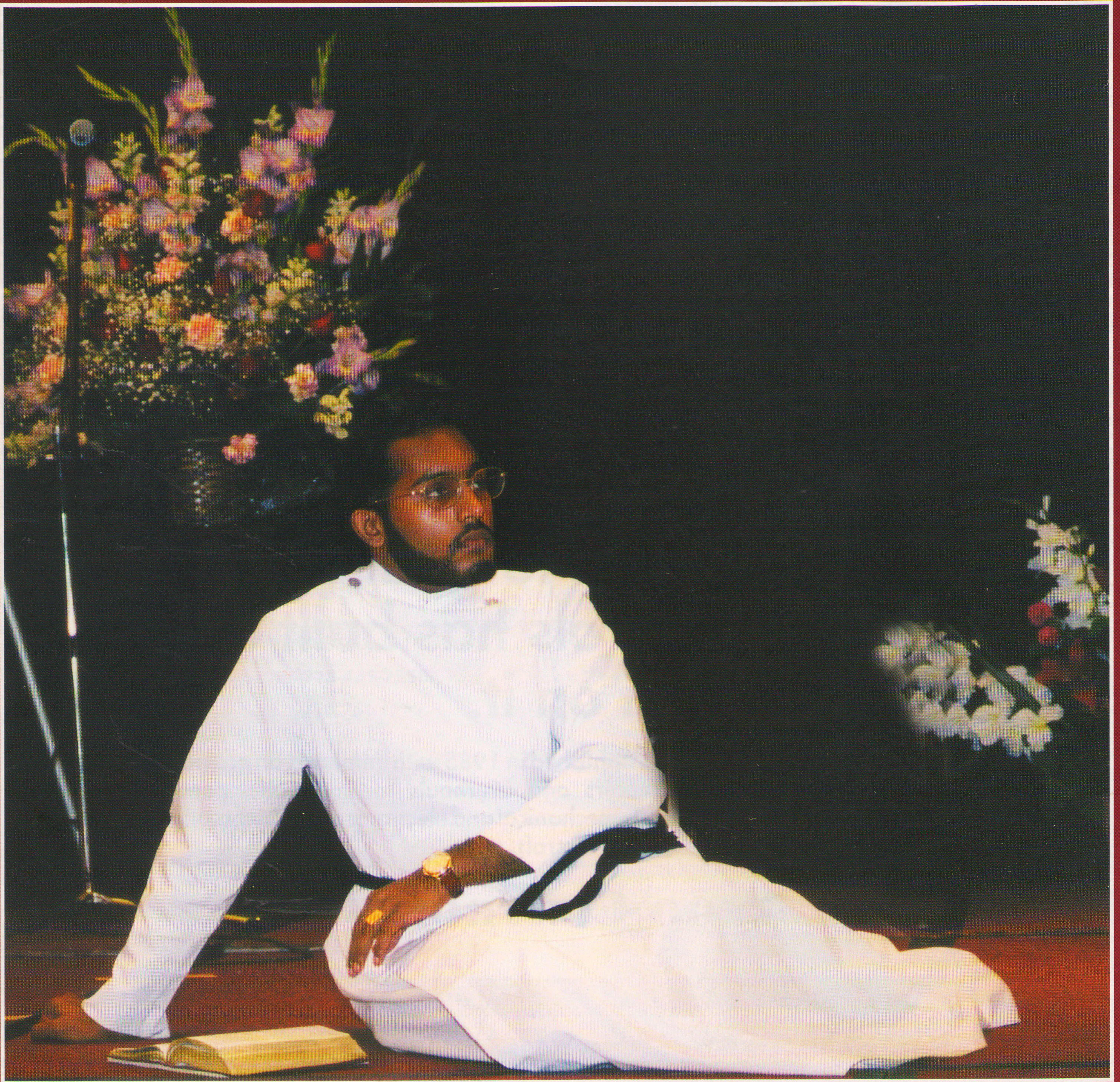


MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 1999



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EDITORIAL BOARD

Rev. K.Y. Jacob
516 377 3311
Abraham Mattackal,
562 431 0046
Abramat@aol.com

Diocesan Secretary
Fax: 516 377 3322
Chief Editor
Fax: 562 431 5857

Associate Editors:

Dr. Anna Panackal,
Abraham Thomas,
abethomas@aol.com
Dr. T. M. Thomas,
Abraham Thariath,
Dr. Zac Varghese,

215-934-6257
732-695-1015
203-333-1243
718-712-0736
London, UK

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Rev. K. G. Joseph
Phone & Fax:
Rev. Thomas Easow
James T. Philip
jamestphilip@mindspring.com
Chacko Philip,
C. V. Samuel,
Gigi Tom,
Mathew Varghese,

Manager
718 845 2920
718-465-2358
718 761 1295
516-747-5903
810-268-8007
914-268-3532
718-479-2545

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Mailing Address:

Mar Thoma Messenger
Sinai Mar Thoma Center
2320 S. Merrick Ave., Merrick, NY 11566
Tel. (516) 377-3311
Fax (516) 377-3322

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Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas

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Message From The Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

I am very glad to greet you all from Houston, where the 17th family conference is going on in full swing. July-August are the months of camps and conferences for the Diocese. Juniors, seniors, youths, families, professionals, and clergy gather in separate groups at different places during the weekends of these months for retreat and renewal. Many undergo a rejuvenating experience while participating in these programs.

The family conference in Houston had Theodosius Thirumeni and Sister Joanne Chungappura as main leaders to deal with the theme, "Reconciliation in the Midst of Conflict". For the modern world, church, and family situations, the theme seemed to be very relevant. Kashmir, Korea, and Kosovo, surface the grave conflicts on the international scene. Multiplication of denominations in various parts of the world point towards division in the church. Divorce, desertion, and separation speaks for conflicts in the family. Many are ignorant or incapable of managing or resolving conflicts that are natural when two or three live together. One must be prepared to give up "The Tunnel View of Life" and accept "The Helicopter View" to redeem a conflict situation. All knowledge and resources within a person, wisdom and counsel of experts in the field, and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are essential to redeem conflict. Any conflict has the potential of peace, provided the context is properly understood and cautiously handled. With patience and perseverance, one can make a lot of difference in the personal, family, church, and community life. So never give up, conquer conflicts! Begin afresh. Any moment is good for a new beginning.

One of the most important events of the diocese took place at the family conference on July 4, Sunday. Deacon Roy Abraham Thomas, Grand Prairie parish, Dallas was ordained as "kasseessa" during the Holy Communion service. This was the first ordination held in the diocese of North America and Europe. Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas is the first person from the second generation of our community who has responded to the call of ministry. Rev. Thomas and his family need to be congratulated for the bold step and great commitment. The solemn service attended by over a thousand members was a strong challenge for youngsters to come forward to build up the church and for the parents to offer their children to the cause of the church. I hope and believe many would follow the path of ministry in the coming years.

I thank God that Rev. M.O. Oomen, Jr. could begin the ministry of Youth Chaplain in the Texas Oklahoma region from the first of July. I hope and believe his service would be a great assistance and guidance to our youngsters in that area. I pray God to bless his family and ministry abundantly.

The Mar Thoma Messenger now has a new Editorial Board and a Managing Committee. Mr. Abraham Mattackal is the Chief Editor and Rev. K.G. Joseph is the convenor of the Managing Committee. I believe the new arrangement will generate more efficiency in the publication of the Messenger in the coming years, I want to thank Mr. Abraham Thomas, former editor and his colleagues, Rev. Kurien George, Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas and especially Mr. James Philip for the yeoman service rendered to the Diocese. I wish God's blessings on the new team. It is encouraging we have over twenty-five life members who have already remitted \$300 each. At present we have only about seven hundred subscribers (\$18 for two years and for 8 issues). I urge each subscriber to enroll a friend in the subscription list of the Messenger from this month onwards. All our families should be enriched by having and reading the Mar Thoma Messenger.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon you all.

With prayers and blessings

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

Reconciliation in the Midst of Conflicts

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius

[Main Talk on the theme, at the XVII Mar Thoma Family Conference hosted by the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston: July 1-4, 1999.]

Conflict is a reality in human life. There are conflicts within oneself, within the family, within the Church and between religions. There are conflicts between various ideologies and between communities. Almost every aspect of our society is being swallowed up by conflicts today.

When we are in the midst of conflicts, we need reconciliation. The word reconciliation means: 'to make peace with', 'to change thoroughly', 'to make self pleasing', 'to bring together', 'to re-unite', "to restore the friendship" and 'to bring back to harmony. Reconciliation indicates the changed relationship for the better between persons or groups who formerly were at enmity with each other. Biblically, it refers to the new relationship between God and humanity effected by Christ's redemptive work. (Rom 5. 10-11, 2 Cor 5. 12-20, Cor 1: 20-32 and Eph 2:16)

God has created this world in such a way that all aspects of the created order are inter-related and dependent on each other. There is harmony in the created order. Bible clearly tells us that whenever there was a breakdown of relationships, God did not rest. Prophets had come, Kings were sent, judges were deputed to correct the life of human beings and turn them to God. God took the human form in Jesus Christ and broke down the walls of separation. He gave us the commandment to love one another. The reconciled life would give the whole cosmos a healthy and happy living. The Church, which commemorates Jesus' birth, death and resurrection, is given this ministry of reconciliation. This means every family and every individual has a role to play in order to make this ministry more meaningful and fruitful today.

When we say that Jesus Christ reconciles the whole creation, it means three things:

1. The need for recognizing that we have conflicts and we need the Experience of reconciliation.
2. The need for affirming that Jesus is the one who reconciles us.
3. The need for us to recognize the mission to be the agents of reconciliation.

Reconciliation in the Midst of Conflicts is the theme of the Conference, Let us relate this to the life of the Christian Family.

Christian Family and Married Life

Family is the smallest unit in the Church and society. In the family there are conflicts that arise day by day. God in Christ enables us to face it positively and resolve them. It brings in happiness and harmony. The reconciled family gives the whole cosmos an atmosphere to have a healthy and happy living.



1. What makes 'marriage' a marriage? What are your expectations and realities that you face in choosing your partner?

Many people think that they can enter into marriage once they have achieved the marriageable age or have gotten a job or attained financial security. This is like building the house upon the sand. What you need is a strong foundation, which will face the storms of life. (Mt. 7:24-)

(i) **Marriage is a vocation.** It is God who calls a man and a woman to enter into married life. The order of service for Holy Matrimony tells us that it is God who calls them into his presence in the sanctuary. He gives them the wedding rings as a symbol of His blessings, which will remain with them throughout their married life. "The blessings and goodness from the hand of Christ remain with you and protect you throughout your life... With peace and joy of body and spirit may you offer praise and glory to Christ, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit." The spouse is God's gift and they accept each other accordingly (Gen. 2.18-23) "Here is one of my own kind, bone taken from my bone and flesh from my flesh."

(ii) **Marriage is a covenant.** Marriage is a sacred covenant - a dynamic growing interaction and devotion between spouses who faithfully love and cherish each other. This covenant is modeled from God's unconditional love to the world through Jesus Christ who incarnated to be among the creation. It is the mystery of being in love. Marriage is an experience of the love-call of God. According to St. Paul, it signifies the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church. St. Paul in Eph. 5:22-23 compares husband-wife relationship to that of Christ and the Church. The love that is revealed there is (a) sacrificial love (b) enriching love (c) caring love (d) unbreakable love. Paul exhorts in vs. 25 "husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church." In vs. 28 he says, "husbands ought to love their own wives as their bodies." (Read Tim. 5: 8 and 1 Pet. 3: 7)

(iii) **Marriage is a sacrament.** When we say marriage is a sacrament, God is the celebrant—it is the grace of God that enables the couple to lead a happy and blessed life and this life of marriage is meant to be a sacramental life. Marriage is a spiritual union blessed by God. Oswald Chambers, in his book *MY utmost for his Highest*, says: "our human relationships are the actual conditions in which the ideal life of God is to be exhibited."

The Bible reminds us that the married couple should remain as one. 'They are no longer two but one.' This does not mean one identifying with the other, but this means, both bride and groom begin a new life, which they have never lived before. When we realize that there is permanency in marriage we 'need to recognize that the bride and groom should enter into the experiences of new life moment by moment. Therefore, life together is continuous and progressive finding the utmost only in the Kingdom of God.

People have lots of expectations when they choose a life partner. But those expectations may not become a reality because marriage is a union of two persons while recognizing the Lordship of Christ. Here each person has the God given freedom to choose and plan his or her future. When Christ is Lord, it is the will of God that has to reign in the married life. So there is a union of three free beings and yet they are to be of one accord. Therefore, $1 + 1 + 1 = 1 \times 1 \times 1$. This is a mystery. One person has said that life is like a piano; what comes out of it depends on how you play it. It is like an orchestra where there is only one music.

The partner in life is a gift of God. Married life is also a gift of each other and, therefore, the closest friend in life is your partner and no one else, while Christ remains as the Lord. Happiness in married life is in sharing. This sharing is not out of any demand but out of love, The partner is a person and therefore life together is to be with understanding and honor. (1 Pet. 3,7)

Marriage is not merely a physical union. It is a spiritual, mental, and emotional union where two persons experience their perfection as a union designed by God. "The two will become one flesh." This should not be out of lust but out of love and loyalty to each other, Here there is no, place for domination, exploitation, doubt or brutality. It is a self giving love for mutual edification. 'A smile is a curve that can set a lot of things straight.'

Marriage is sacred and sacramental. Man and wife are jointly the image of God. They are called jointly to radiate the nature of God. God is writing the story of each family on the canvas of history. Married life becomes sacramental when it becomes a blessing to others and to the future generations

2. What do you think is the place of God in your modern family life?

The post modern world has become a place where the speed of development or progress is very rapid. Here human being becomes only a commodity or a cog in the machine. The modern man with his -market-culture throws away all that is old and unproductive. Every product in the market is becoming now and attractive in shape and essence. The result is that the human being is also in search of new things including life partners.

With the rise in global market human being is discovering new Gods like materialism, efficiency, bank deposits etc. etc. thereby distorting his own identity. With the migration of people from one country to another country, there are people who have given up their ancient culture in the hope of embracing the new one. But the reality is that they have lost both cultures. This changes one's world view and identity.

The modern Info-Tech also affects their interpersonal relationships. The e-mail and internet facilities help us to have all information worldwide. It helps us to know the names of our relatives and friends and all the details about them, except they themselves as persons, The impact of socio-economic changes in society has very much affected the modern family in its function and altered the family pattern and roles. The growing concern for the role of the family in the new situations calls for a new perception and creative assessment of what promotes and what hinders the family's vital role and status in modern society.

We recognize that there are difficulties today in getting married and staying happily married. When some one is offended, attitudes quickly change, inappropriate words and actions soon follow. The relationship is strained. Like flashing red lights, these symptoms of conflict warn us that something needs to be done to bring back the harmony of life.

What the families need here is to turn to God who is the Lord, the designer and protector of married life. God is God even when humans turn away from him. But human beings reduce to zero if he or she moves without God. God still reconciles the world. When the family turns to God, reconciliation begins. The improvement should always begin with the 'I' in the family. The real joy of any family is found when God is at the center of all relationships.

Marriage is instituted by God as God's loving plan for man and woman. It is a sacred covenant where the spouses got opportunity to strengthen and to grow in love understanding and trust as God like persons. God has also given form and content to the functions of the family. God wants humans as partners in maintaining and building up God's creation. So like God, humans have the pleasant task of caring, sharing, and tending one another. One can join the Psalmist in saying: "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes." Ps. 118:23

3. What is the relevance and meaning of relationship?

God's creation and purpose of man and woman are embodied in their relationship to God, to one another and to the other creatures. The pattern of all God given relationships is founded in the relationship we have in the Godhead Trinity. Trinitarian God is one and at the same time three persons. This relationship transcends all human understanding, but is an empirical reality. Christ speaks more of this in his high-priestly prayer we see in John 17. It is not sameness, but unity where plurality is respected and individuality is transcended.

A group of people staying together under the same roof doesn't make a family. This small unit of a community called family links and frees the persons from isolation of the solitary individual and anonymity of the solitary world. The existence of the family shows that we are not meant to be totally alone. Family provides the privileged environment for nurturing, growth, well being, and freedom of the individual members. So every one is related and is part of the family. Family provides the basic life-experience of responsibility and values such as loving, caring, and sharing. The family is a unit of its members and is adaptive to social changes.

A Christian family consists of persons related to each other in Christian love. The relationship that we have in the family is

God-given. It is sacred, lasting, life-giving and to be kept. God related himself to the created world through his son Jesus Christ and gave us a model for all human relationships. This can be understood as: a) God's love revealed in the incarnation; b) Outflowing love revealed in Christ's prophetic ministry where he went out to meet people; c) Love revealed on the cross of Christ (self-emptying); and d) Love revealed through the resurrection of Jesus and commissioning his disciples.

St. Paul says that this love of God in Christ to the created order excels all wisdom. (Eph. 3:1-9) This is given to us as the model of reconciliation.

There are three types of relationships, dependent, independent and interdependent. God's intention about human relationships is to have interdependent relationships where one becomes the helper of the other, complementing and contributing to each other.

In the sacred union of marriage one cannot exist without the other. Through the sacrament of marriage one has said 'yes' to companion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, forbearance, patience and forgiveness and 'no' to anger, malice, wrath, abusive language and lies. (Col. 3:12-17) Humans are not perfect but in honesty and humility, the partners must try to grow, share each others views and happenings and be willing to forgive one another.

Following are some of the suggestions that can keep the couple together: a) Build on the same spiritual base and work toward the same spiritual goal. Col. 3: 1-47; b) Share feelings and talk about mutual interests. Col. 3: 18-19. Eph. 4: 29-30; c) Identify frustrations, but never attack the person. Col. 4:6; d) Never allow a lively discussion end in ugly argument; e) Never go to bed angry at each other. Make up before you go to sleep. Eph 26-27. Mt. 5: 48; f) Kneel together in prayer before God who has designed your family. Eph. 3:14-15

In the making of a home, its substance and completion is perfected in oneness and mutuality. In the relationship of interdependence one's weakness and sadness affect the other and on the other hand, strength and happiness of the one build up the other. The prayer of Reynold Nieobuna is relevant here: 'Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.' – Amen.

4. How do you reduce conflicts and differences of opinion that arise in your daily life?

It is only natural that there arises conflicts and differences of opinion in the interpersonal relationships. This is natural and is a reality. We need to accept that fact. There is no security on this earth; there is only opportunity. Do you recognize any of the following fiery phrases? What did you say? Leave me alone She makes me sick! Mind your own business So what? Get off my back, will you? etc. These are some of the common phrases we hear at home. As we grow in a family we note that various circumstances bring in unseen weakness in each individual. The use of money, for example, is a major reason why many families break. Just because one member brings the resources it does not follow that in a family he or she must have complete control. In

the married life, it is not the material resources that matter, but it is the person.

"I will kill you!" This is another phrase we hear at home. This is not a silly statement. Words come out when your heart is full. These words express some of your feelings when (1) there is no faith in the partner; (2) when desires are not fulfilled; (3) You are addicted to drugs and drinks; (4) there is cheating in the mutual relationship; (5) there is dissatisfaction with respect to sex; (6) there is problem with the children; (7) a partner is ignored; (8) there is mental stress; (9) there is physical assault; (10) there is involvement of wrong persons in the conflict. etc. These conflicts are to be resolved in love; your benediction then will be 'may you live all the days of your life.'

Love is the key for a happy family life. This love is not mere phrases. It is not infatuated love. It is sacrificial love. Such a loving person will not start speaking about problems or financial needs as soon as the partner comes home tired after long hours of work. He or she will be given time for relaxation, A loving person will not speak of various needs unnecessarily when the family's income is not adequate. Remember that a man feels great when others recognize that he is able to support and manage his family. A woman feels great she is given love and care when she is tired and understanding when not keeping well.

Conflicts arise without much effort. "It takes one to make a war, but two to make peace." It is easy to get angry. 'When you are angry for one minute, you lose a minimum of sixty seconds of happiness.' It may prolong for hours together. 'Remember that it is nice to be important, but much more important to be nice.'

Reconciliation is made possible by forgiveness and forgetfulness. Jesus Christ asked us to forgive seven-seventy times, which is without limits. 'Building a character takes longer than destroying it—just as it takes longer to grow a tree that to cut it down!' Conclusion:

A family is created by God once a man and woman are joined together in marriage. Jesus said-. 'What therefore God has joined together, let no man but asunder.' Mt. 19.6. Mutual acceptance and willingness are necessary for the life together. Man and wife are jointly the image of God and are jointly to radiate the nature of God. A happy and harmonious marriage means falling in love many times, but always with the same partner.

Holiness, which is the essential nature of God, is to be experienced and revealed in the mutual relationship and in the daily life. Book of Hebrews reminds us: Let marriage be held in honor among all. (Chapter 13 vs. 14). Married life is ordained by God and is sacred and a God-given responsibility.

Family as a community of persons is the first human society. It is the primary religious center where the Gospel is announced and liturgy is celebrated. Naturally, conflicts arise in families. It is God's desire that the conflicts are resolved from time to time, enabled by the all-sufficient grace of God. This reconciliation is a divine gift when you participate with God in the divine process of redemption. You are reconciled for: reconciliation. ■

GIST OF TALK GIVEN BY SISTER DR. JOAN CHUNKAPURA DURING THE FAMILY CONFERENCE IN HOUSTON FROM JULY 1-4, 1999 ON THE THEME 'RECONCILIATION IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICTS'

Friday July 2, 1999

Identifying Areas of Conflicts

Just as Spring flowers wither away from their stalks to produce fruits on the plants and trees, change is part of the human growth. Change in itself is necessary for sustaining life. Conflict is part of this change. Conflict is not seen only in marriage but everywhere people interact together — in workplace, community, church life etc. Conflict is not because someone hates someone. Family is a place of healing. Without reconciliation, there is no healing. In order to have healing taking place in us, we all need to be reconciled. In order to reconcile, we have to change. We all need a conversion as we all have areas of repentance. Sinfulness is part of the human nature. There is an inward power of holiness and spirituality and at the same time there is another world of instincts, emotions, needs and wants, pleasures, egoism and selfishness.

In order to resolve conflicts, one has to find himself a journey inward to find himself, a home coming to forgive his own childhood traumas. These childhood traumas are the shadows of life; they are the areas of compulsive and behavioral disorders. If we accept conversion and reconciliation, we can keep the harmony going and we can heal one another. In the book of Exodus, over a hundred times, it is written "I'm the Lord your God". Until and unless we experience that He is the Lord and our God, healing will be difficult to be achieved. God has forgiven us. He has liberated us.

