

MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 1997

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JUBILEE SPECIAL



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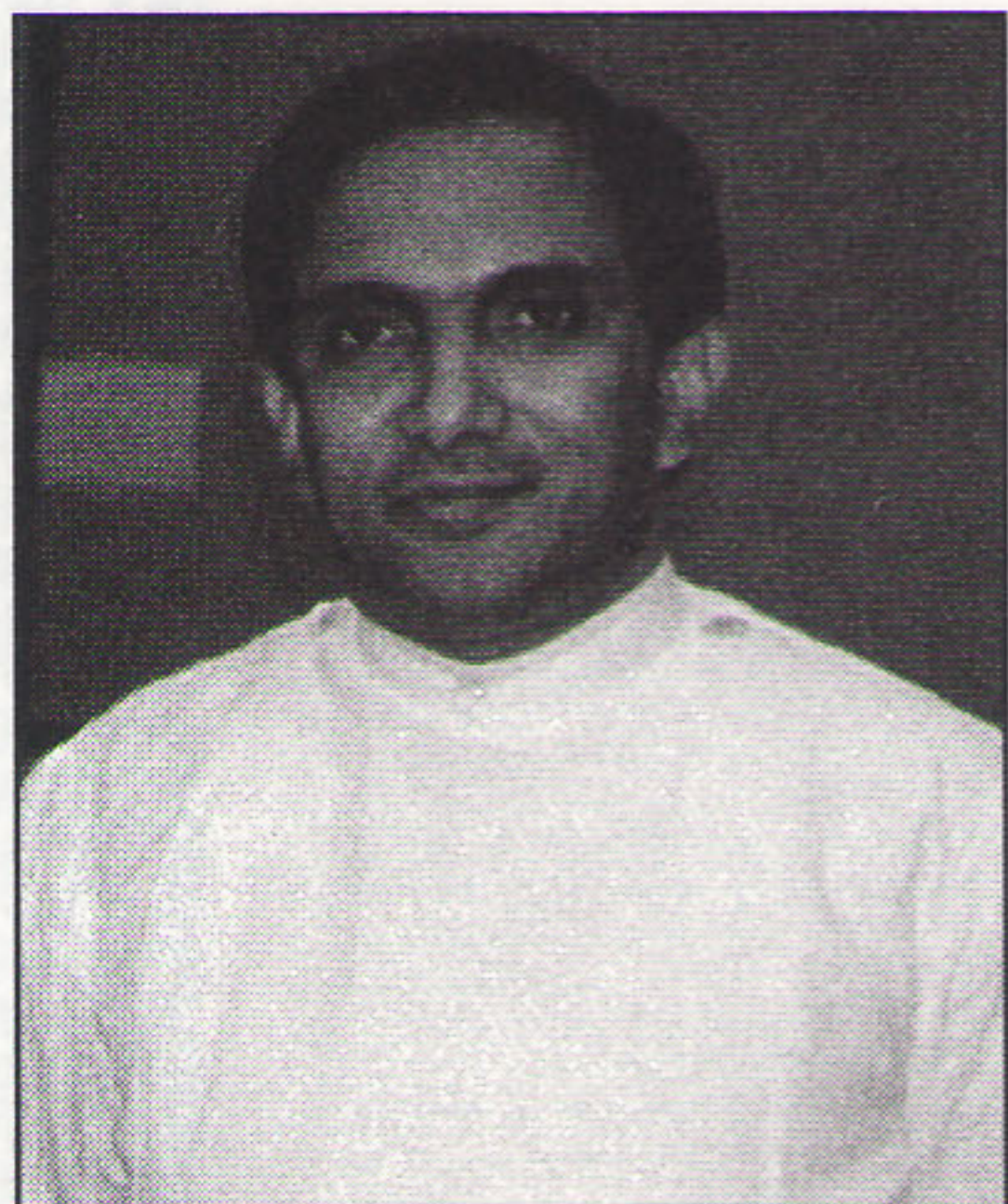
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MAR THOMA MESSENGER UPCOMING ISSUES

OCTOBER, 1997

Jubilee Theme: Repent, Renew and Rejoice
Articles, News etc. due by September 20, 1997



Jubilee is an occasion to look back at the unique grace filled life of our parishes and our Diocese, to reflect on the great things God has done for us. There is a story which comes to my mind on such an occasion, a story from the famous Indian Poet and Writer Tagore. It is about a beggar who symbolizes each of us in our journey through life. He sits day after day by the highway waiting for an opportunity to come. Then one day, to his delight, the beggar sees a golden chariot coming over the brow of the distant hill. With bated breath he watches the carriage draw nearer and he sees a very rich person inside. Finally the carriage stops and the beggar rushes over to receive a gift from the rich man. But, to the beggar's amazement, the rich man stretches out his own hand, empty, and says to the beggar, "You give something to me!" In his confusion and disappointment the beggar searches in his miserable bag and he reluctantly hands over a tiny grain of corn, and the carriage moves on into the sunset. That night as he sadly empties his bag to count the day's takings, he finds, to his surprise, that he still has the tiny grain, but now it has turned into pure gold. His great regret is that he had not given more, the whole bag.

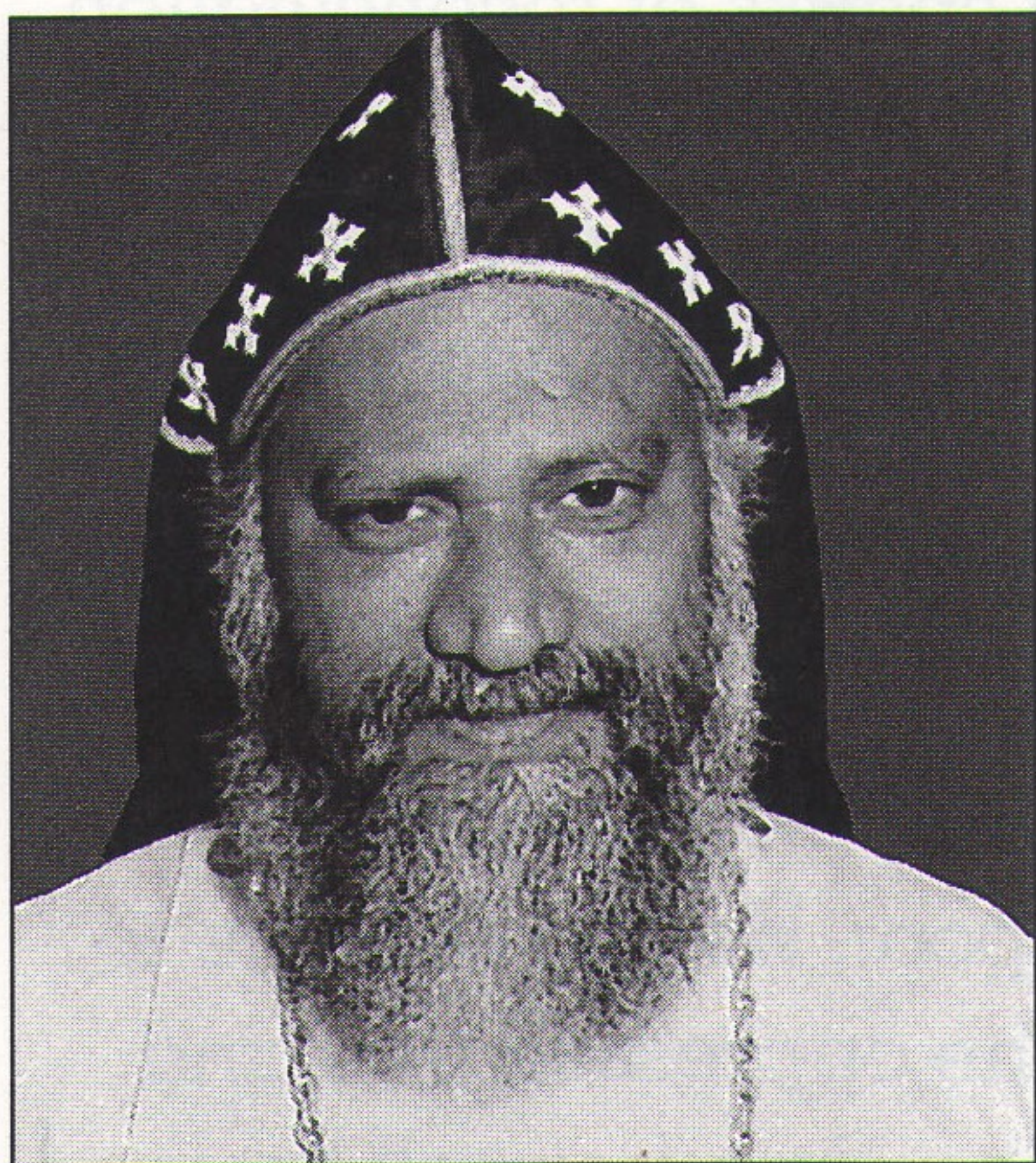
It would be easy to lose ourselves in stories of the past. But for a Christian, the best is yet to come. Tagore has wise words which echo and challenge the experience of each of us.

*I thought that my voyage had come to its end
at the last limit of my power—
that the path before me was closed
that provisions were exhausted and
the time come to take shelter in silent obscurity.
But I find that thy will knows no end in me
and when old words die out on the tongue,
new melodies break forth from the heart;
And where the old tracks are lost,
new country is revealed with its wonders*

Often we tend to close the book before the last page. Who knows the Father's will? Perhaps our most important work is yet to be done. With our celebrations, let us rededicate our assets of talents, time, and involvement so that all may be used in the plan and provision of God. Let us thank God for all who worked in our diocese and parishes. May God help all of us to go ahead to do the will of God as parishes and diocese through the Jubilee celebrations.

Oommen Philip Achen
Manager & Treasurer

Message From The Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

India is celebrating its Golden Jubilee of Independence on August 15, 1997 with numerous programs and projects. The forties and fifties were historic periods especially for the Afro-Asia Countries. Most of the British colonies became free. India had to pass through an unparalleled and prolonged struggle to obtain its freedom. Non-violent sathyagraha of the masses defeated the gun barrels of the mighty British Empire. For the past fifty years the country kept its freedom and remains as the largest Democracy. We could have done more but for the corruption in the higher places and the slothfulness among the general public. India could easily become a mighty power in Asia if its people had stood together and worked hard forgetting past differences of race, caste and culture. We need to pray for the progress of India.

The Diocese was abundantly blessed spiritually by the recent visit of our former Diocesan Bishop and the Suffragan Metropolitan The Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom. Last month we had the Family Conference, Junior-Senior Conference, Doctors Conference and the Youth Conference. Those conferences have enriched many of our members in manifold ways. Four of our young people have gone together for a mission tour in different parts of India arranged jointly by the Diocese and the Santhigiri Ashram.

The presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church will be succeeded by the new incumbent The Most Rev. Frank Tracy Griswold III. On behalf of the Mar Thoma Church, we convey our greetings and good wishes and pray the Lord to make his ministry a blessed one. Four of our delegates, two clergy and two laity are participating in the National Consultation of the Asiamerica Ministry of the Episcopal Church to be held between August 11-16, 1997 at Seattle. Hope the relations between our two Churches and its people will improve in the coming years.

The Sabha Mandalam is meeting at Thiruvalla from September 16-18, 1997. Revision of marriage rules is an important item in the agenda which is significant for the North America-Europe Diocese.

The construction of the Mar Thoma Center at Long Island is progressing very well. The basement is nearing its completion and we need to give the first payment to the contractor soon. Vicars, Assembly Members, and the Parish Executive Committee are approaching all our earning members to offer an amount as a Thanksgiving to the Jubilee fund which will be used for various programs of the Jubilee.

As a mark of Jubilee, we are extending ministration to various areas and regions where our people are few and Aghens are far away. Such congregations are made satellite congregations of the nearby major parishes and the Vicars of the parishes are authorized to minister nearly 23 congregations. Hope these small congregations will become full fledged parishes within a short span of time under the zealous leadership of the lay people and committed guidance of clergy.

'Jubilee' is the theme of this issue. This is a powerful theme all through the Bible. The book of Leviticus chp. 25 points out to a radical revolution in thinking and action related to Jubilee. Jubilee means celebration, thanksgiving and remembrance. Jubilee calls for a restructuring in the divine-human, human-human and the human-nature relationship. It speaks of reconciliation, redistribution and rejuvenation. It calls for repentance, renewal and rejoicing. The role of the other person in our life, the place of environment in our existence and the centrality of God in our behavior pattern all are implicit in the Jubilee theme. The forthcoming General Assembly of W.C.C. has chosen the Jubilee theme "Turn to God-rejoice in hope." A return to God for an advancement towards God is expected of us.

Jesus Christ in His Nazareth manifesto, St. Luke 4:18 had recalled the Jubilee theme when he announced "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save His people." Freedom from all types of bondages, new insights and clear vision, release of the imprisoned body and mind and the realization of unbounded joy are the marks of Jubilee. As long as these qualities remain out of and far away from human experience any celebration of Jubilee will have no meaning. When we celebrate Jubilee in this Diocese, parishes have to ensure that nobody is in bondage, oppression, sorrow and broken relationships. All should enjoy the presence of others, in the fellowship of God and in living on this earth. When there are strained relationships, rigid contacts and tight movements there won't be any Jubilation. Relaxed relationships, closer communion, rejoicing in the company of man, nature and God will make Jubilee a meaningful reality. Let us commit ourselves to have such a joyful life wherever God has placed us.

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

REMEMBERING THE PAST



Rev. Oommen Koruth (Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus) in 1973 after baptism.



Rev. Abraham Lincoln celebrating Holy Communion in 1972.

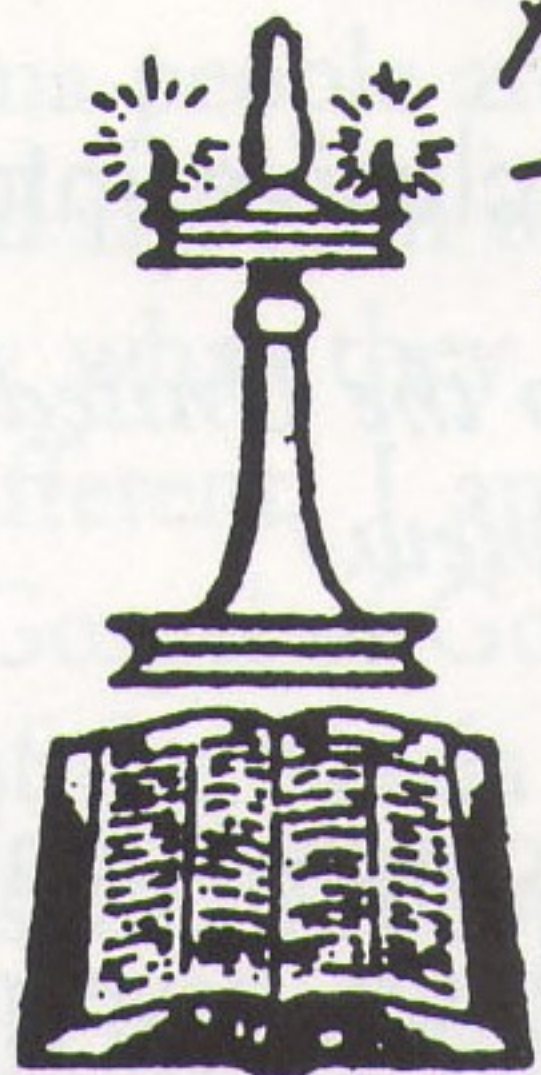
Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar.

No. 357

Dr. Yuhannon Mar Thoma Metropolitan



Poolathara
Tiruvalla-1
5-2-76



To: The members of the Mar
Thoma Church Resident in
Greater New-York.

This brings to you the
decision of the Synod of the Mar
Thoma Church to recognize
you who have assembled as a
prayer group; as the Mar
Thoma Congregation of Greater
New-York.

Rev. K.S. Mathew will
be your Vicar.

The By-Laws sent to me
are accepted for the time-being.

May God help you to live in
fellow-ship with other Commu-
nions in New-York.

Tiruvalla
5-2-76

Yuhannon Mar Thoma

Above: Copy of the original Kalpana from (Late) His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Yuhannon Mar Thoma regarding the formation of the Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York.

Below: News from the May 1972 Issue of the Sabha Tharaka

ന്യൂയോർക്കിൽ മാതോമ്മാസഭ രൂപംകൊള്ളുന്നു.

ന്യൂയോർക്ക് നഗരത്തിലും പരിസരപ്രദേശങ്ങളിലുമുള്ള മാതോമ്മാ സഭാവിഭാഗത്തിൽപ്പെട്ട ആളുകളുടെ പ്രാർത്ഥനയാലും നിരന്തരപരിശ്രമത്താലും 1972 ഏപ്രിൽ മാസം 9-ാം തീയതി ന്യൂയോർക്കിൽ ജനമയ്ക്കായിലുള്ള ലൂഥറൻ പള്ളിയിൽ വെച്ച് മാതോമ്മാസഭയുടെ ആദ്യത്തെ ശുശ്രൂഷനടത്തപ്പെട്ടു. വളരെപ്പേർ പ്രാർത്ഥനയോടെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിരുന്ന ഈ ശുശ്രൂഷനടത്തിയത് ശ്രീമാൻ ജോസഫ് മട്ടയ്ക്കൽ എന്ന ദേഹമാണ്. ശുശ്രൂഷാനന്തരം കൂടിയ പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ ഭാരവാഹികളെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുകയും ഭാവിപരിപാടികൾ ആസൂത്രണം ചെയ്യപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്തു. മാതോമ്മാസഭയുടെ വിശ്വാസാചാരങ്ങളിൽ

ഉൾ ഉറച്ചുനിന്നുകൊണ്ട് മറ്റു സഭകളുമായി സഹകരണത്തിലും സാഹോദര്യത്തിലും മുന്പോട്ടുപോകേണ്ടതാണെന്നു പൊതുയോഗം തീരുമാനിച്ചു.

ന്യൂയോർക്കിൽ ഒരു മാതോമ്മാ ഇടവക സ്ഥാപിച്ചു കിട്ടുന്നതിനുവേണ്ട അനുമതിയും അനുഗ്രഹാശിസ്സുകളും നൽകുന്നതിനു് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ തിരുമനസ്സിനോടു അഭ്യർത്ഥിക്കുന്ന ഒരു പ്രമേയം യോഗം ഐക്യകണ്ഠേണ പാസ്സാക്കി.

ഈ ഇടവകയുടെ വളർച്ചയും നിലനില്പിനും എല്ലാവരുടെയും പ്രാർത്ഥന അഭ്യർത്ഥിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു.

Be A Christ Church

Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan in an exclusive interview

(The editorial board had the privilege of meeting Chrysostom Tirumeni during his recent visit to the United States. We found the eighty year old Tirumeni vibrant and extremely convincing. Given below are excerpts from the interview.)

Messenger: We are delighted with your visit to the diocese and are very happy to see you strong and healthy. We are grateful to God for your leadership.

Tirumeni, how is Valia Tirumeni?

Thirumeni: He is doing very well and is in good health. Of course, because of his age, he is getting weaker; but is very active. God has given him good health.



Messenger: Tirumeni, there is a general feeling that despite problems, the church is standing strong because Valia Tirumeni and you are there to lead. There is also a feeling that the time after both of you pass by, there is going to be quaking in the church. What are your comments on this?

Thirumeni: See, to feel like this is natural everywhere. Suppose you work in a parish for 3 years and you do very well, people will speak good about you. If I were to transfer you, people would object to it. They will say they want you for 3 more years. Valia Tirumeni is the one in charge and he is handling his duties very efficiently. Others haven't been in that responsibility and so people think others will not be able to do it. If he had not done that efficiently, then people would say other Tirumenis could have done it better. People say this to compliment Valia Tirumeni, but to Valia Tirumeni, the real compliment is not to say that others will not be able to do it. That is what this feeling among people means.

Messenger: What is the general reaction and your opinion about the discussion of Episcopal retirement?

Thirumeni: The present Metropolitan and the previous Metropolitan and also Thomas Mar Athanasius Thirumeni said in the Mandalam that they would like to retire; but the people said no. The present metropolitan again two months ago told us that he was nearing 85 and so would like to retire. I am in favor of bishops retiring at some point.

Messenger: Recently someone who once very actively involved in the administration of the Mar Thoma Church commented that the future of the Mar Thoma church is bleak; why?

Thirumeni: Why did he say that? You must ask him. The church of God is God's body; how can that be bleak? Mar Thoma Church is part of the church of God. Christian faith, you see, is the faith of hope. If he had been involved in the Mar

Thoma church actively I don't think he would have said that. He must have met with some other disappointments in life, which of course has made him make some disappointing remarks about the church.

Messenger: Tirumeni, as regards our church elections, has the change in the process helped us to get a new set of candidates for Sabha Council and other administrative bodies?

Thirumeni: First of all, we are getting the first set of candidates. So it is too early to assess. Secondly, there were evils associated with the earlier election codes. We tried to eliminate some of them. Besides, this time whether you get better candidates or not, to some extent practically every voter knows the candidates who are standing for elections. Otherwise, earlier probably only twenty percent would have known for whom they voted. All the candidates from this diocese, for example, are known to all those who have voted for them.

Messenger: Referring to the comments in the Mandalam and other places, is there a group of people who are discontent with the church?

Thirumeni: Of course, there will be discontent. Even when the good Lord came to this world there were so many people who were discontented. If you stand for some principle, it causes discontentment for some some.

Messenger: In many situations, many persons including achen are making allegations about the church and its authorities even in the Mandalam. Can't there be another forum to address their allegations and grievance, so that unpleasant situations can be eliminated?

Thirumeni: If somebody has an unsatisfactory relationship with the working of the church for defective reasons, he is bound to make allegations. The Mandalam is a place where there are rules. Whatever is allowed by the constitution can be transacted. Anything outside of the constitution is not entertained. We all have to make room for many unpleasant experiences of life.

Messenger: Aren't people taking advantage of the situation?

Thirumeni: It is very much possible, but why is it necessary

that all people think good of you? Are you very impressed by what others say or what God would say? I am assuming that most of the Mar Thoma people are concerned about what the Pentecost people would say. I am totally indifferent about what they say. Let them say what they like because, their point of view and mine are different. I am not prepared to shift my understanding of the Gospel of God for the sake of popularity. Recently the speaker of the Kerala Legislative Assembly visited our place and said; most of the people are very much concerned about the headlines that would come in the following day, not about the content of what they say. They want to make statements that would bring catching headlines.

Messenger: Nowadays we have a lot of convention speakers from among lay persons. Without some training how can they interpret and teach certain things about the Church's theological stand. Therefore, is not some sort of licensing appropriate before they are allowed to speak in the churches?

Thirumeni: They are not speakers; they are preachers. The point is; when some one is allowed to speak a question to be asked, 'Does the parish priest know this man?' The licensing authority is the parish priest. He must know the person who speaks in the church. If we go in for specific licensing, then no body can speak without a license, which may be too restrictive. We don't issue licenses to any body; at least that I know of.

Messenger: In the ecumenical field, there are some discussions going on with the catholic and orthodox churches and is there any possibility for some type of a communion.?

Thirumeni: I am not a prophet or a prophet's son; but, this will happen. In the Orthodox-Mar Thoma dialogue, I find a large area of agreement at least concening our understanding of faith and faith matters. They don't accept our ministry as valid and we don't accept certain things about them as well. They say we don't have the continuity of faith. Also, though we all subscribe to the Nicene creed, our understanding of the Nicene creed is different. The eucharistic and theological understandings are different. So, there are agreements and disagreements.

Messenger: The church is going through changes and other people are noe given membership in the church. In India we already have people from Karnataka and here we have the possibility of many ehtinic groups who could join the church. Would we be able to accommodate them?

Thirumeni: I would say the monolingual church is not relevant anymore. Authentic christianity involves diversity; diversity in language, in culture and in litergy. It is better to have such a diversity.

Messenger: In such a situation will you not be worried about children getting into interracial marriages?

Thirumeni: I don't think anybody objects to interracial marriages; may be few people object. Actually, if you marry only within your community, there is a deterioration of the genetic pool. Therefore, interracial marriages are necessary for the vibrancy of any particular group. This is a sociological and biological factor.

Messenger: What is the stand about the funeral service when a child dies before baptism?

Thirumeni: We do not say that the child be buried without prayers though, the fact is that there is no liturgy provided for this. Liturgy is for the members of the church. Unless you are baptized, you are not a member of the church. But we also do not say that there is no salvation without membership in the church.

Messenger: The youth of this diocese always complain about our liturgy?

Thirumeni: What is their complaint about liturgy? Everybody complains about everything. There are so many people even Christians who complain about God. When Jesus died Jesus said 'Oh God why have you forsaken me.' Have you listened to any of their(youth's) songs? They go on repeating it 12 times; we repeat only 3 times, they (youth) are not against repetition. Who said that they are against repetition?

Messenger: Their basic problem I think is that their generation has a lack of internal fellowship.

Thirumeni: What do you mean by lack of internal fellowship.

Messenger: They see the arguments, fights, breakups etc.

Thirumeni: Can you show me any area where there are no arguments, no breakups? Don't you think that there is a lot of fighting everywhere, even among young groups? It has been explained that fellowship includes these problems. Conflicts in fellowship is the reality you must face; not that fellowship is improved by confict.

Messenger: We have evangelists working in the mission fields especially in the rural areas in India; but we have no system whereby they can go beyond the levels at which they are. How can they expand their levels, for example through higher education?

Thirumeni: What is the necessity of improving their educational level. If a person graduated, do you think he would be more fit to work in a rural area? Would he be more qualified to associate with the people? You see, I don't agree with all that.

Messenger: They may be vulnerable and forced to take conflicting decisions when faced with situations they cannot handle or manage with the meagre salary they get.

Thirumeni: A number of people desire others to take decisions for them. Can you give me an instance of a single person who is satisfied with his income? When I first joined as an evangelist I did not have a salary at all. I had to do so many things. I had to clean my house and look after the buffalo, milk the cow, and cultivate the fields. I have even gone to the forest to cut wood and carried it to the market to sell. Actually how much money and standard of life did Jesus have when he came to save the world. Now, you go to a village and live there. What is the average income of the villager. Have you calculated that?

Messenger: How much has your father (Rev. K. E. Oommen Achen) influenced you in becoming the person you are?

Thirumeni: You see, I have not made a comparative assessment of that. My family, my parents, my Sunday school teachers, my church, all people have helped me to be what I am.

Messenger: Thirumeni, your experience in life will be a great resource for us in the future. Have you ever thought in terms of an autobiography?

Thirumeni: No, no, I don't believe in these. I have no special contribution to make so that people can be benefited from that. I don't see the need of writing any of those things. All the things I have done are ordinary.

Messenger: We have heard a story about you that just a few years back there was a flood which inundated the Vaikom area and you swam to the house of a poor family to redeem their belongings. Is it true?

Thirumeni: (Smiling) A lot of it is apocryphal, I was not the only person who did it, there were others also.

Messenger: Thirumeni, you have been visiting all the dioceses and what do you see is the strength of this diocese?

Thirumeni: I don't see this diocese much different from others. Of course, you have more money than others; and you are giving liberally to the church.

Messenger: How about some weakness?

Thirumeni: To me, man everywhere is the same.

Messenger: We are celebrating our Silver Jubilee, do you have any advice or suggestion for the next say 5 years, ten years or 25 years?

