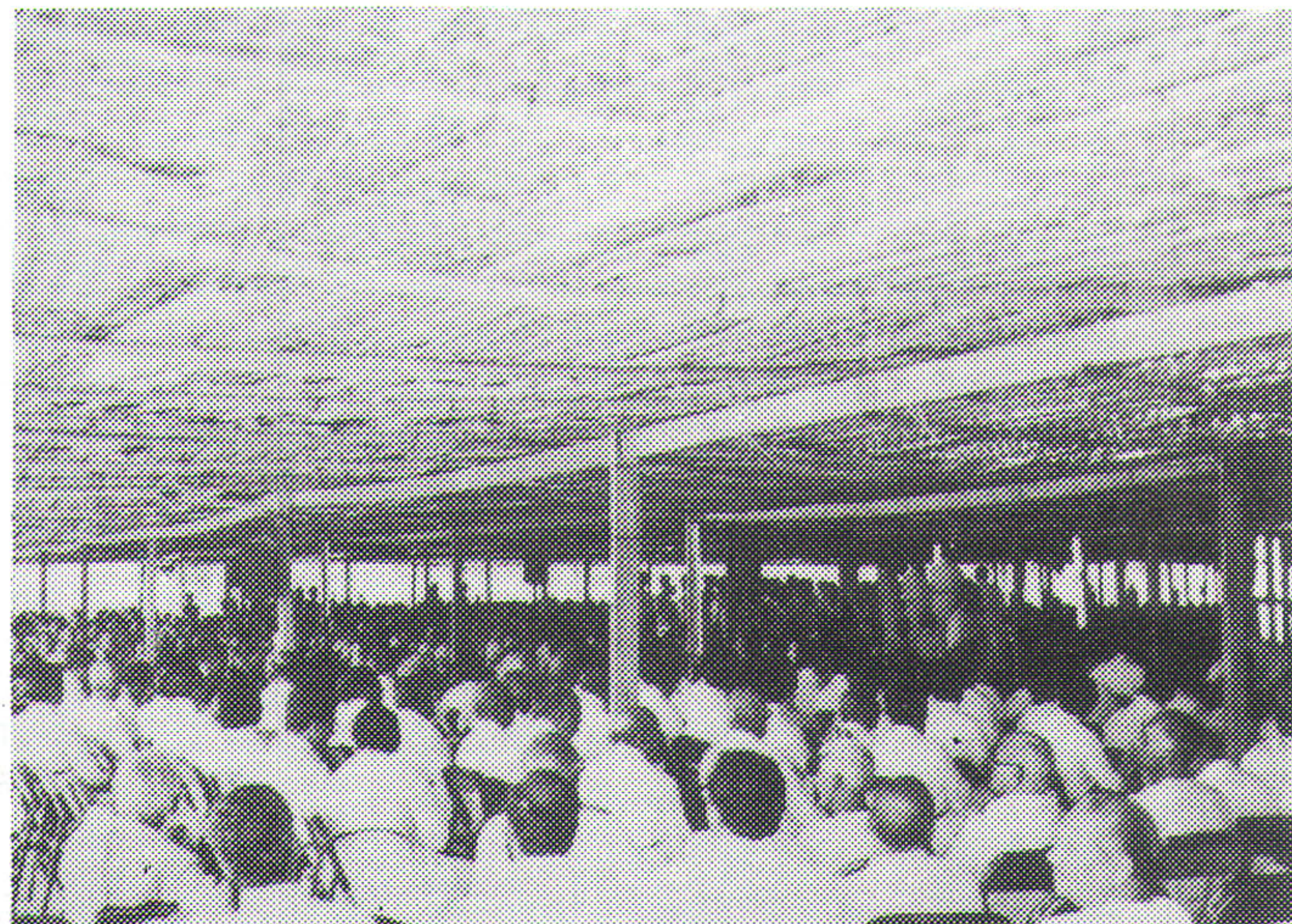


# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU THIRUMENI!!



Rt.Rev.Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, our diocesan Bishop, addressing the Sevika Sanghom delegates at the Maramon Convention on Friday February 21,1992.

We take this opportunity to extend our sincere felicitations to Thirumeni on his 75th birth day(April 27 ). Our Achens and members of the Diocese of North America and U.K. wish Thirumeni many many happy returns of the day and pray to the Almighty to shower His choicest blessings on Thirumeni for many more fruitful years of service to the Lord.



A SECTION OF THE AUDIENCE

Photos by Dr. M.V. Mathew, Chicago.



No, you guessed right! They are not in 'sathyagraham', they are just relaxing after the lunch.







# A VISION OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Rev. K.U. Abraham, Boston University.

**"Young people tend to be precise indicators of what is going on within a community ."**

Critically reflecting on youth ministry with a consciousness that spirituality and ministry are integral could surface any number of pertinent points. Here I have chosen to elaborate three that have far-reaching implications in my own ministry. These are: that reflection on spirituality should be a primary pastoral concern of the Mar Thoma Church, that community is at the heart of ministry and that spirituality could provide a context and direction for dialogue on how youth ministry relates to other ministries of the Church.

A critical priority of the Mar Thoma Church should be that of enabling people to reflect on their own spirituality, on how their faith is expressed in their life-style. Youth ministry is significant, it seems to me, because it reveals this priority, and it is and will be a vital ministry within the Church to the extent that it can help us address this priority.

First, let us look at how youth ministry reveals people's need to be able to reflect on their spirituality. Youth ministry becomes a priority when the Church is losing its ability to help youth grow up in faith. By its very nature, it indicates a problem in passing on the faith. Parents are concerned with a "crisis of faith" in their children and they insist that the Church address this problem. Educators see that youth do not know their faith and become concerned to teach it. Ministers see youth disregard the Church as an influential force in their life and want to take steps to remedy this. However, these phenomena reveal as much about the quality of faith of the adult community as they do about the so-called problems of the youth. **Youth do not grow up in isolation, and for the most part they reflect- although often with more intensity- the struggles of the entire community.** Youth are not alone in their faith questions and searching - we all experience them.

One of the major reasons why the adult community is having problems passing its faith on to youth is because we are not in touch with our own spirituality. **Parents, unable to speak of the value of religious life particularly worship for themselves, wonder why their kids question going to church on Sundays. Adults, unable to speak in personal terms about the meaning of faith in their lives, wonder why youth don't seem interested in spiritual matters.** We need to foster the ability to reflect on spirituality- in ourselves and with each other. Too often our faith is off in the corner, tacked on at the end and peripheral to critical issues of our lives. They find it excess baggage in a transient world where it's important to travel light.

It seems to me that youth ministry can hold us address this priority of reflecting on spirituality in several ways. First of all, we can address it by helping youth become more aware of their own spirituality and by helping them develop the ability to articulate their faith. This skill of reflecting on the everyday is an absolute essential for a vital, growing faith. The ability to

reflect on experience is probably the most important skill that we can offer to youth today. Secondly, by using youth ministry as a "teachable moment", we can minister to the adult community- particularly to significant adults working with youth - by helping them develop the ability to share their faith with young people. Thirdly, we can minister to the whole church by providing a context- that is an environment - where dialogue on spirituality takes place between youth and adults. **Such dialogue should be based on the idea that each group has something to give and something to gain from the interaction. It is from this dialogue that mutual growth in faith can begin to happen, and youth will come to be viewed as an integral part of the community of faith.**

When the integral relationship between spirituality and ministry is conscious in shaping our ministry, community is seen to be an essential element of that ministry. We are, as a church, a community gathered in response to God's presence in Christ in word and sacrament. There are two aspects of this communal nature of ministry that I would like to explore here. Ministry is person-centered and it is relational. These two are intertwined.

Sometimes when you ask a person how things are doing, the response is "Well, I'm here." When you stop to think of it though, one of the most important things we ever have going for us is our personal presence. "I'm here" is perhaps the most significant statement we can make. Ministry is a way of being with and for others so that we are "at their service" -- responding to their needs and concerns. When we consciously shape our ministry on our spirituality, person emerges as central while functions and programming take a secondary role. My person as a minister meeting the person of the other is crucial. Thus the needs and concerns of the total person are an important basis for shaping our ministry. Programming is not an end in itself; rather, personal growth is the goal. Luke's account of Jesus' meeting Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) exemplifies this. Jesus is not so concerned with the sins of Zacchaeus--what he has done-- as he is with Zacchaeus as a man. Jesus becomes present to Zacchaeus. This affirmation of him as a person calls him to repentance.

Persons are essentially related and so person-centered ministry is also relational ministry. These are two sides of the same coin more than they are separate principles. Both are expressions of communal nature of ministry. To say ministry is relational means that it consists of whole-person interaction. Again, the story of Zacchaeus is exemplary. Jesus is not concerned with Zacchaeus as a tax collector, although it is this role that alienates him from his fellow countrymen. Rather, he related to him as a man, as a whole person.

Roles have a way of expressing power or authority--as that of a parent over a child or a teacher over a student. When we relate in terms of roles, we relate unequally. The focus is on how we are different--in what area you are an expert and I am not, and so on. On the other hand, when we relate personally--that is, in whole-person interaction--we focus on

*Continued on page 23*



# REFLECTIONS! AFFIRMATIONS! PROPOSALS!

The Youth Selection Committee (Advisory Committee for the Diocesan Youth Ministry) convened a Leadership Training Workshop at the Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia from February 14-16, 1992, to address present concerns of youth in the North American Mar Thoma Churches. We attempted to:

- Assess the needs of the youth
- Examine how successful the church has been in addressing these needs
- Develop a plan of action for youth ministry

Our discussion revolved around five major areas of concern:

- A. Spiritual Development
- B. Communication
- C. "Our" Church
- D. Appropriate Leadership
- E. Current Issues Facing the Church

## I. CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES FACING YOUTH

### A. Spiritual Development

Our most fundamental concern is the present lack of emphasis on spiritual development; we fail to realize that our life with Christ ought to be our primary goal. This failure is apparent in many aspects of our personal and community life. Rarely is our walk with Christ a matter of concern or of sharing amount the youth. We are not comfortable about sharing our feelings regarding our journeys in faith with each other. we feel an absence of role models, both among the youth and the elders who can cultivate spiritual development. In our churches, we tend to place more of an emphasis on programs rather than on developing our relationship with Christ. Consequently, we are ineffective witnesses.

### B. Communication

We perceive problems in communication among three segments of our community:

1. Parents and Youth
2. Youth raised in the U.S. and Youth raised in India
3. Older members of the youth group and younger members.

1. There is a mutual lack of trust between parents and youth which leads to a failure in communication regarding serious issues (such as suicide and sexuality) that affect both generations. This is due to the parents' desire to shield children from the harsh realities of life. However, students live in a society in which they are forced to deal with these very issues.

2. Often there is no openness between U.S. raised youth and youth raised primarily in India. No effort is made to share each other's experiences and draw from each other's strengths even though both have a common heritage.

3. There is also a gulf separating younger youth group members from older members. The younger ones, on the whole, are more assimilated into mainstream American culture than those who are older. Younger members have difficulty relating to many aspects of Indian culture and tradition.

### C. "Our" Church

In order for the Mar Thoma Church to be "our" church, we

feel an urgent need to appropriate its history and traditions. Only by understanding the history of our church, can we understand its distinctiveness. This will, in turn, give substance to our identity as Mar Thomite Christians. In order to know who we are and where we are going, we need to know where we are coming from. Also important is the living tradition as it is expressed in our worship. **The rituals, sacraments and symbols of our liturgy remain meaningless to us unless it is explained to us.** Finally, we need to cultivate within us a feeling that our church is a sanctuary, a place that provides an atmosphere of peace.

### D. Appropriate Leadership

**We feel that we are unable to have personal relationships with our Achens. There is insufficient trust between youth and clergy due to their short stay in the U.S. parish. By the time a relationship begins to develop, their term ends. Issues of confidentiality have also been raised, increasing the rift between youth and their pastors.** Trust is vital if our pastors are to counsel us in matters of career choice, preparation for marriage and spiritual direction. **It has also been our experience that sermons are often irrelevant to the practical issues that we face daily.**

Given the short duration of clergy stay, we must develop more permanent leadership structures. In particular, we have observed that leaders once actively engaged in church life and now independent, are no longer a part of the lives of youth members.

### E. Current Issues Facing the Church

There are many pressing issues that youth face today; we had difficulty in deciding which issues to stress. We decided that the following issues must be addressed immediately:

1. Substance Abuse
2. Suicides, Family Violence and Gangs
3. Dating, Sex, Abortion and AIDS
4. Racism, Sexism and Discrimination

1. There are two distinct levels we must address when considering substance abuse:

a. Those who have not yet been exposed or affected but need education.

b. Those who are affected and require assistance.

2. Though cases of suicide, family violence and gangs are relatively rare, they must be addressed before they become prevalent among our youth. There are instances of murder, suicide and family abuse in the Malayalee community today. Consequently, some young people have joined gangs to solve their problems instead of approaching family or church members.

3. Ignorance and denial impede successful communication regarding dating, sex, abortion and AIDS within the Malayalee community. These are issues that must be addressed by both youth and parents.

4. Prejudice in all forms is present in our community. The responsibility of making individuals aware of their prejudice lies with youth, elders and clergy. We have cited a few forms of racism, discrimination and sexism:

#### a. Racism

- The relationship between Indians and Blacks.

