



MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

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IN THE 21ST CENTURY”**





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EDITORIAL BOARD

Diocesan Secretary
Rev. Joseph Oommen
516-377-3311
Fax: 516-377-3322
josephoommen59@rediffmail.com

Chief Editor
Eapen Daniel
Philadelphia
215-364-5459
eapen4@hotmail.com

Associate Editors:

Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia [NY]
(718) 370-7664
manojmzacharia@gmail.com

Dr. Ashley Mathew
Council Member [Philadelphia]
(215) 288-4825
ashleymathew@hotmail.com

Atty. Lal Varghese
Council Member [Dallas]
(972) 874-7909 attylal@aol.com

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Council Member [NY]
(914) 693-6547
jct247365@aol.com

Dr. P. V. Cherian [Ann Arbor, MI]
(734) 429-2808
pvcherian@yahoo.com

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(908) 832-5611
schackalamannil@comcast.net

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905-799-2123
nancygm@rogers.com

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Manager
James T. Philip (NY)
(718) 761-1295
(718) 761-1723 (Fax)
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Manager
Subscription/Promotion (USA)
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(713) 455-7469
tamathew@hotmail.com

Thomas Mammen (CA)
(562) 431-6469
tvmammen@msn.com

Vinod Varghese (NJ)
(201) 836-3716
vveditor@hotmail.com

Gigi Tom (NY)
(845) 268-3532
gigitomelr@aol.com

Koshy P. Koshy (NY)
(718) 987-5108
koshy@verizon.net

Mailing Addresses:

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

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

Websites:

Diocese of North America **Mar Thoma Church**
www.marthomanae.com www.marthomasyranchurch.org

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ADVISORY BOARD

Rev. Thomas John [Wash. D.C.]
(301) 891-3511
revthomasjohn@gmail.com

Dr. John P. Lincoln [Lubbock]
(806) 797-6000

Dr. M. V. Mathew [Chicago]
(847) 991-6709

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(516) 616-5565

Benny Mathew [NY]
(914) 378-8028
bennymathew@optonline.net

Abraham K. Daniel [NY]
Council Member
(718) 417-8441 koabdan@aol.com

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Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly beloved in the Lord,

Year 2006 has passed us by. We faced a year filled with sorrow, happiness, peace, pain, and acceptance. We did not get everything we had wished for although we did receive some things we did not deserve. Life is a confluence of various experiences. Some of these experiences become a problem for us when we see ourselves as the center of our lives. However, when we make our God, the Lord of all history and the savior of the world, the owner and center of our lives, we will see Christ walking towards us amidst the waves transforming all our problems into blessings.

As we take the first steps into the New Year, let us forget what is behind us and keep our eyes full of hope on what lies ahead, prayerfully trusting in God's grace and running our race at a steady pace.

He who has called us is trustworthy. He protects us from falling and keeps us in his glorious presence without blemishes. The New Year is filled with new experiences, new conundrums, new hopes, new opportunities, and new blessings.

May the exhortation of our Lord, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you," embolden us. What is important is not that God fulfills all our desires, but we fulfill His will. We celebrated Christmas. The priest Zachariah becomes a father in his old age, Joseph's betrothed becomes pregnant without him. Mary gives birth to her baby in a manger. In all these instances, we see these people submit to God's will and accepting with joy what God sends them. By such submission is God glorified and peace brought into the world. On January 6 we remember the baptism of Jesus Christ. Through baptism, the Lord melded with the sins of mankind. John the Baptist asked Him if He needed this baptism. John was giving the baptism of transfiguration. How did the Christ transmogrify? Through baptism, Christ became one with the sinful mankind. Christ rising out of the water is symbolic of mankind's redemption from sin.

January 8 was St. Stephanos Day. Stephanos was a problem solver in the church. As new aspects of ministry became evident, new platforms for ministry also evolved. The expanding global ministry discovered new methods and newer callings. As the church enters various facets of life in the world, the methods of ministry should be adapted to it. St. Stephanos, who was just a deacon, gave a sermon more touching than even the apostle Paul. Every ministry is a part of the larger ministry of Jesus Christ. The church should come up with various opportune methods for ministry suited to our times. We have to see all ministries as contributing to our Christian witnessing.

One of the main areas of action for 2007 is the revival of parishes. Our Animation Center gives leadership to this. You can contact its director, Rev. Eipe Joseph Achen, for guidance and help regarding this matter. Parishes should become lively fellowships. They should become scenes of many moving experiences. Each one of us should transform into tireless Christian runners focused only on our final crown.

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

Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

While the New Year has been ushered in with much promise, unfortunately the global situation has presented itself to be a challenge. It is in this context that the Editorial Board of the Messenger has selected a theme based on "Challenges to Christianity in the 21st Century."

One of the most poignant challenges arises within Christianity itself. The struggle to understand, reflect upon, and propagate the true meaning of Christianity as the path of hope, grace, and redemption in a world attempting to cope with war, devastation, and anger is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks. Some have made the mistake of limiting Christianity to "personalized religion," while others have gone to the extreme of leaving personal experiences out of Christianity.

Our tradition, as a church, has been to incorporate the personal dimension of Christianity as enlightenment of the soul based on the truth found in Christ so that this personal dimension will enable us to be a strong witness and advocate for justice on this earth. What type of Christianity do we promote at the parish level? A major challenge for us as a community in our living situation is to promote individual experience of God in the context of community while working together for the establishment of peace and justice on the earth. This means that the parish must become an advocate of justice issues in the local community.

Contemporary society's attempt to deal with fundamental human issues at the "material" level had led to a deep existential crisis. Truly, without a fundamental spiritual orientation—an understanding that there is a realm beyond human and material understanding, society will be unable to cope with the contemporary crisis of individualism, economic disparity, racial prejudice, and a feeling of meaninglessness. Therefore, the challenge to Christianity in the 21st century is to offer a meaningful narrative in the midst of "de-construction." Christianity has to offer itself as particularly relevant as a spiritual discipline and a metaphysical system in order to deal with the penetrating existential issues that society faces.

As Mar Thoma community, may we be truly lighted to lighten so that we can be people of meaning—providing meaning and depth to a society, which has become solely bent on a materialistic worldview.

May God Bless You.

Yours in His ministry,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Coorilos Metrachan".

Coorilos Metrachan

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



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Coorilos Metrachan

Challenges to Christianity in today's world

Rt. Rev. Dr. George Ninan, Retired Bishop-CNI

The two thousand years history of Christianity has been full of challenges, difficulties and even failures. For better understanding, let me clarify my own use of the terms: Christianity, Church and Christian Faith. Christianity refers to the Christian Religion, the expression of faith in the mould of a world religion with adherents and identified as a religion among other religions. It includes all Christian denominations and this is what people see, respond or reject in most cases. The term Church narrows down the reference to denominations with membership, hierarchy, clergy, doctrines, dogmas, structures, systems, administration etc. When we use the term Christian Faith, it refers to the essence of all these and refers to the faith of members, groups or more specifically that of an individual.

Let me briefly look at some of the challenges all these areas face today, in a reverse order beginning with Christian Faith. It is better to speak of faith in terms of our own personal Faith which we hold close to our hearts, which keeps us moving ahead. In fact the post modern world offers a challenge in this direction. The present emphasis is on local/personal/experiential faith rather than what was handed over from the past with authority of the hierarchy or formulated by experts and scholars. The growing interest of young people in non-liturgical and informal worship services such as prayer & praise is a sign of this challenge today. They are skeptical of anything that was handed over from the past and remote authority and want to accept only what they can experience in their personal life. Hence there is a major challenge to Faith of a Christian by this growing trend to accept and affirm only what one can understand, experience and make it personal rather than what is there in the Scriptures, history, traditions and rituals or authorized by hierarchy and experts far away. Those who work with youth should know this. I keep hearing our aches criticizing the fascination of youth members for informal way of worship in the contemporary style leaving their tradition, without bothering to understand the times and its influences on the youth. However we should also be aware of the dangers of such highly individualistic grasp of faith and its praxis. It will neglect the very important corporate aspect of Christian Faith and witness and make Faith a shallow and simplistic prosperity oriented one for life here now on earth and a hope of golden streets and beautiful mansions in the other world. How do we cater to the contemporary needs of the youth? How a holistic Christian Faith could be communicated to them? These are major challenges our Faith faces today.

When it comes to the Church, there are many challenges it faces today. We believe that the Church is the body of Christ but hastens to add that the churches as we know now here in this world do not adequately fit into that quality. The



churches do belong to the body of Christ and are in the process to be really the body of Christ. The early Church expressed more genuine identity with the body of Christ. But the fourth century royal patronage made it become powerful and soon moved to "royal" style of set up. Reformation in the sixteenth century made great impact in the life of the Church and in the life of the world particularly in Europe. People's participation and democratic pattern of governance were major achievements for the Church. The post reformation missionary

enterprise, though it was in a sense the handmaid of the colonial powers, did make a big difference in the world. Though they subdued the local religions, cultures and values and went on promoting western civilization, a lot of good came out of it. We say "good" simply because we have no way even to imagine what would have been the out come if they had interacted creatively and meaningfully with other religions and cultures at that time. But the colonies were able to get some benefits of science and technology and make progress in their own life. The Church continued to face many challenges down through the centuries.

Here I would like to continue our discussion of Church focusing on Kerala Christians who migrated to this country during the last four or five decades. They have formed their own churches and we should be asking what the challenges are before such churches here in the Twenty-first century rather than speaking in general terms. Let me identify a couple of concerns. The Church is to be in the context while affirming its universal nature. The mission is very central to the Church as Jesus is understood as the man for others. Mission is possible only in the context. If we believe that the Diaspora Christians of Kerala has a mission today, it will be a very narrow understanding of mission if they engage only in some mission field in India or support some cause back home. The mission work in Mexico of the Mar Thoma Church is commendable, but real mission is to be active in Jerusalem, the neighborhood, before reaching out to another country or both actions should go simultaneously. How can the Kerala Christians exercise mission in USA when the first generation Christians, generally speaking, have very little knowledge of mission concerns here in North America? I am afraid we are becoming a ghetto with too much pull to remain in the back home culture, church life, politics, social customs etc. I need not say anything more as His Grace Philipose Mar Chrysostom has strongly stated the case along with right thinking theologians and Christian thinkers. The needs of our youth for a church which is relevant, contextual and mission oriented are the challenges before us.

Finally we take a brief look at Christianity as a religion. There is no question that during the last 2000 years we saw different faces of Christianity. The early face of simplicity,

(Continued on page 10)

Parish Based Reconciliation: The Social Trinity Model For Mutuality

Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, The MTC Staten Island, NY

Introduction:

A major challenge to Christianity is the increased amount of division and strife within parishes. Parishes must, inevitably, deal with conflict at one point or another. A healthy parish is one that is able to overcome the strife of division and become more whole through the process. The objective of this article is to offer the perichoretic paradigm of the Trinity as a paradigm for healthy church living. In order to posit the aforementioned, it is imperative that the root of conflict within the parish be examined. In this vein, it will be argued that divisions were part of the ecclesia, even in her primordial moorings and the Enlightenment era enervated the divisions through the concept of autonomous self-understanding.

The European Enlightenment effectuated the dawn of the "modern period." Part of the "Enlightenment's" end result was to elevate the individual subject and, thereby, autonomous reason over and above the notion of community. In fact, Weber defines this process as the objectification of rational structures.¹ The rational structures contributed to the secularization of culture and society which hailed the following: (1) the reflective treatment and critique of traditions; (2) the universalization and actions through the generalization of values; and (3) forced individuation of the subjective-self away from traditional cultural context of formation. The end result of this is the deframing of ethical conception, language, and morality away from a proper context. Consequently, there is a loss of a commonly employed ethical language. A major phenomenon that is occurring in the parishes is the inability of parishioners to communicate with each other because of the critique and lack of a "meta-narrative" from which to communicate. Alistair Mac Intyre alludes to this notion through the term "emotivism."² In other words, the concept of unity in the parish is following a "majority rules opinion" without really having a strong foundational ethical framework to work from. This leads to problems when dissent occurs because dissent, according to the majority rules framework, cannot be accommodated as it is seen as an attack on the unity of a parish. Rather than having a theological framework that sees unity as incorporating diversity, administration in parishes where there is conflict is effectuated through the rules established by a group of individuals who have a common agenda rather than the "corporate" body as a whole. Quite surely, along with a stream of post-modern critique that challenges over-arching meta-narratives and seeks to de-construct language and social norms from over-arching paradigms, at the parish level conflict occurs when the "meta-narrative" of community, vision, and love is lost.



Upon analyzing the causes for division in the parish, the essay will briefly focus on the post-modern project as offering a methodology to understand and deal with parish conflict. It is through this, that the social model of Trinity will be offered as having a profound impact in enabling us to engage parish conflict through the notion of "mutual indwelling."

New Testament Passages Dealing with Conflict:

Hans Rudi-Weber alludes that the Bible is quite powerful because it is the "book that reads me." In fact, Weber has authored a text with the same name. The central thesis of the text is that the Bible reflects the ground reality humans encounter on a day to day basis. To the extent that the Bible contains "real-life" scenarios encountered by the community of faithful, there are some interesting insights on conflict in the Bible. Incidents like the various recording of divisions among the 'Hebrew people' in the desert after their liberation from Egypt, post-Davidic experiences, etc., as well the context of the early church community wherein there was division between rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, and ego-clashes underscore the notion that conflict and community are not necessarily mutually exclusive from each other. For instance, the context of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians is a major factional in-fighting. The Apostle Paul writes:

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be united and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is to that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?³

The text alludes that there was certain internal differences which led to factionalism in the Corinthian Church. As a result of the factions, the people formed personality cults to substantiate and further aggravate the division in the church.

1. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, translated by P. Lassman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 12.
2. Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.)
3. I Corinthians 1:10 ff. The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1990) 1286.

Another expression of division in the church centers on economics and the distribution of bread. The "historical" book of Acts records the establishment of the diaconical ministry wherein deacons were chosen to wait on tables because:

The Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.⁴

The issue presented above revolved around two distinct themes. An initial theme revolves around an economic disparity and injustice. The theme of economic disparity and its repercussions in the church is also a theme for the Epistle of St. James. St. James writes:

Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field...Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted...⁵

Therefore, issues centering on economic disparity among the members were a source of conflict. Seemingly, the problem was so corrosive that the poor were unable to fully participate in the Lord's Supper because the rich would engage in hoarding.⁶

The second source of conflict, in the example above, deals with the ethnic divisions that ran rampant in the church. While the "Hellenists" mentioned in the passage quoted from the Book of Acts may refer to Hellenized Jews, the church engaged in much debate over the fate of Gentiles who had accepted the message of Christ. The context of Acts 15 is set around the debate as to whether or not Gentiles must receive the Jewish rite of circumcision for their conversion to be complete. Seemingly, the Apostle Paul addresses this issue when he writes:

...for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.⁷

How did the early Church deal with issues that caused conflict? From the Biblical perspective, they engaged in conversation with each other. The frame or foundation for conversing and engaging in community was faith and baptism in Jesus Christ. Moreover, unity was seen as an ontological change or fusion of different identities. In the passage mentioned above, in terms of hermeneutics, the passage does not suggest that one's ethnic or gender identity is absolved in Christ. Rather, that in Christ, these differences can be accommodated and placed in the context of community. The community becomes whole based on foundational faith and the incorporation of diversity.

Some Socio-Philosophical Thoughts on Re-construction:

The introduction as well as the previous section alluded to Biblical and "modern" philosophical causes for conflict. The

notion of "sin" as alienation from community and the exaltation of the individual can truly be employed as the predominant culprit for division. With the dawn of "post-modern" philosophies and their derivations, there has been a reflective critique of "modernity's" attempt at hegemony. While, de-constructionists like Derrida critique modernity's attempt at the universalization of reason, etc. they fall into the trap of endless subjectivism. The subject as the arbitrator of values and norms is hailed and extolled by the de-constructionists. With certainty, the de-constructionists contribute to the analysis of human as constructed by various biological, sociological, cultural, and economic factors. However, they analyze the individual as being shaped by "local" norms rather than any universal conception. Thus, even values such as "love," "goodness," "virtue," are analyzed and evaluated subjectively rather than taken as given. Thus, deconstruction is a sort of extension on modernity's project on centering on the individual. The major difference centering on the fact that in modernity "universality" of values can occur through "reason" whereas in deconstructive postmodernism such universality cannot exist.

It is in the wake of deconstructionist philosophy we must ask, is a theological reconstruction ever possible? This is where "re-construction" as a philosophy offers some perspective. Communitarian philosophers like Michael Walzer and Michael Sandel offer a prescriptive perspective to post-modernism. Values such as "love," "goodness," and "virtue" can be constructed through communitarian dialogue. For example, people of differing cultural backgrounds through dialogue can come to a common understanding of values. From a foundational purpose, this should occur at the parish level. For instance, if you are an active member of the Roman Catholic Church, you tacitly (perhaps through a nuance of social contract theory) agree with the theological moorings of the Roman Catholic Church. With certainty, disagreements over certain policy matters may occur. There is freedom to leave the community and join another community which is more in line with personal values, if necessary. Yet, if you remain in the Roman Catholic Church, you are making the affirmation that you agree to the theological values therein. Similarly, at the parish level, membership does not necessarily mean agreement with every decision made at the parish level. Rather, it is an agreement to the framework and theological vision of the parish expressed through her liturgical and theological practices. Re-construction offers the possibility of resurrecting a theological language to deal with divisions and conflict. The re-constructive paradigm that this paper offers is that of the perichoretic understanding of the Trinity. The re-constructive model of the perichoresis offers a way wherein hegemony is critiqued yet unity is preserved.

4. Acts of the Apostles 6:1ff. Ibid, 1236.

5. James 1: 9-11; 5:1 ff, Ibid, 1369-1371.

6. I Corinthians 11:17 ff, Ibid, 1294-1295.

7. Galatians 3:26-28, Ibid, 1315.

The Social Model of the Trinity

The development of the doctrine of Trinity was based on explaining the divinity of Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit. While the discourse concerning the Trinitarian model encompasses a whole host of historical and theological issues, this assignment will focus on the Trinitarian model posited by St. John of Damascus. According to John of Damascus, Trinitarian belief is based on the

Belief in one God: one principle, without beginning, uncreated, unbegotten, indestructible, immortal, eternal, unlimited, uncircumscribed, unbounded, infinite... For the Father never was when the Son was not, but the Father and the Son begotten of Him exist together simultaneously because the Father can be so called without a son.⁸

Jurgen Moltmann asserts that the "One God" formulation appealed to the political unification attempts of the Roman Empire. Pluralism and diversity necessitated conceiving of a world view that could provide uniformity and unity. It is in this context, that scholars like Jurgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff imply that the Trinitarian doctrine had a political sub-text to it. Moltmann argues that the notion of one God has always been appealed to and comprehended in the context of the unity of the world.⁹ As such, there is a link between "one God and one monarchy." Moltmann continues to argue:

Monotheistic monarchism was, and is, an uncommonly seductive religious-political ideology. It is the fundamental notion behind the universal and uniform religion. One God-one Logos-one humanity; and in the Roman Empire, it was bound to seem a persuasive solution for many problems of a multi-national and multi-religious society. The universal ruler in Rome had only to be the image and correspondence of the universal ruler in heaven.¹⁰

Boff compares this sort of paradigm as engendering colonial paternalism in the South American context.¹¹ As such, a "uniform," monolithic conception of a God—unity—could possibly be a theoretical model for hegemonic assertion of power thereby dissuading plurality and participation. However, the Trinitarian model expounded by Christian Orthodoxy and more explicitly through the concept of perichoresis is a critique of the hegemonic understanding of "One God" while retaining monotheism and striving away from "tri-theism."

John of Damascus subscribes to the "orthodox" formulation of the Trinity as expressed through the Councils of Nicea (325 c.e.) and Constantinople (381 c.e.) wherein the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are constituted of the same substance (homo-ousia.) As such, there is no hierarchy or modal progression between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Damascus posits a formula for understanding the "orthodox" emphasis of the homo-ousia of the Trinitarian constituents. Adapted from the Cappadocian Father, Basil, Damascus asserts:

The only begotten Son of God, who was inseparable and indivisibly begotten of the Father and abides in Him always does have his own individual existence apart from that of the Father... the Son is the figure of the substance of the Father and in all things is like the Father except in the Father's being unbegotten because He alone was begotten alone of the only Father... The Holy Ghost does proceed from the Father, not by begetting, but by procession...¹²

This model, or perspective into the Trinity, is called "perichoresis." Perichoresis or circumincession expresses the mutual sharing/indwelling of the same ousia and attributes in the triune God. Creation, Redemption, and Consummation are the work of God through the Son and the Holy Spirit. While there is ontological unity in terms of essence, the three are separate and distinct in terms of their functions. However, as they are one in essence, they mutually participate in each other's functions. John of Damascus continues to explain:

The Holy Ghost is the intercessor who is like the Father and Son in all things; who proceeds from the Father and is communicated through the Son and in is participated in by all creation ; who through Himself creates and gives substance to all things and sanctifies and preserves them who is distinctly subsistent and exists in his own person, indivisible and inseparable from the Father and Son, who has all things whatsoever the Father and Son have except being unbegotten and begotten but proceeding from the Father.¹³

The analysis of John of Damascus is in continuation with the orthodoxy expressed by the Cappadocian Fathers. Gregory of Nyssa in his exposition entitled "Concerning We Should Not Think of Saying that there are Three Gods" profoundly asserts the following levels of analysis:

1. Three hypostases (persons) does not mean tri-theism. For example, Peter, James, and John, may share the same humanity, but they act distinctly, however, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, on the other hand are the same essence and act together;
2. Distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are possible within the framework of Unity;
3. Distinction, among the constituents of the Trinity, exists because Father is the cause. While confessing the

8. John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith: Book One, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc, 1958) trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr., 180.

9. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and The Kingdom* (Mineapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 130.

10. *Ibid*, 131.

11. Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*. (New York: Orbis, 1997)

12. John of Damascus, *Ibid*, 180-181.

13. John of Damascus, *Ibid*, 184.

unchangeableness of the nature, we do not deny the difference in the cause and causality, by which alone we seize the distinction of the one from the other. It is by belief that one is the cause... Thus, it is that the aspect of the only-begotten undoubtedly remains the Son. It is also not doubted that the Spirit is from the Father. The meditation of the Son, although it guards for him his only begottenness does not prevent the Spirit from a relation by nature to the Father.¹⁴

The basis of analysis for the Cappadocian Fathers as well as for John of Damascus is Athanasius. According to St. Athanasius:

The Son of God did not cease to be God when he became man... Our faith is not in the creature but in the one God, Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Holy Spirit, one God known in the Holy perfect Trinity, baptized unto which, and it united to the Deity, we believe have also inherited the kingdom of God... For there is one form of Godhead, which is also in the Word: and one God, the Father, existing by himself according as He is above all, and appearing in the Son, according as pervades all things through the world. For thus, we confess God to be one through the Triad.¹⁵

A more contemporary interpretation of the aforementioned fundamental tenets are expressed through the words of Kenneth Leach:

The doctrine of the Trinity is an assertion that within the God-head itself, there is society and equality of relationship and that humanity is called to share in that divine life. Against the Arian heretics, the Church insisted that God could and did share his nature with man, that we might be "sharers in the divine nature."¹⁶

The explication of the model of perichoresis over and above "modalism," "functionalism," and a hierarchical form of conceiving the Trinity aims at serving as a paradigm for human beings. The Trinitarian formulation, viewed through the guise of perichoresis, is an attempt to demonstrate that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, exist as one simple essence while each of the three has perfect subsistence. In the words of John of Damascus, the three persons in the Trinity are in one another in an uncompounded manner. As such, the Trinity has one essence, one goodness, one virtue, one intent, one operation, and unified power.¹⁷ However, while there is such a unity, there is distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. John of Damascus elucidates this notion further by saying:

God exists simultaneously... And just as the light is ever begotten of the fire, is always in it, and is in no way separated from it, so also is the Son begotten of the Father, without in any way being separated from Him, but always existing in Him.¹⁸

How is the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constituted? Boff attempts an explanation. Fundamentally, he argues, the experience of the Mystery of the Trinity implies diversity and at the same time diversity which is effectuated through the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, the Trinity is the revelation of God, as God is, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in eternal co-relation, interpenetrating in love and communion. It is the model of "unity in diversity."¹⁹

To make the case, Boff continues to argue that the perfect union envisioned in perichoresis does not blot of the difference and individuality of each. In fact, the perichoretic union envisions that the Father begets the Son and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. The mystery of the union involves an interplay of truth and love. Furthermore, perichoresis implies difference and the individuality of each in the union. The notion of union is transformed both epistemologically as well as ontologically to reflect the meaning that unity does not imply homogeneity.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, although in perichoretic union with each other, cannot be reduced to one constituent. Meaning, in order to even utter or conceive of the notion of "God" for the Christian, it would incorporate "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" in inter-penetration, mutually indwelling with each other, and therefore not being reduced to one person. This is further underscored by the history of debate regarding the Trinity wherein it is affirmed that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-eternal. As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, mutually exist as one, all three "components" are involved in the process of creation, redemption, and the eschatological vision of parousia. As such, it is not the Son who solely redeems, but the Son with the Father and Holy Spirit, who redeems the world. Moltmann affirms this line of analysis by stating:

By virtue of their eternal love, they (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) live in one another to such an extent that they are one. The components are in a mystical union of eternal communication, fellowship, wherein differences are communicated with each other. They are individual, unique, and non-interchangeable. They are the subjects of the one common divine substance with consciousness and will.²⁰

Boff continues to explain this sentiment in the following manner:

Through Jesus and His Spirit, humanity came to a full understanding of the perichoretic reality of God that by the name "God" it should in the future understand the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²¹

14. Gregory of Nyssa,

15. Athanasius, Discourses I - III.

16. Kenneth Leach, *The Social God*. (London: Shelden Press, 1981), 32.

17. John of Damascus, *Ibid*, 184.

18. John of Damascus, *Ibid*, '90

19. Boff, *Ibid*, 3.

20. Moltmann, *Ibid*., 175

21. Boff, *Ibid*. 10-12.

In connection with this, from the vantage point of “social construction,” Moltmann alludes:

They have the divine nature in common; but their particular individual nature is determined in their relationship to one another. The three divine persons exist in their particular, unique natures, as Father, Son, and Spirit, in their relationship to one another, and are determined through the relationships. It is in these relations they are persons. Being a person, in this respect, means existing in relationships.²²

Seemingly, the mystery involved in the “perichoretic union” is a lived communion which highlights the essential one-ness while not blotting out the difference among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, the Trinity is an example of living “koinonia.” This koinonia is engaged through an active, but permanent, process of interpenetration and the sharing of values. Underlining this, Boff continues:

Christian understanding integrates distinction in God without thereby multiplying God and falling into tri/poly theism. This profession of faith is laden with consequences for humankind and society. Since it supposes that the ultimate basis of reality is not to be found in the solitude of One but in the co-existence and communion of the three. Worldviews that take Unity and identity as their goal and all embracing standpoint find particular difficulty in living with difference. They can generally barely tolerate them, doing everything to reduce them and subject them to the rule of one. Buy the New Testament belief in the Trinity forces us to accept differences for what they are and put forward a vision of God and universe as difference. Unity does not mean negation of difference or reduction of them all to One but expresses communion and interpenetration of difference strands.²³

Furthermore, the Trinity in perichoretic union symbolizes a relational paradigm. David S. Cunningham calls this “relation without remainder.” He poignantly writes:

God is wholly constituted by relationality. God is not (first) three independent entities who (then) decides to come into relation with one another; God is rather, “relations without remainder; as the three participate in one another in a profound way, undermining any attempt to understand them independently of one another.”²⁴

As humans are made in the image and likeness of God²⁵ and are called to be partakers in the divine life, the doctrine of theosis opens up the avenue for humans to emulate the life of the Trinity. If the essence of Trinitarian relationship is described through the term “perichoresis,” the imperative for the Christian believer, is thus, to fully partake in the divine life and hence imbibe and live out the values of the Trinity. The perichoretic perspective of the Trinity expands our theoretical

horizons. By constitution, God in Trinity is One. Unity is transformed and incorporates diversity. Within this diversity, the individual personas of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not lose their identity. Their relations with one another actually accentuate their identity. As such, they constitute the essence of each other. Union is ontologically transformed to imply that through the mystical work of the Holy Spirit, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are one essence and the philosophical notion of “One-ness” can include diversity and pluriformity. Truth and love enable the koinonia of the Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mutually indwell with one another. These values of the “perichoresis” truly enable us to re-frame the understanding of the church.

Theological reflection establishes itself through the hermeneutical process. The hermeneutical process revolves around the dialogue between text, context, and one’s subjective understanding of the “lived reality.” From the perspective of a pastor, which involves being a student of theology, for this particular task the question that must be answered is simply – how can we apply the model of perichoresis to “lived experience?”

The perichoretic paradigm offers “unity” as the foundational perspective. Based on this notion, the paper will proceed on a prescriptive analysis incorporating the following levels of analysis:

1. Perichoretic Unity as the incorporation of diversity;
2. Perichoretic Unity as mutually indwelling;
3. Perichoretic Unity based on the work of the Holy Spirit;
4. Perichoretic Unity as the basis of the constitution of each other;
5. Perichoretic Unity as highlighting and celebrating difference.

While the concept of “unity in diversity” has been the hallmark of the World Council of Churches, on a grassroots level, individuals believe that unity involves the acceptance of a monolithic approach to situations and issues. In the case outlined above, while much of the issues involved personality clashes, attempts to incorporate diverse perspectives should have been effectuated. This involves the practice of “mutual communication.” The spirituality of the perichoretic model of the Trinity implies that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are diverse individuals, are in constant communication with each other. The essence of a healthy parish is the practice of communication. If parishioners lose the framework of communicating with each other, mis-understanding and mis-communication will certainly ensue. In the decision making process, a willingness to move away from conventional

22. Moltmann, 171.

23. Boff, *ibid.*, 140.

24. David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 1998), 165.

25. Genesis 1:28

“democratic” methods which involves a majority “rules” attitude (or in the words of De Tocqueville the tyranny of the majority) and engage in deep and heart felt communication is a must. The pastor as the spiritual guide should facilitate mutual communication and foster an environment wherein diversity and difference of opinion is not seen as antithetical to a cause but as an avenue for further conversation and enrichment.

Perichoretic Unity is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the working element within the parish. Through Baptism and Chrismation, the individual members are incorporated into the “corporate” body of Christ thereby mutually indwelling with each other. While individuals differ, through mutually indwelling with each other through koinonia and community, the purpose of the church to spread the values of the Kingdom of God must be underscored. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that constitutes the church. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables communication. Therefore, a deep discernment and quest for the working of the Holy Spirit will enable the community of faith to awaken and understand that although individually differences are there as a community mutually indwelling in the life of the Spirit and with each other, differences must be resolved in a spirit of love and truth.

Perichoretic Unity involves a change in our ontological understanding of God. God is not merely Father. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working with each other. Similarly, on an applied basis, the church is not a group of individuals who enter into worship. The church is an organic and ontologically constituted community of believers who engage in the act of worship. Therefore, from a perichoretic model, individuals within the community of faith must become aware and conscientized that they are not merely individuals when they come to church. They are part of an ontological process of becoming the sign and symbol of the Kingdom of God. The pastor’s role as spiritual guide²⁶ is to assist in the ontological transformation of diverse individuals transforming them into a community reflecting the will and purpose of the Triune God.

Applying the perichoretic model of the Trinity as a guide for dealing with parish conflicts involves understanding that unity is a mutually negotiated space between diverse perspectives conversant with the fact that those holding diverse

perspective are cognizant that they constitute each other’s identity in the community of faith.

Conclusion:

The perichoretic understanding of the Trinity is relevant in the era of postmodernism and globalization. Globalization, some argue, is an attempt at homogenization through the imposition of capitalist values. Whether or not this description is accurate is not relevant for this paper. However, the notion that there are homogenizing elements in parishes today is a reality. While post-modernism has brought the promise of critiquing hegemony, unfortunately, deconstruction leads to the peril of endless subjectivity. It is in this context that the perichoretic model of the Trinity offers a reconstructive possibility based on participating in the life of God. In order to participate in the life of God through theosis, we must understand the nature of the life of God. The perichoretic model offers insight into the life of God. God as an ontological entity consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together. The elements of the individual persons are not lost, but they all through mutual indwelling constitute God. Similarly, the parish is made up of diverse elements. Diversity is not something to be discouraged but something to be viewed as part of the creative social process. This entails that the parish will not be a parish unless all elements are in constant communication with each other.

The words of Leonardo Boff expresses this in a broader sense. Boff states:

Such a perichoretic model of the church would submit all ecclesial functions (episcopate, presbyterate, lay) to the imperative of communion and participation by all in everything that concerns the good of all. Then the church would in fact be a people made one with the unity of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.²⁷

The perichoretic model of the Trinity offers a paradigm for participation, inclusion, and diversity in the contemporary age. ■

26. Howard Rice, *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide*. (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998)

27. Boff, 154.

Challenges to Christianity in today’s world *(Cont’d from page 4)*

hope, faith and love gave way to a distorted face under royal and political power game. There then emerged the ruthless expansionism and the manipulation of the Faith followed by schisms and missionary enterprise. The 19th and 20th century saw the emergence of Ecumenism and Church’s Mission stated as: Movement to the Kingdom of God through struggle for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. Today Christianity is broadly divided into two camps: The growing right wing fundamentalists or conservatives and the ever weakening yet progressive and forward looking mainline churches and movements. The mainline churches have never been so far in the forefront for the furtherance of the values of the Kingdom of God as they are today. It is a great challenge to reaffirm Christianity to be an inclusive, open and loving

fellowship in the pattern of Jesus Christ, free from self imposed bondages of power, power struggles, money power and institutional and legalistic values.

So the Challenges of Christianity in all its three manifestations are before us. I could mention only a few. But in each area, personal, church life and as a major religion Christianity stands at cross roads. Challenges can be faced only with courage and determination. Many of us stop with knowing what is wrong or at best knowing what is to be done and most people never even reach there because their eyes are blinded with preconceived ideas and fears. The major challenge to Christianity to day is to open our eyes and see the reality and join Christ Jesus ministry: “Behold I make all things new.” ■

Role of Christianity Today: Combating Wealth, Enmity, Exclusivity

Mrs. Mini Krishnan, Chennai

Till the end of her days my late and formidable surgeon/physician mother-in-law (P. T. Madhavi Amma) believed that Christians were better people than non-Christians. From a matron in the hospital to a domestic helper at home, other things being equal, she preferred to be a follower of Christ. Herself a non-believer, she loved to listen to the songs and occasional tirades against Hinduism that visiting Pentecostals unleashed in her home while my Father-in-law chuckled. The rest of us either seethed silently or learned to ignore the exercises.

Where did this strong conviction of Christian superiority come from? Where, but from watching people who had indeed behaved in a morally admirable way? Indeed the Malayali Christians and Anglo-Indian Catholic girls that I grew up with were also a cut above the rest of the children in class and made dependable friends. I still recall the shock I felt at Fr. Benedict's case, a corrupt and dangerous priest, though I could not have been more than 11 or 12. I thought of my brother's good teachers and my early tutors at the convent; I questioned, was it possible to have a corrupt and dangerous priest? Alas. Much more was to come. One grew up and found out that Jesus could be pinned to the lapel of a dress or tie but it did not mean very much more than some other sort of decoration.

Twenty centuries is a long time to find out if something has worked or is working. Has Christianity been able to save the world from itself? Considering that the worst forms of war and weaponry have come from "Christian" civilizations, not to mention the cruelest theories of racial prejudice based on colour and facial features, there is something very wrong about the way our dear Lord's teaching has been understood.

What are the public faces of the Teaching that are projected, absorbed and propagated? Let us take it at a personal as well as public level using three extremely commonly understood human norms: money, enmity, a feeling of communal bonding/exclusivity. Each of these if viewed in a healthy way has enormous potential for growth and if misunderstood can do a lot of damage.

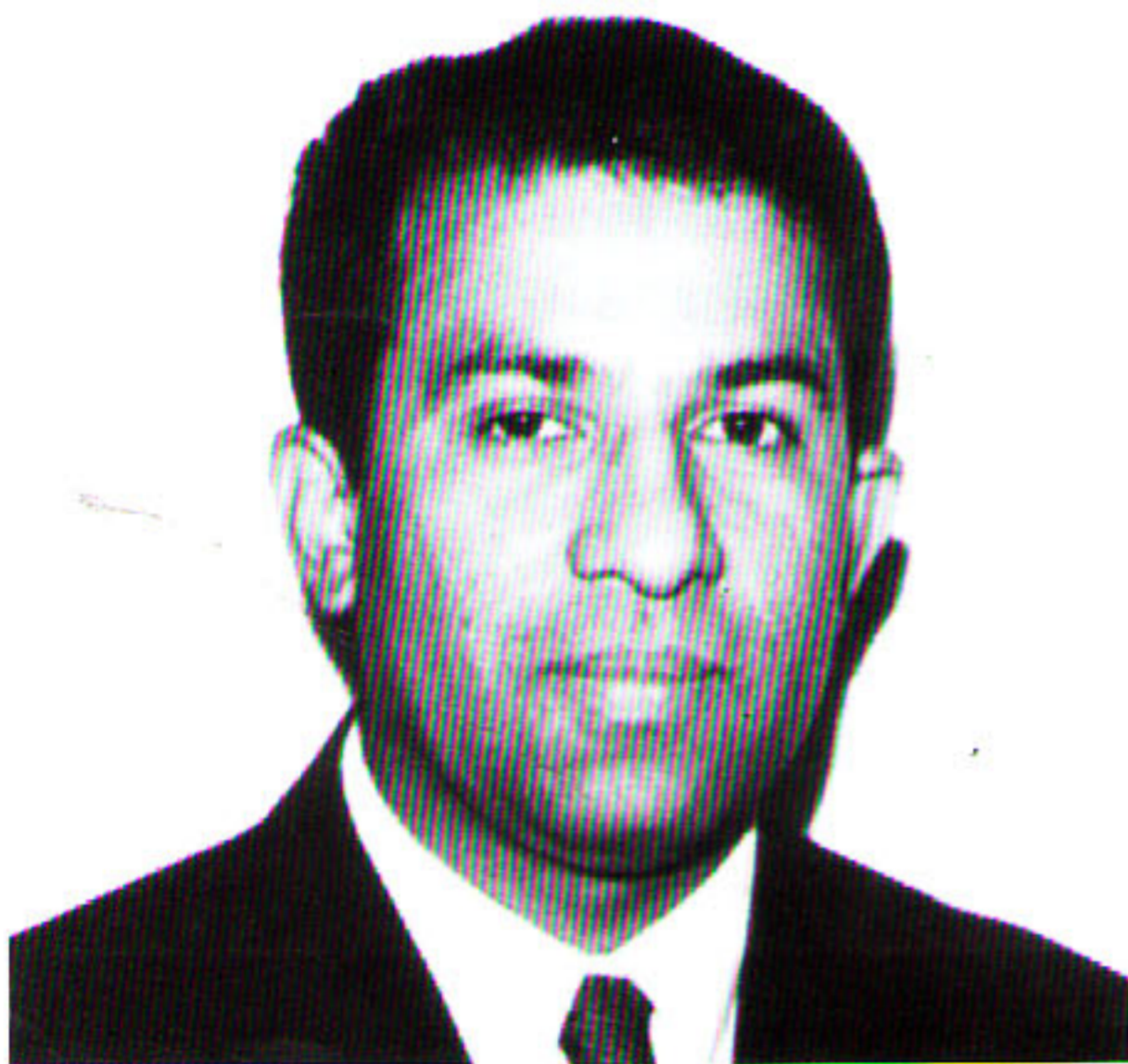
Watching the Sunday TV evangelists is something I enjoy and before I go any further let me say that my vote is for the late Derek Prince. No theatrics, no yelling or joking. Prince's sessions are like being in an English Literature; it is like classroom listening to a great professor teaching the scriptures. A man who taught the Bible for nearly 60 years, he settled in Jerusalem where he eventually died in his sleep. He did not just teach the Word. He lived it.

On the other hand, there is a channel called the Dollar TV. Amazingly, the speakers on this channel assure their viewers that following the Bible will make them rich. It uses Jesus Christ to reach Mammon. I find this most peculiar. ("I recited this prayer for a week and I got \$20,000"). Why is no one protesting? Do Christians think it is all right for the great messages to be distorted? I thought Jesus had advised his disciples not to take anything with them except a staff when they set out to preach. His spirit would be with them to empower them. Sell all you have and give it to the poor and you shall have riches in Heaven. The channel does not speak about riches in Heaven but about prosperity here and now. I'd like to use this space to make at least one thing clear—worldly though it is, the goal of Lakshmi Devi pooja is not wealth; it is to gain moral merit from generous acts that are possible only if the Goddess of Plenty showers riches on the worshipper. Does that sound complicated? Believe me, Hinduism is complicated. But Jesus' warnings about human attachment to money becoming an impediment to spiritual growth seem to have been misunderstood by many Christian organizations. A shining example of the opposite is the St. Teresa's College in Ernakulam. The older members of the convent were extremely upset when they heard that a fund raising campaign was on to complete their building expansions. They felt that it was not part of their vocation at all to make money out of society and insisted that as soon as the bare minimum had been collected to meet student comforts; all efforts to raise more money should be stopped. The sisters have understood that the greatest bulwark against failure and insecurity is not money, but faith in a Teaching they have chosen to follow. We too can decide, "This is enough. Any more fund-raising would be unseemly. Even this is not really necessary."

The challenge before Christianity today is whether its followers are prepared to honor Jesus Christ. Not merely by praising him and showing up in Church every Sunday thereby claiming they are his followers but by acting out the instructions Christ left us with. Jesus is the hardest person to imitate. Just another one of his injunctions—to bless those that persecute you, would throw the whole Dalit Christian movement out of business because if they blessed and forgave those that had persecuted them and continue to, it would end the careers of their political leaders. Yes, Jesus' teachings only sound and look simple. They are very, very hard to follow. If you are of an extremely worldly bent of mind, find it hard to acknowledge another's achievement,

(Continued on page 16)

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"More Precious Than Rubies"

And a visit to Rashtrapati Bhavan

Rita Mathew, Athens GA

More precious than rubies—that is the value of being noble. Rubies are inherently beautiful. We ascribe a value of 'precious' to these and other stones such as diamonds or emeralds. As women, we want a diamond or a ruby necklace to adorn us because it makes us beautiful; but beauty is to be noble, which is the quality being extolled in Proverbs 31. Our attention turns to the woman who has this quality, and we wonder, "Did she choose to be noble or was she born with this quality?" There is a striking similarity between this verse and the reminder in 1 Peter 3:4: "Let not yours be the outward adornment ...but the inner beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit." As I meditate on these words, I feel God's presence. I am worth nothing apart from Him. I am made noble by His compassionate love. As I experience God's Holy Spirit, I am filled with the knowledge that I am precious in His sight. I understand what it means to be God's noble and precious creation.

Consider the central figure in this proverb. She is knowledgeable about business, textiles, import and export trade, agriculture. Verses ten through twenty-four point to a composite of several different women. When we survey all the contributions made by women to society, we realize how God has blessed us and enabled us to be all that we are meant to be. One person who aptly fits the description in Proverbs 31 is Suzanne Wesley, mother of John Wesley and Charles Wesley. She was born on January 20, 1669. From a young age, she shouldered responsibilities at home and at the same time developed a strong mind.

She did not shy away from theological discussions. Her taste for serious reading would later stand her in good stead as she undertook the education of her ten children. John Wesley would recall his mother's influence on his life. One day, young John sat on his mother's lap and asked her what was 'sin'. She said,

'Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God or takes off the relish of the spiritual things ...whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you.'

Even though he was only a child, his mother's reply made a deep impression on him for later in life he would quote her often in his sermons. Suzanne taught her children to pray twice a day. She was sacrificial in her love for her family. One day when the rectory caught fire, she ran inside to rescue all her children and suffered severe burn damage on both her legs.

Suzanne lived in a period considered the 'Golden Age of England'. It was a time of new inventions, new ideas and new philosophies. At such a time, Suzanne Wesley was unwavering. She drew her sense of identity from scripture by using her extraordinary reasoning skills to gain a deep-rooted understanding of the Bible and to grow in her faith. Perhaps it would help to know that such a relationship between faith and reason is not new, just lost to us through the passage of time. Our faith has a rational basis and reason has a role to play in exercising our faith. Sin is "whatever weakens your reason," Suzanne Wesley said. With the explosion in connectivity—internet, cell phones, travel and global influences,—we must develop our ability to reason and safeguard the truth that has been revealed to us.

Our reason plays a pivotal role when we consider ideas, weigh thoughts and come to conclusions. This reasoning is commonly confused with the judgment we exercise in our professional lives as scientists, nurses, engineers, and doctors. Scientific principles do not allow us to choose between values, which are considered to be in the realm of what is subjective. Scripture makes mention of spiritual qualities which we accept in faith. But the values prescribed by one religion may be proscribed by another religion. How can we then choose between values if scientific method does not provide us with guidelines? Are we to conclude that values are subjective and personal and as such we cannot choose between them? These questions fall in a category that requires us to use our reason. For example, we may have to forego material benefits and give up the comforts afforded by progress when we realize that five year olds living in shantytowns make a certain brand of clothing. We have to choose to be fair. That would be the noble thing to do. We have to use our reason and choose not to be racist.

The Samaritan woman at the well was a foreigner. Yet Christ chose to cross boundaries of race and gender when he offered her a drink of water (Jn 4:14). We can receive God's gift of wisdom to experience living in the power of God and to have such a mind of Christ. To be noble means that we are no longer arbitrary, willful or capricious; to be noble precludes manipulative, violent behavior. The Lord himself urges us to exercise our reasoning power: "Come now let us reason together," he urges in Is 1:18. When we exercise judgment and make good choices, we come closer to becoming noble. When we make such a choice, it leads us 'to be transformed by the renewal of our minds' (Romans 12:2). Our ability to reason helps us choose between spending time for someone else over foregoing personal comforts. We have to choose to better serve all people regardless of their caste or color.



Athens Academy students with the President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhavan (the Presidential Palace) in New Delhi on August 1st, 2006. Front Row (left to right): *Allison O'Rear, Blair Terry, Jess Marrano, His Excellency A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Hayley Brown, Surili Sheth, Ellis Tomporowski.* Back Row (left to right): *Mrs. Sally Harris, Mr. Ernie Harris, Mrs. Rita Mathew, Ankur Mathew, Sharon Covington, Jarrard Cole.*

The qualities described in Proverbs 31—Inner strength, Dignity, Respect, Consistency, Justice, Equity, Care, and Empathy—are needed now more than ever. We must apply them to our complex, twenty-first century lives. This became vividly clear during our meeting with His Excellency, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. This summer Ankur and I led a group of local high school students and teachers from Athens, GA to

Kanya Kumari on a project to serve children in a fishing community struck by the Tsunami in December 2004. On August 1, 2006, we were granted an audience with the President of India. The President was delighted to see the American girls draped in silk saris and the boys in jubbas. The yearlong preparation facilitated a spirited exchange, and the students asked questions about the poet Thiruvalluvar, about the effects of globalization, and other topics of interest. Finally, in conclusion, the President made us repeat after him verses from the Thirukural:

When there is righteousness in the heart,
there is character in the person;
When there is character in the person,
there is harmony in the home;
When there is harmony in the home,
there is order in the nation;
When there is order in the nation,
there is peace in the world.