It is part of the spirituality and holiness to belong to a group. Human heart is created for relationship in the likeness of God. The need for relationship is very basic like the need for air and water. Without that the human life will be meaningless. So whatever price one has to pay, whatever pain one has to take, keep the relationship in harmony and don't take it as a burden. Each one of us has to ask ourselves the question — Do I perpetuate conflict because of my personality? There are five types of personalities:

1. **A Turtle.** When things do not move according to my own will and plan, I would rather withdraw and I am not interested in talking or engaging myself in a dialogue. So what happens — our own goal of making a family is at stake. We are alienating ourselves.
2. **A Shark.** The person has already made up his or her mind as to what should be done with or without the help of the other. These are compulsive achievers and theirs is an achievement based personality. Here there is



no value for individualism.

3. **A Teddy Bear.** One simply wants to please the other and no importance is given to self. One allows all bad habits to keep harmony. There is no time for discussions, no leisure time for recreation, no justice to oneself. There is lack of self-respect and a horrible injustice to oneself.
4. **A Fox.** We try to appear loving and caring but mostly they are pretensions. There is no deep love or commitment. We lead a double life with a double personality. In the beginning, everything goes well but later we act according to our true nature which create conflicts.
5. **An Owl.** Both husband and wife are aware of the relationship, both have capacities and both know each other's potentials and weaknesses. One doesn't allow domineering by the other. Both have demands and needs leisure, job, spiritual needs, intellectual needs, social needs etc.

Wisdom of the fifth personality is humility. Both have to show from the beginning a willingness to compromise. Both have to open their hearts to express "I need you to achieve my goals and I need your love and companionship. God has created Man and Woman in His own image. The reciprocity of life demands that there has to be two sexes. Human sexuality is not simply an instinctual sexuality of physical sex alone. It is a sexuality embracing all areas of human existence. The positive side of sexuality is not often seen in Christian couples. They often forget that it is God who united them in matrimony and that the Christian life is a self-emptying love. The husband-wife relationship is a life long commitment and together they have to fulfill certain responsibilities — responsibilities to themselves and society at large.

Saturday July 3, 1999

Practical Ideas for Conflict Resolutions

First we have to have an awareness of the fact that there is a conflict because without this awareness, there is no conflict to be resolved. In order to resolve the conflicts, we have to remove from our minds all irrational thinking and belief systems such as "my misfortune is so horrendous, my problem is the greatest, whatever I do I should succeed, I should be perfect in everything I do, others should accept my opinions and actions, sorrow and pain doesn't have any place in my heart, others should love me the way I love them."

We have to say good-bye to the irrational thinking. We belong to the universal family and we have to understand the universality of the problem. Make a dialogue with ourselves, make a dialogue to the inner self and reconcile ourselves. Individual conflict often creeps up to the family. Lack of understanding and acceptance is the root cause of family conflict. The reason for the conflict is not because the husband and wife are different. It is because they do not accept each other as they are. Try to appreciate and admire each other. Practice *Token Therapy* — at least say two things good about each other before retiring to bed. If argument starts at any time, cut it short so that it doesn't prolong for more than five minutes. All negative talks and criticisms should be avoided. We have to say goodbye to our egoistic tendencies.

Love Letter Therapy: Write letters to oneself without showing it to the other—Bring out all the anger and complaints in the letter— “You are the worst, you spoiled my life, you are good for nothing...”

Then anger becomes sorrow or pain. “I'm sorry our marriage is not working out well, our children suffer.. nothing moves as we plan ...” Next the letter will show anxiety and fear. “ I'm going to be in trouble. I do not have the courage to face life's problems .. I cannot handle these alone... I do not have the strength.” Then a feeling of guilt comes in. “ I'm responsible for all family problems. I admit I'm wrong. I caused your pain” Finally healing takes place. Reality comes in. “I love you, I admire you. I do not

have any complaint. I have to be thankful to you. I need you. Without you, I cannot proceed.”

Then the person writes the reply seeing her or him in front. “I'm drinking not because I do not love you. You do not have to worry about the future. You are everything to me. I miss you when you are away. I understand your feelings, the troubles you take to bring up the children, to keep the family going. We have to discuss everything, we need to exchange our ideas and thoughts...”

Conflict between neighbors and Church

Church belongs to God. We give to examine ourselves whether we are building up the church or dividing it. It's good for us to belong to a group and that gives us strength. We have to see the common good and not individual benefit or glory. Church doesn't belong to one. Everybody together makes the Church. Gossip and hatred do not have a place in church. We believe in the mystical body of Christ. We have to respect authority. God selects a few people every time to do His will. We have to accept their authority as the authority comes from God.

We need to form a prayer group and reconciliation group in our churches so that the devilish elements will not have any influence in the church. We have to be truthful about our sin. Do we have an 'abha' experience? Be repentant and turn away from sin and make a commitment to stay together for the common good and for the glory of God. There is no place for seeking individual glory in the church.

Abraham Mattackal



സഖറിയാസ് തിരുമേനി

നിലയ്ക്കാത്ത ഓട്ടം

“വേഗം പോരാ ഒന്നിനും
വേഗം പോകണം എന്തിനും

നിലയ്ക്കാതെ ഓടുന്നവരും
നിലനിൽക്കാനതല്ലാതില്ല മാറ്റം”

ശബ്ദരഹിതരുടെ ശബ്ദം

“നിശ്ശബ്ദത്തിൽ സൗഖ്യമാരറിയിന്നു
ശാന്തത തൻ സുഖമാർക്കുമറിയില്ല

ശബ്ദമുഖരിതമല്ലേ എല്ലാടവും
ശബ്ദരഹിതരുടെ ശബ്ദമോ ആരറിയിന്നു !”

XVII Mar Thoma Family Conference

Abraham Mattackal

The XVII Mar Thoma Conference hosted by the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, was held at Adam's Mark Hotel, Houston from July 1-4, 1999. This year's conference had an added significance because it was the last one of the century and its theme "Reconciliation in the Midst of Conflicts" was very much relevant in our present day church life. While it's so easy for the participants to



Trinity Houston Choir at the inaugural session of the Family Conference.

point out the omissions or lapses, we all know full well the enormous amount of time and effort put in by the organizers to make it happen. In fact the Conference was a great success and the participants, at the end, left for their homes with a renewed spiritual awakening and understanding that conflicts do arise in our family and church lives, but reconciliation in the midst of these conflicts is not only a possible divine task of every Christian



A section of the audience.

but also is an absolute necessity to lead a true Christian life. The organizers of the Conference, especially its President Rev. Cherian Joseph, Vice President, Mr. M. A. Mathews, Secretary Mr. T. A. Mathew and all the members of the Conference Committee deserve our admiration and

congratulations for a job well done.

The highlight of the inaugural session of the Conference on Thursday evening was an hour long video presentation "Mar Thoma Church Through the Centuries" which was interesting and informative. Besides the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, the leaders of the Conference included Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Sister Dr. Joan Chunkapura, Rev. Dr. Cleophus J. LaRue, Jr., Asst. Professor of Preaching and Worship, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Jersey, Very Rev. P. V. Thomas, Rev. Kurien George and Mr. George Cherian, the well known Convention speaker. A few government officials and civic leaders were also present at the inaugural session. The Conference Choir sang melodious songs during the opening session and led the sing-alongs throughout the Conference.



"Bible Study" Rev. Dr. Cleophus J. LaRue, Jr.

Separate meetings were held on Friday and Saturday for adults, youths and children. Bible Study for adults was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Cleophus J. La Rue and for the youths by the Rev. Sajan P. Mathew and Rev. K. Y. Jacob. Main talk on the theme 'Reconciliation in the Midst of Conflicts' on both Friday and Saturday was given by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius (full text published elsewhere in this issue) while talk on the different aspects of Family Conflicts and various methods and ways of avoiding conflicts in husband/wife relationship was given by the Sister Dr. Joan Chunkapura, Director, TRADA (Total Response to Alcohol and Drug Abuse) While Sister Chunkapura centered her talk on identifying areas of Conflicts in Friday's session., she offered practical ideas for conflict resolutions in Saturday's session. A gist of her talk is published elsewhere in this issue. Very Rev. P. V. Thomas, Vicar General, who served as Houston Parish Vicar from 1981-1985 also talked on the theme Friday evening.

Rev. Dr. Cleophus J. La Rue, Jr.'s Bible study on Friday morning was based on the Bible portion Mathew 25: 14-25, and centered on the subject "The inner turmoil in a person", when man is afraid of the past or his present or his future, he has a loss of direction and a loss of vitality of life. He feels an overwhelming sense of inadequacy and



Children's Session

inadequacy leads to jealousy and envy. We often permit ourselves to be cheated by unfounded fears and it leads to mistrust in God. Saturday morning's study was based on Romans 8:28-39 during which Dr. La Rue Jr. reminded the audience that all things work for good for those who love God. God is at work in different situations but sometimes it appears everything doesn't go as we wish or plan. God works for the ultimate good of His people. Dr. La Rue, Jr. illustrated by citing the example of the beautiful bird peacock. Although man is enchanted by the beauty and splendor of the magnificent feathers of the peacock, there is the dark side of its dirty and ugly feet. We are asked to see the good in everything. God's inseparable love will take us to the unending hope of ultimate victory in life.

A panel discussion on 'Mar Thoma Church in the New Millennium — Mission and Challenges' was held on Saturday in which Rev. Kurien Thomas, Rev. Joseph



Youth Session

Chacko and Rev. V.S. Varghese presented papers and answered questions from the audience. Rev. Dr. K.T. Joy moderated the panel discussions. Choir competitions were held on Friday and the first and second prizes were awarded to Dallas Mar Thoma Church Farmers' Branch and Mar Thoma Church of Long Island respectively. The first prize



Witnessing Session-Shawn and Ashley

in Youth Choir competition went to St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York.

The Dedication Service held on Saturday night was led by the celebrated Convention Speaker Mr. George Cherian. He exhorted the Conference attendees to serve as builders of unity and accord in their respective parishes so that reconciliation in the midst of conflicts would become a reality in every parish of the Mar Thoma Church. Just as a brick is chiseled to fill in the gap on the brick wall during construction, Mr. George Cherian reminded the audience that God often wants us to be the gap fillers and builders of the Church. Hundreds of delegates stood up in repentance, some with tears rolling down their cheeks, to rededicate themselves and their families to the Living God. When two youngsters named Shawn and Ashley came forward with moist eyes to witness and dedicate their lives, many an adult in the audience could not help but wipe out the tears.

An important part of the Closing Session on Sunday July 4, 1999 was the ordination of Deacon Roy Abraham Thomas as "Kasseessa" by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus and Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius. The ordination was part of the Sunday Holy Communion Service in which over a thousand Marthomites attended. For many, the Ordination Service was a moving experience as never before in their lives, did they watch such an ordination. Deacon Thomas' parents and other close relatives were also present at the Ordination Service. The Bishops, the Vicar General and our achenes were all visibly overjoyed with the thought that with the ordination of Deacon Roy A. Thomas as "Kasseessa", another history was

being made in that hotel hall on the 4th of July and that the first fruit of the Diocese of North America and Europe was being presented to the Mar Thoma Church, nay the Almighty God himself. Rev. Kurien George, Youth Chaplain (Eastern Region) addressed the gathering during



Deacon Roy Thomas with Thirumeni and Rev. C. Joseph before ordination

the ordination service. As a symbol of commitment, loyalty and surrender, hair from four sides of Deacon Thomas' head was cut in 'cross' form. After the ordination Service, Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas addressed the gathering primarily to offer his thanks to all those who helped him to become a Mar Thoma priest. Though he had to overcome many obstacles and difficulties during his theological studies at Kottayam, Rev. Roy A. Thomas was indeed overwhelmed by the support and love he received from all those who knew him. After the Bishops' blessings, Rev. Roy A. Thomas assisted Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus in giving bread and wine to the communicants.

Prizes were distributed by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus after the Holy Communion Service, to students who got the highest marks in the Diocesan Sunday



Rev. Thomas K. Jacob and Mr. Kalathil Varghese (Diocesan Council member) receiving the rolling plaque for most participation.

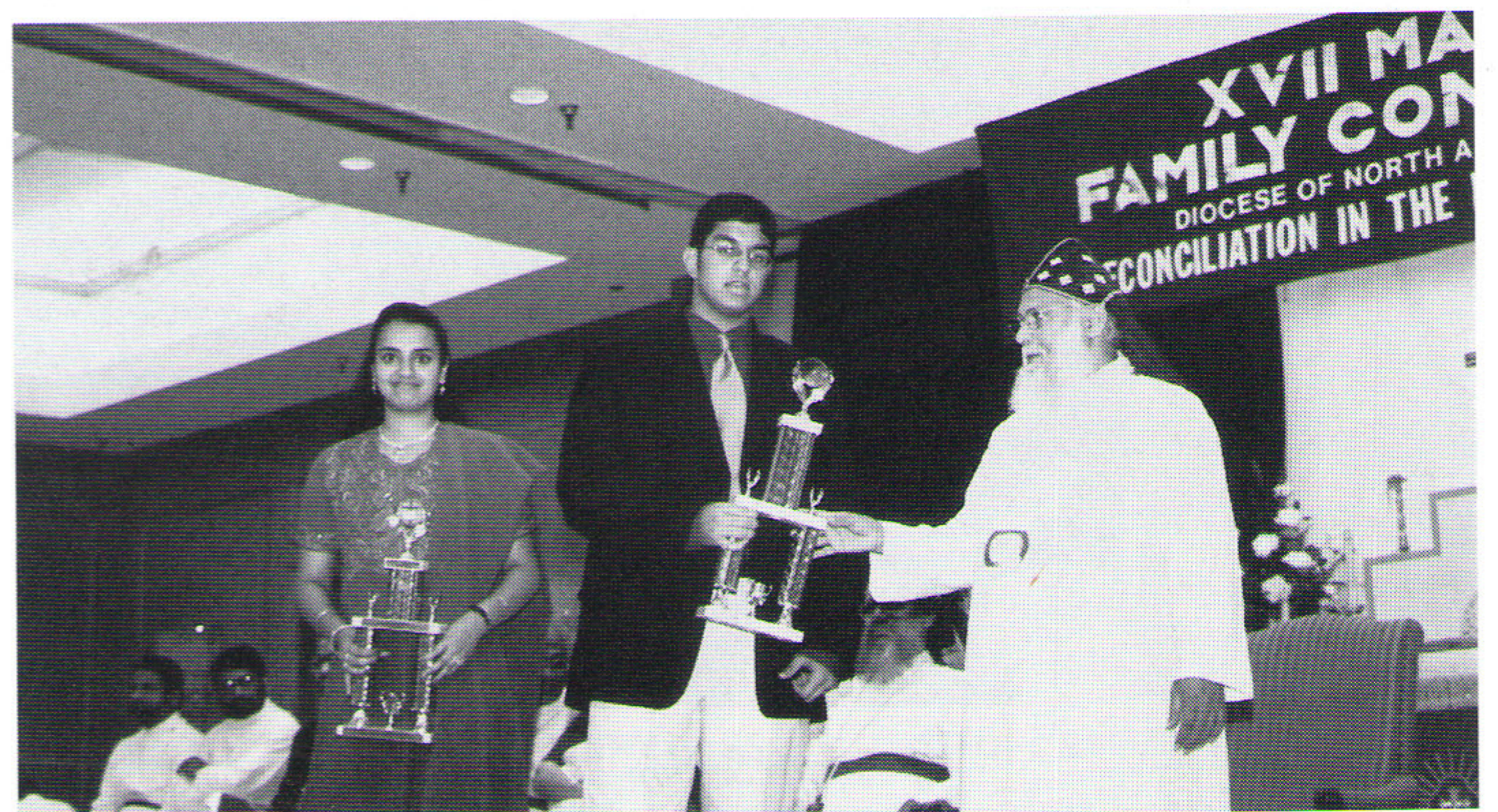
School Examination held in May and other winners in the various competitions. The Secretary Mr. T.A. Mathew then thanked all those who participated in the Conference, its leaders including Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Very Rev. P.V. Thomas, the Diocesan Bishop



Achens during the Holy Communion Service on Sunday.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, the Diocesan Secretary Rev. KY. Jacob, the Conference President Rev. Cherian Joseph, achens, various committee and sub-committee members, the choir, the hotel management and a host of others who put in enormous time to make the Conference a success. The closing session was over by 1

SUNDAY SCHOOL AWARDS



p.m. and the delegates left for their homes with the determination to do their part in working towards reconciliation in the midst of conflicts in their homes and parishes. Next year's Conference will be hosted by the Mar Thoma Church of Long Island from June 29 - July 2, 2000.

Abraham Mattackal

Ordination of Roy Thomas Kassessa

Rev. Jiji Mathews, Vicar, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Grand Prairie.

One more event that happened on July 4, 1999 in Houston has now been written into the history of the Mar Thoma Church. The Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas of Dallas was ordained as a priest of the Mar Thoma Church at the annual family conference of the North America & Europe Diocese in Houston on July 4th.

Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas, 26, a member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Grand Prairie, Texas, is the first priest of the Mar Thoma Church ordained from the second generation Marthomites born and brought up in the United States.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, bishop of the Diocese of North America and Europe and Africa and Rt.

In the year 1994, during the regional conference of the South West Region Youth League, Sevika Sangham and Edavaka Mission held in Lubbock, Roy Achen dedicated himself for the church ministry. With the blessings of the diocesan bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Roy Achen pursued his Theological Studies at the Mar Thoma Seminary, Kottayam. At the completion of his studies, he was ordained as deacon of the Mar Thoma Church on June 16, 1999 at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Thiruvalla. The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa, and Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa led the ordination ceremony.



Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Bishop of the Thiruvananthapuram- Kollam Diocese, led the ordination ceremony. Priests from different parishes and hundreds of people who attended the family conference witnessed the ceremony.

Roy achen is the son of Naranganam Kandamkulath K. A. Thomas who is a computer professional in Dallas. His mother, Sosamma, is a registered nurse and sister Faye Thomas a student of medicine in Houston. He was born and the cradle of his life was set forth in Lubbock, Texas. He was born on June 21, 1973 at the Methodist Hospital in Lubbock. During those period there were only few Marthomite families in the Lubbock area, but they were very closely nit families. The family then moved to Dallas and most of his childhood and adolescent life was in Dallas. He graduated in Accounting and Computer Science from the University of Dallas.

As a member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Grand Prairie, he has actively involved in the parish activities. His service as a Sunday School teacher, Youth League vice president, Prayer Group leader and the like was very remarkable. By virtue of his Christian character and conduct he has been able to win the love and regards of all concerned.

Roy achen celebrated the Holy Communion Service in Malayalam at the Grand Prairie Mar Thoma Church on July 18, 1999. For many people who participated in the Holy Qurbana, it was a very emotional experience. During the meeting that followed, many people representing various organizations of the area offered felicitation speech. Vicar of the Parish Rev. Jiji Mathews presided over the meeting and the parish choir presented a special song for Roy Achen.

Roy Achen, his faith and commitment has been a great inspiration for all the youths of the North American diocese. We are all proud of Roy Achen for his hard work and perseverance in reaching this important goal in his life. We are also proud of Manoj who is undergoing Theological Studies at Kottayam and looking forward for a bright future for the Mar Thoma Church in this country.

May God bless Roy Achen and Manoj in the building up of His kingdom. As members of the Mar Thoma church let us humble ourselves under the mighty hands of God so that He may exalt us in due time and use us for His glory for the extension of His Kingdom.

We wish Roy Achen all the best in his ministry.

A Servant of People

The Address given by Rev. Kurien George during the ordination service of Deacon Roy Thomas as "kasseessa" on Sunday July 4, 1999

Respected Zacharias Thirumeni, Theodosius Thirumeni, Brother Clergy, brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we have met here at a momentous occasion, a turning point in the history of our church. It is a new beginning where the diasporic community has given its first fruits to the Lord. What we have gathered to do today will change the face of the church in this country. At the turn of a new millennium, a new century, the heavens are rejoicing and angels in heaven are praising God at the victory of His people. Deacon Roy is today being ordained into the priestly office of the church. He is a pioneer in the movement of the church towards self-sustenance. He has today come to the climactic point of his four years of sustained commitment. As yet, he has tread on the uncharted, rough stones of the lonesome pathway, while others have hesitatingly vacillated. He has opened his eyes to see and ears to hear the urgency of the call to the people of this land...to respond to what is also their right.

At this juncture, the Gospel according to John 21:17-19 comes to mind. This is an interesting passage. Peter is being told by our Lord that, "somebody else will tighten your belt and lead you where you do not want to go." Let us pray.

Blessed are you, Deacon Roy and your family for having taken up this task. Today you are embarking on a journey for which you have been training, for which you have been waiting in anticipation. A journey not of your own choosing, a journey for which the Lord has called you, but to which you have committed yourself. As our Lord told Peter, from now on you will be led where you do not wish to go, but you will also lead others where the Lord wishes for you to take them. Therefore, you will be transiting between the Lord and his people. You will not obey the Lord in isolation. You will obey the Lord in and through the church. Starting today you have a new family, in addition to the family you already have, the spiritual family of the church. The head of this family is our Lord. Starting today, you will obey the Lord unquestioningly, in and through His Bishops, who are the Spiritual Fathers of the church. This does not mean that you will be muted in your responses, this also does not mean that you will stub all creativity and have no redress for your pains. It means that you will be a son to our Lord by discerning His Spirit in the believing community, as He speaks to us in and through the church. Therefore, your eyes can never shift from the eyes of our Lord or from the face of His people.

Three characteristics are expected of you: Faithfulness,



obedience, and perseverance, to the Lord through His church. This can be painful at times and you may have no recourse but to cry out to the Lord in pain, as did Jeremiah, "you have deceived me O, Lord." But remember the very same Jeremiah went to die for the Lord in absolute obedience. Our Lord does not tell you to do what He himself did not feel. On Calvary He cried, "My God, My God, why has't thou forsaken me?" But He was the very Lord who said, "Not my will, but your will be done."

Today you are authorized to be His servant.

The Lord, through the Spiritual Fathers of the church is authorizing you. He is giving you authority to be His servant. It is an authority not of human making, but of divine order. This authority has to be exercised with responsibility, humility and servitude. It is a privilege, an honor. You did not leave something good to be this servant. You left everything you had to find this treasure as the most valuable one to be possessed.

The servitude of the Lord is to his people. You are being ordained in the Mar Thoma Church, not merely as the servant of the people of the church. Of course, you are a servant of the people of the church, but you are also a servant of the people of the world, as the church is in servitude to God's world. In this servitude, you will be filled with compassion as you see, hear and feel the pain of His people in the church, as also in the world. There are two examples that come to my mind as to the kind of ministry you are called into:

1. You will be like the water carrier in ancient times, a mere water carrier, nothing more. One who carries water to people who are in need. Probably, you will remain as one all your life. You may never go beyond this level of responsibility. A water carrier who struggles in slow pace, in the heat of the sun, with the leather bag on his shoulder, but a water carrier who carries 'Living Water', giving 'life' to the world. You will be the soothing balm that God will use to rub on the wounds of His people. You will find yourself being rubbed out, but others being healed.

