



MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

APRIL 2006



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Presidential Address

Diocesan Assembly: March 25, 2006



Respected Achens and dearly beloved in Christ,

Addressing the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of North America and Europe is both a privilege and pleasure for me. We are here again to renew our fellowship and to deliberate and decide on the future activities of the Diocese. I consider it a privilege to be one of the servants of the Lord in His divine plan in and through this Diocese. I am humbled by your love, concern, prayer, and suggestions in the activities of the Diocese. To work with the people and to share their pain and joy is a great experience. Dear friends, once again I welcome you all to this Assembly with much pleasure and expectations.

The center of gravity of this world seems to have lost its stability. The earth like a pendulum seems to be oscillating between war and peace, hostility and hospitality, hatred and love. In a subtle response to the violence over the cartoons of Prophet Muhammed, the General Assembly of the WCC points out that "The real tension in our world is not between religions and beliefs, but between aggressive, intolerant and manipulative secular and religious ideologies." Even though Iraq appears to be the epicenter of all the upheavals, the real cause seems to be human greed, arrogance and animosity. Even the believers are bewildered and they ask whether God is still at work. But our only hope is the Lord of the Psalmist who affirms that the Lord is in His Holy Temple. The Lord shall rule from heaven.

Spirituality is the most discussed and misunderstood word in religious circles. This is the essence and foundation of Christian life. The search for a meaningful spirituality is relevant at all times. As Christians we have to fathom the meaning of Christian spirituality. Spirituality is a growth in all dimensions of life; personal as well as social. It is the totality of God guided life and it's a lifestyle that helps us to lead a faithful life towards God and to the society. In the context of an onslaught of individualism, consumerism, materialism and so on, the challenge of the spirituality of the cross should be underscored. Spirituality demands relationship to God and to everything He created. This is a two-dimensional relationship as revealed in Jesus Christ. This makes Christian presence more meaningful and relevant, which is the need of the hour.

Organizational Witness

I am glad that the Diocesan level Conferences were well attended. It is commendable that we have national conferences for almost all organizations. Nevertheless, the decreasing number of participants at the Family Conference should be a concern for all of us. Efforts are to be made to make the Family Conference an occasion for spiritual rejuvenation and fellowship in the community of faith.

Chaplaincy Program

It is a healthy sign that the ministry of Chaplains is getting more and more importance. By God's grace we were able to buy a residence for our Chaplain in Philadelphia. This wouldn't have been possible without the wholehearted support of the parishes in the region and the Youth Fellowship. Let me express my gratitude to the sub-committee and especially to Mr. Cherian Zacharia for a personal loan of \$300,000 towards this purpose.

Mexico Mission

As presented in the annual report, the devastating hurricane Emily which struck the coastal Islands of Mexico took away almost everything from the islanders except their hope and trust in us. In coordination with the local Government, we have to rehabilitate them in the main land. I am overwhelmed by the concern of the Diocesan Youth Fellowship towards this project. They have sponsored 10 houses and a student's hostel.

The Alexander Mar Thoma Memorial Project

Since the last Assembly decided to have an alternate project, a sub-committee was appointed to study and report to this Assembly a suitable project which would be a befitting memorial to the Late Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Please be assured that we are going ahead with the project with a renewed awareness and a mission focus, more than a memorial structure.

Mission Involvement of the Parishes

I am grateful to all those who contributed liberally towards the Katrina Relief Fund. The entire amount was handed over to the NCC-USA Katrina relief activities. In this scenario we are challenged to be more relevant and meaningful in our vision. The WCC general assembly in February 2006 deliberated on the theme 'God, in your Grace, Transform the World.' "At the heights of human self-sufficiency, communication revolution, etc on the one hand and our contemporary historical uncertainties and 'Walls of partition' on the other, we are trying to see God's need in the transformation of the world. The whole world is praying together 'God we acknowledge that this is your world.' The entire creation belongs to you. We cannot transform this world without you. Sinners and sinned against as we are, we are sorry that we have managed the affairs of this world without you. We thought we are unlimited and that we are on our own today, more than ever we need your transforming presence, healing presence and reconciling presence in the world. Enable us to go with You into the world with Your eyes, with Your arms, with Your Spirit." (Messenger, Jan. 2006)

The question is whether we can recapture this vision and internalize some of these values at the local parish level through concrete mission activities.

Achens on the transfer list

This year 16 of our Achens are leaving this Diocese and 18 are joining us. I gratefully acknowledge the ministry of our Achens and also their contributions to the growth of the Diocese. I wish them all God's blessings in the new field. Rev. Dr. K.A. Abraham has been serving this Diocese as the Diocesan Secretary and the Bishop's Secretary for the last two years. His scholarly talks, interactions, and efficient leadership will ever be remembered.

Achen's God-given talents, scholarship, and expertise were added assets to this Diocese and everyone who knows him always speak very highly of him. Personally, I am grateful to him for his assistance and fellowship. Gracy Kochamma always made Sinai Center a home for all, especially for me and I am grateful to them. They will be leaving the Diocese at the end of April and I wish them all God's blessings. Rev. Joseph Oommen will take charge as new Diocesan and Bishop's Secretary from the end of April. His many years of experience as a parish priest and as a lecturer at the Dharma Jyothi at Delhi will be an asset to this Diocese. I welcome Achen and look forward to his leadership in his new task. Let us work together in the coming years as in the past with vision and determination. Let us also run the race that is set before us steadily and confidently until we reach the goal. 'I will lift up my eyes to the hills; from where my help comes, my help comes from the Lord who made the heavens and earth' (Psalm 121:2).

New Parishes

As you are aware, three new parishes were formed in the Diocese on November 1, 2005: Tabor in Staten Island, St. Thomas Delaware Valley, PA and Hermon in Atlanta. I congratulate all of them and warmly welcome them to the Diocese. It is also commendable that we have new Church buildings in Staten Island, Ascension Philadelphia, South Florida, Denver and Jacksonville in Florida. All these are signs of our growth. In the near future we hope to have residences for all of our chaplains and zonal retreat centers for the organizations.

I would like to highlight a few insights for us to ponder on in our journey of faith

- **Look ahead:** In our journey of faith we are always tempted to look upon things that are near us. Yes, we need to look for the possible pitfalls that are nearby. However, we need to look beyond the immediate and temporary. The eternal transcends the transitory. We are called to be people with a larger vision. It is imperative to be a missionary to be a visionary. We now have the book of Revelation in our hands because John the Apostle looked beyond the temporary dilemmas in the city of Patmos. This made him visualize the heavenly scene.
- **Preparedness to see our limitations:** We always want to be the winners and very often our 'win-or-lose' attitude stands in the way of a genuine community of faith. We want to remain in situations of safety and security; but let us remind ourselves that our preparedness to see our limitations is part of learning and growing. Once we have the preparedness to face the challenges of life we will be equipped for mission that is entrusted to us. "For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it, but whoever will lose His life for Me and my Gospel will save it" (Mark 8: 35). We see St. Thomas affirming such a preparedness in John 11:16. This made him carry the gospel of the Kingdom to India.
- **Rediscovery of Christ's presence:** Very often in our journey we are tempted to forget the presence of the master who wants to be with us always. This lack of awareness of His presence in our life takes us to the verge of falling. We forget and doubt

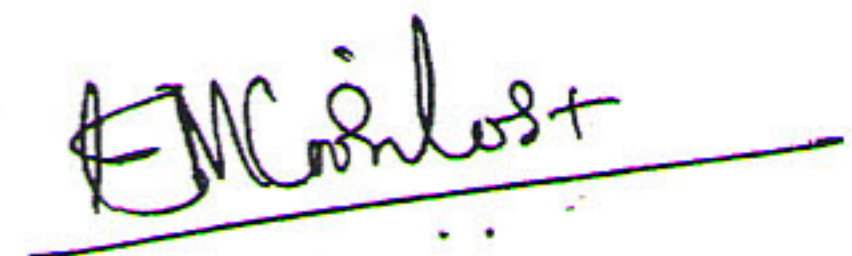
the presence of the Lord in our struggles and subsequently feel tired and exhausted. How meaningful is God's presence when he says "I will be with you till the end of ages" (Matthew 28:20).

- **Goal setting:** In our journey of faith, we are to fix our eyes on the ultimate destination rather than being carried away by matters by the wayside and get distracted. No doubt Peter was capable of overcoming the natural law of gravity by walking over the waters. This was because his eyes were fixed on Jesus who was walking over the waters. But when the waves came against him, he was frightened and began to drown.
- **A life of trust:** Over-confidence in our life, in our potentials will lead to fall and failure. It will lead to difficult situations and irrevocable disaster. The basic philosophy of religion is to rely upon the transcendent one. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on the things you know" (Proverbs 3:5). Most of the time we are so busy and preoccupied that we forget to trust in the Lord and His guidance. The Word of God exhorts us to praise ceaselessly and to depend on Him.

Conclusion

Let us introspect and see who we are, remove all veils and masks. Let us see ourselves as we are. The new vision of ourselves may sometimes frighten us or free us from threats and fears. We need to handle ourselves by radically changing our lifestyles, actions and options. We ourselves may not be able to do it but our Creator and Redeemer never moves away from us or leaves us. When we turn to Him, He will renew us. He will guide us to the goal. As rejuvenated persons we should run the race together with courage, hope and purpose. Once again, let me extend my gratitude to all; especially Achens, Assembly members, Council members, auditors and members of the various sub-committees for all their contributions and prayerful support in the activities of the Diocese. Let us resolve to work together for God's glory and for the promotion of the values of the Kingdom at all levels. Amen. ■

Yours in His ministry,



Coorilos Metrachan

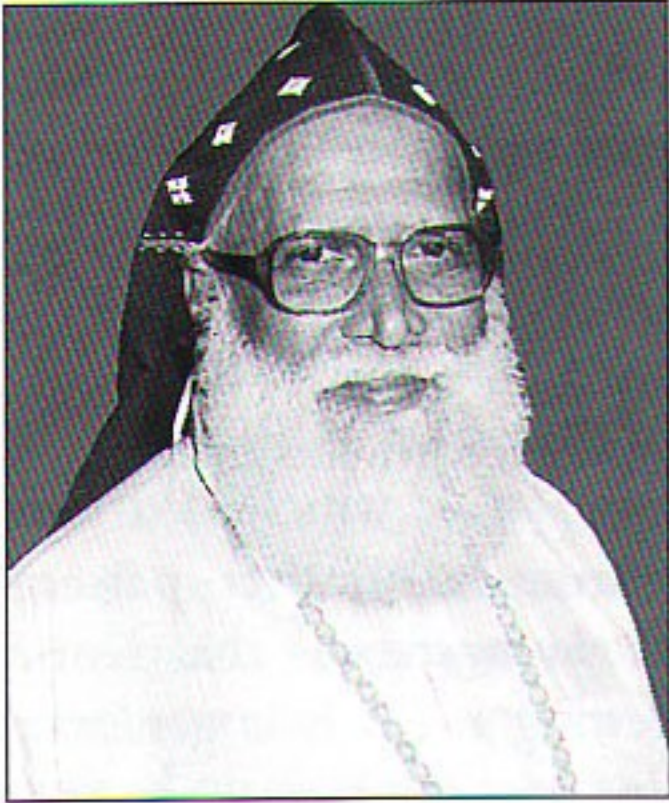
Jehovah

Alex Thomas, Jackson, Tennessee

*Jehovah-Jireh, you are the provider
You are the only one I need
Jehovah Rapha, you are the healer
We are healed by thy stripes
Jehovah Shamma, He will be with us
He will give us all we need
You are all I need
You are all I need
You are the only one I need
Jehovah Elohim, you are the creator
Thy word has created everything
Jehovah Elion, He is the almighty
He is the only one like Him
Jehovah Shalom, He is my peace
He gave us eternal peace*

*You are all I need
You are all I need
You are the only one I need
Jehovah Nissi, Lord is my banner
The battle belongs to the Lord
Jehovah Tisdkneu, the Lord of righteousness
Grantor of justice, peace and mercy
Come to His altar, worship and praise Him
He is the Lord Almighty
You are all I need
You are all I need
You are the only one I need.*

Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

I am writing this letter on the Friday of the Maramon Convention. This is a season of religious conventions galore. Ideals and great truths are being proclaimed with no dearth. There is a deluge of speakers from all around the world. People flock to these conventions, which are advertised even more aggressively than jewelers. However, should we measure spiritual confluences by the same yardstick as commercial institutions? Are we more intent on calling out the Lord's name than doing the Lord's will? Our activities should reflect our intentions. We need to focus our attention on transforming, by God's grace, individuals and society into components of God's Kingdom.

We need to take decisions inspired by God's grace, not by overcharged emotions. We should strive to be partners in building a fellowship not on the temporal sands but on the rock that is Jesus Christ. These conventions are opportunities for deepening our desire for the Gospel, for recognizing the fullness of God's love, for renewing relationships, and for taking part in the service of God's Kingdom.

The day laborers, parishioners who thatched the coconut leaves, bus drivers, the sanitation workers, the speakers who spoke on the Gospel, those who listened to the Gospel, those who slept through it, those who contributed to the offertory, the cooks who fed us, the officials, all were part of the convention and we are indebted to all of them.

While our Maramon Convention was going on, the 9th Conference of the World Council of Churches took place in Brazil. Irenaeus Thirumeni, Zacharias Thirumeni, Philoxenos Thirumeni and several others from our church attended the Conference. The Council elected our Philoxenos Thirumeni to their Central Committee. It is a recognition for our entire Church too.

The parish is a society based on love, a fellowship, and a family. You all know the meaning and significance of this. Do our parishes proclaim this to the world at large? Or do we distort the meaning of these ideals?

Our duty is not to find fault with the parish office bearers and indict them. It is our duty to help them so that they do not fail in their duties. Office bearers should accept the opinions of the parishioners with the gravity it deserves. More than pin-pointing another's shortcomings, we should have the good heart to correct our own failings. After all, the parish is a regional form of the Church, which is a part of the Kingdom of God. The Church is universal and Holy, and therefore should include one and all. It should model itself on the character of God. Differences in opinion are inevitable, but it should not slip into disruptiveness and vengefulness. Any fight that goes against the character of the Church cannot be Holy.

Family prayer is a panacea to every problem. It does not cost any money. We can start it without help from anyone. Everything begins with the family. Family is a divine ideal and a gift from God. The Church is an expanded version of the family. Society is the Church's arena of service.

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you all.

Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

Christian Family: A Covenant Relationship

Jaicy Varghese, Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Family is one among the prime gifts of God to humanity. God in the Garden of Eden instituted it. It is the smallest unit in the building block of society and the Kingdom of God. It is part and parcel of the fulfillment of God's divine purpose. Mathematically, one plus one equals one, may be wrong but is an accurate description of God's intention for the marriage relationship. Scripture says, "for this reason shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh."

(Gen 2:24) Marriage should not be a matter of convenience or blind chance but it should involve deliberate choice and obedience. Always remembering that this covenant relationship is made before God and is binding until death. The purpose of the family is to continue the covenant through procreation and subdue the earth.

Today's family has been influenced by the rapid changes caused by consumerism and globalization that has affected societies and cultures. Most often, to make ends meet, both the parents have to work. As a result of this, there is an increased awareness of personal freedom and also the quality of interpersonal relationship in marriage has improved. Of course, this enhances the dignity of women and responsible procreation but along with this, the freedom causes degradation of some fundamental values. The concept of independence of spouses in relation to each other is non-Biblical. It is in fact this so-called independence between the husband and wife that leads to divorce, abortion, etc. Another matter of concern in today's family is regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children.

The word of God is very clear on the relationship of husband and wife and parents and children. In Ephesians 5:22-25, the apostle Paul states that the husband is to be his wife's leader—that does not mean he has to be the boss of every action, but being the leader means that he must be the family's biggest servant. And the Lord commands the wife to be submissive. Submission means that the wife yields and uses all her abilities under the management of her husband for the good of her husband and her family. That is, they are to work as a team looking into the best interests of each other and the children. Just as Christ loves the Church and the Church submits to Christ, her Lord, the husband and wife should mutually submit to and love one another.

Different media are bombarding our homes with messages that contradict God's word. Our children, especially the teenagers feel an urge to identify with the



culture around them. They feel that to be popular they have to follow the trend. So they often get caught up in destructive life styles. Often times it becomes difficult for the parents to understand peer pressure. This leads to 'closed communication', which further encourages rebelliousness. Another pattern seen among today's youngsters is that living together without getting married is generally acceptable. It is a matter of real concern that many families do nothing or are unable to prevent such actions.

Many serious conflicts could be eliminated for Christian couples if they would make the Bible their final authority on raising children. The word of God stands out clear regarding the responsibilities of parents to children and children to parents. In the book of Proverbs it mentions about the disciplining of the child. The disciplining of a child starts from birth and parents should discipline the child in love. In Ephesians 6:4 it also says— "and, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." In Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1 it says children are to honor their parents and obey them in the Lord, for this is right. Children do not naturally do what is right, nor do they eagerly choose what is good and holy. To help them make the right choices and do the right things and live in the right way, God says, they need to be disciplined. This is possible when parents discuss their faith with the children, pray with them and encourage them to do what is right not hesitating to say 'no' when necessary and be a model in all walks of life.

Family is the basic unit of all right social relationships and family life is made worthy by love. It is in the family that an individual learns his responsibility towards himself, God and society. And it is only through a great spirit of sacrifice the oneness of the family can be preserved. Unless each and every member of the family is humble and open to understand, forget and forgive, it is difficult to keep the family intact in the busy world of today. Selfishness and unresolved conflicts cause differences in relationship between family members. This affects the growth of the individuals and disturbs the peace in the family and it's after effects are carried on to the society. God has called the Christian family as the smallest unit in the Kingdom of God to be the agents of peace and reconciliation and this can only be achieved through the way of the cross—a life of utmost humility and sacrificial love. ■

Christian Family

In My Vision.....

Christina Roy Thomas, Trinity MTC Houston

When we say family, we think of our parents, our siblings, our relatives, but what picture does we see when we think of our Christian Family? After all, aren't we all one family under Christ?

Webster's dictionary defines family as "members of a household" or "all the descendants of a common ancestor." A Christian is a person to whom God has given the Holy Spirit. A new life comes into a person that will never stop, not even at the time of physical death. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, giving us peace with God, and producing fruit in our lives, of love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness and holiness.

As Christians, we are ambassadors of Christ who have responsibilities toward our spiritual family. Timothy 5:8 says, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Being in America, God has blessed us immensely with a good home, food, clothing, vehicles etc. It is our duty towards our brothers and sisters who are less fortunate than us to provide with food or anything that you are able to give. We also have to be an example to others as a good Christian family. We have to show our faith through prayer, so that we can also be "fishers of men" bringing more people into our 'family' following the example of Christ.

Members of the family have the responsibility to follow this command as 1 John 4:20-21 tells us, "if anyone says, 'I love God' but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, who he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command. Whoever loves God must also love his brother." We have instructions from our father and mother that we should follow in our Christian family life.

Ephesians 5:21 says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." This simple sentence sets the tone for all that follows: we are to submit to others, because of our reverence for Christ. In other words, in any human relationship, husband and wife, child and parent, slave and master—a third party is involved, Christ himself. The apostle Paul urges us to conduct those relationships in light of Christ's own spirit. He advises us in the book of Ephesians, how to live as "children of light." He tells us that we came to know Christ and we were taught in

accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. Therefore, each of us must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body, to put on the new self, created to be like God in the righteousness and holiness.

We as Christians also have the duty to stand against the devil. Ephesians 6:10-12, "Finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." We have to follow Christ and resist the temptation just like Christ resisted the devil in the desert.

According to Pastor Joel Osteen, "We all face challenges, struggles, and times when things don't go our way. When problems occur, some people immediately think they have done something wrong, that God must surely be punishing them. He doesn't send the problems, but sometimes he allows us to go through them. The Bible says temptations, trials, and difficulties must come, because if we are to strengthen our spiritual selves, and grow stronger, we must face adversities to overcome and attacks to resist." God never promised that we wouldn't have challenges. In fact, he said just the opposite. His word says, "be truly glad!... these trials are only to test your faith, to see whether or not it is strong and pure. So if your faith remains strong after being tried in the test tube of fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day of his return."

In conclusion, the true Christian family always gives priority to God. Start the day with prayer; it is the greatest power on Earth. As the prayer goes up, the blessings come down. So, family prayer is an essential ingredient in a successful and healthy Christian family life. Being in a Christian family means that you are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. We have to nourish ourselves in mind, body and spirit which enables us to a total personality development. As Ephesians 5:1-2 states, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." ■

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റവ.സുശീൽ വർഗ്ഗീസ്

ആ ദേശത്തു നിന്നും ഒരു കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീ വന്ന് അവനോട് കർത്താവേ, ദാവീദ് പുത്രോ, എന്നോട് കരുണ തോന്നേണമെ, എന്റെ മകൾക്ക് ഭൃതോപദ്രവം കഠിനമായിരിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന് നിലവിളിച്ച് പറഞ്ഞു. അവൻ അവളോട് ഒരു വാക്കും ഉത്തരം പറഞ്ഞില്ല. (മത്തായി 15: 22-23)



യെഹൂദ സമൂഹത്തിന് മുൻപാകെ ഈ പ്രവർത്തനം വെല്ലുവിളി ഉയർത്തുന്നു. രക്ഷ സാർവ്വലൗകികമാണ്. സുവിശേഷം സാർവ്വത്രികമായി ഉള്ളതാണെന്നും ഇത് പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. മാറ്റി നിർത്തുന്നവരായി സമൂഹത്തിൽ ആരും ഉണ്ടാകരുത്. തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ടവരാണ് ചിന്തിച്ച് നട്ടെല്ലും തലയും ഉയർത്തി നടക്കുന്നവർ നോക്കി നിൽക്കെ ഭൃഷ്ട് കൽപ്പിച്ച് മാറ്റി നിർത്തിയവർ അനുഗ്രഹവും വാങ്ങി പോകുന്നത് കാണേണ്ടി വരും എന്നാണ് ഈ വിവരണത്തിലൂടെ സുവിശേഷകൻ പറയുന്നത്.

അത്ഭുതങ്ങളിൽ വിശ്വസിച്ചിരുന്ന ഒന്നായിരുന്നു യേശുവിന്റെ ലോകം. അത്ഭുതങ്ങളെ സൂചിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുവാൻ സാധാരണയായി പുതിയ നിയമത്തിൽ ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന 3 പദങ്ങളാണ്, സെമെയിയോൻ (അടയാളം), ദ്യൂനാമിസ്, (ശക്തി), ഏർഗോൻ (പ്രവർത്തി). രോഗശാന്തി പ്രാദാനം

വിശ്വാസത്തെ എല്ലായിപ്പോഴും ശ്ലാഘിക്കുകയും, വിശ്വാസമില്ലാ

ചെയ്യുന്ന അനവധി അത്ഭുതങ്ങൾ യേശു പ്രവർത്തിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ യേശു എന്ന വ്യക്തിയേയും യേശുവിന്റെ ദൗത്യങ്ങളേയും ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തിയാണ് എല്ലാ അത്ഭുതങ്ങളും നടക്കുക. യേശുവും ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട വ്യക്തിയും തമ്മിലുള്ള കണ്ടുമുട്ടലിനും, ആ വ്യക്തിയുടെ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികവും ശാരീരകവുമായ വ്യതിയാനത്തെ മുൻനിർത്തിയുമാണ് യേശു അത്ഭുതം പ്രവർത്തിക്കുക. സൗഖ്യം പ്രാപിക്കുന്ന രോഗിയുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ നിർണായക സംഭവമായി അത് മാറുന്നു. (മത്തായി 9: 32, 20: 34, മർക്കോസ് 5: 18) യേശുവിൽ വിശ്വാസം ഉള്ളയിടത്ത് മാത്രമേ അത്ഭുതങ്ങൾ നടക്കുകയുള്ളൂ.

യ്ക്കെ കർത്താവ് എപ്പോഴും ശാസിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇവിടെ കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീ യേശുവിൽ പൂർണ്ണമായി വിശ്വാസമർപ്പിച്ച് ആവശ്യത്തോടെ അടുത്ത് വരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ അതികഠിനമായ വേദനയിൽ നിന്നും ഉരുത്തിരിയുന്ന അവളുടെ നിലവിളി കേട്ട് കർത്താവ് നിശ്ചിതത്വം പാലിക്കുന്നു. യെഹൂദന്മാർക്ക് യേശുവിൽ മശിഹായെ ദർശിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയാത്ത സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ വിജാതീയ സ്ത്രീയായ കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീക്ക് യേശുവിൽ മശിഹായെ കണ്ടെത്തി വിശ്വസിക്കുവാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞു. പക്ഷെ വൈരുദ്ധ്യാത്മകത എന്നവണ്ണം, യേശു നിഷ്ക്രിയനായി നിശ്ചിതത്വം പാലിക്കുന്നു. പഴയ-പുതിയ നിയമങ്ങളിൽ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നിശ്ചിതത്വം പലയിടത്തും ദർശിക്കാം. അർത്ഥഗർഭമായ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നിശ്ചിതത്വം!

കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീയുടെ മകളെ സൗഖ്യമാക്കുന്നതിന്റെ ആധാരവും വിശ്വാസമാണ് എന്ന വ്യക്തമാണ്. ഈ സംഭവം വി.മത്തായി എഴുതിയ സുവിശേഷം 15-ാം അദ്ധ്യായം 21 മുതൽ 28 വരെ ഉള്ള ഭാഗങ്ങളിലും, മർക്കോസ് എഴുതിയ സുവിശേഷം 24 മുതൽ 30 വരെയുള്ള വാക്യങ്ങളിലും രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. എന്നാൽ വ്യത്യസ്തമായ വിവരണങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ട് വിഭിന്നമാണ് ഇതിന്റെ ഉള്ളടക്കമെന്ന് തോന്നാം.

