

MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

APRIL 2005

Hostility to Hospitality

**LEAD KINDLY LIGHT
FROM HOSTILITY
TO HOSPITALITY**

**THE ESSENCE OF
SPIRITUALITY**

**CHRISTIN MOTHERS-
WEAVERS OF CHARACTER**

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Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly beloved in Christ,

Greetings in the eternal name of our Lord.

As you are aware, in the demise of Pope John Paul II we have lost a great leader of the contemporary worldwide church. He was known for his reconciling presence, especially in situations of strife and conflict. In an obituary published by the NCC-USA it says :

"He was a powerful, persuasive yet often disarming advocate who was broadly shared by an entire generation of church leaders and from many Christian traditions. His papacy sounded strong the unity among Christian traditions. As in a world torn by war and all that on religious differences, he advanced the cause of interfaith understanding. He engaged in a passionate

quest to end the hostile hotspots of the globe and to advance human rights everywhere."

We as a Diocese express our solidarity in the grief of the members of the Catholic Church.

During this summer, as usual, we will be having several Diocesan Conferences such as: The Family Conference, Clergy conference, Junior-Senior conference and so on. The Washington Parish is making elaborate arrangements for the Family conference to be held from June 30-July 3, 2005. The theme of the conference is "Be a Blessing in the Land" (Gen.12:2). Abraham, the father of the faithful was blessed by God so that he would be a blessing in the land for many. We are also blessed as a community not to make exclusive claims for ourselves, but to be God's agents of 'abundant life for all.' In an age of cutthroat competition and privatization, the rediscovery of this Biblical vision is of great importance. We can become a source of blessing in the land only when we attune ourselves to the Divine, every moment in our journey of faith. I urge all of you to make it a point to pray and participate in this important conference of the Diocese.

I am glad to see that the Diocesan Sunday celebrations went on very well in most of the places. Please arrange to send the collections to the Diocesan office as early as possible. We will have the Diocesan Assembly on June 3 & 4, 2005 at the Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Farmers Branch. As part of the agenda we will also have the election of members to the Diocesan Council. Hope you will make it a point to elect people with commitment to Christ and loyalty to the Church.

The Episcopal consecration of Ramban Rev. Dr. K. U. Abraham will take place in Thiruvalla on May 14, 2005. Let us uphold the Episcopal designate Ramban Achen in our prayers.

The following Achens of our Diocese are being transferred back to various places in India: Revds. George K. John, P. J. John, S. George, Sham P. Thomas, John Mathai, John A. George, Saji Joseph, Sunni E. Mathew and Raju P. Zachariah. I express my deep gratitude to all of them for all their contributions to the Diocese in various capacities.

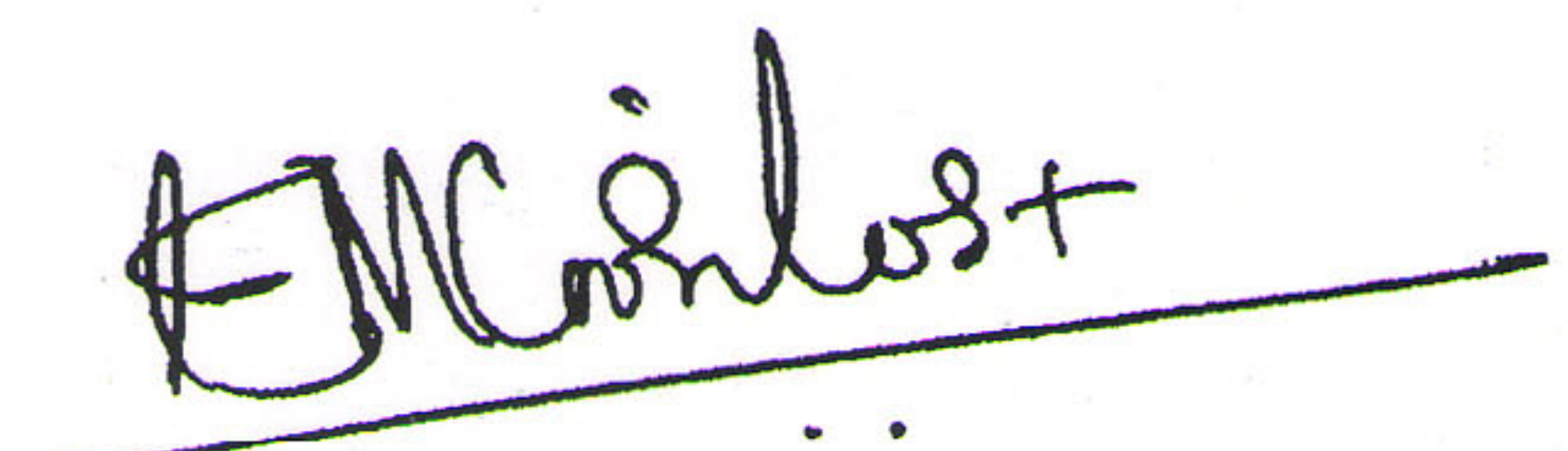
The following Achens will be joining us in May: Revds. James M. Koshy, Thomas C. Oommen, Daniel Varghese, Varghese A. John, Ninu Chandy, Biju S. Cherian, Susheel C. Varghese and Noble V. Jacob. I welcome all of them to this Diocese.

I would like to thank all of you for the timely response to the appeal for the Tsunami collection. We have already sent \$110,000.00 to the Sabha office towards this purpose. The remaining amount will also be sent without much delay.

Beloved, let us continue to work for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God as taught and lived by Christ.

With warm regards.

Yours in Christ's ministry,



Coorilos Metrachan

Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly beloved in Christ,

I am writing this letter on Pesaha Thursday. "Do this in remembrance of me." The word, "Remember," has a strong connotation in the Bible. It is not an earthly activity, but a spiritual experience. The presence and experience of Christ become real. Remember means "make it contemporaneous." It is not an old woman's tale, but a real life experience of the present.

The Pharaoh was humbled by adversities. But when life got comfortable, he became hard hearted. It is difficult to interact with people of this nature. The Pharaoh submitted when destructive forces started to work. God told Moses to set out on the exodus before the Pharaoh changed his mind. There is no time to wait for the dough to leaven. The unleavened bread signifies immediacy. Let not the taste of food destroy your future. It is imperative to set priorities.

Pesaha or Passover is release from the devil's dominance. Every person is a sinner. Not one of us can claim to be sinless. Jesus Christ who understood this, forsaking heavenly bliss, welcomed a sacrificial death on the cross for the sake of mankind that has lost their peace and happiness. This sacrifice will have significance only with the liberation of mankind from sin. Heaven opened up for the thief. Maria got back her son. Everyone regained perseverance. Our souls are in God's hands. This is the message of hope and peace.

The Holy Communion is not a ritual of the Church. It is the gift and experience of Jesus Christ. This is an experience, which should be sustained throughout our lives. The living Christ should become our own life. We have to see our participation in the Holy Qurbana as a blessing from God.

We receive Qurbana in two-piece, bread and wine separately. The bread is placed in the mouth and the wine is served with a small spoon. Special provision was made in Singapore for people to receive the wine in small cups in the wake of the SARS epidemic in that region following regulatory instructions from the government. However, we do not intend to set any norm for this procedure at this time. We value traditions and for that reason alone, we will follow the method of the priest serving the wine with a spoon. Let us act according to the will of the Church.

Any complaints regarding parishes or a diocese should be submitted to the respective Diocesan Bishop. If his decision is perceivably flawed, an appeal can be made to the Metropolitan. Even with a majority, if a parish takes an unconstitutional step, the authorities are obligated to overrule that decision. Please make an effort to take corrective steps if an error has been pointed out. It is not right to break written constitutional by-law in the name of precedent. Precedents can take place only where there are no written by-laws to address the issue. If there is a question regarding anything, please take advice from the Diocesan Bishop and act upon it. It is not right to do things as we please just because a Bishop has been notified about it perfunctorily or because a Bishop did not reply immediately to the notification. The clergy should also make sure that adequate written instructions and consent is obtained from the leadership regarding pertinent issues.

Receipts should be issued for people's donations. Of course, it is not possible to give receipts for some donations like the offertory. However, most contributions like the Rasseesa, subscription, special donations, etc. should be given receipts. In special circumstances when this might not be possible, it will be a good idea to get consent from the parish executive committee.

Following a difference of opinion regarding any issue during a meeting, it is constitutionally appropriate for the Vicar to call for a vote. The minority should not decide to void the decision of that vote. Once a majority has been established, the minority should happily accept the decision. Of course, genuine discrepancy in the proceedings can be brought to the attention of the leadership.

A committee headed by Most Rev. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Metropolitan and consisting of representatives of Kozhikode and Karunagapally parishes, Sabha Secretary, trustees, and three members appointed by the Bishop will be in charge of constructing the 75 houses to rehabilitate the victims of the tsunami. Work will commence very soon.

- All parishes should raise funds for medical care, marriage, and such needs. Everyone should be able to contribute to it all year through. Birthday and Wedding Anniversary offertories should be utilized to this end. The vicars and executive committee members should take steps to encourage people to contribute this fund.

The affluent parishes should help the less privileged parishes. Is it a good practice to send needy people with letters from their parish? Is it better to collect money from various parishes at the diocesan level and then distribute it from the office to various needy people whom we don't know personally or is it better for parishioners to identify the people in need and continually help them financially as a show of solidarity with them? Think about this matter and determine which is the better option.

Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

Being a Disciple—The Challenge of Faith

(Phil. 3:9-14, Col. 3:1-25, Jn. 21:17-18, Eph. 4:2)

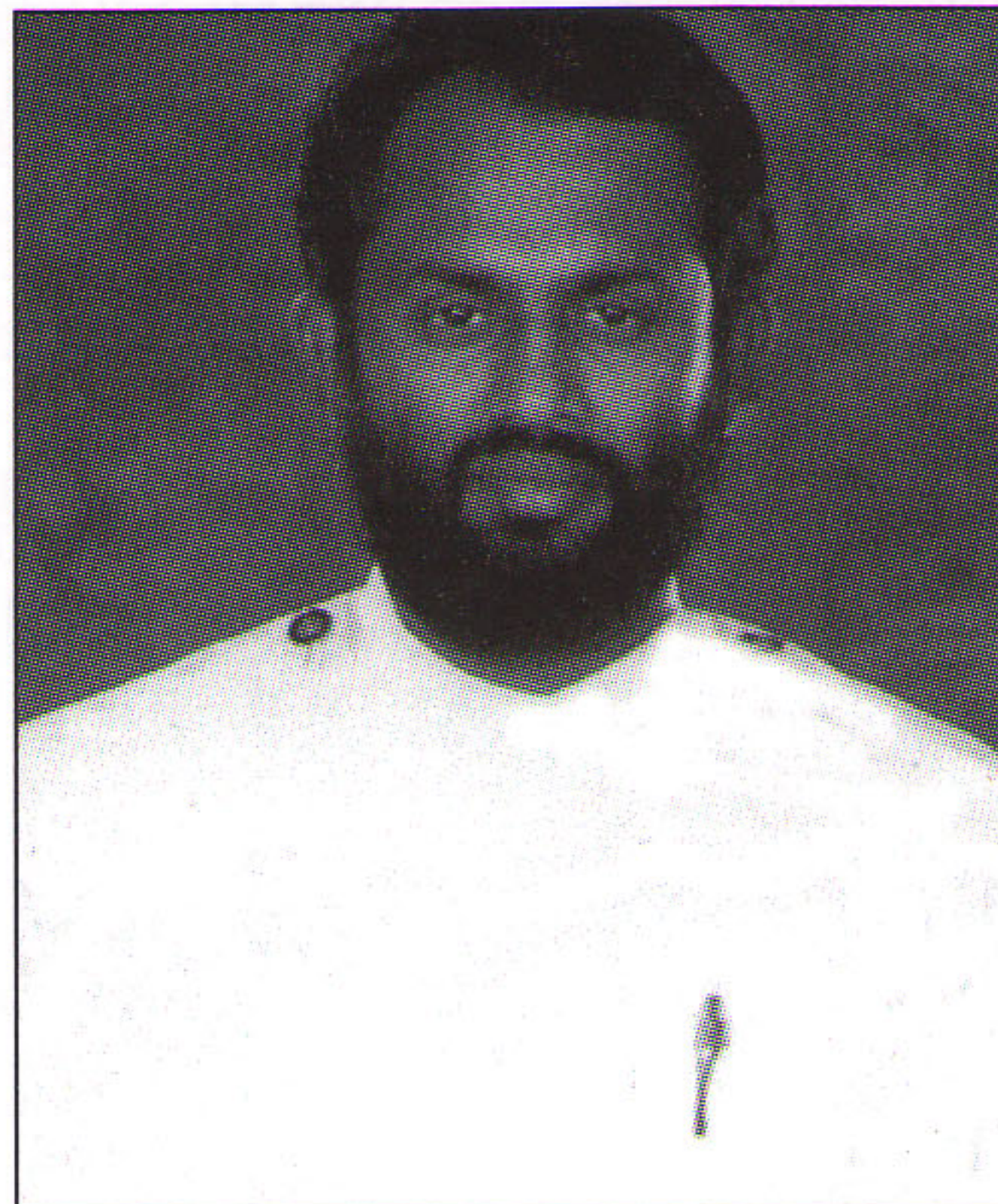
Rev. T. A. Varughese, Epiphany MTC, New York

The life of Christ was a life of obedience to the will of God. It was a life of patience and long suffering in the face of gravest wrongs. Discipleship does not culminate in the experience of the cross but inevitably leads to the experience of resurrection. There is no resurrection without the cross and no cross without resurrection. The hope of resurrection sustains our faith in God and helps us to grow in conformity with Christ. Participating in Christ's death is not a matter of intellectual exercise or emotional exuberance, but appropriating its meaning in our life situations. We become fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with Him (Rom. 8:17).

Though Paul had all the marks of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12, 1 Cor. 9:1), he realized that the most convincing marks of his apostleship were the scars of suffering in his body. In Gal. 6:17, Paul says, I bear in my body the marks of Jesus. The Christian identity solely depends upon bearing the marks for the sake of Christ. A disciple needs to evolve a theology of cross which leads to a theology of glory. A life devoid of the reality of suffering is not Christian life.

Discipleship demands a deep conviction regarding what is of ultimate significance, an obedient submission to the source of faith and an unflinching trust in the God who is the ground of our being. As disciples, we have to accept the uniqueness of the person Jesus Christ in person and social life situations. The call to follow Jesus demands a deliberate break with sinful structures and sinful ways of life. Discipleship is the disciplining of the total person in accordance with the will of the creator. St. Paul speaks of Christ that "He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death, his death on the cross" (Phil. 2:8). For the Son of Man did not come to be served, he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people.

As Hanskung writes "Discipleship is a call, not to rule, but to service". Hence, Christian life becomes a life in tune with the demands of the cross. Bonhoeffer writes in clear tones "Just as Christ is Christ, only in virtue of His suffering and rejection, so the disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares his Lord's suffering, rejection and crucifixion". The call to follow Jesus is an open call to fight without minding the wounds, to toil without seeking rest, to labor without desiring the reward.



1. We are called to live a new life—A new scale of loyalties

Christian discipleship demands from us a new style of living that transcends shallow spirituality. The salt may lose its form to get into action. Jesus Christ and his cross is our pattern of life, if we are to live as Christ's disciples today. Our loyalty to Christ and our values of life should reflect in our way of living. Disciples have to place the claim of Jesus above all needs of livelihood.

This new scale of loyalties centered in the lifestyle of Christ calls into question our long cherished loyalties. For the sake of Christ and for His kingdom, we need to transcend the narrow loyalties. Our call to live a new life is realized when we respond to our life situations and when we participate in the sufferings of humanity.

2. We are called to share a new vision—A new scale of values

As disciples of Christ, we are called to share the new vision grounded in the hope of resurrection. Resurrection calls us from sight to faith. This new vision of life is primarily the cosmic vision of humanity. The time for silence is past. This is the time to speak. Let us decide to follow our Lord who Himself rejected the path of the crown and chose the path of the cross. Today we stand at the crossroads of a momentous decision. The cross stands as the non-conformist and His cross signifies self-sacrifice for others. The cross becomes the touchstone of one's depth of commitment.

As Bishop Leslie Newbegin said, "Discipleship is both believing and acting, both trusting and obeying and we learn both together by a single commitment". Jesus's demand is not confined to personal lives but over the whole realm of life. Confessing the Lordship of Christ is needed in the present day world to exercise fruitful discipleship.

Confessing the faith in the pluralistic context of India is a challenging task. A certain amount of openness and courage is inevitable to fulfill this task. Nothing less than unconditional surrender to Jesus could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice on Calvary. This vision is integral to discharge our responsibilities as faithful disciples of Christ.

3. We are called to instill a new hope—Growing towards a new humanity in Christ

Discipleship means a new order on earth which manifests God's will on earth. As Hanskung suggests, "The following

(Continued on page 10)



XXIII Mar Thoma Family Conference

June 30 through July 3, 2005

At The National Conference Center, Virginia 20176

Hosted By

The Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington

Theme: Be A Blessing in the Land

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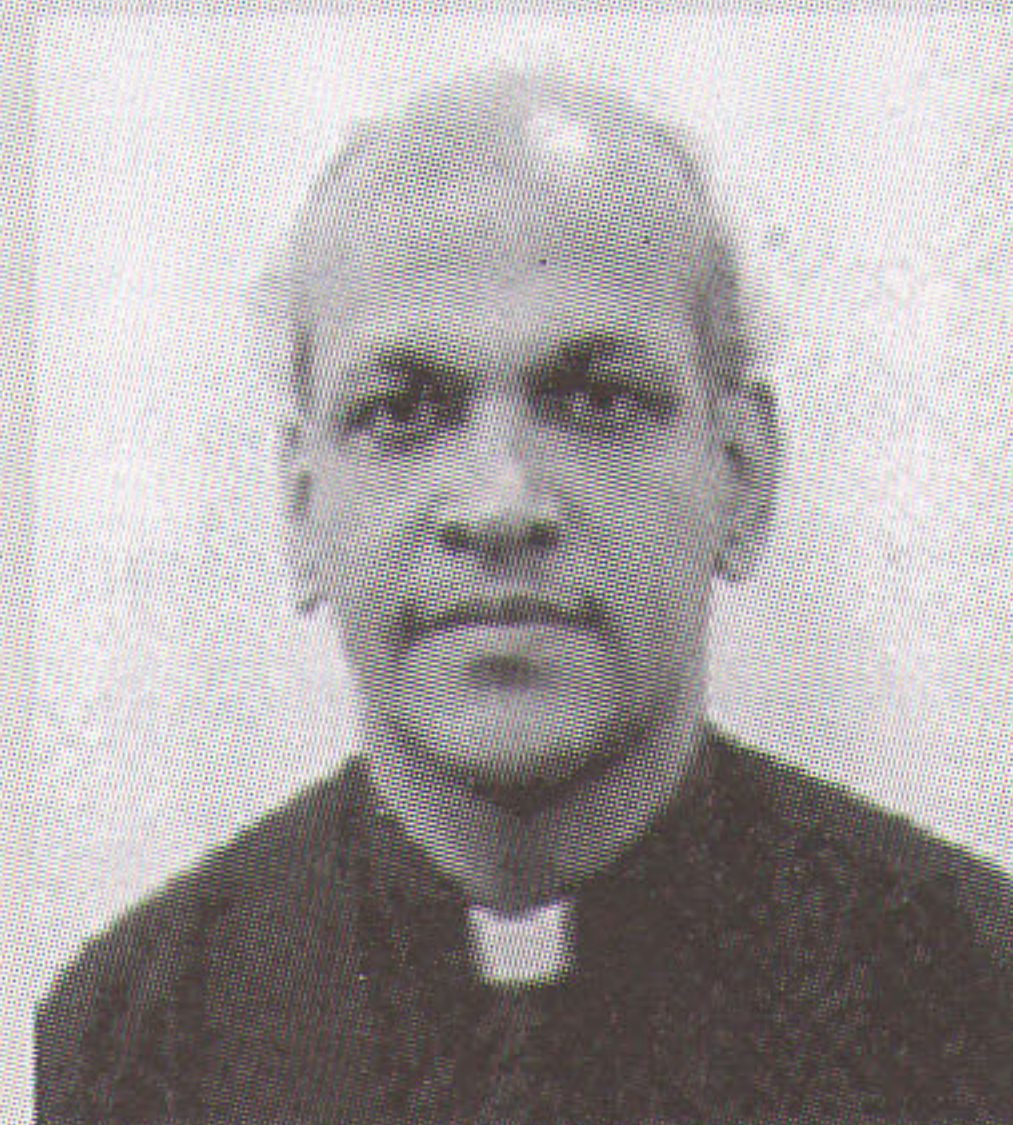
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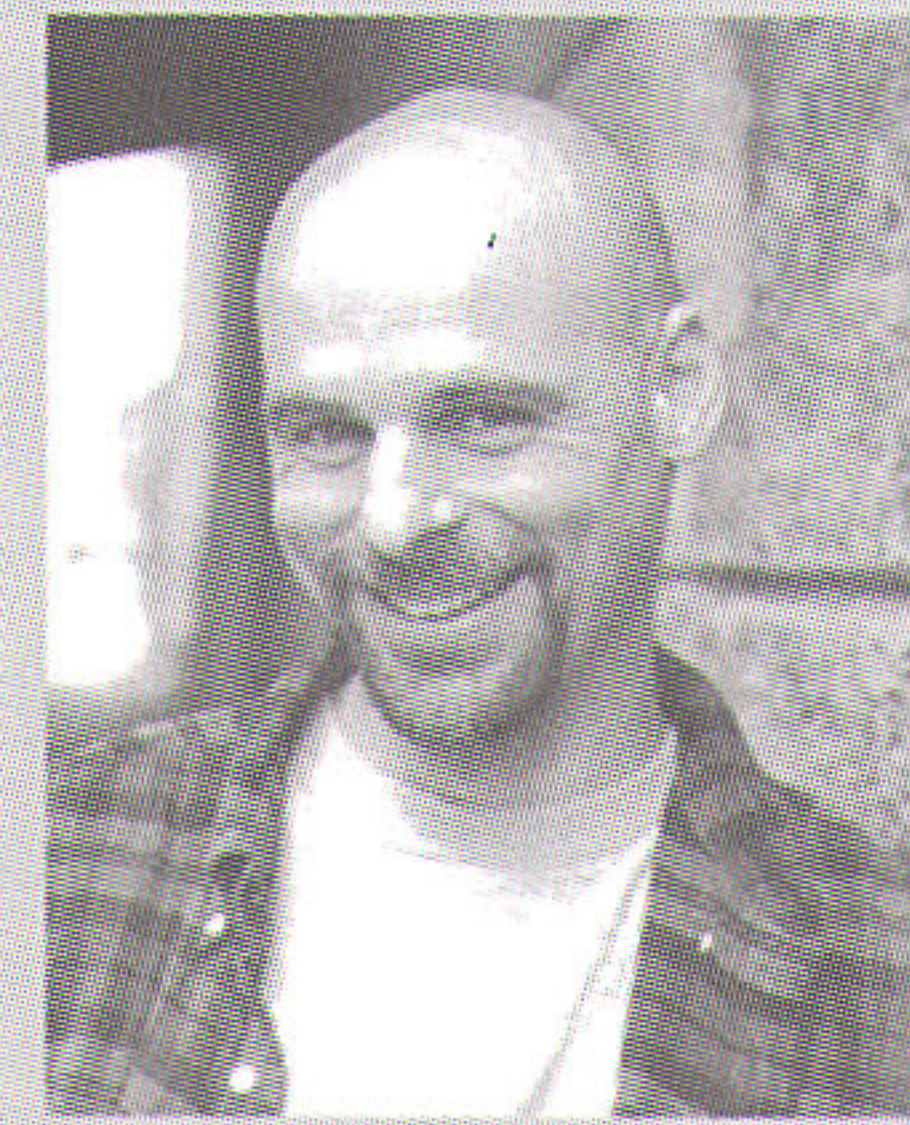
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Mr. Bart Campolo

Conference Website

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Lead Kindly Light From Hostility to Hospitality

Rita Mathew, Athens, Georgia

A barbed wire surrounds the candle that sits on the mantel in our family room—out of place in comparison with the other pleasing things in the room. Nokwonda from Ivory Park, South Africa handcrafted the candle for the Nehemiah project. The barbed wire reminds me that he faces a violent, hostile, environment daily, filled with hate, addiction, and murder; not one that I would be in willingly. I offer a prayer for Nokwonda and light the candle. The light shines defiantly through the barbed wire; it says, 'I beg to differ.' The status quo will be broken because some people are willing to move from hostility towards hospitality.