That was the parting message to us from the President of the world's largest democracy. He is a Muslim by birth, a scientist, a poet, an author and a philosopher—even he was able to say that the most important thing is to be righteous. These words underscored in my heart and mind the value of being virtuous—more precious than rubies. ■

Bible and your Cell phone

I wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our cell phones.

- What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?
- What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?
- What if we flipped through it several times a day?
- What if we used it to receive messages?
- What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?
- What if we gave it to kids as gifts?
- What if we used it as we travelled?
- What if we used it in case of an emergency?
- What if we upgraded it to get the latest version?

This is something to make you go...hmmm...where is my Bible?

Oh, and one more thing. Unlike our cell phones, we don't ever have to worry about our Bible being disconnected because Jesus already paid the bill!

(Contributed by: **Rev. Jobi Varghese**)

Ref: Cell Phone vs Bible (2006).

Retrieved from- <http://www.nairaland.com/nigeria/topic-16761.0.html>

How Can We Inherit the Kingdom of God?

Nirmala Philip, Sunday School Superintendent, Marthoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch
(Message given on the World Sunday School Day)

People were bringing little children to Him so that he could touch them but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this He was indignant and said to them “suffer the little children to come to me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God.” “Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child He shall not enter therein. And so He took them up in his arms and blessed them.” In the previous chapters we see that many brought sick people to Jesus so that He could heal them. They wanted to touch his clothes so that they could be healed. Mark 3:10, 8:22, 5:28 and 6:56 all describe the healing Christ. Mark 10:14-15 makes us ask what it is about a child that fits him or her for the kingdom of God. The answer is that children receive the kingdom as a gift. They come with empty hands and trusting hearts. They are totally dependent on God’s Grace and that is the only way to receive God’s Kingdom. In Mark 10:15, Jesus is warning the disciples that they must give up the normal human calculations of greatness if they are to participate in the rule of God.

We see that it is much easier for children to receive God’s Kingdom, as their hearts are innocent. They are quick to forgive others and do not keep any hatred in their heart. They completely trust in their Father, whereas the Pharisees loved to pray aloud in the street corners for everyone to hear them. They loved to show off all their wealth and accomplishments. They did not totally depend on God’s Grace. As Mathew 5:20 says, “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law you will certainly not enter into the Kingdom of God.” That is what the Lord means when he says whosoever will not receive the kingdom as a little child shall not enter therein. So dear friends let’s all strive to be like little children and be totally dependent on God’s Grace to receive His kingdom.

In Mark 10:17-31, we read the story of the rich young ruler. When Jesus was going on his way, there came a man who knelt down and asked him, “Good teacher what should I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said, “Why do you call me good. There is none good but One that is God. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, defraud not, Honor thy father and mother; and He answered, “Master all these I have done from my youth. Then Jesus loved him and said, “One thing you lack. Go and sell whatever you have and give it to the poor. Then you will have treasure in Heaven. Take up the



Cross and follow me.” The young man was downcast because he had great possessions and he did not want to give them up. Jesus’ disciples were astonished at His sayings. Jesus told His disciples that those who leave their homes, brethren, children, and lands, all for God’s work will receive a hundred fold during their lifetime but will face persecution. However, the gift of perseverance is Eternal Life in the world to come.

This story reminds me of my own childhood. My father became a doctor when he was very young, and like most people, could have made plenty of money but he chose to be a missionary doctor. He actively listened to God’s call and decided to help several sick and needy people in North India and Nepal for thirty years. Being the child of a missionary doctor, life was not easy for me because we moved frequently and I had to change several schools and colleges. I loved the school where I studied from the fifth to the ninth grade because I had many friends and the teachers were great. So one day I asked my father, “Why do we have to leave this place?” He answered, “We are here in this world only for a short time. This is not our permanent home. Our permanent home is in Heaven and we need to build our treasures in Heaven.” He said, “I have to listen to God’s call and do what He wants me to do even though life may not be very easy for us.” He also said that God would bless our generation and us in this world and the world to come—Eternal life.

In order to inherit the kingdom of God, Paul exhorts us to imitate Christ: “Be imitators of Christ, therefore as dearly loved children and live a life full of love” (Ephesians 5:1). Ephesians 5:5 says, “No immoral, impure or greedy person such as an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of God.” Ephesians 5:8-20 says, “Live as children of light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth. Find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. Be careful how you live. Be wise and make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. The Lord says, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit and always give thanks to God the Father for everything.” “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

As imitators of Christ, we have the inheritance of God. What is the Kingdom of God? There are several parables about it, but the two parables that are very dear to me are the parable of the weeds and the parable of the net. The first, the parable of the weeds is found in Mathew 13:24-30. “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good

seed in the field but while everyone was sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servant came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seeds in your field? Where did the weeds come from?" "The enemy did this," replied the master. The servants asked him, "Do you want us to pull the weeds out?" "No," he answered, "Because while you are pulling the weeds you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow up together until harvest, and at that time I will tell the harvesters to first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat and bring them into my barn."

This is how the lord explained this parable to His disciples (Mathew 13:37-43). "The one who sowed the good seed is the son of man, the field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, the devil. The harvest is the end of age and the harvesters are the angels. As the weeds are pulled out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of age. The Son of Man will send out his angels and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will be thrown in the fiery furnace where there

will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." The Lord then says, "He who has ears let him hear."

The second parable is the parable of the net found in Mathew 13:47-51. "The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up to the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets and threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous." These two parables teach us that there will be a final separation of the righteous and the wicked. Therefore, let us seek God's Grace in our life so that we can be inheritors of the kingdom of God. ■

Editor's Note: Mrs. Nirmala Philip is an active member of the Marthoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. She is married to Mr. Philip Kochiyil and they have two sons Alex and Christopher. She has served the parish in various positions including, Music Director for the youth choir, prayer group leader, Sunday School Secretary and Executive Committee member. Presently she is serving as the Sunday School Superintendent. She can be reached at Phone Number: (214) 537-8066 or by Email: monaphilip@hotmail.com

Role of Christianity Today: *(Cont'd from page 11)*

or indeed what they've done for you, and then being a Christian is to know about one's life long incompatibility with one's way of life.

Turning the last page of the OT and moving into the NT makes one think that there was no gap between the two periods. In actual fact 400 years lay between the periods of these two books. And it is against the context of these four centuries that the world's best-known biography began. What do we see? In place of David's throne was the Roman standard, Roman tax-gatherers sat at the gate of every Jewish town and the religious patriotism of the Jews had run so low that whatever was grand and living in the scriptures had been by-passed and the ceremonial elevated to the same rank as the moral. The synagogue, one of the most potent engines of instruction ever devised by any people, had entirely forgotten its true role and became a dry space controlled by men who used their positions for self-aggrandisement, scorning those to whom they gave stones instead of bread. The public conscience was loaded with thousands of interpretations and commentaries every one of which was hammered out and shown to be as divinely sanctioned as the Ten Commandments.

In my opinion, there is not much difference between the descriptions of Judea and life in the first century AD and the kind of pain and social fragmentation we see today all around us. What is worse today is that despite being attached to a tradition of personal austerity and love, so few Christians actually practice the simple messages that Jesus Christ left

them with. Why call yourself a Christian if you are not really one. Jesus did not ask people to fast beyond endurance, stay awake at night, inflict all manner of physical torture on their bodies or deny themselves the comfort of their friends or family. At the core of Jesus' teaching was the insistence that you see the other as yourself. This violently upturns everything that we normally array in life as necessary for personal and emotional safety. Marry only your own kind, don't eat in the house of someone of another religion or caste, and help only people in your own community. Never give an opportunity to anyone else...she/he will bring in her/his whole world of friends. This tendency to build walls of exclusivity was not at all Jesus' way of thinking. Although a Jewish rabbi had to live by very strict rules he thought that most of the rituals and rules of pollution and exclusivity were utter nonsense if it meant that they excluded human warmth and loving assurances.

I wish all the different Churches of India would stop breaking up His body into small pieces and prove that there is only One Christ. There would be no need for evangelism of any kind if Christians followed Christ. Nor would there be any conflict concerning conversions or the devious ways in which they are done because people are usually happy to follow those they admire. But where are the admirable Christians today who will step out of their communities to understand and serve people of other faiths? ■

Mini Krishnan: email: minik@satyam.net.in

To Our Beloved Coorilos Thirumeni, with love, on his 55th Birth Day

Elias Abraham, Baltimore, Maryland

The beauteous earth,
the clustering stars,
the moonlit nights
that hum to the depths,
each spark, each breath,
God-touched,
with wonder and awe,
to the Creator pays
constant tributes
in blissful joy,
and colorful ease.



Back in Fifty One,
in the November chill,
while Nature slept,
and the heaven sang,
a child was born
at Kunnamkulam.

The steady cadence
in the passing seasons,
reaching goals
in several roles,
and the Cross
with self-will
bearing, yet smiling,
this chosen one,
finding Jesus,
where suffering expressed,
shedding Mercy's drops,
as the Master did,
dedicated and consecrated:
Our pride,
the Church's glory,
and the Heaven's gain.

Thirumeni's sweetness,
the sustaining charm,
in his prised vision,
and moving mission, rests;
"Where's God in the crisis?"
"In our response
to the crisis,"
from within comes
Thirumeni's answer.
When the Church fades,
and the leaders fail,
sins increase,
and the lambs decrease,

this great one,
clad in humility,
like Paul,
on earth builds
heavenly abodes
for the Master Great.

Look at the row of daffodils;
the Asha Bhavans, the Half-way Homes,
Mexico Homes, Deepthi Bhavans,
Jyothis Home,
the smiling daffodils,
proclaiming
the concern to the sheep,
his faith and trust
in the Lord.

The 'Bishop Suite,'
at the village site,
his sweetness proves,
the blessing underlined,
and the showery grace
purely expressed.

This great soul
is our Paul,
the apostle of simple faith,
and rigorous deeds.
The tear drop he keeps
for the prodigals
is our spiritual spark.

Oh! teach us, Your Lordship,
to tread with Jesus
on this earthly patch
and get a suite
in the heavenly sweep.
Oh! man of prayer,
the adoration and hope
of old and young,
give us strength
to hold on to Christ.

This day never dies;
Serving is Served.
Oh! star of the East,
from David's stardom sent,
our heads to Him we raise,
and sing the hymn of praise:
Happy happy birth day,
and many returns of the day.

The Faith and Practices of Mar Thoma Church

The Doctrine of Holy Spirit

Rev. Ninu Chandy, Youth Chaplain, Dallas

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the fundamental dogma of our faith. In the Nicene Creed we affirm, "We believe in the Holy Spirit..." Holy Spirit is popularly associated with a particular group of Churches not in the theological and doctrinal aspect but in an ecstatic way as experience of speaking in tongues and so on.

The words that are used for the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments are *Ruach* in Hebrew, and *pneuma* in Greek. Both these words symbolize the powerful vital energy of God entering into human life (Gen. 2:7, Ezek. 37; John. 20:22). The word *Ruach* in Hebrew is feminine in character and *pneuma* in Greek is neuter. From the Bible, the person and work of the Holy Spirit could be understood through the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. It can be summarized as follows

The Holy Spirit is God's spirit. In the New Testament, Holy Spirit is synonymous with the spirit of God. Paul says, "God's spirit dwells in you" (Rom. 8:9). In another context, Paul speaks of the believers as the Temple of God "Where the spirit of God dwells" (1 Cor. 3:16). The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are also synonymous (Rom 8:6-11). In the Old Testament, through the power of the spirit, various people were able to accomplish great things (Ex. 31:3, 35:31, 36:1; Jud. 6:34; 1 Samuel 11:5 ff).

The Holy Spirit is the Creator Spirit. Gen. 1:1 says that the spirit brooding over the waters created the cosmos. The Bible affirms that the spirit continues the process of bringing about order, harmony and beauty out of situations of chaos, disharmony and disorder. "The spirit can like wise effect this change in human hearts" (The Holy Spirit, Fr. Samuel Rayan). This affirms the fact that God is not a God of status quo. God keeps challenging the status quo, which is implied in the Genesis story of creation.

The Holy Spirit is the Incarnation Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who initiated the universal Logos (Word) to become flesh- Jesus of Nazareth. To become flesh means to become human. The Holy Spirit conceived Jesus, a human filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus received the Holy Spirit at the time of Baptism and he identified with the human community. Receiving the Holy Spirit is for realizing the authentic humanness and not for separation from the human. It is also the Holy Spirit who enables us to confess and realize; "Jesus Christ came in the flesh" (1 John 4:2).



The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. John 8:32 says "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." The Holy Spirit continually leads us from falsehood to truth and sets us free from bondage and brings us to truth. Truth is what is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is described as the Teacher of Truth. In 1 John 2:26-27, the writer exhorts the congregation, "Dwell in him (Holy Spirit) as he told you to do."

The Holy Spirit Brings Reconciliation and Unity. The Holy Spirit is a "unity being". "The work of the Holy Spirit is simply another aspect of the reconciliation work of God, and so another aspect of the work of Christ" (Macquarrie). The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples in Acts 2:1-13, brought about a new experience of unity. The Holy Spirit comes to unite us and to build up the community.

What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit? In order to answer the question, it is essential to go back to Gal. 5:19-23 and Eph. 4:1-13.

The letter to Galatians by St. Paul makes a contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:19-23). The contrast is between the quality of life associated with our unspiritual nature and the quality of life in the Holy Spirit. The unspiritual natures are fornication, indecency, idolatry, quarrels, envy, selfish ambitions, party politics, dissensions, drunkenness, etc. All these are put under works in the plural, a life without unity. On the contrary, the quality of life produced by the Holy Spirit is described in the singular, fruit. It includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self control – the life seen in Jesus Christ. It is life with a singleness of purpose centered in Jesus Christ. Hence the goal of the work of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to be 'Christ like.'

In his letter to the Ephesians (4:1-13), St. Paul speaks about another aspect of the gift of the Holy Spirit. In that portion, he gives us the diversity of the ministries needed for the continuity of the ministry of the Jesus Christ. The list includes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers and so on. Today, the list may include doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, counselors, social workers, mentors, Red Cross volunteers, peacemakers, political activists, etc. By this we understand that the Holy Spirit empowers people with abilities and skills for the building up of the body of Christ. The ministry of Jesus Christ is committed to the whole people of God, so that we all attain the "full stature of Christ."

Along with the aforementioned gifts, the Pentecostal gifts have to be mentioned. Firstly it is a gift to all God's people. In Acts 2:4 we read, "They all filled with the Holy Spirit." All are Spirit-bearers; all are 'charismatics.' The anointing with the Chrism immediately after the Baptism service declares this truth. Secondly, it is a gift of unity. Again Acts 2:1 testifies, "They were all with one accord in one place." The Spirit makes many to be one Body in Christ. It is a reversal of the Babel experience in Gen 11:7. "They had all things in common and united in heart and soul" (Acts 2:44; 4:32). Thirdly, the gift of the Spirit is a gift of diversity (Acts 2:3).

Where does the Holy Spirit Work? A recurrent question arising in the minds of believers is whether the Holy Spirit works only in the Church or only among Christians. As mentioned previously, the Holy Spirit is the creative

spirit that leads us all into truth and also the Spirit of reconciliation and unity. Hence, that spirit challenges us to see beyond the narrow boundaries of Church and Christian community. We have to be open to the act of the Holy Spirit. The works of the Holy Spirit cannot be limited to Christians but impacts all of humanity. All barriers of disunity and ideology will be overcome by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of love revealed in Jesus Christ, should heal all forms of disunity and disharmony.

For Further Reading: *The Holy Spirit*, Fr. Samuel Rayan; *The Orthodox Way*, Bishop Kallistos Ware; *Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes*, Donald Fairbairn; *New Testament Studies*, Rev. M.V. Abraham; and *I Believe*, Russell Chandran. ■

(To be continued)

SEVENTH NATIONAL SEVIKA SANGHOM CONFERENCE

The Seventh National Sevika Sanghom Conference hosted by the Detroit Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom came to a successful and blessed ending on Sunday October 15, 2006 after the Holy Communion service. The conference was held at the Colombiere Retreat Center in Clarkston, Michigan from October 12-15, 2006. There were about 150 delegates from 19 parishes from all across United States. The messages were spiritually uplifting echoing the theme "Being Precious than Rubies: Values and Virtues in family and Society" (Proverbs 31:10). The main leaders of the conference were the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop; Mrs. Suma Cherian, Missions India, Tiruvalla; Mrs. Rita Mathew, Athens, Georgia; Rev. Ninu Chandy, Youth Chaplain, Dallas, Texas; Rev. Daniel Varghese, Vice-President, Diocesan Sevika Sanghom, and Rev. K.T. Abraham, Vicar of Detroit Mar Thoma Church.

The Highlights of the conference included a traditional "Swagatham," a candle lighting ceremony and a video presentation depicting the busy life of a postmodern woman. A Souvenir was published to commemorate the occasion and the melodious theme song provided upbeat during the entire conference. A prominent feature of this year's conference was the participation of many young women in the conference and a young women's session that was well attended with lively discussion. The Bible study by Rev. Ninu Chandy presented how we can be virtuous women citing examples from the Scriptures and explaining Paul's views on women's role and position in church and ministry. Rita Mathew presented a new dimension of women's role in family church. The various workshops provided insights into Christian living and the workshop leaders were Dr. Leela Cherian and Rev. K.T. Abraham, Grace David and Rev. Daniel Varghese, Nirmala Abraham and Rev. Ninu Chandy.

Suma Cherian exhorted the delegates to gain insights from the life and character of Esther who used her position as the queen of Persia to deliver her people from massacre. Her commitment and concern for her people in a foreign land and her courage to plead with the king for her people worked in a providential manner resulting in Haman's defeat, Israel's preservation and honoring her uncle Mordecai whom Haman plotted to kill. Like Esther, each woman has a role to play, to rise to the occasion to save our generation attain the salvation in Jesus Christ developing a personal relationship with the Lord. During the dedication service led by Rev. Philip Varghese many delegates committed and rededicated themselves to the service of the Lord. The conference came to a close with Holy Communion followed by the final session. Coorilos Thirumeni in his concluding remarks commended highly of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church for hosting a conference of this magnitude providing the spiritual atmosphere for uplift, dedication and commitment. Thirumeni particularly recognized the support and dedication of several men of the parish who worked hard for the success of the conference.

I conclude this brief report with a gratitude to several men and youth of noble character who provided their whole hearted support for this conference in every single step of the way for the last one year. We thank all of them, our Vicar Rev. K.T. Abraham, the Executive Committee and the entire parish for helping and being with us patiently that helped us achieve the commendation by the delegates and the leaders, "the best conference." I give glory and honor to God our eternal Father who strengthened us and blessed us from the beginning to the end and in whose grace we continue to lean.

Kunjumol Cherian, General Convener



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"The Mission of the Church"

Rev. V. T. John, Chicago, Illinois

I have heard people saying, 'What is our church doing? The church has no interest in this', so on and so forth. What is church? If you remove the common factors namely 'CH' from the word 'CHURCH', what remains is only—UR, means 'you are the church'. Everyone is responsible for the mission of the church. Our late Abraham Mar Thoma rightly said, "Every Marthomite is a missionary." Emil Bruner said, "As fire exists by its burning, Church exists by its mission." Our mission makes us what we are. If we fail in it, our very existence is questioned. To share the Gospel to all, through our thoughts, words, and deeds in all twenty-four hours of the day is the mission of the church to all the people groups of the world. Mission is crossing the barriers. The word evangelize is used in the New Testament fifty-two times and the word gospel is said seventy-two times. Evangelize means to proclaim, or to announce good news. "Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God"- Luke 8:1.

While I was a missionary on the borders of Tibet about 40 years ago, a government official and I walked together for a whole day, some 15 miles, to reach one of the remote villages. Our topic of discussion was about our Lord Jesus Christ. At noon, we rested under a shady tree to enjoy our lunch. I took out the 'Gideon's New Testament and Psalms' from my pocket and asked him to read certain portions. I led him through the following concepts about God, Heaven and Sin: Heaven is wonderful and it is our eternal home; Sin hinders to reach there; Everyone is a sinner; The wages of sin is death; One's own good works will not save him; Jesus opened the way of salvation through His death on the cross; Repenting from sin, believing in Him, and praying will make one a real child of God to reach Heaven. He accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior and asked me to pray for him. After prayer, I presented to him with a Bible. Then he said with tears rolling down his cheeks - "Mr. John, you are on your mission, you revealed to me the good news and thank you." It is distinctly clear that you should bring others to Christ. The last fifty-three years of my ministry, including twelve years as a missionary in Tibetan border, taught me this truth.

Who entrusted us with this great mission? Some say, 'my parents, or Achen, or Thirumeni, or Sunday School teacher' and so on. This is partially true, but ultimately, the Lord Himself calls and appoints one for the mission. John 15:16 say: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain".

"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations bap-



tizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" Amen - Matthew 28:18-20. 'All authority is given' means supreme authority or the right to appoint to office; the right to govern in both earth and in heaven. 'All nations' means all peoples and groups. Nowadays, oceans are no wider than rivers. Edna St. Vincent Millay says: "The world stands out on either side, no wider than the heart is wide."

What, then, is our calling? It is two fold. Catch this great vision and obey it. This is how our church went out to all parts of India, Nepal, and to other places. Our diocese can be proud of our beloved Thirumeni, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, who caught this vision to extend the mission to Mexico and among Native Americans. Thirumeni always says in our faith journey we need to love those who cannot return the same to us.

Jesus said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." - Acts 1:8. The whole world is in hunger and thirst, not only for bread and water, but for the word of God, to hear Jesus, accept Him, and be in peace.

"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher and how shall they preach unless they are sent?" - Romans 10:13-15. So, we need to be preachers of this good news to those who never heard about Jesus so that they may believe in Jesus and be saved.

C. T. Studd says: "Only one life, it will soon be past; only what is done for Christ will last." Amy Carmichael, the founder of Zanana Mission in Donovar, India, saved more than one thousand young women from the fire of prostitution. Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" - John 12:24, 25. Mission entrusts us the task of being the light for others so that others may see the light and the darkness may be removed from their life. Our church's motto is also "Lighted to lighten," so let us be the lights to remove the darkness from the hearts of others.

Italian patriarch, Garibaldi once said: "I offer neither pay, nor quarters, nor positions: I offer hunger, thirst, freed marches, battles and death. Let him who loves his country in his heart, and not with his lips only, follow me." Jesus also preached the same, who ever wants to follow Him, let

that person leave everything including his family, and then take up the cross and follow Him.

Swami Vivekananda; said: "If I was there at the time of Christ on earth, I would have washed His feet with my life blood." Acts 20:24 is my life motto which says: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace". Till today, I could humbly fulfill the Lord's mission. The Lord had been providing for my needs, helping me to learn new languages, giving me health, protecting me from enemies, and healing me when I am ill.

Will you please wait on the Lord, catch the vision, and obey Him in all the paths He leads you to bring the lost to His saving knowledge? "... Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"- Isaiah 6:8. Will you answer, 'Here am I, send me'? I believe God has a purpose for planting each one of us in this country. God wants us to be His missionaries

wherever He has planted us including our job, family and parish life. I also urge all the youths of this Diocese to listen to the calling of our Lord, and do your part to spread the word of God to those who haven't heard it before. You can do your part of the mission work by praying for the missionaries and the non believers among whom they work, by spending your time in mission fields, and by sharing your resources for those who need your help. ■

Editors Note: Rev. V. T. John is a retired priest of the Mar Thoma Church. Achen served about 12 years at Indo-Tibetan border mission field and served in other mission fields in Orissa and other parts of India. Achen is the founder missionary of the Khariar Road Mission Field in Orissa. Achen was also a missionary in Childrens' Special Service Mission (CSSM) a joint mission of Mar Thoma Church and Church of South India. Achen recently visited various mission fields in India. If you would like to know or want to visit mission fields in India, please contact Achen by mail at Rev. V. T. John, 9261 N. Loras Lane, Niles, IL 60714. Achen can also be reached at (847) 966-8916 (H) or (847) 682-0448 (Cell) or at E-Mail: revvtj2003@yahoo.com.



