

MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

OCTOBER 2007



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THE MOST REV. DR. JOSEPH MAR THOMA**



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When Mar Chrysostom says **Goodbye...**

*The angelic crew
in celestial tone
sings the heavenly hymn,
when, from thousand lamps
flows, the ethereal light;
the curtained sleep
brings colorful scenes
from life's mesmeric screen,
the visuals of four score and ten.*

*Here's the golden tongued
spiritual father,
Mar Chrysostom,
slowly, with his smile,
the farewell note gives.*

*God, too, smiles,
and blessings does shower:
Oh mighty leader,
bless us all,
while making the glorious exit;
'Long live our Thirumeni,
with ease and peace,
with that beauteous gaze
adorning the world,
in permeating radiance,
to carry on the blissful Joy.'*

Elias Abraham, Baltimore



Message from the Metropolitan

The Last letter written in the *Sabha Tharaka* by The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma as Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church.



Dearly beloved in the Lord,

Education is the foundation of the mission of the Church and the strength of the society. The search for truth, knowledge, and experience are the components of education. Gandhiji, the father of our nation, has stated that education is for life and, at the same time, it occurs through life. Always, our Church has given good leadership in Kerala's educational field.

The fathers of our constitution, in their farsightedness and their deep vision of democracy, had given some protection to minorities. The majority can attain what they need through voting. In order to protect the fundamental rights of the minorities, some protective arrangements were made in the constitution. Today we understand its importance. The broad vision of the architects of the Constitution is very clear to us now.

Protection and rights do not mean freedom to do whatever we want, or to disregard the majority. The rulers and the ruled, and the majority and the minority, have to accept this truth and act accordingly.

The fall in the deeds is not a call for the nullity of performance. Misuse is no argument for disuse.

Statements that increase misunderstandings will lead the society into peacelessness.

Any effort to threaten and separate Muslims and Christians will be counter-productive. It is also ridiculous to try to thwart the assurances and protection that the Constitution offers.

To carry on education by disregarding the nation is not right. What we need is reconciliation, not quarrel. Is it right to disregard the educational agencies in matters such as learning, administration, appointments of teachers, and the selection of the students? It is also not right to insist that the Government, in this issue, should remain as onlookers.

Today's mode of approach leads to the degradation of education. We should diligently work together with proper vision and patriotism, giving importance to the progress of our society and nation.

The moral pillars such as truth, justice, and honesty that perpetuate the human society have flowed away in the flood. It may look that there is no need or place in society today for love, care, and empathy.

The number of distorted people who find enjoyment in cheating, deceiving, and enticing others through meaningless promises, is increasing day by day. Such people do not hesitate to push down others into the whirlpool of harm and destruction. Many think that values are hallucinations propagated by our ancestors to keep some fools in peace. The sustenance of values is highly necessary for society to exist and grow. It is the fullness of love and the inevitable values that make humaneness, human. Love is God's prompting us to forsake ourselves and accept others. It is the unavoidable component to follow Jesus.

You might have come to know through different media that I informed the Mandalam about my stepping down from the position of the Metropolitan. I step down with full satisfaction, joy in God's grace, and in my obligation to the members of the Mar Thoma Church. My heart is filled with gratitude. I request your continued prayers.

I rejoice in the fact that the Thirumeni who is going to take up the responsibility is strong, capable, dutiful, and the gift of God. Within the limit of my abilities, I have executed only certain programs to keep up the mobility of the Church. In these days when global powers get strengthened more and more, we need new visions, increasing performance, and the Holy Spirit's fullness, guidance, and protection. We need to elect new Episcopas, too.

Family is an important component of society. Today, there are servants to serve. Play schools give training. Nursery schools build the foundation. Little children grow up in boarding homes. What, then, is the relationship of children with families? Today families offer to retired persons, a service just like that is given by the banks. What is the remedy for this? We must study about this enthusiastically, and find remedy, and execute it.

It is stated in the gospel of St. Luke, "Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

The Church, Sevika Sanghom, Yuvajana Sakhyam, and the parents have to make more regularization in this area. The family must become a training workshop of worship. It must be a scene of experience of love and friendliness. It should be a service training center. It should be a gymnasium of group sharing, and character formation. The family must surely become a performance-friendly center for making the infant a human being. It should be a performance ground for creating a foundation for social relationship. Family is not the "Appendix" of life, but it must essentially be the "Heart" of life. The influence, breadth, and the dignity of the family should go on increasing.

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

Happy 56th Birthday



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

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

We are just on a journey; sometimes it is rough and the going gets tough. But we are not on the journey alone. We are people of faith. The Diocesan Sevika Sanghom National conference in New York and the Mar Thoma Yuvajana Convention in Detroit rejuvenated our faith and strengthened our involvement in mission. These conferences highlighted the importance of deep rooted faith in Christ and our role as torch-bearers enlightens our fellow beings.

I had the privilege of attending the installation ceremony of Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Metropolitan on October 2, 2007 at Thiruvalla, Kerala along with all other Bishops of our Church and other dignitaries from sister Churches and public life. It was a divine plan and a turning point in the history of the Mar Thoma Church. It is really an occasion for giving thanks to God for all blessings showered upon the Church to have Thirumeni to occupy the throne of St. Thomas, the apostle of India. All the Marthomites living and working in this Diocese join with other Marthomites and other believers all over the world on this historic moment of great joy for the whole Church. On behalf of the Diocese of North America and Europe, let me take this opportunity to congratulate our beloved Thirumeni and pray that God may continue to shower abundant blessings upon Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan in his faith journey of leading and guiding the Church to fulfill the mission entrusted by our Lord Jesus Christ.

We as a Diocese also remember the contributions of our Valiya Metropolitan, Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom who gave able leadership for the Mar Thoma Church for the past 54 years, which is a record in the history of any Eastern Church. I congratulate Thirumeni who has been elevated to the position of Valiya Metropolitan of the Church. At this time I remember with gratitude the valuable contributions of Thirumeni in the formation of this Diocese and nurturing it in all respects. As a Diocese we pray that God may continue to keep and bless Thirumeni with strength, health and heavenly wisdom to lead the Church as Valiya Metropolitan in the years to come.

We are part of the race. We need to pass the torch of faith and keep it in our generation and to pass it on to the next. Are you doing your part? Each and every one of us has vital roles in the transmission of the flame of faith.

May the grace of our Lord be always with us all.

Yours in His Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Euyakim Mar Coorilos". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos
Diocesan Bishop

മലങ്കര ശ്ലീഹായുടെ സിംഹാസനത്തിന്റെ

ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായിൽ നിന്നും

സർക്കുലർ നമ്പർ 203

നമ്മുടെ സഭയിലെ തിരുമേനിമാർക്കും, വികാരി ജനറാൾമാർക്കും, വികാരി അച്ചന്മാർക്കും,
മറ്റ് പട്ടക്കാർക്കും, ഇടവക ചുമതലക്കാർക്കും, വിശ്വാസികളായ ജനങ്ങൾക്കും
കർത്താവിന്റെ വാഴ്വുകൾ

കർത്താവിൽ പ്രിയരെ,

1940 മുതൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിൽ വിവിധ രംഗങ്ങളിലും നിലയിലും കർത്താവിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ പങ്കാളി ആകുന്നതിനുള്ള വലിയ പദവി സർവ്വശക്തനായ ദൈവം എനിക്ക് നൽകി. സഭാ ജനങ്ങളുടെ സ്നേഹം, പ്രാർത്ഥന, സഹകരണം ഇവ ദൈവം നൽകിയ അനുഗ്രഹമായിരുന്നു. ഞാൻ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്ന സമൂഹം എനിക്ക് നല്ല പിന്തുണ നൽകി. ഇപ്പോൾ 89 വയസ് പൂർത്തിയായി. ആരോഗ്യപരമായ കാരണങ്ങളാലും മറ്റും മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ എന്ന നിലയിലുള്ള ശുശ്രൂഷ തുടരുന്നതു ശരിയല്ല എന്ന് എനിക്ക് ബോധ്യമായതിനാൽ ആ സ്ഥാനത്തു നിന്നും ഒക്ടോബർ 1-ാം തീയതി മുതൽ വിരമിക്കുവാനുള്ള എന്റെ തീരുമാനം ഞാൻ സഭാ പ്രതിനിധി മണ്ഡലത്തിൽ പ്രസ്താവിച്ചു. വേണ്ട ക്രമീകരണം ചെയ്യുന്നതിന് മണ്ഡലത്തോട് അപേക്ഷിച്ചു. ഞാൻ ആവശ്യപ്പെട്ടതുപോലെ സിനഡും കൗൺസിലും തീരുമാനിച്ചു ആവശ്യമായ ക്രമീകരണങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഞാൻ സ്ഥാനം ഒഴിയുമ്പോൾ സീനിയർ സഫ്രഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ, മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ സ്ഥാനം ഏല്ക്കുന്നതാണ് (ഭരണഘടന വകുപ്പ് 7).

ഞാൻ എന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ നിന്നും നന്ദിയോടും സംതൃപ്തിയോടും സഭയോടുള്ള കടപ്പാടോടും കൂടിയാണ് വിരമിക്കുന്നത്. ജോസഫ് മാർ ഐറേനിയസ് സഫ്രഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പൽ രജത ജൂബിലി സ്മാരകമായി മാരാമണ്ണിൽ പണിതിട്ടുള്ള ജൂബിലി ഹോമിൽ താമസിക്കുവാൻ ക്രമീകരണം ചെയ്തു വരുന്നു.

ഡോ. ജോസഫ് മാർ ഐറേനിയസ് സഫ്രഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായെ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ എന്ന നിലയിൽ നമ്മുടെ പിൻഗാമിയായി 2007 ഒക്ടോബർ 2-ാം തീയതി ചൊവ്വാഴ്ച രാവിലെ 8.00-ന് തിരുവല്ല എസ്. സി. സെമിനാരി ഗ്രൗണ്ടിൽ പ്രത്യേകം സജ്ജമാക്കി കുദാശ ചെയ്യുന്ന മദ്ബഹായിൽവെച്ച് അവരോധിക്കണമെന്ന് സർവ്വശക്തനായ ദൈവത്തിൽ ശരണപ്പെട്ടുകൊണ്ട് മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭാ കൗൺസിൽ നിശ്ചയിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. ഈ വിശുദ്ധ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ ദൈവകൃപ വ്യാപരിക്കുന്നതിനും, മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ സ്ഥാനത്തേക്ക് ഉയർത്തപ്പെടുന്ന മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായ്ക്ക് സമൃദ്ധിയായ ദൈവാനുഗ്രഹം ലഭിക്കുന്നതിനും, ശുശ്രൂഷയിലൂടെ എല്ലാവർക്കും ആവശ്യമായ ആത്മീയ പ്രചോദനം ഉണ്ടാകുന്നതിനും ഏവരും മുട്ടിപ്പായി പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കണമെന്ന് നാം ഉദ്ബോധിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

സ്ഥാനാഭിഷേക സംബന്ധമായ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കായി ഓരോ ഇടവകയും നിത്യച്ചെലവ് വരിസംഖ്യയുടെ പകുതിയിൽ കുറയാത്ത തുക സംഭാവന നൽകുന്ന പതിവ് പാലിക്കുമല്ലോ.

പ്രിയരെ, പ്രാർത്ഥനയോടെ സ്ഥാനാഭിഷേക ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ ഏവരും ഭക്തിപൂർവ്വം പങ്കെടുക്കണമെന്ന് ഉദ്ബോധിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. കർത്താവ് യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ കൃപയും സമാധാനവും നിങ്ങൾ എല്ലാവരോടും കൂടെ ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കട്ടെ.

2007 സെപ്തംബർ 3-ാം തീയതി തിരുവല്ലാ പുലാത്തീനിൽ നിന്നും

P. Cleary O.S.A.

ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ

On the occasion of Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus' Enthronement as Malankara Mar Thoma Metropolitan on 2 October 2007, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia extended the Council's 'Hearty Congratulations, Prayers & Best Wishes'.

Geneva, 1 October 2007

Your Eminence,

It is with great joy that I received the message that you will be enthroned as the new Malankara Mar Thoma Metropolitan on 2 October 2007 in a divine and historic function. Your Eminence, it is with profound happiness that I take this opportunity to extend to you our hearty congratulations, prayers and best wishes on the occasion of your enthronement as the 21st Mar Thoma Metropolitan to occupy the Holy Apostolic Throne of St. Thomas after the reestablishment of the episcopacy in the 17th century. In fact, this historic event is a moment of very great joy for the whole Church, especially the members of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church who are scattered in many parts of the world.

Your Eminence, you bring with you a wealth of experience, rich heritage and tradition to this exalted position. I fondly remember my visit to your historic ancestral home at Maramon village from where four generations of Malankara Mar Thoma Metropolitans were enthroned as the heirs of St. Thomas over the past centuries. Almost a century later, it is you now being called by divine grace to follow in the foot steps of those great ecclesiastical luminaries from your own family who have provided leadership to this ancient and historic church in Asia. May God almighty continue to bless you to be instrumental in nurturing the spiritual fervour, evangelical zeal and social commitment of the Mar Thoma Church which has a unique ethos and tradition.

We thank God that He has enabled you to give leadership in church and society in various ways over the years. Your contributions to the ecumenical movement have been significant. Your leadership as President of the Kerala Council of Churches, President of the National Council of Churches in India and President of the Christian Conference of Asia has been remarkable. You have participated in and provided leadership at various global ecumenical events, including the WCC assemblies in Canberra, Harare, and Porto Alegre. Your commitment and passion for peace and reconciliation efforts and your deep involvement in peace monitoring missions in conflict and violence affected areas in North East India, Sri Lanka and Cambodia have been appreciated and valued by the ecumenical family. Your ability to recognize the spiritual essence of pastoral care, and your gift for nurturing and sustaining friendship and fellowship with people from all walks of life across religious or ideological boundaries has been proven as unique. Your concern and compassion for the poor and the needy in society epitomized in your deep involvement in social development, emergency relief and rehabilitation initiatives during times of humanitarian crises, have on several occasions been appreciated in the ecumenical family and beyond.

May I also take this opportunity to remember the contributions of your predecessor, the 20th Malankara Mar Thoma Metropolitan Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom who gave profound leadership to the Mar Thoma Church and the ecumenical movement as a whole over the past several decades. As he relinquishes his office due to old age and declining health, I thank God for his life and witness and pray for God's divine grace upon him.

Your Eminence, I pray that the Lord may grant you abundant blessings to fulfill the mission entrusted to you and face the challenges of this world as you shepherd your entire flock, scattered over many parts of the globe.

Again, my prayers and best wishes.

Yours in His Service,

Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia,
General Secretary

**Group Discount Airfare from USA is available for
Maramon Convention-2008.**

For information contact:

cvsamuel@hotmail.com **Tel: (586) 216-0602**

The Rt Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus

The Servant Of God I Know

Dr. P. John Lincoln

I have known Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Metropolitan since 1967, when he was Vicar of the Madras Mar Thoma Church in Chetput. From the time I came to know him, it was evident that he cared for the general good rather than his own honor or fame because he set a standard of loving others above himself.

Mar Irenaeus was born into a family with a great heritage: his forefathers were the church reformers. In early 1850, Abraham Malpan of Palakunnathu started the reformation. His nephew Mathews Mar Athanasius Mar Thoma was the first Metropolitan after the reformation. According to the Mar Thoma hierarchy he was the thirteenth Mar Thoma. There were three more Metropolitans from the same family as his successors. The reformation enlightened powerful visions and currents of changes in the church such as to honor the place of the Bible, the purity and simplicity of Apostolic faith, the virtue of authority in self-government and fundamentals of democracy during the time after the reformation, which in turn gave the laity an experience of the joy of intelligent understanding of corporate worship and the Bible at large. This reformed section of the ancient "Mar Thoma Church", thereafter marched forward into a period of reconstruction on old foundations. Reformation touched the lives and activities of the people making steady progress. The revival movements of the nineteenth century rendered marvelous service to the church in building it up. The church became spiritually stronger and was enabled to build new worshipping places, organizations, institutions, schools, colleges and medical mission hospitals.

Mar Irenaeus was born on June 27, 1931 as Joseph to Mr. And Mrs. Lukochan of Maramon Palakunnathu family. Though he belonged to a family of dedicated and selfless leaders that changed the image of the church, he had a simple beginning. Mar Irenaeus had his early education at St. Thomas High School. His undergraduate education was from U. C. College, Alwaye. His theological education was from U. T. College, Bangalore. After his B. D. graduation, he was selected by the Mar Thoma Church as deacon on June 29, 1957. Thereafter, on October 18, 1957 he was ordained as a priest. After ordination he served parishes in places such as Ranni, Calicut, Kundara, Madras, and Trivandrum. He has worked as the traveling secretary of the Sannaddha Suvishesha Sanghom. He received his post-graduate degree from Virginia Seminary and Canterbury completing his M. Div. and STM.



On January 11, 1975, along with Rev. V. T. Koshy he was consecrated Ramban. He was consecrated as Bishop Irenaeus on February 8, 1975. I had the privilege of attending his Episcopal consecration. I closely watched his course of actions as the Episcopa of the church, as a younger brother would. To my knowledge he has never changed his course of action or behavior. In fact, he has set higher goals to help his fellow men. He has attained high positions of respect among Christian leaders. He made it a point to do whatever he

was called to do and was able to accomplish his tasks successfully. His main concern was how to help the down-trodden. He has worked as the president of the Kerala Christian Council, and the National Christian Council for a number of years. He was president of C.A.S.A. (Churches Auxiliary For Social Action) and was re-elected for a second term of office. He was the trust board member of E.C.L.O.F. and the chairman of the Christian Council of Asia. Today he is the president of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association. He has played a key role in the World Christian Council in raising the image of the Mar Thoma Church. He is highly influential among the Indian political leaders and has brought the image of the Mar Thoma Church to one of the leading evangelical and Episcopal mission churches. He has very intimate relationships with world Christian leaders and in the political arena and is a great administrator. His responsibilities during the Maramon Convention, the largest convention in the world, are how the pandal is erected and the welfare of the visiting preachers and the people assembled. He also faced much jealousy when he advanced in position in his ministry and out of ignorance many people ridiculed his goodness and pure intentions. He has considered those experiences as thorns in his life. He has emerged as a beautiful, fragrant and colorful rose and like Apostle Paul he always thought that God's grace was sufficient for him. His vision of ecumenical relationships changed him as a global Christian leader.

His concern for his fellow clergymen was so great that he was always available for any help physically, emotionally or monetarily. Many a time he has visited the sick and given a helping hand to the suffering, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. He always appreciated good and encouraging suggestions from the old and the young from all walks of life and implemented those suggestions in his life for the betterment of the church.

In 1970, when he was our vicar in Madras, he conducted our marriage and has since conducted all the sacraments in my family, including my children's marriages. I was among the four representatives from the Diocese of North America and Europe in 1985 who attended his convocation granting him a Doctorate from the Theological College in Virginia. Very recently he received another Doctorate from the Serampur University for his social contribution to mankind. Since 1985 I have had the privilege of being his dental surgeon attending to his dental needs.

On October 2, 2007, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Mar Thoma Metropolitan succeeded

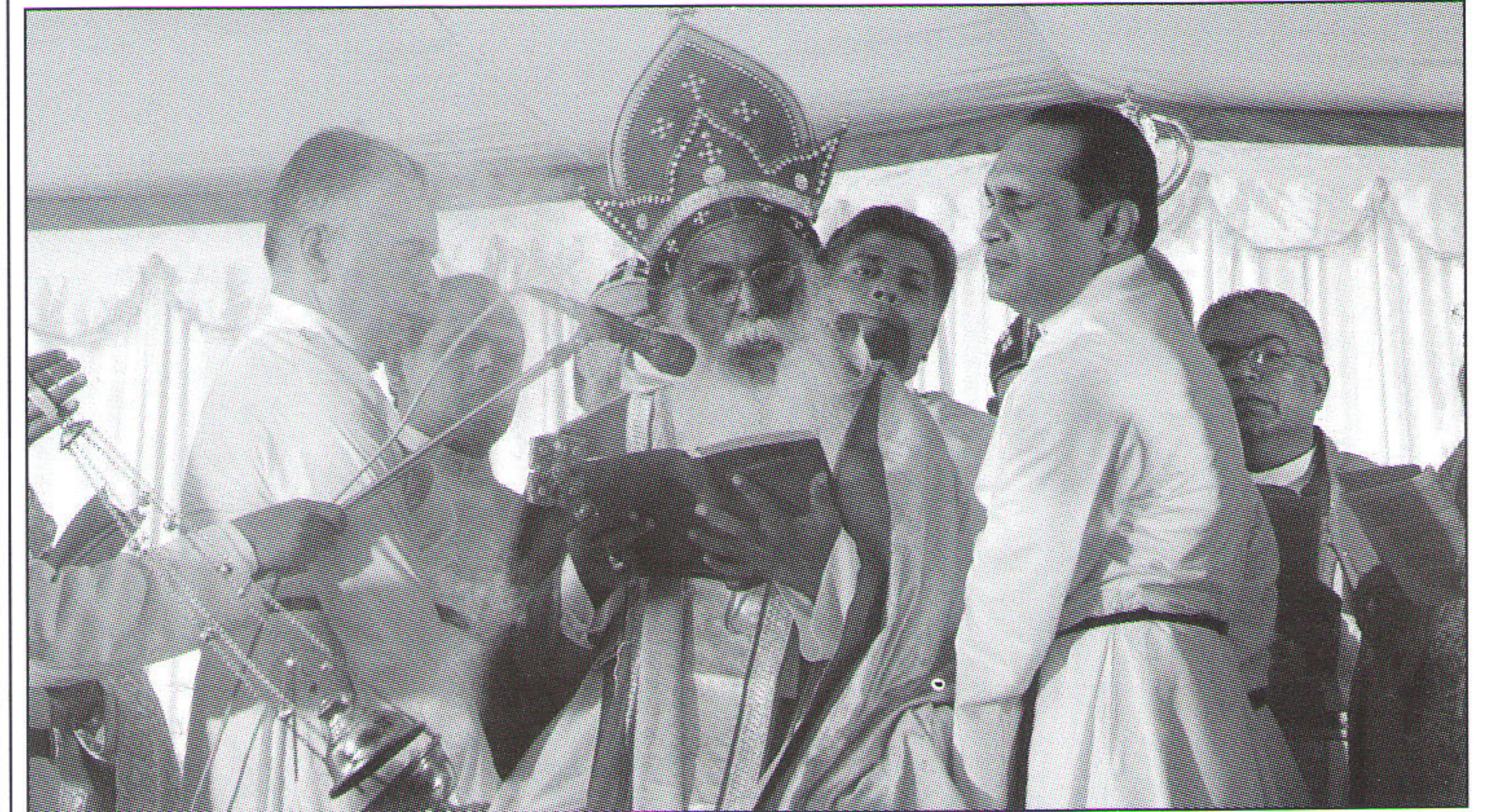
His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan as the Metropolitan (XXI Mar Thoma). How graceful it is for our former Metropolitan to hand over the baton following the example of his predecessor, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma. At this time, I am delighted to know that our Chrysostom Metropolitan will be given the highest honor as Valiya Metropolitan. My family and I congratulate him on this occasion and the position he is going to hold. My family and I congratulate and pray for God's blessings upon Irenaeus Thirumeni as he starts this new chapter of God's plan for his ministry. ■

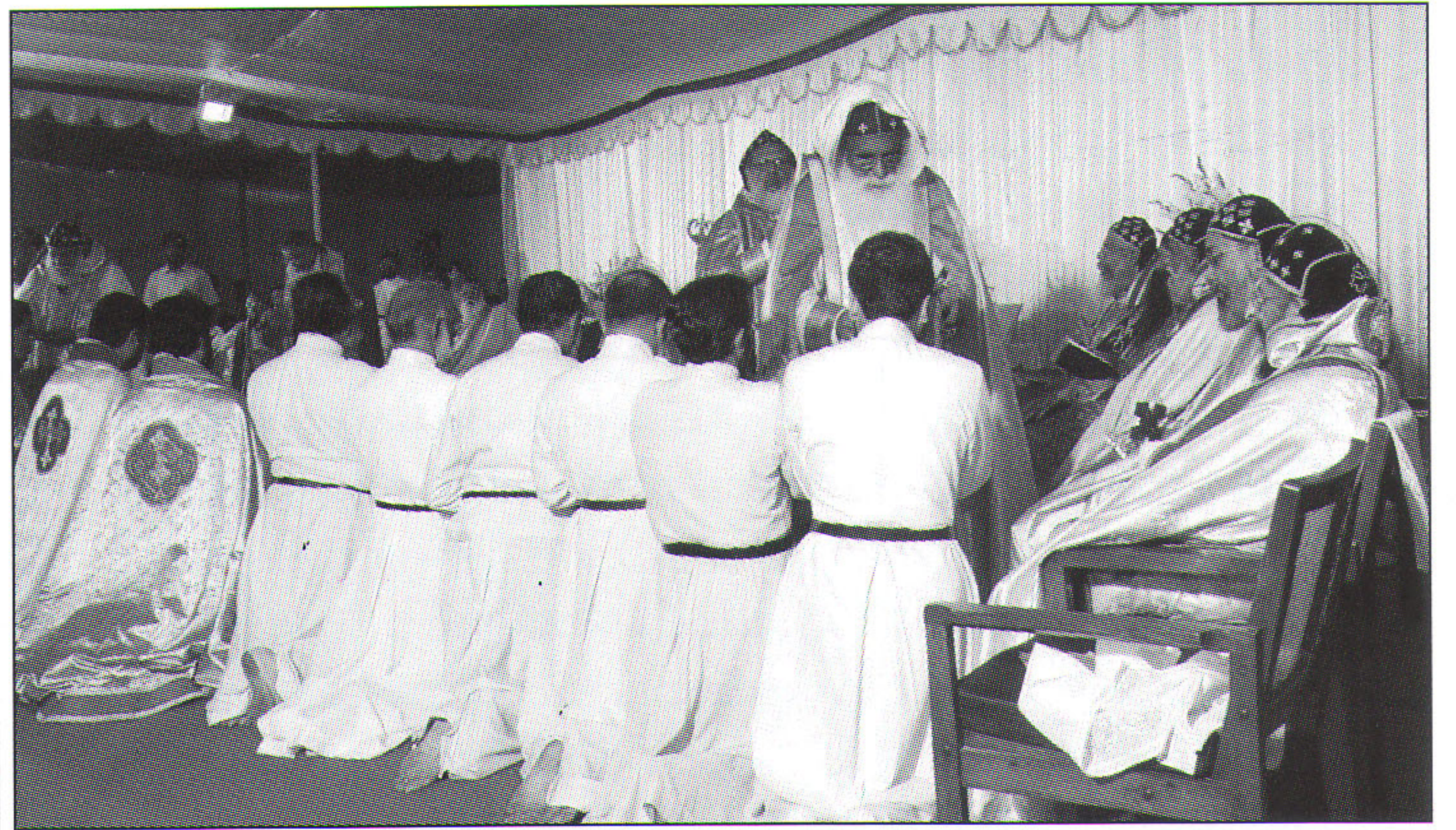
Mission & Vision; moving hand in hand



Lead, kindly Lights, 'lead us on...'

Consecration of our XXI Mar Thoma Metropolitan The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma





Diaspora—to sow, to scatter

Rev. Mathew Skariah (Sam Achen), Youth Chaplain

A recent New York Times essay (Jason De Parle, “Jobs Abroad Support ‘Model’ State in India”, Sept. 7, 2007) on migration from Kerala, described the enormous impact of Diaspora remittances on the economy of the state. The thesis of the essay was that the much acclaimed Kerala development model was sustained by the hard working Diaspora and migrants outside the state. We very well know the economic dimension of Diaspora, but we also know Diaspora is much more than money; it is an entirely new experience of life.

The primary meaning of the word ‘Diaspora’ means, to disperse, to scatter and to sow. Strictly speaking, Diaspora denotes the dispersion of Jews in various lands starting from the destruction Jerusalem during the Babylonian conquest of 587 BC. But it has come to acquire a broader meaning encompassing the diverse present day reality of people living in other lands than their “homeland”. In a special way it denotes the collective existence and experience of our church members who have made US their second home.

Diaspora is a mighty phenomenon of modern times. Significant populations from across the globe have migrated to other lands for better opportunities. People have also been pushed out due to war and civil strife, nations have lost their territories and people had moved out because of natural calamities and famines. Historically, the Mar Thoma Diaspora has happened because of immigration for better living situations. But it can never exclude the diverse experiences of Diaspora.

We need to interact with the context of the Bible from our own contexts of displacement and migration. Let us try to understand how the Diaspora becomes a significant dimension in the unfolding of God’s purposes for the people.

Diaspora as punishment displacement/punishment

The first Diaspora must have happened around the Garden of Eden itself. It is banishment of Adam and Eve from the garden as a consequence of disobedience. Displacement in the classic manner happens as the fruit of rebellion.

The story of Cain provides another dimension of Diaspora. After the murder, Cain is “driven from the land”; he is destined to be “a restless wanderer on the earth”, Genesis 4:13, 14. This is viewed as the most difficult of all the punishments. He becomes an uprooted being, devoid of a meaningful relation with the land.

Again and again there are instances where scattering is said to be the consequence of being unfaithful to God and his



covenant. In Deuteronomy, scattering is included in the curses for disobedience as contrasted to the blessings for obedience. “Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other”. Deut. 28:64

Diaspora as Divine Initiative/blessing

The story of the Tower of Babel provides a change in the understanding of Diaspora. It shows how scattering is both a punishment and a blessing. It is out of a desire to be together and

never to be scattered that they are building the tower. The people are trying out a hierarchical model of being together so that they could have a name, an identity. But the purpose of God is to “scatter them over the face of the whole earth” Genesis 11:9. The divine purpose of helping the people to move out in all directions to inhabit the whole earth takes the form of a punishment against the human desire to be together.