2. You are also like the trimmer of lamps. In England, in olden days, before they had electric lamps they had the gas lamps. These lamps had to have the wicks trimmed and the glass shades cleaned of soot, for the lamps to give good light. The job of cleaning was that of a minor nature. The wick trimmer was amongst the lowest paid employee in the whole set up. He probably never went beyond the streets where he trimmed the lamps. However, if people had to travel and reach the highways from the small streets, he had



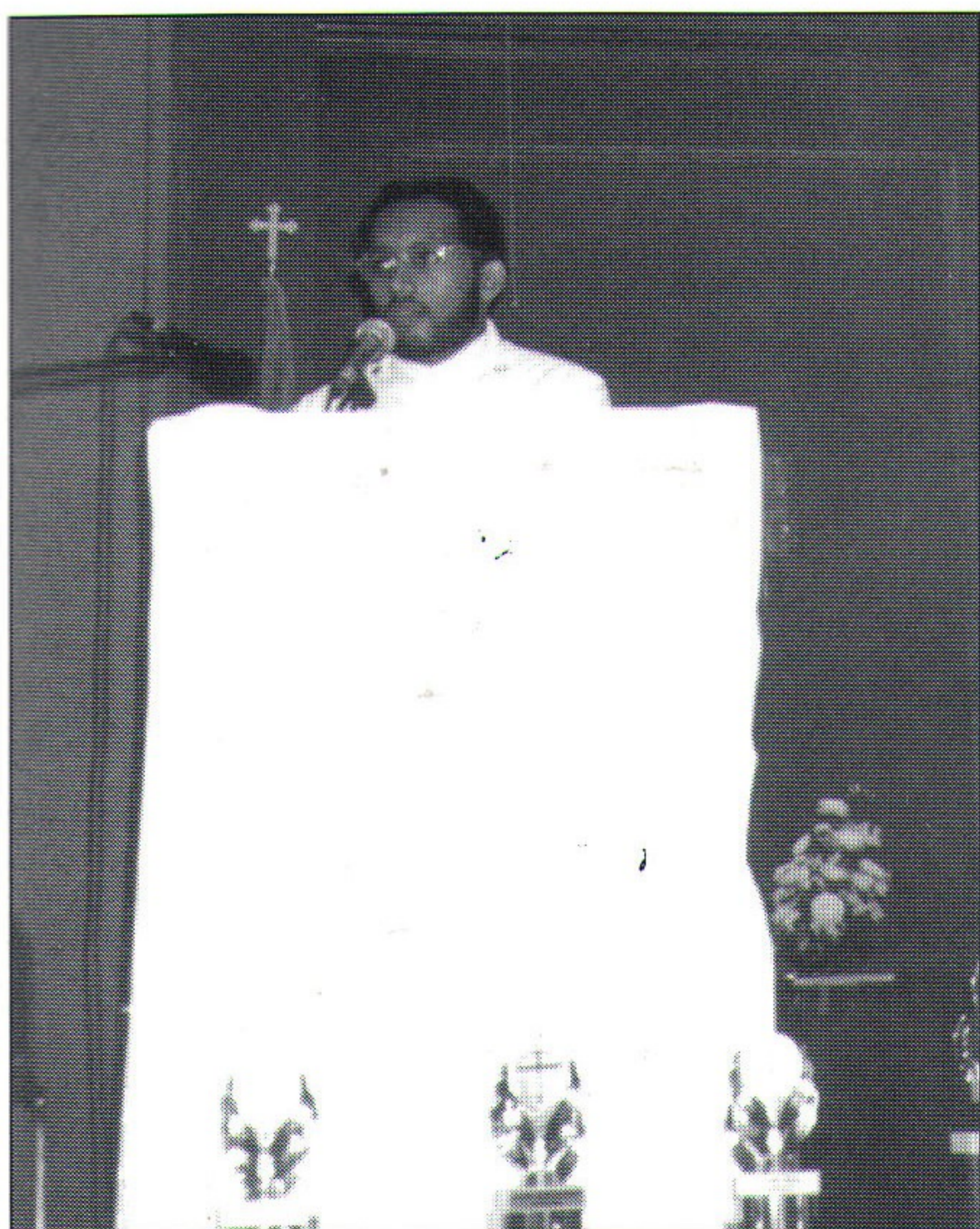
Greetings and prayers from fellow Achens.

to clean the lamps well and trim the wicks properly, so that people could use the small streets to the highways. He did a minor but very important job...for others to traverse the highways. You Deacon Roy may never traverse the highways of life, you may remain merely the wick trimmer, lighting the streets so that others may travel and reach where you will never go because you have limited yourself by choice. A humble choice to remain a wick trimmer.

Your servitude is servitude not in sloppy spinelessness. It is servitude in dignity; it has all the majesty of the walk of our Lord towards Golgotha, even as he bent to carry the cross. The dignity of your bearing is the dignity of divine majesty. In your servitude you face God for the people, interceding for them, and the people for God teaching, exhorting, guiding, and correcting them. This has to have all the love and dignity of His divine character.

This is a journey in loneliness, where in the dark wakes of the night you will feel what no one else feels, as you carry the pain of the people, or the pain of God for the people. You will hear complaints and bickering against you as you tend the flock of God. Some of the sheep may be cumbersome, others diffident and still others rebellious. Your approach to all will be firm, but loving, never

forgetting your calling. Like Paul, there will be times when you will see the seventh heaven in joy, and there will be times when you will also pray to the Lord to remove your thorn in the flesh. The only answer you may get will be, 'My grace is sufficient for thee'. In all this remember, you are



Rev. Roy A. Thomas addressing the delegates.

walking where others have tread and walked before you. The path is well tread on. There are others who are even now treading the very same path in the very same experience. Keep their fellowship. We as brother clergy can only pray for you, but the pain you go through will be your pain and yours alone. Respect, obey and love our thirumenis, have fellowship with fellow clergy, serve the people, protect and defend the faith with your whole life.

It is a journey of pain where skeptics will say as they see your pain: he saved others, he cannot save himself. They said the very same thing about our Lord. You are therefore in sacred company. As you fight the war against evil you



Rev. Roy Thomas with Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus and Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius after the Ordination Service

will be wounded many times over. You yourself will need healing. You cannot heal others if you do not have healing. You will find this in prayer, in communion with God. In your joy, in fellowship with God you will like the psalmist — lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Your prayer will be a continuous prayer, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me'. You will look into the eyes of God, and look at the world through His eyes. You will put your hands in the hands of God, and let Him lead you on...even where you do not want to go.

Dear people of God, see the priests as ordained of God. They are human, with their own strengths and weaknesses. They are here to serve you and lead you Godward. Respect and love them, work with them for the glory of His Kingdom.

May the grace of God Almighty help and sustain us in this our calling.

Everlasting Life — a Life and Death Issue

A Bible Study

Rev. A.T. Philip

... As the members of the council (Sanhedrin) listened to Stephen, they became furious and ground their teeth at him in anger. But Stephen full of Holy Spirit looked up to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right hand side of God. "Look!" He said, "I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand side of God!" — Acts 7:54-56

In order to have a discrete treatment (a fresh look) on the development of the ministry and mission of the apostolic Church, immediate context of Stephen's martyrdom has to be evaluated in relation to the life and ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the religious antagonism of Jewish authorities. Stephen's Christology is the boldest in the whole of the New Testament.

In Mark chapter three the twelve apostles are designated to (1) be with him (2) be sent out to preach and (3) have authority to drive out demons. Jesus in his public ministry, as we find in John chapter thirteen, washed the feet of the apostles and showed the examples so that they would do just what he had done for them (v.16). Jesus' act of washing the feet of his apostles right after (in the context of) the Last Supper suggests that the enactment of the Holy communion has its relevance only when the community of believers who share or witness the communion wholeheartedly engage in serving one another and the people in and out. Feeding the hungry was a very special concern of Jesus in his public ministry. New Living translation of the Bible says: breaking the loaves into pieces he kept giving the bread and fish to the twelve disciples to give to the people (Lk. 9:16b.) Mathew 14:19b. says: breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave some of the bread and fish to each disciple and the disciples gave them to the people. After Jesus' resurrection the reinstated apostles were specially commissioned to go to all peoples, everywhere, and make them His disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything He had commanded. (Mtt.28: 18-20).

As we look into Acts ch.6 dwelling on the above background we see the apostles seem to cause a division in the ministry. As the Church grew numerically and as there was a quarrel between the two partisan groups of the Jewish followers of Jesus Christ (the natives and the Hellenists) on the issue of daily distribution of provisions the apostles formed themselves as a special class. They keep preaching, teaching, and praying as their business and administering of



the food program as the task of the seven who were to be elected for that purpose. In establishing a new office of service involving seven helpers the apostles escape from the scene of a genuine human need and crucial linguistic controversy. *Prima facie* there is no demand from the Church that the apostles must neglect the preaching of the Word of God in order to administer the food program. Why did they bifurcate the ministry? The scripture is silent on the apostles' continued presence in the community when the crucial thing (murder of Stephen) happened.

Among the seven helpers Stephen transcends the bound and scope of his limited task. Persecution and martyrdom of Stephen came as an eventuality in as much as he was the central figure of the serving group. We read of him thus: Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people (ch.6:8). The Holy Spirit empowers him in a special manner as he lived amidst stiff opposition. His arrest and murder are sensational news to all hearers arousing intense interest and excitement till today. He is the first confessor turned to be martyr among all Christians. His interpretation of the Old Testament as we find in his speech later became the standard interpretation for Christians and it is evident that Paul and other leaders subscribed to the same. In the whole of the history of the Christian Church we do not find a person as exemplified as Stephen in close resemblance with our Lord Jesus Christ. God in Christ used Stephen to edify the withdrawn apostles and transform Saul the persecutor who witnessed his murder. We do not see any statement by the apostles concerning the ministry or death of Stephen. However, in later times Augustine (354-430) made a statement: apart from the martyrdom of Stephen there would not have been a Paul. Paul singularly in due course challenged the whole body of the apostles including James the brother of Jesus and established relevance of the Gospel in the pluralistic contexts of the ancient Graeco-Roman world.

In our ante-communion liturgy as believers are exhorted to abide by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles Paul is distinctly commemorated as the architect and builder of the Church while other apostles are passively mentioned at random (without names). Nevertheless, in the actual text of our communion liturgy Stephen's unique vision is thus established: at the right hand side of God the

father on the high place where the Lord Messiah has taken his position we must have our intellect, thoughts, and hearts. English translation of the communion liturgy does not render it fully and correctly. (The English translation though not fake does not convey the actual meaning in many places). Jesus during his public ministry and crucifixion appealed to God's witness (martyria) (Jn. 5:19-47, Lk. 23:46, Mk. 15:34, Mtt. 27: 46). In line with Jesus' appeal Stephen appeals to the Lord Jesus who stands at the right hand side of God (Acts 7:55). Stephen's vision is unique in the whole of biblical episodes.

Among all the persecutions suffered by the church, persecutions by Jews were the greatest. Jesus' own words testify that it is a difficult task to minister to ones own community (Mk. 6:4). The persecution followed after the martyrdom of Stephen dispersed all the followers of Jesus Christ except the apostles (Acts 8:1). How could the apostles stay back in Jerusalem while all other believers fled to the provinces of Judea and Samaria? We may view it in terms of three options: (1) the apostles were absconding, (2) they were in prison and (3) they must have had some sort of an understanding with the persecutors. In any case they did not leave the city of Jerusalem which is the seat of Jewish religion and power until the Holy Spirit worked out a plan to drive them out. As per the available data Peter was the first among the twelve who moved out. Paul, qualified as the ring-leader of the sect known as the Nazarenes (Acts. 24:5), was the main character who facilitated an encounter between the Jewish Christian (Nazarene) leaders of Jerusalem and other places on the one hand and the gentile Christians (Christians drawn from Greek speaking people) who are the fruits of his own labor and the labors of those dispersed Jewish Christian believers who had worked among the Greeks on the other. (Acts 11:26) (Here we must admit that the Church in India (Kerala) was a community of Nazarenes till the 17th century). Ministry of Stephen provided the motive force for this phenomenon.

Interpretation of Christianity in the context of the public ministry of Jesus Christ in Palestine and in the context of the pluralities of the world is an apologetic task which all Christian ministers should share. Christian apologists lived and wrote against heretics. What is heresy? While the crucified (and thus proclaimed) Christ who is the power and wisdom of God is in view the Jews wanted miracles for proof and Greeks looked for worldly wisdom (1

Cori. 1:22). Religious perversion and passion for worldly knowledge take people away from Jesus Christ. Imbalance in establishing the visible unity of humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus Christ paved way to heresy.

Abasing on Stephen one can say that love which knows no limit, including the limit of one's own life shapes the discipleship of the contemporary church. Martin Luther King Jr., and Bishop Oscar Romero are the most obvious and well-known examples of love that knew no limits. Indian examples of Antony Murmu, Graham Staines etc. are also important. But when one pays careful attention, one regularly notices stories of Christian disciples who give their lives in love: nuns and priests who have stayed at their ministries in central America and war-torn Eastern Europe knowing that it will cost their lives; doctors and nurses in hospitals and health care facilities in impoverished and embattled countries around the world who will not leave those for whom they care; martyrs of religious persecution across the globe. It is crucial that ministers of the Mar Thoma Church remember this form of discipleship.

On the other hand it is easy to minimize all forms of discipleship that do not involve laying down one's life. What one is tempted to think, is the significance of my struggle to live the love of Jesus in my small ways when compared to those who lay their lives on the line daily? What is the worth of my witness when weighed against the witness of someone's death? The words about the beloved disciple in Jn. 21:20-24 insist that his love for Jesus was not to be devalued because his witness took the form of reporting traditions about Jesus and not martyrdom.

The Lord of the Christian Church has not forsaken her despite the many gruesome mistakes committed by her due to an evasive dreamy tender mood. However, since the apostolic times God in Christ does not look for people who will blend in. He is looking for people who are ready to set the world on fire. If one wants to develop qualities in life that sets him/her apart from the average, settle-for-the status-quo person he/she must draw inspiration from the unique witness of Stephen the martyr as found in Acts Chs. 6-7. While other followers of Jesus Christ including the apostles lived and behaved as if the risen Christ Jesus did not reach at the highest place where from God rules in his majesty and power, Stephen clearly sees and appeals to the exalted Christ at the right-hand side of God.

MATRIMONIAL

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their daughter 28 years, 5' 3", slim, attractive, medium complexion, MBA, working in the area of public administration. We welcome proposals from Christians with professional degree. Please respond with personal and family details to: Box # 0799-1, Mar Thoma Messenger, Sinai Center, 2320 S. Merrick Ave, Merrick, NY 11566

Do We Know Our Church? *(Continuation)*

Rev. Dr. K. T. Joy



Consolidation: The consolidation and growth of the Mar Thoma Church is indeed a surprise to any historian. The growth and development of other churches in India such as the Roman Catholic, Jacobite or Orthodox and Anglican is necessarily linked with the fortunes of their particular denominations outside India. On the other hand, the Mar Thoma Church through its capacity for self support, self government and self propagation, has risen step by step through the patient and hard labor of its Leading Bishops, Priests and Laity in India. In spite of the many difficulties it had to face in its early stages and the forces of disruption it had to combat, it has recorded a continuous growth not only its size but also in its spiritual vitality through extending its spirit of cooperation with sister churches all over the world.

As we have noticed earlier, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch came, did his work and returned to home leaving behind him only faction and discord within the church and a "sea of troubles" for the successors of Mathews Mar Athanasius and Joseph Mar Dionysius (*The Young Men of India* Vol. XXIX, pp. 606 ff). Before matters came to a close, Mathews Mar Athanasius, the then Metropolitan passed away in 1877, leaving the Episcopal charge of the Malabar Church of St. Thomas to Thomas Mar Athanasius in the same year. The death of Mathews Mar Athanasius, however paved the way for further action on the part of Joseph Mar Dionysius and he summoned a meeting of his partisans at Parumala in 1878. It was resolved in that meeting that a suit be filed without delay against the claims of Thomas Mar Athanasius, the then Metropolitan and his followers and that necessary funds be realised for the same. Accordingly, on March 4, 1879, Joseph Mar Dionysius filed a suit in the Alleppy court to recover from Thomas Mar Athanasius the Old Seminary and allied property of the church. As a result of this suit, Thomas Mar Athanasius, was per force involved in a litigation known as the Seminary case, lasting for 10 years from 1879-1889.

The Question of Rightful Metropolitan?

It is important to learn here that the question of rightful metropolitan and the autonomy of the Malabar Church of St. Thomas came up in the seminary case. Joseph Mar Dionysius took the plea that he had been duly consecrated as Metran of Malabar by the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch in 1865, that he had been appointed president of the Syrian Association Committee and accepted by the Syrian Community and that, though during the life time of Mathews Mar Athanasius he had been unable to assert his

rights and enter in to his office, he was entitled to have his position recognized after the death of that Metropolitan and receive facilities for accession to office. (Race. G.M., *The Syrian Church in India* p. 326).

On the other hand, it was contented on behalf of Thomas Mar Athanasius that he had in accordance with use and wont, been consecrated by his cousin Mathews Mar Athanasius in 1868.....that when his cousin died in 1877, he had, in accordance with the terms of his will, entered on the management of the trust property, and that he had discharged the duties of the office of the Metropolitan for nearly two years before the institution of that suit.

Course of the Suit: The suit passed through three levels of courts, to wit the District Court, the High Court and the Royal Court of Appeal between the years 1879-1889. Till then no such case had been filed in the Travancore Court and Joseph Mar Dionysius had to deposit Rs. 61,000 as court fee for the Church properties. (Paret. Z. M. *Malankara Nazranikal*, vol. III, p. 322) The writers of Church History such as G.M. Rae, M.P. Varkey and T.C. Chacko has given details of the Church properties. The properties under the custody of Thomas Mar Athanasius consisted of: (a) Lands, the Old Seminary, the Church and other buildings; (b) Founded money, articles of furniture and other movable property; (c) Mityes, Crosses, Staves, Jewels with Vestments and other paraphernalia, belonging to the Metropolitan.

It was unfortunate that both parties had to spend so much time, energy and money through out the course of this litigation. The ruler of Travancore had to appoint special judges to deal with the case. The suit drew the attention of both Christians and non-Christians of the country. A case of disputed succession in the Bishopric of a christian church passing through a series of law courts in which most of the judges are non-christians, is indeed a phenomenon of considerable historical as well as legal interest.

Judgment of the District Court of Alleppy:

A few details of this prolonged litigation may not be out of place here. The suit bore No. 499 in the files of the District Court of Alleppy and dragged on for five years in that court from 1879 to 1884. The plaintiff in the case was Joseph Mar Dionysius and the defendants were Thomas Mar Athanasius the then Metropolitan, and the joint trustees Thazath Chandapillai Kathanar and Kulangara Ityachen Pylee. Lafrenais and Krishna Menon, the judges,

pronounced their verdict in favor of the plaintiff but refused for payment of court expenses by the defendants. Justice Krishna Menon gave his reasons for his refusal which were stated as follows: "Thomas Mar Athanasius was Metropolitan for a long time. He has only obeyed the one who has consecrated him and accepted the properties of the church as handed over to him. There are many Syrian Christians who acknowledge him as a right religious head. Because of these reasons he need not give court expenses" (Titus Varghese, Mar Thomas Mar Athanasius Metropolitan, p. 32). In other words even the court did not question the episcopal validity of Thomas Mar Athanasius Metropolitan.

Judgment of the High Court of Travancore:

The defendants filed an appeal in the High Court of Travancore against the judgment of the lower court. The case was in the file as No. 137 in the High Court of Travancore between the years 1884-86. The judges were Narayana Pillay and Arianayagom. Though there was no reference to heresy in the plaint, one of the judges upheld that the invocation of Saints, adoration of Virgin Mary and prayers for the dead had been deliberately omitted by the Late Mathews Mar Athanasius from certain service books of the Syrian Church and approved by the defendant. But he did not inquire as to how the said doctrines had crept into the Syrian Service books at the Synod of Diamper in 1599. He was probably not aware of the fact that the Malabar Syrians acquired the right to eliminate all Roman Catholic elements from their Creed as they had thrown off the Roman Yoke at the Coonen Cross in 1653 as referred earlier. He therefore, concluded that a person holding the defendant's view could not be a Metropolitan and pronounced his verdict against him. (Rae, g.m., The Syrian Church in India p. 330). However, the Royal Court in due course, rejected the issues on articles of faith as irrelevant in the Seminary Case which was purely a question of the right of church property.

Failure of a Peace Formula:

It is worth mentioning that both parties made an attempt to withdraw the case after the judgment of the High Court and arrive at a peaceful settlement among themselves. With this aim in view, Thomas Mar Athanasius and Joseph Mar Dionysius, along with other prominent members of the Church assembled at the Niranam Church. Joseph Mar Dionysius put forth three conditions (Titus Varghese, Mar Thomas Athanasius Metropolitan p. 34) for a compromise which may be summed up as follows: (1) All Syrian Christians should recognize Thomas Mar Athanasius as Malankara Metropolitan; (2) After his death they should accept Joseph Mar Dionysius as Successor; and (3) After the latter's death, accept the nominee of the Patriarch of Antioch who was to be consecrated as Malankara

Metropolitan. (George Kakkanadan—The Mother Church in Malabar, p. 163).

Thomas Mar Athanasius could agree to the first two conditions but he would not yield to the last one as it was detrimental to the very independent nature of the Old Malabar Church of St. Thomas. Trusting in God, he stoutly upheld the singular prestige of his Mother Church but at a great sacrifice and financial loss as we shall see later. The formula for a rapprochement thus failed. Time has proved his noble stand as right.

Judgments of the Royal Court of Final Appeal:

The failure of the peace formula led to further litigation and the case went to the Royal Court of Travancore as No. 3 in its files between 1886-89. (Exhibits and petitions, in the Royal Court of Final Appeal Vol. III pp. 1-262 Trivandrum 1888.) The judges were Krishna Swami Rao (Chief Justice) E.E. Ormsby and Sitaramayyar and the judgment was pronounced by the royal court in 1889.

Ormsby, the only Christian judge, pronounced his verdict in favor of Thomas Mar Athanasius and held that the Malabar Church had always been an independent Church with a custom that each Bishop consecrates a successor (Kuruvilla, K.K.; A History of the Malabar Church and Doctrines, pp. 23-24). He further declared that Thomas Mar Athanasius was the legal Metropolitan. But the other two Hindu judges gave their decision in favor of Joseph Mar Dionysius, confirming the authority of Jacobite Patriarch over the Malabar Church and declaring him as the rightful Metropolitan.

