



MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

OCTOBER 2006

Twenty Five Years of Publication



Jubilee Edition



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Mar Thoma Messenger

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Message from The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan



Dearly beloved in Christ,

Greetings to the members of the Diocese of North America and Europe. With delight, I understand that the Mar Thoma Messenger is celebrating her 25th Anniversary. The Messenger, true to her name, serves as an official voice and link of the diocese. In an era wherein communication tends to become more and more individualistic and constrained, the Messenger aims at fostering a sense of community and wholeness.

At the very core of the word, communication, is the notion of engendering a communitarian ethic. It is only when such an ethic is formulated and effectuated that we can actualize the reality of the Kingdom of God.

May God shower blessings and grace on the endeavors of the Mar Thoma Messenger in the days to come.

Yours in Christ,

Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Message from The Rt Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Metropolitan



I am delighted to know that the Mar Thoma Messenger publication is crossing 25 years of its service to the Diocese of North America and Europe. It is a noble and profound idea to publish a special Jubilee issue to mark this bright milestone.

I recall my first visit to USA on September 2nd 1965 and leaving the country on September 1st 1966. I had the privilege to receive my Master's and my honorary degrees from Virginian Episcopal Seminary in 1966 and 1984 respectively.

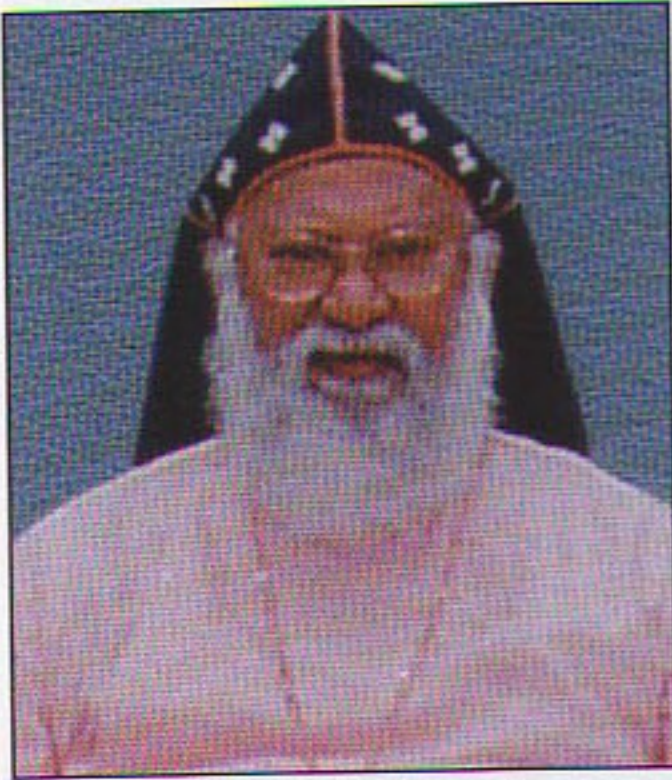
I also had the opportunity to be at one of the family conferences held at Florida at the turnover of the century during the term of the present Diocesan Bishop. I have noticed the fast growth of our church on that continent between my visits. I am fascinated to see the commendable advancement of the parishes and Diocesan projects ever since my first visit. I am sure that Messenger played a key role in interlinking many activities at diocesan and parish levels. Wish

all blessings to the Mar Thoma Messenger, parish, and the Diocesan programs. We have to remember that, in the midst of the affluence, not to forget the exhortation of St. Peter in the 2nd letter at the 1st chapter verse 10 "Brethren, let your call and the election be a daily experience". If so the promise in the 11th verse follows.

May the Lord's blessings be with you all!!

Joseph Mar Irenaeus, Suffragan Metropolitan

Message from The Rt Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Greetings! It is indeed a joy to join all of you in celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Mar Thoma Messenger. The Messenger has a significant role in the growth of the Mar Thoma community in North America and Europe. Messenger enabled the Diaspora community in this part of the world to link with each other and also expresses spiritual thoughts in a unified manner.

The Messenger gave a platform to express ourselves and to contribute in the healthy development of our thinking pattern and also remain updated on the developments of the Mar Thoma community in the western hemisphere. The Messenger enabled our youngsters to get a feel of our unique traditions and to be in touch with the church. It provided a medium for our youths to voice their concerns on the faith and practices of the Mar Thoma Church.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of this great publication, I pray that we will be able to go much forward in making the Messenger a blessing to all our members. My appreciation to all the editorial team who have toiled in making the Messenger a great source of inspiration through the past 25 years, and my best wishes to the present editorial team and those in the future.

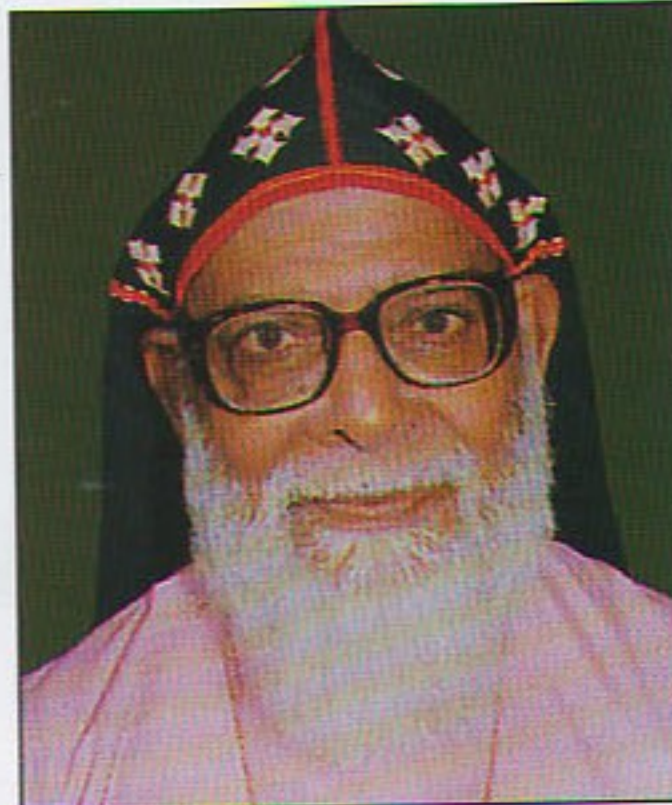
Your's in Christ,

Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Suffragan Metropolitan

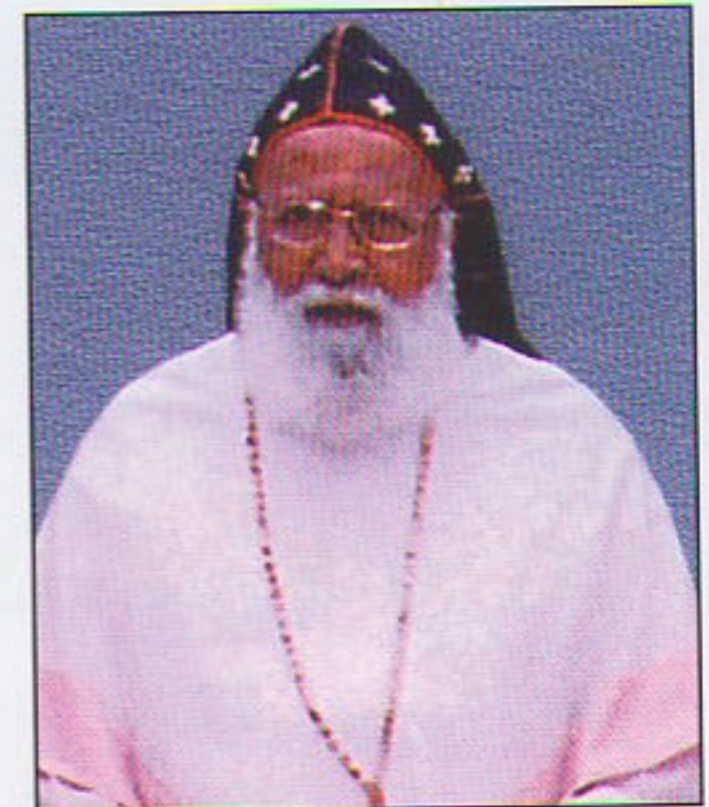
OUR CURRENT & FORMER DIOCESAN BISHOPS



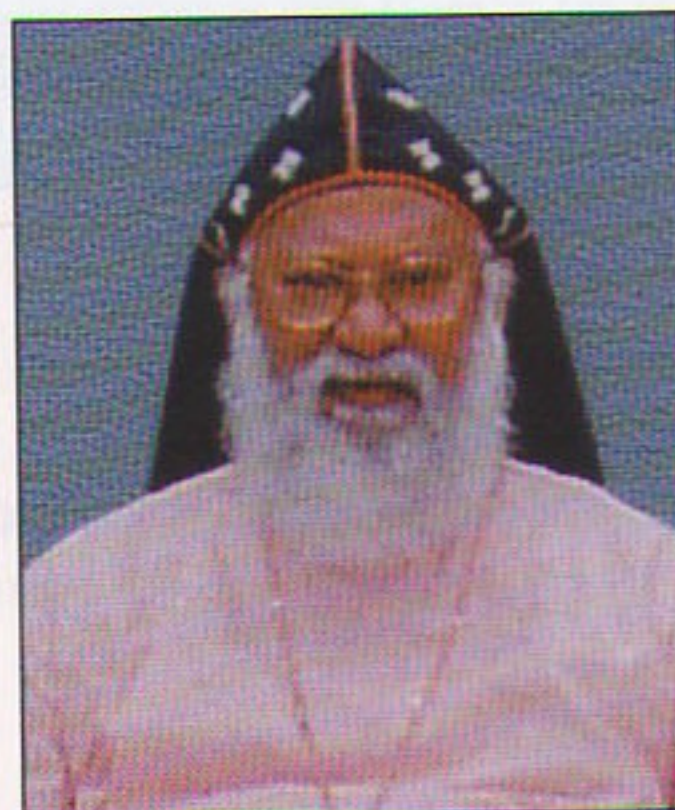
(late) The Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan



(late) The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan



The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan
(1994-2001)
First Resident Bishop



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa
(2001 To Present)

Happy 55th Birthday



**The Messenger joins the family of
The Diocese of North America & Europe
in wishing a very happy and blessed birthday
on November 25th to our beloved
Coorilos Metrachan**

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The Mar Thoma Messenger is celebrating her Silver Jubilee this year. In order to commemorate the Silver Jubilee, the Editorial Board of the Messenger and the Diocesan Council decided to mark this auspicious occasion through the publication of a special issue.

In examining the course of history for the past twenty-five years, it is quite evident that we are living in a rapidly changing world. The world is facing multi-polar realities with small and regional threats springing up throughout the world. From a relatively slow communicational model, we now live in the age of a global communication apparatus known as the Internet. To be sure, world history has been quite paradoxical in development. It is in this context that genuine communication is needed.

The purpose of communication, at its very core, is to engender community. It is through a network of inter-personal relationships that a community is formed. To this extent, the Mar Thoma Messenger has been effective in fostering genuine relationships between the Diocese and parishes and among members within North America, Europe and Canada. Quite certainly, with the tremendous population and institutional growth of our Diocese, the Messenger has been both a catalyst for, and a part of, this exponential growth.

I commend those who have played an integral role in the growth of the Messenger from her cradle. On the other hand, we must remember that as the Diocese grows, we must strive to have the Mar Thoma Messenger in every household of the Diocese. The Messenger not only provides the news of the Diocese and various parishes, but also contains life-changing and transformative articles, Bible-studies, crossword puzzles, and even household tips.

May God enable us to move forward in meeting the goal of reaching the entire world with the Good News of the gospel, and through the Mar Thoma Messenger, reaching our entire parishioners with the news that the Church is moving forward in her work for the Kingdom of God.

May God bless you.

Yours in His ministry,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Coorilos Metrachan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Coorilos Metrachan



BEGINNING YEARS IN THE DIOCESE

Rev A. G. Mathew

It gives me great pleasure to note that The Mar Thoma Messenger has completed 25 illustrious years in October, 2006. I feel privileged to be a part of the silver jubilee issue. My memory races back to August 29th, 1984, the day I took charge as the second secretary of 'North America - Canada - U.K.' Zone, from the out going secretary Rev. N. M Cherian (Vicar General), in the presence of Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius, at the Mar Thoma Parsonage, Staten Island.

I vividly recall Thirumeni's keen interest to publish 'The Messenger' thrice a year, owing to his deep concern for our growing newly immigrated community. I still cherish those words of concern from Thirumeni. After the sudden demise of Thirumeni, when The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan took charge of the diocese, His Grace also insisted on the publishing of the

Messenger, if possible quarterly.

The far sightedness and zeal of Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius about the Mar Thoma Messenger encouraged us to weather the challenges. Since then, the magazine has created a sense of belongingness and motivation, for both generations, young and old, to hold on to and share the faith, values, visions and missions of the Mar Thoma Church, though away from their homeland.

Since the articles and views of that time projected the aspirations, struggles and challenges of the members, it gave valuable guidelines to the Aghens to extend significant pastoral care to our community. The Messenger was thus, an effective means of communication and comfort and a tool equipping them with the strength of faith.

In the midst of all the struggles and ongoing issues in the parishes, it was hard to find time, effort and resources to publish each issue. However, the contributions of Dr. John P. Lincoln (treasurer), Rev. P. M. George (Vicar General), Dr. T. M. Thomas, Dr. P. V. Cherian, Dr. George Zachariah, Mr. P. C. Philip and Mr. P. G. George and Mr. K. V. Thomas were remarkable and relentless. I would definitely contribute the current success to the sincere prayers of our people too.

With great satisfaction I look back and praise the Lord Jesus with a thankful heart for using me as a tool during the early years, in some form, with all my limitations.

I too join with the diocese to thank God for the ministry and contributions of all our Bishops, Clergy and the masses. My sincere acknowledgments to Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa and all who took the initiative to bring out a silver jubilee issue of 'The Mar Thoma Messenger', especially the editorial board, managing committee, the diocesan council, all Aghens and laity.

With humble prayers,

Yours in His Service,

Rev. A. G. Mathew

MAR THOMA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

P. O. BOX 287, KOTTAYAM 686 001 • KERALA STATE • Telephone 0481-256 9291

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Rev. Dr. P. G. George,
Dean of Studies

I am very happy to congratulate you on the 25th Anniversary of the official publication of the Diocese of North America and Europe, the 'Mar Thoma Messenger'. I am privileged to have been part of this ministry as a member of the Editorial Board in the '80s and as the Manager in the '90s.

As the Secretary to the Diocese, I was directly involved with the publication. With the purchase of a new Diocesan Centre at Richboro, Pennsylvania, the Mar Thoma Messenger was published from the Diocesan office. I remember, with a lot of appreciation, all who helped me in writing, typing, and even in sorting and mailing out the Messenger. They were unsung heroes.

The Messenger had a great role in building the Diocese of North America and Europe to this stature. The Messenger has been a catalyst in forging unity among our Congregations and parishes scattered across the continents. The Messenger is a bridge. The early immigrant Mar Thoma community did not have any social or religious identity here. The Messenger was a symbol

and tangible expression of their identity in that part of the land. It was their own publication, with articles, news, and pictures of their community. The Messenger is a Vision held dear and welcomed by the people of the Diocese.

I pray that God continue to bless this ministry and make it a blessing for the parent generation and for the new generations of the Diocese. I wish all success to the people who work hard to see every issue come out on time. Our God is a 'moving God' in the midst of His people. God's care for His people is real and will keep you all in faith, hope, love, and peace.

In His Service,

P. G. George Achen

Phone: 0481-256 3928 (Res) • Fax: 0481-256 3921 • E-mail: mttseminary@yahoo.com



THE MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

Rev. Oommen Philip

MESSAGE

I am very much happy to know that the Mar Thoma Messenger, of the Diocese of North America & Europe is celebrating its jubilee. My heartfelt congratulations to all its present editorial team and those who put their efforts to make it a great publication.

A jubilee is to thank God for all who are laboring in the becoming of the Messenger in today's shape. This time should also be used to think and plan the future course of publication in tune with the needs to cater the realities of the present Asian-American society and the Church at large. Our aim shall be to build a better Church life that expresses the love of God by establishing mutual bonds in our society.

My memories are still green and fresh with your life and witnesses as parishes particularly "Long Island" and as a Diocese in that part of the world. Jessie and children joins me to greet you all through these few lines. May God continue to richly bless all your efforts.

In His Service,

Oommen Philip Kassessa, Secretary to the Bishop, Ranni-Nilackel Diocese



THE MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

47 PRIMROSE ROAD • BANGALORE 560 025

Rev. K. Y. Jacob

Tel: 25325827

MESSAGE

It's indeed a great privilege and honor given to me to wish The Mar Thoma Messenger, the official voice of the Diocese of North America and Europe, on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee Year. It was a privilege for me to be part of this endeavor during my tenure as the Bishop/Diocesan Secretary. The Mar Thoma Messenger has played a vital role in carrying the ethos and emotions of the Diocese in letters and images throughout the Diocese. I value the services of the Diocesan Bishop of the North America and Europe and the Editors, Managers and all Board members of their intense effort and hard work behind it. As the Mar Thoma Messenger is celebrating her

25th anniversary, I offer my prayers and wishing all success for the coming editions of the Messenger, which would be more effective and relevant. I congratulate the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, the Diocesan Secretary, and the Editor and Associate Editors and Managing Committee for their dynamic leadership.

With all good wishes and prayers.

Yours in Christ Service,

K. Y. Jacob Achen

Best Compliments From Dr. Sara Koshy and O. C. Koshy



Dr. Sherin Eitzman, Emily, Sara, Mathew, Dr. Daniel Eitzman

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Ph: 0481-2581777



MESSAGE

Dear friends,

I am glad that the Mar Thoma Messenger is celebrating its Silver Jubilee in October 2006. At the outset, let me extend my best wishes and greetings.

I thank God for the ministry that we have had together. I cherish the Editorial Board and all those who are instrumental in the timely publication of the Messenger. I am also glad to see that strenuous efforts are being made so that each issue of Messenger is more and more attractive and educative.

In a situation where Christian publications are becoming parochial and exclusive in nature, the value oriented articles and thematic presentations in Messenger are significant. What is of great importance is the wider use of this publication in the Diocese. Let the special issue and the Jubilee programs enable us to reach new heights in our onward journey of faith.

In His love and ministry,

K. A. Abraham Achen



By God's grace, I served our diocese as treasurer and Building Committee Convener for the Sinai Center from 1996 to 1999. When the diocesan center was moved from Pennsylvania to Long Island, it was a major decision in the history of our diocese. I am grateful that I could be a part of the process. I enjoyed the full support and cooperation of our then diocesan bishop Zacharias Thirumeni, diocesan secretaries Rev. Dr. P.G. George and Rev. Oommen Philip, council members, assembly members and the members of the building committee. The efforts were joint and everyone involved in the process should be commended for their hard work. I still remember the many obstacles we faced, especially the hard road we traveled to arrange the sale of our Pennsylvania property. God guided us through every step.

As we celebrate the silver jubilee of the Mar Thoma Messenger, I hope that every household in this diocese subscribes to it. However, I also know that the diocese does not have the resources to meet the costs of printing and mailing the publication on that scale. These costs can be offset

by collecting \$10.00 from each family as part of the diocesan dues as well as through advertisement revenue.

Let us all work and pray together for the success of the Mar Thoma Messenger and the continued development of our diocese.

Kuruvilla Cherian



It is a great honor and privilege for me to be part of the Messenger Family since 1996. I am very happy that the Lord has enabled us to publish this publication of our Diocese since 1981. At this time I remember with gratitude the great leadership of our former Diocesan Bishops, Chief Editors, and Managers. I also acknowledge the support and able leadership of our Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa in the growth of this publication. I want to congratulate Mr. Eapen Daniel (Chief Editor), Mr. James T. Philip (Manager), Mr. C. V. Samuel and Mrs. Susan Johnson (Managers, Subscription/Promotions), and all the Promoters for their dedication and valuable services.

As we celebrate the Silver Jubilee, let us all work as a team and enroll more subscribers for our Messenger. Our goal must be to make the Messenger available to all our homes by 2010. As Swami Vivekananda said, "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached." Congratulations and best wishes.

T. A. Mathew, Diocesan Treasurer

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

C. V. Simonkutty, St John's Mar Thoma Church, New York



It is more than a quarter of a century now, since we have Mar Thoma Diocese in North America and Europe. I am very proud of the development of the Diocese and its various projects, including the Messenger, our quarterly publication. We are celebrating the silver jubilee of the Messenger at a time when family values are drastically changing in society. It is only through media such as the Messenger that that we can create awareness of the different negative forces that threaten the survival of our families. I wish the Mar Thoma Messenger great success in the future to be our medium of communication and and defender of our faith that was handed down to us form our forefathers.

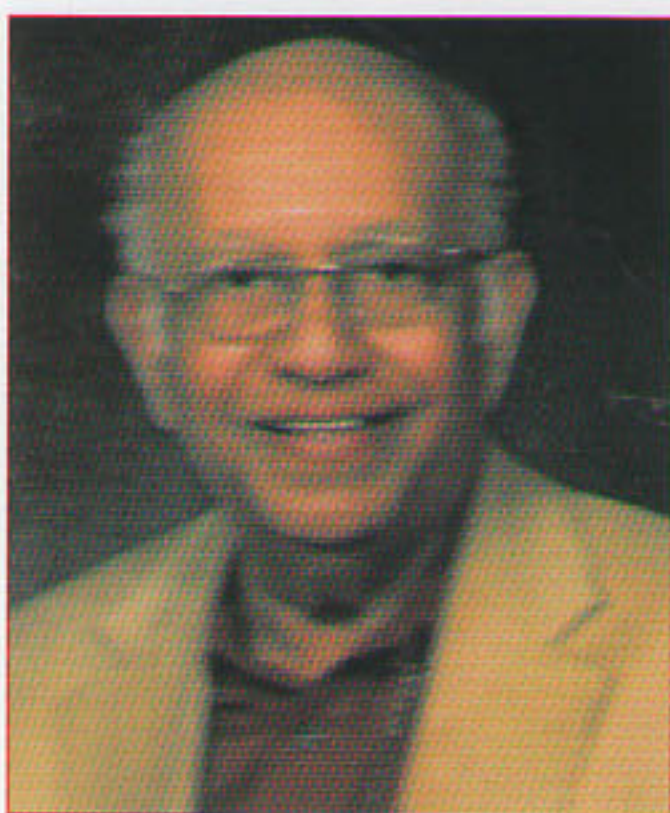
God has richly blessed us and continues to bless us both when we sleep and when we wake His mercy waits upon us. We tend to forget the grace of God that sustains us, often imagining that our success and blessing in this country is the result of our own personal effort. As individuals and as a community we are a part of God's plan. In all His relations with His people God is always faithful and we can safely rely upon Him. Bringing glory to God is the purpose of our lives and let us be faithful in our life and mission to the Lord. As said in Psalm 100:5, "For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations."

LIST OF OUR DIOCESAN SECRETARIES

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| 2. Rev. A. G. Mathew | 9. Rev. Oommen Philip |
| 3. Dr. P. V. Cherian (Associate/Recording Secretary) | 10. Rev. K. Y. Jacob |
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| 5. Rev. Jayan Thomas | 12. Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham |
| 6. Rev. P. J. Alex | 13. Rev. Joseph Oommen |
| 7. Rev. Dr. T. P. Abraham | |

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| 1. Rev. P. V. Thomas (Picture not available) | 4. Mr. Abraham Mattackal |
| 2. Dr. George Zachariah | 5. Mr. Abraham Thomas |
| 3. Rev. Dr. P. J. Philip (Picture not available) | 6. Mr. Eapen Daniel |



Dr. George Zachariah
(1986–1989)



Mr. Abraham Mattackal
(1990–1995) & (1999–2002)



Mr. Abraham Thomas
(1995–1999)



Mr. Eapen Daniel
(2002–Present)

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MR. THOMAS MATTAPPALLIL
(1982-1984)



MR. C. V. SIMONKUTTY
(1984-1987)



DR. P. JOHN LINCOLN
(1987-1990, 1993-1996, 2002-2005)



MR. M. K. THOMAS
(1990-1993)



MR. KURUVILLA CHERIAN
(1996-1999)



MR. ABRAHAM THOMAS
(1999-2002)



MR. T. A. MATHEW
(2005 To Present)

FIRST TIME IN THE DIOCESE

Year	Event	Place
1972	Regular worship began	New York
1976	Approved the first Congregation in North America	New York
1980	First Students Conference	New York
1981	Agreement with the Episcopal Church in USA	New York
1982	Zonal Council formed	Philadelphia
1982	Mar Thoma Messenger First Issue	New York
1983	First Family Conference	Toronto, Canada
1983	Agreement signed with the Anglican Church of Canada	Vancouver, BC, CAN
1984	First Junior Conference	New York
1988	Approved as Diocese	
1993	Diocesan Center was established	Richboro, PA

COMPILED BY: MR. C. V. SIMONKUTTY, ST. JOHN'S MTC, NY

First Bishop (Zonal Council)	The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan
First Diocesan Bishop	The. Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan
First Resident Bishop	The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa
First Parish	The Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York
First Vicar	The Rev. K. S. Mathew
First full time Vicar	The Rev. M. V. Benjamin
First Mar Thoma Church Building	Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York
First Church Building Built	Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston, TX
First Editor—Mar Thoma Messenger	The Rev. P. V. Thomas
First Zonal Council Secretary	The Rev. N M Cherian
First Zonal Council Treasurer	Mr. K. Thomas, Staten Island, NY
First Diocesan Secretary	The Rev. Dr. P. J. Philip
First Diocesan Associate Secretary	Dr. P. V. Cherian
First Diocesan Treasurer	Mr. C. V. Simonkutty, New York
First Bishop's Secretary	The Rev. Dr. P. G. George
First Mandalam Members	Dr. T M Thomas, New York & Mr. K O Kochummen, Canada
First Sabha Council Members	Mr. Abraham J. Manaloor & Dr. Jacob O Mathew

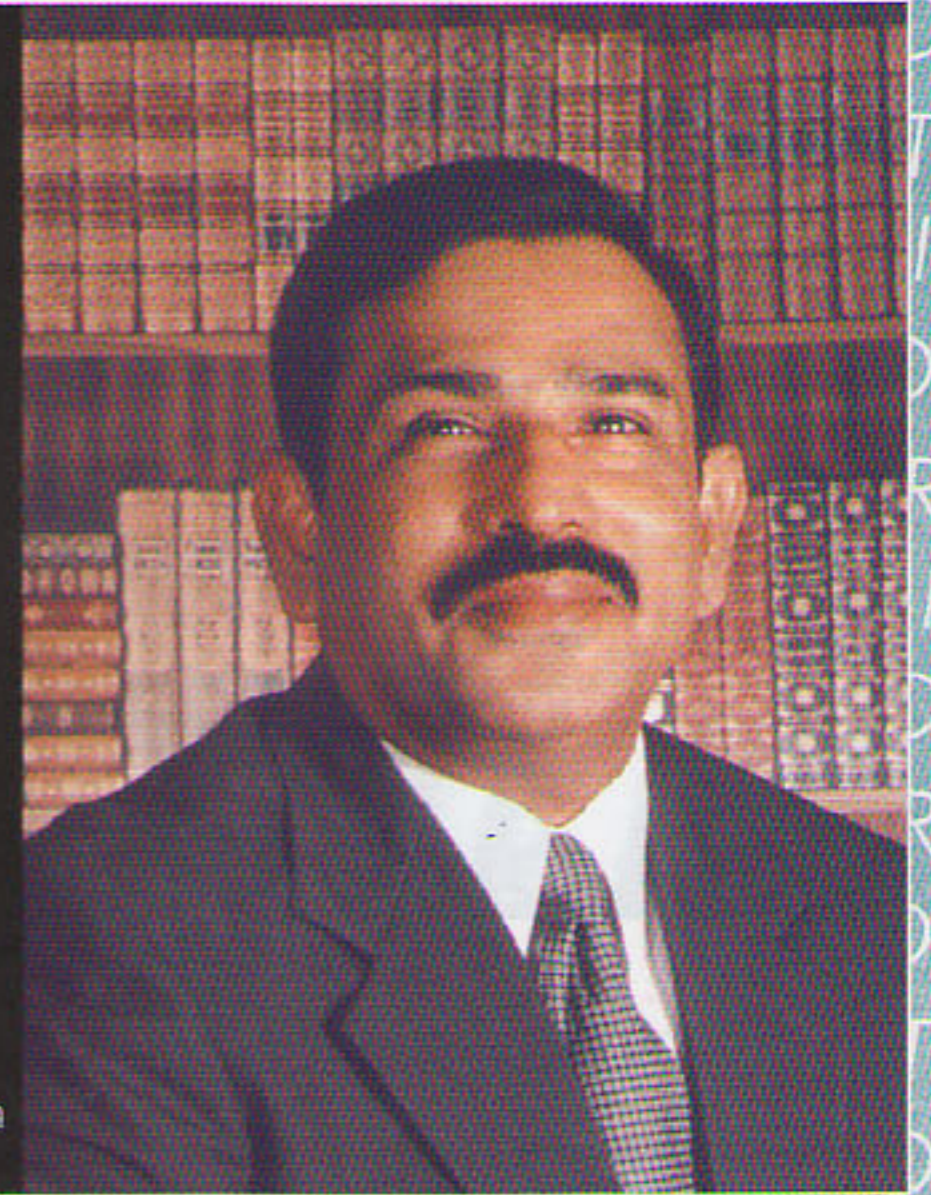
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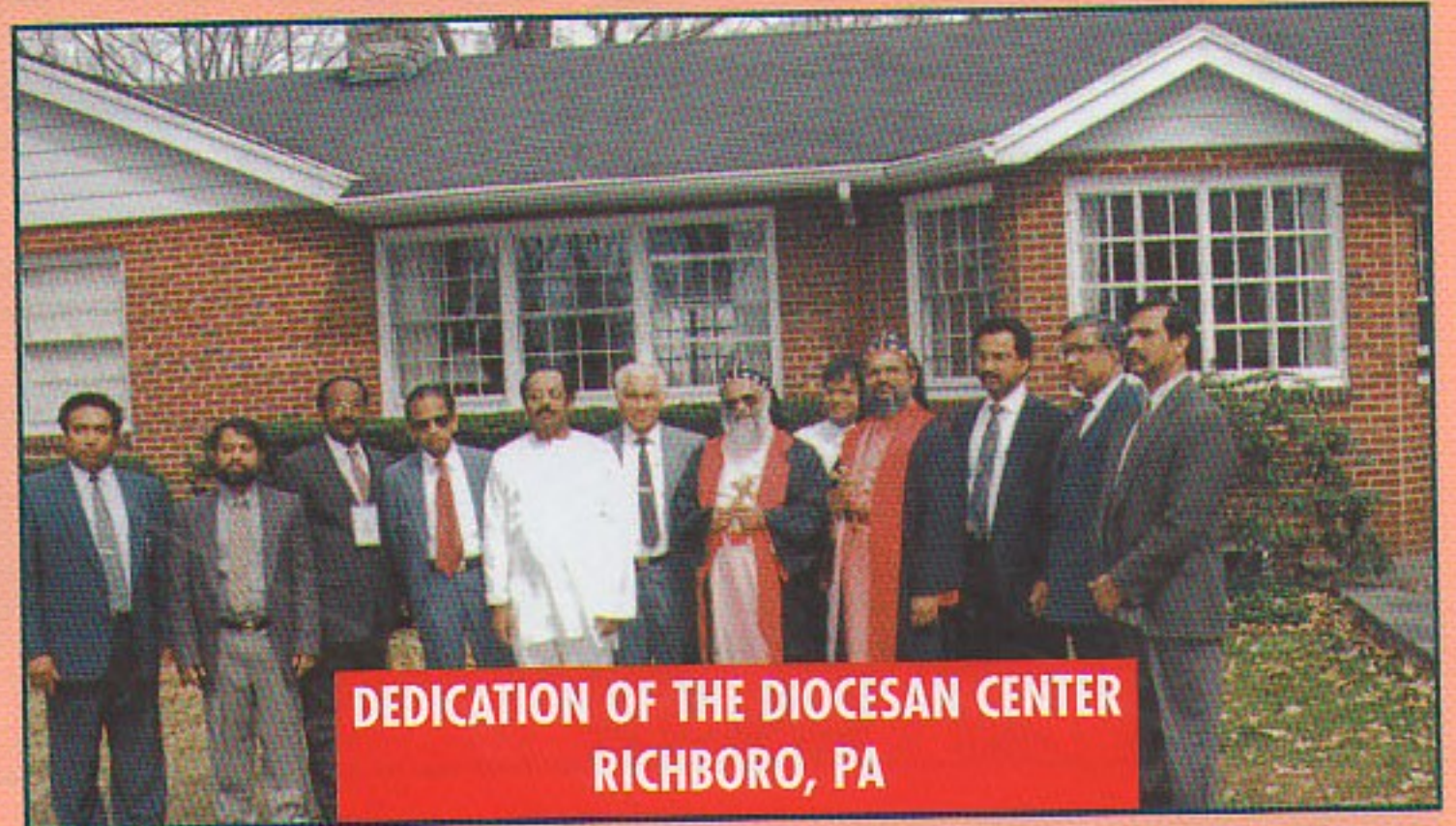
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GLIMPSES OF PAST 25 YEARS OF THE DIOCESE



FIRST DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

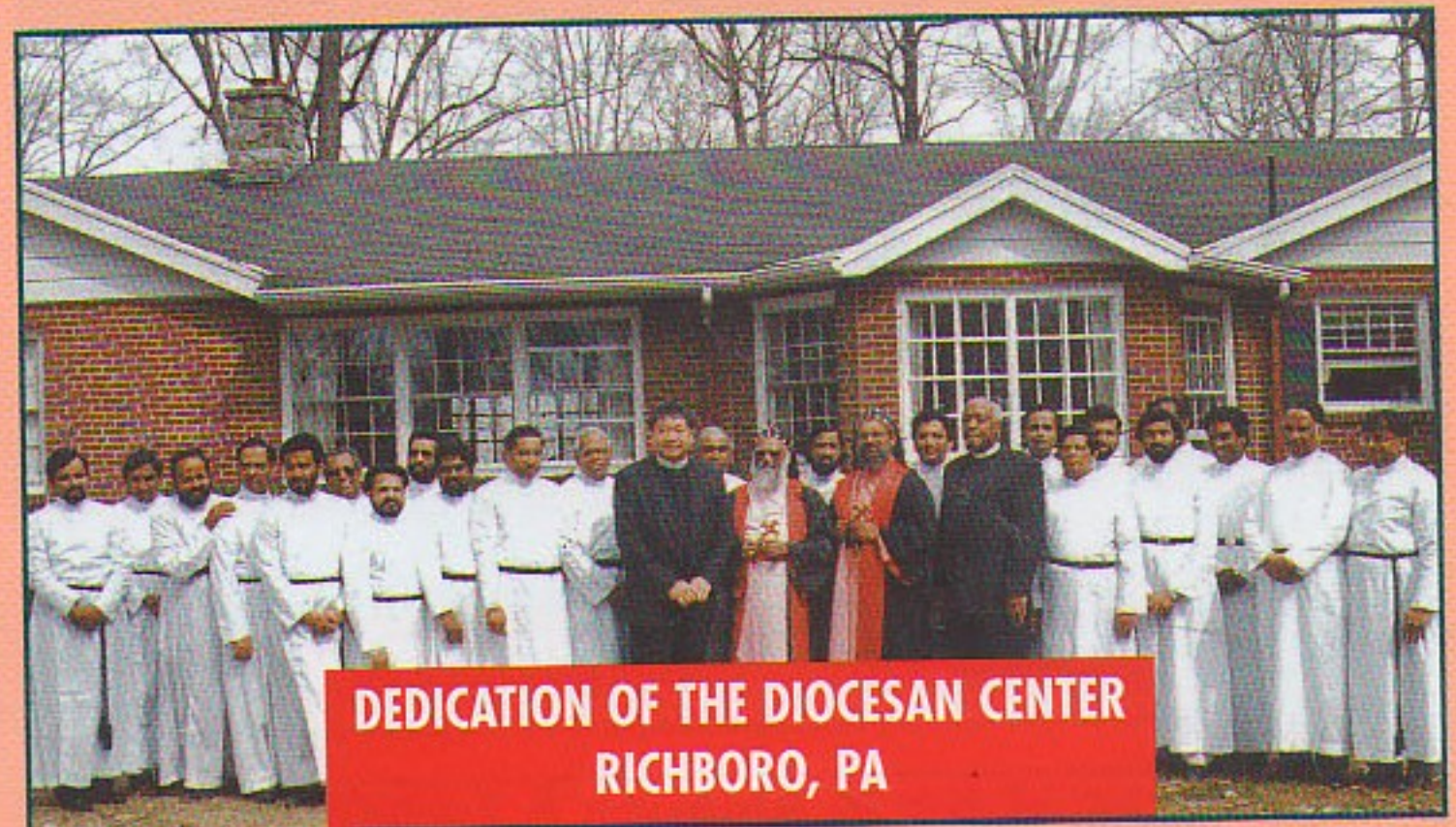
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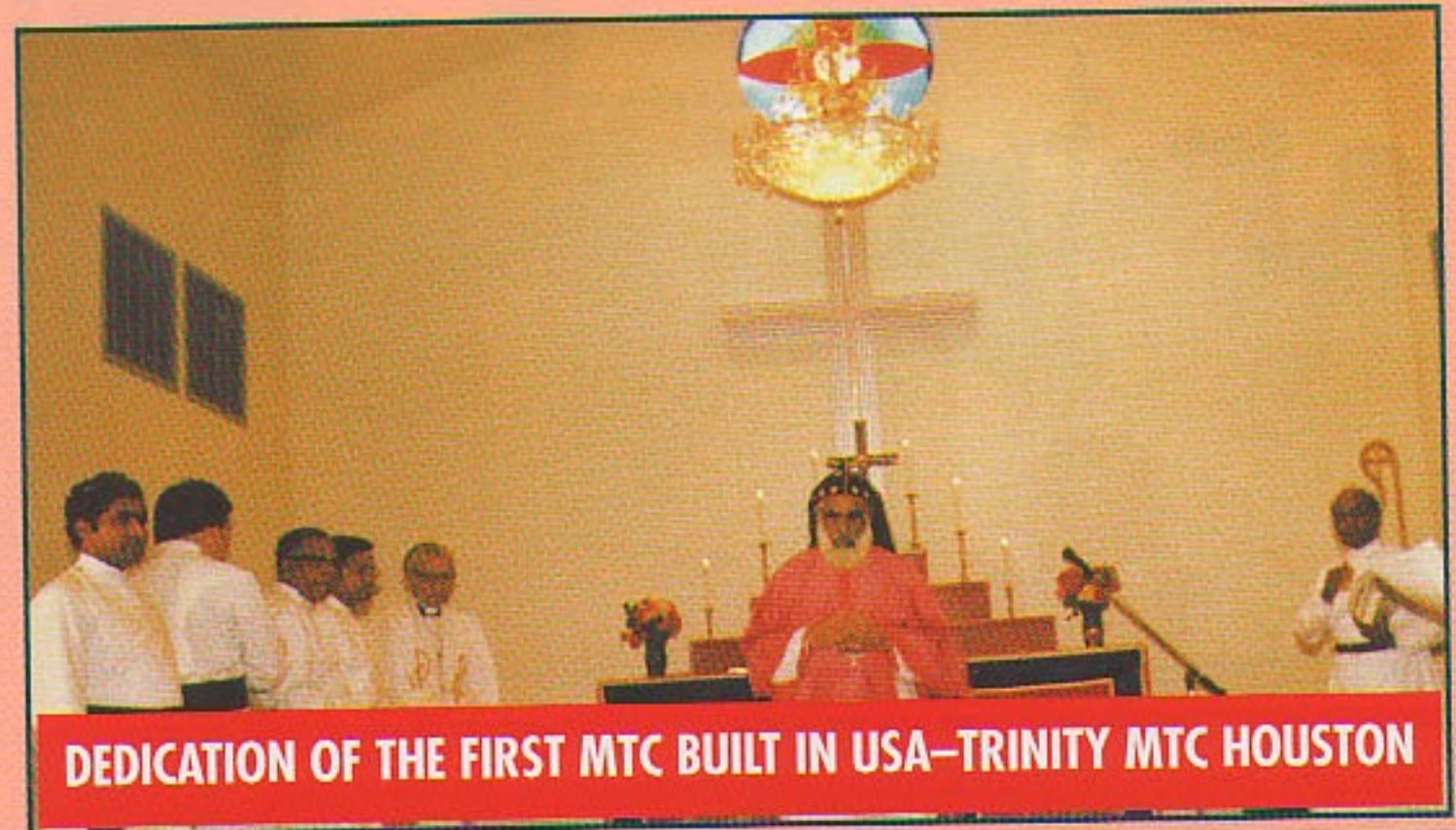
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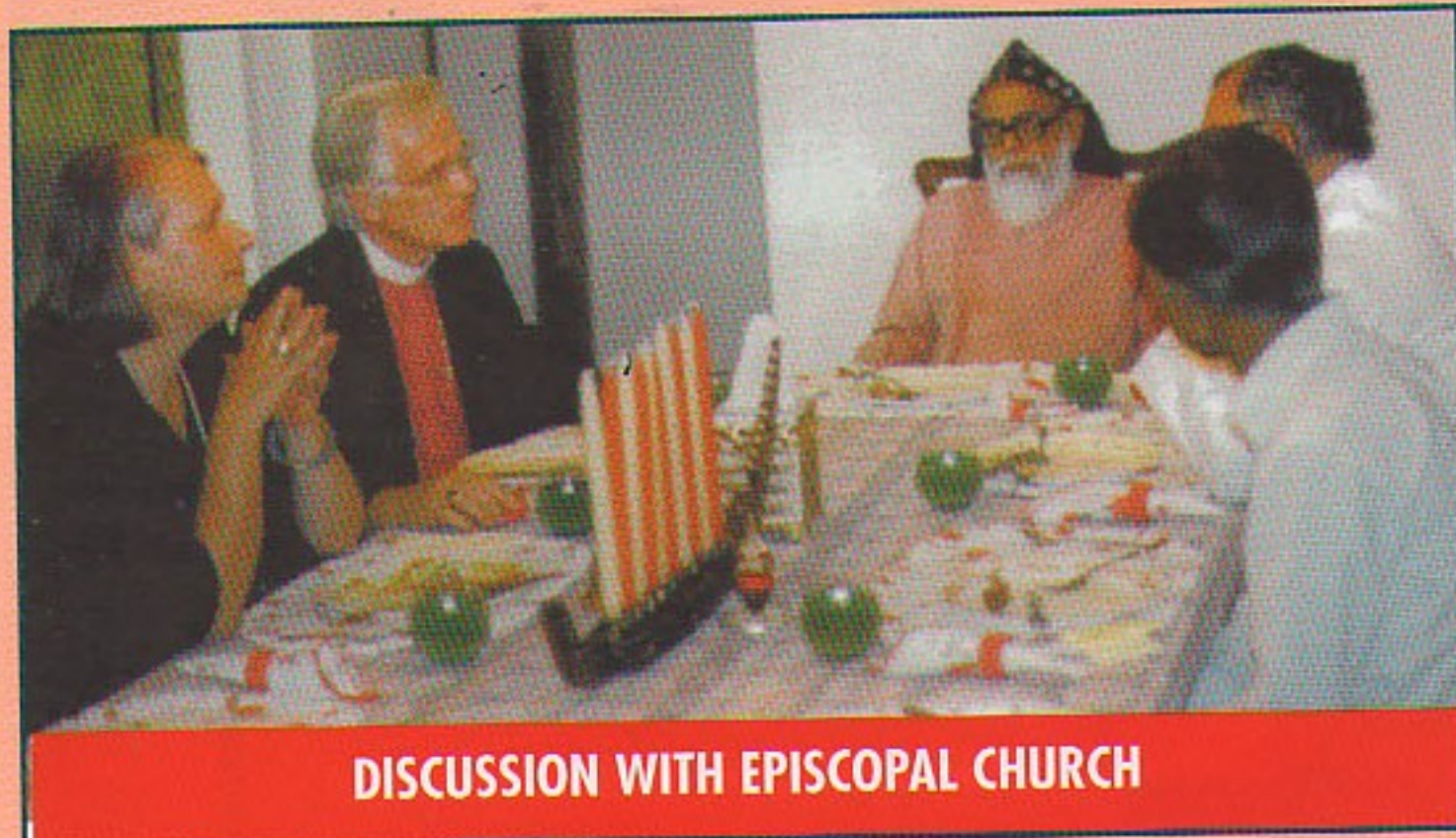
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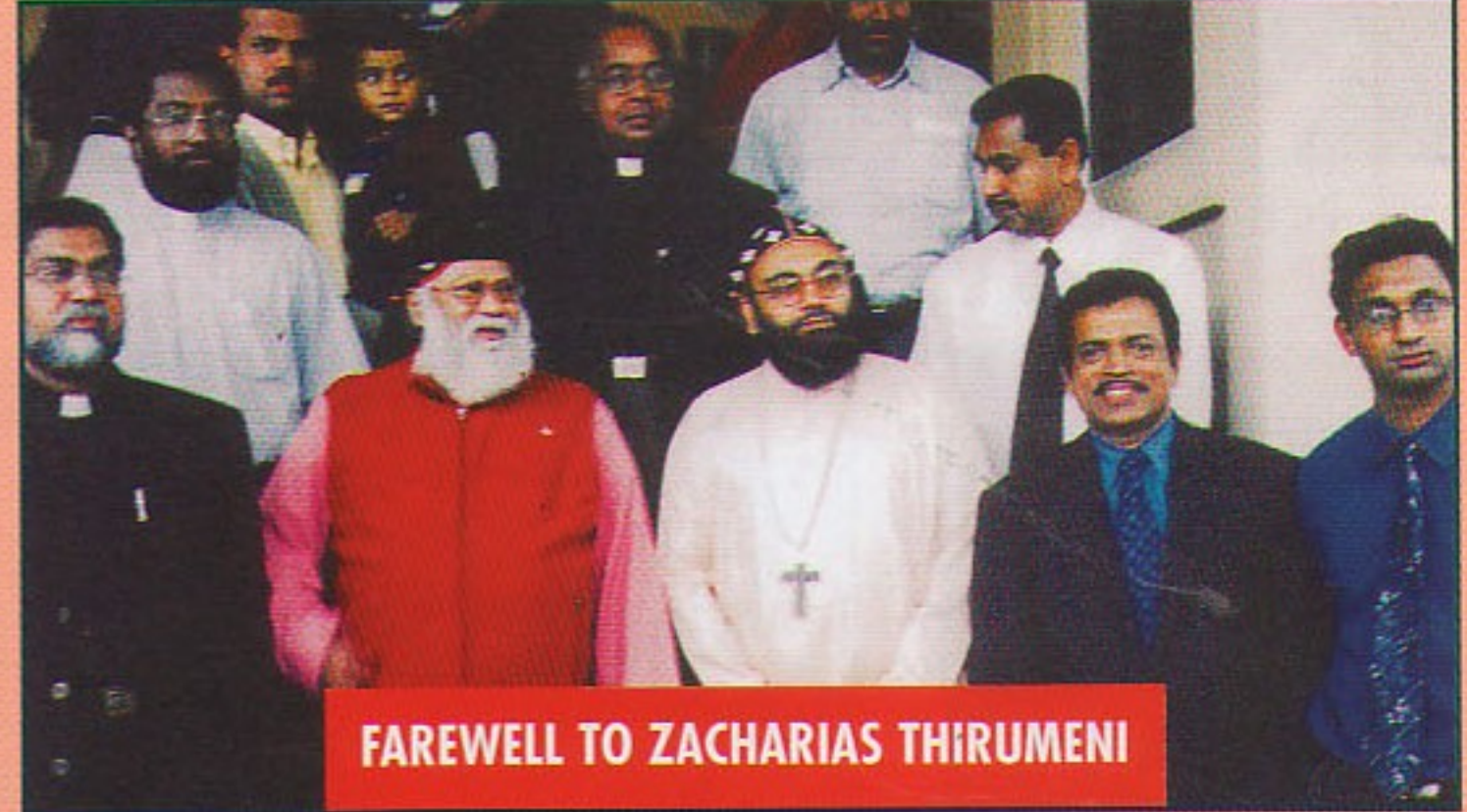
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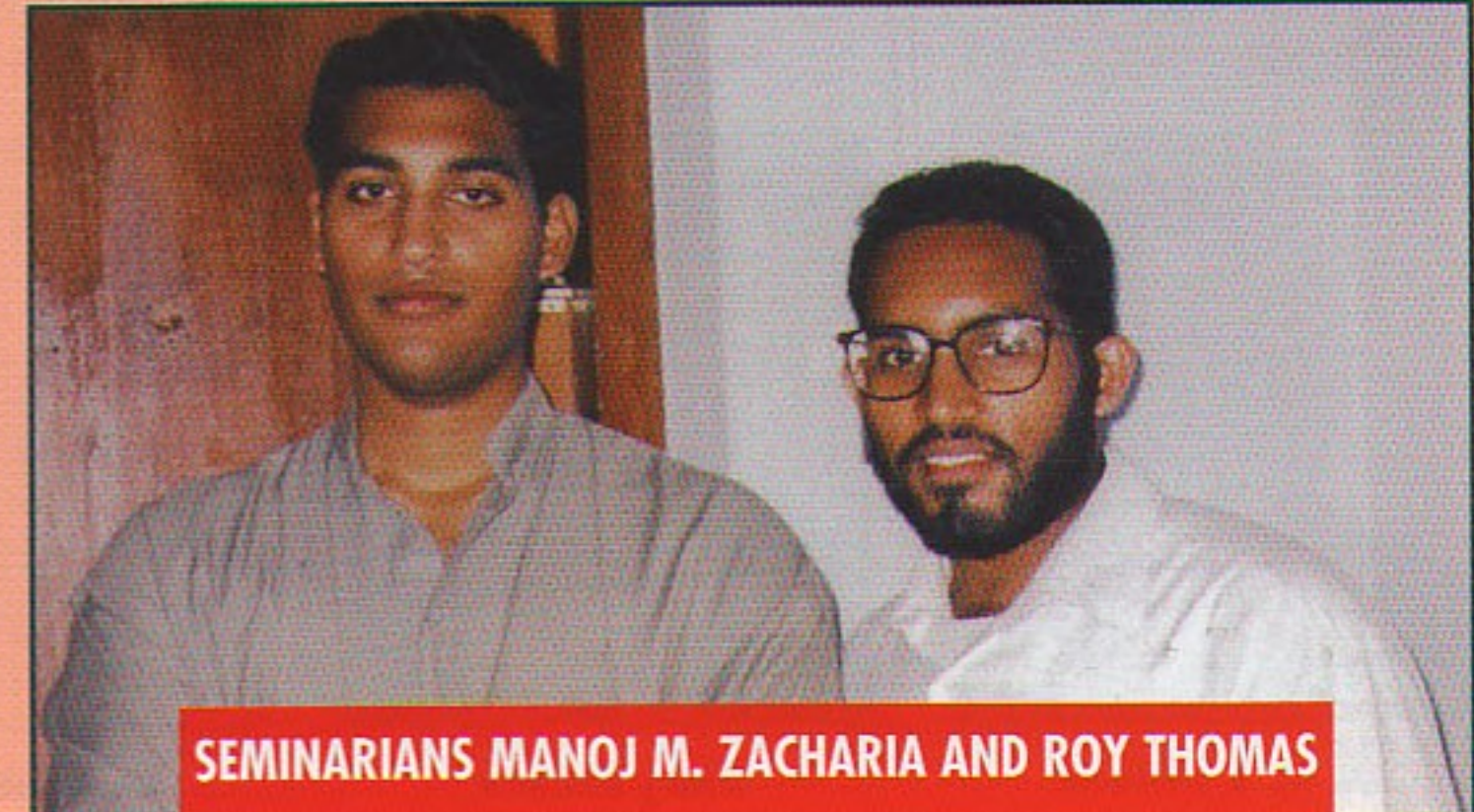
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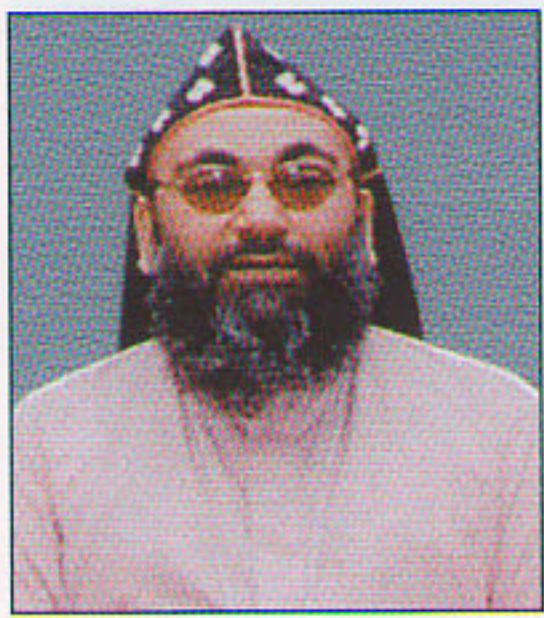