The call of Abraham is a clear command to move out of the homeland and to start the life of a wanderer. Genesis 12. The blessing of Abraham is connected to the start of a journey. Only when Abraham begins the life of a wanderer can he become part of the purpose of God for the nations. The sojourning of Abraham becomes the central motive in the faith journey of the people of God. The Abrahamic diaspora experience becomes part of the core faith affirmation of Israel. At the time of first fruits, the people should declare their faith, which is nothing other than the remembrance of the Diaspora experience; “My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down...” Deut. 26:5.

Diaspora God

A new dimension of God experience is shared to the people though the wilderness Diaspora; that of a journeying God. God is present within the movement of people, sharing and participating in their experiences. The tabernacle and the cloud descending on it represented God’s immanent presence. God adjusts the pace so as to journey with the Diaspora.

The presence of God is experienced as the fourth person when the Hebrew boys are thrown into the fiery furnace for not confirming to worship the idol of the king.

Diaspora Ethics

The relationship that should govern the life in the Promised Land has a close relationship with the wilderness experience. Even when the people are at peace in Canaan

they have to live out the ethical standards of the Diaspora. They should remember the mighty acts of God that brought them out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness (Deut 8). The alien and stranger among them should be taken care of. (Leviticus 19:9-10) The Sabbath year and Jubilee is a proclamation of the rights and privileges of the sojourner. (Leviticus 25) The Diaspora ethics should govern their settled life in the land.

It reaches its culmination in the Sechem Covenant that Joshua makes with all the people of Israel. "As for me and my household we will serve the Lord." Joshua 25:24. It is a proclamation of the undivided commitment to Yahweh which provides the direction for their existence in the Promised Land by being true to their Diaspora history.

Diaspora Witness

The primary purpose of God for the Diaspora is to be the witness of God's love to the nations by being an alternative community in the places where they were in sojourn. Exodus 19:6, Leviticus 20:26. The Diaspora is a holy nation to the Lord, set apart for God's purpose to be a blessing. This call to witness has actualized in the individual and collective actions of the people of the Diaspora. Daniel continues to pray to the Lord three times a day in spite of the royal decree, Hebrew boys are bold enough to witness to the Lord in their disobedience to the king, Esther is bold enough to intercede for the life of the Jews and Nehemiah is courageous enough to speak to the king about the plight of Jerusalem. These are powerful ways in which the Lord's name is glorified through the Diaspora.

Diaspora Mission

It is the Babylonian dispersion that challenges the Israel to be the missional community. Even though it was the core of the primary calling they received through Abraham, it was the hard experience of the Diaspora that made them look around and realize the mission that God had entrusted with them. The loss of the Temple built by Solomon and their Davidic kingdom was an experience of deepest loss and despair as a community. But the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel opens the eyes of the Diaspora to see the glory of God and what God would expect of them. The Jeremiah letter to the exiles challenges them to be engaged in building life as families and community and in relation with the land of dispersion. "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have

sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper..." Jeremiah 29:5-7

This is a new theology of the Diaspora, a missional theology. Babylonian dispersion becomes the time of new theological reflection and has caused the writing of many biblical texts. Worship centers of the diaspora, the synagogues, have its beginning in the Babylonian dispersion. Synagogues functioned as witnesses to worship of the Lord and later became platforms for the preaching of the gospel to Jews and Gentiles.

The New Testament Diaspora

The Book of Acts is testimony how the spread of the gospel happened through the Jewish and Christian Diaspora. Jewish colonies had been established in various parts of Asia and Europe during the Greek and Roman periods. Paul always preached to the Jewish Diaspora during his missionary journeys before moving out to the non Jews. The persecution of Christians in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen scattered the believers all around the provinces that they became powerful witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Acts. 8:1, 4; 11:19-21)

The Diaspora church in Antioch takes on a new dimension by being called as "Christians" for the first time (Acts 11:26). It becomes a caring community by sharing resources with the famine affected Judean church. And the dynamism of the Diaspora in Antioch is shown in the act of commissioning Paul and Barnabas for the proclamation of the gospel. (Acts. 13:1-3). The "scattered" were always the holy and set apart alternate community for faith. (1 Pet. 1:1, James 1:1)

The Diaspora becomes a compelling symbol of the New Testament church in its identity as a pilgrim church. The writer of the Hebrews asserts, "And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own" Heb. 11:13.

Our Diaspora existence is not by chance or by accident; or merely for the purpose of an economic advancement. It is part of the divine purpose of scattering. Let us be responsive to the biblical vision of Diaspora that we may become a community in pilgrimage with God towards God's purpose. ■

*"Instead of focusing on a person's past,
look at how far he's come."*

Mission of the Mar Thoma Church In the context of the Diaspora Community in the West

Dr. George K. Zachariah, Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington

“The day is short, the work is much, the workmen are lazy, the reward is great, and the Master is pressing.”

Ethics of the Fathers 2:15.

I have been asked to write on the theme: Mission of the Mar Thoma Church in the context of the Diaspora Community in the West. The word ‘mission’ is used so often that it has become a cliché. I myself have written on the mission of the church on several occasions. Let me use this opportunity to make some observations hoping that it would help us reflect on the great vocation wherewith we have been called. As I get older, it is obvious to me that I know God and our mission all too little. I believe in Him profoundly, I pray to Him often, and I am grateful that He revealed Himself to us as Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who became one of us and gave His life for the love of us. But there is more. Jesus said that when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoner, open our hearts to the stranger, we are really loving and caring for Him, especially as He is found in the poor and the abandoned. Thus God becomes a living and visible reality all around us. All are brothers and sisters, all are our neighbors, especially when in need. I thus believe that humans are the most important reality in the entire visible world. I believe that since they are all created in the image of God, I cannot love God without loving them and seeing them as best as I can.

The church has been called into existence as the principal vehicle for accomplishing the great calling. The church is often defined as the extension of Christ’s incarnation. The church plays a vital role in what Christ came to accomplish. It is suspected by many that God’s stated action plan for the church is being eclipsed by a man-made assortment of activities that ranges from the spurious to the scandalous. My first point therefore is let us wake to the great purpose for which we have been called. Every era has its calling within the bounds of the general design. Every generation has its mission. In order to understand ourselves and find meaning in our lives, we must first understand the unique time in which we live. This can be more difficult than it sounds. We find it hard to step back and cast a clear eye on our chaotic surroundings because we are so immersed in our everyday lives. We may think of ourselves as a meager generation, but when we stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, we have the potential to become the mightiest of structures. In fact, there has never been a better time to reach people, for their hearts and souls



are thirsting for nourishment, understanding and love. Instead of using modern technology simply for personal and business reasons, we must learn to use it to spread inspiration and goodness; we must learn to look at the world and the church with fresh eyes.

While the church’s mission is one, it may best be understood in terms of **four dimensions namely horizontal, vertical, theological and ecumenical**. First, the **horizontal**—the outreach or the extension of the body of Christ. The mission is to present the gospel to the lost, to send the gospel around the world through missionary efforts. When Bishop Newbegin states that “the whole life of the church has a missionary dimension though not all of it has mission as its primary intention”, he is considering mission of the church in a narrow framework. In fact, the home base is everywhere. Mission is the mission of the whole church to the whole world. Many years ago one non-Christian M.P. classified the foreign assisted projects in India into three categories: Christian, non-Christian, and un-Christian, not in the communal sense but in a broad spiritual and moral sense. He suggested that there was an urgent need to liquidate the un-Christian ones, to Christianize the non-Christian ones, and strengthen the Christian. As Vissert Hooft reminded us, mission is not from the West to the East, but from everywhere to everywhere.

Secondly, the **vertical** dimension. The church’s movement is mostly polarized. She cannot be the church militant, the church engaged in warfare. She must also be at rest. Prophetic spirits like Soren Kierkegaard have insisted that our task now is to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom. Much of the preaching is inconsequential and teaching in the church schools somehow misses any connection with the Gospel. The vertical dimension of mission implies that the church will take her own order seriously. The church leadership is far removed from the role of the prophet of the living God. Listen to these words of Albert Camus in 1948 at a Dominican monastery in France: “The world of today needs Christians who remain Christians.” We have to return to the spiritual values of the Christian tradition. It is one of greater strictness, austerity and discipline. We have to declare and support wholesome values (home, moral and ethical purity, the dignity of individuals, godly living, healthy marriages, integrity, etc.). Reach out to today’s youth and challenge them to make Christ the center of their lives, their choice of a career, and their plans for the future.

Thirdly, the **theological** dimension: The church’s movement outward and upward must be informed and

directed by the meaning of her message which is symbolic of that relation between religion and learning. Theology's three traditional functions, namely, didactic, polemic, and apologetic must be served. We have to participate in the human predicament, as Paul Tillich would say.

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

When we consider our errand to the world the nettlesome fact remains that much of the missionary enterprise has been fueled by a triumphalistic understanding of theology and history. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that missionaries at times have attached little importance to their calling to servanthood and have entered other lands and cultures with a 'crusading mind' assuming that their divinely designated role was to be that of master or patron. In these cases the missionary went as a superior, not as a subordinate; went to teach, not to learn; went to evangelize, not to be evangelized. Of course this is not a problem for the Mar Thoma church in the West, because they do not do much of this anyway. However, the attitude is reflected in many of our activities. We have to recover the notion of our mission as self-emptying or kenosis. Christ's self-emptying is meant to be, I believe, the subject of contemplation—faith, reflection, prayer, meditation, and worship; and it is meant to be a model for imitation—reflection, renewal, and praxis—and not a proposition designed to provoke theological and philosophical debate. We have to keep high the thought that Christ is our motive and Christ is our end. We must give nothing less and we can give nothing more. As Kagawa said, "The starting point of missions is the Divine commission to proclaim the Lordship of Christ over all life." That calls for our active involvement in social and political life. Hendrick Kraemer has identified the ideal missionary approach as the combination of "a prophetic, apostolic heraldship of truth for Christ's sake, with a priestly, apostolic ambassadorship of love for His sake." Jesus came and preached peace, "shalom" which implies wholeness—totality, well being, and harmony. The criteria of Christian concern are the love and holiness of God. We are invited to share in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, our Lord.

Most mission theology is based on a kingdom model, not a kenosis model. Jesus' kingdom, as the Bible describes it, is one that encompasses all of life, one that welcomes the most unlikely subject, one that exposes every pocket of evil and liberates from every injustice and oppression, one that comes through the most implausible means, and one whose sovereign power is revealed in weakness, poverty, suffering and death. Of course Jesus' kingdom is indeed a threat to other kingdoms.

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

What is our role in the Diaspora situation that we are placed? Instead of being an isolated community that we are, we are to be open and are to become part and parcel of the local community. No longer can we pretend not to see what is happening around us locally. No more can we think of ourselves as a separate culture. The problem at hand is "Will the Diaspora community ever become a local community?" The related question is "How can we make it happen?" Our witness as a church here is dismal. Of course, the church provides opportunity for regular worship and instruction, which is quite ineffective. We have to teach the Scriptures with a view to holy living. We must stimulate action and involvement in critical social issues. We have to be a lighthouse in the community. We have to equip saints for the work of ministry and must build up the saints. It seems we have gathered enough dust sitting around merely discussing our plight. We have to learn from the churches in the West about smoothly running the affairs of the local church.

Responsibility is one of the greatest gifts God gave us—the gift of being active participants in the dynamic unfolding of the world's destiny. We must never ignore this gift. In the delicate balance in which the fate of the world hangs, feeling responsible may be one deed of merit that tips the scale. There is a constant sense of urgency, a sense that our actions truly matter, that people really matter—that you and I, and everything we do, is of vital importance. We treat each other cruelly. We do not always care for our needy. We each need to make a new commitment to kindness to spread a message of love and cooperation, of moral and spiritual values. That is the least that we can do.

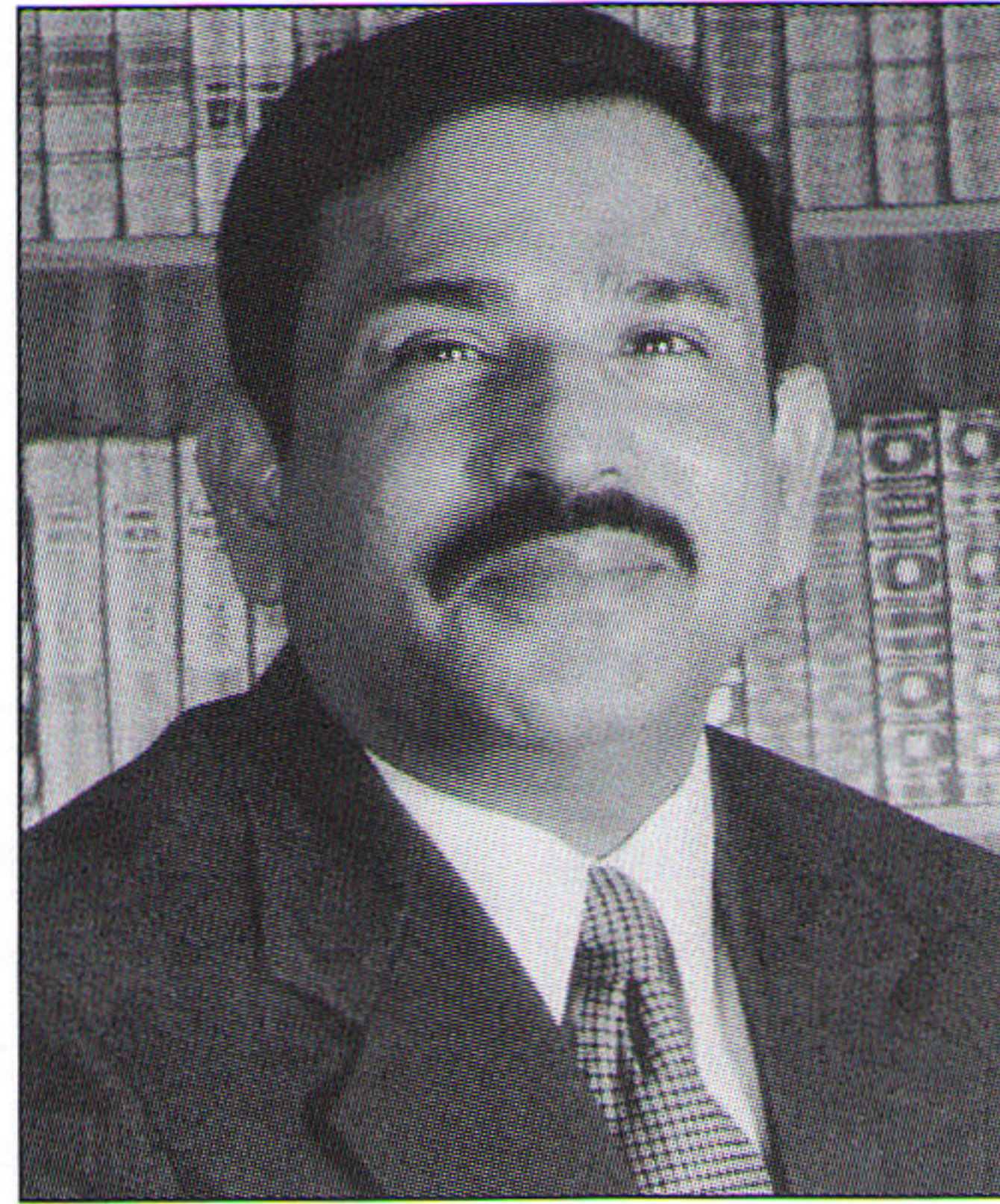
Finally, it is part of our Christian mission to bring the secular into focus with the sacred. Our lives become truly meaningful when we know that it is our duty to 'marry heaven and earth' to fuse the human with the divine. So where does heaven meet earth? Right at our doorstep. We must learn to look at the world and the church with fresh and open eyes. God, the divine architect, has given us a blueprint, a road map that illuminates the world's many winding dark paths. This road map is the Bible, which provides mankind with the directions to lead a meaningful, productive life. It shows us the good deeds each person must perform, the means by which we refine our lives and our environment. ■

The Mar Thoma Church—An Overview of Its Temporal and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and Authority

Attorney Lal Varghese, Diocesan Council Member, MTC Dallas, FB

The Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, believed to have been founded by Saint Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world and known by the name of the Apostle, is part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The church, in conformity with the faith of the Christian Church of all ages, believes in Jesus Christ, God incarnate for the redemption of mankind, and in the Triune God revealed by Him, who is himself one in that Trinity. The Holy Bible consisting of the sixty-six books comprised in the Old and New Testaments, accepted by Mar Thoma Syrian Church as the basis of all matters of doctrine and faith, and the Nicene Creed, formulated in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, shall, not be altered in any manner by any one and likewise, the Ministry of Deacon, Priest and Episcopa, the rites of Church namely Church Dedication, Church Consecration, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, Holy Matrimony, Unction of the sick, Funeral Service and observance of Sunday, Lents and Dominical Feasts, shall not be abolished, at any time. The church accepts as its goal and function to be the repository of the divine doctrines revealed by Jesus Christ and proclaimed by His Apostles to maintain these doctrines in its purity; to promote the spiritual life of its members through the administration of sacraments and by the ministry of the Word; to make disciples of all nations by the proclamation of the Gospel to all the world, and through the administration of Holy Baptism in the name of the Triune God.

The Mar Thoma Church has its own written constitution, the first four parts of which lay down explicitly its basic teachings: belief in the Trinity, salvation through Jesus Christ, the Bible as the foundation for all theological teachings, Nicene Creed, sacraments of holy baptism & holy communion (dominical sacraments), the exhortation to preach the Word of God everywhere in the world, the declaration that the Mar Thoma Church is part of the one catholic and apostolic Church, the orders of priests and Bishops. The rest of the constitution mainly deals with the temporal matters of the church. These are the basic concepts which form the backdrop of its constitution. The constitution of the church is available both in English and Malayalam at the Mar Thoma Sabha Book Depot at Thiruvalla, Kerala, India or from the Literature Society of the Diocese at the Diocesan Head Quarters. The administration



of the church has three levels namely: central administrative setup embracing the entire church, dioceses on regional basis and individual parishes scattered all over the world.

Central administration of the church

The central administrative set up consists of the Metropolitan, the Episcopal Synod, the Prathinithi Mandalam (General Assembly of the church) and the Sabha Council (Executive body of the Mandalam), and various subcommittees appointed by the Synod, Council and Mandalam. At certain times, when the Metropolitan decides to step down in accordance with Clause 7 A of the constitution, such Metropolitan will be designated as Valia Metropolitan. Such designated Valia Metropolitan continues to be a member of the Episcopal Synod, Sabha Council, and Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam, In consultation with the Episcopal Synod and Sabha Council, one or more senior Episcopas may be designated as Suffragan Metropolitan. Their authority and responsibilities will be decided by the Metropolitan in accordance with the Episcopal Synod and Sabha Council. The official web site of the church is www.marthomasyranchurch.org.

Metropolitan and Bishops

His Grace the Metropolitan is the supreme authority of the Church, even though when we have a Valia Metropolitan, who is symbolically designated as the Head of the Church. Suffragan Metropolitan/s helps the Metropolitan in the discharge of his temporal and ecclesiastical authority. Presently we have Valia Metropolitan, Mar Thoma, one Suffragan Metropolitan and seven Bishops. The Metropolitan, in consultation with the Sabha Council and Episcopal Synod, organizes and reorganizes the church into various dioceses. Each Bishop is in charge of a diocese, and his term of office is normally seven years. Thereafter they will be transferred to be in charge of another diocese. There is no retirement age for our Bishops. Presently we have 12 dioceses including two outside India—Malaysia—Singapore—Australia and Diocese of North America & Europe. The supreme body of ecclesiastical authority of the church is known as Episcopal Synod of which the Metropolitan is the president. The supreme executive body of the church is known as the Sabha

Council and supreme general body of the church is called Prathinidhi Mandalam. The Metropolitan and Bishops derive their power from the constitution and precedents of the church. All the Bishops are nominated by the Episcopal Nominations Board and then elected by the Prathinidhi Mandalam after receiving 75% of the votes of the clergy and laity reckoned separately. In order to be nominated as an Episcopa the nominee should have completed 40 years of age and 15 years service in the Ministry and shall be celibates according to the Eastern Church's tradition and precedents. The Metropolitan is the president of the Episcopal Synod, the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam and the Sabha Council. He is also an ex-officio trustee of the church. The place where our Bishops live are called 'Aramana' or Bishop's house.

Episcopal Synod

The Synod consists of all Bishops of the church including Valia Metropolitan, if any, and helps the Metropolitan in the general administration of both temporal and ecclesiastical matters. The Metropolitan is the president of the Synod. The Synod approves the decisions of the Prathinidhi Mandalam and the Diocesan Assemblies. Preparation & publishing of the liturgy is also done by the Synod, in addition to transfer of clergy. They form the ecclesiastical authority of the church. Important information about the church is sent to parishes by the Metropolitan and Bishops in the form of 'kalpana' which should be read in each parish for public information. The Synod helps and advises the Metropolitan in implementing decisions taken by the Mandalam and also forward to the Council matters which in the opinion of the Synod should be considered by the Mandalam. The church has its own Legal Affairs Committee to advise the Metropolitan in any legal matters and also in the matrimonial matters.

Prathinidhi Mandalam

The elected representatives from each parish constitute the supreme general body of the Church, consisting of the Valia Metropolitan, if any, Metropolitan, Suffragan Metropolitan/s, all other Bishops, Vicars Generals, representatives of the clergy, representatives of parishes, representatives of the recognized Institutions of the Church, representatives of those who have become members of the Church as a result of the missionary work of the Church and persons nominated by the Metropolitan. 65% of the membership is from laity and 35% from among the clergy. The lay representatives are elected by parishes and other institutions. The clergy members are chosen according to seniority. The term of the office of the Mandalam is three years. The Mandalam elects the Sabha Secretary, Lay Trustee and Clergy Trustee. The Mandalam decides all spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church and make appropriate decisions. The annual report, accounts and budget for the

church are approved by the Mandalam. The decisions of the Mandalam are submitted to the Synod for its approval, then for Metropolitan's approval and circulated in all parishes by the Metropolitan in the form of kalpana. Though generally the Mandalam meets once a year, in exigencies special Mandalam can be convened.

Sabha Council

The Council is the executive committee of the Mandalam. The Metropolitan is the president of the Sabha Council. Valia Metropolitan, if any, Suffragan Metropolitan/s, all other Bishops, the senior Vicar General, the Trustees and Secretary are ex-officio members of the Council. The other members are elected from Dioceses by the Mandalam Members for three years. The council has the power to implement the decisions of the Mandalam which are approved by the Synod and confirmed by the Metropolitan. The Sabha Council also acts as an advisory body to the Metropolitan.

The Sabha Secretary

The Sabha Secretary is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Mandalam and Council. The Sabha Office, the central secretariat of the Church, functions directly under the control of the Sabha Secretary, who is the secretary of the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam and Sabha Council, where all administrative support to the executive bodies of the Church are being provided. The Sabha Secretary is the chief executive officer of the Sabha Office, and he is responsible for implementation of all policy decisions, with the cooperation of the Lay Trustee and the Clergy Trustee. Both laity and clergy can be elected as Sabha Secretary.

Central Office or Sabha Office

All the decisions of the Synod, Prathinidhi Mandalam, Sabha Council, various committees, etc. are executed through the Sabha Office. The Sabha Office also coordinates the administration of the dioceses, organizations of the church and parishes. Our Sabha Office is located at Thiruvalla in Kerala, India. The Sabha Office is also acts as the central office for the official organizations of the church, namely: Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association (a wing to lead and coordinate the evangelistic works), Sunday School Samajam (children's department), Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom (women's department), Voluntary Evangelistic Association (department to mobilize parishes for evangelistic work), Yuvajana Sakhyam (mainly for Malayalam speaking youths), Department of Sacred Music and Communications (DSMC). The church also has various institutions like schools, colleges, theological seminary, Bible institutes and various mission centers in mission fields. The world famous Maramon Convention is annual religious convention held at the banks of river

Pampa at Maramon in Kerala during the month of February held by the church (www.mtconvention.org). The church's official publication is called 'The Sabha Tharaka' published in Malayalam from Thiruvalla, Kerala. Various organizations of the church publish their own periodicals both in English and Malayalam. The church is a member of World Council of Churches (WCC), National Council of Churches (NCC) and various other ecumenical organizations both in India and abroad. The church is in full communion with the Church of North India (CNI) and Church of South India (CSI) and the three collectively constitute what is known as the Communion of Churches in India (CCI). The Metropolitan is the ex-officio Trustee of the church. In addition to the Metropolitan, the Mandalam elects two trustees—one from the clergy and one from the laity. The Lay Trustee is the treasurer of the church who presents the annual accounts and budget in the Mandalam for its approval.

Vicar Generals and Clergy of the Church

The clergy of the Mar Thoma church are selected by the Vaideeka Selection Committee appointed by the Sabha Council. To be qualified to discharge the duties as a clergy each selected person has to attain Bachelors Degree in Theology from an approved theological seminary and should not be below 24 years of age. The clergy will be in charge of a parish and their term in each parish is limited to three years. Thereafter they will be transferred to a different parish of the church. They retire at the age of 65 years or can opt for voluntary retirement after 30 years of active service. Our clergy are allowed to marry and their spouses are known as "baskiamma" and they assist the clergy in their ministry. They live within the parish limits and the house they live are known as 'Parsonage.' Vicar Generals of the church are appointed from clergy who have 25 years of standing in ordained ministry and are not less than 55 years of age. The term of the office of the Vicar General is to a maximum of 10 years, but they should retire at the age of 70 years. The Vicar Generals' powers and responsibilities are prescribed by the Episcopal Synod in consultation with the Sabha Council. Vicar Generals may be appointed to assist the Diocesan Episcopa wherever it is necessary.

Laity of the Church

The Mar Thoma Church is a reformed church which was formed as a movement of the laity in Kerala at the initiative of Abraham Malpan and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan and several others more than 150 years ago. The Laity are those who believe in the faith and practices of the church and are members of the individual parishes. The laity are called to profess and practice Christian truths and teachings in their daily life. The laity shall also take active part in the life of the church and cooperate in the general administration of the

church. Laity should follow the general directions of the Metropolitan and Diocesan Episcopas, and should not do anything to hinder the activities of the church, diocese, recognized institutions of the church and parishes. Laity should follow the constitution of the church, its faith and practices in both temporal and ecclesiastical matters especially for the sacraments. All children born should be baptized in accordance with the faith and practices of the church. The church does not recognize civil marriages or marriages conducted not in accordance with our sacraments. Parties who enter into civil marriage or marriages performed without following the sacraments of the church may obtain permission from the Diocesan Episcopa to have their marriage blessed in accordance with the faith and practices of the church and to be in the fellowship of the church. Children born to couples before entering into sacramental marriage will be considered as legitimate children once the marriage is validated by performing the sacraments of the church after authorization from the Diocesan Episcopa.

Liturgy or Order of Worship

Mar Thoma Church uses a set order of liturgy for its worship and sacraments known as the 'Thaksa'. Copies of the newly released 'Thaksa' in English are available from our Diocesan office. We use mainly the St. James version which is believed to be one of the oldest worship orders in the world dating back to 4th century and originated in Jerusalem. The sacraments are a means of grace, a visible sign used to signify and point to a spiritual truth. There are seven sacraments which laity of the church must obey and follow namely: Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Holy Communion, Marriage, Ordination, and Extreme Unction (anointing of the sick). Of the seven sacraments Baptism and Holy Communion are called Dominical Sacraments i.e. they are directly commanded by Jesus Christ. Others are instituted by the church in accordance with our faith and belief.

Dioceses and its Administration

The central administration of the Church is divided into dioceses. The Diocesan Bishop is the head of the diocese and supervises the administration of the dioceses subject to the approval of the Metropolitan. A Vicar General may be appointed by the Metropolitan, to assist the Diocesan Bishop. The Diocesan Assembly consists of representatives from each parish in the diocese. The Assembly members elect the Diocesan Council which is the executive body of the Diocese. The Diocese has a Diocesan Secretary and a Trustee. The Diocesan Bishop is assisted by the Diocesan Assembly and the Diocesan Council in the discharge of his duties. All parishes in the Diocese are represented in the Assembly. All Achenes in the Diocese including retired Achenes are members of the Diocesan Assembly. The duration of the Assembly is three years. The Diocesan Bishop is the president of the Assembly and the Council. The Diocesan Assembly takes

appropriate decisions for smooth administration of the Diocese. The Assembly also approves the annual report, accounts and budget of the Diocese. The Diocesan Council implements the decisions of the Assembly in addition to assisting and advising the Diocesan Bishop. Each Diocese has its own Legal Affairs Committee to advise the Episcopa in any legal matters and also in matrimonial matters. Each Diocese has its own approved organizations and various committees which all help the Diocesan Episcopa in the discharge of his temporal and ecclesiastical duties. The official publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe is called 'The Mar Thoma Messenger'. The Diocese of N. America & Europe has published three study booklets namely: A Brief History of the Church —A Biblical View with Special Reference to the Mar Thoma Church by Dr. P. V. Cherian, The Liturgy of the Malankara Mar Thoma Church—Doctrinal Identity as a Basis for our Existence by Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, and Enriching Marital and Family Life by Rev. Joseph Kuruvilla, MT Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala which are available at the Diocesan office. For details about our Diocese and its programs please visit the Diocesan web site at www.marthomanae.org and the e-mail address is marthoma@aol.com.

