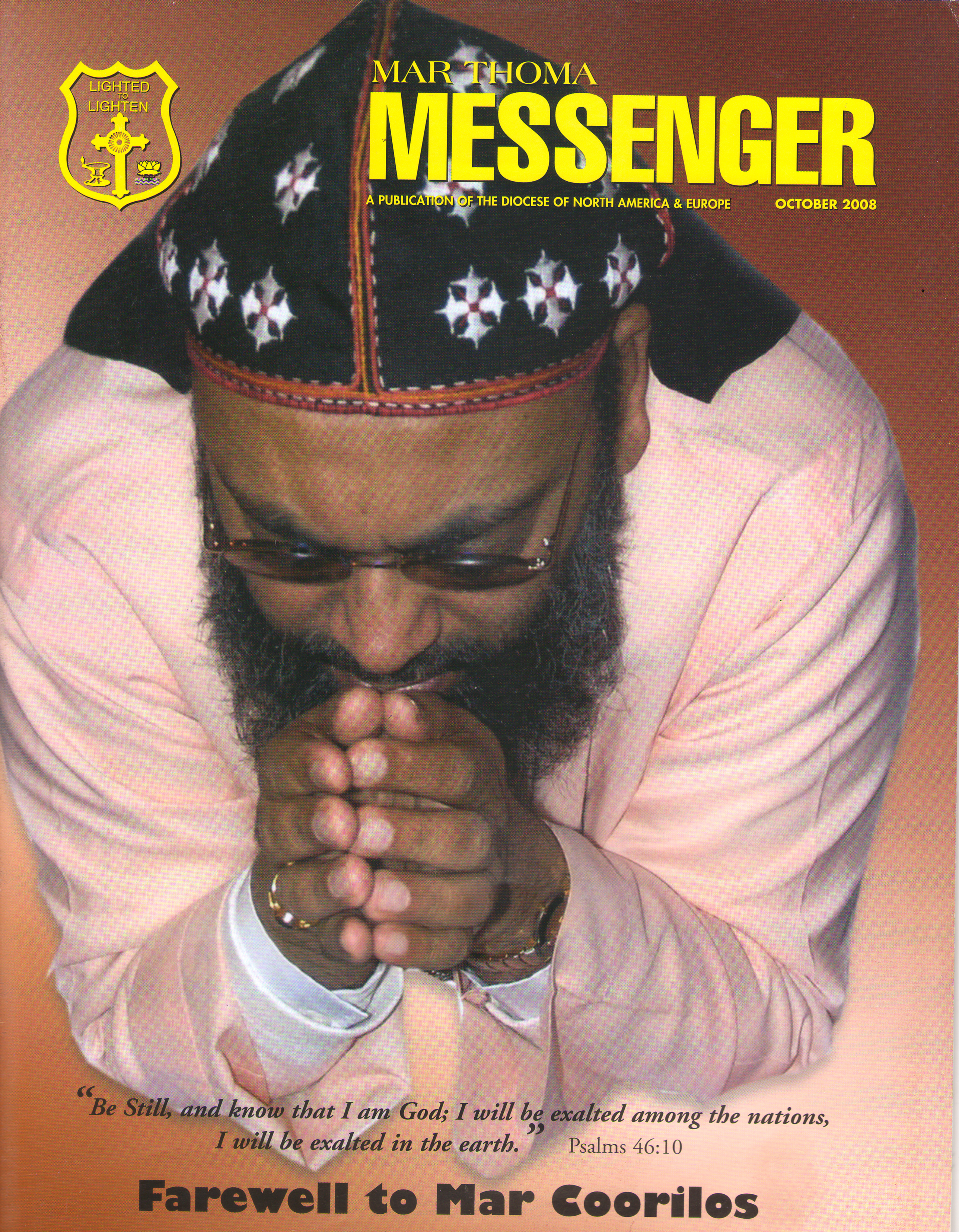
LIGHTED TO LIGHTEN

MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

OCTOBER 2008



"Be Still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Psalms 46:10

Farewell to Mar Coorilos

OUR STAND

NEW CAR KEYS

ARE KEY TO SAVING ON CAR INSURANCE.

Call me today to see how much you can save with Allstate's new car discount.

Tel: (718) 464 - 8500

Fax: (718) 464 - 4230

Roycthomas@allstate.com

ROY C THOMAS, LUTCF

Allstate Insurance Company
224-17 Union Turnpike
Bayside, NY 11364

Allstate®

You're in good hands.

Discount and insurance only offered through select company and subject to availability and qualifications. Discount amount may be lower and applies to most major coverages. Allstate Insurance Company and Allstate property and casuality Insurance Company: Northbrook, IL 2004 Allstate Insurance Company.

Mar Thoma Messenger

The Official Publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe

VOL. XXVII No. 4
October 2008

For Private Circulation only

EDITORIAL BOARD

Diocesan Secretary
Rev. Biju S. Cherian
516-377-3311
Fax: 516-377-3322
bscachen@yahoo.com

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

Associate Editors:

Rev. Jaisen Thomas [Dallas]
(972) 495-5393
revjathomas@yahoo.com

Elias Abraham [Baltimore]
(410) 418-8018
elias.abraham49@gmail.com

Lal Varghese, Esq. [Dallas]
(972) 874-7909 attylal@aol.com

Dr. Mathew T. Thomas [Washington, D.C.]
(301) 526-8723

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

Dr. Nancy George Maliacal [Canada]
(905) 799-2123
nancygmal@rogers.com

Shirley Chackalamannil [NJ]
(908) 832-5611
schackalamannil@comcast.net

Alan John [Detroit]
(313) 534-8947
alangjohn@chennithala.com

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Rev. Mathew K. Punnoose (UK)
(011-44) 208-859-5111
revkovoor@yahoo.com

Manager
James T. Philip (NY)
(718) 761-1295
(718) 761-1723 (Fax)
jtphilip@hotmail.com

T. A. Mathew (Houston)
Manager/Advertisement
(713) 455-7469
tamathew@hotmail.com

C. V. Samuel (Detroit)
Manager
Subscription/Promotion (USA)
(586) 268-8007
cvsamuel@hotmail.com

Susan Johnson (Canada)
Manager
Subscription/Promotion (Canada & UK)
(905) 821-4385
susanj1@sympatico.ca

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

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

Chacko Mathew (NY)
Diocesan Treasurer
(718) 761-6847
mathewc@hpd.nyc.gov

Varughese P. Varughese (NY)
(718) 987-5108
vpvarghese@aol.com

Cherian Philip (San Francisco)
(415) 883-7396
cphilip1120@yahoo.com

Annamma Mathew (Dallas)
(972) 462-7522
annamathew254@yahoo.com

Biju T. Mathew (Houston)
(832) 488-0238
bijusmathew@yahoo.com

Samuel T. Thomas (Canada)
(905) 279-1241
punnamalasam@rogers.com

ADVISORY BOARD

Rev. C. K. Koshy [Dallas]
(972) 226-0976
pallathachen@yahoo.com

Sunny Abraham [Philadelphia]
(610) 876-8011
sunny.abraham@comcast.net

Dr. Suresh Samuel [UK]
(44) 208-205-5992
Sureshshamini@aol.com

Zachariah Koshy [Houston]
(281) 437-4020
punnuran@earthlink.net

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

Websites:

Diocese of North America
www.marthomanae.com

Mar Thoma Church
www.marthomasyrianchurch.org

DISCLAIMER: Articles published in the Mar Thoma Messenger are solely the views of the authors. Messenger or the Diocese of North America & Europe is not responsible or liable for the contents of the articles or views in any form.

CONTENTS

Message from the Metropolitan 2

Message from the Diocesan Bishop 4

Bishop Mar Coorilos as I Know Him
Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham 6

A Bishop of Vision and Prayer...
Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia 7

Daniel and His Friends... Rev. P. J. Varghese 8

The Pursuit of a Mission Aswathi Varughese 9

My Interaction with Coorilos Thirumeni
Rev. Vinoy Daniel 12

Mar Coorilos—Youth Connect, Youth Inspire
Rev. Mathew Skariah 13

My Reflections about... Rev. V. T. John 15

Unity and Anglican Identity...
Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa 28

Living Home Shirley Chackalamannil 41

A Call to Early Settlers in this Adopted Land
Dr. Joseph Mattackal 42

A Perspective on Biblical... George Thomas 44

Mar Thoma Sabha Mandalam 2008 Meeting
Dr. John P. Lincoln 45

Mar Thoma Family Conference 2008 Cherian Philip . . . 47

Youth Corner 52

Diocesan/Parish News 55

Cover: **Farewell to Coorilos Thirumeni**
Cover Design: **Biju T. Mathew,** Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX

Subscription Rates:

	2 Years	5 Years	Life
USA	$20.00	$50.00	$300.00
Canada	$25.00	$60.00	$300.00
UK	£10.00	£25.00	£150.00

Advertisement Rates:

	Four Issues	One Issue
Back Cover	$2,000.00	$525.00
Front/Back Cover Inside	$1,500.00	$400.00
Inside Full Page	$ 500.00	$150.00

Mailing Addresses:

Mar Thoma Messenger
Sinai Mar Thoma Center
2320 S. Merrick Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

Eapen Daniel
165 Springflower Court
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

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

Message from the Metropolitan

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

We are entering into the hope-awakening month of September. Onam which is closely related to the harvest festival of the land of Malayalam is on its way. Concerning the Church also, this is a time where we give much attention to the formation of various Governing Boards of the Church and it's Organizations for the period of 2008-2011. We move forward with optimism, seeing before us the coming three years. This is a time when we get God's grace in the formation of the Sabha Council, the Managing Committee, and the Governing Boards. Those who are chosen must submit themselves to the responsibilities that are bestowed on them. We, as a Church, have to imbibe clearly the instruction given by the Spirit of the Lord through the prophet Zechariah to Zerubbabel. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of the hosts" (Zech. 4:6). This was a clear directive from God to Zerubbabel to face the responsibilities bravely. It is not improper to think that it would have been like this He would say to us in these times, "not by votes, nor by propagandistic strategies, but by My Spirit." This period should be a time for us to pray that the Almighty give us immense strength to insert the linchpin on the possibilities before us with a joyful shouting of the word, 'grace", repeatedly. More over, during the days of the Annual Mandalam Meeting Procedures, we must be careful not to misuse the freedom which has been given to us by the Church Constitution formed on value based democratic principles. Great attention is to be given to bring out positive results, seeing before us today's possibilities. Opportunities wait for none. The Committees and Councils that sparkle with vision and ability are very much necessary and everybody must prayerfully show diligence in this matter.

It should be noted that according to our Constitution, Article 117, if a Mandalam member fails to attend two Mandalam meetings consecutively without permission, that Mandalam representative, whether a clergy or a laity, is not entitled to participate in the next immediate Mandalam meeting. Some members, thus, have lost their eligibility. The Mandalam members must pay great attention to this, so that such situations may not occur in future. Those who are not able to attend the Mandalam meetings, after getting the notice for the Mandalam meetings, must send their apologies in writing to the President of the Mandalam Meetings before the commencement of Mandalam meetings.

Our Church had a very sad experience in our Theological Seminary at Kottayam. It is the necessity of our Church and the Seminary to find out the real reason. We are ready to give our complete cooperation to the Government and the Police who conduct the investigations based on the complaints given to these authorities. As we have legal barriers to conduct our own investigation as a Church in this context, we want to make arrangements to review the Seminary activities after getting the report of the investigation from the authorities. We express our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family and share with them their loss that occurred on June 10th.

We entered into the 40th year of a great event in the history of mankind on the 20th of July. On this day the people on the Earth remembered with pride the event which enabled the American Astronauts to step on to the Moon. The incidents said to be associated with this event strengthen our Christian faith. One of the Astronauts after returning to the Earth shared his devotional thought in this way. "When I lifted my eyes to the infinity, I saw at a distance, a blue sphere. I was proudly thinking that the same sphere where the Creator of the Universe was born as an infant is the one that I was also born." Addressing the Maramon Convention once, he had shared his rare experience with us. The Earth which acquired praise worthy scientific achievements, today, moves through the paths of discomforts, disharmony, and moral severance. The alarming climatic changes, quite absent in the past and a continuous phenomenon of the present day, destroy human life. Isn't it the unscientific exploitation of Nature that is the reason for this down fall? Today's need is the discovery of nature friendly energy sources. Let us pray that such efforts succeed so that, this God blessed earth continue as an apt place for human existence. It is not the supreme authority of the Earth that the God entrusted with man, but the stewardship to till it and keep it and preserve it in beauty, health, and fruitfulness (Gen. 2:15).

I have great pleasure in letting you know that our exchange of ideas in the past with the Traditional Catholic Church in Europe is moving toward more discussions. The Traditional Catholic Church has the historical inheritance from the Church of Utrecht that was established in the 8th century in Netherlands. The Traditional Catholic Church which has, from time to time, entered into full communion with many other Churches of the world including the Anglican Church, is a member of the WCC and a special

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

Confessional Family. The Mar Thoma Church also, from 2006 onward, is a special confessional Family in the WCC. Thus, in order to study the communion possibilities between two ancient Churches, a high representative body of The Traditional Catholic Church will be visiting our Church in the near future. In a specially arranged meeting between The Traditional Catholic Church's Archbishop Jorris Ven Camen and I during the month of May, 2008, in Geneva, we were able to give shape to this visit. This meeting occurred because of the invitation of our Synod some time in the past. The Traditional Catholic Church is helping the scattered members of our Church in Europe by providing the Marthomites their facilities to worship. If the relations strengthen there is a possibility that the two Churches together can involve in joint activities in different European countries, the USA, and Canada in future. Let us hope that such conciliatory unions with different Churches will provide our scattered members of the Church in many areas of the world to connect the mission of the Mar Thoma Church with local circumstances prevailing in those places.

The topics of Devotion in August were the quests for finding out the basic values in Christian life. The topics included the search for the sources of eternal grace that we experience through the Holy Sacraments, and the liberation of humanity through Jesus Christ. Along with that, during our devotion we thought of the freedom of our nation, and the blessedness of the vision we received through the Reformation of our Church. Let us remember that we are entering into the Mandalam Meeting procedures in this context. May God enable us to see this radiance of our search as a reality throughout the Mandalam meetings.

During the time of Moses total darkness covered all Egypt. A situation in which no one could see anyone and no one could leave his place where he was. Yet all Israelites had light in the places where they lived. In that light they were able to understand and communicate with each other. The reason is simple. The presence of God was with them. Let us pray that in the midst of our responsibilities in the month of September, this experience be our life experience by having God's presence spreading light.

Grace be with you all.

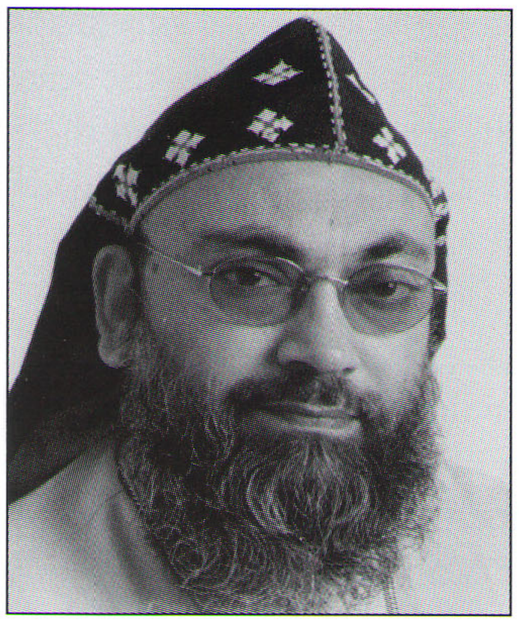
Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Happy 57th Birthday

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

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly beloved in Christ,

I consider it as a great privilege to address you all through the Messenger once again. This is probably the last letter that I will be addressing to you all as the Diocesan Episcopa of the Diocese of North America & Europe.

As stated in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 'for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace'.

I took charge of this Diocese on October 1, 2001. When I look back, I can see the overall growth this Diocese had made during the past several years. It is only with God's guidance and grace that I could lead this Diocese for the past seven years. My predecessor Episcopas laid the foundation stone and God gave me the strength and courage to nurture this Diocese to grow in the ecclesiastical aspect. We have grown from 68 parishes and congregations to 85 parishes and congregations and from 43 clergy to 54 clergy now serving in this Diocese. We have five youths from this Diocese serving as Achens and four youths presently studying at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam to become ordained priests. It is my prayer and dream that within the next ten years at least half of the Achens serving in this Diocese should be from this Diocese itself. Let us pray that God may empower more of our youths for full time ministry in our church.

It was my dream that we should have our own mission fields within the land where we live as Diaspora community. With God's providence we were able to begin two mission fields – among the Native Americans and the Mexico Mission field. With the prayer and support of every member from this Diocese, we have built 67 houses at Colonia Mar Thoma in Mexico. The handing over of the keys to the islanders was done on May 10, 2008 as a part of the Navathy celebrations in the presence of Valiya Metropolitan Philipose Mar Chrysostom Thirumeni and The Metropolitan Joseph Mar Thoma Tirumeni. I have witnessed the trials and tribulations that the members of this Diocese have gone through and at the same time keeping faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and being loyal to the Church. I am also proud of our second generation youths who are keeping their loyalty to the Church and respecting its leaders. I congratulate the parents who nurtured them in the faith and practices of Mar Thoma Church.

I take this opportunity to appreciate all clergy who served this Diocese during these years and helped me in discharging my responsibilities as Diocesan Episcopa. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the families of all Achens for providing me with continued prayers and support.

Our Church is a democratic Church and it is being administered by elected bodies at all levels. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all Diocesan Secretaries, Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Rev. Joseph Oommen and Rev. Biju S. Cherian; the Diocesan Treasurers, Mr. Abraham Thomas, Dr. John P. Lincoln, Mr. T. A. Mathew, Mr. Chacko Mathew, the Diocesan Council members and the Diocesan Assembly members who served this Diocese during the past seven years and rendered support in discharging my responsibility promptly as the Diocesan Episcopa. I also appreciate the Conveners of all Diocesan Sub Committee, its committee members, Secretaries of all Diocesan organizations, its committee members for fesilitating the growth of the Diocese for the past seven years. Let me acknowledge the invaluable services rendered to the Diocese by the Office staff Mr. Anil Joseph and Mr. Thomas Oommen. During these years while taking certain decisive decisions I made it a point to see that my decisions did not harm anyone. However if any of you experienced any hurt feelings via my talks or actions I humbly request your forgiveness in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We have national conferences every year for mostly all organizations. The Family Conference completed 25 years in 2007. The silver jubilee meeting was held during the Family conference held at Toronto in 2007. I appreciate all parishes that hosted the Family Conferences for the past seven years in the best way they could to help the members of this Diocese to grow in the faith journey. We had regional conventions every alternate year in different regions of our Diocese. I firmly believe that these events helped each one of us to rededicate our life to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and also to nurture our children in Christian faith.

The Mar Thoma Messenger, the official publication of the Diocese has also completed 25 years of publication in 2007 and I appreciate all those who worked hard especially the managing committee for the continued publication of Messenger. Communication is an important tool for spreading our faith in Jesus Christ. God Almighty enabled us to launch a web site for the Diocese, Maramon Convention, and for the Mission Board. I wish to congratulate Mr. Thomas Cherian for creating and maintaining the web site for the Diocese.

Mission of the Church is to help everyone experience fullness of life in Christ. Our Mission Board has taken an active part during the past seven years by establishing two mission fields one in Mexico and one among Native Americans. Apart from the elders our youths also, are taking active interest in the mission activities of our Diocese. I see the future of our Church safe in the hands of our young generation and I am sure that they will keep the faith and practices of the Mar Thoma church. The Diocesan Youth Fellowship has undertaken the Mexico Mission project and they are in the process of building two hostels for the children of the islanders so that they can stay in the hostels and attend schools. I request the openhearted support of all our members and families.

Our Diocese could also extend helping hands to our brothers and sisters in India and other parts of the world by providing the basic human necessities such as housing, food, education, medical facilities etc. We have contributed more than half a million dollars towards the rehabilitation of the families affected by Tsunami. God also enabled us to contribute more than one million dollars towards the Navathy project of our Sabha in building homes for the homeless. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who had contributed towards the above projects and all other projects of the Diocese for the past seven years.

We had also the privilege and honor in hosting our Valiya Metropolitan on his completion of 90 glorious years as a servant of God and also the newly consecrated 21st Metropolitan of the Church, Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma.

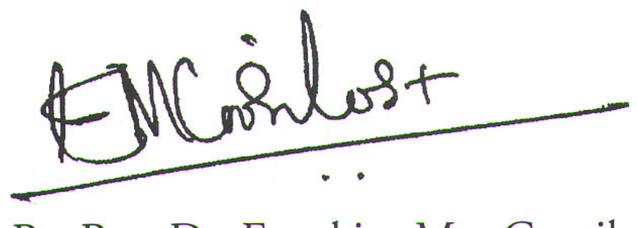
As per God's plan and the decision of the Episcopal Synod I am transferred to the Kottayam- Kochi Diocese from January 2009. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa will be the new Diocesan Episcopa. I wish and pray that God may provide all His providence and guidance to Theodosius Thirumeni to lead this Diocese in the faith journey of the Church. I request your valuable prayers so that I may remain as His chosen vessel in imparting God's will to everyone till He allows me. As I close let me quote the famous lines of the American poet Robert Lee Frost,

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

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

With blessings and prayers,

Yours in His Service,

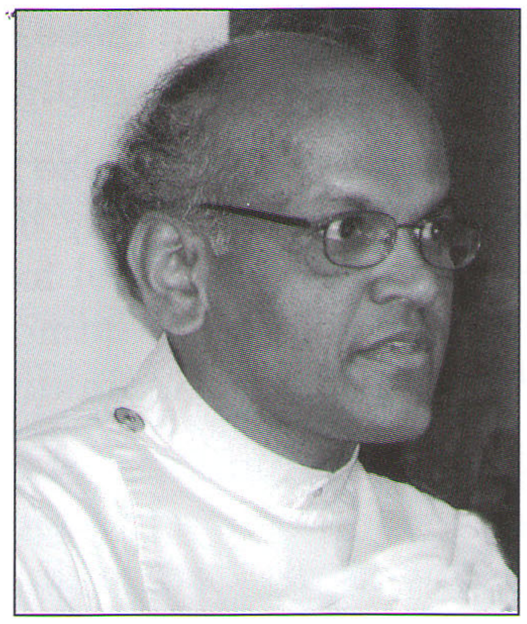


Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos
Diocesan Bishop

Bishop Mar Coorilos as I Know Him

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, former Bishop's and Diocesan Secretary

At the outset, I commend the editorial team of Messenger for bringing out a special issue in connection with the transfer of Coorilos Thirumeni from that Diocese. I thank Messenger committee for having asked me to write the following reflections on the life and ministry of Thirumeni.



My first association with Euyakim I. Cheeran (afterwards Mar Coorilos) was in 1974 October when we were together for the entrance exam for theological studies at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam. For some of us from Central Travancore, his name sounded a bit peculiar. Both of us were selected as theological students of the Church. I did my studies at the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur and Mr. Cheeran at the Mar Thoma Seminary, Kottayam.

My second association with him was at the Palarivattom Mar Thoma Church, Kerala where Rev. Euyakim I. Cheeran served as the Vicar. I was there in connection with the Mar Thoma Students' Conference years ago. I stayed over night with him at the Parsonage on one Saturday. It was time for the evening family prayer. At the Parsonge he had set up a prayer room with an almost temporary altar. After the prayers he gave me a briefing about the next day's service. He wanted me to conduct the Holy Communion and also to deliver the sermon. Though I was prepared for it, I asked whether he would do one part. Declining very politely he said: "Achen I am always here. Today you are the guest. But don't think that my sermon is not prepared" (He laughs). Dignified and disciplined as he was, from the people there I could gather that he was a prospective Episcopal candidate for the first time.

My third association with him was while I was serving as the Vicar of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York. As soon as we reached the Parsonage of the St. Thomas Church, there was a phone call from the Diocesan office, New York. Coorilos Thirumeni was at the other end. He extended to my wife and I, a warm welcome to the Diocese. All the Achens of that Diocese would say that they too had such courtesy calls. Well, this is definitely an expression of one's concern for some one who is together in the ministry of the Lord. While at St. Thomas I had a memorable event in my ministry-the silver jubilee of ordination in 2003. Since both Thirumeni and I got ordained in the same year the Parish made it a solemn occasion to celebrate it together. Again Thirumeni visited us on another important occasion. Recognizing the life and contributions of the Parish to the community, the Yonkers City in New York decided to rename the street that goes across the Parish as the "Mar Thoma Way". (Previously it was Morris Street) The City counselor and several other dignitaries were present. This was a joyous occasion for all of us.

My fourth association with Thirumeni was serving as Bishop's secretary and also as the secretary of the Diocese of North America and Europe. During my tenure at the St. Thomas, perhaps after a few months, I had a phone call from him. "Achen, would you like to work with me as the secretary"? I never expected such an assignment as my mind-set and concerns were different. I didn't give a quick reply. Rather I asked for some time to ponder on it and also to find out the nature and responsibilities of the work. On the next day I replied that I am doubtful whether I am fit for the post as I do not have any previous experience and my interests are more in the area of teaching and so on, but if he is prepared to bear with me, I am ready. During my stay at Sinai Center, New York for two years: Thirumeni and my family had most of our meals together, shared our concerns traveled a lot by road and on flights. At home he was a fisherian and at times an eggetarian. He was always dignified at home; never on casual dress but always on cassok with masanapsa in the Chapel for our family prayers and even for meals.

Thirumeni was also an administrator who functioned with a pastoral mind. He didn't have any hidden agenda for any of the committees. He was not a fund raiser par excellence by promoting the ego of the people or begging for support. If he is convinced about any project, he would present it as convincingly as possible before the people and usually there was an overwhelming support. As an administrator he found a reliable colleague in me. When ever there was a delegation from a Parish with an issue, he would also ask me to be with them in the sharing session. On one occasion, in connection with the formation of a new Parish, we had a tough time. The group was not lenient and receptive. Thirumeni also didn't give up; he had to blast a few. After the blasting session, the group had left. It was time for lunch. When I found that he had settled down, I thought an intervention might help. I told him that a few of the members were upset and even wounded by some of the remarks made by Thirumeni. He gave me a patient hearing. In the evening, to my utter surprise, prior to our evening family prayer in the Chapel, he rang them up one by one, reconciled with them and prayed for them by name. Yes, there ought to be a pastor in a Bishop!

Thirumeni kept a good relationship with the other Church traditions too. Visitors to New York from India, Marthomites and others took time to visit us at the Sinai Center. I had the opportunity to be with him on several ecumenical programs such as the NCCC-USA and so on.

Last but not the least; I would say that he is jovial and sturdy, caring and supportive. One thing is definite: no one could rob him of his Episcopal credibility or take him for a ride with money or other favors. Perhaps, we had a few theological disagreements, yet we were like colleagues, friends or partners in the ministry of the Lord. While thanking God for his life and ministry in that Diocese, we look forward to his ministry in the Diocese of Kottayam-Kochi. Let the Almighty grant him several more fruitful years of life and ministry. ■

A Bishop of Vision and Prayer: A Heartfelt Reflection on Coorilos Thirumeni

Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Toronto, Canada

Our beloved Coorilos Thirumeni has been an integral part of this diocese in many ways. Having served as the vicar of various parishes in the late 1980s, Thirumeni has an insight into parish dynamics in the North American context. Now, as our Coorilos Thirumeni will be transferred from this diocese, I would like to highlight a few aspects of Thirumeni's ministry in our diocese.

Thirumeni is a Bishop who grounds ministry in prayer. As a parish priest, I'm constantly amazed at Thirumeni's deep focus on prayer. During our clergy meetings, Thirumeni always affirms that "all problems will find their solution when we fall on our knees." While it may be easy for some to make this statement, Thirumeni demonstrates this through his prayer life. An example of this is during Thirumeni's parish visits. In a systematic manner, Thirumeni inquires about the prayer life of the clergy. Thirumeni asks questions about the type of devotional books that we read during our family prayer times. Moreover, Thirumeni is quite observant in terms of recognizing and realizing if there are any shortcomings in the prayer life of the parish.

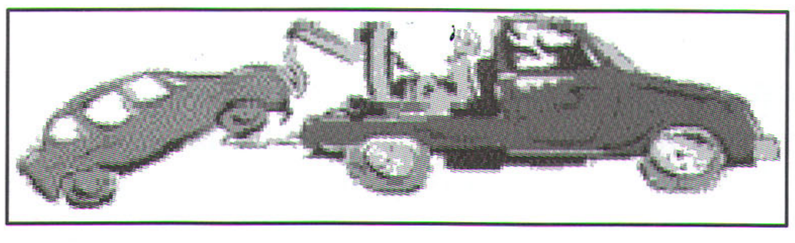
Coorilos Thirumeni took charge of this Diocese in 2001. Having vitalized the ministries in Adoor-Mavelikara and Ranni-Nillackal, Thirumeni understood that this Diocese had a good foundation. In fact, Thirumeni constantly acknowledged the work of Our Suffragan Metropolitan, Zacharias Mar Theophilus Thirumeni, in terms of developing the infrastructure and inspiring the growth of various organizations. Coorilos Thirumeni decided that we must move beyond the confines of "Syrian Christianity" and engage with people of other races and ethnic backgrounds. Taking a look at our Thirumeni's ministry, we see that Thirumeni's vision led to the development of the "Youth Center" in Adoor as well as many missionary projects. It is with this sense of dedication and vision that Thirumeni began to script a new chapter in the history of the diocese. This new chapter is of course the "hands on" engagement with the newly established Mexico Mission. Amidst much skepticism, Thirumeni persevered in establishing this project.

From a personal perspective, Coorilos Thirumeni ordained me as a *"kassessa"* of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Truly, it is during Coorilos Thirumeni's time that many have come forward for the "ordained ministry of the church." In fact, Thirumeni has expressed concerns about the "United States Generated *Kassesas*" even to the extent of desiring to establish various plans for us.

Having directly witnessed Thirumeni's style of functioning, there were certain aspects which I continue to appreciate. Thirumeni's care for those who are downtrodden and oppressed is just one example. Thirumeni utilizes the traditional "kaimoothu" to help others in need. Thirumeni's concern for the clergy in the diocese is another example. Thirumeni listens and does not hesitate to guide and or chastise us when we need it! Certainly, Thirumeni's paternal instincts are felt when he engages in "directing" us. While there may have been certain points of disagreement with Thirumeni, Thirumeni was open-minded and open-hearted enough to listen and understand our differing perspectives. During critical periods in my ministry (church construction in Staten Island and XXV Mar Thoma Family Conference in Toronto), Thirumeni's words of wisdom, counsel, and consolation nurtured, strengthened, and guided me.

Although we will miss Thirumeni's leadership in this diocese, we will certainly be able to experience Thirumeni's continued ministry in the church. As I close this reflection, the contribution of our bishops, clergy, as well as lay members in this diocese, is a testament to the work and providence of God. Let us continue to experience this providence through prayerful engagement in the work of the Kingdom. ■

DONATE YOUR USED CARS AND VANS TO CHARITY!!!



DONATE YOUR USED CARS AND TRUCKS

Tax deduction – Free towing nationwide, any condition

1-877-227-7487 Ext. 2302

The Mar Thoma Church S.I. Charity Program

Daniel and His Friends:
An Ever Challenging Model for all Students (Daniel 1:1–20)

Rev. P. J. Varghese, Epiphany MTC, New York

Among the Biblical narratives, Daniel and his friends, stands unique with its hard challenge, unparallel heroism and outstanding achievement.

The questions regarding the personal identity and the historicity of these characters get insignificant while the character and special way of life of these youngsters come into life. In a hostile land and culture how these young men utilized their time and situation and how they reached the key positions in the royal affairs of the Babylonian kingdom is an eye-opening episode from the Old Testament and hence as an immigrant community we have a special message from the story.

Background

The united kingdom under King David broke away into South and North and the Southern state of Judah continued until the conquests began in 597 BC. The city of Jerusalem was devastated in 587/586 BC which also marked the beginning of Babylonian exile. The exile was an experience of military defeat, deportation and oppression in a new and strange land. As was their policy, the Babylonians exiled large sections of the conquered people. Daniel, Hananiah(Shadrak), Mishael(Meshak) and Azariah(Abednego) were part of the exilic community taken to Babylon.

As the youngsters were of noble birth, handsome and showed aptitude for every kind of learning, they were assigned for a special training in the Palace. The training package consisted of the language and culture of Babylon and military and administrative training. They were granted a daily amount of royal food and wine from the King's table. This training was to be for three years and after that they were to enter the king's service. The package seems to be very attractive in terms of accommodation, training and also placement as of the present times.

Priority or Attraction?

But Daniel and friends were not attracted by the 'menu' in the package. They resolved to take a wise decision to comply with the training and also made a wise rejection of the royal food (Dan. 1:8-17). Why did these Jewish youths reject the food from the royal palace even though the Jewish food code didn't prevent them from drinking wine?

Biblical scholars suggest a number of points: (a). It may be a protest against the conquest of their mother land and the destructions that the King made in their land. (b). They wanted to show the king that their menu in the court did not have any impact on their proven ability and command on learning. (c). Last but not the least, through the rejection of the royal food they wanted to show the providence and might of the God whom they believed.

The world we are living in is characterized by the seemingly attractive offers, packages, schemes and the like. We are exploring this Biblical message at a time of unparallel economic recession at an alarming and devastating nature. A relevant question that we ought to raise is, "Are we driven by God-centered priorities or by the attractions of the world?"

Achievement or assimilation?

The young heroes proved that they were ten times better than all the experts in the whole kingdom in the matters of wisdom. It was verified by the king himself (Dan.1:19-20). How did they make it possible? Did they enjoy everything provided to them? Can intellectual pursuit and upgrading of achievement needs undermining of principles and values in life?

The intellectual achievement of these four friends illustrate that achievements in life are not the end result of assimilation of all that is provided. Christian faith inevitably calls for an active non-conformity with the world, even in the manner in which we daily live our lives—the food we choose to consume, the clothing we choose to wear, the cultural pattern and lifestyles we choose. As contemporary advertisements and marketing are directed toward changing the people's habits to entice them to buy products that will become necessities that they simply "can't live without", 'denial of king's food and wine' has a special message. What we consume would not determine what we ought to be, but our conviction and will power should determine what we own or consume.

Conclusion

Our social situation is of a plural nature with many cultures, religions, faith practices and life styles. Fashions and brands are changing drastically. The demarcation between right and wrong are becoming very thin and at certain stages it seems unclear. "Don'ts" are getting the status and ratification of "do's".

As an immigrant community in a land of prospects and problems, how do we imbibe the Biblical messages? The challenges faced by the first generation have become more complex and perplexing as we come to the second and third generations. In a situation where our identity and possibilities of existence are alarmingly threatened like any of the immigrant and faith communities, where do we have to anchor our hopes and aspirations other than the lives and messages of people like Daniel and his friends? Read the Bible, identify messages, assimilate ideas and principles of a God-centered life and make clear priorities in life. May God bless all of us to assimilate the most usable and desirable things in life to reach all possible heights in life as God likes. ■

The Pursuit of a Mission

Aswathi Varughese, St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Lombard, Illinois

Every now and then all of us experience an earnest desire to make a difference, to do some good, to be a Christian 'in action'. More often than not, these emotions are quickly suppressed by the turbulent tide of life. Just for a bit, let us take a step back and contemplate on the following arbitrary news articles.

- Amstetten, Austria: A man has confessed to imprisoning his daughter for 24 years in windowless cell with a soundproofed door and fathering seven children with her, police said Monday. "The entire nation must ask itself just what is fundamentally going wrong," the newspaper Der Standard said Monday in a commentary
- Bosnia: More than two hundred thousands civilians have been killed in Bosnia and Croatia since the beginning of the war. Tens of thousands of women were raped, some of them more than a hundred times, while their sons and husbands were beaten and tortured in concentration camps like Omarska and Manjaca. Millions lost their homes due to a process called "ethnic cleansing."
- Darfur, Sudan: Government-armed Arab militias known as the Janjaweed, with open support from the Sudanese military, are attacking villages from non-Arab ethnic groups. An estimated 15,000 to 30,000 people have been killed so far; between 1 and 2 million people have been driven from their looted and burned homes. Most of these refugees are in camps inside Darfur, where Janjaweed openly rape women and steal food aid. The government has repeatedly blocked and delayed humanitarian aid efforts, in a policy predicted to kill 350,000 from hunger and disease in the upcoming months. This is deliberate, ethnically targeted genocide by starvation.
- Orissa, India: The violence that began in the Indian state of Orissa on Christmas Eve continued through Friday, with arson attacks killing at least nine more Christians. Furthermore, at least 50 churches and institutions have been destroyed or desecrated as a result of the attacks.
- Virginia, USA: The Virginia Tech massacre was a school shooting consisting of two separate attacks approximately two hours apart on April 16, 2007, which took place on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in Blacksburg, Virginia. The perpetrator, Seung-Hui Cho, killed 32 people and wounded many more before committing suicide, making it not just the deadliest school shooting, but the deadliest shooting rampage by a single gunman in all of U.S. history
- Baghdad, Iraq: A suicide bomber detonated a truck full of explosives in the crowded outdoor market of a Shi'ite farming town north of Baghdad on Saturday, leveling houses and stores and killing more than 100 people, officials said.

