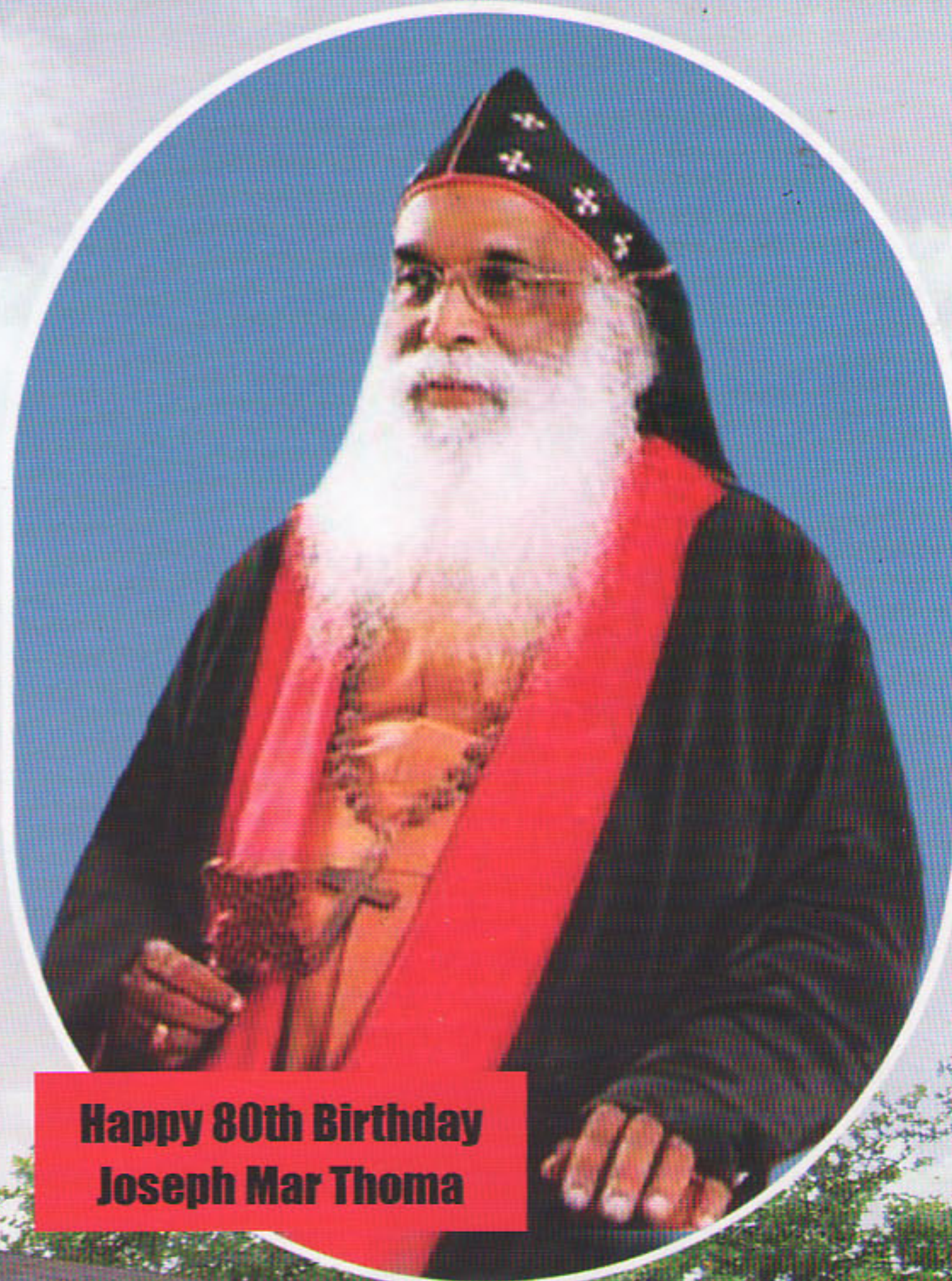




# MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 2010



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Joseph Mar Thoma**

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I am sending you”**



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# Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly beloved in the Lord,

Through the closing days of the meditative Holy Week, we were able to enter into the life experiences of the month of April. The unusual severe summer tortured the State of Kerala. Owing to sunstrokes, deaths occurred in Orissa and other parts of Northern India.

During the Passion Week, I was able to visit our parishes in South Africa. The Family Conference in Pretoria was a great success. In Pretoria, the respected N. Barney Pityana, the Vice Chancellor of the University of South Africa honored me with a banquet. He has agreed to deliver messages in the next year's Maramon Convention. He has promised to stay with us as our honorable guest for one week. Immediately after the South African visit, I was able to participate in the inaugural meeting of the fourth parish in London. According to the request of our venerable Suffragan Metropolitan, I invited Rt. Rev. James Jones, the Bishop of Liverpool to deliver messages in the next Maramon Convention of 2011. He has consented to do the same and he also will be here as our honorable guest for one week. This information will be reported to the Evangelistic Association. The volcanic eruption in Iceland caused much hardship to thousands of travelers passing through England. About 78,000 schedules by different Airways were postponed or changed. The earthquakes that occurred on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, China, and South American shores caused terrible destructions. These tragic events remind us a great spiritual truth: God is the Lord of all creations. If somebody thwarts the God created Nature in unscientific ways, all have to endure the bitter consequences of the exploitation. Love nature. Preserve nature. Let each household plant at least one sapling this year.

The centenary celebrations of the Mar Thoma Students Conference are on the way. May 21st will witness the centenary meeting of the Mar Thoma Students Conference. Let the celebrations be an inspiration for many less fortunate youngsters. My best wishes follow.

The month of April is the beginning of the new financial year. When each parish plans the budget for the next year, it seems desirable, to budget an amount for the Sabha Corpus Fund and send the same to the Sabha Office. Corpus fund is not intended to give any grant. This is a reserve fund to be used in urgent necessities. Those who get money from this fund, should pay the amount back to the reserve fund. We want to collect Rupees ten crores for the reserve fund within five years. Hope for everyone's cooperation.

Those who journeyed to Emmaus experienced the transforming presence of the risen Jesus who lives for ever. Just before the Ascension, a brilliant vision of glory occurred at the banks of the Sea of Tiberias, conforming the disciples who were fortunate enough to experience the ever transforming presence of the risen Jesus. The disciples, after losing their faith in their Lord and Master who was crucified, had tried to depend solely on their vocation and professional experience, thus striving to reach success in life. But the result was most disappointing. Hopes faded. They became weak in mind and body. When they cast their net according to the word of the risen Christ, they caught a great shoal of fish. If we try to attain success depending on our own efficiency and decisions, and disregarding God and His benevolence, we will fail. Jesus who is the light of the world is our light. Without Jesus, our Lord, any effort is futile and disappointing. It won't bear fruit. When we cast the net in the presence, word, and might of our Lord, the state of having "nothing-caught-in-the-net-that-night" situation is changing completely. "...When they threw the net, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish" (John 21:6).

"It was full of large fish, but even with so many the net was not torn" (John 21:11). We must note the fact that no power could tear the net. When we remain with God and set ourselves to work, that will become God's own enterprise, then nobody in the world can destroy it. After appeasing them of their hunger, our Lord asked the leader of the disciples a question. This question is one that comes from the profound depths of God's heart and that pierces into the deepest realms of human heart. "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" The meaning of this question can be analyzed as this: Do you love me more than any aspect that you believe to make you successful in life? Peter's reply before the omnipotent Lord can be considered to be the most glorious reply with which he was completely surrendering before his Master, embedded in love and faith. Through this, Jesus was able to conform the disciples steadfastly for their future mission. We also have to surrender completely before our Lord, like the disciples so that we too will be reinstated.

Jesus who said, 'As my Father sent me, I too send you', gave them the assurance that He would be with them always to the very end of the age. With this promise, He disappeared among the clouds. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through this, reminds us: "For my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:30).

Grace be with you all.

Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

# Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

As we are enjoying the summer season with our children who are back from colleges and universities, let us together thank God for all who have graduated from schools, colleges and universities and pray to God to provide them guidance while seeking higher education and jobs. Let us also

praise God that our new Achens transferred with effect from May 1, 2010 for our parishes in the Diocese and their families have joined us after receiving approval from U. S. Immigration and their visas issued by the U. S. consulates. At this time, we also thank God for the Achens who served here for the past three years and transferred to different locations assigned to them by the Episcopal Synod. We wish and pray for God's blessings upon all our Achens and their families who just joined this diocese, and on all who completed their service here. We also wish and pray that the incoming Achens to this diocese will have a fruitful ministry. We have scheduled a meeting of all the clergy and members of their family at the St. Paul's Mar Thoma Parish in Dallas from July 4 to 6, 2010.

The Diocesan Assembly met at the Atlanta Mar Thoma parish on April 19, 2010. I am glad that there were a good number of representations from our parishes and organizations. The Vicar and members of the Atlanta Mar Thoma parish made all the arrangements to host the meeting, for the boarding and lodging and transportation needs of those who attended the assembly meeting. Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in USA (NCCC-USA), attended the meeting and gave the devotional talk. We handed the Haiti relief fund collected from different parishes, amounting to \$131,775.00, to Dr. Kinnamon, and he expressed his gratitude and appreciation to our Diocese for the generous contribution. Dr. Kinnamon also praised the partnership of the Mar Thoma Church in all the activities of NCCC-USA and in all other ecumenical endeavors. I take this opportunity to thank each member of our parishes and congregations for realizing the immediate need and praying for the people of Haiti and for contributing generously to help them. The Diocesan Assembly met and approved the annual report, accounts and budget and also passed several important decisions. Once these decisions are approved by the Episcopal Synod, they will be communicated to all parishes and members through Kalpana.

Study of the Word of God and living a life worthy to God by its members is an integral part of a growing Church. In order to accomplish this noble cause, we are arranging about ten conferences in the Diocese in the months of July, August and October. These conferences include: the National Family Conference in Dallas; conference of Medical Professionals in New Jersey; the Conferences For Children and Teenagers in two geographic locations; the National Youth Conference in Chicago; the Voluntary Evangelists Association Conference in Philadelphia; the Family Conference of parishes of Europe in UK; the National Sevika Sangham Conference in Florida; the National Yuvajana Sakhyam Conference in Randolph, New Jersey; and the retreat for the Young Adults and Couples in Virginia. It is my desire that all members of the Diocese make it a point to attend at least one of these conferences to enhance their spiritual growth and maturity. While as members of the parishes coming together for these conferences, we not only celebrate our diversity but also help each other to grow together in faith as the body of Christ. It is important that we take time to sit at the feet of Jesus, study the Word of God, worship together and reflect upon the contemporary issues and challenges we face in the land where we are planted by God.

We are publishing this issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger before all of the conferences, mentioned above, taking place. There will be a few articles in this issue regarding the theme of the Family Conference to be held in Dallas in the first week of July. I request each one of you to read the articles before you participate in the Family Conference. I am happy that about 2,000 families subscribe to Mar Thoma Messenger at present. However, considering that there are about 7000 families in this Diocese, the current subscriber's list is not satisfactory and must be increased. Therefore, a special effort must be made to encourage each family to subscribe for the Mar Thoma Messenger. It will be good if parishes with more members make an effort at the parish level to collect the subscription fees for the Messenger along with the annual contributions of the members, and coordinate with the Diocese for the effective distribution of the Messenger. This can be done in all of the parishes, considering the fact that each parish has at least twenty families. In the month of October of this year the Diocese is organizing an institute to study our liturgy. Rev. Dr. George Mathew from Kerala will lead this institute, in Chicago, Dallas, New York and Philadelphia. The parishes located reasonably in close proximity to these places should join together so that a maximum number of our people can get the

opportunity to study the meaning and relevance of our liturgy. A similar institute is planned for 2011, to understand and study the topic of counseling. Some sessions will also be organized within the Diocese to study the subject *'Christian Witness: Revisiting the Mission Mandate of the Church'* which is the Sabha Mandalam Theme of the Year. The Mandalam Members and Diocesan Assembly Members will be intimated about this by a separate circular.

