



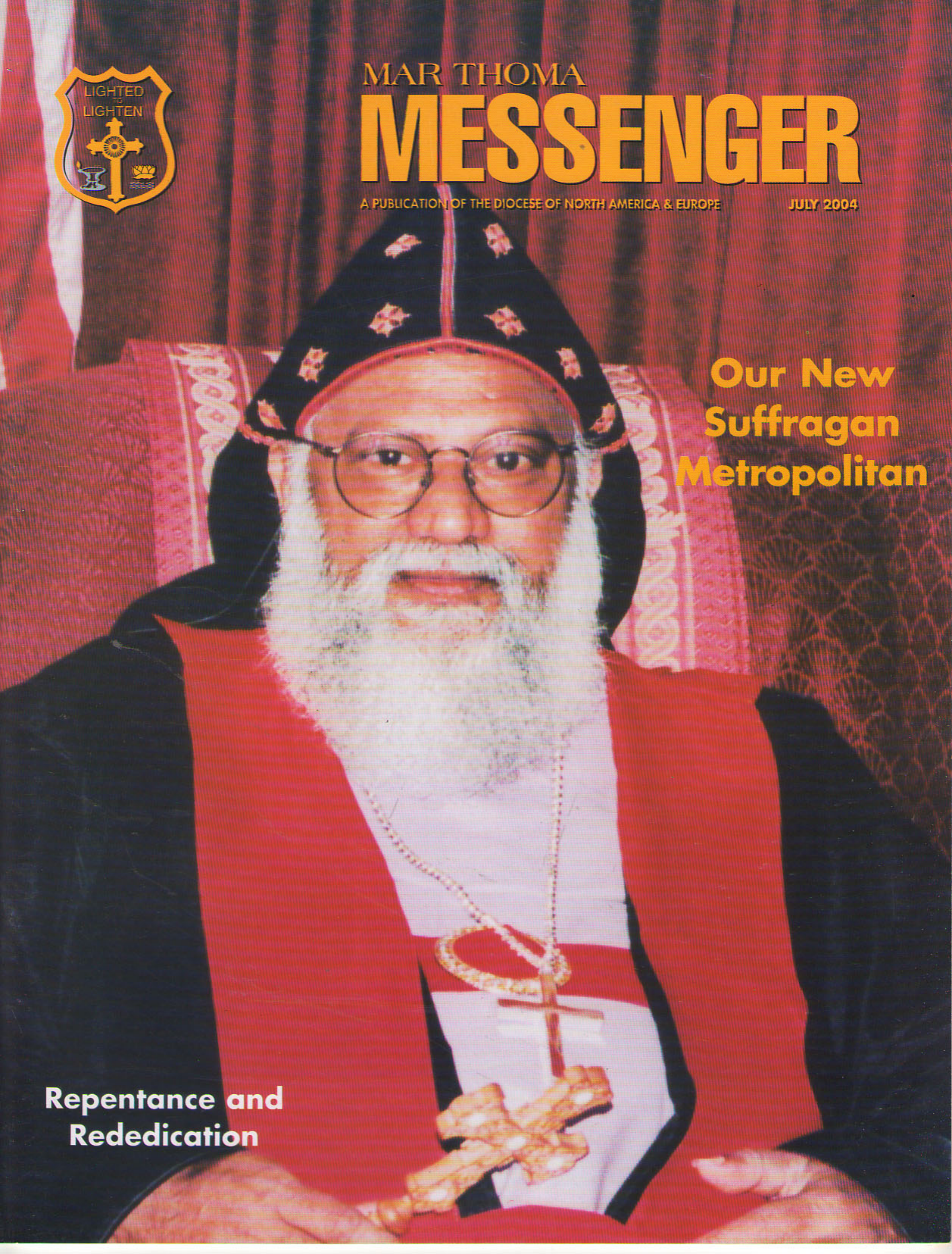
MAR THOMA  
**MESSENGER**

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 2004

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Suffragan  
Metropolitan**

**Repentance and  
Rededication**



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# Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly beloved in Christ,

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

We are at the threshold of another Family Conference. The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York is making elaborate arrangements for the conference. The legacy of the conference in this Diocese needs no special mention. Hope you have already done the registration. Rather than a comfortable stay and vacation, let us make an earnest effort to make this conference a turning point in our life by attuning ourselves with the Divine more than ever. The Diocesan Clergy conference will be held immediately after the family Conference at the St. James Mar Thoma Church, New York. I request all Acheens of the Diocese to attend both conferences with their families.

We are glad that The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan has given Zacharias Thirumeni the title 'Suffragan Metropolitan' on July 3, 2004. Let us thank God for Thirumeni's vision and mission; his contributions to our Church, our Diocese and also to the Ecumenical Movement world wide. We will have a brief session to felicitate Thirumeni at the concluding function of the upcoming Family Conference. Kindly make it a point to attend this program.

As was done last year, we have adopted another Island in Mexico which is adjacent to the earlier one. We are in the process of constructing 36 houses and two community halls for the poor Islanders over there. Several Parishes and Organizations have already sponsored a few houses. I am grateful to all for their generosity. We still need a few sponsors more. Kindly do the needful. I commend all the teams who have volunteered to go over to Mexico this summer. I am also glad to note that the V.B.S. for the children of Native Americans in Alabama and Oklahoma went on very well.

I am glad to let you know that we have two new Parishes in our Diocese: the Salem Mar Thoma Parish in Eastern Long Island and the Sehion Mar Thoma Parish in Dallas. I wish them all God's blessings in their ministry.

As you are aware, last year the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom collected about \$43,000 towards the Metropolitan's Golden Jubilee Project named 'Toilet for the toiletless'. This amount was sent to the Metropolitan who in turn distributed the whole amount among the various Dioceses.

We are going to have another clergy from the younger generation of this Diocese. Dn. Shiby Abraham, member of St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church is going to be ordained on August 21, 2004 at the Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. Let us uphold him and family in our prayers.

Mr. Anil Joseph, our office assistant and software consultant left for Texas on 28th of June. I thank him for his exemplary service to the Diocese. Mr. Vinu Ittykunju has replaced him from July 1st. I wish him all the best in his work.

Beloved, let us be reminded of our Family Conference theme 'Arise, Shine, for your light has come'. We are called and set apart as the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Let us seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that we will always be with the forces of light over against the forces of darkness and evil in this world.

May God's grace be with you all.

Yours in His ministry,

Coorilos Metrachan

# Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly Beloved in the Lord, June 2004

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

May 30th was Pentecost Sunday. Pentecost is an experience of fellowship, sustaining and strengthening our relationship with our fellow beings by understanding their language (using any medium of translation). I hope this Pentecost celebration left our church with this kind of fellowship. June 5th was World Environment Day. The environment is part of ourselves. God created man after he created light, land, sun, trees, animals, birds, air, etc. One of the duties that God entrusted to man was to protect the environment; but man, who is supposed to protect nature, exploits and corrupts it. Air, water, and food, which are supposed to be the basis of life, have become carriers of death. Our forests are depleting as a result of the proliferation of our greed. As we relentlessly continue this destruction, we also pray to God to protect our land from droughts. We enthusiastically engage in activities that will contribute to the drought.

Let us dedicate this year to love and protect our environment in our capacity as individuals, families, and a church.

June 6th was observed as Trinity Sunday. The concept of the Trinity is one of our basic tenets. During the ordination of our priests, one of the instructions given to the priests, loosely translated, is as follows: "You should consistently observe the true faith with praise in the prescribed manner. It is the faith in the triad God. Even while He was conceived in the womb of the virgin, He existed in the heaven of heavens." We should strive to teach people of this faith and help make it their experience too.

Many priests were transferred to different parishes in May. I am aware that we were not able to accommodate the wishes of all the priests and all the parishes completely. Individual members focus on one parish, but the Synod has to keep in focus the needs and improvement of all the parishes. The transfer of priests is a decision taken by the Synod. The opinions of Diocesan Bishops get preference in this matter. Everyone should cooperate keeping this in mind. Priests should live in the houses provided by the respective parish. Not only should they live in the parsonage, they should work in the community too. Finding time to meet with parish members and talk to them is also part of our ministry. Family prayers, Bible study, caring for the aged, upliftment of everyone in our vicinity—all these deserve our exceptional attention.

Soon schools will reopen. I pray for the little children who will start school this year and wish them a blessed academic life. I also congratulate the ones who have graduated and scored high. However, those who were unable to achieve their potential should not be disheartened. Believe that what lies ahead is much better than what is past. It is not right to be angry at not getting school or college admissions. Refrain from accusing the authorities without reason. Financially stable parishes should extend help to educate children from less fortunate families. We should aspire for great success. At the same time, do not believe nor make others believe that success in examinations alone is the deciding factor for success in the life ahead. Help each other to grow in their God-given talents.

I do not believe that an education or a position devoid of godliness is a real achievement. Our children should excel in sports, arts, social service, and be a part of serving this nation. Encourage them not to procure high positions for its own sake, but to purposefully react to the situational needs.

May 1, 2004 marked our Zacharias Mar Theophilus Thirumeni's 25th anniversary as Bishop. Thirumeni's service in the church and in the community during this span of time is indeed laudable. Also, a circular has been sent to the church announcing the appointment of Theophilus Thirumeni as the Suffragan Metropolitan as advised by the Sabha Council and the Synod.

As a church, we are observing 2004 as a year of repentance and rededication. This is not just a declaration, this is a program for transformation. If a man is in Christ, he becomes a new creation. The old will give way for the new.

Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

# Repent & Rededicate—Clarion call for Home Coming

(Bible Study)

Rev. T. A. Varghese, Epiphany MTC, New York

**W**e live in a fragmented world and human community, which is divided into diverse factions based on color, creed and caste. Enmity and vengeance seem to permeate society at large. The divine acts of forgiveness and reconciliation seem to be vanishing. Pride and ego dominate the human self, and even the very fabric of human society, which will culminate in catastrophic ends. Repentance is not an abstract philosophical concept, nor a relative phenomenon. Rather, repentance is a relation action by which oneself finds his/herself reconciled to God and to one another.

The word 'repentance' has a spectrum of meanings and implications. Repentance means 'conviction of one's omissions and shortcomings'; 'coming back to oneself,' or 'feeling guilty for the past.' The church, being the community of pilgrims locked to a higher destination, inevitably needs repentance. One's free will is involved in that act of repentance. The Holy Spirit convicts us of the sins of our inner conscience and helps us to rededicate our being. Now we are going to analyze the text to understand the various implications of the theme. The chosen text for our meditation highlights the dynamics of the theme.

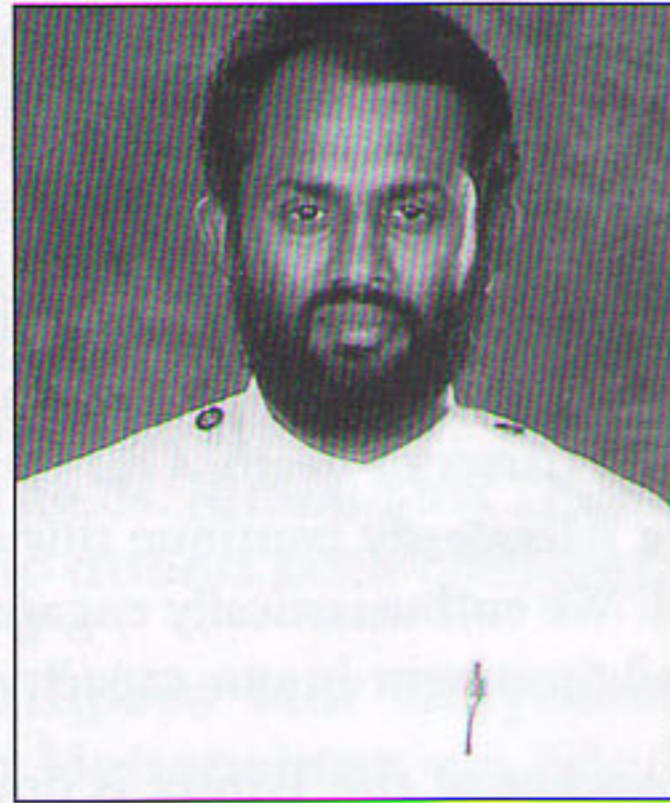
## Repentance is Knowing Your Limits

It was unusual on the part of the younger son to ask for his share in the father's property while the father is alive. Human freedom is to be exercised in responsible ways. Freedom ceases to be freedom when it violates the specified limits. The younger son could not understand the limits of freedom. When the limits are crossed, freedom turns into slavery. Sonship is proved in the responsible use of self-will. Having received the property, the younger son ran through his own ways, obeying his impulses and instincts, until his resources were exhausted. Friends left him as his resources became depleted. The sensual pleasures seem to be vanishing and temporal. The lust of the flesh could not satiate his urge for pleasure and fun.

Human freedom is freedom within the limits. St. Paul said, "If Christ sets you free, you are free indeed." Christian freedom is freedom under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The first parent, Adam and Eve, could not keep the boundary line of freedom and they eventually failed in experiencing this freedom in the Garden of Eden. Often, we too commit the same mistake, the mistake of crossing the limits of freedom. The Holy Spirit will help us discern the areas of freedom.

## Repentance is Coming Back to Oneself

It took a long time for this young man to reach self-realization. He realized his deplorable plight in the wandering life. To be in



the circle of God's fellowship is the sublime experience of life. He was secure in the company of his father's house. But when he moved from his father's house, he became alienated. Though he was living within the family, he could not understand the depths of his father's love. He misunderstood his father's love and tried to get rid of it. He understood the providential concern of his father's love during his wilderness experience. To be away from the fellowship of the father is suicidal and equal to death. There is a vacuum outside the fellowship of the father. No reality can exist outside the being of God. It is painful to be

outside of a relationship with God.

Human beings are created for eternity and there is an eternal dimension within our being that can only be satisfied in a blissful experience with God. Repentance is the essential step to rededication. Having been convicted, one can dedicate the whole avenue of life for the cause of the kingdom. Hence, Christ challenges us to rededicate our life and ministry for the extension of his kingdom.

## Rededicate for a New Being in Christ

Rededication is the dedication of oneself towards a higher reality and to the challenges of the Kingdom. We need divine wisdom to know that the doors of the Kingdom are still open to those who are repentant. Repentance is not forgetting the past, but reaffirming the assurance that God's love is not yet exhausted. One's faith in the redemptive death of Christ is adequate for one's salvation.

The picture of the son coming back to the father's house is symbolic of one being admitted to the eternal bliss. There is great joy in the heavens when one sinner finds himself and turns to God's way. God's forgiving love is demonstrated in the approach of the father. God's love is not exhausted and he is not frustrated with human kind. Divine love transcends the human limitations and forgives human iniquities. He was received by his father as if he had not committed any sin.

The more we are penitent, the more we are accepted. The providential grace of God does not withhold the experience of salvation from anyone. Repentance opens the door for rededication. The future of our ministry depends upon the pattern of our response to Christ. We live in an era of challenges and possibilities. As Gail Brunnes put it, "As the fire exists by flame, the church exists by mission." The mission of the church is accomplished in the act of repentance leading to commitment. Being the extension of his incarnation, let us prepare ourselves to be rededicated to the work of furthering his kingdom. ■

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# Move towards Reformation

Rev. Sunni E. Mathew, Los Angeles, CA

## Introduction

In the former issue, we dealt with the work of the CMS Missionaries within the Indian Church. As we have already seen, the first generation of missionaries were well accepted. At the same time they tried to understand the Metropolitan and the practices of the Church in India. Between the years 1826 and 1833 these Missionaries had to return to England. In their place two younger Missionaries arrived. They were Rev. Joseph Peet and Rev. W. J. Woodcock. They were rather impatient. Their assessment of Malabar Church was from a purely evangelical understanding. As a result they found everything wanting. For them the progress was very slow. Hence they were sometimes rash in their actions. This caused friction in their relationship with Cheppat Mar Dionysius who was the Metropolitan at that time.



## Confrontation between Missionaries and Metropolitan

Some people were not in favor of change. Some among them began to play a double game. They conveyed to Rev. Peet that the Metropolitan is about to take away the documents of the Seminary (now known as Old Seminary) and was trying to get the Seminary in his custody. In his irrational and arrogant haste, Rev. Peet went to the Seminary and rashly took away the documents. He further kept them in the custody of the Resident. Following that, they went to the Metropolitan and informed him that the documents had been removed by the missionary. This added fuel into the already strained relationship. Those who were disappointed by the expulsion of Athanasius now became sufficiently strengthened by the support received from the Metropolitan. Matters became worse and passions began to rise.

## Efforts to diffuse tension

Rev. John Tucker, the CMS Secretary from Madras could not diffuse the tension. Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta came to Kerala in 1835 to sort out differences. He proposed six points for the consideration of the Church.

1. Ordination should be given only to those who have completed their studies at the Seminary and have a certificate in recognition of that.
2. Instead of collecting money as a token for celebrating sacraments, salary system should be implemented for the clergy.

3. Schools should be started along with all parishes of the Syrian Church.
4. Clergy should read out Word of God to people in their vernacular language, Malayalam.
5. Liturgy should be explained to those who do not understand Syriac.
6. Every year accounts should be passed in the parish and it should be submitted to the British resident.

All the first five clauses were acceptable. Seminary was started in collaboration with the Metropolitan and he was overseeing the Seminary. Having schools in association with the Parishes was also not of much problem for the reason that the Assembly of the Church held at Kandanad has already resolved for that in the year 1805. Using Bible in Malayalam was also considered a favorable act, since the translation was taken up as an important act by the former Metropolitan. Kandanad Padiyola (Decisions of the Kandanad Assembly) explicitly speaks about the decision of presenting the accounts in the parish general body and to get the approval. Therefore, these proposals were quite reasonable. But the sixth one created major problem with its clause of submitting the accounts to the British resident. Mar Dionysius saw in them an attempt to violate its integrity by a body that wielded political power in the country. In the background of the annexation of the Church by the Roman Catholics through the backing of Portuguese political power, the thinking of Mar Dionysius was very reasonable. This was particularly true with the sixth clause, which called for submitting the returns regularly to the British resident who is a political authority.

## Attempt to thwart British Influence

Mar Dionysius convened an assembly at Mavelikkara in 1836 and placed the suggestion of Wilson before the assembly for consideration. The assembly rejected the proposal. But they did not want to antagonize the political power by outright rejection of the proposal to produce its accounts before the British resident. They knew that such a confrontation is suicidal. Therefore they affirmed in its decision that, "We are Jacobite Syrians subject to the Patriarch of Antioch, observing the Church rites and rules established by the prelates sent by his command. We cannot therefore deviate from them." This means that, on account of this authority any decisions could be taken only with the consent of the Patriarch. Hence they have inability to



accept the proposals. At the same time, the assembly also forbade the missionaries to preach and teach in the Church. Here also it was asserted that the sanction of the Patriarch is a necessity for doing so.

### **Unfortunate Outcome of the historical situation**

In order to check any exercise of authority by the western missionaries and those associated with them, the Mavelikkara assembly affirmed that the Church of Malabar is fully subjected to the Patriarch of Antioch. This decision produced longstanding consequences. Those who supported the missionaries and worked for reforms did not accept this decision, yet this decision became a basis for their further action for confrontation.

### **Parting of the Missionaries and the Metropolitan**

It came to the point that working together became very difficult. So the missionaries and the Malankara Church decided to part. In a feasible and moderate way settlement on the claims on the properties between the Metropolitan and Missionaries were made by arbitration. According to the award of the arbitration, the Seminary with its compound and the endowment fund for the education of the clergy known as 'Vattipanam' were allotted to the Metropolitan. The Missionaries got the Monroe Island along with the education fund and the school for higher

education at Kottayam. Thus the Missionaries and the Malankara Church parted company.

Now the Church Society had to decide what to do next. They decided to work among the non Christians. Some of the members of the Malankara Church who were strongly drawn to the Missionaries joined them. A Church was built at Mallappally for those who preferred to use the Anglican prayer book in their worship, and to adopt rituals according to the Anglican rites. Other Churches were subsequently built at Mavelikara and other places. Not long after the Anglican Diocese of Travancore, and Cochin was formed in 1878. Kottayam was made the headquarters of this diocese.

### **Conclusion**

Unfortunate circumstance and the weight of historical stigma developed into distrust and rivalry between a once smooth relationship between the Indian Church and the British Missionaries. Opportunistic games by some vested interest groups added fuel to this. Finally it became inevitable that they part. Meanwhile, a group of enlightened clergy and laity felt the need for purification of the Church. They did not want to depart from the Church and form a Church in the Anglican tradition. They valued the worth of Eastern tradition and understanding. So they started working from within the Church. Their efforts led to reformation within the Church further leading to the division of the Church into two. This we will discuss in the next issue. ■

## **Matrimonial**

Marthomite parents settled in Canada invite marriage proposal from Keralite Christians for their daughter living with them age 28, Masters, employed. Respond at [usandca@yahoo.com](mailto:usandca@yahoo.com) or [keralacanada@yahoo.com](mailto:keralacanada@yahoo.com)

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# Twenty-five Years in Amazing Grace— Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

## Our New Suffragan Metropolitan

Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles

It was indeed welcome news to all of us, especially the members of the North American Diocese, when we learned from the Metropolitan's Letter published in May 2004 issue of the "Sabha Tharaka" the Sabha Council's and Synod's decision to elevate Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus to Suffragan Metropolitan during this Silver Jubilee year of his consecration as a Bishop. We remember with immense gratitude Zacharias Thirumeni's untiring efforts and dedication with which he served the diocese from 1993 to 2001 as its Bishop.

When Zacharias Thirumeni was appointed as the first resident Bishop of this Diocese in 1993, our diocese was in its infant stage. We had about 26 parishes/congregations with a membership of close to 12,000 then, but he knew more than anyone else in our diocese that his primary goal was to look for the "lost sheep" in different and distant regions of the United States, Canada and Europe and bring them together as a congregation in different areas so as to enable them to avail themselves of the services of a Mar Thoma priest. No wonder, by the time Zacharias Thirumeni left in October 2001, we had over 70 parishes/congregations and close to 30,000 members.

The establishment of our first Diocesan Center in Philadelphia, the subsequent construction and dedication of the beautiful Sinai Mar Thoma Center in Long Island, the consecration of Rev. Roy Thomas as the first Kasseessa from our second generation American Marthomites, maintaining high level personal relationship with the Episcopal Church and other Church leaders on a global basis, the acceptance of the Mar Thoma Church as a member of the N.C.C., are some of the achievements of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus during his tenure as our first resident Bishop. As a member of the Central Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Zacharias Thirumeni has been able to maintain a strong and lasting relationship with different world Church leaders, thereby elevating the position of the Mar Thoma Church to a higher level of global perspective.

Perhaps many of our members, especially the second generation Marthomites and the newly settled Mar Thoma



immigrants, may not be aware of the fact that it was because of the vision and sacrifices of a handful of early Mar Thoma settlers in the greater New York area and a student achen studying in Boston University in the early 70's by the name Rev. Oommen Koruthu, that the Mar Thoma Church came into existence in Northern America and Europe. What kind of an achen was he then? Well, he was then and now a Servant Leader - servant first and leader second. With no significant regular support from the early scattered settlers, Oommen Koruthu achen had to make both ends meet with his meager scholarship amount as a Ph.D.

student in Boston. Yet he took pains to visit our early settlers in New York once a month which culminated in the formation of the first Mar Thoma Congregation in New York. Later on, more and more Congregations were formed in different parts of North America and Europe by the early settlers there. So it was befitting that the former Oommen Koruthu achen, presiding the 2000 Diocesan Council and Assembly meetings as the Bishop of the Diocese of North America and Europe, had agreed in toto with nostalgic feelings the members' decision to observe Diaspora Sunday every year in our parishes on the last Sunday in November to commemorate the sacrifices made by our early settlers in different parts of this diocese just as we celebrate Thanksgiving Day every year to remember the enormous struggles and difficulties the early pilgrims had to endure.

Zacharias Thirumeni is a man of vision. He maintained a nexus between the old and the new generations. His very life exemplifies what it means to live by faith in God's grace. Bishop Theophilus is a true ecumenical spirit. He has made signal contribution to the global ecumenical movement. He believes that the ecumenical movement does not deal with concepts and views but essentially with people. His contributions to the Church are manifold. At a time when we celebrate the Silver Jubilee of his consecration as a bishop and his elevation as Suffragan Metropolitan, we pray to God Almighty to grant him grace and strength for many more years of fruitful service in the Lord's vineyard. ■

# Everyday Theology

Dr. Zac Varghese, London

It is most significant that Metropolitan Chrysostom has emphasized the importance of setting apart 2004 as a special year for 'repentance and rededication;' this is so timely for us as a Church at the beginning of the 21st century. Nevertheless repentance and rededication are not one off events; they should be part of our daily living and an everyday theology. But earmarking an event by dedicating a year might provide fresh impetus. Archbishop William Temple said that the Church is the one society which exists primarily for the sake of those who are outside it? Does it happen so in the Mar Thoma Church? Church should be able to serve society as a whole in many ways- in helping the poor, for example, or educating 'differently talented' young people or caring for the marginalised people and the old. We are mindful of these responsibilities, but we should be doing more.

