



MAR THOMA
MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

APRIL 2003

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Message from the Diocesan Bishop

March 19, 2003



Dearly beloved in Christ,

We are now in the Lenten season, a time to discipline ourselves in every area of our life to prepare ourselves to acknowledge the great salvific act of God in and through Jesus Christ. It is a time for self evaluation, there by confessing our short comings, recommitment and creative response. We are challenged to identify with the passion of our Lord's death, burial and resurrection. We are dead and buried to this world and now living in the resurrected power of the Lord. No longer I but Christ—this will be the radical change in our perspectives and priorities.

As I am preparing this message the war with Iraq is almost certain and imminent. The words of Paul to Colossians are very important at this point. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, since as members of one body you were called to peace" (Col. 3:15). We are indeed called to peace. Light is an image associated with peace, harmony and oneness with God. When all was in the darkness God created light and called it good. Let us dedicate ourselves in the ministry of peace making and offer ourselves as an instrument of peace. Let us denounce war as a final rupture of the human family and violation of God's will for our lives. Let us pray for His wisdom and courage so that we won't miss His Kingdom goal.

The 108th Maramon Convention went on very well and I am happy to know that so many of our dear ones from this Diocese attended the convention. In spite of the physical ailments our Metropolitan could give powerful leadership to the Convention all through. For various reasons I couldn't attend this year's convention.

The inaugural function of the Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan Jubilee Mexico Mission went on well and we had nearly 50 people represented from the various regions of the Diocese. The Holy Communion celebrated on the 24th January, 2003 in Mexico was a historic event for the Mar Thoma Church. For the inaugural function nearly 400 people from the six islands in Mexico gathered and I commend the sub committee for the Native American and Mexico mission of the Mission Board for the planning and arrangements. As we are adopting the island Puntilla Norte I urge every member of the Diocese to be a part of this mission program and there by participate in the furtherance of God's Kingdom. We are also getting so many opening to work with the Native Americans and I pray that we will have enough volunteers to take up the various challenges placed before us. Your prayer and participation are very important in the mission of the church.

The Diocesan Assembly is scheduled for March 28, 29, 2003 at Philadelphia mar Thoma Church. Pray for its blessing so that the Assembly will be able to decide and resolve on issues which are very crucial as also unique to this Diocese. I appreciated all the members of the Diocese for their leadership in the Diocese and involvement in the local parishes. The Council members played their role during the past year and their vibrant leadership will facilitate the growth of the Diocese.

Few of our Achens are going back to India after their service in this Diocese. I acknowledge their contributions and leadership. I wish them God's blessings as they take up the new assignment of the church.

The South Florida Mar Thoma Church is hosting this year's family conference from July 3-6, 2003. The theme of the conference is **"Thy Kingdom come"** and Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus is the main speaker. I urge all of you to attend the conference and pray for its blessing.

This issue of Messenger is focusing on the topic Spirituality and I am sure the various articles will expose and give us a clear understanding of meaningful spirituality which is relevant for the time. I also commend the efforts taken by the Messenger team for improving its quality and quantity within this short span of time.

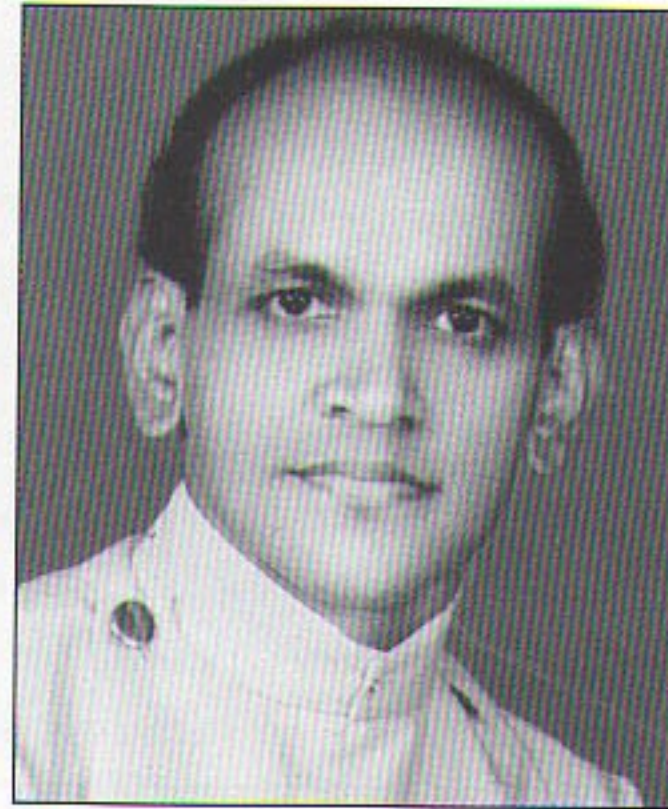
May God bless you all.

Yours in His Service,
Coorilos Methrachen

The Pattern of the Cross and Resurrection

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

During the period of Lent, a re-examination of the meaning of the Cross and Resurrection is of great importance. The Cross is understood in a variety of ways in Christian traditions. Some of the dominant images during the middle ages were the "bleeding face of Christ", "the sacred blood of Christ", "the sacred heart of Christ", "the five wounds of Christ" etc. The following approaches are to be questioned in our search for a meaningful concept of the Cross.



Two: Idolisation and ritualisation of the Cross

As we are aware, cross is a powerful symbol in Christian faith. Here we have to distinguish between a symbol and an idol. An idol is that which blocks our ultimate loyalty to God. Hence any attempt to make a cult of the cross, to give magical powers to it or to make it an object of worship is to make it an idol. According to Dr. S. Kappen, an Indian Jesuit theologian, the ritualisation of the cross is a

deliberate attempt to do away with the cause of Christ in our life.

Baptism of the Cross

Cross is not simply the wooden frame on which Jesus was nailed to death. Jesus points out that 'He has another baptism to receive' (Lk.12:50) which is the baptism of the cross. In other words, this has to do with the 'principle of immersion' into the realities of this world and human life which would ultimately lead Him to the culmination of the cross. The logic of exclusion is alien to the spirit of Christ. What comes to the fore here is the pain of God for the redemption of the world. In the words of Kazov Kitamori, it is this pain of God which creates newness in history.

Way of the Cross

Jesus shows us that the way of life is through death and that our salvation is on the way of the cross. Here we are confronted with an either or situation in life. He says: "I am telling you the truth; a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies." (Jn. 12:24) This response of Jesus to the Greeks is to be seen against the background of the Greco-Roman world in which the concept of a suffering God was totally absent. Alistair Kee rightly reminds us: "Christianity begins with a man on his way to the cross. The cross was not an altar for

One: Prediction-fulfillment

Notwithstanding the role of prophetic ministry in Christian faith as attested to in the Word of God, the prediction "fulfillment" approach goes against the spirit of the prophetic ministry of Christ. The advocates of this theory would say that everything in the life and ministry of Jesus was predicted earlier and when He came those predictions were simply fulfilled. There is a definite continuation of the prophetic ministry in the life of Jesus. In His ultimate obedience to God the Father, He took over the ministry from John the Baptist after His baptism of identification in the river of Jordan which was in fact a prophetic initiation. Jesus continuously got inspiration from the prophetic writings and He identified Himself as the "Paschal Lamb" mentioned in the servant songs of Isaiah. He was always a prophet of the eschaton. The early church saw in Jesus the culmination of the prophetic ministry. Nevertheless, when we see only the fulfillment of certain earlier predictions in the life and ministry of Jesus, we are underestimating the cause for which Jesus stood and died, His basic convictions and historical actions and options. As it was pointed out in the first article in this series, since the Bible is mostly a retrospective document of faith, rather than prediction-fulfillment what is to be underscored is God's wider plan for this world and the place of Jesus within that plan (Phill. 2:1-5).

The Messenger provides valuable information about the Mar Thoma Church and its members, both in our own diocese and around the world. Most importantly, it is a tool that can be used to spread the word of God not only in our own Malayalee community, but to other communities as well. I would like to see a smaller more condensed version of the Messenger, perhaps containing only spiritual essays and stories, available to those who don't subscribe. I think that the future of the Mar Thoma Church in North America will depend greatly on our ability to make a positive impact on the society we live in.

Shaun Chacko, St. Mathews Mar Thoma Church, Toronto

the divine sacrifice but the prescribed instrument by which the Romans tortured to death those who would not submit to them and who encouraged men to put their ultimate loyalties elsewhere." Hence cross is the inevitable consequence of Jesus' way of the cross or His mission of the Kingdom of God. When He negated the political ideology of the Zealots (the Zealots' movement wanted to overthrow the Roman empire by force and establish the rule of the Messiah), the perfectionism of the Scribes and the Pharisees, the legalism of the Saducees and the Puritanism of the Essenes, He was ushering in the values of the Kingdom of God on the way of the cross.

Last Supper and the Celebration of the Eucharist

Rather than instituting a cultic act to be celebrated, the Last Supper is to be seen as a symbolic attempt of Jesus to interpret to His disciples His impending death on the cross. Over the years the churches have attributed sacramental value to this salvific act of Jesus. The question here is how does Jesus want us to remember Him. When we celebrate the Eucharist, let us constantly remind ourselves that the Last supper took place under the shadow of the cross and in anticipation of the Kingdom of God. (Lk. 22:14-16) Rather than a simplistic and superficial faith appropriation of the cross, our preparedness to be broken with Christ for the furtherance of the Kingdom is what makes our celebration of the eucharist authentic. Every eucharistic celebration is a re-enactment of the Paschal mystery in our times.

The Crucified—Risen Lord

Through the resurrection of Christ, the pattern of life through self-giving is affirmed. The doctrine of Resurrection is of great importance not because of its fascination or supernatural wrappings but basically because of the theological questions: Does God allow sin/evil to have the final word in history? Is there any enduring value in our stances for the just cause and the resultant sufferings? The resurrection of Christ points to God's ultimate triumph over the forces of evil in this world. Here we should also acknowledge that the cross and resurrection are used as powerful symbols by poets, both Christians and people of other faiths to portray the eternal value in suffering for the sake of others.

Conclusion

There is an inevitability of the cross in Christian life. Our life is a continuous assimilation of the mystery of the cross and resurrection over the values and ethics of the market such as individualism, competition, profit and pleasure. What emerges so powerfully in the light of the crucifixion and resurrection is the category of life. A new perspective on life is brought to the fore in this context, which sets new priorities and values before us. Our task is to give witness to Christ by following Him on the way of the cross (Mk. 8:34). In order to confess Jesus as the Lord of life, we have to choose life and its higher values and reject the forces of death at all levels. ■

MAR THOMA VALEDICTORIAN AWARD

In 1996, the Diocesan Assembly decided to establish the Mar Thoma Award for all High School Valedictorians belonging to the Mar Thoma Church. Over the last six years, the Diocese has honored 20 young people in various parishes with this award. These recipients have demonstrated outstanding academic achievements as well as dedicated service to their church and community.

For the year 2003, please submit the nominations, through your vicar or assembly member, to the convener of the committee on or before June 15, 2003.

Mr. John Kunchandy
9734 Glenhope Road
Philadelphia, PA 19115

The awards will be presented at the 2003 Mar Thoma Family Conference in South Florida.

History of the Mar Thoma Church

Rev. Sunni E. Mathew, Los Angeles, CA

Indian Christianity in the early ages

In the previous issues, we have discussed about the founding of Christianity in Indian soil. The subsequent condition of the Church till the coming of imperial powers from the west is sketchy. But whatever little information we have, it is certain that the church in Malabar had a very strong relationship with the church in Persia.



Connections with Churches outside

Early Church historian and the bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius mentions that in the year A. D. 189 Pantaenus visited India. He was a missionary sent by Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria. He arrived at Malabar where he found a group of Christians. It is mentioned that he found with them a copy of the Aramaic version of the Gospel according to Matthew. We also find mention of this incident in the writings of St. Jerome. It is also said that he took the Aramaic Gospel writings with him.

Further mention about Christianity in India is seen in the list of participants in the council of Nicea which took place in the year 325 A. D. List of participants show the name of a certain bishop by the name John representing the see of greater India. These events could be of much significance. As we have mentioned in the earlier articles, after these we find a uniformity and preciseness in referring to the activity of St. Thomas. Though the writings of Fathers prior to the council of Nicea differ in the sphere of the work of St. Thomas, those writings from the post-Nicean era strongly and uniformly presented St. Thomas in relation with India specific.

It is also mentioned that Emperor Constantius sent Theophilus on a mission to Arabia Felix and Abyssinia (about 354). Theophilus was an Arian. He was surnamed "the Indian". This is because, at a very early age, he was sent to the Romans from Maldives. Maldives is a chain of islands near the Indian subcontinent. Philostorgius, an Arian Greek Church historian recorded his travel narrations. It is said that, after finishing his mission to the Homerites, he sailed back to his island home. Afterwards he visited other parts of India. He is said to have reformed some practices which were considered faulty. Mention is made about Christians in India hearing the gospel in the sitting position, which he corrected.

Cosmas the famous Christian traveler from Alexandria who traveled in the Indian seas around 522 A. D., provides clear evidence about the church in Malabar in his book Universal Christian Topography. He records that he found

Christians in the land of Taprobana (modern Sri Lanka) with clergy. Further he records the presence of a very strong Christian community with clergy who are ordained by a Bishop sent from Persia in the land of Male where the pepper grows. This clearly speaks of the connection of the Christian Church in Malabar with the Church in Persia.

Migration from the Persian Church

The strong tradition that a group of Christian immigrants from Persia arrived in Malabar in the year 345 A. D. under the leadership of one Thomas of Cana (commonly known as Knaye Thommen) further strengthens the above stance of relationship between the Indian Church and the Persian Church. A bishop and some priests and a group of Christians came along with him. The native Christians gladly welcomed him and company. They together, approached the King of Malabar. They were provided land to stay and establish a community. The King also conferred some royal honors to the Christians and inscribed them on copper-plates. From this time onwards Syrian clergy came to the town on the order of the Catholicos of the East.

It is said that the Catholicos of the East had a vision on the declining condition of the Christians in India. It was he, who sent Thomas of Cana. Thomas of Cana was a merchant. He after visiting Malabar went back to Persia and came back with a bishop and clergy and some Christians. But it is more probable that they came as a result of persecution of Christians in Persia at that time. The political condition in Persia during that time was very volatile. Persia was having ongoing conflicts with Rome. When Christians were a persecuted lot under the Roman Empire, Persians did not persecute Christians. When Constantine's Roman government started openly supporting Christians in that Kingdom, Persian emperors started looking on the Christians in their region with suspicion. When the nations were at peace, the Christians were spared. Following the death of Constantine, war broke out between the Roman Empire and Persia. Sapor II was the king of Persia during this time. The hatred of the Romans by the Persians was translated to hatred of the new Roman Christianity. Instigation of the Persian religious clerics (Zoroastrian religion) combined with doubts on patriotism of the Christians, resulted in strong persecution of Christians. As Christians and traders, Thomas of Cana and the Persians had contact with the Christians of Malabar who were the main sources of spices. As a result many Christians comprising skilled merchants, mechanics,

artisans and clergy came to India in the year 345 A. D. The Hindu rulers were interested in encouraging trade especially with Christian traders who were acknowledged for their honesty. So the kings received them kindly and special privileges were given to them. The existence of Christians in Malabar and the favorable response of the rulers positively support the earlier theory of the beginning of Christianity in India during the first century itself.

With this migration the connection with the Syrian Church became very close. By A. D. 500 there were many Assyrian Christians in Malabar. Persian Christianity had a well-organized liturgy and other structural arrangements. It is quite logical to deduce that the Indian Church welcomed many of these into its life. Writings of Cosmas Indicoplustes (India traveler) support this. He connects the Malabar Church with the Nestorian Patriarchate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Those Christians who came from Persia settled on the Northern side of Periyar near Cranganore. They kept themselves apart from natives in matrimonial relationship. While others who inter-married with the locals settled in the southern part. They came to be known as the Southists while those who kept the ethnic purity came to be known as the Northists. Even though they came together for worship together they did not enter into matrimonial relationships with one another.

We also find the mention of subsequent migrations from Persia. Some say about the migration in the year 774 A. D. It is believed that the King issued a copperplate of charters to Iravi Corttan, the head of the Christian community. In that Corttan was acknowledged as the sovereign merchant of the Kingdom. Another migration appears to have taken place in the year 825 A. D. This took place under the leadership of a Persian merchant named Marwan Sabriso. He was accompanied by two Bishops named Mar Sapro and Mar Prodh. They landed at Quilon. King Cheraman Perumal gave them land and extended to them special privileges, inscribed in two sets of copper plates. Out of these, five still exist. Three of them are kept at the Old Seminary in Kottayam and two at Poolatheen Aramana of the Mar Thoma Church, Tiruvalla. These provided Christians considerable social mobility. Unfortunately these privileges made the Christians regard themselves as a special lot. They in the later course of

history tried to present themselves as privileged class in a caste-ridden society causing them to remain isolated from the lower classes. Mar Sapro and Mar Prodh were pious men. Later they were called saints. The church they built at Quilon was dedicated to them. Alexis de Menezes, the Roman Archbishop changed the dedication to other saints according to the Roman Catholic calendar in connection with the Romanization of the Malabar Church.

It is quite probable that the second influx of the Christians from Persia also had an element of pressure of persecution. By that time Mohammedan power was sweeping over Persian area. Though in the initial stages Christians were not affected, after the consolidation of Islamic power Christians started feeling the pressure. Malabar seemed a refuge for them. Presence of a strong Christian community that enjoys social and ethical recognition gave them room to migrate. The warm welcome by the natives provided them with a homely feeling.

Further proof of connection with the Persian Church is found in the form of Persian Crosses with inscription in Pahlavi language. One of these crosses is found in Valiya Palli, Kottayam. Similar crosses were found in Kadamattom and at Muttuchira.

Western Visitors

From 12th to 15th century, we get records about the Malabar Church from the writings of western travelers. They include Marco Polo, the great Venetian traveler. He came to Malabar in 1293. During the same time, John of Monte Corvino, a Franciscan friar also visited the Church. Another Franciscan friar by the name Odoric visited in the year 1316. Dominican Friar Jordanus visited the Church between 1321-23. He made a second visit in 1330. Through the visits of these western travelers, the western world also came to know about the existence of a Church in Malabar. The Western world along with their interest in trade started targeting the Church. That resulted in the beginning of a new era in the history of the Church of Malabar. Before going into that history, we should discuss the socio-religious condition of the Malabar Christians till the advent of Western colonial power. That we will take up in the next issue. ■

Do you KNOW ?

Dental Health.

Many individuals do not realize the fact that dental hygiene is very important in keeping your health at its best.

Periodontal disease (Gum disease) has been attributed to be the main reason for the loss of teeth and dental disfiguration in the general population. There are several stages in the progression of periodontal disease. Initial, moderate and advanced. The initial signs of periodontal disease are bleeding gums and halitosis (bad breath). Periodontal disease has been shown to be a factor in the progression of heart disease. Hence the prevention of periodontal disease is important. Regular biannual cleanings are the first step to health and sometimes, deep cleanings and surgery may be necessary to stop the breakdown and to revert back to a state of health.

A Holistic Christian Spirituality

Rev. Alex Thomas. Boston, MA

We want to be spiritual men and women by maintaining an intimate relationship with God. The meaning of the term Spirituality was defined and understood in many ways depending on the religious affiliations and the theological outlook of a person or a religious group. To some people spirituality is a nonphysical or non-worldly affair and thus refers primarily to prayer, meditation, piety, and worship. It restricts spirituality as a personal inner experience focusing to exercise spirituality in a devotional mystical way. This understanding is not only misleading but also unbiblical. The above notion of spirituality derives from a dualism, which splits life into two opposed realms: the physical and the spiritual, the political and the religious, the public and the private, the body and the soul. In other words the tendency is to understand spirituality as an otherworldly matter.

Jesus is key to Christian spirituality. His example shows us that spirituality is expressed in living a human life in this world. Jesus is the model of a spiritual person, one who lived his human life in union with God. Jesus explicitly stated, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does (John 5:19)." An authentic spirituality is knowing and doing the will of God. Jesus made it clear that he had come down from heaven not to do his will but to do the will of him who sent him (John 6:38). Only with an intimate relationship with God, can we know and do the will of God. Jesus said that apart from him we couldn't have a fruitful life (John 15:5). Our capacity to live a spiritual life depends entirely on our relationship with Christ. Anything that comes without that degenerates to activism, and thus leads to self-righteous activity. According to Bryan Stone, "Authentic spirituality is both the experience of grace and the activity of being gracious to others." A holistic spirituality is an ongoing journey of a transformed life being shaped by the grace of God.

As we have noted, Jesus is the model of a spiritual person. In the Biblical accounts we see moments of retreat by Jesus. It is not a passive retreat; but occasions to know the will of God, making him available to the crowd, responding to their needs, and thus doing the will of God. The forty days of Jesus' retreat in the wilderness empowered him to announce the agenda of the kingdom of God and to step into a ministry for which he was sent (Lk. 4:1-19). The retreat in the Mount of Transfiguration empowered him to respond to the needs of the people in the valley of disfiguration (Mat. 17:1-19). The communion with God in the garden of Gethsemane empowered him to face the Good Friday (Mat. 26:36-46). None of these events were

retreats from the world but empowering Jesus to engage with the world. An authentic spirituality is not worship, prayer or meditation alone, rather a responsible engagement with the day-to-day life in the midst of others.

Public worship is a means to reshape our spirituality, and our church gives much importance to worship. We are a "liturgical community". The word liturgy usually refers to what goes inside church building—prayers, songs and chants, recital of the creed, proclamation of the word, and the Eucharist. But the liturgical worship had a wider horizon. John Chrysostom spoke of two altars: one within the sanctuary, and one outside in public square. This idea is the basis of the concept "liturgy after liturgy." It explains how Christian worship is inseparable from committed engagement in society and culture. Ian Bria unfolds this concept of the liturgy after liturgy in his book with the same title. According to him, the liturgy itself resonates with an understanding of the church as both gathered for worship and sent out to the ends of earth. It is the extension of the liturgical celebration into the daily life of the faithful in the world. The dynamics of the liturgy go beyond the boundaries of the Eucharist assembly to serve the community at large. The liturgy is not an escape into an inner realm of prayer, a pious turning away from social realities; rather it calls and sends the faithful to celebrate the sacrament of the brother, outside the sanctuary, in the public place, where the cries of the poor and the marginalized are heard.

Each individual is called upon to continue a personal liturgy on the secret altar of his own heart to proclaim the good news with word and deed. Without this continuation the liturgy remains incomplete. The participation in the Holy Communion must be extended in personal sacrifices for the poor people in need, the brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. The continuation of the liturgy in life means a continuous liberation from the powers of the evil that are working inside us, a continual reorientation and openness to insights and efforts aimed at liberating human beings from all demonic structures of injustice, exploitation, agony, loneliness, and at creating real communion of persons in love.

The liturgy reshapes the social life of the Christian with a new emphasis on the sharing of the bread, on the healing of brokenness, on reconciliation, and on justice in the human community. Liturgy should lead us to the diaconal functions. The liturgy is not just the telling of the story of Jesus Christ, but the interpretation and concretization of his death on the cross and his resurrection. The earthly life of Jesus and his death on the cross are keys to our spirituality. ■

Focus on Mission

Rev. Varghese M. Easow, Christudasa Ashram, Palghat, Kerala, India

Christudasa is the first Ashram of the Mar Thoma Church, fully established in 1928

The primary mission field was established in the year 1924 by Rev. P. I. Mathai, Plavunkal and few other Mar Thoma friends. Since there was no place available for the team to stay overnight, they stayed in temporary huts during the beginning years, moving from place to place with all the belongings. The work was focused amongst the poor and under-privileged families and individuals. After the arrival of Rev P. John Varghese (Parepeedikayil, Chengannur) in 1928, the mission work advanced in all phases. The mission control center was named "Christudasa Ashram" in that year. The beginning years were very painful with financial needs, lack of workers, transportation issues, social acceptance and so on. The few workers took a lot of pain and suffering to support the needy. Many times the workers did not eat a good meal during their work day. But all these efforts were paid off when *Christudasa Ashram* became a "Point of Hope" for the poor community around. Individuals of all ages respected the workers and their mission. Soon the *Ashram* was able to attract educated individuals from our church to help with the establishment of schools and community centers. This group of committed and faithful workers are key points in the establishment of this Ashram. Most workers were unmarried committed Christians who shared their wealth and talents with other workers and the community.

Gospel Work

Our aim was to spread Gospel in and around the Malabar community. We accomplished this great task by helping the community dwellers in their life needs, distributing Christian literature, arranging house visits, gospel conventions, Slide shows, Christian musical evenings and one on one Christian teaching. The workers took much pain in organizing these works in a community where there is no

means of transportation, communication system, financial help or even a nice place to stay. The *Ashram* volunteers sometimes walked miles, carrying the items needed for the work of the day. We arranged prayer cells and gospel gatherings as needed. By the grace of God, all our work produced results that glorified the name of the Lord.

A place of Worship

We were able to establish a small church in 1935. The local people depended on the chimes of the church bell to know the time during the early years. Later we built a guest house for visitors and another building for the use of the *Ashram*.

Bringing the Literacy Level Up

The first school under this mission field was started in Erimayoor. An individual named Charles Williams helped with the finance and the land for the starting of the school. The school was started with 10 students. In the beginning years the teacher was never paid any money. The teacher had to go to the homes and bring the children to school and then teach them. The first school building was a small shed with thatched roof and dusty floor. This school later became a good L.P. School. A nursery school was established in 1942 which later became a well known English medium School in the area. Presently we have one U.P. School and two L.P. Schools along with the English medium school under this mission field.

Post office

In 1945 we helped to establish a post office for this community. This was very helpful in matters of communication with the outside world. In the year 2000, Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa helped to establish a brand new building for the use of the post office.



About Messenger

Have a better layout and design rather than pages of straight text with more graphic design and color like modern magazines. Work together with the diocesan youth fellowship and their online newsletter. If possible, having an online version of the Messenger would be great!

About Mar Thoma Church

I think it would be great if Mar Thoma Church could focus on making an impact in the local communities. It would be great if we had more opportunities to serve in missions in this hemisphere, possibly as summer internships for students for American mission programs.

Maureen Mathew, Youth Secretary, MTC of Los Angeles

Camp Center

With the money donated by the Mar Thoma Sunday School of Dubai, UAE, under the direction of Bishop Barnabas, *Ashram* was able to build a "Children's Camp Center". We are very thankful to Thirumeni and the Dubai MT Sunday school. We use this camp center to conduct Sunday School camps, Youth Conferences, special meetings etc. on a regular basis.

Vocational training

In order to help the unemployed individuals, especially girls, we started two 'sawing schools' where we teach cloth making and stitching. At present we have over 40 students attending the school. Those who finished the course, self employ at their homes and make a decent living. This model was later copied by many community establishments and governmental authorities.

