



MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

OCTOBER 2004

THIRD "KASSESSA" FROM US



Diaspora Special

**XXII Mar Thoma
Family Conference**



Wilsco Inc. is a leading US Software Development firm, which caters to the International market place from Offices in India and UK. We can deliver your next Software Project quicker and at a lower cost by using our experienced developers.

We offers spectacular services in **Software Development, Electronic Document Management, Graphics & Animation, Web Programming, Designing & Hosting, Typesetting (English & Malayalam)** with strong background of **Advertising Agency & Network Marketing.**



WILSANT K. BABUKUTTY
CEO. Wilsco Group of Companies

These services are provided using the most appropriate combination of on-site and off-site work.

www.ezkerala.com, a Portal of Wilsco inc leads you to the world of **KERALA** Informations

Branches : **Wilsco International, Trivandrum, INDIA & Wilsco. UK.**

SOFTWARES now available...

☀ **Video Library Management System**

Manage your video shop.....including barcode scanning and printing features.

☀ **Check Printing Software**

Print your bank checks....Keep your checking accounts organized and stop working with math problems.

☀ **Pizza Inventory Control Software**

An Inventory system for pizza delivery and restaurant management



Wilsco Inc.

190 Melba Street, Staten Island, NY 10314

www.wilscoinc.com

Phone : 718 - 986 - 0011 Fax : 718 - 982 - 8898

E-mail : wilsantb@aol.com

Designed by Wilsco Creative Unit.

Our Publications

AMERICAN MALAYALEE BUSINESS DIRECTORY

അമേരിക്കൻ മലയാളി ബിസിനസ്സ് ഡയറക്ടറി

Your gateway to the world of Informative extravaganza!

www.ambdirectory.com



Mar Thoma Messenger

The official publication of the
Diocese of North America & Europe

VOL. XXIII No. 4
October 2004

EDITORIAL BOARD

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham
Diocesan Secretary
516-377-3311
Fax: 516-377-3322
marthoma@aol.com

Eapen Daniel
Chief Editor
Philadelphia, PA
215-364-5459
eapen.daniels@uphs.upenn.edu

Associate Editors:

Rev. Sunni E. Mathew
Glendora, CA
626-963-0432
revsunni@rediffmail.com

Anil Mathew
London, UK
44-208-393-1508
anil@nellimala.fsnet.co.uk

Abraham Mattackal
Los Angeles, CA
562-420-8817
Fax: 562-420-6528
Abramat@aol.com

Koruthu Mathew
Long Island, NY
516-621-0832
kmathew@optonline.net

Dr. Usha George
Toronto, Canada
905-887-6626
u.george@utoronto.ca

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Rev. T. A. Varghese
Ozone Park, NY
718-845-2920
t_a_varughese@yahoo.com

James T. Philip
Manager
718-761-1295
Fax: 718-761-1723
jtphilip@aol.com

Anil Joseph
New York
845-426-0329
aniljoseph@msn.com

Lal Varghese
Dallas
972-874-7909
attylal@aol.com

Benny Mathew
New York
914-378-8028
chunackaraben@aol.com

Vinod Varghese
New York
917-685-4890
weditor@hotmail.com

Gigi Tom
New York
845-268-3532
gigitomelr@aol.com

Mailing Addresses:

Mar Thoma Messenger Eapen Daniel
Sinai Mar Thoma Center 165 Springflower Court
2320 S. Merrick Avenue Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
Merrick, NY 11566

James T. Philip
175 Sheraden Avenue
Staten Island, New York 10314

CONTENTS

Message From the Diocesan Bishop	2
Message From the Metropolitan	3
The Political Witness of the Church Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham	4
Faith and Life Style Rev. Valsan Thampu	6
Uncle Vanya and the Mar Thoma Diaspora Mathew A. Kallumpram & Dr. Zac Varghese	9
Reformation in the Church Rev. Sunni E. Mathew	11
XXII Mar Thoma Family Conference Mathew V. Zacharia & Anil V. Abraham	13
Arise, Shine, for Your Light has Come Stanley Allaby	16
Mission of the Church Dr. George K. Zachariah	17
A Time to Remember Our Mar Thoma Early Settlers Around the World Abraham Mattackal	19
Does Faith Have a Future in a Culture of Darkness? Prof. Plammootil V. Cherian.	25
Bible Cross Word Puzzle	43
Diocesan/Parish News	46

REGIONAL PROMOTERS

Benjamin George
New York, NY
516-616-5565

Thomas Varghese
Atlanta, GA
770-736-5216
thomasfly6@aol.com

C. V. Samuel
Detroit, MI
586-268-8007
cvsamuel@hotmail.com

Varghese George
Washington, DC
301-924-5777
gvarghese@howard.edu

T. A. Mathew
Houston, TX
713-455-7469
mathewthottinal@hotmail.com

Dr. Zac Varghese
London, UK
44-208-951-5273
zvarghese@rfc.ucl.ac.uk

Thomas Mammen
Los Angeles, CA
562-431-6469
tvmammen@msn.com

Zachariah Mulamootil
Toronto, Canada
905-279-4602
zmulamootil@yahoo.com

Subscription Rates:

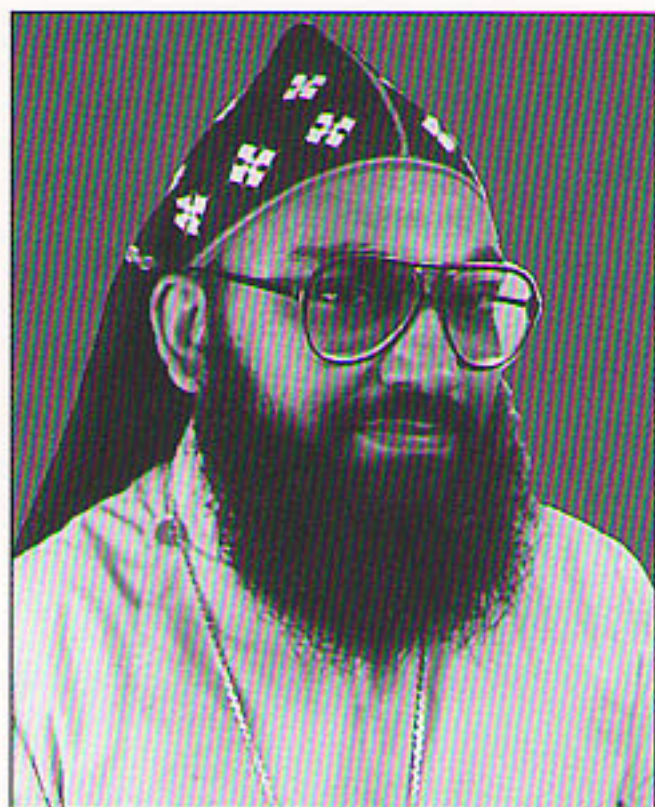
	2 Years	5 Years	Life
USA	\$20.00	\$50.00	\$300.00
Canada & UK	\$20.00*	\$50.00*	\$300.00*

*Plus Postage

Advertisement Rates:

	Four Issues	One Issue
Back Cover	\$2,000.00	\$525.00
Front/Back Cover Inside	\$1,500.00	\$400.00
Inside Full Page	\$ 500.00	\$150.00

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Greeting in the eternal name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

I am glad to let you know that the closing function of the summer program in Mexico on October 2, 2004 went very well. Several of the Diocesan Council members, members of our parishes, and the islanders took part in the function. Keys of thirty-one houses were handed over to the islanders. The remaining five houses should be completed soon. It is commendable that the Houston Trinity parish presented a wheelchair to a physically challenged person on the Island. Now, the first phase of our work is over. Our special thanks to all who sponsored houses and participated in the construction work. Your good gesture will go a long way in the mission activities of this Diocese. Now we have to concentrate

on the two Islands we have already adopted. Let us make an earnest effort to be involved in the real life situations of the people.

We have already had five National Conferences this summer: Family Conference hosted by St. Thomas parish, NY, Voluntary Evangelists Association sponsored by Washington Marthoma Parish, Youth Fellowship sponsored by St. Peter's, NJ, Yuvajana Sakhyam sponsored by St. James, NY, Sevika Sanghom sponsored by San Francisco Parish. Congratulations to all the organizers for the wonderful way in which you have arranged these conferences and special thanks to all parishes who sponsored them. We are getting good feedback from the people about these conferences. Let us make it a point to continue our discussions on the conference themes at the parish level.

Hope you remember that we will have the 'Suvishesha Nidhi-Collection' on Sunday, November 14. The proceeds are set apart for the mission work of our Diocese. Your whole-hearted cooperation is solicited in this regard. Acheans and office bearers of the Parishes are requested to promote the collections prayer group-wise and let the Suvishesha Nidhi boxes be submitted during the Holy Communion along with the offertory.

November 14th is also the Festival of Unity of the Communion of Churches in India (CCI). Special efforts may be made at the local level for ecumenical gatherings and services on that day.

I'm glad to note that more young families took part in the last Family Conference. This would not have been possible without the strenuous efforts of the Young Family Fellowship of the host parish, St. Thomas, NY. Let us make a special effort to form Young Family Fellowships in all our Parishes. Topics such as "Communication in Marriage", "Effective Parenting", etc. are to be studied at the local level.

We are coming to the end of another financial year. Parish and organizational elections are to be held in the month of November. Please make it a point that people with commitment to Christ, loyalty to the church, and competence are elected to various posts. Let us try to avoid all win and lose attitudes and work together for the furtherance of God's kingdom wherever we are.

As you are aware, the presidential elections in this country are around the corner. As I have reminded you through my circular no. 357 dated Aug. 26, 2004, please make it a point to register and vote. Let us make genuine choices for the common good and also pray that the whole election process would be peaceful and just.

May God's grace be with you all.

Yours in His ministry,
Coorilos Metrachan

Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly beloved in Christ,

As was decided by the last Mandalam the Episcopal Nomination Committee has nominated two candidates. The next step of the process has been informed to all parishes through a kalpana. We now hope to convene the Mandalam for the Episcopal Election in the first week of December 2004. Everyone should pray that this meeting would be convened and carried out to make decisions according to the will of our God. Mandalam members should cast their vote with a sense of responsibility.

Many dioceses have started organized activities under the banner "Ministry to the Aged and Sick." This is indeed a great need of the hour. Many who gave strong leadership to their parishes and its activities are confined to their homes in solitude. Every parish should take steps to provide them with a social life, which is a basic human necessity.

The number of suicides is going up owing to debt, poverty, academic failure, and cruel environment. Parishes and dioceses should study this matter and come up with programs to counter this.

As a result of our evangelical activities in the Karnataka and Telugu regions, many are coming into the faith; an abundant harvest.

All the trouble in the world today stems from societies and individuals who are no longer focused on God. What the world needs today is a society that seeks God's will and finds rapture in fulfilling it. Let us with a sincere heart revert to our God and say like the prodigal son who had turned away from his father's shelter and faced the consequences, "Father I have sinned; please take me back as one among your servants (dedication)."

I am writing this letter from a guest room in Secunderabad en route to a meeting of the Executive Committee of the CCI. The CNI, CSI, and Mar Thoma Churches will celebrate November 14th as Unity Festival. The goal is to grow in unity without losing each one's identity. Unity here means the focus on the Holy Trinity. These three Churches have come together as the Communion of Churches. The Church is a Koinonia. In all three Churches, a Bible portion is read and meditated upon. All three Churches accept each other's Bishops and pray for them during their Holy Communion service. The youth, women, clergy, and bishops of these three Churches meet together frequently. This helps to make our fellowship more profound and meaningful. Efforts are underway to come up with a common liturgy acceptable to all three Churches. However, each Church will continue with its own agenda. The three Churches together restored the houses that were destroyed in Orissa. It is this sharing in improving the life of people and society that makes our unity a reality. Not only at a Church level, but even on a diocese level, regional level, and parish level this unity should be evident. It would be a good idea to conduct the Holy Communion service on November 14th in Mar Thoma parishes according to the CSI, CNI liturgy. The clergy should try to interchange their parishes if possible. These arrangements should be made with the support and cooperation of the parishioners.

I have informed the Mandalam of my wish to retire from active service. It would not be right to say retirement from God's service. Even lying still on a bed is a service. At present we have two Suffragan Metropolitans to assist with the duties of the Metropolitan. I am sure the Synod will draw out a plan to distribute the responsibilities of the Metropolitan among the Suffragans and the other Episcopas.

Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

The Political Witness of the Church

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham

One of the questions that often asked in Christian spiritual circles is whether the Church's witness has a political dimension. Very often a negative sentiment towards political involvement is found among the members of the Church. Nevertheless, whether we like it or not, the fact is that the Churches have always been political in nature. Ever since the Old Testament times, there has been an unholy alliance between religion and politics. Several of the historical evils were due to this unholy alliance. It is to be admitted that there are different types of politics such as opportunistic politics, communal politics, and justice oriented – value oriented politics.

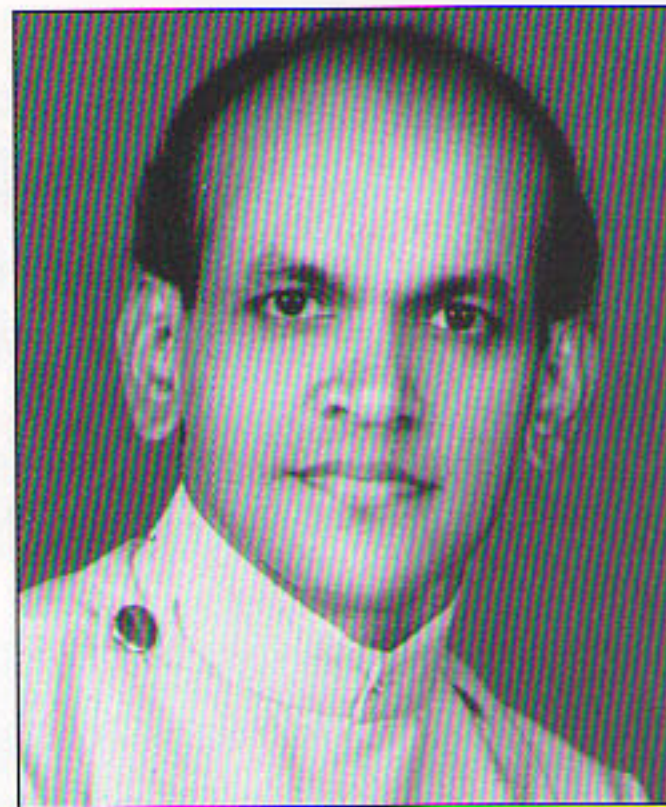
So the question to be asked in this context is not whether we should be involved in politics but rather, what type of politics we ought to have in our journey of faith and which political system or model would be more conducive for us to give visible manifestations to the Kingdom of God and its righteousness.

Two Biblical texts are always quoted in support of the so-called theory of the 'De-linking of the Church and the State or Religion and Politics'- Matt. 22:15-22 and Rom. 13:1-5. Let us briefly try to ponder on these texts.

Christian faith is a prophetic faith. Here prophetic has to do with our prophetic obedience as concrete historical human beings. God's will for us has to be accomplished while we are here on earth. Hence we have to make right choices for Him and with Him, both negation of this world and glorification of this world are alien to the spirit of the Bible. The Word of God gives us God's agenda for this world. In order to have the transformation of this world genuine human historical involvement is inevitable.

1. The politics of God

The Biblical God is neither, apolitical or neutral. The word 'polis' which is the root of the word 'politics' in Greek has to do with the affairs of the city. God wants us to be genuine historical human beings. The prophets of the Old Testament were all 'politicians of the Covenant' and the spokesmen of Yahweh. Being the counselors of Kings, they were actively involved in the socio-political issues of their times. They also enabled people to read the signs of the times. A culture of resistance and tradition of protest were at the core of their ministry. They were against all forms of idolatry and sinful systems and structures. The ministry of Jesus especially his 'Caesar-God saying' and Paul's exhortation—'Be subject to the authorities' are to be understood within this framework.



2. The Caesar-God saying of Jesus

We are confronted with certain issues here:

One approach is that the sphere of God and that of Caesar are always opposed to each other. St. Augustine's 'City of God/City of Man' and Martin Luther's 'Two Kingdom theory' are all along these lines. Here the political involvement of the Church is not possible. The realm of God is eternal and the realm of Caesar is temporal. Christians are citizens of two states and they need not worry about the demonic regimes of his world. Since God is all-powerful in His own time (kairos) he would make all things new.

Another approach is what does God require of us; and what does Caesar (State/Government) require of us? What Caesar demands is only the tax. As citizens of a particular land, we have an obligation to the State. Nevertheless, our ultimate loyalty is unto God. In other words, the image on the coin is Caesar's where as human beings bear God's image. Hence we need the spirit of discernment to distinguish between the two. As Allan Bosak the South African theologian reminds us: "Obedience to the will of God would at times be the denial of the will of man."

3. The idolatry of the State

The purpose of Paul in Rom. 13 is not to give an eternal doctrine about the State. During the time of Paul, the Roman persecution of the early Church was not at its zenith. To a certain extent, Paul also enjoyed the privilege of the Roman citizenship. Most of the persecution of Paul was from his own community—the Jewish religion. Hence he could even consider the State as divinely ordained to establish God's justice. It was in this context that Paul says, "Be subject to the authorities" (Rom. 13:1-2). One of the questions that comes to the fore is this: If the State goes against the will of God what ought to be the role of the church? Paul seems to be silent about it. This again is understandable because, given the reality of the oppressive Jewish hierarchy on the one hand and the Roman State on the other, Paul would consider the latter as the lesser evil. To what extent are we to juxtapose this to our context? Here we need to have a comprehensive view of the Scripture. For example, Rev. 13 talks about the same Roman Empire, but definitely at a different historical period. Here John considers the State as a Dragon and the faithful are exhorted to fight against it (Rev.13:1-5). This shows that the Roman State had already become a cruel, oppressive regime and Paul's exhortation in Rom. 13 should not be absolutised.

(Cont'd on next page)

From the Diocesan Secretary

1. *Let us thank God for having guided us so far in our Diocesan Mission Project. The Diocesan Council was held on October 1, 2004 at Matamoras in Mexico. At this time the signing of the legal papers necessary to form "Mar Chrysostom Mexican Association" took place. Now, as we enter into the second phase of the project, we have to concentrate more on the lives of the people on both Islands. The groundwork is almost complete. We are in the process of availing a few acres of land in the mainland. Once the land becomes available, we envisage a hostel for the children of the Islanders. They are also in dire need of a medical clinic. Our focus should be on the value-education of the children and the health needs of the people. The Islanders need basic health and anti-alcoholic awareness. Special thanks to the summer mission volunteers from different parishes. The sacrificial services of Mr. George Kurian and family and Mr. P. T. Abraham and family are to be specially acknowledged. Let us thank God for their vision and sincere involvement in the mission's project.*
2. *Rev. Ninu Chandy has joined the Princeton Theological Seminary for his ThM program and Rev. Koshy P. Varghese is at Princeton for his Doctoral exposure program from the South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI), Bangalore.*
3. *Mar Coorilos ordination Silver Jubilee block in Kunnampulam, Kerala was dedicated to the Glory of God on September 15, 2004. Coorilos Thirumeni attended the function. We had contributed a sizable amount towards the construction of the building.*
4. *Mrs. Leila Thomas, Our Mission Coordinator is relinquishing her job. Her teaching skills and communicative abilities contributed a lot to the Mexico Missions Project of the Diocese, especially in its formative state. Our sincere thanks to Mrs. Leila Thomas.*

*Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham
Diocesan Secretary*

The Political Witness of the Church (Cont'd from page 4)

No wonder why the Apartheid regime in South Africa considered Rom.13 as its key text and the Black Movement for freedom considered Rev.13 as its key text. (Kairos Document of W.C.C.—A publication of the program to combat racism, 1975).

4. Faith as right choices in life

God provides us with two ways of life: the way of life and the way of death (Deut.30:19). He respects our free will. Though our destiny is not in our hands, God wants us to make concrete and responsible choices for ourselves. This means that we are not puppets in the hands of God. He does not impose His will on us. Rather, He shows us the way, motivates us and empowers us in our journey of faith. Here we need to develop a sense of discernment, a life of convictions and the preparedness to pay the price for our convictions.

There is no perfect political system or political parties. Whether we like it or not, we will always be under one political system or the other. On this historical predicament Mahatma Gandhi says: "Indian politics has lost its spiritual dimension and Indian spirituality has lost its political dimension" What is of great importance is the promotion of social forces that are in harmony with the values of the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. Let us not absolutize or negate any political party or system. Politics should not go without the creative intervention of religion and vice-versa.

God needs people with commitment and competence in all fields. Political actions and policy decisions are inevitable for the transformation of historical structures and systems. As another election in this country is around the corner, let us make it a point that all those who have votes would exercise their voting right and thereby participate in the electoral process. Let us also pray that the elections would be peaceful and just. ■

Faith and Life Style

Rev. Valson Thampu

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that come from the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:4)

We are living at a time when lifestyle matters more to many people than life itself. This is a warning that we are being alienated from the depth of life and are getting obsessed with its surface. Seen spiritually, surface is a sphere of human poverty and malnutrition. Spiritual resources and treasures reside in the depth. The Word is the narrow and strait path to the depth. Hence it is that the Word is the “Bread”, or nourishment, of life. We can “exist” with bread—or material nourishment—alone. But we cannot “live” by bread alone. For that, we need the Word, which is the Bread of Abundant Life.

This leads us to an important issue. Lifestyle is a practical statement on how we understand ourselves. The lifestyle we maintain, or covet, indicate the significance we ascribe to our life. It indicates what we make of our personality. Those who understand their personality superficially will choose to live by bread alone. Those who experience their personality in spiritual terms, and know it to be a depth-phenomenon, will know at once that they need to live also by the Word.

We have a spiritual duty, indeed a basic need, to be vigilant about the lifestyle we maintain. We cannot live a worldly lifestyle—a lifestyle driven by covetousness—and lead a godly life. We cannot, as Jesus said, serve God and Mammon (Matt. 6:24). How do we serve both? We do so by praying to God and, at the same time, living by the norms of Mammon. Our prayer-style is godly, our lifestyle is, if you will, “Mammonly”. Increasingly, contemporary religiosity is driven by the self-contradictory intent to extract from God maximum material concessions in order to be able to serve Mammon. This amounts, in effect, to making God a servant of Mammon. “The fool says in his heart,” writes the Psalmist, “that there is no God” (Ps. 14:1). That heart-murmur echoes right through the lifestyle he maintains. But the fool, being a fool, will realize the folly of his lifestyle only too late. Else, he would not be a fool.

The parable of the Rich Fool (Lk.12) is a sharp warning in this regard. The sheer magnitude of material blessings crowded God out of this man’s life. As his barns burgeoned, his lifestyle began to announce itself, “Eat, drink and be merry”. The situation is sober and familiar. This man, like so many of us, excluded God from the framework of his life just because God blessed him



abundantly. We need to be alert to the aberrations of affluence. Affluence can breed illusions of self-sufficiency. It can, correspondingly, occlude the logic for God-dependence. A young man asked me once, “Why should I pray, ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ when my parents have accumulated enough for the next ten generations?”

Affluence poses the foremost challenge to spirituality today. Affluence births a rebellious and licentious lifestyle. It equates plenty with sufficiency. Because you have plenty of material wealth, that is, you think you have all you need! Jesus thought otherwise. This logic is fatally absurd, he said. If you have a thousand noses you can say you have ‘plenty of noses’. But you cannot say that a thousand noses are sufficient by themselves, if that is secured at the expense of other vital organs. An over-abundance of noses is not ‘sufficient’ to constitute a human body.

The materialistic culture insults our humanity by equating us with what we have, especially with what we eat. Hence it is that we come to think we can live by bread alone, as though we are only bodies. The all-important concern, then, is to ensure that we eat the best bread on planet earth. He who eats “five-star bread” is superior to he who can afford only “un-starred bread”. In the end, there are only two distinctive lifestyles. First, the lifestyle that assumes that human beings can ‘live by bread alone’. Second the lifestyle that acknowledges that we need to live also by ‘every word that comes from God’.

The Bible begins by warning us against any confusion or misconception in this regard. We are much more than bodies. A lifestyle that fondles and indulges the body and starves the Spirit is fatal for our humanity. There is, hence, a negative correlation between indulgence and human greatness. The more we eat, or locate our fulfillment only in eating, the smaller we get as human beings created in the image of God.

This enables us to see the spiritual value of suffering. Suffering awakens us to the thirst and hunger of the soul. It pricks the bubble of our notions of self-sufficiency. Suffering is to our soul what pain is to our body. Pain, as Paul Brand argues so eloquently, is our friend, not our enemy. Pain is the sentinel of life. But for our ability to feel pain, our life would be imperiled. Suffering is the pain of the soul. It alerts us to the imperiled state of the soul. Predictably, materialistic culture sees suffering only in

negative terms, as something to be avoided at all costs. This unspiritual assumption underlies much that happens even under the banner of the "ministry of healing" today. Jesus says it is good that we suffer. Can we imagine Jesus without his monumental suffering? Odd indeed is the religiosity that makes us assume it is good for Jesus to suffer for our sake (Isaiah 53:5) but that it is altogether bad for us to suffer even for our own sake! Broadly speaking, the "bread-alone-lifestyle" sees suffering as evil; whereas the "Word-also-lifestyle" sees suffering in positive terms. Arguably, the second is more holistic than the first.

Some key issues pertaining to lifestyles, which we shall only inventory here for further exploration by the readers, are noted below.

