



MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 2000



XVIII Mar Thoma Family Conference

Best Compliments

from

Babu, Kusumam, Joby
Jeena & Julie



Titus Family
Kent, WA



**Airlines have a
commitment to quality...
Aero Controls has built a
reputation on it.**

Aero Controls was established in 1985 with emphasis on providing the highest quality repairs and overhauls for hydraulic, pneumatic, mechanical, electro-mechanical and electronic components utilized in Boeing and Douglas aircraft.

AERO CONTROLS, INC.

1602 Pike Street N.W. • Auburn, WA 98001 • Phone: (206) 735-3350
Fax: (206) 939-0530 • Telex: 62897575



Mar Thoma Messenger

The official publication of the
Diocese of North America & Europe

VOL. XIX No. 3
July 2000

EDITORIAL BOARD

Rev. K.Y. Jacob
Diocesan Secretary
516-377-3311
Fax: 516-377-3322

Abraham Mattackal
Chief Editor
California
562-420-8817
Fax: 562-420-6528
Abramat@aol.com

Associate Editors:

Dr. Anna Panackal
Philadelphia
215-934-6257

Dr. T. M. Thomas
Connecticut
203-333-1243

Abraham Thomas
New Jersey
732-695-1015
abethomas@aol.com

Abraham Thariath
New York
718-712-0736

Dr. Zac Varghese
London, UK
81-951-5273

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Daniel Thomas
Manager
New York
516-377-3311
Fax: 516-377-3322
914-693-9488 (Res.)

Chacko Philip
New York
516-747-5903

C. V. Samuel
Detroit
810-268-8007
Fax: 313-871-8333

Rev. Dr. John Joseph
New York
718-845-2920

Gigi Tom
New York
914-268-3532

James T. Philip
New York
718-761-1295
jamestphilip@mindspring.com

T. A. Mathew
Houston
713-455-7469

Articles published in the Messenger are solely of the author's view.
Messenger is not responsible or liable for the contents of the articles in any way.

CONTENTS

Message From the Diocesan Bishop	2
XVIII Mar Thoma Family Conference	
Rev. Thomas K. Jacob/Chacko Mathew	3
Key Note Address	
Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius	5
The Mar Thoma Church	
An Apologetic Overview	
Rev. A. T. Philip	10
Towards the New Millennium	
Manoj M. Zacharia	14
Seeds of Change: Overseas Marthomites	
George Alexander, Ph.D.	18
With Christ to a New Millennium:	
A Journey of Hope	
Kunjumol Cherian	21
Bible Cross Word Puzzle	33
Diocesan News	36

Mailing Addresses:

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

Abraham Mattackal
2719 Studebaker Road
Long Beach, CA 90815
Tel. (562) 420-8817
Fax (562) 420-6528

Subscription Rates:

	U.S.	CAN.
Life Members	\$300.00	\$300.00
Four Issues	\$10.00	\$15.00
Eight Issues	\$18.00	\$25.00

Advertisement Rates:

	Four Issues	One Issue
Back Cover Page	\$1,500.00	\$500.00
Front/Back Cover Inside	\$1,000.00	\$300.00
Inside Full Page	\$ 500.00	\$150.00

Cover: Family Conference – 2000

Message From The Diocesan Bishop



Dearlly Beloved in Christ,

The XVIII Family Conference concluded on Sunday July 2, 2000 after the Holy Communion service on a high note of satisfaction and hope. The Biblical addresses and social fellowship spiritually blessed the children, youth, and adults. The theme, "With Christ to a New Millennium," challenged the participants to take Christ and the future very personally and seriously. What is the role and place of Christ in a high-tech society? How do you communicate the gospel in an age of communication explosion? In the quick march of globalization, will all human beings find identity? What shape should the church take to have a meaningful existence? Does death find an important agenda in your life? These and such other questions were dealt with all through the conference. I hope searches will be continued in our parishes for satisfactory answers to such vexing questions during the coming days.

During summer holidays, our youth learn and earn, travel a lot, and talk much. Some are getting out of universities; many others are getting ready to enter universities. The fear of the unknown is on one side, while the thrill and excitement of new discoveries, is on the other. You need to hold on to something strong and sturdy, so that you may not fall down in your journey through rough and slippery roads. You need a firm faith as you step into unseen territory. You should know what to believe and whom to believe in. The age old, well-proven faith is in the God of our fathers and mothers. Parishes should pass on to the younger generation this strong faith through their life and witness, especially during these summer holidays. Church campuses should become learning centers of Biblical truths and living forums of Christian experience. Dialogue with Biblical truths and interactions with Christian witnesses should envision new hope and a new life to our youngsters during these days. Summer vacation should be filled with meaningful moments for Christian nurturing, as well as preparation for campus life in the next academic year. Life in homes during these days should challenge our young persons to having and molding a family life of their own in the future. For that, parents and members of the family should take special care to have and cherish sweet memories of loving and caring homes.

The growing number of poor people around the world has not yet received serious attention of members from the church. God has given us the challenge to be the keepers of our brothers. We rarely see the other person as our brother and thus, forget the command of God. In the abundance of our health and wealth, we forget the sick and hungry. It is high time that each one of us take care of our weak brothers and sisters around us. All our parishes should frame programs and projects to uplift the poor, the sick, and the suffering in our neighborhoods and around the world. The divine love shared with us through the Cross must be shared with others by partaking in the suffering of our Lord. The Cross should not be on the altar to be worshiped, but in our hearts to be broken for the lowly. As we live in an affluent context, our burden should be very heavy. Unless we rise through the challenges around us, we will be judged by the Giver of Blessings above us.

Nowadays, Bibles find a major place as a gift item in liturgical service. Parishes give Bibles to the first communicants and the newly wedded couples. How many of us read the Bible regularly? Do we go meditatively and reflectively into the depth of the Biblical messages, or do we keep the Bibles in our bookshelves as a literary showpiece? The elders and youngsters, children and clergy, all need to study the Bible afresh and share God's Truth among ourselves and with others, so that the world may be renewed as per the Biblical vision. Bible study has to become central in every parish. Unless we know the Word of God, we will not know how to live by the Word. In the absence of Divine guidance, we would be confused when needing to be courageous. We would be faltering when we have to stand straight. As you enter the Holy Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem, you will find people kneeling and kissing a raised platform, thinking that it is the tomb of Jesus. But a professional guide would lead you to a nearby dome, where underneath you will find a grave that is believed to be the actual burial tomb of Christ. We always need a guide to lead us to the Ultimate Reality. God has sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us to all eternal truths. We need the power of the Holy Spirit, even after celebrating the day of the Pentecost, ever to remain with us.

With blessings and prayers,

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

XVIII Mar Thoma Family Conference Diocese of North America & Europe

Hosted by The Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York

The XVIII Mar Thoma Family conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe was held from June 29 through July 2, 2000. The conference was hosted by the Long Island Mar Thoma Church. The venue was the Huntington Hilton Hotel, one of the largest facilities available in Long Island, suitable for a conference of this magnitude. The theme of the conference was "with Christ to a new millennium." Three hundred and eleven families registered and attended the conference full time. The settings were perfect for a conference atmosphere and the weather conditions were ideal.

The leaders of the conference were Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharius Mar Theophilus Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa, Rev. M. C. Thomas, Rev. Duncan James Jeffrey, Rev. Kurien George, Rev. K. Y. Jacob, Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Rev. Roy Thomas and Mr. Thomas Koshy. The specially invited local dignitaries were Honorable Thomas S. Gulotta, Nassau County Supervisor and Mr. Thomas R. Suozi, Mayor of Glen Cove, Ramesh Chennithala, Member of Indian Parliament, from Kerala was also present.

The inaugural program began at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 29, 2000. This was comprised of a public meeting and an entertainment session. The main auditorium of the conference was named 'Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan Memorial Hall' to honor the memory of our beloved Alexander Thirumeni. All invited guests and Achens have entered the inaugural hall in a procession. Forty flaming candles, resembling the 'Thalappoli' of Kerala, welcomed them into the hall.

The program began with song and worship followed by a condolence message read by Mr. Varkey Abraham in honor of the late Valiya Thirumeni and a minute of silent prayer. President Rev. Thomas K. Jacob gave a hearty welcome to everyone in his welcome speech. The conference choir presented the theme song of the conference. Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, the Diocesan Bishop delivered the presidential address in which he emphasized the mission of the church and its believers in the new millennium.

Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa delivered the keynote speech. Ramesh Chennithala, Thomas S. Gulotta, and Mr. Thomas R. Suozi made felicitation speeches. Mr. Gulatta presented the flag of Nassau County to appreciate the good works of Mar Thoma Church in the community. Mr. Thomas Mathew, vice president of the conference delivered the vote of thanks.

The entertainment programs were both colorful and meaningful. It began with a solo dance based on a Christian theme followed by a song by the conference choir. The theme presentation was conducted by the Long Island Mar Thoma Church youth group which portrayed many modern "Gods" (computers, superstars etc.) that control modern society in the new millennium and presented the consequences & perils if we follow them. The group dance by the Long Island Church's 'little girls' was one of the highlights. The program ended with a short drama that presented a modern version of the 'Prodigal Son.' Mr. Koruthu Mathew (Saju) and Betsy Varughese were the Master of Ceremonies.

Two full day programs (Friday and Saturday) began with a sing along and worship by different parishes. Different parishes also conducted evening worship. Rev. M. C. Thomas conducted Bible studies, highlighting the theme of the conference. The first study session was based on Gen. 6:4-9. The second session was based on the life of Noah. Noah was a man who walked with God in a corrupted world and his life gives each Christian a challenge to walk with Christ in this immoral era. Athanasius Thirumeni delivered the main talks. In his speech, Thirumeni gave an illustration of the unholy trinity (money, market and media) that is corrupting modern society. His Grace's talks were very interesting and inspirational. The Bible studies and the main speeches appealed the audience to follow Jesus in the new millennium.

There were two parent-youth joint sessions on topics that concern youths as well as adults. The first session was on the subject 'stress in family life' in which Rev. Kurien George provided leadership and Dr. John Benjamin presented his professional opinion. The subject of the second session was 'traditional marriage in a western context: challenges and possibilities.' Mr. Thomas Koshy provided leadership in this session and the panelists were Dr. P. V. Cherian, Mr. Benny Philip and Miss Merry George. In both sessions, the audience's participation made it very interesting. An information session on the subject 'Investment strategies for major future expenses: retirement, college, wedding, etc.' was included in this year's conference. John Coyle from Solomon Smith Barney was the resource person.

Youth Program

The youth session of the conference was split into three separate sessions: the primary-youth (ages 5 through 8); the

junior-youth (ages 9 through 12); and, the senior-youth (ages 13 and above.)

Over 130 children attended the junior and primary-youth sessions, which were conducted by the organization Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF). In these sessions, children learned songs, worked on crafts, listened to Bible stories, watched Biblical videos, participated in Olympics, etc. CEF, through a variety of teaching aids, did a wonderful job of keeping the kids interested throughout the sessions, all the while maintaining proper discipline.

Over 200 youths attended the senior-youth session, which was, in effect, a youth conference. If one were to ignore the fact the parents of these youths were also present in the same location, one could have easily mistaken these sessions for the regular youth conference.

Rev. Duncan Jeffrey, of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, was the main leader in the senior-youth session. Rev. Jeffrey has had extensive experience working with immigrant youth, including Malayalees, and so was well versed with many of the issues facing our youth. Rev. Jeffrey was extremely effective as the leader, as he was innovative in his approach in communicating with the youth. Rev. Jeffrey, as part of his talks, employed a number of different techniques, such as, aerobics, praise & worship, skits, and debate.

The Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa also conducted two sessions with the youth. These included a thought-provoking talk on the conference theme, and a very interesting Question & Answer session on the topic "Mar Thoma Church in the New Millennium."

Rev. Kurian George and Rev. Roy Thomas, youth chaplains, and Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Vicar of Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, were always present and provided leadership during Bible Study, discussion and joint sessions, and during dedication and witnessing.

One of the highlights of the conference was the splendid performance by the Mar Thoma Diocese band "Exiles". The one-hour of music and songs played by Christy Mathew and the other talented members of this band was pure inspiration.

The presence of both the youth and the parents at the same conference was a real blessing, as this allowed two joint sessions to be held with the parents. At these joint sessions, topics such as "Stress in the Family," and "Traditional Marriage in a Western Context" were openly discussed. These joint sessions were very constructive, and were useful in clearing misunderstandings and getting across differing viewpoints.

The different sessions and events, and the ensuing atmosphere, were a blessing to many that attended. Many youth were drawn closer to Christ. Many were able to renew their relationship with God. Many witnessed how wonderful Christ has been in their lives and many dedicated their lives to Christ.

In the choir competition first and second prizes was won by Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church and St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church respectively. The Talent night program was very entertaining. Different groups and individuals participated in the program. Sports competitions were conducted and prizes were distributed for winners.

Holy Communion Service on Sunday was lead by Zacharias Thirumeni and Athanasius Thirumeni delivered the message. Over a thousand people participated in the Holy Communion. The service was followed by the closing session, which encompassed closing remarks by Zacharias Thirumeni, prize distribution for the winners of Sunday School examinations, Mar Thoma Messenger Awards, Valedictorians, Choir Competitions and the church with most conference participants. Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church won the trophy for the church with most participants. Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church won the trophy for the church with most participants (87 members) and the second place was for St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church (84). The meeting was concluded with the vote of thanks by the conference secretary Mr. Chacko Mathew, and also prayer and benediction by Zacharias Thirumeni.

Different parishes provided leadership in worship and sing along sessions. All the members of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church under the leadership of Rev. Thomas K. Jacob along with the committee and sub-committee members earnestly worked to make the conference a blessed one. Seventy-five families from Long Island Mar Thoma Church registered and participated in the conference. Special appreciation goes to the Long Island Church youth group for their active, untiring, hard work and participation to make the many programs successful. The conference choir under the leadership of Mr. Varghese Chacko (Babuji), presented superb performances in various singing sessions. Many individuals from different parishes rendered their valuable help in various aspects of the conference.

Conference Committee:

Office bearers

Rev. Thomas K. Jacob, President; Mathew Thomas, Vice President; Chacko Mathew, Secretary; Samuel Chacko, Treasurer; John Koshy, Accountant.

Committee Members:

K. V. Thomas, Varkey Abraham, Kalathil Varghese, Dethose Joseph, K. C. Cherian, Mrs. Mini Benjamin, Dr. John Benjamin, Varghese Chacko, Koruthu Mathew, Joseph V. Thomas, Thomas Samuel, Ninan Muthalaly, Mathew Chiramannil, Thomas Rajan, K. C. George, Mrs. Mariamma Mathew, Mrs. Annamma Koshy.

God's abundant grace has made the conference a successful one and a blessing for all the participants.

Rev. Thomas K. Jacob, Vicar
Chacko Mathew, Secretary

XVIII Mar Thoma Family Conference

The Key Note Address by The Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius

Commitment: The Importance of Enduring to the End

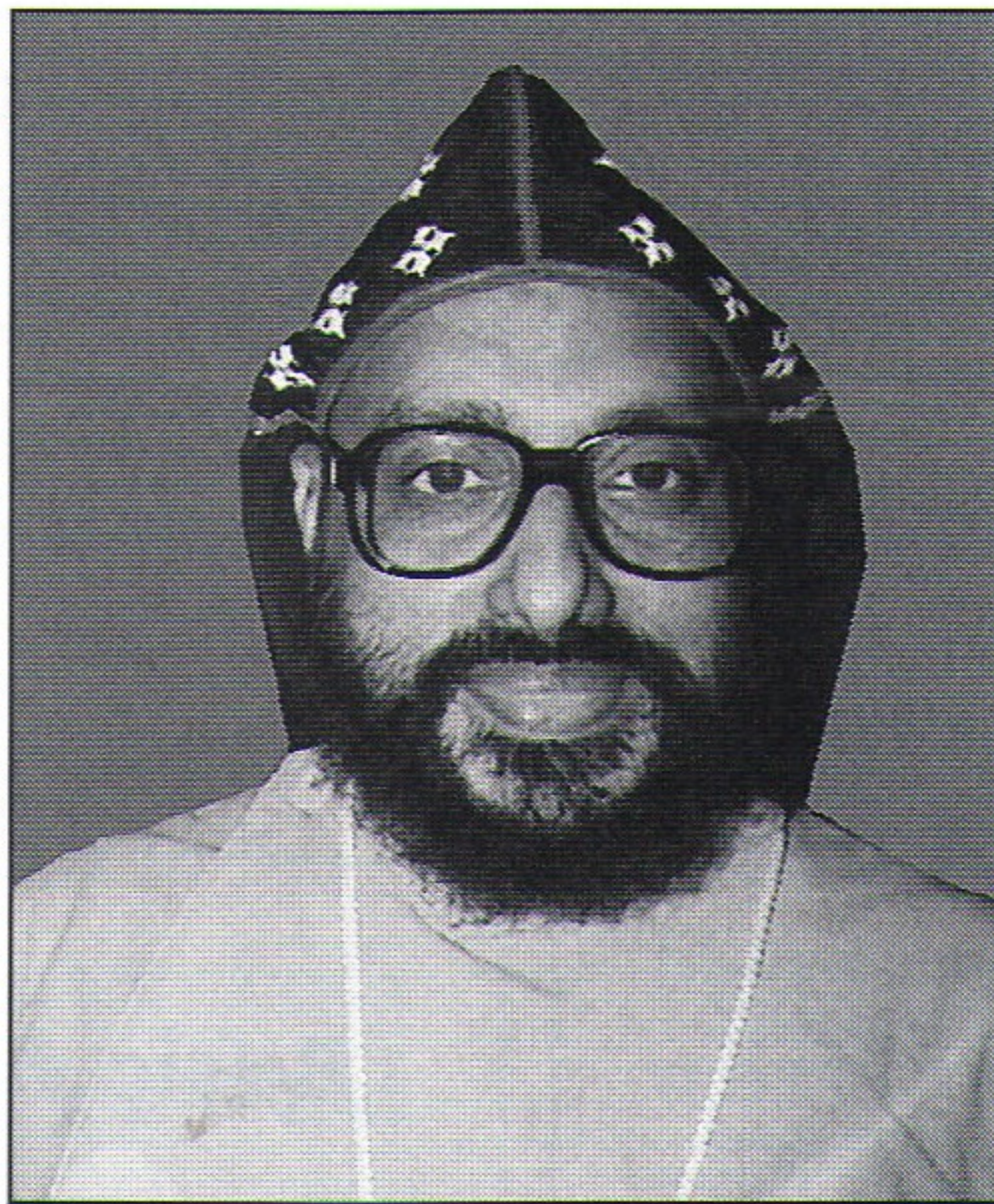
God has created us with the capacity to be deeply committed. But our age has challenged our capacity to be committed to what is significant. It is our tragic pathology that we are unable to be committed to something on a long-term basis. Our concerns are superficial and they lack depth. To be committed is to be given over to the service of a cause. As spirituality declines in our age, more and more people attach themselves to what is trivial. Yet the lives of people who have committed themselves to great causes have always fascinated humanity. The greatness of such cause has touched people and transformed them.

Paul asked people to offer their lives as living sacrifices to the service of God. Many people think that commitment to deeper matters of life, to the cause of Christ undermines their freedom. It is true that when we put our lives under the yoke of Christ it curtails our self-centeredness. But it is also true that it is in that yoking of ourself under Christ, that we develop true freedom. This is the reason that our abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ results in fruitfulness and fullness of life.

Jesus had one central aim and purpose in His life, namely the will of God and the reign of God, and He was committed to it without any wavering. That was the power and beauty of Jesus' life. (The dynamic of commitment is the dynamic of love. It is love that empowers sacrificial commitment. Napoleon said, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded empires by force. Jesus alone founded it on love and to this day, millions would sacrifice their lives for him.")

Commitment Arises From Faith

It is only as a result of our spiritual and character orientation that we can remain committed. It does not go with a casual or businesslike outlook on life. Commitment transcends the calculation of profit and loss. The capacity for commitment develops from the seed of faith. When one commits oneself, it is committing one's future without foreseeing it. So our commitment can be affected by anxiety. It is faith that frees our commitment from anxiety. That is why commitment arises from faith and is fortified by faith. Faith takes us beyond the limits of reason. Faith is not the negation of reason. But faith expands the boundaries of reason and merges into the sphere of trust and commitment.



This is significantly portrayed in the story of Abraham. He was called to go into a land that he had never seen before. This was his divine call. Abraham responded. This shows that Abraham was primarily committed not to the land, but to God.

This reveals a fundamental pattern in commitment. Our calling is not primarily to a project or a program, but to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Only this can constitute an enduring foundation for the adventure of our faith.

This year, CMC Vellore is celebrating the anniversary of Dr. Ida Scudder's coming. In the final analysis Ida Scudder was committed primarily not to the thousands of people she cared for, she was committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and through Christ to the thousands of needy people. The moving story of CMC Vellore is the story of Ida Scudder's daily faithfulness to God and through that to the daily commitment of several others. In the very first year of her work, Ida Scudder assisted by her servant attended to about 12,000 patients, with no good facilities at all. She finished an enormous volume of work each day all with the mind of serving God with total commitment.

The Transformation of Values

As Abraham followed God to take possession of the land not yet seen, the very concept of land underwent change. The focus changed from land to the nation. God did not call Abraham to be a great landlord. God called him to be a 'great nation'. The tragedy of the Christian community is that our imagination is stuck at the muddy level of the land. As a result we lose sight of the nation. We are not called to take possession of the land in the sense of merely purchasing and owning it. On the other hand, we are called to be a community who will transform peoples and nations, and form relationships with land and people on the basis of the transforming vision of God's reign and vision. It is about transforming nations and communities in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Overcoming Difficulties in Our Formation

Our growth in human qualities occurs as a result of engaging reality in the light of the reality of God and Jesus Christ. We can develop our spiritual resources only through sustained and consistent application of real values in our lives and painfully mastering our lives over self-centeredness. Many people remain amateurs in Christian

life because they don't take the time and pain to develop their spiritual skills. So spiritual illiteracy remains. We never inherit spiritual skills. But we develop them as we receive them from God through parents and the Christian community. It is through sustained and enduring commitment through a long period of time that we develop our spiritual foundation. The time of family conference is the time of renewal of commitment. But it is commitment for consistent and enduring efforts for Christian living and involvement.

There is a common concern today that human stature and qualities are dwindling; that greatness is slowly departing from our midst. In many places people lament over the dwindling stature of man and woman. If we would think for a moment, it becomes clear that our inner life has become disappointingly vague and empty. We have knowledge, expertise and skills, but we have thrown out our love and desire for God and our love for people and their well-being. As our inner and spiritual life has weakened, we can see the chaotic forces around us becoming strong. Only an unreserved commitment to the will of God can help us to break our preoccupation with superficial matters and lead us on to authentic personhood.

The Basic Eligibility That Jesus Requires

The basic eligibility that Jesus required from his disciples is the capacity for commitment. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." By this yardstick, we are still found wanting. We want to avoid the risks and reject the thorny and costly path. Commitment is the spiritual lens that focuses our love, energy, enthusiasm and gifts on a worthy goal or purpose.

Commitment and the Spirit of Our Age

It is basic to human nature that we have a need to be committed to something beyond ourselves. So our capacity to be committed will not die out entirely as long as we are human. But the question is about to what and how much we are committed. If we are committed to faith and God and Jesus Christ we will orient all our life and activity to Godly purposes. If we are committed to the materialistic culture around us, we will align to the narrower goals of the self. As a result our humanity becomes closed and distorted. But the basic contribution of spirituality is to awaken the depth of humanity.

It is important to realize that human maturity is a two-fold journey. We move horizontally to integrate ourselves with the world around us. Simultaneously we must dive deeper into ourselves to come to terms with who we are and what our ultimate destiny is. Human growth is, thus, defined as an integration of the social space (external) with the eternal space (internal). These two must exist in a state

of deepening dialogue. When the social supersedes the eternal or the internal is emphasized to the neglect of the social, the process of human maturity is imperiled. Thus our culture itself deteriorates.

We may ascend the corporate ladder of prosperity or advance materially. It might create the illusion of personal well being, but only in a superficial sense. We may appear to be successful but we will have to live with the pain of inner unfulfillment. This is where we have a basic need to be aware of our deepest potential. We have a need to love and serve sacrificially. It's only through a life of commitment and sacrificial service that we may answer this call of the deep within us.

Basic Aspects of Commitment

1. Commitment is integral to human nature. But it does not happen spontaneously. If we are not nurtured by the spirit of God, we will be more subject to our infantile selfish tendencies rather than guided by mature and steadfast orientations. When we go by our own inclinations, we are guided by a self that craves for immediate gratification. The role of spirituality is to sustain a wholesome pressure on us so as to help us to master our selfish inclinations and live by our highest calling. A long term and sustained commitment is necessary at this point.
2. Commitment involves the expanding of the self to include others:
In the Biblical sense, commitment involves a goal which stretches us towards our fellow human beings. God has ordained our lives in such a way that we can grow in stature only by stretching ourselves in our relationship with others, in love and compassion. The self, left to itself without any relationship with God, will try to fill the universe by itself. This is why there must be a conscious effort to check the distorted impulses of the self so that the space for the well-being of others can be created. Only God can constrain and expand the self, so that the self will focus its energies on the neighbor.
3. Commitment presupposes a sense of belonging. It is impossible to be committed to something that we do not love and identify ourselves with. It is also impossible to remain indifferent to what we are committed to. It is our belongingness that enlarges our freedom and effectiveness. If we don't belong where we must, it will result in multiple alienations. This is why Jesus said to His disciples that they must abide in Him.
4. Commitment is proved only over time. In His parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus spoke of the difference between those seeds those fell on the good soil and

those that fell on the shallow ground. The difference comes to light in the heat of the sun. Those that fell on the shallow ground withers away. Jesus told His disciples, "Those who endure to the end will be saved." The real test of our life and character is whether or not we endure. Those who have gone through the real battles of life know that we cannot stick on our strength. Only those who are founded on God, only those who abide in Him, can really face the thrust of life and remain steadfast.

Overcoming Temptations and Crises

Committed lives have to face and overcome both temptations and crises. Temptations are significant and positive in relation to commitment. They indicate that our lives have a direction. For those who are morally neutral, there are no temptations. Compromises with evil will not trouble them since they just want to get on in this world. When we face temptations and overcome them as committed people, our life becomes more clearly defined and strengthened. Temptations are essentially upheavals from within. We also face crisis that are storms of life from without. There is a reciprocal relationship between these two. When we are weak internally, it increases our helplessness over external crises. Our fear of external forces intensifies the power of temptations. The event of Jesus calming the Sea of Galilee illumines this theme. We can make two observations from this episode:

1. Jesus was composed and confident in contrast to the panic of the disciples.
2. Jesus first rebuked the littleness of their faith and then the turbulence of the sea. The reality of our inner strength is important. It is on this basis that we must face the external forces. Both temptations and crises help us to celebrate our larger awareness, renew our God-dependence and accentuate the depth of our personality.

Commitment is Unwavering Single Heartedness

It is a matter of intense focusing on the will of God and the person of Jesus Christ. When we have divided loyalties we cannot attain any fulfillment. When we abide in Christ, it gives a coherence and concentration that comes into our life as a result of our accepting God's divine sovereignty. Commitment is the capacity for taking infinite pains for the sake of a particular vocation in the kingdom of God. It takes infinite pains to build our family, our church and our community along the imperatives of the kingdom of God.

It is dangerous and wasteful of our humanity to be committed to what is trivial and partial. Our commitment must be to what is of enduring value. In the final analysis, our commitment is to God and all other commitments are shaped by it and in the light of it.

Such commitment becomes the foundation for holiness. To be holy is to be set apart for God's purposes. The mark of a saint is not perfection, but a man who has given himself without reserve to God.

Commitment is the Secret of Effectiveness and Fulfillment

Sometimes we launch into a project which evokes hostile reactions and we tend to retreat. What is neutral and is of little consequence is often tolerated. But what is useful is often resisted. It is foolish to give in to discouragement and give up as we face difficulties. We can recall instances in the past when we retreated and fled the scene a little too soon. This results in a tragic waste of time, energy and resources. Commitment requires us to effectively go on and fulfill what we have begun.

Finally commitment leads to resourcefulness. When we are illumined by commitment, our eyes become open to the possibilities to which we were blind until then. It enhances our effectiveness, deepens our sense of joy and strengthens our morale. It will inspire our co-workers. Commitment and the consistency born out of it are the corner stones of our witness life. Our witness is not a matter of verbal confessions alone. It is with the whole of our life we are to witness and honor God. When our witness is affirmed by our life, it easily persuades.

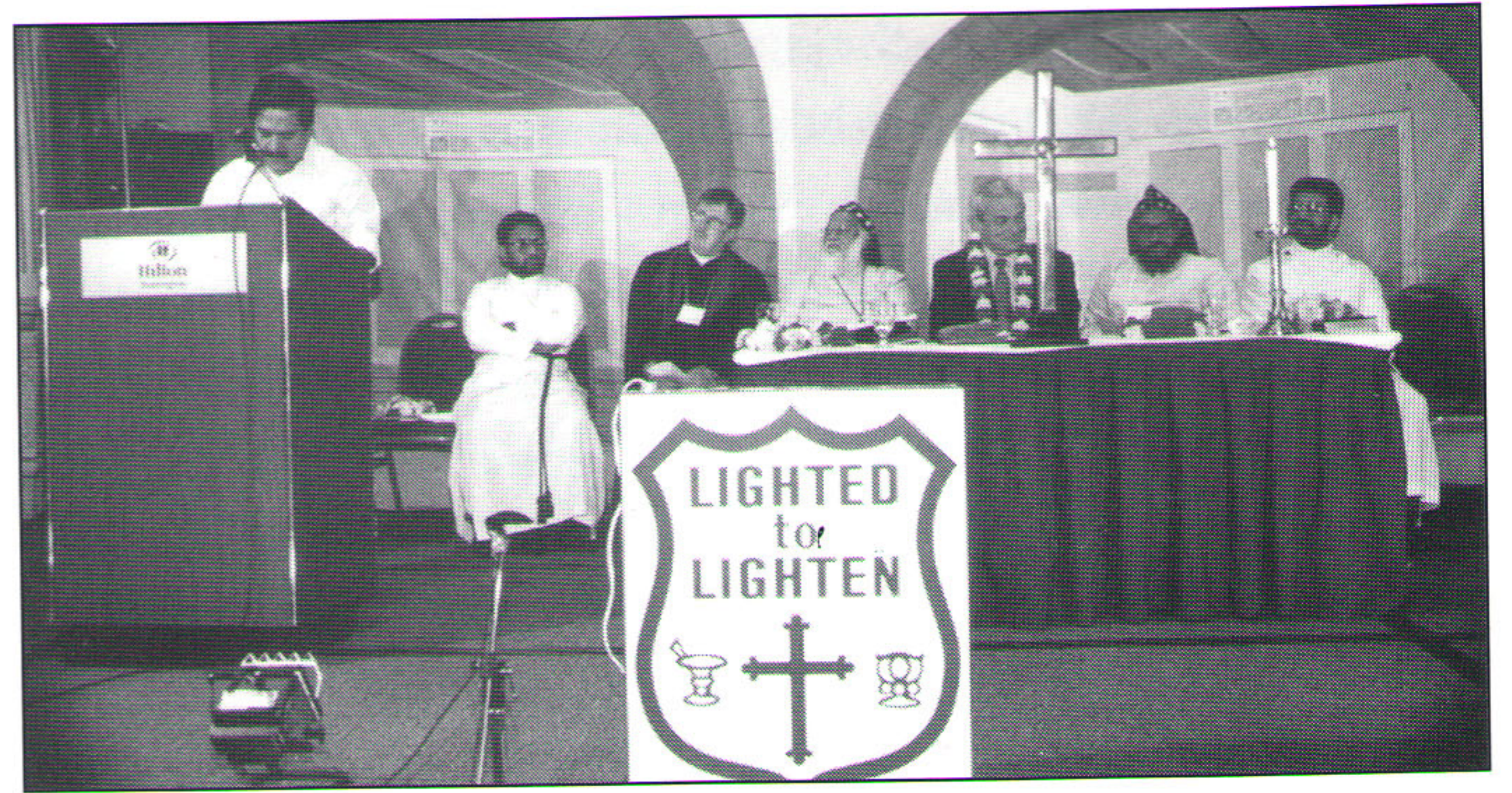
God is looking for people who can focus on the divine will. Moses went on a very demanding mission. He went for the only reason that God sent him. We must focus on our history and discern what God wants to do in us and through us. It requires a commitment that is consistent and steadfast.

The story is told of a dog that used to brag about his special skills in catching rabbits. One day, as the other dogs were watching, he chased a rabbit, and the rabbit escaped. When the friends made fun of him, the dog replied, "You must remember that the rabbit was running for its life, while I was running for my dinner". A lot depends on what we are running for. If we are running only for our food, clothes, and houses, the idea of commitment will disappear from our life.

No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). ■



Inaugural Procession



Felicitation by Mr. Ramesh Chennithala, Member of Parliament, India



Begins with worship



Hon. Thomas Gulotta, Nassau County Supervisor presenting the County Flag to Zacharias Thirumeni honoring the Church.



opening worship



Mar Thoma Messenger Booth



Diocesan Episcopa addresses the audience



Winners of Sports Competition



Valedictorians with Zacharias Thirumeni



Diocesan Sunday School Examination Winners



Rev. Joseph Chacko and Dolie from Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church receive first prize for the Choir Competition



Bible class session



Rev. Thomas P. Chandy and K. G. Varughese from St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church receive second prize for the choir competition.



Vote of thanks by Chacko Mathew, Conference Secretary.



Leaders at the concluding session



Family Conference Committee Members with leaders.

The Mar Thoma Church

(An Apologetic Overview)

Rev. A. T. Philip

The Church communion to which we belong (The Mar Thoma Church) is governed by the Holy see of Apostle Thomas in India headed by His Grace, the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan (address: The Poolatheen, Tiruvalla, India 689101). Ours is an indigenous and autonomous (autocephalous) Indian Church reformed in the nineteenth century. This Church maintains its historic episcopate, follows an episcopal polity in church administration, continues the ancient liturgical practices and affirms the centrality of the Bible for all matters pertaining to the fundamentals of the Christian faith while not averse to all healthy and beneficial traditions and practices not opposed to the Bible. We share in our communions both the traditions of the religion of the Nazaranes (Acts 24:5) and Gentile Christianity (Acts 11:26).

We acknowledge catholic oneness and social and economic justice in our liturgy and work for the same and live in communion with the world-wide Anglican Communion and the Church of South India and the Church of North India and established conciliar fellowship with the last two and continue negotiation to enter into communion with other Churches of Orthodox and Protestant patronages. We share a history of over nineteen hundred years of Church life developed in the socio-religious pluralities of the biblical home lands of Palestine and Mesopotamia (the original setting of the Garden of Eden) and the Indo-Parthian regions with particular emphasis to Southern India. We make our contributions to the socio-political life of India. Ours is the first indigenous missionary association in India established in 1888. We have forty six mission fields all over India with thirty two missionaries and two hundred and five evangelists working in them. The Maramon Convention began in 1895 is the largest annual Gospel Convention in Asia.

We are represented in the World Council since its inception in 1948. One of our theologians, the late M. M. Thomas was the Chairman of the Central Committee of the W.C.C. We are having membership in the National Council of Churches in India and America. One of our bishops the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus is on the Central Executive Committee of the W.C.C. and our Suffragan Metropolitan Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus is the chairman of the Christian Conference of Asia.