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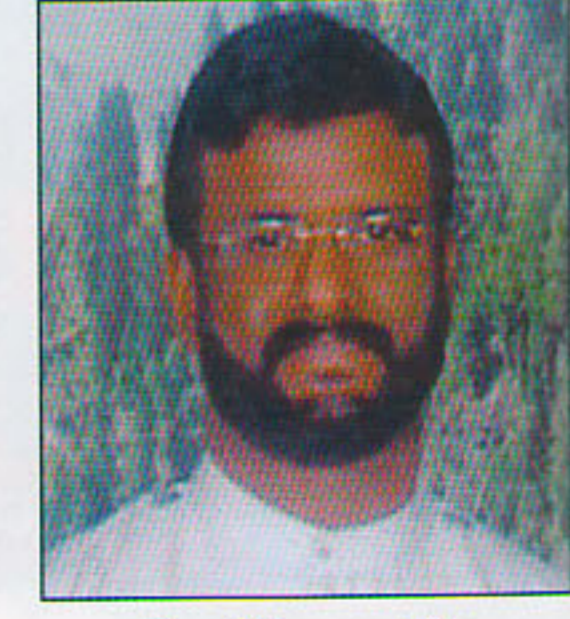
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Felicitation to Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas

Dr. George K. Zachariah

Remarks made at the Marthoma Church of Greater Washington on September 3, 2006

Praise God and thank Him for our dear Jaisen Thomas Achen, one of the illustrious sons of our parish who was called to become an Achen of the Mar Thoma Church and who responded with enthusiasm and dedication. We all are very proud of him. If the attendance at the ordination service is any indication, our love for him and hopes and expectations are undoubtedly great. Our prayers go with him as he has begun a journey of leading by serving our people here and elsewhere. The Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington extends her heartiest congratulations and best wishes. We congratulate Rev. Dr. A. V. Thomas & family for all that they were instrumental in bringing up this fine, handsome young priest to this level.

Let me take this opportunity to remind him of his great responsibility. His chosen job requires him to be 'set apart,

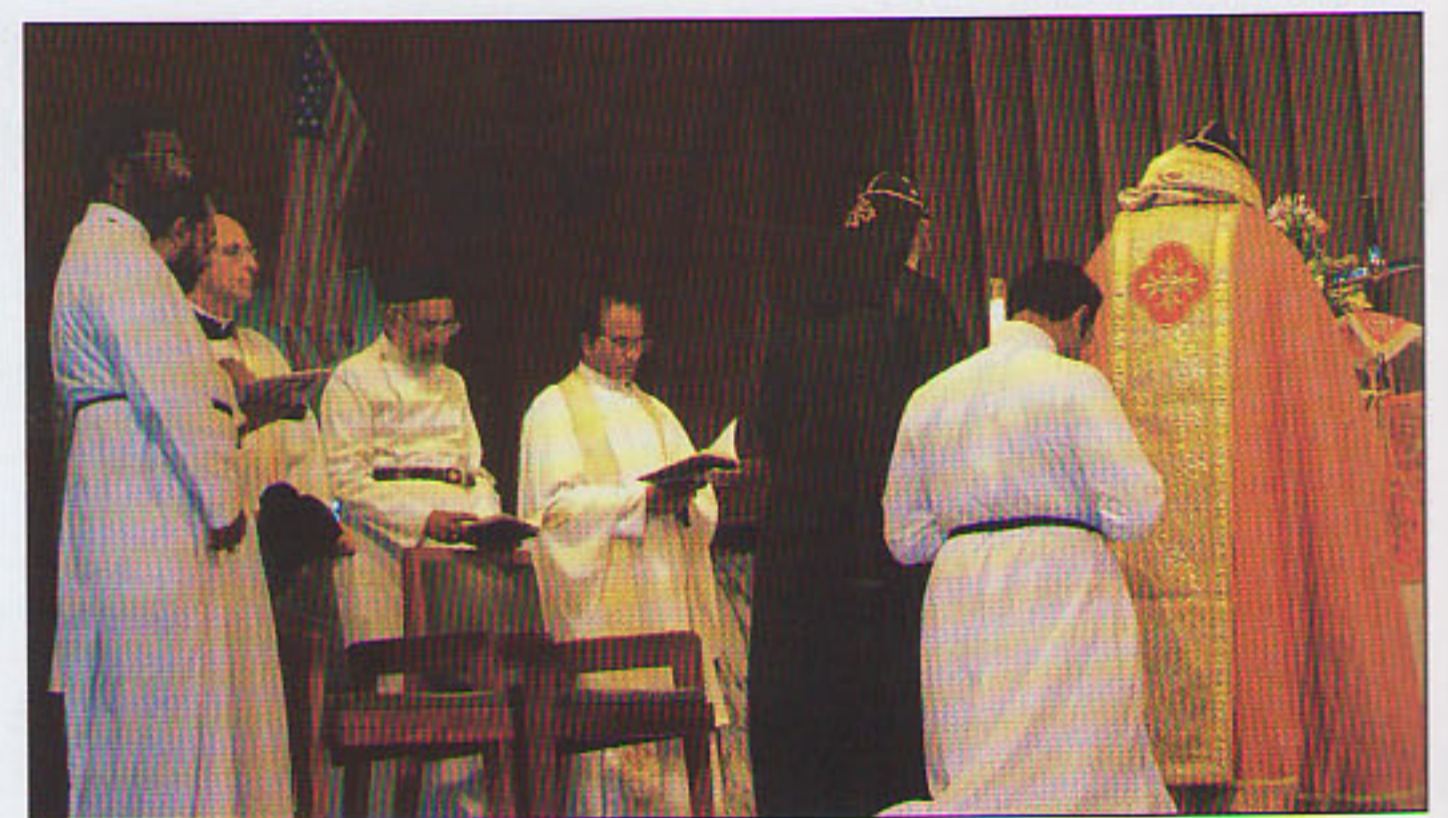


yet constantly in touch'. That is asking that he live in two worlds and two time zones at once: the temporal with all its



inter-locking and conflicting little worlds – and the eternal, living between two worlds reconciling man and God. Preparation for priesthood began far back in youth, possibly even as far back as God indicated to Jeremiah when He ordained him a prophet to the nations: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee."

The priests I admire most are men who are generous with their time and talents in the service of others. They all

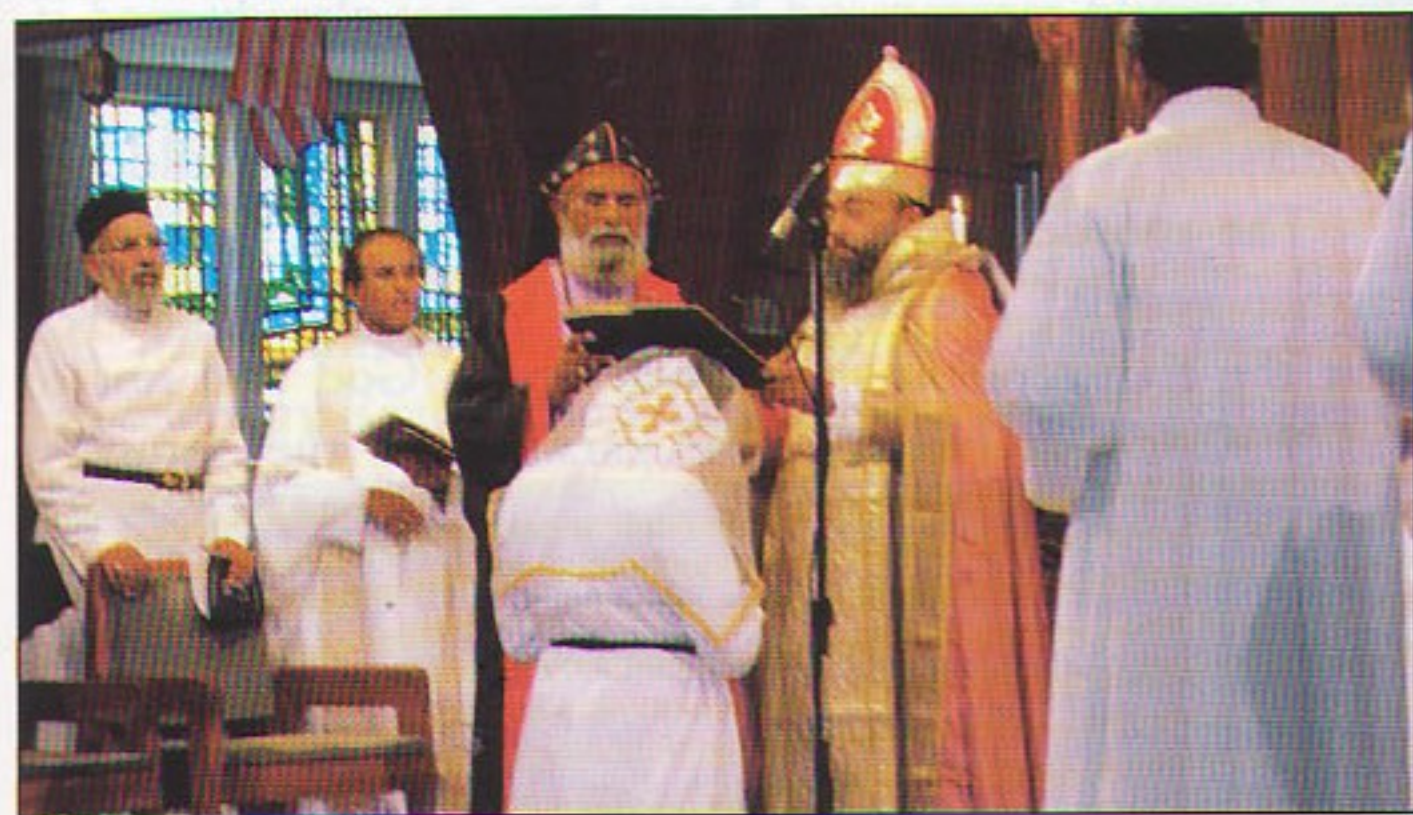


appeared in my eyes as persons who had achieved a kind of personal equanimity and integrity which I find extremely attractive. Their lives seemed to demonstrate that a ministry of service brings to its practitioners a kind of satisfaction and a sense of fitness that self-serving persons never achieve. I have always believed that the Christian paradox really works, if we can be generous enough to take Jesus Christ at



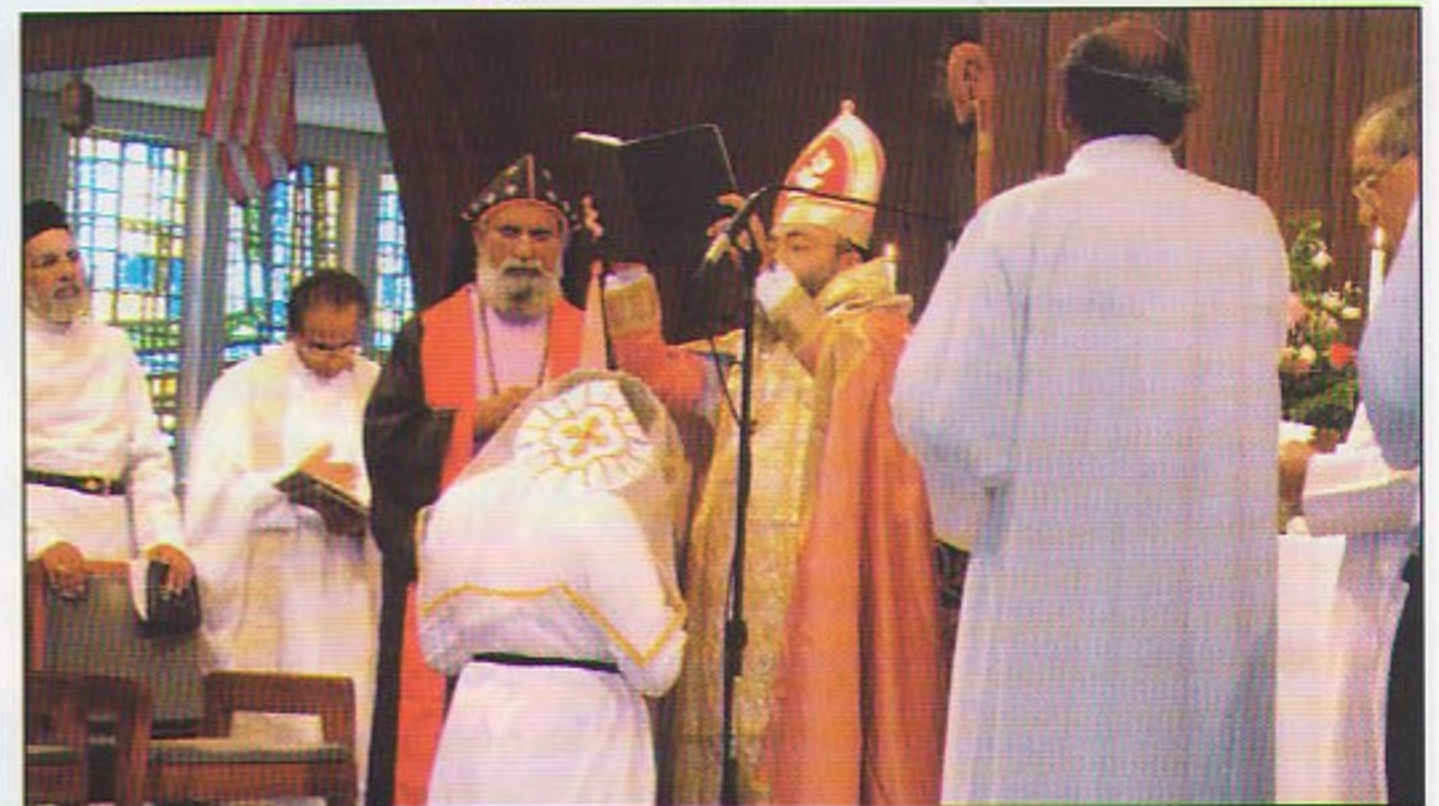
His word. Jesus said and continues to say to us, "Follow thou me...Be ye therefore perfect." And also, "I will be always with you." Christ is the only man who ever really lived. Gentle, yet brave; confident, yet humble; wise, yet simple; meeting life with calmness; trouble with fortitude; hate with forgiveness; disloyalty with magnanimity; and crucifixion with faith.

The New Testament is the most positive and hopeful of all books. Its emphasis is not on death, but on life; not on despair, but on hope; not on doubt, but on faith; not on sin, but on grace; not on condemnation, but on forgiveness; not on lostness, but on recovery.

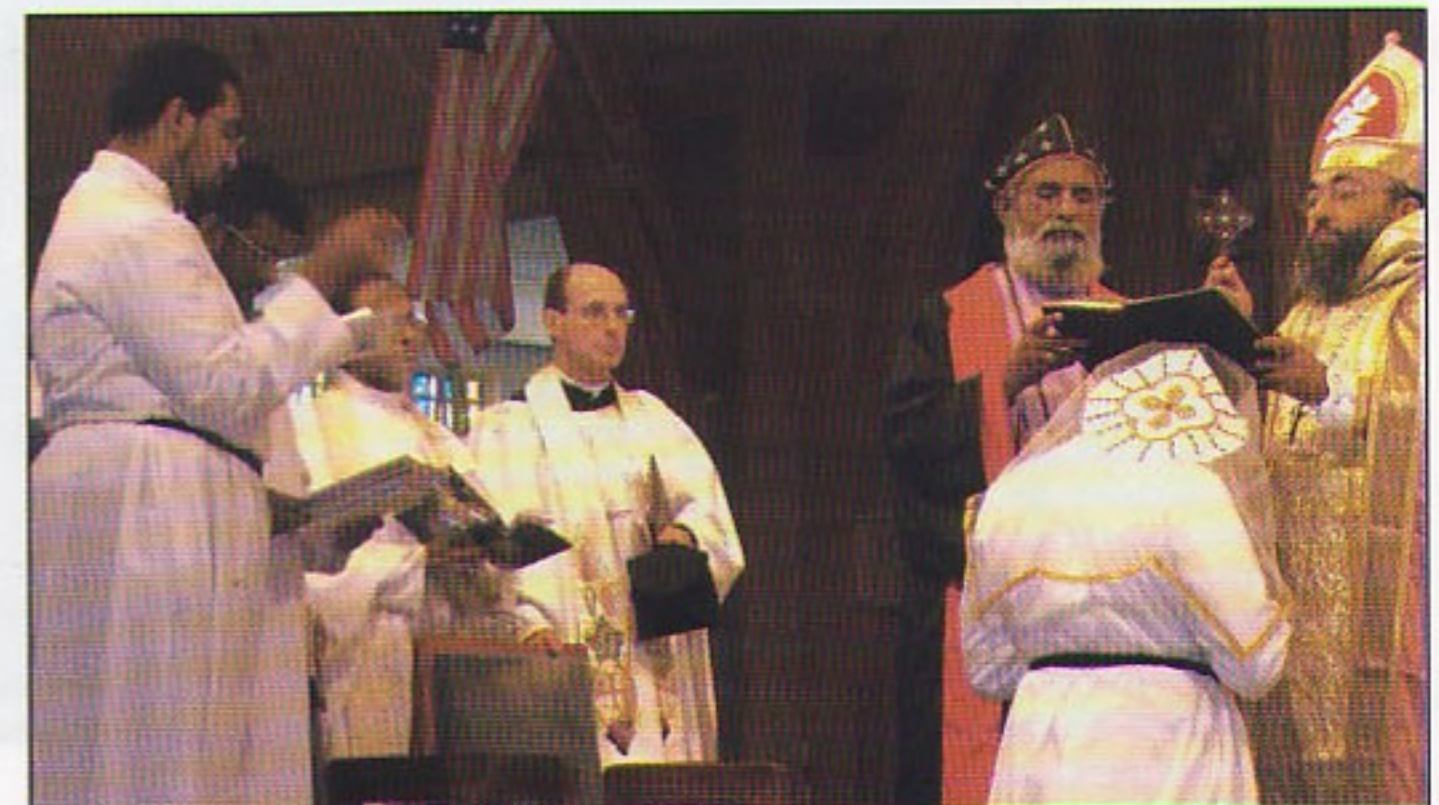


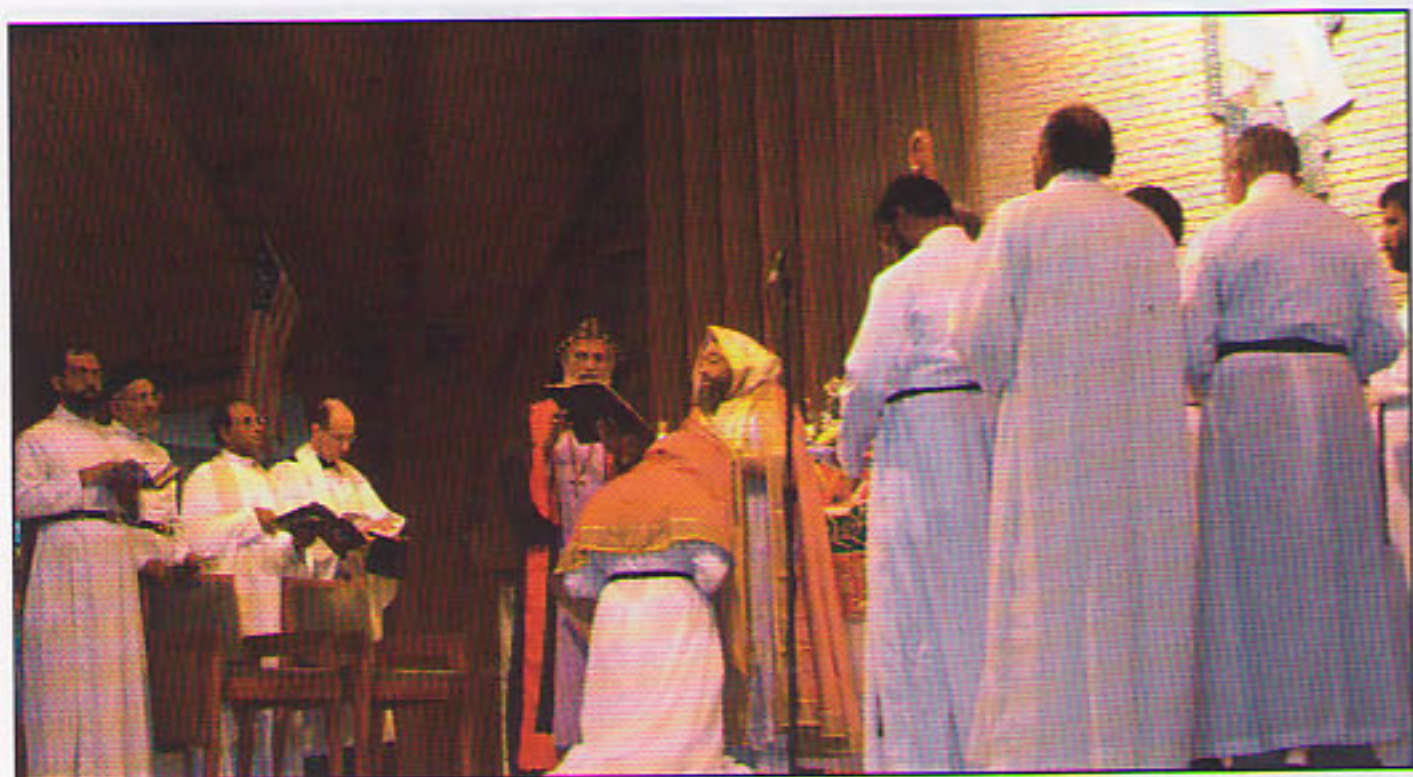
You are not merely the receiver and the dispenser of the offerings of people, the maintainer of physical properties of the church establishment, the passer out of occasional help to the needy persons or families; but you are the embodiment of the church's compassion for the distressed, the educator and the exemplar of Christian stewardship. You have entered your ministry in a revolutionary time.

Yours will be a ministry of reconciliation, of breaking down barriers, of overcoming polarities, of ministering to human need, and of leading your people into a new vision of what



it is to be fully human on this good earth where God has put us and which we have succeeded in corrupting. In all this and for all this, I wish to reemphasize, there will be one paradigm, Jesus Christ, the man for others, the source of our ministry, and the mirror of mankind. As you begin, it





is well to be reminded of the advice of the great historian Herbert Butterfield, "Hold to Christ, and for the rest be totally uncommitted." Our greatest problem is the eighth deadly sin, indifference, the arrogant neutrality that is less than human.

The church must learn to listen. In order to be pastors we must learn compassion. Not only listen but must



genuinely like people. There are many who can become very enthusiastic about programs but who simply do not care about human beings. We must in all honesty steer clear of the romanticism of the status quo. We must understand the meaning of people's power. Our philosophy, however, is expressed in the adage that 'Papa knows best'. God forbid that you encourage such a philosophy. No human construct is free from the judgment of God. A warning: Watch out those among us who would like, often unconsciously, to



twist the kingdom of God to serve secondary ends. The institutional church is not exempt from this temptation. It is frightening to see the subtle kind of osmosis that brings secular standards right into the house of God.

Church is not only a field where you can have gracious worship, happy fellowship, take part in attractive programs; but the church is a force invading the community, sharing its life, stirring its conscience, 'shaping its ideals, speaking



forthrightly as a prophet on all the issues that touch and influence human beings. The church must not be and in fact cannot be chained within its own walls. As the well known preacher Ernest T. Campbell, an old acquaintance of mine, once remarked "To say 'the parish is my world' is to die. To say with Wesley, 'The world is my parish' is to live." I would recommend if you have not already read it, the book by Robert Greenleaf of AT&T, entitled "Servant Leadership" where he defines a leader as a bridge builder.

The apostle Paul knew that "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." He testified to the Corinthians "to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." (1 Cor.4:7) Here is the paradox of the ministry. Through our faithfulness and our foolishness, through our abilities and limitations, God is at work in redeeming love. I dare to predict that you will discover this truth ever more fully the longer you minister. The fact that we are 'earth-bound' is more than a limitation; it is an occasion for the life of Jesus to manifest itself in mortal flesh. May He go with you. For you have started your ministry under the promise that the transcendent power of God is at work in earthen vessels. It is good to have this motto for your life and ministry: "All that I have and all that I am I give to God and for His service!"

May you ever be open to God's richest blessing upon you and through you!! ■

Report of the XXIV Mar Thoma Family Conference-2006



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, Diocesan Bishop, officially inaugurating the conference by lighting the lamp (Nila Vilakku).

The XXIV Mar Thoma National Family Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe was successfully held in Chicago from July 20-23, 2006. The theme **"Live a life Worthy of the Lord"** based on Colossians 1:10. The enthusiastic participation of approximately 800 delegates from the U.S., Canada and Europe made this conference a truly blessed and enriching experience for everyone.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas, Bishop of the Diocese of Mumbai-Delhi, Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse, renowned convention speaker, Rev. Dr. Jacob Thomas of Union Theological Seminary, Pune, India, Rev. David Lee, Senior Pastor of Harvest Community Church, Ms. Jody Ward, Director of Child Evangelism Fellowship, Mr. Jim Austin of Children's Christian Ministry, the diocesan secretary Rev. Joseph Oommen and about 50 clergies of

the Diocese provided commendable leadership to the various programs of the conference. Metropolitan Yeldho Mor Theethos of the Jacobite Syrian Diocese of North America delivered the key note address. Hon. Jagadish Rai, Deputy Consulate General of India in Chicago represented Hon Consul General of India Mr. Arun Kumar and offered felicitation at the opening ceremony on July 20.

The conference was hosted by the Chicago Mar Thoma Church, the largest Mar Thoma parish of the Diocese of North America and Europe. An Executive Committee consisting of President Rev. Daniel Varghese, Vice President Mr. N. M. Philip, Secretary Mr. Jose Varghese, Treasurer Mr. Achenkunju Mathew, Accountant Mr. Shani Abraham,

Assembly Members Mr. George Mathew and Mr. Yesudasan P. George worked together with 30 sub-committee conveners and about 100 sub-committee members to plan and organize the various aspects of the conference.



Conference Leaders and Guests at the Inaugural Session.

Prior to the start of the conference, a delightful scenic tour of Chicago was arranged for participants that included a boat trip through Lake Michigan and a land tour of down town tourist attractions which was coordinated by Mr. Mathews Abraham. The conference officially started after registration and dinner at 6:00 P.M. on Thursday with a colorful cultural procession including flag bearers, choir, nativity tableau, display of



Inaugural Session Entertainment Program "Dance" by the Juniors.

western and eastern costumes, dance costumes, 'thalapoli' and western and eastern percussions. The procession was coordinated by Mr. Yesudasan P. George in which the bishops, clergies, conference leaders, diocesan assembly and council members and conference committee members participated. Following the Welcome Song by the Choir, the diocesan bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, conference president Rev. Daniel Varghese, Dr. M. V. Mathew, Mr. Koshy Varghese and Mrs. Anne Varghese led the opening worship. The conference president Rev. Daniel Varghese delivered the official welcome address. The diocesan bishop The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa officially inaugurated the conference by lighting the lamp (*nila vilakku*) accompanied by Barnabas Thirumeni, Yeldho Thirumeni and Hon. Deputy Consul general of India Mr. Jagdish Rai. Mrs. Mariamma Pillai, the



and praise & worship teams. The worship sessions and meditations were led by selected guest parishes. The leaders quite elegantly and eloquently delineated various perspectives on the theme which were well-received and acclaimed by all age groups. Mr. Sam George and selected experts from the delegates provided leadership to several important



seminars, panel discussions and group discussions. The topics included a lively interactive dialogue between the youth and adults on marriage in our community, symposium on lay leadership and panel discussion on the roles and needs of senior adults in our worshipping community. Other programs included Bible Quiz, organizational meetings, business session and award distribution. The sports and games program were coordinated by Prof. E.J. Jacob. Rev. V. T. John and Mr. P. C. Philip provided leadership to a spirit-filled testimony and witnessing session. Mrs. Susan Chacko and Mr. Mathews

Abraham served as the MC's for a highly entertaining talent night. The program on Sunday commenced with a serene Holy Communion Service celebrated by the bishops and assisted by the clergies of the diocese. In the ensuing closing ceremony, both bishops made concluding remarks and

convener of the Souvenir and Editorial Committee, gave a copy of the conference souvenir to Barnabas Thirumeni to mark its official release. Following some short felicitations by selected dignitaries, there were several entertainment programs that included theme song presentation by the Choir, theme skit by the youth group, eastern dances by junior and senior children and 'margam kali' by the ladies' group. The registration committee convener Dr. Abraham George introduced the delegates. Mrs. Besty Philip and Miss Jane Easo served as the MC's for the opening program. The highly entertaining and enlightening opening ceremony came to an end with the official vote of thanks by the conference vice president Mr. N. M. Philip.

The sessions on Friday and Saturday were divided into five different tracks based on age starting from children, junior youths, youths, young adults and adults. The morning and evening sessions on both days started with sing-along led by the choir

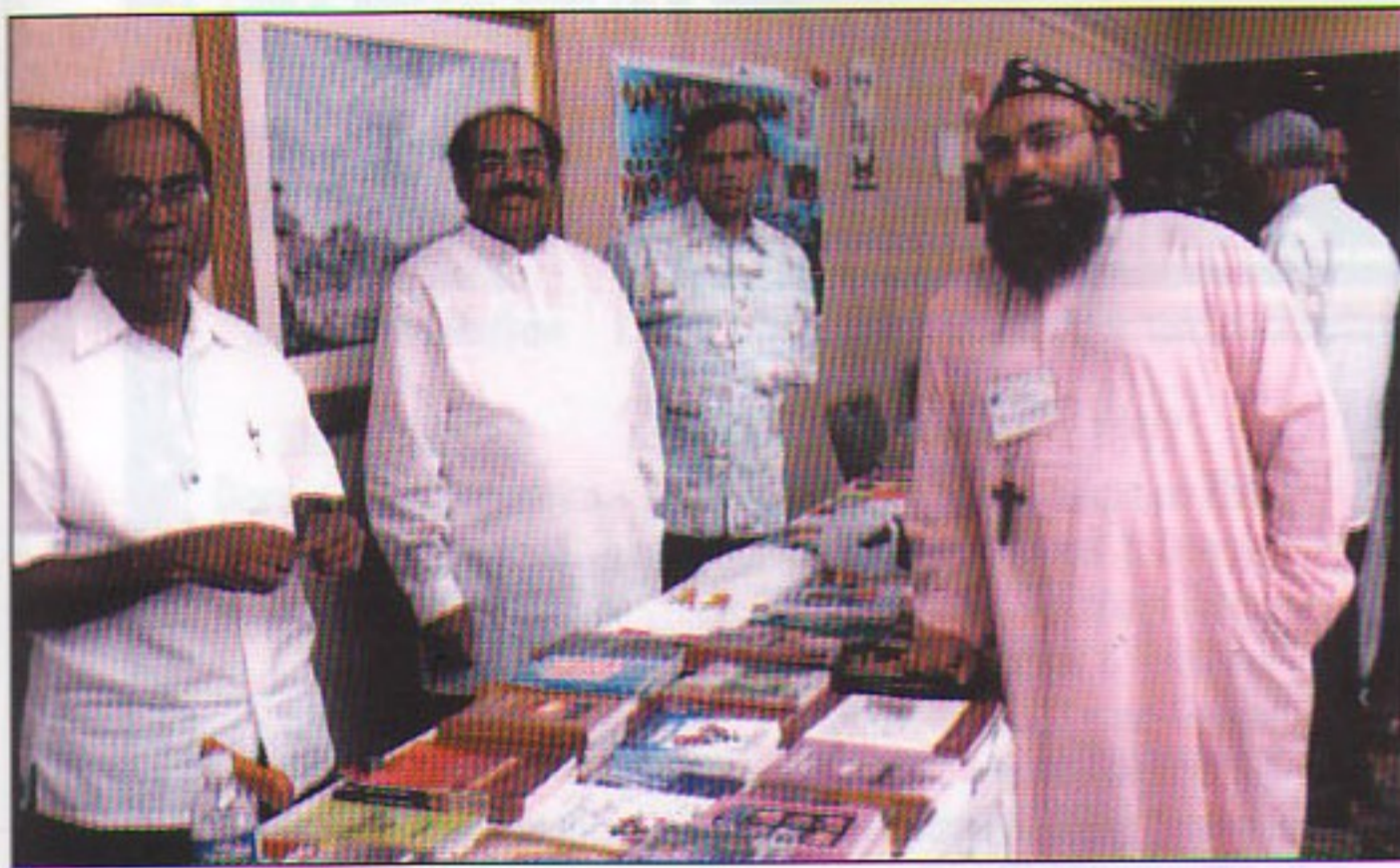




Conference President Rev. Daniel Varghese delivering the welcome address.

the conference torch was handed over to the host of next year's conference, the Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto. The conference secretary Mr. Jose Varghese offered vote of thanks to acknowledge and appreciate the time, talents and contributions of all those who worked hard to make the conference a truly blessed event. The diocesan treasurer Mr. T. A. Mathew expressed thanks to the host

parish and committee members on behalf of the diocese. We use this opportunity to record our heart-felt gratitude to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all the blessings and guidance throughout our humble planning and



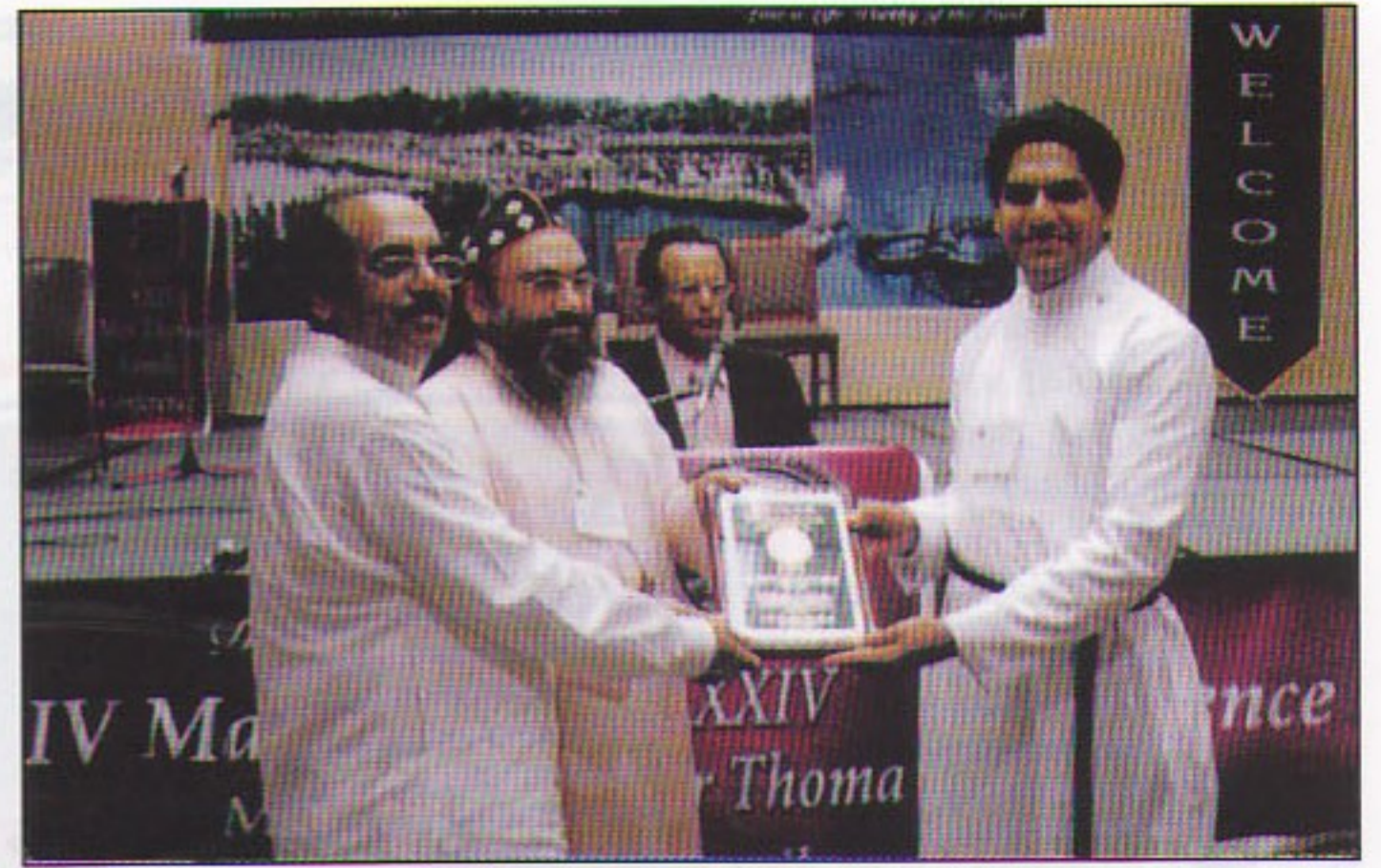
Coorilos Thirumeni at the Mar Thoma Literature Society Booth.

organizing efforts. His grace is sufficient for us to lead a **'life worthy of the Lord'** in these challenging times. All praise and honor belongs to Him, and Him alone.

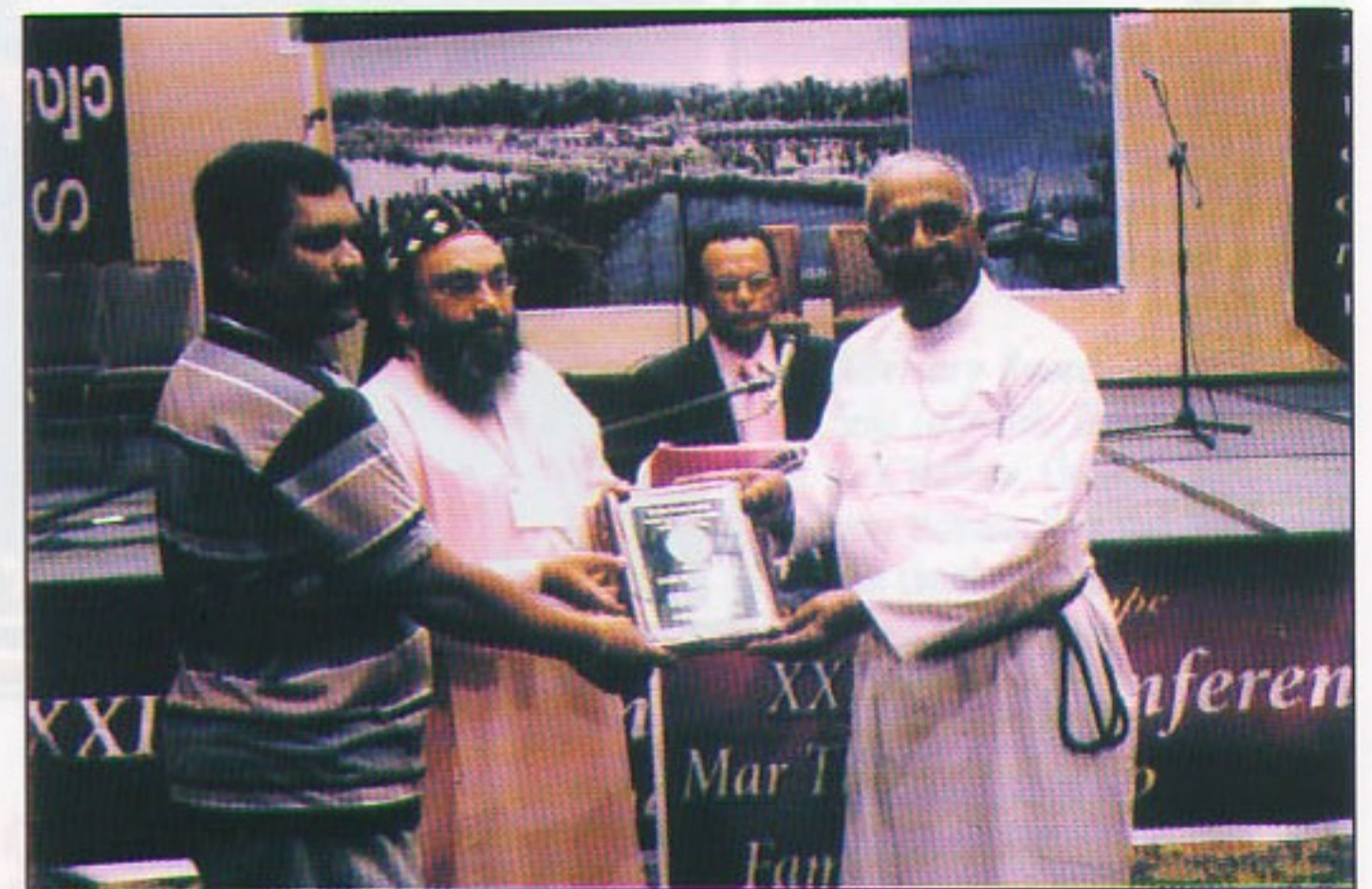


Coorilos Thirumeni at the Mar Thoma Messenger Booth.