അബ്രഹാമിനെ വിളിച്ച് വേർതിരിച്ച് വിശ്വാസികളുടെ പിതാവായി പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്ന നടപടിയിൽ ഈ നിശ്ചിതത്വയുടെ അർത്ഥം ദർശിക്കാം. ആകാശത്തിലെ നക്ഷത്രങ്ങൾ പോലെയും കടൽകരയിലെ മണൽത്തരി പോലെയും അനന്തരവകാശികളെ നൽകും എന്ന വാഗ്ദാനം നിവർത്തിക്കുവാൻ അബ്രഹാമിനും സാരായിക്കും ജീവിതസായാഹ്നം വരെ കാത്തിരിക്കേണ്ടി വന്നു. വാഗ്ദത്തപുത്രനെ ബലി അർപ്പിക്കുവാൻ ആവശ്യപ്പെട്ടപ്പോഴും ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നിശ്ചിതത്വം അബ്രഹാമിന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ ആന്തരിക സംഘർഷത്തിന്റെ വേലിയേറ്റം സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു. അവസാനം ബലിപീഠത്തിൽ മകന്റെ നെഞ്ചിന് മുകളിൽ വാൾ ഉറപ്പിക്കുന്നതിന് മുൻപാണ് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നിശ്ചിതത്വം ദേദിക്കുന്നത്. നിതിമാനും നിർമ്മലനുമായ ഇയ്യോബിന്റെ കഷ്ടതയുടെ മദ്ധ്യത്തിലും ഈ നിശ്ചിതത്വയുടെ വിവിധ മാനങ്ങൾ ദർശിക്കാം. ആരോഗ്യവും സകല സമ്പ

ഭൃതോപദ്രവം കഠിനമായ കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീയുടെ മകളുടെ സൗഖ്യം, സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ സാർവ്വലൗകികതയെ എടുത്ത് കാണിക്കുന്നതാണ്. സോർ സീദോൻ എന്ന പ്രദേശങ്ങളിലേക്ക് യേശു സഞ്ചാരം ചെയ്തു എന്നതും, ആ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഈ സംഭവം നടക്കുന്നു എന്നതും യേശുവിന്റെ ദൗത്യത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകത എടുത്ത് കാണിക്കുന്നു. മശിഹായുടെ ആഗമനം യെഹൂദന്മാർക്ക് മാത്രം രക്ഷ നൽകുന്നതിന് മാത്രമാണ് എന്ന് വിശ്വസിച്ചിരുന്ന

ത്തും നഷ്ടമായപ്പോൾ മാത്രമാണ് ദൈവം ഇയ്യോബിനോട് ഉത്തരം അരുളുന്നത്. ശത്രുക്കളുടെ പിടിയിൽ അമർന്ന് നിരാശനായി എല്ലാം നശിക്കുന്ന വ്യക്തിയുടെ പ്രതീകമായി പരിത്യക്തന്റെ പ്രലപനമായി സങ്കീർത്തനത്തിലൂടെ ദാവീദ് കരഞ്ഞ് അപേക്ഷിക്കുമ്പോഴും ദൈവം ഒരക്ഷരം മിണ്ടുന്നതായി വേദപുസ്തകം പറയുന്നില്ല. (സങ്കീ. 22:2) ഇവിടെയും വിശ്വാസവും അവിശ്വാസവും തമ്മിൽ ശക്തമായ വടംവലി നടത്തുന്ന നിശ്ശബ്ദത ദർശിക്കാം.

പുതിയ നിയമത്തിൽ ഈ ദൈവ നിശബ്ദതയുടെ വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ഉദാഹരണങ്ങൾ കാണാം. യായിറോസിന്റെ മകൾ മരിക്കാനായി കിടക്കുമ്പോൾ അവളെ സൗഖ്യമാക്കണമെന്ന അപേക്ഷയോട് പ്രതികരിക്കുവാൻ യേശു സമയം ദീർഘിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. യായിറോസിന്റെ ഭവനത്തിലേക്കുള്ള യേശുവിന്റെ യാത്ര തിടക്കത്തിലല്ലായിരുന്നു. അതിനിടയിലും തന്റെ സഹായം അഭ്യർത്ഥിച്ചു വന്ന രക്തസ്രാവക്കാരിയെ സുഖപ്പെടുത്തുവാനും ആശ്വസിപ്പിക്കുവാനും യേശു സമയം കണ്ടെത്തുന്നു. (മർക്കോസ് 5: 34). ഒരിക്കൽ യേശു ശിഷ്യരുമൊത്ത് നടന്ന പോകുമ്പോൾ വഴിയിൽ വെച്ച് രണ്ട് അന്ധന്മാർ കർത്താവെ ദാവീദ് പുത്രാണങ്ങളോട് കരുണ തോന്നണമെ എന്ന അപേക്ഷിക്കുമ്പോഴും യേശു അവരോട് ഒന്നും പറയുന്നില്ല. അവിടെ നിൽക്കുക പോലും ചെയ്യാതെ തന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യ സ്ഥാനത്തേക്ക് നടന്ന് നീങ്ങുകയാണ്. അതിന് ശേഷം അവൻ ഭവനത്തിൽ എത്തുന്നു. ഈ നേരമത്രയും ആ അന്ധന്മാർ കരഞ്ഞു കൊണ്ട് അവന്റെ പുറകെ വരികയായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ യേശു അവരോട് സംസാരിക്കുന്നതായി വേദപുസ്തകം പറയുന്നില്ല. മറിച്ച് ഭവനത്തിലെത്തിയ ശേഷമാണ് കരഞ്ഞു കൊണ്ടു വന്ന അവരെ അവൻ സുഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത്. ലാസറിന്റെ കല്ലറയെ ത്തും വരെയുള്ള നിശബ്ദതയും മറ്റൊരു ഉദാഹരണമാണ്. ദൈവ നിശബ്ദതയുടെ അത്മതലങ്ങൾ കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീയുടെ ഭൂതബാധിതയായ മകളെ സൗഖ്യമാക്കുന്ന പ്രക്രിയയിൽ ഏറെ വ്യക്തമാണ്. യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദത വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ആഴങ്ങളിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു. കാരൂണ്യത്തിന്റെ മുർത്തിമത്ഭാവമായ യേശുവിനെ വിശ്വാസത്തോടെ അവൾ സമീപിക്കുമ്പോൾ അവൾ അപഹാസ്യയായി തീരുന്നു. പൊതുജന സമക്ഷം വ്യക്തിത്വമില്ലാത്ത തെരുവ് നായോട് അവൾ ഉപമിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. എന്നിട്ടും അവൾ ആരുടെ സമക്ഷത്തിലാണ് വന്നിരിക്കുന്നതെന്നും ആരെയാണ് വിശ്വസിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നതെന്നും വിസ്മരിക്കുന്നില്ല. ആ കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീ ഒരമ്പലമുറയല്ല. മറിച്ച് യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദതയെ ഭേദിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുന്ന വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ആഴങ്ങളിലേക്ക് അവൾ ഇറങ്ങി ചെന്ന് യേശുവിൽ അഭയം തേടുന്നു. പൗലോസ് അപ്പോസ്തോലന്റെ ഭാഷയിൽ പറഞ്ഞാൽ ഞാൻ ആരെ വിശ്വസിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ഞാൻ അറിയുന്നു എന്ന് പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്നു. വിശ്വാസത്തിലേക്ക് നമ്മെ നയിക്കുന്നതാണ് യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദതയെന്ന് ഈ സംഭവം നമ്മെ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദതദൈവത്തിന്റെ പരമാധികാരം അംഗീകരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ്. യേശുവിൽ ദർശിച്ച് ദൈവം സർവ്വ സൃഷ്ടിയുടേയും നിർമ്മാതാവാണ്. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ നിയ

ന്ത്രിതാവും അവൻ തന്നെയാണ്. സർവ്വ സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ മേൽ അവൻ പരമാധികാരമുണ്ട്. തകർക്കുവാനും ഉടയ്ക്കുവാനും പണിയുവാനും അധികാരമുള്ളവനുമായ സർവ്വ ശക്തനുമായ ദൈവം. യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദത സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ മേലുള്ള ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പൂർണ്ണ അധികാരത്തെയാണ് ഇവിടെ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുക. വിജാതീയയായ കനാന്യസ്ത്രീ സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ മേലുള്ള യേശുവിന്റെ അധികാരത്തെ ഇവിടെ അംഗീകരിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സൃഷ്ടിയായ അവളുടെ മകൾക്ക് യേശുവിന് മാത്രമെ പൂർണ്ണ നൽകുവാൻ കഴിയുകയുള്ളൂ എന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു, അത് അവൾ ഏറ്റു പറയുന്നു. കുശവന്റെ കയ്യിലെ കളിമണ്ണ് പോലെ എന്ന ശൈലിയുടെ പൂർണ്ണത ഇവിടെ ദർശിക്കാം.

യേശുവിനാൽ അസാധ്യമായത് ഒന്നുമില്ല. വിശ്വാസം കൊണ്ട് എല്ലാം സാധ്യമാണെന്ന് ഇവിടെ യേശു ഒരിക്കൽ കൂടി അടിവരയിട്ട് പറയുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദത താത്ക്കാലികമാണ്. അത് അത്ഥപൂർണ്ണവുമാണ്. അവന്റെ നിശബ്ദതയിൽ വിശ്വാസ ത്യാഗികളാകാതെ വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ വാക്താക്കളായി വലിയ വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ഉടമകളായി ജീവിക്കാം.

യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദത വിനയത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവകൃപയില്ലാതെ ഒന്നും സാധ്യമല്ല. എല്ലാം നമുക്ക് ലഭിക്കുന്നത് കൃപയാലത്രെ. ഞാനായിരിക്കുന്നതും, ആകുന്നതും കൃപയാലത്രെ എന്ന് വി.പൗലോസ് ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. സ്ഥാനങ്ങളെക്കൊണ്ടും മാനങ്ങളെക്കൊണ്ടും ദൈവകൃപ ഒന്നു മാത്രമാണ് ആശ്രയം. യേശുവിന്റെ കാൽക്കൽ നമസ്കരിക്കുന്ന കനാന്യ സ്ത്രീ അവന്റെ നിശബ്ദതയുടെ മുന്നിൽ വിനയാന്വീതയായിത്തീരുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദതയുടെ മുൻപാകെ കനാന്യസ്ത്രീ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു, ഞാൻ നിസ്സാരയും ഏതുമല്ലാത്തവളുമാകുന്നു. അവിടത്തെ കൃപ ഒന്നുമാത്രം ആലംബമെന്ന് സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു. ജീവിത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഒന്നാണ് ദൈവകൃപയെന്ന് യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദതയിലൂടെ വിനയത്തോടെ അവൾ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു. കർത്താവ് മാനിക്കുന്നത് കരയുന്ന ഹൃദയത്തെ മാത്രമല്ല ജ്വലിക്കുന്ന വിശ്വാസവും, മനസ്സുമാണ്. The greatest enemy of high religion is not irreligion but low religion.

യേശുവിന്റെ അത്യുത പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ കുറിക്കുന്നതിന് ഉയോഗിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന ഗ്രീക്ക് പദങ്ങളിൽ സെമയിയോൻ, എന്നതിന്റെ അർത്ഥം അടയാളം എന്നതാണല്ലോ. ഇവിടെ യേശുവിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനം ദൈവരാജ്യ പ്രവർത്തനത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യക്ഷ അടയാളമായി നില കൊള്ളുന്നു. യേശുവിനാൽ അസാധ്യമായത് ഒന്നുമില്ല. വിശ്വാസം കൊണ്ട് എല്ലാം സാധ്യമാണെന്ന് ഇവിടെ യേശു ഒരിക്കൽ കൂടി അടിവരയിട്ട് പറയുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ നിശബ്ദത താത്ക്കാലികമാണ്. അത് അത്ഥപൂർണ്ണവുമാണ്. അവന്റെ നിശബ്ദതയിൽ വിശ്വാസ ത്യാഗികളാകാതെ വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ വാക്താക്കളായി വലിയ വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ഉടമകളായി ജീവിക്കാം.

Faith and Practices of the Mar Thoma Church

Rev. Ninu Chandy, Youth Chaplain, Dallas

The faith and practices of the Mar Thoma Church has to be understood in the light of the Bible, tradition, and liturgy. Before analyzing the faith and practices, it is equally important to look back briefly into the origin and history of the Mar Thoma Church.

It is believed that the church was founded by the apostle Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Traditions and history provides ample authenticity to this belief. Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan in his book *Christianity in India and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Church* argues, "The history of the Christian church in the first century does not depend entirely on historical documents. Tradition is often more true and more compelling than plain historic proof. In this sense St. Peter's founding of the Roman Church and St. Thomas founding of the Malabar church, maybe said to stand on the same footing. Both are supported by traditions which are sufficiently early and sufficiently strong." The history of this ancient church from the fourth century to the fifteenth century reveals the fact that it had friendly relations with the church in Persia. There was an ecclesiastical connection between the church in West Asia and the church in Malabar until the sixteenth century, with the Nestorian church.

With the coming of Vasco de Gama in A.D. 1498, the Portuguese established their power in Malabar, now part of Kerala. It was also a time which witnessed far-reaching effects of the missionary adventures of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church wanted to use their power to bring the Church of Malabar under the supremacy of Rome. In A.D. 1599, the powerful Archbishop Alexico-de-Menezes convened a Synod at Diamper with the intention of bringing the Malabar church under Rome, and he succeeded. The Church of Malabar was under the Roman supremacy for almost 54 years.

By this time, they tried to get a Bishop from one of the Eastern churches to lead the church from this torpid state of affairs. But the efforts proved to be futile, they decided to declare independence and shook off the Roman supremacy with the 'Oath of Coonen Cross' in A.D. 1653. Thus, the Malabar Church regained the lost independence and purity in the faith and practices of the church. Some people remained in the Roman Catholic Church while others stayed with the Malabar Church.

Later in the nineteenth century, there developed close relations with the London missionary society (LMS). Though the relationship was broken at some point in



history, a nucleus of people in the church longed for reformation within the church in the light of the Gospel which was transmitted through the missionaries of LMS. Abraham Malpan and Kaithayil GeeVarughese Malpan pioneered the reform movement in the Malabar Church. The most prominent elements in the Reformation were:

1. **Return to the gospel message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ;**
2. **Cleansing of wrong ways of life;**
3. **Taking up responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to others; and**
4. **All importance be given to the primacy of the Word of God.**

(Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, *'The Mar Thoma Church Heritage and Mission'*, p.18)

The reformation moment was returned to the purity of the life and practice of the early church. The liturgy was translated in Malayalam and many progressive thoughts flourished in the church in the light of the gospel.

Unfortunately, the then leadership of the church was against reformation. Hence, the pro-reform groups were engaged in prolonged court litigation which eventually led to a division, where the reformists suffered great loss with respect to material possessions. Besides the importance of the Word of God, the reforming spirit is the guiding force of the existing Mar Thoma Church. We have to keep the reforming spirit lit with the light of the gospel. The ethos of the Mar Thoma Church can be summarized as follows.

Eastern:

The eastern character of our Church is very much linked with the liturgical pattern we uphold in the life of the Church. Liturgy communicates the doctrine of the Church. The very nature of liturgy is to commemorate the love of God. Liturgy builds a community of faith. The liturgy offers the community of faith a theological identity and enables this community, historical importance with its roots. The Eastern Church reveres all life and considers all life as sacred. The Eastern ethos compels us to lead a sacramental life for the glory of God. A close observation of the liturgy of our Church will provide profound insights into its Eastern nature.

Episcopal:

The hierarchical order of the Church is traditionally three-fold—deacon, presbyter, and episcopo. But we go a step further and forward to incorporate the participation of laity. Laity plays a vital force in the life and witness of our Church. The symbols and office attached to episcopacy reminds us of the continuation of the apostolic heritage of the Church as well as its independent nature—this Church does not owe allegiance to any foreign hierarchical order. Thus our Church is unique in its function. It is equally important to note that our Church has a strong constitution for the smooth functioning that provides discipline.

Evangelical:

The evangelical zeal of the Mar Thoma Church is derived from her emphasis on the Holy Bible. We believe that salvation is the gift of God, appropriated by faith in Jesus Christ. It challenges all believers to a holy living. The gospel message received through the CMS missionaries reverberates in the life of the Church in the fact that it takes responsibility for the well being of society at large in various ways. The evangelical emphasis equipped the Church to start missionary movements inside and outside India. The Mexican mission and the Native American mission are latest examples of our missionary character. The Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelistic Association exhorts all the members of our Church to be witnesses for the Lord in all walks of life, which is a unique insight proposed by the late Metropolitan Abraham Mar Thoma.

Ecumenical:

The evangelical and reformed doctrines along with ancient forms of worship and practice make the Church unique in many ways. As the late Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma rightly pointed out, this unique nature enables the Mar Thoma Church to work as a bridge church in the ecumenical body. Therefore the Mar Thoma Church becomes a dialogical partner in the ecumenical arena. The full communion relationship with the CSI, CNI, and the Anglican churches is an explicit expression of this nature. More dialogue with other churches is ongoing to foster similar relationship with other churches. ■

Reference Books:

1. **Christianity in India and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Church**, Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan
2. **The Mar Thoma Church Heritage and Mission**, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan
3. **Pathapeedathinkal** (Malayalam), The Episcopal Jubilee Institute

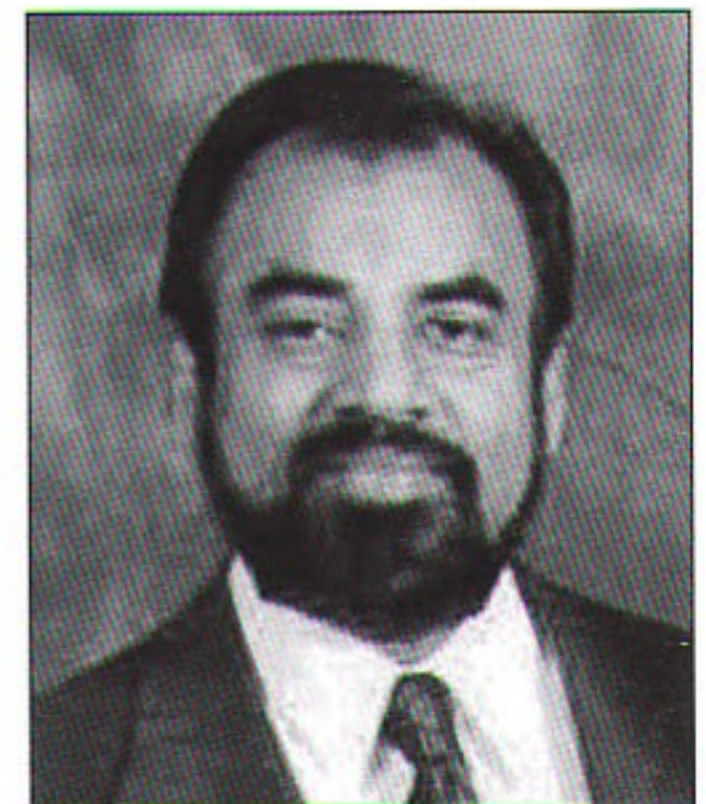
This Study series relating to the origin, faith and practices of Mar Thoma Church is prepared by Rev. Ninu Chandy (Youth Chaplain in Dallas region). Achen is a native of Venmony, Chengannur and his mother parish is Venmony Sehion MTC. Achen graduated from Mar Thoma Vaideeka Seminary at Kottayam in 1995, and was ordained in 1995. Achen did his Masters degree in Theology from Princeton University, Princeton, NJ in 2005. Achen has married Lekha, who is the daughter of Rev. Kurian Thomas Jr. They have a daughter named Leya.

The Frame work

Elias Abraham, Baltimore, Maryland

*The sun rose and the sky shone.
The ultimate divine intent breaks into view.
This day of pure light and radiance proclaims
In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.
While the waves, one after the other
Smiling and swimming come and bow,
The shore tastes the eternal love.*

*It's jubilee of freedom won, when every family rejoices,
And, in Lord, becomes one, the rainbow colors,
Through life's prism spreading beauty's rays.*



*Spring sprouts its wings the floral bed is ready,
Heaven and earth for His glory
Sing the songs of perennial Love,
And, of Who here and hereafter
The whole family is named.*

Thru the land of Milk and Honey...

Rev. Issac P Johnson

“Welcome to my Diocese and the Youth Ministry” – the words we heard from our respected Coorilos Thirumeni during the first week of September 2002 were more like a Divine invitation for us to join the ministry among the youths of this Diocese.

Planted by Zacharias Thirumeni, nurtured by Coorilos Thirumeni, with the active support and cooperation of so many ordained as well as lay leaders of this Diocese, above all by His grace, the ministry among the youth grew significantly. I and Sherly accepted the Chaplaincy as a challenge, a rare privilege and an honor and landed in NY on 3 May 2003 to be part of this great ministry in the Diocese.

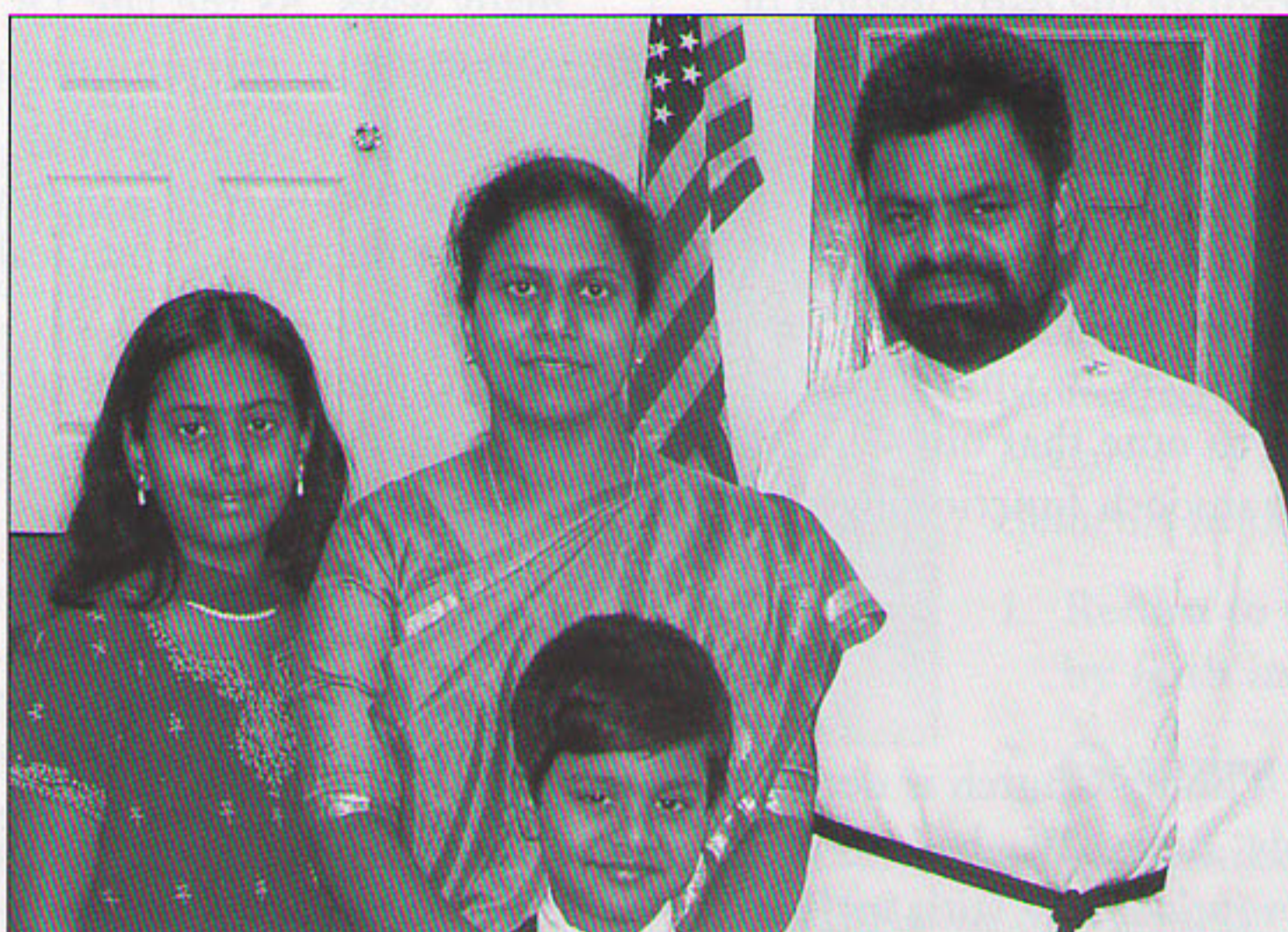
The regional Committee consisting of Achens, Trustees and Secretaries of the Youth Fellowship (YF) of all the parishes in the South East Region decided to rent a house, buy a car and set up an office at 10239 Jeanes Street, PA, 19116.

There are nine parishes in four eastern states: four in Pennsylvania (PA), three in New Jersey (NJ), and one each in Maryland (MD) and District of Columbia (DC).

Activities

Parish level: A schedule of visits were prepared and sent to the offices of the Vicar, Secretary of the parish and Secretary of YF so that they could organize weekend meetings accordingly. Parishes were visited once in two months and YF meetings were conducted once a month in most of the parishes. The Chaplain led Bible studies and discussions on topics related to church history, worship and tradition, sacraments, personality development, and guiding our youth to grow into the fullness of Christ. The effective counseling sessions enabled a good number of our youth to face reality and various challenges of life with a confident heart.

Regional level: Regular meetings were organized at the regional level. Two major events hosted by the region such as the one-day conferences are held during spring and fall every year. A regional committee was formed for a term of three years, representing all YFs to plan and coordinate the various programs for the year.



Diocesan level: The Youth Chaplain helps or leads to organize diocese level conferences such as the Leadership Conference in January and the Youth Conference during July-August every year. It was a wonderful experience to be a Diocesan Council member from 2003 and as its Vice President until April 06.

Campus Ministry: Many of the youth members of various parishes of South East and North East regions

study in various colleges and universities in PA and NJ. The Chaplain met these youths on campus. We spent time with them for their personal growth, emotional stability and spiritual nourishment. These sessions help them share the stress and struggle they experience.

On-line sessions: In addition to the above, this office was accessible to the youth regularly through the internet. Youth came on-line and discussed various personal, academic, social, cultural, ethical, moral and value concerns. Burning issues such as broken relationships, lack of communication in the family, hypocritical attitude of church members, different faces of people, feeling of being ignored, etc. were discussed.

I am thankful to God that those long hours of discussion with so many youth across the Diocese made a great impact in their lives.

The things that we as a Family stood for ...

As one youth mentioned rightly, our family considered the youth ministry as TEAM WORK. Sherly knew all the youths personally, sometimes even more than I, always welcoming them to our home with a sweet smile and home-made food. For a good number of them she was and is a source of inspiration. Nita and Abel would probably be the most traveled kids among the Achens' families as most of their weekends were spent moving with us from place to place.

We believe ...

The Chaplain is a bridge between two generations, especially between the church and youth who can mend broken relationships between individuals, between

individuals and families and between individuals and God. We extend maximum support to parishes in its various activities.

We identify individuals who would grow to become strong members of our church in the future.

Suggestions ...

While expressing sincere thanks for the support we received from the Diocesan Office, our Aghens, Office bearers and members of all the parishes and Youth Fellowships, let me put forward a few things for which I stood ever since this office was established in the South East region.

- a. Every parish should identify and maintain a register of members between the ages of 15 and 35, copies of which should be given to the Chaplain's as well as the Diocesan Offices.
- b. Awareness of chaplaincy as an ongoing special ministry rather than a parallel one with the existing ministry is the need of the hour.
- c. A conscious effort should be made by which more and more individuals who go through tough times are

introduced to the Chaplain's office for more interaction and proper guidance.

- d. In order to develop closeness within the parish as an extended family, it is always better to worship together irrespective of language used. A Sunday school student who is not familiar with Malayalam service for 10 years finds it difficult to attend it after he or she turns 15. The parents and older generation should decide to conduct Sunday school before or after the Holy-communion service so that it forms an integral part of their worship life.
- e. It is always advisable to hold Youth Fellowship meetings on a weekday rather than on Sundays after the service. This would give the youths enough time to interact with each other and devote more time for learning.
- f. All the YFs of our Diocese should register with the Diocesan office which would help to monitor the activity of each local unit and plan various programs to include those youth who cannot attend the meetings regularly. ■

Josiah: "One in the Family! Young in the Family!" What Can We Learn From Him?

