



MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JANUARY 2004



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LEADERSHIP & MINISTRY**

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Message from the Diocesan Bishop

January 26, 2004



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I am happy to wish you all a blessed and prosperous New Year. We need to thank Him for all His blessings and providence all through the past year and should confess our alienation from the purpose and plan of God. Despite our unfaithfulness He remained faithful and has granted us one more year. Therefore we need to amend our life to fit into His master plan and should resolve to be His witnesses wherever we are placed.

We are asked not to change but to preserve the ethical standard which Christ has set for us. "If gold rusts what would iron do". The world is desperately looking for models and if we compromise our life because of false prestige we can be of no value and God can never use us. So as the salt of the earth let us preserve the values of the Kingdom of God.

Let us praise and thank God for His guidance during the past Sabha Mandalam. The cries and prayers of God's people were granted and we could make healthy and powerful resolutions for the betterment and growth of the church. One of the decisions of the Mandalam was to elect two more Bishops for the church. Since there are substantial growths in various areas of the church we need to have adequate leadership and having two more bishops at this juncture seems to be imminent. Let us pray that we will be directed to the right people in this process who can lead the church with diligence and wisdom.

I commend all the achen and parishioners for their contributions to the growth of the diocese during the past year. The Yuvajana Sakhyam celebrated the Christmas in a special way this year. They adopted a village near Chengannur, Kerala, and celebrated the arrival of Immanuel by their presence with the poor people of that village. I commend the leadership and vision of our young friends in this regard. The progress and the participation in the leadership conference of the Youth Fellowship is a healthy sign and I appreciate all the youths who attended the conference. Your leadership at the local and diocesan level can bring a facelift to the church. I also appreciate your involvement with the mission of the church.

The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Chicago was officially inaugurated on January 4, 2004 and I commend the members of the new parish in accomplishing this dream. I also appreciate the efforts of vicar and members of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church for their leadership and powerful model in actualizing this project. This is now the 48th parish of the Diocese, and I hope that they will be able to worship in their own sanctuary at the earliest.

A good number of the achen are being transferred back to India from this Diocese after their term of service. The Diocese is grateful to all those achen for their contribution and leadership for the past three years. As they go back to take up a new assignment we pray that God will use them henceforth also more effectively in the furtherance of God's Kingdom. On behalf of the Diocese I thank all the achen for services rendered to the people of this Diocese.

Rev. Dr. John Joseph served as my secretary and the Diocesan Secretary for the past three years. I appreciate his service and leadership and this Diocese will always remember it. I will personally remember achen's assistance and service and it will be cherished. His family, Shirley Kochamma and children, Reuben and Roshan made my life more comfortable and I felt at home always. As they leave I wish them all the best and assure them our prayers.

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham will be my secretary and the Diocesan Secretary from May 1, 2004. His experience as a parish priest and seminary professor will be beneficial in giving adequate leadership to the various activities of the Diocese. I urge all of you to keep achen and family in your prayers.

Let us pray that God will continue to open new doors for us to move ahead and thereby lead a more authentic existence in this country.

May god bless you.

Yours in His Service,
Coorilos Methrachen

Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

From December 2 to December 4, we were able to discuss and decide on many topics that were left unfinished in the prematurely terminated Mandalam meeting of September. Everyone experienced God's grace.

The Sabha Secretary took responsibility for the unfortunate turn of events in September and apologized to the Mandalam. The Mandalam unanimously accepted the apology and requested the Secretary to continue in office. Achen graciously withdrew his resignation and continues to execute his duties as Sabha Secretary.

The Sabha Council's resolution to elect two more Episcopas for our Church was unanimously approved by the Mandalam. Guided by the Holy Spirit, everyone worked in unison to reach agreeable decisions on many amendments suggested. I congratulate everyone who gave the necessary leadership, advice, and help for this Mandalam meeting.

We celebrated Christmas in the last week of December. Christmas is an important day for us. However, it shouldn't peter down to a time of certain perfunctory activities. We should emulate the attitude of Christ who renounced heaven to come into the world and live as a lowly mortal. In Christ, we should begin our pilgrimage from a culture of possession to a culture of service. We should bring about a culture that greets the destitutes, the abandoned, and the helpless into mainstream social life. Do we pray for joy, peace, and prosperity just for ourselves or do we work for joy and peace for everyone? Do we experience peace as an insatiable craving for material things or is it experienced in the love that shares what little we have with those that have none? Is not providing shelter, medical care, education to children and such for those that live in abject penury a source of joy that God has given us through Jesus Christ? Do the destitutes, the abandoned, and the helpless in our parishes see the Saviour in us and our activities? Christmas reminds us unequivocally that God is with them; let us humbly lead ourselves into the presence of that Christ. Let us live in this world in the abundance of his grace and strength. Jesus Christ lived in this world amidst us, exuding grace and truth. Let today's world see us actuate that grace and truth.

By the time you read this letter, the year 2003 will have slipped away from us. Take a moment to contemplate if it slipped away or did we live it out? Did we bade farewell to a 2003 filled with more joy and peace than when we received it? If not, let us think why.

Year 2004 is the continuation of year 2003. Many of our outstanding debts will be carried over to 2004; but this is not a repetition of last year. We should see this new year as an excellent opportunity to take up new challenges, responsibilities, and a new vision. I wish to call your attention to the matters listed below:

1. All parishioners should firmly believe that each one of us experience and inherit the salvation of God given to us through his son Jesus Christ.
2. Family prayer should be conducted in every house without relenting.
3. Everyone should take part in the worship and communion at least once in three months unless you are sick, aged, or happen to be away.
4. Contribute a portion of your earnings to the Church for God's work.
5. Prayer meetings should be opportunities for fellowship.
6. Arrangements should be made for study programs. Based on each topic, four-day study conventions should be held in evenings.
7. The larger community that we are part of should see us as an asset to them.
8. Those in need should see us as bulwarks of support.
9. Eliminate wasteful expenses when building churches or houses. Uphold marriages, baptisms, and burials as holy sacraments. Do not let these degenerate into a race to show opulence and gain recognition.
10. Let us wage a ceaseless war against alcohol. Make alcohol taboo. Every Marthomite should see the sale, production, and use of alcohol as an obviation.

The world today is weighed down with vice in every way imaginable. Does the Church that is to be the light of the world have the perfection of Christ? The solution is not to blame the world and find fault with others. We should proclaim to the world the goodness of God through the purity of our lives. May the year 2004 present to us as Church, parishes, families, and individuals, many opportunities for devotion and a new life.

I wish everyone a blessed New Year!

Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan

From the Diocesan Secretary



Greetings from the Sinai Center and wish you all a blessed New Year.

A new parish, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, was formed on January 1, 2004 in Chicago, Il. They were formerly members of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church and Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Frankfort, Il. The assistant vicar of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church, Rev. Jose Prakash P. L. is the vicar of the new church. On behalf of the Diocese, I congratulate the members of the new parish and wish them every best.

The Diocesan Assembly is tentatively fixed for March 27, 2004 at the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, NY. I request all Assembly members to block this date well in advance so that you will be able to attend the assembly meeting.

The Diocesan Clergy fellowship is scheduled along with the Diocesan Assembly and it will be held on March 25 & 26, 2004 at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church, NY.

Eighteen Achens are transferred from this Diocese back to India after the completion of their term and almost an equal number of achens are coming to replace them. Please keep them in your prayers.

The Maramon Convention is from February 15-22, 2004. Please pray for the blessing of the convention as also for our people who are traveling to attend the convention. Our Diocese will have a separate booth on the convention grounds and we will be displaying the Mission activities of the Diocese. Please be sure to visit our booth when you are there for the convention.

Thirumeni is attending the convention. On his way back Thirumeni will also attend the family conference in Australia and will return by the first week of March, 2004.

Please continue to support and pray for the mission in Mexico and among the Native Americans. The government of Mexico has agreed to lease 10 acres of land at a nominal rate. The Diocesan Council is studying the legal implications in acquiring the land. That done with the approval of the Diocesan assembly we can have the land for initiating long-term projects in Mexico.

A delegation from the NCCC of USA including the General Secretary Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar visited the Diocesan Center on January 19, 2004 and discussed various topics including the church's greater involvement in the life of the Council.

Let me commend and appreciate the Council members and the Diocesan Assembly members for their leadership all these past years. May God continue to use them for His glory.

May God bless us all.

Rev. Dr. John Joseph

Diocese of North America & Europe — Clergy Transfer List for the Year 2004

Parish	Present Vicar	New Vicar
Bishop's Secretary	Rev. Dr. John Joseph	Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham
Ascension MTC, Philadelphia, PA	Rev. Alexander Thomas	Rev. A. C. Kurien
Baltimore MTC, MD	Rev. Sabu Koshy	Rev. Saji P. Thomas
Epiphany MTC, NY	Rev. C. A. Varghese	Rev. T. A. Varghese
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX	Rev. George Jose	Rev. Varghese Mathew
Long Island MTC, NY	Rev. K. P. Sabu	Rev. Isaac G. Varghese
MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch, TX	Rev. P. Mathew	Rev. Anil George
MTC of Dallas, Grand Prairie, TX	Rev. Dr. C. A. Abraham	Rev. Shaji M. Thomas
MTC Staten Island, NY	Rev. Samuel M. Samuel	Rev. Manoj Zachariah
Philidelphia MTC, PA	Rev. Sunny George	Rev. T. P. Zachariah
St. Peter's MTC, NJ	Rev. Oommen Samuel	Rev. P. Y. Mathew
St. Stephen's MTC, NJ	Rev. John P. Oommen	Rev. Thomas Paul
St. Thomas MTC, NY	Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham	Rev. Jojan Mathews John
South Florida & Tampa MTC, FL	Rev. Joseph Mathew	Rev. Alexander Tharakan
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX	Rev. T. V. George	Rev. George Thomas
Canadian MTC, Toronto, Canada	Rev. T. S. Thomas	Rev. Mathew M. Thomas
St. James MTC, UK	Rev. Prasad Mathew	Rev. Thomas P. Koshy
St. John's MTC, UK	Rev. K. V. Cherian	Rev. John Thomas Rev. Gigi Thomas (Asst. Vicar)

Choose Life

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, St. Thomas MTC, New York

Some social scientists point out that two syndromes loom large in our society in contemporary times: success syndrome and pleasure syndrome. These are promoted by some of the so-called modern industries such as the sex industry, tourism industry, information industry, entertainment industry, etc. In the first case human life is pictured as a success story. What we need everywhere are the excellent ones and the competent ones. Here we fail to understand that competence at the expense of a search for the higher values of life is counterproductive. Same is the case with the pleasure principle in life. While admitting to the fact that human life has an entertainment value, we must be aware that our whole life is not for pleasure and entertainment. Here is an advertisement that is found in one of the airports in U.S.A.: "Think as if there were no tomorrow. Live as if you would live for ever." This is reminiscent of the ancient Epicurian and Stoic philosophy: "Eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die".

Here we have to distinguish between "life" and "physical existence".

There are three words for Life in Greek language. "Bios" refers to life in general which includes all forms of life. "Psyche" refers to the emotional and relational dimension of life. "Zoye" refers to the beyond dimension, the transcendent element and the sanctity of life. While the first two exist in nature which is part of God's created order, the third one has to do with the specificity of human life; which is God's image in the human. This element of life needs to be promoted through our life of faith.

Faith gives us a new perspective on life; that life on earth is God's gift and what we make of it is our gift to God. Human life becomes meaningful only when it is at the service of God and human beings in the community. Life becomes authentic when we make it a vocation. A sense of vocation enables us to discern the sanctity and the "beyond dimension" of life. Here we have to raise some of the ultimate questions such as "What is the meaning of my life?" "What is the purpose of my life?" "What should I do in my life?" and so on. According to Paul Thillich, the famous theologian of the 20th century, "That which concerns us ultimately is divine".

The God of life against the idols of death

Moses' challenge before the people of Israel is very suggestive. He points out that there are two ways before them: the way of life and the way of death. (Deut. 30:19). They are



challenged to make a definite choice in their life. Yes, faith means right choices in life.

The question that comes to the fore is what is an idol and who are idol worshippers? In a pluralistic society can we single out any particular religion as idolatrous in toto? Pablo Richard in his book "The God of life and the idols of death" points out that the idols of the Old Testament were all symbols of power; they were not just value-free cultic images. e.g., Baal. When the Egyptian and the Babylonian Kings

wanted the people of Israel to bow down before an image; it was not just the question of doing a religious ritual. They were asked to submit to a demonic regime and its oppressive and inhuman ideology. This can be called the idolatry of the State. Same is the case with the Roman emperors persecution of the early Church. Hence an idol is that which blocks our ultimate loyalty to God and to his Kingdom. There are several other forms of idolatry in our times as well: the idolatry of wealth (Matt. 6:24); the idolatry of power (Rev. 13:1-18) etc. Here we are confronted with an either or situation: we cannot have two masters! In our times we are challenged to worship the God of life and to negate the idols of death within the post-modern life. But in the light of the advertisement gimmicks of the modern market, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the wheat and the chaff. In the market ideology, the idolatrous elements are so wrapped up in the so-called symbols of life! Here we need to be guided by the spirit of discernment.

Conversion to the God of Life (Jn. 3:1-8)

Conversion means to commit oneself to the reign of God; to attune ourselves to the divine, to embrace a new set of values and goals in life. This is a fundamental change of perspective; an attempt to see the realities and events with new eyes. In the words of Tissa Balasurya of Sri Lanka, Conversion is from accumulation to sharing, from pride to humility, from darkness to light, from domination to participation, from injustice to justice and from death to life.

In other words, this is a "born again experience". This is not to make any exclusive claims for ourselves but to commit ourselves fully to the reign of God or to make ourselves available for the ushering in of God's reign in our midst. This is possible only through a conscientious effort to replace the old symbols of discrimination with new symbols of love and fellowship. The Greek word "Epistrophein" that is used for "conversion" shows a continuous act and not just a onetime event. In the words

of Konrad Raiser, the former General Secretary of W.C.C: "Turning to God is not the first act but the second act. This is possible because God has first turned to this world."

Abundant life for all (Jn. 10:10)

Jesus is the harbinger of life. He is the one who brings abundant life for all; not abundance for a few and penury and death for others. "Abundant life" is to be distinguished from an "abundance of things." This has to do with the intrinsic value of life rather than the instrumental value of life. The contemporary market ideology always promotes the instrumental values of life such as competition, success, profit, pleasure etc. The question is whether we can promote the higher values of life in this context; values such as love, peace, justice, righteousness, fellowship, compassion etc.

4. Relationship between life and eternal life (Jn. 6:35, 47)

In Christian spiritual circles very often a dichotomy is made between this world and the other world, life after birth and life after death. In the following words of

Bishop Dom Helder Camera of Brazil this dichotomy is brought to the fore: "When I give food to the poor you call me a saint; when I ask why the poor have no food you call me a communist." But such a dichotomy is alien to the Biblical vision. According to John's Gospel eternal life begins here with Christ. (Jn. 17:3) Unlike the synoptic gospels, in John 6, the sign of feeding the five thousand is within the framework of Jesus' teaching about himself as the "Bread of life" that is broken for the world. This is the qualitative dimension of life in Christ. We can experience this life only by our participation in the ushering in of the reign of God in and through Christ in the midst of all historical predicaments and uncertainties.

The culmination of our life is with Christ in its fullness. The question is whether we can create and support social forces which would facilitate life at all levels. In other words, eternal life is in relation to the fullness of our life on earth. Hence earthly life is neither to be glorified as such or to be negated. Rather, it is to be lived in an authentic relationship with God and with other human beings. ■

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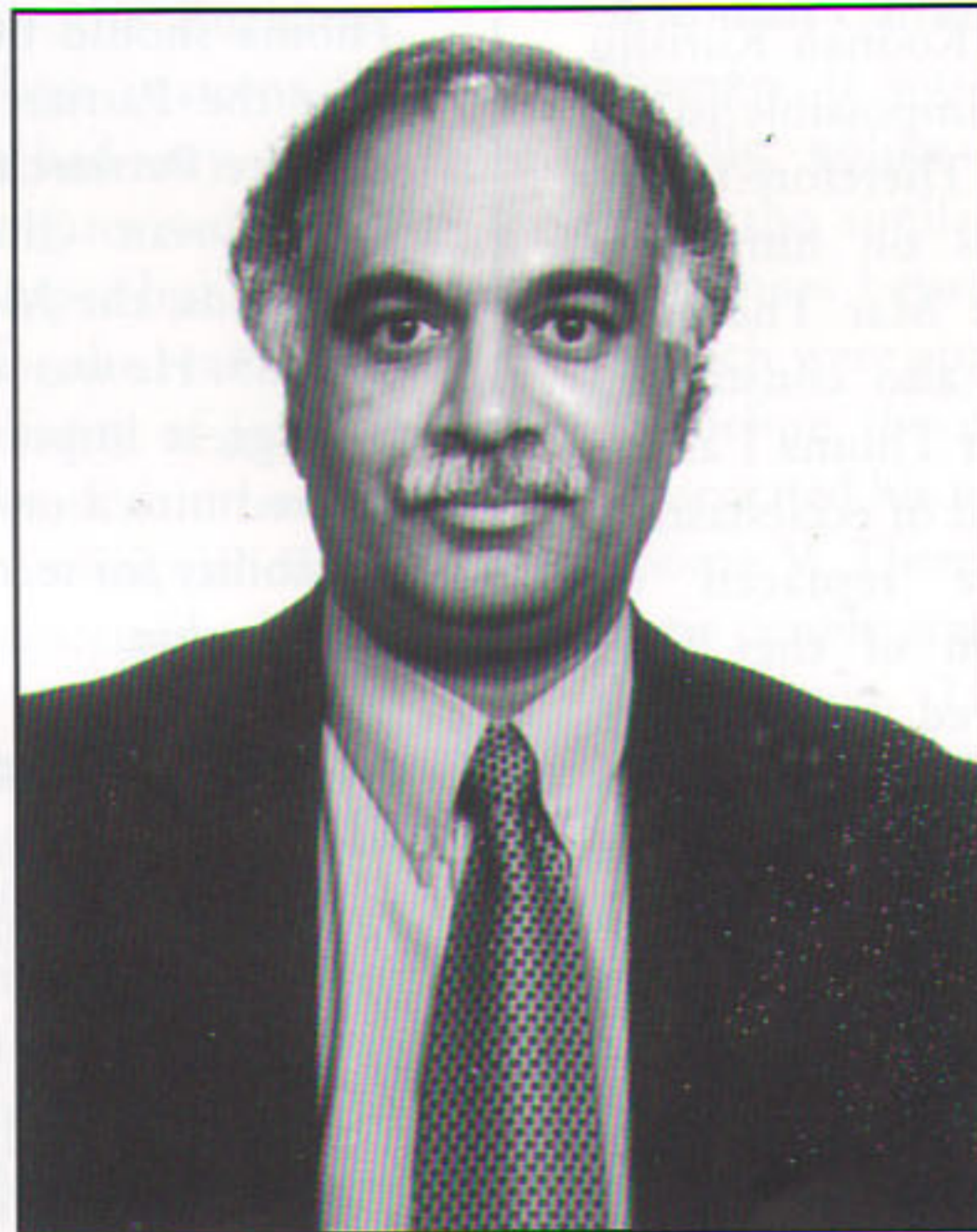


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Thank you for having "Georgia on your mind..."

History of the Mar Thoma Church

Rev. Sunni E. Mathew, Los Angeles, CA

As we discussed in the last issue, through the Koonan Cross Oath Mar Thoma Christians of Kerala denounced the Roman Catholic supremacy and acclaimed the autonomy of the Malankara Christians. Those who have relinquished connections with the Roman Catholics were left without a bishop. They were eager to regain the sanctity of apostolic succession. They realized that if the Church had to prosper it should continue as a strong but independent Church having apostolic succession. They were also convinced of the need of a duly consecrated Metropolitan as their head. The aggrieved St. Thomas Christian community held a council at Aalangad near Angamali and raised the archdeacon Parambil Thomas Kathanaar as their bishop. But under the historical setting of the Koonan Kurishu Sathyam (Coonan Cross Oath), it was impossible to get him consecrated in the traditional way. Therefore twelve priests came together and laid hands on him in a "consecration". He was given the title Mar Thoma I. Some kind of a Church council was also constituted comprising of four Kathanaars¹ and Mar Thoma I as the president. Thus they aimed at some kind of ecclesiastical autonomy. Meanwhile Jesuits were replaced by Carmalitan order as for the direction of the Pope. Carmalitan propaganda mission moved into action. Allegations were raised on the validity of the consecration of Mar Thoma I. The result of this was very decisive. Some including two among the committee of four that was formed to help Mar Thoma I left the group and joined the Roman Catholic faction. Around 84 congregations re-aligned with the Roman Catholic Church while 32 remained faithful to Mar Thoma. Yet there was a considerable number of Christians who did not yield to Rome and they slowly moved towards the Syrian Church of Antioch. The Church that remained one for centuries came to be split into two.

Change in the global political scenario helped the Indian Church to establish itself again. In the 17th century the Portuguese power started declining. The Dutch took Cochin in 1663. Following that the Portuguese influence in Malabar came to an end. One of the first actions that the Dutch did was to sent away all European clergy who were working among the Syrians. In accordance with that the Joseph Sebastini and the Carmalites had to leave. This unavoidable historic necessity led to the consecration of an Indian Christian to the bishopric of the Roman Catholic section. Before



leaving Joseph Sebastini consecrated Parambil Chandy as a bishop. The Portuguese called him, Alexander de Campo. This consecration of an Indian Bishop in the Roman Catholic faction also exerted tremendous pressure on the Syrian Christians to find a solution to the accusation on the validity of the consecration of Mar Thoma I. But the political situation became favorable for the Syrians to make arrangements to contact Persian Churches ones again. They looked for bishop from

Persia. Bishops could come in Dutch ships. Thus messages were sent abroad asking for a properly consecrated "Metran". This request was made with the intention of consecrating Mar Thoma I in the traditional and acceptable manner so that his position as Mar Thoma should be regularized. For reasons that are not clear the Patriarch who responded to this request was Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and not that from of the East Syrian Church. Thus a Jacobite bishop Mar Gregorios, the Metropolitan of Jerusalem came to India in 1665. He was welcomed by Mar Thoma. This incident is of great importance. Those who longed for freedom entered into a new phase of history. Along with that any possibility for reconciliation between the two groups also became thin.

A Brief History of the Syrian Orthodox Church

In the Chalcedon council of 451, Eutychus was condemned. But those churches, mostly the oriental churches did not accept formula adopted at the council. They emphasized the unity of Christ in line with the Cyril of Alexandria. The party in power considered those non-Chalcedonian churches heretical. But they had numerous followers in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Patriarchate of Antioch in West Syria some times showed allegiance to the Chalcedonians² and some other times to non-Chalcedonians. Mar Savarius of Antioch was the most famous among the non-Chalcedonian Patriarch of that time.

During the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565), he persecuted the non-Chalcedonian group and deprived them of citizenship. It was the time when Jacob Zanzlus came into the leadership of the non-Chalcedonian group. He was commonly known as Jacob Baradai (Bardeus).³ He was consecrated as bishop for the non-Chalcedonian Church about 555. He exhibited great zeal for the propagation of the faith. At the time of his death he is

said to have consecrated a number of bishops and ordained a large number of clergy. It was from this leader that the opponents gave the non-Chalcedonian church the name "Jacobites". The Patriarch of Antioch claims to be the head of this Church.⁴ Mar Gregorios who had the title, Metropolitan of Jerusalem belonged to this Church. By receiving Mar Gregorios and from him consecration the Syrian Church of Malabar came into communion with the Jacobite Church of Antioch.