Thirumeni: My own idea is; you are the people to decide. I am not very much in favor of a man who comes from outside making all sorts of suggestions.

Messenger: Anything to avoid?

Thirumeni: I would say, how can you fulfill the mission of God in this place in the context in which you are placed. The study of the mission of God is important. And secondly, what is the need of the people today? Jesus went out to the other side and he wanted to rest, but the crowd came and he felt compassion for the people. You also look at the style which Jesus used in preaching. Are we now following that style, not exactly what he did but the style he used?

Messenger: We all enjoy your humor your wit and wisdom, which are unique and full of meaning; would you like to share your secret?

Thirumeni: I don't try to be humorous. What you mean by humor? If you are able to see your follies and failures as part of you then you will be able to see the follies and failures of other people also as part of them and then if you live up to the grace of God you can enjoy all these things.

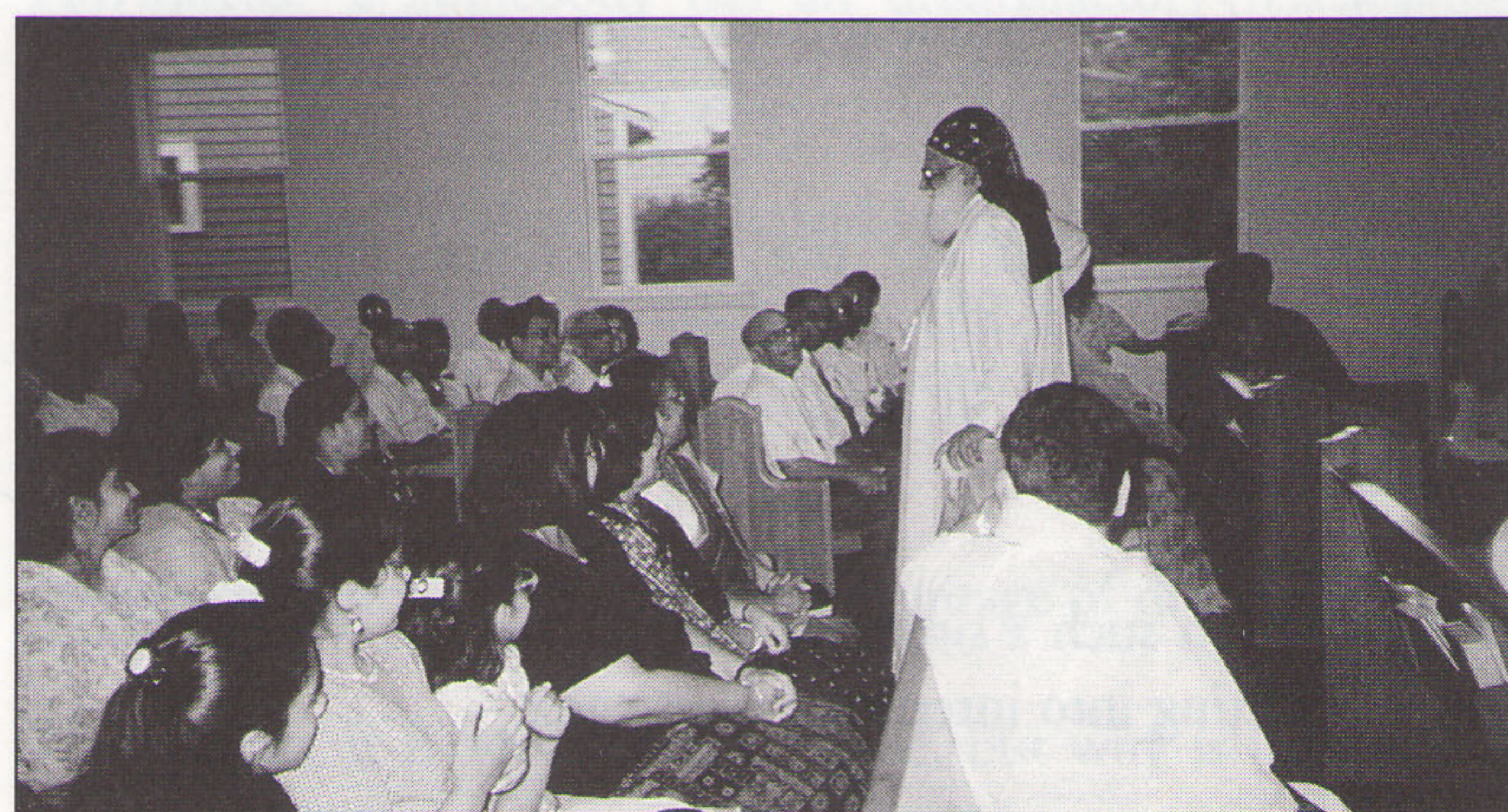
Messenger: Thirumeni, we are celebrating the Silver Jubilee, do you have a message for us?

Thirumeni: Be a Christ Church, that's all.

Chrysostom Thirumeni visiting Baltimore MTC



Chrysostom Thirumeni visiting MTC Greater Washington



Shalom: A Jubilee Vision

Rev. Kurian Thomas, San Francisco

(This is the first part of a series to follow in the coming issues.)

The completion of 25 years since the beginning of the Mar Thoma service in this land is a milestone, therefore, the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of this occasion by the diocese is very pertinent. Jubilee, according to the biblical tradition, is an occasion for celebration and thanksgiving, an occasion for repentance and restructuring (renewal), a time to look back and to look ahead. In keeping with this tradition, we remember God's faithfulness to the church and rejoice in the rich, varied and manifold gifts brought to us through her ministry and mission.

The church, as the people of God both in the Old and New Testament, consists of 'people called out of and separated from the world'- not for causing divisions, but for universal solidarity and identification. This reaffirms God's love and concern for all people everywhere. Therefore, the church can call itself the people of God only in the context of its mission, which is to reveal that all are called to be God's people. In this sense our church is also called to participate with God as His partners in mission, which also involves helping to shape the destiny of this land. All of this can be incorporated into a single word Shalom, which in its meaning and depth conveys the various dimensions of this activity.

As we celebrate our Jubilee, we are at the threshold of a new century, and therefore, we also need to visualize a church in the context of her mission in this land. The Church is facing new challenges and opportunities. The third generation of our community is on the stage, and hence, the so-called "identity crisis." Recent developments in economy and media are affecting our life, our value systems and relationships. While they open up new possibilities of growth, they threaten the traditional structures like family, community and even church. Consumerism and materialism are reducing life itself to a commodity. Permissiveness paves the way for all kinds of perversions involving sex, alcohol and drugs etc. 'Isms' in religion (extremism, fanaticism, communalism, etc) challenge the harmony of our life. Even in the church, fundamentalism and divisive activities are distorting the essential nature of faith.

All of the above calls for a re-understanding of Shalom in the context of a fractured world as viewed from the perspective of the church as the people of God. Shalom is a biblical word and a reflection on it will help us as we search for the church's mission in the 21st century.

Shalom In The Bible

Its theme and content are central to the Old and New Testament. The word in its root form means 'wholeness, well-being, and welfare.' It implies a sense of 'right relationships. It has to do with our sense of self, with the community of persons in our immediate environment, and with the well-being of the whole world. Walter Brueggemann in "Living Toward A Vision" explains Shalom as follows: 'the central vision of world

history in the bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature.'

In The Old Testament

The Hebrew word Shalom is one of the most frequently used words in every period of Old Testament development. In its early meanings, when Israel thought of itself as a tribe among tribes, the word referred to wholeness and well-being. From its earliest beginnings Shalom has had a community thrust. To be sure, individuals knew shalom, received shalom and shared shalom; but the sense of shalom was always seen in broader terms than mere individual interests. In a wider sense it envisaged the tribe as experiencing a sense of 'Shalom', of spirit or blessing. The word Shalom was often a greeting or blessing, as seen in Numbers 6:24-26.

"The Lord bless you...and give you 'Shalom'."

The patriarchal families also had a sense of Shalom. The story of Joseph illustrates the way in which the idea of Shalom functioned in the patriarchal period. Joseph, being the child of his father's old age, was the favorite. So his brothers "hated him, and couldn't speak peaceably (Shalom) to him (Gen. 37:4). Jacob, unaware of this attitude of his sons, sends Joseph to inquire about their well-being. He wants to know 'if it is well (Shalom) with them' (Gen. 37:14). Later, when Joseph becomes a leader in Pharaoh's court and his brothers come seeking grain because of famine in their land, he inquires about Jacob, his father, 'Is your father well' (Shalom)? (Gen. 43:27). Eventually the family is reunited; the 'Shalom' of the family is restored.

'Shalom' in its earliest biblical roots also depicts an ecological outlook of the relationship between people, creatures and nature. Lev. 26:4-6 and Ezek. 34:25-29 say, 'I will give peace ('Shalom') in the land' expressing God's intent of 'Shalom' which includes all three aspects. To symbolize this, the Hebrews built altars from well-formed and unbroken rocks, which they called 'Shalom stones'.

The inseparable relation of Shalom and covenant is conveyed in Old Testament. The Hebrews were a covenant people. The covenant partners were clearly unequal. God in His mercy had chosen Israel as a people for servanthood. Faithfulness, mercy and blessings were God's part of the promise. Their part was obedience, faithfulness, and service. Robert V. Moss writes that:

"Shalom...denotes the content and purpose of the covenant, the state prevailing in those united, whereas 'berith' (the Hebrew word for 'covenant') itself denotes the community established between those who enter into it."

The integral relation between shalom and covenant is conveyed in such passages as Gen. 26:31, Joshua 9:15, Job 5:23

and Obadiah 7. The culmination of this relationship is in 'the covenantal nature of Shalom' interpreted by Ezek. in 34:25 and 37:26. "I will make with them a covenant of peace (shalom)...it shall be an everlasting covenant with them."

In the tribal period the word 'shillem' (a close linguistic cousin of 'shalom') was used to denote requital or payment of compensation. The ancient Semitic tribes stressed the necessity of compensatory acts to make up for property loss, murder, or death in battle. "This 'making up' (the loss) is a type of peacemaking in that it attempts to restore the whole. Shillem restores shalom" (Huge C. White). Blood vengeance was one of the early forms of requital. A later development of this was called 'jus talionis' (law of retribution), which fixed limits upon the act of vengeance. Eventually monetary and other forms of compensation developed. The key notion behind this primitive practice was the sense that the balance, unity, wholeness (shalom) had been disturbed and must be restored.

As the Hebrew people grew in experience with one another, with other nations, and with Yahweh their God, a fuller understanding of shalom was achieved. They developed a larger sense of God's purpose for the whole world. The whole earth is the object of God's shalom. This is conveyed in the peaceable kingdom passages in Isaiah 2:1-4 and 11:1-9. They saw a close connection between shalom and righteousness. Isaiah says that "the effect of righteousness will be shalom (32:17). Related passages are Ps. 34:11-14; 72:7; Isa. 48:17-19 and 60:15-22.

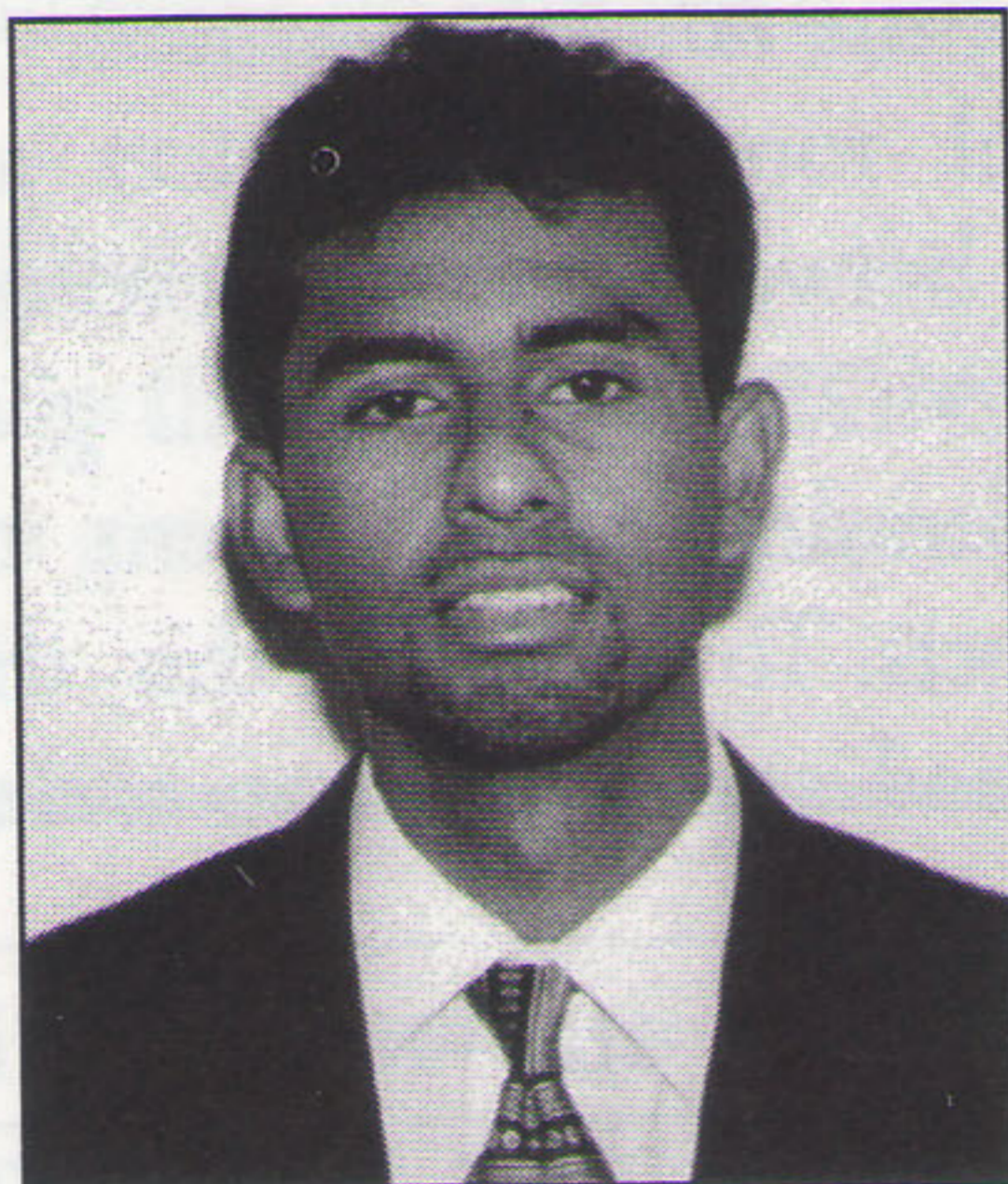
Shalom from its earliest use in the Old Testament has had a strong bias in favor of the poor, the oppressed, and the victims. Since shalom is meant to benefit the whole community

of persons, those who are denied its benefits are particularly the object of concern. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the sense of interdependence that shalom represents is found in Jer. 29:7. The people of Israel are in captivity in Babylon, and God, through Jeremiah, tells them: "Seek the shalom of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its shalom you will find your shalom."

The sense of justice is a very strong part of the idea of shalom. Amos 5:24 expresses this meaning, although the word shalom is not used there. Other illustrations are Isaiah 59:8 and Zachariah 8:16. Similarly, the Bible also has a strong sense of the need for integrity in a person's utterances. Thus, it condemns lying and deceit. This is we find expressed in Jer. 6:13-14 and 8:11-12. Other illustrations are in Isaiah 59:6 and Zech. 6:16.

Shalom as used in the Old Testament is obviously a word with diverse interpretations. Throughout the Bible, the concept of shalom retains the sense of wholeness and well-being that is at its heart. It is communal in character with a strong bias toward the well-being of the poor and oppressed. Shalom is deeply concerned about justice and righteousness. It is associated with an end to the state of war and the achievement of harmony among people. Through it all, shalom remains both a vision of a world to be and the substance of present human relationships. The sense of future hope as reflected in Isa. 2 and 11 and in Micah 4:1-4 gave Israel the vision to endure based on Shalom.

(To be continued)



MALAYALEE YOUTH CAMPAIGNING FOR THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Biju Mathew of Mar Thoma Church, Boston is competing for the Cambridge (MA) City Council under the Democratic ticket. Biju, who is twenty five, has been actively involved in the political and community affairs of the area for the last 9 years.

MAR THOMA MESSENGER

As a member of the editorial board, Alex Thomas has made valuable contributions to the Messenger for more than two years. He has served the diocese in several other capacities also, including the diocesan assembly and council. Recently he has relocated to Tennessee. We express our thanks to him for his dedicated services and wish him all the best.

The diocesan bishop has nominated Rev. Kurian George, the Youth Chaplain, to the editorial board and we welcome him to the board. His addition to the editorial board, we hope, will augment the Youth involvement in the Messenger.

"Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope!"

Rev. Dr. M. V. Abraham (Retired Principal, Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam)

"TURN TO GOD, REJOICE IN HOPE" is to be the theme of the eighth assembly of the WCC (to be held at Harare, Zimbabwe, in September 1998).

The theme calls us to proclaim together the Christian faith, to bring a message of hope and a new life to a world gripped by doubt, meaninglessness and despair. It calls us to live out our faith in witness, mission and service in response to the injustice and suffering endured by both humanity and the natural world. The theme is fundamentally a call to Christian obedience today.



A. SIGNS OF HOPE AND HOPELESSNESS

The fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the rise of a democratic regime in South Africa, a tentative and troubled move towards peace in Ireland, West Asia, former Yugoslavia, with the promises of liberation from violence, oppression and human suffering: these are signs of hope - God's presence and intervention in history.

Powerful counterforces are also at work in the world: personal individualism, an insatiable market, which defines personal and social worth in terms of material gain; collective individualism, often stemming from a long history of oppression and frustration, promoting a particular ethnic, cultural or racial group at the expense of others; the culture of violence—of death—which defies humanity and reason alike, preferring competition to cooperation, domination to solidarity and sharing. An article in the Journal—Scientific American notes as follows: "The great majority of modern conflicts are now internal matters than international. They are civil wars, struggles for independence, ethnic and racial 'cleansings', terrorist campaigns...Accordingly, civilians have increasingly become victims of war. In World War I, they represented only 15 percent of all fatalities...; in today's hostilities, more than 90% of all those injured are civilians."

In Church situations there are signs of both renewal and decline. In the Southern hemisphere, churches are growing, and acting as if their historic divisions have been healed; in the North there is the undoing of old anathemas and divisions; everywhere there are many examples of greater unity of witness, of service, of resistance to oppression and evil, of faithfulness unto death. But in the North many churches are declining. In many countries, both North and South, new patterns of religious life are emerging, challenging traditional church structures.

The ecumenical scenario is poised between renewal and decline. While the churches have learnt to reflect worship, to witness and serve together as shared ecumenical experiences, there is also the strengthening of denominational structures at the expense of ecumenical commitments. Some even speak of an "ecumenical winter."

"False Hopes" provided by "prophets" of market economy, political systems, are the forecasts of the next millenium. As we approach the new millenium (2000) the Christian virtue of critical discernment will become more and more essential, not only over against the world, but within and among the Churches and Christian movements as well.

The meaning of the WCC theme in terms of Christian lives can be explained as follows:

God turns to us in grace.

We respond in faith, acting in love.

We anticipate the coming, final fullness of God's presence in all creation.

The three dimensional nature of these elements become expressed in various forms in our affirmations, community life, and sacraments:

Affirmations: God's unshakable fidelity, Christ's saving act, the spirit's powerful presence.

Community: Remembering God in community, love in action, and community in eschatological (future and eternal) hope.

Sacraments: Baptism; celebrating God's gift of faith, the human response, and movement into the joy of a new life.

Eucharist; remembering God's grace as he turns to us, receive the life poured out in Christ in the present and rejoice in the hope that the present is the foretaste of the future fullness of God's promise.

"God Turns to Us"

The God to whom we turn is the faithful God who has acted in creation and throughout history. We can turn to God because He turned to us first. Therefore our turning to God is founded upon God's unshakable fidelity. Not our faith, but God's faithfulness is the bedrock of our hope and the source of our life. The affirmation that God is the same forever, does not mean that God is static and unchanging, but that God's relationship with God's people and world is marked ever anew by this same, constant caring. We appropriate God's fidelity, and confess that we are called to obedience by God, through an active remembrance of the mighty things that God has done. It is in this act of remembering and confessing that we claim the faith as our own, and affirm our identity as God's people (Deut. 26:1-11; "a wandering Arammean was my ancestor..."—Deut. 26:5). As it is remembered, told aloud and handed down, the history of God's liberating acts in the past becomes the story of Israel in the present, a story which is renewed as it is retold in every generation.

The New Testament also witnesses to the priority of God's action and God's faithfulness. "Christ died for us" "while we were

yet sinners" (Rom. 5:7, 10); "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). The supreme example of this "active remembering" is, of course, the eucharist or the Lord's Supper. Here, Christ's full sacrifice of love is "re-presented" in the midst of the community, the people of God, as they remember (*anamnesis*) Jesus' last meal with his disciples, receive it again in the present, and, through the Holy Spirit, appropriate its power today.

The New Testament image of the "household of faith" conveys the inclusiveness of the Christian people.

It is important that this "remembering" is not an individualistic act; it takes place within the community's celebration of Christ's gathering of his disciples for a meal. We can remember because someone has "handed on" the story to us as Paul insists in 1 Cor. 11:23.

In summing up, God is faithful, despite and beyond all human unfaithfulness—beyond indeed all human faithfulness—and has acted mightily and in love we respond joyfully, gratefully affirming our place among the people of God's calling, and celebrate announcing the reality of God's rule in our lives and in the whole of creation.

B. TURNING TO GOD—OUR RESPONSE IN ACTIVE LOVE

In joyful response to God's faithfulness we turn to God, discovering in the process, ourselves and our true humanity. We discover the meaning of our life in God, that is the meaning of our life and our true home. In turning to God we seek to be faithful to God's faithfulness to us.

The turning to God is fundamentally, a turning to God and God alone. It is inevitably a turning away from other things from all the "idols" which clamour our allegiance today. The idols of wood and stone (Isaiah 40:19-20; 44: 9-20) have been supplanted by far more pervasive and seductive things: by systems of material and social gain which reward greed rather than generosity; by political and economic systems which reward those who already have at the expense of those who have not; by cultural and psychological systems which reward habits of domination and control rather than those of cooperation, sharing and solidarity.

The call to turn to God is always a call to repentance (*metanoia*), to a deliberate "about-face" from the dominant values of our society, in order to draw our values and our principles for action from elsewhere. Because we too participate in the structures of our society and are subject to their power (the principalities and powers – Eph. 6:12), we can truly turn away from them only through God's saving grace. But again, God is ahead of us, having acted in Jesus Christ for our salvation — "Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4).

"Turning to God" is not only a mental reorientation; it demands a revision of our whole self and affects every aspect of

our lives and all of our relationships. It calls us to a new spirituality, expressed not just in particular devotional acts but in a whole way of life oriented to the living God, who becomes our constant point of reference and our decisive focal point of value. We are called to respond as Jesus did — "Away with you, Satan!" (Mt. 16:23).

Through such "repentance", through letting go of ourselves as the centre of our own life, we establish a new relationship not only with ourselves but also with our neighbours. There again, God is out ahead of us. Because God is present with our neighbours it is hardly surprising that, in turning to God, we encounter them anew, as being in God's image and beloved of God, of infinite worth in God's (and thus in their own) eyes.

Moreover, Christ is present in our neighbour (Mt. 25:31-46). How are we to turn to our neighbours? The same way that God has turned to us, in the way of loving kindness (*chesed*). *Chesed* is due to all persons, including those who are even powerless to demand fair treatment. God has already made an "option for the poor", rooted again in God's actions on behalf of God's people: "you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9).

The turning to our neighbour (*chesed*) should be more than a sentiment; it must be expressed in active concern: as God has acted for our salvation, we must act for the good of the neighbour, the community and the whole created order. This also includes a new understanding about justice.

Justice is not basically a matter of rights and wrongs, nor social programs. It is fundamentally a matter of relationships. It is the restoration of right relationships.

The biblical passion for justice is driven by Israel's experience of its own liberation by the God of justice from slavery and oppression (Exod. 2:3-9), and by the earliest Church's conviction that Jesus called them into a fellowship of persons loved equally by God, and equally deserving of God's good things (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). It is justice which goes beyond rights and wrongs, and which often appears to contradict commonly accepted notions of fairness or even good sense (Jesus commands to go the second mile—and even beyond the second—Mt. 5:41, 43-48; 20:1-16).

The final goal of such a justice is reconciliation. (Peace has to be accomplished by Justice) — "Righteousness and peace will kiss each other" (Ps. 85:10); Paul identifies the kingdom of God as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

The demands of justice require that Christians and the churches should exercise the "ministry of reconciliation" entrusted to them (2 Cor. 5-18). They have to be engaged in struggles for justice as part of their witness (mission) in their own situations. The churches have to ask themselves as to how far their own lives commensurate and reflect the biblical understanding of God's merciful justice and the biblical vision of life in the community. Here the vision of Christ's self-emptying love (*Kenosis*) should challenge them. Can we imagine a kenotic ecclesiology which would help the churches to reflect in their own lives, the stewardship of material resources and the exercise of power?

C. REJOICE IN HOPE!—LIVING IN AND BY THE PROMISES OF GOD

Rom. 15:13 – “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

Joy and hope go hand in hand, “Joy” is not a superficial “positive feeling”, nor is hope a facile optimism; both notions emerged from the experience of early christian communities confronting impossibilities, hardships and persecutions. Joy and hope together form a christian response to God’s gracious acts. Hope in the future is a source and confirmation of our joy in the present. In Rom. 15:13 hope is the product of joy experienced in the Holy Spirit.

The “hope” to which we are called is a radical hope. It is rooted in God’s raising Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, from the dead (Rom. 1:4). Such an act is the exact opposite of something to be predicted by clever analysis of the present; it makes a radical disfunction with the present order offending common sense and reversing this world’s values—a “stumbling block” or “foolishness” (Mk. 8:31-38; 9:30-41; 10:32-45; Cor. 1:22-25).

This hope was born out of rejection and death (cross). This was possible because hope knows to whom it belongs, and we belong to the God who has acted in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, and who has promised that we will not finally be abandoned nor given over to destruction.

This hope is not presented in the biblical account as an example of renewal according to the “cycle of nature”, with new life coming each year as spring follows autumn and winter; rather it proclaims God’s “no” to the fundamental power of that cycle, the power of death itself. Paul describes it as an act of new creation reversing death’s ascendancy. This we see in the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus is a yes to Jesus of Nazareth and to the kind of Messiah. He understood Himself to be—a servant who suffers for others (Mk. 10:45), the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (Jn. 10), the lamb who bears the marks of slaughter (Rev. 5:6). The stone rejected by the builders has become the corner stone (1 Pet. 2:7). The power of the hope to which we are called is the power of Christ’s suffering love. Such a hope, rooted in suffering, can never be triumphalistic, coercive, utopian or sentimentalistic. Christ offers no cheap “hope”, just as He offers no “cheap grace.”

The resurrection is not as much a victory over the cross, as a victory through the cross.

Secondly, this hope to which we are called is an inclusive hope. Biblically it is rooted in the vision of an in-cohering principle of all creation (to gather up all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10). This inclusive hope insists that all persons are within the scope of God’s love and care and within the scope of Christ’s concern. Jesus’ ministry reached out to all (Lk. 14:13-35). This idea reiterates the Old Testament insistence on the inclusion of the excluded as an essential mark of a just community which God requires as a character for His people (Deut. 14:28-29; 16:14; 26:13).

