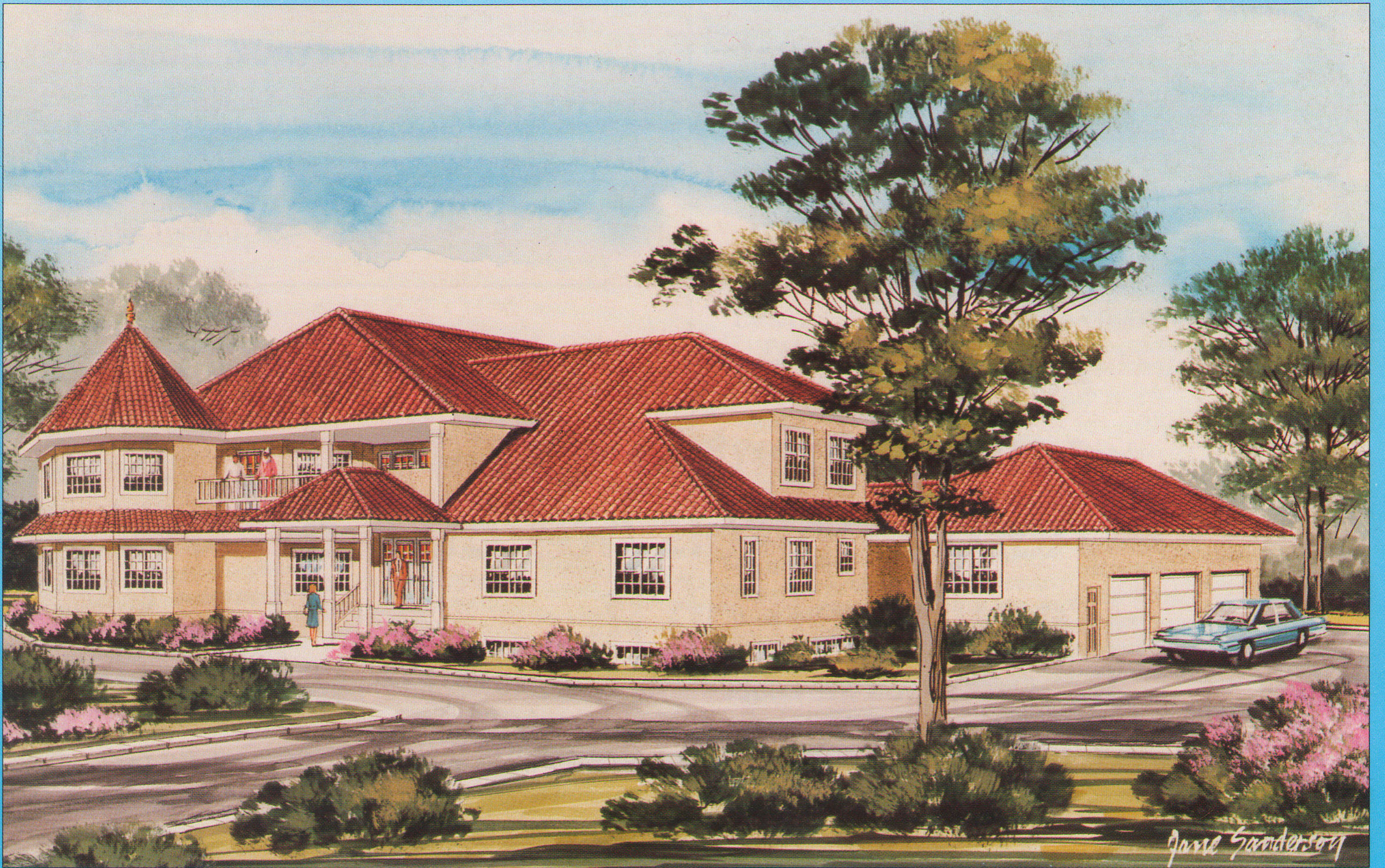




MAR THOMA

# MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE OCTOBER 1996



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Cover: The new Diocesan Center to be built in Long Island.

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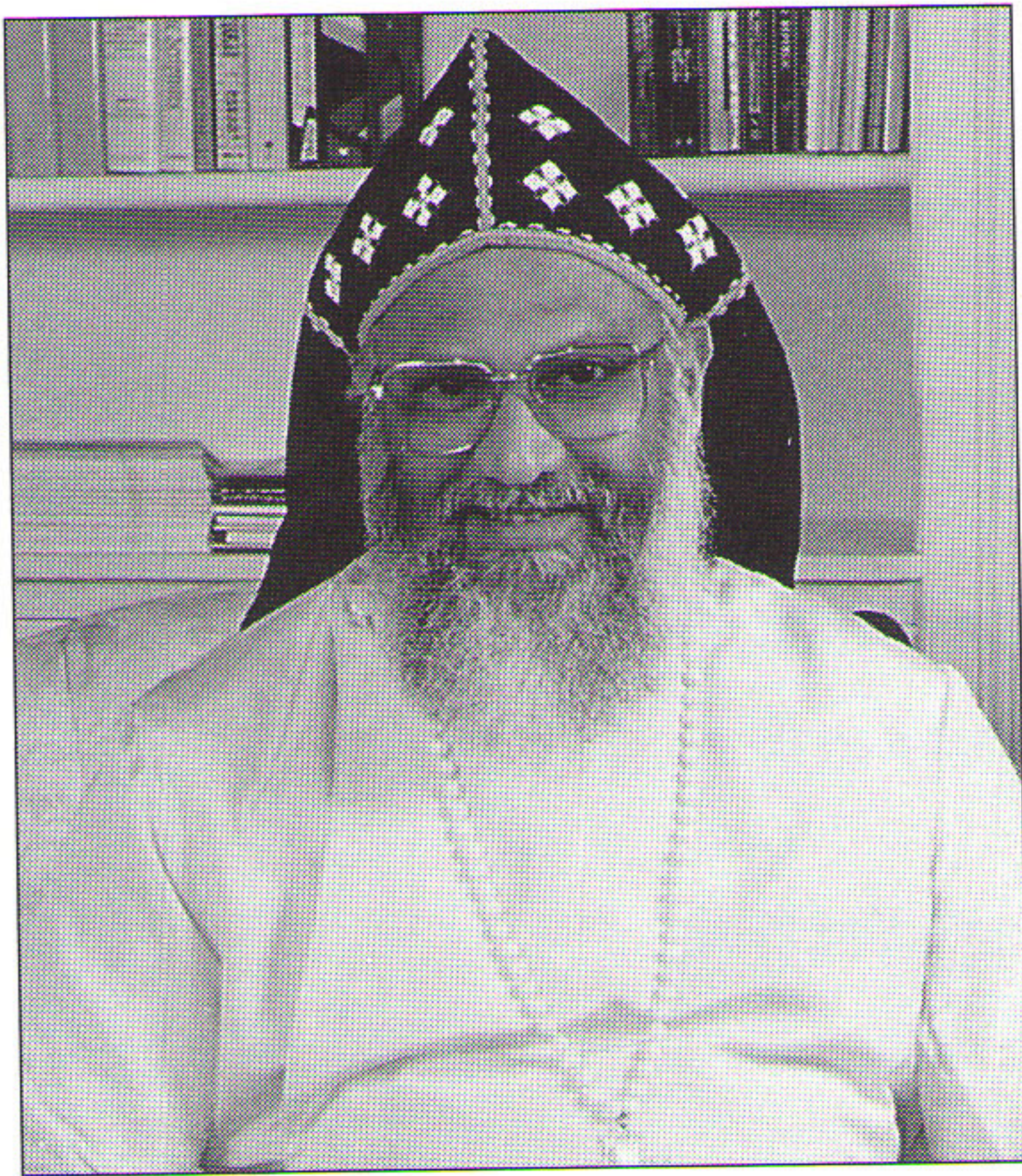


## MAR THOMA MESSENGER UPCOMING ISSUES

**JANUARY, 1997 — LAITY**  
Articles, News etc. due by December 15, 1996

**APRIL, 1997 — LITURGY**  
Articles, News etc. due by March 15, 1997

# Letter From The Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

On my way to the Sabha Mandalam, Thiruvalla, I spent a weekend in Germany with our members. We had a Holy Communion Service in the St. Luke's Church, Essen by the permission and support of Superintendent Wolfgang Glade of the German Church. Most of our members participated in the worship and there was also one confirmation service. Our people are growing in fellowship with one another and in relationship with other denominations. Rev. Abraham Skariah would be in Germany as an exchange minister from December onwards. We are grateful to superintendent Glade and his Church for the valuable support and assistance rendered to the Mar Thoma Church in various ways.

The newly elected Sabha Mandalam met from August 28 to 30 in the new Sabha auditorium. The Sabha Secretary, Lay and Clergy trustees were elected by the Mandalam. The Mandalam was divided into several groups and studied the theme 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Diakonia ministry.' It was gratifying to see that Mr. K. C. Cherian of Long Island parish received the Mar Thoma award for literary contributions. For the first time our Diocese was represented in the Sabha Council by three members; Rev. Oommen Philip (Long Island), Mr. Anil Thomas (Epiphany) and Mr. O. C. Koshy (Seattle). Many of our members participated in the Mandalam.

In September, I had the privilege of participating in the Central and Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches at Geneva. Reports from the Secretary Moderator, unit committees and commissions were heard. Discussions were mainly on world issues, common understanding and vision of W.C.C., and planning for the 8th Assembly at Harare. I had the privilege of giving the sermon at the concluding session of the Central Committee.

In October, I am visiting our parishes in Canada. In Edmonton I could preside over the farewell arranged by our parish for the Anglican Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Ken L. Genge. It was an exciting experience to visit the Winnipeg congregation. It was for the first time another Mar Thoma Bishop visited the place since the visit of late Thomas Mar Athanasius Thirumeni in 1974. Though Calgary and Fort McMurray are small congregations, they are spiritually growing up well. Our members at Vancouver have yet to gather regularly as a congregation. Rev. Philip Easow is taking care of our members at six places. Toronto parish is a growing parish in Canada with addition of new members mainly from Gulf countries. Kingston, Ottawa and Montreal parishes have been keeping themselves steady in their life and witness. Rev. Prakash K. George is caring for our members in these places.

On November 2nd we are inaugurating the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Mar Thoma Church in North America and Europe and the 'Ground Breaking Ceremony' for the construction of New Diocesan Head Quarters in our property at Merrick, Long Island. There will be a Thanksgiving service and Public meeting to mark the occasion. Regional celebrations have to be followed under the guidance of the Jubilee Committee. Various programs and projects are envisaged as part of Jubilee. Mission fund box, Jubilee mementos and Diocesan Directory would be made available to all families. A Thanksgiving offering will be collected through Jubilee coupons. I urge all to pray and participate earnestly in this celebration.

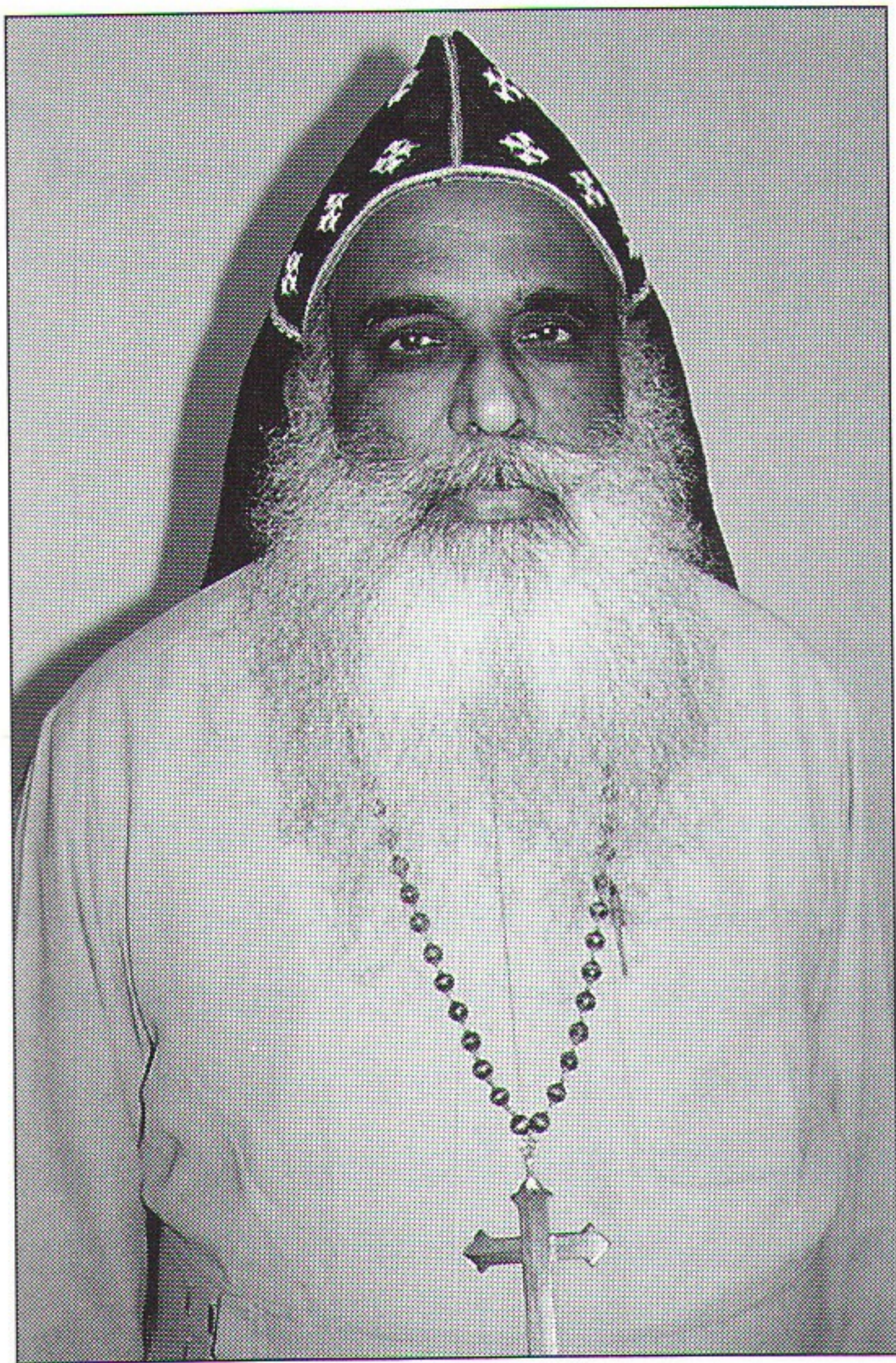
'Spirituality' is the theme of this issue. Though human beings belong to a material realm, there is a spiritual dimension around and beyond them. Spirituality is generated in one's relationship with God. When human meet other humans and the world around, spirituality finds its expression. Prayer, Worship, Devotion, Meditation, etc., leads one closer to God and His creation. In other words real Spirituality will be 'the spiritual moving the material', as God was in Christ.

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

# Not by Might and Power, but by Spirit

(An exclusive Interview with Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa)



Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa, Bishop of Trivandrum Quilon Diocese is visiting United States on special invitation from Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia, from where he completed his studies 30 years ago. The Messenger Editorial Board met Thirumeni on Sunday, October 13, at the Staten Island Parsonage after the Holy Communion Service. Messenger is thankful to Thirumeni

for spending some time with Messenger Editorial Board during his short visit, and busy schedule. Following is the excerpt of his discussion with Messenger.

**Messenger:** Thirumeni, how is Valiya Thirumeni recuperating from his recent hospitalization?

**Thirumeni:** Doctors advised Thirumeni for Hospital treatment and more so for rest than anything else. He is well now, healthy and strong. As a matter of fact Thirumeni is now visiting mission centers in central India.

**Messenger:** We are hoping that you attend the inauguration of Silver Jubilee Celebrations and the Ground-breaking Ceremony of the new Diocesan Center; but we understand that you won't be able to attend. Do you have a message for us?

**Thirumeni:** It would have been a golden opportunity to attend the festivities, especially the ground-breaking ceremony of the new Diocesan Center. Unfortunately, I need to be in Kerala for the General Body Meeting of the Evangelistic Association. The day to conduct the election and the General body meeting is November 2nd, the day you begin your celebrations. I wish the celebrations every blessing and assure prayers.

**Messenger:** Speaking about elections, isn't it disappointing to see that it is often politicized in the church bodies and organizations?

**Thirumeni:** Our church all through these years were progressing on democratic ideals and principles. We cannot now boast of democratic practices and freedom in a constitutional episcopacy. The misuse of freedom prevents us to have best fruits and air ideas. The reason may be the impact of the political disorder prevailing in the country.

In our church democracy, we have principles based on what we can give to the church rather than what we can get from the church. Now the elections and the struggle to get into the authority of the church have forgotten that principle and turned it upside down. Now the question is

what can I get by holding these positions in the church. It is very evident when we see the present practice of signing the travel expense even before we enter into the agenda of the meeting. In the past, travel bill was not signed even after the agenda is over. The money and muscle power also play significant role in the church elections. It is disturbing to see such a trend in our church administration.

**Messenger:** We hear about unpleasant remarks made in the last Sabha Mandalam by some members. What is your comment?

**Thirumeni:** As the church leaders, we need to protect our constitution and we have to honor the laws of the country. As the spiritual leaders, we need to be compassionate and we cannot forget our principles. We should be very conscious about these in our actions.

People with selfish motives make false and baseless accusations thinking that church is a safe place where they can make them without reactions and repercussions which they could expect, when they make it outside church atmosphere. Some people like to make false accusations which are far from truth. They are more concerned about making norms and bylaws to suit their convenience rather than taking seriously the concerns of people and humanitarian concerns. The church ought to be the conscience of the society, but at present, the evils in the society prevail to stop that function. We can see this as we have grown up in the institutional life of the church. This aspect is clear in a statement which I happened to read recently 'Many noble ideas have given birth to many noble institutions in this century. But those very institutions are now trying to bury those ideas that have given birth to them.'

We are mindful of rights and privileges and are conscious about it. It is good. But we forget the responsibilities coupled with it. That we can see very well in our dealings in Sabha Mandalam, Diocesan Assembly and Parish General Body Meetings. The concept of justice is also disfigured. The realities that are convenient for us are taken as justice. If justice is inconvenient, we resist to accept it as justice. The student who hits the Head of an institution comes out with cry that the Head of the institution must respect justice. The anti-social elements who burn the public property ask the government to exercise justice. We can hear such strange voices in the churches also.

**Messenger:** In today's sermon you mentioned that parents consider their children as investments, in what way?

**Thirumeni:** Parents invest money or pour out their wealth over them with the expectation of the returns with capital appreciation and interest and if it fails there is discord and disunity in the family. In some other cases the parents are unwilling to part with the possessive feeling about their children ever after their marriage. That prevents the children to have the freedom to built up their family which results in

estrangement and divorce related. Sometimes we can see monetary considerations in building our children's future. Their personal and humanitarian concerns are forgotten. Thus our life and the life of our children become miserable. We bring to our children the affluence and we sail through affluence; but we fail to steer them through adversities. In such a situation we see total collapse of family relationship.

**Messenger:** We are at the threshold of the 21st century. What are some of the challenges of the Church?

**Thirumeni:** This is a question asked often these days. But we have four more years before the next century and they are equally important.

This year is very important because of various historical realities. The Jewish Church is celebrating the entrance into the fourth millennium of the establishment of David's throne in Jerusalem. This year for us is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Malpan, the reformer of Syrian Church. This year also is the 20th anniversary of the demise of our late Metropolitan Yuhanon Mar Thoma. We are looking forward for our entrance into a new century and also a new millennium. Four years are ahead of us. During those four years we are going to remember many more historical events.

The '97 marks, the golden Jubilee of India's journey to nationhood, started in 1947. Simultaneously we are going to remember the Golden Jubilee of the churches in India originated by the work of the western missions to a United Church, at the formation of Church of South India. This Diocese is going to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of our existence in this part of the world.

In '98 we are further looking forward to remember the 500th anniversary of Vasco de Gama's journey as the successful explorer in his way to India by landing at Kapad in Calicut which has totally changed the social, economical, and political life of the nations. In the same year World Council of Churches is going to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of its pilgrimage started from Amsterdam in discovering or exploring the way for one church and new forms of ecumenical unity. That takes us to 1999, the year from which we step into the new century and a new millennium.

Let us stop now and look back to these great historical events to discover where we are. One thing is clear. We haven't reached our destination to which we have started all our journeys whether in the church or in the state. The goal and expectation are still a reality we are yet to reach. It is true that ecumenism progressed but still differences are more deep and estrangement prevails. Forces of disunity and separation are still at work.

Affluence has led us to forget the reality of how our forefathers have withstood the pressure, external and internal, to hold on to their faith. They courageously took the challenge to confront the adversities and to hold fast the faith which they believed as the gift of God. When they lost church property they had two options; i.e. to forsake their principles and make a compromise, or to join the western church, the church of the emperor who ruled the country, which could bring more wealth. They did not accept those

options but courageously tried to build up by their own resources and in a century we reached to our present status with hard work and committed service in the spirit of "what I can give to the church than what we can get from the church." It is very well described by Bishop Stephen Neil in his statement in the history of the church "Mar Thoma Church is an example. Mar Thoma Church has lost everything in material wealth for the sake of principles and have gained everything from the committed work of the same generation."

Now the challenges are many. The erosion of the values in the society has corrupted the life of church too. The evils that prevail in the society emerge here and there. Interpersonal relationship has widened. In the early Christian centuries, outsiders used to say, "look at these Christians, how they love and care each other." The days that followed the reformation, the reflection about our church was exactly same. Now where are we? We have to assess from the present reality.

As we march into the next century, first we have to conscientize our people that there are no rights and privileges without responsibility. Accountability must be prioritized. Secondly, humanitarian values must be taught to build up interpersonal relationships.

We do not know what would happen in the 21st century. The close of this century is not so much encouraging to expect something positive, as the people at the close of the last century expected; they thought that in the 20th century, God's kingdom will be established on earth. Now, the fundamentalism based on various reasons, terrorism, erosion of democratic values, inability of society to withstand adversities, corruption and indifference to religious concerns, all these will take us not to a positive expectation. But, remember one thing is clear, this decade itself has given us the hope that God is in control of the destiny of the country and its people.

At this, two things I would like to point out, People who went to bed after a comfortable dinner on August 1st 1990 woke up in the morning and sat in front of breakfast had no penny for lunch — Invasion of Kuwait — a small nation and a mighty currency of the world. Their name was erased from the list of the world nations; their money had no value. This event had shaken the consciousness of the people of the world. In seven months they were restored back to a nationhood and their wealth was stabilized and even with 100% appreciation and they are now one of the strongest currencies of the world. At the very same time the mightiest military power of the world, Soviet Union, without any external aggression disintegrated by its own. It is unheard of in the history. Their money value also was weakened. They are still not able to restore their might and power. This tells us a reality. The might and power are not the criteria for the resurrection from destruction, it is God who controls the history.

Let me conclude with the words of our lord through prophet Zachariah addressed to Zerubabel 'Not by might and power but by my spirit.' That gives us the strength and courage as we journey through the 21st century to meet and confront the life realities. ■

# Spirituality: A Holistic Perspective

Dr. V. T. Samuel

Spirituality and religiosity have been used interchangeably in literature. A precise definition of spirituality is not found in dictionaries or concordances. The term spirituality is not found in the Bible, but the theme runs throughout. A few academicians and social scientists have defined spirituality as a state of the quality of life at the personal level in relation to a Supreme Being. Neutral statements like "Spirituality is a fundamental aspect of humanity" or "Spirituality is the human experience of discovering meaning, purpose, and values which may or may not include the concept of a God or Transcendent Being", may be inclusive and appealing but in my attempt to elaborate a "holistic perspective of spirituality" I have maintained a view of spirituality with reference to a personal belief in God who transcends the man-made barriers and walls, yet actively involved in the day-to-day affairs and welfare of all in the Universe.

Religion is encompassed within Spirituality but spirituality is often considered to be broader than religion. Religion refers to a formal institutional or organizational context for spiritual beliefs and practices. Spirituality refers to the human experience involving meaning, purpose, and morality in relation to a Supreme God and to other human beings. The possibility of defining spirituality outside of a religious context may be desirable but is not within the purview of this essay. As a student of the religions of the world, my attempt will be confined to explaining spirituality within the context of both organized/institutionalized/native religious traditions.

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***Social involvement, advocacy, and actions grounded in the faith in a holy and just God must be manifested in love, compassion and social justice for all regardless of their religion, ethnic, cultural or ideological affiliation.***

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Contemporary discussions of sacred versus secular may be appreciated by many but to view them in a unitive way is essential for understanding our existence in a universe created by God. As human beings we live in it, move in it and cooperate with the forces of nature. We become the crown of creation as we try to relate to other human beings, ecosystems and environment. Therefore, spirituality is not a quality of life lived apart of this every

day mundane world but lived in harmony with the nature and its creator. The purpose of this essay is to identify three dimensions of a "holistic perspective of spirituality that can be experienced in this God-given world here and now. As Christians, we may look at this perspective as (1) A Faith driven devotional (*Bhakti*) spirituality; (2) A faith driven Dynamic (*Karmic*) spirituality and (3) A faith driven Reflective (*Jnana*) spirituality.