Alex Thomas, New Jersey Mar Thoma Church

"He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father" (2 Kings 23: 25). Josiah was the youngest king to ever reign in Judah. Seated on the throne at the tender age of eight, he began to seek God only eight years later, when he truly became intellectually (and not to mention physically) fit to rule the kingdom. A strong advocate for God, Josiah would go to the pagan temples and destroy idols dedicated to the likes of Baal, and made sure the temple was restored and God was again worshiped throughout the land (2 Kings 22 & 23). In fact, many Bible scholars say that Josiah was just as loyal to God as his ancestor, David.

Josiah acted in the name of the Lord at a young age. I am a year older than he was when he started to really worship God. Yet as a 17 year old, I have not done much for God (until recently) other than going to church every Sunday, and praying every night with my family. Truth be told, most of my prayers are just repetitions of the standard "I love you God, help me in school," and rarely if ever, do my prayers truly mean something. Shamefully, in most instances, prayer time was to me, another waste of my time. Despite all the knowledge I may possess about Christianity and despite my continuous reaffirmations of my faith during church retreats, God was just another part of my schedule.

After reading how Josiah changed his people's attitude and remained firm in his faith and after seeing blessings bestowed upon those who take their faith in God seriously, my neglect of God is beginning to change.

As the youth of the Mar Thoma Church we must truly search within ourselves and find God. Most people go to church for show, or because it is a weekly routine instilled in them, not out of genuine love and fear of God. Recent events in my life (such as everyday teenage angst) have led me to reevaluate myself as a Christian. Much like Josiah, I now find myself jumping to protecting God's name. Though I do not condemn my friends for being Hindus, Jews, or Muslims, I do hint at Jesus' boundless compassion, and I also try to behave in a way pleasing to God.

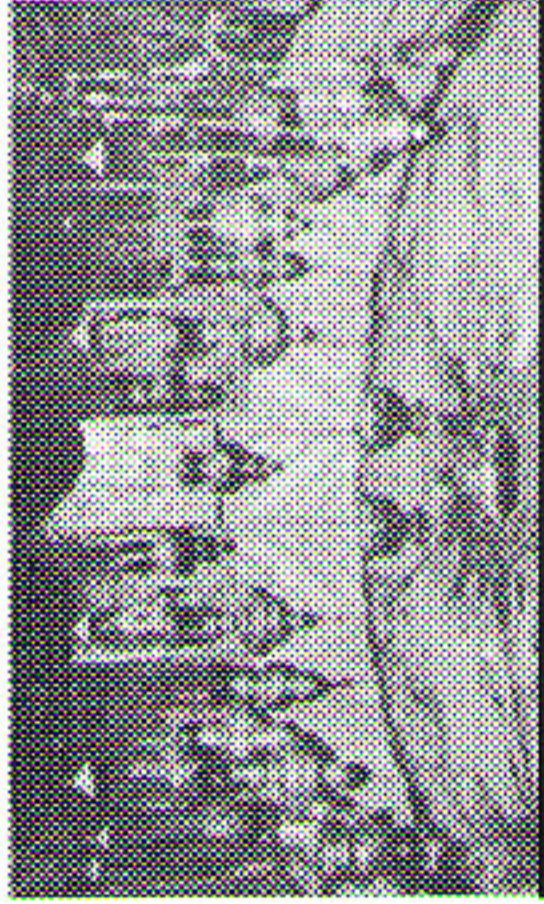
Like Josiah, we must stand firm in our faith. It is written that the Passover celebration during King Josiah's time was celebrated with greater zeal than had been since Samuel's day. Moreover, he was greatly loved by his people. When we are baptized as infants, we do not have the mental maturity to truly accept Jesus. It is at this time in our lives that we youth must make the choice for ourselves: the choice of accepting Jesus. I hope that all Marthomites who truly love Jesus will begin to stand up for Christ, and show through actions what it means to be a Christian. ■

TO India VIA Israel

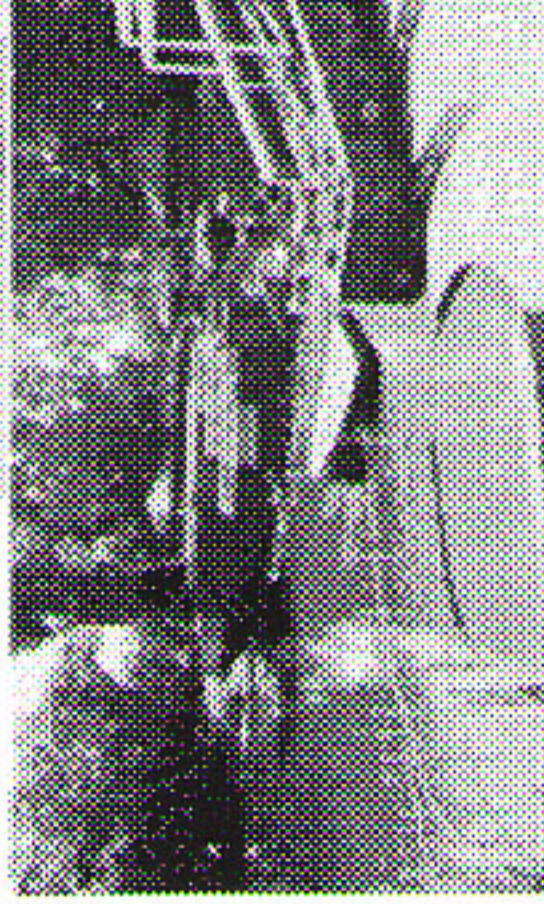


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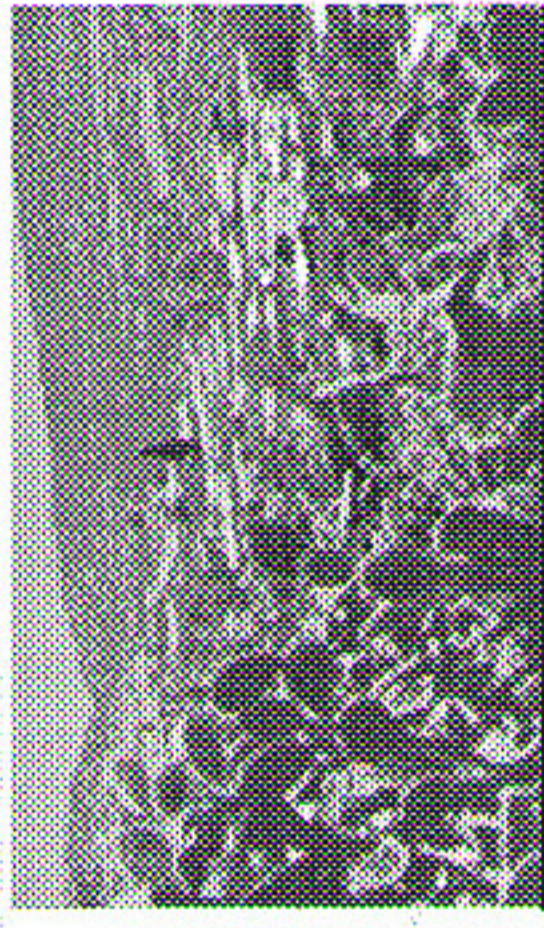
WALK IN HIS FOOTSTEPS
2000 Years later



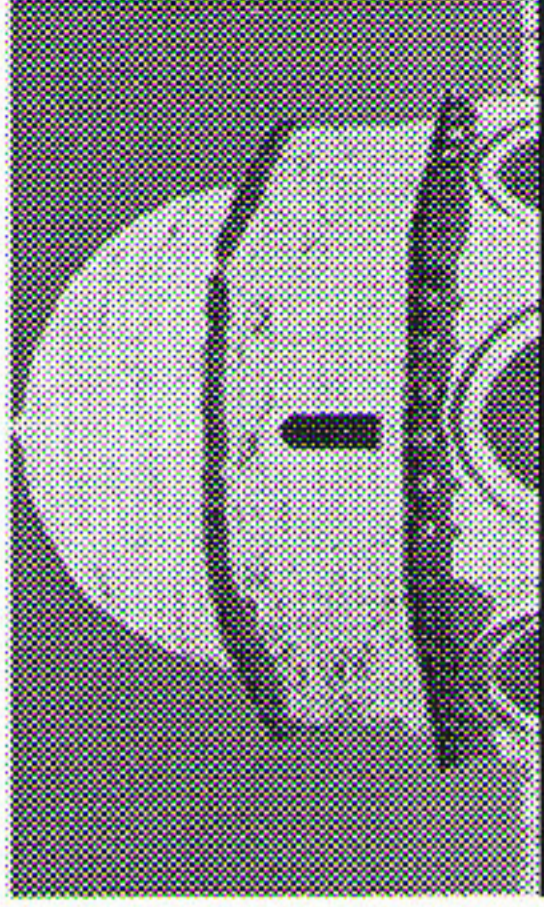
She gave birth... no place for them in the inn. *Lk: 2:7*



...and was baptized by John in the Jordan *Mark 1:9*



And Jesus went about all Galilee... Kingdom *Mat 4:23*



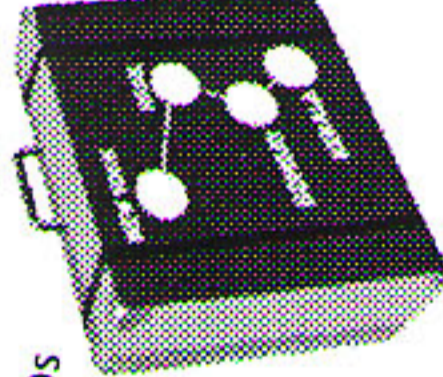
... and a cloud took him out of their sight" *Luke 24:51*

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SHILPI STUDIOS

The Great Passion Play

Eureka Springs, Arkansas

Aswathi Varughese, St. Thomas MarThoma Church of Chicago

Nestled in the heart of the Ozark Mountains is a tiny little town called Eureka Springs. Sapphire lakes adorn the green clad mountains. Deer graze at the forest edge and iridescent gill swim lazily in the summer sun. Situated eight miles from the southern Missouri border on Leatherwood Creek, a branch of the White river, this isolated area in the Northwest Arkansas Ozark Mountains has become one of the more popular health centers in the United States. Visitors were attracted by the number of mineral water springs, believed to have therapeutic value for many of the prevalent diseases.

Today, this little town offers to the world "The Great Passion Play of Christ". On August 2, 2003 I was blessed with the opportunity to see this absolutely incredible performance!

The play was first performed on July 15, 1968. Thirty-five years later, by July 2003 the play had drawn over 7 million visitors! What a great testimony to Christianity!

To give the reader an idea of the play...the actual play employs a cast of about 250 actors. The selection process begins in March every year. Two actors are chosen to portray Jesus. These actors are selected based not only on their acting ability but their character as well. In addition, there are sheep, donkeys, camels, doves and horses. The buildings constructed to stage the play are designed to portray the city of Jerusalem, especially the Temple. The buildings were originally constructed in 1968 but have been remodeled since. The detail captured is truly unimaginable! The play is performed every year from the last Friday in April through the last Friday in October, during the late evening hours. The actual performance takes place in the center of an enormous outdoor amphitheatre that has a seating capacity of 4100. The wooded hills provide the perfect backdrop as the viewer is transported back through time to witness the ultimate sacrifice for humanity.

As dusk spreads her shimmering veil, the city of Jerusalem comes to life. The compassionate voice of Jesus teaches his disciples the Way of Life. Little children flock to him and he has time for each one of them. Pilate and Caiaphas, resplendent in their silken robes mock and jeer.

Dancers with cymbals play on the streets. The guards on horseback control the multitude of followers waving palm leaves and singing "Hosanna" during Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Doves soar to freedom as their cages are overturned in the temple, which was 'turned into a den of thieves'. Peter, who loves Jesus dearly, denies him thrice. And of course there is the betrayer, Judas Iscariot.

Until witnessing this play, Judas Iscariot was a person that I personally considered to be on par with Brutus of Julius Caesar fame. Today I have a different perception of a man torn by his desire for wealth, willing to compromise yet not wanting to harm, much less be the cause of Jesus' crucifixion. Don't we all face those same questions today? Do we compromise and if yes, to what extent? Judas Iscariot believed what he wanted to believe that the 'elders' would only 'question' or 'debate' with Jesus. Despite all indications to the contrary, Judas trusted them and when Jesus was captured Judas was a desperate man. Willing to face the consequences, he approached the haughty priests and humbled himself asking for Jesus' release. Too late! Unwilling to witness the crucifixion that he had played such a vital role, Judas unties his girdle and with the haunting cry of a doomed man, he runs to the hills to hang himself.

The crucifixion of our Lord is brought vividly and poignantly to life. The immeasurable sadness and pain as Jesus is flogged. The cruel whip hissing through the air inflicting excruciating pain. The crown of thorns and the sharp nails driven into the palms of his hands and the painful spear thrust into his side. For us! A crowd 2000 strong is hushed into silence and teardrops glisten as people watch in reverence.

And then the moment of glory...OUR LORD LIVES! The massive rock is rolled away; Jesus radiant and glorious arises from the tomb! The silent crowd ecstatically applauds and the dark hills reverberate with the joyous truth "CHRIST HAS RISEN"!!!

Yes! Our Lord lives and he gives us hope eternal.

"He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come; see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead" (Matthew 28:6). ■

The Body, the Temple of God

George Abraham, MD, MPH, FACP

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? (I Corinthians 6:19)

Good health is partly a blessing and partly a choice. We only need to see someone around us who is afflicted with a chronic or incurable illness to appreciate the blessing of good health. Our ability to maintain good health is determined largely by the lifestyle we adopt.

The age-old adage 'Prevention is better than cure' holds true in this day and age, when we in the US face epidemics of obesity, heart disease, hypercholesterolemia and diabetes mellitus. With the search for increased comfort comes the choice of less and less physical activity and the problems accompanying a sedentary lifestyle.

A. Preventive medicine in children

We all recognize the need for timely vaccine administration to prevent childhood diseases. The Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (www.cdc.gov/nip/acip/) provides updated guidelines for immunization and this is further enforced by school health boards, to help eradicate and control diseases that could become life-long scourges, such as hepatitis B, polio, etc.

Among our children, there is increasing focus on obesity primarily due to the plethora of high-calorie snacks such as cookies, chips and soda. Combined with the propensity of children to come home from school and become 'couch potatoes', there is no expenditure of all the excess calories ingested, leading to its deposition as fat within target organs such as the liver and blood vessels. This leads to the problem of visceral obesity (as opposed to the subcutaneous or superficial obesity seen in Sumo wrestlers), a far more ominous problem in terms of its propensity to lead to 'metabolic syndrome' and premature atherosclerosis (the deposition of fat in blood vessel walls).

Lastly, my dental colleagues would wax eloquent about the benefits of brushing teeth with an electric toothbrush twice daily, as oral health is often underestimated, but can lead to more serious and widespread health problems, if ignored.

B. Preventive medicine in adults

The concept of a normal heart rate and blood pressure being a fixed number is a misconception. We are in an era of 'lower is better', be it the heart rate, blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, or most other parameters. Thus, the lower the heart rate (as in athletes), the more fit one is. Further,



the blood pressure is dependent on the height and weight of the individual, and so is a dynamic number. However, in general, the lower it is the better (in the absence of disease). Obviously, factors such as emotional and physical stress, excessive chronic salt intake and significant alcohol intake are all 'modifiable' risk factors for hypertension.

Probably one of the most common actions that we are all guilty of is compromising sleep in order to accomplish more. The National Sleep Foundation (www.sleepfoundation.org/)

highlights the importance of quantity (at least 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep) and quality of sleep, it being well documented that inadequate sleep leads to health problems such as hypertension, immune suppression, etc.

The importance of physical activity and proper diet, as highlighted in children, is all the more important in adults. We, of Indian descent, are unfortunately handicapped by a poor genetic profile that sets us at high risk for the metabolic syndrome (high fasting blood sugar and triglycerides, waist circumference more than 40" in males and 38" in females, and low HDL cholesterol). A recently developed program by the USDA (www.mypyramid.gov/) is an excellent resource to customize a meal plan that highlights a balanced diet, as well as establishes guidelines for ideal body weight and weight loss. It is not possible to cover all areas of cholesterol guidelines, but these are readily available through the National Cholesterol Education Program (www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cholesterol/index.htm) and are insightful in their content.

It is relevant to put in a word about an annual physical examination. We often ignore the need for preventative care because we are asymptomatic. However, many diseases such as hypertension are called 'silent killers' in that they exhibit no manifestations, unless specifically looked for. Thus, preventive procedures such as gynecological and breast examinations (including mammography), colonoscopy and prostate examinations, are all well-documented in terms of their benefit, when performed at appropriate ages and intervals. While various specialty societies differ in their recommendations, most will agree to the consensus guidelines of the US Preventive Services Task Force (www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm) which make disease-specific recommendations.

Lastly, more grey areas of recommendations revolve around the role of aspirin in prevention of cardiovascular events (more unclear in women), the role of a multivitamin daily, etc. Preventing osteoporosis in women by taking cal-

cium and vitamin D is more relevant, especially in the elderly.

C. A Biblical basis for health

The International Conference on Primary Health Care that convened in Alma Ata, Russia, in 1978 defined health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Thus, 'eating to live rather than living to eat' takes on a new meaning in the light of our discussion above.

Again, mental health is underscored by the fact that we all recognize emotional ill-health as being a strong temptation to resort to alcoholism or substance abuse. Paul sums it up best in Ephesians 5:18: "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." John states the same in 3 John 1: 2, "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."

Spiritual health is essential in this day and age when we are constantly faced with challenges, be it in the workplace,

the home or elsewhere. Psalm 119:9-10 goes, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands." A personal favorite for many of us is Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will."

In summary, health is not only a blessing, but a choice. As the Bible teaches us, our bodies are the temple of God. Does it not behoove us to maintain that body as best as we can so that it might be an appropriate place of residence for Him? ■

The author is Director of Ambulatory Care and Preventive Medicine at Saint Vincent Hospital, Worcester, MA, and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. This paper was presented in part at the Diocesan Clergy Conference on March 23, 2006 at New York.

Love and Grace at Its Best

N. M. Philip, Chicago

*At Calvary, I see a 'man' hanging on the Cross,
His hands and feet nailed tight to the wood.
A crown of vicious thorns resting on His head,
While tossing and turning with agony and pain.
While groaning with torment, the 'man' is glancing
Softly and gently on the multitudes around Him.
With an eye of compassion, caring and comforting,
Even praying for those who inflict excruciating pain.
Look at the men and women standing around Him,
Some are cursing, kicking, spitting and dancing,
Many are wandering petrified and trembling with fear.
And a few are mourning at the unbearable sight!
See the other two crosses on both of His sides,
Hanging there with Him are two known criminals.
As the man on the left is cursing with contempt,
The one on the right is weeping with remorse.
As the end is near, the body gets weary and weaker,
He lifts up his head to draw strength from heavens.
Not pleading with any one to spare His pain or life,*



*He treats His trials as God's mission for mankind.
Who is this 'man' whose withering face glows,
With a divine grace, while agonizing in intense pain?
They mock him 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of Jews',
As He is consoling, despite His tormenting pain.
Realize that He took my place on the Cross,
The only sinless one as a ransom for my sins.
He became 'guilty' to blot out my guilt, and that's
The manifestation of love and grace at its best!*

The Largest Mar Thoma Church in USA: Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia New Church Consecration

March 11, 2006 marked another milestone for the North American Diocese when the largest Mar Thoma Church in USA was dedicated to the glory of God for the proclamation of the Word of God and the administration of sacraments. The new church has a 1000 plus seating capacity, a very spacious madhbaha, a separate nursery, an office complex, a spacious foyer, a kitchen and all other utilities. Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan led the dedication service in the presence of Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa and several achenes. The dedication was witnessed by about 1500 people from several Mar Thoma and other Malayalee church parishes on the eastern coast of USA. Several distinguished guests from various walks of life also attended the dedication service.

The service began with the traditional circumambulation around the new building. The



style wooden ceiling, latest sound system, and mega-sized mechanized curtain, gives an awesome aesthetic look to the new building. The quiet and green landscape with sufficient car parking for more than 200 cars is definitely an added convenience. The facility is planned to be used for the ecclesiastical needs of all worshipping community in and around Philadelphia.

The parish donated \$4000 for the missionary work of Karnataka Navajeevana Samithi (KNS) in Chennai-Bangalore Diocese. The check was handed to Dr. Abraham C. Thomas, General Director of KNS.

Rev. A. C. Kurian serves as the present parish priest. Mr. John Mathew serves as the building committee convener. Mr. C. S. Mathew serves as the trustee and Mr. John Varghese serves as the secretary. Rev. Oommen Philip, Rev. Dr. V. S. Varghese, Rev. Dr. P. T. Jacob and Rev. Alexander Thomas were the former vicars. ■

Rev. A. C. Kurian, Vicar



Malayalam choir led the singing and the whole congregation joined the procession. In the public meeting that followed several political, social and ecclesiastical leaders congratulated the congregation on its enviable achievement in the short span of eight years since its inception in 1998.

The foundation stone was blessed by the Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos on April 10, 2005. The total cost of the construction was around 2.2 million dollars. Some of the funds were contributed by parish members and well wishers. The remaining finance was mortgaged by a local bank for 30 years.

The new church building, which occupies about 10500 sq. ft and another 4000 sq. ft area in utilities, is an asset to the whole community. The sanctuary, with large solid wooden pews, custom-made lights, cathedral



Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Church Members: Happy Owners of a New Church Facility

George Samuel, Secretary



After more than three years of hard work, sincere prayers and help from sister parishes and others, the long time dream of Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Church members came true on January 5th. The parish acquired a church facility in Northglenn, Colorado. The facility is 1.39 acres with a sanctuary seating about 100 people, 2 conference rooms, office, 3 classrooms and a fellowship hall.

The parish started with 12 families in 1997. Currently our parish has 22 active families. We have been conducting our worship services, youth group session, Sunday school etc. at a rented facility for about 8 years. Currently we have Holy Communion service once a month led by Rev. V.J. Mathew and divine service in English and Malayalam on alternate Sundays.

It is our goal to use the new church facilities to enhance our relationship with God and provide opportunities for the next generation to prepare themselves as they begin to face their life as strong Christians in this country. Also the members of the parish strongly believe in witnessing in the local community through outreach programs.

As a part of the fund raising campaign, to engage with increase awareness in our community about the Mar Thoma Church, we recently conducted a musical concert in Denver. A 50 member local choir, Jubilate! Sacred Singers performed

at this event. The choir director David Harris and his team put in more than 12 weeks of effort practicing and learning Malayalam songs. The solo song performed by Sara George accompanied by Indian musical instruments thrilled the audience. Sunil Daniel welcomed all the attendees and George Samuel made a presentation about the history of Mar Thoma Church and activities of the church. Rev. Jojan M. John and family were present during the event. The event was conducted at Central Presbyterian Church, Denver and was attended by more than 600 people from local churches. It was certainly an interesting opportunity for the audience to learn about our church history and activities. We hope this will be a new beginning for us to extend our opportunities for service to the local community.

The members of the church would like to thank once again each and everyone who contributed towards the success of our church building project. Our members were able to visit some sister parishes for fund raising. We received hearty welcome and generous donations from all the churches we visited. We would like to thank our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Vicar Rev. V. J. Mathew for their support and encouragement towards the church building project. The dedication of the church is scheduled for July 29th, 2006. ■

PERFECT 37 TOURS AND PILGRIMAGE

Unique and Exclusive Cruise – November 2, 2006

Paul's 2nd and 3rd Missionary Journey

10 Educational Days to Greece, Italy and Turkey

Day 1 and 2 Departure and Arrival in Venice: Your pilgrimage begins as you depart the USA and arrive in Italy. You'll be met by our representative and transferred to your ship in the port of Venice for dinner and overnight.

Day 3 At Sea: Today will be a full day at sea. Biblical lectures and plenty of other onboard activities will set the tone for the day. There is an indoor pool and health club, great beauty salon, and plenty of deck space to just sit and watch the beautiful Adriatic sea that glides beneath you.

Day 4 Corinth: This morning we dock in Patras, Greece, and travel to Corinth (Acts 18:1-18), a city that inspired many of Paul's most familiar letters. You will visit the Archaeological Museum, the Market Place, and Temples. Walk among the ruins and stand on the Bema where Paul stood. Read Paul's letters to the Corinthians and visualize his address to the Gentiles as he began the task of building Corinth's church. Imagine where Aquila and Priscilla lived and where they had their tent making business.

Day 5 Athens: The architectural splendors of the ancient city of Athens are as magical as ever. Follow your guide on a journey to the ancient Acropolis where you will see the Propylaea, the Parthenon and the Erechtheum. View Mars Hill where Paul preached the gospel to the intellectual Athenian community of his day (Acts 17:15-34). View the ruins of the Agora, ancient market place and center of Athenian public life, where Paul preached to the skeptical Athenians. You will view the Olympic Stadium, where the modern Olympics began and where the games returned in 2004.

Day 6 Thessaloniki and Kavala: The New Testament books of Thessalonians are Paul's correspondence with the people of this church. In Thessalonika, visit St. George's Basilica, traditionally believed to be built over the synagogue where Paul preached. View the Old City Ramparts, and the Galerius Arch that rises over the Via Egnatia. Walk to the monastery built over the sight of Jason's House. This afternoon we visit Neopolis (Kavalla), one of Greece's most picturesque mainland ports. Paul landed here with his disciples, Timothy and Silas. You will see the Roman Aqueduct and Acropolis. In Philippi, Paul was moved to preach his first evangelical sermon in Europe to women who had gathered at the river. Among them was Lydia, a cloth merchant, who became the first Christian to be baptized on European soil. Visit the place where this event is remembered and see a crypt dating from the Roman period, which is thought to have served as a prison for St. Paul. You'll also see the famous Acropolis, the Market Place, Basilica and the Theater. Reboard the ship for dinner and overnight. Sail for Dikili.

Day 7 Dikili and Pergamum: Disembark at the port of Dikili and travel to Pergamum. Christianity reached Pergamum very early and the church was addressed by John the Revelator (Rev. 2:12-17) as one of the Seven Churches. The inhabitants of the city were condemned for their doctrines (Rev. 2:14-15) and those who overcame were promised a "white stone" and a "new name" (Rev. 2:17). The first Christian to die at the hands of a Roman state, Antipas, was put to death in Pergamum. As you enter the Royal Gates, you'll see the Temples of Athena and Trajan. You'll explore the Grand Theater, the Gymnasium and Health Center. You'll also view Pergamum's famous Library.

Day 8 Ephesus: Today you will journey to Ephesus, where Paul spent three years of his ministry. It was to this community that Paul may have written his Epistle to Ephesians. You will visit the ancient Agora and imagine where Demetrius, the silversmith, sold his silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. You will enter the Great Theater and have a communion service in the place where Paul witnessed faithful for Christ. During the night, the ship will set sail for Patmos.

Day 9 Patmos and Athens: When you awake, you will be docked in the harbor of the Island of Patmos. Disembark after breakfast for a field trip on the island. No record indicates that Paul ever visited Patmos. Visit the Monastery of St. John, high on the mountain overlooking the entire island. Visit the Grotto of the Apocalypse where the exiled Apostle John lived and wrote the Book of Revelation and other correspondence to the early church. During the night, the ship will return to the Port of Piraeus in Athens.

Day 10 Disembark and Return Home or Begin Post Tour: After an early breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for your international flight. You will return home with new images and new appreciation for the life and teachings of Paul and John.