Beginning of Antiochian Connection (Jacobite Syrian)

It is believed that he re-consecrated Mar Thoma. There are varied opinions on that. In any case, he remained in India till his death in 1672. He and Mar Thoma worked together. Mar Gregorios stayed in Kerala till his death in 1672. He taught the Jacobite understanding with anti-Roman and anti-Nestorian emphasis. He also sought to reintroduce the oriental customs like the eastern liturgical vestments, using of leavened bread in the Eucharist, clerical marriage and so on.⁵ In all these customs the Syrian Churches of Persia and Antioch had very similar traditions. On the same time he used the revised liturgy that was in use after the Synod of Diamper but making some essential changes. This was done for the reason that the people commented on the unfamiliarity of Jacobite liturgy that he used. Thus following the division of the ancient St. Thomas Church those who relinquished the Roman Catholic connection came in connection with the Syrian Orthodox Church.

The Christians of Malabar were not particular about the differences in tradition pertaining to ecclesiastical authority between the Churches of the East. Mar Gregorios joined Mar Thoma in confirming the Malabar Church of its Syrian character against the Roman Catholic. Similarity in language and customs shared by the Church of Persia and Church of Antioch facilitated these efforts. In the mean time a vast majority of the Syrians had re-joined the Roman Catholic group. "They came to be called in common parlance 'Pazhayakur' (i.e. the Old Party), while those who stayed behind, maintaining their independence of Rome, were known as 'Puthenkur' (i.e. the New Party), though is a strange terminology in view of the facts of history."

Situations that led to Jacobite Supremacy

Mar Thoma I died in the year 1670 after consecrating his successor Mar Thoma II. He held the office till 1686. Meanwhile in 1678 two more bishops from the Church of Antioch arrived in Kerala. They were Mar Baselios and Mar Ivanios. Mar Baselios died within a very short period

after their arrival. But Mar Ivanios remained till 1693. He continued the propagation of Antiochian teachings. Mar Thoma II expired unexpectedly in 1686 without consecrating a successor. Mar Ivanios then living in Kerala consecrated Mar Thoma III. But his tenure lasted only for a year or two. Mar Ivanios further consecrated Mar Thoma IV in 1688. He was on the see for about forty years. During his time a Nestorian bishop Gabriel arrived in Kerala and established a sort of rival rule among a fairly large section of the non-Roman Syrians. He tried to bring the Church under the Nestorian Patriarch. But Mar Thoma IV resisted. In doing so he requested Syrian Patriarch for help. He sent three sets of letters.⁶ In these letters he appealed the Patriarch to send bishops and priests competent to teach the faith opposing Mar Gabriel. There are three possible reasons behind the hostility of Mar Thoma to Mar Gabriel. Firstly, Mar Gabriel was considered as one who came to capture the administration of the Malabar Church and hence the question of autonomy. Secondly, following the onslaught of Roman Catholicism on the Nestorians at the Synod of Diamper it was considered as something abominable. Thirdly, unlike during the coming of Mar Gregorios when the similarities were evident, at the present the differences between the churches of Persia and that of Antioch were apparent.

Before the death of Mar Thoma IV in 1728, he consecrated his nephew as his successor with the title Mar Thoma V. There arose a dispute regarding his position. Some people argued that he was not properly elevated to the position. The section of people who sided Mar Gabriel turned against him. Mar Thoma V remained in the see till his death in 1765.

Establishment of Jacobite Power

During his time three bishops from the Church of Antioch came to Malabar in a Dutch ship in 1751. They were Mar Basilios, Mar Gregorios and Mar Ivanios. Mar Basalios was a Catholicos or Maphrian. The intention of the Patriarch behind deputing a Catholicos was to give the Church of Malabar an Episcopal dignity and thereby to bring it under his control. Though this was initiated in response to the request of Mar Thoma IV, this development resulted in some undesirable consequences. There arose a conflict between them and Mar Thoma V. These foreign prelates utilized the existing situation prevailing in the Church to exert their authority. In the context of allegations regarding the validity of his elevation to the bishopric, they claimed that his consecration did not have any authority of the Patriarch and hence invalid. So they demanded that Mar Thoma V should accept re-consecration at their hands. But the

(Continued on page 14)

Women in Christian Leadership & Ministry

Mrs. Litty Jose, Immanuel M.T.C. Houston

“Women and Church” has been a subject of debate and discussion for many decades in the church circles. In the 50’s and 60’s it was the theme of hot debate. In the 70’s it somehow assimilated into the comprehension of the leadership and ecclesiastical heads of Churches. Consequently 1980 to 1990 was declared as Women’s Decade by World Council of Churches. Even though one decade was proclaimed as Church in Solidarity with Women, it has to be analyzed how much impact it had on each church with regard to the subject of women in Christian leadership and Ministry.

It is in this backdrop I would like to share a few thoughts pertaining to the same subject from the Biblical perspective.

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18).

The resources required to accomplish tasks in this world are time, people and money. The devil has used a very successful strategy to stop the church from fulfilling the great commission to evangelize the world.

God’s Purpose for Man and Woman

Let’s go back to the Book of Genesis and look at the creation of Woman “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Genesis. 1:27)

1. Rulers Together

It is clear that God’s original intention for man and woman was that they should be rulers together over all creation—an equality of position and authority. This unique partnership is confirmed in the New Testament, “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3) This teaches us that the relationship that exists between Christ the Son and man was the same relationship God intended between man and woman, and the head of woman is man.

2. Full Participation

Just as the Son depends on the Father for approval and the authority to act, the woman acts in collaboration with man. The Son does whatever the Father does in the same manner as He sees the Father doing it. So God intended the woman to fully participate in what the man does.



3. Submission and Obedience

But Adam and Eve sinned and God told Eve, “Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you” (Genesis 3:16)

So women were told to obey their husbands. That’s the way it has remained even into the New Testament times when the Apostle Paul told Christian wives “submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22).

But even though a woman is to obey her husband, she is not inferior to him. It just means that she should be willing to let him lead. In fact, Paul called for submission on the part of both the husband and the wife, “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21)

Paul clearly stated in his letter to the Galatians that there is no difference of status in Christ between a man and a woman. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28) We need to understand the role outlined in the Bible for the woman. Let us look into it in detail.

The Role of Women in the Old Testament

Several Old Testament women were famous for their faith. Sarah and Rahab are included in the list in Hebrews. Hannah, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and the wife of Isaiah are some other figures. Let us examine the role of Miriam, Deborah and the wife of Isaiah.

MIRIAM

Miriam, the older sister of Moses was a most remarkable woman. She Saved the life of Moses.

When Pharaoh ordered to kill the Israelite male children, the life of baby Moses was in danger. But his courageous sister Miriam even though a child at that time stayed, nearby (Exo. 2:4). When she saw Pharaoh’s daughter rescues Moses, she immediately presented a plan of action. The quick and daring action of Miriam saved Moses. We owe Miriam a lot.

Praise & Worship Leader and Prophetess

A great praise and worship took place after Pharaoh’s army was drowned in the waters of Red Sea and Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. (Exo. 15:20-21). The praise-worship ministry is best led by those with a prophetic anointing upon their life. Miriam had a lovely prophetic and musical gift that made her an ideal Praise & Worship leader and Prophetess. Like David, she sang the song of the Spirit. Her worship ministry was the result of the prophetic anointing upon her.

Leader with Moses and Aron

Miriam is mentioned right along with Moses and Aaron as one of the trio that delivered and led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery. This illustrates the highly influential leadership role she exercised. (Mic. 6:4)

DEBORAH, the Prophetess and Judge

Deborah, a married woman, held two offices. One as a prophetess and one as the ruler or judge. (Jud. 4:4-5) Under her leadership, the children of Israel were delivered from a twenty-year occupation by an alien army. Through prophetic insight, the prophetess Deborah called for the Israelite General Barak to lead the battle against the Canaanite army led by General Sisera.

HULDAH, a Prophetess of Reformation (2 Kings 22:14)

During the reign of King Josiah, the book of the law was discovered in the Temple. When the priest began to read it they realized the nation had departed far from the way of God. To find out what to do, they went to this outstanding Prophetess who gave specifics of a coming judgement, Huldah inspired Josiah, the High Priest and other leaders of Israel to implement the most sweeping moral and spiritual reforms ever recorded. A virtual wave of revival and repentance resulted. No prophetic ministry of record ever produced such a sweeping change in the nation of Israel in such a short time.

THE WIFE OF ISAIAH (Isa. 8:3)

We have no biblical comment on her ministry. She might have contributed significant prophetic insights to the extensive writings of Isaiah. No other Old Testament prophet is said to have been married to a prophetess. Could this explain why Isaiah so accurately foretold the sufferings of Christ? It is not hard to believe that Isaiah's marriage to a prophetess gave him a distinct advantage over other prophets. No wonder Isaiah's writings are often called "The Fifth Gospel."

II. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN NEW TESTAMENT

By New Testament times, Jewish women had stopped being active in temple or synagogue worship. Although there was

a special area in the temple known as the 'court of Women', women were not allowed to go into the inner court. Extra-biblical sources tell us that women were not allowed to read or to speak in the synagogue, but they could sit and listen in the women's special section.

A different picture unfolds in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus welcomed some women as traveling companions (Luke 8:1-3). He encouraged Martha and Mary to sit at His feet as disciples. Jesus' respect for women was strikingly new, and in contrast to that of the Pharisees and Saducees.

In the redemptive work of Christ, all of those partitions were broken down, and every believer, regardless of race, gender or other distinction has equal access to God.

Women like Mary and Anna had a significant and prominent role in Jesus' birth and dedication. It was through Mary, the Savior of the world was born. Anna, the prophetess at Mary's purification ceremony confirmed that Jesus was the expected Messiah for whom Israel had waited. Women also had a very significant role in events surrounding His crucifixion and resurrection. The resurrected Christ appeared and spoke first to a woman. His death and resurrection lifted women from their fallen state and restored them to their rightful place in His Kingdom.

When we analyze the New Testament church both men and women gathered at the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark to pray for the release of Peter. (Acts 12:1-17)

The first individuals to receive the Christian missionaries in Europe were members of a women's prayer group. (Acts 16:13). These women became the founding members of the church in Philippi. The story of Lydia, a remarkable woman is worth considering. As a seller of purple, it has been suggested she had wide contacts among the most influential European families of the Roman Empire. She used that advantage to spread the gospel to these wealthy families who had great political influence.

Even though the leaders in the Bible were men, chosen women of God were never denied leadership roles. God's design for man included a woman helper at his side, that they share with each other, work and live together side by side as one unit under God. This companionship implies cooperation, working side by side, worshipping and praying together, serving together, ministering together, winning souls together.

Let us unite in prayer for an army of spiritual women to win the world for Jesus. ■

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.

C. S. Lewis

The Role of the Sevika Sanghom

Rachel Mathew, Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary

When considering what role our Sanghom should or is currently having in the life of our church, it is wise to look back at our history, for our history tell us our purpose and to what extent we have realized it. The Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom was established in 1919 during the Maramon Convention, under the leadership of Bishop Abraham Mar Thoma. The Sanghom's motto, which expresses the Sanghom's dual purpose, is "Service and Evangelism through active participation of women believers." The Sanghom has fourteen mission fields and eight institutions: Vanitha Mandiram, Salem Children's Home, Vanitha Hostel (Kottarakara), Balika Bhavan (Elanthoor), Vishranthi Bhavan & Hostel (TVLA), M.T.S.S.K.G., UP School & Boarding, M.T. Nursery Teachers' Training School, and Ashrams (Trivulla, Elanthoor). Through these institutions Sanghom members have been very active in society, providing much-needed services such as a vocational school for tailoring, creating the S.V.S. Press, building the "Showroom & Snack Centre", as well as a culinary vocational unit—the "Bakery and Curry Powder unit." The Sanghom also created the Vanitha Bodhini—the main publication of the Sanghom. It has a circulation of 5200.

The Sanghom has created a system of annual collections as its five main means of raising revenue. First, an annual collection called the Deppi piruvu is used to fund orphanages and to assist marriages as endowments and sponsorings. Second, the Sowjanya dana piruvu is collected to aid the Swadesha Mission. Third, the Vaarshika piruvu is used for general expenses. Fourth, the Videsh mission piruvu is used to aid work outside Kerala. Lastly, general donations are collected to supplement and fund orphanages and all other activities.

The first secretaries of our Sanghom were Polachirakal Mariamma and Angilivelil Rachelamma. Mrs. Kandamma Varghese served as Traveling Secretary. She conducted 101 meetings for adult women and thirty-eight meetings for young girls. She would use any venue to teach and evangelize. She spoke in 236 Christian homes and seventy non-Christian homes. Her service was exemplary and inspiring. She left an indelible mark on our Sanghom.



One of the great institutions created by our Sanghom is the Vanitha Mandiram which is an educational center for young women. Founded in 1924 with the help of CMS missionaries, the Vanitha Mandiram educated young women both in vocations such as nursing, tailoring, teaching and in the teachings of our Lord. Ms. Callaway, an Australian missionary, was the first Principal of this institution. She was affiliated with the CMS missionary organization and served as the director of the Vanitha Mandiram for 22 years. She retired in 1946 to return to her native country. Her service was vital to the Sanghom and will never be forgotten.

After Ms. Callaway's retirement, Ms. Miriam Samuel became the Director. She served till 1967 and she died in 1996. In 1970 Susie David became the principal and held the position for 27 years. Ms. Saramma Eapan is the present Principal.

In this tradition of service, consider now the organization and structure of our Sevika Sanghom in North America. Our Diocese is divided into two zones: Eastern and Western. Within these zones, there are many regions such as the South West and North West Regions, which are both in the Western Zone. Because of this division, our Sanghom has meetings and conferences on a regional, zonal, and diocesan level. Different parishes in a specific region work together to organize regional activities. Zonal committees coordinate the activities of various regions. And once a year, a Diocesan conference is held. Overseeing the Diocese is Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos. It must be remembered, always, that our Sanghom exists to serve our founding purposes: To Serve and to Evangelize. All of our activities are aimed at achieving these goals. The North American Diocese continues to realize these goals by donating to and supporting various causes such as marriage aid, building homes in Mexico, and the "Toilet for Toilet-less" program.

I thank God for our Sanghom and for His providence in guiding our Sanghom. We must earnestly strive to remember, pass on, and realize our motto: "To Serve and To Evangelize". ■

Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.

By Billy Graham

മെനേ, മെനേ, തെക്കേൽ, ഊഹർസീൻ

ചേച്ചാ ജോൺ - ന്യൂയോർക്ക്

വളരെ ദശ വർഷങ്ങൾക്ക് മുമ്പ് ഭാരതീയ ജനത അമേരിക്കയുടെ വിവിധ ഭാഗങ്ങളിലായി കുടിയേറി പാർത്തു തുടങ്ങി. 6 ഡോളറുമായി കപ്പൽ മാർഗ്ഗവും വിമാന മാർഗ്ഗവും പാലും തേനും ഒഴുകുന്ന അമേരിക്കൻ ഐക്യ നാട്ടിൽ എത്തിയ മലയാളികൾ പണിയാത്ത വലുതും നല്ലതുമായ പട്ടണങ്ങളും നാം നിറക്കാതെ സകല സമ്പത്തും നിറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്ന വീടുകളും നാം കുഴിക്കാത്ത കിണറുകളും, നാം നട്ടുണ്ടാക്കാത്ത മുന്തിരി തോട്ടങ്ങളും ഒലിവു തോട്ടങ്ങളും അനുഭവിച്ചു തൃപ്തി പ്രാപിച്ചു. 2003 ഡിസംബർ മാസം വളരെയധികം ആഘോഷങ്ങളോടെ നമ്മുടെ രക്ഷിതാവിന്റെ ജന്മദിനം നാം ആഘോഷിച്ചു. സമ്മാനങ്ങൾ കൈമാറിയും വളരെയധികം പ്രതീക്ഷകളോടെയും കണക്കു കൂട്ടലുകളോടെയും ആഘോഷങ്ങളോടെയും പ്രതിജ്ഞകളോടെയും പുതുവത്സരത്തെ നാം എതിരേറ്റു, അപ്പോഴെല്ലാം നാം വിസ്മരിച്ചു പോയ ഒരു ശോചനീയമായ കാര്യം നമ്മുടെ മുമ്പിൽ നടന്നു വഴി നടത്തി നമ്മെ ഇവിടെ എത്തിച്ച നമ്മുടെ രക്ഷിതാവിന് നമ്മെക്കൊണ്ടുള്ള ഉദ്ദേശം നമ്മുടെ ആഘോഷങ്ങളിലും സമ്മാനദാനങ്ങളിലും സ്വർഗ്ഗം സന്തോഷിച്ചിരിക്കുമോ?

യേശു യെഹൂദ്യയിലെ ബേത്ലഹേമിൽ ജനിച്ച ശേഷം അവന്റെ നക്ഷത്രം കിഴക്കു കണ്ടു യെഹൂദന്മാരുടെ രാജാവായി പിറന്നവനെ നമസ്കരിപ്പാൻ പൊന്നും മുരും കുന്തിരിക്കവുമായി വന്നു കാഴ്ച വെച്ചു. ഇതായിരുന്നു യേശുവിനു ലഭിച്ച ആദ്യത്തെ സമ്മാനം. ഇന്നു നാം യേശുവിന്റെ ജന്മദിനം ആഘോഷിക്കുന്നത് ഇതിൽ നിന്നും എത്രയോ വ്യത്യസ്തമായി, തമ്മിൽ തമ്മിൽ സമ്മാനങ്ങൾ കൈമാറിയും നമുക്ക് പ്രിയമുള്ളവർക്കും സമൂഹത്തിൽ സ്ഥാനമാനങ്ങൾ ഉള്ളവർക്കും സമ്മാനങ്ങൾ നൽകിയും അത്രെ.....നമ്മുടെ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളുടെ ജന്മദിനത്തിൽ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾക്ക് സമ്മാനങ്ങൾ കൊടുക്കുന്ന ദൈവ ജനമെ മറക്കാതിരിക്കൂ.....യേശുവിന്റെ ജന്മദിനത്തിൽ സമ്മാനങ്ങൾ നൽകേണ്ടത് യേശുവിനത്രെ....യേശു പറയുന്നു മത്തായി 25:4 ഈ ചെറിയ സഹോദരന്മാരിൽ ഒരുത്തന് നിങ്ങൾ ചെയ്തടത്തോളം എല്ലാം എനിക്കു ചെയ്തു എന്നു ഞാൻ സത്യമായി നിങ്ങളോടു പറയുന്നു.

സെപ്റ്റംബർ മാസം രണ്ടാം ആഴ്ച സേവികാ സംഘ വാരവും ദിനവും ആഘോഷിക്കാറുണ്ട്. വർഷത്തിൽ ഒരിക്കൽ സഭയായി സേവികാ സംഘത്തിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളെ ഓർക്കുകയും വിലയിരുത്തുകയും സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് വചന ശുശ്രൂഷക്ക് അവസരം നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന വാരം. 1919-ൽ രൂപം കൊണ്ട സേവികാ സംഘത്തിന് ഇപ്പോൾ 83 വയസ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇപ്പോൾ 900 ത്തിൽ അധികം ശാഖകൾ നമുക്കുണ്ട്. പ്രാർത്ഥനക്കൂട്ടങ്ങൾ, ബൈബിൾ പഠനങ്ങൾ, ഭവന സന്ദർശനം, രോഗികളെ സന്ദർശിക്കുക, സാധു സഹായം എന്നീ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ശാഖകൾ നടത്തിവരുന്നു. ചില ശാഖകൾ സ്വയം തൊഴിൽ കണ്ടെത്താൻ സഹായിക്കുകയും വിവാഹത്തിനും ഭവന നിർമ്മാണത്തിനും ചികിത്സക്കും വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിനും ആരാധനാലയ നിർമ്മാണത്തിനും സാമ്പത്തിക സഹായം നൽകിവരികയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

ആദ്യമായി സേവികാ സംഘം ആതുര ശുശ്രൂഷാ രംഗത്ത് വരുന്നത് അനാഥ കുട്ടികളുടെ സംരക്ഷണവുമായാണ്. അനാഥ കുട്ടികൾ എന്നു കേൾക്കുമ്പോൾ ശാലോം ഭവനം എല്ലാവരുടേയും മനസ്സിലേക്ക് ഓടി എത്തുന്നു. ഈ കുട്ടികളുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം വിവാഹം സംരക്ഷണം ഇവ സംഘത്തിന്റെ ചുമതലയാണ്. ശാലോമിൽ വളർന്ന് 4-ാം ക്ലാസ്സ് പാസ്സാകുന്ന ആൺകുട്ടികളേയും നിർധനരായ മാതാപിതാക്കളുടെ

കുട്ടികളേയും പുനലൂർ ബോയിസ് ഹോമിൽ ചേർത്തു പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ഡബ്ലി പിരിവാണു ഇവയ്ക്ക് രണ്ടിനു മുളള ഏക വരുമാനമാർഗ്ഗം. ഇതു കൂടാതെ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ പ്രവർത്തനം, ഹോസ്റ്റലുകൾ, വികസന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ, ആശ്രമങ്ങൾ, പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണം എന്നീ മേഖലകളിലും സംഘം ഒട്ടും പിന്നോക്കമല്ല. വേല സ്ഥലങ്ങൾ സംഘത്തിന്റെ മറ്റൊരു പ്രവർത്തനമത്രെ. ഇടവകയുടെ അതിരുകൾക്കപ്പുറം സുവിശേഷ ഘോഷണത്തിന് ദർശനം ലഭിച്ച ഒരു വ്യക്തിയായിരുന്നു ശ്രീമതി കാണ്ടമ്മ വർഗ്ഗീസ്.

മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടെ ഇടവകകളിലെല്ലാം തന്നെ സേവിക സംഘ ശാഖയുണ്ട്. ശാഖകൾ റീജിയണുകളായും സോണുകളായും ഡയോസിസുകളായും ഗ്രൂപ്പു ചെയ്തുള്ള വിവിധ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും ഇന്നു സംവിധാനം ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. എല്ലാ ശാഖകളും ട്വി പിരിവ്, സൗജന്യദാന പിരിവ്, ബാഹ്യ കേരള മിഷൻ പിരിവ്, വാർഷിക പിരിവ് ഇങ്ങനെ വിവിധ ഇനങ്ങളായി ശേഖരിച്ച് കേന്ദ്രത്തിലേക്ക് അയച്ചു കൊടുക്കുന്നു. വർഷാവസാനം പണം ശേഖരിച്ച് സംഘത്തിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് എത്തിച്ച് കൊടുക്കാൻ ഭാരവാഹികൾ വളരെ ക്ലേശങ്ങൾ സഹിക്കേണ്ടി വരുന്നു.