Do these headlines capture your attention? These are just random news articles of abuse, violence and terrorism from different locations around the world. A couple of these articles are fairly high profile, generating world-wide interest and sympathy. What does this all have to do with a comparatively small Mar Thoma community in North America?

Centuries ago, Queen Esther asked a parallel question: What can I do? Recalling from the Bible the story of Queen Esther, Mordecai managed to initiate Esther, his uncle's daughter to King Ahasuerus's court. Letters from King Ahasuerus were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children in one day. When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. Esther, being apprised of the circumstances was deeply distressed and sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. In his response, Mordecai sent a copy of the written decree issued in Susa regarding the destruction of the Jews. He commanded her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. Esther replied signifying the law of the land that "if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."

The young Queen Esther feared for her life. Mordecai sent his reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish."

In our world today, our safe little silos that are fairly untouched by such dramatic occurrences we probably will never need to make such critical decisions. Yet, we are entrusted with a task that is of paramount importance to our Creator: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9

The time is NOW. This moment in time—We—You and me are called to make a difference…..TODAY!

And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? For such a time as this—TODAY—Not tomorrow! Our Savior calls us to action NOW!

Abuse, violence and terrorism prevail and run rampant in the world today. The sanctity of Life is questioned.

There is exploitation and manipulation, verbal and physical abuse—we are all probably guilty at some point of one or the other, though probably to a much lesser degree. Some small steps that we can do to catalyze a change movement within our spheres of influence: Can we as a community make a decision to stop negative criticism? We are not called to be judges: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" Matthew 7:1. With that guiding principle, during our General Body, when we are in meetings or even during social gatherings can we make a conscious decision to 'bite our tongues' so to speak and avoid speaking ill? What an alteration it would be if we reversed the trend and spoke words of appreciation instead! Can we reach out to families we know where there is abuse and pray for them—not merely reciting their names, but on our knees, with outstretched arms, praying to our Lord for compassion and healing? Then, let us take this small step one leap further into the outside world. By our words, our compassion, can we influence the larger community?—Yes, we are called for such a time as this! Violence stems from anger. Anger is often uncontrollable and unmanageable. Indians, on the whole are a fairly passive community. So, does this not apply to us? Absolutely yes! We can reach out to victims by reaching into our wallets and into our hearts. Reach out in sympathy and empathy. We are blessed so that we can be a blessing to another. How many of us have taken the time to write a note to any of the victims from the news articles listed above? Man is a social being. Take the time to reach out to a victim of violence. Comfort them. Stand up for what is right! Speak out—the Lord will guide your words. Speak to them of the unconditional love of our Savior—His all encompassing mercy! Believe me, it's not too hard to do. Just once, maybe? Can we venture out of the comfort zone of our safe world?—Yes, we are called for such a time as this! We hear of missionaries being killed. We listen with heavy hearts and we are silent. Why? Our children beg for time with us—we are busy. Work calls us. Society calls us. Our children call us again and yet we remain silent. Why? Our children are the leaders of tomorrow. Talk to them. Listen to their pressures. Speak to them about their heavenly father. Read the Bible —together. Pray—together. Life is not about dollars and cents. Life is about Love and Faith. Have we visited a home for the elderly? The calloused, wrinkled hands and the lined faces have stories to tell—of lessons learned, of pain filled nights. Can we stop our 'busyness' for a moment and listen? Disabled children on wheelchairs pass us by—we turn away—Why? Are we fearful of being drawn into their ceaseless aching? Yes, we are called for such a time as this!

The crucible of Life is about burning with a passion for serving our Lord—in whatever role He calls us and rest assured He will. Live life to the fullest by living each day serving Him. Praise Him everyday. When the burden is too heavy, get on your knees and cry out to Jesus—He answers every call and wipes every tear—with a Lifetime Guarantee. The Warranty never expires—Yes, we are called for such a time as this!

In conclusion, I humbly reach out to my fellow Marthomites:–

- Take a pledge to make a difference, irrespective of the magnitude.
- Take a pledge for action…. Maybe an hour of our time ….whatever stirs our heart….
- Forget to pray for ourselves and remember to pray for those in pain, for those who are destitute, for those who are lost, for those who need the healing touch of our Savior.

Somewhere, someone needs us.
Let us answer that call.

Sheltered from the destructive, jagged lighting flash
Privileged to hear the Savior's tender call
My heart—remain not silent,
Linger not till the tempest abates—
For in the hushed stillness of a silver twilight
A forlorn cry re-echoes for help … ■

OBITUARY

DR. MARY ABRAHAM was born to Mr. and Mrs. K. G. John of Thekkemannil House Vennikulam, Kerala State, India on July 13, 1954. She was a loving wife, mother, sister and a friend. She has been married to the love of her life, Mathew (Valsan of Valoor Kottapuram, Cherukole), for the last 28 years. She was very devoted to her dear children Melvy and Ivy. Her loving mother living in India and her siblings were constantly in her thoughts. Family and friends meant everything to her.

She lived her life serving and caring for people around the world. After graduating from T. D. Medical College in Alleppey, India and finishing her medical internship training, she joined her husband in Nigeria, where she was a physician at the A.B.U. Teaching Hospital. She completed her residency in Internal Medicine at Cook County Hospital, Chicago in 1991, and her fellowship in Nephrology at Loyola University in 1993. Throughout her career, she strove to serve the neediest, working in medically underserved communities in Kentucky and Chicago. She has been a senior nephrologist at Provident Hospital for 13 years. She was also associated with the Nephrology Associates of Northern Illinois and was a consultant at Holy Cross, Jackson Park and St. Bernard Hospitals.

Her life revolved around her family, work and church. She was selfless in whatever she did and always wanted to give more of herself. She had a deep and abiding faith in God. Her enthusiasm and drive were apparent to everyone. She leaves behind a legacy of love, service and faith, which will continue to live on in the hearts of those who knew her.

Shibu P. Thomas, MBA, MS
Accountant &
Financial Advisor/Consultant
Serving the Community since 1998

Active Member of
Staten Island Mar Thoma Church

Member AICPA, NYSSCPA

CPA ACCOUNTING SERVICES, LLC

Accounting and Financial Services

Offices:
- ***Jericho Office:*** 125 Jericho Tpke, NY
- ***New Hyde Park Office***: 1606 Hillside Ave, NY
- ***Staten Island Office***: 35 Norwich Street, NY

Telephone: (516) 352-2856 ■ (718) 698-2370
Fax: (516) 584-7174
Email: sp.thomas@verizon.net
Web site: www.spthomas.com

■ FREE ■

Comprehensive Review of your Taxes, Finances and Retirement!

Also included is a review of insurance and market exposure to you and your family!

(Call for more information)

- Financial and Retirement Planning (Free Complete Review)
- Qualified and Non-Qualified plans, 529 Plans, Pension Annuities
- Not-for Profit, 501(c) (3) Formation and Filings

Drop-off ■ Mail ■ Fax ■ E-Mail your tax documents

Call me and let's review your taxes, finances and retirement!

- **CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIP RETURNS**
- COMPLETE PAYROLL SERVICES
- **INCOME TAX PREPARATION**
- FREE ELECTRONIC FILING
- **SMALL BUSINESS ACCOUNTING & BOOKKEPPING**
- NEW CORPORATION / BUSINESS SET-UP
- **BUSINESS LICENSES**
- ALL STATE RETURNS
- **AMENDED RETURN PREPARATION**
- ANNUAL AND QUARTERLY SALES TAXES

TAX PLANNNING – INSURANCE – RETIREMENT – ESTATE PLANNING

My Interaction with Coorilos Thirumeni...

Rev. Vinoy Daniel, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

Even though I have only one and half years of personal interaction with Thriumeni, let me recollect some of the important things which catch my attention in Thirumeni. Thirumeni is a very simple man, with simple life style and without any fan fare. Thirumeni is a man of prayer. I recently read in a devotional book, that "if you find difficulty to stand on your feet and minister, kneel down and minister on your knees." Thirumeni begins and ends his day on knees; Thirumeni is a fitting model for prayer. Thirumeni is not anxious about anything or worried about any problems and always says we have to submit to God's will at all times

I find certain uniqueness in Thirumeni's parish visit. Thirumeni usually stays at parsonage whether it is a big house or an apartment. Thirumeni takes time to interact with members of the family especially children and he closely watches the family prayer of Achens. Thirumeni shares experiences in ministry which strengthens Achens in their ministry. Thirumeni takes time to meet all the organizations of Church and usually have healthy discussion with them. Thirumeni's passion towards youth is well evident in his interaction with them. It makes great impact among the Diaspora youth. Many youngsters committed their life for Christ and dedicated for ministry of our Church from this nation.

Coorilos Thirumeni has clear vision about the mission of the Church. Thirumeni encourages people to undertake the mission of the Church where they are planted. Thirumeni's vision about native missions is well known to everybody. It is Thirumeni's vision and dream that there should have mission fields near the places where we live so that our youths may have easy access to the mission of the Church. With this in mind, Thirumeni initiated two mission fields, one in Mexico and the other among the Native Americans. Thirumeni took personal interest in both of these mission fields. Thirumeni traveled several times to these mission fields to have first hand knowledge of the issues and problems being faced by the people living in the mission fields. Thirumeni addressed the problems and issue through financial support, guidance and prayer. Thirumeni believes our primary duty is to propagate gospel through our active presence and action among the people. Thirumeni knows that church exists only by mission. That's why without neglecting Indian mission, Thirumeni initiated two missions here which attracts our youth who born and brought up here, which shows Thirumeni's vision about coming generation.

His Lordship is well known for his compassion towards the less fortunate people in the society. It is the fulfillment of Thirumeni's prayers and vision that our Church could build about 78 houses in Mexico and hand over the keys to the islanders while the Valiya Metropolitan and Mar Thoma Metropolitan visited Mexico in May 2008. Thus Thirumeni makes his name meaningful through this action. Valiya Thirumeni during the key hand over ceremony said that this is the most glorious moment in His Grace's 90 years of life to witness the establishment of a mission field outside India and USA by the Church and congratulated Coorilos Thirumeni for his initiative and leadership. And Thirumeni reminded members that in the past westerners came to the east and spread the Gospel, and now it is our turn to spread the Gospel to the Westerners.

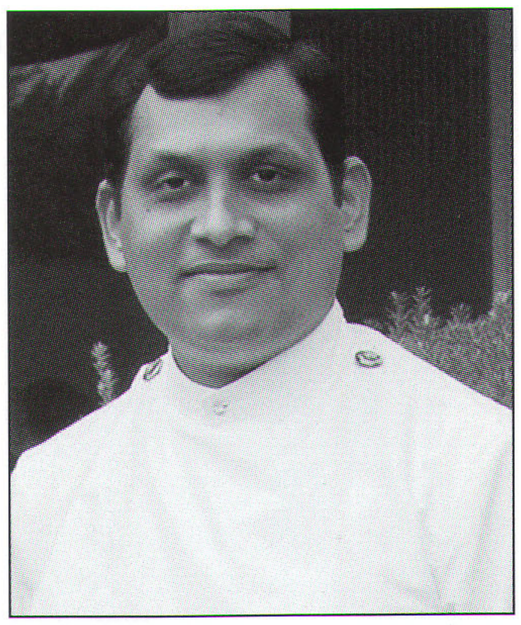
Thirumeni's leadership and administrative capacity is commendable. As an administrator, Thirumeni is very strict in adhering to the rules and precedents being followed by his predecessors. Thirumeni makes sure that all members of the Church including the clergy strictly follow the faith and practices of the Church. Two things are absent in Thirumeni, that is worth mentioning those are fear and favor. He fears only God and never bends before human being for receiving favors. As Psalmist said "with upright heart he tended them, and guided them with skillful hand" (Psalm 78:72). Surely Thirumeni has an upright heart and skillful hand that could enable him to tend his sheep here in America.

Thirumeni repeatedly reminds achens about parish ministry. Respect the people those who are coming for worship and don't go after money, Thirumeni reminds us that people are very eager to attend the worship service, and are going through different kinds of pressures in life, shepherd them in God given grace as Peter says to his fellow elders "to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock."

The common factor that relates both of us is that we are both hailing from North Kerala belonging to the Kunnamkulam-Malabar Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church. But, my past one and half years' interaction with Coorilos Thirumeni has supplemented me with at least fifteen years of personal relationship between us. I wish and pray that God may continue to keep Thirumeni in His providence so that the responsibilities as a servant of God may be discharged without any fear or favor. On behalf of Achens of the Diocese, the MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch and on behalf of myself and family, I pray that God may shower His abundant blessings upon Thirumeni in the future. ■

Mar Coorilos—Youth Connect, Youth Inspire

Rev. Mathew Skariah, Youth Chaplain, South East Region



Youth life is all about being connected. It is how and where they are connected that determines the identity and existence. Connectedness provides belonging and relevance. It could be to persons, to movements, to organizations, to causes to anything or even to nothing. The challenge of the church, as body of Christ is enabling relevant connections, or "life (giving-receiving) connections. Coorilos Thirumeni connected with and Thirumeni inspired the youths.

The second generation youth of the diocese has been the foremost priority of Thirumeni as the Diocesan Episcopa. Thirumeni has always been the manager, the coach, the captain and the cheerleader for the youth. It was always a great experience playing in the Thirumeni's youth team. Thirumeni's interpersonal relationship with the youth has transformed them and his very clear challenge for the ministry has enabled many of the youth to dedicate them to ordained ministry of the church.

How did Thirumeni connect and inspire? I found a few answers…

Tears: The gift of divine compassion

In our world of reason and "picture perfectness", tears are not appreciated. It is perceived as a sign of weakness and is banished from public display. But tears have a deep spiritual significance.

Tears…have been associated with deep compassionate prayer. When the ascetic tradition speaks about "the gift of tears", it is not an expression of sentiments, but as a special charism of the Holy Spirit that induces an incessant flow of tears that "make the flesh bloom" in joy and in compassion.–*K. M. George, "The Silent Roots"*

That day in December 1989, when Euyakim I. Cheeran Ramban walked down the aisle as a candidate to be consecrated as Episcopa, it was those abundant tears which incessantly poured down his face, cleansing and preparing for the great task for which he was being called and about to be consecrated. The gift of tears has been with Thirumeni and has always given the amazing depth to moments of prayer and intercession.

Change: A personal story

Thirumeni always has his own personal story to share. It is the story from the college days when he struggled with a sense of irrelevance with the church, but was confronted by a group of friends, and thus finding a new and personal relation with Christ. It was a defining spiritual encounter that caused a U turn in life and became the foundational story of his committing to be minister of the church. Thirumeni is never tired of retelling the story. It is in fact being very true to the reformation emphasis on the need of repentance and the experience of salvation in a very personal manner. And it has connected and inspired many in their own struggles of meaning and relevance. It has encouraged people to tell their own stories and has affirmed the relevance of personal experiences in encountering the grace of God.

Hospitality: humility to accept and to give

The hospitality of Abraham, who hosted the angels of God outside the tent by the oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18), is a powerful image in the Old Testament.

Hospitality is an attitude. It is a willingness to accept and to give without pride or prejudice. It is the philosophy of affirming the other. Thirumeni's parsonages and Aramanas, has been more of *"thravadu"*, whether in Staten Island, Adoor, Ranni or Sinai, have been open houses and safe havens for people in need of shelter. People can walk in and enjoy the warmth of acceptance and some time to talk and to be listened. Thirumeni is willing to come and stay in any accommodation provided, whether it is dorm accommodation during youth and Sunday school conferences; and his room becomes the "party area" where youths could walk in and share in the laughter and snacks.

Qurbana: liturgy becomes life

The celebration of liturgy becomes powerful and life changing when the celebrant has something personal to offer. Every celebration of Eucharist has been a distinctive experience of divine grace as it was an offering from the heart. The prayer for pardon before the sedra is always something beyond the written words, with the personal pleas of brokenness. Those are the moments when the congregation shares the heartbeat of repentance along with the celebrant. Through the brokenness and the joy of such a celebration, the wonder and power of liturgy is revealed.

Mexico and Native America: Mission without borders

It is an undoubted fact that the single factor that has challenged the youth most through the leadership of Coorilos Thirumeni is the mission in Mexico that he has pioneered. It has made such an impact with the people of the islands in their habitat, education, hygiene and faith, that they will never be the same. But the greatest miracle has been in the lives of those youth and parents who have gone and volunteered in the mission trips. People have come back with transformed hearts and minds. They are eager to involve in the church and commit their time, energy and money for the Kingdom of God through the church.

Native American mission was another example of crossing the borders and involving in the life of the original inhabitants of this land, sharing the pain and providing new meaning in their lives wrought with emptiness.

Coorilos Thirumeni had a great vision for the diocese. It is a vision for the youth of the diocese as well. It is a vision that the youth would be transformed by the love of Christ and will shoulder the responsibility of leading the church.

Coorilos Thirumeni's shepherding has been an example of visionary leading and the youth of this diocese will ever be thankful to God for Thirumeni. ■

The End of a Chapter, but the Beginning of Another: May He Fly on the Wings of Angels!

Professor Dr. Zac Varghese, London, England

This is the end of an unfinished chapter or it is the end of the first page of a letter and beginning the next page because our lives are intended to be God's open letter to the world, it is through our lives others see and sense a living God. Coorilos Thirumeni brought to this diocese a new vision about our engagement with the people among whom we work and live. His 'purpose driven mission' was to give motivation and enthusiasm for us to get involved with neighbourhood mission activities. Therefore, it is a time of thanksgiving for people in our diocese; we are thanking God for the blessings that we received during our diocesan bishop's reign over us during the last seven years. It is a time of celebration too because it may the only time that we all will be saying very good things about our Thirumeni who will be leaving this diocese. When King Solomon was leading the celebrations to dedicate the temple in Jerusalem, he reviewed the past from the perspective of what God had done. Looking back over the past in the light of the present can be a most rewarding experience.

Over the past seven years Coorilos Thirumeni was in the business of building the Diocese of North America and Europe. He came to North America and Europe to build on what Zacharias Thirumeni had started. Building on a pre-laid foundation is not an easy task. His emphasis on building was people-centred. He realised the future of Church in the West depended on our young people and their commitment. Therefore, his main concern was about of our young people, he worked to empower the young people in our parishes. He listened to them and did many things with them. One of the major highlights of his time with us is the Mexico mission and it is the young people who worked with him in achieving his objective under the grace of God. Let us hope that this work will continue and continuation of this project will be our real expression of gratitude to him. Secondly, he got young people involved in parish and Diocesan administration, the diocesan council that he will be leaving with us is a very young council.

Thirdly, when he took charge we only had two parishes in London, but now we have seven parishes and five congregations, and many prayer groups which may become parishes. This rate of development has happened in other regions of the diocese too. Thirumeni has carried the massive burden of building the Diocese with inner strength, tenderness with toughness, compassion with competence. He has helped to build institutions, organisations, movements, and fellowships for various professional groups and practices for the Diocese and the Church. Thirumeni made us aware of our responsibility as a diaspora community to our folks in India and helped to channel large amounts of funds to India for various projects. Building houses for the poor was a great project of our Church to express our gratitude to Chrysostom Thirumeni. Out of the 16 or so crores of Rupees collected, more than 10 crores came from Our Diocese and Middle East; Thirumeni's guidance was very helpful in this matter. I hope that in future we not only write cheques, but we also may personally get involved in an one to one basis with various activities with the mother Church; otherwise, we may just become a colonial outfit of a big empire.

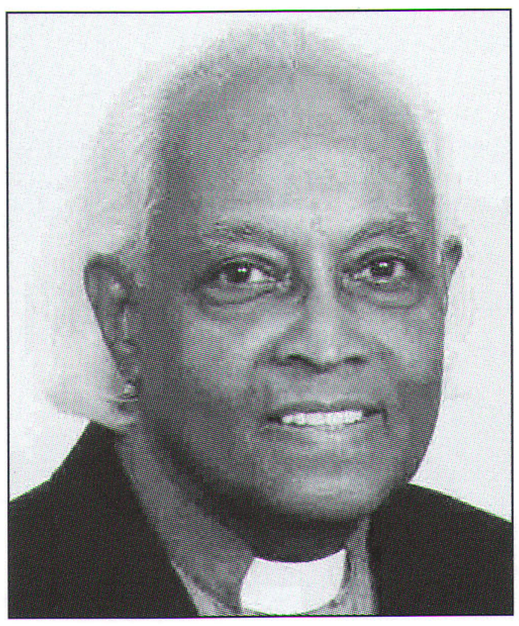
Finally, Thirumeni also was very proactive for seeking membership of the 'Churches together in England'- National Council of Churches. When Thirumeni came we were an immigrant Church and now we are a legitimate part of the British Christian community. Let us thank God for Thirumeni's leadership and concern for us and let us continue to pray for him to provide pastoral ministry for our people in the Kottayam Diocese. Each man's achievement is his own under the most benevolent grace of God and only the person can tell what the cost has been. Thirumeni's actions were guided by faith in a master guide; hope in a promise; charity in pouring out, and an utter humility in receiving. These are the essential Christian virtues and Kingdom values for anyone intending do anything well in this world for building His Kingdom.

Thank you Thirumeni for your friendship and spiritual guidance, I thank you for all your advice and help for our growth and we wish you good health and happiness for your ministry at Kottayam. Let us offer him our thanks and the sincerity of our prayers for allowing him to fly on the wings of angles and wish him a bon voyage. ■

"To multiply your joy, count your blessings."

My Reflections about Coorilos Thirumeni

Rev. V. T. John, Niles, IL



The first time I met beloved Euyakim Mar Coorilos Thirumeni was when he was a vicar at Palarivattom, Kerala. As a local parish vicar, he had invited me to speak at the youth conference. That night I stayed in Kunnamkulam Aramana with my brother late Easow Thirumeni and shared my impression about Cheeran Achen (now Coorilos Thirumeni) and told my brother Thirumeni that this Cheeran Achen could become a bishop of our church because of his prayerful life and sincerity to the Church and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this connection it is worth to note that Easow Thirumeni was Coorilos Thirumeni's spiritual Guru and both had November 25 as their birthday. I was vicar in Kunnamkulam, Thirumeni's mother parish for a short time during which time I had a close contact with Thirumeni's beloved parents and siblings and other members of the Cheeran family.

I served the parishes in Thevelakara, Kottanad, and for the past seven years in the USA, in the Dioceses where Thirumeni was the Diocesan Episcopa. His devotional life, missionary zeal, seriousness in worship and simplicity in the sermons during the Holy Communion, his concern for the clergy specially the sick and retired, care for the poor and less fortunate are admirable. He brought the youth of this Diocese in the main stream of the Church and for the service of the Lord and enabled them to be in the faith journey of the Church. We have five youths as ordained priests from this Diocese and four youths are now in the Seminary undertaking theological education to become ordained priests of our Church. Thirumeni's vision is that at least half of the Achens serving in the Diocese should be from this Diocese itself within next 10-15 years.

It was Thirumeni's dream and vision that the Diocese has undertaken two mission field one in Mexico and the other among Native Americans. It was Thirumeni's leadership and initiative that we could build 78 houses as part of Navathy project in this Diocese and handed over the keys of the same on May 10, 2008 in the presence of our Valiya Metropolitan, and Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Thirumeni has challenged so many youths in this Diocese to undertake mission and to become a missionary of the Church as envisioned by Late Abraham Mar Thoma.

Coorilos Thirumeni's vision and sincerity led to the laying of foundation stone by Joseph Mar Thoma in the presence of Valiya Metropolitan on May 10, 2008 in Mexico to build a mission center in our mission field in Mexico, where a mission coordinator may stay and coordinate the mission activities of this Diocese. Our Diocesan Youth Fellowship has undertaken the task of building two hostels one for boys and the other for girls on that land so that these poor children can stay in the hostels and attend schools. Thirumeni encourages us to be a sharing community with the talents God has given us. Thirumeni believes that by doing social justice, God's justice will be fulfilled through us as a faith community. As family and on behalf of the Kansas, St. Louis and Minneapolis congregations we pray for Thirumeni and wish him the best in his future endeavors as a servant of our Lord Jesus. ■

Editor's Note: Rev. V. T. John is a retired clergy still serving as a priest at St. Louis, Kansas and Minneapolis congregations. He is the brother of late Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa. He can be contacted at revvtj2003@yahoo.com or at his telephone (847) 966–8916.

വിശ്വാസ നായക... അങ്ങേയ്ക്ക് വന്ദനം

കാപ്പിലാൻ
(ലാൽ പി. തോമസ് ഡിട്രോയിറ്റ്)

വിശ്വാസ വീരനാം തോമാശ്ലീഹാ തൻ
വിശ്വാസത്താൽ കൊളുത്തിയൊരു ദീപം
കടലുകൾക്കക്കരെ കേരള നാട്ടിൽ

കൊടുങ്കാറ്റിൽ അണയാതെ സൂക്ഷിച്ചാവിശ്വാസം
നൂറ്റാണ്ടുകൾ കഴിഞ്ഞിന്നും ജ്വലിക്കുന്നു
ഈ പാശ്ചാത്യമണ്ണിലും മിന്നും പ്രഭപോൽ

പ്രകാശത്തിനായ് പ്രകാശിക്കുമി സഭയിൻ
അമരക്കാരനായ് വിളങ്ങും മാർ കൂറിലോസ്
അങ്ങേയ്ക്ക് തിരുസഭയിൻ മക്കൾതൻ വന്ദനം

സുന്ദരമാം വദനത്തിനൊരു കോണിൽ
നേർത്തതാം പുഞ്ചിരി തൂകിയും
മറുകോണിലെന്നും
തീഷ്ണമാം ആത്മീയ ചിന്തതൻ വിത്തുമായ്
പത്തും നൂറും വിളവിനായൊരുക്കിയ
ഞങ്ങൾതൻ ഹൃത്തടങ്ങളിൽ പാകിയും
സുവിശേഷത്താലെ നിത്യം നടത്തിയ
പ്രാർത്ഥനാ ധീരാ അങ്ങേയ്ക്ക് വന്ദനം

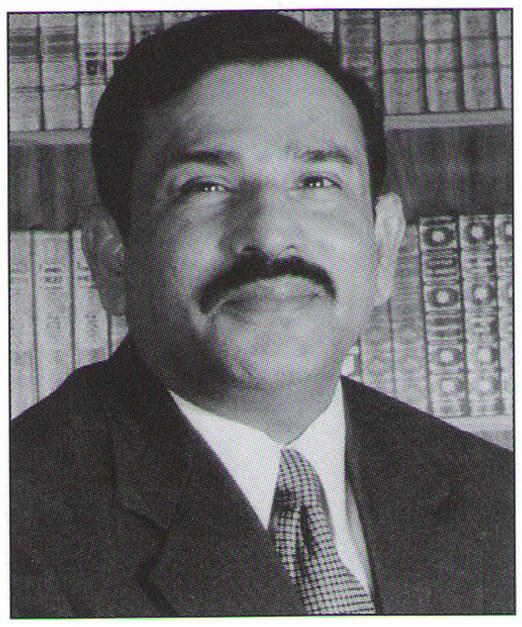
ഒരു കൈയ്യിൽ സ്നേഹത്തിൻ ദീപം ജ്വലിപ്പിച്ചും
മറുകൈയ്യിൽ ജീവന്റെ വചനവുമേന്തിയും
കുന്നംകുളത്തുനിന്നോടിത്തുടങ്ങിയ
യാത്രയിൽ താണ്ടി നീ ദുർഘട പാതകൾ
കർത്തനോടൊത്തെന്നും ആനന്ദചിത്തനായ്
ഒടുവിൽ
എത്തിയീ മണ്ണിൽ നീ സ്നേഹത്തിൻ ദൂതുമായ്
പിന്നെയാ മെക്സിക്കൻ മണ്ണിൽ ജീവന്റെദൂതുമായ്
കരുണയും സ്നേഹവും എങ്ങും വിളമ്പുന്ന
വിശ്വാസ നായക അങ്ങേയ്ക്ക് വന്ദനം

യുവത്വം തുളുമ്പുന്ന ആദ്രമനസ്സിലും
മായാതെ സൂക്ഷിക്കും ഓർമ്മയിൻ ചെപ്പുമായ്
താണ്ടുവാൻ ഘാതങ്ങളേറെയുണ്ടെങ്കിലും
വാരിവിതറുന്നു നിൻ വഴിത്താരകളിൽ
ഞങ്ങൾതൻ സ്നേഹത്തിൻ വാടാമലരുകൾ

Coorilos Thirumeni: A Man of Prayers

Lal Varghese, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

I first met Thirumeni when he visited Dallas in 1995 and our relationship has grown stronger since then. For the past seven years of association in various capacities at the Diocesan level with Thirumeni, I can undoubtedly say that Thirumeni is a man of prayer. Thirumeni begins and ends his day by kneeling before God, seeking His guidance and expressing gratitude to God for being with him throughout the day in all his decisions and deliberations.



Thirumeni belongs to the fifth generation descended from a unique Syrian immigrant. In 1846, the Patriarch of Syria sent Yuyakim Mar Kurilos Bishop to inquire the dispute between Mathews Mar Athanasius (the nephew of Abraham Malpan) and Mar Dionysius of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Kerala. The dispute was over Abraham Malpan's reforms, which Mathews Mar Athansius supported and Mar Dionysius opposed. Gabriel Malkudisa, Mar Kurilos's brother accompanied the bishop from Antioch. While living in Kerala, Malkudisa married an adopted girl (dathuputhri) from the Chalakuzhy family in Thiruvalla; he continued to live in Kerala with this family at the same time Mar Kurilos served as a Bishop in Kerala. Malkudisa and his wife had one son named Malk, who married from the Kandathil family and had three sons, C. M. Yuhakim, C. M. Mathen, and C. M. Philip as well as three daughters. The elder son, C. M. Yuhakim, became an ordained priest, kept his celibacy and served in various Syrian Orthodox Church parishes around Thiruvalla for several years. He was also known as 'Habib Achen' and inherited the paten, chalice, ring, and censer belonging to Bishop Mar Kurilos, who died and was buried at Mulanthurithy Mar Thoman Church near Ernakulam in Kerala. C. M. Mathen, the second son of Malk, had one son named Thampan and two daughters, Ammini and Ponnamma. Ammini (Saramma) was married to Sri. Ittymani Ittyachen Kunju, who belonged to Cheeran family of Arthattu Kunnamkulam Mar Thoma Church. The fourth son born to them on November 25, 1951 was Euyakim I. Cheeran, who we know as Euyakim Mar Coorilos, our Diocesan Episcopa.

Coorilos Thirumeni's great grandmother Saramma was married to Rev. K. I. Joseph of the Pariyaram Elackattukaduppil family of Anchery Christos Mar Thoma Church. Coorilos Thirumeni's father is one of the children of their older daughter Chechamma. Joseph Mar Barnabas Thirumeni and Rev. E. J. George are grandchildren of the aforementioned Rev. K. I. Joseph of Anchery. Thus, Coorilos Thirumeni and Barnabas Thirumeni are first cousins. The paten, chalice, ring and censer belonging to the Bishop Mar Kurilos from Antioch was inherited by Coorilos Thirumeni and he keeps them as very sacred. The late Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius, who ordained Coorilos Thirumeni as a priest, mentioned in his speech during the ordination ceremony that the paten, chalice, ring and censer that once belonged to the Bishop Mar Kurilos, who came from Antioch to create troubles for Mathews Mar Athanasius and the reformers, now belong to the Mar Thoma Church, the reformed church. Thomas Mar Athanasius Thirumeni never thought about Rev. Euyakim I. Cheeran becoming a bishop of the Mar Thoma Church, when Thirumeni made that remark. Coorilos Thirumeni had his primary education at C.M.S. L.P. School and completed high school at Erumapetty Government School. After completing his degree and post-graduate studies from Sacred Heart College, Thevara, Cochin and Christ College, Irinjgalakuda, he joined Mar Thoma Seminary, Kottayam for theological education. In 1978 he was ordained as a priest of Mar Thoma Church and served as priest at Mar Thoma parishes in Jalahalli, Kottayam (Asst. Vicar), Thiruvarppu, Palarivattom, Mumbai (Colaba), Staten Island, Philadelphia Bethel, Baltimore and Florida. The late Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan consecrated Coorilos Thirumeni as a bishop of the Mar Thoma Church on December 9, 1989 along with Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa and Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa. Thirumeni served as Diocesan Episcopa at Adoor-Mavelikara Diocese, Ranny-Nilackal Diocese, and Diocese of North America and Europe. He will assume charge of the Kottayam-Cochin Diocese of Mar Thoma Church and also the Mar Thoma Vaideeka Seminary at Kottayam with effect from January 1, 2009.

Thirumeni believes that social justice is God's justice and by providing the basic needs to people living around us, that social justice can be accomplished in God's own way. It is only out of compassion and love that one could feel the pain of others. It was a tough decision to build the houses for the fishermen in the two islands adopted by the Diocese since the language and culture is foreign to us. But, God was with Thirumeni all these years, leading and guiding his decisions even though many people were not convinced about undertaking the mission project in Mexico.

Although not expressed externally at all times, Thirumeni is a loving and compassionate leader, with humor and wit. He can sit down and make you laugh for many hours. Thirumeni is very strict when it comes to the administrative matters and implementation of the Sabha constitution and the Church's doctrines. Thirumeni has stated frequently that when a faith community moves from its center, where it was rooted, to its periphery, there will always be challenges to face and we should never allow those challenges to overcome our faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

Thirumeni is very much concerned about the youths of this diocese who are not attending our worship services and not being able join in the faith journey of the Church. Although it is understood that the Mar Thoma Church is strictly eastern in tradition and orthodox in its practices, and

may not be able to follow practices of the western churches, Thirumeni is urging the youths to surrender to Jesus Christ and follow Him in all their ways and lead a life worthy to God. It was with this intention that Thirumeni began the two mission projects for the Diocese, so that our youths may get a firsthand experience about the sufferings of those who live around us and also be part of the Church in its mission activities.

Thirumeni always says that within next ten years or so, at least half of the Achens serving in this Diocese should be from this Diocese, so that they may be able to join hands with the youth of this Diocese and lead them in the path of our forefathers and be loyal to the Church. During the past seven years, we have had five Achens from this Diocese; four others are now studying at Seminary to become ordained priests of the Church. It is Thirumeni's prayer that more and more youth will come forward from this Diocese to the ordained ministry of the Church.

Thirumeni is very simple in his lifestyle and never submits to the pressures of nepotism or being influenced by those who are close to the hierarchy of the Church. Thirumeni believes that Church belongs to the ordinary people and they should have upper hand in the matters that affecting the life of ordinary believers of the Church. Thirumeni always speaks in a language that is easily understood by the ordinary lay people. He is not pretentious, and always speaks the truth even though it may not be pleasant for all to hear. He is not a people pleaser or one who intends to receive cheers from the crowd, since he makes his point very emphatically and makes sure it is implemented at any cost.

I wish and pray that God may continue to keep Coorilos Thirumeni in His providence. May God enable Thirumeni to lead believers in the faith journey of the Church. May God's plan be fulfilled in many lives of the faithful believers of the Church through Thirumeni so that God's name be glorified. ■

References:

1. History of the Syrian Church in India, By Rev. F. M. Keay, M. A., D. Litt.
2. Malankara Mar Thoma Sabha Charithram, By N.M. Mathew, Vancouver.

Coorilos Thirumeni: Personal Reflection

C. V. Samuel, Detroit

On this occasion of publication of a special issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger as farewell edition to honor the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, my memories go back to last seven years of my association with Thirumeni as the Manager of Subscription/Promotion (USA) of the Mar Thoma Messenger. I recall with pleasure the times spent together in the context of the Messenger activities. I remember Thirumeni as a man of prayer, mission, and vision for the future. As a blessed team leader, Thirumeni has the ability to inspire people of all walks of life.