The Royal Court Judgment of 1889: In the Travancore State Manuel, written by T. K. Vellupillai (Vol. pp. 750-51) the Royal Court Judgment of 1889 is given as follows: The majority of the court found: (1) that the ecclesiastical supremacy of the See of Antioch over the Syrian Church in Travancore has been all along recognized and acknowledged by the Jacobite Syrian Community and their Metropolitan; (2) that the exercise of that supreme power consisted in ordaining either directly or by duly authorized delegates, Metropolitans from time to time to manage the spiritual matters of the local church in sending Mooron (Holy oil) to be used in the churches in the country for baptismal and other purposes and in general supervision over the spiritual government of the church; (3) that the authority of the Patriarch has never extended to the government of the temporalities of the Church, which in this respect has been an independent church. (4) that the Metropolitan of the Syrian Jacobite Church in Travancore should be a native of Malabar consecrated by the Patriarch of Antioch or by his duly authorized delegate and accepted by people as the Metropolitan to entitle him to the spiritual and temporal government of the local church. Dr. Ormsby, the third judge, in his dissenting judgment observed: "It is not made out that imposition of hands by Antioch is essential to the consecration of a Metran of Malankara which is itself an

independent Church.”

An Evaluation of the Seminary Case:

It is but natural to have differences of opinion with regard to the final judgment of this extraordinary suit. The suit is known as ‘The Seminary Case’ as the Old Seminary, where Thomas Mar Athanasius resided was the main property which was the immediate cause of the suit a careful analysis of the facts and circumstances of the seminary case would reveal that the question involved was the rights of the Patriarch and his supremacy over the Malabar Church in India. In fact he had ordained only one Metran Mathews Mar Athanasius during the whole period of its Jacobite connection from 1665-1852. The contention of Joseph Mar Dionysius was that the Malabar Church was part of the Patriarchate of Antioch and that permission of the latter was necessary for a regular consecration of Metran. The contention of Thomas Mar Athanasius was that though episcopal orders may have been obtained from Antioch rarely, yet the Malabar Church was an autonomous church with the habitual custom that each Metran consecrated his

successors.

Above all, the Royal Court Judgment in the Seminary case was confined in the main to the question of the right to the property of the church and questions regarding faith and doctrines of the old Malabar Church were not involved. That is why Punnathra Chandapillai Kathanar was confirmed as trustee of the church property. Following the two judgments of 1889 the Old Malabar Church of St. Thomas was divided into two sections one calling itself the Jacobite Church and the other the Mar Thoma Church. The Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasius could have retained possession of the property of the whole church, if he had been willing to give up the autonomy of the Church and the principles of Reformation and accept foreign domination. But he and his followers did not leave the mother church of St. Thomas. This stand of Thomas Mar Athanasius and his followers in the Mar Thoma Church has been fully justified in course of time even by the Orthodox Syrian Church in 1958 which had opposed its claim to autonomy in 1889. ■

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA is accepting applications for the position of general secretary. The general secretary is the principal executive officer of the Council, responsible to the General Assembly and Executive Board for: providing dynamic leadership, articulating the mission and purpose of the Council, providing spiritual guidance and vision, symbolizing the vocation of Christian unity in service and witness, maintaining relationships with communions, and implementing and interpreting policy.

An applicant must be a member in good standing in a communion that is a member of the Council, be theologically competent and articulate, and be an active participant in church life and in the ecumenical movement. Minimum educational requirement: graduate theological degree or equivalent experience. The Council is seeking a leader with a collaborative leadership style and excellent communication skills.

For a copy of the position description and application form please contact:

General Secretary Search Committee
National Council of Churches
475 Riverside Drive, Room 650
New York, NY 10115-0050



Applications will be accepted with a postmark no later than August 2, 1999.

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON
"REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS FOR THE PAST 25 YEARS"

Mathew Varghese, Secretary

"This was the Lord's doing; It is marvellous in our eyes"
Psalm 118:23.

From a humble beginning of few Mar Thoma Christians coming together for prayer and fellowship in the early 1970's, the Trinity Mar Thoma Church of Houston has grown into a parish of over 200 families and a sister parish, the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston. As a parish, when we are celebrating our Silver Jubilee, it is only with gratitude we can remember the marvellous ways by which He has led us for a quarter of a century.

It was the encouragement and guidance of the Late Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, that enabled us to form a congregation, and we were elevated to a parish status during his time. Thomas Thirumeni laid the foundation stone of our church building on August 29, 1982 and dedicated the building on July 14, 1984. It is only with gratitude we can remember the contributions of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom officiating Metropolitan, who was our Diocesan Bishop. With the cooperation of the parishioners, we were able to acquire the parsonage during his time. Presently we are blessed by the leadership of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, as our Diocesan Bishop and Thirumeni's guidance and leadership has enabled us to grow as a parish in many ways. Thirumeni's vision concerning the future of the Mar Thoma Church in the continent of North America is bearing fruit in recent years. The blessings of the Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan is very valuable to us. His grace has visited our parish on various occasions and guided us in many ways. His grace laid the foundation stone of our Sunday School building on April 20, 1986 and dedicated the building on July 11, 1987.

The contributions of our committed clergy who served us is worth mentioning. The commitment and eminent leadership of the Very Rev. P. V. Thomas Achen, the Vicar General of the Church, gave new life and dimension to our parish. When we were going through financial crisis, due to unemployment, it was the faithfulness of God and the leadership of P. V. Thomas Achen that enabled us to build the first church building of our own in this Diocese. The Rev. T. I. Joseph Achen, who celebrated the first Holy Communion Service in Houston on September 1974, deserves special mentioning. We gratefully remember the leadership and contributions of all Achens who served us as Vicars, Interim Vicars, or Assistant Vicars in the order of Rev. T. I. Joseph, Rev. T. J. Thomas, Rev. Joseph Thomas, Very Rev. P. V. Thomas, Very Rev. P. M. George, Rev. K. M. Samuel, Rev. Jayan Thomas, Rev. P. J. Alex, Rev. Eapen Cherian, Rev. Thomas Alexander, Rev. Raju George, and our present Vicar, Rev. C. Joseph. Achen deserves special commendation for giving leadership to the Silver Jubilee

Celebrations and the Seventeenth Mar Thoma Family Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe.

While preserving our religious and cultural heritage, we are catering to the needs of our growing generation in a contemporary setting. Five of our youths committed themselves to pursue theological studies. We were privileged to host the Sixth Mar Thoma Family Conference of our Diocese in 1988 and the Twelfth Mar Thoma Youth Conference of North America in 1991. As a token of our thanksgiving to God's faithfulness and His providence for the last 25 years, we have decided to financially support 25 needy couples in India to begin their married life.

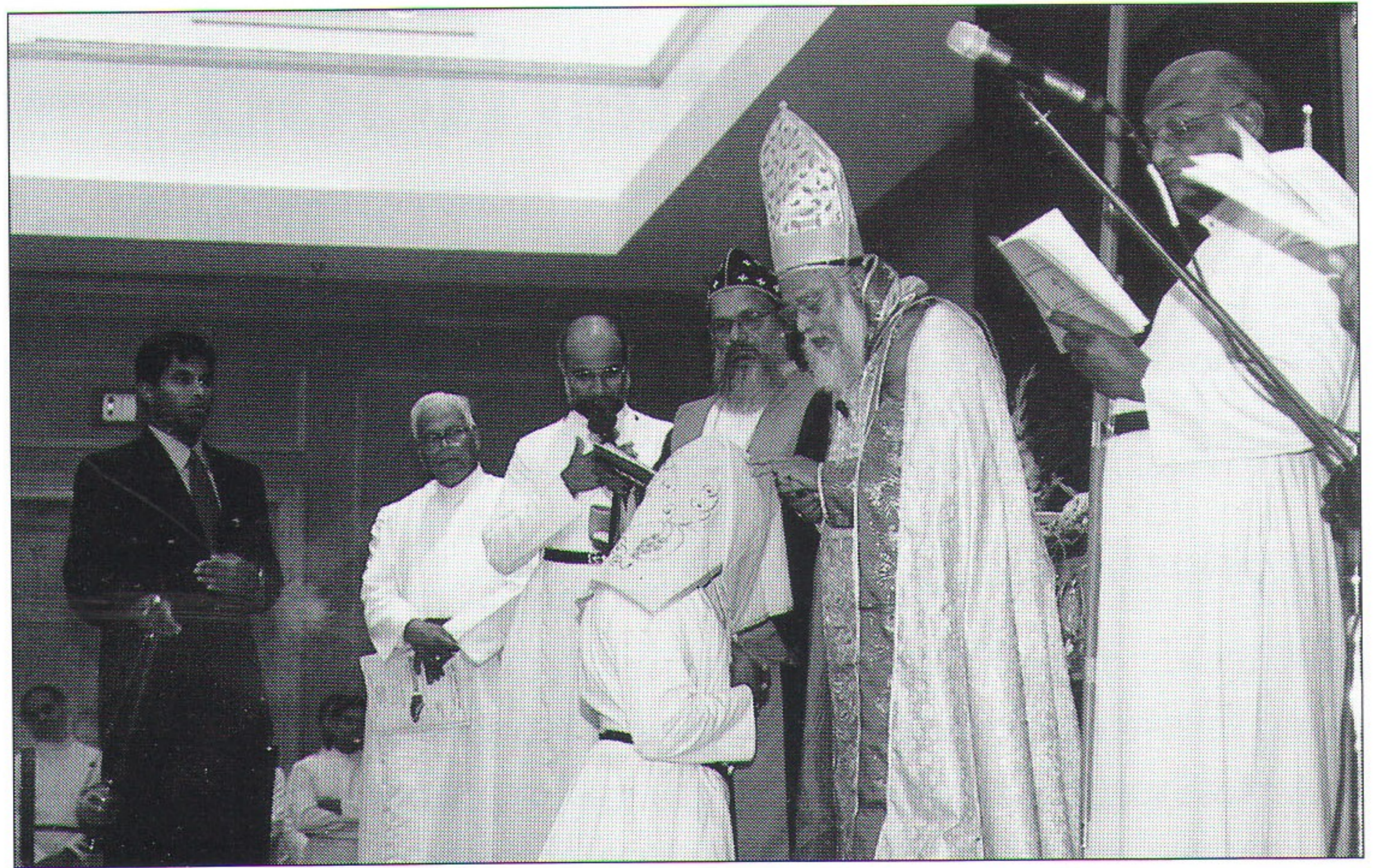
When we are celebrating our Silver Jubilee, it was a great honour bestowed upon us to host the Seventeenth Mar Thoma Family Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe from July 1 to July 4, 1999. The concluding events of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations began with a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 10, 1999, at our church. Our Diocesan Thirumeni presided over the meeting and Very Rev. P. V. Thomas; Hon. Consul General of India, Mr. Rinzing Wangdi; Ms. Gigi Lee, representing the Hon. Mayor of Houston; Rev. T. I. Joseph; and Rev. A. T. Philip were the chief guests. Clergy from the various denominations of local Indian churches spoke on the occasion to felicitate us. After the public meeting, our youth enacted "The Power of His Love," an exciting new musical that relates to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, using a unique dramatic technique. The presentation of the experience of the risen Lord through the eyes of five key figures in their lives—the Apostle Peter; the centurion, Marcus; Pilate's wife, Camilla, the thief, Barabbas; and His mother, Mary—had a very profound message. The concluding remark by our Achen on how the love of Christ can transform lives was very touching. On Sunday morning the Jubilee worship was led by Very Rev. P. V. Thomas and Rev. C. Joseph and the Holy Communion Service was celebrated by our beloved Zacharias Thirumeni. The presence of Rev. M.O. Oommen Jr., the newly appointed youth chaplain of this region, and Rev. T. I. Joseph was a blessing. In his messages, Thirumeni reminded us that Jubilee is not only a time of rejoicing, but also a time of expressing our gratitude and a time of retrospection. It is a time of reconciliation and renewal. Reconciliation between God and man, man and man, and man and nature. It is the love of Christ that gives strength to forgive. Thirumeni called upon all the parishioners to be new creatures in Christ with a change in attitude and style of action. The celebrations concluded with Parish Day Lunch, joined by all sharing the Jubilee of the Parish.

All praise and thanks to God Almighty who has led us over the last 25 years. He is our Ebenezer; He is the same yesterday, today, and forever more. ■



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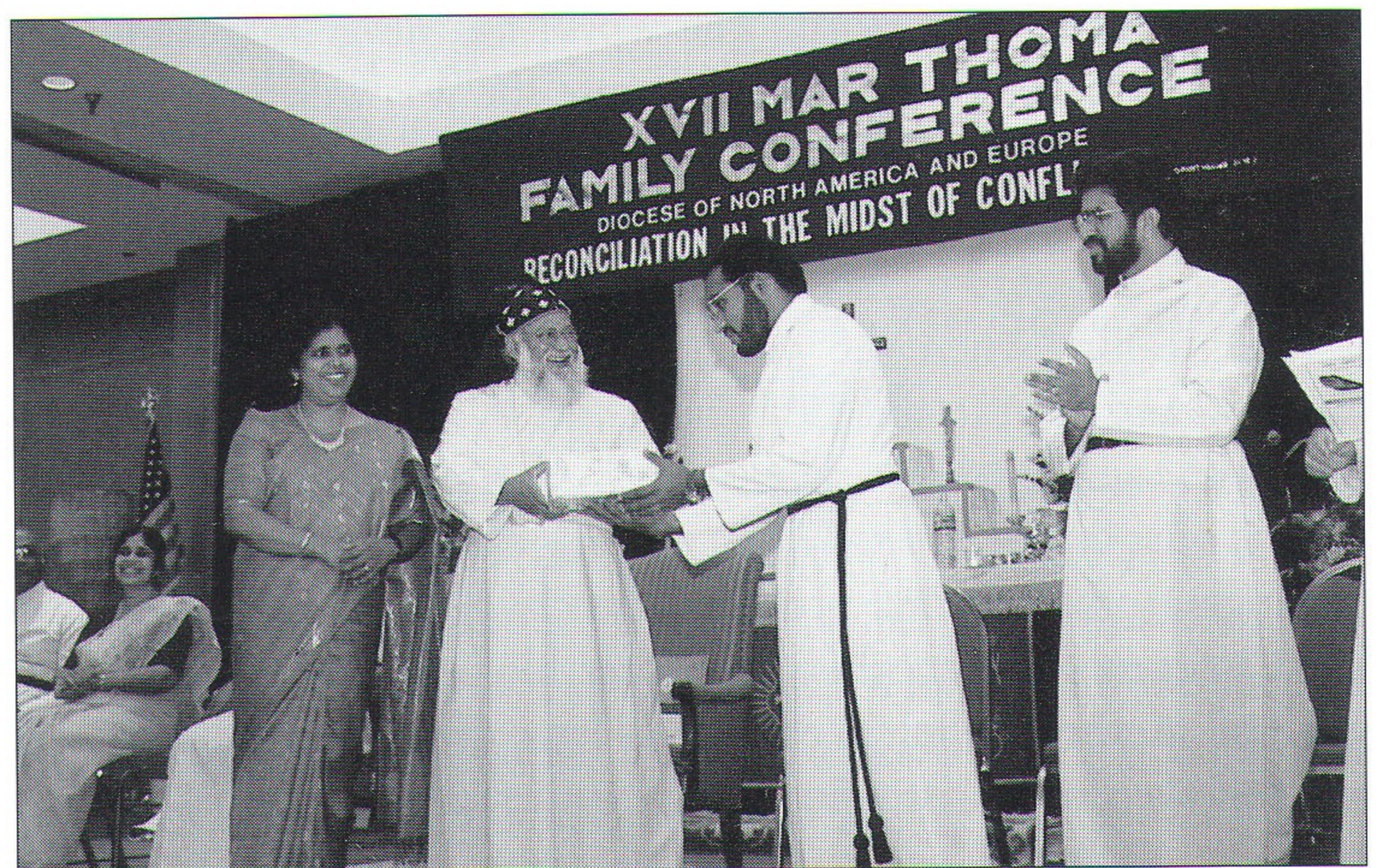
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Motherhood — A High Calling

Dr. Bindu Alice Philip, Chicago

The message given by Dr. Bindu Alice Philip on Mother's Day at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church on Sunday May 9, 1999. She is a Youth Advisor and an active worker among the young people.

Introduction

Mother's day takes me down memory lane...browsing through greeting card stores and flower shops to find the perfect gift for my mom to see the sweet smile on her face. However, Mother's Day this year is extra special to me because by the divine will and grace of God, I have come to the other side of the fence by being a mom myself to my precious little five month old daughter, Shalomi.

What an unspeakable privilege it is to be called a 'MOM' or 'DAD', yet it comes with a price tag - a corresponding challenge. It is one thing to take part in the labor and delivery of a baby, but it is quite another thing to nurture that life into maturity, into the knowledge and fullness of Christ. It takes commitment, vision and most of all God's grace.



God at work in their lives. Spiritual parenting demands a great deal involving active participation in a child's life and an on-going mentoring of the child in how to live out the Christian life in the church and in the community.

There is a woman in my life who has been the greatest influence upon me. She would cry with me. . .laugh with me. . .play with me. . .encourage me. . . At times when the going was tough, I knew I could take refuge in her arms. She is a courageous woman who would walk with me into the power-house of prayer to meet with Jesus to unburden my load at His feet. She taught me to go on my knees when my knees were knocking. Whether I held in my hands a trophy of victory or face covered with shame, her loving arms would still warmly embrace me and I knew I could be secure there. This woman is my mother and I cherish her deeply.

Called to be Mothers

After graduating from the University with a major in Chemistry, like most recent graduates entering the job market, my greatest motivation was to embark on a career. But right then, my daughter, came along and I am amazed at the shift in priorities my life took on. Today I speak with conviction that my first occupation besides being a 'child' of God is to be called a 'mother'. "You mean that's all you do?" some may ask. We hear in the media nowadays about how important it is to find yourself, express yourself and assert yourself. Perhaps some of the younger women may wonder as to what kind of life it is, to be nothing more than somebody's wife and somebody else's mother. Two thousand years ago, there was another young woman of the Jewish tribe of Judah, who understood that truth. The world has never forgotten her - Mary the mother of Jesus because she was willing to be known as simply "someone's mother." She spoke for all women for all times in Luke 1:38, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Motherhood is a high calling where the woman gives of herself first to her husband and then to the life of her child. A life of self-giving! Old-fashioned notions they sound, don't they...but they weren't ours to begin with. They were God's. He calls some to be single, some married people to be childless, but He calls most women to be mothers — either biological mothers or spiritual mothers, wherein each of us have the opportunity to rear followers of Christ who would experience the presence of

Laws of the Harvest

Proverbs 24 tells us that a house is built through wisdom. We can use the wisdom of God found in Scripture to initiate a fresh start with children already on way or renew the process with children already grown. Galatians 6:7-9 reads, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. The one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption. The one who sows in the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary." From Paul's counsel in these verses, we can glean a few principles to guide us in parenting and in maintaining family unity. Let us call them the laws of the harvest. These shall be summarized in four laws.

Law 1: We Reap Only What Has Been Sown

Galatians 6:7 brings us to the first law, we reap only what has been sown. Every harvest has to begin as a seed. There is no such thing as spontaneous generation-something coming from nothing. Have you ever had a vegetable garden suddenly sprout on your front lawn? Not unless, for some strange reason, you threw some seeds out there!

Not only is it a privilege to invest in our children's lives, but it is smart to remember the rationale behind that investment: We get what we sow. Some non-Christian parents may say something like this, "You Christians try to

force your values on your children. But we believe that children ought to be allowed to choose their own values and make their own moral judgments. That way, they can grow up with a spirit of independence and be who they really are.” That might sound wise and noble, but such thinking contains at least two fatal flaws.

The first flaw is that while neglecting to teach our children values and sound moral principles, we are violating clear teaching from Scripture. The new testament teaches us to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and children are to learn with an attitude of respect (Eph 6). And the Old Testament makes this even more clear in Deuteronomy 6:6-9, “These words that I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” I remember how often my Dad and Mom used to talk to me about Jesus and the significance of having Jesus in my heart. They would emphasize it over and over again at family prayer times, dinner times, vacation and travel times. Even though it wasn't pleasant back then, I am truly grateful to them today. The family throughout Scripture is considered to be the basic channel for the moral and practical teaching of children.

The second flaw is that such a valueless approach to family-life makes no sense. If we do not influence our children, someone else will. If we are not shaping their values, others will do it for us. Music, movies, videos, the Internet — all push the envelope of death right within the confines of our home where we live. But we prefer to remain oblivious while much of this happens right under our noses. When was the last time we read the lyrics of the songs that our children listen to everyday? The massacre that took place at the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado can repeat itself day and night—our children are exposed to a cultural explosion of conflicting values. How can we as parents prevent the weeds of death from destroying the healthy greens in our campuses and in the lives of our children? Evidence has it that the two teenage killers were ardent followers of the rock star known as Marilyn Manson. Some of you might know that Marilyn Manson takes his name from two popular personalities, the movie star Marilyn Monroe and the murderer Charles Manson. In a recent concert held at Grand Rapids Michigan, it is said that Marilyn Manson entered the stage nailed on a cross which was later burnt during the concert. This, of course, is only a small taste of the violence and extremely wicked and graphic nature of events, which took place that night.

Where are our children building their values? We can blame Marilyn Manson, Gothic Gore, the utter depravity in much of what Hollywood dumps into the culture, but we need to take a deep inward look into ourselves and assess where we are failing. Do we as parents have the personal

relationship with Jesus Christ that we can impart to our children? Before a revival can sweep across their hearts, it must first blaze within our hearts. We must purify our love for Christ and trim the wicks of our devotion. Only then can His light burn brightly and radiantly in our lives, drawing our children to the Light of the World. By simply believing in Christ's finished work we reap the bountiful harvest of eternal life (John 3 :16)

Mother Teresa was asked to speak at a national prayer breakfast attended by Bill and Hillary Clinton along with many other prominent dignitaries and members of the press. Mother Teresa simply, yet emphatically, spoke that abortion is the greatest curse to America today. Bill Clinton, of course, was not in agreement with that statement at all, but there was little he could refute. So he replied, “How can one argue against a life so well-lived.” It was Mother Teresa's life that spoke more eloquently than her words and so it is with us. Our children are watching everything we do.

Law 2: We Reap the Same in Kind as we Sow

Paul continues in verse 8, “The one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption.” Thankfully, however, there is a positive side as well in the latter part of the same verse. “The one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.” From this comes the second law. We reap the same in kind as we sow. Spiritually speaking, if we plant seeds of integrity, we'll reap good character. Some people however may think that it does not matter what kind of seeds they sow. For years, they freely scatter seeds of pride, anger, dishonesty and then they are shocked when they begin to reap the bitter consequences - a long time trust crumbles, a legal suit is filed, a marriage ends in divorce. But, the reverse is also true which many godly parents have witnessed in their homes. Here and there, they drop little seeds of faith in the lives of their children. It may be through the family prayer, by taking them to the Sunday school, and attending prayer meetings or perhaps the conversations around the dinner table. Even though these alone are not enough, children, like sponges, absorb it all. After a while, a fragile shoot begins to appear and buds of godliness emerge and blossom. In time, our children start to bear fruit on their branches and reproduce their faith in the lives of others. What a thrilling sight for any parent to see!

