

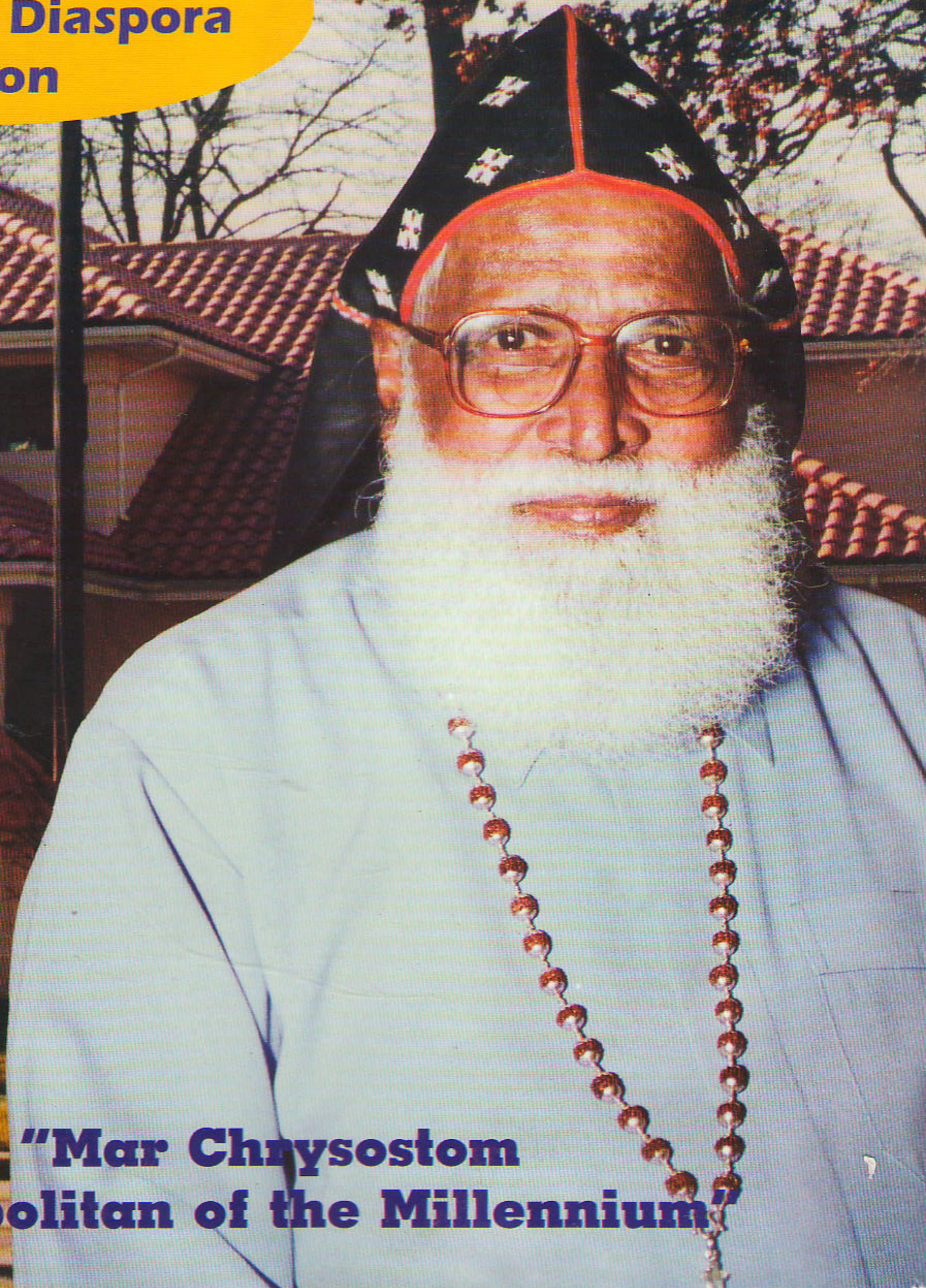


MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

OCTOBER 2002

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Mar Thoma Diaspora
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CONTENTS

Message From the Diocesan Bishop	2
The Life-World of Metropolitan Chrysostom	
Rev. Sunny George	3
Biblical Interpretation	
Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham	7
MChrysostom Thirumeni—A Living Legend	
Justice K. T. Thomas	10
Diaspora: What Does It Mean For Mar Thomas Christians Theologically?	
Prof. Plammootil V. Cherian	11
History of the Mar Thoma Church	
Rev. Sunni E. Mathew	17
Towards A "Diasporic" Theology	
Rev. Valson Thampu	19
Exercising Parental Authority	
Rev. Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla	24
Management of Mission.	
Rev. Varghese K. Abraham	26
Mission of Mar Thoma Diaspora	
Mathew Kallumpram	29
Christianity—On Its Way Out?	
Thomas Mathew Kurumthottickal	35
Talk on Family Issues	
Fr. George Kolath	37
A Dialogue with the Mar Thoma Metropolitan	
Lesley M. Thomas	40
Bible Cross Word Puzzle	45
Diocesan/Parish News	47

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Message from the Diocesan Bishop

October 22, 2002



Beloved in Christ,

I am happy to greet you again through the Messenger and I thank and praise God for all His bountiful blessings bestowed upon us as a Diocese. As we commemorated the first anniversary of the tragic event of September 11, we remembered the pain it caused, the unrest it perpetuated and the tremendous amount of unbearable loss created by it. No amounts of words can alleviate or console the pain of those who lost their dear ones. We as a church offer prayer for all those who pass through such agony and remember with gratitude all those who sacrificially contributed in rebuilding this country. Let us pray for those who inflicted this pain upon this country and elsewhere, so that they will reorient their energy for the betterment of humanity. Our humble way of responding to this nation at the need of crisis is appreciated.

We, as a Diocese celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Episcopacy of our Metropolitan when Thirumeni visited the Diocese during July, 2002. The Diocesan Council worked out a detailed program and the felicitation meeting was well attended. We also initiated numerous Jubilee projects to express our gratitude and joy to Thirumeni. I thank all the organizations for their contributions in this regard. A special Messenger was released during the Sabha Pradinithi Mandalam and was a widely appreciated. We also arranged a small video projection to have a glimpse of the life and ministry of the Metropolitan for which DSM & C of the Church helped us in this endeavor.

The Regional Convention was well organized through out the Diocese and was well attended. Joint Holy Communion services were organized in all the regions and were a great experience. The prayer vigil organized on a regional basis was a time of empowering and prepared the people for the convention and we could experience the blessings all through the conventions.

The National Youth Conference hosted by the St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York was well organized and I commend the vicar, Youth Fellowship members and the members of the parish for their efforts. The National Women's leadership conference hosted by Chicago Mar Thoma Church too was a great blessing and I express my gratitude to the hosting parish for the elaborate arrangements.

Rev. Dr. John Joseph (Diocesan Secretary), Mr. Varkey Abraham (Long Island MTC) and Mr. John Thomas (St. Thomas MTC) were elected to the Sabha Council and I wish and pray that their involvement and leadership will benefit the church as whole. The active involvement of the Mandalam representatives in the Sabha Mandalam was also commendable.

I am happy to say that the Zonal system is being implemented with regard to the various organizations and I hope the functioning of the organizations will be all the more effective under the new system. The various sub committees of the Mission Board also are working properly and the project for Native Americans and Mexico is slowly coming to shape. We need volunteers for all these projects. I am sure that our people will positively respond to the mission of the church. The details of the project and the need will be properly informed and I would like to have your feed backs and response in this matter.

This issue of the Messenger is set apart primarily for the Diaspora Community. We are scattered to different the parts of the world because of various reasons. Nevertheless we have a primary responsibility to witness the Living Lord wherever we are. God has blessed in this foreign land and has given us opportunity to stand for His glory. We need to be grateful to God and to this nation for all what we enjoy. In the process we at any cost should ignore our roots and traditions. We owe to our heritage and the church in various capacities facilitates us in this process. We have set apart a Sunday in November to remember the Diaspora Community all over the world. Let us pray that god will bless us wherever we are and use us more effectively for His glory.

We are entering in to the advent season and let us celebrate it meaningfully this time so that Christ's birth would bring substantial changes in our life situations, decisions and deliberations.

May God bless you all.

Yours in His Service,

Coorilos Methrachen

The Life-World of Metropolitan Chrysostom

Rev. Sunny George, Philadelphia

This article aims to give a brief sketch of the life world of the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church. Thirumeni's life world represent a diverse and intricate component and ground work for understanding Thirumeni's life, theological vision, and praxis.

In this brief sketch, the transition from traditional society to the modern world and the state of affairs of the present era, the leap happening towards the post modern fabric of life, is traced. The Kalamannil family is a branch of the Adangapurathu Kudumbum. The history of the Adangapurathu family gives a glimpse of that period in detail. The 'Kudumba Charithram' traces their lineage back to the St. Thomas tradition as well as the place of the family in the traditional society.

In the traditional society, where people were subjects to the king, privileges conferred on them by the king determined their place in society. Tracing back the lineage of the Adangapurathu family, Yacob Kathanar tells of its connection with the Edappallil Tharavadu. From this Brahmin family in Chempil Kulashakaramangalam near Udayamperoor, a person converted to Christianity and was then transplanted to Kolloppara being allowed to settle down in the Tharamel illam by the King of Edappally because there were no Christians in Kolloppara and because nobody was there to inherit the illam.

Kolloppara, during those days, belonged to 'Perumbra Nadu' and was ruled by the chieftains of Edappally lineage. It was only during the tenure of A. J. John as Chief Minister of Travancore in 1952 that both Edappally and Poonjar were joined to the Travancore state. Before its state formation, Travancore was rigid in caste laws. Travancore's entry into treaty with the East India Company due to internal strife and external threats from Hyder and later Tippu, gradually altered the constitution of the caste foundation of the society. Even in those days Edappally kings were lenient to Nazrani Christian subjects. According to legend, the king of Edappally saw the hardships that Christians had to undergo to gather together for prayer and decided to provide land for Nazrans both for a cemetery and worshipping place adjacent to the Kolloppara Devi Temple.

The Very Rev. K. E. Oommen, the father of Philip Oommen, was born in 1881. He was born into a family of six



children. His elder brother, K. E. Jacob Kassessa, was a celibate priest trained by Vicar General Ipe Thoma Kathanar and ordained by Metropolitan Titus Ist at the Kolloppara Syrian Church.

The late Very Rev. K. E. Oommen received his school education from the Syrian Christian Seminary School, Tiruvalla, and the Church Missionary Society High School, Kottayam. He began his collegiate education at CMS college in Kottayam and graduated from Christian College Madras with a baccalaureate in arts. He was ordained as a priest in 1921. He married Sosamma Philip in 1901. She hailed from Vadakkeveetil in

Karthikapally, and they had three sons and two daughters. Dharmistan, (one who loves Dharma – Duty or Justice), as Philip Oommen was called at home, was their second child.

The traditional world in which they lived was regulated by customs and practices legitimized by myths and metaphysics of the Aryan system. Outwardly and functionally, it had the appearance of an integrated whole. But internally, hierarchy and separation by ascribing ontological differentiation was the way in which the system operated. The oft quoted Rig Veda and Manu Dharma may provide the necessary insights into this. Pointing to Swayambhu (Ishwara) it says, "The Brahmin is his mouth, his two arms are the Rajanya (warrior), his two thighs the Vaisya, (trader and agriculturist) and his feet the Shudhra (servile class)." (Rig Veda X, 90: 11-12)

Every religious representation has socio-political extensions in traditional society. Thus the above representation legitimized hierarchy and designated some communities in the society as untouchable and outcaste.

In such a rigid caste-ridden society of Travancore, Rani Gauri Lakshmi Bhai who succeeded Balarama Varma, appointed the then British Resident Col. Munro as Dewan after suspending Ummany Thampy from that post because of internal rivalries. It was Munro who introduced a secretarial system in Travancore.

Munro enacted land reforms and imposed control over the activities of Devaswom, the administration of the temples. To the judicial courts Munro appointed native Namboothiri Brahmins, Shudhras, and Syrian Christians, who were well versed in their own language and also in Sanskrit and who possessed a thorough knowledge of the laws of Manu which was



This robust, Gibraltar of a man, towering but childlike; sincere (what you see is what you get); warm but refreshingly 'cool'; a bishop of uncommon distinction with lively enthusiasm; level headed and sensitive with sympathetic concern; disarming, crusty good nature; intellectually impeccable, disciplined, lucid, so relentlessly logical; in his vicinity through his magnetic presence one feels as electric current circulating; his warm eyes seem to flash with energy, revealing his charismatic personality; most basic to his effectiveness, his endearing innocence; this 'golden tongued' preacher, true to his name, has a God-given imagination and God-given delivery, speaking out unsparingly about the follies of laity as well as clergy with humor; able to be at home in any place; behind his charming smile and compassionate nature exists a laser-like shrewdness that has totally captivated me; this Patriarch, a quintessential Christian, looms larger than life; God's wonderful gift to the Mar Thoma Church.

Dr. George Zachariah, Washington, D.C.

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required for the office of a Judge. He also established a Satta Wariola other than the caste norms with 34 sections for dispensing justice in the court. He abolished slave trade with a royal proclamation dated 5th December, 1812. It was Munro who initiated secular school education system as well as systematic theological education in Travancore. Through his initiative, Syrian Christians were able to establish the Syrian Christian Seminary at Chungam in Kottayam (now known as Pazhaya Seminary). He also invited educators from the Church Missionary Society to lead the educational institutions. He served both as Resident and Dewan till 1814 and as Resident till 1819.

When Dharmishtan came of age to join school, he joined Abraham Malpan Memorial School at Maramon for primary education and the sixth form at Kozhencherry St. Thomas High School, and later at St. John's High School, Eraviperoor. It was from the St. John's School, Eraviperoor, that Dharmishtan got his English School Leaving Certificate. It is interesting to note that in Kerala, schools are known as 'Pallikudam' which points to the historical fact that it was only the compound of the church that was open to the students of 'lower castes' for secular primary education in those days. It marks the introduction of new categories and concepts that challenged the Brahmin system of education provided to the upper castes. Science and mathematics became part of the new educational scheme, which gradually helped to evolve a scientific view towards nature and society in place of the mythical and metaphysical one.

In 1934, Dharmishtan enrolled in Union Christian College, Aluva, for collegiate education. Union Christian College was the result of the fellowship of six old students of the Madras Christian College: A. M. Varkey and K. C. Chacko of the Jacobite Church, C. P. Mathew of the Mar Thoma Church, V. M. Ittyerah, T. B. Ninan and K. Jacob of the Anglican church. A detailed scheme was drawn up for a high school or college in North Travancore with interdenominational co-operation. The plan was presented at a conference of representatives of the Anglican, Jacobite, and Mar Thoma churches of Travancore and Cochin held in January 1913 in Carey's Library of the Serampore College in Calcutta. The conference was held under the chairmanship of John R. Mott who was there with Mr. G. S. Eddy in connection with the formation of the Student Christian Association of India, Burma (Myanmar), and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Representing the churches, Bishop Gill, Mar Dinoysius, and Titus Mar Thoma were present. The scheme was in abeyance for a long time since K. C. Chacko fell ill, but it resurged finally in 1921 as the Union Christian College.

Institutions like the Union Christian college promoted national vision and feelings at that time. On 18th March, 1925, they accorded a reception to Gandhiji, the then symbol of the nationalist movement.

The presence of the teachers like T. S. Venkataraman, Kuttipuzha P. Krishnapillai, T. R. Anantharaman, T. V. Ramanujam, etc., gave a secular character to the institution.

The 1930's was a period of political turmoil in Travancore when Sri. Chithira Thirunal Bala Rama Varma, after ascending the throne, appointed C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar as legal and constitutional adviser in 1931. C. P., upon taking charge, announced that the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly was to be appointed on a statutory basis with expanded powers and functions. In the 72-member body, 48 would be elected by a franchise. Fourteen would be nominated by the government to represent various minority interests, and 10 would be officials. Minority communities including the S.N.D.P. Yogam, Muslim Service League, and Christians raised doubts as to whether they would get adequate representation through this system. In December of 1932, the three communities formed the All Travancore Joint Political Conference.

In January 1933, the minorities took a momentous step by launching the Abstention Movement. As feared by the Political Conference, the minorities got only 16 seats in the mid-June election of 1933. In 1934 more voices from the 'untouchables' demanding laws for social and economic upliftment and for temple entry began to be asserted.

Due to the abstention movement and demands for more civil rights, the system of constituencies was changed and an election was held in 1937. The minorities received a significant advancement. Later the Joint Political Conference changed its name to Samyuktha Party and finally Travancore State Congress. Later, the State Congress announced its aim as the attainment of responsible government under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja through peaceful and legitimate means. Pattam Thanu Pillai, C. Kesavan, and T. M. Varghese emerged as the leaders of the State Congress.

In this period, the undergraduate courses in History and English included courses in British Constitutional History and Political Science. They quoted Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and Abraham Lincoln. In U. C. College, every Christian lived with an ecumenical spirit. During the evening eight o'clock roll call, V. M. Ittyerah would check if everybody was in their room. In the morning there were regular chapel services; there were worships and Bible studies under the leadership of Roger Hicks. On Sundays, after the service, there was a Bible Circle led by K. C. Chacko. The books studied included 'Oneness with Christ'



By his humour and fine oratory, Chrysostom Thirumeni has encouraged his listeners to think and reflect on themselves for their life and the world beyond. With his teaching "know thyself," Thirumeni deserves comparison with the two greatest teachers, Socrates and Jesus. His jokes lead people to seek higher realities. The life of this "Eastern Philosopher" being a good subject matter for a Ph.D. thesis, could be based on "Church as a Community of Faith Reaching Out to Large World Community: Challenges of Mission in the 21st Century." I thank God for his eminent leadership.

Dr. T. M. Thomas, New York

and 'Christ's Way and Ours' by L.P. Larsen, 'Meaning of the Cross' and 'Meaning of Resurrection' by W. R. Malthy, and also selected Bible Reading and a study prepared by the Student Christian Federation. Students, who underwent such a social ferment, were always challenged to take up tasks either for the church or for the Nation through different means. The important point to be noted is that through institutions and organizations in that period an aspiration for National freedom and dream for a nation was created in the people. In June 1939 Philip Oommen graduated from Union Christian College, which was then affiliated with the Madras University.

It was at that time that the mission activities enjoined by the MarThoma Evangelistic Association in 1910 in North Canara came to a dead lock. To continue the mission, the MTEA decided to have an Ashram there. Rev. P. J. Thomas and Mrs. Thomas who were doing pastoral and educational work in Kottayam decided to join the North Canara Mission field. Mr. Philip Oommen and Mr. P. John Thomas, both University graduates, also expressed their willingness to join the North Canara mission. In one of the meetings of the friends of the project, the decision was taken that Ankola, between Karwar and Honavar, should be the location for the Ashram. The new group began their activities in Ankola Mission House on 28th September, 1940.

The Ashram group chalked out a plan for daily, weekly, and monthly life. The major part of the time during those first few months was spent in language study. However, particular attention was given to individual and common devotional periods, manual labour, and games. Joint study and discussion, weekly Holy Communion service and retreats were on their regular program. In the educational field, to uplift people of the Ager tribe, the Ashram opened a home for girls. Till that time, the Agers had never sent a girl to school. It was feared among the Agers that their children would die if the girls were sent to school. This fear gradually waned off. The medical work also gradually got acceptance from the community. Today, the Ashram hospital has 75 beds with twelve medical clinics covering the surrounding villages with a population of 10,000. About 20 evangelists from the Ashram, Evangelistic Association, the Diocese and Sevika Sangam stay and work in the several villages of Ankola.

In 1944, the Church sent Philip Oommen to United Theological College in Bangalore to do his Bachelor of Divinity Course of the Serampore University. He was ordained as a

Deacon and Kassessa respectively on January 1st and June 3rd of the same year so that he could minister to the new Mar Thoma Parish in Bangalore. The theological orientation received from this institution provided him with a systematic approach to Church and society. After completing the theological studies, Rev. Philip Oommen served the parishes in Kottarakkara, Manganam, and Thiruvananthapuram. On May 23, 1953, Rev. Philip Oommen was consecrated as Episcopa, Philipose Mar Chrysostom along with the late Suffragan Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasius and the late Valiya Metropolita Alexander Mar Thoma. After consecration, he was sent to Canterbury for a one-year theological program. Later, in 1954, Thirumeni represented the Church in the second assembly of World Council of Churches in Evanston. The delegates discussed in detail the responsibility of the laity, 'God's People,' in setting the agenda of the World.

In 1964 Thirumeni attended the eleventh Vatican Council as an invitee and in 1968 the fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in Sweden as the representative of the Mar Thoma Church as a member church. In these meetings the unity of the Churches and relation with people of other faith were discussed in detail. As a result our church entered into full communion with the Malabar Independent Syrian Church, Church of South India, and Church of North India within the country and churches of the Anglican Communion outside India. From the 1970's we began to hear pluralism and demands for decentralization at different stages. It was during this period Dalit theology, feminist theology and ecological sensitivity began to question the methods of 'mainstream' theology. The students' revolt in France in May 1968 also raised fundamental questions against modern epistemology. The term "postmodern" characterizes these fundamental shifts that reject generalizations and universalizations of varying traditions and methods of natural sciences, social sciences, determined character of social history, etc. Through the concept of a small Diocese and devolution of powers, decentralization became the practice of the Church. So does the postmodern era demand dialogue with people of other faiths as pilgrims in a shared world. It demands to alter the cultural practices that society has set over dalits and women, to create a new habitus to bloom life in a different order. It is on these specific tasks the Metropolitan is inviting the participation of the believing community. May the celebration of the golden jubilee year of his consecration turn our life towards that vision. ■



Chrysostom Thirumeni is known for his wisdom and wit but to me, he is a leader with a vision for the future, always willing to accept changes if changes will lead to progress. He knows the problems and possibilities of the Mar Thoma Community. He once said, "The life and witness of the dispersed community is integrally related to the life of the larger community. The community should write the agenda for the church. Direct your church to fulfill the needs of the existing community."

Ask yourselves – "How can we, a Diaspora Community, become a local community?"

Authority is not in bringing others to submission, it is in developing people to help themselves and others."

"Let us incorporate our children in all aspects of Church including worship in languages that they can read and understand, and let us keep them as integral part of each parish."

Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles, CA

Biblical Interpretation

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, New York

The Editorial Board of Messenger has decided to begin a series of Bible studies from the October issue onwards. These will be mainly thematic studies and doctrinal topics. This article may be considered as an introduction to the studies in the forthcoming issues.

Bible is the Word of God in the words of human beings. It was written by people who were inspired by the Spirit of God. The Biblical narratives are mainly retrospective documents. The Spirit of God has been active before the formation of the Bible, during the process of its formation—both in its oral and written traditions and after the completion of the Bible. Hence the Holy Spirit is the real interpreter of the Word of God.



mostly among the congregational churches. The interpretation here is mainly literal, otherworldly and individualistic. The second approach is found mostly in the mainline churches, especially in the Eastern tradition. Bible is understood here as the faith affirmations of the early Christian communities.

