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MESSENGER

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Message from the Metropolitan

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

God led us through many blessed experiences in the beginning months of 2010. I praise God for obtaining the courage which abides with us to undergo that unique peace even in the midst of doubts and apprehensions. When observing the presence of God we experienced during the Sabha Mandalam meetings, and the election of the Episcopal Nomination Board, we can witness just like the apostles of the early Church did: 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' (Acts 15:28).

I believe that the attendance in the Mandalam meetings, the proactive election, and the record breaking number of visitors that watched the election processes can be attributed to the directives of the Holy Spirit.

I glorify God for His blessings in conducting the 115th Maramon Convention in the most blessed manner. Though the accumulation of dust was lessened, the sandy expanse of the river was not at the best comfortable level for people to sit under, the pandal. But each believer showed extraordinary self discipline and order. I appreciate the loyalty and dedication. Each message was to strengthen the idea that evangelism is not only proclamation, but also one that ought to be shared through life's experiences. Let us praise God who sent the speakers who were able to inspire the minds of believers through various topics of this year's gatherings.

It is a matter of joy for all that our Valiya Metropolitan could participate in the various meetings this year. He was also able to deliver the keynote address in one meeting. It is noteworthy that through many of the messages, we could enhance the awareness of our responsibilities to keep this beautiful earth healthier, more colorful, and fruitful.

During the convention, the Government of Kerala freely distributed one lakh Teakwood saplings to be newly planted as a step to preserve the ecological balance. I convey our gratitude to the Government of Kerala.

St. Mark says, 'Jesus Christ is the beginning of the gospel.' St. Paul tells us, 'Remember Jesus Christ, David's son. That is my gospel.' St. Peter declares, 'Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall...' This is the gospel that we must share through our life experiences.

We have entered into the period of Great Lent. The gist of Lent is not obtaining satisfaction only through abstinence. The true experience of Lent is the process of having an insight into the surroundings in which we live. Nehemiah lamented, 'Myself and my paternal household have committed sin.' Nehemiah's tears reflect the evil in which his surroundings were filled with. Prophet Isaiah said, 'I am a sinful person who lives day by day with sinful people.' St. Paul's comments are noteworthy, "Having committed sin, we all lost the glory of God." We also have to pass through such transformations and repentance during the period of Lent. In the Sundays of Lent we are actually remembering the redeeming love of God. He rescues us from the sickly conditions of sin. What did the leper tell Jesus? "Jesus, if you wish, you can give back whatever I lost in my life." Jesus extended His hand and touched him. The leper was healed. Jesus wanted him to come back to the main stream of life. The Lord's words praising the centurion's approach, 'even in Israel, I haven't found such a faith,' remind us the great truth of Lent. We have yet to remember that our Lord will be very much sad and painful if we happen to remain aloof without considering the realities of the society in which we live.

When we enter into the Passion Week, our deepest thoughts should be on the Cross of Calvary, where God's love and wrath embrace each other. The thief on the right side admitted his sins in life and truly repented. He was blessed by Jesus. "You will be with me in Paradise today." The other thief on the cross, owing to his foolishness of repugnance lost the Paradise. Be reminded that if we find solace in abstinence without undergoing the experience of transformation, we will lose the golden chance of hearing Lord's call of, 'Come you, heirs of Paradise.' May God's blessings follow you so that you will be able to pass on with newness and strength to the realms of resurrection after going through the transforming experience of the Lent.

Grace be with you all.

Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

Message from the Diocesan Bishop

Dear Friends in Christ,

"The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' " 1 Corinthians 11.23

Greetings to all in the PRECIOUS NAME of our LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.

We are in the season of Lent. The 50 days of lent gives us enough opportunity to renew our life by confessing our sins and seeking God's grace for the transformation of life. As members of the church we will observe the Holy Week to meditate on the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem, His arrest, death on the Cross, and resurrection. The Eastern Church gives more emphasis to the passion of Jesus Christ, His self-emptying and resurrection from the dead. We are an Easter community. It means that we are empowered daily with the power of the resurrection of Jesus continuing our spiritual journey to grow to the full stature of Christ. We say with St. Paul, "for me to live is Christ." Phil. 1:21.

This issue of the *Mar Thoma Messenger* has articles on "**Sacraments and Sacramental Living.**" The church universal identifies seven sacraments which are Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Holy Qurbana, Priesthood, Marriage, and Anointing the Sick. Among these, the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Qurbana are generally identified as Dominical Sacraments, as they are observed in the church in accordance with the words of Jesus Christ. When we identify sacraments in this manner let us also understand spiritually that our entire life is also sanctified to be a sacrament. Therefore sacraments are in the church for administration to the people and the life that receives these sacraments are meant for sacramental living. Any sacrament is a means of grace, receiving the grace of God. In sacramental living the life becomes a means of grace for other people.

On Maundy Thursday, we remember how Jesus Christ observed the Passover festival with His disciples and how that celebration became an institution of the Holy Qurbana. Jesus and His disciples came together to praise and thank God for the deliverance God gave to the people of Israel while they were in bondage in Egypt. God listened to their cry and saw their affliction and sent Moses to be the leader of the people; a people who were brought out by God from the injustice they had to face in the hands of the hard-hearted Pharaoh. God was delivering them while Moses was only an instrument in the hands of God, to be a means of grace. The book of Exodus reveals that Pharaoh was becoming more and more hard-hearted when Moses spoke to him the message of God that the people are to be set free. God touched Pharaoh's life by taking away the life of all first born including his son. As a result the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt as they were spared because of the blood of the lamb was spread on the doorways. This deliverance was remembered by the people and the generations through the Passover festival. When Jesus Christ celebrated it with His disciples, He assumed Himself to be the lamb slain to spare God's people from the clutches of sin. Jesus was seeing His death on the Cross and therefore symbolized it by taking the bread, giving thanks, breaking it, and giving it to His disciples saying, 'This is my body...do this in remembrance of me.' In accordance with these words of Jesus and after His death on the Cross, the church that is redeemed by his blood is celebrating the sacrament of Holy Qurbana. This sacrament is for the remission of our sins and for the health of our body and soul.

'As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. 'The sacrament of Holy Qurbana is the only sacrament that is repeated again and again in the Church for the participants to repeatedly experience the renewal of life in Christ. When we participate, we say together: 'Lord we remember your death, we celebrate your resurrection, and we look forward to your second coming.' The Holy Qurbana is a renewing experience which enables us to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and to live in faith and hope looking forward to the spiritual consummation one would have at the second coming of Christ. The mystery and authenticity of the sacrament though expressed in the liturgy can be fully understood only through one's own experience. The sacraments are community events. 1 Cor. 10:16-17. Therefore the community worship and participation in the sacrament are very significant in the spiritual growth of a person.

Sacramental living is a God-given mission. One significant aspect of this is the incarnational ministry through our life in Christ. Jesus Christ came down from His heavenly throne to be born and to live in the world among His creation. He not only accepted the manger in Bethlehem but also found His dwelling among the villages of Galilee and its outskirts where people were marginalized and rejected. We can see this incarnational life in the followers of Jesus down through the centuries. Father Damien, Albert Schweitzer, Ida Scudder, and Mother Teresa are only a few examples. All these people committed their lives to reaching out to the unreached and to impart abundant life by becoming a means of grace in their time. Each of us who live in this world now are created with a mission not only to receive the grace of God but also to become a channel of blessing (Diaconial life = Servant life) so that others would receive God's grace and become enriched by it Gal. 4:19. There is always a call for every person for sacramental living.

Breaking the bread is a symbol of the Holy Qurbana. It points to the Lamb of God who broke His body on the cross. "On the night he was betrayed..." 1 Cor. 11:23. Pain and suffering are inevitable when one is called to deny oneself, take up the Cross, and follow Jesus Christ. Mercy Mathew who is now popularly known as *Daya Bhai* and who lives in Madhya Pradesh is an example of such a life. Though she had graduated in social work she chose to live among the Tribals in Madhya Pradesh, identify with them to develop the living conditions of the people. After years of living among the tribals, when she came back to Kerala to visit her parents, her father couldn't believe his eyes in seeing *Daya Bhai* in the complexion of a tribal. When he asked her, "Mercy, was this much necessary in your life?" Pointing her finger to the crucifix on the wall she asked her father "Was that necessary for the life of Jesus?" Phil. 1:29. When we take the Cross of Jesus seriously, the words on the Cross echoes again and again, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" It is easy to see the broken bread and the crushed wine in the sacrament of Holy Qurbana but it is very, very hard to internalize it and realize that one's own body is to be broken and the blood is to be shed if life is to be redeemed from the clutches of sin and satanic forces. Phil. 2:17.

Sacramental life was demonstrated when the disciple John was asked to accept Mary as his mother and Mary to accept John as her son. The Heavenly Father is teaching us every day that this is to be practiced by accepting "the other." What else is the lesson of loving thy neighbor as thyself? This is sacrificial life, which involves self desertion and the spirit of giving. It is only the love of Christ that enables us to go beyond the human set boundaries to accept other human beings irrespective of race, color, or creed. No one is unwanted in the sight of God and it should be so in the sight of humans. No one is beyond the scope of redemption in the sight of God and we can realize it when we believe that the death of Jesus is the sufficient sacrifice for redemption. Though the people will be separated on the Judgment day because of their conscious choice of evil over good and misuse of God-given freedom, the heart of God is always longing for the redemption of all, including the least, the last, and the lost. It is to this end that we are also called to be Christ's ambassadors. Let us remember that we are baptized to identify ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The powers of the world found the death of Jesus on the Cross a victory but Jesus through His death challenged all these powers and conquered them through His resurrection from the dead. Pain, suffering, perseverance and renunciation are all inevitable in sacramental living but these do not make it a failure. The power of resurrection in Jesus made the early Christians more than conquerors. The early apostles turned the world upside down not because of their might, but because they became a channel of God's grace. Today we are all called to experience this AMAZING GRACE and to lead a sacramental living for the world and ages to receive God's grace in and through our lives.

I wish you all a Happy and Blessed Easter.

May God bless you all.

Yours in His Service,
s/d

Geevarghese Mar Theodosius
Sinai Mar Thoma Center, Merrick, New York
March 19, 2010

Sacraments and Sacramental Life

Dr. Mathew Sadhu, Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Frankfort, IL

The word "Sacrament" is derived from the Latin word *Sacramentum*, meaning oath or vow, usually taken by a soldier pledging his allegiance to the king. It also has the meanings to consecrate, sacred etc.¹ In a Christian church, a sacrament is a special rite or liturgical act conferring specific grace on those who receive it in faith. It is the visible, outward sign of or means of the invisible, inward grace that the believer receives from the Lord.

Generally, in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches there are seven sacraments, whereas in some Protestant churches only two. In the Mar Thoma Church we have seven sacraments: (i) Baptism or *Mamodisa*; (ii) Confirmation; (iii) Confession; (iv) Holy *Qurbana* or Holy Communion; (v) Ordination; (vi) Marriage; (vii) Unction.

Of the seven sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion are called Dominical Sacraments, since they have been ordained or instituted by Jesus. Hence they are considered very important sacraments. All Christian denominations observe them, except those denominations, which do not have a sacramental dimension, such as the Quakers and the Salvation Army. In our church, Confirmation is administered along with Baptism, and Confession along with *Qurbana*. The sacraments (v) through (vii) are termed optional sacraments, since it is a matter of personal choice for the believer to get ordained, married or receive unction. Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination are given only once, to an individual and not repeated.

In the administering of sacraments the church believes that the effect of the sacrament depends not on the personal holiness of the minister administering it. This is referred to as *ex opere operato*. The sacrament is only an outward sign of an invisible, grace and blessing that the Lord bestows on the believer. Therefore it is efficacious if a member of the church receives the sacrament in full faith, irrespective of the worthiness or holiness of the celebrant.

The Five Essential Elements of Sacraments

1. **Intention:** It is the declared purpose of the specific sacrament. For instance the intention of Holy *Qurbana* is to become partakers in the atoning sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.
2. **Meaning:** The meaning of confirmation is the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Words of Institution:** It gives the scriptural basis of the sacrament and is used in the sacramental liturgy.
4. **Matter:** It is the material used in the sacrament. For instance, bread and wine constitute the matter in the case of Holy *Qurbana*. Matter is an essential element of all sacraments.



5. **Celebrant:** The person authorized by the church to administer the particular sacrament. Most often a priest or bishop is the celebrant.

Let us now examine briefly the seven sacraments

I. Baptism or *Mamodisa*

Though it is one of the Dominical sacraments, there are minor differences as administered by the different Christian denominations. Whereas some denominations administer only believer's or adult baptism, Mar Thoma church has both believer's (or adult) and infant baptism. Adult baptism is for those who come from a non-Christian background and infant baptism for children of Christian parents.

We also believe in one baptism (as professed in the Nicene Creed) and will not baptize again a person who had been baptized before, even if it was not in the Mar Thoma Church. The person is baptized "in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit." Water prepared by mixing warm and cold water, along with a few drops of *Mooron* is the matter used for this sacrament.

II. Confirmation

Confirmation or Chrismation is administered immediately after Baptism. *Mooron* is used in this sacrament. It is holy oil prepared by the Bishops from pure olive oil, mixing it with incense, myrrh etc. and praying special prayers of consecration. Applying *Mooron* to the body of the baptized represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, we read that Aaron and his sons were anointed with special consecrated oil for the priestly duty. So were the kings and prophets. So Confirmation also represents being anointed into the royal priesthood of believers.

III. Confession

Confession is required before one receives the Holy *Qurbana*. One has to repent, confess sins and be reconciled in order to partake in the Holy *Qurbana*. Mar Thoma Church has public confession unlike the Roman Catholic Church, which has private confession.

IV. Holy *Qurbana*

Holy *Qurbana* is a Dominical sacrament. The words of institution is Matt. 26:26-28, Mk. 14:23, Lk. 22:17-20 and 1 Cor.11: 22-25. The sacrament is referred to by various names, such as Holy Communion, *Eucharist*, the Lord's Table, Mass, etc. in different denominations emphasizing its different aspects. The Eastern Churches use the term *Qurbana*, meaning offering, and in the Anglican Tradition it is referred to as Holy Communion, many protestant

churches use the term *Eucharist* or the Lord's Table, whereas the Roman Catholics use the term *Mass*. In our church we commonly use the terms Holy *Qurbana* or Holy Communion, or sometimes the Lord's Table.

Bread and Wine are the materials or elements used in this sacrament. Again, there are variations as practiced by different denominations. The Bread is made of wheat, and most Eastern Churches use leavened bread, whereas many Western churches and the Western rites in the Roman Catholic Church use unleavened bread. Grape juice, (usually non-fermented or wine with low alcohol content) mixed with water is used as Wine in our church.

In the Mar Thoma church, as in other Eastern churches, the Paten and Chalice are placed on top of a special, consecrated piece of wood called *Thabaleetha*. This signifies that it is an offering, and not a sacrifice, which is often offered on a stone altar.

In the Eastern liturgy the words of institution is followed by the *Epiclesis*: "May the Holy Spirit sanctify this bread that it may be the body of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "May the Holy Spirit sanctify the wine in this chalice that it may be the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Over the years there have been lots of theological discussions, especially in the Western Churches, on the finer points of if the bread and wine are actually transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and if so, at what point and so on. These theories are referred to as Transubstantiation (Roman Catholic), Consubstantiation (Lutheran), Receptionalism (Calvinist), Memorial (Zwingly)². Eastern churches use the term *mysterion* or *divine mystery* to describe what happens in the sacrament. As mentioned earlier, our church does not consider *Qurbana* to be a sacrifice. It is an anamnesis of Christ. While neither affirming nor negating the presence of Christ through the elements, we have room for people of both positions in the church. However, the church unequivocally maintains that Holy *Qurbana* enables the faithful to appropriate the forgiveness of sins.²

V. Ordination

It is the sacrament by which a layperson is made a deacon or priest (ordination) or made a bishop (consecration). There are differences in the liturgy depending on the office. Not all Christian denominations are Episcopal, meaning have bishops. However, laying on of hands, signifying

apostolic succession, is considered vital in most Christian denominations including ours.

VI. Marriage

This is an optional sacrament. But it was God who ordained it in the garden of Eden. It is a sign of the love uniting Jesus Christ and His church. Accordingly the Christian marriage is not a contract but a covenant relationship that cannot be dissolved. It is Christ Jesus who joins the groom and bride in Holy Matrimony. "What God has joined together let no man put asunder". The sacrament confers on the couple the divine grace they need for living a holy and sanctified married life and for responsible acceptance and upbringing of children that the Lord may give them in future.

VII. Unction

This sacrament is the anointing of the sick with Holy *Mooron*. The Mar Thoma liturgy used has two parts: Healing service for the sick and service for critically ill patients³, often called Extreme Unction.

Sacramental Life

It is theological understanding of Eastern churches that through the sacraments we receive God's grace that will enable us to live a transformed and sanctified life—a life that is Christ-centered, and well pleasing to the Lord. Just as in Holy *Qurbana* ordinary bread and wine is transformed by God's grace into the holy elements, our lives are also to be transformed, and we are to live a sacramental life worthy of our calling. We cannot do this on our own strength. But by His grace, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can. ■

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1. Middle English, from Old French sacrament, from Late Latin sacramentum, from Latin, oath, from sacrare, to consecrate, from sacer, sacr-, sacred (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language)
2. Gleanings, The Mar Thoma Church: Its Faith, Practice and Mission, published by The Madras-Calcutta Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church, 1997.
3. Foundation and Vision, p189, Published for The Mar Thoma Sunday Schools, Diocese of North America & Europe.

MAR THOMA VALEDICTORIAN AWARD - 2010

The Diocese is inviting nominations for the 2010 Valedictorian Award to students who are selected by their respective schools to be valedictorians of the graduating classes of 2010. Students who are members of the Mar Thoma parishes or congregations in the Diocese and who attend worship services and participate in the parish activities are eligible for this award. The awards will be presented during the 28th Mar Thoma Family Conference to be held in Dallas, Texas from July 1-4, 2010. To submit your information, please contact:

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Sacraments and Sacramental Living [Part I]

Rev. Dr. George Mathew Kuttiyil, Thiruvalla

Introduction

Sacraments are acts of worship and the means of sanctification of the church. In our encounter with God, Jesus Christ whom the Word became flesh and born as human, died for our sake is the ultimate sacrament of God (Heb. 1:1-3). In Christ, the saving love and mercy of God descend on all areas of human life. He lifts up human situations to God through the means of the love and mercy showed by God. Sacraments are the means of grace commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ and given to the faithful through the tradition of the church.



Meaning of the Word Sacrament: The word sacrament is derived from the Latin word *'sacrare mentum'* which means taking oath or showing allegiance. Here it denotes faith in Christ and His promises. In Syriac language in which our liturgies were developed, the word used is *'koodasa'*, derived from the Syriac root word *'kadesh'* meaning to sanctify, to make holy, to set apart, etc. In Greek it is *'mysterion'* which means secret or unexplainable. In the eastern churches, the term generally used is mystery (Rozo in Syriac). It is a spiritual act understandable to those who are within the church and incomprehensible to those who are outside. Again the word mystery is used for sacraments because it is beyond the comprehension of the human mind. But sacraments are not hidden. It is the revealed mystery. In this sense Paul refers to the divine plan of salvation as 'mystery revealed in Christ' (Eph. 1:9, 1 Cor. 2:1, Col. 2:2).

Definition of Sacrament: Church fathers and theologians tried to define sacraments in different ways. In the articles of faith of the Anglican Church, it is defined as follows: "sacraments which are instituted by Christ are not mere signs of our confession of faith in Him, they are the mark of our testimony and fruitful means of grace which works invisibly within us." They are not only the means of rekindling our faith in Him but strengthen and confirm our faith. They evolve fruitful means of grace within us. In simple terms, sacraments can be defined as 'the outward sign of inward grace'. It is the divine mystery through which the church makes the divine plan of salvation of the past into a present reality. The sacraments sanctify the participants through the power of the Holy Spirit by divine grace.

The seven sacraments generally accepted by Christian Churches are as follows: Baptism, Confirmation (Anointing with Holy *Muroon* [*Chrism*]), Confession, Holy Qurbana (Communion), Holy Matrimony, Ordination, Anointing the Sick (Healing Ministry). There are disagreements about the number of sacraments and there are disagreements on whether they are all established by Christ Himself. But there are references and Biblical basis for each sacrament. We have to understand that Jesus Christ is the basis of all the sacraments.

They are like seven streams of the waters of means of grace established by our Lord Jesus Christ. They are the means of grace and act of the church that enable us to live the experience of salvation. Here we are not attempting a detailed study of each sacrament but only aiming at an introduction.

Baptism (*Mammodisa*): Baptism and Holy Qurbana (Communion) are the two sacraments which existed right from the beginning of the church and there is direct command from our Lord for them. In the Gospel of St. Mathew we read that the Risen Lord exhorts the Apostles, "All authority in heaven and earth has been

given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father Son and the Holy Spirit... to the very end of age" (28:18-20). This shows that baptism is a sacrament which was established by Christ and it has to be administered at all times by the church. The early church took this command very seriously and administered baptism. There are references to baptism in the New Testament in Romans (6:1f), 1 Corinthians (1:13-17), Acts (2:41, 8:12, 38, 9:18, 10:48), etc.

Paul illustrates the death of Christ and the baptism in parallels (Romans 6:5-7). Just like the participation at the Lord's Table, baptism also demands our readiness to suffer with Him. Baptism is the experience of dying, burying and rising again with Christ. It is the experience of gaining life by dying. Baptism and Holy Qurbana are two sacraments that proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ and the faith community identifies with that experience. Baptism is the sacrament of incorporating believers into the faith community, which is the body of Christ—the church. The fellowship of the believers is embedded in the sacrament of baptism (Eph. 4: 4-6). Baptism is cleansing from sin (1 Cor. 6:11). It is regeneration (John 3:5), illumination by Christ (Eph. 5:14), liberation from bondage (1 Cor. 10:1-2, and the experience of putting on new garments (Gal. 3:27). This sacrament administered in the name of the Holy Trinity is God's gift for us. We enter into the covenantal community through baptism. It is a great commissioning to bear witness to the Gospel and bring the world to Christ; it is the responsibility of every believer.

Confirmation (Anointing with Holy *Muroon*): The anointing with *Muroon* is the sacrament for the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Muroon* is the anointing oil prepared with special oils and spices by the Metropolitan or the head of the Church. This is mainly practiced in the Eastern Churches. The meaning of the Greek word *Muroon* is perfumed oil, oil of anointing, etc. The baptized person is anointed with *Muroon* as a sign of the reception of the Holy Spirit. This is the usual practice of the Eastern Church. The operation of the Holy Spirit is inevitable to rekindle the gift that God has

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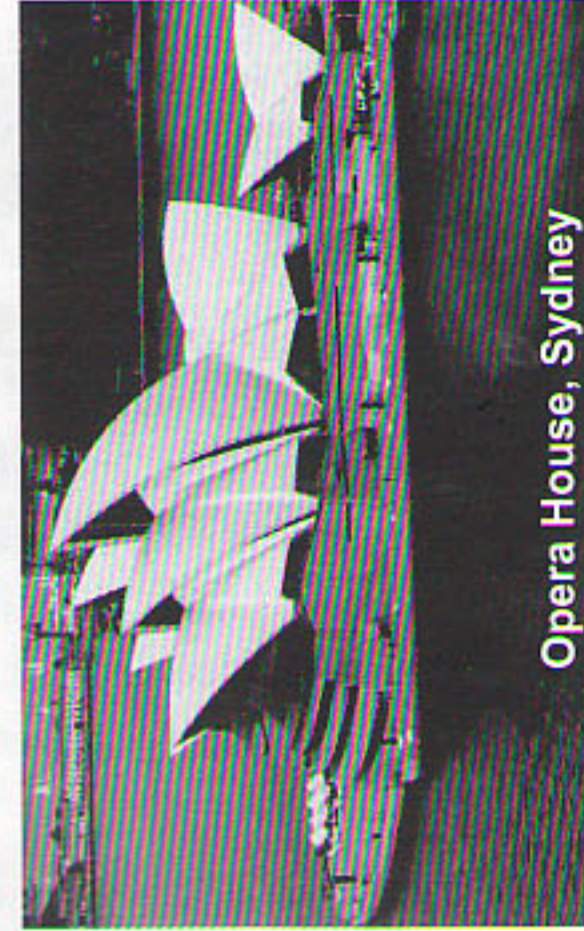
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given (the *Charismata*) and to live in that. Confirmation or anointing with the holy oil is the prayer of the church for this purpose. In the Western Church, the confirmation service is conducted by the laying on of the hands and prayer by the Bishop. The church believes that by this act of confirmation, baptized persons are initiated into the gift of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of baptism are perfected through this sacrament of anointing. This enables confirmed believers to identify with Christ and to grow into the full stature of Him and bear the fruits of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the candidate and the church commends them to the Holy Spirit through her collective prayer and anointing.

The anointing is administered by the Bishop or the minister of the church. It is also a sacrament of unity of the church. Believers are anointed with same oil and incorporated into the same fellowship that thereby shows the ecumenical nature of the church. The spiritual aroma of Christ is transfused into the believers through anointing.

Confession: At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus Christ exhorted: "The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14). The purpose of His advent was to liberate human beings from the bondage of sin, sickness and death. He declared that He has authority to forgive sins. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). Later this authority to declare the forgiveness of sin through Christ is given to the Church (John 20:21-23).

One's sinful nature alienates one from God, fellow beings and nature. There are corporate sins and individual sins. Believers are freed from such sin through confessing them to God. The church affirms that forgiveness through the absolution. Forgiveness of sin is the most important emphasis of the gospel. When members of the church are burdened with sin, they individually and collectively confess their sin. The minister of the church who represents the church declares the absolution that God has forgiven your sins. This is the practice of the church. It is the confessed, forgiven and reconciled faith community who celebrates and participates in the Holy Communion.