Parishes and its Administration

The most vital unit of the Church is the parish. All those whose names appear in the Parish Register who worships in the parish are members of the Parish. All members whose names appear in the parish register and who receive Holy Communion in the parish and who are of 18 years of age and whose membership is not barred are entitled to members of the Edavaka Sanghom (General Body). Each parish has a Vicar, Assistant Vicars wherever appointed, and elected Secretary, Trustees and Lay Ministrants. The Edavaka Sanghom (general body of the parish) makes decisions with respect to all matters relating to the parish. The annual accounts and budget of the parish are also approved by the Edavaka Sanghom. All of its decisions are subject to the approval of the Diocesan Bishop. Edavaka Sanghom members are above 18 years of age, regular worshippers and communicants and whose membership is not banned by higher authorities. Since the Mar Thoma Church has adopted a policy of voluntary contribution, there is no fixed fee for membership. However all members are under Christian obligation to extend financial support for the needs of the parish and the church. In order to become a member of a parish an application must be submitted to the Vicar with transfer certificate from former parish, if any.

The Edavaka Sanghom has an executive committee called the Kaisthana Samithi. For administrative convenience and fellowship, the parish is divided into prayer groups. The area prayer groups are local bodies usually arranged geographically and send representatives to the Kaisthana Samithi. There are different organizations in the parish, which are governed by their own central constitution. Among them are Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association, Sunday School Samajam, Suvisesha Sevika Sanghom, Voluntary Evangelistic Association, Yuvajana Sakhyam (mainly for Malayalam speaking youths), Youth Fellowship (mainly for

non-Malayalam speaking youths), Senior Citizen's Fellowship, Choir (English and Malayalam), mission project committees, retreat committees, etc. Each official organization of the parish also sends representatives to the Kaisthana Samithi. The term of office of the Kaisthana Samithi and office bearers is one year.

Though democratic principles are incorporated in the administration, the Church takes pride in the fact that most decisions are based on consensus, reached after prayerful consultations and discussion. The functioning of the Mandalam and Assemblies are the best example for this. The Church follows a wonderful heritage in its administration, and carefully blends active involvement of the laity. The Mandalam consists of 65% laity at all times. In the Episcopal Nomination Board (a body responsible for nominating Bishop Candidates) with 24 members, 14 are lay members. The administrative setup of the Mar Thoma Church is a harmonious blend of Episcopal and democratic methods, and the Church is always responsive to the demands of the times. For more serious and in depth study about the origin, history, faith, liturgy, and practices of Mar Thoma Church the following books may be useful. ■

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A Theological Appraisal of the Sunday School Curriculum In North America

Rev. Ninu Chandy, Dallas (Part II)

Logic of Transformation

The logic of transformation is based on the disclosure model of knowing. In other words, as we indwell the object to be known within its context, it discloses itself. Loder refines discovery knowing into five movements. He illustrates it using the classic story of Archimedes and Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. I will refer only to Archimedes in the following discussion on the logic of transformation.



1. Conflict-in-context is a problem or conflict a person grapples with to find coherence, in a given frame of reference. The conflict in context in the example of Archimedes was the problem posed by King Hero of Syracuse who asked Archimedes to find the genuineness of the gold in his crown without melting.
2. Interlude for scanning. Once the conflict is engaged, the spirit consciously or unconsciously seeks resolution. It scans for relevant possibilities. Archimedes spent many hours consciously and unconsciously pondering the puzzle.
3. Insight felt with intuitive force is the constructive resolution, which brings the incoherent elements together into a new whole and within a new context of meaning. While stepping into a public bath Archimedes saw the water rise against the marks of the wall. He suddenly connected (bi-sociation) with the problem and solved it in his mind. If the quantity of water displaced corresponds to the weight per volume unit of gold, then the crown could be "weighed" and compared with the same quantity of gold in water. If the volume of water displaced was in agreement then all was fine; if more water was displaced then an alloy was used in the crown.
4. Release and re-patterning is the release of energy bound up in the conflict. Archimedes' insight, at the intellectual and emotional levels, released such energy and excitement that he jumped out of the bath naked and ran into the streets of Syracuse shouting "Eureka! Eureka!" (I've found it)
5. Interpretation and verification are the spirit seeking confirmation and verification of the resolution of the conflict. It "may take various forms, from an empirical test for scientific insight, to public confirmation in the case of interpersonal insight, to sheer aesthetic or

metaphysical elegance and a claim as when persons simply know artistically or conceptually that a piece of work is finished because it is 'too beautiful' to be wrong or different."

Archimedes put his insight to test according to the canons of coherence and correspondence. He not only solved the given problem but the discovery yielded the first principles of hydrostatics, a hidden order in the nature of things.

The Direction of Transformation

The direction of transformation in all the areas of human action is summarized as follows:

1. The Psyche box. The ego is transformed and so also its defenses, echoing Paul, "I, yet not I, but Christ."
2. The Social box. The transformation of roles is brought about by the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ, resulting in koinonia. Loder expresses it: "We, yet not we, but Christ."
3. The Culture box. "What ego is to personality, role is to society, master image is to culture. It is necessary but it must undergo transformation so as not to subvert faith and life in the Spirit." Master image gets transformed in several ways. Example: Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus. The transformation of the master image resulted in communion with the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit.
4. The Organism box. In the spirit to Spirit encounters, the human body might find healing as an eschatological event and cognition will seek for the ultimate intelligibility that holds the universe together in Christ. Thus, one seeks to study the Word of God in the context of koinonia.

Reflection and Implication

Let us now reflect upon the newly introduced curriculum in the light of the aforementioned theological discussion.

1. The curriculum is designed according to the lock and key metaphor, as it is developed with teacher-student and student-teacher understanding. It is desired that teacher and student should participate in the respective classes to make it more meaningful and participatory.

2. The whole Sunday School activity is shaped in such a way to facilitate the iconic model, where it encourages students to experience the Divine presence. The activity is oriented in the context of the holy. Hence the classes should start and end with the prayer.
3. It is the task of the teacher to engage students in problem-posing education that creates dialogue between the learner and the instructor. This will facilitate interaction, inquisitiveness, joy, and freedom. The student is no longer a slave to the teacher or to the text, but participates in the activity of learning.
4. Provide opportunity to discovery learning, giving space for the indwelling on the problem or the text. For example, the text for the class could be placed and encourage the students to give feedback in relation to the theme of the day.
5. Celebrate learning through appropriate action. For example, if the study is on sharing, plan ahead to celebrate the learning of sharing by giving and receiving some gifts. Again, it is the task of the teacher to take extra effort to make the learning a joyful experience.
6. The curriculum of the Mar Thoma Sunday School is concentric in nature. The theme and subject are common for the entire grades. Hence one might think that the whole curriculum is repetitive and meaningless. On the other hand, while the student promoted to the higher level will receive added value through learning. Here the task of the teacher is to find appropriate vocabulary and teaching skills according to the cognitive level of the learner. It makes the teacher more efficient and sound in ministry.
7. The unique character of the curriculum is reaffirming in nature. Each year the student learn the same subject in a different perspective as per the cognitive level. Moreover, the memory verse learning, by repeating every class is also intentional and progressive. These processes concretize and reaffirm the content and memory in the students which will yield lasting impact in the life of the learner.
8. A course of study should end with the doxology, thus grounding all learning in God. The worship after the classes should be viewed and promoted so that both teacher and student may find their being in God. ■

VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH

LINDA JOHNSON OF ST. JAMES MTC, NEW YORK, THE VALEDICTORIAN OF CLASS OF 2007, BERGENFIELD HIGH SCHOOL, NEW JERSEY.



They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint, says Isaiah Chapter 40, Verse 1.

It was in eighth grade. I remember that day quite clearly, torturous under the hot June sun. I was in my

social studies classroom ready to shoot out at the sound of the bell. While I was sitting there the teacher began telling us a story. It was the story of a mother bird taking her children high atop a mountain. The bird then pushed her children off one by one so they could learn how to fly. They all managed to fly, but some were soaring and others just maintained to stay in the air.

The mother bird symbolized a teacher, she later explained, and the children her students. There will be a point in time when the teacher will have to let go of her

students; those with passion and drive to succeed will soar above the others and dominate the skies. I made a promise to myself back then that I would be among the ones to soar.

I would like to thank our unseen Father for making my dream a reality. The Lord imparted to us, those who believe, the strength to not just fly but to soar and to not just walk but run and I have achieved this great honor thanks to His grace and glory.

Another force that has motivated me and kept me moving toward my ultimate goal has been my parents. They have been a constant pillar of support for me helping me trudge through the complexities of life by being the constant voice of reason.

Last but not least I would not have gotten this far without the help of all my loving and dedicated teachers. My teachers have built the foundation of my life upon which I will now continue building and for that I will always be deeply indebted to them. Never will their words of advice fade away from my heart. As a graduate I feel as though I can say that I am one of the birds who soared. In college I plan to pursue a doctorate in Pharmacy and I am sure that with the motivation and inspiration that I have received from my friends and family along with the grace of the loving Father, I will achieve many more great things.

Linda is the daughter of Mr. Johnson George and Mrs. Lally Johnson, members of the St. James MTC, NY.



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Be A Companion To A Loved One's End of Life Journey

Mrs. Gigi M. Mathew, RN, Ph.D, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

A century ago, most people who suffered traumatic injuries and contracted serious illnesses had little hope of living a long life. Today medical procedures and modern technology and research offer a chance of extending the life of a person who has suffered such misfortune. Despite modern technological advances, the scriptures remind us "Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart" (Eccl. 7:2). However, God promises that one day "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow nor crying" (Rev: 21:4). Preparing for death can be a stressful and tedious process for both the individual and his/her loved ones.

According to Elizabeth Kubler-Ros, the dying person typically experiences five emotional stages in the following phases: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and finally, acceptance. A person in denial may act, think, and talk as though death will not occur. Denial generally occurs because of the fear of the loss of control, fear of separation from the loved one, uncertainty regarding one's future and apprehension of suffering. In the angry phase, an individual may feel a sense of injustice and may have feelings like "Why me?" The individual who is in the bargaining phase may actually be reasoning with death and seeking to negotiate for more time to live. Depression may set in when the individual begins to realize that the other strategies have failed. Last is the phase of acceptance and awareness of the inevitable. Acceptance generally occurs after discussions with family, friends and health care providers.

Death is a mystery. Neither man nor medical technology can predict the actual day or time of death. Doctors may provide an expected time of death based upon statistical evidence of caring for large groups of people with similar diagnosis and conditions. The time, however, is not certain. Therefore, people should acknowledge the available time and should make plans accordingly. The companion, who may be a spouse, sibling, child, friend, or a relative, should learn the likes and dislikes of the dying person. Preferences for physical comforts are highly individual. If possible, let the dying person lead the process.

Having companionship prior to the different stages of death is an indispensable need of human beings. Few people want their departure from life to be solitary. Terminally ill people treasure companionship of various sorts. For those who live among caring and congenial people, family reunions and gatherings of special friends and families may bring the most fulfilling end of life memories and provide much comfort. Many dying people find comfort in being surrounded by familiar voices and talking about anything



whatsoever. In addition, smelling favorite food, being hugged and kissed by loved ones, being showered with attention, and knowing that loved ones came together just for them may provide comfort. Stories abound of those close to death that hold on to life until after celebrating some special event, such as a birthday party, a family reunion, a wedding, or the arrival of a new baby in the family.

Prayer, a means of communication with God, is a means of drawing away from pain and restlessness. Another form is practicing meditation by encouraging the person to close

his eyes and concentrating in silence on a particular word that can allow the person's mind to travel to a sacred place, where the divine strength can enlighten, encourage, and comfort. Another path is to read a passage from the Bible and let the mind wander back to the one phrase that "jumps out." Inspiration and strength are drawn from repeating that phrase in one's mind throughout the day.

Touch is a spiritual gift and a powerful antidote to suffering. Touch can add comfort to a person like fresh bedding, and a clean body with less pain and nausea. Human nature longs for touch. Skin hunger affects all humans including infants who if they are not cuddled or touched enough will express emotional disturbances as they grow up. Skin hunger also occurs in the sick and elderly whose friends and family withdraw from touching because of their dislike of the person's physical condition or fear of contracting a disease or not knowing how to provide comfort.

Seeing an old friend's face, art, videos, photographs, flowers and aquariums may provide comfort. Knowing your loved one's personal aesthetic taste can guide you in choosing visual gifts. The person may find comfort in a pleasant view from the window, a passing scene of people coming and going, children playing, or a beautiful backyard with flowers. Thus, it may be helpful to position the person's bed so that he or she can visually participate in the world around him/her.

One of the most powerful comforts of sight at any point in life can happen oddly enough with eyes closed with guided imagery. Sitting or lying in a comfortable position with eyes closed a person can be verbally led down an imaginary pathway, such as to a beach, a favorite get-a-way, or to some other happy spot. The weary one can rest for a time, walking the imaginary beach sitting on a garden bench, sitting by a fireplace, overlooking a mountain peak, or with whatever images they have chosen. Then, moving from the toes all the way to the top of the head, the guide can coach the person to relax his or her entire body, to breathe deep, long breaths, to linger at the site of relaxation

for a while. Gradually, the guide can coach the person back to the present. With practice, guided imagery can be a self-guided tour but generally, the person needs to have a few sessions with a leader or listen to a tape before doing it alone.

Sound is reportedly the last of the senses to leave even if a person is unconscious and breathing through life-support. Always assume that your loved one is present with you and can hear you clearly, right until the last moment of life. The greatest comfort for the person is your speaking directly to him. Never talk as if the person is already in the process of dying. Try to include the person in conversation, decision-making, prayer and shared feelings of every kind if they can comprehend.

The rhythms and tones of music always communicate movingly in the last days of life. The loved one may retreat to a place that is beyond language or be too exhausted to sort out the meaning of words and sentences. Talking may be painful or simply impossible. During those times, music has the power to reach those final places and to soothe and bring peace to lighten the person's mood. Living fully until death means using all the senses including taste and smell.

Even when you are separated from a distance, there are many ways to offer comfort from afar. Regular telephone calls, letters, and encouraging cards can be a way to keep in touch. Providing assurance of your kind thoughts with care packages full of things to please the senses with simple things such as pressed flowers from your garden, and handmade cards, can ease the pain and discomfort.

The journey near the end of life is sacred and to be a spiritual companion to someone is an act of love and compassion. From your presence the one who is dying gains many blessed gifts such as to be heard, the gift of being loved and cared for and the gift of empowering. By necessity, death is something a person must do alone, but as a companion, you are privileged to hold hands until the end.

The journey alone after losing a loved one is one of the loneliest of life's experiences. The heart is often broken, the

body numb with fatigue, the tears seemingly endless. The memory of your loved one's existence may surround you and result in an unbearable void. Returning to "normal life" is a long and slow process. People who try to hurry through the grieving process end up unsuccessful. Let time take its course and ease the grief. A day will dawn when the pain of loss diminishes and life seems to hold energy and hope again. Be of faith, the cloud of divine presence, as called in the Hebrew language "Shekinah," will hover around you until weariness is no more and you learn to reinvent life and live again without your loved one.

The loving God obtained eternal redemption for our bodies through His son Jesus Christ. Once again we await rapture; as St. Paul says, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor 15:52). So let us arm ourselves with His precious promises, through fervent prayers of faith, supplication and constant fellowship with His son Jesus Christ. Let us Glorify God, live for Him and serve Him faithfully to the end. ■

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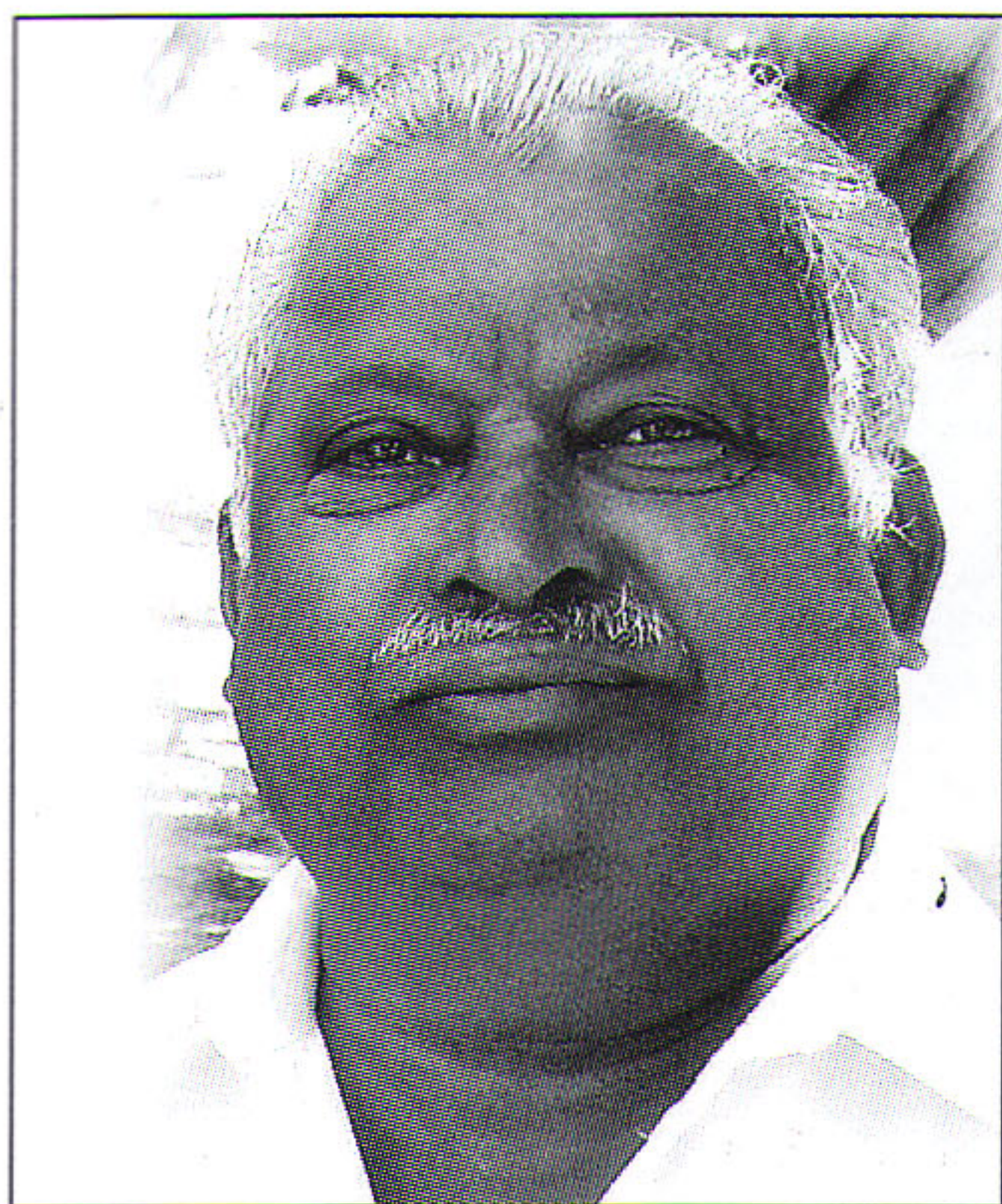
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Editor's Note: Dr. Gigi Mathew completed her Nursing at CMC, Vellore, India and recently obtained her Doctorate in Health Care Administration. She works in the department of Care Coordination and JCAHO regulations at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas. She is an active member of the MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch. She presently serves as the Joint Superintendent of the Sunday school and is also in the choir. She is married to Mr. Mathew Pappy and they have two children, Reba and Abel.

OBITUARY

V. A. MATHEWS (Mathukutty): V. A. Mathews, also known to everyone as Mathukutty, was born to the late V.



V. A. MATHEWS
1941 - 2007

K. Abraham and Annamma Abraham on September 17th, 1941 at Kozhencherry, Kerala, India. On July 3, 1972, he married Aleyamma Abraham and later that year they migrated to the United States and settled in Pasadena, Texas. He was called to eternity on August 19th, 2007. Funeral was conducted on August 25th, 2007 at Hilltop

Cemetery in Carrollton, TX. He is survived by his wife Aleyamma Mathews (Kunjumol) and daughter Libby Mathews and sister Mariamma Abraham. He is preceded in death by his parents and brothers: V.A. Samuel, V.A Varghese, O.A. Thomas, and his son Tobin. He was one of the founding members of the Trinity MTC, Houston and since he moved to Dallas in 1987 he was an active member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. Through the years it was his faith, prayer life, and his positive outlook that pulled him through all personal challenges and obstacles including laying his son Tobin to eternal rest in March of 1997.

Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar

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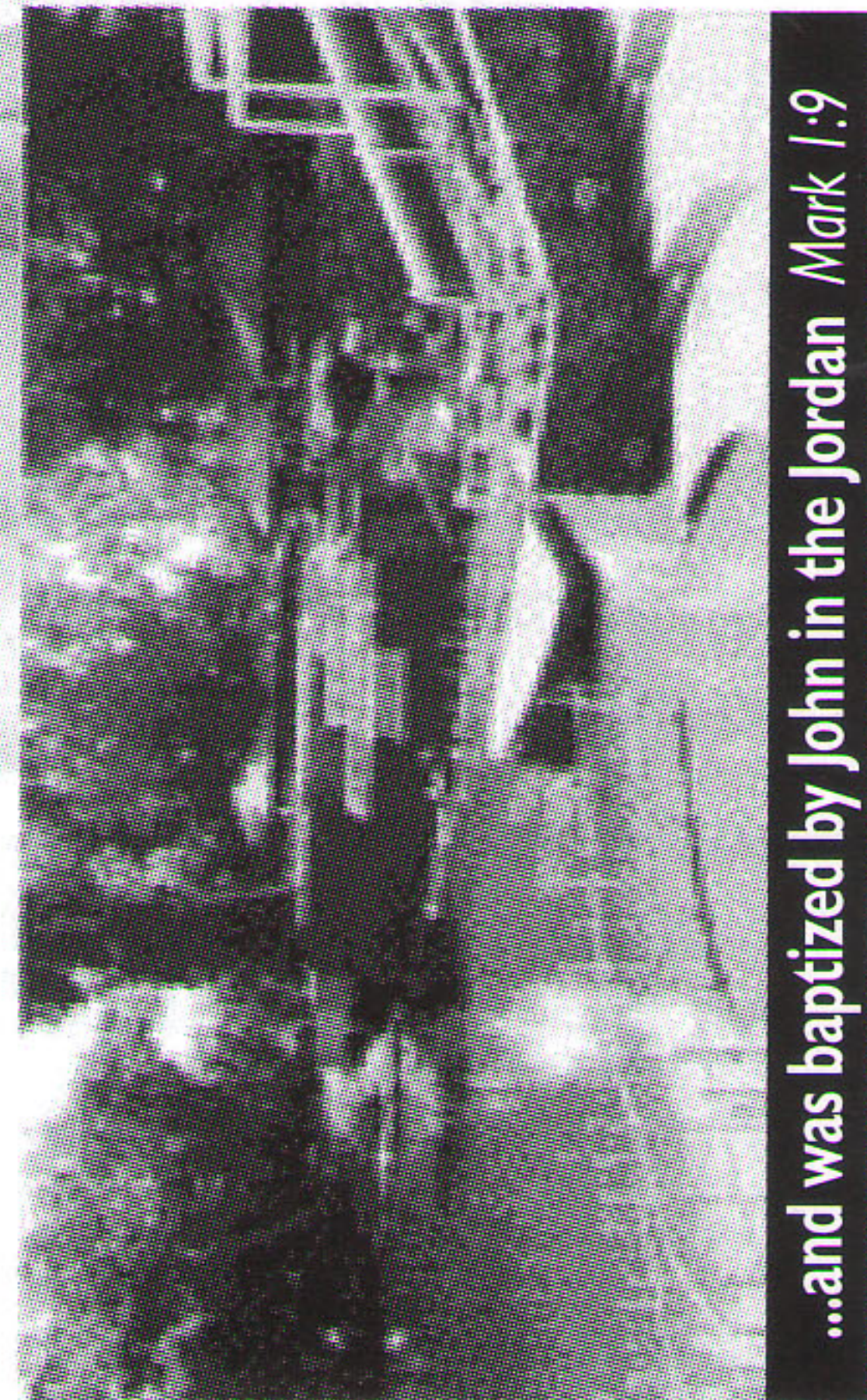
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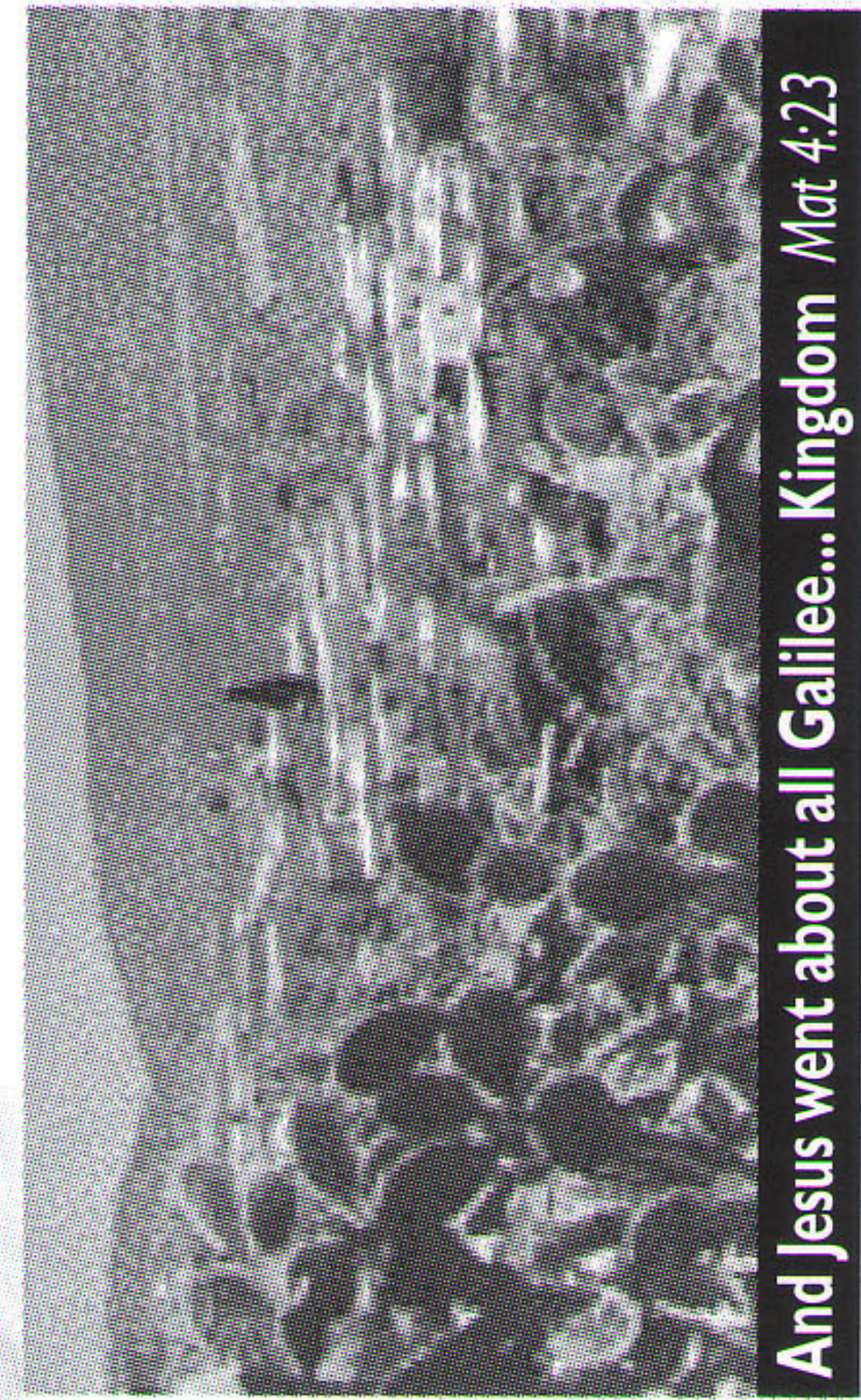
WALK IN HIS FOOTSTEPS 2000 Years later



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



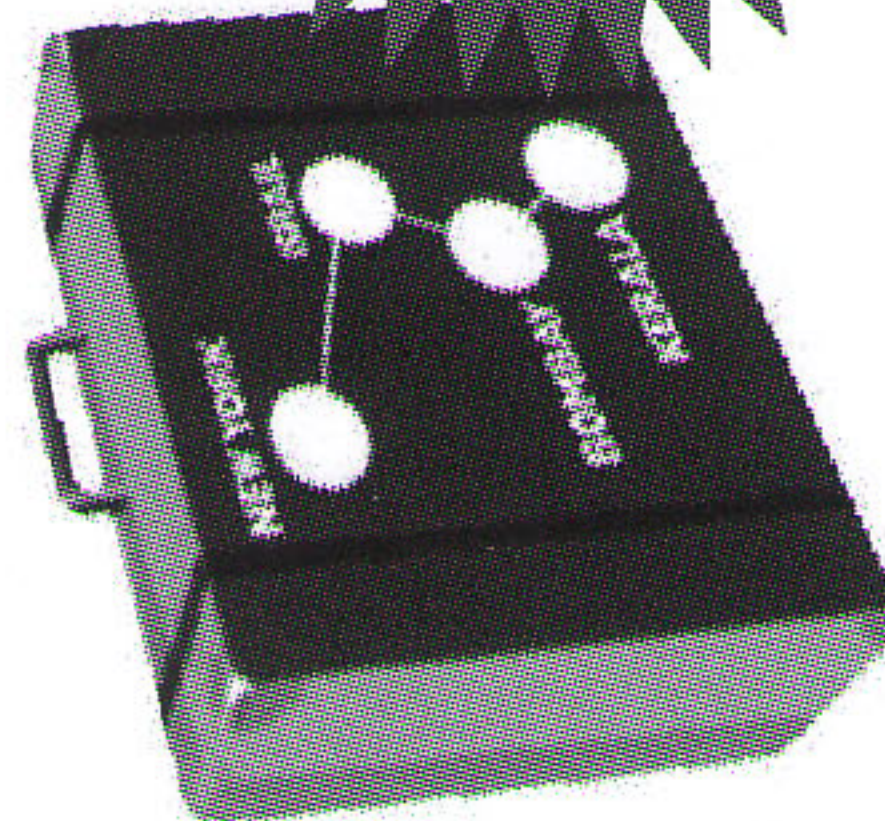
...and was baptized by John in the Jordan Mark 1:9



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



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



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Why is there high incidence of coronary heart disease (CHD) among South Asians?