The New Testament image of the “household of faith” conveys the inclusiveness of the Christian people.

Therefore, the church itself is called to live out an inclusive love that values all persons and welcomes their gifts. This love should include all those in need and should express itself in caring for the suffering and the outcast (minorities, the poor, refugees, the displaced, street children, the abused) in the struggle for justice on their behalf.

This love should include even the “other”, even the offensively and threateningly other. It must reach out to the victims and to the enemies, even those who have harmed us and hurt us. Therefore, memory (*anamnesis*) and forgiveness (*aphesis*) coincide in this love. Memory can be liberative only when there is the courage to forgive.

The vision of God “gathering up all things” into christ (Eph. 1:10) points to another quality of our hope: It regards the present joy as only a “foretaste” (*analion*) of the fullness to come, when God shall inaugurate a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:5; 2 Pet. 3:13). We live in the “time between” the “already” and the “not-yet”. The promised age has entered history (Acts 2:17), but it is not presently experienced in its fullness (1 Cor. 13:12).

This hope was born out of rejection and death (cross). This was possible because hope knows to whom it belongs, and we belong to the God who has acted in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, and who has promised that we will not finally be abandoned nor given over to destruction.

Meanwhile, we know that our birthright is secured in Christ, Christ who is the first fruit of a transformed and liberated humanity (1 Cor. 15:20), and the firstborn within the large human family (Rom. 8:29). All the rest of creation are also marked for redemption and transformation (Rom. 8:18-25; 2 Cor. 3:18). We reach out to take this promise, and the instrument with which we grasp and claim our birthright is hope (Rom. 8:24-25). ■

Marthoma Christians: Be Productive Disciples of Jesus

Dr. Anna A. Panackal

(Devotional Message given at the Assembly Meeting)

All Christians together form the Church which is the real body of Christ. Jesus compared Himself to the vine and His disciples as its many branches. By extension the whole body i.e., the church is the vine and individual members are branches and the Lord is the keeper. As branches we have to bear fruit and plenty of it. Otherwise, we will be broken away, so that the other branches which bear more fruit can grow better and produce more.

What is the fruit we have to bear?

We have to show Christian values in our day to day life so that others who see us will come to Jesus. At present, we have a great deal of preaching: in local churches, through radios and televisions, in conferences, and evangelical conventions in Bible studies at home and in churches, and currently through the internet, God's word is being shared very widely. But we have to admit that there is a breakdown between hearing the Word and practicing the Word in our daily life. People mark their Bible, fill their notebooks with salient points, file away their precious cassettes, but somehow the power of the word seldom gets into the decisions and actions of the daily life of many of us. We feel a spiritual revival after a convention individually and collectively, but somehow it is only ephemeral. Then, we wither away like the branches that produce no fruit.

A Look at Ourselves

We, the Marthoma Christians claim the St. Thomas tradition from 52 A.D. After the initial conversion of our forebears and the formation of the first seven churches in Malabar, our history got entwined with the local situation, which was that of a caste-ridden society over which we had no control. The arrival of the Portuguese, though it destroyed the records of our history, helped us to become assertive and created a larger world-view about our faith. The subsequent influence of the British opened up the process of dissemination of teaching to a greater level through the translation of the Bible and opportunities for education equally to all. As a consequence of this the church went through a process of reformation and emerged as The Malankara Marthoma Syrian Church about 160 years ago. The faith and farsightedness of our forebears (bishops, clergy, and lay leaders in the church) made us a strong Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical Christian Church which has spread all over the world; thus making it a vine

with prolific branches in God's sight. The emphasis our forebears have given to bible study, christian fellowship, and bearing the gospel through sharing in the pain of our fellow creatures has enabled us to bear fruit. Initially, they faced many adversities, but that did not deter them from building the church. We are still growing because we are bound together in Christ and are trying to concretize our faith.

Yet a Lot Needs to be Done...

This year we are celebrating the silver jubilee of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. Currently, we have over 4000 families in this diocese. Although, we have established Churches in this country, we do not yet have an active evangelistic program to spread the Gospel to people who do not know Christ. Even though, we have prayer groups, we do not have the machinery to provide fellowship to people with problems on a regular basis. This, despite having tools and resources which can be used for the same. Just imagine, what St. Paul would have accomplished if he had tools such as television and the internet. We should therefore use all our resources for the greater glory of God. Given below are some thoughts to make us more productive:

In a society that puts too much emphasis on members, we tend to forget the importance of individuals. Bible is filled with examples of the importance of the individual. When God wanted to redeem the lost world, he called two individuals, Abraham and Sarah, and set in motion his great plan that culminated in the birth of Jesus Christ. When God wanted to redeem the Israelites from bondage, he did not call a committee meeting, he called one individual—Moses—to lead the Israelites out of Egypt into the promised land. In other words, it is the individual that get the job done, either as leader or as followers. God needs individuals, who will work for Him in and through the community.

Today, we are proud to have our own beautiful churches to worship. We feel that we are loyal Marthomites worshipping regularly, conducting and attending Bible Studies, as well as attending conferences and conventions. But our growth as a Marthoma Church will be stunted if our younger generation lacks the motivation and enthusiasm to continue as members of the Marthoma Church. It is our responsibility to help them understand that we are a group of closely knit people willing and eager to serve the Lord by staying bonded to Christ. We should also lead the way by enabling conflict to result in positive dialogue rather than seen as people who argue over trivial

things and destroy creativity. If we let our social life and spiritual life be influenced by the incivility, ideological extremism, unwillingness to compromise and intolerance of opposing ideas we see around us today, the resurgence of fundamentalistic social and religious doctrines which we see in this society will anesthetize our youngsters and assimilate them into situations which will endanger their faith perspectives.

We have a great responsibility to fulfil our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ, to love one another as he had loved us. When we read St. Matthew Chapter 15, we find Jesus telling us, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures." Competition is good, but should not dominate our lives. The ministry entrusted to us by Lord Jesus Christ and the exhortations of our visionary leaders of the Church should guide our mission, otherwise it will

leave our children who look up to us for guidance more bereft and blunt the passions in those who wish to serve.

We have a choice to make now. The theme of the Jubilee year is "Repent, Rejoice and Renew." Therefore, let us renew our commitment to be "one in the Spirit, and one in the Lord" as the beautiful song goes, and by our love be productive in bringing others to Christ. When we are productive for the Lord, the Lord will nourish us as He nourished our forfathers.

Our founding fathers and ancestors took the risk, prayed hard, suffered a lot, worked hard, obeyed orders, accepted responsibility, and contributed much to the growth of our Church. We are reaping the benefits of their sacrifices and prayers. In another 150 years, if our future generations will be able to witness the same thing about us, we are a blessed people. ■

How True Faith Changed My Life

Ruby Abraham, Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, New Rochelle, New York

Imagine this, you are suffering from a very serious case of asthma. Within two weeks, you are transferred to four different hospitals and taken care of by many doctors. Finally, you are given a chance through surgery because doctors diagnosed you of having a lump or foreign body in your chest and your parents say no. How do you feel? "We are going to pray to God, the Greatest Doctor, to heal her." Those were my parents exact words. This was my experience when I was around five years of age.



strong faith and prayers from my parents and all my loved ones. Through my healing my entire family was renewed. Last December, my doctor had seen me and still calls my experience a miracle.

On January 5, 1997, I received my First Holy Communion and Jesus as my personal savior. Now I am 13 years old. I trust and believe in Jesus fully. From now on, I will witness myself as a matter of faith. ■

I can still remember, all the people who came to visit me. All the achenes who assured me that they will pray for me. All my friends who wrote cards of comfort which said that I will be healed.

My parents had requested to all the members of our church to pray for me. I had faith but was still a little scared. During my time at the hospital, my mom used to read the Bible to me. If you read John 3:15, it says "Whoever believes in Me will not perish but have everlasting life." Also in John 11:25, it says, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies."

Job once had said, "If He kills me also, I will still wait for Him." After reading this, I realized the amount of faith we all should have. After I was discharged from the hospital, I felt like a witness to all because I was healed through

TORONTO MAR THOMA CHURCH VBS—1997



Identity and Integration

Most Rev. and Rt. Hon Robert Runcie (Former Archbishop of Canterbury)

(Address at the service of the United Kingdom Mar Thoma Congregation's Silver Jubilee, September 10, 1982, Newington, London)

This Thanksgiving Service is my first public act of worship since I celebrated my own silver wedding anniversary at the beginning of this week. So I feel particularly close to you since your history as a Mar Thoma Congregation and my marriage have marched side by side for the last twenty-five years. I see that your history has been marked by a debate about the relative claims of the need to preserve your identity as Mar Thoma Syrian Christians and the desirability of making the full contribution to British society, which only a measure of integration can make possible. Some of you, I know, as well as worshipping here also worship in your parish churches. I hope and pray that you will continue to respect both the need to preserve identity and to promote integration.

As a Western Church, we deeply value and give thanks for our communion with one of the most ancient Churches of the East. After the exuberance and self confidence of the nineteenth-century, we have become aware of the imbalance within western culture, our estrangement from the elemental, from mystery and from the world of symbol and intuition. Christ is so much greater than the view any of us have of him. 'God has given him a name which is above every name, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.' He is to be worshipped by all and, indeed, he is not fully seen or worshipped unless every tongue and all nations bring their own particular gifts to his service. We need you to be true to your identity as Indian Christians in order to add to the richness and breadth of our understanding and worship of Christ. In the nineteenth century you welcomed missionaries from the Church Missionary Society and you gave them an honourable place in the history of your Church. They had an influence on the way in which you study and regard the holy scriptures. **Now we need your gifts. Preserving your identity as Eastern Christians is not selfish; it is the only way in which you can enrich your brothers and sisters in the worldwide communion of Christ's Church.**

This is a very Anglican view. In the sixteenth century we began to worship God in our own language and, while not abandoning our desire to be part of a universal Church, true to Scripture and primitive tradition, we developed our own English customs and autonomy. So it is close to the heart of the Anglican tradition to insist that the Indian Christ should have an Indian face, so that he can draw into himself the riches of every tongue and every culture on earth. Alas, we have not always been true to our own tradition. We have sometimes confused the gospel with Englishness and tried to make Indian Christians into Europeans.

You have resisted this process and we are grateful that you have, since now one of the reasons we particularly rejoice over communion with the Mar Thoma Church is the evidence you provide that Christianity in India is not some mere colonial import. There were Christians in Kerala even before the time of the first Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Augustine, who landed in Kent in 597. The churches that look to St. Thomas as their founder can refute the slur that Christianity in India is a colonial ideology. You have a special responsibility in contemporary India to be the face and hands of our Lord, to make him known and to serve him. 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen.' You have this responsibility not only in India, of course, but also in Britain. 30,000 of whose citizens speak Malayalam. **So we give thanks for your identity, for the way in which you have preserved the God-given gifts of your Indian heritage. Unless you cherish your identity you will have nothing to give. But, like all God's gifts, yours are to be shared.** Proper insistence on identity should not degenerate into a selfish ghetto life where talents rust in that compound of inactivity, complacency and fear which characterizes the ghetto.

The other pole is integration, to desire to make a contribution to the society of which you are a part. 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who took upon him the form of a servant.' I believe that the Mar Thoma Syrian community has already made a very considerable contribution to the life of this country. We have entered a period where many western people are so uncertain of their own identities and traditions that they are easy prey for spectacular and spurious wise men from the East. **There is true wisdom to be found in the East, not least in the ancient Christian Churches, and we look for your help in our joint God-given task to build a world in which every knee shall bow at the name of Jesus.**

But you also have a place in the Indian nation, in which the majority of citizens belong to one of the other great world religions. We are only at the beginning of our attempts to understand one another, but the peace of the world depends on all the lovers of God coming to respect each other's beliefs more deeply. There should be no compromise with our loyalties, but there should be a willingness to thank God for the treasures and insights to be found in other religions. Thanksgiving for our own biblical inheritance and thanksgiving for the goodness to be found in the lives of Muslim and Hindu believers is a practical contribution to softening hearts and making the world more in the image of

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the one who came with the open hand and not with a clenched fist. 'Identity' and 'integration', the two poles of your history as a congregation, are key words which cast light upon much of our life as Christians. **I began with a reference to my own silver wedding celebrations and clearly in marriage there has to be a firm hold on personal identity or we have nothing to give in the process of integration as a married couple seeks to become one flesh.**

In our relations with God we are not to see ourselves dissolved into some impersonal divine spirit. In the Book of Genesis, Jacob wrestles all night with the angel of the Lord and refuses to submit. As a result, he wins a clearer and more conscious identity as Israel and this new identity, signified by the change of his name from Jacob to Israel, also gives him the potential for a deeper integration with the life of God in more obedient service.

Perhaps there is even a model for the divided Churches of world Christendom here. We must explore as deeply as we can

and realize our own individual identities as children of the heavenly Father, who said: 'I have called thee by thy name...thou art precious in my sight. I have loved thee.' God loves us individually and gives us gifts as individuals for the purpose of linking us to other people in a community which can reflect more and more of the glory of God. Integration or unity must not be an imposition of one pattern, one tongue, one set of customs. That is to thwart God's work in creating diversity. **We must not see integration or unity as a reversion to the undifferentiated, unconscious mass which existed in the beginning, but as an ascent to the integration of marriage—the conscious union of gifts to make a richer whole.** It is only after undergoing such a process of integration that we shall see the full glory in the face of Jesus Christ and understand God's insistence that 'every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.' ■

The Three Trees

(From Youth talk, the youth publication of Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto)

Once upon a mountain top, three trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up. The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: "I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I'll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be traveling mighty waters and carrying powerful Kings. I'll be the strongest ship in the world!"

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave the mountain top at all. I want to grow so tall that when the people stop to look at me, they'll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world."

Years passed. The rain came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain. The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell. "Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest, I shall hold wonderful treasure!" The first tree said.

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the second tree fell. "Now I shall sail mighty waters!" thought the second tree. "I shall be a strong ship for mighty Kings!"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me." He muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter's shop. But the carpenter fashioned the tree into a feedbox for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, or filled with treasure. She was coated with saw dust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals. The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty ship was made that day. Instead, the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail an ocean, or even a river, instead she was taken to a little lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumber yard. "What happened?", the once tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountain top and point to God..."

Many days and nights passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams. But one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn bay in the feedbox. "I wish I could make a cradle for him," her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and sturdy wood. "This manger is beautiful," she said. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

(Cont'd on page 19)

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Our Diocese—Reflections and Challenges

Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles

I. REFLECTIONS

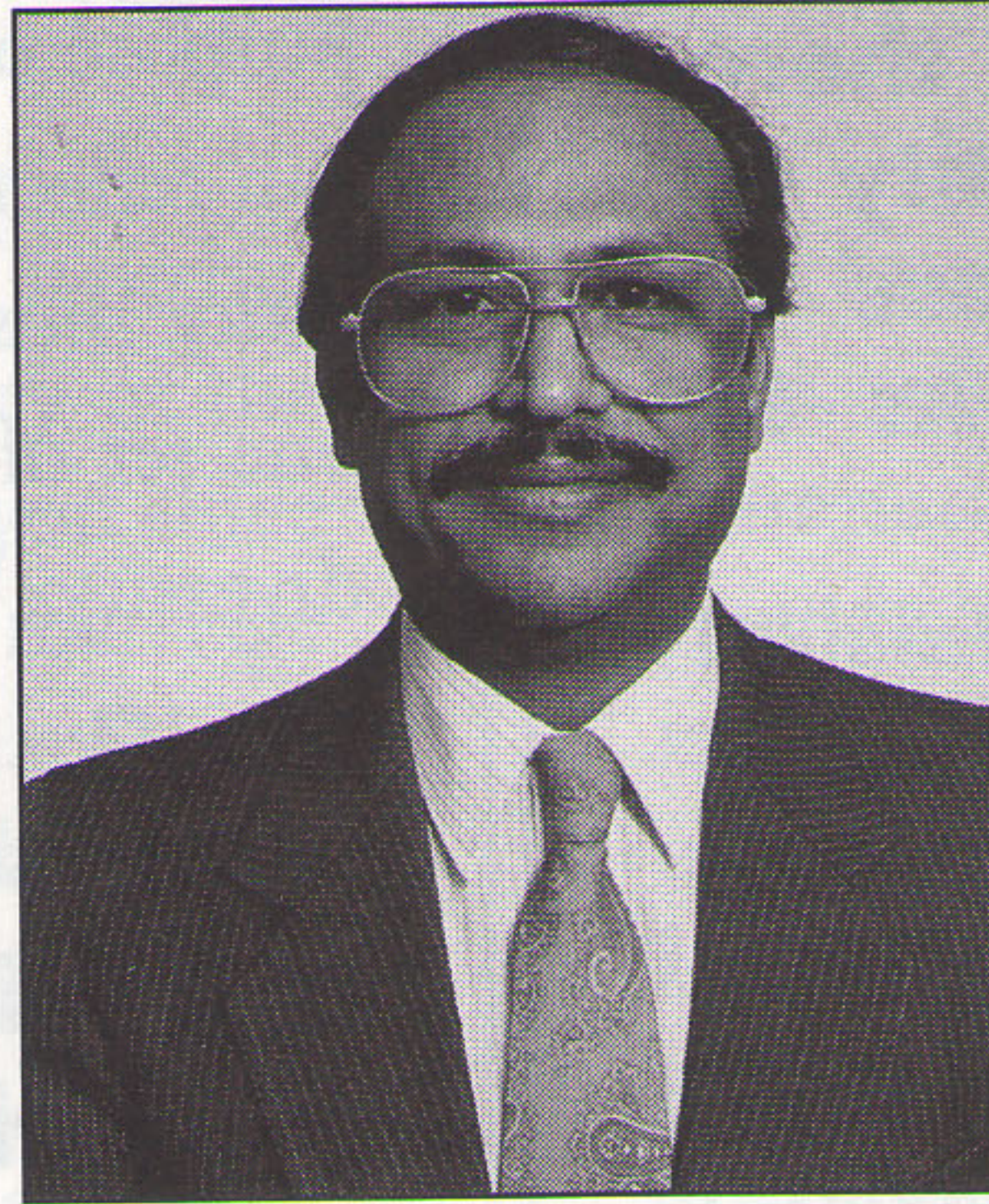
In the late summer of 1971 a few Mar Thoma families joined together to sing God's praises and pray for His blessings behind the closed doors of an apartment in Queens, New York. At that time they did not realize that they were in fact laying down the foundation of a Mar Thoma Church edifice in the North American Continent. Today this edifice consists of 42 parishes and 22 Congregations within a short span of 25 years. To the hundreds of newly arrived Mar Thoma immigrants in the seventies, the church was not only a place for corporate worship in the tradition and faith of our forebears but also was a meeting place for exchanging ideas and greetings.

Our thoughts and actions in the initial stages centered around our survival in this strange land as we had very few role models to look up to or to guide us. In the process we committed some mistakes: Anxious as we were to obtain decent employment we substituted the living room T.V. and the baby-sitter for our own presence and thereby minimized the quality time spent with our children. We were naive enough not to understand the warning signs shown to us by our children that they gave very little importance to the amount of money we made or the size of the house we bought. What they needed was our presence with them, guiding them and sharing with them their own problems and pressures while growing up in this society. Some of us noticed the signs but most did not.

The mention of our early struggles has relevance to our Jubilee Celebrations as a worshipping community in the West. The growth of our church was directly in proportion to the growth of our community. The establishment of various parishes and congregations gave us a sense of accomplishment and togetherness. Our church life became part of our everyday life. The Sunday School, Youth League, Youth Fellowship, Regional and National Junior and Senior Conferences, National Youth Conference, all helped our children to grow spiritually and also to hold on to our heritage. Most of our children proved that our early fears and anxieties about them were false alarms and that given encouragement and support, they were willing and able to take up responsible positions in the church.

The role of laity in our church has always been worth mentioning. We started this diocese with lay initiative and action. It was through lay initiatives we started the worship services twenty five years ago when we didn't have a Bishop or a priest assigned to us. The potential of lay men and women should be channeled for the building up of the church and its mission within and outside the borders of this diocese.

As we celebrate the Silver Jubilee, we should remember with gratitude all clergy who served this diocese in the past and



also those who are serving at present. They are all extremely dedicated, always willing to share our joys and sorrows, committed to the building up of the church. Their loyalty to the church is rock-solid, devotion to duty is unquestionable and love for the parishioners is immense.

We are also deeply indebted to the services of our Bishops. The vision of Late Thomas Thirumeni, the support and guidance of our Valiya Thirumeni, and the wisdom and meaningful wit of Chrysostom Thirumeni will always remain in our hearts for years to come. The diocese took its full shape and form with the stationing of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus as its first resident Bishop from 1994. Many of us who know Zacharias Thirumeni as Rev. Oommen Koruthu, a young student achen in Boston in the early seventies, were elated at the thought that the diocese would be immensely blessed by his presence and leadership. What we witnessed in the last four years, especially in terms of the overall growth of our diocese, is much beyond our expectations!!

I must add a personal note in regard to Thirumeni's deep rooted commitment. As Oommen Koruthu achen, he came down to Teaneck, New Jersey on a Sunday afternoon in 1974 for the "house warming" of our first home. Achen was then living on a meagre scholarship amount, often not having enough money to buy a train ticket from Boston to New York when visiting our people. Achen gladly accepted a check that we gave him after the "house warming", as a token of our love and friendship. However, I was dumb-founded and totally taken aback when I received a receipt for the check amount from one of our social welfare institutions. A similar thrust is seen in the Santhigiri project which Thirumeni is guiding.

Unmindful of the physical constraints and fatigue of continuous travels, Zacharias Thirumeni keeps in touch with all the parishes. He is also constantly looking out for the Mar Thoma diaspora scattered around the remote regions of the North American continent and Europe to enable them to get fellowship.

II. CHALLENGES

1. If our concerns and fears in the Seventies and Eighties were about our children (how to bring them up in this multi-cultural society?), our concerns and fears in the year 2000 and beyond will be about 'ourselves'. We would be looking back in bewilderment at the futility of our having spend the best years of our life. We have run after the mirage of amassing wealth and in the process becoming victims to materialistic tendencies. **We forgot or rather didn't take a moment to enjoy the simple**

pleasures of life, the beauty of nature or the bounties of life's moments.

The little children whom we left in front of the living room T.V. have become or are themselves about to become parents. As the birds leave their nests to fly away into the open sky to make it on their own, so our children would soon leave the comforts of our air-conditioned homes to start their life in condos or apartments. Like Hamlet, we too may soliloquize "To be or not to be, that is the question?" — To go back to India or to remain at the mercy of the local nursing home?

2. Our youth and young adults of today will carry the torch of our church well into the 21st century. We must encourage them now to have a positive voice in directing the future of our diocese. Clergy and adults need to demonstrate trust in their youth and allow room for some failures. We must also encourage local-born youth to prepare for church ministry so that our participation in the church will be complete.
3. As a worshipping community, we made real progress, but as a witnessing community, we have a long way to go. We should enlarge the circle of family and personal friends to include non-Malayalees, so that through our witness others may come to our fellowship and worship with us. Our children and youth should be encouraged in profitable activities at school and in the community. Parents should be role models for participation and involvement in the life of the community. This will enable communion in the environment of our existence while maintaining our identity.
4. The stress and demands of every day life have taken a toll of the unity and cohesiveness of our family life. Spousal abuse, alcoholic addiction, run-away children, loss of job, all these and many more are contributing factors of family break-up. The question then asked continues to be "Why couldn't the Church do something?" In most cases, it becomes too late to answer the question. Even though our people are generally weary of going to "our own" counselors, it would be helpful if we have Counseling Centers at parish level. Pre-marital counseling should become compulsory for all those who plan to get married. We have well qualified Family and

Marriage Counselors in our Church and we must make use of their expertise and life experience. Or, if need be, we could also associate ourselves with a local church such as Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist or Lutheran as they all have professionally staffed Counseling Centers. This will also help us to get involved with local missions and the various humanitarian work they are involved in.

5. Our involvement in mission work is rather limited. People with a mission in life transcend their self-interest. They move out of their small worlds to embrace a larger world of people—concerns and noble causes to which they dedicate themselves. Each and every family in our diocese can get involved in some form of mission work. Many of our members are working as doctors, nurses, x-ray technicians, physical therapists, medical technologists and so on. Their services could be offered for missionary work. While we spend large sums of money for the marriage receptions of our sons and daughters, we could also help parents in India who are too poor to get their daughters married by cutting down all unnecessary expenses during such receptions. *"In as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you didn't do it to me."*

As we stand at the threshold of the 21st century, let us begin anew with energy and hope, with faith and discipline. Our challenges are numerous and possibilities endless. It was the vision of a few dedicated and selfless leaders that changed the destiny of the Mar Thoma Church. Similarly, we are called upon for the building up of this diocese. We are a chosen people. From the mountain top of our Jubilee Celebrations, we hear a call to service in the valley. We must answer that call. The total evangelization of India, sharing our wealth and time for the benefit of the poor and the needy, volunteering our services for the benefit of the community that we live in, taking part in our civic duties, caring and supporting each other are all burdens that we as individuals and families should be willing to carry through to the next century. ■

The Three Trees (Cont'd from page 17)

One evening, a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She knew she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through with the wind and the rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the King of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel. But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. It had made the third tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world. ■

Kerala Christians and Peacocks

Thomas Cherian, M.D., FRCPC

The peacock is the most beautiful bird in the world. When the peacock fans out its tail feathers and dances, the dazzling colors make a good impression to the onlookers. The common peacock is a habitant of India and Sri Lanka. This precious bird was introduced to several countries in the past centuries, but never survived long in other countries. Because of the beauty and the myth of immortality attached to the peacocks, they were in great demand in Greece, Rome and Egypt even before the time of Jesus Christ. In 400 BC in Athens, a peacock could fetch a colossal 10,000 drachmas (equivalent to about 4,000 current U.S. dollars) (1). The tail feathers of the peacock are colorful and have "eyesspots" with a blue patch surrounded by a bright blue and bronze ring, in turn surrounded by green and another of purple. No wonder, peacock has been honored as the national bird of India.

What is the connection between Kerala Christians and peacocks? The peacocks are mentioned in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible in 1 Kings 10:22 and 2 Chronicles 9:21. According to the King James older version of the Holy Bible, the verse in 1 Kings is written as, "For the King (Solomon) had at sea a navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks" (2). The verse in 2 Chronicles is also similar to the verse in 1 Kings. But, the New International Version of the Holy Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible substitutes " baboons" for "peacocks" giving the explanation that peacocks were unknown in Israel in the 10th century BC during the reign of King Solomon (3,4). The New Standard Revised King James Version of the Holy Bible uses the word *peacocks*, but mentions *baboons* as an alternative(5).

Prof. W. S. McCullough in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, mentions, " It seems unlikely that the peafowl, a native of India, was introduced into Palestine as early as the age of Solomon. It is more probable that it came into the Mediterranean area only after Achaemenid Persia had established relations with India" (6). I have to disagree with Prof. McCullough about his statement that peacocks may not have been introduced to Israel at the time of King Solomon. He seems to have made a mistake in interpreting the Hebrew word for *peacocks*. The Hebrew words in question are given below.