Through confession believers receive forgiveness from the Lord. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts the sin and prompts to confess them (John 16:8, 9). The confession and absolution of sins are the means of grace to participate in the divine mission. It is a healing sacrament and an assurance of divine mercy and forgiveness. This sacrament proclaims that there is forgiveness for the fallen, so it is a good news or gospel to the world. It is the bound duty and mission of the church to proclaim that Jesus through the Holy Spirit forgives sins.

Holy Qurbana (Communion): Holy Qurbana is a sacrament entrusted to the church by our Lord Jesus Christ by saying "Do in remembrance of me until I come". It is a command and a gift from our Lord. The Biblical basis of the Holy Qurbana is given in 1 Cor. 11:23-25, Math. 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, etc. Holy Qurbana is the remembrance and celebration of the saving act of God in Christ. The church as a whole gives thanks to the Father for the redemption and makes

it a present reality through her liturgical celebration. Through participation in the Holy Qurbana believers enter into reconciliation and communion with one another. The church celebrates the death and resurrection of Christ and is waiting for the coming again of Jesus Christ in and through the Holy Qurbana. Holy Qurbana is a sacrament which enables the faithful to experience and celebrate the salvation and redemption achieved through the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, in their daily lives.

The participation and sharing in the Holy Communion should enable us to transcend all kinds of barriers: injustice, discrimination based on caste and creed, slavery and all types of dehumanizing structures. Eucharist (Holy Communion) is the greatest proclamation of unity of all people. Eucharistic community must be a caring and sharing community. The church has to bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ by forgiving each other, exchanging peace, interceding for others, participating at the Lord's Table together, celebrating this sacrament of healing with the sick and the refugees.

Holy Qurbana is also a celebration of the participation of God's mission in this world. Proclamation of the gospel, ministry to our brothers and sisters in Christ, witnessing to the Kingdom values, etc. are the mark of a true disciple of Christ. It is a way of life or we can call it sacramental living. We are enriched by the Communion and transformed to meaningful discipleship. Participation in the communion demands us to be broken and send out to the world for the missionary mandate of the church. Therefore, Holy Qurbana is a missionary activity. The final benediction 'go forth in peace' is a sending out or commissioning for our witness in the wider world.

Holy Matrimony: The sacrament of Holy Matrimony or marriage has to be understood on the basis of the Old testament narration of creation and the teaching about marriage by our Lord Himself in the gospels (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:18-24, Math. 19:4-7). All creations of God, especially male and female, pleased God and He found it good. In the Old Testament understanding, God's covenantal relationship with the people of Israel is the model and basis of all relationships including the relationship between male and female. The self giving love of Christ revealed through the Cross is the model of Christian marriage. In the order of Holy matrimony of the Eastern Church, Jesus Christ is symbolized as the heavenly bridegroom and the church as the bride of Christ. The self giving love of Christ by which He loved and redeemed the church, is the model that a husband and wife should imitate in their family life. Mutual submission and faithfulness is inevitable in family life.

Through the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, the church reveals her incarnation, to witness the divine act of God, and proclaims the divine purpose of human life by means of creation, sexuality and procreation. We see a God who allows His creature to participate in the process of creation, through this sacrament of marriage. Christian couples receive a calling to be faithful and loving until the end of their life and through marriage, it is also a calling for us to serve the world. Married life is a vocation to bear witness to

the divine love of God showered upon us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ordination (Ordained Ministry of the Church): This is the practice of setting apart and ordaining suitable people from the faith community through laying-on-of-hands to proclaim the word of God and to administer the sacraments that existed since the establishment of the church. In the Gospels we see that Jesus Christ chose twelve Apostles to be with Him and to proclaim the good news and to heal the sick. The church set apart and ordains ministers to continue the ministry of the risen and living Lord. They are appointed by the church to lead the people of God and bear witness to the Lord in this world. The calling and election to this ministry is the act of the Holy Spirit. The church appoints its members to do the ministry in the name of Jesus Christ through the laying-on-of-hands and prayer to the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6). The minister stands before God as the representative of the people and works with them. It is not to take away the charisma given to the people but to kindle it and equip them to participate in the mission of the church.

In the analysis of the ordination rites of the church it can be seen that it is the Holy Spirit who calls, enables and strengthens one to the ordained ministry of the church. It is not a task that a minister does in isolation; it is the sharing of the Priesthood of all believers. Through the ministry, the edification of the believers by teaching, administering, disciplining, caring, leading, sharing, administering the sacraments, representing the servanthood ministry of Jesus, etc., are taking place. The calling of the church is to make all people, people of God. For this, the church needs such people whose ministry is totally dependant on God. The life and witness of the church is reflected through such persons.

Anointing the Sick (Healing Ministry): Anointing the sick or healing ministry is a sacrament began by our Lord Jesus Christ during His public ministry and entrusted to the Apostles and to the church. There is Biblical foundation for this means of grace. In the Gospels we read: *"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their Synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness"* (Math. 9:35). The Apostles drove out the demons and healed the sick by anointing the afflicted with oil (Math. 10: 1f, Mark 6:13). Apostle James gives a detailed account about the practice of the early church as follows: *"Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders (Presbyter) of the church to pray over him and to anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven"* (James 5:14, 15). It is the belief of the church that anointing the sick in the name of Jesus and praying for him/her will make the person well.

The blessed olive oil is used for anointing the sick person. The oil is also used for pre-baptismal anointing. Jesus healed the sick by words and by touching as we see from the gospel narratives. Therefore the sacrament of healing has three parts: the ministry of the Word, laying-on-of-hands, and anointing with oil. The sick are led to faith through the

Word, and to healing through laying of hands and anointing. Oil is good for healing wounds and strengthening the body.

This sacrament of healing reminds us that the entire church (faith community) is anxious and concerned about welfare of the sick person. They are interested in the healing of their brothers and sisters in Christ. This collective approach and attitude will bring healing, happiness and peace to the sick. It prepares the sick to face death with hope and without fear, and lead them to confidence and hope in God. The Sacrament of anointing the sick symbolizes salvation from sin, victory over death and the Hope to eternal life. Healing takes place in a community where there is love and care for one another. Sickness is not just physical; it affects body, mind and soul. The prayer for the sick is a holistic approach to the person. One is healed through reconciliation and forgiveness of sin. This gift of healing which is entrusted to the church must be conducted more frequently and in public at the churches and home prayer meetings. This means of grace, based on the scripture and practiced in the early church must always be administered in more meaningful and participatory ways.

Sacramental Living: Only a brief study of the commonly accepted sacraments of the church is attempted in this article. A detailed study will help the members of the church to get a deeper understanding of sacraments. Rev. Dr. Louis Moolaveetil in his book *Sacraments in the Malankara Church* (Malayalam) summarizes the impact of sacramental life.

The purpose of sacraments is to help the believer to receive God's grace in their faith journey. The new life that receives Baptism is perfected through Anointing of the Holy Muroon (Confirmation) and thereby one becomes the true soldier of Christ. Holy Qurbana is the daily spiritual food of a disciple of Christ. Confession and the anointing of the sick are the two healing medicines of the believer. Confession heals the wounds of mind and spirit, whereas anointing heals the person from the guilt of sin and sickness. It enables one to face death in faith and hope. Marriage and Ordination are the sacraments that strengthen the social institution. A person called for ministry is born to divine life and nurtured as a disciple of Christ through the ordination of the church. Through marriage the family gives birth to children of God in society. In short, the functions of the sacraments are to give birth in divine life, confirm in faith, strengthen by divine food and drink, heal during sickness and contribute children in the image of God, to society.

Participation in and experiencing the sacraments make believers dedicate themselves to the mission of the church. Sacraments are the means of grace to fulfill the will of God on this earth and lead the world to new humanity through Christ. It is the means of grace for us to confess Christ and to his church, through our life, witnessing Him publicly. ■

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BIBLE STUDY

Re-Visioning the Word by Re-Defining the Liturgy [Luke.13:10-14]

Rev. Ansan Thomas, Malad, Mumbai

Introduction

Church is the locus and the manifestation of the Divine Word. The Word become flesh through the liturgical practices of the community. It is the body of Christ and the hope of the least and the lost. Church entrusted the ministry of healing where many suffered from physical and social illness. The Christian spirituality locates its divine presence among the sufferings. By neglecting the sufferings of the marginals and deprived, the core of the very spirituality is lost. Jesus not only condemns the text centered shallow spirituality and its liturgical practices but also shows how the word and the liturgy become a life giving practice to the depth of human sufferings.



called out to her and placed His hands on her. His seeing is something that deserve special attention. He saw the unnoticed and the unable woman and empowered her to stand herself. Jesus acknowledges the "rejected" by calling her near to Him and touched her. He simply rejected the social and religious taboos which denied her personhood. Jesus helps her to re-position herself into the descent of father Abraham. Consumeristic ethic of the market which governs the ethos of the present society, consciously avoids the needs of others

and blind to the sufferings of people amidst us. In this context, we need to re-define the liturgical practices with a new vision of seeing the unnoticed.

Context of the text

Luke's gospel is of the oppressed and the marginalized. Chapter 9-19 describes the journey of Jesus towards Jerusalem. During this journey He taught about the Kingdom of God through parables and miracles. The victory of the Kingdom of God over the demonic powers of the world is well explained in chpt.13 by the example of healing the crippled woman. Luke here emphasizes the importance of women in the ministry of Jesus. Luke reveals the three dimensions of Jesus ministry, namely teaching, preaching and healing. In this episode of healing Jesus re-define, re-formulate and re-vision the liturgical practices of His community through word and deed. In this study, we can go through the relevant patterns of the faith of a worshipping community. Liturgical renewal is possible through the incarnation of the Word. In a "global world", where the marginalization is at an ever increasing rate the necessity of the actualization of the Word is unavoidable.

Jesus re-defines the liturgy by seeing the people in a new way

Jesus entered the Jerusalem temple in a liturgical context. Even though they are reciting hymns from the Talmud, they couldn't see the co-worshipper, the crippled woman for the last eighteen years. The sufferings of the fellow-worshipper was not a problem to be taken care of. It was a community which is insensitive to the feelings and agonies of the human. They had failed to translate their faith in God into human love. Here the intervention of Jesus is significant. He tried to re-define the exclusive liturgy in a more open and sensitive way to the burning issues of the people. He saw her,

Jesus re-formulate the liturgy by offering new imaginations to the 'word'

Liturgy is not a static one but dynamic in its spirit and content. The dynamic aspect of the liturgy is the ever challenge of the worshipping community. When the community become part of the subjugating system which rejects the people who belong to the margins, then the liturgy rectify, reform and revolutionize the community by offering new imaginations. For the Jews the Sabbath was a day for rest, which means no work and no to all life saving endeavour. Jesus re-formulate the liturgical tradition about Sabbath by healing the much suffered woman in the community. Customs and traditions could have become weapons of enslavement and lethargy. The tradition of Sabbath was a hindrance to do goodness. Jesus exposes the false religiosity of the Pharisees by offering them a new imagination of the Word and the value of life in the Kingdom. When Jesus touches her body she envisages a new social agency and a new social space that rejects the authority of the power of the dominating discourses, which legitimize the distance. She could re-imagine herself by touching the resurrected body of Jesus Christ and there by re-positioning of her subjectivity, as the Church is the fellowship of the resurrected ones.

Jesus re-visioning the 'word' by doing new practices

According to Karl Barth, "The Church exists...to set up in the world a new sign which is radically dissimilar to the world's own manner and which contradicts it in a way which is full of promises". Liturgy and the Word of God are

(Continued on page 13)

വലിയ നോമ്പും ക്രിസ്തീയ പരിപോഷണവും

റവ. ഡോ. ജോൺ ഫിലിപ്പ് അട്ടത്രയിൽ

ജഡം ധരിച്ച ദൈവപുത്രനാണ് യേശുക്രിസ്തു. ദൈവപുത്രന്റെ ജഡധാരണവും പീഡാനുഭവവും യഥാർത്ഥമായിരുന്നു. യെഹൂദ പെസഹായുടെ സമയത്താണ് യേശുക്രിസ്തു പീഡാനുഭവമേറ്റത്. യെഹൂദ പെസഹായെ അവൻ പൂർത്തീകരിച്ചു. ക്രിസ്തീയപെസഹായെന്നാൽ യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ മരണവും ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പുമാണ്. പൌലോസ് ശ്ലീഹാ പെസഹായെപ്പറ്റി രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നത് ഇപ്രകാരമാണ്: "നമ്മുടെ പെസഹാക്കുടമാടും അറുക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു; ക്രിസ്തു തന്നെ. ആകയാൽ നാം പഴയ പുളിമാവുകൊണ്ടല്ല, തിന്മയും ദുഷ്ടതയും ആയ പുളിമാവുകൊണ്ടുമല്ല, സ്വച്ഛതയും സത്യവുമായ പുളിപ്പില്ലായ്മ കൊണ്ടുതന്നെ ഉത്സവം ആചരിക്ക" (1 കൊരി 5:7,8). ക്രിസ്തീയ പെസഹായെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ബോധ്യം സഭയ്ക്ക് ആദിമുതലേ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ക്രിസ്തീയപെസഹാ സഭയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാന വിശ്വാസമാണ്.

രണ്ടാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടു മുതൽ ക്രിസ്തീയ പെസഹാ സഭ പ്രത്യേകമായി ആചരിച്ചു. യെഹൂദ പെസഹായ്ക്ക് ശേഷമുള്ള ഞായറാഴ്ചയാണ് മിക്ക സഭകളിലും ഇത് ആഘോഷിച്ചത്. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പ് ഞായറാഴ്ചയായതിനാലാണ് അങ്ങനെ ചെയ്തത്. ക്രിസ്തീയ പെസഹായിൽ നിന്നാണ് വലിയ നോമ്പിന്റെ തുടക്കം.

ക്രിസ്തീയ പെസഹായോടനുബന്ധിച്ച് ഉപവസിക്കുന്ന രീതി ആദ്യംതൊട്ടേ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. വിശുദ്ധമായ കർമ്മങ്ങൾക്കു് ഒരുങ്ങുന്നതിനായി ഉപവാസം അനുഷ്ഠിക്കുന്ന രീതി പൂരാതന കാലത്തുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ക്രിസ്തീയ നോമ്പ് പൂരാതന രീതിയുടെ പകർപ്പല്ല. അനുതാപത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമാണ് ക്രിസ്തീയ നോമ്പ്. എന്തെങ്കിലും ഉപേക്ഷിക്കുന്നതിനെയാണ് ഉപവാസം എന്നതുകൊണ്ട് ഉദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നത്. സൃഷ്ടികളെല്ലാം നല്ലതായതിനാൽ എല്ലാ ഭക്ഷ്യയോഗ്യമായ ആഹാരങ്ങളും നല്ലതാണ്. അവ വേണ്ടതിലേറെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതും വേണ്ടാത്തപ്പോൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതും തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് ഉപേക്ഷിക്കണം. വേണ്ടിയതു തന്നെ ഉപേക്ഷിച്ച് അതിലും വിലയേറിയത് ഉൾക്കൊള്ളണം. പ്രപഞ്ചത്തിന്റെ സംരക്ഷണത്തിനായി സുഖസൗകര്യങ്ങൾ വെടിയണം. കൃത്യമായ നോമ്പാചരണം ഉദാരമായ നൽകലിനു നമ്മെ പ്രാപ്തിപ്പെടുത്തും.

യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഐഹിക ജീവിതവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട സ്ഥാനങ്ങളെ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ച് യെരൂശലേമിലെ സഭയിലാണ് ഇന്നത്തെപ്പോലെയുള്ള വിപുലമായ ആരാധന ആരംഭിച്ചത്. എ. ഡി. 384-ലെ പീഡാനുഭവ വാരത്തിൽ യെരൂശലേമിലെ ആരാധനകളിൽ സംബന്ധിച്ച സ്പാനീഷ് കന്യാസ്ത്രീയായ എജീരിയ എഴുതിയ യാത്രാവിവരണത്തിൽ പീഡാനുഭവ വാര ആരാധനകളെപ്പറ്റി വിശദമായി പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. യെരൂശലേമിലെ ആചാരങ്ങൾ ആകമാന സഭയിലേക്ക് വ്യാപിച്ചു.

ഉയിർപ്പ് പെരുന്നാളിനുവേണ്ടിയുള്ള തയ്യാറെടുപ്പാണ് വലിയ നോമ്പുകൊണ്ട് ഉദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നത്. അതായത് ഉയിർപ്പിനെ നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമാക്കിത്തീർക്കുകയാണ് ലക്ഷ്യം. അതിലൂടെ നമ്മെത്തന്നെ യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ മരണത്തിനും ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പിനും ഏൽപ്പിച്ചു കൊടുക്കാനാണ് വലിയ നോമ്പ് നമ്മോട് ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്നത്. യെരൂശലേമിലെ കുറിലോസിന്റെ മതധ്യാനപ്രസംഗങ്ങളിൽ ഇങ്ങനെ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു: "നിനക്കു തർക്കിച്ചു നിൽക്കാൻ നേരമില്ല. അനുതാപത്തിനിതാ 40 ദിവസങ്ങൾ. ഉരിഞ്ഞു കളയുന്നതിനും, അലക്കുന്നതിനും, ശുഭ്രവസ്ത്രം

ധരിക്കുന്നതിനും തിരിച്ചു വരുന്നതിനും നിനക്കു ധാരാളം അവസരം ഉണ്ട്." സ്നാനപനാർത്ഥികളെ ഒരുക്കുന്നതിനും മാത്രമല്ല, സ്നാനപ്പെട്ട പാപികളെ രക്ഷയുടെ സന്തോഷത്തിലേക്കു കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നതിനാണ് വലിയ നോമ്പ് ആചരിക്കുന്നത്. അതിനാൽ വലിയ നോമ്പ് ആചരണം ചരിത്രപരമായ യാദൃശ്ചികതയല്ല, സഭയ്ക്ക് കർത്താവിനോടുള്ള വിശ്വസ്തതയുടെ സാക്ഷ്യപത്രമാണ്.

നമ്മുടെ ഹാശാക്രമം ക്രിസ്തീയ പെസഹായുടെ വിശദമായ ധ്യാനമാണ്. ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ജീവകരമായ പീഡാനുഭവത്തെ ധ്യാനിക്കുകയാണ് പീഡാനുഭവവാര ശുശ്രൂഷകളിലൂടെ ലക്ഷ്യം വയ്ക്കുന്നത് (പേജ് 131). ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ ധ്യാനിക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ തന്നെ അയച്ച പിതാവിനെയും നമ്മെ ശക്തീകരിക്കുന്ന പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിനെയും നാം ധ്യാനിക്കുന്നു. ചരിത്രത്തിൽ വെളിപ്പെട്ട ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തെ മാത്രമല്ല, ചരിത്രാതീതമായി ദൈവത്തിലുള്ള സ്നേഹത്തെയും ധ്യാനിക്കുകയാണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്. ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തെ ധ്യാനിക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ മനുഷ്യൻ രൂപാന്തരത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ധ്യാനം കർമ്മത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ധ്യാനത്തെയും കർമ്മത്തെയും വിരുദ്ധ ധ്രുവങ്ങളിൽ പ്രതിഷ്ഠിച്ച ആധുനിക ബൗദ്ധികതയുടെ അപകടം തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് മാത്രമേ നോമ്പാചരണത്തിൽ പങ്കു ചേരാനാവൂ. ധ്യാനത്തിന്റെ കൊടുമുടികൾ കയറാൻ മടിക്കുന്ന ആധുനികൻ കർമ്മത്തിന്റെ താഴ്വാരങ്ങളിൽ സഞ്ചരിക്കാനും അപ്രാപ്തനായി തീരുന്നവെന്നതാണ് സത്യം.

സുവിശേഷ പാരായണം ആരാധനയുടെ സവിശേഷ ഘടകമാണ്. ഹാശാക്രമം കുരിശിലെ ഏഴു മൊഴികളുൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള പീഡാനുഭവ സംഭവങ്ങളെ കോർത്തിണക്കുന്നു (പേജ് 133). വചനം ആരാധനയായും ആരാധന വചനമായും തീരുമ്പോഴാണ് സമർപ്പണം സാധ്യമാകുന്നത്.

ആരാധനയുടെ പ്രമാണമാണ് വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ പ്രമാണം എന്നാണ് ആദിമ സഭ പഠിപ്പിച്ചത്. Rule of the faith is the rule of the worship (*Lex Orandi Lex Credenti*). വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ബാലപാഠങ്ങളും മുതിർന്ന പാഠങ്ങളും ആരാധനയിൽ ഒത്തുപോകുന്നു. വെള്ളിയാഴ്ചയിലെ മൂന്നാം ഭാഗത്തെ സെദറായിൽ (പേജ് 150) വിശ്വാസപ്രമാണത്തിലെ മിക്കവാറും കാര്യങ്ങൾ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. സകലത്തെയും സൃഷ്ടിച്ച ദൈവം, യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിലുള്ള വീണ്ടെടുപ്പ്, രണ്ടാം വരവ് ഇവയെല്ലാം ഈ പ്രാർത്ഥനയിലുണ്ട്.

യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ദൈവത്വവും മനുഷ്യത്വവും ഹാശാക്രമത്തിൽ ഒരുമിച്ചു പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്നു. വിശ്വാസത്തെ വാക്കുകളിലൂടെ വിശദമാക്കുവാൻ വേണ്ടി മനുഷ്യൻ വിരുദ്ധമെന്നു തോന്നുന്ന കാര്യങ്ങളെ ഒന്നിച്ചു പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നു. കൗമാരിലെ 'മരണമില്ലാത്തവനെ നീ പരിശുദ്ധനാകുന്നു' എന്നതിനു പിന്നാലെ പറയുന്നത് 'മരണമുള്ളവനെ നീ പരിശുദ്ധനാകുന്നു' എന്നാണ്. ഹാശാക്രമത്തിൽ ഈ അവതരണശൈലി തുടരുന്നു. യേശുക്രിസ്തു 'മനുസുതനായൊരു ദൈവസുതൻ' (പേജ് 114) ആണ്. സർവലോകത്തിന്റെയും ന്യായാധിപതി അക്രമികളാൽ വിധിക്കപ്പെട്ടു (പേജ് 115). അഗ്നിജ്വാലയായ ദൈവപുത്രൻ നശ്വരരായ മനുഷ്യരാൽ വിധിക്കപ്പെട്ടത് ദൈവം ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ പരിമിതികളിലേക്ക് തന്നെത്തന്നെ ഏല്പിച്ചുകൊടുത്തതുകൊണ്ടാണ്.

ജഡാവതാരത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗം തന്നെയാണ് പീഡാനുഭവം. ദൈവസ്നേഹമാണ് ഇതിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനം. അതിനാൽ നോമ്പു ശുശ്രൂഷയുടെ പ്രധാന പ്രമേയം 'കഷ്ടത'യല്ല, 'ദൈവസ്നേഹ'മാണ്.

മനുഷ്യന്റെ ജീവൻ താൽകാലികമാണോ നിത്യമാണോ എന്നതല്ല വലിയ നോമ്പിന്റെ കാതൽ, ദൈവത്തിലാണോ അല്ലയോ എന്നതാണ്.

ചരിത്രാനുഭവങ്ങളെ വേദപുസ്തകവും ആരാധനക്രമങ്ങളും ഗൗരവമായി കാണുന്നു. ദുഷ്ടരായ യൂദർ (പേജ് 120,121) എന്ന പ്രയോഗം മനുഷ്യവർഗത്തെ സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ്. ഇസ്രയേലാകുന്ന ദൈവജനത്തെ ഫറവോൻ പീഡിപ്പിക്കുന്നതും ചേർത്തിരിക്കുന്നു (പേജ് 128). എന്നാൽ ഫറവോന്റെ കീഴടക്കൽ വാസനകൾക്ക് ജനം വേഗം കീഴടങ്ങി. ഫറവോന്മാരിലും, ഹെരോദാക്കന്മാരിലും ഇരുട്ടിലും ആശ്രയിക്കുമ്പോൾ നാം സൗഖ്യം അസാധ്യമാണെന്ന് ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ട് ദൈവമല്ലാത്തവയെ തകർത്തുകൊണ്ട് മാത്രമേ പുതിയ ആരംഭം കുറിക്കാനാവൂ. ഹാശാ ആരാധനനമ്മിൽ നിന്നു പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്നത് പുതിയ ജീവിത ക്രമം ഉണ്ടാക്കാനാണ്.