2. Two schools of thought: Apocalyptic and Prophetic

I. Authority of the Word of God

Two negative approaches are to be noted here: proof text approach and Bibliolatry. There are Christians who believe that the Bible gives answers to all questions that human beings ask. Well, here we have to remind ourselves that the Biblical writers didn't have before them many of our contemporary issues and as Dr. Stanley Samartha rightly reminds us:

'The Bible gives us a pattern of obedience and not a blueprint for action'. Bibliolatry is even more problematic. It is some sort of a worshipping attitude towards the Bible without going into the depth of it. The question here is whether we are prepared to go beyond the letters of the Bible. Here we have to distinguish between the 'Word of God' and the 'words of the Bible'. According to 2 Tim. 3:16 the authority of the Word of God is to be seen in four areas within our life of faith: for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness. Bible is both a divine as well as a human document.

II. Foundations of Biblical interpretation

1. Two approaches: sola scriptura (Bible alone) and Bible within the tradition of faith. The first approach is found

Both apocalyptic and prophetic elements are found in the Bible. For example, the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation are apocalyptic books. These were written in the context of persecution: Daniel was written in the context of the persecution of the Jews and Revelation was written in the context of the persecution of the early church. Apocalyptic literature is full of imageries, symbols, metaphors and numbers. Dualistic categories are also found in these writings; e.g. this world other world, God-Satan etc. We also have apocalyptic and prophetic eschatology (interpretation of the End times) in the Bible. A careful reading of the Biblical texts will reveal that Jesus' option is more prophetic which is more historical and transformative in nature.

3. Biblical world-view

Biblical world-view involves three elements:

- A. Belief system:** e.g., three-layer concept of the world, Israel as the chosen people of God etc.
- B. Symbol system:** all symbols are products of culture. There should be a continuous rediscovery of the meaning of Biblical symbols in each situation.



I had the privilege of knowing Chrysostom Thirumeni from the days he was the Rev. Philip Oommen (Dharmistan Achen). He has fulfilled the hope of his future. I have known him closely as a Diocesan Bishop when I was the first secretary of the U. K. Mar Thoma Congregation. His vibrant energy and incisive humor has enhanced over the years quite miraculously, but he is a unique servant of God and the leader of the Church. Long may he lead the Church.

Mathew Kallumpram, Manchester, U.K.

C. *Value system:* ancient Jewish society had several social taboos and in the New Testament we read how Jesus transcends those taboos through his miracles/signs of the Kingdom. We have both eternal and temporal values in the Bible. For example, in Rom.13:1 ff Paul advises the church to be 'subject to the authorities for all authorities come from God'. Here authority means the state of Rome. Does Paul intend to give us here an eternal doctrine about the Christian approach to the State? If the state becomes demonic and oppressive what should we do? A brief survey of the historical context will show that the persecution of the church by the Roman Empire was not severe in those days and Paul was mostly persecuted by his own people; whereas in Rev. 13 the same state of Rome is portrayed as a monster and the faithful are summoned to struggle against such an evil force.

4. *Towards a meaningful interpretation of the Bible*

Only a few tips are given in this direction. These insights will be underscored in the upcoming Bible studies.

A. *Vision of God.* Biblical God is not to be seen as the object of our worship. He is our eternal subject. He creates and re-creates. He is always for life, justice and fellowship. He is always against slavery, oppression, injustice and denial of human rights. He reveals himself to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Our task is to give witness to Christ vis-a-vis the Kingdom of God.

B. *Vision of the Kingdom of God.* The Kingdom of God is to be seen as an ultimate state of life, a community of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. It has both present as well as futuristic dimensions. Our life is in between the "already" and the "not yet" of the Kingdom of God.

C. *Vision of the human.* Human beings are created male and female in the image of God. We are co-workers with God in the world. Human life is inevitably in the community. Church is a community of faith.

D. *Context.* Context here means context then and context now. Each Biblical text has a particular context and immediate readers in the mind of the writer. Along with this, our contextual needs and challenges should be given due attention in our interpretation of the Bible.

E. *Historicity.* Bible is not a book of history. What we have in the Bible is an interpreted history. So a non-historical interpretation of the Bible should not be encouraged.

F. *Culture.* Culture has to do with the way of life, organic whole of ideas, values and goals of a given community.

Conclusion

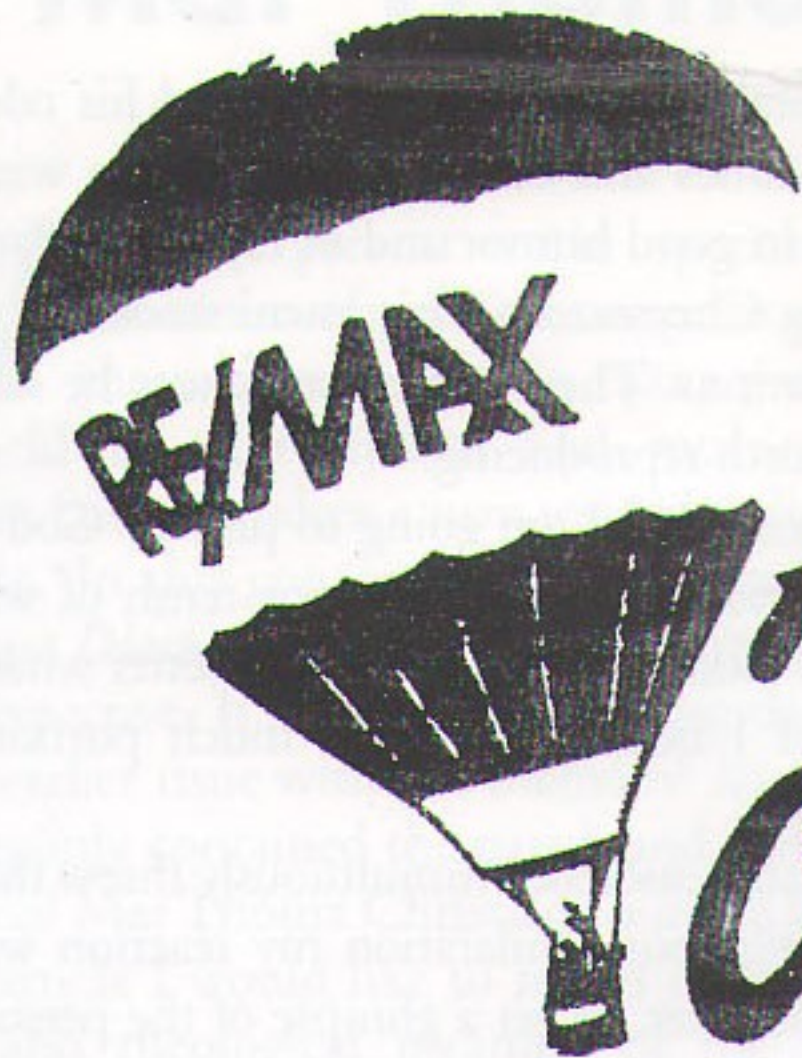
As a church, we are people of faith, not of a book. The Bible contains God's agenda for this world. As Hans Ruedi Weber, the well-known Bible study leader of W.C.C. reminds us "Bible is the only book that reads me" let us allow ourselves to be enriched, motivated and challenged by the Word of God. God is not bound by what he has done in the past. He has His own ways of doing things in this world. The question for us to ponder on is whether we have the preparedness to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who opens up new possibilities before us in our journey of faith. ■



Profound, prophetic, deeply spiritual, self-critical, authentic, and humble—some of the qualities that come to mind when I think of Metropolitan Chrysostom. Chrysostom believes, as the early church did, that the bishop must be, first and foremost, a servant to servants. Thirumeni has dedicated his life to the ministry of enabling his flock to meet the desperate needs of a broken world. Guided by his conviction that world does not exist for the church, but the church for the world, Chrysostom issues a clarion call to the church universal, not just the Mar Thoma Church, to pray, to think, and to act in a manner that brings healing and reconciliation to creation. It is simply impossible to be in his presence without being reminded once more what an awesome burden and calling the Christian bears in seeking to love the world as Christ loves the world. What a blessing it is to be in his presence!

Dr. John John Thatamanil, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Millsaps College

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Chrysostom Thirumeni—A Living Legend

Justice K. T. Thomas, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India

There are people who became famous in history when people regarded them so after their lifetime. But there are a few who would become living legends. In my view, Philipose Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan is a legendary personage, the kind of which might not appear in the Christian scenario for generations to come.

It is a thrill to listen to him when he is addressing a gathering. It is a greater thrill to listen to others while they are speaking about him. It is still greater a thrill to write about him on his completion of 50 years of Episcopal leadership. To put it euphemistically I have that thrill now when I am called upon to write this article on Chrysostom Thirumeni.

For the last 50 years the audience of Maramon Convention have been waiting each year to reach the time scheduled for that year for the address delivered by Chrysostom Thirumeni. I know of speakers whose speeches are relished by children particularly. I have also come across speakers whom young people admire copiously. Some others are favorite speakers for the feminine audience. Some others are specially favored by middle-aged people. Old people have their own choice of speakers. But in the case of Chrysostom Thirumeni there is no scope for segregating the audience into different categories, for, whenever he spoke, the children, the adolescents, the college students, the middle aged, and the old people, without exception, huddle together in the audience eagerly waiting for the commencement of the oratorical eloquence of Chrysostom Thirumeni. Once he starts, the entire audience listens to him spellbound and they enjoy every bit of it with sporadic outbursts of mirth. Inspired by the glow of his eloquence, his unique exhortations, and his playful banter, many in the audience get reformed.

Any man would normally fall into the trap of praises. Once you are brought into that dragnet you are spoiled and the talents gifted to you by the Almighty get eroded. But I have found that Chrysostom Thirumeni took special care not to fall into any such trap. He never gave in to sycophancy.

It happened a few years ago that an organization had decided to confer a coveted award on Chrysostom Thirumeni, that of "Kerala Acharya". When I was serving in the Supreme Court as a Judge, the committee approached me for formally conferring that award on him. At a function organized for that

purpose, all the speakers including me extolled his talents and highlighted his qualities and eulogized on how he was able to keep the audience in good humor and in rapt attention. At the end of the meeting Chrysostom Thirumeni stood up to give a reply to the felicitations. The first few sentences he said in his reply speech are worth reproducing.

"Let me tell you what I am going to pray to God tonight: O God, make me not to believe even one-tenth of what have been spoken of me today, because you know better what disaster would befall me if I believe even that much portion of the speeches made today."

Though the entire audience tumultuously threw themselves in to a loud and hilarious exhilaration my reaction was, apart from joining the laughter, to get a glimpse of the personality of Mar Chrysostom through the episode. He scrupulously avoided being praised by others and that was possible for him because of his implicit faith in God.

I have yet another instance to pen down that would show how he carefully keeps away from falling into eulogies. One Sunday, he conducted worship at the Safdarjang Marthoma Church, New Delhi. Since it was an unscheduled visit, his sermon was mostly extempore. I could not resist my temptation to call him over the phone in the afternoon to convey my irrepressible appreciation. His response was, "Ah!, now I know the person responsible for increasing my height these days; you are the cause because of such encomiums". Although said as banter, it was a reflection of the true personality of Mar Chrysostom Thirumeni.

I can say, without any fear of contradiction, that the Mar Thoma church is uniquely blessed in having a versatile personality as Chrysostom Thirumeni to be its prelate. He is perhaps the most lovable personality in the entire Christendom. Everyone who have been acquainted with him have spoken intimately about him. He became intimate to all not by means of any diplomatic strategy, but by his forthright and frank repartee. His reposte was rapier sharp. A person having such a weapon would normally gather only enemies, but Mar Chrysostom has gathered only admirers because he wounded none by his retorts. Even the victims of his inimitable banter style joined the rest of the audience in enjoying the bonhomie.

(Continued on page 31)



Right doing is right being; this is the secret and simplicity of Mar Chrysostom. The great inspiration in his life is his view of Jesus Christ as the spiritual creditor. His innermost thoughts are like a fountain and flows out from his heart like a river. If laughter is the best medicine, Mar Chrysostom manufactures it and delivers it as a gift with no price tag attached. He is like a university where many have enrolled, but none have graduated because the passing grades are set high and the grading itself is tough. A bishop who never recites any memorized speeches and who waives his own rights to obey the Lord. May God continue to bless him abundantly for his own and our Church's future.

Dr. John P. Lincoln, Lubbock, TX

Diaspora: What Does It Mean For Mar Thoma Christians Theologically?

Prof. Plammootil V. Cherian, M.Div., Ph.D., Ann Arbor, MI

When the present world operates on the canon of political correctness and the society at large in many parts of the world is multicultural and multiracial, Christian faith has taken a turn towards religious pluralism. In this context it is appropriate that we discuss *Diaspora* as it relates to us from a biblical perspective. It is my understanding that we had an earlier issue with the theme of *Diaspora*, and it mainly contained the parish and community life of Mar Thoma Christians outside India. In this article I would like to reflect on the historical and theological meaning of the word *Diaspora* with the vision and mission implied in it.



The term *Diaspora* is a Greek word meaning "dispersion" or "scattering" or "sowing." It originates from the word *diaspore*, which is a spore or a seed that can be dispersed to produce a new plant. The root words of both *Diaspore* and *Diaspora* are in Latin [*dia* = through, and *speirein* = to scatter or sow]. The equivalent word for *Diaspora* in Hebrew is *Galut*—meaning, "exile." Thus *Diaspora* means dispersed or scattered seeds to propagate new generations. As it relates to humanity, the word *Diaspora* was originally applied to denote the dispersion of Jews among the Gentiles after the Babylonian exile, or the aggregates of Jewish communities scattered from their homeland. It also denotes the Jewish Christians who lived outside of Palestine in the apostolic times. Although the term refers to the physical dispersion of Jews, it also carries religious, political, philosophical, and eschatological connotations as far as the Jews consider Palestine as their homeland.¹ The word also applies to the dispersion of any people with a common origin, background or faith. However, the term *Diaspora* is more relevant theologically to people who have been scattered from their place of origin and who hope to return to their homeland permanently, like the dispersed Jews who longed to return to Israel.

As the world has become more and more a global family the word *Diaspora* has become less meaningful in its literal sense. There are more Jews outside Israel today than within, and those in different parts of the world are politically, socially and economically powerful.

Thus we have an Indian *Diaspora* globally among which Mar Thoma Christians are an entity. As far as the Jews and Christians are concerned, the hope of an "ingathering" to their homeland—the Promised Land—has deeper theological implications. It is in that context and meaning that I intend to analyze the vision, mission and the lifestyle of the Mar Thoma *Diaspora* globally. Mar Thoma Christian communities are present today in the United States of America, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore, and the Middle East. While we have become a *Diaspora*

for reasons other than the Jewish *Diaspora*, it is important to examine the similarities of both groups in their call from a biblical point of view to understand our plight, our resettlements, our religious and cultural heritage, the future of our generations, and our vision and mission in the respective countries where we have been dispersed.

God's Original purpose for the Jews

Apostle Paul clearly explained God's purpose in calling Abraham and establishing the Jewish nation (Rom. 4:16,17; Gal.3:6-9). God directed Israel to the land of Canaan (Palestine), a land that never belonged to them but from where they were to root out the evil and immorality (Ex. 23:32-33; Num. 33:50-56). God promised Abraham that he would bless the world through his descendants—the Jewish race from which the Messiah would come (Gen. 12:3). God intended the Jewish nation to be a separate and holy nation that would teach the world about God, introduce the Messiah and then carry on his work in the world (Ex. 19:4-6). God knew that no nation was good enough to be called his people—his "treasured possession" (Ex. 19:5). He chose Israel not because of anything special they had done or deserved, but in his love and mercy God promised Abraham who wholeheartedly believed and obeyed God's call to leave his homeland, and set out for the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1-9). Abraham's belief in God made him righteous (Gen. 15:6). God put Israel through a rigorous training program so that they could be the agents of salvation to the rest of the world. All nations of the



Mar Chrysostom has repeatedly mentioned that his philosophy is "Bringing people together not for sending them away." His words are reinforced with love and affection. He respects all, regardless of their social status, age or other human differences. He upholds the principles of true Christian spirit. I still remember his most affectionate words to me from 23 years back, when he visited New York Mar Thoma Congregation.

Jacob Chacko, Staten Island, NY

earth would have to be blessed through Abraham's descendants (Gen. 18:18). Isaiah predicted that Gentiles and Kings would come to the Lord through Israel (Is.11:10). However, after Solomon, the nation gave up its mission to tell the world about God by rebellion and rejection of the Messiah.

The History of the Jewish Diasopra

According to biblical chronology, in the divine plan and purpose of God, the Jewish State was established in 1406 BC after forty years of wandering in the desert after their miraculous liberation from slavery in Egypt where they were in bondage for 430 years (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40; Num. 14, 34).² Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel, the ancestral home of David, Israel's greatest king, and the location of the temple, their national pride. It was intended to be the center of worship of the true God and a symbol of justice to all people. But Israel had become disobedient to God and insensitive to human needs. Jesus wept looking over Jerusalem at what was going to happen to it. "O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under the wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate" (Mt. 23:37, 38). Here we see the depth of Jesus' feeling for the lost sheep of Israel and for his beloved city, which would soon be destroyed. After about 1475 years of statehood, the Jewish nation came to an end in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem in fulfillment of the prophecy.

How did Israel become a Diaspora?

Israel was ruled by the Judges for about 325 years (1375-1050 BC), after which Saul was enthroned as the first king of Israel, moving away from theocracy. Israel opted to be ruled by kings as other surrounding nations (1 Sam. 8:6-22). Saul ruled for forty years and he had great success when he obeyed God. But his failures resulted from acting on his own. By his own choice he separated himself from God and eventually alienated his own people. Eventually, Israel had its greatest king David, who ruled for forty years. David is remembered and respected for his heart for God. The Bible makes no effort to hide David's shortcomings, however great he was. Along with his greatness we also see the sinful side of David, but he was quick to acknowledge them and confess them (Ps. 51). His confession was from the heart and his repentance was genuine.

Until the time of Solomon Israel was one nation. As Solomon ascended to the throne, David charged him to obey

God's laws and to walk in his ways (1 Kings 2:3). This Solomon obeyed and when given the choice of gifts he humbly asked for wisdom and discernment (1 Kings 3:9). As a result Solomon's reign began with great success including the construction of the temple—his greatest achievement. Unfortunately his heart was turned away from the Lord to the false gods of his pagan wives (1 Kings 11:1-4). After Solomon's reign the kingdom was divided into South (Judah) and North (Israel). The divided kingdom (2 Kings 12) drifted into idolatry and corruption that led to the collapse of the kingdom and the captivity of their people. The succession of evil rulers and the rebellious life of the people of the Northern kingdom continued until they were conquered by Shalmaneser of Assyria who led the people to captivity in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:6). Of all the kings of Israel and Judah, only two of the kings of Judah, Josiah and Hezekiah followed God with spiritual character and moral conscience. Because of their obedience to God and their fervor to make spiritual reforms and bring people closer to the God of Abraham, the Southern kingdom of Judah stood until 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Judah and held the people captive. Throughout the dark periods of both the North and South, we see about thirty prophets who reminded them of God's message and warned both the leaders and the people. God's mighty prophets Elijah and Elisha were among them.

With the dispersion of Jews the chief center of Judaism shifted from place to place—Babylon, Persia, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, United States and other parts of the world. The Jewish Diaspora was scattered to India also and one colony flourished in Cochin, Kerala. The Indian Postal Service issued a Commemorative stamp in 1968 honoring the age old Synagogue in Cochin.³ Wherever they settled, they gradually adopted distinctive languages, rituals and cultures of the region and submerged themselves in non-Jewish environments more completely than others. While some lived in peace, others became victims of violent anti-Semitic behavior, as was the case in Nazi Germany under Hitler. Of the estimated 14 million Jews world wide, today 4 million live in Israel, 5.5 million live in United States, 2.3 million live in former Soviet Union and the rest elsewhere.^{1,4}

Israel was dispersed by force and desire

The Jewish Diaspora outnumbered the Jews in Palestine even before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This fact has important implications. Jews were displaced in three ways:

1. A large number of Jews were taken as hostage and captives by Assyria (722 BC, 2 Ki. 17:1-41), Babylon (598/597



Revered and Fond Thoughts about our Metropolitan

- Bishop Chrysostom is one of the rarest, if once seen or heard, would never be forgotten
- A Bishop always ready to address any age group for a meaningful conversation
- My son still cherishes the memory of playing Nintendo when he was 6 years old, with Bishop Chrysostom
- There were no youth league retreats without Bishop Chrysostom in my youth league days
- As the Patron of our family he has linked the extended family around the globe
- We receive the best blend of jokes and facts for life and we retain all of it because of the divine gifts that dwell in our Metropolitan.

Thomas Koshy, Washington, D.C.

BC, 2 Kings 24:6-15; 25:27-30; 2 Chr. 36:5-8; and 586 BC, 2 Kings 24:17-25:21; 2 Chr. 36:10-21), and many were later scattered by Medo-Persia, the Greeks and the Romans. Many others were taken as slaves.

2. While many exiles returned (538 BC, 458 BC and 445 BC), many Jews chose to remain in the foreign lands (Ezra 1:1-2:67). Though Cyrus the Great of Persia in God's great providence allowed the Jews to return to their homeland in 538 BC, most chose to remain in Babylon (Is. 41:1; 45:1-8). Persian records indicate that many Jews in captivity had accumulated great wealth. Returning to Jerusalem would mean giving up everything they had accumulated—many preferred their wealth and security in the lands of exile to the sacrifices they had to make for God's work.
3. Still many others went into different places by their own free will largely for the reason that they were attracted by the "green pastures" that seemed to provide numerous possibilities of "life out there."

The main reason for the dispersion of the Jews was God's punishment for their rebellion and ungodly ways (2 Kings 17:1-17; 2 Kings 25:1-30; Ezek. 12:1-28). Judah was invaded by Babylon three times (2 Kings 24:1, 10; 25:1), just as Israel was invaded by Assyria three times (2 Kings 15:19,29; 17:1-41). After 70 AD the Jewish history would be only the history of the Jewish Diaspora until 1948, when under the United Nation's charter the present day State of Israel was carved out.

The term Diaspora (scattered or dispersed) was more meaningful at a time when Jews were required to make a pilgrimage to Israel. In the Old Testament times and the time of Christ on earth, all Jewish males were required to go to Jerusalem to observe three feasts by regulation:

1. The Feast of Passover and Unleavened bread (Lev. 23:5) was celebrated in remembrance of the sparing of the first born of Israel in Egypt and the liberation of Jews from bondage. It also reminded the people that they were leaving the old sinful (leavened) life behind and entering a renewed life in obedience to God.
2. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-22) was a celebration of the first crops of harvest reminding them how God provided for them.
3. The Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33-43) was celebrated as a reminder of God's protection and guidance in the

desert when they wandered for forty years. It also reminded them of Israel's commitment to God and trust in his guidance and protection. When Israelites made annual pilgrimages they were looking forward to an ingathering which provided them the opportunity for family reunion, a national patriotic feeling, a sense of belonging to the Jewish nation, and above all, for a religious renewal. Today there is no legal or theocratic requirement of observance of these and perhaps they may celebrate their traditions, with modifications in their respective places. Israelites were a *Diaspora* because they were exiled, captivated, and forced out of their country because of rebellion against God. But they were looking forward to gather back in their homeland to observe their religious festivals and national unity.