#### b. Discrimination

- Light-skinned Indians being more desirable than



dark-skinned Indians.

- In the workplace and school.
- People recently converted to Christianity.

**c. Sexism**

- Double standards between Indian boys and girls.
- Roles in church for women.

## II. THE STATE OF THE STATE: IS THE CHURCH MEETING OUR NEEDS?

### A. Spiritual Development

The church has attempted to cultivate spirituality among the youth, but these attempts have had limited success as there are few adult and youth role models in the church. Dedications services and testimonies given at the various conferences have been a source of openness and spirituality. A few churches have organized retreats in order to make church life more Christ-centered. Over all, our spiritual needs are not being met.

### B. Communication

The church has attempted to improve communication among young adults and parents by implementing the following programs. Many churches have focused their attention on open forum discussions. Some of the issues discussed at these forums include: 1) Trust between parents and young adults 2) Open and honest discussion of societal problems 3) Support and overall understanding of each other's needs. Programs such as counseling centers for marriage and family have been introduced and mediated by trained professionals. These persons having our mutual background and heritage have, on occasion, been able to break down communication barriers. Some parishes now have regular adult Sunday School and Bible classes to meet the needs of the parents. These and other activities can bring about more closeness.

The relationship between Indian-raised youth and American-raised youth is currently unstable. However, it is also our feeling that this issue can be resolved through simple measures and common effort. There is an increasing distance between young adults and the younger children. The Church through Sunday School has allowed the young adults to serve as role models to teach and influence our children. Much still remains to be done on the part of youth and parents.

### C. "Our" Church

Attempts have been made in several churches to teach Mar Thoma Church history in Sunday School to the upper classes. In most instances, these classes did not continue for very long, either because of a lack of interest among the youth or a lack of appropriate leaders, or both. In one church, chanting has been successfully incorporated into English services, largely through the efforts of the Achen with cooperation from parents and youth. A deacon training program has been instituted in another church for those interested in becoming lay leaders (Members of this parish plan to share the resources with other churches in the area). Essentially, we have observed that while intentions are good, there is no commitment to follow through with programs in a consistent manner.

### D. Appropriate Leadership

In assessing the effectiveness of leadership in youth ministry, we observe that some steps have been taken: youth serve as deacons during English worship, youth have been encouraged to give sermons, and many are involved in teaching Sunday School. However, much more needs to be

done. Deacons are given little, if any training before they assume their responsibilities. **Women do not play an integral role in the worship life of the church. For example, they are not allowed to serve as deacons.**

We have heard of isolated instances where Achens have been able to provide counseling to youth. However, regular and consistent counseling is not a part of the routine life of parishes in North America. **On the whole, Achens do not privately or publicly, address fundamental challenges faced by youth.**

The role of senior advisors also needs to be clarified. In many of our parishes, senior advisors plan an indispensable role in serving as a reconciling mediator between parents and youth. However, in many cases, the senior advisor only serves as a baby-sitter, who monitors the activities of youth. This stifles freedom and indicates a failure of trust which is crucial if youth are to be responsible leaders.

### E. Current Issues Facing the Church

Due to the sensitive nature of many of these issues, the Church has been reluctant to examine them directly. A number of these concerns (i.e. substance abuse, suicide and discrimination) have been raised at regional and national conferences; however, there has been no further work done at the parish level. **The Church, by and large, seems to be unaware that these issues are ones which are faced by our youth daily, not just in the society at large.** Yet, we as youth leaders are aware of substance abuse by early teenagers in many of our parishes. These and other issues must be addressed immediately before such problems reach crisis levels.

## III. PLAN OF ACTION FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

### A. Spiritual Development

The spiritual development of the youth can be achieved by the following means:

1. Get back to basics. We must cultivate:

- a. Personal relationships with Christ
- b. True concern and love for our fellow youth
- c. Desire to share our testimony
- d. Desire to witness to others

2. Our plan of attack is based on the principle of "Example and Repetition." A letter will be drafted stressing the urgency of the problem of spirituality. The letter should contain the following:

**a. Urge Achens to make conscious efforts to be both a friend and a spiritual leader.**

b. Urge Achens to challenge us to develop a personal relationship with Christ.

c. Urge parish members to make conscious efforts to be role models.

d. Urge senior youth members to disciple younger youth members in their walks with Christ.

e. Stress that no one should be forced to join in fellowship; instead youth should be inspired to have fellowship with other Christians.

f. Realize that a change of this nature requires time, total cooperation and dedication, prayer and dependence on Christ.

### B. Communication

The lack of communication among parents and young



adults can be overcome by implementing the following measures:

1. Individual and group counseling
2. Open forums, carefully planned, using appropriate leadership.

The lack of communication among American-raised and India-raised youth can be overcome by social and spiritual opportunities enabling both youth groups to join together. Concerted efforts can be made by individual members of both groups to break down communication barriers.

The lack of communication among young adults and young children can be overcome by using the young adults as role models who earn the trust of the children.

### C. "Our" Church

To make the Mar Thoma Church "our" church, we recommend the following plan of action:

1. Incorporate the study of Mar Thoma Church history into the Sunday School curriculum at an early age with an emphasis on its functional aspects: What does this mean to me today?

2. Compile a series of educational materials to explain the significance of the sacraments, rituals and symbols used in the church. Parents must also make an effort to learn the meaning of the Mar Thoma culture. Perhaps parents and youth can together formulate explanations of key parts of the Malayalam liturgy so that the youth can better understand a Malayalam service.

3. Become more actively involved in all aspects of the service by: a. designing new liturgies for particular occasions, b. compiling a book of Christian hymns to be used a resource to the youth of the diocese.

4. Promote closer inter-parish relationships as well as interaction with other denominations, especially the Episcopal church.

5. Introduce more parent-youth activities such as family retreats.

### D. Appropriate Leadership

In order to enhance leadership both among Achens and youth, we recommend that:

1. Deacons be fully trained as to the meaning and significance of their responsibilities during worship.

2. Liturgical education should be a regular part of Sunday School education.

3. Youth Leaders must expose Achens to regular "cultural immersion sessions" in their first year in the States. It is our hope that this will help Achens to achieve a level of personal comfort that will allow for closer and more trusting

relationships.

4. Achens must attend all youth group functions.

5. Current youth leaders must invite senior youth leaders (25 and older) who were once active in church life, to serve as senior advisors and resource persons.

### E. Current Issues Facing the Church

#### 1. Substance Abuse

a. Those not yet affected:

- Encourage a Christian attitude regarding drinking or smoking

- Organize workshops (Resources: Alcoholics Anonymous, Tough Love, Liquor Control Board) For Kids: Meetings in Sunday School, using plays or skits, as means of instruction. For Adults: Regional prayer groups led by senior youth leaders (awareness)

b. Those already affected

- Create support groups consisting of senior youth (Exchange business cards with phone numbers)

#### 2. Suicide

Support groups should know suicide prevention phone numbers. Attempts should be made to inform community suicide prevention groups of the particular cultural pressures facing Indian youth, thereby enabling them to do a better job. Youth leaders must receive basic suicide intervention training from community groups. Support groups must know youth in their parishes at a more personal level so that they can be aware of signs of potential trouble.

We hope that this document will initiate and spark meaningful dialogue in our parishes leading to renewal and change. We urge each parish to set aside time to carefully consider our suggestions and respond creatively to the concerns that have been raised.

*(This document has been prepared by a drafting committee consisting of Aji George, John John, Susan John, Suja Thomas and Mohan Zachariah on behalf of the Diocesan Youth Selection Committee. -Editor)*

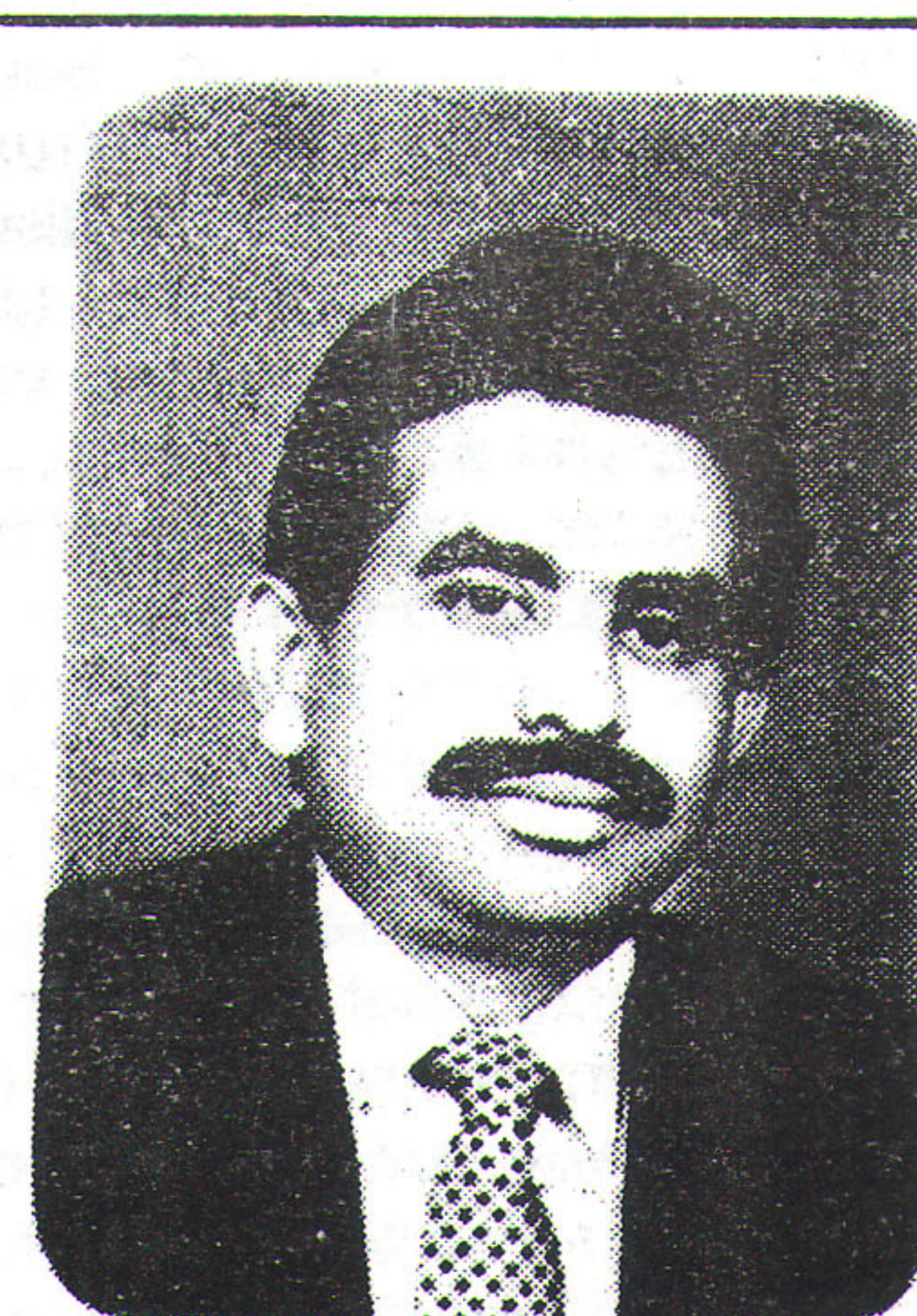
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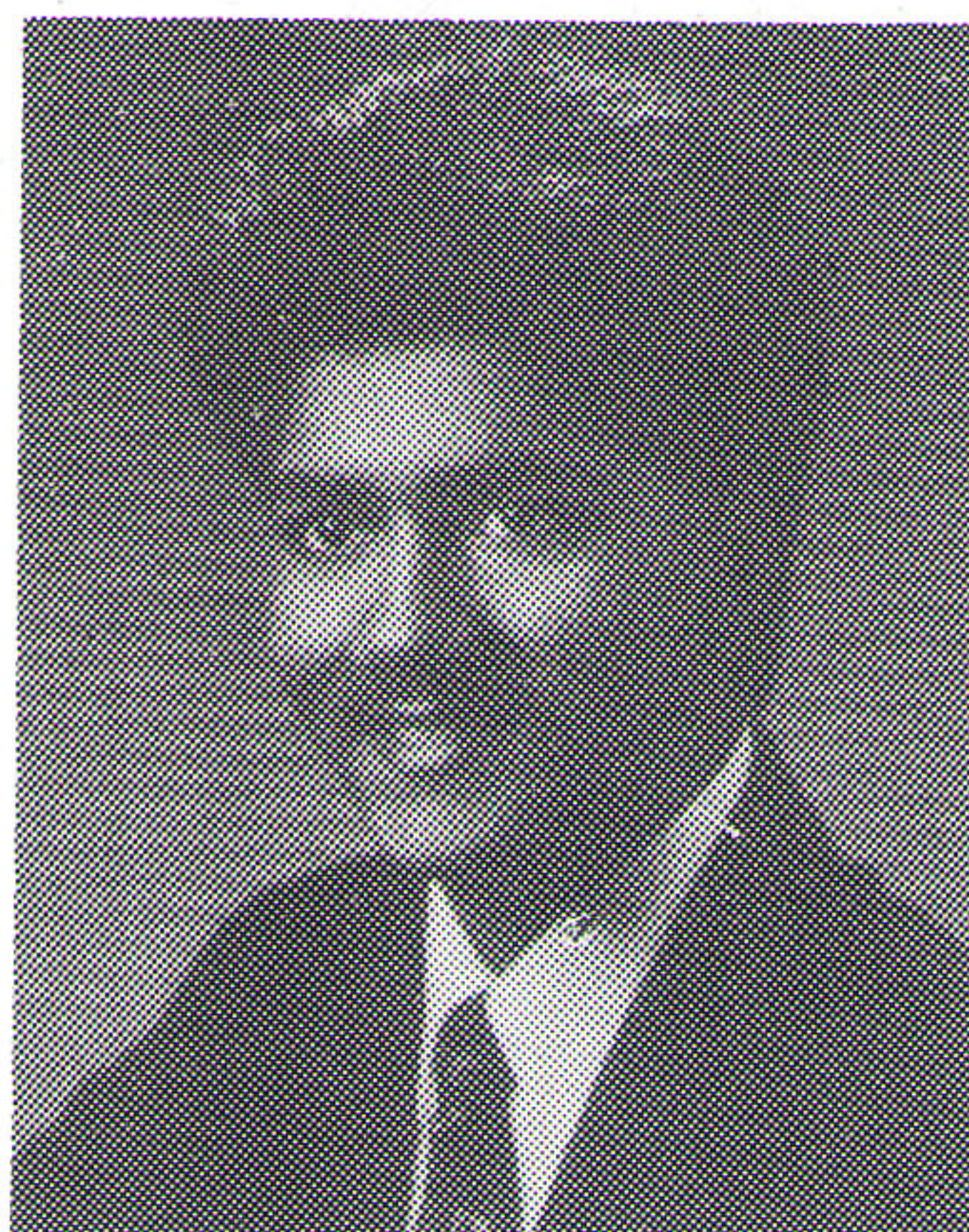