Vital Confessional Positions of the Mar Thoma Church

1. The Malankara Mar Thoma (Syrian) Church believed to have been founded by Apostle Thomas and called by that name is of catholic oneness.
2. Along with other historical churches of Christ, this church believes in the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as revealed by Jesus Christ, God incarnate and redeemer of humankind.
3. Christ is more the mediator, the medium through whom the grace is imparted. And through His atoning death, salvation is brought to the world. The Church believes that, both the divinity and the humanity of Christ are united in the same person inseparably but so as not to be confounded in the union. (We are neither Nestorian nor Monophysite).
4. The constitution defines the Church as the body of Christ with the faithful as its members. Those who are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and are subjecting themselves to the presiding authority of the Church, and are under obligation to follow the rules and observances of the Church, and are not leading an immoral life, and have not accepted membership in other Churches or converted to other religious faiths, or excommunicated or relieved from the Church, and also members of their families who live in accordance with their faith and under their protection are members of this Church.
5. This Church acknowledges the sixty six canonical books of the Bible and the Nicene Creed as the basis of its theology (faith and doctrine).
6. The Sacerdotal orders (deacon, presbyter, metran), the consecration of Churches, the baptism, the holy communion, the marriage, the extreme unction, and the burial as well as Sunday, the lent and other important days connected with the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and saints days should find a permanent place in the life of the Church.
7. Historical episcopate is affirmed by this Church.
8. Baptism: Both infant and adult. (Infant baptism is the accepted practice). Baptism is given in the name of the

Holy Trinity, and is understood as an expression of dying for sin with Christ the sinless one, and rising with Him for new (eternal) life. As a token of sonship/daughtership by rebirth the candidate is anointed with olive oil and as a token of the gift of the virtues of the Holy Spirit, the candidate is anointed with the chrism.

9. The sacrament of the Holy Communion: This makes us participants of the life in Christ through the offering of bread and wine. It is the Lord's Supper, in that He is the host and we are the guests. It is also the means of communication with God and with one another. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?... (1 Cor. 10:16 ff). It is also an Eucharist expressing our joy and thanksgiving.

There has been a good deal of discussion regarding the presence of Christ in the bread and wine after consecration. The Church repudiates the theory of transubstantiation and the localized presence of Christ in the elements. Two other views are prevalent in the Church, namely (i) that there is some mystic connection between Christ's presence and the consecrated bread and wine; and (ii) that there are symbols, reminding us of his sacrificial death and the many blessings we have received through it, and of great spiritual values to those who worthily receive the Holy Communion. The consecration has two parts: the words of institution and epiclesis. Auricular confession has been discarded but there is general confession before the communion service, and after the confession the minister pronounces absolution, declaring that Christ forgives the sins of those who have truly repented.

10. The object and mission of the Church are: (i) to safeguard the faith as revealed by Jesus Christ and taught by the apostles; (ii) to promote the spiritual life of the faithful through preaching of the word and administration of sacraments. (The Church has not limited the number of its sacraments. In the pre-Portuguese Kerala Church, we had only three sacraments namely, baptism, communion, and the orders. In the modern Mar Thoma Church, certainly we have more, and marriage is one of them. The Number of sacraments are not limited in accordance with the eastern traditions); and (iii) to proclaim the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them to be His disciples in the name of the Holy Trinity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Ministry and mission of the Church are understood as the gifts of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ. And the church is entrusted with the responsibility of doing the ministry and mission in the realm of history and for this purpose the Church is filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Apostolate of Thomas in India (Malankara)

Jesus Christ at the center of the kingdom (rule) of God and as the revelator of the Holy Trinity is the all time focal point of the Christian Church. The rule of God in Christ must become real in the life of peoples and nations. Our loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ is practically expressed in terms of our solidarity to the Holy See of Apostle Thomas in India headed by the Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Supreme Prelate of our Church. We have to grasp the ministry and mission of the contemporary Mar Thoma Church (known by the name of Apostle Thomas) in relation to the history of the ancient Church of the East spread over the regions beyond the Tigris embracing the great centers of civilizations of Babylon, Persia, and Mega India. Mesopotamia, the strip of land between the Tigris and the Euphrates is located as the site of the garden of Eden, scene of beginning of all biblical episodes, Jesus Christ and his forerunner John the Baptist though were Palestinian Jews, many modern scholars are of the opinion that they belonged to the community of Jews migrated from Babylon during the reign of Antiochus epiphanus, second century B.C. Jesus' anointing with nard (svachajatomansi — an ointment made out of an Indian herb) as we find in John Chapter twelve is a fascinating event. (Oxford Dictionary renders it jatomansi). The Jerusalem Church at Pentecost (Acts Ch. 2) had large sections of people from these regions representing Parthians, Medes, Elamites and Inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea... Parthians are defined in the International Version Study Bible as the inhabitants of the territory from Tigris to India (Indus). Values and aspirations of these people had direct and indirect impact on the development of biblical events focussing on Christian faith and its history.

Judas Thomas is regarded in high esteem as the apostle to the East (Babylon and India). He ranks at the top of the apostolate and is on a par with Simon Peter in the post-resurrection narrative (John 21:2). He had taken a bold step to mobilize the apostles to accompany Jesus to Bethany at the death of Lazarus amidst Jewish commotions. (John 11:16). In physical appearance he resembled Jesus Christ in every respect. Hence he is called Didimus (the twin). This fact confused the chief priests and the teachers of the Jews to identify Jesus correctly. They hired Judas Iscariot to spell out Jesus with the kiss of betrayal. Thomas' confession "My Lord and my God" forms the basis of all biblical confessions with regard to the Godhead of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

One of the earliest and most notable witnesses with regard to the apostolate of Thomas is the Teaching of the Apostles (Didascalia Apostolorum), a book in all probability produced in East Syria and dated about 250 A.D. which contains the following statement:

India and all its own countries and those bordering on it, even to the farthest sea received the Apostles' Hand of the priesthood from Judas Thomas who was guide and ruler in the Church which he built and ministered there.

The Malabar (Malankara) tradition concerning the activities of apostle Thomas and the origins of Christianity in India is that the apostle after visiting Socotra (an island in the Arabian Sea off the north-east coast of Africa) landed at Cranganor (Kodungalluru) on the Periyar estuary north of Kochi, in about 52 A.D. He is said to have preached to the Jewish colony settled there and to have made converts both among them and among their neighbors. Travelling in the coastal regions southwards he founded churches in seven places, Maliankara, (near Cranganore), Palayur, Parur, Gokamangalam, Niranam, Chayal, and Quilon, in four of which places ancient churches still exist. He is further said to have ordained presbyters for the churches from four Brahmin families called Sankarapuri, Pakalomattom, Kalli, and Kaliyankal. After this he is said to have crossed over to the east coast and to have travelled eastwards from there to Malaca and even to China, and finally to have returned to Mylapore, now part of the city of Madras (which did not exist in the first century). Here his preaching aroused the hostility of the Brahmins, who raised a riot against him, during which he was speared to death. The year of his martyrdom is said to have been about 72 A.D.

It is quite clear that there were regular communications and trade by sea between the west coast of India and the Roman Empire even before the Christian Era via the Red Sea and Alexandria. From time to time Jewish and Christian immigrant communities from Persia came and settled in the west coast. The Fathers writing towards the end of the fourth century — Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ephraem the Syrian and Jerome bring in St. Thomas by way of illustrations. Ephraem was a hymn-writer who spent the last ten years of his life at Edessa which claimed to be the resting place of the mortal remains of apostle Thomas brought back from India by a Syrian merchant. An annual festival of apostle Thomas in commemoration of this event was celebrated there on July 3rd and is still kept in the Syrian Churches. J. N. Farquhar (a noted historian of the Indian Church) dates the deporting of the apostle's remains some time at the third quarter of the second century. An apocryphal work known as the Acts of Thomas much of which is legendary in character gives apostle Thomas' activities in the Parthian Kingdom. The King Gundaphorus, a figure mentioned in the Acts at any rate is a historical figure. Since 1834 numerous coins have been found in the Punjab and in Afganistan bearing his name in Greek on one side and in Pali on the other. They are dated on palaeographical grounds in the first half

of the first century and specifically interpreted as of 46 A.D. The author of the Acts may have received a tradition of apostle Thomas' mission to India which he has filled out with stories. It is no doubt possible that some of the fathers we have referred to were influenced indirectly by the Acts.

It was the Church of the East of which the Christian communities in India were part. Most of such small communities were either extinct or merged into the large communities on the Malabar coast. The bishop appointed from Persia whom Cosmas Indicopleustes found about 522 A.D., in Southern India at a place called Kalliana close to "Male where the pepper grows" was a bishop under the authority of the Patriarch of the East. The connection of the Indian Christians with the East Syrian Church went back before the time of its adoption of Nestorianism. Removal of the mortal remains of Apostle Thomas from India to Edessa remains as a reinforcing factor. Apostle Thomas is regarded as apostle of both India and Persia. The East Syrian Church originally was under the Patriarch of Antioch. At a Synod held in 424 the Patriarch of the East who was also known as the Catholicos was proclaimed entirely independent. We also find him referred to as Patriarch of Babylon. The Metropolitan bishopric in India had its seat at the Maliankara (Cranganore) Church. Monophysitism is a heresy opposite to Nestorianism. Many of the Monophysites settled in Persia shared in the revival brought about by one of their wandering bishops named Jacob Baradai (524-577) from whom they are also known as Jacobites.

With the advent of colonial period (at the dawn of the 16th Century) the Roman Catholics who were with the Portuguese sailors had their strong influence on the Church in India. At the Synod of Diamper (1599) the following affirmations were made by the representatives of the Malabar (Malankara) Church before the Roman Catholic Archbishop Menezes on:

1. Clear renunciation of Chaldean (Eastern) Christianity against the statement of the Roman Catholic faith.
2. Clear renunciation of the Patriarch of Babylon (or of the East) against insistence on the duty of obedience to the Pope.
3. A fairly full explanation of the seven Roman Sacraments with many detailed provisions concerning their use and manner of celebration.
4. Arrangements for administration, e.g., division of the Church into parishes, provision of ministers, feasts and fasts to be kept.
5. Miscellaneous provisions concerning life and manners, e.g., relations with non-Christians, superstitious practices, etc.

According to James Hough a British historian who had made researches on the Pre-Portuguese Church in India the

following are the three leading doctrines of Christianity which appear always to have been held by the Indian Church:

1. Salvation by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ for the sins of humankind.
2. Necessity of the new birth or regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
3. God head as the Trinity in Unity and unity in Trinity as defined in the Athanasian creed, but without its damnatory clauses.

Hough says that in these fundamental tenets the ancient Indian Church agreed with every Orthodox Church.

The Indian Church of apostle Thomas revolted against the Roman Catholics at the Coonen Cross in 1653. A great many parishes joined in the Roman Catholic Church and they were given special status by the Pope. Those who wanted to sever their ties with the Roman Catholics were in a dilemma. The Church of the East could not send bishops to India owing to its decline in Babylon. The Persian bishops stationed in India were intimidated or taken in to custody or deported by the Portuguese at the behest of the Roman Catholics. Under the circumstances when the request from India for a bishop reached Syria, a Jacobite bishop by name Mar Gregorios came (1665) as a representative of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. The archdeacon of the Indian Church who was in the mean time nominated as Mar Thoma I by the laying on of hands of twelve priests was consecrated as a bishop by Mar Gregorios. Mar Thoma I stuck on with the internal administration of the Church while the Jacobite bishop

exercised liturgical functions according to the Jacobite version of the St. James liturgy. Mar Gregorios and other Jacobite bishops arrived from Syria taught as Jacobites and the Church was gradually drawn closer to Jacobite teaching. However, Mar Thoma I and his Indian successors presided over the Church ever since. Nineteenth century reformation at the wake of British rule and C.M.S. mission activities, among other things, enabled the Church to renounce Jacobite authority by way of liturgical and social renewal while a large number of parishes opted for Jacobite Patronage. The Church was virtually divided into Mar Thoma and Jacobite in 1889 in accordance with a court order.

With regard to the general state of the Indian Church before the reformation one should know that since Hinduism permits the individual to worship whichever god he prefers (the ishtadevatha principle) nothing prevented the Christians from changing their way of worship and name of their god as long as they continued to follow the Hindu way of life. In that way Christians lived in two worlds, they were Hindus in so far as they worshipped Jesus as God and the Church was supervised by foreign bishops from Persia till the 17th century.

The Church had been fragmented by Persian, Roman, Jacobite, and Anglican onslaughts. New found expression of the Mar Thoma Church was a long felt need. Orthodox interests of the Indian Church and biblical aspirations of the universal Church found their concrete expressions in the advance and spread of the Mar Thoma Church. The present prelate (Metropolitan) of the Church, His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom comes as the twentieth successor of Mar Thoma I. ■

Poem that won Editor's Choice Award from the International Library of Poetry and published in their Anthology "Into the Sun" in December 1999.

Twilight and the Old Man

1. *Twilight twilight bride of the night
Tonight every night your solemn sight
Glow and blows thoughts I ignite
Bless my soul with spiritful light.*
2. *Gentle and gentle your mantle descend
Until your hands stretch and bind
Mountains and valleys in unbroken bond
Attune to voices you softly sound.*
3. *Cradling breeze creep from mountain-top
Cuddle and fiddle the flowery slopes
Carry and marry my humble hopes
For tomorrow that offer no hap.*
4. *Wrinklefree blue sky will soon loom
Twinkling stars will peep and bloom
Moonlit starlit the sky will become
Heartfelt my joy and peace become.*
5. *Still I till though old and gaunt
Spill my blood as boiling sweat
Milling clouds spread no silken hat
Twilight every night bless my hut.*

– Pulivelil P. Varghese

Towards the New Millennium

Manoj M. Zacharia, Kottayam

Introduction

The cacophonous effects of the contemporary dilemma resonate on a daily basis. Quite apart from the mundane routine of life, we are all active participants in the routine churning of Western society. Although the grind of life, perhaps, has its materialistic rewards, the question that continues to perplex those in this context is whether there is fulfillment in life. Philosophers, from the glorious zenith of historical philosophy in the Greco-Roman era, have posited and sought answers to two basic questions: Who am I? Who is God? As a derivative of the first question is the query pertaining to the purpose of human existence. The second question also possesses a derivative in the form of who is the correct object of worship. The objective of this article is to address some major concerns of the modern era and offer a Christian response to the challenges of the times.

Although contemporary social-scientists argue that we have moved from the "modern" era to the "post-modern," it is quite difficult to provide a substantive understanding of post-modernity. However, the influence of post-Enlightenment modernity continues to propound itself onto our worldview. Modernity is an enterprise that evolved from the European Renaissance. The historical demarcation between post-modernity and modernity is unclear, yet post-modernity, on the whole, anthropologically argues that we are "socially constructed beings" framed by a variety of societal determinants, whereas, modernity has construed the "individual" to be virtually a priority.

The modern scientific enterprise developed as a response to the overarching hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The church attempted to dominate in all spheres of life. The Roman Church perpetuated a reality imposed by its self-interest, etc. It distorted Christian doctrine for its own end. This distortion led to the assertion of independence and questioning which permeated the realms of secular society. Traditional Christian teaching understood the individual as shaped and molded by the community of faith. With the onslaught of the modern enterprise, individualism became heralded. The Western modern framework understood the individual to be entirely rational and subject only to his/her own personal whims and decisions. The traditional societal conception, or world view, understood the individual to be a being made in the image of God and shaped by the factors of natural, cultural, and political environment. While questioning the unorthodox practices of the Roman church was a positive move by the advocates of scientific modernity, their understanding of the human has had pernicious effects. The individual and not the community is given importance.

The vitriolic results of this is the highly corrosive self-centered culture in which we are living today. Rather than sharing, we offer competition. Rather than enabling, we offer an individualistic praxis perpetuated for capitalistic endeavors. Rather than economic and social parity, the individual is rated in terms of socio-economic health. Spirituality and belief in God has been replaced by the worship of idols in the form of money, luxury cars, and hedonistic lifestyles.

The results of the modern enterprise are basically threefold. Firstly, the existential dilemma of who am I, etc. has not been answered. Yet, the question has become more grave. Secondly, disparity in all areas, social, economic, and religious, has not been bridged but only widened because of the individualism of the modern age. Thirdly, moral decisions have become the subject of individual perceptions rather than working from the frame of community or society based values. In an era wherein we realize the problems, our solutions are varied. However, Christian understanding offers a framework which can rebuild and refashion society in terms of working from the will of God. There are three paradigms which I would like to offer. These, paradigmatically, fall under the following rubrics:

1. Understanding Humanity in the Image of God
2. Communitarian Understanding of Salvation
3. The Values of the Kingdom of God as the Imperative for the Christian

Christian Understanding of Human

In the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, there is a clear depiction of the nature of the human. Humans are created in the image and likeness of God. Due to various choices, humans chose to forego the ideal relationship with God. Throughout Biblical history, God attempts to forge a relationship with human beings. Whether it be the example of the covenant relationship with Israel, or the redemptive and liberative acts of God evinced from the Exodus, etc., God is clearly depicted as the one who although transcendent is imminent. God is active in history. God is the redeemer, liberating humans from the bondage of all forms of sin. Sin's oppressive results are transmitted in the breaking of the covenant, injustice, and eventual depletion of national and cultural sovereignty for the Hebrews throughout most of their history.

Yet, humans, as they are breathed with the breath of life from God and made in the image of God, have the ability to move beyond the impediments to likeness of God. This basic

Orthodox Christian understanding known by the name, *theosis*, argues that the God's full intention for humans is to be enmeshed into the likeness of God. Humans are endowed with specific responsibilities. They are called to have a steward relationship protecting the environment and the habitants of the earth. Humans are called to be productive and life givers.

Unfortunately, in contemporary society, humans tend to be involved in the extraction of resources on the earth. Capital resources are drained through unjust economic systems, which perpetuate economic divides. Labor resources are exploited. Rather than reaping the benefits of labor, the globalization phenomenon has used the labor market in various areas of the "Southern Hemisphere" to maximize profits for an elite class. Interestingly, the fruits of unjust wage practices are neither reaped by the laborer or the consumer. The fruit of profit maximization, as the "modern" economist Ricardo would put it, lies with producer. Environmental resources are continuously depleted. The current environmental crisis is not merely a phenomenon of the West. In order to compete, industrially, mostly all countries are engaged in environmentally dangerous means of production. Ecological havoc, especially in the vein of species extinction, impedes bio-diversity. The diversity of creation is an intrinsic part of the creation epoch.

The Christian response in such unjust situations is quite clear. As humans, we are stewards of creation. We have responsibility to protect one another and the imperative to safeguard the fragility of the environmental and ecological spheres. God, as the Lord who intervenes in world history, is a God of justice. As stewards we are called to perpetuate and partake in the life preserving and life enhancing work of God as evident in the work of creation.

Communitarian Understanding of Salvation

The Bible was not addressed to a specific individual. The Bible reflects the intervention of God in a specific historical, cultural, and sociological context. As the inspired Word of God, the Bible relays the revelatory actions of God to a community of faith. Subsequently, we must continue to reinterpret the message of the Word of God in light of contemporary realities. The Christian community panoramically consists of a plethora of diverse linguistic, cultural, racial, and national identities. Yet what binds the community of faith is the belief in the incarnation of God in the form of a human, Jesus Christ. Christ lived amidst a community. The mission of Christ was not to redeem an individual or select breed of individuals but to bridge the gap between the condition of human alienation from God to a condition of harmony between God and human. Although Christ lived in a particular context, His genealogy and imperative for mission reflects the universal intent of establishing a community of faith bound in the divine act of sacrifice and love.

Beginning from the period of the Reformation, more specifically commencing with the Anabaptist movement, emphasis on individual salvation and faith has become explosive. Contemporary Christians are worried about their own salvation, neglecting in turn, the salvation of humanity. Some evangelical movements have misinterpreted the whole understanding of salvation. For example, the contemporary evangelical understanding of (adult) baptism reflects this type of individualistic ideology. Christianity has always existed in the form of community. It was a community of disciples, which spread the message of Christ. It was the community of faith, which supported the early church in its missionary endeavor. The church is based not on individuality but communion. Communion is the common experience of worship and partaking in the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ.

In an era where individualism is rampant, what should be the response of the church? Firstly, the church must come to an understanding of the historical aspects of worship and faith. Due to demagogic movements, which are rampant, the true understanding and meaning of worship, liturgy, and faith become distorted. It is essential that members of the church are educated in these areas so that an objective evaluation can be taken. The modern evangelical zeal is rampant because of ignorance of historical Christian doctrine and understanding. Secondly, in an era wherein individualism is rampant, the church must engage itself in community building activities within and outside of the church. Within this stream, diversity should not be stymied. However, an understanding that diversity and community are both from God must be realized. Thirdly, in an era of competition and emphasis solely on material development, the church must instill the values of universalism, love, and sacrifice. Education should be pursued for the joy of education and fulfillment rather than for reaping the economic benefits which may ensue from education. The value system of contemporary society, which endears only economic values, must be confronted with the values of the Christianity as exemplified in the Kingdom of God. The material benefits and technological advances in the West have not quenched the existential questions. Humanity is still engulfed in the existential quagmire. Rather than creatively expressing our questions, different manifestation of the crisis have occurred. The emphasis on individual economic merit and the ensuing existential questions have led to increases in violence in schools, clashes between ethnic groups, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, etc. In order to come to grips with the crises, it is essential that a communitarian understanding of Christianity based on the ethics of the Kingdom of God be actuated. What are the values of the Kingdom?

The Kingdom of God and the Christian Imperative

The Christian mission is basically summed up in the concept of the Kingdom of God. The ministerial imperative

TO India VIA Israel

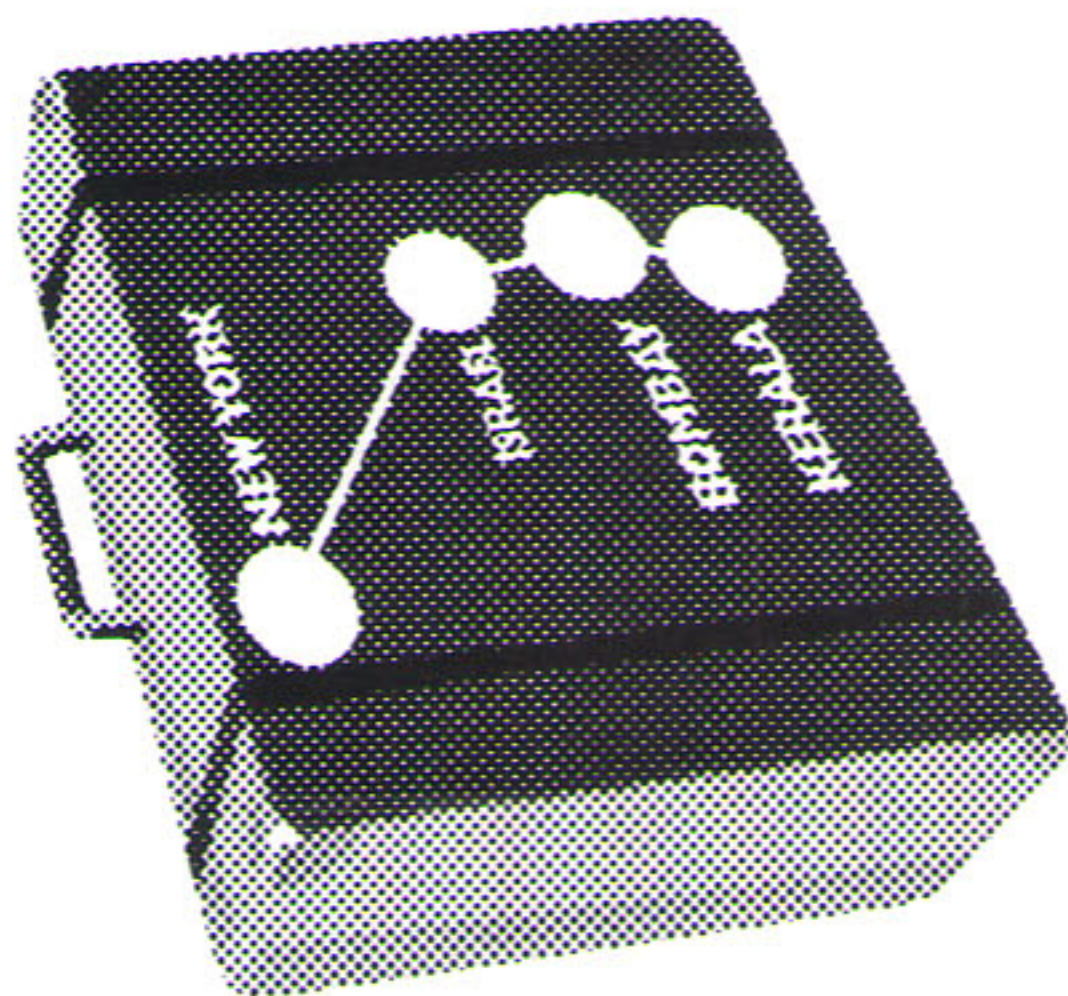
വിശുദ്ധ നാടുകളിലൂടെ

TOUR #1

Stopover in Israel enroute India 4Ns/5Ds or 6Ns/7Ds

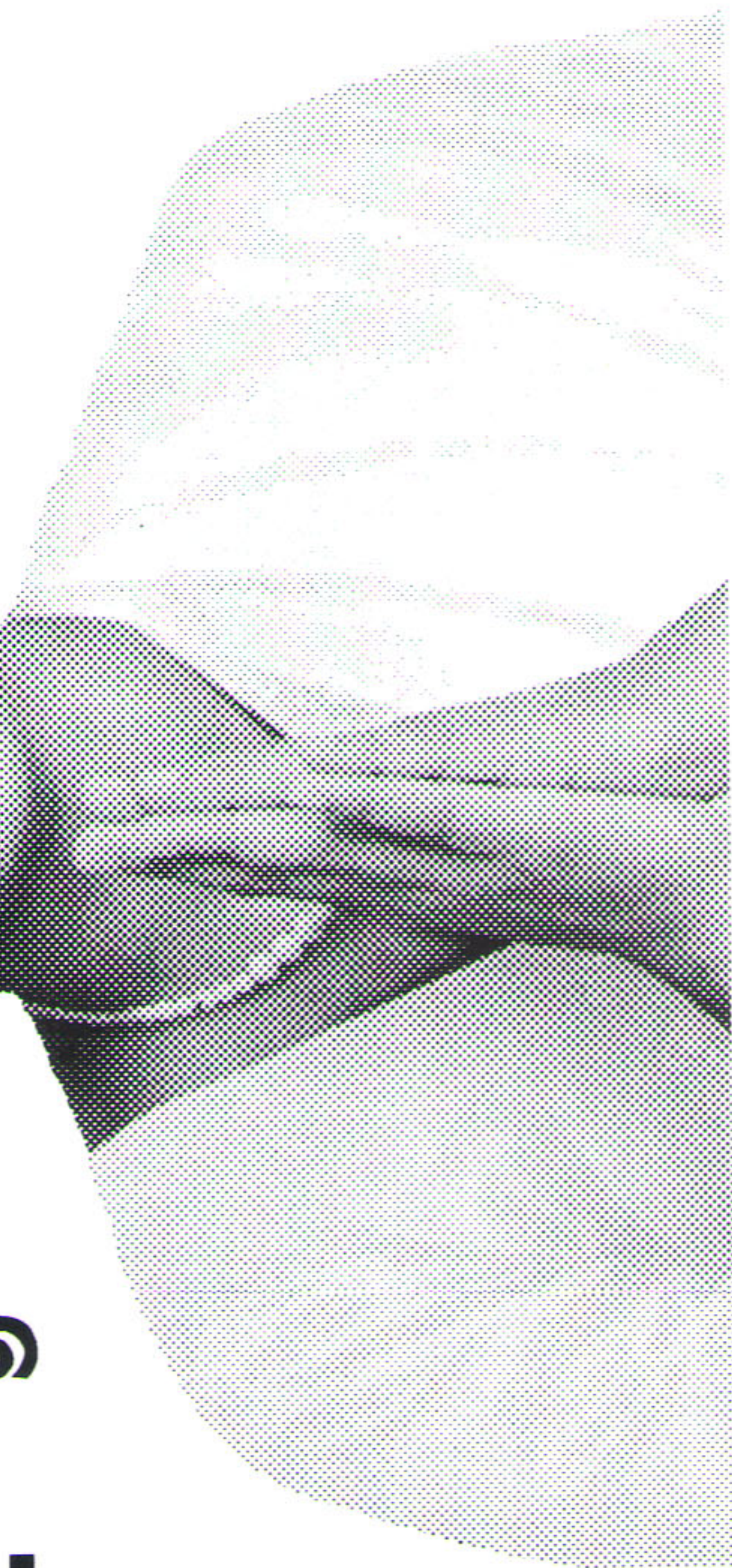
TOUR #2

Newark / New York to Israel and return 6Ns/7Ds

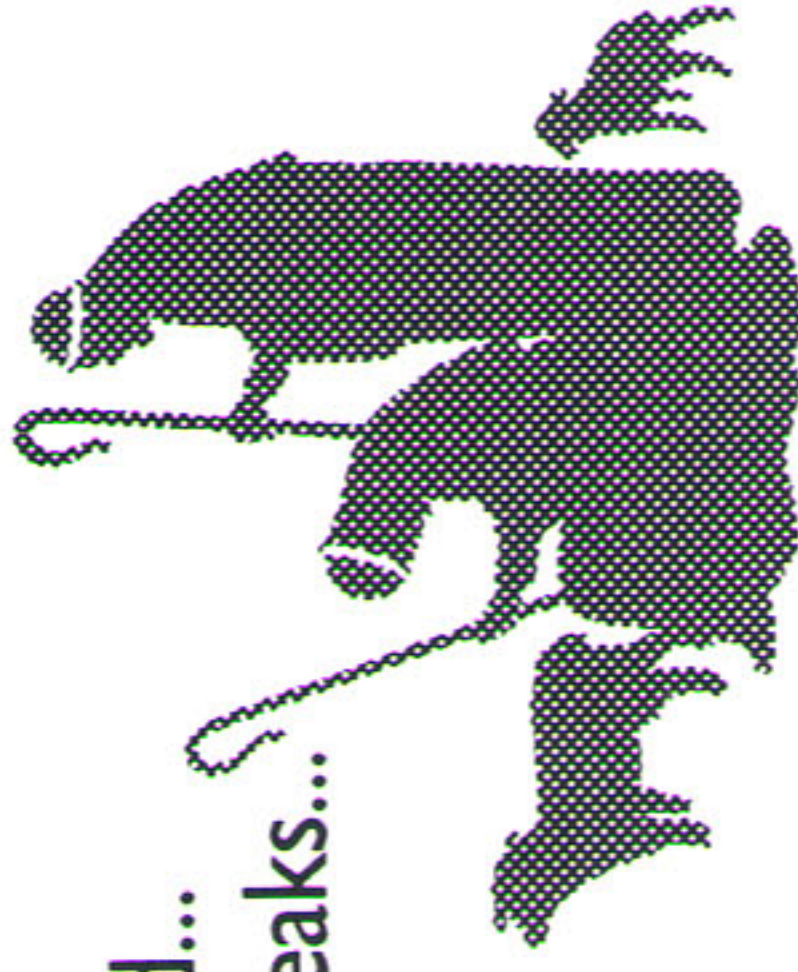


WALK IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

2000 Years later



Put your feet where Jesus walked...
View the sites where History speaks...
Feel the living touch of Jesus...
It is an experience !



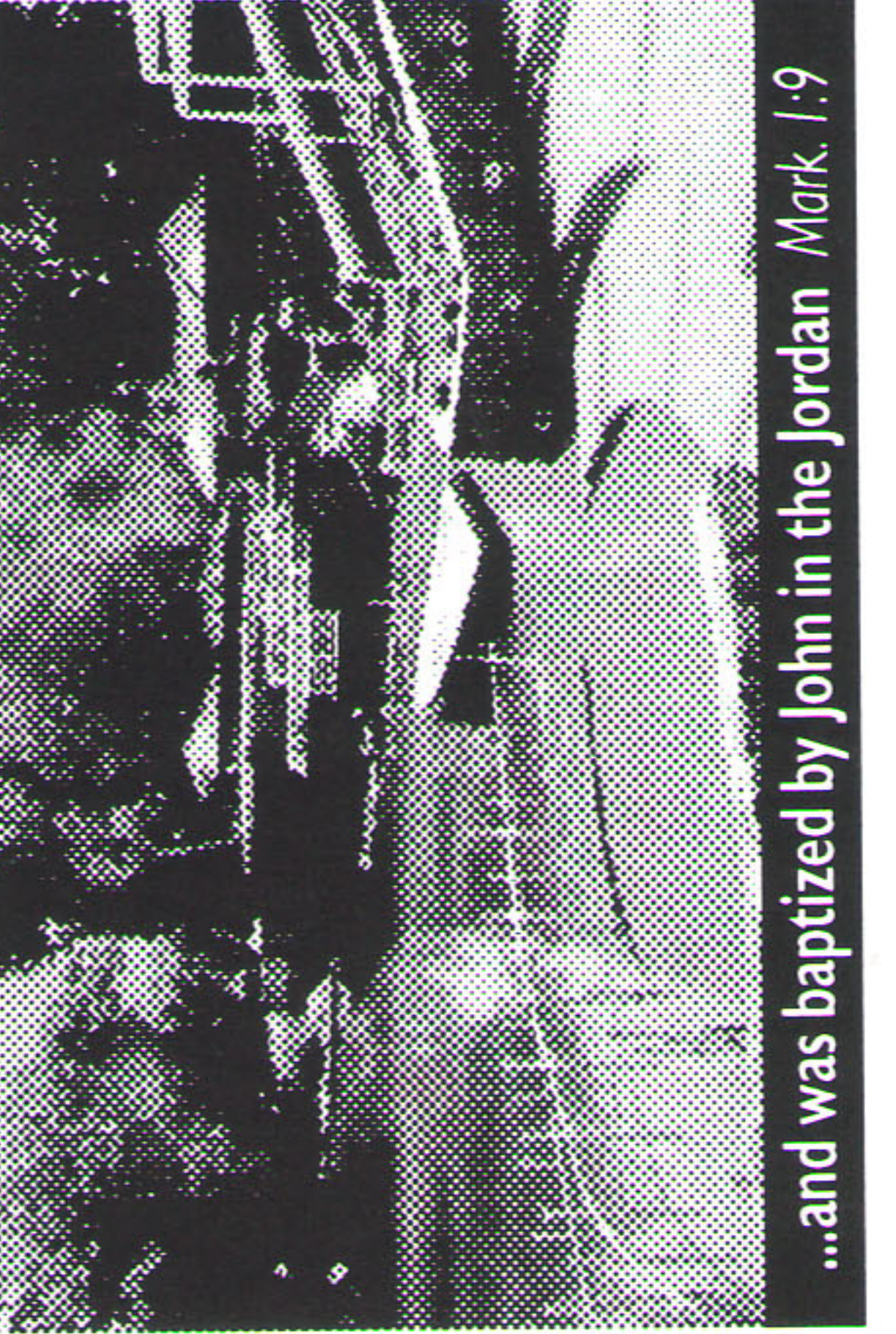
She gave birth... no place for them in the inn. Lk. 2:7



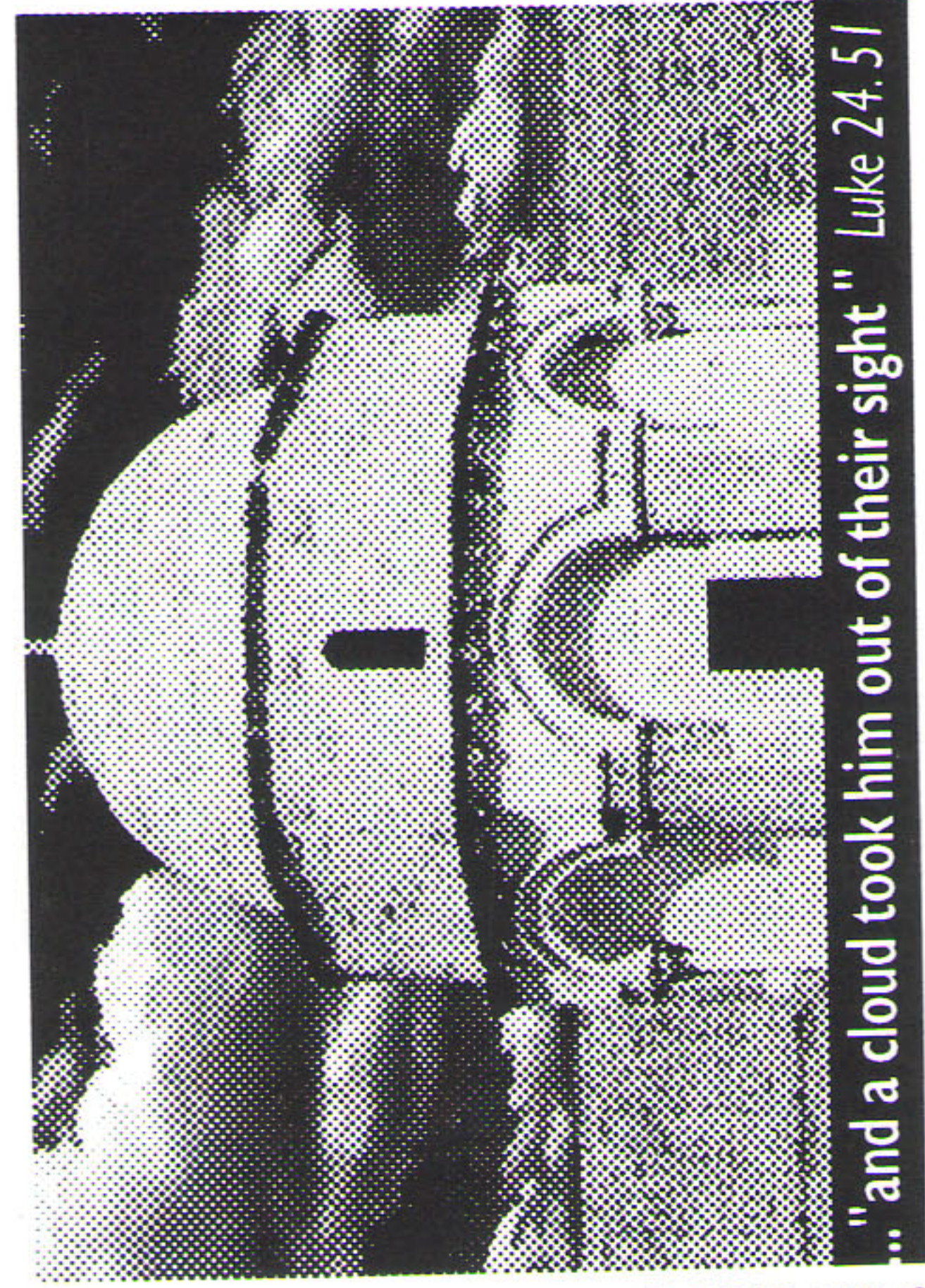
And Jesus went about all Galilee... Kingdom Mat. 4:23



Then Jesus... Gethsemane Mat. 26:36



...and was baptized by John in the Jordan Mark. 1:9



.. and a cloud took him out of their sight " Luke 24:51

Add only a little more to your India fares and have a 7 days "JOURNEY THROUGH THE HOLY LAND", Transfers, 5*/4* Hotel, Breakfast, Dinner, conducted tours. Groups of 2, 4, 8, 10, 15 or more - any time.