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St. John's MTC New York receiving Best Parish Award.



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Scenes from Sports & Recreation at the Family Conference.



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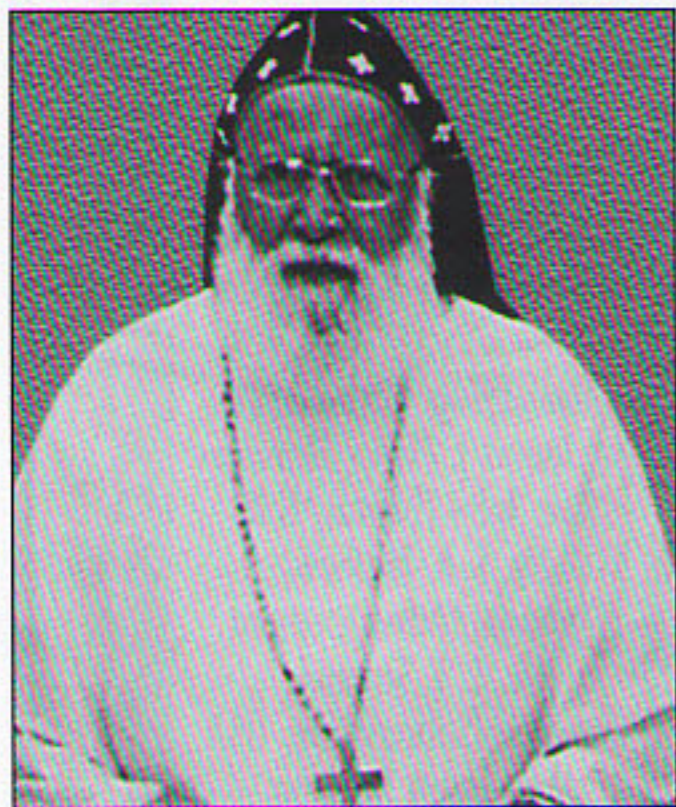
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Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

October 1st was our Voluntary Evangelists Association Sunday. The lay leaders are the pith of the church. The church will attain strength only when it takes steps to emphasize their importance and responsibilities. Proclaiming the gospel is the mission and the destiny of the church. The proclamation of the gospel is to live as witness of Jesus Christ. People should see your good deeds and praise God. Christian witnessing is not a part-time activity confined to a few hours a day. It is a lifestyle that shapes your entire life. Laymen are the ones who interact with the temporal aspects of life. They are the real witnesses. The Voluntary Evangelists Association exists to prepare them for this great ministry. Life should be a witnessing. Preparing the various groups in the church for this purpose is the responsibility of the Voluntary Evangelists Association. This is not a project by a few individuals, but rather a responsibility of each parish that includes everyone.

October 8 was a day of special prayers for the Disabled/Differently-Abled. Several of the world's leaders were people with disabilities. Former American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the famous English poet John Milton, Helen Keller, the former professor Dr. Mary Varghese of Vellore Medical College, the former editor of Mathrubhumi Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon—all these people fall under this category. Ignoring the disabled and ostracizing them from society, would be a loss for society. Recognize their potential and equip them for the transformation of society. Make our churches wheelchair accessible so more people can take part in church activities. Parishes should take steps to provide wheelchairs for those confined to their homes due to a disability. The handicapped are capable of education. A blind boy in Andhra Pradesh passed the LLB exam and went on to become a manager of the Andhra Bank. Now he has started an organization that rehabilitates blind people. This is the legacy (mission) of Jesus Christ, our savior. We should recognize this aspect of evangelization and implement it.

Our Lord proclaimed, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Has the church which is the body of Christ forgotten the teachings of Christ who is the head? It is the duty of the church to keep those who have been weakened by a disability in the mainstream of society. They do not require our pity but our cooperation.

October 15th was Youth Sunday. Children look forward to the future while the aged spend their time reminiscing about the past. Both these are necessary and good. The present is the arena of youth. It belongs to them. How should we live? Should we cling on to the irrevocable past or the uncertain future? Or should we realize the potential of today's opportunities? What is the basis of our ideals? It is the duty of the youth to make the present happen by fusing together the knowledge gained from our failures in the past and the hopeful promise of the future. There is definitely a growth in speeches and meetings among the youth. But how much improvement is there in involved activities?

October 22nd was Family Sunday. The family is fast becoming a weak entity. There used to be a time when we considered the family as the foundation of values, relationships, and personality development. We understood the family as a very pure and hallowed organization to which we had deep obligations. Today, the family is only one of several weak links in our culture. We see marriage as separate from family. Relationship with parents, spouses, siblings, all have become fragile and weak. Some even think of these relationships as merely apocryphal.

Divorce has become a common occurrence. Weddings used to be a social event conducted with much care and thought. Today in many cases, even parents are not informed of their children's weddings. It has degraded to an understanding between two individuals.

Family is God's plan and gift. The integrity of our society depends on the integrity of our families. Every man and woman should attend premarital counseling between 15 and 30 years of age. Every parish should provide the facility for this every year. There are books available on this subject. If you need any assistance regarding this, please feel free to contact my office.

There has been an increase in marriages that start as hurried weddings with a groom or bride who is on a short vacation from overseas and then end in even more expedited divorces. Some parents are focused only on giving away their daughters to a man by any means. Some see weddings as an opportunity to flaunt their wealth. The contextual significance is completely overlooked. We should question if marriage has slipped from a holy sacrament to being a social spectacle. Families should be centered on God.

May the grace, love, and care of our Lord be with us all always.

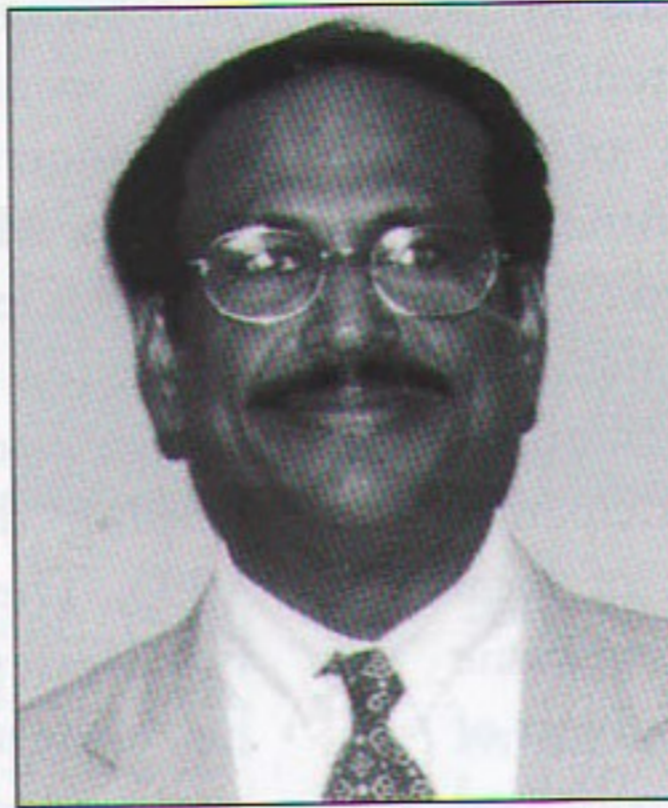
Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

The Emergence of a Diocese and its Official Publication called Mar Thoma Messenger

Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles

When a small number of families got together on a Sunday afternoon to sing God's grace and offer their prayer of thanksgiving to their eternal God, at All Saints Lutheran Church, Jamaica, Queens, New York, in the early spring of 1972, they could not have even dreamt that they were, in fact, laying the foundation stone of a large edifice called the "Diocese of North America & Europe" which would house our Mar Thoma Diaspora communities scattered all across the continents of North America, Europe and South Africa. In spite of enormous difficulties these early immigrants faced in their new found environment with no role model to look upon, they made slow but steady progress in establishing themselves as, individuals, families and small Mar Thoma communities in major cities of the United States of America, Canada and U.K. By 1976 we had Synod-approved Mar Thoma congregations in a few cities and towns of the North American continent and U.K.



Though the Zonal Council formed in 1982 started publishing the Messenger containing a few pages of cyclostyled copies of news and events, at irregular intervals, it was at the Diocesan Assembly presided over by the then Suffragan Metropolitan Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, held at Lubbock on July 19, 1990; that a decision was taken to publish the "Mar Thoma Messenger" on a quarterly basis with a few advertisements and nominal subscription fees to support itself. The Assembly unanimously elected Mr. Abraham Mattackal as Editor of the Messenger and allowed him to publish it from Los Angeles beginning October 1990. Later a five member Editorial Board was formed with Rev. Dr. K.G. Pothan, Los Angeles, Dr. John Mathew, Dallas, Mr. Thomas Mammen, Los Angeles and Mr. P. T. Thomas, New York as its members. While Saji Abraham, a second generation student of Graphic Arts helped us with cover design and other design jobs, Thomas Mammen (Laverne) helped us with type-setting and publication of the Messenger.

The redesigned issue (October 1990) of the 'Mar Thomas Messenger', with the newly constituted Editorial Board, carried the theme 'Pilgrims' which gave us an occasion to remind ourselves that while the early English settlers, pilgrims as they are often called, who landed at

Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620 were in fact fleeing away from religious persecution by the Church of England, the main purpose of Marthomites' coming in and settling down in the United States, Canada and U.K. was financial and social. While our common goal remained the same, our priorities changed quickly. In the 1970's, there were only fewer than 1000 Mar Thoma families in North America and U.K. In the absence of any support groups, we needed each other for our social and spiritual growth. If we were struggling hard to take roots in different areas of our settlement in the 1970's, our main concern in the 1980's was about bringing up of our children in this alien culture. "How to bring up our children in this Western culture without losing our traditional Indian values?" was a subject of serious discussions in our Student/Family Conferences and Church workshops. The number of Mar Thoma immigrants to the North American continent and U.K. was increasing steadily and by the early 1990's, we had over 35 parishes and congregations with about 3500 families.

While we worshiped as congregations in the basement of American Churches and School Auditoriums in the 1970's, many of our parishes had their own places of worship and Achens from Kerala to minister to them in the 1990's.

As our babies and elementary school going children of the 70's and 80's grew into teenagers and college bound youths in the 1990's, the concern of the parents, amongst other things, shifted to the role played by our Achens amongst our youths. A concern was raised that the Achens coming to this diocese, though talented and well educated, did not possess adequate experience or know-how in dealing with the pains and problems that our young people faced in this Western Culture while trying to adhere to the cardinal norms and traditions of their parents' homeland. The number of children approaching the age group of 15 to 25 years was increasing in every parish. A number of them moved out of their homes to lead independent lives with their own circle of friends. The parents became 'panic-stricken' over the future of their children as they strived to come in terms with concepts alien to them such as dating, late night parties, premarital sex and teen pregnancies. It was in this context that some of our parents questioned the role of our church in general and of our achens in particular.

The consensus of opinion amongst the members of the Editorial Board was that the Mar Thoma Messenger, as the official publication of the diocese, should convey the concerns of our people and serve the interests of the Church in general and our diocese in particular. Based on this, the editorial in the October 1991 issue of the Messenger called for, amongst other things, arranging orientation classes for new Achens before they arrive in the West. These classes, the editorial suggested, would deal with issues such as the set up of our parishes in the West, the problems the parents and children face, the strengths and weaknesses of our community, the ethnic diversity in mainstream American life etc. It was also suggested that the newly assigned Achens should attend a course of study in Western culture including European and American history and also in Youth Ministry, counseling and English language skills besides participating in the youth work and other community activities of local American churches. The editorial drew criticism from some of our Achens in the United States and also was a subject of discussions at the Synod. Perhaps those discussions helped them to decide on certain basic requirements to be met by all Achens selected for assignments outside India.

The Mar Thoma Messenger played a crucial role in the overall development of our diocese in its infant stage. The Diocese of North America and Europe became an independent reality on November 1, 1993. Our new Diocesan Center at 744 Newtown Road, Richboro, Pennsylvania was inaugurated on April 9, 1994. The purchase of the Diocesan Center, the appointment of a full time resident Bishop, establishment of about 38 parishes, leadership of over 25 clergymen, membership of nearly 3500 families, the creation of a Youth Department to coordinate the activities of all youth organizations, youth workers etc. and the appointment of three Youth Chaplains—Rev. Dr. P. G. George, Rev. Alexander Issac and Rev. Eapen Cherian—to work among our youths were proud achievements of the new diocese. The construction and dedication of a bigger and gorgeous Sinai Center in Long Island in June 1998, the consecration of Rev. Roy Thomas as the first Kasseessa from our second generation Marthomites followed by Rev. Manoj M. Zachariah, Rev. Shibi Abraham and now Rev. Jason Thomas, the acceptance of Mar Thoma Church as a member of the NCC, our initiation and active involvement in Mexican Mission work and also amongst native Indians are some of our further achievements as a diocese.

During the first five years of the reconstituted Mar Thoma Messenger, various thought provoking themes such as our Mission, Culture, Church Life, Stewardship, Christian Response to Social issues, Dowry System amongst Kerala Christians, Renewal of our Faith and Spirituality, Our Challenges and Possibilities into the 21st Century, were discussed at length and commented upon by experts in the field. 'Letters to the Editor' were encouraged

and given due importance in the publication as 'vox populi' has always been a guiding principle of our publication. In order to have a common idea about what other parishes are doing, 'News from Parishes' has been introduced as a regular feature in the Messenger.

As we celebrate the jubilee of our Diocesan publication, we must remember our Bishops, present and past, who gave us timely advises and guidance, a few of our clergy and a number of dedicated members of our diocese from all areas who spent their time and talent in bringing out the Messenger on time. They include the Editors and Associate Editors, Managing Committee members and the Promoters at parish level.

They deserve our gratitude and prayers. James T. Philip, the present Manager of the Messenger has been helping the publication of the Messenger from July, 1995. The enormous time he spends in every aspect of the Messenger publication, the commitment with which he undertakes the job even at the expense of his professional as well as family time, deserve our praise, prayers and gratitude.

After two decades of progress both in number and activities, our diocese has now entered into a new phase of its existence as part of a global church. Yesterday's children are today's young adults and second generation parents in many cases. More and more young professionals are arriving as new immigrants on a continuous basis. To these newly arrived ones, assimilation process is easier and less strenuous compared to our early settlers, as they have either friends or relatives and/or established Mar Thoma communities in most of the cities they choose to settle in. As the first generation Marthomites are fast approaching their sunset years, we should encourage more and more of our second generation members to take up leadership roles in the Church. The Church at the same time should continue to make use of the experience, commitment and loyalty of every first generation member. It is to remind our children and their children about the enormous hardships and sacrifices our early settlers made in the beginning that we celebrate Diaspora Sunday as Thanksgiving day so that its significance and real meaning would never be lost with the passage of time and that it would remain as a memorial to our posterity.

Even though we have made tremendous progress in the last two decades as a Diaspora community and most of our 6000 families or so are well of compared to many other immigrant communities, our Church life, once considered to be the core of our social interaction and our Christian faith, is beginning to loose its luster of cohesiveness and mutual respect. Many have lost the self-imposed discipline of attending Sunday morning worship services. Now it has become a matter of convenience. Some even, including our youngsters, question the usefulness of attending our services every Sunday of the month! Our second and third

(Continued on page 46)

The Day When Messenger Was Born

Dr. T. M. Thomas, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers, NY

I remember the long time we devoted, “brainstorming” with the idea of a publication. It was at the first meeting of the “Diocesan Assembly”, called “Zonal Council” at that time. The meeting was presided over by (late) Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius, Suffragan Metropolitan in whose diocese at Kottayam that a new “Zone” for North America was formed. Soon after taking charge of the Zone in Summer 1980, Thirumeni visited places where we have a parish or congregation. Again, he visited North America in 1981 to attend the second Students’ Conference held in Chicago (at present, Youth Conference), the first approved national organization. Also, he invited office bearers to San Francisco to discuss the formation of a “Zone” and the first meeting of the unit was held next year. Thus, the first gathering of all parishes/congregations was held.

This meeting was held in Allentown (near Philadelphia) at a college following the third Students’ Conference. It was a hot day in August 1982 and we were fortunate enough to be in a small air-conditioned room. At that time there were twelve parishes and eleven congregations. The Congregation of Greater New York was divided into four in 1980 and they started separate worship by 1981. They are St. Thomas, Epiphany, Staten Island, and New Jersey Marthoma churches. The remaining eight parishes are at Philadelphia, Toronto, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles and St. Andrews, New York. The person who wrote the minutes was the Vicar of Toronto, Rev. George Jacob (now Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius).

Whatever name we used, the foundation for a strong and dynamic diocese was built by the visionary Suffragan Metropolitan, Thomas Thirumeni. Four committees were formed with lay conveners and clergy chairs to bring reports next year (1983 Assembly), on Sunday schools, Youth, Women and Mission. I was given the responsibility of the Sunday schools and the Report was submitted at the next meeting by the chair Cherian Thomas Achen of Chicago. All these years I have been holding some responsibilities of Sunday schools, even today at age 73. The Report for Youth as entrusted with Cecil Mathews and George Poikayil. The person who continuously assumed women’s auxiliary was Nirmala Abraham. Dr. A. M. Alexander of Toronto was in charge of Mission. Unfortunately, he died in a plane crash later.

There was another committee also, not to bring any Report next year, but to begin its work immediately. It was for the publication recognizing the need for a “medium” for keeping all parishes and congregations together as a cohesive unit. Since there was no name, we all worked together for coming up with one. Whatever name we



suggested, Thirumeni commented on it taking considerable time and the list continued. Finally, Thirumeni took a pause in a thinking mood and selected the name “Mar Thoma Messenger”. An “Editorial Committee” was formed with four members, Rev. P. V. Thomas of Houston, Rev. N. M. Cherian, Diocesan Secretary, Dr. A. M. Alexander, Toronto and Mr. Cecil Mathews, New York. They worked on the first issue immediately and published it in a matter of months. It was released before the Fourth Students’ Conference and the First Family Conference, both held at Toronto in 1983.

The early issues of the Mar Thoma Messenger were very attractive both in appearance and content. Members who had talents to write wrote articles. Also there were short news items mentioning the activities of different organizations in parishes and congregations with their pictures. Even from the beginning, the cover page was well designed. It reminds of a big open door to the church and the basic design is kept for years. On the cover page, the emblem of our church, “Lighted to Lighten”, with other symbols, cross, light, and lotus flower. The emblem of the church is surrounded by the map of the United States and Canada.

Though there was a healthy “birth” for the Messenger in the early 1980s, the childhood years in the late 1980s were miserable when it hardly continued as a newsletter. The condition changed when Abraham Mattackal took charge of the publication. After the “rebirth” in the early 1990’s there was steady growth. Some others who worked hard during early years include Saji Abraham, Thomas Mammen (La verne) and P. T. Thomas, New York. The new resident Diocesan bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus took personal interest in the growth of this diocesan publication. Later Abraham Thomas and others carried on the work followed by James T. Philip who devotes full-time for this publication and Eapen Daniel, a creative editor. When Coorilos Thirumeni took charge of the diocese he continued enough attention for the publication by appointing efficient editorial boards and himself regularly writing the “Message from the Diocesan Bishop”. An issue devoted to one theme shall be continued in the future. The different features appealing each age group and organization will make the journal very attractive.

The Messenger is completing twenty five years of its existence and growth. The experiences of early immigrants for survival and their struggle to build new structures must be recognized and the lessons from it can be shared with new generations for which Messenger has a significant role in the future. Indeed, I suggest a special issue of the Messenger devoting for writing such early experiences because most parishes are celebrating its Silver Jubilee during these years. ■

Heritage of the Past and the Horizons of the Future

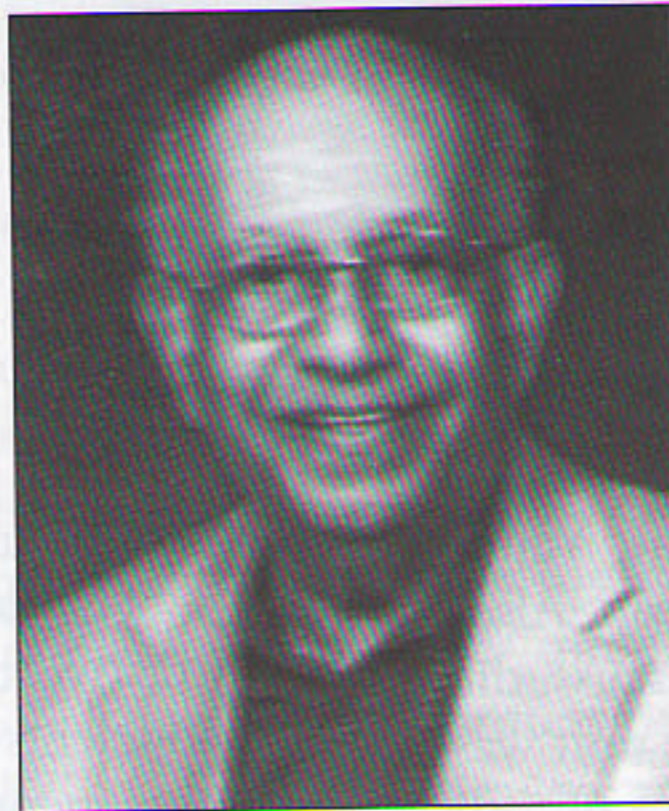
Dr. George K. Zachariah

[We are reprinting here an editorial written in 1986 as we celebrated the Sesquicentennial of the Marthoma Church in the Marthoma Messenger by the then editor, Dr. George K. Zachariah]

The sesquicentennial of the Reformation and of the formation of the Mar Thoma Church is an occasion for celebration. This is a time when we can celebrate together an exciting sense of identity. The most important question we can ask is: who are we anyway? To some, the answer may seem so obvious that they fail to ask the question, when they should. Familiar clichés do not go deep enough to awaken the church's vitality. That can be achieved only through a rediscovery of the roots of the Christian church. Perhaps the strongest thread that binds together Christians of different persuasions is their theological understanding of the church as the People of God. Our calling as a Christian community is clear. It is to help our members discover what it means to be God's people in a particular time and place. We will have to come to a clear image of what the church is meant to be.

What drew people to the early church that continues to serve as a model to us in the twentieth century was not a lot of doctrine but a desire to have a personal relationship with Christ and to have it grow. It matters **not** so much **what we say** about our calling as the servant people of God, as the body of Christ, as a royal priesthood, as a living temple or ministers (agents) of reconciliation, but what we do about it. Whatever the major emphasis, a spiritually vibrant church always has a clear and consistent sense of direction, a strong sense of purpose and a contagious sense of identity without exclusivity. A strong sense of identity generates contagious enthusiasm and communicates a climate of vitality. Such a church sees itself as a catalyst in the lives of individuals and in the corporate life of the community. There are three **foci** for its work, encouraging people to truly become disciples or followers of Christ; nurturing its people to grow in a personal relationship with Christ through service; and making Christ known in the community at large.

The church is where grace, rather than guilt and legalism, provides motivation. It is through grace that we discover the deep meaning of our common humanity. Since none of us has deserved the love of God, we share a common life in Christ. Every one of us has been forgiven so much that whatever we must forgive to one another is really nothing at



all. In brief, the church is a forgiven and forgiving community and is simply a **"network of grace"** in which there is a mutual acceptance by people of one another. Grace opens the door to growth. It allows people to make their own mistakes. It gives them the right to fail. Renewal comes where a climate of acceptance and trust gives freedom to be honest with one another about our fears and failures about our vulnerabilities and longings.

Our church with its ancient Eastern traditions and liturgical practices, informed by the insights of the Reformation and based on biblical teachings, came on the scene as a renewed and reformed church. The tension and the Spirit that gave birth to the church are ever present. Each generation has to think through its faith and practices. Actually, theology is not an intellectual exercise for leisure time; rather, it is committed reflection. "It is tying up the loose ends of our lives from the perspective of one's faith". In a sense we **do** theology rather than think and speak. The church needs to inspire its members to do theology in the sense mentioned above.

We ought not to pretend to be what we are not. Neither should we, with false modesty, pretend that we are not what we are. We must be aware of the gifts God has given us and must use those gifts in a spirit of stewardship and thanksgiving. It is comforting to note that God gives the church the gifts it needs to fulfill its mission in the world. The necessary abilities to carry out that mission do not reside only in a few persons, but they are present in many different ways in all members of the church. We must consciously seek to discern the manifold gifts in our people and must be involved in equipping the members for their ministries and must encourage them to experiment using those gifts.

It is good to remember that institutions, just as much as persons, can get amnesia. The church cannot afford to succumb to amnesia any more than other institutions can. A vital part of its life is the "community remembering" of that which goes on its midst. In fact, from a human point of view, the church's survival may depend on how well its memory bank is working. What kinds of things does our church have for remembering? There are three: (i) the set of events that brought the Christian church into being; (ii) the two

thousand years of reflection and commentary on it; and (iii) the movement of reformation and renewal. Together they constitute the heritage that gives us our identity and mission.

The call that comes to the family of God is to be a "people for others". Dr. Cliff Robinson used to say that the only ability God requires of us is "availability". We are called to be key instruments of God's grace for change in the community. Awareness of need must lead to commitment of resources. Time, energy, skill, imagination and money are all involved in meeting these needs. We must take seriously Dietrich Bonhoeffer's warning not to seek for our own ideal image of Christian community, but to accept community as a gift of God—a divine reality rather than the fulfillment of a human dream. We are not nurturing people for their own benefit. It is in order to impart family life, community life, work life, life in the nation. The mission of the church is to speak the language of compassion and like the Samaritan in Jesus' parable, its role is to be the first on the scene. Inherent in mission is a vital holy impatience.

We need to integrate our worship and mission. In fact, there is no dichotomy between worship and mission. As Orlando Costas has characterized the relationship, "Liturgy without mission is like a river without a spring. Mission without worship is like a river without a sea". Both are necessary. Without the one the other loses its vitality and means.

Institutional structures often are the product of former movements that have been organized to ensure continuity, coherence and conformity. It is a fact that many times they persist even when the soul of the movement has been lost altogether. They may lose their capacity to change. Someone has asked, "can the church be trusted with mission"? Is not mission a movement rather than an institution? The tight boundaries of the institutional church make it uncomfortable for many searching and creative individuals.

A serious problem we confront is viewing and experiencing the church as an institution rather than as a Christian community. One of the great priorities of the church in our time is to help people discover community. We are called to be a pilgrim people. The life of pilgrimage of each individual must be taken seriously. We are challenged not to settle down. We are called to be perpetually in an "exodus mode". More often than not, the church is a secondary group rather than a primary community. We are a group of strangers rather than a people who deeply share our lives with each other. It may be worthwhile to experiment with spending a good part of our committee meetings for worship, caring, loving, healing. Let us take the time to be a brother or a sister to our fellow believers. A climate where making decisions by consensus can be developed. We have to learn to trust that God's spirit is at work in

other styles and persuasions wherever faithful people gather. We must learn to appreciate what others have to say and what others are doing.

It is possible that movements can thrive within church structures if the church is structured so as to encourage movements of the Spirit. It is good to remember that order without ardor is empty, meaningless and barren, while ardor without order breeds chaos and eventually leads to deadly conflicts. It is not hard to understand why most of us resist change. Familiar ways are comfortable. Growth can be painful. Fear may drive us to seek solutions in increased activity. Fear may prevent us from discovering what our real problems are.

We have to change our way of doing things. Consider the time spent by congregations and the members of the congregation in church-related matters. The church spends too much time and energy analyzing problems. It is worth recalling that devastating word in with Reinhold Niebuhr summed up his attitude to American Protestantism. The church, he said, has become "trivial". Too little attention is given to creative movements of the Spirit. The myriad problems that we face and our inability to appropriate God's grace in solving them have left us as one of the most cynical people on the face of the earth. There is a need for change in the church's mode of dealing with the world from monologue to dialogue.

The church's passive internalization of the surrounding secular culture has resulted in a situation in which each church member follows the culture on most issues, rather than submit his/her thinking to the light of the scripture. The men of God in the Bible were almost always prophetic rather than diplomatic. We conform to this world by becoming mild-mannered "organization men". We should have more prophets and fewer diplomats. However, the ideal missionary approach has been expressed by Heinrich Kramer as the combination of "a prophetic, apostolic heraldship of truth for Christ's sake, with a priestly, apostolic ambassadorship of love for His sake".

Where exactly do we stand on the issue of *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church always to be reformed)? How do we treat the "gad-flies" in our church: with tolerance or with disgust? Our attention must not be on our past, but on our potential. The inertia of 150 years of past practice must be overcome. The heritage of the church must be offered as a *resource* rather than as the *source*. The heritage of the past and the horizons of the future are called to be in dialogue. What we do not need is a heritage in monologue with itself obscuring the horizon. Our memory needs to be a servant rather than a master. Are we deeply committed to becoming God's active people that we are willing to pay the price? What is our commitment? Are we willing to give time and money? Are we willing to enlist others to work with us? ■

North American Mar Thoma Church Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

Dr. P. John Lincoln

The Mar Thoma Church is one of the major Episcopal churches of Kerala with more emphasis on Evangelical mission. From the inception of the Mar Thoma Church since 1840, it has made a phenomenal growth because of its eminent Bishops, hard working clergy and committed lay people. The ancient Mar Thoma Church was unique because of its rich heritage, tradition, spirituality and ethos. Late Dr. Stanley Jones, one of the most eminent preachers, stated, "The Mar Thoma Church entirely Indian manned is the brightest Christian movement who are progressive and will bleed and die for their church." The vision of one of the Metropolitans, Abraham Mar Thoma, was that every Marthomite be a missionary to all of India. God Almighty has heard his cry and answered his prayers. The Marthomites have moved all over the world crossing oceans. Many Marthomites have landed into this continent conceived in the proposition that all men are created equal. The early church was very powerful due to its qualitative growth fulfilling the missions of our fore-fathers. In the last 50 years the Mar Thoma Church has grown extensively. This growth is not only numerical but also structural. Structural and material growth of our church amazes our sister denominations. But, is it that we have derailed from its early calling? This is the time for us to return to our original calling.

During the 1960s people from all over the world started to move to the United States for higher education and greener pastures. Indians were not any different. They also moved in large numbers although the Malayalees were few in number. The Malayalee Christians such as the Orthodox, Mar Thomites and CSI, joined together for prayer groups in different cities as and when they could. The immigration laws were changed in the 1970s and a lot of Kerala doctors and nurses moved to this country. The prayer meetings grew in size and the denominational groups separated to their own entities.

In the past 25 years Kerala Christians increased in numbers, which in turn increased the need for religious gatherings. The lay leadership was appreciated by the Mar Thoma church authorities. Now and then the visiting clergy conducted Holy Qurbana services. In 1972 there were worship services conducted in New York and in Texas areas. During the early part of the 1970s there were children gathering together for fun, fellowship and spiritual closeness in the New York area. This was not an organized national event. Rev. T.I. Joseph and Rev. Oommen Koruth,



who came as post-graduate students, have played vital roles in these two areas. Due to the changes in immigration laws, immigrants were allowed to bring their families to this country. Many people became citizens and brought their loved ones, which in turn increased the number of members. Until 1978 there were a few congregations and a few ecumenical prayer groups in North America. Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan was the visiting Bishop at that time. He traveled the length and breadth of the entire United States and Canada to establish

parishes and congregations and was rightfully called as the architect of this Zonal system and Diocese. He, with his ecumenical relationship had discussion with the bishop of New York, Paul Morie. Rev. N. M. Cherian was the first secretary at that time and worked hand in hand with Thomas Thirumeni to bring the North American Mar Thoma Church under one umbrella. This helped our Mar Thoma Metropolitan Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma to sign an agreement with the presiding bishop of the Episcopal church of the United States. In 1980 our Metropolitan divided the congregation in New York into four parishes. This helped the parishes to grow in number and spirituality. Very soon in the year 1983 the Anglican leader also signed an agreement with the Mar Thoma Church in the Canadian area. The Episcopal Church issued supporting documents and official papers for our clergy to get visas to visit the United States and to serve our people.

When the congregation and parishes started to increase in number, regional and national meetings were made. By this time in 1982 there were around 23 congregations. After the formation of the congregations it grew to become parishes. The total number of members reached 5000. The first zonal council was started in 1982, which took place in Philadelphia along with the first national student conference, which was later on renamed as the National Youth Conference. It was also the year of the first publication of the 'Mar Thoma Messenger'. In 1983 the first family conference was conducted in Toronto, Canada. There after it was conducted every year during the summer in different cities across the United States and Canada. The Houston parish constructed the first Mar Thoma Church and it was dedicated by Thomas Thirumeni on July 14, 1984. In 1984 the Dallas Mar Thoma Church hosted the zonal council meeting and the family conference. Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, the

architect of the Diocese presided as the patron. He called the family conference as the Maramon Convention of North America. The first Zonal property of 2 1/2 acres located in Lubbock, Texas was donated and accepted to the Zonal Assembly in 1986 to develop a Zonal Center. In 1986 the Chicago Mar Thoma Church hosted the Zonal Assembly and family conference. Until 1987 the National Family Conference and the Youth Conference were conducted at the same time and venue. The first edition of the National Mar Thoma Church directory was printed. Mr. Thampi Mathai from Rochester helped to compile all the names and addresses. In 1987 at the Los Angeles Family Conference it was decided to separate the Family Conference and the Youth Conference to be conducted at different times and venues. In 1988 our Zonal Assembly was elevated to be the Diocese of North America and Europe. The Houston parish hosted the Diocesan Assembly and also the yearly Family Conference. Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan took over the charges as the Diocesan Bishop. The Diocese had 22 parishes and a membership of 2500 families. There were 22 clergy ministering throughout this Diocese. In 1988 the Sunday school was separated as an autonomous body. It was the far sightedness of Chrysostom Thirumeni calling our lay people of our new Diocese to prepare our young people for ministerial purposes.

In 1990 the Diocesan Assembly decided that the Lubbock Mar Thoma Church be granted permission to construct their church on part of the Diocesan property and the remaining property for further Diocesan development. Mr. Roy Thomas, the first-born citizen of Lubbock, came forward to submit himself as a candidate for the Mar Thoma Church ministry during the Family Conference. Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom in 1992 encouraged the Diocesan Council and the Assembly to purchase a Diocesan Center. In December of 1993 the Diocesan Center in Richboro, Pennsylvania, was purchased. On April 9th, 1994 the Mar Thoma Diocesan Center at Richboro was dedicated by the first resident Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa and visiting bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa. Rev. Dr. P. G. George was the first resident Secretary of the Diocese of North America and Europe. During that time we had about 25 clergy ministering to about 3000 families with about 40 parishes. With the Diocese being very large it was divided into Diocesan Centers and Regions for activities and growth. During 1994 the Texas Regional Youth, Sevika Sangham and Edavaka mission meetings were conducted in Lubbock. Mr. Roy Thomas dedicated himself to go for Theological studies and was accepted by Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus and was sent to Kottayam for his studies. In 1996 the Diocese decided to change the location of the Diocesan Center from Richboro to Long Island. Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Diocesan Bishop, the

Council and the Assembly decided to buy the property in Long Island and construct the new Diocesan Center. In 1997 the second national directory was published. The Sinai Mar Thoma Center was constructed within 2 years and the dedication was done by the Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma on June 27, 1998.

Our Ecumenical relationship with local churches deepened our horizon to join as a member of the National Council of Churches in 1996. This enabled our church to be a bridge between Eastern and Western churches. On July 4, 1999 Mr. Roy A. Thomas was consecrated as a Kasesa during the Family Conference conducted by the Houston Mar Thoma Church. In 2001 our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus emphasized that we should not be isolated as an Indian Mar Thoma community in our own church buildings but become church builders. The missionary zeal and the commitment for evangelization are the phenomenal difference between the Mar Thoma Church and other churches. It was also emphasized that we must do mission work here in the US, in India as well as in the neighboring underdeveloped countries. In 2002 Mr. Manoj Zachariah was consecrated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos as a Kasesa. In 2003 the Diocesan Assembly decided to do mission work in Mexico and with Native Americans. We have decided to construct housing facilities for the fishermen in Matamoros Islands. We constructed around 80 houses for the local fishermen and their families. We also started a technical institute in the name of Philipose Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan. We also do vacation Bible schools among Native American children. The 3rd National directory was published in 2003. It is noteworthy to mention that Mr. James T. Philip was the main source to compile all the material for printing the directory. In 2004 Shibu Abraham was consecrated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos as a Kasesa. Towards the end of 2005 hurricanes hit the coastal areas of Mexico, which was a disaster and most of the houses that were built were washed away. In 2006 Mr. Jason Thomas was consecrated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos as a Kasesa. These four people have paved the way for our youth to follow in their footsteps. Today we have 54 parishes and 18 congregations in our Diocese. Our dream is that by the end of 2025 we will have our own young men becoming Achans and serving this Diocese and allowing us to be self sufficient. In spite of all the growing pains, we are marching forward to rejuvenate our Diocesan activities in the great leadership of Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Coorilos. Each of these events leave indelible footprints, which make up the history of the Mar Thoma Church in these continents, which make up this great Diocese of North America and Europe. Since I was an active participant of this Diocese from the time of its inception, I can relate to the historical events, as if it has just happened. ■

Jubilee in Family

Rev. Thomas John, Washington, D.C.

In Biblical understanding, Jubilee is the year of "Yobel" which is the fiftieth year, the 50th year after the succession of seven sabbaticals. The seventh day of the week is the day of Sabbath. God created the universe in six days and set apart the seventh day for rest. The day of rest is the day for meditation and worship. Hence, that day is the reason of creation. The 7th year is the sabbatical year and that whole year is set apart for God and divine purposes. The Silver Jubilee is the 25th year which is half the way to Yobel.



Repentance in Family

Jubilee in the history of Israel is the celebration of the return to God. The celebrations become meaningless without true remorse and repentance on the part of the people. Jubilee in the new Israel should be the experience of revision and transformation of being in Christ the God and our savior. The state of conversion should compel one to reflect upon the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Turning to God results in a radical and meaningful change in our relationship with Him and consequently our perspectives in the world.

The Jubilee should be a turning point in the life of the community and the individual. As everyone has turned away from God, a process that is often a gradual one, there is a need for turning back to Him, the source of our being. Turning away from God is sin and that ends up in all sorts of abominations. But detachment from these alone does not make conversion perfect. Attachment to Christ and the kingdom values and abiding in Him are essential ingredients.

Liberty in Family

When we bid farewell to the 'old man' and enter into a new life, we are in the domain of full freedom, liberated from all sorts of slavery. The oppressive demonic forces get defeated and we are liberated from the clutches of evil forces. Hence, Jubilee celebrates freedom and liberty in Christ. In the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament, the norms of Jubilee are dictated for the welfare of the community. In the Book of Leviticus, Chapter 25 and in Luke Chapter 4 we see the obligatory instructions on Jubilee.

Repentance and liberty are the two main characteristics of Jubilee. Repentance is not an emotional excitement and liberty is not licentiousness. In order to buildup a community based on Christian values, individuals and families in particular have an important role. The family is

the basic unit of society. The family is the creation of God. In the family there is the bond of mutual partnership of husband and wife and relationship of brothers and sisters and their obedience of parents and everyone's responding to God's commands. The world is the family of God and the church is the family of those who are in Christ. Family life is sacramental and is meant to be preserved until death. But unfortunately the sanctity, warmth and intimacy of relationships are diminished because of circumstances and individual

disobedience. Each individual, both male and female, has the freedom to express their identity, but in family both husband and wife have the mutual responsibility to love one another for maintaining harmony in the family. The family is an institution that exists for the well being of all its members. It is the cradle of culture and nursery of values.

So, in Jubilee, the family should experience the celebration of liberation. In family, both the husband and wife should evaluate their lives and mend the brokenness and maintain the necessary balance. The foremost villain in the saga of family crises is the 'Ego' which is worse than 'Iago' (the villain in Shakespeare's writing- Othello). Ego binds the personality and succumbs to the slavery of self-justification. Humility and self-understanding are very essential to get rid of ego and self-justification. Jesus is inviting us to learn humility and lowliness from Him (Mtt 11:29).

Self Respect

When one loses self-respect, he/she starts to disrespect others. The body is the temple of God and it is created in the image of God. It has an undecending value which time cannot grab away. When one respects ones self, he/she must respect the better half also. Because God united male and female; they are no more two but one. Hence, when one respects her/himself that is mutual respect.

Sentiments

Emotional integrity is not only an expression of sexuality but also an intimacy of two personalities. In family life both spouses and family members express positive sentiments to each other. There should be enough opportunities for expressing wholesome sentiments in family life. Support, appreciation, criticism and warnings must be conveyed on times exactly when they are needed. Faults, weaknesses and shortcomings should be accepted as human errors and accept the spouse as partner and the children as our

(Continued on page 44)

The Vision of a Man of Faith Behind the Birth of Mar Thoma Messenger

M. C. Alexander, NJ Mar Thoma Church

It is a matter of great joy that Mar Thoma Messenger is celebrating its Silver Jubilee. It seems unbelievable that this publication has completed twenty-five years.

When I first came to this country, I looked for a Mar Thoma Church. There was none in New Jersey. It was after a while that I found a congregation in New York City. From 1974, we used to commute to Manhattan, every Sunday for worship service.

During the mid-seventies, doctors, engineers, nurses, and other professionals from Kerala started to migrate to this country in greater numbers. The presence of Marthomites in large numbers in the New York–New Jersey area demanded the establishment of convenient facilities for worship. The Mar Thoma Church realized the great need for pastoral services in this region. Recognizing the need and the potential for growth in the region, in 1981, the Marthoma Metropolitan divided the congregation to four areas, and thus the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, Staten Island Mar Thoma Church, and the New Jersey Mar Thoma Church came into being.

The first Vicar of these churches was the late Rev. M. V. Benjamin. Rev. N. M. Cherian, who succeeded him, provided excellent guidance to this community, under the great leadership of the late Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Saffaragan Metropolitan.

Cherian Achen was the first Secretary of the Zonal Assembly of North America and UK. I had the opportunity to work very closely with him as Zonal Assembly Member and the Secretary of New Jersey Mar Thoma Church. It was his vision to start a publication in USA with news and articles on the Mar Thoma Church and its activities. His vision became a reality before he left for India. That was the birth of Mar Thoma Messenger.

This is prime example of how a decision taken with prayer and trust in God will be sustained. John 11:40 says, "If you believe, you will see the glory of God". Very often, our weakness is the doubt in our minds. Behind Cherian Achen there was a group of people who prayed for the successes of our activities in regard to the messenger magazine. I believe they are still praying for the growth of our community, which brings us victory through Christ. We thank God for the dedicated team that has been working very hard in the past and in the present for the growth of this publication. The prayers of the faithful, the dedicated work of people in charge and the unselfish cooperation of the members paved the way for the success of the 'Mar Thoma Messenger'.

As we celebrate the silver jubilee of the Messenger, let us remember the vision and the faith of one man, Rev. N. M. Cherian, whose efforts the Lord has blessed. May God abundantly bless the entire Mar Thoma community in North America and UK. ■

"The Savior"

Nina Varughese, Ebenezer MTC, New York

Jesus my savior
So might and strong
You are the one to whom we belong.
Glorious and powerful,
So full of might,
Now show us the way,
So that we may see the light.
Come to Him because He is the way.

Through Him you can go through every single day.
Show us Oh Father! the blessings You give,
And show us the way we should live.
Protect me from my enemies,
For they do not know
The powers You have and the miracles You show.
Now bless us each day so that we may be
Fit Oh Lord! To Dwell With Thee.

Change of Diocesan Office Email Address!!!

The Diocesan office email address has changed. The new email is: marthomadiocese@aol.com

The Role of a Christian Family In Social Changes

Rev. Joseph Oommen, Diocesan/Bishop's Secretary

Family, for ages, has existed as an extensive and influential social outfit. Its universal nature has impacted almost all cultures. Sociologists suggest that family is a socio-cultural institution. Anthropologists argue that in ancient days there were no families and most probably people lived in groups and they were promiscuous. According to Karl Marx, family is the production unit of tomorrow's labor force. Others have different opinions. However, it is obvious that every society, throughout ages, has been family bonded. In this context it is worthwhile examining the religious significance of a family, how the church and family are related and, above all, what is the role and responsibility of a Christian family in the present situations.