മിസ്രയീമിൽ നിന്നുള്ള മടക്കയാത്രയിൽ പ്രലോഭനങ്ങളെ നേരിട്ടുകൊണ്ടു മാത്രമേ ജനത്തിന് മുന്നോട്ടു പോകാനായുള്ളൂ. പുത്തൻ പ്രയാണത്തിന്റെ മനോഹാരിത ജനത തിരിച്ചറിയാതെ പോകുന്നുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ മരുഭൂമിയാത്ര മിസ്രയീമിലെ അടിമ - ഉടമ വ്യവസ്ഥിതിയുടെ സാമൂഹ്യബന്ധത്തെ തച്ചുടച്ച് പുതിയ സാമൂഹ്യ ബന്ധങ്ങളെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. പത്തു കല്പനകൾ ഇതിന്റെ സാക്ഷ്യപത്രം കൂടെയാണ്. ഉടമ്പടി സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ മാർഗരേഖയാണിത്. ആരാധന, വിശ്രമം, ലൈംഗികത, സാമ്പത്തികാരാഷ്ട്രീയ, നീതിന്യായ വ്യവസ്ഥിതികൾ എന്നവയിലെല്ലാം ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ പുതിയ തുടക്കങ്ങൾക്ക് വഴി തുറക്കുന്നു. അങ്ങനെ കാലത്തിലൂടെ സഞ്ചരിക്കാൻ ജനത പഠിച്ചു. കാലം സമ്മാനിച്ച ഓർമ്മകളെ മുന്നോട്ടുള്ള പ്രയാണത്തിന്റെ ഊർജമാക്കി മാറ്റി. ഈ കാലങ്ങളെയെല്ലാം ഹാശാക്രമം അനുസ്മരിക്കുന്നു. ചരിത്രാനുഭവങ്ങളുടെ വ്യത്യസ്ത കാലങ്ങളെ കോർത്തിണക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ചരിത്രം സൂചനകൾ തരുന്നവെന്ന് മാത്രമല്ല, ആരാധകൻ അഭിമുഖീകരിക്കേണ്ട യാഥാർത്ഥ്യവുമാണ്. ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ ഓർമ്മപ്പെടുത്തലുകൾ ആരാധനയുടെ ഭാഗമായിത്തീരുന്നു.

പാപത്തിന്റെ കാഠിന്യം വെളിവാക്കുന്നതാണ് പീഡാനുഭവ വാര സംഭവങ്ങൾ. പാപം ഒരു യാഥാർത്ഥ്യവും ശക്തവുമാണ് (പേജ് 139). യേശുവിനെ ഉപദ്രവിക്കുന്ന അധികാരികളെ മാത്രമല്ല, അവനെ വിട്ട് ഓടിപ്പോകുന്ന ശിഷ്യസമൂഹത്തെയും ഹാശാക്രമം വരച്ചുകാട്ടുന്നു. (പേജ് 127,142,143). ഇവ ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നും സമസൃഷ്ടികളിൽ നിന്നുമുള്ള ഒളിച്ചോട്ടത്തെയാണ് പ്രതിനിധീകരിക്കുന്നത്.

സ്വന്തം മക്കളെച്ചൊല്ലി കരയാതെ ദൈവപുത്രന്റെ പീഡാനുഭവങ്ങളെ പ്രതി വികാരഭരിതരാകുന്ന യേശുലേഖിലെ സ്ത്രീകളും അന്യവർകരണത്തിന്റെ പാതയിലാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സൃഷ്ടിയിലെ നല്ല തുടക്കം മനുഷ്യന്റെ സ്വയകേന്ദ്രീകൃതമായ പ്രതികരണങ്ങളിലൂടെ വികലമായി. സൃഷ്ടി അവതാളത്തിലായി.

മരണവും ഉയിർപ്പും തമ്മിലുള്ള അഭേദ്യ ബന്ധം ഹാശാക്രമം പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നു. മരണത്തിലൂടെയുള്ള ഉയിർപ്പും (പേജ് 44). മരണത്തിൽത്തന്നെയുള്ള ഉയിർപ്പും (പേജ് 154) ക്രിസ്തീയപെസഹായുടെ അവിഭാജ്യ ഘടകങ്ങളാണ്. ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ മരണവും ഉയിർപ്പും മനുഷ്യന് കേവലമൊരു മാതൃകയായി നല്കിയതല്ല. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ തേജസാണ് ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ വെളിപ്പെട്ടത്. അതിലൂടെ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ തേജസിലേക്ക് നമുക്ക് പ്രവേശനം സാധ്യമാക്കി.

പീഡാനുഭവങ്ങളിൽ പങ്കുകാരാകണമെന്നതാണ് ഹാശാ ആരാധനയുടെ ആഹ്വാനം. വൈകാരികമായ സഹതാപത്തിൽ അവസാനിക്കുന്ന പ്രതികരണമല്ല പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്നത്. ദൈവിക ജീവന്റെ പങ്കിലാണ് മനുഷ്യന്റെ ധർമ്മം. മനുഷ്യനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള മുഖ്യഉദ്ദേശ്യം ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കുക എന്നതാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷകരാകുന്നതിലൂടെയാണ് ദൈവസ്തുതി പാടുവാൻ കഴിയുന്നത്. "നിന്നെ വഹിക്കുന്ന വാഹനങ്ങളും, നിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷയ്ക്കു കൊള്ളാവുന്ന ഉപകരണങ്ങളുമായി ഞങ്ങളെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തേണമേ. മനസു തിരിഞ്ഞു യേശുലേഖിലെ പൈതങ്ങളെപ്പോലെ നിനക്കു സ്തുതി പാടുവാൻ ഞങ്ങൾക്കു കൃപ നല്കണമേ" (പേജ് 19). ദൈവപുത്രനെ ശിശുക്കൾ എതിരേറ്റതുപോലെ ആരാധകർ എതിരേല്ക്കണം എന്നതാണ് ഹോശാന ഞായറിലെ ആരാധനയുടെ പ്രധാന ആഹ്വാനം. അവഗണിക്കപ്പെട്ടവരെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടവരാക്കുന്നതാണ് പ്രമേയം. സ്തോത്രം കരേറലും രൂപാന്തരവും അഭേദ്യമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

ഓരോ പുതിയ ആരംഭവും പഴയതിന്റെ പ്രതിധ്വനിയോ പകർപ്പോ അല്ല, പ്രത്യുത പുതിയ പോരാട്ടത്തിന്റെ തുടക്കമാണ്. ഓരോ പുനർവായനയിലും ഓരോ വിജയത്തിലും നാം ചിന്തിക്കുന്നത് അത് പൂർണ്ണ വായനയാണെന്നാണ്, പൂർണ്ണ വിജയമാണെന്നാണ്. എന്നാൽ ഓരോ വായനയിലും പുനർവായന ആവശ്യം, ഓരോ വിജയത്തിലും മറ്റൊരു വിജയം ആവശ്യം. നിലവിലുള്ള വിജയത്തിലെ പൈശാചികതയിന്മേലുള്ള വിജയം. മറ്റൊന്നുണ്ടാകാൻ അവസരം ഒരുക്കുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ നാം മരിക്കുകയാണ്. വലിയ നോമ്പ് ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്നത് അവസരങ്ങളോട് ക്രിയാത്മകമായി പ്രതികരിച്ച് ജീവിതത്തെ പുതുക്കുന്നതും പുതിയ ക്രമങ്ങളെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നതുമാണ്.

BIBLE STUDY (Cont'd from page 11)

the faith affirmations of the community. Christian faith proclaims the salvific act of the Son of God in history. Jesus was born and brought up in a life- world exclusive religious community. Patriarchy and 'Priestocracy' are the norms of that society. Woman with a crippled body is the most vulnerable one in that society. In this social context, Jesus called and touched the woman with many sufferings. For the Jews, Scripture is a closed entity with many limitations to fulfill the needs of the marginalized. Jesus broke the shallow vision of the religion and its practices. He re-visions the scripture of the time by doing new practices of giving life to a helpless poor woman. Thus Jesus turned the poor and decaying Scripture into a new, life bound Word of God.

Conclusion

"Liturgy is always and everywhere constructing a world and therefore it is necessary to deconstruct the world as well". The present world demands to the liturgical community, to construct the world in a different way. We have to construct a world which is sensitive to both the Word and the reality, and re-position ourselves as divine agents of the Word, to start new practices as signs of the Kingdom. For this task, we need a 'habitus' of the Word of new imaginations to re-formulate the present world order into a divine order. The Church as a liturgical space, and a community of the Word, envisions the transformation of human agency into divine agency. ■

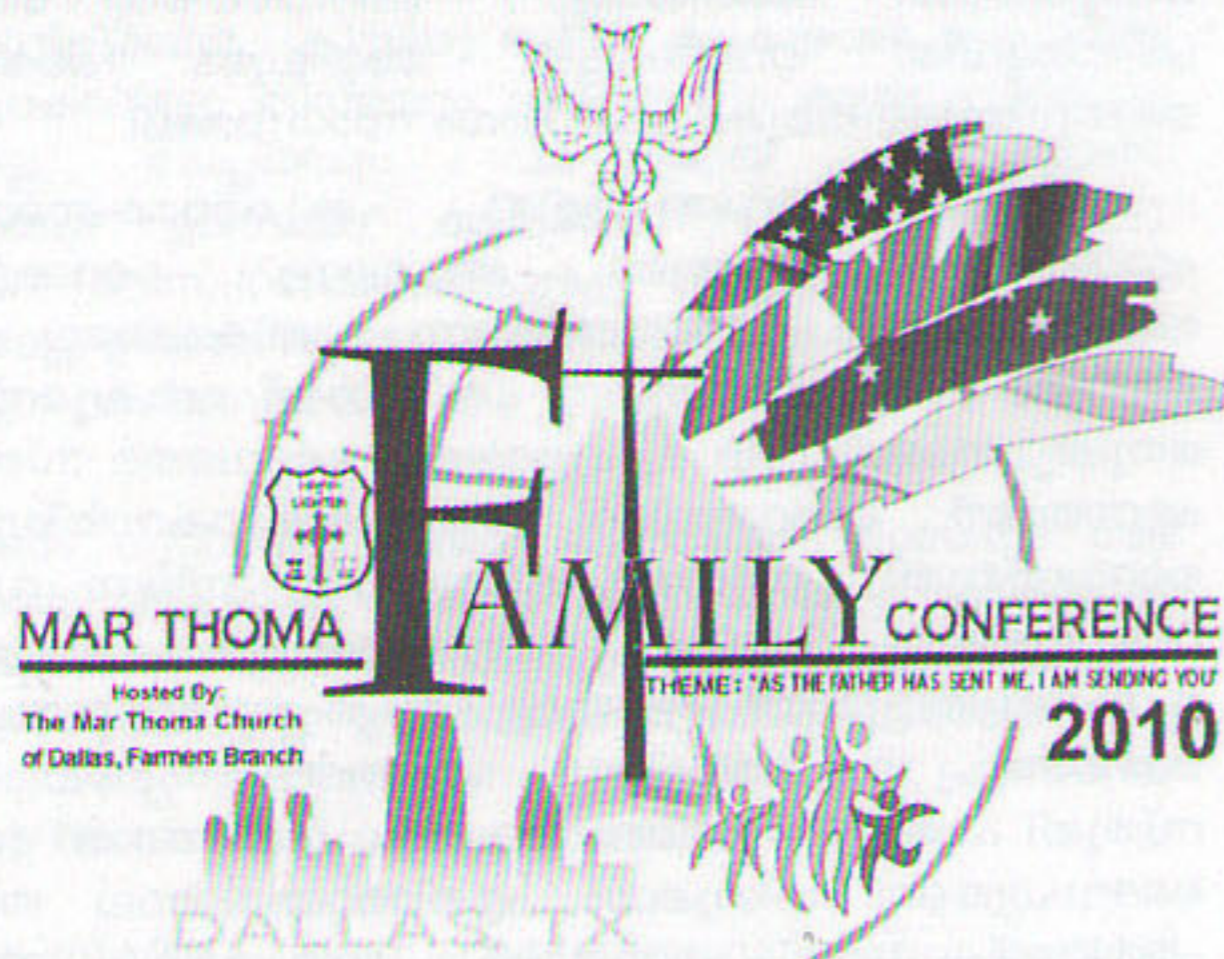
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Life is a Journey with Christ...

Rev. Joseph Daniel, Switzerland

Life is a journey. Life is short. In our more reflective moments, we remember these truths. If life is a journey, should we then not think about the fuel which powers us to our destination? As Christians, we are cognizant of the fact that prayer powers our journey; and that our ultimate destination is the eternal heavenly abode of our Lord and Master.

A little more than two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came and founded His Body, the Church through His Apostles and disciples for the salvation of the whole created order. In the years which followed, the Apostles spread His teachings far and wide. They established many churches, all united in faith, worship, doctrines and the partaking of the Mysteries of the Body of Christ.

The Church recognized that as it is a faith community, it could not exist meaningfully without reference to the larger community outside of it. They experienced Christian fellowship and unity in life before it was defined or explained. This is the reason why nurturing of the community is viewed as a vital ministry of the church.

One of the most striking elements of early Church Life is its members' sense of fellowship as exemplified in Acts 2, 42: *"They devoted themselves to the apostle's teachings and fellowship"*. This sense of fellowship was distinctively manifested in the Jerusalem community. They strove to be inclusive and ministered to the marginalized like the poor, especially widows and orphans. They shared their possessions. "None considered their property to be their own, but to be used for the good of all" (Acts 2:45-47). So they placed emphasis on the practice of faith in the form of doing good works, while at the same time subjecting themselves to the spiritual authority of the apostles and abiding by their teachings. "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds.... Can such faith save him? ...In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:14-17).

Sadly, the situation today is quite different. An astonishing number of denominations and para-Christian religious groups claim to be the successors of the early Church. Claims and counter-claims are the order of the day. A yardstick for truth is needed by which to compare what the Church originally believed in and practiced with what these groups claim. In this climate of confusion, we should examine the human situation, both within and outside the church.

There is an increasing division of biblical faith from mainstream contemporary life. Most people, including Christians, see Christian life as a matter of adhering to routines and regulations that are unrelated to the art of living. To them, spirituality has little to do with the

challenges and possibilities of "secular life". Hence, the scope of Christian living is reduced to seeking favors from God.

To the majority, life is to be lived according to the pressures and pulls of human nature and popular secular culture, in pursuit of instant personal gratification. This is achieved with no regard for cost or consequence, or consideration for the welfare of others. However, the proof of the vitality of a spiritual tradition is the extent to which it empowers the most vulnerable segments of a society or community. It is this insight that underlies Jesus' announcement that He came to "to preach the good news to the poor... to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Poverty is the essence of vulnerability. Contrary to popular assumption, modern man is most vulnerable. The more materially privileged they are, the more vulnerable they tend to be. This vulnerability stems from emotional, relational and spiritual poverty or deprivation. The worst part of this human condition is the lack of awareness of this sorry state of existence.

Contributing factors include unprecedented affluence, ever-expanding boundaries of individual freedom, the collapse of moral norms under cultural pressures, perilous neglect of the logic of life, depletion of the sources of guidance and counselling, emergence of a culture of consumerism and indulgence, etc.

In addition, there is something about the relentless speed, drive and spirit of this age that is incompatible with Christian living. The frantic pace of a consumerist lifestyle robs this generation of the leisure to be. Man is too busy and blinded by his pursuits to enjoy the gift of life. Spiritual alienation results, trapping man in an emotional void.

There is an urgent need to address this situation. We need deliverance. Salvation is the divine gift by which we are delivered from sin and death, united with Christ, and brought into His eternal Kingdom. Salvation demands our faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot save ourselves by our own good works. It is a never-ending life-long process, where we strive with God's help for perfection. As humans, we are fallible and must keep striving. In this process, a contemplative and prayerful life would help us to get on the authentic track of life, which in turn brings us to the original blessedness.

Like breathing is essential to sustaining life, prayer sustains our spiritual health. Like breathing, prayer must become second nature. Prayer aligns us to God's will as it is the conduit for communication with God. In this communication hierarchy, as modelled by our Master in the "Lord's

(Continued on page 17)

They Betrayed Him.....!

Lal Varghese Esq., MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

Throughout the Bible, we see history of betrayal by individuals. The first couple Adam and Eve disobeyed God by betrayal when they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. Jacob, for the sake of inheriting elder brother's birthright, betrayed Esau. Israelites, God's own people, whom Moses was trying to liberate from the slavery in Egypt at God's command, betrayed Moses and God several times during their journey through the desert. The brothers of Joseph betrayed him, by pushing him in to the abandoned well and finally by selling him to the slave traders. Potiphar's wife betrayed her husband when she attempted to seduce Joseph. The Potiphar's butler also betrayed Joseph, by not speaking to the Pharaoh of Joseph's innocence so that he can be released from jail.

Betrayals between brothers led to conflicts between people and tribes as seen in Genesis. There is betrayal in the conflicts; between Abraham and Lot, between Ishmael and Isaac, and between Jacob and Esau. The rivalry between Cain and Abel, which resulted in the first murder in history, was caused by betrayal and jealousy. Samson's wife betrayed him to protect her house and people. Dililah, the young Philistine woman, with whom Samson fell in love, also betrayed him by revealing the secret of his strength to the rulers of Philistine, so that they may defeat Samson. Saul became very sad in his heart since he betrayed God, who had given him all wisdom in the world. After Saul disobeyed the voice of the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord left Saul, and no longer spoke to him.

Peter denied of any connection with Jesus before rooster's crow as predicted by Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus, by pointing out Him to the soldiers for thirty silver coins. The disciples who followed Jesus also betrayed Him when He was crucified by running away from Him. The crowd, who followed Jesus and uttered 'Hosanna' a week before, betrayed Him by insisting to crucify Him and making fun of Him at Calvary. Human history depicts many such acts of betrayal and dishonesty prompted by greed for positions, power, wealth, and other pleasures of life. The root cause of such human actions can be traced to lack of faith in God. We tend to do things for self-glorification and not for the glory of our creator and protector. Jesus warned us of scribes and Pharisees in Luke 20: 46-47: 'Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'

On the other hand, we see Biblical characters who were totally loyal to God, and the people around. When

King Nebuchadnezzar ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to worship the golden image, they refused to do so and told that they will bow down only before the living God. When the King threw them in the furnace, they did not betray their God and He saved them from the furnace. The story of Daniel was also not different, since he did not betray the living God and refused to bow down before the King Darius. The God saved him from the lion's den, which prompted King Darius to proclaim that all should fear and worship the living God of Daniel, above all other Gods, who only can save mankind. When Satan tempted Job with several trials and tribulations in his life, he never betrayed the living God. Abraham, Moses, Enoch, and Noah obeyed God and never had forsaken God, even at adverse times. David kept his faith in God and never betrayed Him even when he had to face the giant Philistine. Joseph, the faithful carpenter from Nazareth, never betrayed Mary to whom he was engaged, when he found out that she was pregnant before their marriage. He obeyed God's commands and kept the secret by himself and accepted Mary as his wife.

There are also people in Bible, who kept their faith in God and never betrayed God and of those who trusted them for attaining their personal goals. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of the Lord. Are we prepared to accept disgrace and shame by serving our Lord in the places and the positions where we are planted? On the other hand, are we trying to shower disgrace to our Lord and our brothers and sisters in Christ by our actions of betrayal? Legend is that Michelangelo painted with a brush in one hand and a candle in the other to prevent his shadow from covering his masterpiece in progress. Are we creating darkness in the lives of others by our own dishonest actions and betrayals? Cases of betrayal occurs in our individual, family, church, and community life. Many in our society represent self-motivated individuals, who have no concern for the pain and suffering being inflicted on others.

The name 'Christian' means one who is "adherent to Christ" - literally, one who "sticks" to Christ. Today many people call themselves Christians, including Marthomites as 'Syrian Christians', being proud of their rich heritage and traditions. If we call ourselves a Christian, then our life should reveal to others who Jesus is. Philippians 2:1 reminds us about imitating Christ's humility. 'If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy com-

plete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than you. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.'

When the believers in Corinth were feeling too much of themselves, Paul warned them "that no flesh should glory [boast] in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:29). Colossians 3:12-17 says: 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'

The legend is that the word 'scapegoat' originated from a ceremony performed with two goats on the Hebrew Day of Atonement. The high priest would sacrifice one goat and symbolically place the sins of the people on the head of the other—the scapegoat—before it was sent into the wilderness carrying away the blame of the sin (Lev. 16:7-10). Are we using others as scapegoats for our own faults and shortcomings by betraying them? An anonymous person says: "It is a simple thing to say that Christ died for the sins of the world. It is quite another thing to say that Christ died for my sins. It is a shocking thought that we can be as indifferent as Pilate, as scheming as Caiaphas, as callous as the soldiers, as ruthless as the mob, or as cowardly as the disciples.

It wasn't just what they did—it was I who nailed Him to the tree. I crucified the Christ of God. I joined the mockery."

In Matthew 23, Jesus called the Pharisees as hypocrites seven times! They were religious people who were putting on a big show, but Jesus knew their hearts. According to Max Lucado, 'they wear their doctrine on their sleeves, they make the boxes of Scriptures that they wear bigger, they make their special prayer clothes very long, they demand the choice seats since they love to have the most important seats at feasts and in the synagogues and they take pride in their titles. They do good things so that other people will see them, they complicated gospel with odd myths and superstition, they were arrogant because they were self righteous.' Are we like those Pharisees trying to put out a big show to please the people around us? But, remember, you may be able to please the crowd, but not the One who created you. We need to have a full faith in Jesus Christ in the assurance that He will never leave us alone. When the creation betrayed the creator, the Heaven felt the pain and repented for creating human being in His own image as stated in Genesis 6: 5-6: 'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.' So, let us not do wickedness and evil through our betrayals to cause Him to grieve in His heart.

Galatians 6: 7-10 says: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." ■

Life is a Journey with Christ... *(Cont'd from page 15)*

Prayer", the focus is primarily on God, His Kingdom and Will. This is followed by the needs of "our neighbor" and others. Our personal concerns and requests come last. This is the way our prayer should also be.

There are two dimensions to prayer—corporate prayer and personal prayer. Both play an important part in our spiritual journey. So, our spiritual journey should be a key concern of the Church. To be effective, the Church must be seen to be relevant, and be in tune with day-to-day human situations. Corporate worship must address the life situations of people.

For personal prayer to be effective, man's aspirations of striving for holiness and emulating our Master hinges on his ability to be subjugated to Christ and to control his own inner drives and passions. According to Eastern spirituality, fasting, and restraint from anger and jealousy, sexual pas-

sion, sensual stimulation, and all inner turmoil which makes us do things against our own free will, is a necessary preparation for prayer. This preparation enables us to worship in truth and spirit, by involving our whole being—body, mind and spirit.

This realignment through prayer will power our journey such that we strive to shift from an "I" centric alienated existence to a more "God-centric" and "fellow human beings centric" fullness of life. We will be empowered to live a more Godly life and be better able to withstand the pressures and pulls of human nature and secular culture, while being fully engaged in society. A community of such fervent believers will translate into corporate worship which will be in tune with the realities and vulnerabilities of society, and offer the world a relevant and necessary alternative. ■

Message of the Great Lent and Easter

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For you know that it was not with the perishable things such as silver or gold you were redeemed (1 Peter 1:18)

Introduction

Easter, literally, is a Christian festival commemorating the resurrection of Christ, held on the Sunday following Good Friday. However, Easter is not uniquely a Christian festival. Biblically, Easter is a Greek translation of "pascha" which means Passover (Acts 12:4). Easter was a pagan festival observed long before Christ was born. It is not a Christian name, but is derived from "Ishtar", one of the Babylonian (Modern Northern Iraq) titles of an idol goddess, the Queen of Heaven. The Saxon goddess Eastre is the same as the Astarte, the Syrian Venus, called Ashtoreth in the Old Testament. It was the worship of woman by Israel that was such an abomination to God (1 Samuel 7:3). Round cakes imprinted with the sign of the cross was made at this festival, the sign being, in the Babylonian mysteries, a sign of life. Easter eggs, which play a greater part in today's celebrations, were common in all heathen nations. The fable of the egg declares that "an egg of wondrous size fell from heaven into the river Euphrates; the fish rolled it to the bank, where doves settled upon it and hatched it; and out came Astarte or Ishtar, the goddess of Easter".

Easter, Christmas, Lent and other Babylonian festivals were all borrowed from this religion and were all observed for centuries before Christ. Curiously, none of them have any relationship to Christ or Christianity.

Christmas brought Peace and Glory to Christians while Easter bought redemption for sinners and so the message of Easter is Redemption. There is a cause and effect relationship between worship to God and peace on earth. We intermittently develop an uncanny alliance with Satan, a rival to God, and so remain in conflict within us, between us and between God's creations. So we live in sin and someone has to break the mould to scoop us out of the depths of sin. On Good Friday, Jesus Christ, the Son of God paid the ultimate price of saving us from the grips of Satan and emancipated us from conflict to peace and dignity. But, against the wishes of Satan, on the third day, He rose again to glory and by His death we are redeemed from sins.

What is Redemption

Redemption means various things for various people. However, Biblically, redemption means to buy back or repurchase. In other words, redemption is an act of rescuing someone from the dangers of sin with a ransom. Salvation and redemption, although inaccurately, are used synonymously. However, redemption is only one event in the process of salvation. Salvation is an all-inclusive word of gospel, embracing all redemptive acts and processes.

Salvation and redemption come from the Greek words "soteria" and "apolutrosis" respectively. In short, in this complex event of redemption there are two actors and three components. The actors are the redeemer and the redeemed. In the context of the Old Testament, Father God is the redeemer and the Israelites the redeemed. But in the New Testament, the Jesus Christ is the redeemer and any sinner

who is willing to be a Christian is the redeemed. The three components of Redemption are sin, ransom and rescue. Redemption is not a concept but a fact.

Metaphorically, the three components of redemption are stratified as sedimentary layers of rock or three layers of onion skin or three strands plaited in a rope or a cord. The strands are sin, ransom and rescue firmly tied together as in a rope or arranged one layer over the other as in a rock or in an onion. We see the inner layer when we remove the outer layer and if we keep removing the layers we are left with nothing. But in redemption we get rescued from the dangers of sin by Savior Jesus Christ. Simply put, when sin is removed with blood of Jesus, sinners are redeemed.

Sin

So the first strand in the process of redemption is sin. Sin is described as violation of conscience or of divine law. Alternatively, sin means missing the mark or falling short of God's perfect standard. In Galatians 3:15-23, St. Paul describes law. He revealed to Galatians that law has two functions—one positive and one negative. On the positive side, it reveals the nature and will of God and shows people how to live. On the negative side, it points out our sins and shows us that it is impossible to please God simply by trying to obey all His laws. The more we know God and His laws the more we recognize how sinful we are.