Nehemiah, the prophet who rebuilt the lives of those returning from exile, has inspired the residents in a neighboring middle class suburb. Nokwonda and others like him in the impoverished black community find economic sustenance because of the partnership that breaks from the tradition of apartheid. Traditions are meant to protect the vulnerable—widows, children, the sick, hungry, and poor. When we neglect justice, hope, mercy, peace and forgiveness, there is only an illusion of protection—we brutalize the vulnerable first. Racism, communal violence, child labor, dowry system are outcomes of traditions built on the quicksand of power, greed and brute force. Traditions that cause conflict and injustice enrage me.

Rage

In order to understand my rage, I focus my attention on scripture and use it as a guide to understand its source, its effect, God's judgement, and the solution. Gen 4:6-8 records hostility and anger for the first time. Cain became angry when God rejected his offering. Cain did not heed God's guidance. Anger turned to calculating, cold-blooded rage, which led him to commit murder. How did Cain sin? He rejected God's authority over his life. What was the consequence? It alienated him from his Creator and his brother. "Sin against God is the root of all division, all alienation."¹ We also see hostility in relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, in churches, on factory floors and in the wars between nations.

An article in a leading newspaper describes our nation as suffering from an anger epidemic. I recall a parent saying, "We have lost some of the glue holding our society together. We have lost our respect for others. The example we are setting for our kids is terrible."² Dan Kindlon and Michael



Thompson the authors of 'Raising Cain' share some frightening statistics. Boys commit about 95% of juvenile homicides and perpetrate 4 out of 5 crimes that end up in juvenile court. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among boys in their late teens. Anger festering in our hearts has led to children dying prematurely and murder in schools across our nation.

It is God's plan for creation that the intimate relationship shared in a marriage by man and woman reflect that of Christ as head

of the church. In contrast, consider the matriarchal system.³ Moses' choice for a wife elicits jealous disapproval from Miriam and subjects Miriam to God's judgment. The dark clouds of depression, anxiety, abuse, and other generational sins hang over Christian families when Christ's spirit does not permeate every aspect of our lives. We are very much like "the house once swept clean that is now occupied by seven other spirits more wicked than itself ... and the final condition of that man is worse than the first." (Luke 11:25, 26). Our generation remains ignorant of the wisdom in our heritage along with its pitfalls. Consequently, we pay a heavy price.

Are our relationships at church immune to this disease? Are we like the Pharisees in our dealings with others? The Pharisees represented the religious institution of the day but conspired behind closed doors and spun webs of malicious lies in order to trap Jesus. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul warns of the risk of coming under a measure of demonic influence when we give in to anger: "do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Ephesians 4:27. The devil's operations result in destructive words; anger gives way to bitterness, rage, clamor, slander, malice. Do we destroy others with our sharp words and with hostile acts rooted in bitterness and malice?

We take hostage in our mental prisons, anyone who dares to disagree with us. The building blocks of suspicion, hate, the need to be right takes more captives. As time goes on, we grow beautiful hedges around the prison walls and paint it so that nobody will guess it exists. When sin takes root, it establishes a stronghold—in this case it creates our very own prison. As the Cain factor grows it manifests itself in "... our worldliness, our wounded pride and reactive anger, our compulsive desire to control and dominate, our greed for more than we need, our hardness of heart toward fellow human beings, our need to hide from truth, our willingness to distort reality for our own purposes."¹ What strongholds do I need to expose? In what way am I hostile?

When my anger is out of control⁵, it makes me a hostile person. An angry person may be addicted to the power it gives him over others. Inaction, neglect in serving people in a timely manner are examples of hostility. I can rationalize and say 'Sorry' but superficiality leads to emotional and psychological damage while creating a pattern of abuse. Refusing to forgive is an act of hostility. At the same time as long as I refuse to forgive, those who have offended me hold me captive, and I remain imprisoned in a cycle of anger and revenge. How then do I find release from my addictive anger and from its infliction on me by others? God's direction to Cain to master his anger and to use it constructively is a wake up call to our society even today.

Release

Only God's grace can demolish strongholds. We need to heed the instruction to humble ourselves and to resist evil⁴. We find release when we obey Jesus' command to love our enemies; we are empowered to subject our anger into creative channels. We learn new ways of looking at events and at anger itself. Anger can indicate wounds within us and in our relationships. C. S. Lewis writes, "Anger is the fluid that love bleeds when it is cut." The new understanding helps me to wipe away masked tears in others and myself. Tears flow because of unmet need, pain felt from rejection, hurt experienced because of abuse. Forgiving our enemies precedes loving them. Forgiving acknowledges an evil act by matching our enemy's capacity to inflict injury with our capacity to endure suffering⁶. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. used forgiveness as a spiritual force; they taught that non-cooperation with evil is a moral obligation just as is cooperation with good.

Receiving and offering forgiveness breaks the cycle of hate. A moving example is Pope John Paul II's offer of forgiveness to Mohammed Agca who shot him. The Pope also sought forgiveness from the Jewish people for the inaction of the church while they suffered during the Holocaust. All the prophets testify that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his name and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Humility and mercy are the spiritual roots of forgiveness and reconciliation. When we exercise tolerance towards those who disagree with us, when we embrace those who are different, we practice the presence of Christ in our lives. When I love my enemies, Christ transforms them and brings about reconciliation.

Restoration

Christ demolishes the wall of hostility that divides Jews and Gentiles, male and female; he makes peace between

brothers, and allows us to extend a hand of friendship to those from whom we experience alienation. Such striking restoration in relationships occurs between Jacob and Esau and Joseph's embrace of his brothers. As I glue together the pieces of a broken ceramic pot, I sense God's love for me. I was filled with pride to possess something so expensive and unique. But the broken pieces are more precious to me now. They reflect my own imperfections. It is when I am broken that I understand his mercy as he takes my broken heart and makes it whole again. His forgiveness serves as glue; it adheres to the jagged edges created by old grudges and restores me into a fellowship that I could not imagine as humanly possible. I am filled with joy again. As Christians, we are called to rebuild our lives and practice traditions worthy of being a living temple.

Response

The candle provides hope because its light illuminates places of weakness and brokenness. I look inside my prison. My blind ambition, greed, self-centeredness, and thirst for power have imprisoned many while my refusal to forgive others has also kept me imprisoned. His forgiveness to me is a gift, which I receive humbly, and in return, I offer the gift of mercy and compassion to those who seek to harm me. I call by name those held captive. I forgive them, bless them, and set them free. His grace releases me to love my enemy unconditionally. I am not afraid to love anymore. For to live is to love in spite of knowing the risk of rejection in return for an offer of love. In doing so, I find comfort in being called 'beloved' and courage to sit at the table with my enemies. At this banquet, the Lord of the Dance calls me to swing to a new beat. Do you hear it as I do? I swing from hate to compassion, from competition to cooperation, from control to care. How about hostility to hospitality? I hear him call my name as he leads me in a new dance, a new song. Do you hear the beat as I do? I am Christ's bride and I will live in unity and serve in peace in God's temple. ■

1. Companions in Christ: Way of Forgiveness, Marjorie J. Thompson. Published by Upper Room Books, Nashville TN, 62.
 2. Karen S. Peterson, "Why everyone is so short-tempered," USA Today, July 18 2000, p 2A
 3. Stirn, A. & van Ham, P.: The seven sisters of India Prestel books 2000
 4. James 4:6-8
 5. Getting Anger Under Control, Neil T. Anderson and Rich Miller Harvest House Publishers 2002
 6. Strength to Love, Martin Luther King, Jr., Fortress Press, 1981, 52
- Author's email address: rithmath1@aol.com

"No one is hopeless whose hope is in God"

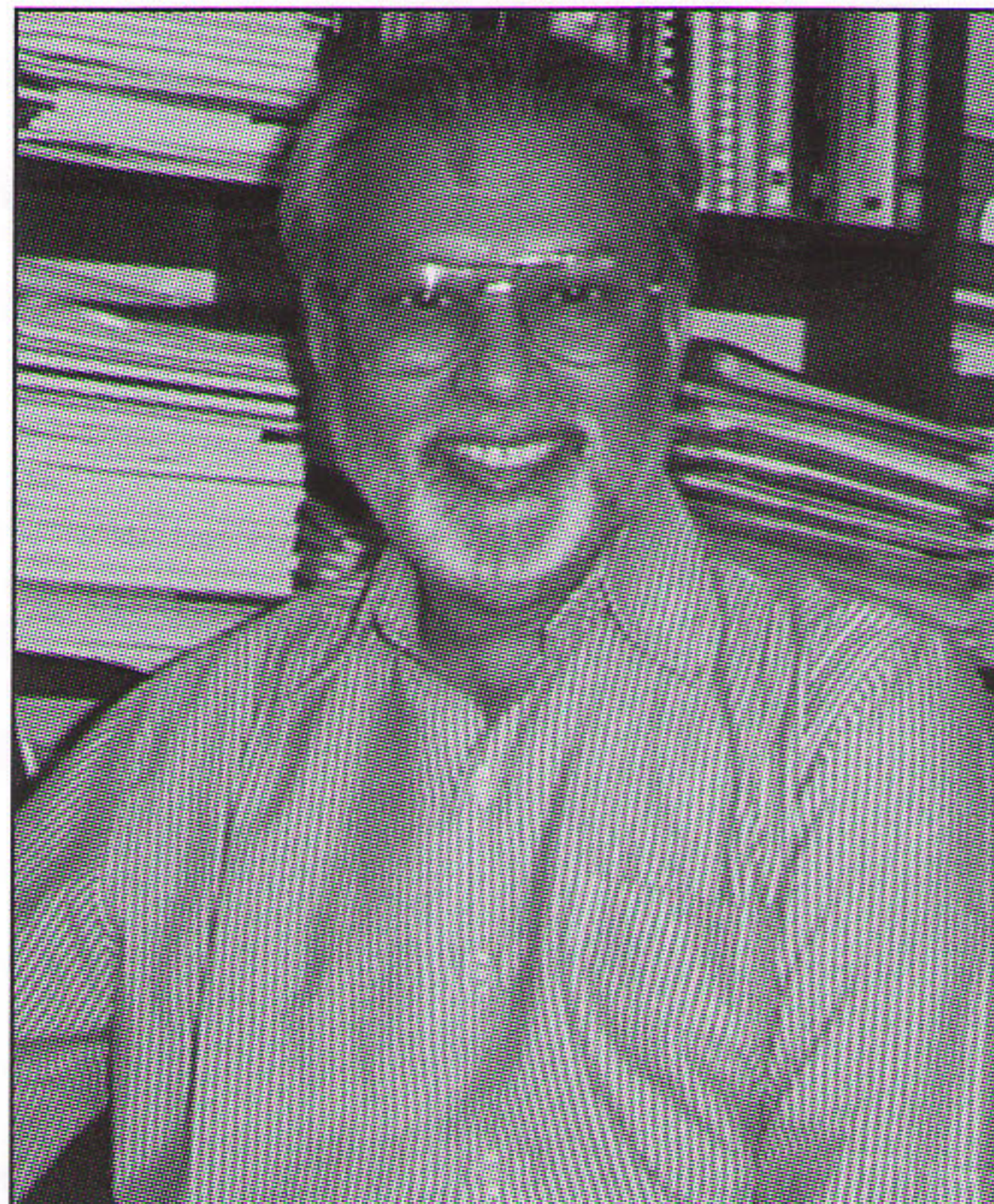
The Essence of Spirituality From Hostility to Hospitality

Dr. Zac Varghese, London, England

'Hostility to Hospitality' is a phrase that I first heard from Rev. Dr. Valson Thampu at the Mar Thoma family conference in New York in 2004. It is the very essence of a spiritual journey. This is a beautiful sound bite, which has been buzzing in my ears and troubling my mind ever since. These are words which do not require any explanation as we understand them quite well. But when we put the two together in a phrase, it has that amazing potential power to create a movement from enclosed corridors of limitations to expanding avenues of grace and unlimited possibilities. I write with the sure hope that one day we will move from the entrenched position of hostility to the expanding avenues of hospitality, accommodation, and civility in all human relationships. We should never be tempted to use the medium of the 'Messenger' for attacking people, we should be careful in using words which may help projecting our ego in showing up the skills with vocabulary but may hurt people and create hostility. Let the messages from the 'Messenger' help us to respect people, but not suspect.

I am writing this article, particularly, to challenge our young people to contribute to the 'Messenger' to create a living forum for providing hospitality for fresh thinking for a Christian lifestyle. I do understand that changes that the young people are seeking in the light of their newer understanding and exposure to various cultural and other societal influences may take a very long time to actualize. This requires patience till we can create a critical mass of people wanting these changes in their own time and pace. It needs self-discipline to be tolerant to others who do not like any deviation from the status quo. A feuding Church cannot heal a broken world.

Hostility is a major theme in the Old Testament, the division between the creature and the creator is the source of all conflict and all hostility. But we also see the hospitality there from the very beginning of the Old Testament faith beginning with Abraham. In nomadic existence hospitality was a matter of survival. When God appeared to Abraham by the terebinth trees of Mamre in the company of two others, Abraham welcomes them according to the custom of the desert, he brings water for their feet and their thirst and Sarah prepares them a great feast without ever expecting anything in return. This hospitality has become one of the great blessings for Abraham and the inauguration of a great nation. The blessing comes by way of a prediction that Sarah will give Abraham a son. At the other end of the spectrum, we also read the story of the kind of hospitality given to the two angels who appeared at Lot's doorstep and how Lot's



hospitality ended up in hostility and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the New Testament Jesus has become the reason for hospitality and creates a season for hospitality throughout Galilee. From the beginning of his ministry he became the medium for hospitality. At the wedding at Cana, at the feeding of five thousand, and numerous other occasions and finally at the Last Supper we see this theme in his ministry. His mere presence and personality created hospitality for the tax collectors and other socially unaccepted people; after his death

and resurrection, Peter, Paul and other Apostles extended this hospitality to the gentiles and whole humanity. Therefore, one of the major emphases in Christianity is moving away from hostility and creating hospitality. The invitation to His great banquet is still open to all.

In this opening decade of the twenty-first century we continue to experience resurgence of 'do-it-yourself religious groupings' and polarisation, in rebellion against institutionalised mainline churches. The mainline churches have a responsibility to provide the right kind of pastoral care for this new demand in religious experiences and to prevent the propagation of a wrong theology. To do this we need to be secure in our basic theological foundations. Mar Thoma Church over the years provided good leadership in India to bring out religious renewal, various social changes through education, social and cultural integration. However, a period of stability and prosperity and complacency created pseudo superiority and fixation in our attitudes. There are new demands on us to provide basic human needs, friendship, warmth, empathy, healing, and an integrated collective spiritual experience through adequate pastoral care. Mainline churches, generally, do not meet emotional and social needs of the majority in the society; where other, 'instant- do- it- yourself' religious groupings move in to exercise their influence. We should be aware of our motives under these circumstances; we should not allow ourselves to be sucked into a vacuum created by the breakdown of institutions and structures. There are differences among us; but, more importantly, there is a world out there crying out for hospitality; a world broken by wars, oppression, prejudice and injustice.

Do we need an Indian Christian Theology to move away from hostility to provide hospitality to other faith communities in the Indian context? Do we need a Diaspora theology to live with our neighbours in countries of our adoption? China's absorption of Buddhism from India failed to propagate an Indian culture in China. The Chinese adapted Buddhism to Chinese purposes and needs, the new

Hindu revivalist has a tendency to see Indian Christians as agents of Western civilisation. The Western cultural baggage of Christianity is too easy for others to see and react against. The growing power of non-western societies, Islamic nations, China, and India through modernisation is generating very special demands on established mainline churches. Under these circumstances what should be the theological understanding of Mar Thoma Christians? How do we go about establishing an Indian Christian theology? Most of our theological scholarship is borrowed scholarship from the West and it is time to build on the work started by the late M. M. Thomas, bishop Appasamy and others. In the fields of Mission and evangelism there is an urgent need for greater understanding of other faiths to create wider ecumenism. We should search for a new vocabulary in creating this hospitality.

Although faith is the basis of all religious affiliation, yet in the present climate it is fear and hostility which is driving people to seek 'do-it yourself religions' which will meet their immediate needs and protect them. God is seldom in the lips of the prosperous and the complacent. The 11th of September experience of panic, fear and desperation gave way to a strong need for spiritual healing and recuperation. As a jerk reaction, President Bush immediately allocated millions of dollars for faith-based projects. But true religion should be able to provide a lasting solace and meaning for all eventualities of life including the rebuilding of communities after a devastating tsunami. One of the recurring themes in periods of violence and instability is religious revivalism. People search out and find safety in spiritual desert-islands. Spirituality and a spiritual life are the way of seeing the whole life in a new and fuller perspective. Sadly, we often speak of spiritual life as though it were an alternative life lived in an alternative world.

The Church always needs a sturdy and searching theology, and never more than when tides and waves of religious revivalism are flowing, unquestioned and unchecked. Both Apartheid and Nazism sprang from wrong theology. They are based on the belief that God is a sort of God who created some people with particular coloured skins or certain genetic makeup in them. Theology begets belief and belief begets behaviour, and before long such beliefs beget bad behaviour. Many more evils in the world than we realise are derived from religious convictions based on bad theology. Skilled autocrats forge signature of God as the ultimate infallible authority underwriting those wrong beliefs. They paint God as a projection of their own unfulfilled desires, they make god in their own image. They even convince us that God spoke to them in the early hours of the morning before or after a crisis. These are ways of closing down hospitality to create exclusive communities and interest groups.

The healthy environment of all religious conviction must be a living theology and in the best sense an everyday theology. It is an attempt to speak to a need and respond to an opportunity. There is a quest for faith and belief; we

need to help ordinary people to have the tools, road maps, and guide books for their spiritual journey. We live in an expanding market of faith and we really do need to know some theology to be able to articulate our faith. Cardinal Newman realised these years ago and said, "I want an articulated and well educated laity." The need for an articulate, theologically sound Church is far greater than ever. Today's world is a world of buzz words, sound bites, instant opinions, and packaged discussions, manufactured for a global market. Mass manipulation is increasingly the agenda of our times, which is a prescription for hostility.

For this reason, if for no other, there is an urgent need for a greater and deeper theological understanding of hospitality and solidarity in all the churches today. Most of the theological basis for the formation of new branches of the churches has arisen from a response to events and insight of a particular period. Such historically oriented theology is occasional theology. Such occasional theology is of importance because it was formulated for a need of the day and satisfying that need in the context of best possible theological insight of the time. This is also true for the Mar Thoma Church and its reformation in the nineteenth century. Church historians will never be able to neglect the role of lay participation in formulating this important occasional theology during the reformation or transformation of any faith community. Such a theology is a theology of the whole people of God and not just of professional theologians because theologians usually talk about God, but religious people experience God. This is the hospitality of including everyone in our spiritual journey to experience God.

A Christian theologian is like the cuckoo that lays her eggs in other birds' nests and flies away. It is the laity who is responsible for hatching the theological egg and their contribution is vital for its nurture. Here we see hostility is being transformed to hospitality through lay participation. A lay-centred church should be the hallmark of the twenty-first century. Mar Thoma Church has the label of a lay-centred church. Generally speaking there are three kinds of laity in the Church: the first group is the one who spends their entire time in councils and committees and who are designated, quite incorrectly, as representing the laity. But they are very important in maintaining the structure of the Church. This lay contribution is not democracy's answer to an institutionalised church. They pretend that they are the standard bearers of tradition. The second group is evangelically minded born-again laity who is also important in the life and mission of the Church and they are flag bearers of the word of God in the scripture. They sometimes practise a tyranny of emotional experience. We also have a third much larger group of silent lay people whose insight and experience is drawn from daily chores of their daily life. This sort of lay presence draws their strength from their daily involvement in that continuing process of God's continuing revelation and creation. Our liberal understanding is that creation is a continuing process

within which there is the further revelation and purpose which we call redemption under the grace of God. It is important to see that we should not allow ourselves to be guided by a tyranny of the institutions, or emotional blackmail in appreciating this reality for moving away from hostility to hospitality in our parish life.

Many people are experiencing a vacuum in their religious experiences and expectations. It is a god-shaped hole created by the theological vacuum which so many religious cults are filling in through university ministries and church planting. This is a real crisis and it will be met only by a fresh understanding of the importance and place of theology in the life and faith of whole people of God. A tripartite theology involving the word of God in scriptures; the word of God in the teaching of the Church and the word of God in human experience and reason are out there. It is this third part which is hidden in the very fibre of his creation. The genius of a living theology is to see how these three witnesses, scripture, tradition and reason, can agree for creating God's Kingdom here and now.

Is there such a thing as a unique Mar Thoma Theology? What is it? Where is it? Are uniqueness and special claims recipes for disaster and hostility? Metropolitan Mar Chrysostom of the Mar Thoma Church seems to have said in a recorded conversation (Mission in the Market place) that "Malpan's reformation was a movement against the practices of the church; it was not based on any well thought out theological position." What is it then? Is it an evolving theology based on its history, corrective actions, social exclusions, and evangelical fervour? Perhaps it is based on stories and legends of our forefathers; if it is, then we need to tell these stories very quickly before our memories fade away. There is a need to tease out every layer of that theology hidden in the developing story of the Mar Thoma Church. If you know these stories and the theology behind the stories, would you please come out tell us these for the benefit of future generations, particularly generations growing up in

Diaspora communities. But there is a problem here because Metropolitan Mar Chrysostom had this amazing insight based on the apparent lack of an identifiable Christian culture in Kerala at the time of reformation; he wrote: "The reason for this was that our forefathers did not have any deep understanding of Christ. How is a deep understanding of Christ possible without the study of the Bible?" Now we have the Bible in various formats, theological interpretation of all types, our own theological institutions and research centres, but what is preventing us from studying and writing an authentic theology of the church? Are we still carrying with us the hostility and resentment associated with the reformation? What is on the agenda for creating Eucharistic hospitality at the Lord's Table with other churches? Is there a problem in raising such a question?

Death and resurrection is written into the very fibre of human experience. As surely as a grain of wheat that falls on the earth must die in order to bring forth new life, this regeneration is the need of our times to remove hostility and to create hospitality. Programmed cell death, apoptosis, is a built-in safety valve for the homeostasis of cells, tissues, and the physiology of life. Repentance, renewal and regeneration are important processes in our spiritual life and the life of the church as well to build and nurture a faith-based community. This is why our church in its collective wisdom had set apart last year for repentance and rededication. Was it an image-building exercise of spin-doctors of the church? It is time to review what we have achieved in this exercise. This is the way for shifting our emphasis from hostility to hospitality in our everyday living. As we face the aftermath of a devastating tsunami, it is a good time to look at the ancient virtue of hospitality. We need to pray for keeping our arms open to strangers, to those who are different and social outcasts; there is also the possibility that these strangers may be carrying unexpected gifts and blessings with them, which might change our lives. ■

Being a Disciple—The Challenge of Faith *(Cont'd from page 4)*

of Christ is what distinguishes Christians from other disciples and supporters of great men in the sense that Christians are ultimately dependant on this person, not only on His teaching, but also on His life, death and new life". The power of the cross is the power of the suffering servant. Christ inaugurated a new humanity which is beyond spacio-temporal limitations.

Risen Christ is the author and perfecter of this new order, a new scale of living standards. Risen Christ initiates a new value-oriented society. Growing towards the new humanity in Christ means becoming co-workers with God to meet and help the bleeding humanity. Today we are called to impart the new hope of resurrection into the contemporary situations of disunity, despair and

disintegration. God's continuing concern for the liberation of humankind comes to fulfillment in the creation of new humanity of which Christ is the first fruit.