EL AL
It's not just an airline. It's Israel

105 W. Shore Ave,
Dumont,
NJ 07628

Contact: P. T. Chacko TEL: 201-244-1547 ■ RES: 201-678-9501 ■ FAX: 201-244-0573

of Christ is the proclamation and actuation of the Kingdom. The imminence of the Kingdom effectuated love, joy, and peace, all of which are embodied in the person of Christ. While the inauguration of the Kingdom occurred with the Incarnation, it was the death and resurrection of Jesus which truly sustained the power of the Kingdom. Philosopher Frederick Nietzsche in his Genealogy of Morals asserts that Christianity is basically a religion of the servant. For Nietzsche the epitome of human history was reached in the zenith of the Greek era. During the aforementioned period, a historical block, which saw rapid developments in literature, philosophy, mathematics, and science, human virtue, was measured by physical strength and domination. Characteristics such as pride and arrogance were the benchmark to the lowly. Humanity was conferred only to those who encompassed such norms. The majority were the weak, oppressed, and downtrodden. Christianity, the religion of the enslaved masses, through the ethics of the Kingdom transformed the Greco-Roman conception of virtue and valued service, meekness, and humility, over domination, assertiveness, and pride. For the Christian, service to the whole of the earth is the imperative given by God through the furtherance of the Kingdom.

Contemporary society, and unfortunately the "Christian Church" have perpetuated a culture, which supports domination and oppression. Although the Kingdom imperatives call us to an equitable ordering of society, we encourage, both tacitly and explicitly, a rigid hierarchical ordering of society based on social, economic, racial, and religious status. The ethic of love and care has been replaced by a pervasive aggressive individualism which seeks to hoard wealth and even religion to oneself. Bearing our prejudices and social rigidity, we tend to be exclusive and ethnocentric in our worldview. The Bible, the Word of God, is quite clear in its perspective. We are called to be harbingers of peace,

emulate the self-sacrificial love of Christ, and work for the benefit of the earth that is epitomized through justice. Our covenant relationship with God is based on the ethic of the Kingdom (Matthew Chapters 5-7; Luke 4, etc.)

Conclusion

As we are living in an age of transformation, the call for the Christian church is quite simple. It is to retain the orthodoxy of faith which has been transmitted throughout the generations. The traditional understanding of human in the image of God has tremendous implications, especially in the Western hemisphere. The divine love, providence, and sacrificial ethos of God should relay in our relationship with each other and the environment. We are called to be caretakers and not exploiters of our surroundings. The imperative for us is simple! we are called to humbly serve each other and work for the fruitfulness of the earth. However, with the growth of individualism, we have been myopic in our understanding of salvation. Unfortunately, we have sought our own salvation — individualistically, without understanding the intrinsic communitarian nature of salvation. We must assert our understanding of salvation from the perspective of the community of faith moving away from the perils of individualism. Our vision — the central focus of mission — must be grounded on the values of the Kingdom of God. It is the message of the Kingdom of God as embodied in Christ which has had the most profound effect on the recorded history of humanity. Thus, our call, as followers of this tradition, is to continually work for the expansion of the Kingdom. ■

Manoj M. Zacharia, a member of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, N.Y., is currently undergoing training as a third year student in the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

Articles for Publication in the Messenger!!!

All articles for publication including reports, photographs, letters to the editor, etc. should be sent to the Chief Editor's address. All questions regarding subscriptions, advertisements, renewals, etc. are to be addressed to the Diocesan Center in Merrick, NY for the attention of the Manager Mr. Daniel Thomas.

We welcome Malayalam articles but we do not have any facility for Malayalam typesetting. Therefore, all Malayalam articles for publication should be in printed form.

Seeds of Change: Overseas Marthomites

George Alexander, Ph.D., Los Angeles, CA

As our world becomes steadily smaller through advancements in transportation and communication, the need for more international understanding demands our attention. Many societies are in a state of rapid change, and many of the problems have been attributed to problems of transition. The underlying assumption is that the traditional and modern are in competition, and in choosing one, the other is lost. Our world changes faster and more profoundly with every passing decade. And at the same time, the need, opportunity, and means for evangelizing the world are increasing.

In this article, I will address two questions: First, from my ministry perspective as an immigrant church leader, *what are the key challenges and possibilities of the overseas Marthomites?* Second, *how do we go about bringing a globalized perspective to overcome those challenges?* The purpose of my article is not just to stimulate debate, but to envision that Mar Thoma Church will emerge as the forerunner of all Indian churches in the USA, Canada, and the Europe. My thesis is that the Mar Thoma Church will stand up to the test of time but it is fundamentally up to their members to change with them.

The challenging task of moving out of one's own familiar surroundings in favor of a new and strange environment is usually undertaken in order to escape from the harsh realities of life in the home country, while attracted by the promises and opportunities of the host country. The new opportunities of "earning more money" and "securing higher education" for themselves and their children attracted many Marthomites, along with other immigrants, to the Western countries. Like other immigrants, the Marthomites also arrived in this land with their religious and cultural heritage. They were attached to customs and practices of Kerala into which they were socialized early in life. To their new country they brought their familiar practices as well as their values and attitudes which guide their actions in the host society.

The desire to worship in one's own mother tongue is something inherent in all people and it is gratifying to note that this noble sentiment enabled the Marthomites living in Western societies to request the Home Church to send a resident priest and to organize local churches. Like many other immigrants, Marthomites at the time of arrival, typically had the intention of going back "home" after working a few years and saving some money. When they came, the well being of their parents and relatives in India was uppermost in their minds. After their stay in this



country, their own family, children, and future took precedence. With the organization of parishes a large number of people are brought together as a unit. Religion is considered as the life blood of immigrant communities since it supplies continuity with the traditional culture. By providing a sense of identity, religion helps to meet the challenges of the new society.

The Mar Thoma Church is an Eastern Reformed Church. It owes its origin to the evangelistic work of the Apostle St. Thomas who came to India in 52 AD . During the

past centuries, the church has been keeping friendly relations with various ancient churches. The Mar Thoma church is Eastern in worship, episcopal in tradition, democratic in administration and ecumenical in vision. Its Biblical emphasis, evangelical outlook, missionary zeal, theological concerns, and social commitments are some of the salient features of the church.

The Diocese of North America and Europe was formed as a Zonal Council in 1982 and then as a diocese in 1988. The diocese holds in its fold approximately 4,000 families, consisting of over 15,000 members, organized in about 42 parishes and over 22 congregations scattered all across the continents of North America and Europe. The diocese is now being served by a resident bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa and about 38 clergymen. The different organizations of the Diocese and the regional and national conferences provide leadership and assistance to children, youth, men and women in their spiritual growth and development. The diocese is very keen to maintain ecumenical relationships with other American churches and also in establishing friendly contacts with people of different religious backgrounds and cultures of the host country.

The Mar Thoma Church has earned a reputation for its global outreach and ecumenical spirit. The World Council of Churches (WCC) gave global visibility when some of its members, both clergy and laity assumed responsibilities in this World Council. For example late Juhannon Mar Thoma Metropolitan was one of the presidents for seven years from 1954, and the late M.M. Thomas, a Mar Thoma member, was the chairman of the central committee from 1967 to 1975. The present Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, has been re-elected for the second term as the executive member of the central committee of the WCC in which capacity he is serving meritoriously.

In the Western countries, the Mar Thoma congregations are part of the highly skilled, aggressively

industrious and obviously prosperous South Asian Indian communities. Marthomites of this generation have to face many challenges in order not only to maintain, but also to succeed. They are the transitional dialectical link in making the future a great possibility. What are the challenges and possibilities that face them into the 21st century?

To Assimilate or to Preserve

First of all, a great challenge that the overseas Marthomites face is that their American-born youngsters are pinned between two cultures — forced to choose between adhering to Indian traditions and customs and accommodating American values. Assimilation is one of the hardest trials faced by our teenagers in this country. The cultural pressures to mimic adulthood and grow up fast leave many youngsters disturbed. Culturally sanctioned social events like dating and beauty pageants come off as ambiguous cultural bridges at best.

Tradition is the spice of our life. Tradition and culture are to be considered as a treasure. As Marthomites, we need to safeguard it, preserve it, refine it when necessary, and pass it on to the next generation. The respect for the past assures us a lot of security. If we deviate from it, we are not certain about the future. That uncertainty will induce anxiety and weakness within us.

Miss India Georgia is a documentary that I have watched recently, that well depicts the struggle of our teenagers who try to adhere to Indian traditions and to accommodate American values. It presents intimate portraits of four young women who are contestants in the Annual Atlanta Beauty pageant. These women find themselves pinned between cultures, forced to choose every day between adhering to their parent's tradition and accommodating American values. The film accompanies the four women to church, temple, and mosque; to the mall, parties, fast food jobs, dance clubs, and pageant rehearsals. Each struggle with the question of how much to assimilate and how much to preserve her ethnic identity. Each arrives at her own, unique solution. We must not forget that there are many good and bad customs and traditions in America, but what to accept and reject is a personal choice.

Conflict of Languages: English vs. Malayalam

Secondly, a great challenge of our overseas Marthomites is that their American born youth do not understand Malayalam. After so many years of living in America, I have seen in many churches, parents who have teenagers, born and brought up in this country, pushing for services and meetings only in Malayalam. If we have to attract the American born youngsters, these services must be conducted in English, the local priests must be well versed in English, and able to communicate with the youth well. Many parents boast to their American born children epitomizing the Malayalam language as their great Indian culture and that makes no sense to the foreign born

youngsters. The youth must be represented in all the committees and the services, and committees must be conducted in English. No committee in our church should be formed without making sure that our youth are also represented in that group.

The concept that Malayalam is the mother tongue of Kerala, so a priest candidate is expected to chant the liturgy and preach in Malayalam discourages many American born youngsters to enter into full time ordained ministry. The church should make provisions for the appointment of American born youngsters to begin with, as assistant vicars under the parish priest from Kerala. This will be mutually beneficial to the priests as well as to the younger generation of Marthomites. The church should consider intra-diocesan transfer for the young ministers selected and trained from the American diocese rather than transferring such a priest to Kerala after his tenure of a three-year ministry in an American parish. This pattern of transfer will enable the minister to effectively discharge his duties in English based on the experiences he has gained from the American cultural context. This arrangement should not exclude assigning such priests to parishes in other countries where his skills and experiences are deemed beneficial in the parish ministry, especially reaching out to the second generation Marthomites.

Traditional Authority vs. Individual Autonomy

Thirdly, the overseas Marthomites face the conflict between traditional authority and individual autonomy. The American culture has evolved into a stage where there is little appeal to authority and respect for elder persons. Our youngsters have come in which one has to be convinced through reasons. In India when parents tell their children to sit down, the children obey readily and sit down. But in America, when the parents tell the same thing, the children will sit down but before sitting down they want to know from their parents why they have to sit down. This is an area that a typical Marthomite family is in direct clash with their youngsters. The challenge of the parents in America is to transfer the Indian values to the second generation which grows up in a society where age, wisdom and maturity are not esteemed over youth, self-reliance and egalitarianism. What we can do is only to reduce differences and improve understanding between the two cultures. Parents should assume full responsibility for coming into grip with both cultures. It was a deliberate choice taken by them to come to this country, not by their children. This will give a sense of accountability in changing our thinking rather than blaming it on somebody else and the culture we presently live in.

Selection and Training of Young Candidates for Ministry from our children

Lastly, the urgent need of the overseas Marthomites is to focus on the emerging realities and the need for changes in

the theological training and pastoral appointments for these overseas established parishes. So far, 42 parishes and 22 congregations are served by about 3 dozen priests trained in Indian theological seminaries (with the exception of one). The first generation Marthomites must face the reality that our children born and brought up here are going to assume the leadership in the church ministry. Though the church has extended invitations to our young Marthomites in North America to consider full time ordained ministry during the last several years, the response was not impressive at all.

Since Malayalam is the mother tongue of the vast majority of Marthomites, a priest candidate is expected to chant the liturgy and preach in Malayalam. The need for flexibility in the ordination of locally born Marthomites and their assignments is essential for the Mar Thoma church to move forward with greater vigor and power in this part of the world for the 21st century. If we are to be successful in the selection and training of young candidates from among our children, we need to adapt to the changing realities within the cultural context of our life in the adopted land. Certainly, this new pattern will curtail the transfer of priests from India to this country for pastoral ministry. Our American born priests will be working among their peers and parents with whom they can communicate and relate more effectively.

Conclusion

Accepting the validity of our host culture does not imply that one should change the behavior in the direction of the values and practices of that culture. No culture is to be considered as superior to any other culture in any way. Some are more advanced in one area and others in another.

Culture affects both the communicator and the receptor. They are both immersed in their own cultures. The situation becomes deplorable when the communicator does not realize that such differences exist. Contextualization seeks not only that the Biblical message penetrate and adopt the cultural forms of the people but it must also stand in judgment upon the culture. The Gospel accepts and values these cultural components on one hand, and on the other hand, it judges and changes them. From Moses to John the Baptist, the Biblical prophets condemned elements of culture which were contrary to the Word of God. At the same time the prophets' ministry fulfills and re-creates the truths of every culture. The Gospel re-creates and renews that part of culture which is not in opposition to the revealed Word of God. Jesus the Son of God identified Himself with the culture of his time, but He did not become a slave to it. He brought the culture of his time under judgment just as he does every culture.

In conclusion, the Mar Thoma Church overseas must contextualize the presentation of the Gospel to the second and third generations. Only then do they grasp it as something "excitingly relevant to the problems that they struggle with." It is only then that they really understand it and can respond to it meaningfully. Then the Mar Thoma Church will emerge as the forerunner of all Indian churches in the USA, Canada, and the Europe. Thus, the Mar Thoma Church will move forward with greater vigor and power in this part of the world for the 21st century. ■

Dr. Alexander is the Director and Professor of Intercultural Education at BIOLA University, La Mirada, CA. He is the author of *New Americans* (1996) and *Higher Education in India: Critical Issues and Trends* (1998).

Mar Thoma Messenger Life Members

1. Dr. Kurian M. Abraham, Ascension MTC, PA
2. Poikail Varghese, Ascension MTC, PA
3. Varghese Abraham, Ascension MTC, PA
4. Alex Thomas (Tennessee), Carmel MTC, Boston, MA
5. Lily Kurian, Chicago MTC, IL
6. Dr. M. V. Mathew, Chicago MTC, IL
7. George Cherian, Detroit MTC, MI
8. Thomson David, Detroit MTC, MI
9. Dr. P. John Lincoln, Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock, TX
10. Cherian Abraham, Long Island MTC
11. Dethose Joseph, Long Island MTC
12. Kalathil Varughese, Long Island MTC, NY
13. Samuel V. Chacko, Long Island MTC, NY
14. Thomas Samuel, Long Island MTC, NY
15. Varkey Abraham, Long Island MTC, NY
16. Dr. K. O. George, Los Angeles MTC, CA
17. Thomas Mammen, Los Angeles MTC, CA
18. M. C. Alexander, New Jersey MTC, Randolph, NJ
19. Kuruvilla Cherian, St. James MTC, NY
20. N. M. Mathew, St. James MTC, NY
21. C. V. Simonkutty, St. John's MTC, NY
22. Dr. George Jacob, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
23. P. M. Thomas, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
24. Dr. Thomas Abraham, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
25. Daniel Varghese, St. Stephen's MTC, NJ
26. Lukose Koshy, St. Thomas MTC, NY
27. Mathew Abraham, St. Thomas MTC, NY
28. P. T. Thomas, St. Thomas MTC, NY
29. Thomas Varghese, St. Thomas MTC, NY
30. Rev. Varghese Abraham, St. Thomas MTC, NY
31. Thomas K. Jose, The MTC Staten Island
32. T. A. Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston
33. Thomas Koshy, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
34. Dr. K. John, St. James MTC, UK
35. Mathew A. Kallapuram, UK
36. Dr. Zack Varghese, UK

With Christ to a New Millennium: A Journey of Hope

Kunjumol Cherian, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Introduction

The latter half of the 20th century has seen profound changes that affected every aspect of human life globally. We have witnessed vast changes in the socio-cultural, political, educational and religious areas that not only influenced our lives but also continue to have a profound impact on human values, family life, relationships, character and faith. While technological development has accelerated our lives to move at the speed of light, human values and faith have plummeted, as a result of the "pop" culture that became prominent since the sixties. During this period we have seen the rise of humanism, feminism, substance abuse, easy divorce, sexual revolution, man's preoccupation with self and materialism. Many of these have adversely affected the stability of the family, as well as man's faith and relationship with God. The rise of atheistic secularism poses yet another great danger of the present times. Two crucial areas which affected human life adversely with the new culture are: (i) our true identity and relationship with God and (ii) the stability of the family. These are the most important aspects that determine our worth, our usefulness and our responsibility to the family, society and the nation. It is with these profound changes that humanity enters the postmodern era with the dawn of the new millennium. Under these circumstances, it is very appropriate that we have selected the theme, "With Christ to a New Millennium" for this year's family conference. In the postmodern era the world needs Christ more than ever when society is unable to distinguish between right and wrong, ignores the moral code of ethics, and is driven by impulse rather than by conscience. Christ is the answer to all personal and family problems in general, and we need a renewed spiritual awakening for a personal growth. The purpose of this article is to discuss some of the changes that affected the present generation adversely, our true identity and how Christ is sufficient for us in this new era

Lessons from History: The Perils of life without God

I think most of us would agree that we are living at a time similar to the days of Judges when, "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes."¹ Throughout the Old Testament, the fundamental issue is the Lordship of God in Israel. Soon after they settled in Canaan, the Israelites forgot the acts of God that had led them to this land and lost sight of their unique identity as God's people. As a result they were subjected to foreign oppression, humiliation and hardship. Whatever happened to the Israelites and the present world

has been the result of our alienation from God. The postmodern world continues to disobey God and his laws. A life away from God results in broken families and scattered societies with destruction of the hopes and dreams of the generations as the Israelites experienced. The Bible teaches us that God entered human history in the form of a man when the "Word became flesh" in Bethlehem.² People had refused to abide by God's instructions and to accept the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ when they were visited by God himself. Looking at Jerusalem and the people with their outward religiosity without a personal relationship with God, Jesus wept reflecting what was to happen in the near future to an obstinate generation.³ About forty years later in A.D. 70 Jerusalem was destroyed and the city was in ruins. When Christ was led away to his final destiny on earth, he said to the by standing women "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children."⁴ Today everywhere people are weeping for themselves and for their children as a result of what happened to the society in the past four decades — a life away from God. The new era has brought in a culture driven by impulse to seek pleasure by any means and created a feeling of "no guilt," and "no sin."

The New Age of Delusion

We are living in a period of delusion and its effects are devastating. "The secret power of lawlessness" has been at work. *Secret* means no one can discover the real intended inner meaning except the Holy Spirit, and only people who are led by the Holy Spirit can discern the crafty manipulations of the lawless one. Apostle Paul has warned about this. "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles.... For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."⁵ The man of lawlessness will have power to do amazing things, but his power is to create the delusion, lead people away from God and destroy them. Our personal, family and social problems are for the most part a result of disobedience to God. Drastic changes emerged in the culture when unethical and unbiblical practices became facts of modern civilization. The characteristics of the new culture are selfishness, covetousness, materialism, hatred, discord, idolatry, sexual immorality, slandering, dishonesty and lack of compassion. These are the very things God hates and apostles warned us

about.⁶ Federal and State laws and regulations have been enacted to shelter many of these changes under the disguise of freedom of expression and personal rights. Our children are innocent victims of this new culture that emerged from the melting pot of multicultural society and pluralistic religion. The consequences have been devastating.

Identity Crisis & Relationship with God

Sometime or other most people have experienced an identity crisis in their life. Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? What is life all about? What happens when I die? These are some of the questions, to which people seek answers. Lack of knowledge in the biblical truth about such and similar questions have forced people to seek answers through drugs, sex and alcohol. We can find answers to all these in the bible. When God created us in his image we were created to develop an intimate relationship with Him. God has given us an identity of belonging to the "chosen people" through the promise made to Abraham that through him all nations will be blessed.⁷ This blessedness is in attaining the status of children of God through Jesus Christ. The key to Abraham's blessings was obedience to God. "Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."⁸ Jeremiah 29:11 says "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Thus, our true identity is with God. Our true culture is a culture of obedience to God. The basics of this culture were given as the Ten Commandments, which are an expression of the eternal moral nature of God.⁹ They embody the fundamental principles that govern a life of faith that is loyalty and reverence toward God, identity with God and moral responsibility toward man. Scripture states that these were spoken by God and were written by Him.¹⁰ Christ summed up these Laws by asserting that people are to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, and souls, and minds, and their neighbors as themselves.¹¹

When we alienate ourselves from God through disobedience, and conformity with the patterns of this world, God grieves. To the Israelites God said in the past, "You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth."¹² The Bible teaches us that alienation from God severely affects individuals, families and nations. People experience loneliness when they lose friends, family members or a dear one. The severe form of loneliness is separation from the fellowship of God. Loneliness is a chronic problem of modern society. Many feel lonely for lack of this intimacy with God even when they are in the care or company of others. Anyone who has a conflict with his or her true identity in this postmodern culture must establish a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ.

Restore Our Relationship with God

We are created in his image, fearfully and wonderfully made, made a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor.¹³ There shouldn't be any doubt as to the need for our relationship with God. God assured the Israelites in their bondage that He will accept them as His own people and be their God. "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God." "You are to be my holy people."¹⁴ Jesus said during his mission on earth, "Abide in Me, and I will abide in you" If a man remains in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."¹⁵ With Christ we can do everything. Only a faithful follower can claim that he abides in Christ. "He who says he abides in Christ ought himself also to walk just as he walked."¹⁶ The relationship of the Church with Christ is symbolized by the bride and groom and we must have a spiritual intimacy in all matters of life with the Lord. Whatever alienation we suffer, God is merciful and willing to restore us through his promise. "You will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all uncleanness."¹⁷

A relationship with Christ brings our identity and worth. Everyone who knows Christ has a new identity. When we identify ourselves with God through absolute faith in Christ, we have the assurance that we are redeemed and justified, sanctified and sealed with the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ The relationship with Christ assures a fuller and abundant life. We must take that free offer for a life overflowing with love and grace. When we are restored in our relationship with God, we become a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people belonging to God to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.¹⁹ That is our worth in Christ. Like the Psalmist, we must taste and see that the Lord is good.²⁰

Scripture is sufficient for Strengthening Families

We all cherish our homes for its shelter, warmth, acceptance and unconditional love. In these modern times family relationships have become unstable. This erosion in the family structure and values is the result of exchanging God's laws with an ideology based on materialism, selfishness, greed and unfaithfulness. About fifty percent of western families end up in divorce resulting in broken families, destitute, run away children and disturbed youth. Research shows that although most adults regard family as the most satisfying aspect of life, they also regard it as the most frustrating.²¹ The causes of the erosion of the family are many, a few of which are: (1) Divorce epidemic and departure from life long monogamy. (2) Lack of exercising parental authority. (3) Unwillingness to sacrifice one's greedy goals for the good of one's marriage and family. (4) Failure to uphold the dignity of parenthood. Some of these may be related to the socio-cultural, educational, or economic background of individuals as well as the religious beliefs and values in people's lives. Whatever the reason one may find, the source of unhappiness in family life is the failure to submit to the Word of God.

The key element in marriage is a joint commitment to serve and love each other unconditionally. The ability to love one's spouse in the same way God loved Israel or Christ loved the Church is all the more essential for a solid family life.²² The Main qualities of a strong family are: (1) Commitment to each other. (2) Spend time together. (3) Effective communication. (4) Appreciation and encouragement to each other. (5) Ability to solve problems in a crisis. (6) Spiritual commitment. The domestic strength is sustained by living according to the Bible, by teaching the young diligently, by loving the Lord fervently and by fearing the Lord greatly. We must view marriage as a permanent covenant of biblical truth as the Lord taught us.²³ Only the Holy Spirit can bring effective, productive and edifying communication between couples with a spirit of reconciliation and submission to one another.²⁴ But in a male dominated society, the word submission has often been tossed to the feminine gender. As we intend to walk with Christ in the 21st century we must learn the biblical truth about love, respect, service and submission in family life in the fear of the Lord. That is possible only with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us and such a couple's marriage will be blessed. Such marriages will be stable and such families will survive against all adverse conditions. The wife in such a family will be like a fruitful vine and their children will be like olive shoots around the table.²⁵ "Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain."²⁶ A family without God can never experience the spiritual bond God brings to relationships, and a city without God will crumble with evil and corruption.

With Christ a New Beginning

Apostle Peter had clearly stated about the sufficiency of Christ for our daily lives. "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him, who called us by his own glory and goodness.... For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."²⁷ Our effectiveness and spiritual productivity in increasing measure comes from the gifts and resources God has made available to us. Indeed the 2nd letter of Peter was written to combat disbelief and wrong teaching prevalent in the first century, as it is today. Knowledge of Christ leads us to a deeper relationship with him, godliness and a character of self-control. A true knowledge of Christ will change our attitude with an outpouring of love, kindness and sacrifice for the good of others. Peter also said that if any one does not have these qualities, he is near sighted and blind.²⁸ Without Christ, we are totally blind. New age culture has not only alienated us but also blinded us. Let us regain sight through Jesus Christ.

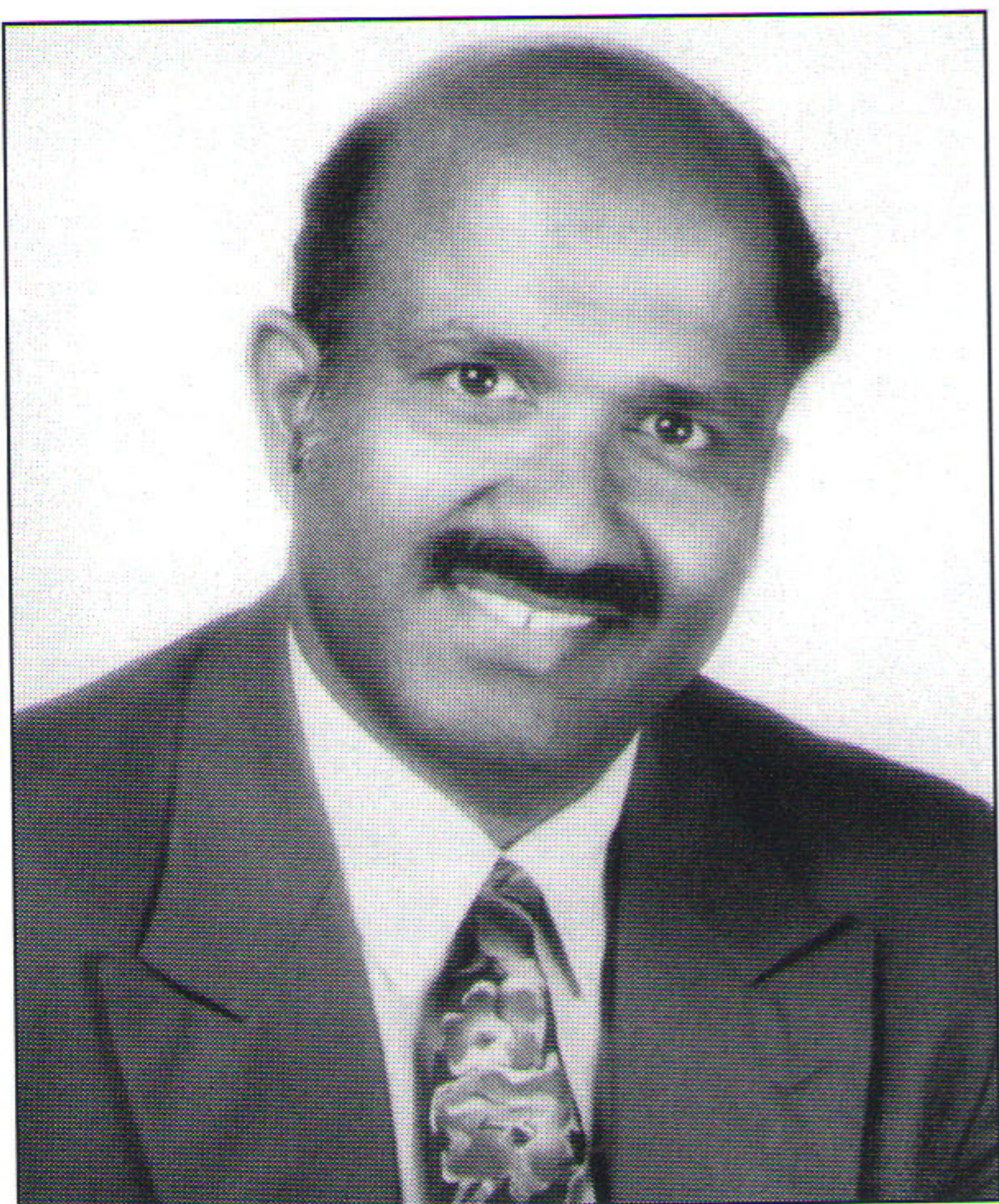
Though we are living at a time of delusion and the adverse influences are powerful, we can have a new

beginning, renewing ourselves to abide by the Scripture and to follow Christ. It is comforting to know that we have hope in an everlasting God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The assurance of God is "Call unto me, and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."²⁹ The Bible teaches that we are entitled to victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have heard it before, but still many of us don't really understand it. 1 Cor. 15:57 say, "Thanks be to God! Because He gives us the victory, making us conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ!" As individuals and as a community we must praise Him that we are joined with the One who has conquered the world, the flesh, the devil and the new age. We need to enjoy the Victory with Christ in the new millennium. We all encounter problems from time to time and when we do, we should seek the Lord through the Word and in prayer and ask Him what the solution is. If we face troubles, the Bible also teaches us that sometimes they have a positive side. "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."³⁰ Life with Christ in the new millennium will remove our fears of the present, transform us for a new beginning, and give us hope for the future. With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm.

Conclusion

In the years ahead, we may face adverse conditions perhaps more than what we already have experienced. The Holy Scripture being God's laws and testimony is absolutely true and should therefore serve as our standard for matters of life and faith.³¹ Scripture is totally adequate for our personal, family and social problems. It is holy and sacred, it is able, God inspired, and it is profitable and useful.³² Biblical truth is the absolute truth in all matters of life. If we abide in Christ we have the assurance for a better future and a safe passage through the new century. At the end of our life's journey we are to meet our Creator. When we stand before Christ, the greatest words we could ever hear will be, "Well done, good and faithful servant."³³ May the Holy Spirit enlighten and strengthen us to achieve that great price of commendation as we decide to walk with Christ in the new millennium. May we resolve as we depart from this year's conference that we will walk with and abide in Christ in the years ahead with a renewed vigor to change ourselves, and through our transformed lives, the world. ■

1. Judg. 21:25; 2. John 1:14; 3. Luke 19:41-44; 4. Luke 23:28; 5. 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 6. Eph 4:31,32; 7. Gen12:2,3; 22:15-18; 8. Gen. 22:18; 9. Ex. 20:1-17; 10. Deut. 4:13; 5:4,22; 10.4; 32 16; 11. Matt 22 3540; 12. Deut 32 18; 13. Ps. 139:14; Ps. 8:5; 14. Ex. 6:7; 22:31; 15. John 15:4,5; 16. 1 John 2 6; 17. Eze. 36:28,29; 18. Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:13; 19. 1 Pet. 2:9; 20. Ps. 34:8; 21. George Barna. The future of American Family 1993; Moody Press; 22. Hos. 1:1-9; Eph. 5:25-33; 23. Matt 19 3-9; 24. Eph. 5:21; 25. Ps.128:3; 26. Ps.127:1; 27. 2 Pet 1:1-8; 28. 2 Pet.1:9; 29. Jer.33:3; 30. Ps.119:71; 31. Is. 8:19, 20; 2 Pet. 1:3; 32. 2Tim. 3:1-17; 33.Matt. 25:23.