It is right of course for the Mar Thoma Christians should have a closely-knit life of its own, but if it becomes too comfortable, it may have the effect of causing those outside it to be forgotten, or worse still, to be remembered in intercessory prayers, but not to be wanted. From this perspective it is important to applaud and congratulate our Synod for initiating the formularies for creating the 'Communion of Churches of India.' We celebrate events which make us different from others, and try to minimize the things which make us the same. We yearn for that transcendent experiences which will take us out of our ordinary everyday activities; we are after an other-worldly experience and 'spiritual fixes' that will allow us to forget the familiar routines of family, work and worship. The New Testament gives us a great wealth of resources for working out the spirituality of everyday life. Jesus made himself available for participating in the everyday events of very ordinary people including social outcasts rather than of spiritual athletes. However, we do not look for the spirituality of everyday life and we have given ourselves, particularly the young people, to the quest for a dramatic, sensational spirituality. Why is this? Everyday life is very repetitive, there is little to get excited about and we do not look to meet God there. We need a theology of everyday life to bridge the gap between academic theology and the specific needs of ordinary people.

All rational human beings possess two distinct aspects in their encounter with God: that of knowing and of loving. One of the ways of knowing God is through scholarship, which is an arduous task; it generates doubts



and disbelief and when one begins to doubt, one is in debate with the wisdom of the ages and it is an endless pain. Another way of knowing God is through the amazing power of love. In all humility, then one comes to the conclusion that it is in silence that one comes to know one's God. This allows one to believe that all the promises of faith are possible. For Jesus lack of faith was the greatest obstacle to religious well being and the main barrier in front of a divinely inspired action. Faith was the corner stone of his healing ministry; Jesus

credited all his healings to the faith of his subjects. According to Jesus, faith as small as the proverbial mustard seed can enable a man to perform miracles. Jesus appreciated children's simple and total dependence on their parents; this is the basis for the central position given to children in having the right spiritual attitude in the quest for the kingdom and spiritual pilgrimage. Burden of knowledge can become an obstacle at times in our spiritual progress and hence 'knowing is in the unknowing.' Why do we have four Gospels, instead of one? Why didn't a committee of the disciples provide an authentic comprehensible account of Jesus and his ministry? Did the early Church in any way water down the teaching of Jesus or doctored its content to suit its immediate needs? How did Paul open his ministry to the gentile world? Did Jesus say everything that is attributed to him? How do we find answers to 21st century problems in the context of first century revelations? How does God identify himself with human suffering? Does God suffer in his own being or is God incapable of suffering? Can God's impassibility be understood while at the same time affirming his real awareness of, and true identification with, human suffering? I really get confused and give up when they begin to argue about the immanent and economic Trinity. Theologians generate hundreds of such questions, but they have no real significance for a faith-oriented life. Faith is a simple and true friendship. Theology has somehow become a kind of mandarin's art.

What is everyday theology? It is taking the incidences of everyday living and relating it to the manifestations of God in the ordinary and extraordinary moments of our lives. It is about loving God and realizing His love in our lives and the lives of our neighbors. It is testifying with confidence that His grace is sufficient for us in all circumstance of living and in all seasons of our lives. Then we begin to experience the presence of God in the highs and lows in our lives, in the rise and fall of the sun, in the

waxing and waning moon, and in the rise and fall of the wind. All these are opportunities to feel a purpose for our pulsating and throbbing lives within ourselves, our neighbors and the created order. The creator and coordinator of this incomprehensible mystery is our God and everyday theology helps us to experience this mystery in our living. Even Jesus himself was amazed at the power of this authentic everyday theology. Jesus turned to the crowd following Him and said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (Luke 7: 1-10). The Roman centurion's servant was sick and about to die. But the centurion was totally prepared to leap over his constrained faith barriers to reach out to Jesus for saving the life of the servant he valued highly. The centurion took a familiar everyday experience and made an amazing faith-connection and confession: "Say the word, and my servant will be healed. For me I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go' and he goes; and that one 'Come', and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this', and he does it." It is in everyday ordinary events that we experience the love, the power and the authority of Jesus.

How do we appreciate this everyday theology? This can be illustrated through the story of the hermit who, lived in a cave on a hill above a Celtic Village. He was well known for his wisdom and understanding. Many people came to him for help and counselling. But two village boys wanted to play a practical joke on him to tease him. They decided to shout for him from outside the cave, one of them hiding a small living bird in the palm behind his back, and asking the question: "Father, is this bird in my hand live or dead?" If he said it was dead the boy would open his hand and let it fly. But if he said it was alive, the boy would cruelly crush and kill it for the sadistic pleasure of proving that the old hermit was a fool. With this carefully constructed plot, they climbed the hill and called on the hermit. "Father," said one lad, "I have a small bird in my hand, you're wise, could you kindly tell us whether it is dead or alive?" There was a long silence, the old man fixed his gaze on them and exploded into laughter and said: "Well, boys - it all depends on you!" Only theology that is relevant is the everyday theology and it is entirely up to us to write this theology by living out our faith through the grace of God. If we pick up words from the Bible or other sacred books as a safety net or as a password for access to a mind set and don't use it in everyday situations of hustle and bustle of life, then we are like the fool who built his house on the sandy beach; when storms rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards (Matt. 7: 26-27).

Centers of learning, perhaps, provide shortcuts to understanding God to some extent; they have study guides and formulas, diplomas and degrees for a successful life that can be obtained in our spare time. Religious life is not a spare time activity or a hobby of a kind. An everyday theology should help us to keep away from false

teachers who smile a lot, masking insincerity; these people are out to rip us off in some way or the other. A real teacher will never exploit our emotions or our check books. The words of Jesus during his Galilean ministry are foundational, words to build our lives on. Galileans were surprised at Jesus' teachings because he was living everything that he was saying- quite a contrast from the accredited religious teachers of the day. This was the best simple teaching they had ever heard. If we use these words in writing an everyday theology for living, then we will be like the smart man who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, river flooded, a gale hit- but nothing moved that house because it was built on a sure foundation. The way to living, living with God, requires total attention and commitment. This we know from the living testimony of people who tasted life with God and said: "And for we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). The only life that is worth living is a life in communion with God, it is an unbelievable inheritance!

Any religious thought, no matter where it comes from, should be threaded; and every thought, no matter who said it should be set in the context of others with the silk thread of love and reverence to feel the beauty of creation and enjoy the bliss of the union of the creature and the creator. These pearls of wisdom were part of a necklace of humanity once, or intended to be part of one, threaded with a very strong silk thread of love. Someone, somewhere, somehow broke the string and the pearls were shattered and lost; we need to find the pieces and the silk thread to recreate the string of pearls. Unfortunately these pearls have become private collector's pieces and they do not belong to ordinary people any more, they have become museum collections. These museums are our religions and its curators are priests and religious leaders. Nevertheless, if we have a tiniest fraction of the sensitivity of Jesus we may see divine truth being revealed in the chatter of children or in the conversations of simple people during their everyday activities, or in the unmolested beauty of the nature. But there is a thread connecting all these people and events, the beauty of living is in finding the thread, the silk thread of love. It is the thread needed to weave the fabric of life with an everyday theology.

We must be alive for reasons other than procreation, productivity and consumption. We should be able to become alive in ourselves when we see a beautiful flower, hear a melodious song, witness a beautiful human activity or simply experience a moment of divine grace. It requires courage and humility to say: "I am a spoiled child of God as God has given me most of things I have asked and many more things which I did not ask for." But we have lost our innocence. Most unexpected thing can happen from one minute to the next, but that uncertainty is also lost because

of our trust in a plastic credit card. We are bewitched by the false god of glamour and a fake promise of advertising. In our obsession for instant success, we neglect the fact that best things are discovered slowly. Slow aging and maturing is essential to bring out the fullness of a classic vintage wine. Spirituality is a slow journey; instead we are offered package holidays with guides and tours devoid of silence, beauty and meaning. It was Blaise Pascal, in the 17th century, who said that all human difficulty derives from the inability to sit quietly in a room. If we trust our need for silence, stillness and solitude we will find where we need to go. We need to find great shelters of belonging in this journey. We need to reclaim our right to our faith traditions from the frightened functionaries who create exclusive gated- communities and guard their gates so jealously. Institutionalized religions have covered up most of the innate, spontaneous and dynamic experiences that can be enjoyed in belonging to faith communities. In its place we are given neatly packaged prescriptions and repeat prescriptions of a kind which will bring artificial stability and instant release of pressure and anxieties. The worshipping place, temple, or church is a place now we hear 'you must, you shouldn't, you can't', but it should be a place where we experience the beauty of a conversation with our maker. Religion which is composed of rules and regulations, of moral codes, external rites and statutory religious duties, is as chilling as the bureaucracy and red tape that surround it.

As religious pilgrims, let us hope that our churches may become places where we find meaning of life in difficult times. If our marriage is going bad, our kids are on dope, our work is unsatisfactory, we're lonely, we're getting old, we're unhappy, may be the place not to go to is the gambling house or the house of pleasure or a department store of instant spirituality. The place to go to is the local church or a community of believers; just go in even if we've lost our faith in the church and the God they portray. Let us go in for the fellowship because we need to belong, we may find peace and we may be even in for a miracle of finding that we may be helping to put together an everyday theology. This world of everyday theology is the arena of God's creative involvement and love, and once you have entered that fellowship there is no turning back. There are only two rules for this journey, love for God and neighbor, but in everyday theology they are both one. The New Delhi assembly of WCC stated: "The real letter written to the world today does not consists of words. We Christian people, wherever we are, are a letter from Christ to the world." Relationships are important; we do not grow in our own spirituality apart from others. An old adage tells us

that a 'solitary Christian is no Christian.' How can we speak or write to others about God if we are broken in our relationships? What one puts into a relationship is more important than that what one expects to get out of it. St. Paul in Romans 12 speaks about the style of personal relationship within the Christian community. Paul's emphasis has been that the gospel of grace should inform and mould our relationship with others. God's gracious relationship with us is both a paradigm and a resource for our relationship with one another.

Let me end this discourse on everyday theology with an old legend. This I hope will help us to see the need for repentance and rededication to build the world-wide Mar Thoma Church; it will help us to see opportunities in places where God has placed us to build His Kingdom. Once there were two monks who went in search of a very special door at the end of the earth, which opened to a place where heaven and earth met. They started their pilgrimage in search of this door, they travelled all over the world, encountered difficulties beyond imagination, suffered all privations that such a journey around the world demands. Finally, they found the special door in a very special place and they were hoping to find God inside. With trepidations and trembling hearts they knocked at the door and watched it slowly open. But when they went inside with anticipation they immediately realized they are standing inside their own monastery from where they started their pilgrimage many years ago. Then they began to understand that the place where heaven earth meet is to be found in everyday lives, in the place where God has placed them to be. Ordinary Christian folks and faith communities need to understand the very simple fact that we are the only Bible that people out there read. Doors are symbols for so many events in our life. Doors can divide and they can open to create relationships. The risen Christ passed through locked doors to see his frightened disciples. This changed everything, their anxiety disappeared. The Lord said to them: "As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). These Apostles were not comfortable functionaries in an affluent Church, they were restless men, who did not spare themselves, but expended their strength in the service of the marginalised, poorest and most abused people in the communities. That is what everyday theology is all about. Our primary vocation is to implement Jesus' love and compassion; we can only fulfill that vocation by applying an everyday theology in places where we live, where we work and where we spend our leisure. Let us repent and rededicate ourselves for this task. ■

*"How else but through a broken heart may Lord Christ enter in"*

*Oscar Wilde*

# The Church Needs True Repentance and Rededication

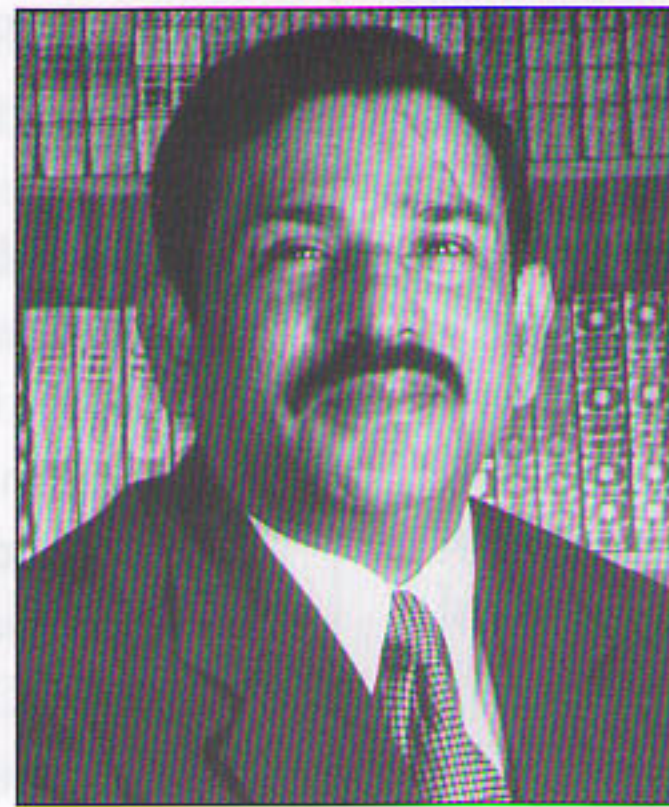
Atty. Lal Varghese, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch, Dallas

**A**s stated in second chapter of Acts the New Testament Church was born in a dramatic display of spiritual power, which sealed its divine origin and produced a dynamic witnessing community of believers. The community of believers multiplied as the power of God was evidenced by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The disciples of Jesus Christ were filled with zeal. The sermons of the apostles proclaimed Christ and His resurrection. The living Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection ignited the earlier Christian Church in its quest of spreading the word of God.

Nearly 2000 years later the question being asked is this: do Christians still band together as a community of believers bonded by love, lead by the Holy Spirit and united in their endeavors as they did in the first century? In Ephesians 2:19-22 Paul wrote: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." Paul gives us a clear historical foundation for the Church. He traces the Christian heritage, the roots to which every believer is connected, to the New Testament community of believers.

In 1 John 4:7-9 it says: "We are enabled to love one another through Jesus Christ." Galatians 5:22-23 reads: Christians are different because Christ lives in them. We the Marthomites claim the heritage of St. Thomas and eastern traditions, its culture and values to claim a unique and separate identity for itself from other churches. Our efforts, so far, in trying to pass this on to our younger generation have been unsuccessful. For Christians being the children of God, it is not the identity through its origin, nationality or race which makes them unique, but it must be always be the love of God that should transgress through us to others.

The Church is people, a living entity, not a corporate body. The church is not building or a structure. The Church is also not a multinational institutional conglomerate. This does not mean that the people of God should not be organized or that no formal structure should exist. But, the Church should never forget that it is composed of people, special people, the people of God. Unfortunately, in this materialistic society, people of God have often been over looked, forgotten and even neglected and abused by the corporate institution of the Church. There are now



man-made categories and hierarchies of people in the Church, the religious proletariats and bourgeoisies.

Jesus' disciples used the Greek word "ekklesia" to refer to the Church. The original meaning of this word means an assembly. But it refers to the people of God whether they are assembled or not. Some define Church as people 'called out of the world.' The fact that Christians are 'called out' is Biblically correct, but the word 'ekklesia' may be better translated as "called together." So the members of the

New Testament Church themselves are called together, chosen people, the people of God. They were the people of God at all times, and not just when they were assembled together for worship services. We pretend that we are God's chosen people only when we are inside the sanctuary and not outside.

What is the challenge for the Christians today? We must share the love that dwells within us by Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ's commission to the Church in Mathew 28:19-20 clearly identifies the Christian responsibility to proclaim the Gospel: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Sprit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." This challenge to adhere to New Testament teachings and the responsibility to make disciples applies to all of us as a Church. Jesus promises to be with us and live his life in us, strengthening and empowering us: verse 20 says "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the ages."

It happened on the road to Jerusalem when Jesus's disciples wouldn't let the blind men come to Christ. It happens today when a Church spends more time discussing the style of its sanctuaries than it does for the needs of the hungry; it happens when the brightest minds of the Church occupy themselves in prosaic controversies rather than biblical truths; it happens when a Church is known more for its stance on an issue than its reliance upon God. In our worship services many times our words falter. Many times our music suffers. Many times our worship is less than what we want it to be. When we ride on the steeds of chariots by building architectural monuments spending millions of dollars for our sanctuary, remember God uses tinny seeds to reap great harvests. It is on the back of donkeys Jesus rides – not steeds of Chariots – just simple donkeys to convey His message of love and glory.

In Mathew 21:13 it says: "My temple will be called a house for prayer. But you are changing in into a 'hideout

for robbers.' "It is sad but true fact of the faith: Church is used for profit, position and prestige by the so called believers: people are exploited and God is infuriated. Church is getting in the way of people who want to see him. Church exploits people in the name of God. Religious hucksters poke the fire of divine wrath. They build more fences than they build faith. Max Lucado writes: "The religious hucksters have stained the reputation of Church. They have muddied the altars and shattered the stained glasses. They stripmine faith to get a dollar and rape the pew to get a payment. Our master unveiled their scams and so must we."

Compare our churches to the Laodicean church. They were wealthy and self sufficient as we are now. There are parishes built spending millions of dollars, and spending huge sums to maintain the same. Yes, we are wealthy and self sufficient, but, is our faith hollow and fruitless or strong, withstanding, and fruitful? The message of the fig tree given by Jesus on His way to Jerusalem is not for all of us to have the same fruit. The message is to bear fruit. We have faith in religion, faith in the Church, but not in God. What angered Jesus during his last week was not apostles' confusion, not for the people's demands, not for being questioned by the Pilate or when whipped by soldiers. But what made him angry was two-faced faith: religion used for profit and prestige, and he could not tolerate that attitude.

Jesus lives in the midst of the forgotten and marginalized people. He has taken up residence in the ignored. He made a dwelling amidst the sick. But today's church lives with the affluent and the wealthy and taken residence with haves, and made mansion among the richest. Pilate thought he could avoid making a choice. He washed his hands off Jesus. He chose to sit the fence. However, Pilate did make a choice. Rather than asking for God's grace, he asked for disgrace. Rather than inviting Jesus to stay, he sent Him away. Rather than hearing Jesus' voice, he heard the voice of people. When we spend millions of dollars to build sanctuaries, our church is doing the same, not asking for grace, making wrong choices, listening to wrong voices, and turning away the forgotten. Jesus denounced hollow religion through his final walk through the temple of Jerusalem. We need to invite Jesus to

walk through our sanctuaries, our general body and committee meetings, our bake sales, raffles, and our feasts.

We too make choices at the foot of the Cross. We compete for recognition, big church buildings, well furnished parish halls, wedding receptions, and even funerals. We scramble for status by inscribing our names on the doors, walls, pews, and floors of our sanctuaries. How many Sundays have been wasted at the pulpits for spreading personal grudge and agenda? Many parishes have witnessed physical fights between believers. How many pews and altars have been wet with the tears of believers who experienced bitterness of their own brethren? Some find pleasure in hurting others by words and actions. We disagree violently and split on simple things, and then split again. We are so close to the cross but far from Jesus.

Legend has that Pilate's wife became a believer, and Pilate's eternal home is a lake where he daily surfaces, still plunging his hands into the water seeking forgiveness. He is trying to wash away his guilt... not for the evil he did, but for the kindness he didn't do. When people are forestalled the access to Jesus by those pretending to be close to him, the result is an empty, hollow and ugly Church. So we need to turn to God, seek forgiveness not for the evil that we are doing or spreading, but for the kindness we are not sharing with others. So let us nurture love, have concern for others, do well to our brothers and sisters, share and care for those who need our help, which is an essential characteristic of the Church. So let us repent, re-dedicate ourselves as a Church so that our parishes bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control as stated in Galatians 5:22-23. The Church should repent for not being the "salt and light" it should have been, for allowing the forces of darkness to rule us, by our own fault. The Church should ask for God's grace to replace our faith in Jesus Christ through sharing the love of God by re-dedicating ourselves so that we can be the light for others, rather than cursing the darkness. We should be grateful to our Metropolitan and the Synod for declaring 2004 as a special year of repentance and rededication for our church. ■

## **Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelist's Association Diocese of North America & Europe National Conference – 2004**

The 2nd National Conference of the Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelist's Association, Diocese of North America & Europe will be held on August 27-29, at Bishop Claggett Center, 3035 Buckeystown, Maryland. The main leaders of the Conference are Rev. Dr. Valsan Thampu, Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Rev. Sabu Koshy and Rev. John Mathai. All Edavaka Mission members of our Diocese are encouraged to attend this Conference. Please uphold this Conference in your prayers.

**Roy Thomas, Diocesan Secretary-MTVEA**

# Repentance and Rededication

Usha George Ph.D, The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Markham, Toronto

**T**hese concepts form the foundation of Christian living. These can be described as two sides of the same coin. More precisely, repentance is a precondition for rededication; and rededication assumes that repentance has already taken place.

Repentance refers to a feeling of regret and a change of the mind, where there is a conscious attempt to turn away from sin and to God. When a person realizes that a particular action or a certain line of conduct or perhaps the whole direction of life, has been wrong, and honestly resolves to change his conduct, he has repented. Repentance is the result of being sorry for one's own sins (2Corinthians 7:10). Repentance does not mean grieving for past mistakes. Worrying over past mistakes is remorse and remorse is a refusal to accept God's forgiveness. Renewal of commitment and reaffirmation of faith is the meaning of repentance in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation (2:5; 2:16). Repentance is not feeling sorry for our sins, it is turning away from our sins and turning to God through Jesus.

In Old Testament times, repentance was expressed corporately. When calamities such as famine, drought and disease happened, people did not hold themselves individually responsible; but sensed that these incidents were caused by collective sins--sins of the nation. All shared the responsibility and hence the rituals of repentance such as fasting, and wearing sackcloth. These rituals, when not accompanied by a genuine attitude of repentance, was devoid of their true meanings and many prophets spoke of the need for true remorse, where the individual is actively involved in making a radical change in his/her life. The Old Testament also has Jonah as the example of someone who turns away from his/her calling, and had to face the choice of repent or perish.

Repentance is a theme throughout the New Testament. Repentance is the result of being sorry for one's own sins. In most cases repentance was associated with the arrival of the Kingdom of God. John the Baptist issued calls for radical turning and expected those who made the commitment to demonstrate by their actions the change they had initiated in their hearts. John's message of repentance was connected inextricably with his expectation of the imminent coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist said "repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2). In sharp contrast to the Old Testament conceptions, New Testament



writings place the responsibility for repentance squarely on individuals.

Jesus preached the message of repentance. He entreated his followers to turn and become like children. He illustrated the notion of repentance by the parable of the prodigal son and also insisted that the life that was changed was obvious by the fruit that it bore (Luke 6:20-45). The Apostolic preaching identified repentance with belief in Christ; both resulted in the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). When

one repents, he turns away from his sins (1 Thessalonians 1:9) and shows he has repented by doing good works (Matthew 10:32,33).

Rededication is different from initial conversion; it is deeper and longer lasting, almost permanent feature of our Christian existence. Rededication is just not turning away from sin- it is also change within a person; it is to be openly manifested in justice, kindness and humanity (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24)

What are the elements of repentance and rededication?  
How do we achieve repentance and rededication?

- Being aware of our own sins and our frailty. We may consider ourselves to be strong and powerful; but we are often faced with our own feebleness. The results of sin are hard to wipe out; but it can be done just as completely, if the sin is abandoned.
- Moving away from a feeling of self-righteousness. "Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you in the same way as you judge others and He will apply to you the same rules you apply to others. Why then do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? (Matthew 7:1-3).
- Praying for courage and wisdom to forgive others and ourselves. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 4:19) Once we pray for forgiveness there is no need to punish ourselves any longer. Failure to forgive ourselves prevents us from experiencing peace. We have to forgive others if we want to make real spiritual progress. This is important not just for others, but for our own sake. It will make no difference to other persons (unless they happen to set a value upon your forgiveness), but it



will make a tremendous difference to you. Resentment, condemnation, anger and the desire to see someone punished are things that rot your soul. This does not mean that we should allow ourselves to be used and abused by others. It means you cease to rehearse your hurt over and over and focus on the power of Now. The only time you have is the present moment and the only thing you have to heal is the present thought. What we call the past is our memory of the past. Our duty is to dwell in the present and make this moment right. Get the present moment right by realizing peace, harmony, joy and goodwill.