## **1. Faith Driven Devotional (*Bhakti*) Spirituality**

This dimension of spirituality is based upon the faith in a personal God and incessant devotion to him. Complete submission and loyalty to him can be expressed in singing hymns of praise, chanting liturgy, performing the prescribed rituals associated with various rites of passage, and in reading exposition of the scriptures. Institutionalized religions require prescribed forms of worship on a regular basis where as native religious traditions uses various generic forms of worship, indigenous, mystical and esoteric prayers and other cultic rituals which vary from tribe to tribe, clan to clan and region to region. All forms of devotion are meant to praise and please God in order to obtain favors for the individuals as well as for the community of believers. Christians believe in a Holy God. Therefore, devotees must become holy in their relationship with God. Such devotional spirituality which requires holiness has been practiced in the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic traditions that had originated in the Middle East as well as in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jainist traditions of India and the other native religious traditions rooted in Africa, and the rest of the world. Manifestations of intense devotional spirituality became a central focus of Christianity in the Medieval ages and the vestiges of which can be seen in monasteries and Ashrams established for the purpose of cultivating personal holiness and spirituality. The Puritans of England of the 16th and 17th centuries migrated to the United States to nurture their spirituality based on the scriptures without interference from the established religious and political powers. The religious awakenings of the 18th and 19th century America bears testimony to this fact that the descendants of the earlier Puritans wanted to maintain their spirituality in the New England. This primary emphasis on devotion (*Bhakti*) has permeated the Indian subcontinent both in the Islamic and Hindu religious traditions as early as the 11th century. The traditional emphasis on the devotional spirituality is also pervasive in the 20th century Christianity. Protestant Christians have a basis for this devotional spirituality as they often refer to the Scripture

which reads *"the one who is righteous will live by faith"* (Romans 1:7 NRSV). Spontaneous forms of the devotion and worship services are also pervasive in local autonomous churches and the Store-front Churches in the inner cities. New forms of devotional worship services using contemporary music is becoming popular in the West. Experimental liturgies utilizing indigenous religious concepts and vocabulary is also an emerging phenomenon in third world countries in the latter part of the 20th century.

## **2. Faith Driven Dynamic (Karmic) Spirituality**

Persons who believe in an active, creative, and involved life, give due emphasis to this dimension of spirituality. It is also known as the love-in-action spirituality. People of this orientation tend to be driven by their faith and conviction that one's action must reveal the nature of their faith in God and in their fellow human beings. Social involvement, advocacy, and actions grounded in the faith in a holy and just God must be manifested in love, compassion and social justice for all regardless of their religious, ethnic, cultural or ideological affiliation. A man does not live alone in an island, but in the community and in constant interaction with others whether it be the family, neighborhood, church or work place. We have heard the stories of many spiritual heroes who conducted their adventurous journeys of faith to spread the truth of the Gospel in foreign lands. But in contemporary society, people are looking for persons who are active in reducing the pains and hurts caused by unjust economic and socio-political systems, exploitation of people and environment, materialistic philosophies and by the permissiveness based morality. Sister Maria Rani of Kerala who was killed during her active campaign against an unjust landlord system near Bhopal in 1995 is an example of this dimension of faith driven active spirituality. Such martyrs who have lived a life of activism are the heroes of Dynamic (*Karmic*) Spirituality or the love-in-action spirituality.

## **3. Faith Driven Reflective (Jnana) Spirituality**

The third dimension of spirituality identified in this essay refers to those who devote their lives to the exposition of theological/philosophical aspect of their faith. St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Frederic Schleiermacher, Emile Brunner, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, and M. M. Thomas, to name a few, are some of the giants of this kind of spirituality. These scholars have tried to reflect on the faith of the Christian church and wrote voluminous works elucidating Christian faith in a rational way. They were no less spiritual than those who have been identified with the other types of spirituality. Other religious traditions also had such giants who attempted to explain spirituality in a rational way. Sankaracarya of Kalady and Al Ghazali of Egypt are examples of such scholars. Contemporary Biblical scholars

whose commentaries we read and appreciate are also examples of reflective spirituality. Among the disciples of Jesus was Thomas who tried to understand his faith in a rational way (John 20:24-29). St. Paul's letters are the sources of early Christian faith, practice, traditions, and effective thinking immersed in spirituality. Today, we are enriched by the fruits of the reflective spirituality of several generations and they enhance our ability to redefine a new holistic spirituality with due emphasis on all three dimensions mentioned above.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion let me summarize by stating that each of the three dimensions of spirituality discussed has its own merits. All three, devotional, dynamic, and reflective are dimension of a holistic spirituality like the tripartite concept of a human personality consisting of Soul, Spirit, and Mind. When the three dimensions are integrated and function with proper balance, it is easily understood, appreciated, and recognized as true exemplary spirituality. At the same time, we should be cautious about the devotional spirituality which could lead to the extreme of the world-denying ascetic spirituality. Undue emphasis on dynamic spirituality for the sole purpose of recognition and rewards may become self serving in itself instead of a world-affirming creative spirituality. The love-in-action life devoted to the betterment of life of all around us including the ecosystem and the environment could lead us to humanistic ideology without any reference to an immanent God with whom we could enter into partnership in the on-going creative-recreative and redemptive work. It is important to hear what the scripture says in this regard: *"So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead"* (James 2:17). So also devotion and dynamic actions without adequate reflection could become superfluous and expose the shallowness of our faith. Christ is the supreme example of a holistic spirituality. He lived a life of constant devotion to God (Mark 1:35). He was never disloyal to God, even at the hour of his death (Luke 22:43). His earthly life is the unique example of a dynamic love-in-action spirituality of always seeking, serving, healing, reconciling, and redeeming the world. His teaching illustrates the reflective spirituality, explaining the necessity of faith and repentance and the rationale for our ethical and moral behavior (Matt:chs. 5-7). Religiosity may be measured by the frequency of church attendance, tithing, personal piety and by other ritualistic behavior. There is no instrument or scale to measure the spirituality of a Christian. It must become self evident when Christians truly make an honest attempt to follow the footsteps of the Lord who exemplified a holistic spirituality through devotion, dynamism and reflection. ■

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Dr. V. T. Samuel is a Professor in the School of Social Work, Grambling State University, Louisiana. He is a former Professor and Vice Principal of Serampore College, India.



# From Tomb to Home

## St. Mark 5: 1-20

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa

(Sermon at the closing worship of the WCC Central Committee, Geneva, Switzerland)

We are at the threshold of a new millennium. The 21st century opens up immense possibilities for humanity. At the same time it brings a lot of anxiety to the present generation. Nuclear threat, rampant terrorism, growing unemployment and new killing diseases, generate anxiety in the minds of the people. New inventions and discoveries, science and technology, World Wide Web and Internet are unravelling new possibilities for humanity. In every anxiety there is a possibility. There is hope in the midst of despair.

The passage preceding the Gospel reading, illustrates the power of Jesus over sea and storm. The text which we have read explains the power of Jesus over the evil spirit. The succeeding passages prove the power and authority of Jesus over sickness and death. Jesus releases the power of life from the forces of death. Life is unique and significant. Affirmation of life is central to the message of Jesus.

The WCC theme for the next Assembly is "Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope". This passage illustrates the theme in its depth and width. A demoniac approaches Christ and moves on as a changed person. A man in the tomb becomes a man in the home. One who turned to Christ returns with joy and hope.

Let us have a closer look at this man. Firstly, the demoniac person found his abode among the tombs. A tomb is a place of lifelessness and darkness; there is a lack of communion. He cuts himself off from his community and consequently he has lost his humanity. No person can realize his/her humanity apart from community. This man was not dead, but he was on the verge of death because of his loneliness and aloofness. He has become sub-human and de-humanized. His society had isolated and labeled him a terrorist. He becomes bitter and brutal against such a society.



Secondly, we read that he was in chains and fetters. Nobody could control him. Chains and fetters are not permanent solutions. Force is not an answer to evil power. Wars cannot be wiped out by wars. We try to control or curtail others by putting them in chains and fetters. Economic sanctions and safe air spaces are new chains and fetters. But they are more often broken. Christ's presence and power alone will transform and rebuild persons and structures.

Thirdly, this man was crying day and night in tombs and hills. We hear the cry of the people all around us. But we don't listen to their cries or shouts, for they can't speak intelligently or communicate meaningfully. But they express deep truths and raise strong challenges through their cries and shouts. Changampuzha, the radical Malayalam poet (India) vividly depicts the cry of children in his poem "Plantain", when the landlord takes away the ripe plantain which the children planted and watered with the hope of enjoying it. The poet asks "who will listen to the cry of the kids who can't utter words together?" But that cry launched a big revolution against the system of landlordship that denied the rights and dignity of people.

Thirdly, Christ sends the healed man back to his home. The demoniac wanted to go with Jesus. But Jesus wanted him to go home and tell what God has done in his life. He was asked to face the challenge of mission. Mission is the communication of our experience. It is personal as well as corporate. It has to be conveyed to home, home-town and friends. Mission is other people recognizing Christ's transformation in a person.

The reaction of people in that locality speaks to our modern age also. People plead with Jesus to leave the place.

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***In Christ there is great possibility of renewal, transformation and humanization. In Him there are no fetters, shrieks, self-bruising or loneliness. Christ gives new life, a new message, a new story to tell. A disoriented personality is well integrated by Christ. A self-killer is made a good missionary. An isolated person is integrated into the community. A broken man is made whole.***

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His presence caused loss—personal as well as material. They lost the pigs. Their economy is being touched. They argue for their property rights. They don't care for human rights or dignity. When their economy is affected and their property lost, they are hurt. This raises the issue of value and cost. The pigs may be costly. But the man is valuable. What is costly need not necessarily be valuable. we need to differentiate between valuable and costly. Human beings are more valuable than material possessions. Value is not measured in currency, but in the quality of life. The present market economy that rates pigs high and human beings as consumers, makes people mad and self-destructive. If we are unwilling to lose what we have, we will never help others gain what they have already lost.

This passage challenges us and helps us to evaluate our 'modus operandi' as the ecumenical movement and as individual churches. We are called and sent out to bring individuals and communities 'back home'. 'Back home' is a modern challenge. A million-man march organized by Mr. Louis Farrakhan and black leaders in Washington D.C. last year called blacks to 'go back home'. Mr. Farrakhan, Rev. Jesse Jackson, and many others who spoke at the gathering challenged the young people, women and men to go back home from the streets, drugs, laziness, crime and sex. Back to family values is the trump card of both parties in the Presidential election of the USA. Jesus tells the healed demoniac to go back home and to the people from whom he was estranged or cut off. Jesus reestablishes broken relationships and makes him part of the community. Christ makes him what he ought to be. The challenge of 'back home' is a call to turn to God. The Parable of the "prodigal son" makes this explicit. A metanoia is a prerequisite for partnership in the oikoumene. 'Back Home' is a call to enter into the Kingdom of God, into Kingdom values of justice, peace and joy. It is a return from despair to hope, solitude to community, and from a 'no-man's-land' to the father's home, where one ought to be.

In Christ there is great possibility of renewal, transformation and humanization. In Him there are no fetters, shrieks, self-bruising or loneliness. Christ gives new life, a new message, a new story to tell. A disoriented personality is well integrated by Christ. A self-killer is made a good missionary. An isolated person is integrated into the community. A broken man is made whole. He regained discernment. He is no more a threat, a terrorist or an anti-social element. He is made part and parcel of a society. One who turned away from the world has now turned towards the world. Turning to God leads to turning to the world which God "so loved" and "gave His only Son" for its redemption.

Let us not chase people out of their homes into the tombs. Christ brings back people from tombs to houses. Modern world has to turn to God to rejoice in hope. We find people around with evil spirits, crying, destroying, in

isolation and who are a threat to others. They could be made into sober, sensible, conversing, constructive, and comforting members. The other side of anxiety is possibility and hope. We are challenged to meet Him and to make Him known. Christ in the tomb brings resurrection. He is the only hope and the joy of the world.

In the modern world we hear the cry of women who are raped and exploited, children who are sexually and physically abused and people who have become refugees, homeless and landless. The cry of the differently abled, unemployed, and of those denied human rights are heard every day. A cry is very important. A child cries when it feels discomfort, hunger, anger, pain or when it needs the presence of its mother. Unless the cry is understood and responded to, it leads to death and destruction. No one listens to the cry of this demoniac. Christ listened and turned his cry into words of hope and encouragement. Can we make the cry of the world a hope for transformation?

Fourthly, he was bruising himself. Many around us are killing themselves and only a few pay attention to it. Drug addiction and AIDS are destroying many young lives before they can blossom. Here is a book titled "*Mr. Executive, You are Killing Yourself*". Many of us are workaholics and kill ourselves. Racial prejudice, ethnic hatred, professional jealousy, sexual promiscuity, obesity, are some of the other factors that lead to self destruction. A frog dropped into a pot of boiling water, jumps out and escapes; but a frog that chooses to remain in a kettle of water being heated slowly, adjusts to the temperature and enjoys it. 'When the water in the kettle is boiled the frog will be boiled to death without knowing what has happened. So many people are killing themselves without knowing what is happening. Christ is liberating this man from his death trap.

Fifthly, the demoniac asks Christ: "*What have you and I to do with each other?*" this is a question that is often asked: Has Christ anything to do with awkward and frightening situations? Should he not be in the temple with the saints and not at the tomb with the demoniac? Has Christ anything to do with the disintegrating lives, structures and powers of this world?

Here we see the deplorable plight of a person who has lost identity, integration and relationships. Jesus enters the scene and changes the person. He reaches the unreached, dejected, and the rejected ones. Christ crosses the sea to meet this suffering person and to save him. The action of Jesus is very vivid. We may take note of the following points:

First, he commands the evil spirit to get out of him. He even asks the evil spirit to reveal its name. Name gives identity to a person. Revealing the name is revealing the identity. The spirit does not reveal his true identity. He calls himself legion, the Roman battalion, the greatest power he has ever known. There is a film where a character is leading

*(Continued on page 40)*

# What Is Biblical Spirituality?

Rev. K. V. Simon

Religion makes very little impact on individuals nowadays. We think spirituality is at its best. There is church growth at an increased rate, Bible conventions and revival meetings are organized greater than ever, all Sundays all churches are crowded for worship, we build bigger churches to accommodate more people. On the other hand materialism is at its worst. There is breakdown of marriages, total rejection of moral law and rebellion against God. Pleasure has become the goal of millions. In the midst of all this we have to look for the real spirituality.

## 1. What is spirituality?

Spirituality is nothing but the religious orientation of the whole man- an orientation which has both vertical and horizontal dimensions: God, man and the world. Spirituality is the natural outcome of theology, liturgy, and ethics. The type of theology we learn, the nature of liturgy we participate in and the orientation of the morality we practice, ultimately build up our spirituality. Our task, therefore is to interpret the signs of the times, relate ourselves to the times and develop a spirituality that will answer the demands of our times. It must be something which can face the challenges and demands of our present culture and civilization. It must be of higher values, and must have the noblest goal in life.

## 2. Biblical Basis for Spirituality

The simplest and clearest exposition of a true spirituality is found in the Sermon on the Mount. Christian spirituality should be based upon the Bible. It is the lifestyle of a Christian. When he accepts and understands the Good News of Christ as it is inaugurated by the arrival of the Kingdom of God, through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. The requirement on the part of man to attain this Biblical spirituality is "metanoia"—a complete repentance, as Jesus told Nicodemus "I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). We can call it poverty of spirit. A man with profound righteousness which surpasses that of the Pharisees and the Scribes and his readiness to become like children. Then religion becomes more meaningful and influences everyday life and evaluates the realities of life.

## 3. Different facets of Biblical Spirituality

### (a) Surrender to the Will of God

*Learn from me, for I am gentle, and lowly in heart* (Mt 11:29), is nothing but submitting to the Will of God. We always talk in the possessive, our identity becomes so wrapped up in the tangible possessions. We must belong entirely to God, we must be ready to do anything for Him. The sacred power we set into motion. When we say, "not my will, but Thine, O Lord" is wonderful. It strengthens, nourishes and encourages us. We are dead and will not live; we are lost and will not be found; and we are bound and will not be free as long as we resist to the will

of God. Prepare your way by focusing exclusively on God. Cleave to Him in every situation of life. This is complete surrender.

### (b) Humility- first and foremost

Humility is a virtue that all preach, but none practice. God continually stoops down to help us and He wants us to do the same. Thomas A Kempis said "It is great wisdom and perfection to think nothing of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others." St. Paul also said "in humility consider others better than yourselves having the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus" (Phi:2:3-5). Whenever we place our reputations, needs, wants and interests at the forefront, we are far away from God. To learn humility, we have to place God at the center. True humility excludes self-consciousness. Christ showed the way of humility and taught his disciples "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mk 10:43-44). It is part of the discipline of humility that we must not spare our hand where it can perform a service. The people who honor humility in the words of Michael Grant are; *those who have confidence in no earthly authority or salvation, but in God alone, are particularly likely to possess the right attitude of humility and repentance for securing entry into the kingdom.* Christ exemplified humility from the beginning of his earthly life in a stable to the end of it on a wooden cross. Perfect humility means perfect confidence in the power of God. By going down to the depth of humility we climb to the greatest height of the power of God.

### (c) It is bearing of Fruit

The power of the risen Christ dwelling in us helps us to bear fruit. The power that comes from the spirit enables us to grow in courage, wisdom and responsibility to others. This power will burn away our fears, anxieties and worries. It is a liberating force which has no limits. It takes us to the highest spiritual experiences. Gentle Christians who are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit will become sign posts towards God in the world around them. Christians are placed in this world to bear fruit. We cannot bear fruit if we stay apart from Christ. Christ has chosen us and appointed us to bear fruit (John 15:16). Are we bearing the fruit of the spirit?

Bearing fruit also means clothing ourselves with the gentleness of love. Love is the greatest fruit we can bear. The world now is thirsting for love. The greatest Christian virtue, 'agape', gathers all virtues. The early Christians propagated this greatest virtue to the world around them. Our love for God reaches out to others and God is pleased with our labor. If our spirituality is perfected with humility, gentleness and love, it is of the greatest value. God always wants the best from man.

*"Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things"* (Phil 4:8). May the God of peace help us to practice real spirituality. ■

# "We Are The Clay, And You Our Potter"

Isiah 64:8

Dr. John Abraham, Indiana

This issue of the Messenger focuses on Spirituality- a term whose meaning and relevance I am still struggling to understand. Yes, it is different from 'being religious' — which is associated with following a set of rules and practices, whereas "Being spiritual" would, in our context, associate with being led by the Spirit. All the same, the term does not appear in the Bible in a direct sense and its implications remain vague to me. Hence, if you are looking for enlightenment on this subject- read no more! I may have none to offer. You may then wonder: so what are you dabbling in these pages? Well! You see while struggling with the term, I came to a point where I said to myself: OK! it does not quite matter what it means as long as what you understand by it is from God, glorifying His name and pleasing to Him. Our God does not want our intellectual unconditional acceptance of His plan for our salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, and our belief in the redemptive power of the Cross. Simple Truths...Yes! But, hard to rationalize "*Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*" (I Cor. 1:20). Christian spirituality, whatever it may mean or imply to each person, must, up front, embrace these truths unconditionally to have any relevance.

## A Personal Response is Needed

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that our relationship with our Creator is a very personal one. "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.*" (Is 43:1). "*Zaachaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.*" (Lk 19:5). One could go on .... His call to us is by each individual's name. Our response also has to be a very personal one. It is not a response that we can give through another person or institution—Not our parents, not our priests, not our church. Neither it is an impersonal one whereby we might hide behind the cover of church participation or corporate worship. All these are important but no substitute for a personal response — "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*" (Rev. 3:20). What is our response going to be?

"*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" Thomas confessed to him. (John 20:28). Zaachaeus responded by making haste, coming down from the tree and receiving Him joyfully. Stephen responded with martyrdom. Paul, with a life of passionate commitment. "*I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered all things, and count them as rubbish,*

*that I may gain Christ.*" (Phil. 3:8). All of these witnesses who responded and all of us who respond will go through life-transforming experiences of being born again whereby our lives become filled with the Holy Spirit, our 'Helper'. (John 14:16). 'Spirituality' without such a personal response is void and meaningless, 'like grasping for the wind' (Eccl. 1:14).

## A Life of Surrender to God

Once we have responded to His call, our Lives will become one of surrender and dependence on His grace and providence. We will acknowledge His ownership of our lives. We will then realize that we are but pieces of clay for Him to mold into vessels of great beauty and worth, useful for His kingdom. We let the Spirit lead us in our journeys and lean on God for our needs. Augustine was a rebellious and sinful young man until he responded to God's call. He had this to say then: "*Cast yourself upon him, fear not, He will not withdraw himself and let you fall; He will receive you and heal you*" (*Confessions*—*St. Augustine*). We can recount the lives of many saints, including the ones back in Kerala, whose lives are testimonies to a response to God's call and life of surrender. "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..*" (Gal. 2:20). This response is one of obedience to His call. (*The Cost of Discipleship*—*D. Bonhoefer, Collier, 1963*). Today in a world where we have all our needs fulfilled and we all are striving to increase wealth, power, education, prestige, this dependence on God may seem somewhat out of place. Where is God in our lives in the midst of all our efforts? Does He have a place in our crowded lives? Watch out! The day of reckoning will come. "*The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do,.....*" (Luke 12:16)—read on.

'Spirituality' in one's life without a life of surrender is void and meaningless, like 'grasping for the wind'.

## A Life Built Upon the Rock

"*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.*" (Mt. 7:24). It is important to note that the parable that follows comes after Jesus had spoken at great length about both earthly and heavenly matters. He had just given a blueprint for daily living to His disciples in which He had expounded and clarified the law and the Prophets, "*Do not think I came to destroy the law or the*

*Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.* (Mt. 5:17). He thus gave importance not to what he had just said but to the entire Word of God, "*the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God*" (Eph. 6:17). A life built on this Word of God, is then like a house built on a rock—a hard solid foundation, unshakable, protected from the vicissitudes of the world we live in. Contrary to this is the house on the sand, blown away by the storm. Are we taking time to study God's Word, meditate on it, and let the Holy Spirit provide us the understanding of His Word? Are we preventing the Holy Spirit from helping us grow in the Word by trying to give our own ineffectual interpretation that rhymes with our lifestyles and our convenience? Are we compromising the Word to please all those around us and diluting the meaning of Sin? Are we letting those who preach false gospels enter our lives and our worship to misguide us? If we do not know what the Word says, how can we even think of building a house on a rock? How can we discern what is of God and what is not from Him? "*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*" (Gal. 1: 6, 8). We recite this every Sunday. Do we know what the true gospel is?

'Spirituality' which does not acknowledge and accept the supremacy of the Word of God is void and meaningless, like 'grasping for the wind'.

## **A Life of Witness**

Once we have heard the call of God, responded to Him personally, surrendered our lives to Him and have allowed His Word to be supreme in our lives, our lives will become lives of witness. Like Philip (Acts 8:26-40), we will feel the Spirit leading us to places unknown and unplanned to lead others to the saving grace and power of Christ. Or, like Aquila and Priscilla, God will use us in the midst of our daily lives to bring people to salvation. The Bible records the incidents of many ordinary people in ordinary circumstances who led lives of testimony and witness right where they were. Consider the Samaritan woman at the well. After her encounter with the Lord, she went back to the city, "*And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified*" (John 4:39). Then there was Tabitha of Joppa, a disciple "*full of good works and charitable deeds*", (Acts 9:36), and Lydia, the woman who sold purple and worshiped God, (Acts 16:14). What about us? What is our testimony of our encounter with our Lord? We do not have to be hermits and live apart from the world to lead lives of testimony. "*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?.....You are the light of this world...*" (Mt 5:13,14). We cannot run away from the world, but here, now, we have to lead lives that testify.

'Spirituality' which is not accompanied by lives that testify is void and meaningless.

## **Finally.....**

The focus above has been on personal response and testimony. What about the Church? It is abundantly clear from the Word of God that it is not God's plan for individual believers to live in isolation. From the time when about one hundred and twenty of them gathered in the Upper Room in '*prayer and supplication*' (Acts 1:14) to later when deacons, elders and bishops were appointed in the Church, the coming together of believers is emphasized in the Word of God. The Church as a corporate body of believers has a great role to play in God's plan for salvation. Above all, it has a role to teach the Word of God, encourage people to grow in the Word, minister to the needs of believers and be active in bringing the good news of salvation through Christ to the ends of the earth. How much time does our church spend in these areas? What is our participation? What kind of Church do we belong to? Have we become a loveless church (Ephesus, Rev. 2:4), a persecuted church, (Smyrna, Rev. 2:9), a compromising church which has 'departed from the doctrine' (Pergamos, Rev. 2:14), a corrupt church which has become unethical and immoral (Thyaira, Rev. 2:20), a spiritually dead church, (Sardis, Rev. 2:4), a church which is lukewarm in its response, (Laodicea, Rev. 3:16), or are we a faithful church which has "*strenght, have kept My Word, and have not denied My name.*" (Philadelphia, Rev. 3:8). Where are we on the scale? Ultimately the Church is us and it mirrors us and our 'spirituality'. It all starts with each individual hearing the call of God, responding to His call, living out lives of surrender and witness, acknowledging the supremacy of the Word of God in our lives and in our Church and then our Church will be a '*bride in waiting.*' In the end, whatever words we may coin as the basis of our discussions, we have to have these eternal Biblical truths as the framework.

'Spituality.' Ah! Yes. That all-encompassing word. There are all forms of them in this world. Hindu spirituality, Islamic spirituality, New Age spirituality, Shinto spirituality. Let us count. No! I give up. There are too many. Everyone is searching. So did the Jews of Jesus' day and the Greeks of Athens when Paul encountered them. Their eyes were blinded and their hearts hardened by their pride. Oh Child of God! search no more. Let us cast aside the intellectual and philosophical discourses of our market place. Let us turn our eyes upon Jesus who is the source of our salvation and let His spirit speak to us through His Word and lead us in our spiritual journeys. ■

# Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi — Man of Practical Spirituality

Rev. Jacob Mathew

## Introduction

As a Mar Thoma community, our understanding about spirituality is very much influenced by the spiritual revival of the years 1873, 1895, 1907 and 1920 in Kerala. Among them the last two were more organized as a continuous movement under the leadership of Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi and Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi. Still people are proud of those movements and wish to experience it through initiating charismatic movements in the church. In this article I wish to highlight a few aspects of spirituality Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi professed and practiced during the revival movement, which we often forget.