At the outset, let us ponder why the church should be concerned about family at all. Should it not just concentrate on its structured goal of spirituality? The answer is simple. Religious training, socialization and education are inculcated through the family. So, family, as the basic social unit of human civilization, continues to be the inevitable and most effective instrument for any effort at human excellence and transformation.

Meaning and Definition of Family

The word family is derived from the Roman word 'famulus' meaning a servant, a group of producers, members connected by marriage or through slaves. In ancient days, they were an agrarian community and their activities revolved around households and fields. They acquired wealth and properties for the well being of the individual members. The basic tenet of this goal remains the same today, even after sweeping industrialization and the onset of knowledge-based activities based on information technology. Sociologists like Ernest W. Burges and Harvey J. Locke define family as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household. They interact and communicate with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating and maintaining a common culture. Anderson and Parker define family as a socially recognized unit of people related to each other by kinship, marital and legal ties. These definitions spell out that family is an institution, which has social roles, interpersonal relationships, status and cultural traditions. Karl Marx points out that family is not only the production unit of tomorrow's labor force but it also creates a hierarchical and in-egalitarian relationship which dampens



the revolutionary function. It upholds capitalistic society. People by habit become submissive to authority. Marx argues that power, property and prestige uphold and maintain hierarchy. The outcome is class, politics and status. They have affected relationships, education, marriage and even the basic needs of family members.

In many cases, heads of family, who control property and power, decide the life style of other members even to the extent of what kind of food is to be eaten and the type of clothes to be worn. They also decide which family member should be sent for education and at what level and who will marry whom and where they should settle down. Such arbitrary and dictatorial decisions, often taken with the motive for the perpetuation of family wealth and name, have trampled on the freedom and feelings of other members curbing their aspirations and denying opportunities for social participation on individualistic basis.

For Marx religion is mystification, a manifestation of false consciousness and an agency of social control deployed by the ruling classes in the class struggle. His view of religion as 'the opiate of masses' more or less agrees with Sigmund Freud's concept of religion as 'the institutionalized mass neurosis'. However, Max Weber identified religion as the most influential agent of value systems that determine social institutions. As two social groups, religion and family are closely related functionally and morally to each other. This integration between religion and family has stood the test of all times and the synergy between the two influences help in maintaining the sanity in social behavior which is often guided by selfishness and greed.

Relationship between Religion and Family

The Hindi word 'Dharma' from the Sanskrit root 'Dhru' means religion, virtue, quality, function, duty and opinion. For many people, religion is civic virtues and for some others it is recognition of super human powers, with belief in one God or beliefs in several gods. All 'isms' have religious elements. Even 'isms' such as communism, fascism and humanism can be categorized as religion. Defining religion is a complex task.

"Religion is a mode of action as well as a system of belief, and a sociological phenomenon as well as a personal experience", says Malinowski: while Johnstone defines religion as "A system of belief and practices by which a group of people interpret and respond to what they feel is supernatural and sacred". These definitions attribute to religion certain

characteristics – social phenomenon, a system of beliefs and practices, it has relationship with supernatural and sacred, a personal experience and also it brings people together.

David Aberle identifies five major functions of family: Recruitment/reproduction; Socialization; Producing satisfactory levels of goods and services; Preserving orders of society and Maintaining a sense of purpose.

The recruiting function of every religious group is the same as that of the reproduction or adoption function of family. It is from the family that children learn discipline, tolerance, cooperation and all other civic virtues. The new members of all religious groups are subject to the process of training, very similar to that of the socialization of children in the family. Those who are not satisfied with the social groups will try to avoid or escape from the group. Therefore, religious movements set the satisfaction of the maximum number of people as the chief goal. The dissatisfied often embrace other religious groups. Similarly in family those who are dissatisfied tend to quarrel and escape from their ties through divorce and in extreme cases by taking their own lives. Both in religion and in family, the members not only maintain a feeling of commitment to the group but also preserve the norms, goals, roles and status.

In addition to the functional relationship, religion has a moral responsibility to the family. It influences the family by exerting values such as human dignity and freedom, equality before the law, respect for legitimate authority and faithfulness to one's own role in society. Religion gives solace to those who are in misery and hopelessness. It upholds social values and trains children to obey their parents. It inculcates in them values of love, service, charity, faithfulness, discipline, obedience and friendship. Religious rites are performed on the occasions of birth, marriage, sickness and death. Such religious rites enhance the dignity of individuals and strengthen family bonds. Children learn the value of relationship among members of family, who will derive basic psychological satisfaction having their spiritual needs like security, acceptance in society and meaning to the mysteries of life met. Thus, religion and family remain intertwined as beacons of hope and faith, having the potential of infusing individuals with the spirit to cope with adversities and overcome despair and hopelessness.

Sweeping changes in several fields, technological advancements, new ideas, social sanctions and new social structures have changed the pattern of family as a whole. For instance, the Hindu Law of Inheritance Act 1929, the Child Marriage Restriction Act 1929, the Hindu Succession Act 1956 and missionary movements in different parts of the country have given more freedom to women to be equal to men. There has also been a changing trend from arranged marriages to marriage by choice. The Internet has now become an open forum for global search of life partners. There are many matrimonial web sites where one can post matrimonial details and hope to net a partner. Interpersonal relationships, economic freedom, modern communication facilities and the freedom given to the members of the family

in decision-making have all affected the fabric of social changes. But almost in all cases of marriage, religion and family go together and both institutions have survived the onslaught of the changes all around.

Marriage and Family

Marriage is a social event that constitutes a family. It is a socially sanctioned union between men and women. "Marriage forges a new social link and thus added strength; but perhaps also the loss of a productive worker or a friendly kinsman". It is a social relationship. Mainly, marriages are of three kinds: Monogamy when one man marries one woman; Polygamy when one man marries many women and Polyandry in which one woman marries several men.

Family can also be divided into many forms according to the structure, authority, residence and ancestry, Joint family and Nuclear family (structure), Patriarchal and Matriarchal (authority), Matrilocal, Patrilocal, Neolocal (residence), Patrilineal, Matrilineal (ancestry) and Endogamous and Exogamous (in-groups and out-groups).

The major role of decision-making by women happens in the matriarchal system and man is the decision maker in the patriarchal system. When the couple establishes a separate residence after their marriage, it indicates a neo-local pattern of residence. The couple who lives with the man's parents follows a patrilocal pattern and if with the girl's parents it is matrilocal. Basically, all these forms depend on the socio-cultural customs of society.

Joint Family

Predominantly, both in the East and the West, family exists in two forms—joint family and nuclear family. The joint family is the outcome of an agrarian and feudalistic system that was common in most civilizations.

A joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common family worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred. Joint family is a merger of several nuclear families controlled by a patriarch. It has common residence, a common religion and joint property. The members share joy, sorrow and burdens together. As a cooperative institution, the joint family assured the safety of orphans, widows, sick and old people. Young people have learned social virtues and religious rites from the elders. However, frequent quarrels, uncontrolled procreation, lack of opportunities for individual pursuits and intellectual developments and the dependent and submissive nature of members in a restrictive atmosphere are held as the pitfalls and negative outcome of a joint family.

Nuclear Family

Urbanization following industrialization, religious reformation, western education and other influences undermined

the patriarchal family system and thus the nuclear family emerged, a family unit free from the control of elders. It consists of the parents and their unmarried children.

According to the functionalist theory (David & Moore, 1945), every social phenomenon exists because it has some positive function to perform in society. Besides, a number of functional pre-requisites must be effectively fulfilled. By applying this theory they say that there are four inevitable features in a society. They are the reproductive, sexual, social and maintenance functions. These basic functions are satisfied in the nuclear family, hence it is called the universal social institution. At this point one may question the universality of nuclear family since social functions differ from one society to another.

Nowadays, educational, economic, religious and recre-ational functions of the family have been undertaken by other social agencies and the basic agrarian and sacred nature changed into a consumptional and secular realm². By then, the major changes observed in families are freedom of choice of life partners, independence from parents after marriage, equality of husband and wife and participation of family members in decision-making. These social changes have a great impact on dowry, inter-caste marriages, widow remarriages and women's education.

Values in the context of secular society, however, are determined by the influence and beliefs of children through peer groups, educational institutions, clubs and mass media—both print and electronic. Usually children are exposed to society even before their religious studies. It is at this juncture that we will be able to see the role of the church and the Christian family in a biblical perspective.

The Church and Christian Family

The Church is the living expression of God's communication. In God (Trinity), we have the Father, the Mother and the Son. The Hebrew and Syriac languages themselves make it easy to call the Spirit "the Heavenly Mother" because 'Ruach' and 'Ruho' are feminine. The Hebrew word 'Elohim' is also plural. Above all, the nature of God as it is shown in the book of Genesis implies that God is a family (Gen. 5:2-3). The world is the family of God (aikos). In the Indian context, the idea of *Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam* will have relevance.

God constituted family, (Gen 2:22-25) for people to live together fruitfully and entrusted them responsibilities and put them in charge of the world in which they live. According to the Old Testament, parents were the teachers of religion and home was the cradle of their culture. (De 11:8-120). "The home is the only agency in which precept and example can go hand in hand through the year, where there is time enough and the experience is intimate enough to mold inner attitudes and habits³". Family needs guidance, nurturing, fellowship and support of the church because "the church

and the family are partners⁴". Is the family ready to accept the nurturing of the church?

Does the church perform its function properly? Perhaps, there is a need for the Church to examine and prepare suitably to face social changes.

Christian marriage constitutes a Christian family. It is essentially a sacrament and is meant to be preserved until death releases those who took the vows. Without sacrament, no church can express her mission.

Christian marriage is a visible act performed by the church for the invisible grace of God. So it is not a contract between two persons. A wedding in the civil registry differs from a church wedding in that respect. The first act of union in marriage is not love and sex, rather it is worship before God.

It depicts a promise of comfort, respect, care, love and life long faithfulness. Unfortunately, the present world is increasingly getting caught in the trapping of the myths reinforced by secular media. Myths are those stories that tell us who we are, what we have done and what we can do and cannot⁴.

People today "live by the Media" and they have not fully realized the vanity and hollowness of images and fantasy provided to them.

Family and Media

Media awareness, as someone has rightly said, is everybody's concern and nobody's concentration. People try to ape media-images of prestige, power, sex and escape.

Violence in media is all pervading. It is predominantly present not only in films but also in other programs, including news. The malicious and base character of unwarranted violence and exploitative sex coming into the living rooms of people are shaking the very foundations of family life. Television sets now make such materials easily accessible to children below the age of prudence. Children reflect on what they see in their own homes. The media transform the values of sexuality into sex appeal, the value of self-respect into pride, the value of recreation into competition⁵. Our society, our families and our lives are at stake.

Pornography invites and activates base urges and sexual desires. It demeans human beings, undermines marriages and families. It also contributes to sexual violence and child molestation. Adultery is the betrayal of one's partner. It is an act of self-destruction. The sixth commandment exhorts a truthful marital relationship. On an ontological level, refusal to be in a relationship with your partner is separation and that is the opposite of love.

No other social group other than family has an impact and influence on human beings. It is the nursery where we receive our first lessons and it upholds our spiritual and moral values. It is therefore all the more necessary for a Christian family to tear itself away from the heinous and devouring forces of hatred, hostility, inequality, disparities, exploitation, fiendish fanaticism and murderous malignity.

They should shun such self-destructive agenda and abide by moral laws and values derived from religion and family leading to the Kingdom of God. The relationship among religions, churches, members of the churches and even members of the same family is weakening. That is when the role of a Christian family becomes crucial. Christian families should promote cooperation, mutual encouragement, mutual acceptance, mutual understanding, participation, interaction and sharing and at the same time stand against all kinds of domination, hierarchy, patriarchy, nepotism and parochialism.

Do we ever pause to reflect over the evil effects of inequality of rights of family members?

Is the church ready to identify and examine the evil effect of any disparity of opportunity of its members? All families,

with their various organizational structures, are built on human relationship, trust, sincerity and communication. Everything that threatens our values of family life are obstacles on the pathway to the Kingdom of God. ■

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The Jubilee

Prof. Elias Abraham Baltimore



Praising lips
in glory's search,
turn, of course,
to joyful lips.

The beauty and victory
proclaim,
the sweat and toil
of the promising team
that soared into the skies
to fetch the sobbing stars.

When sleep departs
and the heart pains,
'Messenger' gently brings
the swing of thoughts
and soothing recompense.

It gives nourishing,
It's pleasant and delicious.
Yes, the team,
under good captaincy,

did a rasping race
to drink to the lees
the quest to know
and satiate the thirst
of a thousand mind.

This is Jubilee
for all of us,
and let's pay
due respect
to all who belong
to the productive crew,
for, the spirit of Christ
animates them,
and, singing them,
we encourage them.



മലങ്കര സഭാസംഗ്രഹം

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Twenty Five Years of Marthoma Messenger

George Abraham, Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey

Mar Thoma Messenger is celebrating her jubilee year. I take this chance to ponder over The Mar Thoma Church in North America for the last twenty five years. Mar Thoma church in this diocese had a very humble beginning. In the parable of the mustard seed in the Bible, we are able to see how a simple, insignificant seed, is able to flourish into a large plant and become prominent in its surroundings. Likewise, from its humble and modest beginning, the Mar Thoma Church in the land of North America has grown tremendously and has become a significant worshipping community. The formation and existence of a well-organized and well-administered diocese in North America & Europe is the clear evidence of the growth and spiritual development of our community. Currently, our diocese continues to undergo unceasing phases of growth that are led by our resident Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Thirumeni. Our diocese is actively engaged in various outreach and mission field activities in India and other parts of the world. Through these activities, we are able to contribute to the spiritual and material well being of many people in need. During these past 25 to 30 years, growth of the Mar Thoma Church in North America has been phenomenal. Our number of parishes and congregation has increased to 71 and we have 53 Aghens serving in the Diocese of North America & Europe. This has only been possible through God's divine grace and guidance, through the tireless leadership of our Bishops and Aghens, and the wholehearted cooperation of our immigrant members. Furthermore, we were able to experience the extended heart of willingness from local communities and political and social leaders, who helped to accommodate us in this land, without sacrificing our Syrian Christian culture and traditions.

To remember and to reflect upon our past is a good thing. Due to the liberal changes in immigration laws in the United States during the 1970's and 1980's, a large number of people from Kerala were able to immigrate to the New York Metropolitan area and other parts of North America. In my understanding, in 1971, our members in the New York Metropolitan area began to assemble occasionally and had prayer fellowship meetings at their apartments or homes. In 1972, our first congregation was formed in Queens and it later moved to Manhattan after forming a Joint congregation with the Church of South India members. In 1975, this joint congregation was dissolved, and our own Mar Thoma parish was started in Manhattan. In 1980, this New York congregation was divided into four,



based on geographical distribution, and later became individual parishes. Similarly, during this period other congregations were formed in Dallas, Philadelphia, Houston and in other cities in this country as well as in Canada.

For the past 25 years, I have had the opportunity and privilege to get involved in and to be a part of this developmental phase of our church. In New Jersey, we started as a congregation in Newark in 1980 with very few members. The Episcopal Diocese helped us on providing places for worship as well as guidance in this new land. For the past ten

years, we have been blessed with our own beautiful church in Randolph, New Jersey with about 85 families. Similarly, St. Peter's church in Teaneck, New Jersey has their own beautiful church with more than 100 families and the St. Stephen's church in Fords, New Jersey with more than 100 families. Currently, in the New York area, there are about ten parishes. In the Philadelphia area, there are four parishes. Recently, a few of the original parishes have celebrated their silver Jubilee and others, like our Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey in Randolph, are in the preparation of their Silver Jubilee celebrations.

Church leaders have made vital contributions during this period. In the beginning of 1980, the leadership of the late Suffragan Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius and Rev. N. M. Cherian, guided the growth of our church in this country, especially in this New York Metropolitan area. During this period, our church made agreements with the Episcopal Church of United States to have local supervision of our parishes in the U.S. This helped us a great deal in various ways, especially in acquiring places of worship. After the demise of Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, the late Metropolitan Rt. Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma presided over the Zone. Subsequently, a new diocese comprised of North America and European countries was formed and the current Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, took charge as Diocesan Bishop. Afterward, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus became the first resident Bishop of this diocese.

At this juncture, it is worth remembering that we had to go through many obstacles and hardships through these beginning stages. The membership, personal income and other resources were limited. Our knowledge and familiarity of this new land was also limited. Through these difficult times and circumstances, by God's grace and with the dedication and hard work of our members, we were able to accomplish a lot and come to the present stage. Our

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Everyone Can Be A Leader-Follower

Dr. Steve Seteroff

Perhaps the greatest myth is that leaders must be appointed by someone to the position. Nothing can be further from the truth. We can lead from where we are in any organization because leadership is nothing more than clearly seeing a goal and influencing the behavior in those around us to achieve the desired objectives. Of course, leadership alone is not enough and we must have access to resources to ensure that collectively we have the necessary tools to achieve the objective. A parent is probably the most fundamental form of leadership as we guide our children to achieve the goals of self-sufficiency, citizenship, values, morals, and other objectives that we as parents believe are desirable. We know that our children often try our patience, especially as they begin to become influenced by their peers, but this is where leadership truly emerges, for we must find the way to ensure that the objectives continue to be met, in spite of the external challenge.

As we join organizations, such as a church, and voluntarily offer our services to support the goals and objectives established by others, we too can contribute our skills to lead others by our followership. In my book, *'Beyond Leadership to Followership'*, I suggest that followership is more important than leadership alone, for the best and most effective followers are leaders who voluntarily subordinate themselves for the good of the organization or task. A strong leader does not need to be acknowledged as such, and can often accomplish more by lending their leadership skills in support of another, more suited to the task. In my workshops, I often point to my wife of more than 42-years as a leader because she raised our two daughters to be fine young women that we are very proud of, and did so with little support from me as I was at sea for most of the formative years. She continues to be a leader by keeping me from making the blunders I would otherwise be prone to making. This did not keep her from taking leadership roles when necessary, but she remains very effective in whatever role she undertakes.

Although we make much use of the natural, albeit unacknowledged, leadership skills we possess, we are often uncomfortable in displaying these skills in a public setting. Volunteer based organizations can, and should, create an environment where education of its members and especially volunteers in leadership become part of establishing a culture of learning to learn and becomes one of the organizational goals. When we equip our members with the knowledge of leadership and arm them with the tools to



understand their individual roles in the organizational structure, we can begin to see the creation of a safe environment and solicit contribution of ideas to better achieve the goals of the organization.

All members feel a need to contribute to formulating the direction an organization takes. Granted some will be perfectly content to go along, but consider if the commitment to success is as strong as when at least a small portion of the direction is based on their individual input. In a safe environment, this

contribution toward formulating the organizational goals and helping to set the objectives can only lead to each individual more actively participating in the process. Now we begin to see that the overall leader, perhaps the minister, pastor, priest, deacon, or other official is the driving force and initially this may be true. However, as new themes begin to emerge, the initial leader may well become a follower as emergent leaders take charge of individual tasks. Here the positional leader begins to act more as a project manager to coordinate the several leaders' activities to ensure there is consonance and to reduce potential conflict.

The task of a leader then becomes one of encouragement, supporting the positive aspects and discouraging those elements of a task that duplicate or conflict with the overall objective. Mainly the positional leader must support these emergent leaders by offering a level of trust that will allow the individuals to feel a valuable part of the organization or group and to celebrate the success or progress toward the goals, or an objective. Allocation of resources to meet the needs of the several tasks are always an issue and some contention may arise, but we know that we have achieved an organization of trust with emerging leaders when these conflicts are resolved by the emergent leaders themselves, with little intervention from the individual controlling the allocation of resources. Of course, this level of trust can only exist in an open organization. So how can we achieve it?

By now we realize that to have good followers, we must foster and promote those activities that generate strong leaders who are secure in their personal commitment, able to understand the objectives of the organization, and willing to voluntarily subordinate themselves to a follower role when they feel it would best serve the organization. Several studies have suggested that organizational trust is essential, and in my leadership workshops for volunteer-based non-profit organizations, we continue to see the dilemma of keeping volunteer turnover to a minimum. We

see this retention of volunteers as attempting to keep frogs in a moving wheelbarrow but retention of volunteers is essential to conservation of resources and attaining the level of organizational learning that is necessary to establish a level of trust in which emergent leadership can thrive. In the workshops, I ask those in attendance to list the conditions that are necessary to keep them personally involved and the results, although varied, generally center around openness and giving credit when it is due. Good leadership therefore allows spreading credit liberally.

So what can followership and leadership do in your own church organization? Only you and your organization can answer this question, but I hope that I raised some questions in your mind regarding this application of current thinking regarding the effect of leadership and followership. I commend the following questions for your examination, perhaps in an open forum in small groups of concerned members.

Does our acknowledged leadership allow open dialogue and input into decisions?

Can we, as individuals, provide input into policy formulation without risk?

Does our organization provide education or training on leadership?

Are we allowed to take a leadership role when we feel we are the best qualified?

Can we offer criticism to improve the process?

Are we as individuals really committed to the success of the objectives?

These are hard questions and, in most volunteer-based non-profit organizations, the answers will initially be varied, and perhaps follow the expected response. How to get out of this group think is always a dilemma but there are various techniques available to ensure that a true picture emerges. This too is a part of leadership. Knowing where we are is the only way to determine the path to where we wish to go. Only education and commitment will get us there. Everyone can be a leader and the job of leaders is to expand the number of leaders in the organization until everyone is a leader that voluntarily subordinates themselves to become a follower for the good of the organization. ■

Dr. Seteroff is retired as President of Management & Logistics Assoc., Inc. of Poulsbo, Washington. He has earned a Doctor of Business Administration (Management) degree from Nova Southeastern University in 1997. His dissertation was a study of voluntary employee turnover among professional engineers. He is an adjunct professor for the Bangor Academic Center of Chapman University, in economics, organizational leadership, strategic management, and research methods. He is also an adjunct instructor for City University in economics, business administration, and project management; and is adjunct faculty at the Washington Campus of the University of Phoenix and Online. He served as the General Chairman of the International Logistics Conference in 1998 and as the Coordinating Chairman of the Advanced Technology Steering Group from 1991 to 1998. He also served as a member of the collaborative research committee in the Practitioner Series of the Academy of Management 1997-1999. Research interests remain in voluntary employee turnover among highly skilled professionals, and include the effects of advanced technology implementation on the strategic posture of high performance organizations.

His book *Beyond Leadership to Followership: Learning to lead from where you are* is available at <http://www.trafford.com/robots/03-1184.html> or from www.amazon.com

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Twenty Five Years of Marthoma Messenger (Cont'd from pg 40)

church has various organizations dedicated to the spiritual growth of our children, youth, women, and senior citizens. We have conferences and retreats for our families, youths, young couples, women and children. The leadership conferences for our youths are especially noteworthy since it helps to equip our young people to attain and participate in various church leadership positions. As a result, the second generation has grown up to excel in their individual fields and careers and a few have also gone on to serve the church further as Achens. Also, several Achens who have previously served in this diocese have been chosen to be in various leadership positions in our parent church in India.

As our church community grows, we have been actively involved in fulfilling our purpose of being "lighted to lighten." We are involved in various social, humanitarian,

and ecumenical projects in India as well as in this country. For example, we are involved in outreach programs through our Mexico Mission and work among Native Americans. In addition, individual parishes are involved in helping the needy people in different ways. Let us pray that our church in this land may be the light to the world by serving God and man alike thus fulfilling the mission of the Church. By turning the pages of the Messenger Magazine of the last twenty five years we can see how great the divine providence of our heavenly father and how much we should be thankful for the blessings we have received from Him, the wonderful ways in which He has led us through these years. Happy twenty fifth Birthday, Mar Toma Messenger! ■

The Uniqueness of Humanity: Tracing our life's Journey

Dr. Plammoottil V. Cherian, former Associate Secretary of the Diocese (1984-1990)

"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine" (Isa. 43:1).

It is difficult to define human life and if we ask that question we will get as many different answers as one sees his or her life. Philosophers and poets have compared human life to a circus, a minefield, a wrestling, a symphony, a journey, or a drama. Shakespeare in Hamlet says, "Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing." One of the famous poets of Kerala, Kumaran Asan compares life to a fallen flower—which was very colorful, aromatic, and after a short fragrant life finally fallen to the ground. I am not sure Kumaran Asan read Bible but his poetry is very reflective of what Isaiah said, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them" (Isa. 40:7). Reminiscing this, Apostle James asks in his Epistle, "For what is your life? For it is a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). While these metaphors and analogies are as meaningful as they sound, human life can be defined only from the life experiences of each individual, how one finds and fulfills the purpose of human life, as envisioned by the God, our Creator.

Our lives are surrounded with many patterns. We live our lives in toiling, discovering, identifying, tracing and following those patterns in our daily chores. Awaken in the morning to the sun's diurnal pattern; our minds and bodies function and malfunction in patterns directed by our DNA, but certainly modified by our choices. And every year, as the pattern of the season moves from Spring to Summer to Fall to Winter our life's journey goes on as part of God's grand design, taking our turns on earth each day.

Human personality is very unique and distinct. The DNA molecule that has the genetic information of who we are, what we will be, and whom we generate as our children and their children is a very unique molecule. When each human child is formed in the mother's womb, it is estimated that the gene pool has the ability to make 10 X 2.4 billion (24 cores) combinations. This is equal to 10 followed by 2.4 billion zeros and if each zero is written in half inch diameter it would need a paper 74,000 miles long to write that number. That is the uniqueness of the combination of personality traits God formed in you, and that is why there is not a single person on earth like you. We



are very uniquely created and we are called by our name. "I have called you by your name, you are mine." We came to this world from eternity with this customized biological and spiritual DNA, preset to assist us in living a transformed life, and transforming others to become the men and women of God. That is the crux of the purpose of human life.

The purpose of human life is explained throughout the Bible. The State of Michigan has passed a law this month (October 2006) banning any inclusion of "intelligent design" from science curriculum, but may be taught in religious studies. Being a scientist, a professor who teach medical and biological sciences and a person of faith I am not going to relinquish my faith or belief that each human being is a handicraft of God.

The verse at the beginning of this article is one of my favorites in the Bible which my father had me memorize and recite to him many a time since I was a boy. I did not know the real meaning, the depth and width of these and many similar verses until I studied theology in a systematic way. "But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine" (Isa. 43:1). It is very assuring to know that God designed, fashioned and "formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7) and "God created man in his own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27).

It makes me proud to know that my persona is uniquely designed by God and that I belong to Him. Humanity's uniqueness comes from God. Many ordinary people who became extraordinary by faith had no background in science, yet recognized this uniqueness of humanity. David says, "For you formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in the secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed" (Psalm 139:13-16).

Knowing this eternal truth that we are uniquely fashioned, we must trace our Life's journey and fulfill God's plan and purpose in life. We may ask how we could understand the meaning of life. (1) **Surrender our life to Christ** for building up God's kingdom on earth like Mary the mother of Jesus and many others. Mary is a model of inspiration for ordinary women and men who can fulfill their deepest vocation by placing themselves for service and presenting Christ to others in their everyday lives. "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38). She lived her life in relative obscurity, yet the world has celebrated her obedience to God for nearly 2,000 years. (2) We must **see the purpose of life through the eye of God** and not through human eyes. Apostle Paul says, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). C. S. Lewis once said, "All that is not eternal is eternally useless." (3) **We must recognize our allotment—our assigned gift or talent** for serving. Apostle Paul reminds that "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2:10). (4) **Our life must glorify God in every aspect of human life.** One can glorify God by: (a) worshipping God in spirit and truth;

(b) loving others unconditionally with the goal of presenting Christ as the Saviour of the world; and (c) serving others with a commitment, "I am the Lord's servant." Finally (5) we must **entrust our weaknesses into the mighty hands of God** to be transformed by the Mighty One who can do great things for us and through us.

Hudson Taylor once said, "All God's giants were weak people." Moses was short tempered and in his anger he broke the Tablets, and struck the rock, but he became the deliverer. Abraham had fear, and in fear he lied, but he became the father of faith. Peter had acted on impulsiveness but he became the rock. We must know that God specializes in transforming our weaknesses into strengths once we commit our lives to the fulfillment of God's purpose for which he uniquely created each one of us. We must trace our life's journey to find where we are and how far we progressed in fulfilling God's plan and purpose in life. Life can become a "tale told by an idiot," if we don't recognize this truth. Therefore it is imperative that we must be transformed by the renewing of our mind to meet our Saviour who shall present us as his bride to God who fashioned us. The glorious wedding day of the Lamb is not far behind. ■

Jubilee in Family—Cont'd from page 34

inheritors. Accepting them as they are while expressing affection and sentiments will increase the bond of intimacy as well.

Covenant

Marriage is God's plan of action and family is the product of that action. The initiative comes from God and the celebrant of marriage is God. Marriage is not a contract between two persons; it is a conventional relationship with man and woman in the guidance and lordship of God. Covenant is basically fulfilling the promises that one makes even if the other person has failed to keep them. Both husband and wife have a covenantal responsibility to keep and fulfill the vows. But in case of a failure, the other has the covenantal responsibility to mend the relationship.

Jubilee in family recalls harmony, peace, forgiveness and justice they have experienced. In Leviticus 46:27, we see "do not deal unfairly with others". The dealings within the family also should not be unfair with each other. "And should not rule with harshness" (Vs. 46:53) because mutuality and partnership in affection are the role of the family. Such a family would enjoy fairness, justice and freedom.

God's free people cannot be made slaves. Wife, husband, children or their parents should not be considered equal to slaves. They are all God's own possession and they possess God's image. Hence, they are independent and must be revered in love. None of them should be treated harshly and compelled to do heinous or menial jobs.

In many families, women are the historically oppressed group of people. They have developed themselves with a subordinate personality culture with sheer obedience, submission, silence, endurance and tears. Male chauvinism always demands those. In certain families, equal rights are not given to women. In Jubilee, God reminds man to say you are "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh".

Recall

In Deuteronomy 15:12 we see "in the Jubilee year all the debts are to be cancelled". The debts are not only financial liabilities but also any sort of obligations, unfulfilled promises and all feelings of the past. All those above are yokes that bear down the weak and oppressed. In short, Jubilee is a year of forgiveness, acceptance, independence and interdependence. When the families of Israelites went astray, Joshua lamented in remorse and gathered his family. ■

A Church at Crossroads

Thomas Mathew, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

The Mar Thoma Church has completed three decades of existence in the United States. When we look at the growth pattern of the Church, it has grown at a rate beyond the expectation of its members and the Church hierarchy. I am sure it is all in God's Divine Plan and He has a profound mission for this community in the U.S. From a mere handful of members gathering in homes and rented church halls in the late seventies, the Church has grown into a full-fledged diocese with 67 units including parishes and congregations. The growth of our Church is very unusual when compared to that of local churches. A cause of this could be triggered by waves of the arrival of immigrants and their movement within the country. The Mar Thoma Church has been successful in maintaining its member composition (all of Kerala/Indian origin), makeup, and has kept its faith and practices intact over the last thirty years. It would be a social scientist's favorite topic to study why this ethnic group is able to preserve its identity intact the way it did over the years. The church community has influenced the life of adults and young in many ways. It has produced tremendous positive impact in the spiritual, familial, cultural and social areas of individuals. The assessment of the positive impact is the topic of another discussion.

While we should celebrate our success, it must be balanced with reflection. There are certain questions that we have to ask ourselves immediately for the continued development of the Church. If we look at Mar Thoma Church in general we can see certain interesting data. The most revealing data is that out of total 1,077 parishes that the Mar Thoma Church is composed of, 336 are outside Kerala, including the ones in different parts of India outside Kerala. This simply means that one in every three (31%) parishes is outside Kerala. A second aspect of the data is that it is in the outside Kerala group where the Church is experiencing growth. If our eyes are not open to this reality, calling ourselves a "global church" is meaningless. Sadly, we do not address the Church from this perspective. The Church still remains a rural Kerala based church in its outlook. We have to come up with innovative plans to modify the systems or the training provided to our clergy to meet the challenges of these parishes outside Kerala. In other words, I believe the mentality that we have for the church is that of a Church we all grew up with back home in Kerala, a place to quench our own nostalgia. In my humble opinion, there are four main areas that we need to examine.



Youths Leaving our Church

A proverb says, "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago or today." Thirty years after our existence as a Church on this land, can we honestly say that we have done enough to train our youngsters to lead our churches into the 21st century? From this writer's experience from 1982 onwards, with the original Mar Thoma parish in Dallas, the members divided and formed four different parishes now. The data that I have compiled is about youngsters who were our members, who went to our Sunday School and attended our church services and prayer meeting regularly. In this sample survey, I looked at 155 youngsters in our church then and where they are today. The ages of these young men and women range from 25-35 plus or so now. Out of this group, approximately 27% have left the church! They do not come to Mar Thoma church at all. I do not know if they are completely out or if they have joined a local church of their choice. We have to wonder why they leave the Mar Thoma Church and go elsewhere. Answering this question is our combined responsibility. I am sure this data is fairly representative of most Mar Thoma parishes in the U.S. Each one of us has a responsibility to discover why they have left the fold of our church. These young men and women may never come back to Mar Thoma Church, but by asking them the right questions we can discover reasons why they left and make changes now so that the trend may not continue. As a matter of fact, we simply do not feel their physical absence so much because there is a constant flow of new members into most of the major parishes. But that reason should never stop us from finding the reasons and remedies to stop the exodus. Their responses will most probably be an eye opener to all of us. If this is a trend that we expect in the future, we need to be alarmed. We lost the boys and girls that we sat with on the pews of our church! It is time for us as a church community to take some serious decisions prayerfully and see why this is happening.

Dwindling Laity Participation

The planting of the Mar Thoma church in the U.S. was mostly led by laity initiative. But over the past decade or so, we, the laity, are taking a back seat approach. I think the most fruitful time in our Church history both in India and in U.S. were when laity were fully engaged in the church activities. I would like to quote a theologian who said, "Laity is the crown of the church." Laity in U.S. parishes

can play a key role in molding these parishes for the future. We need to sit down and have dialogue and discussions. There is no passion in members as there were in the 70's or 80's. Everybody seems to feel fatigued when it comes to church. Recently a theologian whom I have enormous respect for, said there are three critical dangers that threaten churches: 'Institutionalism, Clericalism, and Legalism'. This is a profound statement that closely parallels some of our parish's symptoms, correct? Aren't these three 'isms' creeping into our Church? We adore the institution, but are not concerned about the mission of that institution. We think of everything in a "business as usual" manner. Over the past several years we can see that laity participation in our parishes has dwindled at an alarming rate. For some reason we lost the vibrancy.

Widening Gap between Clergy & Laity?

Close relationship existed between the clergy and laity during the early days of the formation of parishes in this Diocese. At present that relationship seems to be shrinking to mere formalities. There are several reasons for this shift. I am not trying to finger point at our Achens for that. This phenomenon is mostly due to the growth in members, which cause our Achens to be continually occupied with many administrative matters (most of which are trivial and are our own making). This phenomenon has caused our clergy to not have enough time for true relationship building. I must point out that they are playing a critical role in the life of each parish. But the fact is times have changed and we have not done anything to replace that clergy factor. Sunday in a typical Mar Thoma parish is a busy event. If we count all the things we accomplish within the short three hours period, it is amazing. We have Sunday School, worship services, followed by committee meetings, choir practices, auctions, fund collections, coffee and social hour, meeting friends... on and on. We tend to cramp everything in on a Sunday morning. Is it not time to think if we can schedule things differently so that we can make some positive changes? Let's pause for a moment and ask

The Emergence of a Diocese—Cont'd from page 28

generation Marthomites hesitate to come forward to take leadership roles in the Church. They are silent observers of anecdotal undesirable behaviors in the sanctuary of our Church following the Holy Communion Service. While most of our Achens assigned to this diocese are well educated, dedicated and service oriented, we have to remember that the selfish and ungodly behavior of even a very small minority of our members will destroy the very fabric of our faith, love and loyalty to our Church. God has blessed us abundantly and our Achens, fortunate enough to get new assignments outside India, should be thankful to

WHY we are doing what we are doing? The church is slowly falling into the path of Clericalism.

Rigid Structure

I believe that we need to be rigid in certain matters and flexible in others. What do I mean by this? As a church, there are items that we consider unchangeable. Let's say our basic faith matters are examples of things we do not want to compromise or change. That's fine; however, there are things that are nonessentials that we should look into. For example, when we close our accounts is a non-essential matter. It seems we cannot distinguish the difference between the two. For some reason, we are still doing the same mistakes we have done since we started several decades ago. There seems to be no improvement in our techniques and processes. The discernment to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials is a mark of growth and spiritual maturity. Let's be firm and united on essentials and flexible on non-essentials, as St. Augustine once said. A healthy system is one that allows flexibility in non-essentials. We do not have to do the same thing that we did in our parishes in Kerala. We need to see how our needs change and how best we can accommodate them in the grand vision of the Church.

I have not proposed any solutions here, although I am positive that solutions can be found at the grass roots level in the parishes. Experience has proved that solutions never come from the top. What we need is to approach these matters prayerfully and seek God's direction for our problems and act on them when we find a solution collectively. Let this Thanksgiving be a special one for us as a diocese to examine ourselves as individuals, families, and parishes, to see where we are and where God wants us to go. Rosh Hashanah in the Jewish tradition is the time of self-evaluation, soul searching and reflection. This is a good practice for us to emulate during Thanksgiving as well. After 30 years we are at crossroads. The direction we take now will decide the future of our church and pave the path for our youngsters to be witness of our Lord and savior Jesus. ■

God for the opportunity they get to serve our Diaspora communities across the globe and should be willing to serve our people based on their specific needs expecting or accepting nothing extra in return. In our untiring efforts to make more money and possess all worldly comforts, we do not have the will or patience to lend our ears to the cries of the poorest of the poor in our own motherland or across this continent. As a diocese, we have come a long way. From the mountain top of our successes and achievements, we hear a call from the valley. We must attend to the call. ■

Building Bridges Instead of Fences in Our Faith Journey

Atty. Lal Varghese, Council Member, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

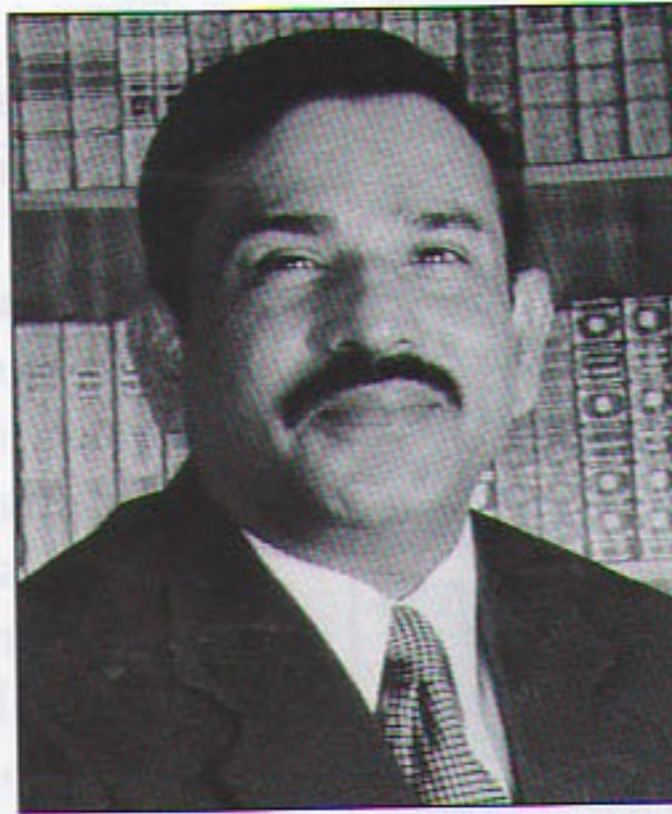
As The Messenger celebrates twenty-five years of our faith journey, let us examine ourselves and ask whether we are building bridges or making fences around us. God wanted company for Himself, so He created man and He walked with His creation. But man, instead of walking with God, built a fence around him and kept God away by sinning. But God, in order to save man from his sins, left His heavenly glory and became a man to identify with man. In this way, Christ became a bridge between man and God. But again man did not listen to His words and rejected Him by crucifying Christ. Man built fences around him, separated God from his life and continues to do the same. But Christ still continues His effort to be a bridge-maker between man and God and promises that He will come again to gather all believers so that we may have an eternal life in heaven with God.

There were two brothers, who lived on adjoining farms for about 40 years, who fell into conflict. One morning there was a knock on the older brother's door. He opened to find a carpenter. "I'm looking for a few days work" he said. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek in between my farm and my neighbor's. That's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee, and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll do him one better," said the older brother.

"I want you to build me a large fence so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore," said the older brother. "Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you," replied the carpenter. The older brother had to go to town. The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, and nailing. When the older brother returned at sunset, the carpenter had just finished his job.

There was no fence at all. It was a bridge, stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work with handrails and all, and his younger brother was coming across, his hand outstretched. "You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done." The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge. They met in the middle, took each other's hand and hugged each other. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few more days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother. "I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but I have many more bridges to build."

Are we like these brothers quarreling and creating obstacles for each other? If we are, then we need the carpenter, the one who came down to build the bridge between heaven and earth. Do we see our neighbors as



brothers or as enemies sitting behind the fence built around us? Jesus taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we cannot love our neighbor, then we are building fences around us. As Marthomites, we need to examine the past twenty-five years of our existence in this country and see whether we have built fences or bridges. Our faith journey should be able to carry others to the cross, the place from where we can look around and see others as our brothers and sisters.

We need Christians to live for others, sharing and caring. We should be bridge makers and not fence makers. Max Lucado in his book "God Came Near" says: "Christianity in its purest form is nothing more than seeing Jesus. Christian service, in its purest form, is nothing more than imitating Him who we see. To see His majesty and to imitate Him, that is the sum of Christianity." Are we imitating Christ in our faith journey? Or are we creating more and more obstacles for others to follow Christ? If our religion and our faith life are not for building bridges with people around us, we are not following Christ in the true sense.

Genesis 1:27-28 says, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" He made a beautiful garden for them to live. Instead of creating a fence and letting them live alone, He set certain rules for them and asked them to obey those rules. He walked with them thereby creating a bridge between Him and man. But man disobeyed God and hid from God. God has grieved since He made man on earth, and His heart filled with pain.

God led the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, and provided them with everything they needed in their 40-year journey through the desert. In Exodus 13: 21 it is written, "By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." Instead of letting them live on their own He asked them to follow His commandments and to worship Him. But instead of obeying God, they deviated from His commandments and disobeyed Him.

The Bible is full of examples of people who have built relationships with God. Enoch walked with God and then he was no more because God took him away. Genesis 6:8-9 says, "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was

a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God." God never built any fences around Enoch or Noah but used them as bridges for the generations to come.

God kept Abraham and was with him to keep his faith. He made him the father of nations and asked his generations to worship Him. In Genesis 28:15, "God said to Abraham, 'I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'"

Job was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. God put a hedge around him and his household and everything he had. Even though God allowed Satan to put Job's faith to the test, Job never rejected God because his faith in God was always strong.

God was with Daniel when he decided not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. He never built a fence around Daniel but He kept a constant relationship with him by giving knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. When King Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and ordered that they be tied up and thrown into the blazing furnace, God was with them.

In 1 Samuel 3:19-21 we read, "The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there He revealed Himself to Samuel through His word." Samuel obeyed the Lord and kept His words in his heart. This helped him to be a bridge between the people and the Lord.

The Lord was with Joseph, he prospered, and he lived in the house of Potiphar. When Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph into bed with her, he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. When his master put Joseph in prison, the Lord was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

As we look at other Biblical figures like David and Joseph, we observe that they never built any fences around

them but always kept their relationship with God, obeyed Him and listened to Him. God sent His only Son to save mankind from their sins. God used Jesus to bridge the gap between Him and mankind. God offered Himself to us so that we may become children of God. He did not build a fence around those who came to Him, but asked them to love their neighbor so that they can also become children of God. The eternal became temporal to be a bridge between us and Him.

The disciples did not build a fence around themselves, but they went out everywhere to spread the Good News. Every Marthomite is a missionary and we are not to build fences around our parishes, our families and ourselves. We need to reach out to the community around us, to those who need us. As Christians, we need to follow Christ and show others that Christ lives within us. The cross reminds us of two things—look upward and look around us. Christ should live within us so that the love of Christ may flow from us to those around us. Those who see us should see Christ through our lives.

Max Lucado says, "Instead of looking upward at Him, we look inward at ourselves and outward at each other. The result—cabin fever, quarreling families, restless leaders, fence building, staked off territory, no trespassing and beware of dog signs are hung on hearts and home." In our faith journey we need to look up to the cross, the place from where boundless love has flowed so that others may also feel welcome in our faith journey.

As we celebrate twenty-five years of existence in this Diocese, let us rededicate ourselves as bridge-makers so that people may see the love of God within us. Instead of isolating ourselves as a community in this country, let us make bridges within our own community, in our parishes, and families and with other communities so that we can spread the Good News. Let us look upward at Him, instead of looking inward, fighting each other, and fence building around us. Let us invite the carpenter who came down from heaven to build bridges between us and those around us. Let us throw away the 'No Trespassing' and 'Beware of Dog' signs hung on our hearts and homes. The fire on the altar of faith must be kept burning; it must not go out by building fences around us. The Lord is holy and He has set us apart from the nations to be His own as bridge makers. He broke the bars of our yoke and enabled us to walk with heads held high so that we need not hide behind fences. ■

ESSAY COMPETITION!!!

The Mar Thoma Medical Mission conducts an essay competition for Mar Thoma Sponsored and Non-Sponsored MBBS & B.Sc. Nursing Students on the Theme: **"The place and significance of the Mar Thoma Parish in the Healing Ministry."** Attractive prizes and certificates will be distributed for the First and the Second place in both disciplines. Essays in English not exceeding 4 print pages with certificate of the Vicar be submitted on or before 30th November 2006. For any further details please contact the Secretary, M. T. Medical Mission, phone: **0469-2600116 (O), 0469-2672048 (R), 9847215395 (M)**. Mailing address: Rev. John Mathew, Secretary; Mar Thoma Medical Mission, Mar Thoma Sabha Office, Tiruvalla 689 101, Kerala, India.