**THE COMPANY YOU KEEP**



# THE MISSION OF YOUTH GROUPS; A YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVE

Simon Ninan, Teaneck, NJ



As long as I have been a member of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship, the question of what our mission as a youth group or a church, for that matter, has never arisen. Since many of our youth groups in the Diocese of North America & U.K. are well established, it is time now to re-define or at least categorize what our role as youth should be in the church. No, this is not one of those essays that is deeply controversial and at the same time inspiring to its readers; it is just an enigma. However, if the essay is thought to be so, at least read it in its entirety. Remember the old phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover".

Rather than being speculative in nature or to procrastinate inadvertently, let me give the facts of this message directly. For a proper explanation of what the mission of the Mar Thoma church is, please contact the local parish achen for advice and a lengthy monologue. Not only will "acho" be delighted, he will probably recruit us into being a lay leader, secretary or even a voluntary evangelist. Perhaps my exploitation of a myth is pompous, but who knows, it could probably happen.

In any case, the task ahead of us is quite clear. Rather than declaring what the proper mission of our youth groups should be, the following presentation will consist of guidelines that will place our youth groups in the right direction and hopefully shed out disbeliefs. As youths there is an infinite amount of things we can do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, but let us now take this opportunity to ponder the following five developmental and instructional precepts that can enhance the performance of our youth groups in the Diocese of North America and U.K.

Being a youth secretary for one year, I have noticed parallel experiences that most secretaries in the diocese go through, causing some of them to never take up the position again unless it is repeatedly forced upon them by an achen or an elder uncle which is usually the case. For the record, let it be said that just because "acho" claims to be an achen or an elder uncle, who in reality is not even related to me, says he is our uncle, advises us on an issue or problems, do we accept the advice like zombies with no brain. Well, not exactly!!! We should have the courtesy to listen to their advice, then think about it and finally come to our own conclusion whether to accept or reject it. Do not be afraid to reject bad criticism from respectable people who are making face value or judgemental decisions on issues they have very little knowledge or control over. Always remember that we are working for the Supreme Lord Jesus Christ, not for our parents, achen or bishops. Keep in mind that Jesus Christ is an equal opportunity employer. He only wants the best from us and it is our mission to complete His task on earth. For this our rewards are eternal life with Jesus Christ. Christ, in the spirit of the law, is the President of our association, not some prejudiced elder who

thinks he or she is God and knows everything because he or she is a Keralite Indian. We are not saying that we shouldn't respect our elders - we should because they are responsible for our Christian upbringing and make it possible to worship in our respective parishes. In a sense we owe it to them: but it is ultimately our decisions that affect the youth group as a whole. Youth leaders are responsible and liable for the decisions they make. Also, they are held accountable for everything they do in the name of Christ as well as other related or unrelated activities. However, if a youth group leader makes a mistake, make it a point not to make a big deal out of it and adopt the adage, "Forgive and Forget." This is exactly what Jesus wants us to do as recorded by the evangelist Luke. Inciting riots, resignations and quarrelling among members won't get anything accomplished; it just causes more troubles. If there is any doubt about this notion, just attend any of the General Body meetings of our churches during election time. If problems do come, obviously youth groups should look to Christ first and then compromise; this is what America is built upon.

Another sorrowful event that plagues our youth groups is the notion of an "F.O.B." We all have a notion or at least a sense of what this primordial concept is all about. Those of us who deny its existence are pure liars. Some of us know this concept more than others; a few of us pretend as if we just don't know. In any case, we all will settle the case by finding out right now what exactly a so-called "F.O.B." is. Technically an "F.O.B." stands for "Fresh off the Boat." The terminology is an inaccurate, degrading, racist, unethical, immoral classification placed upon innocent youths who are raised in India and are relatively new to American way of life. We all will be surprised to find out that there are many similarities among us, such as wanting to have a better life, wanting to party, etc. However, the only difference is the way we both go about it. They might watch Malayalam movies for entertainment while we watch American movies. Or they might think girls or boys from Kerala are cool rice types, while we think Indian American girl or boy is fresh or shall we say naughty by nature. However, the fact is no matter how much we deny it, a movie is still a movie and a girlfriend or boyfriend is still a girlfriend or boyfriend. Instead of helping these fine young people get used to the American way of life, whatever that may be stereotyped to be, most of us increase their miseries by avoidance or ignorance which are perhaps the cruelest form of twentieth century torture available to us today. Why, some of us may ask? 1. According to the Surgeon General, prolonged or limited contact with an "F.O.B." can cause lung cancer or premature infant births. 2. According to the American Dairy Council, making their acquaintance will cause us to lose our existing cool "milk" friendships. All we can do is to break the stereotypes that prevent fruitful relationships among equal youths, considering the fact that when our parents leave us, don't expect our Sunday worship to be in English with these so called "F.O.B.s" around. Since most of us don't know Malayalam, since most "F.O.B.s" do know how to speak English and we are living in America, we ought to work together as brothers and sisters in Christ to make the Mar Thoma Church stronger and more unified and, of course, the services to be in English. Other wise, if we at any time let our defences down by letting the "F.O.B.s" run the place and us falling into the inescapable, irreversible trap of succumbing



into going to a Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran or God-forbid Pentecostal church, we are no better than Benedict Arnold, President Nixon, Oliver North, Lee Harvey Oswald, and/or Judas combined. We as youth groups have a mission and an obligation to break the barriers among blacks, whites, reds, yellows and of course "brownies" like ourselves. As Human beings, we should not have bias towards anyone, this is one of the missions of a youth group. We shouldn't be like our former President Reagan and respond to all problems with the phrase, "Well I can't remember, or I don't recall!" This Reagan phrase only indicates an apathetic nature or upbringing. We should be like Mother Teresa who is full of compassion, mercy, faith and love. We should act like the children of God not like we are members of the Klu Klux Klan.

A third necessary component in our youth group is spirituality. Many of the youth groups and its members lack it. Sure the world is a "land of confusion" but our spiritual mission is not one of them. In no way should our conduct or behavior be like a Keralite "upadeshi", an American "Holy Joe" or even a Mar Thomite achen. But none of the above types should cause us to become an average Joe-Six pack either. Our role model should be Christ himself. We are only required to imitate Him and try to be like Him in every way possible. Being a Christian existentialist and/or the "ideal" Christian is not what we should strive towards. Rather we should be filled with the will to do good and be Christ centered. We can attain this through prayer, worship, fasting, charity and being a part of Christian fellowship. Being a Christian also doesn't mean we can't have parties, dances, and other fun and exciting events. We have to increase our attendance to Church, college, and/or association sponsored dance parties. But by the same token, we have to also increase our attendance to youth group meetings, bible studies, soup kitchens, cottage prayers, worship services and other such youth sponsored Christian events. A general rule of thumb is that for every dance or party one attends, make a point to attend two or more Christian gatherings. This is not for our sakes, but for Christ's. The question is that Jesus calls us, but do we answer? As we see in Ecclesiastes, there is a time and place for everything we do in mortal life.

A fourth component of a youth group with a mission is honesty. As you all well know, in every youth group there are a few "Devil's Advocates". As Christian homeboys and flygirls, we have to "fight the power". We do not need hypocritical "Devil's Advocates" who say they are helping us in one instance and talking behind our backs the next minute. We don't need these "Devil's Advocates" to pretend they're on our side when in reality all they are doing is securing fame and prestige for themselves. We need to get the "Mar Thomite Jungle Fever" to rid our youth groups of "Devil's Advocates" and to show them honesty and justice prevails. Or we have to conform these sad people into one of us. Who are we? We are Mar Thomite Indian Americans "Boyz & Girls in the Hood" human beings. Never forget this dogma, other wise we can lose ourselves to a cultureless society that is ever-emerging. Sure multi-culturism is great, but we are a small distinct part of that culture. Our parents struggle daily and work hard for our well being; they're not out to scold us all the time. We shouldn't take drugs and shoot our parents as one Malayalee boy did or commit suicide as one Malayalee girl did using Drano or Clorox. We should let our parents be proud of us Mar Thomite youths who are "good little boys and girls" in the view of our parents. We have to make our parents aware of these "devil's advocates" and stop them from kissing up to them as better than us. Let us show our parents that we have what it takes; we have the power to be like Fortune 500 business profes-

sional in our youth groups and to show them we are capable Christian people who are ready to accept the responsibility of "Our Church." We have to give the world the impression that Mar Thomites are Too Legit to Quit, like the Hammer. We are all not to be sloppy Joe Manwhich types, but rather to be as bold as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nehru, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and all others wanting to increase the peace and conduct affairs non-violently and honestly. We should follow the laws when they are correct, but when something is not morally correct, we should apply Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" concepts and precepts. Remember that there are parents out there who will help us in our every endeavor. Find them and avoid and ignore all those who put us down physically, mentally and/or spiritually. True, there are power hungry youth members out there who are fools but they all will fall down like Shakespeare's Macbeth because of their overbearing pride and ego. These power hungry youths will be seeing "daggers" in their eyes and will be walking right into an ocean so full of bad blood that they have no-where to go because they are in the middle drawing right into it. To those of us, who are righteous, never fear, but fear the Lord God only, because He will help us out.

The fifth and final theme to be addressed is something all youths know. There are some youths who are quite stupid in their actions and/or behavior because these people think by playing dumb, they can get away with murder. Murder can quite literally stand for anything or behavior that is Anti-christ anywhere from lying, cheating to pre-marital sex and gang-banging. In a nutshell, being cool is not what you wear, who your friends are, or what you eat but rather knowing the difference between right and wrong, and when you are wrong, having the courage to face up to your mistakes and their consequences. Life is composed of both good and bad events, trials and temptations. This is what makes life complete and fruitful; this is who we are yesterday, today and in the future.

In conclusion, if the above five thematic guidelines are followed by a group or individual, this will make the youth groups much better than it already is or at the very least, it will bring us to a level where we can understand an "acho's" monologue on what the mission of the Mar Thoma Church is. Not only is the above essay developmental but it is also experimental in nature. Publication of this text in the *Mar Thoma Messenger* means nothing unless it is applied by every youth group. Youths should make meaning out of reading whether it be this essay or any other and be capable to interface with the text. Before this text comes to a halt, let me say that our life is too short to worry, therefore we should live our lives to the fullest, basically to seize the , "Carpe Diem". Since our time is brief on earth, we should make full use of all our resources, including our youth groups. We have to be able to help ourselves and non-Christians as well. **Always remember the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang - where there is a little bad in everything that is good, and there is a little good in everything that is bad. More importantly remember that people are not born into who they are, but they are made into who they are by our decisions.** We, however, are Christ-like and Christ-centered human beings. So increase your awareness by reading because reading increases the amount of tools and weapons we have while waging the war for Christ. If this essay left you with nothing else, please take into consideration the following sentences. "With the Lord God Almighty, you can do anything, including the impossible or impractical!! So stop worrying and fear only the Lord God Almighty, for He will be your Saviour and more importantly your Salvation to Heaven!!!