ഇന്നു ദൈവം നമ്മെ അമേരിക്കൻ ജനതക്ക് അസുയാർഹമായ വിധത്തിൽ നന്മകളാൽ നിറച്ചു. നെബുഖദ്നേസർ രാജാവിന്റെ കാലശേഷം തന്റെ മകൻ ബേൽശസ്സർ രാജാവു ഭരണം ഏറ്റെടുക്കുന്നു. ദൈവം തന്റെ പിതാവിന്റെ അഹങ്കാരത്തിൽ അവനെ ശിക്ഷിച്ച് യെഥാസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുത്തി ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മഹത്വം കാണുമാറാക്കിയത് സകലതും ബേൽശസ്സർ മറന്ന് ഒരു വലിയ വിരുന്ദാരുക്കി മതിമറന്നു സന്തോഷിച്ചു. യെരൂശലേമിലെ മന്ദിരത്തിൽ നിന്നു തന്റെ പിതാവ് എടുത്തുകൊണ്ടു വന്നിരുന്ന പൊൻ വെള്ളി പാത്രങ്ങളിൽ രാജാവും മഹത്തുക്കളും അവന്റെ ഭാര്യമാരും വെപ്പാട്ടികളും കുടിച്ചു. പൊന്നും വെള്ളിയും താമ്രവും ഇരിമ്പും മരവും കല്ലും കൊണ്ടുള്ള ദേവൻമാരെ സ്തുതിച്ചു തന്റെ പിതാവിനെ ശിക്ഷിച്ച് യഥാസ്ഥാനത്താക്കിയ സ്വർഗ്ഗസ്ഥനായ രാജാവിനെ സ്തുതിച്ചു പുകഴ്ത്തി ബഹുമാനിച്ച പിതാവിന്റെ കാലവും മറന്നു. ഇതാ ഇവിടെ ഒരു മനുഷ്യന്റെ കൈവിലകൾ പുറപ്പെട്ട് വിളക്കിനു നേരെ രാജധാനിയുടെ ചുവരിന്റെ വെള്ളമേൽ എഴുതി, എഴുതിയ കൈപ്പത്തി രാജാവു കണ്ടു അവൻ പരവശനായി അരയുടെ ഏപ്പു അഴിഞ്ഞ് കാൽമുട്ടുകൾ ആടിപ്പോയി. രാജാവ് ഉറക്കെ നിലവിളിച്ചു, എഴുതിയിരിക്കുന്ന എഴുത്തോ ദാനിയേൽ 5:25 'മെനേ, മെനേ, തെക്കേൽ, ഊഹർസീൻ', ഇതിന്റെ അർത്ഥം ദാനിയേൽ വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നു. 'മെനേ' എന്നു വെച്ചാൽ ദൈവം നിന്റെ രാജ്യം എണ്ണി, അതിന് അന്തം വരുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. 'തെക്കേൽ' എന്നു വെച്ചാൽ തുലാസിൽ നിന്നെ തൂക്കി കുറവുള്ളവനായി കണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. പെറേസ് എന്നു വെച്ചാൽ, നിന്റെ രാജ്യം വിഭാഗിച്ച് മേദ്യർക്കും പാർസികൾക്കും കൊടുത്തിരിക്കുന്നു. ആ രാത്രി തന്നെ ബേൽശസ്സർ രാജാവ് കൊല്ലപ്പെട്ടു. നെബുക്കദ്നേസർ രാജാവിന്റെ ശിക്ഷ സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിൽ നിന്നുണ്ടായ ഒരു ദൈവ ശബ്ദത്തിൽ നിന്നും നടപ്പാക്കപ്പെട്ടു. ഇവിടെ ബേൽശസ്സർ രാജാവിന് ദൈവം തന്റെ സ്വന്തം കൈവിലകളാൽ എഴുതി വെളിപ്പെടുത്തി നടപ്പാക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നു. 'തെക്കേൽ' എന്നു വെച്ചാൽ തുലാസിൽ നിന്നെ തൂക്കി കുറവുള്ളവനായി കണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. പ്രിയമുള്ളവരെ ദൈവം ഇന്നു തുലാസിൽ നമ്മെ തൂക്കിയാൽ നാം ഏതെല്ലാം പ്രവർത്തന രംഗങ്ങളിൽ കുറവുള്ളവരായി കാണപ്പെടും? ലോകാവസാനത്തിൽ ന്യായവിധി നാളിൽ നാം

ഈ തുലാസിൽ തൂക്കപ്പെടും. ജീവിത കാലത്ത് ദൈവദാസരിൽ കൂടി ദൈവ ശബ്ദങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ കേൾപ്പിച്ചു നമ്മെ യഥാസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുത്താൻ ശ്രമിച്ച ദൈവദാസരെ നാം ധിക്കരിച്ചു ദൈവ ശബ്ദത്തിനു നാം ചെവികൊടുക്കാതെ സ്വന്ത ഇഷ്ടപ്രകാരം ജീവിച്ചു.

അനേകർ പട്ടിണിയിലും രോഗത്തിലും പാർപ്പാൻ ഭവനമില്ലാതെയും ധരിപ്പാൻ വസ്ത്രമില്ലാതെയും വിവാഹിതരാകതെയും അനാഥരായും ചികിത്സ ലഭിക്കാതെയും കഴിഞ്ഞു പോകുന്നു. ആത്മഹത്യയിലൂടെയും പീഠനത്തിലൂടെയും വേശ്യാവൃത്തിയിലൂടെയും കടന്നു പോകുന്നു മറ്റൊരു കൂട്ടർ. എസ്റ്റേമിനോട് മോർദ്ദുവായി പറയുന്നത് വളരെ ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. എസ്റ്റേമർ 4:14 ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ളൊരു കാലത്തിനായിട്ടല്ലയോ നീ രാജ സ്ഥാനത്തു വന്നിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇന്ന് അമേരിക്കൻ ഐക്യ നാടിന്റെ പല ഭാഗത്തും ലോകത്തിന്റെ പല ഭാഗത്തും ദൈവം നമ്മെ പഠിച്ചു നട്ടിരിക്കുന്നത് ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ളൊരു കാലത്തിനായിരുന്നില്ലയോ?

പ്രിയമുള്ള ദൈവമക്കളെ ഉല്പ. 32:10 യാക്കോബ് പറയുന്നു 'ഒരു വടിയോടുകൂടി മാത്രമല്ലോ ഞാൻ യോർദ്ദാൻ കടന്നത് ഇപ്പോഴോ ഞാൻ രണ്ടു കൂട്ടമായി തീർന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. യാക്കോബ് തന്റെ ആത്മാർത്ഥതയിൽ ദൈവത്തോടുള്ള നിലവിളിയിലും നന്ദി പ്രകാശിപ്പിച്ച് പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നു. നാമും '6' ഡോളറുമായി ഈ നാട്ടിൽ കാലുകൂത്തി. അനവധി നന്മകളാൽ നിറയപ്പെട്ടു. പാലും തേനും ഒഴുകുന്ന ഈ നാട്ടിൽ, ആവർത്തനം 6:10,11 നാം പണിയാത്ത വലുതും നല്ലുമായ പട്ടണങ്ങളും നാം നിറയ്ക്കാതെ സകല സമ്പത്തും നിറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്ന വീടുകളും നാം കുഴിക്കാത്ത കിണറുകളും



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നാം നട്ടുണ്ടാക്കാത്ത മുന്തിരിത്തോട്ടങ്ങളും ഒലിവ് തോട്ടങ്ങളും അനുഭവിച്ച് തൃപ്തി പ്രാപിച്ചു. കഴിഞ്ഞ കാലങ്ങളിൽ നമുക്കു മുമ്പായി നടന്നു നമ്മെ വഴി നടത്തിയ ദൈവത്തെ നാം മറന്നു. നമ്മുടെ സാധുക്കളെ നാം ഓർത്തില്ല. ഈ നാടിനോട് അനുരൂപരാകാൻ നാം വെമ്പൽ കൊണ്ടു. സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ ദൈവ ശബ്ദങ്ങൾക്ക് നാം ചെവി കൊടുത്തില്ല. നാം യഥാസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുവാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചതുമില്ല. ആ സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ കൈപ്പത്തി വീണ്ടും നമ്മുടെ നേരെ ഉയരുമോ? ആ വിരലുകൾ നമുക്കെതിരായി ഭിത്തിയിൽ വിധി എഴുതുമോ? 'മെനേ, മെനേ, തെക്കേൽ ഊഹർസീൻ' തുലാസ്സിൽ നമ്മെ തൂക്കിയാൽ കുറവുള്ളവരായി നാം കാണപ്പെടുമോ?.....

മത്തായി 25:40 എന്റെ ഈ ഏറ്റവും ചെറിയ സഹോദരൻമാരിൽ ഒരാൾ നിങ്ങൾ ചെയ്തടത്തോളം എല്ലാം എനിക്കു ചെയ്തു എന്നു ഞാൻ സത്യമായിട്ട് നിങ്ങളോടു പറയുന്നു. ഈ പുതുവത്സരം പുതിയ പ്രതിജ്ഞയോടെ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കൈപ്പത്തി നമുക്കെതിരായി വിധി എഴുതാതിരിപ്പാൻ പുതിയ തീരുമാനങ്ങളോടെ, മലാഖി 3:10-ൽ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കും പ്രകാരം ജീവിക്കുവാൻ ദൈവം നമ്മെ സഹായിക്കട്ടെ. 'എന്റെ ആലയത്തിൽ ആഹാരം ഉണ്ടാകേണ്ടതിന്നു നിങ്ങൾ ദശാംശം മുഴുവനും ഭണ്ഡാരത്തിലേക്ക് കൊണ്ടു വരുവിൻ, ഞാൻ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ആകാശത്തിന്റെ കിളി വാതിലുകളെ തുറന്നു, സ്ഥലം പോരാതെ വരുവോളം നിങ്ങളുടെ മേൽ അനുഗ്രഹം പകരുകയില്ലയോ? എന്നിങ്ങനെ നിങ്ങൾ ഇതിനാൽ എന്നെ പരീക്ഷിപ്പിൻ എന്നു സൈന്യങ്ങളുടെ യെഹോവ അരുളിച്ചെയ്യുന്നു'.

History of the Mar Thoma Church (Continued from page 9)

latter refused. "However, he entered into a compromise with them by acknowledging the supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch, while the foreign bishops agreed not to ordain any priests here without the sanction of Mar Thoma." Basalios died very shortly, but Mar Ivanios continued to work for eight years. It was he who advanced the work commenced by Mar Gregorios in bringing the faith and traditions of the Syrian Church of Antioch into the Malabar Church.

Before his death in 1765, Mar Thoma V consecrated his nephew as Mar Thoma VI. The new Mar Thoma in response to the intermittent difficulties incurred with the foreign bishops he succumbed to their pressure to obtain a re-consecration at their hands. He was given a fresh title of Mar Dionysius.

Meanwhile, political scenes showed intense activity. Political power structure overturned. British colonial power started establishing itself in India. The impact of British colonialism became evident in the life of the Mar Thoma Christian community also creating everlasting effect. That aspect of history, we will discuss in the coming issue. ■

- 1 They were Pambil Chandy of Kuravilangad, Vengur Geevarghese of Akaparambu, Kadavil Chandy of Kaduthuruthy and Anjilimmootil Itty Thommen of Kallisserry.
- 2 Many western scholars in the past had used the term 'Monophysites' to address them. But this term does not seem to be a right usage because they did not consider that Christ has only one nature. They did not deny either divine or human nature of Christ. But their emphasize was on the unity of human and divine nature in Christ rather than their distinction. On the other hand, the Chalcedonian group emphasised on the distinction instead of unity. Therefore the usage of the terms 'Monophysite' or 'Diophysite' does not provide a true understanding of the situation.
- 3 The word means the man in rags. He got the name because he was a monk and went around disguised as a beggar.
- 4 The Greek Church also has a Patriarch stationed at Antioch as well as the Maronites and Latin Patriarchs of Antioch. The Jacobite Patriarchs have from time to time shifted their residence.
- 5 The Indian Churches of St. Thomas, p. 39. These changes might not have been effected all of a sudden but slowly.
- 6 Quite interestingly these letters were sent to some other destinations. The first letter that was sent in 1709 reached Amsterdam whereas the second and third written in 1715 and 1720 respectively reached Rome. This points to the probability that Mar Thoma was not sure about the location of the Patriarch. This in turn suggests a not so strong relationship in existence before.

ഈ തുലാസിൽ തൂക്കപ്പെടും. ജീവിത കാലത്ത് ദൈവദാസരിൽ കൂടി ദൈവ ശബ്ദങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ കേൾപ്പിച്ചു നമ്മെ യഥാസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുത്താൻ ശ്രമിച്ച ദൈവദാസരെ നാം ധിക്കരിച്ചു ദൈവ ശബ്ദത്തിനു നാം ചെവികൊടുക്കാതെ സ്വന്ത ഇഷ്ടപ്രകാരം ജീവിച്ചു.

അനേകർ പട്ടിണിയിലും രോഗത്തിലും പാർപ്പാൻ ഭവനമില്ലാതെയും ധരിപ്പാൻ വസ്ത്രമില്ലാതെയും വിവാഹിതരാകതെയും അനാഥരായും ചികിത്സ ലഭിക്കാതെയും കഴിഞ്ഞു പോകുന്നു. ആത്മഹത്യയിലൂടെയും പീഠനത്തിലൂടെയും വേശ്യാവൃത്തിയിലൂടെയും കടന്നു പോകുന്നു മറ്റൊരു കൂട്ടർ. എസ്റ്റേറിനോട് മോർദ്ദെഖായി പറയുന്നത് വളരെ ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. എസ്റ്റേർ 4:14 ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ളൊരു കാലത്തിനായിട്ടല്ലയോ നീ രാജ സ്ഥാനത്തു വന്നിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇന്ന് അമേരിക്കൻ ഐക്യ നാടിന്റെ പല ഭാഗത്തും ലോകത്തിന്റെ പല ഭാഗത്തും ദൈവം നമ്മെ പഠിച്ചു നട്ടിരിക്കുന്നത് ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ളൊരു കാലത്തിനായിരുന്നില്ലയോ?

പ്രിയമുള്ള ദൈവമക്കളെ ഉല്പ. 32:10 യാക്കോബ് പറയുന്നു 'ഒരു വടിയോടുകൂടി മാത്രമല്ലോ ഞാൻ യോർദ്ദാൻ കടന്നത് ഇപ്പോഴോ ഞാൻ രണ്ടു കൂട്ടമായി തീർന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. യാക്കോബ് തന്റെ ആത്മാർത്ഥതയിൽ ദൈവത്തോടുള്ള നിലവിളിയിലും നന്ദി പ്രകാശിപ്പിച്ച് പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നു. നാമും '6' ഡോളറുമായി ഈ നാട്ടിൽ കാലുകൂത്തി. അനവധി നന്മകളാൽ നിറയപ്പെട്ടു. പാലും തേനും ഒഴുകുന്ന ഈ നാട്ടിൽ, ആവർത്തനം 6:10,11 നാം പണിയാത്ത വലുതും നല്ലുമായ പട്ടണങ്ങളും നാം നിറയ്ക്കാതെ സകല സമ്പത്തും നിറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്ന വീടുകളും നാം കുഴിക്കാത്ത കിണറുകളും



Checha John
Staten Island, New York

നാം നട്ടുണ്ടാക്കാത്ത മുന്തിരിത്തോട്ടങ്ങളും ഒലിവ് തോട്ടങ്ങളും അനുഭവിച്ച് തൃപ്തി പ്രാപിച്ചു. കഴിഞ്ഞ കാലങ്ങളിൽ നമുക്കു മുമ്പായി നടന്നു നമ്മെ വഴി നടത്തിയ ദൈവത്തെ നാം മറന്നു. നമ്മുടെ സാധുക്കളെ നാം ഓർത്തില്ല. ഈ നാടിനോട് അനുരൂപരാകാൻ നാം വെമ്പൽ കൊണ്ടു. സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ ദൈവ ശബ്ദങ്ങൾക്ക് നാം ചെവി കൊടുത്തില്ല. നാം യഥാസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുവാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചതുമില്ല. ആ സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ കൈപ്പത്തി വീണ്ടും നമ്മുടെ നേരെ ഉയരുമോ? ആ വിരലുകൾ നമുക്കെതിരായി ഭിത്തിയിൽ വിധി എഴുതുമോ? 'മെനേ, മെനേ, തെക്കേൽ ഊഹർസീൻ' തുലാസിൽ നമ്മെ തൂക്കിയാൽ കുറവുള്ളവരായി നാം കാണപ്പെടുമോ?.....

മത്തായി 25:40 എന്റെ ഈ ഏറ്റവും ചെറിയ സഹോദരൻമാരിൽ ഒരാൾ നിങ്ങൾ ചെയ്തടത്തോളം എല്ലാം എനിക്കു ചെയ്തു എന്നു ഞാൻ സത്യമായിട്ട് നിങ്ങളോടു പറയുന്നു. ഈ പുതുവത്സരം പുതിയ പ്രതിജ്ഞയോടെ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കൈപ്പത്തി നമുക്കെതിരായി വിധി എഴുതാതിരിപ്പാൻ പുതിയ തീരുമാനങ്ങളോടെ, മലാഖി 3:10-ൽ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കും പ്രകാരം ജീവിക്കുവാൻ ദൈവം നമ്മെ സഹായിക്കട്ടെ. 'എന്റെ ആലയത്തിൽ ആഹാരം ഉണ്ടാകേണ്ടതിന്നു നിങ്ങൾ ദശാംശം മുഴുവനും ഭണ്ഡാരത്തിലേക്ക് കൊണ്ടു വരുവിൻ, ഞാൻ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ആകാശത്തിന്റെ കിളി വാതിലുകളെ തുറന്നു, സ്ഥലം പോരാതെ വരുവോളം നിങ്ങളുടെ മേൽ അനുഗ്രഹം പകരുകയില്ലയോ? എന്നിങ്ങനെ നിങ്ങൾ ഇതിനാൽ എന്നെ പരീക്ഷിപ്പിൻ എന്നു സൈന്യങ്ങളുടെ യെഹോവ അരുളിച്ചെയ്യുന്നു'.

History of the Mar Thoma Church (Continued from page 9)

latter refused. "However, he entered into a compromise with them by acknowledging the supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch, while the foreign bishops agreed not to ordain any priests here without the sanction of Mar Thoma." Basalios died very shortly, but Mar Ivanios continued to work for eight years. It was he who advanced the work commenced by Mar Gregorios in bringing the faith and traditions of the Syrian Church of Antioch into the Malabar Church.

Before his death in 1765, Mar Thoma V consecrated his nephew as Mar Thoma VI. The new Mar Thoma in response to the intermittent difficulties incurred with the foreign bishops he succumbed to their pressure to obtain a re-consecration at their hands. He was given a fresh title of Mar Dionysius.

Meanwhile, political scenes showed intense activity. Political power structure overturned. British colonial power started establishing itself in India. The impact of British colonialism became evident in the life of the Mar Thoma Christian community also creating everlasting effect. That aspect of history, we will discuss in the coming issue. ■

- 1 They were Pambil Chandy of Kuravilangad, Vengur Geevarghese of Akaparambu, Kadavil Chandy of Kaduthuruthy and Anjilimmootil Itty Thommen of Kallisserry.
- 2 Many western scholars in the past had used the term 'Monophysites' to address them. But this term does not seem to be a right usage because they did not consider that Christ has only one nature. They did not deny either divine or human nature of Christ. But their emphasize was on the unity of human and divine nature in Christ rather than their distinction. On the other hand, the Chalcedonian group emphasised on the distinction instead of unity. Therefore the usage of the terms 'Monophysite' or 'Diophysite' does not provide a true understanding of the situation.
- 3 The word means the man in rags. He got the name because he was a monk and went around disguised as a beggar.
- 4 The Greek Church also has a Patriarch stationed at Antioch as well as the Maronites and Latin Patriarchs of Antioch. The Jacobite Patriarchs have from time to time shifted their residence.
- 5 The Indian Churches of St. Thomas, p. 39. These changes might not have been effected all of a sudden but slowly.
- 6 Quite interestingly these letters were sent to some other destinations. The first letter that was sent in 1709 reached Amsterdam whereas the second and third written in 1715 and 1720 respectively reached Rome. This points to the probability that Mar Thoma was not sure about the location of the Patriarch. This in turn suggests a not so strong relationship in existence before.

Sevika Sanghom: An Organization with Potential

Leelamma John, Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

We are privileged to live in a society, which has provided us with abundant opportunities. Yet we are hesitant in sharing our time and talents with those around us, especially to the less privileged. The great vision of our foremothers of witnessing the truth of the gospel must be fulfilled in North America in greater dimensions. As our women have a specific role to play in the family, church, and society, they need to hear what the Lord is saying to them throughout life's different situations and need to study the Bible from the perspective of women. They have their own special concerns which need to be addressed. Thus, the Sevika Sanghom equips our women to be more effective in their roles through study, service, and mutual sharing.

Women had an important place in the ministry of Jesus. He lifted these women to a place of honor to overcome the social attitudes and cultural barriers of the first century. Women were actively involved in the life of the early church. The great courage of Deborah, the faith of Eunice and



Esther, the truthfulness of Hannah, the hope and endurance of Anna, the sacrifice and devotion of Mary the mother of Jesus, and the deep love of the women who ministered to Jesus at the cross should inspire us to work together with enthusiasm and eagerness.

Women not only play a vital role in our families but also in the church as well. Older women must recognize the power within themselves to help others, bringing younger Marthomite women into the mainstream of women's activities. We can do greater things if we stand together and work together, offering our time, talents, and goodwill. We need the women of our Sanghom, especially the younger women to come forward and enter into the service of the church community with a sense of dedication to the Lord. I hope and pray that we continuously draw strength from the Lord to serve those in our church. We need to comfort the sick, and help the needy. We need courage for the present and hope for the future. May God bless us all. ■

Western Region Marthoma Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom

Mrs. Ponnamma Ninan, Vice President

The Sevika Sanghom, an integral part of our church, came into existence during the Maramon Convention of 1919. Under Bishop Abraham Marthoma's encouragement and guidance, Rev. V. P. Mammen prepared the written constitution. The objectives of the Sevika Sangham are:

- Fellowship and spiritual support among the women of the parish.
- Missionary outreach beyond the church community.
- Missions of mercy and financial help to the underprivileged without regard to caste or creed.

Mrs. Kandamma Verghese rendered her valuable services as the organizing secretary for over 20 years. Miss. Callaway, an Australian Missionary helped to establish the Vanita Mandiram in 1925 to train women evangelists who were sent as *sevinis* to mission fields in Kerala and different parts of India such as Kashmir, Tibetan Border, and Karnataka. After Miss. Callaway, Miss Mariam Samuel became the Principal of the Vanitha Mandiram.



The history of the Sevika Sangham of the Marthoma Church of San Francisco Bay Area starts on the 18th of June, 1995 under the leadership of Rev. C. John and Mini Kochamma. Miss Rachel Thomas was the Vice President, Mrs. Leelamma Phillip was the Secretary and Mrs. Shirley Mathew was the Treasurer. Our Mission is focused on helping people in need and the spiritual development of the women in our parish.

For the last eight years we have been raising funds to help people in need:

- We are helping to build houses for those who cannot afford a house back in Kerala with a scheme known as "House for the Houseless"
- Under the "Marriage Aid Plan", we help eligible families meet the expenses for the wedding of their daughters.
- We are sponsoring one *Sevini* every year.
- We are helping two children of the *Balika Bhavan*, Elanthoor.

(Continued on page 17)

The Hand that Rocks the Cradle Rules the World

Mrs. Kunjumol Cherian, Clinical Pastoral Counselor, Emmaus Center, Ann Arbor, MI

The Bible honors women and motherhood with dignity, equally with men in creation (Gen. 1:27) and oneness in marriage with man (Gen. 2:18-24). The creative work of God was not complete until He made woman. Instead of making woman from the dust as he chose to create man, God chose to make her from the man's flesh and bone to illustrate that man and woman are one in essence. Every man and woman are created and God equips them for different tasks but all the tasks lead to the same goal—honoring God through worship, service to others and evangelism. However, in a male-dominated society with the great responsibility of motherhood how can it be true that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world?

In a global culture that is success oriented, acquiring power by any means is the aspiration of many. Both men and women have succeeded in their pursuit of power though the balance of power, in the society hangs heavily on men traditionally. It is not sociopolitical and economic power of women that I intend to convey through this article but rather the ultimate power and ability to rule the world from a theological and spiritual view.

The word power is synonymous with authority, jurisdiction, control, sway, dominion, command which means the right to govern or rule or determine. Power implies ability to exercise force, permissive authority, or substantial influence to mold public opinion or the decisions of others. The stereotypical woman rocking the cradle brings to us an image of a tired woman, with her older children around her, demanding attention for their physical and emotional needs. She is tired and worn out running after the children, taking care of household chores, preparing the table when her husband comes home before he seats himself comfortably on the chair in front of the television. While he is watching his favorite game or show, she has more chores to finish, washing dishes, doing the laundry and getting children to bed. By the time she finds a few minutes to share her day experience with her husband, she finds him asleep on the chair. She retires in frustration and the whole routine starts all over again. Even in the postmodern society women attend to the "little" things at home, which are often thankless tasks that are necessary to keep our families going.