## Life Sketch of Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi

Sadhu was born in the year 1883 at Edayaranmula, a place very near to Maramon, the cradle of Reformation in Malankara Church. He received less than six years of formal education. In keeping with the prevalent custom and tradition of the community, he got married at the age of twelve. After the age of fourteen he went through painful and tragic life experiences. He lost his mother, his father became completely bedridden, failed in his business, resigned from the teaching career, etc. At last he opted farming as his means of daily bread and decided to work very hard in the vineyard of the Lord for the spiritual bread of thousands of people. He organized a group called Christian Fellowship Unity and extended his mission to nearby parishes and places. But the days in the valley of Bacca confronted him as a test of his surrender to the Lord, depth of his faith and earnestness for the mission. His second son died. His elder son was chronically ill. Bitterness of poverty compelled his wife to depart from him and stay in her parents' home with children. His friends, relatives and neighbors began to criticize and ridicule him for his option for the cross. His physical body became the home of different diseases. But these days of loneliness helped him to get new heavenly visions which lead him to confront the realities of his life. At the age of thirty he accepted the life style of a 'Sadhu' - complete detachment from the attractions of the world. Until his death at age of sixty, abstention from passions, lesser interest in food, simple clothing etc. were practiced. Through fasting and prayers, his speeches became the fire tongues of Holy Spirit which transformed thousands of people. His songs were channels of Lord's mercy to the people and ladders to the heavenly abode. The last words of Kochukunju Upadeshi was a challenge to death "Is this death ...? I am not dying ... let me take rest....."



## His understanding of Spirituality

Many think Sadhu as a mystic with the passion only for *'the other world'*, ignoring the realities of the present life. But a close analysis of his life and mission will help us to understand his spirituality as world affirming, world transforming, contextual and challenging. He interpreted life in the light of eternity, visualized the immediate in the prospect of ultimate and analyzed self in the knowledge of corporate.

## Spirituality and Healing Ministry

Sadhu's Convention meetings were not 'Miracle Crusades', but they were fellowship of "crucified people" for continuing mission expecting sustaining results. Though he prayed for sick and many were healed he never wanted to make a propaganda of his healing power. To avoid personal glory he prayed standing in the midst of his followers and openly praised the Lord for his prayer partners like Maramon Yohannan Varghese Upadeshi, etc. His emphasis was on the word of God; not in the miracles. People forgot about their diseases and illness when they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He allowed them to confess their sins before the assembly and to express spiritual emotions through dancing, clapping and singing. Through these songs people got inner healing which lead many to the cure of physical illness and diseases. He neither taught diseases as the work of Satan, nor he caste out demons from the people. But he encouraged people to make reconciliation through embracing each other with words of regret for their mistakes and short comings before they departed from the meetings. This in turn healed the disintegration of families and community. He wanted to see the healed individual in a healed community. In other words, he wanted to place the new man in a new society.

## Spirituality and suffering

He accepted suffering as a gift and right of the faithful. His famous song "*Dhukkathinte Panapathram.....*" was written in the remorse of the death of his son Samuel. He saw the disciplining hands of the Lord in suffering. He believed in the loving, caring, nursing motherhood of God.

Sadhu never considered the material blessings as the sign and symbol of God's blessings to His people. He gave more importance to detachment than attachment to the worldly blessings. He understood sufferings as a good means of detachment from the worldly attractions.

He saw sufferings as opportunities to serve other people. When he surrendered to his Master, he surrendered to the people of the Master also. His detachment from the passions of the world helped him to serve the people more and in better ways. Sadhu asked the people to share the sufferings of other people. He established orphanages and asked the local community to cater to the needs of the inmates. In many places he insisted people to thatch houses of the needy before thatching the 'Pandal'.

Kochukunju Upadeshi never promised a secure life for his followers. The modern gospel of affluence was alien to him, but he preached the security of life in the hands of the Lord, even amidst suffering and tribulations.

### **Spirituality and Community.**

He was an ardent member of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Though he was liberal in the methods of worship, preaching etc., he was a conservative about the traditions of the community. He opposed the proposal to delete the word 'Syrian' from the name of our Church as he believed will harm the tradition and discipline of the church. He was both an advisor and disciple of the Bishops and Achens of his time. Though he was a staunch Mar Thoma member, due to the heretical teaching kept in the church, he adopted 'second baptism'. Though he regretted about it before the authorities and his disciples, this act created a darkness in his spiritual life. He wrote about it as the 'days of darkness', as he understood the 'second baptism' as his work for attaining salvation, forgetting the grace of God once and for all received through the infant baptism. His report about the revival in Malankara Church published in 1924 shows his affection and allegiance to the Mar Thoma Church. He wrote many songs defending the faith of the Church when one of the Brethren leader ridiculed him and Mar Thoma Church. His pain and agony about the heresies kept in the church is reflected in the song '*Sadhukkal Mayangeruthu Balabeena Sadhukkal Mayangeruthu .....*'. He defended the church about its Episcopacy, ordination etc. before the separatists (Bretherens) and opposed their doctrine of 'once saved, saved for all time.' Though he organized meetings and established different movements for revival, he was within the framework of the Church, he accepted the discipline, its heritage, traditions, rules and regulations.

Sadhu encouraged ecumenism in many practical ways. He asked people from all denominations to enter the stages for singing, praying and praising. He accepted disciples from different churches and communities, especially gave much encouragement to the ones from South Travancore and Tamilnadu. He established institutions for the less fortunate. His sense of stewardship prompted many to cooperate with him. For him, spirituality was nothing but commitment to community with the self understanding of stewardship. It was not a privilege but a responsibility to be fulfilled with Christ.

### **Spirituality and social confrontation.**

Sadhu criticized the existing dowry system. He published pamphlets and recited songs against this custom. He saw the pain and suffering of the poor in the struggle for paying dowry. He organized an anti-dowry movement and published the book '*Sthreedhana Thyagom*'.

In 1928 he published a book describing the drawbacks of '*Lela Chitty*.' He explained to the masses the importance, credibility and dignity of any labor in the society. He criticized the rich in exploiting poor through '*Lela Chitty*'. He proclaimed judgment and wrath of God on those who expelled the poor from their houses for non payment of loan. He raised voice against the exploitation of the businessmen and intermediaries through his book '*Vyaparadhar.....*'. Spirituality without morality is untrue Christianity. Without confronting the evil of this world Christians cannot meet the holy and righteous God. The ethical dimension of spirituality should help the church to confront all kinds of injustices of the society.

### **Spirituality and contextualisation**

Sadhu never saw Christianity as an imported religion of western countries. He used the language and literature of the soil for his mission. His appreciation for eastern traditions, his earnestness to establish '*Ashrams*', enthusiasm to accept the life style of Indian *sannyasm* shows his attachment to the native land. He founded a '*Moksha Prayana Sannayasins*' a pilgrim community and encouraged people to travel with the slogan '*Yesuve Saranam, Yeuve Saranam, Saranam yente Yesuve*' wearing saffron dress and cross. His songs were composed purely with Indian '*ragoms*' which are so attractive to all religious people. He opted the traditions of his country amidst the temptations of western missionaries who worked intensively to convert the Syrian Christians to different sectarian groups, who advocated everything in the native land as against the word of God, and exhorted to embrace the western culture as part of the good news of Jesus Christ. Sadhu was conscious about the superstitious belief and faith of the other communities in India. He strongly fought against the heresies of '*Yuyomayam*' which advocated syncretism. But he accepted the culture of the land as his base for contextualising the gospel.

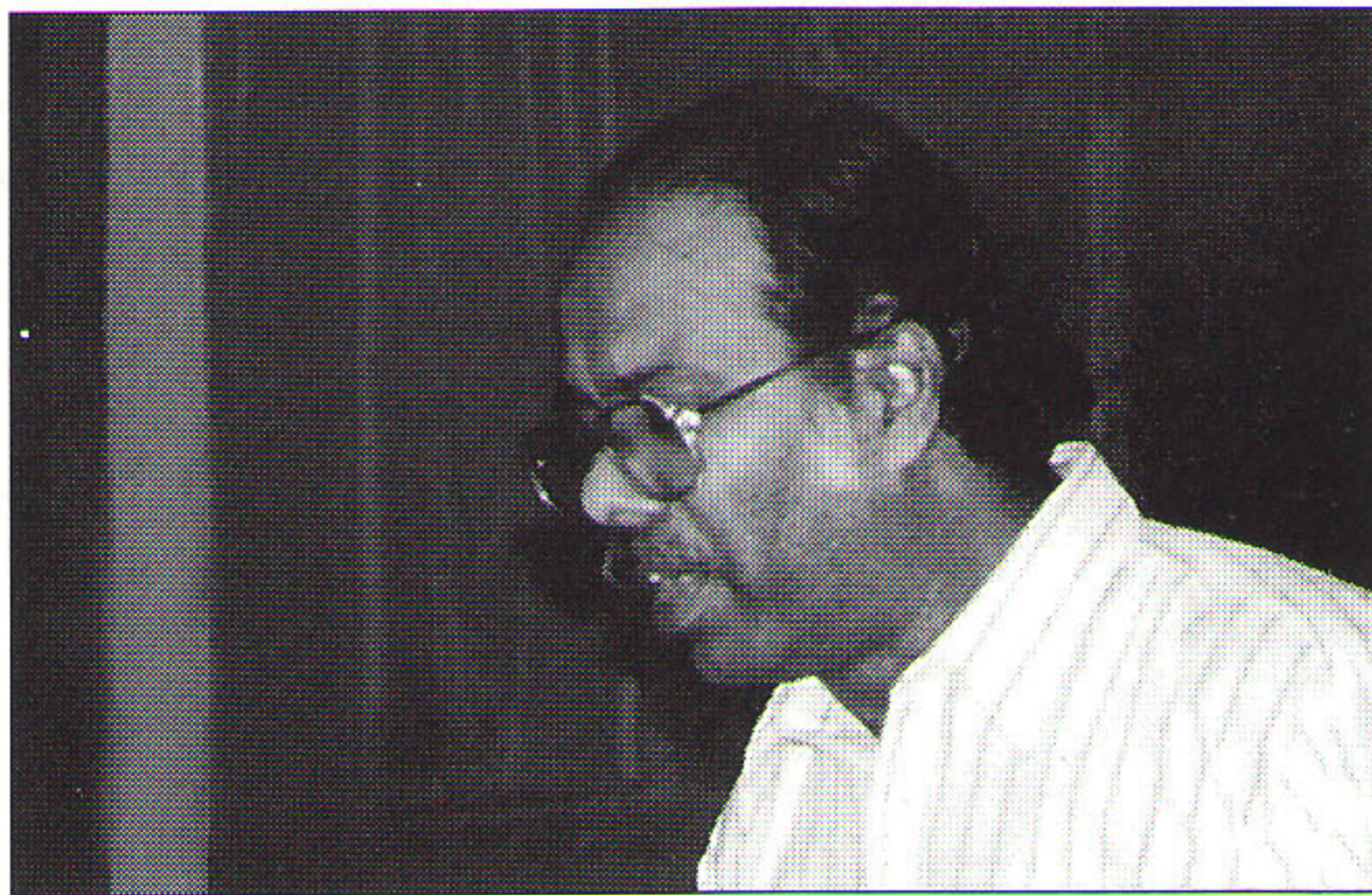
### **Conclusion**

Due to the undue importance to charismatic movements and healing ministries many consider gospel of Jesus Christ as miracle performance and personal conversions. Spirituality includes it, but true spirituality should care for the wholeness of individual, integrity of community and consolation for the broken world. Instead of individualism and egoism, community consciousness has to be created and emphasized. The mystic experience of Sadhu constrained him to become an activist in the world. True spirituality will take context as very important so that the gospel can transform and transcend the culture according to the values of the cross. ■

# കാടുകയറുന്ന ആത്മീയ സമസ്യകൾ

പ്രൊഫ.കോശി തലക്കൽ

**മ**നശ്ശരീര സംഘാത(Psycho-somatic unity) മായ മനുഷ്യാവസ്ഥയിലെ ആന്തരികഭാവമാണ് ആത്മീയത- ആത്മാവിനെ സംബന്ധിക്കുന്ന ഭാവം. അത്യന്ത സൂക്ഷ്മവും അതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെ അത്യന്ത ദുരുഹവുമായ ഈ ഭാവം ദാർശനികരുടേയും ആദ്ധ്യാത്മ ജ്ഞാനികളുടേയും ഖനനഭൂമിയായിരുന്നു, എന്നും. പക്ഷെ, ഉപഭോഗ സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ വേലിയേറ്റത്തിൽ ഭൗതികവും (Material) സ്പൂലവും (Concrete) ആയ പലതിന്റെയും തനിമ (Identity) നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന കൂട്ടത്തിൽ സൂക്ഷ്മമായ (Abstract) ആത്മീയാംശത്തിന്റെയും തനിമ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നതുപോലെ. ഒരു ഒരു മതത്തിന്റെയും ആത്മീയത ഇതിൽ നിന്നും ഒറ്റപ്പെട്ടു നിൽക്കുന്നില്ല. അനന്ത സാധ്യതയുടെ സ്രോതസുകൾ ഉറവെടുക്കേണ്ട ആത്മീയത ഇവിടെയെല്ലാം മനുഷ്യന്റെ ക്ഷുദ്രവാസനയുടെ ഇരുണ്ട പരിമതികളിലേക്ക് വഴുതി വിഴുകുകയാണ്. ക്രിസ്തീയ ആത്മീയതയുടേയും കഥ ഇതുതന്നെ. പരിമതികളിലേക്കുള്ള സങ്കോചം. (Contraction to the limits). ഒരു വിധത്തിൽ ചൈതന്യ കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ നിന്നുമുള്ള അന്യവൽക്കരണം (Alienation) ആണ് ഇത്.



ക്ഷേ ആത്മീയ ശൂന്യത സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്ന അസ്വസ്ഥത ഇന്നും പുതിയ മേച്ചിൽ പുറങ്ങൾ തേടി ഉഴലുകയാണ്. ഈ ഉഴൽചപാശ്ചാത്യ പൗരസ്ത്യ രാജ്യങ്ങളിൽ ഒരു പോലെ തന്നെ. പുതിയ പുതിയ ദൈവശാസ്ത്രങ്ങളുടെ നിഴലിൽ, പുതിയ പുതിയ കൾട്ടുകളുടെ തണലിൽ അസ്വസ്ഥതകൾ കണ്ണുപുട്ടിക്കിടക്കുന്നു, നിറവും ഭാഷയും വ്യത്യസ്തമാണെന്നു മാത്രം.

സമകാലീന ക്രൈസ്തവ സഭയിൽ ആത്മീയത ഒരു ആഡംബരമായി മാറിയിരിക്കുന്നു. എല്ലാ ന്യൂനതകളേയും, വൈകൃതങ്ങളേയും മറച്ചു വയ്ക്കുന്ന ആഡംബരം. മനുഷ്യൻ പരാജയങ്ങളുടെ പര്യായമായിത്തീരുന്നു ആധുനിക സമൂഹത്തിൽ. പ്രസിദ്ധ അമേരിക്കൻ എഴുത്തുകാരനായ ലൂയിസ് മഹോർഡിന്റെ ഭാഷയിൽ സംസ്കാരം "മലയിറങ്ങുകയാണ്". (Civilization is going downhill) സാംസ്കാരിക ച്യുതി എന്നു നമ്മൾ പറയും. ഈ സാംസ്കാരിക ച്യുതിയുടെ മലിമസതകളെ മറച്ചു വയ്ക്കുവാനുള്ള ഒരു ബാഹ്യാവരണമായി പലരും ഇന്ന് ആത്മീയതയെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു.

കോമോള സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ ഈ കാലത്ത് ആത്മീയതയും ഒരു വിൽപനച്ചരക്ക് (Commodity) ആയി മാറുന്ന പ്രതിഭാസമുണ്ട്. പണം കൊടുത്തു വാങ്ങുവാൻ പരുവത്തിലുള്ള ആത്മീയത! ശമർത്തയിലെ ശീമോന്റെ ആഭിചാര മനസ്സാണു ഇവിടെ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത്. നേട്ടങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള ഉപാധിയായി ആത്മീയതയെ ഇക്കൂട്ടർ തരംതാഴ്ത്തുന്നു. എല്ലാ ഭൗതിക നന്മകളും ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്ന 'മാന്ത്രികവിദ്യ'യായി ആത്മീയതയെ ഇവർ വ്യാഖ്യാനിക്കുന്നു; സമൃദ്ധിയുടെ പര്യായമായി അതിനെ കാണുന്നു.

സമകാലീന ക്രൈസ്തവ സഭയിൽ ആത്മീയത ഒരു ആഡംബരമായി മാറിയിരിക്കുന്നു. എല്ലാ ന്യൂനതകളേയും, വൈകൃതങ്ങളേയും മറച്ചു വയ്ക്കുന്ന ആഡംബരം.

മനുഷ്യൻ പരാജയങ്ങളുടെ പര്യായമായിത്തീരുന്നു ആധുനിക സമൂഹത്തിൽ. പ്രസിദ്ധ അമേരിക്കൻ എഴുത്തുകാരനായ ലൂയിസ് മഹോർഡിന്റെ ഭാഷയിൽ സംസ്കാരം "മലയിറങ്ങുകയാണ്". (Civilization is going downhill) സാംസ്കാരിക ച്യുതി എന്നു നമ്മൾ പറയും. ഈ സാംസ്കാരിക ച്യുതിയുടെ മലിമസതകളെ മറച്ചു വയ്ക്കുവാനുള്ള ഒരു ബാഹ്യാവരണമായി പലരും ഇന്ന് ആത്മീയതയെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു.

കമ്പോള സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ ഈ കാലത്ത് ആത്മീയതയും ഒരു വിൽപനച്ചരക്ക് (Commodity) ആയി മാറുന്ന പ്രതിഭാസമുണ്ട്. പണം കൊടുത്തു വാങ്ങുവാൻ പരുവത്തിലുള്ള ആത്മീയത! ശമർത്തയിലെ ശീമോന്റെ ആഭിചാര മനസ്സാണു ഇവിടെ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത്. നേട്ടങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള ഉപാധിയായി ആത്മീയതയെ ഇക്കൂട്ടർ തരംതാഴ്ത്തുന്നു. എല്ലാ ഭൗതിക നന്മകളും ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്ന 'മാന്ത്രികവിദ്യ'യായി ആത്മീയതയെ ഇവർ വ്യാഖ്യാനിക്കുന്നു; സമൃദ്ധിയുടെ പര്യായമായി അതിനെ കാണുന്നു.

മനുഷ്യവർഗ്ഗത്തെ നിരന്തരം വേട്ടയാടുന്ന ശത്രുവാണു ആത്മീയ ശൂന്യത.(Spiritual vacuum) ഭൗതികതയിൽ മനുഷ്യ മനസ്സ് ആ മഗ്നമാകുമ്പോഴുണ്ടാകുന്ന ഈ ആത്മീയ ശൂന്യതയിൽ നിന്ന് രക്ഷപ്പെടുവാനുള്ള കുറുക്കുവഴികൾ തേടുന്നിടത്താണു ആത്മീയതയുടെ പേരിലുള്ള ഈ കാടേറ്റം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത്. ആത്മീയ ശൂന്യതയുടെ പ്രത്യുൽപ്പന്നമായി എഴുപതുകളിൽ കൂടുപൊട്ടിവന്ന ഹിപ്പി പ്രസ്ഥാനത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് നമ്മൾ പലരും മറന്നു കഴിഞ്ഞു. പ

നമ്മുടെ ആത്മീയ ദാരിദ്ര്യത്തിനു പകരം വയ്ക്കാൻ ഹോറുന്നതല്ല ഭൗതികനേട്ടങ്ങൾ ഒന്നും -ഒരിക്കലും. ഭൗതികനേട്ടങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ മിഥ്യകളിലേക്ക് അനുസ്മരണം നയിക്കുന്നു; ആത്മീയ നേട്ടങ്ങളാവട്ടെ സത്യത്തിലേക്കും. അതുകൊണ്ട് നമ്മുടെ ആത്മീയഭാവത്തെ പരം പൊരുളിനെ നമുക്കു കാട്ടിത്തന്ന കാൽവരി സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ മുന്നിൽ സമ്പൂർണ്ണമായി നാം സമർപ്പിക്കുക. ജെ. ബി. ഫിലിപ്പ്സ് കുറിച്ചിട്ടു:

ദൈവത്തെ, ദൈവ മഹത്വത്തെ ആത്മാവിൽ തിരിച്ചറിയുകയും, ആ മഹാപ്രഭാവ സമക്ഷം നാം പൂർണ്ണമായി വിധേയപ്പെടുകയുമാണാവശ്യം. സ്വാർത്ഥലേശം പോലും ഇല്ലാത്ത വിധേയത്വം. എങ്കിലേ നമ്മുടെ ആത്മീയ ദാരിദ്ര്യം പരിഹൃതമാവുകയുള്ളൂ. ആ മലയിലും ഈ മലയിലും അല്ല, ആത്മാവിലും സത്യത്തിലും അൾത്താരകൾ പണിയുകയാണാവശ്യം.

നമ്മുടെ ആത്മീയ ദാരിദ്ര്യത്തിനു പകരം വയ്ക്കാൻ ഹോറുന്നതല്ല ഭൗതികനേട്ടങ്ങൾ ഒന്നും -ഒരിക്കലും. ഭൗതികനേട്ടങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ മിഥ്യകളിലേക്ക് അനുസ്മരണം നയിക്കുന്നു; ആത്മീയ നേട്ടങ്ങളാവട്ടെ സത്യത്തിലേക്കും. അതുകൊണ്ട് നമ്മുടെ ആത്മീയഭാവത്തെ പരം പൊരുളിനെ നമുക്കു കാട്ടിത്തന്ന കാൽവരി സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ മുന്നിൽ സമ്പൂർണ്ണമായി നാം സമർപ്പിക്കുക. ജെ. ബി. ഫിലിപ്പ്സ് കുറിച്ചിട്ടു:

“നിങ്ങൾക്കു ചുറ്റുമുള്ള ലോകം നിങ്ങളെ അതിന്റെ അച്ചിലേക്ക് വലിച്ചിറക്കി രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുവാൻ അനുവദിക്കാതെ നിങ്ങളുടെ ഉള്ളിൽ തന്നെ നിങ്ങളെ പുന:സൃഷ്ടിക്കുവാൻ ദൈവത്തെ അനുവദിക്കുക.”

കാടേറുന്ന ആത്മീയ സമസ്യകൾക്കു പിന്നാലെയുള്ള ഓട്ടം മതിയാക്കി നിർത്തുന്നിടത്തേ സത്യത്തിലേക്കുള്ള ആദ്യ ചുവടിനു നാം അർഹത നേടുകയുള്ളൂ.



# The Internet As A Resource For Christian Ministry

This is the information age with the buzz words being e-mail, the information superhighway, worldwide web and of course the Internet. In a manner resembling previous defining periods of the twentieth century, such as the age of the Model-T, the jet age, the age of transistors and semiconductors, our current time period will probably be defined by the revolution in electronic transmission of 'anything goes' on the information superhighway, conveniently dubbed the Internet. With each such defining period has come dramatic changes in our society. One common result in all cases, however, appears to be that the world gets relatively smaller each time. Cars and jets allow us to transverse distances faster, radios and TV's allow us to reach across continents at the speed of light, and the Internet opens up a whole array of possibilities in communication, education and business. As things stand, it is impossible to predict where this is headed to. One thing however remains true. As Christians, we are always challenged to take advantage of the best resources at our disposal to carry out our ministry to reach out to the ends of the earth to bring the message of salvation, hope and love in Christ to a 'lost' world in dire need of this good news. It is not necessarily true that the onset of the Internet will make this task any easier, for close on our heels is also the devil with his bag of tricks. I would like to suggest that there are at least three specific areas where the Church can use the Internet as an effective resource for ministry and evangelism. First, it is a means of communicating to people regarding resources for spiritual growth such as Christian literature, devotional, materials for Bible study, and information about conferences, meetings and retreats.

In fact, many churches have web pages which are used for this purpose at the local parish level and these are

proving to be effective. This could be extended to a national level. Second, the Internet could serve as a means of Christian counseling on an individual (and perhaps, group) basis. This is not necessarily the best way to carry out this ministry in all circumstances but there are situations where anonymity might be useful. Even otherwise, the Internet allows for rapid and convenient correspondence. As an aside, it is not impossible to imagine a time when 'mail' as we know it through a post office may become somewhat obsolete. Third, the Internet could be used to bring people together when they are dispersed and to minister to them in a 'corporate' manner. I would certainly not suggest that this is the preferred way when people are able to come together physically in fellowship. But, this may be applicable for example, to students with common backgrounds and cultural heritage on college campuses organizing a campus ministry for students - the common background in this case being the Mar Thoma heritage. I have used the Internet to communicate with students on several campuses across the country and bring them together in local areas for Bible studies and prayer groups. While this is still a fledgling, by the grace of God, the response from many students have been positive and encouraging. This certainly will be a growing area of Christian ministry in years to come. In all these cases, The challenge may be the same as in years gone by, when the harvest was plentiful and the workers were few. We have to step out and take a leap of faith. This was the case when missionaries had to trek across land as well as travel for weeks by ships as we made progress in transportation and technology. God continues to equip us with better resources. Are we ready to take it and use it for His glory? ■

The Mar Thoma Church Diocese of North America & Europe  
Winner of the Prestigious His Kingdom Award for Web Page.  
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# The Internet As A Resource For Christian Ministry

This is the information age with the buzz words being e-mail, the information superhighway, worldwide web and of course the Internet. In a manner resembling previous defining periods of the twentieth century, such as the age of the Model-T, the jet age, the age of transistors and semiconductors, our current time period will probably be defined by the revolution in electronic transmission of 'anything goes' on the information superhighway, conveniently dubbed the Internet. With each such defining period has come dramatic changes in our society. One common result in all cases, however, appears to be that the world gets relatively smaller each time. Cars and jets allow us to transverse distances faster, radios and TV's allow us to reach across continents at the speed of light, and the Internet opens up a whole array of possibilities in communication, education and business. As things stand, it is impossible to predict where this is headed to. One thing however remains true. As Christians, we are always challenged to take advantage of the best resources at our disposal to carry out our ministry to reach out to the ends of the earth to bring the message of salvation, hope and love in Christ to a 'lost' world in dire need of this good news. It is not necessarily true that the onset of the Internet will make this task any easier, for close on our heels is also the devil with his bag of tricks. I would like to suggest that there are at least three specific areas where the Church can use the Internet as an effective resource for ministry and evangelism. First, it is a means of communicating to people regarding resources for spiritual growth such as Christian literature, devotional, materials for Bible study, and information about conferences, meetings and retreats.