Karunalayam

Karunalayam was built to accommodate individuals who have no home to stay or nobody to support. It also absorbed orphans and gave them education and other support to lead a better life in the future. We are proud to say that many of the orphans who we educated in the past are now well established in and outside India. We are very thankful to those who supported us financially to help these children, who might have gone poor and street bound otherwise.

Health Center

From the very beginning of this Ashram, we were helping the local community with limited health care. In 1936 we established a small Health Center in the building donated

by Mr. K. G. George, Pallickal Kankalil. Dr. Eli Mammen was the first doctor to establish practice here. Dr. Mammen did a great job in helping the community. In 1947 we established the "Bishop Abraham Jubilee memorial" hospital in place of the previous health center. Today we have Eleven dispensaries scattered in the district of Palghat and closer areas in Tamil Nadu. Many of our doctors helped us with their valuable time and talents to establish these centers and manage the Hospital.

In 1998, the Evangelist Association handed the *Ashram* and the mission field over to Malabar-Kunnamkulam Diocese. It is functioning as a vibrant community center that has helped many in need.

Our Present Needs

Your continued prayer and Financial support to help serve the community.

We need a dedicated Gynecologist and other general MDs to meet the health needs of the community.

We need a Van that can be used for the Mission field, the Hospital and the *Ashram*.

Volunteer youngsters to stay and serve in the community.

Most of all, please visit "*Christudasa Ashram*" during your visit to Kerala, in the future. ■

Address:

Sr. Mariamma Thomas

Achariya

Olivemount P. O.

Kuzhalmannam

Palakkad 678702

Phone 91-492-272974

Rev. Varghese M. Easow

Missionary

B. A. J. M. Hospital Qrts.

Kuzhalmannam P. O.

Palakkad 678702

Phone 91-792-272037



- Emphasis for all members to have personal relationship with God.
- Contemporary Worship. We still can follow the essence of liturgy by make sure our worship service has Adoration, confession, intercession and thanks giving.
- Have testimonies and bible study. Testimonies as part of main worship service.
- Resources to be spent to nurture native youths to be ministers of the church.
- Ministers brought from India should preferably have good fluency in English.
- Focus on the roots: Improved syllabus for the Sunday school. We need better teachers and passionate believers.

A ministry backed with tears and prayer will never go in vain.

Kurien K. Joseph, San Francisco Youth Secretary

A Brief Study of Spirituality in Hinduism

John Kunchandy, Bethel MTC, Philadelphia

The term spirituality is hard to define. The scope and extent of the subject is so vast and varied in many different aspects, that it can hardly be put into a few words. "Spirituality deals with the immutable and eternal aspects of life." It is concerned purely with all facets of spirit or soul. For many people, spirituality is a troublesome issue. They do not know what to believe in because there are many different beliefs and teachings of spirituality held by different people. They do not know which belief system (religion) is the best to hold on to.

However, some say that spirituality is not the same as religion and religion is not the same as spirituality. A person need not be religious to become spiritual and one being religious does not make her/him spiritual.

Religion can be viewed as a subset of spirituality and spirituality is always considered broader than religion. Religion is man-made, culture-based doctrine that guides people in the practice of spirituality. Religion gives us guidance and direction in an organized way for spiritual faith, belief and practices. Spirituality always points out the human values, experiences, and the meaning of life and purpose in relation to the supreme God and fellow human beings. "Spirituality is more a practical science than a theoretical thesis; and spirituality is an open book of God, with the living touch of God."

"The various scriptures of the different religions of the world provide us with the theoretical aspects only and cannot give us a demonstrative experience of the reality in the laboratory of the human body." The purpose of this article is to briefly point out the views outlined in the sacred holy books in Hinduism on the concept of spirituality.

Hinduism

Asia is the motherland of religions. But the subcontinent of India has significance for all of Asia, because of its classical and cultural heritage. India has been the mother of four religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism.

The late and first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharal Nehru says in his book, "*The Discovery of India*". "In India, the greatest virtue we have been taught by our sages and seers is tolerance — the willingness to recognize and accept the truth which the people of different cultures and origin hold and to live in harmony."

To define Hinduism is a delicate and difficult task. Hinduism has no founder and it is not based on the message of any single prophet of God, nor the teaching of



any saint, sage or religious reformer. Hinduism is more a league of religions than a single religion with a definite creed. A Hindu is called "*Sanathana Dharma*" which means the truth, the way, the life.

The Hindu literature and the Holy Book

According to Juan Mascaro, "India has the great songs of the *Vedas*, the splendor of the *Upanishads*, the glory of the *Bhagavad Gita*,

the vastness of the *Mahabharata*, the tenderness and heroism found in *Ramayana*, the scientific philosophy of India, '*Sankhya*' and the psychology of *Vedanta*, the laws of Manu, the grammar of Panini and other scientific writings, the lyrical poetry and drama culminating in Kalidas."

The *Vedas* means 'revealed wisdom'; it contains religious practices and cultic hymns, prayers and chants. Vedic hymns are called '*Shruti*'. There are four divisions of Vedic literature — *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Atharva Veda*. *Rig Veda* means 'verse' and it is the oldest document. It contains hymns and prayers addressed to the Rishis or seers who received the revelations contained in them. *Yajur Veda* is a collection of invocations for use by priests in ordered worship. *Sama Veda* is the Veda of melodies containing a group of chants. *Atharva Veda* contains much prose that is magical in purpose.

The *Upanishads* is concerned with the knowledge of God and the highest aspect of religious truth. The word *Upanishads* means to sit down beside or secret teaching. They are essentially dialogue between teacher and a student and considered as revealed scripture to the seers and saints. It has a trend in the direction of monastic worldview in which all reality is derived from a single principle.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is 'the song of the adorable one'. It is the most widely read piece of Indian religious literature. It is also known as the New Testament of the Hindus made by the teaching given by Krishna and explains the many ways of obtaining salvation, known as the *Margas*. The emphasis is placed on doing your duty and trusting God for the rest of your salvation.

The Hindu religion and the Holy Scriptures teach that the ultimate end of human spirit is spiritual liberation known as '*Moksha*'. In other words liberation from bondage misery and death. This is the ultimate blessedness in life. According to Hinduism, spiritual liberation is not realized in one life. The Hindu person's life is some kind of journey, a pilgrimage to be ended by his own spiritual liberation.

Spirituality in Hinduism

The Hindu scripture teaches that the ultimate end of human life is spiritual liberation, which is fulfilled by four paths known as *Yoga*. The word *Yoga* means the union of the individual soul with universal God. The aim of *Yoga* is to develop man's intention for comprehending the supernatural truths. *Karma Yoga*, 'the path of action for the active mind', teaches the secrets of right activity by which our mind is purified; thus becoming a channel for the expression of divine will. *Bhakti Yoga* is 'the path of divine love'. The love of God is the secret of His path — He seeks no return for His love, love knows no fear, and love is the highest ideal. *Jana Yoga* has an emphasis on intellectual disposition. The follower must possess keen power of reasoning to distinguish the real and changeless from the unreal and changing. *Raja Yoga* contains eight steps, which

follow the art of concentration. The first two steps deal with ethical disciplines, the third and fourth with posture and breathing, and the rest with concentration and meditation.

"Human life is neither joy nor sorrow, but it is a struggle. Human life is not realized, but at the same time it possesses the state of realization." So one can say in Hinduism, the realization of God is the whole of religion. The Hindu religion teaches the unique eternal relationship between the eternal soul and the eternal God.

The Hindus practice their religion in their everyday life. Here we can say religion is not information, but a transformation; thus the function of the religion is to bring the soul into true purity so that God becomes himself by his teacher. As in the great prayer from the *Upanishads*:

"Lead me from the unreal to the real. Lead me from darkness to light. Lead from death to immortality." ■

DOES YOUR CHURCH BUILDING COMPLY WITH FIRE CODES?

With the recent incidents of Fires claiming many innocent lives, we want to advise you to check and make sure our church buildings and parsonages comply with Fire Codes. Many of our church buildings were built in old style with a lot of wood floors and wood frame work. This increases the intensity and amount of smoke in case of fire. Some of our churches leave folding chairs and tables near the exit doors and hallways. This will become obstacles during emergency exit situations. Our churches on certain occasions will have more number of individuals than the Local Government Occupancy Certificate allow. In case of emergency, this could lead to unexpected problems with bad results.

Check to make sure the fire extinguishers are in good working order with the right pressure.

If you have sprinklers, please check to make sure it works properly.

Make sure that the exits are well marked and without obstacles in the event of a fire Clear the stairs and hallways of any obstacles.

Leave all doors unlocked while the building or area is in use.

Do a fire drill on one Sunday after service to make sure that everyone will get out safely in a timely manner.

Inform the Sunday School children, the escape plan in case of emergency. Assign safety officers for Parish and Sunday School.

Do periodic check on wiring and electrical systems, heating and cooling systems, exhausts, stoves, ovens, fans, high voltage appliances and any item that could potentially cause fire.

For the main sanctuary there should be at least 4 exits well marked and free of obstacles.

Install more fire alarms if necessary and check batteries periodically.

Do not leave used church candles and matchboxes in open areas.

Do not let Sunday School children go into the church kitchen.

Check with the local government requirement as far as fire safety.

About Mar Thoma Church

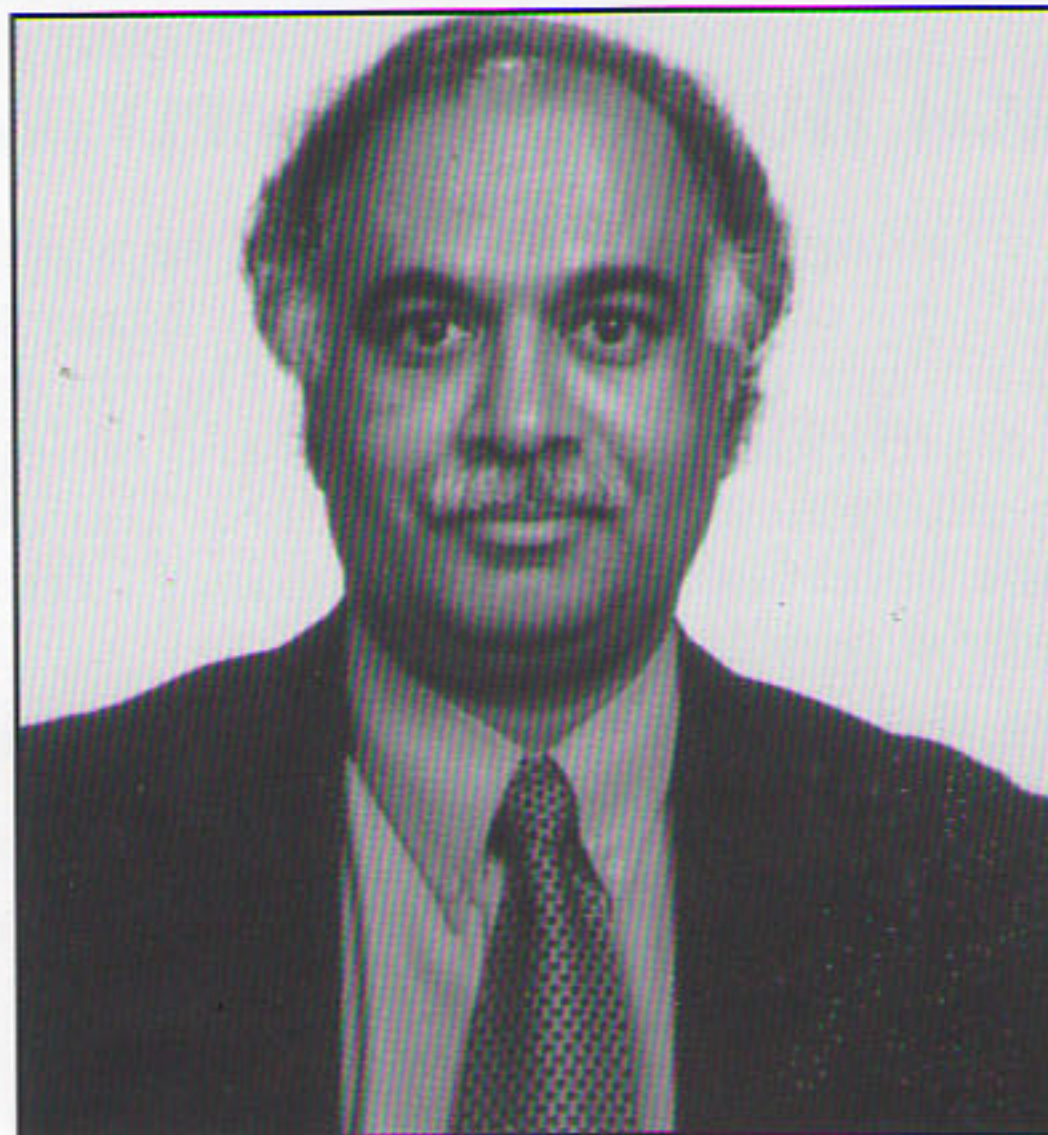
"I don't really have much of an opinion—As a native religion I've learned going to church for most adults is more of a social or political event rather than a religious one. Therefore, as a Youth Fellowship, if we move away from that mentality and center upon God we will have good times. For we are the future!"

Gigio Ninan, Ebenezer MTC YF Secretary

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The Conflict of Cultures—Some Thoughts!

Aswathi (Mary) Varughese, Chicago Marthoma Church

Life today is a constant struggle between priorities, values, time...the list is endless! But right at the very top is the word "Children".

One of the biggest question marks facing both parents and children alike today in North America is resolving the "*Conflict of Cultures*" (as I term it) I would just like to share some thoughts...

Where do we as parents *draw* "the line" and where do our children *see* "the line?"

Each child is different. There is one universal link among all parents; "the unconditional love" (realizing the full depth and impact of the word) toward our children. I would like to bring to mind the love of King David for his son Absalom. In 2nd Samuel 18:33 "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" King David was weeping for his son Absalom who was responsible for the murder of another of David's sons (Amnon). The most powerful message relayed here is the "unconditional" love of David for his son Absalom. Despite that fact that Absalom caused the death of Amnon, David loved him and wept for him, willing even that his life be sacrificed to save Absalom, for such is the love of a father towards his son.

If we could protect our children from every raindrop that fell and bear the pain of every cut or bruise...! What we can do is armor them with shields of love and swords of wisdom. One of the biggest advantages that we have as a Christian community today is our faith and our church to help us build those shields and armors.

About five years ago, despite the young age of my children, I insisted on family prayer. I struggled initially because it was a task to keep the little ones awake. However, today singing a hymn, reading the Bible and praying together has become the cornerstone of our family life. Being an emotional person, sometimes tears would fill my eyes during prayer, which I initially tried to hide without much success! Today, I realize that it is valuable for children to understand that there is a Father to whom we can go on bent knees in every situation. On days when good grades are received, I thank God with tears for blessing them. On days when a small injury caused pain, I again tearfully thank God for averting what might have been!

To deny that there are differences is pretty much like leaving blinkers on...the peripheral world does exist and will affect, but it is beyond the immediate

range of our vision. This is something that our children have a difficult time comprehending or accepting. How many times have we heard the question repeated "If my friend can do this, why can't I?—She is just like me, only, she happens to be an American and I am an Indian!" or "How come you never understand me at all?"

Children—I am not sure how many of you will read this, but if you do, there is one message that I would like to tell you—remember no matter how trying the times, your parents have "Unconditional" love for you! There will be conflicts—that is guaranteed, but there is also a word "Compromise." We come from a culture rich in tradition. Our heritage is something that we can be immensely proud of—let's not lose it! The values that have been handed down from our forefathers may seem outdated in the present world. Nonetheless, these are values that, eventually, build a strong foundation. Each disagreement is not worth a battle. Battles leave scars that rarely fade. Tempestuousness seldom paves the way for peace. Change is not easy to accept, even less with the older generation. As we face the world outside the safe haven of our homes, remember that we are not alone. We have the love and compassion of our heavenly Father and He will wipe every tear and strengthen every heart.

In conclusion, I would like to end with these thoughts...

*...A rumble of thunder heralds the arrival of his
fearful majesty "The Storm"*

Ominous clouds eclipse the sun

Blue lightning illuminates the path of fury

Wet rain carpets the terrain.

Like a child in the darkness I grope in fear

My fingers grasp at a shape...a book!

In the flicker of a passing yellow headlight

*The well-worn leather cover of my Bible glows
—like a candle.*

I feel the frayed pages

Instinctively I turn to Psalm 100

"The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want..."

...And my soul is quiet within.

Outside my window the world is bright again

A rainbow bridges the sky

*A sign of the everlasting covenant between
God and man.*

Mexico Mission Inauguration

P. M. Jacob, Houston
(Convener, Mexico Mission Working Committee)

"Go ye into all world and preach the gospel to every creation" Mark 16:15.

From its very beginning, the Mar Thoma Church has remained obedient to this call and considered missions to be its top priority. Rallying around the vision of our forefathers, our church has actively pursued the ministry of evangelization and transformation of community. The large number of mission fields currently existing in various parts of India attests to this realization and commitment. Understanding its own responsibility to this Great Commission, the North American Diocese has decided, under the visionary leadership of Coorilos Thirumeni, to take up the work of the Lord, in this part of the world. In pursuit of this goal, the Native American and Mexico Mission sub committee, with the guidance of the Mission Board and Diocesan Council, has identified various



A team of volunteers left Houston on January 24th morning to Matamoras, Mexico to participate in this inaugural session and gain a first-hand experience of the work that lies before us. The group consisted of several members from the Immanuel and Trinity parishes, including Vicar Rev. T. V. George and a few delegates from New York parishes including the Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. John Joseph. Beloved Coorilos Thirumeni and several other members from the Chicago and Dallas parishes joined the group at Brownsville, Texas. On the 24th evening the group traveled to Matamoras, Mexico and participated in the *first ever Holy Communion Service performed on Mexican soil by the Mar Thoma church*. About 55 members attended the Holy Communion service, including some from the local community. On the 25th Saturday, the group journeyed by bus and fishing boats to the adopted island and toured the village. The group visited one of the houses and saw for themselves the absolutely impoverished living conditions of the residents. This emotionally disturbing experience was quite an eye opener for all. Since the only occupation of the



Journey to the adopted island "Puntilla Norte"

mission projects, chief among them being "Adopt an Island Program" off the coast of Mexico.

January 25th, 2003 was a historic day in the life and ministry of the Mar Thoma Church in the North American Diocese. It was on this day that our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa formally inaugurated the *Puntilla Norte* mission field located about 60 miles off the coast of Mexico. This mission field takes on added significance, as this is the first of its kind outside India. Through this project our church intends to communicate the love of the Lord to the underprivileged people of the island by identifying and taking care of their physical, mental, and spiritual needs. It is our hope that our resolve to care for and provide fellowship will gradually transform their lives, and one day, help them enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.



Diocesan Bishop and team at the adopted island.

islanders is fishing, hardly any income is generated during the winter months. This results in much hardship and starvation for the people. Existing shelters, covered with sackcloth and garbage bags, are unable to withstand the severe weather conditions of the season. The lack of drinking water, adequate clothing, and medical help makes life miserable for the villagers.

After touring the village, the group traveled to another island where everyone assembled for the inaugural meeting.



Volunteers singing Spanish and English chorus for the islanders.

The crowd, estimated at about 400, comprised of people from all of the six islands, and a few of the government officials from the mainland. After inaugurating the mission field, Coorilos Thirumeni addressed the crowd and shared with them our intent to care for them by providing the basic necessities of life. He extended our fellowship and love and promised to do everything possible to nurture a long-term relationship. A talk given by Mr. Sam George served as a belated Christmas message in which he reminded them of God's love for them as revealed through His son Jesus Christ. Both messages were translated into Spanish for the benefit of the islanders. This was followed by several other activities on the island such as distribution of toys donated by the North Eastern parishes, fellowship lunch (paid for by Houston parishes), songs by Mar Thoma youth and Mexican band members and personal interaction with the locals. All in all, this was quite an enchanting, exciting, and rewarding experience for all the participants.

The "Adopt an Island Program" consists of several key elements. The Initial goals are to:

- a. families living on the island
- b. Build a schoolhouse, which could also serve as a community center
- c. Provide vocational alternatives for youth at a shelter on the mainland
- d. Provide electricity and well water
- e. Provide medical help

The estimated cost per house is \$1,500.00. Parishes in the Diocese will be responsible for



Inauguration of the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan Jubilee Mexican Mission

the entire funding of this project. Each parish may sponsor single or multiple houses, according to their capabilities and willingness. Those parishes that sponsor houses will be responsible for the construction of their sponsored houses. The estimated time for the construction of each house is two to three days. Tentative plan calls for the construction to start around May 15th and end by August 25th 2003.

For project coordination and to handle the various logistics issues, a ten-member Mexico Mission working committee has been appointed from the Houston parishes. The Diocese critically needs a full time person to direct the various mission projects from the Diocesan center. Recognizing this need, the Diocesan Council has authorized the Mission Board to select an appropriate person to serve as Mission Coordinator. *It is hoped that the youths of this Diocese will also play a key leadership role in support of this noble and worthwhile cause.*



Diocesan Bishop with the children of the island.



The Mexican Band during the inaugural function.

are less privileged amongst us. By sharing our many resources of people, skills, talents, and insights, we can carry out God's mission with relative ease.

Let us humble ourselves and focus on God and His calling to take the mission personally. By giving our very best for the very best of others we have an opportunity to reflect God's love. Let us stay encouraged and responsive to the Holy Spirit. May our missions and outreach activities add dynamism and vitality to our church and result in the exaltation of His name. ■

Initial opportunities for helping are:

- Sponsor a minimum of one house for the homeless. This may be done individually or as church organizations
- Volunteer to help with the construction
- Pray for this project and pray for the people of this island who have now become our adopted families

God has uniquely gifted us with a heart to serve Him and all humanity: "Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples" (1 Chronicles 16:24). As we go in His power, sharing our faith and serving others, we will bring glory and honor to Him. As a caring and inclusive community, we should find in our heart a deep desire to help those that



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"The Very God and YOU"

Mannoor Thomas, Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

Consciousness, the essence of the spirit in you, and of knowing God, is important because it enables us to have more understanding of 'the very God' and our profound relationship with him! In every religion, there is some conception of God, but while you define that concept — 'God is great,' simply understanding that 'God' is not sufficient enough for Christian faith, we must have knowledge about our relationship with that very God. That relationship must constantly improve our relationship with our fellow men, human beings — the same creator created everyone equally to co-exist equally and share, care, and be compassionate to each other, ultimately resulting in the 'co-existence' peacefully in the world.

Generally, we take everything for granted — that god is our customer service person to take orders for an abundant supply of our needs. So those who believe in God usually approach him only when distress hits, or when they're in need of material things. Throughout Judaism, and the Christian faith, we are taught that very god is not only the provider, he is with you in pain, suffering, good times, and bad times — at all times. Christian faith is enjoyment out of distress or pain that paired with God converts much energy in your heart; it can only be experienced by faithful believers.

There are some people who approach God out of 'curiosity' and a few who want to understand the 'science of God.' All of them may have the background of pious activities, which we may misunderstand with the faithfulness to God. Faith is a divine gift of God with constant communication with him, created intimately, eventually oneness which is the ultimate benefit of constant worship and prayers which pays off in time.

Those who approach God out of curiosity and those few who want to understand the science of God; they may be interested in God and also, they may have every background a good believer has, but fail to receive God, therefore, they fail with God. They never care for God, so it is very wise to say an atheist understands God. So, consciousness alone does not make you understand God; just like you feel pain when you get cut, animals also feel that pain when they get hurt. So animals also have consciousness. So the believers are not animals alone but beyond animal instincts.

"The presence of the almighty."

Eternal consciousness is the one connecting the God and you, that's a gift of God which can only be achieved by constant contact, by worship and prayer. This is what the 'so-called' Christians are lacking nowadays. The essence is missing in their belief — they're just pretending — otherwise known as 'casual faith.'



I am not reluctant to quote from the *Bhagavad Gita* since all religion teaches some good; only the interpretation of human's limited knowledge makes the difference. Consciousness is that which is spread all over your body, and it is eternal. That can be learned by practical experience. When you are a child, you have consciousness, when you are a youth, you have consciousness; when you get older, you still have consciousness. Your body is changing, your consciousness continued, unchanged. The *Bhagavad Gita* says '*na lanyate hanyamane sarire.*' Consciousness is eternal. It does not vanish with the destruction of the 'temporal body.' This leads to the concept of reincarnation. But Christian teachings do not agree fully in this teaching. As a matter of fact, it contradicts. Here consciousness is very well defined as 'spirit,' which later will be defined as 'Holy Spirit,' with God's presence, because the end result of your life in this world is either a better life with God or hell without God. Your life with God in this world will qualify you to life with the 'holy spirit' of God. Unlike Hinduism, God does not punish you with an ill-fated life with your same old spirit or otherwise 'consciousness.' You reincarnate with another form of body, maybe a cow, dog, donkey, pig, etc. This concept sounds good, but those who lead a wonderful life, pleasing to God, that God wants with him in essence of heaven. Those who made repeated sins failed to do God's will, will be punished for that unfaithfulness; condemned to hell, which is altogether a different life.

Any believer's ultimate aim is to reach God for peace within them and that peace to reflect on others. It is that process that makes the world better. It is that intention God wants us to uphold. It is that ultimate reward all human beings can enjoy together.

The purpose of any religion is peace within you and peace for the entire human race. But all religions teach fanaticism to people to do anything for their survival. It is not that religion is bad, but some teachings are bad and twisted. Thus the end result is sinful acts committed by people.

The prime example is the September 11, 2001 attacks of evil minded on innocent people at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It is being called the 'holy war,' but there is no such thing as a 'holy' war! Evil cannot be holy. Holiness is only with god. No religion can justify these kind of evil acts, unless the teachings twist things to the wrong dimension.

I am personally deeply saddened by these attacks to my fellow human beings. These evil acts will never be justified and never fade away from my heart.

(Continued on page 21)

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The Call to Remembrance

Dr. George K. Zachariah
Marthoma Church of Greater Washington

Jeremiah 51:50, the last part of which reads: **Let Jerusalem come into your mind** and Deuteronomy 8:2, **Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee.** Let us also hear from the psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people...I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord." (Psalms 116:12-13, 17) "O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His steadfast love endures forever." (118:1)

It was indeed very appropriate that we celebrated our most American festival, Thanksgiving, and the Diaspora Sunday in our church on the same day. *It was very thoughtful of our Diocese to set apart a Sunday to celebrate God's design to bring a good number of our people to countries outside India for a purpose they have to discern and fulfill.*

Diaspora is derived from the Greek diaspora, dia meaning through or asunder and speirein, to sow or scatter. It refers to dispersion applied collectively to those Jews who after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of 722 and 586 BC respectively resulting from forcible deportation of the Jews from their native land and their forcible detention. Originally, they were confined to parts of Asia especially Armenia and Persia or modern Iran. It later spread throughout the Roman Empire to Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and Italy. This word is applied by extension to Christians isolated from their own communion. Although Cyrus the Great, the Persian conqueror of Babylonia, permitted the Jews to return to their homeland in 538 BC, part of the Jewish community voluntarily remained behind. We can trace four directions of their footsteps after the time of their captivity. (1) Some returned and mixed with the Jews. (2) Some were left in Samaria who mingled with the Samaritans and they became bitter enemies of the Jews. (3) Many remained in Assyria and Babylonia and were recognized as an integral part of the dispersion. They remained in close touch with their home country, paying the temple taxes and keeping their religion and the restriction of the law, though Hellenic culture penetrated into their thought. (4) Most, probably, apostatized and adopted the usages and idolatry of the nations among whom they were planted and became wholly swallowed up in them. The term diaspora was later applied also to Jewish Christians living among the heathen.