In modern society most mothers work outside the home also. In a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics women represented 45



percent in the civilian labor force in 1992. Women are projected to account for nearly three-fifths of the labor force between 1990 and 2005 and will comprise 47 percent of the work force by the year 2005.¹ Thus a typical mother in the postmodern culture has three full time jobs, two at home—doing the daily chores of the house and taking care of the children and her husband, and one working outside the home to pay for the bills. In between she also finds time to serve in her church and community.

In spite of all this how can the cradle-rocking hands rule the world? Women rule the world in the sense that through the unique ability of motherhood they perpetuate the human race. Every world leader, man or woman was brought forth and influenced by a mother. It takes a tremendous amount of strength, patience, and endurance to bear, raise and mold the character of a child. The Bible teaches us that such an enduring mother's "children will rise up and call her blessed," (Pro. 31:28).

People who became leaders in the world attest to this blessedness of women. Abraham Lincoln said of his mother, "All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother" ...And "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

In a male-dominated world the role of women is subjective and submissive in church, society and home without any public accolades, media coverage or front-page headlines. While feminists criticize apostle Paul for certain statements in his epistles in reference to women's role or behavior in church and society (I Cor. 14:34-35, I Tim. 2:11-12), we must not sidestep the many references Paul makes about the equality of women in church, home or society in service, mission and evangelism. "For there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:28). "And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life." (Phil. 4:3). "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also" (Rom. 16:1-2).

The qualities of leadership of a godly woman are explained in Proverbs 31:10-31. With godly women, it must not be an issue of who leads or who gets the

recognition. Many wonderful women in the Bible are not often the subject of pulpits, and many women in history remain in the shadow. "But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised... and let her own works praise her in the gates." (Pro. 31:30-31). Heaven's record lists them each beside their wonderful works in the home, church or society.

Such are the women God employed throughout the history of mankind to benefit humanity. The perpetuation of the human race began with Eve, though fallen from grace. Sarah at a biologically improbable age gave birth to a promised son (Gen. 21:1,2). Against all odds of authority, suppression and hatred in Egypt (Exo. 2:2) Jochebed bravely hid Moses who became the liberator of Israel. Deborah took charge as God directed when Barak was afraid of Sisera and Jabin (Jud. 4:4-9). God brought Ruth a Moabitess in the deepest despair of an idolatrous nation to Boaz who became her kinsman redeemer and their offspring continued the lineage through which Christ came to this world (Ruth 4:9-12). Hannah was fervent in worship and in answer to her prayer she dedicated her long-awaited son Samuel to the service of the Lord who became a powerful judge for Israel (1 Sam. 1:26-28). Jehosheba was instrumental in preserving the Davidic line of the Messiah by concealing the infant prince Joash in a bedroom of the palace for six years (2 Kin. 11:2; 2 Chr. 22:11-12). Esther saved Israel from a king (Esther 4:14).

Elizabeth, though old showed no doubts about God's ability to fulfill his promise and gave birth to John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus (Luke 1:24-25). Mary "found favor with God" and became the blessed mother of the Savior of the world (Luke 1:30). Joanna and Susanna were helping Jesus and the disciples out of their own means and they served the Lord (Luke 8:2-3). Mary

Magdalene from whom Jesus cast out seven demons became the first evangelist to proclaim the risen Savior (Mark 16:9-10). Without a God-fearing grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, Timothy would not have become a companion and a fellow evangelist to Paul (2 Tim. 1:5).

Qualities of a godly woman include hard work, fear of God, respect for husband, foresight, encouragement, care for others, compassion for the poor and wisdom in handling money wisely. Her portrait is a balance of these qualities (Pro. 31:10-31). She must love (Eph. 5:21-22; 1 Pet. 3:1-6) and reveal self-control (Titus 2:5). She manages her home (1 Tim. 5:14). Her faith is absolute trust in God (2 Tim. 1:5). When clothed in humility and coupled with fear of God they lead to enjoyment, success, honor, peace and security not only to herself but also to others around her.

Godly women are the reflection of God that our children often see. There is no substitute for godly women at home, in church, society and the nation. Their service is critical to the church and society. Though they seldom get flowers or accolades "Their price is far above rubies." How befitting are the words of William Makepeace Thackeray, "Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children." And the Jewish proverb says, "God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers." Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades. The woman to be admired and praised is the woman who lives in Fear of GOD. Give her everything she deserves! Festoon her life with praises! (Pro. 31:30-31 MSG). Yes, the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. ■

1 U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, No. 93-2 June, 1993
<http://eserver.org/feminism/facts-on-working-women.txt>

Western Region Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom *(Continued from page 15)*

- We are helping towards the expenses of education and transport of handicapped students in the Marthoma Opportunity School, and Liza's Home in Bangalore.
- During the Orissa flood, we took part in helping the flood victims.
- We are helping the mission fields in Tibet and Karnataka.
- We contributed \$10,000 towards the Church Building fund of our parish.

In order to promote spirituality among the members, we held several retreats over the years. The leaders for these

retreats were: Rev. Kurien Thomas, Rev. K. Thomas and Dr. Molly Abraham. Every year, the Sevika Sanghom enjoys the privilege of assisting the Achens during the service and ministering the Word of God on the Sevika Sanghom Day. Sevika Sangham members are involved in the planning and providing of dinners on special occasions like Christmas, Easter, Farewells, Birthdays and Fund Raising.

It has been encouraging to see these past years of growth and strength that the Lord has provided the women of our parish. Please pray that this flame may stay alit and continue to bring glory to God. ■

ജീവിതം നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു പോകാതിരിക്കാൻ

Thomas Philip, Maryland

മരണം ഒരു നിത്യ സത്വം. ഏതു സമയത്തും പ്രായഭേദമന്യേ ആർക്കും സംഭവിക്കാവുന്ന നീക്കുപോക്കില്ലാത്ത ദൈവവിധി ! എന്നാൽ ജീവിതം ഇവിടെ കൊണ്ടുവരാനിരിക്കുന്നില്ലെന്ന് ദൈവ വചനം പറയുന്നു. 'അവനവൻ ശരീരത്തിൽ ഇരിക്കുമ്പോൾ ചെയ്തത് നല്ലതാകിലും തീയതാകിലും അതിനു തക്കവണ്ണം പ്രാപിക്കേണ്ടതിന് നാം എല്ലാവരും ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ന്യായസനത്തിന് മുമ്പാകെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തേണ്ടതാകുന്നു' എന്നു അസന്നിഗ്ദമായി ദൈവം മനുഷ്യന് മുന്നറിയിപ്പു നൽകുകയും ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു. (2കൊരി. 5:10)

ക്രിസ്തീയ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പരമോന്നതമായ ലക്ഷ്യം മനുഷ്യന്റെ ആത്മരക്ഷയാകുന്നു. എല്ലാ ദൈവ വിശ്വാസികളുടേയും മുൻപിലുള്ള അതിപ്രധാനമായ വലിയ ചോദ്യം ജീവിതം നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു പോകാതെ നിത്യജീവൻ പ്രാപിക്കുവാൻ എന്തു ചെയ്യേണം എന്നുള്ളതാകുന്നു. ആത്മീയ ജീവിതത്തിൽ അനുധാവനം ചെയ്യപ്പെടേണ്ട അതിപ്രധാനങ്ങളായ ദൈവ കല്പനകളെ അവഗണിച്ചു കളഞ്ഞിട്ട് പൊള്ളയായ മതഭക്തിയും ആചാരാനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളും കൊണ്ട് ആത്മരക്ഷ പ്രാപിക്കാമെന്നുള്ള മിഥ്യാബോധത്തിൽ കഴിയുന്ന അനവധിയാളുകൾ ഇന്നുണ്ട്. ദൈവത്തെ പ്രസാദിപ്പിക്കാനായി എന്തെല്ലാം കാര്യങ്ങൾ മനുഷ്യൻ ചെയ്യുന്നു. നോമ്പുകൾ നോക്കുന്നു, ഉപവസിക്കുന്നു. നേർച്ചകളും പ്രാർത്ഥനകളും ധ്യാനവും വഴിപാടുകളുമൊക്കെ ആചരിക്കുന്നു. പക്ഷെ, ദൈവം അകലത്തിൽ തന്നെ. 'എന്തൊന്നു കൊണ്ടു ഞാൻ യെഹോവയുടെ സന്നിധിയിൽ ചെന്നു, അത്യുന്നത ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മുമ്പാകെ കുമ്പിടേണ്ടു? ഞാൻ ഹോമയാഗങ്ങളോടും ഒരു വയസ്സു പ്രായമുള്ള കാളകിടാക്കളോടും കൂടെ അവന്റെ സന്നിധിയിൽ ചെല്ലണമോ? ആയിരം ആയിരം ആട്ടുകൊറ്റനിലും പതിനായിരം പതിനായിരം തൈല നദിയിലും യെഹോവ പ്രസാദിക്കുമോ? (മീഖ. 6:6-7). ദൈവത്തെ പ്രസാദിപ്പിക്കാനുള്ള മനുഷ്യന്റെ പങ്കുപാട് നോക്കുക! ഉപരിപ്ലവമായ കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ മാത്രം ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചുകൊണ്ടുള്ള ദൈവാരാധനയും ഭക്തിയുമാണ് പ്രായേണ ഇന്ന് എല്ലായിടത്തും കാണപ്പെടുന്നത്. പാപത്തെ ഉപേക്ഷിക്കാതെ അധരം കൊണ്ട് ദൈവത്തെ ആരാധിക്കുന്ന വിശ്വാസികളെക്കൊണ്ട് നിറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുകയാണ് ക്രൈസ്തവ ലോകം ഇന്ന്.

ദൈവത്തിന് പ്രസാദകരമായ ദൈവാരാധനയും ഭക്തിയും എന്തെന്ന് വിശുദ്ധ ഗ്രന്ഥത്തിലുടനീളം വിവരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. പക്ഷെ ലോകത്തിലേക്കും വിലയുള്ള ഈ വിശുദ്ധഗ്രന്ഥം ഇന്നാർക്കും സമയമില്ലപോലും. ദൈവത്തെ അത്രമേൽ അറിയേണ്ട ആവശ്യമൊന്നും സുഖ സുഭിക്ഷതയിൽ ജീവിക്കുന്ന ഇന്നത്തെ തലമുറക്ക് ഇല്ലെന്നും വന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. അമേരിക്കയിലെ 64% ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികൾ ബൈബിൾ വായിക്കാത്തവരാണെന്ന് ഒരു സർവ്വേ റിപ്പോർട്ടിൽ കണ്ടു. മാർത്തോമ്മാക്കാരുടെ ഇടയിലും പ്രാർത്ഥനകളും ആരാധനകളും മറ്റുമായി മാത്രം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന ഒരു പുസ്തകമായി തീർന്നിരിക്കുകയാണ് ബൈബിൾ ഇന്ന്. ബൈബിൾ വായിക്കാതെ അടച്ചുവെച്ചു ജീവിക്കുന്ന ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികൾക്കുവേണ്ടി ദൈവം സ്വർഗത്തിന്റെ വാതിൽ തുറക്കുമെന്ന് ആരും കരുതണ്ട.

ദാനധർമ്മങ്ങളിലൂടെയും നേർച്ചകാഴ്ചകളിലൂടെയും ദൈവത്തെ പ്രസാദിപ്പിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നവരോട് അവൻ കൽപ്പിക്കുന്നു 'ഇനി നിങ്ങൾ വ്യർത്ഥമായുള്ള കാഴ്ച കൊണ്ടു വരരുത്, നീതികേടും ഉത്സവയോഗവും എനിക്കു സഹിച്ചു കൂടാ. നിങ്ങൾ എത്ര തന്നെ പ്രാർത്ഥന കഴിച്ചാലും ഞാൻ കേൾക്കയില്ല; നിങ്ങളുടെ കൈ രക്തം കൊണ്ടു നിറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നു. നിങ്ങളെ കഴുകി വെടിപ്പാക്കുവിൻ. നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്രവർത്തികളുടെ ദോഷത്തെ എന്റെ കണ്ണിൻ മുൻപിൽ നിന്നു നീക്കിക്കളവിൻ; തിന്മ ചെയ്യുന്നത് മതിയാക്കുവിൻ'. ഇതാകുന്നു ദൈവം എന്നും നമ്മോട് ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്നത്. ദൈവത്തെ അറിയുവാൻ ഒരൊറ്റ മാർഗ്ഗമേയുള്ളൂ, അത് നിഷ്കളങ്കതയുടേയും ഹൃദയശുദ്ധിയുടേയും മാർഗ്ഗമാണ്. 'ഞാൻ നിഷ്കളങ്ക മാർഗ്ഗത്തിൽ ശ്രദ്ധ വെയ്ക്കും; എപ്പോൾ നീ എന്റെ അടുക്കൽ വരും?' (സങ്കീ.10:12). ശുദ്ധിയുള്ള ഹൃദയത്തിൽ കൂടി മാത്രമേ ദൈവത്തെ ദർശിക്കുവാനും അവനെ ആരാധിയാനും സാധിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. ആവർത്തന പുസ്തകം 18:13-ൽ നാം വായിക്കുന്നു 'നിന്റെ ദൈവമായ യെഹോവയുടെ മുമ്പാകെ നീ നിഷ്കളങ്കനായിരിക്കണം' എന്ന്. ദൈവത്തിന് പ്രിയങ്കരമായ നേർച്ച ഇതാകുന്നു. 'ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഇഷ്ടമേ നിങ്ങളുടെ ശുദ്ധീകരണം തന്നെ' (1തെസ്സ.4:3). ഈ 'ശുദ്ധീകരണം കൂടാതെ ആരും കർത്താവിനെ കാണുകയില്ല' എന്നുമാണ് ദൈവ വചനം നമ്മോടു കൽപ്പിക്കുന്നത്.

മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയുടെ ഇന്നത്തെ ആവിശ്യം ആത്മീയമായ ഒരു നവോത്ഥാനമാകുന്നു. ജനങ്ങളുടെ സമൂഹമായ ആത്മ ശുദ്ധീകരണമാകുന്നു. പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്ന

കൂടുംബങ്ങളേയും ജനങ്ങളേയുമാണ് സഭയ്ക്കിനാവശ്യം. ഇടവകകളും അതിന്റെ അംഗസംഖ്യയും വർദ്ധിക്കുന്നതിനേക്കാൾ ഒക്കെ ഏറെ അഭികാമ്യമായിട്ടുള്ള കാര്യം പാപമോചനവും ആത്മശുദ്ധീകരണവും പ്രാപിച്ച ദൈവ ജനങ്ങളുടെ എണ്ണം ഇടവകകളിൽ വർദ്ധിക്കുന്നതാകുന്നു. ഭൗതികമായിട്ടല്ല ആത്മീയമായി മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭ വളരണമെന്നു വിവക്ഷ. കാലം ചെയ്ത എബ്രഹാം മാർത്തോമ്മ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത 'ഓരോ മാർത്തോമ്മാക്കാരനും ഓരോ സുവിശേഷ വേലക്കാരനായി തീരണമെന്ന്' സഭയെ ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്തതിന്റെ പൊരുളും മറ്റൊന്നല്ല. മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയിലെ ഓരോ വ്യക്തിയും നശിച്ചുപോകാതെ നിത്യജീവൻ അവകാശികളായി തീരണമെന്നും സഭ നൂറു ശതമാനവും സുവിശേഷ സത്യങ്ങൾക്കും ആത്മ രക്ഷയ്ക്കും വേണ്ടി നിലകൊള്ളണമെന്നും ആ വിശുദ്ധൻ ആഗ്രഹിച്ചു. ദൈവകൃപയാൽ, ദൈവ രാജ്യത്തിനുവേണ്ടി ആത്മ സമർപ്പണം ചെയ്തിട്ടുള്ള വൈദികരും, മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താമാരും, മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായും, സുവിശേഷവേലക്കാരും, വിശുദ്ധ ജീവിതം നയിക്കുന്ന ഒരു വിഭാഗം ജനങ്ങളും ഇന്ന് മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിൽ ആത്മീയമായ പ്രകാശധാരണി പരത്തിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടെ ഓജസ്സും, തേജസ്സും ശക്തിസ്രോതസ്സും അവരാകുന്നു.

ഇത്തരൂണത്തിൽ സഭാംഗങ്ങളുടെ ഇന്നത്തെ ആത്മീയ നിലവാരമെന്ത് എന്ന് ഒരു ആത്മ പരിശോധന നടത്തുന്നത് പ്രയോജനകരമായിരിക്കും. നമ്മുടെ ഇന്നത്തെ ആത്മീയ ജീവിതം നമ്മെ രക്ഷിക്കുമോ? ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നരകവിധിയെ നാം അതിജീവിക്കുമോ? നമ്മുടെ ആത്മീയ യാത്ര ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വിശുദ്ധ നഗരത്തിലേക്ക് തന്നെയാണോ നമ്മെ ഇന്നു നയിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്? ഉത്തരം വേഗം കണ്ടെത്തേണ്ട ജീവിതത്തിലെ അതിപ്രധാനമായ വിഷയമാകുന്നു ഇത്. 'ഒരു മനുഷ്യൻ വീണ്ടും ജനിക്കുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ അവൻ സ്വർഗ്ഗരാജ്യം കാണുകയില്ല' എന്ന് യേശു തറപ്പിച്ചു പറഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇതു കൂടാതെ ഒരു ആത്മീയ ജീവിതം ഇല്ല. നാം വീണ്ടും ജനിക്കപ്പെട്ട അഥവാ മാനസ്സാന്തരാനുഭവമുള്ള ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികളോ? പാപങ്ങൾ ഉപേക്ഷിച്ച് ആത്മ ശുദ്ധീകരണം പ്രാപിച്ച് ദൈവാത്മാവിലും ദൈവാത്മാവിന്റെ ഫലങ്ങളും പുറപ്പെടുവിച്ച് ജീവിക്കാതെ ആരും സ്വർഗ്ഗരാജ്യത്തിൽ പ്രവേശിക്കയില്ലെന്ന് നാം അറിയണം. 'ക്രിസ്തുയേശുവിനുള്ളവർ ജഡത്തെ അതിന്റെ രാഗമോഹങ്ങളോടുകൂടി ക്രൂശിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു' (ഗല.5:24). ദൈവാത്മാവിൽ അവർ ജനിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിൽ വേരൂറപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള ക്രിസ്തീയ ജീവിതം ഇതാകുന്നു. അനശ്വരമായ ആത്മീയ ജീവിതം ഇതാകുന്നു. നക്ഷത്രങ്ങളെപ്പോലെ എന്നും പ്രകാശം പരത്തുന്ന ക്രിസ്തീയ ജീവിതം ഇതാകുന്നു.

എന്താണ് ദൈവാരാധന? 'വിശപ്പുള്ളവന് നിന്റെ അപ്പം നൂറുകിക്കൊടുക്കുന്നതും അലഞ്ഞു നടക്കുന്ന സാധുക്കളെ നിന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ ചേർത്തു കൊള്ളുന്നതും നഗ്നനെ കണ്ടാൽ അവനെ ഉടുപ്പിക്കുന്നതും നിന്റെ മാംസ രക്തങ്ങളായിരിക്കുന്നവർക്ക് നിന്നെത്തന്നെ മറയ്ക്കാതിരിക്കുന്നതും അല്ലയോ? (യെശ.58:7). ഭാരതത്തിൽ മദർ തെരേസ്സാ ഇത് ലോകത്തിനു കാണിച്ചു കൊടുത്തു. സഭയായിട്ട് നാം സാധുജന സേവനങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യുന്നുണ്ട്. ആതുരലയങ്ങളും അഗതിമന്ദിരങ്ങളുമൊക്കെ നടത്തുന്നുണ്ട്. സൂഷ്ടിപരമായ മറ്റുപല നല്ല കാര്യങ്ങളും ചെയ്യുന്നുണ്ട്. പക്ഷെ പോരാ. കൂടുതലായിട്ട് നാം ഈ രംഗത്ത് ഇനിയും പ്രവർത്തിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. അത്രയധികം വിശക്കുന്ന വയറുകളും തേങ്ങുന്ന ഹൃദയങ്ങളും കേരളത്തിലുണ്ട്, ഭാരതത്തിലുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ സൽമനസ്സുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ രോഗത്തിലും ദുഃഖത്തിലും കഷ്ടതയിലും കഴിയുന്ന പലരേയും കഴിവനുസരിച്ച് വ്യക്തിപരമായി നമുക്ക് സഹായിക്കാവുന്നതല്ലേ? ഓർക്കുക 'നന്മ ചെയ്യാൻ നിനക്ക് പ്രാപ്തിയുള്ളപ്പോൾ അതിന് യോഗ്യന്മാരായിരിക്കുന്നവർക്ക് ചെയ്യാതിരിക്കരുത്' (സഭ.3:27).

എന്താണ് ഭക്തി? 'പിതാവായ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മുമ്പാകെ ശുദ്ധവും നിർമ്മലവുമായുള്ള ഭക്തിയോ; അനാഥരേയും വിധവമാരേയും അവരുടെ സങ്കടത്തിൽ ചെന്നു കാണുന്നതും ലോകത്താലുള്ള കളങ്കം പറ്റാതെപ്പണ്ണം തന്നത്താൻ കാത്തു കൊള്ളുന്നതും ആകുന്നു' (യാക്കോ. 1:27). കളങ്കം ഏശാത്ത ശ്രേഷ്ഠമായ ക്രിസ്തീയ ജീവിതത്തേയും ഭക്തിയേയും ദൈവം ഇവിടെ എടുത്തു കാണിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വിലയേറിയ ദാനമായ നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതം എന്നേക്കുമായി നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു പോകാതിരിക്കാൻ തിരുവചന സത്യങ്ങളെ മാനിച്ചും പ്രമാണിച്ചും നാം ജീവിക്കേണ്ടതാകുന്നു. 'ഇങ്ങനെ ഇവ ഒക്കെയും അഴിവാറുള്ളതായിരിക്കയാൽ ആകാശം ചുട്ടഴിയാനും മൂല പദാർത്ഥങ്ങൾ വെന്തുരുകുവാനും ഉള്ള ദൈവ ദിവസത്തിന്റെ വരവ് കാത്തിരുന്നും ബദ്ധപ്പെടുത്തിയും കൊണ്ട്, നിങ്ങൾ എത്ര വിശുദ്ധ ജീവിതവും ഭക്തിയും ഉള്ളവർ ആയിരിക്കണം!' (2പത്രോ.3:11-12).

Of Scheherzade and Other Women I Know

Vinod Varghese, Staten Island, New York



I have been witness to many a battle of the sexes, the arenas varying from homes to work places to church.

Being a bachelor, I see this duel when I visit other homes. Thankfully enough, the home is the least turbulent battlefield. I have seen only an occasional family that has to deal with a power struggle between the spouses. Apparently, the order of precedence is set early on in the relationship and each one knows when to swing the see-saw. The workplace, on the other hand, is the nastiest scene of gender rivalry. I remember with pain the cold-blooded murder of a very close friend's wife by one of her jealous male co-worker just a few months back.

In church, I hear grumbling from aunties on how the main positions in the Executive Committee should be shared equally between men and women. Built on the patriarchal legacies of the Semitic and Middle Eastern cultures, we have come to accept many practices as tradition. Among them, an unquestioning acceptance of an all-men governing body for our church. However, on closer scrutiny, I would say this is just a cosmetic characteristic of our community.

The women of the Syrian Christian community have enjoyed relatively more freedom of expression than women of other communities in Kerala. They have set precedents in education, travel, civil and family laws, and have taken active roles in the social transformation of Kerala. This cardinal role of women in our community could not be more evident than in the American Malayalee community where many women earn as much, if not more, as men, have helped in immeasurable ways to build up the community by sponsoring immigrant families, making large donations, doing voluntary work and so on.

