

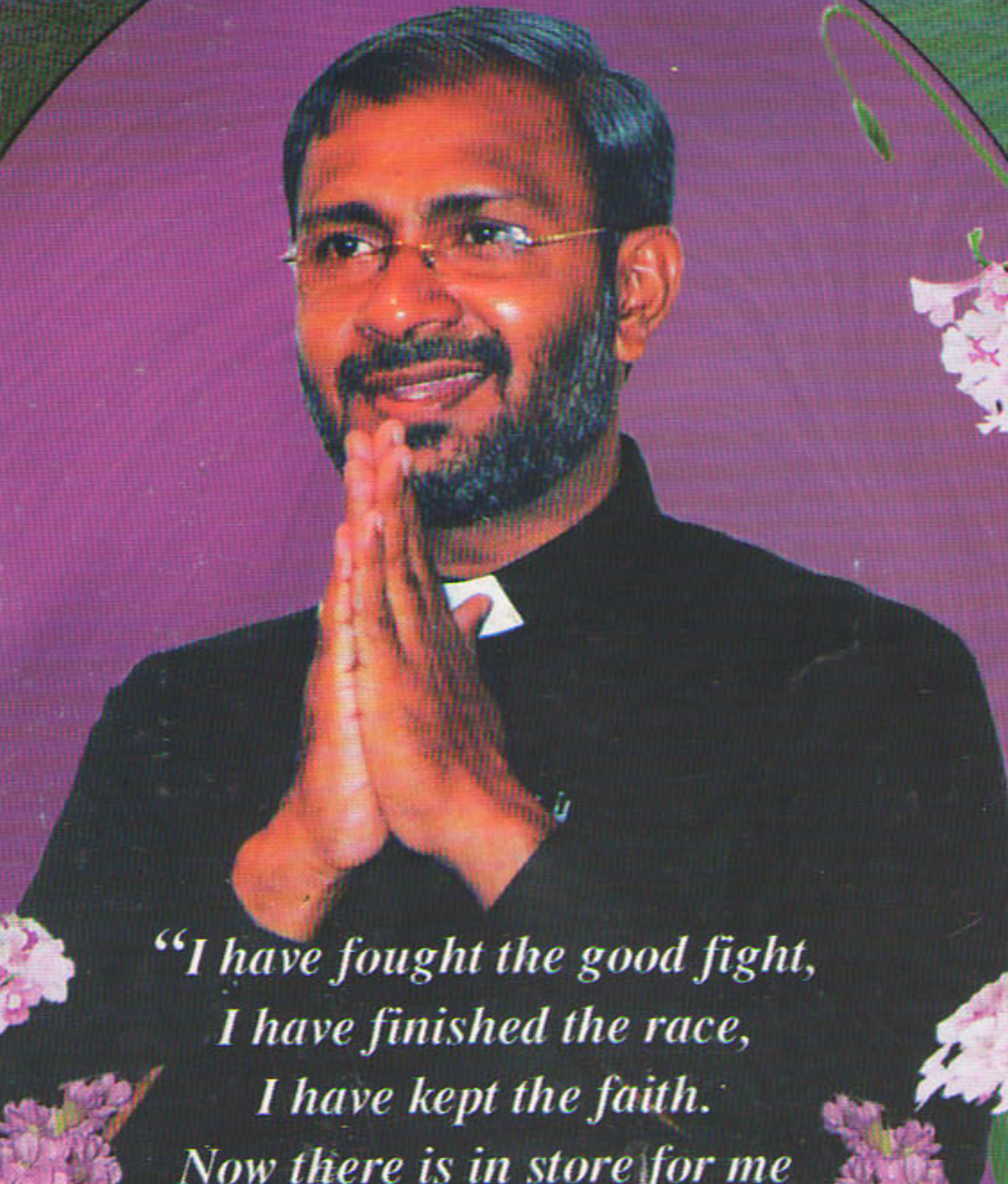


MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

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JANUARY 2008



*"I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.
Now there is in store for me
the crown of righteousness."*

2 Timothy 4:7-8

Rev. C. P. Wilson
Vicar, The Philadelphia MTC

Work Ethics—A Christian Perspective



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Message from the Metropolitan



Message from the Metropolitan

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

The year 2007 was a year of innumerable reminiscences. Sixty years were completed after the birth of independent India. We celebrated the anniversary of the formation of Kerala State on November 1, 2007. The union of the Indian Churches with different traditions also is being completed 60 years. The sad and bloody events during the division of India 60 years ago bring forth painful memories. Then, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, reminded the Churches in India of the necessity of wiping away the miseries of the people of North India and their rehabilitation. He called on the Churches to go to those places and involve in humanitarian acts. Sixty glorious years pass by after the youth representatives of our Church went to Punjab and W. Bengal for various missionary activities. Thus, this is a period of Diamond Jubilees.

I acknowledge with thanks, the love and regards expressed by the members of our Church and many individuals in various areas of society at the time of my consecration as the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church. Your constant prayer is my strength for achieving grace and capability from God to execute my responsibilities as the Metropolitan. In the second week of November, we held special worship services in the churches to remember the joining of the Mar Thoma Church with C.S.I. and C.N.I. to form the Communion of the Churches in India, with a view to strengthen the ecumenical movement in its great journey to find out the true meaning of love and Christian fellowship among all Christians. This is 'Hudos Etho' which manifests the reformation of the Church. Then we entered into the Festival of the Rising Sun (Eldo) where the rays of the rising sun from heaven will come to us.

The priest Zechariah, who is the father of John the Baptist, filled with Holy Spirit, comments on this festival, "the rising sun has visited us from heaven" (Luke 1:78). It will help us a lot to attain blessedness of life if we remember the experiences of the blessed family of Nazareth in these days of 'Sun rise.' Joseph made futile attempts to find a place for his beloved and tired wife to take rest. They were not accepted anywhere. At the fullness of time, there was the rising of the new humanity. They got the manger, which nobody may desire to have as a place of rest. But the Child was born there. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." May God help us to understand these days the inner substance of the song sung by the angels.

This is a time when we remember Sunday School Organization and discuss more about the positions and rights of children in the Church. We started the activities of the Sunday School hundred years ago, deriving inspiration from the Maramon Convention. We have to think about the restructuring of the syllabi and curriculum of the Sunday School in the context of modern technology and scientific advancement, in order to make it easier for the growing children to know more about the Lord and to accept Jesus as the Savior.

Ecological concerns are a global issue now. God created the earth in all its beauty that is being destroyed by man. The imbalance caused by the destructive deeds of people against Nature makes us fearful. We have to seriously take into consideration the warnings of environmental experts to avoid future tragedies. The Church, parishes, and the accredited organizations of the Church have to respond creatively for the preservation of Nature. The psalmist says in psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they who dwell therein."

We have come to the end of one year. Many expected and unexpected things became life's realities. Let us remember God's grace that directs us always in all circumstances. The One that calls is trustworthy. I believe He will give me ability and confidence to execute the responsibilities. Let us hope, the coming Church Day celebrations, may enable us to remember our heritage. May it become a source to find out the unlimited possibilities of the New Year. In the new year we have arranged April 26th as the closing day of the Navathy Celebrations of our Chrysostom Valya Metropolitan. All the members of the Mar Thoma Church are expected to work hard and cooperate fully in the coming five months for the successful completion of the Navathy Project. I congratulate all those who have cooperated and those who will be cooperating in the great Navathy project which is truly the glorious reflection of the love, and respectful regard of the believers of the Church to the Valya Metropolitan.

The topic of our meditation for December is from the song which, the priest Zechariah sang in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. "...the oath He swore to our father Abraham: ...to enable us to serve him with out fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:73-79).

Grace be with you all.

Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan

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Theme of next (April) issue of the Messenger is
**“The Navathy Project &
Our Valiya Metropolitan”**

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Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The focus of the Messenger this quarter is on developing a "Christian Work Ethic." Recently, I read an article by Catherine Goulet. This article, quite interestingly, made the argument that while the technological revolution was intended to cut our "work time" and give us more leisure time, the opposite phenomenon occurred. She writes, "it seems that whenever a significant new 'labor saving' product or service is developed we use it so much that our workload actually increases. After all, wasn't our work supposed to be made easier?" Another way to illustrate the point that Goulet makes is by expressing the sentiment of Harvard University Economist, Julie Schor. She finds that by the 1990's, people were working an equivalent of one month more than they did during

World War II when production of materials was at a peak.

The whole point is simple: while work productivity has increased, the worker does not appear to be reaping the reward of her/his effort. Moreover, we see at an increasing rate that those who work are becoming alienated and displaced due to the greed of many corporations. Nevertheless, we are reminded of the fact that we must engage in work that reflects our spirituality. The question that comes to the forefront, then, is: how can we as Christians develop an attitude of work that conforms to our spiritual calling?

Max Weber, in his acclaimed work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, describes how certain "protestant" societies were able to develop their economies based on constant labor as a sign of salvation. Work duty, as conceptualized by the early Protestants, served to make society better as a whole. While our work should be focused to generate a better society, unfortunately, the rampant spirit of capitalism tends to displace and alienate many. We need to develop an integrative work ethic that understands the notion that work is a gift from God and that our work is not necessarily for the economic strength and development of a community but for the holistic (spiritual and temporal) development of society. The way we can do this is by recognizing all work/professions/calling as a manner to contribute to society.

We often see in ours a "status driven" society, wherein we count certain professions/jobs as below our dignity. However, we must recognize that all jobs, if they are done for the glory of God and for the betterment of the world, are valuable. There's no such thing as a "menial" job! Wherever God has placed us, we are called to be doing our job to the best of our ability. It is God who has given us our calling and the situation to work. Therefore, it is up to us to use our God given situations to witness integrity, peace, love, and justice.

Our Christian work ethic must meet five criteria:

1. Recognize the value of each and every profession and by extension worker.
2. Recognize that workers deserve just wages. In an age where corporations are trying to reduce the benefits and salaries of employees by outsourcing, in the spirit of Christianity, we must recognize that this will only displace these workers.
3. Recognize the overall dignity of the workers in whatever profession/vocation/job that God has placed them.
4. Understand that we as "workers" do our work for the glory of God and the benefit of society.
5. Our work ethic must be centered on the values of the Kingdom. The kingdom values of equity, justice, and integrity must be upheld in each and every action that we do.

In Mexico, 90 houses will have been completed by the end of April. His Grace the Valiya-Metropolitan and the Metropolitan will be visiting the Diocese in May and we are planning to hand over the keys to the islanders as our

birthday present, as His grace completes 90 years of service to the Church and the world at large. Reception meetings will be conducted in different regions of the Diocese to honor both of them and the reception of the Diocese will be in New York. The dates and other details will be confirmed at a later date. I request your prayer and support to make these events a time of blessing and rededication.

Recently I had the privilege of laying the foundation stones for two new church facilities: St. Paul MTC (Dallas) and Sehion MTC, (Dallas). St. Thomas MTC (Delaware County, Pennsylvania) has decided to construct a Madbaha. I request everyone's support for these projects.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to all of our Achens who are leaving this year, and their families, for their sacrificial service rendered to the parishes and the Diocese at large. Rev. Joseph Oommen is serving as the Diocesan/Bishop's secretary and will be leaving this April. I thank Achen and family for their dedicated service rendered during his tenure. As they leave, I wish and pray all blessings for their future ministry. Rev. Biju S. Cherian will be taking charge as the new Diocesan/Bishop's secretary.

I welcome all the Achens and their families joining us. Rev. Jason Thomas and Rev. Biju P. Simon are appointed as youth chaplains in Dallas and New York respectively. One more youth chaplain is joining this time at Chicago area.

Vaidika Selection Committee has selected two of our youths, Christopher Phil Daniel (Dallas Farmers Branch) and Larry Varghese (Houston Trinity), who will undergo studies in our seminary at Kottayam. I urge more youngsters to come forward to the ordained ministry.

Our Diocesan Youth Fellowship has raised about \$49,500.00 to buy a land for constructing two buildings for hostels for the children of the islanders of Mexico. They are planning several mission trips to Mexico and among Native Americans during 2008.

National Youth Fellowship Leadership Conference was held at Denver in the first week of January and was well attended. Even though the Horeb parish is small; the whole hearted support of the parish made it a great event. I congratulate the parish and youth fellowship members.

We need to raise about \$300,000.00 for building 90 houses and another \$50,000.00 to build the infrastructure like road, drainage, water, electricity, etc., within next couple of months. I request the whole hearted support of all Marthomites in our Diocese in finishing up this project, which will demonstrate our true Christian love and concern for our fellow humans dwelling on a land of poverty and uncertainty. It is our hope and vision that in the future, we can designate this island area as Mexican centre of this Diocese, to further enhance our Christian mission and charitable activities.

We are deeply saddened by the sudden demise of our beloved C. P. Wilson Achen who came to this diocese as the assigned Vicar of the Mar Thoma Church of Philadelphia. Achen was a leader with heightened spiritual insight, doctrinal integrity, and mission objectives. While in India, Achen served the Mar Thoma Church in various capacities with utmost efficiency and loyalty. His sudden death is a loss for the Mar Thoma Church at large. May the Almighty Lord comfort, guide and strengthen Pracey Kochamma, Pavana, Praveena and all those who were touched by Achen's love.

By December, the tenure of the assembly is completed and now the elections have been completed in different parishes for Assembly and Mandalam representatives.

May God bless us all!

Yours in His Service,



Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos
Diocesan Bishop

Work Ethics—A Christian Perspective

Mrs. Pracey Wilson, Philadelphia MTC

Ethics are moral values that humans uphold in their entire life. Ethics are certain principles that should be followed in their personal and community life. Ethics indicate socio-cultural and religious norms and values, which affect the fairness or welfare of the community. Work ethics is becoming an important term that is related to paid and unpaid jobs.



1. Work Ethics and Virtual Values

Work ethics deals with a set of virtual values that control or influence the workers. It speaks of worker accountability and responsibility. It indicates some standard characteristics that foster interpersonal skills, initiative and dependability. Interpersonal skills generally include good manners, behavior, habits and attitudes of workers. These skills develop from childhood and are nurtured by surroundings—family, friends and the environment. Initiative is another most wanted quality in a good worker—he or she takes initiative in work that might even involve risk without supervision. They might have an individual viewpoint on various topics. The third indispensable trait in work ethics is workers' reliability: they do not waste time or resources but earn maximum profit honestly.

A good worker always respects other workers. A few years ago, former Indian President Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam was flying to Jharkhand, a newly-formed state in India. As the pilots were preparing to land, the aircraft hit the ground and several parts of craft scattered. Fortunately, the engine stopped just before the touchdown. When Abdul Kalam emerged from the helicopter, the pilots looked at him miserably. Kalam shook their hands and offered his thanks saying that it could happen to any aircraft, but the pilots faced the situation with courage. Kalam comments on this experience in his book, *Ignited Minds*: "I had to address the students of Ramakrishna Vidyalaya. They might have been waiting for me. So we rushed into the school, laying aside that ruined helicopter and that mental shock there." This is an event that shows Kalam's work ethics. Any other person would have been angry or frustrated by such a physical and mental shock. While Kalam understood the pilots' struggle to face him, Kalam lent them a hand to overcome their mental shock too. His total commitment to give proper guidance led him to overcome his own negative feelings.

Any professional has to undergo certain training to develop his/her skills. They go through theories and practical exposures during an assigned period. But how will he or she be governed by religious principles? A Christian

basically assimilates these interpersonal skills from the teachings of the Bible.

2. Christian Perspective on Work

What does the Bible say about work? Bible provides a painstaking picture regarding work. It depicts different dimensions of work that points to a positive version of creativity. God is the author and founder of work. God created the world as the beginning of everything.

God's Word became flesh. That is God's great work of salvation. Jesus healed the sick and gave them wholeness. He invited hard working people and offered them comfort. Certain references in the Bible help us to understand the Christian perspective on work ethics. In the Bible, certain references portray work as God's curse while others picture it as blessing.

2. 1. Adam's Curse/Work as Birthright: God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3: 17) and "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground" (Gen. 3:19). Work may seem here as a curse to human beings. Hard work is supposed to be a curse because humans should undergo suffering as a consequence of sin. However, Jesus Christ's life is a living example of redemptive suffering for the salvation of others. So any work that can be taken as having redemptive value can provide joy and satisfaction to the workers as well as the beneficiary. Work is a blessing as stated in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." The word subdue is confusing as it means 'to rule'. Here 'rule' does not mean use resources for own sake, to do as they like. On the contrary, it means to nurture and keep the world according to God's expectation. God blessed human beings with work to maintain a healthy life. Physical and mental exertion keeps humans healthy. God bestows work as human birthright. Human beings are God's own handiwork.

2. 2. Parable of Talents: God offers different kinds of talents to humans. And God desires them to develop these talents through hard work. Jesus told the parable of talents (Mtt. 25: 14-30), to explain this truth. The master gives three workers talents. On his return, the first and second workers who had multiplied the talents were appreciated by the Master while the third who simply kept the talent safe without doing anything with it was thrown into obscurity.

This system of reward is a common ideal of work ethics in this information age. Those who work hard and with

diligence get promotions while those who do not, may lose their jobs. Labor allows a person to enter into the world of divine creativity and thereby in to the divine order of the universe.

2. 3. Jesus' Saying on God's Providence: In Matthew 6: 26, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" Jesus makes the multitude aware of God's care and providence. God feeds birds without their sowing, reaping or storing food. What about humans? Humans are privileged with different provisions to work hard to meet their daily needs. However, meeting these needs is made possible only by God's kindness. God feeds the birds in the air and adorns lilies in the field. Dependence on human muscle power or intellectual creativity is futile without Divine providence.

2.4. Sabbath experience of Rest: God, the initiator of work, rested after His work of creation (Gen. 2:2-3). Hence rest or leisure is a basic requisite of work. Stress relief techniques and games are popular in the modern world. Schedules for work and entertainment make modern life easier. God separated the seventh day as holy. Two things are implied. The first one is observing a holiday from routine work. The second thing is observing the Sabbath as a blessed day by worshipping God, which is more mandatory for a Christian. Divine solitude and fellowship of fellow believers strengthen a Christian's life.

3. Example of Work Ethic: Albert Schweitzer

Albert Schweitzer was a Christian physician, philanthropist and a philosopher. His ethics was termed as "ethical

mysticism." Mysticism refers to appreciating the interconnectedness of all things. He strenuously held on to his work ethic of philanthropy with a concern for humanity, nature and universe at large. An academic until the age of thirty, Schweitzer decided to study medicine. He wanted to use his talents for the service of the community. His aim was not moneymaking but serving others and thereby satisfying his Christian faith journey. He took work as duty beyond the provision of money. He viewed work as meaningful in intercommunications the community.

In his books Schweitzer expresses work ethics as three motives of his value commitment—empathy, reverence for life and gratitude. "An imaginatively felt kinship with other organisms is the most wanted attitudinal change in humanity. This empathetic attitude to human and nonhuman surroundings always reminds us of the reality that all life has an inherent value". In Schweitzer's view, human obligation to these forms of life should be worked out of their gratitude. For him, gratitude is far more important than any other virtue. He termed it the "mysterious law of existence" Everyone is indebted to other persons and things directly or indirectly. The elemental awareness of this fact should regenerate in human minds a sense of repayment by their empathetic actions. From childhood, everybody receives help from educational, health, and community services. Yet they cannot repay those particular persons or agencies fully or directly. According to Schweitzer, the gratitude for all benefits can be expressed in the same spirit by helping others as our "inaccessible benefactors". ■

MEXICO MISSION INAUGURATION AND RECEPTION

The council decided to conduct the inauguration of the Mexican Mission field in May 2008 in the presence of Valia Metropolitan and Metropolitan. The keys for the rest of the houses will be donated during that function. It was also decided to give a grand reception and to conduct a felicitation meeting for Valia Metropolitan and Metropolitan in New York by the Diocese in May 2008. Hence the council authorized Diocesan Episcopa to formally invite both the Valia Metropolitan and Metropolitan to visit the Diocese during May 2008. The council also decided to request that the 'Tharaka' cover photo be of the Mexican Mission field, preferably in the month of June or July, and also to publish photos from inauguration and reception on the back cover of the Tharaka in the same issue. It was also decided to provide wide publicity both in print and TV media for the inauguration of the Mexican Mission field and reception being arranged to the Valia Metropolitan and Metropolitan. It is also suggested that January issue of Messenger should be dedicated for the Mexican Mission.

Lal Varghese, Dallas

Work Ethics in Medical Field— a Christian Perspective

Jose Varghese, Chicago MTC

In an article recently published by The Boston Globe, Dale Dauten suggests that today's work ethic is dead and serves no purpose because it no longer works. Several factors including but not limited to the decline of moral principles and social values, a profit-oriented frame of mind, and a loss of personal integrity all contribute to this way of thinking. For many healthcare systems, what was once considered to be a charitable work motivated by a concern for the individual has now become a highly profitable industry.



In his letter to the Church of Ephesus, Paul reminds us that servants ought to obey their masters with sincerity of heart. We are not to simply provide our service to please the eyes of men, but as servants of Christ we must do the will of God from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men. We can then conclude that good, moral workplace ethics are a result of faithful stewardship of authority and faithful obedience to the divine principles found in the Word of God.

Ethics—An Overview

Derived from the Greek word *ethos* (character), ethics are the principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group. It is also a system of principles governing morality and conduct. In philosophy, ethics defines what is good for the individual as well as society and seeks to establish the nature of duties that people owe themselves and one another. In contrast, law is based on the principle of ethics. Where ethics is a personal choice and identifies values that ought to be, law is mandatory and governed by a higher authority.

Work Ethics

For many, work ethics is simply how one feels about his/her job, career or vocation, but it also involves how one does his/her job responsibilities. It serves to include a person's attitude, communication, and interaction; in other words, one's relationship with others is of major concern. In the end, work ethics demonstrate numerous things about whom and how a person is because they are intrinsic and come from within.

Work Ethics: A Christian Perspective

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Church of Colossae writes, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (Colossians 3:23). This verse captures the heart of Christian life by saying that everything we do in life should seek the glory and honor of the One who created us to be. Paul calls us to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord. When we look throughout Scripture, we are reminded that each of us is given a responsibility and we are to remain faithful in that trust. The basis for workplace ethics is that those in the workplace, both the employer and the employee, should see their lives as being a steward who is responsible to govern their action by the viewpoint and the model of God's faithfulness.

Medical Ethics

The medical field is unique to others as professionals seek to provide quality service to each patient out of compassion and concern for the needs of each individual. Throughout the centuries, individual workers in the medical field have fulfilled their obligations by applying their skills and knowledge competently, selflessly, and at times heroically. Today, this profession must reaffirm its historical commitment remembering that humanity is our patient. If we truly love our neighbor as ourselves, we must be willing to care and treat for them as we would want to be.

The American Medical Association adopted a Declaration of Professional Responsibility, an oath that upholds and celebrates the ideals that has throughout history inspired individuals to enter medicine and has helped to earn society's trust in the medical field. The declaration is summarized into the following nine main points:

- 1) To respect human life and the dignity of every individual
- 2) Avoid supporting or committing crimes against humanity
- 3) Treat the sick and injured with competence and compassion and without prejudice
- 4) Apply our knowledge and skills when needed
- 5) Protect the privacy and confidentiality of those for whom we care
- 6) Work with others to discover, develop, and promote advances in medicine and public health to alleviate suffering and contribute to human well-being
- 7) Educate the public about present and future threats to the health of humanity
- 8) Be advocates for social, economic, educational, and political changes so that we may contribute to human well-being

9) Teach and mentor those who follow us for they are the future of our caring profession

Abiding by these principles, we not only fulfill our responsibility as workers in the medical field but also our calling to serve our Lord in the ministry He has prepared for us.

Challenges for the Christian

In the real world, we will be bombarded with numerous patients all from different race, culture, and backgrounds. Do we give priority to some and not to others? If we are to bring glory unto God in the work that we do, we must see our patients through the eyes of Christ. If we see our patients as a soul and as a human being who is in trouble and needing help, we will give our best and nothing less. When dealing with patients, mere knowledge is not enough. Christian medical professionals should have a more holistic and deeper understanding of their patients. We cannot see them as a mere body or a diagnosis; rather, a soul, a fellow human being created in the image of God and in need of healing, whether it be of mind, body, or soul.

One of the major challenges for people in the medical field is the struggle to resist being overwhelmed by ambition and greed. It is typical that those in the medical field have tasted or experienced a measure of financial and worldly success, but we are reminded of Christ's warning that one cannot serve both God and money. If the work that we do is to be honoring the Lord, then we do it out of love for the people we serve; not because we expect something in return. When a patient who is in need of healing is brought to our attention, it is typical that we take into consideration such things as their medical insurance and their ability to pay for the services that are provided. Sometimes we even go as far as denying those who are really in need and give priority to those who we know will bring us income. Let us think for a moment and ask ourselves if we are being Christ-like in this type of approach. When serving in the medical field we must be willing to put our own selfish desires aside and see the greater purpose in the

things we do. Our service to our patients should not be measured by monetary reward, but be a self-offering service to those who are in dire need of healing.

As discussed earlier, the ethical challenges in the field of medicine are intensifying every day, especially as technology continues to develop into the world. Our ability to provide quality service with compassion is often overshadowed by the fear of medical malpractice suits by greedy lawyers and profit seekers. As professionals, we must seek to address ethical issues from a biblical perspective. Let us take the life of Joseph as an example. When we look at someone like Joseph who was sold into slavery by his siblings, we find it difficult to imagine ourselves in that very particular situation. We look at his life because he excelled in the face of adversity and never ceased to forget God. By our standards, his work ethic under intolerable conditions should be an example and challenge to us even today. It is important to note that Joseph is just one of the numerous characters in the Bible who demonstrated admirable work ethics under difficult circumstances without compromising their faith and practices.

Conclusion

As Christian medical professionals, we must focus our attention on Christ and realize that we are employees of the Lord. While this does not guarantee monetary rewards, we await an eternal, spiritual reward that outweighs the things of this world. In addition to this understanding, we must conduct our lives according to a higher standard. Apostle Paul reminds us, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). We must pursue the glory of God in all that we do. If we fail to realize the greater purpose, we fail in our mission and we displease God. Let this be a reminder that the work we do is to the Lord and not to men for we serve Him and Him alone. We must maintain these perspectives in our lives and especially in our profession. Let Jesus Christ be our example. Let the Word of God be our guide. Let eternity with Almighty God be our reward. ■

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON, TEXAS

During the closing of the Parish Annual Convention, on Sunday, November 18, 2007, the Diaspora Sunday and Senior Citizens Day were celebrated. After the service, all seniors 70 and above were recognized by giving them a "Ponnada" by Rev. Alex P. John, the chief guest (the main convention speaker). Mr. Nellical J. Chacko, the Secretary of Senior Citizens Fellowship was also recognized for his outstanding service and contributions to the Senior Citizens Fellowship in 2007. After the function, lunch was served to all Senior Citizens by Trinity Yuvajana Sakhyam.