**JACOB MATHEWS
INSURANCE AGENCY**

(Kunjumon, Kumbanad)

**BUS: (562) 804-4613
FAX: (562) 920-1748
RES: (909) 278-ASHA**

5230 N. Clark Avenue, Suite 4
Lakewood, CA 90712

**AMERICA CAN DEPEND ON FARMERS
AND JACOB MATHEWS
FOR ALL YOUR INSURANCE NEEDS**

AUTO, HOME, RENTERS, BUSINESS, COMMERCIAL, APARTMENTS

NEW VALUE - ADDED SERVICES FROM FARMERS:

Education Loans: (800) 778-1921, Real Estate and Mortgage Assistance: (800) 979-9639,
Auto Buying Service: (800) 332-4639, Auto Loan and Leasing, Mechanical Breakdown
Insurance, Homeowners Plus-Insure the Inner Working of the Home - All Appliances.

CALL FOR FREE QUOTES!

*Life Insurance Specialists in all types,
Flexible Universal Life, Mortgage Protection & College Fund*

TAX DEFERRED ANNUITIES & IRA

**HEALTH INSURANCE (BLUE CROSS APPOINTED AGENT)
Farmers' Only Malayalee Agent in California**

Best Compliments From: Jacob & Lillykutty Mathews, Ron,
Nisha & Tobias, Rob & Asha and Sheeba Lilly Mathews

Chacko Itticheria, Chicago MTC

അല്ലയോ മഹാത്മാവേ അലക്സാണ്ടർ മാർത്തോമ്മാ
 അങ്ങു ഞങ്ങളോടൊന്നു വിടച്ചൊല്ലിപ്പിരിയുമ്പോൾ
 വിങ്ങുന്നു ഹൃദയങ്ങൾ ഞങ്ങളിലെന്നതായ്
 പൊങ്ങുന്നു ശോകാർദ്രമാം ഗദ്ഗദങ്ങളായിരം
 ഓർമ്മകളിരസിവന്നിറ്റുന്നേരത്തിൽ പറ
 നോമനിച്ചിടുന്നാത്ത ചേതനയനസ്യുതം
 നന്മകൾ ഞങ്ങൾക്കേകാൻ ജീവിതം സമർപ്പിച്ച
 കർമ്മയോഗിയാം താതാ നന്ദിസീകരിച്ചാലും
 മാളിയേക്കൽ ജോർജ്ജച്ചൻ തന്നുടെമകനായി
 കേളിയേനീടും പിതാവങ്ങു ജാതനായേവം
 ഉത്തമൻ പിതാവിന്റെ പാതപിൻ പറ്റിടുവാ
 നുറ്റമോദത്താലുറച്ചങ്ങനെ മംഗല്യവും
 രണ്ടുവ്യാഴവട്ടത്തിലേറെയിമലകര
 യ്ക്കുണ്ടായ മഹാഭാഗ്യമോർത്തു ഞങ്ങളിനേരം
 നന്ദിയർപ്പിപ്പു ജഗദീശനാദരാൽ ദൈവ
 നിശ്ചയം മാറ്റാനാമോ മറ്റാർക്കുമധീശനേ!
 ആയിരം,തൊള്ളായിരം, പത്തു, മൂന്നിത്യാദിക
 ജൊത്തുകൂടിയ സുദിനത്തിലീധരണിയി
 ലുത്തമൻ ഭൃജാതനായെത്തി യീ നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ
 യുത്തുംഗമാമിപ്പടികടന്നിന്നിങ്ങേപ്പറ്റം
 മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയ്ക്കെത്ര ധീരമാം നേതൃത്വമ
 ങ്ങേകി യോർത്തിടും ഞങ്ങളേതുകാലത്തും പ്രഭോ!
 ആർത്തരാ യനാമരായ് തീർന്നിടാ തങ്ങളെ
 ചേർത്തു സ്വാന്തനം നൽകിനിന്നുനല്ലിടയനായ്
 കാഷായവസ്രം ചുറ്റി ലാളിത്യം വിളിച്ചോതും
 ഊഷിവര്യനാം തിരുമേനിതൻ ത്യാഗം സാക്ഷാ
 ലാരിലും സ്നേഹാദരമുളവാക്കീടും ദിവ്യ
 ശ്രേഷ്ഠമാമനുഭൂതി നൽകീടും കാരുണ്യമേ!
 സൗമ്യനായ്, സന്തുഷ്ടനായ്, സുസ്നേഹവദനനായ്
 സർവ്വഭാ വിരചിച്ചു സർവ്വവും തൃജിച്ചാനേ
 സത്തയായ്, സഭയ്ക്കുറ്റ മിത്രമായ്, സംപൂജ്യനായ്
 സർവ്വശക്തൻ തൻപാദംചൂടിയ നൈപുണ്യമേ!
 വിടച്ചൊല്ലട്ടെ ഞങ്ങൾ നന്ദിയാൽ തൊഴുകൈകളാൽ
 ഇടയശ്രേഷ്ഠാ,വന്ദ്യതാത ഗദ്ഗദങ്ങളാൽ
 ഇടറും കണ്ഠങ്ങളാൽ ചുണ്ടുകൾ വിതുമ്പുന്നു
 ഇശ്വരസവിധത്തിലങ്ങു വിശ്രമിച്ചാലും

“അങ്ങ് കേൾക്കട്ടെയിവസ്വരം,നന്,നന്നല്ലവൻ
 വിശ്വസ്യനായ ദാസനേ, നിനക്കായൊരുക്കിയ
 നിത്യസൗഭാഗ്യത്തിലേയ്ക്കുഴ്പവേശിക്കുക
 ഇതിലെ,ഇതിലെ ഇതിലെയിതിലെയെൻ വലഭാഗേ”
 നന്മകൾ നേർന്നിടുന്നുജനലക്ഷങ്ങൾ ഭവാ
 നിമ്മഹീതലം വിട്ടു യാത്രയായിടുംനേരം
 കർമ്മയോഗി മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭതൻ മഹാചാര്യാ
 നിർമ്മലപ്രസൂനമേ നിത്യസൗഭാഗ്യം ചേരൂ!
 ബാഷ്പാജ്ഞലികളർപ്പിപ്പു കൃപ്തകൈകളാലജ
 പാലകാപാദങ്ങളിലാദരാൽ പുണ്യാത്മാവേ
 സ്വീകരിച്ചനുഗ്രഹമേകി യാത്രയായാലും
 നാകലോകംപുകീടു താതസന്നിധാനത്തിൽ.

“അപ്പനും അമ്മയും”

പി.ടി. ചാക്കോ മലേഷ്യ

ഒരു പ്രസിദ്ധ നടൻ അടുത്ത കാലത്ത് പറയുകയുണ്ടായി. “ഇന്നത്തെ കൊച്ചു മക്കൾ വളരുന്നത് ചന്ദനപ്പൊട്ടിന്റെറയോ കാച്ചിയെണ്ണയുടെയോ ഗന്ധം അറിഞ്ഞു കൊണ്ടല്ല” എന്ന്. അതു കൊച്ചുമക്കളുടെ കാര്യം. ആ ഗന്ധം ആസ്വദിച്ചു വളർന്ന മക്കൾ?

ജനിച്ചനാൾ മുതൽ ഏറെക്കുറെ 20-24 വയസുവരെ മലമുത്രം കോരൽ തുടങ്ങി തോളെകയറ്റം, കുസൃതി കളികൾ, അപ്പപ്പൻ കഥകൾ, പഠിപ്പിച്ചു ജോലി തേടുന്നതുവരെ കൂട്ടു നിന്ന ഒരപ്പനെയും അമ്മയെയും പാടെ മക്കളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ നിന്ന് തുത്തെറിഞ്ഞു അനുപ്പെടുത്തി കളയുന്ന ജീവിതസിദ്ധാന്തമാണ് ഈ കാലത്ത് പല മക്കളുടേതും. മക്കൾക്കു വേണ്ടി അപ്പനും അമ്മയും എന്തു ചെയ്താലും കണക്കും കാര്യവുമില്ല. അതു അവരുടെ കടമ. മൂന്നു നാലു മക്കൾ ചേർന്ന് ഒരു പിതാവിനെയും ഒരു മാതാവിനെയും സന്ധിക്കേണ്ട അവസ്ഥയുടെ അവസരത്തിലാണ് മക്കളുടെയും മരുമക്കളുടെയും കണക്കുകളുടെ കുന്മാരം. ആരാണു ചുമതല ഏൽക്കേണ്ടത്, എടുക്കേണ്ടത്? പ്രശ്നമേ പ്രശ്നം!

കൊച്ചു കൊച്ചു കുഷിയും കച്ചവടങ്ങളും കൊച്ചു ജോലികളുമായി ജീവിച്ച സുപരിചിതമായ ഗ്രാമീണാന്തരീക്ഷത്തിലെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ മക്കളാരും അധികം അന്വേഷിച്ചില്ലെങ്കിൽ തന്നെയും വൃദ്ധരായ മാതാപിതാക്കൾ ഒരളവുവരെ അന്യരെ ആശ്രയിക്കാതെ കഴിയുമായിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് അവസ്ഥ അതല്ലല്ലോ. കാക്ക എറിഞ്ഞ കല്ലുപോലെ മക്കൾ ഒക്കെ നാലു ദിക്കിൽ; നാനാ രാജ്യങ്ങളിൽ, ഭാര്യമാർക്കോ പേരക്കിടാങ്ങൾക്കോ തികച്ചും അന്യരായ അപ്പനും അമ്മയും. സ്വയം തീരുമാനം എടുക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്ത ആൺ മക്കൾ. ഭാര്യമാരുടെ മുമ്പിൽ ചുളുന്ന ഭർത്താക്കന്മാർ. അപ്പനും അമ്മയും മൊത്തത്തിൽ ഒരു ഭാരം. കാറിന്റെറയോ, വീടിന്റെറയോ, വീട്ടുപകരണങ്ങളുടേയോ ബാധ്യതകൾ ഒന്നും വലിയ പ്രശ്നമല്ല. വിശപ്പില്ലാത്ത,

ആഡംബര ആടുകൾ വേണ്ടാത്ത അപ്പന്റെറയും അമ്മയുടെയും ചെലവുകളാണ് പ്രശ്നം. ഈ അവസ്ഥ എങ്ങിനെ ഉളവായി. ഉത്തരവാദിത്വപ്പെട്ടവർ ആര്. രാജ്യത്തിനും ഭരണകർത്താക്കൾക്കുപോലും പ്രായം ചെന്നവർ പ്രാരാബ്ധം!!

മുത്തശ്ശി കഥകളും അവയിൽ അടങ്ങുന്ന അന്തസത്തയും ഒന്നും ഇന്ന് ആർക്കും അറിവില്ല. മറ്റുള്ള വിജ്ഞാന ശേഖരത്തിനിടയിൽ അറിഞ്ഞിരിക്കേണ്ട ജീവിത കുടുബ മുല്യങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റി അബോധാവസ്ഥയും അർദ്ധബോധാവസ്ഥയും. പണസമ്പാദനവും സുഖലോലുപത്യവും ജീവിതത്തെ കരണ്ടു തിന്നുപോയി. മതങ്ങൾക്കും മനുഷ്യന്റെ മേൽ പണ്ടേപ്പോൽ സ്വാധീനമില്ല. ദൈവവും ദൈവരാധനക്കും സമയമില്ല. സ്ഥാനമില്ല. അവയൊക്കെ പഴഞ്ചൻ പ്രമാണങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടികയിൽ. ദൈവഭയം ഉള്ളവനെ മറ്റു ദൈവ സൃഷ്ടികളെ സ്നേഹിപ്പാനും സേവിപ്പാനും ബഹുമാനിപ്പാനും കഴിയും. ഈ മേഖലയും ശുഷ്കം, ശൂന്യം.

രത്നചുരുക്കം: പ്രായമായ അപ്പന്റെറയും അമ്മയുടെയും സംരക്ഷണ രാഷ്ട്രത്തിന്റെറയോ സമൂഹത്തിന്റെറയോ സഭയുടേതോ അല്ല, ആകരുത്. ഒരളവുവരെ, പെറ്റു വളർത്തിയ മക്കളുടേതു മാത്രം. ഇതിൽ നിന്നും ഒളിച്ചു ഓടുവാനോ, കർത്തവ്യങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും വ്യതിചലിപ്പാനോ ആരും തുനിയരുത്. സുഖവും സന്തോഷവും പങ്കിടുമ്പോലെ ദുഃഖവും പ്രാരാബ്ധവും കൂടെ പങ്കിട്ടേതിരൂ. മക്കൾ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ ആയിരുന്നപ്പോൾ ചുമതല മാതാപിതാക്കളുടേതെന്നപോൽ, വൃദ്ധരായ അപ്പനമ്മമാരുടെ ജീവിത-സായാഹ്ന ചുമതല മക്കളുടേത്, മക്കളുടേതു മാത്രം. മറ്റൊരു സിദ്ധാന്തവും കൊണ്ടു വന്ന് കുഴപ്പം സൃഷ്ടിക്കേണ്ട. ഒരു മതവും, ഒരു രാഷ്ട്രീയവും ഒരു ഇസവും ബദൽ പദ്ധതി ആവിഷ്കരിക്കേണ്ട. ഇന്നു തീരുമാനം എടുക്കേണ്ട മക്കളെ കണ്ടു വളരുന്നു അതേ തണലിൽ കൊച്ച് മക്കൾ. കഥ കണ്ടുകൊണ്ട്, ശ്രദ്ധിച്ചുകൊണ്ട്.

My Hopes and Fears as a Christian for the New Millennium

Melvy S. Mathew (Age: 16), Chicago MTC

No one but the divine Father can predict the future. Therefore, referring to the word of our Father, the Bible, allows us to make an educated guess as to what may lie ahead in our future as Christians. By deliberating on what Jesus foretold about the future and considering our present-day circumstances, we can prepare ourselves and *"put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, we may be able to stand our ground"* (Ephesians 6:13).

During the past few decades, the world has seen a number of astounding technological advances. In many cases, we have been so dazzled by our new innovations that we fail to realize the implications of our actions. For instance, our new "information highway" the internet has both advantages and disadvantages. The internet allows people to access reservoirs of both useful and harmful information. Bombmaking instructions, pornography, and downloads containing viruses are only a handful of the unpleasant resources readily available on the internet. The internet is becoming an integral part of our lives, overshadowing our other concerns. A few months ago, as we were entering a new millennium, we Christians were too busy worrying about the effects of the Y2K bug to praise God for giving us the opportunity to see the beginning of a new century in our lifetime. We must be careful to realize that everything we invent or devise is under the supervision of God and He is the ultimate provider and destroyer. *"And this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8).

In the scientific realm, researchers are excited over new tools that allow gene therapy and cloning. This new apparatus will allow people to do such things as decide the physical characteristics of their children and alter genes in order to avoid contracting a life-threatening disease. As Christians, we should be wary of such research and be careful to not take on the role of God. *"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being"* (Genesis 2:7). As Christians we must always be ready to resist the temptations offered by new innovations.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:9-13). The media and the internet are becoming more prominent parts of our

daily lives, and like false prophets, they are instilling corrupt and amoral ideas in many minds. Possible effects of this influence were evident in the behavior of the perpetrators of the Columbine school shooting. In the shooters' case, "there was an increase in wickedness" and their "love grew cold". In one instance, the teenage murderers asked one of their fellow students if she believed in Jesus and warned her that if she said she was a follower of Christ she would be shot. Disregarding the fact that her life was on the line, the girl stated that she was a Christian. That day, a true Christian died defending her faith. We have the consolation of knowing, however, that because she "stood firm to the end", she was saved and now resides with our Father in heaven. Like that teenager, we lovers of Christ must always be ready to defend our Father when confronted with the evil forces of Satan. As Christians we are sure to be tested like that girl was. *"However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name"* (1 Peter 4:16).

In addition to the media and the internet, there are real life individuals who promote wrong ideas like the false prophets referred to in the Bible. *"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you"* (2 Peter 2:1). One example of a modern-day false prophet was the leader of the Heaven's Gate cult. His crazed beliefs and persuasiveness led to the deaths of both him and his followers. They committed suicide, believing they would acquire eternal life after death. We Christians know that the only way to heaven and everlasting life is through Jesus Christ. This idea must always be embedded in our minds because more false prophets are sure to surface in the future. *"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many"* (Matthew 24:4-5).

"Lighted to Lighten". We Mar Thoma Christians are familiar with the slogan of our church. However, we often fail to share the word of God with others and remain unlighted. We can begin to fulfill our goal of enlightening others by beginning first with our fellow Indians. Several months ago, an Australian missionary and his two sons were set on fire by Hindu fanatics. Again, as in the Columbine incident, Christians were being persecuted and killed for simply sharing the good news. We must develop the courage to talk to strangers and followers of other gods about Jesus, our savior.

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the

end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:6-7). During the past few years, wars are becoming more frequent. We have already witnessed two world wars, and seem to always be on the brink of a third. The conflicts that occurred in Vietnam, Iraq, Kuwait and, more recently, Ireland and Bosnia, testify to this fact. The Bible tells us that we can only look forward to more hostilities between peoples. However, the way in which we resolve these disputes is important. Putting aside our pride and our weapons, we must consider what Jesus would do in our situation and learn to compromise. The word of God also warns us about famines and earthquakes. Recently, the people of Turkey were grieving over the lives lost during an unexpected earthquake. Whether we are in the midst of a war or have just had our lives shattered by a natural disaster, we will become more like Jesus through our pain and suffering. Having dilemmas in our lives strengthens our faith in God and forces us to give Him thanks when our problems are resolved.

Although there is much to fear in the coming years, there are also many reasons to hope. Many people are becoming familiar with Christianity and it is the religion

prevalent in the world. The accredited magazine U.S. News & World Report recently published an article entitled "Is the Bible true? — New discoveries offer surprising support for key moments in the Scriptures." With such publicity, the media may actually be promoting faith in God. We as Christians can also rest assured about our future trials because we know our Father is always watching and protecting us from above. "*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand*" (Isaiah 41:10).

Most importantly, as followers of Christ, we are always looking forward to Jesus Christ's second coming. Our Savior may arrive at any moment, and when He does we must be prepared to speak of our lives as Christians. "*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done*" (Revelation 22:12). We must tell God about how we resisted temptations offered by such sources as the media and the internet. Instead, we shared God's word with others, just as the girl in Columbine and the Australian missionary in India did. With Jesus by our side, we Christians can contend with anything that the new millennium has in store for us. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

FOCUS Seminar

The next FOCUS (Christian Understanding and Solidarity) Seminar is scheduled to be held from February 7-10, 2001 at the Santhigiri Ashram, Santhigiri, Alwaye. Mar Thoma delegates from Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Middle East, Europe, Africa, North America and India will meet for four days in the serene settings of Santhigiri and then attend the Maramon Convention beginning February 11.

Theme: "From Corridors of Power to Expanses of Divine Grace"

Leaders: Bishops of the Mar Thoma Church

Expenses: Food and Lodging — US \$250.00 for couple and \$150.00 for singles.

For further details, contact any one of the following:

Convenors: Mr. Varghese George, 96 J Jalan Dato Dollah, Teluk Gardong, 41100 Klang, Selangor, Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Phone/Fax: 03-3328312 E-mail: vargh@tm.net.my

Dr. Zac Varghese, 3 Rose Gardens Close, Canons Drive, Edgware, Middlesex, London, U.K. HA8 7RF
Phone: 011-44-181-951-5273 E-mail: zvarghese@rfc.ucl.ac.uk

North American Representative: Abraham Mattackal, 2719 Studebaker Rd., Long Beach, CA 90815
Phone: 562-420-8817 Fax: 562-420-6528 E-mail: Abrammat@aol.com

My Hopes and Fears for the New Millennium

Runcie Jacob

In the Bible, hope is the expectation for a favorable future under God's direction. Hope is a word meaning to wait, to expect. In Hebrews, it says that salvation is in the rite of Baptism, an act of cleansing, of regeneration, of making new, accomplished by the Holy Spirit which God poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ, so that we may become heirs in hope of eternal life.

When the word hope comes to mind, there are four points to consider. The church, my family, the community, and my personal hopes. I would like to elaborate on my thoughts by defining what my hopes are. I started going to church at the age of three and it has influenced me greatly. For me the church is always first. I try my hardest to go to church every week and try to help in every way I can. My hopes for the church are to grow spiritually stronger, for us youths to get more involved in many of the church's major projects the church is tackling, because we are the future of the Marthoma Church. I would like to see more of the youths set apart their time and come to every youth meeting. I want to see the church taking the necessary steps to attract our youths to be more involved. Many of the Marthoma children go to colleges far away. It is my wish that we as the church should go out to the colleges and set up meetings so that after their studies they do not forget the church and go astray.

The new millennium offers us a great opportunity to know each other closer and help each other as a community. We as the Marthoma community should come together and help in times of trouble. For example, we should be open-minded and give money to not only the poor in India but also the poor who live in the country we live in. We could help by donating to food drives, and volunteering a little bit of our time.

My family always comes before me. The hopes that I have for my family are that we should have a more intimate relationship with God. We should make decisions only after asking God. I hope that in this new millennium we use God as a base or a cornerstone for whatever we do so that our decisions may be successful.

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick; but when the desire comes to fulfill the hope, it is a tree of life." I have many hopes for this new millennium; hopes like owning a sports car, getting good grades so that I may be admitted into a good college, and pursuing a career that will help me earn a good living. These are all materialistic goals that are posed to glorify myself, but I do not want to do that. My aim in life is to glorify God, for He is the one who brought me into this world.

My most important hope in this new millennium is that I want to develop a more intimate relationship with God. I want to learn more about God, and know what His expectations are of me. I would like to understand how it feels to have an unconquerable army. "Myself plus God, plus His shield, plus His sword bared in defense are an unconquerable army." It is my heartfelt desire to know how it feels to love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, all your mind, and with all your soul.

The new millennium is upon us and I wish to fulfill my hope of being able to contribute to the betterment of the society. The new millennium provides a fresh slate to overcome wordly lusts and temptation; to come closer to God. I am going to glorify him as much as possible for He is the one who has given me so much success.

The year 2000 has given me many hopes to fulfill, but also some fears that make me tremble. Fear, if you look in the dictionary is concern or anxiety. Two other definitions of fear are, the painful sense: dread, fight, or terror caused by the expectation of danger, or the positive sense: reverence or awe toward power and authority. There are three Greek words for fear Phobos, Deilia, and Eulabelia.

In the latter part of the 1900's, ninety percent of the people in the United States were preparing for the new millennium. At the same time people afraid of the y2k bug were scrambling to buy generators, batteries, clothing, food, water, and many other items needed for survival. The new millennium has come and gone and it was very uneventful. My point is that if these people trusted in God and put their faith in Him they would not waste their money. This one example explains my fears about our community. It is saying that people do not trust their master in heaven to make life-altering decisions.

The Internet, invented in 1960, has opened a world of communication for us. It has brought many conveniences like online shopping, e-mail, and many things that we usually had to do manually. Since the Internet has come into use there has been more violence. There have been more sex-crimes, credit-card fraud, and hacking just to name a few. I fear that since the public has more access to people's privacy, they can do whatever they want. Just a few weeks ago, there was a problem where about 7-8 companies experienced trouble due to someone hacking into their system and practically destroying their sites. There was another incident where a person intruded into an Internet web-site, acquired all credit card numbers, and started using them for their benefit. These crimes just explain my fears of cyber communication.

(Cont'd on next page)

Making A Christian Choice in Today's World

Jay Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston

The destiny of a person, people, or nation is greatly determined by the choices that are made. Before we look into the choices that a Christian should make in today's world, it is important to define today's world. We are living in a world with a tremendous growth in economy, science, and technology. We have become high tech, materialistic, and worldly. We are witnessing moral and spiritual deterioration in today's world. As Christians who have put our trust in an unchanging Savior, when making choices in life, should we follow the patterns of this changing world, or should we follow the pattern of Christ? Today, I would like to point out three important principles in making a Christian choice in today's world.

First of all, as Christians who are disciplined to follow Christ and His ways, we should use Biblical principles in making choices in life. Christ, Himself has said that He has come to this world to fulfill the Law and the prophets, and in doing so, it does not matter whether the world may approve of it or make fun of it. Our duty is to follow Christ's example. The Bible instructs us to commit our ways unto the Lord and trust in Him. Before destroying the world with the flood, God commanded Noah to build an Ark for their safety. Though the whole world made fun of Noah, he trusted and obeyed God and did exactly as God had commanded him to do. Because of his obedience to God, the human race and all the living creatures of this world were saved from total destruction. Do we follow God's word or do we follow the opinions of this world in making choices in life?

The second principle is to be on God's side and choose to serve Him. When we have to choose between serving God and serving the gods of this world, such as material things, popularity, power, and pleasure, we

should always choose to serve God. In the Bible we read about the children of Israel going after foreign gods, ignoring all that God has done for them. However, Joshua stood before them and said, "Choose for yourselves whom you shall serve," and he firmly declared, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." God has brought us to this land and blessed us. Should we serve God who blessed us or should we serve other gods, such as wealth, fame, and power?

Thirdly, when making choices in life, we should be concerned for the good of others. The principle of this world is selfishness. But as Christians, we should always look for the best in others and for others. Jesus commanded His disciples to "do unto others what you want them to do unto you." In the Bible, we read about how Abraham and his nephew, Lot, had to choose the land for themselves. Lot chose the best land for himself, but Abraham was satisfied with the leftover. But God honored Abraham's choice and blessed him and his descendants. However, how sad Lot's life ended! Let me ask you, are we considerate of others when making choices for ourselves?

In conclusion, as Christians, even though we live in this world, we are not of this world. Our citizenship is in heaven. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing, and perfect will." ■

Jay Mathew, a member of the Trinity Mar Thoma Sunday School, won the first place in Elocution Competition (ages 13-15 years) sponsored by the South West Region Sunday School Junior/Senior Conference, held on March 18, 2000.

My Hopes and Fears for the New Millennium *(Cont'd from previous page)*

Nuclear weapons have helped America stay safe for many years in many wars. I fear that the nuclear weapons made for battle will go into the wrong hands and cause troubles between nations and cause warfare. For instance, America uses nuclear weapons only when Americans are in danger, but in Saddam Hussein's hands these weapons can be deadly.

As teenagers in this country, we face many trials and tribulations every day. In general, we fear the same thing, death due to murder. It is very hard for us to go to school everyday after hearing that three people were killed in a shooting, or many people were wounded due to a bloody

massacre. This really makes a profound impact on my daily life. I fear that this issue is getting out of control. Everyday at least one teen is dying by murder.

In conclusion, I think that everybody has to self-examine himself or herself so that they may be made anew. They must be reborn to be in the wonderful kingdom of God. Everybody must think ten times before they do anything and most definitely stay close to God. Through this we will have a non-violent and prosperous new millennium. ■

Millennium Celebrations

The North East Region of The Diocese of North America & Europe celebrated the Millennium at the Marriot of Melville in Long Island, New York on Saturday, April 29, at 5 P.M. with dinner and entertainment.



Organizers of the Millennium Celebration with chief guests

Sitting: (L to R) Hon. Thomas DiNapoli, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Rt. Rev. Nicholovos Zachariah, Rev. K. Y. Jacob and Kalathil Varughese.

Standing: (L to R) Abraham Thomas, Joseph Dethose, Rev. Thomas P. Chandu, Rev. Thomas K. Jacob, Rev. John Thomas, Dr. John Benjamin, George Thomas and Zach Mathai.

The meeting started with the opening song by the Boston choir singing, "Oh, God our Help in Ages Past." Rev. Dr. M.V. Abraham said a prayer. Rev. K.Y. Jacob, Diocesan Secretary, gave the welcoming speech and congratulated all the organizers for making the Millennium Celebrations a great success.

Zacharias Thirumeni in his Presidential address, called on the members of the church to commit themselves to the tasks assigned to them by God, to spread joy, peace and justice around them moving forward with Christ in the new millennium.

The Rt. Rev. Mar. Nicholovos Zachariah, bishop of the Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox church in North America, in his keynote address said, "We often go without aim. First, we must move towards Christ in order that we can move with him in the new millennium." He challenged the audience to use prudently the advantages modern technologies have invested upon humanity. Growth of the church is not in terms of adding buildings and structures, but it is in changing the lives of the people for the better.



Organizers and Thirumenies with Glen Cove Mayor Hon. Thomas R. Suozzi. Sitting: (L to R) Rev. K. Y. Jacob; Rt. Rev. Mar Nicholovos Zachariah, Archbishop Syrian Orthodox Church; Hon. Thomas R. Suozzi, Glen Cove Mayor and Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus.

Standing: (L to R) Dr. John Benjamin, Master of Ceremony and Kalathil Varughese, Convenor.

Invited guests were, Hon. Thomas R. Suozzi, Mayor of Glen Cove and Hon. Thomas DiNapoli, New York State Assemblyman/Chairman of the Nassau County Democratic Party. They both expressed their thoughts about the Mar Thoma community. Both were very impressed by the Indian community's heritage and cultural values.

The entertainment consisted of a dance by Julie Thomas and Anju Thomas of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church and St. John's Mar Thoma Church, respectively. There was a concert by Shibu John and Party from the St. Thomas Church. Grace John of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church sang a solo. There was a



Millennium Banquet.

group dance performed by the Jeevadhara School of Dance. Choirs were represented from different churches.

The following churches participated: Long Island MTC, Carmel MTC, Ebenezer MTC, Epiphany MTC, St. Johns MTC, St. Thomas MTC, St. Andrews MTC, Staten Island MTC, St. James MTC, Rochester MTC and the Albany congregation.

The event raised \$56,000. A lot of the tickets sold were Grand Sponsor at \$1000.00 and Sponsor at \$500.00. The

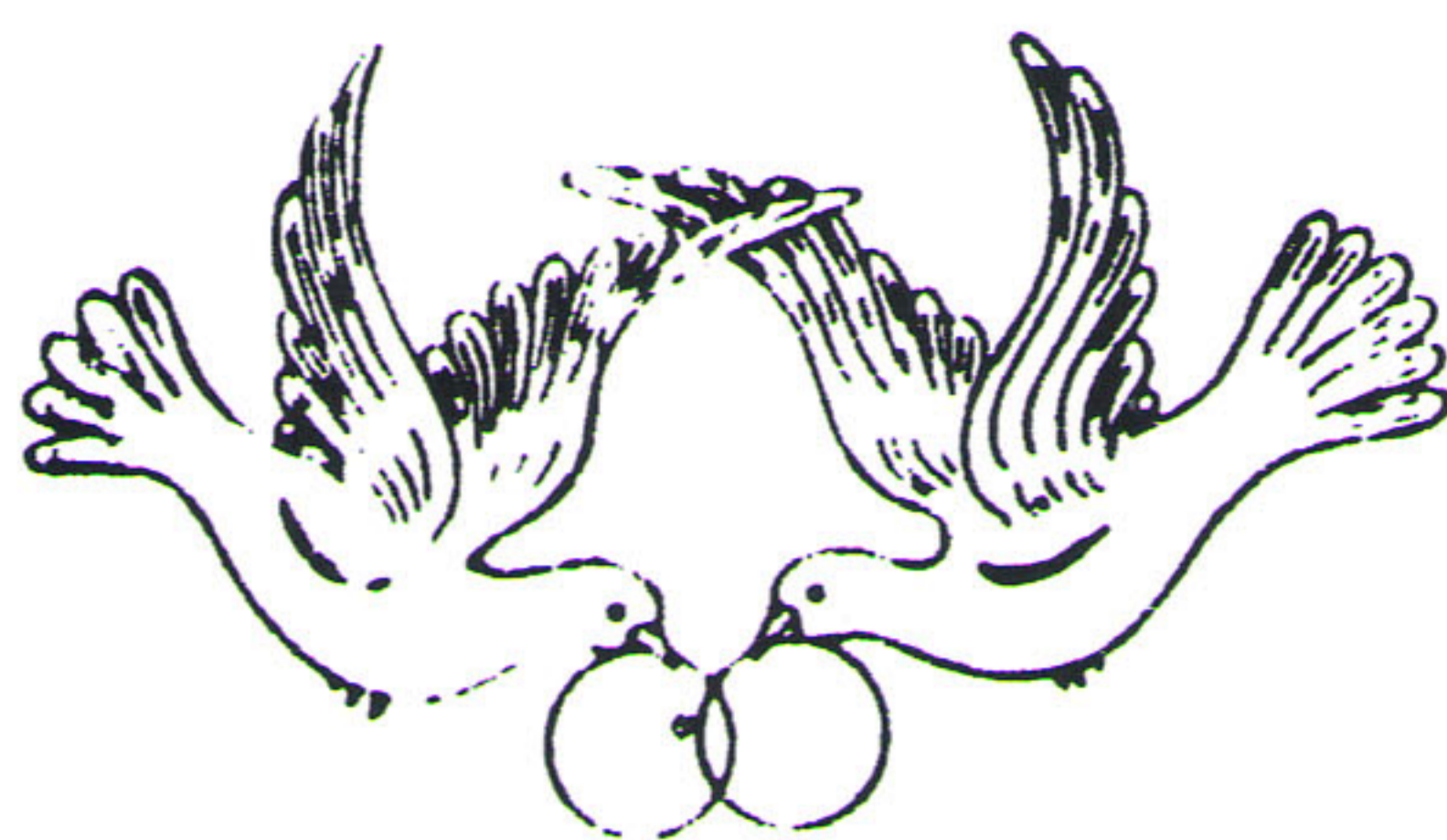


Zacharias Thirumeni officially inaugurating the Mar Thoma Visa/Gold Credit Card by giving an application form to Rt. Rev. Mar Nicholovos Zachariah, Archbishop of Syrian Orthodox Church.

Millennium Celebration was a great success thanks to too many people to mention and all of the participants.

Kalathil Varughese, Diocesan Council Member and Convenor for the Millennium Celebration, gave the Vote of Thanks. He highlighted the major areas of growth in the life of the Mar Thoma Church in North America.

This celebration made a historic mark.



Introducing Marriage Guidance to Malayali Christians Worldwide

- Grace Marriage Guidance Bureau, would like to professionally help you choose 'The Right Life Partner'
- We are service minded firm with a strong Christian background.
- We giving priority reliable service and to furnish proper information without considering monetary gains.

WARM WELCOME TO :

- Bride and Grooms from any denomination/Churches
- From Lower/Middle/Higher Income Group
- Settled in India/Middle East USA / Europe / Australia.
- According to your Faith/Practices/Social and Cultural background

Register Your name with us and leave the task to us.

We will do it for you with a smile. contact us for more details :

GRACE MARRIAGE GUIDANCE BUREAU

A/1059, Bhandup Industrial Estate, 1st Floor,
Pannalal Silk Mill Compound, Opp. Hotel Raj Jog, L. B. S. Marg,
Bhandup (W), Mumbai - 400 078.