God's original purpose for the Mar Thoma Christians

Like Abraham was separated, God sent Apostle Thomas to India to the Malabar Coast to separate a group from the pagan community of idol worshipers that would worship and obey a living God and propagate his Gospel throughout the land of India and beyond, and to evangelize India. Indian culture and practices were in many respects similar to the pagan culture of the Canaanites such as idol worship (Ex. 23:32-33), human sacrifice (2 Chr. 28:3), snake charming and worshipping (Ps. 58:4, 5; Jer.8:17), temple prostitution and immorality (2 Kings 23:7; Jer. 13:27). Many of these detestable customs were practiced by the Israelites. The civilization of the Canaanites, Egypt and India parallel in many respects.² Even today many of the detestable practices are prevalent in India in the form of ignorant worship and temple acts. God found the need for a special group, just as God found Abraham and his descendants a special group with a special purpose, to remove the ignorant traditions of idol worship like the Canaanites and to educate them in godly ways. Our forefathers were blessed by receiving the gospel that Apostle Thomas brought to us.

How the Mar Thoma Community became a Diaspora?

The Mar Thoma Community became a Diaspora by will and not by exile or captivity. We are exiles and captives to our own agenda or problems. However, I believe that our dispersion to



Bishop Chrysostom: A star in every way. Through my years as council member I experienced the manifold images of this great mind. Dependable reference point and focus of admiration, respect and wonder. His great thoughts find finite expressions through his golden tongue. His pearly words of wisdom are received by others "as the heart panteth for the water brooks" to quench its thirst. A great leader who listens and responds appropriately to make collective decisions. May God continue to bless him abundantly.

Dr. Thomas Abraham, New Jersey

different parts of the world in search of better opportunities was by God's providential plan. God wants us to be a light in the places where we live. We were called and dispersed to proclaim the Word of God, which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105). We have no legal mandate to return to Kerala for any observance or festivals. In most of the communities in North America and Europe we live aggregated and our religious needs are met through priests from Kerala, and in our places of living we are part of the community. While the first generation is alien to the new places the succeeding generations are citizens with all the rights and privileges except Middle Eastern countries. Future generations do not consider themselves a *Diaspora* in the literal sense.

The Diaspora and the Gospel

Since *Diaspora* is the term applied for the dispersed Jews and God's plan and purpose for the Jews were to propagate the seeds of faith, we cannot discuss *Diaspora* apart from its intended purpose—spreading the gospel. As explained earlier, God planned that through the Jewish nation the entire world would come to know God (Gen. 12:3). Apostle Paul, a Jew himself loved his people (Rom. 9:1-5) and wanted to give them every opportunity to join him in the proclamation of God's salvation. Jesus asked his disciples to go to the Jews first because "he came first to his own, yet his own did not recognize him, yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become the children of God" (John 1:10-12). He came to the Jews first as God chose them to tell the rest of the world about him. The disciples and apostles preached the gospel of the risen Christ throughout the Roman Empire and as a result Gentiles were pouring into the church. God's message of salvation is for all people regardless of race, sex, or national origin (Gen. 12:3; Is. 25:6; 56:3-7; Mal. 1:11; Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 3:29, 30; Gal. 3:28).

Moses reminded the Israelites of God's purpose in selecting them as a nation and called them for a renewal of the covenant, before his last days as the leader of the Jews (Dt. 29:1-30:20). At Mt. Sinai forty years earlier, God and Israel made a covenant (Ex. 19:20). In the covenant God promised to bless the Israelites by making them the nation through whom the rest of the world could know God. In return the Israelites promised to love and obey God in order to receive material and spiritual blessings. Moses reviewed this covenant and reminded them of their moral duty and the severe consequences if they failed to observe them.

How is the Mt. Sinai Covenant applicable to Christians?

Apostle Paul explained that all believers in Christ are children of God. "Consider Abraham: He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'" So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Gal 3:6-9). Thus the real children of Abraham are those who have faith, not necessarily those who were physically born in his lineage, not those who simply claim they are children of Abraham, not those who keep the law, but those who HAVE FAITH. All believers in every age, and from every nation share Abraham's blessings. This is a great promise of hope, a great heritage for us and a solid foundation for living.

In that heritage, our forefathers obtained faith through the work of St. Thomas, as we believe. Of all the people in India, God chose us to receive the Gospel in the subcontinent with the promise of material and spiritual blessings through whom the rest of India would know Christ. Being a Christian in Kerala was a special privilege and God has been faithful in his part of the covenant to us. The fact that the 3% population of Christians in India in 1975 is only 2.5% in 2000 indicates that we have not been very effective in attracting others to Christ.

Who is the true Israel?

Theologically, a *Diaspora* still remains at large. In order to find out who they are, we must define who is the true Israel. True Israel includes all people who believe in God through faith in Christ. Paul clearly stresses this fact (Rom. 4:16-25; Gal. 3:6-9). Abraham pleased God through his simple faith alone before he had even heard the rituals that would become so important to the Jewish people. We too are saved by faith, by FAITH ALONE. It is not by pleasing God, by doing good deeds that we are saved; neither is it by claiming our heritage as the children of Abraham or as St. Thomas Christians. We are saved ONLY THROUGH FAITH in Jesus Christ. If good deeds were the yardstick of our spiritual life, Jesus would not have found much ground in chastising the Pharisees and the religious leaders. A person who has absolute faith in Christ will have the qualities of love and will naturally do good works as the Holy Spirit guides.

All believers are a *Diaspora* since our citizenship is in heaven—the kingdom of God (Phil. 3:20). We are dispersed in different parts of the world to be seeds of faith. Jews were scattered, by



Valiya Thirumeni, your smile, exercise of humour and leadership give a gift, not a load, to every living human being. You are an effective and influential channel for Jesus Christ and His church. We are touched by your respect for individuals. Best wishes and prayers go to you, Valiya Thirumeni, on your Episcopal Golden Jubilee.

C. V. Samuel, Detroit, MI

force and by free will. We are scattered by free will. Whether by force or free will, the purpose was, and is to propagate the seeds (*diaspora*) of faith and bring forth others into faith.

In the parable of the kingdom of God (Luke 13:22-30) Jesus explained that the kingdom of God would not necessarily be inhabited with the people we expect to find there. Jews have rejected the Messiah and those Jews who cannot accept Christ will not enter the kingdom. Many could say "We ate and drank with you and you taught us in our streets. But God will reply I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, you evildoers. There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from the east and west, and north and south and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be the first, and first who will be the last" (Lk. 13:26-30). Thus it is clear that there will be many surprises in the kingdom of God.

Our Vision, Mission and Lifestyle as a Diaspora

Vision is the ability to perceive something not actually visible, as through mental acuteness or keen foresight. In theology, a vision is a miraculous revelation of God's truth and it comes to us through the intervention of God, his angels or the Holy Spirit instructing us to do what is necessary with foresight. Nehemiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zechariah, Joseph and Mary, Apostle John and Paul all had visions. Nehemiah had a vision and he shared it with fellow Jews in exile. "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace. I also told them of the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me" (Neh. 2: 17-18).

Spiritual renewal often begins with one person's vision. We often underestimate people and don't challenge others with our visions for God's work in the world. God gave Isaiah vision with a difficult mission (Is. 6:1-6). He had to tell people who believed they were blessed by God, but instead God was going to destroy them because of their disobedience. Ezekiel came to the exiles with several visions to show God's awesome glory and to warn them of sin's consequences before it was too late. Daniel and John were others who used apocalyptic imagery in their visions.

Mission is carrying out specific projects that were revealed to us through vision or by command. The translation of a vision into action is what is called mission. Jesus' mission was the most hardest and even against the sever agony he did not try to get out

of his mission. The risen Christ sent his disciples with a new mission. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always unto the very end of the age" (Mt. 28:19-20).

We are adopting everything culturally and socially at the expense of our spiritual life as a community. We are rapidly conforming to the pattern of this world as the Jews did with the catastrophic result of alienation from God. This is not a problem just outside Kerala or in the West, but within our native places also. As Christians we are called "not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2).

God has selected us in the Indian subcontinent to propagate the gospel to all parts of India. We have had the opportunity to scatter to the West—North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. We are in Malaysia and Singapore, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Middle Eastern countries of Islamic faith. *The vision of a Marthoma Diaspora should be to strengthen ourselves and our generations in the spiritual life and to sow the seed of faith in the lands we inhabit on the globe.*

We are called to be the salt of the earth and to show the Light of the World. Are we flavorful salt and our lamp filled with oil? Or are we becoming the salt without flavor and are our lamps empty of oil? Thus in the theological sense, Mar Thoma Christians, as all other Christians are a *Diaspora* to scatter the **seeds of faith**. Are we? There is a Japanese proverb, which says, "Vision without action is a daydream, and action without vision is a nightmare." May the Lord help us to translate our visions into actions and may our actions as *Diaspora* be with clear visions. ■

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The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom is blessed with a very unusual charismatic personality. He brims with intellect, opportune wit, high idealism, sincere dedication, altruism, and above all dependence on God and theological knowledge. I consider myself very fortunate indeed to have had the opportunity to spend quality time with this blessed and great personality.

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History of the Mar Thoma Church

Rev. Sunni E. Mathew, Los Angeles, CA

This is the first of a series of articles on Church History. It will be continued in the forthcoming issues.

We are living in a world in which many individuals or even communities are not sure of their roots and standing grounds as far as their faith, practices, and total worth are concerned. This is because of the fact that they tend to lose their identity consciousness. Identity consciousness is a pre-requisite for asserting the worth of a person or a society. Otherwise one will be lost in the crowd. Awareness of history provides this identity consciousness. It answers our quest, "Who we are? What we are? How we are? And how we have to be?" That is the reason why Philip Schaff said, "The Present is the fruit of the past, and the germ of the future."¹ As members of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, awareness of its history provides ample room for a strong identity consciousness. In fact, that provides us a feeling of worth and a purpose to live in the midst of diverse culture, practices and perceptions.

WE ARE AN ORIENTAL CHURCH

Many a time, most of us are not sure of the category of church in which we fall. Christian churches throughout the world could be broadly categorized as follows, on the basis of their place of origin, theology and practices:

1. The Western Church
2. The Eastern Church

Eastern Churches are the group that refers to the churches that are developed in the eastern half of the Roman Empire, along with those dependent communities even though those churches were founded outside the boundaries of the empire. In AD 293 Emperor Diocletian divided Roman Empire into four provinces; Gaul, Italy, Illyricum and Orient. But after the death of Theodosius I in 395, the empire was divided into two halves. In practice they were separate and independent. The Western part included



Gaul, Italy and a part of Illyricum and was called the Roman Empire. Eastern part included Illyricum and the Orient and that part was called Byzantine Empire. Churches that generally fall on the Western side ecclesiastically belonged to the Latin or Western Church. On the other hand, churches on the eastern Byzantine Empire ecclesiastically belonged to the Greek and Syriac speaking churches known as the Eastern Churches. They could be further sub-divided into various groups. The Western Church could be divided into Roman Catholic Church and different denominations of the Protestant churches that fall in line with the reformation inspiration of the 16th century. Eastern Church is divided into Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Churches. Oriental Churches are also called by the name Lesser Eastern Churches. The name Lesser is used in terms of their size. Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church falls into this category along with the Indian Orthodox Church, Jacobite Church etc.

BEGINNING

History of the Mar Thoma Church goes back to the history of Christianity in India. In order to get a general idea of this history, we have to go back to the first century. But, most of the period of Indian Church history is shrouded in darkness. We possess little or no material evidences to find out what has happened. Most of the details come in the form of legends and traditions. One could find the tradition embedded in folk songs like Ramban Pattu (Songs composed by Thomas Ramban around the 16th century), Margam Kali Pattu (a typical Christian folk art), etc. Whatever little material evidences we had were destroyed either by negligence or through force by the western Christian arrogance. Therefore, it also has a peculiar history of having difficulty in reconstructing her history. Above

¹Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Vol. 1*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991, p.20



I had the privilege of listening, meeting and traveling with Chrysostom Thirumeni for the last fifty years. In 1953, I was fortunate to attend the reception meeting at Victoria Jubilee Hall, Trivandrum, to felicitate the then "new Episcopa." A bishop of rare caliber with determination and commitment. His emphasis on study of the Bible, family worship and evangelistic missions had brought great blessings to our members and the Church as a whole.

Thomas Mattapallil, Staten Island, NY

that, it also has the history of persecution not mainly from the non-Christian locals but from the hands of the so-called Christian arrogance of the Western Christianity.

APOSTOLIC ORIGIN

Christian faith entered the land of India even while most of the world did not have a chance to know about it. There is a very strong tradition that St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, brought it into the land. Tradition says that St. Thomas came to the Southern coast of India and landed at Cranganore (Kodungallur) a famous port at that time in the year 52 A. D. He preached the gospel to the Jewish settlers there. Further he traveled inland and established seven churches. They are at Cranganore (Malankara), Parur, Palur (Chavakkad), Gokkamangalam, Niranam, Chayal (Nilakkal), and Quilon (Kalyan). He is supposed to have ordained priests from Sankarapuri, Pakalomattom, Kalli and Kalliankal families. Eventually he moved to Mylapore in the Madras province. There he was martyred in A. D. 72.



St. Thomas

The above-mentioned tradition is the general tradition upheld by the Syrian Christians as well as the native people of Kerala. Folk art forms like margamkali and Ramban Pattu accepted this tradition and used it to communicate it. This was the tradition that the Portuguese heard and recorded following their landing in Kerala. There is another tradition distinct from the above-mentioned one. This is mentioned in the 2nd – 3rd century work (180-230 AD) called the Acts of Thomas. This tradition is as follows. After the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ when the disciples were sitting together and were assigning various places of work for each of them, India fell for Thomas. Meanwhile Habban, a merchant, met him and he was looking for a carpenter who could build a beautiful palace for the King Gondaphorus of the Indo-Parthian region. Thomas was

introduced to the King as a carpenter. King gave him enough money to build a palace. But Thomas distributed the money to the poor. When the King came to see the palace, there was no palace. In his fury, the King ordered to capture Thomas and Habban. They were put in prison. Meanwhile, Gad, the brother of Gondaphorus died. He was taken into heaven where he saw a very beautiful mansion. When he enquired about that, he got the answer that Thomas had built that for Gondaphorus. Gad pleaded to go back to earth and convey this to his brother. He was given permission. Hearing this, Gondaphorus released Thomas and they accepted the Christian faith. From there Thomas went to the Kingdom of Mazdei. There he performed many miracles. But when aristocratic ladies of the palace accepted the faith and in response abandoned their marriage, the King became furious. Thomas suffered martyrdom. After some years his remains were secretly removed to Edessa, in Persia.

Church Father Jerome says that, “The Son of God was present in all places with Thomas in India, with Peter in Rome, with Paul in Illyria—and with every preacher of the Gospel in all the regions they traversed,” Doctrine of the Apostles written down in the 3rd century also says that, “India and all its own countries and those bordering it, even to the farther sea received the Apostle’s hand of priesthood from Judas Thomas, who was Guide and Ruler in the Church which he built and ministered there.” Gregory of Nazianzus who died in 389 AD discussing about the work of apostles among the strange nations mentioned, “...were not the Apostles strangers amidst the many nations and countries over which they spread themselves? ...Luke with Achaia, Andrew with Epirus, John with Ephesus, Thomas with India...” Ambrose of Milan who died in 397 AD, St. Paulinus of Nola who died in 431 AD, Gregory of Tours who died in 531 AD, all certify that the sphere of Thomas’ work was India.

In general, it is upheld by the Mar Thoma Christians, that they have a great heritage and form the part of a Church that has apostolic origin. But not all accepted this claim in full. There were dissenting voices, especially from the western historians following the coming of the scientific age. That made the history of reconstruction of the history of Indian Christianity a Herculean task. ■



My personal acquaintance with Chrysostom Thirumeni goes back to more than two decades, especially my three years tenure as the Diocesan Treasurer, working with him. I have great admiration and heartfelt gratitude to Almighty Lord for lifting up such a wonderful leader of his caliber for our Church. Commitment to noble causes, unwavering dedication and leadership and contributions to the struggle against social evils are commentary. His personal magnetism, sense of humor and ability to endear extends beyond denominational and social barriers. May Lord shower His choicest spiritual and physical blessings upon Thirumeni on this occasion.

M. K. Thomas, New Jersey

Towards A "Diasporic" Theology

Rev. Valson Thampu

Diaspora is at the root of the human predicament in the post-lapsarian state. The Edenic existence was presumably one of rootedness in a specific locale. The Fall of man launched our species into the orbit of uprootedness. Adam and Eve became exiles from Eden and Cain, a restless wanderer: the first ambassador of Diaspora. The first city in the Bible is a Diaspora achievement. It is as a wanderer that Cain builds the first city (Gen. 4:17).

Post-Cain, no intrinsic spiritual value is ascribed to a territorially circumscribed or stagnant way of life. On the contrary, there is a thread of scepticism, if not suspicion, running right through the biblical accounts concerning human settlements qua settlements, especially of an urban kind Sodom and Gomorrah are the earliest examples of it. Even the valley of Shinar, where the great Tower of Babel was attempted, corroborates this pattern (Gen. 11). The problem is not merely that great cities like Nineveh become cesspools of ungodliness and provoke the righteous indignation of God. It is that rootedness tends to breed, somehow, spiritual inertia and rebelliousness.

The reason for this is not far to seek. In a stagnant way of life, human beings tend to encircle themselves with the splendour of their own handiwork. This is an instinct that seems to be basic to our humanity, as is intuited in the instance of the Tower of Babel. The most significant instinct at work in this event is the desire to shift one's foundation from God to one's own handiwork, in this instance, a gigantic tower.

As against this, the territorial displacement, if you like, of people seems spiritually more fruitful in the biblical narrative. It is difficult to imagine Abram becoming Abraham without being called out of the land of his forefathers (Gen. 12). It was in the course of the journey from Egypt to Canaan that the Jews were reborn

as a nation and they were imbued with profound spiritual experiences and revelations. Coming to the New Testament, it was in the course of a journey that Saul encountered Jesus. In contrast, the High Priest, under whose authorization Saul rushed about hounding the followers of Jesus, seems self-exiled from the dawn of a new vision.

Jesus himself is a Diaspora personality. Heaven was his home. The Word becoming flesh and dwelling in our midst (Jn. 1:14) is a Diaspora enterprise. If he were not, he would not have encountered, for example, the woman of Samaria, for no devout Jew would have ventured into the Samaritan territory. The Holy Spirit embodies the dynamism of the Diaspora predicament. The wind blows where it pleases. Staying put or luxuriating in the status quo is the last thing we associate with the Spirit of God. It is the Diaspora element that seems to make the difference between idol worship and walking with the living God. Idols are the gods of stagnation. The living God, says Jesus, sits neither on this mountain nor on that mountain (Jn. 4:23-24).

It is into a spiritual Diaspora that Jesus calls us. He calls us to send us out as his mission-partners. Mission involves movement, of which journeying is the most explicit, but not the most essential, aspect. But physical movement or displacement is not the most significant aspect of this situation: it is the mandate to be different from the world for the sake of the world. Even when we are not in a distant land or different climate, or even when we are in our own homeland and among our own people, as Christians we are spiritually in a Diaspora sort of situation, for we are called to be different. A Christian is required not to conform to the pattern of the world (Rom. 12:1-2). No matter where he is, he has no permanent city on this earth. He is a Diaspora pilgrim; and we must move on.



The two phrases that come to mind when I think of Chrysostom Thirumeni is "laughter is the best medicine 'and' problem? — there is no problem." Thirumeni's unique sense of humor and unworried management style make him a true leader. His optimism in the midst of crisis enable him to solve them effectively and efficiently. This approach in his lifestyle has given him longevity and created harmony in our church. We ought to learn these lessons.

Abraham Manaloor, Dallas, TX

What does our Diaspora imply?

There are three possibilities in this context. (a) We are a Diaspora people in a territorial sense only. (b) We are a Diaspora people in a spiritual sense. (c) We are a Diaspora people territorially and spiritually. For those who continue to be in the land of their forefathers, Diaspora can have only a spiritual dimension. For those who have opted to be in a different geographical setting, Diaspora could have a territorial and spiritual connotation, though the likelihood is very real of it being reduced to a mere territorial angst, a residual nostalgia kept alive by a simmering anxiety on account of being transplanted in a different and distant soil. As anthropological studies of the human predicament in the urban context has shown, the mere fact of being uprooted from the land of one's ancestors produces psychological anxiety at the root of a person's consciousness and this colours one's outlook in a powerful way. Normally this anxiety operates below the level of consciousness. It dissipates only over a period of three generations. But this applies only to the psychological dimension of Diaspora. Our spiritual Diaspora should never end. Illustrated by the example of the Church at Laodicea, which became neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm; totally domesticated within the given cultural milieu. Both the Church and the individual believer are meant to be a radical and transforming presence wherever they are planted by God. The question whether or not we should become a local community is one of academic interest only.

The concept of Diaspora dates back, let us note, to the pre-globalization phase of human history when nation states and ethnic identities reigned supreme in the socio-political consciousness of our species. This accounts, to a large measure, for the deep pathos of the concept. Yet even centuries ago, those who spent long periods of time away from home (sea-farers and explorers being obvious categories) were not bitten by the 'Diasporic' bug. Similar is the case with those who deem themselves 'world

citizens'. A certain chthonic imagination, a nostalgic parochialism, is at work in the way we emote the Diaspora. This needs to be interrogated in the light of globalization, if only because cultural homogenization is integral to globalization. The same consumerist-materialistic culture is spreading all over the world, emptying the concept of Diaspora of its cultural resonance. Those who live in their own 'familiar' environs know the stormy and sweeping changes that buffet them. They are becoming 'strangers' in their own 'environs,' aliens in their own homeland. In a deep human sense, this too must be deemed a Diaspora predicament and is, I venture to argue, an equally poignant situation as Diaspora in the familiar sense of the term is. Becoming strangers in one's own birthplace can, in no wise, be a less traumatic situation than being aliens in the 'far country'.

A bane or a boon?

Be that as it may, the question needs to be raised: "The Diaspora predicament: is it a bane or a boon?" Or is it, like in the parable of the wheat and the tares, a mixed-up affair: a bane and a boon at once? Even more importantly, how does the Christian experience of Diaspora differ from that of others?

As noted earlier, the Bible attaches no spiritual merit to the mere perpetuation of the status quo. It is in this regard that biblical spirituality is vastly different from, say, the Hindu worldview. Due to the hegemony of the Brahminical lobby, the Vedic vision was restructured into a pro-status-quo ideology that is inherently allergic to change. This is a quintessential Indian problem. And this accounts, in a large measure, for the uneasy relationship between Hinduism and Christianity in the Indian context. From a Hindu standpoint, Diaspora can only be a negative and undesirable thing. Hence it is that, according to Hindu orthodoxy, crossing the seas is a source of pollution. Even leaving one's village and settling down in another used to be frowned upon until recently.



Chrysostom Thirumeni: A magnetic speaker who interprets Biblical truths in everyday language mingled with great humour and personal stories. Centered in prayer, his life exemplifies true calling for God's work on earth. He has brought visibility to our Church through leadership, friendship, ecumenism and global vision. The very existence and growth of the Diocese of North America and Europe proves those qualities.