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| 6. Premium Oceanview Cabin, 2 lower beds – avg. 142 sq. ft. | \$2998* |
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PERFECT 37 TOURS AND PILGRIMAGE

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LIVING HOME

"Yesterday is already a dream and tomorrow is only a vision; but today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope."

(Translated from Sanskrit)

HOME & GARDENING TIPS

BY MRS. SHIRLEY CHACKALAMANNIL, NEW JERSEY

Rose—The Queen of Flowers

Even before Roman times, gardeners and poets revered the rose as the Queen of flowering plants for the exquisite beauty of its blooms. Roses come in a variety of colors, shapes and scents. There is almost no other plant that is as varied and versatile as the rose in its growth habitat, height, foliage and form. They are adaptable plants and can grow well in almost all parts of the world. Even though roses are most vigorous in warm climates, they survive well in sub tropical and cold climates with good care and attention.

Choosing Roses

Many different cultivars of roses are available, so selecting one that is appropriate for your taste and need can be bewildering. Based on the duration and frequency of blooms and the appearance of the size and shape of the plant, we could divide them into four major groups: (1) Bush Roses, (2) Climbing Roses, (3) Shrub Roses, and, (4) Ground Covers.

Bush Roses: Of the four different groups of roses, the most commonly used are Bush Roses. There are four different categories of **Bush Roses: Hybrid tea Rose, Grandiflora, Floribunda and Miniature Roses.** *Hybrid Tea Rose:* They have upright growth and feature attractive buds, and large flowers carried one to a stem. These flowers have long stems and are strong enough to use for fresh flower arrangements. In general, they grow about two and a half to five feet tall. So if you are interested in cut flowers for flower arrangement these hybrid tea roses are the best. *Grandiflora:* These are vigorous plants that grow very tall and provide masses of color and the flowers on individual stems are similar to those on hybrid tea rose. In general, grandiflora roses are well suited as background plants since most of them bloom only once a year, usually in May-June. *Floribunda:* They are the most popular class of rose around the world because of their profuse blooming and little need for care. If you are interested in having rose flowers garden at all times (May to September where there is winter), this one is for you. They never get tired of flowering. Flowers bloom in clusters and they are abundant in number. These are not very good for flower arrangement since the flowers are smaller and their stems are not strong enough to hold the flowers in the upright position. *Miniature Roses:* These are the tiny counterparts of Hybrid Teas and Floribundas. They are compact, well-branched with dense growth, floriferous and often more hardy than their larger counterparts.

Climbing Roses: Climbing Roses produce long and supple stems that need support such as fences, arbors, buildings or any kind of firm structure. Since they do not have tendrils or any means of attaching themselves to the support structure, they must be fastened to their support. Many of these roses bloom once in a year.

Shrub Roses: These are less formal plants coming in a wide range of shapes and sizes and forms. They include both upright, free standing bushes and also prostrate ones that trail along as ground covers. They mostly bloom only once a year.

Ground covers: Low growing, trailing or spreading roses belong to this group. There are spring-blooming and ever-blooming varieties in this group.

Rose Planting and Care*

Preferred times for planting**

Pacific Northwest	February, March
Pacific seaboard	January, February
Southwest	Late December, January
South Central	Late January, February
Mid-South	February, March
Subtropical	December, January
North Central	April, Early May
Eastern Seaboard	March, Early April
Northeast	April, Early May

Location

Roses love light, air circulation and warmth. The best places are sunny and open areas. The soil should be rich in humus, well drained with pH neutral to slightly alkaline. They do not like standing water. Acidic and sandy soils are not suitable for roses. It is very important that you turn the soil completely at least to the depth of two spades if you are planting roses where there were roses before.

Care in spring and summer

When the first new leaf growth is visible in spring, the soil around the roots should be loosened. Then put a complete fertilizer (1 3/4 oz per square yard or 50 grams per square meter) or organic fertilizer (cow manure, compost, etc.). It is better to fertilize newly planted roses with organic fertilizer in the first year. When watering, avoid getting the leaves wet in order to avoid the spreading of fungus spores. After the first flowering, fertilize a second time, until the middle of July. In order to stimulate repeated blooming, cut off the dead flowers at once.

Fall Care and Winterizing

In cold areas, before the onset of hard frost, mount soil around the roots of roses up to about 8 inches and cover loosely with evergreen branches. Protect climbing roses with pine twigs. Shrubs and wild roses need not be covered.

Pests and Diseases

Deer is the worst enemy of roses. Rose buds are their delicacies. A see-through wire fence around the plant will keep the deer away. Other than deer, the most troubles a rose can get are from

*Thanks to my friends at the Department of Plant Science Rutgers University, NJ for their expertise in Rose care.

**Information provided by Brooklyn Botanical Garden Record.

(1) **powdery mildew**, (young leaves are more susceptible). The first symptom of the disease is slightly raised, blister-like, red areas on the upper surface of the leaf. (2) **black spot**, (This also appears on the upper surface of the leaf where you see the spots turn yellow and this chlorosis expands throughout the leaf until it drops), and, (3) **rust**, (Nine species of rust fungus are found on roses). It appears on leaves and other green parts of the plant as powdery orange pustules or blisters usually on the lower surfaces. As the pustules develop, they become visible on the upper leaf surface as orange or brown spots).

All of the above diseases are combated with fungicides that are available in most garden centers. A non-toxic insecticide like Safer's insecticidal Soap is helpful against aphids and leaf hoppers. If you see scales (another pest) on the roses, use Isotox or orthonex. Pruning the infected shoots at the end of the season will help prevent the fungus from over-wintering. Raking and destroying the fallen infected leaves around the plant at the end of the season also inhibit the over-wintering of the fungal spores.

Proper Pruning

The purpose of pruning roses is to speed up the natural process of new vigorous, disease free shoots developing to replace the old, weakened ones and to produce an attractive shape with optimum display of blooms. The severity of pruning depends on the type of rose. However, certain principles of pruning apply to all roses. Always make a clean, angled cut above the shoot bud (not flower bud) where new shoots will be emerging. A pair of sharp, high quality pruners is essential. A fine-toothed pruning saw is also helpful for removing woody stumps. Always remove dead and dying shoots even if it means pruning almost to the ground level. Prune weak leggy stems so that the plant can concentrate all its energy on the more vigorous shoots; it also allows good air circulation that could help prevent diseases. Applying wound paint to large cuts after the pruning is recommended for modern hybrids to prevent the entry of disease spores or pith boring insects.

The proper time for pruning is when they are dormant or semi dormant, that is between leaf drop in the fall and when the new growth are just beginning to appear in the spring. In areas where climate is warm, the rose blooms continuously. Prune them in cooler months to induce dormancy and give them an artificial period of rest.

Reading and Resources

Book: *Roses of America*: by Stephen Scanniello and Tania Bayard 1990. *A comprehensive look at roses in America; lots of practical tips on growing roses.*

Nursery: *Jackson & Perkins Company*. One of the most popular and dependable breeders and providers of Roses in America. Free catalogues are available upon request.

Email: jacksonandperkins.com

Address: Jackson & Perkins Company
1 Rose Lane
Medford, Oregon 97501

Dried Flower Arrangement (Continuation from the last issue)

Mechanics

The age old way of creating a floral display is just placing flowers in a vase or jug of water, but for almost all modern day arrangements, it is necessary to use materials which keep the foliage and flowers in place within the container. These materials along with its associated aids are known as **Mechanics**. They must be fixed securely and should be hidden from view as

well. Not all of the following items are necessary for one style of arrangement. You could pick and choose what type of materials you prefer in your arrangement.

Floral foam: Usually this is called Oasis. This was invented in the 1940s and has become a leading mechanic for home flower arrangement. There are two types of floral foam. One is green in color and absorbs water and is used for fresh flower arrangement. The Brown or Grey colored one is good for dry and artificial displays. The great advantage of foam is that stems can be held at any angle and in any depth. If you are planning to make a large display then an extra support is needed for the foam. For this purpose you could use chicken wire.

Adhesive Clay: Another name for adhesive clay is "Oasis Fix". It is non-setting sticky clay in strip form which holds dry surfaces together. It is mostly used for securing a frog, pin holder or a candle cup to the container. They are available in green and brown colors.

Adhesive Tape: It is also known as "Oasis Tape". This is a strong sticky tape and is available in both wide and narrow forms. The wide one is good to secure floral foam or chicken wire to the container. You could use a narrow tape stretched across the top of a vase in crisscross fashion to form a grid to hold the stems.

Frog: This is a type of floral foam anchor. It is a disc with four prongs and the base is attached to the container with adhesive clay. The floral foam is pressed down on to the four sharp prongs. For a larger arrangement you need more than one frog.

Chicken wire: Other names used for chicken wire are wire mesh and wire netting. The best one is of a gauge size of 2 inches (5 cm). The usual way of using a wire net is to cut off the edge and roll into a tube, then shape into a ball that fits into the container. This mechanic is preferred for an arrangement of tall and heavy stems.

Glue: In dried flower arrangement, a quick-drying glue is very much needed to attach flowers or leaves to the container especially if you are using flowers without stems. The most convenient way to apply glue is with a glue gun.

Pebbles & Marbles: Pebbles and marbles can be used to hold the stems of cut flowers and it also helps to keep the vase from tipping over when the arrangement is top heavy. This is a method used only in an informal arrangement.

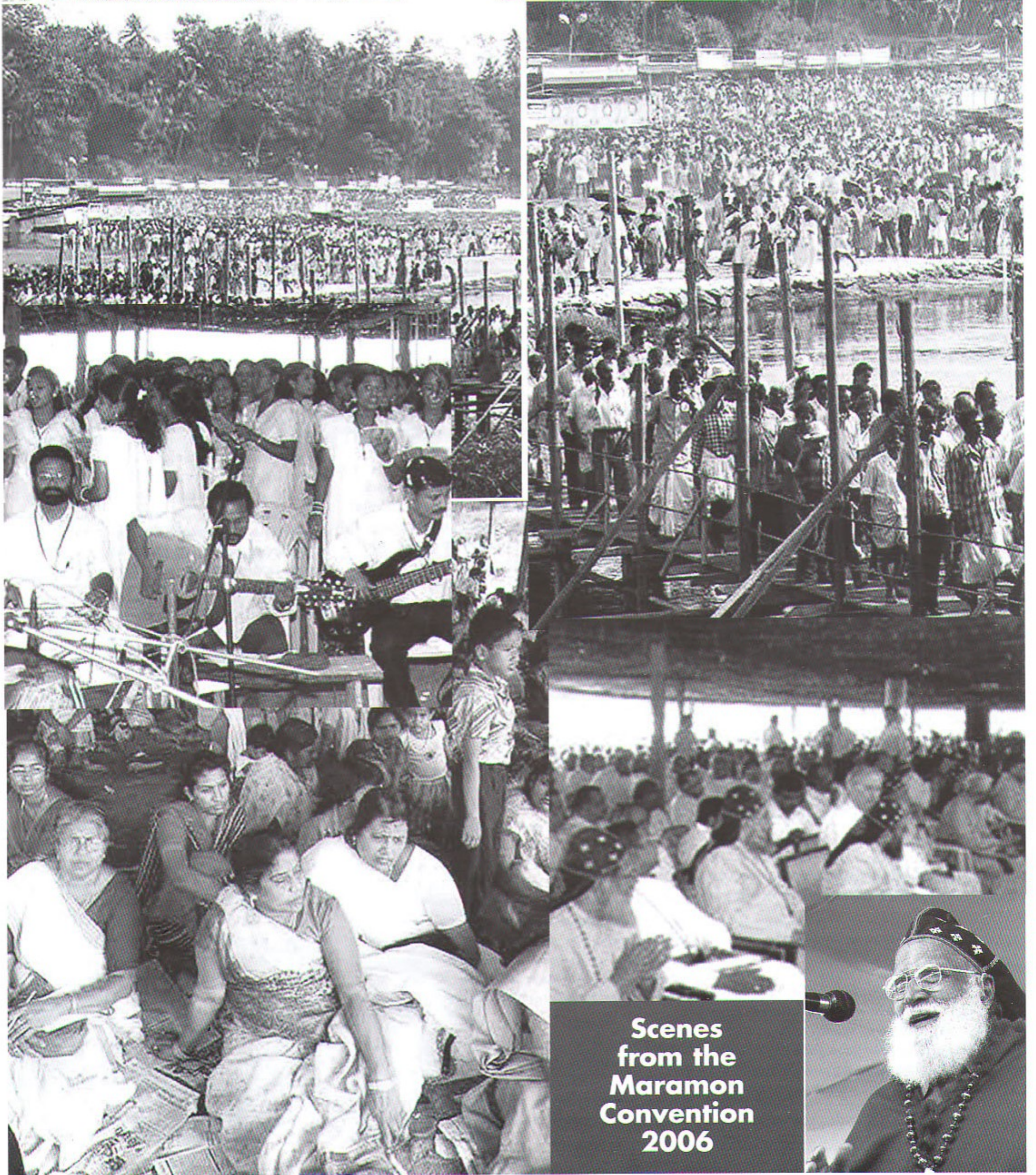
Setting Clay: Other name for setting clay is "Dry Hard". Setting clay is used as a mechanic in permanent dry and artificial flower arrangements. This material sets solid after a few hours and neither the clay nor the plant material is reusable. Plaster of Paris is another option to use in the place of setting clay. This is mostly for commercial use.

Non-setting clay: This is also known as "Stay Soft". This clay is used as the mechanic in artificial and dry flower arrangements where the plant material can be removed and reused at a later date.

Pin-holder: It is a circular or rectangular base with a series of sharp pins that are firmly bound and it is used for holding thick and heavy stems securely in its place. If you are using a shallow vase, a pin-holder can be used by itself. For a larger display in a deeper vase, one should use the pin-holder with other mechanics to hold the heavy flowers or stems in its place.

Methods of Flower Arrangement will be in the next issue of Messenger.

മറ്റൊരുമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ



Scenes from the Maramon Convention 2006

രൂപാന്തരം ഇന്നിന്റെ ആവശ്യം

റവ. ഡോ. മാർട്ടിൻ അൽഫോൻസ്

പരിഭാഷ : റവ. ജോർജ് വർഗീസ്

ക്രിസ്തീയ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാണ് പുതുജീവൻ. ഓരോരുത്തരിലും പുതുജീവൻ നൽകുന്നത് രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ അനുഭവമാണ്. ആത്മീയശൂന്യത പ്രകടമായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ ആവശ്യകത വലുതാണ്. ബ്രസീലിൽ ഇപ്പോൾ നടക്കുന്ന സഭകളുടെ ലോകസമ്മേളനത്തിന്റെ ചിന്താവിഷയം, "ദൈവമേ, തവ കൃപയാൽ അവിടുത്തെ സൃഷ്ടിയെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തണമേ" എന്നാണ്.

രൂപാന്തരത്തെ പൊതു കാഴ്ചപ്പാടില്ലാതെ ക്രിസ്തീയ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടില്ലാതെ മനസ്സിലാക്കേണ്ടത് ആവശ്യമാണ്.

I. രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ സാരാംശം - പൊതു കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ

രൂപാന്തരം എന്ന വാക്കിന് പൊതുവായ അർത്ഥം 'വ്യതിയാനം' അഥവാ 'മാറ്റം' എന്നാണ്. മനുഷ്യന്റെ പ്രവർത്തന മേഖലകളിൽ വ്യതിയാനം സംഭവിച്ച് ഒരു കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ നിന്നും മറ്റൊന്ന് സ്വീകരിക്കുന്നു. ജീവിതാനുഭവങ്ങളിലെ മാറ്റങ്ങളിൽ ചിലത് ക്രിയാത്മകവും മറ്റ് ചിലത് നിഷേധാത്മകവുമാണ്. എല്ലാവരിലും ഉള്ളവകുന്നതാണ് പൊതുവായത്.

ശാരീരിക രൂപാന്തരം - വളർച്ചയുടെ വിവിധ ഘട്ടങ്ങളിൽ സംഭവിക്കുന്നു. വളർച്ച, ആരോഗ്യം ഇവ ക്രിയാത്മകതയിലേക്കും അവയിൽ നിന്നും അനാരോഗ്യം, തളർച്ച ഇവ നിഷേധാത്മകവുമായ വ്യതിയാനമാണ്. തളർച്ചയിൽ നിന്നും വളർച്ചയിലേക്കുള്ള മാറ്റമാണ് ആവശ്യം.

വൈകാരിക വ്യതിയാനം - മുൻകോപി ക്ഷമാശീലനാകുന്നത് ക്രിയാത്മക വ്യതിയാനവും ക്ഷമാശീലൻ അക്രമത്തിലേക്ക് മാറുന്നത് നിഷേധാത്മക മാറ്റവുമാണ്.

സാമ്പത്തിക വ്യതിയാനം - സാമ്പത്തിക സുരക്ഷയിൽ നിന്നും തകർച്ചയിലേക്കല്ല, തളർച്ചയിൽ നിന്നും സ്വയം പര്യാപ്തതയിലേക്ക് മാറുന്നതാണ് ക്രിയാത്മകമായ സാമ്പത്തിക വ്യതിയാനം.

സാമൂഹികമായ വ്യതിയാനം - മുൻവിധിയിലൂടെ ക്രിയാത്മക പ്രതികരണം നേടി വളർച്ചയിലേക്ക് രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുന്നത് സാമൂഹ്യ രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ നല്ല വശമാണ്.

ഭാരതം സാത്തികമായി ഔന്നത്യത്തിലെത്തി. എന്നാൽ സാമ്പത്തിക ഔന്നത്യത്തിൽ മുല്യശോഷണം, ധാർമ്മിക അധഃപതനം, ആത്മീക തളർച്ച ഇവ ഉണ്ടായി. എവിടെയാണ് രൂപാന്തരം ആരംഭിക്കേണ്ടത്...? രൂപാന്തരം ഹൃദയാന്തർഭാഗത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഉടലെടുക്കണം - ഹൃദയത്തിൽ, നമ്മിൽ, സഭയിൽ, സമൂഹത്തിൽ ആരംഭിക്കേണ്ടത് ആവശ്യമാണ്.

II. രൂപാന്തരം എങ്ങനെ സംഭവിക്കും...?

ക്രിസ്തീയ കാഴ്ചപ്പാട്

ഉയരങ്ങളിലേക്ക് വലിക്കപ്പെടുന്നതാണ് രൂപാന്തരം. സ്റ്റാൻലി ജോൺസ് അബ്ബി രീതിയിൽ ഉള്ള രാജ്യങ്ങളെ വരച്ച് കാട്ടുന്നു. ഖനന രാജ്യം, സസ്യ രാജ്യം, മൃഗരാജ്യം, മനുഷ്യരാജ്യം, ദൈവരാജ്യം ഇവയാണ് അവ. ജലവും മറ്റും ചേർന്നതാണ് ഖനന രാജ്യം. ചെടികളും വനങ്ങളും നിറഞ്ഞതാണ് സസ്യരാജ്യം. മൃഗങ്ങൾ നിറഞ്ഞതാണ് മൃഗരാജ്യം. മൃഗരാജ്യത്തിൽ ബലവാൻ ബലഹീ

നനെ കീഴടക്കുകയും ഭക്ഷണമാക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. അവിടെ നിലനില്പിനായുള്ള പോരാട്ടം നടക്കുന്നു. മനുഷ്യരാജ്യത്തിൽ വൈവിധ്യങ്ങൾ നിറഞ്ഞ മനുഷ്യർ വസിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റേതാണ് ദൈവരാജ്യം.

മനുഷ്യർ മൃഗരാജ്യത്തിനും ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിനും ഇടയിലാണ് വസിക്കുന്നത്. മൃഗരാജ്യം മനുഷ്യനെ താഴോട്ട് വലിക്കുകയും വിദ്വേഷം, കലഹം, ശബ്ദം തുടങ്ങി എല്ലാതരം മൃഗീയതകളും പെരുമാറുവാൻ പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ദൈവരാജ്യം മനുഷ്യനെ മുകളിലേക്ക് വലിക്കുന്നു. സ്നേഹം, സമാധാനം, നീതി തുടങ്ങി ഉന്നത മൂല്യങ്ങൾ പുലർത്തുവാൻ നമ്മെ പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. "മുമ്പേ അവന്റെ രാജ്യവും നീതിയും അന്വേഷിപ്പിൻ; അതോടുകൂടി ഇതൊക്കെയും നിങ്ങൾക്ക് കിട്ടും." (മത്താ. 6:33). ദൈവനീതിയെ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നതും അതിനായുള്ള അവേശവുമാണ് അത്യന്തവശ്യമായത്. "കാലം തികഞ്ഞു ദൈവരാജ്യം സമീപിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു; മാനസാന്തരപ്പെട്ടു സുവിശേഷത്തിൽ വിശ്വസിച്ചിട്ട് എന്നു പറഞ്ഞു" (മർക്കൊ. 1:15). ഇത് ആദ്യം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയ ക്രിസ്തു വചനമാണ്.

"സഹോദരൻമാരേ, ഞാൻ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മനസ്സിലിവിടെ ഓർപ്പിച്ച് നിങ്ങളെ പ്രബോധിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്: നിങ്ങൾ ബുദ്ധിയുള്ള ആരാധനയായി നിങ്ങളുടെ ശരീരങ്ങളെ ജീവനും വിശുദ്ധിയും ദൈവത്തിനു പ്രസാദവുമുള്ള യാഗമായി സമർപ്പിൻ. ഈ ലോകത്തിനു അനുരൂപമാകാതെ നന്മയും പ്രസാദവും പൂർണ്ണതയും ഉള്ള ദൈവഹിതം ഇന്നതെന്ന് തിരിച്ചറിയേണ്ടതിന് മനസ് പുതുക്കി രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുവിൻ" (റോമ. 12:1-2). ലോകത്തോടുള്ള രൂപാന്തരം കീഴോട്ടുള്ളതും തളർച്ചയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നതുമാണ്. പൗലോസ് പ്രത്യേക ജാതിക്ക് വേണ്ടിയല്ല സഭക്ക് ആകമാനമാണ് തന്റെ ലേഖനത്തിലൂടെ ഉന്നത മൂല്യങ്ങൾ മുറുകെ പിടിച്ചുകൊണ്ടുള്ള രൂപാന്തരം ആവശ്യമാണ് എന്ന് പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്നത്. കൊലോസ്യ സഭയോടും (3:1-2) ഉയരത്തിലുള്ളത് അന്വേഷിക്കുവാനും ചിന്തിക്കുവാനും പൗലോസ് ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ അന്ത്യസത്ത

സ്വഭാവത്തിൽ ക്രിസ്തുവിനെപ്പോലെ ആയിത്തീരുക എന്നതാണ് രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ അന്ത്യസത്ത. സുവിശേഷീകരണത്തിലൂടെ സാധ്യമാകേണ്ടത് ക്രിസ്തുസ്വഭാവം പകരപ്പെടുക എന്നതാണ്. പ്രശസ്ത സുവിശേഷകനായ സ്റ്റാൻലി ജോൺസ് സുവിശേഷീകരണത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് ഇപ്രകാരം പറഞ്ഞു, "ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ സ്വഭാവത്തിൽ ഈ ലോകത്തിലുള്ള ആളുകളെ ആക്കിത്തീർക്കുകയാണ് സുവിശേഷീകരണത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം." 20-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ മറ്റൊരു സുവിശേഷകനായ കഗാവയും ഇപ്രകാരം പറഞ്ഞു. ഔമികതയിൽ നിന്നും ദൈവികതയിലേക്ക് ക്രിസ്തുവിനെപ്പോലെയുള്ള പ്രയാണമാണ് സുവിശേഷീകരണം.

കൺവൻഷൻ എത്രപ്രാവശ്യം വന്നു എന്നതോ, എത്ര നേരം ഇരുന്നൂ എന്നതോ പ്രസക്തമല്ല. എത്ര പേരിൽ മാറ്റം ഉണ്ടായി എന്നതിനാണ് ഊന്നൽ നൽകേണ്ടത്. സുവിശേഷ ശ്രവണത്തിലൂടെ ജീവിതത്തിന് രൂപാന്തരം ഉണ്ടാകണം.

രൂപാന്തരം ക്രിസ്തുവുമായുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ..

1. ക്രിസ്തുവിനെപ്പോലെ ആകുക

"ക്രിസ്തു നിങ്ങളിൽ ഉരുവാകുവോളം ഞാൻ പിന്നെയും പ്രസവ വേദനപ്പെടുന്നവരായ എന്റെ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളേ..." (ഗലാ. 4:19). ക്രിസ്തു ഉരുവാകുക എന്നാൽ ക്രിസ്തു ഉള്ളവകുക അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ജനിക്കുക എന്നാണ് അർത്ഥം. അമ്മയുടെ ഉദരത്തിൽ കുഞ്ഞ് ഗർഭം ധരിക്കുന്നത് പോലെ നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയത്തൽ ക്രിസ്തു ഉരുവാകേണ്ടത് ആവശ്യമാണ്. സ്റ്റാൻലി ജോൺസ്, "ഞാൻ ഒരു ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി ആയിക്കൊണ്ടേയിരിക്കുന്നു" എന്ന് നടത്തിയ പ്രസ്താവന പ്രസക്തമാണ്. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ വളർന്ന് കൊണ്ടേയിരിക്കുന്ന അനുഭവം ആണിത്. ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി എന്നും ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെട്ട് വളർന്നുകൊണ്ടേയിരിക്കണം.

2. ക്രിസ്തുവിനോട് അനുരൂപപ്പെടുക (റോമ. 8:29)

ക്രിസ്തുശിഷ്യരായി സഭയുടെ അംഗങ്ങളായിരിക്കുന്നത് യാദൃച്ഛികമല്ല, അത് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ അറിവോടും മുൻ നിർണ്ണയ പ്രകാരവുമാണ്. ക്രിസ്തുവിന് അനുരൂപരായിരിക്കുവാൻ ക്രിസ്തുവിനെപ്പോലെ ജീവിക്കുവാനുള്ള ആഹ്വാനമാണ് പൗലോസ് നൽകുന്നത്. സാധുസുന്ദർ സിംഗ് സ്നേഹത്തിൽ പൊതിഞ്ഞതും ദൈവകൃപയിൽ ദൃഢപ്പെട്ടതുമായ വാക്കുകളിലൂടെ സംഭാഷണം നടത്തി ക്രിസ്തുവിനോട് അനുരൂപപ്പെട്ടു. യേശു സ്നേഹിച്ചതുപോലെ സ്നേഹിക്കുക. യേശു സ്വീകരിച്ചതുപോലെ സ്വീകരിക്കുക. ശുശ്രൂഷിച്ചതുപോലെ ശുശ്രൂഷിക്കുക. ജീവിച്ചതുപോലെ ജീവിക്കുക. ഇതാണ് ദൈവം നമ്മിൽ നിന്നും ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നത്. വ്യത്യസ്ത സാംസ്കാരിക പാശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ യേശുവിന്റെ മൂല്യങ്ങൾ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുകയാണ് ആവശ്യം.

3. ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ പ്രതിരേഖിപ്പിക്കുക (2 കൊരി. 3:18)

"കർത്താവിന്റെ തേജസിനെ കണ്ണാടിപോലെ പ്രതിബിംബിക്കുന്നവരായി" തീരുന്നവൻ പൗലോസ് ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ഇതിലൂടെ ദൈവമഹത്വം പ്രതിബിംബിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനെ സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. മാത്രമല്ല ജീവിതം രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുന്നതിലൂടെ ലോകത്തെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തുവാനുള്ള ആഹ്വാനവും നൽകുന്നു. പൂർണ്ണ അനുസരണത്തോടെ അയച്ചവന്റെ ഹിതം യേശു നിറവേറ്റുന്നു. രണ്ട് തരത്തിലുള്ള പാനപാത്രങ്ങളാണ് യേശുവിൽ കാണാൻ കഴിയുന്നത്. ഒന്നാമത്തെ പാനപാത്രം ശിഷ്യന്മാർക്ക് പകർന്ന് കൊടുത്തു. രണ്ടാമത്തേത് സ്വീകരിക്കുവാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ട് ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു എങ്കിലും പൂർണ്ണ അനുസരണത്തോടെ പാനം ചെയ്ത് പിറ്റേന്ന് ക്രൂശിൽ യാഗമായി തീർന്നു. ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ സ്വഭാവത്തിലെ അംശങ്ങളെ സ്വീകരിച്ച് അവനെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ പ്രതിഷ്ഠിക്കേണ്ടത് ആവശ്യമാണ്. മരണത്തോളം അനുസരണം ഉള്ളവനായ ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഭാവം നമ്മിൽ ഉണ്ടാകണം എന്ന് പൗലോസ് ഫിലി. 2:5 ൽ കൂടെ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നു.

ദൈവസൃഷ്ടിയായ ലോകത്തെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തുവാൻ നാം ദൈവത്തോട് അപേക്ഷിക്കുമ്പോൾ തന്നെ പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കേണ്ട പ്രധാന സംഗതി ഇതാണ്, ദൈവമേ തവകൃപയാൽ ലോകത്തെ മാത്രമല്ല എന്നെയും രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തണമേ.

WCC 9th Assembly at Porto Alegre, Brazil

The 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14–23 February 2006, addressing the theme “God, in your grace, transform the world”. The Assembly was a time of encounter, prayer, celebration and deliberation for thousands of Christian women and men from around the world. The Assembly was invited to Brazil by the WCC's Brazilian member churches and the Brazilian National Council of Christian Churches. The venue for the event was the Events Center of the Pontifical University of Rio Grande do Sul.



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan at the WCC meeting.

Porto Alegre is the largest city in southern Brazil with a population of 1.5 million people. It has become a leading centre of culture and education and, more recently, the host of the World Social Forum, of popular democracy and participation. The Assembly is the “supreme legislative body” of the WCC, and meets every seven years. The formal purpose of the Assembly is to review programs and determine the overall policies of the WCC, as well as to elect presidents and appoint a Central Committee which serves as the chief governing body of the WCC until the next assembly. In Porto Alegre, over 700 delegates and their advisors, representing over 340 member churches of the



Protest against racism.



Marching with the WCC banner.

WCC, carried out their work in a program that included prayer, Bible study, thematic plenary sessions, hearings and committee work.

Alongside the committee work and business sessions for the delegates, the Assembly was also a venue of celebration and sharing for the many thousands of other visitors at the event. A highlight of the 9th Assembly was the ecumenical partnership program or “Mutirão” - a Portuguese word which means coming together, celebrating



Youth gathering at the WCC meeting.

together, reflecting together. It was precisely for this reason that the WCC provided a space that was open to a wide range of churches, ecumenical organizations and groups from around the world. The daily program of the “Mutirão” included a range of presentations, exhibitions and discussions open to all Assembly participants. A central element of the Assembly for all participants was the worship life, where the community gathered for prayer and meditation, drawing on the diverse spiritual experience of the churches around the world.

The preparatory work for the 9th Assembly was conducted by the Assembly Planning Committee (APC) and



Stewards of Christ.

the Assembly Worship Committee (AWC), under the supervision of the WCC Central Committee. These committees met regularly during the period leading up to the

Assembly. The event was coordinated by an Assembly Office in Geneva, and by a local coordinator based in Porto Alegre.

The Assembly is over when the 691 delegates from the WCC's 348 member churches and other participants are back in their homes around the world. With them, along with papers and multimedia files, returning participants took memories of an intense period of encounter, prayer, and celebration - in morning and evening worship, 90 Bible study groups, and in the 200 workshops and other events making up the Assembly's parallel mutirão. On another level, the in-depth work done by the Assembly on themes and issues, structures and relationships is likely to impact the WCC fellowship and the wider ecumenical movement for a long time to come. ■

NOTE: The information is collected from the WCC web site and other printed materials distributed during the assembly, and compiled by Atty. Lal Varghese, Associate Editor, Messenger.

കൃസ്തീയ ഭവനം

ലാലി തോമസ്
ഇമ്മാനുവേൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ ചർച്ച്, ഹ്യൂസ്റ്റൺ



സ്വപ്നങ്ങൾ പൂക്കും ഭവനത്തിനായി
ആശിപ്പൂ മാനവർ മാനസത്തിൽ
സ്വർഗ്ഗീയ സുന്ദര ഭവനത്തിനായി
കാക്ഷിപ്പൂ ഏവരും പാരിടത്തിൽ.

യേശു ഭവനത്തിൻ നാമനായും
ഗ്രഹനാഥൻ യേശുവിൻ ഭാവമാർന്നും
മാതാവ് ത്യാഗത്തിൻ പ്രതീകമായും
കൃസ്തീയ ഭവനത്തിൻ ശിലകൾ പാകാം.

സ്നേഹമാം നറുതേൻ നാവിൽ തൊട്ട്
ദൈവ വചനം നിത്യഭോജ്യമായി
നാൾതോറും മക്കൾക്ക് നൽകിടുകിൽ
കൃസ്തീയ ഭവനം പടുത്തുയർത്താം.

അന്തിമയങ്ങും യാമങ്ങളിൽ
അന്തിവിളക്കുകൊളുത്തി നമ്മൾ
പ്രാർത്ഥനാഗീതങ്ങൾ ഉയർത്തിടുമ്പോൾ
കൃസ്തീയ ഭവനത്തിൻ ശില്പിയാവാം.

ശാന്തിയും മോദവും ചേർന്നു നമ്മൾ
കർത്തന് മഹിമ കരേറ്റിടുകിൽ
ജീവിത സ്വപ്നങ്ങൾ പൂവണിഞ്ഞ്
കൃസ്തീയ ഭവനം സ്വർഗ്ഗമാക്കാം.

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- Accompany you at the walk-thru and inspection and explain the process and expectations.
- Review the closing statements prior to closing and discuss its details and attend the closing.
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World Day of Prayer 2006—Signs of the Times

Compiled by Nirmala Abraham, Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

World Day of Prayer (WDP) is an international, ecumenical event, celebrated in 170 countries on the first Friday of March each year. From sunrise to sunset, prayers follow the sun's path around the globe. WDP, initiated eighty years ago by Christian women of the United States and Canada proposed to support women's involvement in mission at home and around the world. They wanted to affirm that prayer and action are inseparable. Each year, the International committee of WDP assigns women from a specific country to write the worship service and choose a theme. The women of South Africa wrote the 2006 worship. The theme, "Signs of the Times", reflected the call for transformation and reconciliation.

The Republic of South Africa lies in the southern most part of the African continent. In 1652, it became a Dutch colony. In 1948, apartheid, a racial segregation policy, affecting every area of life such as education, transportation, legal rights and social interactions, came into being. In 1990, the government released Nelson Mandela from prison. In 1994, the first democratic elections took place. At present, the biggest problem facing this country is HIV & AIDS. It is of epidemic proportion, especially among women and children.

This year, many Sevika Sanghoms in our Diocese conducted the WDP worship services in their respective parishes and/or region. In Dallas, Philadelphia and New Jersey, the local committee of the Indian Ecumenical Churches hosted the event, with strong support from the Mar Thoma churches. Following are some of the WDP reports and photographs received from our parishes.

CHICAGO

WDP worship took place on Saturday, March 4 at the Chicago MTC. Vicar, Rev. Daniel Varghese provided the leadership. Various members participated in responsive and scripture readings. Achen's message, based on Mathew 26:10, talked about signs of hope, love, care, and faith. We exemplify these by going out into the world and pouring out into the community the gifts God has given us. In addition, Achen discussed different cultures around the world, especially the culture and lifestyle of the people in South Africa who suffer from AIDS. We watched 'Coming to Say Goodbye', stories of AIDS in Africa. It is a documentary about courageous people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya and Tanzania. It is a story of church workers, medical professionals, social workers, and educators who stand by those suffering, especially the thousands of children orphaned by AIDS. In this film, we

see the personal and structural aspects of the HIV/AIDS, the outbreak of the disease in Africa, poverty, lack of access to treatment, and the extraordinary social cost. It was very inspiring and spiritually uplifting. Members of the St. Thomas MTC, Chicago also participated in this event. The meeting concluded with prayer, followed by lunch.

Ponnamma Samuel

NEW YORK

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church

St. Thomas MTC, Yonkers, New York observed WDP on March 24 with St. Andrews MTC and the Hudson Valley



CSI Church. It was a successful prayer meeting. We had a special guest from South Africa, Mr. Johnson, a nurse and an RNP. He and his wife shared their vast knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Mr. Johnson and his wife sang a beautiful, melodious song in English as well as in their dialect. Rev. Jojan Mathews John presided over the meeting. St. Thomas Choir led the sing-along songs in Malayalam and English as well as the opening song. The meeting ended with dinner. It was a pleasant event with a large number of attendees.

Marykutty Thomas

St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York

Edavaka Mission and Sevika Sanghom members joined together to conduct WDP on March 3. Mrs. Tina Biju Cherian, wife of the Youth Chaplain, Rev. Biju S. Cherian gave an inspiring message on 'Signs of the Times'.

Ponnamma George

Long Island Mar Thoma Church

Members of the Long Island MTC along with the local CSI church conducted the WDP services on Friday, March 3. Rev. Cherian Thomas from the CSI Church gave the

message based on theme, 'Signs of the Times.' Sevika Sanghom members were part of the worship team.

Ann Abraham

The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island

Staten Island MTC celebrated WDP on Friday, March 3, presided by Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia. About 110 people



attended, including our members and members from other denominations in Staten Island. The service mainly consisted of a Bible study by Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia and a slide show presented by one of our youth members. It was a blessed event, indeed the time to think of the less fortunate and thank God, for all the blessings we receive every day of our life.

Elsy Skaria

Tabor Mar Thoma Church, Staten Island

About forty-five members gathered to conduct WDP service on March 4. Mr. Thomas Mattapally gave a short reflection on the theme. Women led the intercessory prayers. Vicar, Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham gave an inspiring message. Achen's experience is based on his prior interaction with the South African Black Movement Church leaders, which has also given new meaning to the song 'We Shall Overcome Some Day'. Overall, WDP worship was an inspiring experience for the attendees.

Thankamma Varghese

NEW JERSEY

New Jersey Mar Thoma Church, Randolph, NJ

The Ecumenical Fellowship of North Jersey Indian Churches observed WDP on March 4 at the New Jersey MTC, Randolph, with an afternoon of prayers, worship, and informational and devotional messages. The meeting was presided by Rev. Fr. K. K. John, Vicar of St. Thomas Orthodox Church in Dover. All the Orthodox, Mar Thoma, and Catholic Churches in New Jersey participated in the event. The meeting started with worship songs by Mr. George Varghese and friends from Full Gospel Church and Mr. Sebastian from the Syro-Malabar Church. The worship service led by different denominations of Indian Churches was a spiritually uplifting experience.

A PowerPoint presentation by Mr. Thomas B. Thomas of New Jersey MTC enabled the audience to understand

life in South Africa. Dr. Elizabeth Mammen, the Keynote Speaker, gave a brief history of the AIDS epidemic and spoke of the spread of the disease, not only in Africa, but all over the world, especially India. She also talked of the consequences, the need for awareness, and the precautions against this deadly disease.

Rev. Abey Joseph, Youth Minister of Full Gospel Church, spoke on the theme, the 'Signs of the Times.' He made the congregation aware of the signs that point to the second coming of Jesus Christ. As in the time of Noah, people were not paying heed to the warnings, but it is certain that the second coming is at hand, he said. He exhorted the audience to prepare for that crucial event. Mr. George Thumpayil, Editor of Malayalam Pathram, narrated his experiences at the ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches recently held at Brazil.

Dr. Usha Abraham was the MC for the function. Mrs. Grace Alexander, Coordinator of the event, proposed the vote of thanks. The meeting ended with prayer and benediction by Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathew, Vicar of New Jersey MTC, which was followed by refreshments.

Grace Alexander

St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church

Members of St. Peter's church celebrated WDP on Friday, March 3. Rev. P. Y. Mathew gave the message based on the theme 'Signs of the Times'. The event was well attended and inspiring.

Thankamma Varghese

PHILADELPHIA

The Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian Churches in Philadelphia hosted the WDP worship service on Friday, March 3 at the St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Philadelphia. Clergy from the Mar Thoma, Orthodox and Catholic churches led the event. All the attendees wore red ribbons to show support for the AIDS victims in South



Africa. A table was set up in the hallway displaying artifacts from South Africa.

Highlights of the events included:

1. An interdenominational worship team of twenty-two women, representing two generations, and readings in English and Malayalam incorporated seamlessly in the

worship service, provided a unique experience of unity in diversity. Rev. Susiel Varghese, Vicar of the Bethel MTC deserves special thanks for making the worship an uplifting experience.

2. Two guest speakers of South African origin, spoke about their experiences living in Apartheid.
3. A South African woman spoke about her difficulties growing up as a black woman and experiencing the most discrimination of all the four categories of people who live there.
4. One of the guest speakers sang a song in Zulu. The audience joined in the singing of 'We are Marching in the Light of God'.
5. A PowerPoint presentation, Faces of South Africa, was made and a discussion on the history and challenges faced by HIV/AIDS victims was held.

Nirmala Abraham

DETROIT

Detroit MTC conducted WDP worship on March 5. Seventy-five members attended it. Rev. Daniel C. Varghese, Vicar of Chicago MTC gave the message. Achen talked about the HIV/AIDS situation in South Africa. Sevika



Sanghom members actively participated in the WDP worship service.

Alice Thomas

DALLAS

WDP 2006 was celebrated as an ecumenical group at the CSI Congregation of Dallas on Saturday, March 4. Members from different denominations from the Dallas/Fort Worth area attended this meeting. Mrs. Dolly Paul reflected on the theme 'Signs of the Times.' South African representatives, Pastor Ian John Chellan, Mrs. Gary Chakkarova and Mrs. Dilly Moon from Church Women United were present at this meeting. The Ecumenical Choir led the singing.



Rev. Anil George and Rev. Jacob Thomas attended the meeting. Rev. Saju Zachariah gave the welcome speech and Mrs. Ann Kunnathuseril gave vote of thanks. Mrs. Rubymole Thomas was the convener for this meeting.

Elizabeth. V. Mathew, Dallas Farmers Branch MTC

HOUSTON

Immanuel MTC and Trinity MTC observed WDP on March 4. Sevika Sanghom members of both parishes led the worship. Suja Kochamma gave the devotional talk. Rev. George Thomas spoke about the life of South African women. In the intercessory prayer, we upheld women all over the world, especially those of South Africa. It was a blessed event for everyone present.

Mariamamma Abraham

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YOUTH CORNER

Youth Fellowship: 2006 Diocesan Leadership Conference

Boney Mathew, Convener, IX Diocesan Leadership Conference

1 Peter 2:9 states: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Hearing God's call,

ing Bible studies and tracks throughout the conference. During the inaugural program, the delegates had the unprecedented opportunity of listening to the first Malayalee Bishop of the Episcopal Church—



Conference Leaders and Delegates with the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse.

ninety-nine delegates from the snowed-capped mountains of Canada to the sunny beaches of the eastern coast of the US gathered at the Valley of Blessings Camp in Washington from January 5th to 8th this year. This also marked a significant event in the history of the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Seattle, as the Youth Fellowship was given the great honor and privilege of hosting the IX Diocesan Leadership in the Pacific Northwest.

Under the theme, 'Chosen for a Greater Purpose,' the delegates had the privilege to learn and hear from the leaders of the Christian Church. The Mar Thoma Church of Greater Seattle had the opportunity of welcoming Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, who gave the presidential address and released the souvenir to Mr. John Titus. Also in attendance were Rev. Reji K. Philip, Rev. Dr. K. A Abraham, Rev. Isaac P Johnson, Rev. Ninu Chandy, Rev. Biju. S. Cherian, Rev. Varghese John, Rev. James Koshy, and Mr. Ashley George (Diocesan Youth fellowship Secretary). The Achens played a tremendous role in lead-

ence, delegates participated in two of the four following tracks: 1) Christian perspectives on Human Sexuality; (2) Dimensions of Prayer and Worship; (3) Biblical Hermeneutics and Homiletics; and (4) Christianity and Other Religions. In the afternoons, delegates had the opportunity to fellowship with one another through recreational activities.

The conference concluded with Holy Communion Service led by Coorilos Thirumeni at the Mar Thoma



Conference Leaders—Scene from the Inaugural session.



Seattle Leadership Team.

Church of Greater Seattle. The homily was given by the Southeast Youth Chaplain, Rev. Issac P. Johnson. The closing session was led by Mr. Ashley George and the Diocesan Youth Fellowship Committee.

All praise, honor and thanks goes to the Lord Almighty for all the blessings that he showered upon us throughout the conference. We would also like to thank Coorilos Thirumeni for his prayer and support, Rev. Martin Alphonse for his inspirational message and his presence, our vicar, Rev. Reji. K Philip for his support, Rt. Rev. Dr. Johny Itty, Rev. K. A Abraham, Rev. Ninu Chandy, Rev. Isaac P. Johnson, Rev. Varghese John, Rev. Biju S. Cherian, Mr. Ashley George, and the DYFC council for their leadership.

This conference wouldn't have been a success without the participation of the 27 churches from all over North America. We take this time to

express our sincere gratitude to our church members; each and every one of whom supported and helped us financially. In addition, our leadership team put in a lot of time, effort, and hard work to make this conference a blessing to everyone.

Once again, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Remember, this is not the end, this is just a beginning. We have been chosen for a greater purpose—go and spread the gospel to everyone and

declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. The 2007 Diocesan Leadership Conference will be hosted by the Baltimore Mar Thoma Church. May God bless you and guide you in your walk with Christ. ■



Conference Convener, DYFC Secretary and Achens with Coorilos Thirumeni after the Sunday Service.

Husband who hated the cat

A man hated his wife's cat and he decided to get rid of it. He drove 20 blocks away from home and dropped the cat there. The cat was already walking up the driveway when he approached his home.

The next day, he decided to drop the cat 40 blocks away but the same thing happened.

He kept increasing the number of blocks but the cat kept coming home before him.

At last he decided to drive a few miles away, turn right, then left, past the bridge, then right again and another right and so on until he reached what he thought was a perfect spot and dropped the cat there.

An hour later.... The man calls his wife at home and asked her, "Jen is the cat there?"

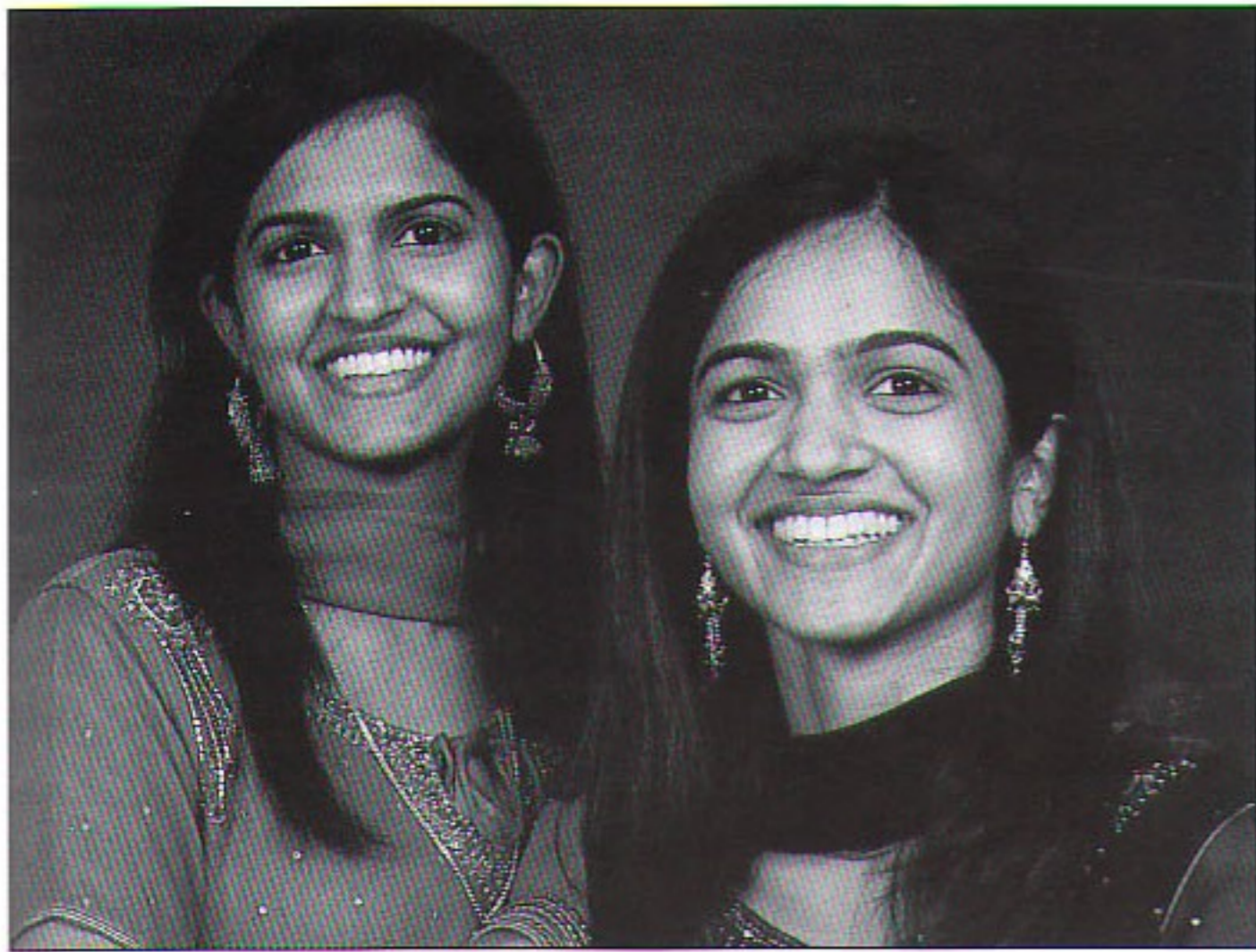
"Yes, why do you ask?" answered the wife.

Frustrated the man said, "Put that damn cat on the phone, I am lost and I need directions to reach home!!!"

Moral: "How much ever we dislike somebody, remember that someday we may need their assistance."

A Mission to Envision in India

Janice Mathews & Thara Mathews, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch



“Their need is much greater than any other’s need”—a simple yet firm statement that indicates the importance of participating in mission work and making a change in other people’s lives. We were always aware of our church projects in India, but never really understood what exactly was taking place there. We wanted to immerse ourselves into these mission projects and interact with the people who spearheaded these projects and benefited from them. We also wanted to provide feedback to those who may want a better idea about the growth and positive impact these projects have in India. These were some reasons that influenced us to take on this challenge of visiting our mission projects in Kerala. It has been a memorable and humbling experience for us.

By the grace of God, from December 2005 to January 2006, we had the opportunity to visit two projects being sponsored by the MTC



Dallas, Farmers Branch: the HIV/AIDS centre located in Manjalummoodu, Tamil Nadu, a small town about 50 km south of Trivandrum, Kerala, and, the School for the Deaf and Industrial Training Centre in Kasargode, located in the northern part of Kerala

The centre is called ‘Snehatheeram’, which translates “Love’s Shore” in English. It began as the vision of Evangelist P. T. Thomas (Vinod), who began to work in that area about eight years ago after he witnessed the death of two AIDS victims. The evangelist was touched by the two young orphaned children of the husband and wife who died of this disease. At that time no one mentioned AIDS for fear of shame, betrayal, and disownment by family and society. Thus, the cause of the parents’ deaths came to light only the following year. The evangelist realized that the children would need a place to live so he garnered his own funds at first to build a house for the young children. They now live with their grandparents in the house built for them through the initiative of the evangelist.



Gradually, due to their poor health and living conditions more patients began to speak out. Many women from the area were forced to work in the red light areas in Bombay and returned with the disease, which then infected their spouses and children. By taking enough precaution, some of the children could be saved from being infected. The families that are being helped through the centre usually consist of innocent young women whose husbands died from the disease leaving them to raise the family by themselves. However, the immunity of the patients rapidly declines and the whole family is left with either minimal or no source of income. As AIDS became more prominent in the area, the Mar Thoma Church became more involved



with establishing a centre where people suffering from the disease could come together to raise awareness, for proper health care, and to discover the love of Jesus Christ.

The 'Snehatheeram' centre currently serves as a place for AIDS patients to gather for prayer and fellowship once a month at which time they receive food and health kits. The centre is currently responsible for all the needs of 60 families who live within a 25 km radius. The number of families being helped is growing rapidly because of the great work being done there. The volunteers at the centre ensure that all the families have a place to live, enough healthy food to eat, and remain in good health. Their work includes building homes for those who do not have one, and fixing up the homes of those that do not have a proper roof, kitchen, or bathroom. When we attended their monthly meeting, the leaders were taking a count of those families that need to have their homes fixed up. They had about ten bathrooms to build, two kitchens, and were in the process of building one entire house. The centre also provides enough food for those patients and their families who need it. During the meeting, the centre distributed a month's supply of food such as rice and beans. When we were there, volunteers were distributing "Kozhikoode" or chicken cages and chickens to those without it so that the patients could have eggs in their diet. The centre is also responsible for the care of each patient's health. The centre ensures that they are taken to the right hospital and receive proper care at any time they fall ill. In addition, the centre offers the patients and their family entertainment, such as a day trip to Trivandrum or Kanyakumari, the two famous tourist spots.

The centre also serves as a home for happiness and comfort during difficult days. Today all the patients are enjoying the few days that have left in their lives and it is through the 'Snehatheeram' centre that many have discovered the love of Christ. The joy and faith of these

patients, all of whom suffer from this deadly disease, was an amazing experience. The strong faith and peace that, these victims experience in their lives was unlike anything we fathom. They shared their personal stories of life before the centre was established and how they struggled in pain and sickness and worried about how they would survive the next day.

During our stay at the Mar Thoma School for the Deaf at Kasargode in the northern part of Kerala, we were able to attend a Sunday school camp, a child evangelism fellowship camp, and also spend quality time with the hearing impaired children as well as the Industrial Training Centre students. On the first day, we visited every classroom and quizzed some of the students on subjects they were studying and distributed sweets. We also spent time with the students going through their curriculum and watching them conduct therapy with the deaf students. Although we struggled to communicate with the children at first, by the second day we could conduct a good conversation with the deaf students using sign language. We joined the students during breaks and dance practice, in the study hall, and even got to play some cricket with them. We conducted an arts and crafts session with the children where we created a star and told all of them to shine like stars. In addition, we started some work on a website for the school.