# XIII Mar Thoma Youth Conference of North America & U.K. - 1992

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**Theme: Hope In The Midst Of Crisis**

**Place: St. Elizabeth College,  
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**Date: August 12-15, 1992**

**Leaders: Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom  
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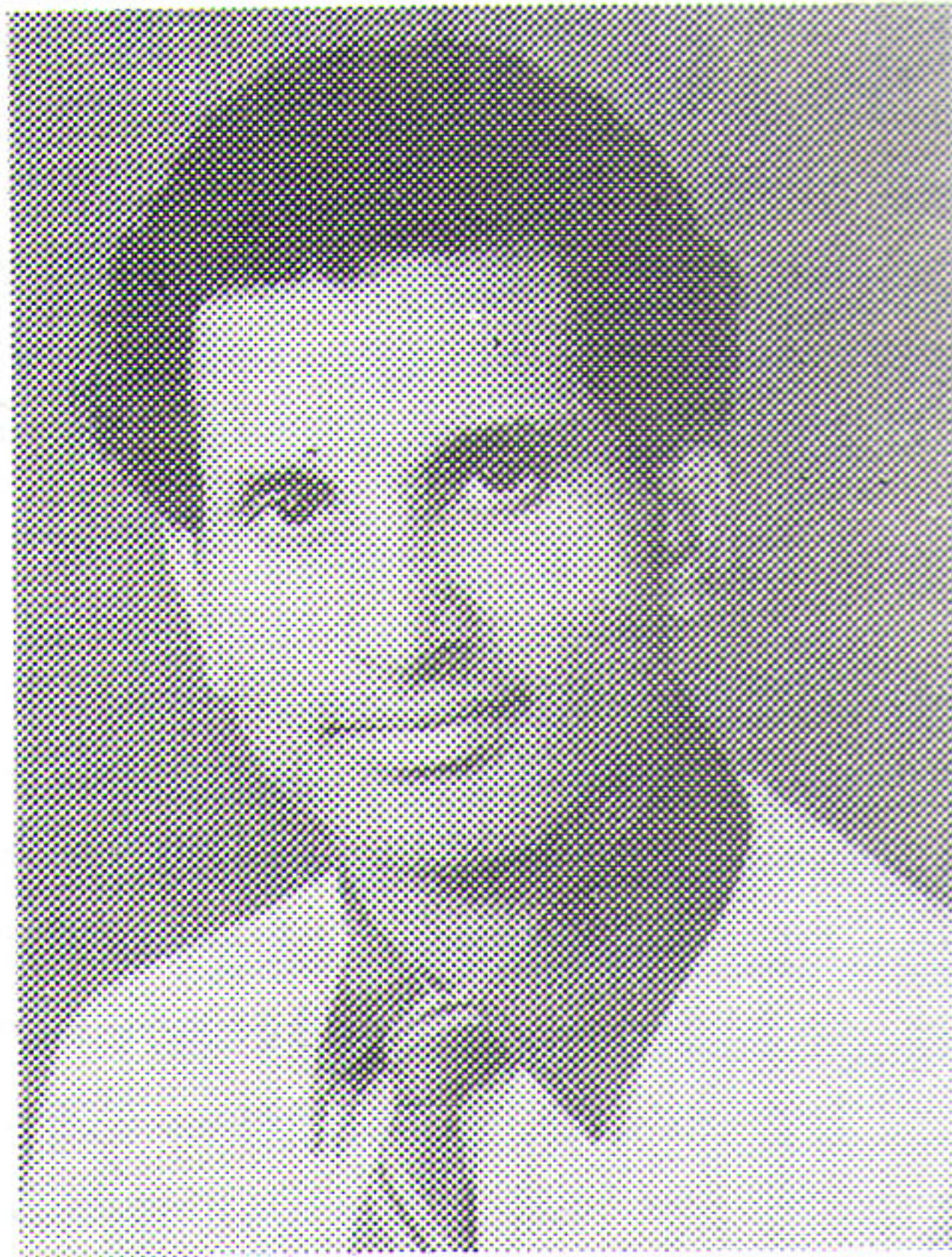
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*Please keep us in your prayers for the success of the  
conference.*



# FAITH IN CHRIST

Dr. A.V. Thomas, Levittown, New York



will hold us up. Without faith, we can do nothing and can not live.

Faith is fundamental to the Christian creed and conduct for we are saved by faith, Ephesian 2:8 "By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you, it is the gift of God. As Christ conversed with people and healed them, he looked for the characteristic of faith in each one. In Matthew 8:8-10, the centurion manifested a humble faith, in Mark 10:51, the blind man showed an earnest faith, and in the book of Daniel 6:10-23, Daniel manifested a daring faith.

Faith is confidence in God that leads us to believe His word, the Holy Bible. By faith, we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour and confess Him to the world.

The definition of faith:

The dictionary says, Faith is belief, trust, fidelity and loyalty, creed or religion.

The Bible says:

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1)

We relax and without looking, place our whole weight on a chair; faith says we will not fall.

Faith is simple enough for the child to fulfill but too sublime for the sage to comprehend fully or explain satisfactorily. Faith is not the blind act of the soul; faith in God rests upon the best of evidence, the infallible word of God. Faith is trust in the God of the Scriptures and in Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, faith receives Him as Saviour and Lord and impels loving obedience and good works. The faith that saves is a personal trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The primary objectives in understanding faith are:

- I. To understand the necessity of faith.
- II. To understand the nature of faith.
- III. To understand the source of faith.
- IV. To understand the object of faith.
- V. To understand the principle of faith.
- VI. The results of faith.

## I. THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:6 "but without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. There can be no dealings with the invisible God without faith in His existence. We must believe that He exists, that he rewards men; this confidence is called faith. Faith is necessary for salvation (Acts 16:31). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. This is the exercise of faith. Now here is the question. What is faith? Faith is simply believing. Everyone has faith, though not everyone uses it rightly. Abraham was a man of great faith; God gave him certain promises and Abraham believed them. He had faith. There

was nothing to make him believe these promises except that God had done the promising. God promised Abraham that he should have a son. Abraham thought that this was impossible but he did believe God and God was pleased. Let us look at what is said in Acts 27:21-25. Paul was going on a ship from Jerusalem to Rome as a prisoner. A great storm came upon them and they were all afraid, except Paul. They saw the great towering waves, heard the whistling wind and felt the rocking of the ship and thought they would all be killed. But God spoke to Paul and told him that not one of them would be hurt. Paul believed what God said. The storm was just as bad, the waves were still as angry, the wind blew just as hard, but Paul knew they were safe. He believed God. Faith is necessary for salvation keeps us safe all our lives.

## II. NATURE OF FAITH.

There are two kinds of faith in regard to salvation:

- A. Head belief - a knowledge of the historical Christ and a general acceptance of the Bible.
- B. Heart belief - faith from the heart that causes the person to act on his faith.

We must base our faith on Christ and not faith in our own selves. Faith is not something that we can make ourselves. True faith in Christ is believing to the extent of receiving Christ (John 1:12 and Colossians 2:6). "Neither knowledge nor assent is true faith; true faith involves appropriation." Faith is the soul leaping forth to embrace the Christ in whom it believes. Where does faith come from? Ephesians 2:8 says it comes from God. To those who will be saved, God has given the faith of the Lord Jesus. That is the kind of faith that saves. The ordinary kind of faith helps people to get along in life; saving faith is the kind that takes us to heaven. The Holy Spirit must give them this saving faith. The scripture says "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

## III. SOURCE OF FAITH

### A. The divine side.

Faith is the work of the Triune God.

1. God the Father. Romans 12:3 "...according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith". Every man, therefore, has the inward potential of faith. I Cor. 12:9 says "To another faith by the same Spirit". Some have more faith than others, for faith is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

### 2. The human side

Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. As we read stories of the Bible, our faith grows stronger and stronger. The people heard the Word of God and believed - had faith (Acts 4:4 and Mark 9:24). In Matthew 17:19-21, Jesus tells his disciples that certain demons can only be cast out by prayer and fasting accompanied by a living, vital faith in the Lord.

## IV. OBJECT OF FAITH

### A. The word of God.

Faith must never be faith in an uncertain thing called "faith". It must be faith in the Word of God. Faith accepts the statements of the Bible as the revealed word of God, true and genuine.

### B. The person of Christ.



# IS TEACHING A VOCATION TODAY ?

Dr. George K. Zachariah, Washington D.C.

(Talk given to the Mar Thoma Teachers' Fellowship in Philadelphia On Sunday, February 16, 1992.)



Everyone will agree that teaching is a vocation; if not, it must be one. It is true that some may not have taken up teaching as a vocation but merely as a means of earning a livelihood, or making a living. In order to make it more relevant to our context, let us ask whether our teaching is a Christian vocation. To paraphrase it further, what difference does it make to be a Christian teacher in the teaching-learning environment ? As we are in the education business we should first be clear as to what our business is. What is education, after all ? Etymologically it could have been derived from one of the two Latin words - '**educare**' and '**educere**'. **Educare** means rearing, bringing up; **educere** means to unfold or help grow, help fulfil what one is capable of. The motto of New York State comes to mind; "Let everyone become what one is capable of". In both those senses education's goals are applicable. Let me give three of my definitions of education:

(i) Developing a dictionary of experience;

(ii) Creating and utilizing the environment to facilitate the development of intelligence. The word intelligence is derived from the Latin '**intelligere**' which means shaking up or selecting.

(iii) The reconstruction and reorganization of experience (including individual and group experiences, a body of knowledge/information, skills, needs, problems) in order to facilitate (a) the reflection of experience, (b) the development of the individual's ability to direct the course of one's own subsequent experience, and (c) utilization of this improved ability and skill in preparing others for life experiences.

Education is an invitation. It is an attempt to bring people into a kind of conversation, into a set of ideas, into ways of thinking, talking, writing and reading that are new to them. Thus we can see it as a relationship. And if the relationship works right, it is like a romance, gripping you. True education, by the same token, is a subversive force because it mandates change. It is a life-long process of learning how to negotiate with the world, i.e. understand, accept, cope with, manipulate, triumph over, enjoy, be one-with etc.

We are here to reflect upon our role and responsibility as Christian teachers. Teaching is our Christian vocation. The word vocation is derived from '**vocare**' - to call. And thus a man's vocation is a man's calling. It is the work that he is called to in this world, the thing that he is summoned to spend his life along. The vocation is where we find out our personal dignity. We can speak of a man's choosing his vocation, but perhaps it is at least as accurate to speak of a vocation's choosing the man. Primarily, the real vocation for all of us, not only teachers but all others, is the calling to be apostles and in a nobler sense to be Christs. To be Christs in whatever way we are able to. To be christs with whatever goodness we have and in whatever place, among whatever brothers we are called to. That is the vocation, the destiny to which we were, all of us, called even

before the foundations of the world. Every occupation should be considered just as truly a sacred vocation as is the ministry. We must constantly remember that it was the meaning of the powerful New Testament phrase 'the priesthood of all believers'. **To choose a Christian vocation, therefore, is to choose the role of a servant or better still a 'slave'**. We do our best to soften Paul's language by translating the word 'slave' as 'servant'. In the celebrated words of George Herbert:

"Teach me, my God and King  
In all things Thee to see;  
And what I do in anything,  
To do it as for Thee."

We have to make a distinction between vocation and career:

- **Vocation** implies a commitment to a cause or a search, a 'calling' with social purpose. It implies acceptance and active pursuit of a different pattern of life-Living a vocation for individual and social change. That means seeing your life in the context of a protracted struggle. You struggle not only to change your own values but the values of those around you. You work with others to challenge institutions as well as yourselves. Such a life does not offer the kind of security we have grown to expect., We will have to create our own security, not just material security but the security that comes with knowing that there is a place for you in the work that is to be done.

- **Career** implies a specialization, a progression of jobs and the achievement of professional standing. Earning high salary and achieving status and power are usually the primary goals of a career. For the advancement of your career it is almost mandatory that you defend the status quo. Our vocation needs redemption. I have put the following inscription on the door of my office, a profound statement by Eric Hoffer, the longshoreman who never went to college but became a well known author and a professor in the University of California, Berkeley:

"People who invest themselves in being what they can be, and even more important, people that invest themselves in helping others be what they can be, are involved in the single most important work on this earth."

I said that we have been called to be apostles. Apostle is one who is sent with a mandate, with the authority of one who sends. The apostle is:

- |  | Goals                          |
|--|--------------------------------|
| (a) a messenger of the Word                                    | - Communication (Proclamation) |
| (b) an ambassador of the Faith                                 | - Conversion                   |
| (c) a witness of the Church to the resurrected power of Christ | - Community.                   |

These six elements are involved in an act which we can call an act of mission and form an interpretive grid, permitting the verification of the missionary value of each action. It is through the will of God, or the command of God, to use Pauline phrases, that we have become His apostles. We must realize



that we have not been in a real sense appointed by some educational agency, but by Christ Himself. The object of His apostleship is 'the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus.' The beauty of it all is that when we discover God's plan and purpose for us, we have a sense of destiny. We must also remember that we never work for Him. We are only allowed to work with Him.

A teacher is supposed to teach, not echo. It is absurd to insist that teachers hide their opinions or their professional judgments from their pupils. A teacher is an intelligence, not a phonograph. A great teacher is one who is a master in the art of starting fresh things moving, of evoking response, of putting things in new relations which have not been seen before, of creating the sense of importance. The teacher's task is the human(e) one of catalyst, spark, stimulant, resource, interpreter and learner.

What is the mark of an effective teacher? Before we address this, let me suggest some criteria of true teaching:

- (a) That it tell the truth - Truth is one;
- (b) That it be whole - addressing the whole man;
- (c) That it be marked by a sense of excellence - Whitehead's remark that "Moral education is impossible without the habitual vision of greatness" comes to mind. This must be true of all education.
- (d) Discrimination of being able to tell the difference between the important and unimportant in life, true and false;
- (e) That it aims to teach how to take sides. The end of truth is not neutrality.