That said, I should also concur that when it comes to sharing official positions in church, men still enjoy a majority of it. Some of us might say there is no such thing as gender-based discrimination. Perhaps no written rules, but we know the subliminal thought process, don't we?

To date, I have never taken sides although I have no doubts about my gender and whither my loyalty should lean. Nevertheless, I feel the urge to shine the light on women, if not for any profound reason, just to remind ourselves what awesome women we live among despite their unassuming appearance. This stream of thought sprung from two sources: One, a very objective thought that if women are an integral part of life itself, why do we have this tussle between the genders? Two, a subjective realization of how much my life has been influenced by women.

Let me start with that oft-quoted anecdote: When a professor asked a class to punctuate a sentence the men wrote, "Woman, without her man, is nothing" and the women wrote, "Woman, without her, man is nothing." I would not go to either of those extremes. A wise woman is every man's dream just as a sensitive man is every woman's. Don't we all know the little passage from the book of Proverbs? If you don't, look up Proverbs 31:10-31. Presumably, the book of Proverbs was written by a man. Looking

outside the Bible, in world literature, we see the characters of Portia in the 'Merchant of Venice' who not only saves Antonio's life but also changed her fiancé Bassanio's fortune by her astuteness, of Scheherzade who changed a psychopathic monarch's life and saved many women from undeserved death by her resourcefulness, of Morgiana in Ali Baba and Forty Thieves who saved the lives of her master and his family by her presence of mind--all representatives of a man's idea of the ideal woman. In other words, real men have always appreciated women's wisdom and never felt threatened by it as is the common belief among women.

One very valuable aspect of the feminine personality is the intuitive wisdom that comes with being a woman. Women seem to see solutions to problems without getting all tied up in political side issues. Whenever we tend to sideline a woman only because we are not comfortable with the notion, let us remember what a waste of valuable resources it is. Elephants follow a female leader and lionesses hunt food for the brood because they have learned to put to good use a resource they have among themselves. It's not a favor to women but an act of common sense to have their perspective on any major issue.

Anything I have to say about women would necessarily start with the wonderful women who have shaped my life so far: my mother, my grandmother, a relatively large contingent of aunts, an even larger number of sisters inclusive of cousins, and a few friends who left an indelible impression. I have to borrow the words of Kahlil Gibran here, "I am indebted for all that I call 'I' to women ever since I was an infant. Women opened windows of my eyes and the doors of my spirit. Had it not been for the woman-mother, the woman-sister, and the woman-friend, I would have been sleeping among those who disturb the serenity of the world with their snores."

Of course that would be material for a book, so I will stick to the first two here. Everyone has a mother, and so do

I. No big deal. The big deal however, is that she was the Encyclopedia Britannica of solutions to life's problems. I think of my mother every time I watch the ferryboats chugging to and from Staten Island. Stately, very accommodating, always dependable, never slacking, occasionally intimidating, and yet very susceptible. My grandmother, diminutive, fine featured, delicate to look at, with translucent skin, silver hair, and the brightest smile. It was hard to believe she gave birth to thirteen children, was grandmother of twenty-seven, and could charm any creature that breathed, reaching across cultures, languages, or age. One of my favorite memories of her is the way she would talk to our Punjabi neighbor in pure Malayalam and still comprehend her conversation in Punjabi. I still wonder how she did it because she never learned a word of any language other than Malayalam. My Ammachi never missed a day to pray for all ten of her surviving children and each of her twenty-seven grandchildren. Every time a good thing happens in my life or when I experience the love of a total stranger in a strange land, I believe in my heart, it is the fruit of years of my Ammachi's prayers.

Everything is not rosy in real life, though. The water turns muddy when egos clash. I have come to believe that this arises out of lack of understanding of some basic facts, especially among educated individuals. We have tons of feminist literature with endless tirades on insensitive male stereotypes and the wounded, misunderstood, downtrodden female psyche. In this issue of the Messenger itself I am sure readers will find some such stereotypical

assertions. Without attempting to refute any of those accusations, I would like to put in a few words for my usually silent fellow-males.

With education and self-dependence rising among women, it is only natural they would demand more recognition. However, some women take that thirst for recognition to the extreme of squashing everyone around them. Sadly, this Procrustean pursuit of acceptance only gives a false sense of grandeur. To walk with midgets and feel tall is not the same as walking with giants. I have also come across a few who equate emancipation of their femininity with effacement of femininity. The ideals of compassion and tenderness are signs of weakness to them. While I wish to see in every woman a Portia or Desdemona, I am not oblivious to the occasional Lady Macbeth.

It is true that most men have inflated egos. Take a moment to realize the functional purpose of that ego. Personally, I believe that if such a thing were not necessary, God would not have instilled that in us. Peacocks have bright feathers, male deer have intricate antlers, mandrills have colorful posteriors, and men have inflated egos. Take that away and most of them will look like a Persian cat just after a haircut. That ego makes a man attractive and exists for women. It's very rare to find a woman, regardless of how educated, or wealthy, or beautiful she is, who would choose a man beneath her level. Behind every successful man is a woman who lets him toot his own horn. ■

He is there!

Angela Susan Philip

*When the ship of life wrecks away
And all hopes for the future break away
When the rivers of our dreams
become shallow and deep,
And the road to our goodbeing
becomes narrow and steep,
When the stars we tried to reach
goes up higher in the sky,
And our work gets stuck
in a turbulent tide.*

*When the boat of our life tosses away,
And nothing seems visible except losses everywhere,
When the red roses of life wither away,
And all that bloomed yesterday
becomes gloomy today.
To help us around nobody is seen
To someone's shoulders we cannot lean
Look carefully by your shoulders
You're His love and care,
Surely it's Jesus,
He is always there.*

Being A Role Model in Post-Modern Society

Christian Nurturing and Educational Response

Thomas Koshy

Paper presented at the XXI Mar Thoma Family Conference held In Weston, Florida.

Let us examine the current trends to understand what trends are changing and if it should matter to a Christian community.

The crime statistics by Federal Bureau of Investigation reports that the rate of crime per 100,000 people has increased to 4,160.5 in 2002 from 4,124.8 in 2001. This gives an increase of 0.9% or increase in crime in a country where Christians are a significant majority.

The moral values have also have undergone changes. In the 1980s, Senator Gary Hart's illicit affair was recognized to a serious enough problem that made him withdraw his candidacy for presidential election. However, in 1990s, President Clinton's extra marital affairs were viewed by the American public as a 'never mind' matter through the election. Further, the Supreme Court banned prayer in public schools and continued to remove the 10 commandments from public buildings because it was objectionable Christian propaganda.

The widely accepted belief that uncontrolled freedom brings out creativity became basis to legally ban 'spanking of children' in Denmark, Sweden, Austria etc., Religion that was the primary source of inspiration for Art and Music in the early days became object of satire from icons of success. "Religion is for the weak" was the statement from Jessie Ventura, the Governor of Minnesota, and Bill Gates, the worlds wealthiest proclaimed that he has no time religion.

Certain principles can be derived from the new social standards. Let us find the primary root cause that drives the newly accepted standards:

When the economy is doing well, the president's moral values are not important (Root cause: Money)

If the team is winning, Magic Johnson's life style should not matter (Root Cause: Reputation)

Making most people feel good is more important than being right (root Cause: Pleasures)

As Christians we should have greater appreciation for Godly values. Christian Nurturing is the primary way of transferring the unchanging Godly standards of Conduct to the next generation.

The following scriptural references substantiate the parental influence.



1. "You are doing the things your own father does" John 8:41
2. Timothy reminds Paul of his mothers and grand mothers faith (II Tim 1:5)
3. Joseph was taken away from home at a very young age but he endured all trials from the foundation he received at home

How can we communicate the Godly value system? Parental Values are very loudly proclaimed in the use of Time, Talent & Treasures

Time: The use of time in the normal course of business is an expression of priorities. When the evenings are full of events and cannot find time for daily family prayer, we have indirectly proclaimed that family prayer is not a priority item. When parents cannot find time regularly to read God's word, meditate or find time for fellowship regularly, the value of prayer and meditation slides to the lowest priority.

Talent: When the skills and capabilities are at work only for building financial assets and fame God's work cannot be communicated as a required service of Christian discipline.

Treasures: When the purchasing budget is filled with buying entertainment and subscribing to status symbols and cannot find time for Christian service, charity or helping the needy another priority of home is forever engraved into the young hearts. Christian stewardship is not in the top list of budgeted expenses.

Christian values have to be taught at the "Home University". In the young age the children are to be seen as 'wet cement; make the right impressions' — Anne Ortlund. In the impressionable years, the parents are to control the environment to limit the level of risk. The approach must be not by saying "No-No-No", but be finding and organizing increased opportunities to create occasions that are "Yes" in every way. The approach of carrot and a stick works when it is respectfully administered at an young age. The Word of God endorses physical punishment. "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Proverbs 13:24, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not his soul spare for his crying" Proverbs 19:18. This teaching is contrary to the popular ideas of modern psychology.

As the children get older, the impact of the message depends on the character of the messenger. The practiced lesson of home is what is learned and retained, not the theoretical lesson. "Preach always; use words when necessary." Francis of Assisi. Another approach is to engage in participatory decision making. It involves including the youngster in preparing the pros and cons of the issue and allowing to reach a decision with sufficient bases. This method removes the undue effect of passion and forces reason to influence the outcome while the process of decision making is taught.

One of the greatest behavior to be acquired is to admit one own mistake. "To admit that I have been wrong is but saying that I am wiser today than I was yesterday." It is also founded on the Biblical principle "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." Proverbs 28:13. Never give the devil a ride; he always will want to drive.

Along with the discipline of home, Christian families should influence social and community values. Promote Christian values not just by voting but working for the candidate who will promote a Godly value system. Seek representation in School Boards and other community organizations and project our Christian Values. "If we do not stand for anything, we will fall for anything." Our implicit or explicit approval of today, sets tomorrow's standards.

The Christian Character needs to reflect in every endeavor. Our decision making is a critical area where we have to be extra careful. Following are some considerations:

- Is it consistent with the Ten Commandments?
- Will it deepen my relationship with Christ?
- Is it an extension of Christ's life, message and kingdom?
- Will it glorify Him and enable me to grow as His disciple?

Is there scriptural basis for it?

Has prolonged prayer produced an inner feeling of 'rightness about it'?

Is it something for which I can praise God?

Is it an expression of authentic love that brings good in the lives of people involved?

Will it be consistent with my basic purpose to love the Lord and communicate His love to others?

Will it enable me to grow in the talents and gifts the Lord has given me?

Will my expenditures in implementing this decision support tithing and helping others?

Concluding Thoughts

Parents have greater influence as role models than anybody else

Our use of time, talent and treasures display a value system
The home is where our values are put to test and that become lessons of life for the younger family members

Get involved to set Christian values for the community and bring the kingdom of God among us.

We need to demonstrate our Christian discipline in our decision making, actions, reactions & interaction. ■

Forward your comments or questions to tomkoshy@aol.com

Thomas Koshy, of Washington Mar Thoma Church, is a Senior Nuclear Scientist serving US federal government. His primary service area is Sunday school where he held several offices for the Diocese and Southeast Region. He devotes most of his time in teaching and preaching the Word of God to reaffirm our faith. He lives in Maryland with his wife Elizabeth and two children Benjamin and Annie.

My father had never lost his temper with us, never beaten us, but we had for him that feeling often described as fear, which is something quite different and far deeper than alarm. It was that sense which, without irreverence, I have thought to find expressed by the great evangelists when they speak of the fear of God. One does not fear God because He is terrible, but because He is literally the soul of goodness and truth, because to do Him wrong is to do wrong to some mysterious part of oneself, and one does not know exactly what the consequences may be.

Henry Drummond

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എബ്രഹാം മാമ്മൻ (സണ്ണി)
 Epiphany Marthoma Church



Abraham Mammen
 Epiphany MTC, New York

What Shall I Call it?

Smitha Thomas, Gaithersburg, Maryland

What shall I call it?
 The fondest memories of my
 yesterday or the hope for a
 wonderful tomorrow?

What shall I call it?
 The wild imagination of my inner
 self or the sincere prayer of my heart?

What shall I call it?
 The innocent gesture of my feelings or
 the playful Path of the hidden truth?

What shall I call it?
 The test of time or the opening
 gate for a happy ever after?

What shall I call it?
 The strength of my divine faith or
 the fulfillment of my beautiful future?

What shall I call it?
 The mirage of an impossible or
 a hopeful dream for the possible,
 unseen reality?

“Faith puts God to Work”!

"Thy Kingdom Come:" Bible study outline

Rev Sham P. Thomas

Bible Study given at the XXI Mar Thoma Family Conference held In Weston, Florida.

Bible Study II

The features of the Reign of God

Revelation 21:1-6, 22-27, 22:1-21

John visualises the fulfilment of the Lord's prayer, "thy kingdom come" in the coming down of the New Jerusalem. Unlike Paul, who suggested the possibility of disciples meeting the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:17) on his coming again, John emphasises the coming of heaven to the earth. It is not we going "up" to heaven, but heaven coming "down." The features of the new heaven and new earth are to be understood against the great Babylonian Empire. John presents the reign of God as God's alternative or antidote to the oppressive empire of Babylon. Babylon stands for any system that creates slavery, oppression and death. Jerusalem symbolises a reign of freedom, justice and life. The nature of these two reigns is symbolically contrasted in the various imageries used to describe them. Accordingly, Babylon is caricatured as beast where as the new Jerusalem is symbolised as Lamb. Again, Babylon is portrayed as a prostitute where as Jerusalem is narrated as a bride.

Features of Babylon are entirely different that of the Kingdom of God. Babylon is a super military and monetary power (Rev 18:2). In its arrogance of power Babylon boasts as invincible (18:7b) and invites other nations to align with it. Babylon is also a world market, which becomes the focus of consumer and luxurious goods (18:12f). The tragedy of this system is the conversion human souls and bodies as a consumer item.

The market exists at a human cost. Besides being a monetary and market centre, Babylon offers non-stop entertainment (18:21-24) with its artists and craftsmen. The combination of power, prosperity and pleasure give glamour to Babylon empire and its life-style. Life becomes defined after Babylon model. However John proclaims God's judgement on the great city of Babylon. The angel calls people to leave away from Babylon because any association with it would only bring lament. If you long for it, you will only end up in lament (18:4), John warns.

There are two reasons why Babylon and the life-style it symbolises would be judged and the great city would be grounded to nothing leaving only dust and smoke (18:23b-24). Firstly it was seducing people to believe that power,



prosperity and pleasure is life. It is a life of deception making people addicted to its lifestyle making them slaves. Secondly, it silences or even slaughters those who resist its luring and speaks against it (prophets). "Either seduce or silence" is the machination of the life symbolised by the world power Babylon. It is against the reign of Babylon and God's judgement of it that John has the vision of the Kingdom of God.

The Reign of God promises another reign. It is an alternative community. This is a promise of God and it emphasises that an alternative is possible to the life of Babylon. The new heaven and new earth is God's promise. The New Jerusalem descends as an alternative to Babylon on earth. It is not a product of human power, wealth and skills. It is God's gift and its garment is the righteousness of the saints.

The new Jerusalem is God-centred (Rev 21:3). In Babylon God is either absent or unnecessary. New Jerusalem is filled with God's presence. The presence and communion with God is all pervading to all parts of the city and time. It is a kingdom based on relationship between and among God and human beings. It is revealed in the absence of the temple (21:22). There is no realm of life, which is outside the control, and presence of God. God is not confined to certain time or space. It goes against the super-market spirituality where God is confined only to a counter. In other words God in Jesus becomes the host of life rather than a guest who can be invited when it is convenient and comfortable. Since relationship is more important and people are not objectified there is no tears and pain in the reign of God. Instead of the wanton consumption in Babylon, in the reign of God it is only communion and communication.

The reign of God is symbolised by the open gate (21:25). Gate or door always symbolises acceptance and rejection. Gate is to allow wanted people in and to keep others outside. Babylonian empire seeks its protection in defending itself: using various devices like forts, gates and military. In short, boundaries are made as part of ensuring security. New Jerusalem becomes an open gated city. It is not something that has to defend as it invites all and accepts all. Open access is its catchword. The other is not considered as a threat. The other is not segregated in terms of race, class, gender and colour. There is no distinction between holy and unholy. The reign of God is where

boundaries are broken, and dichotomies are overcome. The boundary between heaven and earth, night and day, light and darkness have overcome.

Kingdom of God is symbolised as a city of life. Two symbols of life from Genesis have been re-employed in the last chapters of the Bible: Water and tree. Instead of the addictive wine that flows in Babylon, kingdom of God is featured as having water of life and tree of healing. In Babylon there is limitless consumption, in the reign of God there is mutuality between human and nature. The tree is not the cause of curse but of healing of the nations. The life-giving water is offered as a gift in the reign of God. 22:17. There is an invitation to drink life-giving water. Life in God's reign is not a product to be purchased in the profit-driven market. It is offered as free gift. The fullness of life (eternal life) of the kingdom of God is not a product to be purchased. It is a gift to be accepted. It is not something we build up, construct or amass. It is a call to continue the invitation to accept the life of the Kingdom of God.

Reign of God is an alternative to the "Babylonian" empire and life-style it perpetuates. Reign of God subverts the existing empires and invites to accept a new reign, life style and value system.

Bible Study III Response to the Reign of God

Reign of God is God's and God's gift. But it demands our response urgently and the response is to be made in this world. We like to study and analyse the reign of God, but Jesus invites us to accept and enter into it. The reign of God, in this sense, is not something that enter into us but it is we who are to enter into the reign of God.

What is the response to the reign of God that Jesus demands from us? Mark 1:14-15. Jesus began his ministry announcing the reign of God. The context and content of the inauguration of his ministry would indicate the response that Jesus requires from us.

1. **The Context:** Jesus begins his ministry of the Kingdom of God on hearing the arrest of John the Baptist. This coincidence of John's arrest and Jesus' entry to ministry is significant on two counts. John the Baptist was the forerunner who prepared the way, inviting people to move away from the traditional political and religious power centres of his time—Jerusalem—to the desert to participate in the new beginning of God. He invited people to move to a new location and vocation. However John the Baptist through his uncompromising prophetic ministry has been perceived as a threat by the political rulers and was

arrested. He was imprisoned. If anybody had thought that by imprisoning John, the ministry of the Kingdom of God could be thwarted, it had ended up as an illusion. When John was arrested and removed from the scene, Jesus entered the scene. This taking over indicates that the message of the kingdom cannot be chained or suffocated by imprisoning the messengers of the kingdom.

Again, the imprisonment of John for the sake of the Kingdom of God or because of the ministry of the Kingdom of God had very well indicated what Jesus also could expect in continuing the ministry. So from the beginning of his ministry, according to Mark, the cost of the ministry is vividly given and the readers of the gospel are also cautioned what to expect of it. The price of the Kingdom is proclaimed at the very beginning itself. So the very inaugural proclamation of the Kingdom of God is comforting and challenging. It is comforting because of the assurance that the reign of God would continue even though John was imprisoned, Jesus was crucified and his disciples were persecuted. The disciples of Christ can be silenced or slaughtered, but the reign of God would continue: it would resurrect! However, life for the reign of God is challenging because if Jesus had been killed because of his life for the reign of God, his followers could not expect anything less. It is costly indeed. So the very context of the proclamation is important.

2. **The proclamation that Jesus announced was two-fold. It contained an announcement and an appeal.**

a) The announcement "the time is fulfilled, kingdom of God is at hand..." had made it clear that the reign of God has come into the world decisively in Jesus. It was inaugurated in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and it will be fulfilled in his coming again. So we cannot separate Jesus from the reign of God and vice versa. The exorcisms and common meal were two of the symbols he used to declare the advent of the reign of God. Exorcisms signalled the end of the tyrannical powers and common meal showed the open access to God's community in Jesus. Mt. 12:28, Mk. 3:27. In short, Jesus lived out the reign of God as he had never considered it as exclusively other worldly experience.

b) This is an urgent call. The response to God's rule is something, which can not be postponed or delayed. Luke 9:59-60, Luke 10:4. The messengers are to be so committed that they should not even wait to greet anyone on their way. The messengers of the kingdom do not have the luxury of time. Priority is for the Kingdom and time is running out. It is suicidal to think that life will go on as it is cautioned Jesus.

Response to the kingdom should not be delayed because each moment away from the reign of God will be that harmful to oneself and others-catastrophic.

3. **The response that Jesus wants is given in the appeal: "Repent and believe in the gospel."**

- a) The title of Mark's book is gospel. John and Jesus also use the term gospel. Gospel is a term associated with Roman propaganda. When a new Roman emperor was enthroned, or a new country was brought militarily under Roman dominion the news was proclaimed all over the kingdom. This was called "gospel." By using that term Mark is pointing to the announcement of an alternative reign to that of the Roman Empire.
- b) Jesus announces the inauguration of a new reign, which is new and different from the existing empires and kingship. However those who are aligned with the old order and its benefactors cannot enter in to the kingdom. If people want to enter into this reign of God they need to proceed differently and take a new direction. In other words they need to repent. Repentance, in this sense is not just feeling remorse but taking a U-turn in life towards the reign of God. It is seeking the kingdom first, that is, above everything else and seeking its righteousness. It is moving away from the influence of the unholy troika of military, money and market. It is moving away from the glamour of seduction and deception of the Babylon.
- c) Most importantly, Jesus emphasised that it is not our repentance that gives us the kingdom of God, but repentance is our response to the gift of the Kingdom. Kingdom is not the result or reward of our repentance. Repentance is the response to the kingdom, which is at hand. Kingdom is not our product. We are called to enter it rather than make it. Repentance is a preparation just like we dressing up for a journey. It is not our dressing up that necessitates the journey but for the journey that we get dressed.

4. **Repentance is leaving the old life and cleaving to the new reign.** Parable of the prodigal son indicates this new orientation in life. He wanted a life of power, prosperity and pleasure but came to his sense to realise that the life he had chosen away from his household was a non-sensical one and returned to the family. It is this taking of a different direction in life is repentance. Hosea 6:1. Come return to the lord. Turn away from Babylon and Rome what they symbolised. Leaving the Babylonian life. Cleaving to the good news which is a new community in Christ.
5. **Turning away is only part of the answer. We are to turn to something.** That is the kingdom of God. We are to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to trust in the trustworthiness of God. It believes that God's reign that is most important in life. The most valuable thing in life is entering into God's kingdom and seeking its righteousness. Faith also means faithfulness. It is in faithfulness that we become signs of God's reign in this world. We are to keep on repenting and believing that Jesus requests us to do. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness is given the water of life and are called to be messengers of the Kingdom of God. We are under new management.

Conclusion:

When we pray "thy kingdom come" we are submitting ourselves to seek God's reign as the most important goal in our life. Such a prioritization demands to run away from the seduction of a life style marked with power, prosperity and pleasure. In turn, it is a call to accept God's reign and to live faithfully to the core of the gospel in a world, which gazes itself, on glittering glamour. Can we make this choice to seek God's reign and its righteousness? Can we be like the merchant who sold everything to buy the precious pearl hidden in the field? Is the reign of God and its righteousness the most precious in our life to commit everything including our own lives? ■

Instead of allowing yourself to be unhappy, just let your love grow as God wants it to grow. Seek goodness in others. Love more persons more — love them more impersonally, more unselfishly, without thought of return. The return, never fear, will take care of itself.