In the Old Testament there were three categories of laws namely, Ceremonial Laws, Civil Laws and Moral Laws. Ceremonial law relate specifically to Israeli worship (Leviticus 1:1-13), the primary purpose of which was to focus attention on the birth of Jesus Christ. Although the principles of worship apply to us today, these laws are no longer necessary or relevant after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Civil Law is set out elaborately to give directions to Jews about their daily living (Deuteronomy 24:10-11). These guidelines cannot be strictly adhered to because modern culture and society are so radically different. But the principles behind the commands should guide our conduct. Moral Law is the direct command of God as is the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). They reveal the nature and will of God and still apply to us today. Modesty and moderation were the watchwords of Syrian Christians, which has given way to emotional exuberance.

We are obliged to obey the laws to live a life which is pleasing to God, and not to obtain salvation. We observe the laws to be "safe than sorry", however difficult the law is. We commit sins by commission and omission. Equally, inaction, underaction or overreaction amounts to willful neglect, which in turn would lead to heinous crimes and sin. Crucially, provoking or not preventing a crime is sin by willful misconduct and willful negligence respectively. Therefore, we tend to miss the intents and purposes of God's words when we read the rules for living. We are unable or unwilling to grasp why laws were made and so we interpret laws to suit our needs. We do keep God's rules

but close our eyes to the intents. In Criminal Law aiding and abetting as well as provocation are crimes, although the former carries a lesser sentence than the latter.

Ransom

The second strand in the complex process of redemption is ransom. Ransom is the price paid for release from captivity. It is a modern phenomenon in which arrogant people take other people hostage to express grievances. Other cunning and devious people take revenge on their fellow human beings to express disapproval of inaccessible political masters. In either case, governments or Non-Governmental Organizations or Charities work behind the screens and offer ransom of cash or other resources to secure freedom. Predictably, the time and other valuable resources are expended on the release of the innocent creatures from captivity.

In the Old Testament times, people offered an equivalent slave or a superior one to buy back a slave. In the Bible, ransom is compared to short arms or long arms and highways. In Isaiah 50:2 God asked "was my arm too short to ransom you and do I lack the strength to rescue you" which means "am I powerless to help"? God promised to fight for Israel but Israel sold itself into sin. In Isaiah 35:10 ransom is compared to a highway "the way of holiness" which the righteous pilgrims will take from desert to Zion. God is in the highway beside us protecting us from wicked travelers and dangerous animals.

Hebrew 9:15 announces how Jesus Christ paid the ransom under the first covenant which means that people of the Old Testament offered unblemished animal sacrifices in anticipation of Christ's arrival and death. Jesus revealed in Matthew 20:29 to the disciples that only His death would save them and the world. He paid the ultimate ransom in His death. But the disciples thought that as long as Jesus was alive, He could save them.

Rescue

The third strand in redemption is rescue itself. Rescue means to save from the danger or harm (of sin). In the Old Testament there are several stories about rescue like the rescue of Joseph and Israelites. But in the context of redemption, rescue refers to freedom from the internal struggle and subsequent sin committed. Romans 7:24 reads "what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" This inward struggle with sin was real for Paul as it is for us. We learn from Paul what to do about it. Whenever he felt lost he would return to the beginning of his spiritual life, remembering that Jesus Christ had already freed him. So when we feel confused or overwhelmed by sin's appeal, we are advised to follow Paul's example which is to thank God that He has given us freedom through Jesus Christ. Let the reality of Christ's power lift us up to real victory over sin. In Galatians 1:4, St. Paul talks about being rescued from the evil age which means our loyalty has been transferred to Jesus Christ. Here we learn to live among evils but not enslaved by them. In Galatians 1:14, St. Paul talks about rescue from the dominion of darkness. Paul describes how to live in hope rescued from persecutions (1 Thessalonians 1:10) and Peter explains how to survive trial and temptation (2 Peter 2:9).

Parallels have been drawn between the Law of Adoption and Rescue. Under Roman law, an adopted child was guaranteed all

legal rights to his fathers's property although he was formerly a slave. He was not a second class son. He was equal to other sons, biological or adopted, in his father's family. As adopted children of God's family we share with Jesus Christ, all the rights of God's resources. As God's heirs, we can claim our full identity as children. Clearly, rights go with privileges and responsibilities. One of the outstanding privileges is being led by the spirit (Romans 8:14-17). His inward presence reminds us about our identity and the privileges that go with it, which is God's love (Romans 8:23). The Holy Spirit in us is a guarantee that we belong to God (Ephesians 4:30) and that we are rescued from sin.

Old Testament Vs New Testament

In the Old Testament, redemption is rather loosely used. In Exodus 12:29-30, we read "at midnight the Lord struck down all the first born in Egypt". Every first born child of Egyptians died but the Israelite children were spared because the blood of lamb had been placed on their door frames. So the story of redemption is the central theme of the Bible. Redemption is also used to mean release from captivity. In Exodus 6:6, Father God promised "I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the yoke of Egyptians". Israelites were bracing themselves for repression but God intervened with His mighty power and performed great miracles to deliver them. God's promises in these verses were fulfilled to the letter when the Israelites left Egypt. He freed them from slavery, He became their God and He accepted them as His people. Then He led them towards the land He had promised.

In the New Testament, redemption has a new perspective, meaning and dimension. Here God bought us back and He offered His son in exchange for us. He accepts us and He becomes our God when He redeems us from sins. Then He leads us to a new life to follow Him. When Jesus came He substituted His perfect life for our sinful lives, taking the penalty for sin that we deserve. Thus He redeemed us from the power of sin and restored us to God. It is our duty to sustain the rescue. His sacrifice made animal sacrifice irrelevant and unnecessary. We must recognize that if we want to be freed from the deadly consequences of our sins, a tremendous price must be paid. We do not have to pay it as Jesus Christ, our substitute, has already redeemed us by His death on the Cross. We, in our part, have to trust Him and accept His free gift of eternal life. Our sins have been paid for and the way has been cleared for us to begin a relationship with God (Titus 2:14, Hebrews 9:13-15, 23-25).

Summary

In summary, Christmas brought us peace and Easter Redemption. Redemption means to save sinners from the dangers of sin by paying a price. In the Old Testament, God accepted symbolic offerings like the life of an animal in the place of the life of the sinner. When Jesus died on the Cross He substituted His perfect life for our sinful lives, taking the penalty we deserve for our sins. We are restored to God and animal sacrifices are no longer necessary because Jesus has sacrificed Himself. Now we do not have to pay the expensive price to get redeemed. Jesus has paid the perfect and ultimate price to free us from the deadly consequences of sins. Now we are redeemed and forgiven on the basis that He has shed His blood (Mathew 20:28; Ephesians 1:17).

In order to get redeemed, we have to have a humble heart to accept Him and His free gift for eternal life. Redemption is free and is a gift of God. There is no time limit or expiry date. It is freely available all the time. It is handy and it is our responsibility to get hold of it. It would be construed as terrible negligence to miss such a free gift. Sin is the first strand of redemption. Sin means falling short of the perfect standard of God. However, human interpretation of sin falls far short of His golden standard. We live in sin because we do things we ought not to have done and we do not do what we ought to have done. We are less generous to accept that we instigate others to commit crimes. Nevertheless, God is willing to accept those with a humble heart to receive Him. Jesus Christ has paid the price and so we can go free. The price of sin is death. Jesus paid the price.

So, as a judge in a court of law declares "the defendant is not guilty", He has acquitted us and all the charges are removed from the records. God has forgiven our sins and our records have been wiped clean as though we have never sinned (Romans 3:24, 8:23). However, (Romans: 1:18) God's anger erupts against those who persist in sinning. He cannot condone or ignore willful rebellion. He seeks only our humble heart and compliance. Now we are redeemed and we are privileged to inherit the Holy Spirit and if we do not accept the free offer, we will live in sin. Satan is more

active than ever before with his expansive ambition to drive a wedge between our redeemer and us.

Conclusion

To conclude, as sinners from below separated from God above, we see His laws as a ladder to be climbed to God. We cannot climb the ladder without help from above. Perhaps we have repeatedly tried to climb up the ladder to God, only to fall to the grounds every time we have advanced one or two rungs. Alternatively, the sheer height of the ladder seems so overwhelming that we have never started up. In either case, we feel relieved to see Jesus offering His open arms to lift us above the ladder of the law to take us directly to God. Once we are lifted up to God's presence we, out of love but not necessity, are able to obey the laws and if we stumble, we will not fall back to the ground; instead Jesus will hold us dearly in His loving arms (Romans 5:20). We have to make an effort to put our feet on the rungs because redemption is prepaid as the Bible says: "In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:8). Finally, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you are redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19). ■ Email: Samuel.easow@sky.com

അമ്മ

ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ അക്ഷയഖനിതൂറക്കുന്ന താക്കോലാണു അമ്മയുടെ സ്നേഹം.

(Bishop Fulton)

ഇന്നു ഞാൻ ആയിരിക്കുന്നത് എല്ലാറ്റിനും ഇനി എന്തായിതീരും എന്നു പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്ന സർവ്വത്തിനും മാലാഖതുല്യമായ എന്റെ അമ്മയോടു ഞാൻ കടപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

(Abraham Lincoln)

ആയിരം അദ്ധ്യാപകരെക്കാൾ മൂല്യമുണ്ട് ഒരു നല്ല മാതാവിന്.

(George Herbert)

ഭാര്യയെപ്പോലെ മനുഷ്യന് ആനന്ദം നൽകുന്ന മറ്റൊന്നും ഭൂമുഖത്തില്ല.

(Becon)

ഭാര്യ യുവാവിന്റെ യജമാനത്തിയും മദ്ധ്യവയസ്കന്റെ കുട്ടുകാരിയും വൃദ്ധന്റെ പരിചാരികയുമാണ്. ഒരു മനുഷ്യനു സംഭവിക്കുന്ന ഏറ്റവും സങ്കടകരമായ അപകടം അവനു ദൈവത്തിലും അതുപോലെ സ്ത്രീയിലുമുള്ള വിശ്വാസം നശിക്കുക എന്നതാണ്.

(Alexander Smith)

കുടുംബം പറുദീസയാക്കിമാറ്റാൻ അമ്മയ്ക്കു കഴിയും. സന്തോഷസന്താപങ്ങൾ ഇഴപാകിയ വസ്ത്രമാണ് ജീവിതം. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഊടും പാവും ദൈവത്തിൽ സമർപ്പിക്കുക ജീവിതം ധന്യമാകും.

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- Begin with an early rise
- Mix in a light two-mile walk
- Add a healthy breakfast
- Sprinkle in laughter, smiles, and cheer
- STIR well
- Continue on Medium
- Gradually mix in hard work and a sense of accomplishment
- Cool down frequently
- Add several servings of organic fruit, light protein, and enough carbs
- Stir in brief meditation (optional)
- Sprinkle in friends and family
- Cool again
- Flatten and let rest for eight hours!!

(Contributed by Mrs. Mariamma Abraham [K.C.], Bethel MTC, Philadelphia)



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തകർച്ചയുടെ കാലത്തെ രക്ഷാദൗത്യം സഭയ്ക്ക്

തോമസ് മാർ തിമോത്തിയോസ്

തകർച്ചയിൽ നിന്നു സമൂഹത്തെ കരകയറ്റുകയാണ് സഭയുടെയും വിശ്വാസികളുടെയും ദൗത്യമെന്നു തോമസ് മാർ തിമോത്തിയോസ് പ്രസ്താവിച്ചു. 115-ാം മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ രണ്ടാം ദിവസം രാവിലത്തെ യോഗത്തിൽ മുഖ്യപ്രസംഗം നടത്തുകയായിരുന്നു മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭ തിരുവനന്തപുരം-കൊല്ലം ഭദ്രാസനാധിപൻ തോമസ് മാർ തിമോത്തിയോസ്.

യോവേൽ പ്രവചനം 2: 25 നെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി പ്രസംഗിച്ച മാർ തിമോത്തിയോസ് തകർച്ചയുടെ പഴയകാല ചിത്രമാണ് വരച്ചുകാട്ടിയത്. വെട്ടുകളി, വിട്ടിൽ, തുള്ളൻ, പച്ച പൂഴു ഇവ തിന്നുന്നതിനായി വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു പകരം സംവൽസരങ്ങളെ നൽകുമെന്ന ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഉറപ്പാണ് യോവേൽ പ്രവചനം. മലയാള മനോരമയിൽ തകർച്ചയുടെ മാനക്കാഴ്ച എന്ന പേരിൽ വന്ന യൂഎസിലെ വേൾഡ് ട്രേഡ് സെന്ററിന്റെ ചിത്രം ശ്രദ്ധേയമായിരുന്നു. ആനന്ദം മനുഷ്യനെ വിട്ടുകലുന്ന ഈ കാലത്ത് ദൈവത്തിങ്കലേക്കുള്ള തിരിച്ചുവരവു മാത്രമാണ് തകർച്ചയ്ക്കുള്ള പരിഹാരം. പുണയിൽ കഴിഞ്ഞദിവസമുണ്ടായ ഭീകരാക്രമണത്തെപ്പറ്റിയും പരാമർശിച്ച മാർ തിമോത്തിയോസ് ഇവയൊക്കെ തകർച്ചയുടെ വിവിധ മുഖങ്ങളാണെന്നു അഭിപ്രായപ്പെട്ടു. ഒറീസയിലും മറ്റും മതമൗലികവാദത്തിന്റെ പേരിൽ ആക്രമണം നടക്കുന്നു. മത പ്രസംഗങ്ങളുടെ അതിപ്രസരത്തിനിടയിലും സഭ തകർച്ചയുടെ നടുവിലെ കാഴ്ചക്കാരുടെ സമൂഹമായി മാറുന്നു.

കുടുംബ, സാമൂഹിക, രാഷ്ട്രീയ, സാമ്പത്തിക, ഭൗതിക തലങ്ങളിൽ തകർച്ച യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ്. സമൂഹത്തിലെ തകർച്ചകളെ തിരിച്ചറിയേണ്ടത് സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യമാണ്. തകർച്ചയെക്കുറിച്ചു ഭാരമുണ്ടായിരിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് പ്രവാചക ദൗത്യം. ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തെ നിസംഗതയോടെയല്ല ഗൗരവത്തോടെ കാണണം.

രാഷ്ട്രീയ കൊലപാതകങ്ങളും അധികാരത്തിനു വേണ്ടി ജനങ്ങളെ മറക്കുന്ന നേതാക്കളും തകരുന്ന രാഷ്ട്രീയ രംഗത്തിന്റെ ചിത്രങ്ങളാണ്. ഇന്നലെ പറഞ്ഞത് ഇന്ന് ഓർക്കാത്ത നേതാക്കൾ പെരുകുന്നു. അധികാരം മാത്രം ലക്ഷ്യമാക്കിയുള്ള ഇവരുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം കാരണം ഭരണം സ്തംഭിക്കുന്നു.

ആത്മീയരംഗത്തും സമാന ചിത്രമാണ്. മത പ്രസംഗങ്ങളുടെ അതിപ്രസരം ഉള്ളപ്പോൾ പോലും ജനങ്ങളിൽ ഗുണപരമായ വ്യത്യാസമുണ്ടാകാത്തത് ആത്മീയ രംഗത്തിലെ തകർച്ചയാണ്. അണികളെ പിടിച്ചുനിർത്തുന്ന ആൾ ദൈവങ്ങളുടെ എണ്ണം വർദ്ധിക്കുകയാണ്. ഇവിടെ ആത്മീയ വ്യാപാരം വർദ്ധിക്കുന്നു. ജീവനെ സംരക്ഷിക്കാൻ കടപ്പെട്ട സഭ ജീവനെ ഹനിക്കുന്ന പ്രവർത്തന

ങ്ങളിൽ നിസംഗത പുലർത്തുന്നു. പൊലീസ് അക്രമി യോടെ കുർബാന നടത്തേണ്ടി വരുമ്പോൾ ആത്മീയ രംഗത്തെ തകർച്ചയ്ക്കു തെളിവാണ്.

കുടുംബ ബന്ധങ്ങളിലും ഇന്നു തകർച്ചയുടെ അനുഭവമാണ്. വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ നിലവാരം ഉയർന്നപ്പോൾ വിവാഹമോചന നിരക്കും വർദ്ധിച്ചു. കാമുകനു വേണ്ടി ഭർത്താവിനെ കൊല്ലാൻ മടിക്കാത്ത ഭാര്യമാർ, പിതാവിനെ കൊല്ലുന്ന മക്കൾ, മരുമക്കൾ.

നാട്ടിൽ വ്യഭസദനങ്ങളുടെ എണ്ണം വർദ്ധിക്കുന്നു. സാമ്പത്തിക ശേഷി ഉള്ളവർ പോലും സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ കാര്യത്തിൽ അനാഥത്വം അനുഭവിക്കുന്നു. മക്കളില്ലാത്തവർ മാത്രമല്ല പത്തു മക്കളുള്ള അമ്മമാരും ഇന്ന് അനാഥരാണ്. വൈകാരികമായി പകപതയില്ലാത്ത കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ ആത്മഹത്യയിൽ അഭയം തേടുന്നു. ബാല്യംമുതലേ ചോദിച്ചതും ചോദിക്കാത്തതും ലഭിച്ചു വളരുന്ന കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ അരുത് വേണ്ട എന്നു കേൾക്കുമ്പോഴേ തളർന്ന് ആത്മഹത്യയിലേക്കു പോവുകയാണ്. ജീവൻ സംരക്ഷിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ട കുടുംബങ്ങളിൽ ജീവൻ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന അവസ്ഥ. ലഹരിയും മദ്യവും വ്യാപകമായതോടെ റോഡ് അപകടങ്ങൾ വർദ്ധിച്ചു. 12-ാം ക്ലാസിൽ പഠിക്കുന്ന കുട്ടികൾ മദ്യപിച്ചു വരുന്നതിനാൽ അധ്യാപികമാർ ക്ലാസെടുക്കാൻ ഭയപ്പെടുന്ന സ്ഥിതി. ലോകത്തിൽ ഇന്നു വരെ കണ്ടിട്ടില്ലാത്ത പുതിയ പകർച്ച വ്യാധികൾ വ്യാപിക്കുന്നു. ആഗോള താപനമെന്ന ഭീഷണി ഇതിനു പുറമെ. ഒരു വശത്ത് പുരോഗതിയാണെന്നു തോന്നിപ്പിക്കുമെങ്കിലും മറുവശത്ത് തകർച്ചയെന്നതായിരിക്കുന്നു കാലഘട്ടത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകത. വയൽശൂന്യമായും വീഞ്ഞുവറ്റിയും എണ്ണ ക്ഷയിച്ചുമിരിക്കുന്ന കാലത്തെപ്പറ്റി യോവേൽ പ്രവാചകൻ വേദനിച്ചതുപോലെ സഭ ഇന്നു പ്രവാചക ദൗത്യത്തോടെ ഈ തകർച്ചയെ നേരിടണം.

രാഷ്ട്ര നിർമ്മാണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ സഭാംഗങ്ങൾ പങ്കാളി കളാകണം. ആരു ഭരിച്ചാലും ഒന്നുമില്ലെന്ന മനോഭാവം മാറ്റണം. വോട്ടവകാശം പരമാവധി ഉപയോഗിക്കണം. വ്യക്തമായ രാഷ്ട്രീയ നിലപാട് എടുക്കാൻ സാധിക്കണം. അടിയന്തരാവസ്ഥയെ സഭയെയും എതിർത്ത യൂഹാനോൻ മാർത്തോമ്മയുടെ പാരമ്പര്യം നമുക്ക് അവകാശപ്പെടാം. തകർച്ച കണ്ടിട്ടും നിസംഗത നടിക്കുന്ന സ്റ്റോക്ക്ഹോം സിൻഡ്രോമിനു സഭയോ വിശ്വാസികളോ അടിമപ്പെടരുത്. ജീവനക്കാരെ ബന്ധിതമാക്കിയ ബാങ്ക് ജീവനക്കാർ കുറെ ദിവസം കഴിഞ്ഞ് കൊള്ളക്കാരെ സ്നേഹിക്കുന്ന അവസ്ഥ സംജാതമായതിനെപ്പറ്റിയാണ് സ്റ്റോക്ക്ഹോം സിൻഡ്രോം എന്നു പറയുന്നത്. സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ ആർ, വിമർശിക്കുന്നവർ ആർ, സ്വീകരിക്കാത്തവർ ആർ, സ്തുതി പാടുന്നവർ ആർ എന്നീ നാലു കാര്യങ്ങൾ പരിശോധിച്ചാൽ ഒരു

വ്യക്തി യഥാർഥ ക്രിസ്ത്യാനിയാണോ എന്നറിയാം. ഫാ. ഡാമിയൻ കുഷ്ടരോഗമെന്ന തകർച്ചയെ നേരിട്ടു. ആഹാബ് രാജാവിന്റെ തകർച്ചയെ ഏലിയാവ് വിമർശിച്ചു. ഹെറോദാവിന്റെ തകർച്ചയെ യോഹന്നാൻ സ്നാപകൻ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്തു. മനുഷ്യനെ ചൂഷണം ചെയ്യുന്നിടത്ത് നീതി പഠിപ്പിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്ന മിഷനറിമാർ ദൗത്യം തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നവരാണ്. തകർച്ചയിൽ നിന്നു സമൂഹത്തെ രക്ഷിക്കാൻ അവർ ശ്രമിക്കുമ്പോൾ മതപരിവർത്തനത്തിന്റെയും മറ്റും പേരു പറഞ്ഞ് ചൂഷകർ എതിർപ്പുമായെത്തുന്നു.

ഇത് മത ഭക്തിയുടെ കാലമാണ്. സ്വാമി ഭക്തി താരതമ്യേന കുറയുന്നു. സ്വയം പര്യാപ്തതയിൽ ദൈവം എന്തിനെന്നു ചിന്തിക്കുകയാണ് ജനങ്ങൾ. പൂർവ്വ പിതാക്കളുടെ പ്രാർഥനയുടെ ഫലമായി അനുഗ്രഹങ്ങൾ ലഭിക്കുമ്പോൾ ദൈവം എന്തിനെന്നുചോദിക്കുന്നവരാണ് ചുറ്റും. ക്രിസ്തുവിങ്കലേക്കു തിരിച്ചുവരവ് മാത്രമാണ് തകർച്ചയ്ക്കു പരിഹാരം. ഇള തലമുറയെ ദൈവ വിഷയത്തിൽ സമ്പന്നരാക്കാൻ മാതാപിതാക്കളും സൺഡേ

സ്കൂൾ അധ്യാപകരും ശ്രമിക്കണം. ആ ലക്ഷ്യം ഉറപ്പാക്കുക തന്നെ വേണം. വസ്ത്രങ്ങളെയല്ല ഹൃദയങ്ങളെ തന്നെ കീറുവീൻ എന്നാണ് പറയുന്നത്. പുതുക്കം ആന്തരികമായിരിക്കണമെന്ന് അർത്ഥം. തകർച്ച ഒരു ജീവിത യഥാർഥ്യമായിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ തന്നെ ദൈവത്തിങ്കലേക്കു തിരിയുന്നവർക്കു നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടതെല്ലാം ഇരട്ടിയായി തരുന്ന ദൈവത്തെയാണു ബൈബിൾ നമുക്കു കാണിച്ചു തരുന്നത്. തിരിച്ചുവരവിൽ ഭൗതിക സമ്പാദ്യം മാത്രമല്ല, ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ആത്മാവിനെയും നിങ്ങൾക്കു നൽകും. സമൃദ്ധി ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ദാനമാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വിളിയോട് പ്രതികരിച്ചവർക്ക് ആർക്കും അതിൽ ദുഃഖിക്കേണ്ടി വന്നിട്ടില്ല. ഉണങ്ങിയ പുൽമേടും അത്തിയും മുന്തിരിയും പച്ചപിടിക്കുന്ന അനുഭവമാണിത്. നഷ്ടമായതും തകർന്നതും ദൈവം തിരികെ നൽകും. ഇയ്യോബിന് എല്ലാം ഇരട്ടിയായി നൽകിയ അതേ അനുഭവം. ആദിമ സഭയിൽ ആത്മാവിനെ പകർന്ന അനുഭവം വീണ്ടെടുക്കാം.

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സാന്ത്വന സഭയുടെ ചുമതല

ഡോ. ഏബ്രഹാം മാർ പൗലോസ്

ഉടഞ്ഞജീവിതങ്ങളെ നേർവഴിയിലേക്കു കൊണ്ടുവരുന്ന ദൈവിക ശുശ്രൂഷ ഇന്നു സഭയെയാണ് ഏൽപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നതെന്നു ഡൽഹി-മുംബൈ ഭദ്രാസനാധിപൻ ഡോ. ഏബ്രഹാം മാർ പൗലോസ്. ഇന്ന് ആൾബലം വിജയത്തിന്റെ അളവു കോലാവുമ്പോൾ ആൾക്കൂട്ടം സ്വാധീനിക്കാത്ത പ്രവർത്തനമാണ് ക്രിസ്തു നമുക്ക് കാണിച്ചുതന്നത്. ഉള്ളിൽ വേദനതിങ്ങി പിടിച്ചു നിൽക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്ത ആളുകൾ നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിലുണ്ട്. അടയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ട സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് ഇവർക്കു തുറന്നു വരവിന്റെ അനുഭവം നൽകുകയാണ് സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യമെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷന്റെ രാത്രി യോഗത്തിൽ മുഖ്യസന്ദേശം നൽകുകയായിരുന്നു അദ്ദേഹം. പുരുഷാരത്തിന്റെ ആരവത്തിനു നടുവിലും വേദനയുടെ നെടുവീർപ്പുകൾ തേടിപ്പോകുന്നതാണ് ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ സുവിശേഷം.