תנאים (1 Kings 10:22) תנאים (2 Chronicles 9:21)

According to others who can read old Hebrew and to my own research and to the Pocket Hebrew Dictionary to the Old Testament, these Hebrew words are pronounced as tukkiyim (tukki - singular) (7). This is the same as the Tamil word, *thokei* for peacock tail feathers (8). (Anybody could confirm this by asking an educated, Tamil speaking person from India or by referring a good Tamil dictionary). The peacock itself is known as *mayil* in Tamil language and *tavas* in Hebrew.

The International Bible Society (IBS) seems to have some confusion about the translation of the word, peacocks. That is because of the original translation of the Hebrew word, *tukkiyim* as peacocks . If *tukkiyim* was translated as peacock tail feathers in the original English Bibles, no confusion would have developed. Because IBS could not trace the origin of the word, *tukkiyim*, they tend to translate it into baboons instead of peacock tail feathers.

Sometimes the Western Christian scholars completely ignore the Eastern Christian thoughts and faith. Even though the mention of peacock in the Holy Bible is not that significant internationally, it is very important to Kerala Christians of southwest India to trace their heritage. According to the local tradition, Jews were present in Kerala even before the time of Jesus Christ. That may be one reason why St. Thomas the Apostle, visited Kerala in the first century AD. to preach Christianity.

The peacocks were numerous in India and their tail feathers had great ornamental and decorative value at that time. King Solomon's ships could have carried these feathers away from any northern seaports in India. But, the Sanskrit or Marathi word for the peacock is *mor* or *mayur* and for peacock tail feather is *mayur-pamk*, entirely different word from the Hebrew word, *tukkiyim* (9).

That means the peacock tail feathers were brought to Israel from the southern seaports of India, most likely Kerala, where Tamil, not Malayalam, was the spoken language before 7th century AD. King Solomon's ships most likely came to Muzuris (now Kodungaloor) and carried away goods including peacock tail feathers. It is easy to carry peacock tail feathers rather than peacocks in ships. These details are explained by Rev. W. J. Richards in his book (8). Through Phoenician traders, peacocks from India were introduced to the pharaohs of Egypt, not far from Israel, long before King Solomon's time (10).

To disprove Prof. McCullough's claim that peacock was not introduced to Israel as early as the age of Solomon, one more important clue could be discussed. *Cinnamon* is mentioned in Exodus 30:23, Proverbs 7:17 and Song of Songs 4:14. The Hebrew word, "quinnamom" unquestionably refers to *Cinnamomum Zeylanicum*, a tree native to India, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and south-east Asia. The *cinnamon* stick is the inner bark of that tree and the very best quality comes from India and Sri Lanka (12).

The Hebrews beloved *cinnamon* as a perfume and as incense (13). Historically, the cinnamon tree was not introduced to other countries from its native habitats, India and Sri Lanka. If Moses used *cinnamon* to make " holy oil" at the time of Exodus, *cinnamon*, an Indian product, should very well be known in Egypt and Israel long before King Solomon's time. Then, why not another Indian commodity, namely peacock tail feathers, was not considered to be known to Israel at the time of King Solomon?

Another, exclusive Indian product, nard (spikenard), is also mentioned in the Song of Songs 4:14, Mark 14:3 and John 12:3 (11). Nard is a perfume exported from India in sealed alabaster jars. The host would break the seal and pour the oil for the anointing, only when the guest was present to enjoy the sweet smell (13).

If the Indian spices and perfumes were very well known in Israel at King Solomon's time, it could be very well concluded that peacock tail feathers were known to King Solomon's palace. The Hebrew language adopted a word for peacock tail feathers, namely tukkiyim, from the language of the country of origin of the peacocks. The substitution of the word, peacocks by baboons in the NIV Bible has a negative impact to the heritage of Kerala Christians. I hope the International Bible Society will review the Bible verse in 1 Kings 10:22 and 2 Chronicles 9:21 and consider changing the word, "baboons" to "peacock tail feathers" in the next edition of the Holy Bible (NIV), the most circulating book in this world. ■

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XVIII National Youth Conference

The XVIII National Mar Thoma Youth Conference was held from July 31st through August 3rd at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois. The conference was hosted by the Chicago Mar Thoma Youth Group, and over 300 youth attended. The theme of the conference was "*If You Remain Silent...*" and the mission of the conference was to generate a passion for missions and evangelism amongst our youth.

The main leaders of the conference were, Rev. Min J. Chung who is the pastor of a church in Urbana, Illinois where many of our youth attend the University of Illinois and Rev. Irvin E. Rutherford, who heads an organization called Asian Ministry Teams which specializes in training and sending young people to minister in Asian countries. Pastor Min addressed contemporary issues that face our youth and spoke of the importance of having hungry hearts, clean hearts, and obedient hearts to God. Rev. Rutherford spoke of his missions experiences and the heart and mind a missionary should have. Both leaders gave main talks and also led track sessions.

We were also blessed with the presence of our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, who spoke on two occasions and led the business meeting session. Our Youth Chaplain, the Rev. Kurien George gave a captivating testimony and provided effective leadership throughout the conference. Rev. K. Y. Jacob, Rev. P. P. Thomas, Rev. G. Samuel, Rev. James Thomas, Rev. P. M. Thomas, Dr. T. M. Thomas and several members of the hosting parish provided guidance and leadership throughout the conference.

Other highlights of the conference included several creative

audio/video presentations, worship/singing sessions, personal testimony and witnessing, Holy Communion Service, a Diocesan Jubilee celebration, and a Business Meeting. Thanks to the Almighty God, we were able to worship and rejoice together in the presence of the Lord through this conference for three days.

Gina E. Philip, Conference Secretary



SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION

SOUTHEAST REGION—YOUTH ADULT SEMINAR

The youth-adult seminar, which took place on April 5, 1997, was attended by churches from Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, and New Jersey. Members of a panel debated three main topics connected with the current situation of the Mar Thoma Church. Extensive discussion ensued, all moderated by Mr. Tom Thomas of Philadelphia and coordinated by Dr. Samuel Chacko, also of Philadelphia.

Issues were brought up by young and old alike that provoked serious thought in all who were present. The most critical problem raised as perceived by many members was regarding spiritual experience and fellowship in the Mar Thoma Church. Other quandaries that were illuminated included the reluctance of the church to welcome outsiders and various fund raising concerns.

The first session of the seminar addressed the question, "What is the state of the Mar Thoma Church in the Diocese of North America and Europe?" The first speaker was Rev. Dr. P.G. George, Secretary of the Diocese of North America and Europe. Achen spoke about the usage of both charismatic and deductive teaching in the Mar Thoma Church. He stressed that, as his own experience in different cities showed, separate churches may be growing at separate rates, but the Mar Thoma Church as a whole is growing with leaps and bounds, a feat all must take part in. The second speaker was Mr. Saju Mathew of Philadelphia. Mr. Mathew spoke about many aspects of the church that bothered him. Among them he named the lack of power of clergy members to prevent bad committee decisions, as well as the placing of the Mar Thoma Centre in affluent suburbs where catering to the lower classes is virtually impossible.

The second session was based on the question, "Are the parishes in this diocese fulfilling the mission of the Mar Thoma Church?" Rev. Jacob Mathew, Vicar of the Washington, D.C. Mar Thoma Church, spoke first. He began by saying that the mission of the Mar Thoma Church is to communicate the gospel to the whole world, a mission he feels sure the church is indeed fulfilling. He challenged all members to ask themselves what they were doing for the church and why and how they were doing it. The next speaker was Mr. T.M. John of New Jersey. Mr. John felt that the Mar Thoma mission is outlined in Matthew 28: to preach, teach, and make disciples. The latter is not being accomplished, he felt, because the needs of those not

speaking Malayalam are not considered. The final panelist to speak was Mr. Chacko Abraham of Philadelphia (Bethel.) Mr. Abraham discussed the church's current stagnancy due to a lack of intimate knowledge about Christ and a fear of losing its cultural identity. By being proud of the Mar Thoma character and raising its children to be the same way, he said, the church will be able to put the good back into the land it takes the good from.

The third and last session discussed the question, "How do we prepare our parishes to address the spiritual needs of our future generations?" Mrs. Jiji Ninan of Washington, D.C. was the first panelist to respond. The solution is to elevate the spirituality of the faith, Mrs. Ninan said, and to reflect the fact that Christ is the root of all strength in one's words and deeds. The Sevika Sangham achieves its part of this solution, she added, through its active role in all forms of fellowship. Mr. Sabu Chacko of Philadelphia was the last speaker. His points included the assertions that all Mar Thomites should be evangelists, that church history should be taught, and that the three qualities every Christian must have are faith, hope, and love.

Each of the panelists who delivered a message inspired intense discussion of the problems the Mar Thoma Church faces today and all possible solutions. Many festering issues were brought to light, an activity necessary for the continued growth of any church. All in all, the seminar was successful. Hopefully, positive change will be the result.

NEW CONGREGATION IN VIRGINIA



Rev. Jacob Mathew conducted Holy Communion Service on June 29, 1997 at Richmond, Virginia.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones Memorial Lectures

Rev. Jacob Mathew

As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, Dr. E. Stanley Jones memorial lectures were inaugurated by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus on May 31st 1997 in Baltimore, Maryland. It was a joint venture by the Greater Washington Mar Thoma Church and the Mar Thoma Church of Baltimore, supported by other parishes in the northeastern region. The first year's lectures were delivered by Rt. Rev. James K. Mathews, senior bishop of the United Methodist Church and Rev. K.V. Mathew, former principal, Mar Thoma Theological seminary in Kottayam. The lectures highlighted the personality and missionary endeavors of Dr. Jones. The memorial lectures will be conducted annually in various parishes of our diocese. Next year's lectures will be delivered in New York.

Earlier in the day the fellowship hall of the Baltimore Mar Thoma church was dedicated to the memory of Dr. E. Stanley Jones in a solemn dedication service officiated by the Diocesan Bishop. Towards the end of the dedication service a beautiful portrait of Dr. Stanley Jones, painted by artist Mathew K. Mathew of Baltimore was unveiled by Mrs. Eunice Mathews (daughter of the late Dr. Stanley Jones and wife of Bishop James K. Mathews).

An exhibition highlighting the life, mission, and legacy of Dr. Jones was also conducted in the church. All the books authored by Dr. Jones, rare photographs, manuscripts of books, letters to Ms. Nellie Logan (his mentor and teacher), the ivory casket presented at the Maromon Convention, articles published by/about Dr. Jones in India and abroad, and his speeches reported in the Malayalam Manorama, and Transformation (publication of the Christian Ashram Movement founded by Dr. Jones).

Dr. E. Stanley Jones Memorial Scholarship was instituted at the gathering with a view to booster the missionary endeavors as envisioned by Dr. Jones. A significant amount of money was also collected towards the scholarship fund.

The programs were well attended. Along with the members of our various parishes, representatives of Methodist, Episcopal and the Kerala churches were present. Rev. Jacob Mathew, Vicar welcomed the audience. The prayer in Sanskrit by Fr. Robert H. Stucky and the poems presented by Prof. Elias Abraham were well received. Mr. John Attumalil, Covenor proposed the vote of thanks. Mr. Abraham Varghese was the Master of Ceremony.

Dr. Stanley Jones, acclaimed as the American Gandhi and the greatest missionary since Saint Paul, was instrumental in directing the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent principles. His contributions to world evangelism, world peace, and Indian nationalism are precious. Dr. Jones' friendship with Gandhi and his special relationship with the Mar Thoma Church will never be forgotten. For over four decades his aspiring

leadership dignified the Maromon Convention. He was awarded the Gandhi Peace Prize in 1961. He was also nominated several times for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Christian Ashram Movement founded by Dr. Jones is still active in America and other parts of the world including Japan, Germany, and Switzerland.

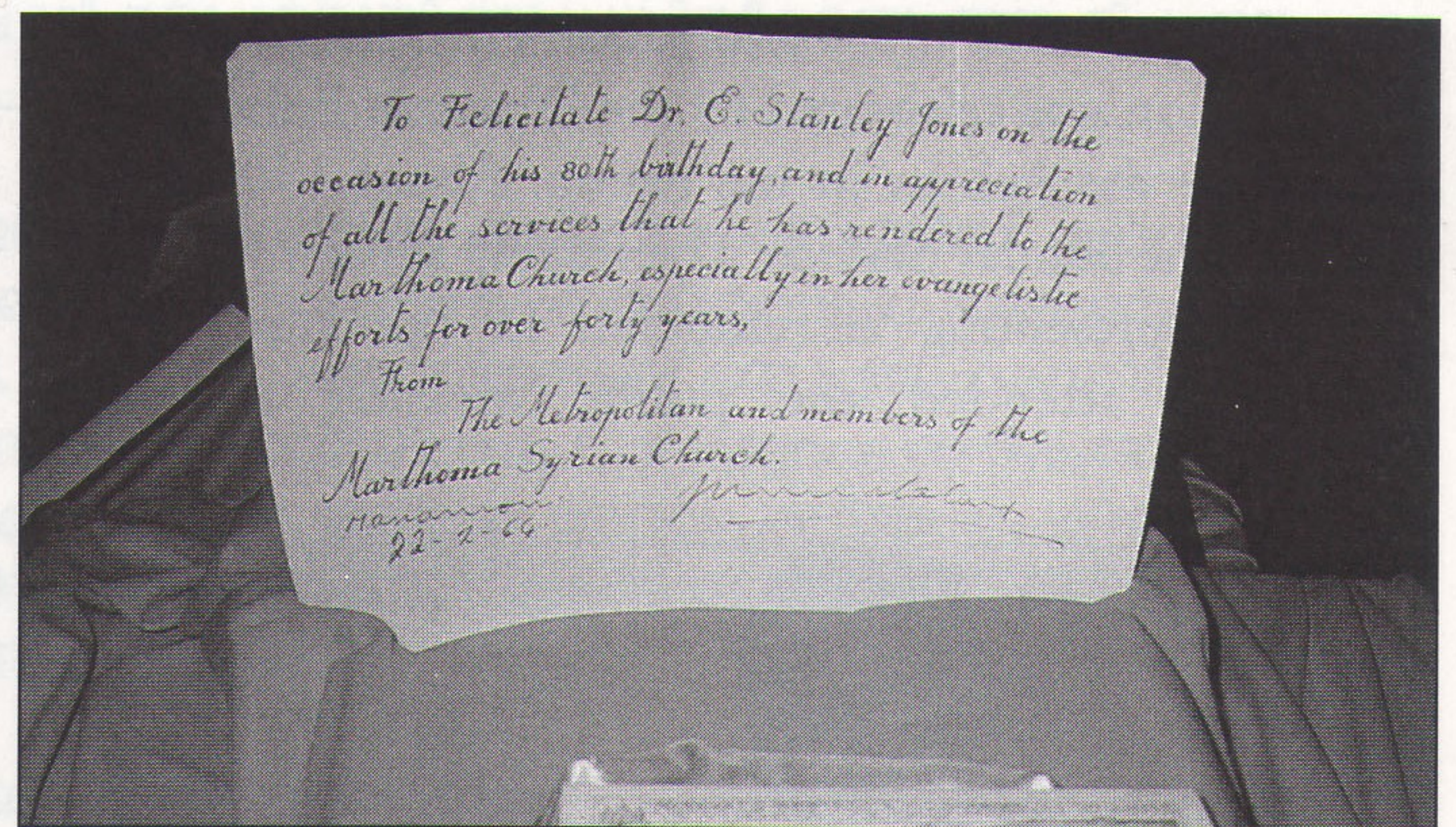
The Christ of the Indian Road (1925) his masterpiece which made him world famous and A Song of Ascents (1968) his spiritual autobiography are among the widely acclaimed of his works.

Dr. Jones loved and served India. He had an immense knowledge and great respect for our culture. He was among the best interpreters of India to the rest of the world. No wonder his personality had influenced the course of a great nation.

Dr. Jones tomb is preserved in the Mount Olivet cemetery in Baltimore, not far from Clarksville where he was born in 1884.

Stanly Jones Memorial Hall Dedication

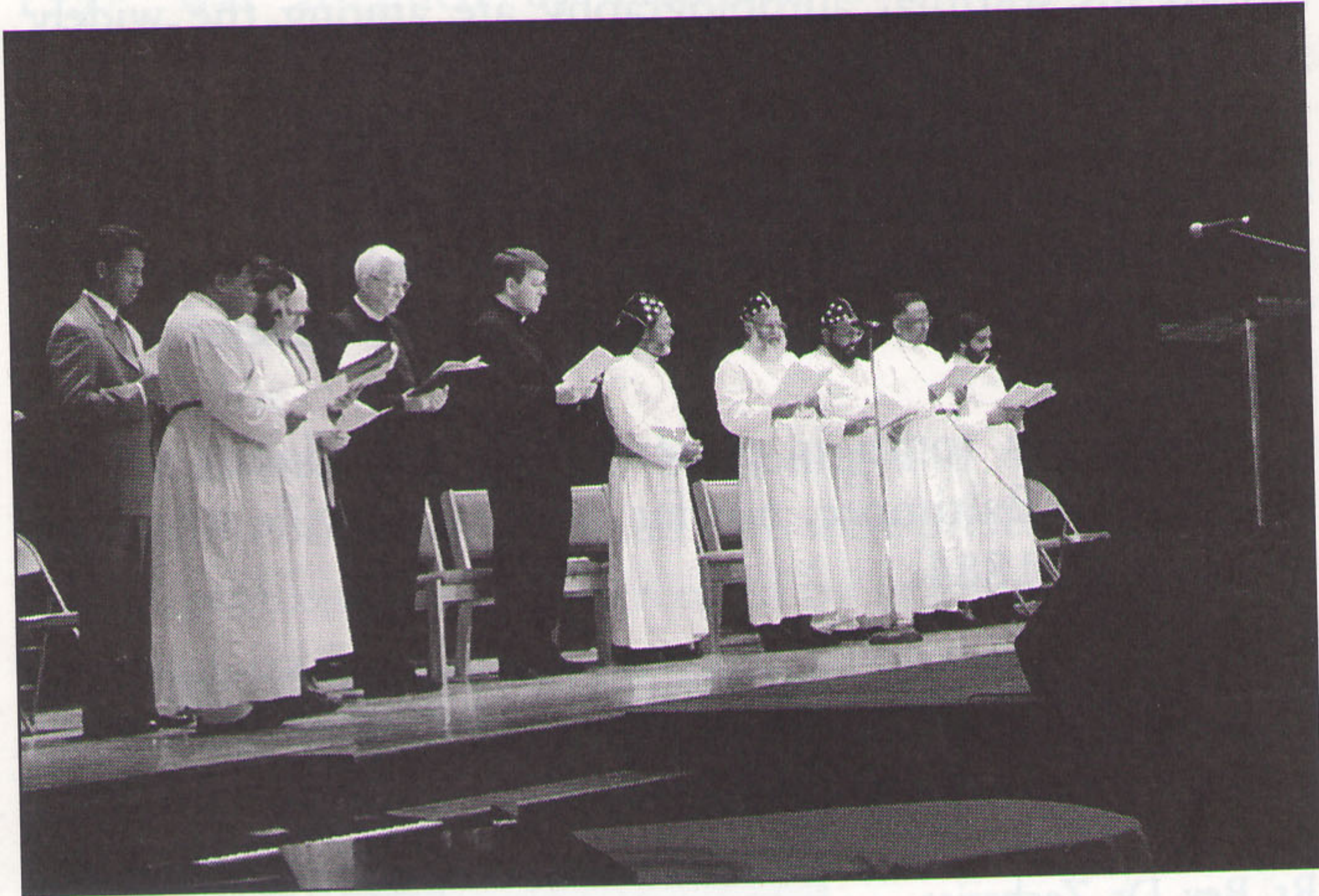
From left to right:
Rev. Jacob Mathew
Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias
Mar Theophilus
Eunice Jones Mathew
(Daughter of Dr. Stanley
Jones)
Bishop James Mathew
(Son-in-law of Rev. Dr.
Stanley Jones)
after the Stanley Jones
Memorial Hall
dedication.



Out of the 28 books written by Dr. Jones, 16 books are available for sale. The video tape of the memorial lectures, Exhibition and Hall Dedication is also available for distribution. For more details please contact Rev. Jacob Mathew Tel: (410) 602-1623.

SOUTHEAST REGION

The Jubilee celebrations of the South East Region was held from April 4 to April 6, 1997. The Gospel convention was held on April 4, 1997 at the Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church. Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa and Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa were the main leaders. A seminar with separate sessions for youth and adults was held on Saturday April 5, at the Bethel Mar Thoma Church. The Thanksgiving service followed by a



public meeting on April 5, the Holy Communion Service on April 6, held at Cardinal Dougherty High School Auditorium, were well attended by members of the Philadelphia, New Jersey, Baltimore and Washington area churches. A joint choir of over two hundred members from the churches of the region led the singing. Several dignitaries attended the public meeting and gave felicitations.



NORTH EAST REGION

The Jubilee celebrations of the North East Region was held from May 30 to June 1, 1997 at the Central High School Auditorium, Valley Stream, New York. At the Gospel convention held during the celebrations Rev. Dr. Sam Kamalesan, of World Vision was the main speaker. He emphasized Family and its nurture in his messages. On Saturday there were Seminars and Bible Studies with separate sessions for adults and youth. On Sunday, the Holy Communion was celebrated by the Diocesan Episcopa and assisted by the Achens in the region. About 1500 people attended the Sunday Service. The singing session was led by a choir representing all churches in the area. Several dignitaries attended the public meeting and gave felicitations.



സിൽവർജൂബിലി സെലിബറേഷൻ റിപ്പോർട്ട്

അപ്പോസ്തലനായ വിശുദ്ധ തോമസിനാൽ സ്ഥാപിതമായ മലങ്കര മാതേർമ്മ സഭയുടെ ചരിത്രം അനൗപമമായ ദൈവകൃപയുടെ ചരിത്രമാണ്. സഭയിലുണ്ടായ നവീകരണ കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ സത്യവിശ്വാസങ്ങൾക്കായി അചഞ്ചലമായി നിലകൊണ്ടതിനാൽ അന്നുണ്ടായിരുന്ന പള്ളികളും, ജംഗമസ്ഥാവരവസ്തുക്കളും കൈവെടിഞ്ഞു ദൈവകൃപയിൽ മാത്രം ആശ്രയിച്ചു ഉറങ്ങിത്തീരിച്ച നമ്മുടെ പുറപ്പിതാക്കന്മാരെ അരുമനാഥൻ കൈവെടിഞ്ഞില്ല.

ചെറിയ ആട്ടിൻകൂട്ടമേ ഭയപ്പെടരുത്, പിതാവു രാജ്യം നിങ്ങൾക്കു തരുവാൻ പ്രസാദിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു, എന്ന ദൈവവാഗ്ദത്തം അന്വർത്ഥമാകത്തക്കവണ്ണം ചുരുങ്ങിയ കാലം കൊണ്ടു മാതേർമ്മാസഭ വളന്ന് സകല ഭൂഖണ്ഡങ്ങളിലേക്കും പടന്ന് പന്തലിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. വെറും കൈയ്യോടെ ഉറങ്ങിത്തീരിച്ച നമ്മുടെ പിതാക്കന്മാരുടെ ലളിതവും ത്യാഗോജ്വലവും, ദീപ്തവീക്ഷണത്തോടു കൂടിയ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും, പ്രാർത്ഥനയും, സമുപരി ദൈവാശ്രയവുമാണ് സഭയുടെ ഈ വളർച്ചക്കു കാരണമെന്നുള്ളതു നാം നന്ദിയോടെ സ്മരിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്.

ആയിരത്തിത്തൊള്ളായിരത്തി എഴുപതുകളുടെ ആരംഭം മുതൽ മലയാളക്കരയിൽനിന്നും ധാരാളം ആളുകൾ അമേരിക്കയിലേക്കു കുടിയേറും ആരംഭിച്ചു. ആ കാലത്തു ന്യൂയോർക്കിൽ കുടിയേറിയ മലയാളികളിൽ ഒരു നല്ല പങ്കു മാതേർമ്മാക്കാരായിരുന്നു. ന്യൂയോർക്കിൽ പല ഭാഗങ്ങളിലായി ചിതറിപാത്തിരുന്ന മാതേർമ്മാക്കാരെ സംഘടിപ്പിച്ചു ക്യൂൻസിൽ ഒരു മാതേർമ്മായിടവകയുണ്ടാക്കുവാൻ ധീരമായി നേതൃത്വം നല്കിയതു അന്നവിടെ ഉപരിപഠനത്തിനായി വന്ന റവ. ജമ്മൻ കോരതായിരുന്നു എന്നുള്ളതു പ്രത്യേകമെടുത്തു പറയേണ്ടതാണ്. അന്നത്തെ റവ. ജമ്മൻ കോരതു ജന അമേരിക്കൻ ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ബിഷപ്പായി നമുക്കു നേതൃത്വം നല്കുന്നു എന്നുള്ളതു ഒരു ദൈവനിയോഗം തന്നെയാണെന്നുള്ളതിൽ സംശയമില്ല. അദ്ദേഹം സമാരംഭിച്ച ചെറിയ ഇടവക ജന നാല്പത്തിരണ്ടു ഇടവകകളും നാലായിരത്തിൽപരം കുടുംബങ്ങളും ഉരുപത്തിയഞ്ചു വൈദികരുമുള്ള ബൃഹത്തായ ഒരു ഭദ്രാസനമായി വളർന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. ക്യാനഡ, യുകെ, എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിലുള്ള ഇടവകകളും ഈ ഭദ്രാസനത്തോടു ചേർക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ഈ വളർച്ചയിൽ അതുല്യമായി നേതൃത്വം നല്കിയ നി. വ. ദി. ശ്രീ തോമസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസിന്റെ സേവനം പ്രത്യേകം സ്മരിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. ആയിരത്തിത്തൊള്ളായിരത്തി എൺപത്തി ഒന്നു മുതൽ-എൺപത്തിനാലുവരെയുള്ള കാലഘട്ടം വടക്കേ അമേരിക്കയിലെ മാതേർമ്മാ സഭയുടെ വളർച്ചയുടെ സമയമാണ്. അമേരിക്കയിലെ ഇടവകകളെ പരസ്പരം ബന്ധിപ്പിച്ചു സംഘടിതമാക്കിയതു ഈ കാലഘട്ടത്തിലാണ്. ആയിരത്തിത്തൊള്ളായിരത്തി എൺപത്തിയൊന്നു ജൂലൈ ഉരുപത്തിയാറു മുതൽ മുപ്പത്തിയൊന്നു വരെ സാൻഫ്രാൻസിസ്കോയിൽ വച്ചു തോമസ് തിരുമേനിയുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ നടന്ന യോഗത്തിൽ അമേരിക്കയിൽ ചിതറിക്കിടന്ന സകല ഇടവകകളിൽനിന്നുമുള്ള പ്രതിനിധികൾ പങ്കെടുത്തിരുന്നു. ഇടവകകൾ അഭിമുഖീകരിച്ചിരുന്ന പ്രശ്നങ്ങളും, വെല്ലുവിളികളും ഈ യോഗത്തിൽ ചർച്ച ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ടു. Zonal Council of The Mar Thoma Church of North America & Canada എന്ന പേരിൽ ഏകോപിച്ചുള്ള പ്രവർത്തന സംഘടനക്കു ഈ സമ്മേളനം രൂപം നല്കി. ആയിരത്തിത്തൊള്ളായിരത്തി എൺപത്തി രണ്ടിൽ ഫിലാഡൽഫിയായിൽ വച്ചു Zonal Council തിരുമേനി ഉൾഘാടനം ചെയ്തു. മാതേർമ്മാ മെസഞ്ചർ എന്ന പേരിൽ Zonal Council ന്റെ മുഖപത്രമായി ഒരു പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണം ആരംഭിച്ചു. ഇതു ഇടവകകളെ തമ്മിൽ ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും വളർത്തുന്നതിനും ഉപകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

ഇടവകകളുടെ പോഷണത്തിനും സഭയുടെ വളർച്ചക്കും ഉതകുന്ന വിധത്തിൽ ഫാമിലി കോൺഫറൻസ്, സ്റ്റുഡൻസ് കോൺഫറൻസ് മുതലായവ ആരംഭിച്ചു. ഇതിനും പുറമേ തുടന്ന് ആണ്ടുതോറും മേഖലാടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ വിവിധ സമ്മേളനങ്ങൾ ക്രമീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ടതു സഭയുടെ വളർച്ചക്കു കൂടുതൽ കാരണമായി. മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷനിലെ ഒരു പ്രസംഗകനായിരുന്ന Rev. Dr. Richy Hogg ആയിരത്തിത്തൊള്ളായിരത്തി എൺപത്തിനാലിലെ നമ്മുടെ Family Conferance അഭിസംബോധന ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ടു പറഞ്ഞതു "Truely this is a Maramon in USA എന്നായിരുന്നു. അഭിവന്ദ്യ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായും ക്രിസ്തോസ് തിരുമേനിയും കാലാകാലങ്ങളിൽ നല്കിയ സേവനങ്ങൾ അവിസ്മരണീയങ്ങളാണ്. മാതേർമ്മാ സഭയെ ഇത്രത്തോളം അമ്മരിക്കയിൽ വളർത്തിയ പരമകാരണീയനായ ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കുന്നു.