It gives us great joy that new parishes are formed in England and Virginia in United States. The Mar Thoma Congregation in Austin, Texas, has become a full-fledged parish now. Another new parish in the Philadelphia area will be formed by branching out from the Bethel Mar Thoma parish in Philadelphia. I encourage that all the congregations have to grow to the status of parishes in the near future. This year, the Sabha has provided us two more Achens to serve in our Diocese. At present, we need three more Achens to meet the needs of our people in this Diocese. We are in the process preparing the transfer list of Achens for 2011 and the list of new batch of Achens to join the Diocese by May 1, 2011. In order to request the required number of Achens to the Episcopal Synod and to process their petitions for approval from U. S. Immigration Department we need all the parishes and congregations to become separate entities by registering as non-profit organizations with the State authorities and also should apply for tax exemption with IRS and comply with all State and Federal laws and should keep and maintain all necessary documents. Vicars and all office bearers will have to work towards this end without much delay and help the Diocese to serve the parishes and congregations in a better way by filing the petitions for new Achens in a timely manner so that they all can join in the first week of May 2011 itself.

We live at a time when there is a financial meltdown all over the world. Many of our members have lost jobs and are facing financial burdens and feeling the stress and strain associated with such unprecedented events. It is difficult to find jobs for unskilled laborers. Hence, our children are to be motivated and encouraged to pursue their careers in specialized areas. At the same time, we need to discipline ourselves in our spending also. It is heart breaking to see how much food and water are wasted in this country while mil-

lions of people are starving in several parts of the world. The Diocese, with the help of the Diocesan Council, is also looking at ways to bring down the amount of remittances to be made by the parishes to Diocese under the Sabha constitution. However, this must not become an excuse for our people to abstain from giving to the Church and the needy. We have a heritage of sacrificial giving. The Mar Thoma Church at the time of reformation went through the financial strain, but our ancestors met the needs of the Church and helped it by sacrificial giving to grow in its ministry and mission. The Holy Bible speaks about tithing our time and talents and our resources. Our Lord Jesus Christ showed us the example of self-emptying and highlighted the spirit of giving through the example of the widow who gave out of her poverty everything she has to live on. A believer should not put a limit for giving to the Lord when he or she realizes that everything comes from Him. No member in our Church should hesitate to give voluntarily from what God has provided. Giving must be with a heart full of thanks to God.

Let us remember the leaders of our Church, who have committed themselves to serve our Lord Jesus Christ through the Church. Our dear Metropolitan Thirumeni, Joseph Mar Thoma is celebrating his 80th birthday on June 27, 2010. On behalf of the diocese, let me wish a happy birthday and pray that God may continue to shower abundance of blessings and grace upon Thirumeni to lead and guide the Church in to the future. Our beloved Zacharias Thirumeni completed 30 years as the Episcopa of the Mar Thoma Church on May 1, 2010. I wish and pray that God may continue to keep our Suffragan Metropolitan in His providence. There are new people who entered ordained ministry this year. We need more committed youths from this Diocese to undergo theological training to serve as ordained priests of the community and to serve God. Let us also pray for our Church as we seek God's guidance in selecting three candidates to serve as the Bishops of the Church. May our deliberations and decisions be the decision of the Holy Spirit.

May God Bless You All!

Yours in Christ's Ministry,  
Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius

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# Re-visiting Mission Agenda in the Tapestry of Twenty-first Century

Rev. K. C. Varughese, Carmel MTC, Boston

Jesus preached the kingdom of God and all His activities including teaching, healing and preaching were pointed towards the coming of the Kingdom. In the healing narratives, healing was not simply an act of cure. Jesus was confronting the life situations which prevented the afflicted from becoming a part of the reign of God or from enjoying the abundant life the Kingdom provided. The leper was under social and psychological exclusion; the woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, was alienated and was stamped unclean. The paralytic, the crippled, Syro-Phoenician woman, the Samaritan etc., were all kept away from enjoying the love of God. Jesus stood for 're-gaining' their social space in the Palestinian social and religious life. The socio-political, religious and economic realms of the third millennium demands a 're-visit' to the mission mandate of the Church. It involves a 're-visioning' from the witnessing community. Church has been called out to continue the Mission.

Church is intrinsically missional in its very nature, and therefore, we should think of the Church's mission rather than the Church and Mission: The Church is God's pilgrim community and the Church is not for the people but more than that the Church is of the people. Commitment to faith and its response as mission doesn't suggest an absence of critical examination. So it is necessary to subject every definition and every manifestation of the Christian mission to rigorous analysis and appraisal.

## Mission as *Missio Dei*: Re-defining the Subject

The Church is continuing the Mission of God (*Missio Dei*) entrusted to her. Karl Barth was one of the first to use this term and it came into widespread use in the 1950s. The Vatican document *Ad Gentes* tries to work out this in detail. Robert J. Schreiter is of the opinion that identifying our Mission as the Mission of God will help us in many ways:

"In view of the many difficult, seemingly intractable issues mission is facing—conflict, multi-religious violence, growing poverty and hunger, loss of self control, erosion of the physical environment—there seems to be a growing awareness that it is not that we carry out mission, but rather that we participate in what is first and foremost God's work"

Now after confident activism we think about the other pole in mission. This does not mean passivity before matters of Social Justice or a quietism that eschews social engagement. It is rather a different attitude towards the relationship within mission. The renewed focus on God's activity can become a source of hope for beleaguered missionaries who see so



much of their work coming to naught. We cry for reconciliation and social transformation. Poor have less control over their lives. Disruption in social life looms large. In all these situations, what needs to be done seems to be beyond our ability. In such situations we come to recognize how much the transforming work of mission is first and foremost God's work.

## Contemporary Challenges

Any study of the Church's journey through history reveals the fact that the dominant social changes and ethos of any era inevitably produce accommodation and contaminations in our understanding and communication of mission. The New Testament had the Jew-Gentile problem, the early Church faced persecution and some of the epistles derive their theology from this. The growing Church had to negotiate with heresies and schisms and hence the creeds. The medieval world shaped Church with mystical superstitions and political entanglements that led to manipulation and control of an uneducated laity by the corrupt Church leadership. The modern world went for rationality and it affected the Biblical interpretation. Overreliance on cognitive study and debate attached to the de-mythologization and textual and source criticism made Biblical texts simply an object of study. Today we live in a world where there is large-scale violence attributed to religions. The post 9/11 provides a complex socio-political landscape of xenophobia. Amidst these conditions we are supposed to perform our great commission. Our commitment to faith and its response as mission doesn't suggest an absence of critical examination. So it is necessary to subject every definition and every manifestation of the Christian mission to rigorous analysis and appraisal.

What is the meaning and future of Jesus commission to Mission (the Great Commission) which is seen in Matthew 28:19-20 for the twenty-first century? While the Gospel of Jesus Christ is timeless, the contexts in which mission take place are always changing. According to Dana L. Robert, Christian mission or witness to the Gospel across diverse boundaries is a process of relating the Christian faith to the ever-changing realities in the world created by God and yearning toward recreation. Those committed to mission must reflect on it with the Bible in one hand and, and the newspaper in the other, to paraphrase Karl Barth.

## Mission as Dialogue: Re-discovering identity in harmony

Donal Dorr while writing his book on Mission in Today's world, (2000) says if he was writing the book twenty years

ago he would have begun with an account of Mission as evangelization. He devotes the early chapters to an account of mission as dialogue. For him dialogue provides a correction for the very one-sided notion of mission. The earlier emphasis was on the missionaries with little attention to the recipients of mission. Dialogue is integral to mission because we accept the fact that spirit is to work among all. The notion of dialogue conveys the impression that mission is not just a matter of doing things for people. It is first of all a matter of being with people, of listening and sharing with them.

If dialogue is only an exchange of information then it will be among the experts only. Then religion will be treated just like any other scientific subject like history or mechanics. Religious faith cannot be fenced off into a separate domain, for it is concerned with all aspect of human living. Social issues like poverty, violence etc., are common for all people and it raises serious questions about God, faith and intervention of God in history. Dorr explains how we can be enriched in our understanding by other religions. He highlights Islam's idea of sovereignty of God and importance of revelation, mysticism present in Hinduism, compassion in Buddhism, stability and flow in Chinese religions and importance of nature and community binding in tribal religions. Primal religion gives people not only a sense of being linked to the ancestors but also a feeling of connectedness with the animal and plant world.

In many poor countries of the world, the people are afflicted with widespread corruption. Ordinary citizens feel so powerless. This is a political and cultural problem. But it also has an important religious aspect. For there are some spiritualities and religious traditions which encourage fatalism in the face of evil and some which call for unquestioning submission to authority in the face of oppression and injustice. There are other spiritualities or religions, which call people to struggle for liberation. They help people believe in their own goodness, their own power, and their responsibility both for their destiny and for the well being of their nation. Political issue of challenging corruption has a religious dimension too.

Amaladoss suggests '*kenosis*' (Phil. 2:5-8) as the best theological model in collaborating with others. Though Jesus was divine He emptied Himself and became a human being, limited by His human nature, culture and history. Here other religions are our collaborators. The Church needs to look up to the '*kenosis*' that happened through Jesus and must be ready to receive this kenotic revelation.

### **Mission in the context of Globalization: Relocating the idols of death and the God of life**

The so-called socio-political and economic phenomena 'Globalization', is the context of Mission today. Though there is interconnectedness because of new communication

gadgets there is a serious problem of exclusion. Special attention should be given in mission strategies today not only to those who do not benefit from globalization, but also are disadvantaged and oppressed by it. The economic flows that globalization promotes lead to greater concentrations of wealth in those who have access and resources already. For those who do not, they not only do not improve in their lot, but they actually get worse. Although no one has been able to measure this exactly, the general estimate is that approximately 20% of the population benefits from globalization, while 80% find their position worsened. One gets the phenomenon known as "Brazilianization", where enclaves of the rich live in relative detachment from poor who are right alongside. This de-territorialization of the world makes old definitions obsolete. Since boundaries are not drawn as sharply, even to speak of exclusion, as a category is somewhat inaccurate.

Globalization is most evident in economic sphere. The transnational corporations resist government control and try to escape regulation of any type. The totalizing tendencies of capitalism present itself as a kind of religion. Here the market is absolute, competition is the only possible action, and profit is the ultimate value. These claims reconfigure the world for the sake of those who want to make money. In the Socio-cultural sphere there is large-scale migration. Circulation of icons of culture, emanating especially from the US, has transformed the desires of the youth in the poor countries. Production and consumption of goods became the defining points of being human in this globalized world. The old who can no longer produce, the poor who do not have the means either to produce or to consume are written off and excluded from the whole scene. If working together in all these areas of common interest are taken as a basic way of life and relationship that will create a profound respect in the other who is acknowledged as free and different. All this brings home to us the fact that inter-religious dialogue is not a marginal activity unrelated to everyday life. It affects and is affected by the political, social economic and family issues that shape our daily lives. So it would be serious mistake to assume that it can be left to specialists. It is common for all of us.