Only an understanding of the place in the divine economy of the dispersion of God's people can be of assistance to us. Perhaps the Jewish diaspora can shed light on our situation, for according to the prophets, the dispersion was a divine judgment which, in the mysteries of God's will, was also a new call to Israel to be His servant. Through her faithfulness to Him and her obedience to His commandments in all areas of her life, Israel would be used by God for this mission. But alas! the people of Israel departed from this

path. When they settled down in the land which God had given to them, they forgot the purpose of their election and began to use God for their own selfish ends, for their own profit and security. On this road, they soon turned to idols that were much more useful for that purpose, and forgot justice as they oppressed and exploited the poor, the fatherless and the widows.

The dispersion of the Jews was promised and predicted, the prediction was fulfilled and there was the promise of return which to considerable extent has also happened.

However, the use of the diaspora concept to describe the life of Christian in the modern world is by no means new in ecumenical circles. It has been used in a restricted way to refer to the scattering of Christians in the world during the week as over against their gathered life in the church on Sunday. In an important document of the World Council of Churches we read this. "It should first be emphasized that the church lives not only in assembly, but in dispersion too. In the time between Christ's ascension and his second coming the church of Christ has two forms of existence: that of the *ecclesia* and that of the *diaspora*, the dispersion. The true role of the laity in the church is apparent not in its *ecclesia* form, however, but in the *diaspora*." God has brought his church today into a new diaspora situation in a non-Christian world.

We are in a situation similar to that of the Jews of the Diaspora, scattered among people whose culture, mores and thought patterns are not like ours nor will they become so. Our cathedrals and temples are no longer the center of life nor do they bring the whole community together under God. "If we hope to reach modern man", wrote Richard Schull, "it will not be so much in terms of gathering him into the church as of going to him in the midst of our dispersion." The church is scattered, dispersed to the ends of the earth. It no longer has terrestrial power, nor should it seek it once again. It is the band of people, here and there, united along the conduits of power mysteriously supplied

by the Holy Spirit, who, wherever they are, offer themselves and the resources of their institution in the service of all men, and not just in the service of those who happen to belong to the institution.

The Diaspora situation helped the Israelis understand themselves. They see the Diaspora as a *Ban eden*—a paradigm of material affluence and well-being. They do not grasp the needs of the Jewish soul, of the unsatisfied spiritual hungers present in the Jewish world. They have little appreciation of the problem of Jewish continuity in the Diaspora and of the overwhelming problem of assimilation in a modern pluralistic society. The real question should be: How can we battle with modernism and secularism. The overriding threat to our future is our assimilation, not our particularism or marginality. Let me add also that Judaism was never as powerful as it is in the Diaspora. Not even in the Bible. The struggle to survive in the Diaspora makes the Jew work hard for his Jewishness.

For the sake of the congregational life of the church, we must ask ourselves what forms of Christian community are called for in the dispersion and how can they be developed realistically? For it is only as such new forms appear in our midst that the congregational life as we now know it will be transformed. The very nature of the Gospel and of the church demands it. The service of the church to the world should take the form of solidarity with man in all his struggles. It was in the midst of the Jewish Diaspora that a new vision of Israel as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh emerged.

Let me go back to the key verse: Let Jerusalem come into your mind. The captives in Babylon are charged to remember Jerusalem: First, because the temple of their God was there; Secondly to keep them from settling down in Babylon; Thirdly to make them long for the holy city; and finally to keep them prepared to return to it. The church of the living God is our holy city, the city of our great King. We should have it in mind for various reasons. First to unite with its citizens. We should join with them in open profession of faith in Christ, in Christian love and mutual help, in holy service, worship, communion etc. Second, to pray and labor for its advancement. We should remember it in the allotment of our money, the use of our time, the employment of our talents, the exercise of our influence etc. Third, to prefer its privileges over earth gain. We ought to consider these privileges in all our choices.

Fourth, to act consistently with her character. We must not degrade His name and cause by living in sin and to lament our transgressions and declensions. Then there is a Jerusalem above which should come in our mind. Our home is not here. We are sojourners and pilgrims on our way. Whatever we do should be in the context of how the cause of God prospers through our actions. The cause of Christ should be an all-absorbing maelstrom into which all our thoughts and pursuits should be drawn.

The Second Isaiah calls the exiles to remember their story which is essentially God's story, His story, that is what after all history is. And of course, God's story is not yet finished.

Daniel Schachter, the Harvard psychologist, recently wrote a book entitled, 'The Seven Sins of Memory.' He lists them as transience (gradual forgetting), absent-mindedness (failure to fully attend), blocking (memory even though present is inaccessible because of interference), misattribution to the incorrect source, suggestibility, bias distorted by one's prior knowledge and finally persistence, highly intrusive and obsessive memory. We have to have what I would call sanctified memory. Remembering things that help us to lead our life abundantly. Remembering how the Lord has led us so far.

This leads to the second part: remembering all the way the Lord hath led thee and giving thanks constantly for the same. We often are grumblers than thankers. The verse from Deuteronomy appears in a passage where Moses makes a great report to the people of Israel of the covenant God made with Israel on Mount Horeb. Throughout these pages the recurring theme of the message is 'Lest ye forget!' 'Beware lest thou forget all the way the Lord thy God has led thee' (6:12) David sang: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thy infirmities; who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindness."

In the early English language the word 'thank' was the past tense of 'think'. And the saying goes: Think and thank. The person who is thankful is the one who thinks back to what others have done for him. He takes pain to remember. The Christian in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* had his battle with Apollyon 'in a narrow passage, just beyond Forgetful Green.' And indeed that place is the most dangerous place in all these parts. For if at any time the pilgrims meet with any brunt, it is when they forget what favors they have received, and how unworthy they are of them. Jesus was disappointed when he healed ten lepers and only one returned to thank Him for restored health.

Dr. John Witherspoon, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and President of the College of New Jersey which later became Princeton, lived about two miles from the college and drove over in his buggy each day. One morning a neighbor came excitedly into his study and said, "Dr. Witherspoon, you must join me in giving thanks to God for His providence in saving my life. As I was driving this morning the horse ran away and the buggy was smashed to pieces on the rocks, but I escaped unharmed". "Why?" answered Dr. Witherspoon, "I can tell you a far more remarkable providence than that, I have driven over that road hundreds of times. My horse never ran away, my buggy was never smashed, I was never hurt. God's providence has been for me even remarkable than it has been for you!"

The man who is thankful to God, sits before God to enjoy his presence.

Paul exhorted the Thessalonians: "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ concerning you." (1 Thess 5:18) Thanksgiving is thanksgiving. The story of a boy in India to whom the presence of Jesus Christ was real even in the games field has come down to us through the work of Dr. Findlay, one of the early missionaries in Madras. The boy was playing in a soccer match. While netting a ball to the credit of his team, he exclaimed as soon as the ball got into the opposite team's goal net, 'parum yesu swami, parum'. (see Lord Jesus, see)

Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate from India, in his celebrated *Gitanjali* has given a very excellent idea expressing how God gives us. "I had gone a begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream, and I wondered who was this King of Kings. My hopes rose high and me-thought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting alms to be given unasked, and for wealth scattered on all side in the dust. The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me, and Thou comest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden Thou didst hold out Thy right hand and say, what hast Thou to give to me? Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open Thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused, and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to Thee. How great my surprise when at the day's end I empty my bag on the floor to a least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept, and wished that I had had the heart to give Thee my all!"

The Indonesian word for 'Thank you', *Terima Kasi*, means literally 'I accept your love'. Christianity's chief act of worship has for one of its titles, 'Eucharist'—thanksgiving Eucharist, the Holy communion, symbolizes the twin graces of gratitude and giving. If you are truly thankful, you will be glad to share.

"The Very God and You" (Cont'd from page 17)

Modern education systems unfortunately have no teachings about consciousness, or the spirit soul; This knowledge may be the most important. The body is useless unless the spirit is present; the holy spirit with God's presence, which only produces good. The soul with an evil spirit produces only evil. There is no repentance for these acts. Only the presence of the holy spirit can make a person repent. Everything else is in vain.

Humans, superior to all living creatures, are meant for advanced and superior knowledge. What is that advanced knowledge? To know one's self. In every civilized society there is some set of religious principles, whether Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, or Buddhism. What is the purpose of the scriptures and religious principles? To

Corrieten Boom tells of her sister Betsy insisting that they thank God even for the fleas that infested their barracks in the Concentration Camp. Soon their daily praise meetings no longer had to be kept secret. The Nazi guards ceased their harassing inspections because they could not stand the fleas. Incidentally sister Betsy died in the camp.

An incredibly heroic family of missionaries, the Lees in India, when six members of their family were buried in a landslide at Darjeeling, the others built a monument. On it the bereaved parents inscribed the New Testament words, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Our sinful nature can be summed up in two words: pride and selfishness. The antidote to pride is thanksgiving and to selfishness is intercessory prayer. Thanksgiving should be the chief characteristic of our lives. We need to ask God to make us more aware of little daily graces. A favorite childhood rhyme goes like this: "Always remember to forget the troubles that pass away, but never forget to remember the blessings that come each day."

In our more honest moment, we must confess with Shakespeare, 'Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks'. Our constant prayer must be that of George Herbert:

"Thou that hast given so much to me
Give one thing more—a grateful heart.
Not thankful when it pleases me,
As if thy blessings had spare days,
But such a heart, where pulse may be thy praise."
That is, saying Hallelujah all the time.

And finally a very brief personal testimony. I came to this country in 1958. Throughout my life both in India and here, the Lord has been extremely good to me. My testimony can be summarized by the following words: Jehovah Shamma (The Lord was there); Jehovah Jirah (The Lord provides); El Shaddai (God who is enough). My philosophy of life can be summarized in four brief sentences: I am His; They are His; The work is His; The future is His. ■

understand consciousness, to understand holy spirit and soul, and how it has fallen into material, conditioned life. Only the human form of life has the knowledge to ask questions — what am I? If we do not understand what we are, then we miss the opportunity of human life. We simply exist, wasting our time on the propensities of animal lifestyle — eating, sleeping, mating, defending competition; wild acts of nature, the knowledge of consciousness is missing! Live just like any other creature.

The intent is lost in this lifestyle. The human form of life is the opportunity to achieve the highest perfection. If we do not make progress toward that vision, we are simply spoiling an opportunity of civilized human life. ■

PRAYER—Our Intimate Communion with God

V. T. Abraham, UK

Have you ever wished that you had a close friend with whom you could share your plans, sorrows, failures, rejections, ambitions and innermost secrets? Jesus Christ can be your most trusted friend with whom you could share everything. He will take upon Himself all your burdens, pains and concerns and give you that peace which surpasses all understanding. He says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.... For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls" (Mat. 11:29).

1. What is Prayer?

Prayer is our intimate and personal relationship with God, our heavenly Father. God created us in His image and likeness and He wants us to have fellowship with Him. He wants us to come to Him and make our desires and requests known. The Bible says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8). Of all God's created beings man alone is given a spirit with which he is able to communicate with God Who is Spirit. His eternity is written into our hearts. In Him we live and move and have our being. So it is natural for man to seek his Creator and know Him. This we do by prayer. All religions teach prayer. It is not a ritual or a daily exercise. We are taught to pray by our parents or by our religious teachers. The habit is formed in many people to pray at regular set times or in times of need, or in a crisis when all other helpers fail.

Prayer unlocks the heart of the Father. Christian prayer is directed to God the Father, in the name of God the Son, with the help of God the Holy Spirit (the holy Trinity of God). Jesus taught us to pray to the Father in heaven in His name. "For through Jesus, we have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:15). No one has seen God but we are able to know Him because Jesus Christ, the Son of God has opened the way to Him through the cross and revealed Him as our heavenly Father. When we pray our spirit rises to God's throne of grace and we can talk to Him and tell him all about ourselves just as we talk to our earthly father. Not only are we able to talk to Him but also able to listen and hear Him. It is not a one way communication. God our heavenly Father always answers our prayers when we come to Him in humility and truth. He always responds to our requests and supplications if our requests are in accordance with His will and not to satisfy our selfish desires.

2. How should we pray?

Firstly, by offering God our thanksgiving, praise and worship. "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts

with praise because the Lord is good and His love (mercy) endures for ever (everlasting), and His faithfulness (truth) continues through all generations" (Ps 100). We thank God for His goodness towards us, we praise God for His greatness and worship God because He is a holy God. Our worship delights the heart of God. King David prayed, "As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after You." (Ps 40:1-2) We are commanded to worship God alone and not to have any other gods (idols). The Bible says, "God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (Jn 4:24).

Secondly, we must come before Him with a repentant heart. When we come to God in humility and brokenness, He gives us grace to confess our sins and to ask for His forgiveness. Like the Tax Collector pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk 18:13). To repent means 'to turn back' from our sinful life and not to repeat those sins. There needs to be a sincere confession and a willingness to acknowledge before God our evil ways. Sin is not only committing offences and wrongdoings alone but also our tendency to lead a life independent of God and to rely in our own self-sufficiency. "This is the one I esteem, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at My word" (Isa 66:2). He is able to completely set us free from our life of sin, guilt, shame and fear. Ask the Lord to cleanse you and to heal you in body, soul and spirit. "He has borne our Infirmities (sicknesses) and carried our sorrows (pains) He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our Iniquities (sins). The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:4,5).

Thirdly, by asking God for our needs. Our requests to God must be definite and specific. We must not ask God in a selfish way (bringing just a shopping list for our benefit) but in accordance with His will. If we abide in Him and obey His word, He always answers our prayers. Ask in faith without doubting and believe that you have received it. Faith dispels all anxieties and brings peace of mind. "Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mk 11:24). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father" (Jas 1:17a). "Do not be anxious about anything but in everything in prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Php 4:6).

Fourthly, by interceding for others. Intercession is our prayer to God for others. We stand as a bridge between man and God. The intercessor lives close to the will and heart of God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps 25:14). "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails

much" (Jas 4:16b). Pray that the people of the world will come to know the saving grace of God. We can ask God for healing, deliverance from demonic oppression, comfort and peace in bereavement and sorrow, wisdom to do the right things, justice for those who are wrongly accused or imprisoned. Also pray that God's blessings and gifts of the Spirit are imparted upon us and God's servants. Jesus promises us, "If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Lk 11:13). We begin to notice God works as we pray and we are blessed and healed at the same time as others are changed and healed.

Jesus is our Intercessor and Hlgh Priest In heaven. As we pray, the Holy Spirit takes our prayers and supplications to God our Father and to Jesus Christ. Romans 8:34 states that Christ Jesus who died was raised to life and is at the right hand of God interceding for us. Hebrews 7:25 declares, "Therefore, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him because He always lives to intercede for us". Every father is pleased when his child comes to him with an earnest request. The same is true of our heavenly Father who will hear everyone who calls upon Him.

Fifthly, God wants us to be persistent in our prayers. Jesus said, "Men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18:16). He gives the example of the persistent widow who comes to the unjust judge to ask for justice from her persecutor. The unjust judge although he did not fear God or man, gave her justice because she constantly troubled him. Another example given by the Lord is the story of a man who goes to his neighbour for three loaves of bread for his friend who has come at midnight as he had nothing to set before him. Although the neighbour did not want to open the door and disturb his children who were asleep, because of the importunate request of his friend, he opened the door and gave him the bread (Lk 11:5-8).

3. What happens when we pray?

(a) **True Prayer transforms and convicts us.** When we come to God with thanksgiving and praise in the humility of our heart the Spirit of God gives us His presence. A deep love and reverence for God grips us and we begin to see our true condition before a holy and just God. The Holy Spirit will reveal to us our hidden sins and failures such as unforgiveness, bitterness, hatred, greed, bad habits etc. When we discern this, we must confess our sins and ask for God's forgiveness. Thus, God's presence and favour are restored in us.

(b) **We receive a new power and strength from God.** Prayer releases us and gives us a new sense of freedom and assurance. God pours out His love and grace into our hearts. The more we pray, the more power we receive to

pray and do His work. During times of intensive and travailing prayer, the Holy Spirit comes to our aid to help us to pray in the Spirit. "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isa 40:31).

(c) **Prayer changes people and situations.** When we pray, something happens in the invisible realm. God hears our prayers and begins to act. We find there is a healing, a blessing or a change in a person's attitude or situation. Our prayers will set free people from their burdens, sins and oppressions and draw them to God. Through prayer, we can see that many of the heroes of faith in the Bible have achieved great victories, opened prison doors, shut up the lions' mouths and received mercy and deliverance in times of distress and peril.

(d) **God will give us new purposes and new visions.** God is the giver of all wisdom and understanding. When we ask in prayer, God will give us new plans and directions for our life. Defeat and failure in our life are caused by our separation from God. Like a child, we can call Him 'Abba' and we begin to have a new relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit is the greatest teacher Who opens up the truth of the Word of God and His counsel and revelations to us.

(e) **God gives us victory over the devil.** Our enemy, the devil is a liar who accuses us continuously attacking our mind and the purposes of God. If we do not pray, the devil will gain the upper hand and will bring confusion and unrest in us and conflict in our family life. When we pray and lift up the name of Jesus, Satan is overthrown and the Kingdom of God comes into us.

4. When should we pray?

Jesus is our model for Prayer. Jesus rose early and stayed awake late to pray. He prayed at His baptism, before selecting His disciples, at the last supper, in the garden of Gethsamane, on the cross and after His resurrection. He prayed always to know the will of God before taking major decisions and important miracles. Jesus taught the disciples to pray to the Father in heaven. The Lord's Prayer is our model prayer as a pattern for Father/child relationship.

+ **Our Father In heaven, hallowed be Your name:** We address our prayer to our heavenly Father. We are told to hallow (magnify, worship, adore) His name first and foremost. Our worship belongs to God alone.

+ **Your kingdom come:** We pray that His kingdom come here and now. That His kingdom rule and priorities are established in our own life and in our loved ones. His kingdom rule in us takes away all our fears and guilt giving us His righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.

- + **Your will be done:** We are to seek the Father's heart and His burdens for us and the world. We are to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit telling us what to pray for because the Spirit knows the heart of God.
- + **Glve us this day our dally bread:** When we ask for our provision and supplies, we are asking for God's concerns. We are to be thankful to Him for meeting all our needs. At the same time we are to remember the poor and those who have not received when He sets our table with all good things.
- + **Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sinned against us:** We need to forgive others who have done harm or injury to us before God can give us His forgiveness. Pray that we receive God's grace daily to walk in His love, wisdom and forgiveness.
- + **Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one:** We need God's grace and strength to overcome all the temptations of life, evil thoughts, fantasies, pride etc. The devil enters in subtle ways and sows the desires in our heart to entice us to sin. Pray for God's protection for us, for our family, for all our dear ones and our church. Jesus told us to watch and pray so that we do not fall into temptation.
- + **For Yours is the kingdom, power and glory:** Praise God for manifesting His power and glory in our life and for hearing our prayers.

Lacking a vocabulary to pray: Sometimes, we do not know how to pray because we do not have adequate words to pray. The psalms and hymns are a rich source as they contain prayers and supplications of the psalmists and saints of old who went through the same sufferings, difficulties and trials as we have. Another source is the prayers of the heroes of faith in the Bible and the promises of God and Jesus Christ. The secret is to focus our mind and spirit on the Lord and speak to Him as you talk to a friend. When we do this, the Holy Spirit will come to our aid to cry 'Abba Father' and pray with groans and travails which cannot be uttered. So, pray with your mind as well as in the Spirit. If the Lord has given you the gift of tongues, start worshipping Him in that language and immediately you can sense the presence of the Holy Spirit in you giving you the words and requests to pray, because the Spirit Who knows the heart of God and His burdens will help us to pray in accordance with His will.

Forming a habit of prayer: The greatest need of our day is prayer and more prayer but many things hinder our daily prayer and devotional life. We may find the habit hard to cultivate unless we are disciplined. The devil will try to stop

us and oppose us in many ways. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Our materialistic goals and ambitions or our own doubts and unbelief may stand in the way of prayer. Jesus wants us to be overcomers just as He overcame all the temptations of the devil. There are certain essential steps we must take if we wish to develop the habit and grow in our intimacy with the Lord.

1. **Allocate a set time for prayer** just as you set aside time for meals and sleep. Begin the day with prayer and give God first priority. This will make your day productive and fruitful. Also set a specific time for family prayer. The saying goes, "*The family who prays together stays together*". The example the parents show will guide the children all through their life.
2. **Set aside a private place in your home for your prayer.** Go to this private room, shut the door and speak to your Creator and listen to Him. Tell Him all your concerns, worries and disappointments. He will comfort you. In addition, one can keep on praising God and praying silently while travelling, driving, walking or cooking a meal. If you are a very busy person and cannot find time, pray on your travel to work or at lunchtime in a park or private place.
3. **Use a Bible as an aid to your meditation and prayer.** It is good to meditate on the Word of God before you pray. Also try to learn the promises in the Bible which strengthens your faith and give you the words to pray. When our hearts are filled with the truth of God, we want to pray any way. The Bible says, "*Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path*" (Ps 119:105). The Word of God gives you faith and strength and in turn protects you and your family from danger and keeps your day pure from corruption.
4. **Invite the Holy Spirit to come and help you to pray.** The Greek word *Parakletos* for the Holy Spirit means, 'the One who comes alongside'. He the Helper will come and teach you to pray and bring to remembrance all things Jesus has said. He will also glorify the name of Jesus in your heart.
5. **Show a sincere desire to know God and to grow in His grace, strength and guidance.** Resolve to walk in the love of God, in His wisdom and in His humility. Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith.

Dear Reader, may the Lord bless you and give you a new strength and power as you read this article. Let Him impart to you His mercy and grace to come to Him in prayer in all your life situations. Pray like the Psalmist, "*Let the beauty of the Lord, our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands for us*" (Ps 90:17). Amen. ■

Mar Thoma College Celebrates Golden Jubilee

Dr. Abraham George, Principal Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla

The College that has meaningfully served the community for half a century in the fields of education and social service ever since its inception on 10th July 1952 is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its foundation. This institution symbolizes the hopes and aspirations of a society, was started as the first of the Mar Thoma Church in the field of higher education. I am happy to join a very large number of people who are associated with the College to offer thanks to the Almighty God for enabling us to be the instrument of His work. I bow my head in reverence and gratitude before the vision and sacrificial devotion of the pioneers of this great movement and the founding fathers of our College. The great leadership of the late Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan, the late Dr. Mathews Mar Athanasius Episcopa, the late Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan, the services rendered by the late Sri. K. K. Kuruvilla, the generous contributions of Dr. Stanley Jones, Dr. Bob Pierce, Dr. T. K. Varghese (Puthencavu), Col. G. Varghese, and the wholehearted support of a host of friends and well wishers cutting across all sections of society together gave the College the necessary impetus to move steadily in the right direction.

The College that was started with 12 teachers and 250 students has now grown into a premier educational institution of our State with 110 teachers, 70 non-teaching staff and 1500 students studying for 11 degree courses and eight Post Graduate courses. Six of our departments are recognised centres of research work preparing students for Ph.D. Our college is now one of the special grade colleges of our state and has the singular distinction of being the first affiliated college of our State to get the accreditation of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

The late Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan (then Rev. M. G. Chandy) the first Principal and later the Manager of the college for many years could give the college a great heritage focused on Christian values. Prof. K. E. Ninan, Rev. Dr. K. K. George, Prof. V. M. Ittyerah, Prof. M. V. John, Rev. Dr. T. C. Thomas, Dr. C. T. John, Prof. C. C. Joseph, Prof. C. T. Mathew, Prof. C. Kochummen, Prof. C. T. Titus, Prof. Koshy Cherian, Dr. A. P. John and Prof. Jacob Kurien who succeed him as Principals of this college, made substantial contributions to the growth and development of the college. I remember with gratitude all the great teachers and members of the non-teaching staff who have served the college well with a sense of devotion during the last five decades.



Now, the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan the manager of the college gives very valuable guidance to the college.

Mar Thoma College has made notable contributions to the progress of our society in various spheres especially in the realm of leaders. Special mention may be made of Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa and Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa who are bishops of Mar Thoma Church. Apart from several other

Church leaders of different Churches, the late Dr. A. V. Varghese (former Vice Chancellor of Kerala University) Dr. J. V. Vilanilam (former Vice Chancellor of Kerala University), Dr. Samuel Paul (Former World Bank Economist) Dr. Alexander Karackal (former Pro-V.C., Kannur University) were all associated with the College either as teachers or as students. Many of our students serve churches all over the world as priests and hold respectable positions. We are very proud of our students who give invaluable service to our nation as political leaders and as Members of Legislative Assembly and a number of other responsible bodies.

The strong teacher-student relationship based on the rich heritage of clear values and vision is reflected on the campus. The creative leadership given by the teachers who take keen interest in the educational and other related religious and social activities continue to render great service to the college community. The morning chapel service with which the daily work begins and the study meetings and seminars organised by different Christian student organisations under the guidance and supervision of teachers (noon-time study meetings) together give the College campus a unique Christian atmosphere.

Our old students have always been a source of great strength to us. We have a number of strong and very active alumni chapters in our state and in the different parts of India and abroad especially in some of the Gulf States and the U.S.A. The two Alumni Chapters we have at present in the U.S.A are the Delaware Valley Chapter in Philadelphia and the North East Chapter covering New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. We are in the process of starting new chapters in various states of the U.S.A. like Texas, California, Florida and Illinois. Mr. M. Mathews (Ravy) (Tel. 610-265-2997), who is in charge of the Tiruvalla Mar Thomeans Alumni Confederation of U.S.A., coordinates the various chapters. Other contact persons are Mr. George Joseph (Tel. 215-464-1437), Mr. Eapen Daniel (Tel. 215-364-5459), Prof. Sunny Mathew (Tel. 201-261-8717),



Mar Thoma College Alumni Association Delaware Valley Chapter Executive Committee 2003

Mr. O. A. Abraham (Tel. 201-261-6056), Mr. M. C. Alexander (Tel. 973-966-5519), Mr. Alexander Chacko (Tel. 972-492-6186), and Mr. T. A. Mathew (Tel. 713-455-7469).