There is a lot of help that we can offer by spending a little time with those in need and there is plenty of opportunity to do so. We would like to encourage everyone to experience the work that our church is doing for those in need. It will truly



change your life and provide you with joy, peace and a better understanding of the struggle and faith of those who you may think have so little, yet have so much more because of their firm faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior. ■

"How Could I be in the Forefront?"

A response from a Youth

Elizabeth Georgekutty, Salem MTC, Long Island

*"Who am I?
That the Lord of all the earth,
Would care to know my name,
Would care to feel my hurt...."*
—"Who Am I"—Casting Crowns—

This song by the Casting Crowns is a clear description of the question I ask myself each day. I have always wondered who I was and why people cared to get to know me. I did not see myself as someone worthy of being known and I figured I could just blend in with the crowd and not worry about sticking out. I think Nicole C. Mullen said it best in her song "Call on Jesus".

*"I'm so very ordinary
Nothing special on my own
I have never walked on water
I have never calmed a storm
Sometimes I'm hiding away from the madness around me
Like a child who's afraid of the dark..."*

And for twenty-one years of my life, I could do just that. I was a member of Epiphany MTC where I was able to be a part of things but I was able to blend in at the same time. But in the summer of 2004, my life changed. There had been rumors that a church was going to be formed in Eastern Long Island, which was closer to where I grew up, and live currently. I had brushed that off because I loved my mother parish and did not see myself ever leaving until married. But we propose, and God disposes. Following my graduation from Binghamton University, my parents broke the news that we would be joining the new parish. I was a little wary about this because I thought I would not know anyone and that it would just make me miss Epiphany more. And I did not want to leave all my ties at Epiphany behind. But I figured I would give it a shot for my family's sake.

The first time I stepped into Salem, I felt as if I was in a strange place. There were not many familiar faces, and there were also not many people in my age group. This was not very reassuring; I missed Epiphany. In the back of my mind, I figured I would find some way to go back. Following the prayer meeting, a number of aunties and uncles came up to me but I still felt like I was not going to fit in well at this new church. It looked like I was one of the older members of the youth here. This was not a good sign. I could not see myself really getting into the whole church thing or if I did get involved, the kids would see me more



as an elder rather than a chechi that they could go to when they needed help or someone to talk to.

As the weeks passed, I started to become more involved in Salem. I became more active in the Sunday School, the English Choir, the Youth Fellowship, and the church as a whole. I began to learn who everyone was and could recall them by name. Some of these people had gone to church with me at Epiphany, but I did not really know them until we came to Salem. People began to respect me and my opinions and would seek my assistance quite often. I felt

like I could actually do something and make a difference here at Salem rather than just be another face. I slowly began to become friends with all the youth at Salem. Age was but a number and we were all able to become close friends. I found some of the best friends who have accepted me as I am and are always there for me when I am in a bind. Together we learned that we have been given an opportunity to shine and began to spread our wings and utilize our God-given talents for the life and witness of our church. I grew spiritually here at Salem, and Salem has helped me to be a more devout Christian and slowly I am able to spread God's love to others.

Looking back, I think I have been given more opportunities to shine here at Salem than at Epiphany. Don't get me wrong. I love Epiphany and it will always hold a special place in my heart. But with a membership of over 250 families a lot of times you felt like a number when you were there. It seemed there were new faces every week. Before I went away to college, I taught at Sunday School as well as Vacation Bible School. I tried to be an active member of the Youth as much as I could but the distance from my home to the church was a major hindrance. I served as area representative for a few years and I participated in most of the youth activities. I also tried to be active in the English choir, but that proved to be difficult because I was not able to make it to practice at the church. The elders of the church saw me as just a kid and did not feel the need to value my opinion as much as I thought they should. They just saw me as Georgekutty and Kunjunjamma's daughter or Bijoy's sister. It was hard in such a large congregation to keep track of everyone's opinions and thoughts. So I tended to blend in with my surroundings and was not a voice readily heard, which at the time was fine with me because I was never keen on being the center of attention. There were so many social groups at Epiphany I felt like I belonged to many and it felt

really good. But after I went off to college, I began to lose touch with everyone and I felt like a stranger each time I went back. It definitely was not the same anymore and I think it made the transition to Salem a lot easier.

Salem was a completely different experience. For once in my life, I truly felt like I was at home in church. I walked into church every Sunday and people would recognize me and not associate me as a daughter or a sister: they would see me. It was nice to be known for who I was rather than be a mere appendage of members of my family. When they see me after I miss a Sunday, they would ask where I'd been. It felt really good to be missed and wanted. I did not feel like these were just people I go to church with, I saw them as my extended family, my brothers and sisters, my other mothers and other fathers, my appachens and ammachis. Here at Salem, it is not just a church gathering, but a family gathering. And through our activities, it became evident how connected we were and how dedicated we were to the church. It was easier for me to become involved here because the church was only five miles from my home and I could drive myself. In some respects, I saw our church as my second home because my weekends were devoted to the church. So slowly but surely I became involved in the church. Since we are few, the youth have a number of responsibilities. God gave me the ability to serve Him in various capacities such as the English Choir Representative, the Vice-President of the Youth Fellowship, Sunday School Secretary and Treasurer, and the VBS Director (which was one of the most stressful but amazing and blessed experiences of my life and I loved every moment of it).

At first, I lacked the confidence to feel able to lead these children spiritually. I saw myself as someone who was still learning herself and not worthy to be considered a teacher of the Word. Slowly but surely God began to reveal his purpose for my life at Salem. On top of all this, I was part of the Executive Committee and was able to voice the opinion of the youth. My experience has been that when youth stand up for a genuine cause, the older generation respects us and extends their support to us. I was treated as an equal and not just a youth. This is not the norm in most of our parishes. Being at Salem I was able to have all these opportunities because it was a much smaller parish compared to churches like Epiphany. I did not have this

privilege always. I had to work for it and earn the respect of the elders at Salem. The kids of our church became my brothers and sisters; I would do anything for them and I would not allow anyone to speak against them. I would try to protect them as much as I could. Some would say I act like a mother. In some respects that was true, but in other respects I was more than willing to go crazy with the rest of them and be a child. I felt comfortable being myself in this smaller church. I would not trade what I have at Salem for the world. I believe God brought me to this parish for a specific purpose that He is going to reveal to me and I cannot wait.

I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for this opportunity to share my blessed experiences with the enlightened readers of "The Messenger" and most of all for blessing me with those experiences because without them I would not have been able to tell my story. I would like to thank my family, friends, and my Salem family for always being there for me and encouraging me throughout this new journey. Finally, since the inception of our church, we have been blessed with many Achens who spared their time with us. The ones most notable to me were Rev. Ninu Chandy, Rev. Raju Philip Zachariah, Rev. Biju S. Cherian, Rev. Issac P. Johnson, Rev. Roy Thomas, Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Rev. M. C. Joshua, and of course our present Vicar Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathew. These unique individuals and their families have helped me so much to grow as a Christian. The Youth Chaplains RPZ Achen, Biju Achen, Issac Achen, and their families took keen interest in me and many others and were convinced of potential we never thought we had. Whenever I struggled with something, they were always there to help, guide and to teach me lessons from the Bible and life through personal talks, email, phone and even IMs. I don't just see them as Achens; I see them as my friends and my family. They always opened up their homes to us and were always there for us whenever we needed them. They were a wonderful source of faith, support, and love and for giving me proper guidance at time of crises. I hope my experience will help others in similar predicaments and encourage them to be servants of God at the forefront of the Mar Thoma Church. ■

The 2006 Youth Mission Trip to various Indian mission fields is tentatively scheduled for the second week in September. If you are interested, please contact Mrs. Mariamma Thomas at:

(281) 431-4335 or (832) 606-4346

Family—the Basis of Civilization

Cheryl Varghese, St Stephen's Mar Thoma Church

Family is a fundamental part of everyone's life. The word family comes from the Latin root word *famulus*, or "servant". We often describe our family as people who know us best and who are our emotional and physical safety net. While these are two key aspects of a family, the most important aspect of this supportive network is that it helps us to appreciate and focus on our personal relationship with our heavenly Father. Indeed, the relationship that we have with our Father (in heaven) is supposed to reflect the kind of relationship we have with our earthly family. How much we honor our parents, and are faithful to them, is a direct reflection of how much we obey God and remain faithful to him.

Many Christian values are built on family relationships, values that include trust, responsibility, honesty and loyalty. Often, maintaining those characteristics in a family relationship is difficult and requires a great amount of commitment and hard work. But the reward for adhering to those characteristics yields something very precious and indescribable. When we are loyal and obedient to our parents, or trusting and forgiving towards our siblings, we reflect characteristics that qualify our relationship with God. On the other hand, when we are disobedient and disrespectful towards our parents, we reflect our rebellious and stubborn attitude towards God. The relationship that we have with our family is often mirrored in our relationship with God.

The concept of a family is also often underestimated and overlooked. Imagine we had no family. There would be no family dinners, no family gatherings, no family prayers, and so on. It would be a life very different from what we know to be true. My personal life would drastically change

from being a very family oriented person to someone with no family interaction. Family is my comfort and solace. I have shared all my deepest fears and tribulations, my tears and my laughter, my pain and my happiness with them. Both as a person and as a child of God, my family knows who I am. But like all families we encounter obstacles along the way, and those obstacles strengthen our relationships, define and refine our characters. In other words, as much as we get frustrated and annoyed with our family, our family is what defines our character and the principles we stand for. Family is one of God's precious gifts to us, a gift I am very thankful for. I thank God for the wonderful family I am blessed with, a family that knows who I am and is always willing to support me despite my shortcomings. The following poem explains the uniqueness of family. Even though the author is unknown the message is clear.

*Family ties are precious things
woven through the years,
of laughter, love and tears.*

*Family ties are cherished things
forged in childhood days,
by love of parents deep and true,
by tradition, by family ways.*

*Family ties are treasured things
and far though we may roam,
the tender bonds with those we love
still pull our hearts toward home.*

Author Unknown

"My Father's House"

Nina Varughese, Ebenezer MTC, NY

*My father's house
Is a Beautiful place
So lovely with it's heavenly gates
Angels all around me
So lovely they all be
Now lets sing songs of praise
So that we can adore thee.
Look at the Lord's throne,*

*So mighty and glorious,
Just like our father and his
Son, whom we also adorn.
Teach us your way,
So that we may be,
Just like our savior,
And know the price he would pay.
Give us wisdom, give us knowledge*

*But most importantly,
Give us the love,
So that we may acknowledge.
And in knowing all this
We may one day
Enter into his house
Passing his heavenly gates
And know that it's a beautiful place.*

Family

Sheila Vilanilam, age 14 and Anjali John, age 10

What is family? When this question is asked, people often say that it consists of mother, father, siblings, etc. But there is a broader definition to the word 'family'. Family can be any group that is nurturing, strong and is supportive and loving to each other. How often do we spend time with our family? In the modern age, with technological advances like the internet (myspace, e-mail, AIM, etc.), television, and many other things that we idolize, we hardly have any quality time for family. Many may think this is not as important as other things that we prioritize. However, that is definitely untrue. A strong family background can build one's foundation and make for a healthier person, character-wise. A God-centered background is always essential for family life. Parents need to lead their children in God and discernment. Without this, children will be lost and will go astray from the path of God.

Church is a very good example of family. We are a family in Christ and we should help each other in maturing in faith and growing stronger in Christ. God has given us the privilege of having a nurturing home environment and church. There are so many people in this world that do not have this benefit. Think of how lucky we are to have a family that cares for us and leads us toward Christ. There are, however, so many broken and shattered families that need God's love and presence. Prayer is the key to a strong family life. At our house, we have regular family prayers which bring us together as a family and also close to God.

Prayer time is a great opportunity for sharing, caring and character building. Children need a God-centered strong background in order to face today's worldly pressures and bad influence. According to National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), in the United States, one out of every four students drop out of high school and researchers state that an estimated 15.9 million Americans aged 12 or older are current illicit drug users. This estimate represents 7.1 percent of the population aged 12 years old or older. About 99% of these people come from a broken family. Also an astonishing statistic of one out of seven teenagers, by the age of 18 would run away from their homes. It is very easy for youngsters in this country to lose touch with family values and a God-centered life.

Despite busy lives with work and other things, parents must find time to talk with their children and make sure they grow up with discernment and knowledge of right and wrong. In this country, it is very hard to define right and wrong because many things are acceptable here that may not be right in the eyes of God. But how would we know what is right and wrong? God has given us his Word in a very simple and easy way – through the Bible. Parents and children should seek guidance from the Bible, the precious Word of God. Children should be open to their parents and find time to talk to them despite their busy life with school, homework, etc. This is the only way to live a strong and God-centered life in today's world. ■

Jesus: Head of the Family

Shawn Varughese (Age 13), Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia, PA

As a single person

I am weak

As a family

We are united humbly but strong

Love thrives within the family

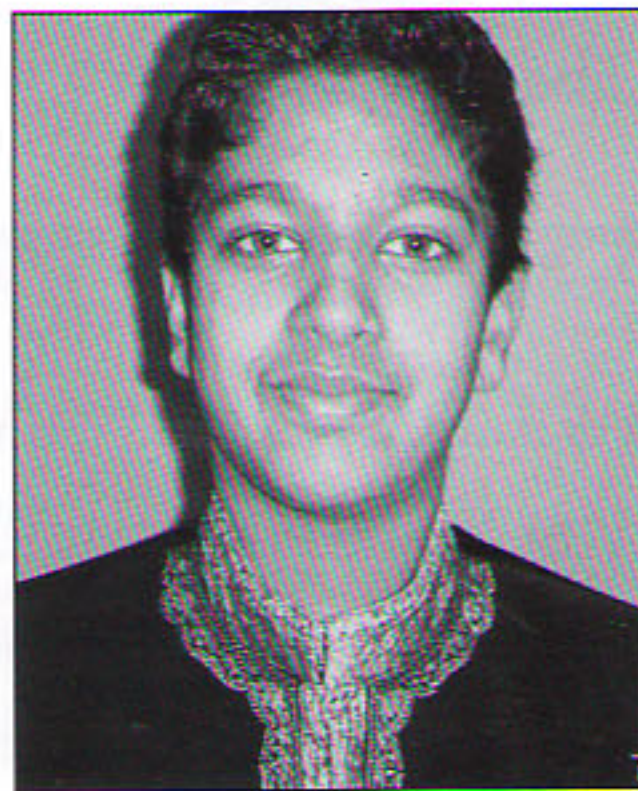
And we are true to each other

We spread the love as He has

So we can go to heaven above

Following Jesus' teachings

We obey him through thick and thin



*We pray to Him in season and out of season
Every day as a Family*

We go to church as a Family

To praise His name with our friends

*We try our best to follow His commands as He wishes
Of the Ten Commandments that prescribes us*

One day soon, no one knows when or where

We hope to see up on the clouds

The majestic vision one has ever seen

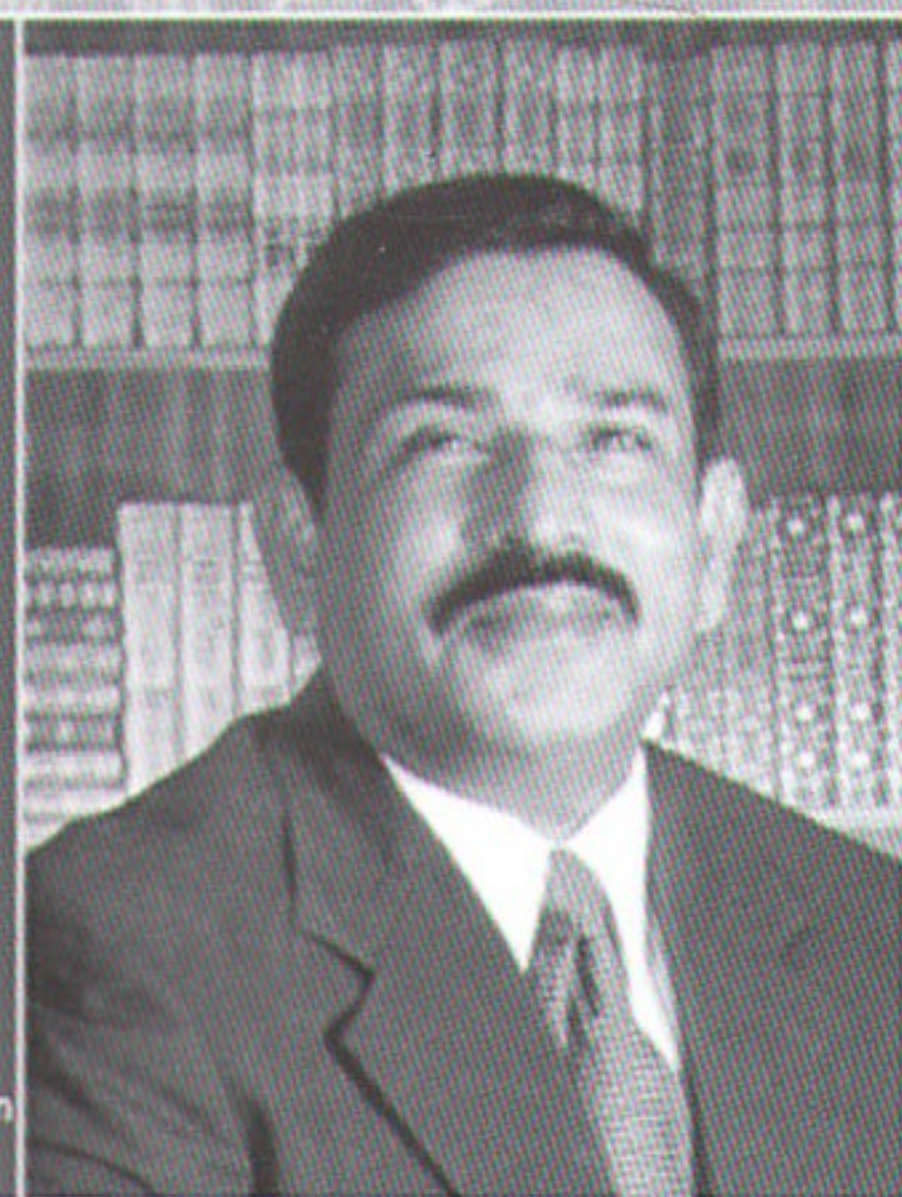
Jesus Christ, Our Head of the Family

Justice
is being
served
to the
Asian
Community

Lal Varghese
.....
Attorney at Law

Immigration,
H1-B,
Fiance Visa,
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Green Cards,
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Visitor Visas,
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V Visas, Etc.

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Seasons Change but Families Don't

Serena Zachariah, age 9, New Jersey Mar Thoma Church



*Weather is dull, weather is fun
Sometimes rain, sometimes sun
Whether you like it, whether you don't
Weather is there, so we have to bear*

*Springtime brings Sun and Bloom
While summer brings rain and sun
Autumn brings color and fun
While winter brings cold and gloom*

*Seasons have their reasons
For they bring occasions
Like Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas*

*Thank you God for giving us life
To enjoy the beauty of the seasons*

*Father in heaven, makes all things possible
Almighty is his name
Mother, father and children
In a place he put them
Love and harmony he gives them
You know that this is what makes heaven on
earth, "a family"!*

OCTOBER WINNERS. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WINNERS!!!

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (January 2006)

1. Alex & Justin Vaidyan, St. Thomas MTC, NY
2. Aleyamma Kurien, Canadian MTC, Toronto
3. Alwin Daniel, Detroit MTC
4. Annamma Abraham, Epiphany MTC, NY
5. Annamma John, St. Luke MTC, FL
6. Annamma Samuel, Trinity MTC, Houston
7. Annie Wilson, St. Mathews MTC, Toronto
8. Daniel P. Thomas, MTC of San Francisco, CA
9. George & Annie Varghese, Michigan
10. Jayashree Thomas, Sugarland, TX
11. Jeena Jacob, New Jersey MTC, Randolph, NJ
12. Jeff Simon, Richmond, CA
13. Jeny Anna Varughese, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
14. Jessey Mathew, St. James MTC, NY
15. Jibin Abraham, Horeb MTC, CO
16. Joshua P. Mathew, St. Stephen's MTC, NJ
17. Justin Mani, The MTC Staten Island, NY
18. Justy John, St. James MTC, NY
19. Kunjumole Jose, Chicago MTC
20. Lily Abraham, Horeb MTC, CO
21. Lily George, Chicago MTC, IL
22. Mariamma Mathew, Sparks, NV
23. Marykutty Thomas, South Florida MTC
24. Molly Abraham, MTC of Greater Washington
25. Neetha Mathew, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
26. Nitin & Navin P. Thomas, St. James MTC, NY
27. Omana Rajee, The MTC Staten Island, NY
28. Ponnamma Mathew, Philadelphia, MTC, PA
29. Ponnamma Ninan, MTC of San Francisco, CA
30. Rosamma Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
31. Saramma Poikail, MTC of Greater Washington, D.C.
32. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
33. Susan John, MTC of San Francisco, CA
34. Susan & Jose Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
35. Susan Thomas, Epiphany MTC, NY
36. Tinju Eapen, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
37. Valsamma Jose, St. James, MTC, NY

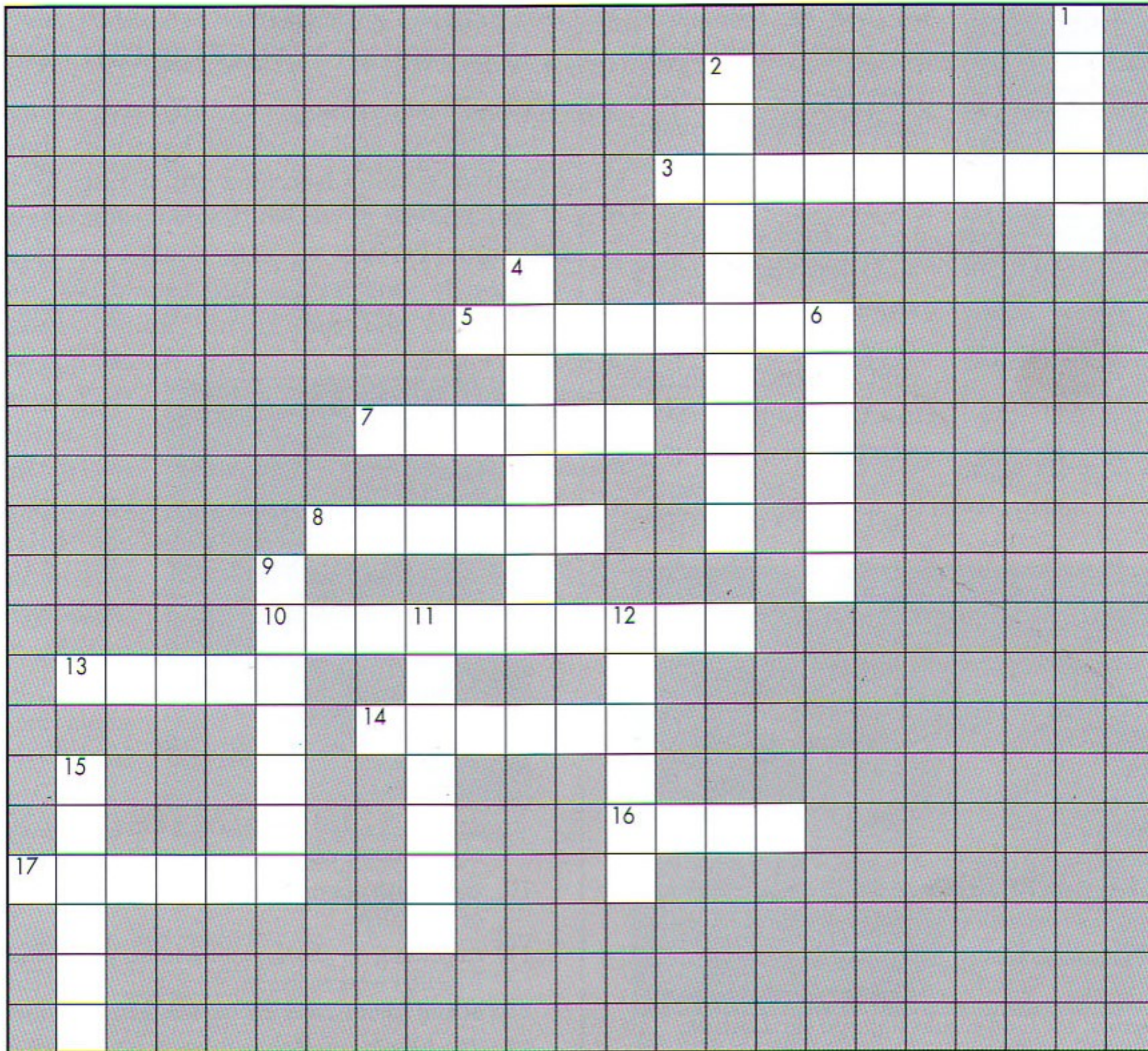
Bible Word Search Winners (January 2006)

1. Alex & Justin Vaidyan, St. Thomas MTC, NY
2. Aleyamma Kurien, Canadian MTC, Toronto
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4. Annamma Abraham, Epiphany MTC, NY
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16. Justy John, St. James MTC, NY
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18. Lily Abraham, Horeb MTC, CO
19. Lily George, Chicago MTC, IL
20. Mariamma Mathew, Sparks, NV
21. Marykutty Thomas, South Florida MTC
22. Molly Abraham, MTC of Greater Washington
23. Neetha Mathew, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
24. Nitin & Navin P. Thomas, St. James MTC, NY
25. Omana Rajee, The MTC Staten Island, NY
26. Ponnamma Mathew, Philadelphia, MTC, PA
27. Ponnamma Ninan, MTC of San Francisco, CA
28. Rosamma Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
29. Saramma Koshy, St. Luke MTC, FL
30. Saramma Poikail, MTC of Greater Washington, D.C.
31. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
32. Susan John, MTC of San Francisco, CA
33. Susan & Jose Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
34. Susan Thomas, Epiphany MTC, NY
35. Tinju Eapen, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
36. Valsamma Jose, St. James, MTC, NY

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF EZRA: CHAPTERS 1-10

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (New York)



Down

1. The Israelites began to build the altar and offer burnt offerings in accordance to the Law of _____.
2. Any King who tries to destroy the temple in Jerusalem will be _____ by the Lord.
4. Ezra, Shecaniah, along with the Israelites made a _____ before the Lord to send away all the foreign women and their children.
6. The gold and silver and the sacred articles that was consecrated in the name of the Lord was accounted for and recorded by _____ and weight.
9. The king entrusted upon Ezra the task of appointing magistrates and judges to administer _____ to all the people of Trans-Euphrates.
11. Names the language in which the enemies of the Israelites wrote a letter to Artaxerxes.
12. By the Ahara Canal Ezra _____ and prayed to the Lord along with others for their safe journey to Jerusalem.
15. For the dedication of the temple, the Israelites offered _____ male goats, each one representing the tribes of Israel as a sin offering for all of Israel.