Dialogue is working together with people of other faiths in pluralistic local situations and that can be called a dialogical existence. To make the day-to-day dialogue meaningful, the Church as congregation even in the villages will have to equip the lay members involved with relevant lay theological anthropological insights. This should be taught to the people. This teaching ministry is to be preferred to the clerical leaders of the Church controlling the decisions and activities of their lay members by communal dictate, which is usually based on communal minority self-interests and rights and not on concern for the total neighborhood.



## **Mission as Re-conciliation: re-telling the past stories as a new one**

The ministry of reconciliation is relevant today because the world is witnessing the cycle of violence both in the religious and the political world. Reconciliation is about lot of things namely, making peace, seeking Justice, healing memories, re-building societies etc. The cry for reconciliation grows out of an acute sense of the brokenness experienced on such a broad scale in the world today. It arises as people try to build their lives in the ruins of ideological projects, civil conflict, the consequence of human malice and greed. Christian understanding of reconciliation is rooted in the belief that reconciliation begins with the work of God in our lives, a work that has been made manifest to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation cannot be reduced to a purely psychological process since it is ultimately a gift of God's grace, which takes place in the deepest spiritual depths of a person, a group or a whole people. But in order to be authentic, it must include some measure of psychological healing of the wounds left by the hatred and strife between the parties also. This is especially the case where the reconciliation is to take place between the oppressors and the victims; for oppression almost always damages the humanity both of the victim and of the oppressor. It is a great mistake to imagine that there can be purely spiritual reconciliation, which takes little or no account of these psychological wounds. So reconciliation has to be worked out at the individual as well as public way. We often tend to believe that healing of such deep wounds can take place through counseling and therapy. But what can we do when faced with a situation where whole societies—millions of people—have been wounded by racism or by sexism and patriarchy? Forgiveness is crucial to the whole process of reconciliation. When people have oppressed others in the past and are now acknowledging the evil, it brings great healing into the situation. If forgiveness is important for the oppressors it is perhaps even more important for the victims of oppression. The aim will be to work for agreements which replace 'win-lose' with a 'win-win' one. By win-win is meant a situation here both sides have the sense that a responsible fair balance has been worked out, and where each side can see that both their side and the society as whole benefits from the agreement.

## **Mission as de-westernization**

In the year 1900, approximately one third of the world was Christians and Europeans composed 70.6% of the world's Christian population. By the year 2000, approximately one-third of the world was still Christians, but European percentage of that shrunk to 28%. Africa and Latin America together provided 43% of the total Christian population. A major demographic shift thus occurred as

Christianity grew in the nonwestern world, but declined in Europe and remained largely unchanged in North America.

Even though colonialism and capitalism provided an infrastructure for the western missionary movement, indigenous forms of Christianity that explicitly rejected western control emerged throughout the world. By the end of colonialism, beginning in 1960s, groups of Christians in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were free to assert their own identity. At the 1998 Lambeth conference, which is the highest consultative body of the Anglican communion 224 of the 775 bishops were from Africa, compared with only 139 from UK and Europe.

In the age of globalization our interpretation of the Great Commission must emphasize proclaiming Christ rather than proclaiming western economic self interests which promotes a Gospel of prosperity. In an age in which Church has finally spread all over the world, it is appropriate for Christians, especially western Christians, to focus more on what it means to be faithful to the God of Jesus Christ. After World War II prophetic mission theologians like Hedrick Kraemer and Max Warren emphasized the separation of Christ from western culture as pre-condition for the health of world Christianity. Warren emphasized a mission of "Christian presence" which would create a climate of integrity in which the message is proclaimed through deeds and not just words. If we can separate the great commission from Capitalist expansion, then our mission is clarified as one that glorifies God rather than ourselves or our western way of life. This will support the apostolic admonition of St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 "we do not proclaim ourselves, we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as slaves of Jesus' sake."

We must continue to move beyond exclusive personal experience in terms of what it means to make disciples of Jesus Christ. There is a desperate need for religious instruction and for ethical reflection on the relationship between the Gospel message and socio-political struggles. People may have joined the Church but their understanding of the Gospel is limited by their lack of formation in Christian beliefs and practices. The hunger for basic teaching on the meaning of the Bible and the Christian faith is overwhelming. If we fail to incorporate the teaching of the meaning of the holistic Gospel in our mission work, then we will be like the sowers who threw the seed into shallow ground. The plants grew quickly, but then withered because their roots were stunted.

Religious fundamentalism and fanaticism, some maintain, has killed millions. Instead of destroying each other with religious rivalry and warring, there is a need to increase unity for our peaceful co-existence. Recognition of the cultural factor is equivalent to acknowledging that there is no final theology of mission. The work of theology need to be done again and again, for its formulations is culturally conditioned, and therefore need reinterpretation as cultural forms change. ■

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# Mission of the Mar Thoma Church in the Global Context

Dr. Zac Varghese, London, UK

This article was written initially as a chapter for the book, 'The Mar Thoma Church Tradition and Modernity' edited by Dr. P. J. Alexander and released on the occasion of the Episcopal Silver Jubilee of the Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan in 2000. Mission emphasis and priorities have changed over the last ten years and hence I have made few changes to the original text. May I also bring to your notice a study published by the Mandalam in 2009 on "Christian Witness: Revisiting the Mission Mandate of the Church." While I am rewriting this article two important events are happening in the background, both of them have considerable bearing on the mission of the Church: firstly, preparations are going on at Edinburgh for the centenary celebration of the 'World Missionary Conference' held in Edinburgh in 1910. Three hundred delegates from sixty countries are meeting in June this year to explore different ways of 'witnessing Christ today' and think through the priorities for this century. Secondly, we need to grasp the implications of the mind boggling scientific work of Craig Venter published in the journal 'Science (May 2010)' about producing a prototype of synthetic life known as Synthia. Here is a doable technology which allows man to side step evolution. The creation of an organism with ability for multiplication and propagation with genetic code written by a scientist is an extraordinary achievement. Is man, in his turn, creating life in his own imagination? Although the potentials for doing good things for mankind through this discovery are highlighted in this paper, the potentials for 'bioerror and bioterror' inherent in such advances are also voiced; speculations are abound. However its real implications may remain as an open question for all of us for many years to come; it requires absolute humility and prayers.

One of the great joys of living in a great metropolis like London is the opportunity to meet people outside one's own professional field of interest, and cultivate an interesting and lasting relationship with extraordinary people from all spheres of human activity. It is in London in the sixties I had the opportunity to meet The Rev. P. T. Joseph who in 1974 became The Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus a bishop of the Mar Thoma Church. Twenty five years later he became the Suffragan Metropolitan. Then on 2nd October 2007 His Grace was enthroned as our Metropolitan, the XXI Mar Thoma. With in a few mintues of my first meeting with Joseph Achen I realised that he is not just an ordinary Achen, he is born to be a bishop of the Mar Thoma Church. He had such a real feel for the history of the Church. Here was an Achen who was utterly proud of the rich heritage of the Church and was fully aware of the role



that his family played in the preservation and restoration of great traditions of St. Thomas Christians of Malankara. He carried with him an amazing enthusiasm; there was almost a child like mischievous enthusiasm about him as if he was holding the destiny of the Church in his hands. I had marvellous opportunities to listen to him later at "FOCUS Seminars" at Santhigiri Ashram where he used to trace the history of the Mar Thoma Church from the days of St. Thomas to the present and projected his vision for the mission of the Church. This made me realise that he has not lost the passion that he carried with him on this subject all those years ago when I first met him in London.

Future historian of the Mar Thoma Church will undoubtedly look back on the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century as a great period in the transformation of the Mar Thoma Church into a global Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. George Carey acknowledged this fact, when he hosted a dinner at the Lambeth palace in honour of The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma. Representing the Metropolitan at the dinner, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus emphasised the opportunities and needs for joint mission activities between the worldwide Anglican community and the Mar Thoma Church. Within a short span of just 35 years, a period covering the Episcopal ministry of our Metropolitan, the mission field of the Church has extended beyond the boundaries of India, Malaysia and Singapore, Middle East, and England into North America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and other places. Therefore, I see the wisdom of the editor of this volume to include a chapter on the 'Mission of the Church in the Global Context', to honour the ministry of Irenaeus Thirumeni. It is a challenge to address such a profound theme: the mission of the Mar Thoma Church. It is doubly challenging to address this subject in the context of the Mar Thoma Diaspora, as I have agreed to do, perhaps full heartedly. Yet I am comforted by the thought that I can draw support from the fact that Irenaeus Thirumeni himself is an embodiment of tradition and storehouse of accumulated wisdom of the great minds of our Church. It is a wisdom that has been handed down to help us in our inadequacies. This idea of traditional values helping us out in situations is clearly expressed in the famous observation that "we are dwarfs, but we stand on the shoulders of giants." The traditional teachings of the Mar Thoma Church can be summarised in these simple terms: Mar Thoma Christians believe in an apostolic Church with very strong Episcopal traditions rooted in Biblical teachings, it is a missionary and bridging Church,

it is a Church which has been sent into the world to share the secrets and mystery of God's love.

Wherever the Mar Thoma Christians emigrated to, they carried with them their great heritage—the tradition of Christian life and worship. In their countries of adoption they organised themselves in small congregations and sought pastoral help from their mother Church in Kerala. Then they sought official recognition in establishing themselves as members of the Mar Thoma parishes in these countries. Rarely has any previous generation of Marthomites since reformation time seen such extensive involvement of laity in the mission and the ministry of the Church. Through out the development and growth of Mar Thoma Diaspora we have witnessed the spontaneous development of lay leadership and development of lay ministry by exceptional individuals and small groups. In general, these developments have been achieved with mutual respect among laity, bishops and clergy. There is an urgent need to sustain this mutual dependency and respect. Lay members of the Church have much to contribute because their experience within the family, professional, secular and religious life are the very attitudes and convictions necessary for the growth of the Global Church.

In recent years, dissatisfaction with institutional structures of the Church has led to a slow movement of lay leaders away from the church-related activities. It is unlikely that the mother Church in Kerala will encourage substantial decentralisation, or they will see any serious relinquishing of administrative powers for the sake of international or ecumenical development in the immediate future. However, we probably have to think about developing the administrative structures of this Global Church according to the model of the Anglican Communion of shared responsibilities and regional autonomies. We need to discover and recover the importance of the periphery; it is the margins that constitute the structure and gives it stability. Ropes, poles and stakes are essential for fixing a tent. Therefore, currently marginalised diaspora communities should have an influence on the policy making processes of the centre. Many aspects of the constitution of the Church were formulated before the Church became a world-wide Church; hence it is necessary to think how trans-national legal requirements can be accommodated within the framework of the present constitution. An urgent constitutional review is needed to address the present realities. As communities grow less and less Christian and become more and more secular, Church membership become static or decrease, pastoral ministry become less effective, lay leadership will need to take upon themselves greater responsibility for their faith. We need to think of forming 'Pastoral Care Teams,' in parishes involving both laity and clergy. The basic idea is based on the foundation of the priesthood of all believers (1Pet. 2:9). This should be an absolute voluntary commitment from the laity without searching for official titles or placement within the executive committee of the parish; it should not become another excuse for muscling into parish committees. Many of the committees and councils of our Church today are producing not a

grass-root involvement but an administrative consolidation of a 'determined, elected and favoured' few. At all levels we must move away from the presumption that 'self-promoted' administrative or managerial positions are necessarily leadership positions. We must accept, respect and encourage true prophetic leadership wherever we identify it. It is important to move from a leadership that has captured a 'suffocating authority' to a leadership that is natural, graceful and free flowing. Such people with good leadership qualities are now marginalised and pushed away from the administrative structures at the parish, diocese and central level. It is necessary to understand and apply subsidiarity principle to carry the whole Church with us; central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those functions, which cannot be performed at a parish or prayer group level. In the future, it may even be necessary to search for such leadership in our young people, identify such future leaders of our Church at a younger age in our universities, seminaries and parishes and then nurture and sustain them with appropriate training, mentoring and support. Such an approach was an essential part of the ministry of the Mar Thoma Church at one time, but sadly missing at the present. In spite of this, the developments of Diaspora Marthomites have been remarkably good. Lay commitment has grown, intervocational ministry has expanded, and new insights into the nature of the Church have resulted. However, there is an urgent need for a radical change in the self discipline, obedience to the Episcopal authority, pastoral care and understanding, and administrative skills of the priesthood.