Santhosh Varghese, The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto

Hear disease has been responsible for more deaths and disability among South Asians in the United States according to the American Heart Association. Canadians of Indian origin have higher death rates from heart disease and lower death rates from cancer as per the American Heart Association. This topic is of special interest to me since I lost my dad a few years ago due to coronary heart disease. Besides, I also see significant number of individuals in the South Asian community who are currently having mild and in some cases acute cases of CHD.

Why is coronary heart disease so prevalent among South Asians compared to other ethnic groups? Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the damage caused to the heart because its blood supply is reduced. Fatty deposits build up on the linings of the blood vessels that supplies blood to the heart muscles causing them to narrow. The term "South Asians", indicated in the title refers to people born in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It is a heterogeneous population with important differences in diet, culture, lifestyles and religion.

In certain segments of the South Asian population, being overweight or obese is considered to be a sign of prosperity. Heart disease has been considered as an "affluent person's disease", an illness associated with easy living, a sedentary lifestyle, and a high-calorie diet rich in cakes, prime cut meats and other fattening foods. According to the 2001 census in Canada, South Asians represent the second largest visible minority, representing 3.1% of the Canadian population [2]. Importantly, South Asians represent the fastest growing visible minority in Canada.

In an analysis of coronary heart disease (CHD) in Canada over a 15 year period, South Asians had the highest CHD mortality compared with individuals of Chinese and European descent [3]. In addition, South Asians are prone to developing CHD at a younger age often before the age of 40 years in men [4]. According to WHO, by 2020 the number of Indian citizens dying each year from heart disease will exceed 2.4 million, more than twice the number in 1990. One of every four cardiac patients in the world will be Indian. In fact, more than 25% of all cardiac patients in the world will be Indian.

The existing data that is prevalent pertaining to the above medical condition is perused. I have obtained this by reading the journals of American Medical Association, British Heart Foundation, and Canadian Medical Association. Besides the internet and library resources, I have also managed to get statistics from a cardiologist of a Toronto hospital who is also an assistant clinical professor of an Ontario university. I have done several one on one conversation with fellow church members, doctors and other medical professionals.

Coronary heart disease can affect anyone, but its effects people in certain groups more than others. Rates of CHD are higher among manual workers than non-manual workers [5]. South Asians have a higher death rate due to CHD than the rest of the population. South Asian were among the first ethnic group noted to have a higher risk for CHD. As early as the 1950's, Asian Indian males were reported to have seven times higher prevalence than Chinese men, of CHD in a series of nearly 10,000 autopsies in Singapore [6]. It is not completely understood why South Asians suffer more from heart disease than other groups. Certain risk factors are more common among South Asians. These vary between communities, but include high levels of smoking, particularly among Bangladeshi men, low rates of exercise across all South Asian communities and a diet high in fat and low in fruits and vegetables in certain groups. This mostly seem to be dependent on their economic status and education. Other key risk factors requiring control are diabetes, which is up to six times more common in South Asians than in general population, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Physical activity has direct, positive effects on cardiovascular and respiratory systems and on glucose and lipid metabolism [7]. However, these positive effects are short-lived and lost once regular activity ceases. South Asian adults are less active than Europeans both in terms of participation in sports and in "lifestyle" activity. This is the case in North America as well as in Europe. Among the South Asians, Bangladeshis are the least active, followed by Pakistanis, with the Indians the most active. According to Dr. Martin, lower socio-economic position may play a role in this pattern. Ethnically specific factors affecting participation in physical activity are more prevalent among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, especially women. A variety of reasons can be found for not participating in physical activity. For example, Indian women were most likely 'not to have time' while Bangladeshi men were the least likely to say this. Some of the other reason for not participating appeared to modesty or avoidance of mixed sex activity and fear of going out alone. Language and culture are also some of the barriers. Religion plays an important role in their participation. Low levels of knowledge about recommended levels of physical activity may be a barrier. Other possible explanations for lower levels of physical activity include fear of racism, which may affect people's willingness to exercise in public places and also socio-economic disadvantage. Lack of money or transport to attend facilities are commonly cited barriers[8].

South Asians are also predisposed to a higher prevalence of the insulin resistance syndrome which is associated with an increased risk of CHD [9]. Increased

prevalence and the acceleration of metabolic and vascular dysfunction in certain ethnic group can in part be explained by recent changes in lifestyle, e.g. through urban migration and 'westernization'. For example in India, there is a higher prevalence of both diabetes and coronary heart diseases in urban areas compared with rural areas. There is now greater awareness of the different physical characteristics of South Asians and Europeans. South Asians have a different distribution of body fat compared with Europeans. They tend to have thinner limbs, suggestive of smaller muscle mass. Despite their relative 'peripheral' thinness they are centrally obese, with a higher waist-hip ratio and higher subscapular/triceps skinfold ratio (indicating central obesity) than their European counterparts [10]. In other words, South Asians carry more fat tissue (and less muscle tissue) and that fat is more centrally located, a finding which may have been of both genetic and developmental origins.

There is compelling evidence that the risk of developing CHD originates in early life. The 'thrifty phenotype' hypothesis which posits that undernutrition in fetal and infant life followed by overnutrition in adult life, predisposes individuals to diabetes and other chronic diseases have been tested in South Asians in India. Circulating insulin concentration in Indian babies was also found to be higher than that in European descent babies even after adjustment for the higher circulating glucose concentration due to intravenous glucose infusion to the mother during delivery. It proves that insulin resistant phenotype of Indians is present at birth [11].

Population projects suggest that the ethnic diversity that characterizes North American society will become even more pronounced in the new millennium. People of so-called Caucasian descent will become a diminishing majority, while the proportions of people of Asian, Hispanic and African descent will increase. The current makeup of the population of the City of Toronto is a prime example. Sheth and colleagues' analysis of 1.2 million deaths from 1979 to 1993 indicate that Canadians of European descent had relatively high rates of ischemic heart disease and of lung, colorectal, breast and prostate cancer. Canadians of South Asian origin had a disproportionately high burden of diabetes, low cancer mortality rates and rates of ischemic heart disease that were similar to those of Canadian of European descent. Canadians of Chinese origin had strikingly low mortality rates for ischemic heart disease and cancer mortality rates were intermediate between those for Europeans and South Asian Canadians. In a recent study done by the American Medical Association demonstrates that the majority of the AMI (acute myocardial infarction) can be contributed to 9 risk factors. They are as follows...

a) Risk Factor – Apolipoprotein B100 [12]

Apolipoprotein B100 is a protein that plays a role in metabolism. It is a form of low density lipoprotein (LDL) Metabolism refers to all the physical and chemical processes in the body that create and use

energy, such as, digesting food and nutrients, eliminating waste through urine and feces, breathing, circulating blood, controlling body temperature, contracting muscles, Functioning of the brain and nerves. The LDL test measures how much low-density lipoprotein (LDL) you have in your blood. LDL is a type of cholesterol.

- b) Smoking –Smoking just three to six cigarettes each day doubles the chances of having a heart attack. Smokers are also more than twice as likely to have a fatal heart attack than non-smokers. Stopping smoking is the single most important thing a smoker can do to avoid a heart attack. Some studies have shown that, with in five years of giving up, the risk is reduced almost to that of a non-smoker.
- c) Hypertension—High Blood pressure.
- d) Diabetes—People with Diabetes are around three times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than the general population. Diabetes is also more common in socially deprived groups.
- e) High Waist-to-Hip Ratio—The adverse effect of excess weight is more pronounced when the fat is mainly concentrated in the abdomen. This is known as central obesity and can be identified by a high waist to hip ration.
- f) Psychosocial Factors (Stress or depression)—Emotional stress, such as heated disputes at work or at home, great fear, mental stress generated by tight deadlines at work increases blood pressure and releases stress hormones particularly among women.
- g) Moderate or High intensity exercise—The lack of this contributes to CHD.
- h) Alcohol consumption—Excessive alcoholism contributes to an onset of CHD.
- i) Lack of consumption of Fruits and Vegetables—An increase of one portion of fruit and vegetables a day lowered the risk of CHD by 4% and stroke by 6% according to a British study.

Solutions: Based on the several findings from various organizations and medical professionals, if some of the following steps are undertaken, it will lead to reduction and in preventing Coronary Heart Disease.

General Diet Advices: A diet with the aim of preventing heart disease is generally the same as a diet to prevent cancer and other diseases. Here are the general diet advices.[13]

- Avoid or reduce the amount of food that are industrially processed, artificially made or heavily fried.
- Eat fish at least every second day. Also eat seafood and fousls.
- Do not eat very much red meat
- Eat 5 fruits or vegetables each day. Each piece should be the size of an apple or carrot. They should be raw or carefully boiled so that the nutrients are not washed out.

- Eat full corn bread, full corn cereals, peas, beans and potatoes.
- Eat just a moderate amount of fat. Avoid Ghee (clarified butter) completely if possible.
- Consume cholesterol rich foods like egg, spawn or liver in just moderate amounts.
- Ideally most fat you eat, should be of the type mono-saturated. You also need some poly-unsaturated fat of the types omega-3 and omega 6, but not too much of omega-6. The consumption of saturated fat should be moderate.

In order to achieve right fat balance, much of the fat supply should come from a blending of sources like olive, olive oil, canola oil, nuts, sunflower, sunflower oil, linseed oil (flax oil), fish and fish oil.

Use only a moderate amount of soy oil and corn oil in the diet. Only using such oil types will give you too much poly-unsaturated fat of the omega-6-type.

Avoid altogether fat that has been chemically altered, giving so-called trans-fat. This type of fat is often found in margarine, cookies, snacks, fast food and other pre-made food.

Consume just a very moderate amount of sugar, refined flour or refined cereals.

Consume just a moderate amount of tranquilizers and stimulants like alcohol or caffeine.

Use just a moderate amount of salt in the food. However, in warm weather and by hard physical work, you will need more salt.

Diet supplements that help prevent Heart Disease

Evidence suggests that it will be helpful to take some supplements of natural substances to prevent heart disease and help to reform already manifest heart problems. These supplements are:

Omega 3: Fatty acids derived from fish and other marine sources, especially the fatty acids EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and alfa-linolaic acid. 1 gram a day of each of these substances may be taken as a supplement. Higher amounts should only be taken under medical supervision, since higher amount of these substances may cause bleeding tendencies, and may suppress the immune system.

Supplement of vitamin C has been thought to help prevent heart disease, but newer findings cast doubt on this.

Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine), folic acid/folate, vitamin b12 and riboflavin seem to prevent the building up of the substance homocystein in the blood and thereby help prevent heart disease, according to results from research projects.

GET RID OF OVER-WEIGHT: The lifestyle measure listed in this article will also help you loose weight. If these measures are not enough, you should consider engaging in more specific weight reduction program. You should choose a program that has a moderate fat content philosophy. Some weight reduction programs have a higher fat and low carbohydrate consume philosophy, and those are probably not the best ones to reduce the chance of getting heart disease.

EXERCISE: You should do some exercise of at least half an hour at least every second day. Condition training as vigorous walking, jogging, cycling or swimming is best for reducing heart attack. Muscular building exercises are also of value especially exercises building leg muscles.

STOP SMOKING: If you smoke, stopping or reducing this habit radically will decrease the chance of getting heart problems.

CONTROL DIABETES: If you suffer from diabetes type 1. a good control of the disease by insulin medication and by diet adjustment will help to prevent heart disease. Many people over the age of 50, and an increasing number of young people suffer from diabetes type 2 because of bad lifestyle. This disease does not give dramatic symptoms, but the disease increases the chance of getting heart problems and many have disease with out knowing it.

TAKING ASPRIN: Low doses of acetyl salicylic acid or aspirin prevent heart disease by persons bearing a high risk for heart disease. However, this medicine increases the risk of bleeding and should not be used without constant medical supervision. For persons of low risk of heart disease, the dangers of aspirin will be greater than the benefits. ■

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യേശുവും സ്ത്രീകളും

Mariam James, Sehion MTC, Dallas

ആമുഖപഠനം

ഒന്നാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ യഹൂദമതനേതാക്കളിൽ നിന്നും വളരെ വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ഒരു സമീപനമാണ് യേശുവിന് സ്ത്രീകളോടുണ്ടായിരുന്നത്. തന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ യേശു എല്ലാവരെയും ഉൾക്കൊണ്ടു. സമൂഹത്തിൽ തള്ളപ്പെട്ടവരും അടിച്ചമർത്തപ്പെട്ടവരും തന്റെ അനുയായികളായിത്തീർന്നു. വികലമാക്കപ്പെട്ട ആളുകളെ പൂർണ്ണതയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നതായിരുന്നു യേശുവിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷ. അതിലേക്ക് താൻ എല്ലാവരെയും ആകർഷിച്ചു. സ്ത്രീയും പുരുഷനും യെഹൂദനും യവനനും എല്ലാവരും ആ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ പങ്കുകാരായി. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സാദൃശ്യത്തിലും സാദൃശ്യത്തിലും സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെട്ട സ്ത്രീകൾ യേശുവിന്റെ കാലയളവിൽ തീരെ അവഗണിക്കപ്പെട്ടവരായിരുന്നു. യേശു അവരെ അംഗീകരിക്കുകയും ആദരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. യേശുവിന്റെ സമീപനത്തിന്റെ മഹാത്മ്യം മനസ്സിലാക്കണമെങ്കിൽ അന്നത്തെ ചരിത്ര പശ്ചാത്തലം നാം മനസ്സിലാക്കേണ്ടതായിട്ടുണ്ട്.

പഴയനിയമ പശ്ചാത്തലം

പഴയ നിയമത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകളുടെ സ്ഥാനത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് ഏകകണ്ഠമായ ഒരു അഭിപ്രായം പറയുവാൻ സാധ്യമല്ല. സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് മാനുഷ നൽകുന്ന വേദഭാഗങ്ങളും, അതേ സമയം പുരുഷന്മാരെക്കാൾ താഴ്ന്നസ്ഥാനം നൽകുന്ന വേദഭാഗങ്ങളും ഉണ്ട്.

സ്ത്രീ - സൃഷ്ടി വിവരണത്തിൽ

ഉല്പത്തി പുസ്തകം ഒന്നും രണ്ടും അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങളിൽ സൃഷ്ടിപ്പിന്റെ വിവരണം കാണുന്നു. ഒന്നാം വിവരണത്തിൽ (ഉല്പ. 1:24-30) 'ദൈവം തന്റെ സ്വന്തം സാദൃശ്യത്തിൽ അവരെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു, ആണും പെണ്ണുമായി അവരെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു' എന്ന് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇവിടെ 'അവർ' എന്ന 'പൊതുനാമം'മാണ് ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. അതായത് ഇവിടെ ആണിനേയും പെണ്ണിനേയും തുല്യമായിട്ടാണ് ചിത്രീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. 1:26 ലും ഇത് വളരെ വ്യക്തമാണ്. ദൈവം 'മനുഷ്യനെ' സൃഷ്ടിച്ച് ഈ ഭൂമിയിൽ 'അവരെ' ദൗത്യനിർവ്വഹണത്തിനായി ആക്കി എന്ന് ബഹുവചനമാണ് പ്രയോഗിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്.

എന്നാൽ രണ്ടാം വിവരണത്തിൽ പുരുഷൻ ആദ്യം സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെട്ടതുകൊണ്ട് (ഉല്പ. 2:18-23) സ്ത്രീയെക്കാൾ ഉയർന്നവനാണ് എന്നൊരു ചിന്ത രൂപപ്പെട്ടു. എന്നാൽ അങ്ങനെ ഒരു ചിന്തയ്ക്ക് പ്രസക്തിയില്ല. കാരണം ദൈവം ഭൂമിയിലുള്ള സകലത്തേയും സൃഷ്ടിച്ച ശേഷം മനുഷ്യനെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു. 'ഏകനായിരിക്കുന്നതു നന്നല്ല' എന്ന് കണ്ട് സ്ത്രീയേയും സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു. അവർ ഏക ശരീരമായിരിക്കും എന്നുള്ള കല്പന വളരെ പ്രധാനമാണ്. അത് സ്ത്രീ പുരുഷ തുല്യതയും അവിഭാജ്യതയും വിളിച്ചോതുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ട് ദൈവം മനുഷ്യരെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചപ്പോൾ അവരെ ആണും പെണ്ണുമായി സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു എന്നും അവർക്ക് സമപ്രാധാന്യം കൊടുത്തു എന്നും മനസ്സിലാക്കാം.

പഴയ യിസ്രായേലിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്കുള്ള സ്ഥാനം

പഴയ യിസ്രായേലിന്റെ ചരിത്രം പരിശോധിക്കുമ്പോൾ സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് സമൂഹത്തോടുള്ള സ്ഥാനം നല്കിയിരിക്കുന്നതായി കണ്ടെത്താം. എന്നാൽ ചില സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ അതിന് അപവാദങ്ങളും ഉണ്ട്.



സാമൂഹിക പശ്ചാത്തലം പരിശോധിക്കുമ്പോൾ നേതൃസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ദേബോറ ഒരു പ്രവാചകിയും ന്യായപാലനം ചെയ്യുന്നവളുമായിരുന്നെന്ന് കണ്ടെത്താം (ന്യായ. 4:4-5). 2രാജാ.12:3 ൽ അഥല്യാ സ്വേച്ഛാധിപതിയായിട്ട് രാജ്യം വാണിരുന്നതായി കാണുന്നു. എസ്ഥർ രാജാവിന്റെ നയപരമായ പെരുമാറ്റം പഴയനിയമത്തിൽ പ്രാധാന്യമർഹിക്കുന്ന ഒരു കാര്യമാണ്.

പ്രവാചകിമാരായിട്ടും സ്ത്രീകൾ പഴയ യിസ്രായേലിൽ പ്രശോഭിച്ചിരുന്നു. പുറ.15:20-21 ൽ മിർയ്യാം പ്രവാചകി ആയിരുന്നു എന്ന് പറയുന്നു. ദേബോറ (ന്യായ. 4:4-6), ഹൂൽദ (2രാജാ. 22:14-20) ഇവരെല്ലാം പ്രവാചകിമാരുടെ കൂട്ടത്തിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു. പ്രവാചകന്റെ ഭാര്യയെ 'പ്രവാചകി' എന്ന് വിളിക്കുന്നതായി യേശ. 8:3 ൽ വായിക്കുന്നു. പഴയ നിയമത്തിലെ മറ്റ് അറിയപ്പെടുന്ന സ്ത്രീകളാണ് രൂത്ത്, നവോമി, അബിഗയിൽ തുടങ്ങിയവർ. സീനായിമലയിൽ വെച്ച് 'നിയമം' നല്കിയപ്പോഴും സ്ത്രീകൾ ആദരിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരുന്നു. പത്തു കല്പനകളിൽ ഒന്ന് 'നിന്റെ അപ്പനേയും അമ്മയെയും ബഹുമാനിക്ക' എന്നാണല്ലോ. അക്കാലത്ത് സമൂഹികമായി പുരുഷമേധാവിത്വം നിലനിന്നിരുന്നു. എങ്കിലും സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം ആസ്വദിക്കുവാനുള്ള അവസരം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു.

മതപരമായും സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് സമൂഹത്തോടുള്ള സ്ഥാനം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. മോശയുടെ ന്യായപ്രമാണം സ്ത്രീകൾക്കും പെരുമാറ്റങ്ങൾക്ക് സംബന്ധിക്കാം എന്ന് അനുശസിക്കുന്നു (ആവ.12:7, 1ശമു.1:1). സമാഗമന കൂടാരത്തിന്റെ വാതിൽക്കൽ സേവ ചെയ്തുവന്ന സ്ത്രീകളെപ്പറ്റി പുറ. 38:8 ൽ കാണാം. തന്നെയുമല്ല, നാസീർ വ്രതം സ്ത്രീകളും അനുഷ്ഠിച്ചിരുന്നു (സംഖ്യാ. 8:2). പഴയ യിസ്രായേലിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾ പരസ്യാരാധനയിലും മതപരമായ മറ്റു കാര്യങ്ങളിലും ഭാഗഭാക്കുകളായിരുന്നു എന്ന് നമുക്ക് മനസ്സിലാക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കും.

കുടുംബ ബന്ധങ്ങളിൽ സ്ത്രീ മാതാവായിട്ടും ഭാര്യയായിട്ടും അംഗീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് താഴ്ന്ന സ്ഥാനവും പഴയനിയമത്തിലുണ്ട് എന്ന് തെളിയിക്കുന്ന ഭാഗങ്ങളും അന്യമല്ല.

കുടുംബത്തിൽ ഒരു സ്ത്രീ ഒന്നുകിൽ ഭർത്താവിന്റെ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ പിതാവിന്റെ അധീനതയിലായിരുന്നു. ഭർത്താവിന്റെ അധീനതയിലുള്ള ഒരു വസ്തുവായിട്ടായിരുന്നു ഭാര്യയെ കണ്ടിരുന്നത്. പുറ. 20:17 ൽ 'കുട്ടുകാരന്റെ ഭവനത്തെ മോഹിക്കരുത്, കുട്ടുകാരന്റെ ഭാര്യയെയും.....മോഹിക്കരുത്'. മറ്റ് വസ്തുക്കളുടെ കൂട്ടത്തിൽ ഭാര്യയെയും ഇവിടെ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

വ്യഭിചാര സംബന്ധമായ ശിക്ഷ സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് അതികഠിനമായിരുന്നു. ഭർത്താവിന്റെ സംശയത്തിന്റെ പേരിൽ പോലും അവൾ ശിക്ഷയനുഭവിച്ചിരുന്നു (സംഖ്യാ. 5:14-28).

സംഖ്യാ പുസ്തകത്തിൽ തന്നെ സ്ത്രീ വ്രതം അനുഷ്ഠിക്കുവാൻ തീരുമാനിച്ചാലും ഭർത്താവിനോ പിതാവിനോ വ്രതം വിലക്കുവാനുള്ള അനുമതിയുണ്ട്. അവർ വ്രതം മുടക്കിയാൽ അവർ അതിൽ നിന്ന് കുറ്റവിമുക്തയായിരിക്കും എന്ന് പറയുന്നു (സംഖ്യാ. 30:3-16). ഇങ്ങനെ സ്ത്രീകളെ തരംതാഴ്ത്തുന്ന രീതിയിലുള്ള വേദഭാഗങ്ങളും, അനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു.

പഴനിയമ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾ ഒരുവിധം മാനുഷമായ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം അനുഭവിച്ചിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ കാലമാകുമ്പോഴേക്കും യഹൂദമതത്തിൽ പല ജീർണ്ണതകൾ വന്നു കൂടുന്നു. അതിന് പ്രകടമായ ഉദാഹരണമാണ് യഹൂദമതം സ്ത്രീകളോടു കാണിച്ച താഴ്ന്ന സമീപനം. കർത്താവിന്റെ കാലമായപ്പോൾ ജീർണ്ണതകൾ അതിന്റെ പാരമ്യത്തിലെത്തുന്നു. സാമൂഹികവും മതപരവും ഗാർഹികവുമായ കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് വളരെ താഴ്ന്ന സ്ഥാനമായിരുന്നു ഉള്ളത്.

യേശുവിന്റെ പരസ്യശുശ്രൂഷയുടെ കാലത്ത് യഹൂദമതത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്ന സ്ഥാനം

യേശുവിന്റെ കലത്തെ യഹൂദമതത്തിന്റെ വ്യക്തമായ ചരിത്രം ലഭിക്കുകയെന്നത് പ്രയാസമേറിയ കാര്യമാണ്. ക്രിസ്തുവിന് മുമ്പുള്ള രണ്ട് നൂറ്റാണ്ടുകൾ മുതൽ പിൻപ് 2-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടു വരെയുള്ള കാലഘട്ടമാണ് യഹൂദമത കാലം. ഈ കാലയളവിലെ ചിത്രം ഒരു പരിധിവരെ യെങ്കിലും ലഭിക്കുന്നത് മിഷ്ന, തൽമുദ് എന്നിവയിലൂടെയാണ്.

മതപരം

ഈ കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ മതപരമായി, സ്ത്രീകൾ ഒട്ടും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം അനുഭവിച്ചിരുന്നില്ല. അന്നത്തെ ആരാധന സ്ഥലങ്ങൾ സിനഗോഗുകൾ ആയിരുന്നു. അവിടെ ആരാധനയ്ക്കായി സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് അനുവദിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരുന്ന പ്രത്യേക പ്രാകാരഭാഗം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു, അവിടെ നിന്ന് ആരാധന ശ്രവിക്കുന്നതിനു മാത്രമേ സ്ത്രീക്ക് അവകാശമുണ്ടായിരുന്നുള്ളൂ (സിനഗോഗുകളിൽ പുരുഷന്മാർക്കുള്ള പ്രാകാരം, ജാതികൾക്കുള്ള പ്രാകാരം, സ്ത്രീകൾക്കുള്ള പ്രാകാരം എന്നിങ്ങനെ തരം തിരിച്ചിരുന്നു.) പത്തു പുരുഷന്മാർ ആരാധനയ്ക്ക് ഹാജരുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ മാത്രമേ ആരാധന നടത്തിയിരുന്നുള്ളൂ. ഒൻപത് പുരുഷന്മാരും ഒരു സ്ത്രീയും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നാൽ പോലും ആരാധന നടത്തിയിരുന്നില്ല. അതായത് ആരാധന, ന്യായപ്രമാണ വായന, പഠനം ഇവയൊക്കെ പുരുഷന്മാരിൽ അധിഷ്ഠിതമായിരുന്നു. സ്ത്രീകളെ ഇതിൽ നിന്നെല്ലാം അകറ്റി നിർത്തി. കൂടാതെ അവർക്ക് പാഠശാലകളിൽ പഠിപ്പിക്കുവാനുള്ള അവകാശം റബ്ബിമാർ നിഷേധിച്ചിരുന്നു. മിഷ്നയിൽ ഇപ്രകാരം നാം വായിക്കുന്നു. 'വിവാഹിതനല്ലാത്ത ഒരു യുവാവിനും ഒരു സ്ത്രീയ്ക്കും കുട്ടികളെ പഠിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ സാധ്യമല്ല'. ഒരു സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് തന്റെ സ്വന്തം മക്കളെ പഠിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ മാത്രമേ അധികാരമുണ്ടായിരുന്നുള്ളൂ.

യേശുവിന്റെ കാലത്ത് മതപരമായി സ്ത്രീകൾ ഒട്ടും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം അനുഭവിച്ചിരുന്നില്ല. അവർക്ക് ആരാധനയിൽ സംബന്ധിക്കാൻ എന്നല്ലാതെ ന്യായ

പ്രമാണം പഠിക്കുവാനോ പഠിപ്പിക്കുവാനോ അവകാശം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നില്ല.

സാമൂഹികം

സാമൂഹികമായും സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് വലിയ പ്രാധാന്യമില്ലാത്ത ഒരു കാലയളവിലായിരുന്നു യേശു ജീവിച്ചത്. സ്ത്രീകൾ എല്ലാ രീതിയിലും പുരുഷന് അധീനപ്പെട്ടിരുന്നു. കുട്ടികളോടും അടിമകളോടും ചേർത്താണ് സ്ത്രീകളെപ്പറ്റിയും പരാമർശിച്ചിരുന്നത്.

ഒരു യഹൂദ പുരുഷന്റെ പ്രാർത്ഥന ഇപ്രകാരമാണ് 'ഒരു പുറം ജാതിക്കാരനായും ഒരു സ്ത്രീയായും ഒരു വിവശിയായും സൃഷ്ടിക്കാതിരുന്നതിനാൽ ഞാൻ അങ്ങയെ വാഴ്ത്തുന്നു'.

പൊതുജീവിതത്തിൽ നിന്ന് സ്ത്രീ വേർതിരിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരുന്നു. ഒരു യഹൂദ സ്ത്രീയുടെ ലോകം അവളുടെ ഭവനം മാത്രമായിരുന്നു. അവർക്ക് പുറത്തിറങ്ങണമെങ്കിൽ മുട്ടുപടം ധരിക്കണം. മിഷ്നയിൽ ഇപ്രകാരം പറയുന്നു: 'സ്ത്രീ-പുരുഷന്മാർ പരസ്പരം സംസർഗ്ഗം ചെയ്യാതിരിക്കുവാൻ സ്ത്രീകൾ മുട്ടുപടം ധരിച്ചുകൊണ്ടായിരുന്നു പുറത്തിറങ്ങാറുള്ളത്.' വിവാഹിത ആയ ഒരു സ്ത്രീ പരസ്യമായി അന്യപുരുഷനോട് സംസാരിച്ചാൽ അവർക്ക് വിവാഹമോചനം ഉണ്ടാകുവാൻ വരെ സാധ്യതയുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ഒരു യഹൂദ റബ്ബി പരസ്യമായി ഒരു സ്ത്രീയോട് സംസാരിക്കുകയില്ലായിരുന്നു. അങ്ങനെ എല്ലാ തരത്തിലും സാമൂഹികമായി അവർ തരംതാഴ്ത്തപ്പെട്ടു.