Work Ethics: Christian Perspectives in the Field of Engineering

Thomas Koshy, Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington, Maryland, USA

Background: Work ethics is the development of a set of values to avoid anticipated problems in a business or social entity. It is an imposition of a value system considered necessary for the economic and peaceful operation of an entity. A documented value system helps to communicate such values to a generic set of people who may not otherwise have any common grounds through religion or social culture.



Development: From secular perspective, the earliest comprehensive rules for peaceful co-existence were given in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). Commandments five through ten appear in the form of civil and federal laws in a religion-neutral vocabulary. In order to keep the separation between church and state, some governmental organizations go the extra mile, creating an appearance of distance between secular law and the Bible. In essence, parts of the Ten Commandments and other biblical directives are selectively disguised as state and federal regulations and are codified with majority consent to protect the innocent and punish the guilty.

Rules of Today: I came across an interesting description of BIBLE as the abbreviation of Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. If basic instructions from God cannot get its honorable position in all human endeavors, biblical guidance is re-engineered to achieve a practical agreement with the unbelievers. Let me begin with what is popularly accepted as engineering work ethics and examine how much of it could be recognized as rooted in the Bible. The Institute of Electrical Electronics Engineers (IEEE), one of the largest professional engineering societies in the world, has the following Code of Ethics, approved by the IEEE Board of Directors in February 2006.

We, the members of the IEEE, in recognition of the importance of our technologies in affecting the quality of life throughout the world, and in accepting a personal obligation to our profession, its members and the communities we serve, do hereby commit ourselves to the highest ethical and professional conduct and agree:

1. To accept responsibility in making decisions consistent with the safety, health and welfare of the public, and to disclose promptly factors that might endanger the public or the environment;

2. To avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest whenever possible, and to disclose them to affected parties when they do exist;

3. To be honest and realistic in stating claims or estimates based on available data;

4. To reject bribery in all its forms;

5. To improve the understanding of technology, its appropriate application, and potential consequences;

6. To maintain and improve our technical competence and to undertake technological tasks for others only if qualified by training or experience, or after full disclosure of pertinent limitations;

7. To seek, accept, and offer honest criticism of technical work, to acknowledge and correct errors, and to credit properly the contributions of others;

8. To treat fairly all persons regardless of such factors as race, religion, gender, disability, age, or national origin;

9. To avoid injuring others, their property, reputation, or employment by false or malicious action;

10. To assist colleagues and co-workers in their professional development and to support them in following this code of ethics.

Biblical Nexus: Now let us examine the following Biblical directives and see how the above guidance compares with them. The applicable codes are listed immediately after the Biblical text.

1. "Love your neighbor as yourself." (NIV Mark 12:31) Compare with IEEE Codes 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 & 10.

2. "He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart ... who does his neighbor no wrong ... who keeps his oath even when it hurts... does not accept a bribe against the innocent ... will never be shaken." (NIV Psalms 15: 1-5) Compare with IEEE codes 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 & 9.

3. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." (NIV Exodus 20:16) Compare with IEEE codes 6, 8 & 9.

4. "You shall not murder." (NIV Exodus 20:13) Compare with IEEE code 1.

5. "You shall not steal." (NIV Exodus 20:15) Compare with IEEE codes 3 & 9.

6. "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." (NIV Romans 14:19) Compare with IEEE code 10.
7. "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly." (NIV Leviticus 19:15) Compare with IEEE codes 1, 2, 3, 7 & 8.
8. "Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous." (NIV Deuteronomy 16:19) Compare with IEEE codes 4, 7, 8 & 9.

These references clearly indicate a traceable and visible relationship between what is accepted in a professional society and what is acceptable to God.

Christian Contrast: Ethical rules that are legally binding are carefully followed by most people. A non-religious approach could be to obey the rules to the extent that one is not caught violating them in order to avoid being shamed by punishment and its lasting effects. The average population is content with obeying the letter of the law and intentionally ignoring the spirit of the law. The Christian contrast comes from the spirit behind the obedience to those rules. There is a Godly order to obey the rules of earthly authorities. Romans 13: 1-2 states: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." Therefore, a child of God obeys all the rules of the land when it does not contradict with God's directives.

Moreover, the following Biblical directives that have a greater difficulty in compliance are not transformed to social or business codes of ethics.

1. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that

you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (NIV Colossians 3:23-24)

2. "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing." (NIV Philippians 2:14-16)
3. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (NIV 1Corinthians 10:31)

The three verses listed above are the work ethics for a child of God. For children of God rules require more than mere compliance; it includes divine rules that have tougher standards and involves a greater price to pay in this world. However, compliance with these Biblical standards will bring a smile to our heavenly Father and far greater rewards in heaven.

Conclusion: The commonly referred to ideals of honor and integrity, whether it be a code of ethics or government regulations, have evolved from the Bible. The standards for a child of God in any field of endeavor should not just be mere compliance to the accepted rules, petty conformance to socially acceptable ethical standards, or adherence to political correctness, but a faithful obedience to all the instructions in the Word of God at any cost. Our calling is not just being good citizens in the community, but to serve as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. ■

Forward your comments or questions to tomkoshy@aol.com
 Author, Thomas Koshy, of Washington Mar Thoma Church, is a manager of research at the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission. His primary service area is Sunday school where he held several offices for the Diocese and Southeast Region. He currently serves as the Vice President, Mar Thoma Sunday School, Eastern Zone. He devotes most of his time in teaching and preaching the Word of God to reaffirm our faith. He lives in Maryland with his wife Elizabeth and two children, Benjamin and Annie.

STATEN ISLAND ECUMENICAL CHRISTMAS CAROL CELEBRATION-2007

Staten Island Churches celebrated its Second Ecumenical Christmas Carol on December 30th, 4.30 PM at The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island Auditorium. Members from Kerala Catholic Association, Mar Gregorio's Orthodox Syrian Church, St. George Malankara Orthodox Church, St. Mary's Orthodox Church, The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island and Tabor Mar Thoma Church attended this function. The celebration began with Christmas worship service followed by colorful Christmas Carol and entertainment program. Rev. Fr. Dr. Geevarghese John of Philadelphia delivered the Christmas message. The well attended function was a real blessing and the fellowship opened new avenues for all Christian Churches to work together in different fields in the future. Under the leadership of Rev. Fr. T. A. Thomas, Rev. Sabu Thomas, Rev. Fr. Cherian Mundackal, members from all churches worked together to make this event a grand success. The planning committee held its first meeting in January to plan for 2008 celebration.

Abraham Mathew, Convener
The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island

Ethical Challenges in the Healthcare Workplace—A Christian Perspective

George Abraham, MD, MPH, FACP

The healthcare workplace is one which is relatively shrouded in secrecy and one that evinces a lot of interest in the average person. Serials on television that have a medical story such as 'ER' or 'Gray's Anatomy' draw a lot of viewer attention because of the public's interest in medical issues, challenges and their resolution. While these scenarios are often embellished to satisfy the director or producer's imagination and to ensure maximal viewer attention, real life may sometimes be less dramatic but no less challenging to those who are called to make decisions at those times.

In the subsequent paragraphs, I would like to highlight some of the ethical challenges that are germane to the healthcare workplace. While this is by no means an exhaustive list, nor are any of the issues or views representative of any solution or answer to the dilemmas, I hope to challenge the reader to frame their own opinions in the light of their faith and the Word of God.

Patient-healthcare provider dilemmas

1. Probably one of the hottest areas of debate is the issue of 'stem-cell research'. The president and a number of others take the position that the use of embryos or fertilized eggs represents taking life that is not ours to take: 'You shall not murder' (or kill, in older versions) (Exodus 20:13). On the other hand, opponents of that position argue that these embryos represent the multitude that are harvested and discarded as part of the process of 'in vitro fertilization' (IVF). The wealthier people can opt to have the embryos frozen for an undetermined period; however, the less wealthy do not really specify what they want to do with the unused embryos, and so they are discarded, which is in the real sense defeating the original concept of preserving life. Balance on one hand the issue of destroying life (if one agreed with that premise) and on the other, the development of life-saving therapies for such diseases that have no cure such as multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou-Gehrig's disease), leukemias, etc.

I do not know what the right or wrong answer is in this situation. It may be far-fetched to draw parallels to the times when Moses and Christ were born, when several innocent babies were killed but Moses and Christ escaped (Matthew 2:17-18). Suffice it to say that even through the Bible, there are several situations where one has lost a life in order that another life is preserved. There is no doubt that the scientific community here in the US has suffered the consequences of the ban on the use of embryonic stem cell research, while many other parts of the world such as Singapore have made huge advances and are way ahead in the race.
2. Most of the developed world has seen the rise of 'same sex unions or marriages', leading to much debate over the Christian basis for its acceptability. Of more concern has been the position of the Episcopal Church, leading to a significant schism from the Anglican Church. There is no Biblical basis for 'same gender unions' (Genesis 19:4-29). Most churches, including ours, have maintained that position. As healthcare givers, we encounter several 'couples' and some look to us for approval of their lifestyle. It is in those situations that as a Christian, one is called to distance oneself from their viewpoint and treat their physical problem dispassionately. While one does not want to take a judgmental attitude, it would be hard as a Christian to find justification in the lifestyle.
3. All healthcare providers, be they physicians, nurses or other allied health professionals, have encountered situations of women coming to us with an issue of an unwanted pregnancy that they need to 'get rid of'. While most of the protestant churches do not share the view of the Catholic Church regarding contraception and abortion, definitely, one is torn as to what advice to offer such women. A pregnancy occurring out of rape is easy to handle since the woman is an innocent victim of the situation. However, in situations where an indiscretion has led to the pregnancy, the biblical precept of 'You shall not murder' that I alluded to earlier is more relevant. However, that is easier said than done, because that would be contrary to the issue of a 'woman's right to choose'. It would also raise the question whether a believing Christian would be comfortable working in an abortion clinic; and yet can we say that those who work there are 'murderers'? Again, no correct answer. Each person needs to balance his/ her personal faith and scientific education to develop his/ her own viewpoint.
4. Probably one other issue that comes up for some in the field of infectious disease, such as I, is the issue of sexually transmitted disease, acquired out of infidelity. I am sure we have encountered situations where one of the partners in a relationship or marriage has been unfaithful and acquired an infectious disease or worse, something more ominous such as HIV disease. To compound the situation, as a provider one is required to preserve the confidentiality of the situation, yet the patient in question may be infecting their spouse or partner because he/she fails to let the other partner know. Although there are laws governing the con-

fidentiality concerning HIV and AIDS and defaults are considered to be punishable crimes, disclosure becomes the primary responsibility of individuals involved. Again, the Christian perspective is straightforward in that there is no room for infidelity (1 Timothy 3:2), calling for us as providers to go beyond treating the physical problem, needing to counsel the person to change their ways. However, that is a delicate situation and it may be more 'appealing' for us to refrain from making any such statements.

Healthcare provider peer dilemmas

1. A recent study published in a medical journal and talked about on news programs in the media highlighted the fact that physicians were secretive of each other, in that if they saw inappropriate behavior, unethical or dishonest actions, they would prefer to remain silent than speak up about a colleague. While I am not a proponent of developing a 'watchdog' system among peers as the solution to this issue, the larger question as a Christian physician is 'Am I indulging in an action that would be considered questionable in my profession?' There is no doubt that we in the healthcare profession are called to a higher standard in legal circles, but also as per the Bible, much as priests or deacons (1 Timothy 3:2). It then becomes difficult to reconcile what our actions should be in cases such as a colleague who comes to work inebriated, or a partner who defrauds the system, or a fellow physician who habitually endangers patient well-being in the course of his/her practice, etc. To further compound things, we may know that any disciplinary action against that person may lead to a loss of livelihood for his/her family, loss of friendship, etc.

Again, I have no one perfect answer that is a straightforward solution to the problem. Christ would call upon us to maintain the highest ethical standards and to point out to a colleague that their behavior is unacceptable (2 Thessalonians 3:15). In reality, how often are we actually able to do it, is a question that looms before us.

2. Physicians in particular, and probably other healthcare providers, are often given gifts by those who want us to reciprocate with favors. While token gifts of appreciation or gratitude do not fall into this category, the acceptance of significant gifts to make a statement or return a favor, which one would not have done otherwise, calls into question what the Bible would label as the 'acceptance of bribes'. The standard that we are called to is outlined in 2 Samuel 12:3.

In summary, unlike other professions, our profession is unique in that we have a lot of interaction with people in the context of significant life and death decisions. People trust our opinion in more ways than one, especially when they have to make significant decisions about their health, life and well-being. No surprise, then, that we are called to empathy, compassion and

honesty in all our dealings, decision-making and actions. This is not achieved with our strength alone. Even Jesus spent time in prayer, asking for strength and direction from God the Father, more so, we, frail human beings. The Hippocratic Oath best embodies the sentiments expressed above, when it states:

I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygeia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant:

To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine, and to regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art—if they desire to learn it—without fee and covenant; to give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but no one else.

I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice.

I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art.

I will not use the knife, not even on sufferers from stone, but will withdraw in favor of such men as are engaged in this work.

Whatever houses I may visit, I will come for the benefit of the sick, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male persons, be they free or slaves.

What I may see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep to myself, holding such things shameful to be spoken about.

If I fulfill this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honored with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot.

It is my prayer that God would use all of us as faithful servants in his vineyard. ■

The author is Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and Associate Program Director of the Internal Medicine Residency Program at Saint Vincent Hospital, Worcester, Massachusetts. He is a member of the Carmel Mar Thoma Church, Boston, and the son of Rev. Dr. M. V. Abraham, former Principal of the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

"Whatever you do" "Our Great Shepherd...makes you perfect in every good work to do His Will, that which is well pleasing in His sight." (Hebrews 13:20b-21)

Dr. Abraham Abraham, M.Min. (Bib). Thd., St Stephen MTC, NJ

Martin Luther said "Work is God's invitation for us to join in His continuing creativity". Let me illustrate the meaning of "work ethics" with two short stories. A father and son worked together on a project as masons. One of their jobs on a beautiful mansion was about to be completed. The father said, "Son we are short of one brick to complete the job." The son told the father that since the brick belonged in the corner of an inner wall, it could be ignored because no one would ever notice it. The father replied that while no one might ever notice or question the missing brick, whenever they passed by the house, their conscience would remind them that they had left one brick out during its construction. "So let us be honest to ourselves." Paul reminds us in Col. 3:23: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Also Eph. 6:8 tells us: "Serve whole-heartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men." If this is what our Christian work ethic is, then our places of work and our lives will glow and the name of the Lord will be glorified.

In another instance, we are told of a saint, who was a dishwashing helper in a restaurant. He used to pray, "Father, as I clean and wipe these dishes so that my face is reflected in their surfaces, cleanse my heart and wipe out my stains, so that I may reflect your face through my works." Paul in Col. 3:17 says, "and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." If this is our work ethic, other people around us will see the glory of God through us.

Certainly, work is a part of our every day life, appointed to us even from creation. God placed man in the garden and instructed him to care for the garden. God instructed man to work six days a week. Work is not only a means of our livelihood, but an appointed service to the Lord. We become partners in creativity with the Lord. Work is one of the means of demonstrating excellence of character, revealing our commitment and relationship to our Lord and Master. Work is also a place where we demonstrate our integrity in our interactions with others as our Master commanded us: "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

In short, the call to serve the Lord is integral with faith, career, and relationships. It is not an isolated action. A Christian should perform his work in excellence. He is chosen to be a being of the highest quality and is measured by the standards of God. In the sight of God there is no place for the claim of superiority. God gave different aptitudes to different people so



that through their collective works the will of God is achieved for a better world. The glory of God and the splendor of His kingdom will be its end. No particular virtue, task, or ability is superior, but the honesty, integrity and dedication of the worker make his/her work superior. In today's competitive labor market, materialism dictates the desire for acquiring wealth and power. Prestige dominates. Pride of the flesh, lust of the eye, the pleasure of life dictates the moral standards of the deprived man. Specialization and excellence controls the labor market. Work ethics today are different from

those of the workers in the preceding stories. Our materialistic ambition leads us to be competitive and deceptive in order to outsmart fellow workers and even superiors for personal gain.

Ethics and morality are sisters; they are like two sides of the same coin. Our moral principles were developed through Judeo-Christian formulae. Work ethics may differ between social cultures, but ultimately desire the same goal. Whether it is religious, social, economic or industrial, the nature of success and self-fulfillment is on one side and upholding the moral values and social integrity is on the other side. Working hard and working smart have its own value. Work ethics is comprised of decision making, conflict resolution, team work, and a safe and healthy system of economic production. Our inherent beliefs and religious practices contribute to its enhancement. Work ethics may change because the moral values change with the changing dynamics in society. When we redefine the characteristics of work ethics to suit the work situation and changing dynamics, we must keep in mind that God our Master does not change at all. Social and personal characteristics such as personal belief, punctuality, team work, organizational skills, attitude, communication skills, respect for authorities, adherence to laws, apparel and appearances, proficiency, enthusiasm and energy all contribute for a better work ethic. It is necessary to constantly examine one's standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well-founded. Ethics is also the continuous effort of studying our own moral beliefs and moral conduct. It is striving to ensure that we and the institutions we work for live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based.

For developing a better work ethic, God's people have to free themselves from the bondage of materialism and idol worship. God called Abraham from his ancestral land and customs to come out to obey the living God, so God could bless him and his posterity, and through him the whole world. God called out Lot from the wicked generation. God called out Noah to escape the destruction of the wicked world. He called

(Cont'd on page 15)

God is Calling...Will You Answer?

Christopher P. Daniel, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch

If the phone is ringing incessantly, we naturally and quickly disengage from our current activities to answer it. During our rapid race to the phone, we curiously ponder who is trying to contact us as we mentally sift through a list of all the people we know. Once we reach the phone, though, we do not immediately answer it; we spend the next few moments eyeing the Caller ID trying to determine whether or not the caller is worthy of our valuable time. If we find that our friends or family members are calling, we do not hesitate to answer; however, if the Caller ID display reads "Unknown" or "Unavailable," we most likely will ignore the call, go back to what we were previously doing, and let the answering machine do its job.

When God tries to communicate with us, He is not going to just pick up the phone and dial our number. When God does call us, He will communicate through His Word, through prayer, through life events, and through others. By calling us, God is revealing to us His will and is directing us to fulfill a specific spiritual purpose or objective that will bring Him glory. On the onset, it is very difficult to discern God's calling because it is so personal in nature and so difficult to categorize. Unfortunately, we do not have Caller ID systems that can accurately gauge His calling for our lives. Instead, we have to train ourselves to listen and look carefully so that we do not blatantly ignore His call as we do those phone calls we receive from unknown parties.

If we examine the Bible, it is replete with examples of those who have been called by God. For instance, when God called Noah, Abraham, and Moses they all had to cease what they were previously doing and wholeheartedly devote their lives to fulfilling God's will. These Biblical figures were able to understand their calling quite clearly because they had the privilege and convenience of hearing it directly from the voice of the Lord. Even though Jesus personally appeared to Paul in a vision, it was not until Ananias visited him, healed him, and encouraged him that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to labor for Christ (Acts 9). In the same way, we can come to know God's call in an indirect manner through those around us who offer their heartfelt advice and prayerful support. Sometimes a little encouragement provides the means by which we are able to discern God's calling and will.

During Nehemiah's time, Jerusalem lay desolate and unprotected and was in dire need of rebuilding its walls. Nehemiah was very much burdened by this and turned to the Lord in prayer. Through prayer, God opened up various channels for Nehemiah to not only complete the task of



rebuilding but also to lead the spiritual renewal of the people. While Nehemiah worked to rectify the situation in Jerusalem, he realized that his greater calling was to lead the people and revive the nation. Nehemiah, who once held a very high position in the Persian Kingdom, gave up his privileged life to lead the Lord's cause in Jerusalem. When we seek God's guidance through prayer, as Nehemiah did, He will lead us down a path to discover our calling so that we can discern how to serve Him through our lives.

Again, it is very difficult to classify the manner in which we may be called into various categories. A calling from God comes from within and should be recognized as a calling that is instituted by God for His glory. When God calls us, He is calling us to take part in building up His Kingdom by spreading the good news of salvation through Christ to all ends of the earth. It should also be mentioned that callings are not limited to the ordained ministry. Paul mentions in Romans 12:6 that "we have different gifts, according to the grace given us." These gifts are the unique talents that God has bestowed upon us to use in order to honor and magnify Him. He may have given us great musical, speaking, writing, or teaching abilities that can be used to fulfill His purpose. He may even call us to be doctors, lawyers, businessmen, or engineers who utilize our vocational skills to share the love and compassion of Christ to the least and forgotten. Even if we cannot easily identify our gifts, God will find some way to use our lives to fulfill His mission in this world. Remember, every life has a purpose, and through every life, God's purpose can be fulfilled.

Very recently, I found myself pondering and contemplating my own calling. From a young age, I was drawn to a career in the priesthood. I do not know if that itself was the beginning of my calling to the ministry, but at that time, I was very quick to dismiss the notion that my future lay in the ministry of the Mar Thoma Church. At the age of thirteen, it was extremely difficult to be receptive to the calling because it was just so overwhelming and discouraging. Luke 2:52 mentions that even Jesus had to grow in "wisdom and stature" before He could fulfill God's plan. We, too, have to grow and mature in our faith before we can go forward and work effectively for the Lord.

As I matured in my faith, I found that I became more active in the church and the community. I also devoted more of my time to meditating upon God's word in search of my calling. Through my study, I was better able to comprehend the amount of dedication that would be

required in pursuing a ministerial career. I learned that the priestly ministry is not merely a career; it is a way of life that requires absolute surrender to the will of God. Jesus says in Mark 8:34 that in order to follow Him, we must deny ourselves, forego our desires, and take up our crosses in full devotion to God's will. We must give up all luxuries and all certainties in life to faithfully and truthfully follow Jesus and work for His sake. At this point, I was still very hesitant to heed the Lord's call because I was just not ready to leave behind the only way of life I knew. I decided that I could not make a formal decision concerning ministry until after college, after having explored all my options.

In college, I was very keen on pursuing a career in the medical field. It was a very promising field that also provided avenues for participating in part-time medical ministries. Of course, in the back of my mind and in my heart, I always felt that the Lord was calling; He was ringing incessantly, but I ignored Him and made myself unavailable to answer. I was just not ready to drop everything for His sake. It was at this point in my life that an unexpected tragedy occurred; I felt totally lost and found myself in a state of utter depression. In the midst of this tragic event, my life continued to change drastically, but through it all, only the Lord's persistent call remained constant. I had no other choice but to seek God's divine guidance in this matter through prayer.

The answer to my prayers did not come quickly. It was during my last year in college, when two people approached me concerning the dilemma I was facing. Their kind, encouraging, and inspirational words reminded me that serving the Lord through full-time ministry is very spiritually rewarding. They reminded me that wherever the Lord sends me, He will be there and watch over me. They even erased any doubts I had about my capabilities and told me that "God does not call the equipped, He equips those He calls." From that day onward, I dedicated my life to the Lord's ministry in the Mar Thoma Church. I finally came to realize that the Lord was calling me to be a full-time

minister. If I had not taken the effort to meditate upon His word, if I had not spent a great deal of time in prayer, if I had not thoroughly examined my life, I would not have been able to discern my calling nor discern the will of God for my life.

Some of you may find yourselves in the same situation that I was in, unable to fully understand or answer the Lord's call. Comprehending and discerning the will of God is a very arduous task; it requires us to examine our lives, our experiences, and our spirituality from a very serious and thoughtful perspective. God has a purpose for all our lives, and it is our duty to discover what this purpose is.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10 that we are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." This means that God has a specific intention for each of our lives, and He already knows what this intention is. We must be patient and ready to receive His calling at His appointed time. Even though I claimed to receive my calling at age thirteen, it was not until I was twenty-two that I was absolutely sure that God intended me to be a minister. Each of us has a different and unique calling, and each of us must devote our time to uncover this calling through meaningful meditation and devout prayer. The Lord will keep ringing in our hearts and minds until we stop regarding Him as an "unknown" caller and are ready to drop what we are doing and answer His call. ■

Editor's Note: Christopher P. Daniel was born and raised in Dallas, Texas, and is an active member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. He is the son of the late Mr. Philip Daniel (Raju) and Mrs. Rachel P. Daniel (Santhamma) who hail from Angadical in Pathanamthitta District, Kerala. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of Texas at Arlington and has completed coursework at Dallas Theological Seminary. Recently, Chris was selected by our Diocesan Vaideeka Selection Committee to study at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary in Kottayam in order to become an ordained minister of the Church. He can be contacted at chrispdaniel@verizon.net.

"Whatever you do" *(Cont'd from page 13)*

out the chosen people. In history, we see that God called out many to work for Him. He is calling each one of us to be His chosen people, a holy nation, and a royal priesthood. Through our work we reveal the grace of our Lord to everyone we come in contact with. We are the written paper that people around us are reading. Our neighbors should be able to see the love and compassion of the One we serve reflected in our conduct and work.

When we aim to amass wealth, work becomes an idol. This will corrupt our work ethic. We will be idol worshippers.

Do materialistic dreams corrupt our ethics and the desire for power and prestige smear the image we reflect? God cried through the prophet "Go forth from Babylon". God tells us through John to abandon Laodiceanism (worldliness). God is standing outside your door and calling, open the door of your

heart, let Him in to bless you and have communion with you. Obey Him and be blessed.

The eternal moral law is part of the universe. To do what is praiseworthy is to act in harmony with the universe. Such ethics will receive its proper reward. Solomon, in his wisdom tells us: "For God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God."

God is calling us to be a living sacrifice, pleasing to God, so that our works will reveal the love and integrity of God and reflect His image to our neighbors. May God bless each one of us to live a meaningful Christian life and reflect the image of Christ in all that we do. ■



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Revisiting the Great Commission

Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse

Note: This article was originally published in a book namely "Integral Mission" released in India recently in honor of Dr. Saphir Athyal who was my professor and Principal of the Union Biblical Seminary in Yavatmal, India. Dr. Saphir Athyal is the son of the Rev. Philip Athyal of the Mar Thoma Church well known as a "Valiya Achen". Dr. Athyal's wife Sakhi is the niece of the celebrated lay theologian Dr. M. M. Thomas who was also an active member of the Mar Thoma Church. Being aware of Dr Athyal's passion and commitment to the holistic mission of the church, I have written this article which is originally contributed to the above named book is being re-published here in a condensed form with permission from the editor.