New Humanity in Christ is a vision as well as a mission oriented in hope. As students called for undivided commitment to Christ, we have to instill unfading hope that transcends the powers of darkness. This is possible through our willful participation in the life of Christ and mission of the church. The spirit of God who renews life will enable us to realize it in the daily walks of life. It is our decision to grow in Christ that makes one's life fruitful. Christ as the Son of God is the source of continuing hope. Christ as one who overcame all odds and tribulations in life would be the goal and ultimate source of help. ■

From Hostility to Hospitality

Sherly Johnson, Youth ministry, S E Region, Philadelphia

After creation, God saw what he created was good, But the word of God says that Sin separated the created order from the creator. Despite the fact that the sin corrupted every thing, God took the initiative and came in search of the lost ones in order to re-establish the broken relationship. He clothed Adam and Eve. The best example of Divine Love is seen in God sending his only son to save the entire created order. Jesus showed his love to the extent of His death on the cross. This puts light on the fact that we all are redeemed children of God the father. Ever since creation, the feelings of love and hatred are two sides of human expression. There is hatred, anger, jealousy and enmity among humanity. Hostility or enmity is one of the sinful acts of the mortal body. But at the same time it is a fact that just like love, forgiveness and fellowship of this father is enjoyable by the creation; it has the responsibility to be true to its creator by sharing the same values.



Fr. Henri Nouwen introduced the idea of the change in human life. In "Reaching Out" he wrote about the three movements of spirituality. The first movement is personal. It is the movement from loneliness to solitude. The second movement is relational. It is the movement from hostility to hospitality. The third movement liberates the human heart. It is the movement from illusion (especially about our false self) to prayer in the presence of a gracious God.

We deal with the movement from hostility to hospitality. A transformation from hostility to hospitality is necessary for one to become heirs of the Kingdom of God.

Hostility seems to be a parasite, which infects the minds and souls of individuals. This spreads in the community thereby entangling the political sphere, which is reflected in hostility between nations. Lack of self-respect leads to a feeling of insecurity, and sprouts up the seeds of hostile feeling towards outsiders or strangers. It will in turn steal our peace of mind and hijack our relationships. As individuals with hostile feelings people are inclined to look at the surrounding world, with suspicion and always expecting an enemy to appear suddenly and do harm. As a result, despite being linked together through technological developments, the growth of a community or a nation often seems impossible. Programs and developments to unite the entire creation with a global perspective are begun but the growth into a community or into a nation is still far from reality.

Now the heart of the matter is how we are going to transform our hostility to hospitality. It is alright for us to be righteously indignant so long as we do not sin. Anger is a passionate response which rises when something happens

or doesn't happen the way we expected. The crux of the problem is two people see things differently and this is where conflict arises. Each one thinks that things should work the way one desires but reality is that others have the same rights from God as well. And this paves the way for hospitality. Now the question is how are we as people of faith supposed to live during these times of fear and mistrust? How can we as one in Christ transform the hostile situation to hospitable one?

Being hospitable is not easy. In this era where things are viewed individualistically where merely talking to strangers hinders our safety. Being hospitable is a call for the death of self. Offering hospitality means opening up our lives and hearts for outsiders or strangers.

A couple of instances from the Bible reveal this truth: Abraham and Sarah hosted three men, without knowing who they were, who were in fact from God who brought them blessings.

When Saul was the king he had hostility with David. But when David became king, as per the promise between him and Saul's son Jonathan, David invited Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan who was crippled and claimed himself to be insignificant, to the palace. David not only restored his inheritance but he was invited to be at the table with David till the end of his life.

On the road to Emmaus, two disciples were ready to share their ideas, meal and home with a stranger which turned out to be one of the most touching experience of meeting with the risen Christ.

During the first missionary Journey when St. Paul and his companions reached Philippi, Lydia and her family opened the doors of their heart and home to the message of Christ.

All these people humbled themselves, sacrificed their comforts and accepted outsiders with compassion and wisdom.

Jesus is clear about how we need to treat our fellow beings. Even when we were dead in our transgressions and sins the One who was right in mercy saved us only by His Grace. Thus through the cross, Christ created peace by reconciling God to man by putting an end to the existing hostility. The One, who came as the Messiah, served, suffered and sacrificed his life for human kind. Christ who is the perfect host in all our lives is urging those who believe in him to be host in every situation.

God loved, blessed, forgave, invited and included us in his fellowship not because of our good deeds but only because of His redeeming grace, does expect the same things from us too.

(Continued on page 14)

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Answering To The Call Of The Hour From Hostility to Hospitality

Shibi Daniel, Philadelphia

Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another.

1 Peter 4:8-9

In a society plagued by the aftermaths of great tragedies such as 9/11 and the Tsunami disaster, many of us have begun to re-evaluate our lives, our faith, and ourselves. In *Radical Hospitality* written by a journalist, Lonni Pratt and a Benedictine monk Fr. Dan Homan, they state, "Terrorism and the war against it have made everyone feel more insecure and unprotected. The media keeps upping the ante of fear with stories about possible calamities. You need only to turn on the evening news to be aware that we are growing into fearful people, suspicious of strangers and outsiders. Fear is a thief. It steals our peace of mind, which is a lot to lose. It also takes over relationships, keeping us sealed up in our plastic world with a fragile sense of security" In the aftermath of violence what is needed is a healing hospitality, and not just a short-lived show of artificial concern put together for media consumption, but a real and genuine expression of compassion and help.

We are living in a generation that is struggling to love our neighbors, our friends, and sometimes even our families. It is also hard for us to imagine loving our enemies, so instead we foster our hatred by plotting revenge, imprisoning them (without rights) or killing them. The verse, "...eye for eye, tooth for tooth..." (Exodus 21:23-25) is often misinterpreted by most when people excuse their wrongful and hate-motivated actions of taking it upon themselves to right wrongs committed against them. It is a mistake to read the present verses too figuratively, as a poetic version of Cicero's "Let the punishment fit the crime." God means what he says, he's talking about real eyes and teeth and hands and lives. The problem is that we now use the phrase "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" only metaphorically and would condemn as barbaric its literal observance.

Fr. Henri Nouwen in his book on Ministry and Spirituality wrote "The movement from hostility to hospitality is full of difficulties. Our society seems to be increasingly full of fearful, defensive, aggressive people anxiously clinging to their property and inclined to look



at their surrounding world with suspicions; always expecting an enemy to suddenly appear, intrude and do harm." It is such a shame that children today live in a culture where hostility is acceptable and understood and hospitality is questioned. How are we, as people of faith and as followers of Jesus, supposed to live during these times of fear and mistrust?

Hospitality and hostility are both derived from the same word root, but they couldn't be more different. Whereas hospitality is about welcoming all, hostility thrives on insider/outsider conflicts. In today's society, we need to practice hospitality to increase tolerance of the various groups in our society and their unique lifestyles. One can say that there is a close connection between hostility and hospitality and that hospitality essentially contains the seed of hostility within it. We know and understand hostility. It can be defined as the refusal to see and honor the image of God within all human beings. We are wary of hostile people, people who have no consideration for the feelings of others. How many of us try to change their mentality? It is easier to just accept and ignore them because of their hostile nature than to minister to them or be kind to them.

Hostility leads communities to evaluate an individual based on their apparent differences (race, culture, traditions, color, etc.) rather than on their similarities in the image of God. These hostile communities then base the exclusion or inclusion of those individuals upon the ways in which they are different. They continue in the fear-based pattern of ignoring genuine needs and fulfilling artificial needs. Hospitable communities, on the other hand, seek to dismantle hostility. All the instances of hostility are parochial attitudes based on shared fear of difference. Wouldn't it be ideal if hospitable communities fostered individuality rather than seeking similarity? Unfortunately for us, the reality lies in the fact that an individual or culture/community can't truly be embracing of another unless he/she/it fully embraces him/her self/itself.

Hospitality takes apart the sin of hostility and is the art of being sensitive to the needs of others. The words, welcoming, warm, generous, and kind comes to mind when thinking of hospitality. We live in such a time where if a stranger were to be kind, warm or generous, the first

thing we think about is, why are they being nice to me? What do they want? It is such shame that we have so little faith and trust in the people who surround us daily. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that the media has brainwashed us to believe that everyone is out to get us, use us or hurt us.

To be hospitable, you need to accept pluralism as being natural in the world. It is essential to spiritual practice and is a reminder that we are all part of a greater whole. In Hebrews we encourage the church to love each other and to love the stranger for one never knows when you are entertaining angels. Abraham and Sarah hosted three men, not knowing them, and they turned out to be angels. On the road to Emmaus two people brought a stranger home with them to share a meal and lodging not knowing it was the risen Jesus. These strangers reflect God. We all do. Putting others first puts you in the midst of life without the illusion of being the center of life (Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro in Minyan). Being hospitable is not easy, it means opening up our heart and lives to people; allowing them in as they allow us in one person at a time with compassion and wisdom.

Caricaturist Max Beerbohm says that people can be divided into two categories, guests and hosts. Guests need help finding their way and fitting in and hosts take it upon themselves to help guests do this. Hosts put guests at ease and affirm their presence in a thousand ways. We practice hospitality when we welcome guests (including strangers and enemies) into our lives with graciousness. An open house reveals certain things about us: we are in favor toward others, we focus on the positive, and we believe the universe is basically a friendly place. (Quote from Beerbohm) "It

seems to me that Jesus, who is the host in all of life, is calling those who believe in Him to become hosts in every situation; to become those who put other people at ease, loving them, listening to them and affirming them in every way possible." Sometimes hospitality requires that we cross boundaries and get rid of some of the barriers put up by our society to keep "the other" out. Sometimes it means entertaining ideas that might be alien to us.

In conclusion, when traditional enemies choose compassion over conflict, they transform hostility into hospitality. Grace is the hospitality of God to welcome sinners not because of their goodness but because of his glory. If God chose not to magnify the glory of his own independence, and instead to enrich himself by looking for talented and virtuous housemates, there would be no grace, hospitality and/or salvation in this world. We owe our never-ending life to grace, and grace is God's nature to glorify his freedom, power and wealth by showing hospitality to sinners. Part of what can transform us into godly hosts is to be aware of the Buddhist concept of interring. Interring is recognizing the divinity in everything and recognizing yourself in everything. Thich Nhat Hahn puts it quite simply, "Everything is in everything else". So then what is our motivation for putting aside the hostility and practicing hospitality? It comes from a memory of the past and a hope for the future.

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality." (Romans 12:9-13) ■

From Hostility to Hospitality *(Cont'd from page 11)*

Though there is a lot of hostility in our society, there are oases of hospitality too. People are making the effort to know and to attend to one another and to cultivate warmth and graciousness. When adults do this they discover a double dividend. They are not only blessed by being a part of redemptive community, but the children and teenagers also catch the spirit. The churches are extending hospitality by catering to the needs of various age groups. The older generation is taken care of by having old age homes, nursing homes and rehab centers. Many youth centers are focused to quench the spiritual thirst of youngsters by helping them know their creator. Children are nourished and nurtured through a well-established system of Christian education in order to bring them up as ones dearer to GOD. There are other philanthropic agencies around the world, which focus on the total transformation of hostile atmosphere to a hospitable one.

However the church should identify itself with the growing needs and the challenges of this process of transformation. Rather than remaining as passive onlookers we need to be active in various stages so that there is effective change in the mindset of people, families and society at large.

James 4:1, 2 says "we fight and quarrel only because submitting to our desire for pleasures inside us and with those around us". D. De Hann writes "when anger and hatred lingers in our hearts, it poisons all we think and do. But faith seeks ways to show God's love and keeps our spirits strong and true".

Next time when a hostile feeling sprouts up let this be our prayer "Lord, as far as possible as it depends on me help me to live in peace with everyone" Rom 12:18.

Let the Grounds that is filled with roots of bitterness, be ploughed by the grace of God. ■

Christian Mothers—Weavers of Character

Anuja Chacko, Detroit Mar Thoma Church

In honor of all the mothers, I would like to begin by sharing a few lines from a poem titled, “A Mother Is Always with You”.

*“Your mother lives inside your laughter,
She is crystallized in every teardrop,
She is the place you came from, your first home,
She is the map you follow with every step that you take,
Nothing on earth can separate you,
Not time, not space, not even death,
You carry her inside of you.”*



“Ma”, it is probably the very first word most of us uttered as infants. The bond between a mother and child is exceptionally powerful. Is it a mother’s unconditional love for her child that creates this unique bond? A Godly mother is the light of a Christian home and the glue that binds the family unit together. She can be viewed as an angel whom God has sent into this world, so we may realize how much He loves us. In Isaiah 66:13, the prophet compares God’s love to that of a mother. A mother lovingly sacrifices her time, efforts, resources, career, and even her health for the welfare of her family. She adeptly maneuvers through an interminable job description list. Her family counts on her as the caregiver, coach, cheerleader, chef, chauffeur, counselor, coordinator, and the list goes on and on. As Cardinal Mermillod states, “A mother is she who can take the place of all others, but whose place no one else can take.” So, it is indeed befitting that our nation has set apart a day, since 1914, to honor our beloved mothers on the second Sunday of May.

As we pay tribute to our mothers on this Mothers’ Day of 2005, let us direct our attention to the chapter thirty-one in the Book of Proverbs, commencing at verse twenty-eight.

*“Her children arise and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praises her:
Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.
Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”*

The epilogue in Proverbs 31 focuses on the virtues of a noble wife and mother. Noble or virtuous character depicts strength and ability. Ruth is described as a virtuous woman in Ruth 3:11. Proverbs 12:4 states that “a wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.” The word woman itself originates from a Hebrew word “ishsha” which means, “to be soft or delicate”. The woman has been bestowed with God-given sensitivities to intuitively perceive the situations and feelings of other people. Now that we have defined a noble woman, let us find more about the virtuous mother who is depicted in Proverbs 31. Who is she? As Christian mothers, how can we emulate her sterling qualities?

The description of the noble woman begins in verse 10 with a question, “Who can find a wife of noble character?” This question does not indicate that such a woman is extinct. However, she is rare. Her rarity makes her more precious than gemstones. In verses 11 and 12, her husband demonstrates implicit confidence and trust in her abilities. He attributes the good that comes to him directly to his wife. She is a competent home manager, and her management skills enhance the wealth of her family. She is supportive, encouraging, and is faithful to her husband all the days of her life.

As we move forward through this passage, the noble woman is described as a dexterous weaver, who works with flax and linen. Flax was the most ancient of all textile fibers. Until cotton was introduced in Persia, during the time of the exile, flax and wool were the sources of all clothing in the Middle East and Egypt. In this passage, the noble woman weaves with great diligence and pride. Even though she is blessed with household help, she is an early riser who wakes up before dawn to provide food for her family and household servants. She truly “does not eat the bread of idleness.”

In verses 16 and 18, the noble woman is portrayed as an individual with tremendous business acuity. She dabbles in real estate and plants a vineyard out of her earnings. She is wise in her business dealings as well as in managing her time. “Her lamp does not go out” indicates that she plans ahead for contingencies. As we are all familiar with the parable of the foolish virgins, the extinguishing of a lamp denotes calamity.

Despite her success as a businessperson, she is selfless and generous as reflected in verse 20. She sells some of her wares for profit and readily shares the proceeds with the poor and needy. She is also well prepared for the cold weather. In verse 21, she clothes her household in scarlet, a bright red color, indicating that she spares no cost in providing for her family. She herself is clothed in fine linen and purple, evidence of her family’s well-to-do position during that time in society. The color purple was probably considered as one of the most exclusive of the ancient dyes. Its various hues of red and purple were derived from the Mediterranean mollusks or shellfish. Since hundreds of shellfish were required to extract a minute amount of the purple dye, only individuals of wealth, royalty, and high rank could afford garments dyed with such expensive substance. As it is stated in Daniel 5:7, King Belshazzar offered a purple robe and gold chain as a reward to the person who could decipher the cryptic writing on the wall. The noble woman’s clothing is metaphorically referred to symbolize her stature of strength and dignity. She does not panic in adversity. On the other hand, she anticipates the future with faith, courage, and confidence.

In verses 26-29, the noble woman is also praised for imparting wisdom and faithful instruction to her children and household. "Her children arise and call her blessed." She is positive and optimistic. Her entrepreneurship does not hinder her duties as a wife and mother. "Her husband praises her" by telling others that she is the greatest among all noble women.

In verse 30, the secret behind her success is her godly character. The honor and praise accorded her are from God's hand. She is physically charming and beautiful. However, we all know that these qualities do not endure. "But a woman who fears the Lord" will be honored and rewarded by both God and men.

In the final verse, the writer is urging the readers to recognize and reward the faithful diligence and kindness of such a woman. This woman, along with her husband, is publicly honored. Honoring a woman at the city gate was not customarily done in Israel. However, an extraordinary woman deserves extraordinary recognition.

Unlike the noble woman depicted in Proverbs 31, we might not possess the outstanding business acumen or the dexterity with our fingers. However, God has granted each one of us a unique set of talents. As mothers, it is our responsibility to be faithful stewards of those talents by utilizing them to their fullest potential. God will honor and reward our motherhood if we are faithful to Him.

Motherhood is indeed a vocation of the highest calling. As stated in the book of Psalms, children are the inheritance of Jehovah, and the fruit of the womb is His reward." Hence, we must view motherhood as a sacred privilege as well as an awesome responsibility. Like Samuel's mother, Hannah, we must consider our children as gifts from God and commit them into His hands. Each day, we must dedicate time to pray for our children and to pray with them. As instructed in Deuteronomy 6:6, we must impress God's commandments in their hearts. We must talk to them about God when we sit at home, when we walk along the road, when we lie down, and when we get up. Mothers play an integral role in the spiritual upbringing of their children. Timothy's grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice, worked as a team in imparting and instilling the scriptures to young Timothy. Children should be brought to Sunday school on a regular basis from a very young age and on a consistent basis. A mother's enthusiasm for Christian education has a tremendous impact on the child's passion to study and apply God's Word in his or her life. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

Apart from being the spiritual mentors, God has also entrusted us with the duty to discipline our children. Proverbs 29:15 reminds us, "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to itself disgraces his mother." We, as Christian mothers must be diligent in disciplining our children, while we ourselves exercise discipline in all walks of our spiritual and personal lives. As we all agree, our children have an uncanny manner of imitating both our positive and negative attributes. Our actions speak louder than our

words. When I reflect upon my personal life, I can boldly affirm that my beloved mom's endurance, love for others, and perseverance in life have indelibly molded the inner core of my character. Even though she passed away, her empowering presence prevails in my daily thoughts, word, and actions. Of all the teachers whom I have encountered, I genuinely consider my mom as the most influential instructor. Her life has etched cardinal values in the depths of my heart. Yes, mothers do indelibly weave the core character of their children. Hence, we must persevere to become role models for our children by continuing in true faith and love.

Finally on this Mother's Day, we should also examine our responsibilities towards our mothers. The Bible repeatedly urges us to honor, love, and obey our mothers and fathers. Even on the cross, Jesus taught us by example that we should not forsake our duties towards our parents. He entrusted his mother to his beloved disciple, John, prior to his departure from this earth. Just as Ruth was unconditionally loyal to Naomi in her old age, we also must be faithful to our mothers until their final breath. For the infinite sacrifices and the unconditional love and forgiveness our mothers have so willingly showered on our behalf, isn't only fair that we reciprocate their love? So let us, as a church family, renew our commitment in God's presence to honor and love our mothers not only on Mothers' Day, but each day of the year with our heartfelt words and actions. For those of us whose mothers have departed from this world, we can continue to honor their memories by treasuring the values they have woven in our hearts and by imparting them to our children.

I would like to conclude with a poignant narrative about Nancy Hank Lincoln, the mother of Abraham Lincoln. She was raised in an indigent family, in the state of Kentucky. She had little opportunity to attain formal education. However, as she grew up, she excelled in the art of needlework. She was a dexterous seamstress, similar to the noble mother in Proverbs 31. She was hired to sew anything from wedding gowns to funeral attires. Nancy's work ethic, neatness, cheerfulness, and intelligence were greatly appreciated by others. She was a deeply religious woman who was "loved and revered by all who knew her." Nancy was also a loving mother who faithfully read to her children everyday from the Lincoln family Bible. She was ambitious for her children and aspired that they would attain the opportunities in life that she and her husband had missed. Abraham Lincoln was merely ten years old when his mother Nancy was afflicted with a deadly illness. Before her death, she beckoned her children to the bedside and reminded them to be kind to their father, to each other, and to the world. In later years, President Lincoln reminisced the powerful influence his mother had upon his life. He recalled, "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life. Whoever I am, whatever I do, for all these things I am indebted to my angel mother. God bless her," he poignantly stated. What an awesome tribute to a noble mother! ■

Malayalam...Why Bother?

Anil Varughese, St. Mathew's MTC, Toronto, Canada

Is there any use in learning an "obsolete" language like Malayalam that is of no practical consequence to us in our daily lives? Why should we make the effort to learn or teach it? The question has certainly crossed our minds as parents, youth and children living in North America. Many of us have opposing views on this complex issue and I have no pretensions of having the right answer. With this article, however, I would like to provoke some thinking around the issue. In the following paragraphs, I describe some of the familiar circumstances that represent the gradual erosion of our heritage language and some of the chief factors that contribute to it.

Virtually every immigrant community wants to pass on its language and culture to the next generation. This desire of immigrant communities for cultural and linguistic reproduction is sometimes in conflict with their desire to master English and to be "successful" in life. Parents and children end up having to make a difficult choice between English and the native language, and most likely English and the practical benefits of mastering it, overshadow the native language. As fluency in English improves, competence in the native language declines. The result is a gradual loss of the heritage language. Studies show that within two or three generations most non-English-speaking immigrants to North America will have almost lost their heritage languages.

The consolation is, if it is any consolation at all, that it is not an isolated issue for Malayalee immigrants in North America, or the Gulf countries alone. It is as much a worrisome issue for Malayalees in other parts of India, and, to a great extent, even within Kerala. As English medium schools become the status symbols of the upper middle class, a new generation of Malayalee children is growing up without any real exposure to their own mother tongue.

Malayalam attrition manifests itself in different ways. Many children, for example, have only a passive knowledge of Malayalam. They may understand the home language in a basic way but cannot speak it. Others may learn to speak Malayalam fluently but are unable to read and/or write it. Sometimes children who start out with a good speaking knowledge of the language end up becoming semi-speakers at best by the end of their high school years. In many cases, families communicate in a curious mixture of Malayalam and English, often called "Manglish."

Many researchers see the power and international status of English in the media and the economy as primarily responsible for the lack of motivation to learn or teach native languages. In the popular mind, competence in English is associated with better paying jobs and higher social and geographical mobility. Conversely, competence

in native languages is popularly associated with lower earnings and lesser social mobility. Upon closer examination, however, this popular perception boils down to a market myth that sets up an 'all or nothing' contest between English and heritage languages. There is no factual evidence to suggest that immigrants who know their heritage language necessarily earn lower incomes.

Adding much credence to this economic myth is a cultural myth, still prevalent in some of our minds, that speaking Malayalam, or encouraging children to speak it, is a matter of low prestige. In the United States, there is still the common belief that bilingualism is bad for children, and that the only way to be "successful" and "American" is to leave behind any prior linguistic and other allegiances. This preference to be monolinguals is not so conspicuous in Canada because of the unique socio-political dynamics of Canadian society and its policy of multiculturalism. Yet, our entrenched racialized attitude towards the native language does not make it easy to nurture, even in Canada.

Sometimes, the choices made by parents may inadvertently abet the loss of Malayalam. Many parents are faced with the dilemma of which language to speak at home. Should they speed up their children's acquisition of English by speaking it with them, or would that hurt their children's chances of retaining Malayalam? Given that schools encourage speaking English at home, and that less proficient students in English may suffer emotionally and educationally, parents are caught between a rock and a hard place. The competing pressures make their choice a difficult one. Parental nagging may be another indirect reason causing native language attrition. Sometimes, parental insistence on retaining the language and values of the native country become a source of intergenerational conflict and children begin to develop a strong aversion.