A New Years Song

T. G. Abraham
Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Frankfort, IL

Tune- Amazing grace how sweet the sound...

കർത്തൻ യേശു നമുക്കായി പിറന്നു പുൽക്കൂട്ടിൽ
വന്നു പിറന്നു ദിവസം എന്തൊരു സന്തോഷം
പാടാം പാടാം ഒന്നായ്ക്കൂടാം കർത്തനെ വാഴ്ത്തിടാം
കുമ്പിടാം നമുക്കൊന്നായി തന്റെ സന്നിധിയിൽ (2)

കർത്താവ് എന്റെ ഉള്ളിൽ തന്ന സന്തോഷം ഓർക്കുമ്പോൾ
എന്നും എന്നും സ്തുതിച്ചിടാം തന്റെ തിരുമുമ്പിൽ
എന്റെ പ്രിയ സോദരരെ ദൈവത്തിൻ മക്കളെ
നമ്മെ തന്നെ സമർപ്പിക്കാം കർത്തൻ കരങ്ങളിൽ (2)

പാടാം പാടാം ഒന്നായ്ക്കൂടാം കർത്തനെ വാഴ്ത്തിടാം
കുമ്പിടാം നമുക്കൊന്നായി തന്റെ സന്നിധിയിൽ...

അനുദിനം നമ്മെ എല്ലാം തന്റെ കൃപയാലെ..
അനുഗ്രഹം ചൊരിയട്ടെ എന്നു പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചിടാം
ആമേൻ ആമേൻ ആമേൻ ആമേൻ ദൈവത്തിനു സ്തോത്രം
സ്തോത്രം ചെയ്യാം നമുക്കെല്ലാം തന്റെ തിരുമുമ്പിൽ (2)

പാടാം പാടാം ഒന്നായ്ക്കൂടാം കർത്തനെ വാഴ്ത്തിടാം
കുമ്പിടാം നമുക്കൊന്നായി തന്റെ സന്നിധിയിൽ...
കർത്തൻ യേശു നമുക്കായി...

Vision for a Meaningful Worship Service

Abraham Pulimootil, St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey

I'm quite sure you will agree with me if I say there is nothing quite like attending a meaningful worship service, particularly in this country where most of us came as immigrants. After working very hard and dealing with tons of difficult situations all around us for six days in a row, most of us go to Church to have some quiet time for meditation and to be part of a group that worships the Lord Jesus in word and spirit.

Some of you may ask me, what problems do we have now? We have a Bishop, a spacious worship place, a full-time Achen, many visiting Achens, a growing membership, a good amount in the bank, and many programs that suit both the young and old. The list could go on and on. I have no choice other than saying all those things are true. However, I must also add that those things alone cannot be considered as a benchmark for a meaningful worship service where participants get a sense of belonging to the body of Christ—a spiritual uplift that sustains us for the rest of the week. Church should be a place where we can go to get rid of our spiritual starvation. If a car needs gas, one goes to a gas station. Along those same lines, Christians should have easy access to a meaningful worship service for replenishment of spiritual nourishment. I would say we need it now more than ever because we are living at a time when society's moral value system is getting redefined minute by minute. What was accepted as a standard yesterday may not be applicable today in our moral and social system.

You may ask yourself what you can do. I believe certain things can be changed, while on the other hand certain things have to remain the same. I know that we can make only limited changes in the direction in which the Mar Thoma Church is moving. We can of course pray for a better situation, and await Lord's involvement. What would be helpful is a willingness of the Church's hierarchy to keep the fundamental principles as it was. But let us not go there at this time.

At the same time: I believe that we, as members of the church, can do certain things within our own congregation to better ourselves. If we work together and pray together we can make a difference and still remain within the framework of the Mar Thoma Church to which we all still have our affinity. To have a meaningful worship, we should come together prayerfully and sincerely to adore the worthiness of our good Lord who is our daily provider with a thankful heart. Also, we should wish for and work together to have a more meaningful service conducive to the needs of the entire congregation. It is a matter of great concern for some of us when our youth are unsure of things and have many unanswered questions concerning church matters. This is the age of knowledge and questioning. Now it is difficult to convince your neighbor of anything because he or she may be more knowledgeable than you think. We should be able to look at situations together and see what changes we can

make. We must remember results may not be immediate but rather slow. However, in my opinion, it is worth the effort.

Worship the Lord and respect the rest as was done by our forefathers. You may wonder at what I'm saying. It is simple. Rather than worshipping worldly possessions such as health, wealth, and education and certain people on earth, we should start worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed us. We should give due respect to the rest of the things mentioned earlier. There is a growing trend among us just to mention the Lord's name here and there, without any actual thought towards the Lord. You may laugh, but I believe this is true. That habit should be changed. I understand it isn't easy, but it can be done.

Leave the "I-factor" at home before coming to the church. We have to try hard not to feel that we are superior to the person sitting/standing next to us. We shouldn't believe that just because one person may have this or have that or be from a certain family, that he or she is more important than the rest. On the other hand, if we cultivate a habit of thinking that we are all equal within the four walls of the church, it will go a long way to help build a proper arena for a meaningful worship. The "I-factor" can also create the "I-syndrome", the "Me-Syndrome" and the "I'm-somebody-special-syndrome". This way of thinking will drown all of us. If possible, we should not create such a toxic environment.

We should try not to lose our identity as Christians. While I'm not a historian, I'm quite sure, there was a time when one could distinguish a Christian just by their name, the way they dressed or by their general behavior. Now none of these criteria apply. If asked, most will say it is due to the fact that we live in a different time. That is fine but I have one question: has Christ also changed? If Christ did not change, why do we have to change with the world? So let us keep our Christian identity as it was before, as much as possible, in all areas that I mentioned earlier.

Let us not create programs just for the sake of creating programs. The only thing this will help to build is the pages of the church's annual report. Also, it is a fact that the number of church members are growing. It is getting harder to get to know one another. It just takes a second to reach out to another member to say hello. If we could all do this, we could get to know each other a little better. Whether we like it or not, we all have to share our place of worship and spend time together. It is nice to be good to each other and to set aside our differences. We have to remember that in the eyes of the Lord, we are all equal.

Let us start a new beginning. Let us join our hands together, worship and praise together and grow in faith together. If we do this, we will all benefit and I am sure heaven will rejoice.

Before I conclude, let me say this: an ounce of humility can melt a ton of ego. ■

സ്ത്രീ- സത്യവും മിഥ്യയും - ഒരു വീക്ഷണം

RACHEL THOMAS, DALLAS
MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FB



പണ്ടു വീട്ടിലെത്തുന്ന അതിഥികളെ ഉമ്മറത്തു വന്നു കാണാൻ - പോലും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യമില്ലാതിരുന്ന സ്ത്രീ ഇന്ന് എവിടെയാണു്? . അവൾ ഇന്നു ബഹിരാകാശത്തു വരെ സഞ്ചരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. എങ്കിലും ഇന്നും സ്ത്രീയെ സ്ബന്ധിച്ചു കൂറെ മിഥ്യാ വിശ്വാസങ്ങൾ നാം വെച്ചുപുലർത്തുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഈ മിഥ്യകളെ വെല്ലുന്ന കൂറെ സത്യങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടു്. അതു നമുക്കു ബൈബിൾ ആസ്പദമാക്കി പരിശോധിയ്ക്കാം.

1. മിഥ്യ - പെൺബുദ്ധി എപ്പോഴും പിൻബുദ്ധി.

സത്യം - യഹോവ യരീഹോപട്ടണത്തെ യിസ്രായേൽ മക്കൾക്കു കൊടുത്തിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു എന്നറിഞ്ഞ രാഹാബു, ദേശം ഉറ്റുനോക്കുവാൻ വന്നവരെ ഒളിപ്പിച്ചു രക്ഷിച്ചു. അതിനുശേഷം അവരോടു- "ആകയാൽ ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളോടു ദയ ചെയ്കകൊണ്ടു നിങ്ങളും എന്റെ പിതൃദേവനത്തോടു ദയ ചെയ്തു, എന്റെ അപ്പനേയും അമ്മയേയും, എന്റെ സഹോദരന്മാരെയും സഹോദരിമാരെയും, അവർക്കുള്ള സകലത്തേയും ജീവനോടു രക്ഷിച്ചു, ഞങ്ങളുടെ ജീവനെ മരണത്തിൽ നിന്നു വിടുവിയ്ക്കും എന്നു യഹോവയെച്ചൊല്ലി എന്നോടു സത്യം ചെയ്കയും, ഉറപ്പുള്ള ഒരു ലക്ഷ്യം തരികയും വേണം". (യേശു. 2:12). അതുകൊണ്ടു് യേശുവ രാഹാബിനേയും അവളുടെ പിതൃദേവനത്തേയും, അവൾക്കുള്ള സകലത്തേയും ജീവനോടു് രക്ഷിച്ചു.

നാബാലിനോടു സഹായം ചോദിച്ചു ചെന്ന ദാവീദിന്റെ ബാല്യക്കാരെ മടക്കി അയച്ചതിൽ കോപിഷ്ടനായിരുന്ന ദാവീദുരാജാവിനെ അബീഗയിൽ എത്രയോ ബുദ്ധിപൂർവ്വമാണു സമീപിച്ചതു്. ദാവീദു് അബീഗയിലിനോടു പറഞ്ഞതു് "നിന്റെ വിവേകം സ്തുത്യം. രക്തപാതകവും സ്വന്ത കയ്യാൽ പ്രതികാരവും ചെയ്യാതവണ്ണം എന്നോടു തടുത്തിരിയ്ക്കുന്ന നീയും അനുഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ടവൾ" എന്നാണു്. (1ശമു. 25:33).

2. മിഥ്യ - സ്ത്രീ അബലയാണു്.

സത്യം - അനന്തരം ദൈവം, മനുഷ്യൻ ഏകനായിരിയ്ക്കുന്നതു നന്നല്ല ഞാൻ അവനു തക്ക തായ ഒരു തുണയെ ഉണ്ടാക്കിക്കൊടുക്കും എന്നരുളി ചെയ്തു (ഉല്പ. 2:18). ദൈവം സ്ത്രീയെ പുരുഷനു തുണയായിട്ടാണു സൃഷ്ടിച്ചതു്. മാനസികസംഘർഷം അനുഭവിയ്ക്കുന്ന ഒരു പുരുഷനു് സ്ത്രീയുടെ നല്ല ഉപദേശങ്ങളും ആലോചനകളും പ്രയോജനപ്രദമാകാറില്ലേ?

പീലാത്തോസു് "ഈ നീതിമാന്റെ രക്തത്തിൽ എനിയ്ക്കു കുറ്റമില്ല നിങ്ങൾ തന്നെ നോക്കിക്കൊൾവിൻ" എന്നു പറഞ്ഞതിന്റെ പിന്നിൽ "ആ നീതിമാന്റെ കാര്യത്തിൽ ഇടപെടരുതു്" എന്നുള്ള തന്റെ ഭാര്യയുടെ സന്ദേശം ആയിരിയ്ക്കണം.

ശൂനേംകാരത്തിയുടെ മകൻ "എന്റെ തല, എന്റെ തല" എന്നു പറഞ്ഞു കരഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ അവന്റെ അപ്പൻ "ഇവനെയെടുത്തു അമ്മയുടെ അടുക്കൽ കൊണ്ടുപോയി കൊടുക്കു്" എന്നു ബാല്യക്കാരോടു പറഞ്ഞു കയ്യാഴിഞ്ഞു. എന്നാൽ തന്റെ മകൻ മരിച്ചുപോയി എന്നറിഞ്ഞിട്ടും ഒടും താമസിയ്ക്കാതെ ശൂനേംകാരത്തി കർമ്മേൽ പർവ്വതത്തിലെത്തി ദൈവപുരുഷനെ കൂട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടു വന്നു മകനെ രക്ഷിച്ചു കാര്യം 2 രാജ: 4-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ നാം വായിയ്ക്കുന്നു.

3. മിഥ്യ - സ്ത്രീ ഭീരുവാണു്.

സത്യം - യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ക്രൂശമരണ സമയത്തു് ശിഷ്യന്മാരെല്ലാം ഓടിഒളിച്ചപ്പോൾ ചില സ്ത്രീകൾ അവിടെ അവശേഷിച്ചു. ഗലീലയിൽ നിന്നു യേശുവിനെ ശുശ്രൂഷിച്ചുകൊണ്ടു് അനുഗമിച്ചു വന്ന പല സ്ത്രീകളും ദൂരത്തുനിന്നു നോക്കിക്കൊണ്ടിരുന്നു. (മത്താ: 27:55). അവനെ വെച്ച ഇടം മഗ്ദലക്കാരത്തി മറിയയും മറ്റേ മറിയയും നോക്കി കണ്ടു. (മർക്കോസു് 15:17). അവർ ഒരുക്കിയ സുഗന്ധവർഗ്ഗം എടുത്തു ആഴ്ചവട്ടത്തിന്റെ ഒന്നാം ദിവസം അതികാലത്തു കല്ലറയ്ക്കൽ എത്തി. (ലൂക്കോ: 24:1).

4. മിഥ്യ - സ്ത്രീ സഭയിൽ മിണ്ടരുതു്.

സത്യം - "സ്ത്രീകൾ സഭായോഗങ്ങളിൽ മിണ്ടാതിരിയ്ക്കട്ടെ; ന്യായപ്രമാണവും പറയുന്നതുപോലെ കീഴടങ്ങിയിരിപ്പാനല്ലാതെ സംസാരിപ്പാൻ അവർക്കു അനുവാദമില്ല" എന്നു കൊരിന്തിലുള്ള ദൈവസഭയോടു പറയുന്നുണ്ടെങ്കിലും, പൗലോസു് തന്നെ ഫിലിപ്പിയർക്കുള്ള ലേഖനത്തിൽ യുവാവായും, സുന്തുകയും സുവശേഷഘോഷണത്തിൽ പൗലോസിനോടൊപ്പം പ്രവർത്തിച്ചിരുന്നതായി രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. റോമാ ലേഖനത്തിൽ ക്രൈസ്തവ സഭയിലെ ശുശ്രൂഷക്കാരത്തിയായ ഫേബയേയും, കർത്താവിൽ വളരെ അദ്ധ്വാനിച്ചുവളയപെർസീസിനേയും വേറെ പല സ്ത്രീകളേയുംപറ്റി പരാമർശിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടു്. അപ്പോ: പ്രവൃത്തി 18:26-ൽ പ്രിസ്കില്ല അലക്സാന്ത്രിയക്കാരനായിരുന്ന, വാഗ്ദൈവവും തിരുവെഴുത്തുകളിൽ സാമർത്ഥ്യവുമുള്ള അപ്പൊല്ലോസിനെ അവളുടെ ഭവനത്തിൽ താമസിപ്പിച്ചു, ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ചാർഗ്ഗം സ്വീകരിച്ചുകൊടുത്തു" എന്നു വായിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ലൂക്കോസിന്റെ സുവിശേഷം 2-ാം അദ്ധ്യായം വായിക്കുമ്പോൾ യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിനെ പറ്റി ആദ്യമായി മറ്റുള്ളവരോടു പ്രസ്താവിച്ച വ്യക്തി ഒരു സ്ത്രീ, (ആശേർ ഗോത്രത്തിൽ ഫന്നുവേലിന്റെ മകളായ ഹന്നാ പ്രവാചകി) ആണു് എന്നു കാണാം.

“ആ നാഴികയിൽ അവളും അടുത്തു ചെന്നു ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിച്ചു. യെരൂശലേമിന്റെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിനെ കാത്തിരുന്ന എല്ലാവരോടും അവനെക്കുറിച്ച് പ്രസ്താവിച്ചു”. (ലൂക്കോ: 2:3)

5. മിഥ്യ - സ്ത്രീ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം അർഹിയ്ക്കുന്നില്ല.

സത്യം - ഇങ്ങനെ ദൈവം തന്റെ സ്വരൂപത്തിൽ മനുഷ്യനെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സ്വരൂപത്തിൽ അവനെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു; ആണും പെണ്ണുമായി അവരെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു. ദൈവം അവരെ അനുഗ്രഹിച്ചു; നിങ്ങൾ സന്താനപുഷ്ടി ഉള്ളവരായി പെരുകി ഭൂമിയിൽ നിറഞ്ഞു അതിനെ അടക്കി, സമുദ്രത്തിലെ മത്സ്യത്തിന്മേലും, ആകാശത്തിലെ പറവജാതിയിൻമേലും, സകല ഭൂചരജന്തുവിന്മേലും വാഴുവിൻ എന്നു അവരോടു കല്പിച്ചു. (ഉല്പ: 1:27-28). ഇതിൽ ഭർത്താവു ഭാര്യയേയോ, ഭാര്യ ഭർത്താവിനേയോ അടക്കി വാഴുവാനല്ല, ഇരുവരും ചേർന്നു ഭൂമിയെ അടക്കിവാഴുവാനാണ് പറഞ്ഞിരിയ്ക്കുന്നത്. ആദം ഹവ്വയെപ്പറ്റി, “എന്റെ അസ്ഥിയിൽ നിന്നും അസ്ഥിയും, മാംസത്തിൽ നിന്നു മാംസവും” എന്നു പറയുന്നു. ഭാര്യയേയും ബന്ധത്തെപ്പറ്റി പൗലോസു പറയുന്നത്, “ഭർത്താവു ഭാര്യയ്ക്കും, ഭാര്യ ഭർത്താവിനും കടംപെട്ടിരിയ്ക്കുന്നത് ചെയ്യട്ടെ. ഭാര്യയുടെ ശരീരത്തിന്മേൽ അവൾക്കല്ല ഭർത്താവിനത്രേ അധികാരമുള്ളത്. അങ്ങനെ തന്നെ ഭർത്താവിന്റെ ശരീരത്തിന്മേൽ അവനല്ല ഭാര്യയ്ക്കത്രേ അധികാരം”. (1.കോരി:7:3-4).

ക്രിസ്തുയേശുവിനെ വിശ്വാസത്തിൽ നിങ്ങൾ എല്ലാവരും ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മക്കൾ ആകുന്നു. ക്രിസ്തുവിനോടു ചേരുവാൻ സ്നാനം ഏറ്റിരിയ്ക്കുന്ന നിങ്ങൾ എല്ലാവരും ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ ധരിച്ചിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. അതിൽ യഹൂദനും യവനനും എന്നില്ല, ദാസനും സ്വതന്ത്രനും എന്നില്ല, ആണും പെണ്ണും എന്നുമില്ല. നിങ്ങൾ എല്ലാവരും ക്രിസ്തുയേശുവിൽ ഒന്നത്രേ. ഈ വാക്യങ്ങളെല്ലാം സ്ത്രീ, പുരുഷന്മാരെപ്പോലെ തന്നെ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം അർഹിയ്ക്കുന്നു എന്നു തെളിയിയ്ക്കുന്നു.

6. മിഥ്യ - പെണ്ണിനു സ്ത്രീധനം വേണം.

സത്യം - സ്ത്രീധനം നിയമപരമായി നിർത്തൽ ചെയ്തിട്ടും ഇന്നും നമ്മളിൽ പലരും പോക്കറ്റുമണി എന്ന പേരിൽ ഭീമമായ തുക വരന്റെ വീട്ടുകാർക്കു കൊടുക്കുന്നു. ഈ സമ്പ്രദായം നിലനില്ക്കുന്നത് മൂലം പാവപ്പെട്ട പല പെൺകുട്ടികളും ഇന്നു അവിവാഹിതരായ സ്വന്തം ഭവനങ്ങളിൽ കഴിയേണ്ടി വരുന്നു. ദൈവം സ്ത്രീയെ പുരുഷനു തുണയായിട്ടു സൃഷ്ടിച്ചുവെങ്കിൽ അവളെ പോറ്റി-പുലർത്തുന്നതിനു പുരുഷൻ ബാധ്യസ്ഥനല്ലേ?

ബൈബിൾ ആസ്പദമാക്കി പരിശോധിച്ചാൽ സ്ത്രീ പുരുഷനല്ല, പുരുഷൻ സ്ത്രീയ്ക്കാണ് സ്ത്രീധനം കൊടുത്തിരുന്നത് എന്നു മനസ്സിലാക്കാം. ഉദാഹരണമായി, 1 ശമു: 18-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ പറഞ്ഞിരിയ്ക്കുന്നത് ശ്രദ്ധിയ്ക്കാം, “അതിനു ശൗൽ, രാജാവിന്റെ ശത്രുക്കൾക്കു പ്രതികാരമാകുവാൻ തക്കവണ്ണം ഫെലവസ്തുരുടെ നൂറ് അഗ്രചർമ്മം അല്ലാതെ രാജാവ് യാതൊരു സ്ത്രീധനവും ആഗ്രഹിയ്ക്കുന്നില്ല എന്നിങ്ങനെ നിങ്ങൾ ദാവിദിനോടു പറയേണം എന്നു കല്പിച്ചു” (1 ശമു: 18:25). അവധി കഴിയുന്നതിനു മുമ്പു ദാവിദും അവന്റെ ആൾക്കാരും പുറപ്പെട്ടു ചെന്നു ഫെലിസ്തൂരിൽ ഇരുനൂറുപേരെ കൊന്നു, അവരുടെ അഗ്രചർമ്മം കൊണ്ടുവന്നു താൻ രാജാവിന്റെ മരുമകനാകേണ്ട

തിനു രാജാവിനു എണ്ണം കൊടുത്തു. (1 ശമു:18:27).

അതുപോലെ, യാക്കോബ് റാഹേലിനു വേണ്ടി ഏഴു സംവത്സരം ലാബാനെ സേവിച്ചു എന്നു ഉല്പത്തി 29:18-ൽ നാം വായിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ഉല്പത്തി പുസ്തകം 24-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ യിസ്ഹാക്കിന്റെയും റിബേക്കയുടേയും വിവാഹത്തെ പരാമർശിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. അവിടെ റിബേക്കയുടെ വീട്ടുകാർ യിസ്ഹാക്കിനു പൊന്നോ പണമോ ഒന്നും തന്നെ കൊടുത്തതായി കാണുന്നില്ല; എന്നാൽ, യിസ്ഹാക്കിന്റെ വീട്ടുകാർ റിബേക്കയ്ക്കാണ് കൊടുത്തത്. “ഒട്ടകങ്ങൾ കൂടിച്ചു തീർന്നപ്പോൾ അവൻ അരശേക്കൽ തൂക്കമുള്ള ഒരു പൊൻ മൂക്കുത്തിയും, അവളുടെ കൈയ്ക്കിടുവാൻ പത്തു ശേക്കൽ തൂക്കമുള്ള രണ്ടു പൊൻവളയും എടുത്തു അവളോടു, നീ ആരുടെ മകൾ, പറക; നിന്റെ അപ്പന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ ഞങ്ങൾക്കു രാപാർപ്പാൻ സ്ഥലം ഉണ്ടോ എന്നു ചോദിച്ചു”. (ഉല്പത്തി 24:22-23). “പിന്നെ ദാസൻ വെള്ളിയാരേണങ്ങളും പൊന്നാരേണങ്ങളും വസ്ത്രങ്ങളും എടുത്തു റിബേക്കയ്ക്കു കൊടുത്തു”. (ഉല്പത്തി 24:53).