Introduction

The church universal had been under heavy attack in the twentieth century by two combined forces. They have even more intensified their assault on Christianity in the twenty first century. On the one hand, there is the intellectual attack on the Christian faith by forces of post-modernity such as secularism and religious pluralism which repudiate the Church's claims of the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, there is the direct, organized, physical assault on Christian workers, particularly on missionaries and church related property, by fanatic anti-Christian religious extremists. Despite the escalation of the twin attacks on Christianity world wide, the opportunity for fulfilling the Great Commission in this generation is still unlimited.

New frontiers have been reached with the gospel and the horizon of missionary activity keeps expanding everyday. Hundreds of new churches are being planted among unreached people groups every month. Mission and Evangelism have become vital topics of discussion in churches and Christian homes, and as specialized subjects of study and research in theological institutions. A number of international conferences and consultations have been held in several nations of the world in order to mobilize a global task force for expediting the cause of World Evangelization with an unprecedented intensity. New mission efforts have been exploding at a global level resulting in the emergence of thousands of indigenous and self-financing mission agencies even in a number of economically disenfranchised nations of the world. Tables have turned and tides have changed in terms of the locus and the potential of the sending bodies. The West is no longer the sole sending agency, and the so called Third World nations are no longer the receiving ends exclusively.

In this context, it is a matter of enormous joy and celebration to note that the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church has established a mission field in Mexico. The enthusiastic participation of the Mar Thoma youth in the Mexico Mission is of significant encouragement and challenge to the whole Mar Thoma Church.

What does motivate the church to move on with a mission so enthusiastically? Of course, traditionally the Great Commission has been singled out as the most significant motif for mission. The Lord has so commanded us in Matthew 28:19-20. Hence we must obey Him. However, for argument's sake one might like to ask: "What if the Lord Jesus did not give the command to his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 to 'go and make disciples of all nations'? Does the absence of a command exempt or excuse the church from getting involved in mission?"

Absolutely not! Even if for some mysterious reasons the Lord Jesus did not command the church, we still have to be involved in mission to reach the world for Him. As Dr. E. Stanley Jones, that legendary missionary to India, and a distinguished evangelist who preached for more than 45 years in the celebrated Maramon Convention once passionately challenged the church saying:

"As far the 'Great Commission' ... it is not based on a command, but upon the very nature of the gospel, upon him. Last command or no last command, we must share him, for the very necessities of human life demand us to give a Savior such as Jesus. Out of the deep necessities comes the imperious voice, "Go into the world and preach the gospel." If we hold our peace, the stones- the hard, bare facts of life—will cry out.¹

As Dr. Jones has pointed out, the Great Commission is not centered on a command. It is centered on the very person, character and ministry of the Lord Jesus. I also see the Great Commission is not just as a command, but as a summary statement of all that the Lord Jesus had been doing in those three and half years of his public ministry even as He was teaching and training His disciples along the same lines.

The Nature of the Great Commission

"[16] Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. [17] When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. [18] Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)² NIV. Let us briefly examine the nature of this command or commission.

1. It is a Categorical Commission

The word categorical means "unconditional, or non-negotiable". It is binding on all concerned. We can see two striking features of non-negotiability embedded in the Great Commission.

a) The cosmic authority with which the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples.

The Lord Jesus said, as quoted in verse 18: "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me. Therefore go ...". This statement is a conclusive revelation and a compelling affirmation of the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ that

demands an immediate obedience. It was a profound sense of obligation to the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus which motivated the early church to move on aggressively with the task of evangelization amidst great opposition and persecution. The members of the early church became simply unstoppable in their zeal for evangelistic witness. They kept on moving all the way to martyrdom which thousands of them embraced very willingly.

Therefore, the commission to 'Go' is categorical, unconditional, and non-negotiable. The church is never exempted from carrying it out in full measure under any circumstance whatsoever. The sovereign Lord has commanded, and we must obey Him at any cost, anywhere and in every generation.

b) The nature of the audience to whom the sovereign Lord Jesus had given the command.

The Great Commission was given originally to a mixed band of 'believers and skeptics'. In verse 16 we notice that the eleven disciples had promptly gathered on the mountain of Galilee where the Lord appeared to them. However their response to His appearance was not unanimous. Verse 17 says, "When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." It was a mixed band of worshippers and doubters, believers and skeptics. Instead of admonishing a few skeptics who were among the apostles, the Lord Jesus straight away commanded the entire group of mixed responders to "Go and make disciples of all nations". That is to say, He "entrusted" the commission to both believers as well as skeptics because He "trusted" that they would eventually understand, change and obey Him.

This is the paradox of mission the Church Universal is suffering from even today. Churches all over the world are filled with both believers and skeptics especially when it comes to interpreting and obeying the Great Commission. Despite the paradoxical mixture of believers and skeptics in the church, the Lord Jesus has once and for all "entrusted" the Great Commission to both believers and skeptics because He still "trusts" that the Christian skeptics of today would also eventually understand, change and obey Him.

2. It is a Continuing Commission

Verse 19 and 20 read: "Therefore 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 I have commanded you." (NIV)

The grammar of Greek language in which all the books of New Testament were written employs two types of imperatives. One is aorist imperative denoting a one time command. Another is present imperative which denotes a repetitive or continuing command. Apostle Matthew has employed the present imperative to describe the command of the Lord Jesus: "Go". Given in the present imperative the word 'go' means that the apostles, and subsequently the church, must keep on going. The Lord Jesus said: "make disciples", meaning that we must keep on making disciples. He said: "baptizing", meaning that

we must keep on baptizing, (by that of course not at all meaning baptizing the same people over and over again), but continuing on with the activity of baptizing new peoples as they are being saved. He said: "teaching them", meaning that we must keep on teaching the people generation after generation until His triumphal return to the earth again.

3. A Comprehensive Commission

Verse 20 says: "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Evangelical Christians, by and large, have been placing a strong emphasis on two aspects of the Great Commission as central to it, namely, the 'going' aspect and the 'disciple-making' aspect. But as we see in this verse, the Lord Jesus has made the Great Commission much more comprehensive in nature which obligates equality of emphasis on all of its aspects. So to say, the task of evangelizing an individual or a people group or a community is not completed until the initial receptors of the gospel are able to intellectually comprehend the demands of the gospel in its entirety, and are clearly taught to obey 'everything' the Lord had commanded the apostles themselves to do. Being able to evangelize a people group and subsequently planting a church among them successfully does not bring the act of evangelization to its completion. It still continues on with the inevitable need for teaching the converts to obey everything the Lord has commanded.

4. A Covenantal Commission

In verse 20 we again read: "... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." When the Lord Jesus gave the apostles the command He knew the fulfilling of the task was not going to be an easy one. In fact, throughout His training of the disciples in the preceding three and half years He had repeatedly predicted the toughness of the task that was awaiting them. Anticipating all the struggles, hardships, oppositions, persecution and martyrdom they would be facing, and of course subsequently millions of Christians through the generation also would be facing, He made a covenant with them saying: "I am with you to the very end of the age." By His promise to be with them the Lord did not at all mean that they would be spared of all suffering for the sake of the gospel, but that He would be by their side at all those terrible and fatal moments sustaining, encouraging and enabling them to complete their mission.

True to His covenant, the Lord Jesus has always been with His suffering and persecuted church to this very day. Persecution against the church is on the increase in an alarming scale in several nations of the world today. For instance, who would have ever imagined that in India, globally reputed to be the nation of Mahatma Gandhi the Apostle of Ahimsa, religiously fanatic elements would gruesomely burn to death a dedicated missionary to the lepers as Graham Staines and two of his innocent children. Even as I am writing this article, I continue to receive news from India reporting the ongoing persecution against Christian workers in several parts of India. Although persecutions against the church continue to escalate world wide, the Lord who made a covenant with the church is always with us. And He will continue to be with us to the very end of the age.

5. A Consummate Commission

Finally in verse 20 we read: "... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." We are living in an age in which there is so much of renewed interest among Christians in the topic of the parousia or the Second Coming of Christ. To cite just one example, the book series called "Left Behind" jointly authored by Tim LaHaye, have consistently hit New York's best seller list. There is a renewed curiosity in churches to study the Book of Revelation in order to check if we are almost at the end of the age. The rapidly changing political scenario in the Middle East are being watched closely by biblical scholars to find out how end-time prophecies concerning Israel are being literally fulfilled in our generation, thus heralding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ any time now!

Mere curiosity aside, one of the definite signs of the return of Jesus Christ is the responsibility assigned to the church by the Lord to complete the process of World Evangelization as He himself predicted it in Matthew 24 in which the Lord explained to his disciples various signs of the end times. He concluded it by saying candidly: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) NIV.

We are indeed living in a most exciting generation as far as completion of the process of World Evangelization is concerned. Unprecedented in the church's history of mission evangelical Christians around the world have intensified their combined efforts to expedite that process in our generation. A great motivation for this combined effort comes from the promise of the Lord Jesus to be with us to the very end of the age. The process of World Evangelization as embedded in the Great Commission is indeed moving steadily forward to its consummation.

Conclusion

How did the Lord Jesus send His disciples when He said, "Go". How were they to go into a hostile world? What model of going were they to follow? Of course, the Lord himself was their

model. Earlier on, on the very day He had resurrected the Lord appeared to His disciples and said: "... As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21) (NIV). And how did the Father send Him? As a prelude to uttering those powerful words the Lord had first made a dramatic presentation of His wounded body in John 20:20 "... he showed them his hands and side, ..." (NIV). We could possibly draw two conclusions from this dramatization, namely: a) He presented a proof of His crucifixion and resurrection; and b) By showing them the scars on his body He meant that the cross was the way for them to do mission just His Father had meant it for Him. The mission of the church is inseparably linked with the cross of Christ. The Lord has made it crystal clear that there can be no Christian discipleship without our willingness to take up our cross and follow Him (Matthew 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 14:27).

To the Lord Jesus, the cross simply meant an absolute surrender to His father's will. So it is with us today. We have to be on the move with mission in absolute obedience to what the Lord has commissioned us to do. Come what may, we will meet the consequences squarely in the great confidence that He who said He will be with us till the very end of the age will certainly be with us just He said. ■

End Notes:

1. E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1925), p6.
2. All scripture quotations used in this article are taken from the New International Version and used here with general permission by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Editor's Note: Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse is a native of India, an ordained minister of the United Methodist Church. Beginning his ministry in India He has served the Lord globally including as a missionary to Singapore, and as a pastor in several churches in USA. He currently teaches mission and evangelism at Multnomah Bible College at Portland, Oregon, USA. Since 1978 Dr. Alphonse has been a frequent speaker in several of Mar Thoma Church conventions, family conferences, youth conferences both in India and North America including his preaching every alternate year at the Maramon Convention, Kerala since 1998. He is looking forward to speaking at Maramon again in February 2009. Phone: (Home) 503-653-8838, (Office) 503-255-0332 or at e-mail: malphonse@yahoo.com

ST. MARK'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, TAMPA, FLORIDA



First Communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni and Jose Achen.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop visited St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, Tampa, Florida and the congregations in Jacksonville and Orlando from November 1, 2007 to November 5, 2007. On Sunday, November 4, 2007, Thirumeni celebrated Holy Communion at the Tampa Church. Eleven children received first communion during this occasion. This was a remarkable event in the life of these children, their parents and the parish. A large number of people from Tampa and nearby places attended service and participated in the lunch thereafter.

Rev. Jose Abraham, Vicar

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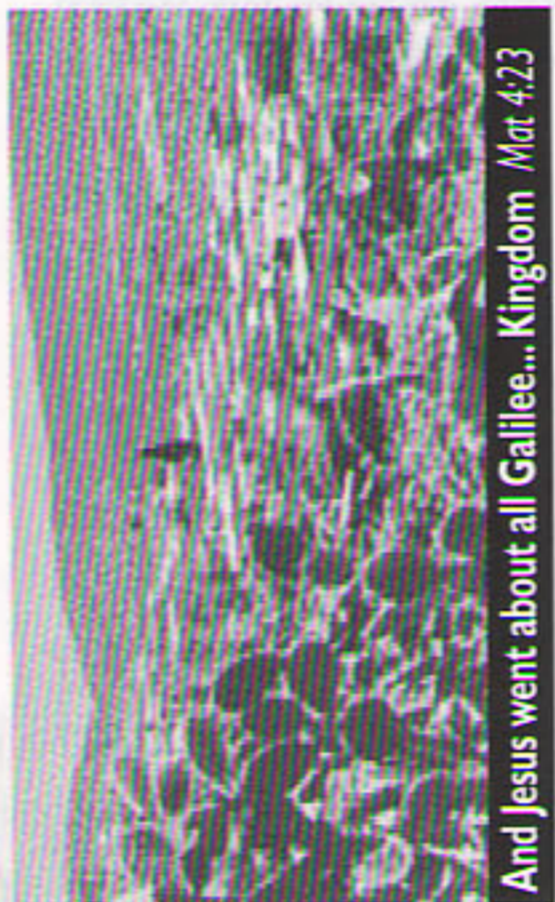
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NAVJEEVAN CENTRE—Voice to the Voiceless in the Society

Rev. Dr. Moni Mathew, Director, Navjeevan Centre, Mumbai

Navjeevan Centre came into existence in 1994 as a project of the Diocese of Bombay-Delhi of the Mar Thoma Church intended to rehabilitate the children of the women in the red light area of Bombay.

Raajeev (fictitious name) when he was 7 years old was shocked to understand that his mother left him and his younger sister alone in their home in the Red streets of Bombay. For three days he took care of his younger sister begging for food on the streets, to the extent of even picking the trash from the garbage bins to fill their stomach. After three days when the mother returned, Rajeev asked her where had she been, and requested for food to fulfil their hunger. He was very much upset and angry upon hearing his mother's reply, 'son, go to the street and find out a strong man for me. Let him use me and with that money I can get some food to satisfy your hunger'. It took a while for Rajeev to come to his senses and to forgive her.

The children of sexually exploited women are children of the darkness. When the rest of the world sleeps, these kids are shoved out from home, forced to spend time on the street with stray dogs, beggars and the lonely ambience of darkness. The alternative is cruelly simple to be drugged and forced to sleep under their mother's bed, while she shares the bed with her customers for money for the livelihood of the family.

These children have limited contact with the outside world and tend to be alienated from their mothers. They are grossly neglected and deprived of their basic needs normally expected from a family. A child born in the brothel may not know about his father and the unanswered question is 'who is and where is my father?' and this thought causes sadness in his/her life. In the brothels and its precincts, the children hear conversations and see sights not expected for them to hear and see. There are often quarrels and even physical fights and the children are physically and sexually abused, and they are more prone to sexual diseases.

Many of the girls born into such a life situation may themselves be led into prostitution. Even more ignominious is the social ostracism, the child of an exploited woman faces. The tremendous presence of evil, the terrible oppression of the women, and the victimization of the innocent children, made a powerful impression upon our Church. It reinforced the conviction that the innocent children have a right to live and thus was born 'NAVJEEVAN'—'God's love in action'. Our Mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of these underprivileged and exploited women and their children, to motivate them to

confront their situations through collective action and to assist them in achieving their highest potential as they grow to become confident, competent and self reliant as members within a family.

Objectives of Navjeevan Centre:

1. Growth in the physical, intellectual, vocational and moral capabilities of underprivileged women and their disadvantaged children.
2. Empowerment of the women and their children through strengthening their collective capacities.
3. Transformation of the social institutions (like the education system, the economic system, health system) in keeping with the principles of equity and social justice.
4. To advocate and campaign for the rights of these underprivileged women and their children.

A) Program for Children

The goal of this programme is to provide the much-needed homely facilities and a nurturing environment where these children can recover physically and mentally from the horrors they faced in their previous life situations in the brothels.

Day/Night Care Centre: These centres are a haven for the children to be away from the experiences they were forced to face when their mothers are in the prostitution business and thus to avoid unnecessary trauma being faced by the children. The existing two centres cater to the needs of about 100 children each in the age group of 3-12 years. The activities of the centre are focused on providing nutrition and basic education. The primary training to prepare the children for formal school is undertaken at the centre. Professional counsellors at these centres help children with their emotional adjustment and behavioral problems.

Orientation (Preparatory) Centre: Children whose mothers are willing to send them to a residential facility are first enrolled in the orientation centre at Kalyan for a period of 6 months to 1 year, to prepare the children both physically and emotionally for the disciplined life in the institution which is very different from what they have been accustomed to.

Residential Home: From the orientation centre the children move to a residential home—the Navjeevan Village, which is located at Khapri, near Murbad (about 56 km from Kalyan). This centre presently serves as home to over 165

children between the ages of 5-17 of the sexually exploited women from Mumbai's red light area known as Kamathipura. The Village is modelled on the SOS Children's Villages. It comprises several cottages, each of which hosts about 20 children. The children are taken care of in these homes till he/she becomes 18 years. The house parents and sisters who live with them provide the love, care and nurturing. These separate homes where the children live collectively constitute the Navjeevan Village.

Trauma is a part of the life for these children. Each child has different experiences of trauma. For one child it may be why my mother does not come to visit me and for another one it may be why my mother has placed me in such a situation. There are no ready made answers except that every one in the centre faces hard time convincing and answering to these questions. Each day we are faced with new problems and in order to solve the issues, goals are set and in order to fulfil the goals different strategies are adopted. They are:

- 1) *Providing for basic needs:* Meeting the basic needs of a child (food, clothing, and shelter) is essential to ensure overall growth and development of the child. A safe living environment away from the dehumanizing situation helps the child to gain self confidence.
- 2) *Education:* To help the child to face challenges in life, knowledge empowerment is very essential. This knowledge is gained through life's experiences as well as through imparted education.
- 3) *Family living:* Emotional and mental stability is achieved in the safe heavens of a family bonding. Providing a family atmosphere, where the emphasis is for group living with foster parents helps the child to experience the love and concern that exist in families.
- 4) *Psycho-Socio Development:* Professionals like Psychologists, Counselors and Doctors visit on a regular basis to deal with the physical and mental health of the children.
- 5) *Home management:* Children are involved in the day-to-day functioning of their respective homes, which helps to reinforce the sense of belonging as well as helps the child to develop decision making capacity.
- 6) *Social interaction:* In order to assimilate in society it is essential for the children to be in constant interaction with others in the society. Participating in youth camps, inter-school cultural and sports programs, inter-village competitions, outings, relating with outside world, masti mela and festivals etc helps the children to mingle with the members of society.
- 7) *Outreach program:* Navjeevan centre also provides the children the opportunity for social services through the social work activities undertaken by the centre. Children were involved in the construction of the dam at the village, agriculture, and gardening etc.

- 8) *Participation:* Children are divided in to groups for skill trades and also involved in the decision making process in the village.

Extension home: The youth of Navjeevan who are at the threshold of finishing their basic education and has opted for different vocations are shifted to the extension home at Vashi. This is the last stage where they are prepared for reintegration into society. At present there are 12 boys staying at Vashi and eight girls in Kalyan.

Reintegration into society: This phase has already been accomplished in the history of Navjeevan with two youths having secured jobs in J P Morgan and are continuing their studies in College while staying in Goregaon, Mumbai. The next 3-4 years is very crucial, as actual rehabilitation and reintegration has to take place for many children. In the past 12 years of Navjeevan's existence, the children of Navjeevan have grown up to become youths, ready to embark on the journey of finding their rightful place in society. It is the endeavor of Navjeevan to assist and guide these youths in this venture.

Efforts are being made to elicit the cooperation of the corporate sector. Suitable companies which has high market potential and which would guarantee job would be identified. These companies will absorb the youths as apprentices and provide the necessary training and later induct them as full time staff.

B) Program for mothers

Ragini (fictitious name) who lived in a remote village in the northern part of India whose two children are with us, will never forget the day which she remembers as the darkest day in her life, when she was hardly 15 years of age. She remembers that one middle aged lady came to her house asking for her mother, and during that time the lady gave her sweets laced with drugs. After which Ragini could see things happening, yet cannot react. She remembers being taken by this lady from her home to the nearby bus station and handed over to a male in return for money. The man brought her to the ghettos of Kamathipura, Mumbai and sold her to a brothel owner. Her Father came in search of her after three days, and the Brothel keeper demanded that he must get his money which he paid to the agent who sold her to him in order to release her. She remembers that her father had to go back without her since he did not have enough money to release her. During those three days, she had already lost her virginity and she has been sexually exploited by many. This is one among many real stories that we have encountered.

The ministry includes: *Counselling:* Day to day contact and interaction with the mothers is an essential component in making the work of Navjeevan meaningful. The efforts of the centre are directed towards guiding them to an alternative life style.

Health monitoring: Concerted effort is made to deal with the medical needs of the mothers, especially who are HIV positive. 11 Mothers of those children who are staying at Navjeevan are identified with HIV positive and they are being counselled and assisted in getting effective medical treatment.

Saving schemes: The future of these women is very bleak, since they are likely to be thrown out of the brothels as age catches on. It is imperative that the women have some form of savings. The centre provides all needed assistance to motivate women to save-up some money for their future.

Rehabilitation: The women who opt to get out of prostitution are given necessary support and guidance. Mothers who are desirous of getting married or who would like to settle down to lead a family life with their children, are given full assistance. 70 mothers have been rehabilitated with their children, either by giving jobs or have been helped to settle in their hometown. Regular follow up visits are being conducted to support and help them to stick to their decision of giving up prostitution.

C) Village outreach programme

At Navjeevan village, in addition to the development of children, we take care of the development of the society and near by villages. In keeping with the principle of optimum utilization of available resources, the school and health centre facilities at Navjeevan Village is also open to the people of the nearby five villages. Navjeevan also strives in getting the villages to be more self-sufficient in their basic needs.

D) Awareness and Advocacy

Awareness about the Navjeevan Centre among the public and advocating the cause of these underprivileged women and their children is done through publishing newsletters regularly, campaigns, holding workshops and through conducting training programmes. In addition, sensitization programmes in schools and colleges are regularly carried out. Navjeevan along with other like-minded organizations strive to campaign for the rights of these underprivileged women and their children. The theme chosen for the campaign is "Right to live and die with Dignity".

Future plans for Navjeevan: Navjeevan aims to provide for the psychological needs of the children, and plans to initiate the following programs in the coming years.

- 1) Recreation building for Indoor and outdoor games as well as for training in music and dance.
- 2) Introduction of meditation, yoga for self discipline and self control.
- 3) Involving like-minded groups in partnership for the furtherance of child participation in developing a right approach and help them to have a smooth sail to the main stream.

- 4) The future of the children to be taken care of with a skill trade center to be established within the premises.
- 5) A new concept is to have a 'Children's parliament' so that the village will be taken care of by, for and of the children.

We request your prayers that all of our future plans may become a reality.

We are proud to belong to Mar Thoma Church, a Church that foresaw the danger in life of these mothers and their children and took the risk which no other Church has taken and still continues to do so. We do not profess that the 12 year old organization has reached perfection and is without any folly. However with all its limitations we are striving hard to bring a change in a few that we come across. We do hope as the years pass by that we will have more and more success stories as examples to the world and many can be encouraged to replicate like minded organization for mothers and children who are less privileged.

Volunteerism

Volunteers are the need of the hour to serve in the Navjeevan Centre since no organization can exist with the facilitators only. We have been blessed for years by regular volunteers from Chicago, New York, Houston, Dallas, Washington and Philadelphia. Navjeevan expresses sincere thanks to the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, the Youth Chaplains, and all clergy of the Diocese of North America and Europe, and all friends of Navjeevan from that Diocese who have played a major role in influencing the young and challenging them to visit Navjeevan.

We would urge and challenge one and all, specially the young to shift your thought process and your energy to a world which you are not much aware of. These children who are voiceless in the society in which they live now should be given a voice by your contribution in different ways and capacities. The children and the mothers wait for you and the wonderful Lord is asking you to offer yourself for this ministry. Please feel free to make Navjeevan a home away from your home and the children need your presence and support. Your time, talents, energy and love setting apart for these children, I am sure that you will be blessed by the prayers that these tiny tots raise before the Lord for helping them in their journey of life. ■

Editor's Note: Rev. Dr. Moni Mathew is serving as the Director of Navjeevan Centre which is located at Navjeevan Village, Khapri, Tokowade, Murbad Taluka, Thane Dist., Maharashtra, India. Tel: 91-02524-242094/93 or can be reached by e-mail: navjeevancentre@vsnl.net. For more information about Navjeevan Centre you can visit its website: at www.navjeevan.org

LIVING HOME

"The best index to a person's character is how he treats people who can't do him any good, and how he treats people who can't fight back"

Abigail Van Buren

HOME & GARDEN TIPS

MRS. SHIRLEY CHACKALAMANNIL, NEW JERSEY MTC

How to Accessorize a Dining Room

Many of us use the extended kitchen area to have our every day meals and the formal dining room often exists as a shadow, decorated only for holidays or special events. A dining room is a place in the house that ought to look festive and inviting at all times and in all seasons. Decorating your dining room can be an idiosyncratic effort. Your dining room is the kind of a place where you could use your imagination and your already owned resources to bring about a theme or a tale that you wish to relate. Keep in mind the phrase "Less is More" when you accessorize any room. There are many ways you could avoid having a stiff-looking dining room and that includes choosing the right colors, centerpieces, side board display, lighting and furniture.

Let us start with the furniture that you already have. A good, average height for any dining table is twenty eight and a half inches from the floor. The table and chairs don't have to match exactly but should match in proportion and in general character. When placed at the table, the chairs should allow at least six inches of space between them. While a conventional hutch or a china closet makes an excellent focal point in a room, a long, horizontal buffet table provides more surface area for food service and displays. If the room space is tight then stay away from fabrics (table clothes or skirted chairs) that hangs down to the floor because exposing legs of chairs and tables will give the illusion of roominess. When dressing the table, whatever you put on the table in the way of centerpieces, mats, table cloths, china and glassware, will instantly become part of your décor. So each piece should be chosen with this in mind. Therefore it is necessary to practice some restraint when selecting a scheme to decorate, that when all is in place, the two most important elements—your guests and your food, are complemented by and not in competition with your decorations.