Coming back to the question raised, some requisites or characteristics of effective teachers mentioned are:

- Intellectual competency, integrity and independence.
- Dynamic and energetic person;
- Being well prepared for class;
- Willing and open to suggestions and co-operate in

teaching activities with one's colleagues;

- Uses improved methods of presenting materials and has an interesting style of doing that;
- A vital interest in and enthusiasm for teaching and working with students demonstrating respect for them.
- Discuss points of view other than his own and encourages class discussion (lead, don't tell) and stimulates their intellectual interest, intelligent and independent thought and enthusiasm;
- Takes evaluation seriously and chooses the appropriate methods of evaluation'
- Continue the interest in one's students even after they have left the confines of the school.

#### Some final thoughts on our role and responsibility.

Our vocation can be summed up in the Pauline phrase: "Faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). Our only role, as Bonhoeffer said, is "to participate with God in the suffering of the world"- not as men-pleasers, not with eye-service, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. What we have to do with the thinking whether we are fit or not for the vocation? The Master Workman surely has a right to use any tool He pleases for His own work, and it is plainly not the business of the tool to decide whether it is the right one to be used or not. If He chooses to use us, of course we must be fit. **And in truth, if we only knew it, our chief witness is in our utter helplessness. His strength is made perfect, not in our strength, but in our weakness. Our strength, in fact, is only a hindrance.**

I asked the question in the beginning: what difference does it make to be a Christian teacher? The experience of a maid who was converted should be a lesson to us. She said, before her conversion she used to sweep around the mat and after her conversion, she began sweeping under the mat.

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*Dr. George K. Zachariah is currently Professor of Philosophy at the University of the District of Columbia.*

(Even though the above article is addressing the issue of teaching as a vocation, it has relevance for all professions including its direct applicability to our Sunday School teachers. -Editor )

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#### ***A Vision of Youth Ministry (continued from page 14)***

our sameness. We accept each other as we are. In whole-person interaction, we are equal and I am as open to grow from my encounter with you as you are to grow from your encounter with me. We relate in a mutual give-and-take in which each of us has some thing to give and something to receive.

Ministry with a communal focus, which is a ministry of presence, is in my experience most effective when it begins as a listening presence. For me, this does not imply that is passive or "mind-less" in its listening. Rather, it means that we take youth seriously and relate to them with sensitivity and understanding. This means that we don't presume to know their needs, but let them tell us about their lives. Then, as their experience and needs unfold, it means we need to be able to respond from our own experience. A listening presence means laying aside our hidden agenda, not trying to trick them into wanting what we would like them to, reverencing their uniqueness as individuals, and trusting them to shape their own lives. It means being able to lay aside our institutional

presuppositions that ask youth to relate to us on our own terms.

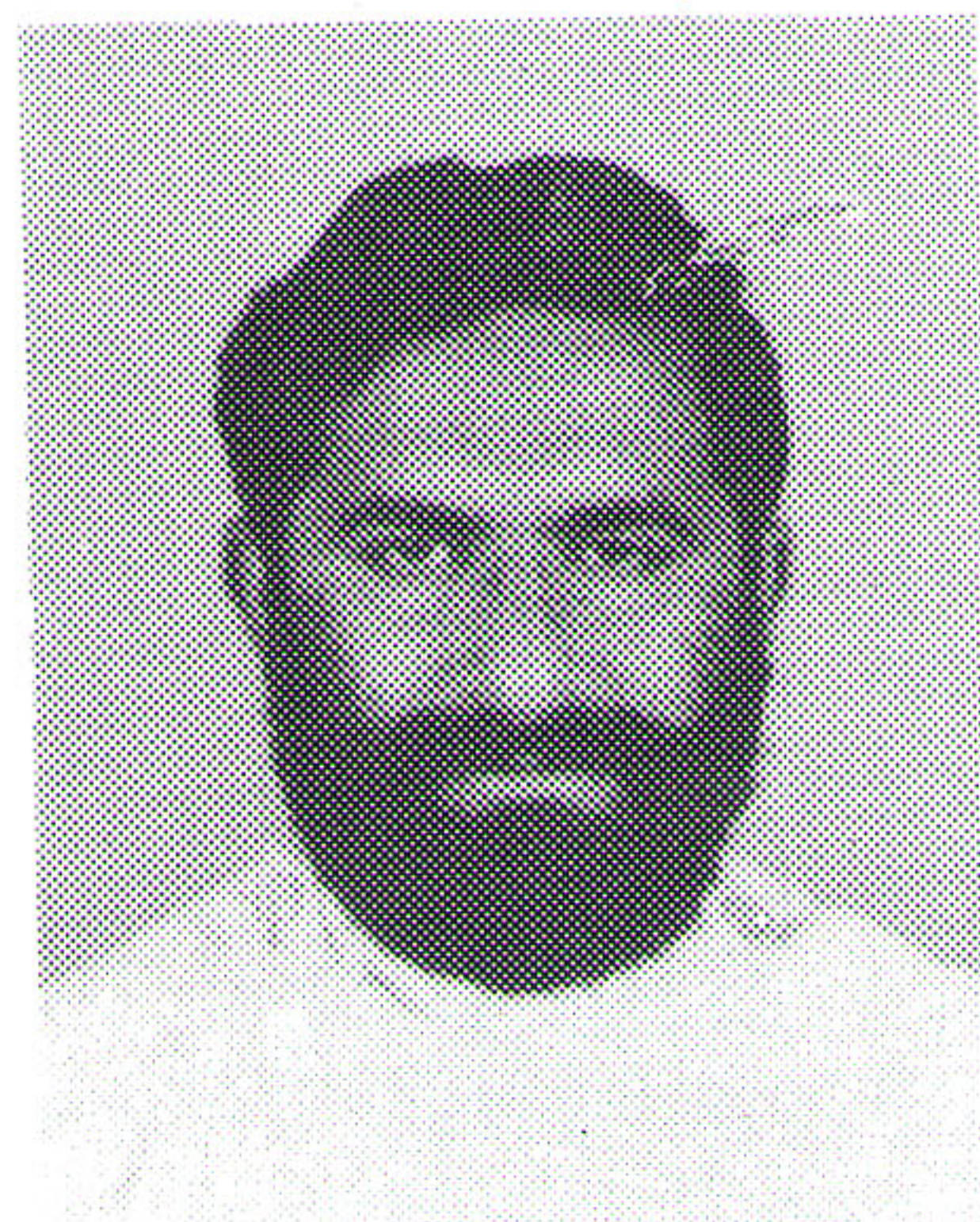
Think of how many of our programs ask youth to come to our buildings and fit into present patterns of interaction we have designed. We are comfortable with what we have planned. But are they? Yet, if we have a person-centered ministry, we should be concerned with their comfort more than our own. We as adults should be willing to lay down our comfort to be at their service.

The point of writing down these reflections is not to have a definitive statement that indicates the struggle is over and the victory won. My purpose is to surface a dialogue that must begin within each of us and among all of us if we are going to continue to shape our lives and our children's lives according to the Gospel and call others to do the same. No one of us can do it alone. Together, I have much reason to be hopeful.



# FIFTY DAYS LENT

Rev. Joseph Jacob, Edmonton, Canada.



We are in the lent season. Valiya Nombu' (big lent) has its importance among the other four Lents in the Church. It is the main period of observation of Christ-event in the Church's almanac. Almost all churches observe this lent, although its emphasis and teachings varies from

church to church and from east to west.

For us the "Valiya Nombu" is a period of fifty days. How does this number fifty come? Christ's forty days of fasting before the start of his public ministry and the last ten days of his passion, death and resurrection give a total of fifty days. But for others, seven weeks - seven always standing for fullness- are required to remember the CHRIST EVENT in its fullness.

Forty days of fasting and meditation helped Jesus to conquer Satan, resist temptations, and enabled him to see the Father's will to save mankind. If Satan stood in the way of the Son of God, what would be the story of us sinners? We also need the power of prayer to defeat Satan. "Be alert, be on the watch, your enemy, the devil roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Be firm in your faith and resist him..." )1 Peter 5:8)

The word Lent implies lamentation, repentance, fasting, and meekness. But for the Eastern Churches, Lent is more than that. For them it is a time of preparation for the great Easter. Because Easter gives hope of a life after death, it gives followers joy and assurance that their sins have been washed away through the atoning sacrifice of the Savior.

This Lent lies between two feast days, *Potrutha* (to leave) and Easter. The first Sunday reading is about the miracle at Cana during the marriage feast. So, for the Easterners Lent means, preparation for a great feast Easter, which ultimately leads to the great feast in the kingdom with Jesus. With a transforming Jesus in a new heaven and new earth. Lentern readings give emphasis on the kingdom of God. The accounts of the healing of the leper, the paralytic, the Cannanite woman, the crippled woman, and the blind beggar follows. To Jesus, the healing ministry was the sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God. That was his main sermon too. Jesus gives healing to the body and the mind. Sin is the cause of all the diseases. So Jesus first gives remission of sins and then healing The Transforming power of Jesus (as was seen at Cana) works in all who accepts Him as Savior.

Lent is a time that people should spend in meditation, prayer, and intercession. It is a time to look back at past life and amend it according to the Word of God. It is a time when people should give priority to spiritual food while reducing or avoiding physical food. Can you share your privileges and food with the under privileged and hungry? God shared everything for us sinners, then what about us?

It is the time the universal Church proclaims to the world the life giving sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It challenges everybody for a sacrificial life and mission in this world. Christ intends for a healthy, God-fearing people for his kingdom. Lent helps each believer to be firm in his or her faith, based on a disciplined Christian life.

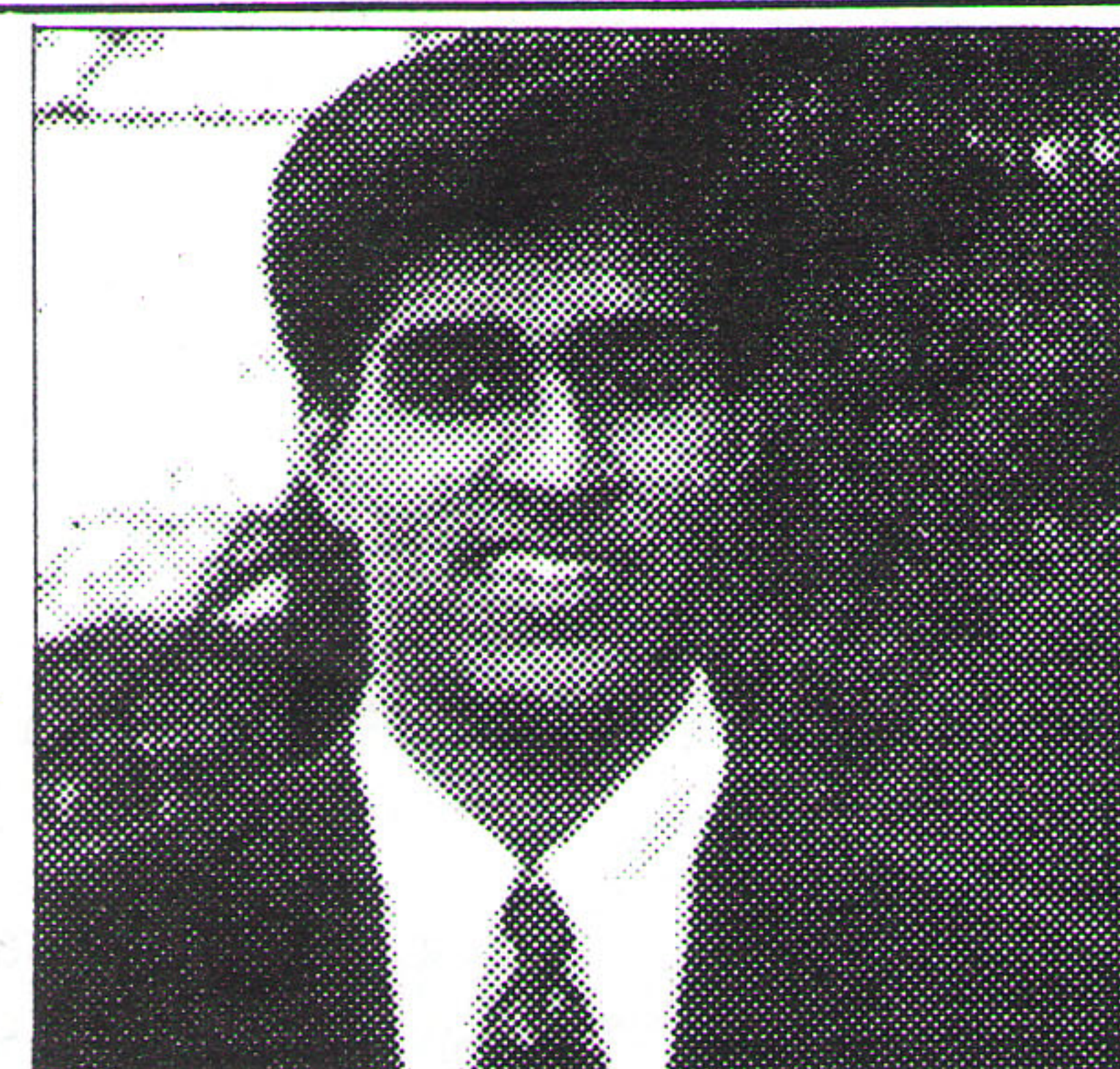
Once again the Lent has come to our midst. Let us get nearer to the Saviour and meditate upon the cross in which He redeemed us all for His own. The cross pointed out the viciousness of sin and at the same time, the love of God. The plain cross tells us about the risen Lord. He is with us until the end of the world.