തന്റെ ബുദ്ധിയും ധൈര്യവും ഉപയോഗിച്ച്, മോശയെ ഹവോന്റെ കയ്യിൽ നിന്നും രക്ഷിച്ചു, വളർത്തി വലുതാക്കിയ യോവേബേദിനെക്കുറിച്ച് കൃട്ടിക്കാലം മുതൽ നമ്മൾ കേട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. യിസ്രായേലിനു ന്യായപാലനം ചെയ്ത ദെബോറാ എന്ന പ്രവാചകി എന്നും നമ്മുടെ മനസ്സിൽ നിലനില്ക്കും. കർത്താവിന്റെ കാല്ക്കൽ ഇരുന്ന് അവന്റെ വചനം കേട്ടു കൊണ്ടിരുന്ന മറിയയും ഇവിടെ സ്ഥിരപ്പെട്ടവൾ തന്നെ. തന്റെ ജനത്തെ രക്ഷിപ്പാൻ വേണ്ടി, വരുന്നതെന്നും നേരിടാൻ തയ്യാറായ എസേമർ രാജ്ഞിയേയും, രാജ്ഞിസ്ഥാനം നഷ്ടപ്പെടേണ്ടി വന്നിട്ടും തന്റെ ആദർശം കൈവെടിയാൻ തയ്യാറാകാത്ത വസ്ഥി രാജ്ഞിയേയും നമുക്കു മറക്കുവാൻ സാധ്യമല്ല.

അന്നും ഇന്നും സ്ത്രീ ബുദ്ധിമതിയാണ്, ധൈര്യശാലിയുമാണ്. സ്ത്രീ, പുരുഷന്മാരെപ്പോലെ തന്നെ ഏതു മേഖലയിലും പ്രവർത്തിയ്ക്കുവാൻ കഴിവുള്ളവളുമാണ് എന്നുള്ളകാര്യം നാം പലപ്പോഴും വിസ്മയിച്ചുപോകുന്നില്ലേ?



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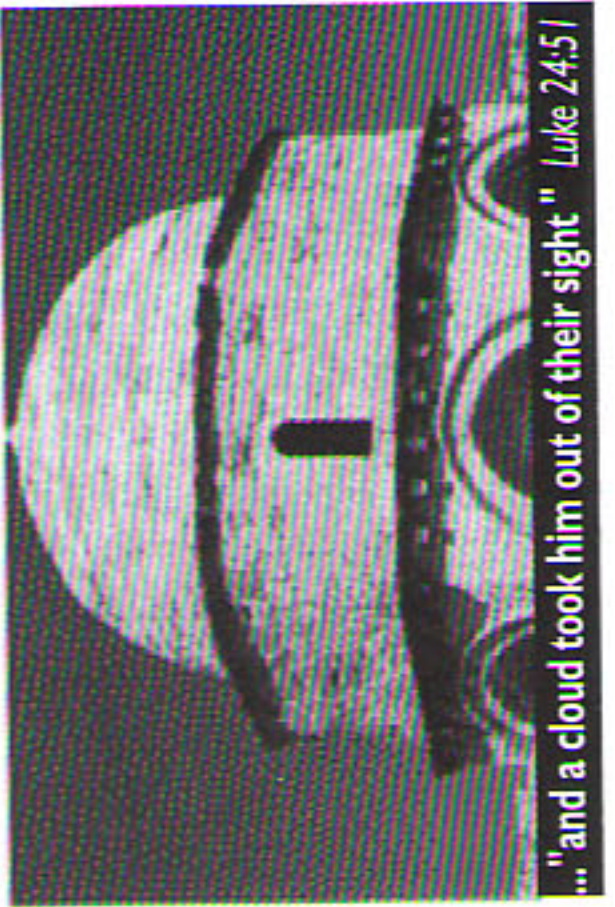
She gave birth... no place for them in the inn. Lk: 2:7



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



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



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



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ഭവനരഹിതരോടോപ്പം നവതി ആഘോഷിക്കുന്ന ഇടയൻ

ഡോ. സഖറിയാസ് മാർ തെയോഫിലസ് സഫ്രഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ
(ചെയർമാൻ, നവതി പ്രോജക്ട്)

നമ്മുടെ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ തിരുമേനി അടുത്ത ഏപ്രിൽ 27ന് തൊണ്ണൂറിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിക്കുകയാണ്. നവതിയുടെ പടവുകൾ തിരുമേനി അനായാസം കയറുന്നതിൽ ആഹ്ലാദിക്കാം, ആയുസ്സിന്റെ ഉടയവനെ മഹത്വപ്പെടുത്താം. സഭയായി ആനന്ദിക്കുവാനും ആഘോഷിക്കുവാനും ലഭ്യമായിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരമൂല്യഅവസരം. സുദീർഘമായ കാലഘട്ടം സഭയിലും സമൂഹത്തിലും ജനലക്ഷങ്ങളെ ചിരിപ്പിച്ചും ചിന്തിപ്പിച്ചും ചലിപ്പിച്ചും സ്ഥായിയായ സ്വാധീനം ചെലുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്ന അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ നവതി എങ്ങനെ ആഘോഷിക്കണം? ആനയും അമ്പാരിയും കൊട്ടും കുരവയും വെടിക്കെട്ടും വാദ്യഘോഷങ്ങളും ഒന്നുമേ അല്ല. ദരിദ്രരിൽ ദരിദ്രരായ 1500 പേർക്ക് ജാതിമതഭേദമന്യേ ഭവനം നിർമ്മിച്ചു നൽകി എല്ലാവരും സന്തോഷിക്കയും ദൈവത്തെ മഹത്വപ്പെടുത്തുകയും വേണം എന്നാണ് സഭാമക്കളുടെ തീരുമാനം. അതു നല്ലതുതന്നെ. എങ്ങനെ നടപ്പാക്കും?

എല്ലാവരും കൂടി ഒത്തുചേർന്നാൽ, കാര്യമായി ഒന്നു ശ്രമിച്ചാൽ നിഷ്പ്രയാസം സാധിക്കാവുന്നതേയുള്ളൂ. ആധുനിക നിർമ്മാണ ശൈലി ഉപയോഗിച്ച് Sitout, Drawing Room, Dining Room, Bed Room, Toilet, Kitchen എന്നിവയെല്ലാം ഉൾപ്പെട്ട ലളിതസുന്ദരമായ ഒരു ചെറുവീട് 60,000 രൂപയ്ക്ക് പൂർത്തിയാക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കും. പുകയില്ലാത്ത അടുപ്പം, Ring ഇറക്കിയുള്ള കക്കൂസും വൈദ്യുതീകരണവും, Plumbing കൂടെ ഗുണഭോക്താവ് നിർവ്വഹിച്ചാൽ ഒന്നാംതരം താമസമാക്കാം. ഇടവക വികാരിയുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ യുവാക്കളെ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തി ഒരു Navathy Home Volunteers Team ഉണ്ടാക്കണം. നവതി ഭവന നിർമ്മാണം ഇടവകയുടെ തന്നെ ഒരു പുനർനിർമ്മാണത്തിന് സഹായകമാകണം. എല്ലാവരും ഒത്തുചേർന്ന് ആഘോഷമായി നവതി ഭവനങ്ങൾ നിർമ്മിക്കണം.

അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഏബ്രഹാം മാർ പൗലോസ് തിരുമേനി വൈസ് ചെയർമാനായും റവ. പി.റ്റി. തോമസ് കൺവീനറായും സഭാസെക്രട്ടറി, സഭാട്രസ്റ്റിമാർ, സീനിയർ വികാരി ജനറാൾ എല്ലാ ഭദ്രാസന സെക്രട്ടറിമാരും ചേർന്നുള്ള 30 അംഗ നവതി പ്രോജക്ട് കമ്മിറ്റിക്ക് രൂപം നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. അടുത്ത ഏപ്രിൽ 27ന് 90 വീടുകളുടെ താക്കോൽ ദാനം നിർവ്വഹിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയണം. ഒരോ ഭദ്രാസത്തിലും ഭദ്രാസന എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായുടെ ചുമതലയിലായിരിക്കും പദ്ധതി നടപ്പിലാക്കുക. ഒരു പൊതുപ്ലാൻ എസ്റ്റിമേറ്റ്, സാധനങ്ങൾ മിതവിലയ്ക്ക് എവിടെ ലഭ്യമാകും തുടങ്ങിയ വിവ

രങ്ങളെല്ലാം convener -അറിയിക്കുന്നതാണ്. വീടുള്ളവരെല്ലാം വീടില്ലാത്ത ഒരാൾക്ക് വീടുണ്ടാക്കി കൊടുക്കുവാൻ തയ്യാറാകണം.

പിന്നത്തേക്കു മാറ്റിവയ്ക്കാതെ ഒരു വീടിനുള്ള തുകയോ, അതിൽ കവിഞ്ഞതോ കുറഞ്ഞതോ ചെക്ക് ആയോ ഡ്രാഫ്റ്റായോ "Metropolitan's Navathy Project" എന്ന പേരിൽ Navathy Project Office, Olivet, തിട്ടമേൽ, ചെങ്ങന്നൂർ 689 121, Kerala, India. എന്ന അഡ്രസ്സിൽ അയച്ചുകൊടുക്കണം. വിദേശത്തുള്ളവർക്ക് പണം അയക്കുന്നതിനു വേണ്ടി തിരുവല്ലയിലുള്ള Union Bank of India യിലെ FCNR Account No. 38930217000038 ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്താവുന്നതാണ്. (FC Reg. No. 052930109) മറ്റുള്ളവർക്ക് ചെങ്ങന്നൂരിലുള്ള Federal Bank Ltd. ലെ SB A/c No. 36585 ലൂടെയും UCO Bank ലൂടെയും പണം അയക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. തിരുവല്ല സഭാ ഓഫീസിൽ Navathy Project ന് ഒരു പ്രത്യേക Counter ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കും മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷനോടനുബന്ധിച്ച് മണൽപ്പുറത്തും പ്രത്യേക സ്റ്റാൾ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നതാണ് Navathy Project -മായി Telephone 0479-2452727 ലൂടെയും Website www.navathy.org ലൂടെയും navathy@gmail.com എന്ന E-mail ലൂടെയും ബന്ധപ്പെടാവുന്നതാണ്. എല്ലാ ഭദ്രാസനങ്ങളും നവതി ഫണ്ട് ഉദ്ഘാടനയോഗം ക്രമീകരിക്കുകയും ഓരോ ഇടവകയും കുറഞ്ഞത് നിത്യചെലവിന്റെ 30 ഇരട്ടിയെങ്കിലും ശേഖരിച്ച് സഭയെ ഭരമേൽപ്പിക്കണം. പുതുവർഷത്തിൽ നവതി ഫണ്ടിലൂടെ ഭവനദാനം നടത്തുവാൻ ഏവരും ശ്രദ്ധിക്കണം. ഇത് Sponsoring ന്റെ കാലമണലോ. ഒരുവീടോ, ഭവന സമുച്ചയമോ, ഒറ്റയ്ക്കോ, കൂടുംബമായോ ഇടവകയ്ക്കോ സ്ഥാപനത്തിനോ സ്പോൺസർ ചെയ്യാവുന്നതാണ്. സംഭാവന നൽകുന്ന എല്ലാവർക്കും രസീതും ഒരു വീടിനുള്ള മുഴുവൻ തുകയും നൽകുന്നവർക്ക് ആകർഷകമായ കൂപ്പണും നൽകുന്നതാണ് നവതി ഭവനം സംഭാവന ചെയ്യുന്നവരുടെ ലിസ്റ്റ് സഭാ താരകയിൽ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കുന്നതായിരിക്കും.

പങ്കിടലിന്റെ ആനന്ദം അനുഭവിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഈ സുവർണ്ണ അവസരം പാഴാക്കരുത്. സഭ ഒന്നായി ഏറ്റെടുക്കുന്ന അനുഗ്രഹിക്കപ്പെട്ട ജീവകാരുണ്യ പ്രവർത്തനത്തിൽ നിന്നു ആരും ഒഴിഞ്ഞു മാറരുത്, ഒന്നുചേർന്നു പണിയാം. നവതി ഭവനങ്ങൾ നമ്മുടെ ഭവനങ്ങൾക്കൊപ്പം എല്ലാവർക്കും ഉണ്ടാകട്ടെ, ഭവനങ്ങൾ എല്ലാവരും അനുഭവിക്കട്ടെ - കൊടുക്കുന്നതിന്റെയും വാങ്ങുന്നതിന്റെയും സന്തോഷം ♦

എക്യുമെനിസം - ഒരു വിശാലകൂട്ടായ്മ

റവ. ജോസഫ് അയിരുകുഴി

അപകടകരമായി വെട്ടിമുറിയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു സാമൂഹ്യ പരിസരത്താണ് നാമിന് ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. അതിന് വർഗ്ഗം, വർണ്ണം, ഭാഷ, സംസ്കാരം ആദിയായ അടിസ്ഥാനങ്ങളുണ്ടാവാം. സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ സമഗ്രസൗഹൃദം ഇന്ന് കൈമോശം വന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ സമഗ്രതയും ഐക്യവും ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിലൂടെയാണ് എക്യുമെനിസം അർത്ഥവത്താകുക.

ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടിച്ച ലോകത്തിന് ഒരു താളവും ലയവും ക്രമവും അതിലെ സകലജീവജാലങ്ങൾക്കും അതതിന്റെ ഇടവും സംലഭ്യമായിരുന്നു. മനുഷ്യന്റെ സ്വേച്ഛാപരമായ ഇടപെടലുകളാണ് ആ ഇമ്പം (harmony) തകരാറിലാക്കുന്നത്. ഈ സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ വിണ്ടെടുപ്പാണ് ദൈവം ക്രിസ്തുവിലൂടെ ആരംഭിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇത് ഒരു തുടർപ്രക്രിയയാണ്. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ ക്രിസ്തുവിനോട് ചേർന്ന് ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ പേരിൽ നിർവ്വഹിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടതാണ് ഈ ദൗത്യം. ദൈവ സ്വരൂപത്തിലും സാദൃശ്യത്തിലും സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യനിൽ തന്റെ അധികാരവും, സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യവും, ഇച്ഛാശക്തിയും, സൃഷ്ടിസാധ്യതയും എല്ലാം ദൈവം നിക്ഷേപിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. ഭൂമിയിൽ ദൈവസാന്നിധ്യത്തിന്റെ ഉറപ്പാണ് മനുഷ്യനിലെ ദൈവസാദൃശ്യം. ദൈവത്തോട് വിധേയപ്പെട്ട് ഭരിക്കാനും, പ്രതിനിധിയായും, സ്ഥാനപതിയായും, ഗൃഹവിചാരകനായും, ഇടയനായും പലവ്യത്യസ്ത റോളുകളിൽ ദൗത്യം നിറവേറ്റാനാണ് മനുഷ്യൻ കൂടും ബമായി വിളിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇവിടെ സ്ത്രീ പുരുഷ ഭേദമോ ജാതിവ്യത്യാസമോ മറ്റേതെങ്കിലും പരിഗണനകളോ കാണുന്നില്ല. ഇവിടെ മനുഷ്യനാണ് കാർമ്മികൻ - ഭൂമി കർമ്മ മണ്ഡലവും. ഒരു ഗൃഹവിചാരകന്റെ വിശ്വസ്തതയും, ഇടയന്റെ കാര്യക്ഷമതയും രാജാവിന്റെ നീതിയും സ്ഥാനാപതിയുടെ കുറും മനുഷ്യനിൽ നിന്ന് പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. ഭൂമിയിലുള്ള സർവ്വചരാചരങ്ങളേയും ദൈവത്തിനുവേണ്ടി ഒരു ട്രസ്റ്റ് എന്ന നിലയിൽ പരിപാലിക്കുകയാണ് സൃഷ്ടി വ്യവസ്ഥയിലെ മനുഷ്യധർമ്മം. ത്രിതല ബന്ധമാണ് മനുഷ്യനുള്ളത്. (1) ദൈവത്തോട് (2) മനുഷ്യനോട് (3) പ്രകൃതിയോട്. ദൈവത്തോടും, ഇതര മനുഷ്യരോടും സകലസൃഷ്ടികളോടും ചേർന്ന് ദൈവത്തെ ആരാധിക്കുമ്പോൾ അത് ജീവന്റെ തന്നെ ആഘോഷമായിത്തീരുകയാണ്. ഇതാണ് യഥാർത്ഥ ശാബ്ദത്. സകലസൃഷ്ടികളുടെയും ലക്ഷ്യം ഈ ശാബ്ദത്തനുഭവമാണ്. അതാണ് വിശാല ഐക്യദർശനം; ദൈവഹിതത്തിന്റെ മർമ്മവും. "അത് സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലും ഭൂമിയിലുമുള്ളത് എല്ലാം പിന്നെയും ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ ഒന്നാ

“മറ്റ് മതങ്ങളെ അകറ്റിനിർത്തിയും ശത്രുക്കളായും പരിഗണിച്ചു കൊണ്ടല്ല.....പരസ്പര ബഹുമാനത്തോടും സ്നേഹത്തോടും കൂടിയുള്ള ഒരു നിലപാട്.....സ്വയം അറിയാനും മറ്റുള്ളവരെ അറിയാനും, തിരുത്തുവാനും തിരുത്തപ്പെടുവാനും, കണ്ടെത്തുവാനും കാണിച്ചു കൊടുക്കുവാനും കഴിയുന്ന തരത്തിലുള്ള താകണം.....സ്പർദ്ധ വളർത്തുന്നതല്ല പകരം ജീവനെ ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതും ജീവനിഷേധിയായ എല്ലാറ്റിനോടും പോരാടുന്നതുമായ ഒരു കൂട്ടായ്മ ”

യിചേർക്കേ എന്നിങ്ങനെ കാലസമ്പൂർണ്ണതയിലെ വ്യവസ്തകായി കൊണ്ടു തന്നെ” (എഫെ 1:10)

തിരുവചനം ലോകത്തെ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഭവന (Oikos) മായി കാണുന്നു. ഈ ഭവനത്തിന്റെ നടത്തിപ്പിനെയാണ് ഐക്യമെന്നെ (Oikumene) എന്ന വാക്ക്കൊണ്ട് അർത്ഥമാക്കുക. അതിൽ നിന്നുമാണ് എക്യുമെനിസം ഉത്ഭവിച്ചത്. എക്യുമെനിസം ഒരു കൂട്ടായ്മയാണ് - പൊതുവായുള്ളത് - എല്ലാവരുടെയും എന്നർത്ഥം വരുന്ന പദത്തിന്റെ (Koinos) തത്ത്വമാണ് കൂട്ടായ്മ (Koinonia). പ്രഥമമായി സഭകൾക്കുള്ളിലും സഭകൾ തമ്മിലും ഉള്ള കൂട്ടായ്മയായി എക്യുമെനിസത്തെ മനസ്സിലാക്കാം. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മിഷൻ (Missio Dei) ചെയ്യുന്നവരെന്ന നിലയിൽ തമ്മിലടിക്കാതെയും മത്സരിക്കാതെയും കൈകോർത്ത് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന ശൈലി. CSI, CNI, മാർത്തോമ്മാ കൂട്ടായ്മാബന്ധത്തെ ഈ നിലയിലുള്ള ഒന്നായി കാണണം. അതൊരു ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ദാനമായി സ്വീകരിക്കണം.

എക്യുമെനിസത്തിന് അതിനേക്കാൾ ആഴത്തിലുള്ള അർത്ഥമുണ്ട്. അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായി സകലസൃഷ്ടികളോടും ഉണ്ടാവേണ്ട ഒരു ബന്ധത്തിന്റെ സൂചന ഈ വാക്കിലുണ്ട്. വിശ്വാസികൾ തമ്മിൽ ഉള്ള കൗദാശികമായ കൂട്ടായ്മയാണ് (Sacramental Fellowship) ഇതിൽ ഒന്നാമത്തേത്. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ വിശ്വസിക്കുകയും എന്നാൽ മറ്റുമതങ്ങളിൽ അംഗങ്ങളായിരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നവരോടുള്ള ഒരു സെക്കുലർ കൂട്ടായ്മ (Secular fellowship) സാധ്യമാണെന്ന് ഡോ. എം.എം. തോമസ് വാദിക്കുന്നു. ക്രിസ്തു പ്രഘോഷിച്ച ദൈവരാജ്യമൂല്യങ്ങൾക്ക് വേണ്ടി ത്യാഗപരമായ നിലപാട് എടുക്കുന്നവരേയും ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തി ഒരു വിശാല കൂട്ടായ്മയ്ക്കും സാധ്യത നിഷേധിക്കാനാവില്ല.

ദൈവം സകല മനുഷ്യരുടെയും പൊതുസ്വത്ത് ആകയാൽ ആ ദൈവത്തെ കേന്ദ്രമാക്കിയും പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് സകലസൃഷ്ടിയേയും നവീകരിക്കുന്നവൻ എന്ന നിലയിൽ അവനെ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചുമുള്ള ഐക്യദർശനത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് ഗൗരവമായ പഠനങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട്. WCC തന്നെ ക്രിസ്തു കേന്ദ്രീകൃതമായ വിഷയങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് ദൈവം, പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ്, ദൈവകൃപ തുടങ്ങിയ വിഷയങ്ങൾക്ക് പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുന്നതിൽ നിന്ന് ഐക്യമെനിസം കൊടുക്കുന്ന ഊന്നലുകളിൽ വ്യത്യാസം സംഭവിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത് കാണാം. ലോകത്തിന്റെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ സഭകളുടെ മാത്രം പ്രശ്നങ്ങളല്ല. അതിന്റെ പരിഹാരങ്ങളും സഭകൾക്ക് മാത്രമായി

നൽകാനും കഴിയില്ല. ഇന്നത്തെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ ആത്യന്തികമായി ഗുണപരമായ ജീവനെ ഹനിക്കുന്ന തരത്തിലുള്ളതാണ്. ആഗോളീകരണം, വർഗ്ഗീയത, മിലിട്ടറിസം, പരിസ്ഥിതിനാശം തുടങ്ങിയ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒറ്റക്കെട്ടായ പോരാട്ടമാണാവശ്യം. ഇത് പ്രാദേശികവും അന്തർദേശീയവുമായ തലങ്ങളിൽ നടക്കണം. അതുകൊണ്ട് ഇന്ന് ആവശ്യമായിരിക്കുന്നത് 'ജീവകേന്ദ്രീകൃതമായ' (Bio-centred ecumenism) ഒരു എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ ദർശനമാണ്.

ഭാരതത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിടത്തോളം മതബഹുലത ഒരു സജീവ പ്രശ്നം തന്നെയാണ്. മറ്റ് മതങ്ങളെ അകറ്റിനിർത്തിയും ശത്രുക്കളായും പരിഗണിച്ചു കൊണ്ടല്ല പകരം സംവാദാത്മകമായ ഒരു നിലപാടിൽ പരസ്പരബഹുമാനത്തോടും സ്നേഹത്തോടും കൂടിയുള്ള ഒരു നിലപാട് ആണ് അഭികാമ്യമെന്നതിന് തർക്കമില്ല. ഈ dialogical position സ്വയം അറിയാനും മറ്റുള്ളവരെ അറിയാനും, തിരുത്തുവാനും തിരുത്തപ്പെടുവാനും, കണ്ടെത്തുവാനും കാണിച്ചു കൊടുക്കുവാനും കഴിയുന്ന തരത്തിലുള്ളതാകണം. ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നും ആരംഭിച്ച് ജീവനെ കേന്ദ്രമാക്കി നീതി-സമാധാനത്താൽ പ്രേരിതമായി സകലസൃഷ്ടിക്കും വേണ്ടിയുള്ള ഒരു പ്രസ്ഥാനമായി എക്യുമെനിസം തീരണം. ജാതി മത സ്പർദ്ധ വളർത്തുന്നതല്ല പകരം ജീവനെ ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതും ജീവനിഷേധിയായ എല്ലാറ്റിനോടും പോരാടുന്നതുമായ ഒരു കൂട്ടായ്മ വളർത്തുന്ന ദർശനമാണ് ആവശ്യം. അയൽക്കൂട്ടങ്ങളിലൂടെയും അടിസ്ഥാന ക്രൈസ്തവ സമൂഹങ്ങളിലൂടെയും ഒക്കെ ഇതു സാധിച്ചെടുക്കണം.