Quality of light is an important component in the décor of a dining room. A good ambience for a dining area calls for a special effect with light. An adjustable chandelier that can be raised to overall lighting and lowered for cozier gathering will be suitable. Installing a dimmer allows more flexibility. In the United States about 40 to 50 years ago most American dining rooms had chandeliers with very bright light that was poised over the food. Today according to majority of the interior decorators any overhead light of this type is unflattering. If you browse in a lighting store you notice that many of the chandeliers have low voltage bulbs. You need good lighting in the kitchen where you prepare the food but not in the dining room where you display and serve the food. If you like the natural light in your dining room, make sure that you will trim down your plants that are outside

below the window level so there won't be any obstruction that prevent the natural light from coming in.

Choosing a color scheme for a dining room is very interesting in many ways. If your room will be used primarily at night, the problems associated with balancing natural light need no longer limit your choice. You could use any color of your choice. Psychologists who are into colors and its role in human emotions will tell you that the color "red" stimulates appetite. In the Victorian era, the color red was very common. Now a mix between yellow and the orange color are considered good for the dining room accents because it is known that this class of colors are associated with food and stimulate brain activity. This shade of color has different names depending on their hues. Pumpkin spice, terracotta, cinnamon spice, and warm copper are some of the common names. Even though it sounds like autumn colors, these are the most desirable colors for accessorizing the dining room even if you have different colors for the walls and the draperies. Usually a dining room is not as crowded as other rooms in a house so you could be more dramatic than elsewhere.

Proper choice of Centerpiece, China, Silverware, Glass and Linen are all accessories that you could use for your dining room décor. Plan them carefully, combining their decorative effect with their functional role. For example china (dinnerware) is made to serve the food. Many of us forget this and buy something that is beautiful in itself, but does not serve as a aesthetically appealing container for the food it carries. When you select your china try to visualize the food you are planning to serve in it. There are different choices out in the market for good china. Whatever you select it is always wise to buy an open stock so that replacement can be made easily in case you break one of them. Other than your flat silverware there is nearly no silver in the modern dining room than ever before. If you choose to have candelabra, salt and pepper shakers or tea set that is made of silver for a luxurious look, be prepared for endless polishing (because of tarnish). A whole set of Corning glass is more practical. If you are planning to buy new flat silverware, copies of early Georgian or American colonial patterns are classics. If you are buying new glass, crystal is more preferable than colored glass unless you want to use the colored glasses for color display. Crystal is compatible with any other color in the room and most liquids look prettier in crystal than in anything else. If your dining table top is beautiful then do not hide it with a table cloth, rather use mats and doilies. You could use placemats of the color of your choice (stick with warm colors if possible). However, the simpler they are, the better.

Centerpieces and side board displays should be based on your love of variety and imagination. There many ideas you could come up with for a centerpiece. If you are not interested in

making a flower/candelabra arrangement (for details see previous issues of messenger magazine-Living Home), there are simple ways to do create a centerpiece.

- You could use a flat glass bowl with blossoms floating in water. To prolong the life of the blossoms add half of an aspirin tablet to the water. If you want more color you could add food coloring in the water that is compatible with the rest of your décor.
- A bowl of fruits of contrasting colors such as apples, oranges, pear and pineapple.
- A low china bowl with live ivy plant
- Five to seven small clear glass bottles (available in craft stores) arranged in a circle and each one holding one flower of your choice.

There is one really important warning about centerpieces- make sure that they are low enough so that the people around the table could see each other while they were conversing to each other.

You could choose to decorate the wall with a theme that is close to your heart. Make sure that the pictures are hanging to your eye level and in symmetry. If you think your dining room needs a little "opening up" then add ornate mirrors to your décor. Mirrors also give the room an illusion of spaciousness. On the side board display you could use a pedestal or tiered cake stand to arrange small items that you would like to display. The display items could be antique style miniature potteries, figurines, tea pots or anything that you think is cute and beautiful.

(Next issue of Living Home will focus on "Environmentally Conscious Living")

Jeevamrutham Bible Correspondence Course

Stynee M. Mathew, The Philadelphia MarThoma Church

The Jeevamrutham Bible correspondence course was started by the Episcopal Jubilee Institute of Evangelism, Thiruvalla in 2000 by the initiative of Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa and Rev. Dr. C. K. Mathew. Currently, Rev. K. S. Mathew, the Principal of the Institute and Rev. George Alexander, the Manager of the Correspondence Course are providing leadership to this ministry. The Institute gave authorization, to our Vicar, Rev. C. P. Wilson, to introduce the Jeevamrutham Bible correspondence course at the parish level. Our Edavaka Mission has taken on the responsibility of promoting this correspondence course within our parish. The course began in our parish on 19 August 2007. Mr. M. G. Thomas serves as coordinator for this course on behalf of the Edavaka Mission. Currently, there are 64 participants who are using this as an opportunity to study the Word of God. The course consists of a total of 30 lessons that are divided into 3 stages, both in Malayalam and English. The first stage consists of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the second stage deals with theological topics, while the third stage discusses various social issues. After the completion of each stage, the students will be eligible for certificates from the Episcopal Jubilee Institute of Evangelism. Within our parish, 20 participants completed the first stage within 3 months. Each Sunday, the coordinator collects the answer sheets from the participants and distributes the new lessons. Along with this new lesson, the participants receive their graded answer sheets from the previous week. The lessons are presented with a logical flow and the language used is simple and easy to follow. There are many thought

provoking issues that are examined and the module is best used when coupled with its corresponding Bible passages.

This course allows you to internalize what you are learning from the Word of God and helps you to understand where it fits into your life. These lessons are not just assignments that you work on for a grade, but true to life lessons that provide insight from history, terminology, anecdotes, illustrations, and references throughout the Bible. Studying the Bible is an ongoing process and this course sheds light on various biblical topics. This study does not end with 30 lessons; however, it is a spark that should ignite our passion for God's Word. This program allows you to reflect on individual's life and self examine discipleship. Some of the lessons are very personal and one may realize God's awesomeness and how He uses events in one's life to show the path to righteousness. This course enhances your life and it allows for God to transform your thoughts. A few months prior to the distribution of these lessons, I felt an eagerness and desire to want more of Jesus, but I did not know that this was how God would answer me. There is such abundance of God in his blessing to us; blessing that we are not to keep to ourselves, but must pass on to others. This course is not for anyone in particular, but for everyone in general. Anyone can take this course and walk away with a deeper understanding of the Word of God. I am excited that I am able to partake in this correspondence course, and I can't wait to study all the lessons. This course is for anyone who really wants to know more about the Bible. It is an awesome opportunity to travel to new heights with the Lord. It enhances your faith and strengthens your walk with God. ■

Let Them Have Life in its Fullness

Mexico Mission project

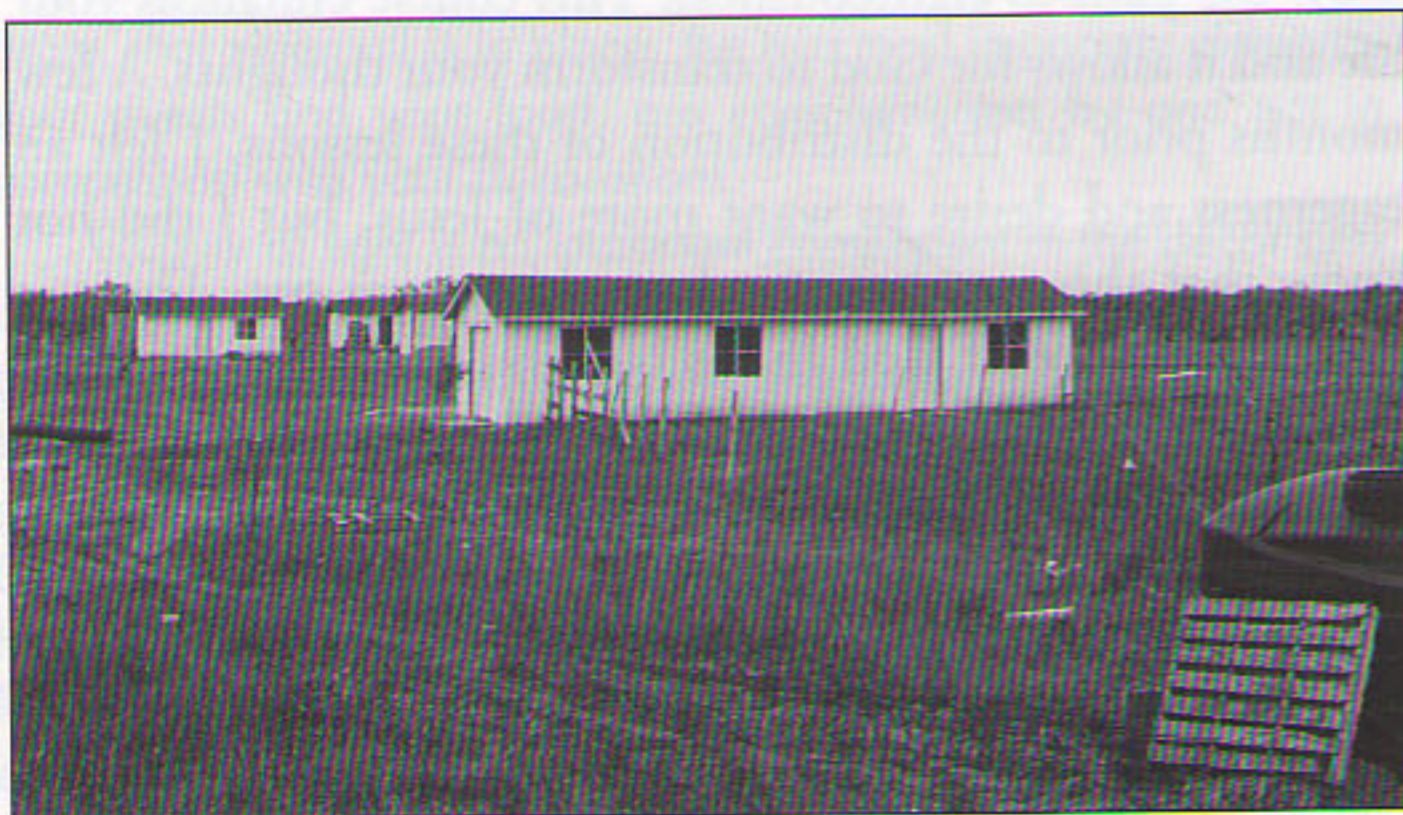
Rev. T. S. Philip, Diocesan Council Member & Convener, Mexico Mission Local Committee, Houston



Often we hear that 'life is a gift from God'. God has sent his only son into this world for us to have life and have it in all its fullness. The Creator who has created the earth and everything in it has entrusted us to make the fullness of life for everybody, a reality. "Everything in this world is for our need but not for our greed". We live in a compartmentalized world, divided econom-

ically, politically, socially and also on the basis of religion, color, race, cast, language and creed. We dwell in an unjust world where equal allocation of resources often does not happen. The culture of consumerism is being imposed on the developing world as well. Poverty has increased and the gap between the haves and the have-nots keep on widening. As a result, humans are facing several challenges that are preventing them from attaining fullness in life as God has envisioned. In this context, as a faith community, we should focus on our missions in this world. Church exists by its mission. As a missionary Church our existence has meaning only when the Church is in Mission. We need to confront the challenges facing the human being with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I thank God and would like to appreciate Coorilos Thirumeni's vision about a mission field for the Diocese of



North America & Europe of the Mar Thoma Church and the believers in this Diocese especially the youth for taking the initiative to begin a new mission field for the Church in Mexico. Our Diocese is in the process of sending the resources to this



small island in Mexico, where life is tough for its inhabitants. This month our Diocesan Treasurer Mr. T. A. Mathew and myself had an opportunity to visit the islanders in the Mexico Mission field, and reflected upon the mission challenges we face there today. Poverty, unemployment, and moral degradation became norms of this community where civic, social and religious leaderships are minimal to none. The islanders who are mainly fishermen, due to the lack of resources to earn a decent living dwell in poverty. Most lack proper shelter, education, food, cloth etc. Their life style poses challenge to us—Christians. It is eminent that we must try our best to provide at least the basic necessities such as housing, education, health care etc. I appreciate the youths of this Diocese for taking up the challenge and being witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is worth to note that our diocese has taken this challenge and established a mission field in Mexico. Even though this is just a small beginning, we are influencing the islanders spiritually, hiking the hope and morale of each individual. The locals are very happy to see the mission team members and receive them and be with them. Life style changes are already visible. Our Diocese had bought one parcel of land within the city of Matamoros for building hostels for the boys and girls of the islanders and the Diocesan Youth Fellowship had already collected the necessary funds for the same. By the initiative of our beloved Coorilos Thirumeni we bought another parcel of land about 30 miles from Matamoros city and are in the process of constructing 90 houses to rehabilitate the islanders who lost their homes in the hurricane. Almost 25 houses have been constructed so far. Constructions of other 65 houses are going on and our goal is to finish the construction of all 90 houses by May 2008. It is our great desire and planning that our Valiya Metropolitan and Metropolitan will be present on this great occasion and will handover the keys of all houses. This is the first step by providing them with a place to live and to lead this poor people into a life in its fullness. ■

Mexico Mission Housing Project

T. A. Mathew, Diocesan Treasurer

By God's grace, the Mexico Mission Housing Project is going on as planned under the Mission Board of the Diocese. Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch is the Vice President and Mr. Jason M. Thomas, Diocesan Council Member is the Convener of the Mission Board. As part of our Mexico Mission project we have adopted two islands namely Fantasia and Puntinella Norte lying in the north east of Mexico main land close to U. S. border. We are in the process of building 90 houses as part of the Navathy celebration of our Valiya Metropolitan, The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom.

As per the decision of the Diocesan Assembly, we were able to buy 3 hectars (7.5 acres) of land in the mainland in Mexico this year to build houses for the islanders who have lost their houses due to hurricane Emily



in 2005 and to resettle them in the main land. The land where we are building the houses is about 20 miles from Matamoras City, which is on the border in Mexico close to the U.S. city of Brownsville in Texas. We also bought one hector (2.5 acres) of land to construct hostels for the children of the islanders near the highway about 11 miles from Matamoras City. The Diocesan Youth Fellowship raised about \$49,500.00 to buy the land to build hostels. One member of our Diocese contributed about \$20,000.00 to buy the land to build the houses for the islanders. Both lands were purchased in the name of a civil organization namely 'Chrysostom Mar Thoma Mexican Association' registered with the Mexican government. Our Diocesan Episcopa is the President of this civil organization and all the Diocesan Council members are the Board of Directors



of the organization. We appreciate the Diocesan Youth Fellowship for raising enough funds and the anonymous member of the Diocese to buy both lands which is much needed to build the houses and hostels at our Mission project in Mexico in a timely manner.

The Diocesan Youth Fellowship has sponsored the project of building the hostels for boys and girls of the islanders. This is planned as a facility where our youths can undertake mission trips through out the year especially during the summer holidays. We are planning to begin the construction of the hostels once the houses are built and the islanders are resettled in the mainland. Presently none of the children attend any school since they do not have any facility for education in the islands where they live. There are about 200 children of different ages to the islanders living in the islands without any basic facility like drinking water, house, education or medical help. Our goal is to pro-



vide these islanders who are fishermen with a house of their own, basic education to the children, and other basic facil-



and 10 houses are under construction. About 42 Youths from various parts of our Diocese visited the Islands from December 26-29, 2007 and distributed Christmas gifts by visiting their houses, and provided lunch for the islanders and their children. They also had a Christmas Carol program for the Islanders and the children at our construction site on December 27, 2007. Our Youths were visiting the islands since 2001 and who ever visited the Mexico Mission field take this as a challenge and commit themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ. We need everyone's prayerful support and cooperation to complete the project in a timely manner. We would like to dedicate these 90 houses as a birthday gift from our Diocese to our beloved Valiya Metropolitan, when Thirumeni visits us in May 2008. Please remember to pray for this project and we like to dedicate the Second Saturday of each month in 2008, to pray for this project, the construction workers and the people over there.

I believe, with all of your support, we will be able to complete both projects in a timely manner. I also request all of you to plan to visit this new mission field of our Church during the time of its dedication in May 2008. The Mission field has been named as "Colonia Marthoma" and we are planning the name the streets in the colony with the names of the Apostles as per the suggestion made by the Diocesan Council. The Mission Board web site is www.marthomamission.org where you can see more photos of the islanders and construction of houses. As stated in Mathew 19: 26 "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." It is only with God's grace that our beloved Coorilos Thirumeni had the vision of beginning a mission field close to us where our youths can go and stay and spend time in mission activities so that they can grow in the love of God and in the faith of our Church. I take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our beloved Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa for Thirumeni's vision about this Mission field and the able leadership given to the Diocese to have a mission field for our Diocese.

ities like drinking water, electricity, medical help etc. The construction of the houses began in October 2007. The size of each house is 24' X12' with concrete floor and is built with concrete bricks, all four corners and in between with iron rods and concrete and the roof is covered by shingles. These houses are meant to be resistant to ordinary hurricane that may occur in that part of the world and hence the cost of building each house has doubled this time. The cost for one house is approximately \$3,100 U. S dollars. Funds are being raised from various parishes in our diocese. Several Parishes, organizations and individuals have already responded to our request and the Diocesan Council express its sincere thanks to all parishes, organizations and individuals who have already contributed to this noble cause.

Our goal is to finish 90 houses by April 30, 2008. We are planning to complete at least 45 houses by the end of January, if weather cooperates and to hand over the keys to the islanders by our Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa. The remaining 45 houses are planned to be completed by the end of April 2008. The dedication of the 90 houses is planned to be held in May 2008. God willing, The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan and The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan will attend the function along with our Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa.

The Mission Board has appointed a fundraising committee with Rev. Vinoy Daniel as the convener. As Treasurer of the Diocese, I humbly request each and every member in this Diocese to whole heartedly participate in this project. On December 18, 2007, Rev. T. S. Philip, Vicar of Immanuel MTC, Houston, who is the Convener of the Local Committee under the Mission Board, and myself visited the Islands and the construction site to evaluate the progress of the building of houses. So far we have finished 15 houses



Christmas in Mexico

Appu Wilson, MTC Dallas, Carrollton



Forty youths from various parishes of our diocese, packed into four vans, and traveled over 400 miles to Mexico, on December 26th, 2007 with the expectation to do God's work and serve those who are in need. By the grace of God this mission team was able to spend two days in the Mar Thoma mission field in Mexico.

The first day was spent on 'Colonia Mar Thoma' (Mar Thoma Colony), the mainland community our church is developing to relocate those who were displaced from the islands of Puntilla Norte and Fantasia after hurricane Emily in 2005. We spent time with the children in our mission field by playing games, making crafts, and teaching them



the story of Christ's birth. This nativity story was then performed for the entire community on a makeshift stage and included a flock of shepherds, three wise men, a multitude of angels, and many other important characters. It was truly amazing to watch the nativity story being performed by the children of the islanders, a story that we have seen and performed many times before in our own parishes. When we

saw the joy on the faces of the children and the delight of the parents helped us realize that although we may come from different cultures, we were blessed with the opportunity to share the story of Christ. These shared experiences continued as we had an unexpected visit from a very special guest from the North Pole. The children of the community



reacted with elation, as any ordinary child would, when Santa Claus came and sang songs and distributed some much-needed gifts. Santa Claus, with the help of the youths





of our diocese, was able to provide one pair of new shoes and socks for all the members in our mission field. We served and enjoyed delicious lunch with them.

The second day was spent on the island of Puntilla Norte with a focus on the spiritual development of the islanders in our mission field. In an activity aptly titled "Lord Teach Me to Pray" the mission team divided into three groups and visited over thirty houses on the island. As



they visited each house they sang Christmas carols, distributed the Spanish version of Lord's Prayer while explaining the importance of prayer, and spent time in prayer with



each of the family. In the spiritual development of this community, the mission team strives to plant seeds that will ensure sustainable and long-term spiritual growth.

On every mission trip to Mexico, we travel to the mission field to help those who are in need. What we often discover after two days of serving is that no matter how much we try to do for them, we are overwhelmed with what they do for us to improve spiritually and the impact that the members of this mission field have on our individual lives. These are people that live with very little, but somehow they have a wealth of joy. As we spend two days being missionaries in a far away place, I am reminded of the cry of the late Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan that every Marthomite is a missionary. The mission team returned with a conviction that this mission work should not remain in Mexico only but should be brought back with us to our homes, into our schools, and into our daily lives. Every



Marthomite is a missionary, everywhere, and all the time! Those youths who have served in the mission fields of Mexico have impacted the community in Mexico, but they are further challenged to continue this spirit of service and uphold it in their own communities.

It was also humbling for me to see the faith of those islanders in the 'Colonia Mar Thoma'. These people put their complete faith in Christ and find their strength in Him. In these the most difficult of life situations they are able to find joy. In contrast we are able to make the smallest of our problems into the largest of complaints. In our daily lives we often try to live on our own might, but the people of this community have that brokenness that so many of us long for in our lives. This is the brokenness that we pray will allow us to put our complete trust in God; a brokenness that allows us to live a content life, a brokenness that lets us count all life situations as blessings, and brokenness where we find strength in Christ alone.

"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:12-13. On Saturday December 29th, 2007, forty youth from our diocese, packed into four vans, and traveled over 400 miles, headed home knowing that God's work does not end in Mexico. ■

കരുതുന്നവൻ !!!

ജി. പുത്തൻകുരിശ്, ഹ്യൂസ്റ്റൺ

മാറ്റമോറസ്- ടെക്സസിന്റെ തെക്കൻ അതിർത്തിയിൽ സ്ഥിതിചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു കൊച്ചു മെക്സിക്കൻ നഗരം. അവിടെ നിന്നും കുറെക്കൂടി തെക്ക് വടക്കായി സഞ്ചരിച്ചാൽ നാം എത്തിച്ചേരുന്നത്, ഗൾഫ് ഓഫ് മെക്സിക്കോ എന്ന പ്രൗഢഗംഭീരമായ സാഗരതീരത്താണ്. കാലങ്ങളായി തന്റെ കലാവൈഭവം തെളിയിച്ചുകൊണ്ട്, പ്രകൃതി തീർത്തൊട്ടുത്ത മനോഹര ഭൂപ്രദേശങ്ങൾ. കുറെക്കൂടി ഉള്ളിലേക്ക് കയറിച്ചെന്നാൽ, വെള്ളത്താൽ ചുറ്റപ്പെട്ട മണൽതുരുത്തുകൾ. മത്സ്യബന്ധന ബോട്ടിൽ കയറി ഈ മണൽതുരുത്തിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്ര അനിർവ്വചനീയമായ അനുഭൂതികളുടെ ചിറ്റോളങ്ങൾ മനസ്സിൽ സൂഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. നേരീയ തണുത്ത കാറ്റിൻ കരങ്ങൾ ശരീരത്തെ തഴുകുമ്പോൾ അറിയാതെ ആശാന്റെ കവിത മനസ്സിലേക്ക് ഓടിയെത്തി,

“ഉളവായിടുന്നു സുഖമേറ്റുമുള്ളിലെൻ

കുളിർപശ്ചിമാംബുനിധിവായുപോതമേ.” - കൂട്ടം കൂട്ടമായി സഞ്ചരിക്കുന്ന തുവൽ വസ്ത്രധാരികളായ അരയന്ന കൂട്ടങ്ങൾ, ആകാശത്ത് നിന്നെങ്ങോ പൊട്ടി വിണതുപോലെ ചീറിപാഞ്ഞു വന്ന് മത്സ്യം കൊത്തി പറക്കുന്ന പക്ഷികൾ- ഞാൻ അറിയാതെ പറഞ്ഞുപോയി - നഗരമെ നന്ദി, ഞാൻ ഈ ശാന്തതയിൽ ഒന്നു ഊയലാടട്ടെ.