ജനനീവിടെ നടക്കുന്നതു ജൂബിലി ആഘോഷത്തോടനുബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള ഒരു റീജനൽ കൺവൻഷൻ ആണ്. ഇതിൽ ഡളാസിയിലെ മൂന്നു ഇടവകകളും, ഓക്കലഹോമാ, ലബോർ എന്നീ ഇടവകകളും ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു. ഈ ഓരോ ഇടവകകളെക്കുറിച്ചുമുള്ള വിവരണം ഇവിടെ അപ്രസക്തമാണെന്നു കരുതുന്നു. എങ്കിലും ഒരു നവചിത്രം ഇവിടെ ചേർക്കുന്നു. **Mar Thoma Church of Dallas:-** 1970ൽ SMU ൽ Canturbury House ൽ കൂടിയ ക്രിസ്തീയ കൂട്ടായ്മയാണു പിൻക്കാലത്തു മാതേർമ്മായിടവകയുടെ രൂപീകരണത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനം. 1976 ഓഗസ്തു 15 വരെ ഈ കൂട്ടായ്മ തുടർന്നു. ആ കാലത്തു സകല ക്രിസ്തീയ സഭാ വിഭാഗങ്ങളും ഇതിൽ പങ്കെടുത്തിരുന്നു. ഈ കൂട്ടായ്മയുടെ ആരംഭകാലത്തു നേതൃത്വം നല്കിയ സി. എസ്. ഐ. സഭയിലെ റവ. പി.ഒ. നൈനാൻ പ്രത്യേകം സ്മരണീയനാണ്. തുടന്ന് ഉപരിപഠനാത്ഥി ഇവിടെയെത്തിയ റവ. റി. ഐ. ജോസഫിന്റെ ദീപ്തവീക്ഷണത്തോടു കൂടിയ താല്പര്യപ്രകാരം 1972 മേയ് മാസത്തിൽ

മാതേർമ്മാ സഭയുടെ തകുസാ അനുസരിച്ചുള്ള ആദ്യത്തെ ആരാധനയോടു കൂടി ഡാളാസിൽ മാതേർമ്മായിടവക ബീജാവാപം ചെയ്തു. തുടർന്നുള്ള ഇടവകയുടെ വളർച്ച അത്ഭുതപൂർവ്വമായിരുന്നു. 1976 ഓഗസ്റ്റ് 15-ാം തീയതി Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Dallas എന്ന പേരിൽ ആദ്യത്തെ മാതേർമ്മായിടവക ഔദ്യോഗികമായി രൂപം കൊണ്ടു. തുടർന്നു Canturbury House നിന്നും St. Luke Methodist Church ലേക്കു മാറി മൂന്നു വർഷത്തോളം ആരാധന നടത്തി വന്നു. പിന്നീടു Cochran Methodist Church ലേക്കു ആരാധന മാറി. 1984 ഡിസംബർ വരെ ഈ രീതി തുടർന്നു. 1984 ൽ Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Dallas, ഗ്രാൻഡ് പ്രയറി പള്ളി വിലക്കുവാങ്ങി. മാതേർമ്മാ സഭയുടെ ഉടമസ്ഥാവകാശത്തിൽ അമേരിക്കയിൽ വാങ്ങിയ മൂന്നാമത്തെ പള്ളിയത്രെ ഇതു. ചുരുങ്ങിയ വർഷങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ട് ഇടവകയിൽ അംഗസംഖ്യ ക്രമാതീതമായി വർദ്ധിച്ചു. 1997 ആയപ്പോഴേക്കും ഇതു Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Grandprairie, St. Paul Mar Thoma Church, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch എന്നീ മൂന്നു ഇടവകകളായി വളർന്നു.

ഡാളസിൽ മാതേർമ്മാ ഇടവക രൂപീകൃതമായ ശേഷം ഇടവകകൾക്കു നേതൃത്വം നൽകിയ Rev. T.I. Joseph, Rev. Dr. T. J. Thomas, Rev. Dr. Joseph Thomas, Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese, Rev. Dr. K.M. Samuel, Rev. Dr. C.K. Mathew, Rev. P.J. Alex, Rev. Eapen Cherian, എന്നിവരുടെ നിസ്തുലമായ സേവനങ്ങൾ പ്രശംസാർഹമാണ്. ഇപ്പോൾ Rev. Ninan Jacob, Rev. Kuruvilla Philip, എന്നിവർ ഇടവകകൾക്കു നേതൃത്വം നൽകുന്നു.

Mar Thoma Church of Dallasന്റെ പ്രതിനിധികളായി Mr. Abraham J. Manaloor, Mr. K. T. Thomas എന്നിവർ സഭാ കൗൺസിലിൽ പ്രതിനിധികൾ ആയിരുന്നു എന്നുള്ളതു പ്രസ്താവ്യമത്രെ. ഡയോസിഷൻ അസംബ്ളിയിലേക്കു വിവിധ കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിൽ താഴെ പറയുന്നവർ ഈ ഇടവകകളിൽ നിന്നും പ്രവർത്തിച്ചിരുന്നു.

- K. T. Thomas
- George Poikayil
- K. C. Samuel & Sosamma Thomas
- Dr. John Mathew & Susan Ninan & Annamma Mathew
- Abraham Mathew & Susan George
- P.T. Mathew, Saramma Poikayil

St. Paul Mar Thoma Church:

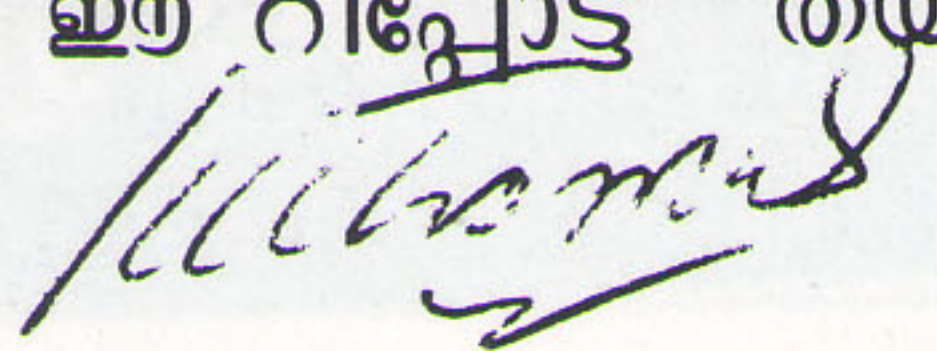
- Phillip Varghese
- James Mepurath
- V. Thomas Jacob
- Raju Varghese

ഇവരെ കൂടാതെ ഈ റിജനിൽ നിന്നും ഭദ്രാസന സിക്രട്ടറിയായി റവ. പി. ജെ. അലക്സും, ഭദ്രാസന ട്രഷററായി രണ്ടു പ്രാവശ്യം ഡോ. ജോൺ പി. ലിങ്കനും ഭദ്രാസന കൗൺസിലിൽ റവ. നൈനാൻ ജേക്കബും സേവനം അനുഷ്ഠിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. 1984 ൽ ഭദ്രാസന യൂത്ത് കോൺഫറൻസും ഫാമിലി കോൺഫറൻസും 1995 ൽ ഭദ്രാസന ഫാമിലി കോൺഫറൻസും ഇവിടെവെച്ചു നടത്തിയെന്നുള്ളതു ഡളാസ് മാതേർമ്മാ ഇടവകാംഗങ്ങൾക്കു അഭിമാനം തന്നെയാണ്.

Mar Thoma Church Oklahoma:- 1980 November മാസത്തിൽ ആറു കുടുംബങ്ങൾ ചേർന്നാണ് മാതേർമ്മാ ആരാധന Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese ന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ തുടക്കമിട്ടത്. 1990 ൽ ഇടവകയ്ക്കു സ്വന്തമായി ഒരു സ്ഥലം വാങ്ങി ദേവാലയം പണിതു പ്രതിഷ്ഠാകർമ്മം നടത്തി. ആസമയത്തു 18 കുടുംബങ്ങൾ ഈ ഇടവകയിലെ അംഗങ്ങളായിരുന്നു. ഇപ്പോൾ 50 കുടുംബങ്ങൾ അംഗങ്ങളായിട്ടുണ്ട്. യൂത്ത് ലീഗ് സൺഡേ സ്കൂൾ സേവികാസംഘം ഇവ സജീവമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. റവ. കുരുവിള ഫിലിപ്പാണ് ഇപ്പോഴത്തെ വികാരി. ഭദ്രാസന അസംബ്ളിയിലേക്കു ജോർജ് വർഗീസ് (ഇടയാറന്മുള), ജോർജ് എം. വർഗീസ്, ജോർജ് വർഗീസ് (തലവടി), വർഗീസ് ചാണ്ടപ്പിള്ള, ചെറിയാൻ കോശി, എന്നിവർ പ്രശസ്തമായ സേവനമനുഷ്ഠിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

Emmanuel Mar Thoma Church, Lubbock:- 1979 മുതൽ 1981 വരെ Rev. Joseph Thomas, മാതേർമ്മാ ഗ്രൂപ്പിന്റെ വികാരിയായിരിക്കുന്ന കാലത്താണ് ഇടവകയാരംഭിക്കുന്നത്. 1993 ൽ ഇടവക സ്വന്തമായി ഒരു ദേവാലയം പണിതു പ്രതിഷ്ഠ നടത്തി. ഇപ്പോൾ 29 കുടുംബങ്ങൾ അംഗങ്ങളായിട്ടുണ്ട്. ആദ്യമായി ഭദ്രാസനം വകയായി രണ്ടേക്കർ സ്ഥലം യൂത്ത് സെന്ററിന്റെ ആവശ്യത്തിലേക്കു ലഭിച്ചു എന്നുള്ളതു സന്തോഷകരമത്രെ. 1987 ൽ ഭദ്രാസന യൂത്ത് കോൺഫറൻസിനും 1990 ൽ ഭദ്രാസന ഫാമിലി കോൺഫറൻസിനും ഈ ചെറിയ ഇടവക നേതൃത്വം നൽകിയെന്നുള്ളതു പ്രശംസാർഹമത്രെ. ഭദ്രാസന അസംബ്ളിയിലേക്കും കൗൺസിലിലേക്കും Dr. John P. Lincoln തുടച്ചുയായി തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. Rev. Ninan Jacob ഈ ഇടവകയുടെ വികാരിയായി ഇപ്പോൾ ശുശ്രൂഷ ചെയ്യുന്നു.

പ്രവാസികളായി അമേരിക്കയിൽ കുടിയേറിത്താമസിക്കുന്ന നമുക്കു മാതേർമ്മാ സഭയിൽ അവഗണിക്കാനാവാത്ത ഒരു അംഗീകാരം ലഭിക്കത്തക്കവണ്ണം സഭയായി നമ്മു വളർത്തിയ പരമകാരണീയനായ ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് ഈ റിപ്പോർട്ട് ഉപസംഹരിക്കുന്നു. ജൂബിലിക്കമ്മിററി ചുമതലപ്പെടുത്തിയതനുസരിച്ചു ഈ റിപ്പോർട്ട് തയ്യാറാക്കി സമർപ്പിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു.


എന്നും കെ. റി. തോമസ്.

CRISIS

One way or other, everybody experiences problems in day to day life. However, how to deal with a critical situation largely depends upon one's life experience. The topic under discrete discussion is well-placed in the following two articles written by Dr. T. M. Thomas and Mr. P. T. Thomas to enlighten it in different perspective.

Crisis is a part of living. Usually people recognize only the problems or breakdown of a crisis. The other side of crisis consists of prospects for growth and development or the possible breakthrough. One of the great challenges in life is to admit or accept life problems and to make use of them for human growth and development. These problems are not limited to personal level, but extends to society at large.

Problems of life are not seen in a true perspective when the dominant philosophy or belief system of a society subscribes to a hedonistic orientation or instant gratification. Today many people strive for immediate results without giving a due place for pain and difficulties that are part of any meaningful life. Answers in life are sought in the forum of "pills" to be swallowed for the elimination of pains and troubles. Happiness is found in sensual pleasures, drugs and loud music. Profit motives and greed dominate business transactions of everyday living over fairness and human caring. Mutual respect and assumption of social responsibilities becomes weak, when individualistic pursuits become the accepted mode of life.

"Life is difficult." This is the opening sentence of Scott Peck's famous book *The Road Less Travelled*. He presents this statement as a great truth and once we really admit that life is difficult we are able to transcend the difficulties. He argues, "Life is a series of problems." The process of confronting and solving problems is a painful one. "Yet it is this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning." Scott Peck continues, "problems call forth our courage and our wisdom; indeed they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually."

Life is "Dukha" or sorrow or suffering, the truth taught by Buddha, from the cornerstone of the religion founded by him. In Christianity suffering is made divine in Christ's suffering on the cross. Instead of swimming away from the pain and agony of life, Jesus accepted it and worked the way to God's glory. When we face the difficulties or suffering in life the example of Jesus is an ideal one. We face them and transform them for a better life.

We all have our stories of hardships and sorrows; we experience suffering and pain. These everyday events of living destroy some people while they generate new life and better living in some others. Some events will break some and make others. At present, I see it in my personal and professional life. The survival of the educational institution seems to be at stake in recent months due to financial shortage. While a few people take it as a challenge, many

others lose hope and become inactive. A person who has gone through difficulties and overcome them can empathize with others by sharing with others in their sorrow and life crisis. Such a person is a real teacher who can teach others about life with its growth.

The above situation is a real crisis. People respond in different ways in such a situation. It is possible to make use of it for our growth and development. The belief system we have and our inner resources we use for the occasion, will make the difference. In time of crisis people tend to remain together for cooperative efforts though a few may isolate themselves from others. Those who work together usually gain greater strength and courage to face the difficult situation.

People who mourn together will rejoice together. It is in relating with one another that human beings achieve their fullness or perfection, an ongoing process always. We are social beings. When we interact meaningfully with others we become ourselves. Also, at this time we create community. In response to crisis genuine community is formed when human fulfillment reaches the optimum level.

Response to crisis is also an occasion to relate to a reality larger than ourself. There is the spiritual dimension in human beings and hence they can relate not only to other human being but also to God. In times of crisis earnest prayer rises to God continuously. The struggle for human perfection ends up in imperfection and further crisis. With God's grace we will better respond to crisis and achieve our fullness, being created in His image.

Dr. T. M. Thomas

Crisis occurs when an emotionally significant event or radical change takes place in a person's life. However, crisis takes place not only in a person's life, but it also takes place in group, community, nation and even international affairs. Quite often, we understand crisis as an unstable state of affairs, which often lead to calamities and destruction. In our personal life crisis takes place when our usual rhythm of life loses its balance. The same principle holds true in our church, community and national life.

1991 was a time of crisis for the people of the United States of America. The economy was going down, people were losing jobs and the country entered into a war with Iraq. 1991 was also a time of crisis for India. The death of a prominent political leader, the ensued political instability and the tough economic times contributed to the causes of crisis. Soviet Union was no exception. The political

development in that country brought the nation to a crisis which even led to the dissolution of the Nation. Hence, the world today is in the midst of crisis. What would happen from here? Destruction or development?

Though dealing and enabling others to deal with crisis on national and international level is a christian responsibility, it is very difficult and out of place for the scope of this essay. However, enabling our members, who are the primary readers of this article, to deal with personal crisis seems to fit well within the scope of this article. As human beings, we are faced with problems and we all have our own method of problem solving techniques and hence we reduce the risk caused or that can cause by the problem. However, at times our usual problem solving techniques become ineffective and then the tension caused by the problem increases. This rising tension, if not tackled properly reaches a stage of breaking point known as crisis. Also on many occasions, our coping abilities become inadequate due to the serious nature of the problem such as accidents, illness, marital infidelity, acceptance of youth's standard by parents and vice versa, mix marriages, mental illness, alcoholism, substance abuse and death. When problems such as these occurs usually there is a 3 way course of action:

1. Get depressed, seek easier remedies such as drug or alcohol and eventually destroy oneself.
2. Live with the problem, but never recover from it.
3. Cope with the problem and seek healthy ways or recovery.

It is the responsibility of the Church/Parish and our Counseling Center to enable the person to cope with the problem in a healthy way. Remember; these events are a turning point from or towards the wholeness of a person. In order to achieve this wholeness the following steps need to be taken:

1. Enable the person to face the problem. Usually, we ignore the problem and pretend as if no problem exist. It is unhealthy. It is very essential that the person should face the problem as it exists. Too often, as parents we believe that problems are not within the reach of our children. Believe it or not, it is time for us to accept that problems exist where we live and we are not immune to them.
2. Our second step is to enable the people to increase the understanding of the problem. We usually ignore the problem due to the lack of proper understanding. Now that we are ready to face the problem, it is very essential that we learn all we can about the problem.
3. When we face the problem and increase our understanding about it, our human response to it are expressed in forms of grief, anxiety, fear, guilt, pain,

anger and resentment. This is quite natural and these negative feelings need to be expressed and worked through. We, often see a person acting in a very peculiar way, which is not expected from him/her on a usual situation. Our immediate response is to blame him/her and isolate him/her. Remember, this person might be expressing a negative feeling associated with a problem and this expression is quite normal. He/She needs our support at that time and not condemnation.

4. Our next step is to enable the person to accept the responsibility to cope with the problem. Remember! we are not asking him to take the responsibility for the cause of the problem, but we are encouraging him to take the responsibility to recover from the problem. Unless, this person feels that he or she can take the responsibility to come out of the problem, recovery is not complete.
5. It is very essential for the person to understand how to separate the changeable from the unchangeable. We should also enable the person to accept the unchangeable as unchangeable. This point need to be well remembered when dealing with crisis related to death etc.
6. Our next step is to open healthy channels of communications with other helping people such as friends and relatives.
7. Finally, we should enable the person to take steps to handle the problem constructively.

These steps can be achieved through Pastoral care and Counseling. However, it need to be remembered that Pastoral care is not the care given by Pastor alone, but the support and encouragement given by the Faith Community as a whole. Once the final step is achieved, the person is on the path to development.

It is also essential for us to understand God's purposes in our lives. God has separate plans for each and every one of us and our understanding of crisis in our lives cannot be alien to God's intentions. Life of Job is a superb example for this. With God, Job turned crisis into success. There are many living people, who achieved success through crisis situations. By surrendering ourselves to God, we can overcome crisis successfully. Our Pastoral Counseling must enable us to achieve this ultimate goal, creating the understanding in us that Crisis is an opportunity to be true to our Calling, always remembering God's intentions in our lives. Then each time a new crisis occurs in our lives, we can understand it as a purifying way to development.

P. T. Thomas, M.A., M.Div.

Family Conference — 1997, Toronto, Canada

The XV Mar Thoma Family Conference, hosted by the Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto was held from July 3-6, 1997 at the Regal Constellation Hotel Toronto, Canada.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan was the main speaker. The theme of the conference was "Rekindle the Divine Gift in You" 2 Timothy 1:6.

The conference started with worship followed by opening ceremony. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan, presided over the opening ceremony and Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa inaugurated the conference. Rt. Rev. Tylor Pryce Suffragan Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada, Honourable Rajeeve K. Bhatia (Consular General of India) Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter Thuruthikonam Bishop of Vijayapuram Diocese, Kottayam and Rt. Rev. Michael John offered felicitations. The meeting on Thursday was concluded with colorful presentations by the Canadian Mar Thoma Church.

There were separate programs for the children and the youth. The children's sessions for the ages 5-12 were led by the Scripture Union Team led by Mr. Dan Ryan. Rev. Jeff Porte, Rev. Kurian George and Rev. Sajan P. Mathew conducted the Programs for the youth.

Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse of Garret Evangelical Theological Seminary, Chicago, led the Bible Study sessions. He based his study on Romans 12:1. Con. 12, Acts 11:19-26. A panel session presented by Rev. K. Y. Jacob, Mr. Thomas Koshy and Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas and Mr. Abraham Mattackal was held on the "Role of the laity in the building up of the church". A group study was held on the subject "Reflections on our immigrant identity." Rev. Jacob Mathew, Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, Dr. T. M. Thomas and Mr. O. C. Abraham co-ordinated the program. A medical panel session was held on Saturday on the topic "Health Related Problems in the South Asian Community." Dr. George Abraham, Dr. Alice Cherian and Dr. Mary Mathew led the sessions.

The Dallas Mar Thoma Church won the first place and the Philadelphia won the second place in the choir competition. Many parishes represented the talent show. The Diocesan Jubilee celebration meeting was held on Saturday and Leonard Griffith was the main speaker. During the meeting Mr. O. C. Koshy, presented a check for \$50,000 towards the Jubilee fund.

Rev. K. Y. Jacob and Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse led the dedication service. Several attendees dedicated their lives for Christ. Holy Communion service was celebrated by The Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan. About 1200 people attended the Holy Communion. The conference was concluded with a meeting immediately after the Holy Communion Service.

Cherian Edichandy, Secretary



Dr. Saramma Koshy & Mr. O. C. Koshy (Sabha Council Member) presenting a check for \$50,000 to the Diocesan Bishop for the Jubilee Fund.



A Meditation at the Cross

Sermon delivered at the Mar Thoma Church, Maryland, on Good Friday, 1997

Dr. P. M. Mammen

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. So they took charge of Jesus. He went out, carrying his Cross, and came to "The Place of the Skull," as it is called. In Hebrew it is called "Golgothe." There they crucified him... [John 19:16-18]

This Cross extends an invitation to us. Jesus on the Cross says: Follow me, who am the Way, the Truth and the Life. Naked I hang on this Cross with arms outstretched, offering myself freely to God, the Father, for your sins. My whole person is a divine sacrifice. You too must willingly offer yourself to Me as a pure and holy offering.

In the light of this awareness of free invitation from the Cross, everything becomes alive again. Molecules of matter dissolve and pass away, but the conscious awareness of mind survives the death of matter on which it rides. Yes, we are invited to have this ride in the vast ocean of energy that is released from the Cross. Once this invitation is accepted, the eternal clash of internal contradictions ends in unity. Once we accept the Cross, we will be released from the impotent duration of barren struggles between the indefinite points of birth and death. Spiritual life is then transformed into Life Divine in an eternal experience - the individual Jiva being transformed by the Vision of God, the Iswara Darsan, that the Cross provides. Let us, therefore, kneel before the Cross in humble submission.

Let us bring our garrulous mind into an empty silence of meditation, receptive enough to fill it anew with our thoughts on the Cross of Christ. Let us engage our minds in humble submission to the dripping sounds of blood drops. Let our raw minds wander into limitless fields around the Cross, restraining our thoughts to a single focus on the Cross—to the sacred face of Christ. Let us now listen to the

voiceless message in the Lord Himself—now that it's dying or dead. Then each one of us shall slowly, slowly, deliberately say to oneself in a voiceless whisper:

O Lord, my Jesus Christ on the Cross, here am I in my frail body. I am fatigued and exhausted by my own labors to win a satisfying happiness in this world. I have been vainly struggling to amass the perishing wealth of this material environment. I am inextricably caught in my web of suffering—caused by the thirsts of my physical body and the illusions of my earthly passions. In ignorance and fancied hopes, I sought and gained much—but all to no avail. The temple of my expectations crumbled at my feet even before I could lay its roof. I am now tired...exhausted. Here I come to surrender, to fall prostrate at Thy feet on the Cross.

I have no right to expect Thy Love, so divinely shed on me through Thy dripping blood drops. I have no right to ask for even Thy charity. Take me as I am; wash me in Thy infinite Mercy and forgiveness. Here I surrender myself fully. Accept my frail body that is emaciated, a tortured soul contained therein. Mold me into a better person. Guide me and lead me. Give me strength to walk my frail limbs by your side. When I limp in faltering steps, hold me straight. Walk with me to walk the path in my Gethsemane of imperfections. Let me walk toward a surer sign of Thy Grace and Glory.

Let me behold Thy triumphal entry once again—from Thy Garden of Gethsemane to meet Thy Cross. In regal splendor but without Thy royal trappings. A dignitary, a potentate, a king in triumph riding on the mule-back. No trumpets, no fanfare. Only a plain old mule lumbering along carrying Thee to embrace Thy Cross. Let me, too, lumber with Thee to walk the walk toward Thy Golgothe. Amen. ■

MAR THOMA CHURCH MONTREAL

This year's Canadian Regional Junior Youth Conference, hosted by the Mar Thoma Church of Montreal, was held from May 17-19, 1997 at Camp Edphy in the Laurentians of Québec.

The theme of the conference was "Take up the cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). Rev. Nick Brotherhood of London, England, presently working as chaplain at McGill University, was the main speaker. Our vicar Rev. Prakash K. George, was present to provide leadership for the conference. Youth from across Eastern Canada participated. The conference was a great success. It was a blessing to the youth and provided them with the opportunity to take up their crosses and follow Jesus.