With this backdrop, let us remind ourselves of the mission of the Church in the context of the diaspora. The available pastoral ministry from local and immigrant Churches is more concerned with caring for the sheep that are safe inside the fold than with searching for the lost. Each of the four Gospels ends with Christ's command to spread the Good News to the ends of the world and with His assurance that He will be with us in the power of His spirit. We are what we are today in different parts of the world because of people who have obeyed that command and believed that promise. St. John takes us deeper into the mystery of the mission, when the risen Christ says to the apostles: "Peace is with you! As the Father has sent me, I also sent you." That is to assert, those who belong to Christ are united with Him in His vocation of bringing God's peace to the world. Therefore, mission is at the very heart of our identity as Christians. There is the sharing of Christian faith through the contact of everyday life - in the family, among neighbours and among people we work with. Our lay people are our greatest strength. Many of them need to be helped to gain greater confidence about sharing their faith. They are the agents of *koinonia* (presence), *diakonia* (service) and *kerygma* (proclamation), the three facets of mission and witness. A revolution is needed, a revolution of moving away from the assumption that talking about faith is a matter to be left to the professionals, to clergy or to professional missionaries who go to various parts of the world with their mission statements; a turning from that view to

the realisation that in the communities that we now live in, we are missionaries of Christ, we are ambassadors of Christ and our letter of accreditation is our simple lifestyle. One of the wonderful aspects of God's graciousness towards us is that God raises us up to become co-workers with Him in the salvation of the world. It means that we in our own turn are missionaries, reaching out to others and adding our bits to this ongoing work of holding and healing this fractured world of ours. Part of our Christian responsibility is to 'bear witness' and to 'walk our faith' in the world. There are many different ways of doing this depending on our gifts and temperament, the people we are with, the circumstance of the occasion and so on.

It is natural, and in some circumstances essential, to make claims that one's faith is the best in the world. This is very much like my knowledge that my mother for me is the best mother in the world and this assertion is authentic because it is based on my close personal relationship with her, not merely judged from a distance. Belonging to another faith contains elements which those who stand outside this experience can never fully understand. The most difficult dilemma hindering inter faith dialogue is to balance the universal and the particular. This is one reason why dialogue between people of different faiths is difficult resulting only at pleasantries at the surface level. How then we can hold fast to Christian understanding while respecting, and being ready to learn from the faith of others? Archbishop John Habgood proposed four ways of understanding this paradox:

1. All religions are attempts to express the same ultimate truth—all roads lead to God.
2. Religions are complex social systems which give us different, but complementary, pictures of ultimate reality. The differences between them are real, and they need each other for a fuller apprehension of the truth.
3. Christ is the ultimate revelation of God, but other faiths may have seen something of Christ, so that what is true in them will ultimately be related to him.
4. We simply do not know how faiths relate to one another, but if we remain faithful to what we have received and open to the experience of others, we believe we shall in the long run find meeting-points where there can be mutual enrichment.

It is time to move from dialogue to interfaith relations and in this new situation we may make use of insight from all four methods. This bringing together of dialogue and praxis is known as diapraxis. Pope Paul VI produced a wonderful pastoral letter on evangelisation many years ago in which he argued that the modern world needs witnesses more than it needs preachers. What he meant was that the examples of Christian living are more powerful than any words we can speak in promoting our faith. If people see us living with faith and courage, if they see we are a Diaspora community where there is kindness and forgiveness, if we reach out to hold and to heal the sick, the weak and suffering among us— all of this 'speaks volumes' about who we are and what we are like.

Therefore, we are in a radically new period in history that calls for a new stance towards tradition and traditional missionary activities. We must reach into the past and tap its energy for the present and the future. This is the strength of Irenaeus Thirumeni's ministry. Science, technology, communication and other forces have produced a global matrix of culture and a global consciousness, consciousness that is open to traditions other than our own and to the traditions of the whole humanity. It is important to assert that a rigid insistence on identity should not degenerate into a ghetto mentality where talents get locked up in a prison of inactivity. In this evolution into post modernity there are no giants who have faced this situation before and whose shoulders we can stand. Modernity displaced faith and replaced it with logic and rationality. Postmodernists reject grand biblical narratives. They suggest a world view in which there are no foundational values that are universal. They think knowledge is a human construct; in reading texts, it is the reader who interprets the text using the context. Ideas are in the public domain for us to elevate it to a higher plane or mutilate and destroy it. Therefore, for the postmodernist there are no foundations or fundamental truths; they are deeply sceptical about God. Postmodernities and secularism are most important movements for eliminating religion as an outmoded and dangerous human construct. However, we can still learn from the past and those giants of our Church who emerged at various times to solve various problems confronted our Church and our communities. It is indeed a challenge for us to expose the flaws of atheism and consumer society with grace-filled Christian lifestyle. Has the spiritual wisdom of the past become alive in the present? For the first time in history each person can become heir to the spiritual heritage of mankind, can evoke a sense of belonging to the whole human race and can cultivate an emphatic consciousness towards other traditions. Here we find a commonality between secular and the sacred for the political agenda expressed in the beatitude which includes a concern for justice, poverty, reconciliation and peace.

As we celebrate the 41st anniversary of man walking on the moon, the 'moon-view of the world' as astronauts noticed was far different from anything the earth-bound man ever experienced. Astronauts saw the beautiful blue globe shining against the black background of the space. They were overwhelmed by its beauty and the wholeness of the earth. Although they were millions of miles away they felt their rootedness there in the earth, they experience a kind of 'detached attachment.' As a Diaspora Mar Thoma Christian, I also have a "moon-view" of the Mar Thoma Church which helped me to write about the emerging global matrix of culture and global consciousness. Our foremost need is to value our own traditions, without setting up artificial barriers against those whose background and experiences are different. We also need to find a frame work to find delight in the faith of others without feeling threatened by it.

The following abstract is from the Mandalam Study I mentioned in the beginning, which raises some interesting

questions: "Equally important are the Diaspora communities, now into fourth and fifth generations and a significant part of our Church. How does witnessing become a possibility in these communities? People who are born and brought up under different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have their social consciousness embedded in these new environments. Diaspora community is raising new challenges in witnessing. How do we meaningfully continue the witnessing in Diaspora communities?..... Far and above building new church buildings and institutions we should think of models of witnessing for the common good of the society and for good social cohesion. Diaspora community should not be just a ghettoised colony of Malayalee Syrian Christians, but carry the dream for the whole society for bringing out Christ-centred social changes. They should become a dynamic force for the ethical transformation of communities where they work and live. Seventeen year olds who leave home for studies in distant places are a group without any recognition and direction. In the midst of varied influences they are becoming a generation without any worthwhile formative guidance. The invasion of the market culture and competition is of great significance. They are losing the influence of Sunday schools and worship services in their frantic guideless lives."

Finally, our best Christian witness lies in our love for Christ and in the quality of our life. There are still parts of the world where our Church is young, needing spiritual guidance and pastoral care from the established Christian communities of the Diaspora. But those established Churches and communities have their own special problems as we all know. Many Christian leaders have asked the Christians every where to take evangelisation as a priority as we move towards the celebration of the millennium and

beyond. It will take different forms in different places and for different individuals. But each of us must give thanks for the goodness we have experienced from God and seek to share that goodness with others. That is our mission, should we decide to accept, it is not an impossible mission, for everything is possible for God. To suggest that the concept and praxis of mission has changed in the last decades is hardly controversial. However, it is important to study how this has come about. There is indeed a shift from mere proclamation of gospel to dialogue, from dialogue to relationship, from speaking the gospel from the pulpit to doing the gospel, from evangelism to witness and from the mission of the Church to the mission of God. The world Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh was an important milestone for providing the opportunity an impetus for subsequent missionary and ecumenical developments. Let us hope and pray that the deliberations of the on going centenary celebration will be of great significance for realising a Church-in-mission in the 21st Century. It is good for the affluent Mar Thoma Diaspora communities to remember the prophetic statement of Philip Jenkins "Christianity is flourishing wonderfully among the poor and the persecuted while it atrophies among the rich and the secure."<sup>1</sup> I am sure that the imaginative and prophetic leaderships of our Metropolitan, our Diocesan Bishop Theodosius Thirumeni, and the Episcopal Synod would help the Diaspora Mar Thoma Christians to prepare and equip themselves for God's mission of building His Kingdom here and now. ■

#### Reference

1. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p220.

## **12th Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam National Conference**

12th Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam Diocesan National Conference will be held  
on Friday October 8th–Sunday October 10th 2010  
at Holiday Inn, Somerset, New Jersey

*Hosted By:* New Jersey Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam

**Leaders: Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa**  
**Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla**  
**Rev. Oommen Varkey**  
**Mr. Tenny Thomas**

All the Yuvajana Sakhyam Members are invited

**Santhosh Abraham**, *Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary*

# Mission of the Church in the 21st Century

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa

## What is Mission?

Mission essentially belongs to God's plan and scheme. God reveals it to us from time to time through prophets and apostles. "Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets" (Heb. 1:1). Our forefathers and prophets have understood it in space and time and have revealed to us through their lives and writings (Sruti and Smriti). The culmination of God's revelation is through God's Son and our redeemer Jesus Christ. He said in history, "I am the Way the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). Today the Holy Spirit is helping us to realize the revelation and to understand the mission. Interestingly, the term mission does not appear in the Bible, yet the concept of the mission permeates the entire Bible. The foundation of the concept of the mission in the Old Testament lies in the understanding that the transcendent God is also the God who is involved in the history. He is the God who acts. The record of His involvement in the history indicates that His work is both revelatory and redemptive.

## Meaning of Mission

The theme of the upcoming National Family Conference is based on the key verse "As the father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). Jesus Christ is the greatest missionary. What was God's mission in sending Him? The Holy Bible tells us that mission is the manifestation of God's Love (John 3:16). Jesus was sent to reveal the Father (John 1:18) and to make God's love and mercy known to a lost world. Love is to be experienced in its full meaning and depth. One cannot express through the words the length, width, height and depth of God's Love. As God's children in the world we want to be in contact with other human beings, to love and to be loved, to be forgiven and accepted. Love begets Love; hence the commandment is—"To love God and love one's neighbor". Jesus Christ gave a new commandment in John 13:34 "Love as I have loved you". The mission of God as manifested in love is to be understood by, loving God, loving each other and loving one's neighbor. We are called to be servants and also friends walking together in God's mission. Therefore, mission is the core of our being and foundation of our existence. In other words each one of us is created with an in-built mission in the image of God, in His likeness and given the breath of life. So mission is not ours; instead we are created for God's mission and its fullness in our lives. The call is not to become introverts in our tasks entrusted to us. The mission of love is inclusive and not that of excluding others. It has to transcend all the levels of being individualistic, communitarian and religiously fanatic. St. John 4 reminds us that Jesus, whose ministry was primarily among the Jews, initiated a conversation with a Samaritan woman that led both to her conversion and that of the entire community. Today this is the task that is to be continued through the ecumenical and neighborhood mission of the Church.