നിസ്സഹായത വളർത്തുന്ന ഒരു യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ് ദാരിദ്ര്യം. ഒരു ന്യൂനപക്ഷത്തിന് പല ഇരട്ടി ജീവിതസൗകര്യങ്ങൾ വർദ്ധിക്കുമ്പോൾ അടിസ്ഥാന ആവശ്യങ്ങൾ

പോലും നിഷേധിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന ബഹുഭൂരിപക്ഷത്തെ അവഗണിക്കാനാവുകയില്ല. അനുദിനം നടന്നു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന കർഷകആത്മഹത്യകൾ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ മേഖലയിലെയും തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിലെയും അസംതൃപ്തി, ആദിവാസി ദളിത്ജനവിഭാഗങ്ങളിലെ അസ്വസ്ഥത ഇവയെല്ലാം എക്യുമെനിസത്തിന്റെ ആത്മാവിനെ തകർക്കുന്നതാണ്. ഇന്ന് സഭയ്ക്ക് രണ്ടു സ്നാനപനങ്ങൾ ഏല്ക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ടെന്ന് എക്യുമെനിക്കൻ ചിന്തകനായ ഫാ. അലോഷ്യസ് പെരസ് പറയുന്നു. (1) ഏഷ്യൻ ആത്മീയതയുടെ യോർദ്ദാനിൽ (2) ഏഷ്യൻ ദാരിദ്ര്യത്തിന്റെ കാൽവരി ക്രൂശിൽ. സാമൂഹ്യ സാമ്പത്തിക കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ നിന്ന് അടിച്ചോടിക്കപ്പെട്ടവരോട് ചേർന്ന് അതിർത്തിയിൽ സന്നിഹിതനായ യേശുവിന്റെ നിലപാടാണ് സഭയ്ക്ക് ആവശ്യം. എന്നാൽ ഇന്ന് സഭ ആരുടെ കൂടെ?

എല്ലാ സൃഷ്ടികൾക്കും അതാതിന്റെ ഇടം നൽകിയാണ് ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടിച്ചത്. ആ ഇടം (space) ഇന്ന് പലതിനും നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. പക്ഷിമൃഗാദികൾക്കും, കുന്നിനും, താഴ്വരയ്ക്കും, വയലിനും, നദിക്കും, അതിന്റെ ജീവിത പരിസരങ്ങളും അവകാശങ്ങളും താളക്രമങ്ങളും അന്യമായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. മനുഷ്യന്റെ അത്യാഗ്രഹത്തിന്റെ അസ്ഥിപഞ്ജരങ്ങളായി അവ തീർന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടിച്ച സകലതിനോടും ജൈവപരമായ (Organic) ബന്ധത്തിലാണ് മനുഷ്യാസ്തിത്വം നിലനിൽക്കേണ്ടത്. ആയതിനാൽ ഒരു പരിസ്ഥിതി സൗഹൃദശൈലി വളർത്തിയെടുക്കാൻ നേതൃത്വം കൊടുക്കാൻ സഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിയണം. ഇത് ഒരു Ecumenical praxis ആവണം. പരസ്പരാശ്രിതത്വവും പുരകത്വവും വളർത്തി ജീവന്റെ സമൃദ്ധിയിലേക്ക് ലോകത്തെ നയിക്കുന്നതാവട്ടെ നമ്മുടെ എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ ദർശനം ♦

Reason Behind the Season

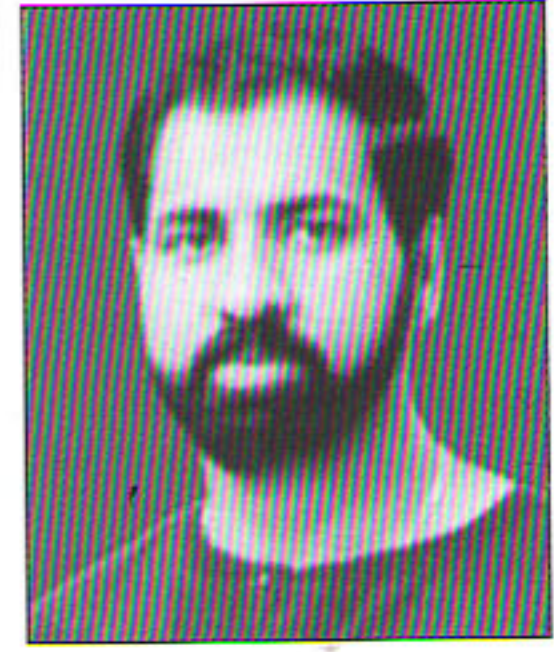
Attorney Lal Varghese, Diocesan Council Member, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

*Each day is wonderful and brings joy to our lives.
But we fail to see the beauty of each day in our lives.
God created everything and found that
it was beautiful.
He created man in His own image.
He created woman from man's own body
to be with man.
God wanted both man and woman to be with God.
God trusted and made man in charge of all
He created.
But man sinned and disobeyed God by trying
to become God.
Man failed to see the beauty of things God created
for him to enjoy.
He failed to live in submission to God and failed
to listen to God.
By seeing man's desire and deeds God repented
for creating man.*

*The creator came in search of his creation in order to
save it from sin.
The creation failed to recognize God and
crucified Him.
Still we fail to recognize the 'Agape' of the God.
At times we recognize the 'Agape' of God in our lives.
Then we feel that the world is so beautiful.
All the creations He made for us are so beautiful.
We feel that they make our life happy day by day.
So, let us keep on reflecting the
'reason behind the season'.
Let us reflect God's love during all holidays.
Let us share the love of God with other
creations around us.
Let us pray that the providence of God be with us
and our families.*

നേരുന്നൂ മംഗളം...

ജോസൻ ജോർജ്ജ്, ഡാളസ്സ്
Marthoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch



(ടെക്സാസിലെ ഡാളസ്സ് മാർത്തോമ്മാ (ഫാർമേഴ്സ്ബ്രാഞ്ച്) പള്ളിയുടെ പത്താം വാർഷിക ആഘോഷവേളയിൽ, ഇന്നേയോളം നടത്തിയ സർവ്വശക്തന്റെ കൃപകളെ നന്ദിപൂർവ്വം സ്തരിച്ചുകൊണ്ടും, ഇതുവരെ ഈ ഇടവകയിൽ സ്തുത്യർഹ സേവനം അനുഷ്ഠിച്ച ബഹുമാനപ്പെട്ട അച്ചന്മാരെ സ്മരണപൂർവ്വം ഓർത്തുകൊണ്ടും.....)

ആശംസകൾ മംഗളാശംസകൾ ഇന്ദ്ര-ദശവത്സരാഘോഷത്തിനെന്താശംസകൾ. നോർത്തമേരിയ്ക്കക്കഭിമാനമായ് നമ്മുടെ മാർത്തോമ്മാപ്പള്ളി വിളങ്ങിപ്പോവാൻ മിത്രങ്ങളേ നിങ്ങൾ ഓർക്കുന്നുവോ നമ്മൾ എത്രയോനാൾ കണ്ട സുന്ദരസ്വപ്നങ്ങൾ ഇത്രമേൽ സാഹചര്യമായതല്ലേ, അതിനെത്രമേൽ പാടുകൾ പെട്ടതല്ലേ.

ഏഴെട്ടുഏക്കറിൽ 'പാഴ്നിലം' വാങ്ങി, പഴിയേറ്റു നാം ആദ്യമേറെ, എന്നാകിലും അന്നേമുതൽ നമ്മളൊന്നിച്ചു, കൈകോർത്തു മുന്നോട്ടുതന്നെ കൃതിയ്ക്കയല്ലോ.

കാലങ്ങളിത്രമേൽ പിന്നിട്ടു നാം, ദശ-വത്സരമാഘോഷമാക്കിപ്പോവാൻ നമ്മൾ, എത്രയനുഗ്രഹങ്ങൾ നമ്മിൽ വന്ദഴ പോലെ ചൊരിഞ്ഞു പരൻ.

വിശ്വാസയാത്രയിൽ നമ്മെ നയിക്കുവാൻ വിശ്വസ്തരാം ദൂരനേതൃത്വവും, പിന്നെ നിസ്വാർത്ഥസേവനമേകും യുവജനം ഈ സഭയ്ക്കെന്നും അലങ്കാരമായിട്ടും.

പിച്ചവച്ചിട്ടുമിടവകയ്ക്കായ് 'നൈനാൻ-അച്ചനെ' തന്നതാം വൻകൃപയാൽ ചര്യം. സർഗ്ഗപ്രതിഭയാം 'സാജനച്ചൻ' പിന്നെ-സ്വർഗ്ഗീയ സംഗീതം നമ്മിൽ പകർന്നേകി.

അത്യത്ഭുതമാം അറിവിൻ നിറവായ് വന്ന- 'മാത്യു അച്ചനേയും' നാമെന്നും സ്തരിച്ചിട്ടും. യുവമാനസങ്ങളിൽ ആത്മീയചിന്ത തൻ-നവകാന്തിയേകുവാൻ വന്നു 'സജിയച്ചൻ'.

ആത്മാവിലേയ്ക്കു കിനിഞ്ഞിറങ്ങിപ്പോന്നാ-രാത്മീയ വാഗ്ധാരണിയ്ക്കെന്നുമുറവയാം- 'അനിലച്ചനെ' നമുക്കേകിയതാം പരൻ ഇനിമേലിലും നമുക്കേകിട്ടും വൻകൃപ.

കൺമണിയാം 'ലേയക്കുട്ടി' യുമായ് ഇതാ വെൺമണിയിൽ നിന്നുമെത്തി 'നൈനു അച്ചൻ'. മിഴികളിൽ സ്മരണത്തിൻ കടലൊളിപ്പിച്ചെന്നും അഴകുറ്റ പുഞ്ചിരി തുകുമി 'കൊച്ചച്ചൻ'.

ഓരോ ചെറുതും വലുതും നന്മകൾ വേരുറപ്പിച്ചു തളിർക്കുന്നിതോർമ്മയിൽ. ഓരോരോ നാഴികകളും കടന്നു നാം-നേരിന്റെ പാതയിൽ എന്നും മുന്നേറിടാം.

തിന്മകളെല്ലാം കുഴിച്ചുമുടി, നമ്മൾ-നന്മതൻ വിത്തുകൾ എങ്ങും വിതച്ചിടാം. നമ്മുടെ ഭാവിതലമുറയിലൂടെയും നാം-നമ്മുടെ നാളുകൾ വാർത്തെടുത്തിടണം.

(* നൈനുഅച്ചന്റെ ഏകമകൾ നാലുവയസ്സുള്ള 'ലേയമോൾ')
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നിങ്ങൾക്കു് അറിയാമോ?

1. ബൈബിൾ ആദ്യമായി അച്ചടിച്ചതാരു്? ജർമ്മനിയിലെ ഗുട്ടൻ ബർഗ്ഗ്, 1445-ൽ.
2. ഗുട്ടൻ ബർഗ്ഗ് അച്ചടിച്ച ബൈബിൾ? ലത്തീൻ പരിഭാഷയായ വൾഗേററ്റ് - ബൈബിൾ.
3. ബൈബിൾ അദ്യ്യായങ്ങളായി വിഭജിച്ചതു് ആരു്? എന്നു്? കാർഡിനൽ ഹ്യൂഗോ, 1204-ൽ.
4. ബൈബിൾ വാക്യങ്ങളായി വിഭജിച്ചതു് ആരു്? എന്നു്? ഫ്രഞ്ച് ചുങ്കാരനായ റോബർട്ട് സ്റ്റീഫൻ, 1548-ൽ.
5. ബൈബിളിൽ പരാമർശിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള ഏറ്റവും വലിയ പേർ? മഹേർ ശാലോൻ ഹാൾബസ്റ്റ്. (യെശ:8:1).
6. 'ദൈവം' എന്നു് ബൈബിളിൽ എത്ര പ്രാവശ്യം പറഞ്ഞിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു? 1855.
7. ബൈബിളിൽ പറഞ്ഞിരിയ്ക്കുന്ന അത്ഭുതങ്ങൾ എത്ര? പഴയനിയമത്തിൽ-60, പുതിയനിയമത്തിൽ 48
8. മലയാള ഭാഷയിലെ ബൈബിൾ പരിഭാഷ എന്നു്? ആദ്യ പരിഭാഷ 1811-ലെ സത്യവേദ-പുസ്തകം എന്ന പേരിൽ കോട്ടയം C.M.S പ്രസ്സിൽ നിന്ന് പ്രൊട്ടസ്റ്റന്റുകാർ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ചതാണു്.



"It's not about how much you do, but how much love you put into what you do that counts. Life isn't worth living, unless lived for other people."

Mother Theresa

HOME & GARDEN TIPS

MRS. SHIRLEY CHACKALAMANNIL, NEW JERSEY MTC

Easy tips to start a perennial Garden

Why Perennials?

If you are new to the world of gardening, you may not be aware of the many benefits that growing perennials can offer. Perennial plants are the one that come back every season. Except in the temperate zones, the perennials die back each year after a hard frost and after the winter they come back better and bigger. Some perennials live for only a few years while others remain vital and attractive for decades. Though perennials initially cost more than annuals to purchase, they are much cheaper in the long term, because you do not have to buy them every year, whereas you have to buy the annuals every season. Also with perennials you can simply divide or take cuttings from your existing perennials to make your garden bigger for the coming years. Perennial garden can be a time saver also because you do not have to replant each year. They are the heart of most flower gardens because of their ability to flower and spread year after year. They invite birds, butterflies, and humans alike. There are thousands of garden perennials and more are being developed each year by careful breeding.

In this issue we will be focusing on the preparation for starting a perennial garden. In the next issue we will be looking at a few of the perennials that are undemanding, requires little maintenance, and reward you with a kaleidoscope of color year after year.

Choosing the right location for a perennial garden

Although perennials are very adaptable, they need to be planted in a spot that meets their basic needs for the intensity and amount of light, proper drainage and appropriate nutrition. Many perennials prefer "full sun" needs eight hours of sunshine a day. Those perennials that prefer shade can be grown with about five hours of sunshine and dappled shade the rest of the day. The garden should be in an area that is convenient to tend so that watering, fertilizing and weeding will be easier for you.

Preparing a perennial bed

Even if most of the perennials are tough and hardy, the better environment we provide for them, the better they grow fast, live long and produce more flowers. Taking time to prepare the soil in the proper way will get your perennials off to a good start. To prepare a planting bed, first remove any sod from the area, dig the soil to a depth of at least 12 inches. Remove any rocks and break up large clumps of soil. Check the pH of the soil (pH meters for the soil is available in most of the garden centers). A soil with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0 is appropriate for a perennial garden.

Add fertilizers and soil conditioners as needed. Fertilizers supply nutrients to plants. The three major ones are nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium and identified on the containers as N, P, and K, respectively. Majority of the perennials thrive in soil that has equal levels of N, P, and K. The soil conditioners improve the soils texture and consistency. If the soil is mostly heavy clay or sandy then they are not good for growing perennials. Generally there are three kinds of soils; sandy, clay and loamy soil. Sandy soils are extremely coarse. It is extremely porous. Hence this kind of soil cannot retain water long enough for the roots to absorb it. Clay soil is on the other hand is very fine, ultra-microscopic in size and retain huge quantities of water for a very long period. After a heavy rain, clay soil can take hours and days to drain and they are impervious to air. Ideal soil will be rich and loamy with 50 percent organic and mineral matter, 25 percent air space and 25 percent water. The most commonly used soil conditioners are leaf mold, compost, peat moss and cow manure. These soil conditioners also add nutrients to the soil. Builder's sand, Vermiculite and perlite with combination of the soil conditioners are used to lighten heavy clay soils and improve aeration.

You could start preparing your perennial garden bed when the weather is mild outside. If you live in a place where there is winter, you could start preparing for your perennial garden by end of April (after the frost), so that you could start your perennial garden by early to middle of May. In the April issue of the Messenger Magazine we will focus on choosing the low maintenance plants, how to start seeding, transplanting and buying the right perennials for your garden along with tips as to how to maintain the garden both during the growing period and the dormant period.

Do Not Go Over Your Vineyard A Second Time

Jason V. Cherian, Trinity MTC, Houston

“Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.” (Levi.: 19:10) This is a commandment God gave Israelites through Moses. If we look at the commandments we find that a lot of them are related to how you should treat the poor and aliens compassionately. This shows God’s ultimate concern for the poor. I think this commandment is more relevant in the present world than any time before.

One of the biggest challenges facing some of the developing countries is poverty. Millions in the present world don’t have the basic necessities of life—food, clothing and shelter. And I think that is ‘the biggest challenge facing the Christian church today’. Our fight is not against other churches or religions; our fight is against poverty, ignorance and exploitation. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse (Prov.: 28:27) Those who show mercy towards the poor, lend for God. He will pay them back (Prov.: 19:17). So this is a good opportunity to lend some money to God, so that one day we will get it back with profit.

According to the Indian Census Bureau, the Indian population has already passed the milestone of a billion. And the sad part of it is that 40% of them live in poverty. When I say poverty, the older generation may know how bad it is. The younger Indian generation in USA may not have a real picture. Recently, my 7-year-old daughter asked me “Are there kids in India who eat from the garbage?” It is natural for them to be unable to comprehend that sort of desperation. I hope this young generation will develop a compassion and concern for them.

When I first heard ‘Every Marthomite is a missionary’ I was really impressed by the vision behind the statement. But how can we become good missionaries? I think we have to be Good Samaritans as a first step towards that Goal. Jesus never preached to any one without considering their primary need. Gospel to a hungry stomach is like pouring water over a pot turned upside down. The first century church was a sharing church. W.C.C. (World Council of Churches) had a slogan R.S.S. (resource sharing system) based on the need for social justice. I think the church should be like that. Even our church buildings should be modified according to this vision. The first missionary, apostle Peter said, ‘I don’t have gold or silver, but I have the power of Jesus Christ.’ So he asked the paralyzed man to get up and walk. Now Christian churches have gold, silver and even platinum. But it looks as though they have lost the

power and vision of Christ. This could be the basic challenge facing Christianity in the current era.

Without becoming good Samaritans we cannot be good missionaries. The Bible says if we receive more, we are accountable for more. It may be money, abilities, or power. Jesus Christ is perceived as a socialist by many. He is the one who said ‘love your neighbor like yourself, and if you have two, share one with those who don’t have’.

Recently I watched a program about an American lady and her daughter doing missionary work among orphan children in the streets of Calcutta. Their organization is called Calcutta Mercy Ministries (www.buntain.org) Ms. Buntain said that every time she goes to a grocery store in the USA, she weeps. What a sincere heart—because she has seen kids digging in the garbage for food.

The biggest slum in the world is in Bombay, We have a project there to accommodate orphans. And we have one in Orissa called Kalahandi Mission Project. These are mere representation of our church’s compassion to the needy and the marginalized. I think every Mar Thomite should sponsor one child. If we don’t go over our vineyard a second time, there will be plenty for others to pick and save for times of trouble. If we close our eyes to the lack of these basic needs, how can we claim to be ‘Christ followers’?

If we take a step towards this goal of being missionaries (not preaching but acting), we will be blessed, the recipients will be blessed and our mission will be accomplished. And we will be facing the challenge of the hour. James 2:14-17: “What does it profit my brethren, if someone says he has faith but doesn’t have works? Can faith save him? If brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled’, but you do not give them the things which are needed for their body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself if it doesn’t have works is dead.”

It is very clear according to the Bible that little things we do for our brethren are the biggest treasure we are ever going to have. God says he will reward every one according to their work. Mathew 25:39-40: “When did we see you hungry, thirsty or sick and come to you?” Then the king will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, as much as you did to one of the least of these brethren, you did it to me.’ And he separated those people to the right side to enjoy the heavenly kingdom.” So when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory and separates the Nations between right and left, where will we stand? Left or right, there is no crown without cross. Can we obey and be faithful to man and God? May his grace help us to fulfill our mission!! ■

Mexico Mission Trip 2006

Diana Thomas

Mission volunteers from St. Peter's MTC, NJ; St. Thomas MTC, NY; Los Angeles MTC, CA; and Canadian MTC, Toronto, Canada, participated in the Mexico Mission trip.

Yo (oooooooooooo) tengo un amigo que me ama, me ama,
me ama

Yo tengo un amigo que me ama

Su nombre es Jesus

I have a friend who loves me, loves me, loves me

I have a friend who loves me

His name is Jesus

We banked on the island like a band of gypsies carrying guitars, boxes of Spanish bibles, workbooks, crayons, glue, and plastic toys. There were coolers and raw chicken, pounds of onions, tomatoes and jalapenos, key limes, and ice tea powder mix. We were equipped to teach, to learn, to feed, and to celebrate with people we never met in a place we did not know. Mar Thoma youth across the North American continent, led by Rev. P. Y. Mathews, came together to give all that we carried in our hearts and in our hands. We have a friend named Jesus, who loves us, and we shared His life and His love like the parts of our caravan.

We had a green tent for VBS at each of the three islands we visited. Tents are intimate spaces in unfamiliar places. There is a sense of closeness and safety in a tent where the sun's rays are shielded and the animals stay away. The children gathered inside for the day's Bible lesson about the paralyzed man who was healed by Jesus. The missionaries, with the help of translators, reenacted the scene with a short skit which showed how the faith of the paralyzed man's friends prompted them to bring him to Jesus. A volunteer from the group of children played the role of the paralyzed man. He was lifted up and brought to Jesus to be healed. Afterward, the children were taught Spanish VBS songs in much of the same way that Mar Thoma children are taught new songs—with the aid of a CD player and CD. However, it was the musical God-given talent of the missionaries that sealed the songs in the children's memories. Their voices resonated throughout the island.

Meanwhile, volunteer cooks stayed in the make-shift kitchens concocting coveted ice tea drinks from a powder mix, key limes, and sugar. The adult islanders prepared lunch. Chicken was peeled and marinated, and put on rustic charcoal grills. Tomatoes, onions and peppers were transformed to spicy pica de gallo. At break time, the children formed a line for cold ice tea and sweet bread, and then they returned to the tents for arts and crafts, making wooden crossed necklaces, and drawing churches on lined

paper. Older kids were pulled aside for vocational training which included medical preparation and computer hardware training. They were taught how to rescue a drowning victim, treat a wound, and save a choking victim. They were also shown hygiene methods such as oral care. Computer hardware training included opening the tower and monitor and describing the different parts and functions of the machine.

At the end of the day, the young and the old came together for prayer and a feast. It was truly a celebration. Then we packed our things, got into the row boat for a brief ride across the river, and headed out on the big yellow school bus to our hotel. Singing continued on our ride home. We sang worship songs and conversed. Our group was made up of people in different fields which included finance, information technology, and social work. There were also students, aspiring medical professionals and lawyers. We also learned a lot about the Mexico Mission as we talked to Baby Uncle, our silent and contemplative guide, who led us throughout the trip.

Baby Uncle, officially known as George Kurian, is the founder of the missions. The story begins with the Holy Spirit leading him to the edge of the US where he met a woman who was crying. She was upset because she, like many island women, needed help as she dealt with her drunken husband. Baby Uncle found these people in physical and spiritual need and approached the Mar Thoma Church for support. He has befriended the Mexican people and they trust him. There were a lot of teen pregnancies, and alcohol abuse among the men. However, since the Mar Thoma Church has become involved throughout these islands, many of these vices have disappeared or decreased significantly.