In fact, many churches have web pages which are used for this purpose at the local parish level and these are

proving to be effective. This could be extended to a national level. Second, the Internet could serve as a means of Christian counseling on an individual (and perhaps, group) basis. This is not necessarily the best way to carry out this ministry in all circumstances but there are situations where anonymity might be useful. Even otherwise, the Internet allows for rapid and convenient correspondence. As an aside, it is not impossible to imagine a time when 'mail' as we know it through a post office may become somewhat obsolete. Third, the Internet could be used to bring people together when they are dispersed and to minister to them in a 'corporate' manner. I would certainly not suggest that this is the preferred way when people are able to come together physically in fellowship. But, this may be applicable for example, to students with common backgrounds and cultural heritage on college campuses organizing a campus ministry for students - the common background in this case being the Mar Thoma heritage. I have used the Internet to communicate with students on several campuses across the country and bring them together in local areas for Bible studies and prayer groups. While this is still a fledgling, by the grace of God, the response from many students have been positive and encouraging. This certainly will be a growing area of Christian ministry in years to come. In all these cases, The challenge may be the same as in years gone by, when the harvest was plentiful and the workers were few. We have to step out and take a leap of faith. This was the case when missionaries had to trek across land as well as travel for weeks by ships as we made progress in transportation and technology. God continues to equip us with better resources. Are we ready to take it and use it for His glory? ■

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# You Are Going To The College Of Your Choice

***Do you know yourself? Where will you be after a college education? What do you have to do to reach your goals?***

Dr. Abraham Panackal

If your answers to the above questions are all "Yes's", and you are confident about your answers, your success depends only on your goals and effort as well as God's Grace. However, many of you have only vague ideas and uncertain plans with limited knowledge about yourself. Now you are 18 years old or going on 18 and is or will be eligible to vote and be drafted into the military. Some of you will be moving out of your house to lead a life with less supervision, support and services of your parents and siblings and great freedom. You may develop new friendships and way of life, and will grow physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Your future depends on many of the choices, decisions, and efforts you take during these years. No human being knows what is good for you at any of the steps you take or decisions you make. Only God knows what is good for you. Depend on Him. God will guide you, protect you, and help you achieve what He has planned for you. God helps only those who help themselves. Therefore, you need information about how to deal with your present situation. You need information about yourself, the college education you are going to acquire, how to study in colleges, how to socialize with other students, how to develop spiritually, how to prepare and find a job, and how to find a partner in your life.

You are still a growing person adjusting to the several physical changes in you and around you. Since your physical growth and development are very important, please eat a balanced food and avoid junk food. Your parents may not be there to prepare and control your diet, and therefore, you have to plan and eat regularly balanced diet on your own initiative. Include plenty of fruits, salads, milk, and meat in your regular diet. You are paying high fees for gyms and other physical training facilities in your college. Make full use of these facilities. Do regular exercise under supervision, learn to swim if you do not know it and practice it regularly, learn weight lifting, aerobics, etc. Tone up your muscles and burn away the extra fat. Get interested in some group games and play them regularly. It will help you to develop good friendships that will help your business endeavors.

You have your school grades, SAT scores, and subject examination scores to make your own self estimate about intellectual ability and educational achievement. Since

different high schools have different standards, SAT scores and subject examinations will give you objective standards for your age groups to compare with. If your scores on these tests are not high, do not lose heart, by working hard and at a regular pace on your academic studies, you can improve course grades considerably in college. If your scores are high on these tests, please do not relax or make overestimates about yourself. Only through regular hard work on your courses in the colleges you can maintain high grades.

You will be more successful in a field in which you have great interest. If you have not taken any interest inventory this far to find out your field of great interest, please make an appointment with the counseling center or the career development service department or any other agency dealing with testing on campus to take an interest inventory such as The Strong-Campbell Vocational Interest Inventory and find out your major field of interest. Find out a vocation that you can take for your economic prosperity and have your course selection planned accordingly. Even if the field of interest the test indicated is different from the one you would like to go into, through hard work and conscious effort you can be successful in it. Try to find out your co-curricular interests such as art, music, sports, literary work, political activities, social work, and religious work by joining different student organizations on campus in these areas and working for them. Please do not spend too much time on these activities at the expense of your regular course work.

We have many different colleges and universities in this country and they differ greatly in their prestige and tuition. When you select a college for your education, you should understand that majority of them follow a policy of admission blind to the financial need of the student. When once you are admitted they will try their maximum to make available to you a financial aid package that will be within the range of your financial status. Try to get into the best university or college you like to go to. Try several colleges and apply for financial aid sufficiently early researching many of the resources that can be tapped into. Consult the advisors in your high school sufficiently early.

In general, the colleges at the undergraduate level will give you a liberal education. A few of them will give you professional and vocational training through cooperative

education and offering professional and preprofessional courses. The college instruction and atmosphere are entirely different from high schools. Almost all colleges and universities provide orientation programs at the time of admission to train you to get adjusted to the new environment. Some even offer special credit courses to educate you how to survive in that college or university. Make the best use of such programs. Get to know some professors and administrators from the beginning to whom you can go to for advice and support to understand situations or to solve problems. Learn to like the institution and get well adjusted to it.

The classrooms, instruction, and the entire atmosphere in colleges are different from that of high schools. The personal relationships your teachers had with you in high school will not be there in college, unless you purposefully create them for you in college. The classes are large in size, especially at the lower levels, and the instructors are impersonal in their instructional methods. Do not expect them to cover all the topics in class even though you will be held responsible for the topics included in the syllabus. Sometimes, the topics covered in the test may be from journal articles or from the extra reading topics assigned to your course. Do not miss or cut any class or be late in classes. Ask intelligent questions in the class to get the attention of the teachers. The topic to be covered in the class, if reviewed earlier, will help you to ask intelligent questions to show a new idea, a new relationship, or a new point of view. If you stay very quiet and is not asking polite critical questions over and above good test performance, the chances of getting 'A' grades for the course is low. Complete and submit class assignments on time, present them in printed form without errors, with table of contents, and synopsis as if professionally done. Do spell checks and avoid long sentences. Correct all grammatical errors. If you feel that your scores on a test is very low, review the answers yourself first to double check the possibility of getting higher grades and then raise the issue with the instructor politely. The grades given by a teacher cannot be changed, except by the teacher himself/herself. Work with very good students in the class and help students who are poorer when requested. Avoid spending too much time on others to affect your grades. Never keep company with very poor students with poor study habits. They may pull you down in your grades.

You may have to finish special sequences of courses for degree completion. Plan your course enrollment and prepare class schedules for each semester till graduation in a rough manner if you know the field in which you are going to major in. If you do not know the field you are going to major in, try to decide on a major as early as possible in consultation with parents, teachers, advisors, and career guidance counselors. It is seen that people who have decided on a major early and continue to work on that

major graduate early and more frequently. Find out the good teachers for each of the courses you have to take by asking other students, looking into student evaluations of teachers, and from your own experience and enroll in the courses taught by them. Do not waste your time, money, and energy on courses that may not give you any boost in the direction you want to grow. If your professors had been very helpful to you in any course, write to the department head appreciating the professor with a copy of the letter to your professor also. Do not write anything derogatory about anybody to anybody. If you do so, it will haunt you later. In each course, have at least two good students as friends and discuss with them the subject regularly. They will be helpful, if you accidentally miss a class or come to the class late. When class tests are returned check each answer and see that you are given full credit for the right answers.

Build up relationships with at least three professors who taught you one or more courses - if possible have at least two of them from your major field. Try to develop in them a high estimate about yourself. You need excellent recommendations for admission to graduate schools, professional schools, and employments. When you have good relationships, send them Xmas cards, Get Well cards if they are sick, Birthday cards, etc. and appreciation letters to maintain and improve the relationships. Maintain a diary for addresses and important personal days of these people and what you have done for them and what they have done for you. Please do that to all your friends also. Your social strength depends on the social friendly relationships you have with many people in different areas, especially with political and professional leadership.

Find out one or two people, such as Academic Advisors, and Administrative Staff, who can help you with administrative processes in the college. Request them to be your mentors and guide throughout your university education. Obtaining financial aid, work study experience, part-time jobs, etc. are part of your developmental processes. It is always better to have some administrators to vouch for you as an excellent worker. Go to the Career Development Services (or similar office) in your college and look for parttime job postings in the colleges or administrative offices on their notice boards. Apply for some suitable ones, get interviews, and be selected for the positions. A student can spare 10 hours of time on such jobs which will fetch them some spending money and can have some valuable experience to adjust to the work environment. It will definitely help you to have a few people to write excellent recommendations with authority on your work habits and values. Also, your boss at work may have contacts in other offices such as financial aid office to expedite matters there.

It is expected that almost all your time be spent on your educational development at college. Each week you have 168 hours, no more or no less. How you use this time in

college is the key to your success in college. As a full time student you may enroll in 4 or 5 courses. Usually, these courses may take 15 to 20 contact hours in class rooms. These courses may demand the same amount of time for library and research work. Also, these courses may require the same amount of time or a little more for studies, note preparation, reviews, and assignments. Thus the total amount of time you have to spend on your studies each week is about 45 to 60 hours. Usually, there will be class tests, and this will require about 10 more hours of your time making the total hours spent on studies each week to 55 to 70 hours. If you work more, it is better. If you work less, don't blame others, your ability, or God for your less than expected grades. You have to sleep 42 to 49 hours each week (6 to 7 hours each night). For personal hygiene, eating, dressing, laundry, mail, telephone, shopping, etc. you have to spend 15 to 20 hours. For exercise and games you need 12 to 14 hours. Now the total used up hours is 116 to 141. The rest of the time - 52 to 27 hours - is for socialization, church and prayer group activities, part time work and social work each week. Whenever, some other activity takes away your time, never use up your time for studies. Use it from the spare time or the time set apart for sleep. Prepare your own time table for each day of the week and try to follow it. Please maintain a diary of all the activities and the time spend on each.

You have to read hundreds of pages each day and there is no shortcut to reading. Improve your reading speed and comprehension skills. When you read, highlight important or key sentences and phrases in the text. Make notes of insights and summaries of what you have learned. If you feel that you lack proper study skills, attend some study skills seminars offered by your college or University, usually free of charge. Write legibly and avoid spelling as well as grammatical errors. Work hard at improving your writing skills also. Basic reading and writing abilities are very very important for your success in college as well as outside. Have prepared notes for each class and for each course you are taking. Review regularly and consult your teachers and/or other good students to clarify your doubts. Try to follow the teachers perspective and when you are compelled to differ have solid reasons to support your point of view. After each test, ask your teacher how to improve your scores till you get perfect scores. Often teachers allow students to do extra work for extra credits. Try to get such credits. Always be respectful and polite to your teachers.

If you live on campus, you have hundreds of youngsters of your age group and disposition to socialize. Develop friendships with people who share your views and values. Others can be acquaintances. There are many religious and nonreligious student organizations on campus. Join such organizations in which your values and views are upheld (if you have the time). Avoid organizations that are against

your important values and principles. Work hard in a few to earn leadership status, goodwill, and recognition from others. Elected positions held in such organizations are a plus in graduate and professional college admissions. Through group games and group activities you participate in and through classroom interactions you will find a few good friends. Often during the first semester, your roommates in the dorms may be new to you, but later you can pick and choose your own roommates. By sharing life together in the same room or apartment, you will learn about each other and the culture. Try to impart to them the Christian values of service, honesty, integrity, love for humanity, hope and faith. Find some senior friends who are considered as good people and seek their advice on matters you don't know about the campus. Because, many of the dorms are coeds, you will have to deal with youths of the opposite sex at close quarters. Remember about the problems of date rape on campuses. There will be no one to restrain you from doing rash things, except yourself and the Holy Spirit in you. Never give any opportunity for anyone to take advantage of you. Never create any situations to make enemies or criminals. Security in your residence, on campus, in class rooms and labs, and your movements on campus should be a main concern for you. Move around in groups, avoid dark corners, carry a whistle and minimize traveling at night. Please don't take any unnecessary risks. Always pray God to send His Angels to guard you and keep you far away from any harm.

If you are in a Coop program, you will be well oriented to take up a job at the end of your education. Otherwise, you will have to work hard at it on your own. You will have to visit work places where jobs you are interested in exist and see firsthand how employees work and produce quality products. If you enroll in summer courses, try to get a part time job in the area you are interested in or any other job in the office or lab or company where such jobs exist. If you are not enrolled in summer courses, take some full time jobs in the area or in the offices or labs or companies where such job exists. Work hard and earn the goodwill of your bosses so that they may recommend you without any hesitation for good jobs. You need computer skills on all jobs, and therefore, take several computer courses and develop some skills with the computers and some popular software available on them. Learn to develop WEB Pages and skills in cyber space. Develop many skills and interests to improve your self estimate and self expression. If you do not have a good self estimate, you will find it difficult to sell yourself in the market for a better paying job. Try to contribute as much as you can wherever you are to your community and this will make you a valuable person in your community. At the same time it will improve your self estimate. Visit Career Development Services department in your institution and discuss with the counselors there your

field and jobs. Go to job fairs and job interviews. After interviews, write letters to each of the people who interviewed you appreciating their attention and time. Talk to people who work in the field and learn everything you can about the jobs. Work with World Wide Web to research jobs as a source of information. We will have to work a little hard to get better jobs.

Many youths in this country feel that college is the time to find a suitable mate and plan life ahead. Many of them have girlfriend/boyfriend from high schools. They spend a huge amount of time for each other, and at the same time some of them are academically successful. For us who came down from Kerala, this part of life takes a lot of energy and time when we try to choose. Often this activity affects the studies and good students drop to mediocrity. Many of the eligible ones belong to other cultures and youths face opposition from parents and relatives. If you find one that suits you and your family, bring that to the attention of parents and they can help you with much of the details. Never spent too much time on this aspect of life when you are a student even though it is one of the major decisions in your life. From what we have seen so far amongst us, God has guided you to make the right choices at the right time. Depend on Him. Pray hard for a good choice. You will succeed.

You are lucky. You have God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, your parents, siblings, your many friends, your church and your college to give you support guidance and help whenever you ask for it. The Key Word is Ask. Pray every day, both in the morning and the evening and before you do anything. Talk to your parents, your siblings, your friends, your professors, your advisors, and your counselors. Never retain your problems within yourself without sharing it. You can develop depression and other problems. If you are away in the dormitory, call your parents every night when the charges are low. Write a diary and keep it in your room and find out how God had guided you through all the previous occasions. Read the Bible regularly and it will give you the answers to your personal problems. Attend church here or on campus and have fellowships with God's People. Never do things consciously to hurt people, but always try to serve them. Pray for your parents, siblings, pastors, teachers, mentors, friends, and even enemies. You have chosen your school, you know that you are a Christian - a child of God - who is going to do the will of God at the level your education will carry you through. You cannot fail because Jesus had victory over the world and through His sacrifice we are saved and has a share of what is His. May God bless you.

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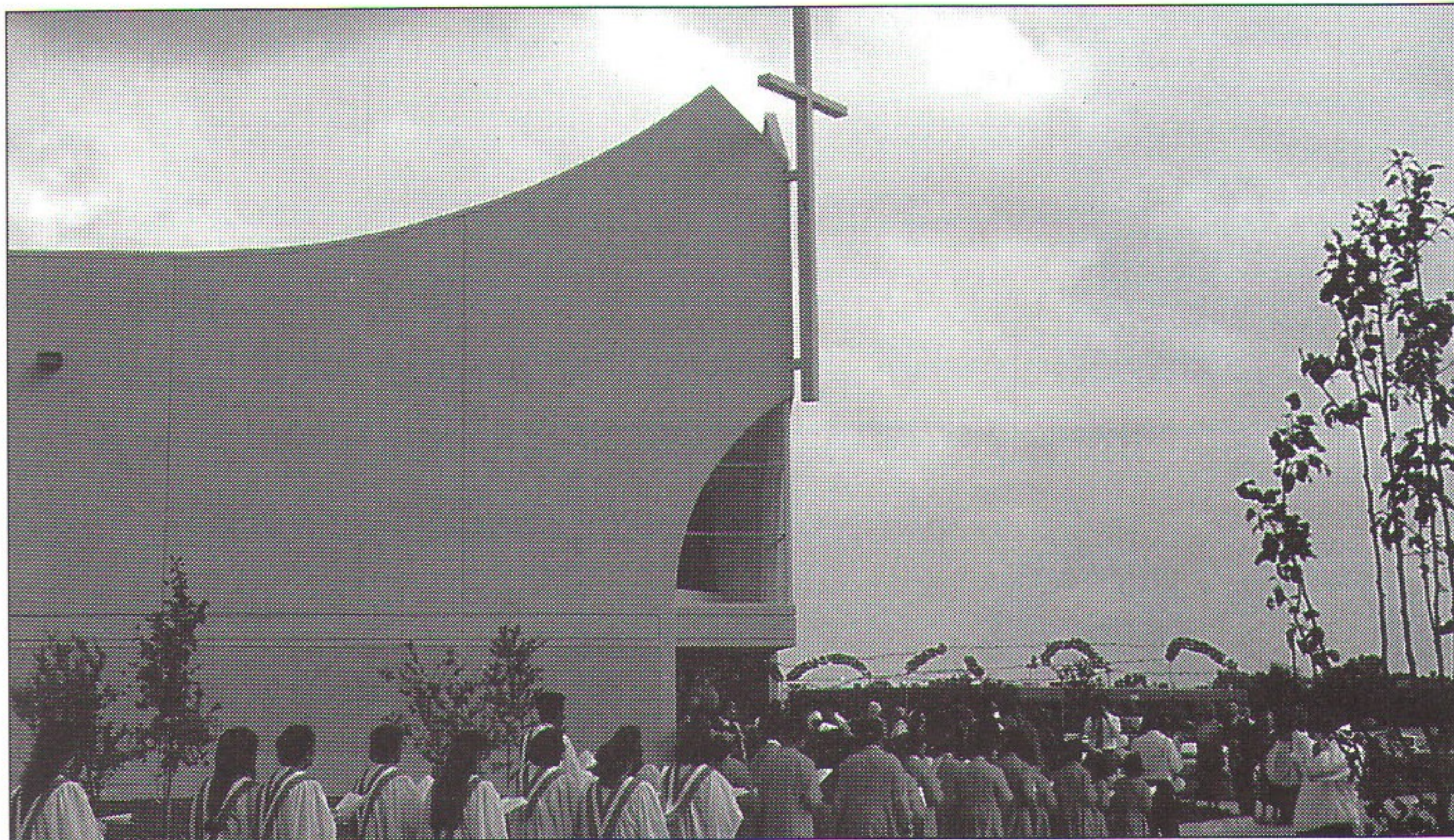
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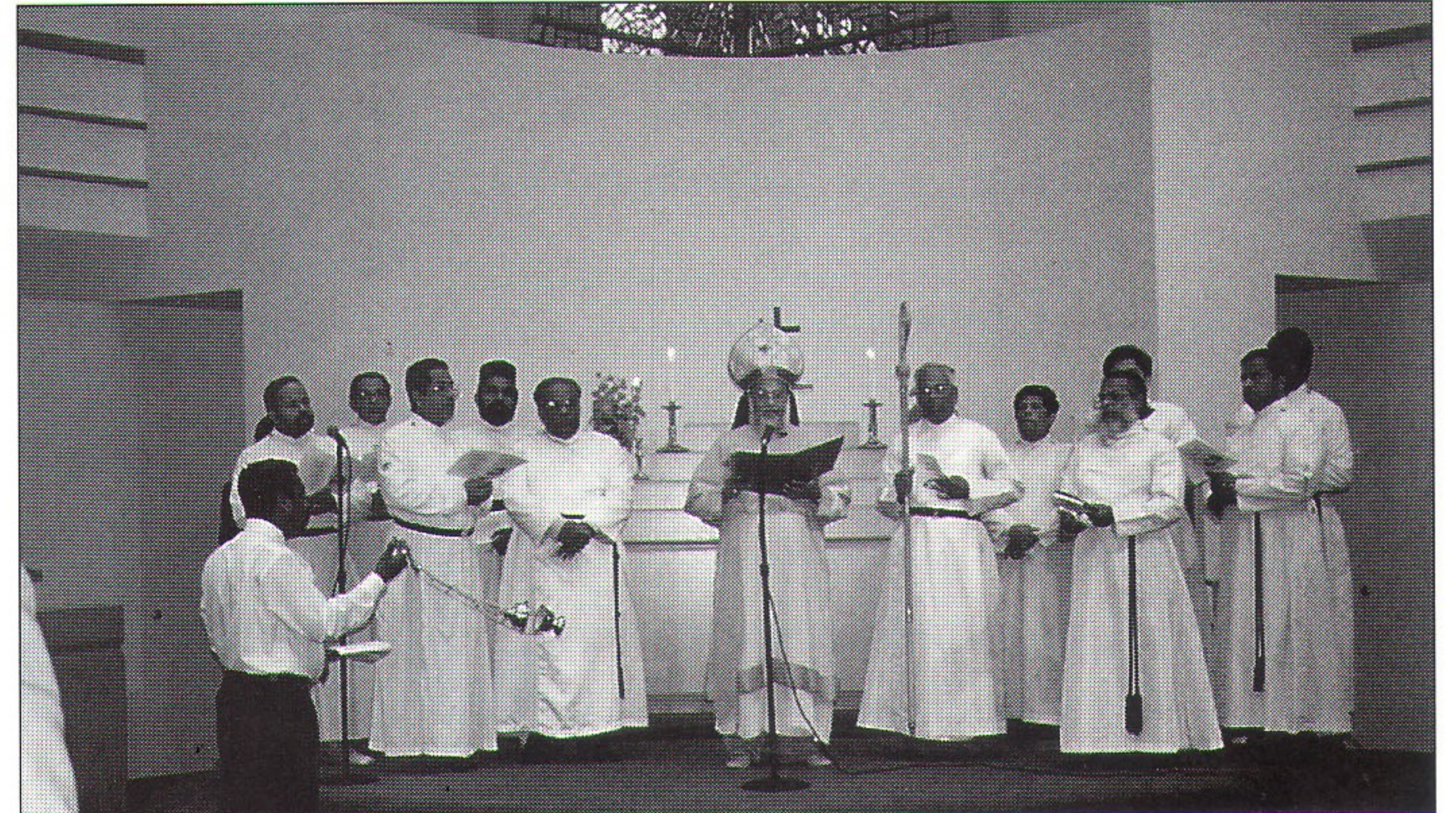
# DEDICATION OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH DALLAS FARMERS BRANCH

The dedication of the New Church building of the MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, was conducted on August 10, 1996 by the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa and assisted by the priests of area Mar Thoma Churches and other sister parishes and other lay leaders. The dedication service and the communion service on the following day was attended by a large number of people including distinguished guests.

The building consists of nearly 17,500 Sft which includes a sanctuary, class rooms, office rooms, fellowship hall, kitchen and other facilities. The total cost of the phase one is about \$1,500,000. The plan for the second phase includes a multi purpose auditorium. The seven acre land, conveniently located has great potential for future developmets.



*Procession lead by choir before the dedication service.*



*His grace Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, Bishop of North American Diocese, leading the dedication service.*



*Mayor Pro term Mr. Bill Moses, Mr. Jagnath Misra – Vice Consul, Indian Consulate Houston and other distinguished guests with Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa.*



*A view of the audience of the public meeting.*

*“The more you look forward to heaven,  
the less you’ll desire of earth.”*

*“Be ready for the last moment  
by being ready at every moment.”*





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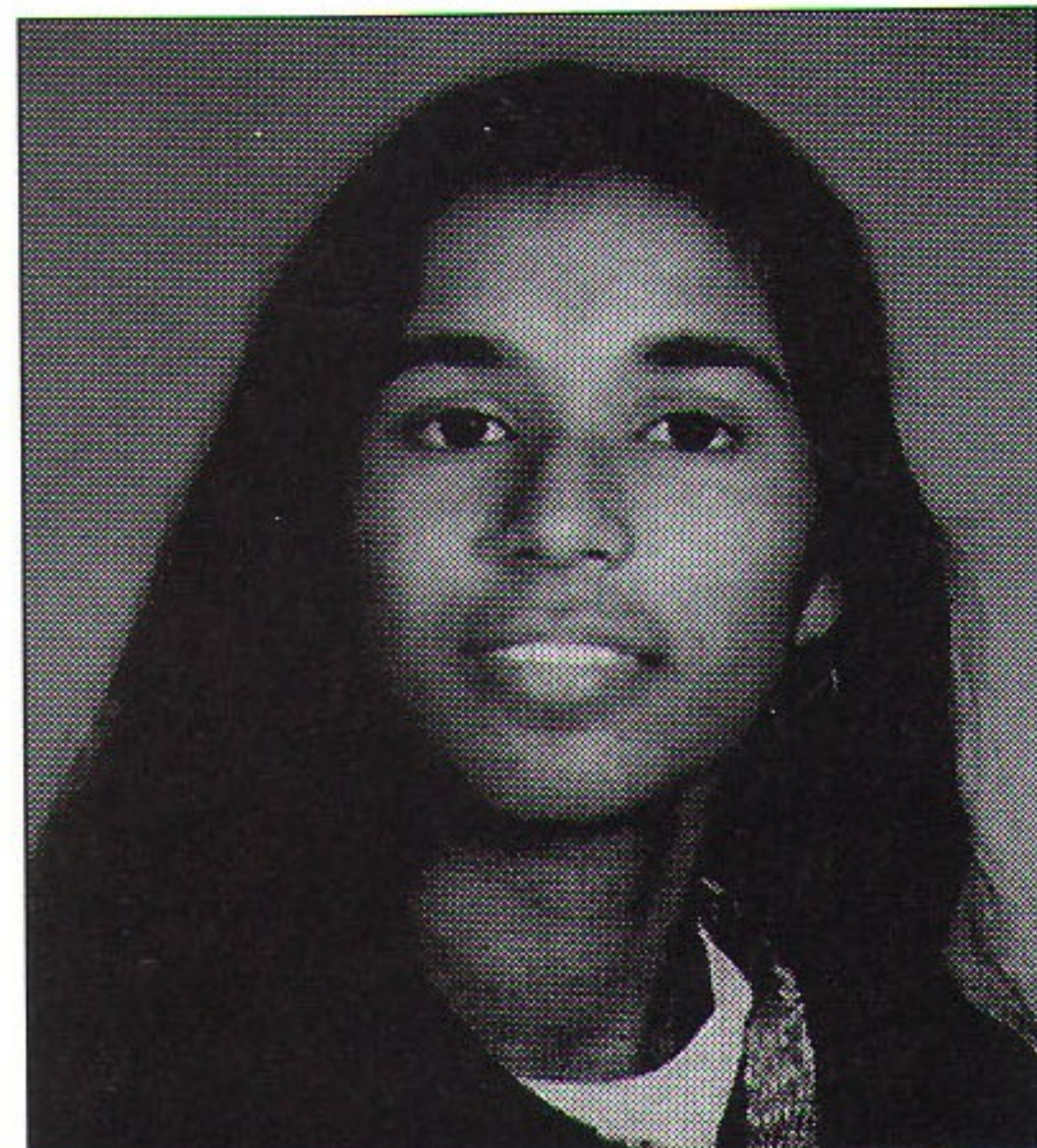
*( Not Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization )*

# The Holy Spirit and me

Betsy Joseph

Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey

The Holy Spirit is defined in Webster's dictionary as the active presence of God in human life constituting the third person of the Trinity. In other words it is God but not as the form in heaven, but in my opinion the one living in my heart. I think that the Holy Spirit and I have a great relationship. Whenever I may have a problem, I know I can rely on the Holy Spirit for comfort as my helper, my teacher, and my counselor.