I am very thankful to Thirumeni for entrusting me with the task of promoting the Mar Thoma Messenger as Associate Manager for the subscription/promotion, for the last seven years. With Thirumeni's strong guidance, the Messenger committee was able to increase circulation within the Diocese substantially. Thirumeni's support and prayers had become a source of encouragement for me to continue my efforts towards the promotion of Messenger and the Sabha Tharaka. Seven years went by with many positive notes in the history of this Diocese and Thirumeni, as the focal point, helped to shape many of its legacies. In conclusion, I uphold the great values of Coorilos Thirumeni, including sincerity, genuine spirituality, and vision for global mission. I wish him continued success and abundant blessings from the Lord. ■

CONGRATULATIONS TO MR. C.V. SAMUEL OF DETROIT MAR THOMA CHURCH

TIRUVALLA: Mar Thoma Sabha Council held on 18th September 2008, under the chairmanship of the Most. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan nominated Mr. C. V. Samuel of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church to the Managing Committee of the Malankara Sabha Tharaka for a second term. Sabha Tharaka is the official publication of the Mar Thoma church for the last 116 years. For the last three years Mr. Samuel was a member of the Tharaka Managing Committee. Since 2001, Mr Samuel did an outstanding job in promoting Sabha Tharka in the Diocese of North America & Europe. He is working with a team of Tharaka Promoters in the Diocese of North America & Europe with a motto to reach every Mar Thoma family with a copy of the Sabha Tharaka.

He is also serving the Mar Thoma Messenger, the official publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe, as its Manager, subscription/promotion (USA).

For all your Sabha Tharaka needs, please contact Mr. C.V. Samuel at 31811 Gloria Court, Warren, MI 48093. Tel: (586) 268-8007. E-mail: cvsamuel@hotmail.com

We wish him all the best and prayers in his nomination to the Sabha Tharaka Managing Committee.

Mar Coorilos: A Chosen Bishop

Jacob Chacko, Mar Thoma Church Staten Island

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" Isaiah 55: 8.

Since the beginning of time, God has chosen the right people to fulfill His desires. He may choose an ordinary person to accomplish an extraordinary task. This is evident throughout biblical history as well as contemporary times. In the Old Testament, there are many instances where God chose judges, prophets and kings to guide His people. In the New Testament, Jesus selected twelve ordinary people to be His disciples. In more current times, we witnessed Mother Theresa minister to the poor, sick, orphaned and dying in Calcutta.

In the past, God chose people from the West to carry out several social up-lift projects in the East. Missionaries from England provided development assistance, healthcare, education, sanitation, and even chicanery throughout Kerala. Times have now changed; God's chosen people from the East are fulfilling God's desires in the West. One person in particular is Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos. With his initiative, Coorilos Thirumeni chose Mexico, one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, to be a mission field. He encouraged and mobilized the Mar Thoma Youths of the Diocese of North America and Europe to acquire 10 acres in the mainland of Mexico, now known as "Colonia Mar Thoma" (Mar Thoma Colony). It was not an easy task to go into a foreign land to build houses for its poor and needy inhabitants. There were many obstacles before them – a barrier in language and a lack of resources, both materially and financially.

It should be noted that this project was initiated during a time when most Marthomites believed that their support should focus on tasks only in Kerala. Regardless of this thinking, Thirumeni proceeded with his prophetic vision and under his leadership and with the Grace of God Almighty, the project proved to be a success.

Our Church members often contribute generous amounts of money, but rarely do they provide laborious assistance. In this case, history took a different turn. We witnessed many of our members, mainly our Youth, actively participate in this mission. They not only provided financial assistance, they also physically labored to build these houses and were engaged in evangelistic activities such as conducting VBS for the local children.

The developments under the Diocese of North America and Europe during the past four decades are the living testimony of the will of God. In its initial stages, a small group of humble lay people assembled to practice their inherited faith and worship. Subsequently, parishes were formed in different parts of this great land and then a Diocese was established for better administration. Approximately seven decades ago, our then Metropolitan, the Most Rev. Abraham Mar Thoma, at a Maramon Convention prayed "Lord, may our people be scattered". Many may believe that the number of Marthomites that immigrated to this country, establishing numerous parishes and consequently a Diocese, was preplanned by God Almighty.

Coorilos Thirumeni was the vicar of the Mar Thoma Church Staten Island prior to the call of the Episcopacy of the Mar Thoma Church. During the construction of our first Church Building, I remember his intercessory prayers, humbly seeking the blessings of the Almighty. In his sermons or during casual conversation, he often shared his experiences as a child stricken with polio. Thirumeni firmly believes that he is who he is today because of His abundant mercy.

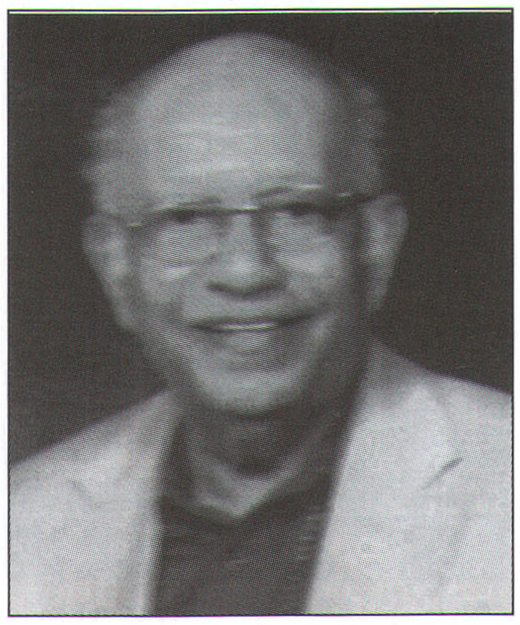
There are many factors that enabled the Mar Thoma Church to endure itself in this foreign land. It is the deep-rooted faith of our members, the unselfish dedication of our Achens, the prophetic vision of our Bishops, the democratically oriented administration of our Church and the blessings of the God Almighty that has sustained us all these decades.

The transfer of our bishops from one Diocese to another is nothing more than an administrative arrangement. We will dearly miss Coorilos Thirumeni. Hope and pray his successor, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, will abundantly bless this Diocese and will accomplish just as many projects for the glory of His Kingdom. ■

"Great Achievement Requires Great Perseverance."

"Sageliness Within and Kingliness Without"—A Tribute

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



It is indeed a great privilege to be asked to give a felicitation to our beloved Coorilos Thirumeni as he is ending his tenure here as the Diocesan Bishop. It is doubly pleasurable and gratifying when the one whom you are asked to felicitate is someone whom you have known rather intimately for a long time. I am a grateful man. I have every reason to be. Occasions like this provide us with the inspiration to follow the example of those whom we honor. And it is with that intent and encouragement that I make the following remarks.

I beg Thirumeni's indulgence as I pen some words which someone who did not know either of us read, would probably consider flattery. I am well aware of the celebrated words of Edmund Burke, "flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver" and the remark of John Hay, "when flatterers meet, the Devil goes to dinner." However, by words of flattery—like all rhetoric—I do not wish to bully the reader into sharing a personal prejudice. It is worthwhile for those who receive adulation to remember that 'the best way to crush your laurels is to lean on them'.

While he was an Achen here in Washington and subsequently the diocesan bishop I have had many opportunities to work closely with him. I grew to like him because of his endearing manners and acceptance of my friendship. He is one of those persons who have showed me that you don't have to have the same mother to be a brother. In fact he is the only bishop who addresses me as 'Joychayan'. I remember us eating a meal from the same plate on a train journey from New York to Washington. He has no 'public persona'. He is always the same man – kind, gentle, modest, considerate and totally dedicated, a man of great faith and superb tastes.

I had often thought when Thirumeni was an Achen that he had a vocation to obscurity. He was never in front. He tried to stay in the shadows. However, it was clear that he was standing for the only thing which counts: being and not appearing. He models what I would call 'soft wisdom'. When I was asked by Sabha Secretary Achen to write a reference in support of his nomination for Episcopa, I did it with great pleasure and thankfulness. My expectation then has been matched with the reality of his performance. I recall what Thomas Merton wrote to a friend about Dalai Lama, "a great guy; all pure gold." Let me express our sentiments by saying we love you; we like you; we respect you and your leadership. We rejoice in that God blessed him with good health and grace for ministering to our people. I remember being asked to speak at the time of his election to the episcopacy. Then I told the gathering we knew that he was destined for great honor as his name itself sounded like that of a bishop 'Euyakim Cheeran'.

What has gone into the formation of this spiritual leader? His disarming ability to be at home in many places; his uncanny way of making friends with very diverse types of peoples, his sense of humor, his simple life and humility, his great appreciation of a contemplative Christian life as evidenced in the Dayara movement in our church which he spearheads, his soft spoken manners and yet firmness in church discipline, are the markings of this humble servant of God.

Ezra Pound once remarked that "(we) have an obligation to visit the great men of our time." Our Thirumeni is such a great man. Greatness is the grandeur in the things we do and simplicity in the way we do them; doing things that influence the lives of many people, but preserving always the greatest personal simplicity. For greatness is simplicity. In Christian terms, our greatness depends upon the radiation of Christ in us.

A bishop or episcopa is literally an overseer of the faith community, an inspector, one who is by your side. We can pinpoint three functions of an episcopa: maintaining the church identity in faith and order as its custodian, the pastoral care of persons, and the pastoral care of the structures. If you read the constitution of our church, the required qualifications for an episcopa are so stringent that one can enter it only with great trepidation. But it is our community's prayerful support that sustains anyone who solemnly accepts the high office. Included in these required qualities are excellent character, good conduct, sound doctrine, stability of faith, fear of God, maturity of judgment, and ability to manage and direct. That is, an amalgamation in one person of a good many noble qualities; what Confucius termed as the ideal character, one with 'sageliness within and kingliness without'; in other words, an aristocracy of talent and virtue. That is what we mean when we shout *'oxios'* at the time of consecration. His faithfulness will be judged ultimately not by his peers or critics, but by the One who chose him. There is freedom in that conviction.

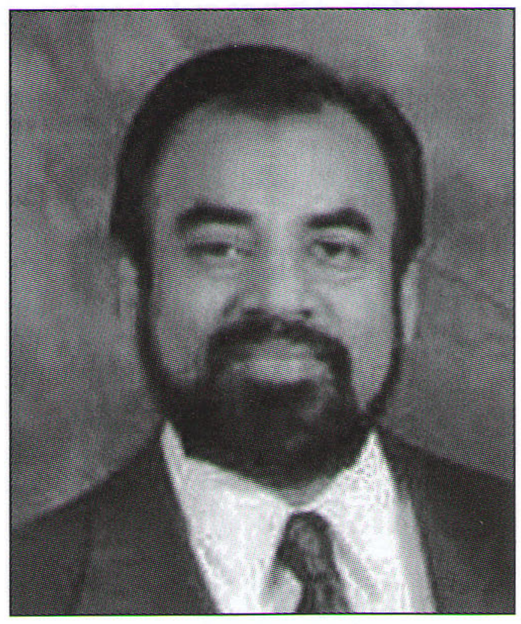
Henry David Thoreau once remarked that there is no better equipment for what we call happiness than these four fine things: goodness of heart, freedom of spirit, gaiety of temper and friendliness of disposition. He continued by saying that "goodness is the only investment that never fails."

When I spoke on an earlier occasion I said, "Thirumeni's destiny in some ways is greater than the people's. I feel in my bones that God is leading us to start a new ministry, some place, somewhere, sometime, somehow. We have been placed on this continent by God for a specific purpose. Let us seek His guidance for discernment and His power for obedience." It was Thirumeni's vision to start the Mexico mission and

(Cont'd on page 20)

The Prince of the Stars

Elias Abraham, Baltimore MTC



It rained. The wind was never weary. I was in a dilemma. How can I take my 'Hero Honda' and start for Adoor in this down pour?

While I was one of the members of the teaching faculty in the Chengannur Christian College, and when Coorilos Thirumeni was the manager of our college, this occurred. The principal told me that an important document connected with my service as a teacher has to be taken to the University office the very next day and it is essential that the manager of the college had to sign it. He told me that Thirumeni was leaving for a conference and so I should personally go to Adoor Aramana the same day and get it signed.

After the classes, I waited patiently for the rain to subside. But the drops seemed to fall with much vehemence and wrath. At last I put on my rain coat and started towards Adoor.

When I took the familiar ramp after the ascending slope of the famous 'Youth Center', it was 8:00 p.m. and I heaved heavily. Shivering in the cold I wanted to get inside the Aramana as soon as possible. I rang the bell and one young man opened the door. I told him of my reason to visit Thirumeni. He let me in. He went inside and I sat on a chair which I thought would give me some comfort.

The silence that pervaded the atmosphere was unusual. While I waited, I was thinking about Thirumeni and what he is going to tell me about the paper which I was carrying. The young man appeared again and this time he was carrying in his hand a cup of coffee. He said, "Sir, Thirumeni asked me to tell you to wait. He has asked me to give you coffee." I thanked the boy, began to sip the coffee, and waited….

I heard the door open and saw Thirumeni coming with a gentle smile. I stood up and moved towards him. He blessed me with a gentle touch on my forehead and asked me to sit down. Then he explained to me why he was late to give me an audience. A prayer was going on. He was so polite and I felt like a fish out of water. Then he asked me about the college, the principal, the department to which I belong, the discipline of the Institution, and the various activities of the college. He said, "See Elias, it is still raining, you cannot go now. So we will have supper together with all the inmates of the Aramana." What attracted me was his simplicity and humility, his enthusiasm to know about our college, and above all the genuine concern for me as a visitor to the Aramana in this cold and rainy night.

Thirumeni looked very young and vibrant. I asked him some questions about his stand in matters connected with youth and he was very optimistic. He talked of the trends among young people and the necessity of the Church to take into account the spiritual problems that the younger generation faced in those days. One thing he stressed was the importance of prayer. Prayer provides strength. When Thirumeni said this, I thought about Tennyson who wrote: More things are wrought by prayer, than this world dreams of.

When Thirumeni was interacting thus, I observed a kind of radiance on his face. His eyes shone conveying me a special message. I thought he was viewing the future and assessing its pros and cons. Here is a prince of the stars, a bishop knowing his lambs…

Time had elapsed. Without asking anything he signed the papers. The rain had subsided. The cold wind made the atmosphere anesthetized.

Thirumeni prayed. He wished me a safe return. He blessed me again as though acknowledging my silent expressions of gratitude.

Riding on the bike, I looked up and saw nothing in the pitch darkness. But there was light in my heart, and hope in my soul. I wanted to sing;

Oh! Prince of the stars,
Star of the East,
Build our Church
On the Rock of Faith. ■

"Sageliness Within and Kingliness Without"—A Tribute *(Cont'd from page 19)*

work among the native Americans as part of the mission of the diocese. He worked tirelessly to put into place the vision he was given and to do so courageously. The youth of our diocese like him immensely probably because he is a spokesman for them. That is another reason why young people participated more in the mission projects.

In the years to come may His Lordship be enabled by the *Parakletos*, the one who is by our side always to help, to lead the church in ways that will fulfill God's mandate of holiness and service and be a veritable bridge bringing churches and peoples together. ■

Our Diocesan Bishops in North America: Their Legacy and Contributions to Sunday Schools

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

The purpose of writing this article is to reflect on the role of all bishops for building up of Sunday Schools in this diocese and their legacy. Who were these bishops? When was the diocese formed? What were the major contributions of these leaders? Did these diocesan bishops leave a legacy for us? When there is a transition of leadership from one bishop to the next, these questions are appropriate to explore.

The North American diocese was approved and inaugurated in 1988 by Metropolitan Alexander Mar Thoma in response to the resolution passed by the assembly held at Los Angeles Family Conference in 1987. How did this Assembly pass a resolution, if there is no Diocese? To answer this question more exploration is needed and we will move on to it now.

For many years, the Mar Thoma Church had only an inadequate system to take care of its members in foreign lands. There was one bishop, called "Missionary Bishop", to look after our members outside of Kerala. This system continued till the end of 1970s. The idea of a diocese was even conceived only by the late Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius, Suffragan Metropolitan, (Thomas Thirumeni, as we affectionately call him) in1980 when he was assigned to congregations and parishes in North America. Immediately, he took action in bringing representatives from all these units to one place, historic Philadelphia, in 1982 to hold the first meeting of a "Zonal Council", later emerged as the Diocesan Assembly.

The "Visionary and Founder" of the Diocese, as I call Thomas Thirumeni, entered eternal life after four years, in 1984. The Metropolitan Alexander Mar Thoma took charge of the diocese and completed his own and his predecessor's dreams. Already, the Metropolitan had conducted the first Students Conference in 1980, at Stony Point Center, New York. When the request for approval reached his desk, endorsed by the diocesan bishop, the Metropolitan approved it as the first diocesan level organization. Thomas Thirumeni gave this information to the concerned officials in April 1981. Students Conference started as a camp of senior Sunday school students in high schools and colleges. Metropolitan Alexander Mar Thoma maintained a special place in his heart for students and youth activities while working for parishes.

After inauguration, the Diocese was entrusted to the Suffragan Metropolitan, Philipose Mar Chrysostom in 1988. His major contribution to the Sunday school was the autonomous status granted to this organization, along with others. Rather than spending time for the organizations, he used the time of the Assembly for building a diocesan center. Since I worked closely with him in this project as convener, I noticed his commitment to this task. Within record time, a Diocesan Center was bought in Philadelphia in 1993. Instead of staying at this Center, he wanted another resident bishop to stay there. The privilege of becoming the first resident bishop was granted to Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus (Zacharias Thirumeni). He struggled with laity during the "Formative years" of parishes in North America during the 1970s. (Details in the book "In the Beginning" edited by Dr. T.M. Thomas, Abraham Mattackal, two of the 19 authors, CSS Books, 2008).

Zacharias Thirumeni made arrangements for the dedication of the First Diocesan Center in Richboro, Philadelphia, PA (dedicated by Theodosius Thirumeni, who has struggled with us during the "Formative Years" in Canada). The legacy of Zacharias Thirumeni would be, in my estimate, establishing the Diocesan Center at the central place in America, after selling the first Diocesan Center. In summer 1998 the Sinai Mar Thoma Center, the new diocesan headquarters, was dedicated. His major contribution to Sunday schools had been the publication of a few books, now used at all parishes in the diocese. Among them two are distinct and they are ***"The Mar Thoma Church: Foundation and Vision,"*** published in 1998 and revised in 2001. (I was fortunate to teach with Thirumeni at Asram High School, Perumbavoor in the late 1950s before his ordination). The second book is, ***"The Mar Thoma Church: Order of Worship, Prayers and Hymns"*** published in 2000. It was compiled by Mr. Thomas Koshy, (Washington) and as Diocesan Assembly member, representing Sunday schools, I helped him in the publication of this book. Also, as part of Thirumeni's legacy we shall include his leadership in WCC and NCC-USA for promoting ecumenical relationships.

In this situation I do not know how I ended up with another major project, to be considered as "mission impossible". To prepare a curriculum for all twelve classes of Sunday schools! Seems impossible while considering the details! I realized that I had the support and supervision of the new diocesan bishop without micro-management. This was what I wanted and in the fall of 2002 itself I started my assignment. Since I had completed fifty years of teaching at schools and colleges, there were some special functions at Asram High school Perumbavoor where I started teaching. Also, there was a meeting of Sunday school Samajam leaders involved in curriculum preparation in India. This meeting was arranged at the "Old Poolatheen" arranged by the General Secretary of the Samajam, Rev. Dr. K. U. Abraham (now Paulose Thirumeni). When I came back and attended the Family Conference, a special session was held for Achens, Sunday school teachers and parents presided by Coorilos Thirumeni. All these meetings took place in spring and summer 2003. Thirumeni continued his support and a

(Cont'd on page 22)

Coorilos Thirumeni: The Shepherd with the Power of "P"

Chacko Mathew, Diocesan Treasurer

History is replete with examples of men and women who have sustained strong faith that God would work through them for the fulfillment of His kingdom. God has used Coorilos Thirumeni to make a difference by utilizing him to reveal His purpose for Marthomite Christians and Christians at large.

The power of the letter "P" was filled in all the actions of Thirumeni. Thirumeni is a shepherd with the "power" of "prayer". Shepherd with a "plan" for the "People". A "person" for the "People". His "Passion" for the "poor" is "praiseworthy". His prayers are for the enrichment of the "powerless". The "purpose" of the shepherd is the "Perfection" through Christ. The seven years of Thirumeni's ministry in this diocese as the shepherd were filled with the "powerful" words of "prayer" and were a clarion call with a ring of reality. Thirumeni's "prayer" is the strength where he enabled things that God has called him to do. The Christ in Thirumeni inspires other "people to do their best". The creative "Pressure" of Christ's indwelling "power" helped Thirumeni to equalize the external "pressures" of life. He does not believe in worldly "pleasures" and is happy to "promote" the faith of moral integrity. He is a shepherd who communicates with much spiritual "power" and insight. Thirumeni discouraged any unbiblical sense of individualistic thoughts among the people. Thirumeni is a shepherd who has placed Jesus in his life so that Jesus can carry out His assignment through him. Thirumeni is a successful shepherd because he does not believe in "living the Christian life" but believed in allowing the "Christ to live through him".

Thirumeni is Biblical shepherd who knew everything about his sheep. A shepherd who can comfort you, reassure you and lead you with the love and compassion in a deeper dimension. He is always "prepared" to "propel" and refresh you through Christ who is the master of all the shepherds.

Thirumeni's "passion" for Mission is reflected in this diocese. The diocese has achieved tremendous growth under his leadership. All the organizations are very active and are spiritually nourished. Regional conventions, national conferences, increase in the number of parishes and congregations, **Mexico Mission, Native American Mission and Support of Mission Projects in India** are few examples. As Thirumeni is preparing to take charge of the Kottayam–Kochi Diocese and the Vaideeka Seminary let us all continue to pray for his ministry to be a continued blessing. Let us thank Thirumeni for the great things he has done for our diocese which we will cherish for years to come. ■

Our Diocesan Bishops in North America: Their Legacy ..... to Sunday Schools *(Cont'd from page 21)*

curriculum was released in two years. It was the Samajam President, Philoxenos Thirumeni who released the curriculum at the 2005 Family Conference held at Washington. The Sunday School Samajam also celebrated its centenary in 2005. I was pleasantly surprised, if not shocked, when the diocesan bishop awarded me a *"ponnada"*, an honor that a bishop bestows very rarely to honor people. In my view, the Sunday School Curriculum developed in this diocese would remain as a legacy of Coorilos Thirumeni.

His second legacy shall be the Mexico Mission. Since others are writing about it, I do not want to discuss the details here. Also, I am thankful to Thirumeni for his encouragement of my other writings. For example, he wrote a preface for the book, "In the Beginning" a publication of early Mar Thoma immigrants who devoted time and energy for the formation of parishes in North America.

Conclusion: In this article I have mentioned all "diocesan" bishops from Thomas Thirumeni 1980 to the present, Coorilos Thirumeni, fall 2008. I had the rare privilege of knowing and working very closely with all these five bishops on a "first name basis" (to use the American idiom). They used me (or I used them) for the building up of a strong Sunday school and a Diocese-at-large during the last three or four decades. At least, two legacies of each Thirumeni were selected, one for the diocese and the second specifically for Sunday schools. All five bishops, discussed here have left their legacies for which we are grateful as members and praise God for their services. We should know that prior to 1980 there were only "Missionary Bishops" assigned to all Mar Thoma members residing outside of Kerala. The system continued, even in 1970s, when a large number of our members reached North America and settled in this faraway land. Leaders of the church were preoccupied with the question of relationship with other churches, Church of South India (CSI), Episcopal Church and other denominations. Laity (now "old-timers") took the initiative to organize Mar Thoma parishes. ■

Our Beloved Coorilos Thirumeni: A Prayer Warrior

Philip Manuel Varampath, Carmel MTC Boston

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1says: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ". Our Coorilos Thirumeni lives by this motto as can be seen for the past seven years that Thirumeni was Bishop of this Diocese. The example of Christ is a very tall order to follow, but Thirumeni is able to achieve a close semblance to this due to his deep faith and prayer life. Thirumeni believes that anyone with a heart for God should have a heart for God's people. This is exemplified in Thirumeni's heart for mission. In every Diocese that Thirumeni has served, he has left his mark, like the Mexico Mission in our Diocese and the Prathyasa Bhavan in the Ranni Nilakkal Diocese to name a few.

Thirumeni firmly believes that love and discipline go hand in hand. I remember an incident during the First Holy Communion service of some children in our Church. Thirumeni stopped the service because he observed that some girls had not covered their heads. Women scrambled to find salwaar kameez shawls and other head coverings for the girls who had not brought their own. Thirumeni resumed the service only after all the girls receiving their First Communion covered their heads. Another time, when our church was going through growing pains, there was a slight possibility of the Church being fractured. Many families had stopped coming to our church due to the problems that had been created during the Church Building project. But through effective leadership and diplomacy, Thirumeni, was able to make the Church stay intact. All the families who had stayed away came back and our Church can now boast of a membership of more than 95 families. Thirumeni's intervention also helped us have a vibrant Sunday school and we are grateful to Thirumeni for the same.

Compassion, integrity and strong faith are qualities of a good spiritual leader and Thirumeni embodies all of these. Thirumeni always "practices what he preaches". During one of his visits to our Church he instructed all of us to pray on our knees. He told Sunday school children that just as soon as they step out of bed in the morning, they should kneel down and pray before doing anything else. This is what Thirumeni does as was witnessed by my children when Thirumeni stayed overnight at our house. Thirumeni also instructed all the children that they should read the Bible in the morning and in the evening. Thirumeni's instruction to us parents was to have the courage to stand as Christian witnesses to our children.

Thirumeni has the magic touch when it comes to youth. Thirumeni is able to relate to them and he has encouraged them to seek admission into the ministry. We know at least a couple of youth who are working towards this goal. Many a time the youth have confided their innermost thoughts and feelings to Thirumeni and Thirumeni has tried to address the issues raised by the youth in adult forums.

Teachers and Leaders should have good memory and Thirumeni does because he cares. There is an adage, "People do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care". I remember my daughter, Sheba, saying, "Thirumeni likes boys more than girls". I asked her why she thought so. She said, "Thirumeni always hugs Prathik". During one of Thirumeni's visits to our house, we casually mentioned it in our conversation. Some time later, when we were going to have dinner at the Family Conference, we saw Thirumeni coming towards us. Thirumeni made a beeline towards Sheba and we heard, "Dad, Mom, you told Thirumeni!"

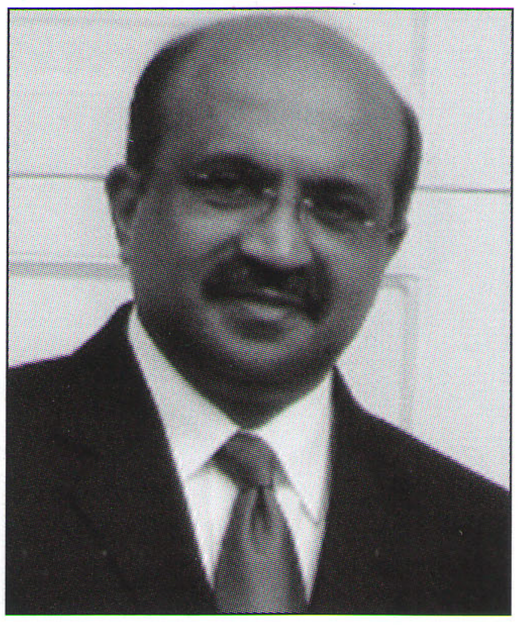
In conclusion, from our personal experience we can confidently say that Thirumeni "walks the walk and talks the talk" as required in Micah 6: 8, which reads, "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". On behalf of our Church and on my family's personal behalf we wish Thirumeni good health and happiness as Thirumeni continues to carry the Beacon of light for our Lord and Savior in a world of darkness, despair and persecution. May the Good Lord bless and keep Thirumeni throughout all his days and give him many, many more years of fruitful life. ■

"What We Leave in Our Children is More Important Than What We Leave to Them."

Coorilos Thirumeni: A Bishop with Action Oriented Spirituality

Mathew Verghese, Tampa, Florida

After over seven years of dedicated service and shepherding the diocese, Coorilos Thirumeni is leaving us to be the diocesan bishop of the Kottayam-Kochi Diocese. Thirumeni came as our bishop at a very critical juncture in its history. His predecessor, Zacharias Thirumeni, had laid a strong foundation for this new diocese; we had moved into a new center in New York; and a number of parishes and small congregations were taking shape in cities other than the larger metropolises. Coorilos Thirumeni came when it was time to take the diocese to the next level where a Church becomes a mission-oriented witnessing community of believers. I believe Thirumeni's arrival at that moment has been a great blessing to the Diocese of North America and Europe and to the Mar Thoma Church at large.



I have had the privilege of knowing Thirumeni since 2002. Since then, I have come to know him as a spiritual leader with a great vision for the diocese, and an even greater concern for the younger generation of Marthomites here. The Mexico mission and the mission among the Native Americans were the outcome of this great vision and missionary zeal. There were times when our members, including clergy, across the diocese were apprehensive and even not supportive of this project because they feared that the Mar Thoma community in this continent was not yet equipped or prepared for this task. However, Thirumrni took it up as a divine call, and the nay-sayers, though very large in number, could not discourage him from his commitment. Even those who supported the mission initially lost their hope and enthusiasm after hurricane Emily destroyed the homes we had built for the islanders in Mexico. The number of people who were calling for retreat increased. Amidst these difficulties, Thirumeni was firm in his conviction that God had a greater purpose for our Church in this continent and he kept encouraging the Diocesan Council, Assembly, the youth fellowship and all members to trust in God, pray, and make the right decisions to move forward with the mission project. When the Metropolitan's Navathy Project was announced, there were many among the Church leadership, both here and in India, who were concerned that our Diocese's involvement with the Mexico mission might hamper the efforts to collect funds for the Navathy Project in the USA. But this Diocese's collections exceeded all expectations, and the target set for us. Even though some of us in the council suggested making a request to the Church leadership to include the Mexico mission as part of the Navathy Project, Thirumeni's stand was clear: the two projects should go on at the same time, and one should not affect the other.

Thirumeni's source of strength is his prayer life. He is a man of prayer. It is not just the routine morning and evening prayers. Whenever he stayed with us during his visits to Florida, I have seen him on many occasions praying on his knees. He prays constantly; prayer is his life, and his life is prayer.

The future of younger generation Marthomites in this diocese, especially second generation Marthomites, lies very close to Thirumeni's heart. He was very sensitive to and clearly understood their needs, concerns and pains. On a number of occasions, whether it was during the diocesan assembly, the council or the family conference, his messages echoed the care and concern he had for this group of our community. He longs for and encourages more youth to dedicate themselves to full-time ministry so that they could eventually take over the responsibility of pastoring the parishes in this diocese.

Thirumeni is also a person with a heart for the weak, the elderly and the needy. He is deeply concerned about the spiritual life of the members of the diocese. He speaks about authentic spirituality and meaningful Christian life whenever he has an occasion. He lived a very simple life. He called upon the members to lead a life worthy of our calling as children of the reformers. He was highly critical of the life style of members in matters of dress, food, and the pomp, especially when it came to occasions such as marriage, baptism, house dedication, etc.

I had the privilege of working with Thirumeni as a member of the Diocesan Council for one term. There were very heated discussions and arguments both in the Council meetings and Assembly meetings, concerning the general direction of the Diocese. I have seen Thirumeni admonish members for their conduct on the floor of the assembly. But he held no ill-feeling towards any one, and after the meeting, he did not hesitate to sit in their company and have lunch. Thirumeni was very conscious about doing things the correct way and not do or say what was expedient. Thirumeni took pains to visit all the parishes in the Diocese at least once every year. The number of parishes in the diocese has grown during his tenure as the Diocesan Bishop.

Coorilos is a Greek word that means 'Lord' or 'Master.' Its Roman version, Cyril is the most commonly used derivative we find these days. There have been number of church fathers who bore the name Cyril, and there are at least eight saints by this name. Most notable among them were Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyril of Alexandria, and Cyril who along with his brother Methodius were the Apostles among the Slavs. The Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Church and the Lutheran Church venerate all these three church fathers as saints. In the Malankara Church we had Yuyakim Mar Coorilos Bava who was a designate of the Patriarch of Antioch during the time when Mathews Mar Athanasius was the Metropolitan of the Malankara Church. He came to Malankara in 1845

(Continued on next page)

Coorilos Thirumeni—the Metrachan I Know

Leelamma Kuryan, Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

I have known Coorilos Thirumeni since 1988 when he started as the vicar of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, during its infant stages. As vicar, Rev E. I. Cheeran provided prayerful spiritual leadership and guidance, helping this new congregation to overcome many challenges. He helped the formation and continued functioning of various organizations such as the Youth Fellowship, Sevika Sanghom, Church Choir, and Edavaka Mission. He encouraged the members of our church to become active participants of these organizations. It was his encouragement that led our children to take a more productive role in the church by playing musical instruments and leading the choir. It was only when they grew older that they fully realized the importance of these childhood experiences.

Due to lack of a parsonage, the Achen stayed in the parishioners' houses during his turn for Services at Bethel. Our family was fortunate to provide accommodation for our "Cheeran Achen" from time to time. During these visits, we became quite close, and our family benefited tremendously from Thirumeni's prayers and spiritual guidance. The time he spent with my three young sons had a profound impact on their spiritual and professional lives.

We were able to visit Thirumeni several times while he was serving as the Diocesan Bishop of Adoor and Ranni. My oldest son was privileged to stay with Thirumeni for several days and witnessed his work with the youth ministry. When my youngest son showed an interest in experiencing the missionary fields in Kerala, it was Thirumeni who recommended that he visit Asha Bhavan in Pathanapuram (a home for physically handicapped children), and Navjeevan Center in Ranni (a halfway home and rehabilitation center). These were just two of the many missionary projects that Coorilos Thirumeni founded. The time my son spent in those mission centers was both challenging and rewarding. They have had a lasting impact on his life and even led him to choose a career in pediatrics.

I was blessed to serve on the Diocesan Council from 2002-2005 and continued to work closely with Thirumeni. When he was chosen to lead our Diocese, Thirumeni showed great interest in the second generation here in the U.S. For this reason, he appointed four Youth Chaplains to serve our youngsters. It was necessary to find permanent accommodations for these Achens. I was appointed as the convener of the committee dedicated to acquisition of a parsonage. Thirumeni's advice and enthusiasm was instrumental in this process, and the Southeast region was able to purchase the first parsonage for Youth Chaplain in the Diocese of North America and Europe, in Philadelphia area.

Without question, one of Thirumeni's shining achievements in this Diocese has been the formation of Mexico Mission Project and the mission work among the Native American communities. The Mexico Mission Project started in 2003. In 2004, Thirumeni handed over keys to 31 houses to the islanders as the first stage of the project. As a council member, I was fortunate to witness this amazing event. This turned out to be a historic day in the life of the church because it marked the first mission field outside of India for the Mar Thoma church. The youth of this diocese are the backbone of these projects, and it would not have been possible without Thirumeni's leadership. These mission fields provide an opportunity for our youths to spread the Gospel for years to come.

We are blessed to have had Thirumeni's presence and prayers with us throughout these many years, and through times of celebrations as well as times of loss. Throughout these years, I have observed several admirable qualities that have helped him become such an accomplished and beloved leader in the Mar Thoma Church:

- Thirumeni is a man of prayer. He experiences power of prayer in his work and in his personal life.
- Thirumeni is a man who is committed to serving the poor and needy.
- Thirumeni is a man who has a vision for the mission fields and is devoted to spreading the Gospel.
- And above all, Thirumeni is a man of humility and a humble servant of God.

I wish Thirumeni many more years of good health and fruitful service in God's ministry. ■

---

and lived in Malankara for 28 years in and around Cochin, and was buried at the Mulanthuruthy Church. Our Thirumeni is the rightful heir to this great line of church fathers not only in name but by the example of an ascetic life he leads.

As Thirumeni completes his tenure as our Diocesan Bishop, I am thankful to God for his service to the Diocese, and I am thankful personally that I came to know him and was able to work with him during this time. He has touched many people in many ways. I was touched by his passion for the Gospel. In a meeting of Sunday school teachers at one of the family conferences, I remember him challenging the teachers to help bring their students to a lasting and meaningful personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. At every opportunity, he reminded us that our primary purpose as a church is to be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we fail in that mission, he believed that we are a total failure as a Church and a community of believers. May God bless him and use him mightily in the days ahead. ■

Coorilos Thirumeni—Looking Back with a Grateful Heart

T. A. Mathew, Trinity MTC, Houston

It was a very humbling and rewarding experience to work with The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa as the treasurer of Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelists' Association of the Diocese of North America and Europe (2002-2005) and the Diocesan Treasurer (2005-2008). During 2002–2005, Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelists' Asociation was able to raise enough funds to remodel the Kadavil Malika building at Kallissery, Kerala and support several Mission projects in India. This shows Thirumeni's commitment and dedication to the Mission projects.