## Purpose of God's Mission

God's mission in sending His Son is for the redemption of the whole creation. The whole world is the arena where God's engagement for transformation takes place. Mission of God is to be understood in the framework of the mandate given to Adam and Eve to 'till the earth and to keep it'. St. Paul's letter to Romans speaks about the whole creation groaning for redemption (Romans 8:23). Humans have sinned and alienated themselves from the presence of God. They have plundered the earth and destroyed the God-given eco-system. And the humans are now helpless to redeem themselves and the wholeness of the cosmos. God takes the initiative in this helpless situation by sending His son and our redeemer Jesus Christ to redeem the whole creation. God's mission in sending His son is full and adequate and the death of Christ on the Cross has opened the way for redemption. To actualize this redemption humans have to respond to it positively and live a life of salvation by experiencing it every day. A Christian in the world lives in a neighborhood which consists of not only human beings, but also many animate beings. In many places, we are not the ones creating the neighborhood, but we are accepted into the neighborhood that is already there. We have no right to destroy our neighborhood or pollute the same. There is an added responsibility of stopping all sorts of exploitations and activities polluting the living atmosphere. The suspense at the Copenhagen Summit and the unresolved concerns of environmental pollution in USA, the aviation system and the number of the cars on the road are making us more concerned of the purpose of our mission today. The responsible freedom, which God has given to humankind by His creation and redemption, is empowering to experience and to lead our fellow beings to the experience of salvation. It includes the eco-justice very much needed in the inhabited world. Romans 8 speaks of a day when the whole creation will be redeemed. Can we catch the vision of God walking with us in our neighborhood as God did in the Garden of Eden with the first humans (Adam and Eve).

## Manifestation of Mission

Christ manifested the mission of God through His incarnate ministry. The mission mandate of the Church is to be of incarnation and this is revealed in the life and work of the people of God inside and outside the visible Church. We as a Diocese in North America reach out to the people in Mexico and to the Native Americans, while each parish is witnessing the Lord through its congregational life and reaching out to the neighborhood. Mission is no longer from center to the periphery. It should be manifested outside the walls of the sanctuary. It is from everywhere to everywhere. Jerusalem was the centre of religion for the people of the Israel when Jesus incarnated. It was the practice then for everyone to come to Jerusalem to experience God's

redemptive activity. Religion, sacrifices and priests were all there at Jerusalem. Prophet Jonah was shocked to receive a different kind of mission—to go to Nineveh and call the people to repentance. God is also the God of the people of Nineveh. Jesus in His public ministry was found more often in the villages and remote centers of the Galilee rather than in Jerusalem. He broke the mental ghetto by going and staying in Samaria and crossed the boundaries by going to places like Sidon and Tyre. He was not only ministering to the house of Israel but also to outside that fold by appreciating the faith He found in the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman. The challenge of the Mar Thoma Church in the 21st century is to assume its global nature by transcending the boundaries set by the familiar religion and culture. Can the Church incarnate in a cross-cultural, interracial inter-generational context? The Church is to cross all barriers to reach out all ethnic groups, class, tribes, social classes and cultures. The message of salvation is to be shared with all people everywhere and not to keep the same within the walls of the sanctuary.

### **Mode of Mission**

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ express the mode of Mission. To be a Christian means to follow the Christ who said — “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mat. 16:24, NIV). It is having a life of following Jesus and taking up the Cross daily. The Cross has its pain, struggle, the agony and ultimate destiny of death. It is the mission of involvement, facing concrete situations of life. In a world of consumerism, pleasure-seeking and craving for safety and security, a disciple of the Christ has the unique role of taking up the Cross and following Jesus. While the people are freedom-conscious and fight for their rights, Christ calls His followers to discipline life and follow the way of renunciation and to carry out good works without desiring the fruit of one’s labor. The resurrection of Jesus makes us conscious of God’s engagement in mission for transformation. He gives us the power through resurrection. The early disciples were empowered to turn the world upside down, all because of the experience of the risen Lord with them always. So in carrying out the missionary journeys, St. Paul says—in Christ there is only YES (1 Cor. 1:20). Suffering and sacrifice shall not deter us from carrying the Cross of Christ. The Cross is the symbol of God’s love. The mission of the church is to follow the life style of the Cross in all walks of our life every day. The theme for this year’s Maramon Convention was *‘live the gospel’*. It focuses on living a life worthy to God. Can we celebrate Easter (Christ’s resurrection) in the neighborhood every day?

### **Building of Community of Believers**

The ascended Lord commissioned the disciples to continue the mission in time and space. The expectations of the disciples were different, even when they left their profession and decided to be in the chosen twelve. Peter and Judas Iscariot were different in their temperament and in their

commitment to Jesus. James and John, sons of Zebedee wanted to be on the left and right in position, when Jesus comes in Glory. Only John was at the foot of the cross of Christ. All others were scattered and they were afraid of the leaders and Jews. Apostle Thomas couldn’t accept the words of others who told him that Jesus has risen. But the outlook of these disciples changed when the resurrected Lord re-commissioned them and gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were empowered by the power of the resurrection to preach the crucified Jesus. Then they lived as an Easter community and celebrated their plurality. Their ministry was to form the community of believers wherever they went and preached the Gospel. They emphasized community living and all together shared spiritual nourishment in community growth. The challenge of the Day when individualism plays a significant role in the world is “Mission of Community Formation and Community Living”. (Acts 14, 17 etc). Building people is more important than building infra-structures. People pool their resources for the mission and the ministry of the Church. But they shouldn’t be seen as only for channelizing money; instead their lives are to be spiritually uplifted and transformed, even through the ministry of giving. Relationship binds all aspects of the community life and hence it is the mission to develop more dialogue, formal and informal, at all levels to bring out the very best in each one for the edification of all in the community and for the glory of God.

### **Church is the Body of Christ**

The Church as a community is uniquely called to carry out the mission. The Church is the body of Christ. It means that Christ is the Lord and the body is the broken body of Christ. Worship and sacraments keep the members together as a community. Participation in the Holy Qurbana reminds us of what God in Christ has experienced on the Cross. Here we enter into a mystical union with Christ and realize that unless and until we are also prepared to break our body we cannot become the body of Christ. This is the mission of imparting life by sharing our life, for the life of other people. It is the mission of self-emptying. It is the mission of putting more life into the life of other people. Caring by sharing is an integral part of the mission. The Church being the Body of resurrected Jesus will reveal the nail marks of her Master in carrying out the mission in the world. (Gal. 6:17)

### **Church Lives by its Mission**

Today the Church lives by the mission. Mission was the heartbeat of the New Testament Churches as we read in the book of the Acts of Apostles. There is a mission of the Church to its members, and a mission to the outside the world. Emil Brunner has said: “The Church lives by her mission as fire exists by burning”. It means that a self centered, inward looking isolated community cannot be called a Church. A person is a person only when he interacts within the community. The very act of creation of each individual by God constitutes a mission to be fulfilled with and



among others, which reminds us that 'you are not your own'. We all belong to God and we belong to each other. That means there is a mission to be fulfilled by the life of each person. In married life, the life-partner is an extension of one's own self. In Indian culture wife is called 'Sahadharmini' which means one who resides together and work together to carry out or attain the mission (dharma) of the family. In a culture where people long for individualism, and where people are reluctant to get married, God's mission for each individual is to be well defined in a manner that is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God. Hence within the family and within the parish/church, there is a mission to the members and also a mission to the outside world. The scientific and technological experiences and demands to which the new generation is exposed today, curtails their free times as individuals and families. The call-center culture confuses our day-night consciousness. The communication system influences our thought process, life styles, spirituality and in general our views about the world. Cyber culture can create virtual experiences in our community living. This will also affect the value system. The challenge before us is to read the signs of the times and establish the Kingdom values by living out the faith. Mission here is about sharing the human experiences of social living to construct Christ centered life with Kingdom values.

### **Church as Leaven, Salt and Light**

Three strong symbols used in the New Testament are Leaven, Salt and Light. The Leaven is added to the dough to make it useful; salt preserves from disintegration and light throws out the darkness. The church is in the world like the leaven, salt and light. Sin in any form brings the darkness. It is the function of the Church to throw light to all the areas where darkness prevails. If sin is alienation, Church has to do the ministry of reconciliation and fellowship. In a world of crime and terrorism the mission of the Church is to become models (light) where life in all its forms is respected and valued. When decay and disintegration becomes the (normal) norm of the world, Church is called to be the salt of the world enabling to reverse the process of disintegration in to integration where 'being' finds its meaning and relevance. When there is an imbalance between the thinly populated developed countries of the North and over populated under developed countries of the South, Church is called to be the leaven that makes populous useful. Whatever we term as useless becomes useful when we realize the truth that these are the unused or 'not-used-properly' ones. Everyone is useful and needed in the eyes of God. It is the God given mission to bring peace in our families, consolation for the bereaved in our neighborhood, shelter for the homeless, joy for the broken hearted, recovery of the health for the sick, comfort for the distressed, unity and reconciliation for those who are estranged, development for the poor and needy and harmony between all peoples and communities. Our prayer is: 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'.

### **The Great Commission**

The Great commission (Mat. 28:19-20) is to go into the entire world and not wait for the world to come to us. This requires obedience in love to the Lord. Even in commissioning, the God-given freedom of choice is not taken away; the early apostles were asked to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship, that includes disciplining the self, is not taking away the God-given freedom of choice. If humans have fallen by the misuse of the freedom, salvation brought by Christ through His death and resurrection is not taking away that freedom of choice. The commissioning of the disciple by the risen Christ is making them more responsible for their choice and the subsequent result of it. When we realize that the redemptive act of Jesus is full and complete, its appropriation in the lives of the people is through our human choice day after day. This should be the commitment of the Church in the 21st century. The second coming of Jesus Christ is to gather the faithful and all those who belong to Him; they are to be judged according to the choices they have made, as response of God's salvific act in Christ. The glory of redemption lies in the fact that God respects the freedom of choice He has already given to His creation. Hence the mission means to realize this truth and live a responsible life where the salvation is rightly appropriated in life and the life is found eternally with God in the community of God's Kingdom.

### **Call of the Church in 21st Century**

Church as a global community must be willing to cater to the needs of the less privileged and marginalized. This is especially important at a time when the Edinburgh Mission Conference held in 1910 in England is celebrating its centenary this June. Edinburgh Mission conference—1910 recognized the need for the Church to become a global missionary Church. This is a time to evaluate our past and plan the future mission of the Church. The Church and its people should equip to provide social justice to others especially in the community where we live. The Church cannot exist within the walls of its sanctuary. It should be able to walk the rugged roads and visit the less frequented Samaritan wells. Preaching of the gospel has to go hand in hand with its practice or 'living the gospel' in the present. The mission is consummated in the culmination of the experience we all will have in the Kingdom of God. The God given mission is to find the place of each life in the Kingdom of God. Let me conclude with the words in our Holy Communion Liturgy:

*"May our hearts be with Christ on high, who is at the right hand of God the father"*

*"Our hearts are truly with the Lord". Amen. ■*

# Edinburgh 2010 Re-visioning the Mission of the Church for the 21st Century

Rev. Dr. George Mathew Kuttyil

## Introduction

The Christian churches and the Ecumenical Movement worldwide are celebrating the Centenary of the World Missionary Conference held in June 1910 at the Assembly hall of Edinburgh (School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh) Scotland. The major emphasis of that conference was 'to evangelize the world in this generation'. After completing a century the entire world and the church scenario has changed. In the Second Edinburgh Conference of June 2010, we have to look into the challenges of the Christian churches and Missionary organizations and Ecumenical bodies for a viable missiology. In this study we are looking at the major issues raised by Edinburgh conference and its impact on the understanding of Mission, with special reference to Mar Thoma Church.