LAW 3: We Reap More Than We Sow and in a Different Time Than We Sow

“And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.” (Gal 6:9) A poem by Helen Young entitled *Children Won't Wait* illustrates this beautifully. It is an eye-opener stressing the importance of acting now and making children a priority. A few lines of it read as follows:

There is a time to treasure every fleeting
 minute of childhood
 Just eighteen precious years to inspire and train him
 I will not exchange this birth right
 for a mess of pottage called social position,
 Or business or professional reputation or a paycheck
 An hour of concern today may save years of
 heartache tomorrow
 The house will wait, the dishes will wait,
 the new car will wait
 But children won't wait

We need to remember that we always reap more than we sow. Each tiny seed is a storehouse of enormous potential for either good or evil. A single kernel of grain can reproduce itself a hundred-fold. Just as a little sin can produce evil, so can a little bit of God's kingdom planted in young lives produce enormous good.

We also reap in a different season than we sow. We think that our good deeds should be rewarded right away. However, seeds don't grow overnight. Many a times, our heart is set on achieving different goals which we define as success and we even justify it in the pretext that we are doing it all for a better tomorrow for our children. But we are stealing our time, energy and love away from them for investing it in some corporate world. There was great wisdom in the words of Socrates when he said these words in 450 BC: "If I could get to the highest place in Athens, I would lift up my voice and say, You fellow citizens, what mean ye, that you turn every stone to scrape wealth together and take so little care of your children to whom you must one day relinquish all?"

An old Chinese adage says it even more simply: "One generation plants the trees and another gets the shade." Our generation lives in the shade of many trees that were planted by our ancestors. If you are a parent, God has granted you the high privilege of raising a son or daughter for Him. No doubt, society as a whole, is in a state of moral and spiritual decline. Can we, at least as Christian parents today, plant some trees that will shade future generations from what may well be the blistering heat of antichristian values in an antichristian world or are we too busy?

LAW 4: We Reap the Full Harvest of Good Only if We Persevere

"...if we do not grow weary" (Gal 6:9b) As wise spiritual farmers, we must stick to the hard work of tilling and sowing today. Even when we don't see the results of our labor, Paul encourages us not to lose heart in doing good and not to grow weary. The devil will come alongside us and use discouragement to pull our hands from the plow. He does not want us to persevere. He says, "Look how hard you are working and for what? Your child is no different from the others - maybe even worse. Calluses and wrinkles on your hand and a field full of nothing! Don't waste your life. Take it easy. Live a little. You deserve better than this."

If we don't remain steadfast in our faith in Jesus, the devil is active and eager to tear our homes and us down. The other day, my husband Sajeev and I were listening to a true-life narration by Charles Swindoll. While traveling on an airplane, the air hostess offered food. However, repeatedly one passenger declined the meals. This caught the curiosity of his fellow traveler and he inquired what the matter was. To this came the reply, "I belong to the Church of Satan and I am fasting. Myself and a group of similar believers like me are fasting and praying this year for the breakup of 300 leading Christian families in our country." What a sobering reminder this is for us to stand firm in our Lord Jesus and fight the dark spiritual forces which have been overcome for us at the cross of Calvary.

Conclusion

May we not forget that one day strings shall turn into wings. Ultimately all of us must say good bye to our kids as we see them fly. I know that even my five month old daughter Shalomi, who today clings on to me and her Dad for her every need, will one day want to explore new horizons. There will come a time when we have to let go. I hope we will have no regrets on that day.

A piece entitled *Taking Mother's Hand* written by an unknown author drives home the significance of our role as parents in the lives of our children:

"When a boy or girl thrusts his small hand in yours, it may be smeared with chocolate ice cream, or grimy from petting a dog, and there may be a wart under the right thumb and a bandage around the little finger. But the most important thing about his hands is that they are the hands of the future. These are the hands that some day may hold a Bible or a Colt revolver; play the church piano or spin a gambling wheel; gently dress a leper's wound or tremble wretchedly uncontrolled by an alcoholic mind. Right now that hand is in yours. It asks for help and guidance. It represents a full-fledged personality in miniature to be respected as a separate individual whose day to day growth into Christian adulthood is your responsibility."

As we enter this new millennium with the ever increasing challenge of raising godly children in a society where morality has become a debatable issue and depravity takes on many new names, may we be granted grace to become parents who draw our strength from our Lord Jesus. ■

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Mar Thoma Identity and Integration

Dr. T. M. Thomas

The following paper was presented in Santhigiri Alwaye, at a conference on the theme "Preserving the Timeless While Adapting to the Times". There were about seventy participants drawn from different parts of the World, Mar Thoma members who moved out of Kerala to places like Malaysia, Singapore, Gulf Countries, England, United States, Canada and Australia. The conference was a pioneering effort of the Mar Thoma laity to share experiences and concerns related to the Diaspora experience.

In America people carry cards to show their identity. Driver's license, social security number, credit cards, student ID, Identity card as an employee are common examples. We have to prove who we are.

A central question we all frequently raise in life, a philosophical question of all times and places, is "Who are you?" Some answers are found within the context of time and place while others are sought beyond the boundaries, searching for the universal or "timeless".

Identity is found at three levels; they are personal, group and universal. To explain these levels, let me paraphrase the three statements of a well-known anthropologist, Ralph Linton. 1) As a human being I am unique, that is different from all others. 2) As a human being I have something in common with several others, members of my cultural group. 3) As a human being I have something in common with all others, all human beings irrespective of time and place they live. In each person we can find a few characteristics coming under each level. In our search for identity do we select any one level or include all of them. My approach is to examine all these three categories though the term "Mar Thoma" encourages us to select the group characteristics.

The question "Who are you?", raised earlier, must be explored further by asking two other questions "Where do you belong?" and "What do you stand for?" The stronger the place that we belong to and the more worthwhile we believe and stand for, the better will be our identity. Thus, we can achieve better identity as individuals, as groups (In this situation as Mar Thoma members) and as human beings.

We all belong to several groups one after another or simultaneously. By belonging to groups or becoming one with them we formulate our values, beliefs and habits. We not only agree with them, but also disagree or question them. It is in this dual process of conforming and questioning that we learn and become a member of the group. This process of learning begins with the primary group (early in life and basic—and continues always in life by our membership in many groups. The membership encourages conformity enabling a person to behave like others in the group. But the opposite tendency to question others in the group results in qualities unique to each individual. Hence we conclude that it is in identifying with

others (develop membership qualities), that a person develops his or her own identity (qualities different from others in the group or personal uniqueness).

The next question on identity, already noted above, is, what do you stand for? This question enables us to examine our commitments. Human nature is best explained in terms of commitment or dedication to something like the ideals of freedom, peace, justice etc. as well as to a person whom we love or admire. Such commitment to something or someone makes us who we are; it shapes our identity as human beings.

Our commitment especially to someone in the identity formation, is determined by a related question: Whom do we follow? All human beings have some role models. A person selects another or a few people and takes their roles. The influence of these models upon personality formation can be positive or negative. We live at a time when peer groups becomes more influential and advertisements provide models rather than the example of adults who commit their life for the good of others and show the values of sacrifice or service.

The third level or category that Ralph Linton presents is what we share with all other human beings or our universal humanity. There are several distinctive features that we share as a species, homo sapiens. These common characteristics of human beings include the ability to reason (Plato and other Greeks), to reflect (Philosophers), advanced brain structure and intellect (evolution), imagination (art), symbols or language (linguists), vision or Dharsana (India), creativity or creation (supreme being), moral sense (ethicist), spiritual being (religion) and many other answers. This list includes secular or religious, artistic or scientific and other answers. A field of study or discipline usually focuses on any one of the above views. Though we learn from such studies our interest is in the integrated personality or wholeness of human beings. In an age of information, pieces of information are valued over integration of knowledge. In that case, the world is seen as fragmented and broken, in turn leading to separation and split personality.

Integration, the other key term in the title, refers to wholeness or oneness. This idea must be explained at social as well as at personal levels. Ideas like national integration (divisive forces in new countries), solidarity movement

(standing together for major struggles), world citizenship (see the world as one and be loyal or responsible to people everywhere) help to find out what is involved in social integration. Its essence is found in togetherness and connectedness of all as a family.

At the personal level integrity explains the excellence of character. An overemphasis on information and knowledge today results in the neglect of character. Educational institutions ignore character building and gives emphasis in becoming smart or intelligent. Moral and spiritual values give place to economic and material values with its association to market or consumer orientation. Excellence of character in the context of American society today is explored in *Integrity*, the book written by Stephen Carter.

The creation of an integrated society centered on the excellence of character goes hand in hand with the realization of who we are or our identity as human beings. The best answer to me is that we are God's children. It assumes God as the father and creator. We are given God's special abilities including the ability to create. God expects human beings to work with Him, sharing his fellowship, for the continuation of the great task started already. It is the creation of a new world consisting of human beings who share his nature and purpose.

We conclude with the same remarks on the "Mar Thoma" identity, the name of our church. Does our name convey some special features unique to our church? What mission does it accomplish today? How does it work with other churches and groups for its fulfillment?. Some of the characteristic features usually pointed out are: 1) an Eastern

Orthodox Church greatly influenced by Protestant churches of the West; 2) an evangelical church committed to the spreading of the good news of Jesus; 3) an ecumenical and global church working closely with other churches with a larger and world-wide orientation and 4) a reforming church, growing, on the spirit of reformation including the attitude of openness.

The "Mar Thoma identity" can serve as a source of strength. Hence Mar Thoma members who moved out of Kerala to other parts of India and later to other countries gathered to form parishes in a foreign environment. The danger of this group formation is that it can end up in "cultural ghettos", separate from the rest of society. A fundamental question to be raised is to what extent and in what ways do we relate with the culture outside. Do we build walls of separation or create bridges to connect with others. The question of interacting with social forces of the surrounding community is important to Mar Thoma members outside of Kerala as well as within in this global age. This issue of interaction was addressed by prophets for people in diaspora. We need the prophetic voice coming from the church leadership, both clergy and laity. Today these "scattered" people are not powerless or persecuted. Rather, they share the wealth, prosperity and power of host countries, and this is especially true in America. It will be a "blessing" when we respond to the needs of others everywhere and fulfill our Christian responsibilities following the example of Christ. Let us shine as light to the World, reminding of the Mar Thoma logo, "Lighted to Lighten".

NORTH EASTERN REGIONAL SEVIKA SANGHOM



A joint couples meeting of the North East and the South East region was held on April 17th at the St. John's Mar Thoma Church, Queens Village, N.Y. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Rev. Alex Thomas (Boston), and Mrs. Elizabeth Punnose (Church of South India) were the main leaders. The theme was "A community being shaped by Jesus Christ." About 400 people attended the conference. The meeting was a blessing for all participants. Rev. Thomas Easow presided over the meeting. Mrs. Ponnamma George gave the welcome speech and Mrs. Lilly Simon gave the Vote of thanks.

Farewell Meeting: A farewell meeting was held for the outgoing Diocesan Secretary Rev. Oommen Philip, Rev. P.M. Thomas, Rev. Jacob Mathew during the couples conference. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus presided over the meeting. The Felicitation message given by Rev Joseph Chacko, Mrs. Lilly Simon, and Mrs. Elizabeth Koshy.

General Body: The North East Regional Sevika Sanghom General Body was held on April 17th at the St. John's Mar Thoma Church. It was decided to sponsor ten students in the A M M Bible Institute, Thiruvila. Mrs. Mariamma Abraham presented the Annual Report for 1998 and Mrs. Susamma Abraham presented the Statement of Account for 1998 and the Budget for 1999.

Regional Meeting: The North Eastern Regional Sevika Sanghom conference was held on June 15, 1999 at Staten Island Mar Thoma Church. Rev. Thomas Easow presided over the meeting Rev. V.S. Varghese, Rev. K.Y. Jacob, and Mrs. Mini Joyce Thomas were the main leaders. Rev. John Thomas gave the welcome speech and Mrs. Lilly Simon gave Vote of Thanks.

Mrs. Lilly Simon, Regional Secretary.

Vision of God's Worldwide Purpose in Christ

(Eph. 1:10)

Rev. K. V. Simon

Vision is the ability to see God's presence, to perceive God's power, to focus on God's plan in spite of the obstacles. It is the ability to see above and beyond the majority. It is looking at life with a divine perspective, reading the scene with God in clear focus. God's worldwide purpose is working from the beginning of creation. From Adam to Abraham, to Israel, to the Church, God's purpose is to:

Penetrate all human cultures with the reconciling Gospel. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself (II Cor. 5:19). God takes the initiative to reconcile all cultures and all creatures unto himself

Persuade all kinds of people to become his obedient disciples (Matt. 28: 20). It is the divine command. There is no other choice

Project into every society the redemptive work of God's Kingdom against the destructive forces of evil (Matt. 10:7-8). There are destructive forces of evil to the life and growth. Jesus commanded to heal the sick—people need physical, mental and spiritual healing. Men must be brought back to life from their inertia.

Press the course of history toward the climactic return of the Lord to reign the whole world in truth and righteousness (II Pet. 3:10-13). We have to lead a holy and sacred life to the glory of God.

Permeate the whole earth with the knowledge and glory of God as waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

Christ is the Center of the Purpose: *Col. 1:18-20*

Christ came in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). God's purpose extends once for all from one nation to the ends of the earth. His blood will ransom sinners from every tongue, tribe, and nation (Eph. 1:10; 23; Col. 1:18-20). When all things are finally summed up in him, all his enemies destroyed, the Kingdoms of the earth will become the Kingdom of our God and of the Messiah. Then he will shine like a Sun in that Cosmopolitan City. The risen Lord has given us the Great Commission to involve in his great purpose. Even after two thousand years the priority of that Commission is not diminished, even though we have many priorities now. John Stott says, "His authority on earth allows us to dare to go to all nations His authority in heaven gives us our only hope of success. And His presence with us leaves us no other choice." Jesus rose and lives and continues to lead God's worldwide purpose to its ultimate

triumph. All along God has intended to include people from every family and race in the inheritance of his dear Son. Christianity is the only world religion without a cultural home base.

The Gospel is the Power of the Purpose:

Matt. 24:14; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47

God's greatest redemptive purpose expands throughout the earth. The Gospel is preached across the numerous human barriers to create a true worldwide community of faith. The Gospel's power is attached with the convicting and convincing power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit translates the Gospel to the level of the human heart and people are convinced and converted. The Gospel calls not only to believe, but also to fulfill their destiny in Christ. The Gospel changes our lives and gives a concern for the unreached people for whom also Christ died. Submission to his commission is a response totally consistent with submission to his Lordship. The Gospel is God's power to save and send. He saves not only ourselves, but for his saving mission in the world. The Gospel should ignite a radical obedience that thrusts us out to follow our Savior to the ends of the earth. You are the witnesses for that great event (Luke 24:48).

Church is the Agent of that Purpose: *I Pet. 2:9*

We are more like a caravan of ambassadors, going forth to bless the families on the earth like Abraham. The Church exists for the benefits of the people outside its community. Citizens of Christ's Unshakable Kingdom are empowered by Him with exclusive authority to be co-workers with Him to fulfill His global purpose. We are the "Household of God" to spread the lifestyle of the Kingdom in the place we are planted. And also it has to march as an army to fight against the evil forces, which threaten the Kingdom values. John Perkins says, "When we say with St. Paul, O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory?, we are shouting out the battle cry as God's liberation front in the world, moving through the world freeing the captives." The local Church is God's base of operation in that locality. Every congregation is potentially like a time bomb within its own culture group, ready to explode with Kingdom style changes. God's worldwide purpose will create and impact on individuals and community.

Compassion is the Pulse of that Purpose:

Matt. 9:36; 14:14

Jesus had compassion in his ministry of teaching,

healing and forgiving. Unless we are moved by the same compassion, we have no mission. Compassion helps us to see people as God sees them. Compassion cares about the deepest needs. God's compassion moves the Church to proclaim the good news and plant congregations. Compassion morally obligates us to speak out and live out what we know to be the source of physical, social, economic, and political burdens of the people. It will bring the people to reconciliation and restoration. In the world there is a cry for caring. We are called to give love in an unloving world.

Satan is the Enemy of the Purpose: *1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:14*

We are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with Satan's hosts who oppose God's work in this world. God is calling people from darkness to his marvelous light to proclaim his wonderful deeds. When a person or a group give allegiance to the Lord, the enemy starts working. The temptations, oppressions, and persecutions experienced by the believers are good examples of this. We cannot label every resistance to the gospel as Satanic. There is growth in the midst of satanic opposition.

The Possibilities in the World:

We have a world full of possibilities. We know that God is not finished yet. The task before us is vast. We need a vision to see the ways God has opened before us. The Church needs to be surrendered, renewed, and empowered. The world wants us to see what God's Spirit will do

through a global Church. Our world is at the point of rapid change. In the midst of this rapid change, people want to hear something: if it is the Gospel it is well and good. In 1900 there were only four million Christians in Africa (3%). By 2000 it is estimated that the Christian population there will be 351 million (46%). In many parts of the Third World countries, there is great awakening of missionary movements. There is an unprecedented receptivity to the gospel of Lord Jesus Christ. More individuals and more communities open the door to the gospel. As never before the potential in missionary approach is vastly increasing. The human resources in the world are immeasurable. The tools and methodologies are immense. Radio and Television broadcasting, computer technology is developing. Never in the history of the Christian Church has a generation of Christians had a greater opportunity as today. The Gospel message forever remains the same, but the key to unlock each piece of the human situation is different. The challenge before us today is to design keys that fit thousands of different locks.

"Christians can escape the sorcery of self-centeredness. Like a mighty wind the Spirit of God can reverse the introverted patterns in our discipleship. He can uncover for us a crystal view of the eternal horizons. He can inject the grandeur of the eternal mountains, into all our efforts down in the valley, wherever God places us and whatever He assigns us to do. He can fill the lungs of our souls with His breath, so that we will have strength and vitality to rescue the perishing everywhere." David Bryant. ■

Obituary

Titus George Philip (Stancy) (February 4, 1979-May 16, 1999)

Titus George Philip (Stancy) son of E. V. Philip and Rachel Philip of St. Johns Mar Thoma Church, New York died on May 16, 1999 in a Car Accident.

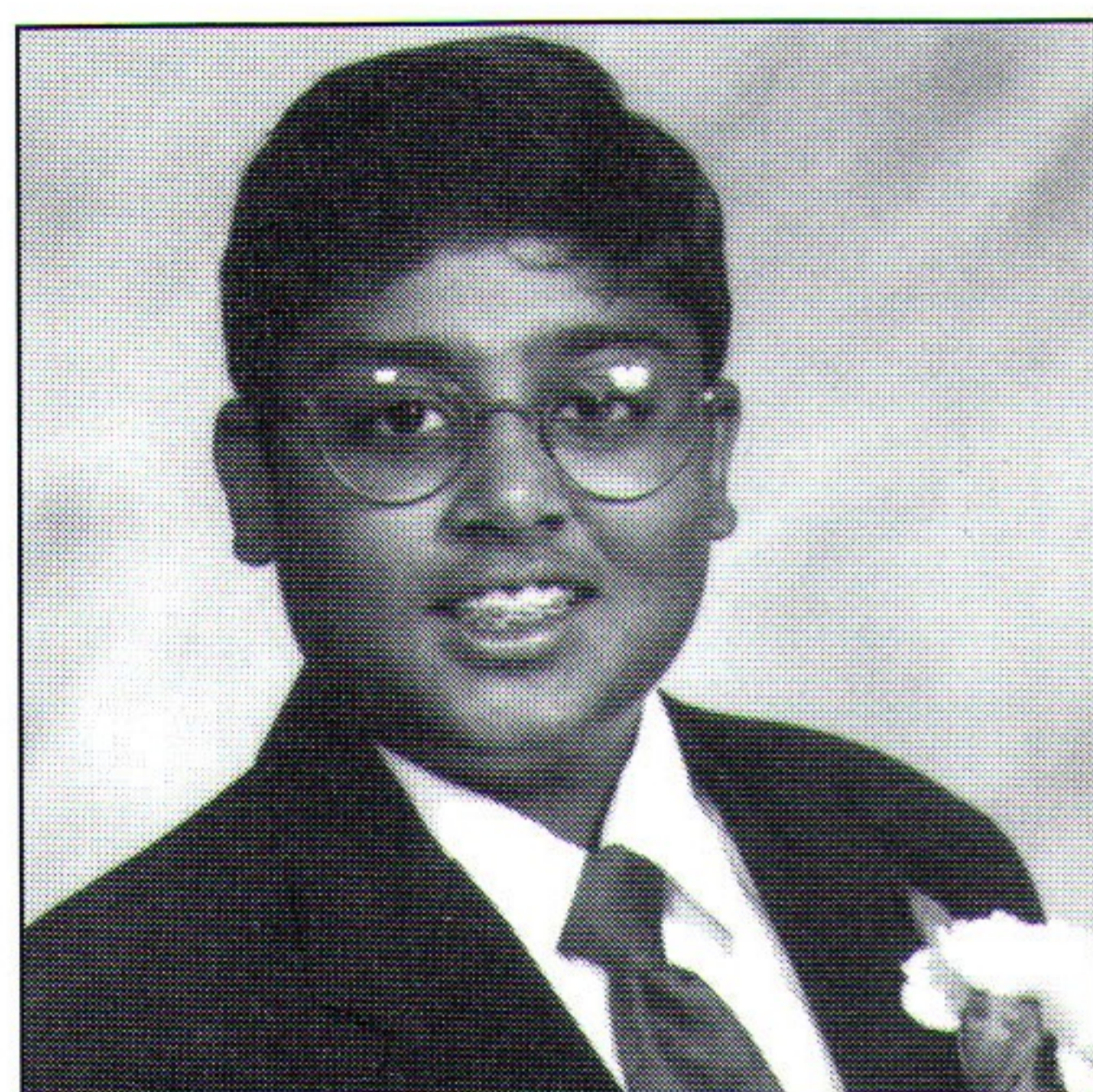
Titus graduated from Elmont Memorial High School in 1997 and was currently a junior at St. Johns University pursuing a degree in Psychology with minor in Womens Studies. He served the community as a counselor/mentor to students at St. Boniface after school program. Stancy dreamed of becoming a psychologist and setting up a foundation for mentally challenged children. He loved playing basketball and was passionate about cars and music.

His father, Mother, brother Stanley, and a number of friends and relatives miss him deeply.