Reena Jacob, Montréal



Message from Rev. Moni Mathew

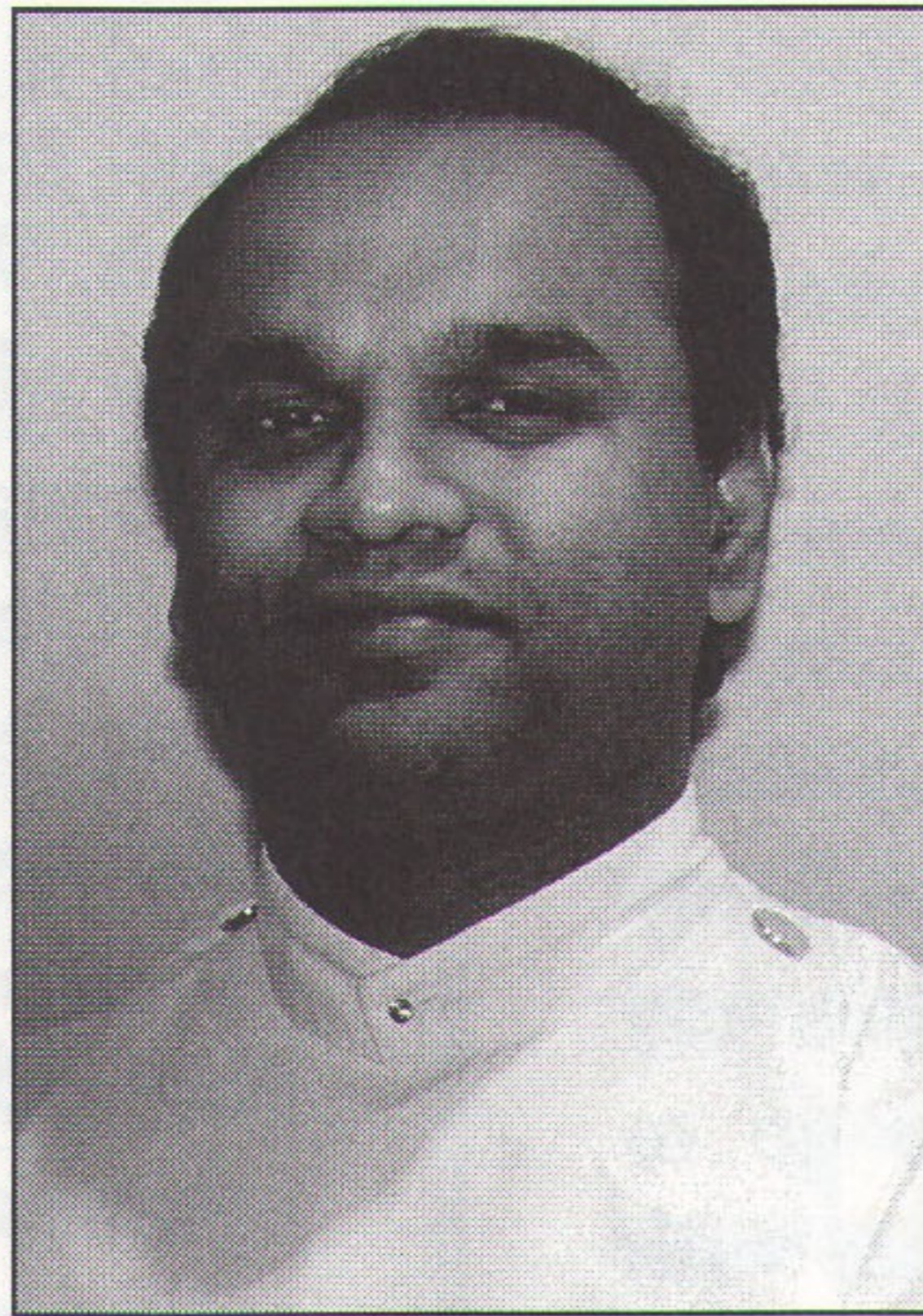
General Secretary, Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam

I bring greetings to you on behalf of the Samajam family.

The Annual Mar Thoma student's spiritual Conference at Allentown, Pennsylvania, indeed was a perfect entry for me once again to U.S.A., as a member of the Samajam family. It reminded me of my ministry at Chicago and Detroit during 1986-1989. The Dedication Ceremony of the Conference was an enriching experience, more particularly when children came forward for full-time ministry. I envision God's servants being raised up from among these children to serve the Lord in His vineyard.

The Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam celebrated (Navathy) 90th year since its inception. Through the years there has been continuous growth under the strong leadership of the V. Rev. V. P. Mammen, the Rev. Dr. K. K. George, and the Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph. 972 Registered Sunday Schools come under the Samajam umbrella. To function systematically the Parish Sunday Schools are grouped together to form Centers which are co-ordinated by a Sunday School Inspector. The Centers, in turn, fall under a District, facilitated by a District organizer. Districts form the Diocese which are supervised by a Diocesan Secretary. Yearly plan is chalked out every December during the Annual Workers' Conference for the ensuing year. Week-end camps and Conferences, one-day program and intensive trainings are conducted regularly for teachers and children alike at our own Christian Education Center, Charal Kunnu, Kurianoor and other resort centers. Samajam has published the first volume of the New curriculum both in vernacular and in English under the theme "BEING GOD'S PEOPLE IN GOD'S WORLD." The thirty lessons in the book highlights various aspects of the theme. The teacher and the student cruise together through the lesson. The approach is Christ, Bible and Child centered, stress is also laid on social, constructive, exploratory and expressive impulse of the child.

Vacation Bible School program captures little hearts during summer vacation. Samajam produces its own



materials both in vernacular and in English to over 90,000 children. V.B.S. resource persons are equipped by the Samajam. The 10 day session includes music, craft, study of the word and meditation.

To commemorate Navathy, Samajam has launched into a project to reach the unreached. This project aims at working among the street-children at Quilon and Kozhikode. We have started the project at Quilon. Land has been bought and structural work has commenced

near Asraamam, to rehabilitate 30 children initially from among the 2000 street children at Quilon. Sponsoring a child for a year needs four hundred and fifteen dollar.

I personally salute my colleague Achens and Sunday School leaders who are involved in the ministry among children and have given a strong foundation to the Sunday School activities here. May I humbly request you to remember Samajam activities in prayer and strengthen the Samajam for the noble cause. I urge each Sunday School of the Diocese to sponsor a child through endowment of \$4,300.

Education today is becoming a way of higher production. Children have become casualties of the new emerging global order and commodities of the consumer culture. Disintegration in families, biblical illiteracy and vanishing spiritual life has lead to a lifeless society around us. It is in this backdrop that one strongly feels the need of imparting practical Christian Education to our children. We need to view Sunday School Education as imparting a style of living within the cultures, that we feel a threat. It should be a training ground for spiritual conduct and to understand the thrill in faith which they profess and practice. Educators through their life model need to impart 'life' to the children and should be facilitators for the children to help them blend the culture they live in and the culture of their moorings without compromising on ones identity and values in Christ.

On behalf of the Samajam allow me to convey best wishes to the Diocese as you commemorate the 25th year of your journey in Christ at this corner of the world. ■

*"When we love God as our Father,
We won't treat Him as our servant"*

*"God uses ordinary people
to carry out His extraordinary plan"*

The Influence of the Sunday School in My Life

Jerry Mathew

In the Bible, we can see in Proverbs chapter 22, verse 6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it". Even though I was born and raised in a Christian family, Sunday School still played an important part in my life. Up to this time in my life, I went to different cities and churches, and everywhere I went there was always a Sunday School. I started my Sunday School in India, and I still remember when my friends come and call me to walk with them to go to Sunday School. Everybody has a small packet of rice with them, called "Nullary", which was used for offertory. In every Sunday School class, I always found great loving teachers who reflected the love of God. I like to share with you three most important things that was influenced by Sunday School in my life.

First of all, Sunday School always gave me a chance for fellowship with other Christian kids. These days it is very hard to find good Christian kids in school, because they are more interested in gangs, violence and doing sinful things. Many kids are disobedient to their parents and some of them even run away from home. I want to thank God for giving me a chance to be in Sunday School and have good Christian friends.

Secondly, Sunday School taught me a lot of Bible stories about great heroes, Bible verses, good Christian songs, and extra activities which bring me great joy and understanding of God's work in my Life. When I learned about Noah's Ark, I understood how God protects God's people. Another thing I learned is that Jesus turned water to

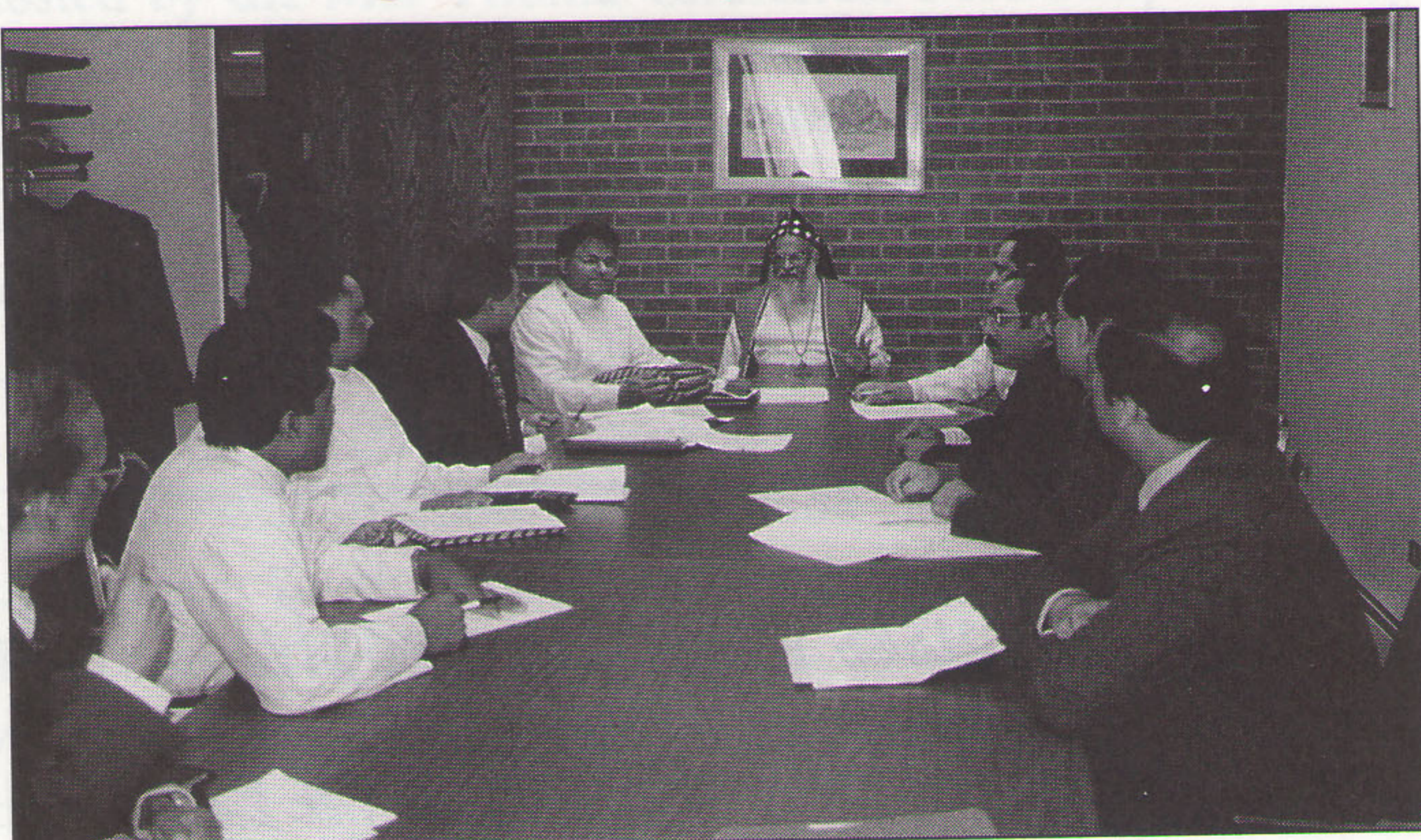
wine, and I clearly understood that Jesus can supply all my needs. When I read about how Moses divided the Red Sea, I saw what an almighty God I have.

Finally, the influence of Sunday School in my life is that I learned many Biblical Principles that is very helpful in my everyday life. If we look in my generation most of them are lost without knowing God's words. From Sunday School, I learned how to behave, act justly, respect others, obey elders, not to do sins, how to worship God, and many other good things. Sunday School can create and develop ambitions and aspirations through learning the life history of Bible characters.

Even though I can say so many good things about Sunday School which influenced my life, these are the three important things. My parents and grandparents used to tell me many things and stories about their Sunday School life, and it was very interesting to me. I started going to Sunday School when I was four, and from there I never stopped going to Sunday School anywhere I went. It is my desire and commitment to be in Sunday School these coming years, to learn more about God, and to shine like a light in this dark world.

In conclusion, Sunday School can make a great impact on the society. It teaches Christian values and helps us to analyze God's word and apply in our daily lives. As the Psalmist says in Psalms 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path". It is my hope and prayer that Sunday School will help many children like me to learn God's word and make a difference in today's society. ■

MAR THOMA LITERATURE SOCIETY



Planning Meeting

PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS RETREAT AT RHODE ISLAND

(JULY 18-20, 1997)



Participants with Chrysostom Thirumeni

Active Knowledge of Our Savior—Jesus Christ

Ann Philip, St. James Mar Thoma Church

“Know ye that the Lord He is God, it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” (ps. 100:3)

We can achieve knowledge either passively or actively. We achieve knowledge passively by being told by someone else. Much of our learning comes passively. Most of the learning from classrooms, watching TV news reports, or by reading Magazines and newspapers are passive. Unfortunately, passive learning has some draw back. It makes us tend to accept uncritically what we are told. Not two words have precisely the same shades of meaning. People repeat a story in their own words rather than in exact quotation; it changes the story. Many enjoy adding their own creative touch to a story, trying to improve it, and stamping it with their own personal style. I am sure all of us are aware of these facts in our daily life.

When a child is born he gets passive immunity from his mother to protect the child from diseases which enable him to have a healthy start. It wears off after months. Then he needs active immunity for a healthy life which he accomplishes by active vaccination, healthy food, and also following a healthy lifestyle. The same way when you are born to a family, you grow up in that family knowing all about your family background, family tree, life style, rules, regulations, morals, and values. Most of them are passed over from generation to generation. Most of them are passive knowledge.

We achieve knowledge actively by direct experience, testing and proving an idea, or by reasoning. When we do it by reasoning we analyze a problem, consider all facts and possible interpretation, and draw the logical conclusion.

Now it is getting more complicated. We, the so called name sake Christians, believe that we were created in the image of God. Is it passive or active knowledge for us? The true Word of God, is it passive or active knowledge? Jesus the son of God died for our sins; is it an experienced knowledge for us? What about the second coming of Jesus Christ, is it an active knowledge for us?

Knowing involves more than having the right answer. It involves the realization of your answer. It also involves the ability to express what we know and how we came to know it. Sometimes knowing is confused with assuming, guessing, and speculating. I am sure that we are very much aware of it. We are always good in assuming, guessing, or speculating things about ourselves or about other family members, friends and about our church members. In our daily life we take so much of burden due to this. Consequences are greater at times and we pay a great price for it.

As I mentioned earlier we need passive immunity from the mother for early survival, so as the passive knowledge

of Christ. Early confirmation, a child's baptism, having bible studies in Sunday School, reading Christian books, attending church services, participating in church choir, all these “rituals” in a way are passive actions for many Christians. Many children are in the church because their parents forced them to be there. Many parents are there because that is what their parents taught them to do in their life. Ministers are doing their “rituals”, because that is what they have chosen to do in their life.

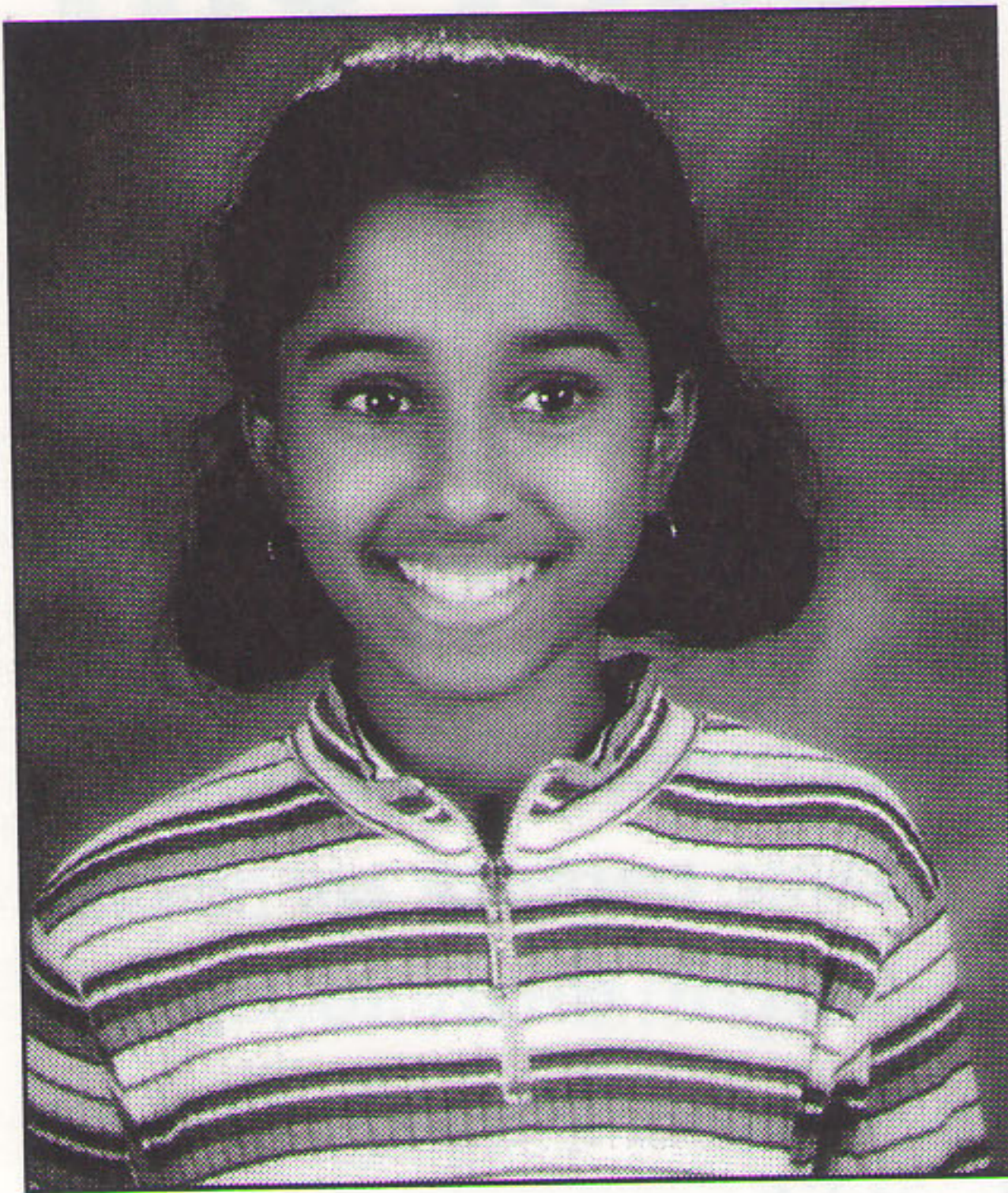
Passive knowledge leads us to gain or experience active knowledge. Reading the Bible can be like any other story book. But experiencing Bible in our daily life leads us to achieve active knowledge of Christ. When we experience it, it becomes an active process for us. It enables us to open our eyes and mold us into fruitful individuals.

What does individuality mean in this generation? Individuality means “doing your own things,” responding to life's situations in whatever way seems most natural. It denies the fact that each of us as Christians have been channeled and conditioned to a great degree. It pretends there is some inner-self untouched by all that we have experienced, all that has happened to us. When we train a dog, we condition the dog in such a way, that the dog will do what comes natural to him. What comes natural is influenced by his experience. He is controlled by a force outside himself, his master. Individuality is something beyond that. As an individual, you are aware of the various ideas and attitudes you have been exposed to and are able to decide freely the extent to which your behavior reflects them. Your individuality reflects the active knowledge of the Word of God. It will let us know where we come from. (Genesis 1:26-27)

Active knowledge of who we are, why we are here, where we are going is important to find our own identity.

There is no use of blaming the other person, parents, children, friends, minister, or church members for who you are. But we as Christians are accountable for each other. Our spiritual life should start in ourselves. Through the Word of God we receive the active knowledge of Christ. (II Tm. 2:15, Mt. 4:4). Active knowledge of Christ enables us to be with Christ. Being with Christ enables us to realize that the only ultimate proof for our faith is the Bible. The Bible is God's chosen way to accomplish his divine will. When we submit ourselves to accomplish his divine will, a new self is born. Is that what we have in ourselves? Can we bury our pride, power, health, and wealth? What is important in our life? Where is God in our midst? Is He still standing outside and knocking, waiting for our invitation? Are we experiencing Him? Do we have a spiritual urge to know Him? If not, let us try together. ■

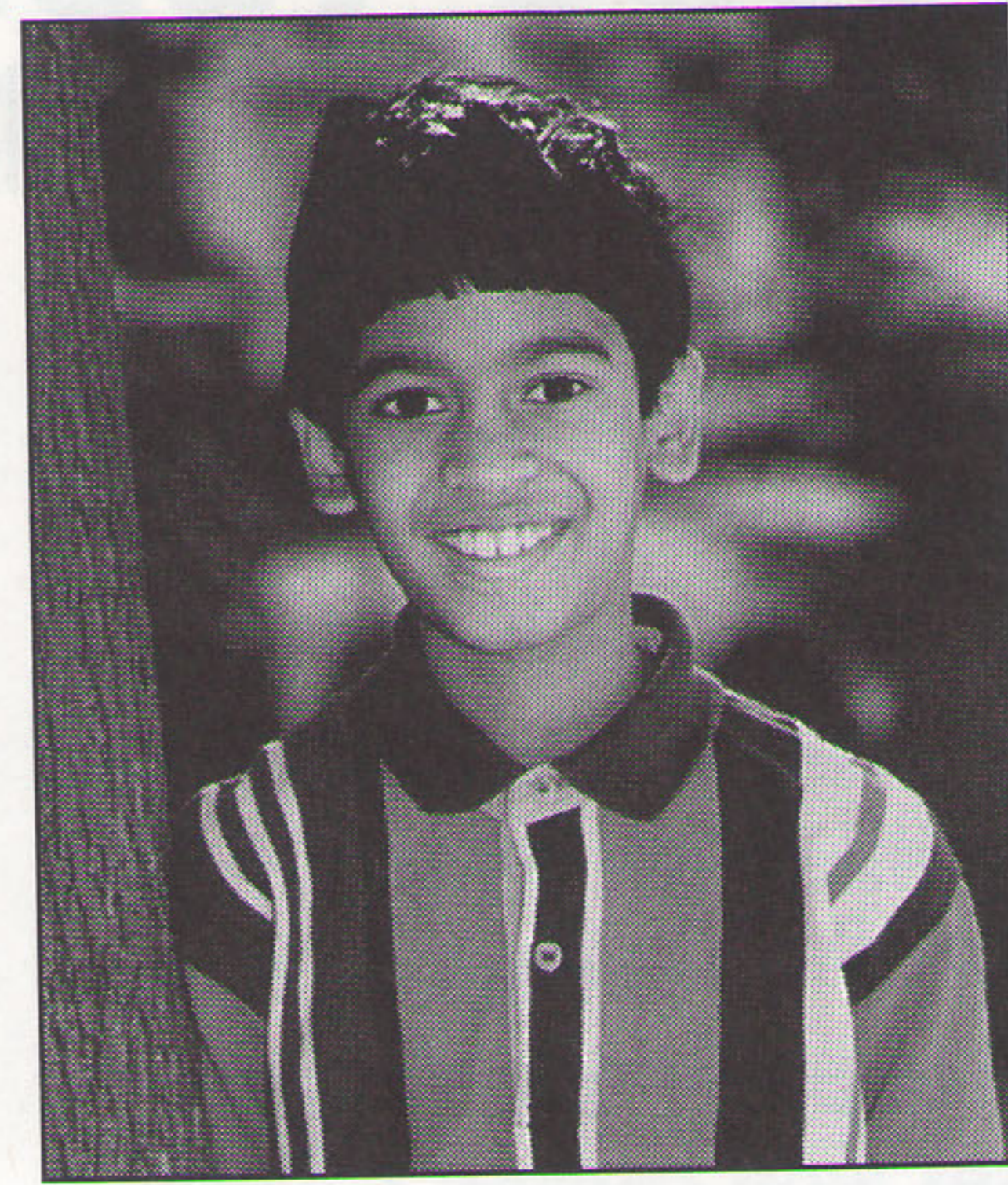
FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD PLACE WINNERS OF THE DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL EXAM—1997



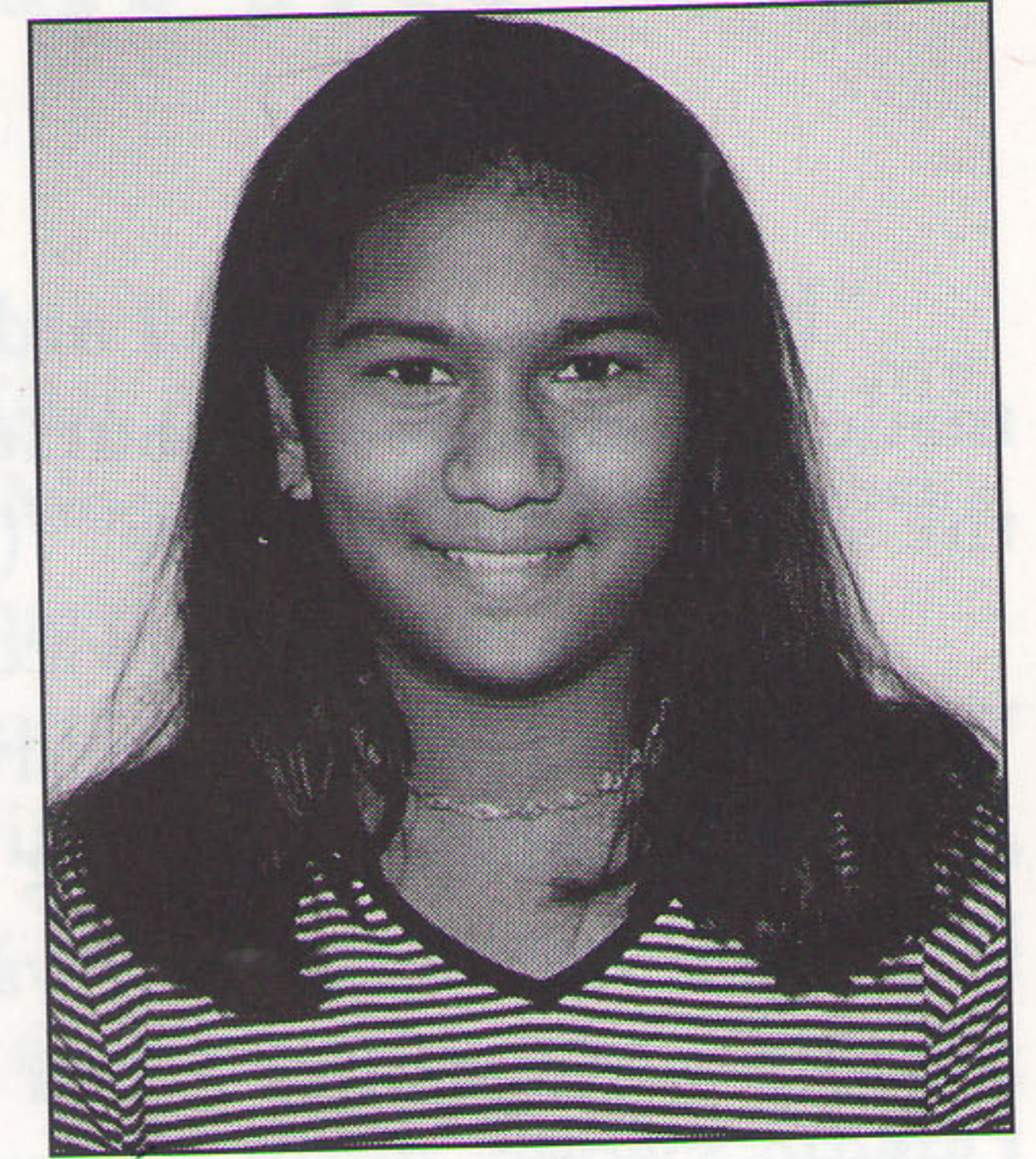
Simi Abraham
First Place (Junior)
Trinity MTC, Houston