## A historical evaluation of Edinburgh 1910

There were 1200 participants from 170 Missionary organizations mainly from England and United States of America. A very few people from India, China, Japan and other Asian Countries attended. There were no representation from Latin America, from the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. It was organized for Protestant Missionary Societies working among non Christian people. Majority delegates were from North America and Europe; only 17 members from younger churches.<sup>1</sup> There were special delegates by the Missionary Societies and not representation of their churches.

## Major Emphasis

The aim of the Conference is given as follows. 'The World Mission Conference to consider the missionary problem in relation to non-Christian world', the strategy for the Mission, work among non-Christians and co-operation in Mission were the major emphasis of the conference. In the 8th Commission of the Conference, the 'church and the Mission field' is differentiated from the 'Home Church'. Church in the Mission field is surrounded by 'non-Christian community' and the task of the Church is to gain them for the Kingdom. The Church in the Mission field looks for support, for help, leadership and control from the Mother Church.<sup>2</sup> Thus a Daughter-Mother relationship existed between the Mission field and the Home Church. They were not considered as equals. Mission was from East to West. West is considered as 'Christian West' where as the East is considered as the non-Christian East. Relationship was between 'Missionary' and the Native worker and not between younger and older churches.

Contribution of Edinburgh 1910 was not in the theology of Mission. It was not the concern of the Conference. Missionary enthusiasm was at a high point. There was a sense of optimism about Missionary enterprise. The Edinburgh 1910 discussed the following Topics:

- (i) Carrying the gospel to all the world;
- (ii) Native church and its workers;
- (iii) Education in relation to the Christianization of natural life;
- (iv) The Missionary message



in relation to non-Christian world; (v) Preparation of Missionaries; (vi) The Home base Mission; (vii) Relation of Missions to Governments; and (viii) Co-operation and promotion of unity.<sup>3</sup>

There was discussion on Mission as Church centered as well as Mission centered. The emphasis was given that Church was indispensable for Mission and Christian witness.

## Impact of Edinburgh to the Mission and Unity of the Church

The Edinburgh Conference was instrumental in the formation of the Ecumenical Movement. The Ecumenical landscape has shifted- Mission of the Church had to be done through church and not just the agenda of the Missionary organization.<sup>4</sup> Partnership in Mission is essential a change from Euro-centric to poly-centric conference; a shift from North to South. New Christian organizations like YMCA, YWCA were established. In 1968, IMC and WCC merged together, Mission involvement crossed over the boundaries. Unity of churches was a result of IMC. Ecclesial deliberation led to the formation of CSI in 1947 and CNI in 1970.

Missionary activities paved the way for social transformation, universal education and emancipation and uplifting of downtrodden outcaste and subaltern groups of India and elsewhere. It was good news of liberation for those who were in the margins. A new understanding of God as liberator gave new hope to the downtrodden people in the Asian countries.

## Present Scenario

The present conference of Edinburgh 2010 is different from the first conference. World is under globalization, free market, neo capitalism. Market became a powerful force. Nature and its resources, human beings, and products are considered only as commodities. The Self-centered-profit-centered vision of human and nature led to dehumanizing and degrading of values. There is negation of life through disparities, alienation, and exclusion. On the other hand religious fundamentalism, terrorism and other such activities are on the increase. At this present reality we need a re re-reading of Mission in 2010. We also need a restructuring of Mission.

## Challenges for Re-visioning the Mission

Jesudas Athyal in his article 'Edinburgh to Athens: the Rough and Tumble of Ecumenical Missiology' comments:

"The one century from Edinburgh to Athens (2005) throws up pertinent questions with regard to Christian witness in a pluralistic context. Edinburgh 1910 was a prophetic sign of a new movement towards the unity of churches for world Mission. As a symbol of hope, Mission and unity, the accomplishment of Edinburgh Conference is unparalleled". Now the centre of gravity of Christianity was shifted from North to South. It calls us to challenge the slogan 'Evangelization of the world in this generation'.<sup>5</sup>

Purpose of 1910 Conference was to expand Christian Mission in non-Christian lands. Now in most of the traditional Christian countries, the followers of Christianity are on the decrease. That gives new challenges to the non-European non-American churches to witness Christ in a postcolonial time. The age of imperialism, triumphalism and patronage of Mission is over. We need mutual understanding adapting and taking into confidence of all God's people for the propagation of God's Mission. "Mutual sharing and mutual learning should be the hall marks of Christians in the 21st century. We can share the beauty of the World Christianity. Christianity is a global faith. It includes Christians in all Western, African, Asian, European, Latin American and Pacific countries."<sup>6</sup>

Athyal identifies the areas of Missionary challenge in pluralistic context, secular context and in the margins. However we are not dealing it here in this discussion. Edinburgh 2010 can no longer count on the popular influence of their Euro American Christians only as Edinburgh 1910 did. Edinburgh itself did not claim to be a Christian centre. Current Christian centres are to be found either in Africa or in Latin America or in certain regions of Asia. This non Western Christian represents a wide array of Christian histories and expressions. Some of them have incorporated indigenous elements into their liturgies... they are not familiar with historical critical methods of studying, demythologizing biblical text but claim biblical promises at their face value. For them Jesus Christ is not a figure of the past, but is the same God-Man now and here after. They are to some extent aware of the social, political and economic roots of the major Christian denominations and therefore hesitate to transplant them in the churches that they organize. Instead, they see obvious parallels between the biblical narratives and their own agricultural and pastoral societies. They use stories, folk songs, proverbs and idioms in interpersonal communication and relationships. They do not separate the sacred from the secular. They read the biblical text against these backgrounds and understand them afresh.<sup>7</sup>

Mani Chacko, in his presentation suggests for a relevant Missiology, we need a Missional Christology, a Missional Ecclesiology and a Missional Pneumatology.<sup>8</sup> The Salvador Mission Conference (1996) was a shift in Mission thinking and practice from colonial to postcolonial and Euro centric to polycentric. From one ecumenical Conference to another there has been a growing sensitivity to the participation of people of other faiths, along with Christians in God's plan of salvation. Right from the first Missionary Conference in Edinburgh there were search for the meaning of Christian witness in the world of religions. Athyal further observes:

"A significant development in the aftermath of Edinburgh and the subsequent Mission Conferences was a shift from the theological understanding 'of the Mission of the Church' 'to the Mission of God'—*Missio Dei* an all embracing concept that covers the whole of creation not just Christians or humanity alone. God was seen as a Missionary God who crosses frontiers in order to reach all people and all creation. 'Humanization and renewal of the whole creation were thus understood as integral to God.' This process involved a redefinition of Mission from the margins or rather from the perspective of the marginalized"<sup>9</sup>

### **Mission of the Mar Thoma Church**

There is no missionary agenda or strategy exclusively for Mar Thoma Church. As part of the universal Church, She has to address the modern challenges in mission with others and in totality. In the

multi religious-multicultural context of India, the Western concepts and Methodology of Mission is not applicable to us. A Large chunk of Indian population is still in utter poverty and exploration. We have to serve the message of liberation and emancipation in the Indian cup and in Indian style. Even after 2000 years of existence of Christianity in India, it is considered as a Western imperial religion, which is alien to the cultures and ethos of Indian soil. Even now, the extreme fundamental branch of evangelism is marketed in the media, in the cities and villages of India.

Mar Thoma Church as an Eastern reformed church with an evangelical emphasis and ecumenical outlook, need to reach the grass root level in Mission. Bureaucratic and Western model of administrative structure of the Evangelistic Association needs to be restructured and decentralized for effective functioning. The worship and liturgical ethos of the new believers have to be expressed in their own culture. There is a need for enculturation of the whole life. We cannot impose Malayalee Syrian Christian culture and practices to those who have embraced Christianity from a different culture. Leadership and decision should come from within rather than 'remote control' administration.

We have human resources, money and long heritage of Missionary experience. But it has to be re visioned to the local context and into the present realities in an age of globalization. We have to bear witness to the Gospel, which is liberative God centered, inclusive and concerned about nature. We need to articulate the justice, peace and integrity of creation through our Missionary enterprise.

### **Mission among the Diaspora Community**

A large number of Marthomites have migrated to cities in India and abroad. The Second and Third generation of our members are not exposed to the Liturgy, ethos and culture of our predecessors. We need to teach them the basic faith and practices of our Church and at the same time understand and accommodate them to the main stream of the Church. Freedom and flexibility should be given to them to express their faith in Christ through their own media. The Church should take the initiative in providing proper teaching in the areas of worship, liturgy, church history and the tradition of our Church. Participation and leadership of our youth should be acknowledged and encouraged in the life and Mission of the Church. Integration with the local Christian community and people of other faiths is essential for the growth and harmony of our mission.

Let me conclude this study by quoting Mathews George Chunakkara:

"The missionary movement of 21st century by and large concentrated in a mission de linked from structures, dependents or controlled by mission boards. It is in this context that a locally rooted missions needs to be taken seriously by churches in their missionary witness. Mission should be the task of the local churches instead of sub contracting this assignment to a centralized body to mechanism. Unity of God's mission needs to be evident while witnessing Christ and engaging in missionary activities. The issues of co-operation among churches in their witness and mission in the same place or country should be addressed in a proper way. As competition among missionaries and lack of collaboration in mission activities continues to be a common threat, especially it happens in the name of church planting and church growth. It adds more disunity among people. The affirma-

*(Continued on page 37)*

# Christian Witness: Re-Thinking the Mission of the Church

Rev. Philip George, Philadelphia MTC, PA

## Introduction

Jeffrey Archer, through his book 'The Paths of Glory', talks about a priest's son named George Mallory. He was born in 1892 and grown with a great adventurous mind. Later he became a famous mountaineer. Once he decided to conquer Mount Everest because it is there. In his first attempt he failed even though he reached around 27500 ft high. When he returned home, his wife Ruth gave him confidence to make further attempts. On one of his birthdays, in the morning she presented him a wrist watch and a photo of Ruth. Then she encouraged him by saying that she would be happy if he wears this watch during his next expedition. She added that if Mallory can place her photo on the top of the Everest she will be the most honored wife in the world. In his second attempt in 1924 there were witnesses to say that Mr. Mallory and his companion Mr. Irvin were just 600 ft below the peak of Everest. But they didn't come back to the camp. The story tells further that a group of mountaineers who climbed Everest in 1999 found Mallory's frozen body just beneath the peak. They recognized him by seeing the wrist watch panned the name of Ruth, but did not see the photo of Ruth in his wallet. Certainly he must have conquered and placed his wife's photo on the top of Everest in 1924. But what is the proof? Mallory, the priest's son left nothing for his glory but spent his life to give glory to his wife by placing her photo on the top of Everest.



A Christian witness must leave nothing for his/her glory but should be a person who spends and gives glory to the master who saves and redeems. In his/her legacy there might not be much to add but that person's page will be filled with the mighty acts of God to pass it to the new generation. The words of John the apostle is important here. (1 John. 1:1-3) ("...which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.") Here three things are important.