Working with Thirumeni in the Diocesan Council has been a lifetime learning experience. With best wishes and prayers.

Nirmala Abraham, Philadelphia

It does not have to be argued that the Hindu experience of the Diaspora predicament is bound to be far more painful than its Christian counterpart is. What needs to be suggested, though, is the fact that, not infrequently, Christians of Indian origin are crypto-Hindus in their socio-psychic outlook and understanding.

From an orthodox Hindu point of view, the Diaspora predicament is a manifest bane. It is, at best, a necessary evil. As such, utmost care needs to be taken to insulate oneself from the new milieu so that one's roots still remain intact in the soil of one's ancestors. In this respect, the outlook of Hindu orthodoxy is analogous to that of the Jews, who made a virtue of existing like salt packed in polythene bags, and not the 'salt of the earth' in the Diaspora predicament. Not surprisingly, they glorified and absolutized their "tradition" as the film "Fiddler on the Roof" orchestrates. All through the life and work of Jesus Christ, and especially in the Passion narrative, what we see is the tension between the demands of orthodoxy and the dispensation of God. The Cross of Christ stands at their meeting-point.

"Is the Diaspora for us a spiritual or psycho-territorial experience?" In the latter instance, Diaspora is apt to be, almost always, a bane. Not so if the framework of reference is spiritual. At this point let us ask ourselves why we wish to engage our Diaspora predicament? Barring exceptions, expatriate Indian Christians of the first generation, as individuals and families, sit on the horns of a dilemma. They are pleased with the newfound affluence and delighted with the immense social and parochial prestige it affords them back in India. On the other hand, they are troubled, deeply troubled, by the human cost this exacts, especially in terms of the cultural redefinition, at times devastation, of family and, in particular, the alienation between parents and children. Over-arching this is a problem innate in materialism: of the disjunction between having and being. Somehow what one has, does not translate itself into fullness of life; and, often, there is a relationship of inverse proportion between the two. An Indian Christian in Diaspora is

wrenched by the desire to have the best of both worlds: the psycho-spiritual well-being of the place of birth and the material blessings of the adopted home, the place of wealth. He is like one who stands on two boats at once, each going in the opposite direction. He has consigned himself, voluntarily yet unwittingly, to a predicament of anxiety.

I wish to argue that this anxiety derives its intensity in part from a myth: that all was great and glorious back home in Kerala. At the root of the Diaspora angst is an unthinking glorification of 'the way it was'. This, in turn, is part of the nostalgia woven into our fallen predicament; the intuition of an ideal and the awareness that that ideal was lost a long time ago. "Adam was the luckiest man in history," as the saying goes, "because he did not hear of the number of men Eve could have married and Eve was the luckiest woman ever because she did not have to hear how Adam's mother cooked it all!" May be, we should recognize that 'the way it was' seems so attractive to us only because we are used to it and are comfortable with it. The fact of the matter is that every culture is a mixed bag. Nothing is perfect in this imperfect world. A believer is like a grain of wheat sown in the given soil. His mandate is to be the means for a harvest; and the harvest belongs to Jesus, who is the Lord of the harvest (Lk. 10:2). The Christian wheat, if you like, is not called upon to idolize or romanticize the given soil. Soils of various kinds have their problems. And everywhere the soil has to be prepared and negotiated in the process of taking roots and producing the harvest.

In this process the crucial distinction is not between the grain of wheat and the soil, it is between 'wheat and tares'. Both take roots in the same soil. But they produce vastly different results. Jesus, the paragon of Christian Diaspora, said: "Even so the Son of Man has come not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for the sins of the world" (Mk. 10: 45).

What the Christian or 'wheat' model of Diaspora involves is not merely being transplanted to a different geographical-cultural context but "living in their midst,



His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan has completed 50 blessed years in episcopal ministry; this can indeed be considered a great blessing on our church. This is also an opportunity to thank the Lord for his myriad acts of goodness graced through the Thirumeni upon our society and the world at large. Thirumeni's contribution to elevate the position of women in our church are innumerable. Thirumeni's zealous guidance as the Sevika Sanghom President is invaluable. On this occasion of celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his episcopacy, the Sevika Sanghom very sincerely congratulates the Thirumeni and prays to the Lord to grant him many more years for a bold and blessed leadership to our church.

Lilly Simon, New York

Best Compliments from:

Forthcoming Book.....

**Life As
Sacramental
Celebration
in Community :
The
Lifeworld
Of
Metropolitan
Chrysostom**

Editors :

**Prof. M. Thomas Mathew
Rev. Dr. K. G. Pothen
Rev. Sunny George**

This book is an attempt to provide a glimpse of the lifeworld of Most. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan. The term lifeworld refers to the realm of behavior in which social co-ordination occurs by means of shared beliefs and values. The lifeworld provides the resources which nourish networks of communicative action and is the 'medium' by which concrete forms of life are reproduced. The emergence of new life forms and alterations in the lifeworld involves de-centering of worldviews and also a consolidation of the three dimensions of discourse, that is the external world, social world, and the world of inner subjectivity.

The book sets a new tradition in the historiography of the Church. The book unfolds the identity of the Malankara Mar Thoma Church without creating an "Other" and initiates a debate on the mission of the Church. The structure of the book rallies around the myriad relations of Metropolitan Chrysostom.

full of grace and truth" as implied in the Incarnation of Christ. "The Word became flesh and dwelt in our midst, full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:14). From aught I have been able to observe, immigrant Indian Christians live, barring rare exceptions, insulated from the local context. From the perspective of the local community, they are situated in the tradition of the first Adam, who went into hiding (Gen. 3:9). The Christian model of Diaspora must emulate the example of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, who went out on a sacramental search.

The problem in the 'hiding' or 'tares' model of Diaspora is that it is doomed to result in total assimilation. 'Hiding' helps only to postpone the inevitable. Ironically, while the first generation rushes into Diasporic hiding, the second generation—the children of the first—is exposed to the new context and grows up in it. Because they have gone into hiding, Christians in first generation Diaspora fail to develop the skills and sensitivity it takes to negotiate their new context and to help their children, except as financiers and servants. It is this negative model of Diaspora that now threatens to tear apart parents and children in Christian homes. It is the wind of life that separates the chaff from the grain.

At this point let us have recourse to a cliché. We are only too familiar with the saying that a Christian is a missionary wherever he is. Shifting to a theological jargon we may say that a Christian is distinguished by his "sentness". He deems himself sent by the Lord, as a partner-in-mission, to impact the place and people he is sent out to. A Christian is not a mere traveler, or a business executive, or a tourist or a tramp. He is on a mission journey. He is a living meeting-point, as St. Augustine would argue, (ref. *The City of God*), of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. The problem with Indian Christians, especially of the Kerala stock, is that they are not as clear about their calling to be the ambassadors of the culture of the Kingdom. This results largely from a tendency to idolize and romanticize the Kerala tradition and culture.

It is not clear, then, how they comprise a Christian Diaspora.

So, first things first. The very first task at hand is for Indian Christians, as immigrants to various other climes and cultures, to form themselves into a "Christian" Diaspora, which they are not as yet. Only then can they address the question meaningfully and honestly as to how, as a Diaspora community, they can in-dwell the local community like the 'leaven in the lump'. If this is done over a period of time, the so-called Christian Diaspora will get assimilated into the local community and lose its distinctness forever and would be remembered, if at all, as an aborted Diasporic enterprise.

An essential feature of the "Christian Diaspora" predicament is that it is holistic. In the holistic model, two disparate entities enter into interaction paving the emergence of a third entity. The holistic interaction is a crucible for the emergence of the new and the unprecedented. For a holistic interaction to take place, the interacting entities must be authentic. Only an authentic "Christian Diaspora" can enter into a holistic interaction with the local community. Only such a community would even want to be in a state of dialogue.

It is an encouraging sign that now questions are being asked, no matter how timid and tentative, as to what it takes to be a Diasporic community. These questions have not come a day too soon! But it is not enough to pose these queries in a casual and occasional fashion. They need to be addressed and grappled with in a sustained and relentless fashion. We know we are required to pray without ceasing. But we must "ask-seek-knock" also in the intellectual spheres of our spiritual vocation. It is amazing that for so long these questions have been kept under wraps. But, now that they are forcing their way out from underneath the plush carpets, let them be addressed consistently and competently. Remember, those who raise the right kind of questions not less than those who provide the right answers are benefactors of humanity. ■



Underneath the veil of his humor there are some unique qualities I have found in Chrysostom Thirumeni from my association with him. His character is a rare blend of honesty and asceticism. Those who do not know him well enough may mistake his openness as blunt or sharp and miss the opportunity to get to know a truly great man of compassion. Thirumeni has the distinct ability to bring order out of chaos. His love of the church, the priesthood, and his exalted concept of utmost faithfulness to the Lord are commendable, especially when the world operates on the canon of political correctness.

Congratulations on Thirumeni's Golden Jubilee of episcopacy and may God continue to bless him.

Prof. Plammootil V. Cherian, M.Div., Ph.D., Detroit, MI

Exercising Parental Authority

Rev. Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla

This article is the first of a series of articles based on Counseling/Family Health/Christian Family issues. Questions/concerns can be emailed to the editor, which will be forwarded to the Author(s).

Parenting is a privilege. All creatures do parenting. Even street dogs and cats bring up their offspring. The skills of parenting are partly biologically inherited. In humans many skills are culturally transmitted as well. Christian parents are called upon not merely to ensure the survival of their offspring but also to do their best to transmit their faith in God to the children. How best to do it is the main concern of this brief article.

Broadly speaking, there are two parental functions. "Nurture and control." Both are parts of parental authority. Most people have no difficulty in associating control with authority. However associating nurture with authority is less common. It is important to recognize that appropriate nurture and control together constitute parenting. We now proceed to have a closer look at nurture and control

Nurturing children

Infants do not survive without nurture. During the first year of life mother has a greater role in nurturing, as she is the one endowed by nature to nurse the infant. Feeding the child with emotional warmth and allowing the child to experience close physical contact are both appropriate forms of nurture of the infant. Although the father cannot feed the baby, he can hold the baby close to his body with emotional warmth. Experiencing the physical and emotional warmth of both parents is the privilege of the infant. Providing such nurture is parental responsibility. It is through such experience of warmth physically and emotionally that the infant establishes 'basic trust' in relation to parents and the outside world. The infant comes to trust the environment as safe and dependable. Such assurance is also the cornerstone of faith in God in later life.

Being responsive to the infant is another way parents convey care and nurture to children. The only way an infant can communicate his or her needs is by crying. Infants cry for various reasons. Infants cry when they are hungry or wet, bored or when they feel physical discomfort of any sort. It is when parents are on the whole responsive to these cries for help and attention that infants grow up healthy. In the midst of the many constraints of modern living parents need to be available to infants. There are some who believe that being responsive to children will spoil them. One of the most important tasks to be achieved in early childhood is the formation of a healthy attachment between parents and children. This is best accomplished by responsive parenting and not by those who set rules which suit adults. Any animal would be responsive to the cries of the offspring. Humans are not to violate this natural bond simply to suit the convenience of adult living complicated by the modern life style. Much pathology in adult life is the

result of a sense of unwantedness generated in the minds of children by unresponsive parents. Responsiveness does not mean attending to the child on every occasion. But it does mean attending to the child fairly consistently. Occasional failure would be frustrating to the child. But such occasional frustrations and the ability to cope with it are part of normal growing up.

As children grow up the growth would be visible in their ability to use language, strengthening of muscles which help in the mastering over the environment and the growth in intelligence. Nurture needs to continue in accordance with the developmental stage of the child. The ways of nurturing a child needs to be appropriate to the age of the child. During the first year, as we have already seen, nurture is effected through warm physical contact. However, as the child picks up linguistic facility, nurture is to be conveyed through appropriate verbal affirmation of the person of the child. This will include affirming the child's body, physical skills, social skills and intellectual abilities. The body may be affirmed by positive comments about the looks of the child, health of the child and lovability. Physical skills may be affirmed by assigning tasks involving the use of skills and appreciating their performance when it is accomplished. Social skills may be affirmed by encouraging them to play and interact with peers and inviting them to be part of inter-generational conversations. Intellectual abilities may be affirmed by appreciating performance in the academic field. In addition efforts at thinking and problem solving may also be appreciated. Global affirmation of the person of the child may be communicated by conveying love and affection even when the child's efforts are only partially successful.

In the process of affirmation of the child, descriptive comments are the most helpful. "I like that picture you drew today" is a description. "While washing the car, I noticed that you were careful to avoid any scratches" is a description. These descriptions are safer and better for the child's emotional and spiritual health. Frequent use of the adjective "good," "wonderful" etc. in relation to the person of the child are a kind of double edged sword. In these instances the adjective "good" is attached to the child's self. There is a potential threat behind it. The child could begin to wonder as to what would happen to me should I do a poorer job next time. The threat of becoming a 'bad' boy or girl would hang over the head of the child. This could make the child feel insecure. Appreciative descriptions focussing on performance are safer and more wholesome. In relation to the person of the child unconditional acceptance and forgiveness are the keys.

Nurture could become inappropriate when children are over protected or not held accountable. For example when

a child falls sick a few times the parents may become over concerned and become over protective. The child may be asked not to expose himself/herself to sun or rain, may not be given permission to go for picnics or outings with friends. Parents do this as acts of care for the child. But through these protective measures the parents are giving an implicit message to the child that he/she is sickly. The child internalizes these implicit messages and learns to stay sick. There is also the added advantage that a sick child gets more favors at home and can get away with irresponsible actions. Such children may not be held accountable as much as the siblings. Sickness then becomes a tool to exercise power both over the parents and siblings.

Nurture may also take a negative turn when parents begin to do things which children can do for themselves. If a ten year old gets the privilege of mother and father putting their books into the school bags, tying their shoe lace, or getting the shoe polished, they will continue to avoid doing these for themselves. Avoiding these responsibilities then become their ploy for getting parental attention. Children are to be given positive attention for their strengths. If they get attention, even negative attention, for remaining irresponsible and dependent, they will continue to remain irresponsible and dependent. Such behavior is dealt with best not by criticizing such behaviors but by demanding from them the appropriate behavior in a calm and self assured way and by affirming them appropriately for their strengths. When they get sufficient recognition and affirmation for their strengths they will have no need for securing attention through negative, irresponsible or dependent ways. Those behaviors will gradually die away when positive options open up.

The exercise of Control

Exercising Parental authority also involves appropriately controlling children. Controls needs to be undergirded by love. One of the most important parts of exercising control consists of setting reasonable and effective boundaries for child behavior. The boundaries are clearly set when there are effective rules for the family regarding all aspects of its common life. What time will people get up, when will they go to bed etc are rules. When happy what is an appropriate way to rejoice, when angry what is an appropriate way to express it? These are also rules. Children need these rules. If a child is angry there are several different ways to express it. The child could verbally express his protest. He/she could raise the voice. On the contrary the child could smash furniture, hit mother or father, hurl abuses and so on. Exercising control involves letting the child know what is permissible and what is not permissible. By these rules the boundaries of behavior are set and secured. Boundaries are also needed in connection with happy experiences. In any culture children and adolescents will from time to time protest against these controls. This is normal and nat-

ural. There is nothing unhealthy about it. Parents need to be attentive to these protests. Parental rules generally are drawn from their own families and culture of origin. Some of these may still be valid. Others may need some revision. It is by listening to children's protests that parents decide whether a revision of rules is called for. If in their best judgement they stick to the rules it is important to let children know about it. They also deserve an explanation about why the rule is important.

When there is a conflict with children over a rule, Asian parents are prone to move to two extremes. Some resort to extremes of physical punishment, verbal abuse, or threats. These are desperate acts aimed at preserving parental authority. These usually result in counter threats and retaliatory actions from children, particularly adolescents. This could result in a vicious cycle of mutual hurting and emotional distancing. Some other parents withdraw from exercising the parental functions of 'control.' Some parents also believe that saying 'no' to children would do damage to them. Hence they say 'yes' after offering token disapproval. When parents threaten and abuse the child is deprived of the sense of belonging and being loved. When parents fail to exercise authority children miss the sense of security even though they might appear to enjoy the unlimited freedom. Parents need to find a healthy middle ground. On the one hand clear rules and boundaries need to exist and need to be clear to all members of the family. On the other hand some degree of protest or even disobedience needs to be treated as normal. They are not to be treated as a calamity. It is then that 'law' and 'grace' combine to do a redemptive job of parenting.

Parenting and Spiritual Formation

Parental authority also needs to be effectively used in the spiritual formation of children. Providing good spiritual models is the most important part. Children do not need too much advising. They need to see that parents take their church life, family prayers, personal devotions, etc., seriously. They also need to see that conflicts whether at home or church are dealt with spiritually. They need to see the compassionate hand of parents extending to people in the midst of pain. They need to see the poor and the marginalized are respected and loved. They need to see parents applying their faith in decision making in various settings. When such parents set limits to children's behavior in the name of Jesus, the limits would be respected by children. Even when they differ the difference will be openly discussed and debated rather than secretly violated. Encouragement and control need to go hand in hand.

We have briefly surveyed the nurturing and controlling functions. We have also looked at the need for modeling spirituality. When these are done effectively parenting will be a rewarding experience. ■

Management of Mission

Rev. Varghese K. Abraham (Abey Achen)

(From this issue onwards we will dedicate this column for our Mission work and Mission Fields. This is the first of a series of related articles. Later issues will contain detailed articles on individual mission fields. We hope that this will help our readers to get a better picture of our Global Mission works)

Introduction

The word mission comes from the Latin "missio" which means "to send." Mission is God's sending of agents to accomplish God's own purpose for the world. The Church is called to bear witness to God's love for the world. The whole Bible is a witness to the mission of God, thus sending forth of His loving invitation to mankind to share His life, and man's response to that invitation. Today there is a genuine enthusiasm and sense of urgency among Christian mission.

What is the relationship of Christianity to other religions? Should Christianity continue to proclaim the message to people of other faiths? Is conversion any longer to be the goal of mission? To what extent can the church really enter into a true dialogue with people of other faiths? These are some of the questions being asked today within the Christian church. This problem is one that affects the church in every fiber of her being and activity. Unfortunately, vast majority of Christians are ill-equipped to attempt an answer. Many attempts have been made at solving the problem but it must be said at the very start that so far no universally acceptable solution has been found. Perhaps there is no solution and we must say that it forms part of the mystery of God's plan.

Some ask the question: Mission, yes, but how? What methods are appropriate for today's world? Are we to continue to try and convert people anymore? Is dialogue the new name of missionary activity? Now we come to the different responses that have been given in modern times to the problem of the relationship of Christianity to other religions. Here I would like to present three different approaches:

Exclusivistic

Inclusivistic

Pluralistic



Exclusivistic Approach

The exclusivistic approach holds that outside Christianity there is no salvation. This view is based on the conviction that Jesus Christ is the sole criterion by which all religions are to be judged. It proclaims clearly and unambiguously the central truth that Christianity is the one true religion, precisely because revelation and salvation are only offered to humanity in and through Jesus Christ.

According to the theologians of exclusivism there is total discontinuity between faith and other faiths. However, whole granting all of this, it is a position that is severely criticized today for a number of reasons. The exclusivistic position is completely arbitrary, and is totally independent of any knowledge of other religions. For the exclusivist, all other religions are a priori condemned as being incapable of providing salvation.

Inclusivistic Approach

Inclusivism: Salvation is to be found in all religions but that this salvation is ultimately from and through Jesus Christ. So it is claimed that Christ is in some mysterious way present and active in all other religions. This approach aims at holding together two equally binding convictions—the operation of God's grace in all the great religions of the world working for salvation and the uniqueness of the manifestation of that grace of God in Christ which makes a universal claim to be the final way of salvation.

Pluralistic Approach

This can be summed up in the phrase that all religions are equally valid paths to the one goal. In other words, Christianity is but one more way to God among the many that have appeared and are appearing in the world. It



The Metropolitans of the Mar Thoma Church have always stood tall among other church leaders from both India and abroad. The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Mar Thoma Metropolitan, has blessed the church with his dynamic leadership. Thirumeni is well known for many things. When I look back on the history of the North American Diocese, I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Thirumeni, whose vision has been the cornerstone of this infant diocese. I wish and pray that God Almighty will continue to bless His Lordship, so that he can lead and guide our church for many years to come.

P. T. Mathew, Philadelphia

resolves the tension between the universal salvific will of God and the claim to absoluteness of Christianity. It would seem to be more in harmony with true Christian charity and humility. So each of the great traditions constitutes a valid context of salvation/liberation.

Challenges to mission in the Indian Pluralistic context

Globalization: Globalization affects all the realms of the people living in Indian context. It creates a consumorelistic culture, which destroys all genuine relationship. With the globalization, market becomes the primal mediating agent for social relationship and thus market takes control over social life of the people. The poor within the country are neglected of their role and economic rights and find no possibility to improve their economic efficiency.

Cultural Nationalism: Some groups define *Hindutva* as cultural nationalism and as national identity of India. They are trying to create a mono-cultural identity. By completely rejecting the multicultural identity. They advocate a homogenous national identity for the whole country. On the basis of cultural nationalism they are politicizing both culture and religion. This has created many problems and has redefined the basic concept of Indian nationhood. Thus the cultural nationalism is communal in nature and against the pluralistic context of India.

In the daily newspaper "*The Hindu*" dated Oct. 16, 2002 the Shiv Sena chief asked Hindus to start calling India "*Hindurashtra*." Only, "our religion is to be honored here" and then "we will look after other religions." So the unholy alliance between religion and politics is taking the country to the brink of a disaster.

Conversion Issues: The Article 25 of the constitution says that all persons are equally entitled to freedom of consciousness and the rights freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. But there is a difference between conversion and proselytisation (forced conversion). *While criticizing on Christian conversion the Sangh Parivar engages in forced conversion. Those who have been converted to Christianity or any other religion should be forcibly shifted to Hinduism in the name of re-conversion.* So we need to redefine the pattern of Christian mission in the context of conversion issues.

In the midst of all these situations, our church is rendering valuable services in various mission fields by participating in the struggles of the people for true nationhood, social and economic justice, personal freedom and human dignity. Our church is undertaking the service under the "The Malabar Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Evangelistic Association" and the list of the mission fields are given below, subdivided by the Diocese. (Diocese of North America & Europe not included)

Adoor – Mavelikara

Satyavadi Mission, Ladgheswar Mission

Chengannur – Thumpamon

Peringala Mission, Narasapuram Mission, Pandavanpara Mission.

Kunnamkulam – Malabar

Guruvayoor Mission, Palakkad Mission, Attapady Mission, Gudalloor Mission, Mundugode Mission, Ankola Mission, Sirsi Mission, Honavar Mission, Dandely Mission, Goa Mission, Kumpta Mission.

Niranam – Maramon

Khariyarrod Mission, Kidangara Mission, Chennakery Mission

Bombay – Delhi

Satna Mission, Shadole Mission, Sihora Mission, Rajanandgaon Mission, Bhopal Mission, Varanasi Mission, Tibetan Border Mission, Faridabad Mission, Taimer Mission, Vapi Mission, Maharashtra Mission, Lonavala Mission, Rajasthan Mission, Bhilwara Mission, Bikaner Mission, Ludhiyana Mission, Panvel Mission, Ambala Mission.