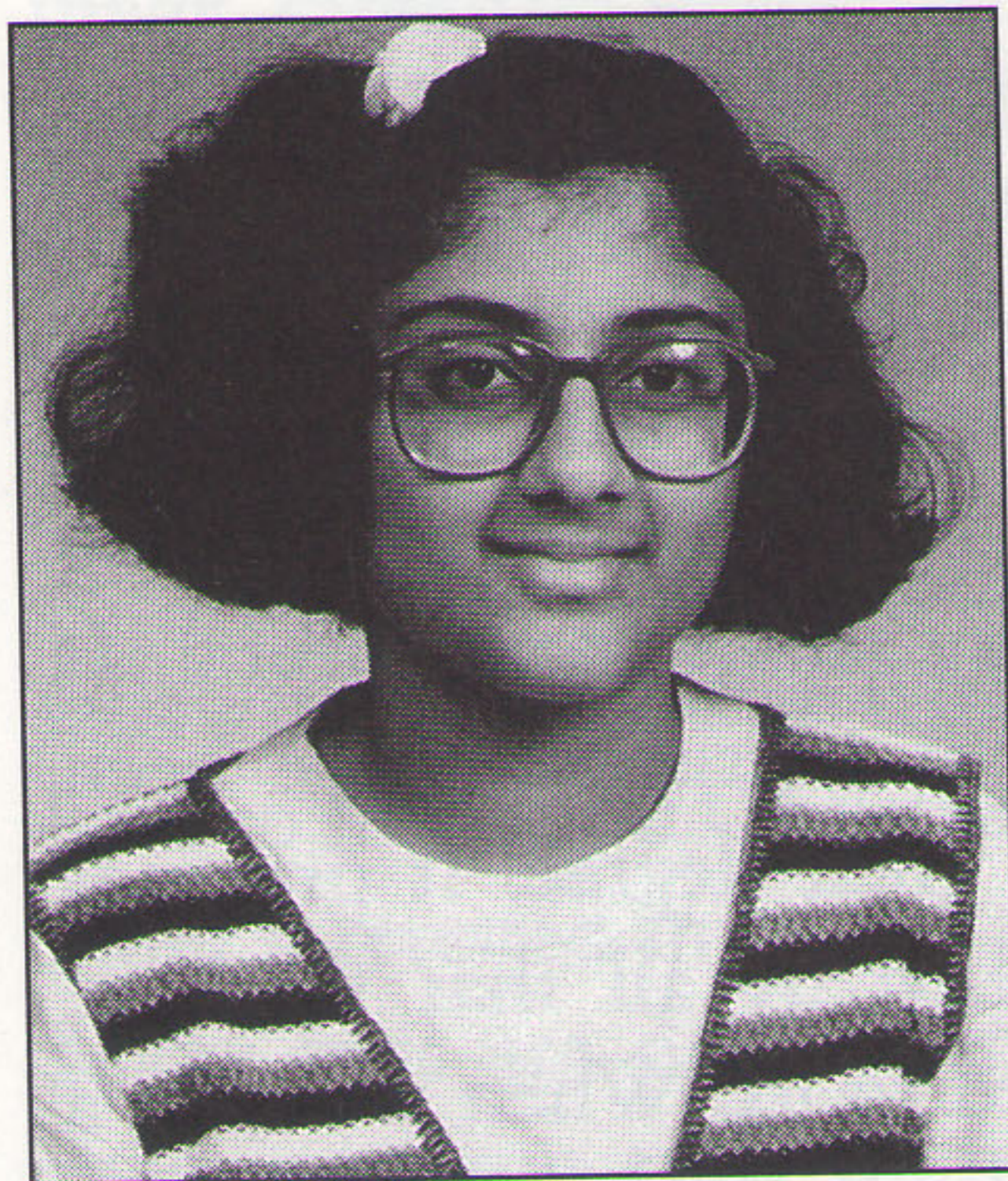
Elizabeth Chacko
First Place (Junior)
Chicago MTC



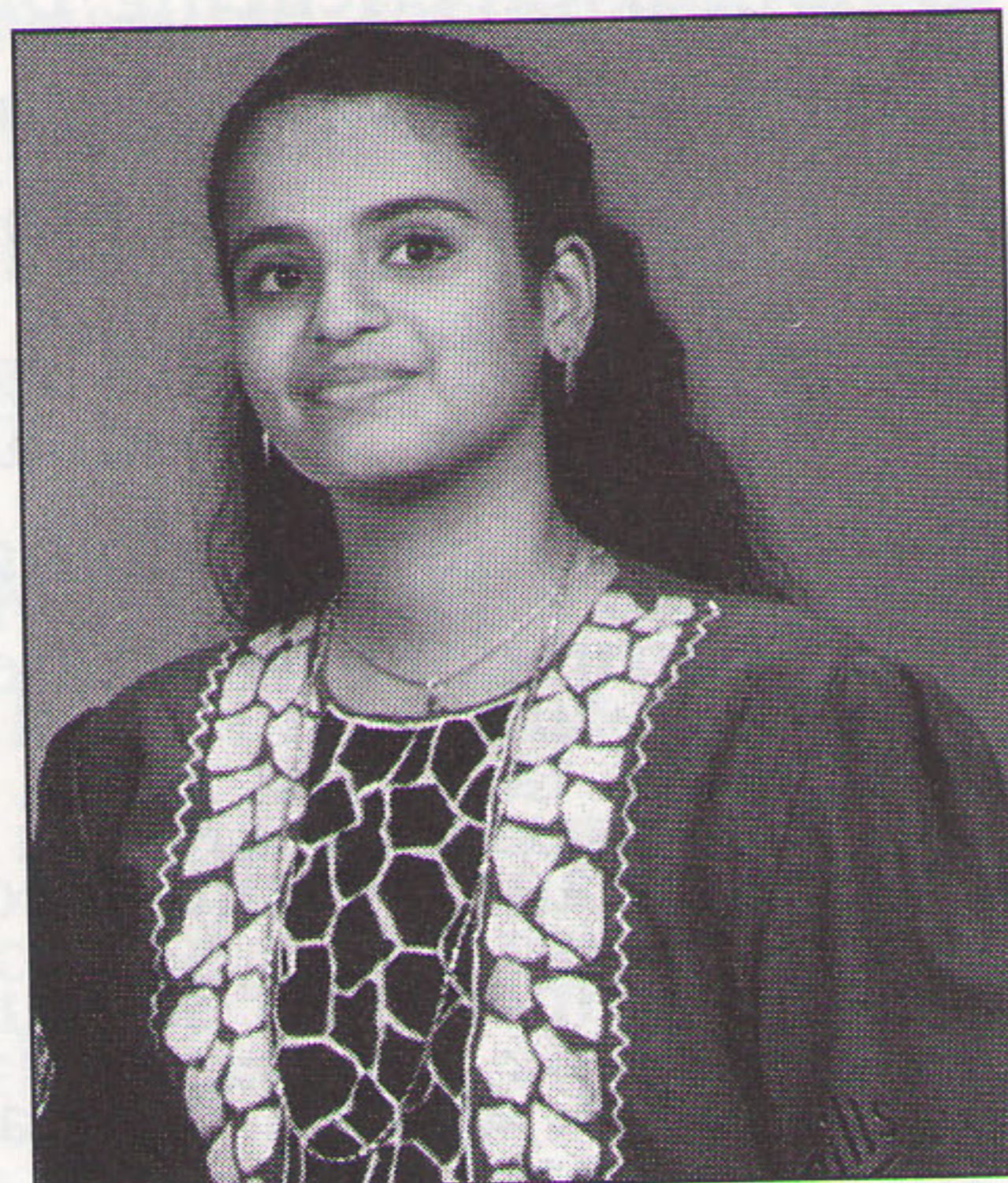
Joseph Varghese
Second Place (Junior)
St. John's MTC, New York



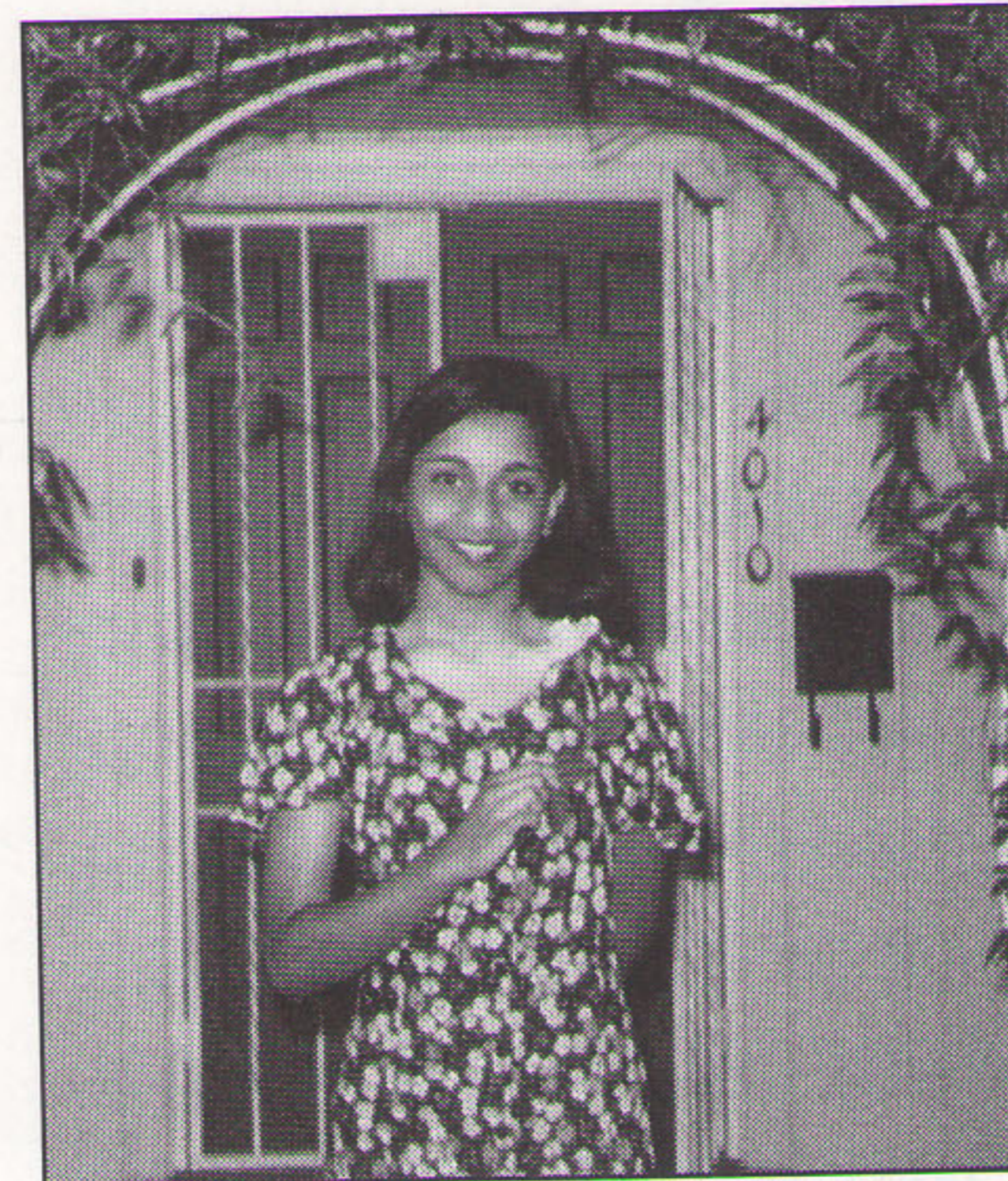
Jenny Ann Varghese
Third Place (Junior)
Staten Island MTC, NY



Melvy Mathew
First Place (Junior High)
Chicago MTC



Jasmine Samuel
Second Place (Junior High)
Trinity MTC, Houston



Suja Chacko
Third Place (Junior High)
Trinity MTC, Houston



Shalin George
Third Place (Junior)
Trinity MTC, Houston

Melvy Mathew is the First Place winner of the 1997 Diocesan Sunday School Examination in the Junior High Division. Her answer to the essay question is printed below in its original form.

Write an essay on: The life and mission of John the Baptist (His birth, appearance, comments about Jesus and doubts)

John the Baptist was born to Zechariah and Elizabeth. He was born six months before Jesus and was to prepare the way for him. This was a mission that had been told to his parents by the angel Gabriel even before John was born. His mother, Elizabeth, would always remember she had acquired John through God's love and the Holy Spirit. Before that, Elizabeth was said to be barren and unable to have children. But she and her husband continued to be righteous towards God and they followed the commandments and regulations of God. This faithfulness was rewarded when God blessed them with a child.

John's birth was told to his father, Zechariah, by the angel Gabriel. Zechariah was a priest and had been assigned to go to God's temple and offer incense. The burning of incense was a sign of devotion to God (similar to a sacrifice) and Zechariah was chosen by lot. When the angel appeared to him at the right side of the altar of incense, Zechariah did not believe at first. So Zechariah became unable to speak. When Zechariah left the temple, the people knew something had happened. Later, when John was born and they were deciding what to name the child, Zechariah regained the ability to speak. He had agreed and affirmed with Elizabeth that the child's name would be John.

During the years, John grew up, he was aware of the important job God had given him. He spent days in the desert praying to God. Later, he appeared in Judea and preached about God. John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He baptized people in the river Jordan. Baptism was an outward expression of the washing away of sins. Some people even suspected John of being the Messiah. But John tried to end these rumors.

One day, a man named Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee came to be baptized. When John baptized him and when Jesus came out of the water, the spirit came down from heaven in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven said, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with You I am pleased."

John had been telling everyone that there was someone more powerful than him coming after him. He said that he was not worthy to untie the thong of this person's sandals. But John was not sure if the man he had baptized was the Messiah they were waiting for. He said "I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Later when John was sent to jail, John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah. He had heard that Jesus was healing people. When the disciples asked Jesus, He replied, "Go and tell John what you have heard and seen: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

John realized Jesus was the Messiah. He now knew he had fulfilled his job of preparing the way for God's son. John was killed and had his head cut off. But he died knowing he had achieved his goal to God.

All of us have a mission in God's plan. It is our job to make sure our task is fulfilled in the way He wishes it. We must always follow His commandment and work hard to achieve our task, just as John did. We read the Bible to learn how people before us followed God's ways. It is our job to show God and others we are proud to believe in Him and not afraid to show people we are Christians. We owe it to Jesus, who died for our sins out of His love for all of us.

Congratulations...

The Diocesan Sunday School Committee is pleased to announce the following students as winners of the 1997 Diocesan Sunday School examination in the Junior and Junior High divisions. First, Second and Third place winners were awarded trophies and certificates at the closing meeting of the 1997 Family Conference at Toronto, Canada. The following is a list of the winners.

Thomas K. Jose, Diocesan Sunday School Secretary

Junior

First Place

Simi Abraham	Trinity MTC, Houston
Elizabeth Chacko	Chicago MTC

Second Place

Joseph Varghese	St. John's MTC, New York
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Third Place

Shalin George	Trinity MTC, Houston
Jenny Ann Varughese	Staten Island MTC , NY

Distinctions

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Bincy Alexander | Chicago MTC |
| 2. Ashish Abraham | St. John's MTC, New York |
| 3. Sharon Chackalamannil | New Jersey MTC |
| 4. Betsy Varghese | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 5. David Cherian | Trinity MTC, Houston |
| 6. Jerry Jacob | St. Peter's MTC, NJ |
| 7. Leslie Thomas | Washington MTC |
| 8. Siby Samuel | Chicago MTC |
| 9. William George | Los Angeles MTC, CA |
| 10. Shanu George | St. John's MTC, New York |
| 11. Shawn Ninan | Trinity MTC, Houston |
| 12. Dennis Abraham | St. John's MTC, New York |
| 13. Biju Raju | Staten Island MTC , NY |
| 14. Queena Varghese | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 15. Prabha Mathew | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 16. Jebin Varghese | Staten Island MTC , NY |
| 17. Leslie Philip | Staten Island MTC , NY |
| 18. Kevin Abraham | Epiphany MTC, NY |
| 19. Jennifer George | St. Peter's MTC, NJ |
| 20. Debbie Valsan | Philadelphia MTC |
| 21. Priscilla Rajan | Epiphany MTC, NY |
| 22. Tina Philip | Immanuel MTC, Houston |

Junior High

First Place

Melvy Mathew	Chicago MTC
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Second Place

Jasmine Samuel	Trinity MTC, Houston
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Third Place

Suja Chacko	Trinity MTC, Houston
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Distinctions

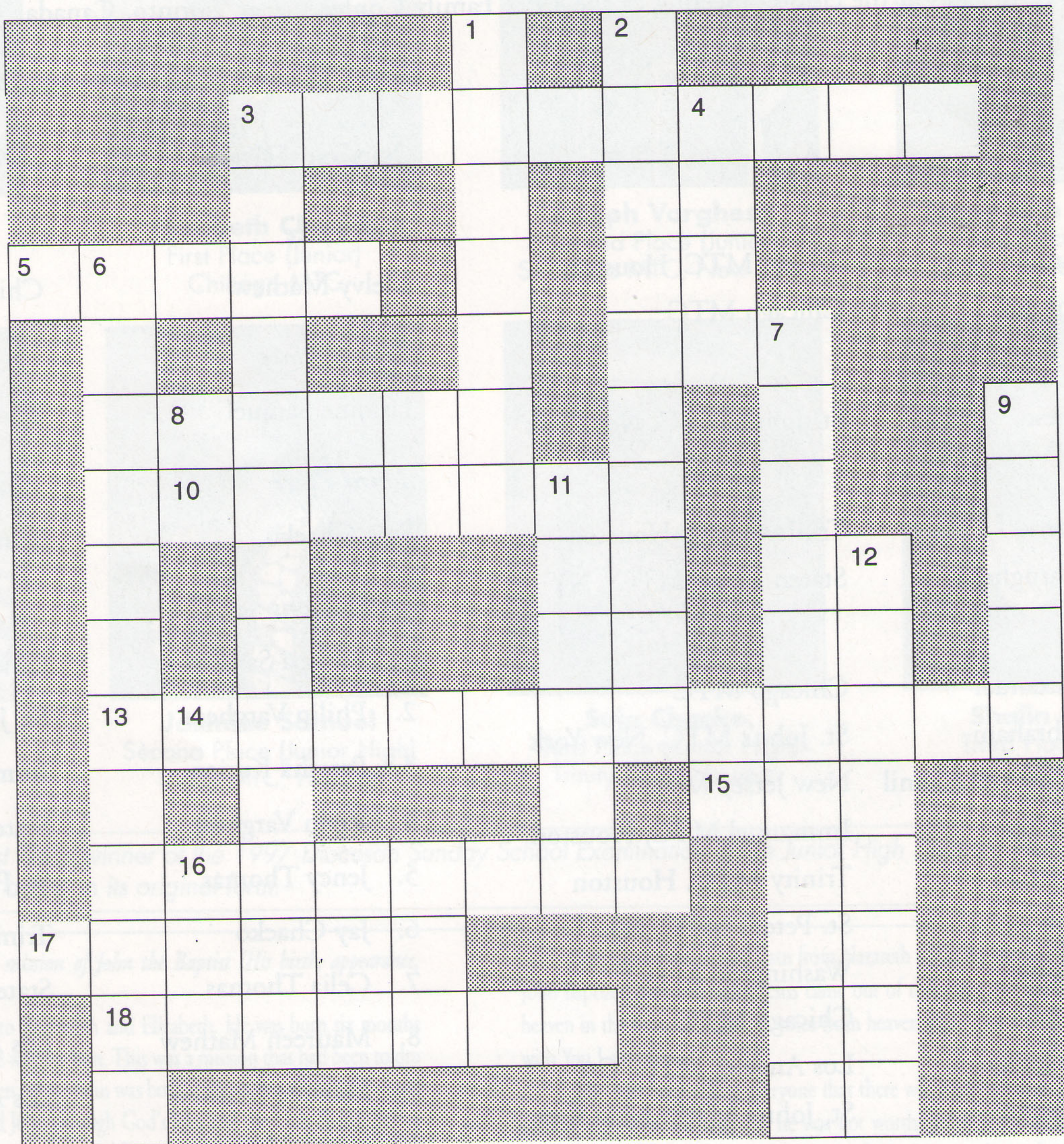
- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Pushpa Samuel | Chicago MTC |
| 2. Philip Varghese | St. John's MTC, New York |
| 3. Preetha Kurien | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 4. Vivin Varghese | Staten Island MTC , NY |
| 5. Jency Thomas | St. Peter's MTC, Houston |
| 6. Jay Chacko | Trinity MTC, Houston |
| 7. Celia Thomas | Staten Island MTC , NY |
| 8. Maureen Mathew | Los Angeles MTC, CA |
| 9. Maxime Mathew | Los Angeles MTC, CA |
| 10. Naven Varghese | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 11. Melani Zachariah | St. Thomas MTC, NY |
| 12. Amanda Philip | Toronto MTC, Canada |
| 13. Vinila Zachariah | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 14. Annie Mathew | Trinity MTC, Houston |
| 15. Sonia Easow | San Francisco MTC, CA |
| 16. Steve Oommen | Los Angeles MTC, CA |
| 17. Jewel Varghese | St. Andrews MTC, NY |
| 18. Libby Zachariah | Dallas MTC Farmers Branch |
| 19. Jason Eapen | South Florida MTC |
| 20. Jerry Mathew | Trinity MTC, Houston |

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

(based on the book of II Samuel)

Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)



Across

3. "He's a good man, and he is bringing good news."
4. The servant of Saul's family.
5. He was the composer of beautiful songs for Israel.
8. _____ soldiers forced their way through the Philistine camp, drew some water from the well, and brought it back to David.
10. David ruled for _____ years.
14. Because of the sacred promise that he and Jonathan had made to each other David spared _____.
15. "Go up to Araunah's threshing place and build an altar to the Lord." Who said this?
16. David's court secretary
17. He cursed David.
18. He came to David's help, attacked the giant Ishbibenob.

Down

1. He hated Tamar even more than he had loved her before.
2. He had supplied the king with food while he was slaying at Mahanaim.
3. After putting his affairs in order he hanged himself.
4. Here they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan.
6. His hair was very thick.
7. He was in charge of the records.
9. David let the Ammonites kill him and then took his wife.
11. Saul killed on _____.
12. Because of the Covenant Box the Lord had blessed his family.
13. She said "He exposed himself like a fool in the sight of the servant women of his officials."

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

(based on the book of I Kings)

Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)

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

1. He was taken outside the city and stoned to death.
2. Solomon was King in Jerusalem over all Israel for ___ years.
3. It had taken Solomon ___ years to build the temple.
4. He was the wisest of all men.
5. Solomon worshiped the goddess of Sidon.
6. He took off the new robe he was wearing, tore it into twelve pieces.
7. He stretched himself out on the boy three times and prayed.
8. He anointed Solomon.
9. He had always been a friend of David.
10. Joab killed this innocent man who was a better man than him.
11. He brought the hill of Samaria for six thousand pieces of silver from a man named Shemer.
12. Solomon dismissed him from serving as a priest of the Lord.
13. He did what pleased the Lord, as his ancestor David had done.
14. She took care of David in his old age.
15. Any members of his family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and any who die in the open country will be eaten by vultures.
16. Son of Solomon.
17. He hid a hundred prophets of the Lord in caves and supplied them with food and water.

Bible Word Search Finders (April 1997)

Prathik Manuel Philip	Carmel MTC, Boston
Sheba Susan Philip	Carmel MTC, Boston
Tinu Thampy	St. John's MTC, New York
Priya Thomas	St. John's MTC, New York
Trigy Thampy	St. John's MTC, New York
Teena Thampy	St. John's MTC, New York

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (April 1997)

Tinu Thampy	St. John's MTC, New York
Trigy Thampy	St. John's MTC, New York
Teena Thampy	St. John's MTC, New York
Mercy Thomas	St. John's MTC, New York
Prijo Thomas	St. John's MTC, New York
Mariamamma Z. Mathai	St. John's MTC, New York

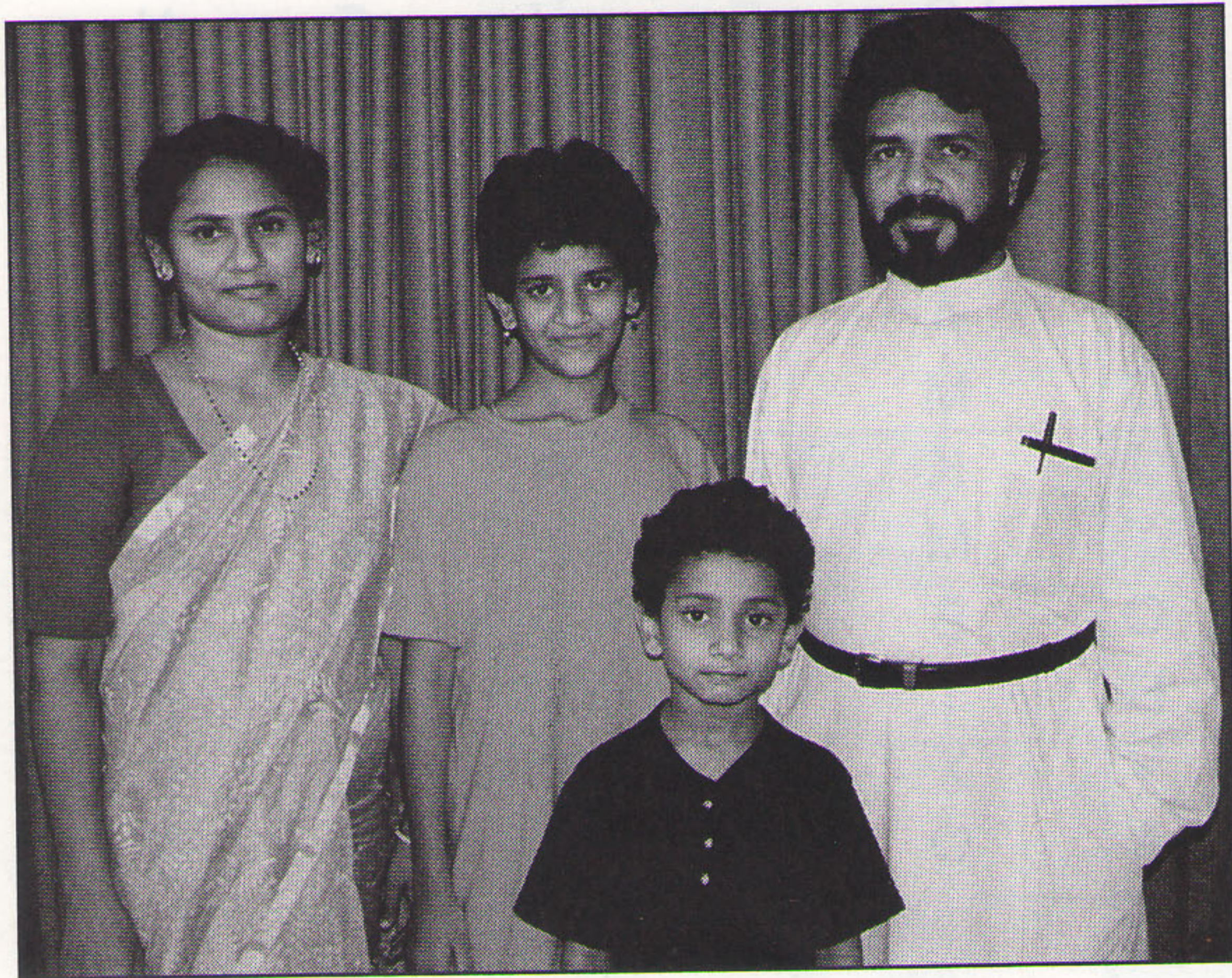
Congratulations to all winners!