I had the privilege of knowing Thirumeni since 1991, when Thirumeni visited Trinity Parish in Houston. I had the opportunity to work with Thirumeni on several committees and in the Messenger managing committee for the last seven years. I consider these chances as a great privilege, and cherish the interactions. Diocesan Council had the opportunity to start and complete several projects and Thirumeni deserve special thanks for his untiring efforts and clear vision.

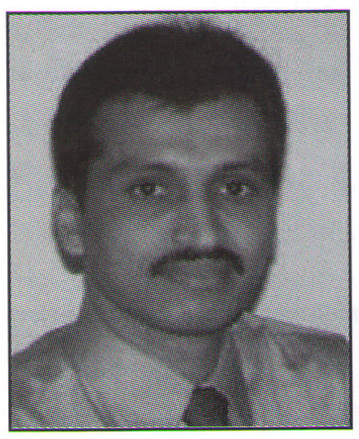
During Thirumeni's tenure as Diocesan Bishop, we were able to purchase residences for Youth Chaplains in Philadelphia and New York. As a Diocese, we were able to raise more than One Million dollars for the Navathy Project in India. Diocesan council arranged receptions to Valiya Metropolitan and the Metropolitan in various centers during their visit here. Many newly built or bought church buildings around the diocese were dedicated, and new congregations were initiated.

Mexico Mission was Coorilos Thirumeni's dream and vision for the future generations of our Diocese. We were able to buy the land and build 70 houses in Mexico within no time, since Thirumeni took active role in raising funds for the project. The long awaited dream has materialized on May 10, 2008, when the Valiya Metropolitan, incumbent Metropolitan and Coorilos Thirumeni took part in the inauguration of newly built homes and laying of foundation stone for the future mission projects in Mexico.

When I look back, I can only praise God for Thirumeni's prayerful life, great leadership, support and guidance for the Diocese. Thirumeni's love for the needy, dedication to the Ministry and compassion towards the body of Christ have made him a symbol of God's Grace. The way Thirumeni uses his unique gifts and talents makes promising and positive differences within the church and the Christian community at large. We are left to thank God for Thirumeni's faithfulness and devotion to the Lord's work.

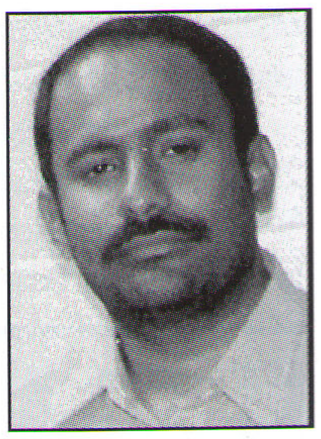
My wife Valsa joins me in wishing Thirumeni all the best as he is moving back to Kerala, as the Diocesan Bishop of Kottayam-Kochi Diocese in January 2009. Our love and prayers are with Thirumeni and may God continue to abundantly bless Thirumeni in his new vineyard. ■

സ്നേഹലോകത്തിലെ തീർത്ഥാടകൻ.....



അലൻ ജി. ജോൺ ചെന്നിത്തല
(ഡിട്രോയിറ്റ്)

ഞങ്ങളുടെ നിറവുകളിലും നിനവുകളിലും ആത്മീയ ആരവമുണർത്തി, ഞങ്ങളുടെ മനസ്സും മനസ്സാക്ഷിയും തൊട്ടറിഞ്ഞ ഇടയശ്രേഷ്ഠനാണ് കൂറിലോസ് മെത്രാച്ചൻ. അമേരിക്കയിലെ പ്രവാസി മാർത്തോമ്മാക്കാർക്ക് പുതിയൊരു സുവിശേഷ ദീപ്തി തിരുമേനി നൽകി എന്നത് ചാരിതാർത്ഥ്യ ജനകമാണ്. ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് ഇവിടെ ക്രിസ്തീയ സാക്ഷ്യത്തിന്റെ ഉടമകളായി ജീവിക്കുവാൻ തിരുമേനി നൽകിയ പ്രചോദനം അവിസ്മരണീയമാണ്. ഓരോരുത്തരുടേയും ആവശ്യം എന്തെന്നറിഞ്ഞ് അവരുടെ ആവശ്യങ്ങളിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിക്കുവാനുള്ള മാർഗ്ഗവും പ്രകാശവും അനുഗ്രഹപൂർവ്വം തിരുമേനി കാട്ടിതന്നു. മനോഹരിയായ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയെ അമേരിക്കയിലെ ഭൗതിക സൗന്ദര്യത്തിനപ്പുറത്തു നിന്നു കാണുവാനും നയിക്കുവാനും തിരുമേനി ശ്രമിച്ചു. പറിച്ചു നടപ്പെട്ട ഈ പശ്ചാത്യ സംസ്ക്കാരത്തിൽ തദ്ദേശിയമായ സംസ്ക്കാരവും സാഹചര്യങ്ങളും ഉൾക്കൊണ്ടു കൊണ്ട് സഭ ആരംഭിച്ച പല നൂതന സംരംഭങ്ങളുടെയും പ്രേരക ശക്തിയാണ് ഡോ. യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറിലോസ് എപ്പിസ്ക്കോപ്പ. തിരുമേനിയുടെ സുവിശേഷ ദർശനത്തിന്റേയും മനുഷ്യ സ്നേഹത്തിന്റേയും ദീർഘ വീക്ഷണത്തിന്റേയും ഫലമായി മെക്സിക്കോയിലെ പാവപ്പെട്ടവർക്കിടയിൽ മിഷൻ പ്രോജക്ടുകളുമായി കടന്നുചെന്ന മലയാളിയായ പ്രഥമ ഏഷ്യൻ ബിഷപ്പെന്ന ബഹുമതിയും തിരുമേനിക്ക് അവകാശപ്പെടാവുന്നതാണ്. ഉടവാളും അധികാരദണ്ഡുമില്ലാതെ ആത്മീയ രാജാവായി തിരുമേനി ഈ മഹാനഗരത്തിൽ അനേകരെ ആകർഷിച്ചു, അതിന്റെ കാരണം അരുമനാഥനോടുള്ള അടങ്ങാത്ത സ്നേഹമായിരുന്നു. മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടെ സുവിശേഷ സ്പന്ദനത്തിന്റെ ഉടമയായ അഭിവന്ദ്യ കൂറിലോസ് തിരുമേനി സ്നേഹലോകത്തിലെ തീർത്ഥാടകനാണ്. രാജകീയ സഭയുടെ ബഹുമതിപഥത്തിൽ സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ സുരഭില കുസുമങ്ങൾ വാരിവിതറിക്കൊണ്ട് നമ്മുടെ മാതൃമണ്ണിലേക്ക് മടങ്ങുന്ന അഭിവന്ദ്യ പിതാവിന് ഞങ്ങളുടെ ആശംസകളും പ്രാർത്ഥനകളും വിനയപൂർവ്വം സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നു.



ഐപ്പ് സി. വർഗ്ഗീസ് പരിമണം
(ചിക്കാഗൊ)

Coorilos Thirumeni—A Man of Prayer

Roy C. Thomas, St.John's MTC, New York

I am delighted and privileged that I have been requested to write a personal memoir about my association with the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, who has been our Diocesan Bishop for the past seven years.

It was during the month of October in 2001 that our beloved Thirumeni landed in New York to take charge of his office at Merrick. I had the opportunity along with many others to receive our beloved Thirumeni at the Airport. Since then I had many occasions to travel with Thirumeni to different places. I cherish those experiences.

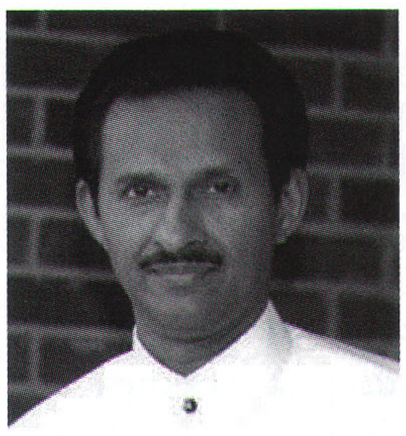
When I took charge as the Diocesan Secretary of the Edavaka Mission, it was another occasion to understand the missionary zeal of beloved Thirumeni. It was during this period that the Diocesan Edavaka Mission grew to greater heights. I acknowledge the great leadership of His Lordship for the mission work of our Church and also our Diocese. I recollect the efforts of our beloved Thirumeni in the renovation of the Kadavil Malika at Kallissery, Chengannur. The Diocese also showed special interest in the uplifting of mission fields in North India during this period.

The most remarkable Mission venture of our Thirumeni is his contribution and commitment to Mexico Mission and mission among the Native Americans. His Lordship can be rightly termed as "The Missionary Bishop of America". This was a project which challenged and motivated the youngsters a lot. The special concern shown to the weaker section of the society, especially the Mexicans, is commendable. Thirumeni's vision turned out to be his mission in Mexico.

When I ponder over the personal life of Thirumeni, I saw His Lordship as a man of contemplative prayer. A man of deep faith, who firmly believes that prayer can move mighty mountains. Thirumeni spends a lot of time in meditation and devotion. I could find a person with simplicity, who keeps and values friendship with constant communication and fellowship.

Thirumeni is a visionary with determination and commitment; commitment to God and fellow human beings. A saint and a humble servant of God, Thirumeni is concerned about the last, the least and the lost. He is a true shepherd who leads his flock to green pastures. Thirumeni's life compelled me to accept challenges. Thirumeni is a great teacher, who taught me this lesson from his life.

As our beloved Thirumeni is leaving this Diocese to take charge of another Diocese, I join with all members of this Diocese to wish him the best and pray for his good health to lead and shepherd the Church to greater heights in the days to come. ■



George Varghese (Jayan)
MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

സഭയിൻ നാഥനു സ്തുതി

സഭയാം നൗകയെ നയിച്ചീടാൻ
സഭയിൻ നാഥൻ അയച്ചീടും
ഇടയന്മാർക്കായ് സ്തുതിച്ചീടാം
സഭയിൻ നാഥനെ വാഴ്ത്തീടാം!

യുയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറിലോസ്
തിരുമേനിയ്ക്കായ് സ്തുതി പാടാം!

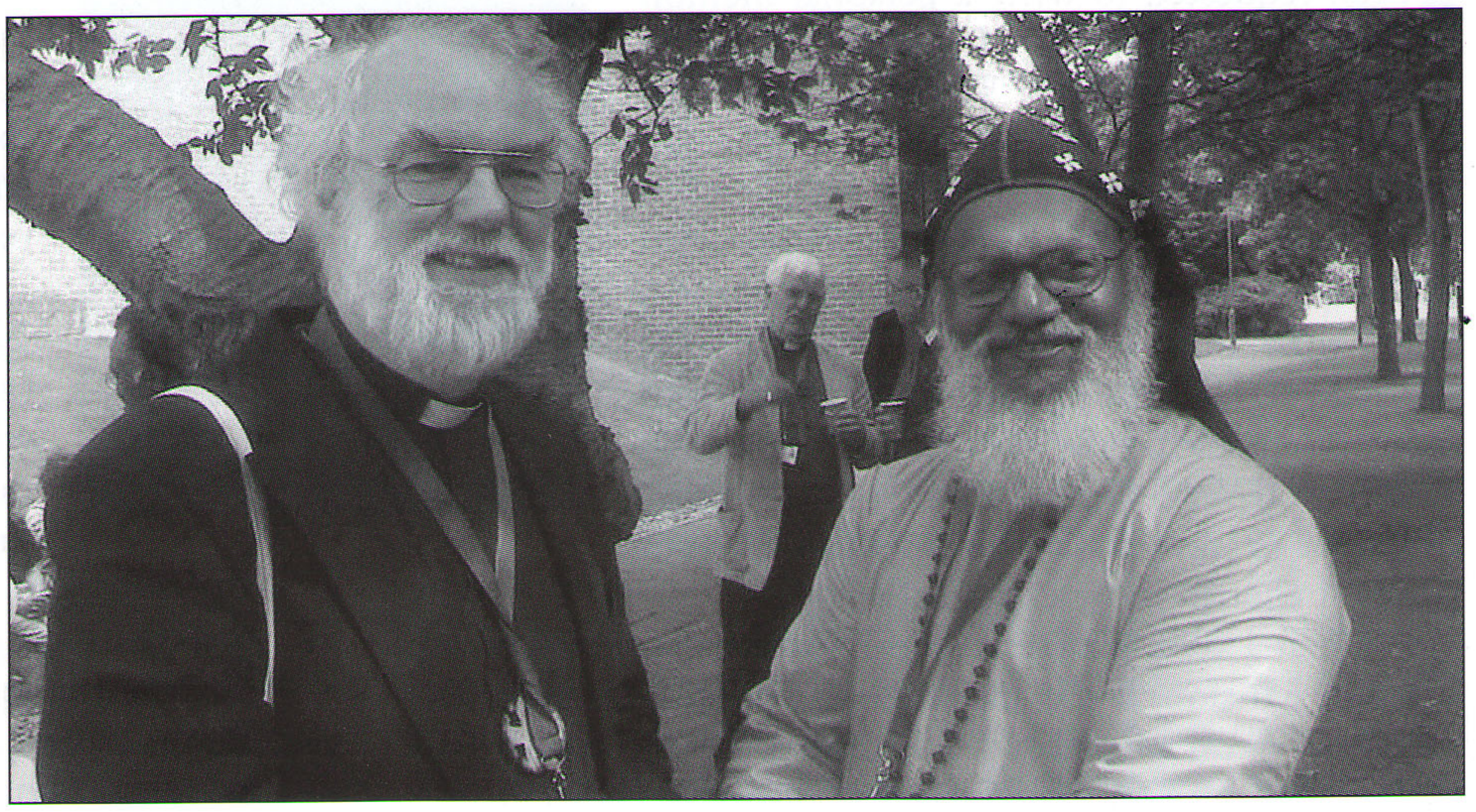
ദർശനമേകി അയച്ചു തൻ ദാസനെ
പ്രവാചകതുല്ല്യം വരങ്ങളുമേകി
പ്രവാസികൾ ഞങ്ങളെ നയിച്ചു ഈ ഭൂവിൽ
സഭയിൻ നാഥന്റെ മഹത്വത്തിനായ്!

വിടുതലിൻ വചനം നാവിന്മേലേകി
പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിൻ നിറവുമതേകി
അനുഗ്രഹിക്കൂ നിൻ അഭിഷിക്തനെ
നവദർശനം നല്കി പരിപാലിക്കൂ!

Unity and Anglican Identity

Reflections on Lambeth Conference–2008

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Episcopa



It was my privilege to attend the Lambeth Conference which took place at the University of Kent, Canterbury in England from July 16 to August 3, 2008. Lambeth Conference is a symbol of the unity of the worldwide Anglican Communion. It takes place every 10 years in Canterbury, uniting about 80 million Anglicans around the globe. Lambeth 2008 was attended by 650 Bishops and Archbishops with their spouses. The Mar Thoma Church has historic links with the worldwide Anglican fellowship since 1961 and we are in full communion with several Anglican churches including the C.S.I. and C.N.I. There is also a conciliar fellowship with C.S.I. and C.N.I. on the basis of full communion. Accordingly, the Mar Thoma Church is traditionally invited to attend the Lambeth Conference. We are privileged to associate with the worldwide Anglican Communion even as we maintain our distinct identity as a Reformed Eastern Church. At Lambeth–2008, I represented the Church and was welcomed at the Conference as an ecumenical partner. I was given the opportunity to serve the communion on the inaugural Eucharist on Sunday 20th July and read the Gospel portion on the concluding Eucharist on Sunday 3rd August. There are several lessons for us to learn from Lambeth–2008. In this article I share some of my reflections on the Conference.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams who was enthroned in 2003, began the Conference with a three day Retreat for the bishops and planned sessions for the next two weeks with daily Bible study and Holy Communion. The Melanesian brothers and sisters organized morning and night prayers each day and led the intercessory prayers in the conference during communion service and evening prayer. There were also mid-day prayers. The Anglican Communion truly experienced communion fellowship at the conference and sought unity through deeper entry into the place where Christ stands. This spiritual experience of I 8 days together helped the leaders of the Church to grow into a binding relationship and a sense of belonging which helped each one realize that 'beyond diversity lies Christian unity'. In the words of Arch Bishop Williams, "Christian unity is union with Jesus Christ, accepting His gift of grace and forgiveness, learning from Him how to speak to His Father, standing where He stands by the power of the Spirit".

Journeying with the Word of God

Everyday at Bible Study, groups of eight bishops from different continents would sit together to explore the message of the Scripture. Resource material was mailed to each participant months earlier for study and reflection. The text chosen for study, the Gospel according to St. John, has reminded every one that the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is not confined by place or time. We understood Jesus as a person whose significance spans infinity and eternity. The focus was on the 'I am' statements of Jesus reflected through 14 Bible portions where Jesus bridges the past, the present and future, just as he bridges Jew and Gentile, men and women. One could also see how he holds together infinity and intimacy within the life of the Trinity.

A journey with Jesus through the Gospel of John is a journey to the Father (Jesus exists in the bosom of the Father—Jn. 1:18) through the Cross where His glory is displayed in the deepest weakness and apparent defeat. This challenged the bishops to see themselves and the Church in Christ finding glory in struggle and apparent failure. The call is for discipleship and for commitment to God's mission in the world.

Together in Mission

The Lambeth Conference 2008 took on a new structure, the form of *indaba* (after a Zulu term for tribal meetings) based upon the African ideal of purposeful discussion on the common concerns of our shared life.

Like our *Nattu-koottam* of old Travancore, this was a process and a formalized method of engagement where everyone listened to each other. It acknowledged first and

foremost that there are issues that needed to be addressed in order to foster ongoing community living. Every aspect of the conference was an expression of an *indaba* where common views were listened to and reflected upon. This created a space for every participant to open up, air strongly held views and listen to others. The aim was to lead participants toward transformed relationships through these discussions groups.

Equipping bishops for Mission was a theme that ran through every aspect of the Conference. The participants were challenged through presentations from distinguished guests on topics like evangelism, social justice, ecology and covenant. In addition, there were self select sessions where Bishops could choose from a variety of topics. Bishops from the Arctic, the Equator, from mountainous regions and Pacific islands, from shanty towns and wealthy cities, from centuries old dioceses and newly planted chruches, experienced life in community and learned to be blessed with the richness of the Universal Church.

An Inclusive and Open Church

The formal inauguration of the Conference was marked by the opening Eucharist at the Canterbury Cathedral on Sunday July 20, 2008. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided from the Chair of St. Augustine and the Sermon was preached by the Bishop of Colombo. A beautiful expression of Anglican cultural diversity was seen in the song and dance by the Melanesian brothers and sisters as the 'Book of the Gospels' was carried through the Cathedral. The order of worship was distinguished by the use of many languages. Representatives of the bishops in communion were given opportunity for active participation in the opening and closing Eucharists at the Cathedral. There were 20 women Bishops at the Conference.

The chaplains and the musicians made each day memorable. The Eucharist each morning and Evening prayer every evening, incorporated liturgical and musical material from different Provinces of the Anglican Communion and led in a variety of languages.

Prior to the Lambeth Conference the bishops of the Church of England, the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Ireland invited groups of bishops to stay in their dioceses to feel at home and get familiar with the communion fellowship of the world wide Church.

A spouses conference was organized along with the Bishops conference under the able leadership of Jane Williams, spouse of the Archbishop Rowan Williams for the entire three weeks, combining separate study sessions and joint worship times with the Bishops.

The Conference extended invitations to 70 bishops to participate as ecumenical guests. They were formally introduced to the conference, briefed at a special session and welcomed by the Archbishop at a garden party. Before the end of the Conference, a special meeting of the Ecumenical partners was convened where the Archbishop heard the views and comments of the partners and responded to all the concerns expressed. The Archbishop also met the Bishops in full communion to explore the possibility of strengthening the growth of the communion life together.

The Archbishop and his family invited all participants to lunch at his residence. They also found time in the evenings to invite smaller groups, to listen to each person and open up occasions for free expression. The Archbishop was always available and approachable and he participated in almost all the sessions.

Walk in London

The Conference accepted the invitation of the Archbishop and other religious leaders to join in a march of witness from Whitehall in London to Lambeth Palace. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Gordon Brown and the Anglican Communion's observer to the United Nations Helen Wangusa addressed the gathering. In a letter presented to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Bishops, the Archbishop wrote: "Because our faith challenges us to eradicate poverty and not merely reduce it, we should be all the more alarmed that by the present speed, most of the achievable targets will not be met. The cause is not lack of recourses, but a lack of global political will. When they meet in New York at the United Nations on 25 September, World leaders must find greater political commitment to addressing poverty and inequality. A time table for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 needs to be created..."

For the Lambeth Conference, this was an expression of unity of the Church with the entire creation. The Gospel is not just the proclamation of individual redemption and renewal. It is the transformation of the entire world under the reign of God, the ending of injustice and the restoration of the right relationship with God, between human beings and between humanity and creation.

Spirit of Unity Threatened

While the Lambeth Conference represents the spirit of unity in the worldwide Anglican Communication, it was sad to note that this year's Conference was threatened by boycotts and recrimination when 230 bishops stayed away from the summit. The controversy in the Communion originally started when an openly gay Episcopalian bishop, Gene Robinson was consecrated in 2003 in New Hampshire, U.S.A. He was not invited to the Conference. But there was strong controversy about whether the Anglican Church should be acquiescent of homosexuality and other modern parameters which were not sanctioned by traditional Church mores.

As the invitation from the Archbishop of Canterbury went to the bishops in different provinces of the Anglican

Communion, about 230 bishops met at the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem to express their views on the gay and lesbian issues and made a declaration called the GAFCON Declaration. Even though Bishop Gene Robinson was not invited to the Conference, most of the bishops who met at Jerusalem abstained from the Lambeth Conference, threatening a break-up in the Anglican Communion. The Reflections from Lambeth Conference, which was produced and published as *Indaba* Reflections said: "We are very aware that some of our fellow bishops who met in Jerusalem last month (June) have not been present at the Lambeth Conference. We have been diminished by their absence. We shall seek ways in which they may be drawn into our deliberations and held in communion."

Building Bridges

From the very beginning, Archbishop Rowan Williams emphasized the common bonds of Christian Unity shared by the bishops. It is said that the previous Lambeth Conference of 1998 saw bishops booed when making speeches. This time the archbishop succeeded in neutralizing acrimony, by reminding bishops of their higher calling and showing them the bigger Anglican picture. He asked the conference to concentrate on two themes: Equipping Bishops for Mission and strengthening Anglican Identity.

Subsequent to the consecration of the gay American bishop in 2003 a rift has expressed itself most keenly in the opposed views of traditionalists, primarily in Africa and Asia who opposed any concession to homosexuality and of liberals in North America who favored the ordination of openly gay and lesbian members and church blessing for same sex unions.

Three aspects of homosexuality that were discussed for clarity:

(i) How can the Church evangelize, disciple and provide pastoral care for homosexual people:

(ii) How and on what basis can the Church admit people to Sacred Orders;

(iii) How can the Church deal with the first two aspects locally and globally. ■

കർമ്മനിരതനായ മാർ കൂറിലോസ്

ജിജി റ്റോം

പ്രസന്നമായ മുഖം. മന്ദഹാസവും, ഗാംഭീര്യവും ഒത്തിണങ്ങിയ ഭാവം. പ്രത്യാശാ നിർഭരമായ വാക്കുകൾ. ലളിതസുന്ദരമായ ജീവിതം. ദൈവ വചനത്തിലുള്ള അമിതമായ തീഷ്ണത. ശത്രുക്കളെപ്പോലും സ്നേഹിക്കുന്ന പ്രകൃതം. ശത്രുക്കളേ ആ ജീവിതത്തിലില്ല. അഭിവന്ദ്യ യുയാക്കീം മാർ കൂറിലോസ് തിരുമേനിയുടെ പ്രത്യേകതകളാണിവ. അഭിവന്ദ്യ തിരുമേനിയോടൊപ്പം ഭദ്രാസന യുവജനസഖ്യം സെക്രട്ടറിയായും, ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ഔദ്യോഗീക പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണമായ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെസ്സഞ്ചറിലും, ഭദ്രാസന കൗൺസിൽ അംഗമായും, മറ്റ് നിരവധി കമ്മറ്റികളിലും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുവാൻ അവസരം ലഭിച്ചത് ദൈവദാനമായും മഹാഭാഗ്യമായും കരുതുന്നു.

കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളെയും യുവാക്കളെയും മുതിർന്നവരെയും ഒരുപോലെ സ്നേഹിക്കുകയും കരുതുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന തിരുമേനി, പ്രായാധിക്യത്തിലായിരിക്കുന്നവരുടെയടുത്ത് ഓടിയെത്തുകയും അവർക്കുവേണ്ടി പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യും.

ഔദ്യോഗീക രംഗങ്ങളിൽ വാക്കിലോ പ്രവർത്തിയിലോ പാളിച്ച വന്നാൽ ഒരു പിതാവിന്റെ സ്ഥാനത്തുനിന്ന് ശാസിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. അനീതിയെ തിരുമേനി സഹിച്ചിരുന്നില്ല. ആദ്ധ്യാത്മീക ഗുരു അപ്പോൾ പൊട്ടിത്തെറിക്കും, നഖശിഖാന്തം എതിർക്കും. എന്നാൽ അടുത്ത നിമിഷം നീതിക്കു മുമ്പിൽ വെറും കുഞ്ഞാടായി മാറും. സങ്കീർണ്ണമായ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പിൽ അചഞ്ചലമായ ഹിമവാനെപ്പോലെ തിരുമേനി നിലകൊണ്ടു. കൊടുക്കാറ്റുകൾ ആഞ്ഞടിച്ചപ്പോൾ അവയ്ക്കു പോലും പ്രാപ്യമല്ലാത്ത വിധത്തിൽ ഉത്തുംഗമായ ഭാവനയും, ഉദാത്തമായ ധീരതയും, ഉജ്ജ്വലമായ വിശ്വാസവും, അത്യൽകൃഷ്ട മാക്കി കൂറിലോസ് തിരുമേനിയുടെ ജീവിതത്തെ. വ്യക്തിത്വം, ആദർശം, അറിവ്, പ്രവർത്തനം എന്നീ ചതുർവിധരംഗങ്ങൾ തിരുമേനിയെ പ്രബുദ്ധനാക്കിയത്, തിരുമേനിയോടൊപ്പമുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് ശക്തിപകരുന്ന വഴിത്താരകളായി.

ദൈവം ഉയർത്തുമ്പോൾ ദൈവകരങ്ങളിൽ താണിരിക്കണം. "മറന്നുപോകരുത് - ഓർത്തുകൊൾവീൻ" എന്നുള്ള കൂറിലോസ് തിരുമേനിയുടെ വാക്കുകൾ ഞങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതത്തെ അർത്ഥവത്താക്കി. അഭിവന്ദ്യ കൂറിലോസ് തിരുമേനിക്ക് എല്ലാവിധ യാത്രാമംഗളങ്ങൾ നേരുകയും മുള്ളുകൾ നിറഞ്ഞചുറ്റുപാടിൽ ഏവരുടെയും ശ്രദ്ധ ആകർഷിക്കത്തക്കവിധം പരിമളം പരത്തുന്ന ഉന്നതശീർഷനായി, കരുത്തുള്ളവനായി കാണപ്പെടുവാൻ ദൈവം സഹായിക്കട്ടെ എന്ന് പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

കനിവിന്റെ കാൽച്ചുവടുകൾ

മാത്യു വർഗ്ഗീസ് (വിൽസൻ) ഇമ്മാനുവേൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ ചർച്ച്, ഹൂസ്റ്റൺ

"എന്റെ ഈ ഏറ്റവും ചെറിയ സഹോദരന്മാരിൽ ഒരുത്തന്നു നിങ്ങൾ ചെയ്തേടത്തോളം എല്ലാം എനിക്ക് ചെയ്തു" എന്ന കർത്താവിന്റെ വചനത്തിൽ പ്രചോദിതനായി ധന്യമായ ജീവിതം കാഴ്ചവെയ്ക്കുന്ന അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. യുയാക്കീം മാർ കൂറിലോസ് തിരുമേനി. സർവ്വശക്തനും സ്നേഹവാനുമായ ദൈവത്തെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ പ്രതിഷ്ഠിച്ച്, സമ്പൂർണ്ണ സമർപ്പണ ജീവിതം നയിക്കുന്ന തിരുമേനിയുമായി രണ്ട് പതിറ്റാണ്ടിലേറയായി സ്നേഹബന്ധം പുലർത്തുന്നതിന്, ആ സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ തൂവൽസ്പർശം അനുഭവിക്കുന്നതിന് എനിക്ക് ഭാഗ്യം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. തീരുമേനിയോടൊത്തുള്ള യാത്രകളിൽ "യേശുവേ" എന്ന വിളി തിരുമേനിയുടെ ഹൃദയാന്തർ ഭാഗത്തുനിന്നും ഉയരുന്നത് കേൾക്കുമ്പോൾ എന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിലേക്ക് തിരിഞ്ഞു നോക്കുന്നതിനും എപ്പോഴും കർത്താവിനോടുകൂടെ വസിക്കുന്നതിന് എന്നെ പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിൽ ആഴമായ ആശ്രയമുള്ള തിരുമേനി തന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഗതിവിഗതികളെല്ലാം ദൈവത്തിൽ സമർപ്പിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് ശുശ്രൂഷയ്ക്കായി കാൽച്ചുവടുകൾ വെയ്ക്കുന്നു. എത്ര വലിയ പ്രോജക്ടായാലും (ഉദാഹരണത്തിന് മെക്സിക്കോ മിഷൻ) ആരംഭിക്കുമ്പോൾ തന്നെ ലക്ഷ്യം വ്യക്തമായി മനസ്സിൽ കാണുക എന്നത് തിരുമേനിയുടെ പ്രത്യേകതയത്രെ. പ്രതിബന്ധങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായാലും അവയെ മറികടന്ന് പൂർത്തീകരണത്തിലെത്താൻ, വിജയത്തിലെത്താൻ സാധിക്കുന്നത് സർവ്വശക്തനായ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ അനുഗ്രഹം തിരുമേനിയ്ക്കൊപ്പം എന്നും കൂട്ടുണ്ട് എന്നതുകൊണ്ട് മാത്രമാണ്.

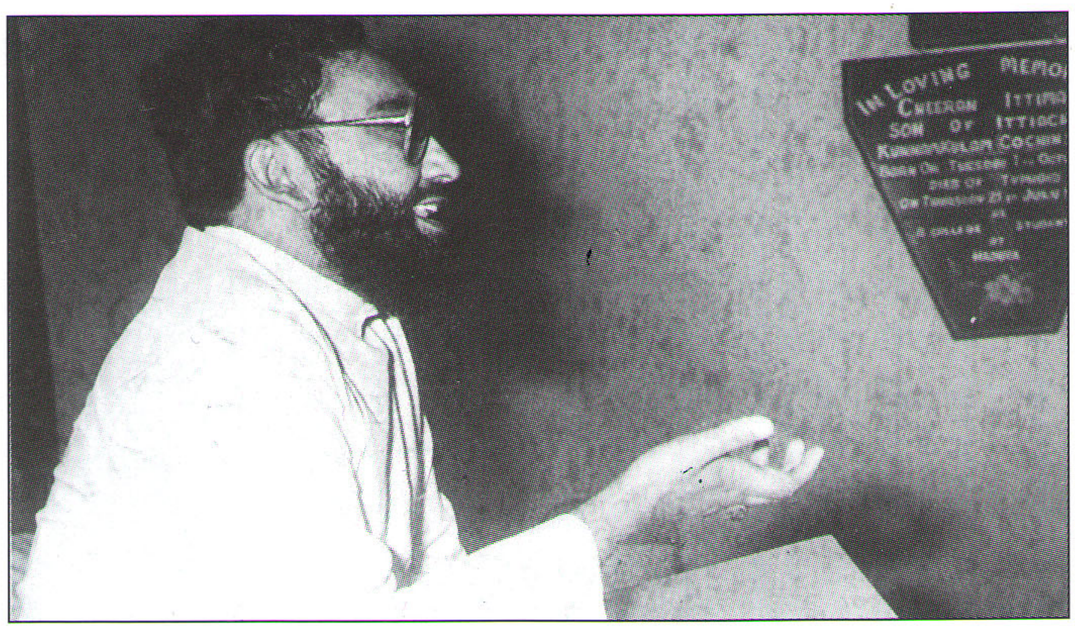
നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടതിനെ കണ്ടെത്തുംവരെയും അന്വേഷിക്കുന്ന സ്നേഹം, നിരാലംബർക്ക് ആശ്രയമാവാനുള്ള ഹൃദയവിശാലത, ലോകത്തിൻ താങ്ങുകൾ, ലോകക്കാർ, ഉറ്റസ്നേഹിതരെല്ലാം കൈവെടിയുമ്പോൾ പിതൃതുല്യമായ സ്നേഹത്തോടെ ആശ്വാസ ഹസ്തവുമായി ചാരത്തെത്തുന്ന തിരുമേനി അനേകരുടെയും ജീവിതങ്ങളെ പ്രത്യാശാനിർഭരമാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. സഭാജനങ്ങളുടെയും സമൂഹത്തിന്റെയും യഥാർത്ഥ നന്മ മാത്രം ആഗ്രഹിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് സുവിശേഷത്തിനുവേണ്ടി, എരിഞ്ഞ് തീരുന്ന ഒരു മെഴുകുതിരി പോലെയത്രെ തിരുമേനിയുടെ ജീവിതം. തിരുമേനിയുടെ ജീവിത വീക്ഷണങ്ങൾ, ക്രിസ്തീയ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഇവയിലൂടെ കരുണയും അതിനും ആഴത്തിൽ ആർദ്രതയും, കനിവും നമുക്ക് ദർശ്ശിപ്പാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നു. അവസരങ്ങൾ ഒന്നും പാഴാക്കാതെ തക്കസമയത്തു ചെയ്യേണ്ടത് ചെയ്യുവാൻ തിരുമേനി എന്നും വ്യഗ്രത കാട്ടാറുണ്ട്. ഏതൊരു കാര്യത്തിലും കൃത്യനിഷ്ഠയും, പരിപൂർണ്ണതയും തിരുമേനി എന്നും ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. നമുക്ക് ദാനം ചെയ്യുവാൻമാത്രം ഉണ്ടായതിന് നാം ആദ്യം ദൈവത്തോട് നന്ദി പറയണം. അതു പോലെ കൊടുക്കുവാനുള്ള മനസ്സ് നമുക്ക് തരുന്നതിനും നാം ദൈവത്തോട് നന്ദിയുള്ളവരായിരിക്കണം എന്നതല്ലേ "എല്ലാം കർത്താവിന്റെ കൃപ കർത്താവിന്റെ ദാനം" എന്ന് സാധാരണ പ്രാർത്ഥനകളിൽ തിരുമേനി പറയുന്നതിന്റെ പൊരുൾ എന്നത് പലപ്പോഴും എന്നെ ചിന്തിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നും ലഭിക്കുന്നതെന്തും ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ദാനം എന്നോർത്ത് മധുരതരമായ പെരുമാറ്റത്തിലൂടെ സ്നേഹപൂർവ്വമായ വചസുകളിലൂടെ കാരുണ്യപ്രവർത്തികളിലുടെയൊക്കെ അനേകരുടെ ജീവിതങ്ങളെ മാധുര്യപൂർണ്ണമാക്കി തീർത്തുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന അഭിവന്ദ്യ തിരുമേനിയുടെ ഒരുപിടി നല്ല അനുഭവങ്ങൾ ഓർമ്മിക്കുവാനും ഓമനിക്കുവാനും ഞങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ തങ്ങിനില്ക്കുന്നു എന്നത് വിനയാന്വീതമായ ഹൃദയത്താൽ നന്ദിയോടെ സ്മരിക്കുന്നു. മറ്റുള്ളവർക്ക് യഥാർത്ഥ വെളിച്ചമാകാൻ വേണ്ടിയത്രെ തിരുമേനി ജീവിതമാകുന്ന വിളക്കുകൾ തെളിയിക്കുന്നത്. തിരുമേനിയുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ തെളിഞ്ഞു നില്ക്കുന്ന ഭക്തിയുടെ വിളക്കുകളാണ് എന്നിൽ പ്രചോദനവും ശക്തിയും പകർന്നിട്ടുള്ളത്. തിരുമേനിയുമായുള്ള ആത്മ ബന്ധം മറക്കാനാവുന്നതല്ല. സ്നേഹമെന്നാൽ അലിഞ്ഞില്ലാതാവലാണ്, കൊടുക്കലാണ്, നിവേദിക്കലാണ്. ഇതാണ് തിരുമേനിയിൽ ദർശ്ശിക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നത്. ഉൽപ്പത്തി പുസ്തകത്തിൽ യിസ്സഹാക്ക് തന്റെ അപ്പനായ അബ്രാഹാമിനോട് "അപ്പാ, തീയും വിറകും ഉണ്ട് എന്നാൽ ഹോമയാഗത്തിന് ആട്ടിൻ കുട്ടി എവിടെ" എന്ന് ചോദിക്കുമ്പോൾ "ദൈവം തനിക്ക് ഹോമയാഗത്തിന് ഒരു ആട്ടിൻകുട്ടിയെ നോക്കി ക്കൊള്ളും മകനെ" എന്ന് അബ്രാഹാം മറുപടി പറയുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പരിപാലനയിൽ പൂർണ്ണമായി ആശ്രയിച്ച് അചഞ്ചലമായ വിശ്വാസത്തോടെ ഏതു സാഹചര്യത്തിലും തളരാതെ നില്ക്കാനുള്ള ശക്തിപ്രാപിക്കുന്ന തിരുമേനി നമുക്കൊക്കെയും മാതൃകയായി തീരട്ടെ.