Across

3. Jeshua, son of Jozadak; _____ son of Shealtiel and their fellowpriests and associates began to build the altar of the Lord.
5. Name the man who opposed the proclamation to separate from their foreign wives and their children.
7. According to the decree issued by king Cyrus, the temple was to be ninety feet high and _____ feet wide.
8. Zechariah and _____ were the two prophets who prophesied to the Jews to resume the construction of the House of God.
10. The exiles were _____ to the God of Israel by marrying foreign people.
13. Name the King of Persia, whose heart was moved in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.
14. During the reign of king _____, the construction of the temple that had been stopped resumed its work.
16. A priest and teacher well-versed in the Laws of the Lord of Israel who travelled (for over 5 months) from Babylon to Jerusalem.
17. Cyrus, the king of Persia proclaimed that the Lord, God of heaven has appointed him to build a _____ for Him at Jerusalem in Judah.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF NEHEMIAH: CHAPTERS 1-13

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (New York)

S A S E O A G U A R D S R O B M H D E , O B A E O
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R U B E R E T E L E S T G E S C S J T S U B E F
A E U E E S A N U Y H E R A T C E W B S O M Y R

- Name the man who cried out to the Lord, "I was cupbearer to the king."
- Nehemiah asked king Artaxerxes to send him to the city of Judah to _____ the wall of Jerusalem.
- The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the _____.
- At the sound of the _____, Nehemiah asked the people to gather together, for God would fight on their behalf.
- Nehemiah asked everyman and his helper to stay inside Jerusalem at night, so that they can serve as _____ by night and workmen by day.
- Hearing the outcry of his people, Nehemiah asked the nobles and officials to give back to the people their fields, vineyards, olive groves and also the _____ the nobles were charging them.
- In the presence of the priests, nobles and officials Nehemiah shook out the folds of his _____ to symbolize that any man who did not keep his promise would be shaken out of the House of God.
- How long did Nehemiah serve as the governor in the land of Judah during the reign of Artaxerxes.
- _____ and Geshem sent a message to Nehemiah to meet together in a village located on the plains of Ono.
- Nehemiah appointed _____, his brother as the in charge of Jerusalem.
- According to the Law of Moses, commanded by God, the Israelites were to live in _____ made out of olive branches and myrtle trees during the feast of the seventh month.
- The Israelites cast lots to bring _____ out of every ten to live in Jerusalem while the remaining people were to stay in their own towns.
- The Israelites settled down across a vast area that stretched all the way from _____ to the Valley of Hinnom.
- During the dedication of the Jerusalem wall, Nehemiah assigned two large _____ to give thanks to God, each of which proceeded in the opposite direction on top of the wall.
- According to the Law of God, the Israelites promised that every seventh year they would forgo working on the land and cancel all _____.
- Nehemiah warned the men in Judah against selling or bringing in food and other kinds of merchandise into Jerusalem on the _____.

Please mail your answers to:

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

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS June 30, 2006

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS—ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK

25 YEARS OF GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, NY (1981-2006)

On Sunday, January 22, 2006, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York, celebrated its Silver Jubilee Parish Day. From its initial worship at the Episcopal Church, Synod Hall, to its current establishment in the city of Yonkers, this parish has certainly come a long way in its spiritual journey.

The occasion was blessed with the presence of many distinguished guests on this special day. The Diocesan Bishop, His Lordship Rt.

Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos officiated the Holy Communion Service, during which he also administered the First Communicant rites to twelve Sunday school children. Rev. Jojan Mathews John, Vicar, assisted in service along with Rev. Bob Edgar, NCC Secretary. Holy Communion was followed by Parish Day



Rev. Bob Edgar, NCCC US Secretary giving the keynote speech.

Public Meeting. Mr. P. C. Chacko, Vice President, offered the opening prayer. In his welcome speech, Rev. Jojan Mathews John reminded the gathering that anniversaries are important to look back where we have come from and look forward to where we hope to go; it marked a time to recall the journey we have taken, both individually and as a parish. In his presidential address, Coorilos Thirumeni

emphasized the need for involvement in the activities of the local community. Mr. John Abraham, secretary, presented the parish report.

Mr. Richard Halvey, Public Affairs and Community Relations Officer of Yonkers City, representing the Mayor's Office, presented the parish with a Proclamation observing January 22 as "St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church Day".



Vicar, Rev. Jojan M. John welcoming the guests.

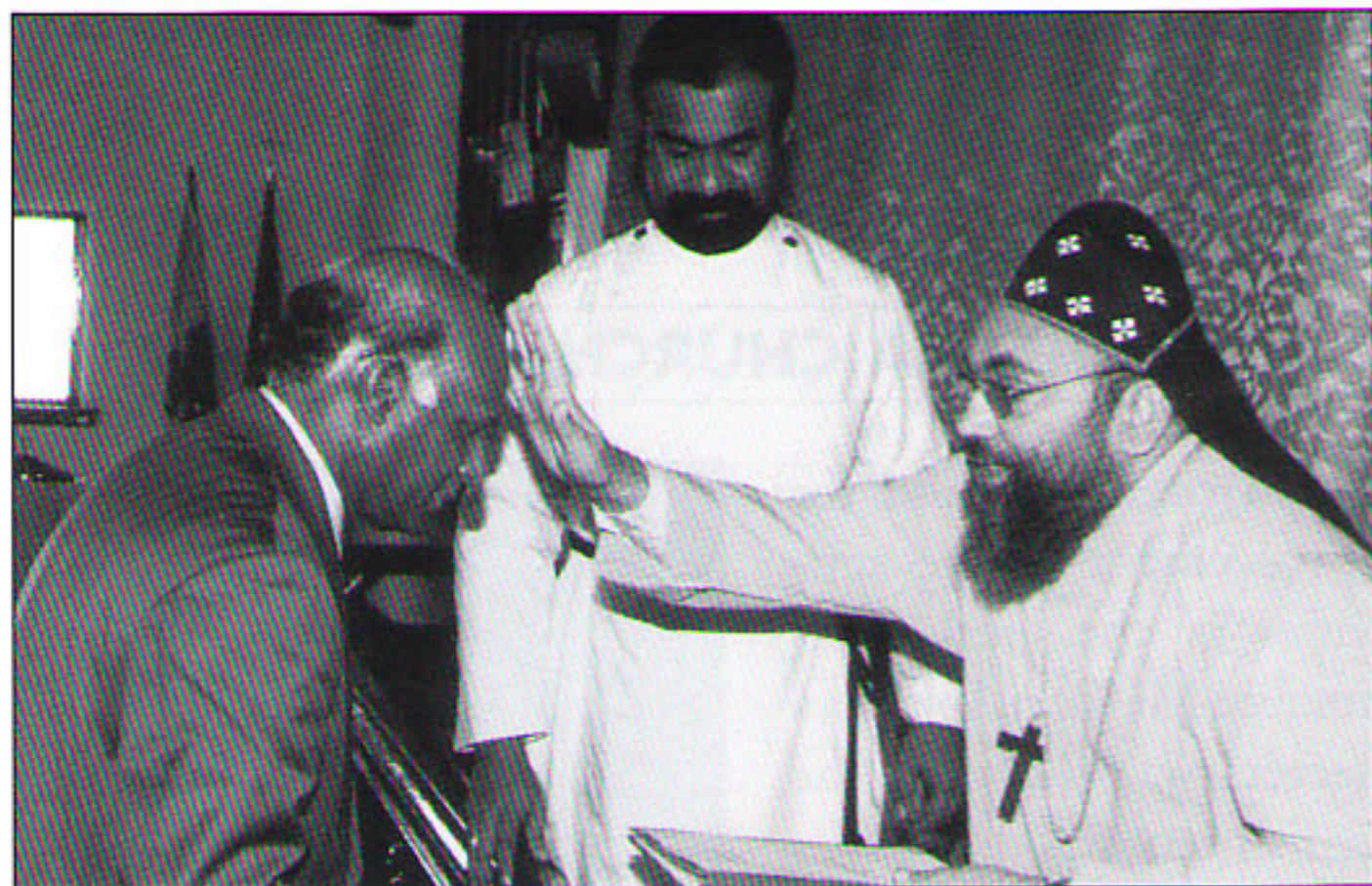


Mr. Richard Halvey, the Mayor's Representative presenting the proclamation.

Rev. Bob Edgar received the Diocesan Katrina Relief Fund from Thirumeni, acknowledging the work that is still to be done to aid the victims of the hurricane. A check for \$5,000, raised by the St. Thomas Mar Thomas Yuvajana Sakhyam through a musical event, was also presented to Thirumeni to help out with the educational needs of tribal children in Madhya Pradesh, India. Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary, Mr. Samuel K. Samuel explained the importance of the project and treasurer Ms. Celine George presented the check to the Vicar. Youth Fellowship Vice President Mr. John C. Thomas presented the Mission Field Support



Malayalam Choir presenting Jubilee Song.



Coorilos Thirumeni releasing the early immigrant book to Mr. K. M. Thomas. Donation, raised separately and independently by St. Thomas Youth Fellowship, to the vicar.

Dr. T. M. Thomas explained the early immigrants' activities as a Mar Thoma community from the early 1970's which helped not only the early immigrants but also the youngsters and the newly arrived immigrants to look back and reflect upon the difficulties the early immigrants went through. Mr. Thomas Mathew (New Jersey MTC), Dr. Thomas K. Jose (Staten Island MTC) and Mr. T. V. Varghese (Epiphany MTC) representing three sister parishes formed along with this parish, also spoke about their early experiences in the Mar Thoma community. Thirumeni released the book of early immigrant experiences to Mr. K. M. Thomas, a senior member of the parish. Thirumeni gave out a specially designed coffee cup to Mr. V. P. Abraham, the first secretary of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church commemorating the silver jubilee. Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Diocesan Secretary, reminded the parish of its responsibility to society. As Christians, we are daily called upon to spread the Good News to the world around us; such work starts in our own community. The services of Jess Jolly, who designed the silver jubilee



Mr. V. P. Abraham receiving the Silver Jubilee Memento.

logo, was duly recognized. Ms. Suja Thannickal and Ms. Neena Philip served as MCs. The public meeting was concluded with vote of thanks by Mr. Thomas Samuel, silver jubilee convener, followed by Thirumeni's benediction. A sumptuous fellowship luncheon was laid out for all.

CHURCH MILESTONES

- 1970:** Arrival of Immigrants from Kerala. Formation of prayer groups in Queens & Manhattan
- 1975:** Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York formed.
- 1980:** St. Thomas MTC officially recognized with three other sister parishes
- 1981:** St. Thomas MTC started worship at Episcopal Church, Synod Hall, Amsterdam Ave, NY
- 1998:** Hosted National Youth Conference
- 1990:** Purchase of church building and dedication in Yonkers, NY
- 2001:** Celebrated 20 years as a parish - Acquired Clarks Town property in Rockland County, NY
- 2003:** Adopted Vazhichal project in Trivandrum district
- 2004:** Hosted Diocesan family conference

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SILVER JUBILEE PROGRAM

- Community Outreach
- Educational Aid
- Marriage Aid
- Children's Orphanage
- Guidance Counseling
- Book Printing
- Parish Album



Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham and Vicar, Rev. Jojan M. John with the Jubilee Year Executive Committee.

Ullas P. Thannickal, Secretary

NORTH-EAST ZONE ANNUAL COUPLE'S CONFERENCE 2006



Zachariah of Philadelphia MTC lead the devotional talk. Achen eloquently presented the Biblical aspect of Christian Family and its importance in today's consumerist society.

Dr. Thomas David of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York did the main talk, based on the theme "Couples Carry the Promises of God". In his simple and inspiring talk, Dr. David highlighted the importance of family prayer, family time and worship.

The North-Eastern Zone Annual Couple's Conference was held on Saturday April 1st 2006 at Bethel MTC, Philadelphia. The meeting was sponsored by the South-Eastern region Sevika Sanghom. Zonal president Rev. Jojan Mathews John did welcome the leaders and participants of



the conference. In his presidential remarks, he reinstated the importance of worship and prayer in a Christian Family setting. Rev Susiel Varghese of Bethel MTC, Philadelphia lead an inspiring worship service that provided a serene atmosphere for the start of the conference. Rev. T. P.

The conference was followed by a short send off meeting for the Achens leaving the diocese after three years of ministry. Mrs. Mariamma Abraham (K.S.) of Bethel MTC, Philadelphia did the farewell talk. Mrs. Marykutty Thomas of NY thanked the leaders, attendees and organizers of the conference. Rev. Jojan Mathews John, Rev. Susiel Varghese, Rev. Johnson Varghese, Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathew, Rev. A. C Kurien, Rev. T. P Zachariah, Rev Johncey George, Rev. Issac P. Johnson and Rev. P. Y. Mathew attended the conference along with about 400 participants from various churches of the North-East Zone.

Mrs. Sheila Daniel, SS Secretary, Bethel MTC, Philadelphia

SOUTH WEST REGION ONE DAY CONFERENCE AND RETREAT

The Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelists' Association and Sevika Sangham South West Region One day Conference and Retreat.

Theme: "The crucified Life Style" 1st Corinthians 2:2

A combined one day conference of South West region Voluntary Evangelists' Association and Sevika Sanghom was held on April 1, 2006 at The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas Grand Prairie, 1517 South West 3rd street, Grand Prairie, TX 75245. One hundred and eighty-six (186) registrants participated in the conference from the various parishes of the region. Seven (7) clergies attended and gave leadership and directions for the success of the conference.

The meeting started with the melodious sing along session lead by the Choir of the host parish. Rev. Jacob Thomas welcomed the conference attendees. Rev. George Thomas made the presidential address, followed by the devotional talk by Mrs. Jaicy Varghese, The Immanuel MTC. Houston.

Rev. Ninu Chandy, Dallas area youth minister was the guest speaker. Achen delivered the thought provoking message based on the theme "the crucified life style".

The crucified life style is the life style of:

- Wisdom for the believers and foolishness for others
- The Christ centered
- Unity not division

- Hope
- Stewardship
- Active not passive
- Self emptying (Kenosis)
- Caring others
- Witnessing through life not only by lips

The region has arranged a farewell meeting to Rev. Saju Zachariah, Rev. T. K. John and Rev. V. J. Mathew who are on transfer to India after their services in USA. Felicitations were delivered by Rev. George Thomas representing the clergies; Mr. P. T. Mathew, Mrs. Ponnamma Chacko and Mrs. Mereena Cherian, representing the Parish Mission, Sevika Sanghom and Yuvajana Sakhyam of the region respectively. In appreciation of their sincere services, the South West Regional organizations presented them with token gifts. In his reply Rev. Saju Zachariah expressed his love and thanks to the Region on his own behalf and for Rev. T. K. John and Rev. V. J. Mathew. The conference president recognized the presence of the diocesan treasurer Mr. T. A. Mathew and family.

The hosting parish has done a tremendous job for the success of the conference.

The next regional conference will be hosted by the Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma in March, 2007.

P. T. Mathew

Regional Secretary, Voluntary Evangelists' Association

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA



The Fundraising Inauguration of Jacksonville Mar Thoma Church.

The Fourth Mar Thoma Parish in Florida

The Jacksonville Mar Thoma Church was started in 1997 with seven families as a congregation and had been worshipping in a rented church (Grace Lutheran Church, Jacksonville). Currently we have 11 member families and a few families belonging to other Indian Christian denominations who are actively participating in our services. By the Grace of God, we were able to purchase a piece of land that included a church building in February, 2006 at 8654 Griffis Rd, Jacksonville, FL-32234. Now the construction of the Madbaha and other necessary remodeling is under way overseen by a building committee.

(www.jacksonvillemarthomachurch.com)

Rev. Alexander Tharakan, Vicar

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY MEETING: MARCH 2006

The Diocesan Assembly was held at Staten Island Mar Thoma Church on March 25, 2006. Out of the 129 members, 79 Assembly members including Achens were present for this year's meeting. The meeting was presided

about the origin, faith and practices of the Mar Thoma Church, with special emphasis on the North American Diocese was also released by Thirumeni. The assembly expressed sincere thanks to the publication committee



and all those who worked hard for bringing out these study booklets and brochure.

The Assembly decided not to approve the recommendation of the Council to build two hostels in the Mexican Mission field as a memorial to late Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan. The Assembly authorized the Diocesan Council to come

up with a proposal for a retreat center in the US instead, for the Assembly's consideration. Thirumeni expressed sincere thanks to all Achens who served in the Diocese for the last three years and who are being transferred to India. Thirumeni presented a plaque to each of them in appreciation of their pastoral ministry in this Diocese. Thirumeni also expressed sincere thanks to Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham for Achen's dedicated service as Bishop's secretary and also as

by Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos. Rev. T. A. Varghese of Epiphany MTC and Mr. Lal Varghese served as recording secretaries. Rev. James Koshy led the worship service, and Rev. Joseph Oommen of Long Island MTC led the devotional talk.

Coorilos Thirumeni in his presidential address pointed out that the world has lost its stability, and the real cause seems to be human greed, arrogance, and animosity. In tune with the WCC's theme, Thirumeni reminded us that the Lord's transforming presence, healing presence, and reconciling presence is needed to transform this world by grace. (See details of presidential address in the beginning pages).

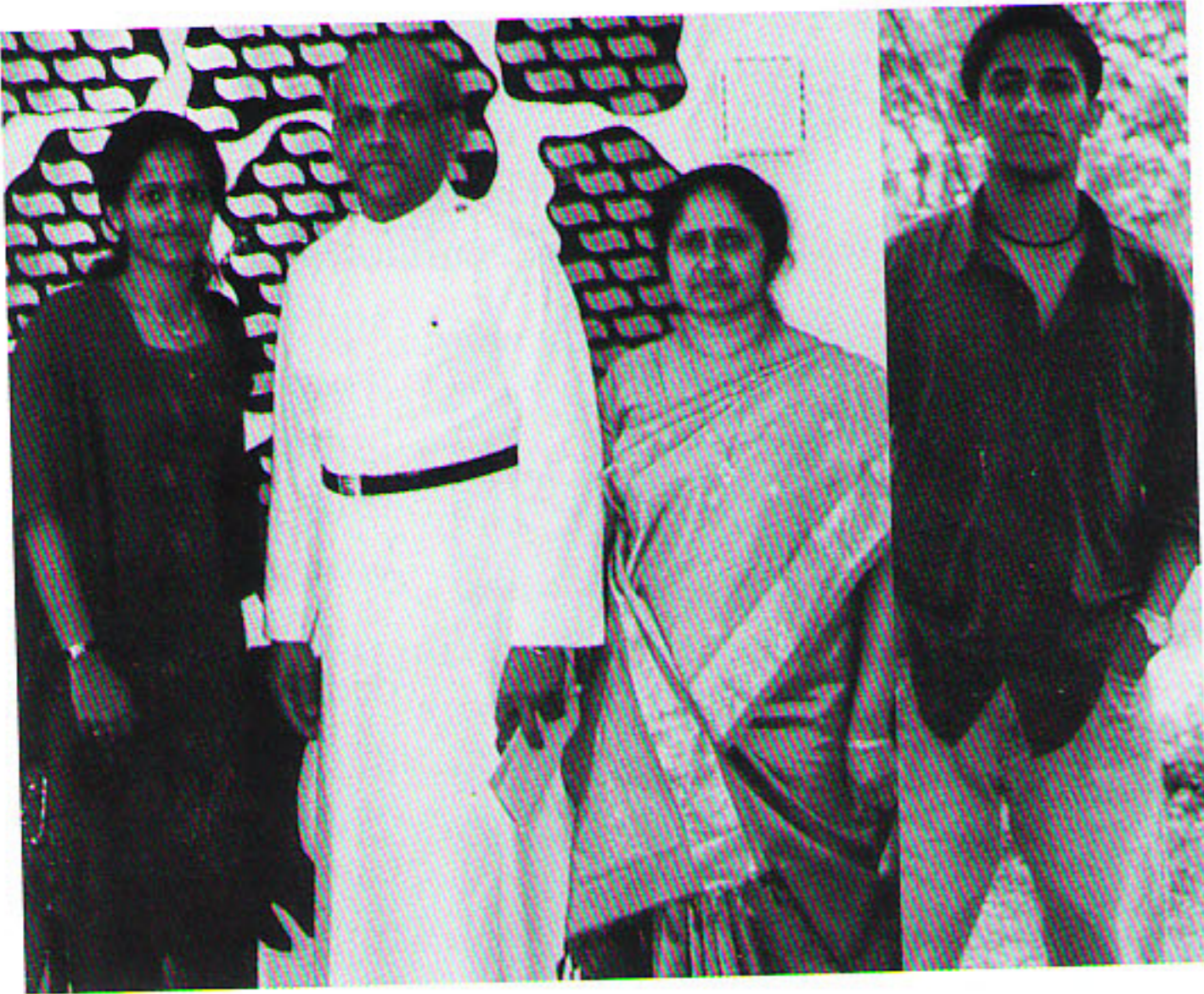
Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham presented the annual report and audited statement of accounts for the year 2005 for approval by the Assembly. The treasurer, Mr. T. A. Mathew presented the budget for the year 2006. After deliberations, the assembly approved the accounts and report for 2005 and the budget for 2006. Thirumeni released three study booklets by giving copies to Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham: A Brief History Of The Church – A Biblical View With Special Reference To The Mar Thoma Church, The Liturgy Of The Malankara Mar Thoma Church, and Enriching Marital And Family Life. The Assembly expressed sincere thanks to Rev. Joseph Kuruvilla, Mar Thoma Seminary, Kottayam, Rev. Manoj Zachariah, Staten Island MTC, and Dr. P. V. Cherian, Detroit MTC for their hard work in writing and compiling these study booklets. A brochure

Diocesan Secretary. The Assembly also expressed sincere thanks to Vicar Rev. Manoj M. Zachariah, the Parish Executive Committee, and volunteers who coordinated the arrangements for the Assembly meeting and made it a very pleasant experience for those who attended.



Atty. Lal Varghese, Council Member

FAREWELL TO REV. DR. K. A. ABRAHAM



Come May and we will be bidding adieu to one of the most erudite theological scholars in our diocese. Time has come for Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham Achen and Kochamma to return to India after 4 years in the service of the Diocese of North America and Europe. A remarkable person, not only for his prolific scholarly outputs but also for his soft-spoken

decisiveness in administrative areas, Achen is well known to everyone in this diocese as the Diocesan Secretary. However, what not many would know is that he was serving as vicar of St. Thomas MTC, Yonkers, NY, when he was chosen to take charge as Diocesan Secretary. Even when he was serving as vicar of St. Thomas parish, he was an integral part of the Mar Thoma Messenger both as a major contributor and editorial board member. For his numerous insightful contributions, for his invaluable and serene guidance, and above all, for his simplicity, The Mar Thoma Messenger editorial and managing committee salutes him and bids him a tearful farewell.

It is not only K.A. Abraham Achen that we are going to miss, but our very dear Kochamma too. Her unfailing cheerfulness and innocent humor often mellowed the somber atmosphere of the Sinai Center.

Achen is being transferred to the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary in Kottayam, Kerala as professor. So much as we would miss their presence amongst us, we are also gladdened by the thought they will soon be reunited with their 2 children and other family back in Kerala. The Mar Thoma Messenger team wishes both Achen and Kochamma the very best in their continued service in the Lord.

'SNEHATHEERAM': NEW MISSION PROJECT OF MTC DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH

The HIV/AIDS center 'Snehatheeram' at Manjalumood in Tamil Nadu, a project of the Mar Thoma Church, and sponsored by the Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese has begun as a vision of Evangelist P. T. Thomas (Vinod). He started working in that area about eight years ago, after he witnessed the death of two AIDS victims. The Evangelist was touched by the two young orphan children left by their parents who died due to AIDS. Evangelist Vinod realized that the children need a place to live, and cared for. So he mobi-

lized the sources and helped them to settle down and to continue their life. Since the AIDS became more prominent in the area, the Mar Thoma Church became more

involved with establishing a centre where people suffering from the disease could come together for awareness, proper health care, and re-discover the love of Jesus Christ. MTC Farmers Branch, Dallas which is already undertaking the ITC Kasergode project since 2000 has decided to sponsor this new project of the Church, and contributed \$10,000 to build the center which was inaugurated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa.