As a **helper**, it leads me through daily hardships. Sometimes when I talk to myself, I realize that I'm really asking the Holy Spirit for help. The following example tells how God, the Father, has given us another part of Him to help us:

*And I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may abide with you forever.* (John 14:16)

This verse proves that the Holy Spirit is there to help and to guide us through our problems. Our conscience is a part of our mind that tells us what is right and wrong, but the real deal behind is the Holy Spirit. He is the bigger player in our mind. The conscience is just a little branch of the Holy Spirit. He helps us with anything we may need, not just on learning right from wrong.

As a **teacher**, if I am facing stress in school the Holy Spirit teaches me that eventhough I'm worried as long as I did my best, I don't need to worry. When I take my tests in school, before I write my name I ask God the Father and the Holy Spirit to be with me and not let me blank out.

In the next example God tells us that we can rest easy knowing that he has sent the Holy Spirit to be with us:

*...He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance of all things that I said to you.* (John 14:26)

In this verse, we know that God has sent the Holy Spirit to keep us aware that God is watching our every move and word. So if we think no one will ever know something that we did wrong, it is a mistake

because God knows. God can teach us how not to ever make those mistakes again. If we are living in the power of the Holy Spirit under the guidance of the Word of God, society's bad influences can't tempt us and allow us to make mistakes.

Finally as a **counselor**, the Holy Spirit is my moral support in times of need. He has been transforming lives through the witness of believers. So the power of our witness comes from the power of the Spirit. Sometimes when I am under a lot of pressure, the Holy Spirit is there to lower my tension and advise me on what to do. The next example explains how the advice of the Holy Spirit will help us become better human beings:

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has appointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives...* (Isaiah 61:1)

This is a great verse to turn to whenever I'm down on myself because it gives me assurance that I have a purpose in life. I'm a child and a missionary of God and therefore must spread his word to those who don't know or who don't want to know about him. The Holy Spirit counsels me to help others who are in pain, to help soothe my pain and in most cases to help me realize that my little stress pains don't match up to the worries of some other people.

Conclusively, God wants us to know that He is there in every form possible. He will be there for us no matter where we are or what time it is. I'm so glad that I have help. My favorite chapter of the Bible, Psalms 57, reveals all that I feel towards God. The Bible and the work of God's Holy Spirit are like a map and a compass. The Bible is our map. Paul assured Timothy that Scripture lays out the route of sound doctrine and righteousness. The compass is the work of the Holy Spirit in Paul's "manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance". I love God and I definitely know that He loves me because of all the many blessings he has showered upon me and I am greatly thankful for that.

# Holy Spirit — Faithful Friend

Mini Alexander

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers, New York

*In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
is something we always pray  
but the last of these is seldom thought of  
it's something we all just say*

*The Spirit is our companion  
our comforter, our guide  
and until our Savior returns  
within us will it abide*

*The Spirit is seen in so many forms  
fire, wind, water, and dove  
it is a guarantee of God's promise  
received through faith from above*

*It proceeds from the Father  
the precious giver of life  
given to those who repent and believe  
to help overcome our earthly strife*

*It enables us to minister  
to spread His word and teach  
to all those who don't know His love  
it gives us confidence to go and preach*

*If we obey the Spirit's instructions  
it will tell us where to go  
it will instruct us on what to do  
where to lead, and where to follow*

*Until the day of the Lord comes  
where His glory and majesty will be shown  
He sent us His Holy Spirit  
so we, His children, are never alone*

“The Spirit's presence within us is God's guarantee that He really will give us all that He promised; and the Spirit's seal upon us means that God has already purchased us and that He guarantees to bring us to Himself.”

— Ephesians 1:14

“And He has put his own Holy Spirit into our hearts as a proof to us that we are living with Him and He with us.”

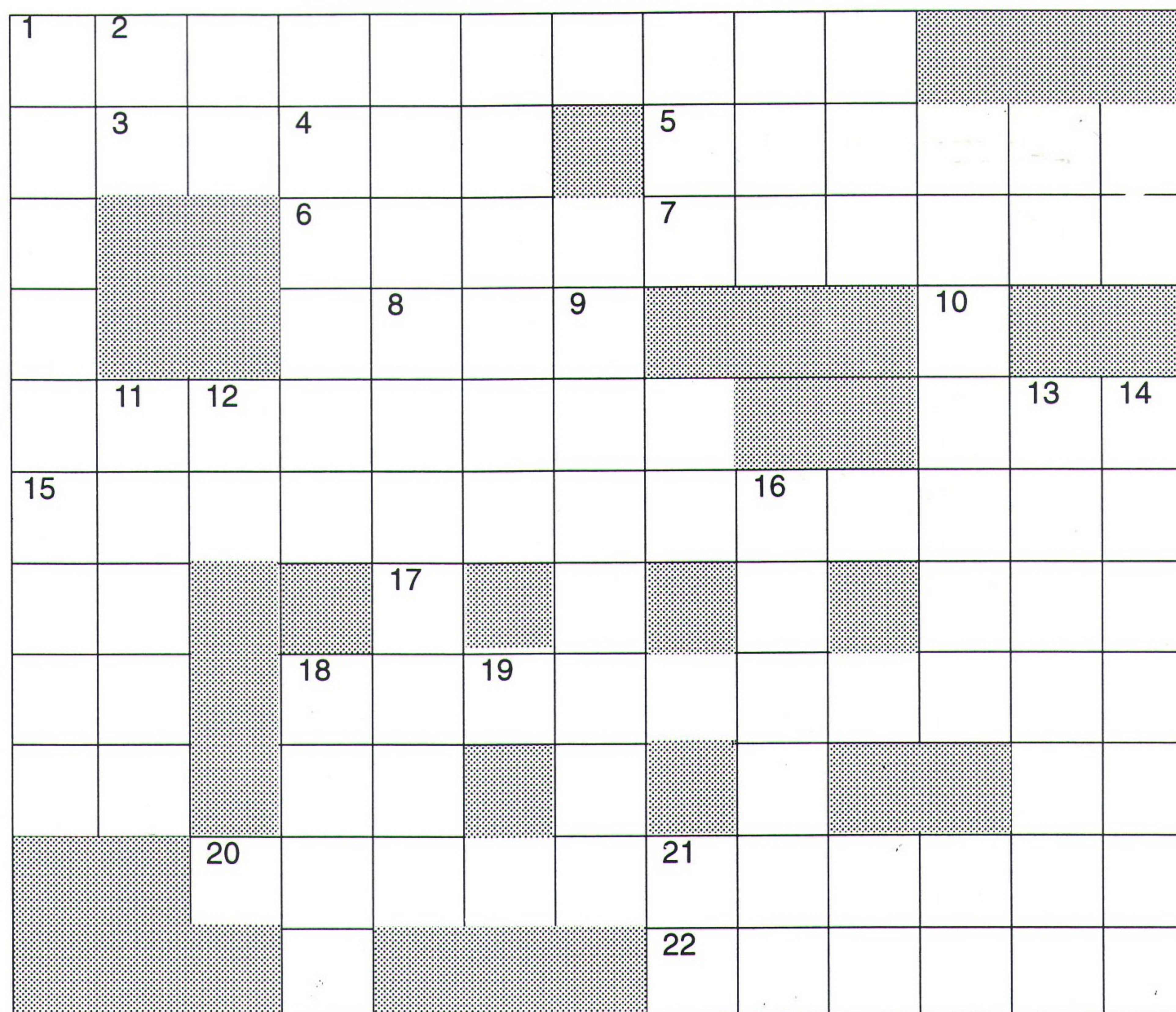
— 1 John 4:13

# BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

(based on the book of Ruth)

Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)



## Across

2. He lived for a while in the country of Moab with his family.
3. His wife.
5. Boaz gave Ruth 50 pounds of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. She said "Don't ask me to leave you..... Your people will be my people...death separate me from you.
7. Due to this they went to Moab.
8. About \_\_\_\_\_ years later Mahlon and Chilion died.
12. It was the custom for the seller to take off his \_\_\_\_\_ and give it to the buyer.
15. This is the native place of Elimelech.
16. Naomi said call me, \_\_\_\_\_ because Almighty God has made my life bitter.
19. Ruth worked with them and gathered this grain.
20. Your daughter-in-law loves you, and has done more for you than \_\_\_\_\_ sons.

21. Husband of Rachel.

22. He is the elder son of Elimelech.

## Down

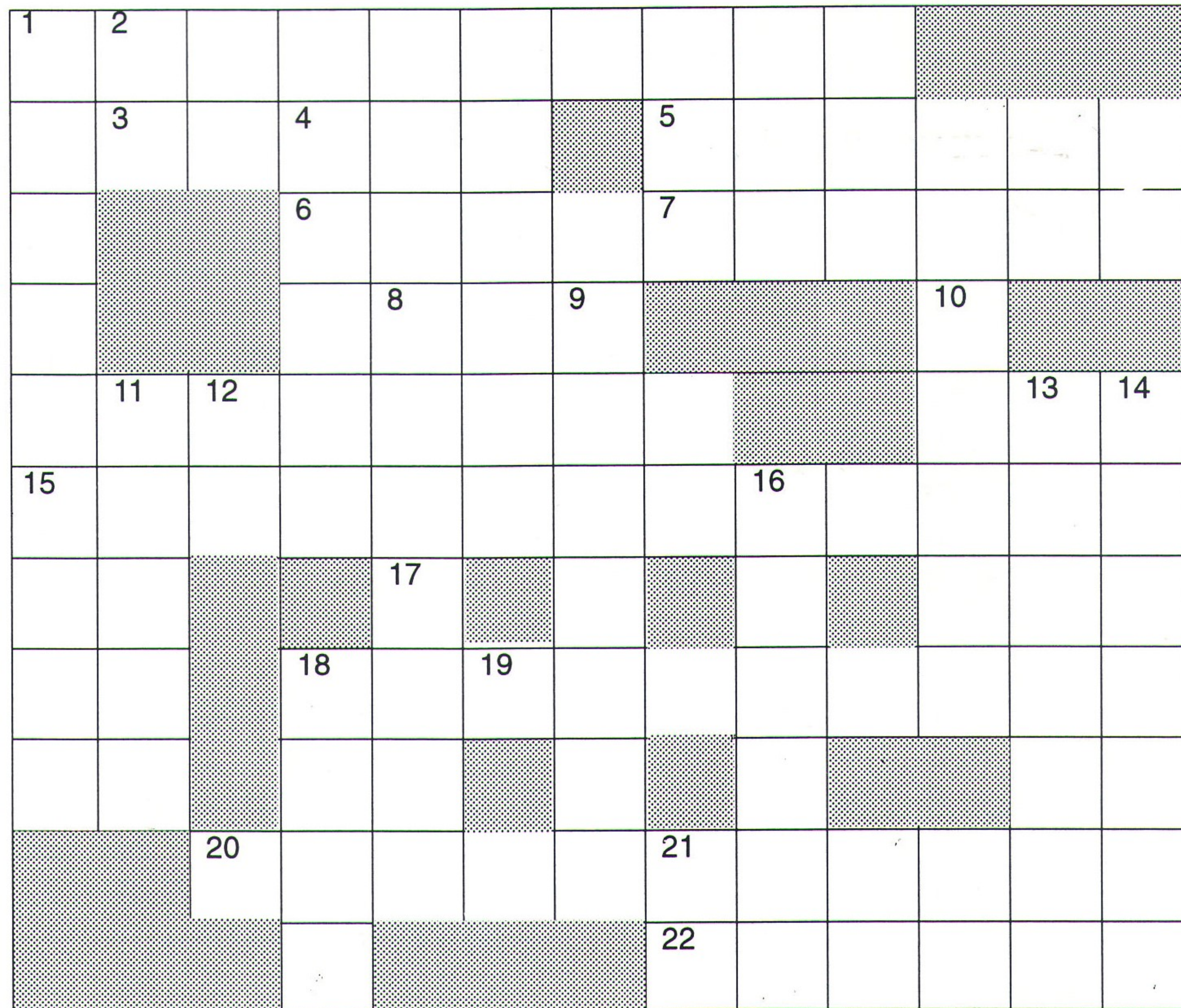
1. Bethlehem was in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. She kissed her mother-in-law good-bye and went back home.
9. Son of Amminadab.
10. Son of Judah and Tamar.
11. David's father.
13. Grandson of Obed.
14. Husband of Orpah .
15. Ruth worked in the \_\_\_\_\_ field.
16. Ruth was from this country.
17. Grandson of Perez.
18. Son of Boaz.

# BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

(based on the book of Ruth)

Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)



## Across

2. He lived for a while in the country of Moab with his family.
3. His wife.
5. Boaz gave Ruth 50 pounds of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. She said "Don't ask me to leave you..... Your people will be my people...death separate me from you.
7. Due to this they went to Moab.
8. About \_\_\_\_\_ years later Mahlon and Chilion died.
12. It was the custom for the seller to take off his \_\_\_\_\_ and give it to the buyer.
15. This is the native place of Elimelech.
16. Naomi said call me, \_\_\_\_\_ because Almighty God has made my life bitter.
19. Ruth worked with them and gathered this grain.
20. Your daughter-in-law loves you, and has done more for you than \_\_\_\_\_ sons.

21. Husband of Rachel.

22. He is the elder son of Elimelech.

## Down

1. Bethlehem was in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. She kissed her mother-in-law good-bye and went back home.
9. Son of Amminadab.
10. Son of Judah and Tamar.
11. David's father.
13. Grandson of Obed.
14. Husband of Orpah .
15. Ruth worked in the \_\_\_\_\_ field.
16. Ruth was from this country.
17. Grandson of Perez.
18. Son of Boaz.

# BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

(based on the book of Esther)

Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)

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

1. He worked for the good of his people and for the security of all their descendants.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ may be it was for a time like this that you were made queen. Who?
3. Haman's wife.
4. He conveyed the message from Esther to Mordecai.
5. Esther's father.
6. Esther became queen in place of \_\_\_\_\_.
7. He made Esther as his queen.
8. Esther had kept it secret that she was a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Haman's father.
10. The Hebrew name of Esther.
11. He was hanged on the gallows that he had built.
12. Mordecai's father.
13. This was a month that had been turned from a time of grief and despair into a time of joy and happiness.
14. That is why the holidays are called \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Mordecai called the officials from \_\_\_\_\_ to Ethiopia.

## Bible Word Search Finders (July 1996)

Reena Mathew	St. Peter's MTC, New Jersey
Manoj John, Vinod John,	
Asha John	St. Luke's MTC, Florida
Teena, Tigi, Toby Mathew	Trinity MTC, Houston
Davis Thomas	St. Peter's MTC, New Jersey
Susy John	MTC Ottawa, Canada
Jay Mathew	Trinity MTC, Houston

## Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (July 1996)

Reena Mathew	St. Peter's MTC, New Jersey
Manoj John, Vinod John,	
Asha John	St. Luke's MTC, Florida
Teena, Tigi, Toby Mathew	Trinity MTC, Houston
Davis Thomas	St. Peter's MTC, New Jersey
Susy John	MTC Ottawa, Canada
Jay Mathew	Trinity MTC, Houston

Congratulations to all winners!

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS DECEMBER 15, 1996

# SABHA NEWS

## SABHA PRADHINIDHI MANDALAM

The annual Mandalam meeting was held on 28-30, August 1996 at Sabha Auditorium, Tiruvalla and made decisions which will guide the activities of the church and its organizations. Theme for discussion in this Mandalam was "Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Servant Ministry." Discussions were held in groups.

The first session of the new Mandalam has re-elected the Rev. A. C. Kurian as Sabha Secretary and Mr. K. Varghese as the Lay Trustee & Treasurer. The Rev. Kurian Thomas Sr. was elected as the Vaideeka Trustee. The Mandalam has allocated Rs. 10 lakhs to purchase a land for the Dayara Movement (Monastic Order) in the Mar Thoma Church.

## MARAMON CONVENTION 1997

The 102nd Maramon Convention will be held from Sunday 16th to Sunday 23rd February 1997. The main speakers include Rev. Dr. William P. Baker, Dr. Sam Kamalesan and others. Please uphold the convention in your prayers.

Maramon Convention Tapes/CDs will be made available. Please contact the Diocesan Office with the Order from your Parish.

## NAVAJEEVAN PROJECT — BOMBAY

The first anniversary of the Navajeevan Center, Bombay was celebrated on the 15th June 1996. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa writes in the Navajeevan Journal, "... It is a response to the challenges posed to people who have faith, compassion and concern. Navajeevan Center aims to give a new life to children, women and discarded lot in society and affirms the life-giving and life renewing forces."

**True Story:** Meena is young woman under the clutches of money lenders and the madam in the Red Light area of Bombay. Navajeevan got her release and have paid

Rs.25,000.00 as ransom. She is now free and happy to be part of the Navajeevan family.

Navajeevan work includes:

Rehabilitation of children from Red Street;

Rehabilitation of street children;

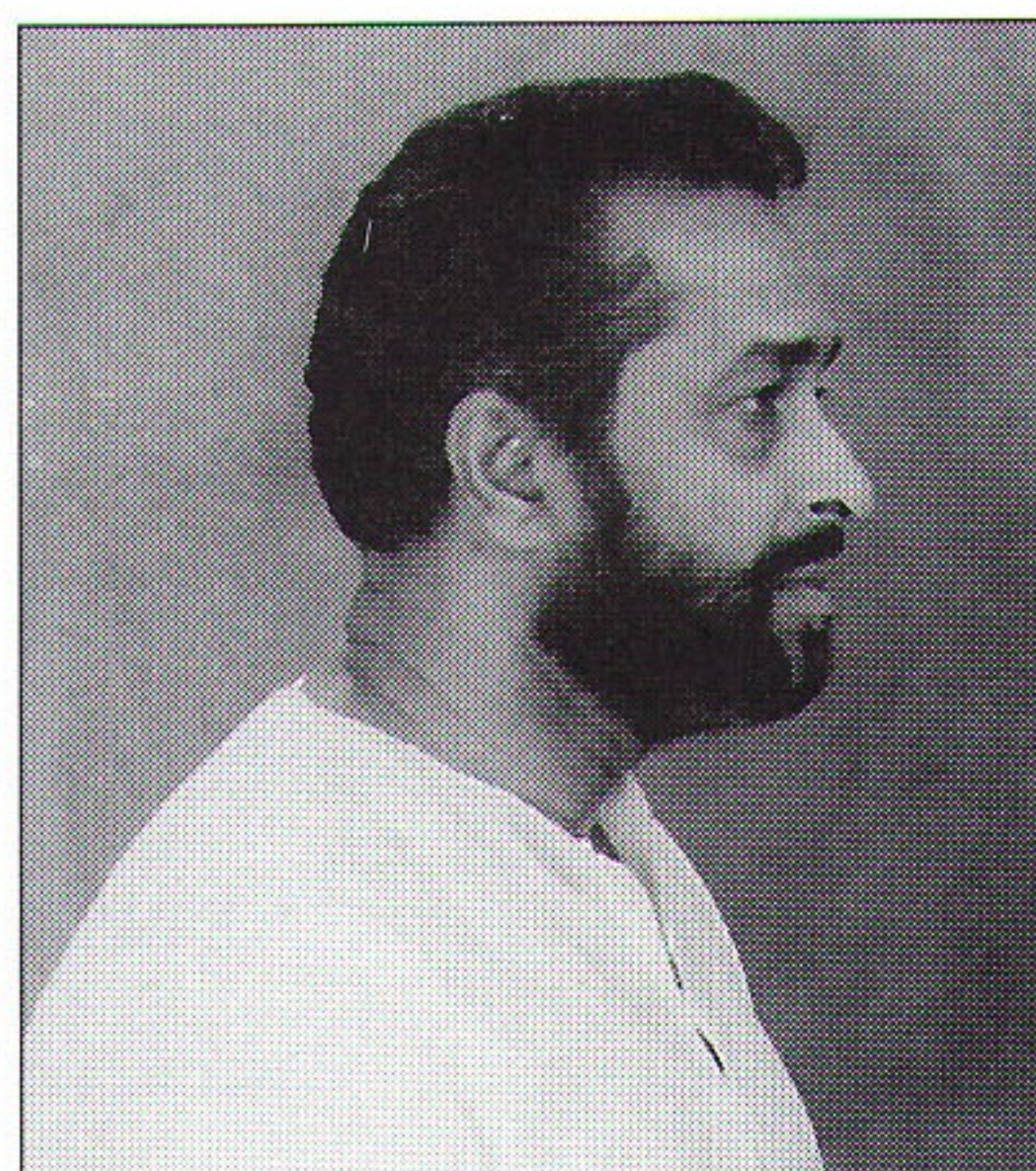
Providing an alternate vocation for women rescued from the Red Street;

Developing a broad based program for conscientisation regarding AIDS

For more information, please contact Navajeevan Center, 6 Chapel Lane, Santa Cruz (W), Mumbai 400054.

## THE MAR THOMA CHURCH HONORS MR. CHERIAN K. CHERIAN OF LONG ISLAND

Cherian K. Cherian was honoured by the Church for his literary works at the Mandalam meeting held in Thiruvella. His literary works included *Pavizhapputtu*, *Kusanum Lavanum Kuchelanum*, *Eravatham*, *Bhranthanum Bhasmasuranum* and *Palazhimadhanam*. He started his career as teacher at the Vadavucode Rajarshi Memorial English High School and later became the Sub-Editor of



Malayala Manorama News paper. He also worked in the Government of India Publications Directorate.

He is the son of late Mr. T. P. Cherian and Mrs. Mariam Cherian of Vykkam. Mr. Cherian and his wife Anniyamma have three children, Babulu, Kavita, and Baba. They are members of the Long Island Mar Thoma church.

## ONE VOLUME — VEDAPADANA SAHAI — DAILY DEVOTIONAL READING

Published by the Orientation Centre, Manganam, Kottayam  
For Copies, please contact your Vicar or write to the Diocesan Centre  
Price \$ 30.00 (Payable to "Mar Thoma Church")

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION

In 1997 we are completing 25 years since the regular Mar Thoma worship service has been started in the Diocese. The Diocesan Assembly, which met during the first week of May 1996, unanimously decided to declare 1997 as the Jubilee year. The Diocesan Episcopa, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus in his Lordship's Kalpana C/8/96 dated August 15, 1996 exhorted us to undertake various plans and projects as part of the Jubilee Celebration.

### JUBILEE PROJECTS

1. Appoint Youth Ministers to work among our young people in Parishes and University campuses at least in the Eastern and Western Regions and to arrange Mission Tours for them.
2. Introduce a new curriculum to rejuvenate Sunday School education.
3. Support the Mission fields of our Church at Kusugal and Dodaballapur in Karnatak State. Suvishesha Nidhi boxes will be provided to all homes for this purpose.
4. Establish Retirement/Counseling/Lay Training, Centres in various Regions.
5. Institute a Jubilee Endowment Fund for the Theological Education and Mission Work.
6. Publish book-lets on Faith, Practises, Liturgy, Music and a revised Diocesan Directory.
7. Arrange Regional Bible Conventions and Conferences.
8. Organize a Mar Thoma Nurses Fellowship to cater to their spiritual needs.
9. Present a Jubilee momento to all families.
10. Relocate the Diocesan Center to New York with added facilities for Bishop's Residence, Secretary's Quarters, Diocesan Office and office space for various Organizations of our Diocese.
11. Raise a Diocesan Development Project Fund through Coupons to serve the above mentioned projects.

### JUBILEE CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

To implement the decisions a Jubilee Celebration Core-Committee is appointed by the Council with the Rev. M. P. Yohannan as the General Convenor.

### REGIONAL JUBILEE CELEBRATION COMMITTEES

Regional Jubilee Celebration Committees are being formed and nominated Chairpersons and Convenors are directed to convene a meeting and elect Regional core-committees and other sub-committees. Maximum participation of all members should be assured, especially the women and young people.

### INAUGURATION OF JUBILEE CELEBRATION

The Jubilee celebrations will be inaugurated in New York on November 2, 1996 at 3:00 pm. All are invited to attend. Following the ground breaking ceremony there will be a Service of Thanksgiving and a Public Meeting at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church.

Church Leaders, Civic leaders, representatives from Sister Churches and members from all Regions of our Diocese are expected to attend. This will be followed by Regional Jubilee Celebrations in different parts of the Diocese.

### JUBILEE MEMENTO

A Jubilee Memento will be presented to all families as a gift from the Diocese.