ഇന്ന് സൃഷ്ടിക്ക് ആകമാനം സംഭവിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന വൈകല്യത്തിൽ സ്രഷ്ടാവ് നെടുവീർപ്പിടുകയാണ്. പ്രകൃതിക്കുണ്ടായ ഈ വൈകല്യം ഉടയവനെ വല്ലാതെ വിഷമിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ആവാസ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ ഇന്നു മനുഷ്യന് അധിവസിക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്ത സാഹചര്യമാണ്. പകലിൽ അത്യുഷ്ണം മനുഷ്യനെ വീടുകളിൽ തന്നെ പിടിച്ചു നിർത്തുന്ന സാഹചര്യം. അസ്വസ്ഥത നൽകുന്ന വിധത്തിൽ ഈ ചൂട് നമ്മെ ബാധിക്കുന്നു. നമ്മുടെ ആവാസ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾക്കു സംഭവിക്കുന്ന വിടവ് നികത്താൻ ഈ സൂചനകൾ നമ്മെ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. പ്രകൃതിയുടെ നെടുവീർപ്പിനോടു പ്രതികരിക്കാൻ അദ്ദേഹം സഭാ മക്കളോട് ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്തു.

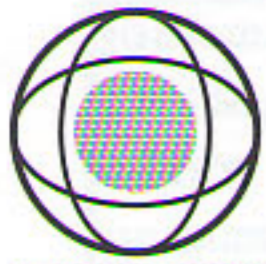
വേദനിക്കുന്നവരുടെ നെടുവീർപ്പുകളോട് അനുകൂലമായി പ്രതികരിച്ച ദയാബായിയുടെ ജീവിതം മാർ പൗലോസ് ഉദാഹരണമായി പറഞ്ഞു. വേദന അനുഭവിക്കുന്നവർക്കൊപ്പം അവരോടു താദാത്മ്യം പ്രാപിച്ചു ജീവിക്കുന്ന ദയാബായി സുവിശേഷ ജീവിതമാണ് നമ്മെ കാണിച്ചു തരുന്നത്. ആൾക്കൂട്ടമില്ല, പണമില്ല, സംഘടനാ ശേഷിയില്ല എങ്കിലും അവർ ജീവിച്ചു. ഇന്നു രാജ്യത്ത് സ്വാധീന ശക്തിയുള്ള സ്ത്രീയായി മാറി. എന്നാൽ നമുക്ക്

ആൾക്കൂട്ടത്തിന്റെ ആരവത്തിൽ മാത്രമേ താത്പര്യമുള്ളൂ.

പ്രകൃതി ചൂഷണത്തിൽ നാം ധനവാന്മാർക്കൊപ്പമല്ലേ നിൽക്കുന്നത്. പാവപ്പെട്ടവരുടെ വനം ഇന്ന് ആരുടെ കയ്യിലാണെന്നു മനസ്സിലാക്കണം. മൂന്നാറിലും വയനാട്ടിലും ചെങ്ങരയിലും ഇതാണ് സംഭവിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ ഭൂമി ആർക്കു വേണ്ടിയാണെന്നു പറയേണ്ടവർ എന്തിനാണ് നിശ്ശബ്ദത പാലിക്കുന്നത്. നിശ്ശബ്ദത വലിയ ഗൂഢാലോചനയാണെന്നു സഭാ മക്കൾ തിരിച്ചറിയണം. നമ്മൾ യോഗ്യന്മാരായി മാറി നിൽക്കുമ്പോൾ നിശ്ശബ്ദതയുടെ പക്ഷം ചേർന്നു ശക്തരുടെ വക്താക്കളാവുകയാണെന്നു മറക്കരുതെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു.

ഈ ആൾക്കൂട്ടത്തിന്റെ ആരവത്തിൽ നാം മതിമറക്കുകയാണ്. എന്നാൽ ഈ ആരവം ചെന്നു നിൽക്കുന്നത് ഇവനെ ക്രൂശിക്കുക എന്നു പറയുന്നിടത്താണെന്നു നാം ഓർക്കണം. ഈ പാവപ്പെട്ടവരെ ക്രൂശിക്കാൻ നാം കൂട്ടു നിൽക്കരുത്. പ്രത്യയ ശാസ്ത്രം പറഞ്ഞ് ഉത്തരവാദിത്തങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നു സഭാ മക്കൾ മാറി നിൽക്കരുത്. യേശു കർത്താവിന്റെ ശരീരമായിരിക്കുന്ന സഭയ്ക്കെല്ലാതെ വേറെ ആർക്കാണു പാവങ്ങളോടു പക്ഷം ചേരാൻ കഴിയുകയെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം ചോദിച്ചു.

നെടുവീർപ്പിന്റെ വേദന ആരു സ്വീകരിക്കും. അനുഗ്രഹങ്ങൾ അടയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ട അനുഭവത്തിൽ നിന്നു തുറന്നു വരിക എന്നു പറയുന്ന ശുശ്രൂഷയാണ് ദൈവം നമുക്ക് പുത്രനിലൂടെ തന്നിരിക്കുന്നത്. നമുക്കു തുറക്കപ്പെടുന്ന അനുഭവം ആവശ്യമാണ്. ഇവിടെയുള്ള മുഴുവൻ ജനങ്ങളെയും ഉൾക്കൊള്ളാൻ കഴിയുന്ന ശുശ്രൂഷയിലേക്കു ദൈവം വിളിക്കുകയാണ്. എല്ലാവരെയും ഉൾക്കൊള്ളാൻ കഴിയുന്ന സുന്ദരമായ സ്വർഗരാജ്യ അനുഭവത്തിലേക്കു നാം മറണം. നമുക്ക് തകർച്ചയിൽ നിന്ന് ഒരു ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പ് ആവശ്യമാണ്. അങ്ങനെയാണ് സുവിശേഷം ജീവിക്കുന്നതെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. **Editor's Note:** Reprinted with permission from Malayala Manorama.



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What does it mean to be a Church?

George Thomas, Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!” 1 Corinthians 1:1-2 (NIV)

Our Youth Fellowship is currently doing a study on First Corinthians. Corinthians is a very powerful book where Paul spends much time discussing the proper standards for a Christian, both as an individual and as one living in a Christian community. It was very fitting, I think, that in the opening verses Paul spends the time to define a Church. What is even more amazing is that he does all that in just one verse! This article will focus on 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, with particular focus on verse 2, in which I believe Paul shares with us three fundamental aspects of any Church: “sanctified in Christ Jesus”, “called to be holy”, and “together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sanctified in Christ Jesus

Let us begin with a look at the first part, “sanctified in Christ Jesus”. What exactly does the word sanctified mean? The term actually means “to be set apart” and to be set apart in a holy way. It implies that we as Christians (or anyone really who calls upon the name of Christ Jesus) are immediately set apart for Christ. God has called us to be separate from the rest of the world, from the rest of our classmates in school, our co-workers at work, our fellow athletes on the basketball, football, or any court for that matter. We are different, set apart, from everyone else around. The next question that comes up is how exactly does this happen.

Well it begins with John 3:16, an amazing statement of our faith. It simply says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” We are taught from a very young age to accept Christ as our personal Savior. We learned the stories of the nativity, the parables of Christ, His miracles and teaching and yes His Passion as well. If we do, then we will receive the promises of John 3:16. However, somewhere down the line we as Mar Thoma Christians have simplified this verse to almost a catch phrase and have removed the power and the standards that come with it. To believe in John 3:16 means that we are sanctified—set apart for Christ Jesus, to be holy. Romans 5:9-11 further reiterates this theme of salvation—“reconciled to God through the sacrifice of Christ”. John 3:16 is only the beginning of our journey in faith; it is not the end.

Called to be Holy

The next part explains what we are supposed to do, “called to be holy”. This phrase is almost the next phase of sancti-

fication. 1 Peter 1:16, calls each of us to be holy because our God is holy.

Well how does one exactly do this? The Bible provides the answer—the Ten Commandments, the Love commandments, the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, any of the countless parables from Christ. The Bible is full of how one must live to emulate Christ, to be in a good relationship with God. However, the question really is: do we care enough to try? How many of us actually “Love our Neighbors as ourselves”? I really like Paul’s challenge, found in 1 Corinthians 4:12. How many of us can truly say that “if someone insults us, we bless them; if someone persecutes us, we endure; if someone lies about us, we respond in a friendly manner”? How do we respond to the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you”? Ephesians 5:22 – 6:4 is such a beautiful passage that discusses proper relationship between a husband and wife and between parents and children. Do we live up to these standards? Looking at our own lives, can we really call ourselves holy, can we really fill this definition? Looking at our church community, a very good litmus test would be our Church General Body Meetings. Is there much love, blessing, or turning of one’s cheek in these meetings or more and more are we becoming like the business world we live in?

All Those Everywhere Who Call on the Name

This phrase will be one of the greatest challenges that we as Mar Thoma Christians face in today’s world. Paul does an amazing thing here; he extends the family of Christianity. He simply states, “...with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Paul refers to a more global Christianity. He understands that we are connected to each other. When we say brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not just talking about those people in our local church or denomination, but all those Christians everywhere. Having such a global understanding of our faith, I think puts life and our church affairs in perspective.

Faced with this challenge, how do we as Mar Thoma Christians respond? Too often, we keep to our own small parish; we are only concerned about those members that we see on a weekly basis. To be honest, I fear that many of our churches are more and more like a Malayalee Association than a Church. Let us take a real look at our church. How often do we have events that include those in our surrounding neighborhood? How often do “non-Indians” come to our church? Do we have any kind of outreach or service activity for the poor, the outcast, or the marginalized? Sure,

(Continued on page 29)

Basic Awareness of Ministry Preparation

T. P. Mathew, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

Introduction: This article is developed from materials used in a class of 11th graders to provide basic awareness required for a youngster who is planning for a ministry oriented career. A youngster may be inclined to be in the Christian ministry at a certain stage. It may be self-motivation or family's interest/passion or some third party's inducements or God's call. The selection and preparation stage of ministry for these youngsters is a challenging task.

1. **God's call.** "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying whom shall I send, and who will go for us". (Isaiah 6:8) Make sure the call is in place. A youngster's or family's dream, or passion shouldn't be the criterion for interpreting "God's call." God's call for the ministry has to be identified and realized to its depth by the candidate, parents and the spiritual leader (vicar) or mentor. Acceptance and submission to the call by all the parties with realization of its importance, hardship and total dedication behind the task by all those who are involved are very important. "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). If one is not "sure" about the call and acceptance, he/she must stop here.
2. **Education:** "Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). A priest (Vicar) in a church is the CEO of the "Parish" which is a registered company and the spiritual father simultaneously. Therefore, he/she should be educated for that level of job or close to it. In most seminaries, a bachelor's degree is the basic requirement for admission. In addition to the bachelor's degree, certain other college courses are recommended if they were not included in their bachelor's program: (1) Basics of Psychology (2) Basics of Economics/Finance (3) Basics of Leadership (4) Principles of Public speech, and, (5) The basic doctrine and practices of the church he/she belongs.
3. **Exemplary Life:** Must be an example to others: "must set an example to believers, in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).
4. **Mentoring Program:** "Teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning" (Proverbs 9:9). An all round mentor program must be adapted. Apart from Parish Vicars, the youngsters are to be recommended to other accessible and reliable mentors such as Sunday school teachers, prayer group leaders and community leaders.
5. **Encouragement/Criticisms:** "Encourage him, because he will lead Israel" (Deut 1:38). Prayerful support, cheerful encouragements and valid criticisms are inevitable from parents and mentors. Honor valid criticisms for their merit.
6. **Resources:** "For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances..." (Philippians 4:11-12). Prepare yourself for simplicity and accommodating within the available resources. Must be prepared to eat what is available, sleep in any place, and meet any kind of people with dignity.
7. **Reading:** "Devote yourself to the public reading of scripture" (1 Timothy 4:13). Prepare them to read more on missionary biographies, books on cross culture and other religions. Paul's exhortation letters to Timothy (First and Second), and Titus are very important to study before entering in to seminary preparations.
8. **The Doctrine:** "Watch your life and doctrine closely, Preserve in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:14). Mar Thoma priesthood/ministry candidates should learn about the principles, doctrine and practices of the Mar Thoma Church thoroughly.
9. **Medical/Physical Fitness:** "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). "For physical training is of some value, but Godliness has value for all things" (1 Timothy 4:8). The candidates are to be prepared to be fit physically and mentally.
10. **Placement:** The placement after the training shouldn't be the objective. Placement is God's business. God will not call a person for ministry without definite and planned placement or a work field. The candidate must be willing to accept God's placement through the respective church or organization. Such placement should not be dishonored. The Lord will reveal it through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them (Acts 13:2-3).
11. **Discharge Duties Diligently:** As a minister, prepare to do your duties diligently. "But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).
12. **Activities:** He must be a team player and be involved in all the possible activities of the parish (worship services, prayer meetings, youth fellowship, mission projects, fund raising, picnic, retreat, conferences (etc.) ■

Turning Guidelines into Lifelines— Women and Heart Disease

Susan Koshy RN, MSN, CCN, Nurse Practitioner-Cardiology

Like many women when we hear the term “Heart disease” one may think, “that it is a man’s disease and therefore, not my problem.” Well here is the Heart Truth! It is your problem, as heart disease is the number one killer of women in the United States. You may be surprised to know, that each year 1 in 4 women will die of heart disease. For those lucky enough to survive their heart attack, 23% of these women will die within the first year following discharge from hospital. This is a staggering number when compared to the fact that only 1 in 30 women will die of breast cancer annually. These statistics alone should convince any woman that the health of her heart is of utmost importance.

If you think medication and cutting edge technology will fix or cure the damage caused by a heart attack, you are wrong. Unfortunately, heart disease is a lifelong condition. Cholesterol fatty build-up in the arteries that supplies your heart muscle is forever damaged once you get it you always have it. For instance, two out of three heart attack patients fail to make a full recovery and within six years 46% of these patients will have complications from heart attacks such as heart failure.

Conditions that increase the changes of cholesterol, fatty deposits in the blood vessels that supply your heart muscle, smoking, diabetes, physical inactivity, elevated cholesterol, obesity and high blood pressure are well known cardiac risk factors that increase the likelihood of heart disease. However other risk factors, such as age, being of South Asian descent, gender and family history, cannot be changed but with the help of a family doctor a woman may come to understand her own personal risk factors and make ‘heart healthful’ choices in her diet, activity and habits so as the heart remains healthy.

It is especially important for menopausal women to be conscienceous of their heart’s health as their risk of heart disease increases dramatically after approximately age 55. For women who experienced early menopause, they are twice as likely to develop heart disease. Today 1 in 8 women between the ages of 45 and 64 has some form of heart disease, increasing to 1 in 4 women over the age of 65.

So what is Heart Disease?

Heart disease is one of several cardiovascular diseases. (Cardio = related to Heart, Vascular = related to Veins/arteries) Other cardiovascular diseases include stroke, high blood pressure, and rheumatic heart disease. Coronary heart disease is often simply termed heart disease and occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscles become hardened and narrowed due to a build up of plaque on the inner walls of arteries. Plaque is the accumulation of fat, cholesterol, and other various substances. A heart attack happens when an artery becomes totally blocked with

plaque, thereby preventing the flow of blood which transports oxygen and nutrients to the heart.

The “Multiplier Effect”

A woman who is overweight, with high blood pressure, and a low level of activity has more than one risk factor. This is an especially serious condition as risk factors tend to “gang up” and worsens each other’s effect. Having two risk factors increases the chance of developing heart disease four fold. Having three or more risk factors increases the chance more than tenfold. While 33% of all women ages 40-60 have at least one risk factor for heart disease which they can change. Every woman needs to take her heart disease risk seriously and take necessary actions, such as eating right, getting enough exercise and sleep, to reduce her chances of developing heart disease.

Risk factors for heart disease

1. Smoking

Smoking is the “leading cause of preventable death and disease in the US” according to various Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Women who smoke are 2 to 6 times more likely to suffer a heart attack than non smoking women. The younger a person starts smoking the more likely he/she is to become addicted to nicotine. Since low tar and low nicotine cigarettes do not lessen the risks of heart disease there is no safe way to smoke. Therefore, the only safe and healthful course is not to smoke at all.

2. High Blood Pressure

New research shows that at least 65 million adults in the US have high blood pressure; a 30% increase over the last several years. Major contributors to high blood pressure are family history, obesity, and a diet high in salt and sodium. High blood pressure is called the “silent killer” because there are no symptoms. According to a National survey, two out of three people with high blood pressure do not have it under control. As a result, many people pay little attention to their blood pressure until they become seriously ill when often, it is too late. Please see the following guideline to see where you stand:

Condition	Systolic	Diastolic
Normal	120mmHg	80mmHg
Pre-hypertension	<120 to 139mmHg	80–89mmHg
Hypertension	>140 mmHg	>90 mmHg
Diabetics	<130 mmHg	<80 mmHg

A special eating plan called D.A.S.H. (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) can help to lower your blood pressure. The D.A.S.H. eating plan emphasizes vegetables, fat free or low fat milk and milk products, whole grain products, fish, poultry, beans, seeds, and nuts.

3. Abnormal blood Levels of Cholesterol and Triglycerides

The body needs cholesterol to function normally. Women between the ages of 45 and 55 tend to have lower values than men. Although women's risk of heart disease at an older age is somewhat lower, the higher the cholesterol levels the greater is the risk of developing heart disease. Cholesterol travels in the blood in packages called lipoproteins. Cholesterol packaged in LDL is often called "bad" cholesterol because too much LDL can lead to cholesterol build up. Another type of cholesterol is HDL, known as "good" cholesterol; helps remove cholesterol from the body. Triglycerides are another type of fat and are produced by the liver. When you drink alcohol or take in more calories than your body needs your liver produces more triglycerides. Other causes of high triglycerides are uncontrolled diabetes and thyroid disease.

4. Overweight and Obesity

Obesity has reached epidemic proportion in the US. Approximately 62% of American women who are 20 years or older are overweight. Among the age group between age 6 to 19 years old more than 16 % are overweight compared to 4% a decade ago. It increases the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, heart failure, gall bladder disease, arthritis, breathing problems, gout, as well as cancers of the breast and colon. Body Mass Index (BMI) of 18.5 to 24.9 indicates a normal weight. A person with a BMI of 25 to 29.9 is overweight, while a person with a BMI >30 are obese. For a South Asian female a waist circumference of greater than 80 cm greatly increases her risk of heart disease.

5. Physical Inactivity

Physical inactivity increases the risk of heart disease more than most people believe. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 60% of women in North America are not meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines. However, research shows that 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most and preferably all days of the week is the recommended guideline. Examples of exercise include: taking a brisk walk, swimming, using a treadmill or an indoor or outdoor biking.

6. Diabetes

Diabetes is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. To date, approximately 7 million women in the US have diabetes including an estimated 3 million who do not even know they have diabetes. Type 2 diabetes commonly occurs in adulthood. In the body pancreas makes insulin. However, in Type 2 diabetes the body cannot use the insulin properly and gradually loses the ability to produce it. There is a condition called pre-diabetes where the glucose levels are higher than normal yet not in the diabetic range. New research shows that pre diabetic individuals have a 50% greater chance of having a heart attack in comparison to those individuals with normal blood glucose levels.

The ABCs of diabetes:

A is for HbA1C test: This test measures the average blood glucose over the past three months. The number should be <7%

B is for blood pressure: The higher the blood pressure the harder the heart has to work. Aim for blood pressure < 130/80

C is for cholesterol: Aim for LDL (bad cholesterol) < 2 mmol/L

7. Other Factors That Affect Heart Disease

a) Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Menopausal hormone therapy once seemed to be the answer to the many conditions women faced as they aged, such as hot flashes, night sweats, and emotional instability. It was thought that hormone therapy could ward off heart disease while improving the quality of life. Researchers have looked at how Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) may affect women who already have heart disease.

b) Stress and Depression

Stress is the body's response to any demands placed on it. There are many stressors in our lives, however, depending on how we respond to them can have a negative or positive impact on our health. Negative stress can affect many aspects of your health, including your heart.

Many women are concerned about a possible connection between stress and heart disease. The most commonly reported trigger for a heart attack is an emotionally upsetting event such as anger. After a heart attack people with higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression have more trouble recovering.

c) Oral Contraceptives

Oral contraceptives may pose an increased cardiovascular risk for women, especially those with other risk factors such as smoking. Researchers believe that birth control pills raise blood pressure and blood sugar levels in some women, as well as increase the risk of blood clots. The risks associated with birth control pills increase as women get older. Women should tell their doctors about any other cardiovascular risk factors they have before they begin taking birth control pills.

d) Vitamins and Heart Disease

The Heart Outcome Prevention Evaluation (HOPE) a study that followed 10,000 men and women over 55 for a seven year period found that 400 IU of vitamin E did not reduce the risk for heart attack. The WHS followed 40,000 Women and found there was no difference between the Vitamin E and the placebo groups in heart attack and stroke. Vitamin C has also not been found to provide any heart protection.

8. Emerging Risk Factors

C-reactive protein (CRP): High levels of CRP may indicate inflammation in the artery walls. Weight loss and regular physical activity can lower CRP. C-reactive protein (CRP) is one of the acute phase proteins that increase during systemic inflammation. It's been suggested that testing CRP levels in the blood may be an additional way to assess cardiovascular disease risk. A more sensitive CRP test, called a highly sensitive C-reactive protein (hs-CRP) assay, is available to determine heart disease risk. Weight loss and regular physical activity can lower CRP.

So what should you do?

The American Heart Association has published guidelines regarding prevention of cardiovascular disease in women. The guidelines recommend the following lifestyle changes:

- Do not smoke or use tobacco. If you smoke, see your family doctor. There are many nicotine cessation aides that can help quitting easier and manageable.
- Get plenty of exercise. Women who need to lose or keep off weight should get at least 60 - 90 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise on most days. To maintain your weight, get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day, preferably at least 5 days a week.
- Women who recently had a heart attack, angioplasty or a stent procedure should join a cardiac rehabilitation program. Exercise is key, if your local hospital offers such a program take advantage of it.
- Eat a heart healthy diet. The diet includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, fish, legumes, and sources of protein low in saturated fat. Often what we eat without thinking about what we are really putting into our bodies? Use a food journal. What did you eat today? When? How much? Why? Often, women eat in order to deal with emotional stressors. Make healthier choices when you feel the urge to eat, you will feel much better both physically and mentally.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Women should strive for a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 18.5 and 24.9 and a waist smaller than 35 inches.
- High-risk women should take omega-3 fatty acids supplements. It never hurts to boost your immune system and your bodies overall well being. Eat right and supplement your healthy choices with omega 3-fatty acids.

For women who have already had a heart attack, it is not too late. Look at your heart attack as a second lease on

life, a time to change the habits that got you here in the first place. Ask your family doctor, call your local health club and community center, get connected, and join a support group. You can change your life and also, change the lives of those around you. Your health is your responsibility and you have all the power to have a healthy and happy heart.

Healing is a matter of time; it is also a matter of opportunity. A bend in the road is not the end of the road there is always time for a U turn. ■

(Susan (Jolly) works as a Nurse Practitioner in cardiology. She is married to Mathew Koshy of Trinity Marthoma Church, Edmonton, Canada.

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What does it mean to be a Church? *(Cont'd from page 25)*

we have our token gifts or donations we give to the Mexico Missions Project, the Native American Missions, or some other Missions in India. However, other than giving money, do we actually go and partake in any of these projects. You know we do not really even have to go to another country. How about a soup kitchen, food drive, habitat for humanity, or a shelter for abused women or children right in our own backyard?

The very definition of "The Church" is a "Community of Believers". In no way does it contain itself in a specific location, nationality, or culture. Rather, we are all "One Church", one community under Christ. With this definition, we should reconsider our events, activities, and projects and see if they really reflect the global calling that is required of us—both in our surrounding community and in the larger world, we live in.

Conclusion

I will always be amazed with the skill (both as a writer and as a theologian) that Paul uses in writing his letters. In just one verse, Paul spells out the mission of the Church and the identity of the Christian community.

I know that many of us, growing up in strong Christian, cultural homes, have heard all this before. However, knowing and actually living are two different things. This article raised many questions that require both personal and public reflection. Do we as individual Christians and as a community really live up to our call? The purpose of this article was to be a biblical challenge for all of us. I pray especially in this New Year that we can strive to be the Christians that we are called to be. ■

Federal Tax Law Changes for Year 2009

Shaju Sam, EA, MS (Taxation), New York

You must file a tax return if your income is above certain level depending upon your filing status, age and the type of income you receive. Even if you do not need to file a tax return, there are several reasons for filing a tax return including - refund of federal income tax which was withheld from your pay, to take the credit of earned income from work, for government retiree credit if you received a government pension or annuity payment in 2009, for earned income tax credit (ETIC) if you worked, but did not earn a lot of money, for additional child tax credit if you have at least one qualifying child, and health coverage credit up to 80 percent of monthly health insurance premiums. The new changes took place for the tax year 2009 is summarized below.



The cost of energy-efficient windows, doors, skylights and insulation also count, but installation costs do not. You would have to spend at least \$5,000 to qualify for the full \$1,500 for this new credit.