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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



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Bible Against/and Science????

Rev. Mathew Skariah (Sam Achen), Youth Chaplain

After raising objections to the manner in which the theories of the origin of life was handled in a biology textbook, Prof. Jim Sparks, left his lectureship in the Virginia Commonwealth University this summer. ("Textbook Controversy-Professor leaves VCU after criticizing book": The Commonwealth Times, August 24, 2006). It may be one of the most recent instances of how much the issue of faith and science remains alive and explosive in this nation.

As we started off with the discussion on Bible & Science track at the National Youth Conference, Toronto, some of our group members were candid in admitting that they still found it difficult to reconcile their faith in the Bible and their knowledge about the world gathered through the study of science. For them it was a tough struggle staying honest to the biblical faith on one hand and to modern scientific world view on the other, both of which seem to contradict each other.

More than anywhere else, Bible/Faith and Science remains a matter of live conflict in the US. It has taken different dimensions in the past, like the creation–evolution debate and in recent times, the intelligent design debate. The topic has been kept burning with the fundamental positions held by both the religious right on one side and the scientific community on the other.

We need to have a brief overview of the history of the relationship between what we now call faith and science. As we look back into the history of ideas, we may find that what we now define as science was all an integral part of one continuum of philosophy. There was no such notion as a separate discipline termed science. The ancient world was comfortable with the world view of a three-tier universe with heaven on top, a flat earth in between and hell beneath. With its questions and ideas, Enlightenment brought about a paradigm shift in the prevailing notions. The world was not something static or given, but something to be discovered by human enterprise. Man is above nature and has the capacity to create, alter or even destroy. Human existence was based on reason, (I think, therefore I am"-Descartes)

The discovery of the fact that the earth revolves round the sun and that it is not the center of the solar system came as such a shock to human thinking that it is rightly termed scientific revolution. The chief revolutionaries were Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564-1642), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), René Descartes (1596-1650) and Isaac Newton



(1642-1727). With the new ideology of Enlightenment and the startling discoveries made about the physical world, science established its own independent identity, breaking away from the umbrella of organized religion. And naturally it came into direct conflict with the world views that defined the ancient and medieval world. The revolutionaries had to face the consequences of their findings, in some cases becoming martyrs for science. But by the time of Newton, modernity was in place and was assimilated

more or less into religious thinking. Gravitational force, and laws of thermodynamics and motion were thought to be the eternal laws by which the universe was governed. The universe was thus a complex machine engineered and set into motion by a Divine Creator.

The ultimate shock came in 1859 in the form of a book, *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. What Darwin said can be abbreviated thus:

- In living organisms there occur small random variations which can be inherited
- In the struggle for survival some of these variations manage a slight competitive advantage, which over generations leads to the natural selection of those characteristics, which ultimately lead to survival, which in common parlance is survival of the fittest or struggle for survival.

This proved not just to be a scientific theory, but a grand statement about humankind and life at large. The consequences were just not measurable. It was seen to challenge the Genesis story of creation in which the universe with its inhabitants were created in six days. The uniqueness of humankind was refuted; man – the 'crown of creation'—was reassessed merely to stand at the highest level in the ladder of evolution. It tried to demythologize the world where all the mystery of life could be explained by the interaction of natural forces without any reference to an external agent of creation.

The theory of evolution and its subsequent impact brought it into a direct confrontation with the literal reading and interpretation of the Bible. Historically, there have been various responses to the challenges posed by the theories of biological evolution. The earliest was that of Creationism, which rejected the theories of biological evolution and the findings of fossil records. The creationists came in all hues: Flat Earthers, Geocentrists, Young and Old Earth Creationists, and Progressive Creationists. It considered

science as unbiblical and as the antithesis of faith. Another response was to adopt scientific methodology and endeavor to prove the veracity of the Bible and creation through science. Whereas the first response has almost become non-existent, the second response has many proponents and takers especially in the US. (The California-centered Southern Religious Right Groups and broadcasting networks are the official promoters of such a brand of creationism). Their reasoning avoids a comprehensive view of scientific evidence and tries to bank on the unexplained aspects or gaps in biological theories.

Intelligent Design (ID) is a recent addition to the Faith-Science conflict. It has attracted much media having been involved in the legal battles for teaching ID theory in schools, which was consequently ruled out by the courts. ID fights the case for an Intelligent Cause or a Master Designer behind the universe, which its proponents are careful not to refer to as God. The prime focus is on the complexity of the cell and its constituents (DNA) which is referred to as Complex (highly ordered)-Specified (fits a preexisting pattern) Information (CSI). This is projected as a secular theory and has quite a few scientists as its proponents. But neither the scientific community in general nor faith-based communities are enthusiastic about it. The Academy of Sciences has unequivocally stated that such a theory is not grounded on the premise of science, and theologians have termed it as 'bad science and bad theology'. It remains a curious mix of science and faith with shaky foundations in both.

Science is concerned with the natural world and phenomena; it has its own methodology of inquiry, observation, inference and theory building. Science always deals with the processes that lie behind natural phenomena.

Bible is a book of faith and all that is written in it is from the perspective of faith. Attempts to establish the Bible as scientific is neither viable nor desirable. Faith is concerned with the ultimate or the purpose behind life. As established in the Bible, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see". Faith goes beyond the world of senses and is not limited within the analytical purview of science.

Science and faith has its own distinct avenues and it has to be respected. When science encroaches upon the realm of faith and claims for itself the status of religion and absolute commitment, it negates its own methodology. Likewise, believers need not confront scientific theories, whether it is evolution or anything else, on the basis of faith. Scientific theories need to be analyzed and corrected based on scientific methodology. The focus and approach of Science and faith are distinct, a few suggestions are provided below:

SCIENCE

Process

Reason

Natural Phenomena

Experiment

Hypothesis/Theory

Value Neutral

Life-Natural Phenomenon

No External Agent- God

Human-Symbolic thinking

Meaning within Nature

Life moves onto

higher level of complexity

FAITH

Purpose/Goal

Faith

Natural and Beyond

Experience

Conviction

Value Based

Life-Gift/Mystery

Ground of Being

Represents God

Searches Beyond

Moves towards Eternity

LIFE-the Meeting Ground

Science and faith may belong to different dimensions, but they have common concerns; they need not be entirely exclusive.

For me, the meeting ground or the deciding point of both science and faith is LIFE. Science would propose that life originated from the non-living system and that it has evolved through time into diverse forms. For science, the mechanism by which it happened was the struggle for survival. Thus the movement is from no-life to life and from less adaptable life to more adaptable and triumphant life. Biblical faith affirms that the purpose of faith and the Christ event is that they may have life and life abundantly (John.10:10).

Primarily, as people of faith, we should be bold enough to accept that the Biblical account of creation is not a theory to be juxtaposed with any theory proposed by science including the theory of evolution. Creation is the Biblical statement of purpose of existence, whereas evolution is theory based on observation. We should allow science to have its own methodology of analyzing and explaining things, and we should be happy with the pursuit of science as long as it enhances life.

*"Our magazine aims to explore the world, often by highlighting scientific concepts like evolution. Is this approach necessarily at odds with faith, which lies beyond the possibility of scientific proof? No. Just as religion did not disappear after Galileo demonstrated that the earth is not at the center of the solar system, evolution does not exclude God from the origins, the "mystery of mysteries" – a 19th century astronomer's description borrowed by Darwin himself." (Editorial, "Was Darwin Wrong?" **National Geographic**, November 2004).*

This is how Faith and Science can co-exist and learn together. ■

On Becoming A 'Real American'

John J. Thatamanil

From adolescence on, I heard a constant refrain from my Indian father: "Don't ever believe that you're really American." I found his advice peculiar, especially as I had been living in America since age 8 and had largely forgotten my time in India. To him, it didn't matter that the only language in which I could think a complex thought was English. It didn't matter that the only music I listened to was Michael Jackson, the Bee Gees and Billy Joel.

My father's dictum infuriated me, in part because I took his comment to be racist. Did he mean that only white people count as real Americans? What about African Americans, let alone Indian Americans? I have insisted ever since that in America, what makes someone an American is citizenship, not race or ethnicity.

This month—after hearing Sen. George Allen call an Indian American, born in this country, "macaca"—I better appreciated my father's sober wisdom. What he meant to say is now apparent: "You will never be accepted as truly American." Education, meaningful work and financial success can get immigrant minorities only so far. For some, whiteness will always be a prerequisite for being American. Conveying that message might not have been Allen's intent, but it certainly was the effect.

What's the lesson to be learned from this episode? Must South Asians and other immigrants resign themselves to second-class status—at least in the eyes of some? Of course "class" is the wrong word here. Indian Americans are, statistically speaking, the wealthiest immigrant group in the nation. We do experience discrimination and, on rare occasions, violence, as some Sikhs did right after September 11, 2001. But discrimination has not had marked economic consequences. It is more often experienced by South Asians as a subtle matter of failed recognition: We are either rendered hyper-visible, marked out as different as S. R. Sidarth was made to feel by George Allen or, in other circles, rendered invisible because we are accorded the status of "honorary whites." Membership in that exclusive fraternity is granted so long as difference is suppressed.

The Allen incident offers evidence that America is not now or likely to ever be a color-blind country. How are South Asians to live with this truth? Resignation is not the answer. Vigorous political participation is. My youthful

intuition that what makes me as American, as any Mayflower descendant, is citizenship—not race or ethnicity—was only partly on the mark. The piece of paper that validates our identities as American citizens can do only so much if we do little to struggle for recognition.

There is also a second lesson to be learned from this incident. South Asian political engagement cannot be driven solely by the private interests of a single racial or ethnic group. America's obsession with color has a long history that South Asians forget at their peril. Indian Americans and other affluent immigrant groups would do well to remember the civil rights struggles of African Americans and others without which a racially inclusive American nation would have been impossible. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which opened the door to people from the Eastern Hemisphere, must be recognized as the fruit of a larger struggle to expand the meaning of the term "American," a struggle fought on our behalf before our arrival.

The aspiration to honorary whiteness—motivated by the hope that success alone will entitle Asians to equality within American life—betrays the memory of that long conflict. Only by making common cause with African Americans, only by joining with other immigrant groups that have not been as fortunate, can South Asian immigrants resist America's troubled racial history and embrace its best aspirations for a truly democratic and inclusive future. That is a legacy I hope to transmit to my 8-year-old daughter, who is herself a lovely perpetual tan, a combination of my brownness with the lighter tone of her Ohio-born mother, who is herself part German, part English and part Native American.

In the near term, what this means is that Americans of color should work together to ensure that politicians who can see the many shades and hues of American life only as exotic, foreign or even un-American have no role in shaping our common future.

This article was first published in the Washington Post (B07) on Sunday, August 27, 2006.

The writer is assistant professor of theology at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville. He is the author of *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament. An East-West Conversation.*

Mar Thoma Messenger Subscription Renewal Reminder!!!

As you all know, the Mar Thoma Messenger is the only official publication of our diocese and is mostly funded by the minimal subscription amount from readers like you. Although the diocese wants every Marthomite to receive a copy of the Mar Thoma Messenger, regrettably it is not viable without timely renewal of subscriptions. Please pay your arrears and renew your subscriptions on time to keep receiving the Messenger regularly. Thank you.

"We are doing it together"

Dr. Zac Varghese, London, UK

"We are doing it together." Quite rightly, in response to this stand alone statement you might ask, "what together?" "Why together?" or "So what!" Here are some of the answers to the questions. The origin of this simple, but costly, statement is from a book on Christian leadership, 'In the name of Jesus', written by Henri Nouwen¹. I owe it to two dear friends, Mini Krishnan of Oxford University Press, and Professor George K. Zachariah, Washington D.C, for introducing this spiritual guide to me. This is an amazing aspect of friendship, which helps us to find new avenues or fresh pastures for enjoying the grace and freedom of God. 'Mar Thoma Messenger' has been a wonderful medium too for me over the last twenty-five years for knowing many people in the diocese of North America and Europe for nurturing friendship and fellowship. It was indeed a journey of 'doing it together,' and hence it is good to thank God for His amazing blessings at the time of the Silver Jubilee of 'Mar Thoma Messenger.' There have been some great events, achievements and growth in our Diocese during the last twenty-five years, some writers will be highlighting them in this issue, but none of them or all of them taken together, can remotely approach the joy of realizing that we have 'done it together' under the Divine grace.

Henri Nouwen's life was an odyssey of deep and life changing involvement with others as he wrote in his dairies of his final year, "My heart was full of gratitude and affection, and I wish I could embrace each of my friends and let them know how much they mean to me and how much I miss them. I felt my whole being, body, mind, and spirit, yearning to give and receive love without condition, without fear, without reservation."² He had a wide spectrum of friends; some came from the world of wealth, abundance of talents, creativity, power and influence, at the other end of the spectrum he moved at ease with 'beautiful people' who were utterly poor, in dire needs, and close to death. Underneath this white light of god-given friendships, he was able to find a rainbow-colored spectrum of beautiful interactions of day to day realities of 'doing it together.' Friendship is all about planting and nurturing a relationship together and slowly removing brick by brick the ego boundaries people so carefully and painstakingly build to define and boost their identities before these God-directed interactions occur.

Henri Nouwen was a Dutch Roman Catholic priest who as professor of theology taught pastoral psychology, pastoral theology and spirituality for twenty years at Yale and Harvard, he also wrote more than fifty books. Then in the last few years of life, he shared his life with mentally and physically disabled people at L'Arche Daybreak community, Toronto, Canada. He reflected on this move in these words¹: "So I moved from



Harvard to L'Arche, from the best and the brightest, wanting to rule the world, to men and women who had few or no words and were considered at best, marginal to the needs of the society. It was a hard painful move, and I am still in the process of making it."

It was at this time he was asked to give a lecture on Christian leadership in the twenty-first century at the fifteenth anniversary of the 'Centre for Human Development' in Washington, D. C. For a professor from Harvard it would not have been a difficult task. However, he had a new reality to cop with, he was not at Harvard, he had no students or academic staff to turn to for research or collect materials for his talk, he was not in an ivory tower, and he was living with day to day realities of a group of mentally handicapped people with different needs and aspirations. How does one talk about Christian leadership while helping marginalized people in a community? This was his dilemma, but he persevered. While preparing his presentation, he had the realization that Jesus did not send his disciples alone to preach the word, he sent them two by two (Mark 6:7). Therefore, he decided to take, Bill Van Bruen, a member of the Daybreak community with him to Washington to deliver his talk. Bill was not very articulate, had difficulties in expressing himself because of his mental disabilities. When Henri expressed his desire to take Bill with him to Washington to give this important talk on Christian leadership to a group of card carrying theologians and priests, he was overwhelmed by Henri's kindness. Bill looked forward in anticipation about this most important assignment in his life. He enjoyed the prospect of 'doing it together with' Henri. During various times before the event, Bill used to tell Henri at every opportunity, "We are doing it together." Suddenly, Bill became an important man to himself, as important as or even more important than Henri because they are preparing to give a talk together, which he has never done; no one, but no one, has ever asked him to do such an important thing in his life. There were occasions, far more than he could remember when others made him believe that he is a burden to the community. Now he has an opportunity to make a contribution.

Finally, the important day had arrived, Professor Henri Nouwen was introduced in a most flowery language, in a traditional North American style sketching his life from birth, to the audience and invited to give his talk, but they did not say anything about Bill at this stage. Bill was of no consequence to them and he was not billed for a great entry. Henri moved to the podium and started to read from his hand written notes. But Henri had no clue about the practicalities of 'doing it together' with Bill, he did not know how to get Bill involved at that crucial moment during his talk. But Bill knew exactly

what it meant and how to do it with aplomb; so he left his seat and stood behind Henri at the podium. Each time when Henri finished reading a page, Bill would come forward and take the page from Henri's hand with great reverence, as he would do when assisting at a Holy Communion Table, and put upside down so methodically on a small table close by. When he heard some familiar part of the speech he interrupted to say, "It is a good one, I have heard that before. It is great, isn't it? That makes sense," and so forth, giving encouragement to Henri all the way, without causing any problem to the flow of Henri's delivery. His spontaneous and down to earth comments were greatly appreciated by the audience. Finally, When Henri finished his presentation; Bill very politely moved forward and asked Henri, "Henri, can I say something now?" Without waiting for an answer, Bill took the microphone from Henri and said with all impediments in speaking, "Last time, when Henri went to Boston, he took John Smeltzer, another inmate of Daybreak community, with him. This time he wanted me to come with him to Washington, and I am very glad to be here with you. Thank you very much." That was it, and that was what 'doing it together' meant to Bill. He did it with great dignity. At this moment, everyone stood up and gave him a thunderous applause for several minutes; it was indeed a sincere and heart felt standing ovation of an unusual kind, some people even shed tears with joy. We worry about relevance, popularity and power in developing Christian leadership. This amazing story gives us the paradigm for 'doing it together,' and for building Christian lifestyles and leaderships.

Mission is a confused and tired word, but mission is more about doing than saying. When John had doubts about Jesus' ministry and sent two of his disciples to question Jesus; Jesus simply said to them, "Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard" (Luke 7: 20-23). It was not an armchair philosophy or arm's length charity or check book giving. Jesus was involved with them in an one-to-one basis to make the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers to become clean and whole. This was a servant-leader who did not keep a safe distance from those whom he came to serve. Now there is quite a safe distance between pulpit and pews. Some of our Christian leaders, I say some and not all, have become mere agents for collecting money from parishes and handing over to other agencies and they begin to think that this is the ultimate God's work. Involvement with people is what is needed. We must learn to trust and invest in people. Our Lord showed the importance of washing the feet of the disciples; Mother Teresa showed us the need to touch the wounded and dressing their wounds. But now, we keep them at a distance and keep them in their ditches or build walls around them and segregate them in well marked enclaves called mission fields or other water tight compartments.

Somehow we have come to believe that good leadership requires a very safe distance from the people who live in the margins of society; there is a great distance between centre and periphery as there was a great distance from Jerusalem to Galilee during Jesus' ministry. Jesus took Galilee and Galileans with him to Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. The day of check

book charity is numbered; responsibility is no more an abstraction; it is to live in the middle and getting engaged with people with whom we need to build a relationship. Building houses for tsunami victims or the homeless in our community is not enough, we should be prepared to live in one of them, for a while to appreciate the problems and build real empathy with them and get a feel for the cause. This is not a one-sided gesture because when Nouwen¹ moved from Harvard to the Daybreak community, he learnt about their unique gifts and graces; he wrote: "They teach me about joy and peace, love and care and prayer—what I could never have learned in any academy. They also teach me what no body else could have taught me, about grief and violence, fear and indifference. Most of all they gave me a glimpse of God's first love, often at moment when I get depressed and discouraged." This is the amazing benefit of 'doing it together' brings to our lives. These opportunities are a gift from God.

"If two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father, in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18: 19-20). We do not agree on anything and no wonder why our prayers do not produce the effect it should. Mission has become a very tired word because of this failure in developing intimate relationship with people who need help of one sort or another. Many mission field workers are now interested in creating popularity by reporting what they do on mission work and building power structures. Mission fields have become constituencies for greater achievements and political maneuvering; it is a check list of duties, obligations, and reports. Mission work is always at another place, away from one's locality and routine life situations; one is always waiting and willing to be sent away for mission work in a far away place. However, doing it together means a willingness to go with, stand together, and to do together things in a most unsheltered way under the guidance of Divine grace.

Communication is the heartbeat of a community, a community without effective communication is a dead community. So 'say what you mean and mean what you say.' Communication depends on both clarity and integrity; without these, one can neither understand another's words nor trust its meaning. Therefore, it is important to develop new writers for 'Messenger,' give them free access, help them to develop their ideas, give them encouragement and support them at every stage. There is an urgent need to develop a dialogue style, instead of a looking down and preaching style from a height in our writings. When St. Paul was in Athens, he got to know some of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers pretty well through his daily conversations at the synagogue and the market place. His discussions were masterly, oozing with conviction, commitment and passion. Some of them dismissed him with sarcasm, but others listening to him encouraged him to explain about Jesus and his ministry in more detail. Down-town Athens in Paul's time was a great place for gossip and Paul was indeed happy to gossip the Gospel and he told them Gospel stories with conviction, "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts

17:16-32). Nevertheless, they were filled with intellectual reservations as we are today. Theological scholarships, spiritual experiences, social skills, and writing abilities should be shared with others and try to produce articles with joint authorship when necessary and possible.

We are called to encourage one another mutually with our God-given gifts and callings in order to grow (Ephesians 4:7-13), to go forward all together, even in the midst of crises, towards the future that God opens up. This will help us to move rhythmically and easily with each other in an effortless and free flowing way, as if we are dancing to a heavenly tune, efficient and graceful in response to our special vocational callings. As an important diaspora Diocesan publication, I am very glad to see, on a regular basis, our Metropolitan's letters in the 'Messenger' and giving a significant place for highlighting the needs of all our diaspora communities through out the world through special editions and so forth. Therefore, let us pray together with one mind and work together with one purpose for developing a new attitude in Christ of humility in giving and generosity for receiving. May 'Messenger' become a medium for such shared experiences.

When we look back and review the progress of our diocese and the development of 'Mar Thoma Messenger' over the last twenty-five years we begin to appreciate the logic and beauty of doing things together. If we care to reflect on our failures in pastoral care, ministry, mission or parish life we may come to realize that all such failures are partly due to our selfishness and trying to do things on our own terms without a care or concern for the common good of the community. Chapter 11 of the book of Numbers recounts an interesting

incident that Moses encountered in his long journey through the wilderness. Having to deal with large number of complaints of his people, which are becoming more and more strident, Moses realizes that his responsibilities have become very heavy for him to handle alone. So he selects seventy respected men to help him; he asks God to enable them in their work by giving them the Spirit. At this crucial time, two of the men selected for this task, Eldad and Medad, do not come before the tabernacle in a prescribed way. Nonetheless, the Spirit of God comes down upon all the seventy of them, including the two who stayed away from the select group. Therefore, let us use this Jubilee year for reviewing our life situations to identify the barriers and ego boundaries that we build around us to exclude others from our lives. Let us repent and pray for a transformation in our lives in union with Jesus Christ to do things together as a faith community for the glory of 'our Lord and our God.' Let His glory be our supreme concern now and at all times. ■

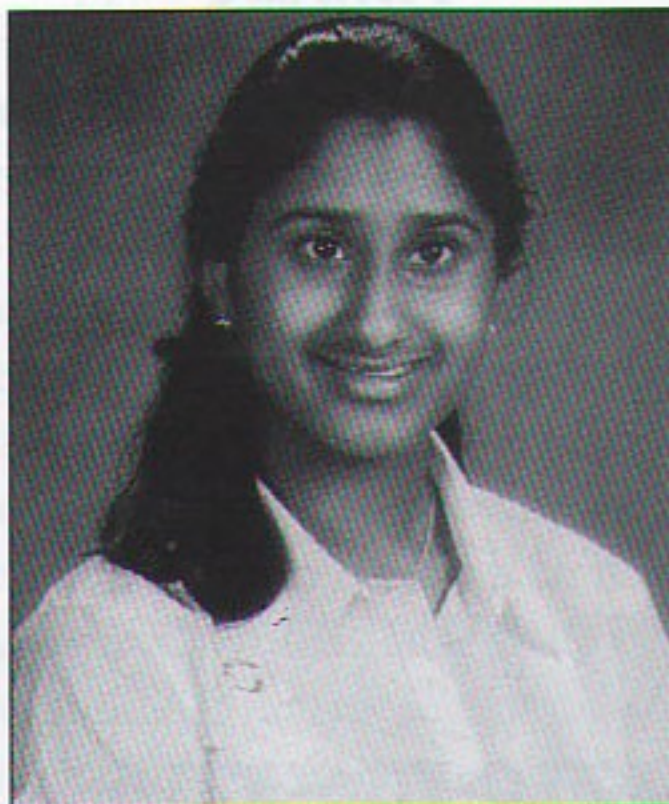
I enjoyed writing for the 'Messenger' over the last twenty-five years and I thank the past and present editors for allowing me to express myself and write freely without censorship, which are fingerprints of maturity and liberation of an enlightened community. May 'Mar Thoma Messenger' become a medium for finding opportunities for 'doing it together' for the glory of God and establishing values of His kingdom on earth.

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- ¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen. "In the name of Jesus," Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., London, 1989.
- ² Henri J. M. Nouwen. "Sabbatical Journey," Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., London, 1998

Just Because

Salome Suresh, Grade 8, Hermon Mar Thoma Church, Atlanta



Just because I'm a girl
Doesn't mean that I'm only suitable for marriage
Doesn't mean I have to cook all day
And doesn't mean I'm weak

Just because I'm a girl
Doesn't mean I don't have the same rights as you
Doesn't mean I'm not afraid to speak my mind
Doesn't mean I'm carefree

Just because I'm a girl
Doesn't mean I'm not smart
Doesn't mean I have no worries
Doesn't mean I think the world revolves around me

Just because I'm a girl
Can't I save my people like Esther?
Can't I be a great judge like Deborah?
Can't I have genuine love for my family like Ruth?

Just because I'm a girl
Why should there be a difference?
Can't you take me for who I am?
Because I'm proud of who I am.

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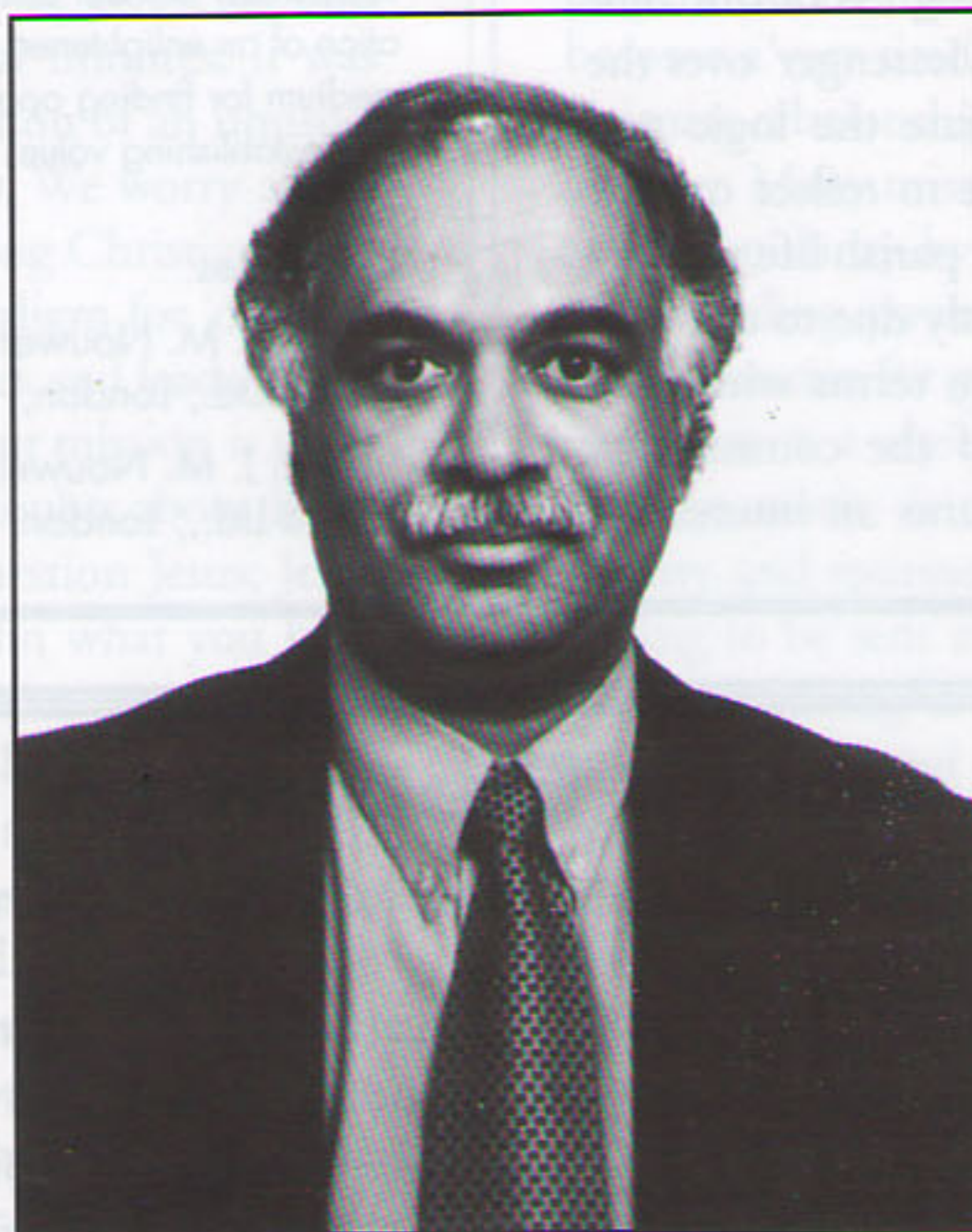


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Thank you for having "Georgia on your mind..."

A Mission Trip to include Tibetan Border

Y. Cherian, New York

Under the leadership of Rev. V. T. John, Chicago, I set out on a mission trip to the Tibetan border where he spent twelve years as a missionary. Team members John Kurikesu, Chicago, A. S. Mathew, Georgia, Y. Cherian, New York and A. J. Abraham, Cochin met in Delhi on 5 February 2006. It is worth mentioning the company of fellowship and service rendered by Pastor M. K. Babu, Worship Leader Samuel Sunam and Jitendra, a tabala player and a good driver, all from Delhi.

Early in the morning on 6th February we started our journey from New Delhi area. We took almost 20 hours to reach our destination. We spent the night in a hotel on the way. Halfway there, we were on the Himalayan Mountain Ranges. There were small ascending and descending roads winding around the high mountains. We had to cross many such mountains. The valleys are so deep and the mountains are so high. Due to the fog visibility was very poor and we could not see the mountaintops. During this journey, some team members started vomiting. In the early days John Achen had to travel half the way by train to the terminal station at Kathgodam, then by bus and then walk for five days through barren mountainous lands.

During the journey Achen told us that this Tibetan Border Mission field was established by foreign missionaries. After a while, due to restrictions imposed by the government, they were not able to continue. These missionaries called on to the seminary students in Poona to take up this site. A team of four people, which included A. K. George, took up the challenge. Later, A. K. George became a priest and spent 32 years of his prime in these areas. V. T. John joined him as a missionary and later became an Achen. They hardly had any salary or support and depended entirely on God's provision. During this period V. T. John Achen composed about 200 poems and translated many songs into Hindi.

From time to time we took breaks during our journey and stood as a team and distributed tracts, sang songs on local dialect and spread the Word of God by preaching. People responded well by raising their hands and praying with us. In some places, sick people came forward for prayers. The villagers are very humble and loving people.

Our main mission center is in Munisiare where Rev. Sunil Zacharia, a newly ordained Priest, is in charge now. It was a great occasion for us to see one hundred students in their school uniform receiving us with great joy on the top of the mountain. Rev. Biju S. Cherian, former Missionary Achen, who is now in New York as a Chaplain took initiative to start this school and since his wife had the credentials to run a school the Government easily granted permission. There are two more Mar Thoma Mission Centers in this area. Evangelist Biju Abraham is in Tejam. He is taking care of a clinic offering first aid only. Evangelist Chandrapani is in Chowpath



where a small group of believers and non-believers assembled, who received us with garlands, and where Achen and Pastor preached the Word of God. We returned to Delhi on the evening of the 10th and attended a leaders meeting at Rohini. A. S. Mathew, John Kurikesu and A. J. Abraham left for West Bengal to visit a tribal ministry.

On 11th February Rev. V. T. John and myself continued our journey by train from Delhi to Khariar Road, Orissa, where Achen was a missionary. The Orissa Mission is under the Niranam-Maramon Diocese which was started in 1985. The Khariar Road Mission Center is located in Nuapada District of Western Orissa bordering Chattisgarh State. It is the poorest district in the State of Orissa. Rev. Biju K. George arranged Sunday evening service at the Center, and Rev. V. T. John conducted the service and celebrated the Holy Communion in Hindi. Even though I have lived in Hindi speaking areas in the past, this was the first experience I ever had of participating in such a service.

There are 17 workers including leading Missionary Achen running the Center, out of which two wardens and fourteen Evangelists are scattered around a radius of 92 kilometers from the Mission Center. Through their selfless efforts they are managing two hostels, one for 74 boys (Grades six to twelve) and 30 girls (Grades four to twelve), three village hostels with 30 students (Grades two to five) with a total of 134 students. In addition to this, they have two Balavadis and three tailoring centers at different locations. All these operations are in remote, rural areas. They have prayer meetings and Sunday services at all the centers. They also conduct VBS, Youth Meetings, Medical Camps and Prison Ministry. During our short visit, we were fortunate to get to attend and witness most of these ministries.

On 15th February, we resumed our journey back by train via Raipur, Katni to Sihora, Madhya Pradesh. In 1942, Rev. K. T. Thomas, John Varghese and M. P. Thomas, responding to the call of Calvary went to Sihora, and a great ministry was started; thousands of people came to know Jesus Christ. Later, John Varghese and M. P. Thomas were ordained to priesthood. We visited the English Medium High School and Hostel run by nuns. There is a Hindi medium training school for Evangelists in addition to an old age home, boy's hostel and Ashram. I left Sihora with great pride that my Sunday school teacher, Sister Aleyamma Varghese, was one of the pioneers who started teaching kids under the shade of trees at Sihora in 1951. She served 52 long years and dedicated her life to the Ashram.

On 17th February, we continued our trip to Jabalpur by car and spent one night in the parsonage which was affected by the earlier earthquake. We took time to visit one of the villages adopted by our Church where 60 houses were built and



L to R: Y. Cherian, Rev. V. T. John, A. S. Mathew and John Kurikesu

an English medium school is running at present. A resident Evangelist and his family are in charge of its daily operations.

During our short span at Jabalpur, Rev. Titus Thomas took us to the Leonard Theological College to meet our seminary students. Upon our arrival, 17 Malayalee students from different denominations received us. After a self-introduction and a discussion, Rev. V. T. John answered their questions concerning theology and bestowed upon them his valuable advice. Being a layman, questions directed toward me pertained to how Kerala Christians are doing in the USA. My answer was quick. I told this group that first generation immigrants are considered to be part of a starting community. They went through a lot of shocks of language, color, climate and cultural discrimination. However, our community has grown materially and the church leaders and institutions in general, are reaping the harvest. Spiritually, in which direction are we advancing? Now the second generation slowly assimilates into the western culture. They are really in the land of milk and honey.

While we were leaving, to my surprise, one of the Mar Thoma students approached me and asked with reverence, "Uncle, are you Y. Cherian?" He became emotional and confided that he could finish his college education only because of my help routed through his parish. I realized I was helping an

unknown person pursue higher studies; when I met this person face-to-face, I was deeply touched. The greatest fruit of this trip was to meet that person in the most unexpected of ways. Indeed, God's ways are mysterious.

On 18th February, we left for Delhi and spent time with Rev. K. G. Joseph and family at Karol Bagh parsonage. Early on 19th morning, he took us to the airport. John Achen went to Kerala and I returned to New York.

During this missionary trip, we experienced the lifestyle we experienced more than 50 years ago in Kerala. In certain places we visited, we had to sleep in old-fashioned beds and function without running water and indoor plumbing. The air was filled with a very unpleasant smell, eat local food in unclean surroundings, use open-air latrines, and witness extreme poverty, but we counted this as joy in the service of our Lord and Master. On the other hand, we experienced the genuine love and hospitality of those poor people who are rich in joy and peace.

In Sunday school, I was greatly touched by the life story of Sadhu Sunder Singh and his missionary trips to Tibet. It was the main reason for my great interest in visiting that area. Sadhu Sunder Singh made his first missionary trip to Tibet in 1908, and the second trip in 1923. In 1927 he tried to make another trip but could not. He made his last journey to Tibet on April 18, 1929. Nobody knew what happened to him until 1933, when Government officials affirmed that Sadhu Sunder Singh was dead.

In conclusion, our journey to the Tibetan mountains was such an adventurous and dangerous trip. We went about 12,500 feet above sea level. We felt the mercy of God when we were at the top of the mountain as well as when we were on the dangerous narrow roads, and on the trains and planes throughout our journey. To follow the Lord in adverse surroundings was such a delightful experience.

May this report challenge more of us to undertake great missions in life. ■

NEW SANCTUARY FOR ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH OF CHICAGO

The 8,000 square feet Church facility built on a 2.5 acre site at the intersection of North Avenue and Main Street in Lombard, Illinois will be the new home for the 130 families of the growing St Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago, which was formed on January 1, 2004 as per the approval of Mar Thoma Episcopal Synod.

Even before the official formation of this new Parish, significant work had been done as a single parish at Chicago Mar Thoma Church over the last few years under the dynamic leadership of Rev. V.T. Josen, Rev. David Daniel, Rev. Roy Thomas and Rev. S. George. Rev. P. L. Joseprakash served as the first vicar till May of 2006. Rev. Johnson Philip is the present Vicar.

The construction started in October of 2005 for church building of a traditional design featuring brick exterior, gothic windows and heavy timber interior finish.

The Madbaha (Altar) is accented with lectern and pulpit is constructed of red oak and flanked with an in wall video projection system. The interior sanctuary will accommodate approximately 450 parishioners. A 1400 square feet balcony is located on the west end of the sanctuary. There is an attached parking lot that will accommodate 150 cars.

The dedication of this new sanctuary is planned for October 21, 2006 at 3.p.m. by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Bishop, Diocese of North America & Europe.

His Excellency Mar Jacob Angadiath, Bishop, Diocese of Chicago, Syro Malabar Church; Rt. Rev. William D. Persell, Bishop, Diocese of Chicago, Episcopal Church; and Clergy from sister churches will grace the occasion. Social and Political Dignitaries will also be the guests of Honor.

Johnson K. Mathai, Secretary

Report on the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam meetings held from September 6 to 8, 2006

The 2006 Annual Prathinidhi Mandalam meeting of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church was held at Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valia Metropolitan memorial Auditorium in Thiruvalla, Kerala from September 6th to 8th. The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan chaired the meetings. Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Episcopa presided in the absence of the Metropolitan. All Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam members and Sabha Council members, including Bishops, Vicar Generals, Clergy, the Hon. Minister of Transportation, Adv. Mathew T. Thomas and Prof. P. J. Kurian MP, attended the 3-day meetings.

The first day's business session started with the opening hymn "Sabhakkekadisthanam than Kanthanam Kristhu". Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Metropolitan led the special worship, which was followed by lesson reading and devotional talk. Most Rev. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan, Bishop of the Niranam Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox church led the devotional talk based on Galatians 2:10 (All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do). Highlighting St. Paul's apostolic leadership style – full submission to the authority of the church and concern for the poor – His Grace challenged the modern apostolic community to take up on the spirit of the apostles and practice the kingdom values.

The opening prayer was led by Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa after which the Metropolitan declared the quorum (965/1354). The meeting then proceeded to the agenda. The Sabha Secretary Rev. K. M. Mammen welcomed the 2006 Prathinidhi Mandalam members after which he announced the program schedule and guidelines to be followed during the 3-day meeting.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa informed the Mandalam that two of our Evangelists in the Karnataka Mission field were arrested and charged by police on September 4 for preaching the Word of God to the native Hindus and requested the Mandalam's prayers for the safety of Evangelists in Mission fields. A special prayer was conducted for the safe release of the arrested Evangelists and for the security of the other Evangelists in the Karnataka Mission field. The prayer was led by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa.

In his Presidential address, the Metropolitan, quoting 2 Cor. 13:14 (May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all), requested the Sabha members to experience the Love, Grace and Fellowship of the Triune God and become children of God. As a church we have been called to respond to the social needs of the community around us.

The Sabha secretary then presented the 2005-2006 report and the Lay Trustee & Treasurer, Prof. Jacob George Mallapally, presented the non-budgeted and over-budgeted

items. The report and accounts were passed after discussions. The full text of the Presidential address, Annual report and Budget highlights in Malayalam are available on the Sabha website www.marthoma.in under Announcements when you click on Events and Announcements.

The question-answer session lasted for three hours during which time the Sabha secretary responded to 47 (out of the 55) written questions from the Mandalam members on the annual report and account. The Mandalam members appreciated the honest and accurate responses given to their questions by the Sabha Council.

The following three proposals were presented and approved:

1. Approve the appointment of Mrs. Annie Abraham from the Delhi Diocese to the Sabha Council under article 164 (6) of the Constitution
2. Receive and approve the contents of Circular #166 issued by the Metropolitan in accordance with article 64 of the Constitution
3. Start a memorial project called "Juhanon Mar Thoma Memorial Centre for Holistic Development" in honor of the late Metropolitan at his ancestral property in Ayroor

The first day's meeting concluded with prayer and benediction.

The second day's event started on 7 September with Holy Communion Service at the St. Thomas Church in Thiruvalla. Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa celebrated the Holy Communion, which was attended by all Mandalam members. The business meeting started at 11 am with prayer by Rt. Rev. Dr. Issac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa. The report for the previous day was read and approved. The highlights of the second day's business meeting are as follows:

1. Felicitation of the Hon. Minister of Transportation, Adv. Mathew T. Thomas (Sabha Council Member), Prof. P. J. Kurian, MP and Mr. Thomas Chandy, MLA (Sabha Mandalam members)
2. Recognition of the contributions of Kaniamparambil Kurian Cor Episcopa by presenting a "Ponnada"
3. Presentation of the Humanitarian award to Mr. C. S. Philip, member of the Coimbatore Mar Thoma Church
4. Felicitation of Scientist Dr. K. George Thomas, recipient of the Bhatnagar award
5. Presentation of Rev. M. C. George Memorial Endowment to Rev. Jose Punnamadam
6. Award to Dalit students for their special achievements in the SSLC examination
7. Recognition of the services of the following retiring clergy: Rev. T. A. John, Rev. C. E. Thomas, Rev.

Thomas Varghese, Rev. P. O. Thomas, Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph, Rev. K. V. Samuel, Rev. M. A. Philip, Rev. P. M. Abraham, Rev. Dr. R. C. Thomas.

8. Book review of Spiritual Nurturing in Local Parish prepared by the Sabha Council for study in local parishes.

The Mandalam also expressed condolences to late Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews the third Catholica Bava, Rev. T. M. Thomas, Vadasserikkara, Rev. Thomas Mathew, Mulakkzha, Rev. George K. Daniel, Anchal, and Mandalam member Mr. J. Samuel, Vattamon.

The second day's meeting concluded with prayer and benediction.

The third day's meeting started at 9 am. The report from the previous day was read and approved. The Lay Trustee & Treasurer, Prof. Jacob George Mallappally presented the 2006/2007 budget showing an income of Rs. 353,309,819 with an expense of Rs. 143, 292, 000.06 and balance of Rs. 210, 017, 819 in security deposits from tenants, long term

deposits, trust funds, endowments and bank accounts. The budget was approved after discussion.

After the Budget, a special Mandalam was convened to make constitutional amendments to Section 387 dealing with the matrimonial commission. The commission has been replaced with a Legal Affairs committee at the diocesan level to advise the Bishop on legal issues and divorce application matters.

The Suffragan Metropolitan Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa and the Sabha Secretary Rev. K. M. Mammen thanked the Mandalam members for their support and cooperation for the smooth conclusion of the 3-day meetings.

The Mandalam meetings were attended by approximately 1000 Mandalam members from Mar Thoma parishes within Kerala and outside. It was also a very happy occasion to meet old friends and acquaintances and renew friendships.

Prepared by Mrs. Susan Johnson, Sabha Council Member, St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church, Toronto.

The Church

Aswathi Varughese (Mary Varughese) St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Chicago

Spanning scintillating seas and magnificent mountains
Crossing the boundaries of time
Navigating abysmal depths
Church bells peal in melodious harmony
Calling the faithful and the faint
The sinner and the saint

My Peace I leave with thee
The church bells chime their mission
Peace and Grace
Peace and Grace

Voices wing heavenward
Congregations kneel in humble adoration
The timeless celebration of salvation
"O Come to me all ye who labor and are burdened"
Loneliness and fear traverse the frail human heart
Solace and caring each hallowed sanctuary will impart

My Peace I leave with thee
The church bells chime their mission
Peace and Grace
Peace and Grace

Shifting quicksand in the desert of survival
Tender no hope to the weary
The Savior's message of freedom
To all - His Disciples decry
A haven of security
At His altar they warranty

My Peace I leave with thee
The church bells chime their mission
Peace and Grace
Peace and Grace

Raindrops of fellowship
Oasis of assurance
Ever-widening circles
Radiating the Savior's message
Life's desert transforms to a mirage
Oasis transcends to reality

My Peace I leave with thee
The church bells chime their mission
Peace and Grace
Peace and Grace

Yes He called the broken-hearted
The downtrodden and disillusioned
His Peace no longer elusive
His Grace given debt free
Compassion at the cross
His nail-scarred hands bestow

My Peace I leave with thee
The church bells chime their mission
Peace and Grace
Peace and Grace

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Christ Our Foundation

Cyril Abraham, Epiphany MTC, New York

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." Are we building our foundations on the temporary things of this world such as wealth, success, security or fame? Jesus teaches us about building on a solid foundation in Matthew 7:21-27. "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock (v. 24)." To build on the rock means listening to Christ's teaching and responding to that. James 1:22 says "Do not merely listen to the world, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." We should put into



action what we have learned from the Word of God so let us not be like the man who built his house upon the sand with no foundation and when the storm came everything collapsed. How solid are our foundations when skies are gray and the storms of life overtake us? Obeying God is like building a house on a strong solid foundation that stands firm when storms of life come. It is through these difficult circumstances that our structural differences will be revealed.