Phone : 562 1676 / 564 0946 / 565 2878 • Telefax : 022-562 1676

E-mail : Grace@bom7.vsnl.net.in

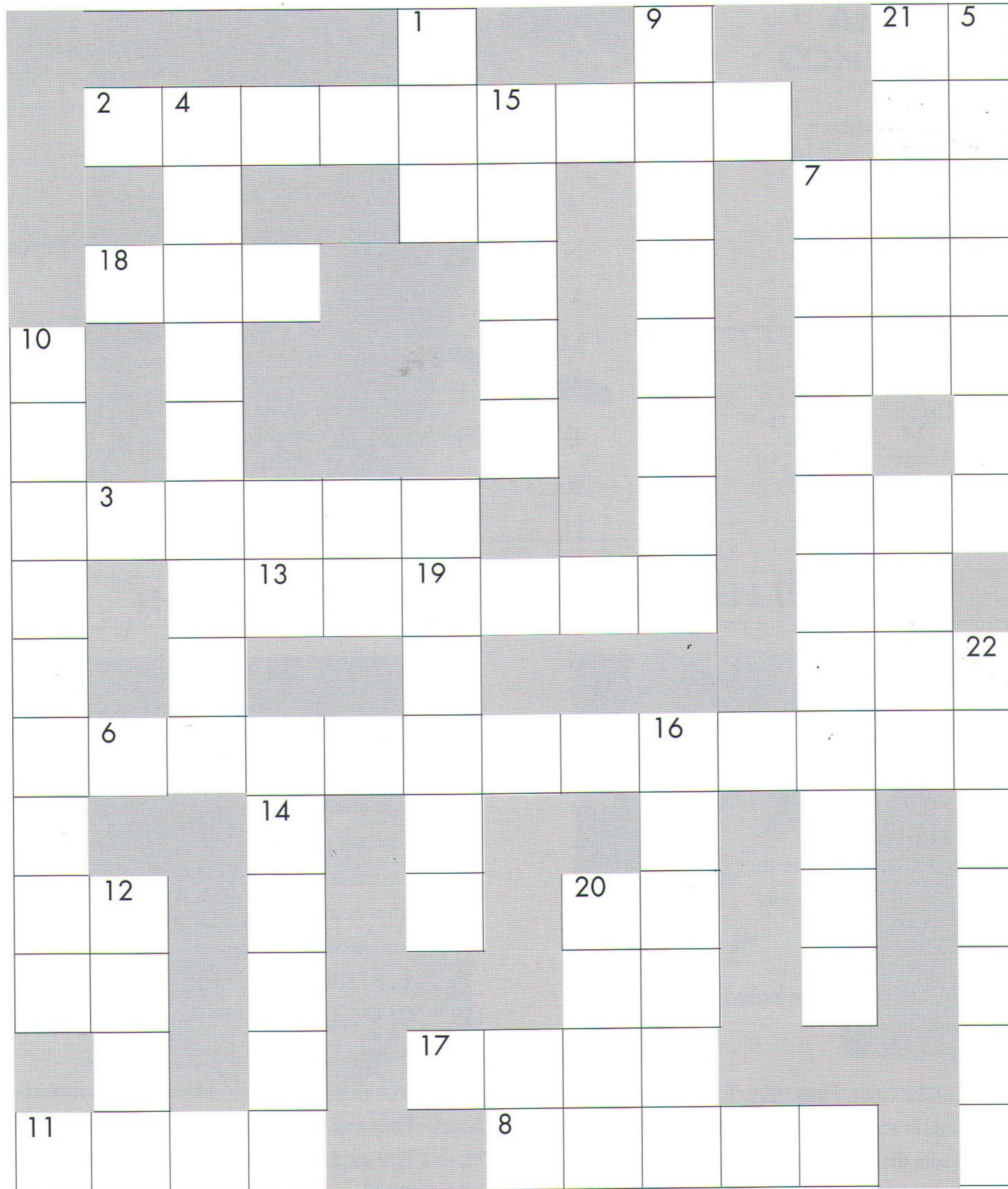
Visit our site at <http://business.vsnl.com/grace2>

***Only for Malayali
Christians World Wide***

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION
(based on the Epistle to the Hebrews)

Mrs. Jessy Kurien (New York)



Across

2. What is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joint from marrow, it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart?
3. Who is the high priest who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin?
6. Jesus is a high priest forever according to the order of _____.
8. Our Lord was descended from the tribe of _____.
11. Behind the second curtain was a _____ called the Holy of Holies.
13. Who entered once for all into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood?
17. _____, warned by God about events yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household.
18. Israelites passed through _____ sea as if it were dry land by faith.

Down

1. Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant, Christ, however, was faithful over God's house as a _____.
4. Although he was a son, he learned _____ through what he suffered.
5. Having patiently endured, who obtained the promise "I will surely bless you and multiply you"?
7. Melchizedek is King of Salem, that is, "King of _____."
9. Jesus is the mediator of a better or a new _____.
10. For a tent was constructed, the first one, in which were the lampstand, the table, the bread of the presence; this is called the _____.
12. The High Priest goes into the Holy of holies _____ a year.
14. Name an offering that was offered according to the law other than sin offering.
15. _____ is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
16. By faith _____ was taken so that he didn't experience death.
19. Name the prostitute described in this book as an example of faith?
20. Who sold the birth right for a single meal?
21. For indeed our God is a _____ fire.
22. The New Testament book, whose author is unknown.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION
(based on the books of Daniel and Hosea)

Mrs. Jessy Kurien (New York)

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

- In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, which King besieged Jerusalem?
- The palace master gave Daniel another name. What is that name?
- King Nebuchadnezzar's chief executioner's name?
- King Nebuchadnezzar set up the Golden statue on the plain of _____.
- Nebuchadnezzar ate grass like _____.
- Nebuchadnezzar's son's name?
- Daniel had visions of four beasts, The second one looked like _____.
- Name the father of King Darius?
- Daniel had the vision of a Ram and a Goat. How many horns the Ram had?
- Who interpreted the vision of a Ram and a Goat to Daniel?
- The book of Daniel recounts events that took place during Israel's Captivity in _____.
- Hosea's father's name?
- Hosea's first son's name?
- Hosea's daughter's name?
- 'You are not my people and I'm not your God.' Which is the name that depicts this idea?
- God said, 'I will make the Valley of _____, a door of hope!'
- Israel is stubborn like a _____.
- 'You have been a snare at Mizpah, net spread upon _____, a pit dug deep in Shittim.'
- God Said, 'I desire steadfast love and not _____.'
- Name a city of evil doers?
- _____ is a cake not turned.
- They sow the wind, and they shall reap the _____.
- The inhabitants of Samaria tremble for the _____ of Beth-aven.
- Sow for yourselves _____, reap steadfast love, break up your fallow ground.

Bible Word Search Finders (April 2000)

- Babetta Mathai
- Benita Mathai
- Annie Thomas
- Vinod John
- Asha John
- Saumya Simon Samuel
- Denny Samuel
- Samuel Thomas
- Mariamamma Zachariah

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (April 2000)

- Babetta Mathai
- Benita Mathai
- Annie Thomas
- Vinod John
- Asha John
- Saumya Simon Samuel
- Denny Samuel
- Samuel Thomas
- Mariamamma Zachariah

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS September 15, 2000

DIOCESAN NEWS

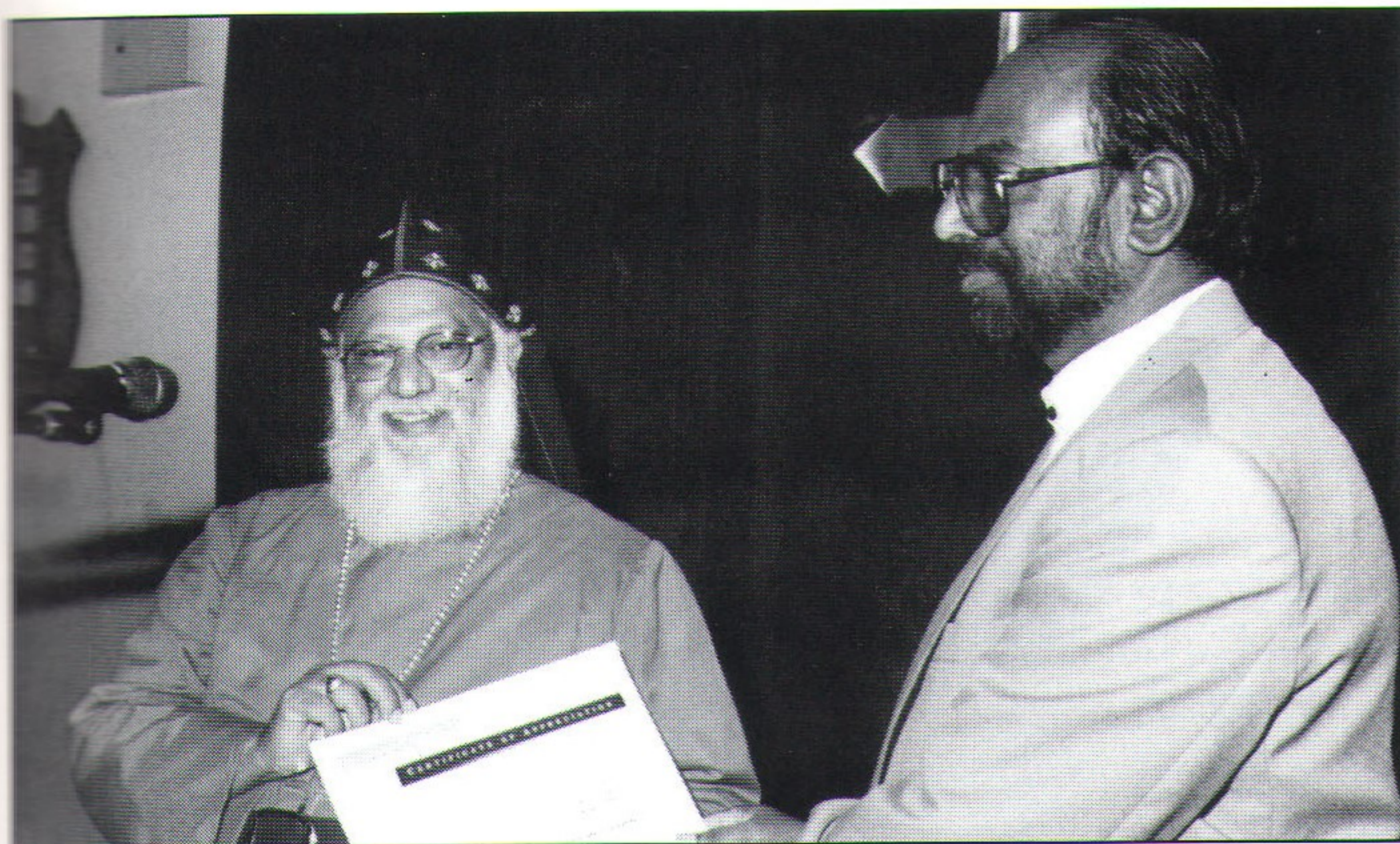


ZACHARIAS THIRUMENI CELEBRATES THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS CONSECRATION AS BISHOP

During his parish visit to The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island, Zacharias Thirumeni cutting a cake to celebrate the 20th anniversary of his consecration as a bishop.

Left to right: Dr. Mathai Cherian; Rev. Roy Thomas, Assistant Vicar Chicago MTC; Zacharias Thirumeni; and Rev. John Thomas, Vicar.

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND



Zacharias Thirumeni presenting "One of the Best Parishes in the Diocese Award" to The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island for paying dues, conducting elections and passing accounts on time, Joseph Zachariah (Secretary) receiving it.

Our Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus visited our Parish on April 30, 2000 and celebrated holy communion service. Sixteen youths received holy communion for the first time. Vicar John Thomas Achen and the First Fruit from our diocese, Roy Achen, Assistant Vicar of Chicago Mar Thoma Church, assisted Thirumeni in the service.

After the service Thirumeni presented "One of the Best Parishes in the Diocese Award" to our parish, for paying dues, conducting elections, and passing accounts on time.

On March 19, 2000, our parish was visited by Rev. Adolf A. and Mrs. Jarene Pagliarulo, and Rev. James along with four youths from Grace Christian church, Staten Island. Grace Christian church is a congregation of the Reformed Church in America. Rev. Adolf A. assisted



First Communicants with Zacharias Thirumeni, Roy Achen and John Thomas Achen.

Kurien George Achen and John Thomas Achen in the holy communion service and gave an inspirational sermon. In his message he spoke of how Jesus healed the paralyzed man. He reminded the congregation of the importance of showing friendship and compassion to our fellow beings. Rev. James gave a testimony in which he recalled worshipping in our present church building during his youth. At the time of his parish's departure the church building was in a state of decay. He applauded our parish for the renovation of the church and the lively worship service.

The VBS was conducted on July 21-23, 2000. The theme was "In The Race With Jesus". About 65 children attended the VBS.

Rev. John Thomas, Vicar

VISIT "DOWN UNDER"



(4 Days Sydney / 1 Day Canberra ** & 3 Days Melbourne)

Air Fare, Conducted Tours & Hotel with Breakfast...\$1950

**Optional \$100

Special features covering Continent to Continent enroute:

- 1. A bonus 2- Days Tour...Malaysia \$200
- 2. An Extension 2 Days Tour...Singapore \$395
- 3. A Side-Trip to Trivandrum & Return \$495



105 W. Shore Ave,
Durmont,
NJ 07628

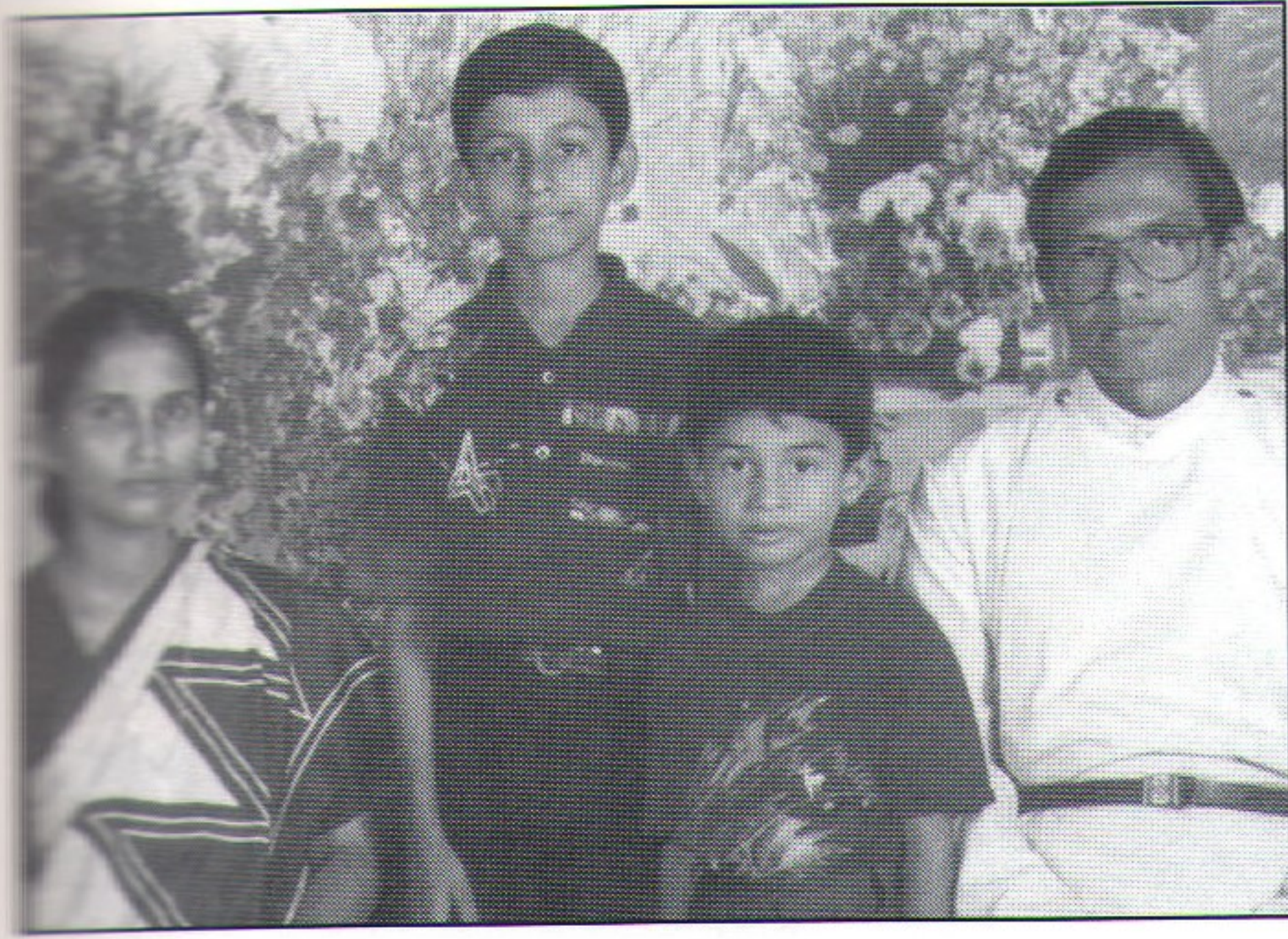
Contact: P. T. Chacko

TEL: 201-244-1547 ■ RES: 201-678-9501 ■ FAX: 201-244-0573



OUR NEW ACHENS

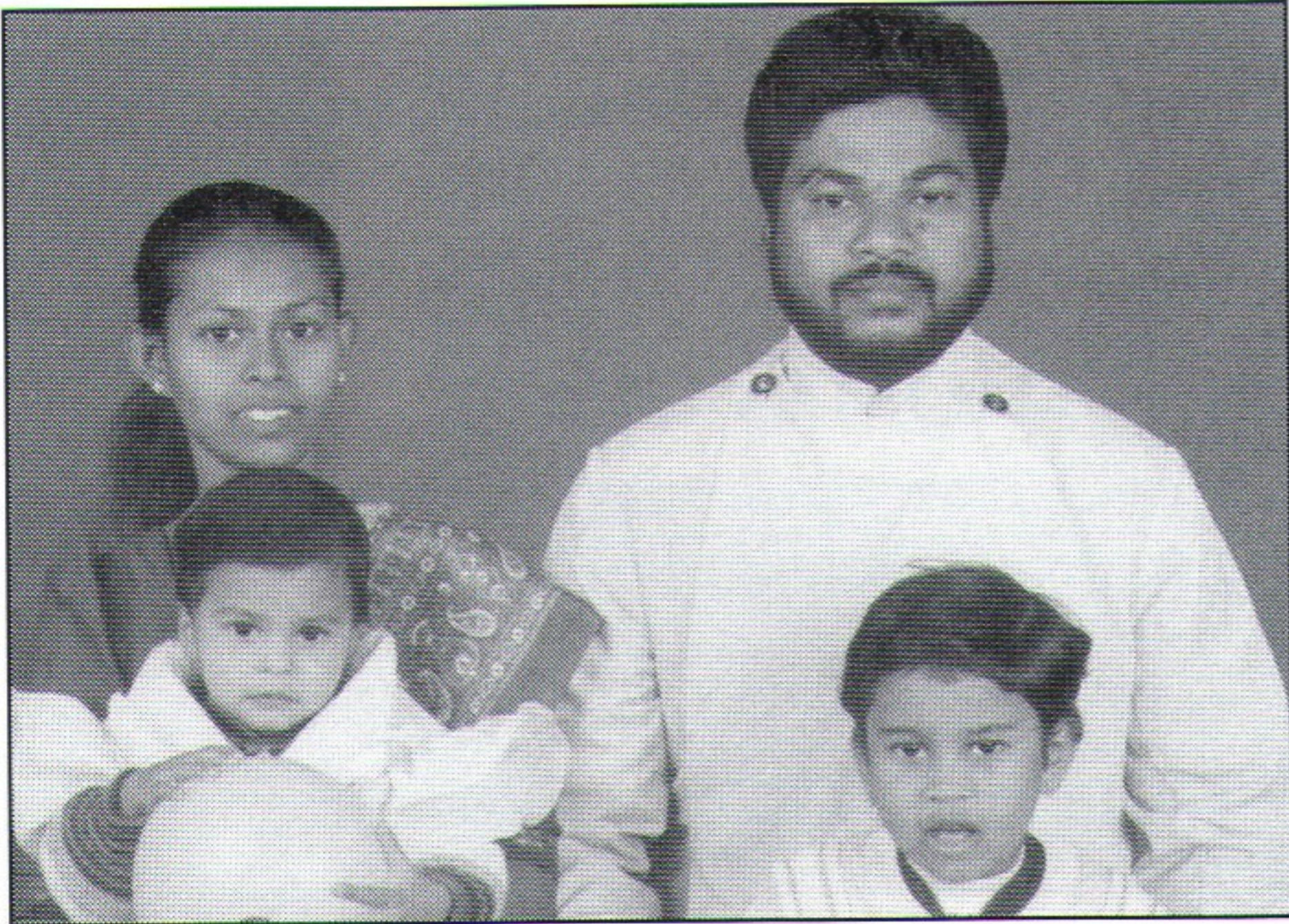
REV. DR. C. P. MATHEWS is the Vicar of St. James and St. Andrew's Mar Thoma Churches in New York. Prior to his posting in the United States, Mathews



Achen has been serving as Vicar of the St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, Mutumbalam, Kottayam. Achen is from Pappanamcod, Trivandrum. Achen is accompanied by Kochamma (Marykutty

Mathews) and their two children (Prasant 18 years and Pradeep 12 years).

REV. THOMAS MATHEW who has been transferred from Mar Thoma Church Jaipur (Rajasthan), is in charge of St. Paul's Dallas Parish and is joined by his wife Reshma and children Maanasa (5 years) and Manooja (2 years). Thomas Mathew Achen is from Naranganam.

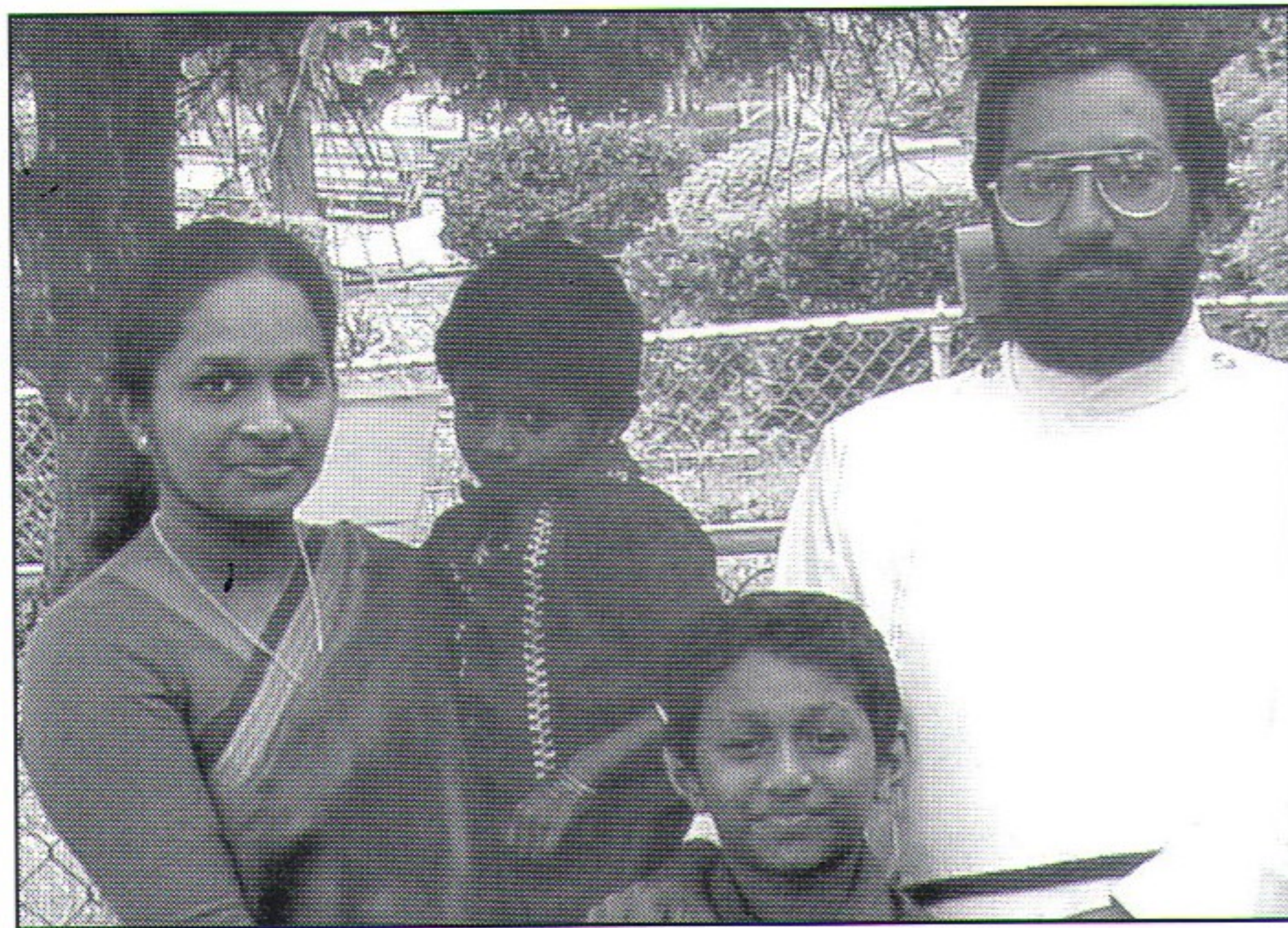


REV. C. G. THOMAS who hails from Mylapra is the Vicar of Oklahoma Mar Thoma Church and Denver Congregation. Prior to his posting in the United States, Achen has been serving as the Bishop's Secretary, Ranny-Nilakal Diocese. Achen is accompanied by his wife Susamma

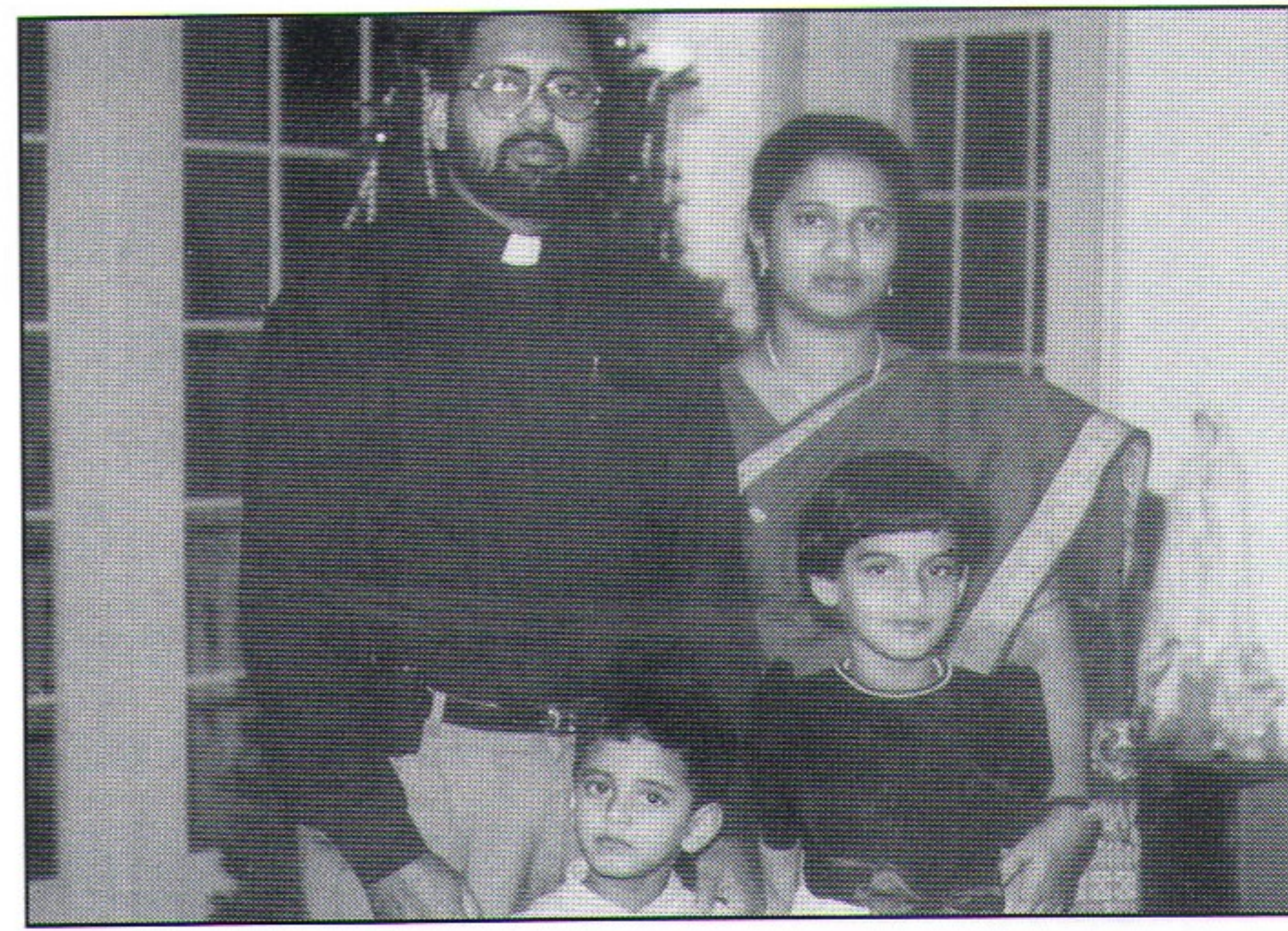


Thomas and children Chris (11 years) and Christy (10 years).

REV. MONSI K. PHILIP is the Vicar of St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York. Achen has been transferred from Athiyal Salem, Perumpetty where he was also working as the Manager of Mar Thoma U.P. School, Perumpetty. Achen is originally from Onakkoor (Ernakulam Dist.) while Kochamma (Anila) is from Elanthoor. They have a son Sachit (9 years) and a daughter Syama (4 years).



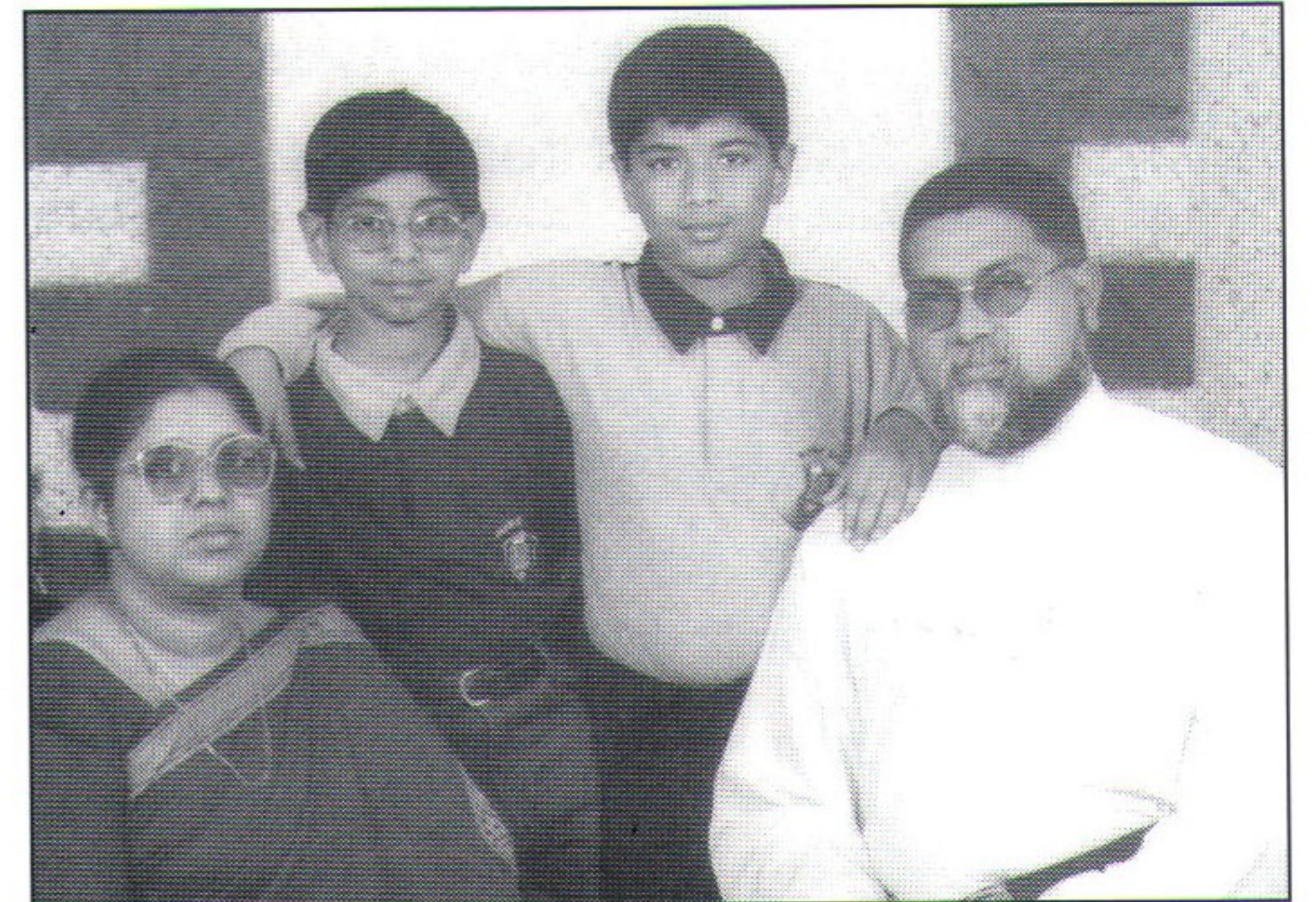
REV. DAVID DANIEL has been working as the Assistant Vicar of the



Chicago Mar Thoma Church for the last one year before he took over charge of the Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church in May of this year. Achen's native place is Punalur while that of Kochamma (Siby)

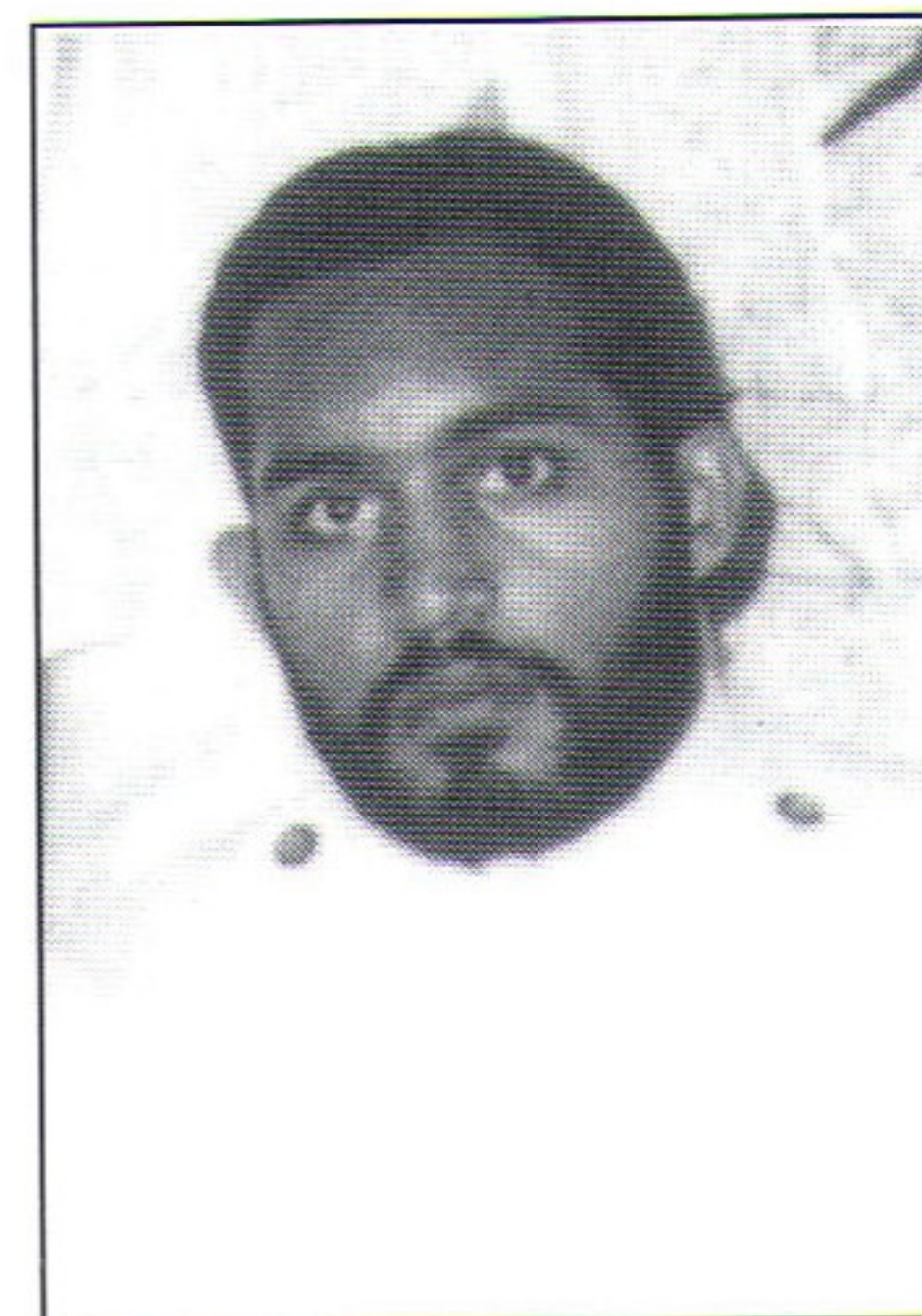
is Kidangannoor. Neethu (7 years) is their daughter and Nikku (4 years) is their son.