First Home Buyer's Credit: If you bought your first home in 2009, you may be able to claim a tax credit of 10% of the cost of the house, up to a maximum \$8,000, subject to income eligibility rules. You are considered a first-time home buyer if you, or you and your

spouse, didn't own a principal residence for at least three years before purchasing a house in 2009. Different income eligibility limits apply depending on when you bought the house. If you purchased it before November 7, 2009, you are eligible for the full first-time home buyer's tax credit if you are single and your income didn't exceed \$75,000 or if you are married and your joint income didn't exceed \$150,000. The credit phases out for individuals with incomes up to \$95,000 and married couples with joint incomes up to \$170,000, disappearing above income levels. Limits are higher for those who bought homes on or after November 7, 2009. A new 10% credit, with a maximum of \$6,500, is available to longtime homeowners who bought a new principal residence on or after that date. The full home-buyer credits are available to individuals with income up to \$125,000 and married couples with joint income up to \$225,000. The credit is phased out for individuals with income up to \$145,000 and joint filers with income up to \$245,000 and disappears for with income above levels.

Federal Tax Education Credit: Parents and students may use this credit to offset part of the cost of college tuition under the new American Opportunity Credit. The maximum amount of \$2,500 credit is available to eligible taxpayers who paid at least \$4,000 in qualified college tuition, fees and required course materials, including books in 2009. The full credit is available to individuals with income up to \$80,000, phasing out above level and disappears at \$90,000. For married couples filing jointly, the full credit is available to those with incomes up to \$160,000 and disappears at \$180,000. If you claim the credit and owe no tax, you may receive a refund of 40% of the credit, up to a maximum of \$1,000 for each eligible student. Other education credits are not refundable. This credit can be applied only to expenses paid during the first four years of college. Graduate students are not eligible for this new credit, but they still qualify for the Lifetime Learning Credit, of up to \$2,000 per household, or a tuition-and-fees deduction of up to \$4,000. A credit, which reduces your tax bill dollar for dollar, is more valuable than claiming a deduction, which merely reduces the amount of income that is taxed.

New-Vehicle Purchases: If you bought a new car, light truck, motorcycle or motor home on or after February 16, 2009, through the end of the year, you may be able to deduct the state or local sales tax or excise tax you paid on the vehicle on your 2009 tax return. The deduction is limited to the tax you paid on up to \$49,500 of the purchase price of the vehicle, but there is no limit on the number of qualifying vehicles. To qualify for the full deduction, your income can't top \$125,000 if you are single or \$250,000 if you are married filing jointly. A partial deduction is available for individuals with incomes between \$125,000 and \$135,000 (and between \$250,000 and \$260,000 for joint filers).

Home-Energy Credits: If you weatherized your home or bought alternative-energy equipment in 2009, you may qualify for either of two expanded home-energy credits, regardless of your income. You may claim a credit worth 30% of the cost of eligible home improvements on your principal residence, up to a maximum \$1,500. The cost of certain high-efficiency heating and air-conditioning systems, water heaters and stoves used for home heating qualify for the credit, along with labor costs for installing them.

Jobless Benefits: Unemployed workers are allowed to exclude the first \$2,400 of unemployment benefits received in 2009. ■

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KIDS CORNER

Prayer

Joel Thomas Sajan, Grade 4, Carmel MTC, Boston

What is prayer? In simple terms, Prayer is to talk with God. When you pray, there are some things you should do. You



can pray with your eyes closed and your hands folded. You can also pray while on your knees or standing up. In Matthew 6:6 Jesus says "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your father, who is unseen. Then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you". There are some things you should not do while you pray. Like in

Mathew 6:5 it says "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full". One of the most important prayers in the Bible is the Lord's Prayer. A good way to pray is to have Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication or requests in your prayer.

Adoration: Adoration is to praise and to worship God. When you pray, you can praise his holy name and praise God for what he is. In Psalms 30:4, David says that we have to praise God's holy name.

Confession: Confession is to confess your sins. You should always confess your sins when you pray. When we sin, we need to go to God for forgiveness. In Psalms 51:2 David Prays "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from your sin".

Thanksgiving: Thanksgiving is to give thanks to God. You should always be happy for what you have. In Psalms 100:2 it says "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name".

Supplication: Supplication is to present your requests in prayer. When you pray, you should pray for the needy people and your needs. In Psalms 20:5 it says "We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up banners in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests".

We need to pray to God not only when we are in need, but also pray while we are in good health. Jesus said "Ask and it shall be given unto you", when we pray we have to believe that God listens and answers our prayers. ■

What is faith?

Johan Thomas Sajan, Grade 4, Carmel MTC, Boston

What is faith? Faith helps the believers to do great things. According to Hebrews 11:1, it says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Faith is a belief or trust in God. By faith there were many

great things that were done, which can be seen in the Bible. For example, by faith the walls of Jericho fell. As Christians, we ourselves have to have faith in everything we do. If we have faith, God will guide us and protect us. Without faith it is impossible to please God. In Genesis 4:4-5 it says, that God favored Abel's offering but not Cain's. Abel had faith in God. In our troubles, we need to pray and have faith. God will help us. Also, in Exodus 14:27-28 it says that when the Israelites came out of Egypt, Pharaoh changed his mind. He sent his army after the Israelites. The Israelites were near the Red Sea. People started complaining because Pharaoh and his army were getting closer to the Israelites. Moses prayed to God. Then Moses stretched his hand over the sea and the sea was divided into two. The Israelites walked on dry land to the other shore. As for the Egyptians, they drowned in the Red Sea. None of them survived. Moses had faith in God.

In James 2:14 it says, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" We ourselves have to show that we have faith by doing things that shows we have faith. In 2 Corinthians 5:7 it says, "We live by faith and not by sight." By doing things, God will enable us to do great things. In Genesis 6:14-22 it says that the Lord told Noah to build an ark. Noah believed, he had faith and did exactly what God said. Noah and his family survived the flood. The rest of the people living on the earth were destroyed.

In Mark 11:22, it says that when Peter remarked that the fig tree Jesus cursed had withered, Jesus said, "Have faith in God." If we lose our faith in God, God will not bless us. When we pray, we have to believe and have faith. In Matthew 17:20 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Have faith in everything you do and then God will help you and bless you. ■

Sin

Oshin Mathew, Grade 8, Carmel MTC, Boston

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9. Many people today are searching for a true meaning for life. Everywhere, we turn, there is no peace, human minds are troubled, people search for different avenues for peace. When you introspect, is your heart full



of peace? If not, it's because our sins have separated us from having a personal relationship with God.

What is sin? God has created human beings with a definite purpose. Missing that purpose is sin. He gave us a set of rules to obey. These rules are 'The Ten Commandments' in Exodus 20: 3-17. Any time we break any of these commandments is sin. In Genesis story, sin comes as an irresponsible action and disobedience. God tell us in Romans 3:23, that "all have sinned" and also in Romans 3:10, it says "there is no one righteous, not, even one". Psalmist says in 14:2-3, "the Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together corrupt".

So sin is anything which displeases God. As small children, we often get confused on sin. Telling a small lie, disobeying parents, elders, and teachers, teasing our friends, improper way of dressing up are all sins. Every time we tell a lie, small or big, is another nail to the cross. Ephesians 5:4 says, "Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving". Sometimes we twist and turn our words just to escape from

telling a lie. But the Bible says in Mathew 5:37, 'simply let your "Yes" be Yes and "No" No. Anything beyond this comes from the evil one'.

What are the consequences of sin? Jesus reserved the hardest words for the hidden sins of hypocrisy, pride, greed and legalism. In Romans 6:23, we read that "the wages of sin is death". This death is not the physical death, but the eternal death, eternal separation from God and suffering in hell.

How can we be saved from eternal death? Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God came to this world to save us from the guilt and power of sins and reconcile us unto God.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just. Confession of the sin is by repentance, which means our complete change of mind or feeling of remorse and regret for past conduct. In Psalm 51, we can see King David's cry for repentance for his sins, saying, "Have mercy on me O Lord . . ., against you, you only have I sinned" When we feel dejected or broken hearted , we should cry out by saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner". Luke 18:13,

Repentance lifts a man up, mourning knocks at heaven's gate, holy humility opens it. ■

Winter Wonderland

Tammy Samuel (13), St. Johns Mar Thoma Church, UK

*In my bed I lay at night,
Looking at the glorious light,
The twinkling stars in the frozen sky,
So that all warmth from my body may not say goodbye.*

*As I awake in morning,
I hear no warning,
From the freezing birds,
Like a harmony of words.*

*I don't want to risk going outside,
As I know my regained heat will subside,
I have to wrap up warm with my hat and coat,
And hope that the ice won't chill my throat.*

*But everything in winter is not all bad,
The striking picture that winter creates is not sad,
The pallid snow blankets the ground,
As the falling snowflakes spin around and around.*

*When the wind howls the wind shall blow,
As the creatures of the world sit menacing in the snow,
Everyone catches coughs and colds,
As the echo of sneezing we do uphold.*

*This is the season when rivers overflow,
And when the naked trees struggle to stay in a row,
But winter is still a season which is delicate as grass,
We must not dismiss it as soon it will pass.*

tammysamuel@hotmail.co.uk

India Mission Trip 2009

***"YOUR MINISTRY IS YOUR SERVICE TO THE BELIEVERS,
YOUR MISSION IS YOUR SERVICE TO THE UNBELIEVERS"***

The 2009 India Mission Trip, conducted as per the decision of the Diocesan Council of North America and Europe, was a great blessing and a wonderful experience for the participants. The Tour commenced on October 5, 2009 and was completed on October 18, 2009. There were a total of six participants (two youths and four adults), and throughout the tour, we strongly experienced God's providence and grace.



Upon arrival in Delhi on Thursday, October 8, 2009, we were received by the Delhi Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos and Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Jayan Thomas. After we had lunch with Thirumeni, we left Delhi via train that evening and arrived at Christa Panthi Ashram, Sihora the next morning. Rev. James Idiculla Acharya and Rev. Mathew K. Chandy welcomed us and we stayed there for three days and also attended the Christa Panthi Ashram Day celebration. It was the most blessed and memorable



moments of our life. The Ashram Day celebration started with a big convention and songs which were spiritually empowering to the villagers and all the participants. Mar Thoma Church members from Bhopal, Bhilai, Itarsi, Ahmedabad, parts of Kerala and the seminary students from Jabalpur and Kottayam and many local members also attended this celebration. Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan and Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar

Paulos were the chief guests. The Christa Panthi Ashram works for the marginalized and downtrodden people of the villages around the Ashram. The ministry and mission of the Ashram for the last 66 years have been to spread the good news and love of Christ. The serene and spiritual atmosphere of the Ashram makes it a pilgrimage site for the believers.

We arrived in Bhopal on the morning of October 12th. Rev. George Cherian, director of Bhopal Mission received us and took us to a Church member of the St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, Bhopal for breakfast. Then we visited the Christa Prema Kulam Mar Thoma Mission in Bhopal. The purpose of this Mission field is to reach out to the unreached villagers around the Mission center with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ through its various evangelistic educational development and spiritual programs. We met the students of the Tribal Boys hostel and Gram Jyoti English School, Sehatganj and attended the evening worship with the children, which was led by one of the village orphan. Achen's driving principle is to educate a child,



enlighten a family and empower/edify the village. In the evening, we visited St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church in Bhopal and there we met Rev. Biju S. Cherian, our former Diocesan Secretary, who had come as a leader to attend the Delhi Diocese Youth conference.

We left Bhopal the next morning for Itarsi Mission centers with Rev. Varghese George, Vicar of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Bhopal and Itarsi Mar Thoma Church. The warm welcome by the Itarsi Mar Thoma parish members and Itarsi villagers and their enthusiasm helped us to penetrate the hearts of the people around us with the great message of love and compassion. Itarsi Mar Thoma Mission center is located in Jai Prakash Nagar. Itarsi is a tribal area. People are very poor and illiterate. At the request of Itarsi Mar Thoma parish and under the guidance of Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Itarsi Mission field started in 1997. This Mission is flourishing under the able guidance of Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos. First, we visited the Gram Jyoti School in Jai Prakash Nagar, which was started in 2000. This school has

proved to be a strong medium to lead the rural children from the darkness of ignorance to the world of knowledge. At present the school has 110 students from nursery to class 5 and has seven teachers. The dedicated volunteer service of the headmaster Mr. Gopala Pillai, who comes from a Hindu family in Kerala, is highly appreciated by the parish members. A new school building has been constructed and was dedicated by Paulos Thirumeni on October 18, 2009 on the Itarsi Mar Thoma Parish day. Then we visited the tailoring school for village women. Fifty-five women have already undergone training at this center. At present, ten trainees take advantage of this program.

Itarsi Mission is set to make its presence felt in the area, where improving rural health has become a priority. Services of a medical clinic are made available to the villagers twice a month. On the day we arrived, the youth and adults of the Itarsi Mar Thoma Parish arranged a Medical Clinic in Nagpur Kala village. Mrs. Anita Patel, the only Hindu girl from that village who has an M.A. degree,



allowed the parish to conduct the Medical Clinic at her husband's house. Two doctors volunteered to come and attend to the sick people of that village. First aid and medicines were provided by the church members.

Illiteracy is an imprecation of rural India. Itarsi Mission has launched an Adult Literacy program for the villagers. At present there are two centers in the villages with 20 adults and two instructors. We were able to meet the villagers and sing and pray with them. We experienced the love of God through these villagers. The Mission center is located in a slum. This Mission educated the slum dwellers on the importance of hygiene. The Itarsi Mission is also planning to start a Mother-child care center in Nagpur Kala village. The Mission conducted VBS for children from the slums. One hundred and eighty children attended the VBS. More than 160 of them were from non-Christian background. This is an opportunity for them to know about Jesus and lead a life with moral values.

The untiring and dedicated service of the Evangelist, Mr. Jithin Lawrence is very commendable.

We returned to Delhi Diocese on October 15th. The next day, we went to Dharma Jyoti Vidyapeeth in Faridabad. We were able to meet the students from eight states of India representing diverse linguistic, ethnic, cultural and denominational backgrounds, doing their B.Th. studies. We enjoyed the natural scenic beauty of that place. We visited the vegetable gardens, and the rice and tapioca fields cultivated by the students. We also met the Principal Rev. Dr. P. G. George

and the Vice Principal Rev. Mathew Muthalaly. At the center of the Dharma Jyoti Campus is the Dharma Jyoti Chapel, where we were able to praise and worship with the students and faculty. After spending the night there, we left for Agra the next morning and returned to Delhi in the evening.

Let me thank God Almighty for giving us the opportunity to travel to the northern part of India and visit Mission centers of our church and meet the less fortunate villagers of different parts of the state. I take this opportunity to thank our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius; Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Vinoy Daniel; Diocesan Trustee, Mr. Chacko Mathew; Mission Convener, Mr. Ashley George and all the council members for permitting me to coordinate this Mission tour. I am thankful to many people for their gracious support in this Mission Tour. First of all, let us thank Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa for his blessing and for allowing us to visit Delhi Diocese and stay there during our tour. Special thanks to Rev. Jayan Thomas for all the scheduling and travel arrangements by road and rail. We thank Rev. James Idiculla Acharya, Rev. Mathew K. Chandy and Rev. Shibu George for the accommodation and food, all the other achen, brothers and sisters, all the evangelists and families, all the volunteers for the love and affection they imparted to us while staying in Christa Panthi Ashram. We thank Rev. George Cherian and his mother for the lunch and the trip arrangements. Special thanks to Rev. Varghese George Achen for accompanying us to Itarsi, to all Itarsi Mar Thoma mem-



bers for their warm hospitality, and to Evangelist Jithin Lawrence for all the arrangements. We would also like to convey our thanks to Rev. Dr. P. G. George, Principal, and Rev. Mathew Muthalaly, Vice Principal and all the students of the Dharma Jyoti Vidya Peeth for their warm fellowship during our stay there. We thank Mr. Titus Abraham for providing transportation from/to the airport and railway stations, as well as Faridabad and Agra. My special thanks and regards to Rev. Florence Earl for her prayerful presence and spiritual support. She was deeply touched by this great experience. At all the mission centers, people took a positive interest in her and were blessed by her prayers for them. Special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Mathew from Los Angeles, for their great support throughout this trip and the two youths, Mr. Justin Chandy and Mr. Arun Samuel Varghese from Dallas, for their devotion to the work of the Mar Thoma Church and accompanying me to make this Mission Tour more blessed and meaningful.

Elizabeth John, Convener, India Mission Trip

BOOK REVIEW

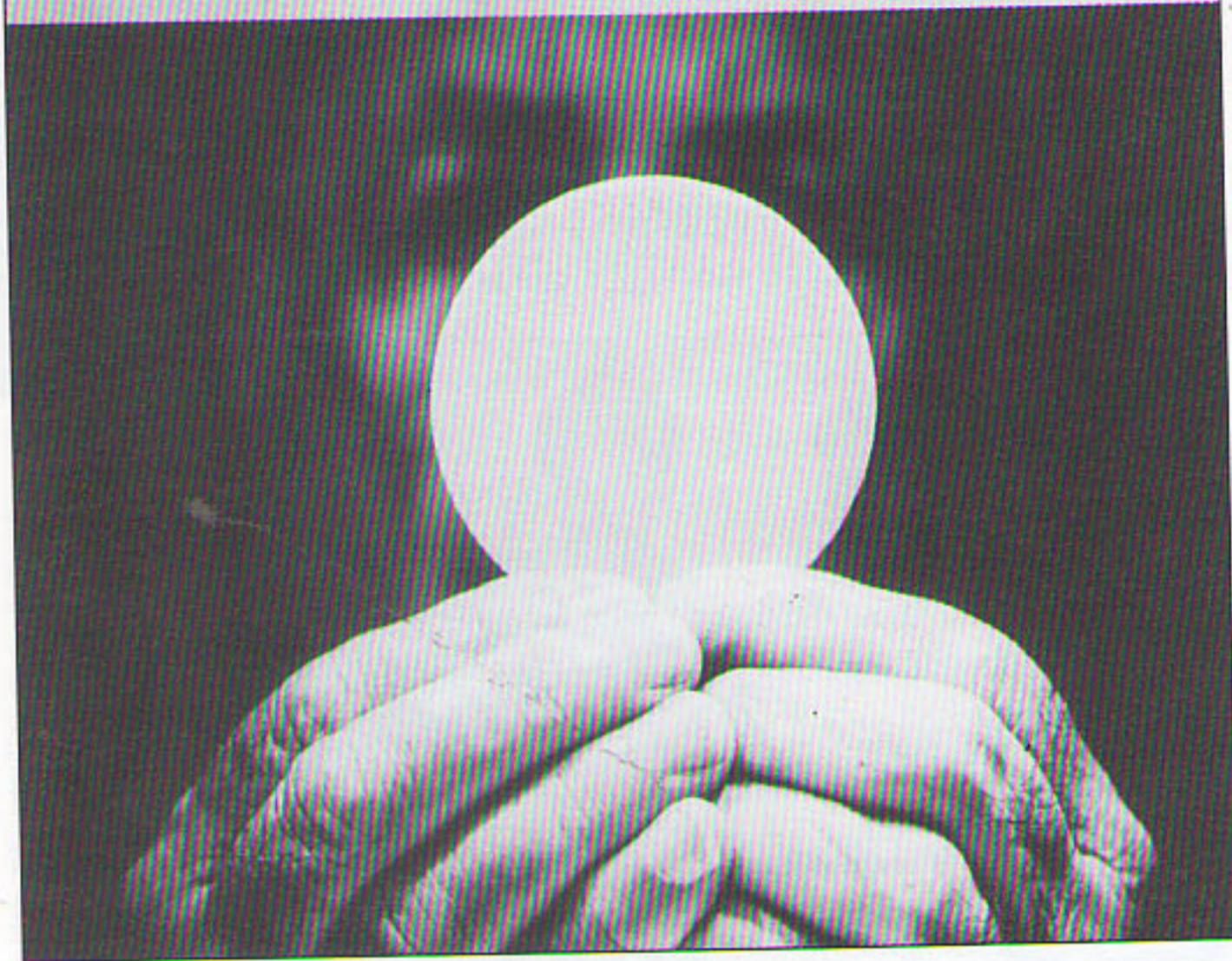
ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS AND THEIR EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Author: Late, George Poikail, Editor: Rev. Dr. George Mathew, Kuttiyil.

(First Edition: Feb. 2010, Published by: C. S. S. Thiruvalla, & Distributed by: C. S. S. Book Depot, Thiruvalla)

George Poikail

St. Thomas Christians *and their* Eucharistic Liturgy



The author, who is the son of famous Mundakkayam John Upadeshi of the Mar Thoma Church, should be commended for this in-depth study of Eucharistic liturgy and St. Thomas Christians. According to Zacharias Thirumeni, "Mr. George Poikail is a voracious reader, astute observer, serious student, a persistent researcher, a good academician and a great scholar." Rev. Dr. George Mathew, the book's editor, points out that, "This book is unique in its nature because no one has undertaken such a comprehensive study on the development and impact of the Eucharistic Liturgy of St. Thomas Christians."

The author explains in the book that the patristic liturgies used in the first to third centuries were rather simple and fluid. The old fluid liturgies crystallized in to four main parental rites, i.e. Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, and Gaul. The St. James liturgy belongs to the oldest and the most apostolic of the four groups, i.e., Antioch, Alexandria, East Syria, and Constantinople. It is believed that St. James litur-

gy was originated in the fourth century in the church in Jerusalem and was written in Greek. The present forms of liturgy have grown out of New Testament Apostolic liturgy. Six of the eight branches of the Malabar Syrian Church use the Syriac St. James liturgy in Malayalam, known as the "Church of Malabar Liturgy." The St. James liturgy is faithful to scripture, tradition, experience, and reasoning.

The author points out that the St. James liturgy is true to the experience of the Christian community in its encounter with the Risen Lord. It also meets the needs of piety and religion, pragmatism and traditionalism, and the various economic and social exigencies of Christian fellowship. The author quotes Adrian Fortescue who wrote that the St. James liturgy is considered as the most prolific because it has a large family of daughter liturgies including Sts. Mark, Basil, Gregory, and Chrysostom. The author's extensive research is revealed throughout the book by citations to theologians like Edward C. Ratcliff, H. W. Cordington, F. E. Brightman, John Wesley Etheridge, Donald Attwater, K. N. Daniel, Claudius Buchanan, G. T. Mackenzie, J. M. Neale, R. F. Littledale, W. Trollope, and several other eminent theologians.

The book explicitly analyzes the meanings of various prayers and symbols used in the liturgy. The author notes that the liturgy not only calls us for devotion, prayer, and participation in the Eucharist, it reminds us of the needs of others. We are called into communion and then, leave in peace. Therefore, we need to bear witness to a Christ who is not parochial, national or religious but the one who is a stranger, frequenting every Samaritan well and walking along every road. The church should not remain in the sheltered walls of "religion" and cannot turn away from the realities facing the world. Being liturgical is different from ritualism. Christian liturgy is a means of effective worship and should never become an end in itself.

The author portrays the transformation of St. Thomas Christians and laments the church's division into several branches; he expresses hope that the liturgy they inherited will unite them and bring together the one undivided church and bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I recommend that those interested in the traditional liturgical worship of the Mar Thoma Church read this book. The family members of Mr. George Poikail deserve appreciation, especially Mrs. Saramma Poikail, who, after Mr. Poikail's passing on December 18, 2008 took up the challenge of publishing this book as a memoir of her beloved husband.

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ONE FAMILY UNDER HEAVEN: A Response to Paradigm Shifts in Ecumenism

Author: Rev. Joseph Daniel

[Available at: Mar Thoma Book Depot, Tiruvalla, CSS Book Shop, Tiruvalla, Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore and ISPCK, New Delhi]

Although Ecumenism is commonly understood as the effort of the various Christian denominations to find a common platform to define essential Christian unity, the scope of the concept goes far beyond a mere interdenominational effort to define meeting points. In its development the concept first grew to encompass all religions and emerges as an effort to promote inter religious understanding. With the wide acceptance of the concept of the 'integrity of creation' Ecumenism also got redefined as a biocentric effort. It could no longer be a mere anthropocentric endeavour. Thus Ecumenism which began as an interdenominational Christian effort has attained cosmic dimensions. In his book "ONE FAMILY UNDER HEAVEN" the Rev. Joseph Daniel tries to explain brilliantly this evolution through an analysis of the origin, growth and future challenges of the Ecumenical Christian Centre. One feels that one is traveling on a parallel track with a moving cine camera that captures the various frames clearly and well focused.

It is interesting to note that the late M. A. Thomas was born to a missionary whose 'mission field' was essentially an area in Kerala with the highest concentration of Syrian Christians. That was indeed an extra ordinary definition of the mission of the Marthoma Church: to kindle the spirit of Reformation among the Orthodox (a k a Jacobites) Christians. M A Thomas's journey from that 'mission field' to the White Field where he founded the ECC to redefine ecumenism and Christian witness was indeed a long one. And it had necessarily to pass through various social, economic and political interfaces. The author weaves beautifully that journey and it adds a third strand in this tapestry. One is tempted to describe this book as *thriveni sangamam*: a man, an institution and a concept being brought under a single scanner without loss of focus.

The trajectory traversed by Christians from the World Missionary Conference of 1910 is remarkable both in its scope and in its formulation. From a patronizing concept of the White Man's Burden we have reached a plateau where we can, for the most part at least, recognize all religions and civilizations as equal. From a monopoly of preaching an anthropomorphic God exclusively revealed in the Person of Jesus we have refocused to get a clearer image of a god who is at the centre of the cosmos, as its designer, builder and

sustainer. Barring a segment of self-righteous evangelists from the 'Bible Belts', in America mostly, no serious Christian defines any longer himself or his mission in the terms understood in Edinborough in 1910. In this journey of revelation the Mar Thoma Church participated in a leading role, thus justifying its right to exist on earth. That seminal contribution came from Juhanon Marthoma, M. M. Thomas and M. A. Thomas and was taken forward by Alexander Marthoma whose in-depth study of *Viswaroopadarsanam in Bhagavat Gita* (Chapter XI) helped him move on from the world and the concerns of Abraham Marthoma without discarding its essence and by Chrysostom Marthoma whose revolutionary perspectives remain to be analyzed properly although it has been portrayed vividly in the book *MISSION IN THE MARKETPLACE*. I consider this book by Rev. Daniel an early attempt to capture the spirit of that journey from the platform set by Abraham Marthoma to the common man's street in Chrysostom Marthoma's vision. Of course this book looks at only one aspect of that journey but I am sure that Rev. Daniel and others who would follow in due course would try to unravel the travel where M. A. Thomas provided an intermediate station before our resuming the journey to the intellectual world of Chrysostom. After all every arrival is a departure and the journey has to go on until the eschatological dream of the new heaven and the new earth becomes an existential reality.