Affluent lifestyle of the worldly kind:

1. **Breeds alienation.** The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates this (Lk. 15:11-32). There is indirect and inferential evidence in the text that the father of this young man maintained a sober and disciplined lifestyle. Also, there is ample evidence that the young man coveted an indulgent and licentious lifestyle. The evidence, for the latter, is two-fold. First, he felt suffocated in his father's house enough to want to leave it for the "far country". Second, in the far country he embraced a lifestyle that soon landed him in the pits. The whole parable is structured on two choices: the choice of one lifestyle over another. In the second half of the parable, the choice made in the first part is reversed. The young man chooses a lifestyle of love and oneness over the lifestyle of alienation, which enables him to come home to his loving father. It is the business of spirituality to empower such a choice.
2. **Inhibits hospitality.** Spiritual lifestyle, as exemplified in Jesus, revels in hospitality. Hospitality implies an outlook: the outlook of unconditional, but purposive, acceptance. Hence Jesus invited all people; irrespective of their merits, but mindful of their needs, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Mtt. 11:28) The rich man, at whose gate Lazarus lay dying, is in stark contrast to this. His worldly lifestyle left him with no time or inclination to respond to the needs of his sorely afflicted neighbor, much less accept him in love (Lk. 16:19-31). Ironically, the freedom to be hospitable decreases even as the material means for it increases. It is because we have, and not because we do not have resources, that we fail to share. Indeed affluence abolishes neighborhood, especially the neighborhood of needs. It distorts neighbors into imaginary threats or nuisances. The end-product of such a lifestyle is loneliness (Jn.

12:24). The saying is profoundly true that "it is in giving that we receive".

3. **Degrades and diminishes personality.** Zacchaeus is an obvious example of it. If the text (Lk. 19:1 ff) is read carefully, it will become apparent that this rich man's problem was not only his physical stature but also his spiritual and social stature. The more he accumulated unfairly, the poorer he became. Ungodly and wasteful lifestyles cannot be sustained in any society without compromising one's integrity and inner wholeness. It is with the blood money for the soul that people paint their door posts in rainbow colors. This is a poor bargain. The secret of the Baptist's awesome personality, in contrast, was his acetic lifestyle. Historically, it is firmly established that an indulgent and hedonistic lifestyle erodes the capacity to resist evil and injustice. Poverty has been the catalyst for revolutions in history simply because only the poor dare to stand up for anything at all. The Church at Laodicea was the most affluent church in Asia in the early centuries. Consider God's verdict on it. "You are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm". (Rev. 3:15-19).
4. **Undermines relationships.** The necessary correlation between lifestyle and relationship is an issue central to human existence at all times. It has assumed added and aggravated significance at the present time. The woman of Samaria was, in the final analysis, the victim of an ungodly lifestyle. Exclusive obsession with her own thirsts and interests marked that lifestyle. It is an orientation basic to the worldly way of life. Of course, she was a religious enthusiast. But her lifestyle was ungodly and worldly. This rendered her incapable of enduring relationships. Her story could be read as a prophetic parable on our times! Our worldliness cannot but awaken mistrust in others. Relationships, infected with mistrust, are hells on this earth. Today, everybody is out to find his or her own exclusive and individualistic fulfillment. The result is that everyone feels hurt, insecure or betrayed. Our lifestyle bristles with grievances. It has become harmful to life, of which relationships are the building-blocks.
5. **Kills the joy of worship.** It is not that worship will be absent from a worldly lifestyle. On the contrary, worship could escalate. Temples, churches, mosques and 'gurudwaras' today overflow with people. But it is, mostly, worship for wealth. And people do not have the discernment to realize that worship for wealth is, indeed, worship of wealth. It was this that Jesus denounced as "Mammon worship". Indulgent and materialistic lifestyles disable us from worshipping God "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). According to St. Paul, joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). If the

spiritual dimension of worship is eroded, worship becomes the mechanical pursuit of a religious formula, which is bound to be a burden and an uninspiring imposition. Even then worship could continue, even flourish. But worship, then, will be driven by the fear that failure to worship could provoke the wrath of God, resulting in serious material losses to the persons concerned. On the social plane, church life, conjoined with worldly lifestyles, becomes little more than membership in a sanctified club where members are entitled to certain privileges. The problem is not with Church. The problem is with our lifestyle that distorts our understanding and priorities in respect of Church in a certain fashion.

6. **Erodes the logic of faith.** The worldly lifestyle is based exclusively on “what is seen”. Faith, on the other hand, is the evidence of things “not seen” (Heb. 11:1). An exhibitionist lifestyle cannot but take a toll on our faith life, because it erodes our ability to take delight in “what is not seen”. We will not begin to love the Creator, wrote St. John of the Cross, unless we transcend the love of created things. Only a passionate love for the Creator can open our spiritual eyes to see what is invisible, but latent, in creation. If we do not develop this spiritual sight, we shall be obsessed with, and enslaved by, what is seen. In that event, all that will matter to us is that we should be “seen by men” (Matt. 6:2, 5). How God sees us would cease to matter to us.
7. **Aggravates anxiety.** In his profound analysis of the aches and pains of the materialistic way of life (Matt. 6:25-33), Jesus warns us that anxiety is of its very essence. Our life will be filled with worries as to what we shall eat and drink—which includes also worries about what we are required NOT to eat or drink under medical advice—and what we shall wear (an anxiety that stems, in quarters of affluence, from what someone else is likely to wear!). “Little faith” is faith in little things. Such faith necessarily breeds anxiety. This anxiety is aggravated, in no small measure, by a nagging awareness of the futility of our desperate pursuits. This anxiety is a pointer to the paralysis of our faith as well as the weakening of our spiritual potential and it forces us into a state of dependence on people rather than on God.
8. **Erodes our freedom.** Lifestyle is not merely a matter of what we eat or have by way of material possessions. It is also a matter of the positions we hold and the kind of importance we ascribe to it. In a worldly sense, a person is nothing more than the chair/position he occupies. In a spiritual sense, though, this is a scandal! To see the enslaving impact of positions and titles on a human being, all we have to do is to consider

Nicodemus in the Gospel. He was deeply convinced about the spiritual stature of Jesus and profoundly moved to meet with him. Yet, he did not dare to be seen with him in broad daylight. He chose to visit Jesus at night, provoking the cryptic comment from Jesus that Nicodemus had to be “born again”. Being “born again” involves a radical shift from a worldly to a spiritual foundation and the lifestyle that goes with it. We cannot have the titillations of a worldly lifestyle and the freedom of a spiritual lifestyle at the same time.

9. **Makes corruption endemic to the human situation.** The worldly lifestyle is driven not by needs but by desires. And desires, by definition, have no limits. They keep multiplying by the hour for the simple reason that desires are a realm of escalating un-fulfillment. It is like being hooked on drugs; the victims need increasing potencies of the substance of addiction. This renders one’s lifestyle unsustainable by honest means, which are then felt to be too narrow and impractical to be pursued. As a result, the attractiveness of “the broad way to everlasting perdition” grows on us. Unless we are in a state of willful self-deception, we shall readily agree that moral uprightness and spiritual wholeness are impossible without a lifestyle that is conducive to it.
10. **Finally, the worldly lifestyle robs us of life, especially life in all its fullness, which is the quintessential spiritual goal** (Jn. 10:10). The life of a man, said Jesus, does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Lk.12:15). Life emerges from the integration of matter and Spirit. And unless the Spirit continues to animate and empower matter—the physical dimensions—life is bound to remain suppressed. We remain capable of life, but our capacity for its fullness will remain suppressed. The famine of the Word, not less than the famine of the bread, is a serious issue. Unspiritual lifestyle, however, makes us blind to this crucial truth.

What we have considered so far could enable us to grasp the meaning of Jesus’ words, “It is not those who say, ‘Lord, Lord’ to me who enter the Kingdom” (Matt. 7:21). Faith in Jesus that does not lead to a reformation of lifestyle is a blatant self-deception. That is because there is an organic connection between “life” and “lifestyle”. It is like the relationship between skin and the rest of the body. Lifestyle is the skin of life. We cannot have a leprous skin wrapped over a wholesome body. The skin shows forth the body. Or, to use a metaphor from Jesus, we cannot stitch an old patch to a new piece of cloth. Our lifestyle must be shaped by life rather than by death. It is the business of faith to enable us to make this all-important choice. ■

Uncle Vanya and the Mar Thoma Diaspora

Mathew A. Kallumpram and Dr. Zac Varghese, UK

In his play "*Uncle Vanya*" the Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov, tells the story of a man who feels bitterly betrayed and totally broken. Vanya Voynitsky had spent the best years of his life looking after the family estate on behalf of his sister and her husband Professor Alexander Serebryakov. Over the years Vanya put up with hardships in running the estate and sacrificed his own worldly ambitions, in the belief that the financial support that the estate provided for the professor was enabling a great man to forward the cause of humanity. But when professor retires and comes to live in the estate Vanya's world falls apart. He discovers that the professor is a selfish and small-minded man, not the great visionary he idolized. They have a saying in Russia: "Great things look better from afar, when you are close, you just see the spots on the face."

Luke writes about Jesus' description of faithful and unfaithful servants in Luke Chapter 12 (12:32-48). Jesus tells his disciples what it means to be stewards of his kingdom. First they have to sell all that they have and give alms, so that they will have treasure in heaven. Secondly, they are to be always vigilant; always ready for the return of the master and never to be complacent in their stewardship of the kingdom. Thirdly, they must always work diligently, so that when master arrives he will entrust to them everything he owns. Finally, the good stewards must carry out their master's wishes for 'when a man had a great deal given to him on trust, even more will be expected of him' (Luke 12:48). Let us who received the most be most willing to give. This is an important mandate for those of us who live in relative affluence in the West.

If we apply all this to Uncle Vanya it might seem that he is the kind of steward Jesus has in mind. Firstly, he gives up his own earthly wealth and ambition for a higher ideal. Secondly, he has been vigilant, never ceasing from his care of the estate. So that when the professor returns he finds Vanya diligently laboring. Finally, Vanya has carried out the wishes of the professor, providing him with the material support he needed to carry on his academic work. So does the only difference between Jesus' good steward and Vanya consist in the fact God rewards a good servant whereas Vanya is betrayed by the professor? Do we experience this sort of betrayal in our lives?

In order to answer this question we need to examine why Vanya starts to grow angry when the professor comes to live on the estate. Up to this point in his life Vanya had given his life in service to the professor because he believed totally in the professor. This belief has given Vanya's own life meaning; in serving the professor he believed he was benefiting humanity. His encounter with the reality of the

professor shatters this illusion and his life has nothing to hold it together.

Sometimes we put more trust in others than we do in God. We all have our particular people whom we tend to trust; sometimes we rely too much on others and exclude God from our lives, we try to blot out God from our action plans. Psalmist says, "Some trust in their war-chariots and others in their horses, but we trust in the power of our Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7). Furthermore, most of us in the diaspora may be able to repeat after the Psalmist: "It is better to trust in the Lord than put the confidence in the man. It is better to trust in him Lord than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:8-9). This is particularly so because like the Israelites of the old we can say with confidence, "His mercy endures for ever."

As Christians we believe that our lives are given meaning through Jesus Christ, but whereas Vanya gave his life so another could do great things for humanity. Jesus gives his life so that we can do great things through Him and for Him. Jesus is the good steward who stays awake in the garden of Gethsemane, whilst his disciples fall asleep. It is Jesus who is always busy about Father's business carrying out Father's wishes, and for His troubles receiving many strokes of the lash, not from his Father but from us.

When Jesus entrusts the kingdom to His disciples He is not handing it over as a remote landlord, who are to serve by giving up all that is good; all that makes us human. No, He entrusts the kingdom to us as His fellow servants and friends. As we work through Him and work with Him to build up the kingdom we are ourselves given a new life and should become more fully human. We are given a new identity and a new life in a new land. Our good works can never be adequate to win God's mercy and salvation. It is His grace which makes us into a new people, a new creation with renewed life of holiness. This is to act with confidence in utter humility in accordance with our conscience and conviction and to give up our unqualified reliance on those in authority in church and state. This new holiness is to be seen not only in individual lives, but also in the exercise of justice within the society where we live. It will affect our attitudes to poor, to people living at the margins of the society. The fellowship of God's people must reach out to everyone, to educated and less well off, to ethnic minorities, to all strata of society, including the poor to create an inclusive community. This is the time to empty ourselves of our pride and arrogance. Sri Aurobindo asked, "Is it when I am nothing, I truly become a man?"

We wish you all a very happy diaspora Sunday celebration on the 4th Sunday in November. ■

“ HOME. AUTO. LIFE. ME.”



**TALK TO A REAL,
LIVE PERSON WHO'S
IN THE SAME PHONE
BOOK AS YOU.**

ROY THOMAS

Allstate Insurance Company
224-17 Union Turnpike
Bayside, NY 11364
Phone (718) 464 - 8500
Fax (718) 464 - 4230



Allstate®

You're in good hands.

**Allstate property & Casualty Insurance Company. Allstate Indemnity Company.
Home office: Northbrook, IL, Allstate Life Insurance Company of new York.
Home office: Happaage, New York. ©2003 Allstate insurance Company.**

Reformation in the Church

Rev. Sunni E. Mathew, Los Angeles, CA

Introduction

Following the unfortunate and unwanted confusion, Indian Church and the missionaries from the CMS mission parted one another. Indian Church leaders under the Metropolitan Mar Dionysius affirmed the authority of the Jacobite Patriarch. Church retained many of these practices came into its life through the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. There were many in the Church who saw these practices against the canons of the Syrian Church and some also as standing not in conformity with the biblical understandings. They were eager to hold on to the eastern nature of the Church and its faith. They did not want to leave the Church and follow the western understanding and practices. Since the metropolitan was in a relentless mood, they sent an appeal to the British resident seeking his help to make the metropolitan to yield.



Trumpet Call for Reformation

Leadership for this reformation movement was given by Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan of Maramon and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan of Puthuppally. They along with Adangapurattu Youseph Kathanar of Kalliooppara, Eruthickal Markose Kathanar of Cheriyaipalli, Anchitharayil Geevarghese Kathanar of Kozhencherry, Karingaattu Yakub Kathanar of Thumpamon, Thomman Kathanar of Pravathu, Kanjirathummoottil Yakub Kathanar of Chathannur, Mathunny Kathanar of Thevalakkara, Marathummoottil Thoma Kathanar of Venmony, Chempakasserril Unnittan Kathanar of Kallisserry wrote a petition to Col. Fraiser, the then British resident. This was done in the year 1836. In that letter they urged the resident to be an arbitrator and requested him to call a meeting with them and the members of the Church and to assert the genuineness of their claim. Further they requested that after finding the truth, he should pressurize the metropolitan to follow the canon of the church. In the memorandum they enumerated some of the practices that are not in conformity with the canon of the church.

1. God gave Ten Commandments which are given in the Book of Exodus chapter 20. Out of that the second commandment that says that "you should not make any idol" was removed and the tenth commandment was divided into two so as to make the commandments ten.
2. It was necessary to test that the child who was baptized being instructed in Christian faith attained maturity in faith. Even then it became a practice that they were conferred with sacraments like marriage.
3. According to the Syrian tradition, it was not allowed to

anoint any thing already anointed once. This was ignored and it became a practice to carry out a second anointing.

4. According to the Bible, it was given that if a person falls ill, he should be consoled by the service of faith (service of healing). But a certain custom had crept into the Church to anoint the seriously dying person as the extreme unction (odukkathe uprusma) and upheld that, that was enough for forgiveness and salvation. This custom does not occur in the "Pallikramam" (Order of services) of the

Syrian Church or in its practices.

5. It was laid down that for absolution and for experiencing divine grace it was necessary to confess and thereafter receive Holy Communion. But this was not taken serious and instead of confessing, priest allowed people to remit a payment of money (one chakram i.e. one twenty eighth of a rupee) and have communion. A priest may allow about hundred people before noon.
6. It was decided by Church Fathers that those who come for confession should be advised to have penitence through the observation of lent, fasting, prayers etc. On the other hand people were asked to obtain absolution through bringing gifts like oil, incense, candle etc.
7. It was the decision of the canon that on Sunday morning people should gather together at the Church and along with the priest should worship. It was also ordered that Scripture should be read and interpreted in a sermon and then Holy Qurbana (Communion) should be celebrated. In spite of this canon law, priests used to demand from people betel leaves and areca nuts and used to enquire about the programs for the next week. People also used to make fun, argue, quarrel and do all sort of things without giving care to preparation for the Holy Communion. Women folks also engaged themselves in gossip. Sacraments and worship has been relegated to mere customary observances.
8. Customs are made to drag themselves on knees and circle the Church on Good Friday and make their offerings in order to obtain salvation. This was also done on festivals (Perunnaal days).
9. St. Paul commanded Timothy to teach the Word of God at all times. This was entrusted upon the priests as those who are conferred in the lineage of the apostles. Hence it is the duty of them to teach and instruct the people continuously. But they got themselves involved in worldly matters engaging themselves in court cases, seeking favors from government officials, doing commercial activities neglecting pastoral duties.

10. Bible and Canon of the Church prescribe that on Sundays people should devote the whole day in worship and prayers, reading the Scripture and abstain from worldly works. Instead, Sunday was chosen to settle disputes and people engaged themselves in other works as they please.
11. According to the Canon of the Church, if a person is to be ordained he should be examined by Malpans and the Episcopa (Bishop) and should obtain witness from people about that person. Yet children were ordained as per the decision of their families.
12. The Holy Fathers decreed that if a young man was ordained Deacon (Semmass) he should be ordained a priest only after he becomes thirty years. During this period he should dedicate his time for further education in faith. But young people who did not even take interest in reading Scripture or did not obtain certification from seniors were ordained even at the age of sixteen as priest (kathanaar) and entrusted with a parish.
13. It was decided long ago that we should remember the holy saints and communicate their good examples to the people and exhort them to follow their footsteps. Instead false faith was propagated emphasizing the benefits people could get from them and instituting celebrations resembling non-christian festivals.
14. The Canon of the Church forbids communion with the heretics. But people were allowed to remember and accept the teachings of heretics like the Nestorians who questioned the Godhead of Christ.
15. In the 7th chapter of the Canon, it is decided that Malpans should be appointed in all places where there are none. Children should be collected for instruction and if there are orphans, provisions should be made for them. Malpans should be paid from the Church. Instead, the priests and the lay leaders appropriated the money. Any balance was used to make idols and people were insisted to pay tributes to them.
16. Scripture and Canon are emphatic in rejecting the making of idols, astrologers, fortune-tellers and engagement in black magic. Yet priests and people engage in and promote black magic and witchcraft.
17. Lent is instituted for repentance and to control the body. Instead at some places observation of eight day lent which does not come in the canon is observed following some Brahmanical practices.
18. Bonfire is lit for celebrating Christmas night. This does not figure in the canon or the tradition of the Syrian Church.
19. Ashes preserved from the wood burnt on the closure of the 25th lent was smeared on the forehead on the day of Danaha Perunnaal and took bath in the water sprinkled with the ashes was done. This was called as "Raakuli". This custom is not in the canon or in the tradition of the Syrian Church.
20. Roman Catholics smeared powdered charcoal on their foreheads on the Wednesday before the 40 days lent before Easter. This is celebrated as a hypocrisy naming it as "Kurusuvara perunnaal". No such practice is authorized by the Syrian tradition.
21. On the day of the Passover Lord gave his disciples bread and wine to represent his holy body and blood. Now a heretic custom has surfaced in the Church. On the night of the Passover people were made to make bread and the eldest person in the family would devotionally break the bread and give to the members of the household. A statue of Judas Iscariot is made and the eye of the statue is pierced and sugared water is drunk. This had no sanction in the Syriac canons.
22. There is no validity in the Syriac canon for performing "pula" (lent) for the dead ones and to light candles and prostrate before their graves.
23. It was clearly stated in the canons that the bones of the saints though holy were never to be placed in the sanctuary of the Church. Disregarding this strict ban, bodies were buried in the sanctuary (Madbaha) and idols were placed on the graves. Candles were lit at the grave for attaining favors.
24. It had been decided that General Synod of the Church should be convened twice a year to decide cases against suspended clergy and lay members.....

The list ends there. We were only able to get this much. We are not sure whether they included much more. This call is called the Trumpet Call for Reformation.

Main thrust of the Memorandum

Main thrust of the memorandum can be summarized as follows. The Church at that time has moved away from its Syrian nature. They have many practices that are alien to the canons of the Church that crept into it through the relationship with the Roman Catholics. Many of these are also in non-conformity with the Scriptural understanding. Irreverence of worship had led to the formalization in the observance of sacraments. False teachings have been made to extort money from people. Superstitious practices were induced into the Syrian Church.

Conclusion

Genuine concern for the retention of the Eastern character of Indian Church and its faith are evident in the memorandum. Reformation thrust was on the regaining of the values and quality of the Church which are evident in their canons and the Biblical understanding. Above all emphasis was on the regeneration of the life, faith, worship and practice of the Church cleansing them from formalization, corruption of manipulating faith and practices for money and selfish motives. ■

XXII Mar Thoma Family Conference

Mathew V. Zacharia and Anil V. Abraham, Secretaries



through August 1st, 2004. The participants of all ages engaged in a very meaningful study of this year's conference theme: "Arise, Shine for Your Light has Come" taken from the book of Isaiah, Chapter 60, Verse 1.

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York, took great effort in hosting the conference and organizing this successful annual event. We are thankful to Lord Almighty for all His blessings.

Leaders of the Conference at the inaugural procession

The 22nd Mar Thoma Family Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe, hosted by St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York, was held at the



Scenes from the inaugural procession.

The conference began with a beautiful, blessed inaugural ceremony with many colors and lights.

A pageant of different presentations made the conference theme alive. Honorable Pamela Duke, Town Supervisor, read and presented the Plaque of



Scenes from the inaugural procession.

picturesque Hudson Valley Resort and Spa in the beautiful setting of Kerhonkson, New York. Over 700 Marthomites from the parishes of North America, Europe and Kerala participated and made this conference a wonderful blessed experience. The conference was held from July 29th



Two members from each parish representing their respective church at the inaugural procession.



Mr. George Cherian, renowned Evangelist from Kerala, led the Saturday night traditional "Witnessing and Dedication" service. Messages throughout the conference and the inspiration received, led many participants to grow in their spiritual walks and share their experiences of God with those gathered at the conference. Certainly, it was a memorable, uplifting, time for all!

Two members from each parish representing their respective church at the inaugural procession.

Proclamation to our Thirumeni and declared July 29, 2004 as MAR THOMA DAY in the town of Rochester and in the Ulster county of New York. Such honoring was well received by all participants.

The main leaders who graced the conference with inspirational and challenging messages were the Rt. Rev Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan, Rt. Rev.



Coorilos Thirumeni at the Youth Session.

Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop, Rev. Dr. Stanley Allaby, Rev Valsan Thampu and Rev Sabu Koshy. Also gracing the conference for the young family track were Dick and Paula Purnell from the Family Life Marriage Conference, for the Youth Track were Dimas Selaberrios and Kevin Ora Hahn, for Children Track leader was the Child Evangelism Fellowship and a wide array of our youth chaplains, seminar speakers, interactive session speakers, clergies and group leaders who sparked the participants with a challenge to live the lives that would Arise and Shine in God's love for His glory.

Participants from all parishes gave a wide array of Christian performances as they displayed their many God-given talents during the talent night. Angelic voices of the conference choir under the direction of Abraham P. Thomas added inspiration to our worship and meditation. Commendation about the theme song was well received.



Diocesan Treasurer, Dr. P. John Lincoln giving a memento to Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus on the occasion of celebrating his silver jubilee of episcopal consecration and elevation as Suffragan Metropolitan at the closing ceremony of the Family Conference.



Family Conference Committee

during the closing ceremony. This conference was a blessed opportunity for many Marthomites to come together in this annual fellowship and be challenged to return home invigorated as "Lighted to Lighten" for the greater service to Our God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to our family, community, state, country and to the world. We are very thankful to our Bishops, Achens, conference leaders, conference committees, our parishioners and participants for their dedicated guidance, support and prayers. ■



Theme presentation members at the inaugural procession.