William Law

Heed to Haggai

Abraham Kurien, Marthoma Church of Los Angeles

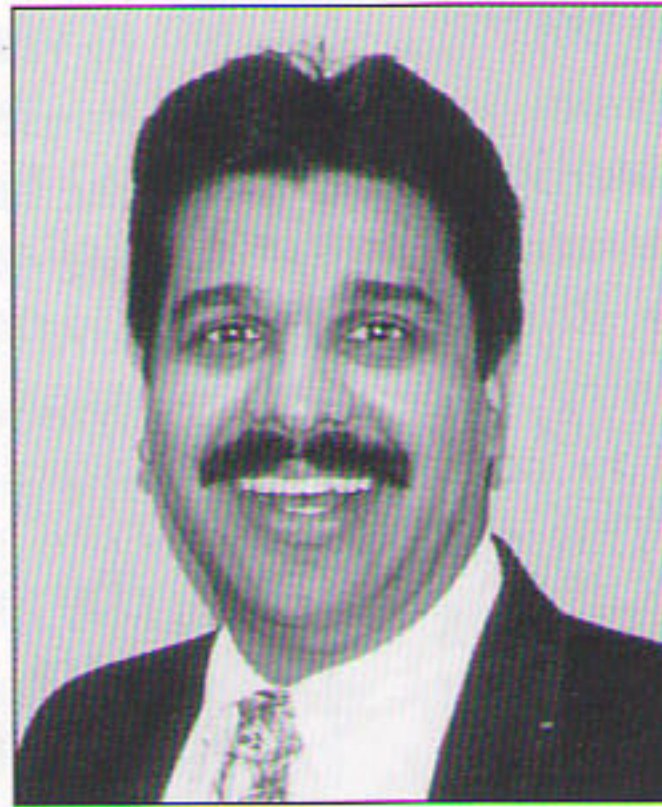
When we left off last month, I had posed a thought-provoking question towards the end of my previous article. The question had to do with how effective we were going to make our devotional time. I would like to continue dwelling on EDT by exploring another book in the Old Testament which was written by a Minor Prophet called Haggai.

The book of Haggai does not deal with EDT per se rather the book deals with the subject on what is important to our lives in terms of priorities. I am not able because of the paucity of time and space to provide a detailed study on the Book of Haggai. I will instead make an effort to underline the basic message Prophet Haggai has for us in his short book. The Book of Haggai incidentally is found towards the end of the Old Testament just before the book of Zachariah.

Pressures, demands, expectations and tasks push in on us from all sides on a daily basis. We are inundated by tasks that assault our schedules. Time and again we hear the call to Do this! Be there! Finish that! Call them! It seems as though everyone wants something from us — our families, our friends, our employer/employees, our schools, our churches, clubs. We find ourselves at the fag end of the day with nothing left to give as we run out of energy and time. We find that life rushes past us as we attend to the necessary, the immediate and the urgent. Soon we realize that we have left unfinished some of the important tasks in life. Our problem is not necessarily the volume of demands or the lack of scheduling skills but rather it is the values and what is truly important to us.

Much of our values and priorities are reflected in how we use our resources namely our time, money, strength and talent. There was some wise person who remarked that a man is known by the way he handles his check register. The statement might seem to allude only to our finances but when we take the broader perspective it also governs the position we have for God in our lives. We are caught often trying to say that God is number one but time and often we relegate him to a lesser number on our to-do lists. Twenty-five centuries ago, a voice was heard calling men and women to the right priorities. Haggai the prophet knew what was important and what had to be done and thus he challenged God's people to respond to what Haggai considered was important in one's life. Today that message still stands good in our modern times, a message I call "Heed to Haggai".

Let me firstly try to throw in a little bit of history to make a clearer understanding of Haggai's message. In 586



B.C., the armies of Babylon had destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem—God's house, the symbol of his presence. In 538 B.C. King Cyrus decreed that Jews could return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple. So they traveled to Jerusalem and began the onerous task of rebuilding the Temple. One would think the Jews would go about completing the task diligently; rather they forgot their purpose and lost their priorities, as opposition and apathy brought the work to a standstill (Ezr 4:4-5).

I am certain many of us have been in similar situations. This is when the prophet Haggai spoke, calling them back to God's values. He asked the question God asked the Jews "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?" (1:4). The people were more concerned with their own needs than with doing God's will, and, as a result, they suffered. I cannot refrain myself from empathizing with the situation. I have been guilty time and over again in not promoting the work of God's kingdom here on Earth. It could be as simple as mailing the check to the hapless missionary in Kerala, or participating in feeding the destitute children in Los Angeles.

It is amazing how prophet Haggai's words seem so meaningful to our lives. For those of us who reside in the continent of United States of America, time is always a premium. We find ourselves at the end of the day with many tasks unfinished. I am certain most of us are committed to God and His purpose here on Earth but somehow our works do not translate to action and we end up miserable not fulfilling our responsibilities.

Then Haggai called them to action: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you! Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD" (1:7-8). And God's message through His servant Haggai became the catalyst for finishing the work.

Although Haggai is a small book, it is filled with challenges and promises, reminding us of God's claim on our life and our priorities. As one reads the book of Haggai, one imagines Haggai walking the streets of Jerusalem, urging people to get back to doing God's work. We need to heed to Haggai urging us to reorder our priorities in accordance with God's will. We need to introspect our lives and as we close out another year in our lives, we need to determine what we have left unfinished. Is there that missionary that needs our support, that sick person who needs our prayers, that cause which we need to stand up and be counted for? ■

The Mar Thoma Opportunity School

A Special Centre for Special Children

Twenty three years ago, His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, the Mar Thoma Metropolitan, while addressing a small group of Marthomites in Bangalore, shared with them the concern that the affluent sections of society took for granted, the rights, privileges and comforts they enjoyed without caring for the underprivileged and disabled persons who worked and contributed to their comfort. In response to this exhortation the group started The Mar Thoma Opportunity School because it felt that mentally retarded children, constituting nearly 3% of the population were the most neglected among the financially backward classes. For better management and for transparency in all financial matters the group formed itself into a society, The Mar Thoma Welfare and Educational Society, which is registered with the Government of Karnataka.

The Mar Thoma Opportunity School is a residential centre for the training and rehabilitation of children with severe mental retardation. The aim is to equip these mentally challenged children with the necessary self-help skills, so that as adults they may live with a modicum of human dignity and be accepted in society. There are sixty three children on the rolls of the School and eleven in the hostel. They all have some physical disability or other. Some are Spastic or Autistic. A good number have speech deficit, hearing impairment, low vision and metabolic imbalances. And they are mostly from economically backward homes. Parents reported that due to these multiple disabilities many of them were denied admission in other similar institutions/training centres. Children, five years and older are given admission to the school and hostel without reference to caste, religion, community, language, domicile or financial status. Two buses ply through parts of the city every morning and evening to collect and to drop back children from their homes.

The majority of students are incapable of any academics and yet a couple of school hours are spent each day in teaching them alphabets and numerals so as to enable them to recognise the numbers on public transport buses, numbers on currency notes and the like. Irrespective of the age of admission, it is observed that most children have not been given any kind of training till then nor have they developed any kind of living skill. Understandably, the parents are overwhelmed by their children's predicament. And poverty compounds their misery. The initial training and emphasis is towards helping the children acquire living skills such as, eating, bathing and dressing without help and more importantly, taking care of their toilet needs. Specially trained staff members are employed. The ratio of staff to students is one teacher for seven students.

The Asha Bhavan Hostel is situated on the same premises as the Opportunity School. It has facilities for 40 residents. Now there are eleven resident children and a resident staff comprising a warden, two trained nurses, two maids and a cook.

There is a Vocational Training Centre attached to the School. Students with eye-hand co-ordination and who are able to follow instructions are taught simple skills. Weaving on handlooms, making bath mats, doormats and envelopes, doing stitching and craft work, cooking, gardening and cleaning are some of the skills that are taught. It is a matter of satisfaction that over the years a number of the students have been empowered to find gainful employment as helpers in show-rooms, printing presses, retail shops and as assistants to gardeners. Can one fully comprehend the agony of a parent whose heart is aching with the burden of not knowing who to entrust an untrained and disabled child with, at the time of death and how to protect it from destitution.

This Centre is managed by a Board of Management, which is elected from the members of the Society. All office bearers are volunteers and they receive no remuneration of any kind, not even towards travelling expenses. This rule is incorporated in the Memorandum of Association and Rules of the Society.

The Society is plagued by financial liabilities because the children of the school are mostly from backward homes and therefore are not able to contribute towards the expenses involved in giving them training. The only steady source of income is an annual Govt. grant of Rs. 4,50,000/- whereas the expenditure is well over Rs.1,200,000.00. This is a staggering amount for a charitable non-profit organisation. The recurring deficit is met by donations from members of the Society and friends. There is no agency or organisation that has committed itself to contributing towards the day to day expenses of the centre. All accounts of the Society are subject to external audit and are made available to members for scrutiny.

Kindly Help the Mar Thoma Welfare and Educational Society continue in its mission of mercy:

With your prayers

By sponsoring the training expenses of one child—Rs 6500.00 per year

By sponsoring the hostel and school expenses of one child—Rs. 30000.00 per year

By donations for other developmental needs

Donations to the Society are exempt from Income Tax under section 80 G of the Indian Income Tax Act. As this provision does not give tax benefit to the donors living in the US, donations may be made to the Diocese of North America, Canada and Europe. The Diocese has agreed to forward it to the Mar Thoma Welfare and Educational Society.

**Association of
Physicians and Dentists of the
Mar Thoma Church of North America, Inc.**

**The Association of
Physicians and Dentists
of the Mar Thoma Church
of North America, Inc.**

Cordially invites all Physicians and Dentists

of our Diocese to attend its

13th Annual Conference

on July 23-25, 2004

at the

Warwick Conference Center

Warwick, New York

For more information contact:

201-670-8126

Mexico Mission Project Leaps Into 2004

Mrs. Leila Thomas

"Test me in this saith the Lord Almighty and see if I will not throw open the windows of Heaven and pour out so much of blessing that you will not have room enough for it". (Malachi 3:10) These were the thoughts that flashed through my mind when I got a feedback from Rev. C. A. Varghese after his visit to the island of Puntilla Norte in January of 2004. This along with the e-mails received from Mr. George Kurien and Susan Kurien helped me prepare a report on the achievements of our mission work and future plans on the island.

Christmas and New Year Celebrations were held with lots of fun and games due to the joint efforts of our members and donation of toys by the Carmel MTC, Boston.

Media coverage. A four page article appeared in the local Mexican Newspaper in September of 2003. The article started from the front page with details of the development and carried pictures of the Holy Communion Service by Coorilos Thirumeni at the inauguration and many other pictures. This was put in the papers by a high ranking official of the Mexican Government who was the guest at the closing ceremony. Soon after this the Television Network telecast the program showing the developments on the island done by the Mar Thoma Mission of the Diocese of North America and Europe. 'Mar Thoma Mission' are well known words and earns tremendous respect in Mexico. Praise the Lord! We did not seek propaganda nor did we advertise—the Lord made it known!

Response from the Mexican Government

Drinking Water. Seeing the good work we did on the island the Mexican Government built a tank at their expense on the mainland and made arrangements to fill the tank at regular intervals with water. This was an answer to the burden in the hearts of each Mission Volunteer—that we need to provide drinking water.

Land. The Mexican Government is willing to give land to make a base for the missionary activities. Three locations of land have been identified near the local school. After a survey and legal formalities this land will be given as a gift to the Mar Thoma Mission.

Achievements

Homes. It was indeed a great joy for Rev. C. A. Varghese to visit each home built by our mission volunteers for the islanders. He was amazed to see the manner in which the houses were maintained, clean and decorated well. Most of them have a garden around their house. The islanders were proud of the homes they owned. A fitting reward to all those who donated the houses and the mission volunteers who helped in building the houses.

Education

Uniforms. Thanks to the generous contributions from members of the different parishes we were able to provide three sets of uniforms, a backpack and a pair of shoes to 35 children.

Housing for the teachers. One of the houses built was designated as a place for the teachers from the mainland to stay. This helps in regular classes being held and also attracts students from other islands. The above two factors have created a feeling of commitment among the children and two students of Standard Seven have secured 100 % in all subjects. The children studying on the mainland are also doing well.

Spiritual and social awareness. The people on the island have realized about the importance of prayer. The women discourage alcoholism and ask the people involved in drinking to move from the island.

Cleanliness and hygiene. The island has been cleaned completely of all the trash and garbage.

Medical Work. A very committed Mexican doctor has volunteered to go to the island 2 to 3 times a month. He is also willing to train a lady to help in administering the medicines. We have to make arrangements for the medicines. This is a great help till our own medical program gets under way.

Tailoring classes. The Jubilee Technical Institute is busy with 23 lady students enrolled for tailoring classes. They are being trained to make ladies garments. The Sevikasanghom of our different parishes could take this as a project to help them make these garments and also help them in marketing them.

Suggestions for Future Programs

- 1) Provide furniture for the school, that is 35 sets of tables and chairs.
- 2) Provide a stove and a cot for each house.
- 3) Sevika Sanghom to help in the tailoring project.
- 4) Spiritual nurturing and social awareness to be imparted to the people on the island on a regular basis. This can be taken in turns by one parish each month.
- 5) Income generation. Providing live stock farming like chicken, goat and turkey.

The Mexico Mission Project as mentioned in the opening verse has been richly blessed by the Lord Almighty. Let us pray for His continued blessings on all the future programs. ■

Pick the Right Food

In recent years much importance is given to balanced diets. Depending on your need, (to lose or gain weight) you are asked to give up certain food items and asked to consume more of other items. In reality, most commercial diet suggestions are based on partial knowledge and incomplete studies. It could lead to more health problems later in your life. We have witnessed many recalls of food and diet products based on adverse outcomes. Individuals suffered heart attacks and other organ damages due to special diet programs they adhered to.

Understanding your body is very important for its upkeep. *In general terms, our body is comparable to a car consisting of a number of pumps, filters, and a main engine, all connected to a central computer system.* The main engine is the Heart. All the food that we consume is to help fuel the engine. You do not need to add more fuel than you need. The pumps attached to the engine, (the arteries and veins) carry the life fluid everywhere in the body. The Filters are the two kidneys and the liver. Both of these vital organs have other functions also including balancing the electrolytes and other enzymes. The kidney is one of the most sophisticated filters, with minute tubules, all trying to filter out waste. Too much waste too fast, can damage the tubules. Your skin is also a partial filter that lets excess fluid waste out. It is good to sweat at least once a week to keep your skin healthy and rejuvenated. Any infections from Bacteria, Virus or fungus can affect the functioning of any of these systems, based on the location and severity of infection.

A blockage in the pump system can cause the engine to slow down or even stop functioning. Good air flow throughout the system is ensured by good lungs. Your intestine processes food, just like an oil refinery, collecting the good and discarding the bad, while passing through a very long canal system.

All these body functions are controlled by a main computer called the Brain. The Human brain has live wires extending to all parts of the body, sensing heat, cold, pain, malfunction, etc. A Headache is usually a brain signal of body malfunction. Remember, treating the symptom does not take care of the malfunction or problem.

Human blood pH is always kept within a short range of 6.8 and 7.8, with a normal reading of around 7.2 to 7.4. (pH is a measure of Acidity/Alkalinity of a given fluid or substance). Altering this pH range affects the functioning of all organs and muscles. Most food we eat, is either Acidic (below pH 7.0) neutral (pH 7.0) or Alkaline (above pH 7.0). The Ayurvedic medicines are used, mostly based on their pH content and chemical balance. It is important to keep a balance between acidic and alkaline foods to keep

your body in good shape. *According to researchers, to maintain good health, diet should consist of 60% alkaline forming foods and 40% acid forming foods. To restore lost health, the diet should consist of 80% alkaline forming foods and 20% acid forming foods.* Please consult with your family physician before starting any special diets or making drastic changes in your eating habits. *Taking care of your body involves more than just watching one's diet. Cleanliness and good exercise habits go a long way. A simple walk for at least 20 minutes, 3 times a week will show positive results in your body function.*

The following is a list of Alkaline and acid forming foods that we use on a regular basis.

Highly Alkaline forming foods: Baking Soda, water melon, onion, lime, lemon, raspberry, pine apple, tangerine etc.

Moderately Alkaline: Cashews, pepper, garlic, greens including kale, parsley, mustard green, ginger root, broccoli, cantaloupe, citrus, carrots, mango etc.

Low alkaline: Green tea, apple cider, sesame seed, almonds, bell pepper, mushrooms, cauliflower, cabbage, eggplant, collard green, pear, apples, blackberry, cherry, peach, papaya etc.

Very low alkaline: Ghee, duck eggs, oats, most seeds, coconut oil, Olive oil, flax seed, Okra, cucumber, lettuce, banana, blueberry, raisin, strawberry etc.

Neutral: Egg yolks (soft cooked), goat milk, soybeans, sprouted grains, Tofu etc.

Very low acidic: Honey, maple syrup, cream, butter, chicken, fish, brown rice, sunflower oil, canola oil, spinach, black eyed peas, string beans, zucchini, coconut, dry fruits, figs, guava, dates etc.

Low Acidic: Black tea, vanilla, alcohol, cow milk, goat meat, lamb, mutton, shell fish, turkey, wheat, white rice, tapioca and other yams, lima beans, tomatoes etc.

Moderately acidic: Coffee, nutmeg, milk protein, cottage cheese, pork, veal, corn, rye, oat bran, pistachio seeds, pecans, green peas, etc.

Highly Acidic: Sweeteners, pudding, jams and jelly, granulated sugar, cocoa, ice cream, beef, cotton seed oil, fried foods, soft drinks (colas), black beans etc.

Although this list does not include all common food items, it should provide a basic idea about acid/alkaline content. Next time you cook, think twice and keep a good balance of proteins, starch, vegetables and fruits preserving its natural goodness. ■

Church Accounting Software

Isn't it time to automate the cumbersome task of church accounts? Now there is software that is approved by the Mar Thoma Diocese of North America that performs all your church accounting needs. This program was originated in the Bethel Mar Thoma Church and been in use for over 3 years. Other Churches also have used it successfully as well.

The software is created using Microsoft Access 2000. It is a relational database where all tables and queries have a built-in relation. It performs both accounts receivable and accounts payable functions.

The benefit of a database structure is that all information is ONLY ENTERED ONCE Then you can generate any reports or queries you want. There are many useful built-in reports typical of the Mar Thoma parishes. Some of benefits of this software include the following:

- No duplication of ANY entry
- Flexibility for user
- Time saving and accurate account logic
- Instant account balance
- Many useful built-in reports that can be readily published. Some of the reports include:
 - > Cumulative receipts for all members' contribution. (This can be issued quarterly, monthly, annually, or at any other intervals. No more manual receipts)
 - > Member contribution table summaries with total. (This report is usually posted on some churches bulletin board and included in the annual report)
 - > Statement of income and statement of expense.
 - > Many other useful reports for administrative purposes that are not typically published.
- All reports, queries, and tables can be directly imported to Excel or Word.

Accounts Receivable

Once you enter all the names and account # of members in the member information table and define all the different contribution types (i.e. BD for Birthday, MS for Monthly subscription, etc.), you are ready to enter all the daily receivables in another form with easy to use pull down menu options. Then you can immediately generate many built-in reports mentioned above.

Accounts Payable

This is similar program as MS Money or Quicken with the added benefit of integration data with the accounts

receivable information. First you define the entire expense category (i.e., electric, mortgage, salary, etc.) in a table and a payee list in another table where you can enter typical names you write check for (i.e., PECO, Gas Company, Vicar, etc.). Entering the information in these sub-tables makes data entry easier by allowing pull-down selection in the main account payable form called "frmBankTransaction". This also gives user the flexibility to define your own entries. Once all bank transactions are entered in the form, then you can instantly generate many accounts payable reports. In the form itself, you can see instantly the total deposit, total withdrawal, and the current bank balance.

Cost

This is NOT commercial software sold for profit. Any money generated will go straight to charity works in India. Jothy Varughese, of Bethel Mar Thoma Church spent significant portion of her personal time to develop this software and to continue technical support for all churches that will use this software. Therefore, a donation made payable to The Bethel Mar Thoma Church of \$250.00 per Church is expected where the funds will be sent to the appropriate charity.

You will also receive Free Church Registry Software

This is a very useful program to track member information by the Vicar or Secretary. All member and family information can be entered including, address, phone number, date of birth, wedding anniversary, children's and other member's information, hometown in Kerala, etc. Once all the initial information from your existing registry is entered, then many standard reports are generated including:

Address labels, Wedding anniversary list, Birthday list (no year will print, so don't worry about your age), Voter's List (automatically generates voter's list once you enter the date for 18 years old and run some extra queries)

Parish Directory. (It even has a report with every individual family member with their phone #), Diocesan Directory (it is now in the standard diocesan directory format), Prayer Group List, Many, many more...

Remember, you only have to enter all the information ONCE, and then periodically update as needed.

For more information contact Jothy Varughese of the Bethel Mar Thoma Church of Philadelphia by e-mail at: varughesefamily@comcast.net

Human Cloning—why it should not be done

Arpan Varghese, Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York

When will humanity learn? When will we realize that we are working toward our own doom? Not every invention or discovery is good. History has taught us that we suffer because of such inventions or discoveries. Although many might argue that human cloning will make life better for all of us, we should also consider the bad side of the same, the side which has been hidden from us by multi-million dollar corporations for their own profit. Not only is it true that human cloning is not morally right, but it can also cause many dangers.

First of all, human cloning is not morally right. Almost all religions of the world would agree with this opinion. Since when do we have the right to play God? If humans could be cloned, there would be no value for human life. He or she will be viewed as an object rather than a person. Every single one of us is different from the other. It is that difference that makes us unique and special. If there were to be identical clones of each one of us, the qualities we have would no longer be a big deal. We would just be one among the many. Imagine a huge market in the future where human beings would just be sold off like property. Our worth would just be handful of currency notes. People say cloning can be used to bring back our loved ones and the people we admire. Say if this technology fell into the wrong hands. People like 'Hitler', would be brought back into this world and cause disaster. The earth is already overpopulated and its resources overused. How then are the excess populations of human

clones who come into this world without the consent of nature, going to survive? They would be a threat to our own survival. They would disturb the balance in nature.

Secondly, there is no proof of complete success. The research on human cloning is at its very early stages. Even the research and tests which has already been done on this issue has proved against it. Many might say that 'Dolly,' the first successfully cloned mammal is proof enough. The truth is, 'Dolly,' was one success among approximately 247 failures, which is hardly about a 1% success rate. Seems like a pretty bad ratio, doesn't it? Most of the animals that did make it, did so with malfunctioning or defective organs, and did not live very long. Say if a human baby is cloned, there is no proof that the cloned baby would live very long. Is that a factor that can be risked? This is a human life that we are talking about.

In conclusion, if the reasons why to clone humans and the reasons why not to, would be placed on either side of a weighing scale, the reasons why not to, would clearly weigh out the reasons why to clone humans. The risk factor in cloning humans is huge. Human lives would be of no value and there would be no guarantee on the survival of cloned human beings either. The balance in nature would be disturbed and this could threaten our very existence. It seems like we haven't learned our lesson from the mistakes of the past, and now, there are weapons of mass destruction that can wipe out the entire planet. It is still not too late. Let us take time to stop and think and leave Mother Nature to herself. ■

Be a Noah Today!

Anita Issac, Detroit Mar Thoma Church

To be a Christian today, we must follow God's words. The Lord made a covenant with Noah promising to never again bring destruction by flood upon the earth. In the Flood, the Lord destroyed every living thing that was impure and unholy but saved Noah and his family, who were righteous at heart. We Christians, like Noah, can live our daily lives trusting in God. We should show our loyalty in our family relationships, friendship, and by worship to make our faith stronger in Him. By practicing God's unconditional love we can fulfill His expectations as modern-day Christians.



First of all, improving our family relationships will make our faith stronger in the Lord. As children of God, we must honor our parents in humility and love. There are times when we want to break the rules and disobey them. However, a trusting relationship is one that is open-minded. Family prayer is needed for families to grow and to keep familial bonds. As Christians we have to be witnesses for each other and guide one another like Noah kept his witness. By his faith, his family was saved from the flood. Indeed, God

must be our rock and strength in our families.

Secondly, our friendships with one another will make our faith stronger in the Lord. Although Noah was not a

(Continued on next page)

KID'S CORNER



Rejoice in the Lord!