Regular annual general body meeting of the Alumni Association is held in our College on January 26th and a family get-together of the alumni is arranged every year on August 15th. The love and affection that our old students show to the alma mater is one of the most inspiring forces behind the developmental activities we undertake.

The College has been keeping up its high academic standard. Last year we had four ranks in M.Sc. Examinations of the M.G. University. This year we have the first rank in B.A History and the first rank in M.Sc. Zoology. The Mar Thoma College football tournament that attracts the enthusiastic attention of everyone in Tiruvalla and around has been regularly conducted every year. As part of the Golden Jubilee Celebration, Mar Thoma Trophy Basketball tournament was also conducted during this year. In Football, Cricket, Hockey and Softball our teams won four University championships during this year. The Women's football team of Mar Thoma College has won the state championship for the past five years.

The "Brains Trust" which was started in 1957 for the personality development of students continues its activities usefully. Career Guidance Bureau, N.C.C, N.S.S, Best Arts, Women's Cell, Astronomy Club, Planning Forum, Subject Associations and allied organisations along with the College Union make the college campus active and attractive. In addition to this the Counselling Centre and the Tutorial assistance given to students help the holistic growth of the students. Language laboratory, Comparative Literature Study Centre, Institute of Computer Science and the like give the students opportunities to study more and get special training. 'Rational Discourse' the research journal which is published annually for the past seven years is another asset of the College. The two women's hostels accommodate 200 lady students of the College.

The Golden Jubilee celebration began with a declaration march led by the renowned Olympians Smt. P. T. Usha and Smt. Shiny Wilson in January 2001. In October Dr. Mrs. Najma Hephthulla (Vice Chairperson of Rajya Sabha) inaugurated the Golden Jubilee celebrations at a meeting presided over by the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Hon. Mr. Justice K. T. Thomas of the Supreme Court of India unveiled the foundation stone of Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valia Metropolitan Memorial Jubilee Block. Seminars and Lectures have been organised by various departments of the College as part of the celebrations. The Astrophysics national seminar led by Prof. Jayanth Narlikar, the Jubilee Lecture delivered by World Bank Vice President Dr. Vinod Thomas, the International Newspaper Exhibition organised by the College Union in association with Malayala Manorama and other newspapers are some of the important functions held in connection with the Jubilee Celebration.

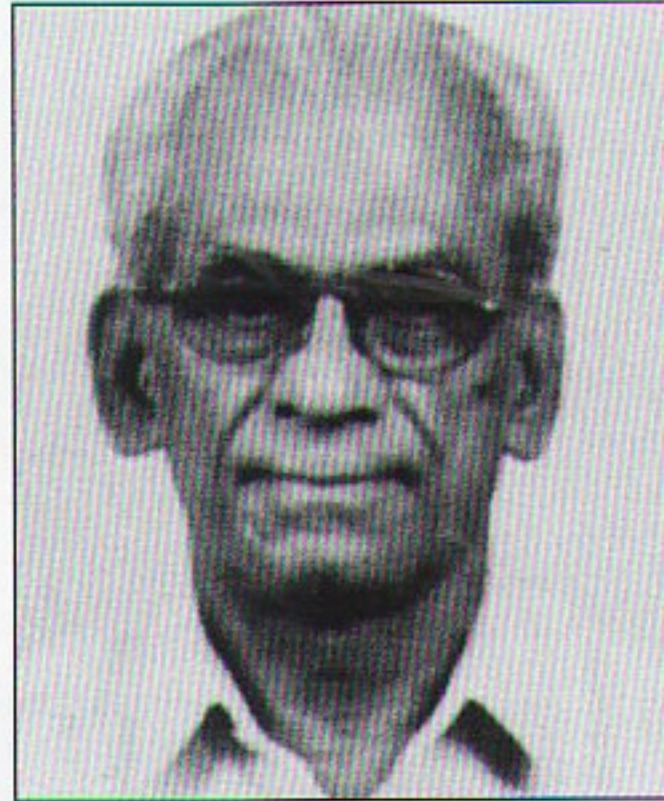
Keeping pace with the development taking place in our country and all over the world, the higher education in our state is on the way to make radical changes in the field. This compels us also to make necessary improvements in the existing facilities and to provide adequate basic facilities absolutely essential for the present Courses and new courses we have to introduce. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council have already recommended our college for granting autonomy by the U.G.C. The introduction and growth of self-financing institutions in the field of education make quality education almost beyond the reach of a vast section in our society. The thrust once given to holistic development of personality and value-based education is seen to be ignored by many. This undoubtedly makes the significance and role of our college more important than ever before in our society. It is with this in view that we have decided to undertake certain developmental projects in connection with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The proposed Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Library cum Research Centre, Computer Centre, Extension projects, etc., are all steps taken in this direction.

Mar Thoma College that has been rendering unique service in the field of higher education and social progress of Central Travancore is now on the path of further expansion. Fifty years ago the pioneers of the college established it on the strong foundations of great vision and values and the college has been a lighthouse of guidance without ever deviating from those values and vision. Let us hope and pray that our college grows and reaches greater heights of excellence in all spheres of its activities and guides the destiny of the people at large and continue to be a blessing to many. ■

Remembrance of Yuhanon Mar Thoma

A Presentation by A.T. Mathew, Rohini, Delhi

A great philosopher and a deeply religious leader and a kind-hearted loving divine personality had a pair of pet dogs named 'Rani' and 'Kuttan' and also a pair of loving cats with him at his residence. All those four favourite animals were really his close and loving pets. This great personality used to share a part of his food with those favourite animals every day with his own hands. Whenever the food was kept ready, he used to signal to those pet animals, through a calling bell, and immediately upon hearing the call from their master, all four used to rush to the dining table, nearby their food was kept ready by that time in one dish for all the four. All those pet animals were well disciplined and obedient to their master and they used to wait till the final O.K. signal was received, to take their food. If any of them made hurry to touch the food because of the sweet and tasty smell of the food, the master used to shout at them by calling their names individually. After listening the warning they all were used to stand around the food very calm and quiet like a well disciplined and obedient soldier. When the final O.K. signal was received from their master they would take their food from the same dish very sweetly with great love and affection. No doubt, it was a surprise to every one to imagine that how the dogs and cats are eating together from one dish without any dispute or quarrel though they belonged to different communities. What a great example of love and affection shown by those animals. Is it possible nowadays for human beings of different communities or denominations to behave like this by sharing the human love and affection to show an example to the world? **Is it possible to share even Holy Qurbana together with different denominations in our Christian Community? This aspect will have to be examined and a solution be sorted out for strengthening the Christian unity.**



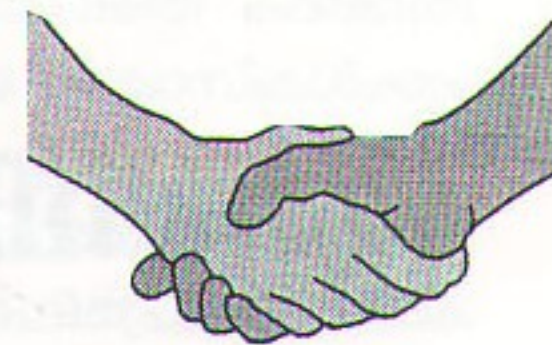
This is a true life story of Late Rt. Rev. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, who lived in Poolathen Aramana, Thiruvalla in Kerala about 25 years ago. This true story of animal's affectionate behaviour which was practically exhibited through the loving guidance of a divine personality is a

befitting lesson to all those who spread communal feelings nowadays, which generates animosity in our society, causing a threat to our national unity and communal harmony. Everybody will say that the days ahead are very bad and it is not possible to restore peace and harmony in the near future until a solution is sorted out and followed very strictly by all the communities. Therefore, like-minded intellectuals and all the religious heads of different denominations should come

together to work out for a solution for restoring peace and harmony in the present society which has now been brutally damaged by fascist groups. One should understand that the man-made religious structures like Mandir, Masjid, Churches, Gurudwaras alone will not give relief or salvation to the mankind until we make a temple of human love and affection in our heart. According to Mother Teresa, **"The fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace"**. If we cannot love others with pure heart, there would be no existence of religions and religious structures in a real sense. In fact, no one can see God and no one can get blessings from God until a man is perfect in heart as in fact "God is Love". Through that love alone we can survive in society in a peaceful manner. **"God has created us to be loved by His Love and not to be destroyed by our hatred"** as said Mother Teresa. Therefore, there is no meaning in fighting with others and killing innocent people in the name of Mandir, Masjid or Churches. Let us build our country jointly with an open heart with love and affection. According to the great philosopher Late Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, **"we cannot build our country with bricks and mortar or hammer and chisels. It has to grow silently in the minds and heart of our people"**.

So, Let us unite by consolidating our heart with love and affection and work together with a firm determination and march towards prosperity to prosperity to generate everlasting peace on earth. Let us also join together to make success of Yuhanon Mar Thoma's idea of making **"Roof for the Roofless"** which he had introduced about 34 years ago. I think it is the only memorial we can make for the true remembrance of Yuhanon Mar Thoma. ■

Facts & Fictions about Marriage and 22 ways to keep your marriage strong



You are never going to find the partner of your dreams who will match your expectations of the most beautiful/handsome, compassionate, rich, and caring person with all other possible health and beauty attributes. Think real and settle for the God-given. Those who are not yet married, listen to the ones who have and learn a lesson in reality because sooner or later, you are going to face the same reality.

There is seldom an ideal husband-wife relationship. Each family unit is unique. Similarities occur in problem-solving situations. So do not hold on to utopian dreams.

LOVE and TRUST go hand in hand in a relationship. If you let go of either one, your relationship will suffer. Trust is bi-directional. God must be a fulltime witness to all your actions.

Money issues can sour any relationship. Make all financial decisions based on a mutual understanding, whether it involves helping family or friends, buying new items, buying a new home or car or even helping your church or the needy. Do not start arguments over money matters. You will never find anyone who is satisfied with the amount of money they have. Learning to manage what you have is always wiser.

There is no I or ME in married life; it must always be WE or US. Humility is a great gift; false prestige and pride are unwanted talents. Consider your partner with equal importance as yourself.

Make decisions relating to the future of children and other dependants including in-laws after honest discussions with the involved individuals and obtaining a consensus within the family. Implementing a decision can always create problems. What you think is right might not be right for others.

Do not discuss family affairs (yours or others') in public including church, prayer groups, or any other social gatherings. What you say will be heard and transmitted with added details, leading to unwanted quarrels in the future. Remember there are individuals who may like to see your family break apart just for the heck of it. Keeping it intact is your duty.

Do not compare your relationship with that of other people. You are unique and your ways must help you to live better. If not, change your ways rather than attempting to change your partner's. Negative comparison will hurt either partner's feelings and can ruin an otherwise blessed relationship.

Selecting your friends is very important. Your choice of friends projects an image about you to the world. Choose your friendships in a way to motivate you and others for the better.

Associating with special interest groups have proven negative for relations. Remember the psalmist in quoting the ways to walk your life. Ask for God's help in making decisions on joining special interest groups.

Communicate clearly. What you say is what you should mean. Do not use words of abuse. Respect each other's feelings when you speak. Demanding an answer is sometimes necessary, but do it the humble way.

Prayer and meditations are important in family life. That will take you through any trying life situations. Finding time for it may not be easy, but it sure helps a lot more than you think.

Do not involve yourself with others' family lives unless you are asked to. Straighten your own problems before you get involved with other people's.

At least once a month, invite your close family friends, neighbors, or relatives to have evening tea or dinner with you. Talk about community affairs and world affairs and matters of common interest. This will be a learning experience. Avoid gossip.

Do not go shopping alone. If your partner does not like the way you shop, tell him or her to take you along the next time. If he or she constantly complains about your shopping, find out the reason why and then change your ways if needed. "Do not leave home without your spouse" at all possible occasions.

Follow a sex life that is comfortable for both partners. It must be done to satisfy mutual biological needs. There are a number of ways you express love to your partner and sex is an important one among them. Talk between yourselves and make it more enjoyable.

Extramarital affairs are not tolerated by God or his people. Working out your differences and making a relationship work is a lot better and easier than going separate ways and looking for a happiness that might not exist.

Respect is earned, not extorted. If you do not get it, remember, it could partially be your fault. Correct your ways without holding on to false pride. Show children and your spouse that you can be trusted and respectful.

Healthy living is always desirable but sometimes not practical. Taking care of your God-given body and helping others in your household to do the same is important. Watch what you buy and consume. Cook and serve with a healthy outlook. Consider the aftereffects of your intake. Read health-related articles and follow guidelines from your family physician and dentist. Oral hygiene is very important. Avoid abuse of alcohol, tobacco and similar harmful substances.

Plan family outings and family vacations at least once a month. Vacations need not be expensive and far from home. A family weekend at a close-by retreat center will help improve your life manifold. Attend desirable community events and keep yourself informed about local events.

Keep in touch with all your relatives. Call them up and convey regards. If close by, visit them often. (But avoid advising them how to live.)

House chores are to be shared at all times. One individual must not be assigned to do all the work for others to enjoy. Work together and enjoy together. Do not try to follow your parents' way of life back in India. They are from an entirely different background with different concepts of living. But you can always inherit their good aspects. Use your God-given talents to enhance your family life. ■

നോമ്പിന്റെ പ്രസക്തി വിശ്വാസ ജീവിതത്തിൽ

റവ. ഏബ്രഹാം തോമസ്, പുത്തൻകാവ്

യേശുവാവ് 58

പ്രാർത്ഥനയ്ക്കും അനുതാപത്തിനും ആത്മശുദ്ധീകരണത്തിനുമായി പ്രത്യേക വർജ്ജനത്തോടെ സഭയായി കാത്തിരിക്കുന്ന കാലയളവാണ് നോമ്പുകാലം. മന്ദീഭവിച്ചുപോയ വിശ്വാസ ജീവിതത്തിൽനിന്നും ഈ കാലയളവിൽ അനുതാപത്തോടും വചനത്താലുള്ള ശുദ്ധീകരണത്തോടും ഉണർന്ന് സഭയായി പുതുക്കപ്പെട്ട് ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേറ്റു കർത്താവിന്റെ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം അനുഭവവേദ്യമാക്കുന്നതിനും സുവിശേഷദൗത്യനിർവ്വഹണത്തിൽ ധീരമായി മുന്നേറുന്നതിനും ഇടയാവണം.

ആദികാലംമുതൽ സഭയുടെ ആത്മശുദ്ധീകരണത്തിനും പുതുക്കത്തിനുമായുള്ള ഒരു അനുഷ്ഠാനമായിരുന്നു നോമ്പ്. ഉപവാസം, ബ്രഹ്മചര്യം, വർജ്ജനം ഇവയാണ് അനുഷ്ഠാനഘടകങ്ങൾ. അനുതാപവും ദൈവസാക്ഷാത്കാരവുമാണ് ഉദ്ദേശ്യം. എന്നാൽ നോമ്പാചരണം വെറും അനുഷ്ഠാനമാത്രമായി തീരരുത്. ജീവിതത്തിൽ നാം ചെയ്യുന്ന പലതും വെറും അനുഷ്ഠാനമായിത്തീരാമെന്ന യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം നാം മറക്കരുത്. കരിസ്മാറ്റിക് പ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങൾക്കുപോലും ഇന്ന് ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കുന്ന അപകടമാണിത്. നമ്മെതന്നെ പൂർണ്ണമായി ദൈവസന്നിധിയിൽ സമർപ്പിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുംവിധം നമ്മെ ഒരുക്കുന്നതാണ് പ്രാധാന്യം. നോമ്പാചരണത്തിലൂടെ സാധ്യമാവേണ്ട കാര്യങ്ങൾ എന്തെല്ലാം?

a) അനുതാപം, ആത്മശുദ്ധീകരണം, ദൈവസാക്ഷാത്കാരം (യേശുവാ. 58: 1,4; മത്താ. 6:6, 17,18)

ഒരു ക്രിസ്ത്യാനിയുടെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഓരോ നിമിഷവും ദൈവത്തിനുവേണ്ടി സ്വയം വിശുദ്ധീകരിക്കുന്ന

അനുഭവം ആയിരിക്കണം. ജീവിതാനുഭവങ്ങൾ, തൊഴിൽ, ജീവിതരീതികൾ, ഇടപാടുകൾ എന്തിന് ആരാധനാ ജീവിതംതന്നെ ആവർത്തനങ്ങൾമൂലം വിരസം ആകുന്നു. ജീവിതത്തിലെ വിരസത ഒഴിവാക്കി ജീവിതത്തെ പ്രവർത്തനക്ഷമമാക്കുന്നതെങ്ങനെ? ഇവിടെയാണ് നോമ്പിന്റെ പ്രസക്തി. നോമ്പു നോറ്റിരിക്കുക, കണ്ണിലെണ്ണയൊഴിച്ച് കാത്തിരിക്കുക എന്നെല്ലാം പറയുമ്പോൾ അർത്ഥമാക്കുന്ന ഒരർത്ത്? കാത്തിരിപ്പും, ഒരുകുറവും, പുനഃപരിശോധനയ്ക്കുള്ള അവസരവും ജീവിക്കുവാനും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുവാനുമുള്ള തയ്യാറെടുപ്പും ദർശനവും ലഭിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള സമയമാണ്.

പൗരസ്ത്യ മതങ്ങളിൽ പ്രാർത്ഥനയ്ക്കും ഉപവാസത്തിനും നോമ്പാചരണത്തിനും പ്രത്യേക പ്രാധാന്യവും പ്രസക്തിയും ഉണ്ട്. യഹൂദ ചിന്തയിൽ ഉപവാസത്തിന് നാല് മാനങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ട്.

1. ഉപവസിക്കുന്ന വ്യക്തിയിലേക്ക് ദൈവിക ശ്രദ്ധയെ ആകർഷിക്കുക, ദൈവത്തിലേക്ക് മനുഷ്യശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുക (യെശ. 58:4; ദാനി. 9:3)
2. ആന്തരിക വ്യഥയുടെയും അനുതാപത്തിന്റെയും ബാഹ്യ പ്രകടനമാണ് ഉപവാസം. അനുതാപം യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ് എന്നതിന്റെ തെളിവായി ഉപവാസത്തെ കണ്ടിരുന്നു (2 ശമുവേൽ 1:12)
3. സ്വാർത്ഥ താല്പര്യ സംരക്ഷണത്തേക്കാൾ ഉപരി ലോകത്തിന്റെയും സമസൃഷ്ടിയുടെയും നന്മയും നിലനില്പുമാണ് ഉപവാസത്തിലൂടെ ലക്ഷ്യമാക്കുന്നത് (1 ശമു. 7:6).
4. ഉപവാസം ദൈവഹിതം തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നതിനും, ദൈവിക വെളിപ്പാടിനും വേണ്ടി (പുറ. 24; ദാനിയേൽ 9:3) ആധുനിക മനുഷ്യന് പ്രാർത്ഥനയും ഉപവാസവും നോമ്പാചരണവും അപ്രസ

ക്തമായി തോന്നാം. എന്നാൽ അതിന്റെ അർത്ഥം അനുഭവമാക്കാൻ നമുക്കിന്ന് സാധിക്കണം. താഴെപറയുന്ന നാല് കാര്യങ്ങൾ നോമ്പിന്റെ പ്രസക്തി വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു.

1. Fasting is good for health (ആരോഗ്യദായകം)

ഭക്ഷിപ്പാനും ആസ്വദിപ്പാനുമായി ജീവിക്കുന്ന (Living to eat) ആധുനിക മനുഷ്യൻ ജീവിക്കുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി ഭക്ഷിക്കുന്ന (eating to live) പ്രമാണം പഠിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ശാരീരിക ശിക്ഷണം ആധുനിക വൈദ്യശാസ്ത്രം പോലും നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നു. അമിത ഭക്ഷണവും, അമിത ജീവിത ഉല്ലാസവും ഇന്നത്തെ രോഗങ്ങൾക്കും അസമാധാനത്തിനും കാരണം ആകുന്നു. ശരീരം ശിക്ഷണവിധേയമാവുമ്പോൾ മനസ്സും ആത്മാവും ഒരുകുറവും ജാഗ്രതയും ആകും എന്നത് ഒരു തത്വം ആണ്. (It is a principle that when the body is most disciplined; the mental and spiritual faculties are most alert)

2) Fasting is good for self-discipline (വ്യക്തിത്വ ശിക്ഷണം)

ഇന്ന് ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ കടിഞ്ഞാൺ നിയന്ത്രിക്കുന്നത് അതിഭൗതികതയാണ്. ജീവിത ഉല്ലാസങ്ങളിൽ മുഴുകി വിചാര വികാരങ്ങൾക്ക് നിയന്ത്രണം ഇല്ലാതെയാവുമ്പോൾ മനസ്സിനെ ഏകാഗ്രമാക്കുവാനോ, ജീവിതമൂല്യങ്ങളിൽ നിലനില്ക്കുവാനോ സാധ്യമല്ലാതാകുന്നു. നോമ്പാചരണം സ്വയശോധനയ്ക്കും, വൈദിക വെളിപ്പെടുത്തലിനും വ്യക്തി ജീവിത പുതുക്കത്തിനുമായുള്ള അവസരമാണ്. സ്വയശിക്ഷണം ക്രിസ്തുശിഷ്യത്വത്തിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ആദ്യപടിയാണ്.

3) Fasting preserves us from becoming slaves of habits (സ്വഭാവങ്ങളുടെ അടിമയാവാതെ കാക്കുന്നു)

Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

ജീവിതത്തിൽ ചില കാര്യങ്ങൾ വേണ്ടാ എന്നുവയ്ക്കാൻ സാധിച്ചാൽ നാം കൂടുതൽ സ്വതന്ത്രർ ആകും. ഇന്ന് നാം പലതിനും അടിമകളാണ്. അർത്ഥവത്തായ ഉപവാസവും ശിക്ഷണവുമുള്ള വ്യക്തിക്ക് ജീവിതായോധനം അടിമത്തം ആവില്ല. സ്വഭാവങ്ങൾ യജമാനനും ആവില്ല.

4) Fasting keeps life and its pleasures always fresh and new (ജീവിതാനുഭവത്തിൽ പുതുതായും പുതുക്കലും)

ജീവിതാനുഭവങ്ങൾക്ക് എന്നും പച്ചപ്പും, പുതുക്കലും നൽകുവാൻ നോമ്പാചരണം സഹായിക്കും. എല്ലാറ്റിനോടും ക്രിയാത്മക മനോഭാവവും ബന്ധങ്ങളിൽ പുതുക്കലും പരീക്ഷകളെയും പോരാട്ടങ്ങളെയും ആത്മബലത്തോടെ അഭിമുഖീകരിക്കാനുള്ള ശക്തിയും അതിലൂടെ ലഭിക്കും. ക്രിസ്തുവിനോടു ചേർന്ന് ജീവിതലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ കണ്ടെത്തി അടിപതറാതെ വിശ്വാസത്തിൽ മുന്നേറുവാൻ നോമ്പാചരണം പ്രേരണ നൽകട്ടെ.

ഭക്ഷണക്രമീകരണത്തിലൂടെ ശരീരപുഷ്ടിയെയും വികാരങ്ങളെയും ക്രമീകരിച്ച് മനസ്സിനെ ഏകാഗ്രമാക്കുന്നതും, സ്വയശിക്ഷണത്തിലൂടെ ഹൃദയം ശുദ്ധമാക്കി കർത്താവിന്റെ കഷ്ടപ്പാടിനെ ഓർക്കുന്നതും നല്ലതുതന്നെ. എന്നാൽ ഇതിൽമാത്രം നോമ്പാചരണം ഒതുങ്ങിനിൽക്കുന്നില്ല. കർത്താവിന് സ്വീകാര്യമായ ഉപവാസവും നോമ്പാചരണവും എന്തെന്ന് ദൈവവചനം വ്യക്തമായി പറയുന്നു. നമ്മുടെ വികലതകളെ നികത്തി നീതിയിലും സമാധാനത്തിലും അധിഷ്ഠിതമായ സമൃദ്ധിയായ ജീവന്റെ അനുഭവത്തിലേക്ക് (ദൈവരാജ്യാനുഭവം) സമൂഹത്തെ നയിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഉത്തരവാദിത്വം ഏറ്റെടുക്കുവാനുള്ള വേളകൂടിയാവണം നോമ്പാചരണം.

b) നീതി നിർവ്വഹണം, സമാധാനത്തിലുള്ള സഹവർത്തിത്വം, ദൈവരാജ്യമുല്യാന്വേഷണം (യെശയ്യാ. 58:5-14; ആമോസ് 5: 22-24)

വേദപുസ്തകത്തിൽ ദൈവസ്വഭാവത്തെത്തന്നെ നീതിയോടുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിലാണ് കാണുന്നത്. ബി.സി. 8-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ പ്രവാചകന്മാരായ യെശയ്യാവ്, ആമോസ് എന്നിവരുടെ സന്ദേശങ്ങളിൽ “നീതി” മുഖ്യപ്രതിപാദ്യമാണ്. നീതിനിഷ്ഠമായ ജീവിതത്തിലും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിലും കൂടിയല്ലാതെ ദൈവത്തെ അറിയുവാൻ കഴിയുകയില്ല എന്ന് ഇവരെല്ലാം പറയുന്നു. അന്നത്തെ ആരാധനകളും അനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളും ആഴമില്ലാത്ത ജല്പനങ്ങളും പ്രഹസനങ്ങളുമായി മാറി. ദൈവം എന്തിൽ പ്രസാദിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് യെശ. 58:6 മുതൽ പറയുന്നു.