The Mar Thoma Messenger extends its congratulations to John Alexander Abraham, 101 Nixon Ave, Staten Island, New York on being named as a finalist in the prestigious National Westinghouse Science Talent Research Competition.

John did enzyme research for his project in biochemistry. Selecting a specific enzyme in the cell membrane of a yeast cell, he modified the chemical link between two regions of the membrane by inserting amino acids. Since the structure of the enzyme tells its function, and the enzyme is responsible for pH regulation and nutrient uptake, the experiment could lead to the development of drugs for anti-fungal therapeutics.

John is completing his senior year at the Stuyvesant High School in New York City, a specialized school for gifted youngsters. He is also the recipient of John Motley Morehead scholarship award, granted to the top 40 students in the U.S. for outstanding achievements, leadership and character. John is also a member of the Arista Honor Society, Stuyvesant Math Team, Computer Club and Student Executive Council. He also has been awarded the New York City Mayor's Recognition award and School Chancellor's award. John is admitted to Harvard University under the University's early admission program where he plans to pursue research career in medicine.

John is the son of Dr. John Abraham and Mrs. Anna Abraham, long term residents of New York City, members of Trivandrum Mar Thoma Church and local Episcopal Church.



John Alexander Abraham, 17, of Staten Island, New York



# INTERPRETATION OF MORAL, SPIRITUAL OR INTERESTING ASPECT OF A CHRISTIAN HOME

Mrs. Mariamma Thomas, Philadelphia

The most important aspect of a Christian home is a 'home with love, peace, and faith.' In order to maintain a Christian home, we should adhere to some principles based on moral and spiritual values. God the Father would be the head of the family. Parents should be able to lead the children morally and spiritually. First of all, let us examine the moral aspect of a Christian home. In order to keep the moral standard of a Christian family, one should follow some guidelines:

## I. Maintain a disciplined life.

a. If we do not keep a sort of discipline in life, how can we lead a life with certain values? If there is no discipline, the life will take whatever direction the wind blows which would lead us ultimately into dangerous turns. If we have moral knowledge, we can select what is good or bad from this world.

### b. Control over anxiety.

If we have some moral thinking, we cannot go anxiously for something which is not acceptable to a Christian. Looking at our friends' life-styles and trying to follow them blindly without even thinking over it, shows that we do not have a firm control on our life.

### c. Control over freedom and emotions.

Too much freedom can lead us from the right tracks to the wrong ones. When we have much freedom, we want to surrender ourselves to emotions which can lead us into danger. So it's necessary to always think morally about ourselves.

## II. Conduct oneself wisely.

There are particular facts regarding this point which we can use to lead a moral life.

- a. Have a godly personality.
- b. Assume personal responsibility in life.
- c. Have the power to fight inefficiency.
- d. Have the courage to make personal decisions.
- e. Understand the security within the Christian life.
- f. Have a focused mind of morality.
- g. Think intelligently about moral issues.

If we keep these facts in a Christian home, the parents can lead their children with a definitive purpose, philosophy, and practical application of moral principles to their lives. If the parents are strict about maintaining good conduct and moral standards, the children cannot deviate from that standard. One example of this is the life of Joseph who was a model of morality in the Old Testament. If we ingrain these principles into our children, they are automatically imbued with a sense of morality and will conduct themselves accordingly. As we are living in a country where there is no importance given to a moral life-style, it is our duty to guide them with these moral truths. Moral courage and moral support leads to moral victory.

Finally, let us examine what are the evidences of a moral life. A moral life-style is evident in our style of dress, behavior, interpersonal relationships, and relationships within our community. Let our Almighty God help us to lead a moral life within our Christian homes.

## III. The spiritual aspect of a Christian home.

There are many spiritual elements which are essential in our Christian homes.

### a. Real conversion or salvation.

Conversion can be defined as a change from the life which we were living to a new life with God which is eternal. Conversion is a change of mind and ensuing attitudes toward understanding the real path of God in our practical lives, i.e., repentance of our past lives and surrendering our new lives to God. Then the power of God works within us and aids us in living a spiritual life. One example of this is the life of Sadhu Sunder Singh.

### b. A prayerful life.

The Christian spiritual life depends on prayer. Without a life based on prayer, no Christian can stand. In the Bible, all the great spiritual leaders had strong, consistent prayer lives. Prayer helps us to communicate with God on a daily basis and strengthens us to grow spiritually by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus provided the greatest example of prayer in our lives.

### c. Obedience to the word of God.

To understand the Bible, it is very essential to be spiritual. The word of God is the "Sword of Life". If the "Sword" is with us, we can fight against the evil of this world. For a Christian home, it is very important to follow the truths of the Bible in a practical fashion. Psalm 119 gives many truths which a Christian can use and follow in his life.

### d. To radiate the love of God.

To be a godly person is to be a loving person. If we have everything but it is without love, we have nothing. Without love within us, we cannot prove we are Christians.. If there is no love for one another, we cannot demonstrate this love to our children. In I Corinthen 13, we are given the definition of love. From love stems so many good qualities such as patience, kindness, forgiveness, humility, and all spiritual deeds. To have a spiritual life, we should have the love of God within our lives.

### e. Holiness and Purity.

To maintain holiness and purity, we have to recognize our inner emotions and feelings. Controlling our inner feelings and remembering our personal relationship with God helps us to be holy and pure. Holiness and purity in our lives is the sign of spiritual depth in a Christian.

### f. Faith and Hope.

Being a Christian means having strong faith and great hope for the future. The Christian life can be risky and troublesome. Jesus went through many tribulations and sufferings. All true Christians will face many difficulties but these trials gives us the opportunity to strengthen our faith. When we have faith, we are hoping for something. So faith and hope are musts in the spiritual life of a Christian.

The most beautiful thing in the world is a happy Christian home with love, peace, faith and hope. To have that beautiful thing in our life, we should have these qualities in our life. Then we can lead a Christian home with moral and spiritual aspects in our daily life. May God help us to lead a Christian home with these truths.

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*(This article received first prize in the literary talent competition (English category) arranged by the Eastern Regional Sevika Sanghom in 1991.)*





# INTERPRETATION OF MORAL, SPIRITUAL OR INTERESTING CONCEPT OF A CHRISTIAN HOME

Mrs. Mariamma Joshua  
Springvalley, New York

**സാ**മൂഹ്യ ജീവിതമായ മനുഷ്യന്റെ സമൂഹ ജീവിത ശ്രംഖലയിലെ പ്രാധമികവും സുപ്രധാനവുമായ ഘടകമത്രെ "കുടുംബം" കെട്ടുറപ്പുള്ള കുടുംബ ജീവിതം ആരോഗ്യകരമായ സാമൂഹികജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ചുക്കാൻ പിടിക്കുന്നു. പ്രശസ്ത ക്രൈസ്തവ പ്രാസംഗികനായ ബില്ലിഗ്രഹാമിന്റെ അഭിപ്രായത്തിൽ "പിഞ്ചുകുഞ്ഞിന്റെ കരച്ചിൽ, വാത്സല്യനിധിയായ മാതാവിന്റെ താരാട്ടുപാട്ട്, കാര്യദർശിയായ പിതാവിന്റെ ഉൾക്കരുത്ത്, സ്നേഹപൂർവ്വമായ ദയങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നുളവാകുന്ന ഊഷ്മളവികാരങ്ങൾ, സന്തുഷ്ടനയനങ്ങളിൽ ഓളം തളളുന്ന പ്രകാശം, ദയ, ഭക്തി, സഖിതം എന്നിവയാണ് ഒരു മാതൃകാ കുടുംബത്തെ കെട്ടുപണി ചെയ്യുന്ന പ്രധാന ഘടകങ്ങൾ". നൂറ്റി ഇരുപത്തിയെട്ടാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ തുടക്കത്തിൽ ഭക്തനായ ദാവീദും ഒരു ആദർശ കുടുംബത്തെ വിവരിക്കുന്നതു കാണാം. "നിന്റെ ഭാര്യ നിന്റെ വീട്ടിനകത്ത് ഫലപ്രദമായ മുന്തിരിവള്ളി പോലെയും നിന്റെ മക്കൾ നിന്റെ മേശക്കു ചുറ്റും ഒലിവു തൈകൾ പോലെയും ഇരിക്കും". മാതാപിതാക്കളും കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളും കുടുംബത്തിലെ പ്രധാന ഘടകങ്ങളായി പരിലസിക്കുന്നു. യേശു ക്രിസ്തു നാഥനായിരിക്കുകയും ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ വിളങ്ങി കണ്ടിരുന്ന ശ്രേഷ്ഠഭാവങ്ങൾ അനുഭവിക്കുന്ന ജീവിത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ പ്രാവർത്തികമാക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു കുടുംബം "ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബം" എന്ന പേരിന് അർഹമായിരിക്കും. എന്നതിന് ആർക്കാണ് സന്ദേഹം? ഒരു സാധാരണ കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്നും മാതൃകാപരമായ ഒരു ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബം ധർമ്മികവും ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികവും, സൗഭാഗ്യകരവുമായ കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ സ്വതസിദ്ധമായ വ്യക്തിത്വം പുലർത്തുന്ന ഒന്നായിരിക്കും.

സ്നേഹം, സഹകരണം, കരുതൽ, ബഹുമാനം, പരോപകാരതല്പരത തുടങ്ങിയ ധർമ്മികമൂല്യങ്ങൾ വ്യക്തികളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ ബീജാവാപം ചെയ്യപ്പെടുന്നത് ഗ്രഹാന്തരീക്ഷത്തിലാണ്. ഒരു ശിശുവിന്റെ ആദ്യ കളരി കുടുംബവും, അവന്റെ ആദ്യത്തെ അദ്ധ്യാപിക മാതാവുമാണ്. "ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളെ സ്നേഹിച്ച് ചിരിക്കുന്നതുപോലെ നിങ്ങളും തമ്മിൽ തമ്മിൽ സ്നേഹിപ്പിൻ". യേശു ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഈ കല്പന അനുസരിപ്പാൻ തല്പരരായ മാതാപിതാക്കൾ, തങ്ങളുടെ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളേയും, അയൽക്കാരേയും നിസ്വാർത്ഥമായി സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നത് കണ്ടു വളരുന്ന കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ, ആ മാതൃക തീർച്ചയായും തങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിലും പകർത്തുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കും. "ദൈവഭക്തി ഭവനത്തിന് കിരീടം" (The Crown of home is Godliness). ദൈവഭക്തിയിൽ വേരുന്നി നിൽക്കുന്ന ഒരു ഭവനത്തിന് മാത്രമേ തന്നിൽ തന്നെ ചരിദ്രിക്കാതെ കെട്ടുറപ്പോടെ പുരോഗതിയിലേക്ക് പ്രയാണം ചെയ്യുവാൻ സാധ്യമാകൂ.

കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള സഹകരണമത്രെ അതിന്റെ വിജയകരമായ പുരോഗതിയുടെ രാസതന്ത്രം. മാതാപിതാക്കൾ പരസ്പരം ബഹുമാനിക്കുന്നതും സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നതും കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ മാതാപിതാക്കളേയും മുതിർന്നവരേയും ബഹുമാനിക്കുന്നതുമാണ്. ഒരു ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബാന്തരീക്ഷത്തിന്റെ മഹത്തായ ആദർശങ്ങളത്രെ. "എന്റെ അയൽക്കാരൻ ആരു" എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിന് "നല്ല ശമര്യക്കാരുടെ ഉപമ" പഠിപ്പിച്ച കർത്താവ് ആവശ്യത്തിൽ ഇരിക്കുന്നവനത്രെ നിന്റെ അയൽക്കാരൻ എന്ന ആശയം ജനസമൂഹത്തെ പഠിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു. സഹാനുഭൂതിയുള്ള മാതാപിതാക്കൾ ആവശ്യത്തിലിരിക്കുന്ന അയൽക്കാരനെ സഹായിക്കുന്നതു കാണുന്ന കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ സഹാനുഭൂതി, സഹായം, സേവനം തുടങ്ങിയ ധർമ്മിക മൂല്യങ്ങളുടെ അന്തഃസത്ത ഗ്രഹാന്തരീക്ഷത്തിൽ നിന്നു തന്നെ ഉൾക്കൊണ്ടു കൊണ്ട് വളർന്നു വരുന്നു. സ്നേഹത്തിലും കരുതലിലും ഐക്യമത്യത്തിലും അധിഷ്ഠിതമായ ഭവനം അഹറോന്റെ തലയിലെ വിശേഷതയെ പോലെ ചുറ്റുപാടുകൾക്ക് വാസന പരത്തുന്നതും ശബ്ദമുള്ളതും ശിഥിലവുമായ ഭവനം ചുറ്റുപാടുകളെ മലിമസം ആക്കുന്നതും ആയിരിക്കും. എന്നതിന് സംശയമില്ല. തമ്മിൽ തമ്മിൽ ഭാരങ്ങളെ വഹിപ്പാനുള്ള വിശാല മനസ്ഥിതിയും ക്രിസ്തീയ ഭവനാന്തരീക്ഷത്തിൽ നിന്നുമാത്രമേ ലഭ്യമാകുകയുള്ളൂ.