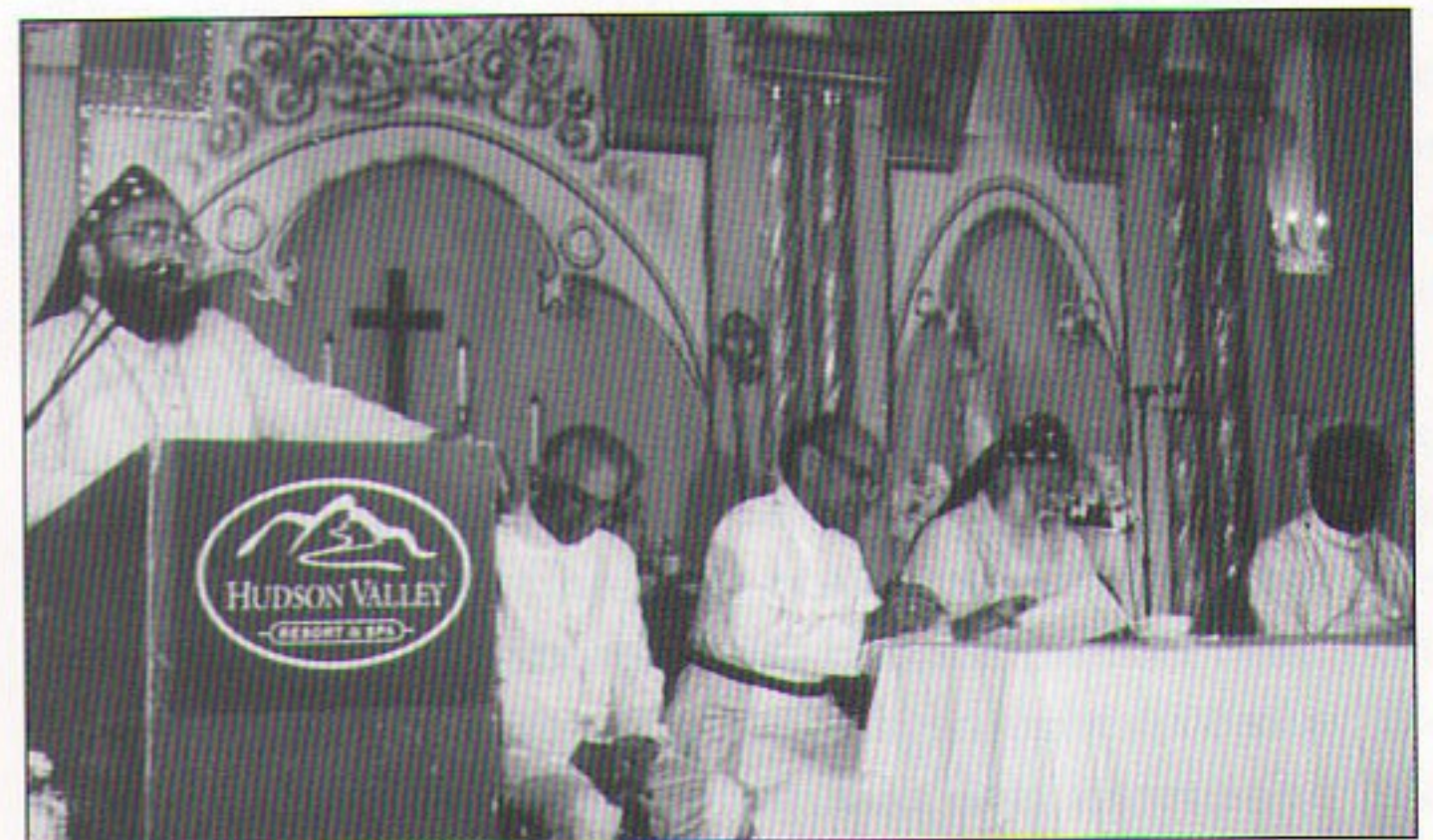


Family Conference Choir

Our Sunday worship service with Holy Communion brought conference participants and visitors to join in the closing worship service and concluding program. Sunday School Diocesan Exam awards, Messenger Essay and Poetry Competition awards and Valedictorian awards were presented



Achens and Families with Zacharias Thirumeni and Coorilos Thirumeni



Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos addressing the participants at the closing ceremony.

Arise, Shine, for Your Light has Come

Isaiah 60:1-14

Stanley Allaby

INTRODUCTION: I visited India in 1983. I saw Thomas Mount and the tomb of St. Thomas so it is a special treatment for me to address the Mar Thoma Church at this convention.

Light is wonderful. Isaiah 60 is addressed to Zion (Isaiah 59:20 and 60:14). Zion, in the New Testament, is the Church (I Peter 2:6; Gal. 4:26; Hebrews 12:22) so this is addressed to us. Let us analyze some of the facts of light.



4. Light gives direction (Ex. 13:21; Psalm 43:3) A lighthouse gives direction to ships. The Bible gives direction to us (Psalm 119:105).

IV. LIGHT AS SEEN BY ISAIAH

1. First he sees darkness (Isaiah 60:2a; Isaiah 8:22; Isaiah 9:9-10; Isaiah 9:2). We are living in a world filled with darkness. People have lost their way. Everyone lives in the "shadow of death" (Is. 9:2). A few weeks ago, a Korean man was captured by the terrorists in Iraq.

They threatened to behead him. Then they put him on television. We heard his plaintive cry, "I don't want to die". This is the cry of all humanity. We live in darkness and in the shadow of death and we do not want to die but we must.

2. He sees light as the rising sun (Isaiah 60:2b). The Bible often refers to God or to the Messiah as the sun (Psalm 84:11; Hosea 1:3; Malachi 4:2; Luke 1:78-79). Psalm 30:5 says, "Weeping may remain for a night but rejoicing comes in the morning".

We had four children. When they were little, one of them would often get sick and I would rock the child through the night. The night seemed so long and so hopeless. But then the sun rose and there was hope in a new day.

V. BENEFITS OF LIGHT AS PERCEIVED BY ISAIAH (Isaiah 60:2-21)

1. His glory will appear over you – v. 2c
2. Nations will come to your light – v. 3a. The nations are coming to Christ. God is doing great things all over the world and especially in India. Rejoice in the fulfillment of this promise.
3. Kings will come to the brightness of your dawn – v. 3b. The visit of the Magi was just the beginning. Roman Emperor Constantine, Emperor Haile Selasse, Chang Kai Shek, the Queen of England, Tony Blair, the late President Reagan, President Bush, all acknowledge Christ as their Savior.
4. The riches of the nations will come to you – v. 5c. Ultimately fulfilled in Rev 21:24.
5. The temple will be glorified – v. 7c. It will be adorned through offerings the converted heathens bring (Haggai 2:7-9). Ultimately Christ was the temple (Luke 2:21f; John 2:19-21; Matthew 12:6; Eph. 2:19-22).

I. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF LIGHT

Contrast between light and darkness is found in Zoroastrianism and, to a marked degree, in the Manual of Discipline of the Essenes who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. Plato associated the sun with the idea of the Good. Philo regarded the Creator as the archetype of light. The Bible declares that "light is better than darkness" (Ecc. 2:13). Babylon is consigned to darkness (Rev. 18:23a) while the City of God (the Church) is bathed in the light of His glory (Rev. 21:23).

II. CREATION OF LIGHT IN GENESIS (Genesis 1:1-3)

God declared light good (Gen 1:4). God challenged the darkness that engulfed the existing chaotic condition and obstructed any possible ordered progress. The creation of light opened the way to the great creative and growth processes, which followed. Photosynthesis is the basis for our entire food chain. It demands the presence of light to function.

III. THE PURPOSE OF LIGHT

1. Light sweetens life (Ecc. 11:7). Some people suffer from winter depression. In the spring when there is more light, the depression lifts.
2. Light exposes faults (Psalm 90:8). The world resents the light (John 1:5); (John 3:19-20).
3. Light dispels fear (Isaiah 42:7). When my wife was a little girl, she was afraid of the dark and pleaded with her father to leave the light on when she was put to bed. Psalm 23:4 declares, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil". The secret is to walk facing the light. When you walk facing the light, the shadow is always behind you and you do not see it.

(Cont'd on page 18)

Mission of the Church

Presentation by Dr. George K. Zachariah
Panel Discussion at the XXII Mar Thoma Family Conference

The church is often defined as the extension of Christ's incarnation. Whatever Christ came to accomplish the church has a role in it. God's stated action plan for the church is being eclipsed by a man-made assortment of activities that ranges from the spurious to the scandalous. My first point is let's wake up to the purpose for which we have been called.

While the church's mission is one, it may best be understood in terms of four dimensions:

(1) **Horizontal** – the outreach or extension of the body of Christ. To present the gospel to the lost. To send the gospel around the world through missionary efforts. When Bishop Newbegin states that “the whole life of the church has a missionary dimension though not all of it has mission as its primary intention”, he is considering mission of the church in a narrow framework. In fact, the home base is everywhere. Mission is the mission of the whole church to the whole world.

Many years ago, one non-Christian M.P. (Member of Parliament) classified the foreign-assisted projects in India into three categories: Christian, non-Christian, and Unchristian, not in the communal sense but in a broad spiritual and moral sense. He suggested that there was an urgent need to liquidate the unchristian ones, to christianize the non-Christian ones, and strengthen the Christian. As Vissert Hooft reminded us, mission is not from the West to the East, but from everywhere to everywhere.

(2) **Vertical** – The church's movement is always polar. She cannot be the church militant, the church engaged in warfare. She must also be at rest. Prophetic spirits like Soren Kierkegaard have insisted that our task now is to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom. Much of the preaching is inconsequential and teaching in the church schools somehow misses any connection with the Gospel. The vertical dimension of mission implies that the church will take her own order seriously. The church leadership is far removed from the role of the prophet of the living God. Listen to these words of Albert Camus spoken in 1948 at a Dominican monastery in France: “The world of today needs Christians who remain Christians.”

We have to return to the spiritual values of the Christian tradition. It is one of greater strictness, austerity and discipline. We have to declare and support wholesome



values (home, moral and ethical purity, the dignity of individuals, godly living, healthy marriages, integrity etc.) Reach today's youth and challenge them to make Christ the center of their lives, their choice of a career, their plans for the future.

(3) **Theological** – The church's movement outward and upward must be informed and directed by the meaning of her message. Symbolic of that relation between religion and learning must be emphasized. Theology's three

traditional functions namely didactic, polemic, and apologetic must be served. We have to participate in the human predicament as Tillich would say.

(4) **Ecumenical** – Bishop Newbegin's statement that “our deepest need is not synthesis but repentance” comes to mind. For God's Spirit refuses to be stifled even by the church. No, especially by the church, for judgment begins in the house of the Lord. It is encouraging for us to remember that a man need not in himself be very great to be used by a great idea.

When we consider our errand to the world, the nettlesome fact remains that much of the missionary enterprise has been fueled by a triumphalistic understanding of theology and history. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that missionaries at times have attached little importance to their calling to servanthood and have entered other lands and cultures with a ‘crusading mind’ assuming that their divinely designated role was to be that of master or patron. In these cases the missionary went as a superior, not as a subordinate; went to teach, not to learn; went to evangelize, not to be evangelized. We have to recover the notion of our mission as self-emptying or kenosis. Christ's self-emptying is meant to be, I believe, the subject of contemplation—faith, reflection, prayer, meditation, and worship; and it is meant to be a model for imitation—reflection, renewal, and praxis—and not a proposition designed to provoke theological and philosophical debate.

The greatest historian of the 20th century, Arnold Toynbee mentioned three essential aspects of Christianity. (i) Christianity has a vision of God as loving His creatures so greatly that He has sacrificed Himself for their salvation. (ii) A conviction that human beings ought to follow the example that God has set them in His incarnation and crucifixion. By following God's example, the Christian may be helping to awake a responsive love in their souls. (iii) We

are not to hold this conviction theoretically but to act on it as far as one is able.

We have to keep high the thought that Christ is our motive and Christ is our end. We must give nothing less and we can give nothing more. As Kagawa said, "The starting point of missions is the Divine commission to proclaim the Lordship of Christ over all life." That calls for our active involvement in social and political life. Hendrick Kraemer has identified the ideal missionary approach as the combination of "a prophetic, apostolic heraldship of truth for Christ's sake, with a priestly, apostolic ambassadorship of love for His sake."

The theological motivation of Christian service was clear enough in the life of Jesus Christ who fed the hungry, healed the sick, instructed the ignorant and preached the good news of the Kingdom of God. These were integral aspects of His mission. He came and preached peace, "shalom" which implies wholeness—totality, well being, and harmony. The criteria of Christian concern is the love and holiness of God. We are invited to share in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, our Lord.

Service is integral to the gospel we proclaim and which is of the very nature of the church and is distinguished by at least three characteristics. (i) It is always self-giving as I stated earlier. (ii) It is done unto Him, in His name. (iii) Its final consequence we cannot either fully comprehend or calculate in the here and now. The question today is not 'Who is my neighbor?' but it is 'What is good for my neighbor?' In the story of the Good Samaritan we have to note that the robbers are also our neighbors.

Most mission theology is based on a kingdom model, not a kenosis model. (Lk 9:2; Jn 18:36; Lk 14:13, 21) Jesus' kingdom, as the Bible describes it, is one that encompasses all of life, one that welcomes the most unlikely subject, one that exposes every pocket of evil and liberates from every

injustice and oppression, one that comes through the most implausible means, and one whose sovereign's power is revealed in weakness, poverty, suffering and death. Of course Jesus' kingdom is indeed a threat to other kingdoms.

In *Christ outside the Gate*, the last book that Orlando Costas wrote before he died, he sounded a warning about our assuming that we know Christ and what Christ is doing. The criterion of the life, ministry and death of Jesus Christ permits us to identify him today. This criterion leads us not only to discover who he is, but where he is to be found today (among the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed) and what he is doing (healing their wounds, breaking the chains of oppression, demanding justice and peace, giving life, and imparting hope to the hurting.) We are to comfort the grieving, encourage the lonely, feed the hungry, minister to the handicapped, help the aged, the abused and the confused. We are to model a standard of authentic righteousness.

Of course the church must provide opportunity for regular worship and instruction. We have to teach the Scriptures with a view to holy living. We must stimulate action and involvement in critical social issues. We have to be a lighthouse in the community. We have to equip saints for the work of ministry and must build up the saints.

It seems to me we've gathered enough dust sitting around merely discussing our plight. Let's wake up to our purpose viz., glorifying God. The church stands precisely where the rich young ruler stood. The church is fabulously rich!

Finally let me stop with the 1952 Willingen declaration: Church is the mission. It stated, "There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world." "The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning", said Emil Brunner. ■

Arise, Shine, for Your Light has Come *(Cont'd from page 16)*

6. Foreigners will build up Zion's walls – v. 10a. The edicts of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes Longimanu were only a prelude to events stretching to the end of time. This referred to the Gentiles coming to Christ (Acts 15:13-18).
7. The gates will be open continually – v. 11. This implies peace – v. 17c. Rev. 21:25-26).
8. There will be no need of the sun – v. 19-20. This is the ultimate triumph of light over darkness (John 1:5b). You cannot hold back the dawn. (Rev. 21:23-25).
9. Your days of sorrow will end – v. 20c. We have much sorrow in this life. Someday it will end (Rev 21:4).
10. The people will be righteous – v. 21a. This is the goal of salvation (Rev. 21:7,27).

11. God's people will inherit the land – v. 21b. Psalm 37:22 declares, "Those the Lord blesses will inherit the land". Romans 4:13 teaches us that this is the whole world.

CONCLUSION: ARISE, SHINE, YOUR LIGHT HAS COME

1. II Corinthians 4:6 says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ". Have you allowed that light to shine in your heart? If not, I invite you right now to put your trust in the Light, that is Christ, and invite Him to shine in your heart.
2. All of this is done "for the display of His splendor" – v. 21c. ■

A Time to Remember Our Mar Thoma Early Settlers Around the World

Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles

Our Mar Thoma parishes and congregations throughout this diocese of North America and Europe celebrate *Diaspora Sunday* in November to coincide with the Thanksgiving Day celebration in the United States. It is a time to remember our past, reflect on our achievements and failures and above all, to offer our thanks to our God Almighty for guiding us and protecting us through generations. It is also a time to remind our children and the newly arrived Mar Thoma immigrants of the enormous difficulties and sufferings the early settlers had to endure to establish themselves as individuals, families and congregations in the land of their choices.

The word *Diaspora* is a Greek word used to designate the dispersal of the Jews at the time of the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC and the forced exile to Babylonia. The *Diaspora* became a permanent feature of Jewish life. By A.D. 70, Jewish communities existed in Babylonia, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. In our case, with the advancement of English education in the erstwhile States of Travancore and Cochin by the end of the 19th century, there was a movement of a large number of educated men from the rural areas of Travancore and Cochin to the great cities of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Delhi in search of jobs. It was part of this wave that swept beyond the Indian borders to the shores of British Malaya. After the end of World War I, more Malayalees, including some Marthomites, left for Malaya and took up jobs there. In the 1920s, it has been estimated that there were about 70 Syrian Christians in Malaya and Singapore. Although divine services were held in Malayalam from as early as 1926, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church was formally established only in 1936 with the posting of Rev. T. N. Koshy. Theirs is the oldest Mar Thoma Diaspora community established outside India. Today their memberships include third and fourth generation Marthomites.

Later from early 1950s on, our people went to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Middle Eastern countries to seek job opportunities and to UK, Canada and the United States for higher studies. While some congregations and later parishes were formed in the 1960s in some of the Middle Eastern countries, Mar Thoma congregations were formed in the United States, Canada and UK in the early part of the 1970s. In 1991, the Synod approved the first two



congregations in Australia—one in Melbourne and the other in Sydney. Our newest congregations include the ones situated in Pretoria, South Africa, Essen, Germany and Geneva, Switzerland.

Thanksgiving Day, the second most typical and important national holiday after Christmas, is celebrated throughout the United States on the fourth Thursday in November and Diaspora Sunday is celebrated in our diocese on the fourth Sunday in November. What do these two celebrations

have in common? 383 years have elapsed since the early English settlers, pilgrims as they are often called, first celebrated Thanksgiving at Plymouth, Massachusetts. What were these early English settlers thankful for? First, they were the same "Separatists" who left England for Holland towards the beginning of the 16th century at the time of Queen Elizabeth I, after years of mounting stress caused by the harassment and persecution of the Church of England and its state-sponsored religion. Second, the pilgrims landed at the worst time of the year—in December 1620 after a voyage that had been nine weeks of unending horror, huddled between the decks of a merchant ship called the "Mayflower". When they finally landed at the new and unknown land, they were terrified of what was to come. They had reasons to be. The fierce winter of New England was taking its toll. Nearly half of them died in the next few months. Yet, the pilgrims did not lose hope or their steadfast faith in God. With the onset of spring, they planted corn and sweet potatoes and in the summer, they had a rich harvest. The native Indians called the Wampanoags (which means "people of the dawn"), who lived in the area for 1200 years, turned out to be friendly and helpful. The settlement was going to survive. And, in the fall, in a spirit of victory over awesome odds and a feeling of home sickness for the land they grew up and left behind, they had a harvest festival. It is their triumph all Americans now celebrate with no real understanding of its meaning or significance.

Our early Mar Thomas settlers in different parts of the world also had to face enormous difficulties. Today's youth and young adults were babies or little children then. Mothers had to spend many a sleepless night taking care of the babies while working night shifts. Those who came as students had to do menial jobs like cleaning toilets to sustain a meager living. There were instances where a

husband and wife had to cut a 29 cent hamburger into two at lunch time because they could not afford one full hamburger each. Some of them had to walk in sandals or ordinary shoes through foot high snow-covered paths because they could not afford snow boots. Little children had to endure taunting and ruthless comments from their fellow students because they didn't have brand name shoes or school bags. Often, they had no role models to look up to. Indians as a whole then were an insignificant minority with no political clout or importance. When the writer's only son, Robby, a high school senior, just weeks before graduation, was killed by a speeding van in front of his school while crossing the street after his classes, the incident made no news in the local newspapers even though the driver was speeding at the rate of 45 miles per hour in a 25 miles per hour school zone! The police who came to the hospital with the dead body had no compassion or condolences to offer to the dear ones gathered there. All efforts to get at least the driver's license suspended were in vain! Their attitude was a reflection of their bonding with the killer who happened to be a worker at the city Fire Department. Another early settler who came as a student in the 1960s recalls with nightmarish feelings, an incident at an Atlanta airport where he was pushed around and scolded before the crowd for unintentionally using a bathroom meant only for whites.

While worshipping openly in most of the Moslem countries was unthinkable, the early settlers in Christian countries had to gather together in apartments to sing God's grace. Later, as small congregations, they started worshipping in the basement areas of schools and churches. But little did they realize then that they had to keep on moving from basement to basement as they were not disciplined enough to keep the places clean after the services, resulting in their losing places of worship every year or so. These kinds of incidents prompted them to buy their own worship places which, in some cases, was burdensome because of the limited number of members in these congregations.

While remembering about the trials and tribulations our early settlers had to endure, we cannot forget the selfless services of our achen who served us in our infant stages. Many of them had to survive with meager scholarship amounts and travel through subways and buses to visit far flung Mar Thoma settlers. A case in point is the services of

a then student achen called Rev. Oommen Koruthu in Boston. Though at times he found it difficult to make both ends meet with the meager scholarship amount he got as a PhD student, Oommen Koruthu achen made sure to visit the small number of Mar Thoma families on a regular basis every month who were scattered around the New York metropolitan area and guide them in every step of the way in the formation of the first Mar Thoma Congregation in the United States.

After the death of Moses, God appeared to Joshua and told him to lead the children of Israel to the promised land of Canaan. God also asked him to take twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes, and ask them to carry 12 stones out of the midst of the river Jordan where the priests' feet stood firm and set up these stones in front of the arc of the Covenant in the lodging place in Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. Joshua then asked the children of Israel to bear in mind that these stones were a memorial to their posterity. "When your children ask their fathers in time to come what these stones are for, then you shall let your children know saying, Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land" (Joshua 4:6-8).

God has abundantly blessed us. Today we have over seventy parishes and congregations all across the United States, Canada and Europe. We have the services of the best and talented achen available everywhere. The newly arriving Mar Thoma immigrants find it easy to adjust and adapt to the new surroundings with the help of numerous friends and dear ones. But we cannot forget the past. The Wampanoag native Indians, with the most primitive lifestyle, passed on their faith, tradition and the difficulties they encountered to generation after generation. As we celebrate Diaspora Sunday and Thanksgiving Day, we are celebrating faith, family and freedom. We too should tell our children and they in turn their children about our humble beginnings, recognizing God's hand in our history, the way in which God led us through generations and expressing gratitude to Him for his goodness and mercies. Diaspora Sunday gives us an opportunity to enrich our families' awareness of this nation's Christian heritage, provide models of courage and sacrifice for our children and establish a tradition of sharing our gratefulness with one another which will build a legacy of memories for the future "... and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider what great things He has done for you" (1 Samuel 12:24). ■

"One indication that we are on the right path on our journey towards the kingdom of God is when the time between our sins gets larger and larger, and the time between sin and repentance gets smaller and smaller."

J. S. Varughese, Philadelphia

നഷ്ട സൗഭഗങ്ങൾ

ജോർജ്ജ് ഉമ്മൻ, പുത്തൻകുരിശ്

അലഞ്ഞുതിരിഞ്ഞുഞാൻ ഒടുവിൽ വന്നെത്തിയാ
 വലിയനഗരത്തിൻ വിശാലവീഥിതന്നിൽ
 ഉത്തംഗസൗധമെങ്ങും മത്സരിച്ചുയരുന്നു
 എത്തിപിടിച്ചിടുവാൻ നദസ്സിൻ താരങ്ങളെ
 കത്തുന്നവയറുമായി കയറി ഇറങ്ങി ഞാൻ
 എത്രയോ പടിപ്പുര വിശപ്പിനന്നം തേടി
 കൊടുപ്പാൻ മനസ്സുളളോർ വിരളം നഗരത്തിൽ
 കടുത്ത നിരാശയാൽ നിറുത്തി ഭിക്ഷാടനം,
 എറിഞ്ഞു തന്ന ചില ധാന്യത്തിൻ മണികളെ
 പെറുക്കി സഞ്ചിക്കുള്ളിൽ ഒതുക്കി വച്ചശേഷം,
 ഓലയിൽ മെടഞ്ഞുള്ള കുടിലു പുകിടാനായ്
 കാലുകൾ വലിച്ചു ഞാൻ നടന്നു തുടങ്ങുമ്പോൾ
 കേട്ടതാ ദൂരത്തൊരു തേരിന്റെ തെളിക്കൽ പോൽ
 ചാട്ടവാറടിയുടെ ശബ്ദവും കേൾപ്പാനായ്
 മനസ്സിനുള്ളിലൊരു കുളിർ കാറ്റടിച്ചുടൻ
 കനകം വിളയുന്ന രാജാവിൻ വരവാണി
 'തീരുവാൻ സമയമായ് ദാരിദ്ര്യദുഃഖം പാടെ
 കോരിതരിച്ചു മേനി കോൾമയിർ കൊണ്ടു ചിത്തം
 ചിലപ്പോൾ ചില സ്വപ്നം സത്യമായ് ഭവിച്ചിടും
 അലച്ചിൽ വിട്ടുപോകും ജീവിതം ധന്യമാകും
 കനവുകണ്ടതാണി സുദിനം ഒരുന്നാളിൽ
 അണഞ്ഞു ഒടുവിലാ വലിയ നിമിഷവും'
 തലകൾ വണക്കി ഞാൻ ഒതുങ്ങി വഴിവക്കിൽ
 അലിവു തോന്നീടുവാൻ ഭജിച്ചു ഉള്ളത്തിലും
 പതിഞ്ഞാ തൂക്കൺ രണ്ടും എൻമുഖത്താശ്വാസമായ്
 കുതിച്ചു വന്ന തേരും നിന്നുടൻ ശബ്ദത്തോടെ

ഇറങ്ങി വന്നുരാജൻ അരികിൽ നിന്നുമുദാ
 വിറങ്ങലിച്ചു നില്ക്കും എൻ നേരെ കരം നീട്ടി
 'തരുവാൻ നിന്റെ കയ്യിൽ എന്തുണ്ടു പറയുക
 തരുവിൻ ഉടൻ തന്നെ പോകുവാൻ തിടുകുമായ്'
 കൊഴിഞ്ഞുപോയി എന്റെ പ്രതീക്ഷ ക്ഷണം തന്നെ
 പഴിച്ചു സ്വയം എന്നെ 'ഭിക്ഷുവിൻ സ്വപ്നത്തെയും!'
 തിടുകും കൂട്ടിടുന്നു രാജാവ് ഭിക്ഷക്കായി
 ഒടുവിൽ തുറന്നെന്റെ പഴഞ്ചൻ സഞ്ചി മെല്ലെ
 ചെറുതാം ഒരു മണി അരി ഞാനെടുത്തിട്ട്
 നിറയും മിഴിയോടെ കൊടുത്തു രാജേന്ദ്രന്
 വിടർന്നു മന്ദഹാസം പരന്നു വദനത്തിൽ
 വിടയും പറഞ്ഞിട്ടു മറഞ്ഞു രാജൻ വേഗം
 ശപിച്ചു ഞാനെന്റെയാ ദൂരയെ ഓർത്തോരല്പം
 തപിച്ചു നഷ്ടമായ അരിയെ ചൊല്ലി ഏറെ
 മറഞ്ഞു സൂര്യദേവൻ പശ്ചിമാബ്ധിയിലങ്ങു
 മറഞ്ഞു ഞാനുമെന്റെ കുടിലിൽ അതിവേഗം
 ഇരുന്നോരല്പനേരം തറയിൽ തളർന്നു ഞാൻ
 ചൊരിഞ്ഞു സഞ്ചിയിലെ ഭിക്ഷയാ നിലത്തായി
 മിന്നുന്നു അരികളിൽ സ്വർണ്ണത്തിൻ ഒരുതരി
 മിന്നിമറഞ്ഞു മൂന്നിൽ നടന്ന സംഭവങ്ങൾ
 കഷ്ടം! ഞാൻ പൂർണ്ണമായി കൊടുക്കാൻ മടിച്ചതാൽ
 നഷ്ടമായ് സൗഭഗങ്ങൾ കൂട്ടമായ് എന്നിൽ നിന്നും.