സ്വാർത്ഥതയില്ലാതെ, താഴ്മയുടെയും ത്യാഗത്തിന്റെയും വഴിയിലൂടെ നടന്ന് സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ സന്ദേശം ലോകത്തിന് നല്കി, തന്നെ പീഡിപ്പിച്ചവർക്കുവേണ്ടിപോലും പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്ന യേശുവിന്റെ സ്നേഹം തിരുമേനിയുടെ ജീവിതത്തിലുടനീളം നമുക്ക് ദർശ്ശിക്കാൻ സാധിക്കും. തിരുമേനി എല്ലായ്പ്പോഴും പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കാറുള്ളതുപോലെ "കർത്താവ് തന്നെ ഏല്പ്പിച്ച ജനത്തെ ഏല്പ്പിച്ചതിനെക്കാൾ അധികം കർത്താവിനെ അറിയുന്നവരാക്കിത്തീർക്കുവാൻ" ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വാഗ്ദാനത്തിൽ ഉറച്ചു വിശ്വസിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് തന്റെ ദൗത്യനിർവ്വഹണവുമായി മുന്നോട്ടു പോകുവാൻ സർവ്വശക്തനായ ദൈവം ധൈര്യവും ശക്തിയും പരിശുദ്ധാത്മനിറവും തുടർന്നും നല്കി അനുനിമിഷം വഴിനടത്തട്ടെ എന്ന് പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നു.

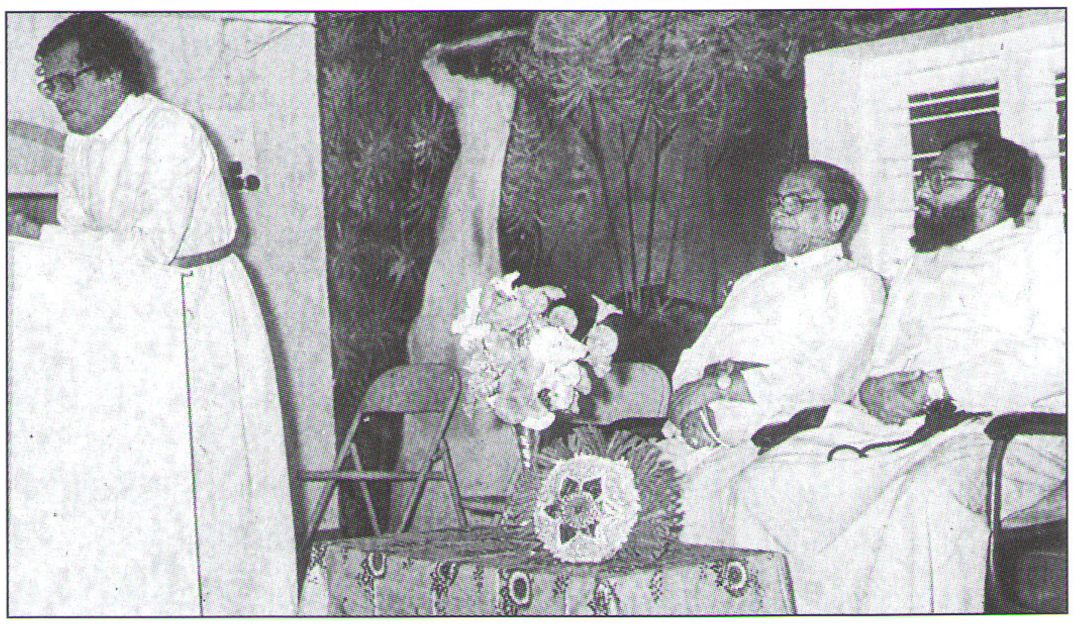
FORMATIVE YEARS OF OUR DIOCESAN EPISCOPA

Ordination of Rev. E. I. Cheeran



Rev. E. I. Cheeran

Newly ordained Rev. E. I. Cheeran with Bishops and Achens



Felicitation meeting after the Ordination

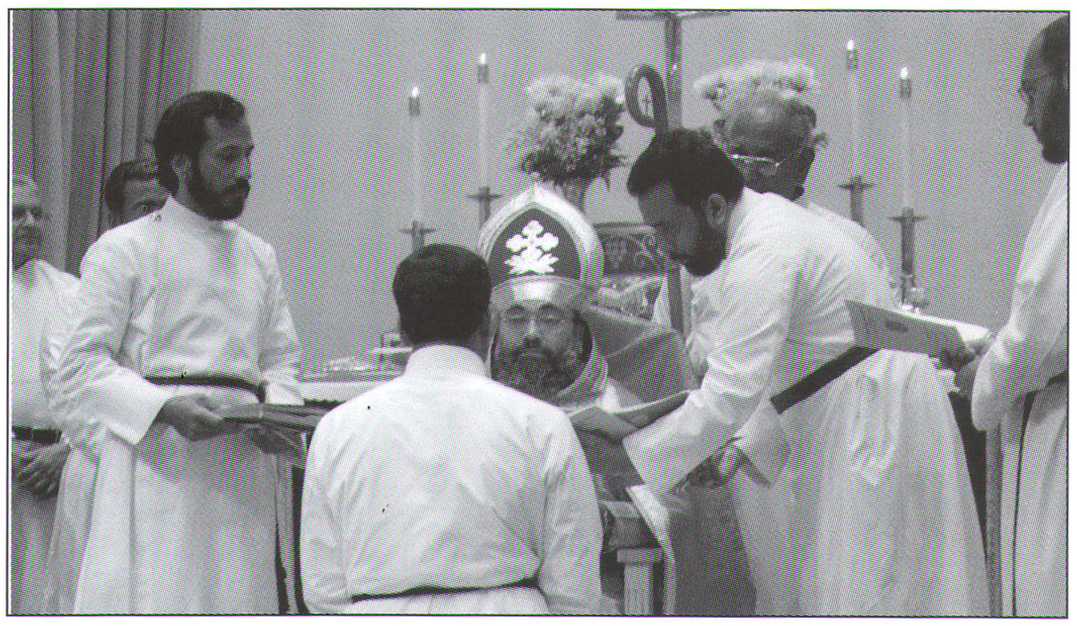
Coorilos Thirumeni with Parents and Family members.

THE GLIMPSES OF THE PAST SEVEN YEARS AS OUR DIOCESAN EPISCOPA

Ordination of Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia

Ordination of Rev. Shiby Abraham

Ordination of Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas



Ordination of Rev. Biju P. Simon

Dedication of The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island

Dedication of Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

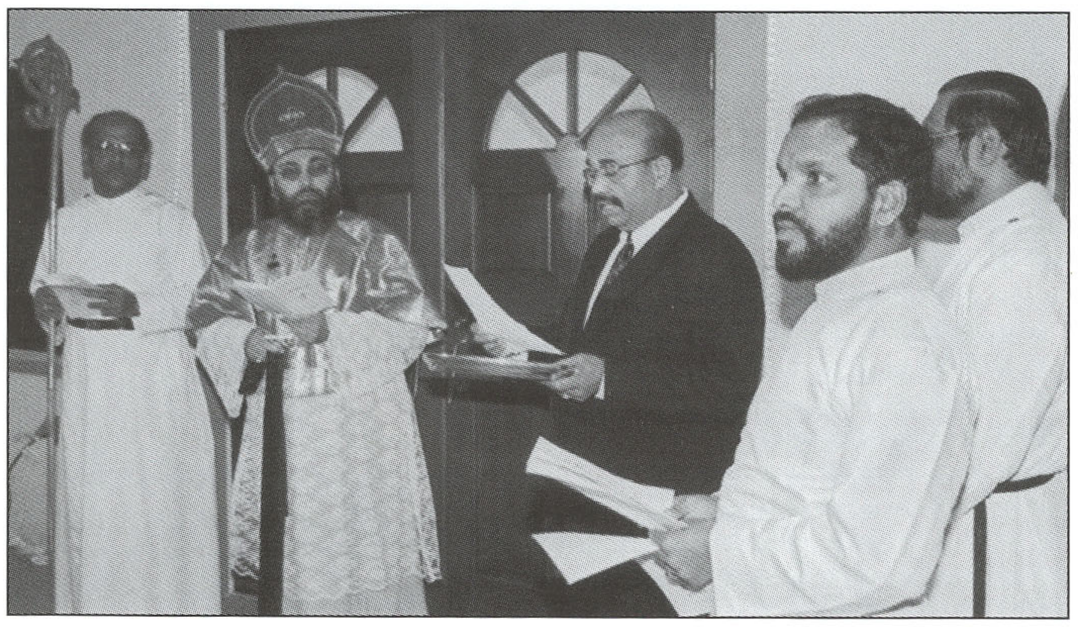
Dedication of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Chicago

Dedication of The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Carrollton

THE GLIMPSES OF THE PAST SEVEN YEARS AS OUR DIOCESAN EPISCOPA

Dedication of Jacksonville Mar Thoma Church, Florida

Dedication of St. James Mar Thoma Church, New York

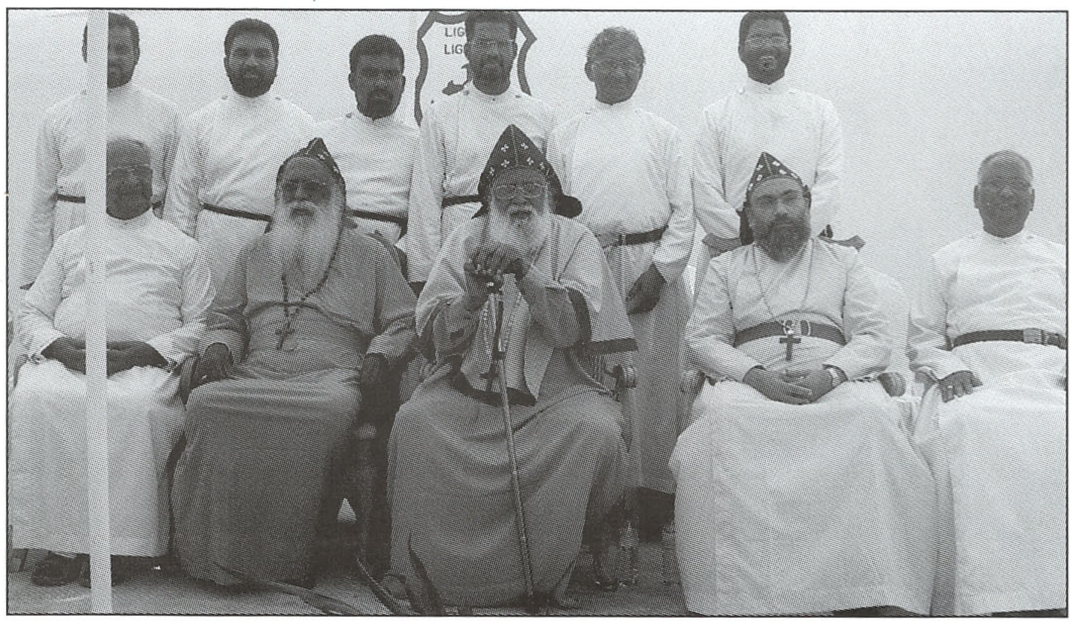


Dedication of St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, Tampa, Florida

Dedication of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Delaware Valley

"Colonia Marthoma" Mar Thoma Colony at the Mexico Mission Field

Metropolitan Blessing the Fondation Stone for the Mexico Mission Center

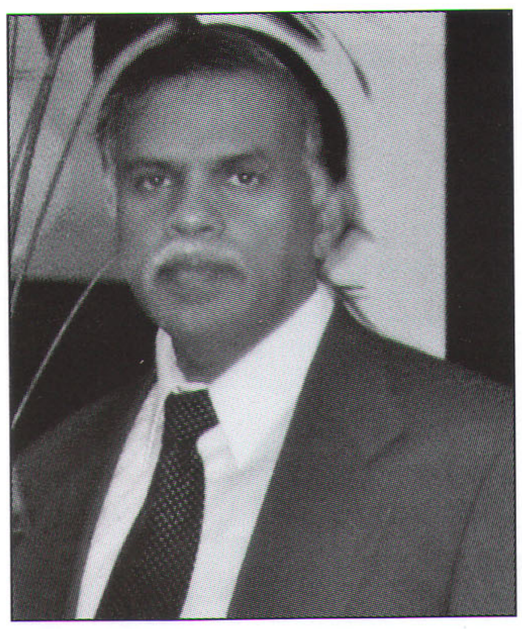


Metropolitans and Coorilos Thirumeni with Achens at the Mission Field

Coorilos Thirumeni welcoming Metropolitans and guests at the New York Metropolitans reception.

Coorilos Methrachen—A Man of Prayer and Vision

Dr. Thomas K. Jose, Staten Island (Mar Thoma Literature Society)



We are living at a time when the United States of America once the richest nation on the face of the earth is facing the worst financial crisis of the century. People are perplexed by the turmoil, not knowing the ultimate answer for the crisis. The ripple effect caused by this economic crisis have spread all across the world, and people are frantically searching for a leader to resolve the issue. The Bible promises us in 2 Chronicles that, "if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray…then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." It is with great honor and pleasure that I am able to write about a great leader of our Church, a man of humility and prayer, our beloved Coorilos Thirumeni.

Coorilos Thirumeni has completed seven years of ministry in this diocese as the Diocesan Episcopa. As he gets ready to leave the Sinai Center and take charge of the Kottayam-Kochi Diocese in Kerala, it is befitting to turn the pages back and reflect upon Thirumeni's leadership qualities and achievements. Coorilos Thirumeni has proved himself through his humility, dedication and faithful prayer life. Thirumeni solved all his problems through prayer. He never had any stress, managing the diocese for the past seven years and has won the hearts of all who came across his ministry.

In addition to Thirumeni's constant desire to kneel before the throne of God, he has extraordinary vision for spreading the gospel. By the grace of God, the Mexican Mission is a dream come true for Coorilos Methrachen. The youths of this diocese have taken charge of this project, and they have contributed their time, money and prayers for this project. Now that we were able to purchase land and build houses, we are moving on to the next stage of education and gospel work in the new colony. Thirumeni has also envisioned the need for a conference center in our diocese and is working hard to move this project forward. I had the privilege to work with Thirumeni over the past seven years as the secretary of the Marthoma Literature Society, an organization that was founded in 1991 by our Valiya Metropolitan to distribute Christian literature and promote healthy reading habits among our community. The growth of the society during these years is noteworthy. We are very thankful for Thirumeni's timely advice, guidance, and vision through these years.

On a personal note, I have been acquainted with Thirumeni (Cheeran Achen) since 1988 when Achen was vicar of Staten Island Mar Thoma Church. It was through Thirumeni's continuous prayers and vision that we were able to have a beautiful church to worship in Staten Island. Thirumeni has a strong testimony and a strong conviction that God will guide us even through these troubled days. Shoba, I, and our family wish Thirumeni God's abundant blessings in his future ministry, and we pray that God may give him good health, prudence and wisdom to guide the Church in the coming years. ■

Tribute to Bishop Euyakim Mar Coorilos

Sam George, Executive Director, Parivar International

Coorilos thirumeni had been a great encouragement and blessing to me personally. I had known him before he became our diocese bishop, and I had several opportunities to serve under his leadership. I have served on committees with him, done mission trips, shared conference platforms, sought his advice for the work of Parivar, brainstorm ministry matters, and even debated on issues. I fondly cherish all memories of my association with Coorilos Thirumeni.

Above all else, his undying passion for mission stands out. Soon after he took charge as the Diocesan bishop, I remember him talking about starting a mission field in our diocese and traveling with him on our first exploratory trip to Mexico. He not only quoted mission scholars frequently, but also lived out that message before us in our planning meetings and sweated out painting houses on the Mexico islands. Through all those interactions, I was moved to see his heart for the weak, poor and marginalized. His personal leadership played a vital role in letting the Mexico mission field flourish in spite of several hurdles along the way. It was my great honor to work with Thirumeni in pioneering the Mexico missions.

Another aspect that stands out from his ministry here in our diocese is his commitment to the second generation Marthomites. He was a champion for the cause of youth ministry in our diocese. As the very first youth worker of the diocese, this strikes a nerve with me. Thirumeni had been a big supporter of nurturing our next generation and encouraged all ministry initiatives to the young. I distinctly remember when I shared about the Coconut Generation research project, he was very supportive and numerous times over next year or so, whenever I saw him he would enquire about the work. I will ever be grateful for his encouragement and kind endorsement for the Understanding the Coconut Generation book.

I am grateful to God for thirumeni's life and ministry here with us over the last many years and pray that God will continue to use him in leading the Mar Thoma church in the years to come. (Author's website: www.ParivarInternational.org) ■

Are You Willing to Face Failures for Me?

Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church

I extend my gratitude to the Messenger committee for giving me an opportunity to express my reflections on Coorilos Thirumeni and the highlights of his ministry in our Diocese. I was reflecting upon the past seven years and pondered as to what would be his legacy as he leaves this Diocese. Without any hesitation, I strongly felt that it would be the starting of the first Mission Projects in North America.

Coorilos Thirumeni has a long history of starting many mission projects in India, such as institutions and projects for the Dalit community as well as the physically and mentally challenged. He has a deep compassion for the needy and a missionary zeal for sharing God's love.

Soon after his arrival to North America, Thirumeni sensed a burning desire to start a mission project to serve the less privileged in this community. This would provide an opportunity for the Marthomites, especially the second generation to serve in a mission field sponsored by our Diocese. How did this come about?

One morning, as an answer to his prayers, Thirumeni had a Vision that God wanted him to start Mission work in Mexico as well as with the Native Americans in this country. He knew that this was a tough challenge and pondered upon the feasibilities.... He continued to pray and asked for guidance. As he was grappling with this call, he heard God's voice. The question was, are you willing to face failures for Me? "Yes, Lord, I am willing," was Thirumeni's response...!

This was the beginning of a journey filled with failures and successes, joys and sorrows, hurricanes and sunshine, Pow-wows and Navathy celebrations, spread all across the country from the fishing islands in Mexico to the Choctaws Indians in Alabama, Okalahoma and Houma Indians in Louisiana. Throughout the year, young Marthomites traveled across the country, extending God's love to the less privileged neighbors.

As the first convener of the Mexico and Native American Mission, I have worked closely with Thirumeni in the early years of this project and felt empowered by his faith and courage when major challenges faced the mission work. When hurricane Emily destroyed the houses we built in Mexico, we were discouraged.... However, Thirumeni moved on. He strongly believed that God had other plans.He inspired the Youth Fellowship to raise funds for buying a property to build a hostel and a Mission center. Many Parishes and individuals donated funds to build houses in the mainland. The Navathy celebration in the month of May, 2008 with the Metropolitan and Chrysostom Valia Thirumeni at Colonia Mar Thoma in Mexico, was the realization of Coorilos Thirumeni's Vision.

The Native American Mission is also moving along very well. Thirumeni has taken time from his busy schedule to visit each location and encourage our young volunteers. He also met with the leaders of the Houma and Choctow Nations. He was filled with gratitude as they presented plaques to express their appreciation and wrote letters to explain how our young people provided spiritual leadership. The legacy will continue on for the years to come.....In the words of one of the young volunteers "Every year we go back home from Alabama, we leave a piece of our heart behind.... God is showing us new things he wants us to do in the community....our Mission is not to teach them about Jesus, but show them a new way of living in Christ...I am rejoicing in the fact that God is using the Marthoma Church as an instrument for the glory of His Kingdom".

Thank you, Coorilos Thirumeni for your vision and mission.

Thirumeni has often stated that the most influential person in his life is his mother. The memories of his mother on her knees praying at all times of the day, has been a great source of spiritual strength for Thirumeni.

We wish Thirumeni God's infinite blessings as he continues to labor for the glory of our Lord. ■

SALEM MAR THOMA CHURCH, LONG ISLAND

The Salem Mar Thoma Church, Eastern Long Island is proud to announce that an automated External Defibrillator (A.E.D.) was donated to us by Ms. Julie Lyksel (RN) on Aug 24th during our worship service. We are the first Church in Suffolk County to own this equipment. The efforts for this was made four years ago by our very active member, Mrs. Suja Zachariah (RN) who was aware of Julie's mission to provide A.E.D.'s to facilities and various organizations to decrease avoidable casualties. All A.E.D.'s are paid for by personal donations and raffle draws at their workplace at St. Catherine of Sienna in Smithtown, Long Island. This is a gift we hope never to have to use but it is a definite benefit for our Church and community if it is needed in cases of emergencies.

Rev. Jobi Varghese, Vicar

Coorilos Thirumeni

Annamma Mathew (Diocesan Council Member), Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch

"Most roads lead men homewards. My road leads me forth." These words from an English poet ring true when we think about the past several years of our beloved Coorilos Thirumeni and his leadership and dedicated work in this diocese. Thirumeni has led forth with a simple vision: to serve our Lord and Savior by marrying a strong faith with enthusiastic acts of charity. This vision towards initiating and sustaining mission activities in both this diocese and India is admirable. The initiation of the Mexico Mission project under Coorilos Thirumeni's tenure is the most visible manifestation of this vision. Extending the mission beyond the church's boundaries in this diocese fulfills one of Thirumeni's long-term dreams, challenging each of us to understand Christ beyond our self-created borders.

I have been blessed to work with Coorilos Thirumeni for the past three years, serving as treasurer for the Diocesan Sevika Sangham. Several mission projects were supported through the Sevika Sangham under Thirumeni's guidance. For example, many less fortunate girls both in Kerala and in our mission fields throughout India received a new life through the marriage aid program. Snehatheeram project in Elanthoor is another example of a mission project undertook by the Sevika Sangham to help the mentally challenged women of our community, under the leadership of Thirumeni.

If one spends a few moments with Coorilos Thirumeni, you will note his simplicity: simplicity of character, simplicity of life, and simplicity of spirit. Thirumeni's powerful and challenging messages will be missed, and his timely advice, leadership, and spiritual guidance is appreciated. I will cherish the fond memories of Thirumeni and earnestly pray that God Almighty shower all His blessings on him as he continues the work of our Lord. ■

Coorilos Thirumeni: Remembering a Prayer

Alex Kolath, MT Theological Seminary, Kottayam

I have had the most wonderful privilege to know, work with, and befriend Coorilos Thirumeni. For two years I worked with Thirumeni while serving as the secretary of the Diocesan Youth Fellowship. Thirumeni has led a fruitful missionary effort in Mexico and for the Native Americans—the first of its kind for our diocese. We have begun to give our time and energy to proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed to our own neighbors in need. But in addition to that, Thirumeni has been a source of encouragement and guidance in my personal life as well. Underneath Thirumeni's strictness is a heart of love and compassion. It is something I have grown to appreciate the more I have gotten to know Thirumeni in the past few years.

One thing I will never forget is a prayer that Thirumeni taught me: "Lord, I am your servant. Whatever you want me to do, I will do it." No conditions. It is not "I will do it as long as if it isn't …" But it is total submission. If Jesus is your Lord, you will do whatever he asks of you. It took me a long time to be able to pray that prayer, but once I was able to, it has been an even greater joy to serve the Lord.

I pray for Thirumeni's future ministry in the Kottayam/Kochi Diocese and thank the Lord for Thirumeni's service to our diocese. I am also glad that his new diocese will be where I currently am in Kottayam. So it will be as if he never left. I look forward to hopefully seeing him more often again. ■

"A Little Light Makes A Big Difference in the Darkest Night."

നി. വ. ദി. ശ്രീ. ഡോ. യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ.

മാത്യൂസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ കാലത്തു അദ്ദേഹത്തെ സ്ഥാനഭ്രഷ്ടനാക്കുവാൻ അന്ത്യോക്യയിൽ നിന്നും യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് മെത്രാൻ സ്വസഹോദരൻ ഗബ്രിയേൽ മൽക്കുദീശായോടുകൂടി വന്നിരുന്ന വിവരം നേരത്തെ പ്രസ്താവിച്ചിരുന്നല്ലോ (അധ്യായം 14). ഇതേ പേരു വഹിക്കുന്ന നമ്മുടെ ഇപ്പോഴത്തെ എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായെപ്പറ്റി അറിയുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി സ്വൽപം കുടുംബ ചരിത്രം എഴുതുന്നു

[1]തിരുവല്ലായിൽ ചാലക്കുഴി പടിഞ്ഞാറെ വീട്ടിൽ (B) ശാഖയിൽ പിതാമഹനായ പൌലോസിന്റെ രണ്ടാമത്തെ മകൻ മാത്തന്, അച്ചാമ്മ എന്ന ഒരു മകൾ മാത്രമേ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നൂള്ളൂ. അച്ചാമ്മയെ കോവൂർ അയ്യാത്ത് ഏലിയാസ് വിവാഹം കഴിച്ചു. അധികം താമസിയാതെ അച്ചാമ്മ നിര്യാതയായി. അതുകൊണ്ട് മാത്തൻ സ്വസഹോദരനായ മാമ്മന്റെ മൂത്ത മകളെ ദത്തുപുത്രിയായി സ്വീകരിച്ചു. യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് (അന്ത്യോക്യ) മെത്രാച്ചന്റെ കൂടെ വന്ന അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ സഹോദരൻ ഗബ്രിയേൽ മൽക്കുദീശാ ഈ ദത്തുപുത്രിയെ വിവാഹം കഴിച്ച് മാത്തന്റെ കൂടെ താമസമാക്കി. ഇദ്ദേഹമായിരുന്നു സെമിനാരി കേസിൽ പുലിക്കോട്ടിൽ മാർ ദീവാന്നാസ്യോസിന്റെ 30-ാം സാക്ഷി.

ഗബ്രിയേൽ മൽക്കുദീശായുടെ മകന്റെ പേര് മൽക്ക് എന്നായിരുന്നു. ഇദ്ദേഹം കണ്ടത്തിൽ നിന്നും വിവാഹം കഴിച്ചു. അവർക്ക് സി.എം. യൂഹാക്കിം, സി.എം. മാത്തൻ, സി.എം.ഫിലിപ്പ് എന്നീ മൂന്നു പുത്രന്മാരും മൂന്നു പുത്രിമാരും ഉണ്ടായി. മൂത്തവനായ യൂഹാക്കിം, സന്യാസി പട്ടക്കാരനായി തിരുവല്ലായ്ക്കു ചുററുപാടുമുള്ള യാക്കോബായ ഇടവകകളിൽ അനേക വർഷം വികാരിയായിരുന്നു. ഹബീബ് അച്ചൻ എന്നറിയപ്പെട്ട അദ്ദേഹത്തിനു യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് (അന്ത്യോക്യ) മെത്രാച്ചന്റെ കാസാ, പീലാസാ, മോതിരം, ധൂപക്കുററി എന്നിവ ലഭിച്ചു.

മൽക്കിന്റെ മകൻ സി.എം. മാത്തന്, തമ്പാൻ എന്നൊരു പുത്രനും അമ്മിണി, പൊന്നമ്മ എന്നീ രണ്ടു പുത്രിമാരും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു.

ഇതിൽ മൂത്ത മകൾ അമ്മിണി (സാറാമ്മ) യെ ആർത്താറ്റ് കുന്നംകുളം മാർത്തോമ്മാ ഇടവകയിൽ ചീരൻ ശ്രീ. ഇട്ടിമാണി ഇട്ടിയച്ചൻ കുഞ്ഞ് വിവാഹം കഴിച്ചു. ഈ മാതാപിതാക്കളുടെ നാലാമത്തെ പുത്രനായി തമ്പാൻ, 1951 നവംബർ ഇരുപത്തിഅഞ്ചാം തീയതി ജനിച്ചു. ഈ മകനാണ് യൂയാക്കിം ഐ ചീരൻ എന്ന പേരിൽ അറിയപ്പെട്ട യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് എപ്പിസ്ക്കോപ്പാ.

തീത്തൂസ് പ്രഥമൻ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ സ്ഥാനാരോഹണത്തിന് തൊഴിയൂരെ തിരുമേനിമാരെ കൊണ്ടുവരുവാൻ ഉത്സാഹിച്ചത് ശീ. ഇട്ടിമാണി ചീരൻ ആയിരുന്നു. ഇദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ പുത്രനാണ് തിരുമേനിയുടെ പിതാവ് ചീരൻ ശ്രീ. ഇട്ടിമാണി ഇട്ടിയച്ചൻ

വാഴൂർ ചെറിയമഠത്തിൽ (മാളിയേക്കൽ) കുടുംബത്തിലെ പതിനൊന്നാമതു പട്ടക്കാരനായിരുന്നു വലിയ യാക്കോബ് കത്തനാർ. മാത്യൂസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ സന്തത സഹചാരിയായിരുന്ന ഇദ്ദേഹം കോട്ടയത്തിനു കിഴക്കുള്ള 20 പള്ളികൾ സ്ഥാപിച്ചു. കോട്ടയം വൈദിക സെമിനാരി സ്ഥാപക നേതാക്കളിലൊരാളായിരുന്നു. ഇംഗ്ളീഷ് സ്കൂളുകൾ തുടങ്ങുന്നതിന് പ്രത്യേകം ഉത്സാഹം കാണിച്ചിരുന്നു. മണർകാട്ട് തൈക്കാട്ടു ഏലിയാമ്മയായിരുന്നു സഹധർമ്മിണി. അവരുടെ മകൾ സാറാമ്മയെ അഞ്ചേരി ക്രിസ്തോസ് ഇടവകയിൽ പര്യാരം ഇലക്കാട്ടുകടുപ്പിൽ ദിവ്യശ്രീ കെ. ഐ. ജോസഫ് കത്തനാർ വിവാഹം കഴിച്ചു. ഇവരുടെ മൂത്ത മകൾ ചേച്ചമ്മയുടെ പുത്രനാണ് ചീരൻ ശ്രീ. ഇട്ടിമാണി ഇട്ടിയച്ചൻ, യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ തിരുമേനിയുടെ പിതാവ്.

ഇലക്കാട്ടുകടുപ്പിൽ ജോസഫ് കത്തനാരുടെ സഹോദര പൌത്രന്മാരാണ് ജോസഫ് മാർ ബർന്നബാസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായും ദിവ്യശ്രീ. ഇ. ജെ. ജോർജ്ജ് കശീശ്ശായും.

---

[1] *ചാലക്കുഴി കുടുംബ ചരിത്രം*. പുറം 37.

യൂയാക്കിം ഐ ചീരന്റെ സ്കൂൾ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, സി.എം.എസ് എൽ.പി. സ്കൂൾ, എരുമപ്പെട്ടി ഗവൺമെൻറ് ഹൈസ്കൂൾ എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിൽ ആയിരുന്നു. തുടർന്ന് കൊച്ചി തേവര സേക്രട്ട് ഹാർട്ട് കോളജിൽ നിന്നും പ്രീഡിഗ്രിയും ഇരിഞ്ഞാലക്കുട ക്രൈസ്റ്റ് കോളജിൽനിന്നും ബി.എസ്.സി. (Special), എം.എസ്.സി. ബിരുദങ്ങളും നേടി. സഭയിലൂടെ കർത്താവിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷക്കായി പൂർണ്ണമായി സമർപ്പിച്ച് വൈദീകാഭ്യസനത്തിന് കോട്ടയം മാർത്തോമ്മാ വൈദീക സെമിനാരിയിൽച്ചേർന്നു.

1978 ഏപ്രിൽ 29-ന് ശെമ്മാശു പട്ടവും മെയ് 16-ന് കുന്നംകുളത്തു വച്ച് കശീശാപട്ടവും സ്വീകരിച്ചു. തോമസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് തിരുമേനിയായിരുന്നു കാർമ്മീകൻ. തദവസരത്തിൽ തോമസ് തിരുമേനി ചെയ്ത പ്രസംഗം, കഷ്ടതയിൽ കൂടെ അവമാനത്തിൽ കൂടെ പേയ ഒരു സഭയുടെ, എല്ലാം നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട ഒരു സഭയുടെ സ്വത്തിനെ പറ്റിയുള്ള ഒരു വലിയ സാക്ഷ്യം ആയിരുന്നു. തിരുമേനി പറഞ്ഞു, ''ഒരു കാലത്ത് മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയെ ഉപദ്രവിക്കാൻ വന്ന യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് മെത്രാച്ചന്റെ കാസായും, പീലാസായും, മോതിരവും ഇപ്പോൾ നമ്മുടെ സഭ വകയായിരിക്കുന്നു. '' അന്ന് കശീശാപട്ടം സ്വീകരിച്ച ദിവ്യശ്രീ. യൂയാക്കിം കശീശാ പിൽക്കാലത്ത് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ ആകുമെന്ന് തിരുമേനി ചിന്തിച്ചിരിക്കാൻ സാധ്യതയില്ല.

പിന്നീട് യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് (അന്ത്യോക്യ) മെത്രാച്ചന്റെ കാസാ, പീലാസാ, മോതിരം, ധൂപക്കുറ്റി എന്നിവ യൂഹാക്കിം അച്ചന്റെ (ഹബീബ് അച്ചൻ) കൈയ്യിൽ നിന്നും യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായുടെ കൈയ്യിലെത്തി. വിലയേറിയ സ്വത്തായി തിരുമേനി അതു സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്നു.

ജലഹാലി, കോട്ടയം യെരുശലേം (സഹ വികരി), തിരുവാർപ്പ്, പാലാരിവട്ടം, മുംബൈ-കൊളാബ, അമേരിക്കയിൽ സ്റ്റാറ്റൻ ഐലൻറ്, ഫിലാഡൽഫിയാ ബെഥേൽ, ബാൾട്ടിമോർ, ഫ്ളോറിഡാ, എന്നീ ഇടവകകളിൽ സേവനം അനുഷ്ഠിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

ആ സമയത്തത്രേ സഭയുടെ മേൽപ്പട്ടസ്ഥാനത്തേക്ക് ഉള്ള ദൈവവിളി ഉണ്ടായത്. പ്രയാസങ്ങളും ത്യാഗങ്ങളും സഹിച്ച് വളരെയേറെ ചുമതലകളോടു കൂടിയ ഈ പദവിയിലേക്കു ആയുഷ്ക്കാലം മുഴുവൻ തന്നെത്തന്നെ സമർപ്പിക്കുവാനുള്ള വിളി ദൈവ നിശ്ചയമെന്നുറച്ച്, അതിനു സന്നദ്ധനായി. ദിവ്യശ്രീ. യൂയാക്കിം ഐ ചീരൻ കശീശാ 1989 നവംബർ മാസം നാലാം തീയതി കൊട്ടാരക്കര മാർത്തോമ്മാ പള്ളിയിൽ വച്ചു റമ്പാൻ പട്ടം സ്വീകരിച്ചു. തിരുവല്ലാ എസ്.സി. സെമിനാരി കോമ്പൗണ്ടിൽ പ്രത്യേകം സജ്ജീകരിച്ചിരുന്ന താൽക്കാലിക മദ്ബാഹായിൽ വച്ച് 1989 ഡിസംബർ ഒൻപതാം തീയതി യൂയാക്കിം മാർ കൂറീലോസ് എന്ന നാമധേയത്തിൽ നി. വ. ദി. ശ്രീ. ഡോ. അലക്സാണ്ടർ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായാൽ എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായായും അഭിഷേകം ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ടു.