- Seek new directions. Substitute our bad habits and thoughts with new ones. "When an evil spirit goes out of a person, it travels over dry country looking for a place to rest. If it can't find one, it says to itself, 'I will go back to my house.' So it goes back and finds the house empty, clean and all tidy. Then it goes out and brings along seven other spirits even worse than itself, and they come and live there. So when it is all over, that person is in a worse state than he was at the beginning." (Matthew 12:43-45). It is important be vigilant about this possibility.
- Experience peace and internal calm; feeling the presence of God and coming to His grace. God's love is profoundly deep and perfect in every way and not conditional. "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21). This is a call to change your thoughts and actions and to realize that the presence of God is where you are. Realize the internal energy. It is a well-known Eastern maxim that what you think upon grows. What you allow to occupy your mind you magnify in your own life and what you keep out of your mind tends to diminish in your life. The more we think of our ill health, the worse it will become. The more we think of our grievances or the injustices we

have suffered, the more such trials we continue to receive; the more we think of our good fortune we have had, the more good fortune will come to you. This is similar to the Biblical theme- be grateful and the 'popular psychology' notion of the power of positive thinking.

- Have faith--faith in the power of Christ to heal, to renew and to lead. The nature of God is perfect goodness and perfect love. God acts only to heal, liberate and to inspire. Faith cannot be inherited (Ezekiel 18:20). Each person must believe in Christ for himself/herself. Faith is not just believing facts about Jesus. Faith is trusting in Jesus (Romans 10:11).
- Be introspective. Review our motives and intentions; thoughts and actions on a regular basis to identify and remove from within us all that is boastful, dishonest, offensive and judgmental. Since you are God's dear children, you must try to be like him. Your life must be controlled by love, just as Christ loved us and gave his life for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice that pleases God" (Ephesians 5:1-3).
- Make a difference by being a dynamic person. One who does something in a new and better way is dynamic. Dynamic people leave the world at least a little different from the way in which they found it. The real secret of a dynamic personality is to believe that God works through you. Whatever you do, put His service first and be sincere, practical and efficient as possible. Every day do something to help someone else. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

Finally, it is important to maintain regular time for prayer and Bible study. Repentance and rededication are not just for 'grave sinners.' All of us should consider ourselves to be candidates for repentance and rededication. ■

*"Some people do not like to hear much of repentance; but I think it is so necessary that if I should die in the pulpit, I would desire to die preaching repentance, and if out of the pulpit I would desire to die practicing it."*

*Matthew Henry*

# Spirituality in Nursing

Rev. K. P. Sabu

**T**he code of Ethics of the International Council of Nurses states as follows:

Nurses minister to the sick, assume responsibility for creating a physical, social and spiritual environment which will be conducive to recovery, and stress the prevention of illness and promotion of health by teaching and example. They render health service to the individual, the family, and the community, and coordinate their services with members of other health professions. Service to mankind is the primary function of Nurses and the reason for the existence of the nursing profession. Need for nursing profession is universal. Professional nursing service is therefore unrestricted by considerations of nationality, race, color, or political status.

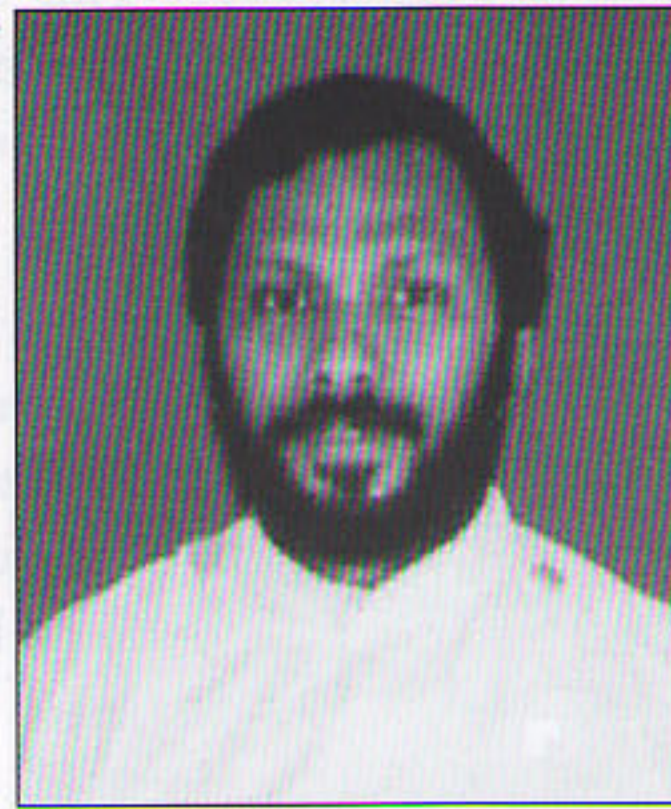
Since the primary function of Nursing is service to human beings by creating a physical, social and spiritual environment in the healing process, the nursing profession is set in a divine frame work. Therefore it is very important and worthwhile to discuss about the subject 'Spirituality in Nursing'.

## What is Spirituality?

Spirituality is not religiosity. There is a distinction between the two. Spirituality is the result of an experience of God, of the human and of the world. It is a vision of life with a system of values, ideals and goals that orient and guides one's life. Religiosity, on the other hand, is excessive adherence to the external practices of religion. It is through religion that spiritual experiences are transmitted to others. Religion is the expression of this experience in time and space. Religious symbols are meant to reveal a spiritual truth or a spiritual experience.

God being by nature unperceivable fully, each one's experience of God will emphasize one or other aspect of Godhead, depending on the cultural, geographic and socio-economic backgrounds in which one lives. In Christ, Christians see the love, compassion and mercy of God highlighted; in Prophet Mohamed, Muslims hear the call for social justice for the children of God; and in Rishis of India, the Hindus see the immanent presence of God in all beings. All these experiences are mutually complementary.

Joann W. Conn says "Spirituality refers to the totality of human life energized by an inner drive for self transcendence, that is, for moving beyond self-maintenance



to reach out in love, in free commitment to seek truth and goodness". Every human being has the capacity for spirituality. This capacity for spirituality is to be actualized in our life and service in relation to God and life giving Spirit. So it is the spirituality that gives us the inner drive or impetus to reach out in love and in compassion to people who are in need, distress and in pain.

## Rediscovering God in the midst of my work

Rediscovering God in every moment of action is a vital part of life. It is an ongoing realization of the marvelous flow of loving energy of God in my life and work. It demands a continued effort of self surrender to the will of God. In order to rediscover God in the midst of our work, we need to constantly look with 'attentive eyes' and stay connected with God. Rediscovering the divine presence in my work is a daily ongoing process. I need to be constantly intentional in the process of recognizing God as part of my identity (who I am) and of what I am doing.

There was a nursing care giver who was very active and was liked very much by her patients. She would reach the bed-side of the patients within no time whenever she got a ring from the patients' room. One day a patient asked her, "Sister, what made you to be different from other nurses of this hospital? You reach at my bed-side faster than any other nurses whenever I press the bell" She responded with humility, "In my room there is a writing which says 'Jesus Calls' under the bell monitor. Whenever I hear the bell ring I look up to the monitor, and the writing under the monitor starts speaking to me that Jesus is calling me. That gives me the impetus to be very attentive to my patients".

The Bible says, "whatever you do, do it for the sake of the Lord" Rediscovering God in the midst of our work leads us into a new dimension in terms of a way or a method or an attitude.

## The Miracle of Healing: Its setting, Conditions and Agents

### 1. Dynamics of Illness

The first thing I would like to say is that a patient with physical illness of any sort is a person. His/her illness means something to him/her. He/she is not merely a case. To any person illness is a source of disappointment, anxiety and worry. It is an experience of resentment, frustration and depression.

## 2. Healing: A Personal and Interpersonal Event

To repeat a truism, it is a person who is sick or healed, not an organ or a case. It is a person who meets the patient as the doctor or nurse. You can be a detached professional who diagnoses or attends a 'case' or an 'illness', forgetting the way the total person is affected by, and affects, the course of the illness and of the cure.

Dr. Bernie Siegel, M.D says, "Unconditional love is the most powerful stimulant of the immune system. The truth is: love heals. Miracle happens to exceptional patients everyday—patients who have the courage to love, those who have the courage to work with their doctors to participate in and influence their own recovery." Dr. Siegel is a person who is impressed by the influence of spiritual and emotional factors on physical healing. He believes that if the power of bitterness makes us sick, the power of love heals us. He stresses the fact that the doctor-patient relationship or the nurses-patient relationship matters in speeding up (or impeding) healing, and how the patients help or block themselves by the attitude they cultivate.

Healing seems to take place best in a healing partnership where the care-giver relates with love and genuine interest with the person who is ill and look at other areas, such as fear, resentment, depression, that affect the body.

Our health is certainly affected by the way we feel and think, speak and act. No Medical practitioner or care-giver can be effective unless they address the total condition of a person who comes to them with a specific problem. Though we are not able to measure the improvement of a patient, we do know that the treatment procedure, medication, patient's confidence in the doctor and in the care-giver, the atmosphere of the hospital, the inner strength gained through counseling and prayer are factors that influence healing.

## 3. The Central Role of One's Belief System

Dr. Herbert Benson describes one's belief system as the essential requirement for physical fitness. That what we believe affects the way we feel, does not need proof. Dr. Benson studies the impact of one's central and basic beliefs on one's bodily health and highlights the importance of a positive belief system. Our levels of serenity or anxiety, our fear or confidence, our readiness to let go of hurts or cling to them (all factors that affect health) depend to a large degree on our belief system. Hostility, resentment and bitterness have a way of wrecking one's physical health as well as one's moral caliber. Therefore one's faith in God who forgives the iniquity and heals the sickness helps in the healing process.

The Bible says, "The Lord forgives all your iniquity and heals all your sickness" (Ps.103:3). The modern medical science also affirms that the feeling of forgiveness is a good

medicine for many diseases. Therefore the care-givers need to clarify their own belief system before they can help care-receivers to clarify theirs.

## 4. The Enormous Resources we have

God has given us enormous resources in us. We are making use of only a small part of our physical, mental and spiritual resources. Stressing the fact that the human beings is far greater than what any science or technique can grasp, each of us, care-giver or receiver, has an enormous storehouse of untapped gifts. The 'spiritual' resource is greater in us because we are created in the image and likeness of God and the spirit of God is poured in us.

As a Pastor, I can tell you something which I know is true, though I cannot prove it to you. I try always to connect myself to the life-giving Spirit. When our desires are honest, and we want to do what is right, we are led by an invisible hand in the right direction. As a person who ministers to the people, I would feel the inner urge to go to the person who is in dire need. I know a well-known doctor, a man of integrity and duty, who would start the day by taking time to listen to God; he told me that he would feel the inner urge to go to the bedside of a patient just when that person needed help.

Your patients have resources, too. They are not organisms to be fixed or passive recipients of medical care. They are meant to be the active partners in the healing process. Impart our spiritual resources to them. Treat them as partners, not as cases; talk to them, not at them; listen to their feelings, not only to what the chart tells us about their symptoms.

## Conclusion

Though I am a non-medical person, in my experience as a trainer in the chaplaincy department of Christian Medical College, Vellore, India, as an Administrator and Chaplain of a Mission Hospital in India and as a colleague in a helping profession, who often faces challenges and demands similar to yours, I have tried to share few beliefs and principles on what it means to be engaged in a healing profession. To repeat what I have tried to say: Experiencing and sharing the nature of God expands our spiritual dimension and enhance our vision of life with a new system of values, ideals and goals. We are in vocation of healing human beings, not of repairing bodies or treating cases. Medicine cannot eliminate all human suffering, but it gives us useful tools to reduce pain, increase our well-being and extend the time available for love and work. The spiritual traits like faith, love, compassion and forgiveness has the power to heal. By creating a spiritual atmosphere in the encounter between the care-giver and the patient, more things happen than what medical sciences describe; for we possess the spiritual powers of healing. ■

# Ordained Ministry— God's CALLING or a Profession?

(A layperson's perspective)

J. Varughese, Philadelphia

**T**his year, Sunday, July 11th was dedicated for ordained ministry. I came to know about this only through the sermon that Sunday and coincidentally or by God's will I was inspired to write about this topic even before that Sunday.

It is the accepted belief that priesthood is more than just a profession, it is a calling from God. We believe that no one should enter priesthood WITHOUT "the calling". As St. Paul states about high priest in his epistle to Hebrews 5:4, "No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was." But how do you discern "the calling"? Are there priests in our Churches who are not "called" by God? How can we differentiate? The entire congregation is observing every word and action of a priest and they can easily determine if their priest is truly dedicated to God's work. Here are some of the characteristics that are observable in priests that are considered to be "called" by God:

- They are witnesses of God who can share their personal experience of God. There is no doubt about their love and faith in God.
- They try hard to bring you closer to God.
- Their faith and love for God is evident in the way they see and treat their parishioners. They have a sincere love for their congregation and general love for mankind. Not much complaining or criticizing, but seeing goodness in all and brings out the best in all. This love is reciprocated by the congregation as well.
- Always truly concerned about every member of their church
- You can feel and sense the spirit of God working in the Church.
- Having endless energy and passion for every activity in the Church. No need to be pushed into doing things. Such priests can get people moving and get involved and are filled with positive energy and hope that comes from God.
- They provide good leadership not necessarily from their innate ability, but because of their passion to serve even if they may not be good managers.
- They can count on anyone in their parish to support and help them, out of love and respect for their priesthood. Such priests are praised and revered by all.
- The parsonage will be buzzing with visiting parishioners. They are never lonely and are always surrounded with love and support.

- They hold meaningful Bible study classes and their sermons are inspired by God and do not have to be very academic or intellectual.
- Monetary benefits are secondary to these servants of the Lord and they are well aware that their Master is the one above.
- By avoiding gossip and loose talk, these dedicated priests respect humans and humanity, without consideration of status.

Truly there are many wonderful priests in our churches who are called by God to serve. Their value is immeasurable. It is not often that we come across such dedicated individuals who truly revere God and transpire true love that comes from God.

On the other side of the coin are those that do not meet these qualities. When these qualities are missing, priesthood becomes a mere profession. The job security and other fringe benefits, could attract anyone to this profession. If such people pass through the seminary screening process and progress to this so-called professional priests, it may do more harm than good to the mission of the church. Priests are role models who are looked up to by their parishioners and they can become disillusioned when their priest does not demonstrate the teachings of Christ.

In the secular world especially in the western hemisphere, each employee undergoes annual evaluations, continuing education programs, and necessary re-training. In the religious arena it may or may not be there. In the Mar Thoma practice, once the term is over, the priest moves on and a new assigned priest takes charge. Do we need a practice in place where there is more evaluation, orientation and continuous training to enhance the discipleship and service? Do we need more screening procedures for those who aspire to be priests? The Mar Thoma Church has achieved tremendous growth from an Indian church localized in one state to a multinational entity with generations speaking numerous dialects, people practicing different life styles, and communities that are rich and poor. In these diverse environments, we need more dedicated and selfless priests who can guide our people through life's various crises and bring them closer to God. I hope and pray that by Lord's grace, our church will grow with His love and our priests will continue with selfless and dedicated services to all the people in His name. ■



# ക്രിസ്തീയ ജീവിതം

**Lali Beji Joseph**  
St. John's Mar Thoma Church  
New York

എൻപരിപാലക! നിൻപൊൻചിറക്  
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തിരുകൃപ എന്നിൽ ചൊരിയണമെ

# Third Medical Mission Trip to Mexico

June 10-12, 2004

Marina Matthew and Nisha Varghese

Mark 16:17-18 *"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well."* (NIV)

**A**t 9 am on a warm, sunny morning on June 10, 2004, the third medical mission team gathered at the residence of Mrs. Mariamma Thomas. Dr. Lara and Dr. Sanchez joined the team on June 11. A member of the team from Denver flew to McAllen because of flight cancellations. Despite the setbacks caused by the cancelled flights and the rearranged plans, everyone knew that God was in control. After a word of prayer by Rev. George Thomas, the team departed from Houston at noon.

The team arrived at the Texas-Mexico border at approximately 6:45 pm. Mr. Jorge Chacon, mission coordinator from the Methodist Church, met them and directed the team to Pueblo de Dios, a church with a pharmacy. At the pharmacy, the team sorted medications, made a list of needed drugs for the next day, and loaded plastic bins with necessary drugs into Mr. Chacon's van. At 9:15 pm, Jorge took the team to the Santidad Trinidad church. The team thanked the Lord for a safe journey and asked for His guidance and support for next day's activities. Later, the young people met together, sang worship songs and prayed before going to bed.

The next morning everyone gathered for morning devotionals led by Mrs. Mariamma Thomas. She read from Ephesians 5:15 and reminded the team of its mission: to do God's will, making the most of every opportunity given to us. Mrs. Thomas spoke for the need for unity within the team, in order to see God's hand move in the area of healing. At 8:45 am, Jorge directed the team to the Fuente de Agua Viva Church in Rio Bravo. The team arrived at 9:05 am to a two-story building, where patients were already waiting to be seen. The team unloaded the medications and began to set up quickly in the large room upstairs. The group organized registration, triage, pharmacy, and discharge areas. Separate places for the assessment and examination of patients by the doctor were also set-up. A graduate student from Virginia was the translator and she was a great help to the team. The team started to see a steady number of patients until they stopped for a 30-minute lunch break. By 4 pm, the team had seen 70 patients. The team ended the day with fellowship and prayer.

On Saturday, everyone rose early and met together for devotionals at 7:45 am. Mr. Abey Mathai led the

devotional, giving a short message from John 21:18. Abey spoke of the importance of feeding the sheep and again reminded the team of their mission. Then, the team leader shared her testimony and spoke about God's grace. Because Mr. Chacon and Dr. Lara were also present, the team thanked them for their help.

At 8:45 am, after breakfast, the team departed for Progreso and arrived at the Templo El Buen Pastor Methodist Church. The team set up as before in the large sanctuary, with registration occurring outside. The team saw 62 patients. The patients who were treated suffer from their poverty. Most adults are uneducated, unable to better their or their children's circumstances. One special patient is worth mentioning because the team had the incredible opportunity to pray healing over her and to bring encouragement to her spirit. The lady was suffering from arterial insufficiency in her left leg and could not walk properly. The team gave her a Spanish Bible because she did not have one. The team also handed out Bibles to the little children. Each day, the team referred an average of 25 patients to the hospital because they needed further medical attention.

After seeing 62 patients, the team closed the clinic at 1:30 pm. and left Reynosa at 3:40 pm. The team safely arrived in Houston at 11:00 pm.

The participants of the third mission trip, listed alphabetically, were Ms. Suma Chacko, Mrs. Annamma George, Mrs. Ann Jacob, Dr. R. Lara, Mr. Abey Mathai, Ms. Marina Matthew, Mr. Robby Matthew, Dr. Diana Sanchez, Ms. Julie Thomas, Mrs. Mariamma Thomas, and Ms. Nisha Varghese. This medical mission was unique because sixty percent of the participants were youth members.

The patients were very thankful and grateful for the team's service. Moreover, the members of the Methodist Partners in Mission were helpful, courteous, and encouraging to the team members; without their assistance, the team would not have accomplished much. The Mar Thoma Diocese of North America and Europe has a great mission to heal the sick and feed the poor in Mexico. As a solution to the lack of consistent medical care in the poor "ejidos" or neighborhoods, the team would like to return to the same neighborhoods frequently to serve the people's needs. On the whole, the third medical mission was a great success. Everyone enjoyed the mission work tremendously and felt truly blessed to have served the people of Mexico. ■

# Return to the Native American Mission Field in Alabama

*A report by the Mission Volunteers*



**Left to Right:** Back row: Jobcy John Thomas, Betty P. Vattakunnel, Merin Ann Thomas, Tina Jones, Terence Fernandez, Larry P. Varghese, Sam Mathew Tharakan, Ranjan Barsley, Prebha Thomas, Jency John Thomas

Front row: Christy Philip, Varughese Abraham, Reena John, Leila Thomas, Rev. John Evagelista, Sarah Pritha Varghese, Zerine Kurian.

*"Sweet Home Alabama, where the skies are so blue". Oh how that was so true!*

**A**s we continue to be a Church that is missions-minded, our activity this summer once again focused on the Choctaw Native Americans in Mobile, Alabama. They are a people who have experienced great injustice in the name of "progress," and many live in hopelessness and little expectations for the future. In connection with Native American and Mexico Mission Ministry of the Mar Thoma Diocese of North America and Europe, we undertook this Summer Mission project again with the Choctaw Indians. This ministry that spanned over 6 days (June 13-19) provided direct exposure to the mission program of the church and, most importantly, allowed us to experience God's love in action with this tribe of Native Americans.

The desire to share the love of Jesus Christ through service drew the following members to this mission among the Choctaw Native Americans in Mt. Vernon, Alabama and other surrounding communities at the Aldersgate United Methodist Church. Our team consisted of 13 mission volunteers and they are as follows:

**From Philadelphia:** Mr. Varghese Abraham (Johnny), Merin Ann Thomas, and Ranjan Barsley.

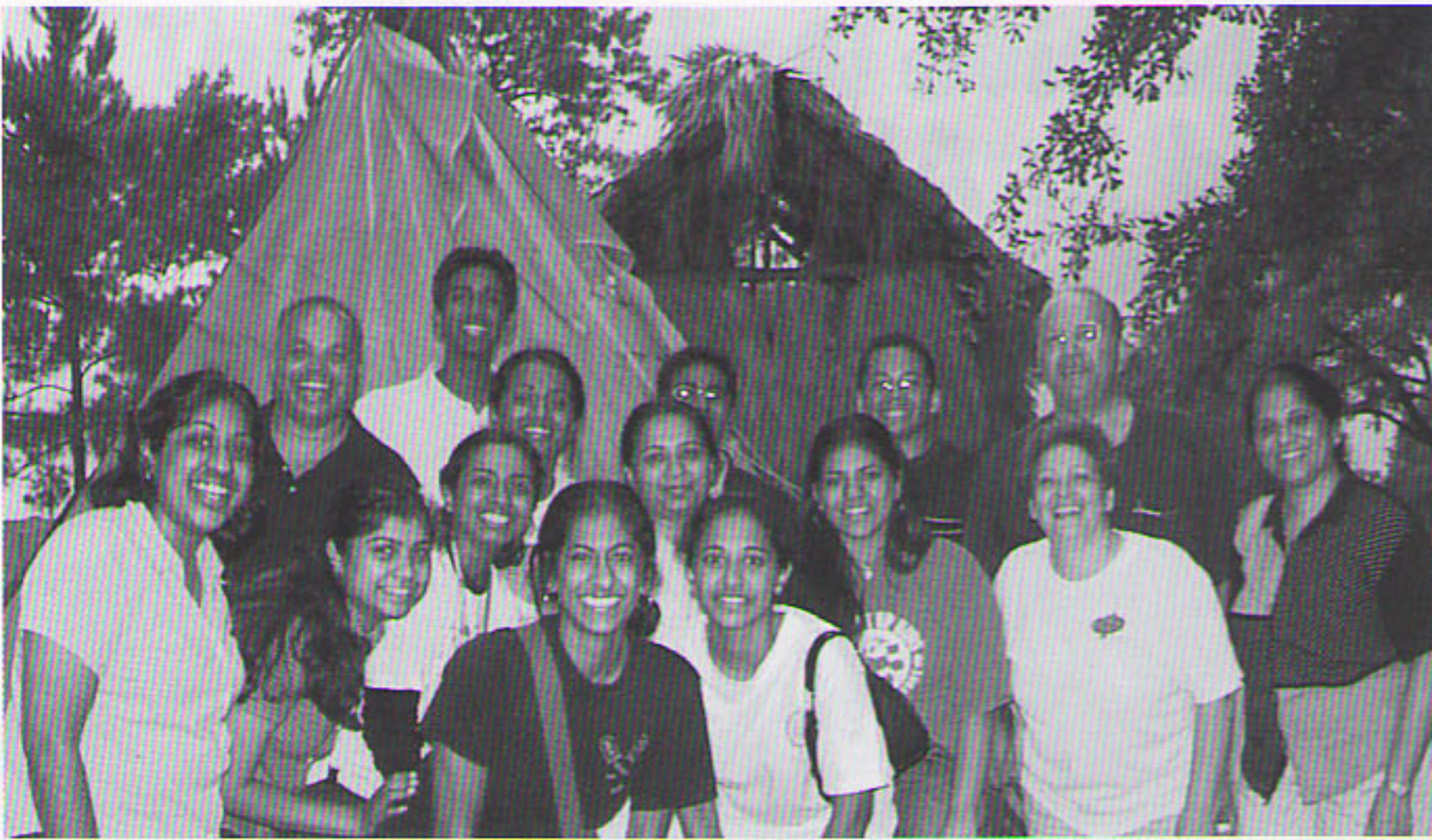
**From Texas:** Mrs. Reena John (Kochamma of Youth Chaplain Rev. John George), Larry Varghese, and Betty Vattakunnel.

**From Atlanta:** Terence Fernandez, Prebha Thomas, Christy Philip, Zerine Kurian, Jency John Thomas, and Sarah Pritha Varghese.