We express our condolence to the bereaved family.

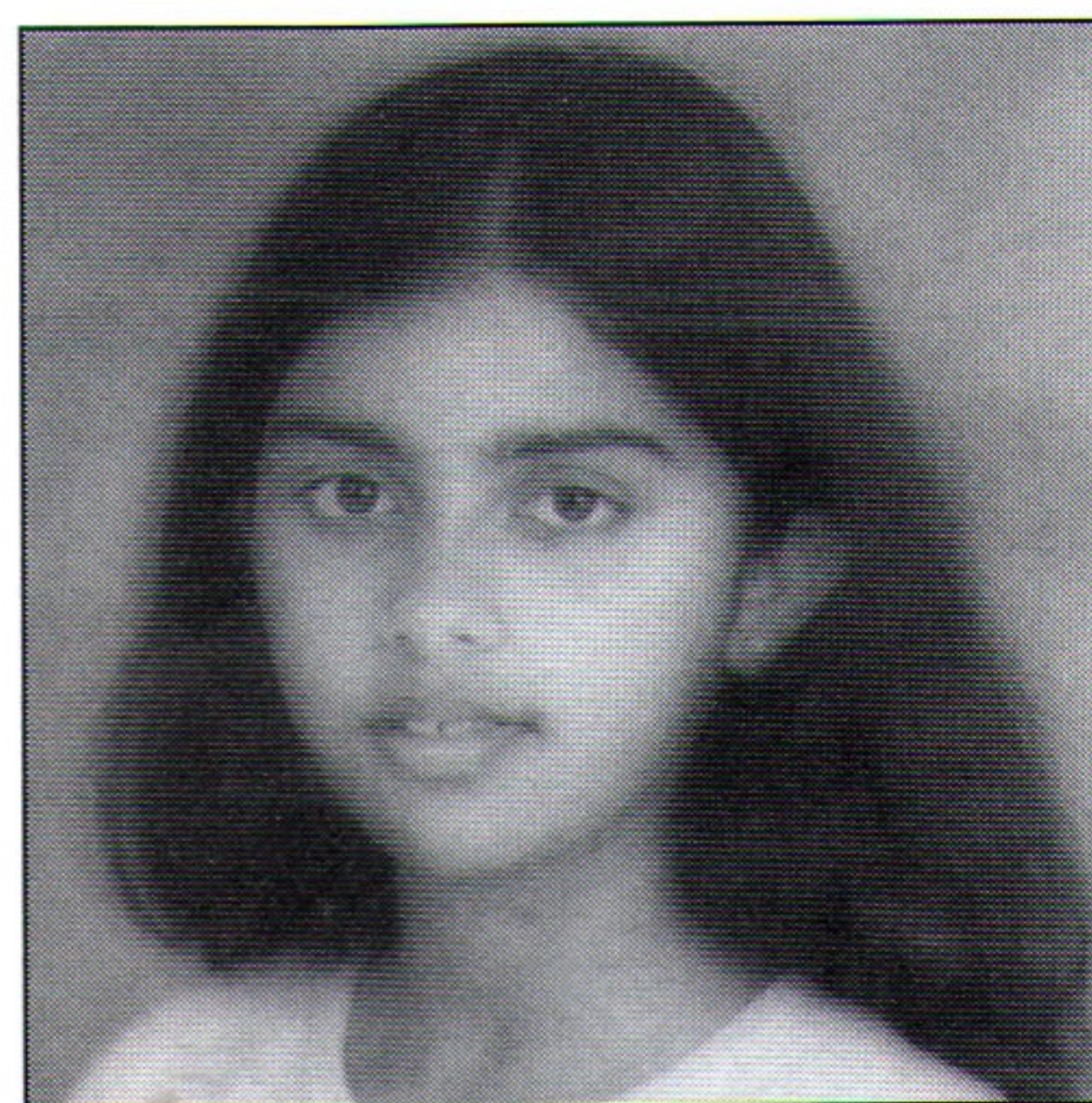


**The Mar Thoma Sunday Schools
Diocese of North America and Europe
Results of the Diocesan Examination held on May 2, 1999
Junior High (Grades 5 & 6)**



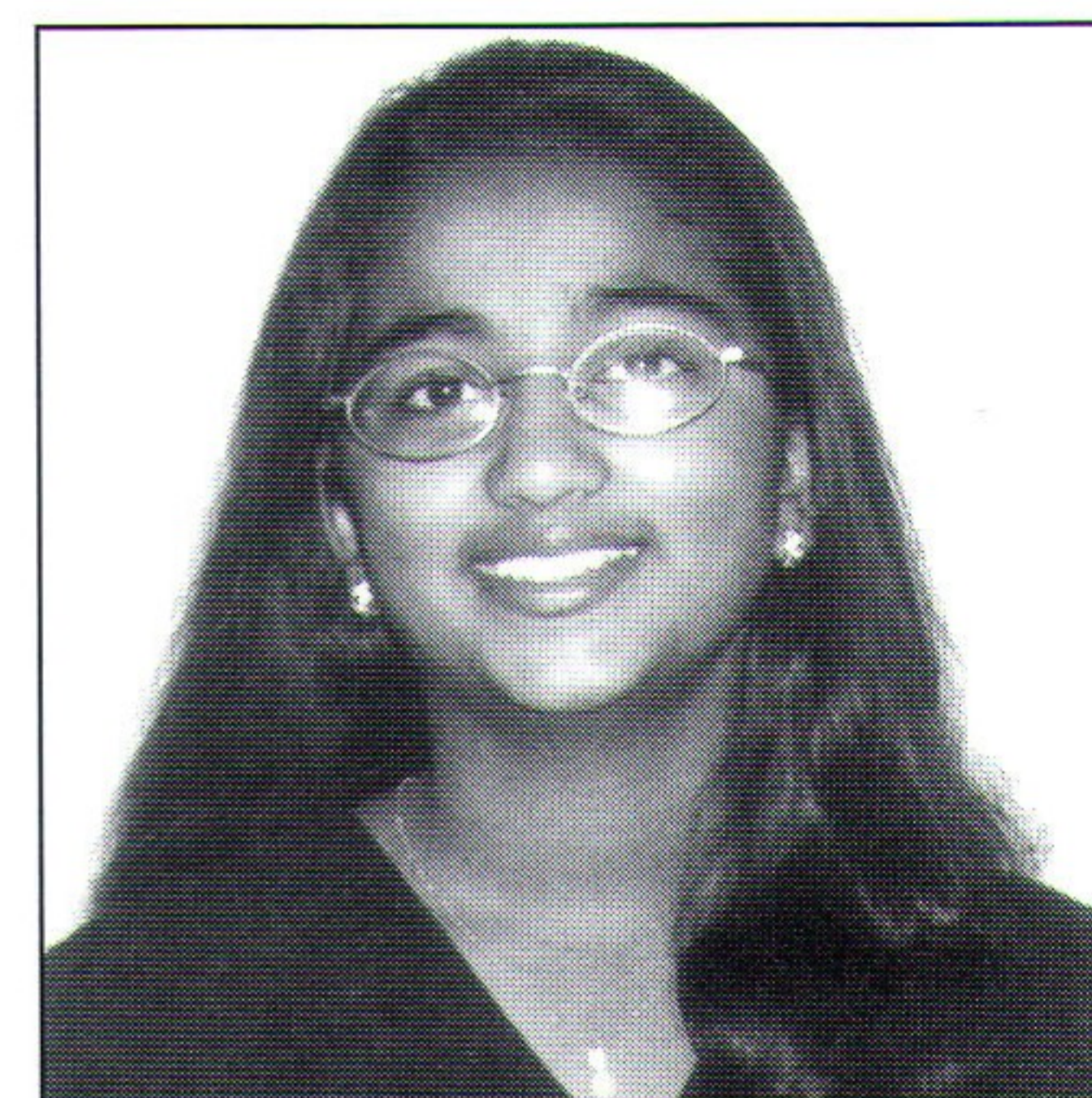
Justin John

Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, NY
Second Place



Kavya Sarah John

Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles, CA
First Place



Jency George

Trinity Mar Thoma Church, TX
Second Place



Susan Jose

The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island, NY
Third Place

Distinctions

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---|
| 1. | Abel Varughese | Mar Thoma Church of South Florida |
| 2. | Blessy Abraham | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 3. | Jenie George | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 4. | Jaeson Abraham | Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, F.B. |
| 5. | Merrill A. Mathew | Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles, California |
| 6. | Justin George | St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 7. | Shane Thomas | The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto |
| 8. | Ron Koshy | St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey |
| 9. | Shane Varghese | The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto |
| 10. | Benji Paul | Mar Thoma Church Chicago |
| 11. | Smitha Jose | Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 12. | Lisa Kurian | Mar Thoma Church Chicago |
| 13. | Derick Abraham | St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 14. | Gena Mathew | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 15. | Teenu Varghese | The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto |
| 16. | Abel Jacob | Detroit Mar Thoma Church |
| 17. | Christeena Kurian | Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 18. | Linda Melethil | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 19. | Joyce James | St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey |
| 20. | Vinu P. Jacob | Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 21. | Robin Karikottu | Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 22. | Ashish Chutel | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |

The Mar Thoma Sunday Schools
Diocese of North America and Europe
Results of the Diocesan Examination held on May 2, 1999
Junior High (Grades 7 & 8)



Priscilla Rajan
 Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, NY
Second Place



Jebin Mary Varghese
 The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island
First Place



Jennifer George
 St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, NJ
Third Place

Distinctions

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|--|
| 1. | Anika Chacko | Detroit Mar Thoma Church |
| 2. | Joseph Varghese | St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 3. | Jithin Yohannan | St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 4. | Merin Mathew | The Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia |
| 5. | Jenny Varghese | The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island |
| 6. | Christine Thomas | Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 7. | Soumya Samuel | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 8. | Sharon Chackalamannil | The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey |
| 9. | Lirin Jacob | The Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma |
| 10. | Anita Matthews | St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey |
| 11. | Leslie Thomas | Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington |
| 12. | Jerry Jacob | St. Peters Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey |
| 13. | William George | Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles |
| 14. | Anila Thomas | Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 15. | Sherin Mani | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 16. | Shaun Ninan | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 17. | Shanu George | St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 18. | Simi Abraham | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 19. | David Cherian | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 20. | Mathew Varghese | Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington |
| 21. | Sophi Thomas | Detroit Mar Thoma Church |

**The Mar Thoma Sunday Schools
Diocese of North America and Europe
Results of the Diocesan Examination held on May 2, 1999
Junior High (Grades 9 & 10)**

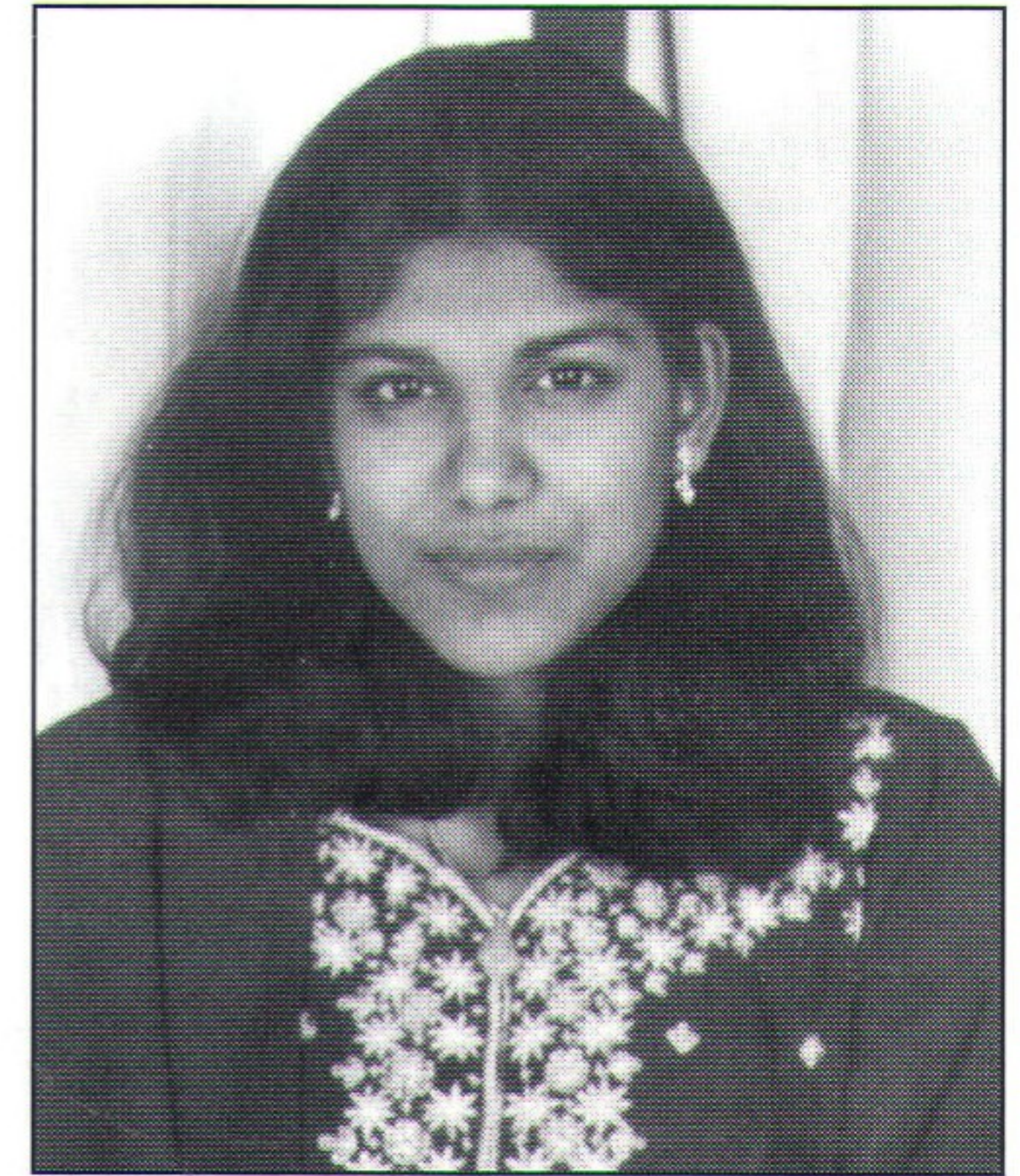
Jay Chacko

Trinity Mar Thoma Church, TX
Second Place



Jasmine Samuel

Trinity Mar Thoma Church, TX
First Place



Celia Thomas

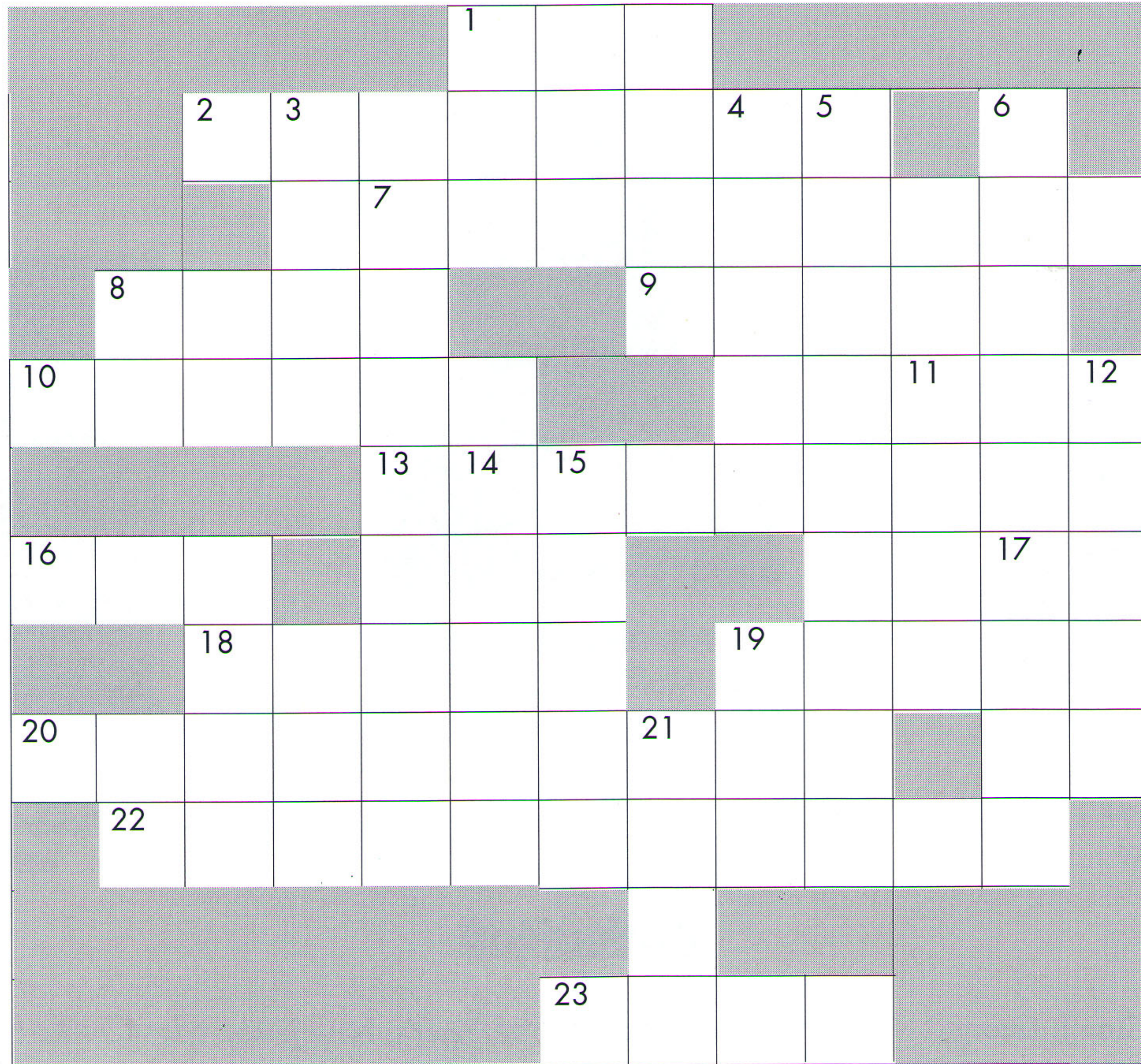
The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island, NY
Third Place

Distinctions

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--|
| 1. | Gina J. George | Prayer Group E of St. Peter's, New Jersey |
| 2. | Jerry Mathew | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 3. | Sherry George | St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 4. | Philip Varghese | St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 5. | Reema Kurian | The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, F.B. |
| 6. | Samuel Thomas | Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 7. | Jocelyn George | Detroit Mar Thoma Church |
| 8. | Beckey Joseph | St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey |
| 9. | Anil Cherian | St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey |
| 10. | Jason Eapen | Mar Thoma Church of South Florida |
| 11. | Christopher Samuel | The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto |
| 12. | Subin Jacob | St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 13. | Maureen Mathew | Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles |
| 14. | Betsy Daniel | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |
| 15. | Pretha Kurien | Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston |
| 16. | Jinu Chacko | The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto |
| 17. | Sonia Easaw | Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco |
| 18. | Tom Jacob | The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, F.B. |
| 19. | Jaison Varughese | Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York |

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
 (based on the book of Nehemiah)
Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)



Across

1. Who fought for Nehemiah and his people?
2. The enemies were planned to harm Nehemiah in the plain of _____.
3. She tried to frighten Nehemiah.
7. The city where Joshua's ancestors were buried.
8. The people of Israel gathered to fast in order to show sorrow for their _____.
9. He was one of the Levites who explained the law to the people.
10. Nehemiah's brother.
13. Son of Jeshua.
16. Nehemiah's feeling about the destruction of his city.
18. King of Bashan.
20. Gates were destroyed by this.
22. Nehemiah took the wine to him.
23. Everyone said _____ and praised the Lord.

Down

3. Father of Joshua.
4. A Musician
5. He was a reliable and God-fearing man without equal.
6. An Arab laughed at Nehemiah and his people.
11. Leader of Benjaminites.
12. The man of God _____.
13. The priest and scholar of the law.
14. He was a supervisor of temple workers.
15. The month of _____ entire wall was finished.
17. The people of _____ paid money to Balaam to curse Israel.
19. According to Tobiah _____ could break down the wall.
21. An object used by the priest to determine God's will.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on the book of Job)

Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)

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

- Job lived in _____.
- Eliphaz was from _____ city.
- Bildad was from the land _____.
- Zophar was from the land _____.
- Job had _____ sons.
- Job had _____ daughters.
- He was a good man, careful not to do anything evil.
- Job's oldest daughter
- Job's second daughter.
- He was the son of Barakel.
- The value of _____ is more than coral or crystal or rubles
- Job's _____ told him to curse God & die.
- Job broke the silence and _____ the day on which he had been born.
- The Lord blessed the _____ part of Job's life even more than he had blessed the first.
- After Job had prayed for his _____ the Lord made him prosperous again.
- There were no other _____ in the whole world as beautiful as Job's daughters.