ഒരു പ്രാർത്ഥനാ മനുഷ്യനായ കൂറിലോസ് തിരുമേനി, 1990 ജനുവരി ഒന്നു മുതൽ അടൂർ-മാവേലിക്കര ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ചുമതലയും, 1997 മുതൽ 2001 വരെ മാവേലിക്കര-റാന്നി ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ചുമതലയും നിർവഹിച്ച ശേഷം 2001 മുതൽ നോർത്ത് അമേരിക്ക-യൂ.കെ. & യൂറോപ്പ് ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ചുമതല വഹിക്കുന്നു.

നോർത്ത് അമേരിക്ക-യൂ.കെ. & യൂറോപ്പ് ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ചുമതലയിൽ ഇരിക്കുമ്പോൾ തെക്കെ അമേരിക്കയിലുള്ള മെക്സിക്കോവിൽ മാൽവിനാസ് (Malvinas) എന്ന ദ്വീപിൽ ഒരു സുവിശേഷഘോഷണ പ്രവർത്തനം ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്തു. 2003 ജനുവരി 24ന് പോയിന്റെ നോർറെ (Pointe Norte) എന്ന ദ്വീപിൽ ആദ്യമായി വിശുദ്ധ കുർബാന അർപ്പിക്കുകയുണ്ടായി. ഫെബ്രുവരി 25-ാം തീയതി നടത്തപ്പെട്ട ഉല്ഘാടന പരിപാടിയിൽ അവിടെ അടുത്തുള്ള ആറു ദ്വീപുകളിലും കുട്ടികൾ ഉൾപ്പെടെ 450 ആളുകൾ പങ്കെടുത്തു. ആ വർഷം ആഗസ്റ്റ് 24 ന് ഒരു സമ്മർ പ്രോഗ്രാമും 'മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം ജൂബിലി ടെക്നിക്കൽ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഉൽഘാടനവും നടന്നു.

Note: The above article is taken with permission from the book 'Malankara Sabha Charithram Volume II' written by Mr. N. M. Mathew of Vancouver MTC and published by the Mar Thoma Episcopal Jubilee Institute of Evangelism, Thiruvalla. He is the son of Rev. P. E. Mathew of Kozhencherry-Keezhukara Palakunnathu Neduvelil family. He has written several books including St. Thomas Christians of Malabar through ages, Baptism (translation), Mar Thoma Sabha Charitram Volume I, II and II. The books are available through Mar Thoma Literature Society of the Diocese of North America & Europe from the Diocesan office. He can be contacted at E-Mail address: nmmat@hotmail.com or by telephone (604) 507-5573.

നമ്മുടെ നാവ് (മനുഷ്യന്റെ നാവ്)

Rachel John , Ascension MTC, Philadelphia

യാക്കോബ് 3-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ നമ്മുടെ നാവ് ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. ഭക്ഷണസാധനങ്ങൾ രുചിച്ചറിയാൻ നാവ് പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുന്നു. നാവിന്റെ ഏറ്റവും വലിയ ഉപയോഗവും സംസാരിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുക എന്നതാണ്. നാവ് കൂടാതെ ആർക്കും സംസാരിക്കാൻ സാദ്ധ്യമല്ല. നാം ഓരോ ശബ്ദം പുറപ്പെടുവിക്കുമ്പോൾ നാവ് വായുടെ പല ഭാഗങ്ങളെ സ്പർശിക്കുന്നു. സ്വന്തം ആശയം മറ്റുള്ളവരെ അറിയിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് സംസാരിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള കഴിവ്. ആശയവിനിമയം നന്മക്കും തിന്മക്കും അത് ഉപയോഗിക്കാം. നാവുപയോഗിക്കുന്ന വ്യക്തിയെ ആശ്രയിച്ചാണ് അതിന്റെ ഗുണഗണങ്ങൾ വിലയിരുത്തുന്നത്. കേൾക്കുന്നവർക്ക് മധുരമായ രീതിയിൽ സംസാരിക്കുന്നവരുണ്ട്. ക്രൂരമായി സംസാരിച്ച് കേൾവിക്കാരെ വേദനപ്പിക്കുന്നവരും ഇല്ലാതില്ല. ഒരാളുടെ സംസാരരീതികൊണ്ട് ആ ആളിനെ വിലയിരുത്തുവാൻ കഴിയും.

ഒരു ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി അവന്റെ നാവ് എങ്ങനെ ഉപയോഗിക്കണമെന്നുള്ളത് വിശുദ്ധ വേദപുസ്തകത്തിൽ പ്രത്യേകം നിഷ്കർശിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. പഴയനിയമത്തിൽ മോശയുടെ പത്തു കല്പനയിൽ രണ്ടെണ്ണം നാവിന്റെ നിയന്ത്രണത്തെ ചൂണ്ടികാട്ടുന്നു. 1. യെഹോവയുടെ നാമം വൃഥാ എടുക്കരുത് 2. കൂട്ടുകാരന്റെ നേരെ കള്ളസാക്ഷ്യം പറയരുത്. കൂടാതെ സങ്കീർത്തനങ്ങൾ, സദൃശവാക്യങ്ങൾ, യേശുവിന്റെ പർവ്വത പ്രസംഗങ്ങൾ, പൗലോസിന്റെ ലേഖനങ്ങൾ എല്ലാം അധരം കൊണ്ട് പാപം ചെയ്യാതിരിപ്പാൻ വിലക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. യാക്കോബിന്റെ മൂന്നാം അദ്ധ്യായം ഉടനീളം നാവിനെ അടക്കേണം എന്നുള്ളതിനെകുറിച്ചാണ്. 39-ാം സങ്കീർത്തനത്തിൽ നാവുകൊണ്ട് പാപം ചെയ്യാതിരിപ്പാൻ ഞാൻ എന്റെ നാവിനെ കണിഞ്ഞാണിട്ട് കാക്കും എന്നുണ്ട്. ഇയ്യോബ് 1:22, ഇയ്യോബിന് സകലവും നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടപ്പോൾ, ഇയ്യോബ് തന്റെ നാവിനെ കടിഞ്ഞാണിട്ട് കാത്തു. അധരം കൊണ്ട് പാപം ചെയ്തില്ല, തന്നെയുമല്ല ഇയ്യോബ് ദൈവത്തെ മഹത്വപ്പെടുത്തി എന്നു കാണുന്നു.

കുരള, ഏഷണി, കള്ളം, പൊട്ടച്ചൊൽ, കളിവാക്ക്, പരനിന്ദ, വമ്പുപറച്ചിൽ ഇങ്ങനെ എത്ര എത്ര പാപങ്ങൾ ആണ് മനുഷ്യന്റെ നാവിൽക്കൂടി അനുദിനം പ്രവഹിക്കുന്നത്. ഇതിനെ കടിഞ്ഞാണിട്ട് നിയന്ത്രിക്കാതെ എങ്ങനെ ഒരു വിശ്വാസിയായി ജീവിക്കും?. ഒരു വിശ്വാസിയുടെ വാക്കുകൾ കൃപയോടുകൂടിയതും ഉപ്പിനാൽ രുചിവരുത്തിയതും ആയിരിക്കണം. കേൾവിക്കാർക്ക് കൃപ തോന്നുന്ന വാക്കുകൾ, രുചിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന വാക്കുകൾ മാത്രമേ പറയാവു. സദൃശ. 5:6-ൽ ഇങ്ങനെ പറയുന്നു (ശലോമോൻ) നിന്റെ വായ് നിന്റെ ദേഹത്തിന് പാപകാരണമാകരുത്. അബദ്ധവശാൽ വന്നുപോയി എന്ന് ദൂതന്റെ സന്നിധിയിൽ പറകയും അരുത്. നമ്മുടെ വാക്കുകൾക്ക് ദൂതന്മാർ സാക്ഷികളാണ്. കുതിര വളരെ ശക്തിയേറിയ മൃഗം ആണ്. മനുഷ്യൻ അതിനെ കണിഞ്ഞാണിട്ട് നിയന്ത്രിക്കുന്നു. മനുഷ്യന്റെ നാവിന് കടിഞ്ഞാണില്ലാഞ്ഞാൽ സമൂഹത്തിൽ ആപൽക്കരമായിരിക്കും. കടിഞ്ഞാണിട്ടാൽ പ്രയോജനമുള്ളതാകും.

മനുഷ്യന്റെ നാവിന് എങ്ങനെ കടിഞ്ഞാണിടും? ഒന്നാമത് വേണ്ടത് ആത്മ നിയന്ത്രണമാണ്. അതിനുള്ള ശക്തി ദൈവകൃപയിൽ ലഭിക്കുന്നു. മനുഷ്യൻ തന്നത്താൻ സൂക്ഷിക്കേണ്ടതാകുന്നു. ഒരു വലിയ കപ്പലിന്റെ ചുക്കാന്റെ സ്വാധീനം. യാക്കോബ് 3:4. നാവിനെ തീയോടു സാമ്യപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. യാക്കോബ് 3:5. നാവ് വിഷം, വിഷ സർപ്പത്തോടു സാമ്യപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. നാവ് മധുരവും കയ്പ്പും ഒരുപോലെ ഒഴുകുന്ന ഉറവ. നാവുകൊണ്ട് ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കുന്നു. അതേ നാവുകൊണ്ട് മനുഷ്യനെ ശപിക്കുന്നു. സംസാരശേഷി ദൈവം തന്ന അതി വിശിഷ്ടമായ അനുഗ്രഹം. അതിനെ നന്മയ്ക്കായി മാത്രം ഉപയോഗിക്കുക. വിവേകം, നിയന്ത്രണം, ഇവ ലഭിപ്പാനായി ദൈവത്തോട് ആത്മാർത്ഥമായി പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കാം. നാവുകൊണ്ട് പാപം ചെയ്യാതിരിപ്പാൻ ദൈവമേ, എന്റെ നാവിന് കടിഞ്ഞാണിടേണമേ.

സദൃ. 10:19. വാക്കുപെരുകയാൽ ലംഘനം ഇല്ലാതിരിക്കയില്ല. അധരങ്ങളെ അടക്കുന്നവനോ ബുദ്ധിമാൻ.

ഓർമ്മയിൽ ഉണരുന്ന ക്രിസ്തുമസ്സ്

മാത്യു പെരുംപൊയ്ക
ബഥേൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ ചർച്ച്, ഫിലാദൽഫിയ

ആത്മാവിലാനന്ദ രാഗം പകർന്നൊരു-
വസന്തോത്സ കാലം വന്നണഞ്ഞു
ആയിരം ഓർമ്മകൾ ഗാനമായ് മാറിയെൻ-
മാനസ വേണുവിൽ തങ്ങി നില്പൂ.

വാനിലെ അമ്പിളി മാമനോ പൊന്നൊളി-
തൂകിയെൻ ചിത്തം കവർന്നു നില്ക്കെ-
മാനസ്സ മോഹന യാനത്തിലേറിയെൻ-
മാമല നാട്ടിൽ ഞാനെത്തി വേഗം.

കാടും മലകളും മേടും പുഴകളും-
ഊടു വഴികളും താണ്ടി രാവിൽ
തമ്പേറിൻ താളവും ചേങ്ങില മേളവും
ചാരുറ്റ ഗീതികൾ പാടി നീളെ

കന്യാ സുതനവൻ കാലിത്തൊഴുത്തതിൽ-
വന്നൂ പിറന്നൊരു വാർത്ത ചൊല്ലി
മണ്ണിലോ പൂത്തിരി, വിണ്ണിലോ താരകം-
പൂമരം നീളെ മണം പരത്തി.

വന്ദ്യനാം ഉണ്ണീ നിൻ ധന്യമാം ഓർമ്മയിൽ
ഖിന്നതയെല്ലാം മറന്ന നാളിൽ-
വന്നൊരു നക്ഷത്രദീപമായ് എൻ മന-
കല്മഷം നീക്കി പ്രഭചൊരിയൂ

മഹിമാധനൻ

സുജാ നൈനാൻ, ന്യൂയോർക്ക്

സുവിശേഷ ദൂതിൻ ശബ്ദം ധ്വനിക്കുന്നിടത്തെല്ലാം
ഒരുങ്ങിപ്പുറപ്പെടും നേതൃത്വ വൈഭവത്താൽ
മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിന്നു ഭൂതലമൊക്കവേ കടന്നാ-
നന്ദാശ്രുപൊഴിച്ചീടാൻ ഉത്സുകരായവരത്രേ

ഇരുപത്തൊന്നു ശതവത്സരം ശ്രേഷ്ഠനൈപുണ്യത്താൽ
വത്സലരായവർക്കൊക്കെ വിശിഷ്ടരാം ഇഷ്ടജനം
ഈ നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ മഹിമക്കൊരുനാവായ്
തീർന്നതാം മാർത്തോമ്മാ നാൾക്കുനാൾ ശോഭിച്ചീടും

പ്രശാന്ത സുന്ദരമഹിമാധനന്മാരാൽ
ഉൽകൃഷ്ടരായ ധീരമാനസന്മാരിൽ നിന്നും
പാരമ്പര്യ ശ്രേഷ്ഠതക്കൊത്ത ധീരതകാട്ടിഎന്നും
സഭയെ മേൽക്കുമേൽ സമ്പുഷ്ടമാക്കീടട്ടെ

യേശുവിൻ നാമത്തിൽനാം ചേർന്നിടും നേരത്തെല്ലാം
ക്രിസ്തുവിൻ ചേതനയെ വെളിവാക്കും മാതൃകയാൽ
ജീവിത പുതുക്കവും രൂപാന്തരീകത്വവും
ഒന്നിച്ചുജയിച്ചീടാൻ ഒത്തുചേർന്നുദ്യമിക്കാം

സ്നേഹത്തിൻ മൂർത്തീഭാവം നിരന്തരം പ്രകാശിച്ചും
സൽക്കീർത്തി പരത്തിത്തൻ പ്രതിബദ്ധത ഉത്ഘോഷിച്ചും
ആശ്ലേഷിച്ചാകർഷിച്ചും ധീരതകാട്ടിത്തന്നെ
സഭയെ വളർത്തിത്തൻ സുവിശേഷ നിധികാക്കും

എളിയവരോടു ദയയാലും കനിവാലും
ആദ്രമാനസരെത്തൻ മനസ്സലിവിൽ ലയിപ്പിച്ചും
വിദ്യവിഹീനരെത്തൻ വിശിഷ്ടവൈഭവത്താൽ
കടന്നാകൃഷ്ടരാക്കിത്തൻ വൈദഗ്ദ്യം നിറവേറ്റും

"Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and angels know of us" *Thomas Paine*

HOME & GARDEN TIPS

MRS. SHIRLEY CHACKALAMANNIL, NEW JERSEY MTC

Decency in Etiquette for our Times*

The word "etiquette" means the rules of acceptable behavior in a society in all arenas from how to be a good host/hostess to how to tip a bellhop in a hotel. Minding the etiquette of the society in which we become a part of is more of a sign of respect to those around us.

This issue of Messenger magazine will focus on the etiquette of formal dining in the Western countries. Knowing the manners and behaviors associated with formal dining will help us to conduct ourselves better as a guest or as a host/hostess in the society where we live. When I came to this country many years ago, I was unfamiliar with the customs and etiquettes here. I asked people around, for example, how to host a party, how to dress on various occasions, and how to respond to pleasantries. Fortunately, there was an older colleague who graciously coached me in manners which I remember with a sense of gratitude. I hope to share here some of the very same etiquettes that I have learned.

Arrivals and Gift giving

Usually a fifteen minute delay in the set time for the dinner party is acceptable. Guests who could not make it at a reasonable time should call the host/hostess and assure him/her to begin without you. According to the Western etiquette the meal should not be put off for the late comers. Guests are encouraged to bring gifts to the hosts of the party to show appreciation for them. Gifts such as specialty foods, pies or home made desserts, candles or a small house plant will be sufficient.

A good introduction

A proper introduction is very important if any of your dinner guests is a new acquaintance for the rest of your guests. A good introduction is not just the provision of a name. A proper introduction serves its function well when the "introducer" vouches for the character of the new guest from a previous acquaintance. By doing so the new comer will be delighted by your generous comments and the rest of your guests will think of this person as someone who is worthy of their time and friendship

Conversation

If you have a group of guests, it is better to start a conversation that applies to all and comfortable to all. Try to set the tone of the conversation to match the mood of the event. During the course of a conversation you or someone in the group may hit on a topic that may be uncomfortable for some of your guests. A tactful deviation by you is needed here where you will not offend either the person who started that topic or the guests who are getting uncomfortable with the conversation. Try to avoid personal questions unless you are very close to that particular guest. If people ask you a tactless or personal question that you don't want to answer, then just evade the question completely by a very diplomatic comment that will not offend your guest. A soft music playing in the background will provide not only a pleasurable dining experience but also some say it helps digestion. Remember to keep the volume of the music low so it would not drown out the meal-time conversation.

The Formal Table Setting

In a formal dinner the guests are seated to be served the food. Very often a formal table is set with two knives, a spoon and three forks of different sizes. A place-plate is set for each guest. The knives and the spoon are kept on the right side of the place-plate and the forks on the left. The simple rule is to start with the silverware that is on the farther away from the place setting and work inward with each course. Always keep the glass/drinks on your right side and the bread plate on your left. At the beginning of the meal remember to put your napkin on your lap. Please do not tuck it on your shirt or skirt. Always use your napkin to wipe your mouth before drinking from your glass so that the rim of the glass will not be stained from the food particles from your mouth. Leave the napkin on your lap until you are finished with your meal. In case you are drinking soup and taking a break between, leave the spoon in your soup bowl. When you are finished drinking your soup then leave the spoon down (not in the bowl) at an angle. Same rule applies to your meal also. Leave the knife and fork together down at an angle. On your bread plate break the bread and if butter is provided in a shared plate, use the knife provided with it to transfer to your plate. Then use your own butter knife to butter your bread. Never dip the bread in the soup at a formal dinner. Following are the seven of the main "don'ts" at a formal dining event.

(1) Don't keep any personal items on the table.

(2) Don't take any calls at the dinner table.

(3) Don't reach across other guests for any food items on the table. Rather ask someone at the table to pass it to you.

(4) Don't put your elbows on the table while you eat.

(5) Don't add salt and pepper to your food without tasting the dish first. After tasting the food and if you need to put salt or pepper, do so discreetly.

(6) Do not leave your napkin on the dining table if you have to leave the table during the meal. Instead leave it on your empty seat. When you are finished with your meal fold the napkin roughly and place it to the left on the dining table.

(7) Don't use your napkin to blow/wipe your nose. Use your own handkerchief instead and do it very discreetly away from the dining table.

After dinner/lunch it is always proper to offer your help in cleaning. The host/hostess either will take you upon your offer or it allows he/her to decline your courteous offer graciously. When coffee or tea is served, it means the conclusion of the formal meal. During the time of coffee or tea the guests and the hosts are allowed to move to more comfortable settings such as a family room or living room. Since coffee/tea time can be very long, guests who wishes to leave at this point is free to do so. Never measure the success of a party by how late the guests stay at a party.

Saying Good bye

The host/hostess worked hard to organize a dinner/lunch party that you have attended. It is only proper to compliment them for their thoughtfulness and hard work. If you choose to compliment the food, then it is better to compliment the whole meal rather than mentioning only one dish. Never say "thank you for the food". It is better to say "thank you for your hospitality". It is proper in the Western tradition to give a follow up call or sending a thank you note to the host/hostess for their hospitality.

Next issue of Messenger magazine will focus on "the etiquettes to follow during travel"

* Special thanks to Dr. Ravinder Kaur Sawhney (retired professor, Yale University) and Dr. Barbara Zilinskas (Professor, Rutgers University) for introducing me to the Western etiquettes.

A Call to Early Settlers in This Adopted Land

Dr Joseph Mattackal, New York

Memory takes me back to the early 70's when the early Malayalee settlers of this land worshiped and socialized together. Their good times and not so good times, heated general body meetings and lengthy committee meetings are all in their memory. They all sacrificed their personal and family lives in their prime, to plant and organize churches in this adopted land. God is the witness and I am sure they have several crowns awaiting them on the other shore. Some of them left their earthly pilgrimage to be with the Lord and God alone knows how long the others will be here on this earth. In the early years, people worshiped together irrespective of any denominational barriers because they were few in number. As time passed, the number of immigrants increased and each denomination made their own separate worshiping arrangements. But the common bond that tied them together in those days still remains strong and they feel at home in each other's company.

A re-union of these early settlers in New York was held on August 30, 2008 in Antun's, Hicksville, New York. Not only people from New York and New Jersey, but people who came to New York and then moved to several other American cities also attended this re-union. It was a time of jubilation and excitement for all attended being a rare opportunity to see our old friends under one roof, some of them after a very long time. During the business session, an ad hoc committee was elected to explore the possibility of convening a similar re-union next year.

Human beings are all involved in a common process of aging and these early settlers are no exception. In fact we are aging since we were born. But, we don't say children are aging but we will say, 'he is growing up.' They are getting bigger, taller, getting married; they become young men and young women. We talk about aging at around 40, 50 or 60.

It is important that we understand our lives and the different stages we go through. We all know about the physical changes described in Ecclesiastes. But I am talking about the changes that are not that obvious or we seldom realize.

1. Personal Changes

For one thing there are lot more candles on the birthday cake. That is chronological age. Chronology is merely an order of events to show how long we lived on this earth. If we take a certain number to heart and say we are old, we are going to act on it. We see vibrant 80 year olds and lethargic 50 year olds around us. What I am trying to say is, age is a lot about our personal approach more than chronological age.

2. Family Changes

These changes happen throughout our life. We start as children, young adults, we get married, have children; they get married, they move out, and we become grandparents and baby sitters to the grandchildren so on and so forth. Some of these changes are good and some are bad. As we get older, we are going to experience the lost changes, death of parents, death of a spouse, death of children and death of our siblings. Sometimes we hear people saying, I am the only one left in my family and for sure they are the only ones! More of these losses are going to pile up at the end. When that happens, people will look for extended family and other ways of sincere attachment to feel that family atmosphere. This stage is very significant as we get older.

3. Role Changes

Along the way, we experience family changes, we change roles from daughter, to wife, mother, son to a father, grandfather, etc. As we get older each role we play is going to change or come to an end. "Role Exit" in life is when we leave one role in life by choice or by circumstances. Let us say a husband and wife are planning their retirement in two years. They sit and chalk out what needs to be accomplished before retirement and how to spend their retirement years. All goes well and they retire in two years. This is a retirement by choice. But let us say, the husband dies in a car accident immediately after they finalize their plan for retirement. This is a "role exit" for the wife. But, it is not by choice, but by circumstances. Now, the wife's role is going to change in the family, in the church and in the society.

4. Life Stage Changes

In the later part of our life we reach the stage of integrity vs. despair. What it means is how am I going to end my life? How was it so far? How am I going to wrap this up at the end? Looking over the shoulder and evaluating the good, bad, ups, downs, hill top experience and the valley experience of life and asking ourselves, "Did I live with integrity? Overall how was my life? Can I wrap up my life with integrity?" Some unfortunately are going to look only on negatives, only on the difficult, only on the downs, only on the valley and end up in despair.

Mark Twain, once said, age is mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter. That is a positive way of looking at aging.

Marthomites of the early 70's at a special gathering on August 30, 2008 in Antun's, Hicksville, New York.

But, it does matter. We are a youth oriented culture that de-values the older adults. It is sad. When that happens, the aging adults move from leadership to dependency in the family system. Adult children, appropriately called "the Sandwich Generation," seek a balance between parenting their children and parenting their parents. Add to the mix frailty, chronic pain, long-term illness, dementia and the role changes necessary to adapt to these life transitions shake the relationships and spiritual foundations of families.

Because of these problems, older adults are given less opportunities to participate in work, family decisions, communities and churches at a time when they desperately need to be useful, valued and connected. God raised up several champions in the senior adult years. Bible gives us numerous examples. Moses started his mission in his retirement years. He did not retire while he was leading God's people out of bondage.

Someone once said that we are most productive from ages 50 to 90. Look around the world, almost all the people in power and authority are in their senior years. The early settlers are definitely in this age group. They have the wisdom, maturity and experience to accomplish a lot before they wrap up their lives. May I challenge them by asking, what are they doing with this vast warehouse of knowledge and experience? By God's grace, they are all well off and their children are well placed. They are free birds with little or no encumbrances. They experienced what life is all about. So, may I request the early settlers in different cities to do something worthwhile with their remaining life in this world? May I suggest the following?

1. Mobilize the early settlers in this part of the globe and bring them under one banner.
2. Arrange for occasional get-together.
3. Decide on a communication medium by which they can keep in touch with each other.
4. Pool their experience and resources; chalk out some projects that are beneficial to our generation and the generations to come.
5. Arrange for periodic sight-seeing group tours and cruises to different destinations
6. Since they are making history, document their pathos, predicaments and success.
7. They have to look back in to their past and reflect upon the enormous difficulties and struggles that they, as early settlers, had to endure in the beginning. There are so many stories to tell to their children and if they don't, they will be buried with them when they finish their lives on this earth. Therefore it is important that we pass on our legacy, traditions and history to our children and they in turn to their children and grandchildren.

Let us make it a forum to be useful, valued, stay connected and make our golden years exciting for us and everyone around us. Let us not bury our God given talents, but use it for the Glory of God so that we can hear His voice at the end "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master." At the end, let us wrap up our life in a beautiful package, put a bow on it, and give it back to our creator and say thank you God for my life. Now I am giving it back to you. I am ending it with integrity. May God bless us all! ■

Dr. Mattackal is one of the early settlers who had the vision and foresight of a growing Mar Thoma community in the North American Continent. In spite of continuous objection from the Mar Thoma Church leaders, he didn't lose hope but organized and conducted the first Mar Thoma Service in this land on April 9, 1972 in Queens, NY.

A Perspective on Biblical Leadership and the Church

George Thomas, Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma

The Sabha Mandalam, diocesan assembly, church managing committees, church building committees, respective organizational committees, the missions committee… Looking at the Mar Thoma Church today, we can see a host of committees and members that have stepped up for a variety of reasons to "lead" and to provide "service" for the church, either in a local or at a diocesan level. In all situations, we as the church general body call these people, these volunteers, as our leaders. But, what exactly do we mean by a leader, what qualifications, characteristics, or personality traits should we expect from our leaders? Is our only qualification the fact that they were willing and volunteered or that they were appointed? When an election is under way for any of these positions, by what standards do we use to judge and select the best candidate? Do we go by more superficial standards (such as the best house name, the nicest smile, or the largest wallet) or do we use something more meaningful?

The best standards I believe in choosing and judging leaders for the church can obviously be found in the Bible. First it is important to note that in both the Old and New Testament, there are many avenues to focus on, such as the Levitic line of the priesthood, apostolic succession, and the elders. This particular article will focus on the concept of the elder. It is at this point, knowing the community that I am writing for, that I need to specify two disclaimers, if you will. First, in no way at all is this article trying to repudiate, critique, or criticize any of our existing lay leaders in the Church. Secondly, I'm not advocating an elder system for the Mar Thoma Church. Rather, I just wanted to share some of the biblical insights that have recently challenged me both in my call to be a youth leader and also in my discernment of church leaders. In addition, I think by looking at the biblical elder system, there is much we can learn in regards to the leadership roles in today's church. So for a moment, let us look at the Old and New Testament's concepts of the elder/leader.

The Old Testament is full of references that describe the function and roles of elders. The elders are considered as a distinct collegiate body with political and religious functions. We can cite a few examples from the biblical text. In Exod. 3:16, we can see Moses speaking to the elders of Israel. Later on, these elders of Israel saw Moses strike the rock (Exod. 17:5-6), witnessed the covenant (Exod. 24:1-9), and received the Spirit at the tabernacle (Num. 11:16-25). The function of the elders continued through the exhilic period (Jer. 29:1, Ezek. 8:1), in the postexilic community (Ezra 10:8), and even in the synagogues (2 Kings 19:2). All throughout these references, we find elders becoming influential members in the Jewish society; they carried out decisions and instructions for cities, tribes, priests, and even had influential roles with the kings (2 Sam. 12:17). The elders even took on some judicial responsibilities such as conducting inquests and settling matrimonial disputes (Deut. 19:12). Unlike the Levitic line or the rabbis of the Jewish faith, the elders seemed to be a part of the laity as opposed to those that are called to the priesthood. These people stood up among the rest of the Jewish faith and served the local community in many of the spiritual and civil responsibilities of the community. ■

What does God want us to do?

Alison John, 6th grade, Detroit Mar Thoma Church

Why are we on the Earth?
What are we supposed to do?
What has God planned for you?
God sent us, who believe in the true God,
It won t be anything that is odd,
As simple as to praise him,
He did make our every limb,
Spread the news,
Is something you should choose,
What God has done for you,
No one else can do,
He made us all,
To do his call,
What would he want?
For us to taunt?
No, for us to embrace,
Everything he made on this place
So take care of what he made,
And keep everything clean and good every decade.
When God saw how we are strong,
He did not look at our wrong,
When people die,
Do not cry,
For they finished their job for God,
They were in God s squad,
But when we are done with our responsibility,
We will have only one more ability,
We go to God s home,
And we won t have to go the Earth to roam,
We will go with our Lord,
Where we will never be bored.

Mar Thoma Sabha Mandalam 2008 Meeting

(House of Representatives)

Dr. P. John Lincoln, Lubbock, Texas

The Mar Thoma Sabha Mandalam was held from Tuesday 9th through Thursday September 11th, 2008 at the Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Auditorium in Thiruvalla. His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan presided. All the bishops of the Mar Thoma Church were present. The Mandalam members were seated in groups according to their Diocese. Very Rev. K. O. Philip, the Vicar General, gave the devotional talk based on the book of Nehemiah. The devotional talk came to an end with a closing prayer by Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos.

In the presidential address that followed, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan touched many crucial and relevant matters of the present day. He stressed that the parents have the freedom to nurture their children with a relationship to God and the faith of the Church. No government can overpower it. He referred to the unfortunate events in Orissa, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh, where Christians are being persecuted and murdered. At the close of the presidential address a resolution was made asking the government to step in and stop the terrorism and violence against the Christians and to also protect the religious freedoms of choice. The Mandalam members then stood up to respect the memory of the bereaved Church members and clergies.

At 11:00 a.m. the president of the Mandalam called to order the business session of the meeting. As the quorum was sufficient to hold the meeting, the president read the oath and all the members took the oath. The report for income and expenditure of the Church was presented and was discussed and with minor corrections was accepted and passed. The budget for the next year also was presented, discussed, and passed. There were 13 resolutions for amendment and 56 people asked questions regarding the reports and accounts. The whole report and accounts presented by Rev. K. M. Mammen, secretary, after deliberation, were accepted, approved, and passed by the Mandalam.

Dr. P. John Lincoln from Emmanuel Mar Thoma Church in Lubbock asked three questions: (i) The appointment of an assistant secretary in the parish executive committee so that youth born and raised in North America will get enough participation in the committee proceedings and get trained as higher officers. The Sabha council gave an answer that it had practical difficulties at this time. (ii) To appoint dedicated born and raised youth from the North American Diocese as youth chaplains and later as working deacons and then thereafter be reselected for theological studies to prepare them to become effective clergy. The answer given was that a youth chaplains can be appointed as and when the need arises, but to appoint a working deacon cannot be put forward for consideration at this time. (iii) Regarding the total amount received for the Navathy project. How much money was received from America and how many people totally participated from America. The reply was the total amount received in rupees was 15,79,32,420.19. The total number of houses completed was 1714. The total number of applications selected was 2059. From American the total amount received in rupees was 6,18,49,376.99. The total number of people who participated was 795. The complete details can be obtained from the North American Diocesan office.

Of the 13 resolutions, two were from the North American Diocese as follows: (i) Mr. P. M. John from Trinity Mar Thoma Church in Houston submitted a resolution to introduce a senior citizens organization as a recognized and approved official organization of the church. This resolution was rejected by the Mandalam for approval. (ii) Mrs. Marykutty M. Thomas from Immanuel Mar Thoma Church in Houston submitted a resolution to have a joint secretary to the parish executive committee. When Mrs. Thomas knew that this resolution would not be accepted by the Mandalam, she withdrew her resolution.

Another resolution that was introduced in the Mandalam was to elect three more Bishops in the Church. After lengthy discussion the Mandalam unanimously asked the Council to study this resolution and bring it to the next Mandalam meeting as a Sabha Council's resolution for approval.

The second day of the Mandalam started with Holy Communion Service at the St. Thomas Church in Thiruvalla with Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas as the main celebrant. A felicitation meeting was conducted immediately after the service honoring the retiring clergies of the Church. The Mandalam also felicitated the attainment of some members of the Church to high positions in various fields of public life. The Metropolitan announced the 70th birthday wishes for Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan and the 60th birthday wishes for Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas on behalf of the Mandalam.

The third day meeting on September11, 2008, started with worship and prayer. The awards were given in recognition of respective distinguished officers in society. At

11:00 a.m., the election of the office bearers for 2008 to 2011 was conducted. Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan was the returning officer. The following persons were elected: Sabha Secretary–Rev. K. S. Mathew; Lay Trustee & Treasurer–K. Varghese; Clergy Trustee–Rev. Varghese Thomas. A 13 member Vaideeka Selection Committee also was elected.

At 5:00 p.m. when all the business was over, the minutes were read, approved, and passed. The president concluded the meeting with prayer and benediction.

Among the 95 Mandalam members of the North America and Europe diocese, our Diocesan Bishop, all three council members, and 35 other Mandalam members took part in the Mandalam meeting at Thiruvalla. I hope and pray that the next year's Mandalam meeting be enriched by our full participation and involvement. ■

For details of this report, please visit the Diocesan Website at: http://nae.marthomanae.com/home/

Mar Thoma Family Conference 2008

Cherian Philip, Secretary, Family Conference 2008

The 26th Mar Thoma Family Conference, hosted by the San Francisco Mar Thoma Church of Bay Area, a small parish of about 200 families, led by its vicar, Rev. James M. Koshy Veeramala and Conference Committee, from July 24th to July 27th, 2008, at the prestigious Marriott Hotel, in Santa Clara California, has been deemed by participants, to be one of the best in the past ten years.

Opening Procession.

This Conference was graced with the presence of Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan and Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, along with other prominent leaders including Mr. Rajkumar Ramachandran, Rev. Dr. Jacob T. David, Rev. C. K. Koshy, Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Mr. Neil Mammen, Dr. George Varghese, to name a few, who all delivered thought-inspired messages on the theme 'For Such A Time As This….' taken from the Book of Esther 4:14.

It was unique in many ways; attracting the highest attendance of delegates (more than 800) from different churches of the Diocese of North America and Europe, nearly 40 clergy and their families, highest participation and involvement of the youth in various facets, the first ever live webcast of the conference inaugurated by the Mayor of Santa Clara, Patricia M. Mahan, with over a 100 successful logins everyday, very effective online registration set-up, and many other firsts.

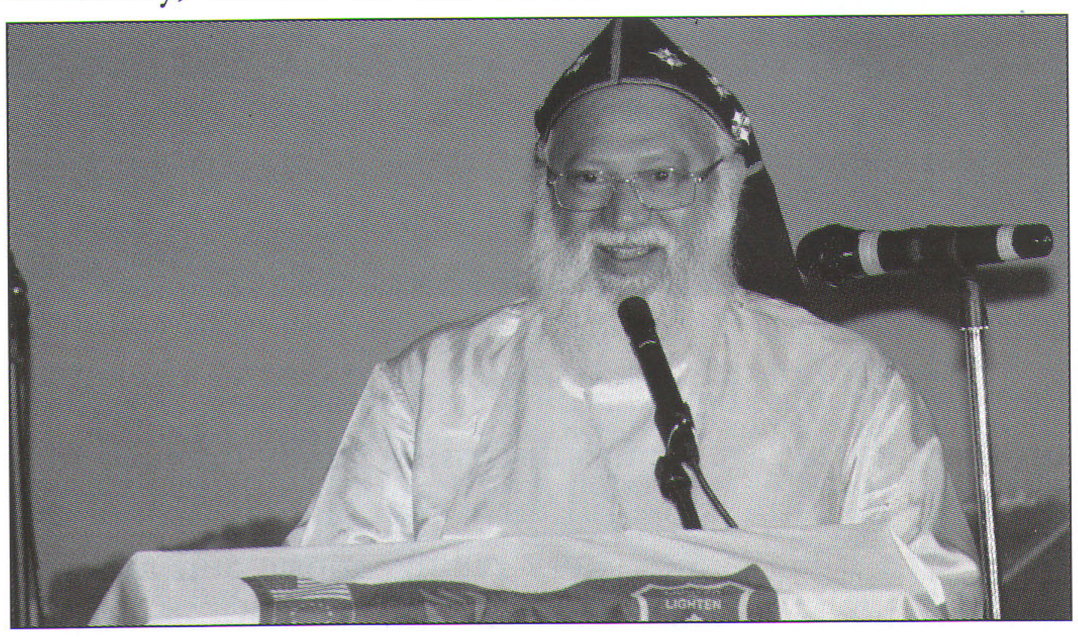
Opening Worship.