Another important factor is the tough assimilative pressures that children are subjected to at school, mainly from their classmates. Some of us would remember how we were teased for not speaking English in preschool. Sometimes we were made to feel different, and our language or accent ridiculed. Children begin to develop a sense of shame about their language and culture and accordingly make every attempt to suppress its source. In a kind of reverse shame, language rejection may also occur or be intensified as a result of discouragement over one's lack of knowledge of the heritage language. Non-fluent children try not to speak the native language at all for fear of being criticized or laughed at by those who speak it better.

There are other practical considerations too that contribute to heritage language disappearance. Youth who have lived in North America most or all of their lives often

(Cont'd on page 20)

Family in Transition: Conflicts and Resolution

Rev. T. A. Varughese, New York

Paper presented in the Eastern Zone Sevika Sangham Couples Conference

Introduction

Family is the primary unit of human community and the basis of societal existence. Evolution of community is inevitably related to the wellbeing and existence of families. Family has now become the focus of the social, political and religious spheres of our life. The year 1994 was observed by the United Nations as “International Year of Families” which shows the decisive significance of family on a global level.

Family is the social space where we find union and sharing of hearts, minds, aspirations and anxieties. In olden days, family was a homogeneous unit. But in the present day context, family has become heterogeneous in nature and functions. Family is fundamentally a meaning system following certain mandatory principles. Today family faces a series of crises like crises of existence, crises of meaning, crises of faith, crises in moral and spiritual formation. “In a market society, people, land, knowledge, faith, religion and other facilities are transformed into commodities. The concept of freedom, equality, compassion and other rich meaning system have lost their legitimacy and spiritual strength within the prevailing market principle.” (Felix Wilfred).

Types of Family System

1. **Joint Family:** This is an extended family which supports and protects the individuals and smaller groups. This system values traditional family values in a time where family values and support system are under threat of extinction.
2. **Nuclear Family:** This is a pattern in which the husband, wife and their children adjust to live, separated from the extended family and its support.
3. **Single Parent Family:** Broken family relationship leads to the evolution of single parent families where the children are prone to become rebellious and lost.
4. **Cohabitation:** This is the practice of living together without getting married. Cohabitation leads to a number of births out of wedlock.
5. **Homosexual Companionship:** This is against the natural sexual relationship which destroys family stability. Sex is not for recreation but rather for mutual union and healthy existence. Lev: 18:22 views it as a abomination.

Family in Biblical Perspective

Bible pays decisive attention to family—its being and doing. Family was considered as a closely knit hierarchical

system in which ultimate authority resided with the father in Old Testament times. Jesus’ teachings on family was reaffirmation of Old Testament truths as well as reassertion of its inevitability in the kingdom experience. Apostles and St. Paul have given high attention to Christian family principles.

1. **Family a Divine Institution:** God established the institution of family (Gen:1:27-28, 2:24). Human family is designed in the order of Trinitarian relationship. The co-existence, coherence and mutual fecundation add to the blessings of family. Family is mutual partnership. Husband-wife relationship explained in Ephesians 5:22-32 is actualized when husband and wife belong to each other.
2. **Family a Covenant Community:** Gen:2:23 explains the tie of covenantal relationship within the family. Marriage is never a contract between husband and wife. A contract is based on mutual and bilateral terms. If the one or other party defaults, the contract is broken. Covenant on the other hand is unilateral relationship. Hence marriage is renewed relationship held together by a natural bond of unbreakable covenant. Marriage is spiritual vow to last until death.
3. **Family a Sacramental Presence:** The feasts and festivals in Israelite Community such as Passover, circumcision and classes on law in synagogue have helped the formation and nurturing of faith. In the early church, house churches played the pivotal role in the transmission of faith. Occasions like preaching of the Gospel (Acts:5:42, 20:22), administering baptism (Acts 16:15, 1 Cor. 1:16), breaking the bread (Acts 2:46) helped experience the sacramental presence of God. Marriage is instituted to enhance life and separation and divorce are contrary to God’s orders. Marriage is primarily designed to be the reflection of the relationship between Christ and His Church.
4. **Family a Therapeutic Community:** We are created to actualize the plan of God in family life. Relationships make the reflection of the covenant. In Gen. 2:18, woman is presented as the helper. It is a complementing relationship neither inferior nor superior to the other. The bond of love and committed service to one another in the family relationship gives a therapeutic effect on the family members.

The wife is the link between husband and children. A capable wife is far precious than jewels. (Pro. 31:10).

Proverbs 31:10–31 present the features of a good wife. She is ambitious, kind, trustworthy, willing, pleasant, concerned, hospitable and reaching out the needy. The calling of the parents is to help the children discover what God means to them. Children are a blessing to parents and are a treasure to the community of faith when nurtured in God's grace. Obedience to parents is expected from children. Obedience is not optional. Children should be reared by both parents in the path of faith.

Family in Transition—Conflicts

1. **Low Self Esteem:** Self esteem is one's awareness about one's own being i.e. potentials and limitations. Every creation is unique in God's plan and comparison between the husband and wife will eventually end up in collision. Low self esteem can result in inferiority complex, superiority complex, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, insecurity, resistance syndrome and suicidal trends. Accept the uniqueness of everyone in the plan of God and try to accommodate the spouse for the fulfillment of God's plan.
2. **Emotional Immaturity in Married Life:** Emotions are essential for expressions and existence. Husband and wife should practice maturity in family and societal level. By being faithful to partners and without losing the values, the spouse can give creative expressions to any emotions. Maturity is reflected in mutual respect, concerned participation and compassionate solidarity.
3. **The Contrast Between Expectations and Reality:** Unrealized expectations will lead to depression, murmuring, irritation, fights etc. Some expectations are beyond or against the realities. Some are exaggerated expectations. Some are inflated expectations. Developmental crises, accidental frustrations, negative responses from the spouse's side, unavailability of the spouse, lack of intimacy, crosstalk with ulterior motives will worsen the situation. The great difference between the past expectations and present reality of life aggravates the crises.
4. **Problems in Family Communication:** Spontaneous complimentary communication will help build interpersonal relationship. Love is the basis for family communication. Mutual respect for the personality of the spouse will enable the communication process within the family. Be open in family communication without veils. Communication is talking to the heart of the other. Love and open talk makes you melt and become one. Everyone in the family should talk and let the dialogue take place in times of get together. The media like T.V., internet has stolen the get together time and occasions for collective interaction. Try to avoid artificiality in talks and do not use personal

disabilities (physical, intellectual, mental, emotional, social or religious) as the trump card.

5. **Sexual Problems:** Marriage is not a license for sex. Sex is a divine activity for knowing each other in mutual commitment and reciprocal love. Men are sexually aroused fast and subside fast. For women, actions like loving, touching, kissing etc. slowly arouse sex in her. Misunderstanding about sex like fear of inability, domination, threatening past experiences, inferiority complex, etc. worsen sexual relationship. Unfaithful partners can never have a meaningful family existence. Sex is one of the experiences that contribute to the stability of the family. Sex is the culmination of the effective emotional relationship between men and women. Sex is not for abuse but for mutual enrichment. Men experience love through sex and women reach sex through love.
6. **Lack of Interpersonal Relationships:** Ability to keep relationship against the odds and improbabilities is the key to durable interpersonal relationships. Acceptance of the partner with the abilities and weaknesses will strengthen the bond of relationship. The wife wants to be attended and enjoys positive strokes of appreciation. A working woman expects the husband to encourage her to develop and grow in the intellectual and social level. She expects not a punishing husband, but a sharing, caring, accommodating and loving person. Husband expects his wife not to be controlled by her emotions. Avoid all negative criticisms and judgments for a transparent interpersonal relationship. Partners should be prepared to forget and forgive without postmortem.
7. **Influence of Media:** Media plays a permeating influence in the family system. The traditional values and long cherished ideals of Christian family are undergoing rapid changes. The impact of globalization, liberalization and marketization have deeply influenced the dynamics of family system. The consumer culture based on profit and gain has gained momentum especially among the young parents. Values based on consumption and usefulness paved way for negligence of responsibilities. The pressure of time and job and cultural factors actually weaken the values of a Christian family. Affection and compassion become rare words in day-to-day vocabulary.

Nowadays, instrumental values like fun, joy, wealth and recreation become attractive and intrinsic values like spiritual qualities, moral character, faithfulness, trustworthiness, kindness, human rights and responsibility are unappreciated by younger generation. Media gives an inflated version of family realities through serials, songs, films, advertisements and

thereby creates a negative influence among the family members. Family instability, dowry fights, extra-marital relationships, divorce, alcohol, drugs, economic crises etc. presented through media play a destabilizing influence on the healthy functioning of families.

8. **Family Relationship Patterns:** A materialistic culture that promotes high individualism against a cooperative and corporate understanding of the society and family looms large in the present day world. Individualism without corporate accountability can be an oppressive threat to the societal existence. To some extent, the family economy is dependent on women for financial stability. In metropolitan cities, both parents have to work to maintain an average economic status even having to work two shifts to handle the financial needs. The ensuing stress and strain in adjusting time take a toll on relationship. The family becomes upwardly mobile but it loses the corporate identity creating psychological problems for the parents and the children. The child grows up with either improper or unbalanced nurture and subsequently has a very restricted view of life. Sexual abuse, emotional conflicts due to loneliness and over dependence on television, internet and other behavior problems are inevitable results of broken family system. Nuclear family pattern caters the highly self centered style instead of community centered approach.

Family in Transition—Resolutions

1. **Use of Resources of Faith:** The disciplines of fasting, prayer and corporate worship will awaken the dormant soul which is under the constraints of material and technological world. It involves getting in touch with the ultimate God. The family that prays together stays together. Prayer changes things. Personal time with God and meditation on the scripture portions will add to the quality of life. Family prayer has a significant role in the spiritual formation of the persons. Bible study groups, fellowship meetings, participation in charity, compassion, and societal development programs will equip us in resolving the crises.

Malayalam...Why Bother? *(Cont'd from page 17)*

simply see no use in using or learning it. The bottom line is, there are a range of reasons for the gradual loss of Malayalam. The questions for us to ponder are: Is it a problem? Should we make a conscious effort to avoid the above-mentioned circumstances that contribute to Malayalam attrition? Why? What are the benefits of knowing or learning Malayalam? Is there any point in spending precious time and resources over this? I believe there are a number of positive reinforcements to be reaped, as individuals, families and communities, from

2. **Awareness Programs:** Retreats, seminars, interaction meetings, theme presentations depicting the family issues will help resolve the conflicts in a family. Open ended approaches in the family can greatly defuse external pressures and can help the family to identify with the spiritual programs of the Church. Family members can seek help from persons qualified to provide resources and be the motivator for enabling changes.
3. **Effective Parenting:** To become parents for the children is not so difficult but being good parents for the children is not so easy. Children are the gift of God and parenthood is the privilege given by God. We should take more pains and efforts in dealing with our children. There is no shortcut to become an effective parent. Parents should be able to communicate the love they have for their children. Learn to give positive strokes to children. Never compare your child with another person, even to your own children. Never be fighting parents at home. It is better to discipline than to punish. Do not use your children as a channel to fulfill your unfulfilled expectations in the past. Learn to be good friends to your children instead of being "judges". Lack of communication in the family will create a lot of problems in the life of the children. We should learn to give God to our children. Parents have a responsible role in making their children responsible citizens.

Conclusion

This paper does not purport to give conclusive answers to the issues that arise in family. I only raise some areas of concerns and attention. It is God who resolves the puzzles and issues. We should keep ourselves informed of the rapid changes that occur in and around our society. Family being the gift of God in this world is to experience the fruits and tastes of the Kingdom of God. Parents are accountable to God for the posterity, avenues and blessings of family life. The world is fast moving and family is always under the flux of change. God the designer of family remains the same transforming every transition for good and in conformity with His will and plan. ■

ensuring an adequate proficiency in Malayalam. These include, to mention a few, better cross-cultural understanding, better sense of self and collective identity, better preservation of culture, lesser alienation of 'born and brought up' youth and more participation, better communication within families, and a better appreciation of our faith tradition. A fuller explication of these points would be a worthwhile endeavour, but I refrain, for the moment, to invite your thoughts. ■

Is Worship for Life on Earth or for Heaven?

V. S. Mathew, Florida, USA

Do we worship God for a better life on earth or for an everlasting life in heaven?

Each Christian has the right to find an answer. Life, for most of us, is a juxtaposition of triumph and tragedy, celebration and loss, joy and tears. And the truth is that God entered into all of it and assured us that He is with us in every dimension of our journey as well. Today may be a time of wonderful triumph and joy or it might be a time of struggle, angst, and heavy burdens—either way God has been there and is there with you. Faithful Christians will serve Jesus Christ as kings and priests here on earth, not in heaven as many wrongly teach.

God gave mankind dominion over the physical earth and its creatures. We are supposed to be learning how to manage, govern, and serve as faithful stewards. But why did God give us such dominion over the earth? The answer is astounding and many are afraid to believe it, even though the Bible makes it plain. God is now giving us the opportunity to train for greater authority and stewardship in the future. God has an awesome plan for humanity. That purpose will expand our capacity and our understanding far beyond what we can now imagine. Do we think that we, as air breathing, food eating, water drinking creatures, can travel very far into space? While the planet Mars may be within reach at a cost of billions of dollars, the star nearest to us is 4.2 light years away. ■

Rich, Poor and Needy

A rich man who had everything that he needed in this world and more lived an extravagant life of luxury and pleasure without any care for the poor and needy. He completely ignored the poor and needy and carried on with his parties and excessive spending on his own needs. One day all of his riches were taken away from him because he did not care for the poor and needy that God had placed before him to help. He had to account for the use of his riches and he was found wanting.

God has given us riches for which we are accountable to Him. If we are only interested in accumulating wealth at any cost and not using it for the care of the poor and the needy, then we are not being good stewards of the gifts God has given us. This needs to be seen not only as individuals



but also in the global context. According to the statistics published by the United Nations Development Plan a few years ago, developed countries such as the USA, UK and others, the richest 20% of humankind receives 82.7% of the world's income, controls 81.2% of the world's trade, 94.6% of loans, 80.6% of domestic savings and 80.5% of investments.

Also 25% of humankind that live in the richest communities consume 60% of its food, 70% of the world's energy, 75% of its metals and 85% of its lumber. If the world

were to consume what the rich consume, the world would explode. Let us as individuals and as a nation strive to share what God has given us with those who are less privileged. In the final account when Christ returns, there will be a reprisal and God will establish justice. ■

The Positive Christian

Sometimes there are situations in life where we just don't know what to do. If there is a decision to be made, both alternatives may seem to be correct or maybe neither feels right.

We have tried praying but, for whatever reason, God seems to be strangely silent. Where do we turn to? What do we do? One of the distinctively Christian ways to help make sound decisions is to use the Ten Commandments. The decision is made up of scripture, transition, experience and reason. We have to learn how each of those elements is vital in making decisions that are pleasing to God. I hope that as you continue to face the ambiguities of life you will remember the Ten Commandments and use them in your decision making. You will become a positive Christian.

Approximately one-fourth of the entire Bible is prophecy. It is vital that we genuinely understand God's revelation to mankind and understand how He will guide the rise and fall of nations and empires—how He will orchestrate world events and the decisions of men to bring about His plans on earth and teach all mankind the lessons that we need to learn in order to fulfill God's ultimate purpose for human life.

We who are willing to understand should give the eternal God great thanks, praise and worship for keeping His solemn promises and demonstrating His love and His power in these latter days of human history. ■

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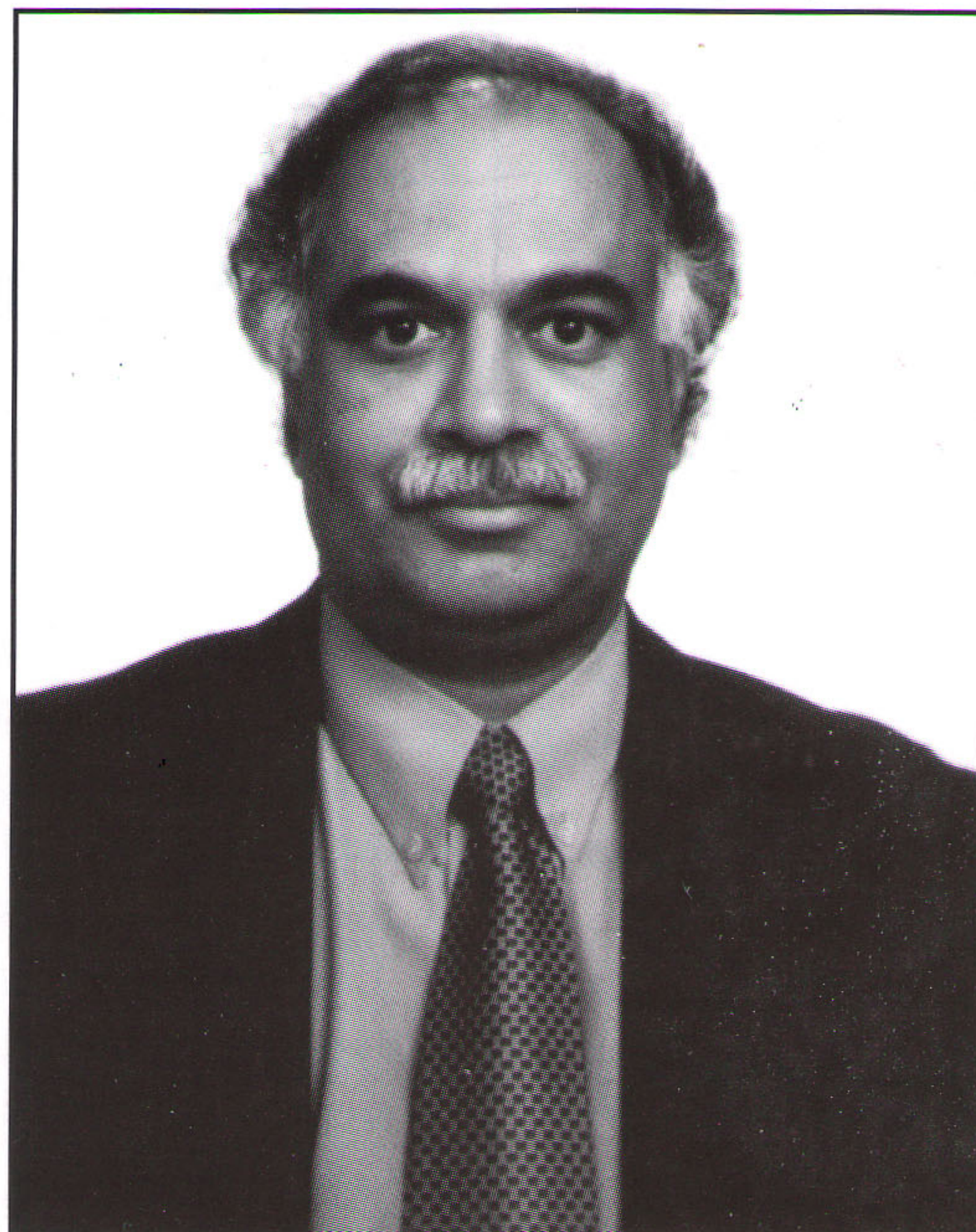


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Thank you for having "Georgia on your mind..."

Salvation

P. V. Varghese , Epiphany MTC, New York

Exodus: 15-12 *The Lord is my strength and my song, he has become my Salvation.*

Psalms: 13: 5 *My heart rejoices in your salvation.*

Psalms: 62:2 *He alone is my rock and my salvation*

Salvation is the Central theme and Cardinal Doctrine of the Bible: The Literal meaning of Salvation as found in the dictionary is as follows: "Deliverance from the power and effects of sin, preservation from destruction/deliverance from danger or difficulty, to rescue or deliver.

It is mentioned 44 times in the books of Psalms, 27 times in the Book of Isaiah, 9 times in other Old Testament books. Total 80 times in Old Testament, 42 times in New Testament total about 122 times in the Bible.

As I am not a Theological Scholar I must confess that I am not competent to give an in-depth discourse on the subject, but every Christian should understand the basic concept about this.

In Islam "Mohammad, the Prophet was sent by Allah to warn the people about impending doom. The basic aim of Islam is Salvation in the sense of escaping future punishment, which will be pronounced on sinners at the last Judgment. But in the Christian faith Salvation has much deeper meaning and understanding. The verbal form of salvation is save. Saving from what? From eternal damnation.

Salvation is the saving process provided by God by the death and resurrection of the God's son Jesus to a world which is condemned for eternal damnation. Before Jesus was born an Angel appeared to Joseph and said "She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) Yeshua is the Hebrew name for Messiah. Jesus is the Greek form. The literal meaning of Yeshua is Salvation or safety. Yeshua came to save us from our sins and from the penalty of Sin—i.e., Eternal death. So he is our salvation. "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16)

The Old Testament understanding of Salvation is slightly different from the New Testament understanding. In the Exodus event the people of Israel experienced God's Salvation as a liberation act. Here the historic experience of salvation is from the unjust, sinful and enslaving situation to a state of plenty and prosperity—from slavery to liberty, from poverty to prosperity. In Isaiah: 45:2 and Amos 9:7 we note that salvation is beyond Israel; it embraces other communities as well and pervades the whole earth.



The manifestation of God's saving deeds is portrayed in the Bible as deliverance, protection, liberation, victory, forgiveness, restoration etc. In the New Testament salvation denotes the forgiveness and restoration by the redemptive work of Christ. Salvation is a gift. It is free, but it is not cheap. Yahweh had to pay a heavy price for it. The price that Yahweh paid to buy back us from Satan and eternal death is called redemption. The word redemption means to buy back, to recover by payment.

In 1 Corinthians: 6:20 it says, "You are bought with a price..." Eph: 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..." Blood represents life. Yeshua shed his blood to win life for us. It is imperative to know that salvation is the only divinely provided remedy for sin. Without such a provision the sinner is both helpless and hopeless. Accepting this blood-bought salvation so freely offered, the sinner can experience freedom from the past with all its failures, victory in the present from sin's tyranny and hope of escape from sin's reward in hell. There is no other way out from the gloom and despair of sin. Christ had to give his life as a ransom to save us.

Creation was a great work of God, but it only cost his breath. He spoke and it was formed. But when it came to salvation, he had to give His blood. "We are purchased by His precious blood." (Acts: 20:28) God gave this gift of salvation to the whole world. Luke 3:6 all the mankind will see God's salvation. God's salvation was to be made known to both Jews and gentiles alike. As a gentile himself, Luke was careful to emphasize the truth that salvation was offered to both Jews and gentiles.