**From New York:** Mrs. Leila Thomas (Diocesan Mission Coordinator).

Additionally Sam Tharakan from Philadelphia, Tina Jones and Jobcy John Thomas from Atlanta joined the team on Thursday and stayed with us till Saturday.

During our stay, we undertook the leadership of the overall organization and structuring of Vacation Bible School. The theme for this year's Vacation Bible School was "Hero Quest-Powered by Faith." With no hesitation, the children joined in with many VBS and Praise and Worship songs. Following the singing we had a devotional talk with all the children, led by different mission team members each day. We had four different classes with approximately 18 to 25 children in each class with two teachers each. Lunch was served and the children met up with a final group game and singing session. The first day started with the familiar story of Daniel's courage and the week ended with Jesus' love for others. Teachers prepared lessons according to the age of the children, which ranged from three to seventeen. A favorite part of the day was singing sessions when all of the children were able to have fellowship together. We utilized games, skits, LCD projections as well as music as a means of communicating our message.



*Members of Alabama team visiting traditional Native American Living Quarters.*

After working with these children for one day, we sat down with the church's pastor to discuss many of the issues that they were facing as a church. We came to know that some issues this community faced were alcoholism, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and lack of education. The pastor and leaders of the Methodist church felt that many of these issues are a result of the lack of knowledge of Christ and His love for them.

Towards the end of the week, preparations began for the annual heritage celebration (Pow Wow). A parade took place on Thursday, June 16th to kick off the festivities. Teachers and V.B.S. participants proudly displayed their "Hero Quest" theme float in the procession. On Friday morning, each class prepared a short presentation for the finale program. There was an Indian Style fashion show by the local children, their parents and the teachers. In the afternoon Mrs. Leila Thomas and Mrs. Reena John prepared a sumptuous Kerala lunch for the parents and children. Later that evening, the annual Pow-wow commenced.

As our Missions Team consisted of 2 veteran members (Mr. Varghese Abraham and Mr. Sam Tharakan), they were able to recognize some of the fruits of our visit last year. The genuine warmth and affection with which we were received and the enthusiastic participation of the children in all the activities reflected the impact of our earlier mission activity. We were considered as part of their family and we had the opportunity to share in the food prepared by the community members, which was a marked change from our last visit.

The North American Diocese has developed this life changing opportunity for many of our members so we are given an avenue to reach out to those who have not heard

the word of God. We as Christians are called to be "fishers of men" and trips such as the Alabama mission allows us to use our talents to spread the word of God to those who are not aware of who our Lord is and what He calls us to do.

This mission trip also provided an opportunity for the members of the Mar Thoma Church from various states to come together and work as a team.

Our thanks to our dear Rev. Simon Behanan Achen and his daughter who visited us on Thursday and brought home-made lunch prepared by Kochamma all the way from Atlanta. Special words of thanks are also due to all our parish members as well as other friends who supported us financially and



*Larry and Betty with their Youth Class*

spiritually. Your support and prayers showed us what a dedicated group of Christians could achieve. We thank God and all of you for your support. We left Alabama knowing that a spark has been lit in the lives of many of the children.

Let us remember what our Lord and Savior taught us to do: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16. Each of us is given a chance to use our time to glorify His name and bring more people to His light. The Alabama mission trip provides this outlet so we can reach out to those who are in need of the Lord's love.

*"Every day is a gift you've been given,  
Make the most of the time every minute you're living"*

*—Chris Rice, Life Means so Much*



# Mission Accomplished

## Native American Mission Trip to Smithville, Oklahoma

By Thara K Mathews/Juby Mathew/Sheena Philip, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch



*From left to right: Front row: Jeane Mathews, Brigit Thomas, Gigi Mathew, Reeba Mathew, Sheena Philip, Thara Mathews, Juby Mathew. Back row: O. C. Abraham, Thomas K. Mathews.*

**Answering the Call:** The mission coordinators of our diocese had requested the churches around Oklahoma for volunteers to teach Vacation Bible School and to provide them with healthcare information to the Choctaw Indians from June 14 through June 19, 2004. The Mission and Outreach Program at the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch send eight members, five youths and three adults. They chose to give up a week of their summer to travel to Smithville, Oklahoma, with Mr. O. C. Abraham from Philadelphia who had worked in that same community about 43 years ago as a seminary intern.

**Arrival:** The church was located 45 minutes away from the main city of Broken Bow, where our motel was located. The pastor, a Choctaw Indian named Rev. Jean Horse Wilson, of the Nanih Chito Presbyterian Church, greeted us in Smithville with great joy and excitement. The new church was built 168 years ago with only four families that regularly attended. The small white church, a new and modest building, was located on a small green hill that overlooked Smithville. It brought back memories of our parish churches back in India. The VBS would take place every evening because most of the children work during the day.

**Teaching V.B.S.:** The theme of our VBS was Hero Quest: Powered by Faith. There were three main classes: adults led by Mr. Thomas K. Mathews, youths (16 and above) led by Jeane Mathews and Sheena Philip, and youths (15 and below) led by Juby Mathew, Reba Mathew and Thara Mathews. The lessons focused on Daniel, Esther, the poor widow, the lame man who was carried through the roof by his friends and their faith in God. Jesus' washing of the feet of the disciples, was taught to teach humility. Each day's topic inspired discussion among the students who related it to their own lives, while others heard the stories for the first time. Even though we were few in number, we learned a great deal from each other. At the end of every evening, the families would provide us with a great feast that consisted of the Choctaw traditional foods. It was a joy to see an adult group consisting of parents, grandparents and great grandparents participating in the adult classes with old bibles, notebooks and pens in their hands. Since we taught in the evenings, the early half of our days were spent preparing for our lessons and exploring Oklahoma and its neighboring states. Every morning and evening, we had daily devotions in our motel rooms where everyone participated and provided new ideas and thoughts.

*(Continued on page 25)*

# Karnataka Navajeevan Samithi (K.N.S)

## A mission of the Madras-Calcutta diocese

Established 1970 • Gospel Home • Devanahalli (P.O.) • Bangalore • Karnataka -562 110

### History

Karnataka state in South India was known, as the "grave yard" of missions in India as there was very little result for the missions in India as there was very little result for the mission work by western missionaries in the past. As a result most missions abandoned the work and left the state. Hence most of the interior villages of the state are left without any knowledge of the Gospel.

Majority of the people in the villages is landless laborers, who live on a hand to mouth existence. The landlords take advantage of them by making them bonded workers lending some money in their emergency needs. Agriculture labor is available only in the rainy season. The fortunate ones find work in the silk worm raising and silk thread reeling business. The wages are so poor that they cannot pay back the debt and they and their children are forever indebted to work for the lender.

Dr & Mrs. Abraham C. Thomas started Karnataka Navajeevan Samithi in 1970 after having witnessed these pitiable conditions and felt a burden for them. We are now actively working on two areas of Karnataka: Bangalore Rural and Kolar district. In 1986, Devanahalli mission was branched off to nurture the believers in that area. K.N.S. pioneered into new areas. In 2000, K.N.S. became part of the Madras-Calcutta diocese. Based on geographic region, the diocese decided to give Bangalore Rural district to Devanahalli mission and Kolar district to K.N.S.

The initial plan for K.N.S. was to reach 200 sq. kms. Today, our work has crossed 220 sq. kms. All these happened by our Lord's grace and blessings. His grace helped us to endure all the oppositions and move ahead with great progress. Today there are over 2700 new believers. We always thank the Lord for accepting us to be His co-workers. We cannot do it alone. All the Vicars and parishners of the seven Mar Thomas parishes are partners with us. We would like to invite you to become partners in this great work.

### Evangelistic work

- Worship and fellowship in 10 Places in Kannada language
- More than 625 children studying in Sunday School
- Evangelistic work using audio and visual media
- V.B.S. and special classes for children
- Regular youth meetings, conferences and camps
- Conventions (Jathras) are arranged annually in different areas
- Lay leadership training

- In-Service courses for Evangelists
- A fellowship and witness meeting is held every first week of the month for the Missionaries and Evangelists from both Devanahalli and K.N.S. missions.
- Team ministry, house visits, prayer meetings, distribution of tracts and Bible.
- All-night Bhajans are conducted village by village
- Fasting and prayer are held area wise and in the local worship places
- Joint meetings of K.N.S., Devanahalli, Hoskote and Sivanapuram Missions once in 3 months.

### Educational and Social Service

1. Sneha Jyothy Student Center, Sidlegatta: About 210 poor children from the remote villages are able to study due to the help of Caruna Balavikas – an organization of Compassion of International.
2. Shalom Jyothy Student Center, Rayulpadu: 125 poor children from the remote villages of the Rayulpadu area will soon be able benefit from the help of Caruna Balavikas.
3. Ebenezer Mar Thoma Nursery School, Sidlegatta: 80 Children attend nursery school at this location.
4. Goramadagu Balawadi: We take care of 28 children of laborers every day. This helps their parents to go to work
5. Helping girls attend Nursing school. Many Pre-University girls are longing to go to nursing school. We are currently sponsoring one girl. The annual cost per student is Rs 30,000. Kindly sponsor a girl so that there can many nurses from these poor people.
6. Helping boys in Technical studies and college degree.
7. Awareness classes in healthcare, environmental cleanliness, social evils, communicable diseases like AIDS are being held regularly.
8. Adult Literacy, Mahila Sangams, Special seminars and help for self employment.
9. Education aid, Marriage aid, Medical aid, Home for the homeless, Tailoring class for the girls and training in other trades to help them make a living.
10. We are helping few to get Law degrees and one for Ph.D.

### Our Immediate Needs

1. Six worship places: For one worship place, the cost of land: Rs. 1.5 lakhs, building: Rs. 2 lakhs.

2. Four quarters for Evangelist: Rs. 2 lakhs each.
3. Six Balavadies are needed: Rs 4000 per month for salary of Ayas and food for children
4. Tailoring or Trade center at six areas: Rs 15000 per center
5. Home for the homeless: Very badly need 42 houses. Rs 30,000 each.
6. Marriage aid. Rs. 15000 per girl.
7. Educational help Rs. 2500 per child per year.
8. If we can give basic infrastructure for Student Centers, Caruna Balavikas will support the operating cost for 3 places. They require infrastructure to be build according to their specifications. The infrastructure includes: a hall to accommodate 200 children, kitchen, borewell, 4 toilets, quarters for 3 managers and an office. This will cost Rs. 6 lakhs per center.

### Office bearers:

*President:* Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharia Mar Theophilus  
*Vice President I:* Rev. George Varghese  
*Vice President II:* Dr. Abraham C. Thomas  
*Missionary in charge:* Rev. K. Thomas  
*Missionary:* Rev. Jacob John  
*Secretary:* Mr. Jaison Abraham  
*Treasurer:* Mr. K.O. Chacko  
*Promotional Secretary:* Mr. George Varghese (Pullad)

### Contact Address:

**Rev. K. Thomas** (Missionary in charge)  
 1064, 7/A 3rd Block, Koramangala  
 Bangalore, Karnataka – 560 034, Phone:080-5531931

**Mr. K. O. Chacko** (Treasurer)  
 No. 20, P&T Colony, R.T. Nagar  
 Bangalore – 560 032, Karnataka, Phone: 3331470

## Mission Accomplished—Continued from page 23



*Members of the team with some of the participants of the Native Indians.*

**House Visiting and Health Talk:** The two healthcare professionals on our trip, Ms. Bridgith Thomas RN and Mrs. Gigi Mathew RN made several rounds of house visits, where they visited the Choctaw homes and provided them with information on basic health care. Health education on nutrition, stroke, heart attack, hypoglycemic attack, and self-breast exams were taught according to the needs of the families. Since teenage pregnancy was noted to be very prevalent in that community, Mrs. Gigi Mathew also gave a brief talk to the teenagers who attended the VBS. Moreover, a small health clinic was conducted along with the final day closing programs.

**Reinforcement:** Rev. Anil George, vicar of the Farmers Branch Mar Thoma Church along with Mr. Thomas Philip, mission coordinator of the church, Mr. M.J. Andrews, Mr. Joseph T. George, Mrs. Mary Philip and Ms. Ashley Philip visited us to encourage us. They brought a lot of food for the team, spent a day with us, met the participants of the VBS, and observed a short cultural program of the Native Indians.

**The Final Day:** The final day program consisted of a skit that portrayed Daniel and his commitment to God. The mission team youths did an Indian dance on behalf of our mission trip. Afterwards, the Choctaw Indians presented several dances that they perform at competitions. The final day program ended with a magnificent performance. At the end of the night, we sat together and ate a variety of foods from the Choctaw Indians as well as our own traditional Indian food. It was a very sad time to leave our friends that we were just starting to know, but we were all thankful to have left the seeds of the word of Jesus Christ in their hearts.

**Final Mission:** In all, the missionary trip to Oklahoma was a great experience. For some of the Choctaw Indians, it was their first time seeing real Indians from India like us, but by the grace of God, they opened their hearts to us. We went over there to help the children and adults strengthen their faith in God, but in turn, we strengthened our faith in God. Through singing praises, discussing messages, and learning to lead more faithful lives, we all, including the missionaries, grew closer to God. We got to experience a different culture, but more importantly a common thread of worshipping God. For those who have not had the blessing to experience a mission trip, we encourage you to attend one. We hope to stay in touch with the Choctaw Indians and visit them next year. It was a wonderful experience that allowed us to share the word of God and actually live according to what Jesus told us. We would like to thank all of you for your prayers and support, and we hope that you will continue to remember us and this mission in your prayers. Most of all, we would like to thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the opportunity. What a great testament to God that we as a church have emerged from our humble villages in Kerala, to spreading the word of God to a small tribal community in Oklahoma. May the Lord bless each and every one of you. ■

# YOUTH CORNER

## VALEDICTORIAN ADDRESS—RAE VARUGHESE (CO-VALEDICTORIAN) McNALLY HIGH SCHOOL, EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA.

### “Into the Great Wide Open”

High school represents an important stage and our school has done so much to create a rich environment for our growth and development as individuals. This school has fostered a family atmosphere of friendship for students and teachers, and through these relationships, we have learned to value loyalty, honesty, and integrity. The experience of friendship and good times will never be forgotten and many of our friendships will last the lifetime.

Through athletics, students union, fine arts and extra curricular activities, we were able to learn the importance of team work and dedication as ingredients for achieving success. All these activities provided abundance of lasting memories. Working together to organize school events and sharing talents & creativity through fine arts added color and visibility to our student life within and outside the community.



As we stand on the threshold of change, we are inspired to look back to our childhood. Everyday we could become a new person whether it was a ballerina or an astronaut. Limitless imaginations and ideas gave way to reality as knowledge base broadened. Everything changes as we accept our diplomas tonight. As we look beyond high school, our security blanket is taken away, and we are faced with decision processes that will affect the rest of our life. Extended love, care and support from our loving parents, support and

guidance from school staff, and good friendships made the past years rich with memorable experiences and valuable life lessons. The future is wide open. We have innumerable choices with varying intensity of challenge. We can persevere and commit ourselves to our goals and achieve the best. Congratulations and good luck to all.

(Rae is the daughter of Thomas Varughese & Molly, Trinity MTC, Edmonton, Canada)

## 3rd Annual South East Regional Mar Thoma Youth Conference

**Theme:** Are You Reaching your Full Potential as a follower of God?

*‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove that the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.’ Romans 12:2*

**Venue:** Howard Johnson Plaza Resort Hotel and Conference Center, Deerfield Beach, Florida

**Date:** September 3-6, 2004

**Leaders:** Rev. Simon Behanan, Rev. T.K. Alexander Tharakan, Mr. Ajay Thomas

**Hosted by:** South Florida Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship

**Contacts:** **Bela Varghese**, 250 NW 71st Terrace, Hollywood, Fl 33024, (954) 989-6475  
belarobin@hotmail.com

**Shobha Jacob**, 9801 SW 58th Ct., Cooper City, Fl 33328, (954) 560-2921  
Rockzgal@aol.com

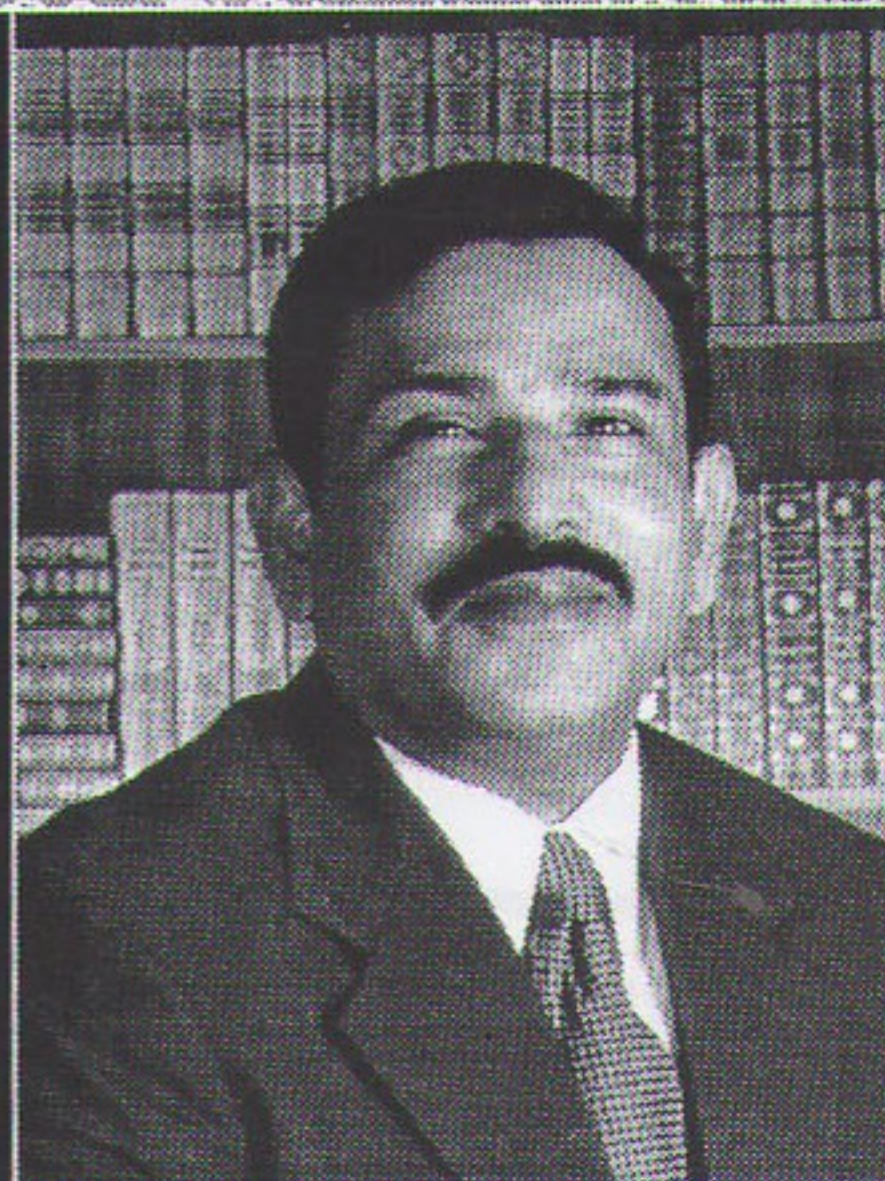
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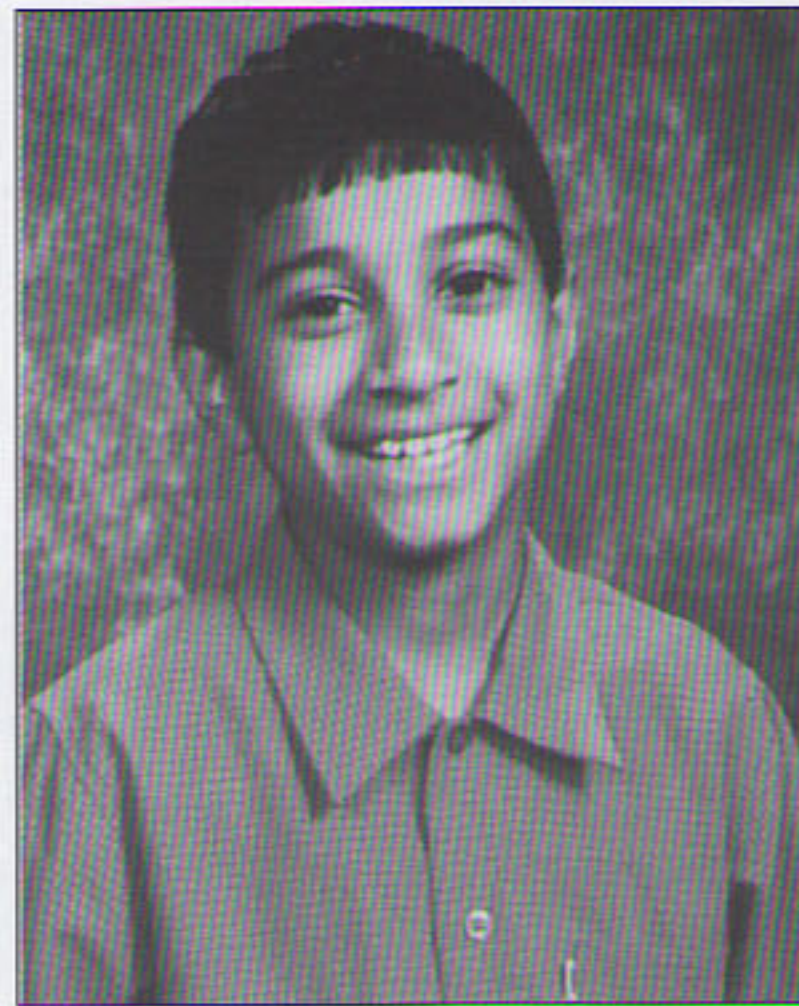
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## Eternal Life

Jason Abraham, Detroit MTC

**L**ong time ago, there was a rich king who was greedy. He asked God "When I touch something, I want it to be gold." God asked, "Are you sure?" "Yes," replied the king. So God granted the king's wish. The king touched his palace, it became gold. The king got really hungry and touched the food, it became gold. Then his only daughter came and sat on his lap, and then she became gold. The king became very sad and cried to the Lord that he wanted to live the way he was living before.

In Matthew 19:16-30 a rich young man came to Jesus and said, "What good things should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said "Follow the commandments." The young man asked "Which ones?" Jesus said, "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as



yourself." The young man said, "I have followed the commandments all my life. What do I still lack?" Jesus said, "If you want to be perfect, sell all your possessions, give the money to the poor, you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me." When the rich young man heard this, he went away grieving because he had many possessions. The disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus said, "For man it is impossible, but for God, all things are possible. Those who left everything and followed me will receive one hundred times as much and will inherit eternal

life. Many who are first will be last and last will be first."

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, so whoever believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life. John 3:16.