ഒരു സാധാരണ കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഒരു ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബത്തെ വ്യത്യസ്തമാക്കിത്തീർക്കുന്നത് അതിന്റെ അദ്ധ്യാത്മികഭാവങ്ങളത്രെ. ദൈവഭക്തി, പ്രാർത്ഥന, ആരാധന, തിരുവചനധ്യാനം തുടങ്ങിയവ അവയിൽ ചിലതുമാത്രമാണ്. കുടുംബപ്രാർത്ഥന കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ഐക്യതയ്ക്കും ആത്മീയ പുരോഗതിക്കും സഹായിക്കും. "A family that pray together, stay together". ഒന്നിച്ചു പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്ന കുടുംബത്തിന് മാത്രമേ അതിലെ വ്യക്തികൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള ഐക്യത പുലർത്താൻ സാധിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. "യഹോവഭക്തനായ പുരുഷൻ അനുഗ്രഹിക്കപ്പെട്ടവൻ". സങ്കീർത്തനക്കാരനായ ദാവീദിന്റെ അഭിപ്രായം ഇതത്രെ. മനുഷ്യ ജീവിതത്തിലെ സൗഭാഗ്യത്തിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രബിന്ദു ദൈവഭക്തിയാണ്. കാലുകൾക്ക് ദീപവും, പാതയ്ക്ക് പ്രകാശവുമായിരിക്കുന്ന തിരുവചനധ്യാനമത്രെ കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളുടെ വ്യക്തിഗത ജീവിതത്തിലെ മാർഗദർശി. ദൈവംഭവനം ജീവിതയാത്രക്ക് ആവശ്യമായ ഉപദേശവും ഉത്തേജനവും നൽകുവാൻ തിരുവചനധ്യാനം ഒരുവനെ സഹായിക്കുന്നു. തിരുവചനം വായിക്കുന്നതിന് മാത്രമല്ല അത് പഠിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ആഗ്രഹം ഉടലെടുക്കുന്നതും ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്നു തന്നെയാണ്.



ഒരു ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബത്തിൽ ആരാധനയ്ക്ക് അതിപ്രധാനമായ സ്ഥാനം ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കണം. കുടുംബ പ്രാർത്ഥന ആരാധനയുടെ ഒരു ഭാഗമാണെങ്കിലും പരസ്യാരാധനയിൽ കൂടെ മാത്രമേ ആരാധനയുടെ അന്തഃസത്ത പൂർത്തിയാകുന്നുള്ളൂ. പരസ്യാരാധനയിൽ ആരാധകർ രണ്ടു കാര്യങ്ങളെത്ര ആവർത്തിച്ച് അനുസ്മരിക്കുന്നത്. ഒന്ന് ദൈവവുമായുള്ള ബന്ധം. രണ്ട് സഹോദരനുമായുള്ള ബന്ധം. കാണപ്പെടുന്ന സഹോദരനെ സ്നേഹിക്കുകയും കരുതുകയും ചെയ്യാൻ സാധിക്കാത്ത യാതൊരാൾക്കും അഗോചരനായ ദൈവത്തെ സ്നേഹിപ്പാൻ കഴിയുകയില്ല. ആരാധനയിൽ തല്പരരായ മാതാപിതാക്കൾക്കു മാത്രമേ ആരാധനയിൽ തല്പരരായ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളെ വാർത്തെടുക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കൂ. തദ്വാരാ ആരാധനയിൽ തല്പരരായ ഒരു പുതിയ തലമുറയ്ക്ക് രൂപം നൽകപ്പെടുന്നു.

വിവാഹത്തിനു മുമ്പു തന്നെ വിവേകികളായ ചെറുപ്പക്കാർ ഒരു സന്തുഷ്ട കുടുംബത്തെ വിഭാവനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. അതു നല്ലതു തന്നെ. വ്യക്തി പരമായ താല്പര്യം കൊണ്ടു മാത്രം അത് സാധ്യമല്ല. ദൈവവാശ്യത്തിൽ കേന്ദ്രീകൃതമായ ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിനു മാത്രമേ യഥാർത്ഥമായ ഒരു സന്തുഷ്ട കുടുംബമായി പരിലസിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുകയുള്ളൂ. വിവാഹത്തിലൂടെ സംയോജിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന യുവദമ്പതികൾ വളർന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു ആയുഷ്കാല കൂട്ടായ്മയിലേക്കു പ്രവേശിക്കുന്നു. രണ്ടു പേരും ദൈവാശ്രിതരേങ്കിൽ ഐശ്വര്യത്തിലും അനർത്ഥത്തിലും സ്നേഹിച്ച് സഹകരിച്ച് മുന്നേറാൻ അവർക്ക്

സാധിക്കും. അല്ലാത്തവർ സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ അനുകൂലമല്ല എന്നു കാണുമ്പോൾ തന്റെ ജീവിതപങ്കാളിയെ ഉപേക്ഷിച്ച് യാത്രയാകും. ഈ യാത്ര എങ്ങനെയാണോ അവസാനിക്കുക? സമ്പത്തിലും അനുകൂലസാഹചര്യങ്ങളിലും മാത്രം കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിന്റെ സൗഭാഗ്യവസ്ഥ അനുഭവിക്കാൻ കഴിയുന്നവരുടെ അവസ്ഥ ഇതായിരിക്കും.

ധർമ്മികതയും അദ്ധ്യാത്മികതയും കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിൽ ഒത്തിണങ്ങുമ്പോൾ അത് താനേ സൗഭാഗ്യങ്ങളുടെ അനശ്വരകേദാരമായി പരിണമിച്ചു കൊള്ളും. "മലമേൽ ഇരിക്കുന്ന പട്ടണം മറഞ്ഞിരിപ്പാൻ പാടില്ല". ഒരു യഥാർത്ഥ ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബം അതിന്റെ ചുറ്റുപാടുകൾക്ക് വെളിച്ചം പകരുന്നതായിരിക്കണം. ഉപ്പിനേപ്പോലെ രുചി പകർന്നു കൊടുക്കുന്നതായിരിക്കണം. അത് ചുറ്റുപാടുകളെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തുവാൻ കഴിയുന്ന ഓരോ തെർമോസ്റ്റാറ്റുകളായി മാറണം. സൗഭാഗ്യകരമായ ഒരു ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബം ഭൂമിയിൽ സ്വർഗം സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്ന അവസ്ഥയത്രെ. സ്വർഗത്തുനിന്നും മാലാഖമാർ പോലും കുനിഞ്ഞു നോക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്ന അസൂയാവഹമായ സ്ഥാനം! ഭാര്യ ഭർത്താക്കന്മാരുടെ ഉള്ളത്തിൽ തൃപ്തി കണ്ടെത്തുന്ന സമീപനം. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഭദ്രതയേയും, ശാന്ത സുന്ദരമായ പുരോഗതിയേയും സാരമായി സഹായിക്കും. ദൈവാശ്രയത്തിൽ അധിഷ്ഠിതമായ നമ്മുടെ ക്രിസ്തീയ കുടുംബ ജീവിതം മഹത്തായ ആദർശങ്ങൾ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന സാമൂഹ്യ ജീവിതത്തിന് നമ്മെ സുസജ്ജമാക്കട്ടെ!

*This article received first prize in the literary talent competition (Malayalam category) arranged by the Eastern Regional Sevika Sanghom in 1991.)*

*Faith In Christ (continued from page 21)*

Faith in itself is not a Saviour; it is faith in a person - the Divine Person called the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is not a meritorious thing in itself, but the medium by which I receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and Lord. **Only believing can save us. Without faith, no one can please God. No amount of good deeds can please God if they come from a heart that does not believe Him.** God will give saving faith to anyone who will receive it. He wants more than anything else that people shall be saved. Jesus died for our sins on the cross.

**V. PRINCIPLE OF FAITH**

The principle of faith is the same as that which we act on in everyday life. All business is carried on by the principle of faith and confidence in others by relying on the testimony of others. The taxi driver doesn't ask to see your money first; by faith he believes that you have money and will pay him at the end of the route. Faith in God is putting confidence in Him and in His Word. It is resting on the testimony of the individual involved, be he merchant, salesman or the Lord himself.

**VI. RESULTS OF FAITH**

We are saved by faith. Genesis 15:6 says that Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Romans 4). We receive Christ by faith (John 1:12). We are justified by faith (Romans 5:1) We become children of God by faith (Galatians 3:26). We are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18). We are kept by faith (Peter 1:5) - "We are

kept by the power of God through faith". Faith brings rest (Hebrews 4:3) "For we which have believed do enter into rest". All the brilliant achievements recorded in Hebrews 11 are possible to those who have faith. Our eternal destiny is determined by our faith or the lack of unbelief. By faith we can be saved and spend eternity in heaven with our Lord Jesus Christ. By unbelief, we will be found yet in our sins and finally cast into hell forever. Only one key can open the door of salvation - that is "FAITH". Here is what faith does: Saves, Justifies, and Gives everlasting life.

Jesus attributes a kind of omnipotence to faith; the disciple by faith will do greater things than his Master. Pray that the word we give in sermons, Sunday School lessons and in conversation will be mixed with faith on the part of them that hear; ask God to give them faith. The great question for the Christian to answer is not "What can I do?" but "How much can I believe?" , i.e., "How big is my faith?".

Let me finish with these simple questions.

1. What is faith?  
Faith is simply believing.
2. Where does faith come from?  
Faith comes from God.
3. What does our faith do?  
Faith saves, Justifies, Gives everlasting life.



# THE CROSS

Sherry S. Varghese, Grade V, Newark , New Jersey

The cross is often known as "The old rugged Cross". But actually what is the Cross? Isn't it much more than two pieces of wood? To some it is, and to some it isn't. What do you think of the Cross? I think of it as an emblem. What kind of emblem? Well, I think of it as a sign that shows what our Saviour did for us.

It was our Lord Jesus who had nails pierced in His hands, was whipped, crowned with thorns, and hung on a simple cross. He also carried that same heavy cross to the place where He would be hung - Golgotha. He gave all of us another chance. He took up all the pain we should have gone through. What a loving and wonderful Saviour we have! Many of us are ruining that chance.

Next, what do people mean when they say, "Take up your own Cross?" Do we have to carry that heavy Cross also? In a way, yes, we have to. We are going through many burdens in life - that is our Cross. Like Jesus, we are climbing a mountain, Jesus fell three times when he has climbing. Like that we will fall many times because of sin, fear, or guilt but we

must get back up. We need courage and strength to do this. We must also stand firm on the Rock of Faith. To do have these things, we must go to God "who gives generously to all."

When do we finish this journey? Well, we finish only the day we die. We will get the reward we deserve. That depends on whether we get up after falling, how we face things in life, and if we don't follow Satan. How do we follow Satan while climbing? Well, he'll tempt us to take easy routes and find help, so it is really easy to reach the top. But we mustn't follow him; we should follow Jesus. So we must always get up after falling and have faith in our Lord and follow him.

So now we should always remember what our Saviour did for us. Also ask yourself, did we take up our Cross? If you didn't, take it up right now. Have faith in our Lord because life is full of many burdens. Go to our Lord and He will give you all things you need in life.

May God be with you and help you take up your cross and continue the journey.

## MARAMON CONVENTION - IN PICTURES (CONT'D )



CHOIR GROUP SINGING



Photos by Dr. M.V. Mathew, Chicago.

### TENTH MAR THOMA CONFERENCE CELEBRATION, UNITED KINGDOM

Details of our 1992 conference are given elsewhere in this issue. As a part of the tenth year celebration, we would sincerely hope to see delegates from outside the United Kingdom attend the conference. We are very keen to establish and foster a closer relationship with the international community of Mar Thoma believers.

Our Conference Celebration Team will be happy to make all arrangements for your stay in the U.K. as well as any sight-seeing programs.

Rev. A.T. Zechariah, London, England



# BIBLE CROSSWARD PUZZLE

(Jesus' Life on Earth and Ascension)  
(The second half of all the Gospels)

1																	2
			3										4				
5				6													
			7														
				8		9											
		10	11														
	12						13										
									14								
								15									
						16											

## Across

- There was a written sign on Jesus' cross that said: This is the \_\_\_\_\_.
- In Gethsamane, Jesus prayed and the \_\_\_\_\_ slept.
- Jesus healed the Syrophoenician woman's daughter here.
- The centurion exclaimed, "Surely he was the \_\_\_\_\_."
- Jesus said, "Let the little \_\_\_\_\_ come to me..."
- The Last Supper took place in the large upper room in this city.
- Jesus took \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to the Mount of Transfiguration.
- \_\_\_\_\_, the high priest and the whole Sanhedrin looked for false evidence against Jesus.
- From him, Jesus was taken to Herod. Who?
- Jesus raised him from death. Who?
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ appeared and talked with Jesus.

## Down

- Ascension of Jesus took place in the vicinity of this place. Where?
- Jesus healed the deaf and dumb man in this region \_\_\_\_\_.
- After resurrection, Jesus first appeared to Mary \_\_\_\_\_.
- Near Samaria Jesus healed ten \_\_\_\_\_ but only one returned to give thanks.
- Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. Jesus said to \_\_\_\_\_, "Put your finger here..."
- He kissed Jesus and betrayed the Son of Man. Who?