* * * * *
 മനുഷ്യ ജീവിതത്തെ മഹിതമാക്കാനായ്
 നിനയാതിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ എത്തുന്നു ഗുരുഭൂതർ
 ലിഖിതം ചെയ്തിടുവിൻ ഹൃദയെ ഇതിൻ സാരം
 സുഖത്തെ ഏകീടുന്നു കൊടുപ്പോർക്കെന്നുമീശൻ

('ഗീതാഞ്ജലിയോട്' കടപ്പാട്)

Please Note!!!

When you email pictures to publish in the Mar Thoma Messenger, please scan and save them as:
Grayscale 300 DPI jpeg or tiff files.

Please don't email pictures as word format.
 Thank you very much for your support and cooperation.



സഭയും അത്മായ പ്രേഷിതത്വവും ബാബു പുല്ലാട്

മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭ അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായി ഒരു അത്മായ യോന്മുഖ (Lay centered) സഭയാണ്. അത്മായ പ്രേഷിതർക്ക് മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭ പ്രോത്സാഹനവും അഭിനന്ദനവും നൽകുന്ന ഒരു നല്ല പാരമ്പര്യം നമുക്കുണ്ട്.

'അത്മായർ' എന്ന വാക്ക് 'Laity' എന്ന ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് പദത്തിന്റെ പരിഭാഷയാണ്. 'Laos' എന്ന ഗ്രീക്കു മൂലത്തിൽ നിന്നുമാണ് 'laity' ഉണ്ടായത്. 'Laos' വേദപുസ്തകത്തിൽ 'ദൈവജനത്തെ' സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നു (പുറ.19:4-6, 1പത്ര.2:9). സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യം പ്രധാനമായും ദൈവജനത്തിലൂടെ (അത്മായരിലൂടെ) ആണ് നിർവ്വഹിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടത്. ഒരു സജീവ ശരീരത്തിലെ ഓരോ അവയവവും എപ്രകാരം ശരീര വളർച്ചയിൽ പങ്കു വഹിക്കുന്നുവോ, അപ്രകാരം യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ശരീരമാകുന്ന സഭയിലെ ഓരോ അംഗവും സഭയുടെ ആകമാന പ്രവർത്തനത്തിൽ പങ്കുചേരണം (എഫെ.4:16). ചുരുക്കത്തിൽ അത്മായ പ്രേഷിത പ്രവർത്തനം മന്ദീഭവിച്ചാൽ സഭയുടെ പ്രേഷിത പ്രവർത്തനം നിശ്ചലമാകും.

യേശു യെഹൂദമതത്തിലെ ഒരു അത്മായനായിരുന്നു. താൻ ജീവിച്ച സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ എല്ലാ മേഖലകളിലും ഒരു അത്മായനായി താൻ കടന്നു ചെന്ന് പുളിമാവുപോലെ പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു. യേശുവിന്റെ സഹപ്രവർത്തകരും അത്മായരായിരുന്നു.

ആദിമ സഭയുടെ വളർച്ചയും മുന്നേറ്റവും അത്മായരുടെ വളർച്ചയും മുന്നേറ്റവും ആയിരുന്നു. (അ.പ്ര.8:4, 11:19-21, 18:26, ഫിലി.4:3). യേശുവിനെ കർത്തവ്യം രക്ഷിതാവുമായി അംഗീകരിച്ച് സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന ഏവരെയും യേശു തന്റെ പിൻഗാമികളായി രാജകീയ പുരോഹിത വർഗ്ഗമാക്കി(1പത്ര.2:4-10) പ്രേഷിത പ്രവർത്തിക്കു നിയുക്തരാക്കുന്നു. ഈ ദൈവ ജനത്തിൽ നിന്നാണ് വൈദിക വൃത്തിക്കും സുവിശേഷ വേലയ്ക്കും ചിലർ വേർതിരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത്. പ്രത്യേക സ്ഥാനികൾ അവരുടെ വിളിക്കപ്പെട്ട ചുമതലകൾ നിർവ്വഹിക്കുമ്പോൾ അത്മായർ ലോകമാകുന്ന വിശാല രംഗത്ത് മഹത്വകരമായ ശുശ്രൂഷ ചെയ്യുന്നു. അവരിലൂടെ വേണം ലോകം രക്ഷകനായ ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ കണ്ടെത്തേണ്ടത്.

അത്മായ പ്രേഷിത പ്രവർത്തനം സാധ്യമാകണമെങ്കിൽ സഭ പ്രാദേശിക ഇടവകകളെ ദൗത്യത്തിനായി സജ്ജമാക്കണം. ചുറ്റുപാടുമുള്ള ജനതയുടെ വേദനകളിലും വെല്ലു വിളികളിലും അർത്ഥവത്തായി പങ്കുചേരുവാനും അവരുടെ കണ്ണുനീരൊപ്പുവാനും ഇടവകകളെ ഒരുക്കിയെടുക്കണം.

പരമ്പരാഗതമായി പട്ടക്കാരെ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനശൈലിക്കു തന്നെ കാലോചിതമായ മാറ്റം ഉണ്ടാകണം. ജനങ്ങളെ സജ്ജരാക്കുന്ന enablers or facilitators ആയി പട്ടക്കാരൻ തീരണം. ഒരു യഥാർത്ഥ നേതാവ് മറ്റുള്ളവരെ നേതാക്കൻ മാരാക്കുന്നവനായിരിക്കണം.

ആദിമ സഭയുടെ ചരിത്രത്തിൽ ഒരു സുപ്രധാന വഴിത്തിരിവുണ്ടായത് അ.പ്ര.6-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ വിവരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. അപ്പോസ്തോലന്മാർ സഭയുടെ ആകമാന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ ബലശ്രദ്ധരായിരുന്നു. ആദ്ധ്യാത്മിക ശുശ്രൂഷകൾ മാത്രമല്ല ഭക്ഷണ ക്രമീകരണങ്ങളും അവർ തന്നെ ചെയ്തു വന്നു. അപ്പോൾ ചില അവഗണനയും പിറുപിറുപ്പും സഭയിൽ ഉണ്ടായി. അവിടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിന്റെ പ്രതികരണം ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. തെറ്റ് അംഗീകരിച്ച് പ്രവർത്തന ശൈലി തിരുത്തുവാൻ അവർ തയ്യാറായി. ആ സഭയിൽ തന്നെയുള്ള സാധ്യതകളെ കണ്ടെത്തി അധികാര വികേന്ദ്രീകരണത്തിന് അവർ തയ്യാറായി. അതിന്റെ ഫലമായി ഒരു സ്തേഹാനോസും ഫിലിപ്പോസും സഭയ്ക്ക് മുതൽകൂട്ടായിതീർന്നു.

ഇന്നും സഭയുടെ ആകമാന ജീവിതത്തിൽ കുറ്റങ്ങൾക്കായുള്ള ചുവരെഴുത്തുകൾ നാം വായിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. സഭാ ശുശ്രൂഷയുടെ ശൈലിയിൽ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ വരുത്തുവാൻ നാം അറച്ചു നിൽക്കുന്നു. ഇടവകകളിൽ ഫിലിപ്പോസുമാരും സ്തേഹാനോസുമാരും ഉണ്ടാകുകയില്ലെന്ന് ആരറിഞ്ഞു? ഇടവകകളിൽ അവഗണിക്കപ്പെട്ടവർ ഉണ്ടാകാതെയിരിക്കുവാൻ ഒരു പുതിയ ശൈലി നമുക്ക് അത്യാവശ്യമായിരിക്കുന്നു. സ്വമേധയ പ്രേഷിതവൃത്തിയിൽ ഏർപ്പെടുന്ന അത്മായരേയും സംഘടനകളിലും ഇടവകകളിലും ഔദ്യോഗികമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന അത്മായരേയും കണ്ടെത്തി അവർക്ക് വിവേക പൂർവ്വമായ സഹകരണവും നേതൃത്വവും പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യുവാൻ കഴിയണം. അവർക്ക് കാലോചിതമായ പരിശീലനം, പരിപോഷണം, വിവിധ രീതിയിലുള്ള പ്രേഷിത പരിപാടികളെ സംബന്ധിച്ച് വിവരങ്ങൾ നൽകി പ്രവർത്തന സജ്ജരാക്കണം. അപ്പോൾ അത്മായ പ്രേഷിത പ്രവർത്തനം സഭയുടെ മുഴുവൻ പ്രേഷിതത്വത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായിത്തീരും. സഭ ആദ്യ നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെപ്പോലെ ആത്മിക വർദ്ധനവു പ്രാപിച്ചും, ഭക്തിയിലും പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിന്റെ പ്രബോധനയിലും വളർന്നു ഫലവത്തായിത്തീരും.

നി. വ. ദി. മ. ശ്രീ. ഡോ. സഖറിയസ് മാർ തെയോഫിലസ് സഫ്രഗൻ
 മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ തിരുമേനിക്ക് സ്ഥാനലബ്ധി
 അഭിവാദനങ്ങൾ-നിസ്തുലാശംസകൾ



സുജാ നൈനാൻ, എബനേസ്സർ ചർച്ച്, ന്യൂയോർക്ക്

മലങ്കര സഭയിന്നു വീണ്ടും ഉണർന്നൊരു
 കാഹള ശബ്ദമായ് ധനിച്ചൊരു വിളംബരം
 മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിലെ സഫ്രഗൻ ബിഷപ്പായി
 അവരോധിതനായി മാർ തിയോഫിലസ് തിരുമേനി

സഫ്രഗൻ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായെന്ന
 വിശുദ്ധ സ്ഥാനത്തു ശോഭിക്കും നാളെല്ലാം
 ക്രിസ്തുവിൻ സുവിശേഷ സാദൃശം ഘോഷിക്കും
 ലോകോത്തരങ്ങൾക്കു നൽ മേന്മയേകിടും

വാനിലെ പറവകൾ പുലരുന്ന താഴ്വരും
 വയലിലെ താമര പൂക്കുന്ന തന്മൂതം
 സത്യമായ് തന്നെ വിളിച്ചപേക്ഷിക്കുന്നോർക്കു
 നിത്യ വെളിച്ചത്താൽ ഏറ്റം പ്രകാശിക്കും

ഉയർത്തെഴുന്നേറ്റ ക്രിസ്തുവിൻ ജീവനെ
 സ്പർശിച്ചറിഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ വിശ്വാസ വീരനായ്
 തീർന്നൊരു ശിഷ്യന്റെ പാദാര വിന്ദുതാൽ
 ധന്യമാം ജന്മനാടാം നിരണം പ്രസിദ്ധമാം

നന്മ സുവിശേഷിക്കുന്നവർ തൻ പാദം മനോഹരം
 എന്ന തിരുവചനത്താൽ പ്രവാചക സന്ദേശം
 തികച്ചും അന്വർത്ഥമാകുന്ന സദ്ഭാവം
 പ്രസന്ന വദനത്താൽ ജ്വലിച്ചു വിളങ്ങട്ടെ

തിരുക്കരത്താൽ എന്നും വഹിക്കുന്നു നിശ്ചയം
 തിരുഹിതം പോൽ നിത്യം പുലർത്തുന്നു മഹിമയായ്
 കുശവൻ കൈയ്യിൽ അല്പം കളിമണ്ണു മാത്രമായ്
 പണിയുന്ന പാത്രങ്ങൾ ഏറ്റം മനോഹരം

അമേരിക്ക കാനഡാ യൂറോപ്പു രാഷ്ട്രങ്ങൾ
 ആകവേ സഭയിന് ഏറെ വളർന്നിടാൻ
 സഖറിയസ് തിരുമേനി നൽകിയ നേതൃത്വം
 പ്രാർത്ഥനയിലോർത്തു നാം എന്നും വണങ്ങിടാം

നീതി സമാധാന സത്യമീ ഭൂതലേ
 ഉയർത്തി വ്യാപിച്ചിടാൻ സൽ പ്രേരണ ഏകി
 ഉന്നതാദർശവും ദർശന രൂപവും
 സമനായിപ്പിക്കുന്ന മാർഗ്ഗം തെളിച്ചിടും

സഭകൾ യോജിച്ച് സ്തുതി സ്തോത്രമർപ്പിക്കാൻ
 തീവ്രശ്രമങ്ങളാം എക്യുമെനിസത്തിലും
 അചഞ്ചല നേതൃത്വം യുവചൈതന്യമായ്
 അനുദിനം പകരുവാൻ നമുക്കു പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചിടാം

വിശ്വാസ തീഷ്ണത, അനശ്വര സത്യങ്ങൾ
 അപഗ്രഥിച്ചുള്ളവാക്കും മായാത്ത ചിന്തകൾ
 പഠനക്കളരിയിൽ സാരോപദേശത്തിൽ
 അവാച്യമാം മാതൃക തുടർന്നും ചൊരിയട്ടെ

അർത്ഥപൂർണ്ണമായുള്ള ആത്മീക ശക്തിയും
 നൂതന ശൈലിയിൽ, പ്രസംഗവേദിയിൽ
 പ്രതിസന്ധി ഘട്ടത്തിൽ തളരാതെ ശയിക്കാതെ
 ദിവ്യ പ്രകാശത്തിൽ എത്തിച്ചതോർത്തിടാം

പ്രതികൂല സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ സ്വയം പഴിക്കുന്ന മനുഷ്യൻ പലപ്പോഴും ദൈവത്തെ പോലും സംശയിക്കാറുണ്ട്. ആധിപത്യകുന്യാൾ ദൈവ സാന്നിധ്യത്തിന്റെ പൊരുളു പോലും അവൻ മറക്കുന്നു. അപ്പോൾ വിശ്വാസം ആവലാധിയായി മാറാറുണ്ട്. ഇന്നും അതിനു വലിയ മാറ്റമൊന്നും ഇല്ല. ഈ സത്യം ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന വളരെ പരിചിതമായ ഒരു വേദഭാഗം ആസ്പദമാക്കി ആണ് ഈ കവിത.

ഉലയുന്ന ജീവിത പടകിൽ

ക്രൂദ്ധിച്ചമറുന്ന മാനത്തിന്മാറത്തിന്നരിവാളെറിയുന്നു കൊള്ളിയാൻ
സംഹാരതാണ്ഡവമാടിത്തിമിർത്തങ്ങലരിയലയ്ക്കുന്നു മരുതൻ
രക്തംഘനീപ്പിക്കും രൗദ്രഭാവത്തോടൂറഞ്ഞുതുളളുന്നങ്ങലകൾ
പ്രകൃതിയതി വികൃതിയാം കുട്ടിക്കുറുമ്പൻ പോൽ തല്ലിത്തകർക്കുന്നു സർവ്വം

ഇളകുന്നാരലകളിലമ്മാനമാടിയൊരു ചെറുതോണിയുലയുന്നു ഉഴറി
തണ്ടുവലിക്കുന്നു മണ്ടിനടക്കുന്നു പരിഭ്രാന്തിയാർന്ന യാത്രികർ
പ്രതികൂലകാറ്റിനാലോളം പെരുകുന്യാൾ സ്വയം പഴിച്ചീടുന്നു ഉള്ളിൽ
അക്കരയെത്തുവാൻ നിശ്ചയമില്ലൊട്ടും ദൈവമേ കൈവിട്ടതെന്തേ?

ഒരുവേള നോക്കുന്യാൾ അമരത്തുറങ്ങുന്നു പിൻചെല്ലാൻ ചൊന്നൊരു നാഥൻ
പ്രകൃതിതൻ വികൃതിയോ മനുജരിൻ തകൃതിയോ പരിഗണിച്ചീടാതെ ശാന്തം
ആശതകർന്നു നിരാശരായ് തീർന്നവർ ഗുരുവിൻ സവിധത്തിലെത്തി
മനമതിൽ നിറയുന്ന നഷ്ടബോധമൊക്കെ വരമൊഴിയായുരുവിട്ടു

താന്തരായ് ഭ്രാന്തരായ് വിലപിപ്പവർക്കൊക്കെ സാന്ത്വനമേകുവോനല്ലേ?
എന്നിട്ടും നീയെന്തേ ഞങ്ങളിൻ രോദനം ശ്രവിക്കാതുറങ്ങുന്നു നാഥാ?
അക്കരെ പോകുവാൻ അന്തിക്കു നിർബ്ബന്ധം ചൊല്ലിയയച്ചോൻ നീയല്ലേ?
ഞങ്ങൾ നശിക്കുന്യാൾ നിന്നുള്ളിൽ വേദന തോന്നാത്തതെന്തേ നീ ചൊല്ലൂ

ശിഷ്യർതൻ നിലവിളി ശ്രദ്ധിച്ച നാഥനാ അമരത്തെഴുന്നേറ്റു നിന്നു
സാകുതമവരുടെ വദനങ്ങളോരോന്നും പരിശോധിച്ചൊരുവേള നിന്നാൻ
കടക്കണ്ണിലൊരുതെല്ലു കുസൃതിയെ ചാലിച്ചു ശാന്തമായവരോടു ചൊല്ലി
വിളിച്ചവൻ ഞാനല്ലേ, വിശ്വസ്തനായവൻ പിന്നെന്തേ പരിഭ്രമിച്ചീടാൻ?

പടകൊന്നു മുങ്ങിയാൽ ഓളം വിഴുങ്ങിയാൽ ഞാനില്ലെ നിങ്ങൾക്കുമൊപ്പം
ജീവനാണെങ്കിലും മരണത്തിനെങ്കിലും എന്നോടൊത്താണല്ലോ നിങ്ങൾ
ജീവിതയാനമിനലകളാലുലയുന്യാൾ പേടിപ്പവരല്ലെ നാമും?
വിളിച്ചവനവനിന്നും വിശ്വസ്തനാണെന്നു വിശ്വസിക്കാൻ പഠിക്കില്ലേ?

Written by: Rev. Sunni E. Mathew

Recited by: Sumitha Rachel Mathew

Does Faith Have a Future in a Culture of Darkness?

Prof. Plammoottil V. Cherian, M. Div., Ph.D.

One of the most challenging questions Christians need to answer was asked by Christ during his ministry, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8). We live in a rapidly changing world culture that affects not only the cultural and social life of the people but the life and mission of the church also. Changing culture has brought a major shift in the paradigm of human life, values, faith, and on Christianity itself. Since the beginning of human history people affirmed that "Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God" (Psalm 90:1-2). That faith has become unpersuasive to millions in the present culture. The last quarter of a century has witnessed the rewriting of human history and civilization with a fast moving culture shifting away from God. In an age of technological and scientific advancement the world today is under the cloud of darkness of ignorance, idolatry, false teaching, false worship, materialism and self centeredness challenging God. God calls the church to arise and shine when darkness covers the world (Isa. 60:1-2).

According to Christian doctrine the present time is the "Age of Grace," but for the secular world it is the Postmodern Era, or "Technocentric Era" and the present secular culture is the "pop culture." The Age of Grace began at Calvary with the death of Christ to redeem the fallen humanity, to give them a new life in a new culture with a new future. It is a time for humanity to take advantage of God's mercy and grace because our sins are forgiven and those who seek forgiveness can spiritually learn and grow to be Christ-like (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14). It is by repentance that we accept forgiveness and by renewal, commitment and trust we grow and acquire knowledge of God through Christ (1 John.1:9). The vast majority do not seem to be affected by the changing culture because they have adopted the principle of "While in Rome do as the Romans do." As far as Christians are concerned, the faithful in the church struggle to cope with the rapidly changing culture and to preserve the faith.

That Christ has foreseen the wave of new culture and its influence on faith is clear from the question he posed to his disciples (Luke 18:8). The same concern was expressed by apostle Paul when he asked the Corinthians and the future generations to "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know



yourself, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified" (2 Cor. 13:5,6). It is the earnest desire of God that we live in faith until Christ returns. "Does faith have a future in the rapidly changing Culture? When Christ returns will He find faith on earth? These are serious questions true Christians need to answer.

Christian Faith is Two Dimensional

For most people faith is a Sunday Mass or worship or attending Good Friday or Easter service. True faith begins at the cross because Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father (God) except through Me" (John 14:6). Bible teaches that eternal life is knowing the true God and Jesus Christ whom God sent to redeem the fallen humanity (John 17:3). Gaining knowledge of the true God and eternal life is through a personal relationship with Christ. That concept is clearly emphasized when John summarized the generosity of God's love for mankind that we should have eternal life (John 3:16). One who has no personal relationship with Jesus Christ will have no eternal life.

Faith has both a vertical dimension directed to God and a horizontal dimension directed to our neighbors in the world. We can relate to both these dimensions only through Christ in us. We cannot speak of faith in CHRIST without the Cross of Calvary. There is no way except the WAY of the Cross. There is no TRUTH except what is revealed on the Cross. There is no ETERNAL LIFE except through an exchange of sinful life that is short of the glory of God for a new glorified life in Christ.

Present Culture and its Effects

The effect of the changing culture is widespread globally in three different spheres of human life.

1. Nations and rulers. Most of the Western nations whose constitution and foundation of the society were anchored on biblical doctrines have become more and more secular. Leaders lack God-centered character and ethical principles and their actions are motivated on the spur of instincts rather than on reasoning and sound judgment guided by the will of God. Getting rich by any means has become the norm of life with the effect that the rich becoming richer and poor becoming poorer.

2. Society and Family. Social injustice, violence, abuse, crime and exploitation of the poor are rampant in

society. Family structure is shattered, lifestyle is changing, cohabitation is becoming common under the protection of law and people have become more materialistic and self-centered. Emptiness in life drives people to drugs, alcohol, sex and pornography to satisfy their needs. Yet with the vacuum inside they find out that running after pleasures is similar to "chasing after the wind" (Ecc. 2:17). Many are in utter despair and suicide is on the rise even in countries which have had Christian influence.

3. Spiritual Sphere. In the spiritual sphere profound changes have been taking place that are astounding. Spiritism, occultism and Satan worship are on the rise. Jesus Christ is reduced to one of the ways not the WAY; worship is turning into gathering of social events having a form of godliness with no substance. God, Christ and theology have been pushed to the side lines against the teaching in Galatians 1:6-9 and we rush to embrace other teachings. There is a trend to compromise faith with culture. The dangerous result will be apostasy (Jude 1-25).

Popular Culture and our Children

Culture affects the Spirituality of our children in three ways.

1. They have a natural curiosity about the unusual, the strange, and the bizarre things and they would experiment with all these.
2. Contemporary culture is widespread with alternative religious practices that may tap into that adolescent curiosity—other religions, New Age, crystals, cults, and more.
3. Main line denominations with their extreme tendencies of either fundamentalism or legalism like the Pharisees can test the faith of young people and they may leave the church and even faith itself.

We must not Shy away from World and its Culture

Every human generation had experienced wild and ungodly culture. The nature of such a culture is, "everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 17:5; 21:25) no matter whether something is right or wrong, godly or ungodly. And that is just the opposite of God's instruction. During the period of Noah wickedness was great, every inclination of human thought was evil and God grieved that he had created man (Gen. 6:5, 6). After Noah we see the desire of people in the creation of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), the culture of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18, 19), and of the Canaanites. The history of Israelites throughout was a culture of rebellion against God. Several centuries after Noah preached Jesus cautioned humanity of the cataclysmic events which were to come in the future—the symbol and signs of the present culture (Matthew 24: 36-42; Luke 17:26-37). The nature of the present culture is further described by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Yet we are to live in this world.

IN the World but NOT OF the World

Christians must view their life on earth from a biblical perspective that we are ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), brothers and sisters of Christ and heirs with him (Rom. 8:16, 17). Like David we must acknowledge that "We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope" (1 Chr. 29:15). We are made the special objects of divine affection in the world when Christ said, "I have chosen you out of the world." (John 15:19). Christians are temporary residents in the world as long as we live.

Jesus asked God not to take believers out of the world, but instead to protect us from falling to the evil one. "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. As you send me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:15-19). Because Christ sends us for a mission in the world, we should not try to escape from the world without fulfilling our mission. Nor we should avoid our relationship with others, non-believers or people of different culture. We must boldly live in the world making a real distinction between "IN the World but NOT OF the World." Paul's instruction underlines this concept when he said, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom.12:2). Conformity with all the patterns of the changing culture is not the mark of the children of God.

Does culture change Faith or Faith change the Culture?

Noted theologian Richard Niebuhr describes five paradigms in his book Christ and Culture.¹

1. Christ against Culture, describes Christians who want to separate themselves from the surrounding culture and do not want to have any contacts with non-Christians. This is a sectarian impulse and the view of fundamentalists.
2. The Christ of Culture, a concept of bringing world culture and Christianity together, regardless of their differences. Christians in this mode seek to discern and then champion the highest moral common ground between the teaching of Christ and the noblest values of contemporary culture.
3. Christ above Culture explains that all that is good in human culture is a gift from God. This was the view of Thomas Aquinas and remains the view of Roman Catholics and similar faith.
4. Christ and Culture in Paradox. This view relates to Christian responsibility in understanding both the

cultural and the spiritual realms. On one hand, Christians believe that God has ordained worldly institutions and that we must work within them the best we can. On the other, we must affirm Christ's principles and God's kingdom in the world for which we are called. 5. Christ, the Transformer of Culture. This relates to Christians who like to make use of the values and goals of secular culture into the service of the kingdom of God. This view is held by Evangelicals and the revivalists group like John Wesley, George Whitefield etc. The underlying principle is both evangelization and bringing about social reforms.