The ECC identifies its role as going Beyond. In reality that is the way for all ecumenical co-workers. Walking the First Mile is not optional but mandatory; every Jew under Romans had to if called upon. It is to walk the Second Mile that we have been called. Often we tend to see this Second Mile only in terms of social initiatives. I believe that the theologians have to try to walk the Second Mile intellectually. (Incidentally that is one of the many points which make me a fan of Chrysostom Marthoma: he has already commenced that journey.) From the Second Mile Perspective, my favorite benchmark, Rev. Daniel's attempt to chronicle analytically the paradigm shifts in ecumenism is an effort in the right direction.

I consider this book as a trendsetter which hopefully will be followed up in the days to come.

Fear or Faith

Saramma Chacko, Epiphany MTC, N.Y.

*Fear works opposite to faith
Faith can move the mountain
That obstructs our path
On the contrary, fear drains our energy
And makes us recoil in our shells
God led the Israelites miraculously
Out of their land of slavery, Egypt
He took care of all their needs
God wanted to bless the Israelites
With the land of Canaan
So God told the Israelites
To go and possess the Promised Land
But the Israelites were discouraged
Their fear overcame their faith
The spies sent to Canaan told them
About the gigantic people living there
So they did not move forward courageously
To take possession of the land
That God wanted them to have
They were distracted by fear
So they missed their goal*

*The Promised Land
Ever since the Israelites crossed the Red Sea
And defeated the two kings of the Amorites
The giants in Canaan knew well
That God was with the Israelites
From that time on, they lived in fear
Of the Israelites defeating them
And conquering their land
But the Israelites did not trust and obey God
So God in His anger made them wander
In the wilderness for forty years
Till everybody in that generation died
Except for faithful Joshua and Caleb
After forty years of the wilderness experience
Under the leadership of Joshua
The Israelites possessed the Promised Land
In spite of the giants living there
For victory belongs to the Lord
All we have to do is move in faith
In the direction He tells us*

In Haiti, There is Anguish

In Haiti, there is anguish that seems too much to bear;
A land so used to sorrow now knows even more despair.
From city streets, the cries of grief rise up to hills above;
In all the sorrow, pain and death, where are you, God of love?

A woman sifts through rubble, a man has lost his home,
A hungry, orphaned toddler sobs, for she is now alone.
Where are you, Lord, when thousands die—the rich, the poorest poor?
Were you the very first to cry for all that is no more?

O God, you love your children; you hear each lifted prayer!
May all who suffer in that land know you are present there.
In moments of compassion shown, in simple acts of grace,
May those in pain find healing balm, and know your love's embrace.

Where are you in the anguish? Lord, may we hear anew
That anywhere your world cries out, you're there—and suffering, too.
And may we see, in others' pain, the cross we're called to bear;
Send out your church in Jesus' name to pray, to serve, to share.

Editor's Note: Placing international anguish over Haiti at the cross of Jesus has resulted in a sadly lyrical hymn by a noted Presbyterian pastor and ecumenist. The Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, who with her husband, Bruce, is pastor of Limestone Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Del., has written, "In Haiti There is Anguish." The above is a reprint from the National Council of Church's resources for which member churches has permission to copy and print.

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BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV BIBLE
THE BOOK OF GENESIS: CHAPTERS 1-12

Mr. Philip Manuel & Mrs. Laila Anie Philip (Carmel MTC, Boston)

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Down

- The _____ was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord had made.
- _____ was the father of Nimrod, a mighty warrior.
- _____ was the third son of Adam & Eve.
- In Havilah there is gold, aromatic resin and _____.
- The Lord God made garments of _____ for Adam & Eve.
- The ark came to rest on the mountains of _____.
- There was _____ and there was morning - the first day.
- She shall be called _____ for she was taken out of man.
- _____ was the father of Noah.
- God _____ Noah and all that were with him in the ark.
- God said, " I have set my _____ in the clouds".
- Noah was the father of Shem, Ham and _____.
- _____ was the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.
- Adam named his wife _____.

Across

- The _____ of God was hovering over the waters.
- The Lord said to Noah "I will send _____ on the earth for forty days & forty nights.
- The Lord God had planted a garden in the East in _____.
- _____ is the son of Enosh.
- _____ River winds through the entire land of Havilah.
- God asked Noah to make an _____ of cypress wood.
- _____ walked with God and God took him away.
- Noah built an _____ to the Lord.
- _____ gave names to all livestock, birds and beasts.
- _____ did everything just as God commanded him.
- God made man in his own _____.
- Nimrod built _____ in Assyria.
- The Lord God _____ Adam from the Garden of Eden.
- Haran died in _____ of the Chaldeans.
- Abram pitched his tent with _____ on the east.
- _____ was the son Of Enoch.
- The tower of _____.

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV BIBLE
THE BOOK OF GENESIS: CHAPTERS 13-25

Mr. Philip Manuel & Mrs. Laila Anie Philip (Carmel MTC, Boston)

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

- _____ 's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.
- _____ was priest of God Most High and blessed Abram.
- Abram went from Egypt to the _____.
- Abram gave the King of Salem a _____ of everything.
- Abram believed the Lord and the Lord credited to him as _____.
- The name of Abram's wife was _____.
- He will be the father of twelve rulers _____.
- _____ was the brother of Rebekah.
- The Angel said to Abram, " I will surely bless you because you have _____ me.
- Sarah was buried in the field of _____ in a cave.
- _____ was the brother of Abram and husband of Milcah.
- Bethuel was the father of _____ and Laban.
- Abram made a treaty with Abimelech at _____.
- The Lord said, " the outcry against _____ and _____ is so great....."
- Abram's chief servant _____ to God to give him success.
- God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in the region of _____.
- _____ and _____ were the twin children of Isaac and Rebekah.
- _____ brought Rebekah into the tent of his mother and he _____ her and loved her.

Please mail your answers to: **Philip Manuel, 23 Lake Street, Billerica, MA 01821**

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS JUNE 15, 2010

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

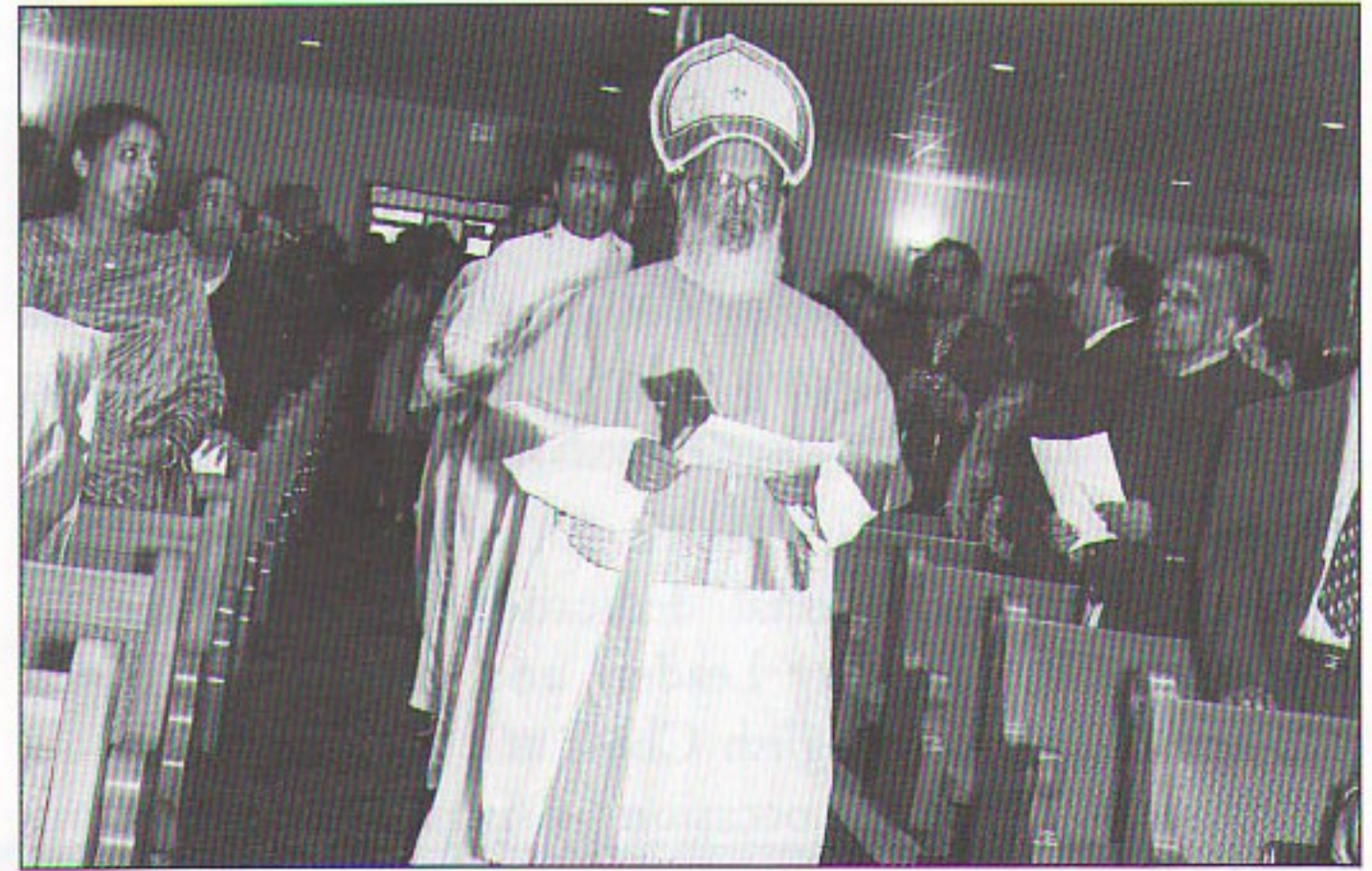
ST. PAUL'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, DALLAS CONSECRATION OF NEWLY BUILT WORSHIP FACILITY



By God's grace, the newly built worship facility of St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church, Dallas, located at 1002 Barnes Bridge Road, Mesquite, TX 75150, with a 600 seating capacity sanctuary, Sunday School class rooms, offices and fellowship hall was consecrated on Saturday, March 20th 2010, at 3:00 P.M. by our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa. The trustee, Mr. Oommen Koshy, read the contract, of transferring the ownership of the new church facility to the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church and furnished keys to the Church to

the Diocesan Bishop. Approximately, a gathering of over 600 believers and respected clergy in the Dallas area, attended the sacred ceremony.

Public meeting started immediately after the dedication ceremony with an opening prayer by Rev. P.V. Thomas. Our current vicar Rev. A.P. Noble welcomed our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, distinguished guests, clergies, invitees and members of sister parishes. Mr. Jacob Abraham presented a brief video presentation about our church and its history. Then





our beloved Thirumeni, in his inaugural address praised the efforts of all the past vicars of the parish and all the members and urged everybody to work together for the spiritual growth of the church. Honorable Mayor of the City of Mesquite Mr. John Monaco, expressed his warm felicitations and presented the Proclamation by the City of Mesquite to our Vicar, Rev. A.P. Noble. The Proclamation declared the 20th day of March, 2010 as "The St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church Day" through out the city. Mr. Monaco closed his speech with a word of prayer. Later, the Honorable Mayor of Sunnyvale Mr. David Byrd expressed his warm felicitations to the Parish. Then, all the dear clergy present, Rev. Minoy Kuruvilla (vicar of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch), Rev. Johnson George (vicar of Marthoma Church Dallas, Carrollton), Rev. George Varghese, (vicar of Sehion Marthoma Church, Plano), Rev. George Joseph (Vice President of KECF), Rev. Mathew Joseph (vicar of Austin congregation) and Rev. Biju Simon (Youth Chaplain of NE region New York) blessed the occasion with their felicitations. Dr. John Lincoln (Sabha Council Member), Mrs. Leelamma James



(Mandalam Member) and Mr. Aby Thomas, Diocesan Assembly Member also gave their felicitations.

The St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church choir graced the occasion with two special dedication songs written by Zachariah Thomas (Lay Leader) and Mr. John Thomas (Choir Leader). The English Choir and the Sunday school children also joined the occasion by singing two melodious



songs. Mr. Saji P George presented a copy of the Souvenir for release by Thirumeni. Mr. Babu Mathew recognized the following Building Committee Conveners and members, Mr. Koshy Thomas (General Convener), Mr. Ipe George (Technical Convener), Mr. Sunny K. John (Project Manager), Mr. P.P. Cherian (Finance Convener), Mr. Mathew Thomas (Architect) and Edison K. John (Designer



& Creator of The Thronos). Dr. Mohan Philip, the Vice-President, presented the general contractor, the conveners and above members with a plaque. The General Convener expressed his gratitude to all the members and especially the Building Committee. Mr. Phil Mathew, Church secretary, represented the parish and expressed his sincere thanks to everybody. The public meeting ended at 7:00 P.M. with the closing prayer by Rev. Jaisen Thomas and the benediction by the Diocesan Bishop. Mr. Soji Skariah was the Master of the Ceremony of the Public Meeting.

On Sunday March, 21st 2010, at 9:00 A.M., our respected Thirumeni led us in our First Holy Qurbana in Malayalam at the new church. Rev. Mathew Joseph, Rev. A.P. Noble and Rev. Jaisen Thomas assisted the Diocesan Bishop in the Holy Qurbana. A first communicant Service was also conducted and eleven First Communicants participated in the service.

A Brief History of our Church

St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church, Dallas was founded by thirty two families, and was inaugurated by His Grace, the Late

Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan along with former vicar of the church, Late Rev. T.I. Joseph, on July 26th, 1988, to meet the spiritual needs of the growing Indian community living in the eastern part of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. At this time I remember with gratitude, the late Metropolitan, Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, for his vision, courage and compassion in approving a new parish to a small group of believers. This church is affiliated with the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Church of Malabar. The previous church was dedicated by His Grace, the Late Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan along with the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, the vicar Rev. Eapen Cherian, former vicars Late Rev. T.I. Joseph and Rev. Ninan Jacob, on July 16th, 1994. The previous vicars of the parish include, Rev. P.J. Alex, Rev. Ninan Jacob, Rev. Eapen Cherian, Rev. Kuruvilla Philip, Rev. Thomas Mathew, Rev. Saju Zachariah, Rev. P. V. Thomas and Rev. C.K. Koshy. The current vicar is Rev. A.P. Noble.

The previous church is located at 2425 Gus Thomasson Road, Mesquite, TX, which is 10 miles east of Dallas. The church acquired its 25,000 sq. ft. building and land in 1993. The first parsonage located at 2604 Mark Drive was purchased in 1997 and was sold later on to acquire a new parsonage. The current parsonage was purchased on December 30th,

2004 and is located at 5906 Blue Oaks Drive, Garland, TX 75043.

The church currently has 105 families as members. To address the growing needs of the members, 3.05 acres of land located at 1002 Barnes Bridge Rd, Mesquite, TX 75150 was purchased on November 21st, 2005. The Ground-breaking Ceremony for the new sanctuary, Sunday school classrooms, and offices was conducted on November 18th, 2007 by the former Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa along with the previous vicar Rev. C.K. Koshy. By God's grace and with the wholehearted support and prayers of all the members of this parish and so many well wishers, the new church facility was consecrated on March 20, 2010 by the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa.



ST. PAUL'S MTC DALLAS FIRST COMMUNICANTS WITH THEODOSIUS THIRUMENI AND ACHENS.

ആലയം... ദേവാലയം

സാം മേലേത്ത്, ഡാളസ്സ്

ആലയം... ദേവാലയം... വിശുദ്ധാലയം...
അഖിലാണ്ഡ നാമന്റെ ആലയം...

മഹിമയിൽ വാഴുന്ന നാമനെ സ്തുതിപ്പാൻ
മഹിമയിൽ തീർത്തൊരു ആലയം
മാലാഖമാർ പാടി വാഴ്ത്തുന്ന നാമനെ
മന്നിതിൽ ഞങ്ങളും വാഴ്ത്തിടുന്നു (ആലയം)

സ്തുതികളിൻ മലരിനാൽ തീർത്തൊരു ഹാരം
തിരുസന്നിധിയിൽ അർപ്പിക്കുന്നേ
ഞങ്ങൾ തൻ ഹൃത്തിൽ നിന്നുയരുന്ന പ്രാർത്ഥന
സൗരഭ്യ യാഗമായ് തീർന്നിടണേ (ആലയം)

അനുഗ്രഹം ചൊരിയുക നാഥായി ഞങ്ങൾക്ക്
അനൽപമായ നിൻ നന്മകൾ ഏകു
അവിടുന്നു ഞങ്ങളിൽ ആവസിച്ച് ഞേ
അവിടുത്തെ മന്ദിരം ആക്കിടണേ (ആലയം)

സെന്റ് പോളിൻ ആലയം സ്നേഹത്തിനാലയം
തമസ്സിനെ മാറ്റും പ്രദീപകമാക്കൂ
ഗിരിമേൽ സ്ഥാപിച്ച നഗരസമം
സുന്ദരമാം സുരമന്ദിരമാക്കൂ (ആലയം)

OUR NEW ACHEN

REV. K. J. MATHEW

Calgary Marthoma Church, Alberta, Canada



Education: BTh.BD.

Date of Ordination as Achen: 4th June, 1983

Parishes served: Peechi, Thaanippad AM, Vadakancheri, Kannur, Neduvallur, Piravanthoor, Ayoor, Alahabdh, Shadol Mission field, Bokaro steel City, Mezhuveli, Punalur, Nilambur, Kattikkalaruvi, and Kottanad Trinity M.T.C.

Mother Parish: Mannarathara Bethlehem, Ranni

Kochamma: Valasamma Mathew, Vechoochira.

Son: Sonu John Mathew (24)

Daughter: Dona Elizabeth Mathew (21)

Contact information (Parsonage): 403- 590-1010.

Email: kjmathew54@yahoo.com.in

THE WESTERN (REGIONAL) CENTER SEVIKA SANGHOM RETREAT



The Western Center Sevika Sanghom Retreat held on Saturday, March 20th, was hosted by the San Francisco Mar Thoma Church. Rev. K. A. Abraham, president of the western center presided over the meeting. Main speaker for the occasion was Rev. Binu Varghese, Vicar of Seattle Mar Thoma Church. Rev. Varghese Ninan of Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church led the devotional talk.

The theme for the conference was **"Fragrance of Grace"**. A total of about 70 delegates from Seattle, Los Angeles, St. Andrews MTC of Los Angeles, and San Francisco Mar Thoma Church attended this blessed retreat. The retreat started with opening worship led by Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles. Dr. Annie Thomas Sevika Sanghom Secretary of San Francisco welcomed the delegates. St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles led the intercessory prayers.

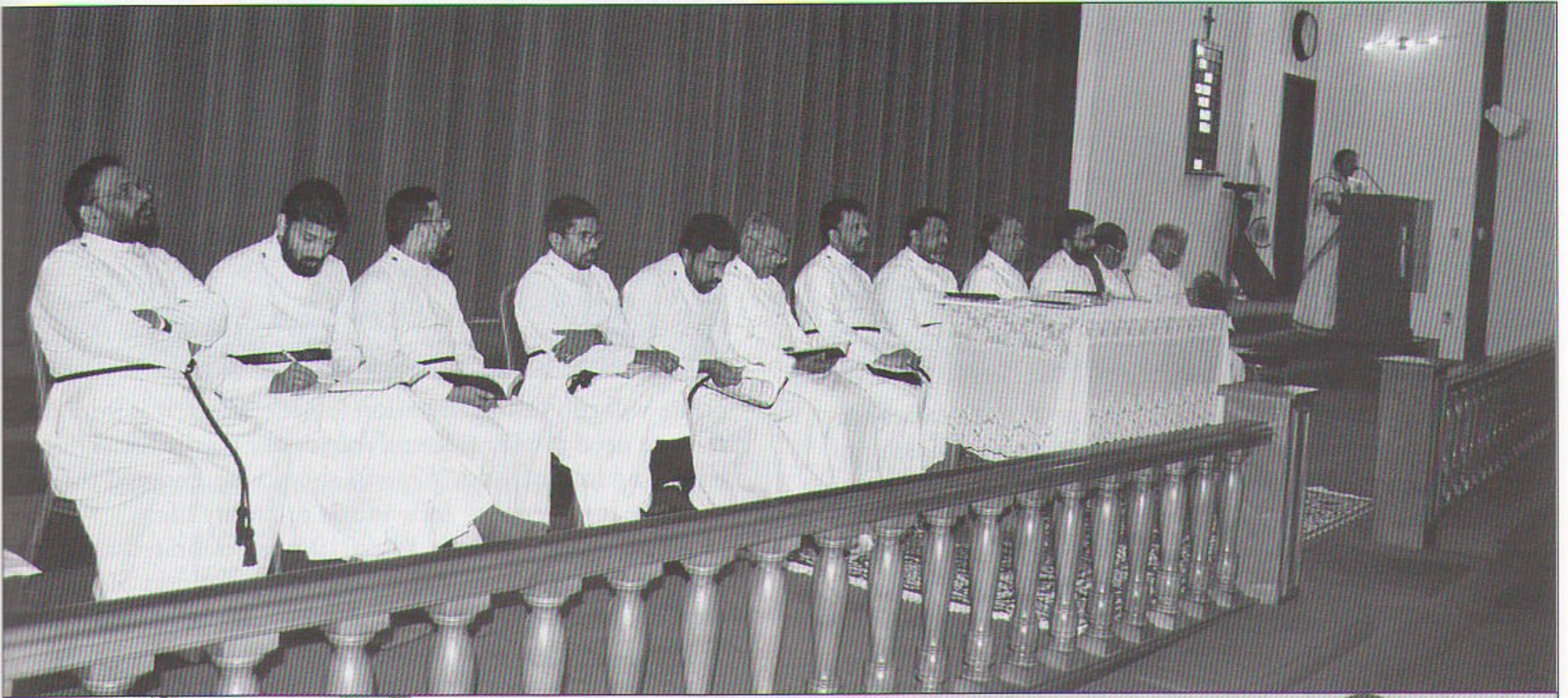
In his devotional talk, Rev. Varghese Ninan reminded us to follow Paul's principles when he says "Imitate Me" in 2 Corinthians 11:22. Rev. K. A. Abraham challenged us to replace "the smell of sin by the wonderful fragrance of grace". In his main talk Rev. Binu Varghese spoke about the basis of grace and in a crisis how we can be fragrances of grace. A lively discussion session followed the talks. The retreat was a great blessing where the participants were urged to reflect on the words and actions and to assure that they reflect our Lords Grace.

Special thanks to San Francisco Mar Thoma Church for making all the arrangements, especially the families that hosted the delegates at their homes, and also to those who provided transportation.

Annie Varghese

Western Regional Sevika Sanghom Secretary

EASTERN ZONAL SUVISHESHA SEVIKA SANGHOM COUPLES CONFERENCE



Eastern Zonal Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom Annual Couples Conference was held on March 13, 2010 at the Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. Rev. Sabu Thomas presided over this meeting and the Conference was led by 11 other Clergies from the region. The Theme of the Conference was "Healing touch to the broken Family life". Rev. Vinoy Daniel was the main speaker and the devotion-

al message was delivered by Mrs. Rachel Sabu. The Messages were inspirational and thought provoking followed by lively discussions.

A Farewell meeting was also held honoring all Clergies transferring from this Zone. Approximately 250 people participated in this blessed Conference.

Checha V. John, Eastern Zonal Secretary

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH—FAMILY SEMINAR



A one-day seminar based on the Christian Family values was held on March 13, 2010. Sister Joan Chunkapura, Director of TRADA de-addiction center, Kottayam was the guest speaker. Sister Joan, a Catholic nun by ordination is an experienced counselor and psychologist who understand issues that individuals and families face in a multicultural society like in United States.

Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla in his welcome speech reminded that family is the foundation of any society and if the foundation breaks or shakes it brings great disasters. Church itself is considered as the household of God. Achen emphasized that marriage is a covenant relationship between the individuals and God and when the family keeps the covenant relationship, God helps to hold the true values of the family and pass it on to the next generation. Mr. Thomas Mathew, Secretary introduced Sister Joan to the audience and reminded that we as families should be good listeners as well as the doers of what God intended from us.

Sister talked about the role of individuals in the family especially focusing on the two aspects—aging gracefully and family life in transition based on Ephesians 3:14-21. She emphasized the truth that Church is based on family and family is based on God. Marriage is a sacrament, a visible sign of Trinitarian existence of God. Family is a gift from God and hence there is need to imitate Christ in our family life. God interferes through family and individuals to establish His Kingdom in this world. The quality of family life we



create will run from generation to generation. It is important that we need to play rule and role in our family life. The self-emptying love of God (*Kenosis*) should be rendered through intimate love between individuals in family life.

The Sunday, March 14, 2010 was celebrated as Family Sunday in the parish. After Holy Communion Sister Joan reemphasized that family is bound together by God so that Trinitarian presence is manifested in it. Trinity is a mystery, but it reveals itself that togetherness is what is important in family life. Marriage is a call to imitate Trinitarian existence of God by witnessing the power of commitment and power of witnessing by following the nature of God. Family life is a process of self-emptying so that God's love is shared through oneself to other individuals of the family. Each individual member in a family need to be more interdependent than independent.