ഗാർഹികം

സ്ത്രീയുടെ പരിമിതലോകം ഭവനം മാത്രമായിരുന്നിട്ടും അവിടെയും അവർക്ക് വേണ്ടവിധം സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം ലഭിച്ചില്ല. മാതൃത്വം എന്നും ആദരിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഭാര്യവീട്ടുജോലിയിൽ മാത്രം ഒതുങ്ങിക്കൂടും. ആഹാരം പാകം ചെയ്യൽ, വൃത്തിയാക്കൽ തുടങ്ങിയ ജോലികളിൽ അവർ വ്യാപൃതയാകും. ഭർത്താവിന്റെ മുഖം വൃത്തിയാക്കുക, കൈകളും കാലുകളും കഴുകുക എന്നിവയൊക്കെ ഭാര്യയുടെ ചുമതലയായിരുന്നു. ഭർത്താവിനെ അനുസരിക്കുക എന്നതു മാത്രമായിരുന്നു അവളുടെ കർത്തവ്യം. അതിനാൽ ഏതെങ്കിലും വ്രതം പോലും ഭാര്യയെ അടിച്ചേല്പിക്കുവാൻ ഭർത്താവിന് അധികാരമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. അന്ന് ബഹു ഭാര്യത്വം നിലനിന്നിരുന്നു. മാത്രമല്ല വിവാഹമോചനം ഭർത്താവിൽ ഏകപക്ഷീയവും ആയിരുന്നു. തന്മൂലം ഭാര്യ നിർബന്ധമായി ഭർത്താവിന് കീഴടങ്ങേണ്ടിവന്നു. ഒരു സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് അക്കാലത്ത് ഒരു ആൺതുണ നിർബന്ധമായിരുന്നു. 'വിവാഹത്തിന് മുൻപ് പിതാവ്, വിവാഹത്തിന് ശേഷം ഭർത്താവ്' ഇതായിരുന്നു സ്ത്രീയുടെ അവസ്ഥ.

ഒരു പുത്രനെ പ്രസവിക്കുക എന്നത് സ്ത്രീയുടെ ഭാഗ്യകരമായ അവസ്ഥയായി കരുതി. ഒരു പുത്രന്റെ ജനനത്തിൽ ഭവനത്തിൽ കൂടുതൽ സന്തോഷം അലതല്ലിയിരുന്നു. മക്കളില്ലാതെ ഭർത്താവ് മരിച്ചാൽ ഭർത്താവിന്റെ സഹോദരന് അവർ ഭാര്യയായിത്തീരും. സഹോദരൻ അവളെ നിരസിച്ചു എങ്കിൽ മാത്രമേ അവർക്ക് പുനർവിവാഹത്തിന് സാധ്യതയുണ്ടായിരുന്നുള്ളൂ.

(അടുത്തലക്കത്തിൽ തുടരും.....)

മലങ്കര മാർത്തോമ്മാ സുറിയാനി സഭ പ്രതിനിധി മണ്ഡല യോഗ അവലോകനം. 2006-2007

തയ്യാറാക്കിയത് - ജിജി റോം, ന്യൂയോർക്ക്

മലങ്കര മാർത്തോമ്മാ സുറിയാനി സഭാ പ്രതിനിധിമണ്ഡല യോഗത്തിന്റെ 2006-2007 ലെ വാർഷിക സമ്മേളനം 2007 ഓഗസ്റ്റ് മാസം 28,29,30 തീയതി കളിൽ തിരുവല്ലാ ഡോ. അലക്സാണ്ടർ മാർത്തോമ്മാ വലിയ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ സ്കൂൾ ഓഡിറ്റോറിയത്തിൽ വെച്ച് നി.വ.ദി.മ.ശ്രീ ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ അധ്യക്ഷതയിലും, സഫ്രഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താമാർ, സഭയിലെ മറ്റ് ഏപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാമാർ, വികാരി ജനറാളന്മാർ, സഭയുടെ ഔദ്യോഗിക ഭാരവാഹികൾ എന്നിവരുടെ സാന്നിധ്യത്തിലും നടത്തപ്പെടുകയുണ്ടായി. “ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികത, വർത്തമാന കാല പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ” എന്നുള്ളതായിരുന്നു മണ്ഡല യോഗത്തിന്റെ ചിന്താ വിഷയം.

ഒന്നാം ദിവസം, 28-ാം തീയതി ചൊവ്വാഴ്ച രാവിലെ കൃത്യം 10 മണിക്ക് “ക്രിസ്തു യേശുവിൻ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം മുഴക്കിടുവാൻ... എന്നു തുടങ്ങുന്ന ഗാനത്തിനും, പ്രത്യേകം തയ്യാറാക്കിയ ആരാധനയ്ക്കും ശേഷം സി എസ് ഐ ഉത്തരകേരള മഹായിടവക ബിഷപ്പ് ഡോ. കെ. പി കുരുവിള ധ്യാന പ്രസംഗം നടത്തി. സഭാ സെക്രട്ടറി റവ. കെ.എം.മാമ്മൻ കൂടി വന്നവർക്ക് സ്വാഗതം ആശംസിക്കുകയും പ്രസ്താവനകൾ നടത്തുകയും ചെയ്തു. തുടർന്ന് യോഗത്തിന്റെ കോറം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തി. നോർത്തമേരിക്കൻ ഭദ്രാസനത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള 9 പേർ ഉൾപ്പെടെ 861 പേർ (68%)യോഗത്തിൽ സംബന്ധിച്ചു. യോഗത്തിന്റെ റെക്കോർഡിംഗ് സെക്രട്ടറി മാരെ നീയമിച്ചതിനു ശേഷം മേജർ ആർച്ച് ബിഷപ്പ് സിറിൽ മാർ ബസേലിയോസ് കാതോലിക്കാ ബാവാ, ഔഗേൻ മാർ ദിവന്യാസോസ് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ, വൈദികർ, മണ്ഡലാംഗങ്ങളായ അത്മായർ, വൈദിക സെമിനാരി വിദ്യാർത്ഥി മുതലായ നിര്യതരായവരുടെ ദേഹവിയോഗത്തിൽ അനുശോചനം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തി.

തുടർന്ന് ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ തന്റെ അധ്യക്ഷപ്രസംഗത്തിൽ,

സകല അതിരുകളും അതിജീവിക്കുന്ന സ്നേഹ സമൂഹം കെട്ടിപ്പടുക്കുവാൻ ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്തു. നീതി സമാധാനം പ്രത്യാശ എന്നിവ ലോകത്തിൽ നിന്നു നഷ്ടമായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. പകർച്ചവ്യാധി, വെള്ളപ്പൊക്കം, കടലാക്രമണം തുടങ്ങി ജീവിത നിഷേധസംഭവങ്ങൾ വർധിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവം നഷ്ടമായതാണ് ഇതിനു കാരണം. ദൈവമില്ലാത്ത ലോകം അനാഥമാണ്. മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടെ നന്ദിയും സ്നേഹവും നിങ്ങൾ പ്രതിനിധീകരിക്കുന്ന ഇടവകകളെ അറിയിക്കണം എന്നും തിരുമേനി അഭ്യർത്ഥിച്ചു. മുൻ കൂട്ടി അച്ചടിച്ച നൽകിയ അധ്യക്ഷ പ്രസംഗത്തിനു ഒടുവിൽ വളരെ അപ്രതീക്ഷിതമായി നടത്തിയ പ്രസ്താവനയിൽ, “1940 മുതൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിൽ വിവിധ രംഗങ്ങളിലും നിലകളിലും കർത്താവിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ പങ്കാളിയാകുന്നതിനുള്ള വലിയ പദവി, ബലഹീനനും പാപിയുമായ എനിക്കു നൽകി, സഭാജനങ്ങളുടെ സ്നേഹം, പ്രാർത്ഥന, സഹകരണം എനിക്കു ലഭിച്ചു. ഞാനുൾപ്പെടുന്ന സമൂഹം നല്ല പിന്തുണ നൽകി. 89 വയസു പൂർത്തിയായതോടെ തന്റെ ആരോഗ്യം കുറഞ്ഞു, കേൾവി മോശമായി, ഓർമ്മയ്ക്കും കുറവുണ്ട്. ഈ സമിതിയിൽ ശുശ്രൂഷ തുടരുന്നതു ശരിയല്ലെന്നു കരുതുന്നു. അതിനാൽ 2007 ഒക്ടോബർ 1 മുതൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടെ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ സ്ഥാനത്തു നിന്നും വളരെ നന്ദിയോടും കടപ്പാടോടും കൂടി വിരമിക്കുന്നതിന് സഭാ ഭരണഘടന വകുപ്പ് 7എ-1 പ്രകാരം ദൈവകൃപയിൽ ആശ്രയിച്ചു തീരുമാനിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന വിവരം അറിയിക്കുന്നു”. സിനഡ്, സഭാകൗൺസിൽ എന്നിവയോടാലോചിച്ച് വേണ്ട ക്രമീകരണങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യണമെന്ന് മണ്ഡലത്തോടഭ്യർത്ഥിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു.

തുടർന്ന് 2006-2007 ലെ വാർഷിക റിപ്പോർട്ടും, മുൻ നീക്കി ബാക്കിയുൾപ്പെടെ 35,36,89,600 രൂപാ വരവും, സെക്യൂരിറ്റി സ്ഥിര നിക്ഷേപം, ട്രസ്റ്റ്, എൻഡോവ്മെന്റുകൾ, റിസേർവ് ഫണ്ടുകൾ എന്നിവയിലായി 26,50,26,000 രൂപാ നീക്കിബാക്കി

യൂൾപ്പെടെ 35,36,89,600 രൂപാ ചെലവും ഉൾപ്പെടുന്ന വരവുചെലവു കണക്കുകളും, സഭാ സെക്രട്ടറിയും, സഭാ ട്രസ്റ്ററിയും അവതരിപ്പിച്ചു. 2006-2007 ൽ ബഡ്ജറ്റിൽ കവിഞ്ഞ് ചെലവായ തുകകൾക്ക് അനുമതി നൽകി. തുടർന്ന് ചോദ്യോത്തരങ്ങൾക്ക് അദ്ധ്യക്ഷൻ സമയം അനുവദിച്ചു. നിശ്ചിത സമയത്തിനുള്ളിൽ ലഭിച്ച 50 ചോദ്യങ്ങൾക്ക് ഉത്തരം നൽകി.

പ്രസക്തഭാഗങ്ങൾ ചുവടെ.

1. 2006-2007 അദ്ധ്യയന വർഷം വൈദിക വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്ക് യോഗ്യമല്ലാത്ത രീതിയിൽ നടന്ന സംഭവങ്ങളുടെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ലഭിച്ച പരാതികളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ ബഹു എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പൽ സിനഡ് വിശദീകരണം ആവശ്യപ്പെടുകയും, വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ തങ്ങളുടെ പ്രവർത്തികളിൽ വേദം പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കുകയും, മാപ്പപേക്ഷിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. സിനഡിന് വിശദീകരണം ലഭിച്ചതിനു ശേഷം കൃത്യങ്ങളിൽ പങ്കെടുത്തവരെ ശാസിക്കുകയും, പഠനം പൂർത്തിയാക്കിയ വൈദിക സെമിനാരി വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളെ തുടർ നടപടിയുണ്ടാകുന്നതുവരെ വിവിധ ഭദ്രാസനങ്ങളിൽ ഏപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാമാരോടൊപ്പം നിയോഗിക്കുവാൻ തീരുമാനിച്ചുവെന്നും, കാലതാമസം കൂടാതെ ഇതിൽ തീരുമാനം കൈക്കൊള്ളുമെന്നും മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ തിരുമേനി പ്രസ്താവിച്ചു.
2. അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ നവതിയാഘോഷങ്ങളുടെ ഭാഗമായി ഹോം ഫോർ ഹോംലസ് പ്രൊജക്റ്റിൽ ജൂലൈ 31 വരെ വ്യക്തികളുടെ സ്പോൺസർഷിപ്പായി 4,54,72,000 രൂപയും ഇടവക വിഹിതമായി 89,13,000 രൂപയും ലഭിച്ചു. 1500 വീടുകളിൽ നാളിതുവരെ 183 വീടുകളുടെ പണികൾ തീർന്നു. മറ്റു ജാതിമതസ്ഥർക്ക് 45 വീടുകൾ നൽകി. 445 വീടുകളുടെ പണികൾ പുരോഗമിക്കുന്നു. 863 വീടുകൾ വിവിധ ഭദ്രാസനങ്ങളിലായി അനുവദിച്ചു. ചർച്ചയ്ക്കും വിശദീകരണത്തിനും ശേഷം റിപ്പോർട്ടും കണക്കും മണ്ഡലം ഏകാഭിപ്രായമായി പാസ്സാക്കി.

രണ്ടാം ദിവസം (29) ബുധനാഴ്ച രാവിലെ 8 മണിക്ക് സഖറിയാസ് മാർ തെയോഫിലസ് തിരുമേനിയുടെ മുഖ്യ കാർമ്മികത്വത്തിലും, മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെയും, സഭയിലെ മറ്റ് എല്ലാ തിരുമേനിമാരുടെയും സഹ കാർമ്മികത്വത്തിലും തിരുവല്ലാ സെന്തോമസ് ചർച്ചിൽ വെച്ച് വിശുദ്ധ കുർബാന ശുശ്രൂഷ നടത്തപ്പെട്ടു. വിശുദ്ധ കുർബാനയെ തുടർന്ന് സഭയുടെ സജീവ സേവനത്തിൽ നിന്നും വിരമിച്ച വൈദികരെ ആദരിച്ചു. കൃത്യം 10 മണിക്ക് ഡോ യുയാക്കിം മാർ കുറിലോസ് ഏപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായുടെ പ്രാർത്ഥനയോടുകൂടി ഭരണഘടനാ ഭേദഗതികൾക്കുള്ള സ്പെഷ്യൽ മണ്ഡലം കൂടി. കൗൺസിൽ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച 10 ഭരണഘടനാ ഭേദഗതി പ്രമേയങ്ങളിൽ 2 എണ്ണം മണ്ഡലാംഗങ്ങളുടെ എതിർപ്പിനെ തുടർന്ന് പിൻവലിച്ചു. മറ്റ് ഭേദഗതികൾ യോഗം പാസ്സാക്കി.

കൗൺസിൽ അംഗങ്ങളിൽ മറ്റ് ഭദ്രാസനങ്ങളിലേക്ക് സ്ഥലം മാറിപ്പോയ വൈദികരുടെ ഒഴിവുകളിൽ പുതിയ വൈദികരെ സഭാ ഭരണഘടന 164 പ്രകാരം കൗൺസിൽ നിയമിച്ചത് അംഗീകരിച്ചു.

- ❖ മാർത്തോമ്മാ വൈദിക സെമിനാരിയ്ക്കു വേണ്ടി കോട്ടയത്തും കറുകച്ചാലിലും സഭാ കൗൺസിൽ അംഗീകരിച്ച പളാനും എസ്റ്റിമേറ്റും അനുസരിച്ചു കെട്ടിടങ്ങൾ പണിയുന്നതിന് അനുമതി നൽകി.
- ❖ വാളകം ജംഗ്ഷനു തെക്കുവശത്ത് എംസി റോഡു സൈഡിലുള്ള സഭ വക പുരയിടത്തിൽ ഒരു ഷോപ്പിംഗ് കോപ്ളക്സ് നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നതിന് സഭാ കൗൺസിലിനെ ചുമതലപ്പെടുത്തി.
- ❖ സഭയുടെ ആഭിമുഖ്യത്തിൽ അയിരൂരിൽ നിർമ്മിക്കാനുദ്ദേശിക്കുന്ന ഡോ യൂഹാന്നോൻ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ സ്മാരക കേന്ദ്രത്തോടനുബന്ധിച്ച് അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ സമകാലീനനായിരുന്ന ഡോ മാത്യൂസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് ഏപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായുടെ സ്മാരകം കൂടി ചേർത്ത് രണ്ടു പേരുടെയും പൊതു നാമധേയത്തിലുള്ള സ്മാരക സ്ഥാപനം സ്ഥാപിക്കുവാൻ മണ്ഡലം തീരുമാനിക്കുകയും സഭാ കൗൺസിലിനെ ചുമതലപ്പെടുത്തുകയും ചെയ്തു.
- ❖ തുടർന്ന് മാനവസേവാ അവാർഡ്, സാഹിത്യ അവാർഡ്, എസ്.എസ്.എൽ.സി. ഉന്നത വിജയം നേടിയവർക്കുള്ള അവാർഡ് എന്നിവ വിതരണം ചെയ്തു.

മൂന്നാം ദിവസം 30-ാം തീയതി വ്യാഴാഴ്ച രാവിലെ കൃത്യം 10 മണിക്ക് ആരംഭിച്ച യോഗത്തിൽ സഭാ ട്രസ്റ്റി സഭയുടെ 2007-2008 ലെ ദൗത്യവും വികസനവും ലക്ഷ്യമാക്കിയുള്ള മുൻ നീക്കിബാക്കി

യൂൾപ്പെടെ 46,27,43,600 രൂപാ വരവും, 22,11,36,000 രൂപാ ചെലവും, സെക്യൂരിറ്റി സ്ഥിര നിക്ഷേപം, ട്രസ്റ്റ്, എൻഡോവ് മെന്റുകൾ, റിസേർവ് ഫണ്ടുകൾ എന്നിവയിലായി 24,16,07,600 രൂപാ നീക്കി ബാക്കിയുമുള്ള ബഡ്ജറ്റ് അവതരിപ്പിച്ചു. പ്രധാന ബഡ്ജറ്റ് നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ ചുവടെ.

സുവിശേഷ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കായി

- ❖ ധർമ്മജ്യോതി ബൈബിൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ടിന് 2 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും
- ❖ കൊമ്പാടി ബൈബിൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ടിന് 3 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും
- ❖ പുതിയ മിഷൻ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ ആരംഭിക്കുന്ന ഭദ്രാസനങ്ങൾക്ക് പ്രാരംഭ ചെലവുകൾക്ക് 2 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും,
- ❖ സുവിശേഷ വയൽപ്രദേശങ്ങളിൽ ശുശ്രൂഷ ചെയ്യുന്ന സുവിശേഷകരുടെ ക്ഷേമ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് 3 ലക്ഷത്തി അൻപതിനായിരം രൂപയും ബഡ്ജറ്റ് ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്.

ദുരിതാശ്വാസ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ

- ❖ ദുരിതാശ്വാസ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കായി 22 ലക്ഷത്തി 5300 രൂപാ ചെലവഴിച്ചു.
- ❖ സുനാമി ബാധിതരുടെ പുനരധിവാസവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് 17 ലക്ഷത്തി അമ്പതിനായിരം രൂപാ ചെലവഴിച്ചു.
- ❖ ദുരിതാശ്വാസ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് ഈ സാമ്പത്തിക വർഷം 1 കോടി 50 ലക്ഷം രൂപാ ബഡ്ജറ്റ് ചെയ്തു.

പുനരധിവാസവും വികസനവും

- ❖ പുനരധിവാസ വികസന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് 21,41,000 രൂപായും,
- ❖ ആദിവാസികളുടെ ഇടയിലെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് 1 ലക്ഷം രൂപായും
- ❖ പ്രതിഭാധനരായ മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവതീ യുവാക്കളെ തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിൽ സജ്ജരാക്കുന്നതിന് പ്രത്യേക പദ്ധതികൾ ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുവാൻ 2,50,000 രൂപയും
- ❖ സ്വയം തൊഴിൽ പദ്ധതികൾക്ക് വായ്പ നൽകുന്നതിന് 1 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും
- ❖ തെളിയൂർ എം സി ആർ ഡി യുടെ സേവന വിപുലീകരണത്തിന് 5 ലക്ഷം,
- ❖ പാലിയേറ്റീവ് സർവ്വീസിനായി 2 ലക്ഷം,
- ❖ എച്ച് ഐ വി, എയ്ഡ്സ് രോഗികളുടെ പുനരധിവാസ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് 3

ലക്ഷം രൂപയും ബഡ്ജറ്റിൽ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

മാരക രോഗങ്ങളുടെ പിടിയിലകപ്പെട്ട നിർധനരെ സഹായിക്കുന്നതിനായി 5 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും, മാരക രോഗങ്ങളാൽ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ട് അനുഭവിക്കുന്ന പട്ടക്കാരുടെയും ജീവനക്കാരുടെയും ചികിത്സക്ക് 5 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും പിന്നോക്ക വിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെ ക്ഷേമത്തിനായി 6 ലക്ഷം രൂപാ ബഡ്ജറ്റ് ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു. റിപ്പോർട്ടു വർഷം 46 വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കായി 4,51,000 രൂപാ ചെലവഴിച്ചു. അഭിവന്ദ്യ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ തിരുമേനിയുടെ നവതിയാഘോഷ ചെലവുകൾക്കായി 2 ലക്ഷം രൂപാ ബഡ്ജറ്റ് ചെയ്തു.

സാമൂഹിക ക്ഷേമ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ

- ❖ നവതി ഭവന പദ്ധതിയിൽ റിപ്പോർട്ടു വർഷം 2,30,76,000 രൂപാ വരവിനത്തിൽ ലഭിക്കുകയും, 81,26,000 രൂപാ ഭവന നിർമ്മാണത്തിനായി ചെലവഴിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. തൻ വർഷം 7 കോടി രൂപാ വരവും, 8 കോടി 50 ലക്ഷം രൂപാ ചെലവും പ്രതീക്ഷിച്ച് ബഡ്ജറ്റിൽ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു.
- ❖ സാമൂഹിക ക്ഷേമ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെ ഭാഗമായി വിവാഹ സഹായത്തിന് 7 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും മെഡിക്കൽ മിഷൻ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് 11 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും ബഡ്ജറ്റിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.
- ❖ വൈദികസെമിനാരിയുടെ കുറുകച്ചാൽ കാമ്പസിന്റെ വികസനത്തിന് 1 കോടി രൂപയും, കോട്ടയം കാമ്പസിന്റെ വികസനത്തിന് 1 കോടി രൂപയും ബഡ്ജറ്റിൽ വക കൊള്ളിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

നീണ്ട ചർച്ചകൾക്കും മറുപടിക്കും ശേഷം ബഡ്ജറ്റ് ഏകാഭിപ്രായമായി പാസ്സാക്കി. തുടർന്ന് 2007-2008 ലേക്കുള്ള കണക്കു പരിശോധകരെ നിയമിച്ചു. റവ. ജോളി തോമസ് ആദ്ധ്യാത്മീകത - വർത്തമാനകാല പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ എന്ന വിഷയത്തിൽ പഠനത്തിനു നേതൃത്വം നൽകി. മണ്ഡലയോഗത്തിന്റെ മിനിറ്റ്സ് വായിച്ചു പാസ്സാക്കി. സഖറിയാസ് മാർ തെയോഫിലോസ് സഫ്രഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ പ്രാർത്ഥന ആശീർവാദത്തോടു കൂടി 2006-2007 ലെ പ്രതിനിധി മണ്ഡലം സമംഗളം പര്യവസാനിച്ചു.

A Tribute to Binil Samuel

Aswathi Varughese (Mary), St. Thomas MarThoma Church, Chicago

Luke 20:36. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Like a flame consumed

*Like the poignant memory of
an emotive dream*

You touched our lives

Never to be forgotten

Son of CMTC

Witness of our Saviors love

May the fire that you kindled

Blaze brightly evermore

The tragedy of your loss

Haunts our thoughts

Echoes in our words

But in the bleak dark silence

Of the anguish filled void

Our saviors voice whispers

“Safe in my arms he’ll always be”

ഒരു “സുറിയാനി” സങ്കീർത്തനം

(137-ാം സങ്കീർത്തനത്തോടു കൂടപ്പാട്)

മിനി ജെയിംസ് വിരമല
സാൻഫ്രാൻസിസ്കോ

“സീരിയൽ” കണ്ണീർ പുഴകളുടെ തീരത്ത് ഞങ്ങളിന്ന് ഇരിക്കുന്നു.
ഞങ്ങളുടെ മക്കളെപ്പറ്റിയോർത്ത് കരഞ്ഞുപ്രാർത്ഥിക്കാൻ ഞങ്ങൾക്കിന്നു സമയമില്ല!
ടെലിവിഷൻ കേബിളുകളിൻമേലും, ഇൻറർനെറ്റ് കഫേകളിലും,
ഞങ്ങൾ ഞങ്ങളുടെ കിന്നരങ്ങളെ തൂക്കിയിട്ടു!

ഞങ്ങളെ ബദ്ധരാക്കിയ സീരിയലുകളും, സമ്മാനപദ്ധതികളും,
കാലത്തും വൈകിട്ടും സീയോൻ ഗീതങ്ങൾ പാടാൻ, ഞങ്ങളെ അനുവദിക്കുന്നില്ല.
ഞങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടി സന്തോഷം “പ്രൊഡ്യൂസ്” ചെയ്യുന്നവർ,
ഞങ്ങൾക്കു സന്തോഷം ഉണ്ടായെന്ന് ചോദിച്ചില്ല!

ഞങ്ങൾ യഹോവയുടെ ഗീതങ്ങൾ ഈ ദേശത്ത് പാടുന്നതെന്തിന്?
“ഇൻസ്റ്റൻറ് ക്രൂസേഡു”കളും, “മിറക്കിൾ ക്രൂസേഡു”കളും,
“ചാനൽ ക്രൂസേഡു”കളും ഞങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടി അലമുറയിടുമ്പോൾ,
ഞങ്ങൾ ഞങ്ങളുടെ “ടൈമും” “എനേർജിയും” “വേസ്റ്റ്” ചെയ്യുന്നതെന്തിന്?

വാത്സല്യമക്കളേ, നിങ്ങളെ ഞാൻ ഓർമ്മിക്കാനിടയായാൽ
എന്റെ പൊയ്മുഖം എനിക്കുപേക്ഷിക്കേണ്ടിവരും!

മക്കളേ, നിങ്ങളെ ഞാൻ ഓർമ്മിക്കാനിടയായാൽ
മക്കളേ, നിങ്ങളെ എന്റെ മുഖ്യസന്തോഷമായ “റിയാലറ്റി ഷോ”-യെക്കാൾ വിലമതിച്ചാൽ
ഞാനിന്നണിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്ന നിലയുടെ “വില” ഇടിഞ്ഞുപോകും!

ഇടിച്ചുകളയൂ, അടിസ്ഥാനങ്ങൾവരെ ഇടിച്ചുകളഞ്ഞ്
പുതിയൊരു “ഡ്രീം വേൾഡ്” പണിതുയർത്തി,
“സംസ്കാര പ്രബുദ്ധരായി”, സമസ്ത ഐശ്വര്യങ്ങളും കൈവരിക്കൂ!
എന്നാഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന “മോഡേണിസ്റ്റുകൾക്കു്” ചെവികൊടുക്കുമ്പോൾ,
മക്കളേ, നിങ്ങളെ ഓർക്കാൻ എനിക്ക് സമയമില്ല!

“ഓവർടൈം”നെയും, മേളകളെയും ആശ്രയിക്കുന്ന-“സീരിയൽ പുത്രഗണ”ങ്ങളേ,
നമ്മൾ മക്കളോടു ചെയ്യുന്നതുപോലെ ചെയ്യാത്തവർ ഭാഗ്യവാന്മാർ!
അതേ! തങ്ങളുടെ മക്കളെ തകർത്തുകളയാത്തവർ ഭാഗ്യവാന്മാർ!

വഴിത്തിരിവുകൾ

Rachel Thomas, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, FB

അതിരാവിലെ തന്നെ സൂസി ഓഫീസിൽ പോകുവാനായി തിരക്കിട്ടിറങ്ങി. ഏതായാലും ട്രെയിൻ വിടുന്നതിനു മുമ്പു തന്നെ സ്റ്റേഷനിൽ എത്തിയ കാരണം അതിൽ കയറിപ്പറ്റാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞു. ട്രെയിൻ മുന്നോട്ടു കുതിച്ചുപാഞ്ഞു. വെറുതെ കണ്ണടച്ചു ഇരുന്ന സൂസിയുടെ മനസ്സു പെട്ടെന്നു ഓർമ്മയുടെ ഓളങ്ങളിലേയ്ക്കു വഴുതി വീണു.