### NEW DIOCESAN HEADQUARTERS

The Diocese has purchased a property in Long Island (52 S. Merrick Ave., Merrick, NY 11566), a property adjacent to the Long Island Mar Thoma Church. Plans are underway to build the Diocesan Head Quarters with Office space, Bishop's residence and Secretary's quarters at this site.

### DIOCESAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FUND

The Diocese is constituting a Jubilee Fund to help various programs and projects. It is expected that all earning members of the Diocese donate a minimum of \$ 100.00 towards this Jubilee project. Jubilee Coupons will be available in \$ 100.00, \$ 200.00, \$ 500.00 and 1,000.00 denominations.

### SUVISESHA NIDHI

The Suvishesha Nidhi boxes (Mission Fund) are shipped to all Parishes for distribution to all families. This is our major fund for mission project and all members are urged to participate earnestly.



## DIOCESAN DIRECTORY

### Publishing Soon

The Revised Diocesan Directory with more information will be published as a Jubilee special. Listing of over 4,000 families.

**Features:** Include the family names, places, and pet names of both spouses.

**Advertisements:** There are only a limited number of pages available for advertisements or compliments. The

Rates are \$ 3,000.00 for back cover page, \$ 2,000.00 for inside covers and \$ 300.00 for regular full page (Special color page \$1,000.00).

Please send in your advertisement with payment to the Diocesan Secretary, 744 Newtown Richboro Road, Richboro, PA 18954.

## NEW PARISHES FORMED IN DALLAS

The Episcopal Synod have approved two parishes in Dallas. The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Grand Prairie and The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch.

## NEW ACHEN



The Rev. G. Samuel of Mar Thoma Church Kottarakara, joins the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago for M.Th Program and serves as the vicar of the Bethel Mar Thoma Parish, Frankfort, Illinois.

Achen is also in charge of Mar

Thoma Congregations in St. Louis, Indiana and Minneapolis. Achen was ordained in 1980 and served the church for 16 years. Achen is married to Pyary Kochamma and blessed with three children; Reuben (12 yrs), Sharon (10 yrs) and Serene (5 yrs).

Address: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1100 E. 55 Street, Chicago, IL 60615, Telephone: 312-947-9616.

## ASIAMERICA MINISTRY CONSULTATION MEETING

The National Consultation meeting of the Asiamerica Ministry of the Episcopal Church was held in the Outrigger Kauai Beach Hotel in the Island of Kauai, Hawaii from August 5 - 10, 1996. The meeting was coordinated by Rev. Dr. Winston Ching, Officer of the Asiamerica Ministry, and the leaders were the Rev. Eric Law and Rev. Dr. Wehn-In Ng.

The meeting addressed the issues related to intercultural and intergenerational differences and how they can be solved in scriptural traditions for a meaningful participation and fellowship. The meeting was attended by the delegates from Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Mar Thoma and CSI congregations of Asian origin and delegates of the Episcopal Church from United States and Canada.

Rev. Oommen Philip (Long Island Mar Thoma Church), Dr. Thomas Abraham (New Jersey Mar Thoma Church) and Dr. P. V. Cherian (Detroit Mar Thoma Church) represented the Mar Thoma Church and Rev. Jacob David represented the CSI Church in this meeting.



## FELLOWSHIP OF MAR THOMA PHYSICIANS & DENTISTS

The 5th Annual Conference and Retreat was held from July 26th thru 28th at the Warwick Conference Center, Warwick in the scenic lower Catskill Mountains of New York State. About 20 members and their families attended this retreat. The Diocesan and Bishop's Secretary Rev. Dr. P. G. George celebrated the Holy Communion. The retreat was blessed by the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus who gave an inspiring speech about the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

This year's Sunday offertory was donated to the rebuilding of the churches burnt recently. The general body has agreed to build a clinic and to support two health workers at Shantigiri. The fellowship is also supporting the Vatavani Clinic near Munnar. The fellowship will be supporting a suitable medical student when identified.

Next annual conference will be held in Boston from July 18 to 20, 1997.



The Annual Christmas Celebration will be held on Saturday 4-9 pm. December 7, 1996 at Newton Church, 206 Buck Rd. Newton, PA 18940 (215-968-9386). For more information, please contact Dr. Thomas Abraham (201) 670-8126 or Dr. Alex Thomas (610) 868-1879.

## MAR THOMA NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE 1996, DALLAS, TEXAS

The 1996 Mar Thoma National Youth Conference was held at the Riverbed Retreat Center, Glenrose, Texas from August 8 to 11, 1996. The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas Youth Fellowship hosted the Conference. The Theme "Free the Fire in me" was dealt with in three tracks: Spark, Ember and Flame. Leaders included our Diocesan Episcopa, the

Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Rev. John Garlock, Rev. Todd Wagner and Mr. Rodney Walker. There were separate sessions for men and women led by Rodney and Mrs. Ruth Garlock. A Leadership Conference also was held preceding the youth conference.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

A Youth Leadership Conference was held parallel to the Junior-Senior Conference of the Eastern Region Sunday Schools from Wednesday 24th to Sunday 28th July, 1996 at Allentown College, Allentown, PA. Twenty young people from different Parishes attended the same. The

Leaders included the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Mr. Paul Yu, Mr. Koruthu Mathew (Long Island), Mr. Saju Joseph (St. John's, NY) and Miss. Suja Ninan (Chicago). These youngsters were group resource persons and it was a practical session.

## MAR THOMA NURSES ASSOCIATION

An executive committee was elected during the general meeting held at the Mar Thoma Family Conference, Chicago. A convenor from each parish will be elected to

coordinate the preparation of the detailed list of all Nurses in the diocese and to enroll membership. For details, please contact Rev. P.P. Thomas, President. (312) 752-9353.

## MAR THOMA MESSENGER JULY 1997 ISSUE

### DIOCESAN SILVER JUBILEE SPECIAL

Share your experience, thoughts, pictures or a piece of information of historical value etc.  
Please send your contributions to the Editor of the Messenger.

## SEVIKA SANGHAM — NORTH EAST REGION

The regional conference was held on September 7 at Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York. President Rev. P. M. Thomas presided over the meeting. The meeting was attended by over 250 members and all the Achens of the region.

Malankara Orthodox Church Bishop the Most Rev. Dr. Mathews Mar Barnabas inaugurated the meeting and Rev. K. G. Joseph was the main speaker, and Arch Bishop of Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of North America and Canada. Most Rev. Zacharia Mar Nicholovas gave messages on Holy Baptism.

The following office bearers were elected during the general body meeting:

- President:* Rev. Thomas Easow,  
St. John's Mar Thoma Church
- Vice President:* Mrs. Kunjamma Simon,  
Staten Island Mar Thoma Church
- Secretary:* Mrs. Mariamma Abraham,  
Epiphany Mar Thoma Church
- Treasurer:* Mrs. Susamma Abraham,  
Long Island Mar Thoma Church

- Auditor:* Mrs. Molly Mathews,  
Staten Island Mar Thoma Church
- Representatives:* Mrs. Aleyamma Mathai,  
Epiphany Mar Thoma Church  
Mrs. Elizabeth Zacharia,  
St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church

**Mrs. Mariamma Abraham, Secretary**



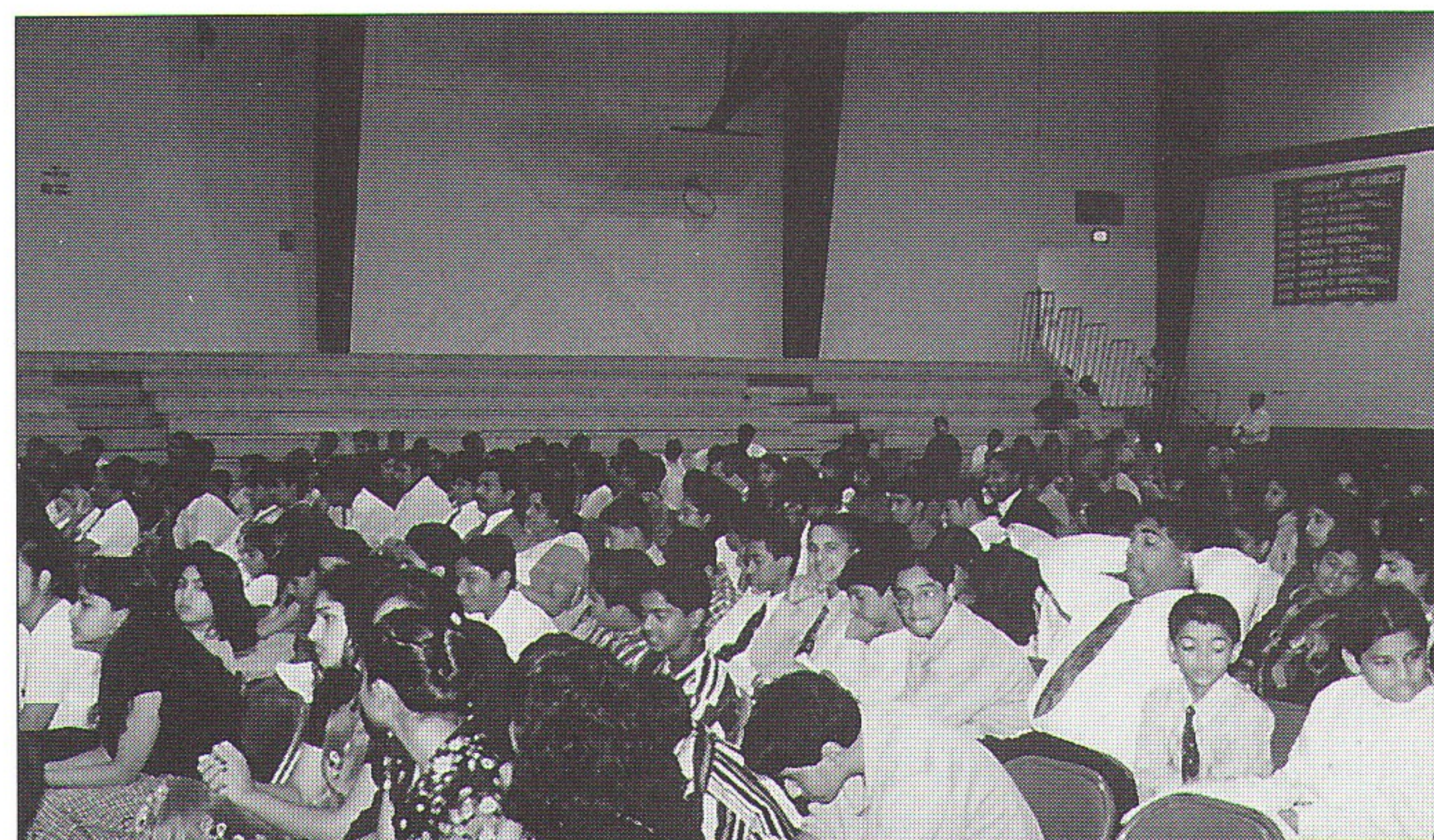
## MAR THOMA CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL — NORTH-EAST REGION

The Mar Thoma Junior and Senior Conference was held on July 25-28 at Allentown College, Pennsylvania. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, The Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasious Episcopa, Rev. Paul Yu, Rev. Gary Werner, Rev. Dr. P. G. George and Rev. Alexander M. Issac were the main leaders. About 400 students from 16 Sunday Schools including Florida attended the conference. Offertory collected at the Holy Communion Service was donated to the Church's 'Home for the Homeless project.'

World Sunday School Day will be celebrated on November 3rd at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers, New York at 2:30 P. M. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa will be the main leader. There will be a rally prior to the meeting. All students who have won distinction and above in the Diocesan Sunday School Examinations will be honored at this function.

Two teachers' training workshops for Sunday School teachers are planned this year; one on October 19th at St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, Teaneck, NJ, for North East and South East regions and another one on November 16th at St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York. Representatives from Cokesbury publications will be present in these meetings.

**Thomas K. Jose, Secretary**



*"Man's ways lead to a hopeless end — God's ways lead to endless hope."*

## MAR THOMA CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL — WESTERN REGION

A workshop for the Sunday School teachers of the Dallas Area was held on September 22, 1996 at the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. Miss Joyce from Cokesbury was the main leader. A similar workshop is

scheduled for the Houston Center Sunday School teachers on October 26th.

**T. Mathew, Secretary, Western Region Sunday Schools**

### **Passover and Holy Communion**

Melvy Mathew, Chicago Mar Thoma Church.

*[Melvy Mathew is the Junior High first place winner of the Diocesan Examinations. Following is the full text of her answer to the essay question.]*

*Write an essay on the following in about one and a half pages (400-500 words).*

**Analyze the difference and similarities between the celebrations of Passover and Holy Communion. Explain why God considers communion to be very important in the life of a Christian.**

The differences between Passover and Communion are that the Passover is for Jewish people and that you eat roasted lamb and unleavened bread during it. In the Bible, it says that no stranger or outsider may eat of it.

Also, the Passover is only once a year. The Passover, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread involves the angel of Death passing over all the Israelites' houses, which had lamb's blood on the door frames. The Angel of death struck down all the firstborn sons in the Egyptian families, though the passover is celebrated as a lasting ordinance to remember the day when God saved the Jews' ancestors from Egypt.

Communion can be celebrated many times in one year. It can be celebrated by everyone. In it, you eat bread (the body of Christ) and wine (the blood of Christ).

The communion represents the death of Christ on the cross. He died for our sins and he showed how much he loved and cared for us. This helped us to accept Jesus even more.

Though there are differences, there are also many similarities between the Passover and the Holy Communion.

During the Passover, the Israelites were to spread lamb's blood on the top side of their doorframes. This saved them from the results of the Angel of Death. This was a sign to God that the house he was going to was an Israelite's house. Therefore, the lamb's blood saved the Israelites.

In the New Testament, Jesus is described as the Lamb of God. He was pure, just like the ones needed for the Passover. They were to be year-old males without defect.

Jesus shed his blood for us. He bled to death, to take away our sins. As you can see, Jesus' blood saved us. Or, in other words, the Lamb's blood saved us.

Just as the lamb in the Passover saved the Israelites, so did Jesus, the Lamb of God, save the whole world from their sins.

Both the Communion and the Passover involved death. The Passover caused the death of the Egyptian firstborn sons and the lamb.

In the Holy Communion you are remembering the death of Jesus Christ.

You hold and remember both of these traditions, the Communion and the Passover, because you want to remember how God's plans were fulfilled and how much he cared for us. He saved many people.

God considers Communion to be very important in the life of a Christian because it shows that you have accepted Jesus, our saviour, into your life.

Each time you go to the front of the church for Communion, you should remember why you are doing it.

You are eating bread and wine. It symbolizes the body and blood of Jesus Christ. You hold this tradition and celebrate it because Jesus died for the whole world for all our sins.

We should all be thankful that we have such a wonderful God and Father.

### **REGIONAL YOUTH MEETINGS**

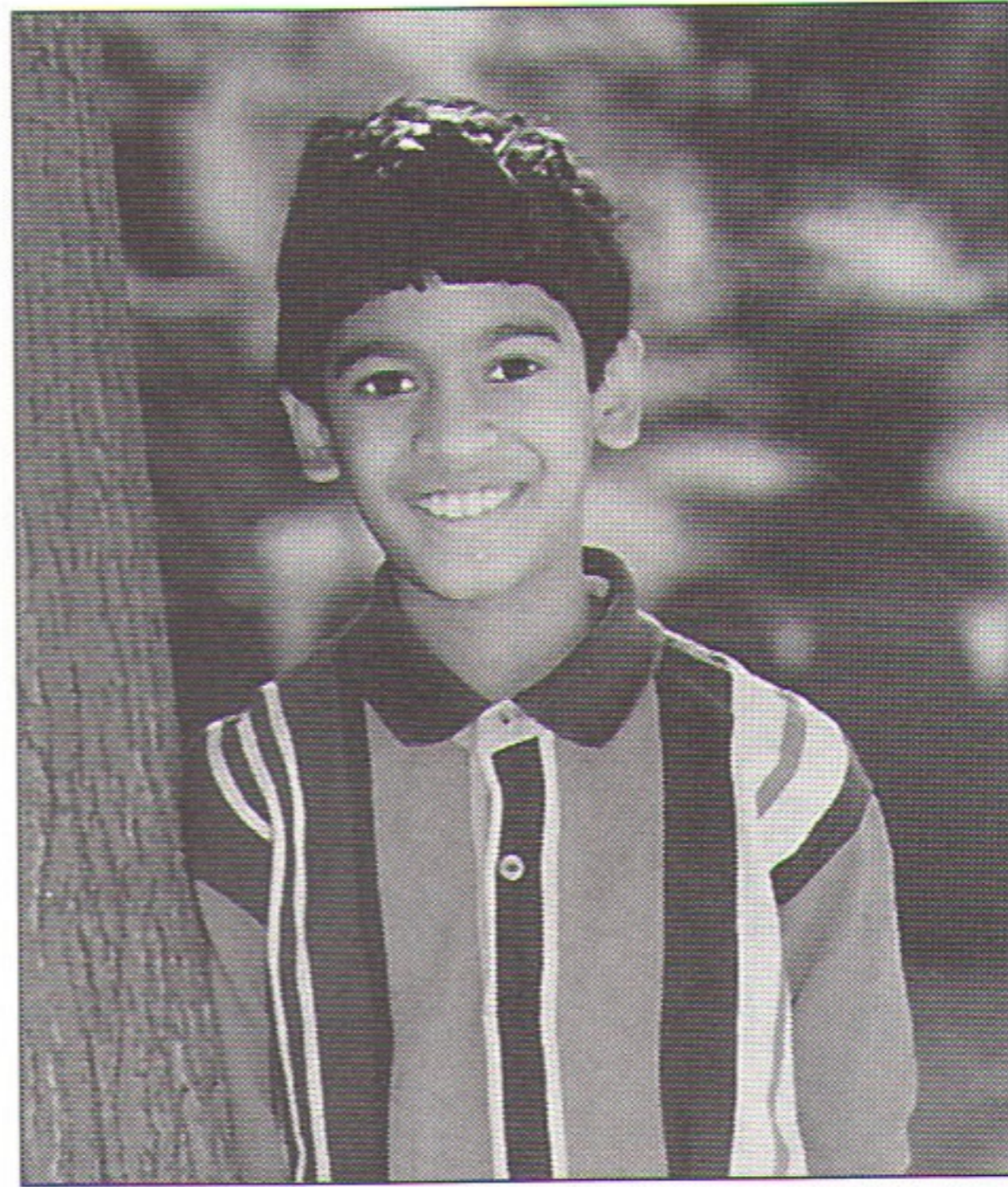
North East Region: Hosted by the Long Island Mar Thoma Church, Merrick, New York will be held on Saturday, November 30, 1996. For more information please contact: Rony Jacob (516) 741-5407, Runy Thomas (516) 223-2742 or Koruthu Mathew (516) 621-0832.

South East Region: Hosted by the Mar Thoma Church of Philadelphia, on November 30, 1996. For more information please contact: Ajai Varghese Joy (610) 259-9662.

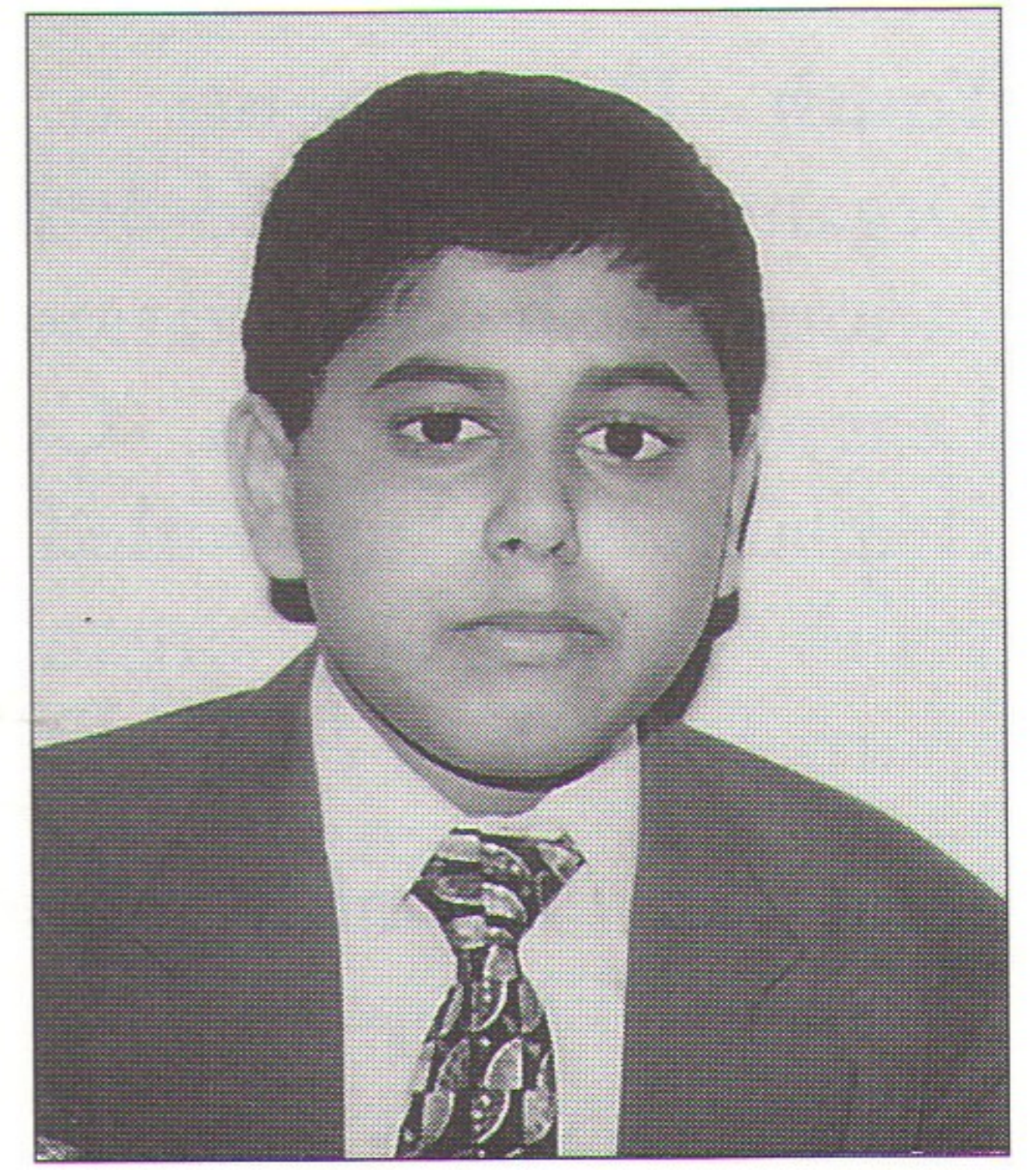
**First, Second and Third place winners of the  
Diocesan Sunday School Exam — 1996**



**Preetha Kurien**  
First Place (Junior)  
Immanuel MTC, Houston



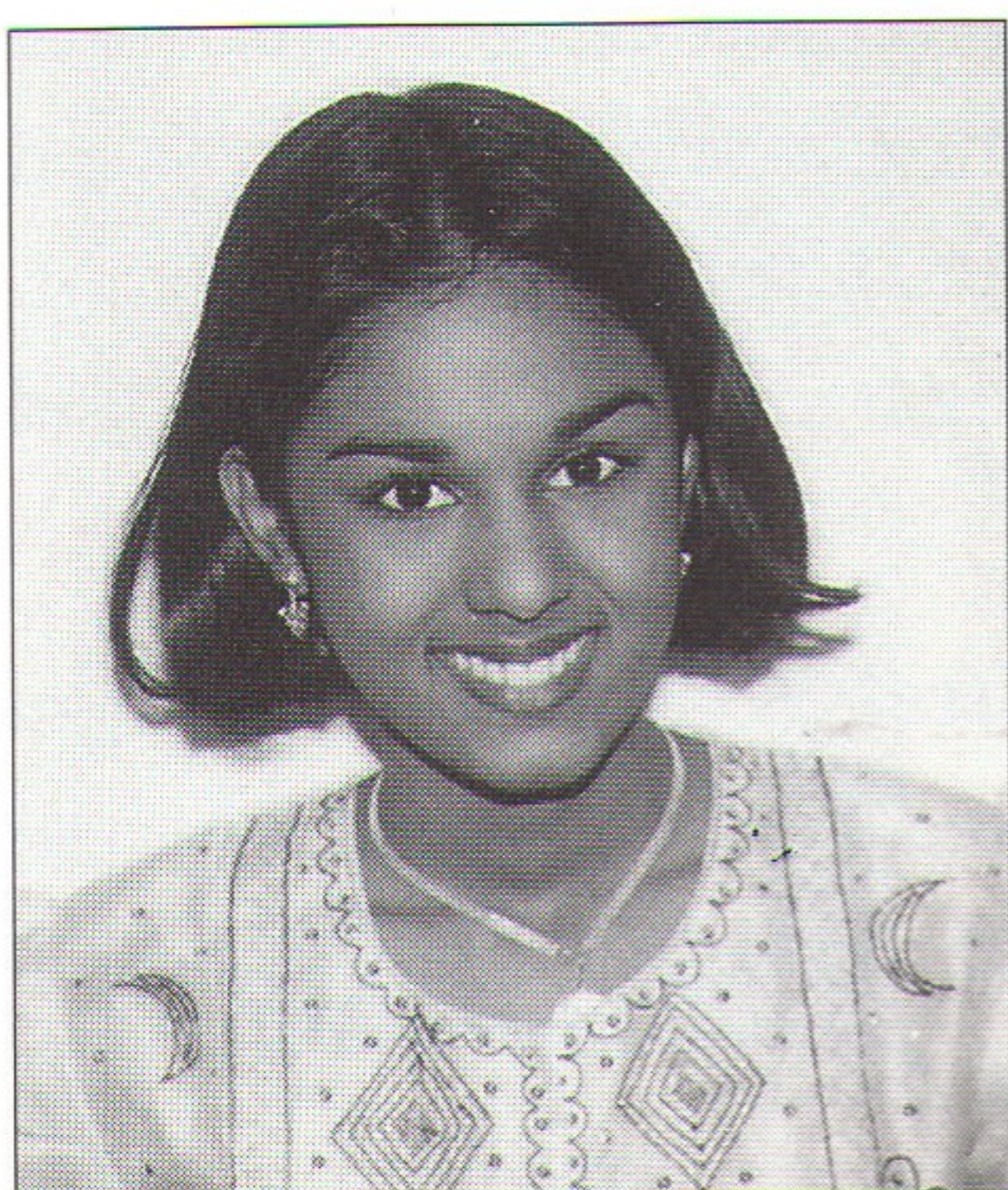
**Joseph Varghese**  
Second Place (Junior)  
St. John's MTC, New York