The 'Snehatheeram' centre currently serves as a place for AIDS patients to gather for prayer and fellowship once a month at which time they receive food and health kits. The centre is currently responsible for all the needs of 60 families who live within a 25km radius in the border of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The number of families using the help from this center is rapidly growing due to the great work being done there. The volunteers at the centre assure that all the families have a place to live, enough healthy food to eat, and are remaining in good health. Their work includes building homes for those who do not have one, and fixing up the homes of those that do not have a proper roof, kitchen, or bathroom. The centre also provides enough food for those patients and their families who need it. During the meeting, the centre distributed one months worth of food supplies such as rice and beans. The centre is also responsible for the care of each patient's health and welfare.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar



lized the sources and helped them to settle down and to continue their life. Since the AIDS became more prominent in the area, the Mar Thoma Church became more

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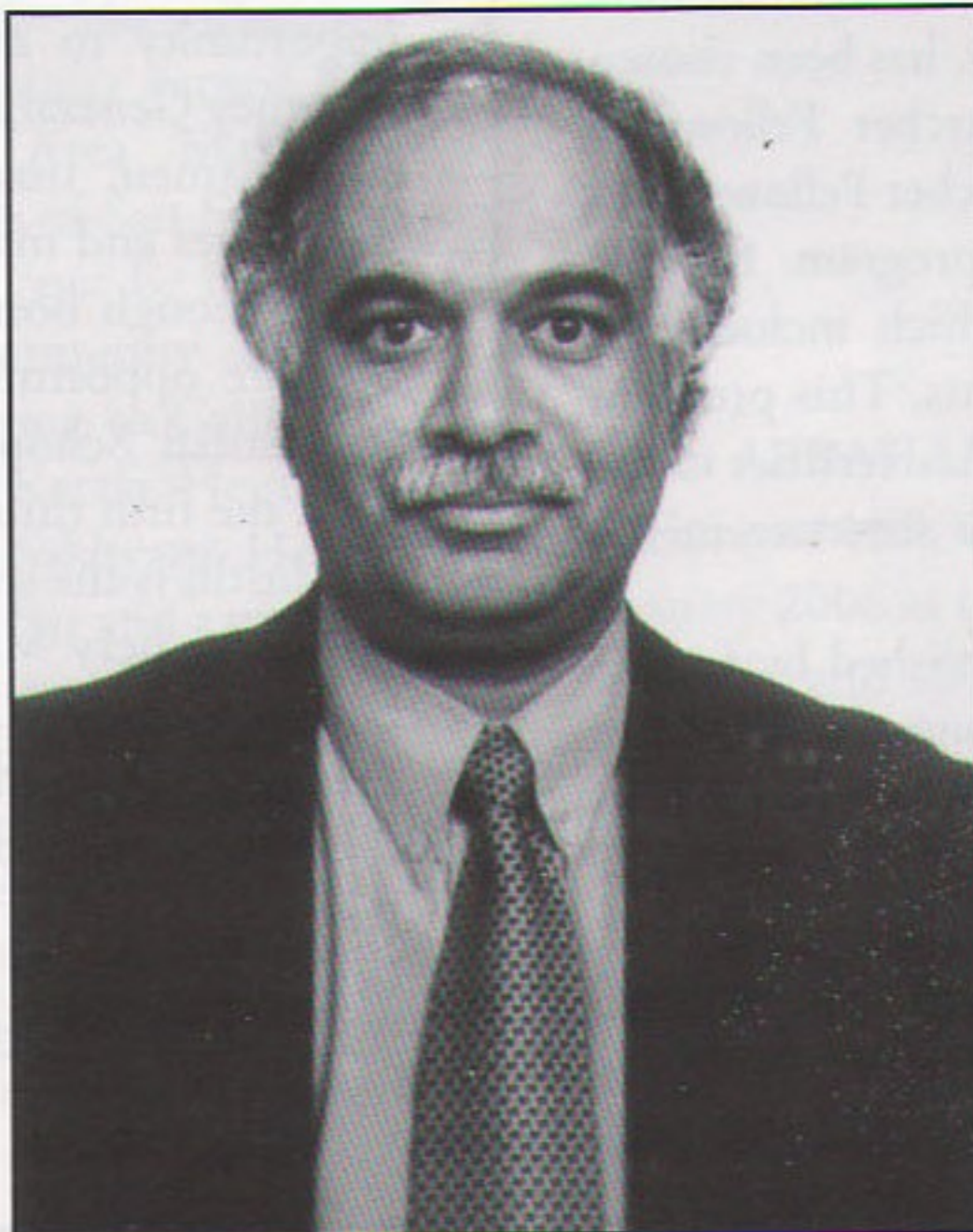


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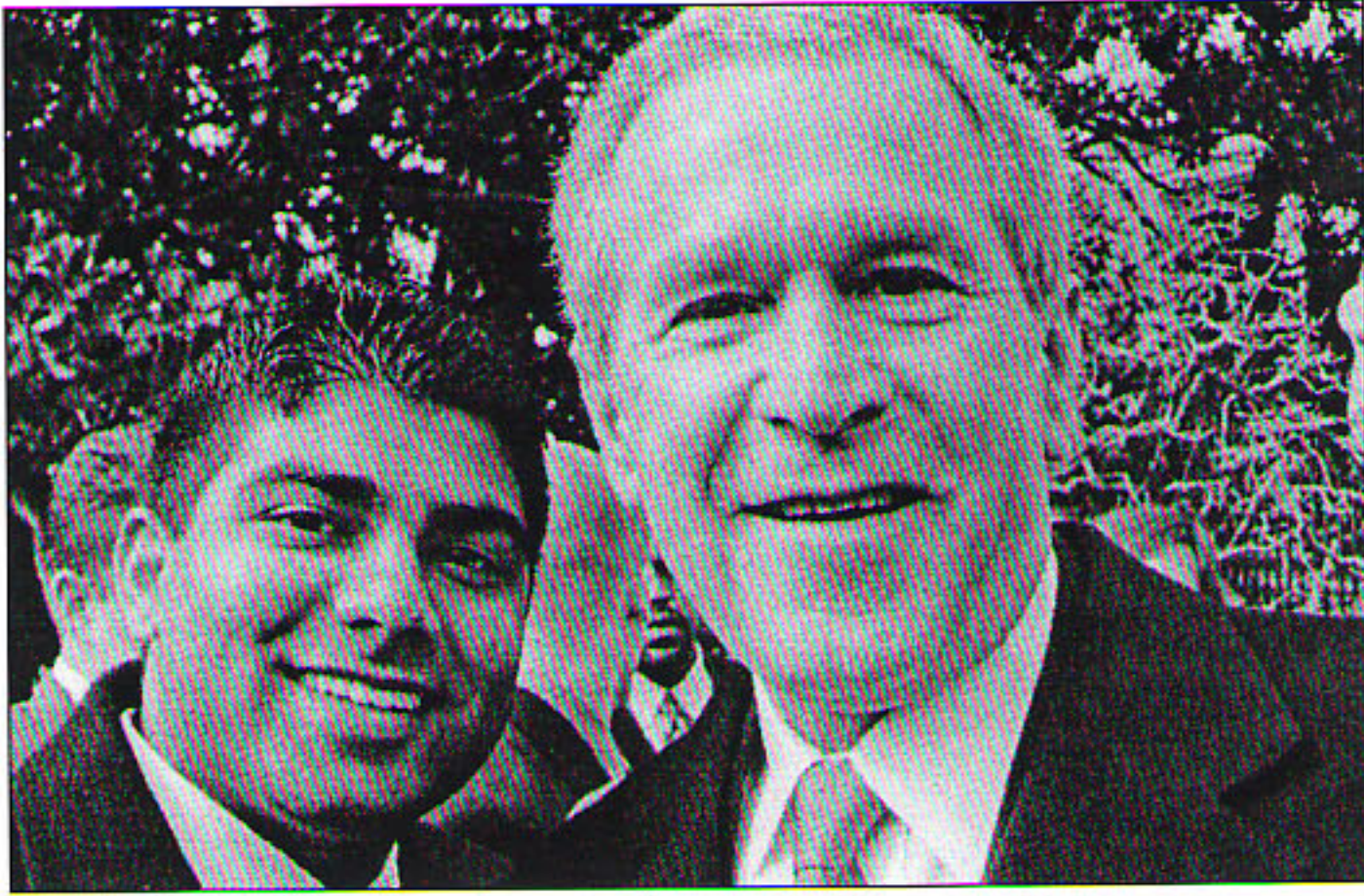
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MALAYALEE STUDENT CHOSEN FOR THE BILL ARCHER FELLOWSHIP

The Archer Fellowship: Preparing Future Leaders for America and the World

Justin Andrews Ulahannan, a Malayalee Marthomite student from University of Texas at Dallas, has been chosen to participate in the prestigious Bill Archer Fellowship Program in Washington D.C. The Bill Archer Fellowship is a Washington D.C. based academic program for the University of Texas System, a system which includes 15 campuses and more than 170,000 students. This program selects two to three students from various universities in the University of Texas System to spend one semester in the nation's capital.

The Bill Archer Fellowship was established by former U.S. Representative Bill Archer, a Congressman from Houston, Texas, and a former Chairman of the House Ways & Means Committee.

For the Bill Archer Fellowship Spring 2006 semester, 22 students from the entire state of Texas were selected. Justin Andrews Ulahannan was the only Indian, let alone Malayalee, to be selected this semester. He is in his final

year at UT Dallas majoring in Business-Finance. Justin is a member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch and its Youth League. Justin is a very active student at UT Dallas. He was the Vice President of the Financial Management Association and a student in the Management Honors Program. He is listed in the National Dean's list. He was also a member of Pre-Law Society and an active member of the Indian-Pakistani Student Association.

The students in this program will have the opportunity to intern in places such as the United Nations Information Centre, the U.S. Department of State, many offices within the White House and on Capitol Hill, federal agencies, and international organizations.

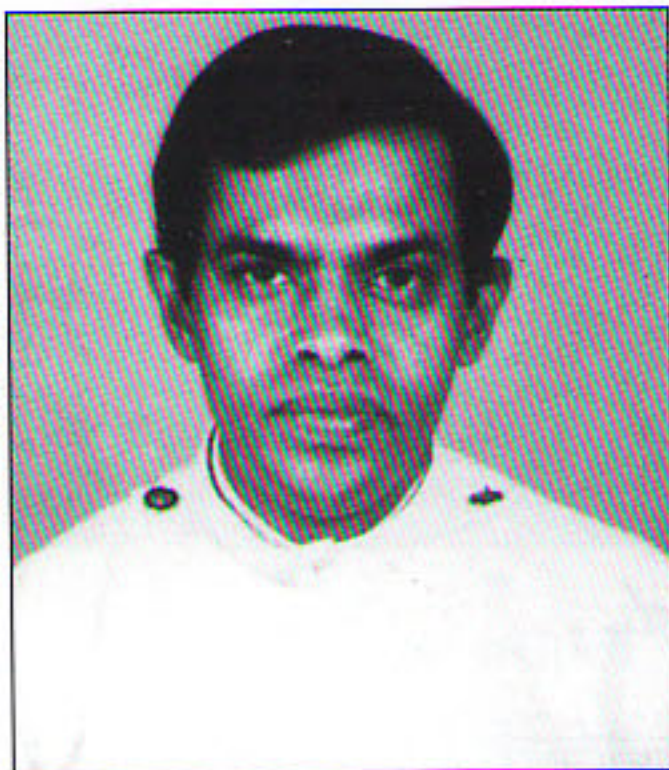
Presently, Justin is doing his internship at the U.S.-India Business Council, an organization that seeks to promote American commercial interests in India and Indian commercial interest in America. This organization has played a significant role in President Bush's recent visit to India. While in Washington, Justin has had the opportunity to meet with President George Bush, U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, numerous senators and congressmen, many high ranking American and Indian dignitaries and many CEOs from both America and India.

Although born and raised in Dallas, USA, Justin had the rare opportunity to attend St. Thomas Mar Thoma Residential School in Trivandrum, Kerala for four years from the fifth through the eighth grade.

Justin is the son of Mr. M. J. Andrews from Kottayam, of the Anchery Madathiparampil family, who is the Choir Director of the Marthoma Church of Dallas Farmers Branch. Justin's mother is Mollykutty from Kottayam, of the Manarcadu Thalachirackul family. Justin has one sister, Jasmin, who is currently attending Texas Women's University.

The Bill Archer Fellowship Website: <http://www.archercenter.org/index.html>

REV. VARGHESE MATHEW, DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEMBER FROM SOUTHWEST CENTER B



The Diocesan Council nominated Rev. Varghese Mathew, Vicar of Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston as the Diocesan Council member from Southwest Center B since that position was vacant.

YOUNG ANGELS PROJECT (YAP)

The Young Angels Project (YAP) established by Dr. Babu Varughese Foundation (Florida) aims to bring a touch of comfort and joy in the lives of cancer-affected children 12 years and under. YAP is seeking applications from parents of afflicted children, attested by religious leaders or any member of local repute, for a one-time monetary gift of up to \$100 (US) to be used to buy their child's favorite toy and/or food. Application and more information are available at www.youngangelsproject.org or you may write to Young Angels Project, 13221 Parkside Terrace, Cooper City, Florida 33330, USA.

OBITUARIES

Adv. JOHN PHILIPOSE THENGUMCHERRY

Adv. John K. Philipose Thengumcherry (Johnny), of San Francisco Mar Thoma Parish died on September 7, 2005.



He was born on September 4, 1939 at Vayalathala, Pathanamthitta. He was the Vice President of the San Francisco Mar Thoma Church from 2004 until the day he was called to the Lord. As the Vice President, he set a new standard for all to follow by his dedication, selfless commitment and compassion. Even during

his sickness, he tried to take care of the needs of the church and its members. Through his service, he set the example of a true steward and committed Christian. He had been a resident of California since the early 1970s. His willingness to support the Kerala immigrant community earned him the nickname "Mayor". The Bay Area Malayalee community and the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco Bay Area will miss him. His legacy shall not be forgotten and his service to the church and community shall be cherished for years to come. Before coming to California, he was active in the socio-political life of Kerala. He started his public life in the All Kerala Balajana Sakhyam. He was a leading advocate in the Pathanamthitta Bar and a member of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee.

His funeral was held at San Francisco Mar Thoma Church. He is survived by his wife Jainy and son Jimmy. May God Almighty provide them the peace to go forward.

Rev. James M. Koshy Veeramala, Vicar

MASTER BENJAMIN T. JOSEPH (15), son of Mr. Joboy Joseph and Mrs. Achamma Joseph, members of the St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, passed away on February 7, 2006 and was laid to rest at the Glen Oaks memorial Gardens in Oakville, Ontario, on February 10, 2006.

Ben was born on April 23, 1990 in Toronto. He loved to read, play video games, and ride his bike



with his friends. He was actively involved in various sports including soccer, tennis and basketball.

In May 2004, Ben was diagnosed with cancer. Through radiation, several rounds of chemotherapy and multiple surgeries Ben remained positive and determined. He continued to attend high school and achieved good grades and won awards. Although Ben enjoyed over six months of remission, doctors discovered a new tumor in his lungs in November 2005.

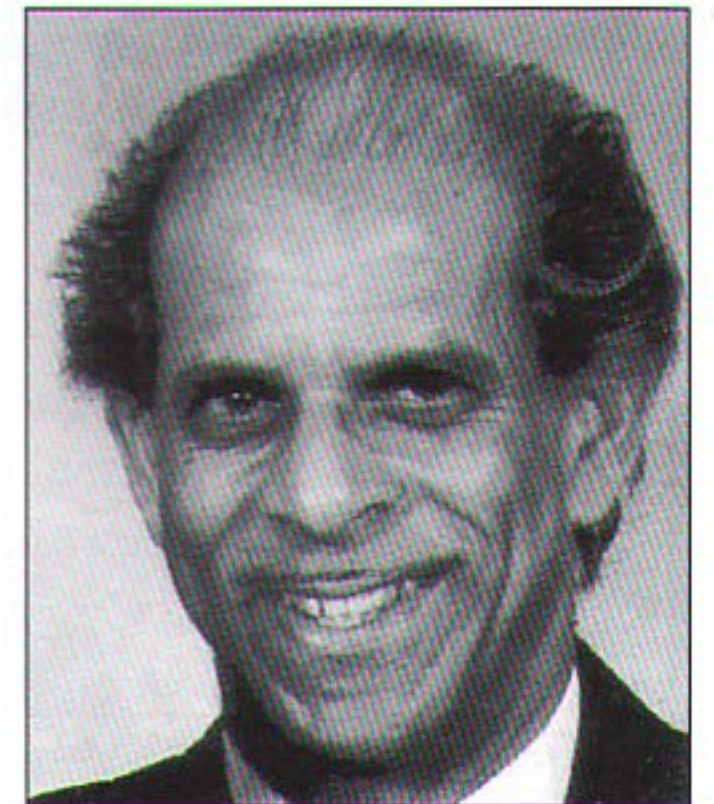
Early this year Ben decided to spend the rest of his days at home with his family and friends. On February 7, 2006, Ben was called to his heavenly abode in the presence of his loving family.

Ben deeply loved and cared for his kid brother Ranjit who misses him very much.

Mrs. Susan Johnson, St. Mathew's MTC Toronto

MR. ABRAHAM MATHEWS (No. 6 Kirkland Cres. Richmond Hill, Canada) was called to Eternal Rest on 23rd January 2006 at the age of 66. He is survived by Annamma, his wife and daughter Dr. Reena Mathews. The Funeral Service was conducted on 26th January 2006 in Toronto.

He was from Chengannur (Udayankaliyil, Pennukkara, Chengannur). Abraham Mathews otherwise known as Mathukkutty was one of the pioneer members of the Canadian Mar Thoma Church Toronto. He loved God, Church and fellow beings sincerely and was a practicing Christian. He had been very active and worked diligently for the parish through various executive positions. He was the Vice President of the parish for 2006. As a Parish we greatly appreciate his contributions and shall miss his presence. We express our deepest condolence.



Rev. Mathew M. Thomas, Vicar

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SEHION MAR THOMA CHURCH, DALLAS



Sehion Mar Thoma Church was inaugurated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa on July 25, 2004 to meet the spiritual needs of the growing Mar Thoma community living in the northeastern part of Dallas. The Church is the newest member of the Mar Thoma family in Dallas. It took a giant leap of faith by purchasing 4.17 acres

located in Plano, Texas for our future church building within a year and half of our inauguration. We are a small but strong congregation of forty-five families. Our aim is to have fellowship in our own church. Members are driven by our common need to fulfill God's intended purpose for us. We are driven by that purpose to pay off the land, to build in wisdom, to organize and to strengthen our church foundation, and to attract believers to build and follow through on our combined ministry initiatives. The road ahead will be rough at times and doubts may rise but we are going to look to God and each other for support. We are ready to face the challenges ahead: "For everyone who asks,

receives; he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Mathew 7: 8) As we take baby steps to the next phase of building our church, we pray to God to always keep us focused on our mission.

Mrs. Beena Varnan, Diocessn Assembly Member,

ST. PAUL'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, DALLAS



The Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa visited our parish from March 16th to 19th. On the 19th, Thirumeni officiated the Holy Communion service where he also conducted the first communicant rites to thirteen members of our church. Before offering the first

communion, the communicants were presented with lighted candles to symbolize the church motto "lighted to lighten" so that the first communicants can be a light for others. Thirumeni also presented them with bibles as a gift from the parish. After the Holy Communion, lunch was served to all the parishioners by the parents of the first communicants.

In 2005, St Paul's MTC bought 3.2 acres of land for building a new church. On March 18th, Thirumeni had a dinner meeting with the executive committee and the building committees together to discuss the progress of the new church building project. During his visit, Thirumeni

urged the members to complete the project as soon as possible so that he can dedicate the new church during his next visit.

Thomas Easo, Diocesan Council Member

THE MARTHOMA CHURCH OF SOUTH FLORIDA—CHURCH DEDICATION



The Dedication of the Church "Blessing of the Sneebe"

The dedication of the renovated church building of the Mar Thoma Church of South Florida was held on Friday, March 10, 2006 by our Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos. The church building was severely



"Handing over the Key" to the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa.

Tharakan (Vicar), Fr. George John, Fr. George Daniel, Fr. John Melepuram, Pastor John Thomas, the Honorable Mayor of Davie, Mr. Tom Truex, and the Broward County



Mayor Tom Truex, handing over the "Declaration of March 10th as Mar Thoma Day in the City of Davie" to Coorilos Thirumeni.

damaged by hurricane Wilma in 2005 but by the Grace of God and the untiring efforts of many people, the parish could renovate and beautify the church building within a few months. The dedication was followed by Holy Communion and a public meeting. Rev. T. K. Alexander



The Church Choir with Coorilos Thirumeni.



Public Meeting: (L to R): Mr. Gerry, Mrs. Susanne Gunzburger, Fr. George John, Fr. George Daniel, Coorilos Thirumeni, Hon. Tom Truex and Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan.

Commissioner, Mrs. Susanne Gunzburger felicitated the function. Thirumeni in his message congratulated the Vicar and parish members for their commitment and contribution and called for an authentic Christian witness in the community. The honorable Mayor of Davie, Mr. Truex commended the parish for its leadership and contribution to the social, spiritual and cultural development of the community. He declared March 10 as "Mar Thoma Day" in the city of Davie and handed the declaration to Thirumeni. The parish is celebrating its Silver Jubilee Year with various programs which include the Home for Homeless project and missionary support in India. Thirumeni unveiled the Plaque listing the names of Vicars who served in the parish to date. Mementoes were presented to various people for their valuable contributions. Mr. Rajan George gave the vote of thanks which was followed by a fellowship dinner.

Rev. Alexander Tharakan, Vicar

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I will be greatly thankful if you will publish this letter in the forthcoming "Messenger". I would like to know the theological perspective, biblical teaching and church's position on the following.

1. Is it appropriate to clap, sing, praise and circumambulate the oil lamp ("Nilavilaku") calling upon the names of various Hindu deities while singing the "Kaikottikali", "Patira-Poo-Choodal", "Thiruvathira Kali", etc. when the proceeds are for building a worship place for God? (See Exodus 23: 130).

Further, I understand that all these forms are expressions of adoration and worship of "Siva Linga," (See quote below.) or praise of pagan deities.

I came across many Biblical passages such as Exodus 23:13, prohibiting even taking the names of pagan gods with our tongue such as many incidents recorded in 1 Samuel 15: 1, Kings 18:20 onwards, and affirmation we often declare like Joshua 24: 14 onwards.

2. Is it right to light the "Nilavilaku" before the beginning of any church-sponsored functions? I think it is indeed calling Agnidevi to witness the pooja, especially praising Saraswathi, who is worshiped as the goddess of all arts, music and culture.

Will our theologians, biblical scholars and teachers of church doctrines, individually or collectively answer these two

questions? It will be greatly appreciated. I think it is time that we preach and teach Christian principles through every action. Without expressing the peace that Jesus brought, or the message of the Cross, Salvation, abundant life and eternal life, we are reverting to our Old nature of more than two thousand years. We are the light of the world. We do not need to light a lamp to become lighted.

Thanks.

Abraham

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"This Thiruvathirakali is a very popular dance form of Kerala. It is usually performed in connection with the Native festival called Onam and Thiruvathira. The festival Thiruvathira comes in Dhanu Maasam (January). Thiruvathirakali is also called as 'Kaikottikali'. According to Hindu mythology, Parvati performed rigorous penances in order to win Shiva as her husband. Shiva, pleased with her commitment agreed to take Parvati as his wife on this vary day of Thiruvathira. Therefore, on this day, married and unmarried women perform the dance yearning for the well-being of their husband and for acquiring a good husband respectively. It is a kind of ritual performed to ensure happy and harmonious marital life."

Smt. Polayil Gaurikutamma (<http://www.freewebs.com/polayil/>)

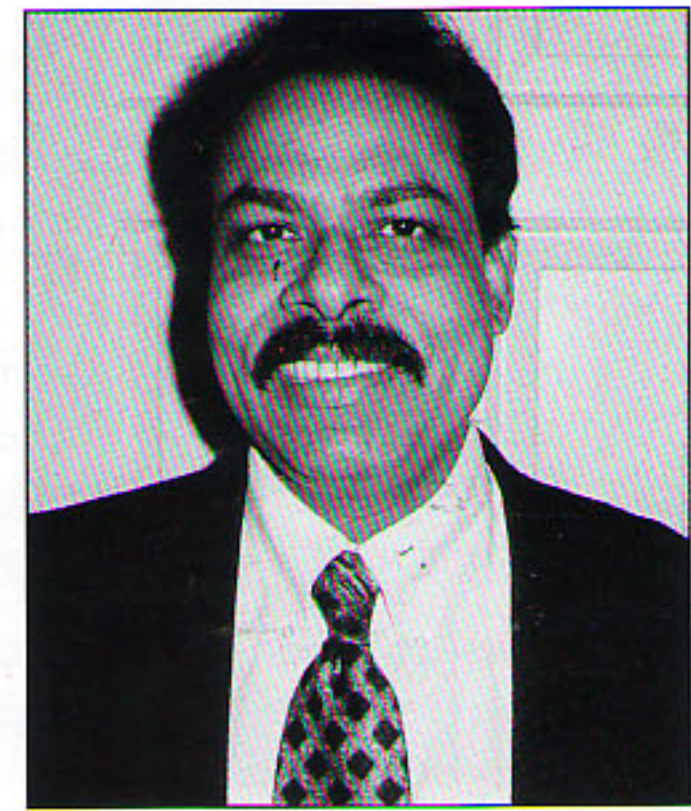
Matrimonial

Marthomite parents settled in USA invite marriage proposals for their daughter, 26 years old and 5'4." She is a doctor currently in her first year of residency. We are seeking responses from professionally qualified young men with background in Medicine, Law or Engineering with good moral and spiritual upbringing. Please send all correspondence to DrIndiaUSA@aol.com or call (864)346-3875.

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposal for their daughter 27 years old, Pharm.D., born and raised in USA, God fearing and family oriented. We are looking for professionally qualified degree holders with good steady job, God fearing and with nice family background. Please respond with a recent photograph and bio-data to: jtphilip@hotmail.com or call (718) 761-1295.

Editorial

Growing up in a village ambience in Kerala was exciting and enriching in its own ways. The sleepy valleys and the green hill tops, soothing songs of the tropical birds, passing noises of animals, rumbling of monsoon rains, roaring of northern winds, giggly sounds of the waters of the streams and rivers, ringing of the church bells from the nearby churches, rare noise of an airplane, frightening strike of lightning and rumbling thunder—all creating a magical world surrounded by people knowing and caring for each other. Life felt more simple and laid back with fewer projects to worry about and an array of chores to do and enjoy. Times have changed and we with them. Since leaving that safe nest, life has been drawn to the fast track with not-enough time in the day to finish all the items on a list of things to do. For many people, modern life is filled with tension, anxiety, irritation, and worry with very little chances to unwind and relax. Such a worrisome life even drains our health. This stands true even for the ones who grew up in different cultures and different countries. Friends who promised that they will be there when you need them for support may turn their back on you, making you feel isolated and unworthy. The past, struggles of today and the worries of tomorrow all come together to haunt one in a way that can get one frustrated and depressed. Finding a way out is not easy, unless you turn to the Bible. “The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 31:8). What great words to remember!! Stand strong with the help of the one who strengthens you!!



On a global basis, today's church leaders and ministers have a lot more to plan and do than in the past. Dealing with the issues and concerns of the parishioners and church members, young and old, and at the same time finding time and opportunities to relate to the community, are major challenges. Successful leadership requires strong and continued support and coaching. Support from families, friends, and higher leadership of the church is very critical. Working together to create an atmosphere filled with prayer, faith, trust, and Christian enjoyment requires strategic planning and implementation. Although the Christian faith underwent minimal changes, practicing church ministry based on the old style may not work for the modern times. To be effective, innovative ways needs to be designed with prayerful thoughts and faithful actions. Being fully loyal and accountable to God and people makes one a better minister, always!

I am thrilled to see that our parishes are establishing spacious and comfortable church buildings. Members of Ascension Mar Thoma Church in Philadelphia are very proud of their new church building, which is the largest in size and capacity, compared to all our present church buildings in this diocese. One of our smallest parishes, Jacksonville Mar Thoma Church in Florida, just bought a church building of their own and is in the process of constructing the altar and other needed conveniences. Horeb Mar Thoma Church of Colorado, a small parish with only 22 families just acquired a beautiful church building in Northglenn, Colorado. It is also good to see that our mission work at parish and diocese levels are progressing very well. Some parishes have taken the initiative to contribute substantial sums for the Mexico Mission project and other projects within and outside our diocese. I sincerely congratulate those who are working hard to secure the needed support, especially the youth, and those who have contributed financially beyond their capacity. Often these individuals go unrecognized. I hope and pray that more members who are well capable of contributing will extend their hands and funds to support our combined activities. God bless!!!

Eapen Daniel



Diocese of North America and Europe
XXIV Mar Thoma Family Conference
Hosted by: Chicago Mar Thoma Church

Date: July 20-23, 2006
Venue: Mar Thoma Nagar, Chicago (*Holiday Inn Crystal Lake Illinois*)
Theme: *“Live a Life Worthy of the Lord” (Colossians 1:10)*

The Vicar and the members of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church warmly welcome you to the XXIV Mar Thoma Family Conference of the Diocese of North America & Europe. It is indeed a privilege and great pleasure for us to host this conference for the third time. We hope that this conference will be a spiritually enriching experience for all the participants.

Leaders

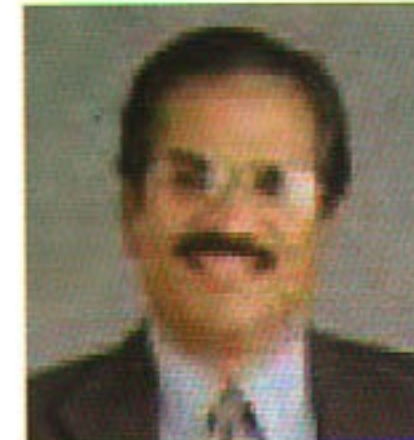
In addition to the Achens and the lay resource of the diocese, the following are the main leaders of the conference.



Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa



Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa



Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse



Rev. Dave Lee



Rev. Dr. Jacob Thomas



Ms. Jody Ward



Mr. Jim Austin

Conference Highlights

Prominent and Inspirational Speakers
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 Colorful Inaugural Ceremony
 Witnessing Session
 Entertainment & Talent Night
 Sports & Recreation
 Variety of Indian and American Cuisine

For more information

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Mr. N. M. Philip, Vice President	847 795 1678
Mr. Jose Varghese, Secretary	847 813 9888
Mr. Achenkunju Mathew, Treasurer	847 749 2482
Mr. Shani Abraham, Accountant	847 673 5215

Registration form can be downloaded from
 Conference website:

www.marthomafamilyconference2006.org



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