REV. DR. JOHN JOSEPH is the new Vicar of Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York and also a member of the Managing Committee of the Mar Thoma Messenger. Prior to his transfer to New York, Joseph Achen was the Vicar of the Tatabad Mar Thoma Church, Coimbatore. He also served as the Vicar of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Bangalore from 1994-1996 and as a Council Member of the Madras-Calcutta Diocese from 1993-1998. Achen is accompanied by Shirley Kochamma and twin sons Reuben and Roshan (12 years).



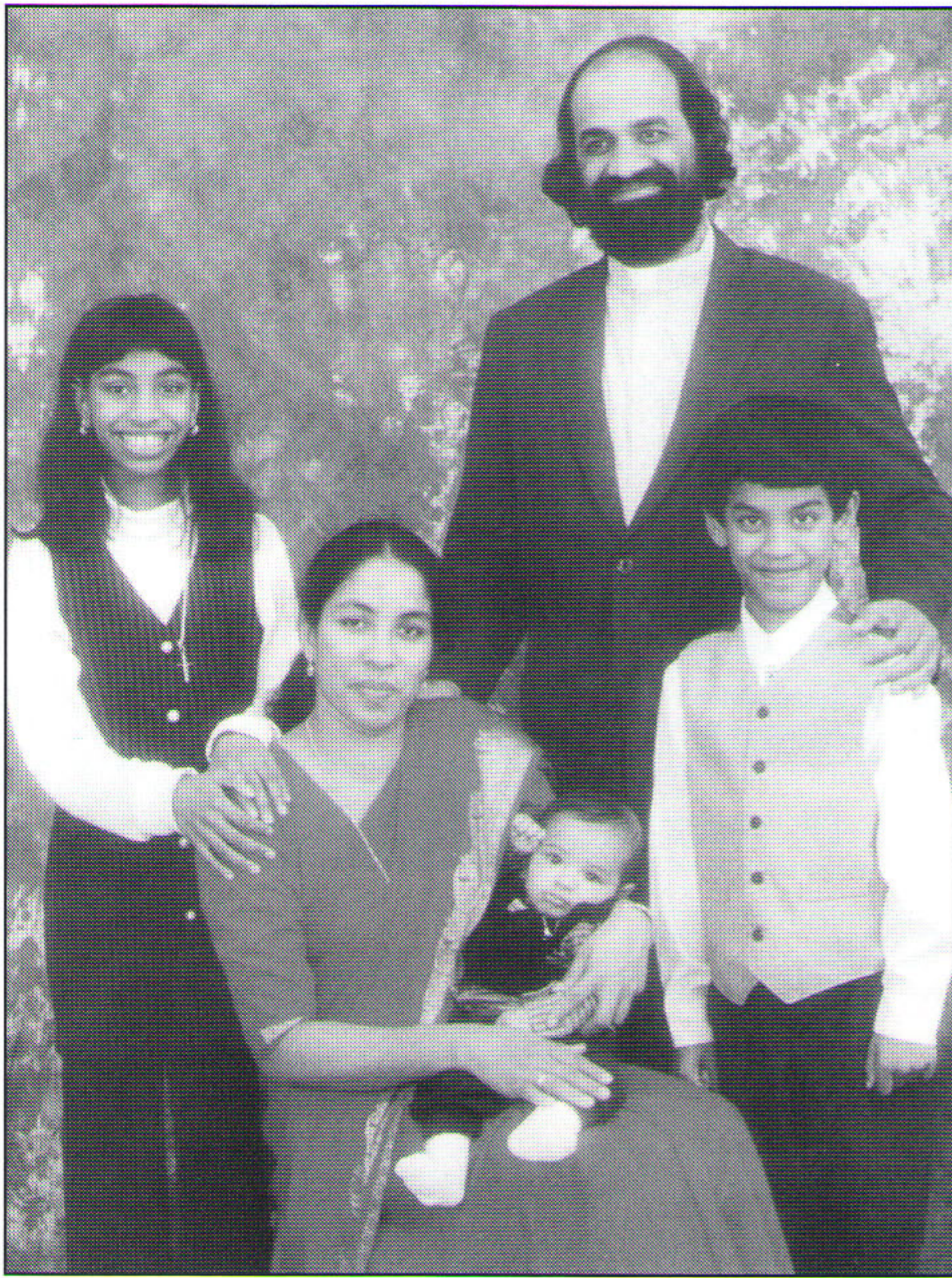
REV. ROY THOMAS

Roy achen, after his ordination in Houston during the Family Conference of 1999, has served as Assistant Vicar in St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Kozhecherry from August 1999 to April 2000. He is now serving as Assistant Vicar at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church, Chicago and Vicar of the Mar Thoma Congregation in St. Louis, MO. His wife Rachel is a 3rd year Pediatrics resident.



Roy achen is the first ordained Mar Thoma priest from the second generation Marthomites of this diocese who had completed theological studies from the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam (1995-99). He was born and brought up in Dallas, Texas. Roy achen's e-mail address is Royachen@yahoo.com

BEST WISHES TO OUR ACHENS TRANSFERRED



REV. K. G. JOSEPH served as the vicar of Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, Ozone Park, New York, for the last four years. Achen also served as a Diocesan Council member, Manager of Mar Thoma Messenger, and Convener of Diocesan Jubilee Souvenir. Achen

is transferred to Santhigiri Ashram, Alwaye as its Director. Achen and family left for India in April.

REV. KURUVILLA PHILIP

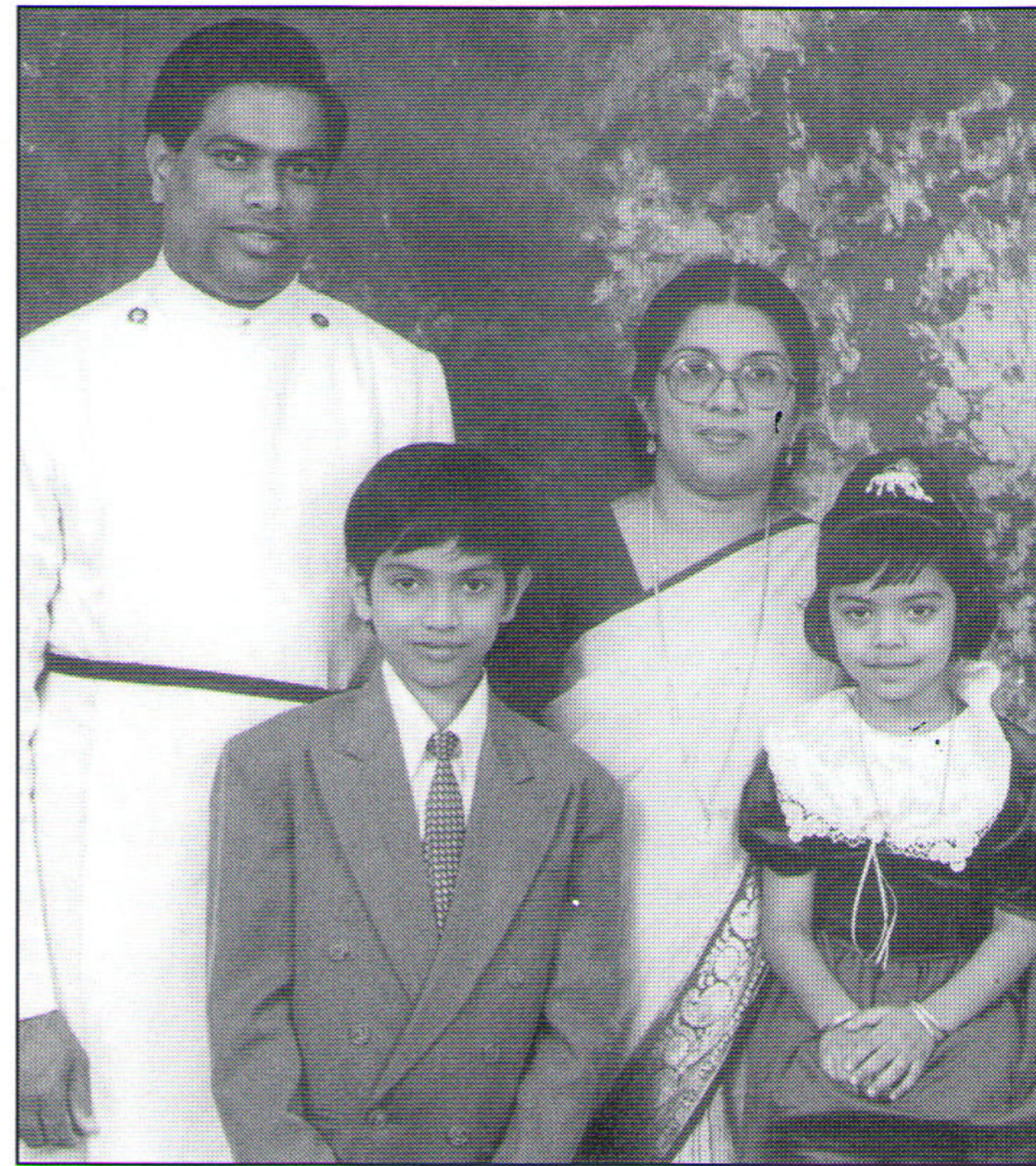
Achen served as the Vicar of St. Paul's MTC, Dallas and Oklahoma MTC; for the last four years. Achen is transferred to Kannur MTC, Kerala.

REV. K. V. SIMON

Achen served as the Vicar of Los Angeles MTC, for the last four years. Achen is transferred to Anicadu St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Kerala.

REV. DAVID DANIEL

Achen served as the Assistant Vicar of Chicago MTC, for the last one year. Achen is transferred to Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church as Vicar.

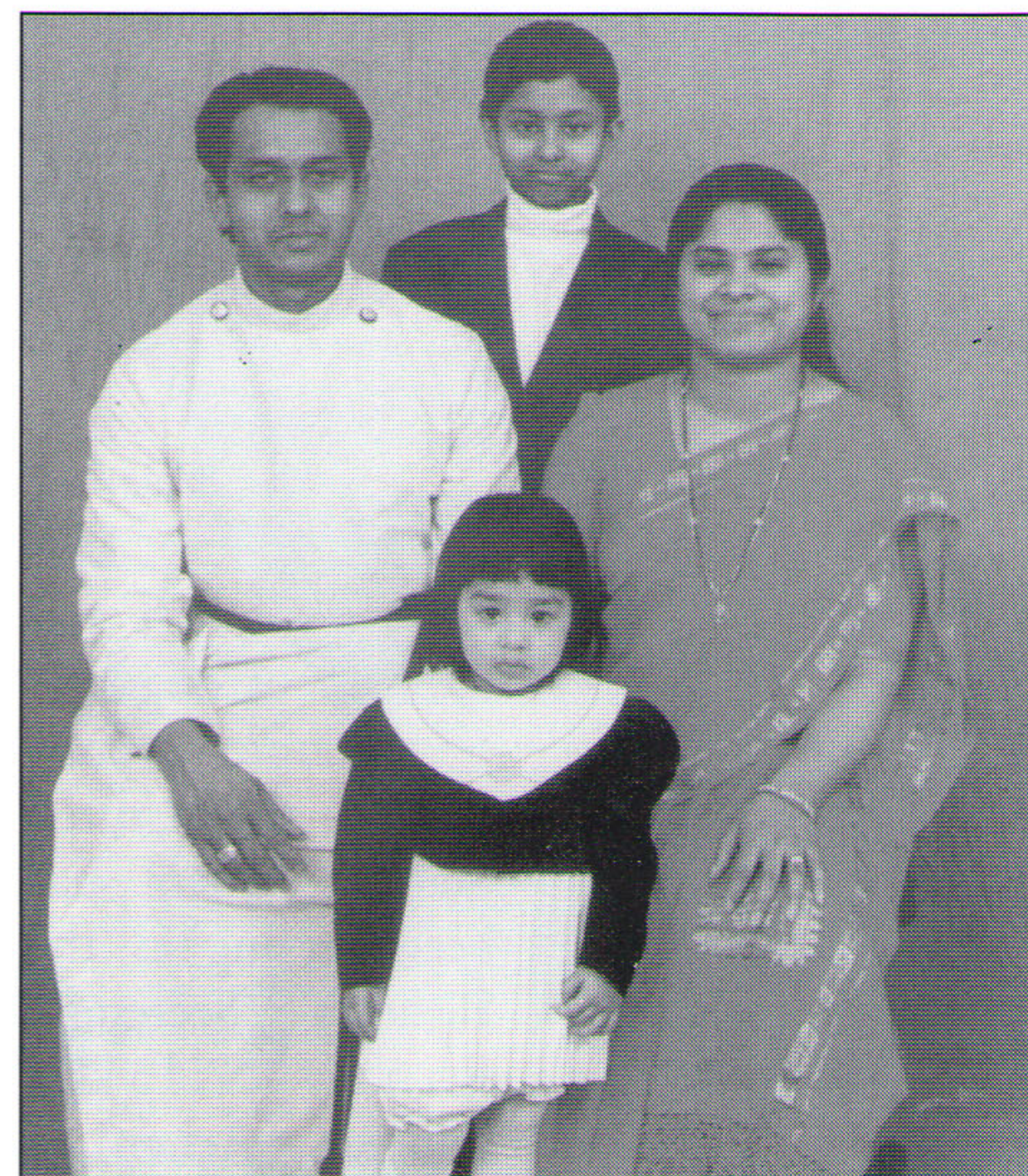


REV. GEORGE ABRAHAM

Achen served as the Vicar of St. Andrew's MTC, NY, and St. James MTC, New York, for the last four years and for one year he served as the vicar of St. Peter's MTC, New Jersey. Achen also served as the Vice

President of Yuvajana Sakhyam. Achen is transferred to Mar Thoma Church Goa. Achen and family left for India in April.

REV. THOMAS EASOW



Achen served as the Vicar of St. John's MTC, Queens Village, NY and Ebenezer MTC, New York, for the last four years. Achen is transferred to Thanniamala MTC, Kerala. Achen also served as the Vice President of Sevika Sanghom and Achen &

Kochamma both served as Mar Thoma Messenger Editorial Board Members. Achen and family left for India in April.

SUNDAY SCHOOL MILLENNIUM MISSION PROJECTS — WALKATHON — 2000

CHILDREN WALK FOR CHILDREN

Please join the fun and support the Diocesan Sunday School's Millennium Mission Projects

Your donation will help:

1. The under privileged children in North America and India
2. Build one Church in Karnataka and one Church in Tamilnadu
3. Sponsor the needy children in India for their educational needs
4. Sponsor local children's projects in United States and in Canada

Please sign up sponsors and join the fun filled walkathon on Saturday September 2, 2000. For more information, please contact your Sunday School Superintendent, The Regional Coordinators or the Diocesan Sunday School Secretary, T. A. Mathew (713) 455-7469 or the Diocesan Sunday School Treasurer, P. T. Mathew (Dallas) (972) 492-0144.

Together we can make a difference in the lives of these children, with your valuable donations.

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

MAR THOMA MESSENGER AWARDS

ESSAY COMPETITION

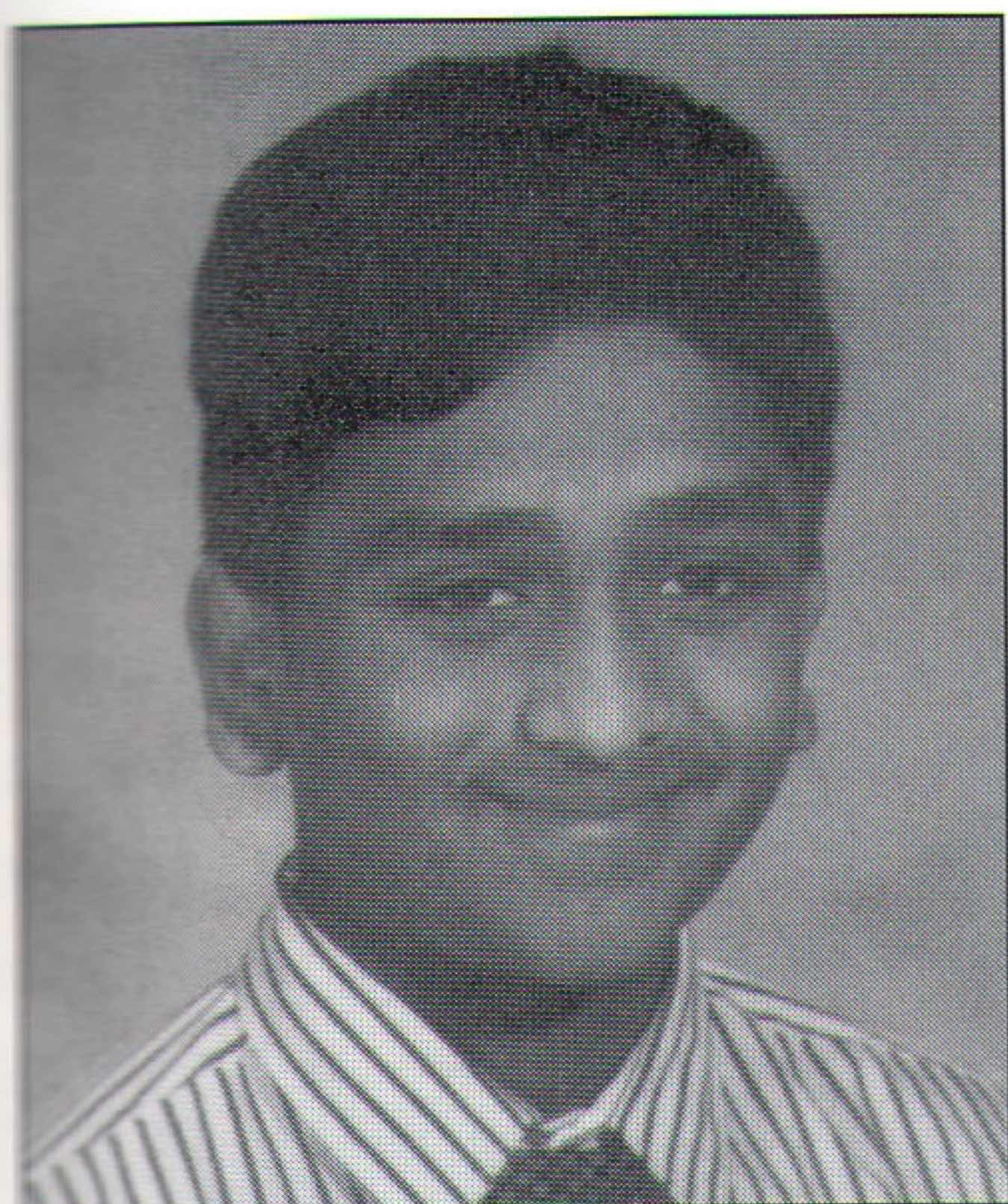
As part of the new Millennium celebrations, the Mar Thoma Messenger held an Essay Competition in March of this year for our students up to 15 years (Juniors) and 16 to 20 years (Seniors). The subject of the essay was "My hopes and Fears as a Christian for the new Millennium."

The Selection Committee consisting of Dr. T. M. Thomas, Mr. Abraham Thariath and the Rev. Kurien George selected following entries for first and second prizes:

The First prize winning essays are published elsewhere in this issue.

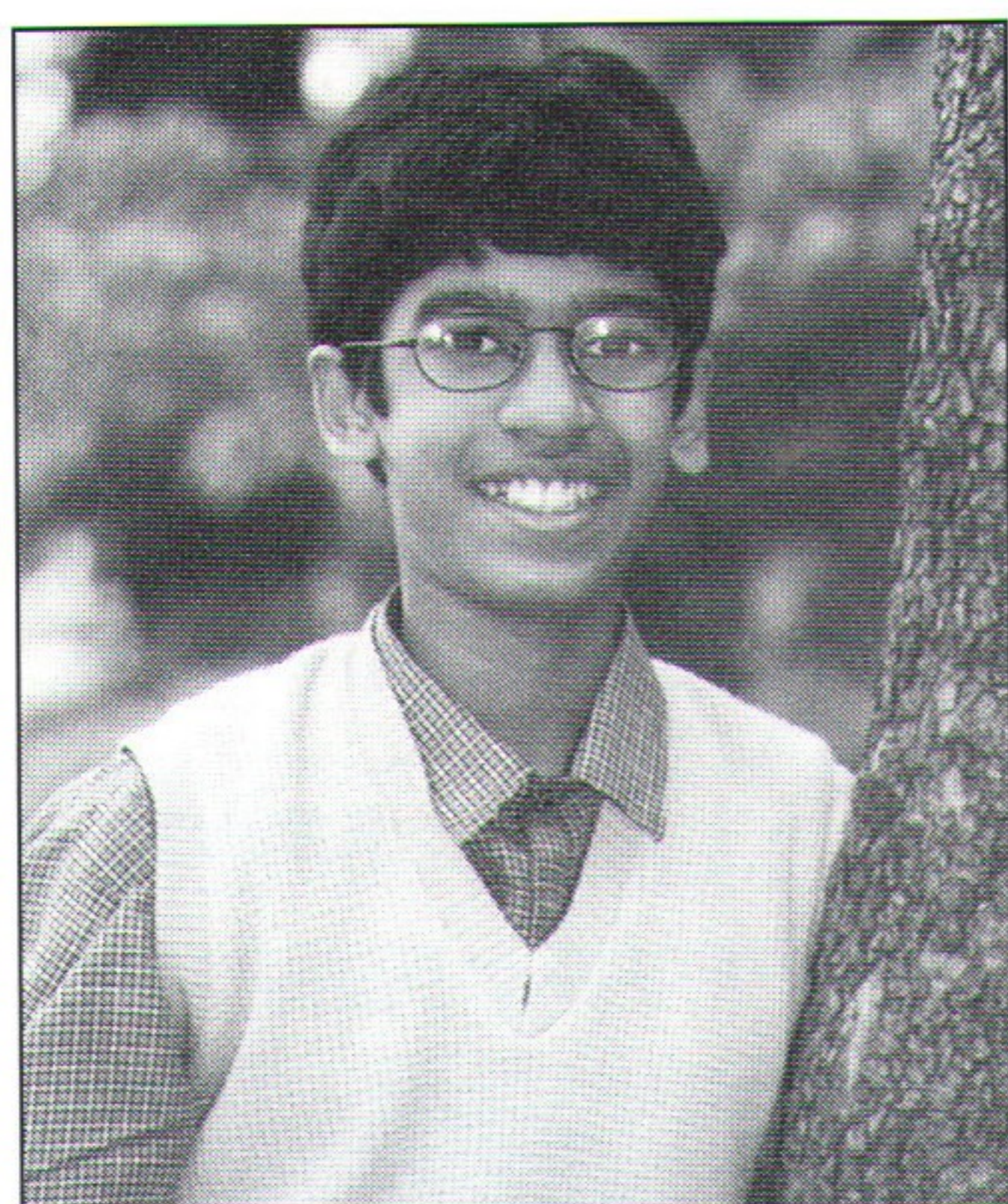
JUNIORS:

First Prize



Runcie Jacob
son of Eapen and
Susan Chacko
Detroit Mar Thoma Church

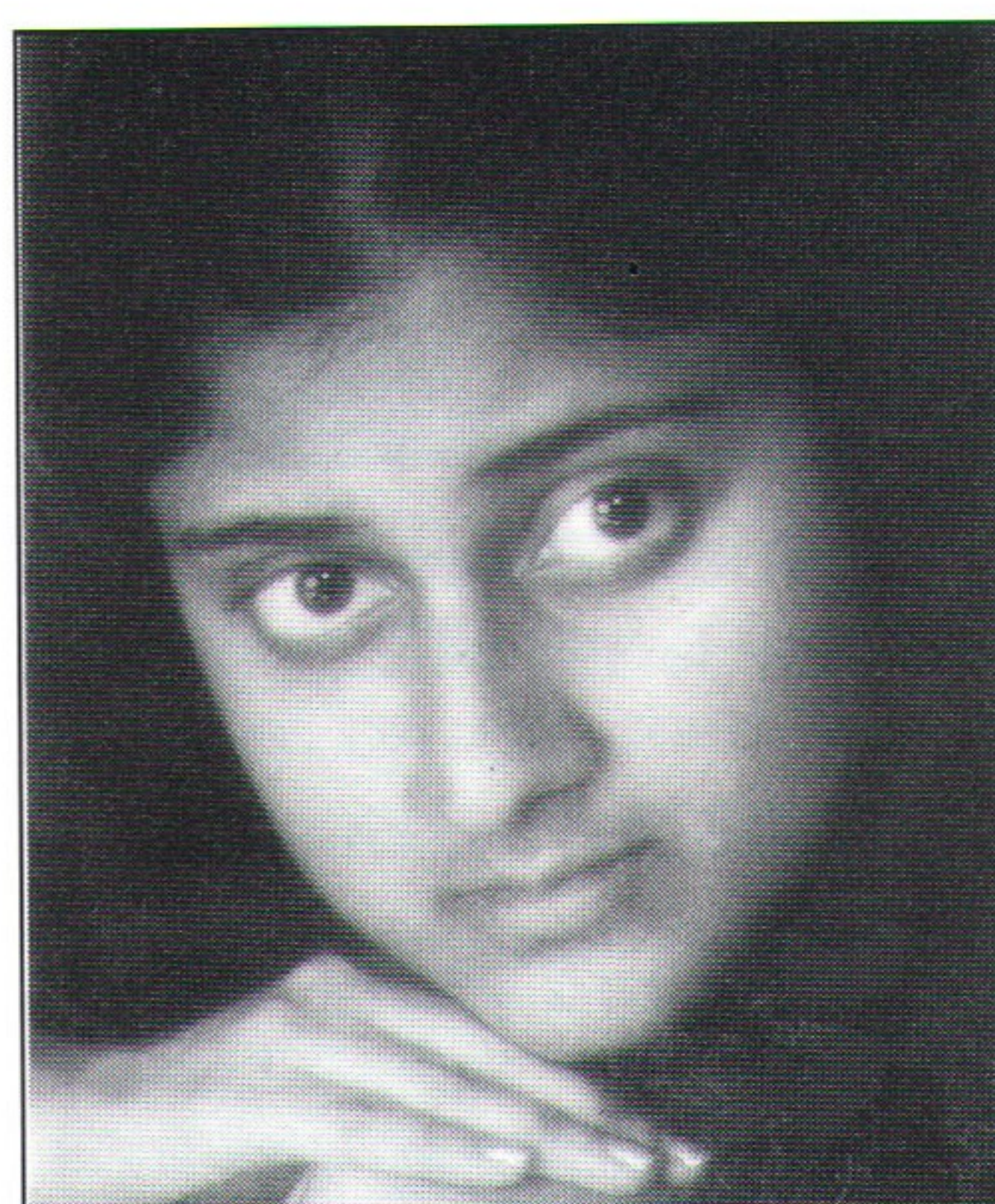
Second Prize



Joseph Varghese
son of Pulivelil and
Susan Varghese
St. John's MTC, New York

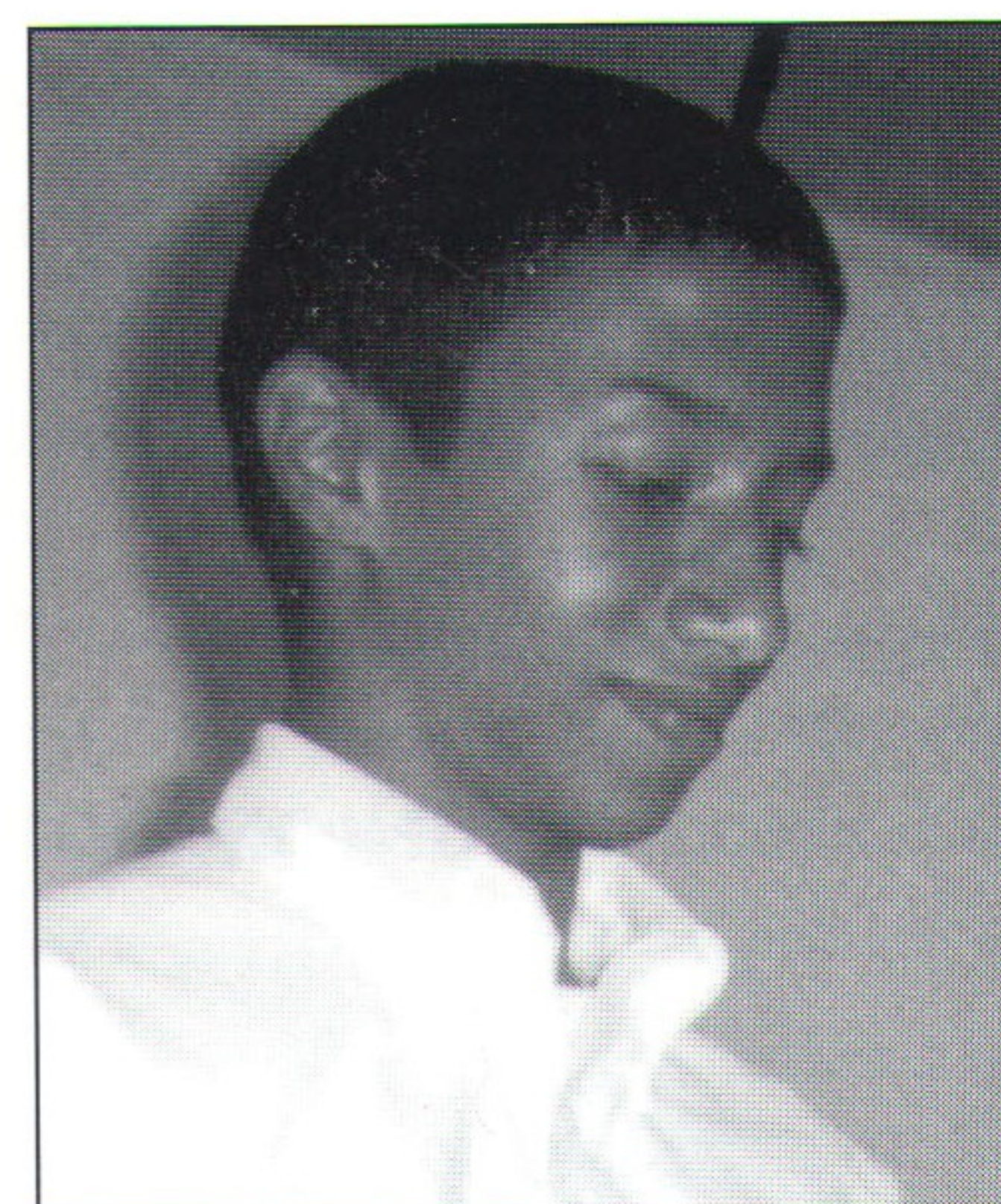
SENIORS:

First Prize



Melvy Mathew
daughter of Abraham
and Mary Mathew
Chicago Mar Thoma Church

Second Prize



Vinod John
son of Philipose and
Annamma John
St. Luke's MTC, Florida

MAR THOMA MESSENGER PROMOTIONAL AWARDS

James T. Philip of The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island, NY and Thomas Mammen, Long Beach, of the Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church, were each presented a Plaque for achieving first place in their Messenger Promotional efforts. Both of them got 67.2% points for Messenger subscription

drive in their respective parishes. C. V. Samuel of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church, Detroit got the Second place Award. The awards were presented by the Diocesan Bishop during the Family Conference at Long Island.

XIX MAR THOMA FAMILY CONFERENCE

The XIX Mar Thoma Family Conference hosted by The Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia will be held in Philadelphia from July 5 to July 8, 2001. The main leaders of the Conference are: The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar

Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Kamalesan and Rev. Dr. T. J. Thomas. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend.

DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL — CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1. September 2, 2000
2. September 3, 2000
3. November 5, 2000
4. March 15, 2001
5. May 13, 2001

Walkathon - 2000

New Sunday School Year Starts

World Sunday School Day Celebration

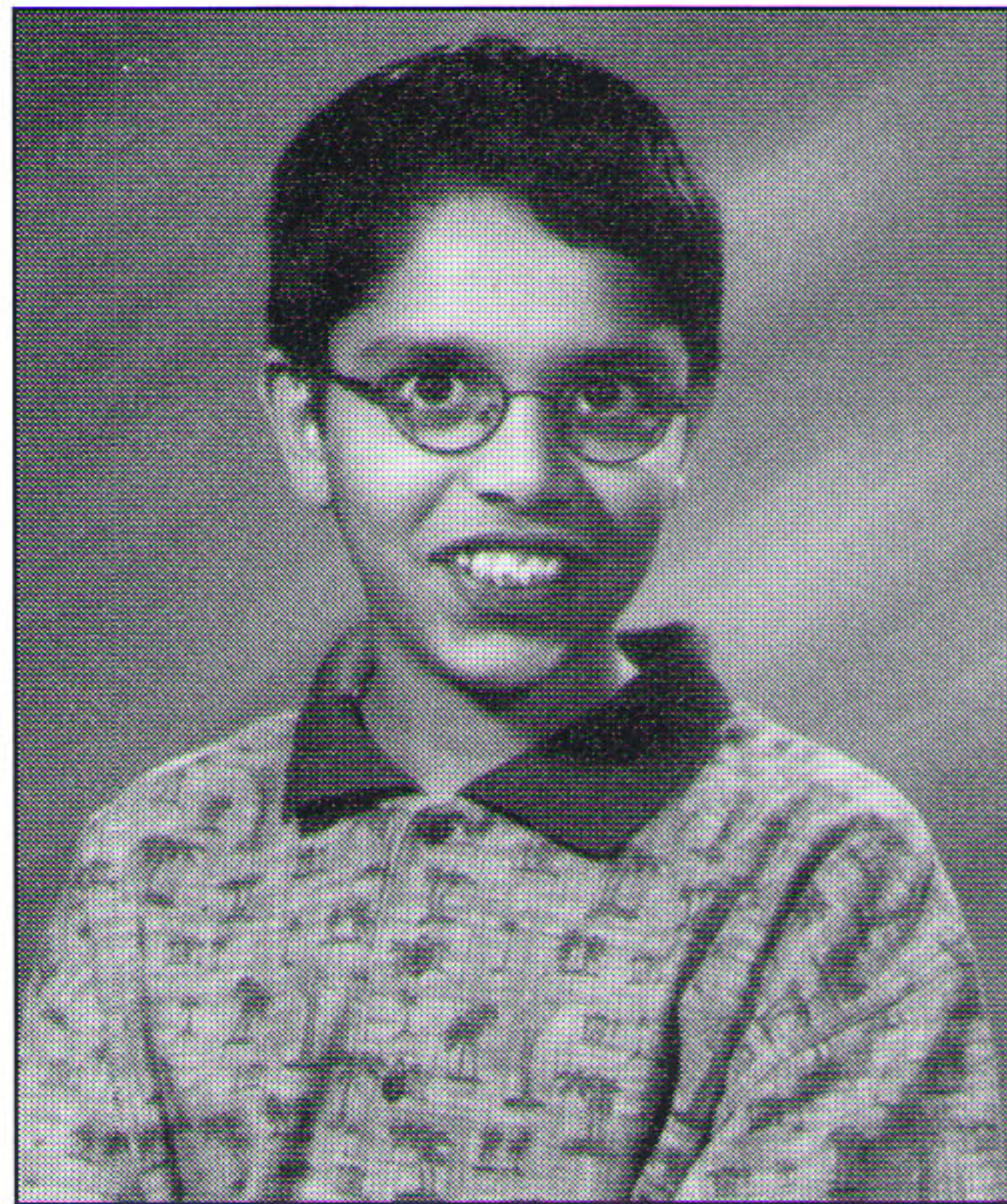
Registration Deadline for Diocesan Examination

Diocesan Sunday School Examination

FIRST AND SECOND PLACE WINNERS OF THE DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL EXAM

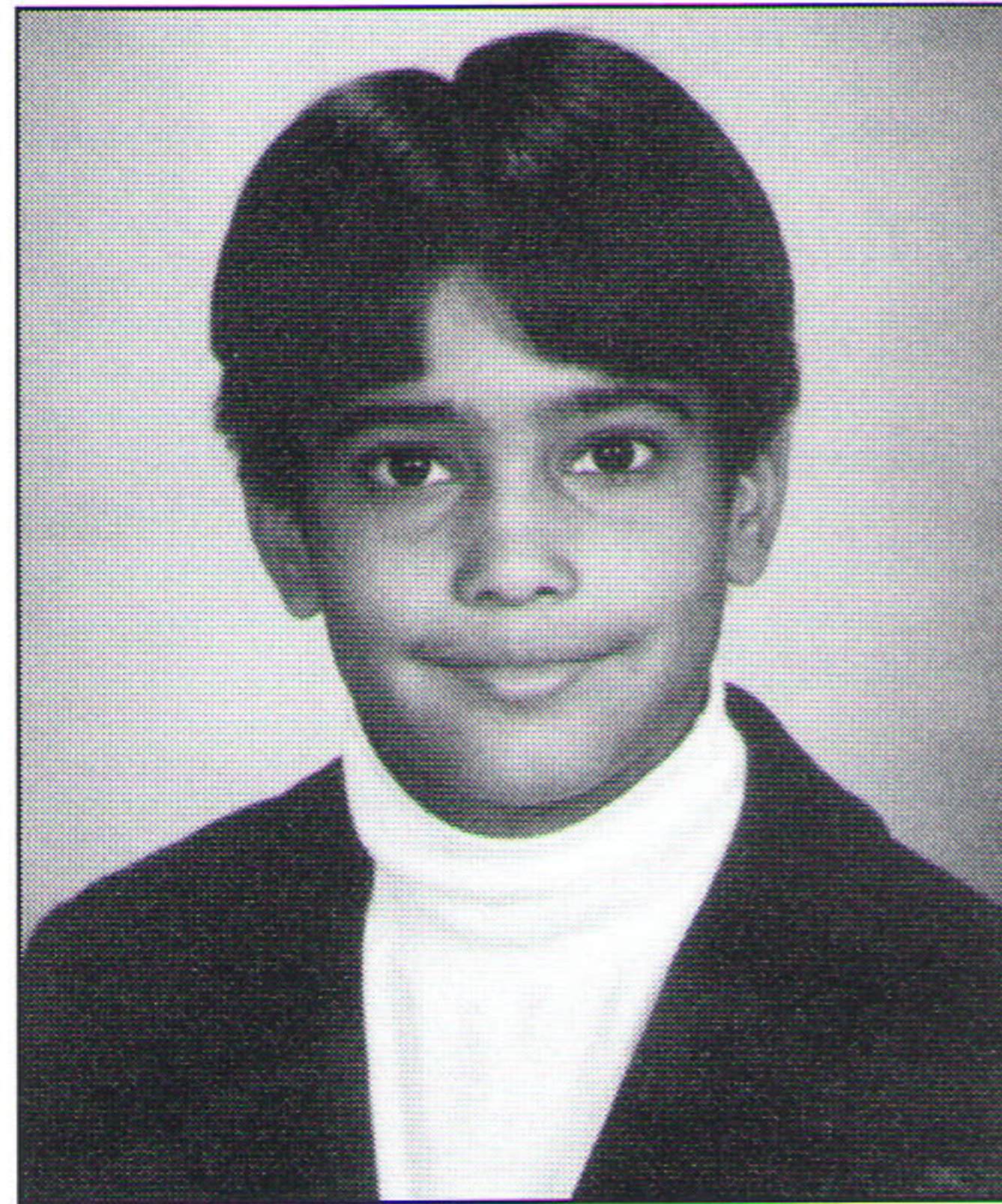
JUNIOR – GRADE 5

First Place



Benson Babu
Long Island MTC, NY

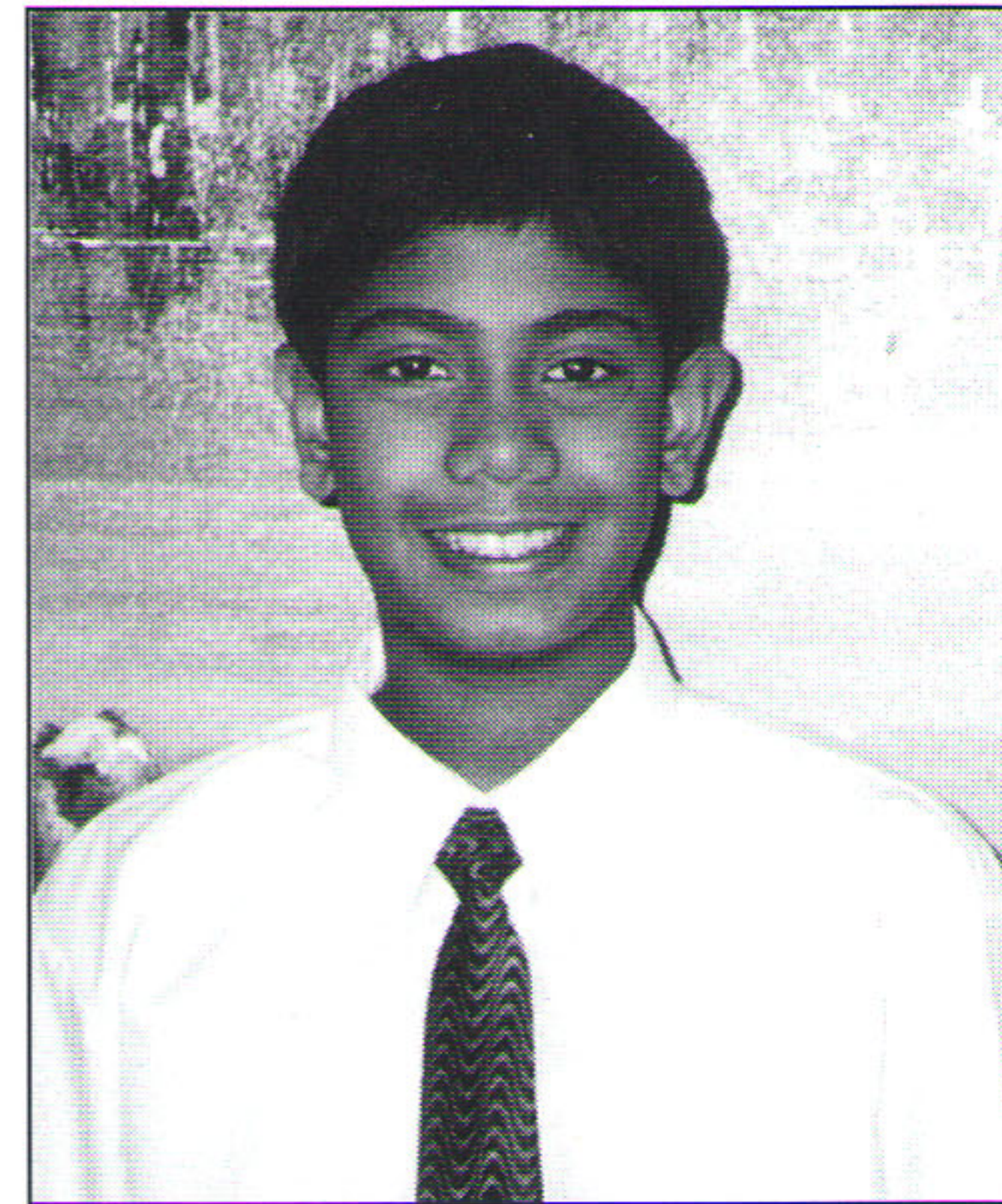
Second Place



Alex Thomas
New Jersey MTC, NJ

JUNIOR – GRADE 6

First Place



Jay Mathew
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX

Second Place



Gena Mathew
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX

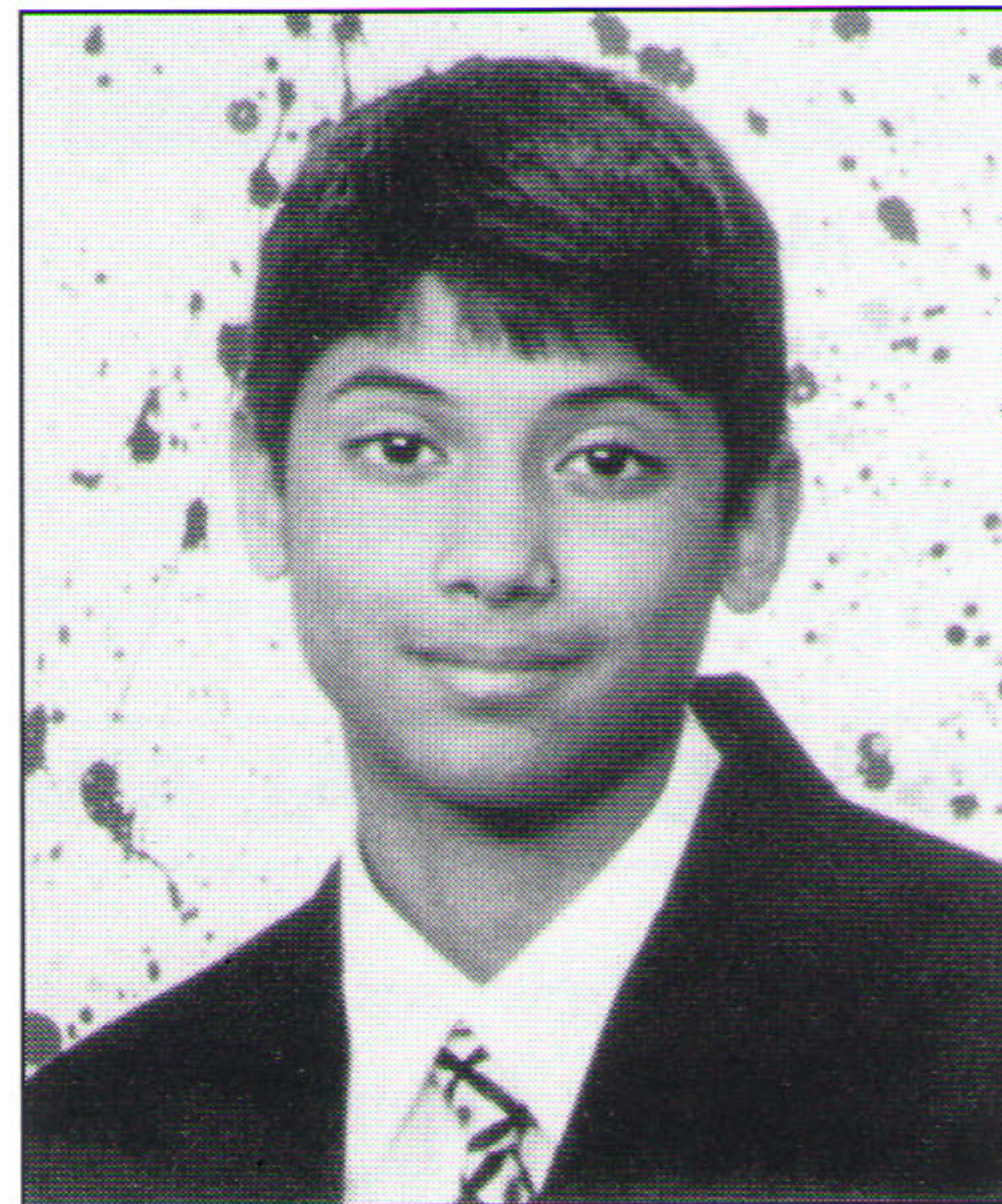
JUNIOR HIGH – GRADE 7

First Place



Prathik Philip
Carmel MTC, Boston, MA

Second Place



Dennis John
Epiphany MTC, NY

JUNIOR HIGH – GRADE 8

First Place



Anika Chacko
Detroit MTC, Detroit, MI

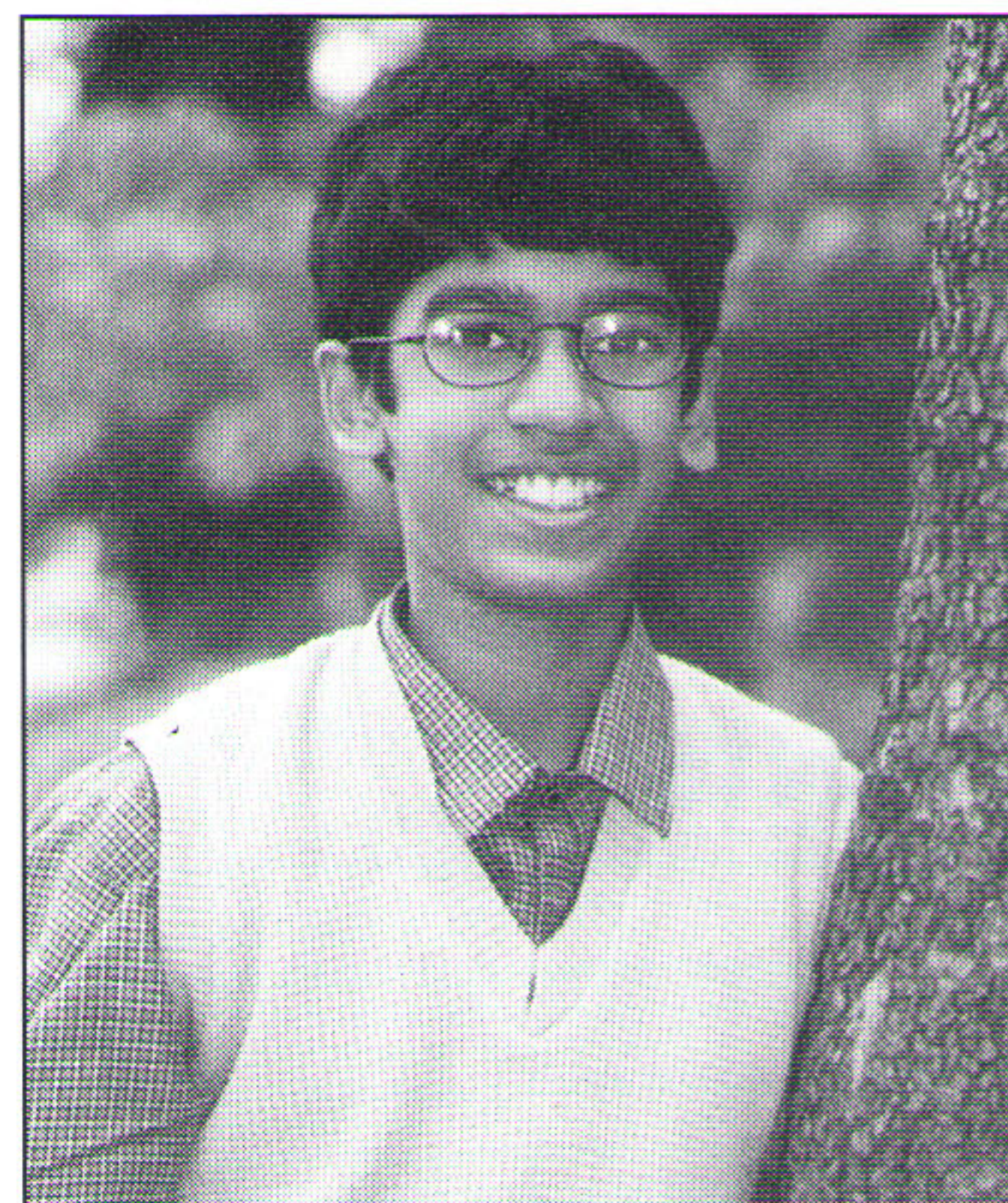
Second Place



Tena Thomas
Epiphany MTC, NY

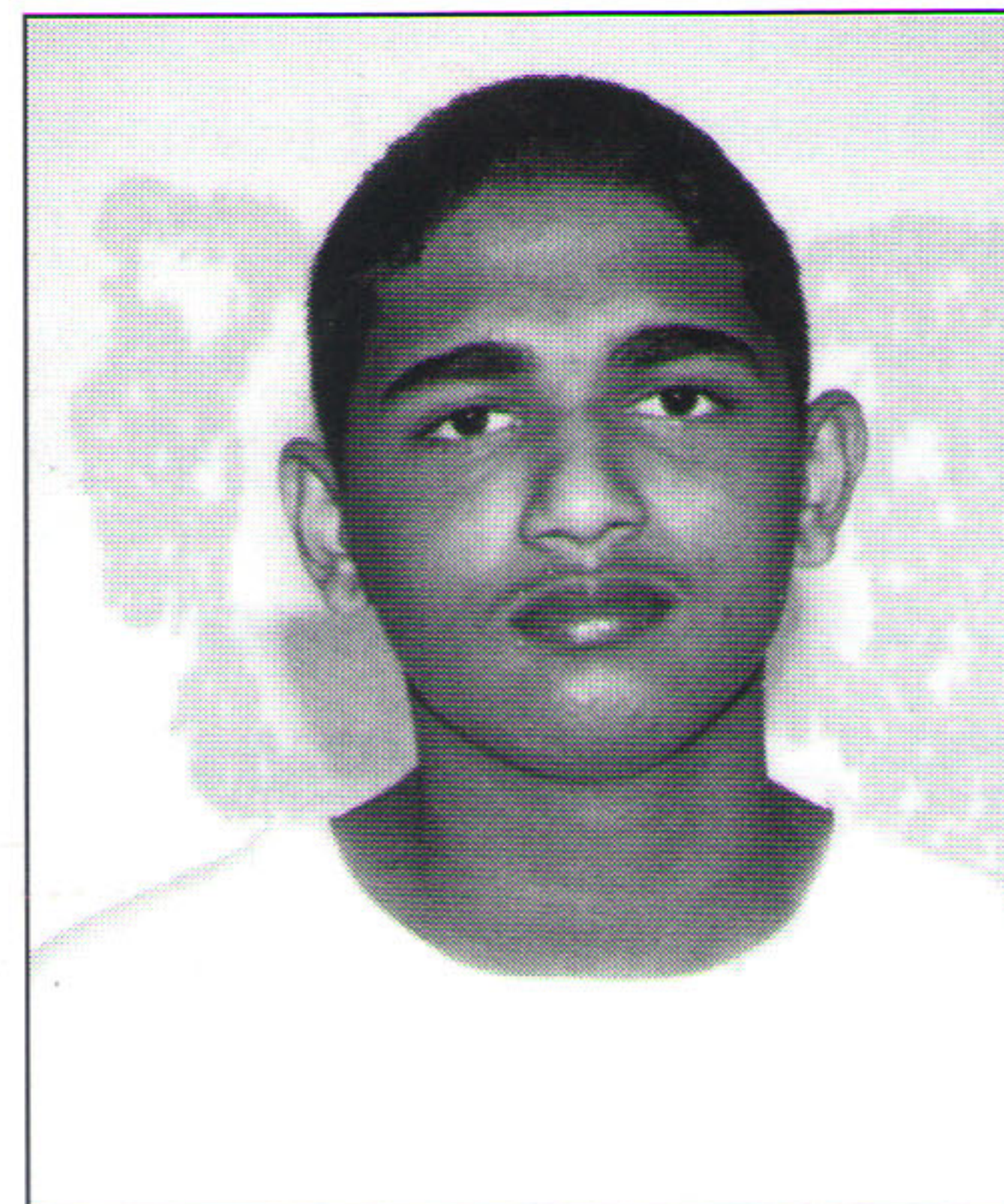
SENIOR HIGH – GRADE 9

First Place



Joseph Varghese
St. John's MTC, NY

Second Place



Jerry Mathew
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX

SENIOR HIGH – GRADE 10

First Place



Jaini Thomas
Bethel MTC, Philadelphia, PA

Second Place

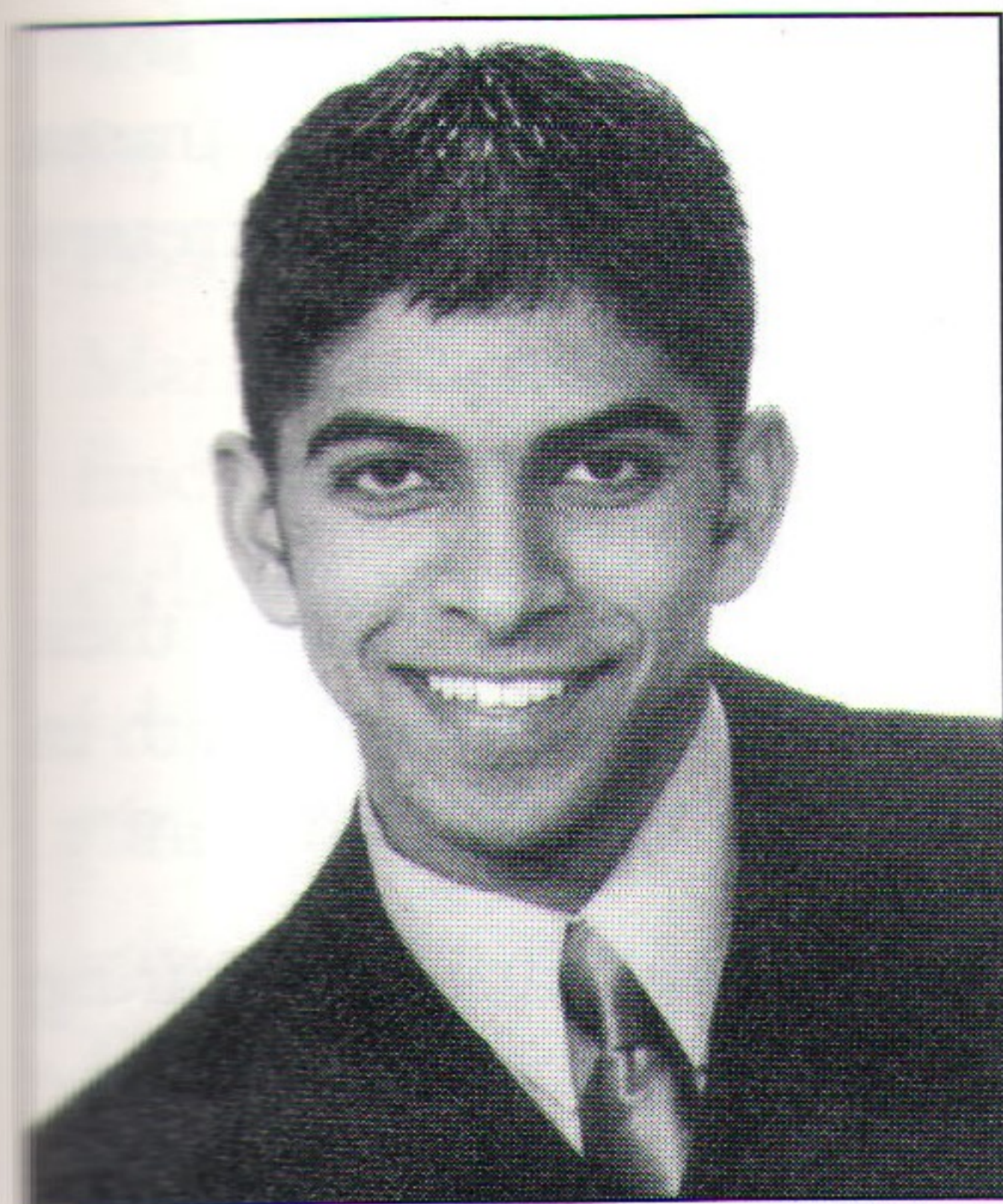


Melame Zacharia
St. Thomas MTC, NY

Top 3 parishes which scored the highest points in the Diocesan Sunday School Exam:

Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York 17 Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston 14
St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York 12

JERRY JACOB – VALEDICTORIAN



Good Morning Dr. Pavel, faculty, family, friends, and good morning to my fellow classmates in the two hundred and fifty ninth graduating class of Central High School.

When speaking about his own life experiences, the learned historian Gordon Wright stated that the past is never completely lost; what you are today and what you

will be tomorrow are because of what you have been. We now stand at the doorway between two monumental periods of our lives. Behind us are the treasured memories of a glorious high school experience, and ahead of us are the pressing fears of an unpredictable future. Today, we recognize the finality of this morning's ceremony, and as we step across that threshold, the question arises of whether or not we are prepared to confront the world that awaits us. As an active member of this class, I can assure you today that finally, we *are* prepared. Four years of challenges and testing have proved that we are a class of unparalleled athletes, musicians, artists, and scholars; leaders of a generation of thinkers and doers. My challenge to you today is to depart from Central with a solid understanding and firm memory of what you have been given here. This memory serves as our beacon, and calls us to the duty of giving back to the community, by never ceasing to be of service to others, and always striving to be a role model for future generations. Our talents are best applied when they are used for the greater purpose of benefiting the society in which we live. Above all else, it is my sincerest hope that our memories of Central will serve as our inspiration, and prevent us from ever losing sight of the people and the events that helped to shape our character. Central has produced the polished and refined product that sits here today.

Our graduation from high school marks a great milestone in each of our lives. It is an achievement symbolic not only of

our own merit and hard work, but of the support and commitment of people around us. Therefore, on this day of recognition, it is imperative that we also honor those who have inspired us through the past four years. First and foremost, I thank God, for innumerable blessings. Each of us is also eternally grateful to our parents, who brought us into this world and encouraged us to achieve and to strive for excellence, and who taught us the difference between good and bad, and between right and wrong. Our teachers are also deserving of our deepest thanks, for instilling in us not only a knowledge of how the world works, but a desire to conquer it. And last but certainly not least, we can never forget our friends, who have proved to us that even when the world seems to crumble around us, there is always an outstretched hand willing to help us through.

In a few moments, we will leave Central and begin our journey on the road to "success." If I leave you with one message today, let it be this. The greatest form of success does not involve international fame, or a prestigious social status, or immeasurable amounts of wealth. It is not receiving numerous academic degrees, or hitting the winning home run in the World Series, or being Hollywood's most beloved actress. It is not being elected president of the United States, and it is not even being valedictorian of your high school class. My message to you today is that our willingness to help others achieve success will truly mark the greatest successes of our lives. As we begin our journeys, let us make it our aim to not only achieve at our fullest potential, but to make it an equal priority to create a positive difference in the lives of people around us. In the words of the distinguished poet Ralph Waldo Emerson "To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; To know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

Thank You.

Jerry Jacob

The Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON

The Trinity Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship are active in the year 2000!

The youth are engaging in various activities. The fellowship is taking on a serious role in church life, by creating many opportunities for involvement.

Thus far, Trinity youths have been bowling, water-ballooning, participating in Friday night Play and Pray, Big Brothers and Sisters program, and even gotten caught up with Who Wants to be a Millionaire hype.

The youth are enjoying all the opportunities Trinity is offering. The youth chaplain, stationed in Houston,

M. O. Oommen Achen has been actively leading Bible Studies. the parish Vicar, C. Joseph Achen has been a very present leader.

The up and coming National Youth Conference is being hosted by the Trinity Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship. The youth look forward to being part of a unique conference experience, unlike anything this diocese has ever seen!

The Trinity Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship extends its warmest welcome to all who are planning to attend the conference. See you in August!

CHURCH WOMEN UNITED (C.W.U.)

Church Women United founded in 1941, is an Ecumenical movement of Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian Women. This Christian Women movement is rooted in prayer and bible study leading in advocacy, action and leadership development. It is an ethnically rich and theologically diverse welcome table where women gather to strengthen their faith, give voice to the gospel, and work for the flourishing of women and children locally and globally so that all may know justice and peace.

CWU Women LinC

Women leading in community is an interactive learning process that helps women enhance and strengthen the leadership gifts they have, identify new leadership skills and work together with others to create an active plan suitable for transforming their communities at the local and national level.

This year Church Women United conducted one of their Women LinC facilitator training programs from February 4-6, 2000 at the Embassy Hotel (Puerto Rico) and six women from our Diocese (Dr. Annie Lincoln, Mrs. Elizabeth John, Dr. Molly Zachria, Mrs. Leelamma Chacko, Mrs. Mariamma Thomas and Valsa Mathai) had the privilege to attend this meeting. This Women LinC training event was so unique, exciting and diverse. It was presented in four languages ie: Korean, English, Malayalam and Spanish. Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, Women LinC

committee member and CWU Denominational Rep. from the Mar Thoma Syrian Church and Mrs. Mariamma Abraham, previous Diocesan Sevika Sangham secretary were the leaders for the Malayalam section.

Common goals of Church Women United

- 1) They intend to grow in their faith and to extend their vision of what it means to be Christian Women of faith in society today and strengthen the ecumenical community.
- 2) They intend to work for a just, peaceful and caring society and to use, responsibly and creatively, the resources God has entrusted to them, their intelligence, their time, their energy and their money as they carry out the mission of Christ through Church Women United.

Jean Rapp, Women LinC committee Chair, Petra Acevedo, Puerto Rico CWU State President, Mona Hayes, WL Committee Member and CWU National Finance Committee Chair, Dr. Mary K. White, Facilitators Rep and CWU National Chair of Ecumenical Development, Inday Day, CWU Programme Director for Leadership Development and Rev. Martha M. Cruz, CWU Deputy General Director and C&I Director were the other committee members, representing different CWU Denominations presented in this meeting.

**For Diocesan Sevika Sangham
Elizabeth John (Secretary)**

MAR THOMA COUPLES CONFERENCE — EASTERN REGION

The yearly One Day Couples Conference sponsored by the Sevika Sanghom was conducted at the Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church on March 11, 2000. The conference was presided by Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa of Kottayam - Kochi Diocese. Rev. Joseph Chacko, vicar of Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church, welcomed 11 vicars and 500 members of our eastern parishes who were in attendance. The regional president, Rev. Varghese M. Easow introduced the theme "How to cultivate Spiritual growth in our youngsters?" and enlightened on the Biblical perspective in raising the children.

Two papers were presented on this theme. Mr. Philip Mathew, the parent of a teenager, shared his personal experiences on parental influence on him and how those influences in turn were carried over to his children. Mrs. Sunita Chandy, represented the youth in providing a youthful perspective of the factors that influence the youngsters in our time.

Athanasius Thirumeni integrated the theme into a deeper dimension of holy living that exhorts the generation and the children to follow. Thirumeni appealed to the audience to strive after a Christ-centered-life that yields ideal human behavior, the glory and victory in Christ contrary to the worldly standards of accomplishments.

The theme talks were followed by a lively panel discussion moderated by Mr. Eapen Daniel and Mrs. Santhamma Thomas.

The Sanghom recognized the great services of Rev. K.G. Joseph, Rev. Thomas Easow and Rev. George Abraham and presented them with parting gifts.

The meeting came to a close with the Vote of thanks by Dr. Mrs. Anna Panackal, the Vice President of the South East Region.

**Elizabeth Koshy
Secretary, South East Regional Sevika Sanghom**

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

A Women's Leadership Conference under the auspices of our Diocesan Sevika Sanghom will be conducted from October 13-15, 2000 at Bishop Mason Retreat and Conference Center, 4700 Wichita Trail, Flower Mound,

Texas 75028. Further details of the Conference will shortly be communicated to the Sevika Sanghom Secretaries of each parish. Please mark your calendar.

**Elizabeth John,
Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary**

MASS MARRIAGE SCHEME

Your prayers and monetary support are earnestly requested for one of the most important mission projects that the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom has ever undertaken- the Mass Marriage Scheme. The purpose of this Scheme is to help find life partners for the poorest of the poor young boys and girls who do not have anyone to support or make decisions

for them. With the moral and financial support of the Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom of the Diocese of North America and Europe, the Mass Marriage will be conducted at Santhigiri, Alwaye on Saturday December 16, 2000.