Lamp Lighting Ceremony.

The hard work, unity, dedication, commitment and leadership of over 22 committees over the past two years contributed to the success of the Conference and this has been evident in the manner in which all the four days' activities were organized.

The sightseeing tours were so popular that people came days ahead to visit prominent places such as San Francisco, Napa Valley, Monterey Bay, and other places of interest before making it to the Conference.

Inaugural day commenced with flag presentations, processions, catchy Welcome and Theme songs, lamp lighting ceremony, release of the Souvenir book as well as the



Zacharias Thirumeni addressing the conference.

Yuvajana Sakhyam song book, culminating with cultural programs by members of the San Francisco church, including Koladi, Maargam Kali, songs, dances and skits by various age groups.

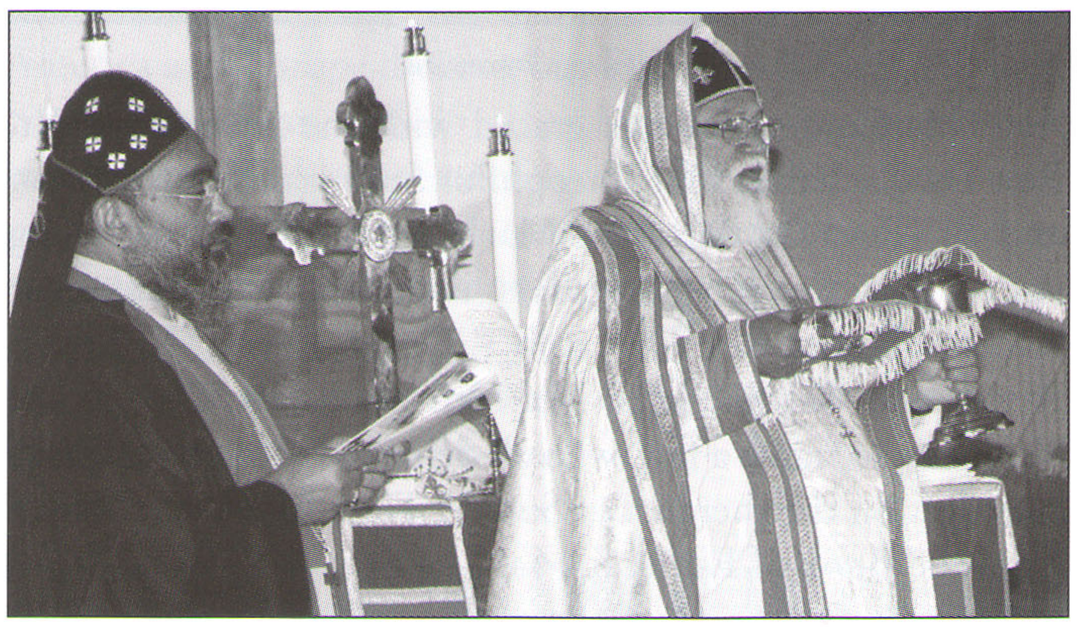
The evening also included inaugural speeches from other high-level dignitaries such as Mr. Ashok Sinha, Consul for Community affairs (Consulate General of India), Rev. Fr. Daniel Pullelil, Vicar of Gregorios Orthodox Church and Rev. Biju S. Cherian, Diocesan Secretary.

Each day began with Meditation and Intercessory Prayers, followed by youth-led Praise and Worship songs and a full-fledged 55-member choir leading the hymns and

Youths Singing.

devotional songs. Four simultaneous tracks were organized for the different age groups discussing family oriented topics. Even the little kids had their own Sunday School sessions with Bible games, story telling, music and arts and were wonderfully entertained by the famous puppeteer, Tony Border.

Scene from Talent Night.



Zacharias Thirumeni and Coorilos Thirumeni celebrating Holy Qurbana.

Evenings were organized with talent programs from the participants of various churches, fun games among the youths and adults, a witnessing and dedication program, opportunities to socialize with the dignitaries and fellow delegates and even included a symposium of parents and youths of the Conference trying to address current issues that are of concern to them.

Scene from Talent Night.

Participants having Lunch.

Since the conference was located in the Silicon Valley, the heart of technology-based companies, we as a parish asked ourselves, "What is a conference without internet and web casting?" Hence was born the idea of making the conference available live via internet broadcasting. For the first time in conference history, the main talks were streamed live to the entire world via real-time internet technology.

The selection of Spice Hut as our food vendor was a major achievement by our food committee. This along with

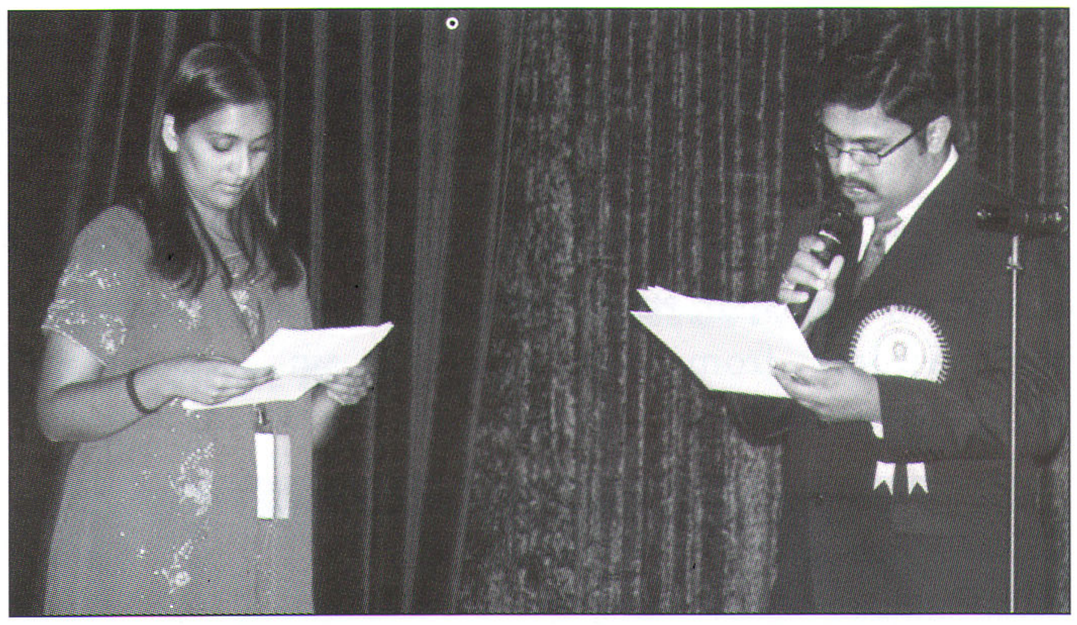
Family Conference Youth Stall.

the willingness of Marriott to work with an outside vendor was the main reason why we were able to serve a cuisine that ranged from typical Kerala meals to a fusion mix of Chinese and Indian, which everyone enjoyed. The participants had the privilege of feasting on a wide variety of international cuisines on all four days, drawing applause for the caterers' efficient and tasty service.

A view of the conference.

Group Discussion.

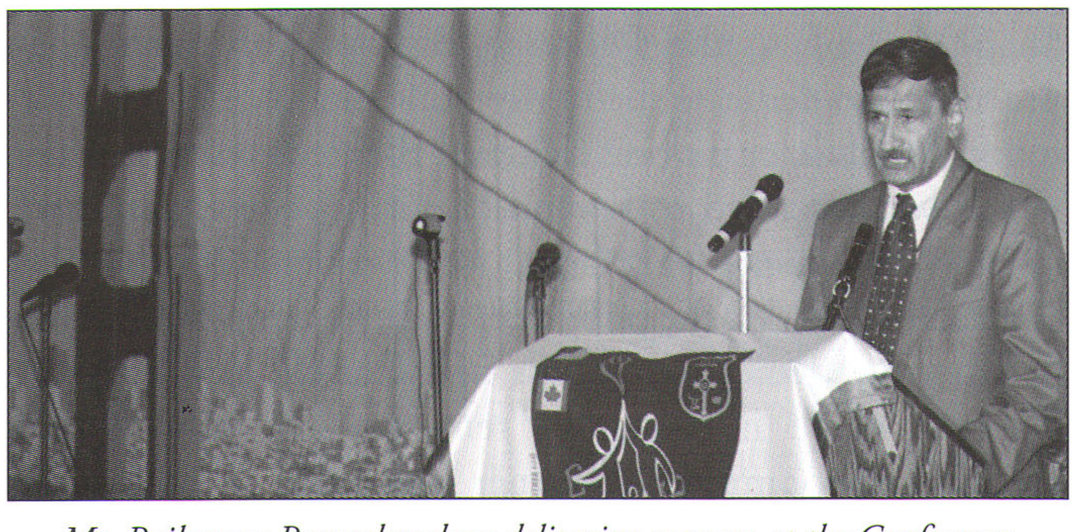
The final day culminated with a Holy Communion Service that was put together so carefully, complete with ushers, and the passing of the torch to the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston, who will host the 2009 Family Conference.



MC's of the Conference.

The prayer committee was fervently praying for the success of this conference for the last two years; "We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength." The 2008 conference proved to be a great testament to that fact.

All in all, God's grace and blessings were very evident in each and every activity of this 'Conference with a Difference'. I thank God for the opportunity he gave me to be a small part of such a big undertaking. Through it all, my prayer was that His name be glorified and I thank God that we put together such a wonderful conference that made a difference in the lives of each and every person that attended.



Mr. Rajkumar Ramachandran delivering message at the Conference.

The Road to St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Delaware Valley—Church Dedication

On May 4, 2008, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, Diocesan Bishop of North America and Europe dedicated the newly built Altar and Sanctuary for St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Delaware Valley. In addition to Thirumeni, clergies from our Diocese as well as other local churches and other dignitaries including Indian consulate representative, Township chairman, vice-chair, Pennsylvania state representative, and well wishers from sister parishes in and around Pennsylvania attended this function. Thirumeni also cele-

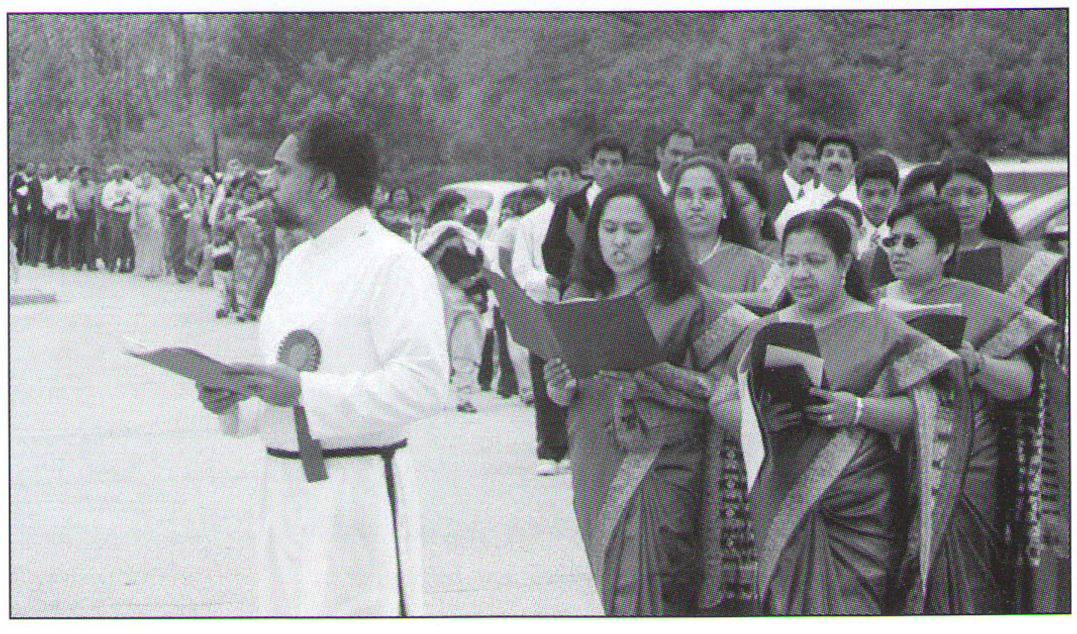
brated the Holy Communion at this newly dedicated Altar & Church on Sunday, May 5, 2008.

The dedication ceremony started with a procession of all members and well wishers and the traditional handing of keys from our Trustees—Mr. Samkutty Kunjachan and Mr. Shaji Mathew to the Diocesan Bishop. Thirumeni then proceeded to dedicate the newly built Altar & church sanctuary. A public ceremony followed the dedication services, which was attended by several hundred people, members, sister parishioners, neighbors, well wishers, construction contractors, etc. At the public ceremony a lamp was lit symbolizing the dedication of this new church. Rev. Shaji M. Thomas made introductory remarks, Mr. John Philip, Dedication committee convener welcomed invited guests to the function. Dr. Samuel K. Chacko provided an

overview of the history of formation of our church. Mr. Saji Jacob, Church Building Committee Convener outlined the Church Building project. Mr. Joseph George then facilitated the unveiling of a plaque by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, dedicating our church. Mr. Mathews T. Mathews, Souvenir Committee Convener invited Thirumeni to present a copy of the souvenir to Rev. Binu John, Vicar of New Jersey Mar Thoma Church, Randolph, inaugurating the Souvenir, which will be released in February of 2009. In the public meeting, various dignitaries and well wishers including Mr. Cherian Thomas, Indian Consulate General, New York, Township officials, Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Biju S. Cherian, and several priests & layman from surrounding parishes, including the ecumenical fellowship of Philadelphia gave felicitations to the members of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Delaware Valley. The audience was treated with the melodious songs of our choir as well as a wonderful ensemble of orchestra by the children and youth of our Church.

In August of 2008, our church also completed construction of an adjoining Parsonage, to accommodate our vicar and family. Dedication of the Parsonage was done on Aug 31, 2008, concluding all major construction activities associated with our Church.

The expeditious work and progress could not have been achieved without God's immense grace on the Church



allowing various people to contribute in many ways in the formation and completion of this project. Most of all the Church Building Committee took an active roll in working towards this project. 16 Members of this committee can be seen in the photograph below. The Church Executive

First Communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni and Achens.

Committee and Church General Body provided timely reviews and approvals of proposal streamlining this project.

Please visit our website at: **www.stthomasmarthomachurch.org** for information and photos pertaining to our Church and related activities. ■

Saji Jacob, Church Building Committee Convener

Book Review: IN THE BEGINNING

Rev. Mathew Jackson, NY

Formative Years of Mar Thoma Parishes in North America

Editors: **Dr. T. M Thomas & Mr. Abraham Mattackal**

Publisher: Christava Sahithya Samithi. Thiruvalla (Price: Rs. 150 - U.S $10)

Releasing the Book at the 2008 Mar Thoma Family Conference in San Francisco.

"History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings tidings of antiquity" (Cicero). The early history of Mar Thoma church in North America was partially vague for the second generation and newly-landed immigrants. For this reason, nineteen authors have strived to present information with the hope that this book will fill-in the gaps in their knowledge.

Documenting the milestones and major events chronologically and systematically is not an easy task. Dr. T. M. Thomas and Mr. Abraham Mattackal, two of the early, loyal and sincere Marthomites who landed in this country, deserve special appreciation and recognition for their diligence in publishing this book. They have reckoned that history of the Mar Thoma Church within the western hemisphere ought to judge the past and to instruct the contemporary world as to the future. The book paints an elegant picture of how this diocese really took shape.

Unlike other Episcopal churches, the initiative to form a Mar Thoma Congregation came from its members and not from the episcopate; this shows their thirst for God and the importance of worship in their lives. It is also remarkable to note that early settlers formed the church even when the situation was unfavorable for them. To quote, "… The Mar Thoma Church Leadership, still not convinced of having a Malayalam congregation in America neither approved nor rejected this move and played a silent role. Part One of the book covers The Comprehensive View of the beginning of the early settlers and their hardships in the foreign land. This section also covers the growth of Mar Thoma church, its origin from the ground level to the level of a full-fledged Diocese comprising a Bishop, fifty-two priests and eighty churches which include some congregations. It is written by one of the authors who really witnessed all these developments throughout these years. Part Two includes articles from various authors which shed more light on the early history of the Mar Thoma Church in North America.

In the words of Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Thirumeni "… neither cultural affinity nor racial diversity provides sufficient reasons to generate unity and mission. But it is love for Christ, commitment to the cause of Gospel and accepting one another as brothers and sisters, which will bring unity in the churches." All through these years our God has been with us, and He lifted us from the basement to the level of a city built on a hill. ■

Native American Mission

Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, Convener

The Native American Mission was successful in conducting several projects this year. Many of the youth as well as adults from parishes across the country actively participated in the mission. It was truly a life changing experience for many of the volunteers.

Activities included conducting Vacation Bible Schools, mentoring young adults, in Alabama and Oklahoma, providing leadership for a Native American camp for youths, and organizing Youth rally in Oklahoma, arranging visits by the Native Americans to our parishes and renovating houses of the Native Americans in New Orleans.

This summer, at the invitation of our Diocesan Bishop, a team of young adults from the Oklahoma and Dallas Mar Thoma Churches as well as the Native American leaders from Oklahoma, met in Dallas with the Metropolitan. This provided an opportunity to give an update on the work carried out so far.

The Native Indians in Alabama, as a token of their affection, presented us with a Plaque expressing their affection for our dedication and spiritual contributions. The plaque, presented to the Diocesan Bishop at the Family conference in San Francisco, is displayed at the Diocesan Center.

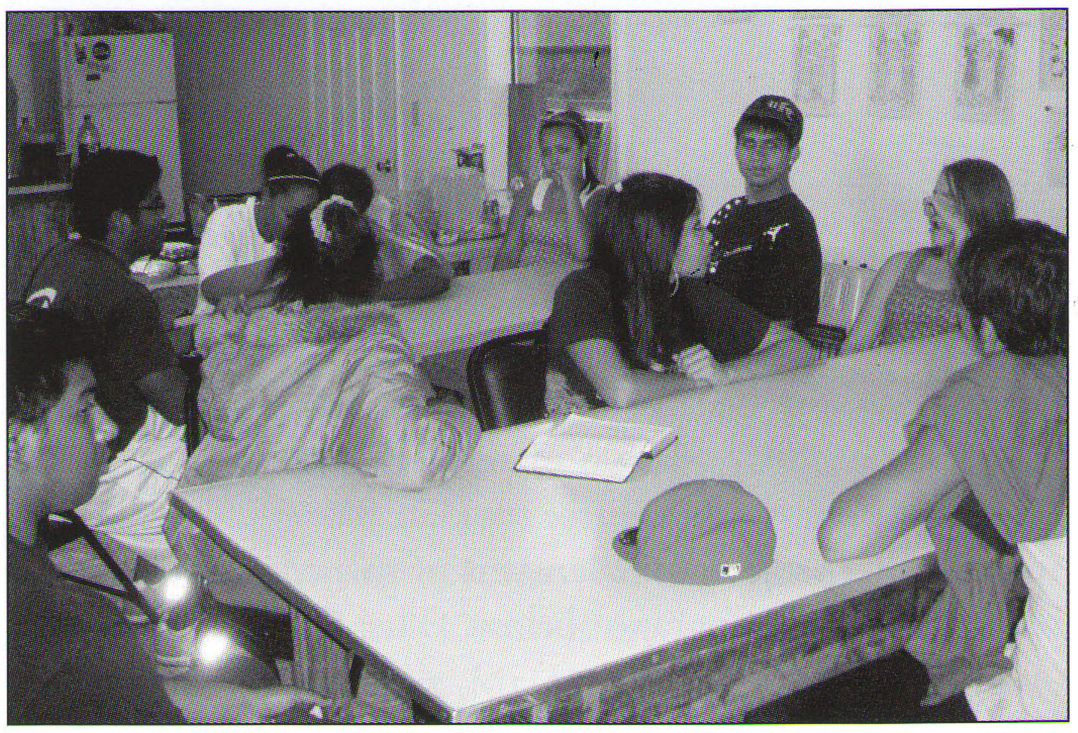
During this Fall, we are planning to take a team to renovate houses in Houma, near New Orleans From November 6th to Nov. 11th. Any one interested in participating, please call at 302-239-7119 or e-mail at ocnirmala@aol.com.

The following articles written by Princy Kuriakose, Atlanta Mar Thoma Church about Alabama VBS and Mrs. Jaisen Thomas (Sherin Kochamma of Dallas) reflect the experiences of the participants during summer of 2008:

LOVE SHINES IN NATIVE INDIANS EYES

Princy Kuriakose, Atlanta Mar Thoma Church

Rain poured outside, hustling us volunteers and our energetic kids inside the sanctuary. Though we were all drenched from our parade outside, the vibration and the light couldn't have been erased from our eyes. Inside we huddled together in the dark gym, a single row of candles illuminating our excited faces. The mood was solemn and serene. Then, the sound of drums began. Mysterious tunes and music filled the air. Children dressed in their native clothes gracefully appeared, their feet moving methodically to the beat of the drum. There was pride in their faces as they swirled and danced around the dim light. For a moment all of us watched them, enchanted and captured by the bright colors and their rhythmic movements. As we watched them dance, it was almost as if we were transported back into the



age of their ancestors. 'Pow-wow', a gathering where the Native Americans sing, dance and honor their culture truly transcends time. The history of the Native Americans goes way before the conquest of these lands. They were the ones who first tread the vast and unexplored lands of the Americas. Yet, sadly today they are treated just like foreigners in their own homeland. In many ways the Choctaw Native American tribe in Alabama have a lot common with us. Just like us, they preserve a very unique culture in the melting pot of America. I believe that God has a great purpose in bringing our communities together in this land.

Every year more and more youths of our church are volunteering for the Native American mission work. This year, thirty-two youths from Atlanta, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. participated in this mission trip with the leadership of O.C. uncle, Nirmala aunty and Suresh uncle. The theme of this year's VBS was **"Beach Party: Surfin' through the Scriptures".** The topics of the lesson included: **"Be Obedient, Be Forgiven, Be Bold and Believe".** We had games, crafts, science experiments, and bible adventure sections to reinforce each day's theme. Though it was often challenging to explain certain aspects of a Bible story, the children of Alabama made it very easy for us. They are the most ideal students for a teacher. Their love for learning and enthusiasm for understanding never wanes. If you are picturing the type of VBS we conduct here, don't expect quiet kids sitting in a chair. The children here can't contain their excitement of being in VBS. They are jumping, dancing, hugging, singing, and laughing all at once. Their behavior is so contagious that for a week we become like little kids. For all of us, a week is just not enough time to spend with these kids.

After working with the kids of Alabama, I realized that we are just 'ordinary' people working among the 'extraordinary'. The reason why each one of us feel compelled to go

back every year is not because of the great work we do there but because of the love that shines in their eyes. All the residents of their community lead a very simple life. Most of them reside in trailer parks. Their community also faces challenges like drug abuse, divorce to name a few. Yet, no circumstance in their life can erase the joy that I witness in their eyes every year. This group of people truly practices the art of giving. This year, due to the large number of volunteers, we didn't have enough rooms in the motel for everyone. However, one of the residents of the community just gave us her house and lived with her relatives for the week. There is no hesitation or question in giving. They don't try to hide the blessings in their lives. They live each moment of their life giving thanks for the good things God has given them. Their whole community is like a big family. They offer help without asking, hug us without a reason, and share everything without any restriction. For most of us, going to Alabama is like going back to visit our family. They have embraced each one of us to the point that we feel like we are one of them. This year as a symbol of their love for us, the Aldersgate United Methodist Church congregation presented a plaque to the Mar Thoma Church. It was with exuberant joy that they narrated their gratefulness to the Mar Thoma Church. It was truly a symbol of their heart-felt thanksgiving. All of us were moved by this token of affection.

Every year when we go back home from Alabama, we leave a piece of our heart behind. No matter how hard we try to hold back ourselves, there is always one shy little girl or one mischievous little boy that grabs our heart. Yet, the truly amazing part about Alabama mission trip is that God never fails to give each one of us a unique experience. As each one of us goes back home from Alabama for the first or fifth time, there is a new story or new experience waiting to be told. Yet, our work doesn't end here. Every year God is showing us new things that He wants us to do in this community. Our mission is not just to teach them about Jesus, but show them a new way of living in Christ. This year in addition to teaching the children, we have also taken efforts to teach the community the benefits of education, as college dropout rates are high in this community. Our dream is that one day the children of Mt. Vernon church would rise up and become leaders of Christ. We are waiting for the day when the older kids of this church would lead this VBS. God has given us the task to show these kids His love and His purpose for their lives. I am rejoicing in the fact that God is using the Mar Thoma Church as an instrument for the glory of His kingdom.

FOLSOM CAMP, BROKEN BOW, OKLAHOMA

Mrs. Jaisen Thomas (Sherin Kochamma), Dallas

This Summer, as part of our continuing ministry among the Native Americans, Mar Thoma Church volunteers provided leadership in a week long residential camp for the

children of the Choctaw tribe in Oklahoma. It was an engaging and blessed experience especially for me since it was my first time. Approximately thirty-five children from all over Oklahoma gathered together for a few days to interact and learn about the love of God. The camp was held from June 2 to 6, 2008 at camp Folsom a beautiful place few miles away from Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

Rev. Mathew Skariah, Youth Chaplain (Southeast Center A) and Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas, Youth Chaplain (Southwest Center A) lead the main talks. They were assisted by O. C. Abraham uncle and Abraham Mathews uncle along with a group of youth from the Dallas and Philadelphia churches who added the flair to the entire program. We had all bunked up in a cabin set right in the middle of nowhere, the highlights of which was when we'd all gather together for a midnight snack and not to mention the early morning alarm clock which was basically Mathews uncle with his megaphone imitating a crow!

For Bible study we used the theme of the VBS material called **"Beach Party 2008"** based on the gospel according to St. Matthew 5:1-11. These lessons of **"Beach Be-Attitudes"** focused on the sub-themes of Be Obedient, Be Kind, Be Forgiving, Be Bold and Believe. Utilizing stories and parables from the Bible, crafts, games and video presentations, the lessons became alive and strengthened the children in their faith understanding. The children shared their experiences and expressed their doubts and fears. Their eagerness to learn more about the Bible, their inquisitiveness, their openness and love reflected the sheer simplicity of their lives and touched my heart in ways too difficult to express in words. It was also a time for cultural exchange as we were able to provide them with a taste of our very own Indian cuisine including O.C. uncle's chicken curry and they in turn gave us a whiff of their culture in the form of art and music and of course food!

On the whole, it was a delightful experience but the fact remains that we have much work to do in helping this group of people to strengthen their foundation in Christ. May God continue to bless this great ministry so many more children may experience the saving grace of our Lord Almighty!

XXIX National Mar Thoma—Youth Conference 2008

By God's Grace, the XXIX National Mar Thoma Youth Conference took place in Detroit during the first weekend of August. Beginning on July 31st, delegates were blessed by the hard work of the hosting youth family of Detroit's Mar Thoma Church under the leadership of Rev. Shaji K. Thomas.

The theme of the conference this year was **"Finding Your Identity in Union with Christ"** based on the Apostle Paul's description of the Christian identity to the church in Galatia: ***"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*** Here the apostle is putting it plainly that his life is now resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This National Youth Conference was also our Coorilos Thirumeni's last as diocesan bishop. Thirumeni's continued vision in the planning and execution of such conferences will be truly missed as God prepares him for his new post in India. Our Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Biju S. Cherian was able to bless the conference with his presence as well; achen formerly attended youth conferences as a youth chaplain and this would be his last as well.

Alongside five of our youth chaplains, the delegates were privileged to have the guidance of Rev. Saji George & Dr. Gordon Isaac. Our veteran youth chaplains included Rev. Mathew Skariah of the Southeast Center A & Rev. Skariah John of the Southwest Center B; while our first time attendees included Rev. Varghese Mathew of the Chicago region, Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas of the Southwest Center A, and Rev. Biju P. Simon of the Northeast Center A. Each Chaplain assisted in one of the track sessions geared toward helping the delegates grow in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

Wayne State University provided lodging for all the delegates and was an ideal location to assist the hosting parish with all their needs.

This year, less than 90 youth members registered for the conference. Though it was unfortunate that not many more could take advantage of its inherent blessings, the benefit was that the conference had the ambience of the Leadership conference providing for a more personal repoire between the leaders and delegates.

Please continue to uphold the work of the Holy Spirit among our youth as God's Kingdom becomes realized in this generation and the generations to come.

Adarsh Abraham, Diocesan Youth Fellowship Secretary

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH NEW JERSEY

Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey Sunday School Students pictured at the 2008 VBS. **Jesus is our Friend for Life** was this year's theme.

THE CANADIAN MAR THOMA CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL, TORONTO, CANADA

Arin Elizabeth Abraham, Maneesha Thomas & Talia Jacob from Grade 5 of the Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto secured 96% marks in the Diocesan exam held on May 11, 2008.

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

YUVAJANA SAKHYAM NATIONAL CONFERENCE–2008

The tenth Yuvajana Sakhyam National Conference, which was hosted by the Yuvajana Sakhyam of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch, from August 22nd through 24th, 2008 became a blessed experience for the 250 delegates who represented the different Mar Thoma parishes of the USA and Canada. Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, our Diocesan Bishop, Rev. Biju S. Cherian, the Diocesan Secretary, and Prof. David Abraham, formerly of the Christian College Chengannur, Kerala were the leaders of the conference. The theme of the conference was 'Dare to be different' based on Daniel 3:16-18. Prof. David Abraham led the main talk which was followed by group discussions and intercessory prayers.

The three day conference had been inaugurated earlier by Coorilos Thirumeni who, in his address, wanted the Sakhyam members to dare to be different in the faith journey of the Church. The conference was colorful with Kalamela, the welcome dance, the theme song, the symposium on a Healthy Heart, the conference choir, and the talent show. Rev. Vinoy Daniel welcomed the guests and the delegates. Mr. Biju Chacko gave the vote of thanks. The Holy Qurbana on the 24th was celebrated by Coorilos Thirumeni. The blessed conference came to a grand finale with the concluding remarks, prayer, and benediction by Thirumeni..

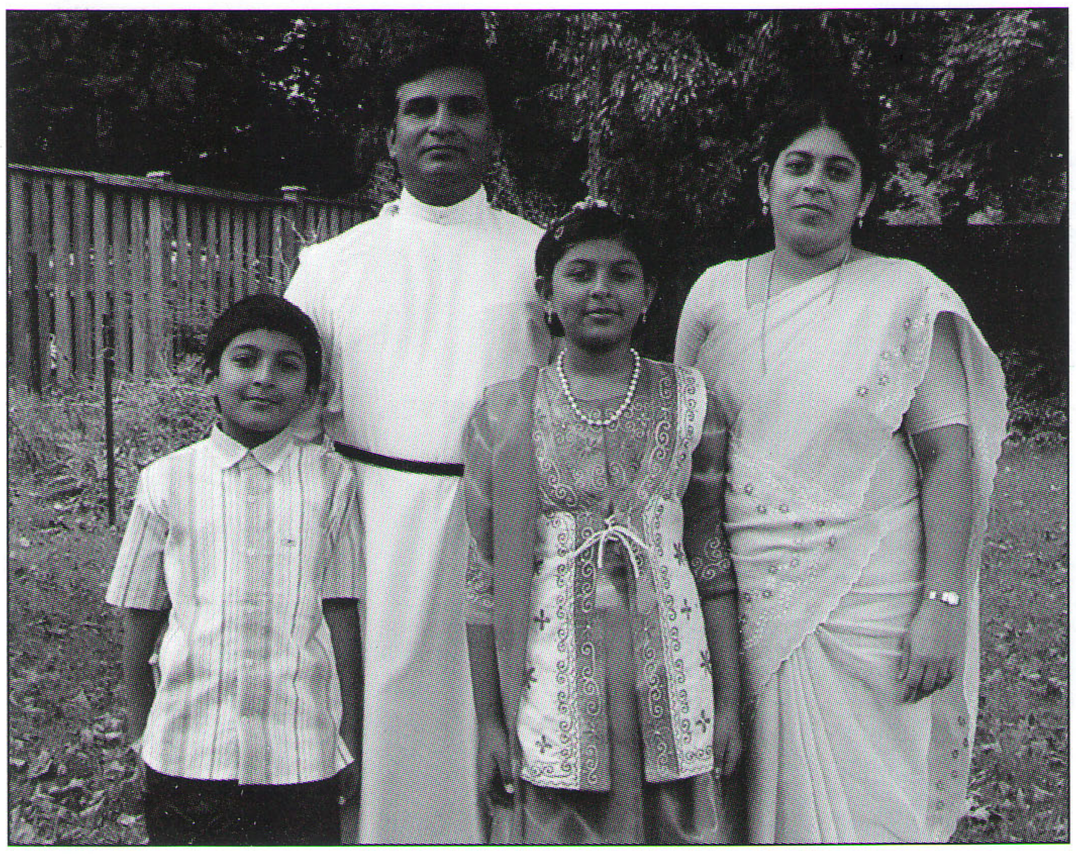
Zachariah Mathew (Sunu), Secretary
Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, FB Yuvajana Sakhyam

SONY JOSEPH
(Epiphany Marthoma Church New York). *First prize winner in male solo for THREE consecutive years of Marthoma Yuvajanasakhyam National kalamela.*

Immanuel MTC Houston won first place in Group Song at the National Yuvajana Sakhyam Conference Kalamela.

OUR NEW ACHENS

REV. A. ABRAHAM: Canadian MTC, Toronto, Canada



Native place: Kottanad (Ayroor), Pathanamthitta District.

Mother-parish: Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Kottanad.

Education: Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, M.P.

B.D degree: Serampur University in 1995.

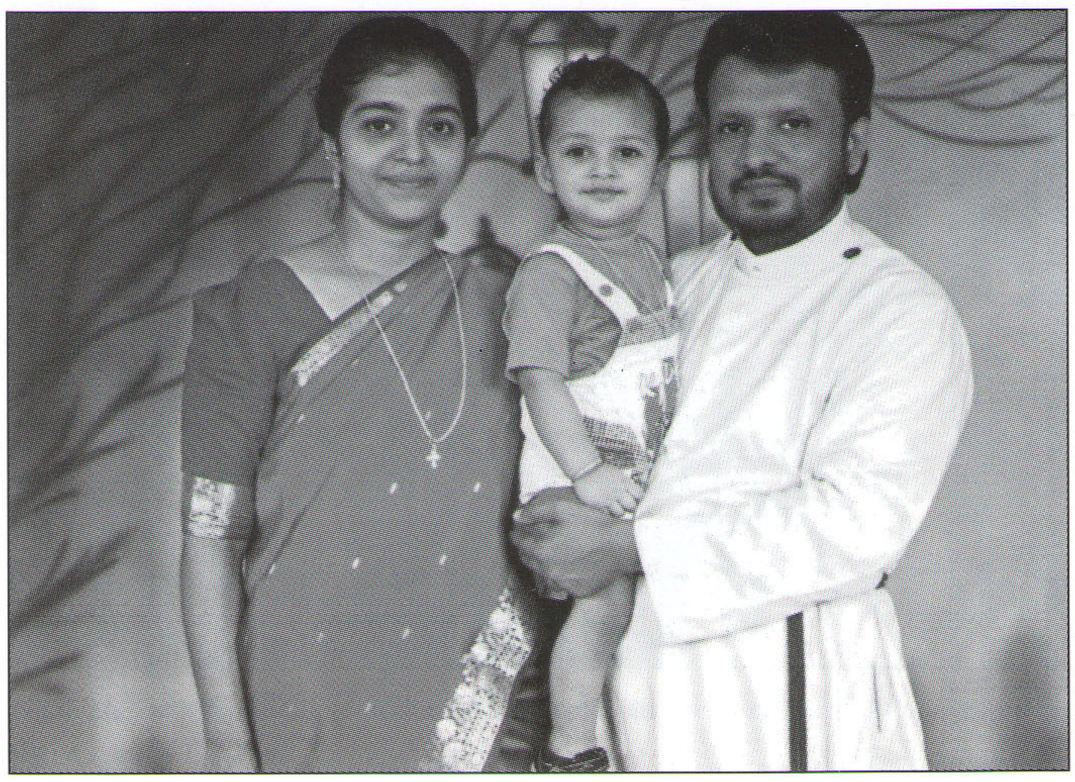
Services: Manipal-Karkala Mission, South Canara as Student Chaplain. (Achen and Kochamma worked as a team in educational institutions introducing the Gospel to students and to those who were seeking the Truth).