പുതിയനിയമത്തിൽ നീതിക്കും വിശുദ്ധിക്കും ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന ഗ്രീക്കുപദം “ഡിക്കായോസുനേ” (dikaiasune) എന്നതാണ്. സാമൂഹ്യനീതിക്കും ഇതേ പദമാണ് ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത്. ശരിയായ ബന്ധം (right relationship) എന്നാണിതിനർത്ഥം. ദൈവത്തോടും സമസൂഷ്ടിയോടും ശരിയായ ബന്ധങ്ങൾ വളർത്തുന്നതിലൂടെ മാത്രമേ ദൈവപ്രസാദമായി ജീവിക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കൂ. നീതിയും വിശുദ്ധിയും തമ്മിലുള്ള അഭേദ്യമായ ബന്ധത്തിലേക്കാണ് ഇത് വിരൽ ചൂണ്ടുന്നത്. അതായത് ആത്മശുദ്ധീകരണം പ്രാപിച്ച് വിശുദ്ധ ജീവിതം നയിക്കുവാൻ നീതിനിഷ്ഠമായ പ്രവൃത്തികളിലൂടെ മാത്രമേ കഴിയൂ എന്നു സാരം. കർത്താവു തന്നെ “നീതിക്കും വിശന്നുദാഹിക്കുന്നവരേയും നീതി നിമിത്തം ഉപദ്രവിക്കപ്പെടുന്നവരേയും” ഭാഗ്യവർണ്ണനയിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. (മത്താ. 5: 6,10)

അനീതിയുടെ മുമ്പിൽ നിശ്ശബ്ദതയും നിഷ്പക്ഷതയും അവലംബിക്കുന്നത് പാപമാണ്. യഥാർത്ഥ ദൈവഹിതം എന്തെന്ന് തിരിച്ചറിയുവാൻ സാധിക്കണം (മീഖാ. 6:8). ദൈവത്തിന് ഹിതകരമായത് എന്ത് എന്നും “യഹോവയുടെ ദിവസത്തിന്” കാത്തിരിക്കേണ്ടത് എങ്ങനെയെന്നും ആമോസും ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടുന്നു (ആമോ. 5:2124). കർമ്മരൂപങ്ങളിലേക്ക് നയിക്കാത്ത വിശ്വാസത്തെയും ആരാധനയെയും മതപരമായ ചടങ്ങുകളെയും യെശയ്യാവും ശക്തമായ ഭാഷയൽ വിമർശിക്കുന്നു (യെശയ്യാ. 1: 11-18)

യഹോവയെ കാത്തിരിക്കുന്ന യിസ്രായേലിനോട് ആമോസ് പറയുന്നത് അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായി ക്രിസ്തു

വിന്റെ മഹത്വപ്രത്യക്ഷത കാത്തിരിക്കുന്ന ക്രിസ്തീയ വിശ്വാസികൾക്കും അന്വർത്ഥമാണ്. ഈ “കാത്തിരിപ്പ്” ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ വേഗത്തിൽ കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നതിനല്ല, ദൈവഹിതപ്രകാരം ലോകജീവിതത്തെ ക്രമീകരിക്കുന്നതിനാണ്. ഇത് ലോകജീവിതത്തിൽനിന്ന് അന്യപ്പെട്ട, നിഷ്ക്രീയമായ ഒന്നല്ല. ഈ ലോകജീവിതത്തിൽത്തന്നെ നീതിയിലധിഷ്ഠിതമായ ജീവിതത്തിലും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിലും കൂടി മുന്നേറുന്ന പ്രവർത്തനനിരതമായ ഒരു കാത്തിരിപ്പാണ്. ഇതിനായി അനുദിനം “പാപബോധവും”, “നീതിബോധവും”, “ന്യായവിധിയുടെ ബോധവും” നൽകുന്നത് പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവാണ് (യോഹ. 16:8)

മേൽപ്പറഞ്ഞവയെ ഒഴിവാക്കിയുള്ള മതനിഷ്ഠകളും, കർമ്മാനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളും, വിശ്വാസസംരക്ഷണ റാലികളുമല്ല ദൈവഹിതം. അന്നത്തെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട രണ്ട് ആരാധനാകേന്ദ്രങ്ങളായ “ബഥേലിലേക്കും”, “ശിൽഗാലി” ലേക്കുമുള്ള യാത്രതന്നെ തങ്ങളുടെ അതിക്രമവർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കാൻ മാത്രമേ ഉതകൂ എന്നാണ് ആമോസിന്റെ ഭാഷ്യം (ആമോ. 4:4).

കഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന ദാസനൂതൃല്യമായി ലോകത്തിൽ വിമോചനദൗത്യത്തിന്റെ പങ്കാളികളാകുന്നതിനുള്ള നിയോഗമായിരുന്നു യിസ്രായേലിനെപ്പറ്റിയുടെ ദൈവഹിതം. എന്നാൽ അവർ നീതിനിഷ്ഠയില്ലാതെ ആത്മീയ പാപ്പരത്തത്തിലേക്ക് തരം താഴ്ത്തപ്പെട്ടു. ഇവിടെയാണ് പ്രവാചകസന്ദേശത്തിന് പ്രസക്തി. ഇന്നും അനീതിയുടെ സംവിധാനങ്ങളുടെ മദ്ധ്യത്തിൽ നീതി നിർവ്വഹണത്തിലൂടെയുള്ള ക്രിസ്തീയ സാക്ഷ്യം പ്രാധാന്യമർഹിക്കുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഉപരിപ്ലവമായ അനുഭവങ്ങൾക്കല്ലേ ഇന്നും ആത്മീകതലങ്ങളിൽ പ്രാധാന്യം കൊടുക്കുന്നത്. ലോകത്തെ വെടിഞ്ഞ് ക്രിസ്തുവിനെയും, ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ വെടിഞ്ഞ് ലോകത്തെയും തേടിപ്പോകുന്നത് ഫലരഹിതമാണ്. പ്രത്യുത ഭൗതികതയിലേക്ക് നീതിപൂർവ്വം വ്യാപരിക്കുന്ന ഭൗതികതയെ ദൈവരാജ്യാനുസരണം രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ആത്മീയ ജീവിതമാണ് ഇന്നാവശ്യം. ഈ ആത്മീക അനുഭവ

വത്തിൽ അന്യനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള കരുതലിനും, വിഭവങ്ങളുടെ നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ പങ്കുവയ്ക്കലിനും ഊന്നൽ ഉണ്ട്. അന്യായമാർഗ്ഗങ്ങളിലൂടെയുള്ള സമ്പാദ്യരീതികൾക്കും ബലാൽക്കാരത്തിനും അധർമ്മങ്ങൾക്കും സ്ഥാനമില്ല. ഇന്ന് പ്രസക്തമായൊരു മാനസാന്തരവും മാനസാന്തരാനുഭവത്തിന്റെ പ്രായോഗികതയും നാം അന്വേഷിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. മാന

സാന്തരം അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായി പാപത്തിൽനിന്നുള്ള മോചനമാണ്. പാപത്തിൽനിന്ന് ദൈവത്തിങ്കലേക്ക് തിരിയുന്നതോടൊപ്പം, ദൈവത്തോടൊപ്പം പാപം നിറഞ്ഞ ലോകത്തിലേക്ക് തിരിയണം എന്ന് മാനസാന്തരത്തെപ്പറ്റി Henry Gramer ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടുന്നു: Conversion from sin to God and conversion with God to the sinful world ഈ അനുഭവം നമുക്ക്

ആശ്വാസം നൽകുന്നതോടൊപ്പം അസ്വസ്ഥതയും നൽകും. ഈ നോമ്പുകാലം ആത്മപരിശോധനക്കും ദൈവഹിതം തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നതിനും അതിലൂടെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെട്ടവരായി ലോകത്തിൽ ക്രിയാത്മകമായി ജീവിക്കുന്നതിനും നീതിപൂർവ്വം പ്രതീകരിക്കുന്നതിനും നമ്മെ പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് ശക്തമാക്കട്ടെ. ♦

SNEHATHINTE NEERCHALUKAL

Rev. Dr. P. G. George

എഴുന്നള്ളത്ത്

വരവായി മണവാളൻ
 എതിരേൽക്കുവാൻ ഒരുങ്ങുവിൻ
 കേട്ടോ കൂട്ടുകാരേ! ഉണരുവിൻ
 തെളിക്കുക വെളിച്ചം, എണ്ണയുണ്ടോ?
 ഞങ്ങളെല്ലാം കൂട്ടുകാരാണ്.
 പത്തുപേരും നാട്ടുകാരാണ്.
 ഒരുങ്ങി ഞങ്ങൾ കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നു
 സമയംവന്നിതാ പുറപ്പെടുവാൻ
 നാനാദിക്കിലും കേൾക്കുന്നിതാ
 മണവാളൻ വരവിൻ കാഹള ധ്വനികൾ
 ലക്ഷണങ്ങൾ പലതും ആകാശത്തിലും
 കാത്തിരിക്കാം കൂട്ടുകാരെ ആശയോടെ
 മണവാളൻ മുഖം ഒന്നു കാണുവാൻ
 ആഗ്രഹം തിങ്ങുന്നിതാ പുണരുവാൻ
 രാവിൻ നിമിഷങ്ങൾ നീളുന്നു
 ഹൃദയം പുകയുന്നു പ്രേമാർദ്രമായി
 വിളക്കിൽ എണ്ണ പകരുന്നു
 തെളിയിച്ചു ദീപങ്ങൾ ഓരോന്നായി
 അയ്യോ! എൻ വിളക്കു കത്തുന്നില്ല
 കേൾക്കുന്നില്ല രോദനം ആരുമാരും
 പുറപ്പെടുന്നഞ്ചുപേർ മണവാളനായ്
 കൈകളിലേന്തിയ വിളക്കുമായി
 എണ്ണയുടെ വില അറിഞ്ഞനേരം പോയി
 തിണ്ണമായ് മറ്റഞ്ചുപേർ വാങ്ങുവാൻ
 സമയം സമാഗതമായ് സോദരരേ
 നിൻ മണവാളനെ എതിരേൽക്കാനാകുമോ?
 കരുതിയവർ കയറി മണവറയിൽ
 കാത്തനോടൊത്തെന്നും വാണീടുവാൻ.

പ്രകൃതിയുടെ രോദനം

കരകളെ തഴുകും ഓളങ്ങളും
 തകർത്തലയും തിരമാലകളും
 പറയുന്നൊരു സന്ദേശം തിടുകത്തിൽ
 കേൾക്കുവാൻ ചെവിയുണ്ടോ മാനവരെ?
 സൂഷ്ടിച്ച് ശരൻ ഈ ഉലക്
 പുത്തനായ് കരയും കടലുമായ്
 നിർണ്ണയിച്ചു ഉടയവനതിരുകൾ
 നിർവ്വാഹമില്ലിവ മാറ്റുവാൻ
 പർവ്വതങ്ങൾ, താഴ്വാരങ്ങൾ, സമതലങ്ങൾ
 നീർചോലകൾ പുഴകൾ കടലാഴികൾ
 നിറയെ ജീവജന്തുക്കളാൽ അത്ഭുതം!
 നിർണ്ണയിച്ചു നല്കി അനുഗ്രഹം സ്രഷ്ടാവ്.
 കൂടിയിരുത്തി മനുഷ്യ വർഗ്ഗത്തെ
 ഇഷ്ടം തോന്നിയതാൽ ശ്രേഷ്ഠമായ്
 പാരിൽ പണിയുന്നവർ സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തെ നരകമായ്
 ശാപമായ് തീർന്നു ഭൂമിയെല്ലാം
 മറന്നുപോയ് മനുഷ്യൻ ദൈവത്തെ
 ഇഷ്ടംപോൽ ജീവിതം നയിച്ചതാൽ
 ഉയരുന്നു ദുർഗ്ഗന്ധം, അകലുന്നു ബന്ധങ്ങൾ
 തകരുന്നു ജീവിതം ഈ കർമ്മഭൂമിയിൽ
 മലിനമാക്കുന്നു വായുവും വെള്ളവും
 ചൂഷണം ചെയ്യുന്നു ഭൂവിഭവങ്ങൾ
 കരയുന്നു ഭൂമി, വരളുന്നു ജീവജാലങ്ങൾ
 മുഴങ്ങുന്നു മരണമണി ആരു കേൾക്കുന്നു?
 സ്രഷ്ടാവാം ദൈവം കാണുന്നില്ലേ
 കേൾക്കുന്നില്ലേ ഈ രോദനം സർവ്വേശൻ
 ഉണരട്ടെ സൂഷ്ടികളെല്ലാം പുതുസൂഷ്ടികളായ്
 പുതു മാനവികതയുടെ ശുഭവാഗ്ദാനമായ്.

THE 108TH MARAMON CONVENTION

യേശുവിനെ യഥാർത്ഥമായി ഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കുന്നുവോ?

പ്രസംഗകൻ . റെറ്റ്. റവ. തോമസ് മാർ തിമോമിയോസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ.

“ശിമോൻ പത്രോസ് അവരോടു :ഞാൻ മീൻ പിടിച്ചാൻ പോകുന്നു എന്നു പറഞ്ഞു; ഞങ്ങളും പോരുന്നു എന്നു അവർ പറഞ്ഞു.”
വേദഭാഗം. യോഹന്നാൻ . 21:3

ഷേക്സ്പിയറിന്റെ പ്രസിദ്ധമായ മാക്ബത്ത് എന്ന നാടകത്തിൽ രാജ്യത്തിന്റെ രണ്ടാമതായ മാക്ബത്തും ഭാര്യയും രാജാവായ ഡങ്കനെ ശൂന്യതന്ത്രങ്ങളിലൂടെ വധിച്ച് രാജസ്ഥാനം കൈവശപ്പെടുത്താൻ ശ്രമിയ്ക്കുന്നു. എന്നാൽ കൊലപാതകം മാക്ബത്തിനെ അസ്വസ്ഥനാക്കുന്നു. കടലിലെ മുഴുവൻ ജലം കൊണ്ട് പോലും തന്റെ കൈയിലെ രക്തക്കറ കഴുകി കളയുവാൻ കഴിയില്ല എന്ന് മാക്ബത്ത് അനുതപിക്കുന്നു. നാളെ രാജാവകാനുള്ള മോഹം മാക്ബത്തിനെ ഇന്ന് കൊലപാതകത്തിലേക്ക് നയിച്ചു.

നാളെ എന്താകാണമെന്നുള്ള ആഗ്രഹം ഇന്നിനെ ക്രമീകരിക്കുന്നു. ഇന്നലെകളും നാളെകളുമാണ് ഇന്നിനെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത്. ഷേക്സ്പിയറിന്റെ മറ്റൊരു നാടകമായ കിംഗ് ലിയർ, രാജാവായ ലിയറിന് മൂന്ന് പെൺമക്കളാണ്. മക്കളുടെ ചെറുപ്രായത്തിൽ തന്നെ മാതാവ് മരിച്ചുപോയി. മൂന്ന് മക്കളും രാജാവിനെ വളരെയധികം സ്നേഹിച്ചു. ഒരു ദുർബലനിമിഷത്തിൽ രാജാവ് മൂന്ന് മക്കളെയും വിളിച്ച് ചോദിച്ചു നിങ്ങൾ എന്നെ സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ?... മുത്ത രണ്ട് മക്കളും അപ്പനെ വാനോളം പുകഴ്ത്തി സംസാരിച്ചു. എന്നാൽ ഇളയമകൾ റെഗ്നൻ പറഞ്ഞു. ഒരു മകൾ അപ്പനെ സ്നേഹിയ്ക്കേണ്ടതുപോലെ ഞാൻ അങ്ങയെ സ്നേഹിയ്ക്കുന്നു. വാർദ്ധക്യത്തിൽ എത്തിയ അപ്പൻ തന്റെ ഇളയ മകളുടെ വാക്കുകളിൽ സന്തുഷ്ടനായില്ല. രാജാവ് തന്റെ രാജ്യം രണ്ടായി പകുത്ത് മുത്ത രണ്ട് മക്കൾക്കും നൽകി ഇളയ മകളെ വിദൂരതയിലുള്ള ഒരു രാജാവിനെക്കൊണ്ട് വിവാഹം കഴിപ്പിച്ചു. സമ്പത്ത് കൈവശപ്പെടുത്തിയ മക്കൾ അപ്പനെ വാർദ്ധക്യത്തിൽ സംരക്ഷിയ്ക്കുവാൻ വിമുഖത കാണിച്ചു. മക്കളുടെ പ്രവർത്തിയിൽ മനംനൊന്ത് വനത്തിലേക്ക് പോയി. ഇളയമകൾ അപ്പനെ അന്വേഷിച്ച് കണ്ടെത്തുകയും ഇളയ മകളുടെ മടിയിൽ കിടന്ന് അപ്പൻ അന്ത്യശ്വാസം വലിയ്ക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു.

കിംഗ് ലിയറിന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ ഇന്നലെകൾ സ്വാധീനിച്ചു. പത്രോസിന് യേശുവിനെ ഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കേണ്ടതുപോലെ ഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കുവാൻ സാധിച്ചില്ല. പത്രോസിന് യേശുവിനെ ഗ്രഹിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയാത്തതിന്റെ രണ്ട് കാരണങ്ങൾ.

1. അദ്യശ്യനായ ദൈവത്തെ ഗ്രഹിക്കാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല.

വായിച്ച വേദഭാഗത്ത് പത്രോസ് മീൻ പിടിച്ചാൻ പോകുന്നു എന്ന് പറയുന്നു. പത്രോസ്



വർഷങ്ങൾക്ക് മുൻപ് ലഭിച്ച വിളിയെ വിസ്മരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ക്രമീകൃതമായ വിളി ആയിരുന്നു പത്രോസിന് ലഭിച്ചത്. യേശുവേണ്ടോ ഇന്നു മുതൽ മനുഷ്യരെ പിടിക്കുന്നവൻ ആകും എന്ന നിയോഗമാണ് പത്രോസിന് ലഭിച്ചത്. വേദപുസ്തകത്തിൽ ദൈവം ഓരോരുത്തരെയും പ്രത്യേക ദൗത്യത്തിനായി വിളിയ്ക്കുന്നു. അബ്രഹാമിനെ ദൈവം വിളിച്ച് വാഗ്ദത്തം നൽകുന്നു. വാഗ്ദത്തത്തിൽ അബ്രഹാം ഉറച്ച് വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു. ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യാതെ ദൈവത്തെ അനുസരിക്കണം. പുറപ്പാട് പൂസ്കത്തിൽ മോശയെ മുൾപടർപ്പിൽ വെച്ച് വിളിയ്ക്കുന്നു. മോശ വിളിയ്ക്ക് അർഹനല്ല എന്ന് പറയുന്നു എന്ന് പറയുന്നു. അതുപോലെ യെശയ്യാവ്, യിരെമ്യാവ്, നെഹമ്യാവ് ഇവരെയെല്ലാം വിവിധ ദൗത്യങ്ങൾക്കായി ദൈവം വിളിച്ചു.

ഇന്ന് സമൂഹത്തെ മുഴുവനായി വിളിക്കുന്നുവെന്നാണ് നാം ചിന്തിക്കുന്നത്. വ്യക്തി സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാന ഘടകമാണ്. പുതിയ നിയമത്തിൽ കർത്താവ് ശിഷ്യന്മാരെ വിളിച്ച് വേർതിരിക്കുന്നു. സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ നിർമ്മിതിക്ക് വേണ്ടിയാണ് അവരെ വിളിച്ച് വേർതിരിച്ചത്. കർത്താവ് വ്യക്തികളിൽ വിളി ആരംഭിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ലൂക്കോസ് 5.0 അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ പത്രോസിനെ

വിളിക്കുന്നത് മനുഷ്യരെ പിടിക്കുവാനാണ്. ഇന്നലെവരെ വലയിൽ ആയിരുന്നവർക്ക് സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം നൽകുന്ന ശുശ്രൂഷയാണ് പത്രോസിനെ ഏല്പിച്ചത്. മീൻ പിടിക്കുന്നത് ലാഭത്തിനാണ്, സ്വാർത്ഥതയ്ക്ക് വേണ്ടിയാണ്. അത് ഉപജീവനമാർഗ്ഗമാണ്. ഇന്നലെയിൽ നിന്ന് വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ഒരു ചുമതല പത്രോസിനെ കർത്താവ് ഏല്പിച്ചു. ലാഭം ഇല്ലാത്ത കാര്യമാണ്. സമയം, ജീവൻ, കഴിവ് ഇവ നഷ്ടമായേക്കാവുന്ന സംഗതിയാണ് പത്രോസിനെ ഏല്പിക്കുന്നത്. പരാജിതനായ പത്രോസിനെ വിജയി ആക്കിയിട്ടാണ് കർത്താവ് വിളിയ്ക്കുന്നത്. പത്രോസിനെ ആത്മവിശ്വാസം നൽകിയിട്ട് പുതിയൊരു ദൗത്യത്തിനായി വേർതിരിക്കുന്നു. പത്രോസിനെ കർത്താവ് വിളിച്ചത് മുതൽ സ്വർഗ്ഗാരോഹണത്തിന് തൊട്ട് മുൻപ് വരെ ധാരാളം സംഭവങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായി. അമ്മായി അമ്മയ്ക്ക് സൗഖ്യം നൽകിയതും, അപ്പം വർദ്ധിപ്പിച്ച സംഭവവും, കൈസര്യ, ഫിലിപ്പിയ ഇവിടങ്ങളിലെ അനുഭവങ്ങളും, ഇങ്ങനെ നിരവധി അനുഭവങ്ങൾ പത്രോസിന്റെ ഭൂതകാലത്ത് ഉണ്ടായി. എന്നാൽ പെട്ടെന്ന് ഉണ്ടായ അനുഭവമാണ് പത്രോസിനെ പിൻതിരിപ്പിച്ചത്. ഇന്നലെ വരെ ദൃശ്യവും സ്പർശ്യവുമായ കർത്താവ് ക്രൂൾ മരണത്തിലൂടെ പത്രോസിനെ ചഞ്ചലചിത്തനാക്കി മാറ്റി. ഇന്നലെ വരെ പ്രാപ്യനായ കർത്താവ് ഇന്ന് അപ്രാപ്യനായിരിക്കുന്നു. യേശുവിനെ ഉള്ളതുപോലെ സ്വീകരിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയാതെ പോയി. ഇന്ന് പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ, പ്രതികൂലങ്ങൾ ഇവ വർദ്ധിക്കുമ്പോൾ നാം അസ്വസ്ഥരാകുന്നു. നാം യേശുവിനെ അവിശ്വസിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ജീവിതത്തിൽ സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ പ്രതികൂലം ആകുമ്പോൾ യേശു യഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണോ എന്ന് സംശയിക്കുന്നു. 'ഞാനോ ലോകാവസാനത്തോളം എല്ലാ നാളും നിങ്ങളോട് കൂടെ ഉണ്ട്. അദ്യശ്യനായ യേശുവിന്റെ സാന്നിദ്ധ്യം നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിൽ ഉണ്ട്.

വളരെ അറിവ് ഉള്ള ചില ആളുകൾക്ക് കർത്താവിനെ ഗ്രഹിക്കുവാൻ ഇന്ന് സാധിക്കുന്നില്ല. സാധ്യ സുന്ദർസിംഗ് ചെറുപ്പത്തിൽ ദൈവത്തെ കുറിച്ച് വളരെ അറിവുള്ള ആൾ ആയിരുന്നു. ആ അറിവ് അനുഭവം ആയി മാറിയപ്പോൾ സുന്ദർസിംഗിനെ ഇൻഡ്യയുടെ അപ്പൊസ്തലൻ ആക്കി മാറ്റി. ലൂക്കോ. 19:1-10 അറിവ് അനുഭവത്തിന്റെ തലത്തിലായ സങ്കായിയെക്കുറിച്ച് പറയുന്നു. ഇന്ന് നാം അറിവിന്റെ തലത്തിൽ ഇരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ശീമോൻ യേശുവിന്റെ ശാരീരിക സാന്നിദ്ധ്യത്തിൽ നിന്ന് അദ്യശ്യമായ സാന്നിദ്ധ്യത്തിലേയ്ക്കുള്ള മാറ്റം ഉൾക്കൊള്ളാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല.

മരണസംസ്കാരത്തിനപ്പുറം ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ പൂക്കാലം

റൈറ്റ് റവ. ജോസഫ് മാർ ബർനബാസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ



2 ശമു. 18:19-33

യിസ്രായേലിന്റെ രണ്ടാമത്തെ രാജാവായിരുന്നു ദാവീദ്. നല്ല ഒരു രാജാവും തന്ത്രജ്ഞനും ഭക്തനുമായിരുന്നു. ദൈവം ദാവീദിന് നൽകിയ വാഗ്ദാനം അവന്റെ സിംഹാസനത്തിന്റെ നിത്യ തയാണ്. സമഗ്രമായ വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിന് ഉടമയും, പൊതുജന അംഗീകാരവുമുള്ള അബ്ശാലോം രാജകുമാരൻ തന്റെ പിതാവിന്റെ സിംഹാസനം പിടിച്ചടക്കുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. അബ്ശാലോമിന്റെ അന്ത്യം ദാരുണവും ദുഃഖകരവുമായിരുന്നു. ഇവിടെ അഹീത്തോഫേൽ, കൃശ്യൻ, എന്നീ രണ്ടു വ്യക്തികൾ വെളിപ്പാടിന്റെ പ്രതിനിധികളായി നില കൊള്ളുന്നത് വളരെ ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. ദൈവികമായ വെളിപ്പാടുകൾ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നെന്ന് കപടമായി അവകാശപ്പെട്ട ദൈവജനത്തെ വഴിതെറ്റിക്കുന്ന വർ ഇന്നും നമുക്കിടയിൽ ഉണ്ട്.

ആകാശത്തിനും ഭൂമിക്കും മദ്ധ്യേ ദാരുണമായ അന്ത്യം കുറിക്കപ്പെട്ട അബ്ശലോമിന്റെ കഥ ഒരു പഴങ്കഥയല്ല. ഇന്നും അത് ആവർത്തിക്കപ്പെടുന്നുണ്ട്. 'വില കുറയുന്ന മനുഷ്യൻ' പരിഷ്കൃതമെന്നവകാശപ്പെടുന്ന ആധുനിക സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകതയാണ് ഇന്നു മലയാളികൾ മരണത്തെ സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നവരാണ്. മനുഷ്യന്റെ വില കുറയുന്ന ഇന്നിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ സുവിശേഷം എത്രമാത്രം സംഗതമാണ്. മനുഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ വില കണ്ടവനാണ് യേശു. തിരുപിറവിയുടെ

വിശാല ദർശനം എത്രയോ അപരിമേയവും സംഗതവുമാണ്.

നമുക്ക് ഒന്നിച്ച് ജീവിക്കാം എന്നാൽ വിവാഹം വേണ്ട എന്നതാണ് പാശ്ചാത്യ സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ മുദ്രവാക്യം. ഈ പൈശാചികമായ സംസ്കാരം നമ്മുടെ ചുറ്റുപാടുകളിലും പടർന്ന് പിടിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. മനുഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ വിലയുടെ പൂർണ്ണത യേശുവിലാണ് നാം ദർശിക്കുന്നത്. മനുഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ പൂർണ്ണതയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കേണ്ടത് മതത്തിന്റെ ദൗത്യമാണ്. ഈ ഒരു ദൗത്യ നിർവ്വഹണത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമാകണം കൺവൻഷനുകൾ. സർവ്വസുഷ്ടിയുടേയും ജീവന്റെ വില കാത്തുസൂക്ഷിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് ക്രിസ്തീയ ദൗത്യം. ലോകത്തിലെ എല്ലാ ജീവിതവും ഒരു എട്ടുകാലി വലപോലെ ബന്ധിതമാകണം. ജീവന്റെ തുടിപ്പ് ഒന്നിച്ചുള്ളവാസത്തിലാണ്. ഭക്ഷണം, വസ്ത്രം, പാർപ്പിടം ഇവ എല്ലാവരുടേയും അവകാശമാണ്. എല്ലാവർക്കും ഇത് ലഭ്യമാക്കുന്നതാണ് സുവിശേഷം.