### APRIL WINNERS AND ANSWERS. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WINNERS!!!

#### Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (April 2004)

1. Accamma Jacob, South Florida
2. Aleyamma Mathai, Epiphany, NY
3. Alex Vaidian, St. Thomas, NY
4. Ajin John, Detroit
5. Alwin David, Detroit
6. Anika Chacko, Detroit
7. Annamma John, St. Luke, FL
8. Athira John, St. John's, NY
9. Chris Chacko, Detroit
10. Edwin David, Detroit
11. Jain T. Joseph, St. John's, NY
12. Justy John, St. James, NY
13. Justin Vaidian, St. Thomas, NY
14. Nobin Vaidian, St. Thomas, NY
15. Romuald Mathews, St. Johns, NY
16. Omana Rajee, SI MTC, NY
17. Philip Mathews, St. Mathews, Toronto
18. Sally Abraham, Epiphany, NY
19. Sosamma Jacob, Epiphany, NY
20. Susan Thomas, Epiphany, NY

#### ANSWERS

##### ACROSS

1. TIBERIAS
2. PEACE
3. HELPER
4. JEWS
5. TRUTH
6. DOUBTING
7. FATHER
8. TEACHER
9. ONE
10. LOOKING
11. DEFEATED

##### DOWN

12. BRANCHES
13. LIFE
14. COME FROM
15. WORLD
16. SUFFERING
17. HOLY SPIRIT
18. ROOSTER
19. SECRET
20. GOD

#### Bible Word Search Winners (April 2004)

1. Alwin David, Detroit
2. Anika Chacko, Detroit
3. Chris Chacko, Detroit
4. Edwin David, Detroit
5. Romuald Mathews, St. Johns, NY
6. Omana Rajee, SI MTC, NY
7. Philip Mathews, St. Mathews, Toronto

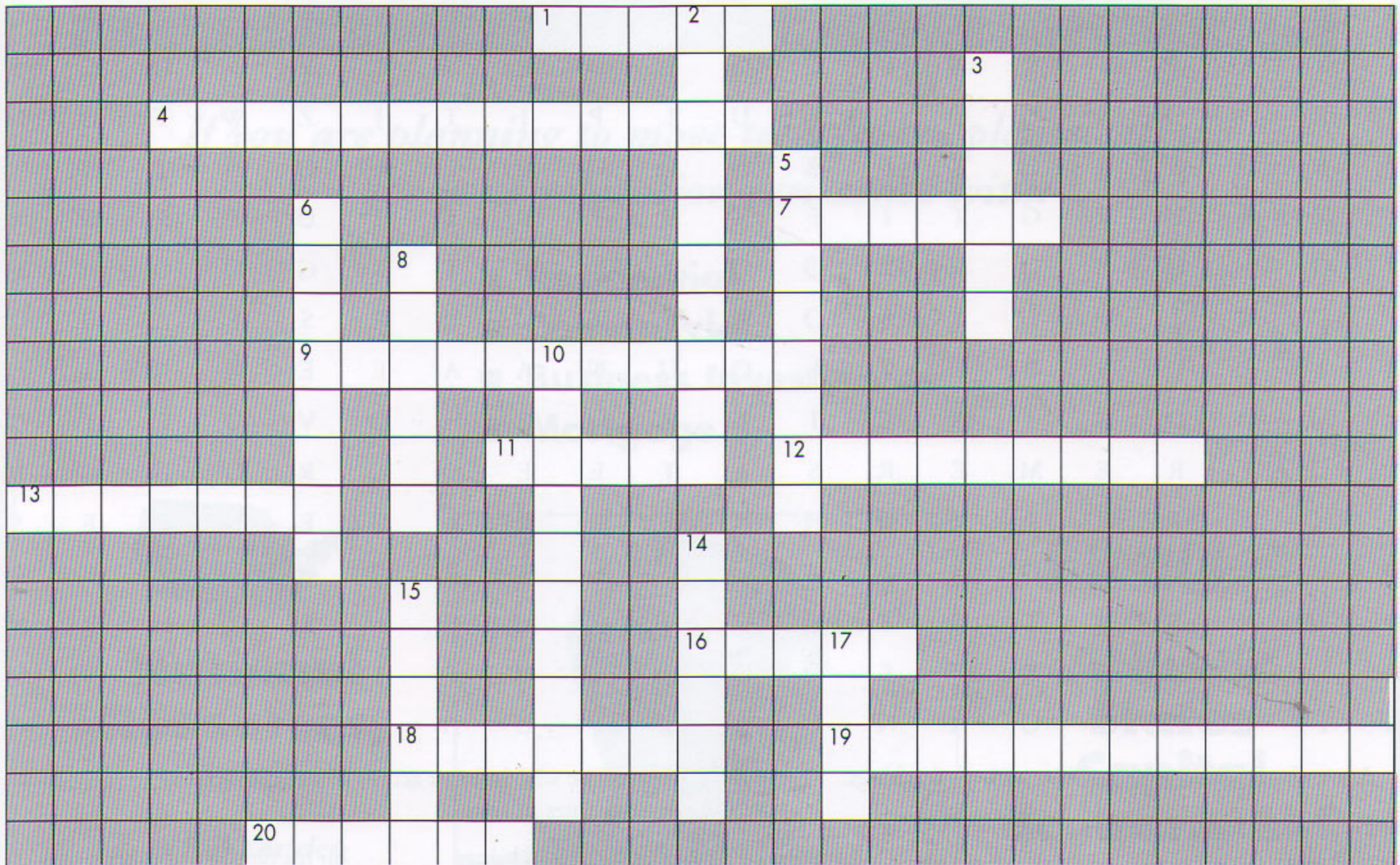
#### ANSWERS

1. SLAVE
2. ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY
3. NATHANAE
4. RABBONI
5. NICODEMAS
6. CLOPHAS and MAGDALENE
7. ANNAS
8. GABBATHA
9. KIDRON
10. LANTERNS AND TORCHES
11. MALCHUS
12. PHILIP
13. JESUS
14. THOMAS
15. JUDAS
16. SIMON PETER
17. FRIENDS
18. SPIRIT
19. EVIL ONE
20. CAIAPHAS

# BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV  
(based on Proverbs Chapters 1-15)

Mrs. Lency Zachariah (New York)



## Across

1. \_\_\_\_\_ only breeds quarrels.
4. He who sows \_\_\_\_\_ reaps a sure reward.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ that brings healing is a tree of life.
9. A son should always listen to his father's \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Guard my teachings as the \_\_\_\_\_ of your eye.
12. Ill-gotten \_\_\_\_\_ are of no value.
13. Keep \_\_\_\_\_ talk far from your lips.
16. A wife of noble character is her husband's \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Free yourself, like a \_\_\_\_\_ from the hand of the hunter.
19. Love and \_\_\_\_\_ should be written on the tablet of your heart.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrong.

## Down

2. He who ignores \_\_\_\_\_ despises himself.
3. Do not \_\_\_\_\_ a man for no reason when he has done you no harm.
5. Wisdom was appointed from \_\_\_\_\_ from the beginning, before the world began.
6. With \_\_\_\_\_ comes wisdom.
8. Whoever listens to \_\_\_\_\_ will live in safety.
10. He who sleeps with another man's wife, no one who touches her will go \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Whoever corrects a \_\_\_\_\_ invites insult.
15. Where there is no oxen, the \_\_\_\_\_ is empty.
17. May you rejoice in the \_\_\_\_\_ of your youth.

# BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV  
(based on Proverbs Chapters 1-15)

Mrs. Lency Zachariah (New York)

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

1. A son should not \_\_\_\_\_ his mother's teachings.
2. Do not plot harm against your neighbor who lives \_\_\_\_\_ near you.
3. Guard your heart, for it is the \_\_\_\_\_ of life.
4. At the end of your life you will \_\_\_\_\_ when your flesh and body are spent.
5. A man who commits \_\_\_\_\_ lacks judgment.
6. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Lazy hands make a man poor, but \_\_\_\_\_ hands bring wealth.
8. The Lord brought \_\_\_\_\_ forth as the first of his works.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
10. The wise in heart accept commands, but a \_\_\_\_\_ fool comes to ruin.
11. He who brings \_\_\_\_\_ on his family will inherit only wind.
12. A \_\_\_\_\_ wife is like decay in her husband's bone.
13. He who spares the \_\_\_\_\_ hates his child.
14. A quick-tempered man does \_\_\_\_\_ things.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ comes before honor.
16. Do not withhold good from those who \_\_\_\_\_ it, when it is in your power to act.
17. Wisdom is \_\_\_\_\_ therefore, get wisdom.
18. You who are simple gain \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Honor the Lord with the \_\_\_\_\_ of all your crops.
20. The Lord does not let the \_\_\_\_\_ go hungry.

**ATTENTION ALL CONTESTANTS!!! NEW ADDRESS!!!!!!**

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**Lency Zachariah, 235-08 Hillside Avenue, Bellerose, NY 11427**

**DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS September 30, 2004**



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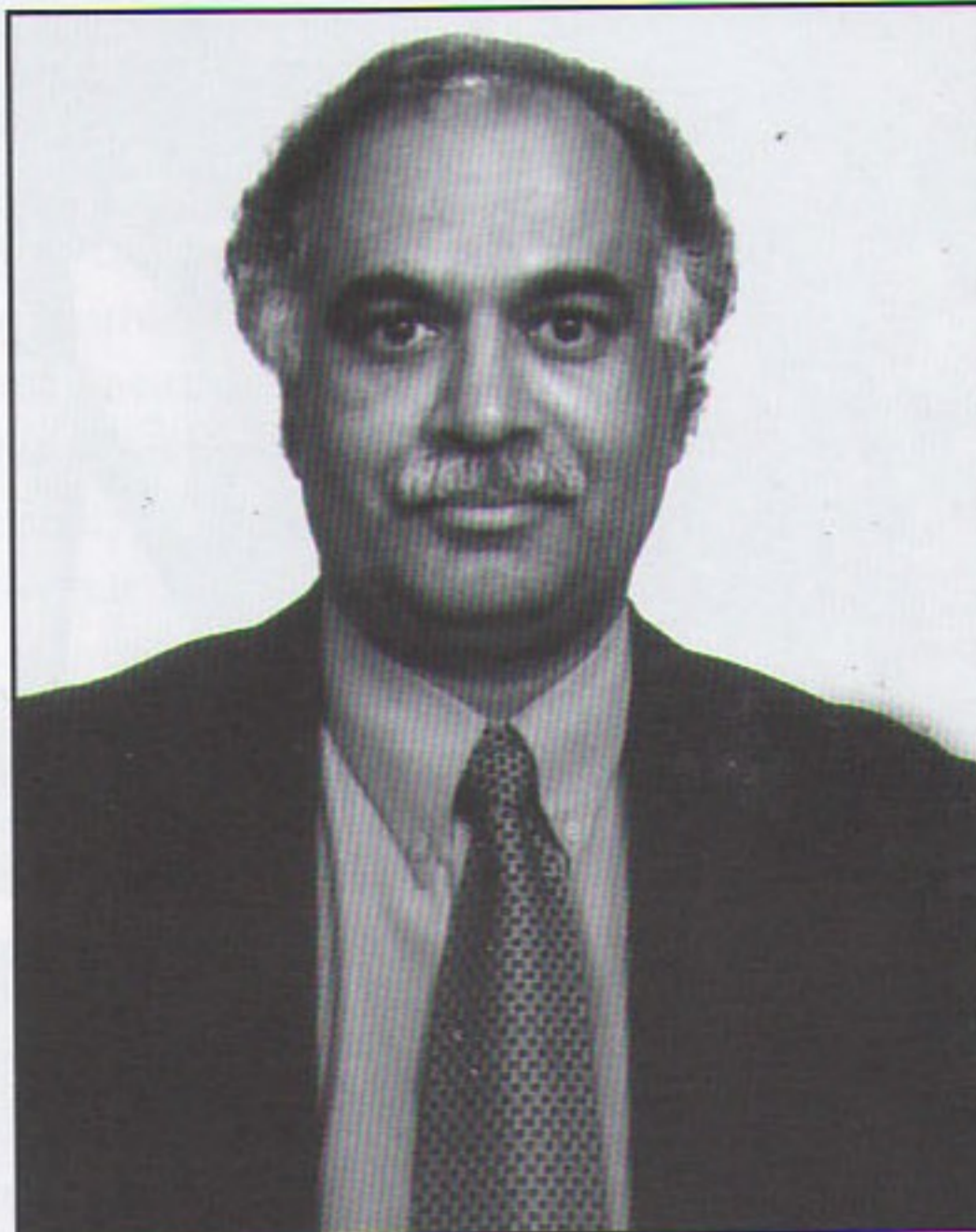


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# DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

## NORTH CAROLINA MAR THOMA CONGREGATION



Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Thirumeni formally approved North Carolina Mar Thoma Congregation (NC MTC) as one of the congregations in the Diocese of North America & Europe with effect from July 1, 2004. Thirumeni also appointed Rev. George C. Mathew as the Vicar of the NC MTC, to celebrate Holy Communion once a month. Achen will travel from Baltimore to Cary every month. NC MTC is based in the Triangle Area of North Carolina and currently has 18 Marthoma and CSI families as its members. It is the first formal Malayalee Christian Congregation in North Carolina.

Last month, Thirumeni had visited North Carolina and celebrated Holy Communion at St. Pauls Episcopal Church's Chapel in Cary, which was attended by about 25 Malayalee Christian families in Triangle Area. A general body meeting was held in the presence of Thirumeni, which unanimously decided to form North Carolina Mar Thoma Congregation and requested Thirumeni for the

approval. Also, the general body elected the following people to the committee for the day to day functioning of the NC MTC.

Mr. Baby Samuel (*Vice President*); Mr. Thomas John (*Secretary*); Mr. Rajan Mathew (*Treasurer*); Dr. (Mrs.) Kumari Verghese (*Accountant*); Mr. Varghese Mathew (*Lay Leader*); Mr. Sajan George (*Choir Leader*); Mr. Victor Thomas, CPA (*Auditor*); Mrs. Valsa Samuel (*Committee member*); Mr. John K. John (*Committee member*).

At present NC MTC does not have a place of worship of its own and does not have the resources to afford a resident vicar's expense every week. NC MTC members request prayer and support of other parishes for the growth of this small congregation. Also NC MTC welcomes people from other parishes who are willing to move. For more details about NC MTC and the area, please write to or call; Thomas John, Secretary, NC Mar Thoma Congregation, 308 Ravenstone Drive, Cary, NC 27511 Phone (919) 233-9241.

**Thomas John, Secretary**

## MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH, DALLAS



*Blessing of New Balcony in the Sanctuary.*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Episcopa blessed the new balcony in the sanctuary on June 27, 2004. The new balcony has about 180 seats, which will to an extent solve the lack of space in the sanctuary due to the increase in the number of members during last eight years after the dedication of the new church building on August 10, 1996. The balcony was constructed at a cost of about \$400,000.00. Before the blessing the balcony, Thirumeni cut the ribbon to formally open the new balcony for the worshippers. Mr. Thomas Mathew Development Committee Convener presented to the parish a brief report of project, and Vicar Rev. Anil George expressed thanks to the Episcopa for opening the new balcony and blessing the same.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Episcopa gave first communion to 30 children of the parish during Holy Communion Service. Before offering the first communion the children were presented with lighted candle to symbolize the church's motto "lighted to lighten" so that the first communicants can be a light for others. Thirumeni presented them Holy Bible as a gift from the parish. After the Holy Communion Service lunch was served to the whole parishioners by the parents of the first communicants.

**Atty. Lal Varghese, Assembly Member**



*Thirumeni opening the new balcony by cutting the ribbon.*



*First Communicants with Diocesan Episcopa*

## THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK



*The Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Metropolitan with Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Vicar Staten Island Mar Thoma Church and Rev. Jojan Mathews John, Vicar, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers after the Holy Qurbana Service on July 18, 2004.*

The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island was blessed by the presence and leadership of His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus, Suffragan Metropolitan during the Holy Qurbana Service on July 18, 2004. Following the service, the church arranged a program to reflect upon the progress of the Church Building, Project and to celebrate the First Place achievement of the Girl's Basketball Team at the tournament hosted by the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church in June, 2004. During the aforementioned, the Sevika Sanghom of the church handed the esteemed Suffragan Metropolitan a cheque in the amount of \$50,000.00 for the Church Building Fund. Moreover, the Yuvajana Sakhyam also gave \$5000.00 towards the Church Building Project. In order to commend the participants of the project, the Suffragan Metropolitan, with the help of Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, President, Mr. James T. Philip,

Treasurer, Mr. Charley V. Daniel, Accountant, and Mr. Jacob Chacko, Church Building Convener, distributed Recognition Certificates for those who have paid their pledge in full and Promissory Notes for members who have loaned the church money for the project. As the Church Building Convener pointed out in his report during the meeting, 71 members have paid their pledge in full. The pledge amount collected to date is \$458,162.30, which is 77% of the total promised amount. With reference to the loan program, we have collected



*Victors for a second time consecutively in the St. Thomas Cup BB Tournament, the Staten Island MTC Girls' Team and coach Paul Thomas with Irenaeus Thirumeni and Manoj Achen.*

**From Left to Right: Back row:** Paul Thomas (Coach), Manoj Achen, Irenaeus Thirumeni, Jenny Varughese (Captain), Nino George, Princy Varghese  
**Front row:** Jenny Philip, Jain Mathew, Susan Kurien, Jaimi Philip. (Ashley Jose is not in the picture.)

\$367,000.00, which is approximately 92% of our goal. From a seed amount of \$75,000.00, through various fund raising



*Very enthusiastic and proud representatives of the Staten Island Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom who raised \$50,000.00 towards the Church Building Fund with Irenaeus Thirumeni, Manoj Achen and Jojan Achen.*



Members of Staten Island MTC Yuvajana Sakhyam stand in for a photo with Iranaeus Thirumeni, Manoj Achen and Jojan Mathews Achen after presenting \$5000.00 towards the Church Building Fund.

efforts, the church has raised approximately \$1,160,000.00. With all said and done, the projected cost of the building will encompass an expenditure of approximately \$1,900,000.00. The Church Building Convener, on behalf of the church, expressed our profound gratitude towards those who have uplifted our needs in prayer and have supported us morally and financially. During the program, beloved Irenaeus Thirumeni distributed certificates of accomplishment and recognized our girl's basketball team for a splendid performance.

Gracious Irenaeus Thirumeni addressed the congregation on the need to give back to Lord as we are merely stewards of

God's endowments. The meeting, which commenced with prayer by Mr. Mathew P. George, concluded with the Vote of Thanks by the Secretary, Mr. Jose Varughese and prayer by Rev. Jojan Mathews John, Vicar, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, NY.

The church was also blessed with the visit of the Suffragan Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, at a gathering in the parsonage on July 22, 2004. With joy and fervor, esteemed Thirumeni encouraged us to complete the project in a diligent manner.

**Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Vicar**

## OBITUARY

**MRS. SARAMMA VARGHESE** (Chinnamma), daughter of the late Mr. Itty Mathai and late Mrs, Mariamma Mathai, Maliackel house, Kavungaprayar, Puramattom was called to eternity on July 20th 2004 in New Jersey. She was born on July 2nd 1933 and was married to Mr. K. John Varghese, Kidayitharayil Varampathu, Pullad, Thiruvalla. Chinnamma worked as a teacher at St.



Augustine HS, Aroor, Kerala for 33 years and was an

active member of St. George Mar Thoma Church, Fort Cochin, Ernakulam. She is survived by her husband K. John Varghese, 4 children: John Varghese and his wife Sudha, Sheela Daniel and her husband C.G. Daniel, Shobha Alex and her husband Alex Thomas, and Mathew Varghese and his wife Reena; 7 grandchildren: Shibydenny, Asha, Leesha, Alan, Shaun and Ryan. The Funeral services were held on Thursday, July 22nd at Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia, and she was laid to rest in Oakland Cemetery, Philadelphia. Along with Mar Thoma priests, Mathews Mar Barnabas Metropolitan, Corepiscopas, priests and deacons from Orthodox and Jacobite churches attended the services.

## TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON



*Our Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa inaugurating the Pavilion Sports Building by cutting the ribbon.*

Rev. George Thomas took charge as the Vicar of the parish on May 7, 2004. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa visited our parish from July 2nd through July 5th. Fifteen of our youths received First Communion. A special thanksgiving service was held for the High School and College graduates during the occasion. Vacation Bible School was held from July 1st through July 4th and about 135 students attended the VBS. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa was the chief guest for the VBS final day program on Sunday, July 4, 2004. The Pavilion Sports Building was inaugurated by Thirumeni after the service on Sunday, July 4, 2004.

Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan was the chief guest for the Parish Day celebrations. A short meeting was held to felicitate Thirumeni on his Episcopal Silver Jubilee along with the parish day celebrations. A Thanksgiving Service was also held and special envelopes were distributed to all the members to collect money to support evangelical mission projects in India.

**T. A. Mathew, Secretary**



*Coorilos Thirumeni with Rev. K. A. Joshua, Rev. George Thomas (Vicar) and the members of the parish after the Pavilion Sports Building inauguration.*

## BETHEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA



*Rev. Sham P. Thomas, Rev. T. P. Zachariah, Rev. A. C. Kurien, Rev. Isaac P. Johnson and Rev. John Mathai at the Convention.*



*Youth fellowship members at the annual **AIDS WALK***

Annual Gospel Convention was held in June 2004. Rev. Sham P. Thomas was the main speaker. It was a well attended and blessed event.

Annual picnic was conducted during the second week of July. Sports activities, fishing and boating facilities and hiking/biking events made the picnic very enjoyable.

Youth fellowship members attended annual **AIDS WALK** and made substantial contributions to the project.

Graduates were recognized and were congratulated during special service on Sunday July 18th.



*Scenes from the Annual Picnic*



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## OUR NEW ACHENS

**REV A. C. KURIEN**, Ascension MTC, Philadelphia



Mother Parish: Ichilampady Immanuel MTC, Karnataka.  
College: Annamala University, MA  
BD: Bishops' College, Calcutta  
Churches: St. Andrew's MTC, Hoskotte Mission, Devanavally Mission, Vellore Mar Thoma Church & B Guidance Center Vellore, Tamil Nadu, Kozhencherry MTC.

Special: Translated Mar Thoma worship order from Malayalam to Karnataka. Developed Sunday School curriculum in Karnataka Language.

Wife: Aleykutty Kurien (Omana)

Children: Anita 16, Anila 12

**REV. ALEXANDER THARAKAN** South Florida/St. Mark



Mother Parish: Immanuel MTC Thevalakara  
College: Devasom Board College, Sasthamcottah.

BD: Bishops College, Calcutta

Churches: Konni: Muthuvezhumkul St. Thomas; Vakayar Christos; V-Kottayam Ebenezer; Kokkathodu Mission Field.

Gujrat: Ghandidham & Bhuj; Ullas Nagar St James & Ambernath, Bombay; Payyanamon St. Andrews; Naranganam St. Thomas.

Special: Diocesan Council Member, Ranni-Nilackal Diocese

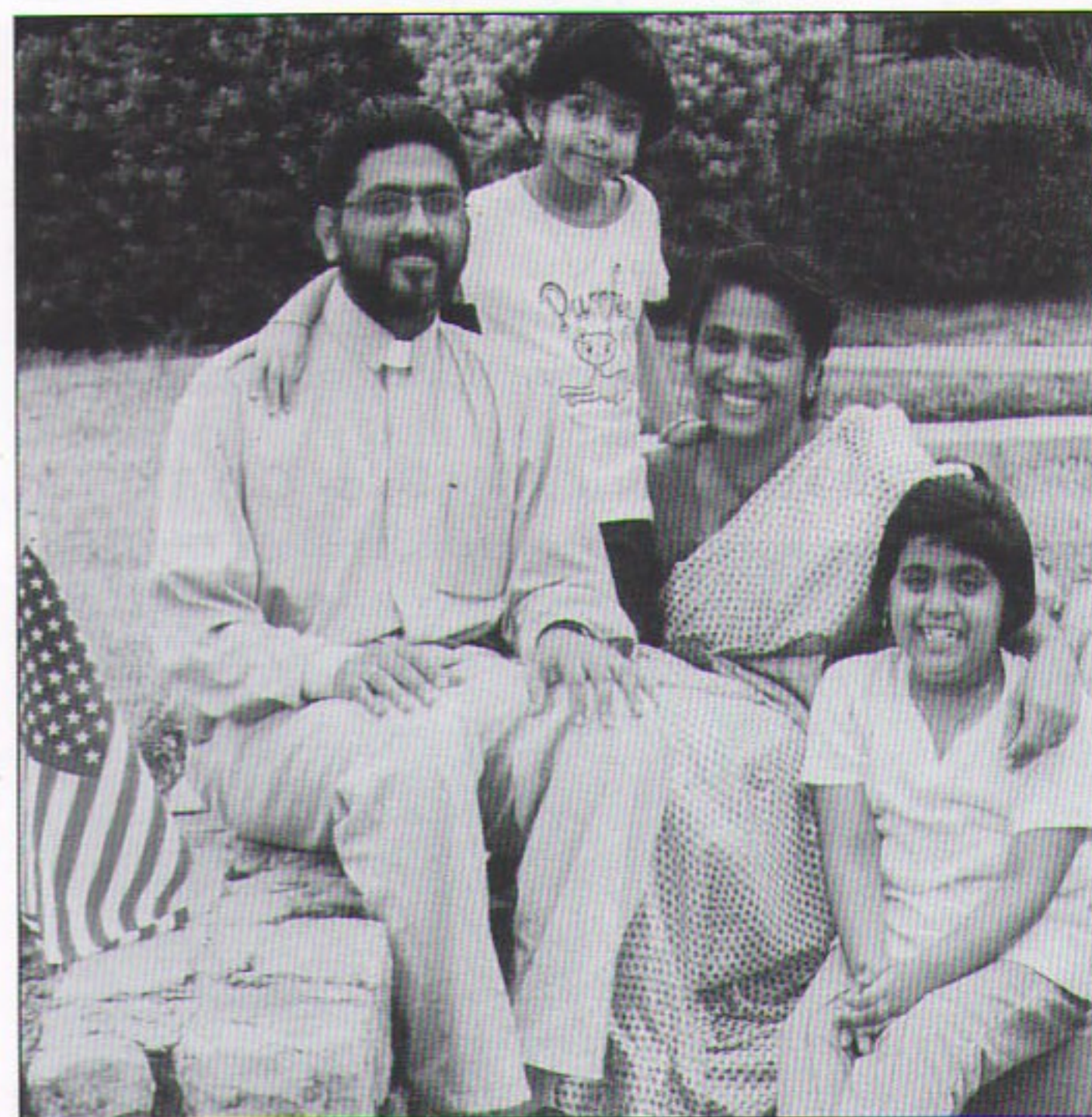
Chairman: Mission-to-College program, Ranni-Nilackal Diocese

Representative to Kerala Christian Council (KCC)

Wife: Mini Alexander, Omalloor

Children: Adona Alexander, 8; Adarsh Koshy Tharakan, 5.