Parishes: St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Kanara-Peechi; Salem Mar Thoma Church, Thanipadam; Hermon Mar Thoma Church, Vadakkencherri; Zion Mar Thoma Church, Pathanapuram; St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, Pathanapuram; Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, Dombivili; St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Kothamangalam; Aayakkad Mar Thoma Church, Vengoor Mar Thoma Church.

Kochamma: Mariam Abraham, Narakathani.

Children: Sneha Grace Abraham (5th grade) and Shalom Aby Abraham (2nd grade).

REV. SANTHOSH THOMAS: Long Island MTC



Mother Parish: Bethel MTC, Nellimala

Education: BSc., BD

Date of Ordination: July 19, 2005 as Deacon; August 12, 2005 as Kasessa.

Parishes served: Chagalamarri Mission (AP); Devanahalli Mission (Karnataka); Mar Thoma Guidance Home (Vellore, TN); St. Thomas MTC (Vellore).

Special: Director of the Compassion International Students Centers in Devanahalli, Director Mar Thoma Guidance Home (Vellore).

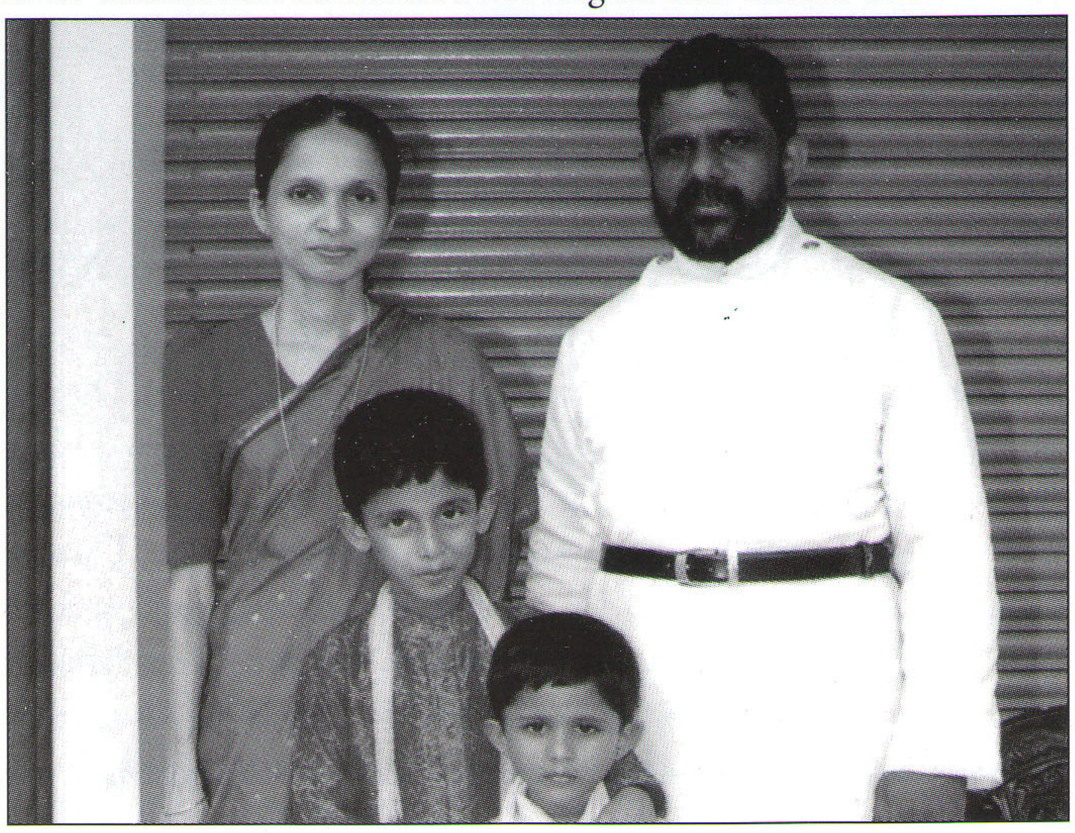
Wife: Elamma P. Thomas (Sobha)

Child: Arpith Santhosh Thomas (2 yrs).

Contact: Telephone: (516) 208-3523

Cell: (516) 589-1606 Email: arpithsanthosh@yahoo.com

REV. VARGHESE A. NINAN: Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church



Mother Parish: St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Thiruvananthapuram

Ordination: Deacon: November 24, 1995; Priest: December 11, 1995

Education: BA (Psychology); BD (UTC Bangalore)

Parishes Served: Karuvatta MTC; Allahabad MTC; Varanasi MTC & Mission Field; Kalluvathukkal MTC; Marakulam MTC; Kaithacodu MTC; Karippuram MTC.

Wife: Suja Susan Varghese

Son: Sanidh Idicula Varghese (6 yrs.)

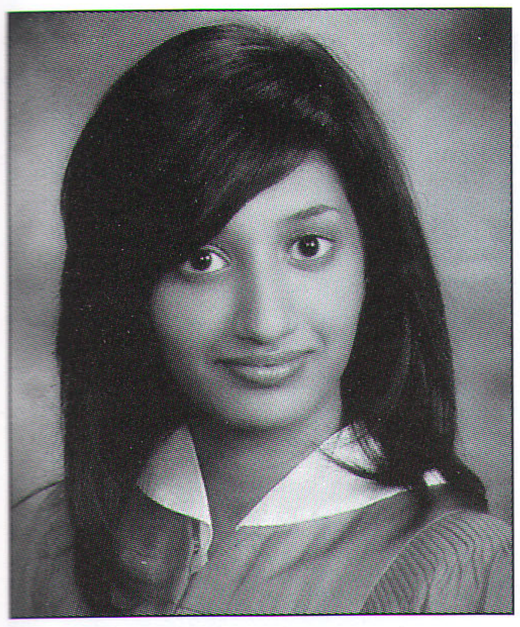
Daughter: Arpitha Miriam Varghese (4 yrs.)

"God's Timing is Always Right—Wait Patiently for Him."

Valedictorian Speech

Jocelin Chacko, Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma

Putnam City High School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Good evening, my name is Jocelin Chacko and I am one of the fourteen valedictorians. When I finally got off of Facebook and started writing this speech, I could not think of a single topic to talk about. What exactly do you say to a class that's as good as ours? Whether it was in academics or athletics, we rose in the ranks so effortlessly compared to our rivals. And it does feel good to be ranked Number One.

Looking back, I realize why these challenges were so easy for us. Everything we did had instructions or a guide to follow. There were rules, books, and people around us who told us what time to arrive, what to do, how to do it, and gave us the materials we needed to succeed at our tasks.

Do you remember those coloring pads with the black and white sketches that we would color back in elementary school? That's what I think of high school. It was a task where everything was laid out and outlined for us and all we had to do was color inside the boundaries and finish. And the box of crayons we have been using is the collection of lessons, experiences, and friends.

It's a sad thought but after tonight or after next week if you didn't save up your absences, we will be done and that picture that has been part of our lives for the last 12 years will be complete. After tonight, high school will be that page we took 4 years to color in. This picture, rather than going on the frig, will be in a frame.

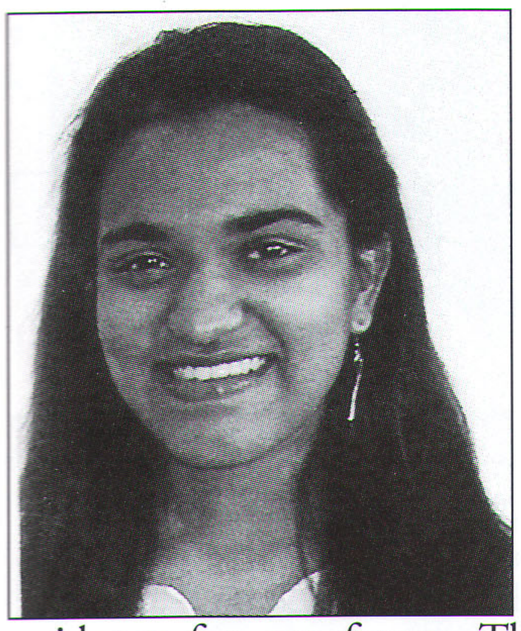
We don't have to color inside the lines anymore. Now, let us being sketching out our lives and coloring our original pictures as we wish.

I'm not worried about the future of our class. Because, what other class is as good as ours? Thank you graduates for letting me color with you. God Bless. ■

Valedictorian Speech

Princy Susan Kuriakose, Atlanta Mar Thoma Church

Central Gwinnett High School, Lawrenceville, Georgia



This is our day, Class of 2008. This is the day we look back and glimpse the memories we have made at Central. This is the moment when we change the entire direction of the rest of our lives. And it's here at this moment that we ask ourselves: What is next? What does our future hold? 1 tried looking at great leaders of our history for inspiration and guidance for our future. Though all of them are equally inspirational, today I want to point out the ones we take for granted in our lives. If you glance around, heroes and our sources of inspiration surround us. They are sitting on the bleachers cheering us. Yes, they are our wonderful parents and family. No matter how embarrassingly they shout out our names, they were the ones who first held our hands as we nervously stared at the new place called "Preschool". Our inspirations are our teachers who encouraged us to strive and achieve our best. Inspirations are our friends who stuck by us during our difficult times and those friends who would be leaving to join the military to defend our country. Our greatest inspiration of all is Dr. Clark, who reminded us each day of being in the "best school in America" and motivated us to do our best in our daily lives. Friends, these people are our greatest motivators and encouragers as we begin the journey of our lives and chase after our dreams.

Fellow graduates, as we leave this school, many of us have the privilege of being able to live relatively comfortable lives when compared to the majority of the world's population. However, whether or not we lead comfortable lives, we will face challenges and adversities. Despite any setbacks, let us never forget to dream. Let us never set the limit on how much we can achieve. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." I believe that dreams have strength and power. Our vision of life can lead us to the greatest heights

My favorite quotation is by Marianne Williamson, who challenges each one of us to discover the great power within us. She says,

> *"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.*
> *Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.*
> *It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us.*
> *We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,*
> *talented and fabulous?*
> *Actually, who are you not to be?"*

Friends, I believe that each one of us has a unique gift in us. Perhaps, some of us weren't great at math, language arts or science. Even now some of us are struggling to choose our path. But remember that we are not "inadequate" or "incapable" unless we choose to be. Among us are seated our future poets, doctors, teachers, scientists. Whatever path we choose in life, let us not be afraid to let our light shine. Let us not live our life to make an impression on others. But let us live our life to leave a lasting legacy in this world.

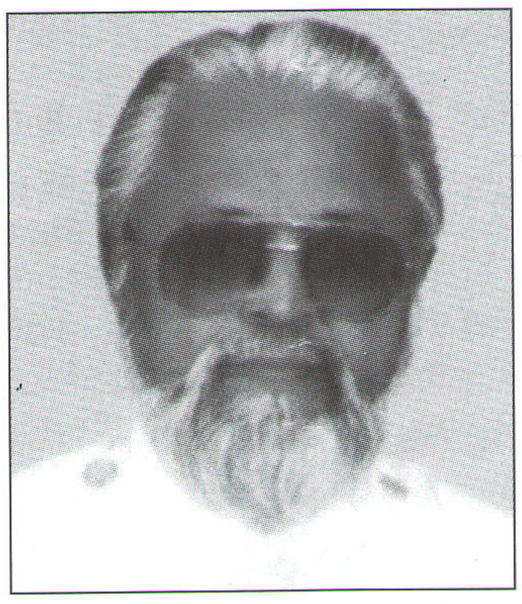
Congratulations Class of 2008!!! We flew through those four years of high school, knocked down those gateway and graduation tests and here we are on May 21st, 2008, (hopefully) 10 minutes away from receiving our diplomas. I hope that wherever life takes us, whether here in Atlanta, Georgia or the farthest corner of the world, that we will be the source of peace among the chaos, justice among the corruptions and hope amidst the hopelessness.

DETROIT MAR THOMA CHURCH, MICHIGAN—FIRST COMMUNICANTS

First Communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni, Shaji Achen and M. P. Yohannan Achen.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY ELECTED SABHA SECRETARY AND TRUSTEES

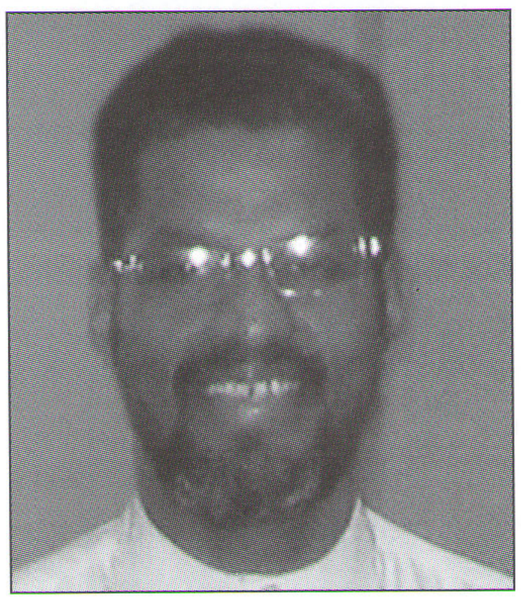
Rev. K. S. Mathew
Sabha Secretary



Rev. Varghese Thomas
Clergy Trustee

Mr. K. Varghese
Lay Trustee & Treasurer

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW SABHA COUNCIL MEMBERS FROM THIS DIOCESE



Rev. T. S. Philip
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX

Mrs. Kusumam Titus
MTC of Greater Seattle, WA

Dr. John P. Lincoln
Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock, TX

IMMANUEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON, TEXAS

TRIP TO ARKANSAS: Houston Immanuel MTC Edavaka Mission and Sevika Sanghom has jointly arranged a fun-filled 3-day trip to Eureka Springs, Arkansas to see the Great Passion Play and other attractions from July 31 to August 02, 2008.

The group was led by Vicar Rev. T. S. Philip, accompanied by secretaries and Edavaka Mission treasurer. The group was received and directed by Mrs. Terry Elder of the Great Passion Play. Terry guided the group to observe the seven-story-high "Christ of the Ozark–Statue", the Church in the Grove, and a section of the Berlin Wall. Then the group proceeded with The New Holy Land tour, visiting the Biblical sites and characters. Our visits also included Old Testament Tabernacle, Bethlehem Inn, and over thirty Old and New Testament sites. After a sumptuous lunch, we enjoyed the tour of the Thorncrown Chapel, museum of Earth History, Bible Museum and the Sacred Art Center. One of the favorite items of the day was 'The Parables of the Potter.' The potter taught inspirational parables from the scriptures and our lives as he molds his clay into form. Finally we reached the 4100 seat outdoor amphitheater to watch The Great Passion Play. Hundreds of actors and live animals brought to life the greatest story ever told: Christ's last day on earth, death and resurrection. Everyone enjoyed the tours and the play and our trip to Arkansas turned out to be a great blessing.

Thomas Varghese, Edavaka Mission Secretary

27th MAR THOMA FAMILY CONFERENCE REGISTRATION KICKS OFF

FAMILY CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS WITH THE DIOCESAN BISHOP DURING SEPARATE REGISTRATION KICK-OFF EVENTS

The 27th Mar Thoma Family Conference of North America and Europe, hosted by the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church of Houston, will be held from July 2-5, 2009 at the West Chase Marriott hotel in Houston. The theme of the conference is **"From the Cross, Through the Church, To the World".** Main leaders of the conference are Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Poulose Episcopa, Rev. Abraham Scaria P., and Rev. Biju Simon. Just some of the features of the conference are in-depth Bible studies, inspiring talks, group discussions, health seminars, and talent night programs. We are also planning some great outdoor activities and enjoyable sight seeing tours. Please keep the conference in your prayers and register early. For more information, please contact president Rev. T. S. Philip (281) 561-9147 or Secretary P. M. Jacob (832) 567-0745.

P. M. Jacob, Secretary

IMMIGRATION

Justice is being served,

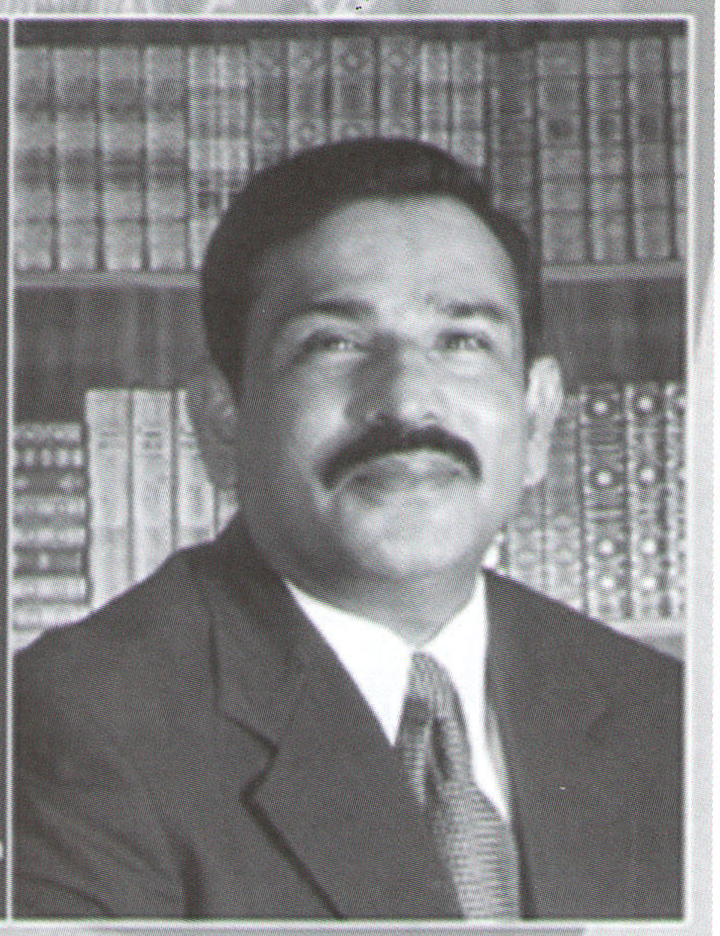
to the Asian Community

Lal Varghese

Attorney at Law

Immigration,
H1-B,
Fiance Visa,
work Permit,
Green Cards,
Student Visas,
Visitor Visas,
K-1, K-3,
V Visas, Etc.

Not Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization



(972) 788 - 0777 (Main), (972) 788-1555 (Direct)
Fax (972) 556-1109, E-Mail: attylal@aol.com
www.indiaimmigrationusa.com

Law Offices of Lal Varghese, PLLC
1111 Kinwest Parkway, Suite 120,
Las Colinas, Irving, Texas 75063-3409

SHILPI STUDIOS.COM

MATRIMONIAL

Marthomite parents settled in Canada, invite proposals for their daughter, 27 years old, 5'1" tall, born and raised in Canada, Chartered Accountant, working as a finance professional;from family oriented, christian professionals with good family background. If interested please e-mail us at: ammachy1@yahoo.ca

---

Marthomite Parents invite marriage proposal for their son 28 years old, 6 feet tall,God fearing,family oriented,born,brought up and educated in US,has Masters Degree and persuing Ph.D.He is now working as an Aadministrator.We are looking for a girl with any good profession,good attitude and Christian family values.Please respond with a recent photograph and details. Email address....philabr123@yahoo.com

---

Parents settled in Kuwait invite proposals for their only daughter, 26 years (5' 7"), born and brought up in Kuwait, attended higher education in Bangalore (MBA), very attractive, well mannered & God fearing, currently working in Koimbatore as Associate Business Manger for one of the Major Banks in India. Expected grooms to be of high moral and Christian values 27 to 29 years, with professional education, employed in the US. Interested parties, please contact eapen4@hotmail.com or eapen4@yahoo.com.

New York domiciled Marthomite parents from Pathanamthitta District invite marriage proposals for their 27-year old, 5' 4" (163 cms), fair complexioned, God fearing, family oriented US citizen daughter with a Medical degree from Europe. She is qualified to pursue her Internal Medicine 2009 Residency Program in the USA. Seeking a professionally qualified Marthomite/CSI/Jacobite boy, age 27-31 with compatible qualities, interests and background preferred. Those interested please contact with details and recent photograph to Email ID: tharakanmathews@msn.com

---

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposals for their daughter 29 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

---

Marthomite parents invite proposal for their son 29 years 5'10" tall Medical doctor doing residency from parents of Godfearing professionally qualified girls with good family background. Please respond with recent photograph and biodata to: revijose@gmail.com

---

Marthomite family seeking devout Christian for their 29 year old, US born-and-raised daughter. She is a young woman of deep faith and humility, and has been active in serving our church and youth. Ivy League educated, with experience in academic publishing, she is currently pursuing a Doctorate while also teaching university English. Christ loving and strong family values a must, to match daughter with strong love for both God and family. If interested, please respond to agape36@hotmail.com

---

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposal for US trained physician (MD) daughter doing residency in Diagnostic Radiology. She is of age 25 with outstanding personal qualities and exemplary character. Seeking compatible match from professionally qualified, God-fearing, good-natured and family-oriented boys of age 25-30. If interested please contact us with details and recent picture to: mvmatri@gmail.com

---

Marthomaite parents invite marriage proposal for their daughter 28 years old, 5'3", God fearing, family oriented, born and brought up in U.S with degree in Civil Engineering and Law, currently working as Attorney at law in NYC. We are looking for a God fearing and family oriented Marthomite boy (29-31) residing in USA. Please contact with details and recent photograph at gpt121@gmail.com.

Parents are seeking proposals for their 27 year old, US born and raised Christian daughter. She has completed medical school training in the US- obtaining her MD, and presently in the final year of her residency training. She is 5'4, slim, attractive, fair complexion and very sociable. Seeking proposals from US settled Christian physicians (ages: 27 to 30). Interested parties may contact us via email (kismet1125@gmail.com) with recent photograph and details.

Marthomite parents invite marriage proposals for their son 26 years old, 5'8", currently doing residency in Anesthesia. We are looking for medical professionals 25 years and below. Please respond with recent photograph and bio-data to: proposalrequest@yahoo.com

REGIONAL FAMILY RETREAT 2008—TORONTO, CANADA

Regional Family Retreat 2008

The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto hosted the Regional Family Retreat at the Salvation Army Jackson's Point Conference Centre, Simcoe, from September 12–14, 2008, which was attended by members from Canadian Mar Thoma Church Toronto, St. Mathews Mar Thoma Church Toronto and Montreal Mar Thoma Church. The theme was "Christian Stewardship" based on St. Matthew 25:21. We were blessed to have the Rev. Jobi Varghese, New York as our main speaker. The Rev. Alex P. John and the Rev. A. Abraham were the other leaders. The retreat was a blessing for everyone who attended.

Cherian Samuel, Convenor

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF OKLAHOMA

FOOD, FRIENDS, AND FUN: This past summer has been a blessed time of fellowship between our church and our extended family with the Choctaw Cumberland Presbyterian Church. We continue to grow in our relationships with each other and see in many occasions how are journeys cross paths. Below is a short recap of our experiences over this past summer.

On June 29th, the Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma hosted a Community Carnival that was open to our church members, those from the Choctaw Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and our surrounding neighbors. The carnival consisted of carnival type games, worship, prizes, and inflatable rides. We also had several information booths that discussed a variety of topics, from church history, to the Indian culture, to our current church activities. The event proved to be a very trying and massive effort, but it was well worth it. While our neighbors and Choctaw friends had a chance to learn about us, we were very blessed to also have the experience to learn about them. About fifteen people from the Choctaw church and another forty from our local neighborhood came to join us for the carnival. It was an excellent time to get to know each other better and we have already begun to form good relationships with some of our neighbors. Many of our church members (both youths and adults) came out and fully participated and helped with this event.

From July 18-20, six youth volunteers from our church went to Centrahoma, Oklahoma to conduct a two day bible school at the Round Lake Church. We used the biblical theme and resources of the Vacation Bible School recommended by the Mar Thoma Diocese. Specifically, we focused on three particular biblical parables: the Good Samaritan, Four Friends who carried a Leper, and Zacchaeus. We had time for bible lessons, crafts, and of course recreation. Through the various activities, we endeavored to show the amazing love of Christ and those that follow Him and how it is open to everyone in need. We ended the bible school with a barbecue lunch at the Winter Smith Park in Ada, Oklahoma.

Finally, on August 23rd, we participated in another Sunday Rally with the McGee Chapel Church in Broken Bow, Oklahoma. The theme of this rally was "Witness" based upon Acts 26:16. Paul and Steven were the central figures for this rally, discussing about their strength and power in witnessing the living Christ to all those around. This proved to be a welcome challenge for all who attended. We were challenged to figure out our own "faith stories" (what are our experiences and journeys with Christ, how have we come to know Him and how can we share this love to those that are around us). In addition to the challenge of developing our faith stories, we also took the challenge of being able to share/witness them to those around. The Rally consisted of worship, bible classes, and crafts. It ended that evening with a lock in between our youths and theirs. The lock in consisted of devotionals and furthering our faith story experience. There was also time for recreation at the Beavers Bend State Park. Approximately thirty youths and twenty parents participated in the rally and about twenty of the Choctaw youths came for the lock in later that evening.

It is amazing that when the Oklahoma Church first took part in the Native American Projects back in 2005, we were only able to coordinate the volunteers and resources for one event a year. By the grace of our Mighty God, we are now having several programs a year. We hope this bond that has been formed with our Choctaw Neighbors will continue to grow and together we can learn what it really means to be Children of God.

George Thomas

ST. MATHEW'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, TORONTO, CANADA

CORNER-STONE FOR NEW CHURCH BLESSED BY THE METROPOLITAN: The church building project of the St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church, Toronto passed another notable milestone when the corner-stone for the new church was blessed by our Metropolitan, The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma, on June 8th, 2008. This auspicious event took place on our property in Halton Hills in the esteemed presence of Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, the Diocesan Bishop; Rev. Alex P. John, our Vicar; Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Vicar of the Canadian Mar Thoma Church, and parish members.

Metropolitan, in his speech, shared the many church building experiences he had during his many years serving various parishes. Thirumeni emphasized the importance of relying on the Almighty for our needs, and the resources will surely be provided as the need arise. This has been very true in the case of our church building project. Indeed, the blessings we have received so far have been beyond all expectations.

St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church, one of the youngest Mar Thoma parishes in North America, was formed on July 22nd, 2001 to serve the Mar Thoma families living in the western portion of metropolitan Toronto. In a short span of seven years, the parish membership has grown from the initial membership of 91 families in 2001, to the present 220 families.

Having successfully completed the process to obtain the necessary zoning amendment for the property, the parish, under the able leadership of Rev. Alex P. John, is about to embark on the construction phase of the church. The new church, featuring a 13,500 sq. ft. facility with a 500-plus seat sanctuary, adjacent fellowship hall and spacious basement, will cost over $3.5 million when completed in 2009.

We humbly request our fellow Mar Thomites everywhere to kindly support our church-building venture with your prayers, and contributions towards this project.

Abraham Jacob, Convener, Building Committee

ST. JAMES MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK

First Communicants with Coorilos Thirumeni and K. George Achen.

Editorial

Farewell to a Shepherd who is tuned to his Master

According to Sri Chinmoy, self-discipline and selflessness-both are extremely important in our spiritual life. This philosophy is well established in all letters of St. Paul, in the New Testament. Once you become a person of faith, it's the Lord's vision that drives you, rather than self derived goals or community defined agenda. It requires a great deal of passion and self discipline for one to lead a community comprised of individuals varying largely in the level of thinking, occupations, financial and social statuses, family and cultural backgrounds, etc. Coorilos Thirumeni was a man with a selfless heart who cared for the well being of his sheep, and the well being of fellow humans. He did not seek media attention to act on charities or mission projects that the Lord has guided him to initiate. Any opportunity he got, he chose to help those in need, regardless of their faith, religion, or cast. I knew of many occasions where Thirumeni helped those who experienced severe financial crisis but were reluctant to ask for help. Thirumeni has never stood for self motives or acted to capture media attention. He who has faith has... an inward reservoir of courage, hope, confidence, calmness, and assuring trust that all will come out well—even though to the world it may appear to come out untactful (B. C. Forbes). Thirumeni's messages were challenging and inspirational. Prior to becoming the Bishop of the Mar Thoma Church, during his tenure as Vicar of Staten Island and Philadelphia Bethel Churches in the U.S.A., I remember one of his Sunday Sermons based on Deuteronomy 8:13-14 (when your……gold and silver increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God). Thirumeni challenged his listeners not to lose humility, when God-given prosperity persists.

Thirumeni reminded us constantly that as we have grown to be a great global church, but our challenges seem complex. It will always be this way, and our Priests and other leaders will have to rely on God's power to lead the multitude. Thirumeni ascertained that as long as we adhere to our original mottos of worship and service, and believe in the power of the almighty Lord, the future will always be brighter. As stated by many philosophers: Once you begin a great movement, there's no telling where it will end. Our church leaders meant to create worshipping communities in local cities, and instead, we expanded to serve and to propagate the Gospel on a global basis. Coorilos Thirumeni, as the Diocesan Bishop, prompted us to learn from the past, set vivid, detailed goals for the future, and live in faith, always tuned to the power above.

Throughout our church's existence in episcopacy, our basic purposes have been to serve the Lord, to foster progress in Christian achievements, and to enhance faith, spirituality and human integrity among peoples and among denominations. Thirumeni adhered to these visions and taught us that to strive for less would be unworthy of religious existence. Bishop Coorilos mentioned that any failure, traceable to sinful actions or our lack of spiritual comprehension or readiness to sacrifice would inflict upon our growing generations, within and outside the church.

Any progress toward these Christian goals is persistently threatened by the corrupted society around us. Global churches face many hostile situations, universal in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and evil in method. Unhappily, the danger it poses appears to be of indefinite duration. As Christians we have to be firm in our commitment and actions. While we are bidding farewell to our Coorilose Thirumeni on his continued journey as Episcopa of another Diocese, let us remember his great teachings and missions that he has initiated, to stand together as one community and serve the lord with utmost Christian pride. The Messenger family is extremely gratefull to Thirumeni for all his support and guidance during his tenure as Diocesan Bishop. We are thankful for his unparallel leadership in relation to the only official publication of our Diocese. Let us resume to sincere prayers and christian commitment and wish Thirumeni continued success and everlasting blessings from the Lord of us all.

Eapen Daniel

Book

On the Beginning of Parishes in North America During the Formative Years

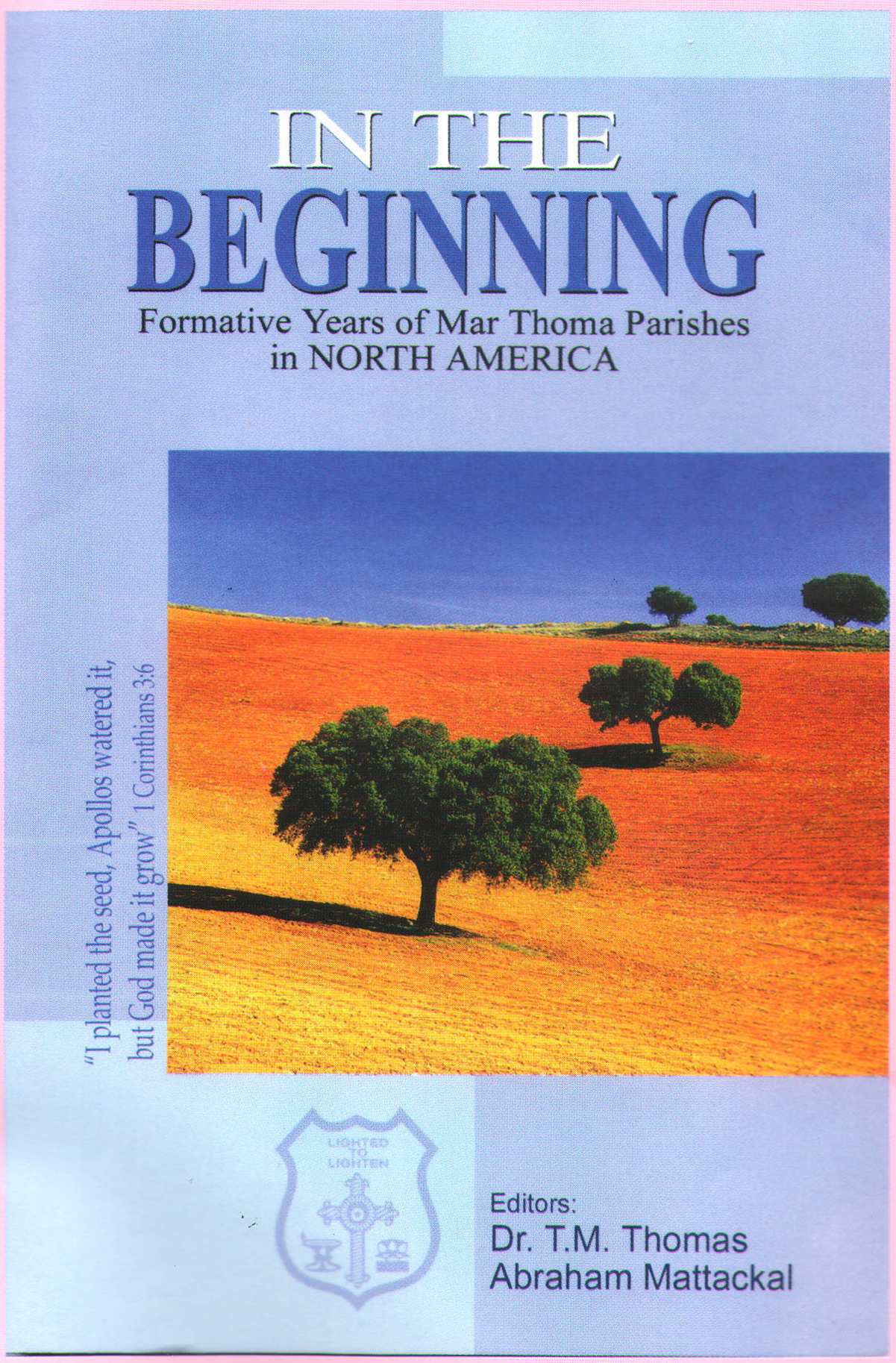
Discusses the Efforts of Pioneers at a dozen cities to begin Mar Thoma Congregations.

A Laity Initiative

Struggle for Parish Formation • Authors involved in it.

Historic document • Original letters and photos in the Appendix

Released by Zacharias Thirumeni at the 2008 Mar Thoma Family Conference in San Francisco



Order from:

The Mar Thoma Literature Society

Sinai Mar Thoma Center

2320 South Merrick Avenue

Merrick, New York 11566

Price: $10.00 (plus postage $2.50) **Proceeds will be donated to charity**

Authors	*Page*
Foreword: Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa *Diocesan Bishop*	9
Message: Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan	10
Message: Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan	11
Introduction: Dr. T. M. Thomas, *Chief Editor*	14
Part One–Comprehensive View: Dr. T. M. Thomas 12 Articles by Dr. T. M. Thomas	22
Part Two–19 Articles from Authors: (Continued)	94
Memory Lane: Dr. Joseph Mattackal, New York	95
Journey to Time Zero: George P Kurien, Tennessee	107
First Two Decades: Dr. T. M. Thomas, New York	112
Challenging Years: Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan	119
A Dream Realized: O. C. Abraham, Philadelphia	124
Beginning of National Organizations: Nirmala Abraham, Philadelphia	131
My Heritage: Sunny Abraham, Philadelphia	135
My Life Experiences: P. T. Philip, Toronto, Canada	142
A Canadian Perspective on the Growth of...NA: Jacob Joseph, Toronto, Canada	149
The Beginning of Mar Thoma Parishes in Canada: Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa	156
Formative Years: Dr. M. V. Mathew, Chicago	164
Personal Glimpse: N. M. Philip, Chicago	170
Western Canada: Brief History Dr. Titus Mathews, Calgary	182
The Origins of Parishes in LA & Western US: Baban Vargis, Los Angeles	186
Humble Beginning: T. A. Mathew, Houston	193
Witnessing of the Diaspora: Marthomites in Dallas P. T. Mathew, Dallas	199
A Grateful Heart: Dr. Mammen C. Jacob, South Florida	205
Some Common Beginnings: George Poikail, Washington	210
Faith and Vision: Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles	217
Appendices	228–263

FRANK BENUCHI SHOES

ERIC SHOES

EXCLUSIVE AGENT FOR U.S.A.

Free Shipping anywhere in the USA

Best Wishes From

Varkey Abraham & Family

Erick Shoes Inc.
216-11 Jamaica Avenue
Queens Village, New York
Tel. 718-465-2860
Website: www.ericshoes.com

Abraham & Son Inc.
Shoe Tech U.S.A. Inc.
A&S Properties Inc.

Mar Thoma Messenger
Sinai Mar Thoma Center
2320 S. Merrick Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
MERRICK, NY
PERMIT NO. 198