While each of these paradigm can be supported by scripture, personally I believe that Christ is the transformer of culture and it is God's ultimate intention as it relates to Christ, humanity and culture. This is evident in Christ's high priestly prayer for his believers in the world (John 17:15-18). Transforming the cultures is a commission when Jesus said, "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt:28:19). It is based on this principle that Christ overcame the cultural barriers as illustrated in his interaction with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42) and the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7: 24-30).

Keeping our faith in a Culture of Global darkness

1. Beware of the cultural changes. We must view the world culture thorough the lens of the Bible. We spent most of our time—our work, social interactions, media, shopping, travel—everything in the secular world. For most part we have a secularized life and are being secularized each day.²
2. We must avoid ethnocentrism (cultural bias) but develop interaction with others. Many people believe that their culture is superior. This is called ethnocentrism and is the root of all misunderstanding, ethnic and racial conflict that we encounter in the world today. Remember that the other culture is not inferior—but just different from many of the practices, behavior and set principles from theirs (ours). This biblical principle is illustrated in the vision of Peter before he went to Cornelius' house (Acts 10:9-38). We must not refer another ethnic culture as bad, inferior unclean or untouchable. By overcoming the cultural barrier and uplifting the cause of the lower castes Mahatma Gandhi became the champion of the untouchables just as Paul became the apostle of the Gentiles bringing them into faith in Christ.
3. Do not compromise faith with culture. We must interact and overcome cultural barriers without

compromising. Know our past culture before we came to know Christ. Christianity originated from the caldron of many cultures—The Jewish culture, the Roman culture, the Greek Culture, the Middle Eastern culture. God repeatedly warned Israelites not to practice and conform to those enticing cultures and practices that surrounded them. But they compromised and gave into the pagan culture that resulted in their downfall throughout history. We are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14) but our lights will not shine if compromising with the world culture. Be in the world, but not of the world. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:11-13). Return to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3-5).

It is only by faith we can stand and overcome the pressures of the changing culture. (2 Cor:1:24) The Age of Grace will not last forever. It could end any day when Christ returns, "when the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). To live as Christians, to engage in witnessing, evangelism and mission without first knowing the culture of the time we are in, would be something like putting some one on a 747 jet who has never flown and asking him to pilot the plane. Whether directly or indirectly, the issue of culture is very important for all that we do as Christians in ministry and mission.

Neither we must run away from the world nor we seclude ourselves under the pretext of seeking the glory of God. This is what God taught Moses through the burning bush (Exod. 3:1-15). God taught Moses that 1. We can see God and attain holiness from where we stand. 2. Holiness is not in getting closer to the altar or behind the curtain, or in visions, but in our open mind to see the oppression of our fellow human beings as the Israelites in bondage in Egypt. 3. Holiness depends on considering others greater than ourselves. 4. Holiness can be found not only in the holy places, it is present everywhere even where it seems difficult to find and in the darkest allies.

To a morally depraved world, God said, "See darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you" (Isa. 60:2). The present world is under the cloud of darkness. We Christians must arise and shine so that the glory of the Lord can shine through us to lighten those who are surrounded by darkness. ■

[Portion of this has been given at the Midwest Regional Meeting of the Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom, held in Detroit Mar Thoma Church on September 11, 2004]

Reference

1. H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture New York: Harper & Row, 1951.
2. Harry Blamires, Recovering the Christian Mind. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988, 59-60.

Second National Edavaka Mission Conference

Roy C. Thomas, Diocesan Secretary



Conference leaders with Rev. Dr. Valson Thampu

EDAVAKA MISSION IN IT'S EFFECTIVE ROLE AS LAY MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH.

The Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelist Association made a leap into the wider frame work of God's ministry as lay ministrants of the Church. This became evident when the Second National Edavaka Mission Conference was held from August 27 to 29 in Washington, hosted by Eastern Zone and Washington, DC Mar Thoma Church. The theme of the conference "laity and the mission of the Church" was appropriate and of contemporary relevance. If we limit the contents of our spiritual calling to Sundays we cannot see our calling in its true implication. There is very little that the lay people can actually do in Church on Sundays. They can, sure enough, worship as well as support the work and witness of the congregation. But Biblical spirituality is not meant to remain confined to only Sundays and to Church premises. This awareness is at the root of our Mar Thoma tradition, which urges every Marthomite to be a missionary.

The Church is a God ordained provision to equip the people of God to the effective witness in the world. A minister is one who serves the Lord Jesus Christ. To serve is to be always alert to the opportunities to do the will of the Master. These opportunities are far greater in the world outside than inside the Church. Every Christian is, by definition, meant to be a missionary. We are meant to glorify and fulfill his purpose for our lives. Each of us has a mission and beyond that each of us has a responsibility to contribute to the mission of the Church. The role of a layperson is no less serious one than the



Participants in group discussion

ordained ministry. This is because we are all called at to be full time ministers to the word of God. A part time ministry is only for a part time Christian.

We were very fortunate to have eminent leaders for the Second National Conference. Rev. Dr. Valson Thampu was the main speaker along with Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Rev. Sabu Koshy, Rev. John Mathai, Rev. Saji Thomas, and Dr. George Zachariah. Zonal Secretary, Dr. John K. Thomas, Lay Vice President Mr. Sunny Abraham, Mr. P. P. Chacko, and Conference Committee Members dedicated their best to make the event successful.



Participants of the Second National Edavaka Mission Conference.

What's Victory?

Dr. Zac Varghese, London

*What's a hill? Someone once asked,
No one knew the answer to his surprise.
A hill is a hole in the sky, he said;
It's simply a way of look at things.*

*Victory is not a hill on the wayside of life
Failure is not a ditch that no one could escape.
Where your God is is an insulting question
Faith is the rope for my agony and gloom.*

*Life and death love and hate,
Rich and poor, winning and losing,
Giving and receiving, caring and using;
A thin line separates them all.*

*Forty days of fasting and praying
Made him weak to face the devil
Faced with options sweet and simple
He took the option for the cross*

*Victory lies concealed in every failure,
And failure in every victory.
It was on the cross that He found His crown
It's in dying, we live again.*



*I see thy hand in everyday things.
I hear thy thunder in the silence of night.
It's a silence of unimaginable dimension.
O whispering silences tell me the tale.*

*I see thy splendour in every creation
The handiwork of a master craftsman
The Lilies of the fields spread a display
Unequaled to any imagination*

*The winking stars have a story to tell,
Do I have the time to stand and stare?
I see miracles in little things of life,
In breathing in and breathing out.*

*O death, where is thy sting?
Where is thy victory?
Cross was a shame for scholarly folks.
O paschal lamb what have you done!*

*"Knowing is in the unknowing", said the sage
It is in silence that you know your God
When silence met silence, a vision was born
"My Lord and my God" was the only response..*

Indian Culture into American Culture for Parents and Children (ICIACFPAC)

V. S. Mathew, Florida

We Indians have established a fine record of bringing up our children into American culture, especially in the upbringing and education of the younger generation and also resolve to preserve our own ethnic traditions, which add so much richness and strength in our American life. We people have sought liberty and opportunity and dreamed of a better life for our children to preserve our rich cultural heritage. For every successful child, the parents are behind him or her telling what was wrong from time to time. It is so unfortunate that the children are not realizing because of the pressure of American culture into their life. It is so fearful that when they realize the reality it may be too late. So I humbly request all our children to listen carefully to your parents because they are your best friends in life. They wish nothing but the happiness and prosperity of their children. Parents also must listen carefully to their children as well as to get into their shoes to understand better.

Today, for millions around the world, life is a difficult and desperate struggle. Discerning families realize that the children of the family face an ominous future. Many people think "the twenty first century may be worse". The way teenagers think determines what to say, what to do and

what kind of individuals they want to be. Therefore, it is essential to develop good thinking—for example, "what should be my ultimate goal and where will be my final destination?" A pure heart and mind produce wholesome upright words and success to build a legacy of virtues and values for our families. Our thoughts shape our words and our words reflect our character, keeping in mind the feelings and dignity of our family beings.

Accepting love affirms the being of the child, whereas transforming love seeks the well-being of the child. Each aspect corrects the excess of the other. Attachment becomes too quiescent if it slackens into mere acceptance of the child as he or she is. Parents have a duty to promote their children's excellence. Parents find it difficult to maintain an equilibrium between the two sides of love; accepting love without transforming love, slides into indulgence and finally neglect. Transforming love, without accepting love, badges and finally rejects. I think that is pretty good. Parents are the source of hope, strength, support and peace of mind through which a child can climb whatever mountains might be before him or her or whatever challenges might present themselves. Love is the persuasive force of all that parents do and are essential as well. ■

In God We Trust:

A Perspective on the Democratic Process in Our Church

Ancy Samuel, St. Peter's MTC, New Jersey

After America's last presidential election in November of 2000, the phrase 'for the people, by the people' didn't seem quite as fitting anymore. Complete with the pomp and circumstance of contested polling practices coupled with the confusion over the popular vote and the Electoral College system, things seemed a bit disorderly. Who in fact voted became an issue, for surely more than just half had to have voted, right? According to the Federal Elections Commission and the United States Census Bureau's Population Survey for November 2000, only 51% of the voting age population cast votes in the November 2000 presidential election. The upcoming 2004 presidential election then begs the question, 'How many will vote this time around?' Ultimately, you figure one vote can't make a difference. Remember though, missed votes add up and could mean the difference between a win and a loss, not only for the candidate but also for those who could have benefited from his/her term in office. In addition, not voting effectively takes away your right to sit on the rice bags at the local Indian store and complain about the politicians whom you had a chance to not put in office.

Talk of this 'American Apathy' is even bearing the brunt of many jokes. In one such gag, a decree from England revokes America's independence in light of its obvious inability to govern itself. So England takes it upon herself to 'take' America 'back' and have us learn the lyrics to 'God Save the Queen.' Fine, let the Brits have their laugh... But really though, don't we have any civic responsibilities as members of this country? After all, government is our means of structure to society. I Corinthians 14:40 offer us a Biblical principle of organization, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Additionally, in Matthew 22:21 Christ says, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." From this then it is possible to deduct two things: 1.) We should approach all things in an organized manner and 2.) Christ is supportive of government. Therefore, a case can be made for Christians to promote the further development and organization of its respective country's government. One way to do this is by voting.

At this point I must admit, voting in November is not my only motivation for writing this article. For participating and doing things in an orderly fashion is not only restricted to the arena of government and politics. No, it also extends into the very administrative bodies of the church itself. With the Mar Thoma church setting ever-deeper roots into places outside of Kerala, it is indeed becoming a global church. Yet, there is still much work to be done, particularly in America's case. We now are seeing not only first and second generation Malayalees, but also the third and perhaps even fourth generations. Do these Marthomites, specifically the second generation, have a close and personal relationship with Tiruvalla, or even possess a desire to know about the goings-on in the church bodies such as the



Sabha Prathinithi Mandalam? Do they even know how to pronounce it let alone know of its function in the church? In the coming generations this Diocese will have many new issues that it will be forced to grapple with in order to ensure the church's continued existence and diffusion. Matters of language barriers, 'importing' clergy, and developing a meaningful Diocese for the Mar Thoma church's Indian-American constituents will become tantamount to its survival.

Much like we as Americans love our nationality and call ourselves Americans with pride, we as Marthomites love our church too (setting aside the general body meetings for a minute, that is). But, similar to a mirror, many Marthomites, particularly later generations seem to be reflecting what Americans proved in the 2000 presidential election—that we either don't care, or we feel as though things will keep running smoothly even if we do nothing. Granted, I'm no church revolutionary myself, but it is indeed necessary to consider the point. Just like Americans have a responsibility to their civic duties, Christians, and in our case, Marthomites have a responsibility to their church. Whether we step up to the plate is not in the hands of one fabulously religious, devout, pious individual. Rather, it's in the hands of everyday Marthomites who live and struggle to fight the good fight. Who fall, but get up again realizing that they are in the grace of God. Remember, we are many individuals, but one in the body of Christ. It's not by the works of any one person that we have become the community that we're so proud of, but rather it's by the work of Marthomites: Just like you and me.

The future of the American Marthoma church rests in large part upon second-generation Marthomites in America. I applaud the Achens who grew up here and replied to God's call. Yet, we need more such committed individuals in order to forge a firm bond between those in the laity who grew up here and the clergy of this our heritage-filled church. Surely, one day in the future, America will have a Bishop from among its own. That is, provided that we, the second-generation become more active in its development. Soon the second generation Marthomites will have to take the reigns of responsibility into their hands whether it be forced upon them or taken of their own volition. Either way, the meaningfulness of this church rests upon their shoulders. It's almost as if the Marthoma church was at a crossroads in America. Whatever the future obstacles may be, an earnest desire for the continuation of this church and of course God's grace is of the utmost importance. All this to say that apathy is not an option. Resigning oneself to be a 'silent' member of the church lends itself to a sentiment of isolation and a lack of community. Take up your responsibility as a Marthomite. Understand that a driving force requires the strength of many and move forward with that motivation...oh, and remember to vote in November. ■

What Can Mar Thoma Churches Do To Help Those Who Are Homeless And Help Other Social Issues?

Reuben K. Jacob, Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Juniors—1st place winner—Mar Thoma Messenger Essay Competition—2004

During my late toddler years, one of the major concerns was whether I was growing normally, walking and talking like other people. Later on I was haunted by the illusion of living in a small apartment forever. Now that we are living in a house, my hopes and aspirations have changed. I was thinking about the feelings of a boy like me who does not even have a house to live. To majority of the first generation of Americans of Indian origin, especially the hard working, family oriented Keralite Mathomite boy homelessness is not at all reality. In fact these qualities itself put us into participants of God's Kingdom in this country and the families are stable with both husband and wife working. Kingdom of God is compared to a mustard seed, a hidden treasure. By providing temporary dwelling place we are in fact introducing the person a permanent place of eternal living, the Heaven. The only irony that comes to our mind is as majority of our own brothers and sisters in mother country is suffering, should we do this humanitarian work in this affluent society.

Despite focusing on modern technological advancement, the recent faltering U.S. economy, skyrocketing housing prices and reduced government services, force people from their homes. Agencies are scrambling to find ways to provide shelter the homeless population. "Homelessness" is a social problem and the homeless person is the one who lack a fixed, regular, nighttime residence, including persons whose primary nighttime residence is a supervised public or private shelter designed to provide temporary accommodation. The Department Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released the most complete report on homelessness in the U.S, which revealed that more than 11 million Americans are at a high risk of homelessness. In New York, the world's financial capital, its Mayor Michael proposed using retired cruise ships as shelters for the homeless. Because of the alarming number of homeless people in New York, Bloomberg made a proposal to use an abandoned Bronx jail, which was blocked by judge order, is a good example of how the society views these issues.

At local and national levels governmental, community and religious agencies are seeking more creative means to



combat homelessness. HUD has recently adopted a Single Room Occupancy (SRO), program. Former president Jimmy Carter started the Habitat for Humanity has provided houses for several years.

Mayors' 16th Annual Survey on "Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities" finds increased levels of hunger, increased capacity to meet demand affordable housing cited as primary factor in largest emergency shelter demand in a decade.

The survey, conducted in 25 cities, examined the causes of hunger and homelessness, the demographic groups that make up this population, demand for emergency food and housing-related assistance, model programs that respond to these problems, and the projected impact of the economy on hunger and homelessness in America.

- The average demand for emergency shelter increased by 15 percent—the highest one-year increase of the decade. Seventy-six percent of the cities—the highest increase since 1994—reported that demand had increased. Requests for shelter by homeless families alone increased by 17 percent, with 72 percent of the cities reporting an increase.
- The average demand for emergency shelter that went unmet in 2000 was 23 percent. Survey results have found this number to be consistently high; for most of the 16 years in which the survey has been conducted, it has been reported at 20 percent or more.
- On average, people remain homeless for five months in the cities surveyed. Fifty percent of the cities said that the length of time people are homeless had increased during the last year.
- Officials estimate that, on average, single men comprise 44 percent of the homeless population, families with children 36 percent, single women 13 percent and unaccompanied minors seven percent. The homeless population is estimated to be 50 percent African-American, 35 percent white, 12 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Native American and one percent Asian. An average of 22 percent of homeless people in the cities are

considered mentally ill; 37 percent are substance abusers; 26 percent are employed; and 15 percent are veterans.

The role of any church in solving social problems is important. In fact majority of all social and humanitarian movements have originated and sustained by religious values irrespective of its faith and denominational boundaries. In fact church ministry is also known as the "diakonial ministry" or servant's ministry. The church is a community that should stay together during times of trouble. It is the body of Christ and the mission of Christ was given to us. The meaning of mission has changed over the years that we have forgotten that the real mission is to bring everybody to Christ. Mission shouldn't be considered as charity. It is the participation of God's plan about His Kingdom, by being an instrument for God.

Mar Thoma church, the reformed Indian church, with eastern and western is the church that can participate in the social problems of American society. As a bridge between these cultures at two extremes, Mar Thoma church can participate in alleviating the social problems of this country. The value systems of our church can penetrate to the root cause of social problems of family disintegration. This church has pioneered the issue of homeless issue in Kerala, during the time of late Youhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan. He started a program called Bhu Bhavana Dana Prasthanam, to provide the land and home for the homeless, much earlier than any other religious, social and governmental agencies in India have started it. Later, this project paved the way for the famous 100,000 housing project by the state government. Most of the people are homeless mostly because they grew up into a bad family or they were abandoned. Many are blessed with food homes and many things that we do not even need, while others do not even have a job and a decent place to live. Based on the bible we understand that the mission of the church is the mission of God. When Jesus ascended into heaven he told his disciples to spread the word and help all causes.

Habitat for Humanity was created to demonstrate the love and teachings of Jesus Christ, so it is natural that the church—Christ's body in the world—should be a primary partner in Habitat's work. Most importantly, every church can pray for the work of Habitat for Humanity around the world. Churches support the ministry of Habitat in a number of other ways and at a variety of levels. So far the Mar Thoma Church is trying to help all of those people who are oppressed. Habitat for

Humanity Mexico offers many opportunities for Mexican citizens to help their neighbors to improve their living conditions. Recently, the church started the Mexico Mission. This mission targets only Spanish people. They have built many homes and tended to many people's problems. We have even started to bring the word of God into their life and started to have them accept God into their life. But is this enough? We should not just target these people but everyone. It is not fair to those who live far away. Some haven't even heard of God before, we should be targeting those people.

The people who are homeless shouldn't be the only ones targeted for this mission. But there are many other issues that are very important in this world that we can contribute our mission to. For example, drug addiction and gay marriages. There should be counseling set up for these types of problems. Once I heard on the news people talking about gay marriage and somebody said God put Adam and Eve on this earth not Adam and Steve. We should tell these people what is good for them and what they are doing wrong. But just talking to them will not do the trick. It will require a lot of effort and time and also visuals to show them the right way. For example we could set up more rehabilitation centers for those in need. The main point is to convince them to believe and put their faith in God. I am not saying that we should take over their lives or do everything for them, but we should take part and set up a new starting-point for them again.

Most importantly, every church can pray for the work of Habitat for Humanity around the world. Churches support the ministry of Habitat in a number of other ways and at a variety of levels. Many are abandoning the church they grew up in and going astray from the word of God. We also have to consider them also into our mission. We should be content when we participate in the mission.

If we bring more people to Christ we also will be blessed. God gave us this mission and we have to fulfill it and reach the goal. The disciples went out and set up the base for us. We have to take some of our time and like Jesus said we have to clean others feet and bring them to Christ. The mission God has given us is a privilege and it's our choice to follow it. We shouldn't do it because someone told us to or someone is making us, but this action of giving should be coming from your heart. This doesn't mean that we should all become missionaries. But we should at least put an effort and participate in some mission events. Jesus is calling us to this mission; will you put an effort and take it seriously? ■

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

Jency George, Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Seniors—1st place winner—Mar Thoma Messenger Essay Competition—2004

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”—Acts 2:46-47. The church is a divine place to sing, to bow, to confess, and to worship our God and Savior. As the years pass by, the number of people who have been called by God to minister has continued to grow. However, the youth of the Mar Thoma Church have become more and more hesitant in dedicating their lives to the service of the church as a result of lack of encouragement from parents, culture clash, poor behavior on behalf of the adults, and a lack of participation in church activities.



In an altogether new and materialistic society, parents can't help but be worried about their children's futures. Indian parents don't necessarily force their children into careers of their liking. However, they coax their kids and put the idea of a particular career in their minds—doctors, engineers, and lawyers are the most popular choices. Every Indian parent wants their kid to have a name for themselves and be well recognized. However, they forget that respect is not only awarded to doctors or engineers but also other professions like ones in ministry. What can be more respectable and rewarding than serving God in the ministry? Achen are given the responsibility of having to serve the church and assume the responsibility of providing spiritual care. They are also given the responsibility of teaching the word of God. Thus, the adults should not be hesitant but rather encourage the young people to dedicate their lives to the service of the Mar Thoma Church. As Alexander Graham Bell stated, “While parents hope for only the best for their children, they often unwittingly hurt them by crushing their dreams.” Not only do the parents crush the dreams of their children but also the dreams that God has set for his own children.

In addition to the lack of encouragements from the adults, there also exists a culture clash between the older generation and the younger generation. In the Mar Thoma Church, certain matters are put into effect by the adults that the youth don't agree with or understand. For example, the children of this generation don't understand why it is necessary for the men and women of the church to sit separately. Some kids have even challenged this idea by sitting on the supposedly “wrong” side. Also, the youth of the Mar Thoma Church enjoy praise and worship services that they witness in the Western churches. Even though they are comfortable praising God in this manner, many of the parents

feel that we should worship God through quiet and solemn praises. The most important issue that exists between the adults and children is language. The children were either born and/or brought up in America. Unfortunately, in an effort to assimilate to the American culture, the youth eventually forgot their mother tongue, Malayalam. As a result, they cannot fully participate in the Malayalam services. Many of them are unable to sing the Malayalam songs or follow the worship service. As these many issues begin to accumulate, the younger generation becomes more and more uncomfortable with the

Mar Thoma Church. Consequently, they turn away from the Mar Thoma Church in order to attend other churches, especially English churches. In order to prevent this from continuing to happen, small things can be done, which can go a long way. For instance, when the achen is preaching in Malayalam, he can repeat the Bible verses and his main points in English so the youth can also understand his sermon to some extent. The Sunday School can also teach the children Malayalam songs and parts of the liturgy that might be difficult to understand.

While we try to close the gap that exists between the adults and youth, it is also important that the children have role models in their lives. It is often thought in our modern world that the role model is someone of stature in the community, be it in sports, politics, or media. I believe that parents should be a child's role models. The Scripture says to parents “teach a child in the way he should go and he will not depart from it.” It is the responsibility of the older generation to set an example for all the children in the church. However, when one notices the behavior of many of the adults in the Mar Thoma Church, one begins to question these supposedly “role models.” Church is a place of unity and fellowship. Then why is it that the adults of the Mar Thoma Church are broken into different groups? In general body meetings, these different groups cause dissension in the church. General body meetings are meant to discuss the problems and issues of church in an orderly manner. Unfortunately, in the church, the meetings end with uncles screaming and with arms swinging at each other. Also, poor behavior from the members of the church can be seen when they disrespect the achen. It is the responsibility of the church of God to bestow the achen with respect. By disrespecting the clergy, we are dishonoring God. God is not pleased when we take on positions in the church for one's own glory. One should be willing to work for the church in an effort to glorify God not to buildup one's own image. When the younger generation sees how poorly the

adults of the church are managing, they tend to stray away from the Mar Thoma Church. Thus, in an effort to bring more children to dedicate their lives to the service of the Mar Thoma Church, the older generation must learn to serve as true role models.

Along with the adults, the church is also responsible in bringing more children to devote themselves to the ministry. There are several organizations in the Mar Thoma Church, but only one, the Youth Fellowship, involves the children of the church. Despite the fact that the Youth Fellowship perform several activities and meet frequently, the young people do not have many opportunities to participate in the church activities. This can be seen as the youth's ideas and suggestions are not heard in the Executive Committee due to the lack of representation in the committee. Also, even though children attend the general body meetings, their suggestions and proposals are not usually considered. In order to bring the youth of the Mar Thoma Church to be active members, they should be given enough representation in the Executive Committee and other organizations of the church.

More important than any of the solutions provided above is for the Mar Thoma Church to encourage the children to come forward into God's ministry by giving an assurance that if they complete their Bachelor's degree in divinity, the Mar Thoma Church would ensure that they would be placed in

churches in the United States instead of sending them to the churches in India. This would allow the Indian American youths to have more opportunities to minister within the community and the culture in which they were brought up and accustomed to. The church should also provide enough missionary fields for the young people to work. Thus, if the youth are given enough opportunities to work within Mar Thoma churches in the United States, more children will come forward to dedicate their lives to the service of the church.