ആകസ്മികം എന്ന് എല്ലാറ്റിനേയും വിശേഷിപ്പിച്ചിരുന്ന ഒരു കാലമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഇന്ന് തിരുത്തി പറയുന്നു ‘പരികല്പിതം’ എന്ന്. ദൈവ നീശചയം, ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികം എന്നിങ്ങനെ പര്യായങ്ങൾ പലതുമുണ്ടാകാം. മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയുടെ നോർത്ത് അമേരിക്കൻ മിഷൻ പ്രവർത്തനം ‘പോയന്റേ നോർത്ത്’ എന്ന മണൽതുരുത്തിലേക്ക് കടന്ന് വന്നത് ആകസ്മികം എന്ന് വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കാൻ കഴിയുകയില്ല. അത് പരികല്പിതം തന്നെ. മാർത്തോമ്മസഭ ഈ തുരുത്തിലെ നിരാലംബരായ മുക്കവന്മാർക്ക് വേണ്ടി തീർത്ത വീടുകളുടെ താക്കോൽ അന്തേവാസികൾക്ക് കൈമാറാൻ പോകുന്ന ദിവസം അടുത്തു വരുന്നു. അതിന്റെ തയ്യാറെടുപ്പിലാണ്, സംശയിക്കണ്ട! പരികല്പിതമായി ഈ തുരുത്തിലെത്തിയ പരദേശിയായ മലയാളി. നോർത്ത് അമേരിക്കൻ-യൂറോപ്പ് ഭദ്രാസനാധിപൻ റൈറ്റ്. റവ. ഡോക്ടർ യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കുറിലോസ് തിരുമേനിയേയും, മറ്റ് വിശിഷ്ടാതിഥികളേയും ഈ മണൽതുരുത്തിലേക്ക് ആനയിക്കാനുള്ള തത്രപാടിലാണ് ‘പരദേശി. ഒരു വശത്ത് പണിതീരാത്ത വീടുകളുടെ പൂർത്തീകരണത്തിനുള്ള സാധനങ്ങളുടെ സംഭരണം. മറുവശത്ത് വരുന്ന അതഥികളെ എവിടെ? എങ്ങനെ? സ്വീകരിക്കണം എന്നുള്ള ചിന്ത. എന്തായാലും, തലക്കുമുകളിൽ ജ്വലിച്ചു നിൽക്കുന്ന സൂര്യന്റെ ചുടേല്ക്കാനുള്ള കരുത്ത് വരുന്നവർക്കില്ലാത്തതുകൊണ്ട് എവിടെ നിന്നെങ്കിലും ഒരു ടാർപ്പോളിൻ കൊണ്ടുവന്ന് വലിച്ചുകെട്ടി തണൽ ഉണ്ടാക്കിയേ പറ്റൂ. ദൈവമേ! ഈ തുരുത്തിൽ ഇത് ഞാൻ എവിടെപോയി സംഘടിപ്പിക്കും? അറിയാതെ വേദനിക്കുന്ന മനസ്സിന്റെ ദൈവത്തിനുള്ള എസ്. എം എസ്. അന്ന് തിടുകത്തിൽ മാറ്റമോറസിൽ എത്തി. വിടിന്റെ പണിക്കാവശ്യമായ സാധനങ്ങൾ ഒരു ട്രക്കിൽ കയറ്റി, ആവശ്യത്തിനുള്ള മറ്റ് സാധനങ്ങളുമായി താൻ പിന്നാലെ വന്നോളം എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ് വണ്ടിക്കാരനെ ‘നോർത്ത് പോയന്റിയിലേക്കയച്ചു.’ സംഘർഷങ്ങളുടെ ഘോഷയാത്ര മനസ്സിലൂടെ, ‘ദൈവമേ നീയല്ലാതെ ഈ പത്മോസ് ദീപിൽ ആരു സഹായത്തിന്?’ ഈ പഞ്ജരത്തിന്റെ ഉള്ളിൽ എവിടെയോ ഒളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന കർത്താവിനോട് ഒരു ചോദ്യം ‘നീ ഭയപ്പെടേണ്ട’ മറുപടി. വണ്ടിക്കാരന്റെ പിന്നാലെ, മറ്റ് ആവശ്യത്തിനുള്ള സാധനങ്ങളുമായി, ചിന്തയുടെ ലോകത്തിലൂടെ തനിയെ വണ്ടി ഓടിച്ചു പോകയാണ്. ‘ടാർപ്പോളിൻ’ ഇടക്കിടക്ക് കയറി വരുന്ന ചിന്ത അതിന്റെ ഉപയോഗത്തെക്കാളേറെ ചുടു നൽകിക്കൊണ്ടിരുന്നു. ഏകദേശം ഒന്നര മണിക്കൂർ യാത്രക്കു ശേഷം ലക്ഷ്യ സ്ഥാനത്തെത്തിയപ്പോൾ, തനിക്കു മുൻപേ പോന്ന വണ്ടിയും സാധനങ്ങളും എത്തിയിട്ടില്ല. ആകെ വിഷമമായി. വണ്ടി എവിടെപോയി? ആകാംക്ഷയുടെ നിമിഷങ്ങൾ! ഞ്ഞോ! ഇവിടേക്ക് വരാൻ ഒരു വഴിയേയുള്ളൂ. പിന്നെ എന്തു പറ്റി? സംശയങ്ങളുടെയും ചോദ്യങ്ങളുടെയും മിസൈലുകൾ മനസ്സിനെ കീറി മുറിച്ചു പായുന്നു. ഏതായാലും കുറച്ചു കൂടി മുന്നോട്ട് പോയി ഒന്ന് അന്വേഷിക്കുക. ആരോ ഉള്ളിലിരുന്ന് ഉപദേശിച്ചു. കുറെക്കൂടി മുന്നോട്ട് പോയി ഒരു വഴിയോരകടയുടെ മുന്നിൽ വണ്ടി നിറുത്തി. ‘ഇതിലെ സാധനങ്ങൾ നിറച്ച ഒരു വണ്ടി’ വന്നോ? കടക്കാരനോട് ചോദിച്ചു, ഇല്ല കണ്ടില്ല കടക്കാരൻ മറുപടി പറഞ്ഞു. ടാർപ്പോളിൻ! ‘ചിന്തായം മണിമന്ദിരത്തിൽ’ നിന്നാരോ വിളിച്ചു പറഞ്ഞു. പിന്നെ മടിച്ചില്ല. അർമാനോ (സഹോദരാ) ഇവിടെ ടാർപ്പോളിൻ കിട്ടാൻ വല്ലമാർഗ്ഗവും ഉണ്ടോ? ‘എന്തിനാ’ കടക്കാരന്റെ ചോദ്യം? കാര്യം അവനോട് ചുരുക്കമായി പറഞ്ഞു. എന്റെ കടയുടെ പുറകിൽ കിടക്കുന്ന ടാർപ്പോളിൻ മതിയോ? ഞഹോ! അത്ഭുതത്തിന്റെ ആത്മഗതം. കടയുടെ പിന്നിൽ തനിക്കാവശ്യമായ ടാർപ്പോളിൻ. കൂടാതെ അതിന് പ്രതിഫലമില്ലാതെ എത്തിച്ച് പന്തലു കെട്ടിതാരാം എന്നുള്ള വാഗ്ദാനവും! ദൈവമേ! മനസ്സിനുള്ളിൽ വിങ്ങലുകൾ, തേങ്ങലുകൾ. കർത്താവേ നിന്റെ ഈ കരുതലും അദ്ഭുതവും ആരോട് പറയും? ആരു വിശ്വസിക്കും?

തൊഴിലിന്റെ നീതിശാസ്ത്രം ക്രിസ്തീയ വീക്ഷണത്തിൽ

റവ. മാത്യു കെ. ജാക്സൺ, ന്യൂയോർക്ക്

ചാതുർവർണ്യത്തിന്റെ ഫലമായുണ്ടായ വിഭാഗീയതാണ് തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയെ ഇത്രയധികം അപചയപ്പെടുത്തിയത്. ബ്രാഹ്മണൻ വേദോപദേശം, ക്ഷത്രിയൻ ഭരണം, വൈശ്യൻ(വണിക്ക്) വാണിജ്യം. ശൂദ്രൻ ഇതരജോലികൾ. തൊഴിലും തൊഴിലാളിയും മുതലും മുതലാളിയും ഏതൊരു സമൂഹത്തിന്റെയും വളർച്ചയുടെ അവിഭാജ്യ ഘടകങ്ങളാണ്. എന്നാൽ തൊഴിലിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ വിവേചനവും വേർതിരിവും നിലനിൽക്കുന്നത് തൊഴിൽ സംസ്കാരത്തിന് ഒട്ടും യോജിച്ചതല്ല. മൃഗജാലങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ചിലത് മനുഷ്യൻ ഉണ്ടെന്നുള്ള തിരിച്ചറിവാണ് അവന്റെ കർമ്മ മണ്ഡലത്തെ സവിശേഷവും സചേതനവുമാക്കുന്നത്. ഇരതേടുക, ഇടംതേടുക, ഇണചേരുക എന്നിവ എല്ലാ ജീവജാലങ്ങൾക്കും പൊതുവായുള്ളതും ഈശ്വരസ്തുതിയും അദ്ധ്യാനിച്ച് ഉപജീവനം കഴിക്കുന്നതും മനുഷ്യൻ മാത്രവുമുള്ളതാണ്.



സ്രഷ്ടാവായ ദൈവമാണ് ആദ്യം ജോലിയിൽ ഏർപ്പെടുന്നത്. ആറു ദിവസംകൊണ്ട് ദൈവം തന്റെ ജോലി ഭംഗിയായി പൂർത്തീകരിച്ചു. ഏഴാം ദിവസമോ തന്റെ ജോലിയിൽ നിന്നും നിവൃത്തനായിരുന്നു. സ്വന്തം സാദൃശ്യത്തിലും സ്വരൂപത്തിലും സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യൻ ഈ ലോകത്തിന്റെ മേൽ പൂർണ്ണ അധികാരം കൊടുത്തു(ഉല്പ. 1:28). അങ്ങനെ പുരുഷനും സ്ത്രീയുമായി സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യകുലം ഈ പ്രപഞ്ചത്തെ മുഴുവൻ തന്റെ സംരക്ഷണയിലാക്കുവാനാണ് ദൈവം ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്നത്. വൈവിധ്യമുള്ള സൃഷ്ടികളാൽ സമ്പൂർണ്ണമായ ഈ ലോകം വളരെ നല്ലതെന്ന് ദൈവം കണ്ടു(ഉല്പ. 1:31).

സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ ആരംഭത്തിൽ തന്നെ ദൈവം മനുഷ്യന് നൽകിയ നിയോഗം ദൈവത്തോടൊപ്പം സൃഷ്ടിപ്രകൃതയിൽ പങ്കുചേരുക എന്നതാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പ്രതിനിധിയായി നിന്ന് ഈ ലോകത്തിന്റെ പുരോഗമനത്തിന് നേതൃത്വം നൽകുക. അങ്ങനെ മനുഷ്യൻ ഒരേ സമയം സൃഷ്ടിയും സ്രഷ്ടാവുമായി മാറി.

ഭാരതീയ ചിന്തയിൽ ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടി കർമ്മം ചെയ്യുന്നത് തപസ്സിലൂടെയാണ്. തന്റെ താപം തന്നിലേക്ക് സംഭരിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് തന്റെ പുരുഷാത്മകത്വം മുഴുവൻ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. തന്റെ സത്തയുടെ(being) ഒരു ബഹിർഗമനമാണ് ഇതിലൂടെ നടക്കുന്നത്. സൃഷ്ടി ദൈവീകമാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ശക്തിയും സൗന്ദര്യവും മഹത്വവുമാണ് സൃഷ്ടിയിൽ നാം ദർശിക്കുന്നത്.

ബൈബിളിലെ ആദ്യപുസ്തകമായ ഉല്പത്തി രണ്ടാം അധ്യായത്തിൽ തരിശായി കിടക്കുന്ന ഭൂമിയിൽ ദൈവം നല്ലൊരു തോട്ടം ഉണ്ടാക്കി അതിന്റെ പാലനത്തിനായി നദികൾ ക്രമീകരിച്ച് മനുഷ്യ ദമ്പതികളെ അതിൽ പാർപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ആ തോട്ടം സൂക്ഷിപ്പാനും അതിൽ കൃഷി ചെയ്യാനും അവരെ നിയോഗിക്കുന്നു (ഉല്പ. 2:15). സ്ത്രീയെക്കൂടി സൃഷ്ടിച്ചിനു ശേഷമാണ് ദൈവം ജോലി ഏല്പിക്കുന്നത്. അതിനാൽ ജോലിയിൽ രണ്ടുപേർക്കും തുല്യതയും കൂട്ടുത്തരവാദിത്വവും ഒരുപോലെയാണ്. മനുഷ്യന്റെ ഏതൊരു ജോലിയും ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ജോലിയുടെ തുടർച്ചയാണ്.

ഈ പ്രപഞ്ചം മനുഷ്യന് പാർക്കാനുള്ള ഒരു കളിപ്പാട്ട് മാത്രമല്ല. ഉണ്ണാനും ഉടുക്കാനും വേണ്ട വിഭവങ്ങൾ ഉൽപാദിപ്പിക്കുകയുമല്ല അവന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. അതിനെ ഇഷ്ടം പോലെ കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യാനും നശിപ്പിക്കാനും മനുഷ്യന് അധികാരമില്ല. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പ്രതിനിധിയായി നിന്ന് ദൈവഹിതാനുസരണം പ്രവർത്തിക്കുകയാണ് മനുഷ്യധർമ്മം. അതുകൊണ്ട് മനുഷ്യന്റെ ഏത് നേട്ടവും കണ്ടുപിടിത്തങ്ങളുമെല്ലാം സൃഷ്ടിയെ പൂർണ്ണതയിലേക്കും ഔന്നത്യത്തിലേക്കും നയിക്കുന്നതായിരിക്കണം. മനുഷ്യന്റെ ഏതൊരു അദ്ധ്യാനത്തിലൂടെയും ഈ പ്രപഞ്ചം കൂടുതലായി ദൈവീക മഹത്വം വിളംബരം ചെയ്യുകയും സൃഷ്ടിയെ അതിന്റെ പൂർണ്ണതയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുകയുംവേണം. സൃഷ്ടിയെ വിരുപമാക്കുന്നതും അപൂർണ്ണവുമായ ഏതൊരു തൊഴിലും അവിശുദ്ധമാണ്.

ഇന്ന് ജോലി ചെയ്യുന്നത് അനഭികാമ്യവും അലസമായി നടക്കുന്നത് അനുഗ്രഹവുമായി കാണുന്ന പലരുമുണ്ട്. ഇവിടെയാണ് 'അഭിവൃദ്ധിയുടെ സുവിശേഷ' (Prosperity gospel)-ത്തിന്റെ ധർമ്മീകൃത ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യപ്പെടുന്നത്. പൗലോസ് അപ്പോസ്തോലൻ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത് 2തെസ്സ.3:10 'വേല ചെയ്യാൻ മനസ്സില്ലാത്തവൻ തിന്നുകയുമരുത്'. ജോലിയെ ഉപജീവനമാർഗ്ഗമായി മാത്രം കാണുന്നത് തെറ്റാണ്. ആത്മാർത്ഥവും സത്യസന്ധവുമായ ഏതൊരു ജോലിയും ഒരു ഉപാസനയാണ്. തൊഴിൽ ഒരു ആരാധനയാണ് (Work is Worship). ഒരാളിന്റെ വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ പ്രഭാവം വെളിപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ തൊഴിൽ മാഹാത്മ്യത്തിലല്ല ചെയ്യുന്ന തൊഴിലിന്റെ മാഹാത്മ്യത്തിലാണ്. തൊഴിലിന്റെ മാഹാത്മ്യം മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നത് നാം ചെയ്യുന്ന ജോലിയിലും ആ ജോലിയോടുള്ള നമ്മുടെ പ്രതിബദ്ധതയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലുമാണ്.

യിസ്രായേല്യർ ഈജിപ്തിൽ അടിമകളായി കഴിയേണ്ടി വന്നപ്പോൾ ജീവിതത്തിലും തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിലും നേരിട്ട കടുത്ത വേദനയുടെയും യാതനയുടെയും ബാക്കി പത്രമാണ് പുറപ്പാട് അഞ്ചാം അദ്ധ്യായം. തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിലെ എല്ലാ നൈതികതയും തകർത്തുകളഞ്ഞ ചില സംഭവങ്ങളാണ് അവിടെ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നത്. ആരാധനയേയും അദ്ധ്യാനത്തേയും രണ്ടായി കണ്ടതാണ് ഇജിപ്ഷ്യൻ സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ ഏറ്റവും വലിയ പരാജയം. അടിമ എന്ന പീഡിത വർഗ്ഗത്തിന്റെ യഥാർത്ഥ അവസ്ഥ ആദ്യമായി മറന്നീക്കി പുറത്തുവരുന്നത് ഈ സന്ദർഭത്തിലാണ്. വേല എളുപ്പമാക്കേണ്ടതിനു പകരം അവരുടെ വേല കഠിനമാക്കുന്നു. അടിമകൾക്ക് ഒരിക്കലും ഇളവ് അനുവദിക്കാൻ പാടില്ല എന്ന നിഷ്ഠൂരപ്രമാണം യിസ്രായേൽ ജനതയുടെമേൽ പ്രയോഗിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ഫറവോയുടെ ഇത്തരം നിലപാടുകൾക്ക് ഒരു മറുപുറമുണ്ട്. അവിടെ നിലനിന്നിരുന്ന രണ്ട് മുഖ്യചിന്താധാരകളാണ് യാഹ്വേ- എബ്രായരുടെ ദൈവം(God of the Hebrews) ഫറവോ- ഈജിപ്റ്റിന്റെ രാജാവ്(King in Egypt) ആരാണു ശക്തൻ? അതുകൊണ്ടത്രെ 'അന്ന് ഫറവോൻ ജനത്തിന്റെ ഊഴിയവിചാരകന്മാരോടും പ്രമാണികളോടും കല്പിച്ചതെന്തെന്നാൽ; ഇഷ്ടിക ഉണ്ടാക്കുവാൻ ജനത്തിന് മുന്വിലത്തെപ്പോലെ ഇനി വൈക്കോൽ കൊടുക്കരുത്; അവർ തന്നെ പോയി വൈക്കോൽ ശേഖരിക്കട്ടെ. എങ്കിലും ഇഷ്ടികയുടെ കണക്ക് മുന്വിലത്തെപ്പോലെ തന്നെ അവരുടെ മേൽ

ചുമത്തേണം; ഒട്ടും കുറക്കരുത്. അവർ മടിയന്മാർ; അതുകൊണ്ടാകുന്നു; ഞങ്ങൾ പോയി ഞങ്ങളുടെ ദൈവത്തിന് യാഗം കഴിക്കട്ടെ എന്ന് നിലവിളിക്കുന്നത്. അവരുടെ വേല അതിഭാരമായിരിക്കട്ടെ; അവർ അതിൽ കഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടെട്ടെ(പുറ. 5:6-9). ഫറവോയുടെ പുതിയ തൊഴിൽ നയവും തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിലെ ബ്യൂറോക്രസിയും യിസ്രായേലുരുടെ ജീവിതത്തെ ക്ലേശപൂർണ്ണമാക്കി. തന്മൂലം തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിൽ അരക്ഷിതാവസ്ഥയും അസ്വാതന്ത്ര്യവും വർദ്ധിക്കാനിടയാക്കി. ഭിന്നിപ്പിച്ച് ഭരിക്കുക എന്ന ഫറവോയുടെ പുതിയ തന്ത്രം ഏറ്റെടുക്കുവാൻ വിജയിച്ചു കാണുന്നു.

താലന്തുകളുടെ ഉപമയിൽ (മത്താ. 25: 14 - 30) ഓരോരുത്തരും നിർവ്വഹിക്കേണ്ട ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് ക്രിസ്തു ചില വേറിട്ട ആശയങ്ങൾ നൽകുന്നുണ്ട്. 'ഒരു മനുഷ്യൻ പരദേശത്തു പോകുമ്പോൾ ദാസന്മാരെ വിളിച്ച് തന്റെ സമ്പത്ത് അവരെ ഏല്പിച്ചു'. ഈ പദപ്രയോഗം തന്നെ യേശുവിന്റെ മരണത്തിനും ഉത്ഥാനത്തിനും വീണ്ടും വരവിനും ഇടയ്ക്കുള്ള സമയം ശിഷ്യർ ചെയ്യേണ്ട ജോലി ഫലപ്രദമായി നിറവേറ്റണം എന്ന മുന്നറിയിപ്പാണ്. സമൂഹത്തിനു വേണ്ടിയും സമൂഹവുമായുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിലും മാത്രമേ ഒരാൾക്ക് പ്രയോജനകരമായി തന്റെ ജോലി നിർവ്വഹിക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. താലന്തുകളുടെ വിഭജനത്തിലുള്ള ഏറ്റക്കുറച്ചിൽ നമ്മുടെ കഴിവുകളിലും ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങളിലുമുള്ള വ്യത്യസ്തതയെ സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നുവെങ്കിലും സമയവും അവസരവും എല്ലാവർക്കും തുല്യമായി വീതിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. യജമാനന്റെ മടങ്ങി വരവ് സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നത് ഓരോരുത്തരുടേയും കാര്യവിചാരകത്വം തെളിയിക്കപ്പെടാനുള്ള നാഴിക വന്നിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന തിരിച്ചറിവാണ്.

തൊഴിൽ ദാതാവും തൊഴിലാളിയും തമ്മിലുള്ള ഐക്യമാണ് തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയെ എപ്പോഴും സജീവമാക്കുന്നതും ഉത്പാദനത്തെ ഗണ്യമായി വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നത്. ഒരു താലന്തു ലഭിച്ചയാളിന്റെ മനോഭാവം വീക്ഷിക്കുക 'നീ വിതയ്ക്കാത്തേടത്തു നിന്ന് കൊയ്യുകയും വിതാത്തേടത്ത് നിന്ന് ചേർക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന കഠിന മനുഷ്യൻ'(V:24). ഇത്തരം മനോഭാവം നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന തൊഴിലാളി മുതലാളി ബന്ധത്തിൽ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വപൂർണ്ണമായ ജോലിനിർവ്വഹണം സാധ്യമല്ല.

താലന്തുകളെ വർദ്ധിപ്പിച്ച ദാസന്മാരോട് യജമാനൻ പറഞ്ഞതോ 'നല്ലവനും വിശ്വസ്തനുമായ ദാസൻ' ഈ സൽപ്പേര് സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നത് മനുഷ്യ പ്രയത്നങ്ങളെ അംഗീകരിക്കുന്ന കർത്താവിന്റെ മനോഭാവമാണ്. പ്രതിഫലം എന്തായിരിക്കും എന്ന് നിശ്ചയമില്ലാതിരുന്നിട്ടും അനിശ്ചിതത്വത്തിലേക്ക് ധൈര്യപൂർവ്വം പ്രവേശിക്കുന്നവരാണ് എക്കാലത്തേയും 'നല്ല ദാസന്മാർ'! അങ്ങനെയുള്ളവർക്കേ ജീവിതത്തിലും അദ്ധ്യാനമേഖലയിലും ആനന്ദം കണ്ടെത്താൻ സാധിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. അവർക്ക് വിശ്രമമില്ല; കൂടുതൽ അദ്ധ്യാനമാണ് അവരുടെ വിശ്രമം. ക്രിസ്തുവാണ് അവരുടെ ആനന്ദവും.

വാക്കിനാലോ ക്രിയയാലോ എന്തുചെയ്താലും സകലവും കർത്തായ യേശുവിന്റെ നാമത്തിൽ ചെയ്തും അവൻമുഖാന്തരം പിതാവായ ദൈവത്തിന് സ്തോത്രം പറഞ്ഞുംകൊണ്ടിരിപ്പിൻ(കൊലൊ. 3:17). നമ്മുടെ തൊഴിലും തൊഴിൽമേഖലയിലെ ഓരോ ദിവസവും അപരന് വേണ്ടി നാം സമ്മാനിക്കുന്ന സൗരഭ്യമുള്ള പുച്ചെണ്ടുകളാകട്ടെ.

CARMEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, BOSTON



First Communicants with Coorilos thirumeni and Jacob K. Mathew achen.

Episcopal Visit and Annual Convention: The Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos visited the parish from 29th June to 1st July 2007. The annual convention was held on 29th & 30th June in which Thirumeni preached the Word of God. The Holy Communion Service was celebrated on Sunday and four students received their First Holy Communion. On his visit, Thirumeni also met all the organizations and interacted with the parishioners. He also visited the sick and the aged members at their homes.

Family Retreat and Parish Day: The Annual Retreat of the parish was conducted on 11th August 2007 at the church. The Rev. Dr. M. V. Abraham, former principal of



Rev. Dr. M. V. Abraham, Rev. Jacob K. Mathew and Rev. C. A. Mathew at the Parish Retreat.

Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam led the Retreat in which a good number of families attended. The Rev. C. A. Mathew (Ayroor) also attended the function. The Retreat was held in two sessions on the themes: "The Church as a community of good shepherd"; "Signs of Christian Maturity". The participants shared their views and opinions about the theme. The program was a blessing to all who attended. The Parish Day was observed on 12th Sunday under the leadership of the two achen which was followed by a fellowship meal.

Rev. Jacob K. Mathew, Vicar

യേശുവും സ്ത്രീകളും

മറിയാമ്മ ജയിംസ്, ഡാളസ് സെഹിയോൻ

(Continued from last issue)

ഇതിൽ നിന്ന് അനുമാനിക്കാവുന്ന ഒരു വസ്തുത പഴയനിയമത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്കു നൽകിയിരുന്ന മാനുതയുടെ ഒരംശംപോലും യേശുവിന്റെ കാലയളവിൽ ഒരു യഹൂദ സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് ലഭിച്ചിരുന്നില്ല. മതപരമായും സാമൂഹികമായും ഗാർഹികമായും അവൾ വളരെ പാരതന്ത്ര്യം അനുഭവിച്ചു. തീരെ വിലകുറഞ്ഞ വസ്തുവായിട്ടാണ് യഹൂദ പുരുഷന്മാർ സ്ത്രീയെ കരുതിയിരുന്നത്. ദൈവം തന്റെ സ്വന്തം സാദൃശ്യത്തിലും സ്വരൂപത്തിലും മനുഷ്യനെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു എന്ന ബോധ്യത്തിനു വിരുദ്ധമായി (ഉല്പ. 1:27) തങ്ങളുടെ ഇഷ്ടത്തിന് ഉപയോഗിക്കാവുന്ന വെറും വിലകുറഞ്ഞ വസ്തുവായി യഹൂദസമൂഹം സ്ത്രീയെ കരുതി.

ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ള സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ തികച്ചും വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ഒരു നിലപാടാണ് യേശു കൈക്കൊള്ളുന്നത്. പഴയനിയമത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്ന മാനുതയുടെ തുടർച്ചയും പൂർത്തീകരണമായിട്ടാണ് ക്രിസ്തു വന്നത്. പഴയ നിയമത്തിന്റെ പോരായ്മകൾ തിരുത്തി അപര്യാപ്ത തകൾ പരിഹരിച്ച് ദൈവീകാനുഭവം പൂർണ്ണതയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുക എന്നതായിരുന്നു ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ദൗത്യം. ഈ ദൗത്യ നിർവ്വഹണത്തിൽ യേശു സ്ത്രീകളോടു കണിച്ച മാനുസമീപനം സുപ്രധാനമാണ്.

യേശുക്രിസ്തുവും സ്ത്രീകളും

യേശുവിന്റെ സ്ത്രീകളോടുള്ള സമീപനം സമകാലിക സമൂഹിക പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഒരു പുതിയ കാൽവെയ്പ്പായിരുന്നു എല്ലാവരുടെയും രക്ഷകനായ ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ദൃഷ്ടിയിൽ സർവ്വരും ഒരുപോലെയാണിരുന്നത്. സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ ആരംഭത്തിലെ താളലയം സംജാതമാക്കുക എന്നത് യേശുവിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യമായിരുന്നു. ദൈവം ആദിയിൽ മനുഷ്യനെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചപ്പോൾ അവരെ ആണും പെണ്ണുമായി സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു എന്ന് വായിക്കുന്നു.