Kottayam – Kochi

Mathaipara Mission, Kuvakandam Mission, Elappara Mission, Puliyanmala Mission, Kambammettu Mission, Pambaner Mission, Puchavayal Mission, Elithodu Mission, Vattavada Mission, Munnar Mission, Chattupara Mission, Kuttapuzha Mission, Poyka Mission, Vattakkupara Mission, Mamalakandam Mission.

Madras – Culcutta

Samasthipur Mission, Vijayawada Mission, Itanagar Mission, Vishakapattanam Mission, Chathesgarh Mission, Nandiyal Mission, Pollachi Mission, Hoskote Mission, Pondicherry Mission, Andimadom Mission, Sivanapuram Mission, Secundarabad Mission, Chagalamarry Mission, Andamans Mission.

Ranni – Nilackel

Kalahandi Mission, Orissa, Angamur Mission, Kokathodu Mission, Krurmbanmuzhi Mission, Kattachira Mission, Muttapally Mission, Allapra Mission, Kollanpara Mission, Adichipuzha Mission, Thombikandam Mission, Thavalapara Mission, Veilayil Mission.

Trivandrum – Quilon

Chengotta Mission, Narkala Mission, Kilimannoor Mission, Manjapara Mission, Pachamukku Mission, Vengodu Mission, Samnagar Mission, Pachamala Mission, Ambasamudran Mission, Puthukulam Mission, Andukodu Mission. ■

കേരളത്തിന്റെ സ്പന്ദനം അറിയാൻ...



മലയാളം വാർത്ത

കൂടുതൽ വിവരങ്ങൾക്ക്

MALAYALAM VAARTHA

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Mission of Mar Thoma Diaspora

Mathew Kallumpram, Manchester, UK

We have at present a world-wide Mar Thoma Diaspora and as a result Mar Thoma Church has become a global Church. By the Grace of God it is still growing territorially and in total numbers. Admittedly we are economic migrants but our Lord has told us "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Again "Ye are the light of the world and let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."



We are born and brought up in the faith of the Mar Thoma Church, a faith based on the Bible and we have absorbed a little of the faith. The late Archbishop Stuart Blanch, Archbishop of York, went to speak at the Maramon Convention in 1979 and on his return to England he said he was pleasantly surprised that the ordinary members of the Mar Thoma Church, a minority of a minority in India, knew their Bible through and through. We should accept the report of the good Archbishop with certain gratification and with humility. So in addition to earning a livelihood by hard work, we have to be a light to the world, however dim it may be. We have to live by the Word of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Our love of God must have its expression in our love of our neighbor. And who is our neighbor? We all know the parable of the good Samaritan. How do we express our love of our neighbor?

We are in a privileged position vis-a-vis our fellow immigrants of other religions from India., with the white majority communities in the western world, Australia and New Zealand. Culturally we are Indians and we can recognize our fellow Indians, Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, settled in these countries. In the U.K. and the rest of Europe and possibly to a smaller extent in North America and Australia, all Indians and Pakistanis suffer from varying degrees of racial discrimination and the disadvantages flowing from it. Although we are also the likely sufferers

from racism, we have more contacts with the 'white' churches and people as we share the Christian faith with our fellow christians of the Western church community, white or African or African American. From my fairly long personal experience I can say that the Western churches and their leaders are willing to listen when we talk about race issues. These church leaders have influence in society at large. So I feel we have a christian responsibility to act as a bridge between ethnic minority groups and the majority white community in the West and elsewhere.

It is good for us to try and understand the religions of our fellow immigrants. The effort to understand other religions does not compromise or dilute our own faith. Inter-faith understanding deepens our own faith and beliefs. It may be recalled that our late Metropolitan, the Most Rev. Alexander Marthoma made a study of Hinduism for his doctoral thesis. At his passing away in January 2000 the General Secretary of the Nair Service Society, a prominent Hindu leader, wrote in the Mar Thoma Sabha Tharaka that Alexander Marthoma was a saint and the epitome of inter-faith harmony in Kerala, in the 20th century. It may be added that the late Nithya Chaitanya Swami, a Hindu guru, was a contributor of thought-provoking articles in the Sabha Tharaka. We have to be an outgoing Church and avoid the easy inclination or temptation to be an inward-looking immigrant group. We must take every care to have social fellowship with our fellow immigrants and co-operate with them to eradicate the sin of racism from Western society.

The first generation of Mar Thoma Diaspora who have migrated from Kerala are culturally Kerala folks with literacy in Malayalam. They have children and eventually grand children raised in the West and in Western culture elsewhere. These succeeding generations will be naturally Westerners in cultural orientation with no literacy in Malayalam which is not an easy language to learn. So there will a linguistic divergence which is difficult to mend. One of the solutions suggested by enthusiasts of Malayalam is



I had the privilege and honor to know Thirumeni when he was an Episcopa and also when I worked with him in the Diocesan Assembly while he was the North American Diocese's Bishop. He worked very hard to establish the Mar Thoma Center in the USA. Thirumeni is an energetic evangelist, a skillful communicator, a patient listener, and a compassionate counselor. One of Thirumeni's greatest blessings is to share the work of his ministry to his co-workers who desire to serve the Lord by serving others. Above all, Thirumeni is a man of humility, a humble servant of God. Thirumeni deserves our prayers, respect, and support in the great responsibility of leading the Church.

John Kunchandy, Philadelphia

that the parents should make an effort to teach the children Malayalam. This is easier said than done. Any parent who has made serious efforts to teach the children Malayalam has failed for various reasons. Those who have persisted in the effort have achieved only very limited success in making the children understand the rudiments of conversational language. So the children are inclined to converse with the parents in English as all the parents are English speakers.

The lack of fluency in Malayalam creates a serious problem in conducting the Church services in Malayalam. A large percentage of the first generation, fluent in Malayalam, insist on the clergy conducting the Holy Communion Services in Malayalam as they prefer it in the way they were used to in Kerala. They persuade their offspring to come to Church Services although these youngsters have no ability to understand the Services. Again one requires a good standard in Malayalam in order to read the Malayalam prayer books I know efforts are made to give the non-Malayalam readers prayer books in Malayalam with the English script. I have found that even with the help of such modifications the Service is virtually incomprehensible to those who cannot read the good Malayalam of the prayer books. I do realize the deep spirituality of the St. James's liturgy which we follow tends to be chanting which is almost inspirational. But it creates a generation gap between the first generation and succeeding generations and we the first generation alienate the succeeding generations for whom our chanting is a mumbojumbo. So with our insistence on Malayalam we are driving the later generations away from our Church Services. It is almost an unspoken excommunication.

When representations were made to Metropolitan Chrysostom his reply was that the problem lies with the first generation. He said the young people have told him "Thirumeni, they all know English very well but they will not allow us to have alternate Services in English" If we continue to adopt this obscurantist attitude the Marthoma parishes of the future will have smaller congregations as the younger generations will either stay at home or go to other places where they can understand the language and participate fully. So the Church has to prepare itself to be 100 percent English language parishes for the diaspora in the future, however unpalatable it will be.

In 1836 when Abraham Malpan translated the Syriac liturgy into Malayalam to make it understandable for our

ancestors as the usage of the language of the people was one of the reasons for the Reformation in the Syrian Church of Kerala or Malabar, I was told by my late brother, a Marthoma Achen, who knew Syriac that the chanting in Syriac was more evocative, Syriac being a dialect of Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ and his disciples. But the founding fathers of the Reformation decided to make the sacrifice of giving up the beauty of Syriac which they knew and accepting Malayalam, the language of the people. It is said that Abraham Malpan said his private prayers in Syriac while conducting the Services in Malayalam. So in the 21st century context, in fairness to all the people in the Diaspora we should conduct all Services in English in the Diaspora.

Further serious efforts have to be made to produce a better translation of the liturgy which will maintain the deep spirituality of the Malayalam prayer book. We can thus have a liturgy in English which will render our Church as a denomination of the several churches in the land, to which the younger generation can invite their friends from the Western society and thus have a fellowship in prayer with our younger generation. This will be a true integration which has got to come for the sake of the future of the Church in 20 or 30 years time. So we have to think long-term and discard the present tendency of short-termism by small adjustments here and there. Similarly our hymns by our great hymn-writers like Vidwan Kutty Achen and Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi can be rendered in English with Western tunes and with instrumental music. This can be done by commissioning the Department of Sacred Music with the help of musically trained members of the Diaspora. Good music enhances all Christian worship.

The Mar Thoma Church is a part of the world-wide Church, the body of Christ. We, in the Diaspora are placed in countries like USA, Canada, U.K., Europe, Australia, where there are provinces of the Anglican Communion or Methodist Church or other Churches which are in Communion with the Mar Thoma Church. We have a duty to join in fellowship and worship with them. It is inappropriate that we create exclusive Mar Thoma community or in other words a 'ghetto' Church and encage (build a cage around us) ourselves in this 'ghetto' situation closing door to fellowship with Christian denominations in the locality. It has to be remembered that this ghetto situation can be conducted with reasonable success only during the life-time of the first generation immigrants and



I am particularly blessed to be growing up in Trivandrum City during the early fifties, listening to the wits and wisdom of "Dharmistan Achen," then vicar of Pattoor Parish. I have watched with admiration, the leadership role Mar Chrysostom played to preserve the timeless, while adapting to the times, especially in the matters of calls to courage and faithfulness, being true and loyal to office and scripture. Thirumeni have conceived, conceptualized and created the "Mar Thoma Physicians and Dentists" forum under the banner ADPM, which in turn helped many in need of medical help in remote villages of Kerala. We are proud of this organization and our prayers are with you.

John Abraham, MD, FAAD, BTh., New York

the whole set-up will crumble after their lifetime which may be 20 or 30 years. So we have a mission to think long-term and if we have our liturgy and worship all in English we may attract other folks from the other churches and will not lose our own younger generations, thus ensuring the continuity of the Mar Thoma Church in the Diaspora.

We, the first generation, all know where we were born and brought up and are in touch with our kinsfolk back in Kerala. The second, third and successive generations do not have such contact and will gradually lose the contact with their parents' families. All the same at some stage in their lives they would wish to know of their roots and there is no machinery to help them in the process of finding their roots. So we have a need to provide a Diaspora centre or centers which can link them to their Kerala roots and at the same time to help them to discover the Mar Thoma history and heritage. We all talk of St. Thomas but very few of us have attempted to visit the place where he is believed to have landed in 52 A.D. in Azhikod, Kodungallur. Very few of the first generation have visited the Holy Apostle's place of meditation in the hills of Malayattur, east of Alwaye. St. Thomas like his Lord resorted to a hill at Malayattur for meditation and to re-charge his batteries. These are all places of which all St. Thomas Christians, irrespective of denominational boundaries, should be keen to visit to draw spiritual inspiration. Kerala has not the benefit of being 'the holy land' which is in Israel and Palestine. But we have

good claims to be a holy land where the Holy Apostle has lived and where the sacred feet have trodden extensively and where he labored for his Lord and God. We should make our children, the second and later generations, aware of our history and proud of its worthy heritage.

By the Grace of God, Kerala is now one of the prosperous States of India due to the near 100 percent literacy Kerala was having for quite some decades. The Mar Thoma Church is an affluent Church in Kerala with its magnificent churches and educational institutions. In Kerala we, the Christians, are cushioned by our affluence and protected by our numbers. We have to give a thought for our fellow Christians in other States of India, most of whom are from the Dalit communities. They are educationally backward compared to our Church members and are often below the poverty line. So we have a mission to help our fellow Christians in the various States of India who are of late subjected to persecution and marginalisation. We hear of it in the newspapers only when it flares up to the scale of murders and arson but they are subject to maltreatment all the time. Their suffering must be shared by us. Their distress and persecution must become our concerns. The youth of the Diaspora has to be enthused to help these weaker brethren, who is our 'neighbor' in the words of our Lord whom we have to love as ourselves. This again is a long-term mission. ■

Chrysostom Thirumeni—A Living Legend *(Continued from page 10)*

Apart from his capacity as a speaker, the worships he conducts are incomparably unique in grandeur as well as majesty. (This opinion is not shared by many others, I know) But for me his baritone voice associated with his towering stature have added to a glow of apostolic glory which percolates when he is in his sartorial elegance while conducting the Holy Qurbana.

Apart from what he is on the dais, or in the pulpit, what a sweet person he is when he deals with others in private conversations. What a personal concern he exhibits to one and all in their needs. What admirable equality he maintains while dealing with rich or poor or any VIP or non-entities. For him

there is no difference between a celebrity and a persona nongrata. During discussions he advances points impregnated with logic and objectivity. Seldom has he hesitated to condescend himself when he is convinced of the opposite point of view with objectivity.

He is one of the rarest of rare personalities in history who could complete 50 years of episcopacy. May the Almighty bless the Marthoma Church and the Christian world as well as the Kerala society by giving Philipose Mar Chrysostom Thirumeni a long life, health, and continued clear thinking. ■

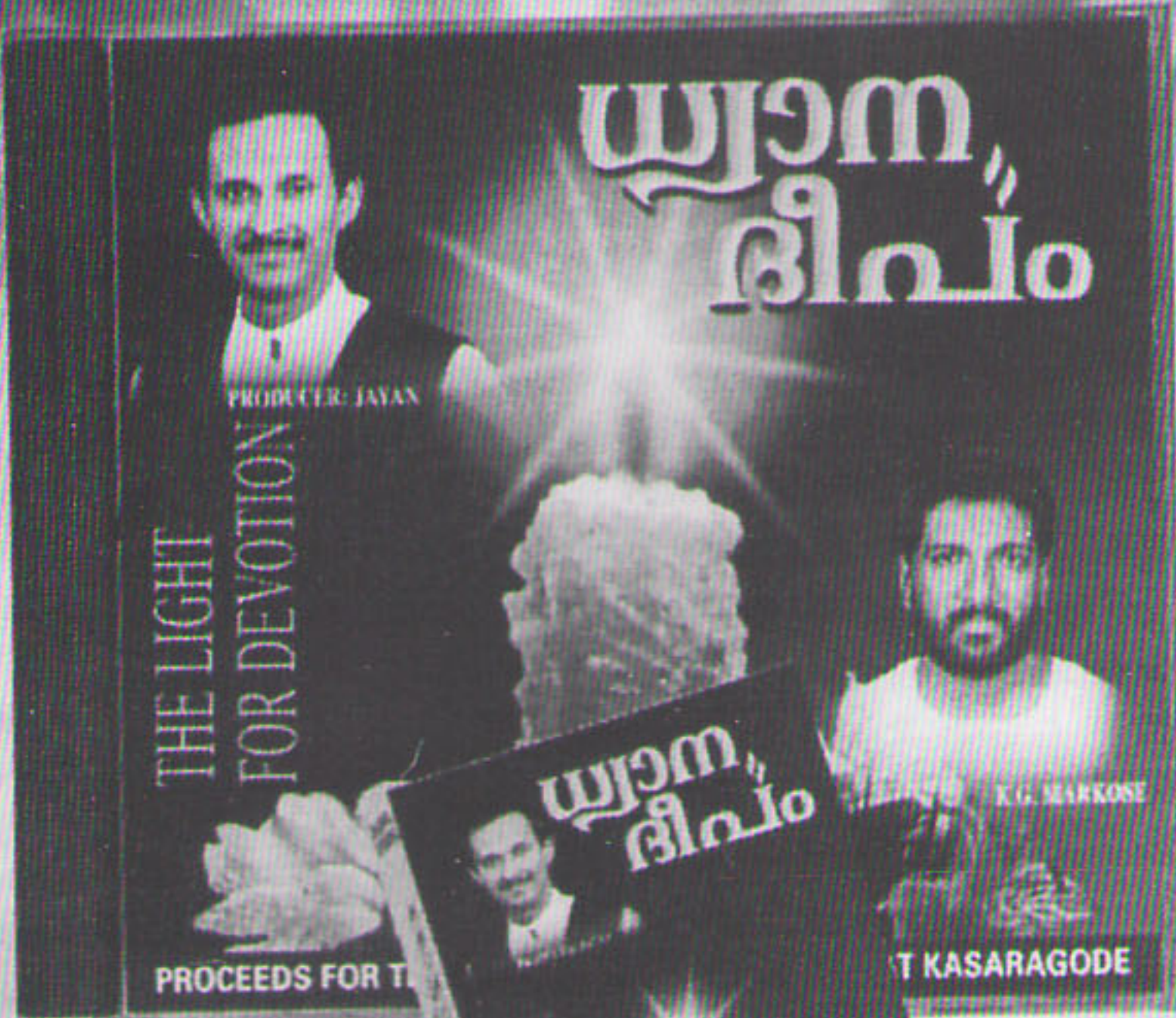


It is an honor and privilege to congratulate our dear Chrysostom Thirumeni on his Episcopal Golden Jubilee. His uncanny humour and extraordinary ability to communicate is incomparable. His depth of biblical knowledge and his personal reflections are profound. His enthusiasm to interact with the young people keeps him young at heart. He is deeply involved in both social and cultural activities, and he takes a strong position of leadership in speaking out against social evils. Thirumeni, we salute you and congratulate you on this very joyous occasion of your Golden Jubilee and pray that the Almighty God will continue to shower his abundant blessings and keep you in His service for more years to come.

M. V. Mathew, MD, Chicago

A Music presentation by Jayan

Malayalam Christian Devotional Songs



SINGERS:

- K.G. MARKOSE
- BIJU NARAYANAN
- SAJAN ACHAN
- JAYAN
- LEKHA
- RADHIKA TILAK
- ELIZEBATH
- ANTU

Contact:
George Varghese (JAYAN)
 Phone: 972-691-1482
 Email: jayn7@hotmail.com

Proceeds for the institute for the deaf and dumb at Kasaragod

അണയാത്ത ദീപം (ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം തിരുമേനിയ്ക്കായ്)

(അഖിലാഞ്ചല മണ്ഡലം.... എന്ന രീതി)

ജോസഫ് മാത്യു, ഫിലാദൽഫിയ



പരമോന്നത പരിപാവന പരിശുദ്ധൻ ശക്തി
പരിവേഷം ചാർത്തുനീ തിരുമേനിയ്ക്കായ്
പരിപോഷിത കരസ്ഥം പരിശുദ്ധൻ ചെയ്യും വേദേ
പരിശോഭിത ഗുരുവിൻ തിരുമേനീ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം

മാർത്തോമ്മാ മുനിശ്രേഷ്ഠൻ മാറാത്തൊരു കനി ജേഷ്ഠൻ
പാർത്തലേ മാർത്തോമ്മാ ഉയർത്തിടും ധർമ്മിഷ്ഠൻ
ഓർത്താലിദലിത പ്രിയൻ കർത്താവിൻ ദാനം
കീർത്തിയുയരുന്നു പുലാത്തിൽ നിന്നും

അമ്പതു വർഷത്തിൻ ചെമ്പക ഗന്ധം
അൻപൊട്ടു തിരുമേനിയായൊരു ബന്ധം
എമ്പാടും മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിലായ് സ്നേഹം
ഇമ്പമായ് പിതമെന്നൊരു അമ്പിളി കാന്തി

തലമുറതൻ ചൈതന്യം വചനത്താൽ വിശുദ്ധ
അല ഉയരും വിലയേറും തിലകക്കുറിയണിയും
മലകയറി ഇല കാടും പലമേടുമേറി
മലയാളമണിമകുടമി കലമണ്ണിലച്ചൻ

രോമാഞ്ചമണിയുന്നി മാർത്തോമ്മാ മക്കൾക്ക്
ആമോദം ഉയരുന്നി അനുഗ്രഹധാമത്താൽ
ആമ്മീൻ ആമ്മീൻ ഞങ്ങൾ പാടുന്നി തിരുമേനീ
ചെമ്മേ അർപ്പിക്കുന്നു സ്നേഹത്തിൻ പുകൾ

ഉണരട്ടെ ഉണ തൻ വചനത്തിൻഘോഷം
അണയാത്തൊരു ദീപത്തിൻ പണിതിർക്കും ശില്പി
അണിയണിയായ് സന്തോഷ കണ്ണിർക്കണങ്ങൾ
ഗുണമിയലുമിന്നേതാവിൻ ഉണർപ്പിൻ പാദാരേ

A Tribute in Love

By Jacob Joseph

St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church, Toronto, Canada



*Standing tall and strong for Christ and His Kingdom
A soldier of the cross; defender of the gospel
The man with a 'golden tongue' speaking eloquently with
wit and wisdom
That's Chrisostom, the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church
With a gentle smile shining through the silvery hair
He greets the young and the old alike
Colourful vestments and a symbol of the cross worn in
many styles
Is this the portrait of a prophet or a king?
Words of wisdom like green pastures leading toward still waters
From the shepherd to his dear flocks, for he cares for them all.
"You are the church" he declares to his people
And humbly leads them in faith and shear joy abounding*

*Youthful and fervent in spirit, even as he ages in his eighties
Strong and determined in his heart to carry on his vision
for his people
He is loved and adored with feelings of affection
For he is their spiritual father and the leader of their church
A personable, affectionate, humorous spirit - filled man
Who loves to see his people laugh and rejoice
An intellectual, insightful orator unparalleled in many ways
We are blessed, grateful and very proud of you Thirumeni
Golden Jubilee is here to celebrate, for you have reigned
fifty years as our bishop
You have enriched our lives with your love and inspired
our souls with your words
Congratulations and best wishes will be our tribute in love to you
And a prayer from the bottom of our hearts to lead us furthermore.*

സെപ്റ്റംബർ ഇലെവ്ൻ

ഉമ്മൻ ജോർജ്ജ്, പുത്തൻകുരിശ്

എത്രയോ ജീവിതങ്ങൾ പൊലിഞ്ഞുപോയാദിനം!
 എത്രയോ കുടുംബങ്ങൾ കണ്ണീരിലാണ്ടുപോയി!
 അത്രക്കു ഭയാനകം 'സെപ്റ്റംബർ ഇലെവ്ൻ'
 ചിത്രങ്ങൾ വരക്കുന്നു മനസ്സിൽ നൊമ്പരങ്ങൾ
 വാനോളം മുട്ടി നിന്ന ആ രണ്ടു ഗോപുരങ്ങൾ
 മാനവ ശക്തിയുടെ തിളങ്ങും പ്രതീകങ്ങൾ
 ക്ഷിതിയിൽ കിടക്കുന്നു ചേതനയറ്റു കഷ്ടം!
 അതിൽ നിന്നുയരുന്നു ആത്മാവിൻ പുകച്ചുരുൾ
 സൃഷ്ടിയും സ്ഥിതികളും പ്രളയം ഇവയൊക്കെ
 സൃഷ്ടാവിൻ പ്രതിസർഗ്ഗ ശക്തി വിശേഷങ്ങളോ?
 ദുഷ്ടനും നീതിമാനും ഒരുപോൽ പ്രഭ നൽകി
 ചുറ്റുമി പ്രപഞ്ചത്തെ നീതി സൂര്യനാം പ്രഭോ!
 നിൻപേരിൽ നടക്കുമി ക്രൂരമാം വിധംസനം
 അൻപെഴും വിശ്വംഭരോ ദുർഗ്രഹം! ഈയുള്ളോർക്ക്
 ദൈവത്തിൻ പേരിൽ തലവെട്ടുന്നു പരസ്പരം
 ദൈവത്തിൻ മക്കളെന്നു പുകഴും നരവർഗ്ഗം
 ഈശ്വര സൃഷ്ടികളെ കുരുതി കൊടുത്തിട്ടോ
 ഈശ്വര പ്രീതി നേടാൻ! പറയു കാട്ടാളരെ?
 അള്ളായും യഹോവയും ജീസസ്സും ഈശ്വരനും
 വല്ലാതെ രക്തത്തിനായി കൊതിക്കും ദൈവങ്ങളോ?
 ഇല്ലിതിൻ പൊരുളുകൾ ഗ്രഹിയാ അശേഷവും
 ചൊല്ലുകി സമസ്യക്ക് ഉത്തരം സഹജരെ
 ഭരണഭ്രമം പൂണ്ടു മരണകുടുകുമായ്
 ധരയിൽ അലയുന്ന വികൃത രൂപങ്ങളെ
 മതിയാക്കിടുമോ ഈ താണുവ നൃത്തം നിങ്ങൾ
 മതത്തിൻ പേരിൽ കാട്ടി കൂട്ടുമിനരഹത്യ
 വെറുപ്പും വിദ്വേഷവും ഹനിക്കും മുൻപേ നമ്മേ
 നിറുത്താൻ സമയമായ് സംഹാര നൃത്തമുടൻ
 ഇടുവിൻ പടവാളാ ഉറയിൽ ഉടൻ തന്നെ
 എടുത്തു പയറ്റുവിൻ സ്നേഹത്തിൻ ഖഡ്ഗം നമ്മൾ
 സ്നേഹത്തിൻ കൂടക്കീഴിൽ ഒന്നിച്ചു നിന്നീടുവിൻ
 സ്നേഹത്താൽ തന്നെ നമ്മൾ ലോകത്തെ നേടീടുവിൻ



It was a very humbling and rewarding experience to work with Chrysostom Thirumeni on the first Diocesan Council of North America. Chrysostom Thirumeni had a profound influence on the Mar Thoma Youth of North America with his visionary ideas and enthusiasm that shaped and cultivated our thinking.