In Luke 2:30 Simeon the pious old man holding baby Jesus in his hands praised God and said, "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people." For Simeon salvation is personal. This is not something Simeon had read or heard from others. It is something he has personally experienced himself. Salvation to be real must be first hand and personal. Only then it will be vital and dynamic. The second important truth inherent in Simeon's declaration is that salvation is in the person of Christ. When Simeon said, "my eyes have seen thy salvation," he was speaking about Christ child whom he held in his arms, not some abstract concept. Salvation does not reside in a set of teachings or system of philosophy, it is not found in a set of rituals or creed. Salvation is in Christ and results from a relationship with Him. God gave this gift of salvation to the whole world. Such universality does not

(Cont'd on page 25)

Sunday School Centenary Celebrations: From Kutty-Pandal to Valia Pandal

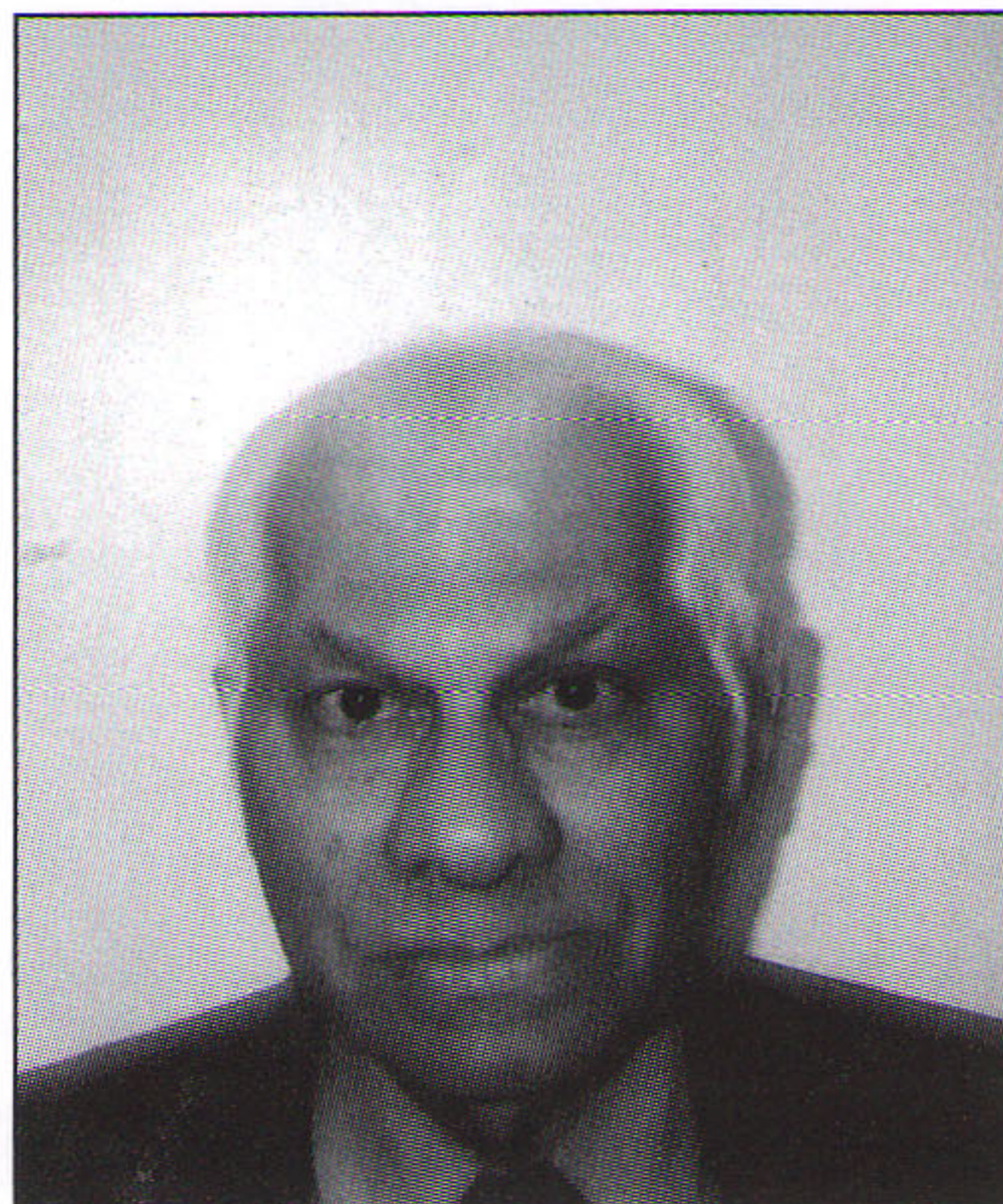
Dr. T. M. Thomas, Curriculum Committee Convener

Hundreds of children were streaming down the sand beds of the River Pampa from all corners of Kerala State and beyond. Innumerable buses parked along the roadside in Maramon and Kozhencherry brought children, parents and teachers. Children from nearby villages walked even a few miles and reached the Pandal. By 9.00 or 9:30 a.m. it was full. The overflowing crowd stood around the Pandal. The total number was estimated at 125,000. The Finale of the Centenary Celebrations started on time at 10.00 a.m., Saturday, February 12, 2005. It was a grand sight to see the children sitting on the sand in white clothes under the Pandal.

The Centenary Celebrations culminated in a three-hour program (10.00 to 1.00 pm) with all our bishops, other church leaders, political figures and others in attendance for felicitations. In between the talks, there were songs, skits and other items presented by the children representing each diocese. A team that visited India on a mission tour represented our diocese in North America. Mariamma Thomas of Houston, Jacob Mathew of Los Angeles and myself from New York were present among the senior teachers. The skits presented were of high quality involving a great deal of preparation. One skit depicted the early days of the Samajam when an achen appeared in the old-fashioned Cassock with a hood in the back. In a city, where youngsters speak several languages, they communicated well as friends. The disabled children presented a show which got the attention of all. The folk songs from Malabar had its distinctive features. There was variety in presentations, manifesting the cultural differences among dioceses, while maintaining unity as a church.

As noted, there were speeches and felicitations in the program. The Finale of Centenary Celebrations was inaugurated by our Metropolitan Chrysostom Thirumeni. His question,

“What was the Tsunami that took place at the time of Jesus” elicited several answers from children though the gathering was huge. As usual, he made the audience laugh and think with his humorous and insightful comments. Samajam President Philoxenos Thirumeni made the observation that children have moved from the “kutty pandal to the valiya pandal,” symbolic of the recognition given to children in the church. The successor of Mother Teresa at Missionaries of Charity, Mother Superior Sr.



Nirmala Joshi, reminded that even in the midst of earthquakes God's love never fails and that we will succeed in sharing with the needy. Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy appreciated the contributions of the Mar Thoma Church to society at large, beyond the boundaries of the church. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Thirumeni conveyed greetings from WCC, being on its Executive Committee, and told the example of the Russian Orthodox Church. Instead of asking for financial assistance from WCC, this newly

reconstituted church in liberal Russia, requested the help of the World Wide organization for its Christian Education Program, recognizing its value. The CNI Bishop Dr. Sahu remarked that big things have humble beginnings. Bishop Sam Mathew of CSI Church noted the need for spiritual blessings along with material prosperity.

Special recognition was given to K.K. George achen for his valuable contributions to Samajam as General Secretary for three decades (1952-1982). A souvenir was released when Irenaeus Thirumeni gave a copy to Mr. George Jacob, a Sunday School teacher and inspector for many years. His lifelong commitment in Sunday School Samajam was an inspiration to me and I consider him my mentor, now in his late 80's. Some of the present workers in Samajam were also recognized. This celebration started with the opening prayer by our diocesan bishop, Coorilos Thirumeni, and concluded with the benediction by our Metropolitan.

The publicity given by the media was indeed praiseworthy. People in general took interest in the celebrations and attended the finale along with children, teachers and parents. On the next day, Sunday February 13, 2005, the front page of Malayala Manorama carried a picture of children holding hands on their heads, like an arch, as part of an action song while they were sitting under the pandal.

The careful planning and implementation of the event by a team of visionaries, working in the Sunday School, resulted in a great program. It was directed by the Samajam President and General Secretary. It was more than a coincidence that K.U. Abraham achen was ordained Ramban a day prior to the Children's Maramon. Children were collecting money for one year to express their mission interest for a specific project among tribal people in Malabar. The offertory of the February 12th meeting was earmarked for Tsunami victims, all indicating the mission

and outreach goal of Sunday Schools and its Centenary Celebrations. A few months ago, teachers, headmasters, inspectors and others who worked in Sunday Schools in the past, (most of them in their 80's now) were brought together to recognize their services. They were able to see the future design of our Sunday Schools in the new century.

Let me conclude with a glimpse of the past and the present. The Mar Thoma Sunday Schools were formally organized first among all churches in India and assigned an outstanding General Secretary, V. P. Mammen achen. He was in that position for nearly half a century (1905-1952) and laid a strong foundation. Already I mentioned the long

service of K. K. George achen. From its small beginning the Sunday School has grown both in size and scope. There were only 52 Sunday Schools when the Samajam was organized in 1905 at the Maramon Convention. Today there are 1,100 Sunday Schools with 160,000 students and 16,500 teachers. From Central Travancore it has spread all over the world. Everywhere our motto is: "Come to Jesus: Bring Every Child to Jesus". The North American Diocese will have its centenary celebrations in Summer 2005 with the Family Conference and the Junior Students Conference at the Zonal levels. ■

Salvation *(Cont'd from page 23)*

mean universalism. Its constituent elements are deliverance from the power of darkness, from the condemnation of sin.

We have to remember that salvation is not something but someone—Jesus Christ. So the message and the messenger is the same. In Luke 19:9 Jesus declares, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham. Zachaeus, now a converted man is in effect saved; saved from the guilt of sins, saved from the power of sins. All the benefits of salvation are his. Where Christ comes he brings salvation with Him. When Jesus declares that he too is a son of Abraham, Zacchaeus is adopted into the family of Abraham and became a co-heir of the inheritance of Abraham with whom God had entered into a covenant relationship. This is the greatest act of salvation. The Biblical view of salvation is not just the salvation of the soul. It concerns the whole human

being. We cannot work out our salvation. Salvation is not to be seen as a private, emotional individualistic experience to take us away from the realities of day-to-day life.

Dr. D. J. Samartha points out that salvation should not be seen as an emergency measure or as a rescue operation. More emphasis should be given to the unity of all life under the embracing, salvific will of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

The Christian faith is rooted in the reality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to man by which we must be saved." This great salvation is the greatest manifestation of God's power to deliver, namely salvation from the satanic bondage. By His blood shedding death and resurrection Jesus secured a perfect salvation for a sinning world. ■

Mar Thoma Valedictorian Award

In 1996, the Diocesan Assembly decided to establish the Mar Thoma Award for all High School Valedictorians belonging to the Mar Thoma Church. Over the past seven years, the Diocese has honored over 20 young people in various parishes with this award.

For the year 2005, please submit the nominations through your vicar or assembly members, to the convener of the committee on or before June 20, 2005. Kindly attach proof of valedictorian status. Nominations can be sent to:

John Kunchandy
9734 Glenhope Rd.
Philadelphia, PA 19115
Phone: **(215) 676-4929**

The awards will be presented at the 2005 Mar Thoma Family Conference in Washington, D.C.

A True Mar Thoma Experience

Jacob A. Mathew (Raju), Los Angeles, California

As a member of the Diaspora community living here in the United States, it was an uplifting and spiritual experience for me participating in the many events of the Mar Thoma Church in the month of February 2005 in Kerala. The events that lasted ten days had much historical significance for our Church.

Rev. Dr. K.U. Abraham was ordained as a Ramban on Friday, February 11, 2005, at the Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church in Kottayam. This was especially a proud moment for all marthomites, and the hundreds of church leaders gathered at the event.



Dr. K. U. Abraham Ramban with U.S. Diocesan members.

On Saturday, February 12, 2005, the 'Children's Maramon' became a reality for the first time in the history of our church. The banks of river Pamba at Maramon was transformed into an ocean of children like little doves dressed in pure white. They sang and enjoyed the



Coorilos Thirumeni inaugurating the Diocesan Booth at Maramon

celebrations and heard from many dignitaries such as, Sister Nirmala of the Missionaries of Charity; Hon. Oommen Chandy, Kerala Chief Minister; our Bishops, and many outstanding leaders. For the next eight days, starting Sunday, the Maramon Convention took place, where the word of God was proclaimed as for the last 110 years. I was blessed by the quality of the messages reminding me of Dr. Stanley Jones, Dr. Bob Pierce, Dr. Paul Reese, and so on who spoke at the same place years ago.



Zacharias Thirumeni with Raju and Simonkutty at the Diocesan Booth

The booth for the Diocese of North America and Europe was visited by many of our members visiting from U.S.A, Canada, and Europe. Our bishops, archbishops who served the North American Diocese, and many political dignitaries visited the booth.



Former Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. John Joseph at the Booth.

Walking through the banks of the Pamba river, and the Convention grounds after 25 years reminded me the fast disappearance of the sandy riverbed that once existed there, reflecting the disappearance of honest human relationships we all enjoyed in the early days.

The lights and sounds and the action I saw and heard once again reassured me that the spirit and vision of our early church fathers of our beloved church will brighten more than ever the lives of the many marthomites living in the far corners of this planet. ■



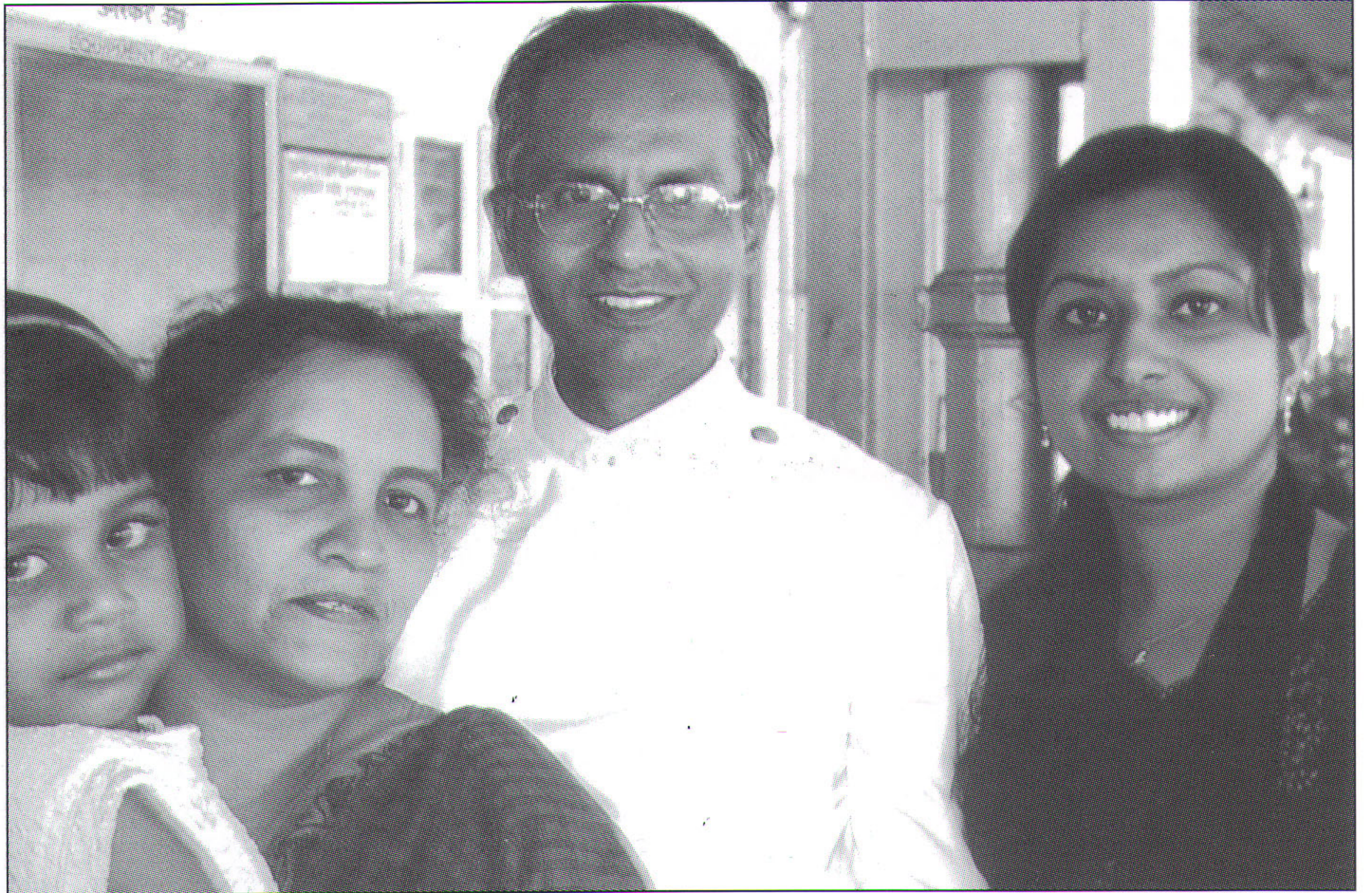
Francis George M.P. (center) with Simonkutty and Raju at the Booth.

My Experience of Being Among the Deaf in Kasaragod

Sheena Philip, MarThoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch

On my recent trip to India, I had the chance to be a part of the Diocesan youth mission trip as well as spend a couple of weeks alone at the Kasaragod ITC School for the Deaf and Dumb. As a member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch, I was already aware of some of the projects associated with Kasaragod and was excited to have an opportunity to spend two weeks there. Along with a few church members, I had an opportunity to visit this city two years ago for an Inauguration program. I saw then the impact that our contribution was making there. The kids were so thankful and loving towards us, which motivated me to come back on my next trip to India and spend some time with them. For these past two years, I had heard of the gradual progress of the Kasaragod ITC program during the annual fundraising event, Mar Thoma Fest, but to actually see the progress in real life was a great blessing.

My journey to Kasaragod began at the end of the Maramon Convention week in February. At the train station, I met up with Mathai Joseph Achen, Kochamma,



Sheena Philip with Rev. Mathai Joseph (Director of ITC School) and family.

and their four-year-old daughter Suzanne and was on an overnight train with a small backpack to Kasaragod. We arrived mid morning. I was excited and anxious about being there. The only information I knew about Kasaragod so far was that it was located at the northern tip of Kerala and was populated mostly by Muslims. As I arrived on the

campus, I was greeted by many smiling children. As they came towards me and started signing, I somewhat felt handicapped for not knowing sign language. Even though I was reluctant at first, I soon learned simple signs and was elated to be communicating with the kids.

Other than the 150 deaf students that attend the school from kindergarten to tenth grade, there were also thirty college students, who are not hearing impaired, but majoring in speech therapy. The hostel behind the school housed 130 out of the 150 children, the college students, and the staff including the teachers and the principal. I felt a real sense of family and community. Throughout the weeks, I felt the immense love and joy the children had for each other and life. Most of my time



Children learning at the ITC Kasaragod deaf and mute school.

(Continued on page 44)

**Justice
is being
served,
to the
Asian
Community**

Lal Varghese

Attorney at Law

*Immigration,
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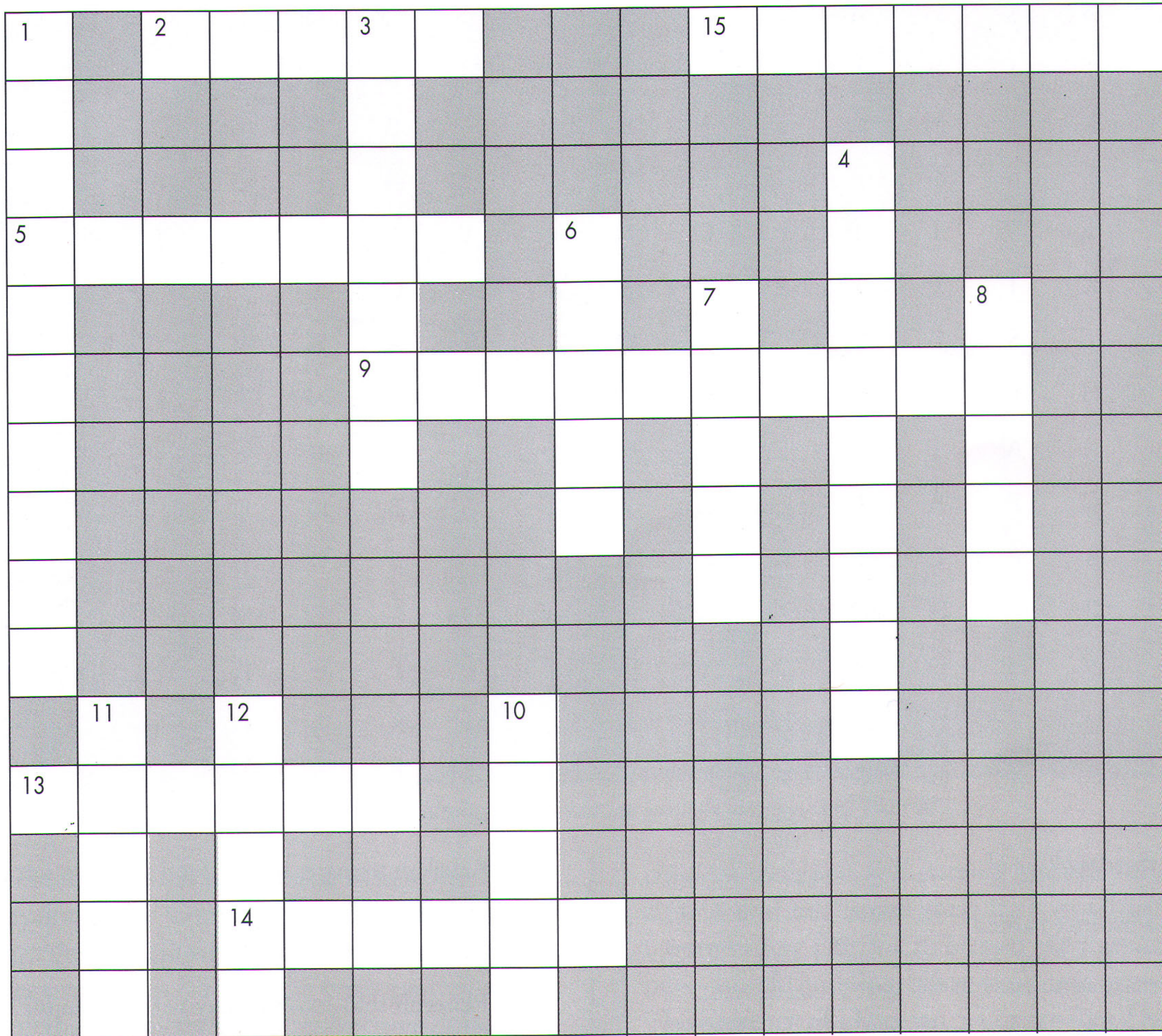
<http://www.indiaimmigrationusa.com>

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BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
PETER (Matthew and John)

Mrs. Lency Zachariah (New York)



Across

- 2. Peter got the four-drachma coin from the mouth of the ____ fish he caught.
- 5. When Peter denied Jesus the third time, at that moment, the ____ began to crow.
- 9. The ____ tax collectors came to Peter and asked him whether Jesus pays the temple tax.
- 10. Peter was ready to walk with Jesus on _____.
- 13. One day Peter declared to Jesus that even if he has to die with Him, he will never ____ Jesus.
- 14. ____ was the one who introduced Peter to Jesus for the first time.
- 15. Peter struck the High Priest's servant whose name was _____.

Down

- 1. Peter told Jesus that he has left _____ to follow Him.
- 3. Jesus told Peter that he needs to forgive his brother not seven times, but _____ times seven.
- 4. Two disciples who are named among those who went fishing with Peter, but did not catch anything all night were Thomas and _____.
- 6. Jesus told Peter that he would build the church on this rock and the gates of _____ will not overcome it.
- 7. Along with Peter, John and _____ were the only witnesses at both the Transfiguration and the prayer at Gethsemane.
- 8. Peter got out of the boat, walked on water and came towards Jesus, but when he saw the wind, he began to sink because his fear was greater than his _____.
- 11. Peter was also called _____.
- 12. Peter's father's name was _____.

DUE TO SOME EVALUATION PROBLEMS WE WERE UNABLE TO PUBLISH THE ANSWERS AND WINNERS LIST OF THE JANUARY MESSENGER BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE AND WORD SEARCH. PLEASE ACCEPT OUR SINCERE APOLOGIES. WE WILL RESUME IT IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
REBEKAH: (Genesis: Chapters 24-27)

Mrs. Lency Zachariah (New York)

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

1. Rebekah was the daughter of _____.
2. Rebekah had a brother named _____.
3. Rebekah was married to Issac in the tent of _____.
4. Rebekah's grandfather's name was _____, who was the brother of Abraham.
5. When Rebekah saw Issac approaching her for the first time, she took her _____ and covered herself.
6. Issac was _____ years old when Rebekah gave birth to twin boys.
7. Out of the two boys, Rebekah loved _____.
8. Issac lied to the people of King _____ that Rebekah was his sister.
9. Rebekah prepares a tasty food for Issac out of two choice young _____.
10. Rebekah covered Jacob's hand and neck with _____.
11. Rebekah told Jacob to stay with Laban for a while until Esau's fury _____.
12. Rebekah told Issac that her life will not be worth living if Jacob marries from _____ woman.
13. Rebekah went to inquire of the Lord when the babies with- in her _____ each other.
14. Rebekah's younger son, Jacob was a quiet man who stayed among _____.
15. The Lord told Rebekah that the _____ will serve the younger.
16. The servant of _____ presented Rebekah a golden earring and two bracelets when she gave him water.