കുട്ടിക്കാലം, സ്നേഹസമ്പന്നരായ മാതാ-പിതാക്കൾ. അവരുടെ സ്നേഹ പരിലാളനങ്ങൾ ആവോളം അനുഭവിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ കാലം. തൊടിയിലെ പൂക്കളോടും പക്ഷികളോടും കിന്നാരംപറഞ്ഞും തുമ്പിയെ പിടിച്ചും നടന്ന കാലം. അന്നു ജീവിതത്തിൽ അല്ലലൊന്നും തന്നെ അറിയേണ്ടിവന്നിട്ടില്ല. അന്നൊക്കെയെന്നു രസമായിരുന്നു. പള്ളിക്കൂടം വിട്ടു വീട്ടിൽ വന്നാൽ കൂട്ടുകാരുമായി അങ്ങനെ കളിച്ചുനടക്കും. നെല്ലിമരത്തിൽ നിന്നും നെല്ലിയ്ക്ക തല്ലിയിട്ടതും, തടിയൻ മാവിന്റെ ചുവട്ടിൽ നിന്നും കണ്ണിമാങ്ങ പെറുക്കിയെടുത്തതും, പാലപ്പൂവ് പെറുക്കി മാല കോർത്തതും ഒക്കെ ഇപ്പോഴും ഓർക്കുന്നു.

എത്ര പെട്ടെന്നാണു വർഷങ്ങൾ കടന്നു പോയത്. പ്രീ-ഡിഗ്രിയ്ക്കു പഠിയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ ആണ് അപ്പന്റെ മരണം. നാടിനെപ്പോലും ഞെട്ടിച്ച ആ സംഭവം കുടുംബത്തെയാകെ ആട്ടിയുലച്ചു. ശവസംസ്കാര ചടങ്ങുകൾക്കു ശേഷം സുഹൃത്തുക്കളും ബന്ധുക്കളും പലവഴിക്കു പിരിഞ്ഞു. ആ വീട്ടിൽ തന്നോടൊപ്പം സഹോദരങ്ങളും അമ്മയും മാത്രം അവശേഷിച്ചു.

സ്നേഹമയിയായ അമ്മയുടെ സാമീപ്യം മനസ്സിനു അല്പാല്പം ആശ്വാസം പകർന്നു നൽകി. എന്നാൽ അധികം താമസിയാതെ ആ ദീപവും പൊലിഞ്ഞു. തനിക്കുചുറ്റും അസ്വസ്തതയുടെ ഇരുൾ വന്നുമുടി. ആ ഇരുട്ടിൽ താൻ തപ്പിത്തടയുന്നതുപോലെ.

അന്നൊരിക്കൽ, തന്റെ മുറിയിൽ വിഷാദ ചിന്തയായ് വിദൂരതയിലേക്കു കണ്ണും നട്ടിരുന്നപ്പോൾ എവിടെനിന്നോ മനസ്സിന്റെ ഉള്ളറയിലേക്കു ഒരു വെളിച്ചം കടന്നുവന്നു. അതൊടൊപ്പം കാതിൽ മുഴങ്ങിയ, “മനമേ ചഞ്ചലമെന്തിനായ്, കരുതാൻ വല്ലഭനില്ലയോ.” എന്ന മധുരഗാനത്തിന്റെ ഇഴരടികൾ മനസ്സിനു ശക്തിയും സന്തോഷവും പകർന്നു.

ആയിടയ്ക്കാണ് വിദേശത്തേക്കുള്ള വിസ കിട്ടിയത്. പിന്നെ ഉപരിപഠനം, വിവാഹം,

കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ. സന്തുഷ്ടമായ കുടുംബ ജീവിതം. അങ്ങനെ കാലചക്രം തിരിഞ്ഞു കൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നു.

അപ്രതീക്ഷിതമായിട്ടാണ് അതു സംഭവിച്ചത്. അന്നൊരിക്കൽ ഓഫീസിൽ വെച്ച് താൻ മോഹാലസ്യപ്പെട്ടു തറയിൽ വീണു. അബോ-ധാവസ്ഥയിലായിരുന്ന തന്നെ സഹപ്രവർത്തകർ വേഗം ആശുപത്രിയിലെത്തിച്ചു. താൻ കണ്ണുതുറന്നപ്പോൾ കണ്ടത്, തന്റെ കിടക്കയ്ക്കരികിൽ ആശുപത്രിജീവനക്കാരുടൊപ്പം ആകാംക്ഷയോടെ തന്നെ നോക്കിനിൽക്കുന്ന ബന്ധുക്കളെയും സുഹൃത്തുക്കളെയുമാണ്. തനിക്കു് എന്തോ മാതൃകമായ രോഗം പിടിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നും, വൈദ്യശാസ്ത്രം അതിനു പ്രതിവിധിയൊന്നും കണ്ടുപിടിച്ചിട്ടില്ലെന്നും ആരോ തമ്മിൽ പറയുന്നതു കേട്ടപ്പോൾ അന്ധാളിച്ചു പോയി.

“ഇനിയെന്ത്?” എന്നുള്ള ചിന്ത ഒരു വലിയ ചോദ്യചിഹ്നമായി തന്റെ മുമ്പിലവതരിച്ചു. തനിക്കെന്തെങ്കിലും സംഭവിച്ചാൽ കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ സ്ഥിതി എന്താകും? ഉത്തരം കിട്ടാത്ത ഒരായിരം ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ. ഞായറാഴ്ച പതിവുപോലെ പള്ളിയിൽ പോയി. “ദൈവത്തെ സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നവർക്കു്, നിർണ്ണയ പ്രകാരം വിളിയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ടവർക്കു തന്നെ, സകലവും നന്മയ്ക്കായി കൂടി വ്യാപരിക്കുന്നു” എന്ന വാക്യത്തെ ആസ്പദമാക്കിയുള്ള വികാരിയച്ചന്റെ പ്രസംഗം ഉൾക്കൊള്ളാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. മനസ്സിന്റെ ധൈര്യം ചോർന്നു പോകുന്നതുപോലെ തോന്നി.

സമയം ആർക്കുവേണ്ടിയും കാത്തുനിന്നില്ല. അതു് മുന്പോട്ടു നീങ്ങിക്കൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നു.

അന്നു്, അദ്യശ്യനായ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കരങ്ങൾ തന്നെ സ്പർശിച്ചു. തന്റെ നാഡീ ഞരമ്പുകളിൽകൂടി വൈദ്യുതി പ്രവഹിക്കുന്നതു പോലെ തോന്നി. ഡോക്ടർമാരുടെ നിഗമനങ്ങൾക്കു വിപരീതമായി താൻ വേഗം സുഖം പ്രാപിച്ചു. ഇന്നു താൻ പൂർണ്ണ ആരോഗ്യവതിയും സന്തുഷ്ടയുമാണ്.

ട്രെയിൻ സ്റ്റേഷനിലെത്തിയതു് സൂസി അറിഞ്ഞിരുന്നില്ല. അടുത്തിരുന്ന യാത്രക്കാരിൽ ഒരാൾ ചുമലിൽ തട്ടിയപ്പോൾ അവൾ ചിന്തയിൽ നിന്നും ഞെട്ടിയുണർന്നു. ദൈവം നടത്തിയ വഴികളെയോർത്തു് സ്തോത്രം ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ടു് ഓഫീസിലേക്കുനടന്ന സൂസി, “അവൻ നടത്തുന്ന വഴികളും കരുതുന്ന വിധങ്ങളും അനന്യമാം കൃപയാലത്രേ..”, എന്നു മുളിപ്പാട്ടു പാടിയതു് തിരക്കിനിടയിൽ ആരും ശ്രദ്ധിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടാവില്ല.

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പ്ലാറ്റിനം ജൂബിലി മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവജന കൺവൻഷൻ ഡിട്രോയിറ്റിൽ സമാപിച്ചു

മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവജനസഖ്യം പ്ലാറ്റിനം ജൂബിലി വർഷത്തിൽ നോർത്ത് അമേരിക്ക & യൂറോപ്പ് ഭദ്രാസന യുവജനസഖ്യത്തിന്റെ ഒൻപതാമതു മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവജന കൺവൻഷൻ ഭദ്രാസനാധിപൻ അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. യുയാക്കിം മാർ കുറിലോസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പ പ്രാകാശിത ദീപം കൊളുത്തി ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്തു. ഉദ്ഘാടന സമ്മേളനത്തിൽ റവ. ഷാജി കെ. തോമസ്സ്, റവ. പി. ചാക്കോ, റവ. ഫിലിപ്പ് വർഗ്ഗീസ്, ഭദ്രാസന സെക്രട്ടറി ഐപ്പി സി. വർഗ്ഗീസ് പരിമണം, ഭദ്രാസന ട്രഷറർ ജോൺ വർഗ്ഗീസ്, ഭദ്രാസന കൺസിലംഗം ഏബ്രഹാം കെ. ഡാനിയേൽ, സുജീവ് ചെറിയൻ എന്നിവർ ആശംസകൾ നേർന്നു. യുവജന കൺവൻഷനോട് ചേർന്ന് പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച സ്മരണികയുടെ പ്രകാശനം ഡിട്രോയിറ്റ് മാർത്തോമ്മാ ചർച്ച് ട്രസ്റ്റി ജോർജ്ജ് കെ. തോമസ്സിന് നൽകി മാർ കുറിലോസ് നിർവ്വഹിച്ചു. കൊളംബയർ കോൺഫ്രൻസ് സെന്ററിൽ വെച്ചു നടത്തപ്പെട്ട സമ്മേളനത്തിന്റെ പഠന വിഷയമായ ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ വേരുന്നിയതും ബന്ധിതവുമായ പ്രവാസി സമൂഹം എന്നതിനെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി വിവിധ സെഷനുകൾക്ക് റവ. ജോസഫ് ഉമ്മൻ, റവ. മാത്യു സ്കറിയ, സാം ജോർജ്ജ്, റെനി ശാമുവേൽ എന്നിവർ നേതൃത്വം നൽകി.

ഭദ്രാസനത്തിലെ വിവിധ സഖ്യം ശാഖകളിൽ നിന്നായി 200-ൽ പരം പ്രതിനിധികൾ യുവജന കൺവൻഷനിൽ പങ്കെടുത്തു. കൺവൻഷനോടു ചേർന്ന് ഭദ്രാസനത്തിലെ വിവിധ സഖ്യം ശാഖകളിൽ നിന്നുമുള്ള കലാകാരന്മാരും കലാകാരികളും മാറ്റുരച്ച ഭദ്രാസന കലാമേള നടത്തപ്പെട്ടു. കൺവൻഷൻ സെന്ററിൽ വെച്ച് നടത്തപ്പെട്ട കലാസന്ധ്യയും വൻവിജയമായി. റവ. ഷാജി കെ. തോമസ്സ് (പ്രസിഡന്റ്), അലൻ ജി. ജോൺ (ജനറൽ കൺവീനർ), മിനി വർഗ്ഗീസ് (ജോയിന്റ് കൺവീനർ), ഡെയ്സൻ ചാക്കോ (സെക്രട്ടറി), ബോബൻ ജോർജ്ജ് (പ്രോഗ്രാം), ജോസഫ് ചാക്കോ (ഫൈനാൻസ്), റെയ്ച്ചൽ ജോൺ (അക്കൗണ്ടന്റേഷൻ), അജു മാത്യു (റെജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ), സോമൻ പി. ചാക്കോ (സുവനീർ), തോമസ്സ് വർഗ്ഗീസ് (ഹുഡ്), ഷീനാ മാത്യുസ് (റിസപ്ഷൻ), തോമസ്സ് ഏബ്രഹാം (ട്രാൻസ്പോർട്ടേഷൻ), വിനോദ് തോമസ്സ് (എന്റർടെയ്ൻമെന്റ്), ഫിലിപ്പ് വർഗ്ഗീസ് (പബ്ലിസിറ്റി) എന്നിവർ നേതൃത്വം കൊടുത്ത വിവിധ സബ് കമ്മിറ്റികൾ യുവജന സമ്മേളനത്തിന്റെ വിജയത്തിനായി സജീവമായി പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു. സമ്മേളനത്തിന്റെ ഔദ്യോഗിക വെബ്സൈറ്റായ WWW.YUVAJANACONVENTION.COM -ൽ നിന്നും കൂടുതൽ വിവരങ്ങൾ ലഭ്യമാണ്.

അലൻ ജി. ജോൺ (ജനറൽ കൺവീനർ)



Lighted to Lighten—Coorilos Thirumeni lighting the Lamp.



Leaders of the Conference on the Dias.



LIVING HOME

"Prayer is not intended to change God's purpose, nor is it to move Him to form fresh purposes. God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment."

Arthur W. Pink

HOME & GARDEN TIPS

MRS. SHIRLEY CHACKALAMANNIL, NEW JERSEY MTC

How to Accessorize a Living Room

The July edition of the Messenger Magazine focused on decorating your foyer and furnishing your living room. Here "The Living Home" will be focusing on decorating your living room with accessories. Accessorizing a room is the major part in decorating any room. When accessorizing a room "The less is more" theme is the best way to go. The famous artist Ad Reinhardt justifies the style of "less is more" by summarizing it in simple words "The more stuff in it, the busier the work of art, the worse it is. More is less. Less is more". This is definitely true for decorating a room. There is a notion among us that in order to decorate a room we need to fill all the available space in our home with expensive knick knacks and furniture. This is not true. Each piece of cluttering, whether it is additional accent furniture or valuable art displays, it will not be an aesthetic decoration to your room but it will only serve as a venue to be a "show off". When you accessorize your home remember that our house should be a home for "our families and our friends" not a storage place for furniture and displays. Maintain a balance. Lots of pattern or color in a room can be too overwhelming.

When you accessorize a room, there ought to be a focal point where you can start the process of decoration. It starts with the one thing in that room you do want to keep. If you have a precious painting and you are much attached to it, then you may need to start with buying furniture that goes with the painting. If you have a beautiful rug that you want to keep, then use the rug as the focal point and start accessorizing the room based on the pattern and color of the rug. Most of us would want to keep the furniture that we have. So in this article the focal point will be the existing furniture.

Of all the accessories in your living room, the lamps are definitely the most important component. In most cases we tend to place lamps that are too small for the space. A small lamp is inadequate from both decorative and functional standpoints. If there is not much to see then there is not much to see by. According to most of the traditional interior designers, fifty six to fifty eight inch is an average height (from the top of the shades to the floor assuming the lamp is on its table) needed for living room table lamps. The lamp should not be just tall but should be somewhat bulky too. A thin, skimpy lamp could be a menace to have around and finding a shade of the correct proportion for the lamp that suits the rest of the furnishings will be hard also. An average living room can be furnished with two lamps and a bigger living room demands four. No matter if it is two or four, they should be of the same height and the top of the shades should be on an even line all the way around the room. If you chose to have two table lamps and a floor lamp, then the table lamp should of the same size and height with same type of shade and place the floor lamp in a symmetrical order. Choosing the right color, texture and designs on a lamp base is the easy and elegant way to decorate your room as long as they are complementary to the pattern and color of your living room furniture. Corners of the room can be brightened by an accent lamp on an accent table.

Coffee and end table accessories are also important in bringing out the spaciousness and the beauty of a room. On your coffee table keep flowers or a flower arrangement in vase that goes along with the color and design of your sofa set. If you have a habit of leaving a letter opener or your eye glass case on the table, then get the most decorative you can find. Remember you want to decorate your house in such a way that is functional in every aspect. If you subscribe to magazines or professional journals, arrange them on the coffee table with only the current issue that you want read and keep the rest in storage areas or in your office/study/library room. Keeping the magazines on your coffee table is not only functional but it also gives a (since most of them have colorful covers) bright cheery note. The end table is mostly occupied with the table lamp so you could just place something small like a live cactus plant in a vase or something of sentimental value such as pictures of your loved ones in appropriate frames that goes with the rest of the décor of the room. An ornate Curio that is compatible with the rest of the furnishings will be a welcome addition to the décor. Here you can display your collectibles and interesting knick knacks. This display, not only add beauty to the room but also it could turn in to an interesting conversational piece for you and your guests. Remember, it is the quality of the display that is important and not the quantity. So be selective about the displays.

A sure way to bring in some color in the room is by having a rug for the floor. Choose the shade of color a bit lighter than or darker than the colors of your sofa set. You can have a neutral color rug with a border of same shade of color of your sofa. If everything is of the same shade of color in a room then the individual items that are part of your décor will lose their identity and this kind of a room is quiet in its effect. Another way to bring colors and texture to your décor will be by having pictures or paintings in your room. No one can tell you what kind of pictures or paintings you should choose for your own living room. It is totally up to you and your personality. It could be of scenery or of old cities. It could be pictures of birds, animals or flowers. It could be pictures of your own family. The important idea here is the frame and the picture mats should be complementary to your sofa set (the focal point of the room, if you choose) and should have a unique theme for the pictures. For example if you wish to put pictures of your family then it is better not to put a picture of a bird or flower along with them. If you wish to hang other picture along with the family photos do it in a way that will bring forth symmetry and balance such as alternating them with another theme of your choice. For example if you like pictures and paintings of scenery then have them of different kinds but the color of the picture or painting and its frame should be compatible with the rest of the décor. There are several principles about how to hang pictures. A picture should always be an integral part of the group of furniture and accessories over it hangs. As much as possible, keep the tops of all pictures in a room exactly at the same distance from the ceiling unless you are hanging pictures in a group. If you are grouping the pictures then for impact, keep grouping fairly tight. Many of the interior decorators are in favor of hanging pictures on your eye level.

There is a saying "windows are the eyes of a house". So when you install draperies or curtains on your windows make sure that you are not blocking day light. Floor length curtains are generally considered more formal, hence suitable for a living room. Hanging the curtain rod a few inches above the window frame will make the window looks bigger and taller. If you

have wall papered living room (with bold patterns) then it is better to have solid color curtains. If not, then the room will look too busy and crowded.

Next issue of "The Living Home" will focus on how to accessorize a dining room.

Does the Restricted Tree Still Exist in the Middle of the Garden?

Dr. Jessy Koshy Puthuvakkal, Baltimore MTC

God created man—male and female—in the image of God. He created man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being. The Lord God formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to Adam to see what he would name them and whatever he named them that was its name.



This is an interesting point to keep in mind. God knew that Adam was alone. From what God had already created, He knew that there was no suitable companion for Adam. Therefore, God made a woman from the rib of the man. This is another point to keep in mind. Why did God choose Adam alone to name the animals and not wait for his companion to help choose the names together? He blessed both man and woman and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number." In this case, did God create a matured man and woman or were they infants? No. They definitely were neither infants nor matured adults. God created them IN HIS IMAGE. They were naked and felt no shame. God kept them in the garden in Eden and told them that they were free to eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if they ate of it, they would surely die. This is also another interesting point. These are just two individuals walking and living together—until the serpent came into the picture. From the time that God created Adam and Eve until the serpent, how long had they been living together? Was it days, months or years? We don't know. The serpent asked a question. Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? Eve replied saying that God told them that they could eat fruit from all the trees in the garden except the tree that is in the middle of the garden or they would die. The serpent's reply is very interesting because he says that she would surely not die, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it too. Then the eyes of both Adam and Eve were opened, and they

realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. God is fulfilling His purpose here through the serpent. God had told them already that they would rule over the world and increase in number. How are they going to increase in number and rule on the earth when they haven't attained physical, mental, emotional or sexual maturity? In the present

time, the age of maturity and reproduction is between the ages of 10 and 15 years of age. At the time that God created man and woman until the serpent tempts them was their period of growing and maturing. Here God is giving them the time to grow in all senses from the period of creation of Adam and Eve until the serpent comes on the scene. Every time I read this chapter, I would wonder why no priest, bishop, or scholar has spoken on this subject yet. Until the serpent intrudes, Adam and Eve had no idea that they were naked and had no shame walking on earth the way they had. Not until they ate the forbidden fruit did their eyes open and reality set in. This was the completion of the growing period that God had determined for them since they had not been born as infants nor as matured adults. God fulfilled His purpose by blessing them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Where is this tree now? What was the purpose of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Does the tree still exist? Has the purpose been fulfilled with that tree? The answer is yes. The tree is not in Eden now since the purpose was fulfilled, but instead it is in each and every one of us? How? When Eve took the fruit to eat from the tree, the knowledge of good and evil was transferred through them and then carried on from generation to generation. In the same way, God has a purpose for each and every one of us. It is pre-planned and pre-determined just like it was for Adam and Eve. Whatever He has determined for us, it is guaranteed and delivered at His own time. Just like the word G. O. D.—Guaranteed Overnight Delivery. It's not the overnight we expect, but the delivery and guarantee in His time. ■

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago

United together in fellowship—Fusion 2007

Aswathi Varughese (Mary)

The church is the focal point for many Malayalee families, especially among the Marthomites. Often, it is the center of many social and cultural activities as well. Why do we come to church? What is our mission? Often these questions are asked and answered at church conventions, sermons, etc. The usual reaction is to listen keenly, discuss even more intently and then assiduously disregard everything we heard!

But, one glorious summer day in early September, I found my question answered in part, and like the pieces of a puzzle, when one piece fits to finally form an exquisite portrait, one is enthralled by the beauty of the whole.

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

St Thomas Mar Thoma Church – a beautiful, magnificent church built on the foundation of prayer and sacrifice has a comparatively small congregation of 130 families. The financial commitment involved in a church that cost almost \$3.5 million to build is a fairly large burden for a parish of this size. Yet, miraculously every need has been met by members who view the church as an extension of their family.

Ephesians 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Back in October 2006 during the dedication of the church, Rev. Johnson Philip the vicar, challenged his parish to be 'different' —to take 'baby steps' that would ultimately pave the way to the community being a 'called out community—holy and set apart for Christ. The theme for the dedication of the church was 'A home for all' and Achen challenged the members with one simple question: "Can you make this church truly a home for all—within and without this parish?"

Jeremiah 3:15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Fusion 2007, a fund raising event was planned by the elected leaders of the church to ease the monetary strain. But, Fusion 2007 turned out to be much, much more than a mere fundraising event. It was an experience of divine grace through an exercise in spiritual fellowship and commitment.

During the weeks prior to Fusion 2007, we took baby steps, most of them forward, a few backward as well. Committee members and parishioners fasted and prayed. Programs were added, deleted, finalized and re-finalized. The well known gospel singer and his wife—Mr. J. M Raju and Latha were recruited to be one of the key performers amongst others. Committee members learnt the art of negotiation. Stalls had to be set up! Do we need a stage? How big should the stage be? Flyers need to be created! Invitations to sister parishes must be sent! Menus were created and then re-created! Permits had to be secured. Dance practices were scheduled and cancelled and re-scheduled! What items can be sold? Churidars and Saris were donated! A 'little Kerala' stall had more donations and items

than could be inventoried in one evening!!! Mother Nature refused to co-operate with all this flurry of activity! Meetings were via phone conference due to torrential downpours and loss of electricity, but they were held nonetheless!

The week prior to September 8th, the lights at the church shone out onto the darkened streets well past midnight. Weather forecasts were listened to intently—"Oh no! Showers were predicted for Saturday! Let us fast and pray for the success of Fusion 2007."

The flyer created for Fusion 2007 read:

- F** – Festivities / fun and amusement
- U** – union of Indo/American cultures- A celebration that is unique, yet is enjoyable for all
- S** – Singing: Gospel music by famed singers
- I** – Intrigue: Come prepared to be intrigued by different varieties of food
- O** – Occasion: an occasion for fellowship and camaraderie
- N** – Nriyam: meaning -Dance -Enthrall your visual senses with dances from India

....FUSION 2007!!!

Saturday, September 8th, 2007 dawned bright and clear—not a cloud could mar the glorious sunshine and heaven smiled down on St. Thomas MarThoma church. Members/volunteers started arriving.

A tall, smiling red balloon man flapping his arms in the wind proudly proclaimed "The party is here". The venue – 'nearly' one year old St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago—A Home for all, standing on the corner of Main Street and North Avenue in Lombard, IL. It's almost 9:30 AM on this balmy Saturday morning and already there are cars in the parking lot. The stage with a banner stating Fusion 2007 artistically spray painted standing in one corner of the parking lot is empty, but holds the promise of exciting performances later on in the day. St. Thomas MarThoma Church was in the final stages of preparation—presenting their very first summer festival—aptly titled Fusion 2007 symbolizing a blend of cultures.

The stalls were set. Achen called everyone to pray. As I bowed my head, I was humbled by the magnitude of the day ahead.

As the day progressed and events unfolded, Fusion 2007 was blessed by the grace of fellowship and commitment. Everyone worked together in unity with one accord. The words of an old English hymn took on a new meaning:

*"...we will work with each other; we will work side by side
And they will know we are Christians by our love, by our
love they will know we are Christians...."
Yes, we worked side by side, hand in hand!*

Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

Johnson Philip Achen—a humble leader of this parish, he taught us by example to work together to rise to greater heights!

Main Conveners Mr. Jacob George and Mr. Jameson Mathai—put their personal lives on hold for Fusion 2007. Their commitment and sincere dedication was a lesson in itself that inspired everyone to make sacrifices and somehow find the time to do everything that had to be done!

Programs flowed fairly smoothly. Around 5:00 PM, the tempo changed and took on a faster beat! When the final program was done and the vote of thanks was called, all the food had been sold. 'Little Kerala' had its own share of success and as the curtain fell, we breathed a simple prayer of gratitude "Thank you Lord".

As the final guests drove away, the parking lot still remained full—yes—there was still work to be done—chairs to be put away, canopies folded, props dismantled. But the load was light for the hands were many.

As the last car finally pulled away at 1:00 AM and the lights were turned off, St. Thomas MarThoma Church made another landmark in the history of this great parish—A landmark of humility and fellowship bound together by the grace of our Savior.

Why do we come to church? To worship and His altar....to experience His divine grace...To offer ourselves for His ministry...to be a missionary and a visionary of His holy will...to share in the fellowship of His children...to divide burdens and multiply joys...to witness for His glory! ■

Be a Torchbearer of Living Faith for Others

Mrs. Leelamma Thomas, Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York

"The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down"
Proverbs 14:1.

The 8th National Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom Conference was held on September 20-23, 2007 hosted by the Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York. The meeting was a blessed and nurturing one. The theme for the conference was "Torch bearers of the living faith" based on 2nd Timothy, 1:5-6.

2nd Timothy is Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, specifically reminding Timothy how he acquired his faith, from whom he learned about Jesus, as well as how he practices his faith and how he can become a torch bearer for others in the Community. 2nd Timothy 1:5-6 reminds Timothy, that his grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice has the same faith as Timothy that is "Sincere Faith" as seen in Verse 4.

His Grandmother Lois who led and motivated the next generation to bear the flaming torch as did his mother Eunice. Both of them passed it on to Timothy. They are not only bearing the torch but also had the flame shining within them, so everybody can see their faith in which they walk and practice. Like Lois and Eunice, we too have to have the flame of faith to light the torch within us so that we may bear the torch of faith and pass it on to others.

2nd Timothy 3:15 remind us how from childhood we have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the work of Christ." Romans 10:17. Thus Apostle Paul sent Timothy to



Thessalonica in their time of trouble to establish and strengthen them in their faith. Faith is personal. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, and faith is the unseen things and becomes a reality. But faith also needs encouragement from fellow believers. Fellow believers like Timothy who in times of distress carry the torch of faith so that those who are losing hope are renewed by the flame.

Faith is seen in many ways throughout the bible. Abraham's faith is a great example. He believed what God told him, never questioned it. Abraham's faith viewed as righteousness for as it says in both Romans: 1:17 and Habakkuk 2:4 the righteous shall live by faith. When Abraham was called out of the land he had to leave everything that was familiar to him. Despite the idolatry of that pagan city, Abraham had probably grown attached to his surroundings, but Abraham left the familiar to follow God's leading because of his faith as Hebrews 11:8 reminds us "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go".

Can we be like Abraham? Can we live like he did and do as it says in 2nd Corinthians 5:7 for we walk by faith not by sight? Let us strive to have the sincere faith of Lois, Eunice, Timothy and Abraham. Let us walk and live our life with faith, fully on fire for Him so that we can pass our faith onto our next generation, within our communities and throughout our work place.

May God Almighty give the strength and courage to have the torch of His love and faith shining through our lives so that we may be living testimonies to each other and the World around us. ■

TEXAS HOMES

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Mission Activities of the Diocese of North America & Europe

Jason M. Thomas, Convener, Diocesan Mission Board & Council Member

Mission work is a vital part of the Mar Thoma church with the emphasis that 'Every Marthomite is a Missionary' according to Abraham Marthoma, the 17th Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church. The role of the church is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every believer and member of the Church is given the light so that he/she can lighten others. Being a Missionary does not mean not only to preach the Word of God to all, but also includes feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and providing the basic needs to those who lack the same. In Mathew 25:34-40 it says: "Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." "Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" "The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Hence the Mission Board is entrusted with the great responsibility of fulfilling God's will in this world by providing the basic needs to those who are deprived of the same.

For the past 25 years, we have evolved from a small congregation to about 54 parishes and 23 congregations. We have 52 clergy serving in this Diocese including retired clergy. The Mission Board appointed by the Diocesan Council is coordinating the mission activities of the Diocese. The Mission Board's purpose is to organize various mission



activities in this part of the world so that the youth of this Diocese may have firsthand experience with mission work. Mission work is a life changing experience for everyone involved, including the islanders in Mexico and the Native Americans in the United States. Presently, Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar of MTC Dallas—Farmers Branch, is providing leadership as the Vice President of the Mission Board and Jason M. Thomas as the convener. The official web site of the Mission Board is www.marthomamission.org.

The Mar Thoma church has embraced the great commission of Jesus Christ by preaching the Gospel to people in various regions throughout the world, including the United States, Mexico, and India. Under the leadership of our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, and the Mission Board, our mission projects have continued to move forward in serving the underprivileged. The major missions undertaken by the



Children of the Islanders with our Mission Team.

Mission Board is the Mexico Mission and the Mission among the Native Americans with full support of the Diocesan Youth Fellowship in addition to the different projects undertaken by the Diocese in different mission fields in India. The formation of the Mission Board in 2001 as well as the missions among Native Americans and Mexico in 2002 is the humble attempts by our Diocese to share and witness our faith and traditions to our neighbors in Mexico and the Native Americans in this county.