There is much lost in the translation of a mission trip on paper. Reading about it will not fully convey the ambience during a boat ride, the warmth of the gulf water during a drenched game of football, or the frustration of not being able to speak fluent Spanish and the delightful presence of translators. The smell of key limes and the sticky feeling of them on your hands create everlasting memories. Experiencing the shy smile of a child after you fasten a wooden cross around his neck, or coloring with the children on the floor of the tent conveys love in all its sweet simplicity. The sound of those children singing has been committed to our memories forever.

The most interesting aspect about the mission trip is the affect it has on the missionaries. We all go to help and

(Continued on page 38)

Meaningful Youth-hood

Sarosh Koshy, NJ MTC (Sermon delivered on Youth Sunday 2006)

Stand before you on this Youth Sunday, with immense joy and overwhelmed with nostalgia. I happened to be one among the fortunate to be part of the Marthoma Yuvajana Sakhyam in the nineteen-eighties. It was a time in the Sakhyam when the quest for theological clarity and a willingness to commit one's life to the calling for mission reached one of its zeniths. It was a time of great fervor. Many of the youth of that period went on to ordained ministry and others to varied fields of social ministry. The influence of those times refused to go away even from the lives of the people who went on to pursue many of the secular careers. The ethos of the eighties challenged our parish priests to grapple with deeper meanings of the gospel and its implications for our context. They drew us to the Sakhyam through their bold interventions in the parish life, gripping sermons and in-depth bible studies. The central leadership of the Sakhyam led us through life-changing sessions and exposures that convinced us to commit our lives towards the mission and renewal of the church. After the Yuvajana Sakhyam days, I have pursued my vocation with so many movements and organizations. But the faith grounding of evangelical social gospel of the Marthoma Church that the Sakhyam bestowed me became my rudder, capable of seeing me through all the turbulences of life.

This youth Sunday, the theme selected by the Yuvajana Sakhyam is "Meaningful Youth-hood." The gospel reading is from the gospel of Saint Matthew, chapter 6, verses 24-34, which is part of the "sermon on the mount." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus unveils the alternative vision of the Kingdom of God. The Jesus' vision of the Kingdom is diametrically opposite to how we envision our values of personal engagement and public governance. The inheritors of the kingdom are the poor, those who mourn, the peacemakers, those who are hungry for righteousness. The beatitudes—the blessedness—give us the vision of a new humanity or the Kingdom Community.

The verse I have chosen for our reflection is Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, "But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Along with the verse from Luke 20:25, "Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's," these two have come to be the most misinterpreted and misused verses in the Bible. "All these things will be given to you as well" has become one of the defining verses to a way of Bible interpretation that have come to be known as "prosperity gospel". The idea behind the prosperity gospel is that God rewards people with wealth for their acceptance of God. The major contradiction here if we subscribe to this

interpretation is that we instantaneously make the great prophets and the disciples of Jesus unworthy of any praise because none of them were rewarded with wealth. All of them were martyred and that was their reward for seeking the God's will.

The misinterpretation of this verse from the Sermon on the Mount arises from the simple fact that we often take it out of the context in which it is spoken. The verse 24 of Mathew chapter 6 make it amply clear that what would be given to us in return of seeking his Kingdom and righteousness. If you seek first the Kingdom of God, all these things shall be added unto you. 'All these things' refer to the basic necessities. In the examples of birds in the air and the lilies in the field, God provides them the basic necessities; food and clothing. Instead of the economy of abundant choice, Jesus is proposing a subsistence economy where we are concerned about the kingdom of God which ensures the satisfaction of the basic needs of all.

But today we are in a state of an addiction. An addiction to acquire more and that has become the only measure of our success in this world. In our gospel reading for today, Jesus addresses this very crisis of today. We all are in that addictive rat race to possess more, to earn more, to own more, to rule more. Our unending desire for goods and power has become the only sustaining force. Our worth is measured by the car we drive, and the house we own. Our being is enslaved in our desire to have more.

Kingdom of God is envisioned in the Bible as a great feast. Many of us who have been to Kerala for marriage feasts would have seen many impoverished people waiting outside the marriage halls for the leftover from our feasts. You will see this image across the world and even in this country that is supposed to be rich and mighty. The imagery of the feast in the Kingdom of God is that of no one waiting outside for the leftovers. Luke 17:21 makes it clear that Kingdom of God among us. If we believe in these words, then it becomes our responsibility to be coworkers with God in the realization of that feast where no one waits outside for leftovers.

Righteousness and justice is the eternal yearning of the Bible. According to Saint Paul it is not just the yearning of God or human beings but of the entire creation. There are more than 2000 verses in the Bible that deals with the themes of righteousness, justice, poor, poverty and the least among us. But we are skillful to slip away from those commands and pursue issues that are peripheral to the biblical message or that is never mentioned in it.

Today this addiction pushes us to seek a career that would quench our thirst for more and more. It is the market which decides what we should be studying and

what should be our career. By doing this, we lose our humanity and become just like any other commodity in the market. Our resumes are nothing but competitive commercials to sell ourselves. In this process we forget that we belong to God who created us with a purpose. And we create a God in our own image who could aid us in this race to have more. We are no more interested in discerning the purpose of God and designing our lives according to that purpose. Like the display items in the malls around us, we all become commodities waiting to be hired or bought by the highest bidder.

What is that we, as Christian youth can do to seek thy kingdom and righteousness? The question is TO HAVE OR TO BE. Rest assured that this was the very same question Jesus had before Him during His temptations. Hence our assurance in Jesus is that we too can overcome these temptations by walking in His footsteps.

The first temptation was to use His power to turn the stones into bread. That is exactly the temptation before us also. Whether to use our power, education, skills, talents and all other resources to just make bread for us or to use them for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. Hence the first thing we could do is to cease preparing ourselves for careers and rather seek a vocation that would fulfill God's plan for ourselves and help us be part of His plan for the larger world out there. A vocation that would give us an opportunity to fulfill our own potentials and yet be part of the larger plan God has for the entire creation.

Today's world is heavily dominated by the quest to attain stardom and there are so many shortcuts for that. The temptation or shortcut presented before Jesus was to jump from the top of the tower and attain stardom. We are also in the run to attain fame and popularity through easy gimmicks. But that is not the way of the Kingdom of God. Hence our orientation should be to seek the Kingdom values and righteousness to make this world in the image of Thy Kingdom.

The third temptation before Jesus and all of us is an urge to rule the entire world. To rule the entire space around us. We do it every day in our offices, our church committees, offices and our homes. Talking about our homes, the Kerala male is caught up in a peculiar situation. A situation where they cherish the pay checks our women bring home, but cannot stand the independence and assertiveness the checks bring along with it. The model of Kingdom of God is that of Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three unique identities, but at the same time equal among them. Hence seeking the Kingdom of God and righteousness mandates us to translate this concept of power in our families, churches, offices, schools and all the spaces wherever we are placed.

This new awareness and assertiveness in our women are seen as a crisis moment. Many people see it as an erosion of some age old family values. And we call our women all

abusive names possible. But for a discerning disciple, this is a God given opportunity for us to transform our families in the image of the Kingdom of God. All of us have heard of the five women who were intelligent enough to secure enough oil when the bridegroom arrived. I have a story of another set of five women to assure my young sisters that answering God's call may, many-a-times, involve disobedience. These five women are—mother of Moses, sister of Moses, the midwife, the princess, the maid of the princess. All of them together save a human life that goes on to become Moses, the liberator of Israel. All these women who answered God's call to reverence for life usher in liberation. Hence the call before my sisters to be a little disobedient and help us men to change ourselves. Let us men and women walk with God and let us together transform our families in the image of the Kingdom of God.

To sum up my points: we have an addiction to have more and in that process we lose our humanity and become commodities. The question is TO HAVE OR TO BE. The discernment of the Word of God and the discernment of its implications in the world around us brings discipleship. The assurance we have to get over our addiction is that Jesus too had these very same temptations and He overcame it. Hence along with God we too can also get over our addiction.

Allan Paton, the celebrated South African author has written many novels depicting the perils of apartheid. His most popular book is "Cry my Beloved Country" which deals with the perils of apartheid. He has written another book by the title, "Yet my Country is Beautiful". The protagonist of this book is a black man who works as an attendant in a school. His school principal is a white man with most of the racial prejudices. One day the school principal – the white man – falls into a difficult situation and this black man rescues him from that big trouble. Afterwards the principal, the white man asks the attendant, the black man, I see you in front of all the black struggles for independence and yet you rescued me, a white man from this big trouble. How can you do both? The black man replied: I rescued you because I knew that you were right in this case. And my fight for justice for my black brethren is because when I die and then go and stand before that Supreme Judge, His first question will be "Where are your wounds?" If I tell Him that I do not have any, then the next question will be "was there nothing to fight for?" that is why I fight.

This is what the Supreme Judge is asking us also. "Where are your wounds?", "Was there nothing to fight for?" "But strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." ■

Sarosh Koshy works with the International Affairs & Peace, and the Interfaith Relations departments of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, at its headquarters in New York City.

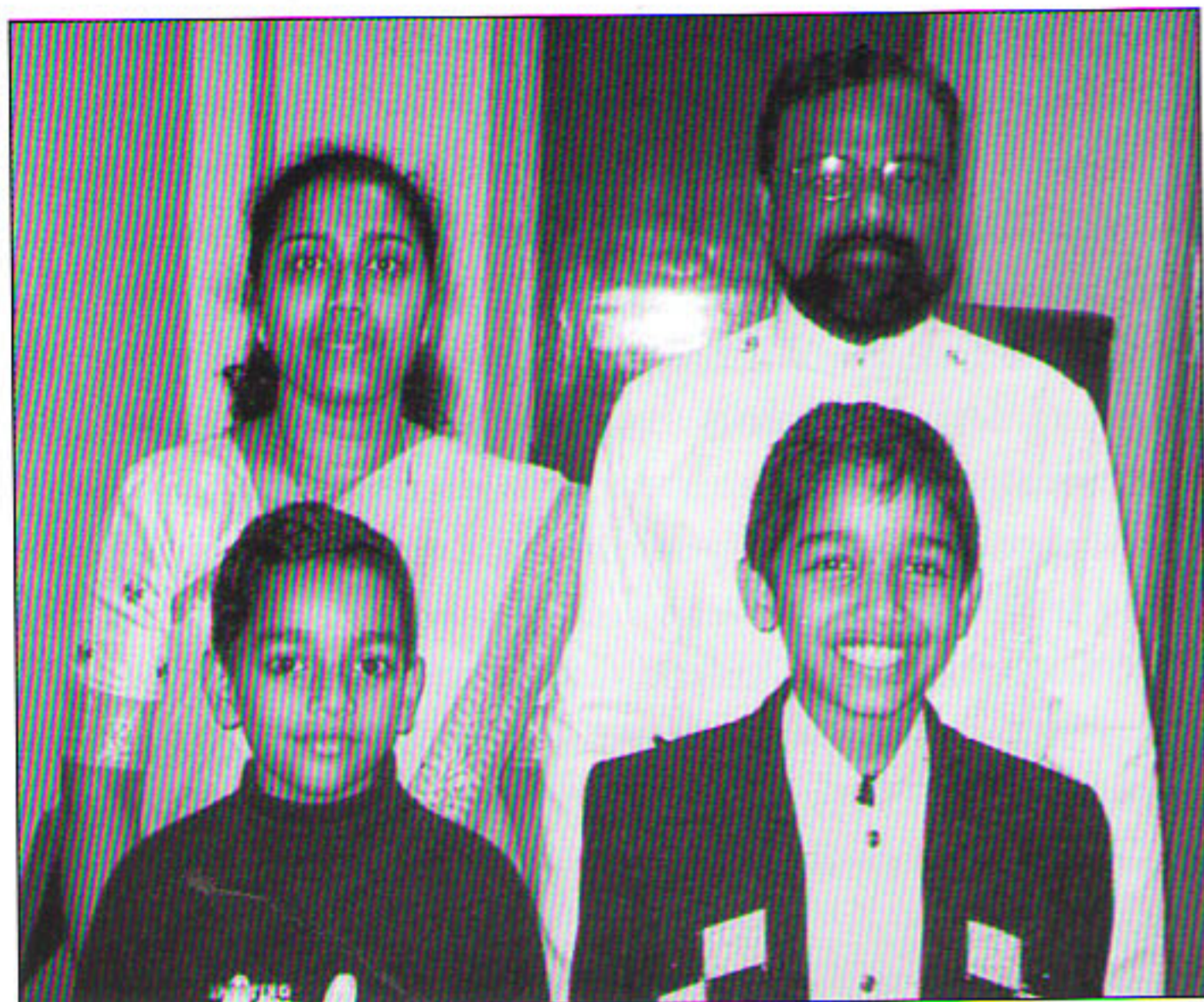
Mexico Mission Trip 2006 *(Cont'd from page 35)*

to minister, but find ourselves renewed and strengthened by God's goodness through the friendships in our morning devotionals, singing on the bus, and mostly by the growing faith of the Mexican people. One islander relayed a story about how her son became deathly ill and how he was declared dead by doctors. God raised him up and healed him. She witnessed all this as her 5-year-old son squirmed

by her side. In spite of all the barriers that separated us—age, language and culture—the touch of God in her life was undeniable in her expression and her demeanor. She radiated the joy of knowing the Lord, which proves once again that God loves all his creation. It is He who ultimately saves people. We just make ourselves available for the journey and have hearts willing to carry a friend to Jesus. ■

OUR NEW ACHEN

REV. ALEX P. JOHN, St. Mathew's MTC, Toronto and Kingston MTC, Kingston, Ontario, Canada



Home Parish: Karuvatta Mar Thoma Church
& House Name: Munjanattu Puthuvanakulangara, Karuvatta

Academic: B.A., Bhopal University
Background: B.D., U.T.C. Bangalore

Parishes served: Baroda Mar Thoma Church, Gujarat; Missionary-Mundgod Mission, Karnataka; Mannamaruthy Bethel (Assist.); St. Thomas MTC Karikattoor; St. John's Mar Thoma Church, Vadasserikara

Kochamma's Name: Mrs. Geena Alex
& Home Parish: Pallipad Cheriypally MTC

Children: Reuben J. Alex (Grade 4)
Joel M. Alex (Grade 3)

Parsonage Address & Phone: 69 Nancy McCredie Drive
Brampton, Ontario, L6X 2N4
CANADA
(905) 455-4717 (Home)
(647) 868-9327 (Mobile)
E-mail: revalexjohn@yahoo.ca

JULY WINNERS. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WINNERS!!!

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (July 2006)

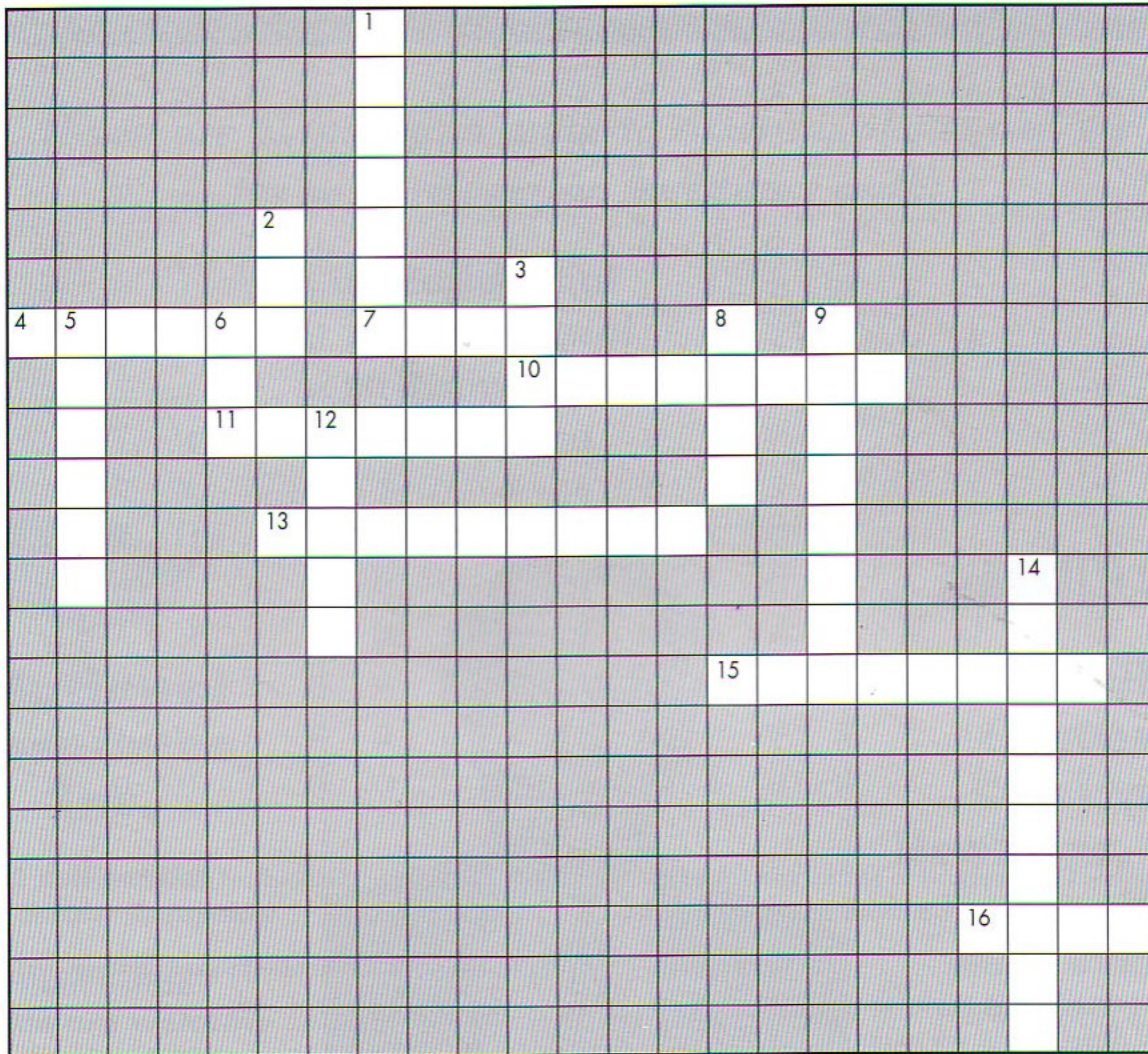
1. Achamma Chacko, Trinity MTC, Houston
2. Alan George, Carmel MTC, Boston
3. Aleyamma Thomas, MTC, San Francisco
4. Annamma John, St. Luke MTC, FL
5. Baby George Thomas, Epiphany MTC, NY
6. Christo Mathew, MTC of Dallas, FB
7. Daniel Thomas, MTC, San Francisco
8. Elizabeth George, The Canadian MTC, Toronto
9. Jane Susan Jacob, Carmel MTC, Boston
10. Jeevan & Pawan Mathew, Carmel MTC, Boston
11. Joann Johnson, St. John's MTC, NY
12. Jonathan Alex, Carmel MTC, Boston
13. Justy John, St. James MTC, NY
14. Kevin Puduseril, Carmel MTC, Boston
15. Kochumol Reji Varughese, Immanuel MTC, Houston
16. Leya Mathew, Gonzales, LA
17. Mariamma Mathew, Sparki, Nevada
18. Mariamma Ninan, St. James MTC, NY

19. Nitin & Navin John, St. James MTC, NY
20. Omana Rajee, The MTC Staten Island, NY
21. Ponnamma Mathew, Philadelphia MTC, PA
22. Ponnamma Ninan, MTC, San Francisco
23. Saramma Poikail, MTC of Greater Washington, DC
24. Sheeba Abraham, Horeb MTC, Colorado
25. Sherly Varghese, St. James MTC, NY
26. Sherin E. Vaidian, St. Thomas MTC, NY
27. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
28. Sinu Linu Koshy, Salem MTC, NY
29. Susamma P. Abraham, Philadelphia MTC
30. Thomas & Susan Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston
31. Thomas T. & Mariamma, Trinity MTC, Houston
32. Valsamma Jose, St. James MTC, NY
33. Vishal, Carmel MTC, Boston

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL: CHAPTERS 1-15

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (New York)



Down

1. Name the son of Abinadab who was consecrated to guard the Ark of the Lord.
2. Samuel anointed Saul by pouring a flask of ___ on his head.
3. Samuel remarks, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to _____ is better than the fat of rams."
5. _____ and Joel were the sons of Samuel.
6. Hophni and Phinehas were the sons of _____, the priest.
8. When the old Eli heard the _____ about the defeat of Israel and the capture of the Ark of God, he fell down and died.
9. Saul, the son of Kish belonged to the tribe of _____.
12. Jonathan tasted _____ by dipping it with the end of his staff and incurred the curse of his father.
14. The Israelites went to battle without a weapon because not a single _____ could be found in the entire land.

Across

4. The name _____, means "Because I asked the Lord for him."
7. Every year, when Hannah went to visit her son Samuel and offer the annual sacrifices she brought him a _____.
10. _____ means, "Thus far has the Lord helped us."
11. _____ means, "departed glory".
13. Eli while rebuking his evil sons said, "If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord who will _____ for him?"
15. Hannah and _____ were the two wives of Elkanah.
16. The Israelites demand for a _____ displeased God.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL: CHAPTERS 16-31

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (New York)

O L R A H H M D E L W R N L G R L B O H I O I
G D E N A A E R R M H I C H H T A A O S L G H
A L R G L M E E R O H L O O H R I D E Y W P O
O B T I I T H B K H W E E A R O I A W L N R Y
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P A B R N L A Y A G H R B C M I C H A L A K E
M E E D A A L G H N K C T E N E C C M I H D R
H A P N I H N E W N A I A E E M A M A P M I T
A D H T P E S H B P E I D G O N T D D R D L M

1. In Bethlehem, the Lord appeared to Samuel and remarked, even though man looks at one's outward appearance, the Lord looks at our _____.
2. King Saul appointed David to play the _____ so that he would feel better and the evil spirits would leave him.
3. David killed this Philistine by simply using a sling and stone.
4. Saul gave his daughter _____ in marriage to David.
5. Jonathan warned David about his father, Saul's intentions to kill him by shooting _____ that was to be fetched by a boy.
6. David deceived _____ the priest into giving him food and weapons.
7. In order to escape from King Achish, David pretended to be _____.
8. In his rage, Saul ordered the killing of 85 men who wore the _____.
9. The city, surrounded by gates and bars, was saved by David from the hands of Saul.
10. David rebuked his men from attacking Saul and spared his life because he is the Lord's _____.
11. _____ was a beautiful, intelligent women, who saved her household by using good judgment.
12. Saul approached a _____ who acted as a medium to conjure the spirit of Samuel.
13. David and his men fed an _____ who led them to the Philistines.
14. The wounded Saul, took his own life, by falling on his _____.

Please mail your answers to:

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

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DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

ST. JAMES MAR THOMA CHURCH, ROCKLAND, NEW YORK



Participants from Parish Retreat

PARISH RETREAT: A Family retreat was held from August 4th to 6th at the Montrose Bible conference center in Montrose, Pennsylvania. The program was blessing to all who attended. The theme of the conference was "Set your



Mayor and Clergy at the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

minds on things above". The main leaders for the retreat were Rev. Joseph Oommen, (Diocesan Secretary) and Rev. K. George. Mr. Abraham C. Thomas from Chicago led the sessions for the youths and Mr. Benny Joseph from Scripture Union led the session for children. A Holy Communion service was held on the final day for the conference delegates.

INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE

St. James Mar Thoma Church of Rockland hosted the 27th Annual Hillburn Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, organized by the town of Hillburn on November 21st, 2006. Clergy from the different churches in Hillburn village and neighboring towns attended the Meeting. The

clergy led in prayer and spoke from the scriptures on Thanksgiving. Village Mayor Hon. Brian L. Miele made the Thanksgiving message. A community choir was organized for the event. Members from St. James Parish participated in the community choir. An offertory was collected for the Hillburn Village Housing Development Fund. Refreshments were arranged for all, which was contributed by the participating churches.