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS OCTOBER 10, 1997

DIOCESAN NEWS

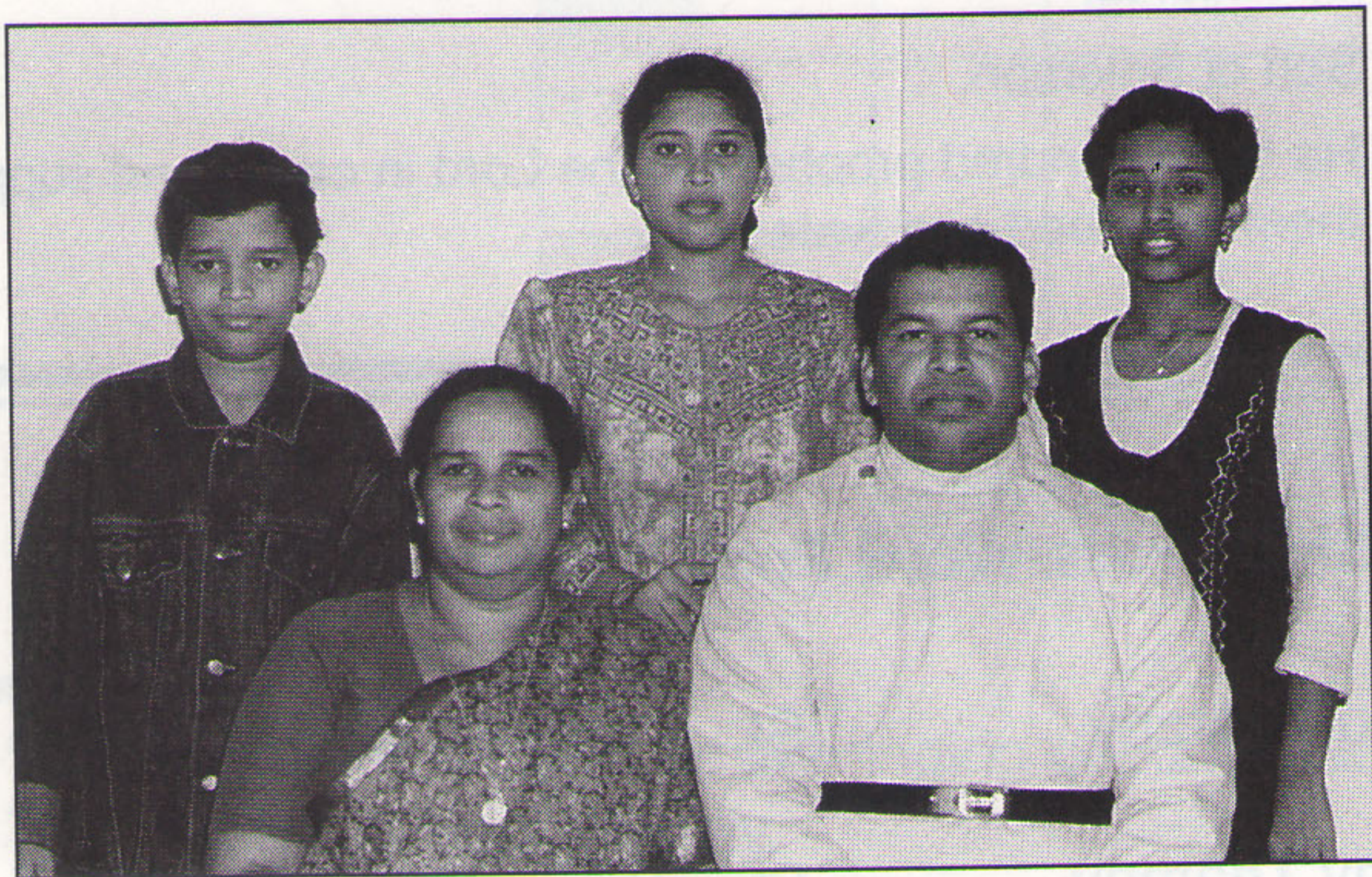
OUR NEW ACHENS

REV. JOSEPH CHACKO of Ranny Valiyakavu MTC, has joined the diocese as the vicar of the Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church, PA. Achen studied at the Leonard



Theological College, Jabalpur and was ordained in 1982. He has served the Kulathoopuzha, Punalur, Karuvatta, Rourkela and Calcutta parishes. He is accompanied by Rose Kochamma, daughter Debi and son Dan.

REV. JOHN THOMAS of Pathanamthitta MTC has joined the diocese as the vicar of Staten Island and Rochester Parishes. Achen studied at the Mar Thoma



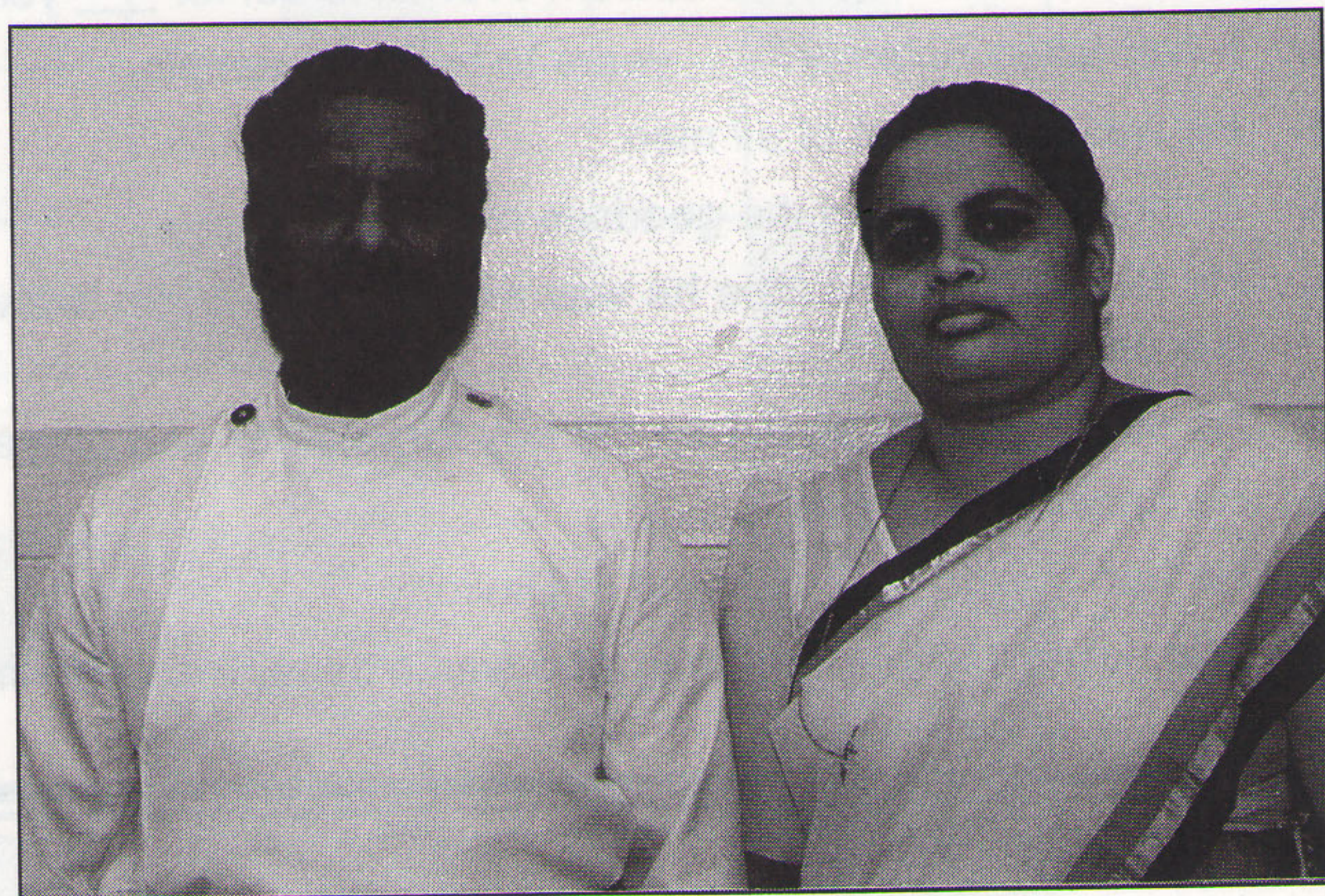
Theological Seminary, Kottayam and was ordained in 1985. He has served the Mundakkayam, Chungathara and Perumbavoor parishes. Achen is accompanied by Ponna Kochamma and daughters Asha, Anu and son Ajo.

REV. VARGHESE M. EASOW of Kalamassery MTC, has joined the diocese as the vicar of Bethel MTC, Philadelphia, PA. Achen studied at the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur and was ordained in 1983. He has served the Thalavoor, Perinadu (Quilon), Kalamassery and Fort Cochin parishes. He is accompanied by Raimol Kochamma, sons Blessen and Phen.

REV. JOHN T. GEORGE of Elanthoor Valiyapally MTC, has joined the diocese as the vicar of the St. John's MTC, UK. Achen studied at the United Theological College, Bangalore and was ordained in 1989. He has served the Thalavoor, South Travancore and Vayalathala parishes. Regini Kochamma and daughter Anjaliy is expected to join soon.

REV. T. C. GEORGE of Theppupara MTC, has joined the Florida parishes. Achen studied at the Serampore Theological College and was ordained in 1980. He has served the Vazhoor, Eraviperoor, Thadiyoor, Amalloor and the Koorthamala parishes. He is accompanied by Deena Kochamma and sons George and John.

REV. KURIAN GEORGE of Ranni, Vaikom has joined the diocese as Chaplain for the Eastern Region. Achen studied at the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur and



was ordained in 1990. He has served the St. Pauls MTC, New Bombay and Projects of the church in Mumbai. He is accompanied by Jessy Kochamma.

REV. THOMAS K. JACOB of Mallappally MTC has joined the diocese as the vicar of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church. Achen studied at the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur and was ordained in 1987. He has served the Pampakuda group of parishes, Vapi and Thamarassery Parishes. He is accompanied by Sushila Kochamma and son Sujith.

*"We can never do too much
for the one who did so much for us"*

REV. SAJAN P. MATHEW of Valakuzhy MTC has joined the diocese as the vicar of Dallas MTC, Farmers Branch. Achen studied at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam and was ordained in 1988. He has served as the Bishop's Secretary (Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese), Chaplain of the St. Thomas Residential School, Director Dept. of Sacred Music and Communications, Bombay group of parishes and Avadi, Madras Parishes. He is accompanied by Sheena Kochamma and son Jeevan and daughter Nanma.

REV. M. SAMUEL of Panaveley MTC has joined the diocese as the vicar of the New Jersey and Atlanta Parishes.

Achen studied at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam and was ordained in 1983. He has served the Neduvalloor, Mundackal, Puthukulam, Anicakadu St. Thomas and Kuriyanoor parishes. Achen is accompanied by Elsy Kochamma and daughters Christa and Achu.

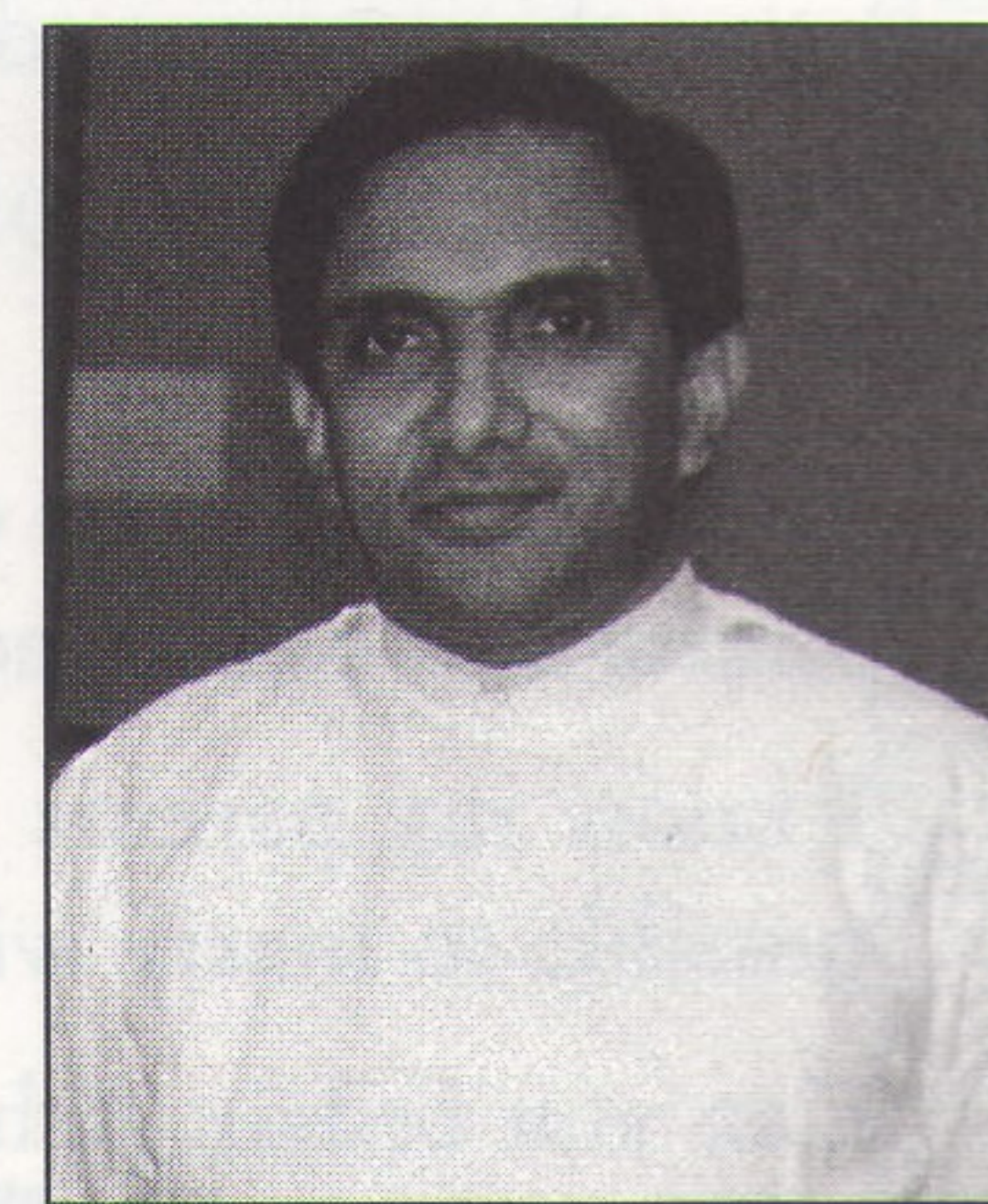
REV. L. VARGHESE of Pattamala MTC, has joined the diocese as the vicar of Edmonton group of parishes. Achen studied at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam and was ordained in 1989. He has served the Thulapally, Chengulam parishes and the Tibetan Mission.

BEST WISHES TO OUR ACHENS TRANSFERRED



P. G. George Achen served as the Bishop's Secretary and Diocesan Secretary for the last three years and as Vicar of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church for two years prior to that. Achen is transferred to Mar Thoma Church Cherukole, Mavelikara. Achen left for India on June 25, 1997.

Rev. Oommen Philip Achen served as the Vicar of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church for the last three years. Achen is appointed as Bishop's Secretary and Diocesan Secretary and as Vicar of St. Andrew's Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers, New York.



FIRST SEMINARY STUDENT FROM OUR DIOCESE

We had the privilege of encouraging Roy Thomas of Dallas Mar Thoma Church who is a second year BD student of the Kottayam Seminary. He came here for a summer practical work and was assigned to the Epiphany Mar Thoma

Church and St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York. He is a pioneer student and his experience proves that young persons from this diocese can go to India for theological education. Let us uphold him in our prayers.

MAR THOMA CENTER CONSTRUCTION

The new Mar Thoma Center Complex construction has started during the first half of July and it is expected to be completed by December, 1997. All parishes, office bearers,

and assembly members are requested to finish the Jubilee Coupon distribution and remit the amount to the diocesan office at the earliest.

FAMILY CONFERENCE

The 1998 Family Conference is hosted by the Carmel Mar Thoma Church, Boston, Massachusetts. The 1999 Family

Conference will be hosted by Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston, Texas.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH: PRESIDING BISHOP'S ELECTION

The Rt. Rev. Frank T. Griswold III of the Diocese of Chicago was elected and confirmed as the 25th presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church on Monday, July 21, 1997. He will succeed the incumbent bishop Edmond L.

Browning on January 1, 1998 and will be installed on January 10, 1998 at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. We uphold him in prayer as he takes up this sanctified office.

WCC/CUV COMMITTEE MEETING

Our Thirumeni visited Geneva during the second week of July to attend the meeting. The general assembly of the

WCC is scheduled to be held in Harare, Zimbabwe on December 3-14, 1998.

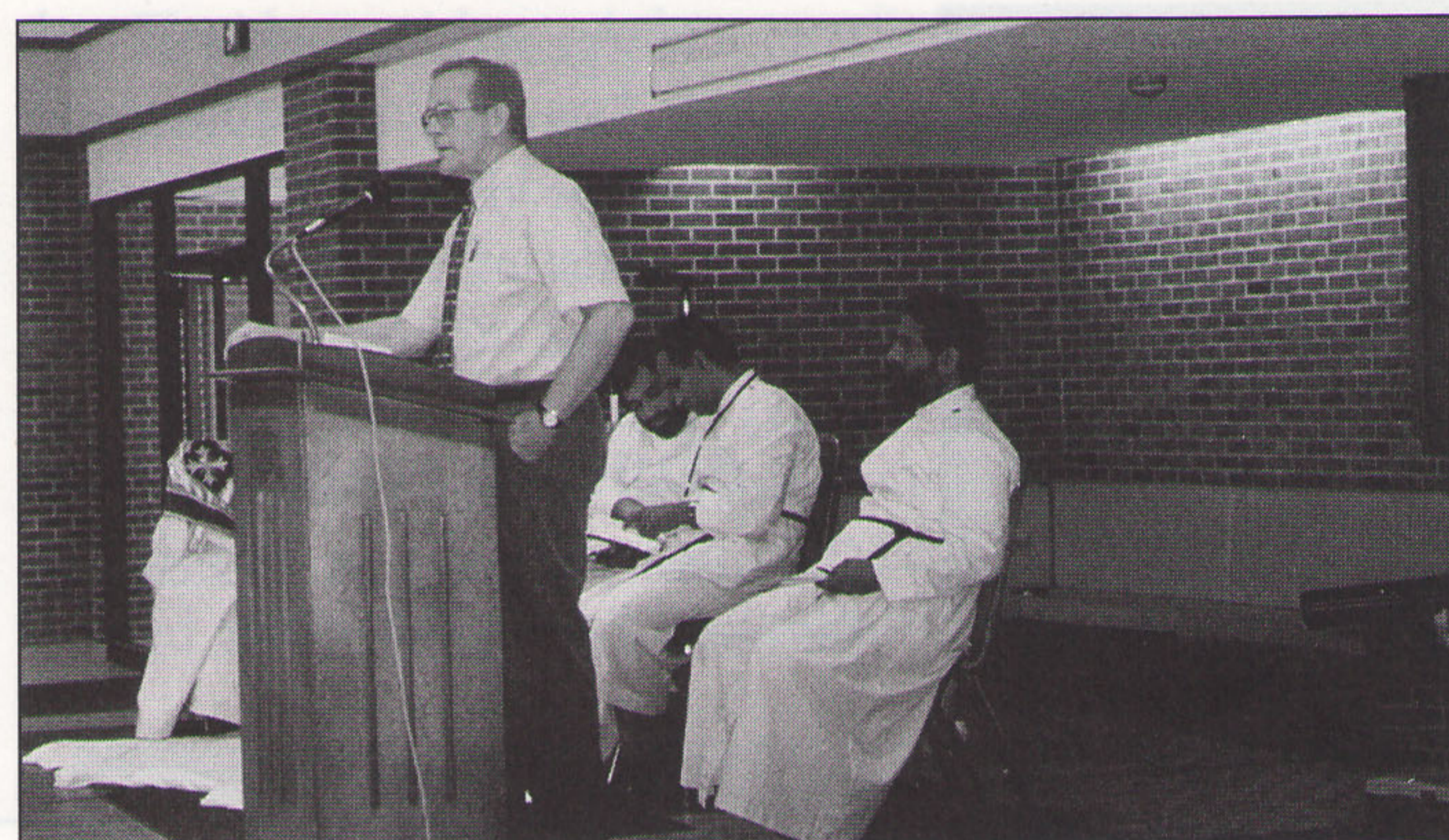
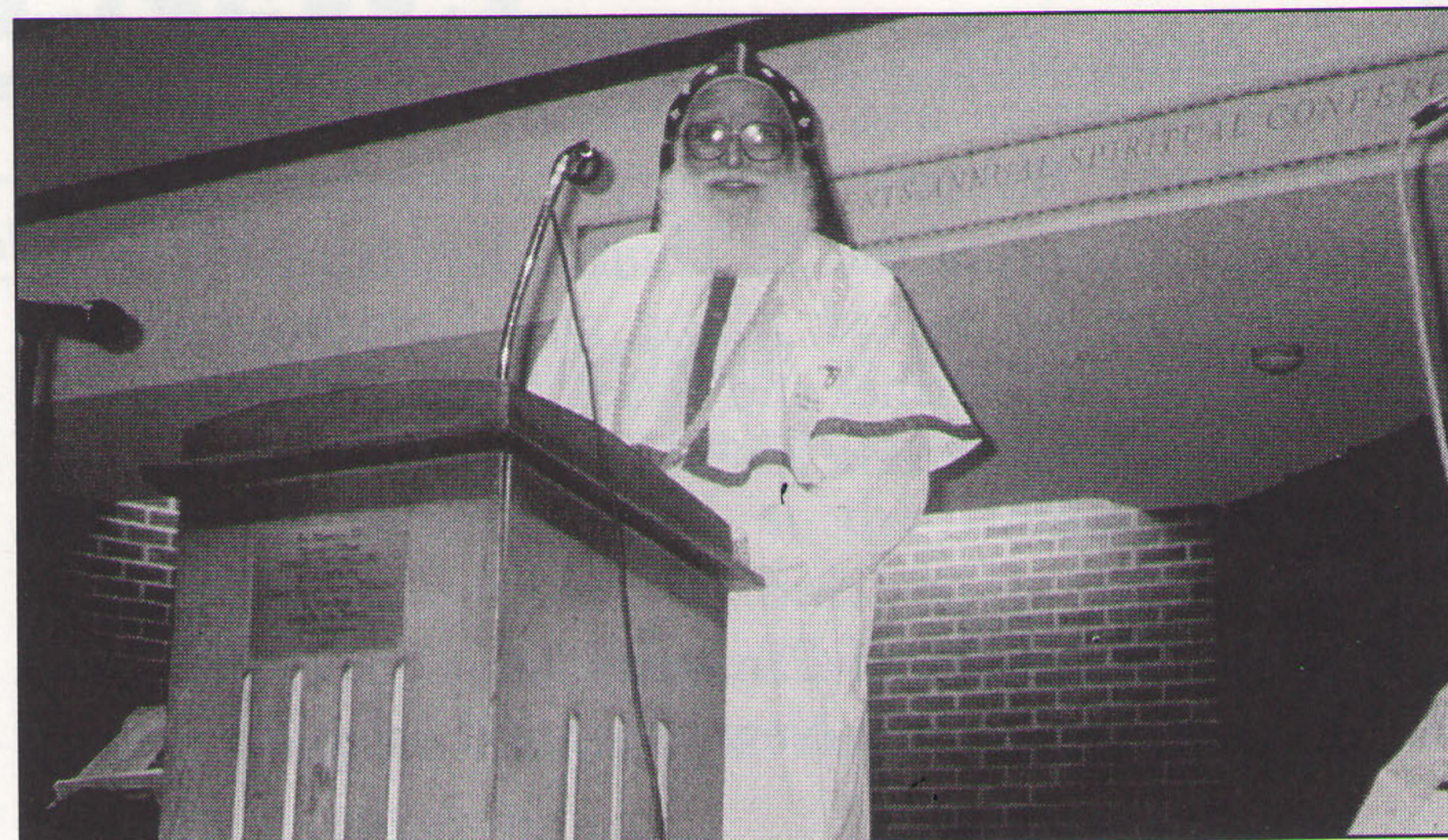
JUNIOR/SENIOR CONFERENCE — 1997

The Junior/Senior conference of the Eastern region was held between July 10-13, 1997 at Allentown College, Pennsylvania. The theme of the conference was "Am I A True Disciple" The leaders were Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan, Mr. Bart Campolo, Rev. Jack Hagar, Rev. Moni Mathew and Rev. Kurien George. Some interesting questions were raised during the question/answer session. Some of them are given below:

1. Why does our church practice child baptism ?
2. Does the church plan to change from the traditional liturgy? As human beings when we keep repeating the same thing over and over it becomes dull...
3. What is the point of the song of songs and who does it refer to?
4. How do I leave the double roll I have to play : one at school and one at home, which are totally different?
5. I know my parents got married without dating, Is it possible to marry without dating?
6. Can you ordain Achens in America? If not why?
7. Could you please explain woman's role in the church relating it to Ephesians Chapter 5:22?
8. Explain Trinity?
9. Why do you think salvation is only through Christ?
10. Is dating wrong?
11. Is drinking a slight amount of liquor just for curiosity, wrong?
12. Is liking someone of the opposite sex right or wrong?
13. Can a girl become a Chaplain, if not why?

These are some of the questions that have been asked. We will be answering them and others in future issues.

For those who have dedicated themselves, your letters are being mailed.



FROM THE CHAPLAIN

Hi...We are sure that you are anxiously waiting for the Messenger to arrive. We want to increase the participation of juniors and seniors in the publication. Therefore, we want contributions from you... not money, but creative presentations like short stories, articles, poems, drawings, cartoons, any special experience you may have had, which you may want to share with others etc...Please send your contributions to the address given below.

We are also introducing a personal column wherein you

may send questions relating to problems of a personal nature which require resolution. They will be kept confidential, the questions and answers will appear in this column. You may send your questions anonymously, though in case you want us to contact you please write your full details and address.

Kurien George Achen

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