It is the responsibility of both the older generation and younger generation of the Mar Thoma Church to bring more youth to God's ministry. By forgetting their materialistic and economic minded goals, parents should encourage their children dedicate their lives to the service of the church. They must be open minded to consider the positive elements that the youth have to offer and allow them to become more involved in church activities. In addition, the children must be willing to work on their lack of spirituality and become more aware of what God wants us to do. As a young person, it is my belief that adults and youth must stop focusing on the materialistic point of view but rather concentrate on the spiritual aspects of ministry and come to understand that there is no greater ministry or service than dedicating one's life to the service of God through the Mar Thoma Church. ■



Psalms: Lessons for My Daily Life

Christopher Chacko, Detroit Mar Thoma Church

Juniors—1st place winner—Mar Thoma Messenger Poetry Competition—2004

*The book of Psalms imparts lessons for life,
To trust in the lord and to walk upright,
It makes us rejoice when we're feeling low,
And to resist the devil, our spiritual foe.*

*Psalms tell us if we trust and obey,
The lord will strengthen us day by day,
He is the mighty king and ruler over all,
He brings low our enemies as they fall.*

*Our gentle shepherd lifts and raises me up,
His love is like an overflowing cup,
Our almighty lord is everywhere,
In an awesome way he really does care.*

*Psalms teach us that our master is omnipotent,
He's indeed a redeemer that is omniscient,
The lord's love is not the least partial,
His compassion is simply impartial.*

*Psalms instruct us that we should constantly pray,
For his wisdom will constantly guide our way,
His words will shine like a lamp unto our feet,
As his love will reflect to every one we meet.*

*Psalms help us to sing praises to our Lord,
For the reward we receive is like a sturdy cord,
Our home and lineage are surely prospered,
As the lord's love for each other is fostered.*

*Psalms impart many valuable lessons,
It paves the way to lasting happiness,
It instructs me to obey the law of the lord,
And to always meditate on the word of God.*

*The book of Psalms powers me up each day,
In times of joy and sadness I pray,
It uplifts my downtrodden spirits,
And often mends my broken spirits.*

I See Christ in the World Around Me

Ivy Abraham, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Chicago

Seniors—1st place winner—Mar Thoma Messenger Poetry Competition—2004



Whatever land you roam
Wherever you may be
One thing is always certain—
Jesus you will see.

He is in the waterfall
And in the mountain's face
For He was with His father
When creation once took place.

He is in the crisp green grass
And on the rolling plain
He is even in the stars and planets—
Things we can't explain.

In every living creature
We see Christ's great blessings
From the swiftness of the dolphin
To the eagle's mighty wings.

But the greatest place where Jesus dwells
To change and to inspire
Is in the hearts of people
Where he can light a fire.

This fire burns within us
Though from a tiny spark
Giving us the power
To free others from the dark.

Pastors and evangelists
Find strength within this flame
To spread the gospel to the world
As did Jesus, when he came.

And so more hearts are lit
By the simple words of few
For in them, sinners see the way
To start a life anew.

But words are not the only place
Where Jesus can be found
We see him in the wondrous deeds
Done without a sound.

Like the Good Samaritan
Who kindly paid the fee
There are many Christians 'around
the world
Who share Christ silently.

Just as Jesus healed the lame
And those who could not see
Those who work in hospitals
Set ailing people free.

In rehab centers workers help patients
To change the lives they led
And share with them that it was Jesus
Who saved them from being dead.

We can see Jesus in our parents
With their sacrificial love
They remind us how much Jesus cares
To send us His Son from above.

We can even see Jesus in the
unlikeliest people
Even in someone who is a poor stranger
Jesus was one when He came to this world
A King, but born in a manger.

Some silently bear witness
Simply by wearing a cross
By doing so, they explain to others
Their wondrous gain within a loss.

Yes, Jesus can even be seen
In the eyes of a little boy
Who gives his money to Him
Instead of buying a toy.

But the one place you can always go
To feel His presence near
Is the church, the house of God
Where hope replaces fear.

Yes, Jesus is in the air we breathe
And in the church so bright
All we must do is look for Him
And we will see His light.

We should live our lives the way
Jesus would want us to
So others will also see Him
By watching what we do.

Paul told the Philippians
To have a mind like Him
Then we may be the candle
In a world so dark and dim.

We can be the ones
Who help fill the world with peace.
In hopes that Jesus' love will spread
And bloody wars will cease.

If we'd only look for Jesus
We would find the key
To solving everyone's problems
Despite the difficulty.

We must open the eyes of others
So they can see His grace
For we can change the entire world
Just by seeing Jesus' face.

Matrimonial

Marthomite parents settled in Canada invite marriage proposal from Keralite Christians for their daughter living with them age 28, Masters, employed. Respond to usandca@yahoo.com or keralacanada@yahoo.com

Marthoma parents settled in US invite marriage proposals for their daughter. US medical school graduated physician doing residency in US. She is 26 years old, 5'3", medium complexion, slim, family oriented and God fearing. We are looking for a God fearing family oriented professionally qualified boy (MD/DO/DDS/Pharmacist/CPA's/MS engineer). Interested parties please contact abraham_m42@hotmail.com or to Marthoma Messenger, P.O. Box ABM42, Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 Merrick Ave., Merrick, NY 11566.

Marthomite parents settled in Kerala invite marriage proposals for their daughter, electronics engineer doing MBA in a prestigious Indian institution. She is 23 years old, 165 cms, fair, well featured, born and educated outside Kerala. We are looking for professionally qualified, employed boys from Marthoma/CSI denominations. Contact: abeyjoe2001@yahoo.co.uk, mtmatthew46@hotmail.com or Tel.: #732-410-4506.

Uncle invites proposal for 24-year-old niece, 160 cm, tall, fair complexion with high moral and family values, born in Muscat. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology. At the moment she resides in Muscat. Please respond with details to (718) 648-6307.

Marthomite parents are inviting a proposal for their 28 year old daughter. She holds a Classical BA in Music Performance and a Masters Degree in Physical Therapy. She is very active in church, community music ensembles and events, and is self-employed as a Physical Therapist. She is beautiful, fair, slim, 5'3" and was born and raised in the USA. She is looking for a handsome, tall, well qualified, born-again Christian from any denomination, preferably raised in the United States or Canada. Interested parties please respond with full details and a full size photograph to PraiseHimA6@aol.com or call 941-380-1382.

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposals for their 29 year old daughter, Phd. in Bio-Physics, 5'6", U.S. citizen, born and brought up in Kerala. We are looking for a professionally qualified boy from any Christian denomination. Interested parties please respond with bio-data and a recent photograph to p3joseph@yahoo.com or pjp1948@hotmail.com

Well settled Mar Thoma parents in USA invite proposals from God fearing Mar Thoma/CSI boys who are currently living and employed in the USA for their daughter who is 24 years old, fair, 5'4" tall. She is an accountant working as an auditor for one of the Big Four accounting firms. She is USA born and brought up, and has high moral and Christian values. Please respond if interested to kunjus@att.net

Marthomite parents settled in the U.S.A. invite marriage proposal for their U.S. born daughter. She is 25 years old, God fearing, and 5'3". She is currently finishing her last year of pharmacy school. We invite proposals from professionally qualified boys, God fearing, and Mar Thoma. Please respond with a recent photograph and bio data to twinklethm@yahoo.com or to the Mar Thoma Messenger, P.O. Box BOTX281, Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 Merrick Ave., Merrick, NY 11566.

Friendship is a Blessing

Justy John, St. James MTC, Hillburn, NY

God has given mankind numerous amount of blessings over periods of time. One of the greatest blessings God has showered upon mankind is friendship. God has given us the heart to decide between good and bad friends. As Corinthians 15:33 says, don't be misled. "Bad company corrupts good character". God tells us to take a closer look at our friends. Three questions pop into mind when choosing good friends. 1) Who are they? 2) What are they involved in? 3) Is it wise for you to stick with them? Solomon pointed out having a lot of friends did not make you invincible. Instead, one good friend will stick closer than a brother as written in Proverbs 18:24. Friends who spend time with you, know you and are loyal to you are friends worth having. How do you know a friend is loyal? There are three questions that will help you determine that.

1. Does he/she listen to you and try to understand your feelings and ideas?
2. Does he/she offer help when you need it?
3. Does he/she point out to you when you are making a mistake?

When you find a true friend, stick close to him/her for they will be your friend for life.

What does a friend do? According to Solomon, he "loves at all times". Proverbs 17:17 says, "Friends love at all times. They are there to help when trouble comes". King David's best friend was Jonathan, the son of King Saul. Jonathan had defended David to his father who wanted to kill David. Jonathan helped David escape death several times. Jonathan ultimately laid down his life for David. A friend never ceases to love. A good friend will risk anything for the one he loves. An example is with a brother and sister. The sister was in the final stage of dying after an accident. The boy was only five years old, but he was the only one with the same blood group as his sister. Without hesitation, he gave up his blood for his sister. Ruth is another great example of friendship. Even though her husband died, she refused to leave her mother-in-law, Naomi's side. "Where you go, I'll go. Where you stay, I'll stay. Your people will be my people. Your God, my God". Ruth 1:16.

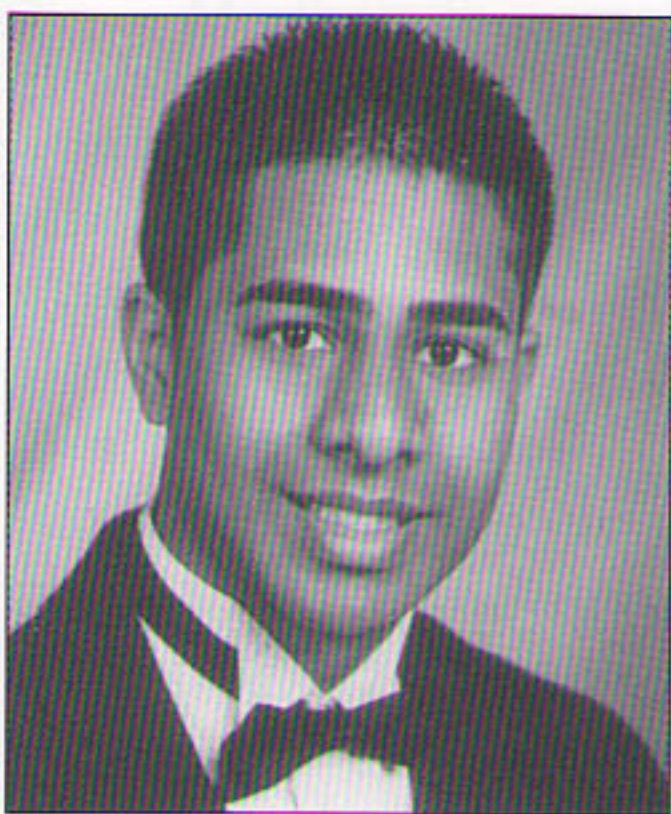


One day at church, I had heard a sermon about two good friends. A young man, with his head down, stood before the judge in the courtroom. He was waiting for his sentence to be announced. Suddenly, another man stopped up to the railing and asked to speak. When granted permission, the young man launched a speech about why his friend, the defendant, should receive a lighter sentence. The young man said, "He is a good kid. He helped me build my tree fort, rescued me when I was almost drowning and encouraged me to return something that I had stolen. I promise, sir, that if you let him go, I'll stick by him and make sure he doesn't do this crime again". The judge was amazed and gave a lighter sentence. There is no friend like one who will plead your case for you. Nothing messes up a friendship like repeating things that should be forgotten. It can be gossip, a lie, a rumor or anything like that. As Solomon pointed out, repeating a sin to another makes it worse and separates close friends. Proverbs 17:9 says, "Those who erase a sin by forgiving it show love. But those who talk about it, come between close friends". If a friend says or does something you know is wrong, don't tell others. Tell the friend and encourage him/her to stop saying or doing such things. That is the way to keep a friend and right a wrong.

Often the Holy Spirit will lead you to gently tell the truth about some problem to someone else. When God wounds a friend with the truth, the real healing will follow. However, an enemy just kisses you and then stabs you in the back. Proverbs 27:6 says, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted. But an enemy kiss you any times". When God's Spirit tells you the truth through a friend, listen even when it hurts. God is the greatest friend there is. "Footprints" describes God's love and friendship. When the man looked back on his past, he looked at all the times that God had been with him. However, during his time of sorrow and trouble, he only saw one set of footprints. When he asked the Lord, the Lord replied, "It was then that I carried you". God is our place of safety and warmth in good times and in bad times. Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly. As G. Randolph had said, "Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave and impossible to forget". ■

Valedictorians

John Kurien: Stranahan High School



I would like to thank my parents and brother for supporting me thus far in my educational career. There are those of us who have worked hard, there are those of us who have worked harder and, well, some of us are just glad to be here. To the latter, I implore of you, keep at it. Continue your journey of education after high school for it will get you much in life. To those who

have other goals in life, I wish you the best of luck. To those of you who have accomplished much, and are able to wear achievements today, I congratulate you.

Being valedictorian of our 2004 class makes me no more worthy than all of you sitting in these front rows to deliver a speech to you. There is no distinction between me, and the rest of you graduating seniors; all that has placed me on this stage are a few grades and a number. Because today—today we all leave with the same thing: a diploma.

We all grew up playing tag, watching TGIF, playing with Barbie's to transformers, playing basketball in the front yard, playing house, watching Saturday morning cartoons, riding our bikes and playing Nintendo. Class of 2004, do you remember those days? It's these similarities that have bonded us thus far. The past four years have been memorable. We have had many friendships. With an initial class size of 800 plus, some friendships have been lost; however, many more have been forged into an unbreakable chain holding us together.

The memorable days of senior year, crossing the bridge to get some Wendy's, senior skip days to go to the beach, and all the memorable stories of other people's business has made high school into an unforgettable four years of our life. As we all move on, we have moved from being kids to adults. In our new adulthood, we must now make important decisions about our lives. One of these decisions is with regard to our expression of love to one another.

The class of 2004 lost a beloved Dragon, Kemar Campbell, who was to walk on this stage tonight. But he does walk; he walks in all of our hearts as we step across this stage. Had Kemar known what was to happen to him that day, what would he have done differently in his life? Having an unknown future makes us reflect on our lives. What can I as just one individual do differently?

If I were to die tomorrow, would I be satisfied with the way things turned out? Has my life been an ideal one? Did my family and friends know how much I love them? Did I help others to help themselves?

The second question we face in our new lives is how can I maintain my personal integrity amidst a society where morals are frowned upon. Another film released earlier this

year that I can recall was the Passion of Christ. That movie was not about religious philosophy; no, rather it was a movie demonstrating the evils of society, both then and now. It showed how easy it is to be cruel rather than kind. If we each had a stick in our hand that day, anyone could easily beat Him. But the real question is how many of us would drop it? After dropping it, how many of us could step away from the crowd? After stepping away from the crowd, which of your lips would utter those words 'Leave that man alone!'

Class of 2004, that movie was not about religious doctrine. No, it was about distinguishing yourself as a person. In life, be the person to step out of the crowd and voice your opinion. For it will make your name be heard. Be the person that says "Leave that man alone!" For it will make your name remembered.

Live your days as your last for if tomorrow you were to die, how would people remember you? If they were to remember you at all...would you be a good person, a bad person, what would people remember you as?

Class of 2004, when you step across this stage in a few minutes, 'pop your collar', 'brush your shoulders off', represent who you are at heart, the best of the best, the brightest of the brightest, Stranahan's finest, a true Dragon. ■

Mr. John Kurien is the Son of Mr. & Mrs. George Kurien, members of the St. Luke Mar Thoma Church, South Florida.

Jithin Yohannan

Before I begin, I'd like to thank some people who made this all possible. First I'd like to thank my parents and siblings.



They've been with me and supported me throughout my entire life. I'd also like to thank my friends both from school and from my St. Andrews crew. Thanks for everything you've done. It's been a wonderful experience and I'm sure we'll all have more great memories together. Last, but never least, I'd like to thank God, for without Him, I would be nothing. I'm standing here today

not to speak with you about life's profound mysteries or the secrets of the universe. In fact, I'm here because I have been granted the title of valedictorian and all the misery that comes along with it. You may ask what misery, isn't being a valedictorian all glory? I can honestly say no, life always juxtaposes happiness with responsibility and misery. For instance, every time I ever trip over my untied shoelace, I'll hear those words coming jokingly from my friends "You were valedictorian?" Every time I get caught reciting some words of wisdom from Lil' John like "3,6,9 damn she's fine" or "skeet skeet skeet" someone will, without a doubt, say "What kind of valedicto-

rian are you?" As I said before, life always juxtaposes happiness with misery.

More than a month ago, I was in a very serious car accident with two of my friends. No one would have thought that at a time of such great happiness, something terrible like this could happen. I was left unscathed. My friend, who was also in the car, received several wounds on her face. Thankfully, she's ok now. However, my cousin, was ejected from the car and landed on a neighbor's lawn. By God's grace her head fell in soft dirt and she's also fine. However, there was a huge concrete block a few inches below where her head landed. If her head had hit that block, the accident could have been fatal. This made me realize just how fragile life is. A few inches of grass and dirt had saved my cousin's life. Because our lives can be ended in an instant, I believe we should learn how to live our fragile lives to the fullest. Now, I'm going to share with you some of the things I've learned during the past four years. I believe that these simple rules will help all you guys get more out of your lives in the coming years as you go out into the real world.

First, be honest. Be honest to yourself. Remember who you are. Maintain your identity wherever you go. Apply principles of honesty to your future career choices, be honest with what you like and dislike. Before selecting your major in college and putting yourself on a path toward a certain job, ask yourself if you really like what you are doing. If you would be happy working the career you choose with zero pay, then you have been honest to yourself and have chosen a truly fulfilling career path. You will probably lead a very happy life.

Second, develop a good sense of humor. Learn how to laugh. Many a times, life is one big contradiction. If you try to figure it out you'll drive yourself crazy. So don't. Instead, embrace life. Laugh at it a bit. Whatever you do, don't take everything life throws your way too seriously. Think of something funny in your head while your parents are yelling at you for coming back home at 4 a.m. Ask yourself why your male teacher is wearing a pink shirt when you get yelled at for handing an assignment in late. When at all possible, don't take a very serious tone with other people. Chances are you'll wind up aggravating them as well as yourself. Throughout high school, we have all used humor to relieve tension and anxiety. Whether it was making humorous pictures of each other on Microsoft Paint during ASR or ending a heated lunchtime debate about religion, the war, or abortion by making illogical comments about someone's mother, humor has always been a positive influence on all our lives. As we go on toward our separate paths, remember to always keep humor a part of our lives.

Third, learn how to love life's simple pleasures. Whether it's playing HALO with your friends and trying to get that next running riot or practicing for a basketball tournament at 3 o'clock in the morning or even enjoying Mr. Masterson's detention on the very last day of high school. It's all of these at first unmemorable little moments in life that keep us going.

Finally, don't dwell on the mistakes of the past; instead look to the future. The word graduation means commencement or beginning. We are not coming to the end of the road; instead we are entering a new era of our lives. Graduate with

an open heart and mind, don't let the past hold you down. As you graduate, take with you all the positive things you've learned over the past 12 years of grade school and forget all the negative experiences. As we go off to college, let us remember to start each day with the desire to live our lives to the fullest. Everyday in our lives holds the promise of learning something new, of talking to someone we've never talked to or doing something we've never done before. Use all of these opportunities we have with great assiduousness. Most importantly, ask questions. Ask questions about anything and everything you see. Be curious and stay curious. Curiosity is the fuel behind learning and learning is one of the keys to success.

Congratulations Class of 2004! We've finally made it!! Good luck and thank you! ■

Mr. Jithin Yohannan is the son of Mr. & Mrs. K. M. Yohannan, members of the St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, New York.

Deny John

I regret never learning how to swim. I regret not walking my dog as much as he would like. I regret being a perfectionist. I regret going on the many so-called diets that have had the adverse effect. I regret not hugging my parents more. I regret the boyish haircuts I had in 5th through 8th grade. I regret not learning how to cook from my mom. I regret procrastinating on every project I've ever done. I regret not throwing my hands up on roller coaster rides. I regret never getting over my fear of the dark. I've spent ridiculous amounts of time worrying about these regrets, but for what reason? There is nothing I can no longer do that will change or correct anything that has already happened.

Good evening to the members of the School Board, faculty, family, friends and Graduates of the Class of 2004. Today is ours; this is our high school graduation. No longer are we watching other graduates walk across the stage, get their diploma, turn their tassel and officially become high school graduates; today, we get to do it. Graduation isn't just the conclusion of four years of high school; it solidifies the foundation we've all built for ourselves. Today is a grand ending to an even greater beginning. As each of us plan to say our final goodbyes, I challenge each of you to live life with no regrets. It's important to realize that all that you regret, all that has happened to you in your life, both the wonderful and the unthinkable, has made you who you are. Experiences are life's education and the mark of maturity. We all make mistakes, but we just have to forgive ourselves. Growing up requires us to make those mistakes, but we learn to appreciate who we are and it teaches us to be responsible individuals with our choices and actions. As Maya Angelou says, "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, [and] how you can still come out of it." So look back on everything you've faced during your life: the friendships, the fights, the stress, the loss, the triumph, and all the confusion and be thankful that they have guided you here today.

On behalf of Poteet's Graduating Class of 2004, I would like to thank all of the families, loved ones, friends

and teachers who are here to today to support each of us on one of the most important days of our lives. We thank you for the sacrifices you have made on our behalf to continually support us. On a personal note, I thank God from whom all blessings flow for giving me the peace of mind and tenacity to make it through everyday and for showing me happiness throughout the toughest four years of my life. To my dad, I love our talks about faith, our family and our shared love for Indian classical music. Thank you for teaching me the power of prayer and most importantly, for your unwavering faith in me. To my mom, thank you for your unconditional love, patience and for being the strength of our family. I know God has blessed me with you two and I hope that I've made you proud. To my sister, you are the person I most admire and I am so grateful for your friendship and for being my biggest support. To my family and loved ones, thank you for being so good to me and for all the prayers throughout

the years. To my friends and the Brown 4, I'm so grateful to have such good people in my life. Thank you guys for all the fun and for being my best friends.

So today, as we prepare to walk across the stage, get our diploma, turn our tassels and officially become high school graduates, I wish each of you all the best in college and in the future. All the hard work, sleepless nights, and endless studying have finally paid off. We have managed to make it through four of the most significant years of our lives and now it's our time to move on. In the years to come, our surroundings, our relationships, our friendships, and most importantly, we ourselves will change, and although it will be a challenge, it will all be for our benefit. According to an episode of FRIENDS, this is truly the "end of an era." Just remember, try your hardest, be your happiest, always be willing to help others and carpe diem. Congratulations to the class of 2004! We did it! Thank you. ■



Look Here

Ancy George

*Dawn brings to you worry and anxiety,
Your sorrow's deep and your joy has faded.
Dusk questions your future so blatantly,
That even darkness makes you feel so jaded.
You dread the day you know is coming.
Have nothing to stop it, seemed selfish to ask,
And now you feel like you are at the seams untangling,
Your life dazzles like an empty flask*

*Fear of sharing and no one to talk,
Lonely and frustrated you feel inside.
You look within; you see the dirt and hypocrisy,
You wish for cleansing but you know it's not that easy.
Your faith is in question and you struggle through each day,
You question the people around you,
But they all seem to be fake.
You pray and you can't find an answer,
You fear your soul out and you know your destiny is at stake.*

*You see it slipping away and you hold on to it tightly,
But you know it's too late and who could you be kidding!
What you held so dearly has been stolen away,
And you stand frozen in time bearing the pain they gave.
You stood like a sheep to be slaughtered,*

*When your own you knew were deceiving.
What can life unfold, for the future's untold.
They've gambled your life and left you grieving!*

*You sleep through your sorrow and worry about tomorrow,
Never here and never there.
You welcome silence as your life's being torn,
For the game is done, and all hope is gone.
Is life so unfair, you wonder!
And is joy found o'er yonder?
If that were true, why would you be here?
Why would we care for our life so dear?
For heavens at your feet, you don't need to look,
That's one thing they couldn't from all the things they took.
His grace can touch every misery,
Even now and not just in history.
That's the miracle you need,
Sea of sorrow parted and justice to every oppressed deed,
Then don't look elsewhere,
For heaven's at your feet.
Right here, right at your feet.*

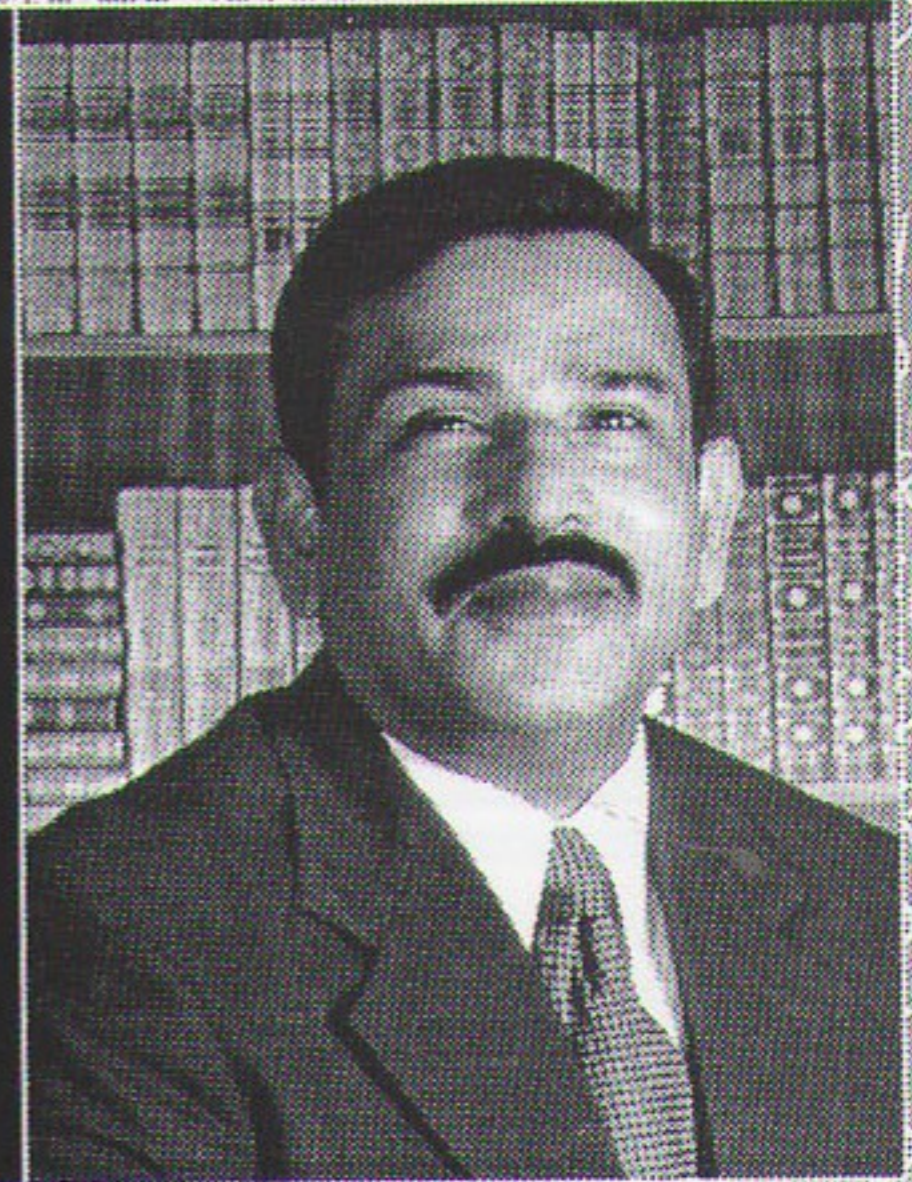
Justice
is being
served,
to the
Asian
Community

Lal Varghese

Attorney at Law

Immigration,
H1-B,
Fiance Visa,
work Permit,
Green Cards,
Student Visas,
Visitor Visas,
K-1, K-3,
V Visas, Etc.