Bible Word Search Finders (April 1999)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Jossy Joseph | Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock |
| 2. Emi Joseph | Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock |
| 3. Tina Daniel | Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock |
| 4. Toby Daniel | Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock |
| 5. Deena Daniel | Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock |
| 6. Asha John | St. Luke's MTC, FL |
| 7. Mariamma Zachariah | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 8. Laly Beji Jose | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 9. Mercy Thomas | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 10. Binsy Koshy | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 11. Shobha Jacob | MTC of South Flrkda, FL |
| 12. Melanie Zachariah | St. Thomas MTC, NY |
| 13. Jay Mathew | Trinity MTC, Houston |
| 14. Usha George | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 15. Sherin Mathews | Philadelphia MTC, PA |
| 16. Shamin Mathews | Philadelphia MTC, PA |

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (April 1999)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Sherin Mathews | Philadelphia MTC, PA |
| 2. Shamin Mathews | Philadelphia MTC, PA |
| 3. Asha John | St. Luke's MTC, FL |
| 4. Vinod John | St. Luke's MTC, FL |
| 5. Jay Mathew | Trinity MTC, Houston |
| 6. Usha George | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 7. Laly Beji Jose | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 8. Mercy Thomas | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 9. Binsy Koshy | St. John's MTC, NY |
| 10. Shobha Jacob | MTC of South Flrkda, FL |
| 11. Melanie Zachariah | St. Thomas MTC, NY |

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS September 10, 1999

DIOCESAN NEWS

DALLAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, GRAND PRAIRIE

The long cherished dream of our parishioners in having our own parsonage building has been fulfilled with the dedication of the newly acquired parsonage on July 6, 1999 by the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus and the visiting Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius. The Vicar Rev. Jiji Mathew welcomed the Bishops and the guests who included Rev. Sajan P. Mathew, Vicar of Dallas MTC, Farmers' Branch, Rev. Kuruvilla Philip, Vicar of St. Paul's MTC, Dallas, Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas, the newly ordained minister of the Mar Thoma Church who has been a member of the Grand Prairie Church from his early childhood on, Rev. Fr. Raju Daniel of St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Dallas and Rev. Dr. E.V. Eapen, CSI Church, Dallas. The Parish Secretary Mr. Renny Abraham gave vote of thanks. The address of the parsonage and the telephone/fax numbers are given below for general information:

602 Hugh Walker Drive
Mesquite, TX 75149

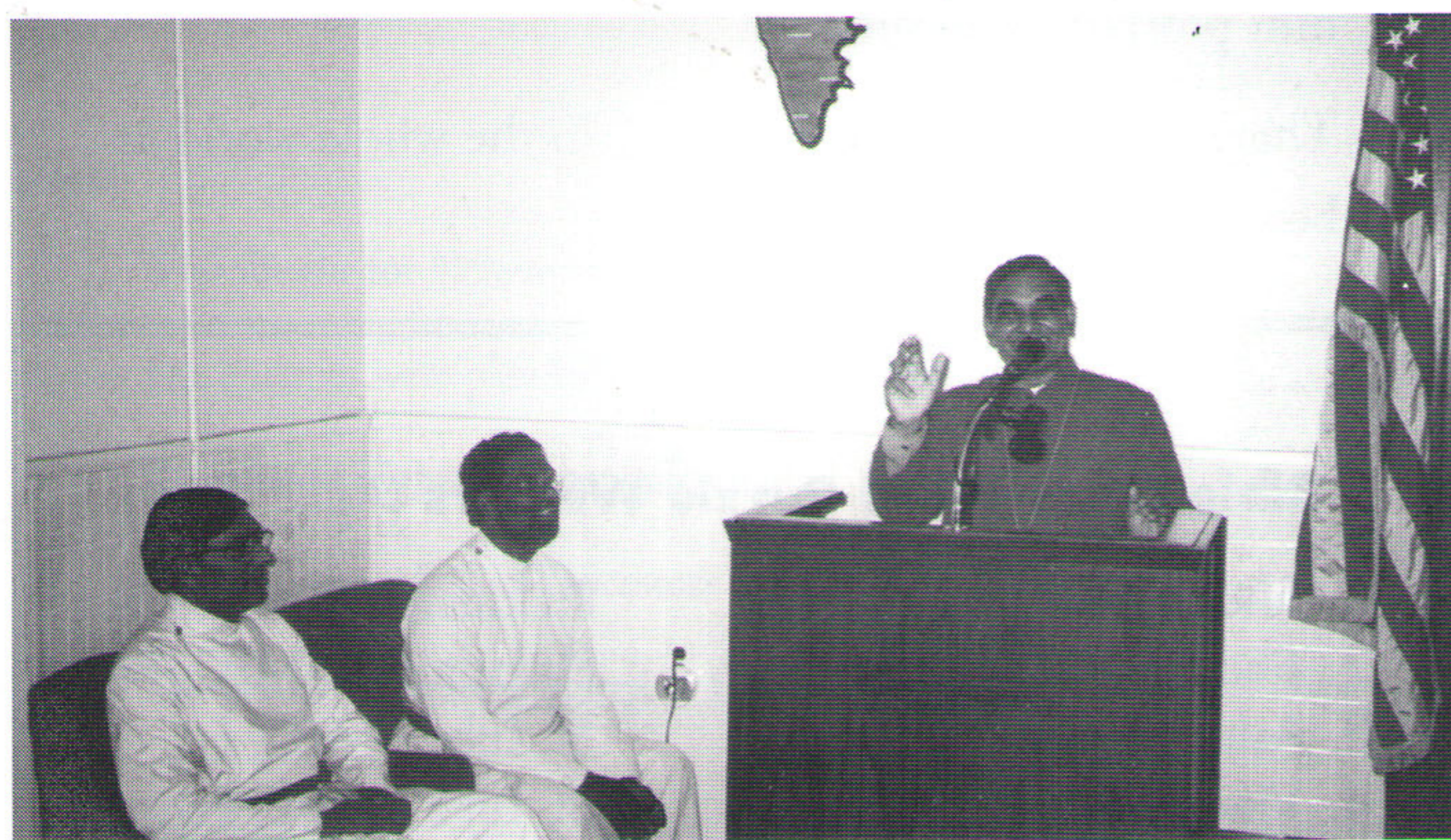
Phone: 972-3294230 • Fax: 972-329-4250



The newly dedicated Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Grand Prairie Parsonage.
The Youth Fellowship of the Dallas MTC Grand Prairie will hold a Youth Banquet in honor of the newly ordained achen Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas on Friday July 30, 1999 at 7 p.m. at the Crown Plaza Hotel, Dallas.

Rev. Jiji Mathew

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF LOS ANGELES



Rt. Rev. Baiju F. Gavit, C.N.I. Bishop of the Bombay & Pune Dioceses giving sermon on July 11, 1999 at the Los Angeles MTC. Rev. K. G. Pothen and the parish vicar Rev. K. V. Simon are seated on the left.

C.N.I. Bishop's visit:

The Rt. Rev. Baiju F. Gavit, Bishop of the Bombay Diocese of the Church of North India visited the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles on Sunday July 11, 1999 and preached at the service. After the Service Bishop Gavit presented the trophy for the first prize in Diocesan Sunday

School Exam to Kavya John which was earlier received on her behalf by the parish vicar Rev. K. V. Simon at the Family Conference. The Rt. Rev. Baiju F. Gavit is also the Bishop for the Pune Diocese. He is very much involved in the social issues and advocates outreach programs of the Church

1999 West Coast Regional Youth Conference:

The West Coast Regional Youth Conference will be held from July 29-August 1, 1999 at the Alpine Meadows Camp Center, Angelus Oaks, California. The theme of the Conference is "Just as you are by the grace of God". The leaders of the Conference are: Rev. Kurien Thomas, Rev. K. V. Simon, Mr. Sajo Oommen and Mrs. Bindu Oommen. Check the Conference website for details at:
<http://www.marthomasf.org/wcyconf/>

Parish Day Celebration:

Our Parish Day celebrations will be held on Sunday August 15, 1999. Dr. Saphir Athyal, Director of Mission and Christian Witness, World Vision will be the Speaker.

Rev. K. V. Simon

ST. STEPHEN'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW JERSEY



Zacharias Thirumeni lighting the Nilavelaku.

The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan graciously approved the formation of St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, (Hoy & Hamilton Ave., Fords, New Jersey 08863) as per his *kalpana* dated February 3, 1999. The Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus dedicated this newest parish in the diocese on April 11, 1999. A public meeting was held in the afternoon presided over by our Diocesan Bishop. Mr. Thy Thanikari the representative of the New Jersey Governor Hon. Christine Todd Whitman along with many other dignitaries from Indian Diplomat Core and local

political/cultural leaders were present. Many achen and members of our sister parishes were present at the meeting

Our Secretary Pappen Varghese welcomed the dignitaries and Dr. Joseph Prasad expressed vote of thanks. Ms. Daniel Varghese, A. Abraham, Biju Kuruvilla, James Varghese and Andrew Pappachan introduced our distinguished



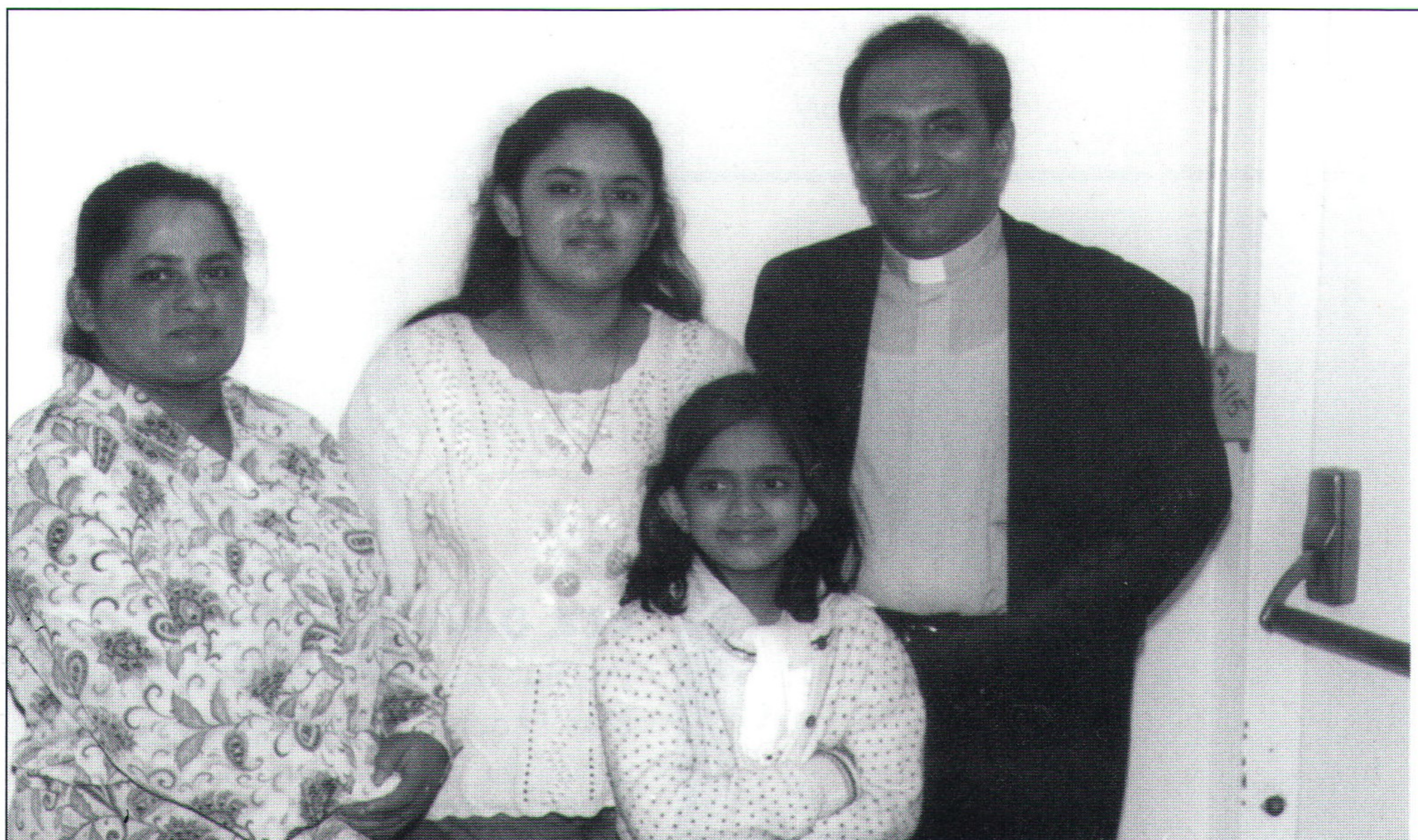
Rev. Oommen Philip, Diocesan Secretary, giving felicitation.

guests on this auspicious occasion. Mr. Sujit John and Ms. Betsy Joseph presented the activities of Youth Fellowship in the local community. Dr. Cecil Mathews was the Master of Ceremony. There were cultural and musical presentations by our Sunday School and Youth Fellowship under the leadership of our choir leader Mrs. Sylva George. The 'Nilavilaku' lighting ceremony made the function historical.

Presently we have 71 families as our members. Rev. P.T. Jacob served as the parish vicar for the first two months. Rev. M.C. Thomas took over as our vicar effective June 15, 1999.

Pappen Varghese

REV. OOMMEN PHILIP TRANSFERRED



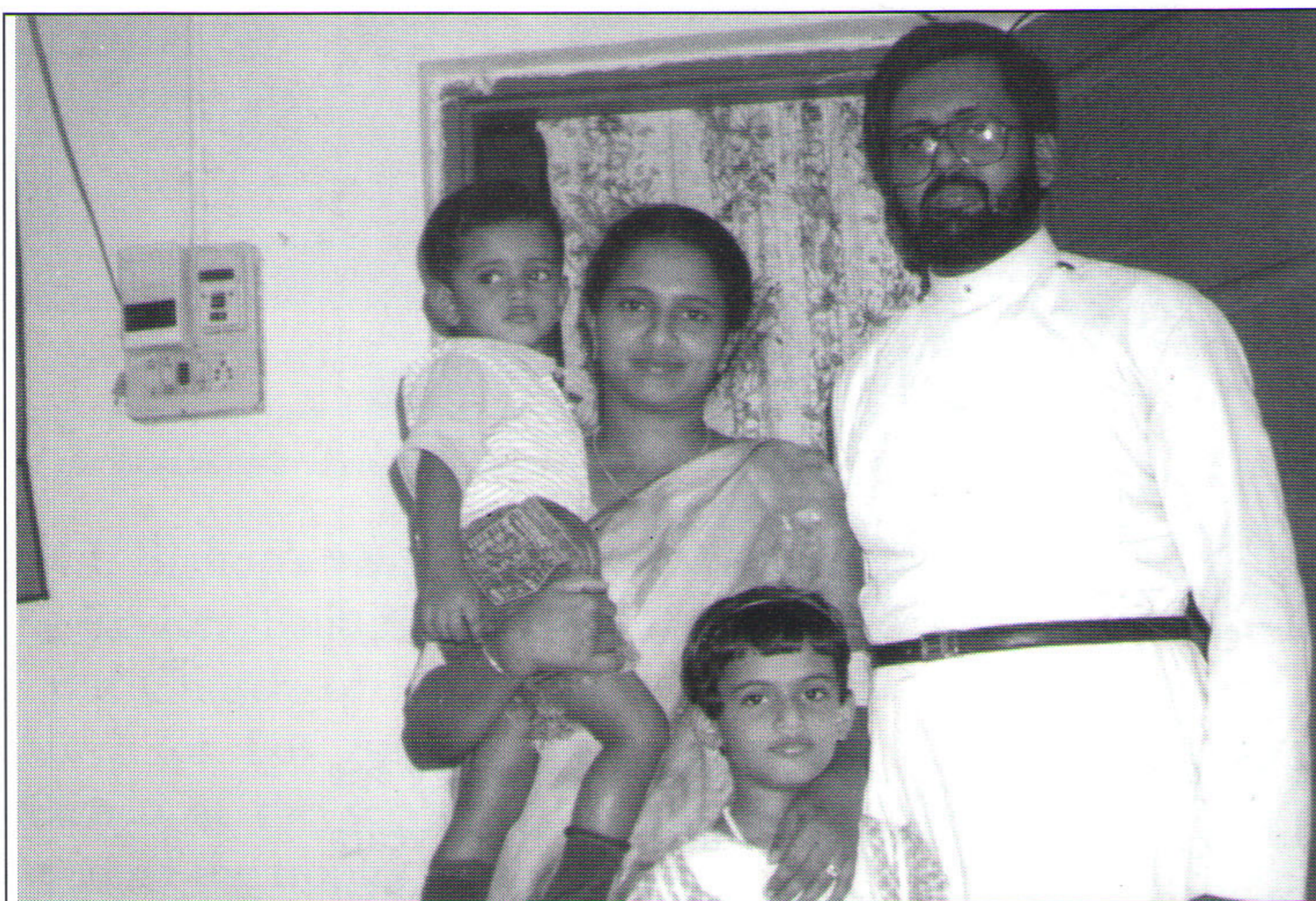
OOMMEN PHILIP Achen served as the Bishop's Secretary and Diocesan Secretary for the last two years and as Vicar of the Long Long Island Mar Thoma Church for three years prior to that. Achen also served as vicar of St. Andrews and Ascension MTC Philadelphia. Achen is transferred to New Delhi.

OUR NEW ACHENS



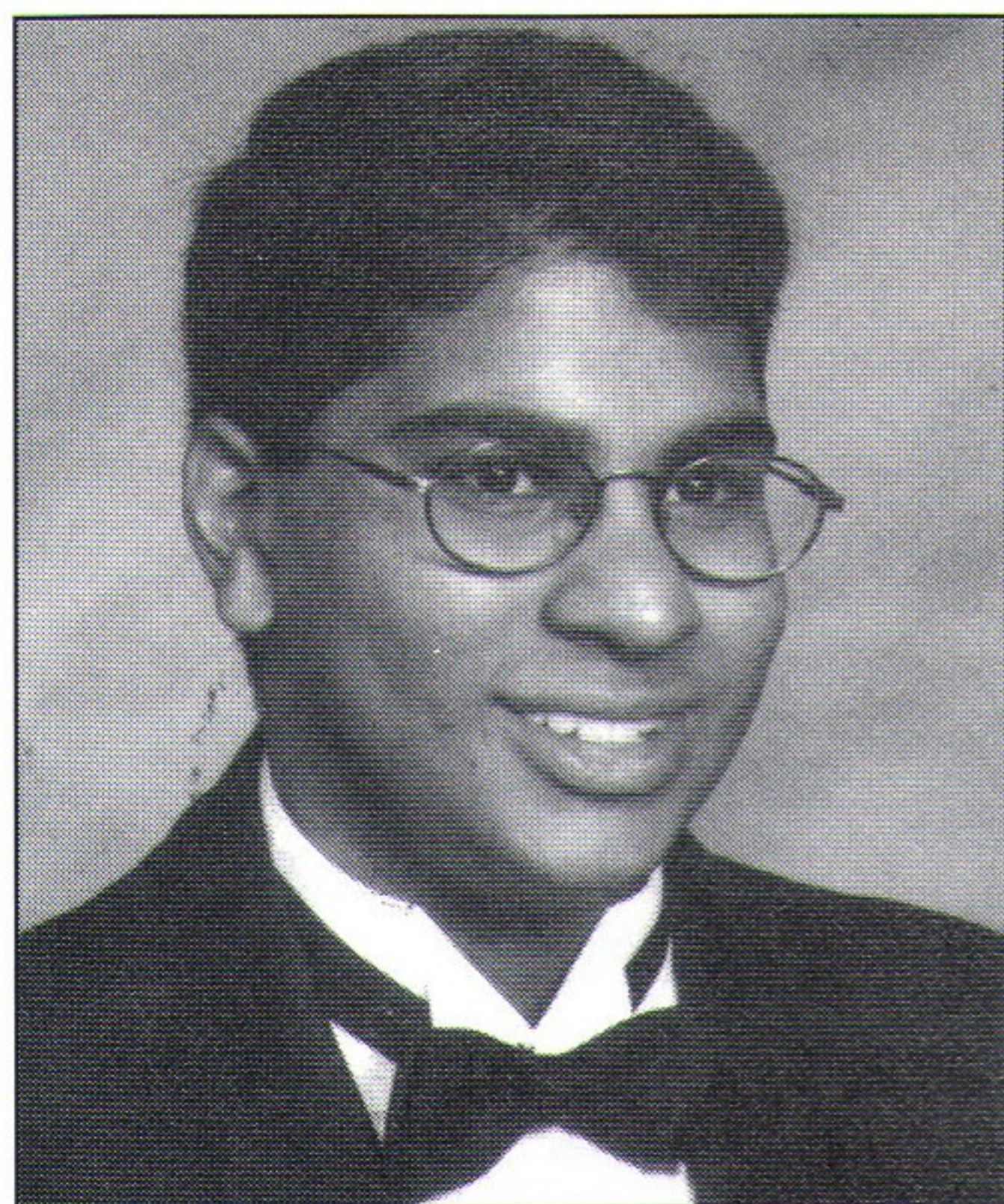
REV. JOSEN V. T. of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Chengara has joined the diocese as vicar of Chicago Mar Thoma Church. Achen studied at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam and was ordained in 1986. Achen took his M.Th. from Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi. He has served the Kovilloor, Mezcheoncode, Kuttamala, Surat, Bharuch, New Delhi, Bharatpur parishes. Achen is accompanied by Lissy Kochamma and son Josen.

REV. THOMAS P. CHANDY of thellyoor Salem MTC, Valakuzhy, Vennikulam, has joined the diocese as vicar of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York. Achen was ordained in 1984. He has served the Anicadu, Odanavattam, Kottara, Chembur, Bombay, Gudalur, Punalur parishes. Achen is accompanied by Annie Kochamma and sons Ashish, Allen and daughter Allen.

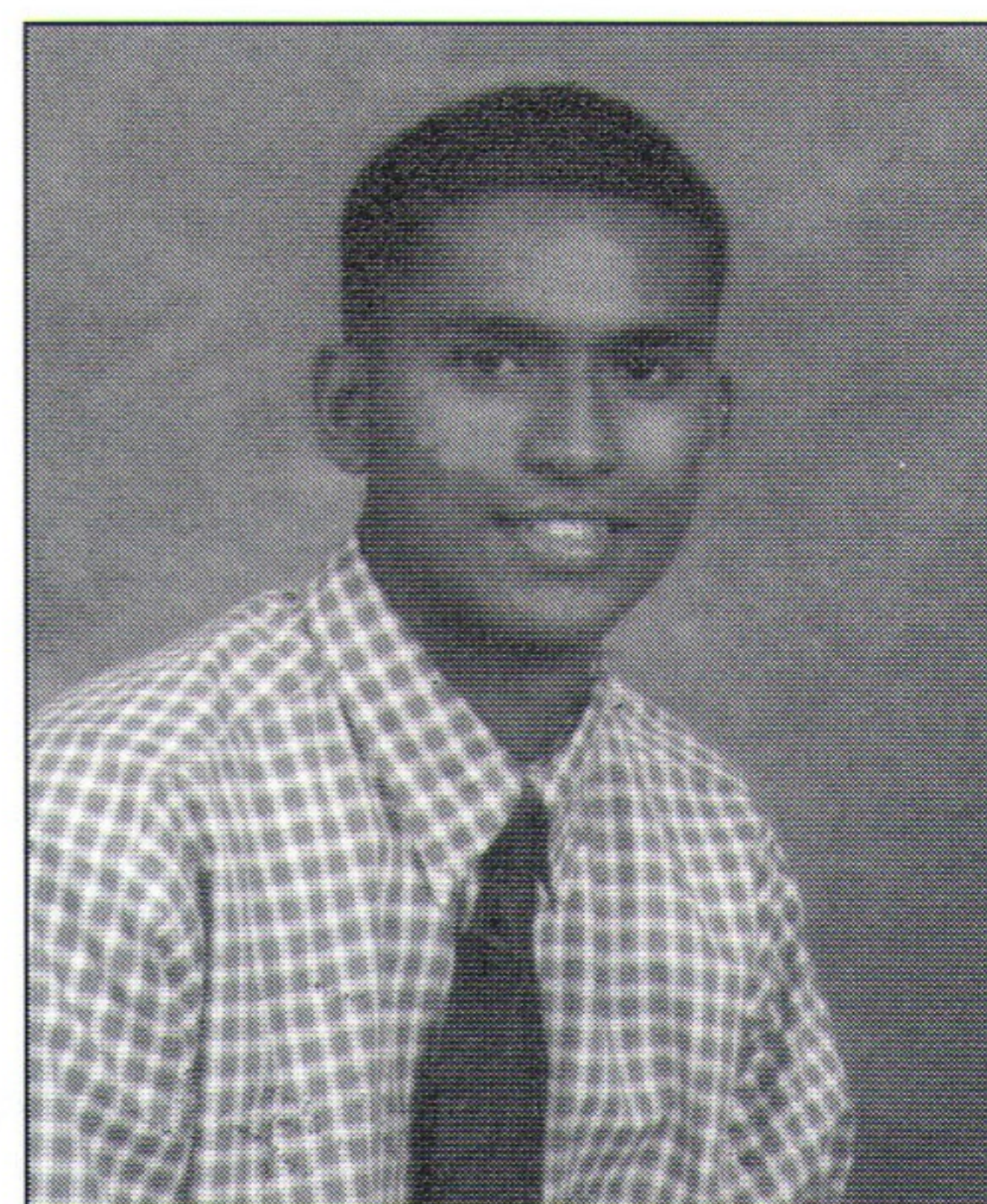


REV. DAVID DANIEL of Carmel Mar Thoma Church, Punalur has joined the diocese as assistant vicar of Chicago Mar Thoma Church. Achen was ordained in 1991. He has served the Thuruthikara, Kunnathur, Ambernath, Mumbai parishes. Achen is accompanied by Siby Kochamma and daughter Neethu and son Nithin.