Before Christ's ascension to heaven He gave the Great Commission to the eleven and to us in *Matthew 28:17-19* saying "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." With this Commission St. Thomas the Apostle came to India in 52 A.D. to spread the Gospel. St. Thomas Christians in Kerala during the early centuries faced a lot of persecution. They held strong to their faith in Jesus Christ and many were ready to die for their faith. Are we willing to risk our lives for the sake of Christ today? It is because of the grace of God and the true faith of our forefathers that we are blessed today. We have been so blessed that we have forgotten to look back and remember what Christ has done for us and have neglected the needs of those in our own homes, community, and church. We have been running after the worldly pleasures that satisfy our wants in life. Paul says "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." *Romans 12:2*. Therefore not to conform to what the world says should be deeply planted in our minds. Jesus said in *Matthew 6:33* to "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Christ tells us to turn to Him first for help, to fill our minds with His desires, to become more like Him, and to serve and obey Him in everything. God knows our needs

and if we seek Him first, all the rest He will provide. Paul writes in *Romans 8:28* that "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to His purpose." God works in all things for our good even though we may not see it. Although evil is prevalent in the world today, God is able to turn every situation around in our lives for our good. He is not working to make us happy but to fulfill His purpose in the lives of those who are called according to His purpose. These are the people who have been convicted by the power of the

Holy Spirit and will stand firm when facing difficult situations in life.

When our church reformed, the early leaders wanted a change by returning to the Gospel. Where have we strayed away from what the Gospel is telling us? According to Rev. Dr. K.V. Mathew in his book "The Faith and Practice of the Mar Thoma Church" he mentions that the "Mar Thoma Church is neither a protestant church of the western type nor an orthodox of the eastern type. It is oriental in worship, autonomous in administration and missionary in action. The church follows an orthodox (true worship) liturgy and a catholic (to all, for all) mission and evangelism." Our church is a bridge church with a great heritage and mission. Are we building bridges to lead others to Christ just as He built one for us? Do we try to bridge the gaps we have in our own homes and communities wherever it may be? We have lost the true faith that our forefathers had. We must pray for a revival within us and a revival in the church. This should not be once but something that doesn't come to an end. The Mar Thoma Church has the oldest indigenous missionary movement in India today and it is our duty to pray for and financially help those who are risking their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Every Marthomite is called to be a missionary wherever they are. Are we really standing up for the Gospel in this country today?

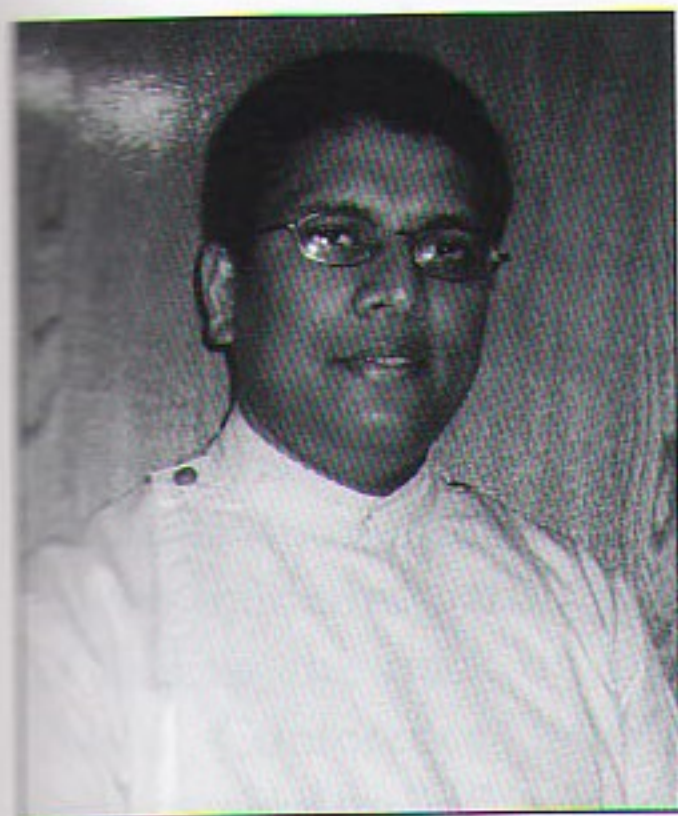
The primary concern of our church is focusing on the lost condition of humankind and the redemption found through Jesus Christ who can deliver us from life's darkest moments. Once we make Christ our first priority in life everything else falls into place. When people become instructed in the Word of God and start to live holy lives they will have a great impact on many lives around them. People will wonder why we're different from the rest of the world and many will come to know our Savior. Jesus teaches

(Cont'd on page 69)

Diocesan Youth Chaplain's Ministry

SOUTH WEST REGION A

Rev. Ninu Chandy, Youth Chaplain, Dallas



South West Region A consists of parishes in Dallas, namely MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch; MTC Dallas, Carrollton; St. Paul's MTC, Mesquite; and Sehion MTC, Dallas. Rev. M. O. Oommen Jr., and Rev. Saji Joseph served as the youth chaplains in the past in this region. I thank God and appreciate the good work

both of them have done among our youth. I take this opportunity to thank Rev. Anil George, Rev. Jacob Thomas, Rev. James K. Abraham and Rev. C. Koshy for their support of the youth chaplain and the youth ministry in this region.

Dallas Area Youth (DAY)

The DAY Bible study is held every Tuesday at MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch. Youth from all four Mar Thoma parishes in Dallas and other sister churches attend the meetings. The topics discussed at these meetings include the fundamentals of faith like God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, and salvation and relevant topics like temptation, freedom, personal conviction, and knowing the will of God.

Parish Youth Fellowship Bible Study

Each parish youth fellowship has their Bible study every Friday. With the help of MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch Youth Fellowship, we have developed a curriculum with four topics – worship, foundations of faith, Christian living, and mission or evangelism. We have finished the first and second topics. Bible studies are conducted every first Friday at MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, every second Friday at MTC, Dallas, Carrollton, every third Friday at St. Paul's MTC, and every fourth Friday for the Sehion MTC at the residence of the youth chaplain.

Summer Program

The summer program was designed for both elders and youths. This was a time for mutual learning for all age groups. The program was a series of Bible studies on the following topics: Grace, Christian Stewardship, and Joy of Suffering. Alex Koleth of MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, and I led the sessions. Approximately 50 members attended this study series in each of the four Dallas parishes.

LOGOS Study

This is an in-depth study for those who are interested in diving into the core aspects of individual texts of the the

Bible. At present, we are studying the Book of Romans. This study is conducted on the first Saturday of every month at the residence of youth chaplain.

Campus Ministry

Campus ministry in and around Dallas has been initiated and students are being visited at their colleges and universities. It is planned in such a way that the youngsters can be reached at least once a month.

Regional Sports Tournament

The regional sports tournament was held on July 28 and 29, 2006 and hosted by the MTC Dallas, Carrollton. Nearly 300 youths and their parents participated in the Sports Tournament.

Regional Retreat

The Regional Retreat is scheduled to be held October 27-29, and will be hosted by the MTC Dallas, Carrollton Youth Fellowship. Mr. P. C. Mathew of Bangalore will be the speaker and the theme is FACE DOWN: HUMBLE THYSELF TO THE LORD.

Parish Youth Retreat

MTC Dallas, Farmer's Branch Youth Retreat was held July 14-16 in Tyler, Texas. The theme was DA ICHTUS CODE, which is a theological affirmation to the Christology. Nearly 130 youths attended the event. Many of them rededicated their lives and three newly committed their lives to the Lord. It was a blessed experience for me and my family to be with such a large gathering of youth at the campsite.

VBS programs

VBS classes of three parishes were held during the summer, which gave us opportunity to interact with Sunday School students and youth.

Call for Ministry

A program for our youth as well as elders to help them engage meaningfully in mission activities has begun. The ultimate aim is to attract youngsters for the ordained ministry of the Lord.

Counseling sessions

Counseling to individuals and groups, and pre-marital sessions for couples as per the directives of the vicars were conducted. Visits to the sick and bereaved families were conducted on a regular basis.

SOUTH WEST REGION B

Rev. Skariah John, Youth Chaplain, Houston



It is by God's providence that I was able to join the youth ministry in this Diocese in May 2006. The South West Region B consists of parishes, namely Houston Trinity, Houston Immanuel, Oklahoma MTC, Colorado Horeb MTC, and Denver and Austin University.

Bible Study

Bible studies are being conducted in the parsonage every first Thursday evening for boys and every first and second Fridays for girls. Every first Monday evening at the parsonage an in-depth Bible Study is conducted for adult youths called "SEEK." On the third Friday and last Friday of every month a combined Praise and Worship and a Bible Study is held in both the Parishes in Houston called "ABLAZE." Cottage prayers are also arranged.

Holy Qurbana

Holy Qurbana is conducted every first and third Sunday at Immanuel MTC, Houston; second and fourth Sundays at Trinity MTC, Houston; every alternate month at Oklahoma MTC; every fifth Sunday at Colorado Horeb MTC, Denver; and weekdays at Austin University.

House Visiting

Visiting youths at home is being carried out in the parishes to understand and know them more closely and to provide them with pastoral care.

Retreat

A one-day Retreat was held for the youths on 2nd September at Trinity MTC, Houston. A One Day Retreat was held on 19th August at Oklahoma MTC. Many youths newly committed their lives and many re-dedicated themselves to God during these retreats.

Counseling

Pastoral care and pastoral counseling are provided to youths as and when needed. Pre-marital counseling for youths is also provided.

Mission Outreach Programs

The youth of this region have actively participated in the Mexico Mission programs, especially the ones conducted by our Diocese. Many youths also participated in the Mission trip to India arranged by the Diocese.

Youths for Full Time Ministry

During the Retreats many youths committed their lives to God. Many of our youth are preparing themselves for full-time ministry. As and when needed, with the help and advice from parish Vicars, special sessions are being conducted for such youths who want to commit themselves for full-time ministry.

Campus Ministry

Visiting our youth at various college campuses in order to foster Christian fellowship is an important part of the youth ministry. Youth are being encouraged to attend churches nearest to where they attend school. Many are able to attend Austin worship services conducted in the university itself. Many of our youth including those from sister churches attend these services conducted at the campus.

SOUTH EAST REGION

Rev. Mathew Skariah, Youth Chaplain, Philadelphia



By the abundant grace of God, I was in charge of the youth ministry of the South East Region from May onwards. We thank God for the exemplary ministry that was accomplished by our predecessors, especially by Rev. Isaac P. Johnson and family, the first resident chaplain for this region. The Vicars and the parish

members are providing great support and encouragement to the ministry to the youth. We, as a faith community, need to create the best environment, which will help the youth grow in their faith in Christ and in their love for the Church.

Parish Ministry

There are nine parishes in the region: Philadelphia MTC, Bethel, Ascension, St. Thomas Delaware Valley, Teaneck St. Peter's, St. Stephen's in New Jersey, New Jersey MTC, Baltimore MTC and MTC of Greater Washington. Holy Communion services are conducted in English during parish visits. Sermons are preached with special emphasis on the experience and challenges of the youth. The heritage and mission of the church is also being focused on.

Youth Fellowship Meetings

Meetings are held on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in different parishes. Effort is made by me to participate and lead each YF meeting at least once a month. The content of the meeting varies from study of the Bible and discussion on various contextual themes and issues. Outreach activities like helping in shelter homes and visiting nursing home patients are being done. We hope to make the YF meetings more effective and participatory.

Bible Study

Systematic Bible study sessions have been started in the Chaplain's residence. It provides a common forum for the youth in four churches in the Philadelphia area to study and reflect upon the word of God in the present context. At present, we are studying the Book of Joshua.

Camps, Conferences, Retreats, VBS

Summer was a time for camps and conferences. It was a blessed experience for me to attend and lead the sessions in the parish youth retreats of St. Peter's, St. Stephen's, Ascension, and Philadelphia parishes. I also led two bible study sessions at the Junior - Senior Conference at New York, youth track devotion at the Chicago Family Conference and the Bible study at the National Yuvajana Sakhyam conference hosted by Bethel parish. I have also been given the privilege of leading the track on Bible and Science at the National Youth Conference held at Toronto. I also had the opportunity to engage with the VBS and Sunday school programs in the various parishes. These avenues provided meaningful interaction with the youth and children.

Personal Guidance and support

Time is set apart to meet youth members personally either at the chaplain's residence or at their homes to share their personal concerns and to encourage them to face their struggles with confidence and faith in Christ.

Campus Ministry

Arrangements are being made to begin campus ministry in all colleges and universities where our youth attend school in the coming weeks.

NORTH EAST REGION

Rev. Biju S. Cherian, Youth Chaplain, New York



Bible Studies

Bible Studies are being conducted at the parsonage every Monday evening for girls and every Thursday evening for boys. On average, fifteen youths attend each session. On the last Thursday of every month a combined Bible Study is conducted in the parsonage. In addition to

our youth, we have youth from the Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran churches attending these meetings. Area Bible Studies are being held in different parishes during weekends.

Special Holy Qurbana Service

A special Holy Communion Service in English has been started in the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church for the youths of Queen's area and also at St James Mar Thoma Church for

the youth of Rockland County. This service is held in the evening on the first and fourth Sunday of every month for those youth who are unable to attend the morning service for reasons such as having to go to work. A youth meeting follows this service. On fifth Sundays, joint Regional Holy Qurbana Service is being held. This is held in the evening at different parishes on rotation basis.

Regional Conferences

Spring One Day Conference was held on 15 April 06 at Staten Island MTC. Peer Mentoring Conference was held from 2nd to 4th June 06 at Bethany MTC hosted jointly by Bethany and St. James Youth Fellowship. College Seminar was held on 20 August 06 at St Andrews MTC for youth who are preparing to join college.

Zonal Conference

A conference for young adults of the Eastern Zone was held from 28th to 30th July 06 at St Peters MTC, NJ. The theme was Turning Corners. This conference discussed issues faced by young adults and how to deal with them.

Campus Ministry

Campus ministry was held regularly in order to foster Christian fellowship. I also visited our youth at various campuses.

Counseling

Counseling is being given at the parsonage for those children who need special guidance with respect to their career or any personal needs as well as pre-marital counseling for those preparing to get married.

Mission Outreach Programs

The youth of this region have actively participated in mission outreach programs, especially the ones conducted by our Diocese. This year, our youth visited the Mexico mission centers in Alabama. A few of our youth visited the Navajeevan Centre in Mumbai, India and spent three weeks with the children and staff at the Centre. Through this they were able to see first hand the needs and lifestyles of the unreached and the downtrodden, and Mar Thoma church's vision and mission concerning this community.

Youths for Ministry

The presence of Youth Chaplains in this Diocese has had a great impact on young people in the past years. Many youngsters have committed their lives to full-time ministry within the church and our Diocese has been blessed by four Achens from this Diocese itself. A few youths are preparing themselves for full-time ministry. A special fellowship is being given to these youngsters as they prepare themselves for the same. ■

വചനം, ജീവിതം, സാക്ഷ്യം - ഒരു പാരസ്പരിക വിചിന്തനം

റവ. അനിൽ ജോർജ്ജ്, ഡാലസ്സ്



ആർനോൾഡ് ടോയൻബി, മതശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞ ചരിത്രകാരന്റെ സമീപനം എന്ന ഗ്രന്ഥത്തിൽ 20-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ മധ്യകാല, സാമൂഹിക, ആത്മീയ തലങ്ങളെ അവലോകനം ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ട്, 'ഒരു പുതിയ തുടക്കത്തിനു സമയമായി' എന്ന് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തി. ചരിത്ര പുരോഗതി മതത്തിനു പുറത്താണെന്നും, ശാസ്ത്ര-സാങ്കേതിക - സാമ്പത്തിക ശക്തികൾക്കു മാത്രമെ മാനവചരിത്ര പുരോഗതിയിൽ പങ്കാളിത്തം ഉണ്ടാകുക ഉള്ളൂ എന്ന ധാരണയും തിരുത്തുവാൻ കാലമായി എന്ന ആ നിരീക്ഷണം ഇന്നും പ്രസക്തമല്ലേ?

മനുഷ്യാസ്തിത്വത്തിലെ ദൈവികതയെ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ്, അവിടെ സ്പെഷ്യലൈസേഷന്റെ ഉറവയെ തുറന്ന്, ആത്മരോവങ്ങളെ ഉണർത്തി, സൃഷ്ടിയെ ആകമാനം സമൃദ്ധമായ ജീവനിലേയ്ക്ക് നയിപ്പാൻ ഉതകുന്ന ഒരു മതാത്മകത ഇന്ന് സാധ്യമാകണം. ഈ മതാത്മകതയുടെ കാതൽ ദൈവിക അനുഭവവും അതിന്റെ സാക്ഷ്യപ്പെടുത്തലുമാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ആത്മാവിഷ്കാരമാണ് വചനം. വചനം ദൈവമാണ് (John 1:1). ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വചനം കാലാകാലങ്ങളിൽ വെളിപ്പാടുകളിലൂടെ ലോകത്തോടു സംസാരിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരുന്നു (Hebrew 1:1) എന്നാൽ വചനം ശരീരം ധരിച്ചപ്പോൾ ആ വെളി പാടുകൾക്ക് അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായ ആധികാരികതയും, സ്വാധീനതയും സ്വായത്തമായി. കേൾക്കപ്പെട്ട വചനം കാഴ്ചയുടെ, സ്പർശനത്തിന്റെ, അനുഭവത്തിന്റെ ശരീരം ധരിച്ചു. വചനസാക്ഷ്യവും, ജീവിതസാക്ഷ്യവും തമ്മിൽ അഭേദമായ ഒരു ബന്ധം സ്ഥാപിക്കപ്പെട്ടു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഈ മനുഷ്യവൽക്കരണം (Incarnation) സഭയുടെ സാക്ഷ്യ ശൈലികളിൽ സമൃദ്ധമായ പരിവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഉളവാക്കി.

വിശുദ്ധ യോഹന്നാൻ എഴുതിയ സുവിശേഷം 'വിശ്വസിയ്ക്കുക' എന്ന ക്രിയയ്ക്ക് നൽകിയ സമാന വാക്കുകൾ ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. കാണുക, കേൾക്കുക, വരിക, ഭക്ഷിയ്ക്കുക, കൂടിയ്ക്കുക, വസിയ്ക്കുക, നിലനിൽക്കുക..... ഇങ്ങനെ നീളുന്നു ആ പട്ടിക.

യോഹന്നാന്റെ സാക്ഷ്യം സൂകരിച്ച് യേശുവിന്റെ പിന്നാലെ പോകുന്നവർ, എവിടെയാണു വരി യ്ക്കുന്നത്? ചോദിക്കുമ്പോൾ, 'വന്നു കാണുക' എന്നാണ് യേശുവിന്റെ മറുപടി (John 1.39). ഫിലിപ്പോസ്, നഥനയേലിനു കൊടുക്കുന്ന മറുപടിയും 'വന്നു കാണുക' എന്നതാണ് (1.46). ശേഷം നിക്കോദെമോസ് യേശുവിന്റെ 'അടുക്കൽ വന്നു' (3:2). ശമര്യക്കാരി സ്ത്രീ യേശുവിൽ നിന്നും ജീവജല ഉറവ കൂടിപ്പാൻ തേടുന്നു (4.15). വിശ്വസിയ്ക്കുക എന്ന ക്രിയയെ, ചരിത്രതലത്തിൽ, സ്പർശകാലതലങ്ങളിൽ മനസ്സിലാക്കുവാൻ മേൽ പറഞ്ഞ ക്രിയകൾ ഉപകരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ ഈ ചരിത്രപരതയെ ഉറപ്പിച്ചുകൊണ്ടാണ് യോഹ. 1.14-ൽ പറയുന്നത് 'വചനം ശരീരം ധരിച്ചു, കൃപ യും സത്യവും നിറഞ്ഞവനായി നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിൽ പാർത്തു. ഞങ്ങൾ അവന്റെ തേജസ്സ് പിതാവിൽ നിന്ന് ഏകജാതനായവന്റെ തേജസ്സായി കണ്ടു'. വചനം, ജീവിതം, സാക്ഷ്യം എന്നിവയുടെ പാരസ്പരികതയും, ദൈവശാസ്ത്ര അടിത്തറയും ഇവിടെ ചുരുളഴിയുമ്പോൾ ഒരു കാര്യം വ്യക്തമാണ് - മത ജീവിതത്തിൽ സാക്ഷ്യനിർവഹണം പ്രധാനമാണ്. അവയ്ക്ക് വാക്കുകളും, ആ വാക്കുകൾക്ക് സ്പർശനവും, അനുഭവങ്ങളും, ജീവിതവും ആവശ്യമാണ്. ഇവിടെ 'എന്റെ ജീവിതമാണ് എന്റെ സാക്ഷ്യം' (ഗാന്ധിജി) എന്ന ദർശനം ഏറെ നിർണ്ണായകം ആണ്.

'യഥാർത്ഥ മനുഷ്യജീവിതത്തിനു വേണ്ടി തീവ്ര-മായി ആഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കുന്ന മനുഷ്യരുടെ ഇടയിലാണ് നാം ജീവിയ്ക്കുന്നത്' എന്ന് ഈ കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ അനേകർ അഭിപ്രായപ്പെടാറുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ ഈ മനുഷ്യവർഗ്ഗം മുഴുവൻ അനേകം ചരിത്രാത്മകശക്തികളുടെ ദീക്ഷണികൾക്കിടയിലാണ് എന്നതേക്കാളുമധികം ഇന്ന്. മതം, മതതീവ്രവാദികൾക്കും, സഭ, സമൂഹായഘടനകൾക്കും പലപ്പോഴും അടിമപ്പെടുന്നു. മതനേതൃത്വങ്ങൾ ദീകര നേതൃത്വങ്ങളായി ആരോപിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ദീകരപ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങളും, പ്രാദേശിക വാദങ്ങളും, വർഗ്ഗീയ വിഘടന വാദങ്ങളും വേരു പിടിയ്ക്കുന്നു. വ്യക്തിജീവിതങ്ങളിൽ മൂല്യശോഷണം വളരെ അപകടകരമായ വിധത്തിൽ പിടി മുറുകുന്നു. ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ അപജയം ഇന്നിന്റെ വേദന ആണ്. പണവും പ്രവർത്തനശേഷിയുമില്ലാത്തവർ തള്ളപ്പെടുന്നു. മാനുഷികതയുടെ ഭാവഭേദങ്ങൾ ഇന്നു കരുവാളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെ ദൈവികമായ രക്ഷാകരദൗത്യത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് സാക്ഷിക്കുക എന്നത് വളരെ സംഗതമാണ്. അർത്ഥവത്തായ ആത്മീയ ജീവിതം നയിയ്ക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ആദ്ധയാത്മിക അടിത്തറ തേടിയുള്ള മനുഷ്യാന്വേഷണത്തെ അഭിമുഖീകരിക്കുവാനും, വഴി കാട്ടുവാനും സാക്ഷ്യസമൂഹം പ്രതിജ്ഞാബദ്ധമാണ്. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിൽ ഒരു ചുർച്ചമനുഷ്യനായി വളരുവാനും, ക്രിസ്തുശിഷ്യരായി വർത്തിപ്പാനുമുള്ള ഒരു എലയക താത്പര്യത്തിന്റെ വെളിച്ചങ്ങളിലത്രേ ഇപ്രകാരം 'വചനം, ജീവിതം, സാക്ഷ്യം' എന്നീ സംജ്ഞകളുടെ ഒരു പാരസ്പരിക വിചിന്തനത്തിനായി (Relative study) ഒരുങ്ങുന്നത്.

ദൈവരാജ്യപങ്കാളിത്തം

യേശുവിന്റെ ശിഷ്യന്മാരെ ദൈവരാജ്യ ശുശ്രൂഷയ്ക്കായി തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുമ്പോൾ കടകൾ പ്രധാനമായും മൂന്നാണ്. യേശുവിന്റെ 'കൂടെ ആയിരിയ്ക്കുക, സുവിശേഷം പ്രസംഗിക്കുക, ദുഷ്ടങ്ങളെ പുറത്താക്കുക' (മർക്കോസ് 3.14). തന്റെ വചനത്തിലും, പ്രവൃത്തിയിലും, ജീവിതസാക്ഷ്യത്തിലും പങ്കു ചേരുവാനായി യേശു നമ്മെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തു. 'കൂടെതായിരിയ്ക്കുക' എന്നതിന്റെ അർത്ഥവും ഇതു തന്നെ. തന്റെ വാക്കുകളിലും, ജീവിതത്തിലും, പ്രവൃത്തികളിലും ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിന്റെ ആരംഭമാണ് ശിഷ്യന്മാർ ദർശിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന് യേശു അവർക്ക് വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുകയും, അതിലെ മുഖ്യങ്ങൾ അവർക്ക് വിശദീകരിച്ചു കൊടുക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. "വിചാരിയരുടെ ഇടയിൽ അറിപതികളെന്ന് കരുതപ്പെടുന്നവർ അവരുടെ മേൽ ആധിപത്യം ചെയ്യുന്നുവെന്നും, അവരുടെ പ്രമാണികൾ അവരുടെ മേൽ അധികാരം നടത്തുന്നുവെന്നും നിങ്ങൾക്കറിയാമല്ലോ, നിങ്ങളുടെയിടയിൽ അങ്ങനെ ആയിരിയ്ക്കരുത്. മറിച്ച് നിങ്ങളിൽ വലിയവൻ ആകുവാൻ ആഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കുന്നവർ ശുശ്രൂഷകനായിരിയ്ക്കണം. നിങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്നാമനാകുവാൻ ഇച്ഛിയ്ക്കുന്നവൻ എല്ലാവരുടെയും ദാസൻ ആയിരിയ്ക്കണം" (മർക്കോസ് 10. 42- 44). അതു പോലെ തിരിപ്രഭാഷണത്തിലും വചനം, ജീവിതം, സാക്ഷ്യം എന്നിവ എത്ര മനോഹരമായി സമ്മേളിച്ചിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ചിന്തിക്കുക (മത്തായി 5.7). ഒരു വേള യേശു സെബന്ദിയുടെ മുമ്പാകെ ചോദിച്ചുവെന്ന് കേൾക്കുക. "ക്രിസ്തുശിഷ്യർക്ക് ബാധകമാണ്. ഞാൻ കൂടിയ്ക്കുന്ന പാനപാത്രം നിങ്ങൾ കൂടിയ്ക്കുമോ? ഞാൻ ഏല്ക്കുന്ന സ്നാനം നിങ്ങൾ ഏല്ക്കുമോ? ചെയ്യുമോ?" (മർക്കോസ് 10.39). യേശുവിന്റെ ഉപദേശങ്ങളിൽ, അന്തിമ ന്യായ വിധിയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായ മാനദണ്ഡവും, അപര സേനാപതിന്റെ പ്രവൃത്തിപഥങ്ങളിലുള്ള ആവിഷ്കരണം ആണ്. (മത്തായി 25. 31- 46). "ഈ ചെറിയവരിൽ ഒരുവന് ചെയ്തതെല്ലാം എനിയ്ക്കൊക്കുന്നു ചെയ്തത്" എന്നതിലൂടെ വചനം ശരീരം ധരിച്ച് സാക്ഷ്യം നല്കപ്പെടുന്നു. മുതലാളിത്ത വചനം, ജീവിതം, സാക്ഷ്യം എന്നിവയിലൂടെ യേശുവിനോടു കൂടെ ആയിരിയ്ക്കുക എന്നാൽ ദൈവരാജ്യത്തോടു ആഭിമുഖ്യം പുലർത്തുക എന്നാണ്.

ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ശിഷ്യത്വം

"ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ ആരും സേനാപതിയ്ക്കുന്നില്ല, സേനാപതിയ്ക്കാൻ ആർക്കും കഴിയുകയുമില്ല. എന്നാൽ വിട്ടുതൽ പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യാൻ സാധിയ്ക്കുന്നത് ക്രിസ്തുവിനായ ക്രിസ്തുവിനു മാത്രമാണ്. ഇതു ലോകത്തെ പരിവർത്തിപ്പിയ്ക്കുന്നു. മരണത്തെ ഒരിയ്ക്കലും ഭയപ്പെടുന്നില്ല. ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ അനുസരിയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ മാത്രമാണ് മനുഷ്യൻ വർണ്ണമാനകാല യാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളിൽ തങ്ങളുടെ നിയോഗങ്ങൾ തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നത്. അവിടെ മനുഷ്യൻ മുക്തി നേടുകയും, അന്യകാരാവ്യതമാകാതെ ഒരു ദാവി അവന് കരഗതമാവുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു". (J. Moltmann, *The crucified God*). യേശുവിന്റെ ജീവിത ശിഷ്യത്വം കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചിരിയ്ക്കുന്നത് ക്രിസ്തുവിനാണ്. ദൈവം, സേനാപതിമാണെന്നും, എല്ലാ സൃഷ്ടികളെക്കുറിച്ചും ഉള്ള പരമമായ നിറവേറ്റുന്നത് ക്രിസ്തുവിനായെന്നും അതു വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. സേനാപതിയ്ക്കുന്ന, ക്ഷമിയ്ക്കുന്ന സഹിയ്ക്കുന്ന, വേദനിയ്ക്കുന്ന ഒരു ജീവിതശിഷ്യത്വം; സത്യ ശുന്യവൽക്കരണത്തിന്റേതായ ഒരു ജീവിതം (Kenosis) ശക്തമായി ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ പ്രതിഫലിയ്ക്കുന്നു. "ക്രിസ്തു യേശുവിന്റെ ദാവം തന്നെ നിങ്ങളിലും ഉണ്ടാകട്ടെ, അവൻ ദൈവ രൂപത്തിൽ ഇരിക്കെ, ദൈവത്തോടുള്ള സമത്വം മുറുകെ പിടിച്ചുകൊള്ളണം എന്നു വിചാരിയ്ക്കാതെ, ദാസരൂപം എടുത്തു, മനുഷ്യ സാദൃശ്യത്തിലായി, തന്നത്താൻ ഒഴിച്ച് വേഷത്തിൽ മനുഷ്യനായി വിളങ്ങി.

തന്നത്താൻ താഴ്ന്നി മരണത്തോളം, ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ മരണത്തോളം തന്നെ അനുസരണയുജ്ജ്വലൻ ആയിത്തീർന്നു. (ഫിലി.2. 6 - 8). ദൈവരൂപം, ദാസരൂപം, മനുഷ്യ സാദൃശ്യം, മരണം ഇവയെല്ലാം ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ ഭാവരൂപങ്ങളാണ്. 'വരിക, ക്രിസ്തുവിനെപ്പോലെ' എന്നത് ബോധം ഹോമർക്ക് മാത്രമല്ല, ക്രിസ്തുശിഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ മുഴുവൻ അവിരാജ്യ അടയാളമല്ലേ? പൗലോസ്

സ്റ്റീഫോയുടെ ഭാഷയിൽ ദൈവവചനം തന്നെ ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ വചനം ആണ്. "ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ വചനം, നശിച്ചു പോകുന്നവർക്ക് ഭോഷ്യവും, രക്ഷിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന നല്ലവർക്ക് ദൈവശക്തിയും ആകുന്നു". (1 Cori. 1 - 18). ക്രിസ്തുശിഷ്യത്വം എന്ന രക്ഷാ പദ്ധതിയോ വേദനിയ്ക്കുന്നവരും, നിർദ്ധനരും, നിരാലംബ രൂമായ ജനകോടികളോടുള്ള ദൈവിക ഐക്യം വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതാണ്, മാനവ ജാതിയെ ആകമാനം ദൈവത്തോടു നിരപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ്. അത് വിശ്വസിച്ചിട്ടില്ലാത്ത പ്രതിഷ്ഠ ഉണർത്തുന്ന രക്ഷാപ്രവൃത്തിയുടെ സാക്ഷ്യമാണ്.

സഭയും സാക്ഷ്യവും

ക്രിസ്തുനാമന്റെ ശരീരമാകുന്ന സഭ; വചനം മാംസം ധരിച്ച്, കൃപയും സത്യവും നിറഞ്ഞവനായി നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിൽ പാർത്തപ്പോൾ, ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ കൂട്ടായ്മയായിത്തീർന്ന സഭ; ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിന്റെ കൂദാശ ആയി ഇന്നും നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിൽ വർത്തിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിന് ഇന്നിന്റെ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ മജ്ജയും മാംസവുമൊരുക്കുന്നത് സഭ ആണ്. സഭ ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിൽ പ്രഘോഷകതാകേണ്ടതു ശുന്യതയിലല്ല, ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളിലാണ്. ഈ ലോകത്തിന്റെ വെളിച്ചമാകാൻ സഭ നിയോഗിയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ലോകം മനുഷ്യത്വരഹിതമാകുമ്പോൾ, സേനാപതിയും ഐക്യവും സമാധാനവുമൊക്കെ അന്യം നില്ക്കുമ്പോൾ 'വെളിച്ചത്തിന്റെ മക്കൾ' എന്ന വിളി അന്യർക്കുമാകണം. ലോകം മുഴുവൻ ശക്തിയുള്ളവരുടെ അതിജീവനത്തിന്റെ (survival of the fittest) വേദനയാകുകയും, സാമ്പത്തിക, രാഷ്ട്രീയ, മാനുഷ അധികാരങ്ങൾ ഉള്ളവർ മാത്രം പ്രബലരാകുകയും ചെയ്യുമ്പോൾ, ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ കൂട്ടായ്മയുടെ സാക്ഷികളായി സഭ ഉണരുകയും, അതിന്റെ കൗദാശിക ദൗത്യം നിർവഹിയ്ക്കുകയും ചെയ്യണം. ദൈവവചനം, ജീവിതം, സാക്ഷ്യം എന്നിവയിൽ നിന്നും അന്യപ്പെട്ട് സഭയ്ക്ക് അസ്തിത്വമില്ല; ചരിത്രത്തിൽ സ്ഥാനവുമില്ല.

ടോയൻബിയുടെ ഭാഷയിൽ, 'ഒരു പുതിയ തുടക്കത്തിനു സമയമായി'. ആയതിനാൽ ചില നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ കൂടി രേഖപ്പെടുത്തട്ടെ. നാം ഇന്നു വചനത്തിൽ വേരുന്നണം. കാലത്തിന്റെ സമസ്യകൾക്ക് വചനാനുസൃതമായി ഉത്തരങ്ങൾ കണ്ടെത്തണം. ലോകത്തോടും, അതിന്റെ വ്യതിയാനങ്ങളോടും, ഒരു തുറന്ന മനോഭാവം ഉണ്ടാകണം. തുറന്ന വേദപുസ്തകത്തിന്റെ (Open Bible) തുറന്ന സമീപനം നവീകരണത്തെ ഒരു തുടർ പ്രക്രിയയായി നിലനിർത്തണം.

"ജീവിതങ്ങൾ ഉറക്കെ സംസാരിയ്ക്കുന്ന" ഒരു കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ നമ്മുടെ വാക്കുകളും പ്രവൃത്തികളും സാമ്യപ്പെടണം. കൃപയും സത്യവും നിറഞ്ഞ് നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിൽ പാർക്കുന്ന കർത്താവിന്റെ തേജസ്സുള്ള അനുകാരിയായി നാം തീരണം.

മാനവ പുരോഗതിയുടെ പ്രഘോഷകരും, പ്രയോക്താക്കളായി ലോകത്തിന്റെ വേദനകളിൽ, ഇച്ഛാഭംഗങ്ങളിൽ, അസുസ്ഥതകളിൽ; കണ്ണും, കാതും, കരളും തുറന്നുപിടിച്ച ഒരു സാക്ഷ്യസമൂഹമായി നാം ആയിത്തീരണം.

യേശുവിന്റെ ജീവിത മരണോന്മാനങ്ങളിലൂടെ, ദൈവം ലോകത്തെ രക്ഷിപ്പാനായി പ്രവർത്തിച്ചതുപോലെ, ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിൽ നിലകൊള്ളുവാനും, രക്ഷയുടെ സന്തോഷം പകരുവാനും ഉതകുന്ന രക്ഷാകര ദൗത്യം ഇന്നും സംഗതമാകണം.

സുവിശേഷദാനം-മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭ

ഏബ്രഹാം കെ. ഡാനിയേൽ (എപ്പിഫാനി, ന്യൂയോർക്ക്)



അനാദികാലം മുതൽ മറഞ്ഞു കിടക്കുന്ന ദൈവിക മർമ്മത്തെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുവാൻ നിയോഗിതമായ സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യം പ്രകാശ പൂർണ്ണമാകുന്നത് സുവിശേഷ ഘോഷണത്തിന് പ്രാമുഖ്യം നൽകുന്ന പ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിലൂടെയാണ്. മലങ്കര മാർത്തോമ്മാ സുറിയാനി സഭ ഈ ദൗത്യ നിർവ്വഹണത്തിൽ ഇന്നോളം മുന്നണിയിൽ നിൽക്കുന്നു.

മലങ്കര സഭയിലെ ആത്മീക ഉണർവിന്റേയും, നവീകരണത്തിന്റേയും ചരിത്രം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നതു തന്നെ വേദപുസ്തകം അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കിയുള്ള ദൈവവചന പഠനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നുമാണ്. അബ്രഹാം മൽപ്പാനച്ചൻ പരിഷ്കരിച്ച തക്സായിൽ മാരാമൺ പള്ളിയിൽ വിശുദ്ധ കുർബാന അനുഷ്ഠിച്ചാണ് മലങ്കര സഭയിൽ നവീകരണത്തിന് തുടക്കം കുറിച്ചത്. പരസ്പരമുള്ള ഐക്യത്തിലും സ്നേഹത്തിലും ഒരുമപ്പെട്ട് അന്ധകാരത്തിൽ നിന്നും ദിവ്യ വെളിച്ചത്തിലേക്ക് വിശ്വാസ സമൂഹം നയിക്കപ്പെട്ടപ്പോൾ, രക്ഷയുടെ മർമ്മം മാനവ ജാതിക്കൊക്കെ പങ്കിടേണ്ടതാണെന്ന് അവർക്ക് വെളിപ്പെട്ടു. ഈ ആത്മീകനിറവിൽ ദൈവഹിതപ്രകാരം രൂപപ്പെട്ട ചരിത്രനിയോഗമാണ് മാർത്തോമ്മാ സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗ സംഘത്തിന്റേത്.

കല്ലിശ്ശേരി ഏബ്രഹാം അച്ചന്റെ മകൻ വാലുചിറയിൽ അവറാച്ചൻ, അബ്രഹാം മൽപ്പാനച്ചന്റെ ശിഷ്യനായിരുന്നു. താൻ കേട്ട ഒരു സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗത്തിൽ നിന്നും പ്രചോദനമുൾക്കൊണ്ട് മറ്റുള്ളവരോട് സുവിശേഷ സംവേദനത്തിനായി സമ്പൂർണ്ണ സമർപ്പണം നടത്തി. ചെങ്ങന്നൂർ കോട്ടുരേത്ത് യോഹന്നാനച്ചൻ, പുത്തൻകാവിൽ ചക്കാലയിൽ ചെറിയാൻ ഉപദേശി എന്നിവർ ഉപവസിച്ച് പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ച് ദൈവിക ചൈതന്യം ഉൾക്കൊണ്ട്, ദിവ്യശ്രീ. കൊട്ടാരത്തിൽ തോമസ്സ് കശ്ശീശായുടെ അദ്ധ്യക്ഷതയിൽ 1888 സെപ്റ്റംബർ 5-ന് (1064 ചിങ്ങം 22 തിരുവോണ ദിനം) 12 വിശ്വാസ വീരന്മാർ കല്ലിശ്ശേരി കടവിലച്ചന്റെ മാളികയിൽ വേദപഠനത്തിനും, പ്രാർത്ഥനക്കുമായി ഒത്തുചേർന്നപ്പോൾ ലഭ്യമായ ദർശനമാണ് മാർത്തോമ്മാ സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗ സംഘം എന്ന മഹത്തായ മിഷനറി പ്രസ്ഥാനത്തിന് രൂപം കൊടുക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള തീരുമാനത്തിന് പ്രേരണയായത്. ഓരോ പ്രദേശത്താണ് സംഘം ആദ്യമായി സുവിശേഷ പ്രവർത്തനം ആരംഭിച്ചത്. അന്ധവിശ്വാസങ്ങളെയും അനാചാരങ്ങളേയും എതിർക്കുവാനും, ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ സന്ദേശവും സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ സദർശനമാനവും സംഘം പ്രഘോഷിക്കുവാൻ തുടങ്ങി. സംഘത്തിന്റെ ആദ്യത്തെ 'സഭയും' ഓരോയിലാണ് ഉണ്ടായത്. ചക്കാലയിൽ ചെറിയാൻ ഉപദേശിയാണ് ആദ്യത്തെ സഞ്ചാര പ്രവർത്തകൻ. പരിമിതമായ വരുമാനം കൊണ്ട് പ്രതികൂലങ്ങളെ അതിജീവിക്കുകൊണ്ട് സംഘം പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ വളർന്നു മുന്നേറുവാൻ ഇടയായി.

മാർത്തോമ്മാ സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗ സംഘം രൂപവൽക്കരിച്ചിട്ട് 118 സംവത്സരങ്ങൾ പിന്നിടുവാൻ ഇനി ദിനങ്ങൾ മാത്രം. ഈ മഹത്തായ പ്രസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ശാഖോപശാഖകൾ പടർന്നു പന്തലിച്ച് ഭാരതത്തിലെ 14 സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിലും 2 കേന്ദ്ര ഭരണ പ്രദേശങ്ങളിലുമായി 47 കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ വ്യാപിപ്പിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞു. കേരളത്തിനു പുറത്തുമാത്രം 2000-ൽ അധികം ഗ്രാമങ്ങളിൽ സുവിശേഷ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ സംഘത്തിന്റെ

ചുമതലയിൽ നടക്കുന്നു. മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത തിരുമേനിയും മറ്റു തിരുമേനിമാരും നൽകുന്ന ആലോചനകളും തീർപ്പ് നൽകുന്ന നേതൃത്വവും സംഘം പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് തിളക്കമാർന്ന പ്രചോദനം നൽകുന്നു. വിവിധ മിഷൻ ഫീൽഡുകളിലായി 200 സുവിശേഷകരും, 50 മിഷനറി അച്ചന്മാരും, 380 മറ്റ് അനുബന്ധ പ്രവർത്തകരും സുവിശേഷ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് നേതൃത്വം നൽകുന്നു. മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടേയും സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗ സംഘത്തിന്റേയും പ്രവർത്തന സരണിയിൽ പ്രവാചക ശബ്ദമായി, ആത്മീക ശ്രോതസ്സായി 111 വർഷങ്ങൾക്ക് മുമ്പ് പരിപാവനമായ പമ്പാനദിയിലെ, ആറന്മുള ക്ഷേത്രത്തിന്റെ വടക്കു ഭാഗത്തുള്ള മണൽ തിട്ടയിൽ ആരംഭിച്ച മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ സംഘത്തിന്റെ സുവിശേഷ ഘോഷണത്തോടുള്ള പ്രതിബദ്ധത സമൂഹത്തെയാകെ വിളിച്ചറിയിക്കുന്നു. ലോകത്തിന് യേശു ക്രിസ്തു നൽകിയ 'ദൈവരാജ്യ സന്ദേശം' തലമുറകളിലൂടെ ഇന്നും മാരാമണ്ണിൽ മുഴക്കുവാനും, അതിലൂടെ അനേകം വയൽ പ്രദേശങ്ങൾ ദൈവരാജ്യ ഭൂപടത്തിലാക്കുവാനും കഴിയുന്ന ആത്മാക്കളെ ഉണർത്തുവാനും ഇടയാക്കുന്നുവെന്നത് സ്വർഗ്ഗം സന്തോഷിക്കുമെന്ന കാര്യത്തിൽ സംശയമില്ല. കൺവൻഷൻ സന്ദേശങ്ങൾ അനേകരെ സുവിശേഷ വേലയ്ക്കും സഭയുടെ ഇതര ശുശ്രൂഷകൾക്കും പ്രതിഷ്ഠിക്കുവാനും സഹായകരമാകുന്നു. മാരാമൺ മഹായോഗത്തിന്റേയും സഭയുടേയും വളർച്ചയുടെ മുഖാന്തരമായ പ്രധാനഘടകം പ്രാർത്ഥനാ ജീവിതമുള്ള വിശ്വാസ വീരന്മാരുടെ പ്രാർത്ഥനയാൽ ലഭ്യമായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ചൈതന്യമാണ്. സാമൂഹ്യതിന്മകൾക്കെതിരെ കൺവൻഷനിൽ മുഴങ്ങിക്കേൾക്കുന്ന പ്രവാചക ശബ്ദം സാമൂഹ്യ രൂപാന്തരത്തിന് മുഖാന്തരമാവുന്നു. അതിന്റെ ഫലമായി കാലാകാലങ്ങളിൽ വിദ്യാലയങ്ങൾ, അഗതിമന്ദിരങ്ങൾ, ഭൂഭവനദാന പ്രസ്ഥാനം, വിവാഹ സഹായനിധി, വികസന സമിതികൾ, മറ്റു മിഷൻ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങി അനേകം സംരംഭങ്ങൾക്ക് ശക്തി ശ്രോതസ്സായി മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ നിലകൊള്ളുന്നു.

കൂടാതെ "ഓരോ മാർത്തോമ്മാക്കാരനും ഓരോ സുവിശേഷകൻ" എന്ന എബ്രഹാം മാർത്തോമ്മായുടെ നിദർശനത്തിൽ ആളാംപ്രതി വേലയ്ക്ക് പ്രാമുഖ്യം നൽകിക്കൊണ്ട് 1924-ൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സന്നദ്ധ സുവിശേഷ സംഘം രൂപൽക്കരിച്ച് ഇന്നോളം പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു വരുന്നു. അങ്ങനെ രൂപീകൃതമായ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സന്നദ്ധ സുവിശേഷ സംഘത്തിന് അമേരിക്കൻ ഐക്യനാടുകളിലും, ശാഖകളും ഭദ്രാസനാടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും വളർന്നു വ്യാപിച്ചു വരുന്നത് ഈ ഭദ്രാസനത്തിലെ വിശ്വാസ സമൂഹത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിടത്തോളം അഭിമാനിക്കാവുന്ന സംഗതിയാണ്. നാലാമത് നാഷണൽ കോൺഫ്രൻസിന്റെ വിജയത്തിലൂടെ അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കുറിലോസ് തിരുമേനിയ്ക്കും, മറ്റു കൺവൻഷനുകൾക്കും മാർത്തോമ്മാ സന്നദ്ധ സുവിശേഷ സംഘത്തിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഭദ്രാസന തലത്തിൽ കൂടുതൽ കർമ്മോന്മുഖമാക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുമെന്ന കാര്യത്തിൽ സംശയമില്ല.