We applaud and celebrate Thirumeni's fifty years of dedication and contributions to the Mar Thoma Church. We thank Thirumeni for gracing us with his wit, intellect, and exemplary leadership.

Anita George Joseph, Indiana

Christianity—On Its Way Out?

Thomas Mathew Kurumthottickal, South Africa

We did not have the luxury of having Nostradamus on the world's list of living men as we crossed the threshold of yet another millennium. But his absence was more than compensated by a host of pretenders, each one coming out with an array of predictions about mankind as well as the whole universe itself...Wizards or eccentrics, almost all of them had one prediction in common—that this new millennium would witness the gradual decay and the final fall of Christianity. Can this really come true? Is it simply possible that this great edifice built on the blood of the holy martyrs and the faith of millions just totter and collapse and vanish without a trace? Here is an insight that might help anyone on the search for an objective answer.

More than four decades ago, when most people in Central Travancore were peasants who lived off the land, when, as a small boy, I walked (as every one did in those days) from the town of Kozhencherry to Melukara (where we lived) late in the evenings there was one sound that greeted me invariably every time, namely, the singing of hymns which was the prelude to the Evening Prayers. They came from all directions, from a valley here and from a hillock there. They came in a rising crescendo of varying pitches and notes. I can still vividly recall the high-pitched voice of a lady in the neighbourhood who sang with great passion on a note that could not be accompanied on any key board, her husband droning along on a flat monotone with three girls and a boy singing merrily along, each on his or her own key... It was cacophony at its very very best. (or should I say worst ?)... But it was their simple way of offering thanks to the Lord for a wonderful day that passed without posing any major problems to them as a family.... This musical (or amusical) exercise was repeated in the morning and as people walked to the town to proceed from there to various destinations, they too sang along, with great gusto, praising the Lord for the beginning of yet another glorious, wonderful day.

I walked along the same path (incidentally, a major road now) a couple of years ago, continuously for many days, both in the mornings and in the evenings hoping to recapture some of those nostalgic moments from a bygone era. It was walking down the memory lane, as they would call it, keeping my ears tuned to capture the familiar strains of some old hymns. The ears did catch them all . . . Hooting of the horns. Loud and deep barking of exotic varieties of dogs...Rhythmic western music.

But the cacophony of hymns had gone for ever....I approached a few old-timers for probable reasons. Oh! they had reasons, valid and genuine reasons all of them. The demands of modern life. People having to catch early trains and early buses to be on time for their important 'appointments' with important people. Their all-important children busy preparing for the all-important exams not to be disturbed and distracted by long periods of singing and praying.

The bustle of modern life not providing us with the luxury of free time which "our primitive ancestors" had in abundance. In short, 'the maddening pace' of life of this modern world does not simply allow us to do what we would greatly love to do. What a pity! But isn't it rather strange that we are the only people affected by the hectic pace of modern life?

The extreme demands placed by modern life and its changing trends and fashions on their lives do not impel the Moslem women to force their way out of the yashmak. On the contrary more and more of them are willingly donning the purdah even in countries where there is no compulsion on them to do so. And more and more of their men are eagerly waiting for the call of the muezzin so that they may go out and bow their heads and knees in supplication before the Almighty Allah.

The demands and pressures increase, but there is absolutely no compromise on matters of faith. They pray the same number of times every day as they did over a thousand years ago. Neither their jobs nor their business commitments prevent them from observing the obligatory fasting in the month of Ramadan. And instead of driving people away, Islam is only attracting more and more into its fold.

When a couple of decades ago, one rarely saw a young man on the streets of Kerala with his forehead smeared with sandal paste and saffron, one bumps into large number of youth with elaborately painted foreheads almost everywhere now at any time of the day or night. The busy, hectic modern world has only taken our Hindu brethren closer to the old values and traditions.

From the look of things only one group has been completely strangled by the modern world into inactivity, namely the hapless Christians! And we claim to be the spiritual descendents of those who waited for the hungry lions with the strain of the Psalms on their lips! Does anyone really believe that we will survive? Do we deserve to? ■

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Talk on FAMILY ISSUES

Fr. George Kolath

(XX Mar Thoma Family Conference — July 25 – 28, 2000, Dallas, TX)

When we think about Family, we all have beautiful memories. We think about parents, grand parents, uncles aunts, nieces nephews—the list goes on. We all honor our family and we cherish the family with much love. When I think about my family I always have the great memory of how I joined with my parents for prayer—how my parents punished me when I was doing wrong or when I came late from school.

One thing I am very proud of is that whatever my parents taught me when I was young, I still remember them and those are the things which kept me going. I learned 11 years in the seminary to be a priest. I may not remember many things what I learned there. But I remember everything my parents taught. That is my strong foundation in the whole life—in the area of material and spiritual life. I shall tell you a very simple example: My mother taught me to pray before I go to bed. Then place a sign of the cross on my forehead and over the whole body. Then place a sign of the cross on four corners of my bed—four corners of the pillow. Once I was with a group of young people for a work camp at Kanyankavayal. We all had to sleep outside near the forest. I had a simple mat and a pillow. I did what my mother taught me before sleeping. Next day when I was waking up and folding my mat and pillow, I saw a cobra slowly going out of my bed. It was comfortably sleeping under my pillow. It went away quietly. Thanks to my mother. I know my prayers saved me. Parents have the great ability to teach simple things in a special way.

Think about the disintegrating families in the culture we live. As I work in an American parish, I can tell you lots of stories. Children are really confused with divorce of parents, step father, step mother, step brother—everything step. I don't see much spiritual values guiding the families. For funerals, I meet with family. If dad is dead, I ask the kids about dad and his spiritual life. They will start with fishing and hunting. He believed in God but nothing specific to say... Thank God we have a good foundation, let us keep that up for the generations to come.

What did God intend the family to do? What does God want us to do with our children? I have listened to many stories of family vacation. The guys plan ahead. It takes many months preparation for a trip to Niagra Falls. Many are more organized, better researched and more goal oriented when planning their vacations than they are in raising their children.

As Israel was preparing to enter the land of promise, God took time to talk about his purposes for the family. Dt. 6:4-9 records the plan of God. "I have designed the family to be my primary learning community. There is no better context to teach the truths that need to be taught so that my people would live the way they should live." God says



"You live with your children. You are there when they are lying down, you are there when they are growing up. You are there during the many days of a child's life. Teach your children; the family is your class room." Are you able to spend more time with your children? Your presence will be a learning time for them. Ask your school age children what their day was like. When in the car, turn off the car radio and engage your children in conversation. Spend a considerable amount of time with your children each day. They should share their problems with you. Everything happening in

the family shall be a teaching/learning moment. This is what makes the family a vital tool for the work of the Redeemer on earth. Teaching in the family happens spontaneously, no lesson plans, workbooks, or rows of desks. You have to live prepared, with eyes open. May be when you are taking the child to school, the child may say something negative about a teacher; that is a good time to talk about teacher student relationship, or a moment may come unexpectedly as the teenager mutters in the bathroom that she hates her face so much that she is embarrassed to leave the house. God calls us to grab the opportunities and teach.

During the month of May, I went with 25 teenagers from my parish for a mission trip to Alabama. It was program for one week—One of the parent was telling me a story about his God fearing wonderful son. One day he came back from the school with his head hanging. He asked him what was wrong. 'Nothing' came the reply. But dad knew that something was wrong and he left his son alone for few minutes and then went to his room to see what is happening. He blurted out, "No one wants to be friends with a kid who has character! All of the popular kids at school, all of the kids who are leaders, are jerks. They are the center of attention, they get all the girls and here I am, a nice guy who can be trusted, and I have no friends. I would better be a jerk! What sense does it make to be good if no body notices?" What a great moment to talk about a higher agenda. He went through Psalm 73 with his son "Truly God is good to the upright, to those who are pure in heart.But, I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as others are. For me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, to tell of all your works."

The key to the family functioning as a redemptive community, where the Gospel is the glue that holds the family together, where parents trust in Christ that they are ready to confess their faults to their children. Often the way parents talk about their childhood is scarily self-righteous. "Why, in my day, 'they say,' I never would have thought about what you are doing now." It is easy for parents to relate to children like Pharisee praying in the temple saying, "I thank God that I am not like other men" Lk 18:9-14.

The Christian parenting should not use just rules and regulations approach that focuses on keeping the teenager "out of trouble". It will ultimately fail because it does not deal with the heart. Peter says that the corruption in the world is caused by evil desires (2 Pet.1:4). It is not enough to be detectives, jailers, and judges. We must pastor the hearts of our children with the kind of faithful, watchful care for them. Pastoring parents will befriend their children. They will engage their children in provocative discussions. They will be unwilling to live with distance, avoidance, and non answers. In times of trouble, they will have discussions rather than cross-examinations. They are not there to prove the child wrong and to announce the punishment. They will seek the thoughts and motives of the children by asking heart-disclosing questions. "What were you thinking and feeling at that time." "Why was that so important to you?" "What were you seeking to accomplish when you did that?" "What probed you to be angry?" This shall be done with a humble, gentle and forgiving way. Colo.3:12-14 gives us the summary of what we need to do as God's chosen people. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all in perfect unity. We must work to see the underlying idols of the heart that have shaped their behavior.

Teenagers' lives tend to be dominated by concerns about the world that can be seen, touched, and tasted. They long to be accepted by peers. They hold their 'stuff' possessively. They are crushed when someone mocks an outfit. They anguish over rejection. They also seem to be intensely materialistic, that is, focused on the physical world. Teens tend to believe two deadly lies. **1.** The physical is more real than the spiritual. It is not surprising that present, physical, personal happiness seems more important than eternal blessings. **2.** They tend to believe in the permanence of the physical world. It doesn't seem to be transient to them. This is contrary to the scripture. Let us see 2 Cor. 4:16-18. Paul says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Why do parents face problems from the teens or what are the reasons for teens' misbehavior?

Unclear rules in the family. You may have rules and regulations at home. But your rules and consequences are verbal, open to interpretation, or made up as you go along. For example you may declare a rule of 'no disrespect', but fail to specify what you mean by that. Your teen can now find loopholes and argue, "You never said that swearing was disrespectful." A typical scene will give more clarification. John a teenager is watching his favorite show on TV. Mom

asks him to take out the trash. Then John starts to rolling his eyes and talks under his breath. "John that was disrespectful. Now turn off the TV and go to your room!" "Mom, you never said that mumbling to myself was disrespectful. I am not going to my room." Mom says "John you know what I meant. Now get up and go to your room." John: "I am not going to my room. You never told me that was being disrespectful. I will take the garbage out, but I am going back to watch T.V." Mom: "Well, as long as you take out the garbage, I guess I will let it go this time. But now on, if you roll your eyes or mumble under your breath, you are grounded." (Mom wants to end the argument. But John has won and he will use this plan again.)

Not keeping up with your teens thinking: Teens can defeat you and make you back down through a special gift called ENHANCED SOCIAL PERCEPTION. They can run through as many different scenarios in their mind as necessary to find a loophole in your rule. Smitha, a 15-year-old, received her punishment of "no phone use" for swearing at her mom. She went to her room to find a loophole. After looking into different plans, she decided on the best one. Smitha told her friends that she would call them at 1 am when everyone in the house would be sleeping. She instructed her friends on how to use a pillow to muffle the sound when the phone rang. Her plan worked beautifully. Smitha had no reason to stop swearing.

Button Pushing: If your teen doesn't want to do something you ask, he or she will start pushing your "hot buttons." This will make you angry or frustrated. For some of you these buttons are swearing or rolling the eyes. For others, it is statements like "I hate you," "You don't love me," "you are not my real father"---Teens know that if they succeed in pushing your buttons, your judgment will be clouded. There is a better chance that you will back down or fail to follow through.

The Pleasure Principle: Why do so many people eat junk food, smoke, or never exercise, even though we know that doing so may eventually lead to obesity, lung cancer or heart attack? It is because of the pleasure principle, living for the moment or for the immediate gratification. Today's teens have instant everything- instant food, instant messages, instant calls on their cell phone. So many teens have come to expect instant gratification. This is why guilt trips, logical reasoning, and traditional punishments often fail. Your punishments and lectures are not strong enough to compete with the immediate pleasures that come with bad behavior.

Peer Power: Today's peer groups have a tremendous hold on your teen's heart, mind and soul. If it is positive peer group with good morals and values, your teen can thrive. But if the group has poor values and exhibits negative behavior, your teen is likely to get more and more out of control. Naturally, teens turn to their friends—those who look, think, and act the way they do—rather than to their parents for acceptance. To avoid getting "kicked out of the club," everyone must follow the club's rules, both spoken and unspoken. These rules might include shoplifting, piercing body parts, drinking, doing drugs or dressing different. Often teens follow such rules rather than risk rejection.

(Continued on next Issue)

Best Compliments from:

FOCUS MOVEMENT

(For the generosity to give and the humility to receive)

*FOCUS Movement offers its Felicitations and Prayers on the Golden Jubilee of the Consecration of
The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan
May God continue to give him good health and all blessings to lead
the Church and the Diaspora communities across the world.*

FOCUS is an acronym, to express the idea of the existence of an informal lay movement within the Mar Thoma Church, which means "**F**or **C**hristian **U**nderstanding and **S**olidarity." This Movement is involved in organising informal seminars for Mar Thoma members who are interested in developing a dialogue about opportunities and aspirations of the emerging Diaspora of Mar Thoma Christians around the world with our Bishops and other Christian leaders. Metropolitan pointed out at the last FOCUS seminar in 2001 that one of the crucial priorities of this movement at this stage should be to create a critical mass of people within the Mar Thoma Church to support and pray for this lay movement. The following mission statement is an effort to open up the movement to everyone.

Mission Statement

The mission of the FOCUS movement of the Mar Thoma Church is to enlighten the Diaspora communities of the Mar Thoma Church all across the world to remain faithful to the heritage, identity and mission of the Church along with its traditions through effective lay leadership and by establishing a strong relationship with the mother Church, and at the same time developing a meaningful dialogue and integration with host communities. Plan to attend the FOCUS 2003 seminar scheduled to be held in Kerala in August 2003. Details may be obtained from any one of the following :

Conveners :

Dr. Sam Chacko (USA),
217 Rushley Way, Media, PA 19063, USA
E-mail :chackosk@mail.med.upenn.edu

Dr. Roy Joseph (Singapore),
30 Springleaf View, Singapore 787934.
E-mail :paeroyj@nus.edu.sg

Dr. Zac Varghese (UK),
3 Rose Garden Close, Canons Drive, Edgeware,
Middx HA 8 7RF, UK.
E-mail : [HYPERLINK mailto:zvarghese@rfc.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:HYPERLINKmailto:zvarghese@rfc.ucl.ac.uk)
zvarghese@rfc.ucl.ac.uk

International Committee

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Mr. Philip Mathew (India)
Mr. Abraham Mattackal (USA)
Dr. Mariamma Thomas (USA)
Dr. Thomas Varughese (Malaysia)

A Dialogue with the Mar Thoma Metropolitan A Youth Perspective

Lesley M. Thomas, The Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

When I was assigned to interview the Metropolitan the first thing I did was ask my dad if the Metropolitan was the funny Thirumeni that I remembered. My dad told me he is and I immediately became excited thinking that Thirumeni would be cool to interview because he would tell jokes and teach me so much. Coming up with questions were not as difficult as I thought they would be. I took all the concerns I have heard lately in our youth meetings and at recent conferences. I figured that Thirumeni would have a lot to say considering that I was armed with about two pages of questions. He was definitely up to the task.

I walked into our Achen's parsonage to find Thirumeni in a state most people rarely see. Thirumeni was wearing Reebok flip flips but at that moment his feet were up on the table relaxing. His "masanaspa" (cap) and "sleeba" (cross) were in his room and his hair was down in wavy strands that fell past his shoulders. To those outside the church, Thirumeni could be perceived as just another man or someone's grandfather.

The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan: He was born Philip Oommen (Dharmishta) in 1918. He started his service to the Mar Thoma church as deacon on January 1, 1944, Kassesha (achen) on June 3, 1944, Ramban in May 20, 1953, Bishop on May 23, 1953, Suffragan Metropolitan on May 1978, Officiating Metropolitan on March 15, 1999 and The Mar Thoma Metropolitan on October 23, 1999. He was ordained as one of the youngest bishops at age 35 in 1953. In 2003, the church will celebrate 50 years of his service as bishop of the Mar Thoma church. Although his service did not begin there, some of his most memorable moments have come within the past 50 years. His love of the church is only surpassed by his affinity toward children. He is able to relate to people on all levels and has gained the respect of many within and outside the church. When asked about his identity as the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma church, Thirumeni stated that he is a symbol of the unity of the church. His place is not to impose his idea on others but to visit with others, learn their concerns and ideas and then share it with the synod and members of the church.

My interview was supposed to take the position of the youth so the questions I asked Thirumeni were from that vantage point.

The main focus was the spiritual nourishment of the youth. Thirumeni really impressed me with his knowledge of educational theory and learning styles. Since I myself am a teacher, we were able to discuss a variety of options and their reasoning quite thoroughly. When asked about older youth leaving the church due to unsatisfied needs, Thirumeni stressed the point that those in leadership need to find out why the youth are unsatisfied. I



gave him the example of inadequate Bible studies and Thirumeni understood. He holds the study of the Bible in high regards. In fact one of his most common sayings is not to read the Bible but to study it. Thirumeni believes that by studying the word, one can learn through discovery. Thirumeni does not believe in giving out the answers to all questions. Teaching is not instruction; it is equipping or helping the learner decide what the truth is. One of the basic principles of pedagogy (learning across disciplines) is to allow the learner to find their answers. It is expected that the learner will struggle to find his answers but the meaningful

things in life are worth the struggle. If there were no struggle, there would be no importance in holding onto the knowledge or taking it to the next level. As Thirumeni puts it, "Only when you have struggled to find it, the truth becomes yours." This falls under the idea of critical thinking. Instilling within the learner what is right and him being able to apply it to a variety of situations. Today's learners seem to be lacking in this ability because those around them tend to do everything for them. The example that Thirumeni mentioned was that of a young girl with a problem. If the mother fixes the problem herself, the girl has learned nothing from it and therefore misses out on the growth that could have occurred in that situation. This same growth occurs during the true study of the Word and can only be attained through discovery of truth.

One of the main obstacles in a good Bible study is a knowledgeable leader. When asked about this, Thirumeni replied that no one person is needed to lead a Bible study. The Holy Spirit will guide the learners. It has been said in the past that through the study of the word, the Holy Spirit will reveal all to the reader. How is this done? A group of learners should get together and choose a passage to focus on. After reading it over, the people within the group should begin a discussion. The discussion can take many directions depending on where you start. Through the simple action of conversation about the reading, people will begin to learn. Not all questions will be answered but certain doubts are bound to be cleared up. Doubts are good to have but you should be able to benefit from them and then get new ones. If you are carrying the same ones around, then there is a flaw in your learning. Thirumeni does not believe in the act of preaching as a medium for learning for today's student. He believes in the art of teaching through conversation and discussion and he encourages the use of these methods in everyday as well as special teachings. Thirumeni recommends, "dialogue sermons" as opposed to today's more common monologue sermons. In the dialogue sermon, a speaker can be asked questions by the con-

gregation and facilitate discussion as his approach to teaching. This is a more active teaching approach. Students will learn and retain that knowledge when they are able to become involved through conversation, questioning, and clarification. Through personal discovery and encouragement through group Bible studies and dialogue sermons, the youth can begin to receive the spiritual nourishment they need.

With the Diocese undertaking the missions in the U.S. and Mexico, I asked Thirumeni about the role of the Mar Thoma church in missions outside of India. His response was that the world belongs to God. The world is God's concern and whatever God is concerned with, concerns the Church. Thirumeni feels that we should not build up any walls in terms of where we do missions. And just as our missions take social activist approach in India, they will do so in other countries. He believes that both go hand in hand. Anytime you go to another country to persuade people, there will be people against you. They will see you as revolutionary because you will be advocating something that is not the norm (religion, equality, civil rights, etc...) If you fight for justice, injustice will always stand against you.

We also talked about the new Achens; both Indian and American born. I asked Thirumeni about what sets them apart from each other. In essence, the answer is nothing. Primarily anyone trying to become an achen should be committed to the kingdom of God. He is confident that the ordination of Achens annually is enough to sustain our church. We recently had a record number of Achens ordained and each year we get at least one Indian American who decides to commit his life to the church. What about women? Thirumeni says that there is nothing in the constitution that states a woman cannot be part of the clergy. This issue is essentially cultural. When our culture is ready to elect women into the clergy, then it will happen. This is similar to the fight for a female president. Although there are people who support it, there is not enough agreement to actually elect a woman president for this country. American-born Achens may be given preference in placement in the U.S. because of their citizenship status. They are able to begin their studies in India but it will continue elsewhere and finish perhaps somewhere else. Thirumeni is quite proud of those Indian Americans who are joining now; he feels that they will serve the youth in this country very well. This will facilitate the cycle of Achens capable of working with the youths of our church.

There are youths who are pursuing theological studies in the U.S. but have yet to decide whether to work with the Mar Thoma church or not. Thirumeni feels that this is a decision they should make on their own but if their heart leads them to the Mar Thoma church then they will have to learn the disciplines of our church and abide by them. They will still be required to learn Malayalam so long as the language is a need of the congregation.