'മനുഷ്യനെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു' എന്ന വാക്യത്തിൽ 'മനുഷ്യനെ' സൂചിപ്പിക്കുമ്പോൾ ആദാം എന്ന എബ്രായപദമാണ് ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത്. ആദാം എന്ന വാക്ക് ഒരു മനുഷ്യനെ കുറിക്കുന്ന സാധാരണ നാമമല്ല. അത് മനുഷ്യകുലത്തെ മുഴുവൻ കുറിക്കുന്ന ഒരു സാമൂഹ്യനാമമാണ്. 'ആണും പെണ്ണുമായി അവരെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു' എന്നതിൽ നിന്ന്, സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ ആരംഭത്തിൽ തന്നെ ദൈവം ആണിനേയും പെണ്ണിനേയും ഒരുമിച്ചു സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു എന്നും, അതിലുപരി സ്വന്ത സാദൃശ്യത്തിലും സ്വരൂപത്തിലും സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു എന്നും മനസ്സിലാക്കാം. ഇതിനു പിന്നാലെയുള്ള ദൈവനിയോഗവും ഒരുമിച്ചാണ്. 'ദൈവം അവരെ അനുഗ്രഹിച്ചു. നിങ്ങൾ സന്താനപഷ്ടിയുള്ളവരായി പെരുകി ഭൂമിയിൽ നിറഞ്ഞു അതിനെ അടക്കി സമുദ്രത്തിലെ മത്സ്യത്തിന്മേലും.....വാഴുവിനെന്ന് അവരോട് കല്പിച്ചു' (ഉല്പ. 1:28). ഒരുപോലെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യർ ഏദൻതോട്ടത്തിൽ ആക്കപ്പെട്ടു. അവർ ഒരുമിച്ച് അവിടെ വസിച്ചപ്പോൾ ആരും ആർക്കും അധീനരല്ലായിരുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷയിലും ഈ സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥയാണ് നമുക്ക് കാണുവാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നത്. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ എല്ലാം ഒന്നാണ്. അവിടെ വർഗ്ഗ, വർണ്ണ, ലിംഗ, വ്യത്യാസം ഒന്നുമില്ല. അത്തരം വേർതിരിവുകളെല്ലാം അതിജീവിച്ച ഒരു ശുശ്രൂഷയാണ് യേശുവിൽ നാം കാണുന്നത്. വേർതിരിക്കപ്പെട്ട, വികലമാക്കപ്പെട്ട വ്യക്തിത്വങ്ങളായി ഇവരെ കണുവാൻ യേശുവിന് സാധിച്ചില്ല. അതുകൊണ്ടാണ് യേശു എല്ലാവരെയും അംഗീകരിച്ചതും

ആദരിച്ചതും. താൻ പാരമ്പര്യ വ്യവസ്ഥകളെ ലംഘിച്ചപ്പോൾ അതിനെ ഒരു ദൈവനിയോഗമായിട്ടല്ല, മറിച്ച് സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ ആരംഭത്തിലുണ്ടായിരുന്ന ആ അവസ്ഥ അനർത്ഥമാക്കുകയായിരുന്നു.

യേശുവിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷാവേളയിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾ

യേശുവിന്റെ പരസ്യ ശുശ്രൂഷാവേളയിൽ തന്നെ അനുഗമിച്ചവരുടെ കൂട്ടത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകളുമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ലൂക്കോ. 8:1-3 വരെയുള്ള വാക്യത്തിൽ ഇത് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. അവർ മഗ്ദലക്കാരത്തി മറിയ, യോഹന്ന, ശുശന്ന എന്നിവരായിരുന്നു. കൂടാതെ താൻ പ്രത്യേകമായി തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ശിഷ്യന്മാർ പോലും പതിപ്പായ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ കുരിശിന്റെ ചുവടുവരെയും അനുഗമിച്ചത് ഈ സ്ത്രീകളായിരുന്നു. എല്ലാ സുവിശേഷകരും ഇത് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. അതിലുപരി പുനരുത്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ആദ്യസാക്ഷികളും സ്ത്രീകളാണ്. മഗ്ദലക്കാരത്തി മറിയ (യോഹ. 20:1), മറ്റേ മറിയ (മത്താ. 28:1), ശലോമി (മർക്കോ. 16:1), യോഹന്നാന്റെയും യാക്കോബിന്റെയും അമ്മ മറിയ (ലൂക്കോ. 24:10) മാർത്തയും മറിയയും (ലൂക്കോ. 10, യോഹ. 11) എന്നിവരാണ് അവർ. മാർത്തയുടെയും മറിയയുടെയും ഭവനത്തിൽ യേശു മറിയയെ ന്യായപ്രമാണം പഠിപ്പിച്ചു. അതാകട്ടെ വ്യവസ്ഥാ പിതമായ യഹൂദ പ്രമാണത്തെ മറികടന്നുകൊണ്ടുള്ള സ്ത്രീജന വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിന്റെ തുടക്കം തന്നെയായിരുന്നു (ലൂക്കോ. 10:38-42). അതോടൊപ്പം സംഭവവും, താൻ മശിഹാ ആണെന്ന് ശമര്യക്കാരി സ്ത്രീക്ക് വെളുപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതും (യോഹ. 4:1-42), ക്രൂശീകരണത്തിനു മുമ്പ് കൂടും രോഗിയായിരുന്ന ശീമോന്റെ ഭവനത്തിൽ വച്ച് മറിയ പരിമള തൈലം കൊണ്ട് അഭിഷേകം ചെയ്യുന്നതും (മത്താ. 25:8-13; മർക്കോ. 14:3-9; ലൂക്കോ. 7:36-50; യോഹ. 12:1-3) യേശുവിന്റെ കാലത്ത് ഒരു യഹൂദ റബ്ബിയിൽ നിന്ന് യഹൂദന്മാർ പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കാത്ത കാര്യങ്ങളാണ്. മാത്രമല്ല യേശുവിൽ കൂടെ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്ന ഒരു കാര്യം വിവിധ ആവശ്യങ്ങളുമായി തന്റെ അടുക്കൽ വന്ന എല്ലാ സ്ത്രീകളെയും യേശു സഹായിക്കുന്നു എന്നുള്ളതാണ്. ഉദാഹരണമായി ഗ്രീക്കു വംശജയായ ഒരു സ്ത്രീയുടെ പൈതലിന് സൗഖ്യം കൊടുക്കുന്നതും (മർക്കോ. 7:24-30; മത്താ. 15:21-28), മത ആചാരപ്രകാരം അശുദ്ധയായിരുന്ന സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് സൗഖ്യം നൽകുന്നതുമായ (മർക്കോ. 5:25-34) അനേക സംഭവങ്ങൾ പുതിയ നിയമത്തിൽ വിവരിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്.

യേശുവിന്റെ പഠിപ്പിക്കലുകളിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾ

വിവാഹം, വിവാഹമോചനം എന്നിവയെപ്പറ്റി പഠിപ്പിക്കുമ്പോഴും (മത്താ. 19:3-12; മർക്കോ. 10:2-12) നൂതനമായ ഒരു അഭിപ്രായമാണ് യേശുവിനുള്ളായിരുന്നത്. വിവാഹമോചനം പുരുഷന്മാർക്കു മാത്രം അനുവദനീയമായിരുന്ന ആ കാലത്ത്, യേശു അതിനെ സഭയെയും എതിർക്കുന്നു. തങ്ങളുടെ ഹൃദയകാഠിന്യം നിമിത്തം വിവാഹമോചനം അനുവദിച്ചു കൊടുത്ത മോശയുടെ ന്യായപ്രമാണത്തെ വിമർശിക്കുന്നു (മത്താ. 19:8). പരസംഗം ഹേതുവായിട്ടല്ലാതെ ഭാര്യയെ ഉപേക്ഷിക്കുന്ന വനെല്ലാം വ്യഭിചാരം ചെയ്യുന്നു എന്നും; പരസംഗത്താൽ ഉപേക്ഷിച്ചവളെ ആരെങ്കിലും വിവാഹം കഴിച്ചാൽ അവനും വ്യഭിചാരം ചെയ്യുന്നു എന്നും കർത്താവ് പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു (മത്താ. 5:32, ലൂക്കോ. 18:18). ചുരുക്കത്തിൽ പുരുഷനോ, സ്ത്രീയോ ആരായിരുന്നാലും ആദ്യവിവാഹം നിലനിൽക്കെ മറ്റൊരു വിവാഹം കഴിച്ചാൽ അത് കുറ്റകരമാണ് എന്ന് യേശു നിസ്സംശയം പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്നു. ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ള ഒരു വിലയിരുത്തൽ മൂലം വിവാഹ

ശുശ്രൂഷയുടെ പരിപാവനതയെ യേശു മുറുകെപ്പിടിക്കുന്നു. കർത്താവ് പറയുന്നു, വിവാഹം എന്നത് ദൈവത്താൽ സ്ഥാപിതമായതാണ് (ഉല്പ. 1:27). 'അതുകൊണ്ട് പുരുഷൻ അപ്പനേയും അമ്മയേയും വിട്ടുപിരിഞ്ഞ് ഭാര്യയോട് പറ്റിച്ചേരും; അവർ ഏകദേശമായിത്തീരും' എന്നാണ് ഉല്പത്തിയിൽ കാണുന്നത് (2:24). ആയതിനാൽ ദൈവീകബന്ധത്തെ അഴിക്കുവാൻ ആർക്കും അനുവാദമില്ല. അഥവാ മോശ അനുവദിച്ച പ്രകാരം വിവാഹമോചനം നേടിയാൽ തന്നെയും ഭാര്യയും ഭർത്താവും ഒരേപോലെ കുറ്റക്കാരായിത്തീരും എന്ന് യേശു അസന്നിഗ്ദ്ധം പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്നു.

ഉപസംഹാരം

കർത്താവിന്റെ പരസ്യശുശ്രൂഷയുടെ കാലഘട്ടത്തിലെ യഹൂദ രബ്ബിമാരിൽ നിന്ന് തികച്ചും വ്യത്യസ്തനായ ഒരു രബ്ബിയെ യേശുവിൽ കാണാം. സകലരേയും ഉൾക്കൊണ്ട ആ ശുശ്രൂഷ പിതാവായ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഉദ്ദേശ്യത്തെ സഫ

ലമാക്കുന്നതായിരുന്നു. സമൂഹത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പുറന്തള്ളപ്പെട്ടവരും രണ്ടാംകിട വ്യക്തിത്വങ്ങളായി മാത്രം കണ്ടിരുന്ന സ്ത്രീകളെ, അന്നത്തെ ചിന്തയ്ക്ക് വിരുദ്ധമായി ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുവാനും അംഗീകരിക്കുവാനും ആദരിക്കുവാനും യേശുവിന് സാധിച്ചു. ലോകം മനോഹരമാകുന്നത് അന്യോന്യമുള്ള സ്നേഹബന്ധത്തിൽ കൂടെയാണ്, അന്യോന്യം അംഗീകരിക്കുന്നതിൽ കൂടെയാണ്. ഈ രീതി നിലനില്ക്കണമെങ്കിൽ ദൈവസൃഷ്ടിയായ 'മനുഷ്യൻ' അന്യോന്യം ആദരിക്കണം, അംഗീകരിക്കണം. ഇതാണ് യേശു പഠിപ്പിച്ചത്.

ഇന്നത്തെ ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ ഒരു ക്രിസ്തു കേന്ദ്രീകൃത ജീവിത ശൈലി രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുവാൻ നമുക്ക് സാധിക്കുമോ? കർത്താവ് കാട്ടിത്തന്ന മാർഗ്ഗത്തിലൂടെ സഞ്ചരിക്കുവാൻ നമുക്ക് സാധിക്കുമോ? ഇന്നത്തെ ക്രിസ്തീയ സമൂഹം ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഈ സമീപനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പാഠങ്ങൾ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

(To be continued in next issue)

NASSAU COUNTY APPOINTED MR. KALATHIL VARUGHESE AS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER

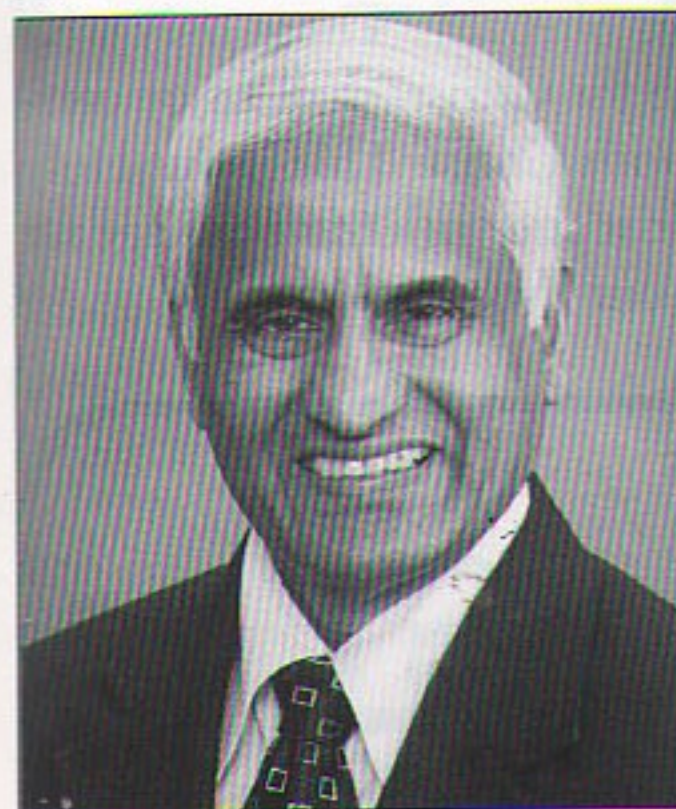


Kalathil Varughese, a businessman, an elected member of the Nassau County Committee for the Democratic Party, and an active member of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church has been appointed as Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission effective August 1, 2007, by the Nassau County Executive, Thomas R. Suozzi.

It is a great honor for the Malayalee and Indian Communities

to be represented by Mr. Varughese. The power and duties are to foster mutual understanding and respect, to encourage equality of treatment and prevent discrimination amongst all racial, religious and ethnic groups in the County of Nassau. The Commission also must cooperate with governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations to ensure that the County does not discriminate any individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, creed, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status and/or source of income. Complaints of any discrimination and/or violation of civil rights may be reported to the Human Rights Commission by calling 516-984-6591 or 516-571-3663.

TOM ABRAHAM ELECTED AS CITY COUNCILOR IN FLORIDA



Mr. Tom Abraham, member of Orlando Mar Thoma Congregation has been elected as the City Councilor from Orange City, Florida.

Orange City, Volusia County, Florida held its 2007 municipal elections on Tuesday, November 6, which brought out among the winners a Kerala born, Indian-American Tom Abraham as

a council member from the prestigious seat of Seat No. 3. Tom becomes the first Malayalee to win an election in State of Florida.

Tom Abraham known as "Chittooran Sir" to his students back in 1967-69, in Christian College, Chengannur,

came to the US in 1980, and became naturalized in 1989. Though Mr. Abraham was certified to teach in West Virginia schools in 1980, he found new pastures in America, and opted to become a certified nuclear medicine tech, and has stayed in that specialty for about 22 years. His love of teaching, preaching, and social service led him into the political circles in Orange City to speak for the citizens in the Orange City council meetings.

City of Orange City's website gives brief bio-data of Tom Abraham, at www.ci.orange-city.fl.us, under city council.

Tom Abraham belongs to Chittoor family in Chengannur and his mother parish is Chengannur Pazhayapalli. He is an active member of newly formed Orlando Marthoma Congregation, Florida.

Thomas Mathew (Jeemon), Secretary

YOUTH CORNER

How does Holy Communion affect my spiritual growth?

Jennifer Zachariah, Immanuel MTC, Houston

Bread and Wine symbolizes the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given during the Holy Communion which was instituted by Christ himself for us to commemorate His death and resurrection. It is a sacramental or memorial reenactment of what He did at His Last Supper in giving his disciples bread, saying "This is my body", and the cup, saying "This is my blood."

The word Holy Communion has its origin from a Greek word "Eucharist" meaning thanksgiving. Other phrases which are used to describe Eucharist are "Lord's Supper", "Table of the Lord", the "Lord's Body", the "Holy of Holies", and "the Breaking of the Bread".

The three synoptic Gospels (Matthew 26:29, Mark 22:24, and Luke 22:19-20), as well as Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians (11:23-26) contain versions of the Words of Institution spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper: "Take, eat, this is my body ... Take, drink, this is my blood ... Do this in remembrance of me." All subsequent celebrations of the Eucharist is based on this injunction.

When I realized the meaning and how symbolic taking Holy Communion was, I became aware of the great sacrifice of our Lord when he died on the cross for us sinners and was resurrected on the third day.

Let me share a few thoughts explaining how Holy Communion affects one's spiritual growth here.

Point 1: The first step towards spiritual growth is the consciousness of sin

Every Sunday, during the Holy Communion service, each of us is offered a time to reflect on our life and confess our sins as part of preparing ourselves to partake in the Lord's Table. During the recital of the prayer of confession we acknowledge our shortcomings and sins, and confess before God.

Point 2: The next step towards growing spiritually is to repent and seek the forgiveness of sins

As mentioned, the Gospel record states that "he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the

new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

The benefits of this sacrament are pointed out by the words, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins". These words assure us that in the sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Point 3: The third and most important step is to Abide in Him

John 6 says: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him".

The parable of the lost son demonstrates that after repenting and seeking forgiveness he came back to his Father's house and did not remain in his old ungodly lifestyle. He went through a complete restoration experience. This is the experience God has been inviting us for when we prepare to partake in the Holy Communion - an abiding experience, a communion with His Holy spirit. When the Holy Spirit is within a soul, the person has begun his/ her spiritual journey and grows more into God's eternal love.

Spiritual growth includes:

- 1) Increasing in your knowledge and understanding of God's Word,
- 2) Decreasing in your frequency and severity of sin,
- 3) Increasing in your practice of Christ-like qualities, and
- 4) Increasing in your faith and trust in God.

In conclusion, I would like to say that though I haven't received my Holy Communion yet, I believe it will play a major role in the growth of my spiritual life. I would like to end with this quote from Thomas Shepard "Those only who are ready and prepared in this life for Christ, shall enjoy eternal and immediate communion with Christ. This is our Holy Communion that is eternal in Christ and with this bondage we shall grow spiritually throughout our lives". ■

The World

Christine Anne Varghese, Grade 5, Chicago Mar Thoma Church

Every voice

Hear the noise

The beautiful sound

It wants to be found

People in the world

See that you can twirl

Show all your talents

Keep peace in balance

Always be fair

Don't make people stare

Try to be true

Let us renew

Be very cool

Not a fool

For this is the world

It is one big pearl

God has made this wonderful place.

The only reason is for us to praise.

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XI Diocesan Leadership Conference

The XI Diocesan Leadership Conference was conducted from Thursday, January 3rd to Sunday, January 6th, 2008 and hosted by the Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship at the Ramada Plaza, Denver, Colorado. 87 delegates representing 24 Youth Fellowships from around the Diocese participated in this year's conference. During the conference, the delegates studied the theme "Leadership: A Costly Discipleship" based on Luke 14:27, "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." As the purpose of the Diocesan Leadership Conference is to train, encourage, and foster the growth of youth leaders of the Mar Thoma Church in the principles of Christian discipleship, servanthood, and leadership, the delegates participated in talks, Bible Study sessions, and many discussions to gain a better understanding that in order to be a servant leader for Christ, you must first be His disciple, and there are costs associated with that discipleship.



several passages in the Bible to illustrate discipleship, leadership, and the challenges and sacrifices of those who followed Jesus Christ and served Him as leaders. Roy Achen also provided the delegates with devotions that were used during Friday and Saturday morning prayer sessions in preparation for the Bible Study sessions.



This year's conference offered track sessions that provided the delegates an opportunity to study the following areas: Worship, Mentoring, Missions, and Bible Study. Rev. Ninu Chandy (Youth Chaplain, Southwest A Region) and Mr. Larry Varghese (Trinity Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship) provided leadership in the Worship track, Rev. Skariah John (Youth Chaplain, Southwest B Region) and Ms. Sunitha Chandy (Los Angeles Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship) provided leadership in the Mentoring track, Rev. P.J. Varghese (Vicar, Epiphany Mar Thoma Church) and Rev. Biju Cherian (Youth Chaplain, Northeast Region) provided leadership in the Missions track, and Rev. Mathew Skariah (Youth Chaplain, Southeast A Region) and Mr. Roby Mathew (Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship). These track sessions provided content to the delegates in order to equip them with knowledge to share with their local Youth Fellowships and provide the leadership necessary to build the foundations of Worship, Witness, Study, and Service in the lives of every youth.



By God's grace, this year's conference was blessed with many great and talented speakers. The conference was inaugurated by our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos. Mr. Rajan Mathews, from New Jersey, served as the Main Speaker of the conference and delivered challenging talks highlighting the responsibilities of a servant leader to proclaim the Word of God in order to respond to society's pluralism, secularization and privatization of doctrine and faith. Rajan Uncle used Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book "The Cost of Discipleship" to highlight the many elements of discipleship and how it relates to Christian leadership. The importance of the Church and its role to respond to society's message was also stressed during the talks. The Bible Study sessions were led by Rev. Roy A. Thomas, Vicar of the Seattle Mar Thoma Church. During these sessions, Roy Achen highlighted



During this year's conference, members of the Diocesan Youth Fellowship presented a missions update that highlighted the activities of the Native American and Mexican Missions. Plans for the 2008 activities of the Oklahoma and Alabama mission trips among the Native Americans were shared with the delegates. The youths also presented the development objectives of the Mexico Mission, specifically in the areas of spiritual, medical, economic, and educational development. Updates were provided on the infrastructure development (housing and hostels) by Coorilos Thirumeni along with the short-term and long-term plans for the Mexico Mission. During this session, youths also had an opportunity to learn more about the mission activities and become involved in the planning and development of the mission. Prayer was the reason for the success of the mission activities conducted in 2007 and is needed for all the planned activities in 2008. All youths were invited to join a weekly mission prayer conference call conducted by the Diocesan Youth Fellowship for 15 minutes every Sunday evening at 10:00 p.m. EST at (712) 580-6300, pass code 257790#. The purpose of this call is to uplift the mission activities of the Church in prayer.

Mr. Rajan Mathews also led an informal discussion session on the role of Christian leadership in the corporate setting. As many ethical, moral, and other issues are constantly faced in the corporate world, the delegates engaged in a discussion on the Christian response to these challenges. Rajan Uncle shared his experiences as an executive faced with these issues and many delegates also shared their experiences, both in the corporate and academic setting. The importance of maintaining the values of the kingdom of God and not the values of the world was stressed when responding to these challenges.

During the Friday evening session of the conference, the delegates were given a wonderful musical performance by Roby Mathew of the Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship and his band The Drive. The delegates were also treated to a special musical performance by our "Youth Chaplain Quartet" during the closing session of the conference.



The conference was closed with the Holy Communion Service celebrated by Coorilos Thirumeni. During the closing program, the Diocesan Youth Fellowship presented Rev. Ninu Chandy and Rev. Biju Cherian, both completing their service as Youth Chaplains in 2008, with a card (signed by all the conference delegates) along with a token of appreciation. Mr. Steven Mathew (Dallas Farmers Branch MTC) and Mr. Swithin Titus (St. John's MTC) offered words of



felicitation of behalf of the youths of the Diocese. The youth members of the Diocesan Youth Fellowship Council also offered a word of thanks for the opportunity to serve the Lord in the Youth Fellowship ministry during the 2005 - 2007 term.

By the grace of God, the XI Diocesan Leadership Conference was a wonderful time of fellowship, study, praise, and worship. Special thanks to Rev. James Thomas, Vicar of the Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Church, Mr. Sunil Daniel, Convener, and all the members of the Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Church for their dedication, leadership, and support in making this conference a great success. May God use each of the delegates of this conference as instruments of His love as servant leaders of the Mar Thoma Church! ■

Ashley George, Diocesan Youth Fellowship Secretary

REV. C. P. WILSON, VICAR OF PHILADELPHIA MAR THOMA CHURCH IS CALLED TO HIS ETERNAL HOME



1964-2008

Rev. C. P. Wilson, Vicar of Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church went to his heavenly abode on January 25th at 12:30 PM, at Holy Redeemer Hospital near Philadelphia. Achen was admitted to the hospital on January 23rd morning.

Rev. C. P. Wilson (Wills Bhavan, Kadampanad, Kerala) was born on May 5, 1964 in Assam as the eldest child of K. Pappachen & Kunjamma

Pappachen. Wilson Achen came to know the Lord as a young child. After completing his B.A. (Political Science) at Mar Thoma College, Tiruvalla, Wilson Achen pursued his Bachelor of Divinity at Mar Thoma Seminary in Kottayam.

He was ordained as Deacon on June 16, 1989, and Kasseessa on July 6, 1989. Achen later completed his Master of Theology in Missions at Gurukul Theological College in Chennai.

Achen served as Chaplain to The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan (1989-1991) after serving as Secretary to Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa. He has served as Vicar of the following parishes: Pallipad St. Thomas, Pallipad Cheriapally, Thumpamon Christ, Ulanad Bethel, Karippuzha Ebenezer, Pollachi St. Thomas, Valparai Horeb, Sholayur, Amblikai St. Lukes, North Madras, Puthencavmala St. Thomas, and Vallamkulam St. Lukes.

He served as the superintendent of Deepthi Balikabhavan (Pallipad) from 1991-1993. He then served as the missionary at Pollachi Mission Field (Tamil Nadu) from 1994-1999.

On April 22, 1991, Wilson Achen married Pracey

Kochamma, daughter of K. M. Varghese & Aleyamma Varghese, Kozhencherry, Kerala.

Wilson Achen is survived by his wife, Pracey; daughters, Pavana (15) and Praveena (9); parents, K. Pappachen & Kunjamma Pappachen; brother, C. P. Nelson; sister, Vincy and brother-in-law, Rev. Jose Abraham, Vicar, Bethel MTC, Trivandrum).

Achen challenged the church members not to be satisfied by living mediocre lives, but rather, to live inspired lives; all for the glory of God. Members of the Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church were eager to see where Achen was going to lead them and will deeply miss his vision and passion for mission and evangelism. His teachings were not limited to just his words through sermons, but also his actions exhibited through his life of servanthood.

Achen's viewing and memorial services were conducted at Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia on Saturday January 26th and Thursday January 31st. This was one event that recorded the highest number of Malayalees ever gathering at one place in the USA during one evening. Individuals and families from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Baltimore, Washington, and other far away places came to pay their respect. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa led the services on Saturday at Ascension Mar Thoma Church. Clergies from Mar Thoma churches within the Diocese and clergies and church leaders from many other denominations attended the viewing and memorial service despite extreme cold weather conditions.

During its 30 years of existence, Diocese of North America & Europe is experiencing its first "Calling Home" of an Achen in active service through the sudden demise of Rev. C. P. Wilson. The Messenger family expresses its deepest condolence and sympathy to Pracey Kochamma, Pavana, Praveena and the bereaved families.

NORTH EAST REGIONAL FALL ONE DAY YOUTH CONFERENCE

By the grace of God, the Fall One Day Youth Conference was held on November 24, 2007, hosted by the Epiphany Mar Thoma Youth Fellowship. The theme was "Surrender to Follow". The portion taken was from Mark 10:17-31 focusing on the Rich Young Ruler. Vicar Rev. P.J. Varghese, Rev. Biju Cherian (Youth Chaplin), Rev. Jobi Varghese (President of N.E Region), and Rev. Mathew K. Jackson (Vicar of St. Johns MTC) prayerfully led the conference.