EPISCOPAL VISIT AND FIRST COMMUNION

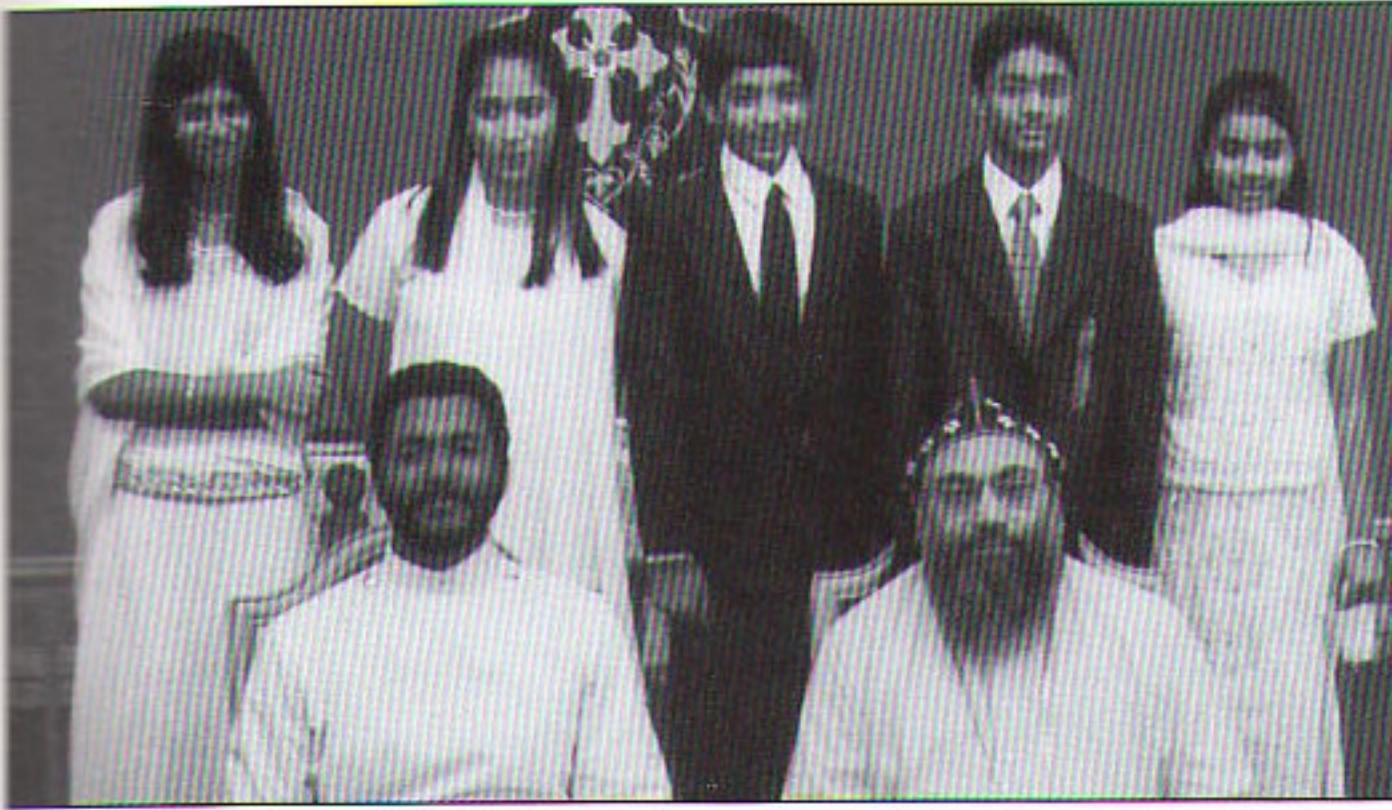
Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa visited the parish and met with all organizations for separate session and celebrated Holy Communion Service. Also he attended the church annual picnic held at Lake Welch, NY. During the service 6 of our youngsters took part in the First Holy Communion Service.

Rev. K. George, Vicar



First communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni and Rev. K. George

ATLANTA MAR THOMA CHURCH, ATLANTA, GEORGIA



Coorilos Thirumeni and Abraham P. Varkey Achen with First Communicants.

VISIT BY NATIVE AMERICANS TO ATLANTA MTC:

As children we always anticipated visits from our relatives. On Saturday, November 12, 2006, I felt like a kid waiting for my relatives to come home. I kept looking out my



Jency & Jobcy Thomas with Native American Children.

window from the fifteen-passenger van my family will be arriving in. Finally, around 11:30 AM 9 little kids jumped out of the car and ran towards me. They hugged everyone on site. By the look on my parents face, I could tell they were not prepared for the hugs from total strangers. My parents have only heard about my little sisters and brothers in Alabama, but now they finally got a chance to meet them.

A total of 12 people came from Alabama; 9 kids and 3 adults. They came into my house without any formalities and treated like their own home. After lunch we decided to take a trip to the nearby mall. They all enjoyed the trip to the mall. Dinner was at Daisy Thomas's house, who was our adult volunteer for VBS. We talked about our lives and how God has done great things in each one of our lives. June Weaver, the children's ministry coordinator from Aldersgate church and Pebbles Frazier, one of the older teens, shared about the impact Mar Thoma Church has had in their lives. Mrs. Weaver shared about Christ working through her to enhance children and youth ministry in her church, and

thanked for the Marthomites who kept active contacts with her through out the last four years. At the end of this report I am attaching a copy of the few words that Pebbles used to thank the Mar Thoma members who have helped to change her life. Brother Rick, the former pastor of Aldersgate shared about the mission God has called him to do in Kenya and gave the sermon on God's love.

On Sunday November 13th, the team from Alabama visited Atlanta MTC and participated in our worship service and communion. Our Vicar, Rev. Abraham P Varkey welcomed the group to our church.

God has provided the great opportunity for me to work with these children in Alabama from the last 3 years. At first it was just a mission trip, but now it is going back to visit my



A Scene from Fellowship Hall.

family. Their love truly shows me a glimpse of God's unconditional love for me. The Alabama families are thrilled about what the Mar Thoma Church and its members who participated in the VBS programs has done for them.

Jency Thomas, Atlanta

Letter from Pebbles Frazier

Dear Mar Thoma Church,

I am not much of a public speaker you can tell. Since I couldn't give you a good testimony I decided to write you this letter.

These people from your church are so amazing! I can hardly express the way I feel for them. They are so special and I don't they even realize the impact that they have on our lives. They are our family and we love them with every bit of our hearts and souls. God shows in everything they do! I just wanted you all to know what they mean to us. I do not know what you all are doing, but keep it up, because you all are producing some wonderful Christians! Thank you for sending them to us! I don't know what kind of life I would be living without the influence of all these wonderful people. I thank you so much.

With, thanks and respect!

Pebbles Frazier, Aldersgate United Methodist Church

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH



First Communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni.

CELEBRATION OF FAMILY OF FAMILIES

MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch conducted an in depth study of the theme 'Family of Families' during the year 2006

focusing on the Biblical families. Rev. Anil George led the classes on the theme in the adult Bible study on every Sunday morning before Holy Communion service. The

theme was also dealt in the Wednesday Bible study conducted for the members of the Parish Mission. The theme was the main focus for this year's family retreat also. The theme helped the parishioners to identify themselves with the Biblical families and to meet the challenges of this multi-cultural society on a Biblical basis.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar



Adult and Youth Choir with Rev. Anil George.



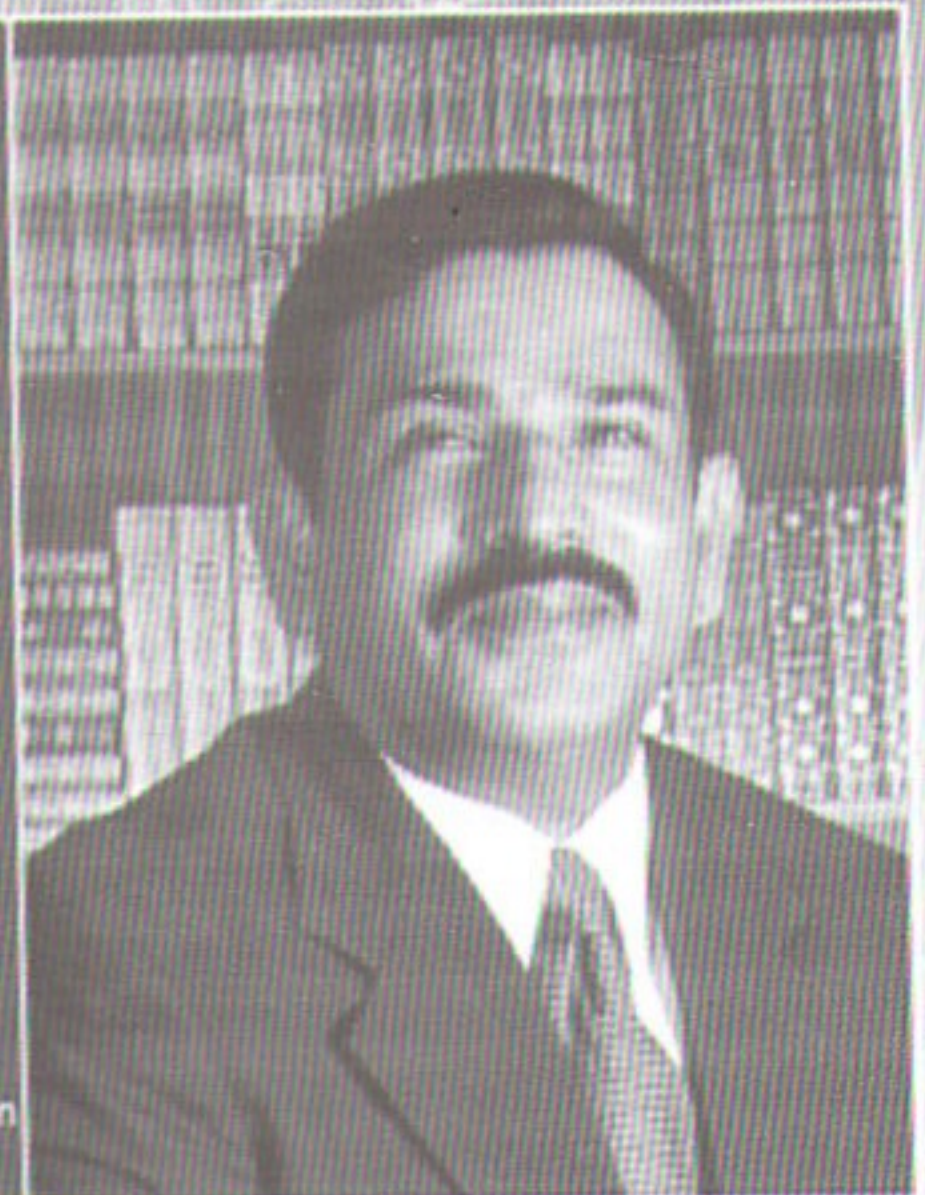
Yuvajana Sakyam with Rt. Rev. Dr. Issac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa

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SALEM MAR THOMA CHURCH, LONG ISLAND, NY



BUILDING FUND INAUGURATION: The fundraising for our new parish Salem MTC, Long Island was officially inaugurated on November 26, 2006 by our beloved Diocesan Bishop His Grace Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos. Mr. Thomas Chandy, Kuttanadu M.L.A.; and member to the Sabha Council, received the first raffle coupon.

The meeting started with inspirational music by our choir and a prayer by Mr. K. A. Chacko (lay leader). Vicar Rev. Joby Varghese presided over the meeting. Thirumeni further issued coupons to the parish members. Mr. Thomas



Chandy M.L.A. offered felicitations. Ms. Shana Elizabeth Mathew sang a beautiful song.

Raffle coordinator and the vice president of the parish Mr. Abraham Chacko Thadathel welcomed the attendees of this meeting. Building Committee and Raffle Committee Convener Mr. Mathew Chiramannil did the vote of thanks. The meeting was organized by Mr. Varghese Gorge (parish secretary) with the support of Mr. Jacob Abraham (raffle coordinator), Mr. John Thomas (trustee), and Mr. Georgekutty Varghese (accountant).

Rev. Joby Varghese, Vicar

TABOR MAR THOMA CHURCH, STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

FIRST PARISH DAY CELEBRATIONS: Tabor Mar Thoma Church celebrated its First parish day on November 5, 2006. This church was formed on November 1, 2005. It



was officially inaugurated on November 6, 2005, by the first vicar and the then Diocesan Secretary Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham. Formerly, this Church was part of the Staten

Island Mar Thoma Church. The need for a second church arose and a prayer group under the banner of "Immanuel Prayer Group of Staten Island" was formed. Mr. Thomas Mattapallil served as its president. Later, the prayer group became a parish. Mr. John K. Thomas was vice president, Mr. Oommen Abraham was secretary, Mr. Abraham Thomas was joint-secretary, and Mr. Varghese V. Thomas, and Mr. Idiculla Mathew were trustees. In a very short span of time, this parish formed all its organizations such as the Sunday School, Youth Fellowship, Yuvajana Sakhyam, Sevika Sanghom, and the Choir. Regular prayer meetings are also conducted under the leadership of the Edavaka Mission.

Rev. Joseph Oommen, the diocesan secretary was the chief guest. The Holy Communion was celebrated by Rev. Joseph Oommen and the Vicar Rev. Jobi Varghese. The present parish Secretary Dr. John K. Thomas gave the welcome speech. In the presidential address, the Vicar called upon the congregation to follow the model of the Early Church, which came together for prayer, fellowship, teaching, and to partake in the Holy Communion.

The Borough President of Staten Island, Mr. Jim Molinaro, issued a Proclamation declaring November 5,

2006, as "Tabor Mar Thoma Day." This was read out by Mr. B. K. John, the Assembly Member. Fr. George Oonnoony, Judge of the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Arch Diocese of New York, was the special guest invitee for the public function. He pointed out the greatest command of Jesus was Love, which is the quality we should uphold in our parish.

Rev. Joseph Oommen, Rev. Manoj M. Zachariah, and Mr. Jijo Rajan gave felicitations at the public meeting. Very Rev. Fr. Paulos Adai Corepiscopa, the vicar of St. Mary's

Malankara Orthodox Church, West Sayville, Rev. Johnson C. Jacob, Rev. Mathew K. Jackson, Rev. Jojan Mathews John, Rev. Varghese John, Rev. Biju S. Cherian, and members of the Salem MTC, NY, sent greeting messages.

Parish day greeting of the Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos was read by the diocesan secretary. The Vice-President of the parish Mr. Thomas Mattapallil gave the Vote of Thanks to all who attended.

Rev. Jobi Varghese, Vicar

OBITUARIES



K. O. KOCHUMMEN
1936 - 2006

Mr. K.O. Kochummen (Joy) was born on June 27, 1936 in Kozhencherry, India. He was the youngest of five children, and enjoyed a warm family life with his siblings and parents. He graduated from Kozhencherry High School and then went on to St. Thomas College in Kozhencherry. He was incredibly proud of both these schools, and enjoyed much camaraderie with friends there. He grew to be an

active member of the Kozhencherry Mar Thoma Church (Valia Palli), and enjoyed all aspects of parish life within various organizations.

After getting married in 1973, he immigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto, where he and his wife raised their daughter Elizabeth. His interest in improving life for the Malayalee community where he lived inspired him to start the first Malayalam newspaper in Canada, "Kerala Prabha". He enjoyed many different career opportunities over his 30 years in Toronto, and ultimately made a career for himself in the finance industry.

As a member of the Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto, he had the wonderful opportunity to watch the parish grow from its humble beginnings in Toronto to a blooming and thriving parish in Markham. He was active with many different committees and parish programs over the years, e.g. choir, Sunday School, the Executive committee, and Area representation. He was also elected as the first Mandalam representative from Canada, serving for two terms (6 years).

He was a man who firmly believed in his principles, and maintained a cheery disposition while trying to make the best out of each situation. His family is grateful to God

for the chance to enjoy his love for so many years. The Funeral Service was held on November 3, 2006 at the Canadian Mar Thoma Church Toronto, and was attended by many friends and family from far and near. Kochummen is survived by his wife Chinnamma, daughter Elizabeth and son-in-law Baiju.

GEORGE VARGHESE KODIYATTU (Raju) of Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston was born on November 22, 1955 to Mr. K. T. George and Mrs. Aleyamma George in Kumplampoika, Kerala. He is survived by his wife Lilly Varghese, his son Joe Varghese and daughter Jincy Varghese. Before coming to Houston in 1998, he served in the Delhi police for 20 years. In the summer of 2003, Raju was diagnosed with Progressive Muscular Atrophy. Throughout the following three years he maintained a courageous spirit which reflected his faith in God.

On January 17, 2007 he peacefully passed away in his sleep surrounded by his family and loved ones. Reflecting back on his life, we are taught to never give up when faced with an obstacle. Instead, we should trust God's will and faithfully conquer each challenge of life with confidence, courage and smile.

Memorial Service was held on Friday, January 19, 2007 at Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston and the Funeral service was held on Saturday, January 20, 2007 at Southpark Funeral Home in Pearland, Texas.

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



GEORGE VARGHESE K.
1955 - 2006

MATRIMONIAL

Marthomite parents are inviting proposals for their US born daughter, 22 years old, 5' 7", compassionate beautiful, slim, family oriented and well educated (BSc). We are seeking a God-fearing, family oriented, well educated and employed (Min. BSc) young man who is committed to Christian way of living. (Marthomites/CSI preferred). Interested parents please respond with a returnable passport-size photo of their son to: Box: ABMA01, Mar Thoma Messenger, Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 S. Merrick Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566.

Marthomite parents settled in USA invite proposals for their daughter who is finishing her residency next year (MD), 33 years 5' 5" medium complexion, from parents of similarly qualified boys. Please reply with a recent photograph and a brief bio-data to: achieveth@yahoo.com

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their son: US citizen, God fearing, brought up and educated in US, practicing RN in Texas, age 30, height 5' 7". We are seeking for a God fearing girl who is US educated with good moral and spiritual values as well as good family background. Please e-mail details with photo to: mastersworks@gmail.com or call (832) 277-6849.

Mar Thoma parents invite marriage proposals for their 32 year old daughter who is a highly educated medical professional in her final year of training. She is born and raised in the United States. She is a fun loving, attractive and intelligent woman who is a committed Christian and is devoted to family. We invite proposals from compatible individuals who have obtained their professional degrees and are employed gainfully. We are seeking a man who is devoted to Christ and family, and also residing in the U.S.A. or Canada. They should be considerate, compassionate, and loving. If interested please respond with a photograph to: bgytenn@yahoo.com

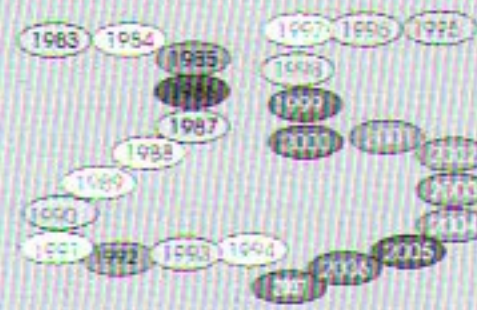
Marthomite parents invite proposal for 28 year old son born and raised in USA 5' 10", MD doing residency; from parents of family oriented christian girls below 25 with compatible back ground. Interested parties please respond with bio-data and recent photograph to: arunthomas@aol.com

Marthomite parents settled in USA invite proposal for their daughter 26 years old 5' 4" fair and beautiful, God fearing, family oriented have masters in physiotherapy currently working. We are looking for God fearing professionally qualified boys working in USA. If interested please respond with bio data and recent photograph via e mail at: abe32007@hotmail.com

Uncle invites proposals for 27 year old niece, Christian, CSI, fair complexion with good moral, spiritual, high family values and US citizen. She has Bachelors Degree in Nursing, and now finishing medical degree, graduating in May 2007. We are seeking responses from Marthomites/CSI professionally qualified boys (Doctors, Engineers, etc.) If interested contact us with details and a recent picture.
Email to: houston_3712@sbcglobal.net

Marthomite parents invites marriage proposals, from parents/boys of Marthomite /CSI, professionally qualified for their twin daughters, 24 years old, US citizens, studied up to 9th in Mar thoma Residential TVLA, and further education in US. One of the twins is currently working as Industrial Engineer, Graduated in Industrial Engineering, The other will graduate in may 2007 in Nursing.
Contact: koshyab@gmail.com

Uncle invites marriage proposal for niece, 29 years old 5' 3", born and raised in USA. She is slim, fair, and God fearing. She is a degree holder and is currently working with a prestigious corporation. Seeking responses from professionally qualified degree holders with good job. Must be God fearing and have good family values and background.
Please send all correspondence to: mullachi9@yahoo.com



**WELCOME TO
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FROM

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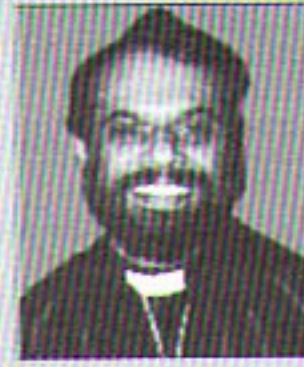
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website

www.marthomaconference2007.ca

FEE SCHEDULE

REGISTRATION FEE:

upto May 15th 2007
Upto June 15th 2007

US\$60.00
US\$75.00

CONFERENCE FEE

Children under 5 yrs
Children 5-11 yrs
Children 12-18 yrs
Parents with children(5 yrs & above)
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US\$180.00 per child
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The first 200 registration received before May 15th 2007 will be eligible for a lucky draw. The Prize: Full conference fee for two.

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Those who have attended 20 or more conferences will be honoured. For more information, contact your Vicar.

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Editorial

It is argued that modern man's obsession with materialism and relativism is separating him from his creator as well as the realms of reality. Our present day religions and denominations include religious symbols, traditions, rituals, and institutional forms. The core of tradition may not change while the peripheral aspects may undergo modifications. One of the Episcopal Church publications stated, "Christianity in the present is not one monolithic tradition but many variations of tradition living under the same name". The histories of a number of Christian missionaries reveal that they arrived with the Bible and a strong will to provide longstanding and vital enhancements to the community. They established schools, hospitals and worship centers, which provided much needed language skills and writing skills, medical help, and spiritual nurturing. Right from St. Thomas to Vasco Da Gama, St. Xavier, Robert de Noble, and many others, the light of life was propagated to many through generations. However, today Christianity, more than any other religion, faces challenges from misconceptions, racism, ethnic clashes, ethical arguments, favoritism, materialism, and many such modern social evils. Part of the problem appears to be that we have learned how to sell Bibles but not how to teach what's in the Bible.



Today, churches, many church leaders, evangelists, and churchgoers have shifted their focus from Christ to a theology of prosperity and wealthy life. One of my frustrations in dealing with spirituality and religion has been trying to understand the overwhelming number of variations and practices among the believers of the same book, the Bible. In fact, this is more confusing to the non-Christians and the atheists that they question the very existence of a true God and also the relevance of Christianity. The Bible says that we have "the mind of Christ", (1 Corinthians 2:16). The Greek word for mind, "nous," means intellect, or the thoughts, feelings, and will. So Christians have access to the thoughts, feelings, and will of God, through His Holy Spirit that is in us (Seek God Ministries, 1998). Still, we tend not to use our mind to practice Christianity, but to propagate Christianity. We ought to shift our focus in order to comply with the need of times. Let the Triune God shine forth through our actions rather than words!

The Messenger managing committee is seeking more subscribers to this magazine. I hope every Marthomite home in this Diocese subscribes to this publication. Being the only official publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe for the past 25 years, the magazine has gone through various changes, and I am very thankful to all who have supported its growth. I now request our youngsters to take an active interest in this publication and help to improve its readership and subscription. The April issue will focus on Youths and Sunday school, which will give a chance for our youths and children to participate.

Eapen Daniel



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