Not Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization



Tel (972) 788-0777 Fax (972) 788-2202

Direct Line: (972) 788-1555

E-mail: attylal@aol.com

<http://www.indiaimmigrationusa.com>

LAW OFFICES OF LAL VARGHESE PLLC, 5050 QUORUM DR., SUITE 241, DALLAS 75254-7054

Mar Thoma Sunday School Diocesan Examination 2004—Rank List

No	Grade	Rank	Name	Parish
1	5th	100	Priya Sara George	Chicago MTC
2	5th	97	Mathew Samuel	Washington D C
3	5th	97	Nigil Thaimuriyil	Dallas Farmers Branch
4	5th	96	Reny Mathew	Chicago MTC
5	6th	99	Jeena Mathew	St. Peters, New Jersey
6	6th	98	Ashly Jacob	Detroit MTC
7	6th	98	Dennis Thankachen	St. Peters, New Jersey
8	6th	98	Tiby Mathew	St. Peters, New Jersey
9	6th	97	Jojo John	St. Peters, New Jersey
10	7th	99	Christopher Chacko	Detroit MTC
11	7th	90	Junita John	Epiphany, New York
12	7th	89	Anita Mathew	St. Peters, New Jersey
13	8th	97	Tina Varghese	St. Peters, New Jersey
14	8th	95	Shajan Mathew	St Johns, New York
15	8th	94	Shana Samuel	St. Thomas, New York
16	9th	96	Titus Kurien	Ebenezer, New York
17	9th	93	Ivy Abraham	St. Thomas, Chicago
18	9th	90	Tara George	Epiphany, New York
19	9th	90	Tobin Abraham	St. Johns, New York
20	10th	94	Lisa Mathew	Ebenezer, New York
21	10th	91	Blessy Abraham	Epiphany, New York
22	10th	91	Shylon Mathew	St. Johns, New York
23	10th	89	Nina Kottakuzhiyil	Washington D C

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

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (July 2004)

1. Accamma Jacob, South Florida
2. Alwin David, Detroit MTC
3. Annamma John, St. Luke, FL
4. Athira John, St. John's, NY
5. Chris Chacko, Detroit MTC
6. Edwin David, Detroit MTC
7. Jain T. Joseph, St. John's, NY
8. Jannet John, Detroit MTC
9. Jerry John, Detroit MTC
10. Justy John, St. James, NY
11. Omana Rajee, SI MTC, NY
12. Philip Mathews, St. Mathews, Toronto
13. Philip S. Chacko, Detroit
14. Romuald Mathews, St. Johns, NY
15. Sally Abraham, Epiphany, NY
16. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
17. Stacy Jacob, St. James MTC, NY
18. Susan Thomas, Epiphany, NY

ANSWERS

ACROSS

1. PRIDE
4. RIGHTEOUSNESS
7. TONGUE
9. INSTRUCTION
11. APPLE
12. TREASURES
13. CORRUPT
16. CROWN
18. GAZETTE
19. FAITHFULNESS
20. HATRED

DOWN

2. DISCIPLINE
3. ACCUSE
5. ETERNITY
6. HUMILITY
8. WISDOM
10. UNPUNISHED
14. MOCKER
15. MANGER
20. WIFE

Bible Word Search Winners (July 2004)

1. Alex Vaidyan, St. Thomas MTC
2. Alwin David, Detroit MTC
3. Annamma John, St. Luke, FL
4. Athira John, St. John's, NY
5. Chris Chacko, Detroit MTC
6. Edwin David, Detroit MTC
7. Jain T. Joseph, St. John's, NY
8. Jannet John, Detroit MTC
9. Jerry John, Detroit MTC
10. Justy John, St. James, NY
11. Justin Vaidyan, St. Thomas MTC
12. Philip Mathews, St. Mathews, Toronto
13. Philip S. Chacko, Detroit
14. Romuald Mathews, St. Johns, NY
15. Sally Abraham, Epiphany, NY
16. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
17. Susan Thomas, Epiphany, NY

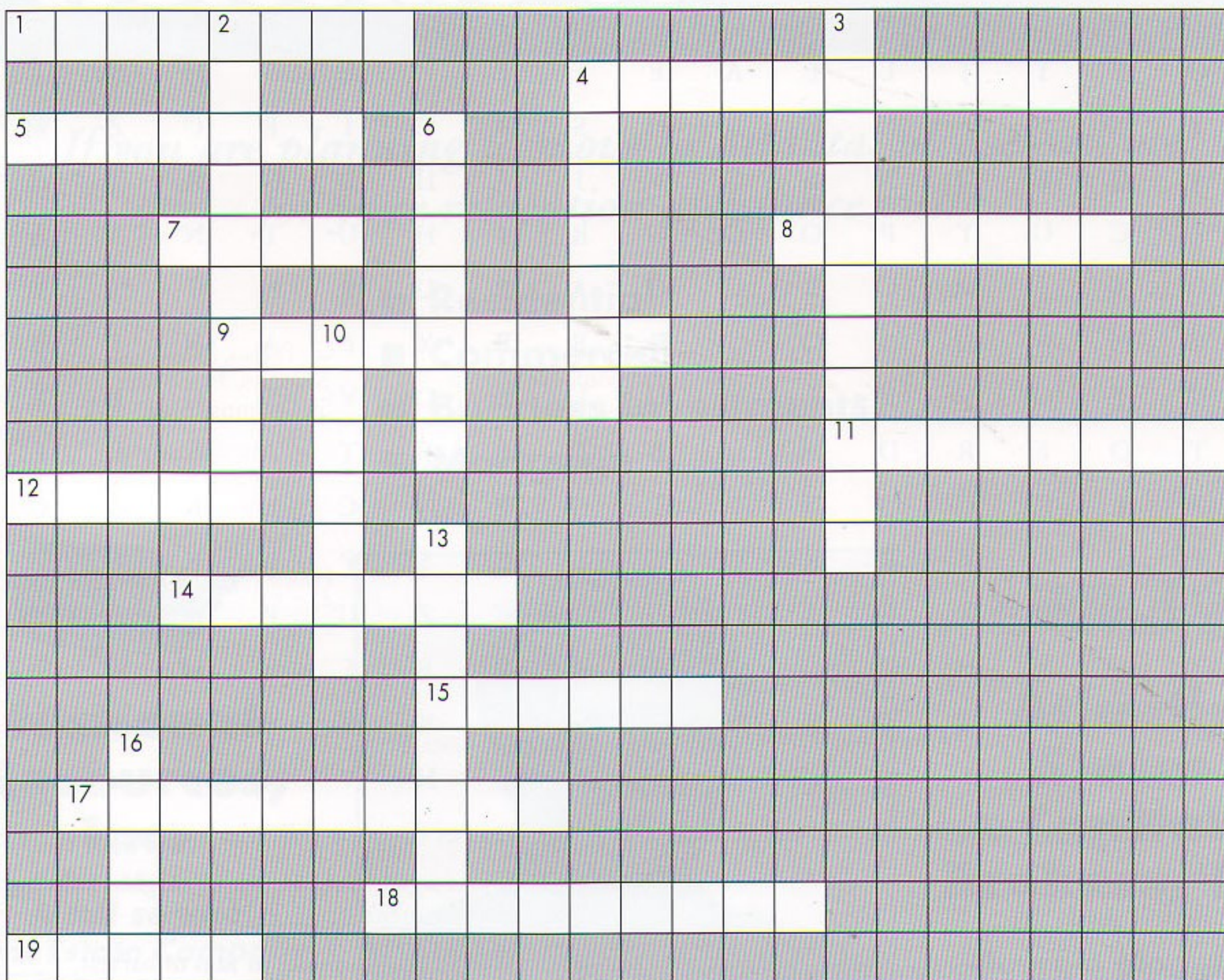
ANSWERS

1. FORSAKE
2. TRUSTFULLY
3. WELLSPRING
4. GROAN
5. ADULTRY
6. CINNAMON
7. DILIGENT
8. WISDOM
9. FEAR
10. CHATTERING
11. TROUBLE
12. DISGRACEFUL
13. ROD
14. FOOLISH
15. HUMILITY
16. DESERVE
17. SUPREME
18. PRUDENCE
19. FIRSTFRUITS
20. RIGHTEOUS

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
(based on Proverbs Chapters 16-31)

Mrs. Lency Zachariah (New York)



Across

1. Do not move an ancient _____ stone set up by your forefathers.
4. He who winks with his eye is plotting _____.
5. _____ have no king, yet they advance together in ranks.
7. Whoever loves _____ and oil will never be rich.
8. In the end wine bites like a snake and _____ like a viper.
9. He who answers before _____ that is his folly and his shame.
11. A wife of noble character watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of _____.
12. A man who loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning is taken as a _____.
14. He who plots evil will be known as _____.
15. Without wood a fire goes out, without _____ a quarrel dies down.
17. If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are _____.

18. Starting a quarrel is like _____ a dam, so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.
19. As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his _____.

Down

2. _____ your son and he will give you peace.
3. _____ by a fool is heavier than stone and sand.
4. Houses and wealth are inherited from parents but a _____ wife is from the Lord.
6. A man who _____ his servant from youth, will bring grief in the end.
10. If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be _____ out in pitch darkness.
13. When disaster strikes you, better go to a _____ nearby than a brother faraway.
16. Lips that speak knowledge are a rare _____.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
(based on Proverbs Chapters 16-31)

Mrs. Lency Zachariah (New York)

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

- Pleasant words are a _____ sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.
- A cheerful heart is good _____.
- Casting a lot settles _____ and keeps strong opponents apart.
- He who robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and _____.
- Do not love _____ or you will grow poor.
- A man who has gained food by fraud, ends up with mouth full of _____.
- Gray hair is the crown of _____ that is attained by a righteous life.
- Do not make friends with a _____ man.
- A good name is more _____ than great riches.
- Do not crave the delicacies and food of a _____ man.
- If you argue your case with a neighbor, do not betray another man's _____.
- Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, _____ is not fitting for a fool.
- As a door turns on its hinges so a _____ turns on his bed.
- The _____ of ones friend springs from his earnest counsel.
- Whoever confesses and _____ his sins, finds mercy.
- A servant cannot be _____ by mere words.
- _____ makes their home in the crags.
- A wife of noble character is worth far more than _____.
- As _____ the milk produces butter, so stirring up anger produces strife.
- King Lemuel sayings were an _____ taught by his mother.

Please mail your answers to:

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

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS December 31, 2004

Welcome to Atlanta!

*If you are planning to move to Atlanta, please call me
for your relocation assistance with:*

- Residential
- Commercial
- Business Investments
- Mortgage

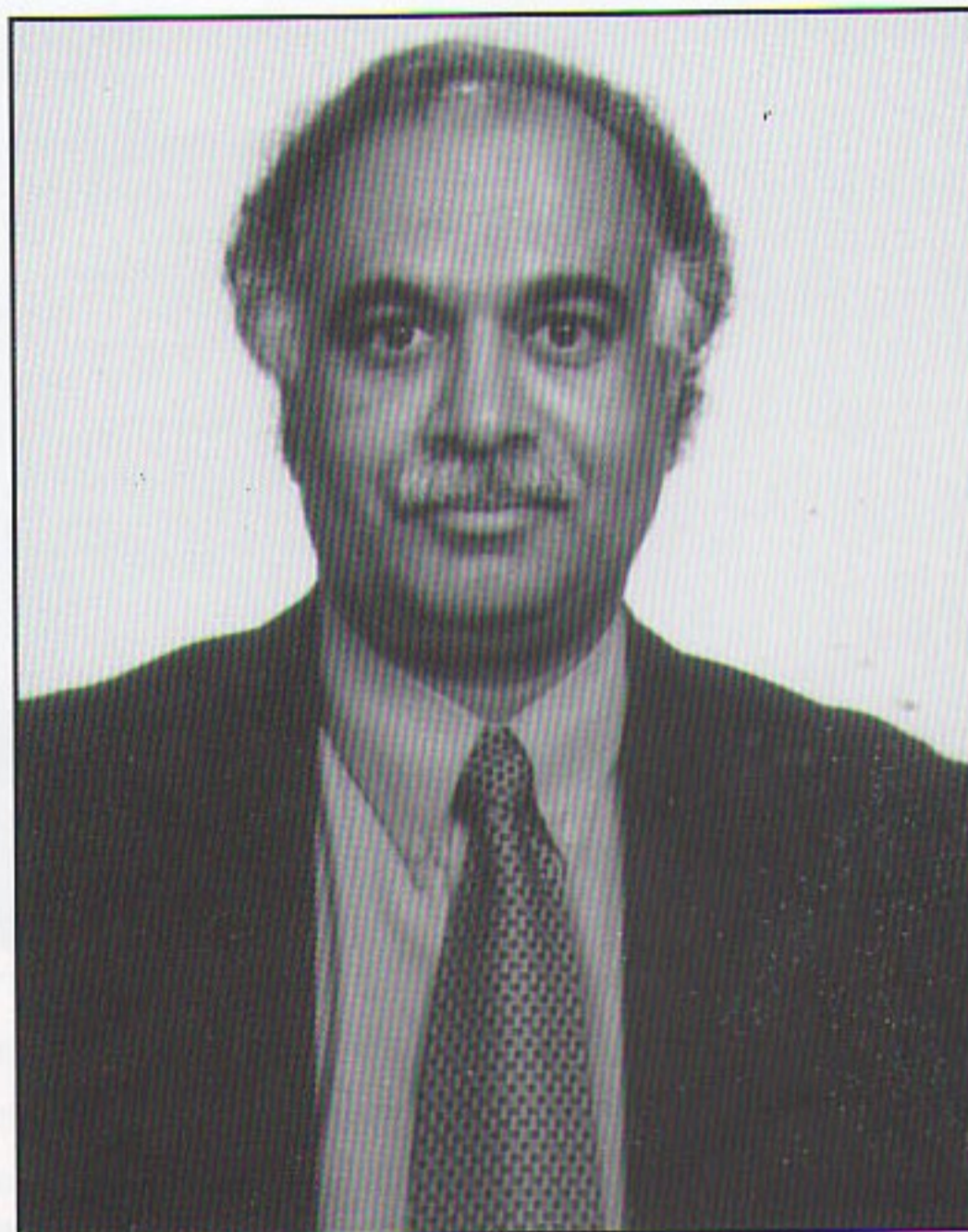


National Resources, Inc.

*A full service
Real Estate Company*

**Real Estate
Agents are welcome**

**Full commission
program with
low transaction fee**



Thomas Varughese
Broker



Atlantic States Capital Brokers, LLC

**Georgia Mortgage
Broker #19096**

**Now hiring Loan
Officers**

**Full/Part time
Training available**

Please call for details:

Office: **678-344-2084** Fax: **678-344-2085** Residence: **770-736-5216**

Cell: **678-557-3029** email: thomasfly6@aol.com

1988 B Dogwood Road • Snellville, Georgia 30078

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

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

THIRD "KASSESSA" FROM OUR DIOCESE—REV. SHIBI MATHEW ORDAINED



Rev. Shibi Mathew Abraham was ordained as a *kassessa* by the Rt. Rev. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa on August 21, 2004 at Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. Born on March 22, 1972, at Habibganj, Bhopal, India, he migrated to USA in February 1975 along with his parents who settled in Union, New Jersey. After graduating from Union High School, he went on to procure a Bachelors and Masters in Financial Management from New Jersey Institute of Technology. He was working with Morgan Stanley Dean Witter as a Trust Administrator when he yielded to the divine call for Ministry in 2000. Consequently he graduated from the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala with a BD in June 2004. He became a Deacon of the Mar Thoma Church on June 22nd 2004 at St. Thomas Church, Tiruvalla, Kerala.

Rev. Shibi M. Abraham conducted his "Puthen Qurbana" on August 22nd 2004 at St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, Fords, NJ. He has been posted to the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Eraviperoor, Kerala as the Assistant Vicar of the parish

His parents are Mrs. Aleyamma Abraham and Dr.

Abraham Abraham (Thattupuracal, Kaviyoor, Tiruvalla) now residing at 381 Colgate Way, Freehold, New Jersey. Shibi Achen has two brothers: Shibu with his wife Annu residing at Stewardsville, New Jersey. and Shiju with his wife Dr. Pamela is now in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Rev. Shibi Mathew Abraham was married to Sheeba George of Mudapallil Patterumadathil, Kuttapuzha, Tiruvalla on September 25, 2004 at the St. Thomas Church Tiruvalla .

Shibi Achen and his parents are members of St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, Fords, New Jersey. They were formerly members of The Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York, (1974- 1979) and then members of New Jersey Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey (1980-1999). Achen was an active Sunday School Teacher at the New Jersey Mar Thoma church, and was active as a youth member in the St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church.

Shibi Achen is the third Mar Thoma achen to be ordained from the Diocese of North America and Europe. He is yet another youth who renounced a lucrative future for a life in our God's service.



The Mexico Mission Project of the Diocese has constructed 37 houses in the island of Fantasia near Matamaros in Mexico during this summer. Each house was sponsored by various parishes, organizations, and as well as individuals.



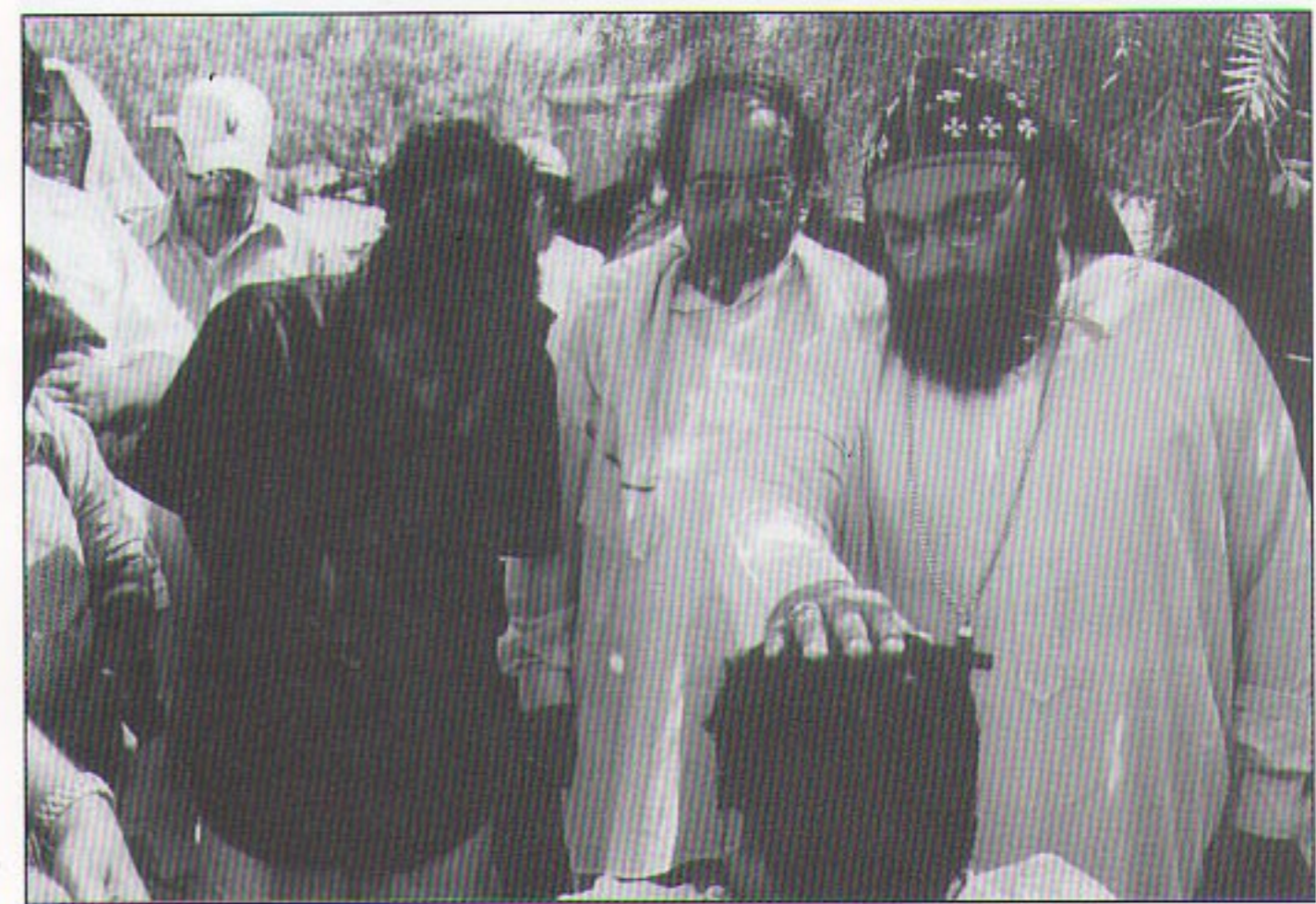
Volunteers from various parishes spent almost all weekends since June to September in the island to construct these homes with the help from the islanders. The ceremony of



handing over of the keys of the houses to the islanders was done our Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos on October 02, 2004 in the island. The ceremony



was attended by Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Diocesan Secretary, Dr. John P. Lincoln, Diocesan Treasurer, Diocesan Council members and Assembly Members,



parishioners from various parishes of the diocese, and the islanders.

There were various entertainment programs by the islanders also. One of the most touching program by the islanders was that of singing of the Malayalam song "Ethratholam Yehova sahayichu".

Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham and Episcopa expressed thanks to the volunteer team from the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas Farmers Branch for teaching the islanders the Malayalam song. The Government of Mexico is taking steps to donate 20 acres of land to Mexican Mission Project of the Diocese in appreciation of the voluntary work we are providing in the islands for the last two years. The Diocese intends to build a school for the children of islanders, medical clinic, and tailoring institute etc. on this land to cater the basic needs of the islanders and their children.

Atty. Lal Varghese, Dio. Assembly Member & Mar Thoma Messenger Promoter

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH, DALLAS



Family Retreat participants with Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham and Rev. Anil George.

FAMILY RETREAT: The second family retreat of the parish was held at Sky Ranch Retreat Center at Van, Texas located about 100 miles south east of Dallas from October 8-10, 2004.



Rev. Anil George Celebrate the Holy Communion and Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham and Lay Leader Mr. Abraham John assisting.

The theme for the retreat was "Repentance and Rededication", a theme selected by our Metropolitan for the Church. Rev. K. A. Abraham, Diocesan Secretary was this year's speaker. Achen reminded the participants that the purpose of every retreat should be a time for a self assessment and introspection, discernment of the word of God, and rediscovery of the presence of God.

Achen spoke about the need for repentance and rededication of individuals and reminded that it is an ongoing process in one's life. Faith should bring us a new perspective in one's life. One should have faith in the faithfulness of God. Faith should also lead us to personal trust and obedience to God. Again faith should be able to create an intellectual illumination so that one can make right choices in life. Repentance and rededication is needed because of the crisis in modernity, human estrangement from God, human propensity to sin, and to restore our broken relationships. Achen said that real independence is interdependence and not being dependent on oneself. Christian religion is not one where man is seeking God, but it is a religion where God is seeking man. Repentance and rededication should be

seen within the frame work of the grace of God. Faith should be seen as God's initiative and human response and God makes provisions for us to turn to him. Repentance is a conversion from sin to God and a life with God in a sinful world. We are not a separated community but a set apart community of God to be in this world. Conversion is to the God of life over against the idols of death. An idol is one which blocks our ultimate loyalty to God including our other priorities in life other than God. Achen concluded the final talk by saying that we should embrace a new life style – the life style of the Cross. We should rediscover the essential components of our faith and God's presence in our life. God accepts us in the state we are and the best is yet to come.

The three day retreat concluded on Sunday by Holy Communion Service led by Rev. Anil George, Vicar of the parish and by concluding message by Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham. Retreat Committee convener Mr. K. S. Mathew expressed thanks for those who attended and also for those who helped it to be a successful retreat. About 200 members participated in this year's retreat and for those who attended, it was really a touching experience and blessing.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar



Family Retreat Choir with Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Rev. Anil George and Mr. K. S. Mathew, Convener.