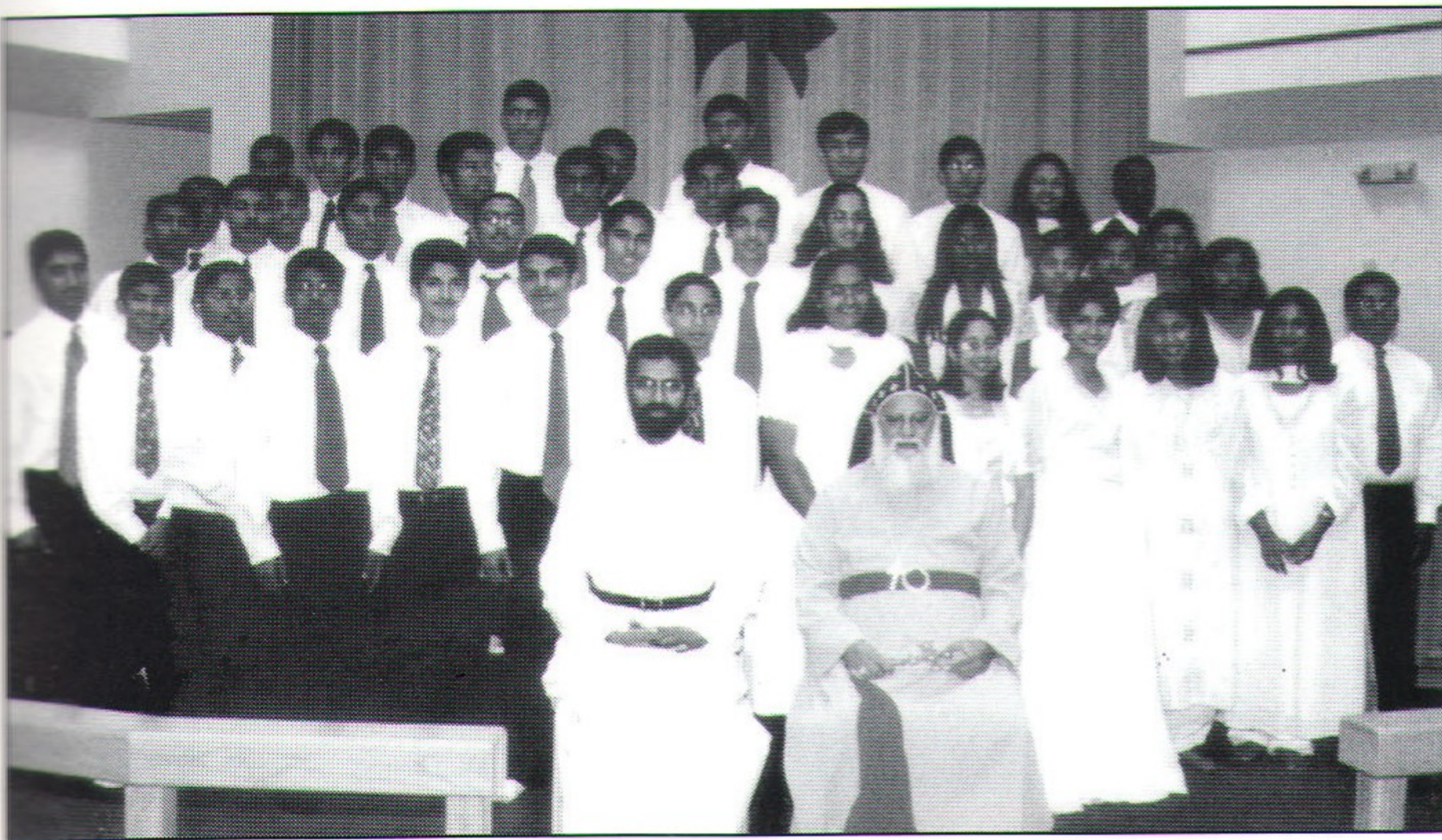
Elizabeth John
Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary

WESTERN REGIONAL YOUTH RETREAT

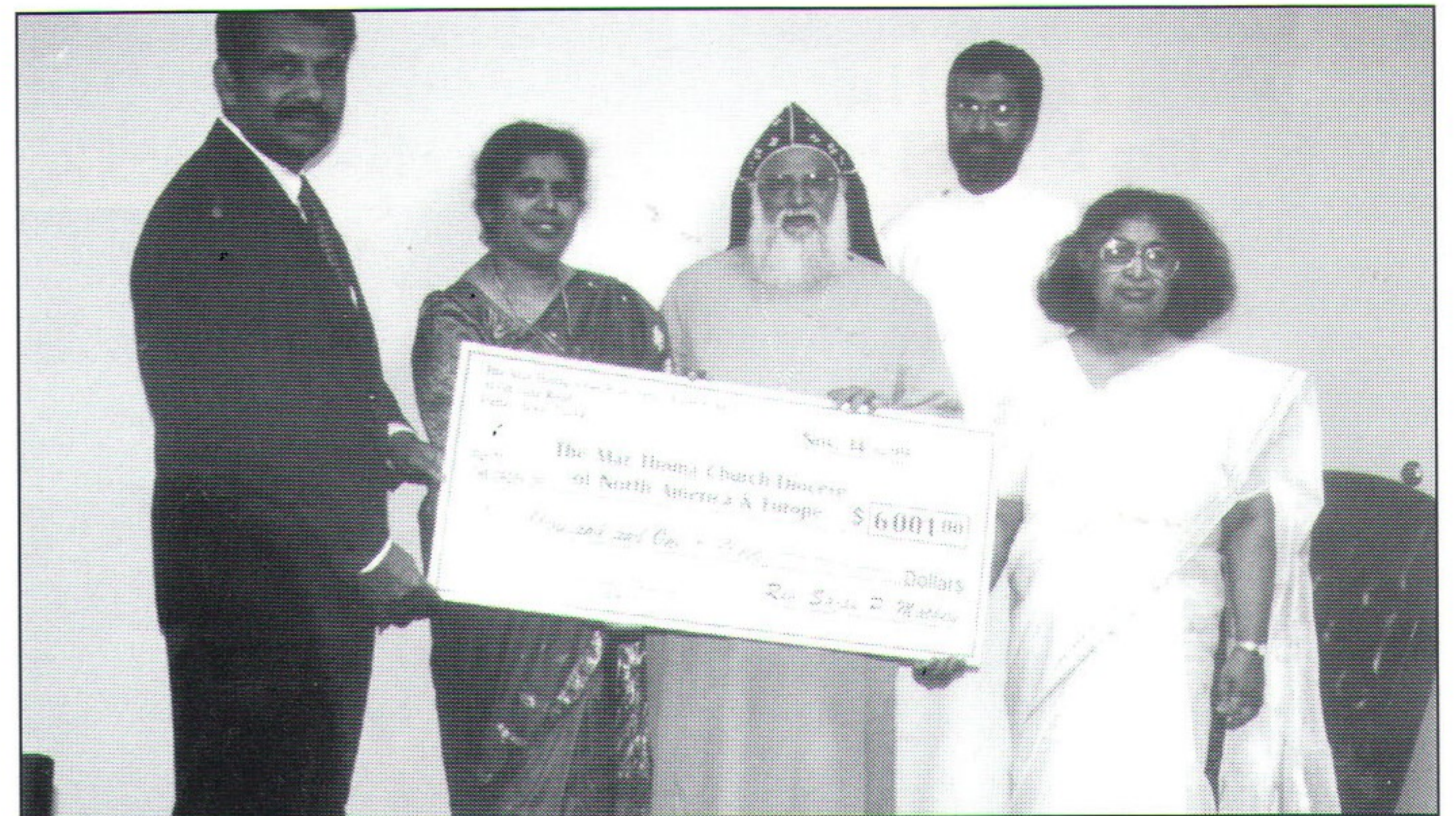
The Western Regional Youth Retreat, hosted by The Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles, is scheduled to be held between September 1-3, 2000 at the Ponderosa Pines Christian Camp, Running Springs, California. The theme for the Retreat is "Jesus, The Great Physician." Mr. Jerome

Mammen is the main speaker at the retreat. A committee consisting of Rev. Kurian Thomas, Rev. David Daniel, Rinku Mathew, Jeena Titus, Rosha Cherian, Charles John, Susan George, Biju Mathew and Jennifer Mathew, has already completed all the preparations for the retreat.

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH



First Communicants with Zacharias Thirumeni and Sajan P. Mathew Achen. 40 Youths received First Communion from our Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus on November 14, 2000. This was a day of tremendous joy and thanksgiving for the parish.



Diocesan Council Member Mrs. Leelamma Chacko, Diocesan Assembly Members Mr. Mathews K. Skariah and Mrs. Saramma Poikail along with Vicar Rev. Sajan P. Mathew, hand over a check of \$6001 to the Diocesan Episcopa Thirumeni. The amount was raised for the Diocesan activities through 'KALASANGAMAM' — a musical entertainment program.

KANSAS CITY CONGREGATION



Members of Kansas City Congregation with Diocesan Episcopa Thirumeni and Vicar Rev. Sajan P. Mathew.

DESMOINS CITY (IOWA) CONGREGATION



Members of Desmoins City (Iowa) Congregation with Diocesan Episcopa Thirumeni and Vicar Rev. Sajan P. Mathew.

DEDICATION OF THE DETROIT MAR THOMA CHURCH



Newly constructed Detroit Mar Thoma Church

By the Grace of God the dedication ceremony of the newly built Detroit Mar Thoma Church and the Parish Hall located at 24518 Lahser Road, Southfield, Michigan was held on March 11, 2000 by our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa. It was a time of thanksgiving and Praise for God's abundant blessings upon the Parish.

Following the dedication service a public meeting was held in the Parish Hall presided over by our Diocesan Bishop. Hon. Mayor Donald F. Fracassi, Mayor of the City



Zacharias Thirumeni leading the dedication service.

of Southfield was the chief guest. After lighting the lamp Thirumeni unveiled a portrait of The Late Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan. Rev. George Mathew, Toronto offered the opening prayer and Vicar Rev. Dr. K.T. Joy welcomed the gathering. Thirumeni released the dedication Souvenir and also inaugurated the Detroit Mar Thoma Website. Felicitations were given by Rev. Sandra Richardson, Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical Officer of Michigan, Rev. K.Y. Jacob Diocesan Bishop Secretary, Rev. John P. Meyer St. Peter's Episcopal Church,



View of the audience.

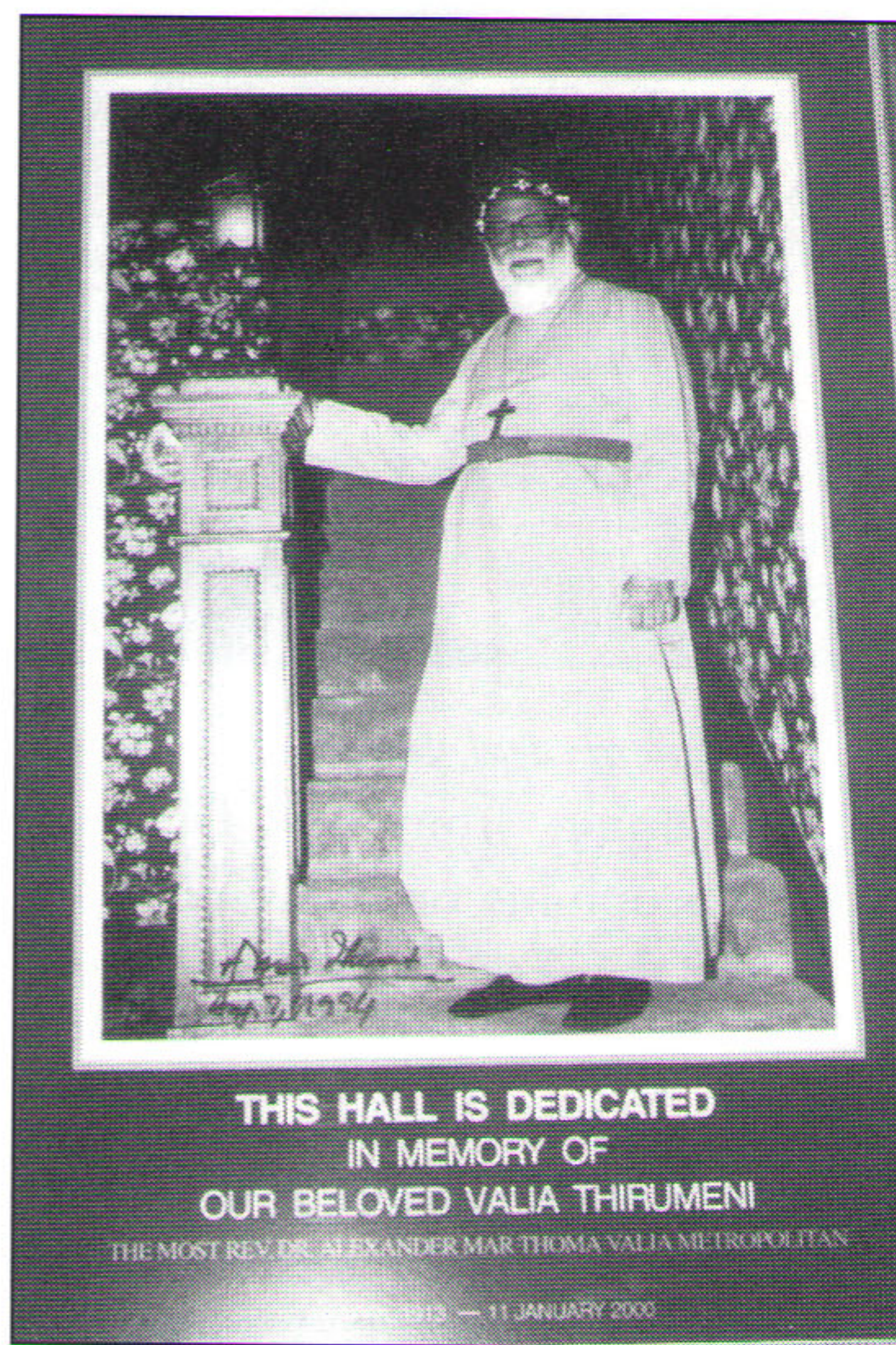
Rev. V.T. Josen Chicago M.T.C, Rev. Fr. Philips G. Sankarathil Detroit Ecumenical committee Chairperson, Rev. T.I. Joseph Former Vicar, Rev. P. Chacko Detroit MT.C., Mr. Georgey Mathews Vice President of Detroit M.T.C. and Mr. P.D. Joshua St. James M.T.C. New York. Mrs. Sara Philip, Secretary, presented a brief history of the



Lighted to Lighten — dance during the cultural program.

parish. The performance by Sunday School children and church choir was memorable.

Plaques for outstanding services to Detroit Mar Thoma



Portrait of Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma unveiled by Zacharias Thirumeni in the Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Memorial Hall.

Church were presented to Vicar Rev. Dr. K.T. Joy, Rev. P. Chacko, Mr. George Thomas, Mr. and Mrs. Mathew and Sheila Varghese, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas and Daisy Mathew, Dr. Jacob Daniel, Mr. Kurien Abraham, Mr. P.M. John and Mr. George A. Thomas and Capital Construction LLC - Jeff Schmitz. A plaque and gift were presented to Rev. John P. Meyer in appreciation of St. Peter's Episcopal Church's valuable services to us for the last 21 years.

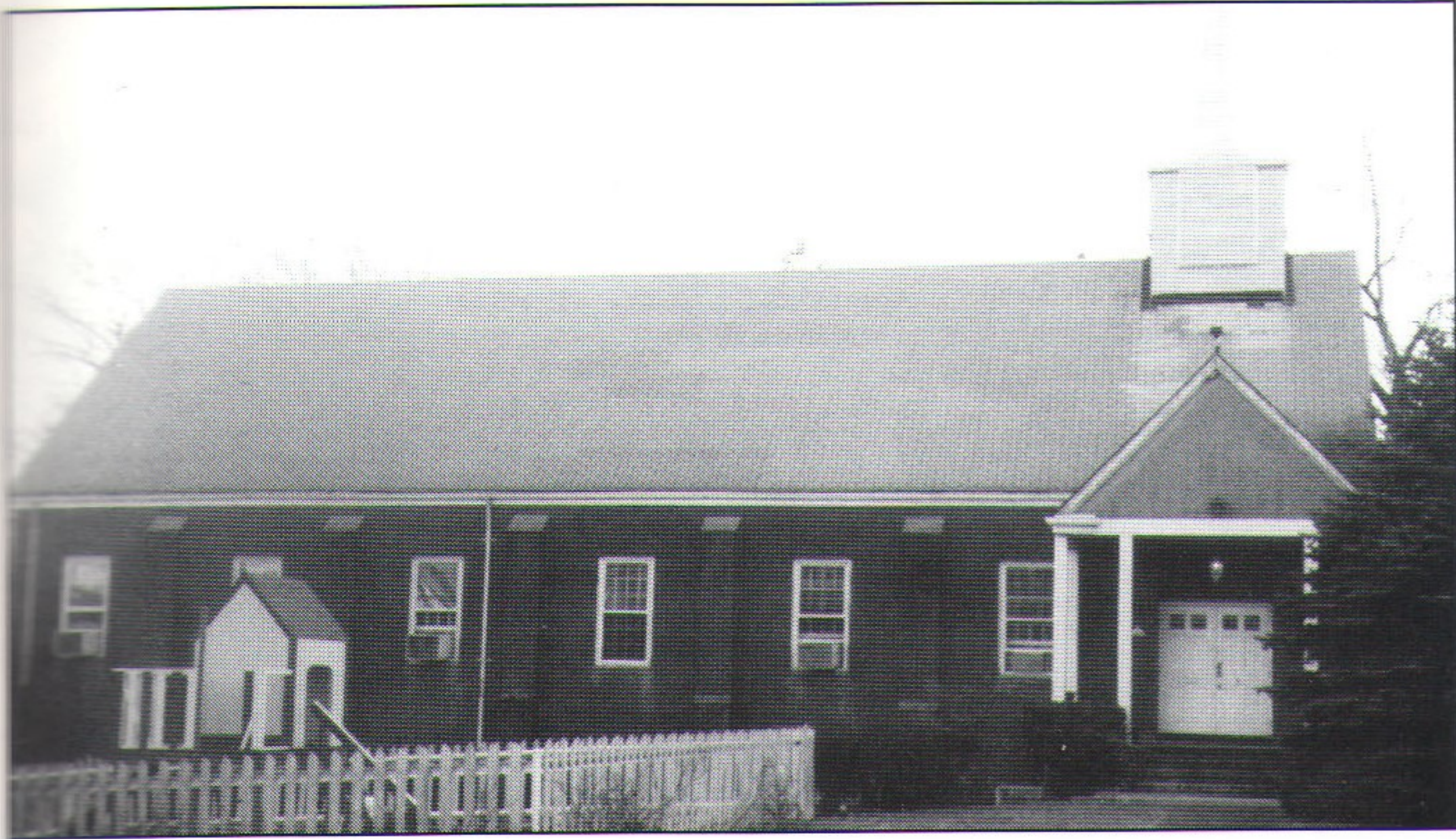
Many dignitaries, members from the community, clergies and council members of the Diocese and the clergies and members from various church denominations attended the function. As a token of gratitude, the church promised to donate a sum of one Lakh Rupees for the construction of a church building in India.

Mr. George Thomas, Coordinator Church Building Advisory Committee proposed the Vote of Thanks.

On Sunday March 12, 2000 our Thirumeni conducted the Holy Qurbana in the new Church and there were eighteen First Communicants.

Rev. Dr. K.T. Joy, Vicar

DEDICATION OF THE ST. PETER'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW JERSEY



The newly purchased and dedicated St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church

The St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church was established on October 1, 1988 with 65 families. Today we have 165 families. Since the inception, we were using the Christ

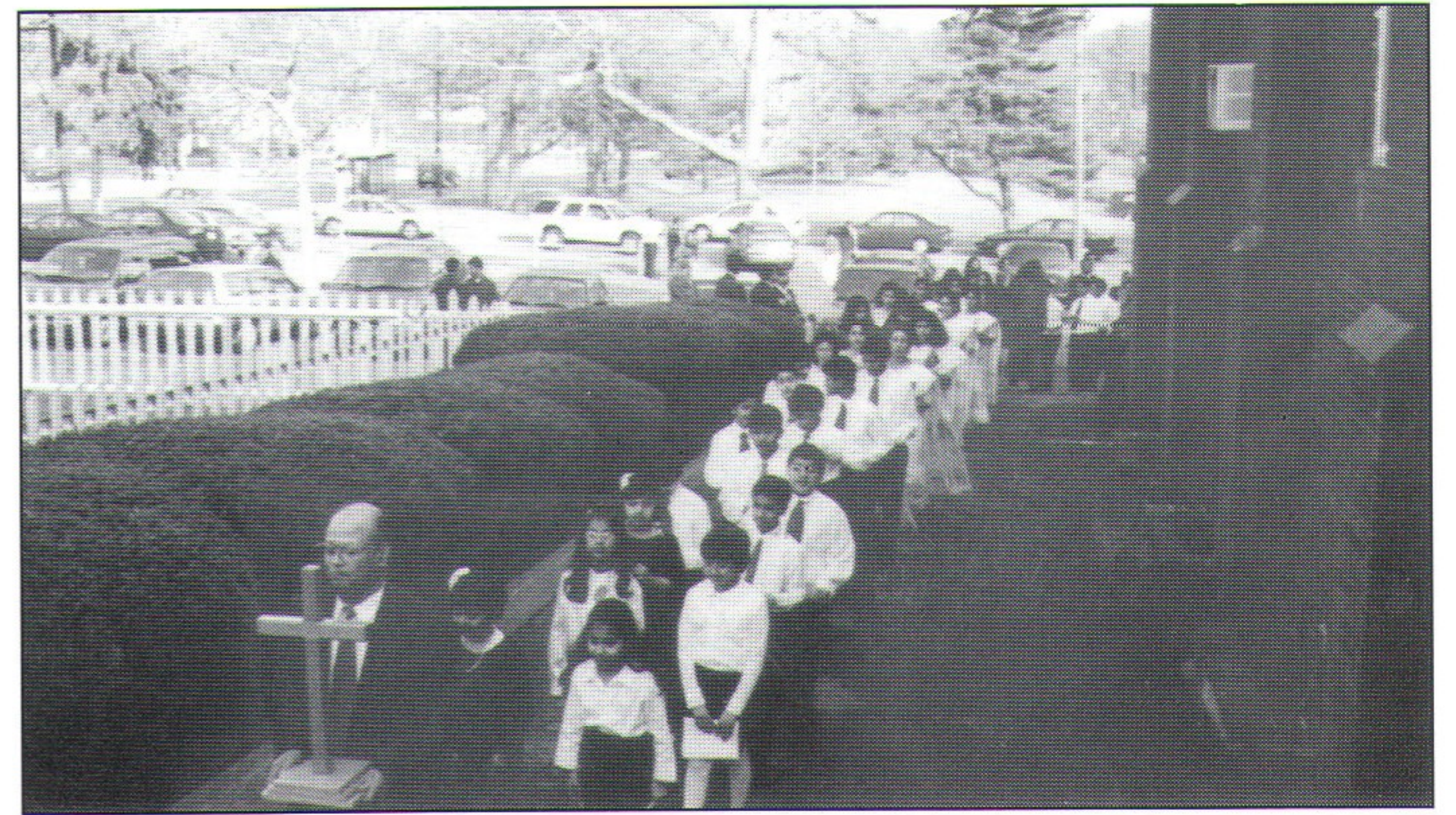


The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa and His Eminence Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim, Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church, assisted by Rev. K. Y. Jacob, Diocesan Secretary and Rev. Philip P. George, Vicar conducting the dedication ceremony.



Zacharias Thirumeni and Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim Metropolitan at the public meeting.

Church in Teaneck for our services and other needs. By the Grace of God we were able to purchase the church building at 70 Cedar Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666 on January 6, 2000. Our dream of having a church building of our own in the



Procession leading to the Church before dedication.

middle of the community we live in is fulfilled and our prayers are answered.

The dedication of our church building was held on Saturday, March 25, 2000 at 4:00 p.m. by our Diocesan



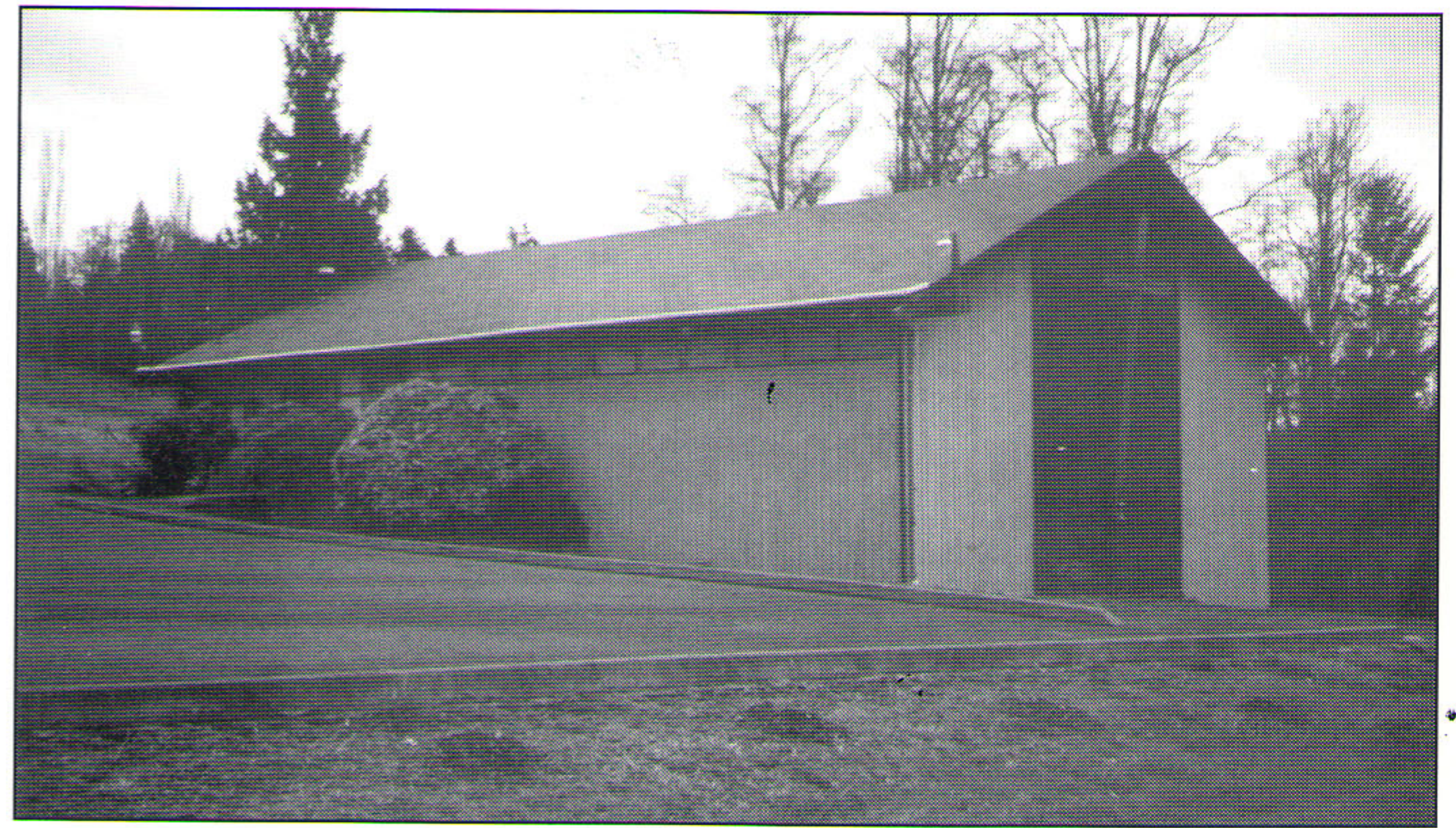
Zacharias Thirumeni leading the dedication ceremony.

Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, followed by a public meeting. During the public meeting our Vicar Rev. Philip P. George welcomed the guests and all members. Zacharias Thirumeni in his presidential address thanked God for this achievement of the parish and said, now it is time for us to do the will of God in this land, and reminded us that this is a church to live the gospel, to enjoy the gospel and to spread the gospel. The chief guest His Eminence Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim, Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church congratulated the members for this achievement, saying this is made possible by the grace of God and to return to God a little bit of what he has given us. Very Rev. John Mino, Cor Episcopa, Rev. K. Y. Jacob, Diocesan Secretary, all our Achens from the tri-state area churches, state and city officials and other invited guests attended the ceremony.

At the time of the dedication of our church building our parish donated \$2615 to the Diocesan Bishop for constructing a church building in a mission field in India.

Thomas Thuthikadathil, Secretary

DEDICATION OF THE SEATTLE MAR THOMA CHURCH, WASHINGTON



The Dedication ceremony of the newly bought and renovated church building of Seattle Mar Thoma Church was conducted by Rt. Rev. Zacharias Mar Theophilos, Bishop of North America and Europe Diocese, on 13th May 2000 at 5 pm. Believers came in procession chanting the song 'senayin yehovaye' and were received at the Church entrance by Bishop. Then Trustees George Daniel and Chacko Joseph handed over the agreement and Key to the Bishop. After that with the assistance of church Vicar Rev. Kurian Thomas and Rev. L Varghese, the dedication of the church was conducted by the Bishop. Immediately after the dedication service a public meeting was conducted and Hon. Jim Mc Dermott (U S representative, 7th Congressional District of Washington) was the chief guest. Mayor Jim White, Very Rev. GW Porter, Rt. Rev. W M Choi,

Rev. Michael Irving, Pastor Larry Spicer, O C Koshy, Thomas P Mathew, Keith Eilers, representatives of Mar Thoma Churches of Sanfrancisco and Portland etc. spoke. The release of the souvenir published in this connection was conducted by Bishop by giving the first copy to the Ex. Governor. Inauguration of Building fund coupon was done by Sri. Paul John, President of Kerala Association of Washington by accepting a coupon of \$1000 from the Bishop. Vice President John Titus welcomed the gathering and Secretary Thomas Abraham extended the vote of thanks. Ms. Jeena Titus controlled the function as the Master of ceremony. A number of Malayalees and local Americans attended the function.

Thomas Abraham, Secretary

CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. JENNY GEORGE



Dr. Jenny George is one of the second generation Marthomites who recently graduated from Columbia University with a DDS. She also has a Ph.D. in molecular biology. Jenny and her husband, George K. George (architect) are members of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. She is the daughter of Diocesan

Assembly Member Mathews K. Skariah.

Rev. Sajan P. Mathew, Vicar

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

The readers of the Mar Thoma Messenger remember with gratitude the services of Rev. K.G. Joseph and Rev. Thomas Easow who served on the Managing Committee of the Messenger till their recent transfer back to India in April of this year. As Manager, K.G. Joseph achen was responsible for the promotion and distribution of the Messenger. Easow achen's wife Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas was responsible for the 'Children's Pages' in the Messenger — Bible Cross Word Puzzle and Bible Word Search. Thank you achens and Kochamma!

MAR THOMA MESSENGER REGIONAL PROMOTERS

It was unanimously decided at the joint meeting of the Editorial Board and the Managing Committee held on June 30, 2000 at the Family Conference in Long Island to appoint Regional Promoters for the promotion of Mar

Thoma Messenger to every home in their respective regions. With the approval of the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, the following persons were selected as Regional Promoters:

Western Region

Edmonton, Ft. McMurray, Calgary, San Francisco, Seattle, Phoenix, Portland, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Los Angeles

Thomas Mammen

Long Beach, CA
(562) 431-6469

South West Region A

Denver, Lubbock, Dallas, Oklahoma, Iowa and Kansas City

Leelamma Chacko

Dallas, TX
(972) 462-1560

South West Region B

San Antonio, Austin, Corpus Christi and Houston

T. A. Mathew

Houston, TX
(713) 455-7469
Fax: (713) 455-8922

Mid West Region

St. Louis, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Indiana and Frankfort

C. V. Samuel

Detroit, MI
(810) 268-8007

South East Region A

Philadelphia

Dr. Anna Panackal

Philadelphia, PA
(215) 934-6257

South East Region B

Florida, Atlanta, Raleigh and Chattanooga

John Mathai

Correlspring, FL
(954) 346-2301

South East Region C

Baltimore, Washington, DC

Dr. Ambili Abraham

Ellicot City, MD
(410) 461-8561

South East Region D

Edison, Teaneck and Randolph, New Jersey

Daniel Varghese

Union, NJ
(908) 688-2830

North East Region A

New York (St. Thomas, Ebenezer, St. James), Rochester and Albany

Daniel Thomas

Hartsdale, NY
(914) 693-9488

Gigi Tom

Rockland, NY
(914) 268-3532

North East Region B

Staten Island, New York (St. Andrews)

James T. Philip

Staten Island, NY
(718) 761-1295

North East Region C

New York (St. John's, Long Island MTC, and Epiphany)

George Thomas

Floral Park, NY
(718) 347-2267

North East Region D

Boston

Varghese Mathai

Millis, MA
(508) 376-4460
Fax: (508) 376-2933

Eastern Canada

Toronto, Kingston, Montreal and Ottawa

Cherian V. Edichandy

Toronto, CAN
(905) 764-6372

Europe

London, Germany & South Africa

C. M. Koshy

Collindale, London, UK
44-181-200-0217

Editorial

The year 2000 is special to Christians everywhere in the world, being the Jubilee birthday of Jesus, and the beginning of a new millennium. We the Marthomites in this diocese have celebrated this jubilee year by arranging regional meetings, prayers, conventions, fund-raising and other programs. The Messenger published articles related to this event in all four issues.

As part of the millennium celebrations, the Messenger has conducted an essay competition for junior and senior high school students. The best essays, selected by a team of judges, are published in this issue. We seek the opinion of the subscribers in continuing this essay competition every year.

Our diocese has arranged a few celebrations in the last three or four years. First it was the jubilee, our continuous existence as worshipping congregations in North America for 25 years. Then we had a series of special functions related to the Diocesan Center culminating in the dedication of Sinai Center at Long Island in June 1998. In order to raise funds for the center special get-togethers are being arranged.

Now it is time to look ahead and move forward with different emphasis and programs in a new direction. Over the last nearly thirty years we have been well organized as a worshipping community by building churches and a Diocesan Center. It must grow, in the future, by reaching out to the community and spread the good news, thus fulfilling the mission as a church.

Let me be more specific by presenting some proposals. Each region of the Diocese, if not parish, can support one mission center in India or outside. Even more than raising money, there must be personal involvement by way of our visit or bringing evangelists to America from time to time. Another proposal is to begin outreach activities in our neighborhoods where the parish is located. Also, we can develop a close working relationship with other local parishes both Indian origin or American churches. Such activities are needed in fulfilling the mission of the Mar Thoma Church. The Messenger can publish activities of this nature from time to time.

Last week I attended a special gathering of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) as an ecumenical representative. This church celebrated Jubilee 2000 by focusing on its mission work and Pentecost when other church representatives were invited. I learned much about this church and I told them of the Mar Thoma Church. This week (June 12-17) I am attending the summer Institute of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. About 150 pastors and lay leaders from two dozen denominations assembled for their study of scriptures as it relates to the issues of our time. There are several such resources in North America that our clergy and laity can make use of for better service in the Mar Thoma Church. In various ways our church has to reach out to other churches and the community at large in order to show its presence and witness in America.

Let me conclude with a recollection of Princeton since I am here this week. It is not about the education that several of our achen and others received from this great institution. Rather, I recall a special Mar Thoma Service held at Princeton Seminary chapel in 1975 when we were struggling to obtain recognition for our congregations. Members of the Greater New York Congregation, about one hundred families (one Mar Thoma congregation for greater New York instead of a dozen now in this area), gathered at the chapel. The one student achen in this area Rev. K.S. Mathew conducted the worship in Malayalam. Our members were welcomed by seminary president McCord. From this stage of struggling for a recognized parish, we have come a long way today when we have an address with our many churches and the Diocesan center. It is time to reach out to the community and to a larger world for fulfilling the mission as a church.

Dr. T.M.Thomas

V. S. REALTY

Residential & Commercial

3366 Hillside Avenue, Suite 14 • New Hyde Park, NY 11040

**Full Professional Real Estate Services
18 Years Full Time Real Estate Business**



Kalathil Varughese

Owner/Broker
Notary

Contact us first before

- Selling your Home
- Selling your Business
- Buying a Home or Business

Quality & Experience
make excellent services

Tel. 516-741-1850

Fax: 516-741-1854

V. S. Gas Station Corp. (mobil)

2200 Hillside Avenue • New Hyde Park

Planning to invest in Gas Station Business

Contact:

Kalathil Varughese

President

V. S. Gas Station Corp.

516-741-6087

Beeper: 516-335-8654



**FRANK BENUCHI SHOES
ERIC SHOES
EXCLUSIVE AGENT FOR U.S.A.**

Best Wishes From
Varkey Abraham & Family

Erick Shoes Inc.
216-11 Jamaica Avenue
Queens Village, New York
Tel. 718-465-2860

Abraham & Son Inc.
Shoe Tech U.S.A. Inc.
A&S Properties Inc.

Mar Thoma Messenger
Sinai Mar Thoma Center
2320 S. Merrick Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
MERRICK, NY
PERMIT NO. 198