Sonu Varughese, Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York

Paul wrote to the Philippian church and said "Rejoice in the Lord." There are many many things to rejoice in the world. Most of the people rejoice in worldly pleasure and material pleasure. Some people rejoice when they have enough money and some rejoice when they get a good job. Young people rejoice when they get good grades in college or school. Paul said to the church "Rejoice in the Lord" and not in the worldly things. The worldly pleasure will remain only for a few days, but rejoicing in the Lord will remain forever.

Why did Paul say, "rejoice in the Lord?" There are some reasons for that. What are the reasons? I would like to explain some of the reasons. (Luke 10:20) "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." When Jesus was in the earth He appointed seventy people, and he sent them to the village and commanded to them, to heal the sick and cast out the demons. After that, the seventy returned to Jesus and said "Lord we caste out the demons and we Healed the sick people in your name." Then Jesus said, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Why should we rejoice? We have to rejoice because our names are in the heavenly book. "It is the book of life." (Rev. 20:15) How can our name be written in the Book of Life? Who is writing our name? "Those who received Jesus Christ, as their personal savior are called the children of God." So if anyone wants to get everlasting joy please accept Jesus Christ today. Those who read this passage please think if your name is in the book of life.

(Luke 2:10) "But the angel said to them, do not be afraid, I will bring you good news of great joy, that will be for all people." The Angel told to the shepherds that there is good news. The news was that a saviour was born for them in Bethlehem. Because of that you can get great joy. Most of the christians celebrate Christmas, but we don't know the exact date of Jesus birth. Still we celebrate Christmas in December and decorate our houses with lights and we have parties with delicious food. This means that every body wants to celebrate Christmas with joy.

Without Jesus there is no Christmas. Unless Jesus is born in your heart, what is the sense in Christmas? When Jesus Christ is in your heart you will get great joy. Only a born again Christian knows this true joy. ■

Be a Noah Today! *(Continued from page 34)*

prophet, that didn't stop him from spreading God's words. Noah showed his love for God through his actions. We, as Christians, must act in kindness and love for one another in our lives. We must and get rid of anger, jealousy, and hate and replacing these with forgiveness. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." (Colossians 3:12). Moreover, our lives as Christians should be an inspiration to one another, whether we are at church, school, or work.

Finally, our worship will make our faith stronger in the Lord. After the flood, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices that pleased the Lord. We should have a relationship with God everyday that is pleasing to Him. If we have faith in Him, anything is possible. "By faith Noah,

when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir to the righteousness that comes by faith," (Hebrews 11:7). By prayer, we can ask God to guide us through the good and bad times in our lives.

In conclusion, we must live the lives that God wants us to live. Our faith in God will be strengthened through our family relationships, friendship, and worship. In Noah's time, the Lord was seeking a pure world for the Messiah to come and found it through a righteous man. Today, the Lord is looking for pure hearts. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," (Mathew 5:8). For this reason, from this day on, let us be more like Noah—preparing for the coming of our Lord. ■

The Mar Thoma Messenger Annual Essay/Poetry Competition 2004

Essay/Juniors: **What can Mar Thoma Church do to help Homelessness and other social issues in USA.**

Essay/Seniors: **Why aren't our youths coming forward in greater numbers to dedicate their lives in the service of the Mar Thoma Church?**

Poetry/Juniors: **Psalms, lessons for my daily life.**

Poetry/Seniors: **I see Christ in the world around me**

Juniors – 10 to 14 years as of June 30, 2004

Seniors – 15 to 20 years as of June 30, 2004

Essays not more than 1500 words. **Deadline May 15, 2004.** No extension of the deadline. Participants to sign and send along with their essays a declaration that he or she hasn't received any help whatsoever from anyone in the preparation of the essay. First, Second and Third prize winners will be awarded prizes at the 2004 Family Conference in New York.

Send your entries to:

Messenger Essay/Poetry Competition
c/o **Mr. Abraham Mattackal**
2719 Studebaker Road
Long Beach, CA 90815

Phone: 562-420-8817 Fax: 562-420-6528

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

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (October 2003)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Accamma Jacob, S. FL | ANSWERS |
| 2. Ajin John, MI | ACROSS |
| 3. Alex Vaidyan, St. Thomas, NY | 1. GATHER |
| 4. Anika Chacko, Detroit | 2. SINNERS |
| 5. Annamma John, FL | 3. CRIMES |
| 6. Athira John, St. John's NY | 4. WEARY |
| 7. Christopher Chacko, Detroit | 5. WATERS |
| 8. Justin Vaidyan, St. Thomas, NY | 6. CHOSEN |
| 9. Omana Rajee, S.I., NY | 7. SUFFERING |
| 10. Sally Abraham, Epiphany, NY | 8. CRUMBLE |
| | 9. WILLINGLY |
| | 10. RENEWED |
| | DOWN |
| | 11. CLOTHING |
| | 12. GRASS |
| | 13. MESSENGER |
| | 14. PROTECTS |
| | 15. WAYS |
| | 16. PLAN |
| | 17. PRAYER |
| | 18. INSULT |
| | 19. SMOKE |
| | 20. BLESSINGS |

Bible Word Search Winners (October 2003)

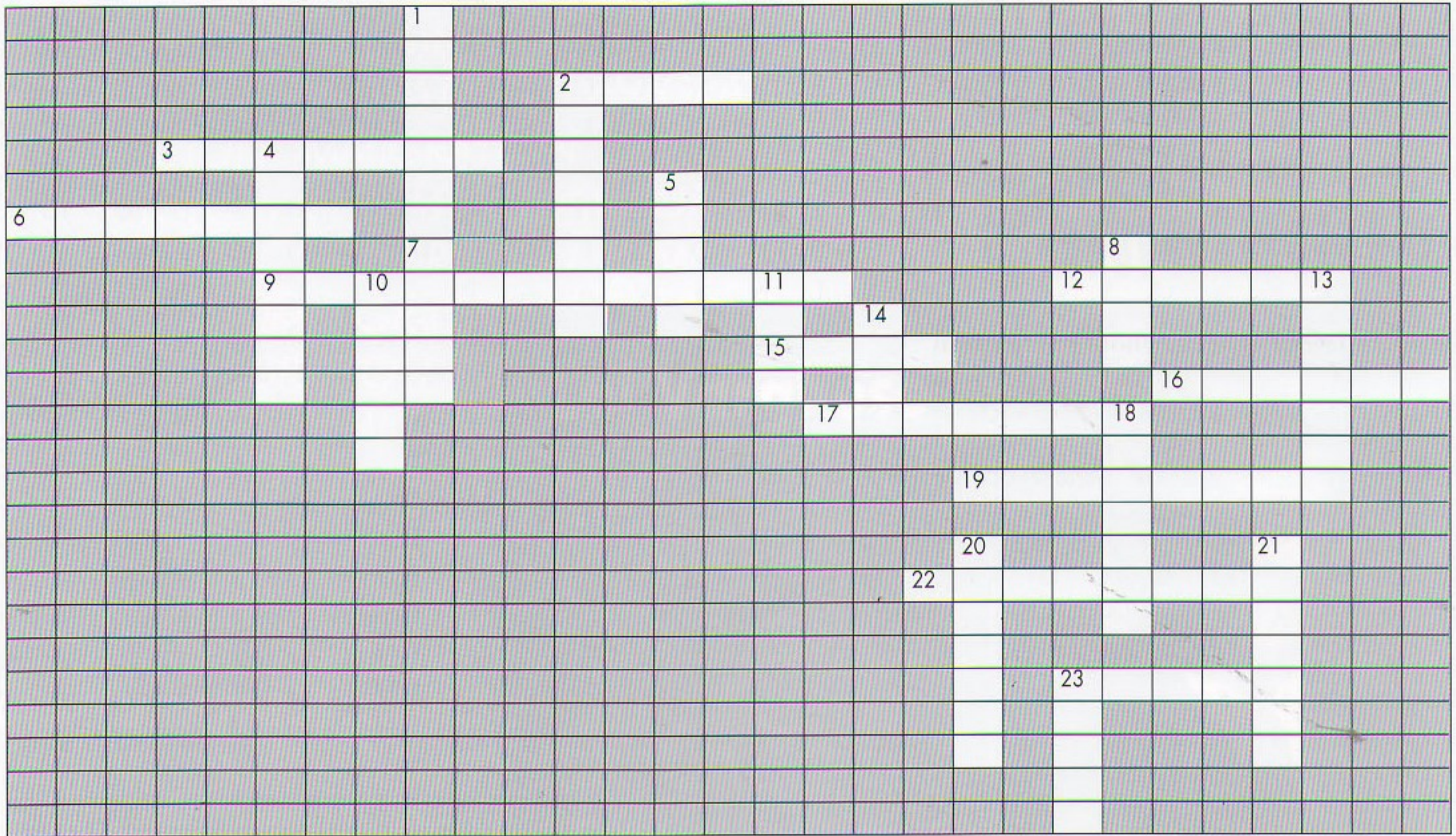
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Accamma Jacob, S. FL | ANSWERS |
| 2. Alex Vaidyan, St. Thomas, NY | 1. GAD |
| 3. Anika Chacko, Detroit | 2. MENI |
| 4. Annamma John, FL | 3. HEAVEN |
| 5. Athira John, St. John's NY | 4. JUSTICE |
| 6. Christopher Chacko, Detroit | 5. RIGHT |
| 7. Justin Vaidyan, St. Thomas, NY | 6. EGYPT |
| 8. Omana Rajee, S.I., NY | 7. ASSYRIA |
| 9. Sally Abraham, Epiphany, NY | 8. BABYLONIA |
| | 9. RAHAB |
| | 10. LORD |
| | 11. ANGER |
| | 12. WAR |
| | 13. ISRAEL |
| | 14. CYRUS |
| | 15. BEL |
| | 16. NEBO |
| | 17. DESTRUCTION |
| | 18. HEZEKIAH |
| | 19. MERODACH |
| | 20. SHEPHERD |

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

(based on John Chapters 1-12)

Mrs. Suma Varghese (New York)



Across

2. Jesus spoke about the temple of His _____ that He would build it again in 3 days.
3. Jesus said that His father had not left Him alone because He always does what _____ Him.
6. The Jewish authorities condemned the paralyzed man for carrying his mat on a _____ day after he was healed.
9. Jesus said to Martha "I am the _____, and the life. Whoever believes in me lives even though he dies."
12. Jesus blamed the Jewish authorities that they liked to receive _____ from one another rather than from God.
15. People love darkness rather than light because their deeds are _____.
16. No one can enter the kingdom of God, unless he is born of water and the _____.
17. Mary took an expensive _____ made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus' feet and anointed them.
19. The Jewish authorities believed in him. But they did not talk about it openly as they loved the _____ of men rather than God.
22. John the Baptist proclaimed that his happiness is made _____ when Messiah becomes more important while he becomes less important.
23. God gave us law through Moses but _____ and truth through Jesus Christ.

Down

1. Nicodemus pleaded with the others. "We cannot _____ a man before hearing him and finding out what he has done."
2. The spirit _____ with the Holy Spirit.
4. Jesus told the Jewish authorities, "Stop judging by _____ standards and judge by true standards."
5. Jesus said, "Gather the pieces left over: Let us not _____ a bit."
7. "If anyone hears my message and does not obey it, I will _____ him."
8. Jesus said to those who believed in Him, "if you obey my teaching, you are my disciples; you will know the truth, and the truth will set you _____."
10. Jesus advised the people, "Do not work for food that _____; instead, work for food that lasts for ever."
11. According to Jesus, His food was to _____ the will of the father who sent Him.
13. "Whoever hears my words and believes in Him, who sent me has _____ life."
14. At the wedding in Cana Jesus' mother reported to Jesus that they were out of _____.
18. He who is from the earth _____ speaks about _____ matters.
20. Jesus predicted about the time when by the power of the spirit people will _____ the father as he really is.
21. "We know that God does not listen to sinners; He does listen to people who _____ Him and do what he wants them to do."
23. Jesus told Martha that she would see God's _____ if she believed.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on John Chapters 1-12)

Mrs. Suma Varghese (New York)

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

1. He was not the light; he came to tell people about the light. His name is _____.
2. "I am someone shouting in the desert; make a straight path for the Lord to travel." "I am the _____"
3. A town where John was baptizing on the east side of the Jordan River.
4. John described Jesus as the _____ of God.
5. John saw the spirit coming upon from Heaven and staying on Jesus in this form.
6. This word means teacher.
7. Sons of John: Peter and _____.
8. The meaning of this word is a 'rock'.
9. Philip was from this town.
10. Jesus called him a real Israelite. His name was _____.
11. There was a shortage of this drink at the wedding of Cana.
12. A Jewish leader who believed in Jesus.
13. John and Jesus baptized people in this place where there was plenty of water.
14. A town in Samaria, very near to Jacob's well where Jesus met the Samaritan woman.
15. They witnessed that they themselves had heard Jesus and came to know that He is the savior of the world. They were the _____.
16. A government official asked Jesus to go to this place and heal his son who was seriously ill.
17. A Hebrew word for a pool with five porches.
18. Jesus met the healed paralyzed man in this place of worship and asked him to stop sinning.
19. One of His disciples was going to betray Him. He was the son of _____.
20. Nicodemus was a _____ who used to visit Jesus often.
21. A man born blind was sent here to wash in the pool.
22. Jewish authorities expelled the man cured of his blindness from their _____.
23. Jesus said "I am the good _____ who is willing to die for his sheep."
24. Festival of the dedication of the temple was being celebrated in _____ in Jerusalem.
25. Martha, Mary and _____ lived in Bethany.

ATTENTION ALL CONTESTANTS!!!

Please mail your answers to:

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

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS March 31, 2004

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on John Chapters 1-12)

Mrs. Suma Varghese (New York)

K I R K L A D N P C A P E R N A U M I E R E P R Y R
N A T H A N A E L B Y T W I N E P R O M O T I O N A
L O S T B F I T D O V E S N I C O D E M U S L A T M
S G P R A E T S E B T S O O N E R L S A T E R C S P
R I P H A R T B T R E O I U T B R T Y S S U S Y R A
A A M Y A E R H T H A T N L T H I E N N H I H C I R
N S W O L R T E A V E R H D O R E M A D O E E A S T
D A M S N O I F C N A L N S V A K P G A L S P R I O
R S I M O I N S P E Y T A E A O M L O Y D T H H S F
E J E A L O S U E S Y P L M T I D E G S E R E R E F
W P S E R I O C U E S I L L B N D E U C M A R I E R
S S E S E V E N A T I E T H B I R A E H O T D R A T
H D A T Y S C U R R B V O I C E R I G R N T T M E E
B U R O E C Y A T E I S A I N T S O F V A M A E N A
M O N C O R N C V E N O T I W I N T E R O B N M O L
L A Z A R U S E H F T W T J O H N I N G S E B E N P
A R A T I S T L U A R K B E H I N D L U R K T I E N
T H O U S A N D S O R L S A M A R I T A N S T O W A
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DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS March 31, 2004

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH



Dr. Mariamma Thomas the First Woman President of the Association of Physicians and Dentists receiving the award of honor from the President Dr. Philip K. Philip.

The 12th annual conference of the Association of Physicians and Dentists of the Mar Thoma Church was held at the Warwick Conference Center in Warwick, NY on July 18-20, 2003.

The leaders of the conference were Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus-Suffragan Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos-Diocesan Bishop of North America and Rev. Dr. John Joseph-Diocesan Secretary of North America. The theme of the conference was "My Grace is Sufficient for You." A special presentation entitled, "The Changing Image of Christ" was given by Marina Thomas.

Dr. Mariamma Thomas, the first woman President of the association, was honored at the conference. The next annual conference will be held on July 23-25, 2004 at the Warwick Center, New York.

**Dr. Thomas Abraham, New Jersey
Sabha Council Member**



Attendees with Irenaeus Thirumeni

If we are to live unto God at any time, or in any place, we are to live unto Him at all times and all places. If we are to use anything as the gift of God, we are to use everything as His gift.

Blaise Pascal

**THE MAR THOMA MESSENGER BIDS FAREWELL TO
REV. DR. JOHN JOSEPH, REV. K. P. SABU AND MRS. SUMA VARGHESE**



Rev. Dr. John Joseph



Rev. K. P. Sabu



Mrs. Suma Varghese

Three of our most valuable contributors who supported us throughout the past three years are bidding farewell to us this April. The Mar Thoma Messenger expresses our sincere gratitude to Rev. Dr. John Joseph (Mar Thoma Messenger Editorial Board Member, Diocesan Secretary & Bishop's Secretary) and Rev. K. P. Sabu, Vicar, Long Island MTC, NY (Messenger Managing Committee Member), and Suma Kochamma (Messenger Bible Cross Word Puzzle and Word Search, [Epiphany MTC, NY]) for their valuable contributions towards Messenger during the last three years.

We owe Rev. Dr. John Joseph for his active interest and participation in the affairs of the Messenger which resulted in the rise in its quality and readership. His help in coordinating, communication, updating subscription and editorial undertakings is greatly appreciated and we will always be grateful for that.

Shirley Kochamma deserves special mention for being a great hostess to the Messenger team when we would meet at the Sinai Center; the memories of her hospitality will stay with us for a long time to come. Young Reuben and Roshan

have always actively joined us during the laborious process of labeling and mailing the large number of copies and we pray for them especially as they go ahead in life to scale greater heights for His glory.

Rev. K. P. Sabu has been a dependable member of the Managing Committee. His dedicated work behind the scene helped us get the magazine to the readers on time. He also helped us in coordinating the messenger Essay & Poetry competitions.

Suma Kochamma's regular contributions towards the Bible Cross Word Puzzle and the Bible Word Search columns have expanded the Biblical knowledge of our readers, young and old alike. The relentless hardwork, vast knowledge of the Bible, and diligence that went into produce such an educative and informative column every three months is greatly appreciated. We remember that even when she was under the stress of her own physical illness and Achen's post-surgical period, Kochamma did not delay her regular column. We wish her and Achen and their family the very best as they go on to other pastures in the Lord's service.

I love poverty because He loved it. I love riches because they afford me the means of helping the very poor. I keep faith with everybody; I do not render evil to those who wrong me, but I wish them a situation like mine, in which I receive neither good nor evil from men. I try to be just, true, sincere, and faithful to all men; I have a tender heart for those to whom God has more closely united me; and whether I am alone, or seen by people, I do all my actions in the sight of God, who must judge them, and to whom I have consecrated them all. These are my sentiments; and every day of my life, I bless my Redeemer, who has implanted them in me, and who, out of a man full of weakness, of miseries, of lust, of pride, and of ambition, has made a man free from all these evils by the power of His grace, to which all the glory of it is due, as of myself I have only misery and error.

John Donne

FOURTH WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



Inaugural Function

"Praise the Lord, Praise Him in His Sanctuary."

From October 24th through the 26th 2003, the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church hosted the fourth Women's Leadership Conference. The theme of the conference was "Parish as the Habitus to Produce Kingdom Relations." Mrs. Mariamma John delivered the welcome speech. After which, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorlios Episcopa delivered the Inaugural Address in which he spoke about the values of the kingdom of Christ. Following Coorilos Thirumeni's address, the ceremonial lamp symbolizing the commencement of the conference was lit. Mrs. Rachel Mathew; Mrs. Johan Malito—CWU Representative; Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham and Rev. Dr. John Joseph delivered the felicitations. Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorlios Episcopa was the Patron and Rev.

Sunny George was the main speaker at the conference. Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Rev. C. A. Varghese, Rev. S. George, Rev. Roy Thomas and Rev. Raju Philip and Philip Samuel were also present at the Inaugural ceremony.

On Saturday Rev. Sunny George's message, an exegesis of Genesis chapter 2, was divided into two sessions. Achen noted the sharp differences between management and leadership, with leadership being a vital attribute

of a godly woman and he spoke of Christ's invitation to his kingdom. Mrs. Betsy Abraham of Dallas Mar Thoma Church gave a message about the "Role of Women in Family." Mrs. Mariamma Thomas, Valsa Mathai and Dr. Annie Lincoln respectively led sessions on the Bible, Leadership, and Anger & Conflict Management. Mrs. Mariamma Thomas led a two-hour session of sharing, testimonials, and prayer.

On Sunday Coorilos Thirumeni conducted the Holy Communion Service in Malayalam. In his message, Thirumeni spoke of the responsibilities of Sanghom members as women, in church, family, and at work. The conference concluded after the business meeting with a prayer by Rev. C. A. Varghese.

Rachel Mathew, Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary

BETHEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA



First Communicants with Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Vicar Rev. John Mathai, during the Episcopal Visit in January 2004.

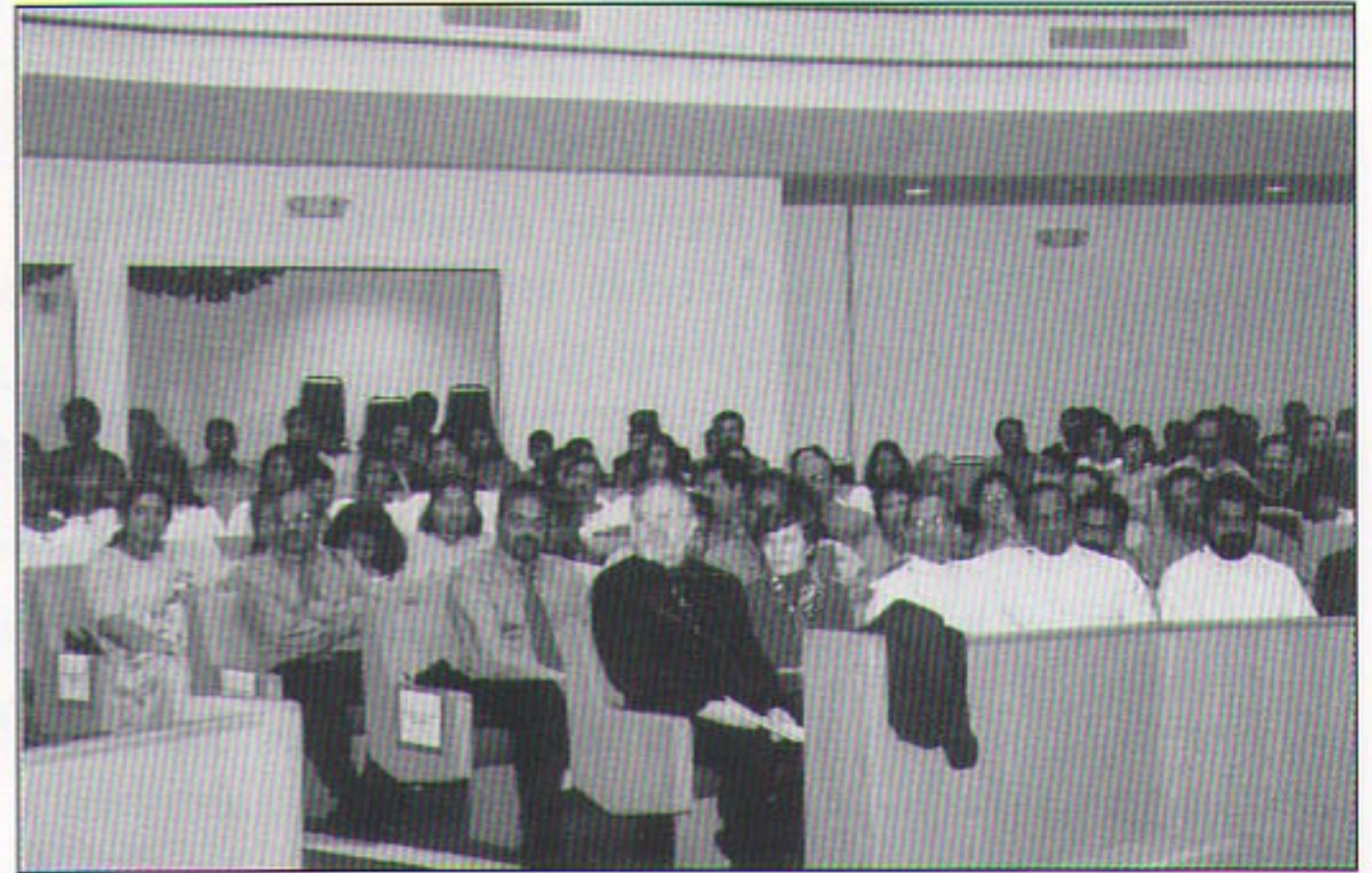
MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH



REGIONAL CHOIR FESTIVAL 2003 AT DALLAS

The first Regional Choir Festival was hosted by the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch Choir on 12/14/2003. Both adult and youth choirs from St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church – Dallas, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas – Grand Prairie, CSI Congregation of Dallas, and the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas – Farmers Branch presented Christmas carols. The Tri-Youth Choir consisting of youths of all three Mar Thoma Churches in Dallas also participated in this festival. Rev. P. Mathew, Rev. Saju Zachariah, Rev. Oommen Alexander, and Rev. Saji Joseph attended the choir festival.