**REV. ANIL GEORGE**, MTC of Dallas, FB, TX



Mother Parish: Thalachira (Kottarakara) Salem MTC

College: St. John's College, Anchal

BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, and ordained as a priest in 1993.

Parishes: Served as Vicar of Bhopal St. Peter's MTC; MTC Ittarsi (MP); Sarni MTC (MP); Ebenezer MTC, Moothedam; Christos MTC, Muthukulam; Ebenezer MTC, Dombivilly (Mumbai)

Work fields: Served as the Director of Bhopal Mission, and Chungathara-Nilambur Development Project.

Wife: Jessy Philip (Jessy)

Children: Deepthi, 8; Mukthi, 5.

**REV. GEORGE THOMAS, Trinity MTC, Houston**



Mother Parish: Niranam Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church  
College: SD College, Alleppey  
BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam  
Previous Parishes: West Kallada; Ullasagar/Ambarnath-Bombay; Ahamedbad/Gandhinagar-Gujarat; Lucknow/Kanpur-Uttar Pradesh; Jalahalli Ebenezer MTC-Bangalore  
Wife: Suja George  
Children: Joel George Thomas, 9; Jacin Mariam George, 4

**REV. JACOB THOMAS, MTC of Dallas, G.P., TX**



Mother Parish: St. Paul's MTC, Karathamankel, Narakathany  
College: Mar Tma College, Thiruvalla  
BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam  
Parishes served: Vayyattupuzha, Seethathode, Vechoochira, Ayroor Salem, Anicadu St. Thomas, Nedumprum Christos, Kadampanadu Salem, Kannamcode (Adoor) M.T.C, Kottarakara M.T.C.  
Wife: Susy Jacob  
Daughter: Soney Annie Jacob (23, Kerala)  
Soju Jacob (21, Kerala)

**REV. JOJAN MATHEWS JOHN, St. Thomas, NY**



Mother Parish: Kuttapuzha Varicadu Sehion MTC (Thiruvalla)  
College: Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla; Bombay University (M.Phil)  
BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam  
Churches: Kovilloor Salem (Kulashekham), Thana MTC (Bombay)  
Special: Served as president of Western-India Youth conference. Convener of Land-for-landless project by Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese. Diocesan Council member-Trivandrom Quilon Diocese.  
Wife: Susan Mathews  
Children: Vishakh John Mathews, 5; Vrindha Chinnu Mathews, 2

**REV. MANOJ M. ZACHARIA, Staten Island MTC, NY**  
Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia has taken charge as Vicar of the



Mar Thoma Church Staten Island since May 1, 2004. Previous to his appointment at Staten Island, Manoj Achen has served the church as Vicar of the St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, Payyanamon, Salem Mar Thoma Church, Konnapara, and San Thom Mar Thoma Church, Njaloor. Achen also served briefly as the Chaplain of the St. Thomas Residential Schools, Mananthala, Trivandrum. Manoj Achen who is a member of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York, completed his undergraduate education, with distinction, from the prestigious Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY followed by serving in the political field and financial industry. Thereupon, Achen completed his theological education from the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam. Achen is accompanied by his wife, Joel.

**REV. MATHEW M. THOMAS** Canadian MTC, Toronto



Mother Parish: Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Cherukol, Kozencherry  
 College: St. Thomas College, Kozencherry, Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla  
 BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam  
 Parishes: Dimapur, Nagaland; Madras; Thalachira, Kottarakkara.  
 Wife: Preeta Thomas  
 Children: Habel, 8 years; Hannah, 2 years

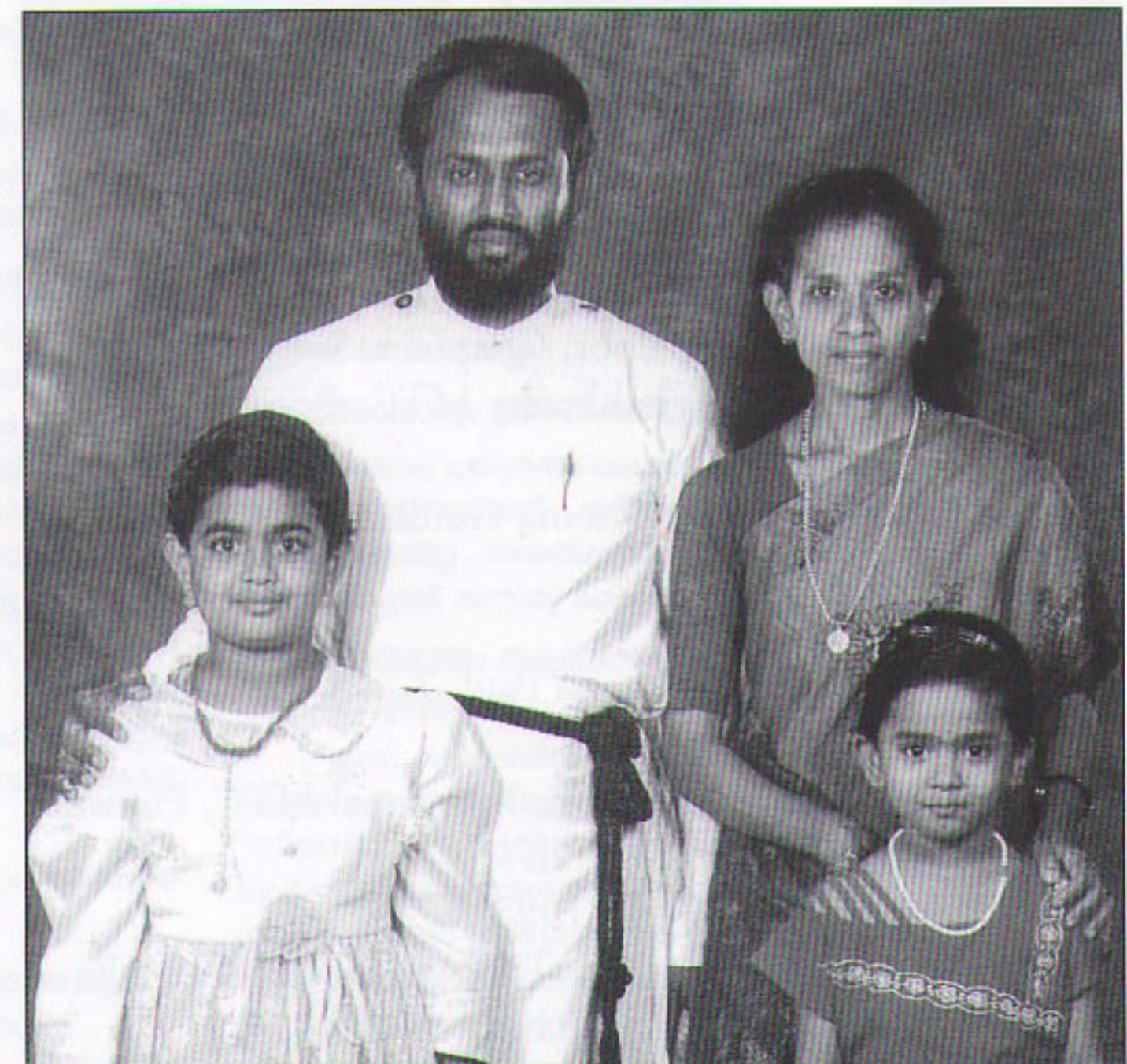
**REV MATHEW P.Y.** St. Peters', NJ  
 Mother Parish: Cheppad MTC, Harppad  
 College: TKMM College, Nangarkulangara.  
 BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam  
 Churches: Ludheana MTC, Chandigarh MTC, Ambala MTC, Vashi-New Bombay, Pune MTC, Ahamadh Nagar MTC.  
 Special: Missionary; Sadhu Sundar Singh Mission, Chakken  
 Missionary, Maharashtra Mission  
 Served as Secretary; member of Western India Zonal Assembly.



Wife: Susan Mathew  
 Children: Snehit, 10; Arpitha, 4

**REV. SAJI P. THOMAS** Baltimore MTC, MD  
 BD: MT Theological Seminary, Kottayam 1986-89  
 Parishes: Bethel M.T.C. Akamkudy  
 Immanuel M.T.C. Ramapuram  
 M.T.C Muttom  
 Immanuel M.T.C. Payipad  
 Ascension M.T.C. Hyderabad  
 St. Thomas M.T.C. Karunagappally  
 Bethel M.T.C. Ayanivelikulagara  
 St. Andrews M.T.C. Jabalpur  
 M.T.C. Raipur  
 St. Thomas M.T.C. Piravanthoor  
 Wife: Elizabeth Saji  
 Children: Ansu Elizabeth Saji; Abhishek Thomas Saji

**REV T. A. VARGHESE**, Epiphany, NY



Mother Parish : Poovanpara Salem MTC, Konni  
 College: Catholicate College, Pathanamthitta.

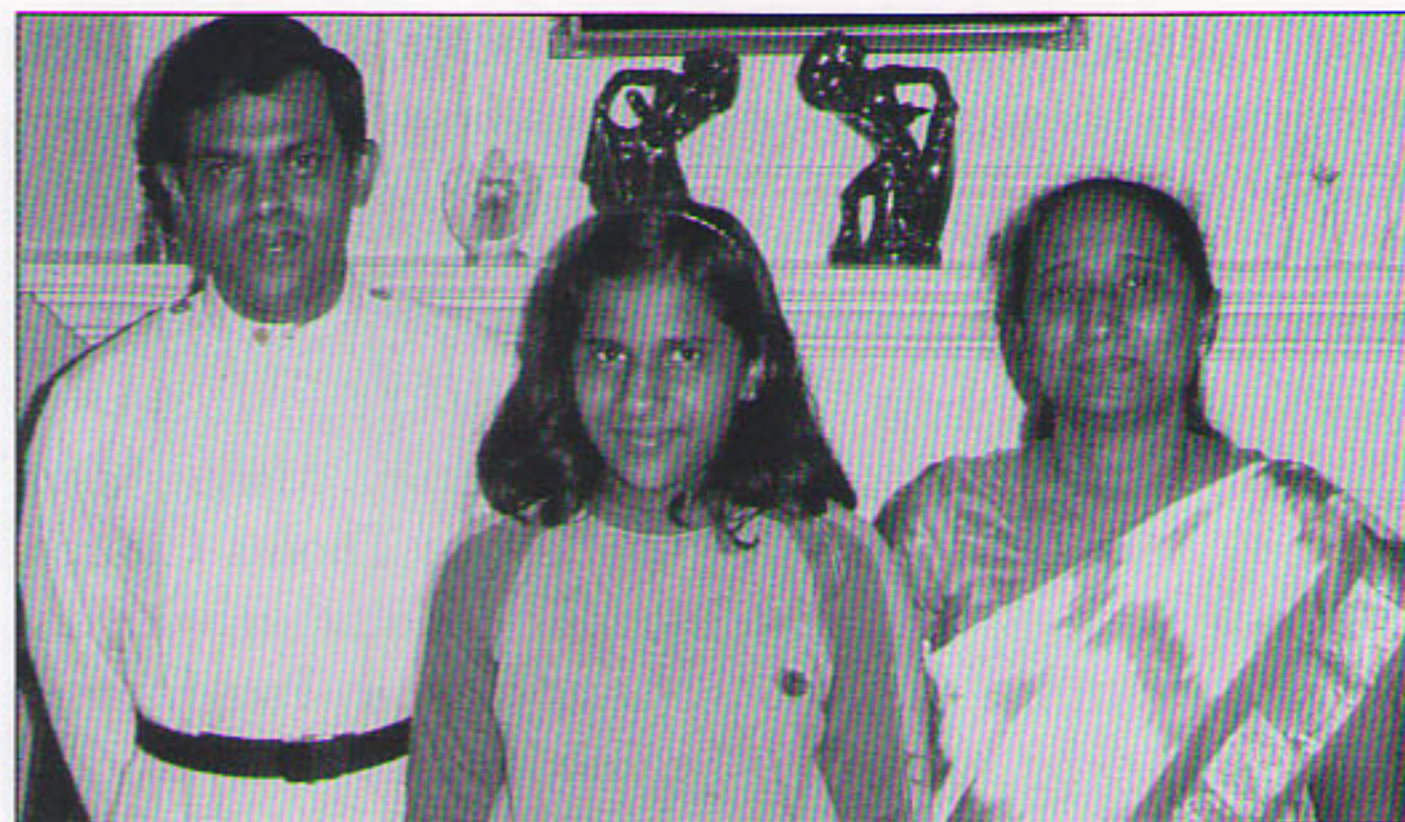
BD: United Theological Seminary, Bangalore.  
 Churches: Assistant Vicar, Madras MTC; Easo Mar Themotheos memorial Bible Institute, Kunnamkulam / Pengamuck and Katakambal MTC; Hubli/Davengeri/Harhar in Karnataka; Niranam St. Thomas MTC, St Thomas MTC. Thamarakulam.  
 Special: General Secretary of Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam;  
 Administrator, Ashram Hospital, Angola.  
 Student Chaplain, Karnataka Northern region.  
 Wife: Jessy Varghese  
 Children: Angel Elsa Varghese, 10; Aksa Miriam Varghese, 5

**REV. THOMAS PAUL**, St Stephen's MTC, NJ



Mother Parish : Ascension MTC, Mukkoottuthara  
 College: M.A. (Kerala University)  
 BD: Bishop's College, Calcutta  
 Churches: Edamon-Punaloor; Chaplain, St Thomas School, Trivandrum; Kaitahkuzhy MTC; Borivli MTC, Bombay  
 Special: Director of Mar Thoma Guidance & Counseling Center, Trivandrum  
 Wife: Shirley Paul  
 Children: Abel Paul, 8; Thejas Paul, 7

**REV. VARGHESE MATHEW**, Immanuel MTC, Houston  
 Home parish: Kattikkal St.Pauls  
 D.O. Ordination: June 4th, 1983  
 Colleges studied: PDC – Mar Thoma College, Tiruvalla  
 Degree: St.Thomas College, Ranny  
 Seminary: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam  
 Parishes Served: Jodhpur & amp; Bikaner, Nasik-Busawal, Thamarasserry-Puthuppady, Port Blair, Secunderabad, Neredmet



Other Responsibilities: Missionary: M.T.E.A. -Andaman and Nicobar islands  
 Missionary: Secunderabad Mission  
 Correspondent: St.Thomas High School, Neredmet, Secunderabad  
 Secretary: Mar Thoma Navajeevan Samiti, Secunderabad  
 Diocesan Council Member: Madras-Culcutta Diocese  
 Wife: Jaicy Varghes  
 Children: Preeti and Praisy

**REV. T. P. ZACHARIA** Philadelphia MTC



Mother Parish: St John's MTC. Kumplamthanam, Thoedical  
 College: Gov. College, Raisen, Bhopal  
 BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam  
 Parishes/ Work Fields: Shadol Mission, Gwalior & Jhanci, Thonniamala MTC, and Elanthoor / Pariyaram,  
 Special: Taught at Sihora Bible Institute, Served as Manager/Principal of Gwalior MTC School, Governing Board member of Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Managing Committee member Mar Thoma Suvisesha Sanghom. Established new mission center in Jhanci.  
 Wife: Saramma Zachariah (Leelamma)  
 Children: Kripa, 18 (Full time student in Kerala); Karuna, 15 (H.S., Philadelphia)

# പുതിയ തിരിച്ചറിവുകൾ എന്റെ കുളക്കരയിലെ രോഗി ആര്?

പ്രസംഗം : ബിഷപ്പ് ജോൺ ഗ്രാഡ്വിൻ

പരിഭാഷ : റവ. ഏബ്രഹാം കുരുവിള

യോഹന്നാൻ 5:2-15

പ്രത്യാശയ്ക്കു വഴിയുണ്ടോ? യുദ്ധവും പ്രവണതകളും സാമ്പത്തിക ചൂഷണവും വർദ്ധിച്ചുവരുന്ന ഈ കാലത്ത് ഏറ്റവും പ്രസക്തമായ ചോദ്യം. നിരാശയിലും വേദനയിലും കഴിയുന്ന മനുഷ്യന് എവിടെനിന്ന് സാതന്ത്ര്യം ലഭിക്കും. കുളക്കരയിലെ മനുഷ്യൻ ആധുനിക മനുഷ്യന്റെ പ്രതിനിധിയാണ്. സഹായം ആവശ്യമുള്ളവർക്ക് അത് നിഷേധിക്കുന്ന ഒരു ലോകത്തിലാണ് അവൻ ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. അവന്റെ ജീവിതം ഒരു തടവറയുടെ അനുഭവം ആണ്. സാതന്ത്ര്യം നിഷേധിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന ഇത്തരം സമൂഹത്തിലേക്ക് കർത്താവ് കടന്നുവരുന്നു. ജീവിതം അവരുമായി പങ്കുവയ്ക്കുകയും രോഗത്തിൽനിന്ന് സാതന്ത്ര്യം നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

## എഴുന്നേൽക്കുക, നടക്കുക, സ്വതന്ത്രനാവുക

മനുഷ്യത്വത്തെ നശിപ്പിക്കുന്ന തിന്മയ്ക്കെതിരെ യേശു പ്രതികരിക്കുന്നു. എഴുന്നേൽക്കുക എന്നു പറഞ്ഞുകൊണ്ട് കുളക്കരയിലെ രോഗിയെ ബന്ധനങ്ങളിൽനിന്ന് യേശു മോചിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. 38 വർഷമായിട്ടും ഈ മനുഷ്യന് ജീവിക്കണമെന്ന മോഹം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. എഴുന്നേൽക്കുക എന്ന കർത്താവിന്റെ ആഹ്വാനം കഴിഞ്ഞ കാലത്തെ പിൻതള്ളിക്കൊണ്ട് പുതിയ കാലത്തിനുവേണ്ടി മുന്നേറുവാനുള്ള വെല്ലുവിളിയാണ്. എഴുന്നേറ്റുനിന്ന രോഗിയോട് കിടക്കയെടുത്തു നടക്കുക എന്നാണ് തുടർന്ന് കർത്താവ് ആവശ്യപ്പെട്ടു.

നന്ത്. കിടക്ക എടുത്ത് നടക്കുക എന്നത് സാതന്ത്ര്യം പ്രാപിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് പുതിയജീവിതത്തിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിക്കുന്ന അനുഭവമാണ്.

## ഹൃദയങ്ങളെ കലക്കുന്ന യേശു

ദൈവം തന്റെ ആത്മാവ് മൂലം നമ്മുടെ ഉള്ളങ്ങളെ കലക്കുന്നു. പുതിയ സാതന്ത്ര്യത്തിനുവേണ്ടി പുതിയ ജീവനുവേണ്ടിയുമാണ് കർത്താവ് നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയങ്ങളെ കലക്കുന്നത്. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ രൂപാന്തരം ഉളവാക്കുമ്പോൾ മാത്രമേ യഥാർത്ഥമായ പ്രത്യാശയുടെ അനുഭവം നമുക്ക് ലഭിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. അതുകൊണ്ട് നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയങ്ങളെ കലക്കുവാൻ പുതുക്കുവാൻ കർത്താവിന്റെ കരങ്ങളിൽ നൽകേണ്ടതാണ്.

ആരാണ് നമ്മുടെ കുളക്കരയിൽ കിടക്കുന്ന രോഗി? സാതന്ത്ര്യം നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട അടിമത്വം അനുഭവിക്കുന്ന അനേകരെ നമ്മുടെ അയൽപക്കത്ത്, നമ്മുടെ കുളക്കരയിൽ കാണുവാൻ സാധിക്കും. എന്നാൽ യഥാർത്ഥമായി കരുതലും സൗഖ്യവും ആവശ്യമുള്ളവർക്ക് അത് നിഷേധിക്കപ്പെടുകയാണ്. യേശുവിനെപ്പോലെ കുളക്കരയിലെ രോഗികളെ തിരിച്ചറിയുവാനും സാതന്ത്ര്യത്തിന്റെ അനുഭവത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുവാനും കഴിയണം. ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ സാതന്ത്ര്യത്തിൽ നടക്കുക, യേശുവിനുവേണ്ടി നിലകൊള്ളുക, ദൈവസന്തോഷത്തോടെ



സഹജര സതന്ത്രരാക്കുക ഇത് നമ്മുടെ ദൗത്യമാണ്. എഴുന്നേൽപ്പിക്കുക, നടക്കുവാൻ അനുവദിക്കുക, സാതന്ത്ര്യം നൽകുക തുടങ്ങിയവയ്ക്കായി കർത്താവ് നമ്മെ ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

# മറ്റൊരു ലോകം സാധ്യമാണ് (ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE)

റവ. വൽസൻ തമ്പു

ഉത്തരാധുനിക ലോകം സാധ്യതകളുടെ ലോകമാണ്. ആ സാധ്യതകളെ കണ്ടെത്തുവാനുള്ള ആർജ്ജവത്വം നമുക്ക് എവിടെനിന്ന് ലഭിക്കും. സാധ്യതകളിലേക്ക് വിരൽ ചൂണ്ടുവാനാണ് യേശു വന്നത്. സാധ്യതകളുടെ ലോകത്തിലാണ് ദൈവം നമ്മെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്.

ഇന്നത്തെ ആത്മാവ് വിപ്ലവത്തിന്റെ ആത്മാവല്ല, ഉപരിപ്ലവത്തിന്റേതാണ്. ഇന്നത്തെ ലകളിൽ ഉടലെടുത്ത ആഗോളവ്യവസ്ഥിതി മനുഷ്യന്റെ പ്രതീക്ഷകളെ തകിടം മറിക്കുന്നു. ഇന്ന് ഉളവായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന മാറ്റങ്ങൾ ഒരേ ദിശയിലും മനുഷ്യത്വം വികലമാക്കുന്ന രീതിയിലും ഉള്ളതാണ്. ദശകങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പ് തകർന്നുപോയ മനുഷ്യന്റെ അധിനിവേശ പ്രവണതയാണ് ആഗോള ലോകക്രമത്തിലൂടെ കടന്നുവന്നിരിക്കുന്നത്. സഹോദരനെ കൊന്നതിനുശേഷം കയീൻ ചെയ്ത ആദ്യപ്രവർത്തി ഒരു പട്ടണം പണിയുകയായിരുന്നു. ഇന്നും ചോരയുടെ മുറിപ്പാടുകളാൽ പട്ടണങ്ങൾ പണിയപ്പെടുകയാണ്. ഇന്നും ഭൂമിയിൽ ചിതറിപ്പോകുമെന്ന ഭീതിയാൽ മനുഷ്യർ ബാബേൽ ഗോപുരങ്ങൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുകയാണ്. ലോകത്തിൽ രണ്ട് തരത്തിലുള്ള മതബോധങ്ങൾ നിലവിലുണ്ട്.

### 1. യാഥാസ്ഥിതിക ബോധം

നിലവിലുള്ള വ്യവസ്ഥിതിയിൽ തൃപ്തരായിരിക്കുകയും അതിനെ പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന മതബോധം.

### 2. മാറ്റങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടി നിലകൊള്ളുന്ന മതബോധം.

മാറ്റങ്ങൾ സാധ്യമാണെന്ന് നിർബന്ധിക്കുകയും അതിനുവേണ്ടി ത്യാഗപൂർവ്വം നിലകൊള്ളുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന മതബോധം.

### ദൈവരാജ്യം സാധ്യതകളുടെ പുതിയലോകം

യേശുവിന്റെ ദൗത്യം ദൈവരാജ്യം ലോകത്തിൽ സ്ഥാപിക്കുക എന്നതായിരുന്നു. ദൈവരാജ്യം ഭൂമിയിൽ സ്ഥാപിക്കുക എന്നത് വിപ്ലവകരമായ ദൗത്യമാണ്. കാരണം ദൈവരാജ്യം അയൽക്കാരുടെ രാജ്യമാണ്. ദൈവരാജ്യം മറ്റൊരു ലോകത്തിന്റെ സാധ്യത മാത്രമല്ല എല്ലായ്പ്പോഴും അതിലേക്കുള്ള ഒരു അന്വേഷണം കൂടിയാണ്. അന്വേഷണം തിരസ്കരിക്കലിന്റെ മറ്റൊരു മുഖം ആണ്. നിലവിലിരിക്കുന്ന വ്യവസ്ഥിതിയെ മാറ്റാത്ത പുതിയ വ്യവസ്ഥിതിക്കുവേണ്ടി യത്നിക്കുന്നത് അപകടമാണ്.

ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിന്റെ നാല് പ്രകടകരമായ വശങ്ങൾ

### 1. ദൈവരാജ്യം മറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്ന സാധ്യതകളെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നവയാണ്.

കാണാത്തവയെ കാണാനുള്ള കണ്ണാണ് വിശ്വാസം. മറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്ന ആത്മീയ സാധ്യതകളെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നവരാണ് നാം. പുതിയ ലോകം നമ്മിലാണ്, നമ്മുടെ നിലപാടുകളിലാണ്.