Mr. Rajan Mathews was the guest speaker and shared about understanding why we are created in God's image and the desires of our heart. Both our body and soul are intricately intertwined to make us who we are. Sad, but unfortunately true, how we love things and use people instead of loving people and using things. He had us seriously thinking about the hindrances in our lives that were keeping us from becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ. "Do not be conformed but be transformed". Jacob Koshy led the devotion, where we were reminded of the difference between "wanting" more and "needing" more. The devotional was entitled, "Living a Life of Contentment" with the following theme verse: "But Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought

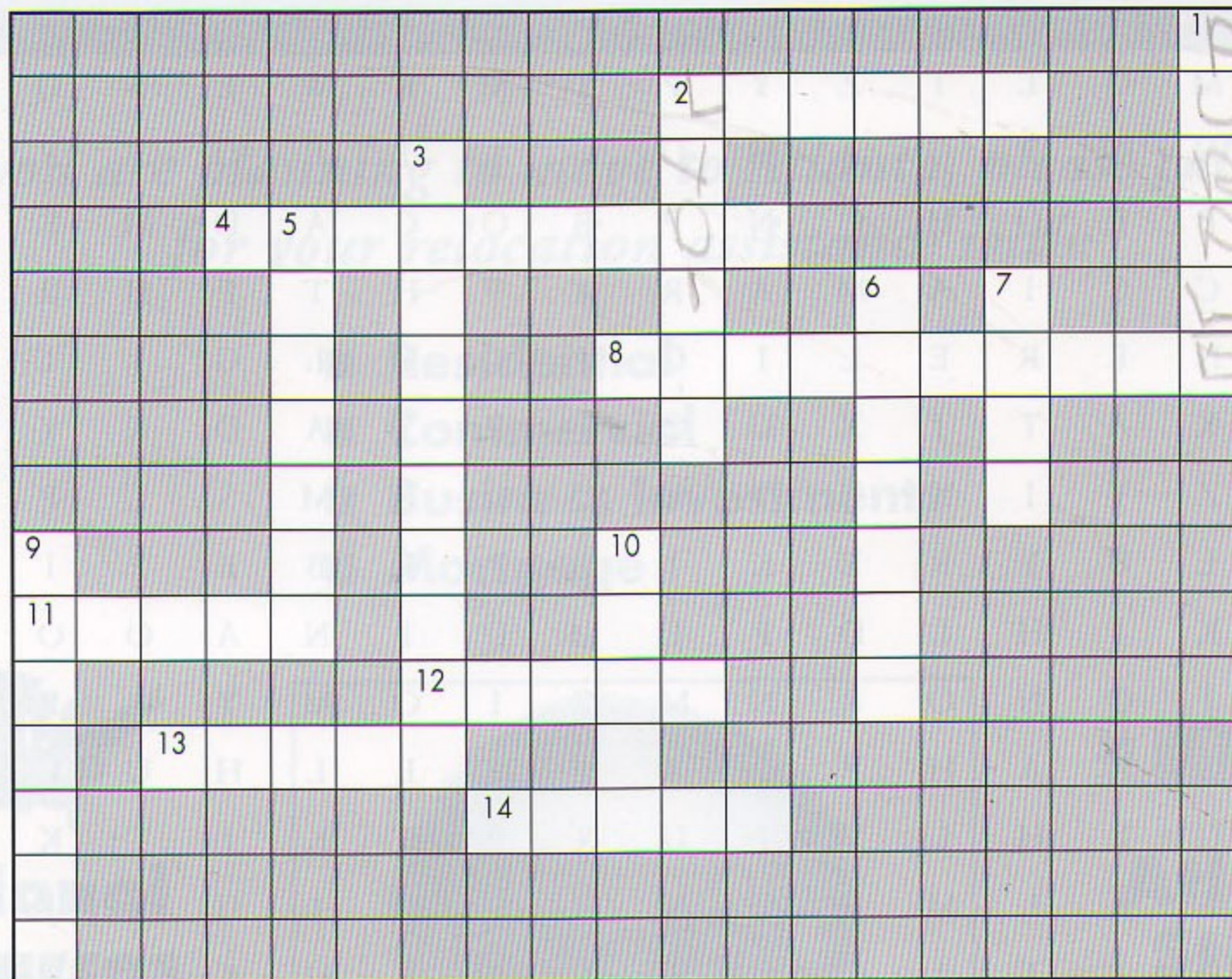
nothing into the world and can take nothing out of it". 1 Timothy 6:6-7. Devotion time was spent reflecting on how often we choose to define WHO we are by WHAT we have. In the light of all those who suffer a great deal, our needs begin to look a lot like wants. We need only to look at the cross to find meaning in living a life of contentment.

With over two hundred participants, many rededicated as well as accepted Christ into their lives for the first time. It was evident that the Lord's hand was in the making of this conference from the start. This message was not just about surrendering all that we have and following Christ, but also understanding the amazing life of our Savior and of His death and resurrection. We live today because of that sacrifice. Will you surrender? We may refuse to follow Him at times, but God's love for us is never exhausted and always an open invitation! Our sincere thanks to all those who committed their time, energy and support in leading this conference to its success. It was such an encouragement to see all unite in the Body of Christ. With our weaknesses revealed and our faith renewed, let us be blessed and continue to be a blessing to all we encounter!

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: CHAPTERS 15-19

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (Toronto, Canada)



Down

1. Lydia, a dealer in _____ cloth invited Paul to stay at her house.
2. Paul baptized _____ and his entire household.
3. Aquila and Priscilla were _____ by profession.
5. Name the learned man, a native of Alexandria, who vigorously argued with the Jews.
6. In Athens, there was an altar dedicated to an _____ God.
7. In Cenchrea, Paul had his _____ cut off because he had taken a vow.
9. _____ was a native of Lystra whose mother was a Jewess and father a Greek.
10. At the council of Jerusalem, Peter affirmed that God makes no distinction for we are saved only through the _____ of our Lord Jesus.

Across

2. In Thessalonica, Paul reasoned with the people of the _____ synagogue.
4. In a vision, Paul was called to preach the gospel to the people of _____.
8. John's baptism was a baptism of _____.
11. In Athens, Paul was greatly troubled when he saw that the city was full of _____.
12. Paul was a _____ citizen.
13. After a long disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, Paul chose _____ and left.
14. In Ephesus, the city _____ calmed the riot that broke out regarding the greatness of Artemis.

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

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Abraham T. Cherian, The Canadian MTC, Toronto | 11. Jessie John, The Canadian MTC, Toronto | 21. Ponnamma Ninan, MTC, San Francisco |
| 2. Achamma Chacko, Trinity MTC, Houston | 12. Jibin Abraham, Horeb MTC, Colorado | 22. Saramma Poikail, MTC of Greater Washington, DC |
| 3. Aleyamma Mathai, Epiphany MTC, NY | 13. Jijo Abraham, Horeb MTC, Colorado | 23. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC |
| 4. Aleyamma Thomas, California | 14. Justy John, St. James MTC, NY | 24. Sicily Skariah, MTC of Dallas, FB |
| 5. Amy A. George, NJ MTC | 15. Kunjamma Thomas, Trinity MTC, Houston | 25. Siny Koshy, Salem MTC, NY |
| 6. Annamma John, St. Luke's Florida | 16. Kunjumole Jose, Chicago Mar Thoma Church | 26. Sosamma Abraham, Long Island MTC, NY |
| 7. Annamma Koshy, The MTC Staten Island, NY | 17. Mariamma Thomas, Trinity MTC, Houston | 27. Susan John, San Francisco MTC |
| 8. Daniel Thomas, MTC, San Francisco | 18. Nevin Mathai, Chicago Mar Thoma Church | 28. Susan Thomas, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch |
| 9. Elizabeth George, The Canadian MTC, Toronto | 19. Philip Mathews, St. Mathews MTC, Chicago | |
| 10. Feba and Febin Jones, St. Thomas MTC, Chicago | 20. Omana Rajee, The MTC Staten Island, NY | |

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: CHAPTERS 20-28

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (Toronto, Canada)

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

- Name the man who sunk into a deep sleep, fell down and died, but was raised from the dead by Paul.
- Paul was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem by the day of _____.
- In his farewell remarks to the Ephesian elders, Paul reminds them that his only task is to finish the _____ and spread the gospel.
- The Ephesian crowd was deeply grieved by the thought that they would never _____ Paul again.
- A prophet named Agabus took Paul's _____, tied his own hands and feet to symbolize how Paul would be imprisoned in Jerusalem.
- In Jerusalem, Paul addressed the crowd in _____.
- In the Sanhedrin, there broke out a big dispute between the sadducees and the _____.
- Governor Felix frequently send for Paul hoping that we would give him a _____.
- On hearing about Paul, King _____ wanted to see him.
- _____, the "Jewess" was the wife of Felix?
- Festus was reluctant to punish Paul as the dispute with the accusers revolved around their _____.
- Paul was handed over to a centurion named Julius who was of the _____ Regiment when it was decided that they would sail for Italy.
- Rather than listening to Paul's advice not to set sail, the centurion listened to the _____ and the owner of the ship.
- On which island did Paul heal Publius' father?
- Paul set sail on an _____ ship with the figure head of the twin gods Castor and Pollux.

Please mail your answers to:

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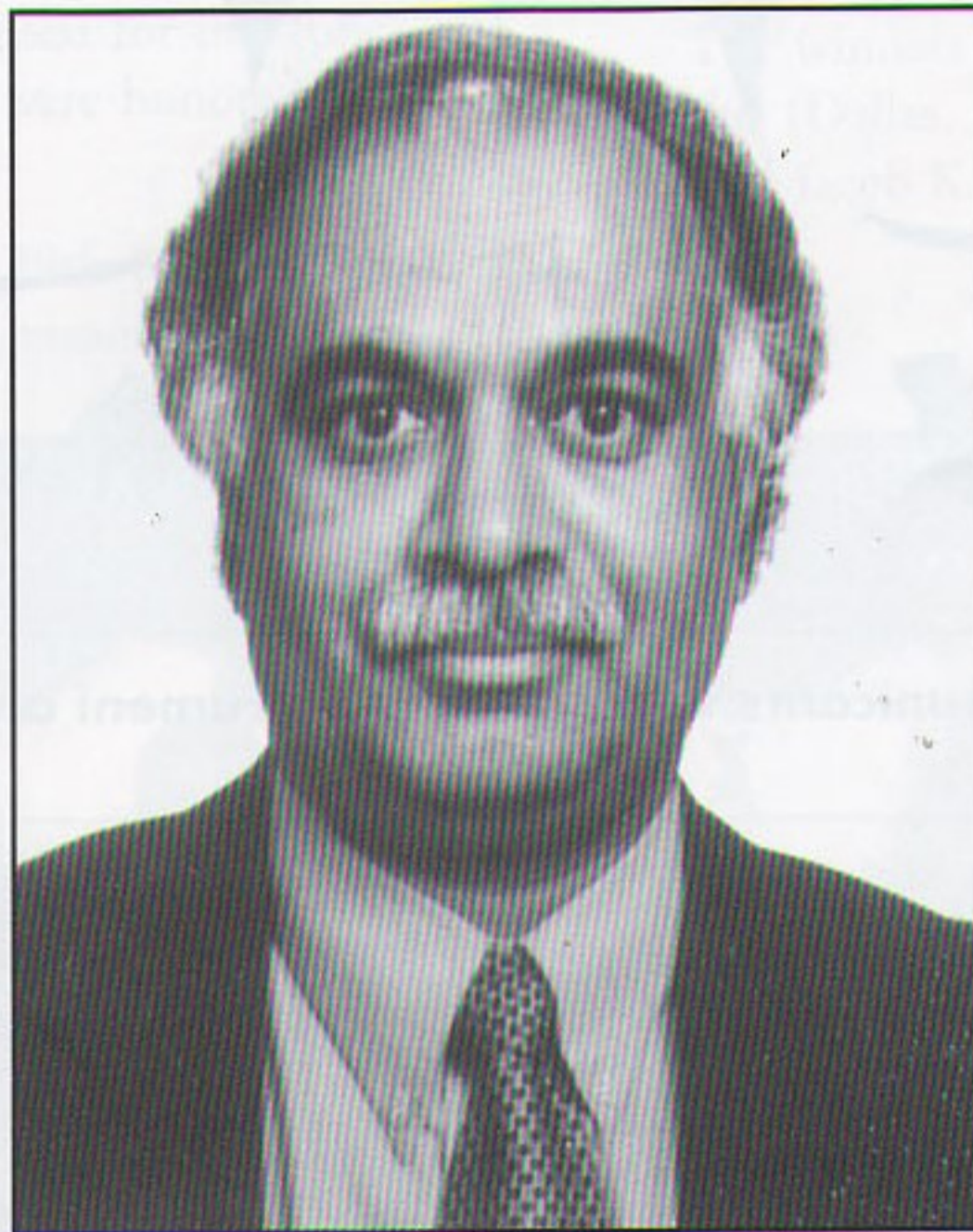


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DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH



First Communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni and Achens.



Audience at the Mar Thoma Fest



Salem Mar Thoma Church, honored their senior citizens on September 30, 2007. Mr. Koshy Varughese (Trustee) and Mr. K. A. Chacko (Lay Leader) presented "Ponnada" for Rev. O. J. Mathai (guest), Mr. Chacko Thadathel, Mrs. Mariyamma Chacko and Mr. P. V. John.

Senior Citizen Sunday was celebrated at our church on Sept 30th, Rev. O. J. Mathai, was the chief guest for this function. Four senior citizens of our parish were honored and given "ponnada" at this function.

FIRST COMMUNICANTS: On Oct 28th Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited the Salem

Mar Thoma Church, Eastern Long Island. Nineteen of our church youngsters participated in the Holy Communion for the first time. A public function was also organized after the Holy Communion.

SALEM RAFFLE: As part of the fund raising program, the Church building committee of the Salem Mar Thoma Church organized a raffle program. On November 22nd the drawing was conducted at our church. The Chief guests for this function were Rev. Dr. K. V. Thomas (Teeneck MTC, NJ) and Rev. Biju M. K. (CSSM). Mr. Mathew S. Chiramannil (Mohan), Mr. Abraham C. Thadathel (Avrachen) and Mr. Jacob

Abraham (Saji) served as the conveners.

The winners of this draw are as follows: 1st—Mr. Biji Chacko (Dallas, TX); 2nd—Mr. Eby Varughese (Florida); 3rd—Mr. Jacob K. George (Chicago, IL).

Rev. Jobi Varghese, Vicar



First Communicants with Theodosius Thirumeni and Jobi Varghese Achen.

ST. ANDREW'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, YONKERS, NEW YORK

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of you I will worship toward your holy temple. (Psalm 5:7)

St. Andrew's Mar Thoma Church entered into the 2nd quarter of the Centenary in November 2007 and celebrated the silver jubilee the same year. The Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, inaugurated the silver Jubilee celebrations on Saturday, March 17th 2007, and the valedictory meeting was on Saturday, November 10, 2007.

As we look back over the past 25 years and thank God



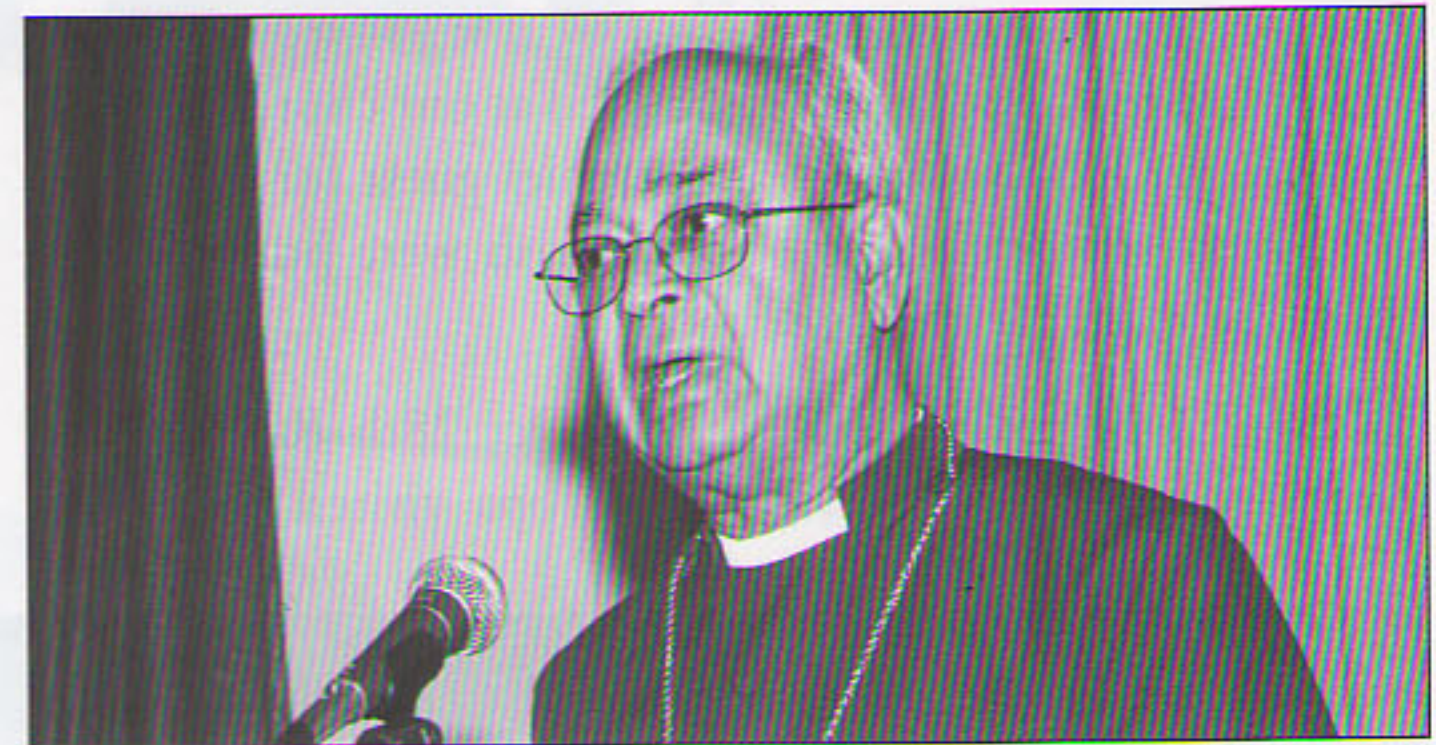
for all the vision and guidance received from Him, to live in fellowship as a parish, a fellowship rooted in God and meaningfully related to each other, we look forward to the years to come and ask God for His guidance to set up the mission for the future of our church in North America and the vision to achieve the goal.

Through the Kalpana dated September 7th, 1980 from the Mar Thoma Metropolitan, His Grace, Rt. Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, The Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York was divided into 4 Parishes on the basis of geographical locations of its members. Due to a strong bond of fellowship felt by some of the members, a group of families decided to stay together and worship at the Trinity Episcopal Church in New York City. This was formed as the 5th Mar Thoma Parish in the Tri-state area with the approval of the Mar Thoma Church Episcopal Synod on 8th of November 1982 as the "St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church". The inauguration of the Parish was held on 20th November 1982, at the Holy Trinity Church, on wood Ave., New York. On 15th of April 1983, we moved to the Church of Intercession, 550 West 155th Street, Manhattan, New York. The St. Andrews parish continued to worship at Church of Intercession for over 12 years. During this period our membership rose from 28 families to 98 families. In the years 1988 and 1991, 2/3 of its families moved to St. Peters Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey, St. Johns Mar Thoma Church, Queens Village, and St. James Mar Thoma



Church, Rockland County, New York. At present we have 67 families in our parish.

By the grace of the Lord Almighty, and the hard work and financial support from our members and well-wishers, we bought the church building located at 58 Crescent Place,



Yonkers, New York in July 1995. Our church dedication service and inauguration were conducted on 27th January 1996 by Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa.

In the past we have received pastoral care from Rev. N. M. Cherian, Rev. T. O. Joseph, Rev. John Mathew, Rev. Oommen George, Rev. M. Varghese, Rev. Mathai Joseph, Rev. Oommen Philip, Rev. George Abraham, Rev. Dr. C. P. Mathews, and Rev. Johnson Varughese. Presently, Rev. Johnson C. Jacob is serving as our vicar.

The motto for the Jubilee year is "ONE IN CHRIST"



Jubilee Programs:

Parish rejuvenation programs: Reviving Organizations: The parish took an active role in reaching out to its members, to ensure that they are actively involved in their respective organizations. Goals and programs for each organization were reviewed and set up to achieve the intended mission.

House visits: Vicar along with the office bearers and Executive committee members visited each family of the parish. The house visits encouraged the families to be closer and more involved in the activities of the church in general, and particularly to the jubilee programs. This, in turn, helped the total growth of the parish.

Publishing: The Silver Jubilee Souvenir is published involving the current and former members of parish, neighboring churches, friends and well wishers in the community.

Aid for Marriage: Our church provided help to 7 most deserving families, facing financial hardships, for meeting the expenses of the wedding of their daughters.

Aid for House Construction: The parish provided help for 7 Families by providing the finances for constructing a house with minimum requirements and area. The aid was provided to families who did not have a shelter of their own but own land to build a house. This was done with the involvement and supervision of the local churches in India. In addition to this our members sponsored 10 houses costing \$1500 each under the Navathy project.

Educational aid: 8 Nursing Students are being supported by the church for completing their Nursing education in India.

Medical aid and other financial help: 18 individuals were helped for getting life saving medical treatments.

Support to Mission work: As a part of the jubilee program, our parish with the youth fellowship decided to contribute for the construction of one house under the Mexico mission project. In addition, we have also decided to support one mission field in India by adopting a village and providing evangelistic work and needed assistance.

Local Support: Donation to Salvation Army Soup Kitchen; Donation to Local Police Dept. and Fire Dept.

By the generous support and cooperation of its members and the organizations of the parish the amount collected towards this purpose is about \$40,000.00.

Jubilee valedictory meeting: Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos inaugurated the valedictory meeting and Bishop Dr. George A. Ninan, Mr. Ken Jenkins (Westchester County Legislator), Mr. Charles Gardner (First Deputy Chief of Police, Yonkers), Rev. Joseph Oommen, Rev. Dr. K. V. Thomas, Rev. Mathew P. George, Rev. K. George, Rev. Biju S. Cherian, and Mr. Kuruvilla Cherian Felicitated on the occasion. Silver Jubilee Souvenir was released. The members who completed 25 years and senior citizens were honored during the meeting. Songs of choir and 'Margamkali' added color to the meeting.

Mr. A. V. Varughese (Vice president), Mr. K. O. Abraham (Trustee), Mr. John K. Thomas (Accountant), Mr. Thomas

P. Varghese (Secretary), and Mr. P. M. Abraham (Lay Leader) served as the office bearers during jubilee celebrations. Rev. Johnson C. Jacob set the vision and direction for the activities we got involved in. The vicar and his family took fundraising and jubilee activities as personal challenges and devoted much of their time, efforts, and energy to ensure that we could celebrate the jubilee year in a memorable fashion and in a manner that honors God.

The great strengths of the parish were the love of God, and the love and care we had for each other. Let us continue to uphold all families in our daily prayers and work for the spiritual growth of the parish in this Jubilee year and continue through the years to come.

Rev. Johnson C. Jacob, Vicar
Thomas P. Varughese, Secretary

ST. ANDREWS YOUTH FELLOWSHIP, RETREAT

St. Andrews Youth Fellowship was blessed to organize its Youth Retreat from January 11th-13th 2008. The retreat was held in the town of Speculator, NY, within a beautiful vicinity called CAMP-OF-THE-WOODS. Our theme for this year's retreat was "Who Will Stand in the Gap?" The verse in focus was derived from Ezekiel 22:30, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap."

We were blessed to have Rev. Johnson Jacob, Rev. Biju S. Cherian and Shino John as our main leaders and speakers for this occasion. It was a very inspiring and God-centered weekend that our youth fellowship shared. The weekend's sermons and Bible study and talks were moving and



the activities brought forth collective participation from all attendees.

The dedication night was held on Saturday, January 12th 2008. It was the most inspirational night in all of our lives. Within this particular evening, the Lord showed us His mercy and allowed us to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. He gave us a peace that left us hungry for more of His companionship and our youth fellowship has only grown more devoted to Him! All glory and praise to our Lord, for His presence was upon us months before our arrival and has not left us since!

SEHION MAR THOMA CHURCH, DALLAS

From a Humble Beginning: The Spirit of the Lord was hovering over the minds of believers living in Northeast



Dallas for a long time. This small spark ignited a fire by the interference of the Holy Spirit that spread through Dallas-Fort Worth and kindled many lives to join together as a new parish to worship our God.

The need for a parish was lingering in the minds of many believers for a long time in this fast growing area. During the summer of 2003, the concerns of a few materialized into a gathering of like minded people to explore the possibilities for a new parish. The parish was officially formed with the approval of the Episcopal Synod and by the Kalpana dated July 11, 2004 by our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Episcopa and presently we have about 70 families. We know the difficulties in organizing a parish; we were struggling to buy land suitable to construct a facility to worship God. With the tremendous efforts of our members and other believers, we were able acquire 4.16 acres of land in Plano, Texas and paid it off within two years.

The process of organizing a parish went through many crossroads, but God's affirming providence and guidance was there in each step we have taken. We feel that by the laying of the foundation stone on January 1, 2008 by our beloved Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, all the efforts made so far worked for the glory of God. The foundation stone laying ceremony was attended by Vicars of sister Mar Thoma parishes, our Youth Chaplain and a large number of believers from different parishes including our own. Our Vicar Rev. James Thomas and the Building Committee Convener Mr. Mathew P. Abraham also spoke on the occasion among several others. The construction of the new facility is expected to be completed by the end of 2008. The parish choir led by Mr. Mathew Jacob sang a beautiful song signifying laying of the foundation stone and glorifying God for showering all blessings upon us.

We are appealing to all believers and our well wishers in Dallas Fort Worth area and in this Diocese and outside to join with us in this great endeavor, which we believe is

God's own plan. We are asking you to share our pain with your financial support and prayers. We know that no one has abundant funds to give away without any pain. We are asking all believers to take some pain in sharing the cost and be part of our pain in making our dream a reality. We are asking for your commitment and partnership in building the house of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we can be a witnessing community in this area.