Thirumeni is known for his humor but he admits that he never tries to be comedic. Since he uses the conversation medium, Thirumeni speaks plainly with his true personality. He is real; he does not put on airs for the different people he speaks to. He welcomes criticism because those who criticize only do so because they have confidence with the person. To Thirumeni, many things, if not all, can be solved through open dialogue. Many complain but they do so to people who are unable to do anything about it. If those who had issues took them through the proper channel, there would be more adaptation within our church. It is inexcusable to say that the people have no voice. There are plenty of men and women who represent our church and now the youth are getting stronger as well. Those who want change have more opportunities today to bring about the change. If you are unable to work with anyone within your church, one can consult with any of the Diocesan representatives or with Thirumeni (Diocesan or Metropolitan). We are living in an activist generation, if you want change, you must be willing to go out there and get it. This is the method our Thirumeni as well as many others would respect. He has openly said he is here solely for the people. Let us be thankful to God for such leadership and truly make His presence a blessing by working with Him and through Him to bring our church to the next milestone. I will close this article with one of those "cool" facts that Thirumeni is famous for sharing. The symbol of the fish is a sign of Christianity but the word in Greek is more symbolic in the meaning of the letters, which adds to the symbolism of the world.

IXqYS-Fish (pronounced "ictus")

Full Sentence: Jesus Christ, Son of God is (our) savior.

Congratulations Thirumeni for fifty years of service as bishop, may God continue to bless you with perception and understanding for years to come. ■

Matrimonial

Marthomite parents of good family background and moral values invite proposals for their daughter 26 years of age (5' 2"), fair complexion, brilliant academic records, M.Sc. Chemistry (Sardar Patel University Gujarat), Gold Medalist, Ph.D., Research Scholar, from parents of well educated, good looking Kerala Christian young men settled in USA, Canada or Europe. Please respond with details and photograph through e-mail: vgt@wilnetonline.net or telephone 91-2836-31142 to the parents or to her uncle in the UK: e-mail: abundant@btinternet.com or phone: 44-1279-654107

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KIDS CORNER

Mice and The Big Bad Cat

Lisa Varughese, Grade 2
Ascension Mar Thoma, Philadelphia

Once upon a time there lived 4 little mice and a big bad cat. The 4 mice lived outside Mr. and Mrs. Higgs house. Their names were Cindy, Ella, Joey and Tommy (the littlest mice). The big, bad cat's name was Tiger. She was Mrs. Higgs cat. Every time when Tiger came out the back door she would smell the wonderful air, and then all of a sudden Tiger could smell mice. She starts sniffing all around trying to find them. And then Cindy would yell "Come and get us Tiger." Cindy was in front of a tree. Tiger ran to get Cindy but Tiger bumped in the tree stump. And then Tiger went inside. "Well that went good" said Ella happily. "And funny too" said Tommy giggling. Then the next day came, and the 4 mice woke up early in the morning. "We have to get that big mean cat," said Joey. "Right!" said Ella. "let's get ready." said Cindy. "O.K." said Tommy in a sleepy voice. Then they all got ready and made plans to get Tiger. "Let's go" said Joey. So they went to Mrs. Higgs backyard, they waited and waited, finally Tommy said "it will take forever for Tiger to come out." Sure enough it did take a long time for Tiger to come out. "Come on" said Joey, as he was walking back "No" said the others. "Fine then" said Joey.

"I bet she is having kittens" said Ella. "What time is it?" asked Tommy. Ten, said Cindy looking at her watch. "I see a tiny hole" said Joey. "Let's go in it" said Ella. "O.K." said Tommy and Cindy. So they went in to the tiny hole. Cindy led the way. They followed Cindy. Finally they all stopped at a big door.

"How are we going to ever reach that door knob?" asked Tommy. "I know!" said Ella. "If we all work together we can all try and pick up some wood and put them together and then we can reach the door knob and then we can go inside." "It is a good idea" said Cindy. "Let's try it" said Joey. So they all went looking for wood. Finally Tommy shouted "I found wood." Piles and piles of them. So they all ran toward Tommy and they all saw wood. Piles of them. "All right" said Ella "Let's try and put them together." said Ella. "Okay" said the rest. So they took some wood and put some big wide tape and taped them together. Finally they finished putting them together. "Let's all have a break." said Ella. "Let's open our backpack" said Cindy. "Good thing we all packed water bottles" said Joey. "Yeah" said Tommy. When they finished there nice, relaxing break they all climbed up the thing that they made. Finally Ella reached the door knob first, Joey was second, Cindy was third and Tommy was last. "Let's all try and open this door." said Ella. "Okay." said the rest. So they turned the knob as hard as they can, and finally they opened the door quietly. "We made it!" shouted Tommy, in a squeaky voice.

"Okay, there isn't much time it's exactly 12:00 and we have to try and find Tiger" said Ella. "Let's go and find that big, mean cat" said Joey. So they looked everywhere for Tiger. "I don't see any sign for Tiger" said Cindy. "Me either" said Tommy.

"She's got to be here somewhere." said Joey. "We haven't checked upstairs yet, so let's look." said Ella. "Okay" said the rest. So they went upstairs. They peeked into the bathroom. "Not here" said Tommy. "Not here either" said Joey as he was peeking in the attic. Ella and Cindy couldn't believe their eyes.

"Hey, guys come look at this" whispered Cindy. So Joey and Tommy ran as fast as they could. Joey and Tommy both peeked inside the door. And there was Tiger and sitting right next to her was 6 newborn kittens! Suddenly Tiger left her kittens near Mrs. Higgs. Tiger sniffed and sniffed. Finally, Tiger found all 4 mice. Cindy took the courage to speak up "Look Tiger we are so sorry that we tricked you a lot." And the others felt very ashamed by themselves. And Tiger understood. "We didn't know that you were going to have baby kittens." And Tiger understood that too. "Well that's about it" said Cindy. And Tiger forgave them. "I've been wondering if you can give us a ride around the town." asked one mouse, and Tiger said "yes of course!!" Yeah! shouted all 4 mice. And then Tiger gave them a ride on her back. And the 4 mice saw some interesting things. And everybody lived happily ever after.

It is not good to mistreat other people based on how they look or where they are from. Loving each other and working together will create more fun and enjoyment in life. It is the Christian way.

Do You Ever Wonder Why?

Lincy Varughese, Grade 7
Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

Do you ever wonder why,
Why God gave you this supply?
His love, his strength, his joy,
Is nothing like a toy.

His love is so real,
So strong like a shield.
His strength is like a rock,
All together in a lock.

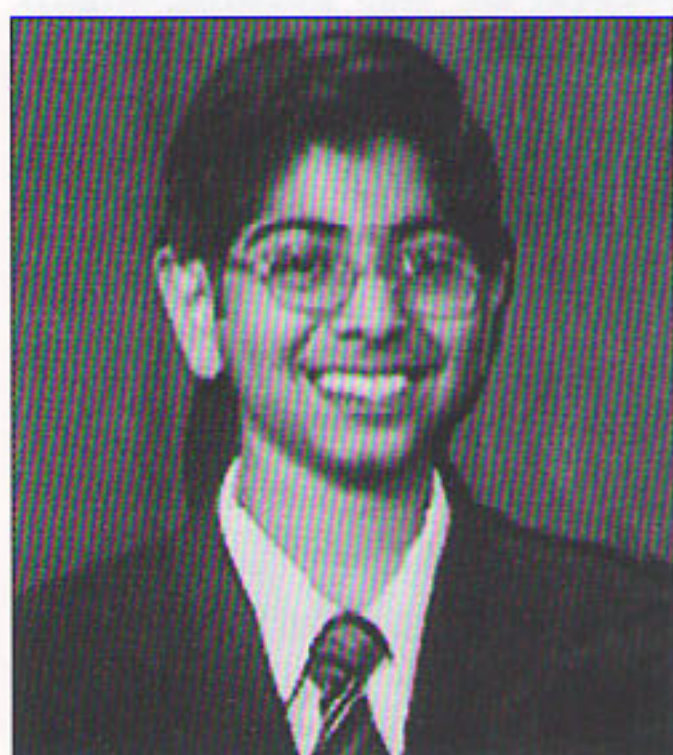
His happiness and joy,
Is of course nothing like a toy.
Everything he does is so real,
All though, that is not what I sometimes feel.

Sometimes in trouble,
I usually wonder,
Could this be?
Is God the key?

But when I read the Bible,
I know it's not just a simple title.
It's God's words, words that are true,
Words that cannot be changed by neither I nor You.

I hold in my hands...

Roshan Joseph John, New York



Pain is a part of everyday life. Many things can cause pain. One of the reasons for pain in one's life is death.

I hold in my hand death. Death can cause pain both physically and mentally. Today it has become the most popular way of destruction. Death can shatter one's heart by taking away his or

her loved one. Death is so powerful that it can bring tears to the world's most strongest and toughest man. It can make him cry like a child whose teddy bear he always had has been taken away from him. Tears are the food for death.

Death's most fierce enemy is life, only life can conquer death. But the strength of the life depends on one's will to defeat death and go on with life. From the time you're born, death has always hated you because there was life dwelling inside you.

I myself am a witness and I have also experienced the pain death causes when I lost my dear sister. She was thirteen

when she passed away and I was ten when I lost her. It was one of the worst days in my life. I miss her like never before. I felt that the sting of death was too powerful for me to overcome. But to my surprise I did conquer it. When I think about it now, the only way I could have sustained the loss of my sister was my will to go on with my life. Although I knew that my life would never be the same without my elder sister, I was desperate to take up responsibility and took care of myself.

So the only defence we have against death is our life and our will to continue it. Another good example is the tragedy that occurred on September 11. The date no American can forget. On that day evil was able to exist by death on its side. The people of America were all witnesses of how powerful death can be. Although none of their lives would ever be the same, they united as a country and tried their best continue life the way it was.

Now we all can see that bearing the sting of death is not a very easy task. It's like sitting on a hot pan and trying not to jump up. So be alert and ready at all times because death does not only knock at your neighbor's door. ■

JULY WINNERS AND ANSWERS. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WINNERS!!!

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (July 2002)

1. Accamma Jacob, FL
2. Ajin John, MI
3. Alex Vaidyan, NY
4. Anika Chacko, MI
5. Annamma John, FL
6. Christopher Chacko, MI
7. Jithin Mathew, Canada
8. John Mathew, MI
9. Justin Vaidyan, NY
10. Mariamma Zachariah, NY
11. Philip Mathew, Canada
12. Tindu Mathew, MI

ANSWERS

- ACROSS
1. PASSOVER
 2. TRUMPETS
 3. FLOUR
 4. SHELTERS
 5. FOREIGNERS
 6. AARON
 7. SINAI
 8. THUMB
 9. COMPLETE
 10. SPRINKLED
 11. ANOINTING
 12. SLAVES
- DOWN
13. PEOPLE
 14. COVENANT
 15. FAILING
 16. SAFETY
 17. CONSULTS
 18. DAZZLING
 19. RENEW
 20. EGYPT

Bible Word Search Winners (July 2002)

1. Accamma Jacob, FL
2. Ajin John, MI
3. Alex Vaidyan, NY
4. Anika Chacko, MI
5. Annamma John, FL
6. Christopher Chacko, MI
7. Jithin Mathew, Canada
8. John Mathew, MI
9. Justin Vaidyan, NY
10. Mariamma Zachariah, NY
11. Philip Mathew, Canada
12. Tindu Mathew, MI

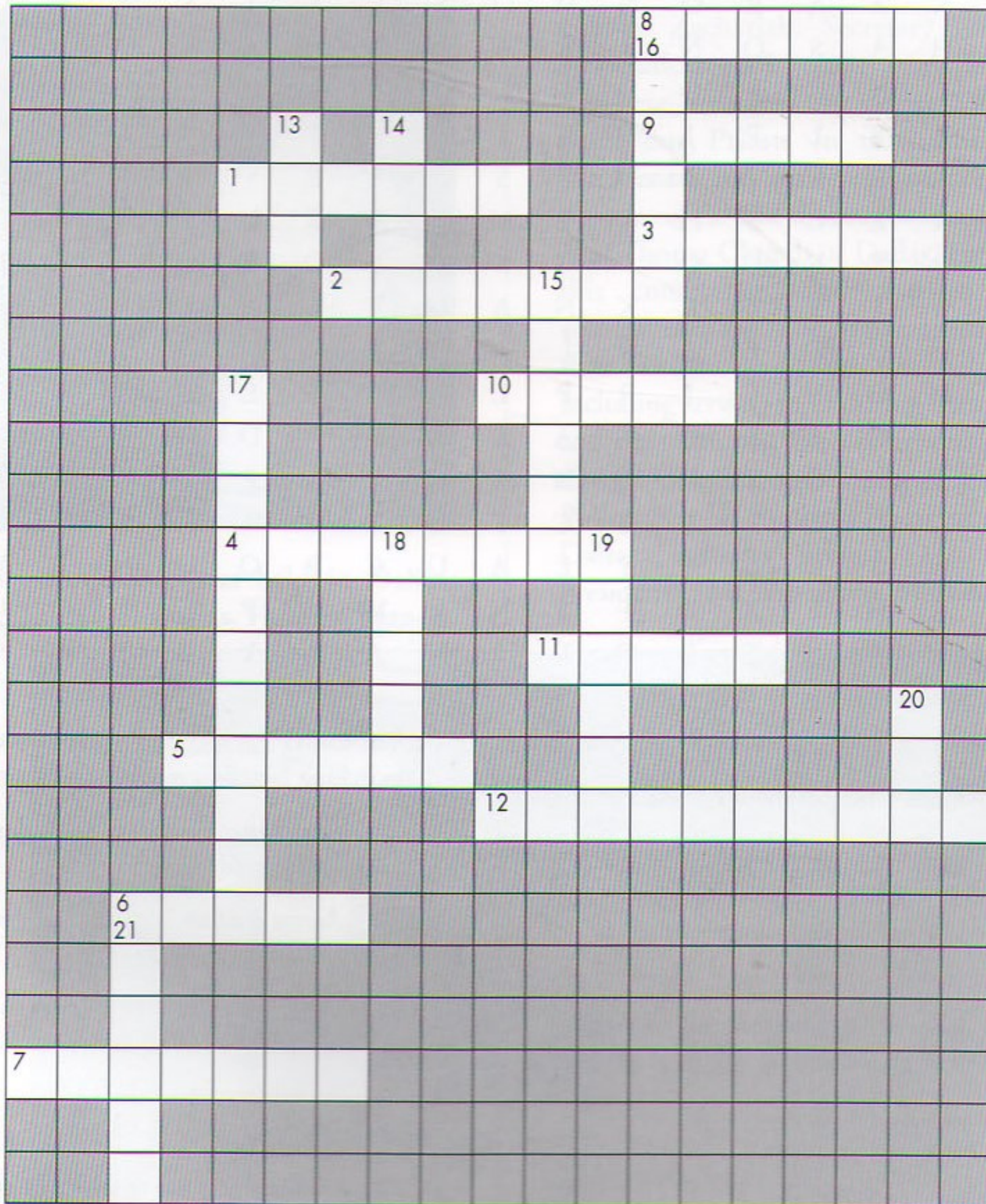
ANSWERS

1. YEAST
2. HONEY
3. DOVES
4. PIGEONS
5. RESPECT
6. WINE
7. TORN
8. DISTINGUISH
9. AZAZEL
10. LAWS
11. PRACTICES
12. CURSES
13. APART
14. FREEDOM
15. FESTIVALS
16. HONOR
17. PRODUCE
18. YEAST
19. FALSE
20. RESTORATION

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN THE TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on Numbers Chapters 1-36)

Mrs. Suma Varghese (New York)



Across

1. God sent _____ to satisfy the Israelites craving for meat.
2. King Sihon ruled over _____.
3. Moses was asked to go up the mountain _____ to get a view of the promised land.
4. The _____ refused a passage through their land; so the children of Israel had to march a long way round.
5. Miriam died at _____, a desert of Zin.
6. Moses struck the rock with his rod when he was asked to _____ to the rock to bring forth water.
7. God appointed _____ elders to assist Moses in his work.
8. Balam prophesied that a king like a _____ star would arise in the nation of Israel.
9. The earth _____ open and swallowed Dathan, Abiram and their families.
10. Moses entreated _____, his brother-in-law, to accompany him.
11. _____ with his 250 followers was instructed to take their fire pans with live coal and incense, and take them to the altar.
12. Balam was killed in the battle between the Israelites and the _____.

Down

13. The Lord showed that he had chosen Aaron by causing his stick/rod to _____.
14. The 250 leaders of Israel were punished with _____ for rebelling against the leadership of Moses.
15. Anyone who had been bitten by a snake was saved by looking at the _____ snake, which was placed on a pole by Moses.
16. King Og ruled over _____.
17. The daughters of Zelophehad were given the _____ of their father.
18. Miriam was punished because she and Aaron claimed equal authority with _____.
19. The man who broke Sabbath was _____ to death.
20. Moses warned the Israelites that they would _____ in the battle if they tried to invade their enemies like the Amalekites and the Canaanites.
21. The _____ trumpets were used for calling the people together and to break camps.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN THE TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on Numbers Chapters 1-36)

Mrs. Suma Varghese (New York)

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

- The Israelites were asked to give _____ cities to the Levites.
- The venue of the second and third prophecies of Balam were _____ and _____.
- The place where the people of Israel complained against the Lord and were punished by fire in their camp is called as _____.
- Joshua complained to Moses to stop the shouting of these two who prophesied. Their names were: _____ and _____.
- God punished Miriam by making her a _____.
- The people were asked to make _____ with a blue cord along the borders of their garments to remember god's commands.
- The place where the Israelite spies cut off a heavy bunch of grapes is called as _____.
- Moses changed the name of _____ to Joshua.
- _____ was the father of Joshua.
- The Lord's _____ always went ahead of the marching Israelites moving from camp to camp.
- God punishes the Israelites by making them wander for _____ years in the wilderness.
13. Aaron died on Mount _____ and his priestly garments were put on _____, his son.
- God asked Moses to take a _____ of the people of Israel in the beginning of their journey.
- The rite celebrated on the 14th day of the first month was the _____.
- Aaron burned incense to make an atonement for the people who were dying with _____.
- Dathan, Abiram and On belonged to the tribe of _____.
- Out of the twelve _____, only Joshua and Caleb reached the promised land.
- The tribes of Asher, Dan and Naphtale served as the _____ of all the divisions when the Israelites marched along.

ATTENTION ALL CONTESTANTS!!!

Please mail your answers to:

Mrs. Suma Varghese, 103-10 104th Street, Ozone Park, NY 11417

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS December 31, 2002

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

CLERGY FAMILY CONFERENCE – 2002



The Clergy family conference was held in Dallas, Texas, at Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch,

Dallas, Texas from July 24 to 25, 2002. More than 32 Achens and their families attended the conference from various parishes in our diocese. Diocesan bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, and Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa of Kunnamkulam – Malabar diocese delivered

messages. Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham (formerly Professor of Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, and Rev.

George Zachariah, Secretary Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association took classes on various topics. Atty. Lal Varghese presented the paper **“What Laypeople expect from our Priests in this diocese”** during the clergy conference, and answered questions from our Achens and their families. The diocese express our sincere thanks to the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch for hosting this conference, and also to those who provided accommodation, and transportation to our Achens, and their families, and those who helped for all arrangements including serving food during these two days to our Achens and their families. We also express our sincere thanks to the Clergy Conference Committee Convener, Rev. Monsi K. Philip, Rev. P. Mathew, Vicar of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch, Mr. P. V. Thomas, (Vice President), Mr. Abraham Mathew, (Trustee), Mr. Philip



Thomas, (Accountant) Mr. Philip Daniel, (Secretary) Mrs.

Leelamma Issac, Council Member, and Atty. Lal Varghese, Assembly Member, for their support, and commitment in making this conference a successful and memorable one for our Achens and their families.



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tions and Prayers on the
Golden Jubilee of the Episcopal
consecration of Most Rev. Dr.
Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar
Thoma Metropolitan. May God continue
to give his grace Good health, every happi-
ness, and blessings to lead the worldwide
Mar Thoma Church.*

*Members of the association are grate-
ful to his grace for encouraging
us to start the doctors fel-
lowship.*

MAR THOMA FAMILY CONFERENCE, LONDON, UK



The 20th Mar Thoma Family Conference, London was held during 15th-17th August 2002, hosted by St John's Mar Thoma Church at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon.

The theme for the Conference was **"I Have Overcome The World"** (John 16:33.) The present scenes in the world and also in the light of September 11th 2001 event, it was felt that we are all vulnerable however mighty we might be. We needed to focus on the Lord Jesus and see what he has to say to us and to the world about trials and tribulations in life.

In many a homes, there are issues that cause sadness, like a tragedy had struck the home in loss of a member of the family or terminal illness of a dear one etc. Affluence on which man has anchored his hope is seen in many cases as working negatively. Suddenly monetary security or social status becomes meaningless. There is a sense of lost cause in chasing earthly wealth, values, and aspirations. In John 16:33 Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you that in me you may find peace, in the world you will have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The Conference was blessed by the presence of Rt. Rev. Dr Thomas Mar Timotheos. The other speakers include:-

Rev. Valson Thampu of CNI (Professor at St. Stephen's College, New Delhi.) He is a renowned Maramon Convention speaker. Valson Achen led the English speaking group and addressed one session with the youth.

Rev. Jacob Thomas, CSI church (Professor, Union Bible Seminary, Pune). Sunny Achen, as he is affectionately known has previously been a convention speaker at the London Mar Thoma Conference. He is renowned as a powerful force in his ministry with the youth. Achen led the Youth group and addressed one session with the English speaking group.

Rev. Sham P. Thomas has been sent by the Mar Thoma Church for his doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh. Sham Achen led the Malayalam group and had one session jointly with the English and Malayalam group.

Rev. John Perumbalath of the CNI Church who is presently doing his doctoral studies at the University of London was at the Conference. Also present was Rev. V. V. Alexander who has been with us for all of the previous Conferences.

The three groups were led by eminent speakers, who are all masters in their own right. The Divine presence in all the

speakers and the intervention of the Holy Spirit in their sessions were strongly felt. The messages were presented very effectively and the receptivity was total. It left virtually everybody with a deep sense of realisation that trials and tribulations do not have a pattern and can at random enter into one's life and rock the complete foundation of a stable and secure existence.

Many accepted that the only hope could be found when one surrenders and places the earthly problems at the foot of the cross. The priorities and dominant influences in our life are suddenly shifted and contentment and solace is ultimately found in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the Youth group, many committed themselves to the Lord during the testimony session. The effect was electrifying and the majority vowed to return next year. Tirumeni made it a point to spend some time with the Youth. The love and affection and the frank answers Tirumeni gave to the curious Youth created a tremendous bond that will be cherished by them for a very long time.

The young children were under the guidance of Alan Bass, his wife Gill and Jonathan Reed of the Rainbow Ministries. The children were totally engrossed in activities and on the final day enacted a play and sang songs with vigour and enthusiasm. The children in fact did not want to leave the Conference Centre, which is a great tribute to Alan, Gill and Jonathan.

Rev. Prasad Mathew of St James' Mar Thoma Church, London was always with us and ensured the Conference success with his guidance and prayers.