Sister also reminded that we need to have an attitude of gratitude since family is a gift from God. We need to have meaningful communication both with God and members of the family. The value system created in each family pass on from generation to generation. God found all He created as good and God gives each day a new life to us and He will keep everything good till the end. The ability to make good decisions and discernment should be part of family life. God is slow in anger and abounding in mercy. The one-day seminar was really a blessing to those who attended.

Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla, Vicar

HOREB MAR THOMA CHURCH, COLORADO



First Communicants with
Diocesan Bishop
Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese
Mar Theodosius Episcopa
and Vicar Rev. George
Varghese.

DIOCESAN BISHOP'S ITINERARY

April 2010

Date	Program
1	St. Andrew's MTC, NY— <i>Maundy Thursday</i>
2	MTC Philadelphia— <i>Good Friday</i>
3-5	MTC Randolph, NJ— <i>Easter</i>
7-9	MTC Sanfransisco
9-12	Trinity MTC, Houston
13-14	Sinai Mar Thoma Center
15-16	Diocesan Clergy Conference, Atlanta
16	Diocesan Council Meeting, Atlanta
17	Diocesan Assembly Meeting, Atlanta
18	MTC Atlanta
18	Chattanooga MT Congregation
19	Chattanooga and Atlanta
24	New Jersey
24, 25	Washington MTC, Virginia
26	Virginia
27-30	Sinai Mar Thoma Center

May 2010

1-3	Carmel MTC, Boston
4-6	Sinai Mar Thoma Church
8-9	The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island
15-16	St. Thomas MTC, Chicago
17	Washington, D.C.
22-23	Baltimore and Rochester
29-30	Toronto, Canada

June 2010

5-6	St. Stephens MTC, NJ
8-11	Horeb MTC, Denver, Colorado
12-13	Immanuel MTC, Houston
19-20	Vancouver, Canada
26-27	Seattle, WA; Portland, OR

July 2010

1 to 7	Dallas, Texas—Family Conference & Clergy Family Conference
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OBITUARY

ABRAHAM SANTHOSH KURUVILLA born on September 27, 1961 to Late Rev. C. A. Kuruvilla and Mrs. Sosamma Kuruvilla, was called to eternity on February 26,



1961-2010

2010. The Funeral held on March 12, 2010, at the Forest Lawn, Los Angeles. The service was conducted by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa with the presence of Rev. Varghese Mathew, Rev. Regi Zachariah, Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas, Rev. Varghese A. Ninan. He was very active in the formation periods of the Los Angeles Parish. He took the lead role in the activities

of the Choir and served as the accountant of the Parish. He is survived by his mother Mrs. Sosamma Kuruvilla and his sisters Ms. Ann John and Ms. Susan Kuruvila. Let us uphold Kochamma and the extended family in our prayers. The Lord Almighty strengthen the bereaved family with the Heavenly peace in the days to come.

Rev. Varghese A. Ninan, Vicar

ANDREWS JACOB (Rajan) was born on December 6, 1955 at Mangamadom House, Vengal, Thiruvalla, India. He was the youngest son of P. E. Chacko (late) and Mariamma Chacko. In 1986, he immigrated to New York

where he worked as a valued employee of the United States Postal Service for over twenty years.

Rajan was a committed member of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers, New York. He played a vital role in the growth of the church, rendering invaluable services and talents, in particular to the Malayalam Choir and Edavaka Mission.

He was also an ardent member of Inter Denominational Christian Fellowship. Rajan was the beloved drummer at the weekly worship meeting held at Christ Church every Saturday.

Rajan leaves behind his beloved mother, Mariamma Chacko; his loving wife of twenty-one years, Kochumol; three amazing children: Ancy, Ansu and Arun; brothers: P. C. George (Baby), P. C. Matthew (Kuttappan), P. C. Jacob (Kunjumon), Joseph C. Jacob (Kunjunju); older sisters: Amini John, Aleyamma Philips (Molly), and Saramma Jacob (Sallykutty), twenty-two nieces and nephews; twenty-one grand nieces and nephews.

Now at the age of 54, Rajan has been elected to serve Christ in His Heavenly kingdom.



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ASCENSION MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA



St. Thomas MTC, New York—winners of the women's championship.

4th Annual Ascension All-Stars Basketball Tournament

The 4th Annual Ascension Mar Thoma Church all-Stars Basketball Tournament was held on March 27, 2010 at the United Sports Training Center in Downingtown, PA. This year we were blessed to have 18 men's and 5 women's teams competing in our basketball tournament. This tournament was an effort to raise money for a charity for Navjeevan Center Mumbai. The St. Joseph's Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Rockland (Family) won the men's championship and the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of New York won the women's championship.

There were a total of 12 Mar Thoma teams, 5 Catholic teams, 3 Orthodox teams, 2 Evangelical and 1 Pentecostal team as participants. This tournament evolved to be an inter-denominational tournament to bring forth more competition and more fellowship



St. Joseph's Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Rockland—winners of the men's championship.

among the Indian Christians in our community. Navjeevan is a registered non-governmental organization primarily engaged in rehabilitating the children of women working in the red-light areas in Mumbai, under the auspices of Mar Thoma Church. It was founded as part of the effort of the Mar Thoma Church to reach out to the several thousand of girls who have been lured into living a life of shame in the mean streets of the metropolis formerly called Bombay.

We like to thank everyone who helped, competed and prayed for the basketball tournament. Most importantly, we wanted to thank God for allowing us to host this tournament again. We pray that He allows us to continue this event for many years to come.

Ascension All-Stars Basketball Tournament Committee

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, EDMONTON, CANADA

Sunday School: Grade nine Sunday School Students Kesia Mathews, Shania Kunjachen, Rebekah Koshy and their teacher Mathew Koshy organized a bake sale to raise money to support the Haiti Earth Quake Fund initiated by our Thirumeni. They raised about \$500 and the amount was remitted to the Diocesan office. The students wanted to put into action what they learned from their Sunday school classes. Their parents and teachers: Mathew Koshy and Arun Cherian gave leadership and advice for this event.

Sevika Sangham: As February is observed as Heart and Stroke month, the Trinity Mar Thoma church Sevika Sanghom organized a seminar on the topic "Women and

Heart disease". The seminar was conducted by Dr. Sajad Gulamhusein a leading cardiologist, electrophysiologist and clinical professor at University of Alberta. Susan Mathews, RPT talked about importance of exercise. The meeting was well attended including members from our sister churches. Following the seminar lunch was sponsored by AstraZeneca pharmaceutical. Door prizes were sponsored by James Thomas assistant branch manager, ATB Financial and Servier pharmaceutical. Mrs. Molly Kuruvilla conveyed vote of thanks. We thank our vicar Rev. Reji John and all the Sevika Sangham executive members in making this event a success.

Susan Koshy, Secretary

Mar Thoma Messenger—Pictures for Publication!!!

Please submit high resolution pictures for publication (minimum 300 DPI), or digital pictures as it is taken without cropping the size (larger sizes). Thank you. Mar Thoma Messenger.

2010 World Day of Prayer

Nirmala Abraham, Board Member, World Day of Prayer, USA

World Day of Prayer [WDP] is a worldwide ecumenical movement of Christian women of many faith traditions. It is observed annually on the first weekend of March.

Each year, women from a different country create the worship service. For 2010, the women of Cameroon developed the worship service. The theme, "Let everything that has breath praise God" is taken from Psalm 150. The worship service reflects the fact that Cameroonians praise God in times of joy and sadness. Through the worship service, participants learn more about the concerns and needs of the Cameroonians.

Each year, people from 170 countries participate in it. Over the years, our diocese has taken an active part in the WDP service and celebrations. Many of our churches have provided leadership in celebrating this event as an ecumenical celebration. The worship service has been enriched by the addition of music, liturgical dances and dramatization of the biblical passage. Special thanks to all those who have worked hard to make this year's World Day of Prayer a blessing.

The following are the reports from some of our churches:

Philadelphia

The Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian churches in Philadelphia hosted the WDP service on March 6th from 10-



12 pm. The venue was the St. Thomas Indian Orthodox church in Philadelphia. The guest speaker was Rev. Dr. Jaya Kiran Sebastian, professor at the Lutheran Theological seminary in Philadelphia. About 400 people attended this service which included media representatives, clergy and members from many denominations. The highlight of the service



included a joyful procession including small children waving tri-colored ribbons, worship team, clergy and Malayalam choir

with the processional song played by the youth choir and the Bethel Sunday school band. The liturgical dance by Nupura dance academy and the skit by Bethel MT church on the story of Paul and Silas healing the slave girl enhanced the event. The presentation on the people and land of Cameroon added a new dimension. Lunch was served to all the attendees.

Detroit

The Detroit Mar Thoma Church celebrated the 2010 World Day of Prayer along with the members of the clergy and dele-



gates from the ten sister churches in the area on March 6, 2010. This lively and spirit-filled service was truly an inter-generational celebration with heart felt prayers, inspiring Bible studies, vibrant musical instruments, creative presentations, and an aesthetic display area exhibiting authentic items from Cameroon and other parts of Africa. Nearly one hundred



youngsters in the children's choir wore colorful outfits of yellow, green, and red, representing the flag of Cameroon and captured the hearts of the congregation with their sweet voices. Galdys Assamo, who had recently arrived from Cameroon rendered a beautiful African Spiritual and thanked the congregation for their Christian love and concern towards the women and children of her country. More than four hundred people attended this service and an offertory of \$2042 was generated for the WDP through this memorable event. We are extremely grateful to Shaji K. Thomas Achen and Mini Kochamma for their invaluable guidance.

Anuja Chacko, Convener

Chicago

The Chicago Marthoma Sevika Sanghom hosted the Word Day of Prayer on March 6th 2010 along with St. Thomas Marthoma Church, Lombard, and Bethel Marthoma Church, Frankfort. Rev. Roy P. Thomas presided over the meeting.

The Sevika Sanghom members, along with Rev. Roy P. Thomas led the special worship designed for this day. A slide show depicting the people of Cameroon, their culture, features, and practices was presented during the meeting. Mrs. Suja Sabu, wife of Rev. Sabu Thomas delivered a speech based on the theme followed by a group discussion. About 60 women attended from the three churches.

Florida

The Kerala Christian Association of Central Florida in co operation with St. Marks Marthoma Sevika Sanghom Tampa host-



ed the World Day of Prayer worship service on Friday the 5th of March from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church Tampa. St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, St. Mary's Malankara Orthodox Church, Mar Gregorious Syrian Orthodox Church, St. Gregorious Malankara Orthodox Church, St. Mary's Syrian Knanaya Church, Sacred Heart Knanaya Catholic Mission, St. Joseph's Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, C.S.I. Congregation of Florida, and St. George Knanaya Church participated in this glorious event. The Vicars and Members of each parish gave leadership in various ways. The worship service including Bible readings, by an interdenominational worship team of 27 women, were seamlessly incorporated into the program. The hymns both in English and Malayalam were sung by the Ecumenical Choir including the youth of St. Marks Marthoma Church. The Power point presentation, describing the life and work of the Cameroonian community, with recorded narration was done by Rev. T. Johnson. Around 200 people attended. President of the Christian Association, Rev. T. Johnson welcomed everybody and the Treasurer Mr. Shabu Varghese did the vote of thanks.

Dallas

Kerala Christian churches women's fellowship in Dallas jointly celebrated this year's Day of Prayer. On Saturday 6th March, over three hundred of the women belonging to different parishes and various denominations in Dallas Area gath-



ered at Dallas Carrollton Marthoma Church and celebrated the World Day of Prayer. Members of Women's Fellowship from 19 parishes out of the 20 (members of KECF) including 10 Achens attended this colorful ceremony. Sr. Dr. Joan Chunkappura (India) and Mrs. Mary Taminga (Cameroon Native) were the main Speakers. Mrs. Sunila Johnson served as the Convener.

New Jersey

Ecumenical Christian Fellowship of New Jersey observed World Day Of Prayer on March 6, 2010 at St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, East Brunswick with an afternoon prayers, worship, songs, childrens worship, Praise dance, witnessing and devotional message. Around 400 members from many Christian denominations participated this event. The meeting was presided over by His Grace Ayub Mor Silvanos Metropolitan of the Kananaya Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of North America and Europe. The Bible study was lead by Rev. Abraham Cherian, Vicar of St. Stephens Mar Thoma Church, East Brunswick and Dr. Usha Thomas did a presentation depicting the religious and socio-economic conditions of Cameron. Miss. Tini Thomas Esq. was the MC for the function and the meeting ended with a prayer by Rev. Jose Abraham of New Jersey Mar Thoma Church.

Grace Alexander, Coordinator

Oklahoma

Mar Thoma Church, Oklahoma celebrated the world prayer day on Friday, March 05, 2010. More than 50 members of the parish attended the prayer. The theme "Let everything that has breath praise God" was conceived by the participants in its true Spirit and the Church was filled with the praises for the Creator. Vicar Rev Varughese Mathew lead the worship service and the speech for the day was given by Mrs. Mariamma Mathew.

Shirly Silas

Staten Island

This year World Day of Prayer was held on March 6th Saturday at Staten Island Mar Thoma Chruuch. This was an



ecumenical event and five Churches in Staten Island participated in this worship service. Rev. Fr. T. A. Thomas, Rev. Fr. Cherian Mundaykal, Rev. Varghese Mathai, Rev. Fr. Joy Alex and Rev. Sabu Thomas took special interest in arranging this meeting. Mrs. Rachel Sabu gave the message based on the theme. An ecumenical choir organized and taught by Mrs. Rachel Sabu led the worship. A slide show was presented by

Mrs. Sheeja Thomas and Miss. Mary Thomas of Staten Island Mar Thoma Church focusing on the Cameron woman, their culture, geography region and health of Cameron. A Skit was performed by Mar Thoma Church members depicting the Theme "Church of Women". Elsy Skariah welcomed all participants and Ansa Thomas did the vote of thanks. Refreshments were served after the program. Offertory which rounded to amount \$650 was collected and send to the World day of prayer office.

Rev. Sabu Thomas

Atlanta

Hermon Mar Thoma Church celebrated the World Day Prayer on Saturday March 6, 2010 at our church. Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Secretary to the Bishop & Diocesan secretary was the chief guest. Achen conducted the service along with Rev. Jay Varghese, the vicar of the Atlanta Marthoma Church. The prayer was organized by the members of our Sevika Sangham and choir. A good number of members from both Mar Thoma parishes in Atlanta attended this graceful service.

**Rev. Thomas Mathew, Vicar
Sagin Mamman, Secretary**

Atlanta Mar Thoma Church celebrated the World Day Prayer on Friday, March 5th, 2010 at 7 p.m. We had the combined service with Edavaka Mission and about 50 people attended the service. One of our members, Alice Mathew, gave the sermon based on prayer. It was a very blessed occasion for all those who have attended.

Anny Varghese

Los Angeles

On Saturday March 13th, 2010. the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles hosted the World Day of Prayer from 10 a.m. to



1 p.m. under the leadership of Rev. Varghese Ninan. In addition to the parishioners of the MTCLA, several members from different churches were in attendance. Mrs. Ammini Samuel gave the welcome speech, after the meeting began with songs and prayer. As a special guest of the church, Ms. Cheffa, born and raised in Cameroon City in Africa, delivered a short message. The Church members and all in attendance participated in Bible reading, songs, prayer and the worship service. Both Mrs. Annie Varghese and Achen delivered messages based upon our theme, "Let Everything That Has Breath Praise God." Afterwards, the offertory was collected, and Mrs. Rachel Mathew gave the vote of thanks. The meeting concluded with prayer and a potluck was served.

New York—Epiphany MTC



Boston—Carmel MTC



EPISCOPAL VISIT TO THE MAR THOMA CONGREGATION, SWITZERLAND

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, after taking the charge of the diocese, made his first Episcopal visit to the Mar Thoma Congregation in Switzerland on 28 February

2010 and celebrated Holy Qurbana Service at St. Maria Kirche, 2501 Biel, Switzerland. Believers from different denominations attended the Qurbana Service.

EPISCOPAL VISIT TO ST JOHN'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, LONDON, UK

The Diocesan Episcopa visited St John's Mar Thoma Parish from March 4 to 8, 2010. This was also the occasion of the

St. John Family Retreat. Theme: **Christian Witness—Rethinking of the Mission of the Church.**



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2010 TOUR SCHEDULE

**10 Day Alaska Cruise Tour
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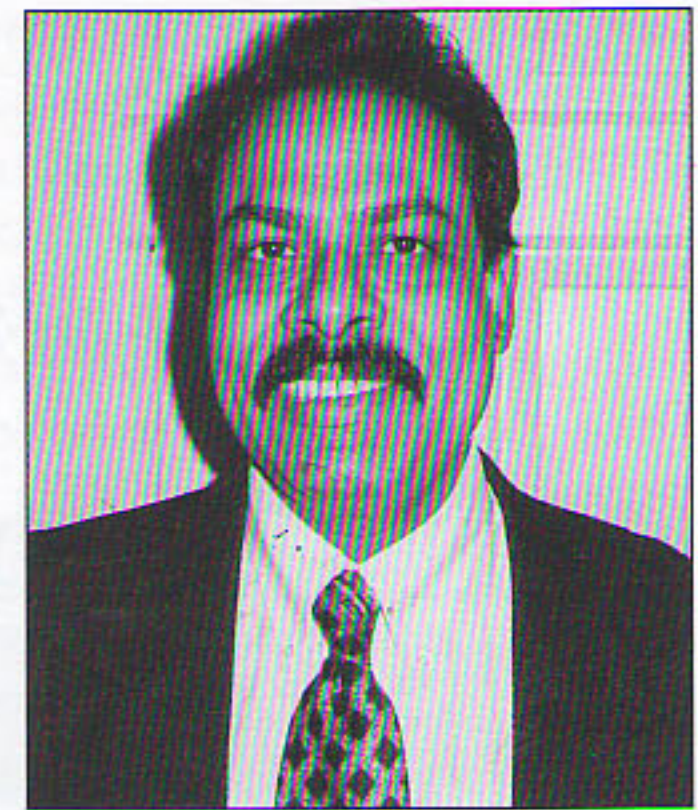
**Holy Land Tour
11 Nights/13 Days,
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"Attempting to capture the essence of the Holy Land has been an incredible challenge. I really enjoyed the holy land trip organized by Royal Travel and Tours...Jesus' foot steps... beauty of the landscape ...Historical and Religious importance of the sites in the "Fertile Crescent" and much more!! I personally recommend everyone to visit Holy Land."

Rev. M.J. Thomaskutty

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I am amazed at the technological ways with which we can track each living object within the US boundaries, or even outside. Once you enter a valid social security number into a designated computer, it yields complete demographical details of the owner of that social security number. Remember, when we had a case of Mad Cow disease? The US government (or its affiliate) was able to track a single cow, born in Canada almost three years before, right to the stall where she slept in the state of Washington, and also tracked its calves to their current locations. If this is humanly possible, how much more God can track!! No wonder the Psalmist stated that the Lord knows the ins and outs of one's heart. As true Christians, we are obliged to lead a life of sanctification; the internal renovation, transformation and conformation to gold standards of Christ. As we often hear, sanctification is not an instantaneous event, but it is a progressive and continuous process based on faith and practice. We have selected 'Sacraments and sacramental living' as the main theme for this issue to humbly remind our readers of our Christian duties during this Lenten season. It is rather easy to yield to the pressures of the modern society and slide into a state of passive Christianity, which may later lead to a life devoid of clear directions and hope.



When tragedy strikes followed by strifes, as humans we are shaken and are prompted to make decisions pertaining to survival; emotional, physical, and ethical. There are many Biblical events that depict such desperate situations. In the Old Testament times, God intervened directly with those situations or His prophets uttered timely points. The preamble of the constitution of this country was derived from emotions resulting from treatments by unjust and unyielding governmental authorities. Those emotions got transformed into powerful words "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution...". In human history, powerlessness, disorder, and corrupted powers led to unification of the sufferers. Christianity is no stranger to such reforms. Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela are witnesses to such humanly events. It is Nelson Mandela who once quoted "A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination". At times, believers questioned even the means and modes of salvation and sanctity. I believe that humanity is now moving towards a period of many challenges that include an array of ethical concerns. We see the so called "evangelists" persuading individuals to choose particulate denominational ways. Many of us are at crossroads where clear directions are absent. What happens today has a greater impact on tomorrow's generation, and if we are lost, the next generation will definitely be scattered more. Our teachings and beliefs must equip the forthcoming generation to help sustain the jest of core Christian values. In second Corinthians we read, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15). Prosperity gospel will not last in a true Christian setting. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated "To endure the cross is not tragedy; it is the suffering which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ".

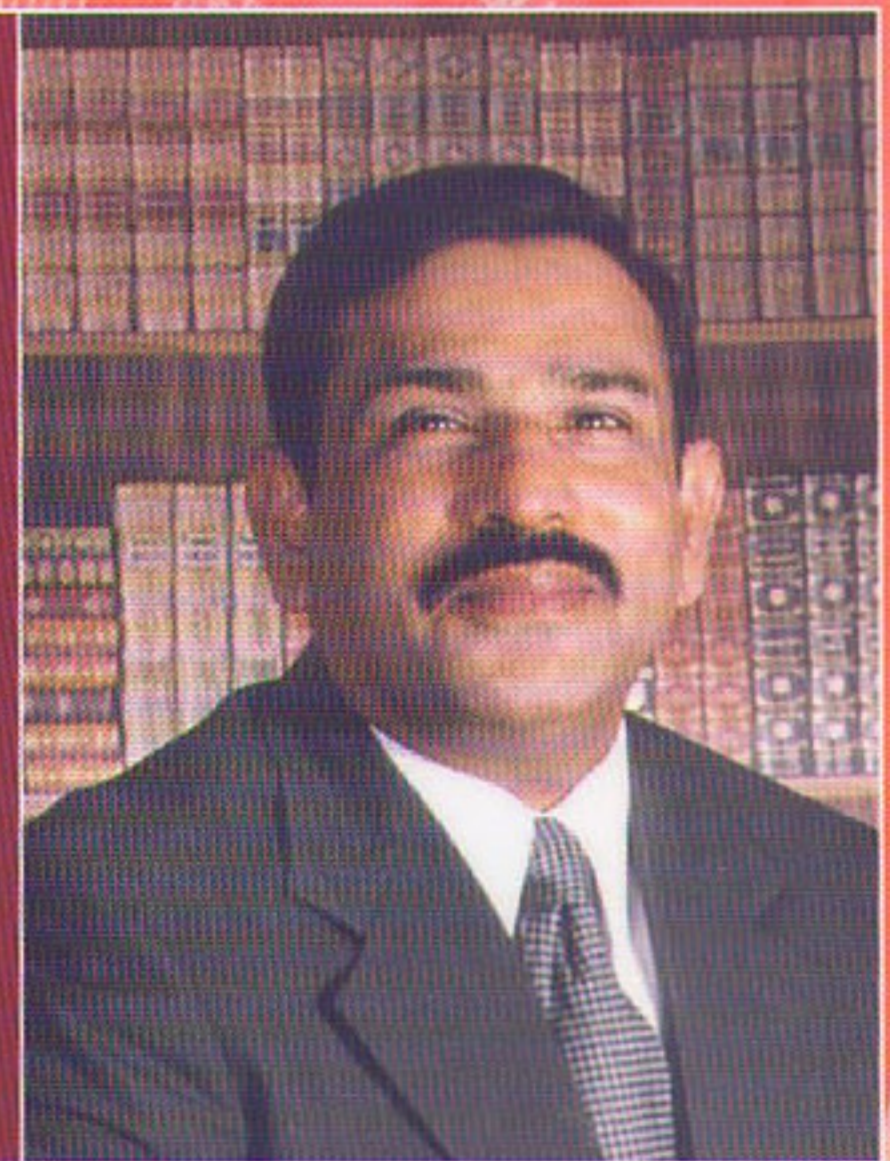
Eapen Daniel

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

Lal Varghese

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Attorney at Law

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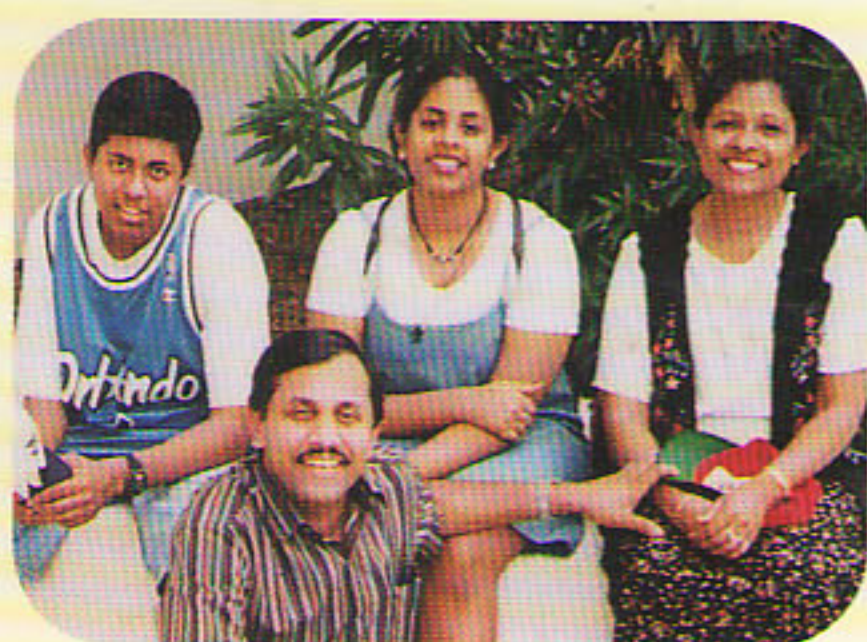


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