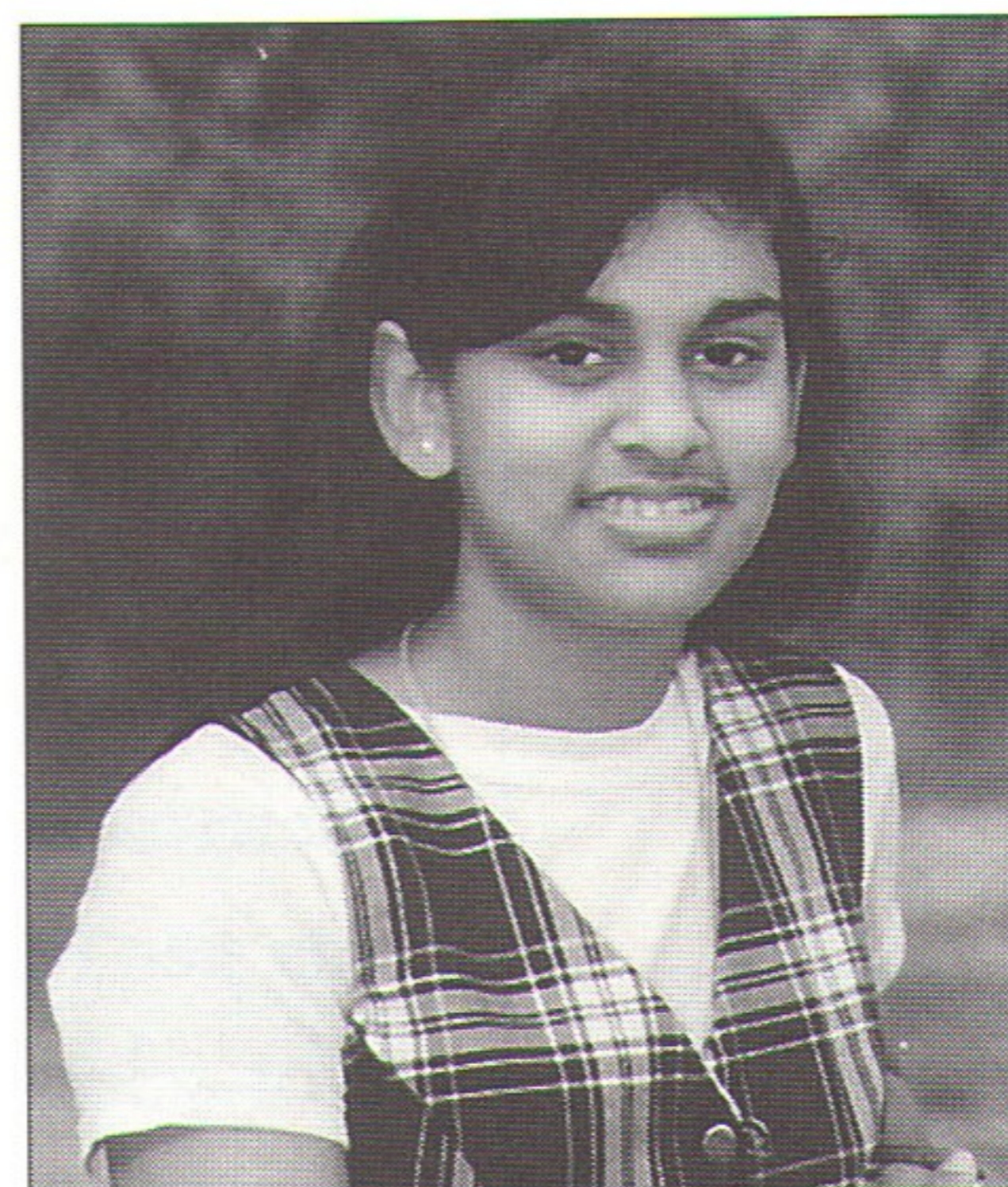
**Aju Raju**  
Third Place (Junior)  
MTC Staten Island, New York



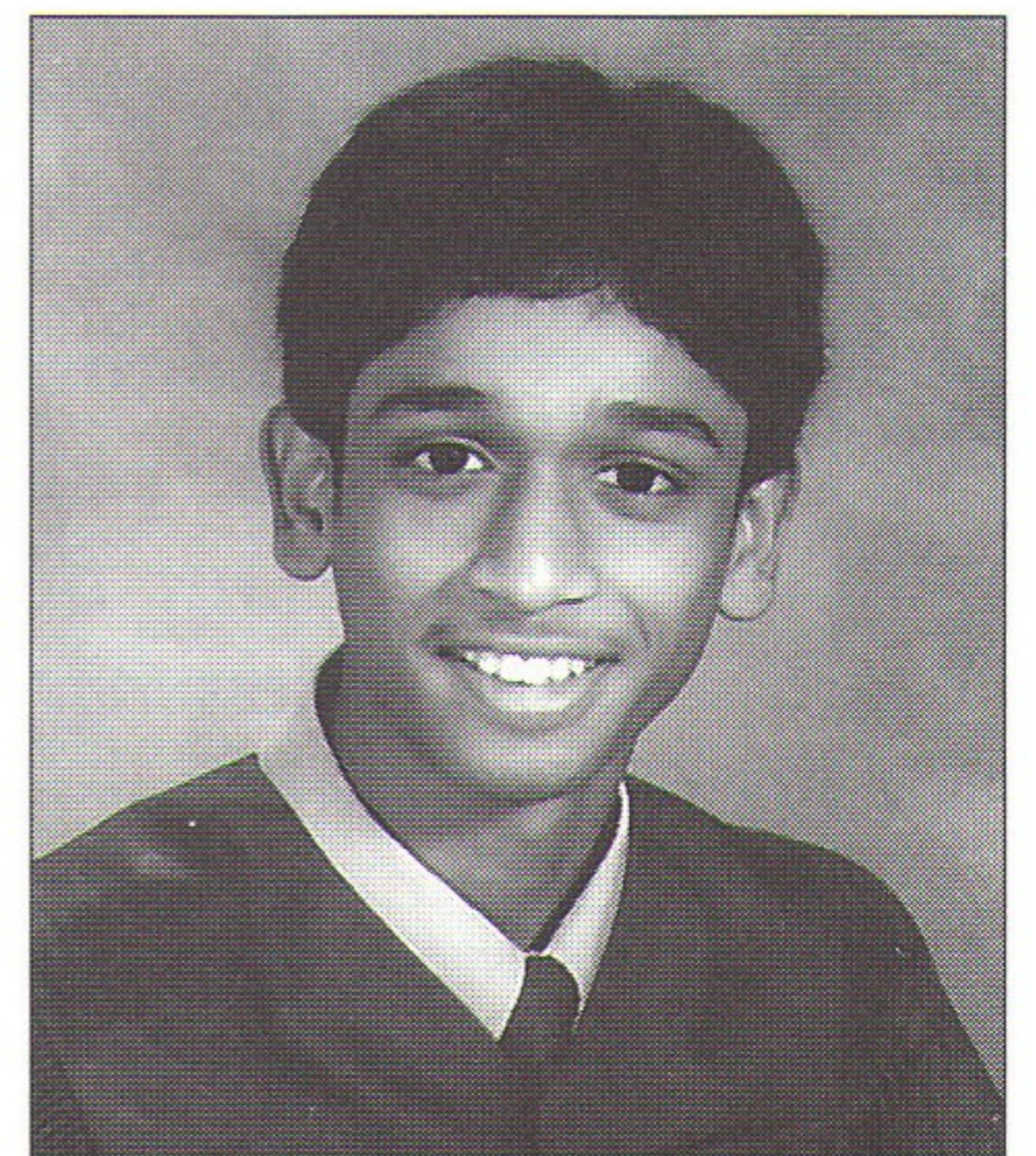
**Melvy Mathew**  
First Place (Junior High)  
Chicago MTC



**Sibyl Elsa Abraham**  
Second Place (Junior High)  
Trinity MTC, Houston



**Shane Ann Ninan**  
Second Place (Junior High)  
Trinity MTC, Houston



**Bibin T. Varghese**  
Third Place (Junior High)  
St. Thomas MTC, New York

## DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY AND COUNCIL AT A GLANCE

*The following are some of the important decisions of the previous Council and Assembly:*

**Youth Department:** It was formed as a Central Organization for co-ordinating different activities of various Youth Organizations, like Yuvajana Sakhyam, Youth League, Cross-roads, Conferences, etc. Three youth chaplains were appointed. It was decided to appoint a youth worker and organize leadership conferences and sports festivals in each region.

**Diocesan Assembly Member:** Decided to request the Diocesan Bishop to issue a Kalpana appealing to the conscience of the Parishioners about the need to send at least one lady member to the Diocesan Assembly if they are eligible to send two representatives and Thirumeni already wrote to all parishes about it.

**Endowments:** Decided to establish endowments for the Diocesan projects and a list of such endowments will be published in the Mar Thoma Messenger. The minimum amount for endowment was set as \$1,000.00.

**D.S.M.:** Decided to request the Diocesan Bishop to appoint a "Committee for the Department of Sacred Music" and they were appointed.

**Ecumenical Relations:** Resolved to request the Diocesan Bishop to appoint a "Committee for Ecumenical Relations" and has already appointed a committee.

**Public Relations:** Resolved to request the Diocesan Bishop to appoint a "Committee for Public Relations" and it was implemented.

**Finance Committee:** A "Finance Committee" was constituted.

**Souvenir:** Decided to publish a Souvenir with Donor's list as part of fund raising strategy and the Souvenir was officially released in July, 1995 at Dallas.

A "Library - Archives Committee" was appointed.

**Messenger:** Resolved to request the Diocesan Bishop to reconstitute the "Editorial Board of the Mar Thoma Messenger" and to publish the Messenger from the Diocesan Center. Our Bishop reconstituted the Editorial Board and the "Messenger" is now being published from the Diocesan Center.

Committees were appointed to reorganize the five existing centers and to study and revise the bylaws of all organizations and conferences and their reports were discussed at the Council meeting held in January 1996.

**Planning Commission:** Assembly elected a Planning Commission to study and report to the Council on the "Vision and Focus of the Diocese in the next Century." The Council has already discussed the report.

**Loan Re-payment:** Repaid the loan (\$116,000 + interest) with 4% interest to all who lent money for purchase of the Diocesan Center.

A committee was appointed to review the current Sunday School Curriculum. The Youth Department has initiated a pilot program know as "Campus Ministry." A Legal Advisory Board, consisting of a few practicing attorneys was appointed by our Bishop. A committee was appointed to study and report about the Mar Thoma Church in Diaspora in the West including South Africa and Germany.

**Oklahoma Governor's Fund:** As per the decision of the Diocesan Assembly (1995) an amount of \$1,000.00 was sent to the Oklahoma Governors relief fund.

**Regional Convention:** Committees were appointed on regional level to organize conventions. The convention in the New York region took place on April 26-28, 1996 at Long Island Mar Thoma Church.

**Diocesan Directory:** Appointed a committee to publish a diocesan directory.

**Retirement Centers:** A committee was appointed to study and report about the viability of starting a "Retirement Center" for catering to the needs of the emerging elderly population of the Mar Thoma Community.

**Donation through the Diocesan account:** It was resolved that any donation to church or church related activities can be channeled through the Diocesan Account.

**Our Parishes and Clergy:** We have now about 40 parishes and one Congregation. There are over 4,000 families. About 22 parishes own their own church building. There are 27 clergies which includes 2 retired clergies and three full time student clergies. Mar Thoma Services are arranged in places like Albany, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Phoenix, St. Louis, Winnipeg, Colorado, Calgary, North Carolina and San Antonio etc.

**Vaideeka Selection Committee:** A special Vaideeka selction committee was constituted by the Episcopal Synod as per the resolution and request of the Diocesan Council for selecting candidates from our diocese.

**Relocation of the Diocesan Center:** The Council already passed the resolution to relocate the Diocesan Center to a more convenient location where there is a high density of Mar Thoma population and parishes.

**Alex Thomas, Boston**

## HOUSE FOR THE HOUSELESS

The idea of "House for the Houseless" which made a big social impact in Kerala was a great contribution of our late Metropolitan, Juhannon Mar Thoma. The Mar Thoma Church continued to keep this alive over the years and has built over 3,500 houses. The Kerala Government has now adopted this idea and in cooperation with the Government of Kerala, The Mar Thoma Church has decided to construct 1,000 homes mainly for Daliths (socially and economically backward people).

The Diocese of North America and Europe is planning to sponsor 200 homes. The Church's share per house is \$600.00 (Rs. 19,000) per home. The Government will contribute the rest of the finance required, about \$300.00 (Rs. 10,000) per house.

Please support this mission with your generous contribution. Families and Parish Organizations are encouraged to sponsor houses by donating at least \$200.00.

Messenger will continue to publish the contribution list. Please make your contribution through your parish or mail directly to

the Diocesan Secretary, Mar Thoma Center, 744 Newtown Richboro Road, Richboro, PA 18954-1718.

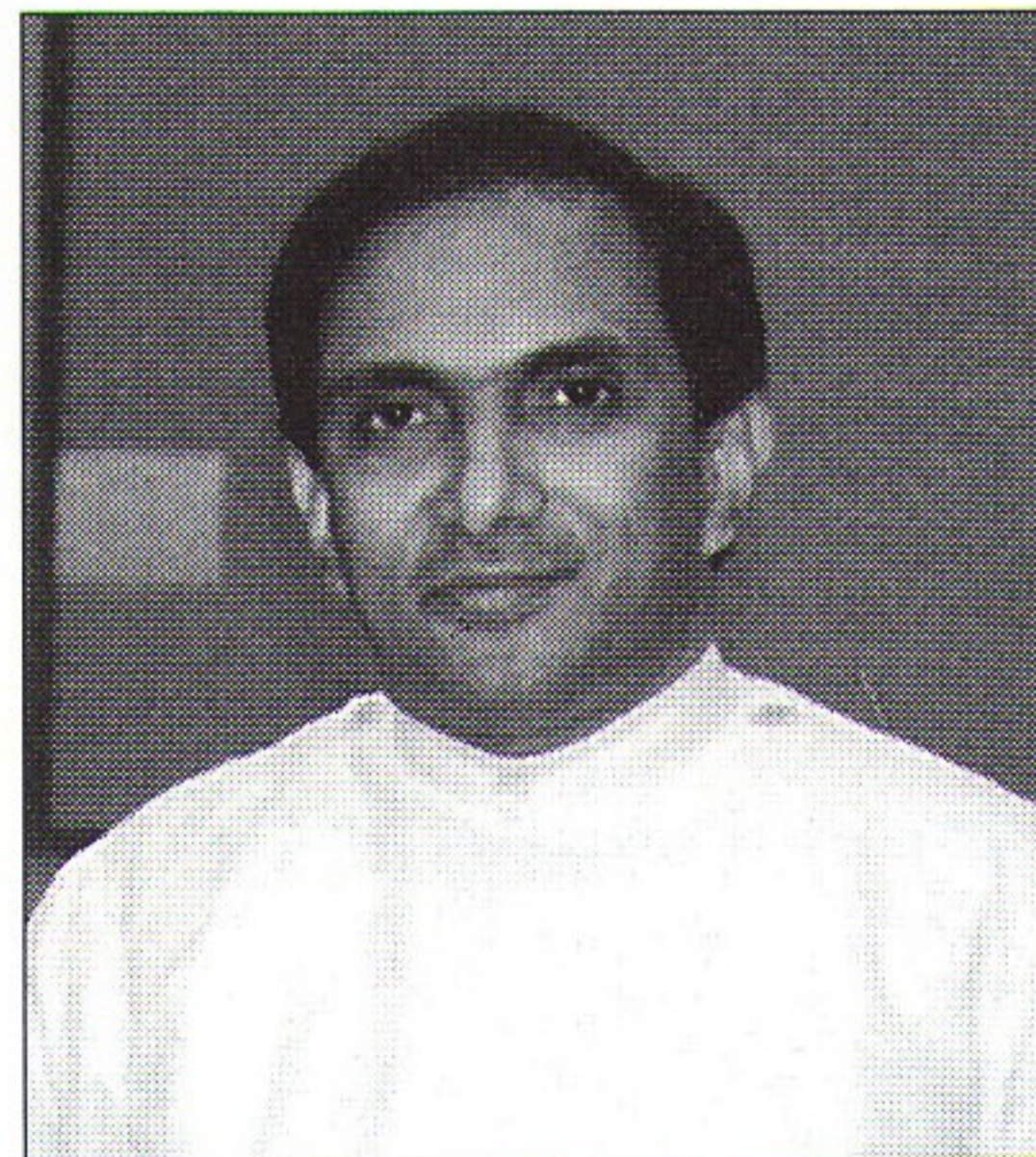
### HOUSE FOR THE HOUSELESS DONORS

*(Continued from last Issue)*

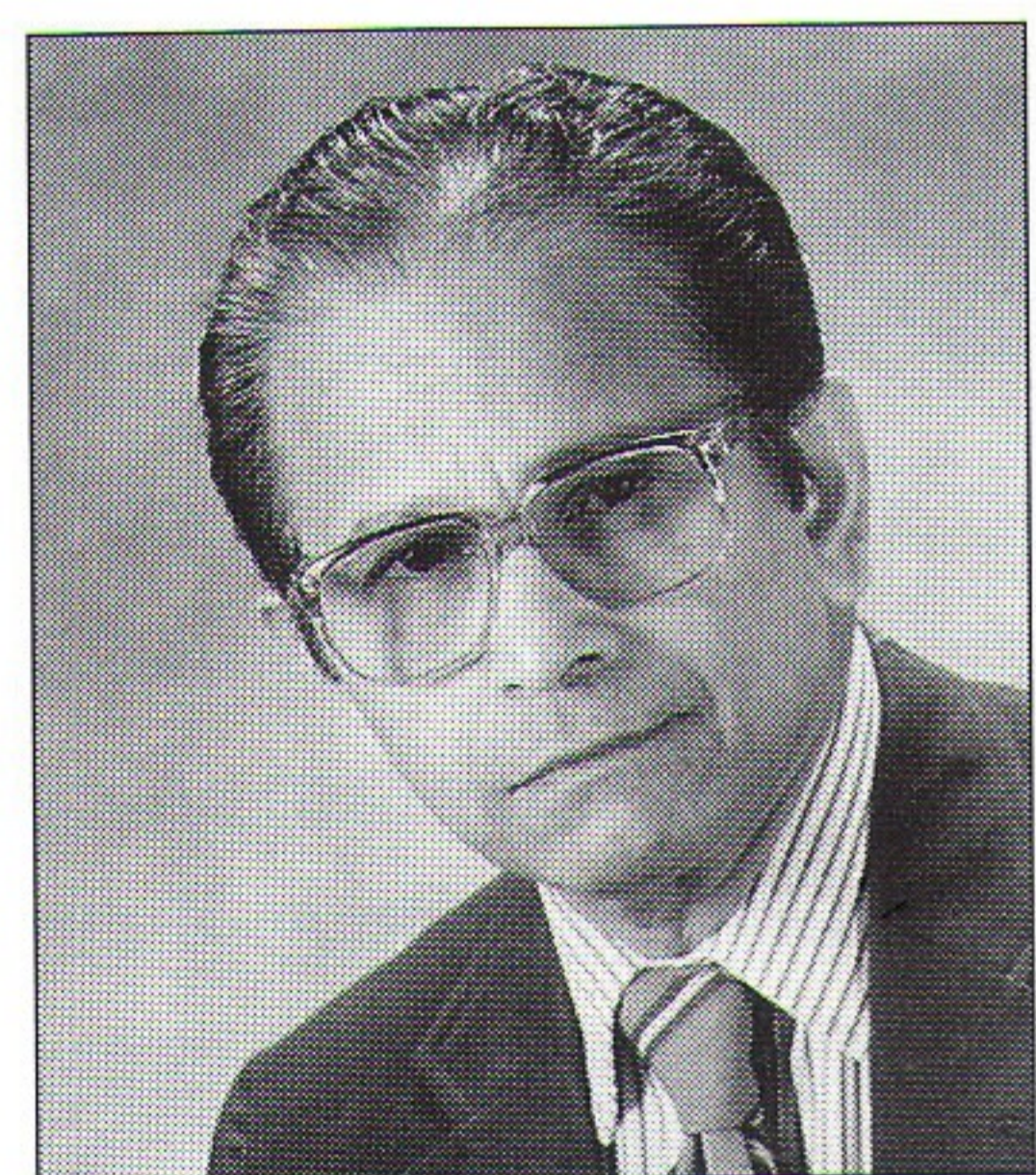
- 75. Youth League, St. Pauls MTC, Dallas .....\$200
- 76. Detroit MTC .....\$3,600
- 77. Sunday School, MTC, Staten Island .....\$125
- 78. Shawn G. Thomas, MTC, Los Angeles .....\$100
- 79. Sasha C. Thomas, MTC, Atlanta .....\$100
- 80. Junion/Senior Conf. Offertory,  
    Sunday School Eastern Region .....\$477
- 81. National Youth Conference, Dallas .....\$200
- 82. Yuvajana Sakhyam, MTC, Long Island .....\$200
- 83. Trinity MTC, Houston .....\$2,200
- 84. Geeve & Ann Mathew, Carmel MTC, Boston ....\$200
- 85. P. M. Oommen, Hounslow, UK .....£400
- 86. Abraham Mathews, London .....£400

## CONGRATULATIONS TO SABAHA COUNCIL MEMBERS FROM THE DIOCESE

Rev. Oommen Philip, (Chamathundathil Ponnakkadu, Mavelikara) Long Island MTC, New York, has studied in Bishop Moore College, Christian College and Kottatayam Seminary. Achen was ordained in 1981 and has served Rajkot, Adoor, Roorkala, Jamshedpur, and Calcutta parishes. He was zonal secretary of Delhi-Bombay Diocese from 1991 to 1993. He is the secretary of Clergy Ecumenical Services and President of Diocesan Sunday Schools.

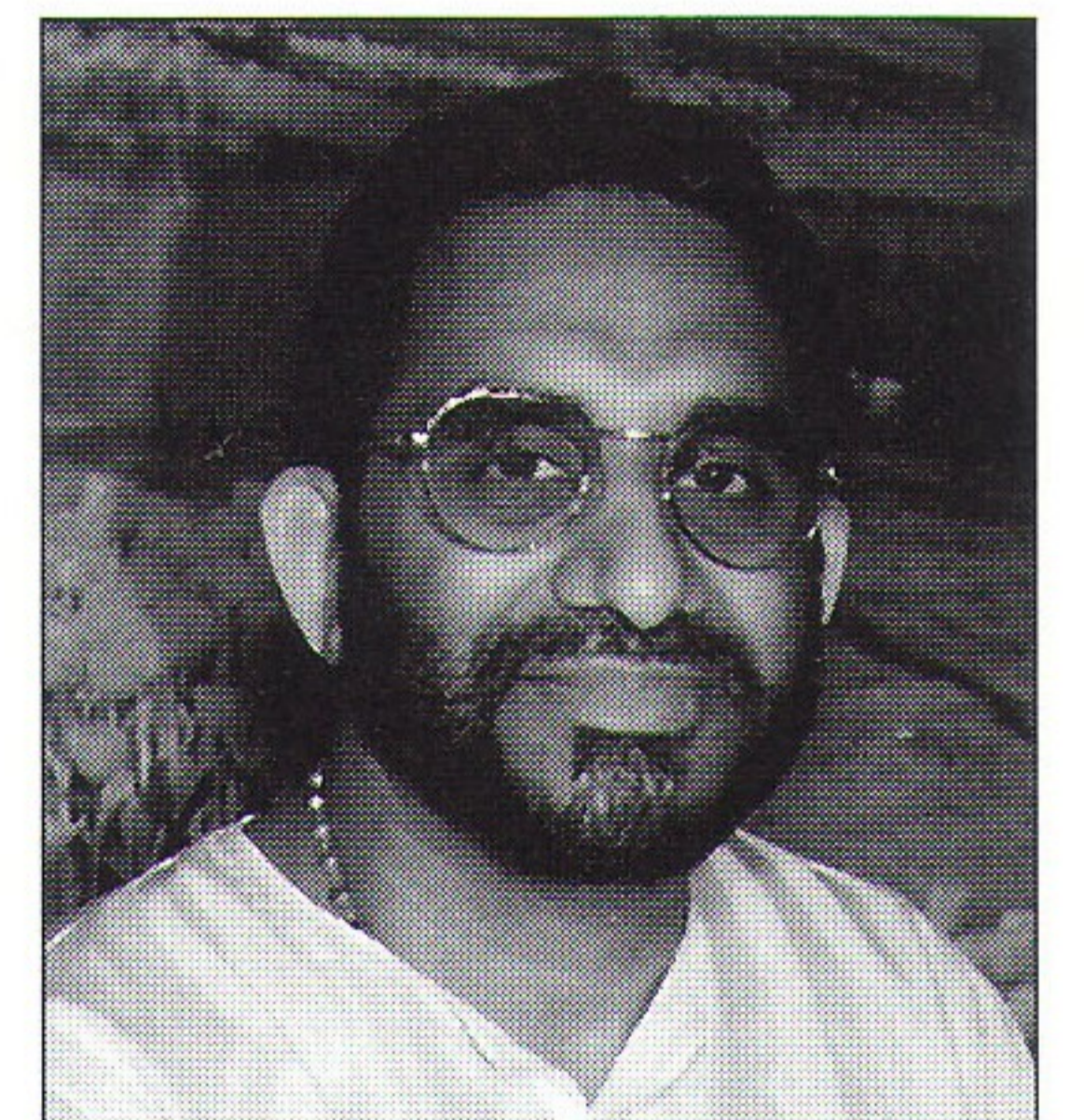


Diocesan Assembly and Diocesan council and the Diocesan Center Committees. Mr. Koshy who is very active in politics and other cultural and community services was a national delegate to the 1996 Democratic National convention and is a member of the King County Democratic Central Committee. As a veteran aeronautical engineer with post graduate degrees from India and abroad, he worked in various parts of the world. He held various positions in the Seattle Mar Thoma Church.