Our Achen, Rev. K. V. Cheriyan was a true shepherd and his care, guidance and prayers were always with us. We, the three convenors of the conference—Leela Jacob, John Thomas and self carried out our duties of conducting the Family Conference with everybody's blessings.

I join all the participants of the 20th Mar Thoma Family Conference, London in proclaiming, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." We were immensely blessed. We have overcome because He has overcome.

We look forward to next year when the Family Conference will be conducted by St. James' Mar Thoma Church, London. Our prayers go with them.

Abraham Mathews (Renny), Convenor

OUR DELEGATES AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE NCCC of USA



The General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ in USA was held in Oakland, CA from November 11 – 15, 2001.

From left to right: Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Diocesan Secretary; Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop; Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, General Secretary of NCCC of USA; Dr. John P. Lincoln, Diocesan Treasurer.

Activities Brief: EASTERN REGION YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

The Eastern Region, comprised of the Northeast and Southeast, consist a total of 18 parishes. The Youth Fellowship of each of these parishes held regular youth programs and meetings. I am thankful to all the Vicars of this region for their commendable leadership, support and guidance.

The year 2002 started off with the National Leadership Conference hosted by the Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia, from Jan 3rd-6th 2002. Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Rev. Kemper Crabb, Rev. M. O. Ommen, Jr., Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah and Rev. P. K. Zachariah were the main leaders of the conference. Track sessions were led by, Rev. C. A. Varghese, Rev. M. O. Oommen, Jr., and Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah, on Mission, Bible Study and Peer-Mentoring respectively. Panel discussions were organized with Thirumeni and the Youth Chaplains as panel members. Merry George facilitated the panel discussion.

NORTHEAST REGION

The Peer Mentoring Conference and Officers' Retreat was hosted by Epiphany Mar Thoma Church from February 15th-17th 2002. Rev Alex Thomas, Carmel Mar Thoma Church, Boston was the main speaker. The three track sessions were led by, Rev C. A. Varghese and Miss Merry George on Mission, Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah and Miss Shinau on Worship, and Rev. John Joseph and Mrs. Sajini on Bible Study.

The One Day Spring Conference was hosted by The Staten Island Mar Thoma Church on March 30th 2002 based on the theme "You are the Salt of the earth" (Matt. 5.13). Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah led the Bible Study and Mr. Thomas Abraham gave the main talk. We emphasized the role of a disciple and his mission in today's world. St. Andrews Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship presented the Theme. Group discussions were led by group leaders. The dedication and witnessing session was led by Shino John. The annual General Body meeting was also held. Annual report and Accounts for the year 2001 were presented and approved.

SOUTHEAST REGION

The One Day Spring Conference was hosted by Randolph Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey on March 16th 2002. The theme of the conference was "Transformers" (1Sam.10.6 and Romans 12.1-2). Rev. Sunil Chandy and Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah gave the main talks. Santosh took the Bible study. The study highlighted the influences of the modern world, which can easily lead the youths to be conformed to the world. The conference challenged the youths to transform. Lively group Discussions were held. At different occasions, youth fellowship members from each parish led the praise and worship service.

The Annual General Body meeting was held and the office bearers for the year 2002 were elected.

Programs for the upcoming months

NORTHEAST REGION

- 1) Pre-college Seminar will be held in July for students who are in 12th grade and for those who finished 12th. The aim is to provide guidance for these youngsters and to better equip them for the challenges they may face.
- 2) Sports Day which will be hosted by the St. Thomas Mar Thoma YF, Yonkers in June.
- 3) 24-hour Fasting program will be held in November. This is a time when the youths would spent the day in fasting, prayer and worship.
- 4) Fall One-Day Conference will be held on November 30th 2002, hosting parish is suggested as Bethany Mar Thoma Church.

SOUTHEAST REGION

- 1) Pre College Seminar will be held in July. The aim of this meeting is to guide the youths that are transitioning into the college phase of their lives, especially those who live away from home during their college years.

Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah, Youths Chaplain, Eastern Region



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LONG ISLAND MAR THOMA CHURCH



Our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa presenting the "Best Parish Award" to vicar Rev. K. P. Sabu and Office bearers of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church.

The Long Island Mar Thoma Church through its various programs has made the summer and fall very productive. The summer program began with a Family Retreat on Saturday, May 11, 2002. "Family as a system in God's plan" and "Effective communication within the Family" were the main themes of study. Mr. Samuel Balachander, Director, EYL Bangalore was the invited speaker for the retreat.

Mothers' Day was observed and the mothers were honored by presenting gifts to them and by organizing a special program on May 13. Variety entertainment programs were also presented. Celebration of the Fathers' Day on June 16th was an occasion to honor the fathers of the parish. The Annual picnic held on July 4th was an event to celebrate the Independence Day as well as to participate in various sports, games and fellowship lunch.

The 15th Parish Day was celebrated on July 7th. The members participated in the Holy Communion, parish day meeting and in contributing one-day income as parish day offering. It was a time to remember the providence and guidance of the Lord in the life and witness of the Parish. Rev. George Jose, Vicar, Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston was the chief guest for that day.

V.B.S was held from July 18 to 21st with 100 students and 15 teachers. V.B.S. training class was conducted for the teachers. Teachers' training class and dedication service were conducted for the Sunday school teachers prior to new academic year.

The Annual parish convention was held from Aug. 1 to 4. Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Varghese, General Secretary, Bible Society of India, Kottayam was the speaker. The members felt the need of spiritual revival and renewal in Christian living during the convention.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos visited our parish on August 18th and conducted the Holy Communion. 10 youngsters received first communion. Thirumeni presented the Best Parish Award of 2001 to the parish during his visit and the office bearers of 2001 received the Award.

The Annual Parish Camp was held from August 23 to 25 at Timber Lake Camp, Shandaken, NY. The main theme "Arise and Build & Arise and Shine" was exposed by Rev. K. P. Sabu. Mr. Joseph Mattackal presented a paper on Family relationships. The camp was an occasion for a physical, mental and spiritual refreshing and renewal for all the participants. The marvelous natural beauty of the Campsite, of course, refreshed our thoughts and minds.

September 11th was observed as a day of prayer. An evening service was conducted to commemorate and pray for our nation and all who have been affected by the tragedy of 9/11. Rev. Dr. John Joseph gave the message. Senior Citizen Day was

observed and all senior citizens of our parish were honored on September 30.

October Fest (Fall Fest), a day of games, sales and entertainment programs is organized to be held on Saturday, October 19. The proceeds will go for the mission and charity projects of the parish.

Under the auspices of the Youth Fellowship, a Gospel Meeting was held on June 28th for the youths of the parish. Rev. Cleophus J. Larue, Professor, Princeton Theological Seminary was the speaker. Three days camp for the Youths was arranged on July 14-16 at Harmony Heart Camp, Jermyn, PA. "Living in Spirit" was the theme for study. Rev. Thomas J. Philipps, Presbyterian Church, Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah (Youth Chaplain) and Rev. K. P. Sabu were the leaders of the Camp.

The Youth Fellowship conducted a "Praise Night" an evening of music, songs and praises, testimonies and message on Sunday October 13. Rev. Joseph Anand Shekhar, Episcopal Church, was the guest speaker. Youths from all over the North East Region attended the program. The Youth Fellowship keeps an ecumenical relationship with other denominations by inviting leaders from other churches for discussions and deliberations. Sr. Peggy from Catholic Church, Rev. Jin Choi from United Methodist Church, and Rev. Tom Philipp from Presbyterian Church were invited for special meetings for youths.

The Youth Fellowship raised funds through Praise Night offertory to support the Wardha Mission Project, Maharashtra. The Youths also participated in social activities in association with the Interfaith Nutrition Network by way of collecting and giving Winter clothes and canned food for the poor and needy.

The parish is privileged to have Mr. Varkey Abraham as the Mar Thoma Sabha Council Member, Mrs. Annamma Joseph as the Vice-president and Mrs. Susamma Abraham as the auditor of Eastern Zonal Sevika Sanghom.

**Rev. K. P. Sabu, Vicar
Glenn Thomas, Secretary**



DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

From Left to Right Standing:

Jose K. Thomas, Staten Island, NY

P. T. Mathew, Dallas, TX

T. A. Mathew, Houston, TX

Sitting:

Rev. Dr. John Joseph

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos

Rev. Alexander Thomas

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY AWARDED CERTIFICATE OF MERIT TO REV. DR. C. P. MATHEWS



Rev. Dr. C. P. Mathews, Vicar of St. James and St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, New York, has been awarded a Certificate of Merit by The New York State Assembly in recognition of his work in fostering interfaith and interdenominational relations. The Town of Ramapo also awarded a Certificate of Honor to acknowledge Rev. C. P. Mathews'

endeavors in bridging cultural and religious schisms. In December 2000, he had organized an inter-religious seminar in Suffern, NY, and in April 2001, he rallied the youths of the CSI, Syrian Orthodox, Mar Thoma, and Episcopal denominations to stage the Ecumenical Cultural Forum of Youths. He was the organizer of the Rockland Christian

Movement for Inter-faith Relations. He was instrumental in initiating inter-religious dialogues and as President of the Joint Council of Churches, supported the unification efforts of the council. Besides being the Chief Editor and publisher of Global Vision, he has also authored 10 books on theological topics including God's Liberative Acts, Christian-Marxist Dialogue, and Christ of the Indian Renaissance. Rev. C. P. Mathews has been actively pursuing a christian solution for communal harmony as his vocation. Rev. Dr. C. P. Mathews received his Ph.D. from Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore and had his post doctoral Research at St. Vladimir Orthodox Seminary, New York. He belongs to the Chekkulathu family, Kozhencherry. He has also taught at Bishops College, Calcutta, and the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Bishop's/Diocesan Secretary

OBITUARY



DR. DANIEL P. GEORGE, (Babu) a member of the Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church, died of Diabetes complications on July 8, 2002 in Las Vegas, NV. He was 61 years old. Rev. Sunni E. Mathew, Vicar of the Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church led the funeral service on July 11 at the Palm Valley View Cemetery, Las

Vegas in the presence of a large number of friends and relatives. Rev. Philip Abraham of the St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Rev. John Thomas of the India Pentecostal

Assembly were among those who paid tributes and expressed condolences to the bereaved family members.

Dr. George was born of late Pandakasala Puthenveetil P. C. Daniel and Sosamma Thomas, Karunagappally. After obtaining his degree in Homeopathic Medicine, he worked as Medical Officer in Trichur, Puthenchira, Malappuram and Neeleswaram before he emigrated to the US in 1977. He was a practicing Homeopathic Doctor in Las Vegas and an active member of the American Homeopathic Medical Association.

Dr. Daniel P. George is survived by his wife Valsa (daughter of late Dr. V. G. Chacko, Varikoliarayil, Kattanam), children Susan, Danny, Cissi, Jessie and son-in-laws Sunny John and Shibu John.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEWLY ELECTED
SABHA COUNCIL MEMBERS FROM OUR DIOCESE**



Varkey Abraham
Long Island MTC, New York



Rev. Dr. John Joseph
Bishop's/Diocesan Secretary



John Thomas
St. Thomas MTC, New York



CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES TO REV. DR. G. SAMUEL

Rev. Dr. G. Samuel has successfully completed his doctoral studies at the Lutheran School of Studies in Chicago and has been awarded his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology. His dissertation is titled "The Prospects and Challenges of Ecclesiology in the Contemporary Indian Context."

Achen served as vicar of Chicago Bethel, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis congregations along with his study.

Achen is currently serving as vicar of Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Adoor.

SEVIKA SANGOM: WESTERN REGION

On September 14, 2002, the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco hosted the very first Western Region Sevika Sangom Retreat. The theme was "The Role of Women in Christian Ministry." The retreat was led by Rev. George K. John of the San Francisco Church. It was a time of fellowship and learning, as Sangom members of the western region came together to learn the unique role they could have in various capacities.

The retreat began with the reading of the scripture by Mrs. Shantamma George. Mrs. Sindu Philip gave the welcome speech. The choirs from both the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco and Los Angeles enlivened the occasion with their harmonious music.

The retreat was privileged to have not one, but two distinguished speakers. Mrs. Marykutty George (the Kochama of the San Francisco Mar Thoma Church) and Rev. Sunni E. Mathew (Vicar of the Mar Thoma Church Los Angeles).

Mrs. Marykutty George, in her devotional talk, spoke concerning the role and status of women. Using various passages like Luke 8:1-3 and Mark 15:40-41, Kochama showed the exalted position women had in the New Testament. At a time in history where women were openly shunned, Jesus incorporated women like Mary Magdalene

as his disciple. Through various other Biblical illustrations, Kochama drew the conclusion that Sangom members in their capacity should lead a similar life of servant-hood.

Rev. Sunni E. Mathew gave a message emphasizing the themes of servant-hood and the necessity for Sangom members to follow the path of Christ. He urged Sangom members to engage in three functions that Christ himself performed. First, there is the priestly function. Like Christ, Sangom members were asked to intercede for their family, their church, fellow workers; in short, for those under their stewardship. Second, there is the prophetic function. Like Christ and the prophets of the Old Testament, Sangom members are to be agents of correction and change. Lastly and in connection with the prophetic function, Sangom members are to be Royal in that they ought to be agents that perfect their surroundings.

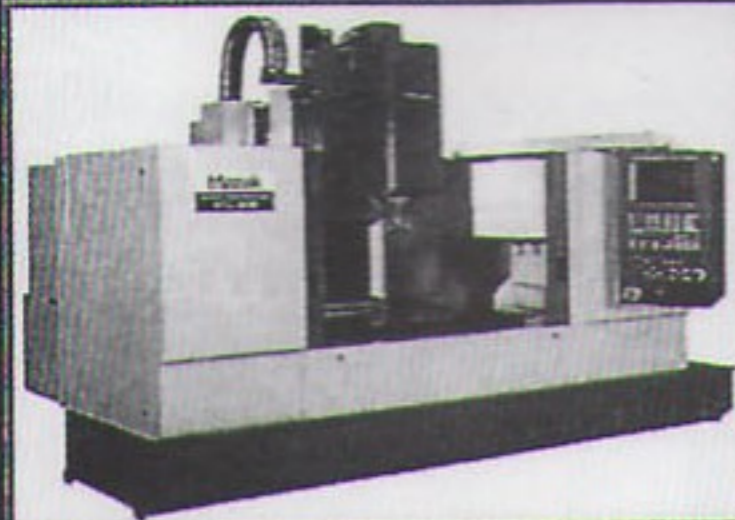
After the message and a short discussion, Mrs. Ponnamma Ninan led a brief meditation. The program concluded with Mrs. Rachel Mathew giving the vote of thanks and with benediction by Rev. George K. John.

Mrs. Rachel Mathew
Western Region Sevika Sangom, Secretary

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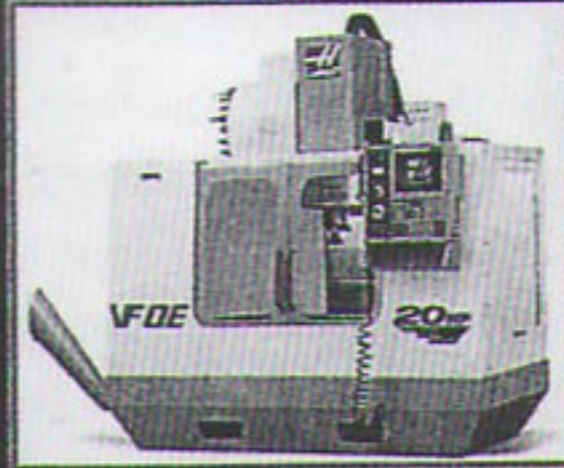


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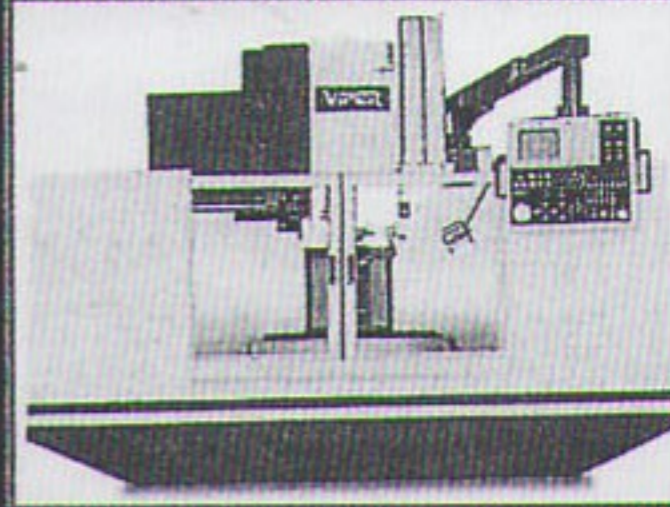
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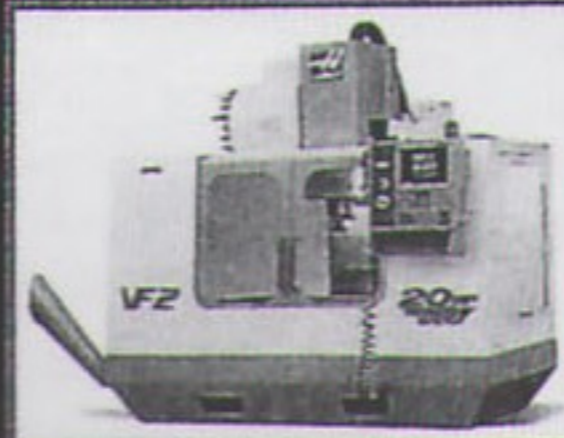
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*Shaji Mathai
President*

This edition of the Messenger is meant to commemorate the Metropolitan's Jubilee. It is also the Diaspora Special Issue. Since I wrote about our Metropolitan in the last issue, I will talk about the Diaspora theme in this issue.

When we think of ourselves as a transplanted generation, we realize how our life has changed. We left our homes, childhood friends and close knit family ties to attain broader Socio-Economic status. We worked very hard to establish ourselves in a new culture and unfamiliar surroundings. Cherishing the dream of resettling in our birthplaces later in life, many of us acquired homes and property in our homeland. Limited needs of life became broader as our children grew up. Slowly we embraced the new culture with all its merits and demerits. Our children accepted what they thought as right and wrong from this new culture, where we failed to recognize and prove what is right.

Many times we felt like a candle in the wind. With very little protection around, our life pattern started to shine and gloom, depending on the direction and strength of the wind. We changed our priorities; what seemed important and critical to our life ten years ago is no longer important. Many times we are worried about little things. We tend to get annoyed by strangers, friends, relatives and even our own children. It happens while we are at work, in church, driving, in school, at home and everywhere else. When we try to correct one end, the other end falls down. It is like cleaning up a child's room. When you think you've cleaned it up good, you turn around and the mess is back. Let's face it. We can either fight these facts and let the repetitive nature of life run us into rat races, or we can find wisdom in the common day to day routines and become wiser and change our behavior.

Like a stream that starts at the top of the mountain and travels down with roaring sounds and powerful rapids, then quietly joins the lake in the valley, we took opportunities and ran with them. Later we got tired of them and slowly gave it up. We saw many who stood as giants and then had fallen down around us. Their toil ended with no fruits and their followers withered like grass under hot sun. But those who established their faith and hope on the Rock of Jesus Christ stood tall and still. Their visions became missions for many.

Sometimes we tend to forget the fact that we are planted here by the will of God. We expect miracles the way we want it. We long for good life, except the "good" is defined in our own way. Here is a quote from the new book *"My Monastery is a Minivan"* by Denise Rose:

The man whispered, "God, speak to me" and a meadowlark sang.
But the man did not hear.
So the man yelled "God, speak to me!" and the thunder rolled across the sky
But the man did not listen.
The man looked around and said, "God let me see you." And a star shined brightly.
But the man did not notice.
And the man shouted, "God, show me a miracle!" and a life was born
But the man did not know.
So the man cried out in despair, "Touch me, God, and let me know you are here!"
But the man brushed away the butterfly and walked on.
Do not miss out on a blessing because it is not packaged the way that you expect.

Life is precious. If you do not know that, ask someone who lost a loved one, someone who lost their sight, someone who lost a limb, someone who lost their ability to talk or walk. Celebrate your life daily with God. Celebrate it with your loved ones. As a member of the Diaspora community, spread the Good News inside and outside of your community.

Eapen Daniel

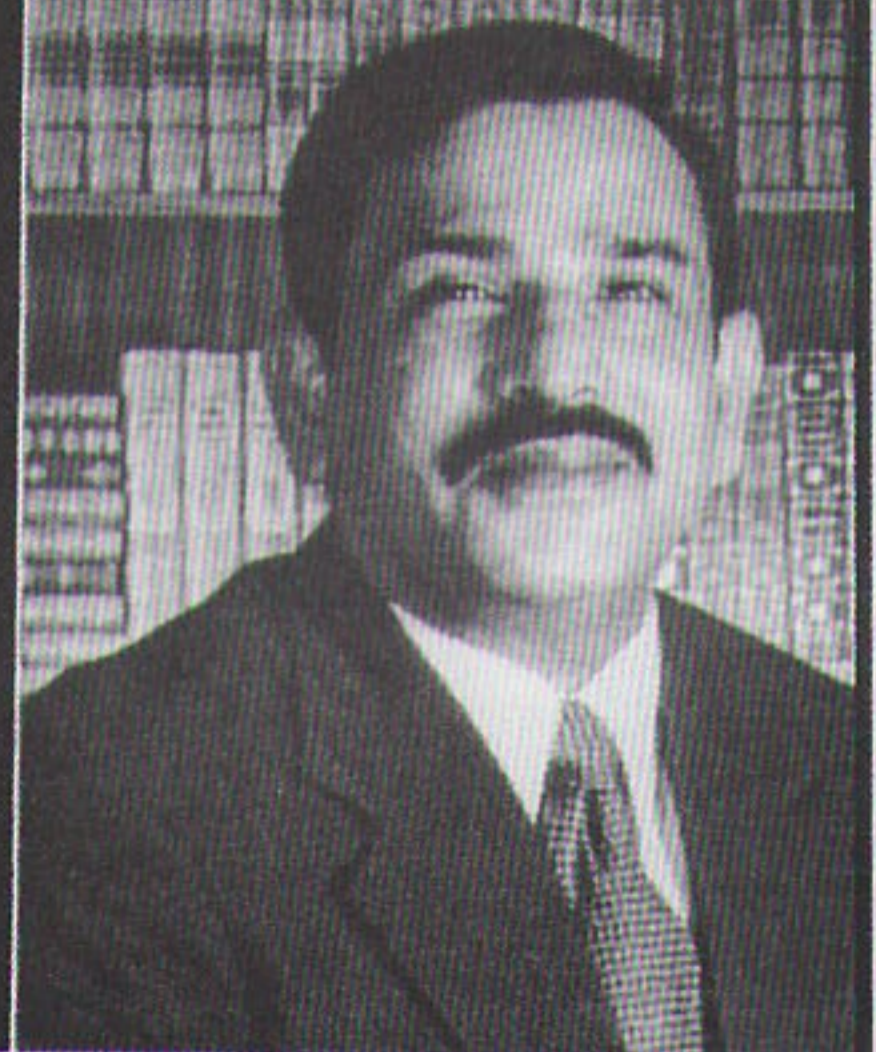
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