ATTENTION ALL CONTESTANTS!!!

Please mail your answers to:

Joel M. Zacharia, 28 Graves Street, Staten Island, NY 10314

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS June 30, 2005

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

ASCENSION MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA



Coorilos Thirumeni blessing the foundation stone on Sunday April 10, 2005.

Ascension Mar Thoma Church was blessed with a visit from Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, our Diocesan Bishop during the week of April 4, 2005. Parishioners were delighted to have the Diocesan Bishop for a whole week participating in all activities of the parish including prayer meetings and Bible study for various organizations. Thirumeni took time to visit members of the parish who are sick and residing in Nursing Homes/Hospitals and comforted them. Thirumeni also visited senior citizens of the parish in their homes and it was a great blessing to them. Thirumeni met with the executive committee to discuss general matters of the parish. On Sunday April 10th, he conducted the Holy Communion as well as the First Communicants Service in which 5

children took part and entered into the full fellowship of the church and reaffirmed their faith in Christ. After the Holy Communion Thirumeni blessed the foundation stone of the new church building being built at a cost of \$1.8 Million. The presence of Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham; Rev. T. P. Zachariah, Vicar of Philadelphia MTC; Rev. John Mathai, Vicar of Bethel MTC; Rev. Issac P. Johnson, Youth Chaplain, Southeast Region; members from Philadelphia MTC, Bethel MTC and friends of the Ascension added significance to the occasion. Everyone enjoyed the luncheon with Thirumeni.

Rev. A. C. Kurien, Vicar

ST. MATHEW'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, TORONTO

The Sevika Sanghom organized a Ladies Retreat at the residence of Sevika Sanghom Secretary, Mrs. Lalitha Philip. It was held on Saturday, November 6th, 2004 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The retreat started with a prayer by our vicar Rev. Mathew Thomas. Mrs. Lalitha Philip led the singing.

Dr. Usha George was the guest keynote speaker for the session. The theme for the retreat was "By the Grace of

God, I am What I am." We also conducted group discussions, question and answers, intercessory prayers, etc. After the retreat, we organized a cooking presentation. Everybody enjoyed the wonderful cooking tips and food. Mrs. Rohini Mathews gave the presentation. This event was an excellent one and appreciated by all who attended.

Lalitha Philip, Secretary

ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, YONKERS, NEW YORK YOUTH FELLOWSHIP—WINTER RETREAT



“Lord, not my will, but Yours be done”-Luke 22:42

During the second weekend of 2005 (January 7-9), we gathered at Camp Pinnacle, in upstate New York, for a winter retreat. The theme was “Lord not my will, but Yours be done”, which was taken from Luke 22:42. The main talks were led by Ajay Thomas from Epiphany Mar Thoma Church.

For the past 5 years, we have held out retreats during the summer. This was our first winter experience. On Friday evening, the retreat opened with prayer and praise followed by an introductory speech by our Jojan Achen. On Saturday, we sang praises to our Lord, listened to two messages by Ajay, engaged in group discussions, participated in recreational activities and glorified God through testimony and prayer. The retreat closed on Sunday with Holy Communion service led by Jojan Achen and a final message by Ajay.

We were reminded that we are all sinners and are in need of God’s grace. We were also reminded that sin causes a gap between God and us. Our merits or talents alone will not attain our favor with the Lord. No matter what skill or abilities we possess, we require God’s mercy to save us from our sins. Although, we must remember that our God is a just God. Like a good judge who reprimands a lawbreaker, God also reprimands us because He is too good to let us go free without punishment. He wishes for us to realize what we have done is wrong and learn from our mistakes.

We should give all of ourselves to Him, presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him

(Roman 12:1-2). Sin should not reign in our mortal bodies, nor should we give into the lusts of our flesh (Romans 6:12). Christianity calls us to respond to Christ by giving ourselves as a sacrifice and be transformed. Therefore, if Christ was sacrificed for us, should we not do the same for Him?

With these words (and more) that God relayed through Ajay, we had a moving testimonial/dedication time. We gathered in the gym around a cross made of tea lights. With the gym lights turned off and prayerful hearts, each one of us was able to tune out the person next to us and meet with God one-on-one. The illuminated cross was a visual reminder of God’s love and sacrifice for us. Many of the youths shared their testimonies and afterwards, individual youths went to the cross. Some knelt, some stood with their heads bowed and some shed tears. It was a time of reflection, prayer and dedication.

We as a youth group were able to strengthen our ties with each other once again, whether it was through Taboo, 28 or snow tubing, during recreation. We were also able to renew our faiths in Christ once again. We removed ourselves from busy schedules, television and the internet in exchange for growth, bonding and spiritual exercise.

Before I conclude this report, I would like to extend our thanks to the office bearers of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, and the office bearers of the youth fellowship especially our President, Jojan Achen, Susan Kochamma and children for making this retreat a memorable one.

Sophia Varghese

SUNDAY SCHOOL CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS—MTC OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH

The formal inauguration of the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam comprising all the Sunday Schools which originated in various parishes in Kerala under the Mar Thoma Church took place at Maramon in 1905. Mr. V. P. Mammen, who later became Rev. V. P. Mammen was elected as the first General Secretary. A publication titled "Sandarsini" was begun by Sunday School Samajam in 1911 containing articles helpful to the pupils, teachers and parents and lesson notes for Sunday school teachers. Since 1952 textbooks have been published for the various classes. From 1977 the Sunday School Samajam follows the curriculum of the Christian Education Council of India. Rev. Dr. K. K. George was General Secretary of the Samajam after the demise of Very Rev. V. P. Mammen, from 1952 up to June in 1982. In 2005 the Sunday school has completed 100 years of its existence and in its efforts to impart Christian education to children.


The Sunday School Samajam celebrated its centenary on February 12, 2005 at Maramon; the place where it formally began in 1905. A large number of children from all over Kerala and various parts of India, and outside India including United States participated in the Children's Maramon. MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch began the Sunday School Centenary Year Celebrations on February 20, 2005, with the release of a bookmark designed by Alex P. Philip, a Sunday school teacher. One of the first Sunday




school students of this parish Mr. Aby Thomas, along with one of the first teachers, Mrs. Mariamma Koshy, received the bookmark from two first grade students, Elisa Andrews and Joshua Kurian. The bookmark was designed and titled as "My Share for Mission Work", as a souvenir to mark the different missionary activities of our diocese. The guest speaker for the occasion was Dr. T. M. Thomas, who is one of the pioneers of Sunday schools in this Diocese. He praised our Sunday school for beginning the centenary celebrations in this Diocese. Mrs. Mariamma Koshy spoke on the occasion recollecting her memories dating back to 1976, and Mr. P. V. Thomas led the concluding prayer.

As a continuation of the Centenary Year Celebration, the Southwest Regional Jr./Sr. Conference was hosted by MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch. Over 225 students registered and attended from this region. We will continue with more programs throughout this year to commemorate the

**MAR THOMA
SUNDAY SCHOOL
SAMAJAM CENTENARY
ESTD. 1905**




2004 - 2005



**"This is what the Lord says - your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."
Isaiah 48:17**

**MAR THOMA
CHURCH OF DALLAS
FARMERS BRANCH
No. of Students: 220
Teachers: 28**

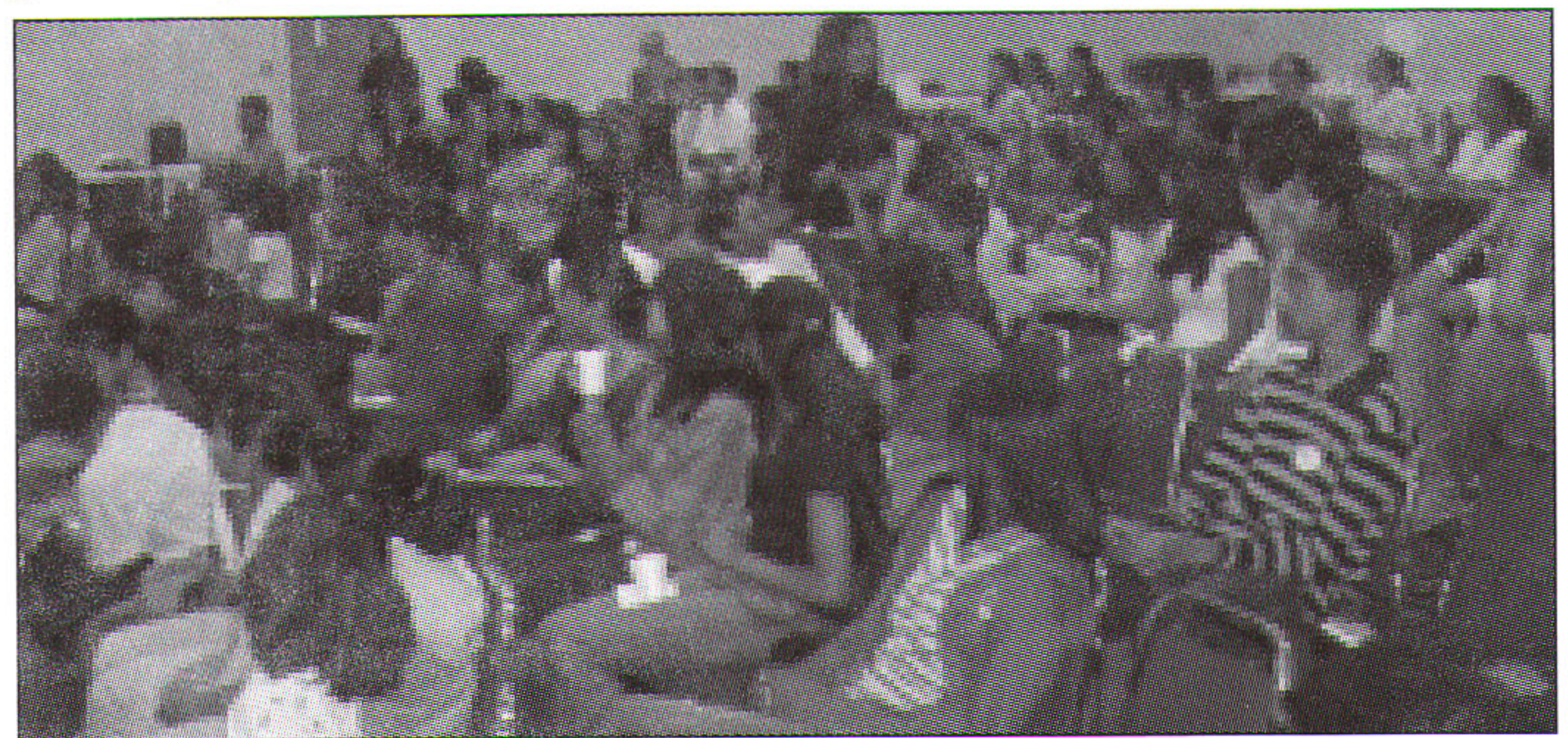


"My share for Mission Work"
* Sihora Ashram
* Mexico Mission
* ITC Kasargod Project

**"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"
Proverbs 3:5-6**

Centenary Year. In addition to the programs, there will be a Centenary Year Publication which is due to be released this September containing articles, poems and stories from Sunday School children.

With all these celebrations we hope to connect the present generation to the origins of the Marthoma Sunday



School Samajam. Through the years Sunday School has been the medium through which God has brought many young people into our church's ministry.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch & Southwest Regional Vice President-Sunday School

MUSIC ALBUM PROCEEDS DONATED TO MAR THOMA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF



The entire proceeds from the fifth Music Album 'Dhyanadeepam' produced by George Varghese (Jayan) of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch was donated to the Mar Thoma School for the Deaf at Kasargod, Kerala, India, a project of the Kunnamkulam—Malabar Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church. George Varghese (Jayan) handed over the total proceeds of Rs. 200,000.00 to the Kunnamkulam—Malabar Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos during a special function held at the Department of Sacred Music and Communication (DSM & C) in Tiruvalla. Rev. Sajan Mathew, Director, DSM & C, Tiruvalla was also present on the occasion, and welcomed the audience. This

Contribution will be used to buy a Hearing Aid Analyzer for the institute and used for the education of deaf children. Thirumeni expressed sincere thanks for the contribution and blessed Jayan's Music Ministry, and appreciated the MTC, Farmers Branch for its support of the school for more than five years. The parish conducts the "Mar Thoma Fest" every year during the month of October to support the school for the deaf.

Jayan is a talented composer and singer who has published five music albums so far. The proceeds from Jayan's first Music Album 'Jeevitham' was donated for the construction of DSMC studios at Tiruvalla, a project of the Mar Thoma Church. The proceeds from the second Music Album 'Yesu Sannidhi' was contributed to the new church building of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. The proceeds from the third Music Album 'Prarthana' was delivered to Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Thirumeni to build three houses for the homeless in the Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese. The proceeds from the fourth Music Album 'Nithya Sneham' was provided to Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos for the 'Home for Homeless' project of North American Diocese. Personal Experiences and meditation on the Word of God is the source of Jayan's compositions.

Atty. Lal Varghese, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch

THE MAR THOMA MESSENGER BIDS FAREWELL TO REV. SUNNI E. MATHEW AND MRS. LENCY ZACHARIAH

Following their end of term in the United States, Rev.



Sunni E. Mathew (Vicar, Los Angeles MTC) and Mrs. Lency Zachariah (wife of Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah, Youth Chaplain, North East Region) have returned to India. We extend a very special note of gratitude and appreciation to Rev. Sunni E. Mathew (Associate Editor) who used to write the Church History series for the Mar Thoma

Messenger. Rev. Sunni Mathew's in-depth knowledge of the Syrian Christians provided many insights into our long and glorious past for the readers.

Lency Kochamma was very generous with her time and skills in helping with the Crossword puzzle and the Bible Word Search regular Messenger features popular with children. Both Raju Achen and Lency Kochamma had been doing an excellent job with the youngsters of the North East Region. Kochamma's cooking classes were a hit with the youth. They will all remain in our fond memories for a long time to come. We wish them all a long and rewarding future in His service and ministry.



We wish Sunni Achen and Lency Kochamma and their families the very best as they go on to other pastures in the Lord's service.

KALLISERY KADAVIL MALIKA THE WOMB-HOUSE OF THE MAR THOMA EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATION



The Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasios Episcopa and Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa jointly laid the renovation stone of the 'Kadavil Malika in Kalliseri'. Also seen in the picture are Sabha Council member Mr. Varkey Abraham, Diocesan Edavaka Mission Secretary Mr. Roy C. Thomas, Rev. T. O. Joseph and Rev. Johnson Varghese.

The Voluntary Evangelist Association of the Diocese of North America and Europe has undertaken the onerous task of reconstructing Kadavil Malika, the historical venue where the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association was born and the citadel of evangelistic activities of the Church.

The foundation stone for the reconstruction work was laid by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, Bishop of the Diocese of North America & Europe at the meeting presided over by the Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasios Episcopa, President of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association on January 13th, 2005.

Rev. T. O. Joseph, Rev. Johnson Varghese and Mr. Roy C. Thomas, Secretary of the Voluntary Evangelists' Association of the Diocese of North America & Europe spoke on the occasion felicitating the Voluntary Evangelists' Association of the Diocese of North America and Europe on this occasion which is a milestone in the evangelistic arena of our Church. The reconstruction work at an estimated cost of Rs. 25 Lakhs is expected to be complete by the middle of 2006.

Roy C Thomas, Secretary

*It's easy to stand with the crowd;
It takes courage to stand alone.*

BALTIMORE MAR THOMA CHURCH



First Communicants and Rev. Saji P. Thomas with Diocesan Episcopa during his visit to the Mar Thoma Church of Baltimore on November 26-28, 2004.

ST. LUKE'S MAR THOMA CHURCH FLORIDA



First Communicants and Rev. Saji P. Thomas with Diocesan Episcopa during his visit to the St. Luke's Mar Thoma Church Florida on December 5-6, 2004.

THE BOSSEY ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE, W.C.C., GENEVA



Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham with the Governing Board members of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Geneva.

The Governing Board of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute was held from April 3-7, 2005 at Celigny, Geneva. As one of the members of the Board, I attended the meetings. Having had an opportunity to be part of the Board for the last six years, and having experienced in person the growth and functions of this Institute in a wide ecumenical scenario over the years, these are a few of my reflections.

The Institute was officially opened in 1946 as a project of the W.C.C in one of the most scenic places in Geneva for ecumenical research, theological formation and interfaith dialogue. During the last 50 years of its existence, around 2,500 students, lay and ordained, men and women, from 340 member churches of the W.C.C. attended Bossey Graduate School. Approximately, another 20,000 have over the years, attended various short term seminars at Bossey. (from the Director's report, p. 1)

My first association with Bossey was in 1987 when I had an opportunity to be in this ecumenical haven for two seminars: one on "Theologies in Dialogue" and another on "Confessing Christ in Africa" for one month. It was an eye-opener in every way. It was an opportunity to re-examine and sharpen my theological positions and academic insights. Over the years, the Institute has grown considerably. Now Bossey offers three major programs:

The Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies (for five months)

Masters in Ecumenical Studies (for two years)

Ph.D. in Ecumenical Studies (up to 5 years).

The Masters and Ph.D. are affiliated to the University of Geneva.

The core Faculty has been structured into four chairs: Ecumenical Biblical Hermeneutics, Ecumenical Missiology, Ecumenical Theology and Ecumenical Social Ethics. Inter-faith component has always been one of the concerns of Bossey ever since its inception. Now scholars from other faiths also serve as visiting professors at Bossey.

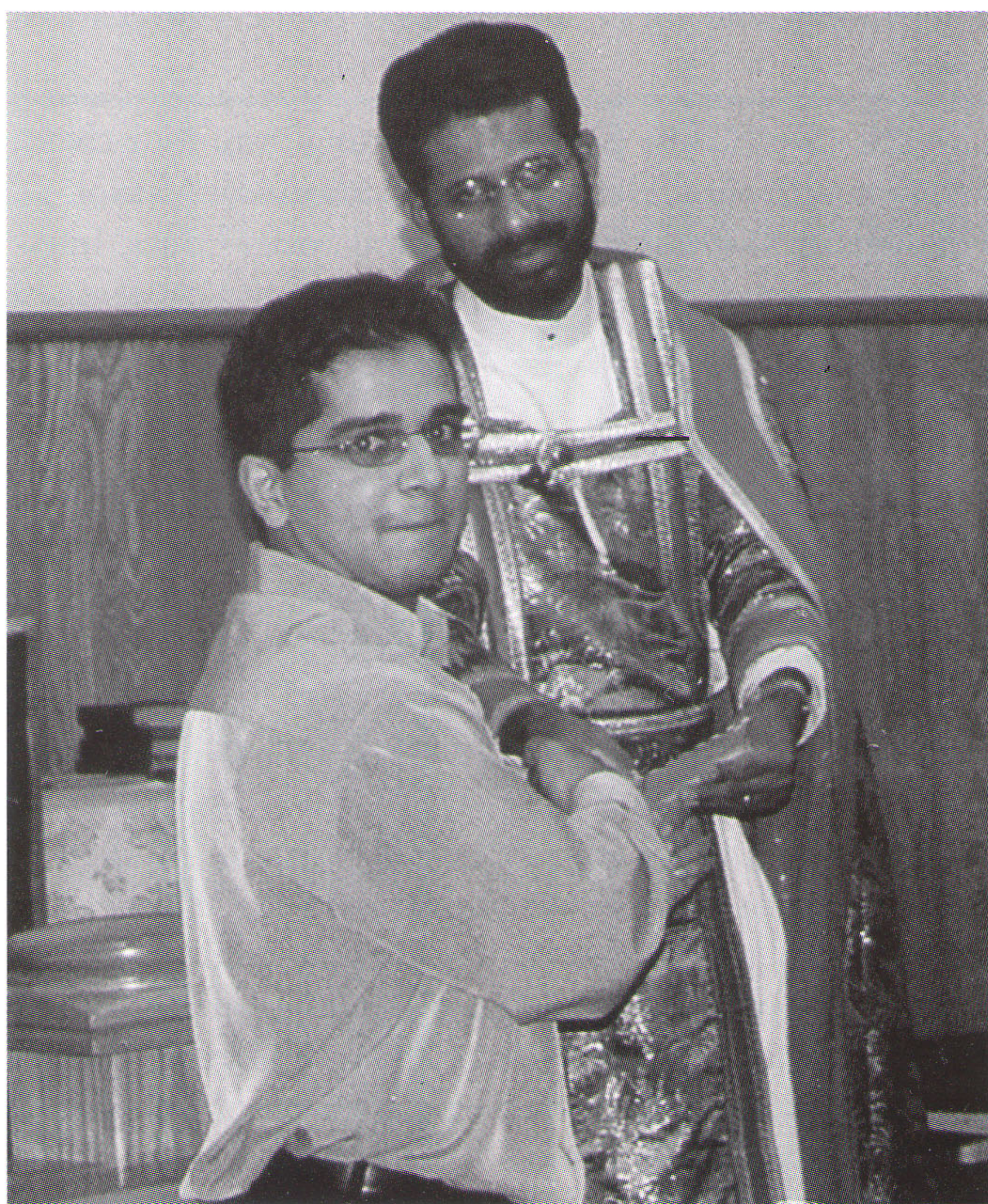
The Governing Board of Bossey is appointed by the Central Committee of W.C.C. for a period of 7 years immediately after the General Assembly. The term of the present Board expires with the next Assembly to be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 14-23, 2005.

The Bossey Board meetings have always been edifying and enlightening in my spiritual pilgrimage and theological exploration. Being one of the members of the Board of such an Institute which is widely known for its contributions in the ecumenical world, with the responsibility to plan and work out mainly the academic programs and seminars along with a group of theologians from different church traditions and from different continents, has always been a blessed experience. Last but not least, I am grateful to the Episcopal Synod of the Mar Thoma Church for giving me an opportunity to be one of the members of the Governing Board of this prestigious Ecumenical Institute.

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



First Communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni and Mathew M. Thomas achen.



Mr. Jacob Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. T. V. Mathews, who is the recipient of the Governor's Award of Ontario, receives merit award of the Canadian Mar Thoma Church's top scorer in High School, from the vicar Rev. Mathew M. Thomas.

WESTERN REGIONAL & ZONAL ONE-DAY SEVIKA SANGHOM RETREAT 2004

On September 4th, 2004 the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Seattle hosted a joint one-day Regional and Zonal Sevika Sanghom retreat. The theme of the occasion was "Prayer: A Challenging Response." Rev. Reji K. Philip, vicar of the Seattle Mar Thoma Church, led the retreat.

The day began with songs, scripture readings, and prayer. After the welcome speech and introduction, the Annual Report and Annual Account for 2003 were presented and passed. Rev. Sunni E. Mathew from the Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church was the main speaker at the retreat. Rev. Reji K. Philip delivered a devotional talk on the theme. Basing his talk on the gospel of Luke 18:1-8, he spoke of the nature of prayer and of the vital role it should have in a Christian's life. Building on the same theme, and based on the gospel of Matthew 5:43-48, Rev. Sunni Mathew in his talk spoke of prayer as a call each Christian has in his life.

After the message, Mrs. Ammini Samuel offered an intercessory prayer. A short business meeting ensued afterwards. It was decided at the meeting that our support for the Mexico Mission would continue. Mrs. Lillykutty Mathew from Seattle Mar Thoma Church delivered the vote of thanks. The retreat concluded after prayer and benediction by Sunni Mathew Achen.

**Rachel Mathew
Western Regional and Zonal Secretary**

5TH DIOCESAN SEVIKA SANGHOM NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary Rachel Mathew lighting the lamp at the inaugural function of the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom 5th National Conference at San Francisco MTC along with Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Western Regional Sevika Sanghom Vice President Ponnamma Ninan.