### 2. ദൈവരാജ്യം ആവശ്യങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള തിരിച്ചറിവാണ്.

ഇന്നത്തെ മനുഷ്യർ ആഗ്രഹങ്ങൾക്ക് കൂടുതൽ പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുന്നവരാണ്. ആഗ്രഹങ്ങളെ നാം കീഴടക്കിയില്ലെങ്കിൽ ആഗ്രഹങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ കീഴടക്കും. ആവശ്യങ്ങളെ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് ക്രിയാത്മകമായി പ്രതികരിക്കുന്നിടത്താണ് ദൈവരാജ്യം.

### 3. ദൈവരാജ്യം അയൽക്കാരുടെ രാജ്യമാണ്.

ദൈവം ചരിത്രത്തിലേക്ക് കടന്നുവന്നത് അയൽക്കാരനായാണ്. ആഗോള ഗ്രാമത്തിൽ അയൽപക്കമില്ല. അയൽക്കാരനെ നമ്മെപ്പോൽ സ്നേഹിച്ചാൽ മറ്റൊരു ലോകം സാധ്യമാണ്.

### 4. ദൈവരാജ്യം സമൃദ്ധമായ ജീവന്റെ അനുഭവമാണ്.

ഇന്ന് ആനന്ദമില്ല, സുഖഭോഗങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടി മനുഷ്യൻ തിരക്കുപിടിച്ച് ഓടുകയാണ്. "നിലവിലുള്ള വ്യവസ്ഥിതിയെ പരമാവധി ചൂഷണം ചെയ്യുവാനാണ് ഞങ്ങൾ പഠിക്കുന്നത്" എന്നത് വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ ആപ്തവാക്യം. എന്നാൽ കർത്താവിന്റെ വഴി സ്വയം ശൂന്യവൽക്കരണത്തിന്റേതായിരുന്നു. അപകടം നിറഞ്ഞ ലോകത്തിലേക്കാണ് വന്നത് എന്ന ബോധ്യത്തോടെ ശുശ്രൂഷ നിറവേറ്റിയ കർത്താവിനെ മാതൃകയാക്കിക്കൊണ്ട് ശുശ്രൂഷിപ്പാനും സമൃദ്ധമായ ജീവന്റെ അനുഭവക്കാരാകാനും നമുക്ക് കഴിയണം.

# അനുദിന ജീവിതത്തിൽ ദൈവസ്നേഹം പുനഃരാവിഷ്കരിക്കുക

മാനസാന്തരത്തിനു യോഗ്യമായ ഫലം കായ്പിൻ

ലൂക്കോസ് 3:7-14



റൈറ്റ്. റവ. ഡോ. ഗീവർഗീസ് മാർ തിയഡോഷ്യസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ

മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ ഒരു വചനോത്സവമാണ്. അനേകരെ മാനസാന്തരത്തിലേക്കും, സമർപ്പണത്തിലേക്കും നയിക്കുന്നതിന് മാനസാന്തരത്തിന്റെയും സമർപ്പണത്തിന്റെയും വർഷമായ 2004-ൽ സാധിക്കട്ടെ. ഈ കൺവൻഷൻ സഭയുടെയും സമൂഹത്തിന്റെയും നവോത്ഥാനത്തിന് കാരണമായിട്ടുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ മറിച്ചും സംഭവിക്കാം. യേശുവിനെ ഉത്സവപ്പറമ്പിൽ ഉപേക്ഷിച്ച് മടങ്ങാനുള്ള സാധ്യത തള്ളിക്കളയാനാവില്ല. അങ്ങനെ സംഭവിക്കാതിരിക്കാൻ വചനം ജീവിതഗന്ധിയാവണം.

മരുഭൂമിയിൽ വിളിച്ചു പറയുന്നവന്റെ വാക്കാണ് ഈ വേദഭാഗം. ദൈവം അയച്ചിട്ടുവന്ന മനുഷ്യനാണ് യോഹന്നാൻ. സ്ത്രീകളിൽ നിന്നു ജനിച്ചവരിൽ യോഹന്നാനേക്കാൾ വലിയവനില്ല. കർത്താവിന് വഴിയൊരുക്കുവാൻ അയയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ടവൻ. ജനത്തെ ഒരുക്കുക എന്നതാണ് യോഹന്നാന്റെ നിയോഗം. മാനസാന്തരാനുഭവം

ഓരോ കാലഘട്ടത്തിലും, എല്ലാ മനുഷ്യരുടെയും ഹൃദയത്തിൽ സംഭവിക്കണമെന്നത് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വലിയ ആഗ്രഹമാണ്. ദൈവം തന്നെ വെളിവാക്കുന്നു എന്നു മാത്രമല്ല ദൈവത്തിന് നമ്മെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഉദ്ദേശ്യം എന്തെന്നുകൂടി നാം തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നതാണ് നമ്മുടെ നിയോഗം.

വാക്യം. 4-6

പാത നിരപ്പാക്കുക എന്ന പ്രവാചകസന്ദേശത്തോടെയാണ് യോഹന്നാൻ ദൗത്യം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത് (യെശയ്യാവ് 40:3-5). കർത്താവിനുവേണ്ടി വഴിയൊരുക്കുന്നതിൽ നേരിടുന്ന പ്രതിബന്ധങ്ങൾ, പ്രതിസന്ധികൾ എല്ലാം മാറ്റപ്പെടുമെന്നു പ്രവാചകൻ സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ഈ സന്ദേശം എല്ലാ കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിലും, എല്ലാ സ്ഥലങ്ങളിലും എല്ലാ സൃഷ്ടിയിലും രക്ഷ സാക്ഷാത്കരിക്കുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന പ്രവാചകനായിട്ടാണ് യോഹന്നാനെ നാം കാണുന്നത്.

'മാനസാന്തരപ്പെട്ട സുവിശേഷത്തിൽ വിശ്വസിപ്പിൻ' (മർക്കോ:1:15) എന്ന ആഹ്വാനത്തോടെയാണ് കർത്താവ് പരസ്യശുശ്രൂഷ ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത്. സകലജനത്തിനും നല്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്ന സുവിശേഷത്തിൽ പ്രവേശിക്കുവാൻ മാനസാന്തരം ആവശ്യമാണ്. ജീവിതം സുവിശേഷമാക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരുക്കം അനുതാപത്തിലൂടെയും, മാനസാന്തരത്തിലൂടെയുമാണ് സാധിക്കുന്നത്.

ഇവിടെ യോഹന്നാൻ പാപമോചനത്തിനായുള്ള മാനസാന്തര സ്നാനത്തെപ്പറ്റി പ്രസംഗിക്കുന്നു. 'സർപ്പസന്തതികളെ' എന്ന സംബോധന ജനത്തെ അകറ്റുന്നതിനല്ല; പകരം മാനസാന്തരം ഉളവാക്കുന്നതിനാവശ്യമായ ദൈവമനസ്സ് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കുന്നതിനാണ്.

'സർപ്പസന്തതികളെ' എന്ന സംബോധന യോഹന്നാന്റെ ചരിത്രകാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ ദൈവജനം സർപ്പസ്വഭാവ സമാനമായ സ്വഭാവങ്ങളിൽ ജീവിച്ചിരുന്നു എന്നതിന്റെ തെളിവാണ്. ദൈവജനം സർപ്പസന്തതികളാവുന്നതെങ്ങനെയാണ്? ദൈവിക കല്പനകളിൽ നിന്നകലുമ്പോൾ, ഭൂമിയ്ക്ക് ഉപ്പും,

ലോകത്തിനു വെളിച്ചവും ആകാതിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ, സ്വാർത്ഥത തേടുമ്പോൾ, സർപ്പത്തെപ്പോലെ നാശവും മരണവും വിതയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ, സ്വയം സംതൃപ്തിയിൽ ആഹ്ലാദം കാണുമ്പോൾ ദൈവജനം സർപ്പസന്തതികളാവുകയാണ്. ക്രിസ്തീയസഭ ഇന്ന് സ്വയം സംതൃപ്തിയനുഭവിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹമായിത്തീരുന്നില്ലേ എന്നു ചിന്തിക്കണം. വിശ്വാസസമൂഹം അടഞ്ഞ സമൂഹമല്ല, പകരം തുറവിയുള്ള സമൂഹമായിത്തീരണം.

വാക്യം 7

തങ്ങളുടെ പാപാവസ്ഥയെ തിരിച്ചറിയുവാൻ കഴിയാതെ പോകുന്ന ഒരു ജനസമൂഹം. പാപത്തിൽ ജീവിക്കുവാൻ ഇഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന ജനം പാപാവസ്ഥയെ തിരിച്ചറിയാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാതെ ഓടിയൊളിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കും. ദൈവം നൽകുന്ന ആഹ്വാനത്തെ തിരിച്ചറിയാതെ പാപാവസ്ഥയിൽ കഴിയുമ്പോൾ ജീവിതത്തിൽ അർത്ഥരാഹിത്യവും, ഏകാന്തതയും നിരാശയും വർദ്ധിക്കുന്നു.

ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ എന്താണ് ചെയ്യേണ്ടത്?

വേദപുസ്തകം പറയുന്നു. "ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ആഹ്വാനത്തെ സ്വീകരിപ്പാൻ ചെവി കൊടുപ്പിൻ. ദൈവം സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിൽ നിന്നും യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിലൂടെ മനുഷ്യയാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളിലേക്കു ഇറങ്ങിവന്ന ദൈവമാണ്. അതിനാൽ മനുഷ്യാനുഭവങ്ങളിൽ മനുഷ്യരെ തേടിവരുന്ന ദൈവത്തെ തിരിച്ചറിയണം. സ്വർഗ്ഗം ലോകത്തിലേക്കു വരുമ്പോൾ മനുഷ്യർ ലോകയാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും ഓടിയകലാൻ ശ്രമിക്കരുത്."

യേശുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശീകരണസമയത്ത് ശിഷ്യന്മാർ ഓടിപ്പോവുകയും, ഒളിച്ചിരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. എന്നാൽ യേശുവിൽ നിന്നും, അസമാധാനത്തിൽ നിന്നും പുറത്തുവരുവാൻ യേശുക്രിസ്തു ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

ഇവിടെ യോഹന്നാൻ സ്നാനപകർച്ച ചോദിക്കുന്നു; "നിങ്ങൾ നിങ്ങളുടെ പാപത്തിൽ ഓടിപ്പോകുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നുവോ? മാനസാന്തരപ്പെടുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നുവോ?"

*"On the day that my daughter was born I was too naive to realize that I was embarking on the most important assignment of my life and that if I failed as a father, all my other achievements would somehow be diminished."*

*Richard Exley*

# ജീവിതയോഗ്യമായ ജീവൻ - ക്രിസ്തുവിലൂടെ

പ്രസംഗം : മാർട്ടിൻ അൽഫോൻസ്

പരിഭാഷ : റവ. എ. റ്റി. സഖറിയാ

ജീവിതയോഗ്യമായ ജീവിതത്തിലൂടെ ദൈവഹിതം പൂർത്തീകരിക്കുന്നതാണ് ക്രൈസ്തവദൗത്യം. ജീവന്റെ പരിപോഷണമാണ് പഴയ-പുതിയനിയമ സംഭവങ്ങളുടെ സാരം. ആവർത്തനം 30:11-20 വരെയുള്ള ഭാഗം ദൈവവും മോശയും സംബന്ധിച്ച അടിസ്ഥാന ബന്ധത്തിൽ ഉള്ളവയെ ജീവനെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുക എന്ന ആഹ്വാനമാണ് വെളിവാക്കുന്നത്. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവും പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചത് ഇതിൽ നിന്നും വിഭിന്നമല്ല. ഞാൻ തന്നെ വഴിയും സത്യവും ജീവനും ആകുന്നു (യോഹ.14:6). ജീവന്റെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഏറ്റവും പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടതാണ്. ഇതിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലാണ് ഭാവി നിർണ്ണയിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത്.

ജീവൻ ജീവിതയോഗ്യമാകുന്നത് ചില കാരണങ്ങളാലാണ്.

### 1. ജീവിതത്തിന് ഒരു ലക്ഷ്യമുണ്ട്.

സഭാപ്രസംഗി 3:1-14 വരെ ജീവന്റെ സമഗ്രമായ വിവരണം കാണുന്നു. അവൻ സകലവും അതിന്റെ സമയത്ത് നടപ്പാക്കുന്നു (വാക്യം 20). ജീവൻ എത്തിച്ചേരേണ്ട അവസ്ഥയാണ് യഥാർത്ഥ ലക്ഷ്യം. ഉയരങ്ങളിലേക്ക് നോക്കി ഉന്നതമായ സ്വപ്നങ്ങളെക്കണ്ട് നന്നായി പരിശ്രമിക്കുന്നതാണ് ലക്ഷ്യത്തിലേക്കുള്ള മാർഗ്ഗം.

മരണശേഷം എന്തു ചെയ്യും? ഒരു ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി അറിഞ്ഞിരിക്കേണ്ട ഒരു ചോദ്യമാണ്. ഈ ചോദ്യത്തിന് കണ്ടെത്തുന്ന ഉത്തരമാണ് ജീവിതലക്ഷ്യം. ജീവിതലക്ഷ്യം അവസാന ബിന്ദുവാണ്. വേദപുസ്തകം ഈ ലക്ഷ്യത്തെ 'നിത്യത' എന്ന് സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിലാണ് നിത്യത നിർണ്ണയിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത് (സഭാ.3:3). മോശയോടും ദൈവം ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്നത് നിത്യത വിദ്യരമല്ല സമീപെയാണ് എന്നാണ് (ആവർത്തനം 30:11). നിത്യതയെ സ്വഹൃദയത്തിൽ തീരുമാനിക്കപ്പെടുന്നെങ്കിലും അത് തിരിച്ചറിയാൻ കഴിയാത്തത്

നമ്മിൽ ഏറെ അപകടം സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. അതിന് മൂന്ന് കാരണങ്ങളുണ്ട്.

- a. വസ്തുപരമായ ഇടപെടലുകൾ (Existential)
  - b. സാമ്പത്തികമായ ഇടപെടലുകൾ (Economical)
  - c. വൈകാരികമായ ഇടപെടലുകൾ (Emotional)
- (i) വസ്തുപരമായ ഇടപെടലുകൾ

എല്ലാത്തിനും ഒരു സമയമുണ്ട്. ജനിക്കാനും മരിക്കാനും, നടുവാനും പരിക്കുവാനും എല്ലാത്തിനും സമയമുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ മനുഷ്യമനസ്സ് ഇന്നും നശ്വരതയിൽ കൂടുങ്ങിക്കിടക്കുകയാണ്. ചുറ്റുപാടുകളിൽ ഉയരുന്ന ആരവങ്ങളുടെ ഇടയിൽ നേരിയ ശബ്ദത്തെ തിരിച്ചറിയാൻ കഴിയാത്തതു മൂലം നിത്യതയുടെ നേരിയ ശബ്ദത്തെ കേൾക്കാൻ കഴിയാതെ പോകുന്നു. സൃഷ്ടാവിനെക്കാൾ സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ അത്ഭുതത്തെ കാണുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നതാണ് ഇന്നിന്റെ അപകടം. ഏകസത്യ ദൈവമായ ദൈവത്തേയും അവിടുന്ന് അയച്ച യേശുവിനെയും അറിയുന്നതാണ് യഥാർത്ഥ നിത്യജീവൻ എന്ന് യേശു തന്നെ വിശദമാക്കുന്നു (യോഹ.17:3).

നിത്യജീവനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ചിന്തയിൽ രണ്ട് ജ്ഞാനം പ്രാധാന്യമർഹിക്കുന്നു.

### 1. ദാർശനിക ജ്ഞാനം

വിവരങ്ങളിൽ അടിസ്ഥാനമുള്ള അറിവ് മാത്രം.

### 2. വ്യക്തിപരമായ ജ്ഞാനം

ബന്ധത്തിലൂടെയും ഇടപെടലുകളിലൂടെയുമുള്ള വിവരം.

യേശുവിനെ വ്യക്തിപരമായി അറിയുന്നതാണ് വ്യക്തിജീവിത ചിന്തയിൽ നിർണ്ണായകമായിട്ടുള്ളത്. അത് അതിശയകരവും സന്തോഷകരവും മാത്രമല്ല അത് സാത്വര്യത്തിലേക്ക് നമ്മെ നയിക്കുന്ന ഘടകം കൂടി

യാണ്. വ്യക്തിപരമായ ബന്ധം ദൃഢതയുള്ളതാകുമ്പോഴാണ് നിത്യത ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത്.

### (ii) വൈകാരികമായ ഇടപെടലുകൾ

ജീവിതത്തിൽ അനുഭവിക്കുന്ന സന്തോഷവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടാണ് ഈ വൈകാരികതലം. ന്യായവിധിയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഉല്ലാസങ്ങളെ ശോധന ചെയ്യുന്നത് അഭികാമ്യമാണ്. തൻകാര്യ സന്തോഷത്തിന് അല്പായുസ്സാണെന്ന് അനുഭവങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

### (iii) സാമ്പത്തിക ഇടപെടലുകൾ

ദൈവത്തെ ഒഴിവാക്കിയുള്ള ഭക്ഷണവും പാനീയവും ശാപമാണ്. സമ്പത്ത് നമ്മുടെ വിഗ്രഹമായി മാറാൻ അനുവദിക്കരുത്. മോശയുടെ യിസ്രായേൽ ജനത്തോടുള്ള ഉപദേശവും ഇപ്രകാരം തന്നെയാണ്.

യോഗ്യമായ ജീവന്റെ അനുഭവവും സ്വായത്തമാകുന്നത് നിത്യതയുടെ വെളിച്ചത്തിലാണ്. നിത്യജീവന്റെ അനുഭവം വിഭാവന ചെയ്യുന്ന ജീവിത അർത്ഥവ്യാപ്തിയെ സഭാജീവിതത്തിലും സമൂഹജീവിതത്തിലും സംസ്ഥാപിതമാകണം. ദൈവശബ്ദത്തിന്റെ നേർത്ത ശബ്ദത്തെപ്പോലും തിരിച്ചറിയും വിധം, ഹൃദയവിശാലത ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ അനുയായികൾ നേടിയെടുക്കണം. അങ്ങനെ യോഗ്യമായ ജീവിതം സ്ഥാപിതമാകും.

കൂടുംബം ബന്ധങ്ങൾ  
ഊട്ടിയുറപ്പിക്കുന്ന കളരി -  
സനാതനമൂല്യങ്ങൾ വിനിമയം  
ചെയ്യുന്ന പ്രാഥമിക പഠനവേദി  
തലമുറകൾക്ക്  
പൈതൃകങ്ങൾ  
കൈമാറുന്ന വിളനിലം

# വിശ്വാസം - തലമുറകളിലേക്ക് കൈമാറുക

പ്രസംഗം : ഡി. സ്റ്റീഫൻ ഏബ്രഹാം

പരിഭാഷ : റവ. എ. എ. വർഗീസ്

ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഭവനത്തിൽ ദൈവജനത്തോട് കൂടെ കാണപ്പെട്ട ശമുവേൽ അതിലൂടെ ദൈവനിയോഗം ഏറ്റെടുക്കുകയാണ് ചെയ്തത്. ശമുവേലിനെപ്പോലെ ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിനു വേണ്ടി മക്കളെ ഒരുക്കുന്ന ഭവനങ്ങൾ ഇന്നിന്റെ ആവശ്യമാണ്. പ്രശ്നങ്ങളുടെ മദ്ധ്യത്തിൽ കരങ്ങളിൽ താങ്ങി നടത്തുന്ന ദൈവകൃപകളെ തലമുറകളിലേക്ക് കൈമാറേണ്ടത് ആവശ്യമാണ്. ദൈവത്തെ സ്നേഹിക്കുവാനും കഴിവുകളെ ദൈവത്തിന് നൽകുവാനും നമുക്ക് സാധിക്കണം. ദൈവരാജ്യ ദൗത്യത്തിന് നാം എന്ത് പ്രാധാന്യ

മാണ് നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്നത്? ശ്രേഷ്ഠമായത് ദൈവത്തിന് നൽകുവാൻ മനസ്സുണ്ടാവണം. ദൈവിക കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ പരിശീലനം ലഭിച്ച കുടുംബങ്ങളാണ് ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നത്. കാരണം ഇവിടെയായിരിക്കണം കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളെ പരിശീലിപ്പിക്കുന്ന വേദി. നമ്മുടെ ഭവനത്തിൽ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾക്ക് ആവശ്യമായ മൂല്യങ്ങൾ ലഭിക്കണം. ആവർത്തന പുസ്തകം 6-ാം അദ്ധ്യായം 20-ാം വാക്യം ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നതു പോലെ കഴിഞ്ഞകാല അനുഭവങ്ങൾ തലമുറകൾക്ക് പങ്കിടണം. മരുഭൂമിയിലൂടെയുള്ള യാത്രയിൽ കാടപക്ഷിയെയും മന്നായെയും നൽകി പോഷിപ്പിച്ചു

ദൈവം ഇന്നും മതിയായവനാണെന്നും അവന്റെ ന്യായപ്രമാണങ്ങൾ ഹൃദയപലകകളിൽ എഴുതേണമെന്നും തലമുറകളോട് പറയുവാൻ നാം ബാധ്യസ്ഥരാണ്. ദൈവത്തെ സ്നേഹിക്കാതിരിക്കുക എന്ന വലിയ പാപത്തിൽ നിന്ന് സ്നേഹം പകരുന്നവരായി നാം മാറണം. സ്നേഹത്തിലൂടെ ശ്രേഷ്ഠമായവയെ നൽകുവാനുള്ള മനസ്സ് നമുക്ക് ഉണ്ടാകണം. ചെറുപ്പുകുത്തിയായിരുന്ന വില്യം കേറിയിലൂടെ ക്രൈസ്തവ ലോകത്തിന് ലഭിച്ച സംഭാവനകൾ ഇതിന് മകുട ഉദാഹരണമാണ്.

# ദൈവത്തിനായി കാത്തിരിക്കാം, നിരാശ വെടിയാം

പ്രസംഗം : റവ. ഡോ. ക്ലയോഫസ് ജെ. ലാറു

പരിഭാഷ : റവ. ഡോ. ജോർജ്ജ് വർഗീസ്

ഹബക്കൂക്: 2:1-4

ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഉയർച്ചയുടെയും താഴ്ചയുടെയും അനുഭവത്തിലൂടെ കടന്നു പോകുമ്പോൾ ദൈവസാന്നിധ്യം അനുഭവിച്ചറിയാൻ സാധിക്കണം. സ്വപ്നങ്ങളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും ഉള്ളവരാണ് മനുഷ്യർ. എന്നാൽ സ്വപ്നങ്ങളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും ദൈവം നിശ്ചയിക്കുന്ന സമയത്തേയ്ക്കായി മാർത്ഥ്യമാവുകയുള്ളൂ. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ നാമൻ താനാണെന്ന സ്വയം അവബോധം ഇന്നിന്റെ ശാപമാണ്. സാഹചര്യത്തെ നിയന്ത്രണവിധേയമാക്കാമെന്നുള്ള ചിന്താഗതി അപകടമാണ്, ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കരുതലിനെ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യുന്നതാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സൃഷ്ടിയാണ് നാം. നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ നിയന്ത്രണം ദൈവകരങ്ങളിലാണ്. ആരോഗ്യമുള്ളപ്പോൾ നാം ചിന്തിച്ചുപോകും 'നാമാണ് ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ നാമൻ' എന്ന്. എല്ലാകാര്യങ്ങളും ഭംഗിയായി നടക്കുമ്പോൾ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ആവശ്യമെന്തെന്നു ചിന്തിച്ചുപോകും. മനുഷ്യജീവിതം വിവിധ അനുഭവങ്ങളിലൂടെ കടന്നുപോകുന്നതാണ്. പ്രകൃതിയുടെ വിവിധ ഭാവങ്ങളായി വിലയിരുത്താം.

**ശരത്കാലം :** വൃക്ഷങ്ങൾ ഇല കൊഴിക്കുന്നു. മനുഷ്യജീവിതത്തിൽ സ്വപ്നങ്ങളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും തകരുന്ന അനുഭവങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകുന്നു.

**ശിശിരകാലം :** തണുത്തുറയുന്ന കാലാവസ്ഥ. ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ ശിഥിലീകരണവും വേർപാടിന്റെ അനുഭവങ്ങളും സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു.