The Diocese has undertaken different mission projects in India through various Diocesan organizations including Sevika Sanghom, Voluntary Evangelists Association, Yuvajana Sakhyam, Sunday school, Youth Fellowship, and Association of Physicians and Dentists etc. The Mission Board also conducts annual mission trips to different mission fields in India for youths who are interested in



Coorilos Thirumeni in Mexico.



Coorilos Thirumeni praying for a paralyzed Islander.

staying in the mission fields for short period of time. These trips to India are organized by the convener Mrs. Mariamma Thomas (Houston, Texas). They also visit other mission fields and projects undertaken by this Diocese. The Diocese collects the necessary funds for its mission activities in India through the Mission Day offertory held every year in the month of November to support the different mission fields and projects adopted by the Diocese. The Mission Board expresses its sincere thanks to those who contribute to the various mission activities of the Diocese.

Recently, we have undertaken the renovation of the "Kadavil Malika" the place where the formation of the Voluntary Evangelists Association of the Church has occurred. Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa took special interest in raising the necessary funds through our Diocesan Voluntary Evangelists Association to renovate the old Malika House at Chengannur, Kerala. In addition to this project the Diocese has undertaken several other small and large projects in the past in India.

We continue to lead in the activities of the Mexico Mission under the leadership of Rev. T. S. Philip, Convener for Mexico Missions, who is the Vicar of Immanuel MTC, Houston. Throughout the summer, youths from different parishes in the Diocese visited the islanders and conducted VBS and medical camps. They also distributed clothes and household items to the islanders. The Diocesan Youth fellowship has increased its role in the mission projects by providing more participation and leadership. The Diocesan Youth Fellowship is mobilizing funds for buying land to construct hostels for the children of the islanders and to develop this mission field as a place where youths can undertake mission trips, especially during summer vacations. There have been various VBS and medical mission trips scheduled for the past couple of years in Mexico.

The Diocesan Assembly held in Chicago this year has unanimously adopted the resolution to buy land in Mexico in the name of "Chrysostom Mar Thoma Mexican Association", a civil organization registered with the Mexican government, to construct houses for the islanders

and hostels for the children of the islanders. The council has decided to buy two parcels of land in the main land one parcel closer to the city and the other about 30 miles from the city and not far away from the island so that the islanders may continue to do their fishing. The intention is to build hostels for about 150 boys and girls of the islanders who are not attending school right now due to lack of school facility in the island, so that they can stay in the hostels and attend the schools in the city of Matamoros. The other parcel of land is intended to build 90 houses as part of the celebration of the 'Navathy' of our Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan.

Native American Mission includes trips to various Native American territories including Oklahoma and Alabama. The teams from the parishes conduct VBS and other interactive activities to understand each other's culture in a better way and also at the same time spreading the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Native American Chief and his family from Oklahoma visited MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch. The Native Children also visited the Atlanta Mar Thoma Church. We will continue to plan more trips such as these in the future so that a firm relationship may be developed between our witnessing community and the Native Americans. The Native American mission continued to expand this year. During



Mission team from MTC Dallas to Native Americans in Oklahoma.

Labor Day weekend, under the Native American Mission Convener, Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, and a group of volunteers helped to rebuild homes of Native Americans destroyed by the hurricane Katrina.

We hope and pray that these mission activities undertaken by the Mission Board of the Diocese will open new doors of witnessing ourselves as a faith community so that we can create a relationship with God and His children in Mexico and among the Native Americans. We believe that Christ has commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything [Christ has] commanded [us]". (Matthew 28:19-20). We request your humble prayers and support for the mission activities of the Diocese undertaken by the Mission Board. ■

Imparting the Right Values to the Next Generation

Ansu Abraham, Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX

We are very blessed that we have a wonderful organized Diocese with a good Sunday School curriculum for our children. But how effective is our Sunday School in reality? Are we able to teach our kids how to make wise choices in their lives? Are we able to teach them the difference between right and wrong? By no means claiming any expertise on this subject, this article is written by a parent praying for wisdom and guidance from God.

Today there are young Marthomites who think that there is absolutely nothing wrong with pre-marital sex. Today school-age Mar Thoma children indulge in drinking, smoking and possibly drugs. Today there are young Marthomites addicted to the evils accessible on the internet. As a church, we will be failing if we do not address these issues. It is not enough to teach kids about what Noah and Abraham did or how many miracles Jesus did. We must teach them practical applications of our Bible teachings. To some extent we are doing that, but a great deal more must be done to improve our Sunday school curriculum. As our children grow up and as they face immense peer pressure and temptations, they should suffer no confusion about what is right and wrong.

As our children enter the pre-teen and teen years, the Sunday school curriculum in my opinion, should devote time to the importance of maintaining purity. Our youngsters should be encouraged to sign "True Love Waits for Marriage" pledges. Young people should be taught that physical intimacy is God's gift within a marriage between a man and a woman and that outside of marriage it is sin. Likewise we must address the importance of staying away 100% from drugs and alcohol. We must talk about the disastrous results of "I'll just try it once" that can lead to a lifetime of unhappiness.

There are parents who think that bringing their kids to Sunday School for 45 minutes every Sunday is all they need to do. We must remember that raising children is primarily the parents' responsibility; but the church can do much to assist the parents in providing the right values and support system. I'd like

to challenge parents to be good examples to your children. How can you tell your child not to drink when you yourself consume alcohol? Even the so called weekend social drinking can influence your child. Except for the occasional glass of red wine which may have health benefits, all alcohol should be kept out of our homes if we truly want to emphasize the values we are trying to teach our kids.

Once our kids start driving, in this country, they have complete freedom. I believe that as parents we should make the effort to know where our children are and who they are with at all times. If they want to hang around with friends, open up your own home and take time to know your children and their friends. If they are going to a friend's house, ensure that their friends' parents are at home during that time. Until young people are mature enough to hold a steady permanent job and have completed their education, we as parents should not think that knowing what is going on in our children's lives is incorrect. On the other hand, giving up our kids to the current culture can ruin their lives. In fact, even with our adult children, it would be wiser to maintain the channels of communication constantly and give them advice, even when they do not want to hear it. Remind them that it is only our love and concern that prompts us to do so.

In addition, encouraging our children to participate in healthy sports activities or learning classical dance, music and other such constructive and creative activities will give them an outlet to express themselves. Young people who are busy with healthy activities, are less likely to go astray.

Yes, I thank God we have a Mar Thoma church to support us through life, but I encourage the leadership to think about how we can make our church even more relevant today. In particular, the diocese could further improve the Sunday School curriculum. As parents, let us pray that God will give us wisdom as we struggle to be good Christian parents in an increasingly hostile world where even talking about right and wrong is no longer seems politically correct. ■

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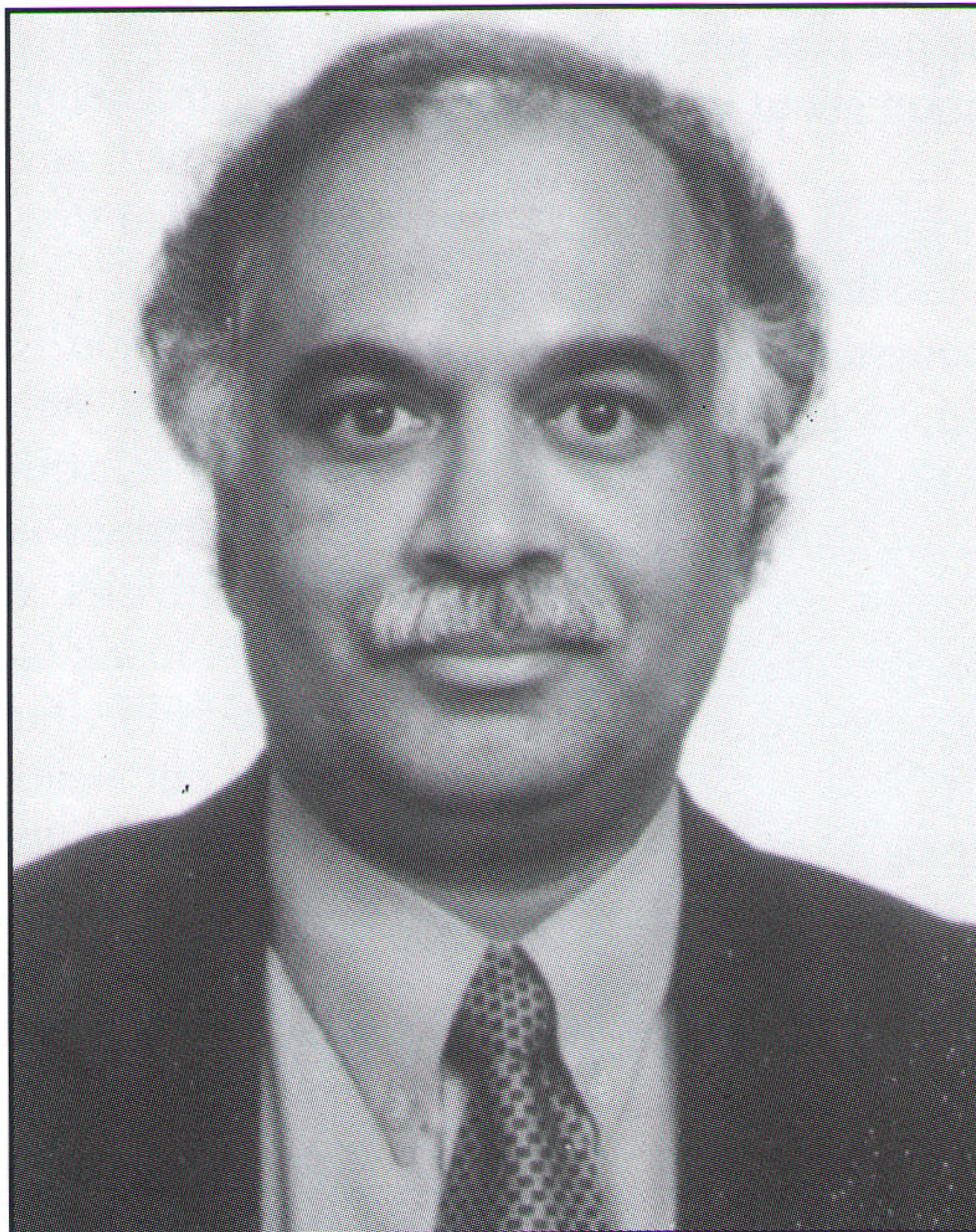


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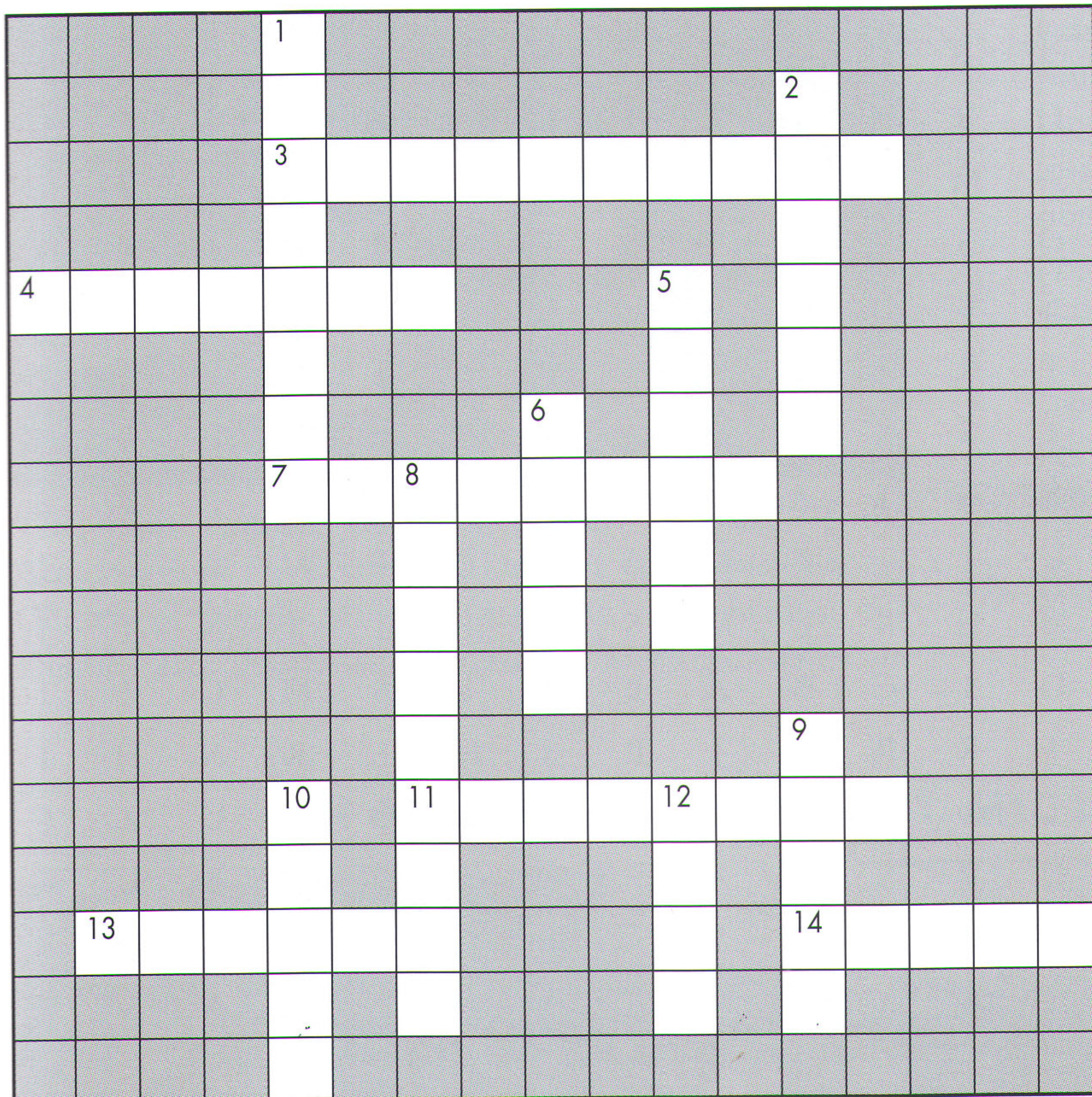
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BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: CHAPTERS 1-7

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (Toronto, Canada)



Down

1. Name the man chosen to replace Judas.
2. Peter again speaking to the onlookers said even though they killed the _____ of life, God raised Him from the dead.
5. While Stephen was being stoned he prayed to the Lord to receive his _____.
6. At _____ in the afternoon Peter and John went to pray in the temple.
8. On the day of _____ all the people were filled with the Holy Spirit.
9. _____ was one of the High Priests at the Sanhedrin.
10. Name the King and Prophet whom Peter addresses in his speech to the crowd.
12. While Stephen was being dragged out, the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named _____ who later approved his death.

Across

3. To whom is the Book of Acts addressed to _____.
4. _____ was falsely accused and captured for blaspheming against Moses and God.
7. Ananias and _____ fell down and died because they lied.
11. He is the stone you builders rejected which has become the _____.
13. This hill was a Sabbath day's walk from the city of Jerusalem
14. An _____ of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and set free the apostles.

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle & Word Search Winners (July 2007) CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WINNERS!!!

1. Achamma Chacko, Trinity MTC, Houston
2. Athira John, St. John's MTC, NY
3. Daniel Thomas, MTC, San Francisco
4. Elizabeth George, The Canadian MTC, Toronto
5. Feba and Febin Jones, St. Thomas MTC, Chicago
6. Jasmine John, Detroit MTC
7. Jessie John, The Canadian MTC, Toronto
8. Jijo Abraham, Horeb MTC, Colorado
9. Kochumol Reji Varughese, Immanuel MTC, Houston
10. Kunjumole Jose, Chicago Mar Thoma Church

11. Mariamma Ninan, St. James MTC, NY
12. Mariamma Thomas, Trinity MTC, Houston
13. Omana Rajee, The MTC Staten Island, NY
14. Ponnamma Ninan, MTC, San Francisco
15. Saramma Poikail, MTC of Greater Washington, DC
16. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
17. Sicily Skariah, MTC of Dallas, FB
18. Siny Koshy, Salem MTC, NY
19. Sosamma Abraham, Long Island MTC, NY
20. Susan John, San Francisco MTC

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: CHAPTERS 8-14

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (Toronto, Canada)

I J O P P A O A Z E S I U S R Y N ' R S H O D P
B U R S I C U A T C O R N E L I U S A T A P U
A N S A U L S U C S A M A D M I U M A S M T E
R M A S S M H N P I O S P R T R P S I D A P . Y
- A N O I S O O L J S B U L A O U I E B S U Z
J B S A O M I L Y S T R A S A S R S I H P I E
E J E E I C S T C W I S A P R A I T E H U J R
S I M S J K M A L Y S N I A J C H B I A E P S
U T A O Y A P C O M C I T E M A C D E M A O I
S S J P N E D H O A M H A U M S L E T S N T J
C B T B T C H H I T D I C W A B A S S M C J I
U A B O R Y I M O L J R R S J R S M L R N H I
T D H C O I T N A J I O S H J S A O O O U Z E
D E Z I T P A B N C O P S D A P U S P W E U A
U E T D S A I N A N A M P P I A P O I M P M B
A I M A O R A O I R N A A S S E O O E T A S R

1. This apostle went down to a city in Samaria and performed miraculous signs.
2. Name the man who tried to buy the gift of God with money.
3. The Ethiopian eunuch was _____ by Philip.
4. Saul was blinded by a flashing light as he was approaching this place.
5. Saul was a native of _____.
6. _____ restored the sight of Saul.
7. Name the woman Peter raised from the dead.
8. In which town was Peter staying when he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened?
9. _____, the centurion, and all his family were devout and God fearing, giving generously to those in need and praying to God regularly.
10. The _____ believers criticized Peter for going to the house of uncircumcised men and eating with them.
11. The disciples were first called Christians at _____.
12. _____, the apostle, was put to death by the sword at King Herod's order.
13. Since Herod did not give praise to God, he was eaten by _____ and died.
14. At Paphos, Barnabas and Saul met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named _____ who was also called Elymas.
15. In _____, Barnabas was called Zeus and Paul called Hermes because a lame man jumped up and began to walk.

Please mail your answers to:

James T. Philip, 175 Sheraden Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10314

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS DECEMBER 31, 2007

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

PHYSICIAN'S & DENTISTS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2007



The 16th Annual Conference and Retreat of the Association of Physicians and Dentists of the Mar Thoma Church of North America (A.P.D.M.) was held at the Double Tree Hotel and Executive Meeting Center in

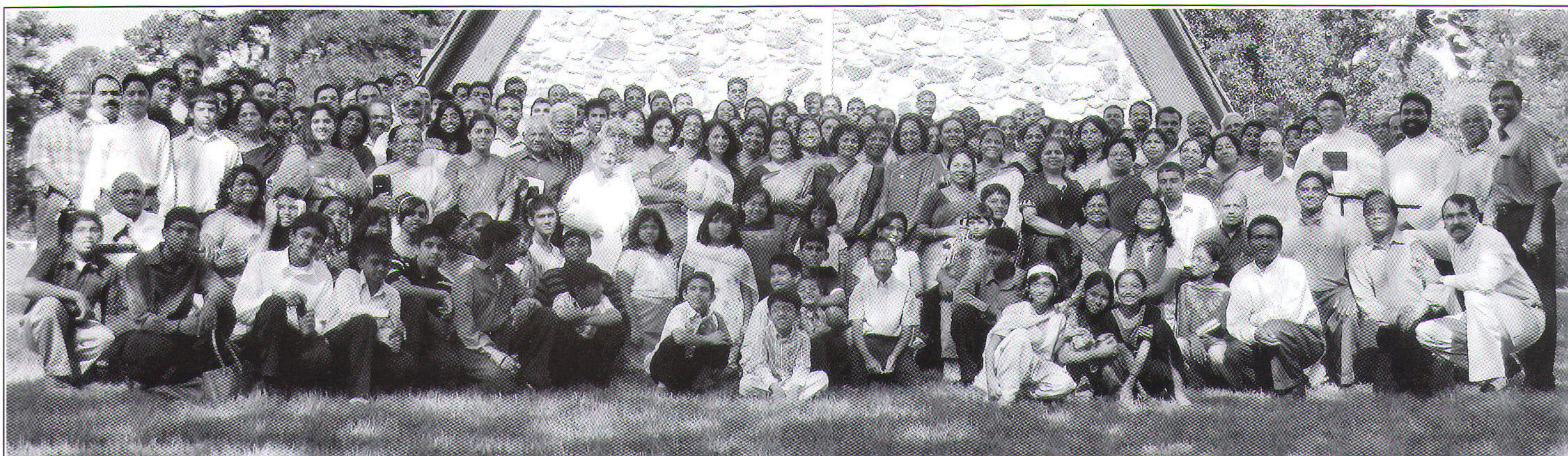
Somerset, New Jersey from June 22nd to 24th, 2007. This year's theme was "O Man... What does the Lord require of you? (Micah 6:8). The conference was led by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Rev. Joseph Oommen who inspired us with thought provoking messages and discussions. Our conference also included medical talks and praise and worship. It was a time of spiritual rejuvenation and fellowship with family and friends.

The A.P.D.M. is an association that includes physicians, dentists and residents. We meet on a monthly basis for bible study and prayer and among other causes, support the medical clinics at Shanthigiri and Vattavada.

We are planning to hold our annual Christmas program at St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church in Teaneck on December 1st, 2007

Anna Mathew M.D. (President, APDM)

5TH ANNUAL FAMILY RETREAT, MTC DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH



The 5th annual family retreat of the parish was held at Lakeveiw Methodist Conference Center in Palestine, Texas from September 7-9. The theme for this year's retreat was "Becoming a Sharing and Caring Community" based on Galatians 6:2 "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Dr. George Poikail, MTC, Washington, Mr. Thomas Mathew, MTC Farmers Branch, Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar of MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, Rev. Ninu Chandy, Youth Chaplain for Dallas Region gave leadership and led different sessions.

The conference was attended by about 200 people from the parish. Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar, Mr. Babu C. Mathew, Convener, Mr. George V. Skariah, Registration, Office Bearers of the Parish Mr. T. P. Mathew, Vice President, Mr. Shaun Alexander, Secretary, Mr. Lejoy Mathew, Joint Secretary, Mr. P. T. Issac, Treasurer, Mr.

Mathew M. Chacko, Accountant, Retreat Committee members, Executive Committee Members and various volunteers took an active part in successfully conducting this year's retreat.

This year's conference helped to identify the main issues that are of particular concern for members of our community and for us as individuals. It also helped to identify some ways to deal with those issues. The various talks, discussions emphasized the need to become a caring and sharing community in the nature of Christ. The attendees left the conference with a firm commitment by gearing themselves up, putting on the spiritual armor to be a community of believers who stand together and work for the Lord and His people.

Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar

PARISH MISSION 5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE



George, Vicar MTC Dallas, Carrollton, Rev. James Thomas, Vicar Sehion MTC, Dallas, and Rev. C. K. Koshy, Vicar St. Paul's MTC, Dallas, Rev. T. S. Philip, Immanuel MTC, Houston, Rev. P. V. Thomas, Retired Clergy and Dr. John K. Thomas, New York, Diocesan Voluntary Evangelistic Association Secretary attended the conference along with the parish mission members of the host parish and other parishes. The highlights of the conference were praise and worship, inspiring messages and Bible studies, sharing of mission field

The Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelistic Association of the Diocese of N. America & Europe held its 5th National Mission Conference from September 28-30th, hosted by the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. The theme for the conference was "Stewards of God's Grace" based on 1 Peter 4:10 'Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.' Rev. Joseph Oommen, Diocesan Secretary inaugurated the conference. Prof. T. V. Alexander (Kerala) was the main leader of the conference. Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, Rev. Ninu Chandy, Youth Chaplain, Dallas Region, Rev. Johnson

experiences, discussions on contemporary issues and great fellowship all of which focused on the theme Christian stewardship. Mr. Abraham Mathew—Coordinator, Mrs. Aleyamma Mathew—Reception and Hospitality, Mrs. Sosamma Abraham and Mrs. Mariamma Daniel—Food, Mr. Joji George—Transportation, Mr. Babu C. Mathew—Accommodation, and Mr. George Varghese—Conference Choir & Worship served as committee members along with many volunteers worked hard for the successful conduct of the conference.

**Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vice President,
Diocesan Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelists Association**

CHICAGO MAR THOMA CHURCH



PARISH RETREAT 2007: Chicago Mar Thoma Church held its 2007 Parish Retreat from Friday, Sept. 28 to Sunday, Sept. 30. Fifty families attended the weekend event at the beautiful Wintergreen Resort and Conference Center, Wisconsin Dells, a 3-hour trip from Chicago. Those who arrived early on Friday had fun at the nearby indoor water park.

The theme for the retreat was "Family—Covenantal Union and Sacramental Unit." Rev. C. K. Koshy achen of the St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church, Texas and the Vicar Rev. Daniel Varghese achen lead the sessions. There were inspiring devotional messages, praise and worship, witnessing session,

and talent night combined with comfortable stay, great food and fun. Separate age-appropriate sessions were held for youths and younger children. The symposium based on "what do we pass on to our next generation, faith or heritage?" generated a lot of interest and participation. While both sides presented their case and argued well, at the conclusion of the debates, it was agreed that faith and heritage are inseparable. While the faith aspect may be more important, we need to pass on to our next generation the values and heritage we brought with us when we came to this country.

All participants expressed their delight at the end of the long awaited conference. Comments from participants included, "after a long time I experienced a real community feeling, got to know a lot of church members personally", "the conference helped me understand my weaknesses, renew my faith, and enhance my love towards my God and my church". Everyone was unanimous in saying that they wanted to see this conference continues every year, if not more frequently, that they would definitely attend and encourage family and friends to attend a future one, and recommended adding another day to the conference.

Rev. Daniel Varghese, Vicar

8TH NATIONAL MAR THOMA SEVIKA SANGHOM CONFERENCE



Opening worship.

The 8th National Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe was held from Sept. 20–23, 2007. The Conference was hosted by New York Long Island Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom at Holiday Inn, Ronkonkoma, New York. The theme of the Conference was “Torch bearers of the Living Faith” based on II Timothy 1:5-6. The main leaders of the Conference



Theme presentation.

were Rev. Joseph Oommen (Diocesan Secretary), Mrs. Annie Koshy (wife of Rev T. A. Koshy, Kurianoor, Kerala) and Mrs. Pracey Wilson (wife of Rev. C. P. Wilson, Philadelphia). Rev. Daniel Varghese, Vicar, Chicago MTC serves as the Vice President of Diocesan Sevika Sanghom, and Mrs. Susamma Abraham served as the convener of the conference. From various parishes of this Diocese about 190 people attended this blessed Conference. The conference was inaugurated by Rt. Rev. Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Assistant Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, American Diocese. The presence and leadership of our Achens, from New York, New



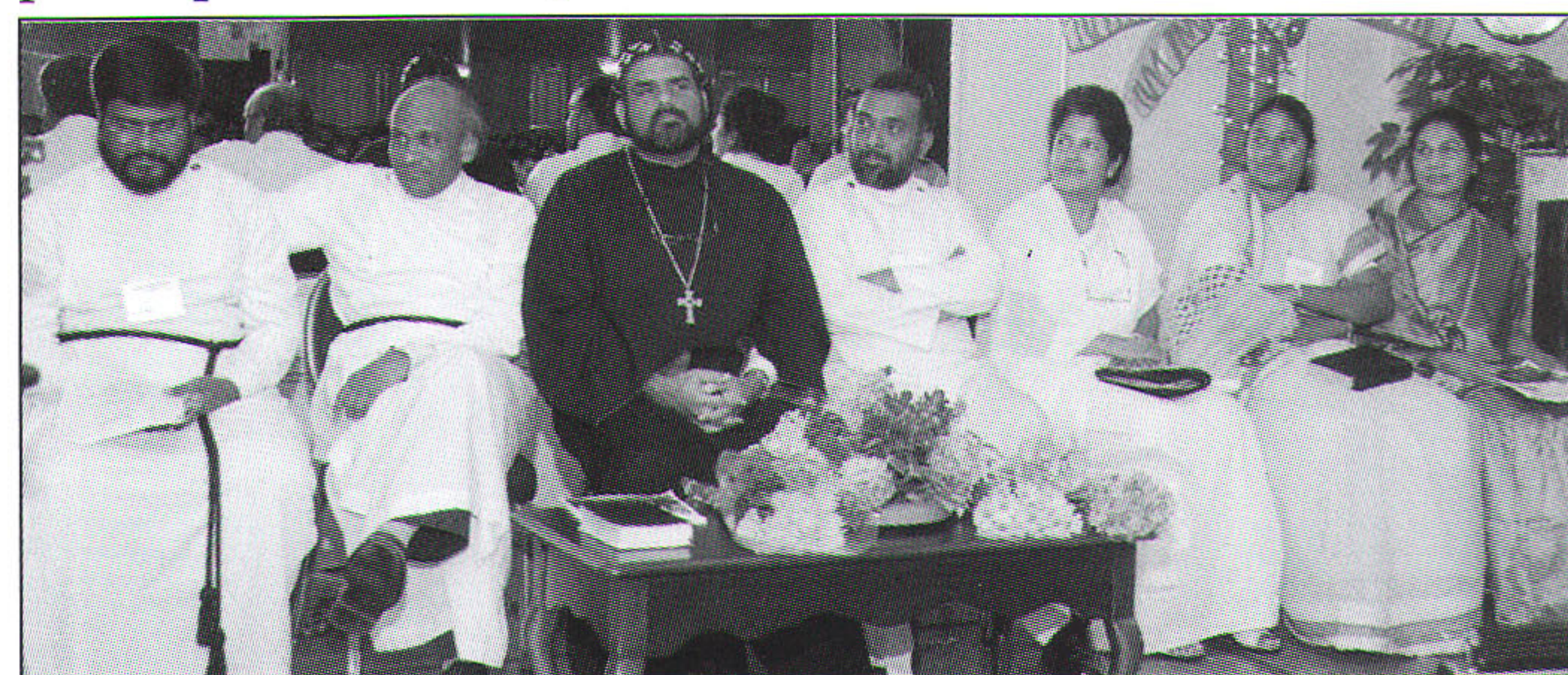
Delegates with lighted candles representing their respective parishes.