From Thursday October 7th through Sunday the 10th, 2004, the San Francisco Mar Thoma Church hosted the 5th Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Conference. Ninety-Seven delegates registered for the conference. The theme of the conference was **"The Role of Women as Mothers in Family and Parenting Toward Christian Faith"**. *(Please see news in the last issue of Messenger)*

Rachel Mathew, Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary

Coorilos Thirumeni giving the inaugural address at the 5th National Sevika Sanghom Conference at the San Francisco Mar Thoma Church on Thursday, October 7, 2004.



Leaders and office bearers of the conference.

San Francisco MTC Sevika Sanghom 5th National Conference Choir.



Change of Phone Number:

Rev T. K. Alexander Tharakan

Marthoma church of South Florida Parsonage

(954) 915-9314

4TH ANNUAL SOUTH EAST REGIONAL MAR THOMA YOUTH CONFERENCE

Hosted by: **St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, Tampa**

Date: **September 2-5, 2005**

Venue: **Word of Life Retreat Center, 13001 Word of Life Dr., Hudson FL 34669**

Theme: **Redeeming Our Time**

Leaders:

Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan • Rev. Simon Behanan

Rev. Saji Thomas • Mr. Mohan Zachariah

Registration Fee: \$100.00

Convenors: Bijou George (813) 654-5281 E-mail: bijou_george@hotmail.com

Siby Abraham (813) 493-4121 E-mail: sibyabraham67@hotmail.com

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF SOUTH FLORIDA Silver Jubilee Programs Inauguration

Date: **May 1st Sunday, 2005**

By: **Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa**

Highlights of the 25 Silver Jubilee Programs:

Adopt Mission fields • Church Renovation • Charity in India

Community Outreach • Ecumenical Fellowships • Jubilee Retreats • Youth Programs

Kindly pray and participate

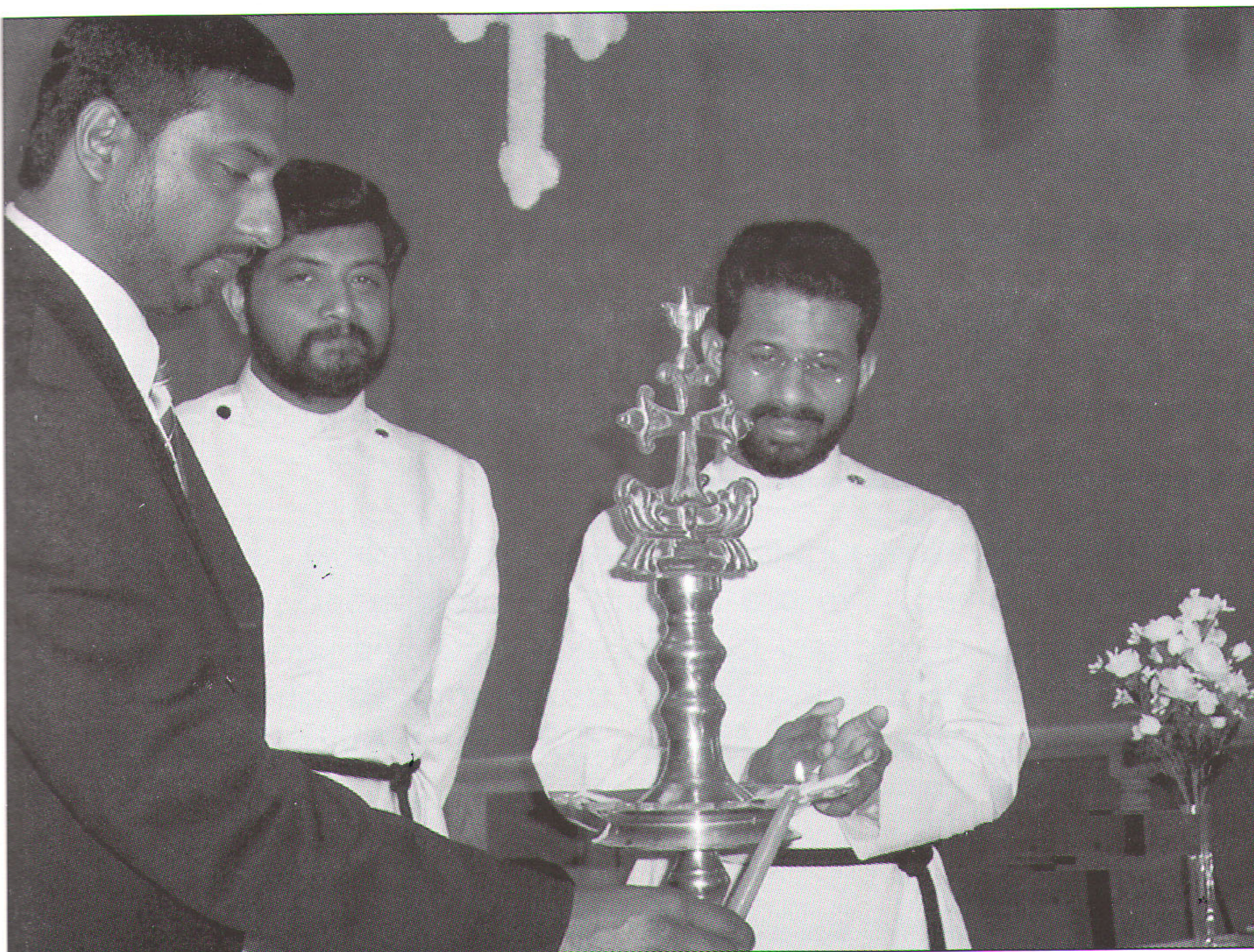
Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan, *Vicar*

Mr. Rajan George, *Secretary*

COORIOS THIRUMENI WITH THE CANTERBURY ARCH BISHOP THE MOST REV. DR. ROWAN DOUGLAS WILLIAMS AND OUR ACHENS IN U. K. IN HIS RECENT VISIT TO ENGLAND.



FORMATION OF EAST CANADA REGION YUVAJANA SAKHYAM



The inaugural meeting of the Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam-East Canada Region was held on Saturday, 9th April 2005 at The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto (Markham, Canada.). Rev. Mathew M. Thomas presided over the meeting. After the devotional talk by The Rev. Mathew Thomas, chief guest Mr. Gigi Tom, Secretary, Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam-Diocese of North America and Europe, inaugurated the Region. The following persons were elected as office-bearers: Rev. Mathew M. Thomas, *President*; Kurien George, *Vice President*; Oommen Joseph, *Secretary*; Manju Joseph, *Asst. Secretary*; Baiju Thomas, *Treasurer*; George C. George, *Zonal Representative*.

Rev. Mathew M. Thomas
Regional President

Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary Gigi Tom inaugurating the Eastern Canada Region by lighting the lamp along with Rev. Mathew Thomas and Rev. Mathew M. Thomas.

Matrimonial

Mar Thoma parents invite marriage proposals for their 27-year old son, 5'9", professional with Masters degree, working at a reputable hospital for past several years. We invite proposals from parents of professionally qualified girls, God-fearing and upholds strong family values. Please respond with recent photograph and bio-data to marthoma_matrimonial@yahoo.com or to the Mar Thoma Messenger, Box TAM 7469, Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 South Merrick Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566.

Uncle invites marriage proposals for his nephew, 25 years old, 5' 6" light complexion, B.Sc. Nurse, working at Hyderabad, India, from Marthomite girls 25 years or younger. U.S. citizens only, please respond with recent photograph and personal and family details to: Mar Thoma Messenger, Box JM 3458, Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 South Merrick Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566.

Toronto (Canada) domiciled Christian parents invite marriage proposals for their 32 year old beautiful, God fearing, family-oriented and outgoing daughter (5'4"). Graduated with Master's in Law from Toronto and presently working as a Lawyer. We Invite proposals from God fearing professionally qualified Christian boys with good family background. Please respond to kuriengeorge@hotmail.com

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposal for their two handsome sons, both Medical Doctors doing residency (26 yrs 6' 1" and 25 yrs 6'2"), from parents of family oriented Christian girls with compatible background. Interested parties please write to johnmathews01@hotmail.com or call 610-358-1649.

Marthomite parents settled in USA invite marriage proposal for their daughter 29 years old, 5' 6" fair complexion, slim, beautiful, God fearing, and family oriented. Has Masters degree in Nutrition and currently working as Licensed Dietitian. We are looking for God fearing professionally qualified boys from Mar Thoma / CSI / Orthodox denominations. If interested, please respond with bio-data and recent photograph via email icjohn@hotmail.com

Mar Thoma parents settled in Canada invite marriage proposals for their son, 28, 5' 8", employed in the biotech field, from the parents of daughters with Christian value and faith, preferably from North America or U.K. Please respond in detail with a recent photograph to: alliance2005@post.com

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposal for their daughter 26 years old, Pharm.D., born and raised in America, God fearing, and family oriented. We are looking for professionals raised in North America, preferably with masters degree or higher, God fearing and with good family background. Please respond with a recent photograph and bio-data to: dozpharm05@yahoo.com or to the Mar Thoma Messenger, Box JTP 1295, Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 South Merrick Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566.

BETHEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

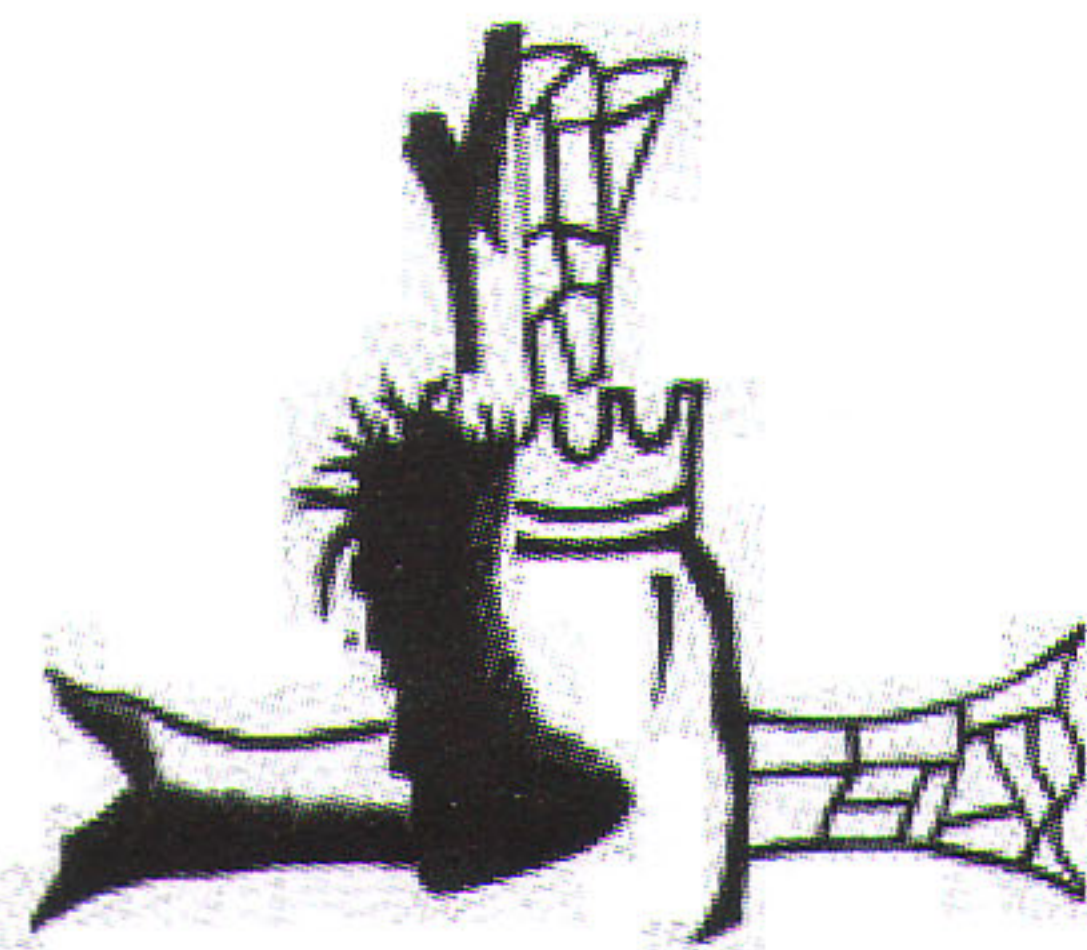


Members of the Bethel Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship with vicar Rev. Mathai Joseph during a farewell given to him.

XXVI NATIONAL MAR THOMA YOUTH CONFERENCE

DATES: JULY 21-24, 2005

LOCATION: MALVERN RETREAT CENTER, PA



THE ULTIMATE MAKEOVER

Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you:
In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." [Acts 3:6]

HOSTED BY:
BETHEL MAR THOMA CHURCH YOUTH FELLOWSHIP
PHILADELPHIA, PA

My Experience of Being Among the Deaf in Kasaragod *(Cont'd from page 27)*

was spent being with the college students either in the lab where they tested the hearing and speech of students or in speech therapy where they help the kids to slowly talk by having one on one session. I also visited the classrooms and talked to the teachers and students. The overall feeling I felt was that the children were very happy and disciplined. After school, the children had play time, free time, and prayer time. When the children gathered in the beautiful small chapel for prayer time, it was touching to see the signing of the Lord's Prayer. Some would even moan and try to say it while they were signing. They were indeed making a joyful noise unto the Lord.

In addition to the main school, I also visited the ITC Engineering College, the hostel that our church has sponsored, the new college under construction, and the elderly center. Rev. Mathai Joseph, who served during the initial years of the school, is serving his second term there. One can clearly see the love, dedication, and fervor he has for the children. One of the most incredible moments of my stay there happened to be when we met a previous deaf student of the school on the street. He told us how the

school helped him to be a working member of society. It was a real life testimony to the success of the program to see how appreciative he was for his education.

Although my two weeks went by very fast, I enjoyed my stay at this beautiful gated school and community. I was indeed going to miss the children, Achen, and Kochamma, who were very gracious and loving towards me. I also want to thank Rev. Anil George, the executive committee, the mission and outreach program of our church, and my parents for this incredible opportunity. I was proud to physically see the extent of the services that the Mar Thoma church as a whole was doing and the impact that it has on the people and community being served in India.

From this experience, I hope to motivate other youths to visit mission fields and contribute their time and resources to the worthy causes that need help, especially the Kasaragod ITC Mission Project. For those who do not have the resources, please keep these projects and organizations in your daily prayers. As Mother Teresa said, "Live simply, so that others may simply live." May the Lord bless each and every one of you. ■

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON, TEXAS



Rev. John George, Rev. Anil George, Rev. Varghese Mathew, Rev. George Thomas and Rev. Jacob Thomas attending the Southwest Region Edavaka Mission and Sevika Sanghom one day retreat at the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston, on Saturday, April 23, 2005.

Participants enjoying lunch at the Southwest Region Edavaka Mission & Sevika Sanghom One Day Retreat.



മനുഷ്യാ, നീ എവിടെ?

അസ്വസ്ഥതകൾ ഉയർത്തുന്ന അടിസ്ഥാന ചോദ്യം

റവ.ഡോ.കാനൻ ആൻഡ്രൂ നോയൽസ്

പരിഭാഷ: റവ.ഡോ.ഏബ്രഹാം കുരുവിള



ചരിത്രത്തിൽ ഉന്നയിക്കപ്പെട്ട അനേക ചോദ്യങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ഇന്നും ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ ആവർത്തിക്കുന്നു... എന്നാൽ വിശുദ്ധ വേദ പുസ്തകം വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനോടു ചോദിച്ച പ്രസക്തമായ ചോദ്യമാണ് മനുഷ്യാ, നീ എവിടെ?

ഉല്പ.3:9

“യഹോവയായ ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനെ വിളിച്ചു: നീ എവിടെ എന്നു ചോദിച്ചു”. ദൈവ വചനത്തിലൂടെ ദൈവം ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ ഉന്നയിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ അഭിമാനവും മുർത്തീഭാവവുമായി ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു. ഭൂമിയിൽ അതിമനോഹരമായ ദാനങ്ങൾ ദൈവം നമുക്ക് നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഭൂമി ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മനോഹാരിതയുടെ മകുടമാണ്. പ്രകൃതിയുടെ മനോഹാരിത ദൈവ

ത്തിന്റെ ദാനമാണ്. മനുഷ്യവർഗ്ഗം ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സാദൃശ്യത്തിൽ സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. എന്നാൽ മനുഷ്യൻ ദൈവത്തോട് നിരന്തരമായി മറുതലിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. വീഴ്ച മനുഷ്യന്റെ പാപം മൂലം ഉടലെടുത്തതാണ്.

ജനിതക പ്രക്രിയയിലൂടെ ഇഷ്ടമുള്ള കുഞ്ഞിനെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്ന ഒരു കാലഘട്ടത്തിലാണ് നാം ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ പിന്നിൽ നിരവധി അപകടം പതിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെ പുറകെ പോകുന്ന നാം വിലക്കപ്പെട്ട കനിയുടെ പുറകെ പോകുന്നവരാണ്. മനുഷ്യന്റെ പാപം മൂലമുള്ള വീഴ്ച പല അപകടങ്ങളിലേക്കും നയിക്കുന്നു. ദുർബലരായ ആളുകൾ ചൂഷണം ചെയ്യപ്പെടുന്ന ഒരു ലോകത്തിലാണ് നാം ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. അനീതികൾ പെരുകുമ്പോൾ ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനോട് ചോദിക്കുന്നു, മനുഷ്യാ, നീ എവിടെ?

എന്റെ ദൈവമേ, എന്റെ ദൈവമേ എന്ന് കർത്താവ് ക്രൂശിൽ വിളിച്ചുപറഞ്ഞത് രക്ഷാപദ്ധതിയുടെ ഭാഗമായിട്ടാണ്. എല്ലാ മനുഷ്യരുടെയും വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ നിലവിളി ക്രൂശിൽ മുഴങ്ങി. പ്രസിഡന്റ് ജോൺ കെന്നഡി ഇപ്രകാരം പറഞ്ഞു. “ഈ തലമുറ അതിശ്രേഷ്ഠരായിരിക്കുന്നു.” അതേ! ഈ തലമുറ അതിശ്രേഷ്ഠമായിരിക്കുന്നു.

പ്രകൃതി നശിക്കുന്നു. ഭൂമിയുടെ അന്തരീക്ഷം മലിനമാകുന്നു. ഭൂമിയ്ക്ക് വഹിക്കാ

വുന്നതിലധികം കാർബൺഡൈഓക്സൈഡ് പുറംതള്ളപ്പെടുന്നു. കൂടിവെള്ള ക്ഷാമം, മാതൃക രോഗങ്ങൾ, പ്രകൃതി ക്ഷോഭങ്ങൾ ഇവ വർദ്ധിക്കുന്നു. 2 തിമോ. 3:2-5 വരെയുള്ള വാക്യങ്ങൾ മനുഷ്യൻ ആയിരിക്കുന്ന ഭീകരമായ അവസ്ഥ വർണിക്കുന്നു.

ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വിശുദ്ധ ജനമായിരിക്കാനാണ് നമ്മുടെ നിയോഗം. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവാണ് നമ്മുടെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ പാത. കർത്താവ് സ്വയം വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുവാനായി ഉപയോഗിച്ച പദം ‘മനുഷ്യപുത്രൻ’ എന്നാണ്. മനുഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ പൂർണ്ണതയിലേക്ക് വളരുവാനുള്ള ആഹ്വാനം ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനു നൽകുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനായത് മനുഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ ഉദാത്തഭാവം വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടിയാണ്. ആദാമിലൂടെ ഉണ്ടായ പാപം മനുഷ്യപുത്രനായ ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശീകരണത്തിലൂടെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിലേക്ക് നയിച്ചു. യേശുവാണ്, ശമുവേൽ എന്നിവരുടെ ദൈവവിളി വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെയും, വിമോചനത്തിന്റെയും പ്രഖ്യാപനമാണ്. ദൈവവിളിയ്ക്ക് സംപൂർണ്ണമായി സമർപ്പിച്ചവരെ ദൈവം ചരിത്രത്തിൽ ഉപയോഗിക്കുകയും, അവർ ചരിത്രം സൃഷ്ടിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. മനുഷ്യാ, നീ എവിടെ എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിനു മുമ്പിൽ ദൈവമേ ഞാൻ ഇതാ എന്ന അങ്ങയുടെ കരങ്ങളിൽ അർപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവവചനകേൾവി സമർപ്പണത്തിലേക്ക് നമ്മെ നയിക്കട്ടെ •

വചനഘോഷണത്തിന്റെ വറ്റാത്ത നീരുറവ

പരിശുദ്ധവും പവിത്രവുമായ പമ്പയുടെ വിരിമാറിൽ രൂപം കൊണ്ട മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷന്റെ 110-ാമതു സമ്മേളനത്തിനു നാനി കുറിച്ചു. ചേതനയറ്റ മനുഷ്യർക്ക് നീതിയും ശാന്തിയും ഓതിയ ലോകരക്ഷകനായ യേശു ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശ് മരണവും ഉത്ഥാനവും അനുസ്മരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന പീഡാനുനോളുകൾക്കു മുന്നോടിയായി... അനുതാപത്തിനും പുതുക്കത്തിനും സമർപ്പണത്തിനും ആഹ്വാനം നൽകുന്ന വചനഘോഷണത്തിന്റെയും വൃതാനുഷ്ഠാനത്തിന്റെയും നാളുകൾ... വൃതശുദ്ധിയുടേയും ശാന്തിയുടേയും കേളീരംഗമായി മാറുന്ന പന്തൽ! ആത്മീകാരാധനയുടേയും സംഗീതത്തിന്റെയും വേദിയാകുന്ന മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ നൂറ്റാണ്ടുകൾ പിന്നിട്ടു. ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികതയുടെ വറ്റാത്ത നീരുറവകൾ തേടിയെത്തുന്ന നാനാജാതിമതസ്ഥർക്ക് സായുജ്യമേകുന്ന വചനഘോഷണം ഏറെ ശ്രദ്ധേയമാകുകയാണ്. സമഭാവനയുടേയും സാഹോദര്യത്തിന്റെയും ശാന്തിയുടേയും മന്ത്രങ്ങൾ മുഖരിതമാകുന്ന ഈ മാരാമൺ മണൽപ്പുറം അനേക പുണ്യ പിതാക്കന്മാരുടെ പാദസ്പർശനം ഏറ്റുവാങ്ങിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

വിണ്ണിന്റെ കാര്യവും മണ്ണിലേക്കിറങ്ങിവന്നതിന്റെ മധുരസ്മരണകൾ പുതുക്കി, മനുഷ്യ മനസ്സുകളെ നീതിയും ശാന്തിയും സ്നേഹവും പരിലസിക്കുന്ന ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിലേക്കാനയിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് മാരാമൺ മഹായോഗത്തിന്റെ ആത്യന്തിക ലക്ഷ്യം. ഒരു നൂറ്റാണ്ടു പിന്നിട്ട മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ ക്രൈസ്തവരുടെ ഒത്തുചേരലിന്റെയും സ്വരൈക്യജീവി

തത്തിന്റെയും ഒരു ജനതയുടെ കർമ്മഫലത്തിന്റെയും നിദർശനമാണ്! അനുതാപത്തിന്റെയും അനുരജ്ഞനത്തിന്റെയും ആഹ്വാനം മുഴക്കുന്ന വചനഘോഷണം മനുഷ്യരെ വിശ്വാസതീരത്തേക്കാനയിക്കുന്നു. വചനഘോഷണത്തിന്റെ വറ്റാത്ത നീരുറവയായി പരിലസിക്കുന്ന മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ സാമൂഹ്യ പരിവർത്തനത്തിലധിഷ്ഠിതമായ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികതയുടെ കർമ്മഫലമാണ്. ഇന്നലകളിൽ ആരംഭിച്ച്, ഇന്നിൽ ആനന്ദിച്ച്, നാളെയിലേക്കാനയിക്കുന്ന ആദ്ധ്യാത്മിക ചൈതന്യമായിരിക്കുന്ന നവീകരണത്തിന്റെ അനർഗ്ഗമായ പ്രവാഹമാണ് മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ. മലങ്കരസഭയിലെ അനാചരങ്ങൾക്കും അന്ധ വിശ്വാസങ്ങൾക്കും വിരമമിട്ട്, സഭയെ ചൈതന്യവത്താക്കിയ നവീകരണത്തിന്റെ അന്തഃസത്ത ഉൾക്കൊണ്ട്, സാമൂഹ്യപരിവർത്തനത്തിലധിഷ്ഠിതമായ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികതയുടെ പൊരുൾ കണ്ടെത്തി, വേദപുസ്തകത്തെ കാലോചിതമായി വ്യാഖ്യാനിച്ച്, ജീവിതത്തിൻ്റെ കണ്ടെത്തിയ പുണ്യപിതാക്കന്മാരുടെ അതിമഹത്തായ പൈതൃകവും കർമ്മഫലവുമായ മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ നമുക്കു പ്രചോദനമാകണം. അനുതാപത്തിനും പുതുക്കത്തിനും ഇവിടെ ഇടം കണ്ടെത്തണം. പ്രവാചകസംവേദനത്തിന്റെ പ്രയോക്താക്കളും മാധ്യമങ്ങളുമായ പിതാക്കന്മാരുടെ അന്വേഷണാത്മകവും വിമർശനാത്മകവുമായ നിലപാടുകളിലും വിശ്വാസപ്രഖ്യാപനങ്ങളിലും നിലയുറപ്പിച്ച്, സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ സവിശേഷത ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ സമസ്തമേഖലകളിലും

വിനിമയം ചെയ്യുവാൻ ഈ പമ്പാതീരം നമ്മെ മാടി വിളിക്കുന്നു.