Seven youngsters who received the First Communion on Sunday, July 18, 2004

Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa visited our parish from July 15 to 18, 2004. During his visit, Thirumeni met with the Youth Fellowship, Sevika Sangham and Edavka Mission. On Saturday, Thirumeni led the evening worship. On Sunday morning, Thirumeni conducted the Holy Qurbana in English and administered the sacrament of Confirmation to 7 first communicants of our parish. A reception luncheon followed. During his visit, Thirumeni visited the sick in our church and concluded his official visit on Sunday afternoon.

Forty-one members of our parish participated in the 22nd Mar Thoma Family Conference held at New York this year. Our Vicar, Rev. Sabu Koshy conducted 2 Bible Classes. Dr. George Zachariah moderated an Interactive Session on "Mission of the Church" and Mr. Thomas Koshy conducted a Main Theme Talk II Interactive Session on the subject "Light as the Force of Redemption."

Our Church Conference choir participated in the choir competition and won first prize for both English and Malayalam choir competitions. Our church also won an award for being one of the best parishes in the Diocese. Ms. Dhanya Kavanakudy, a youth member of our parish presented a Christian Devotional Bharata Natyam during the talent night. Many of our church members also received trophies for sports and Sunday school competition held earlier.

Our parish had the privilege of hosting the 2nd National Edavaka Mission Conference held at Bishop Claggett Center, Buckeystown, Maryland from August 27 to 29th this year. The peaceful atmosphere of the conference along with the powerful messages delivered by Rev. Valsan Thampu, Rev. K. A. Abraham & Rev. Sabu Koshy was great inspiration.

Other Activities of our parish: This year the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ under the auspices of the Ecumenical Council of Kerala Christians in the Baltimore/Washington area was held at our church on April 17th with worship, songs and fellowship. The VBS was held from August 3-6th with the theme "Jesus Helps You Power Up." About 60 students from our parish and sister parishes attended the VBS. Our annual church picnic combined with VBS was held on Saturday followed by the Holy Communion Service and the concluding session of VBS on Sunday. Our youth fellowship

members ranging age 12-30 under the leadership of our Youth Chaplain, Rev. Isaac Johnson meets quarterly and conducts a variety of different activities which include Bible Studies, cottage prayer meetings, Praise and Worship and outreach programs. A team consisting of 8 members of our parish under the leadership of Dr. Mathew T. Thomas visited from August 26-28 the Fantasia Island in Mexico for building houses and for other activities undertaken by our Diocese. Our church members under the leadership of Dr. Cherian Samuel participate in the outreach program of helping the needy in the Washington DC area organizing clothes and canned food drive and help the Soup Kitchen organized by Urban Outreach Ministry in Washington DC.

We are honored to be the hosting parish for the 23rd Mar Thoma Family Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe in 2005. We cordially invite your prayerful presence and participation.

Jacob Mathew, Secretary



Choir members singing in the choir competition held during the 22nd Mar Thoma Family Conference



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan celebrated Holy Communion Service at Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston, during the 30th Parish Day celebrations on Sunday, July 18, 2004. Rev. T. I. Joseph, Rev. K. A. Joshua and Rev. George Thomas (Vicar) assisted during the service.

We celebrated the harvest festival on Sunday, August 22, 2004. During the occasion one day income was collected from the members. A bake sale and an auction were also held during the harvest festival. Church annual picnic was held on Saturday, September 25, 2004 at our Church compound. Sports and Games were conducted for the Sunday School students and the adults. Area wise volleyball tournament was also held during the picnic. About 400



HARVEST FESTIVAL held on Sunday, August 22, 2004

people attended the picnic and barbecue. It was a day of fun and activities. The Church Annual Convention was held from October 21st through 24th and Rev. Philip Varghese from Detroit was the main speaker for the convention. Student Sunday, Sevika Sanghom Day and Sunday School Teachers Dedication were held in August and September. Edavaka Mission Sunday was celebrated on the first Sunday of October.

T. A. Mathew, Secretary

OUR NEW ACHEN



REV. K. T. ABRAHAM, Detroit MTC

Mother Parish: Ranny Pazhavangadikara Immanuel

Date of Ordination: March 14, 1985

Parishes served: Anaprampal MTC; Vechuchira St Andrews; Alwye UC; Perunad Bethel; Chittar St. Pauls; Vazhuthacadu Salem; Punalur St. Thomas; Arthat Kunnamkulam

Wife: Molly Abraham

Children: Christina and Marcus

THE 13TH MID-WEST REGIONAL CHOIR FESTIVAL – 2004



Mid-West Region Choir-Fest – 2004—Opening Ceremony

From left to right: Rev. Jose Prakash; Mr. Yesudasan P. George; Dr. M. V. Mathew; Sam Mammen Thomas; Rev. K. T. Abraham; Mr. N. M. Philip; and Rev. S. George.

The 13th annual Mid-West Regional Choir Festival–2004 hosted by the Chicago Mar Thoma Church, was held at Taft High School on Saturday July 24th 2004. The Choirs that participated in this year's Choir-Fest were Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto; Detroit Mar Thoma Church, Mar Thoma Church of Atlanta, Bethel



Malayalam Choir – Chicago Mar Thoma Church

tation and made the Choir-Fest a memorable event. Rev. K. T Abraham, Vicar of Detroit Mar Thoma Church gave an inspiring message. About six hundred people attended this glorious event. This special gathering generated an environment of love, devotion and fellowship. The Choirs of Mid-West Region were fortunate to have this opportunity to come together and praise the Almighty for His countless blessings.

**Sam Mammen Thomas, Malayalam Choir Leader
Chicago Mar Thoma Church**



English Choir – Chicago Mar Thoma Church

Mar Thoma Church, Chicago; St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church Chicago, and Chicago Mar Thoma Church. This was an occasion for both Malayalam and English choirs to come together and showcase their God given talents and glorify God's name. This year Atlanta Mar Thoma Church accepted our special invi-



Malayalam Choirs of 2004 Mid-West Region Choir-Fest.

MRS. SHEELA ALEXANDER, a member of the Mar



Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch passed away on September 22, 2004 and was laid to rest on September 25, 2004 in Dallas. She was born on May 27, 1960 to the late Mrs. Ponnamma John and Adv. V. P. John of Valiyatharayil, Kanjiramattom, Ernakulam, Kerala, India.

She is survived by her husband V. A. Alexander (Sunny) and children Shaun, Shaina, brothers Manoj V. John (Ernakulam), Vinod V. John (Ernakulam), sisters Asha Roy (Kothamangalam), Anitha Joy (Ernakulam). Sheela was married to Sunny on February 25, 1985 at Alwaye, Kerala, and she joined him in United States on April 18, 1986. She earned her Bachelors Degree (BSN) in Nursing from the Post Graduate Institute & Research, Chandigarh, India and was employed at Medical City Dallas Hospital, Dallas, and at Trinity Hospital, Carrollton as a Registered Nurse.

Rev. Anil George, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, FB

MR. SKARIA PAPPACHAN, a member of our Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church from its inception and one of the early Mar Thoma settlers in this region, died of a heart attack on October 19, 2004 in Los Angeles. He was 67 years old.



Skaria Pappachan came to this country at the age of 29 for higher studies. After obtaining his Masters in Psychology from Cal State, Los Angeles, he served the County in their Social Work Department for 27

years before retiring in 1997. He always believed in the holy words of our Lord's teachings and volunteered to edify younger generation at "Light and Life", a Christian School in East Los Angeles. He was also involved with a Christian Organization called "Underground Evangelism".

Born in the Kottakkakathu Family of Mulavana, Kundara, Skaria Pappachan is survived by his wife Mariamma, Son Reji, Daughter Reni, mother Aleyamma, brothers Thomas, Issac, Raju and sisters Thankamma and Ponnamma.

THOMAS KOSHY was born on June 18, 1921 as the second son of Late Thomas Mathai & Mariamma Thomas of Palakkunnathu Kadon, Maramon. Married in

1939 to Aleyamma Koshy of Keecheril, Perumpetty, he was blessed with 7 children, 17 grandchildren and one great grandchild. He chose to become a voluntary evangelist and was the pioneer missionary to the Mar Thoma Center Malayalapuzha mission. Later served as evangelist at St. John's MTC, Kumplamthanam and his passion for the Lord inspired him to work with



Thomas Koshy
(1921 - 2004)

Late Rt. Rev. Dr. Mathews Mar Athanasius Episcopa to establish a church at Vellayil. Thomas served also as the traveling secretary of the Carmel Agathi Mandiram for two decades. He served as a dedicated leader in various capacities of the local churches, Diocese and the Mar Thoma Church with strong faith. He was called to eternity on October 19th 2004 in Philadelphia. He is survived by wife Aleyamma Koshy, daughters Mary John (married to John P. John) Dallas, Anna Joy (married to Joy Joseph, Philadelphia, and sons Thomas Koshy (Molly) Dallas, Abraham Koshy (Leelamma), Philadelphia, Samuel Koshy (Santhamma) Philadelphia, Mathew Koshy (Jolly) Canada and Joseph Koshy (Jessy) Philadelphia.

Viewing was held on October 22nd at Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia and the funeral services were held at Lam Funeral Home/Forest Hill cemetery in Philadelphia.

The viewing and funeral services were attended by many of our Achens and leaders of other denominations.



Honorable Cliff Hamlow, the Glendora City Mayor addressing the parishioners on Parish Day.

Our Parish Day was celebrated on Sunday, August 15th, 2004. Glendora City Mayor, Mr. Cliff Hamlow was the guest speaker. Mr. Hamlow, in his address, called upon the Mar Thoma Community to be a beacon of Christian stewardship and understanding.

Our Family Retreat was held from August 27-29, 2004. Rev. Paul Cornelius was the main speaker. Our annual Convention was held from September 16-17, 2004. Rev. Oommen George, Presbyter, Diocese of Madhya Kerala was the main speaker. The theme was "Repentance & Rededication" which reminded us of the need to renew our

covenant relationship with God on a daily basis. The convention was a blessed time for all parish members who attended.

Our Yuvajana Sakyam conducted a soup kitchen at Santa Ana, feeding 450 people and it was a blessed event. Mr. Raj Abraham, Vice President of the Sakyam, coordinated the program. Yuvajana Sakyam is planning to have a Musical Concert on November 13th, 2004.

We are proud to announce that Dr. Abraham C. Thomas, a member of our parish, was honored with Manava Seva Award by the Mar Thoma Sabha on Sept. 1, 2004 at the Mandalam Meeting. Our parish congratulated him with a special program arranged on his behalf on Sunday October 2, 2004. Our President Rev. Sunni E. Mathew chaired the program. Dr. Thomas, while replying to the congratulatory messages, gave a detailed account of the mission work being carried on in the Karnataka areas. He praised God Almighty for the way He led Dr. Thomas from his early childhood onwards. He also praised his parents and wife Grace for their continuous support and prayers. A plaque and Ponnada were presented by the trustees Mr. Koshy Varghese and Mr. Joseph Varghese. Our Vice President, Mr. Jacob A. Mathew gave felicitations and Magalopaharam on that occasion. Dr. Elsy Mathew, Secretary, made the concluding remarks.

Dr. Elsy Mathew

DR. ABRAHAM C. THOMAS: RECIPIENT OF THIS YEAR'S MAR THOMA 'MANAVASEVA AWARD'



Dr. Abraham C. Thomas receiving "Manava Seva Award" from the Metropolitan.

Our Metropolitan Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom presented this year's Mar Thoma 'Manava Seva Award' to Dr. Abraham C. Thomas, a member of the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles, on September 1, 2004 at the Mandalam Meeting in Tiruvalla. The award was in recognition of his many years of contribution towards the evangelization of Karnataka area. It was in 1969 that Dr. Thomas started his mission work in Devanahalli with the official name "Karnataka Navjeevan Samithi," which now covers over 240 villages in Karnataka with the largest membership of about 3000 non-Malayalee Mar Thoma Church

members. The work has become part of the Madras-Calcutta diocese in the year 2001 at the request of Dr. Thomas though he continues to be active with the work and is its Vice President now.

Dr. Abraham C. Thomas, a member of the Karakattu Cheruvazhakunnel family in Mannamaruthi, Ranni, was influenced from his early childhood by his devoted parents to lead a Christ centered life. Sensing a call from the Lord for Evangelistic work, Dr. Thomas went for Bible studies at SIBS, Kolar where he began to feel a great burden for the people of Karnataka. He completed his Bible studies and worked with CSSM from 1952 to 1962. However, his burden for Karnataka was uppermost in his heart. After some higher studies and a few years' work in the U.S., Dr. Thomas returned to Karnataka in 1969 and started his work in Devanahalli.

The late Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan once said "this work is the result of one Marthomite who loves the Lord and the Church, by being obedient to God's call." We the members of this diocese congratulate Dr. Thomas for this achievement.

Abraham Mattackal

6TH NATIONAL YUVAJANA SAKHYAM CONFERENCE



Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa Inaugurating the National Yuvajana Sakhyam Conference by lighting the lamp.

The sixth national Yuvajana Sakhyam conference of the Diocese of North America & Europe was held from September 24 to 26, 2004 hosted by St. James Mar Thoma Church of Rockland, New York at the IKCC Conference



Welcome Dance by St. James Mar Thoma Church

Center, Thiells, New York. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa inaugurated the conference by lighting the lamp. CSI Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. George Ninan, Yuvajana Sakhyam Vice President Rev. Sunny E. Mathew, and Secretary Mr. Gigi Tom, gave felicitations. The inaugural ceremony started with procession, worship and opening prayer by Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathew. Conference president Rev. Johncey George gave Welcome speech and Convener Mr. John Mathew gave vote of thanks. Babu Mathew and Mariamma Ninan were the masters of ceremony. Variety entertainment programs were arranged.

The Theme of the conference was “Keep Alert, Be Firm in Your Faith” 1 Cori. 16:13. Rev. Sabu Koshy was the key note speaker for the three day conference. Rev. T. A. Varghese led the Bible study and Rev. Jojan Mathews John led the singing sessions. Mr. P. D. Joshua was the moderator for a symposium—“Challenges in the Family” led by Mr. P. T. Thomas, Mr. John Thomas, Mr. Stanley Varghese, Mrs. Suja Ninan. Dedication, Group Discussions, and talent night was the other highlights for the conference.

Closing ceremony of the conference held on Sunday, immediately after the Holy Communion Service. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa made



Key note address by Bishop Dr. George Ninan at the Inaugural ceremony of Sixth National Yuvajana Sakhyam Conference.

From Left to Right: Gigi Tom, Diocesan Secretary; Rev. Sunny E. Mathew, Vice President; Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa; Rev. Sabu Koshy; Rev. T. A. Varghese; Rev. Johncey George.

the closing remarks. Rev. Johncey George presided over the meeting. After the business session National Secretary Mr. Gigi Tom, made the announcements. Coorilos Thirumeni distributed the “Shiny George Memorial Ever Rolling Trophy” to St. James Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam, who won the first place in group song competition in National Kalamela, and “John Chandapillai Memorial Ever Rolling Trophy” awarded to the North East Region, who got the maximum points in the National Kalamela. Joint Convener Mrs. Mariamma Ninan and Diocesan Treasurer Mr. Alan G. John gave the Vote of Thanks.

A committee comprising of Rev. Johncey George (President), Mr. Gigi Tom (National Secretary), Mr. John Mathew (General Convener), Mr. Thomas Varghese and Mrs. Mariamma Ninan (Joint Conveners), Mr. Mathew



“John Chandapillai Memorial Ever Rolling Trophy” awarded to North East Region, the region that gets the maximum points at the National Kalamela.

Abraham (Treasurer), Mr. Babu Mathew (Program), Mr. George T. Karakal (Registration), Mrs. Beena P. John (Reception), Mr. John Varghese (Food), Mr. Linu Abraham (Accommodation), Mr. Shibu Varghese (Transportation), Mr. Rajan Mathew (Entertainment), and Mr. Thampy Varghese (Souvenir) gave leadership to the conference.

Gigi Tom
Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary

DETROIT MAR THOMA CHURCH

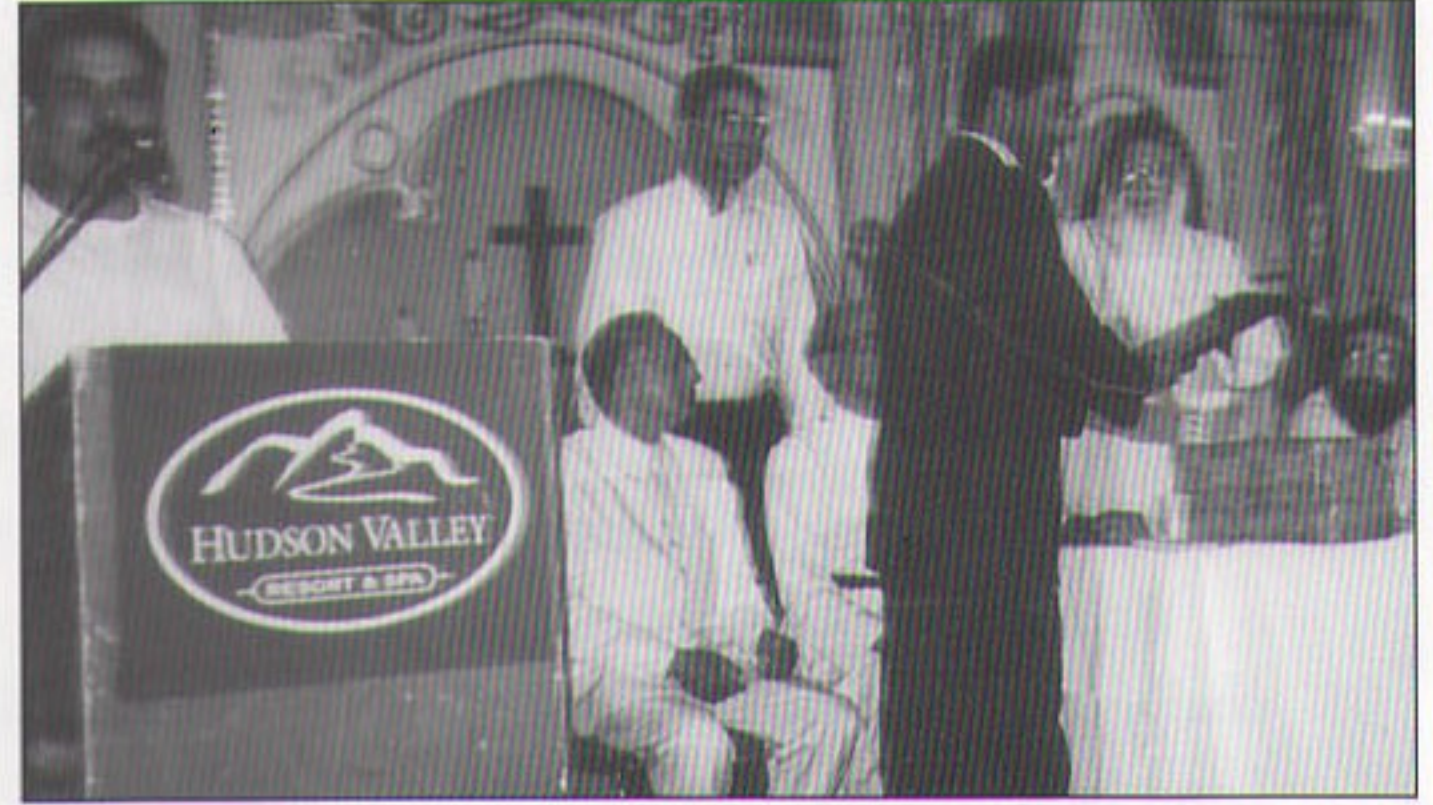


Participants of Mid-West Region Sevika Sanghom one-day conference at the Detroit MTC on September 11, 2004

MAR THOMA MESSENGER AWARDS



MAR THOMA MESSENGER AWARD FOR ENROLING MAXIMUM SUBSCRIBERS: Mr. Benjamin George of St. John's MTC, NY, receives award from The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan.



MAR THOMA MESSENGER AWARD FOR SUBSCRIPTION & CIRCULATION: Mr. Gigi Tom of St. James MTC, NY, receives award from The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan.



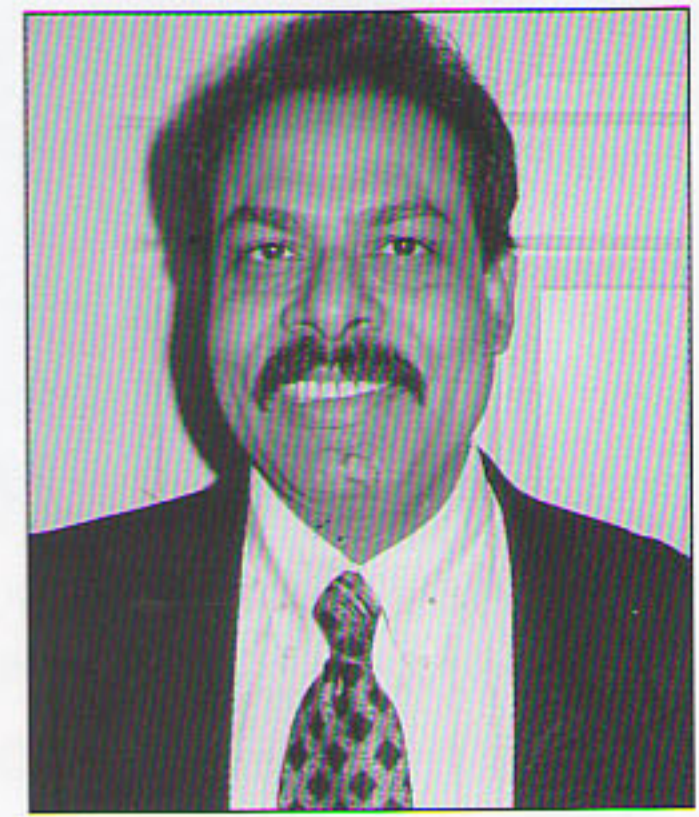
MAR THOMA MESSENGER AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN EDITING: Mr. Vinod Varghese of Staten Island MTC, NY, receives award from The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan.

God's Boxes

I have in my hands two boxes, which God gave me to hold. He said, "put all your sorrows in the black box, and all your joys in the gold." I heeded His words, and in the two boxes, both my joys and sorrows I stored, but though the gold became heavier each day, the black was as light as before. With curiosity, I opened the black, I wanted to find out why, and I saw, in the base of the box, a hole, which my sorrows had fallen out by. I showed the hole to God, and mused, I wonder where my sorrows could be!" He smiled a gentle smile and said, "My child, they're all here with me." I asked God, why He gave me the boxes, why the gold without and the black with the hole? "My child, the gold is for you to count your blessings, the black is for you to let go."

(unknown author)

For us, it is easy to go through life doing the same thing. We have never taken time to find out whom we belong to. We tend not to realize our spiritual needs and our human responsibilities as Christians, but we act 'very religious'. C. H. Spurgeon said, "If our religion be of our own getting or making, it will perish; and the sooner it goes, the better; but if our religion is a matter of God's giving, we know that He shall never take back what He gives, and that, He has commenced to work in us by His grace, He will never leave it unfinished." A believer's personal values are not for him or her to decide—the Bible tells us what they should be. The fact that God saves us totally as an act of Grace on His part is not a license to live as we please. We stand before Him justified, free, and blameless because of faith in the sacrifice of Christ, but we also are now a part of His family, we are members of His royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9). Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4a.) What does it mean to be a disciple? I am sure, it does not mean to make religious gestures and change your outward style of living in a way to display something that you are not. Following Christ begins with an inward change of heart, repentance, and faith, the total experience called the New Birth--it continues to grow into discipleship from the inside out. This transformation will not occur overnight. I have seen individuals who are rigidly religious that they ignore (and sometimes condemn) others around and walk away from reality, holding the Bible close to their chest. Believers in Christ should have a Respect for Human Life, because God is the author of each life, and He tells us not to commit fault. Respect for all life is foundational. Without it, the good society cannot be established.



As a Diaspora community of believers, we are to live the life of "Christian Pilgrims". We face very many challenges. But with God, challenges become golden opportunities. During the journey to the Promised Land Israelites had many trials to encounter. One of these was warfare with Amalek. The enemy tried hard to turn Israel aside and defeat her in her purpose. Israel had been redeemed from Egypt and was now on her way to Canaan, but the enemy was there to bar the way, and Israel must fight. The Amalekites were a strong army with many skillful and brave warriors. Joshua had only an army of liberated slaves, but the story of the Battle of Rephidim proclaims aloud that one with God is a majority, and "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). These war stories of conflict from Old Testament are also pictures of life, and especially the Christian life. The man who is out to acquire his possessions will soon discover that there is no easy way to victory. The highest values in life must be fought for and won. We all have our enemies to face, and blessing will depend upon how we react to the challenge. We are brought over to this land for a purpose. Realizing and understanding that purpose, and working with God is the responsibility of Mar Thoma Diaspora community.

I am thrilled to see that Rev. Shibi Abraham is now ordained as a Mar Thoma Achen from amongst the second-generation youths of our Diocese. I wish him all the best in his ministry and pray to God for His abundant blessings and guidance. I congratulate Mrs. And Mr. Abraham Abraham for their full support in Shibi's decisions.

Eapen Daniel

...in a changing world, innovations and
new ideas come as a matter of
routine. In the business world,
thinking out of the box is just how we
have done business...

...over our 10 years of excellence...
only by the Grace of God.

CompuSystems, Inc.

www.compusystemsnet.com

MVS CONSULTING, inc.

www.mvs.us



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

Best Wishes From
Varkey Abraham & Family

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

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

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

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