രാജകുമാരൻ മരിച്ചിരിക്കുകൊണ്ട് നീ ഇന്ന് സർവർത്തമാന ദൂതനാകയില്ല എന്ന യോവാബിന്റെ നിർദ്ദേശം നിരസിച്ച് അഹിമാസ് ദൂതയായി രാജാവിനടുത്തേക്ക് ഓടുന്നു. എന്നാൽ വ്യക്തതയില്ലാത്ത സന്ദേശവുമായിട്ടാണ് അഹിമാസ് രാജാവിന്റെ മുഖിൽ നിൽക്കുന്നത്. വ്യക്തതയില്ലാത്ത സന്ദേശവാഹകന്മാരും വ്യക്തതയില്ലാത്ത സന്ദേശവും ഇന്നിന്റെ പ്രശ്നമാണ്.

വിവരസാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയുടെ ഉന്നതിയിലെത്തിയ ബാബേലിന്റെ അനുഭവം അമ്പർത്തമാക്കുന്നത് പരസ്പരം മനസിലാകാത്ത സങ്കീർണ്ണതയുടെ അവസ്ഥയെയാണ്. ദൈവത്തെ സന്ധിക്കുവാനും ദൈവത്തെപ്പോലെ ആകുവാനുമാണ് മനുഷ്യരുടെ വ്യർത്ഥശ്രമം. എന്നാൽ ക്രിസ്തുസഭയുടെ സന്ദേശം മനുഷ്യരാകുവാൻ വേണ്ടിയുള്ള ആഹ്ലാസമാണ്. നമുക്ക് മനുഷ്യരായി ജീവിക്കാം. മതം, ജാതി, വർണ്ണം എന്നീ വിഭജനങ്ങൾ സമൂഹത്തെ ചെറിയ, ചെറിയ കണ്ടങ്ങൾ ആക്കുന്നു. ആദാമിന്റെ പതനത്തിൽ നിന്നുമുള്ള കരകേറലാവണം, നമ്മുടെ ലക്ഷ്യം.

ഇന്ന് നമ്മുടെ കൺവൻഷനുകൾ എന്തെങ്കിലും നൽകുന്നുണ്ടോ? നമ്മുടെ Pulpit - കൾ ഇന്ന് ബലഹീനമാണ്. സ്വയം വിശ്വസിക്കാത്ത കാര്യങ്ങൾ വിളിച്ചുപറയുന്ന മനുഷ്യർ. പള്ളികളിൽ നിന്ന് സങ്കീർണ്ണതയല്ലാതെ (Confusion) മറ്റൊന്നും കിട്ടാനില്ലാത്ത അവസ്ഥ. ആരേയും കർത്താവിനു വേണ്ടി വെല്ലുവിളിക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്ത അവസ്ഥ. മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ വെല്ലുവിളിയുടെ ശക്തി സ്രോതസ്സായി മാറണം. സഭയിൽ നിന്ന് ആളുകൾ കൊഴിഞ്ഞു പോകുന്നത് എന്തുകൊണ്ട്? സ്വർഗ്ഗം വരെ ഉയരുന്ന ഗോവേണി സഭയ്ക്ക് നഷ്ടമായോ? കൂട്ടായ്മയുടെ അനുഭവം കൈമോശം വന്നുവോ? ബന്ധങ്ങളില്ലാതെ എങ്ങനെയാണ് കൂട്ടായ്മയുണ്ടാവുക. പള്ളി പലപ്പോഴും K.S.R.T.C. ബസ്സിന് തുല്യമാണ്.

രാജകുമാരനെങ്ങനെ? എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിനുത്തരം ശുഭം, ശുഭം, എന്നാണ്. ഇത് കള്ളപ്രമാചകന്മാരുടെ ഉത്തരമാണ്. ഇത് സമ്പന്നതയുടെ ദൈവശാസ്ത്രമാണ് (Prosperity Theology) സുവിശേഷവേലയും, ജീവിതവും, ഒന്നുവെച്ചാൽ രണ്ടുകിട്ടുന്ന മുച്ചീട്ടുകളിയല്ല. സ്വയം വെറുമായാക്കിയ യേശുവാണ് നമ്മുടെ മാതൃക. നമ്മിലുള്ള നന്മമുഴുവൻ, ദൈവത്തിനുമുമ്പിൽ അർപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ് - നമ്മുടെ കുരിശ്.

ഇന്ന് സഭ സമ്പന്നതയുടെ ശൈലി സ്വീകരിച്ചു. അഹിമാസിന്റെ സഭയായി വളർന്നുകഴിഞ്ഞു. പലതിനോടും കടബാധ്യത തോന്നുന്നുവോഴാണ് സഭ, സഭയായി വളരുന്നത്. അഹിമാസിന്റെ ലോകത്തിന്, ക്രിസ്തീയ ദൗത്യം സാർത്ഥകമാവണമെങ്കിൽ മനസ്സുകളിൽ വചനത്തിന്റെ പൂഷ്പിക്കലുണ്ടാവണം. കഴിഞ്ഞ ഒരു വർഷം, ക്രിസ്തുസന്ദേശം, തെറ്റായി വ്യാഖ്യാനിക്കപ്പെട്ട വർഷമാണ്. ഇന്ന് പ്രസംഗകരുടെ ഭോഷതത്താൽ അനേകർ തല്ലുകൊള്ളുന്നു.

'നമ്മുടെ ക്രിസ്തു ഇന്നും, അരിമത്യയിലെ യോസേഫിന്റെ കല്ലറയിൽ അടച്ചുകിടക്കുന്നു'. വിശ്വാസത്തിന് വേരുകൾ ആവശ്യമാണ് അടിവേരുകൾ ഇല്ലാതെ വിശ്വാസം എങ്ങനെ നില നില്ക്കും.

യോവാബിന്റെ സന്ദേശം ഇവിടെ ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. രാജകുമാരൻ മരിച്ചിരിക്കയാൽ, സദർത്തമാനമാകയില്ല. എന്നാൽ മറ്റൊരു രാജകുമാരൻ മരിച്ചത്, സകല സുഷ്ടിക്കും, സദർത്തമാനമാണ്. അത് യേശുവിന്റെ മരണമാണ്. ബോൺ ഹോഫർ ഇതിനെപ്പറ്റി പറയുന്നത്. 'യേശുവിന്റെ ജനനം തന്നെ മരണത്തിന് വേണ്ടിയാണ്. യേശുവിന് തന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യത്തെപ്പറ്റിയും ജീവിത സന്ദേശത്തെപ്പറ്റിയും വളരെ വ്യക്തതയുണ്ടായിരുന്നു.

കുറ്റബോധം ആണ് ഇന്നിന്റെ പാപം. പാപഭീതി മരണഗർത്തത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് സിമ്മണ്ട് ഫ്രോയിഡ് പറയുന്നുണ്ട്. ഈ മരണഗർത്തത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള ഉയിർപ്പാണ് യഥാർത്ഥ സുവിശേഷം. വി.മാമോദീസാ, ഈ ഉയർത്തെഴുന്നേല്പിനെ അനുഭവവേദ്യമാക്കുന്നതാണ്. അത് ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ മരണത്തിലും പുനരുദ്ധാനത്തിലും ഉള്ള പങ്കുചേരലാണ്. ഈ ക്രിസ്താനുഭവത്തിൽ ഉൾച്ചേരുന്നതാണ് ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ധന്യത. അതിന്റെ സാർവ്വത്രികത ഉറക്കെ വിളിച്ചു പറയുന്നതാണ് സുവിശേഷം.

രാജകുമാരൻ മരിച്ചിരിക്കുകൊണ്ട്, നമുക്ക് സദാർത്ഥമാനം. മരണത്തെ ഭയപ്പെടുന്നവർക്ക് വേണ്ടി, നമുക്ക് ജീവന്റെ സുവിശേഷം പങ്കുവെയ്ക്കാം. ശുഭം, ശുഭം - എന്ന കപട സന്ദേശത്തിന്റെയല്ല മറിച്ച്, യേശുവിലൂടെ രക്ഷ എന്ന ജീവിത ഗന്ധിയായ സുവാർത്തയുടെ വാഹകരാവാം.

"ക്രൂശിലെ രക്തമെൻ - ജീവനാധാരം നാശലോകം വെടിഞ്ഞോടാം ആശയോടുകൂടെ നേടാം".

"The Will of God will never take you to where the Grace of God will not protect you."

മൂല്യസങ്കല്പങ്ങൾക്ക് മാറ്റം വരുത്തണം

പ്രസംഗം : ഡോ. സാമുവൽ കമലേശൻ

പരിഭാഷ : റവ.എ.ടി. സഖറിയ

സമ്പത്തും സ്ഥാനമാനങ്ങളും തൃജിച്ച് ജീവനെ തൃണവൽഗണിച്ചും ക്രിസ്തീയവേലയിൽ പങ്കുചേരുന്നവരുണ്ട്. അവർ മടയരല്ല. 108 വർഷങ്ങൾക്ക് മുമ്പ് ഈ നദീതീരത്ത് ആരംഭിച്ച കൺവൻഷൻ ഒന്നും നഷ്ടപ്പെടാനില്ലാതെ ചിലത് നേടിയെടുക്കാൻ തങ്ങളെ സമർപ്പിച്ചുകൊടുത്ത നമ്മുടെ പിതാക്കന്മാരുടെ ത്യാഗമാണ്.

നമ്മുടെ ലക്ഷ്യമെന്താണ്? നമുക്ക് സൂക്ഷിക്കുവാൻ പറ്റാത്ത പലകാര്യങ്ങളുണ്ട്. അവ നഷ്ടപ്പെടും. എന്നാൽ നമ്മിൽ നിന്നും എടുത്തുകളയാൻ പറ്റാത്ത ഒരു കാര്യമുണ്ട്. അത് ദൈവബോധമാണ്.

വിശുദ്ധ മർക്കോസിന്റെ സുവിശേഷം: ഈ സുവിശേഷം എഴുതപ്പെട്ട ആദ്യസുവിശേഷവും പത്രാധിപശൈലിയിൽ രചിക്കപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ളതും, സംഭവങ്ങൾ രത്നച്ചുരുക്കമായി രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുള്ളതുമാണ്.

ഈ സുവിശേഷത്തിന് മൂന്ന് ഭാഗങ്ങളുണ്ട്.

അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങൾ 1-8 യേശുവിന്റെ പരസ്യശുശ്രൂഷ

9-10 യേശുവിന് ശിഷ്യന്മാരോടുള്ള ഊഷ്മളമായ സ്വഭാവം

11-16 കർത്താവിന്റെ പീഡാനുഭവവും ഉയർത്തേഴുന്നേൽപ്പും
രണ്ടുകാര്യങ്ങൾ ചിന്തിക്കാം

1. എങ്ങനെയാണ് ശിഷ്യന്മാർ വിശ്വാസത്തിലേക്ക് വരുന്നത്

2. ശിഷ്യന്മാരുടെ ജീവിതത്തിലെ പ്രകടമായ അപര്യാപ്തതകൾ എന്തായിരുന്നു

വി.മർക്കോസ് 1-8 വരെയുള്ള അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങളിൽ യേശു ആരാണെന്ന് വിവരിക്കുന്നു. നമ്മുടെ മദ്ധ്യത്തിൽ നടന്നുപോകുന്ന ഈ വ്യക്തി ആരാണ് ?

3:21 ചാർച്ചക്കാരുടെ അഭിപ്രായത്തിൽ യേശു ബുദ്ധിമേമുള്ളവൻ, കുടുംബത്തിന് അപമാനം വരുത്തുന്നവൻ

3:22 ശാസ്ത്രീമാർ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നത് ഭൂതങ്ങളുടെ തലവനെക്കൊണ്ട് ഭൂതങ്ങളെ പുറത്താക്കുന്നവൻ എന്നാണ്.

6:1-6 യേശു സാധാരണക്കാരനായ ഒരാളല്ലയോ എന്ന് നാട്ടുകാർ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു.

6:14 ഹെരോദാവ് പറയുന്നു ഇത് "യോഹന്നാൻ സ്നാനമാണ്."

1:21-26, 3:11-12 സാത്താൻ പറയുന്നു, നീ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പുത്രനാണ്.

ഈ അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങളിൽ യേശു ആരാണെന്നുള്ള വിവിധ അഭിപ്രായങ്ങൾ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇവിടെ യേശു ശിഷ്യഗണത്തോടുചോദിക്കുന്നു നിങ്ങൾ എന്നെ ആരെന്ന് പറയുന്നു. മറ്റുള്ളവരുടേയും പിചാശിന്റെയും അഭിപ്രായമല്ല നിങ്ങൾ ആരെന്ന് പറയുന്നു?

നീ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പുത്രനാണ് എന്റെ കർത്താവാണ്.

ഞാൻ എന്നെ നിന്നിൽ സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നു. എന്നിൽ നിന്നെടുക്കാൻ പറ്റാത്ത



യേശുവിന്റെ ചിന്തയും ശിഷ്യരുടെ ചിന്തയും തമ്മിൽ ധ്രുവങ്ങളുടെ അന്തരമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. മനുഷ്യപുത്രൻ ശുശ്രൂഷ ചെയ്തിപ്പാനല്ലേ ശുശ്രൂഷിപ്പാനും ജീവനെ മറുവിലയായി നൽകാനുമാണ് വന്നത്.

കാര്യമെന്താണ് ?

ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വെളിപാടിനാൽ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഈ വലിയ സത്യം യേശു ദൈവപുത്രനാണ്.

8:31-33 യേശു യരുശലേമിലേക്ക് പോകുകയും കൊലചെയ്യപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുമെന്ന് പറയുന്നു. ശീമോൻ പത്രോസ് കുരിശിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്രയിൽ നിന്നും യേശുവിനെ പിന്തിരിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. യേശു ശീമേനെ സാത്താൻ എന്ന് സംബോധന ചെയ്യുന്നു കാരണം ക്രൂശിലൂടെ സൂഷ്ടിയെ വീണ്ടെടുക്കുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുമ്പോൾ അതിനെ തടയുന്നു. നിങ്ങളും കുരിശെടുക്കുവാൻ തയ്യാറാകുന്നില്ല എങ്കിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ശിഷ്യരാകാൻ പറ്റില്ല എന്നു യേശു പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ പരാജയങ്ങൾ എന്തൊക്കെയാണ്?

1.മർക്കോ. 9:30 ൽ യേശു കഷ്ടപ്പാടിന്റെയും സഹനത്തിന്റെയും ആവശ്യകതയെ പറ്റി പറയുന്നു. ഈ സമയം ശിഷ്യന്മാർ വാദിക്കുന്നത് അവരിൽ വലിയവൻ ആരെനാണ്. ലഭ്യമാകുന്ന സമയം ഒരുപക്ഷേ ജീവിതത്തിൽ ഒരിക്കൽ മാത്രമാകാം. ആരാണ് വലിയവരെന്ന ചിന്തയിൽ ഇരുന്നാൽ സഭയുടേയും ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെയും അവസരം നഷ്ടമാകാം.

2.മർക്കോ 9:38-41 യോഹന്നാൻ പറഞ്ഞു ഞങ്ങളെ അനുഗമിക്കാത്ത ഒരുവൻ

ഭൂതത്തെ പുറത്താക്കിയതിനെ ഞങ്ങൾ നിരോധിച്ചു സഭകൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള ഐക്യം ആവശ്യമാണ്. ഏതു സഭയേക്കാൾ ദൈവം വലിയവനാണ്.

3.മർക്കോ 10 : 32-34 സെബ ദി മക്കൾ വാദിക്കുന്നത് അവർക്ക് ചില സ്ഥാനമാനങ്ങൾ ലഭിക്കണം എന്നാണ്.

ഈ മുന്നുകാര്യങ്ങൾ ഇന്നും നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയങ്ങളെ ബന്ധിച്ചിരിക്കുകയാണ്. സ്ഥാനമാനങ്ങൾക്കും പദവികൾക്കും വേണ്ടി നിലകൊള്ളുന്നത് ശരിയല്ല. ജീവൻ കൊടുത്ത് ശിഷ്യത്വം തെളിയിച്ചാൽ അവർ കർത്താവിന്റെ സ്വന്തം എന്ന് പറയാം.

യേശുവിന്റെ ചിന്തയും ശിഷ്യരുടെ ചിന്തയും തമ്മിൽ ധ്രുവങ്ങളുടെ അന്തരമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. മനുഷ്യപുത്രൻ ശുശ്രൂഷ ചെയ്തിപ്പാനല്ലേ ശുശ്രൂഷിപ്പാനും ജീവനെ മറുവിലയായി നൽകാനുമാണ് വന്നത് എന്ന് പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്നു. ദാസ ശുശ്രൂഷയുടെ മഹത്വം മനസ്സിലാക്കണം. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് നമ്മോട് സംസാരിക്കുമ്പോൾ മാത്രമേ ദാസശുശ്രൂഷ ഏറ്റെടുക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുകയുള്ളൂ. ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിൽ നിന്നു നമ്മെ തടയുന്ന ജഡീക സ്വഭാവങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റി പൗലോസ് അപ്പസ്തോലൻ പറയുന്നുണ്ട്.

യുദ്ധ സ്ഥലത്ത് മുറിവേറ്റ ഒരു ഭടൻ, സഹഭടന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷ ലഭിക്കുമ്പോൾ തന്നെ ശുശ്രൂഷിച്ച ഭടൻ കൊല്ലപ്പെട്ടു. അത് കഴിഞ്ഞുള്ള ക്രിസ്തുമസ് കാലം രക്ഷപ്പെട്ട ഈ ഭടൻ തന്നെ ശുശ്രൂഷിച്ച് മരണമടഞ്ഞ ആ സഹഭടന്റെ പിതാവിന് ഒരു സമ്മാനവുമായി എത്തി. മരണമടഞ്ഞ തന്റെ ഏകമകന്റെ ചിത്രമായിരുന്നു അത്. ചിത്രങ്ങളുടെ ഒരു വലിയ ശേഖരമുണ്ടായിരുന്ന പിതാവ് തന്റെ മകന്റെ ചിത്രം ഏറ്റവും ഉചിതമായ സ്ഥാനത്ത് വച്ചു. കുറച്ചുനാളുകൾക്ക് ശേഷം പിതാവ് മരിച്ചു. വിൽപത്രത്തിൽ തന്റെ കലാവസ്തുക്കളുടെ വലിയ ശേഖരം ലേലം ചെയ്യുന്നതിനെപ്പറ്റി എഴുതിയിരുന്നു. തന്റെ മകന്റെ ചിത്രം ആദ്യമായി ലേലം ചെയ്യണം എന്ന് എഴുതിയിരുന്നു. വൻ തുകകളുമായി വലിയ ചിത്രകാരന്മാരുടെ ചിത്രം ലേലം കൊള്ളാൻ എത്തിയ ആളുകൾ രൂപഭംഗിയില്ലാത്തതും കലാമൂല്യമില്ലാത്തതുമായ ഈ ചിത്രത്തിന്റെ ലേലം വിളിയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുവാൻ വൈമനസ്യം കാണിച്ചു. എങ്കിലും ഒരുവൻ കുറഞ്ഞ വില പറഞ്ഞു. ലേലം ഉറപ്പിച്ചു. തുടർന്ന് ലേലക്കാരൻ പറഞ്ഞു ലേലം അവസാനിച്ചു കാരണം ആ പിതാവ് തന്റെ വിൽപത്രത്തിൽ എഴുതി - തന്റെ മകന്റെ ചിത്രം ലേലം കൊള്ളുന്നവർക്കുള്ളതാണ് ബാക്കിയെല്ലാം.

ഇന്ന് പണത്തിനും പദവികൾക്കും ലാഭത്തിനും വേണ്ടിയുള്ള ഓട്ടമാണ്. ഇവിടെ ജീവിത മൂല്യ സങ്കല്പങ്ങൾക്ക് മാറ്റം വരണം. ഇത് 108-ാമത് കൺവൻഷന്റെ വെല്ലുവിളിയാണ്.

പുത്രനുള്ളവന് ഉള്ളിൽ ജീവനുണ്ട്. പുത്രനില്ലാത്തവന് ജീവനില്ല.



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Toby T. Mathew, Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston

"To prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the knowledge of the Son of God and attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:12,13

One of the many challenges that every Christian community faces is the faith development of young people. Whenever you hear the word mentor, what comes to mind? A super-gifted, high energy extrovert who seems to know what to say and does the right things in every situation? Although these are widespread perceptions, they're seriously unsound. The truth is, anyone can be a mentor! Anyone who has experienced the love of God and prepared to share what he/she has learned can be a mentor.

T.R.U.S.T., *Trinity Restoring Unity and Service for a better Tomorrow*, is a program started under the support of the Trinity Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship. We believe this program creates an atmosphere of accountability and service to one another. This mentoring program encourages a relationship in which the mentor seeks to spiritually lift another persons full potential in Christ.

Mission Statement: We desire to make disciples of our brothers and sisters by modeling Christ to them, connecting all ages within the Church through fellowship, teaching and accountability.

Vision Statement: To transform the relational culture of our church, our community and the world by having Christ centered relationships with those in our community.

Program Core Values:

1. Trust: The firm reliance on the integrity, ability or character of a person. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding: In all ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight." *Proverbs 3:5-6*

2. Honesty: Any thought, word, or action that is truthful, honorable, noble, good, admirable, ethical, fair, right, sincere, or frank and that is free from any hint of fraud or deceit. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." *Colossians 3:23, 24*

3. Integrity: Integrity is a four-step process. (1) Discerning what is right and wrong. (2) Acting on what you have discerned as right and wrong. (3) Saying unashamedly that you are acting on what you understand as right from wrong (4) said on the standards and values promulgated by the Holy Scripture and exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. "Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide." *Psalms 26.1*

T.R.U.S.T. Mentorship Program enables the following opportunities:

- Enabling older youth to see themselves in their younger counterparts, allowing them to have an insight on their own, lives and help give timely guidance to their counterparts.
- Younger youths providing older youths an avenue to serve the Lord.
- Younger youths will feel more connected to people and social groups, which will help to counter societal isolation and pressures.
- Doing the will of God through meaningful Christian mentoring.

The Trinity Represents:

The Father

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father.

The Son

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things.

The Holy Spirit

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in creation, incarnation, and redemption. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He

extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth.

Handprint of Mentoring

The human hand has five fingers, unique in design, essential in function. If you've ever injured a finger, you know the hand is handicapped without use of all five. Similarly, a Christian mentoring relationship will not be healthy and functional without five important ingredients: prayer, worship, Bible study, sharing, and accountability.

1. Let's say the *THUMB* represents *prayer*. The human thumb is essential to manual dexterity, distinguishing us from other species. So prayer is the source of a Christian's strength; praying with and for each other is a distinctive, vital mark of a Christian mentoring relationship.

2. The *INDEX* finger, worship points us toward the Source and Goal of spiritual growth—Jesus Christ. When mentors and mentees worship together, they gain the right perspective. The goal is not that you become more like the Mentor, but more like Christ.

3. The *MIDDLE* finger on the hand of mentoring relationship is Bible study. God's Word is the center of all discipleship. In II Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

4. The *RING* finger on the hand of mentoring relationship is sharing. We slip a signet, or wedding ring—signs that we share a bond with another. A sure sign that mentor and mentee are forming spiritual bonds is that we begin to take off our masks and talk frankly about the deepest issues of our lives.

5. The "*PINKIE*" finger is the smallest, but its grip is strong when linked with another's.

Every handprint is unique. Out of sharing grows accountability—the completion of our handprint of mentoring. As we spend time together in prayer, worship, and Bible study the time will come when we address our weaknesses. There will be moments when you can share a simple insight or truth. In doing so, you can change the perspective of your mentee forever! There will be other times when you can "speak into their life" with wisdom and authority. Your words can be profound when God prompts you to share them. There are other times when simply the way you live your life will help your mentee understand what faith looks like in a real life.

Mentoring isn't just a sharing and receiving of information—it's a life-on-life investment that brings about

transformation in the life of another. If you're a follower of Christ, you can empower others to live up to their full potential by mentoring them. A mentoring relationship empowers the mentee to grow deeper, reach higher and stretch further in his or her connection with God. It empowers because it encourages the other. It empowers because it sharpens the other. It empowers because it teaches the other—with words and actions. Mentoring is a commitment to accompany one another on our respective faith journeys.

Young people need adults in their lives, adults who show an interest in what they are doing and thinking, in their dreams and fears; who will share not only in their faith journey, but in their whole life experience. A healthy mentoring relationship is one that respects the experience of each person involved. This creates space and opportunity for significant growth in a person's spiritual walk. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul wrote, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

Christian mentoring is more than teaching; it is discipleship. Students have individual needs. For many, self-esteem is a fundamental issue. Others struggle with school, subject choices, families, and relationships. The mentor doesn't set out to solve all these problems, rather to equip and encourage the mentee to become a problem solver. For some, simply listening will help them to clarify issues to the point where a solution or next step becomes obvious. For others, making the connection to someone with the right skills will be the most useful thing a mentor can do.

In any case, the simple fact that you care enough and believe in a person enough to sacrifice your time to mentor them speaks volumes. Mentoring creates relationships that in turn help create a united community within a church. It is a way of inviting people to share their lives and their faith together. You will find that your faith grows through this experience as well. It is clearly God's intention that we should learn from one another, grow together in our relationship to him and seek to serve him faithfully in partnership with others. If we can offer genuine relationships to young people, nurture these relationships and offer a true sense of companionship on the journey of faith—then it may be the relational glue found in these friendships that will help them not only to remain within the Mar Thoma Church but will empower them to lead us towards a more hopeful future.

If anyone is interested in developing a mentoring program within his or her Youth Fellowships, please email trust@mtcyouth.org for more information. ■

Winds of time

Kurien Joseph



Lately, I have been seeing lot of questions coming from the church elders to the youths and Sunday school children on their opinion on future of Mar Thoma church outside India. A worthy thought to ponder upon for every believer in our church.

A sneak peek into the past history of our church gives us the understanding the very fabric of the church has constantly changed over time. Even the doctrines of the church have been sifted over time, since the time of Peter and Paul. But it is a great feeling to know that the rudimentary principle of the Gospel of Jesus has stood the test of time. God's assurance of His great love sheds light over the dark and tumultuous journey of man on this cursed earth. Praise God for his unchanging love.

Many consider youth to be the most vigorous and magical time in a person's life. One of the greatest preacher, admonishes the young Timothy to hold on to his faith. Many start their relationship with their creator at various times of their lives. Hence the young children of our church have the prerogative to start this relationship early. During every walk of faith, Satan is quick to place hurdles to steal the love of God from the hearts of men. Many times passionate believers become lukewarm. Praise be to God for His Spirit still burns in our hearts.