Jersey and Philadelphia regions was a great blessing to the Conference. Theme expositions, talks and leadership of



Conference Choir with leaders.

the guests have made the Conference a blessed one. The participants were able to re-examine their faith and com-



Leaders of the Conference on the Dias.

mitment and many decided to dedicate and rededicate their life to carry the torch of faith and to pass it to the coming generations.

**Rev. Varghese A. John, Vicar
Long Island MTC, New York**



Sevika Sanghom National Conference participants with leaders.

BETHEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, FRANKFORT, ILLINOIS

PARISH FAMILY CONFERENCE 2007: Our first annual parish family conference was held at the St. John's Retreat Center in Plymouth, Michigan from July 28-30,



2007. Rev. Philip Varghese (Vicar) and Dr. P. V. Cherian were the leaders. Dr. Cherian gave very thoughtful,

spiritually challenging messages focusing on fruitful Christian living. The first message was based on the John 17:3 challenging us to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In his second message Prof. Cherian discussed the need for our continuous spiritual growth in the contemporary culture in which we are prone to be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14-16). In his final message Dr. Cherian stressed the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation as key factors to be effective and fruitful Christians in our community and the nation. Dr. Cherian also challenged the youth with a powerful message that life without Christ is like "chasing after the wind" (Eccl. 1:14) and challenging them to grow as responsible individuals with Christ at the helm of their life. In a very serene and scenic environment it was a time of revival, spiritual awakening and renewal time for all the participants.

Rev. Philip Varghese, Vicar
Samuel P. Thomas, Conference Secretary

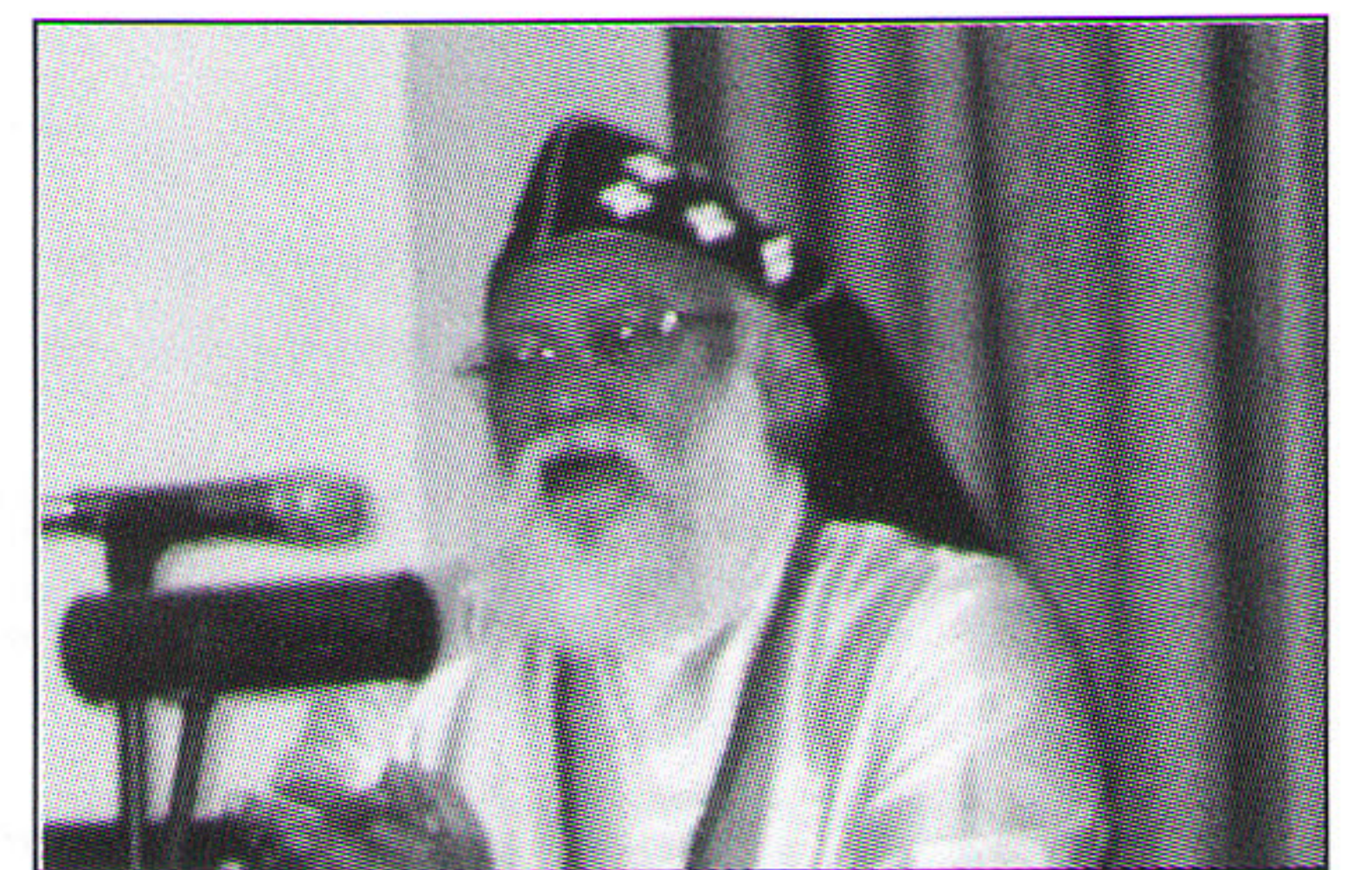
EBENEZER MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK

FAMILY RETREAT 2007: Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, New Rochelle, NY conducted their 2007 Family Retreat at Black Rock Retreat Center, Lancaster PA on June 29th to July 1st. Rev. Thomas John (Vicar Mar Thoma Church of



Greater Washington) was the chief speaker of the camp. The theme of this year's retreat was "Kneel Before the Father of the Whole Family". Rev Johnson C Jacob welcomed the participants and gave the opening speech. Talent shows, a bon fire and other out door activities were also conducted.

PARISH DAY CELEBRATION: Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, New Rochelle, NY celebrated its 20th parish day on Sunday, September 9, 2007 immediately after the Holy Communion Service. Rt. Rev Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan was the chief guest of the meeting. Rev. Johnson C Jacob, vicar, presided over the meeting and welcomed the gathering. Mr. C.S. Chacko, secretary, presented the 20th Edavakadina report. Mr. Koshy K. Ninan and Ms Nina Varghese gave the felicitation speech. Zacharias Thirumeni in his main talk acknowledged Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church and thanked members of the church for their sacrifice and deep faith towards Mar Thoma Sabha and its doctrine. The history of the Ebenezer Mar Thomas Church will always be remembered and the historical judgment which we received from the Supreme Court will be kept at Mar Thoma Museum at Thiruvalla, Kerala as an important document of our Sabha, Thirumeni added. Mr. Vipin Koor expressed a vote of thanks.



C. S. Chacko, Secretary

*"When we accept Jesus' invitation to follow Him,
our whole life changes direction."*

IMMIGRATION



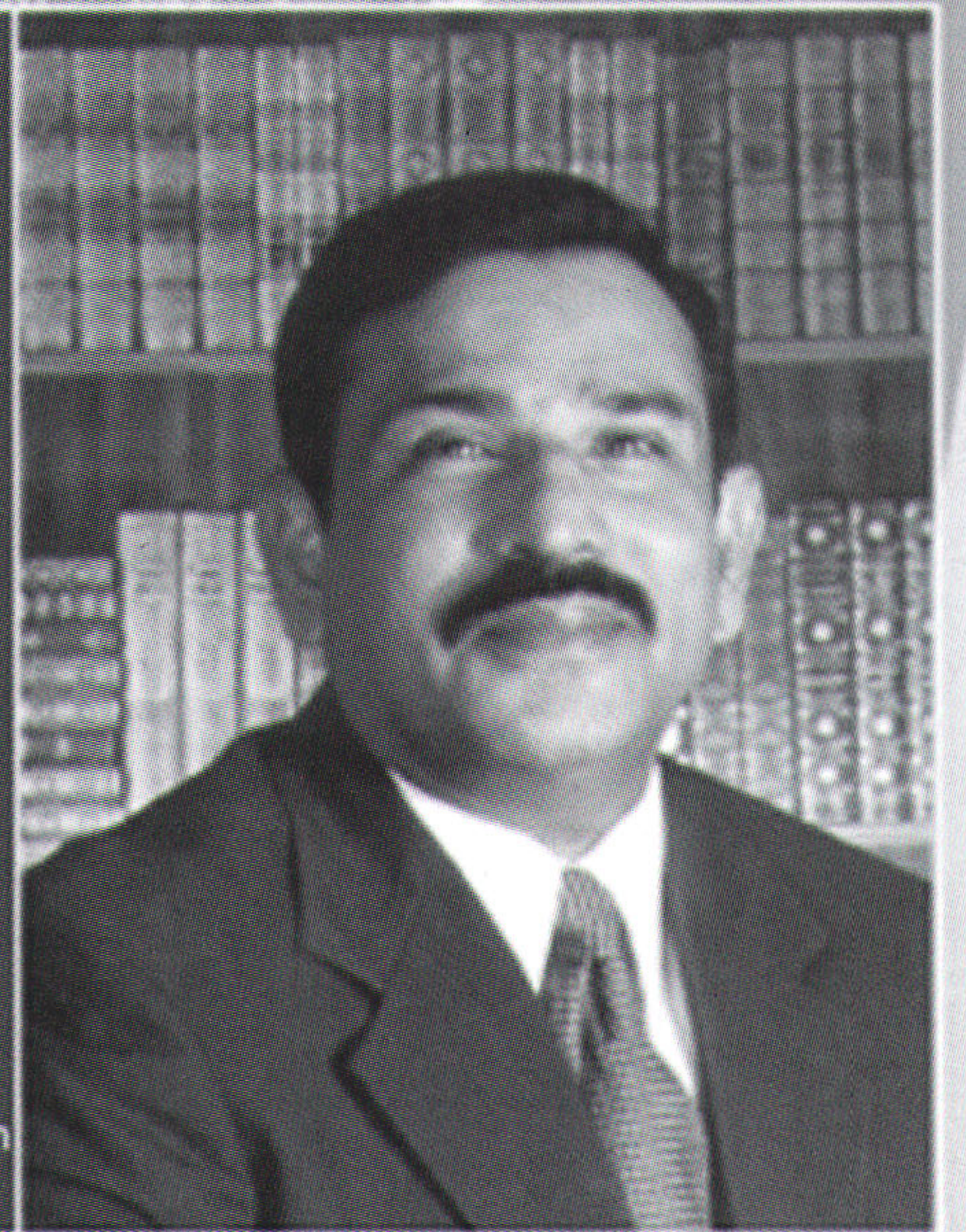
Justice
is being
served
to the
**Asian
Community**

Lal Varghese

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FUSION 2007—A FESTIVAL OF CELEBRATION...



St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago, located in Lombard, IL—a beautiful, magnificent church built on the foundation of prayer and sacrifice, celebrated on September 8, 2007, Fusion 2007 - a fund raising event to meet the costs of about \$3.5 million spent for the construction of the new church facility. It was an experience of divine grace through an exercise in spiritual fellowship and commitment. The theme for the dedication of the church was 'A home for all' and it challenged the members - Can we make this church truly a home for all – within and without this parish?" By celebrating Fusion 2007 the parish witnessed its commitment to be the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ in



the faith journey. The well known singer Mr. J. M. Raju and his wife Latha were among the performers in the program and delighted the audience with their beautiful songs. Rev. Johnson Philip, Vicar of the parish emphasized the need to work together for the glory of God and to rise to greater heights by witnessing Christ. Mr. Jacob George and Mr. Jameson Mathai were the Conveners for the event. Thus Fusion 2007 made another landmark in the history of this church— a landmark of humility and fellowship bound together by the grace of our Savior Lord Jesus Christ

Rev. Johnson Philip, Vicar

DIOCESAN REGIONAL CONVENTIONS 2007



Coorilos Thirumeni and the 2007 Diocesan Convention speaker Prof. T. V. Alexander with Achens and regional diocesan convention office bearers at New Jersey.

Diocesan Regional Conventions were held at New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, Dallas, Chicago and Houston during the months of August and September 2007. Prof. T. V. Alexander was the main speaker for this year's convention. He belongs to the Kakkanad Mar Thoma Church, Cochin and was the former principal of the Mar Thoma College, Chungathara, Kerala.

Regional conventions were held every two years at various regions in the Diocese and all parishes in the respective regions join together as one family in hosting the conventions

and witnessing God together. Many people, including priests, from other sister churches also attended these divine meetings to listen to the Word of God. Several people rededicated their lives during this time. Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, the Diocesan Bishop took leadership in arranging the conventions. Rev. Joseph Oommen, the Diocesan Secretary, co-ordinated the conventions with the respective vicars of the regions and attended the conventions in various places.

The following vicars acted as conveners with the support of the office bearers, assembly members and council members from all parishes in their regions. Rev. C. K. Koshy, Dallas region, Rev. Binu John, NJ Region, Rev. Mathew K. Jackson, NY Region, Rev. Susieal C. Varghese, Philadelphia Region, Rev. Daniel Varghese, Chicago Region and Rev. T. S. Philip, Houston Region. On behalf of the Diocesan Episcopa, I express my sincere thanks to Prof. T. V. Alexander, vicars, office bearers of all parishes, assembly members, council members and all those who have supported, participated and prayed for the successful conduct of the conventions.

Rev. Joseph Oommen, Diocesan Secretary

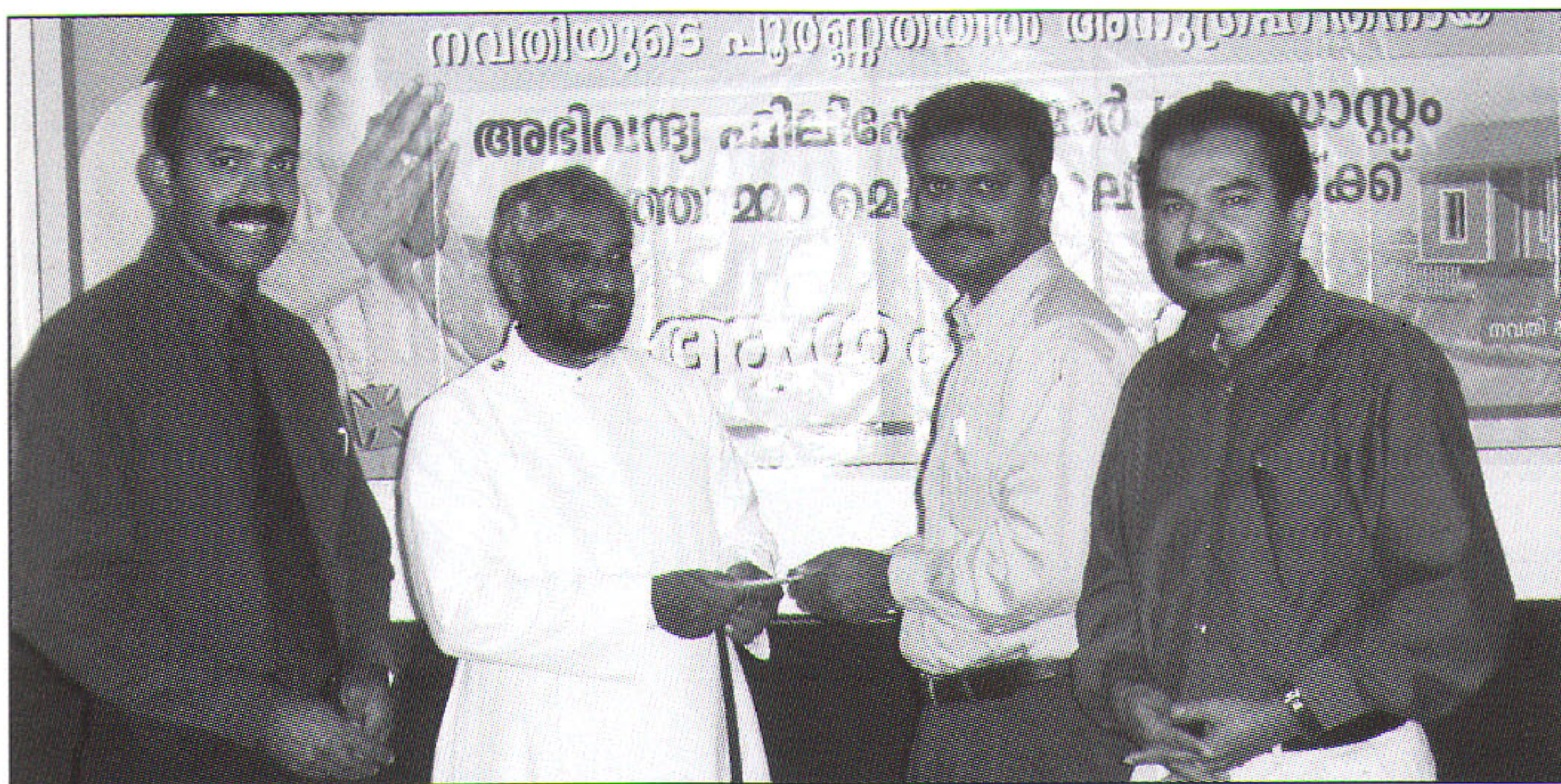
TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH HOUSTON, TEXAS



Rev. M. J. Thomaskutty and Trinity members near the new Community Hall at our land.

Rev. M. J. Thomaskutty, Anita Kochamma and a group of people from Trinity Parish visited Mexico during October 15 -17, 2007. They visited both Islands and distributed food and winter clothes. They also visited our new lands we bought for building hostels and houses for the Islanders. We already built a Community hall and a small building which can be used as a meeting place during our visits to Mexico. One house costs approximately \$3250 and the construction will start during the first week of November. Trinity parish has already raised money for 3 houses and planning to raise funds for 2 more houses in October.

Rev. M. J. Thomaskutty, Vicar



Yuvajana Sakhyam giving a check for \$3000 to Rev. Eapen Cherian to sponsor two houses for the Navathy Project.



Rev. M. J. Thomaskutty and Members from Trinity parish with some of the Islanders near the new building at our land.



Our Diocesan Secretary Rev. Joseph Oommen celebrating Holy Communion at the conclusion of the Diocesan Regional Convention at Houston.



Sevika Sanghom giving a check for \$1500 to Rev. Eapen Cherian to sponsor one house for the Navathy Project.

26TH FAMILY CONFERENCE 2008

The 2008 Family Conference of the Diocese of North America & Europe will be held at Santa Clara, Marriot, California hosted by the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco from July 24th – 27th. The theme is based on Esther 4:14 "...for such as a time as this?". The leaders for the conference are Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Dr. Rajkumar Ramachandran, and Rev. Dr. Jacob T. David. At a function recently held in the parish, Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus, Mar Thoma Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church, released the logo of the conference in the presence of Rev. James M. Koshy Veeramala, Mr. Thomas Mathew Tharakan, Mr. Koshy Chacko and parishioners. Rev. James M. Koshy Veeramala appealed in the sweet and unfailing name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that the parish is privileged to host and take great pleasure in inviting all Marthomiites for the 26th Family Conference.



Achen also requested the prayers and support of everyone as they take on such a responsibility and make preparations for the event.

Rev. James M. Koshy Veeramala, Vicar

As Diaspora Christians, slowly but steadily we are becoming an integral part of the western world of denominations and faith communities. Christianity is facing greater challenges as time passes on. It is predicted that these challenges will intensify and will lead to global turbulence with aggressive hatred between religious and ethnic groups. Many refer to these conflicts as fulfillment of Biblical prophecies. Warning signs are popping up from all corners of the globe. Former US President Reagan expressed concern that Armageddon may occur in our generation. Then-defense secretary, Casper Weinberger, stated: "I believe the world is going to end-by an act of God, I hope-but every day I think time is running out". In this modern era, localized specific incidents draw the attention of world powers that will support radical solutions that pose major threats to peaceful human existence. Jesus talked about "great tribulation" that is expected to come on the globe. As humans, we have established cultures and communities that are 'hostile' to goodness and God. Many passages in the book of Revelation clearly state that God plans to spare His people from prolonged periods of wrath and destruction. This is affirmed by Old Testament prophecies. Far reaching scientific and technological advancements have, to some extent, polluted the younger minds with a false sense of security. Civilizations, as we know, are being corrupted by more and more satanic interjections. As Marthomite Christians are we moving away from the basic principles? Are we keeping the promise to be the 'salt of the world'?



The Mar Thoma church has reached a newer great turning point by consecrating another Metropolitan. What was once a localized faith community has now spread to all corners of the world with growing number of churches and related establishments! Leading such a vast community with multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-economic backgrounds surely require Godly providence. Our hope is that the new Metropolitan, under the valuable guidance of the 'Valiya Metropolitan' will take up the current challenges and will replenish the church members with new hopes and visions. As in the past, let the Lord strengthen our church leaders and provide them with great insights that can enlighten the minds of the believers and the so called non-believers, all around the world. I pray that our 'Valiya Metropolitan' will continue to stay healthy and provide spiritual enrichment to our people.

Messenger committee likes to wish our Diocesan Bishop Coorilos Thirumeni, a happy and blessed birthday and let God continue to shower His abundant blessings upon Thirumeni.

Eapen Daniel



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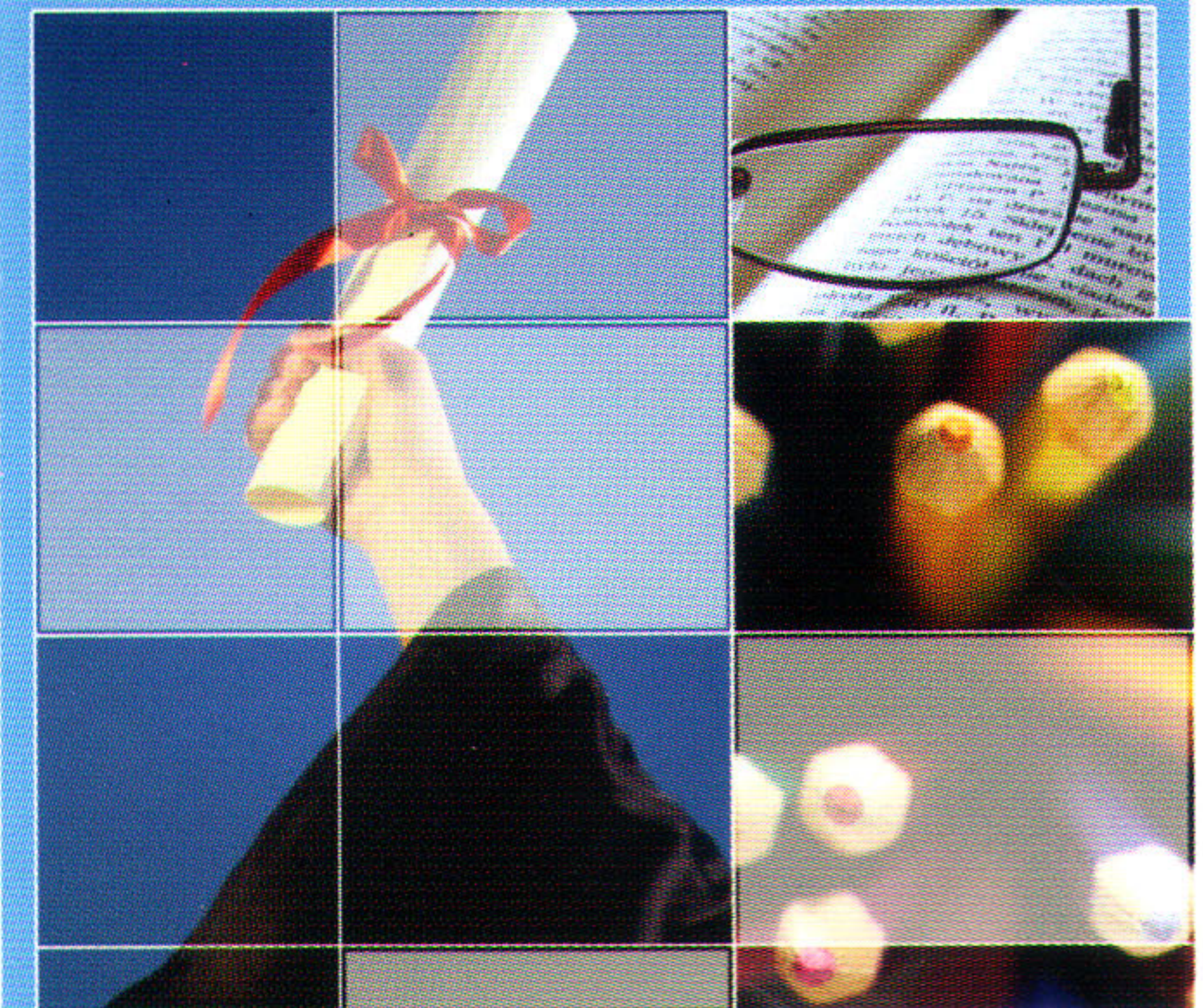
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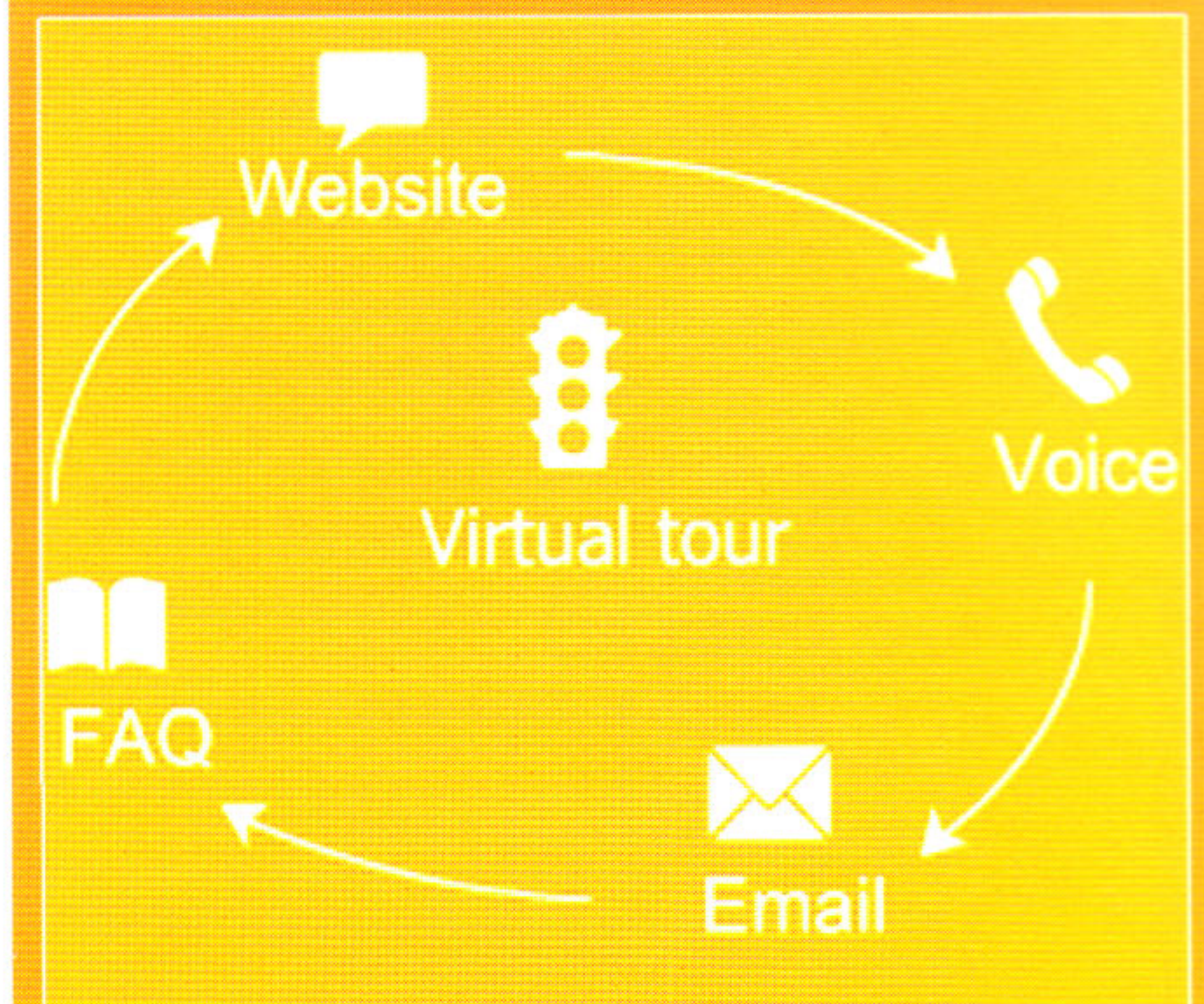
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