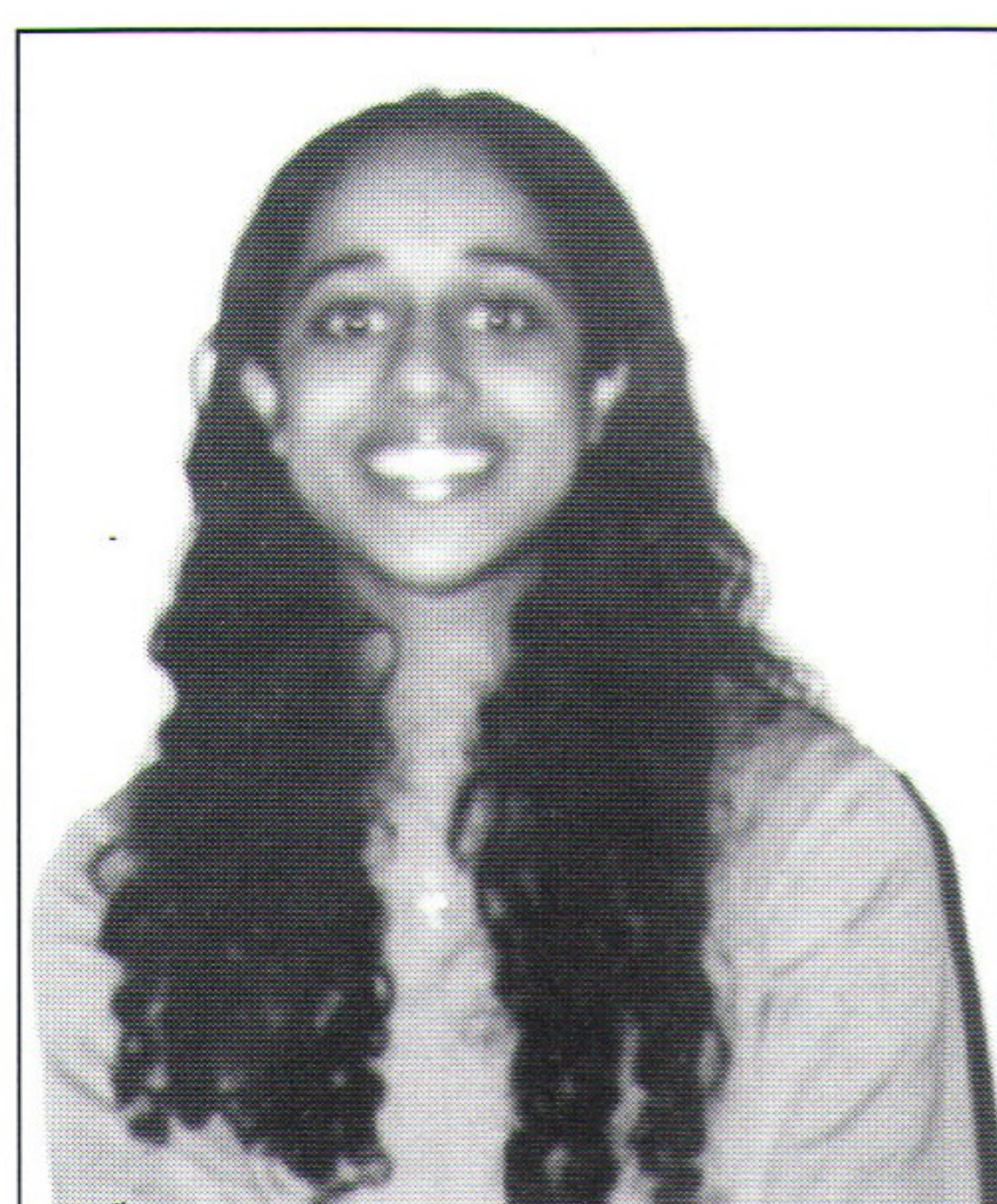
VALEDICTORIANS



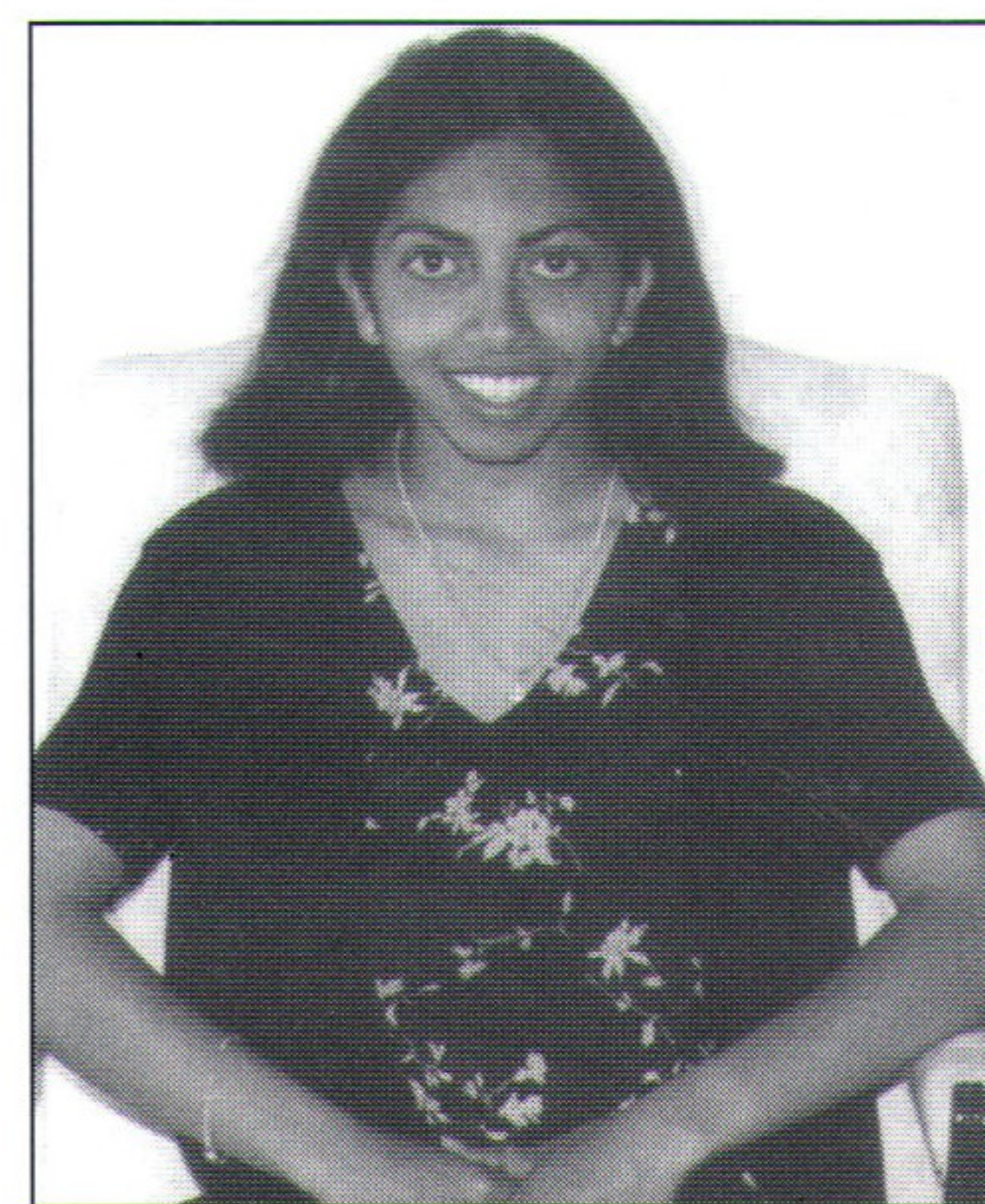
Justin Mammen
Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church, CA



Ajit Itty
Phoenix Congregation, Arizona



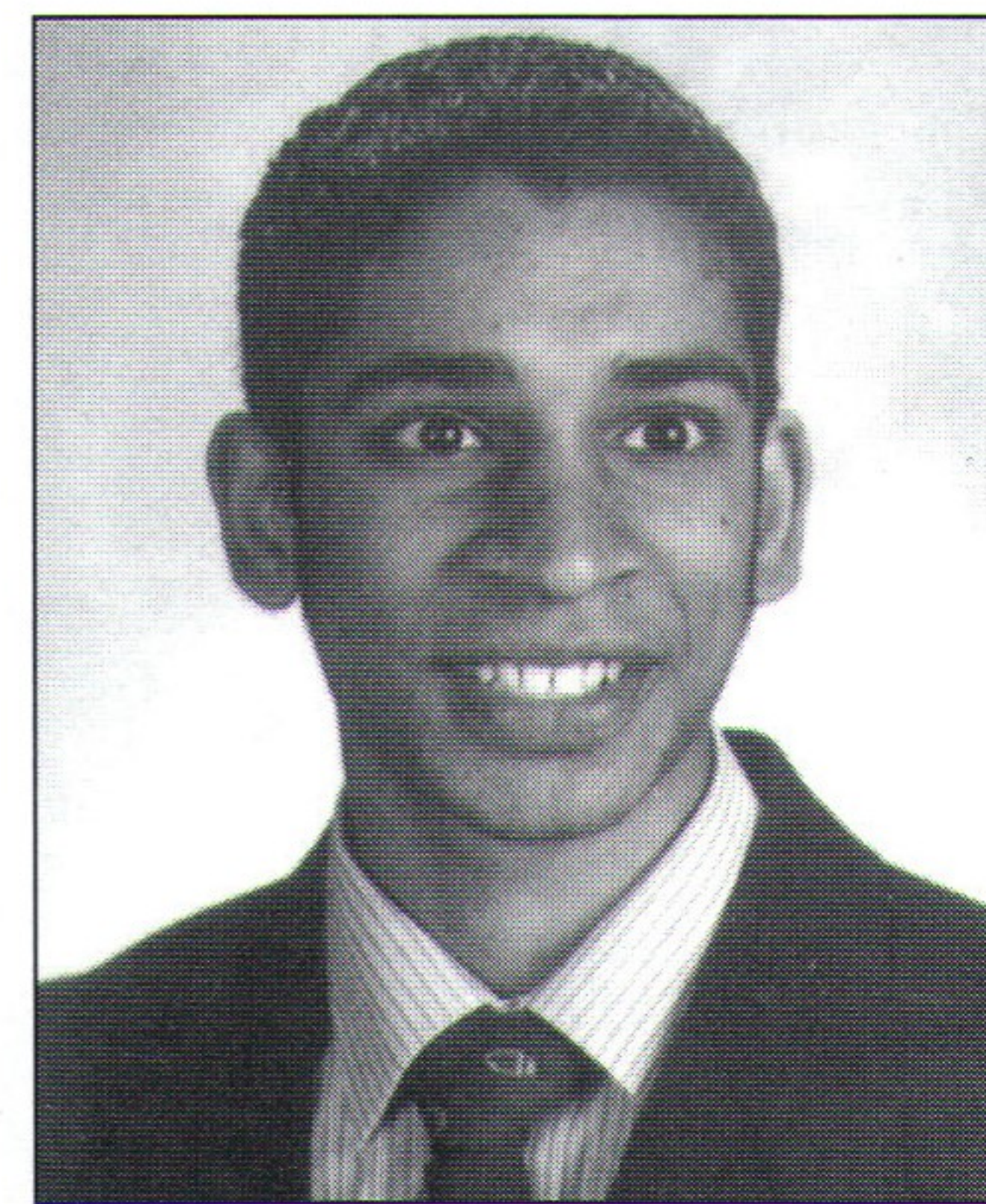
Julie Mary Sadhu
Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Frankfort, IL



Sherry Susan Varghese is the Valedictorian from Union Catholic Regional High School, Scotch Plains, NJ. She is also selected as the Scholar of the Year 1999 by *Daly News Star Ledger*. She is a member of St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, NJ. **Daniel Varghese, Secretary**



Dr. Linu M. John, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John V. Mathai from Chemmannil House, Thonnamala, has just completed her Ph.D. in Bio-medical Engineering from the University of Virginia. She is now doing her post-doctorate in the University of Texas, San Antonio. She is a member of the Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia, PA.



Justin Samuel Sadhu, of Bethel MTC Frankfort (Chicago) who was one of only eight college-bound students in Illinois and one of 31 in the United States to achieve a 36, the highest possible composite score, on the the April 10, 1999 administration of the ACT Assessment. About 58,300 Illinois students and 442,000 from across the nation completed the college entrance exam that day.

Diocesan Assembly

Diocesan Assembly was held on April 22-24. New Diocesan Council was elected during this session.

The New Council Members:

Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias mar Theophilus	– Diocesan Bishop
Rev. K. Y. Jacob	Bishop's and Diocesan Secretary
Rev. C. Joseph	Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston
Rev. K. G. Joseph	Epiphany mar Thoma Church, New York
Rev. George Mathew	Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto
Mrs. Leelamma Chacko	Dallas Mar Thoma Church
Mr. Thompson David	Detroit Mar Thoma Church
Mrs. Mariamma Koshy	Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston
Dr. George Jacob	St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey
Mr. Stephen Jacob	Mar Thoma Church, Montreal
Dr. Thomas Ninan	Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington
Mr. Thomas Mammen	Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church
Mr. Joshua Puthuparampil	St. James Mar Thoma church, New York
Mr. Abraham Thomas	Staten island Mar Thoma Church, New York - Diocesan Treasurer
Mr. Kalathil Varghese	Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York

Members of the Executive Council:

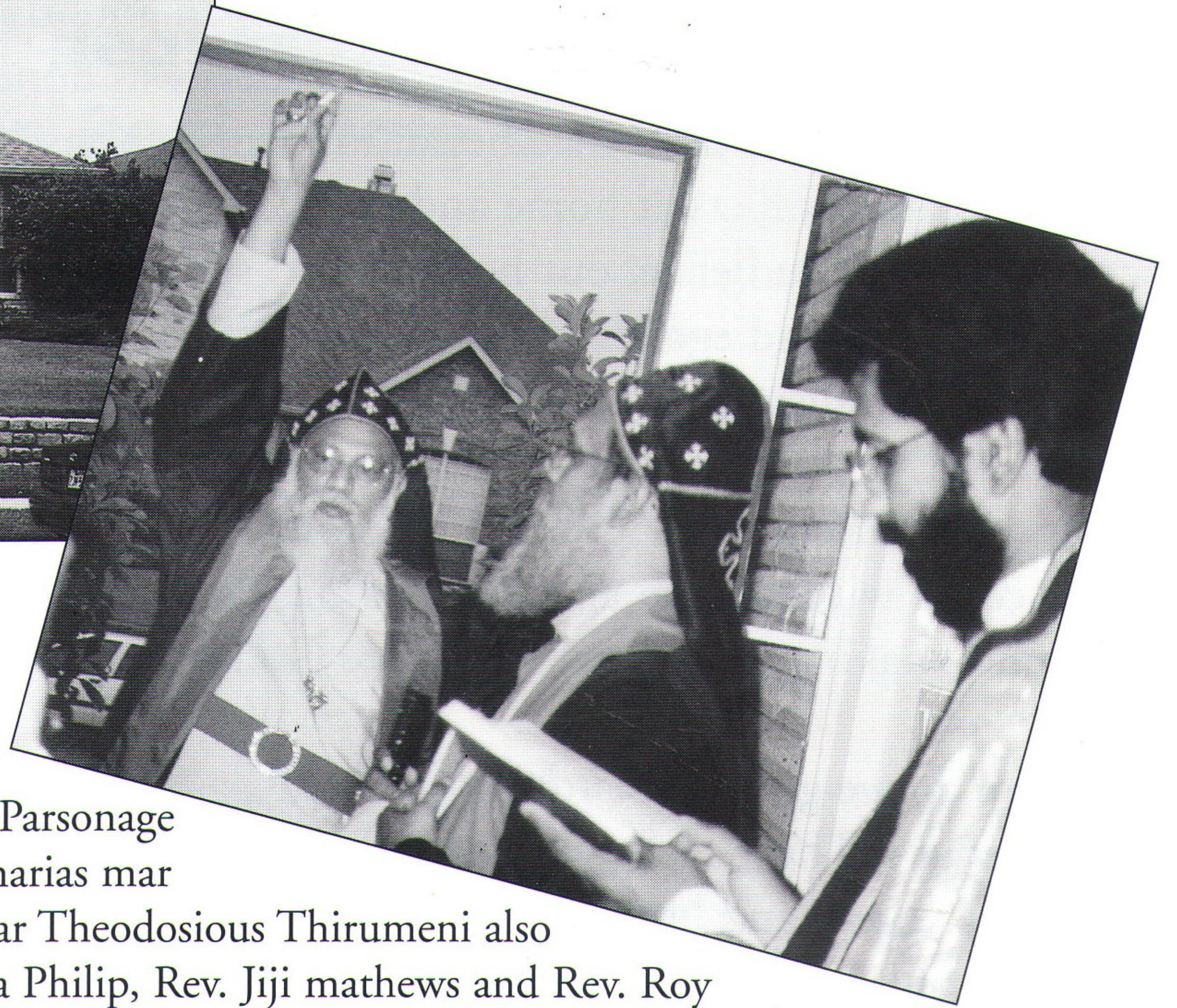
Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias mar Theophilus	– Diocesan Bishop
Rev. K. Y. Jacob	Bishop's and Diocesan Secretary
Rev. George Mathew	Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto
Mrs. Mariamma Koshy	Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston
Mr. Joshua Puthuparampil	St. James Mar Thoma church, New York
Mr. Abraham Thomas	Staten island Mar Thoma Church, New York - Diocesan Treasurer
Mr. Kalathil Varghese	Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York

DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEMBERS WITH RT. REV. DR. GEEVARGHESE MAR THEODOSIUS



Front Row L to R: Rev. K. G. Joseph, Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theophilus, Diocesan Secretary Rev. K. Y. Jacob, Rev. Joseph Cherian and Rev. George Mathew
 Standing L to R: Mrs. Mariamma K. Thomas, Mr. Thompson David, Mr. Thomas Mammen, Dr. Thomas Ninan, Dr. George Jacob, Mr. Kalathil Varughese and Mrs. Leelamma Chacko.
 Not shown in the are Diocesan Treasurer Mr. Abraham Thomas, Mr. Joshua D. Puthuparampil and Mrs. Stephen Jacob.

The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch



The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch Parsonage was dedicated on 7th July 1999 by Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias mar Theophilus Thirumeni. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosious Thirumeni also blessed the occasion. Rev. E. J. George, Rev. Kuruvilla Philip, Rev. Jiji Mathews and Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas were also present.

The completion of the parsonage project was an expression of the parishiners' commitment and sacrificial giving for the cause of the church.

Rev. Sajan P. Mathew (Vicar)

St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church

Diocesan Episcopa visited the St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers on 18th April. During a special service was, 11 youths accepted first communion.

A unity service was held on January 24th with the Church of Intercession Episcopal Church at New York. Rev. Canon Frederick Williams celebrated the Holy Communion. Rev. George Abraham gave the message. Common lunch was served after the service.

Youth fellowship hosted the North Eastern regional spring conference on May 1st. Yuvajana Sakhaym won the overall championship in the North Eastern regional kalamela. VBS was held on July 9-11.

Rev. George Abraham

Editorial

The theme of this year's Family Conference in Houston 'Reconciliation in the Midst of Conflicts' was, perhaps, more effective and meaningful to our personal and church life than any other theme presented in the past Conferences. The theme itself had so much relevancies to our present day life that areas of conflicts were easier to find than adopting ways for conflict resolutions. The exposition of the theme by the Conference leaders was done with such an intensity and clarity that many a delegate at the Conference began to identify himself or herself with the problems especially when it related to conflicts at home and conflicts in our parishes. As Sister Dr. Joan Chunkapura reminded her audience, our holiness and spirituality in our family and church life is often marred by our selfish and egoistic motives and actions. The Church belongs to God. Gossip and hatred, division and disunity have no place in the Church. God selects a few people every time to work for Him and we have to respect their authority as the authority comes from God. Only through unity, can we experience strength and harmony.' Never before in the history of our Family Conference, one could witness such an overwhelming and emotionally charged atmosphere of individuals and families making commitments before God during the Saturday evening dedication meeting.

Where do we go from here? Most of our parishes do have conflicts- conflicts between individuals and groups. Those of us who left the dedication meeting with moist eyes and determination to work for unity and harmony in our parishes should take up the lead and responsibility with the help of our achen to form a small reconciliation cell in every parish. Without fanfare and publicity, if the members of such groups or cells, after taking an oath of secrecy and impartiality, work towards resolving conflicts at its brewing stage, it will go a long way towards making our Church life more meaningful and harmonious.

One of the most memorable and proudest moments in this year's conference was the ordination of Deacon Roy Abraham Thomas as "Kasseessa" by the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus and the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Bishop of the Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese at the concluding session of the Conference on Sunday July 4, 1999. On that day, another history was made for it was the first time a youth from our diocese successfully completed theological studies at the Mar Thoma Seminary, Kottayam and was ordained as an achen outside India. It was the hope and prayer of our bishops, achen and the delegates that more and more of our youths would come forward to the ministry and that future Family Conferences will have ordination services on a regular basis. Roy Thomas achen while thanking the bishops, achen, relatives, friends and well-wishers pointed out the difficulties and obstacles he had to overcome at the Seminary besides learning the Malayalam language. Perhaps it would encourage more and more youths to come forward to the ministry provided they are allowed to complete the theological studies in North America or Europe and then sent to India for shorter training or refresher courses.

Abraham Mattakckal

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