Ms. Caroline Brettell, Professor at the Department of Anthropology of the Southern Methodist University, Dallas delivered the message. Mr. Richard Brettell,



University of Texas at Dallas recited one of his favorite pieces for the audience. Rev. Oommen Alexander of the CSI Congregation of Dallas sang a song titled "Fall on your knees".

Mr. George Varghese, Choir Director of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas – Farmers Branch welcomed the guests and other attendees. Mrs. Lila Alexander, Assistant Choir Director of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas – Farmers Branch gave the vote of thanks.

Ms. Lisa Mathew, Youth Choir Director of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas – Farmers Branch was the MC. Thanks to all those who made this program a great success.

Attorney Lal Varghese, Assembly Member

CHRISTMAS AT THE DETROIT MAR THOMA CHURCH



The Detroit Mar Thoma Church echoed with the sound of Christmas carols on Saturday, December 20, 2003. The church choir presented traditional Christmas songs and the Sunday school children performed nativity scenes. Almost all parish members participated and supported this year's Christmas carol service. The sing-along of "Silent Night,

Holy Night" was very memorable and the participants enjoyed it immensely.

The Christmas Carol Service–2003 started with worship led by Rev. P. Chacko and the vicar Rev. Sonny Thomas gave the Christmas message. In his message Achen reminded the congregation that the reason for the season is the birth of God's Son. Sonny Achen stressed the importance of room for Jesus in our heart, so He will make room for us in heaven.

The Sunday School children lined up to see Santa Claus and sing "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and joined in the festivities of the season. House to house caroling was an occasion of great joy and fellowship. This year's Christmas Carol Service was music at its best with a heavenly message.

C. V. Samuel, Detroit, Michigan

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON, TEXAS

SEVIKA SANGHOM ACTIVITIES

The Trinity Mar Thoma Church Sevika Sanghom took an active part in the various activities of our Church. Prayer meetings were conducted weekly and/or bi-weekly in all (area) prayer groups throughout the year. Our Vicar conducted monthly Bible study classes for the Sevika Sanghom. An art and craft workshop was arranged under the leadership of Mrs. Betcey Abraham of the Dallas Grand Prairie Mar Thoma Church. Sevika sanghom members took active part in decorating the Church and Hall, cooking and serving food for occasions like Regional Conferences, Diocesan Assembly meetings, etc. The Sevika Sanghom published a recipe book and the money generated from the sale of 450 copies was given to missions and charity work locally and also in India. Our Sevika Sanghom members participated in the mission project of our diocese (in Puntilla Norte, Mexico). Also, our members arranged a couple more medical mission trips in Mexico. On the World Christian Women's day, a worship service was held with Immanuel Mar Thoma Church. A one-day retreat was held with Mrs. Lizzy Alexander of Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia, as the guest speaker.

Lillykutty Joseph, Secretary

WORLD SUNDAY SCHOOL DAY

World Sunday School Day was celebrated on Sunday, November 2, 2003 at our Church jointly by Immanuel and Trinity Sunday Schools. Special Thanksgiving day service was held on Thursday, November 27th, and it was a time of thanksgiving and witnessing for all the members who attended the service. Youth Fellowship conducted their annual banquet at our Church on Saturday, December 6th and about 200 people attended the function. Christmas Carol service was held on Wednesday, December 24th and Christmas service was held on December 25th. Christmas Caroling group visited the members of our Pansh during the month of December and shared the joy of Christmas with them. Year end retreat was held from December 29 to 31, 2003. Watch night service was held on Wednesday December 31st starting at 10:30 p.m. Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse was the main speaker for the year end retreat.

T. A. Mathew, Secretary

CHICAGO MAR THOMA CHURCH, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

SEVIKA SANGHAM – SENIOR CITIZENS' DAY & MEDICAL CAMP

Chicago Mar Thoma Sevika Sangham conducted a Medical camp and Senior Citizen's day on Saturday 27th September at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church. Around 60 participants attended the camp. The program started with prayer by our Vicar Rev. S. George. Following the prayer Life Scan Laboratories, Glenview Nursing Home, organized a complete blood-screening test. Breakfast was provided after the blood test.

Dr. M. V. Mathew, Dr. Jacob Samuel, Dr. Joyce Samuel, Dr. Jolly Phillip and Dr. Issac Parampotil conducted a full medical checkup. Before the health talk session, Mr. Biju Simon gave a valuable speech about aging and how to lead a spiritual life in old age. During the question and answer session, Dr. Jolly Philip talked about diabetes

and cholesterol and how to take control of these conditions. Dr. Joyce also spoke on breast cancer, consequences of drinking alcohol and smoking. Dr. Issac Parampottil gave a short talk on how to prevent dental problems. Prof. E. J. Jacob stressed the importance of exercise, balanced diet and demonstrated a few exercises. Dr. K. Philip discussed about Homeopathic treatment. Most of our people are unaware of the public aid, Medicare & Medicaid benefits. Mr. Kuruvila P. Samuel explained about these benefits and its eligibility. This year Dr. Joyce arranged for free Mammograms for women age 50 and above through Cook County hospital.

The camp closed with a vote of thanks and closing prayer and benediction by our Asst. Vicar Rev. Jose Prakash. We extend our sincere thanks to the doctors, nurses, Glenview Nursing Home, Cook County Mobile Unit staff and all those who helped with the camp.

Sally Varghese, Secretary

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

C. S. Lewis

CONGRATULATIONS TO MR. VARKEY ABRAHAM OUR SABHA COUNCIL MEMBER

Mr. Varkey Abraham, Sabha Council Member from our Diocese has been elected to the Episcopal Nomination Board. This is the first time a Sabha Council Member from this diocese is elected to this position. This comes at a time when our Sabha Mandalam at its last meeting has decided to elect two more bishops. Please send your views and opinions in this regard to: varkeyabraham@hotmail.com. We congratulate Mr. Varkey Abraham in his new capacity and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as he carries out his duties.



THE MAR THOMA LITERATURE SOCIETY — DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

www.marthomaliteraturesociety.com

The Mar Thoma Literature Society, formed in 1991 by our beloved Metropolitan The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, has entered a new phase in its growth as it has launched its website to do the e-business. Even though the diocesan assembly has given the approval to start a shop front we are expanding our business and distribution of quality Christian literature to the public through the world wide web as a first step.

The official website of the society was inaugurated at the last family conference in Florida by our Suffragan Metropolitan Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus. Now the website is ready and open for business. The site is designed and maintained by WILSCO.INC, an establishment owned by one of our members. This being the premier business venture in our diocese, I solicit the earnest help and support of all our aghens, executive committees, assembly and mandalam members of the parishes and

congregations to promote our business. Please mention the Society in your newsletters, and encourage people to visit our web pages, buy books and give suggestions to improve the website. Presently the society is operated from our diocesan center at Merrick, Long Island, New York.

Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa is the president and the following are office bearers and committee members.

Rev. Dr. John Joseph; Rev. Dr. C. A. Abraham; Rev. K. P. Sabu; Thomas K. Jose, Convener; C. V. Simonkutty, Treasurer; P. T. Abraham, Office Manager; Varkey Abraham; John Thomas; Philip Thampan; Benny Mathew; John Pazhayidathu; George Muthalaly; Rajan Thomas; George Chacko.

Regional coordinators: T. A. Mathew, Houston; C. V. Samuel, Detroit; Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles.

Thomas K. Jose, Convener

THE MAR THOMA SUVISESHA SEVIKA SANGHOM – STATEN ISLAND

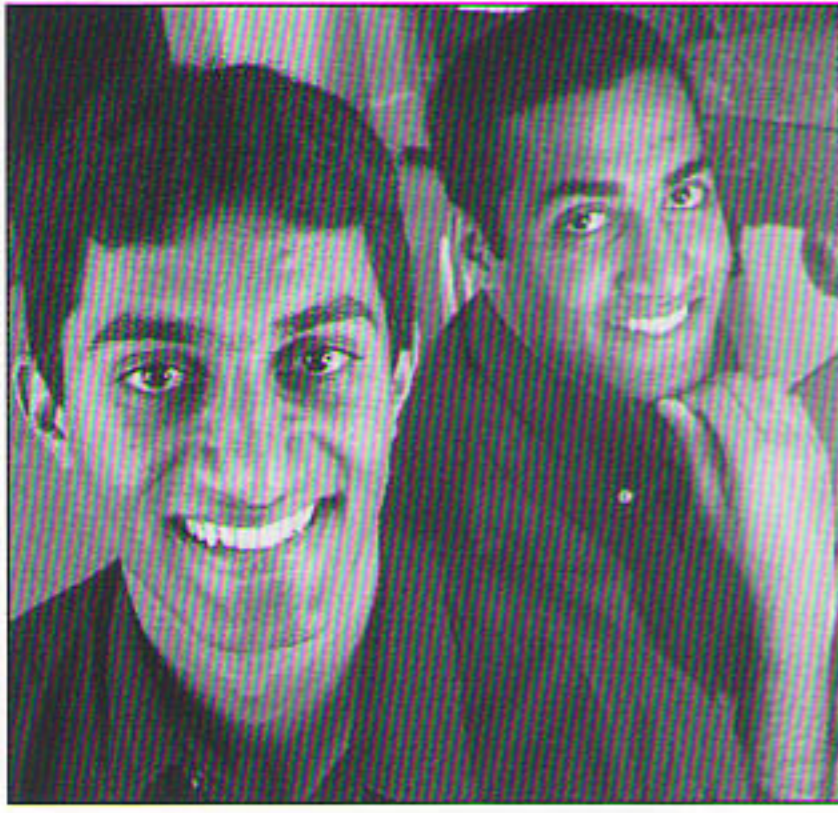
Our Sevika Sanghom has been very actively participating in every activity of our Church. We conduct two Bible studies every month and hold fasting prayers on Fridays, either at our members' residences or in the Church. Our Sevika Sanghom members visit the sick and the bereaved in their homes and hospitals. As part of Sevika Sanghom week we visited many families of our parish. Sevika Sanghom members attended regional meetings and Couples' Meetings and participated in the Kalamela and won many prizes this year. A few members also attended the Women's Leadership Conference. We continue to sponsor children in Girideepthi and the Balika Mandirum. We contributed \$1500 towards building toilets for the toiletless and helped providing nursing education and building houses for the poor in Kerala.

Our Sevika Sanghom organized two trips to Lancaster this year as part of our Church Building Fundraising project. Both "Abraham & Sarah" and "Miracle of Christmas" were remarkable experiences for our church members. We also arranged a Defensive Driving Class on May 31, 2003, the proceeds from which were also contributed to the Church Building Fund. Our members contributed their one-day salary towards our church building fund to reach our target of \$50,000.

The World Day of Prayer was held in our church on Mar 7. Members from various churches attended this meeting. Please remember our Sevika Sanghom in your prayers so that we continue to grow in spiritual strength and active participation in every church activity.

Molly Mathews, Secretary

AWARD: ANOTHER MALAYALEE STUDENT HAS BEEN NAMED A MARSHALL SCHOLAR



David Chacko is one of 40 American students selected as recipients of the prestigious Marshall Scholarship.

The fellowship, in its 51st year, was founded by the British government to commemorate the Marshall Plan, which was designed by

then-Secretary of State George Marshall to help rebuild Europe after World War II. This fellowship is a gesture of thanks from the British government to the U.S., enabling college students from the U.S. to study in England and foster long-lasting relationships between the two countries.

The Marshall Scholarship will allow Chacko, a native of Rancho Palos Verdes, California, to study with full expenses paid at Oxford University. He intends to pursue a master's degree in comparative social policy, while focusing

specifically on healthcare policy. This degree follows logically from his studies at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles, where Chacko is double majoring in biology and business administration and has maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average. In Oxford, Chacko hopes to learn more about other nations' healthcare policies.

Chacko's older brother, Jacob Chacko, has served as a role model. The older Chacko won the Marshall Scholarship four years ago to study at Oxford University. Indeed, one Marshall Scholar in a family is outstanding. But the Chacko family now has twice the joy.

Father K. M. Chacko, an engineer with his own industrial construction company, said, "When Jacob received the scholarship, we were all very excited. When David also got it, we were so proud. God has blessed my wife and me with two incredible boys. We are humbled and thankful to God for his mercy." His mother, Leela Chacko, an emergency room physician, often reminds him of the importance of sharing life's achievements with others.

Former Marshall Scholars include Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer and former Arizona governor and US Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

CONDOLENCE MEETING FOR OUR BELOVED COORILOS THIRUMENI'S FATHER MR. ITTY MANI ITTYACHEN KUNJU



A Condolence meeting was held on December 15, 2003 at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York, in memory of Mr. Itty Mani Ittyachen Kunju, Father of our beloved Coorilos Thirumeni. Mr. Itty Mani of Cheerans House was born on September 16, 1921 and was called back to his heavenly abode on November 30, 2003.

The Condolence Meeting started at 7.00 p.m. with a prayer by Rev. Alexander Thomas. Rev. Dr. John Joseph welcomed the congregation who had come to share in Thirumeni's time of bereavement. His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas, Bishop of the Orthodox Church was the main guest at the meeting. A tearful Coorilos Thirumeni recollected the days immediately preceding his beloved father's demise. He recounted how he had gone to Kerala to attend the postponed Mandalam meeting of December 2-4 and how a few days before that his father had had a fall in the bathroom and fractured his leg. Following that he was admitted to the hospital. Thirumeni went to see him before the Mandalam meeting expecting him to recuperate from that unfortunate accident. However, his condition deteriorated and on November 30, he left this world to his eternal abode with the Lord. Reminiscing about his father,

Thirumeni's words brought a tear to everyone's eyes. "He was born like a Prince. He lived like a King and died like one too," said a proud son about his most loved father. He remembered his father as a practicing Christian exemplary in his generosity. He was a man who took delight in helping those in need even when he had to forego his own family's needs.

His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas gave a very heartfelt consolation, dwelling on his past experiences with Coorilos Thirumeni and the high regards he has about his capabilities as a spiritual guide of the Mar Thoma church. Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham's condolence speech was one to remember for all bereaving Christians. Opening with Jesus' own words, "I am the resurrection and the Life....," he went on to assert that belief in Christ is not only belief that He is the Son of God, it is a determination to follow Christ's footsteps in facing life. Jesus is the one who participates in the realities of life, he said. Discernment of Jesus is the resurrection and life. In conclusion, he said, "Life is the gift of God. What we make of it is our gift to God."

Mr. Philip Thampan, Mr. Varkey Abraham, Rev. John V. Oommen, and Pastor Wilson Joseph representing the Indian Christian Forum were the other speakers. Ms. Smitha sang a song. Rev. K. P. Sabu gave the vote of thanks, and Rev. Cherian Thomas of the C.S.I. Church said the closing prayer. Many from far and wide, despite their inability to be present at the function physically, sent in messages of condolence and consoled our beloved Thirumeni in his time of grief.

OBITUARIES



1930 – 2004

MR. A. M. MATHEN (Georgekutty) was born on November 22, 1930 and entered into eternal rest on January 17, 2004. He was the eldest son of Mr. Mathen and Saramma Mathai of Aekkalathil, Mallappally, Kerala. After completing his studies in Kerala, he moved to Andaman & Nicobar Islands and worked there as

a Junior Engineer in Central P.W.D. for 33 years. He was married to Sosamma (Kunjumol) and immigrated to the United States in 1988 to join his family and stayed here ever since. He was a dedicated member of Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston, Texas and attended church services regularly.

He is survived by his parents Mathen and Saramma Mathai, brothers—Kunjumon and Thampy, and sisters—Ammini and Valsa. He is also survived by his wife Kunjumol, children Reji Mathew, Sheela George and Son-in-law Shajan George and daughter-in-law Jessy Mathew. P. I. Varughese & Family, P. I. George & Family, Aleyamma Koshy & Family are siblings of Kunjumol and resides in Houston.

He was a loving husband to Kunjumol, a devoted father to Reji and Sheela, and a compassionate grandfather to Neethu, Ryan, Nekha, and Roshan.

Memorial service and funeral service was held at Trinity Mar Thoma Church Houston by Vicar Rev. T. V. George. He was laid to rest at South Park Funeral Home and Cemetery, Pearland, Texas on January 19, 2004.

MRS. ELIZABETH GEORGE (86), affectionately known as Mummy.

Mrs. Elizabeth George was called to eternity on Wednesday, December 31, 2003 at the William Beaumont Hospital in Troy, Michigan after a brief period of illness. Funeral service and visitation was held on Saturday, January 3, 2004 at the Calcaterra Funeral Home, in Detroit, Michigan. Another visitation and final funeral rites were held on Friday, January 9, 2004 at the Chandler Funeral Home in Hockessin, Delaware. She was laid to rest at the All Saints Cemetery in Wilmington, Delaware on January 10, 2004.

Mrs. Elizabeth George was born on February 04, 1917 to the late V. T. Eapen and the late Mariamma Eapen of Vadakedathu house, Chengannur, Kerala, India. She was married to the late C. M. George of Sankaramangalam, Eraviperoor, Kerala.

In 1947 she moved with her family to Kuwait where she served as a schoolteacher over twenty-five years. She migrated to the United States in 1969 along with her family to join her oldest daughter Nirmala Abraham and settled in Philadelphia. After her husband's demise in 1998, Mummy moved to Rochester Hills, Michigan to live with her youngest



1917 – 2003

daughter Anuja and her family. She was a very active participant in all activities of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church for the past five years. In Detroit, She was loved and respected by all in the Detroit Mar Thoma Church family and she was affectionately called "Mummy".

Mummy had an unquenchable passion for knowledge and she held several academic degrees. In 1942, she received her first graduate degree (M.A) in history and Music from the University of Madras, India. Then, at the age of fifty-six, she obtained two graduate degrees in Child Development and Special Education from Antioch Putney College and West Chester College of Pennsylvania. She was a Special Education teacher in Philadelphia Schools until the age of sixty-seven. She was an educationalist for nearly a half-century.

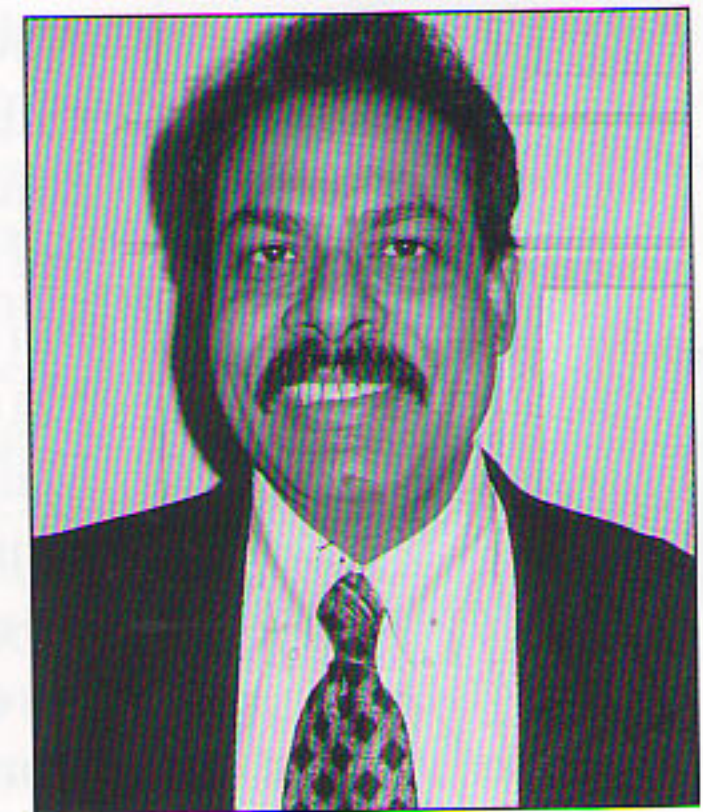
She was very active in the community wherever she lived. She served as the Vice-President of the Kuwait Kerala Samajam, the Secretary of the YWCA, a Red Cross Volunteer and the Vice-President of the Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church Sevika Sangham. During her thirty years in Philadelphia, she helped to organize numerous Sunday School Christmas pageants. Mummy was one of the few people who attended almost every Mar Thoma Family Conference of North America.

During her college days, she was an ardent tennis player. In Kuwait, Mummy and Daddy pursued competitive badminton and won various trophies. Also she was a fervent gardener and secured numerous awards from Kuwait's Sheikh Jabar for the most outstanding gardener in Kuwait's desert barren land.

Mummy was not only a loving mother and grandmother to her immediate family, but was a mother figure to the greater Indian Community wherever she lived. Surviving her are her children: Nirmala Abraham & O. C. Abraham, Ajith George & Dr. Sara Brown, Rev. Dr. Asha George-Guiser & The Rev. Kim Guiser, and Anuja Chacko & George Chacko (Christy) and grand children: Dr. Anisha Abraham, Ajita Abraham, Anika Elizabeth Chacko, Christopher George Chacko and Preeya Mary George-Guiser.

May the Lord comfort the bereaved families in their hour of grief.

The purpose of religion is to help humans attain eternal peace and sanctity coupled with responsible living. However, for many religious groups, it has become a rigid weapon for achieving separation from society, separation from community responsibilities and also a weapon to attain social and political power. In India, we are familiar with many religious groups who worship animals. One community worships rats as God while other communities worship Snake, Cow or Eagle. When rat, snake or cow becomes God, people go to the ludicrous extent of ascribing spiritual immunity to these creatures. No one is allowed to kill or even hurt these 'Holy' animals, no matter what problems they can bring into the community. I recall the plague in one community where the rat population grew so wild that it brought death to many humans through infectious diseases.



Recent social and political restlessness around the globe, can be traced back to religious and ethnic fanaticism. Changing religious practices for a better society is not a simple task. Good intentions can be very costly. Missionaries and mission field workers are living witnesses for the various troubles and tribulations that they go through to implement changes for the better. Some of them have paid with their lives to make a difference, and indeed, it made a difference.

Is there ever going to be an end to this? Are we losing the larger perspective? Are we not limiting ourselves with sectarian thinking? Who will come up with a better solution? The Bible gives very good answers to these pertinent questions. God's plan is totally different from what we can comprehend. What we cannot achieve, God can. What we cannot finish, God will, but of course we have to start from where someone else stopped.

Are we willing to take the challenge and go forward as a group that is called to His service? God promised that He definitely will help us and guide us through situations that we cannot handle by ourselves, if trust in Him. He is the one who taught us to worship none other than the living God. We have to spread this message, because God demands us to. It is high time for us to stop preaching and spring to action. We have to make the next move. We are to become enriched with God's great wisdom and to lead others to enlightenment.

This issue of Messenger is dedicated to the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom. It is a great organization that helped the rapid growth of our diocese as well as the Mar Thoma Church as a whole. Sanghom units and individuals made plentiful contributions for various charities in and around Kerala. We are very proud that many Parish units have helped major projects of the Mar Thoma Church through the years.

Malyalee mothers deserve a lot of praise. They are the backbone of our community. With their dedicated services and selfless actions, we flourished in our new surroundings. Their courage and tireless ambitions have brought help to many families, back in our homeland as well as here. I thank God for all His provisions that we have enjoyed through our Sevika Sanghom units and members.

Eapen Daniel



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