**വസന്തകാലം :** പുഷ്പീകരണ അനുഭവം. ശുഭാപ്തിയുടെ അനുഭവം. പ്രത്യാശയിലൂടെ ആഗ്രഹങ്ങൾ സഫലീകരിക്കുന്ന കാലഘട്ടം.

**ഉഷ്ണകാലം :** സ്വപ്നങ്ങളും ആഗ്രഹങ്ങളും എരിവയിലിൽ നശിച്ചുപോകുന്നു.

വിവിധകാലങ്ങളിൽ വിവിധങ്ങളായ ജീവിത അനുഭവങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകുന്നു. പ്രതിസന്ധികൾ, നഷ്ടങ്ങൾ, നിസഹായത എന്നീ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ എങ്ങനെയാണ് ദൈവത്തെ കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നത്. ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നതുപോലെ സംഭവിക്കാതിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ നിരാശരാകുന്നു.

എപ്രകാരം ദൈവത്തെ കാത്തിരിക്കണം?

ചെറിയ പ്രവാചകനായ ഹബക്കൂക്, പ്രതിസന്ധികളിൽ ഉഴലുമ്പോൾ, പ്രത്യാശ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ ദൈവവുമായുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ നിലനിൽക്കേണ്ടതിന്റെ ആവശ്യകത ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ദേശത്തു വർദ്ധിച്ചുവരുന്ന അനീതിയിൽ ദൈവത്തോടു പരാതിപ്പെടുന്നു. ആശയക്കുഴപ്പങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകുമ്പോൾ ദൈവത്തോട് പിറുപിറുക്കുന്നു. ദൈവ ഉദ്ദേശത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വ്യക്തത നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നു. ദൈവത്തെ കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നവർ നിരാശരാകേണ്ട കാര്യമില്ല. ദൈവം പ്രവർത്തിക്കും.

മനുഷ്യൻ പ്രതീക്ഷയ്ക്കു വിപരീതമായതു സംഭവിക്കുമ്പോൾ ഉൾവലിയുന്നു.

ഉദ്ദേശ്യവും ലക്ഷ്യവും നഷ്ടമാകുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ദൈവത്തെ കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നത് പ്രത്യാശയുടെ അനുഭവമാണ്. ഉയർച്ചയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്ന അനുഭവമാണ്. വളരെ പ്രതീക്ഷയോടെയാണ് കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നത്. സുന്ദരമായ നാളെയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വാഞ്ചിയോടെ ഹബക്കൂക് കാത്തിരുന്നു. ദൈവം ദർശനത്തിലൂടെ അവന് മറുപടി നൽകി. ദൈവം നിശ്ചയിച്ച സമയത്ത് ദൈവം സന്ദർശിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സമയമാണ് നിരാശരാകാതിരിപ്പാൻ പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. ക്ഷീണിക്കാതെ ദൈവത്തിനായി കാത്തിരിക്കുക. ദർശനത്തിൽ കാര്യങ്ങളുടെ സംക്ഷിപ്തം പറയുന്നില്ല, പകരം ഒരു വലിയ ഉറപ്പാണ് നൽകുന്നത്. വിശ്വസിക്കാവുന്നതും സുരക്ഷിതത്വവും നൽകുന്നതായ ദർശനമാണ്.

പ്രതിസന്ധികൾ അധികനാൾ നീണ്ടു നിൽക്കുകയില്ല. കയ്പേറിയ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ മധുരാനുഭൂതിയായി മാറും. ജീവിതത്തിലെ വരണ്ട അവസ്ഥ വസന്താവസ്ഥയായി പരിണമിക്കും. പ്രതിസന്ധികൾ സമഗ്രമായ വളർച്ചയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവം പ്രവർത്തന നിരതനാണ്. വാഗ്ദത്തത്തിൽ വിശ്വസ്തനാണ്. ദൈവത്തോട് വിശ്വസ്തത പുലർത്തി അനുദിനം ജീവിക്കാം. വ്യത്യസ്തമായ അനുഭവങ്ങളിലൂടെ കടന്നുപോകുമ്പോൾ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പദ്ധതി ധനിക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കണം. അവന്റെ സമയത്തിനായി കാത്തിരിക്കാം.

# കുടുംബത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീയുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം

പ്രസംഗം : ശ്രീ. സ്റ്റീഫൻ ഏബ്രഹാം

പരിഭാഷ : റവ. റ്റി. എ. വർഗീസ്

1 ശമു.1, 2 അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങൾ

കുടുംബബന്ധങ്ങൾ ശിഥിലമായി കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന കാലഘട്ടത്തിലാണ് നാം ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. ബന്ധങ്ങൾ അകൽച്ചയിലാണ്. പരസ്പരം മനസ്സിലാക്കുവാനോ അംഗീകരിക്കുവാനോ സാധിക്കുന്നില്ല. മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ മുന്നിൽ മാതൃകാപരമായ ജീവിതം നയിക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നില്ല. ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ള സാമൂഹ്യപശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഹന്ന എന്ന സ്ത്രീ ഉദാത്തമാതൃകയാണ്. ഹന്നയുടെ ജീവിതവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് നാല് കാര്യങ്ങൾ ചിന്തിക്കാം.

**(1) പ്രതിസന്ധി**

കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിൽ ധാരാളം പ്രതിസന്ധികളെ അഭിമുഖീകരിച്ച വ്യക്തിയാണ് ഹന്ന. സ്വയമായി പരിഹരിക്കുവാൻ ആകാത്തതായിരുന്നു അവളുടെ പ്രശ്നം. മറ്റുള്ളവരാൽ അവൾ പരിഹരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ ഇല്ലാത്ത കുടുംബങ്ങൾ ഭൂമിയിൽ ഇല്ല. എന്നാൽ പ്രശ്നങ്ങളോടുള്ള പ്രതികരണമാണ് ഏറ്റവും പ്രധാനം.

**(2) പ്രാർത്ഥന**

ഹന്ന ദൈവസന്നിധിയിൽ പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചു

(1 ശമു.1:9-13). ഒരു കുഞ്ഞു ലഭിക്കണമെന്ന ആഗ്രഹത്തോടെ മനോവേദനയോടുകൂടിയാണ് അവൾ പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചത്. ദൈവം ഫലം നൽകി. നാം മറ്റുള്ളവർക്കുവേണ്ടി പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. മാതാപിതാക്കൾ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടി കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളോടൊപ്പം പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കണം.

**(3) സ്തോത്രം ചെയ്യൽ**

ദൈവത്തിന് സ്തുതിസ്തോത്രങ്ങൾ അർപ്പിക്കുന്നവളായിരുന്നു ഹന്ന. ദൈവം ചെയ്യുന്ന നന്മകളെ ഓർത്ത് സ്തോത്രം ചെയ്യണം. ദൈവം ആർദ്രതയും മനസ്സലിവും കരുണയും ഉള്ളവനാണ്. മനുഷ്യന്റെ വേദനയിൽ ആർദ്രതയുള്ളവനാണ് ദൈവം.

**(4) പ്രവൃത്തിപഥത്തിൽ**

ദൈവത്തിൽ വിശ്വസിച്ചു പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ച ഹന്നയ്ക്ക് ദൈവം പ്രതിഫലം നൽകി. ഒരു മകനെ നൽകിയാൽ അവനെ ദൈവത്തിന് സമർപ്പിക്കാമെന്ന് ഹന്ന ദൈവത്തോട് ഉടമ്പടി ചെയ്തിരുന്നു. മകന്റെ ജനനത്തിനു

മുമ്പ് മകനെ ദൈവത്തിനു മുമ്പിൽ സമർപ്പിച്ചത് അവളുടെ വിശ്വാസം പ്രാവർത്തികമാക്കുന്നതിന്റെ ലക്ഷണമാണ്. ഹന്ന മകനെ ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തിൽ വളർത്തിക്കൊണ്ടുവന്നു.

നാം വിശ്വസിക്കുന്ന ദൈവം വിശ്വസ്തനാണ്. വിശ്വസ്തനായ ദൈവത്തോട് നാം വിശ്വസ്തത പുലർത്തണം. ദൈവം ആരുടെയും കടക്കാരനല്ല. ദൈവത്തിൽനിന്നും ലഭിക്കുന്ന എല്ലാ നന്മകൾക്കും ദൈവത്തോട് നാം നന്ദിയുള്ളവരാകണം.

ഹന്ന കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിൽ പരിമിതികളുടെയും വേദനകളുടെയും മദ്ധ്യത്തിൽ നിരാശയ്ക്ക് അടിമയാകാതെ ദൈവത്തോടു കൂടെ സാധുതകൾ ദർശിച്ചു ശുഭപ്രതീക്ഷകളോടെ ജീവിച്ച സ്ത്രീയാണ്. എപ്പോഴും സുഖപ്രദമായ അനുഭവമല്ല ജീവിതത്തിലുള്ളത്. തീവ്രമായ വേദനയുടെ അനുഭവത്തിൽ ദൈവത്തിന് സ്തോത്രഗാനം അർപ്പിക്കുന്നവരാകണം നാം. ഹന്നയുടെ ജീവിതമാതൃക ഉൾക്കൊണ്ട് സന്തോഷകരമായ കുടുംബ ജീവിതം നയിക്കുവാൻ ദൈവം നമ്മെ സഹായിക്കട്ടെ.



# പർവ്വത പ്രസംഗത്തിന്റെ പൊരുൾ തേടി....

മുഖ്യപ്രഭാഷണം: റവ.ഡോ.മാർട്ടിൻ പോൾ അൽഫോൻസ് പരിഭാഷ: റവ.കെ.വൈ.ജേക്കബ്

സൗമ്യതയുള്ളവർ ഭാഗ്യവാന്മാർ; അവർ ഭൂമിയെ അവകാശമാക്കും.

ആരെയാണ് നാം സൗമ്യർ എന്നു വിളിക്കുന്നത്?

പെട്ടെന്ന് കോപം വരാത്തവരാണോ? രണ്ട് വിധത്തിലുള്ള സൗമ്യതയുണ്ട്.

### 1. ജന്മനാ സ്വായത്തമാക്കിയ സൗമ്യത

ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി ആയതുകൊണ്ട് ഈ സൗമ്യത ലഭിക്കണമെന്നില്ല. ഒരു കാര്യത്തിനും ആവശ്യമായ പരിഗണന നൽകാത്ത ശാന്തരാണ് ഇക്കൂട്ടർ. ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ളവർ കോപം പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാറില്ല. ശാന്തമായി പ്രതികാരം ചെയ്യുവാൻ ഇക്കൂട്ടർ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു.

### 2. ആത്മാവിനാൽ നിയന്ത്രിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന സൗമ്യത

യേശു നൽകുന്ന സൗമ്യത ഇതാണ്. പ്രശ്നങ്ങളുടെ മധ്യത്തിൽ തന്നെത്തന്നെ സ്വയം നിയന്ത്രിക്കുക. ഇത് മറ്റുള്ളവരിൽനിന്നും ഉളവാകുന്ന പ്രതികാരംപോലും ഇല്ലാതാക്കുന്ന സൗമ്യതയാണ് എല്ലാ മതങ്ങളിലും കോപത്തെ നിയന്ത്രിക്കുവാനുള്ള കാര്യങ്ങൾ പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. സൗമ്യത ഉണ്ടെന്ന് നാം പലപ്പോഴും കരുതുന്നുവെങ്കിലും നിയന്ത്രിക്കുവാൻ സാധ്യമാകാത്ത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടാകാറുണ്ട്. ചെറുപ്രായത്തിൽ വളരെയേറെ കോപമുള്ളവർ പ്രായമാകുമ്പോൾ പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിന്റെ നിയന്ത്രണത്തിൽ മാറ്റങ്ങൾക്കു വിധേയരാകാറുണ്ട്. അപ്പോസ്തലനായ വിശുദ്ധ പൗലോസിന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ തന്നെത്തന്നെ നിയന്ത്രിക്കാനാവാത്ത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളുണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട്. (റോമ.7:15) മാനസാന്തരപ്പെടുന്നതിനു മുമ്പ് പൗലോസ് സൗമ്യനായിരുന്നില്ല. എന്നാൽ

മത്തായി 5:5

യേശുവിനെ കണ്ടുമുട്ടിയപ്പോൾ രൂപാന്തരം ഉണ്ടായി. ഒരു രാത്രികൊണ്ട് സംഭവിച്ചതല്ല, പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിന്റെ നിയന്ത്രണത്താൽ ക്രമേണ രൂപപ്പെട്ടതാണ്. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിന്റെ നിറവിൽ നമ്മുടെ വികാരങ്ങളെ നിയന്ത്രിക്കുവാനുള്ള കഴിവ് വിശ്വാസികൾക്ക് ഉണ്ടാകണം.

മത്തായി 5:6

നീതിക്ക് വിശന്നു ദാഹിക്കുന്നവർ ഭാഗ്യവാന്മാർ; അവർക്ക് തൃപ്തിവരും

മുന്മുഖം വാക്യങ്ങളിൽനിന്നും വ്യത്യസ്തമായി ഭൂമിയെ അവകാശമാക്കും എന്ന പ്രയോഗം ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. മണ്ണിൽ കാണുന്നതെല്ലാം വാരിക്കൂട്ടുകയല്ല, നമ്മുടെ സ്വാധീനശക്തിയെ വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് അർത്ഥമാക്കുന്നത്. നമ്മെ ദൈവം വിളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത് സുവിശേഷീകരണത്തിന്റെ ഗുണങ്ങൾ മറ്റുള്ളവരെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുവാനാണ്. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഭാവം നമ്മിൽ വളരുമ്പോഴാണ് മറ്റുള്ളവരെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുന്നത്. ഈ ഭാഗത്തുള്ള ഭാഗ്യവർണ്ണനകൾ അവരെ പഠിപ്പിച്ചാൽ മാത്രം പോരാതെ ജീവിതത്തെത്തന്നെ സ്വാംശീകരിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. എല്ലാ മതങ്ങളിലും സംസ്കാരങ്ങളിലും നീതിക്കു വളരെ പ്രാധാന്യമുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ അവയുടെ പ്രായോഗികത ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ കാലങ്ങൾ കഴിയുമ്പോൾ ഇന്ന് തെറ്റെന്നു കരുതുന്ന പലതും പ്രമാണങ്ങളായി മാറുവാൻ സാധ്യതയുണ്ട് എന്നാൽ ദൈവരാജ്യമുല്പാദനങ്ങൾക്കു സത്യമായ ജീവിത പ്രമാണം എന്നും നിലനിൽക്കുന്നു.

മത്തായി 5:7

കരുണയുള്ളവർ ഭാഗ്യവാന്മാർ;

അവർക്ക് കരുണ ലഭിക്കും

പലപ്പോഴും അർത്ഥവ്യത്യാസം മനസ്സിലാക്കാത്ത കൃപ, കരുണ എന്നീ വാക്കുകൾ നാം ഉപയോഗിക്കാറുണ്ട്. കൃപ എന്നത് അർത്ഥത്തില്ലാത്ത ദാനം ലഭിക്കുന്നതാണ്. അർത്ഥപ്പെട്ട ശിക്ഷയെ ഒഴിവാക്കുന്ന അനുഭവമാണ് കരുണ. നാം മറ്റുള്ളവരോട് കരുണ കാണിക്കുമെങ്കിൽ മാത്രമേ നമുക്ക് കരുണ ലഭിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ശിഷ്യനാക്കുവാനാഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നവൻ കരുണയുള്ളവനായിരിക്കണം

മത്തായി 5:8

ഹൃദയശുദ്ധിയുള്ളവർ ഭാഗ്യവാന്മാർ; അവർ ദൈവത്തെ കാണും

യിരെമ്യാവ് 17-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ മനുഷ്യഹൃദയത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിവരണം "കപടതയും വിഷമുള്ളതുമായാണ്. അതിനെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നവൻ ആർ". നാം വളരെ ബുദ്ധിയുള്ളവരാണ്. ഹൃദയം പ്രായോഗികതയുടെ മേഖലയിലാണ് നിലനിൽക്കുന്നത്. ഇന്ത്യൻ പ്രധാനമന്ത്രിക്ക് ധാരാളം ഉപദേശകർ ഉണ്ടെങ്കിലും അന്തിമതീരുമാനം എടുക്കുന്നത് അദ്ദേഹം തന്നെയാണ്. നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയം ശുദ്ധിയുള്ളതാകുമ്പോഴാണ് ആയുസ്സ് അനുഗ്രഹമാക്കുന്നത്. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പാകപ്പിഴകളെ തിരുത്തി ക്രമീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ട ജീവിതം ഉണ്ടാകണം. തിന്മകൾ മനുഷ്യരെ കീഴ്പ്പെടുത്തുന്നത് ഒരു ദിവസം കൊണ്ടല്ല ക്രമേണയാണ്. ഹൃദയം ശുദ്ധീകരിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടതും ഹൃദയശുദ്ധിയില്ലാത്ത ഒരു പ്രവർത്തനവും അർത്ഥപൂർണ്ണമാകുകയും ചെയ്യാത്തതാണ്. നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയം ശുദ്ധീകരിക്കുവാൻ ആർക്കും സാധ്യമല്ല. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിനു മാത്രമേ സാധിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ.

# വചനത്തിലൂടെ വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ പൂർണ്ണത

റവ.ഡോ.വൽസൻ തമ്പു

അപ്പോ.പ്ര.2:40-47

തരമുണ്ടാകും. ഉപരിപ്പവമായ അറിവല്ല, ആഴത്തിലുള്ള അറിവാണ് ആവശ്യം. വചനം ഉപരിപ്പവതയിൽനിന്നും ആഴത്തിലേക്കുള്ള തീർത്ഥയാത്രയാണ്.

ഇന്ന് സ്ത്രീകളുടെ പ്രാധാന്യം ലോകവുമറിയുന്നില്ല, സ്ത്രീകളും അറിയുന്നില്ല. ഭാവിതലമുറയെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിൽ പ്രധാന പങ്ക് സ്ത്രീകൾക്കാണ്. അറിവില്ലായ്മ അപകർഷതാബോധത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു. നവീകരണം സ്ത്രീകളിൽ ആരംഭിക്കണം. റോമർ 12:2 ദൈവഹിതം തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് ജീവിക്കേണ്ടത് ആവശ്യമാണ്. ആദിമസഭയ്ക്ക് പ്രത്യേക സംസ്കാരം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ആത്മീയ സംസ്കാരം ഇന്ന് നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നു. ദുരാഗ്രഹമേഖലയായി ഇന്ന് പള്ളിയെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു. വചനം ഉള്ളിൽ ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ കൂട്ടായ്മയുണ്ട്.

അപ്പം നൂറുകൽ പകിടുന്ന സംസ്കാര

മാണ്. മത്തായി 9:9 സ്നേഹിക്കുക, അനുഗമിക്കുക ഇതിന്റെ മുഖമുദ്രയാണ്. വചനധ്യാനം ഉത്സവമാകണം.

രണ്ട് തരത്തിലുള്ള ശക്തികൾ ഉണ്ട്.

1. ബാഹ്യമായ ശക്തി
2. ആന്തരികമായ ശക്തി

ബാഹ്യമായ അറിവ് വളർച്ചയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുകയില്ല. ആന്തരികമായ ശക്തി വിപ്ലവകരമായ മാറ്റം വ്യക്തികളിൽ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. ലോകത്തിന്റെ യുക്തിയാണ് ഇന്ന് മതമേഖലകളിൽ. ലോകത്തിന്റെ യുക്തി കൊണ്ട് യേശുവിനെ അളന്നു അന്നത്തെ സമൂഹം. ദൈവവചനത്തിലൂടെ ലോകത്തെ കാണുവാൻ കഴിയണം. വചനത്തിൽ വേരുന്നാത്തതുകൊണ്ട് നമ്മിൽ വ്യാപരിക്കുന്നത് ലോകയുക്തിയാണ്. വചനം ആത്മാവിന്റെ വാളാണ്. തിരുവചനസത്യങ്ങളെ സ്വാംശീകരിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് വ്യക്തിത്വത്തെ നവീകരിക്കാം. വചനധ്യാനം ആഘോഷമായ അനുഭവമാണ്.

ജീവിതത്തിൽ സമ്മർദ്ദങ്ങൾ നേരിടുമ്പോൾ അതിലൂടെ ദൈവോദ്ദേശ്യം ഗ്രഹിക്കണം. ഏത് അനുഭവത്തെയും അനുഗ്രഹമാക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കണം. പാപം അകൽച്ചയാണ്, ശിഥിലീകരണത്തിന്റെ പ്രവൃത്തിക്കായി സാത്താൻ വന്നു. ശിഥിലീകരണത്തിൽനിന്നും സമന്വയം അനിവാര്യമാണ്. റോമർ 7:18 നമ്മെ ചെയ്യുവാനുള്ള താല്പര്യമുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അതിൽനിന്നും വ്യതിചലിച്ചു പോകുന്നു. ലഭിച്ച നന്മ അതിന്റെ പൂർണ്ണതയിൽ അറിയുവാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നില്ല. പൂർണ്ണതയില്ലാത്ത ഒന്നും ശാശ്വതമല്ല.

ആദിമസഭയിൽ ക്രിസ്തീയ സംസ്കാരം രൂപപ്പെട്ടു. സമർപ്പണം ആവേശം നൽകുന്നു.

യേശുവിൽ പ്രകടമായ മൂന്ന് കാര്യങ്ങൾ.

- (1) യേശു പഠിപ്പിച്ചു,
- (2) യേശു അത്ഭുതം ചെയ്തു,
- (3) യേശു കഷ്ടത സഹിച്ചു.

വചനപഠനത്തിലൂടെ മനുഷ്യനിൽ രൂപാ

July 11th of 2004 was celebrated as Ordained Ministry Day. When Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg on 31st of October 1517 he was declaring war against the idea that salvation was mediated through priesthood via the sacraments. His theses were against certain priestly sacraments and spoke against the theology that ex opere operato supernatural life could be created through baptism, brought to growth by confirmation, nourished by the Mass, and healed of all diseases by penance and extreme unction. Luther rejected the idea that through sacraments a priest could control an individual's life both here and hereafter. Luther insisted that everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ is a priest and Scripture was the only authority for a Christian. Times went by and churches have evolved and reformed. As ever, religion plays a very important role in molding and refining human character and behavior. Christianity stands very prominent amongst the various religions as one that offer abundant life and salvation. Jesus, the very center of Christianity, understood the sorrows, hunger, pain, confusion, and joy of the world and took part in it with heavenly love. Priesthood puts one in touch with the drama of life. Sometimes the drama is a tragedy, sometimes a mystery, sometimes a comedy. The priest is expected to respond to each situation with a Jesus attitude.



There have been priests in the Church who were great preachers. There have been priests who were scientists, explorers, poets and even artists. I have heard a lot about Kachukuzhiyil Behnan Kassisa (1863 – 1936), a member of my root family, who used his own house to train new deacons. He was a well known eye specialist and took care of many individuals with eye disease. During his spare time he created wood arts and sculptures. I remember seeing many of his art works at the house where he lived and worked, only few yards from my home (where I grew up) in Kerala. Many surrounding churches got wooden candle holders for the altar made by Achen. As a celibate priest, he found time to help those in need, when and wherever he can. For him, rather than a profession, priesthood was the result of a call, a call by God to serve his people.

Catholic tradition in the Western or Latin-Rite Church requires priests as well as bishops to take vows of celibacy, a rule that has been firmly in place since the early Middle Ages. In the Eastern churches there have always been some restrictions on marriage and ordination depending on the denomination. Recently, more and more discussions are taking place in our church, concerning the ordination of women. Although Mar Thoma church does not have a written policy on this issue, practical aspects restrict female priesthood from becoming a reality.

Our youngsters stated asking questions about the call to ministry. Sometimes, one cannot see or feel the expected qualities in a priest and it could culminate in doubts. Being a servant, messenger, guide, leader, and follower, a priest must derive love and support from the folks around. As a servant of Christ, a priest serves the body of believers with untiring mind. As a messenger, one critical part of a priest's mission is to tell Christ's story of hope. That story brings comfort to those who are weak and without a voice. As a spiritual guide, a priest guides the young and old from darkness to light as stated in our motto 'Lighted to Lighten'. In a world of confusion, this guiding light is a lifesaver. As a leader, he leads his followers to expand their visions and realize the needs of their surroundings and act upon the needs. As a follower he practices what Christ expected from his disciples.

I am very glad that our Metropolitan declared year 2004 as the 'Year of Repentance and Re-dedication' for Mar Thoma Church. As times change, our challenges are many. Without continued repentance and dedication, we will face spiritual hardship. It is the right time for our church and its members, to come back to the basics and adhere to the teachings of Christ in its original intent.

I congratulate Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa on his elevation as Suffragan Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church. Our church was always blessed with great leaders who are true disciples. The church and its members achieved extensive growth in all aspects of spiritual life, through these leaders. This growth also helped the individuals and communities that are associated with the church. May the everlasting Lord strengthen him to continue his fruitful ministry.

**Eapen Daniel**

# The Mar Thoma Church

Diocese of North America & Europe

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