"എന്നാൽ പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവു നിങ്ങളുടെ മേൽ വരുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾ ശക്തി ലഭിച്ചിട്ടു യേശുശലേമിലും യെഹൂദ്യയിൽ എല്ലാടത്തും ശമർയ്യയിലും ഭൂമിയുടെ അറ്റത്തോളവും എന്റെ സാക്ഷികൾ ആകും..."

ഇരുപത്തഞ്ചുവർഷങ്ങൾ.....

സ്തോത്രം നാഥാ ... സ്തോത്രം ദേവാ
സ്തോത്രം നാഥാ ... യേശുനായകാ

ഇരുപത്തഞ്ചുവർഷങ്ങൾ
ഇടമുറിയാതെ വൻകൃപയിൽ
ഇത്രത്തോളം നടത്തിയോണേ
സ്തോത്രം ... സ്തോത്രം ...
ഹാലേലൂയ്യാ! ഹാലേലൂയ്യാ! ഹാലേലൂയ്യാ!
ഹാലേലൂയ്യാ! ഹാലേലൂയ്യാ! ഹാലേലൂയ്യാ!



George Varghese
(Jayan)

നല്ലവനായ് വല്ലഭനായ്
നാളിതുവരേയും തൻകൃപയിൽ
ഉന്നതമായ് അനുദിനവും
പരിപാലിച്ചതിനാൽ
നന്ദിപറഞ്ഞീടാം താണുവണങ്ങീടാം
ആർത്തുസ്തുതിച്ചീടാം കർത്തൻതിരുമുമ്പിൽ
(ഇരുപത്തഞ്ചുവർഷങ്ങൾ)

വന്ദിതനാം യേശുവിന്റെ
സാക്ഷികളാകാം അനുദിനവും
ഉണർന്നീടാം വളർന്നീടാം
കർത്തൻ വരവിനായ്
അന്ത്യംവരേയും തൻചിറകിൻ മറവിക്കൽ
പരിപാലിച്ചീടും കർത്തൻ വിശ്വസ്തൻ!!
(ഇരുപത്തഞ്ചുവർഷങ്ങൾ)

Lyric and Music – George Varghese (Jayan)

Christ Our Foundation (Cont'd from page 62)

about being the salt and light of the world in *Matthew 5:13-16*. Being salt of the earth we should not lose our saltiness. We are also called to be the light of the world as we are "Lighted to Lighten," Jesus tells us that "You are the light of the world (v. 14)." "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and your Father in heaven (v. 16)" We should be a beacon of light in this dark world reflecting the Son. During these uncertain times today we should remember what the psalmist says in *Psalms 46:1-3* which says "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake in their surging." The

psalmist says that even if the world was to end we don't need to fear, for God is with us. He is our eternal refuge and will provide strength in whatever situation we are in. We shouldn't fear of what we hear and face in our lives today but be hopeful that Christ's return is soon. Therefore let us be alert not wavering in faith, steadfast in prayer, diligent in studying and spreading the Word of God through His love. Let us move forward building our foundations with hope in our Savior Jesus Christ. ■

Editor's Note: Cyril Abraham is the son of Mr. Thomas Abraham and Mrs. Annamma Abraham (Sally), members of the Epiphany MTC, New York. He is currently doing his Public Accounting degree at Pace University and can be contacted at cabraham83@yahoo.com.

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Sam Zachariah (Aji)

3-24-1978 – 7-14-2006

Sam Zachariah (28), loving son of Thomas and Saramma Zachariah and dear brother of Cyril Zachariah, passed from this life on July 14, 2006. Sam was also a beloved member of St James Mar Thoma Church. Memorial Service was held at Knanaya Catholic Community Center and MJ Higgins Funeral Home. The Funeral Service was held at the church at 11:30 am, Monday, July 17 with the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa officiating.

Sam Zachariah was born on March 24, 1978. He graduated from Penn State University with a degree in Industrial Engineering. Sam worked as a statistical analyst in Washington D.C.

Sam's soft-spoken gracious nature, his desire to be excellent in the things he attempted, his genuine concern for his friends and family – these characteristics of Sam, we remember with fondness. He was a mentor, a companion and most of all a wonderful friend to all who knew him. Sam will be remembered for his warmth, friendliness and infectious smile.

Sam's grandfather, father, mother and brother, his extended family and friends will miss him deeply.

The Sam Zachariah Memorial Fund was created by St. James Mar Thoma Church with the approval of the Zachariah family. Those wishing to contribute to this memorial may make checks payable to St. James Mar Thoma Church A/c Sam Zachariah Memorial Fund, 526 Route 306, Wesley Hills, NY 10901.

DR. SOSAMMA GEORGE was born on 25th May 1944 to Mrs. & Mr. Eappen Mullelathu Kinnattukara family in Mavelikkara. After completing her formal education, she married Dr. K.O. George (son of Late Rev. K. G. Oommen) on April 18th, 1968. Soon after, son (Oommen K. George) was born to the young couple's life.

Thereafter, both established thriving practice and developed the Fellowship Hospital and Pharmaceutical in Punalur. Dr. Sosamma was a nationally recognized homoeopathic physician and established an OBGYN and Female Disease Branch at the Hospital. She was a



Dr. Saramma George

5-25-1944 – 7-16-2006

member of several professional societies and a community leader in Punalur.

In 1977, Dr. Sosamma immigrated to the United States with her family to further her professional training and co-founded Hahnemannian Research Center, Inc & HRC Laboratories in Irvine, CA. She was well known nationally & internationally as an authority in Homoeopathic Medicine and was a regular seminar speaker in female chronic degenerative diseases.

Many of her family friends and relatives knew her as Rajamma. Her gifts of wisdom, sharp mind and leadership qualities have helped steer many broken lives in the right direction. Her untiring hands have provided hospitality to many ministers and workers of the gospel at all time during her life.

The Funeral Service was held at the Crystal Cathedral Church and the burial service was held at the Crystal Cathedral Memorial Garden on July 25, 2006. Dr. Sosamma has left behind a rich and a versatile legacy, which will stand for many years to come. Her loving husband, son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren survive her.

MRS. ANNAMMA RACHEL PAPPY was born on March 10, 1924 to the Late. Mrs. & Mr. Kochikan Varghese in the village of Kizheketharoor, Kottarakara, went to her heavenly abode on Wednesday, June 28, 2006.

She was wed to the Late Mr. Varghese Pappy of Poikayil House, Chandanappally, Pathanamthitta. They spent the majority of their lives together in Elampal, Punalur and were members of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Elampal.

They were blessed with 4 boys and 4 girls. Their family consisting of 8 children has now

expanded to a family with 21 Grand-children as well as 22 Great-Grand-children. Truly, she was blessed by the Almighty Lord to see the fruit of her generations.

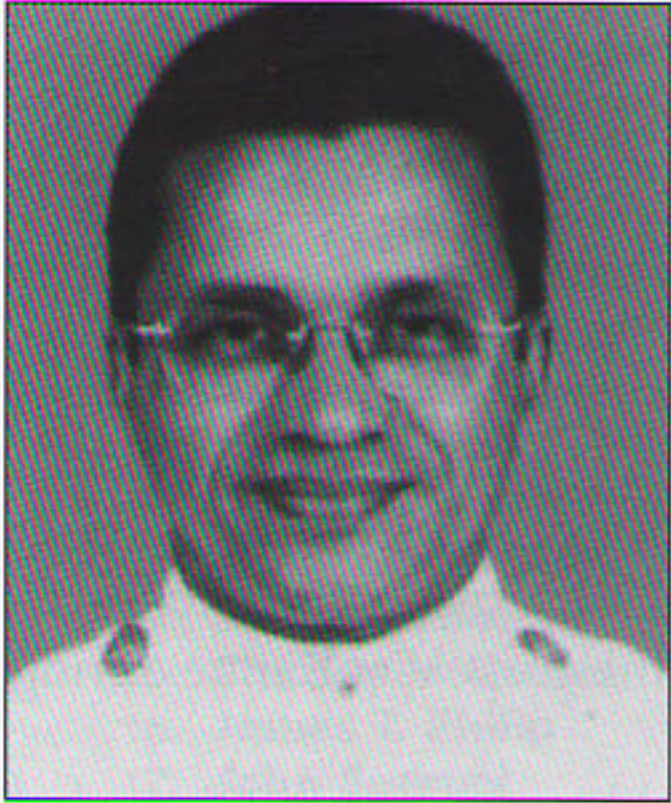
She came to the United States in 1979 and became an American citizen. She was a member of The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island. Funeral services were held at The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island and burial service was held at the Moravian Cemetery. Rev. Joseph Oommen, Diocesan Secretary; Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Vicar; Rev. Jojan Mathews John; Rev. Thomas Paul; Rev. Fr. Thomas Daniel of Episcopal Church; relatives from far and near and a lot of friends and parishioners attended the service.



Annamma Rachel Pappy

1924 – 2006

REV. GEORGE K. DANIEL, Director, Navajeeva Kendram, Malayalapurza, Thazhom PO, Pathanamthitta (S/o Mr. K. O. Daniel & Mrs. Sosamma Daniel, Kizhakkedath, Mannoor PO, Channapetta, Anchal, Kollam) died in a car accident on August 15, 2006. The funeral was



Rev. George K. Daniel
4-28-1954 – 8-15-2006

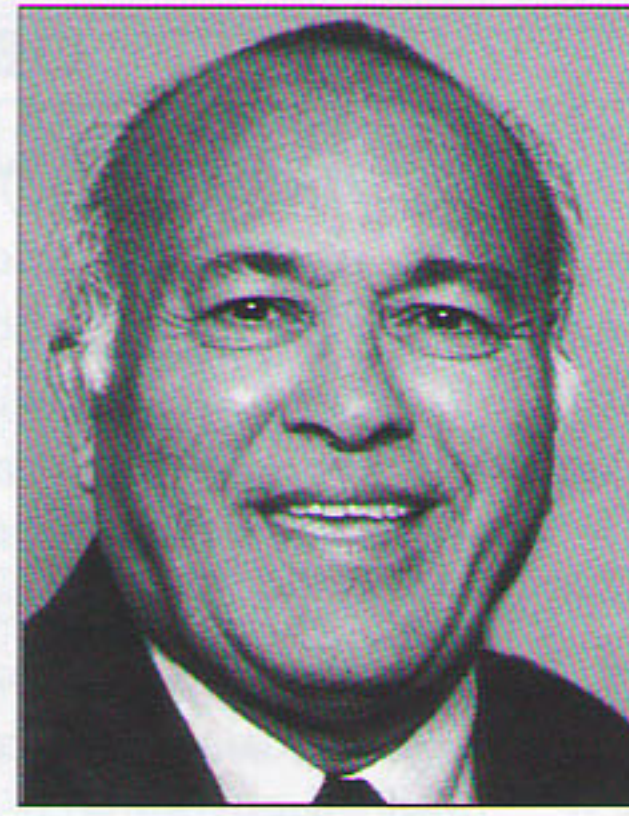
held at Salem Mar Thoma Church, Mannoor, Channapetta on August 19, 2006. He is survived by wife Anu Kurien, and children Krupa Saira George, and Dan Thomas George. Achen was born on April 28, 1954, was ordained as Deacon on June 12, 1987, and as a priest of the Mar Thoma Church on June 25, 1987. Achen served at the following parishes: Kulathupuzha St Thomas, Thinkalkarikam, Kandanchira, Pooyappally St Thomas, Elikattoor Zion, Chempanaruvi, Kumbazha, Vadakkupuram, Karimkuttickal, and Malayalapurza. Achen also served as South Travancore Missionary, and Administrator of Nedumangad, Navadarsan & Kulathupuzha Development Projects.

MR. ISAAC P. IDICULA (Aniyan) of the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston was called to his eternal home on July 15, 2006. He was a member of the Trinity MTC since 1978. Mr. Idiculla was a very active member and served the parish executive committee in various capacities; treasurer

(1981); auditor (1983) secretary (1992, 1998); committee member (1994) and as vice president in 2001.

Funeral service was held at the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston by vicar, Rev. George Thomas on July 16, 2006 and the burial service was held at the South Park Funeral Home in Pearland, on July 17, 2006.

Isaac P. Idicula
8-11-1936 – 7-15-2006



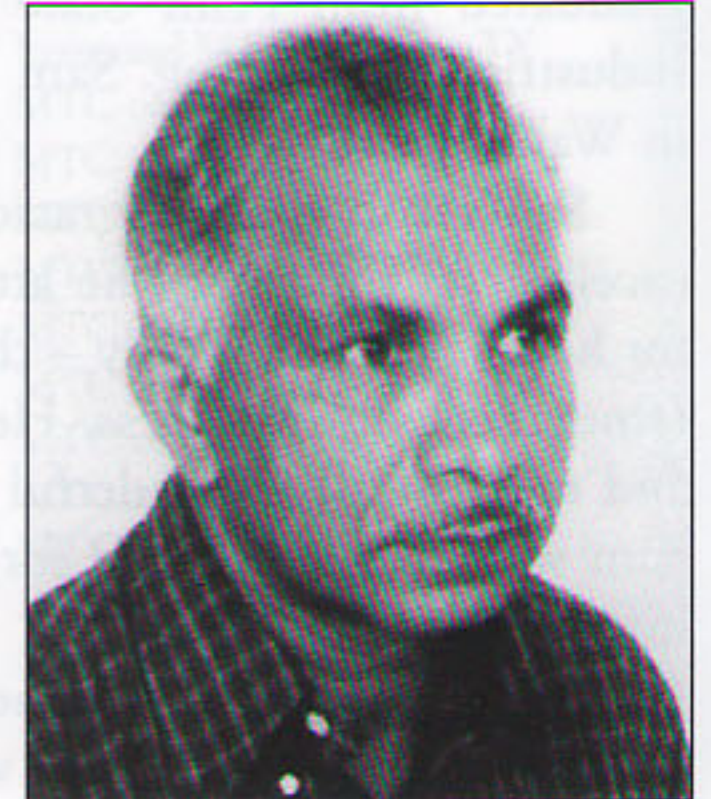
Isaac P. Idicula

8-11-1936 – 7-15-2006

GEORGE V. CHACKO, hails from Vazhakalayil House, Mulakazha, Chenganoor. He is survived by Saramma George (Wife), Jacob George (Son), Susan George (Daughter), Mary and Sunil Daniel (Daughter and Son-in-Law), Steve and Kevin Daniel (Grandsons). He was a member of the Philadelphia Mar thoma Church, PA.

Messenger expresses its deep sympathies and heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prays that God may keep them in His providence.

George V. Chacko
2-25-1933 – 7-17-2006



Matrimonial

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposals for their daughter 25 years old, born and brought up in USA. She is a medical doctor, doing her first year of residency, God fearing, and family oriented. We are seeking responses from professionally qualified young men (doctors, lawyer, etc.) below 29 years old, and with good moral and spiritual values. Marthomites, CSI or Jacobites preferred. Please e-mail your responses with a recent photograph and bio-data to: gaka25@gmail.com

Marthomite parents seeking suitable match for daughter brought up and educated in USA. She is in training for MD in a major university, age 23, height 5'2". Boy must be of good character and religious (Marthomite, CSI or Jacobite). Professionally qualified, personable and age 23-26. Family background and values are important. Please reply with brief biodata and photo to: kerala310@yahoo.com. All enquiries will remain confidential.

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposals for their daughter, US citizen, 26 years old, light complexion, has two Bachelors Degree in Health Science and Nursing; currently working as RN, raised in New York, God fearing girl, seeking for medical professional boy of 26 years or older. Interested parties please contact at jvarghese126@yahoo.com or call (718) 347-8451.

The 27th National Mar Thoma Youth Conference—Are We There Yet?"

Seba Samuel, Secretary

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus"

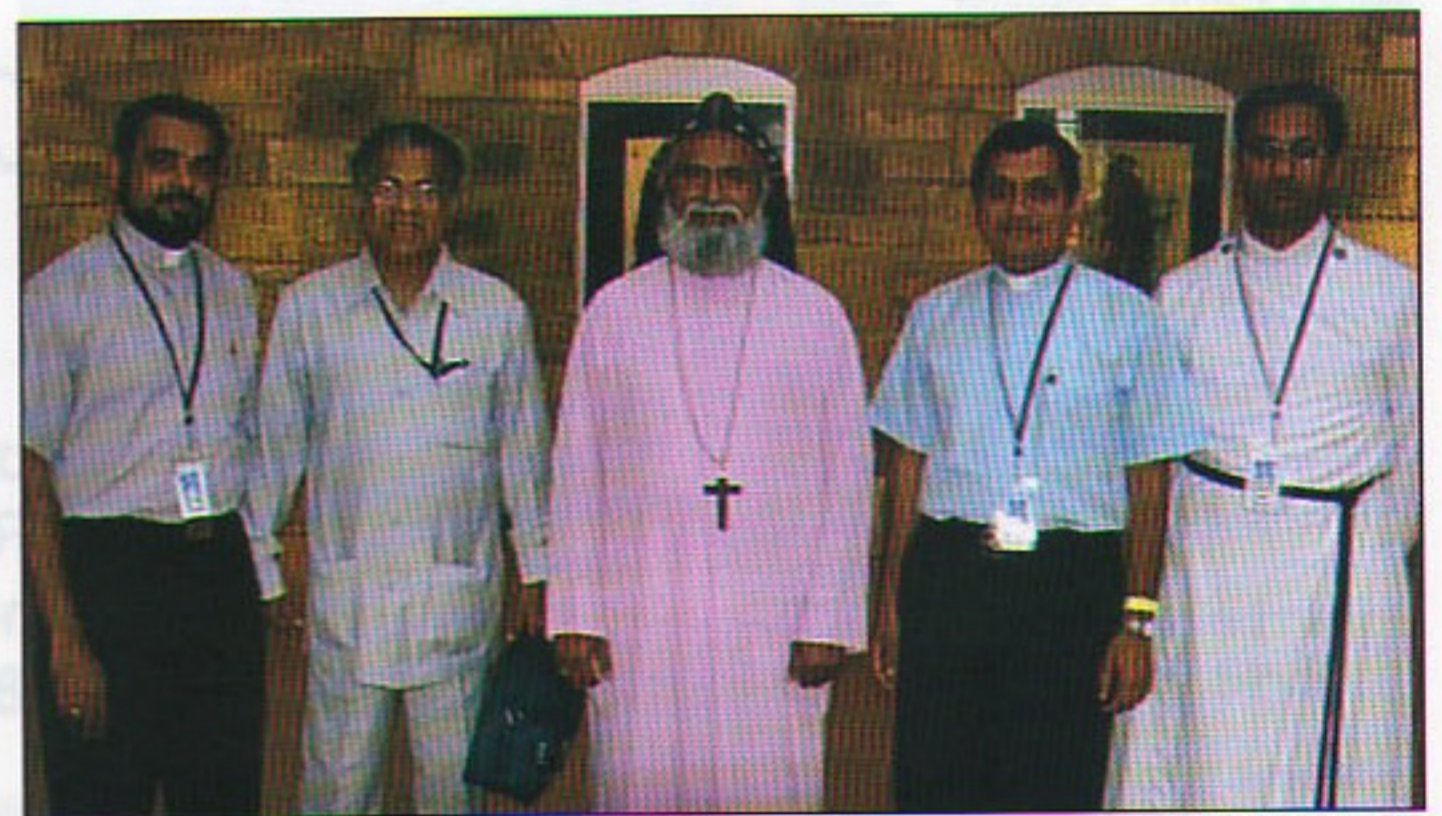
Philippians 3:14



From August 10th to 13th, 2006 the Canadian Mar Thoma Church Toronto Youth Fellowship was given the blessed opportunity to host the 27th National Mar Thoma Youth Conference. The conference was held at the University of Guelph which is a beautiful and peaceful campus located one hour west of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Our youth were extremely excited to be given this blessed opportunity as the conference had not been in Canada for over ten years!

Approximately 170 delegates between the ages of 18 and 35 from our Diocese joined us as we worked together to strengthen our personal relationships with our Saviour. **"Are We There Yet?"** was the theme of our conference, which is based from Philippians 3:14. This is a question that many of us may have asked our parents as children

while on a long journey. However, this question was posed to the youth from a different perspective in order to encour-



age reflection on where they are personally in their life, and assist their personal analysis of where they want to be on their journey with God. The youth were asked to reflect on the goal that Christ has set for them and encouraged to continue to strive to meet that goal in their life.

We were blessed to have the leadership of our Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa, Rev. Dr. M.J. Joseph, Rev. Biju Cherian, Rev. Mathew Skariah, Rev. Joseph Oommen, Rev. Dn. Jaison Thomas and Rev. Mathew M. Thomas. These leaders led main talks which discussed the main theme in relation to many of the issues that our youth may be dealing with in their own personal lives. They also led a

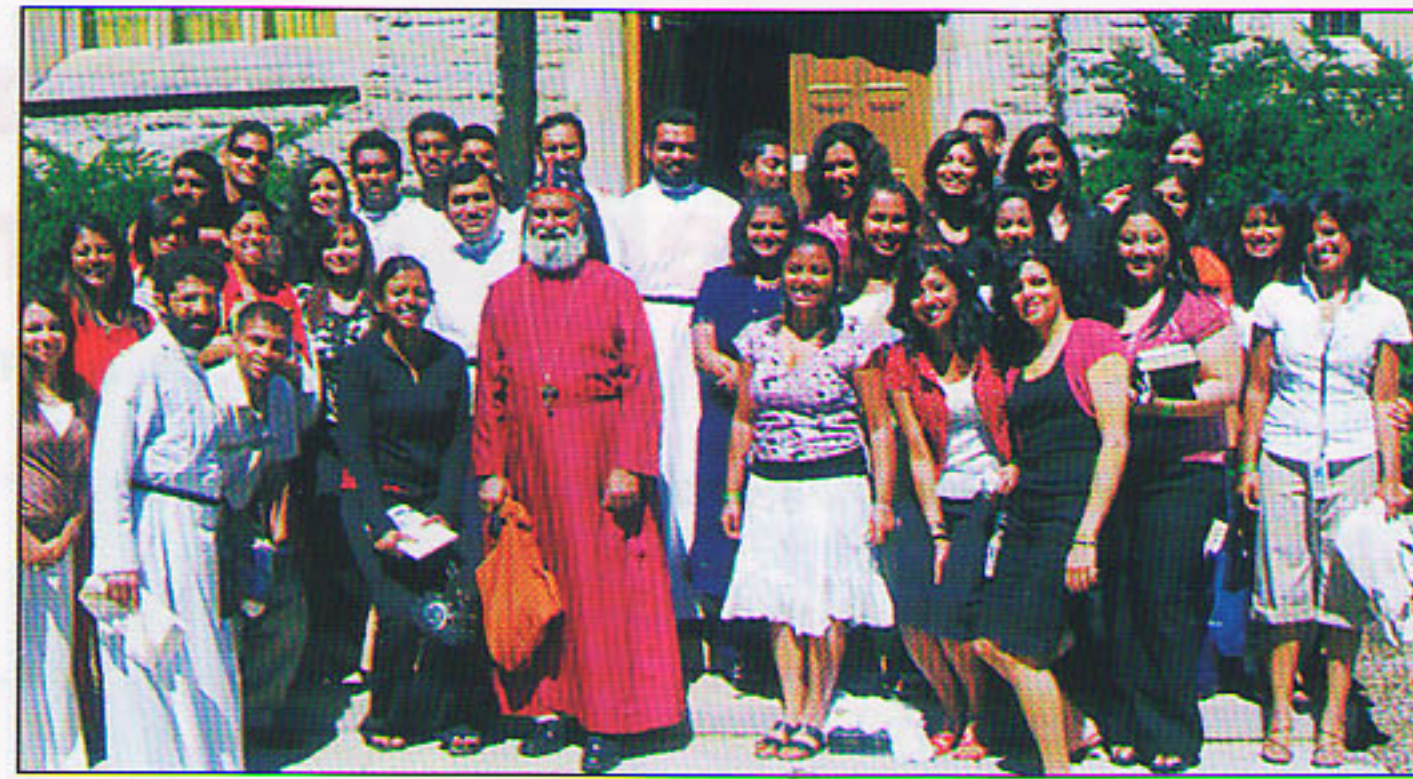




topic specific Panel Discussion, which gave our youth an opportunity to interact with our leaders, ask questions they



may have been carrying with them for some time and get biblically-inspired answers from our experts. Smaller group



discussions and worship sessions were led by the youth themselves and this deeply strengthened the fellowship of all of the delegates with each other.

By the grace of God and the dedication and persistence of our conference committee, we were able to successfully conduct an extremely memorable conference. It was a true blessing to work with such an amazing and energetic team and to be the secretary of such an outstanding event. Personally, this conference is one that will forever be in my heart. We, in Toronto, were truly blessed to be given the opportunity to host this year's conference. It was one which rejuvenated our youth group and strengthened us all as individuals. I thank you all for your prayers, and wish the best of luck to the Executive Committee of the 28th National Mar Thoma Youth Conference. God Bless. ■

With Best Compliments from



Gigi Tom

Promoter, Malankara Sabha Tharaka
 Rockland - New York Area
 1 Hazen Lane, Congers, NY 10920-1203
 845-268-3532, gigitom@marthoma.com



ഒരു മാർത്തോമ്മാ ഭവനത്തിൽ ഒരു സഭാതാരക

LIVING HOME

"Try not to become a man of success, but a man of man of values"

– Albert Einstein

HOME & GARDENING TIPS

MRS. SHIRLEY CHACKALAMANNIL, NEW JERSEY MTC



Flowers always bring a special touch to any room or for any occasion. As I have written in the earlier issues, there are different types of arrangement that you could make that suit various needs of your décor. The mechanics, method and styles for making your own arrangements have been described in the previous issues of Messenger. Here are some pictures of different

styles of arrangement that are very commonly seen in the United States as well as in Europe.



Informal traditional mass style

This is a round version of traditional Mass style with dried flowers, very common in the western countries. The mechanics used here are brown floral foam and chicken wire.



Country Mass style Arrangement

A medley of cottage garden flowers with contrasting shape, texture and color are arranged just as they grow in a cottage garden. Mechanics used are pinholder (kenzan), brown foam and chicken wire.



Formal Traditional Mass Style

This is an arrangement with silk flowers for a formal display. Mechanics used are brown floral foam and chicken wire.



Center-pieces

This is a center-piece for the dining table. This arrangement is made of silk flowers, dried looking plastic mushrooms, broccoli florets that are made with synthetic material and a candelabra with candles in the center.



Asymmetrical Triangle Style

The arrangement in this display is distinctly off centered where it has to be balanced with yet another arrangement of the same style. Therefore this arrangement can be used to border a focal point such as a picture or a mirror on its both sides.

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, CARROLLTON—DEDICATION



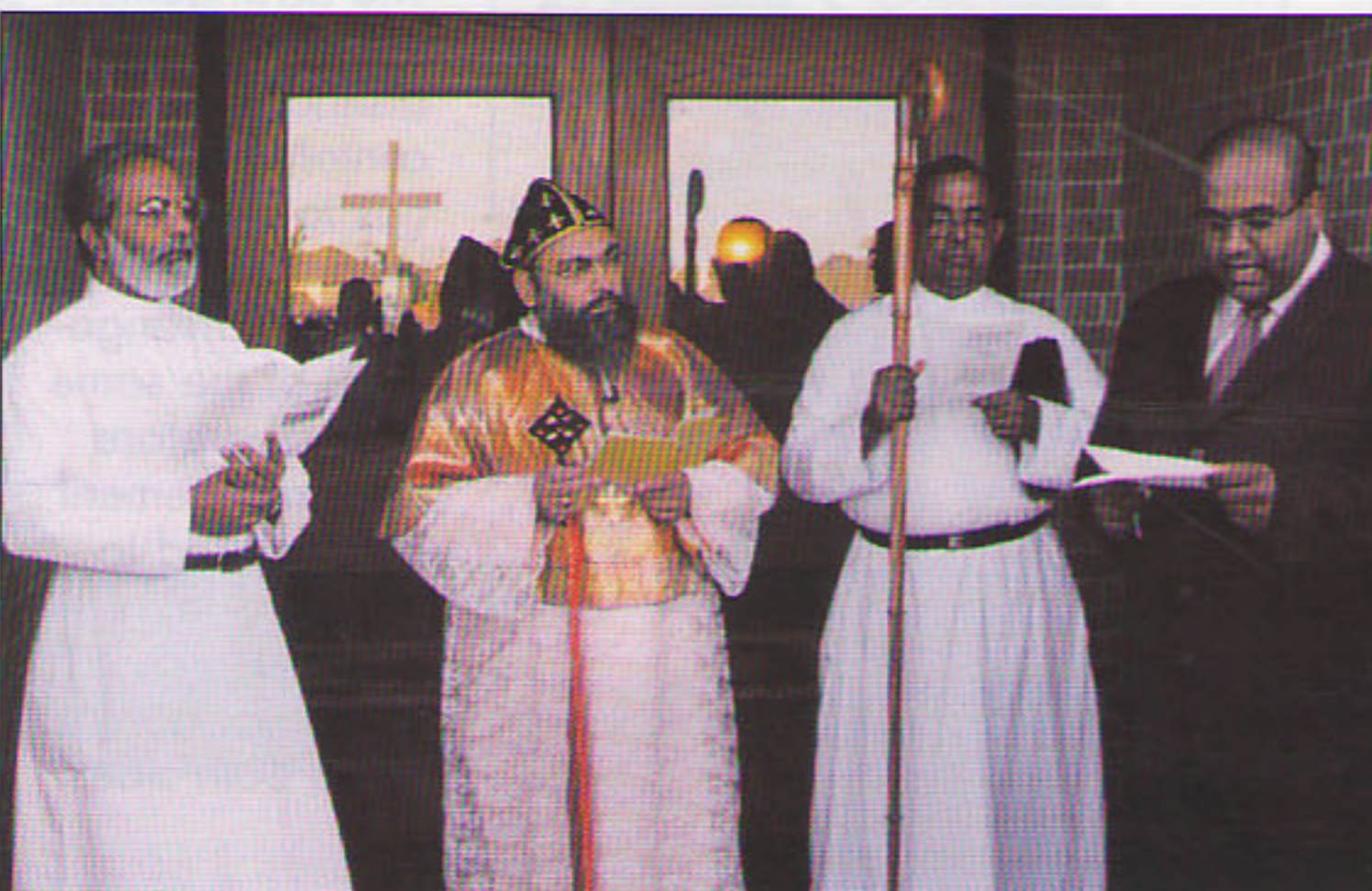
The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Carrollton (formerly known as the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Grand Prairie) has witnessed another historical moment in its path of growth. Its newly purchased facility at Carrollton, Texas

The Service began with the traditional circumambulation around the church building. The choir singing "Senayin Yehovaye" led the procession composed of a large number of believers, priests and Thirumeni. When



was dedicated to the glory of God on Sunday, 24 September 2006, by our Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos.

the procession entered the Church, Thirumeni continued the Dedication Service and celebrated the Holy Communion.





The public function started with a colorful procession outside the church building. Thirumeni blessed the dedication stone and presided over the meeting. The Mayor of Carrollton City, Mrs. Becky Miller was the chief guest.



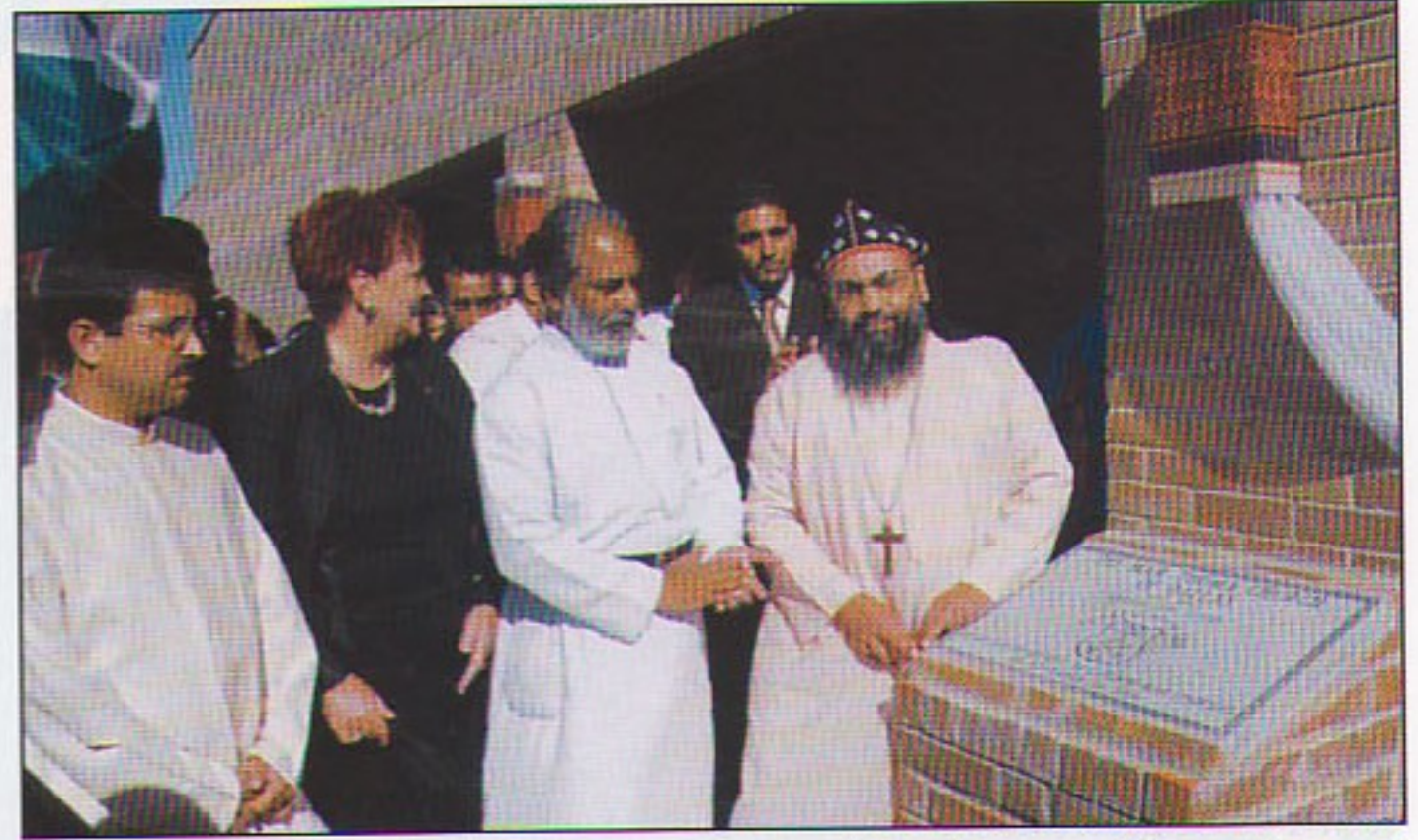
Priests from various Episcopal Churches congratulated the parish for its achievement.

We bought the church with 4.7 acres of land for over 1.43 million dollars. The Grand Prairie property was sold to the Vietnamese Evangelical Church of Arlington. The



new church can seat over 450 and has over 160 parking spaces. We added beautiful pews, carpets and the latest audio and video system to the facility. A new Madhbaha

(altar) was erected following traditional Mar Thomite architecture. The total cost of the project is around 1.8 million dollars and was completed in less than two years. Members contributed liberally and a local bank financed a million dollars as loan.



May this church be a centre for the proclamation of the Word of God, a place to fulfill the ecclesiastical needs and a center for the spiritual nourishment of the worshipping community. Rev. Jacob Thomas is the present Vicar. Rev. Roy A. Thomas (Vicar, Seattle MTC) and Rev. Mathew Joseph (Vicar Lubbock MTC and Austin



Congregation) are members of this parish. Mr. Raji Abraham served as the Building Committee Convener. Mr. P. T. Chacko is the Vice president, Mr. Juby Alexander is the Trustee, Mr. Sunu Mathew serves as the Accountant and Mr. Santhosh Chacko as the Secretary.

Rev. Jacob Thomas, Vicar



THE 8TH MAR THOMA NATIONAL YUVAJANA SAKHYAM CONFERENCE, 2006



The Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam National Conference hosted by Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia was held at Refreshing Mount Camp, Lancaster, Pennsylvania from September 1-3, 2006. More than one hundred Sakhyam members from various parishes in the Diocese attended this blessed gathering and made it a grand success. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa inaugurated the conference on Friday evening. In his inaugural address, Thirumeni encouraged the participants to hold on to Christian vision and values, thereby making repercussions in the society. Conference sessions



were led by Bishop Dr. George Ninan and Rev. Dr. Joy Pulikootil. Rev. Mathew Skariah, Rev. Susieal Varghese, and Rev. T.A. Varghese, were a few among the leaders.

Conference souvenir was released by Coorilos Thirumeni by handing over a copy to Rev. Dr. Joy Pulikootil. Souvenir Chief Editor Mr. Abraham Mathew



expressed his sincere thanks to all who contributed towards the successful release of the souvenir.

"The 3-day conference was a refreshing and rejuvenating occasion for the youths and was truly relaxing" said Ipe C. Parimanam, Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam secretary. The conference was made successful under the leadership of var-



ious committees led by President Rev. Susieal Varghese, Convener Shaji Mathai, Vice President Thomas Philip, and



Secretary Santhosh Abraham, sub-committee members Abraham Mathew, Issac P. George, K. C. Varghese,



Varghese Abraham, Binu Philip, Shajimon P. George, Binu Shajimon, and Dr. Wilson K.

Santhosh Abraham, Bethel Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary

*Best Compliments to
Messenger Silver Jubilee Edition*



John Kuryan, M.D. & Jocelyn Kuryan, M.D.



Alex Kuryan, M.D. & Sara Kuryan, M.S.

Best Wishes

Babu Kunchandy and Leelamma Kuryan & Family

Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

DEDICATION OF THE NEW MAR THOMA CENTRE, ST. JAMES MAR THOMA CHURCH, UK



A long held dream was realized on 20 December 2005 when St. James Mar Thoma Church, UK acquired a new Mar Thoma Centre at 167 Avery Hill Road, New Eltham, London, SE9 2EX. The property was dedicated to the glory of God by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos on 6 May 2006. The dedication service was also graced by the presence of Rev. V. V. Alexander, Rev. John Thomas, Rev. Fr. Abraham Thomas, Rev. Fr. Eldhose Kavungumpillil, Rev. Fr. Joy George and Rev. Gigi Thomas.

This historic occasion was attended by over 275 people including members from the Indian Orthodox Church, our



sister parishes, well wishers and friends. The dedication service was conducted in Malayalam in keeping with tradition. All the Achen present took part in the dedication service liturgy, emphasizing the unity of the Kerala Christian Community in the UK. The Choir gave a wonderful performance in leading the songs for the service. The service was followed by light refreshments. Attendees who had travelled from many parts of the United Kingdom had ample time to mingle and view the premises and surrounding grounds that extend to nearly five acres.

The dedication was followed by a public meeting attended by over 300 people including Mr. Clive Efford (Hon. Member of Parliament for Eltham) Rev. Dr. Jules Gomes (Chaplain, University of Greenwich) and Mr. W. I. Judson (General Secretary, YMCA Indian Students

Hostel). Members of the local community were also present. The meeting was held in a magnificent marquee erected on the grounds.

The meeting commenced with a beautiful rendition of the aptly named 'Wonderful Words of Life' by the melodious Church Choir led by Mr. Phil Jacob (Choirmaster). This was



followed by a Bible reading by Dr. V. M. Varghese and prayer by Rev. V. V. Alexander. Mr Anil A. Mathew (Hon. Secretary & Building Project Convener) welcomed the guests and gave a brief history of the Church and the project to date. This included the future plans for the property that offered the scope for joint activities and initiatives with the local community in full partnership to enhance the quality of community life. Rev. Thomas P. Koshy (Vicar & President) gave an introductory speech acknowledging the contribution of the members who made the dream a reality and emphasizing the potential of the new Mar Thoma Centre.

The Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos gave a message in which His Grace encouraged members to take positive steps to implement the will of God in the new Mar Thoma Centre which is now dedicated to God's glory. The assembled dignitaries gave felicitations and congratulations which were a source of encouragement. The vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. K. John who thanked all the guests for attending and the members who were instrumental in acquiring the property and organizing the dedication program. The public meeting concluded with a prayer by Mr. V. T. Abraham.



MAR THOMA CHURCH OF OKLAHOMA

ATOKA BUILDING PROJECT: The weekend of May 12-14, 2006 was truly an amazing one for the youths of the Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma. During this weekend, 11 youths (7 women, 4 men) and one parent from the Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma devoted their time and efforts in working with the Choctaw Indians in Atoka, Oklahoma, a small town 120 miles southeast of Oklahoma City. Based on our



pleasant experience last summer while working with the McGee Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Broken Bow, Oklahoma, many more of our youths volunteered their time this year to come out and help out with the project that needed to be done.

Our main project was to help build a sturdy foundation for the Coal Creek Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Atoka, Oklahoma. The youth helped provide many of the necessary supplies and tools in fulfilling this task. The majority of the youth group had never had experience in building something of this complexity, so the first few hours on May 13th were frustrating ones, as we experienced first-hand the difficulties of doing this job. But by the end of the day, it was a great success, as we helped set a strong foundation underneath the church. We also assisted in beautifying the church by creating a space to plant a

garden. The following day, the youth visited Coal Creek Church and participated in their church service. It was a special day for all, as May 14th was also Mother's Day. Our youth got a close look at the culture and traditions of the Choctaw Indians during the church service, including seeing the amount of respect and admiration that mothers receive in the Choctaw culture. At the end of the service, the members of Coal Creek Church

provided us with a deliciously made home-style lunch for all of the youth members. It was truly wonderful to see all of the church members being so friendly and courteous to us.

There are many people to thank for making this opportunity possible. We would like to thank Rev. Nathan Scott and the members of Coal Creek Cumberland Presbyterian Church for allowing us to come and have fellowship with them, especially during their Sunday service. We would especially like to thank Elder Lola John, who was in charge of our service project and the representative for the Coal Creek Church. She worked extra hard in getting the bricks and stones for the foundation and made sure that we felt like we were at home during our stay in Atoka. We would like to thank Rev. Randy Jacob, pastor of the McGee Chapel in Broken Bow, for coming down and sharing his expertise in bricklaying. Without him, our efforts

in building the foundations would have surely been in vain. We would also like to thank his wife Betty Jacob, not only for coming down but also for presenting this opportunity to our youth group and being the main source of contact as the days led up to this weekend. We are thankful that our relationship with the Jacobs has gotten stronger throughout the past year, and we are hopeful that the same can be done with the members of Coal Creek Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Finally, we must thank our Almighty God for making this opportunity happen and for making the weekend a great success. He is the reason that our two churches were brought together, and it is God who will keep this bond strong in the future.

Jeremy John, Lirin Jacob, George Thomas
The Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma Youth Fellowship

OUR NEW ACHENS

REV. JACOB K. MATHEW, Carmel MTC, Boston, MA



Native Place: Othara, Kerala

Mother Parish: Ebenezer MTC, Othara

College: Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla; Christian College, Chengannur; BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam (1993)

Parishes served: Panamannu Immanuel, Palankara Horeb, Koottappady Ebenezer, Variapuram St. Thomas, Melelbhagam Bethel, Venmony Bethany, Varampore St. Thomas, Cheruvalloor St. George, Port Blair St. Thomas & Wimberlygunj MTC (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

Positions: Missionary—MTEA Andaman Mission, Chaplain—Mar Thoma Public School, Kakkanad, Kochi.