**A. The theme for our witness is Jesus Christ.** Paul defined the gospel as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). If we are not explaining the sacrifice of Christ, we are not sharing the gospel.

**B. The power of witness is Holy Spirit.** It is the power who transforms a life (Titus.3:5-7) and this transformed life must be evident to all (Matt. 5:16).

**C. The validity of our witness is our lives.** Our witnessing should reflect how we live our lives (Phil. 2:14-15).

In Acts of the Apostles, we see three missionary sermons of Paul (Acts 13:16-41; 14:15-17; 17:22-31) and his five defenses (Chapters 22-26). Most of his addresses were to non-Christian audiences but here he was speaking to the elders of Ephesus. In other words, it was a sermon addressed to the Church. He presents gospel aggressively, apologetically and with personal affec-

tion to the Lord. Through the passage we could feel that he never wanted to leave the Church without fixing the leaders. He was anticipating persecution in Jerusalem in the nearest future and foretold imprisonment also there. So this message can be treated as Paul's farewell message. He has given it in a classic Jewish farewell speech style as Jacob did in the book of Genesis (Chapter 49), Moses in Deuteronomy (Chapters 30-33), Joshua in the book of Joshua (Chapters 23-24) and Jesus Christ in John's Gospel (chapters 14-17). In this passage we see how Paul used three different methods in witnessing Christ Jesus.

**1. He has Taught (20:20; 18:11). Teaching ministry is one of the ways of Christian witnessing.** From the Old Testament time onwards we see the emphasis of teaching ministry. The prophetic schools of the Old Testament, the disciples of John, the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus Christ etc... prove this fact. A closer analysis of this passage will bring out what Paul taught them.

**1.a. He taught them an 'Alternative People Hood' Paul's inspiration came from the early Christian community.** He really challenged by the living of early disciples and believers in the midst of persecution and poverty. They lived together, shared their wealth and time for each other, they prayed together and formed a new style which is alien to the existing culture. Paul realized that the energy of this people hood is the blood of Christ Jesus. So Paul emphasized a micro community in a macro society. In that community there is no segregation, no division on the basis of color or creed. It is a new community neither Pagan nor Jewish but incorporating all. (Gal.3: 28)

**1.b. He taught them an 'Alternative Politics' In verse 19, he said that he served the Lord with great humility and with tears.** Serving mentality and humility are the two faces of Christian community in those days. The secular world in which they live is marked with selfishness and power or position centered culture. In this situation Paul was presenting the Church as model system to show how the administration has to be handled. Here Paul is talking about (v.28) the administration carried through the offices of 'shepherds, guardian, and elders'. The chemistry of this politics is based on servant hood ministry. Paul affirms that we can feel solidarity in Christian brotherhood.

**1.c. He taught them an 'Alternative Piety' Ancient piety was expressed in numerous ways.** People used to fill their spiritual vacuum by visiting shrines, temples, and by attending public festivals. In verse. 26, Paul was reminding them that they are saved by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. So he gave importance to the Lord's Table and calling people to an alternative piety of Eucharist. So Church is a liturgical community that centered on Eucharist that reminds us that we are called to break ourselves for the entire world.

**2. He has preached (20: 25;9: 22;19:13).** Unlike teaching ministry, the audience of preaching is not selective. After being caught up by the resurrected Lord in front of the gate of Damascus, Paul dedicated his life to preach the gospel to the gentile world. At the same time he was so conscious to present the gospel meaningfully to the pagan world and to their needs.

**2.a. He preached that the New Testament Christianity as participation of Divine Benefits.** In verse 32 we see how Paul was committing the Church to God and to His grace. In verse 21, he challenged them again to turn to God in repentance. Repeatedly we see how Paul was talking about the coming of the Kingdom of God. The only way to reach God is presented as to accept God's son. So Jesus Christ is pointed as One who brings the divine benefits to whole world.

**2.b. He preached that the New Testament Christianity as moral Transformation.** Christianity is honored all the time in relation to moral transformation. Wherever the Church exists there we can see great changes in moral and ethical standards. Establishment of schools and colleges, teaching of family values, meaning of community living, and warning of false teaching etc...are some of the contributions of the Church. In verse 31, Paul used the word 'admonish' which term is often used in pagan literature to describe philosophical activities. In Paul's understanding Church is the place where people should grasp real values in Christ to transform the world.

**2.c. He preached That the New Testament Christianity as transcending the world.** Paul, in his preaching always tried to take out the fear of Hell from the minds of people and reinstate with the glory of God. In verse 32, he is talking about an inheritance in Heaven to all those who are sanctified by the blood of Christ. Fear of hell may increase within us a blind faith rather a concrete trust. Sanctification of the believers is to make this earth more holy by a conscious involvement in the day to day pulse of the society. Thus we are called to prepare the world for a new earth and new heaven.

**3. He has testified (20:21,24,26).** In verse 22, Paul was foretelling the persecution which awaits him. Once he traveled from Jerusalem to Damascus to persecute Christians. But now he is a man willing to face the same in Jerusalem where his master died for him. 'Self- testifying' by oneself is more than that of verbal conversation. It needs an action from the person who preaches. This action will prove how far we are capable to bear the Cross. The mission is something that Christian do because they live under Cross.

**3.a. All mission flows from the Cross (v. 22).** Paul is willing to suffer now in Jerusalem. His mission started from the sufferings of the people. True Christian mission occurs not because of human desire for success or accomplishment. It is not the demonstration of capable people but the work of the dedicated believers. The Church is not supposed to form a cult of experts instead it should be a place to formulate strategies from the struggles of the people. In American context, there are three different areas need concentration. **3.a.1. Shame:** There is a Russian proverb saying that 'shame is worse than death'. It has physical, psychological and spiritual effect in personalities. **3.a.2. Burnout:** It is a popular term now. It came due to the exhaustion in various life demanding situations. **3.a.3. Childlessness:** One in ten couples struggle with this severe matter. Desire to have child is fundamental to human.

*The sufferings of the people must be the ground to realize the meaning of Cross. There Church must shape a mission from the context.*

**3.b. All mission flows to the Cross (v. 33).** The ministry Paul rendered is a selfless one like his masters self emptying life. He has never done anything for gain or for any selfish motives. He said, "I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing". He worked and earned for his living as well as to spend for the needy. He emphasized the blessedness of giving in verse 35. The Church is called and set a part to receive the blessing in giving. There is a famous poem by Robert Scudery and the line goes: "Drawn to the cross, which you have blessed with healing gifts for soul distressed to find in you my life, my rest,... Christ crucified; I come".

### Conclusion

Martin Luther said: *A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none, a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone. So each member of the church is assigned by God to serve the humanity. As Christian witnesses, our duty is to teach an alternative life style to the world. Our preaching must be meaningful by presenting Christ and His Church a meaningful space where many can participate in divine benefits. Moreover we are called to testify the pain and the victory over the cross by formulating a practical mission. Moltman once said that "the Church's final word is not 'Church', but the glory of the Father and the son, in the spirit of Liberty".* ■

## OUR ACHENS TRANSFERRED IN 2010 FROM THIS DIOCESE



Achens transferred from this Diocese this year with Theodosius Thirumeni and Vinoy Achen.

# "As the Father has sent me I am sending you..."

Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Toronto

**T**he Church is the institutional expression of a community that has been commissioned to bear witness to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. We, as the Church, are called to replicate and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, further extend the life giving and liberating power of the Father manifested in history through Jesus of Nazareth. The question now becomes—what is the meaning of being called and sent in the midst of our contemporary reality? I offer four areas of insight into the meaning of Christ's commissioning.



and to offer our hand in empowering the marginalized to fight against structures that discriminate and oppress.

## II. The Church is sent to extend Jesus' ministry of healing

Jesus' ministry was focused on healing. Healing is not merely the act of making one physically better. Jesus healed "the leper, the Canaanite women's daughter, the blind" and empowered them as members of society. More than the individual acts of healing, Jesus attempted to

## I. The Church is called to extend Jesus' ministry to the marginalized

The cornerstone of Jesus' ministry is what Biblical scholars call the "Nazareth Manifesto." In continuation of the Old Testament prophetic tradition (Isaiah 61:1, 2), Jesus affirms that He is anointed by the Spirit of God. (Luke 4:18) The implication of being anointed by God is the proclamation of the good news to the poor, freedom for those who are oppressed, and sight to the blind. (Luke 4:18) As we are consecrated and commissioned by Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2), we are to similarly profess the good news to the poor; offer sight to the blind; and freedom for those who are oppressed. In other words, we are called to extend Jesus' ministry to those who are marginalized and disenfranchised.

Marginalization occurs when groups of people are effectively pushed away towards a lower social standing. In other words, marginalization is the process where a dominant group makes another group to feel as if they are "outcasts." In our contemporary context in North America, who are the marginalized and disenfranchised? The economic realities of the "post 9-11" world have drawn light on the fact that there is an increase in income disparity between those who are economically well off and those who are not. According to UC Berkley Economist Emmanuel Saez, the top ten percent (10%) of U.S income earners possessed forty-nine (49%) of the income in the United States. The interesting fact is that this statistic was measured before the economic collapse in the last half of the 2008 fiscal year. Thus, we see that economic disparity exists and persists in our contemporary context. Economic marginalization is only one aspect of marginalization. Social marginalization in the form of gender oppression, homophobia, racism, and xenophobia in the specific targeting of illegal immigrants are the realities of our times.

The task of the church in the context of the marginalization is to address and find solutions to marginalization both within and outside of the Church. The Church is called to be in solidarity with the "outcasts." The parish is the context of social change. We are called to identify and speak out against forms of oppression in our local contexts

heal society's perspectives of those who were differently-abled. Let us take a look at a specific instance. In John chapter 9 (John 9:1-3), the following is recorded: (i) As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth; (ii) His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"; (iii) "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus.

Jesus continues to assert Himself to be "light of the world" (John 8:12, John 9:4). Being the light of the world, Jesus is commissioned to heal the world from imposing earthly moral and ethical standards that deviate from the ethical standard of God's salvific love. (John 3:16) Jesus challenges the values of the Pharisees by highlighting the fact that we are all sinners. An example of this is the phrase "if anyone of you is without sin, let him cast the first stone." (John 8:7) The Biblical imperative of this is simple. Jesus is healing us from our blindness. We are blinded by self-righteousness and a piety that seems to offer prescriptive moral and ethical judgments. Jesus based his ethical standards by the standard of God's mercy, compassion, and love. The healing that Jesus offers the world and especially the institutional religious establishment is the opening of our eyes to see the love of God for God's creation.

The Church is sent to extend the healing ministry of God. Our mission Ashrams and the work of eminent lay members like Dr. A. K. Tharien, who with a devout vision to the Kingdom of God, worked for physical and social healing is what we as a Church in North America are called to do. However, to accomplish this task, we must ask God through the Holy Spirit to remove the blindness of prejudice that we may have. We are called to be "the salt and light of the world" (Matthew 5:11-15) Thus we are called to offer light in the midst of darkness and add flavor to the world that is desperately in need for diversity.

## III. The Church is empowered to challenge oppressive power structures

Christian Theologian H. Richard Niebuhr was most famous for his work entitled Christ and Culture. In this text, Niebuhr offered five perspectives of how the church dealt with her cultural contexts. They are: Christ against Culture; Christ of Culture; Christ above Culture. Christ and Culture

in Paradox; and Christ Transforming Culture. In all of these perspectives, the common theme is that there is an intricate relationship or response between Christ and the cultural situation in which we live. Niebuhr argues through the text that our faith is the context for understanding the relationship between Christ and Culture.