Each believer takes his relationship with God differently. There are evangelists who make well-cut specifics how a relationship should be and the do's and don'ts for a believer. The talk of doctrines draw disputes in beliefs among God's own people. I really would not want to tread too close to this territory, but my attention is on what draws new believers. How is God touching newer lives? At every point in history there has been the aroma of revival catching the attention of both young and old. Praise God for sending His Spirit of revival.

The hottest thing for a generation is stale stuff for the newer generation. I have seen various youth ministries that constantly change, as there is need to satisfy the younger minds. Our Mar Thoma church has done a remarkable job in starting youth ministries inside the church to retain the new generation. After having felt the pulse in the Indian Mar Thoma youth ministries, I feel it meets well with the expectations. But the tide changes a lot as we move across from the sub-continent and into a new place like "America." The culture of the American society is much different than in India. Praise God that we can worship God in this nation.

The younger generation of believers who face peer pressure a lot different than their parents or elders did. The younger generation faces several problems in these times just like the parents or elders faced, probably of a different nature. The way in which their needs are to be met should be given precedence and attention just as every problem that a family faces. Our church has constantly tried to address their needs by accepting newer ideas and implementing them. Some parishes do have workers specifically to handle the spiritual

needs of the youths. Several programs are already in place to make youths participate in the church service and social outreaches around the year. The yearly activities like national and regional youth conferences are immensely popular among the youths. Praise God for He is touching young lives.

The church emphasizes on believers having families that are Christ centered. The parents have to assume the role to pray for their children every day. The parents should be encouraged to lend their ears and also their time listening to the needs and issues of their children. The church family will then automatically share the burden for all the younger believers in the same way. So encourage the new generation and pray for them. Encourage the programs run by them; support and train them. Praise God that He is the center of our church family.

I have seen when the thirsty souls wanting better nourishing spiritually don't find it available in their local church the next step is go in search for a place to minister and to be ministered unto. So we find 'consumerism' which has slowly crept inside the church. If a believer find his church entertaining, he will be willing to put more inside the church offertory. So to talk in secular terms, Mar Thoma church in America has to compete with native churches. If the church fails to cater to the needs of the younger members, it is likely to face rejection in the future. This is an issue that needs to be addressed by all Indian American churches. Praise God that he is churning us day to day.

Let us be aware of the challenges that lie ahead of us. Let us pray that God will reach out to all the youths in our church year by year and they all will enter into a relationship with God. Let us pray that we have hearts and minds like clay that God will use to mould our church. God's work has to be carried on forward to the next generation. And let us be receptive to align ourselves behind God's will. There is no greater Joy than loving God and serving him. ■

Report of the 2002 Diocesan Mission Tour

Mrs. Mariamma Thomas



Andhra Pradesh Villagers receiving us and praying for church.

A group of six Mar Thomites from the North American Diocese (Mrs. Mariamma (Molly) Thomas, Dr. Elsie Mathew, Mr. Susheel Philip, Mr. Siby Mathew, Ms. Mariam Varghese, and Ms. Maureen Mathew) embarked on a Diocesan Mission Tour of Southern India this past holiday season, witnessing some of the trials and triumphs faced by dedicated Mar Thoma clergy and staff. Members gained a greater understanding of the work of Mar Thoma church in these needy areas and had the chance to grow spiritually by sharing in fellowship with one another as well as with the staff and natives in the areas where they visited.

The theme verse that we selected was from Hebrews chapter 11:1: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (NIV)

As Christians, we believe that faith is complete trust in God. As the group left their homes for 3 weeks, we tried to allow faith to guide our thoughts and actions throughout the tour of India.

Tour Highlights

The group spent a day at Zacharias Thirumeni's Aramana upon arrival in Chennai. We worshipped with parishioners at the Chennai Mar Thoma Church to kick-off the tour. On December 22nd, we left for the Mar Thoma mission fields in the rural villages of Andhra Pradesh near the town



X-mas day (December 25, 2002) program at Andhra Pradesh village were unforgettable experience.

of Cuddapah. The group spent four days at Chagalamarry Mission Center under the charge of Rev. R. P. Abraham. During the stay at Chaglamarry, visited over 15 villages and spent time with the staff of evangelists and new believers in the villages. The group spent Christmas Eve and Christmas day visiting, caroling, worshiping, and sharing with the parishioners of various villages. Each of us had the opportunity to give a message to the villagers during this time. And we made the necessary arrangements for their Christmas meal.

The group had the chance to visit the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan in Vellore. After the short visit in Vellore, we continued our



Group with Metropolitan at Vellore.

journey to Kerala and arrived in Thrisur on December 28, 2002. During the one-day stay, the group worshipped with the senior citizens and staff and then left for the Mar Thoma School for the Deaf and Dumb in Kasargod. On December 29, 2002, we attended Holy Communion service with Rev. Eapen Cherian and Mrs. Mariamma Thomas shared from the Word of God. Also, we provided for their New Year's dinner.



Deaf and Dumb School Children with Eapen Cherian Achen and Group at Kasargod.

On December 30th, 2002, the group left for Karnataka and visited the mission fields in the towns of Kumta and Sirsi. Rev. P. E. Mathew and Rev. Chinnadore familiarized us with the mission center and its needs and activities. At Sirsi, we visited an all-girls' school and made donations to build a much-needed bore well for the students.

We then returned to Kasargod and attended a watch night service where the group members shared personal testimonies with church members and partook in the Holy Communion on December 31, 2002.

On January 1, 2003, we left Kasargod and stopped, on the way, to visit the Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos in Kozhikode and had New Year's lunch with Thirumeni.



Group with The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa in Kozhikode for New Year Lunch with Achens and Families.

Then we reached Thiruvalla, where we were welcomed by Rev. K. U. Abraham, General Secretary of the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam and toured several Mar Thoma centers in the environs. On January 4th, 2003, the group had the privilege of meeting four of our Thirumeni's at the Maramon Retreat Center.

During our trip we had the chance to meet and observe so many different individuals ranging in age, cultural backgrounds, languages and financial backgrounds. One thing that comes to our mind is that the villagers are very happy, in spite of, not having the luxuries like what we have

in the U. S. A. We have decided to initiate the building of two churches in Andhra Pradesh in the near future.

With regard to her experiences Dr. Elsie Mathew writes: "How awesome and wonderful is our Lord! I was



Group at Malabar Church Construction Site with Achens after Church Service. The construction of this First Church on this part of Kerala is fully financed by the Group Leader (Mrs. Mariamma Thomas).

privileged to see Jesus face to face and I had a divine experience." Our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob met Jesus face to face. When I saw our Lord, face-to-face, it evoked in me mixed feelings of love, joy, and peace. I recognized his love for me and His love for mankind. My faith was strengthened after that divine experience. That feeling of emptiness is gone. Thank you Lord for the peace that I received through your divine love. Touch of God makes us full, divine, and peaceful. It helps us to grow to the fullness of Christ.

The following are excerpts of the 'unique' experiences of our youth participants:

An unforgettable experience: By Mariam — I went on the trip wondering how the mission trip would change my life. And behold, I had the opportunity to change. God had given me the chance to observe, learn, and react to what He showed me on this blessed trip. An event that changed my perspective of how God heals, occurred on December 25th 2002. On that Christmas evening, we (Molly aunty, Elsie aunty, Maureen, and I) went to a village to worship with the villagers. The villagers worshipped



Group at the Madras Araman after Church Service.

From Left to Right: (Front Row): Mariam Hency Varghese, Mariamma (Molly) Thomas, Dr. Elsy Mathew, Ms. Maureen Mathew. (Back Row): Siby Mathew, Susheel Philip.

outside since they did not have a church. They sat on the dirt floor and many children were present at the worship. Many of the children were filthy and dirty. As we sat on the bed that was provided (instead of chairs), we shared in singing and praising God as well as the message that evening. At the end of the worship, Achen said the benediction. At that moment, a woman from the congregation stood up and behind her was a man clothed in white guiding her to the front of service. The man had his hands around her shoulders and brought her in front of Molly aunty. I heard a man's voice speaking in Malayalam 'She is demon possessed, pray for her.' After that moment, Molly aunty stood and began to pray for the woman. I had my eyes closed during that time and I could hear the woman wailing and crying. When aunty finished praying, I opened my eyes and I saw the woman on the floor. She slowly stood up and went to the back to where was before. Then, another woman came up to Molly aunty and she prayed for her as well. After this woman was prayed for, the entire village had surrounded us to be prayed for and blessed. As we discussed our experience with one another we learned that Maureen and I heard the man speaking the words in Malayalam while Molly aunty and Elsie aunty heard the man speaking in English. As we conversed some more, we soon understood that the mysterious man who had guided the first woman to the front of the congregation was not just any man. He truly was not earthly, but a heavenly being, guiding the woman to be healed. As Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever." And I learned that we are blessed because "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18).

Since I have come back home, I have been given many opportunities to witness to people about the trip and how it impacted me. I have never spoken to so many people in my life! Especially, starting a conversation about God. So this God who took me on the mission trip in December is still taking me on missions today.

According to Maureen's life changing experience: "As we visited the various mission fields, it was an eye-opening experience because the people had very little, but they were



Group with Thirumenies at Maramon Retreat Center.

still extremely happy. All throughout the trip, the six of us spent time together and individually in prayer, bible study, and fellowship. I had an inspiring group of mentors who really opened up and shared many personal experiences with me. I was able to help strengthen my faith and grow with the help of them by my side. During this trip, I witnessed some miraculous events. Not only was I able to see the presence of God on Christmas Day (as mentioned previously), but I also surrendered my life to God and began a new walk with Him.

This trip was not only insightful to how our church has been working in its mission but it was also a spiritually fulfilling trip with Bible studies and prayers.

This trip was definitely a life-changing experience for me and it really helped me to put my priorities in perspective. I will never forget the things I have seen and the lessons I have learned and will always cherish this trip and the meaning of it to me. It has given me more motivation to go and preach people around me about what an awesome God we serve. I thank God for this experience and praise Him for the blessings He has showered upon me.

Siby's unique experience: I want to thank God Almighty for giving me the opportunity to go on this mission trip. This trip truly was a life-changing experience for me. I was able to see and experience things that I have never seen or experienced before.

However, three days after I went to India, I found that my mind was unfocused from our mission and instead I started to focus on personal issues. When I realized that my attention was divided, I started to pray and ask God to help me refocus my full attention on the purposes of the trip. As we visited the rural villages of Andhra Pradesh, the battle for my attention continued. Then on December 25th, Christmas Day, our group of six gathered together and earnestly prayed in the morning. While we were praying, I sang the song "Kunjattin Thirurakthathal" in Malayalam. Then after we prayed we went on to visit more villages on Christmas. While we were visiting the villages, I knew that my mind was still not focused and it was beginning to wear on my mind. So after the day's programs, I decided not to



Group with Kadamana Old Age Home residents and Eapen Cherian Achen.

go anywhere in the evening so I stayed at the Mission Center and prayed while the rest of the group went to Christmas service. When the rest of the group came back, we prayed again as a group. This group prayer was VERY powerful. As soon as we finished praying I opened my eyes and looked down at my t-shirt and I saw a bloodstain on my shirt by the bottom right side of my chest. For a second, I wondered where it could have come from and initially thought that it was a food stain. Then when I looked more closely at it, it became apparent that it was a bloodstain. To clear any doubts I had, I showed the stain to the other group members and they too saw the bloodstain. Then, I checked my body to see if there were any cuts or bruises on my body, but I did not see any such cuts or bruises on my body.

This frightened me for a minute. Where could this bloodstain have come from?

At that moment, I realized that God had touched me with His own blood. With a visual sign, He reminded me that He had washed away all my sins with His blood. God was telling me to remove any and all doubts from my mind and to cast all my burdens on Him. This was truly a wake-up call for me. After this incredible experience I went to sleep and got up freshly the next morning. The issues that had been bothering me the previous days faded away that next day. I started to fully focus on the purposes of our mission trip from that day onwards. This is my testimony for my unique mission trip to India.

The learning experiences of Susheel were: "Most touching to me during my journey, were the new believers in the villages in the Mar Thoma mission fields of Andhra Pradesh. With barely enough food, clothing, and shelter to get by, the new believers spent a considerable amount of their time in the church (whether it was an actual building or outside in a field). In contrast to our concerns, questions, and doubts about our faith, their faith seemed simple, innocent, and pure. Though they may be poor by the world's standards, they are rich by the standard of God, for Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). They gave up their lofty burdens to God and worshipped Him whole-heartedly.

I personally experienced quite a few instances where God touched my soul and erased my lingering doubts. While on the train from Chennai to Andhra Pradesh on the night of December 23, 2002 the Holy Spirit's presence was with me and I dedicated my life to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He freed me from the worldly chains that had been binding me. After that night, I found my trip more fulfilling and I found myself more at ease. Throughout the rest of the trip my eyes and heart were primed and ready for the other life-altering experiences that our group would face.

The Lord has truly shown and taught me many things on this trip. With this being said, I now find myself back in my comfort zone and I realize that I need to continue to rely on His strength rather than my own to live a life pleasing to Him.

Indeed this trip was quite a learning experience for all, me included."

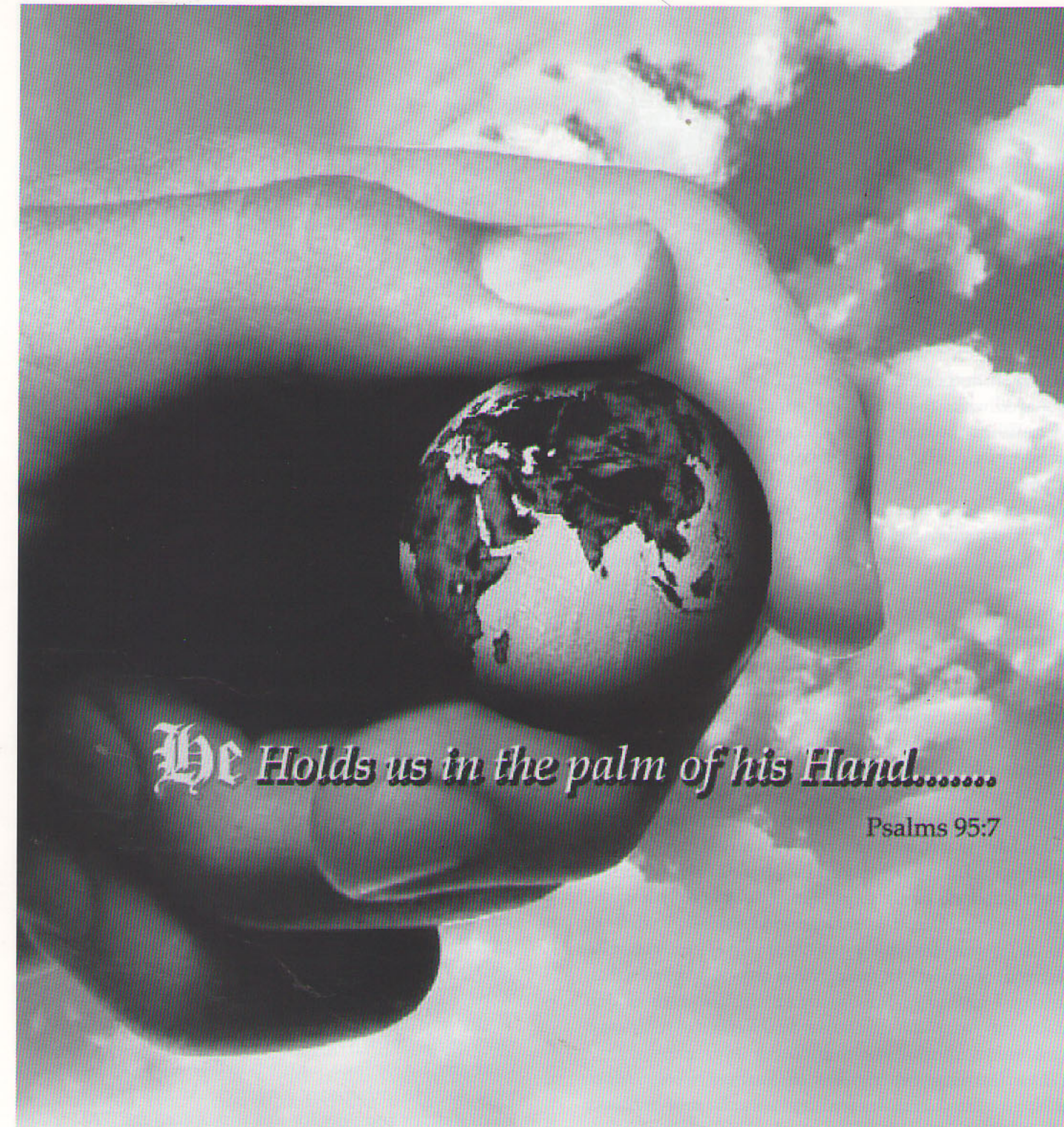


Worship services at Malabar Church made by Sarees and Sheets.

We experienced God's miraculous work and presence everywhere we went. In spite of problems and sickness, God's presence was with us always. As the Psalmist's says in chapter 23, verse 4 — "Even though I walk through the valley of death, I fear no evil for you are with me." Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ fasted and prayed before He went for His missionary activities. As His followers, we (also) did fast and pray for this trip, since June 2002. A lot of people joined us in this effort.

Special thanks, to all the Thirumenies, Achens, Evangelists, Staff and parishioners, who made all the necessary arrangements for our blessed trip.

I take this opportunity to thank the Diocesan Assembly and Council, especially our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Secretary Rev. Dr. John Joseph for all the arrangements and guidance. Also, we express our heartfelt thanks to all, who supported the trip financially and spiritually. ■



He Holds us in the palm of his Hand.....

Psalms 95:7

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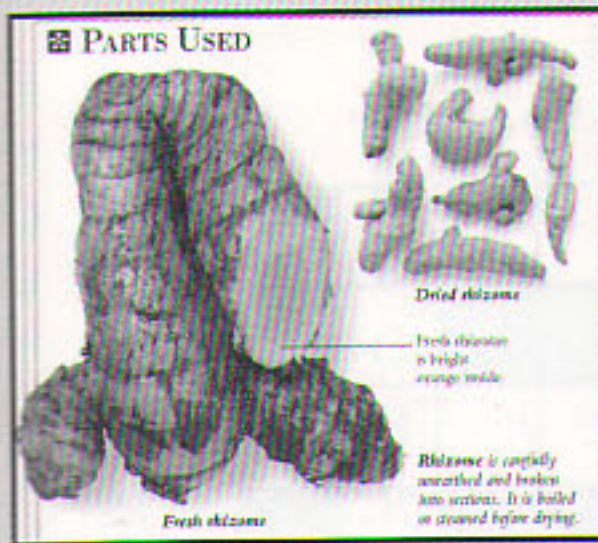
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Houston, Austin, Bombay

(Best) + (Best) + (Great) = (Skypass)
Fares Service Values

SKYPASS
TRAVELING
"your Passage is our Priority"

MEDICINAL VALUES OF SPICES

Turmeric and Clove



Turmeric (Manjal) Botanical name: *Curcuma longa*

Turmeric has been in use for many centuries. It is native to India and Southern Asia. Turmeric is used in Asian and oriental countries in a variety of medicinal preparations as well as in food preparation. It is a traditional remedy for Jaundice, gastritis & acidity and inflammations. Until recently, turmeric was not widely used by many other countries. Researchers have proved the following aspects to be true about turmeric.

Turmeric is a powerful Anti-inflammatory substance. It has a stronger action than low dose Hydrocortisone. Turmeric acts as an antibacterial agent when applied to skin. Clinical studies in the 80's have proven that Turmeric lowers cholesterol. It also has some effect in preventing cancer. Due to its anticoagulant activity, turmeric helps better circulation. Applied to skin, Turmeric is useful in treating a number of conditions, including psoriasis and fungal infections such as athlete's foot. Turmeric is used in preparation of anti-arthritic medications. It protects the liver against toxic substances, especially such heavy metals such as lead to prevent the formation of gall stones or to decrease the size of stones already formed, as well as to increase the flow of bile.



Clove (Grampoo) Botanical name: *Syzygium aromaticum*

Originally from Indonesia and the southern Philippines, cloves are now grown extensively in many other parts of the world. The volatile oil from cloves has been in use for many centuries. It is strongly anesthetic and anti-septic, and therefore used in pain relief for toothache and as an antiseptic for many conditions. In Southeast Asia, cloves were used in the ancient times to treat malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, and parasitic infections. Digestive discomforts such as gas, colic and abdominal blotting can be relieved by cloves. Cloves are a stimulant to the mind and to the body as a whole, and have been used as an aphrodisiac both in India and in the West. Cloves are also used in treatment of acne, skin ulcers, and sties.

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

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (January 2003)

1. Accamma Jacob, FL
2. Alex Vaidyan, NY
3. Anika Chacko, Detroitl
4. Annamma John, Fl
5. Christopher Chacko, Detroit
6. Elsa Varghese, MI
7. John Mathew, Detroit
8. Justin Vaidyan, NY
9. Mariamma Zachariah, NY
10. Omana Rajee, NY
11. Philip Mathew, Canada
12. Rajeev V. Thomas, Staten Island
13. Tindu Mathew, Detroit

ANSWERS

ACROSS

1. HARSHIPS
2. PUNISHMENT
3. RIVALS
4. HONEY
5. HORNS
6. ACCUSE
7. HARVEST
8. SUSTAIN
9. MUZZLE
10. SINNED
11. BULLCALF
12. DISAPPEAR

DOWN

13. CURSE
14. FLOURISHED
15. DEPRIVE
16. MOAB
17. THOUSANDS
18. PROPHET
19. CHOSEN
20. FALLING

Bible Word Search Winners (January 2003)

1. Accamma Jacob, FL
2. Ajin John, MI
3. Anika Chacko, Detroitl
4. Annamma John, Fl
5. Christopher Chacko, Detroit
6. Elsa Varghese, MI
7. Mariamma Zachariah, NY

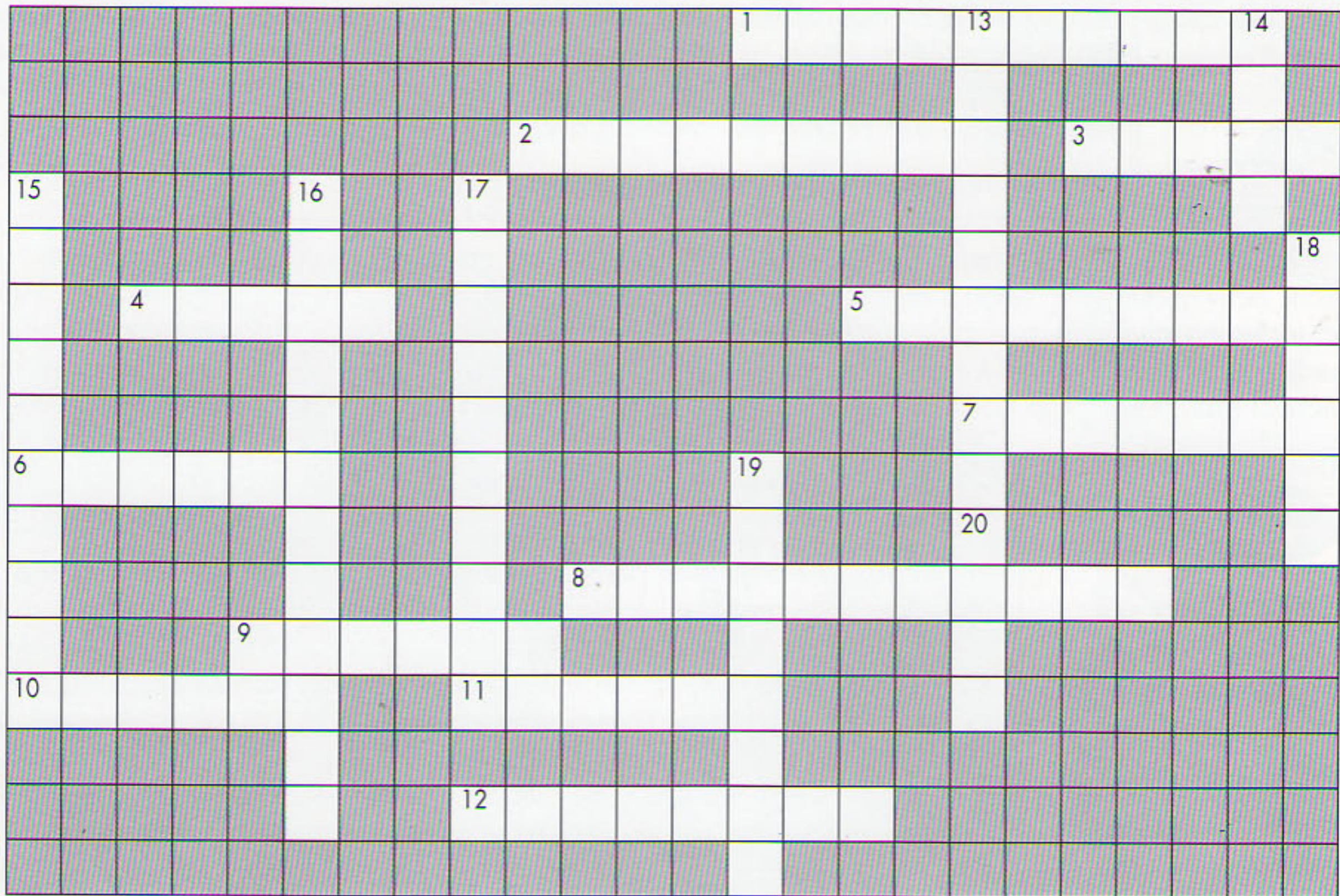
ANSWERS

1. EDOM
2. EMIM
3. SEVENTY
4. GERIZIM, EBAL
5. TITHE
6. LEVITES
7. SEVENTH
8. MOSES
9. DIVINATION
10. MAGIC
11. SPIRITS
12. PROPERTY
13. LEVITICAL PRIESTS
14. WEIGHTS AND MEASURES
15. STONES, EBAL
16. DISEASES AND EPIDEMICS
17. LIFE
18. HUNDRED AND TWENTY

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN THE TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on Joshua Chapters 1-24)

Mrs. Suma Varghese (New York)



Across

1. A _____ named Rahab gave shelter to the two spies in the city of Jericho.
2. Joshua saw a _____ of the Lord's Army near Jericho.
3. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and East Manasseh built a large impressive _____ by the river at Geliloth.
4. The Lord commanded Joshua and his soldiers to _____ around the city seven times while the priests blew their trumpets.
5. Rahab lived in a house built into the _____ so she let the men down from a window by a rope.
6. The priests carrying the covenant box stood in the _____ of the Jordan till all the people crossed over.
7. The spies asked Rahab to tie a _____ to the window she let them down.
8. The Lord told Joshua, "Do not be afraid or _____, for I, the Lord your God, am with you, wherever you go."
9. In the presence of the Israelites, Joshua said, "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; Moon, stop over Aijalon _____."
10. _____ was one of the five places where Amorite kings ruled. The kings surrounded Gibeon and attacked it.