In Patrick Overton's words, "When you come to the edge of all the light you have, and must take a step into the darkness of the unknown, believe that one of two things will happen: either there will be something solid for you to stand on or you will be taught how to fly." We experienced "something solid" in our path whenever we thought that it will be darkness ahead of us and we are expecting to continue to be on that "something solid", which is nothing other than God's providence. We accept the Biblical truth



that the foundation was made on the rock, which is our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Messiah. We are building our parish on this rock and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Thomas Philip, Accountant

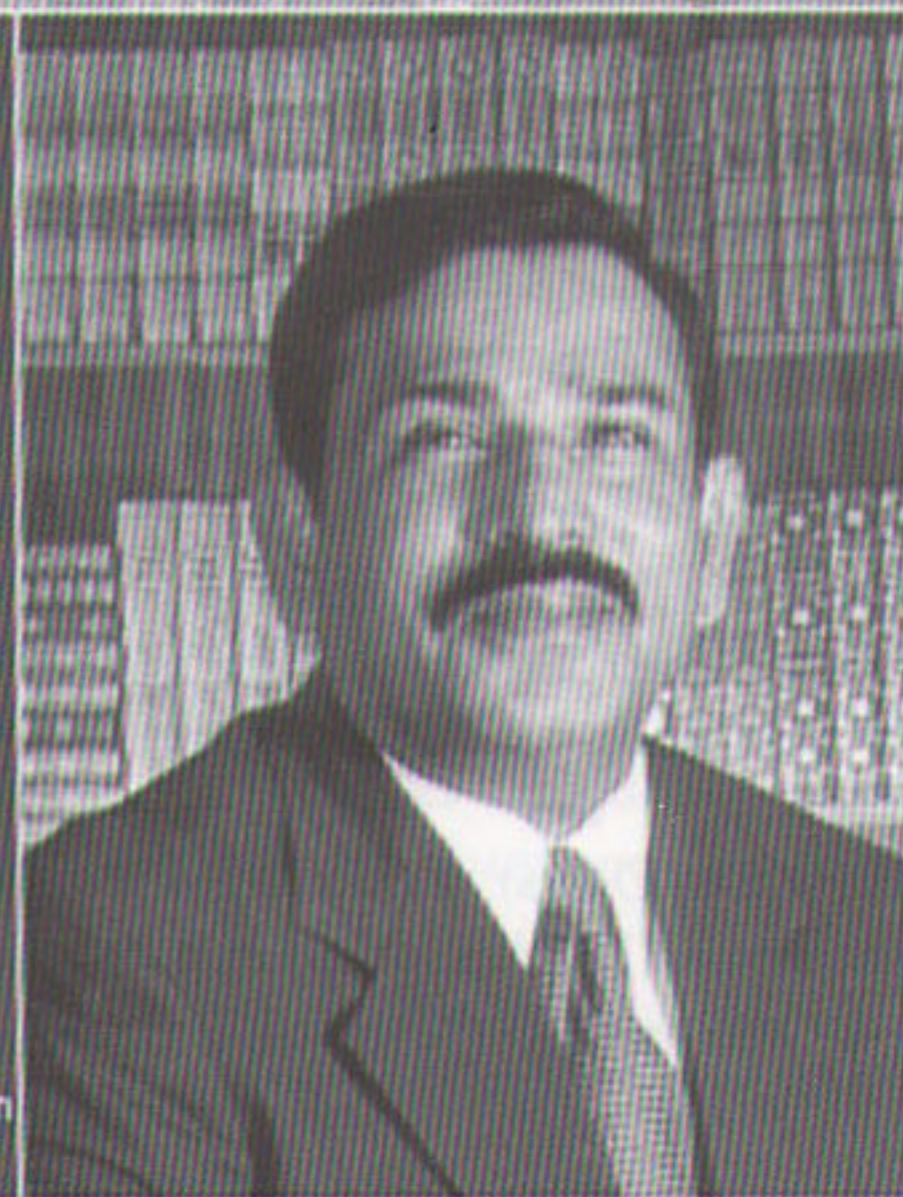
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ST. PAUL'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, DALLAS



GROUND BREAKING AND LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE NEW CHURCH

It was a very joyous and memorable day for the members of the St. Paul's M T Church when the Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa graciously blessed the Ground-breaking and Foundation Stone laying ceremony of the New Church facility. The auspicious function was held on Sunday, November 18, 2007 at 4.30 p.m. at the newly purchased land at 1002 Barnes Bridge Road, Mesquite, Texas, just east of downtown Dallas.

The function started with the opening prayer by Rev. Ninu Chandy (the Youth Chaplain), which was followed by the introductory remarks by Rev. C. K. Koshy, the Vicar of the Parish. The solemn worship of the Blessing began with the Choir leading the song "Vithacheeduka naam swargathinte vithaam..." Thirumeni blessed the foundation stone, and it was laid in the presence of an array of distinguished guests, friends and well-wishers from various Churches and communities.

The public meeting that followed was blessed by the message of Coorilos Thirumeni. We had the privilege of the presence of Mr. Babu Jacob IAS and Mrs. Lizzy Jacob IAS (Former Chief Secretaries of the State of Kerala, India) as special dignitaries. Mrs. Lizzy Jacob, Rev. Aniyam K. Paul (representing the Kerala Ecumenical Christian Fellowship-Dallas), and Rev. Vinoy Daniel (representing the Mar Thoma Parishes in Dallas) gave felicitation addresses.

The function was also blessed with the presence of Rev. Jobi Mathew (St. Thomas Evangelical Church-Dallas), Rev. Fr. Raju Daniel (St. Gregorios Orthodox Church-Dallas), Rev. Zacharias Thottuvelil (St. Thomas Catholic Church-Dallas), Rev. Johnson George (Mar Thoma Church of Dallas-Carrollton), Rev. James Thomas (Sehion Mar Thoma Church-Dallas), and Pastor Don McKay. The Diocesan Council members Atty. Lal Varghese and Mr. Thomas Easow were also present. Rev. P. V. Thomas offered the concluding prayer. Along with the members of the St. Paul' Family, the office bearers and members of the other three Mar Thoma Parishes, and members from other sister Churches constituted the very



large gathering present. Mr. Rajan Mathew (the Parish Secretary) extended a warm welcome, and Mr. Koshy Thomas (the General Convener) expressed our deep gratitude to all who prayed, supported and participated, and made the function a blessing.

The St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church, Dallas was founded as the second Mar Thoma Parish in Dallas-Fort Worth by His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan on July 26, 1988. The property at 2425 Gus



Thomasson Road, Mesquite was purchased, and the present sanctuary was dedicated in July 1994 by Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, in the presence of the then Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, and the then Vicar Rev. Eapen Cherian. Rev. T. I. Joseph, Rev. P. J. Alex, Rev. Ninan Jacob, Rev. Kuruvilla Philip, Rev. Thomas Mathew, Rev. Saju Zachariah and Rev. P. V. Thomas served as Vicars during the past two decades. A parcel of land of 3.05 acres at 1002 Barnes Bridge Road was purchased on Nov 21 2005. The new construction project is planned in two phases; the sanctuary, with fellowship hall, office and class rooms, is envisaged in the first phase with an estimated cost of \$1.8 million. The second phase comprises an auditorium with an estimated cost of \$1 million. We are extremely grateful for the support that we received so far from many quarters; and we look forward for the continued prayers and support in every possible manner.

Rev. Koshy C Koshy, Vicar

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL OF KERALA CHURCHES IN CHICAGO CELEBRATED ITS 24TH CHRISTMAS IN CHICAGO



The Ecumenical Council of Kerala Churches in Chicago celebrated its 24th annual Christmas program on December 8, 2007, at the Lane Tech High School, Chicago, IL. The program started with a processional by the Ecumenical choir, council members, clergies and our Diocesan Bishop, singing "O' Come all ye faithful" followed by the opening worship called to order by Rev. Fr.



Slomo Isac George. During the presidential address Rev. Fr. Saji Mukkoot praised the dedicated services of all the Presidents and Council Members for the past 24 years and requested the entire Christian community to co-operate and celebrate our Silver Jubilee next year. After the presidential address Vice President Rev. Daniel Varghese (Chicago Mar Thoma Church) introduced this year's chief guest, our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar

Coorilos Episcopa. After the introduction, Thirumeni delivered the Christmas message reminding us that the celebration of Christmas will become meaningful only after we "Love, Give & Live" in our daily lives. He challenged the entire Christian community to practice these three



things to make the Christmas celebration more meaningful. After the message, Thirumeni inaugurated the Jubilee celebration by lighting the "Nilavilakku".

After the Jubilee inauguration all the member churches presented various Christmas programs to enhance the Christmas spirit. The Christmas song by the Ecumenical clergy choir led by our Johnson Philip Achen (St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago) made the celebration more beautiful. The program concluded after the vote of thanks by the secretary Mr. John Kurien (Chicago Mar Thoma Church) and benediction by Rev. V. T. John (Member of Chicago Mar Thoma Church). After the programs refreshments were also served.

The Ecumenical Council of Kerala Churches in Chicago consists of 16 Malayalee churches catering the spiritual needs of Malayalee community in Chicago. Three of our Mar Thoma Churches are members of the council—The Chicago Mar Thoma Church, Des Plaines, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago, Lombard and The Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Frankfurt, IL.

**Mr. John Kurein, Secretary
Ecumenical Council of Kerala**

ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DELAWARE VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Delaware Valley, the fourth Mar Thoma Parish in the Greater Philadelphia region in Pennsylvania, inaugurated the construction of their Altar & Parsonage on January 19, 2008. This facility was acquired from "Veterans of Foreign War" (VFW) in May of 2007. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa lead the inaugural ceremony in the presence of Rev. Shaji M. Thomas (vicar), Rev. C. P. Wilson (Philadelphia

MTC) and Rev. M. C. Skariah (Ascension MTC), and members and well wishers of the parish. The selected contractors, Frank Rossi, Abe & Banny Jesudasan, along with Mr. Thomas Chandy, M. L. A., and Mr. John Mathew (Ascension MTC Church Building Convener) witnessed this prominent milestone in the History of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Delaware Valley. (For additional details please visit us at our website: www.stthomasmarthomachurch.org).

2007 SOUTHWEST REGIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE



MAR THOMA SOUTHWEST REGIONAL
YOUTH CONFERENCE 2007

The 2007 Southwest Regional Youth Conference was held from October 26-28, 2007 at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center in Palestine, Texas. The theme was "A Higher Standard of Living" based on Ephesians 4:1, "...live a life worthy of the calling you have received." The main speaker at the Conference was Pastor Mike Langford, formerly Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas and Ph.D. candidate from Princeton Theological Seminary. The Youth Chaplains of the Southwest Region, Rev. Ninu Chandy (Dallas) and Rev. Skariah John (Houston), as well as Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Vicar of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch also provided leadership. The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch Youth Fellowship hosted the Conference.

Approximately two hundred seventy-five delegates from eight Mar Thoma churches and sister churches in the Southwest Region were in attendance. This was the largest ever Southwest Regional Youth Conference. The theme and main talks encouraged delegates to consider their motivations and goals from a Christian perspective and weigh them against the standards put forth by the world. In addition to the insightful main talks and meaningful worship sessions, led by the talented Praise & Worship Team from the Farmers Branch Youth Fellowship, delegates also attended Workshops, a novel approach to theme development. Three workshops were organized based on age of the delegates, in order to address issues relevant to high school, college, and working youth. Two other workshops, which all delegates attended, focused on Christian daily living and missions. Senior youth from the Southwest Region shared their valuable experience during these sessions.

The Southwest Regional Youth Conference is one of two major events held yearly at the regional level. As an opportunity for both fellowship and spiritual development, the Conference was truly a blessing for everyone in attendance.

Kelvin Varghese & Jeffrey Abraham
Conference Conveners
MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch Youth Fellowship

IMMANUEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON

Immanuel Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam had hosted a stage for the members of the church to exhibit their talents on the evening of 3rd Nov 2007. The event was a great success with an overwhelming response from our church organizations and individuals. The whole program was orchestrated and sequenced so uniquely and professionally that it was oriented around a theme that an American sponsor was visiting a typical village in Kerala in search of talent for a cultural program in the US. The conversations and stage were set in front of a tea shop ("Chaya Peedika"). It was a program which was viewed and played by our own members and children. Songs, Dances, Mimics items, Fashion shows made the evening colorful. It was well received and appreciated by everyone who



attended. A program committee was formed with Shibu John, an active and talented member of our Yuvajana Sakhyam as the program coordinator.

George Sam, Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary

ST. JOHN'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, QUEENS VILLAGE, NEW YORK



St. John's Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam, winners of the North East Region Christmas Carol Competition and the 2nd place winners at the Zonal Christmas Carol Competitions with their Vicar Rev. Mathew K. Jackson.

INDIANAPOLIS ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH



CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE: The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Indianapolis celebrated our annual Christmas Carol Program on Saturday, December 22nd. The Carol Service program was the culmination of three weeks of Christmas Caroling, in which over 25 homes were visited covering over 200 miles. This Christmas season was especially significant in 2007 because the parish celebrated this event for the first time as a full-fledged parish and no longer a congregation. It was the vision of our parish to become a full parish, attaining the privileges and rights of such statutes. By the grace of God, we achieved this status in October 2007. The Christmas Carol Program was an

important event in our church calendar. A lot had gone into preparing and planning this program. Our celebrations included a variety of items: performances by adult and Sunday School choirs, vocal and instrumental



performances from members and friends, a musical entitled "Christmas Play" by the Sunday School, and the Christmas message by our Vicar, Rev. P. Chacko. Every year the program concludes with the Christmas hymn "Silent Night" by candle light. The service ended with the appearance of Santa Claus to hand out gifts for the children followed by a very sumptuous dinner.

David Pappy, Secretary

REV. C. A. MATHEW (83), Cherukara, Ayroor was called to heavenly abode on November 8, 2007 in Boston. He



1924-2007

is survived by his wife Deenamma Mathew, (Malayil, Kozhencherry) and his sons Robin Mathew (Boston) and Anil Mathew (Dammam) and their family.

The early parts of funeral services were conducted at Carmel MTC, Boston on November 12 under the leadership of the Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Most Rev. Thomas Mar

Makarios Metropolitan and in the presence of Achens and many members from the Eastern Regional parishes. The mortal remain was taken to Kerala and the funeral was conducted on 16th November at St. John's Mar Thoma Church, Kumbalanthanam, Ayroor.

Born in 1924, Achen had his high school education at St. Thomas High School, Kozhencherry and collegiate education at Madras Christian College. Before joining BD at United Theological College, Bangalore he worked as a teacher at MS High School, Ranni. He was ordained in 1954 and served more than 20 parishes in and outside Kerala. He also taught in the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam for few years. Achen had been instrumental in the construction of several churches and schools in Kerala. He served as the Traveling Secretary of the MTEA from 1976-80 and the secretary of the Carmel Mandiram, Ayroor for many years. Achen retired from active service in 1989 and had been serving as the founder chairman of M.M.M. Public School, Theodical, Ayroor till his last day.

Achen was on his visit to his son Robin and family in Boston since July 2007. He used to attend and lead services at Carmel Mar Thoma Church since his arrival in Boston. Let us thank God for the life and ministry of Achen and uphold the bereaving family in our prayers so that the Lord may grant His comfort and peace at their difficult time.

Rev. Jacob K. Mathew, Vicar

LILLYKUTTY M. THOMAS, daughter of T.K. Mathew and the late Rachel Mathew, was born on July 25, 1951 in Edayaranmula, Kerala, India.

In 1973, she married Thomas Mathai from Cherianad, Kerala and they were blessed with three sons. In September 1987, Lillykutty and children moved to the United States to join her husband in pursuit of a better life.

Lillykutty was a loving wife and devoted mother, and an affectionate and caring grandmother. She was a good daughter and a caring sister, aunt and friend. She was a proud and active member of Bethel Mar Thoma Church. Lillykutty loved to serve her community and was an inspiration to many.

She leaves to treasure her memories, her loving husband Thomas Mathai, son Shaji (wife Rekha, daughter Isabella), son Raji (wife Reni, children Nadia and Nicholas) and son Jiji as well as a host of family and friends both here in the United States and India.



1951-2007

MRS. ELIZABETH GEORGE was born to the late Mr. M. M. Varkey and the late Mrs. Annamma Varkey,



1953-2007

Melamoottil Malayail House, Othara, Kerala, on September 12, 1953. She has one brother and two sisters in India and three brothers in USA. She obtained her B.A. degree from Christian College, Chengannur and did her B.Ed from Sree Saila College of Education Harihar, Karnataka in 1980-81. She was a dedicated Headmistress

at St. Mary's L.P school, Kallissery for 16 years. During her dedicated service of those years, she touched the lives of countless people including colleagues who will cherish her memory for their lifetime.

Mrs. George was married to Mr. George Varughese (Raju) Anjilimoottil house, Othara, Kerala, India (Retired teacher GOVT. V.H.S. for girls, Chengannur). She was blessed with a daughter Riny in (India) and a son Riji in (USA).

Mrs. George was an energetic member of the Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. She was a multi-talented person. She touched the hearts of anyone whoever got a chance to meet her especially, the young children. She was a devoted Christian who lived by her faith and loved the Lord deeply. She brought comfort to many through her powerful testimonies. With an everlasting smile, sense of humor and always a pleasant face, she made an indelible impression on everyone who met her. Her sweet memories will be cherished forever.

CHERIAN CHERIAN, Sr., who was known as Pappa to



1920-2007

most, was born in Ayroor to the Cherukara Kottakal family. Pappa had lived approximately 50 years in Malaysia and about 22 years in USA. At a very early age he had left Kerala for Malaysia and had been a businessman in Malaysia & Singapore for many years till he retired. Pappa had helped many people within his

family and friends to move from India and settle down in Malaysia and Singapore in the early 1940's and 1950's. In the early 1940's he was in the middle of World War II and lost a few of his friends when the Japanese attacked British Bases in Malaysia and Singapore. He was a very active, loyal, and faithful member to the Mar Thoma Church all through his life. He was a member of the Trinity Mar Thoma church Houston since 1985. Pappa is survived by his wife (Aleyamma) and children Leelamma (Alabama), Sunny (Houston), and Molly (Houston). He has seven grandchildren and one great grandchild. Pappa was sincere, gentle, honest, and loving. He was also a man of integrity. We miss our dear Pappa.

MATRIMONIAL

Mar Thoma parents, settled in Canada, invite marriage proposals for their 30-year-old son, 5'9" and an MBA, employed in a reputable pharmaceutical firm, from the parents of professionally qualified girls, God fearing and upholds strong Christian family values. Please respond with recent photograph and bio-data to: matrimonial@asia.com

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposal for 24-year-old daughter in final year of MD program in the United States. She was brought up and educated in the US with strong moral, spiritual, and family values. Seeking a professionally qualified boy with compatible qualities, interests, qualifications and background. Marthomite, CSI or Jacobite, age 24-28 preferred. If interested please contact us with details and recent picture. Email: kerala310@yahoo.com

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposal for their 26 year old daughter, currently doing her second year residency in internal medicine. She is 5'3, very beautiful, and family oriented. We are looking for an MD, JD or masters level degree holder, who is God fearing, family oriented, and has a down to earth personality. Interested parties please contact us via e-mail at proposalrequest@yahoo.com

Marthomite family seeking 29 years-plus Marthomite man with committed love for God for their US born-and-raised daughter. She is active in serving our church and youth. Ivy League educated, who recently completed her Masters, she is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Literature while also working in academic publishing. However, seeking someone who values Christian ideals over resume. God loving and strong family values a must, to match daughter with strong love for God and family. If interested, please respond to agape36@hotmail.com

Mar Thoma parents, settled in the U.S. for over 30 years, invite marriage proposals for their U.S. Citizen daughter, MD, age 26, 5'8", fair and slim, born and brought up in the U.S. with very good moral and spiritual values. She is currently doing first year residency in the Northeast. We are looking for a medical doctor, height at least 5'9", age 26-30, preferably belonging to Marthoma, Orthodox, CSI denominations. Interested parties may respond with a photograph and details to: c702@verizon.net.

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposals for their daughter 28 years old, 5'1", Pharm.D. (Doctor of Pharmacy), born and raised in U.S.A., God fearing, and family oriented. We are looking for God fearing boys with good christian family background. Please respond with a recent photograph and bio-data to: matrimonial1295@hotmail.com

Looking for a born again suitable boy, spiritual and professional, settled in U.S. or Canada for our daughter. She is a Canadian citizen, very spiritually active in Church and in Missions. She is very fair, slim, beautiful, 27, 5'4", Occupational Therapist, working for the Govt., Family settled in Canada and is originally from Kuriannoor. Please forward all suitable proposals to abe.verghis@sympatico.ca

Editorial

In a sermon given to Philadelphia-area Marthomites, our Bishop Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa stated "through sincerity to work (no matter what kind of work), an individual realizes the divine nature of the universe and also the presence of an omnipotent God by accepting that fact that the individual is enabled to perform the duty at its best." Those who work in comfortable employment situations may take things for granted and, consequently, ignore the value of work and how it nurtures those who benefit through your work. Thank God for enabling us to get up and get to work.

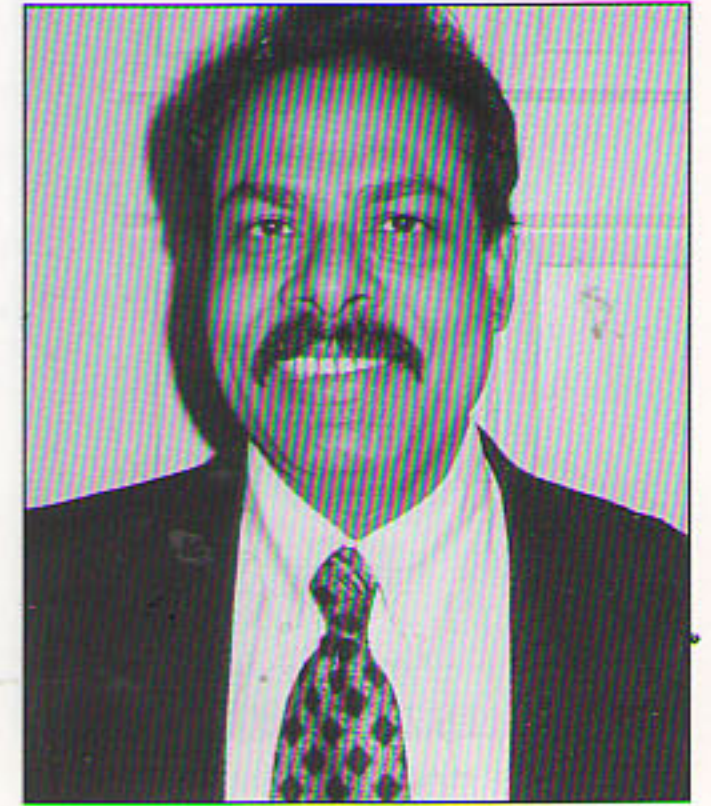
Our families, friends, parishes, and even classmates substantively influence our morale and our attitude, and these in turn play prominent roles in our work performance. Miller and Coady (Teaching the ethics of work: Vocational Education Journal, 64 (5). 1989) define work ethics as reliability and trustworthiness, willingness to learn, responsibility for one's actions, willingness to work, and willingness to work cooperatively. The accumulation of values and moral directives contribute to work ethic, and in most instances, one's ethics reflect one's own attitudes, desires, and self respect. There are many Biblical references pertaining to work ethic. Perhaps the most appealing reference appears in 2nd Timothy 2:15, 24. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach and not resentful." Again in Ephesians 6:7, Paul writes "serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men." These references point to two facts: that selfishness has no place in the work environment and that performing work with bitterness can lead to self destruction. Critically assessing our ethical views in relation to the work that we are engaged in can enhance our performance and productivity. Comparisons must only be made with the best practice in your field, rather than with the worst performer.

I would like to address some of the e-mails I have been receiving from our readers concerning the Mar Thoma Church and its activities in this Diocese. Many are concerns regarding monetary funds going to Kerala from both at the Diocesan and parish level. The concerns referenced inadequate representation of this Diocese in Kerala; often the ideas and suggestions of Mandalam members and representatives from this diocese are heard with less enthusiasm. It was also pointed out that the Mar Thoma constitution does not address many issues faced by churches outside of India, such as the limitation of parish membership to avoid overcrowding of facilities based on city and state requirements, provisions for required and minimum contributions by church members based on church expenses, acquirement and disposal of church properties based on growth needs, and so forth. Some emails referred to a lack of necessary coaching for Achens sent from Kerala to parishes outside of India. More coaching must be arranged for those who desire to serve foreign parishes, to enhance their leadership in the new environment. This coaching must cover many areas including language skills, awareness of the political, social, moral, and ethical nature of the country, and addressing the social and spiritual needs of people. More specifically, the needs of local parishes, the economic, professional, and social standards of the members of parishes, and an understanding of the spiritual needs of youngsters and adults in the parishes. Few other concerns were related to the relevance and conduct of the Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam and their contribution to the enhancement of diocesan activities as a whole. While some of these suggestions stand valid, we have to realize the fact that this Diocese has grown with much vigor and enthusiasm, especially in the past decade, in comparison to many other denominations. As mentioned in our historical statements, Mar Thoma Church with its eastern humble origin and culture, evolved through ages, embracing modern ideas while sustaining its commitment to mission and worship. Our Achens undergo broad training that involve all phases of human living and are capable of leading parishes in versatile settings. Let us hope that more of our youngsters who are born and brought up within this diocese will come forward to become future ministers and will lead our churches on foreign lands with real passion for our people, our missions, and the furtherance of gospel. On a positive note, I received many e-mails congratulating our diocesan youth fellowship for undertaking mission activities, especially the Mexico Mission project.

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all of the Achens who will be leaving this diocese in the coming months, after finishing their 3 year tenure as vicars of various parishes. Special thanks go to Rev. Joseph Oommen and family, diocesan secretary and the Bishop's secretary. Achen's support and guidance towards the timely publication of the Messenger will always be remembered with gratitude.

Rev. C. P. Wilson captured the hearts and minds of Marthomites and Non-Marthomites alike in Philadelphia and the surrounding communities during his nine month tenure as Vicar of Philadelphia MTC. Achen's humility, Biblical knowledge, and compassion for humanity were well expressed through his actions and personal dealings. Achen's death came as a shock to both the Mar Thoma community and the Malayalee community at large. It was the first time that a Marthomite priest was called to eternity while on assignment in the Diocese of North America and Europe. Our hearts and prayers go out to Pracey Kochamma, Pavana and Praveena.

Eapen Daniel





**OUR YOUTH FELLOWSHIP
MEMBERS AT THE
MEXICO MISSION FIELD**



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