Mrs. Sajina Pothan, Los Angeles



# KID'S CORNER

## BIBLE WORD SEARCH

(Combinations of Personalities)

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

1. He followed Jesus, had trouble believing without proof.
2. He brought his friend Nathanael to meet Jesus.
3. He spoke first and thought of it later. Simon was his Hebrew name. Andrew is his brother.
4. He was thoughtful and gentle. When Jesus was dying on the cross, Jesus gave the care of His mother to him. He was "the beloved disciple".
5. He was a sincere man. Jesus said he was a true Israelite. He was also called Nathanael.
6. He was a follower of John the Baptist. He found the boy's lunch that Jesus used to feed over five thousand people.
7. He was a tax collector, a shrewd businessman. He was also called Levi.
8. One time he angered the other disciples with his ambition. He and his brother John were called "sons of thunder", King Herod had him executed by sword.
9. He cared more about money than about serving the Lord. He turned Jesus in to His enemies hands.
10. He was also called the zealot because he was zealous and enthusiastic.
11. He was also called Judas One of the disciples of Jesus. Though the Bible does not tell much about him, he did his part to work for Jesus.
12. He was a physician, author of the Acts of the Apostles and one of the gospels.
13. He was the "forerunner of Christ".

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*CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE "BIBLE WORD SEARCH" FINDERS - JANUARY 1992*

- |                                |   |                                    |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Anu T. Alex                 | - | Boston Mar Thoma Church            |
| 2. Liza, Angela and David John | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton |
| 3. Elizabeth Koshy             | - | Washington                         |
| 4. Larry Philip Varghese       | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston  |
| 5. Lesly Thomas Varghese       | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston  |
| 6. Samuel Thomas               | - | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston  |
| 7. Tony and Tobi Panicker      | - | Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma       |



# NEWS FROM PARISHES/DIOCESE

## **New Jersey Mar Thoma Church Sunday School secures first place in 1991 Eastern Region Sunday School Competitions !!**

The 1991 Eastern Region Sunday School competitions were held at the Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church on November 9, 1991. 14 parishes from the Eastern Region participated in the competitions which featured songs, elocutions, story-telling and a bible quiz. Children in Grades 1 -10 took part in the competitions. Shown in the picture are the participants from the New Jersey Mar Thoma Church which secured 1st Place overall in the competitions. Also shown in the photograph are the Vicar the Rev. Johnson P. Mathew and Mrs. Leelamma Johnson. The trophy winners from New Jersey were: Becky Joseph (1st place, Singing), Shylon Mathew, Sunitha John and Dolly Varghese (all 1st places, Elocution) Julie Varghese and Dolly Varghese (2nd place, Singing), Becky Joseph (3rd place, Story Telling), Shylon Mathew, Danny Alexander and Dolly Varghese (1st places - Bible Quiz), Group song team of Becky Joseph, Reena Jacob, Betsy Joseph, Nisha Abraham, Julie Varghese, Bindu Alexander, Dolly Varghese and Sophia John (2nd places in Malayalam and English Group Songs). In addition to these children, Anisha George also represented the parish.



Dr. John Abraham, Sunday School Superintendent

## **CHOIR FESTIVAL**

Eastern Region Choir Festival will be held on Saturday May 9, 1992 at 10 A.M. at the Mar Thoma Church, 2060 Orthodox St., Philadelphia, PA 19124. The Choral Groups of all the parishes and congregations in the Eastern Region are cordially invited to participate. Details of songs, schedules, regulations etc. have already been sent out to all the parishes in the Region by the Choir Festival Convener Mr. K.C. Cherian, 76-03 250 St. Bellerose, NY 11426 (Telephone : 718-347-9322).

## **YOUR SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS!!**

Do you have a question or suggestion that you would like the Diocesan Assembly or the Council to discuss about? For example, what are your opinions about the projects and/or the activities that our Diocese is involved in such as the Diocesan Development Fund, Good Samaritan Fund, Family Conference, Youth Conference, Choir Festival, Sevika Sanghom, establishment of Diocesan Center, Edavaka Mission, etc. ? The next Council Meeting is towards the beginning of May and the Assembly Meeting a couple of days prior to the Family Conference. **Please give your questions and/or suggestions in writing to Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, 1758 Mendon Hall Mill Road, Hockessin, DE 19707. (Tel: 302-239-7119)**

## **FAMILY CONFERENCE**

The Mar Thoma Family Conference of North America & U. K. is scheduled to be held from July 23-26, 1992 at Novi Hilton, Detroit., under the leadership of our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Suffragan Metropolitan. The theme of the Conference is "Living The Days Wisely" (Psalm 90:12). Speakers include Rev. Dr. A. Leonard Griffith, from Toronto, Canada, Rev. Sam Thomas of the Canadian Anglican Church and Rev. A.T. Zachariah, Vicar of the Mar Thoma Church, London, U.K. For details contact your parish vicar or the Convener for the Conference Mr. P.M. John (Tel: 313-274-2423).

## **YOUTH CONFERENCE**

The XIII Mar Thoma Youth Conference of North America & U.K. will be held at St. Elizabeth College, Morristown, New Jersey from August 12-15, 1992. The Conference Theme is "Hope in the midst of crisis" Leaders for this year's Conference include Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Dr. John Richard and Rev. Ann West.

## **FAX MACHINE AT TIRUVALLA**

Mr. M.K. Thomas, Diocesan Treasurer reports from New Jersey that the fax machine, donated by the Diocese of North America & U.K., has been installed at the Sabha Office in Tiruvalla. The Fax number is 91 04736 20327.

## **EDMONTON CHURCH DESTROYED IN FIRE**

The Mar Thoma Church building in Edmonton, Canada was consecrated on October 5, 1991. The main sanctuary of the building was destroyed on January 3, 1992 by fire of suspicious origin. Although the investigation is continuing and nothing definite has so far been confirmed, the police suspect arson. Now the congregation is worshipping in a nearby Baptist Church. The renovation work is going on and the work is expected to be completed by Easter.



## ANNUAL RETREAT - MAR THOMA PHYSICIANS & DENTISTS' FELLOWSHIP

A two day annual meeting and retreat of the Mar, Thoma Physicians and Dentists' Fellowship, which was formed a year ago with the blessings of our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, will be held on August 1-2, 1992 at a convenient place in the New York- New Jersey Metropolitan area. Chrysostom Thirumeni will be the main leader. For further details, contact the Secretary Dr. John Abraham at (718) 273-7609 or the President Dr. Thomas Abraham at (201) 670-8126.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE IN HOUSTON

The Advisory Committee for the Diocesan Youth Ministry is arranging a Leadership Conference for youth in Western Region at the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston from Friday March 27 to Sunday March 29, 1992.

## ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK:

PARISH DAY: St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York celebrated its 11th Parish Anniversary Day on January 26, 1992. After the Holy Communion, a Public Meeting was held in the Church. The newly elected Mayor of Yonkers, Mr. Terry Zaleski, was the keynote Speaker. Rev. Winston Ching of the Asia American Ministry of the Episcopal Church also made the felicitation speech. The reports of the various organizations were also presented. Rev. Johnson Varghese presided over the meeting. Vice President Mr. Y. Varghese welcomed the guests and Secretary Mr. M.C. Chacko expressed the vote of thanks. A fellowship lunch was also served after the function.

**OBITUARY:** The St. Thomas parish lost two of its members during this period.

Mrs. MARIAMMA ABRAHAM of Airmont was called to her eternal home on February 8, 1992. She was born on February 21, 1923 in Kallaramannil House, Ayroor, Kerala. After her formal education, she was married to Mr. K.M. Abraham of Cherukara Kolakote House in Ayroor. The couple settled in Madras and were running an electrical contracting company. In 1980, while visiting their only son Mr. Abraham Mathew in U.S.A., Mr. Abraham passed away in Florida due to heart failure. Since then, she was living with her son in Armonk, New York. Mariamma Abraham was an active member of the Mar Thoma Church in Chetpet, Madras and of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church in New York. She was also very attached to the Westchester Malayalee Association.

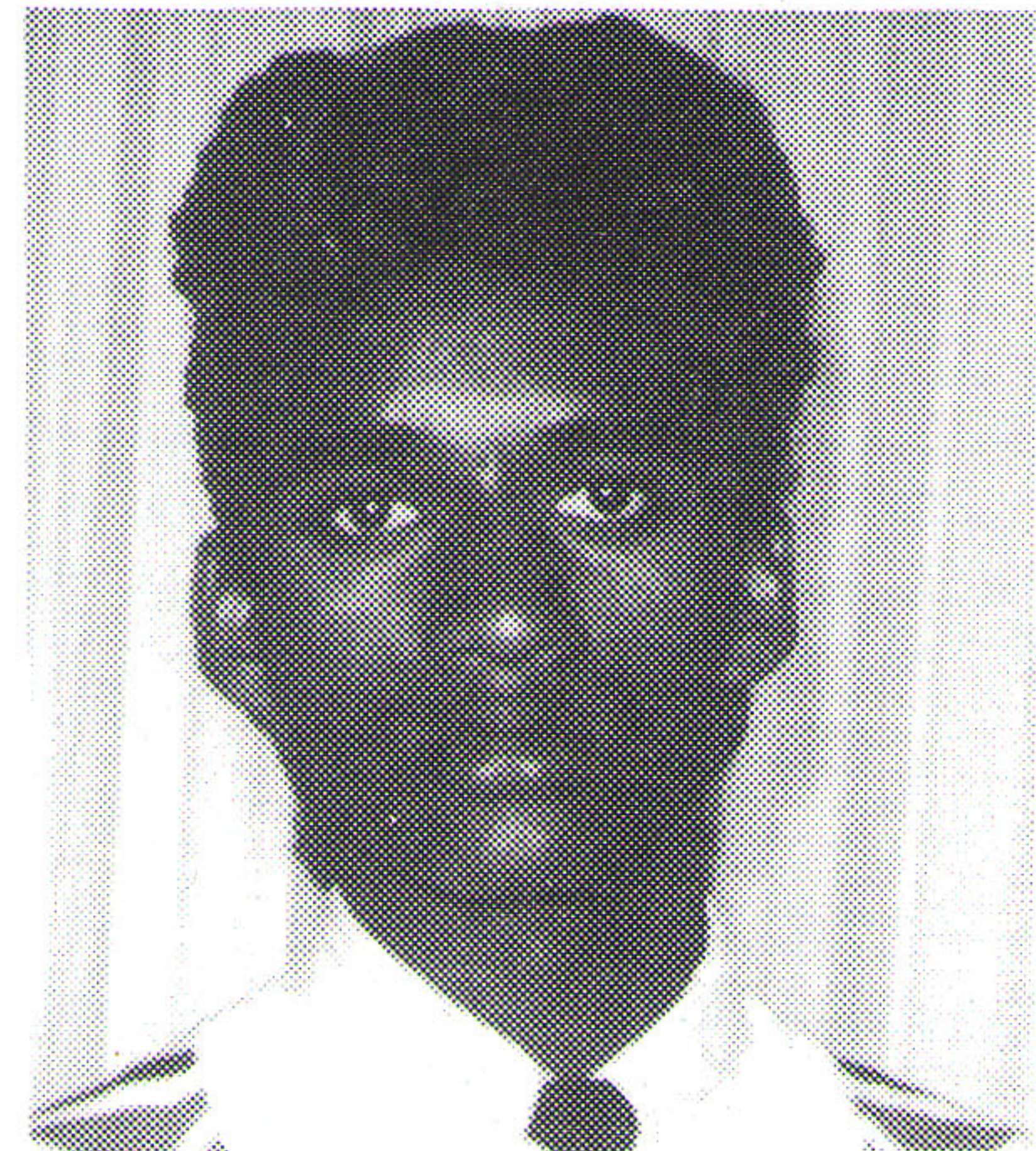
Mrs. Mariamma Abraham is survived by her only son, Abraham Mathew, daughter-in-law Valsa and grandson Sunil. Her body was flown to India and was buried in Kilpauk Cemetery in Madras, where Mr. Abraham was buried in 1980.



Mariamma Abraham

Mr. JOHN PHILIPS, known among his friends as Jiby, was killed in a car accident on February 29, 1992, while the car in which he was traveling with four other teenage friends slipped off the road and collided with a tree. John Philips was born in Jamshedpur, India on March 26, 1975. His parents, Abraham Philipose and Aleyamma Philipose, are from Melukar, Kozhencherry. He migrated to United States in July of 1985 with his parents. In high school, he was on the honor roll and was due for graduation in June 1992 from Roosevelt High School, Yonkers. His favorite hobby was playing basketball and he enjoyed spending time with his friends. John was an active member of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church and its Youth Fellowship. He is survived by his parents and an elder brother Abraham Philips.

Two teenagers, who were in the car with John, Robinson Zachariah and Rupesh Vijayan are still in the hospital in critical condition. Robinson is also a member of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church and its youth fellowship. Please remember Robinson and Vijayan in your prayers. Two other teenagers, Abraham Pappan and Satish Mathai were released from the hospital immediately.



John Philips

P.T. Thomas

## DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL EXAM

The 1992 Diocesan Sunday School examination for Junior and Junior High students will be held on Sunday, May 3 according to Mr. Daniel Thomas, Secretary, Diocesan Sunday School.





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