നിർമ്മല സുവിശേഷത്തിൽ അന്തർലീനമായിരിക്കുന്ന സനാതന മൂല്യങ്ങൾ, സാമൂഹ്യ സാമ്പത്തിക മത രാഷ്ട്രീയ മേഖലകളിലും അനീതിക്കെതിരെ ശബ്ദമുയർത്തുവാൻ നമ്മെ ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. അനാഥരേയും ദുർബലവിഭാഗത്തേയും ശക്തരാക്കുവാൻ പ്രതിജ്ഞാബദ്ധമായ സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യം ഈ ലോകത്തിൽ സാധ്യമാക്കുവാൻ പ്രചോദനം നൽകിയ മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ ഒരു ചരിത്ര സംഭവമായിത്തീരാതെ, സമൂഹ മനഃസാക്ഷിയേയും സഭയേയും തൊട്ടുണർത്തുന്ന ഒരു സംവേദന സംഭവമായിത്തീരണം. വേദവ്യാഖ്യാനങ്ങൾക്കു വേദിയൊരുക്കി സാമൂഹ്യ തിന്മകൾക്കെതിരെ പ്രവാചക സംവേദനത്തിലൂടെ സഭയേയും സമൂഹത്തേയും ചലനാത്മകമാക്കിയ ഈ സംഗമം നിറങ്ങളിൽ ചാലിച്ചെടുത്ത എണ്ണച്ചായ ചിത്രങ്ങൾപോലെ എക്യുമെനിസത്തിന്റെ വർണ്ണരാജികൾ വിരിയിക്കുന്നു. തികഞ്ഞ അച്ചടക്കത്തിന്റെയും ചിട്ടയൊത്ത ക്രമീകരണങ്ങളുടേയും കേളീരംഗമായ മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ വചനാനുഭൂതിയിലൂടെ നമ്മെ ധന്യരാക്കട്ടെ. ദിവ്യസംഗീത വിഭാഗത്തിന്റെ ശ്രുതിമധുരമായ ഗാനങ്ങൾ പമ്പാമണൽത്തീരത്തെ പച്ചകൊള്ളിക്കുന്ന തുപോലെ നമ്മുടെ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മിക-ഭൗതിക ജീവിതത്തെ പ്രകാശപുരിതമാക്കട്ടെ. വചനഘോഷണത്തിന്റെ കുളിർക്കാറ്റ് നമ്മുടെ മനസ്സുകളെ ചൈതന്യവത്താക്കുമ്പോൾ നമുക്കും പ്രതിജ്ഞാബദ്ധരാകാം.... ഒരു നവസമൂഹസൃഷ്ടിക്ക്..... ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിന് !

കർത്താവിന് ഇടം കൊടുക്കൂ നിത്യജീവന്റെ അംശിയാകൂ..

പ്രസംഗം - റവ. ബഞ്ചമിൻ

പരിഭാഷ - റവ. ഡോ. ജി. ശാമുവേൽ

യുദ എന്ന നാമം ആർക്കും നൽകാറില്ല. ആരും സ്വീകരിക്കാറില്ല. പുതിയ നിയമത്തിലെ ഇസ്രായേൽ യുദയെ വളരെ മോശപ്പെട്ട വ്യക്തിയാക്കിയിട്ടാണ് കാണുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ ഈ മനുഷ്യന്റെ ജീവിതം പല തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പുകൾക്കും വിധേയമായിരുന്നു. യുദയുടെ മൂന്ന് തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പുകൾ ആരായാം.

1. യേശുവിന്റെ ശിഷ്യനാകുവാൻ

മത്താ.10:2-4 വരെയുള്ള വാക്യങ്ങളിൽ യേശുവിന്റെ ശിഷ്യന്മാരെക്കുറിച്ച് പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നു. യേശുകർത്താവ് ശിഷ്യന്മാരെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നതിനു മുമ്പ് പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചതായും വേദപുസ്തകം പറയുന്നു. എന്നാൽ യുദയെ എന്തിന് കർത്താവ് തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്തു? യേശുവിന് തെറ്റ് പറ്റിയോ? യുദയിൽ യേശു ഒരു ശിഷ്യനെ കണ്ടെത്തി. എപ്പോഴും രണ്ടാമതൊരവസരം കർത്താവ് നൽകുന്നു. എന്നിരുന്നാലും മറ്റു ശിഷ്യന്മാരിൽ നിന്നും പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കാതിരുന്ന കാര്യങ്ങൾ യുദയിൽ നിന്നും യേശു പ്രതീക്ഷിച്ചിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ യേശുവിനെ കാണിച്ചു കൊടുത്ത ഒരാളായി യുദയെ വേദപുസ്തകം സാക്ഷിക്കുന്നു.

2. യേശുവിനെ ഒറ്റിക്കൊടുക്കുവാൻ

മത്തായി 26:14-16

ഒരു രാത്രി കൊണ്ട് ഒരു മരവും കടപുഴ കുന്നില്ല. ഒരു കുടുംബം ഒരു രാത്രി കൊണ്ട് തകരുന്നില്ല. വീഴ്ചയ്ക്ക് പല പടികൾ ഉണ്ട്. വീഴ്ചയ്ക്കുള്ള ആദ്യപടി അഭിനയമാണ്. മത്താ 26:25. ഈ കാര്യം യേശുവിനും യുദയ്ക്കും മാത്രമേ അറിയുകയുള്ളായിരുന്നു. യേശുകർത്താവിന്റെ എല്ലാ ശുശ്രൂഷകളിലും

സജീവ സാന്നിധ്യമായിരുന്ന യുദ യോഹ. 12:3-6 വരെയുള്ള വാക്യങ്ങളിൽ ഈ വെറും ചിലവ് എന്തിന് എന്ന് ചോദിയ്ക്കുന്ന യുദാ എല്ലാകാര്യങ്ങളും ഭംഗിയായി നിർവ്വഹിക്കുന്ന ഒരാളായി തോന്നാം. എന്നാൽ എല്ലാം പ്രച്ഛന്നവേഷമാണ്. പലപ്പോഴും മുന്നറിയിപ്പുകൾ നൽകി അവസരങ്ങൾ നൽകിയെങ്കിലും യുദ അതിനെല്ലൊന്നും തിരസ്കരിച്ചു. ദൈവം നമ്മുടെ ശരിയായ രൂപാന്തരത്തിന് ആഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കുന്നു. കർത്താവ് നമ്മോടു സംസാരിക്കുമ്പോൾ പ്രതിരോധിക്കുവാൻ ഇടയാകരുത്. നമ്മുടെ പാപങ്ങൾ കണ്ടെത്തുകയും നമ്മെതന്നെ ദൈവകരങ്ങളിൽ സമർപ്പിക്കുവാൻ ഇടയാകണം. യോഹ.13:21-ൽ നിങ്ങളിൽ ഒരുവൻ എന്നെ കാണിച്ചുകൊടുക്കും എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു. യേശുവിന്റെ മനം കലങ്ങുമ്പോൾ യുദയ്ക്ക് അത് അത്രവലിയ കാര്യം അല്ലായിരുന്നു. യുദയുടെ നിലപാടുകൾ ഒരു രാത്രി കൊണ്ട് ഉണ്ടായതല്ല. അഭിനയം, പ്രതിരോധം, നിർവ്വീകാരത ഇതൊരു തെറ്റായ വളർച്ചയാണ് സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. നാമെന്തുകൊണ്ടു ജീവിയ്ക്കുന്നു? നമ്മുടെ യാതൊരു ഗുണവും കൊണ്ടല്ല. ദൈവത്തിന് നമ്മെ കൊണ്ട് ഒരു ഉദ്ദേശ്യം ഉള്ളതുകൊണ്ട് മാത്രം. ലൂക്കോ. 22 :3-6 വരെയുള്ള വാക്യങ്ങളിൽ യുദയുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ സാത്താൻ കടന്നതായി പറയുന്നു. സാത്താൻ നമ്മുടെ ഉള്ളിൽ ഇടിച്ചു കയറുകയല്ല. അവസരങ്ങൾ ശരിയായി വിനിയോഗിക്കുകയാണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്. സാത്താൻ അലറുന്ന സിംഹം പോലെ നമ്മെ ചുറ്റി നടക്കുന്നു. ദൈവമക്കളെ എപ്പോൾ വേണമെങ്കിലും അസ്വസ്ഥമാക്കാൻ സാത്താൻ ആഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കുന്നു. കർത്താവ് വേഗം വരും.

ഒരു പക്ഷെ അനുതപിയ്ക്കുവാൻ അവസരം ലഭിച്ചെന്ന് വരികയില്ല. യോഹ. 13:30-ൽ യുദ എഴുന്നേറ്റു പോയപ്പോൾ രാത്രിയായിരുന്നു എന്ന് കാണുന്നു. സന്തോഷവും സമാധാനവുമില്ലാത്ത രാത്രികളായി നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതം തീർന്നേക്കാം. എന്നാൽ ഉത്ഥിതൻ പ്രകാശമായി നമ്മോടു കൂടെയുണ്ട്.

3. സ്വയം മരിക്കുവാൻ

മത്തായി 27:1-4

ദൈവം നമ്മെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചത് കേവലം മരണത്തിനല്ല. നിത്യജീവന്റെ നിത്യാനുഭവത്തിന് വേണ്ടിയാണ്. കർത്താവിന്റെ സ്നേഹം അറിഞ്ഞവൻ എന്തിനു കെട്ടി ഞാനുചത്തു. കർത്താവ് ക്ഷമിക്കുന്നവൻ എന്നറിഞ്ഞിട്ടും യുദ അനുതപിച്ചില്ല. അപ്പോ. 1:25-ൽ യുദ അവൻ അർഹിച്ച സ്ഥാനം നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തിയതായി പറയുന്നു. സമാധാനത്തിന്റെ സുവിശേഷം ഘോഷിക്കുവാൻ നിയോഗിക്കപ്പെട്ടവൻ സമാധാനമില്ലാതെ മരിച്ചു. അവന്റെ സ്ഥാനം മറ്റൊരുവൻ ഏറ്റെടുത്തു. ഈ ലോകത്തിൽ കർത്താവിന് ഇടം കൊടുക്കുന്ന വർക്ക് മാത്രമേ നിത്യജീവന്റെ അനുഭവം പ്രാപ്യമാകൂ. നമ്മൾ പൂർണ്ണമായി ആരെന്ന് തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നത് ദൈവമാണ്. നാം നമ്മുടെ കർത്താവുമായുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ ജീവിത അർത്ഥം കണ്ടെത്തുന്നു. ഇനിയൊരു ദിവസം നാം പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കേണ്ടതായില്ല. ഇതു തന്നെ രക്ഷാ ദിവസം. കർത്താവിന്റെ സന്നിധിയിൽ നമ്മെ പൂർണ്ണമായി തുറന്നു വയ്ക്കുന്നതിനിടയാകണം. കർത്താവിനെ സ്വീകരിക്കുമ്പോൾ ന്യൂതന അനുഭവം ഉണ്ടാകും ●

ബൈബിൾ ക്ലാസ് പുരൂഷന്മാർ

മർക്കൊ. 8:27-38

ശിഷ്യന്മാരെ സംബന്ധിച്ച യേശുവിന്റെ പഠിപ്പിക്കലുകൾ ഈ ഭാഗത്ത് കാണുന്നു. ശിഷ്യന്മാരും ഒരു നവ്യമായ ജീവിത വഴിയാണ്. സ്നാനത്തിലൂടെ തുടങ്ങുന്ന പുതുപുത്തൻ ജീവിതശൈലിയാണിത്. നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിൽ പരമപ്രധാനമായ സ്ഥാനമുണ്ട്. യേശുവിന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ പഠിപ്പിക്കലുകൾ പ്രധാനമാണ്. സൗഖ്യം സംബന്ധിച്ച ഉപദേശം, യാത്രകൾ തുടങ്ങിയവ. ഈ വേദഭാഗത്ത് യേശുവിന്റെ ശക്തമായ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ, യേശുവിനോടു കൂടെ പ്രവർത്തിച്ച സന്തത സഹചാരികളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിവരണങ്ങൾ കാണുന്നു.

27-ാം വാക്യം ശിഷ്യന്മാരുടെ വ്യത്യസ്ത ഭാവങ്ങളും അതിന്റെ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യതയും വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ കൂടെ വിളിച്ചു വേർതിരിക്കപ്പെട്ട ശിഷ്യന്മാർ വിവിധ പശ്ചാത്തലങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും വന്നവരാണ്. അവരുടെ ചിന്തകളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും വിഭിന്നങ്ങളായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ യേശുവിന് അവരിലുള്ള പ്രതീക്ഷകൾ പുതിയ സൃഷ്ടിയെ സംബന്ധിക്കുന്നതാണ്. ഈ ഭാഗത്ത് ഒരു യാത്രയെ സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള പ്രതിപാദനമുണ്ട്. ഗലീലായിൽ നിന്ന് യെരൂശലേമിലേക്ക് യേശു സാധാരണ യാത്രചെയ്യാറുണ്ട്. ഈ യാത്രയിൽ യേശു പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. തന്റെ വാക്കുകൾ കൊണ്ട് മാത്രമല്ല, പ്രവർത്തനം കൊണ്ടും പഠിപ്പിച്ചു. ഫിലിപ്പിന്റെ കൈസര്യയിൽ നിന്നും യാത്ര ആരംഭിച്ചു. പനയാസ് എന്ന പേരുള്ള സ്ഥലമാണ് കൈസര്യം. വിഗ്രഹാരാധനയും, ഭാഷ്ടിയ ശക്തിയും പ്രബലമായ സ്ഥാനത്ത് നിന്നു കൊണ്ട് ശിഷ്യന്മാരോട് 2 ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ ചോദിക്കുന്നു.

- 1. ജനങ്ങൾ എന്നെ ആർ എന്ന് പറയുന്നു.
- 2. നിങ്ങൾ എന്നെ ആർ എന്ന് പറയുന്നു.

ശിഷ്യത്വം - പുതുക്കപ്പെടലിന്റെ അനുഭവം

റവ. ജയിംസ് ഹയർ,

പരിഭാഷ : റവ. കെ. ബൈ. ജേക്കബ്

എന്നാൽ പത്രോസ് ഉത്തരം പറഞ്ഞു "നീ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പുത്രനായ ക്രിസ്തു." യേശുവിനെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഈ പരാമർശം വിഗ്രഹാരാധന നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന ഈ ദേശത്ത് എന്തുകൊണ്ടുണ്ടായി. ഇതിനെ ജഡാവതാരത്തോടുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ കാണണം. ഈ ഭീകരമായ സ്ഥലത്ത് യേശുവിന്റെ വെളിപ്പാട് പ്രധാനമാണ്. വിഗ്രഹാരാധനയുടെ നാട്ടിൽ നിന്നും വിശുദ്ധിയുടെ നാട്ടിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്ര ആരംഭിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞു. യെരൂശലേമിലേക്ക് അടുക്കുന്നതോറും വിശുദ്ധിയുടെ അനുഭവത്തിൽ വളരേണ്ടവരാണ്. എന്നാൽ യേശുവിനെതിരെയുള്ള വിദ്വേഷം വർദ്ധിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരുന്നു. ഇത് കേവലം ഒരു യാത്രയല്ല. വിദ്വേഷത്തിനപ്പുറമായുള്ള ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്രയാണ്. ജീവിതത്തിൽ ഇത്തരുന്നതിലുള്ള യാത്രകൾ മഹത്വത്തിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്രയാണ്. യെരൂശലേം നല്ലതാണെന്ന് യേശുവിനറിയാം. അത് പകയുടെ പര്യായമായിരിക്കുന്നു എന്നും അറിയാം. എന്നാൽ ഇത്തരത്തിൽ ശിഷ്യരായി എങ്ങനെ നിലനിൽക്കാം എന്നതു സംബന്ധിച്ച് മൂന്ന് കാര്യങ്ങൾ പറയുന്നു.

1. ഒരുവൻ എന്നെ അനുഗമിച്ചാൽ ക്രൂശ് വഹിക്കണം

ഈ ചിന്ത മനുഷ്യരുടെ അഭിലാഷങ്ങൾക്ക് വിരുദ്ധമാണ്. ഇത് ഒരു ശിക്ഷയല്ല. മറിച്ച് യഹൂദ മതത്തിന്റെ വിരോധമാണ്. സെന്റ് പോൾ ശിഷ്യത്വം സംബന്ധിച്ച് പറയുന്നത്, അവനിൽ ഇരിക്കേണ്ടതിന് എന്നാണ്. ഇവിടെയാണ് ജഡാവതാരത്തിന്റെ അർത്ഥം കണ്ടെത്തുന്നത്. ഇത് കേവലം മനുഷ്യനായി തീരുക മാത്രമല്ലായിരുന്നു. മനുഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ ഉന്നത മാതൃകയ്ക്കുകയടയായിരുന്നു. ശിഷ്യ

ത്വത്തിന്റെ ആദ്യപാഠം ഇതിൽകൂടെ യേശു പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ക്രൂശ് എടുക്കാൻ നമ്മെ അവൻ വിളിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനത്തോടുള്ള ഏകീഭാവമാണിത്. സ്വയത്തിൽ മരിക്കുകയും ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ ജീവിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന അനുഭവമാണിത്.

2. സ്വന്തം പരുത്തിന് വേണ്ടി നില നിൽക്കാതിരിക്കുക.

പീഡാനുഭവം അതിശക്തമായിരുന്നു. അവന്റെ വേദന മുഴുവൻ നിന്ദയുടെ അനുഭവമായിരുന്നു. അത് അതിവേദനാജനകമായ അനുഭവമാണ്. ഈ അനുഭവത്തിലൂടെ ദൈവം ആരെന്ന് ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടുന്നു. ശിഷ്യത്വം ഈ അനുഭവത്തിലൂടെയാണ് മനസ്സിലാക്കേണ്ടത്.

3. ജനത്തെ ദരിക്കാനല്ല, ശുശ്രൂഷിക്കലാണ് ശിഷ്യത്വം

ശിഷ്യത്വം - അടിമത്വം എന്നിവ പരസ്പരം ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. എല്ലാ കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിലും ഇത് പ്രധാനമാണ്. ഏതു വിധത്തിൽ ആയിരുന്നാലും നാം ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മുമ്പിൽ വണങ്ങണം.

ശിഷ്യത്വം യേശുവിലൂടെ മാത്രമേ മനസ്സിലാക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കൂ. യേശുവിന്റെ കാലത്തെ പരീശന്മാർക്കു ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ വിവിധ ഭാവങ്ങളെ സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള ധാരണകൾ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ശിഷ്യത്വം ഒരു തരത്തിലുമുള്ള ലാഭത്തിനു വേണ്ടിയല്ല, മാത്രമല്ല ഈ പദവി ആർക്കും ഉണ്ടാക്കിയെടുക്കാവുന്നതല്ല. ഇത് ദൈവിക ദാനമാണ്. ശിഷ്യസമൂഹം വിവിധ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ പേറേണ്ടവരാണ്. ശിഷ്യത്വം യഥാർത്ഥമായ പുതുക്കപ്പെടലിന്റെ അനുഭവമാണ്. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ജീവിതത്തോടുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ നമുക്ക് ഏകീഭവിക്കാൻ ദൈവം നമ്മെ സഹായിക്കട്ടെ ●

Very often, we hear Kerala, the southern state of India where Marthomites originated from, officially referred to as 'God's Own Country' in many tourism advertisements. But for a visitor from outside, it is a tropical land with hot sun, extreme humidity, armies of bugs, unclean surroundings, and the stench of rotting garbage. Nevertheless, India with its colorful array of cultures, religions, languages, lifestyles and socio-economic conditions offer divine richness, unmatched spirituality and a gateway to many eastern mystical disciplines for those who take time to study and attain the wisdom that is embedded in its quiet villages. With their untiring spirit and prayerful family support, Kerala Christians migrated to almost all parts of the world and prospered with dignity and pride. In places where even the natives struggled to survive, our people flourished. God provided health, wealth, and a nurturing environment. However, as time goes by, as we indulge in excessive luxury and lavishness, we abandon God and religion and are engrossed in our self-designed lifestyles. Such selfish motives lead to hostility within and beyond ourselves. All the mystical traditions agree that life begins with ignorance of our vibrant connection to the divine. Those who take time to locate that missing link and re-establish the connection will start enjoying life. In today's post-modern society, many are running the rat race without time to stop and enjoy what they already possess. Tibetan mystics claim that those who seek and find the divine (highly evolved beings) can often elevate themselves beyond normal human pathways and can attain wisdom to understand the intricacies of health, well-being, mind, nature and even the universe, which in turn represent wisdom of God. Without this thirst for what is holy and sacred, one may lose the taste of common living and will turn to violence and social hostility. Today we feel, see and hear hostility that exists between individuals within and outside the family, within communities, and between religions and nations. Are we, the so-called modern humans, losing sight of God? Are we ignoring or forgetting what we have learned or what we are taught about loving our neighbor, respecting others, helping the needy, supporting the weak, and be rejoicing in the almighty? As stated by many, we have to 'return to the basics' and retrace our steps. Without ignoring the roots, let us examine ourselves and see where we are headed. It is important to examine our ways and means to ensure that it does not create or enhance hostile situation for those around us, within the family, within the community and even within the nations around the globe.



Hostility to hospitality is a soothing thought, but it involves a lot more effort to actualize. As we reap the many comforts provided by modern technology, we wonder how life existed in the past without these amenities. As we are gradually become captivated by the lavishness and luxuries, it becomes very easy to be blinded to our surroundings and community. Often unknowingly, with a growing feeling of insecurity, we build unscalable walls around ourselves that isolate us from the rest of the world. However, with divine help, we can discard the security blanket and expose ourselves to our surroundings. Let the wisdom of the Almighty, open our eyes and empower our minds to let go of the feelings of insecurity. With help from God, let us try hard to change hostile situations into an atmosphere of love and support.

On behalf of the Mar Thoma Messenger I take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to Rev. John Mathai, Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah, Rev. Sunni E Mathew, Rev. George K. John, Rev. S. George, Rev. Sham P. Thomas, Rev. John A. George and Rev. Saji Joseph, who are leaving after 3 years of fruitful service in this country. Wishing them all the best in their future ministry. I welcome the new Achens and hope and pray that your services in this land will be of great spiritual benefit to those you serve.

Eapen Daniel

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