Mr. O. C. Koshy (Ooriapadikal, Kumbanad), Seattle Mar Thoma Church, Washington. Mr. Koshy was elected to the Governing body of the Theological Seminary, Ecumenical Relations Committee and the Planning commission. He was formerly a member of the

Anil Thomas (Mulamoottil Thundiyl, Kozhenchery), Epiphany Mar Thoma Church was elected to the Ecumenical Relations Committee and the Department of Sacred Music and Communications. He was a former treasurer of Epiphany Mar Thoma Church. He was the Principal of St. Thomas Parallel College, Kozchencherry. He is very active in the church and community activities.



## THE XVIII MAR THOMA NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE, 1997

The XVIII National Youth Conference will be hosted by the Chicago Mar Thoma Youth Group. The date has tentatively been set for July 31st thru August 3rd. The following office bearers have been elected: Mr. John Kuruvilla, Senior

Advisor; Mr. Sajeev Philip, Vice President; Miss Gina Philip, Secretary; and Mr. Jason Abraham, Treasurer. Please keep the conference in your prayers.

**Gina Philip, Secretary**

# PARISH NEWS

## CARMEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, BOSTON

A one day retreat of the Carmel Mar Thoma Church was held on Saturday April 13, 1996 at the Middlesex Hospital Hall, Waltham. The theme was "Challenge for Mission." The Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus delivered the main talk based on the book of Jonah. The talk was followed by a lively discussion. Singing and talent evening were the other highlights of the event. Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Communion on Sunday April 14 at the St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Burlington.

A Joint Communion service was arranged with the St. Mark's Episcopal Church on the day of Pentecost 1996. Rev. Alexander M. Issac celebrated the Holy communion in the Mar Thoma Order and Rector of the St. Mark's Church delivered a homily. Members brought special dishes to add spice to the celebration of the first joint communion service.

A joint Vacation Bible School was organized by the Mar Thoma Church, the Knanaya Orthodox Syrian Church, the Orthodox Syrian Church, the C. S. I. Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, from June 28-30, 1996 at the Middlesex Hospital Hall, Waltham. Sixty Children and Twelve teachers shared the excitement of "Adventures with Jesus." Christy Mathew, Philip Mathew, Vicars and teachers of the participating churches gave leadership and coordination. Rev. Dr. Ravi Mathews was the chief guest for the final day program.

The annual family retreat of the parish was held at the



*Rev. William P. Balker at the annual retreat of Carmel Mar Thoma Church, Boston. August 2-4, 1996.*

Oceanwood Retreat Center, Maine from Friday August 2 to Sunday August 4. The theme for the retreat was "Remembering Our Heritage." The main speaker Dr. William P. Baker led the retreat and gave a meaningful exposition of the theme based on the story of Jacob. The retreat came to a close with a witness session and Communion service on Sunday.

**Rev. Alexander M. Issac**

## CANADIAN MAR THOMA CHURCH, TORONTO

Regional Choir Festival of the Mar Thoma parishes of Chicago, Frankfort (IL), Detroit, and Toronto was held on Saturday July 20, 1996 at Toronto. Both senior and youth choirs from these parishes participated in the festival. It was the fifth Regional Choir Festival.

Annual parish convention was held from October 3 to 5, 1996. Rev. Dr. K. C. Abraham of the C. S. I. Church was the speaker.

Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus visited the parish from October 10 to 14. Special regional committee for planning the silver jubilee of the

Diocese was held. After the Holy Communion Service on Sunday, Thirumeni released the new parish directory.

**Rev. Prakash George**



## TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, EDMONTON

The VBS was held from 21st to 25th August and the theme was "Friendship Adventures with Jesus. A Picnic was arranged for the children during the summer which was a time of fellowship and fun. The Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa visited the parish from 4-6, October 1996.

Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Communion on Sunday the 6th and attended the 5th parish day celebrations and Sunday school anniversary celebrations that followed. The parish directory also was released.

Thirumeni also visited the Calgary, Fort McMurray and

Winnipeg Congregations and celebrated Holy Communion Services.

**Rev. Philip Easow, Vicar**





## MAR THOMA CHURCH OF GREATER SEATTLE

Annual Parish Retreat was held on 10th & 11th of August, 1996 at the Warm Beach Christian Center, Stanwood, Washington. The theme for the retreat was "Affirming Christian Family Values". Rev. Thomas George, Vicar, Staten Island Mar Thoma Church was the main leader. The Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa visited the parish on 28th and 29th September, 1996. A devotional meeting was held on 28th and the Holy Communion service was celebrated on 29th. VBS was held by the end of June and Geeve Mathew gave the leadership.

The parish has purchased a property for building a church in the near future.

**Rev. Philip Easow, Vicar**



## MARTHOMITES IN INDIANA

It is a joy that since April 1996, Mar Thoma families in Indiana have been gathering together regularly for prayer, Bible study and fellowship. Families from sister churches are also encouraged to attend. The Mar Thoma families have also requested the Diocesan Bishop to establish a Mar Thoma Congregation in Indiana. The first Mar Thoma Holy Communion service was celebrated by the Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Dr. P. G. George in Indianapolis on Sunday September 1. About 40 people participated in the communion service which was followed by a time of fellowship.



## THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND

The Sunday School conducted VBS on July 12-14 and Sunday School Anniversary was held on August 31. Under the auspices of Youth fellowship a one day picnic was organized to Great Adventure, New Jersey on August 20. A family retreat was organized by the Yuvajana Sakhyam on August 23-25 at Camp Green Lane, Pennsylvania. About 50 families have attended the retreat. Prof. Koshy Thalackal was the leader. The annual convention was held on September 5-8. Rev. Jacob Mathew was the main speaker. A one day program was organized by the Sevika Sangham on September 28 at New Jersey. Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa visited the parish and celebrated the Holy Communion Service on October 13.

**Rev. Thomas George**



*Irenaeus Thirumeni blessing the parishioners after the Holy Communion Service at the Staten Island Mar Thoma Church during his recent visit to the United States.*

## ST. LUKE'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, FLORIDA

The first Parish Day of the St. Luke's Mar Thoma Church, South Florida was celebrated on Sunday, October 20, 1996. Special service was held and one day salary was offered by each family.

## TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON

The 17th anniversary of our Sunday School was held on August 24, 1996. Rev. Raju George presided and Rev. Thomas Payikad of the St. Thomas C.S.I. Church of Houston was the chief guest. Prizes were awarded to all the winners of the Sunday School annual examination and intramural competitions. Mr. Thomas Varghese, Mr. Mathai Mathew, Miss. Lini Thomas and Miss. Bindu Philip were recognized during the occasion as the best teachers for the year 1995-1996. Children presented various programs during the celebration.

VBS was conducted from July 25 to 27, 1996, 180 children attended the VBS this year. During the final day program several children dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ. Other activities included Picnic, World Sunday School Day, Student's Sunday and Graduate Day programs. Sunday School children also actively participated in the Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter and Christmas Day programs at the Church.



*The winners of the Diocesan Sunday School Examination from Trinity Mar Thoma Sunday School with Athanasius Thirumeni, Rev. Raju George and the class co-ordinators.*

Twenty-four students from our Sunday School participated in the Diocesan Examination, two of them received 2nd prizes and eight students received distinction.

**T. A. Mathew**

## ZACHARIAS THIRUMENI VISITS GERMANY



*Diocesan Bishop Celebrated Holy Communion at St. Luke's Church in Essen, Germany. The Rev. Wolfgang Glade of the German Church addressed the gathering. Special service for First Communicant was also held.*

## MATRIMONIAL

US settled Marthomite parents invite marriage proposals for their son 25 years old, engineer, 169 cm., lean and handsome, continuing his MS degree program with a full time job. Non-smoker, non-drinker, and a very good Christian in all aspects, educated in US and is a US citizen.

Parents of committed girls—professional degree holder or higher degree students, no matter any kind of visa status, brought up in good syrian christian tradition, who has excellent moral and spiritual values—may respond with bio-data in details and recent photograph to: Box No. 8329 c/o The Editor, Mar Thoma Messenger, 744 Newtown Richboro Road, Richboro, PA 18954-1718.

## From the Editor

There seems to have a hunger for some experience with God and the complete understanding of self, and so there is a widespread interest in spirituality. It is natural for a person pursuing spiritual experience to select a guide, (follow a person, idea or value). Once they find that guide, then they need to follow some regimen to attain the complete transformation they long for. This process constitute spiritual discipline and its practice varies based on the guide and its traditions.

So many media being available, the modern trend is to choose the one path that has the most 'consumer value'. This creates a bonanza for people who sell 'spiritual awakening for wealth, health, love, fame etc.' through seminars, workshops, tapes and the like with money back guarantee. Spirituality is also being used for advancement in the society and is exploited for commercial purposes. We see spiritual leaders, rubbing elbows with leaders in the corporate hall ways exposing the commercial value of spirituality in the workplace. Several church pulpits also are echoing what Prof. Dallas Willard of Fuller Theological Seminary calls 'general human interest spirituality'.

The modern view of spirituality is a major diversion from Christian Spirituality. As Prof. Willard describes, the modern view is that spirituality is "... a kind of 'interiority' - the idea that there is an inside to the human being, and that there is a place where contact is made with transcendental. In this view, spirituality is essentially a human dimension. ...Christian spirituality is centered in the idea of a transcendent life - 'being born from above' ...."

Christian spirituality is an existence before God the father and creator and among His creation. It is a praying and living in Jesus Christ, the 'Word', the Savior and the Risen One. It is the human spirit being transformed by the Holy Spirit, the source of sanctification. It is the fellowship and communion with believers. It is the anticipation of the eternal kingdom to come.

Faith is the basis for Christian Spirituality and without faith spirituality is human. "If your hand or your foot makes you loose your faith, cut it off and throw it away! It is better for you to enter life without a hand or a foot than to keep both hands and both feet and be thrown into eternal fire." (Matthew 18:8). Professor Willard says "Faith has been redefined by social and historical process so that you can profess to believe in Christ while being deeply doubtful about the wisdom of what He says. If you see faith as merely a mental shift in your mind that God sees, and thereby determines you will get into heaven, then spirituality has no place."

*"Let the Spirit direct your lives, and you will not satisfy the desires of the human nature."* (Gal. 5:16). Hindu, Muslim, and Budhist religions also profess a mind free of desire as a prerequisite for experiencing Spirituality. Christian spirituality goes beyond the mere concept of mental shift, inner awareness, higher self etc. and calls for *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control"* (Gal. 5:22).

Christian spiritual discipline is a practice, a way of life that cannot be achieved by us alone. First of all one has to believe in Jesus Christ more than believing certain things about Him. Then we need to learn to be His disciple, and act the way He would have acted. Christian spirituality has to be experienced, practiced and professed, of course, in that order and definitely not in the reverse order.

The spiritual life that carries these concepts are less popular. Spiritual practice that give instant gratification and rewards are more appealing than the one that offers eternal life that we are waiting for. When a popular movie star or a TV personality making confession that their wealth and fame are the result of spirit worship, it is easy to attract a curious mind to practice it. Spirit worship, which is the submission of mind and body to a spirit and allow the spirit to take control, is practised by many youngsters. These groups or the so called Channellers are gaining popularity and increasing in number. For those who are hesitant to face the realities seek 'mental peace', and often join cult groups which give them temporary fix to withdraw from life realities. We can only hope that they listen to Budha who says "As wise people test gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it, so are you also to accept (those) teachings only after examining them."

**Abraham Thomas**

## From Tomb to Home (Continued from page 8)

a wretched life and making the lives of many others miserable. One of the victims, a girl, asks him to tell his name. He angrily shouts: "Don't ask my name"! An unidentified person can misbehave and act in any way he pleases. If you know the name of a person, you will have more control over him. The man explains 'legion' by saying "we are many". Is it not true with us also? We are many confessions, denominations, and communions. Even the World Council of Churches is only a fellowship of churches. One ecumenical movement visualized in the common understanding and vision is still far away. Christ alone can create "out of many"- one, an integrated person, a united church or a well-knit society.

Secondly, Christ permits the evil spirit to leave the man and to enter into the swine. The man became sane and sober while the pigs became insane. Perhaps the unclean spirit found comfort in the unclean animals. Evil refuses to depart and is hesitant to be destroyed. Often it is transferred from one region or a person to another area or person. The man is saved but the pigs are ruined. The evil power that possessed one person is capable of killing two thousand pigs. The possibility of destruction by one distorted person is tremendous. The leaders of the world, if they are not well integrated persons, can cause total destruction to the whole inhabited world. ■

*"The greatest joy on earth is the sure hope of heaven."*

## OBITUARY

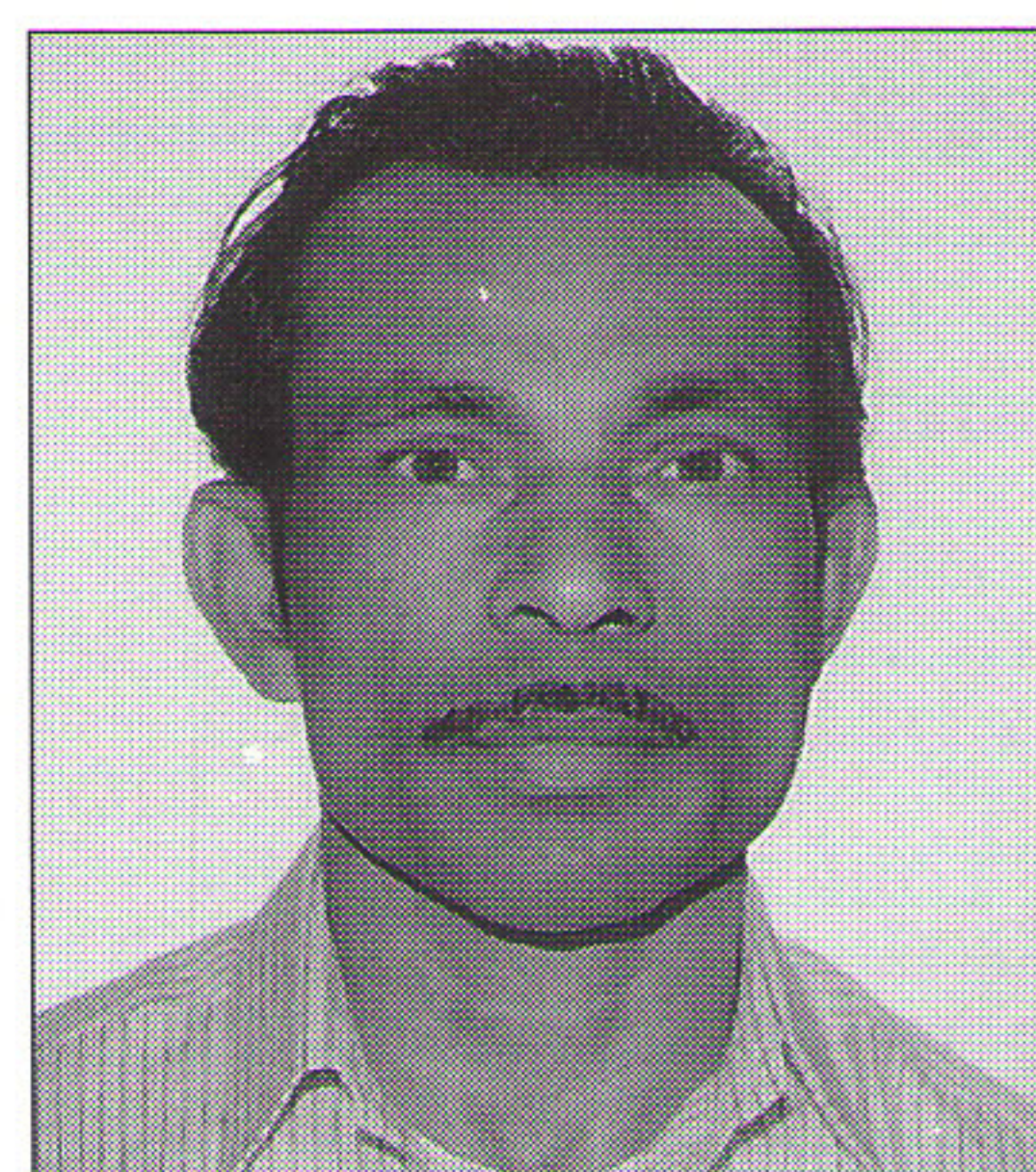


Mr. C. V. Chacko was born on March 29, 1918 at Keezhvaipur, passed away on September 7, 1996. He is survived by his wife Rachel, sons Thampi, Soman, Lalu daughters Susy, Santha, Lysa and thirteen grandchildren. He belonged to the Murani Pallivathilkal Velloor family. He was a teacher and retired from

Govt. High School Ezhumattoor. His entire life was dedicated to the service of our Lord. He was a devoted

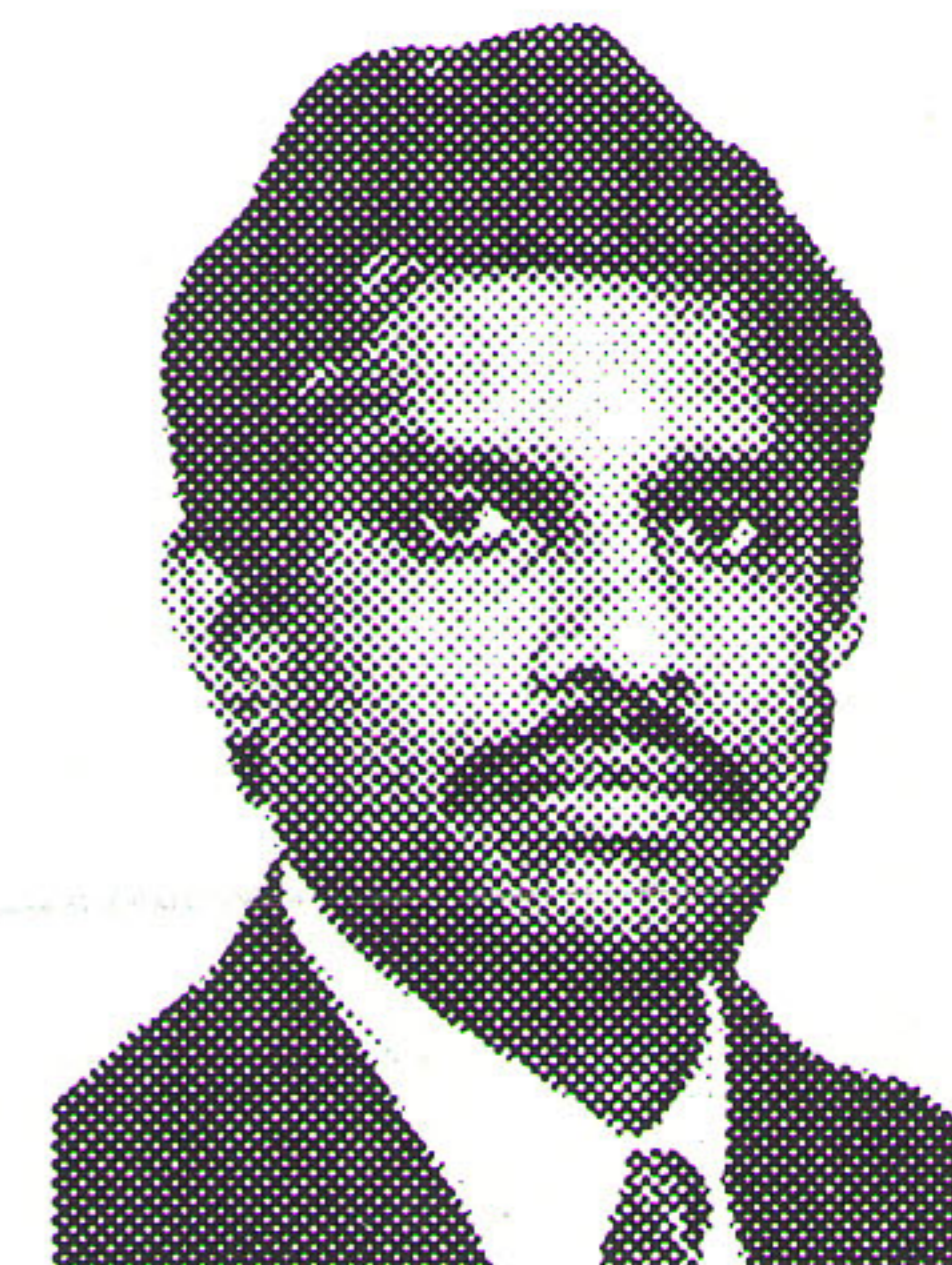
member of his parent parish, Keezhuvaipur St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church. He held various responsible positions in the church as Vice President, Trusty, Secretary, Sunday School Teacher and Sabha Mandalam Member. He served as Secretary and Vice President of the Mallappally East Center Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association.

Chacko Sir immigrated to USA in 1985 and was a devout member of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. He will be fondly remembered for his dedicated christian life and unwavering faith in His ways. We express our deepfelt condolence to the bereaved family.



Mr. John Daniel was born on August 11, 1940 at Elambumkal, Nooranad, Adoor. He passed away of cancer on October 1, 1996 in Bergenfield, New Jersey. He is survived by his wife Kunjamma John, Sons Aji, Saji and daughter Annie. We express our deepfelt condolence to the bereaved family.

Boby Mathew (Kondoor house, Theadikkal, Thiruvalla) was born on January 31, 1951. He passed away of cancer on September 17, 1996. He is survived by his wife Grace Mathew, Sons Philip Mathew (15) and Thomas Mathew (11). He was a member of the Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church and was very active in the Church. While in India he worked for the Malayala Manorama and for the Government of India. We express our deepfelt condolence to the bereaved family.



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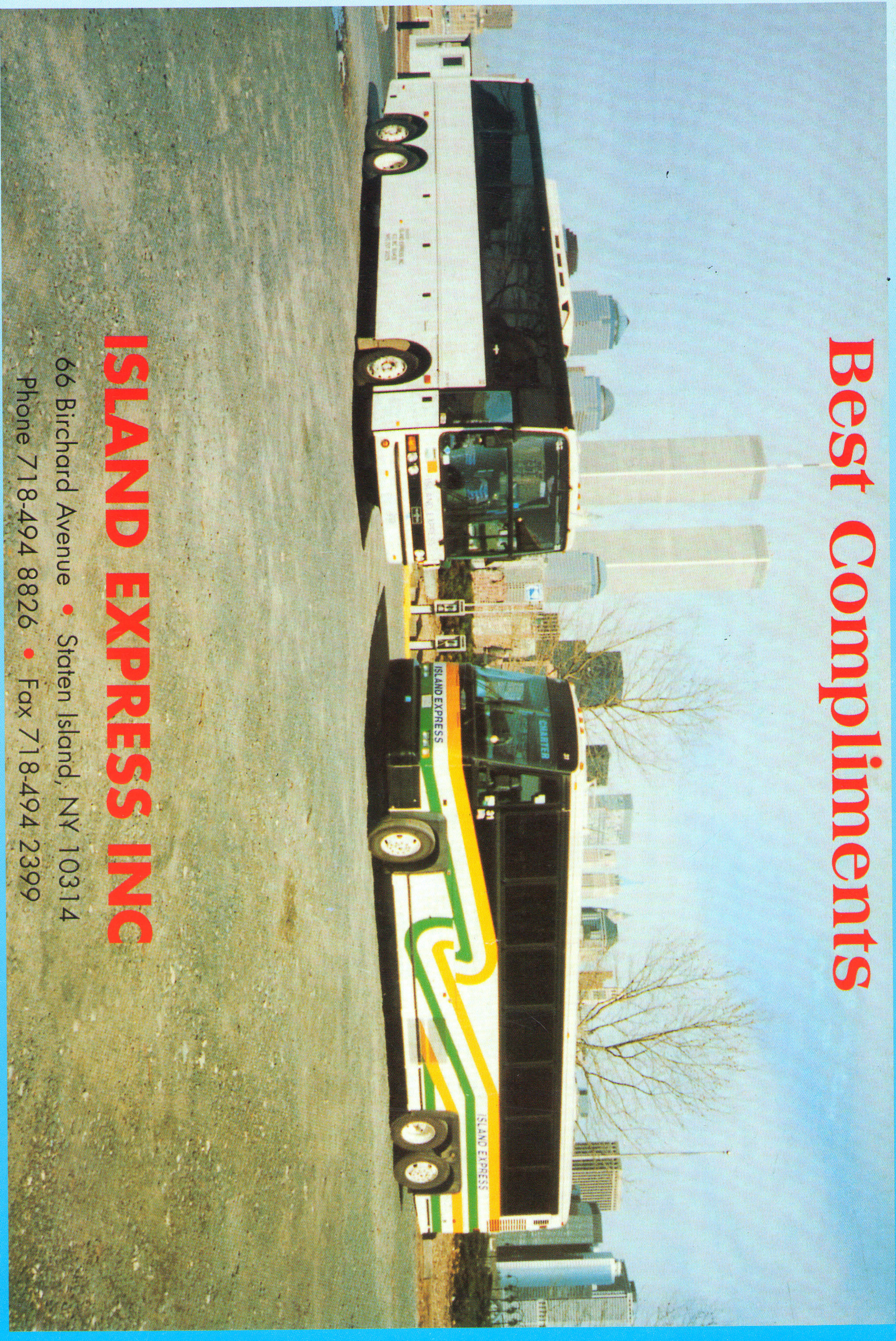
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