11. The sun stood _____ until the nation had conquered its enemies.
12. The _____ were sounding when the priests and soldiers marched around the city.

Down

13. Joshua selected three men from each tribe to map out the _____ that they would like to have as their possession.
14. Joshua built an altar on Mount _____ and read aloud the whole law there.
15. The Lord told Joshua to _____ the people at Gilgal.
16. A person who kills someone _____ can go to the cities of Refuge.
17. When the Amorites were running down the pass from the Israelites' army, the Lord made large _____ fall down on them.
18. Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the _____.
19. Joshua told the soldiers to cross over ahead of their fellow Israelites in order to help them until they had _____ the land west of the Jordan.
20. So the Lord was with Joshua and his _____ spread through the whole country.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN THE TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on Joshua Chapters 1-24)

Mrs. Suma Varghese (New York)

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

- The Israelites and Joshua camped at _____ before crossing the Jordan, and at _____ after crossing it.
- The _____ went ahead of the priests who were blowing trumpets when they went round Jericho.
- Joshua cautioned his men against taking anything that is to be _____.
- The walls of Jericho collapsed when the priests blew their trumpets and the men gave a loud _____.
- The family and slaves of Rahab were taken to safety near the Israelite _____.
7. 8. Achan belonged to the family of _____, the clan of _____, and the tribe of _____.
- King Jabin of Hazor and his allies set up camp at _____ to fight against the Israel.
- Joshua went and destroyed the race of giants called the _____ who lived in the hill country.

- The people of _____, the Hivites, deceived Joshua.
- Achan saw a beautiful _____ and hid it in his tent.
- Joshua _____ the war horses of King Jabin and his allies.
- Achan was stoned to death at _____.
- The people of Judah were not able to drive out the _____ who lived in Jerusalem.
- Joshua was given _____ city he had asked for.
- The priests, who were the descendants of Aaron, were given _____ cities in all.
- The people of Israel brought the body of Joseph and buried it at _____.
- Joshua bid the people to get rid of the _____ that they had and pledged their loyalty to the Lord, the God of Israel.
- Joshua declared, "As for my family and me, we will serve the _____."

ATTENTION ALL CONTESTANTS!!!

Please mail your answers to:

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

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS June 15, 2003

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, NY CELEBRATES 22ND PARISH DAY YONKERS HONORS CHURCH WITH RENAMING OF STREET TO "THOMAS MAR THOMA WAY"



From Left to Right: Councilwoman Symra Brandon, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Councilwoman Sandy Annabi, and Council President Vincenza Restiano.

On January 26, 2003, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York commemorated its 22nd anniversary as a Parish. Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa celebrated Holy Communion service and twelve (12) first communicants participated in their dedication

Malayalam Choir. The celebrations were a wonderful experience to thank our Lord for His grace and mercy in the life of the Parish and rejoice in Him.

Anil Abraham, Secretary

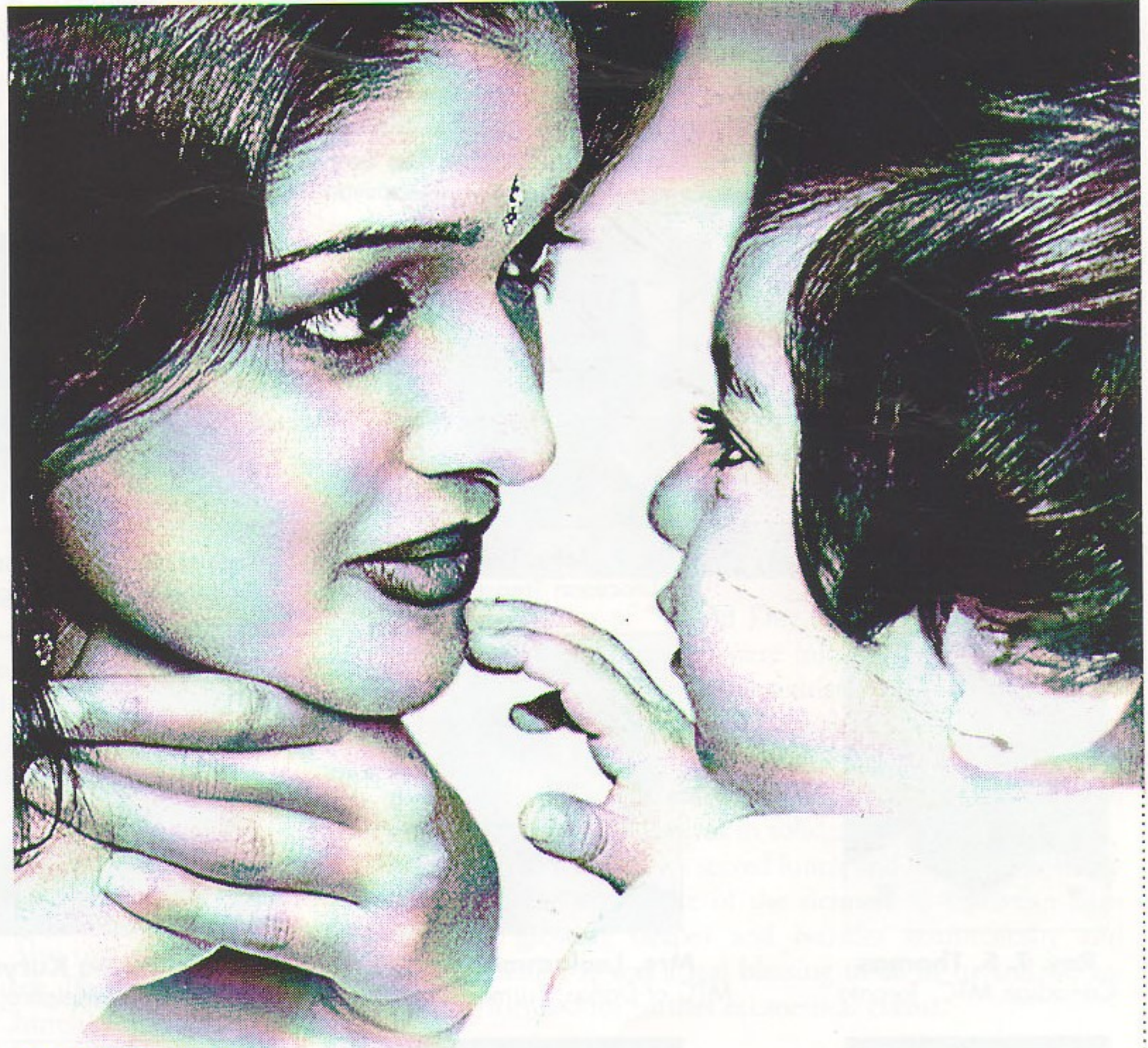
*When faced with a mountain,
I WILL NOT QUIT*

*I will keep on striving until I climb over,
find a pass through, tunnel underneath, or
simply stay and turn the mountain into a gold mine, with God's help.*

Affirm:

**Whatever the Mind Can Believe
The Human Being Can Achieve**

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communication
do not depend
on technology...*



*...for
everything else
there's
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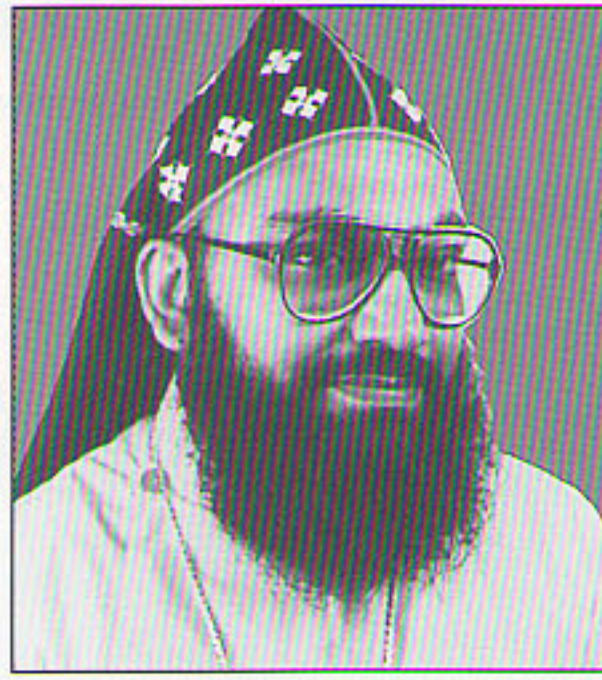


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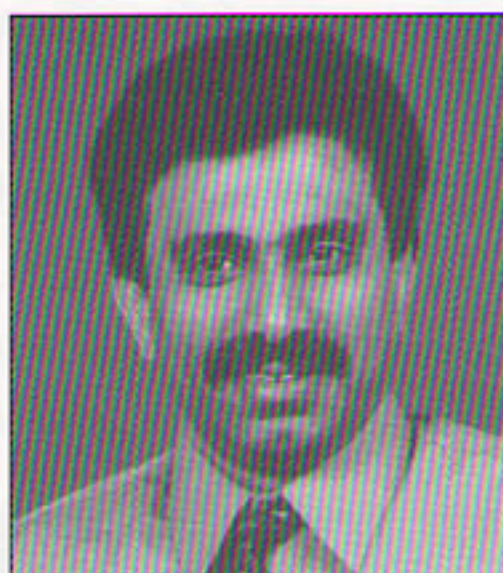
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St. Andrews MTC, New York



Mr. Philip P. Thampan
St. Peter's MTC, NJ



Mr. Thomas Varghese
Atlanta MTC, GA



Dr. Zac Varghese
St. John's MTC, London, UK

World Day of Prayer (WDP) is an international event that unites Christian women and men in 179 countries in prayer. Throughout the day from the first sunrise to the last sunset, prayers follow the sun's path around the globe. Spoken in hundreds of languages and dialects, WDP strives to bring "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action" to communities.

The 2003 WDP service was written by the Christian women in Lebanon. Lebanon is an ancient land that has always been at the center of world events. In the Bible, Lebanon is mentioned more than seventy times. Architects and builders from Tyre built king Solomon's palace and the Temple in Jerusalem for which cedar wood from Lebanon was used. At another town called Quana, (Cana), Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding.

Today, Lebanon is slowly recovering from the impacts of the civil war which ended recently. Yet, with the conflicts surrounding them, peace is fragile as they strive to revive their country. Through preparation and participation in the worship service, we can come to know how our sisters of other countries, languages and cultures understand the biblical passages in their context. We can hear their concerns and needs. In this way it is possible to experience the richness of the Christian faith as it grows deeper and broader in an international, ecumenical expression.

The 2003 theme was "Holy Spirit, Fill us". In the USA, World Day of Prayer is sponsored by Church Women United, an ecumenical, national movement. Mar Thoma Church is a member of this movement.

Our Diocesan-Sevika Sanghoms celebrated World Day of Prayer all over the country. Members from 26 parishes participated. Special thanks to Coorilos Thirumeni for his encouragement as well as all the Sevika Sanghom leaders and Achans for their tireless efforts. Also our appreciation to Prof. Laila Alex (Bethel, M.T. Church, Philadelphia) and Mary Abraham (Philadelphia M.T. Church) for translating the worship service and bible study from the English version to Malayalam.

Following are reports from various Sevika Sanghoms on their World Day of Prayer celebration events.

**Nirmala Abraham, Philadelphia Mar Thoma church
Member, Ecumenical Celebrations committee,
Church Women United**

NEWYORK

The Mar Thoma Eastern Zonal Sevika Sanghom Inauguration meeting and World Day of Prayer was held on March 8th at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church in New York. Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham presided over the event. The main speaker was Rev. Dr. C. P. Mathew and the Bible study was conducted by Mrs. Nirmala Abraham. The offertory collected that day was sent to Church Women United Organization in New York. About 175 people from 14 parishes participated at this event. It was truly a day of blessings.

Ponnamma George, Zonal Sevika Sangham Secretary

STATEN ISLAND

We had an ecumenical gathering of 65 members from different parishes in Staten Island on Friday, March 7th, 2003. Rev. Samuel M Samuel was the main speaker, who gave an inspirational message based on the Theme "Holy Spirit, Fill us" which touched the hearts of many people who gathered on this day. Mrs. Kunjamma Simon led us in Bible Study and, many members of the Staten Island Marthoma Church participated in leading worship service and different activities.



Introduction of "World Day of Prayer" and the paper presentation of "Lebanon" were informative and helpful to understand the history and activities of the World Day of Prayer, and made aware of the struggles of our sisters of other nationalities, languages, cultures and the Biblical passages in their context. We were able to hear the concerns and needs of our sisters and felt ourselves in solidarity with them.

After the meeting we served lunch and had the fellowship in sharing the experience of the richness in Christian faith which is growing deeper and broader ecumenically and internationally. It was a real blessing to all of us and we are looking forward for further ecumenical events.

Checha John, Convener

DALLAS

A prayer meeting was held on Saturday the 8th of march at the C S I church at Dallas. Women from 15 Keralite churches in Dallas Fort Worth area (Marthoma, Orthodox, C S I, Jacobite, Catholic & Knanaya) attended the meeting. Rt. Rev.



Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcoopa was present. Most of the Achens were also present. A Lebanese woman Mrs. Hayfa

Hawa gave a brief talk on the history and culture of Lebanon. Mrs. Lilly George, wife of Bishop George Issac, C S I North Kerala Diocese gave the message. Church Women United Dallas area president Mrs. Catherine Moore also gave a brief message. Mar Coorilose in his message reminded of the atrocities of war suffered by the women in Lebanon and recently in Afganistan and urged that we should pray earnestly that this should not be happening to the women in Iraq. Mrs. Betcey Abraham did a good job in organizing this meeting. Rev. Dr. C. A. Abraham, Fr. V. M. Thomas, Mrs. Molly Zacharia, Mrs Elizabeth John, Mrs. Leelamma Chacko, and Rev. Alex Oommen gave their felicitations during the meeting. Mrs. Sweetie Alex of the C S I church was elected as the convenor to organize the next year's program.

LOS ANGELES

The World Day of Prayer was celebrated at Los Angeles Mar Thoma Parish as part of an ecumenical movement. Local parishes participated in the worship service mainly the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles, St. Mary's Malankara Orthodox Church, San Fernando Valley and St. Thomas Orthodox Church of Los Angeles. Rev. Sunni E. Mathew, vicar of MTC of Los Angeles parish, gave the Bible study. Rev. Father Philip Abraham led the intercessory prayer. The highlights were singing, prayer, and worshipping the Lord through the special worship order. We had a blessed time bringing an atmosphere of serenity and peace among the worshippers giving us an opportunity to renew our covenant relationship with God. We made it a time for total surrender to the will of God so that He can take us and use us for the glory of His kingdom. The worship ended with prayer and benediction.

Dr. Elsy Mathew
Sevika Sanghom Secretary Los Angeles Parish

CHICAGO

Chicago Marthoma Sevika Sangam conducted the World Day of Prayer on Friday March 7th, 2003 from 10 AM to 11.30 AM at the church with the presence of our vicar Rev. S. George and Assist. vicar Rev. Roy Thomas.

The prayer was started with the special order of worship provided by the Diocese. The prayer continued with songs and intercessory prayer. Rev. S. George conducted the Bible study and emphasized the value of women in the society. Around 30 people attended the meeting.

Sally Varghese, Secretary

HOUSTON

The Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom Southwest center B celebrated the World Day of Prayer at Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston, on March 8, 2003. Women from Trinity and Immanuel Mar Thoma parishes, and from other sister churches in Houston attended this meeting. Rev. T. V. George and Rev. George Jose blessed the occasion with their presence and guidance. Women took

active participation in the worship, bible reading and intercessory prayer. Our Youth Chaplain's Kochamma, Mrs. Reena John George gave an inspirational message related to this year's theme, "Holy Spirit, Fill Us". It was a great opportunity to pray and intercede for the women of Lebanon and the world around. The special prayer written by Lebanese women reflected the sufferings of the war torn country and moved the hearts of the participants. Lebanese snacks were served.

Valsa Mathai

SAN FRANCISCO

On Sunday, March 16th, the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco, Bay Area celebrated the World Day of Prayer, 2003. It was hosted by the Savika Sanghom after our Sunday morning service. Around thirty members or so were in attendance. The event began as information was presented about the present persecution and suffering of women in Lebanon. A service, led by members of Savika Sanghom and Rev. George K. John, was held. Rev. John spoke about the crisis and led a study of scripture. Sevika Sanghom raised \$151 by collecting an offering. We closed the meeting with worship and prayer. The Sevika Sanghom of the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco, Bay Area would like to extend our most heartfelt sympathies to the women of Lebanon and we pray for a better future for them and theirs.

Valsa George
Secretary of SFMTC Sevika sanghom

PHILADELPHIA

The Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom of The Ascension MarThoma Church, Bethel MarThoma Church and The Philadelphia MarThoma Church planned and coordinated the World Day of Prayer in the Philadelphia area. The special service was conducted on March 7th at the Ascension Mar Thoma Church. About 100 members from all 3 churches attended the service. The order of the service was translated into Malayalam by Mrs. Laila Alex (Bethel Mar Thoma Church) and the copies were made available to all. The service started with the song "Yeshuve Dhyani kumpol". Rev. Alexander Thomas welcomed all who gathered and gave an over view of the political background of Lebanon in his introductory remarks. Mrs. Nirmala Abraham gave an in-depth slide presentation about the historic background of Lebanon. Songs for the service were selected representing the work of "Holy Sprit". Rev. Sunny George in his bible study explained "Holy Sprit" in a language every one could understand. \$150.00 was collected during the offertory. In his closing prayer, Rev. John Mathai remembered the current events, the tension among nations and the need for us to pray for a peaceful world. The meeting was well organized and gave a chance for all to reflect over what the Lebanese women had experienced in their life. This was a moment for us to be thankful for everything in our life and not to take our blessings for granted. Let us remember this organization and its mission in our prayers.

Mary Abraham, Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH, TEXAS

A BRIEF REPORT ON OUR MISSION TO THE NATIVE AMERICANS

For a year now, we have been involved with the American Indian Center in Eules, Texas, which is a center for treatment and rehabilitation for American Indians of all tribes from all parts of the United States. It currently serves about 250 residents. It is one of two such residential centers in the United States, owned and operated by the Natives themselves.



Coorilos Thirumeni visited the American Indian Center in Eules, Texas

We provide the following services: (1) Concomitant to the genocide, dissolution, and denigration of the American Nation in North America, the remnant had developed addictive disorders and roughly 50-60 percent of the populations in the reservation are addicted to alcohol and other substances. This disease is decimating the population, just as communicable diseases did in the 18th century. We now provide an average of 5 hours a week of psychotherapy and other consultations, with excellent recovery and rehabilitative rates. (2) Contrary to the popular belief of Marthomites who choose to ignore these original inhabitants of this country, the Native Americans do not receive large government handouts. Those who live in the reservations, which are worse than the most pathetic "ghettos", receive some benefits that may average less than a per capita of 1500 dollars per year. Consequently, those who complete treatment and move on to rehabilitation need material assistance. We give clothes and used utensils. (3) We provide a limited amount of money. We also provide books and current periodicals, which they accept with great joy. (4) The greatest need is the spiritual need. The traditional beliefs or worship do not reach the young people who are alienated and scattered from the tribal centers. The gambling houses owned by the small tribes in the East and West, mostly run by and profiting their white contractors and managers, as well as the corrupt Native American political leaders, do not trickle down to the majority. Their greatest need right now is to recreate an ethos that would unify their heritage, pride, and dignity to help the rising generation to enter the American mainstream and become

productive citizens. The message of Jesus Christ provides the greatest input.

PARISH MISSION

Parish mission members met regularly on Wednesday evenings for Bible study and intercessory prayer. House visits were conducted on the first Wednesday of every month. Our Vicar led Bible studies concentrating on the topics of the Christian Family and the Holy Spirit. The highlights of Parish Mission activities in 2002 are as follows:

The Parish Mission and Sevika Sangham jointly conducted a seminar on the "Practical Aspects of Parenting in a Modern Life" on March 23rd. Rev. Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla, director of Thomas Mar Anthanasius Memorial Counseling Center, was the leader.

Parish Mission members visited the Native American Center in Eules on April 24th. New and used household items were donated to the center.

Devotional meetings were held on September 4th, September 11th, and October 2nd. The speakers were Mr.



Missionaries of Charity arranging food items to give to the needin in Dallas area.

Samuel Ganeshen, Mr. Babu Pullad, and Mr. George Cherian, respectively.

Spiritual renewal meetings were held on June 21st and October 11th. Our Vicar and Mr. P.V. John spoke the Word of God.

The first meeting of the Voluntary Evangelistic Association Western Zonal General Body was held at our church on October 26th.

A twenty-four hour chain of prayer was conducted during Thanksgiving and at the end of the year.

Thanksgiving day prayers were held on November 28th, attended by approximately 250 members, with a turkey lunch following.

During Thanksgiving, 700 pounds of turkey was donated to the Metrocrest Social Service Center and distributed to the needy families within the community.

Parish Mission also supported the Missionaries of Charity (Dallas), Meals on Wheels Program, and the American Indian Center in Eules by contributing a total of \$700. Also, a total of \$8,550 was contributed to missions and relief work in India.

Saramma George Poikail, Parish Mission

കേരളത്തിന്റെ സ്പന്ദനം അറിയാൻ... ഭാരതത്തിന്റെ സ്പന്ദനം അറിയാൻ കൂടുതൽ അമേരിക്കയിലേയ്ക്കും.....

മലയാളവാർത്ത, അമേരിക്കൻ മലയാളികളുടെ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട ഭാഷാപത്രം പുതിയ അറിവുകളുടെ ആശയങ്ങളുടെ അക്ഷരനിരകളിലേക്ക് ആർപ്പകളുടെ നിറപ്പർത്തലിൽ ഒരു ജൈത്രയാത്ര. ലേഖനങ്ങൾ, അഭിമുഖങ്ങൾ, കഥകൾ നോവലുകൾ, കവിതകൾ മെട്രോമൊണിയൽ, തുടങ്ങി വിവിധങ്ങളായ വിഭവങ്ങൾ അടങ്ങിയ വിവിധ പാക്കറ്റുകൾ

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SOUTHWEST REGIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE – 2002



The Southwest Regional Youth Conference, hosted by the Youth Fellowship of the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston was held on October 25–27, 2002 at the Trinity Pines Retreat Center in Huntsville, TX. A total of 135 delegates from Houston, Dallas, Lubbock, Oklahoma, and Denver accepted the challenge to discover their individual God-given gifts and talents to better fulfill their necessary roles as soldiers in the Lord's Army. The theme of the conference was "Be All You Can Be in the Lord's Army" and delved into depth the apostle Paul's message in Romans 12:5-6: "...each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others. God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well."

Mr. Mohan Zachariah of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church was the main speaker of the conference. Mohan delivered a series of powerful and thought-provoking messages that inspired and stirred all those in attendance. His first talk, titled "The Kingdom of God," distinguished the practices of this world with the ways of God's Kingdom. Participants were encouraged to become rebels, to not conform to the ways of this world, but rather live as children of a greater Kingdom. In his second talk, "What is Your What?" Mohan used the example of Moses and his staff to inspire the participants to contemplate what their "what" was, i.e. what gifts they were blessed with that God could use for the glory of His Kingdom. In his final talk Mohan challenged all the participants, armed with their own unique gifts and talents, to fight as soldiers in the Lord's army.

Offered concurrent with the main talks were five track sessions aimed to give the delegates better understanding of areas where spiritual gifts could be utilized. Depending on what sparked their interests, participants chose to attend

any three of the following tracks: Pasturing, Counseling, Teaching, Evangelism, and Administration/Leadership. Rev. George Jose, Vicar of the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, led the Pasturing track and gave insight as to what it meant to be a pastor. Rev. Saji Joseph, Youth Chaplain for the Southwest Region Center A, led the evangelism track and highlighted opportunities sponsored by the Mar Thoma Church for reaching out to others. Rev. John George was the speaker for the Administration/Leadership track. Achen explained what were the aspects of being a leader in the church. Reena Kochamma provided participants who attended her track with a better knowledge of what it takes to be a teacher of the Word. Mr. Anish Varghese, a marriage and family counselor, led the Counseling track by giving real life views on how to be a good listener and counselor. The tracks well served their purpose giving all participants a greater awareness of a few of the ways they could serve in God's Kingdom.

In between the main talks and group sessions there was constant congenial fellowship between the Youths of the Southwest Region. The conference concluded with an unplanned yet stirring dedication service on Saturday night and Holy Communion on Sunday morning.

The conference committee would like to express our sincere thanks to Rev. George Jose, Rev. Saji Joseph, Rev. John George, Reena Kochamma, Mr. Mohan Zachariah, and Mr. Anish Varghese for their invaluable leadership and guidance throughout the conference. On behalf of the conference committee I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the youths and parents of the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church for their constant support and zeal in making this conference a successful and memorable one.

**For and on behalf of the conference committee
Mathew Jacob (Bibin), Convener**

As I write this, I see the live telecast of the war on the TV. It is hard to imagine living in a fear-ridden situation where your life is at the mercy of time and luck. Knowing that you could be hit any time and that there is no escape, makes you tremble inside. Religion is supposed to help individuals achieve peace and tranquillity. But in this modern world it is used as a weapon to create animosity between nations and races. Your religious belief can make you an enemy to your neighbor or your neighboring country. The world population has gone through many times of war and peace in the past centuries, but as time progresses, nations are using more lethal and catastrophic weapons that will put large numbers of individuals in agony by just one attack. Biological weapons and chemical weapons of mass destruction are common terms of the modern war. Where are we going with this? Have we lost the basis for peaceful co-existence? Is it our intention to achieve temporary victory only to subject ourselves to worse attacks in the future? Many unanswered questions remain.

All this turmoil around us can put our mind at unease. Our faith will be tested. However, remember there were a lot of wars fought in Old Testament times between tribes, cities, and nations. The only difference was, God was in command in those wars. Now we must turn back to God for answers. The God of all nations, I am sure, is watching all this turmoil. Not long ago, we celebrated the World Day of Prayer across the globe. It was an action of faith that binds humans in strong solidarity. Such movements are necessary to overcome times of disruption. Let us come together and pray for those who are involved in war situations and let us ask God to take over the cities and nations.

Turning to another subject, I am very proud of our Diocese for initiating the mission work in Mexican soil. We are extending our mission beyond the boundaries of the land of India. This being an involved project takes lot of talents, energy, and financial support. I hope that individuals will come out and support this project throughout its extent. This will be a great opportunity for our youngsters to put their faith into action.

Times have changed and we with them. Nations will rise and fall, humans will fight and learn, but the God of all will remain unchanged. God was our help in the past and will be our refuge for generations to come. Keep your faith strong and pray for others. Lead a life that is worthwhile and meaningful and rejoice in the Lord. I hope and pray that the war will end soon with minimal damage.

During this time of fasting, let us all stand together and affirm our faith.

*"By praying long, I calm my body.
When I come out, I smile.
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment."*

Eapen Daniel

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