Wife: Ann Jacob, M Sc., B Ed. (Chumathra)

Children: Jagan Mathew Jacob—5th Grade
Jane Susan Jacob—4th Grade

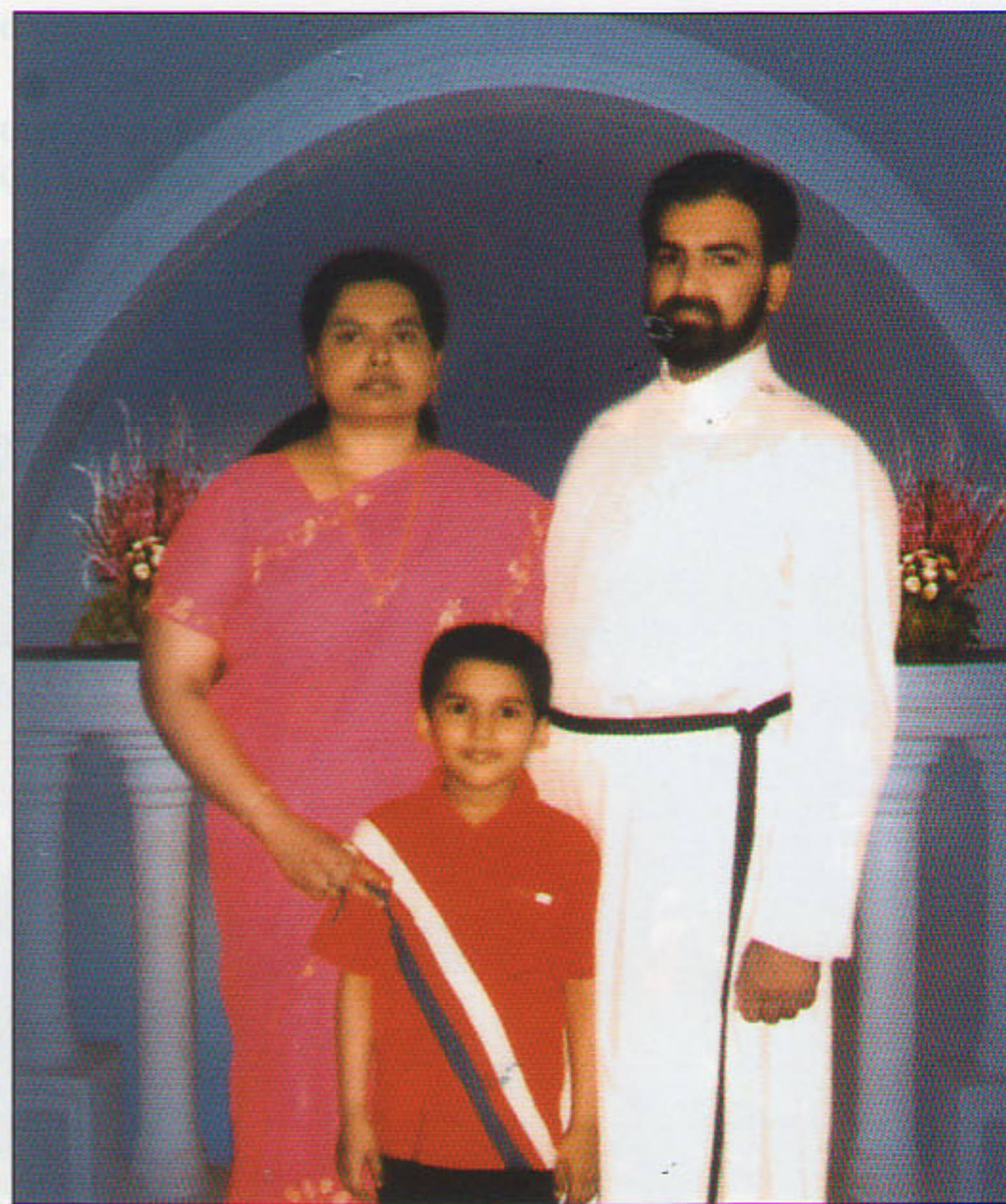
New Parsonage Address and Telephone:

Rev. Jacob K. Mathew
307 Central Street #2311
Hudson, MA 01749

Telephone & Fax: (978) 567-1015

Email: jm_kanicheril@yahoo.co.in
revjkmathew@hotmail.com

REV. JOBI VARGHESE, Salem MTC, Eastern Long



Isnad & Tabor MTC, Staten Island

Native Place: Poovanmala, Ranni

Mother Parish: Jalahally Ebenezer MTC, Bangalore

College: (B.A.) Psychology, Sociology & English, Bangalore University; BD: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam (1997)

Parishes served: Vellathooval Bethel, Mankulam Jerusalem, Thalachira Salem, Podiyattuvilla St. Thomas, Kokkadu St. John's, Ghaziabad MTC, Gurgaon St. Thomas, Agra MTC, Bharatpur Bethel.

Wife: Susan Jobi Varghese, BA, B.Ed., (Anicadu, D/o Rev. Achenkunju Mathew)

Son: Joel J. Varghese (7)

New Parsonage Address and Telephone:

Rev. Jobi Varghese
10 Mack Avenue
Hicksville, NY 11801

Telephone: (516) 390-7092

Email: jobiachan@gmail.com
vicar@salemmtc.org

AUSTIN MAR THOMA CONGREGATION

In August 2006, the Austin Mar Thoma Congregation registered as a non-profitable organization. This is a major milestone for our congregation. We also conducted our first VBS for children in August. Our Diocesan Bishop Coorilos Thirumeni visited us on the last day of VBS. For details of our worship schedule and other activities please visit www.austinmtc.org.

Rev. Mathew Joseph, Vicar



VBS students and Teachers with our Vicar Rev. Mathew Joseph.



Diocesan Bishop with Austin Mar Thoma Congregation Executive Committee members.



Action song by children attending VBS 2006

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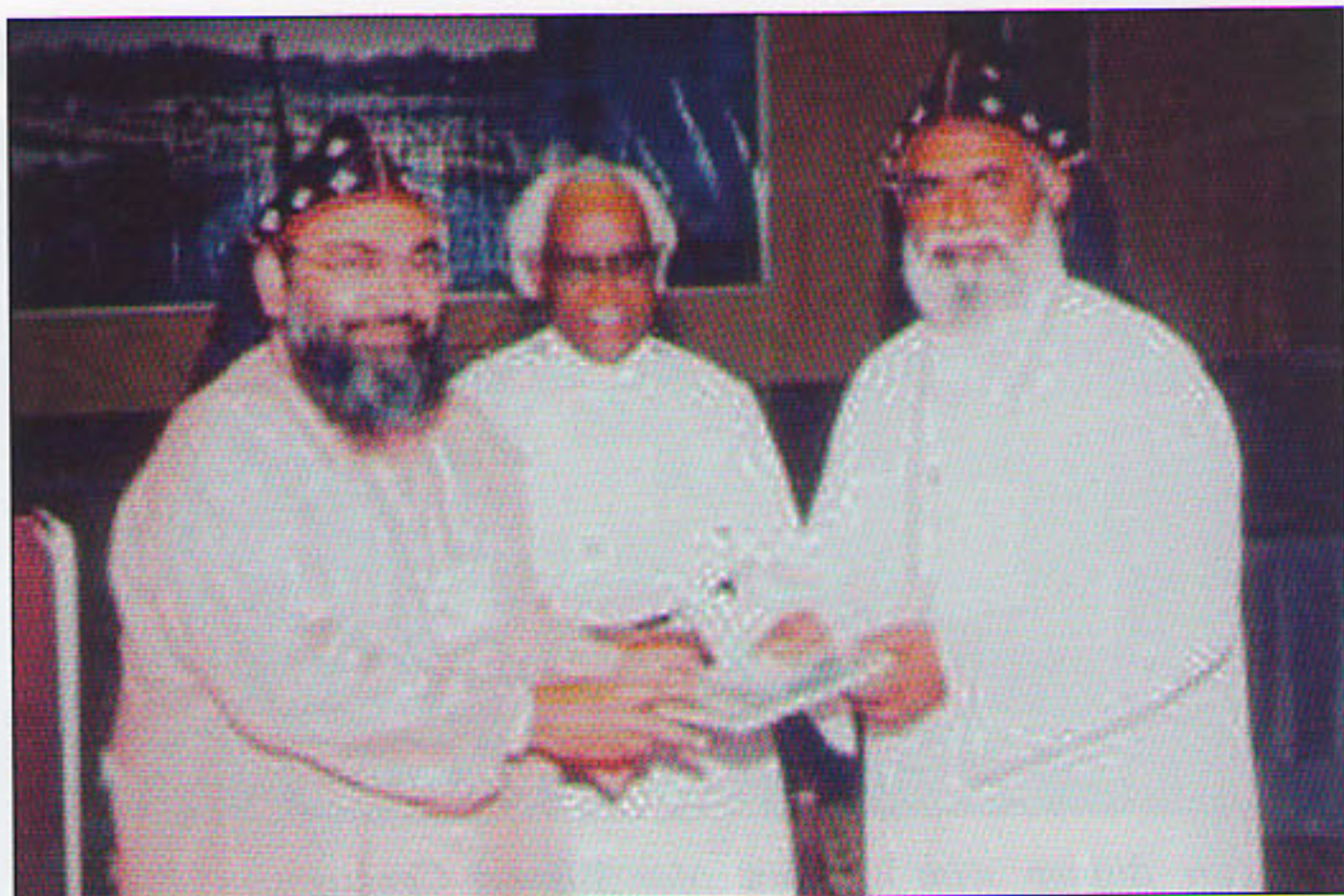
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RELEASE OF BOOK CONTAINING SONGS AND CD OF REV. V. T. JOHN



A book containing songs written by Rev. V. T. John titled "Gana Kavitha Samaharam" and CD titled "Sthuthi Uchitham", containing songs composed by Achen, a retired priest of the Mar Thoma Church, was released by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of North America & Europe, by giving a copy of the book and CD to Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Barnabas, Diocesan Episcopa of Bombay-Delhi Diocese during the family conference held at Chicago in July 2006. Rev. V. T. John is a native of Thonnamala, Pathanamthitta and belongs to Thazhayil Valyaparambil family. Late Rt. Rev. Easow Mar Timotheous Episcopa of the Mar Thoma Church was Achen's older brother. Achen received his biblical education at Kombadi Bible Institute at Thiruvalla and later his theology degree (B.Th) from Union Biblical

Seminary, Yeotmal, Maharashtra, India. Achen served as a missionary for 12 years at Tibetan border, and later five years with Childrens' Special Service Mission (CSSM) a joint mission of Mar Thoma Church and Church of South India. Achen is the founder missionary of the Khariar Road Mission field in Orissa, India. Achen served in various parishes of the Mar Thoma Church including Kumplampoika, Kottarakkara, Karthikapally, Thalavady, Bokaro, Thevalakara, Kunnamkulam, Kulathupuzha, and Kottanad. Achen also served as the Principal, Sehora Bible Institute, Madhya Pradesh, India. Achen retired from active service of the Church in May 2001 and presently resides at Niles, IL with his wife and children. Achen served as the vicar of the Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Chicago for the last five years. Presently Achen is in charge of Minneapolis, St. Louis and Kansas City congregations. In addition to the above book and CD, Achen has published other books such as Divine Fountain Choruses, and Bhajan Mala (Hindi). Achen is a gifted orator and musician. All proceeds from the sale of the book and CD are being spent in the mission fields in India. Recently, Achen spent about a month in the Tibetan Border Mission field, Khariar Road Mission field in Orissa, and various other mission fields in India. Achen's wife is Kunjamma John of Athyal family. Achen has three sons and six grandchildren who are members of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church.

Lal Varghese, Diocesan Council Member, Dallas

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND FIRST COMMUNICANTS WITH COORILOS THIRUMENI AND MANOJ ACHEN



BHS 2006 SALUTATORIAN SPEECH: ROBIN KOSHY (VALEDICTORIAN OF BERGENFIELD HS, NJ)

Good evening to the faculty, parents, friends, and the Bergenfield high school class of 2006. It is with great honor and privilege that I have the opportunity to stand here today and speak to my fellow classmates. We want to embrace what lies ahead of us yet hold on to what we are about to leave behind. The feelings we are having are not unique, they are shared among all of us and among all high school seniors graduating across the country. However, what makes us special is we are the Bergenfield high school class of 2006. No other group has gone through our experiences or shared the feelings we have felt. We are engraved in history as the BHS class of 06 and nothing can take that away from us.

When we walked into the hallways of Bergenfield for the first time our freshman year, there were feelings of anxiety, nervousness, doubt, but also prospect and excitement as we entered a new chapter in our lives. Four years later, we are in that same position. We are here today feeling nervous about what the future holds for us and having doubts about what paths we want to take, choosing between being a surgeon, a nurse, a lawyer, deciding to join the armed forces, going to college, or going straight into the work force. We have doubts, but just like four years ago, there is prospect in the future. Graduating high school opens brand new doors for each one of us and gives us the opportunity to make something of ourselves, help society, and make a difference.

Our years here can be characterized as a journey. Reflecting back on this journey, there were many fun, exciting, and trying times, but also bumps, turns, and surprises. Our journey has enabled us to experience new things and gain valuable lessons. The people we are today are an accumulation of these experiences, the moments, and the challenges we have all shared. High school has changed who we are, but in a positive way. In four years, we have met new people, tried new things, and experienced many firsts in our lives. Four years of high school have also tested relationships, created new ones, exposed us to new ideas, and opened our minds. We have learned more about ourselves, about who we are, what we want, and what we can offer to society. When people think of graduation, they feel the journey is over, but that may be far from the truth. Our journey is not over, rather it has just begun. This is the part where we go our separate ways and use what we have learned from our experiences here at Bergenfield. We must utilize what we have been taught, not just academically, but the values and morals that Bergenfield has instilled upon us in order to succeed in the years ahead.

Going through the Bergenfield educational system from kindergarten, I feel like I have gained tremendous



knowledge, gone through important experiences, and have been surrounded by a class, a faculty, and a community that has helped nurture and prepare us by showing us the way. Being a member of this town has given me a sense of pride and motivation to excel and make the town proud and I am honored to stand here before you as the 2006 salutatorian. I want to thank my friends, classmates, and my teachers, for making this chapter of my life a great memory that will last a life time. I sincerely hope that every other graduating senior has benefited and feels the same sense of belonging to Bergenfield as I have.

Graduation is not a time to feel sad, but a time to celebrate our accomplishments and take pride in what we have done, individually and as a group. We are the BHS class of 2006 an exclusive group that can not be amended but only grow stronger over time. No matter what happens to us individually, we will always be the group of kids that graduated from Bergenfield in 2006, and when we see each other in the future, we will always have that same bond. This is the town we are from, the school we belong to, and the class of our own. In closing, I want to congratulate everyone on his or her successes and accomplishments and wish everyone the best of luck in whatever you may choose to pursue in the future. Thank you.

Robin Koshy is the son of Mr. Koshy Kuruvilla and Mrs. Rosamma Koshy, members of the St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, Teaneck, New Jersey.

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL, HOUSTON, TEXAS

It's getting hot, hot, HOT in Houston!! Trinity Mar Thoma Church Sunday School has been busy all summer, loving the Lord through exciting activities!

At spring break, we invaded the Houston Zoo, with 200+ parents, students and teachers out to view God's imagination in creation! You could distinguish our children from the other monkeys, because we were all wearing our Trinity Sunday School t-shirt! We had a wonderful day, topped off with a picnic at Houston's Hermann Park!

Then in April, we had Creativity Café, an evening at a typical Kerala Coffee Shop, here in Houston! We were entertained all night by a display of talents: songs, dance, poetry, mimicry and more.

We had to take a break in May to prepare for our exams...which our kids rocked!

We came back in June with a SPLASH!!! We had the HUGEST swimming party in Mar Thoma history!

"Summer Splash" was held for our kiddos; we rented an area pool and after we stuffed ourselves with hotdogs and watermelons, about 150 parents and kids donning their bathing suits, jumped in!!

The HIGHLIGHT of summer was definitely the three days of VBS. We had about 180 students and tons of volunteers and teachers come to "Trading Places!" Our VBS was an INCREDIBLE blessing to all those who attended. We sang songs, ate snacks from around the world, danced with Cammi the Chameleon, and in the end, walked away knowing that Jesus makes a world of difference in our lives, if we'll just allow Him to do it!

The Lord is doing some AMAZING things at Trinity, and there is much more to come!

Shiny K. George, Superintendent

BETHEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA



First communicants with our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa and Vicar, Rev. Susieal C. Verghese.

Padmasree Dr. K. J. Jesudas releasing the CD "Anuthaapam" containing songs composed by Rev. Susieal C. Verghese, vicar of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. Promoter Mr. Reji Jacob looks on.



25TH MAR THOMA FAMILY CONFERENCE—JULY 5 TO 8, 2007, TORONTO, CANADA



Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos handing over the Conference Torch to Mr. Thomas T.V. Mathews, the 25th Mar Thoma Family Conference Secretary. Others in the picture: Rev. Mathew M. Thomas, Vicar; Dr. V. K. Pothan, Vice President; and Cherian Abraham, Registration & Reception convener.

As host of the 2007 Mar Thoma Family conference, the members of the Canadian Mar Thoma Church Toronto, cordially invites you to the Silver Jubilee year conference.

As one of the many highlights of the conference we plan to publish a pictorial souvenir of the conference over the years. In this respect we request members of the diocese to forward any photos, articles, and noteworthy items for



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa receiving the first registration from Mr. Joseph Zachariah.

our review. These material should be identified for ease of return and sent to the Vicar ,The Canadian Mar Thoma Church Toronto, 50 Wales Avenue, Markham, Ontario Canada L3P 2C5.

Contact: Vicar: Rev Mathew M Thomas: 905-472-4191; Secretary: Thomas T. V. Mathews: 905-471-3475; Silver Jubilee Convener: Samuel Pappy: 905-472-0610.

Thomas T V Mathews, Family Conference Secretary

ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH DELAWARE VALLEY SUNDAY SCHOOL VBS - 2006





Praveen Bunyan of the St. James Anglican Church, New Port Beach and Dr. M. M. Ninan of our San Francisco Mar Thoma Church gave leadership at the retreat.



Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Varghese speaking at the Parish Day celebrations.

The 30th Anniversary Celebrations of our parish were held on August 20, 2006. The chief guest on the occasion was Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Varghese, General Secretary, Bible Society of India (Kerala auxiliary).

This year's convention was held at our Church from September 7 through 10. Main speaker was Rev. Dr. Sam Kamaleson, former Vice President of World Vision International and a frequent speaker at our Maramon Convention. The theme for the convention was "Compelling Compassion" based on Mark 1:41.



Rev. Dr. Sam Kamaleson speaking at the Parish Convention.

Our Annual One Day Retreat was held at the beautiful Rancho Capistrano Retreat Centre in California on September 30th. Rev.

The theme for the retreat was "Rooted and Built up in Christ" based on Colossians 2:7. The time we spent at the retreat was very useful and rewarding. Both leaders gave an in-depth analysis of how a true follower of Christ needs to be firmly rooted and built up in Christ. The afternoon group discussions, feed back session and 'family feud' arranged by Mathew & Merry Thomas, Joshi John and Lejo Mammen were all very thought provoking and interesting. Our Vicar Rev. Noble Jacob gave overall leadership to the retreat.



Rev. Praveen Bunyan speaking at the Parish Retreat.

Dr. M. M. Ninan was guest speaker at our October 1st Holy Communion Service. After the service, Dr. Ninan arranged a 90 minute power point presentation on "Emergence of Hinduism from Christianity" which was quite informative and news to many of our participants. Professor Ninan had done extensive research work on the subject and, therefore, could prove that the earliest known Hindu temple in India dates back only to 150 A.D. even though we have Buddhist and Jain structures dating as far as 5th B.C. or older. Dr. Ninan could also prove, amongst other things, that the word Om is not found in any Vedas and it appears in Hinduism only after the third century. The sign 'Om' is found in all ancient Christian Churches in Kerala established by Apostle Thomas.



Abraham Mattackal
Vice President

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH

FOURTH ANNUAL PARISH FAMILY RETREAT

The fourth annual parish retreat was held at Sky Ranch Retreat Center in Van, Texas from September 15 – 17, 2006. Main leaders included Rev. Anil George, Vicar of

Mathew and Mr. Chris Daniel served as joint conveners for this year's retreat. Mr. Bijo K. Abraham coordinated the work of program book and power point presentation during the sessions.

K. S. Mathew, Convener



MTC Farmers Branch, Rev. Aniyam K. Paul of the C. S. I. Congregation of Dallas, and Rev. Ninu Chandy, Youth Chaplain for the Dallas region. This year's theme was "God's own family", based on Joshua 24:15, ".....As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." As a parish, this year we are celebrating as a "Family Friendly Year," by focusing on Christ centered family and its richness.

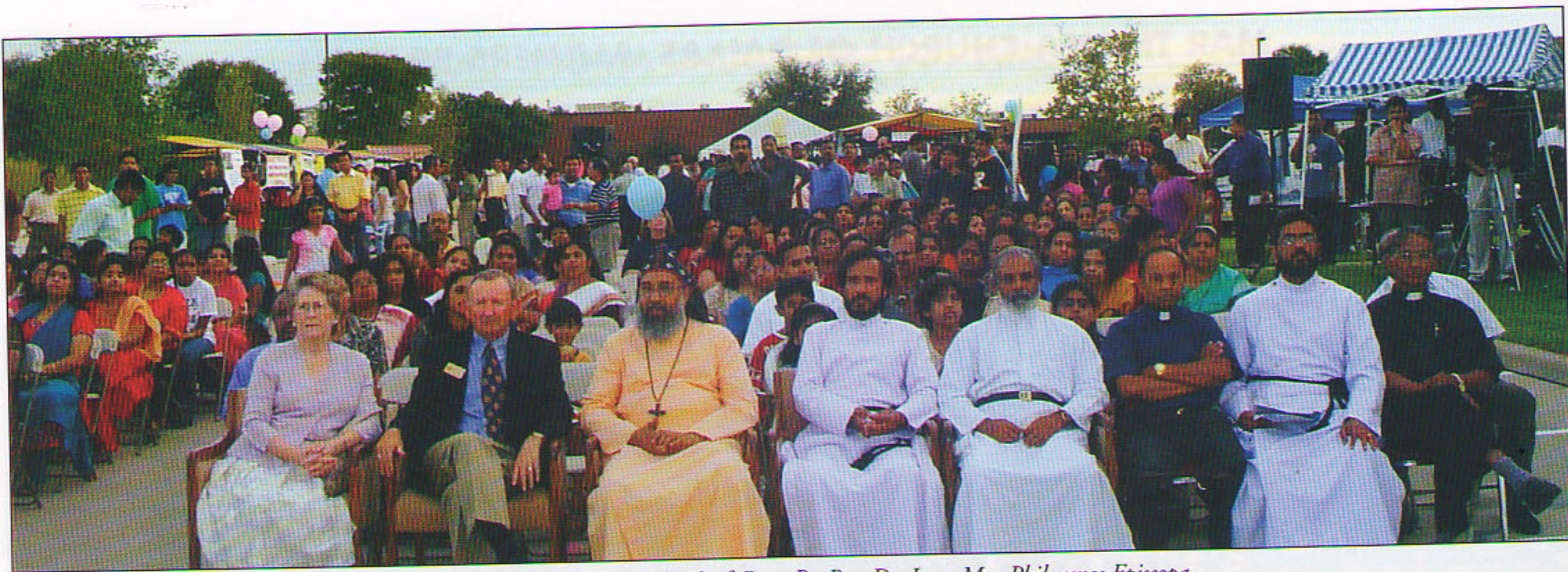
Rev. Anil George, in his welcome speech, pointed out that since families are instituted by and is a gift from God, they needed a strong spiritual foundation. Rev. Ninu Chandy talked about the importance of God's own family role in the mission of the church. Rev. Aniyam K. Paul pointed out that God's own family must be a source for the revelation of God, and in turn, should have a response to God by fulfilling the responsibility entrusted by God. Attendees, regardless of age, shared their real life experiences and pointed out many concerns and threats facing a God's family in this materialistic world. Jessy Kochamma led the devotion during the dedication session on Saturday evening and pointed out the importance of sacrificial relationship in the family. The retreat ended with Holy Communion service on Sunday led by Rev. Anil George. Concluding his thoughts, Achen reminded that success of married life is dependent not on choosing the right partner, but becoming the right partner. This year's retreat was attended by about 150 persons including youths. Mr. K. S. Mathew (convener), Mr. Philip Thomas, Mrs. Molly

MAR THOMA FEST 2006—"GIVING A VOICE TO THE DEAF AND HOPE TO THE SICK"

Each year, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch celebrates the 1st Saturday in October as 'Mar Thoma Day' to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone of our new church facility on October 2, 1995 in the City of Farmers Branch in Dallas. The Mayor of the City of Farmers Branch had declared that day as 'Mar Thoma Day' in the City of Farmers Branch. Every year we celebrate 'Mar Thoma Fest', a festival for our families and friends to come together for a cause with a mission oriented purpose—"Giving a Voice to the Deaf and Hope to the Sick".

We open our doors and hearts to the local community to share with us a day of fellowship while promoting our mission projects. At present we are sponsoring two main mission projects. The first one, which begun in 2000, is the Kasergod I. T. C., an institution for the mentally challenged children run by the Kunnankulam-Malabar Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church. The second mission project is the HIV/AIDS project-'Snehatheeram' at Manjalummoodu in Tamil Nadu undertaken in 2005 and managed by the Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church. This year's Mar Thoma Fest was held on Saturday October 7th at the grounds of the parish from 9 am till 9 pm. A large number of people attended this year's fest.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, the Diocesan Bishop of Kottayam-Cochi Diocese was the chief guest. The guest of



MT Fest 2006—Audience with Chief Guest Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa.

honor was Mayor Pro Term Ben Robinson of the City of Farmers Branch. Vicars from other Mar Thoma parishes in Dallas were also present. The arrangements for this year's



Mar Thoma Fest were done by the Mar Thoma Fest committee led by Convener Mr. Jacob Mathai under the leadership of Rev. Anil George, Vicar. There were various fun filled activities both for the children and adults throughout the day. A badminton tournament was also conducted and trophies were distributed to the winners in various groups. The festival came to an end by a public meeting followed by variety entertainment programs by the members of the parish and members from our sister parishes.

Troy Issac, Secretary

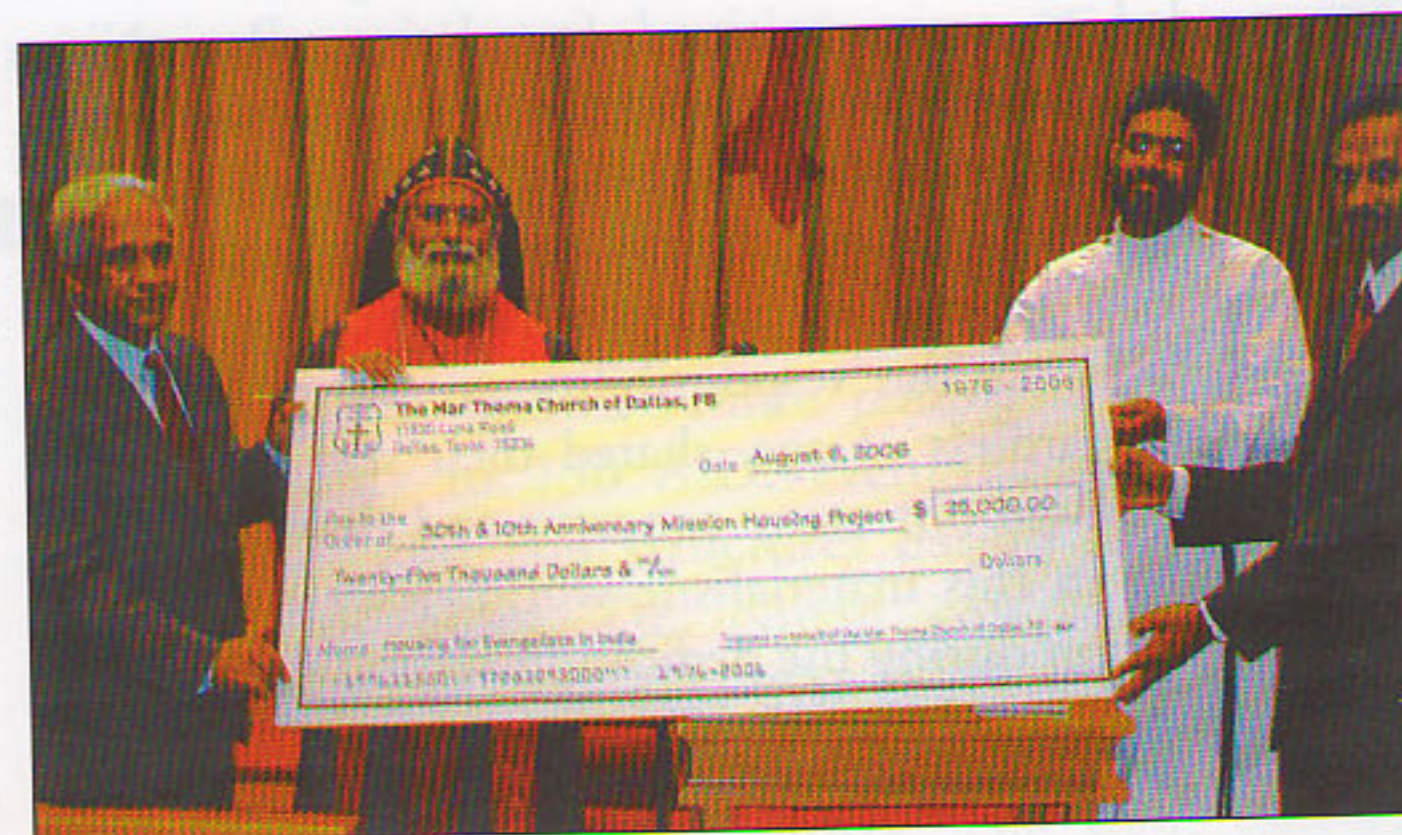
30TH PARISH DAY CELEBRATIONS

MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch celebrated its 30th parish day and 10th year of witnessing as a parish on August 13, 2006. Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa was the chief guest. The Annual Parish Convention was also held from Friday, August 11, 2006 to Sunday, August 12, 2006. Thirumeni was the main speaker of the convention on Saturday and Sunday. Rev. Dr. William J. Abraham, Professor at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, was the speaker on Friday evening. Many youths and adults including believers from sister parishes in Dallas attended the convention. As part of the 30th parish day celebrations, the parish is sponsoring the construction of

10 houses for evangelists in different dioceses of the Mar Thoma Church at a cost of \$25,000.00. A power point presentation detailing 30 years of God's providence in Dallas as a parish was shown during the public meeting held after Holy Communion service. The parish has sponsored two major projects namely the I. T. C. affiliated to



the specially privileged children's School at Kasergode, Kerala, and the HIV/AIDS Project in Manjalummoodu,



Tamil Nadu. Our annual Mar Thoma Fest raises more than \$20,000 for these projects each year. The I. T. C. project has been sponsored since 2000 and the HIV/AIDS project since 2005.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar

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A Tribute to Those Who Served the Mar Thoma Messenger in the Past and Present

James T. Philip, Manager

The Mar Thoma Messenger was born at the Zonal Council held in August 1982 in Pennsylvania. The Council unanimously expressed the need for a periodical as a communication medium for our parishes. Rev. P. V. Thomas (Coordinating Editor), Rev. N. M. Cherian, Mr. Cecil Mathews, and Dr. A. M. Alexander constituted the editorial committee. A general committee, which included the editorial committee and representatives of the Sevika Sanghom (Mrs. Omana Joseph), Sunday school (Dr. George Chacko), and youths (Mr. Cecil Mathews), was formed to continue the publication. Mr. Thomas Mattappallil managed the finances and Mr. Parackamannil designed the cover of the publication. At this time the publication was mailed from the official address of the Zone at Staten Island, New York.

Then Dr. George Zacharia became Chief Editor in 1986, and the publication became more attractive with various articles on different themes and published from Philadelphia. Mr. Abraham Mattackal became the Chief Editor and Publisher in 1990, and started publishing the magazine from Los Angeles with the help of Mr. Saji Abraham to design the cover and Mr. Thomas Mammen (La Verne) typesetting the articles and Mr. Abraham Philipose



Saji Abraham



Thomas Mammen

managing the finances. Mr. Abraham Mattackal invested a lot of his time and energy for the publication and promotion of the Messenger during this period. Though the magazine reached new heights in quality and content, the magazine was lacking the funds to go on.

In 1995, a new editorial board came in to salvage the Messenger from its economic downslide and moved the base of publication from Los Angeles to the Diocesan Center in Pennsylvania. Zacharias Thirumeni played an active role in the publication during this period. Mr. Abraham Thomas became Chief Editor and Publisher and Rev. Dr. P. G. George served as Manager and Treasurer. Rev. Thomas George gave enormous help during this period with editing and proofreading.

Again in 1999, Mr. Abraham Mattackal became Chief Editor and served the magazine very efficiently. He started

new columns and conducted essay & poetry competitions for the youths during this term.

In 2001 Coorilos Thirumeni became the new Diocesan Bishop. In 2002, Mr. Eapen Daniel was selected as Chief Editor and formed a new editorial board. He started new columns like 'Living Home' and introduced more variety in topics. He allocated more pages to the youth section. With help from Mr. Vinod Varghese, Mrs. Nancy Malialal, and Mr. Koshy P. Koshy, and the covers designed by Mr. Biju Mathew, the magazine has become a very attractive periodical. As Associate Editors, Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia and Atty. Lal Varghese help collect and review articles. Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia is doing a fine job in creating the Bible Cross Word Puzzle and Word Search. With the help of Coorilos Thirumeni, Subscription/Promotion Managers, Assembly members and parish promoters, the magazine's subscriptions have increased substantially. Now we have 128 Life and over 1300 regular subscribers. We need more hardworking promoters from each parish to attain our goal of achieving 50% of our families as subscribers. If any one is interested, please contact us.



Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia

I cannot forget the names of Mr. T. A. Mathew, Mr. C. V. Samuel, and Mr. Thomas Mammen for their enthusiasm and hard work. My regards and appreciation for them are beyond words. Mrs. Susan Johnson, Mr. Benjamin George, Mr. Mathew Varghese (Wilson), Mr. Easo Daniel, and Prof. Elias Abraham are all doing an excellent job of promoting the messenger. Mr. Gigi Tom, along with Mr. Benny Mathew, is the hand behind mailing. Rain or shine, they do an efficient job and also serve in their respective parishes as Messenger promoters.



Biju Mathew

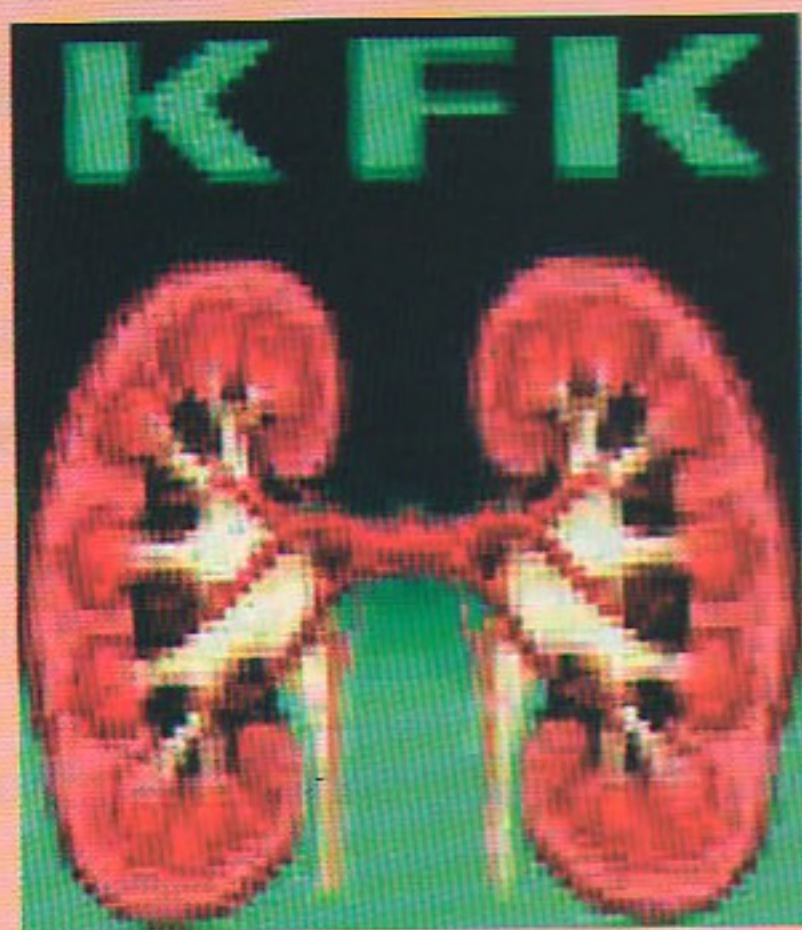
Rev. K. G. Joseph and Mr. Daniel Thomas have done an efficient job as managers before me. It was my understanding when I started this job in 1995 that it was for two years, and now, after 11 years, I am still patiently waiting for my replacement.

Without the help and support of my wife (Leela) and children, this job would

have been impossible. Both my children, Liju and Linsey, have helped me with the editing and proofreading. I am a person with no known abilities other than the job I did for my livelihood as a typesetter. I was a heavy drinker and a chain smoker and with God's grace I quit both in 1993. My only prayer was, "God! I am a sinner, I can't sing, pray, or preach, but please use me in some way for the Kingdom of God." And, to this day, I believe my work for the Messenger is the answer to my prayers! During this period, besides Messenger, I had the opportunity to serve the Diocese to publish the last two Diocesan Telephone Directories and the Sinai Center Dedication Souvenir and this gave the opportunity to work with Dr. P. John Lincoln and Rev. K. G. Joseph. I consider Zacharias Thirumeni, Rev. Dr. P. G. George and Mr. Abraham Thomas as my mentors. I learned

a lot from Mr. Abraham Mattackal and Mr. Eapen Daniel, and I had the opportunity to work with Dr. T. M. Thomas in one Sunday School Special Edition of the Messenger. Also, I have fond memories of our Diocesan Secretaries, Rev. Oommen Philip, Rev. K. Y. Jacob, Rev. Dr. John Joseph and Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham as well as their respective families. Because of limited space, I cannot mention all who served in the Messenger during the last 11 years. Their names are listed on page 25 of this magazine. I appreciate and convey my sincere thanks to each one of them for their dedicated service. Also, my sincere thanks to all those who handled the Bible Cross Word Puzzle and Word Search and writers and advertisers.

May God Bless and help continue our effort to serve as a viable publication for this great Diocese! ■



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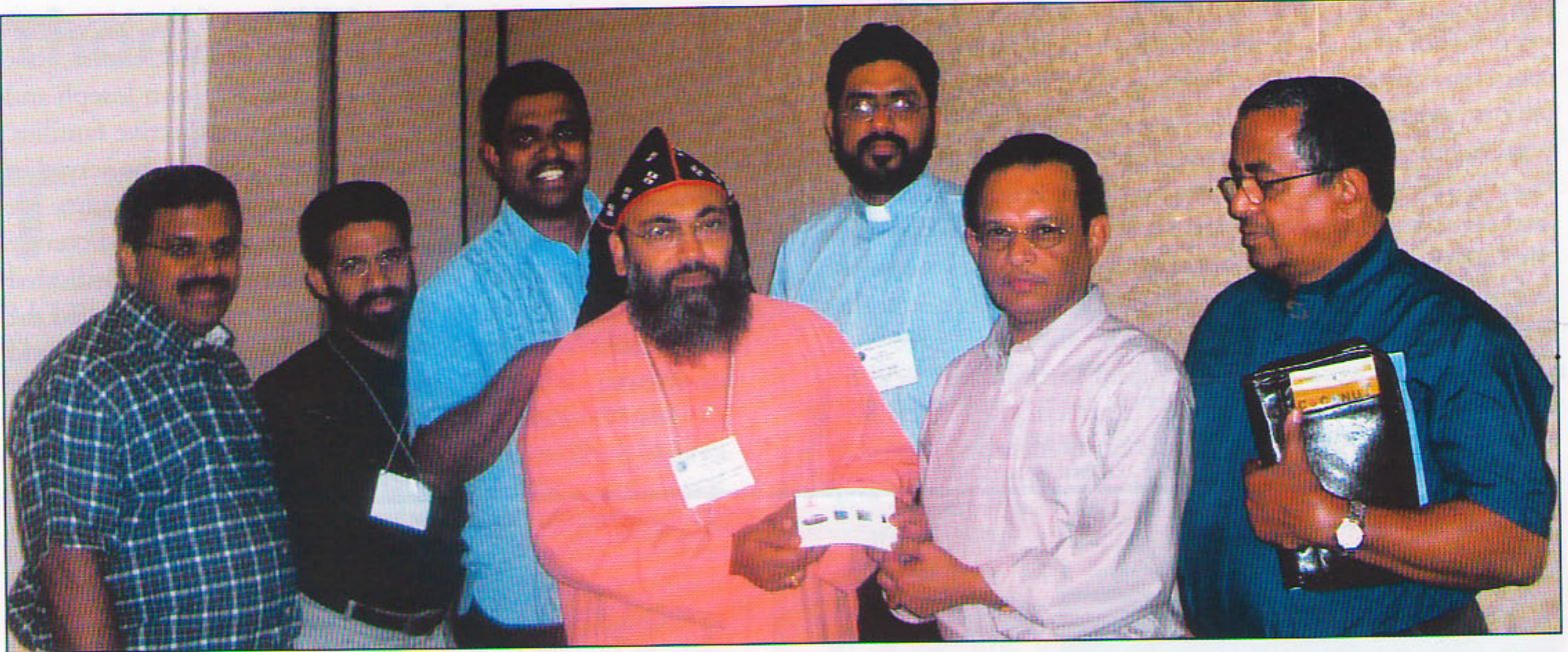
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ST PAUL'S MAR THOMA CHURCH DALLAS



The Diocesan Bishop inaugurates a raffle ticket for the FUND RAISING PROJECT of St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church, Dallas. Mr. T.A. Mathew (Diocesan Treasurer) receives the first ticket from Thirumeni. Also standing in the photo from L-R: are Mr. Anil Mathew, Rev. Mathew M. Thomas, Mr. Thomas Easo (Council Member), Rev. Anil George and Rev. Mathew Joseph.

OUR DIOCESAN WEBSITE

Our Diocesan Website is up and running.

If you like to put the events from your Parish, please send the information at the following e-mail addresses:
tamathew@hotmail.com or **thomas@wmcmail.com**

To see the events, please click on "Diocese Events" at the home page of our website:
www.marthomanae.com

To see our Mission activities, please visit the following website or you can see it as a link in our Diocesan Website at the home page: **www.marthomamission.org**

Letter to the Editor

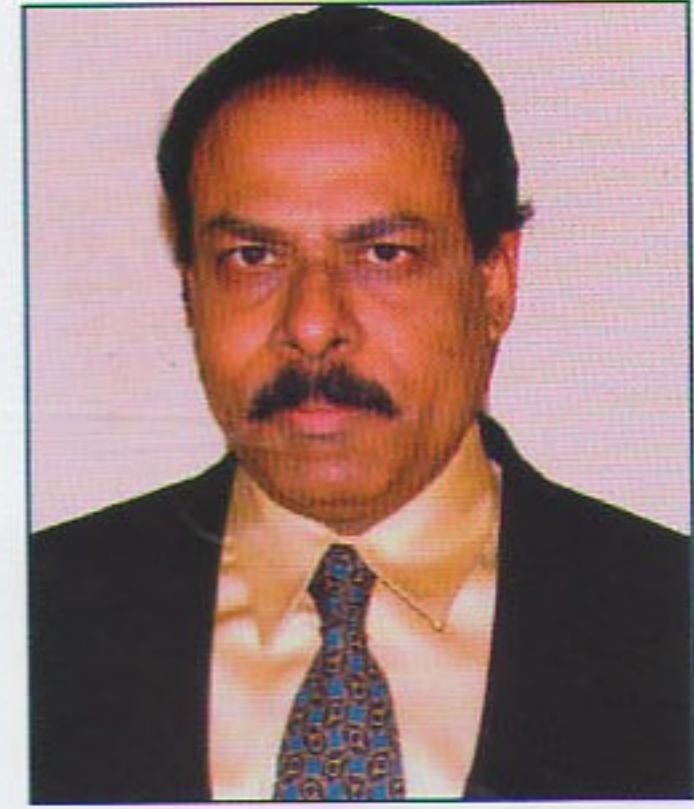
Over the last 30 years, the Mar Thoma church in the United States has attained tremendous growth and some adaptations and adjustments are called for if this vibrant trend is to continue. Congregations are becoming multi-generational and it is common to see "Appachens" and "Ammachis" transplanted from Kerala sitting in the pews next to their American-born grand children. It is necessary for services to be bi-lingual so that nobody is left out. Some youths are leaving the church for other denominations, but many more would like to remain in the church they grew up in; provided we cater to their needs also. Our churches are not only a source of spiritual enlightenment but also serve to promote social interaction and community spirit. The

church can take the lead in providing critically needed childcare and services. Government programs exist to support such activities and we should borrow a leaf from our Korean and Chinese compatriots who have become adept at leveraging such resources for the benefit of their communities. While continuing to generously support worthy causes in our motherland we should not forget to also extend a helping hand to charities nearer home. Our help to the Mexico, Mission and to Katrina victims are noteworthy and commendable.

Mathew Abraham, AICP
St. Thomas, MTC of Chicago

Editorial

It seems second nature for us to complicate our lives, although we blame it on environments. We carry our complexity to all places we go, including places of vacation. We carry our cell phones and laptops even to the most calm and serene places and if asked why, we say, "Just in case". Simplifying does not seem to work any more. When we systematically analyze our situations, we see that most of our troubles are self-created. Such self-created concerns are aptly followed by that invisible and mysterious phenomenon, worry, which clings to us all the time everywhere. Last month, during our church retreat, the speaker reminded the listeners: "If you worry, that simply means that you did not pray, and if you prayed, then you do not need to worry". One simple solution for big worries!! Yes, of course! Think of that solution, based on Philippians 4:13: "I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me". Martin Luther, during his sermons, thanked God that words such as 'my', 'thee', 'me', 'thy', 'thou' are scattered profusely throughout the Bible. "The Lord is my rock", "the Lord is my Shepherd", He is "my fortress", and "my deliverer". "When thou pass through the waters I will be with thee". "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel". These are assurances given for all occasions. Take these profound promises seriously and apply it to your life, and watch the complex life transforming into the simple life. God rightly expects unique actions from each of us. As we often hear, each flower has its own fragrance, each star its own attraction, its own light, and each drop of water its own mission.



The Mar Thoma Messenger has reached another important milestone. A simple publication that has reached many Marthomites, conveying great ideas, messages, and numerous reports, is now completing 25 years! I thank God for all His mercies, and I thank all those who have worked selflessly to make it happen from the very start of this publication to this day, especially editorial board members and managers. Our present Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos takes special interest in making this publication more informative and attractive. On behalf of the editorial board and Messenger Committee, I extend sincere thanks to our beloved bishops, achenes, and other Marthomites who have guided and supported all activities connected with the Mar Thoma Messenger for the past 25 great years. For the last 11 years, James T. Philip (Staten Island, NY) has been compiling and typesetting the contents of each issue, while keeping the subscription and distribution aspects up to date and the last 5 years as manager. James deserves special thanks.

The Mar Thoma Church has achieved tremendous growth within the last 25 years since its inception in the western hemisphere. This immigrant community, originating mainly from India, congregated in various parishes, receiving nurturing and spiritual guidance from our Bishops and Achenes. I admire our pioneers for their hard work and tireless support in laying the infrastructure for beginning a new zone, which subsequently became a diocese. The growth and expansion of the Mar Thoma Church in the US mainland, Canada, and Europe stands witness to the profound truth that when we place our trust in the Lord, He makes things happen. Although forgotten sometimes, our diocese has contributed immensely to the growth of the Mar Thoma Church and all its mission activities, within and outside Kerala. The members of each parish and congregation of the Diocese of North America and Europe deserve special thanks for their contributions towards making great things happen for the church we love and adore. We look forward to years of growth that will bear much fruit in Biblical terms. Let the Lord be glorified through what we do on this earth in the days to come!

Eapen Daniel



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