Our faith is premised on the fact that Jesus has proclaimed the experience of the Kingdom of God through His life and presence on the earth. (Mark 1:14) In this Kingdom, there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11.) The example of Christ teaches us that the church by definition is inclusive and does not exclude anyone. All are welcome in the church. We offer the celebration of "unity in diversity." An example of our church's openness can be found in the response of the Episcopal Synod to the World Council of Churches reflection on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry. In response to the question of women's role, the official response of our church is:

The male-dominated social order which one encounters in many parts of the world is partly a reflection of technologies used by these societies, which are dependent more on muscle power than brain power. The modern developments in science and technology liberate women partly because human mastery over nature is now dependent more on brain power than muscle power. Women now are able to share responsibilities which were formerly exclusively male. This change in society must be seen as an act of God. This must be reflected in increased sharing by women in the priestly ministry of the Church.

Our church advocates gender equality and offers a vision of a holistic ministry that eliminates the barriers of gender oppression. The church also decries against the social barriers that prevent equal access and change.

However, the Mar Thoma Church presently has barriers due to custom, culture, and tradition on allowing women to share in the ordained ministry of the church. It is earnestly hoped that these will break down as men develop greater consciousness of the change of times and women become willing and open to new challenges that God is opening before them.

Our task is to continue our critique of oppressive power structures and push ahead despite adversity and despite cultural barriers to challenge structures of oppression, which persist in the church. These structures of oppression are not just limited to gender inequity but also reside in the experiences of those who feel sidelined by barriers that exist in society.

#### **IV. The Church is challenged to sacrificially offer her life for the salvation of the world**

We are called to be the "salt of the earth" and offer ourselves sacrificially just as Christ did. Salt, when used properly, is by nature sacrificial. For instance, salt has the function of "dissolving" in the dishes that we make. It merges itself to the particular dish losing its own distinctive identity (self-sacri-

fice) while adding flavor to the dish. Salt is also a healing agent. Salt cleanses wounds and functions as a disinfectant. Salt also is a preservative. As a church, we are called to dissolve ourselves into this world to make the world in fashion with the Kingdom of God; we are also called to cleanse and heal the world through offering the life affirming power of the gospel; and we are called to preserve the resources of God's wonderful creation through keeping human greed at bay and working against forces that destroy God's beautiful creation and environment.

The characteristic of "salt" can also be understood by expanding on the acronym "S.A.L.T."

**Submissive:** We are called to be submissive to the values of Christ and the mission-vision of the Kingdom of God witnessed through the liberative power of God in the historical witness of the Exodus Event and the life of Jesus. This means sacrificing our egos, prejudices, and social dispositions for the values of the Kingdom.

**Affirm:** We are called to affirm life through fighting against those powers that seek to destroy and oppress.

**Leaven:** We are called to be the leaven that makes the world rise amidst the powers of darkness. In the Eastern Church, the Qurbana service traditionally uses "leavened bread" to symbolize the power of resurrection. Similarly, we as a community are called to sacrifice and recognize that the sacrifice results in the resurrection and establishment of a new world order based on peace, justice, and the integrity of life. (Revelation 21)

**Testimony:** The Greek Word "marturia" means witness or testify. This word is also the root word for "martyrdom." The early church suffered persecution when it affirmed "Jesus as the Lord." In the midst of a globalized village that extols the demi-gods of Capitalism, Corruption, and Coercion through oppressive social practices, we are called to make our witness of Christ's Lordship through an ethic of Social Equity, Integrity, and Vision for Liberation against powers that marginalize.

The Church as the institutional expression of a community that has been commissioned to bear witness to the life and witness of Jesus Christ is called to extend Jesus' ministry to the marginalized while offering healing to the world. Engaging this ministry means that we, as a Church, need to perform an introspection of our own oppressive structures while challenging the life negating structures of the world. This entails that we as the consecrated community sacrifice and live as witnesses of the Kingdom of God.

Each geographic and social context poses different challenges. It is here that the local parish can engage in the ministry of the Kingdom through affirming and living out the ethic of Christ's sacrificial love. Through this, we will remain faithful to our commissioning by the Lord of our faith.

**Editor's Note:** Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia is an ordained priest of Mar Thoma Church and a Doctoral candidate in Comparative Philosophy/Theology at the University of Toronto.

# The Language of Worship

Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas

The language of worship is a reflection of the heart of a community. Like the waves of a sea rising to meet the sun, worship emerges from a clean and pure heart as an offering pleasing to God. The lens which rests upon the soul of a community colors its understanding of worship. Where some people see images of harmony and unity in worship, others might see discord and disunity. Where some might describe the language of worship as inclusive, others might describe the same worship language as exclusive. In what ways does the language we use in worship support oppressive traditions and structures of injustice? How does the language we use in worship encourage experiences of liberation and embrace justice and equality? The strengths and weaknesses of worship practices become clear only when the Church becomes vulnerable to the Spirit of God. To be vulnerable is to be open to new insights and revelations that shed light on both our sins and our wounds. The language of worship not only enables us to express our pain and suffering as children of God, but it also exposes our prejudices and failures as servants of God. Exploring the language of worship, therefore, is a relevant agenda because it can determine how effectively the Church embodies the Spirit of God in the world. Addressing all the aspects of the language of worship, however, is beyond the scope of this article, and the focus here will be limited to addressing, within the context of the Mar Thoma Church Diocese of North America and Europe, the mission mandate of the Church to worship in the vernacular (the primary or official language of the people).

The Church is called to communicate the living Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this communication begins with worship. One of the primary ways that the Church embodies worship is through the use of language. The paradox of language is that it can be both creative and destructive. The creative power of language is witnessed as God calls creation into being through spoken language. The Bible describes the destructive power of language as a fire that corrupts the whole person and a deadly poison that kills. A mission of the Church in every age is to discern whether the language used in worship through liturgical prayers, music and sermons is creative or destructive. To this extent, many ecclesial communities strive hard to ensure that inclusive and empowering language is used in worship. While discerning what language to use in worship can be a daunting task at times, the process is very much an artistic expression of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church.

The Mar Thoma Church is blessed with the gift of diversity in language. Our global membership is already colored by languages such as Malayalam, English, Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, etc. Worshipping in the vernacular of the people has long been a practice of the Mar Thoma Church. How we define the word 'people' though brings either clarity or distortion to our vision of the Church. While the word 'people' may have cultural or traditional characteristics, the Church is called to see the word 'people' as a description of God's children first and



foremost. Before the word 'people' is used to describe a 'Keralite' culture or a 'Mar Thoma' ecclesial tradition, it must be seen as referring to the 'community created by God.' The Church is called to worship God in the vernacular of the 'community created by God.' Through this lens, the practice of worshipping in the vernacular of the 'people' takes on a deeper and richer meaning.

What is the vernacular of the 'community created by God'? In the context of the Mar Thoma Church Diocese of North America and Europe the primary or official 'language of the land' is English. Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev.

Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius has acknowledged this fact on numerous occasions and highlighted the need of this Diocese to arrange more worship services in English. It is our collective responsibility as a Diocese to ensure that arrangements are made to have at least one English worship service every week. The 'language of the land', however, is not the only vernacular in the context of North America and Europe. There are other vernaculars that we must also consider in worship. An example would be the 'language of gender'. Language represents the voice of a people, and for every voice there are many components. The dialect of the voice might be English, but the gender of the voice is a distinct component that needs to be embraced. As divisive as it may be, it would be a bold step to count the number of times masculine language is used in celebrating the Holy Communion and compare that with the number of times feminine language is used in the same liturgy of the Eucharist. What, if anything, does this awareness signify about the structures and systems of worship?

Ensuring that there is an English worship service every week does not mean that worship services in Malayalam, Hindi or any other language is meaningless. Honoring feminine language in worship does not mean that we dishonor men. The focus of the Church should be on contextualizing the mission of the Church and bringing about an experience of incarnation for a larger 'community created by God'. In some situations, this may require a parish to conduct two services each week—in different languages. In other situations, this may mean liturgical reformation. The relevance of the Church requires us to embody the presence of Jesus Christ through worship in the local community. As a body of Christ, we are called to be an ecumenical community that actively stands with those outside the margins. If the church is to be more inclusive and empowering, then the language of worship must take seriously the vernacular of the 'people'. This vision of worship should inspire us to open the door of the Mar Thoma Church to the larger community created by God and engage ourselves in a deeper dialogue on the language of worship.

**Editor's Note:** Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas is an ordained priest of the Mar Thoma Church, who is presently enrolled in the Masters of Pastoral Counseling at Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry.





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# Hoskote Mission Field In Karnataka

Rev. James Veeramala, Director

**H**oskote Mission, which was started in 1947 is one of the oldest mission fields of Mar Thoma Church and is under the management of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association (MTEA). For more information about MTEA please visit its web site at: [www.marthomaevan.org](http://www.marthomaevan.org), which is the official organization of the Mar



Thoma Church. Hoskote Mission was found in the year 1947, when India became independent from the British rule. This Mission Field was started as a small prayer fellowship and has grown up into one of the well-established mission fields of the Mar Thoma Church at present. The vision and encouragement of visionary Rev. A. C. Zachariah and Mr. M. T. Joseph were also constructive in the development of the mission. Dedicated missionaries, mission workers, Bangalore Mar Thoma community, friends, well wishers and thousands of the believers who came to know Jesus Christ by this mission have also nurtured it.

This mission field is presently functioning with the dedicated service and support of missionaries, evangelists, believers, friends and well wishers of the mission. Beyond all, God's grace enabled the mission to serve the poor and needy for the past 63 years. The various activities of the mission field include one parish, seven chapels and two other worshiping places. About 1000 people from the State of Karnataka (non Malayalam speaking) came to Christian faith through our mission and there are about 750 seekers at present. We have two missionaries, ten evangelists, ten



Sunday Schools, one thousand Sunday School children; one hundred fifty youth league members, active Sevika Sanghom members and Edavaka Mission members from an area covering one hundred villages. The mission field is

mainly concentrated in and around about 100 villages. We conduct Sunday worship in Kannada language every Sunday in all centers and also have V. B. S, youth camps, retreats and classes for women on a regular basis.

The mission hospital consists of 200 beds and served by 16 doctors and 75 staff members. The hospital has several departments including: General Medicine, General Surgery, Gynecology, Pediatrics, Orthopedics, Dentistry, Physiotherapy, Geriatrics, Psychiatry, Ophthalmology, Radiology, Dermatology, ENT, X-Ray, Laboratory, ECG and Ultra Sound Scanning. We just have started new departments of Cardiology and Nephrology. The hospital conducts village clinics, medical camps and mobile clinics on a regular basis in the villages. The hospital always provide free treatment and at concessional rates for economically poor people in the villages where we serve. The hospital also has a leprosy unit consisting of 20 beds with inpatients, about 360 out patients and is served by two Para medical staff and nursing staff.

The mission filed has a destitute home namely 'Shanthi Mandiram' and there are 33 inmates both men and women who live there. Three geriatric nurses and one Ayah serve



them. The JMI Counseling Centre (HIV/AIDS Clinic) mainly provides counseling and treatment to HIV/AIDS patients of the nearby villages. There are two Child Development Centres one in Hoskote and the other one in Dandupalaya. About 500 children are being taken care of in these two centers and served by 24 staff members. The services include: special care for children and parents like moral teaching, Bible classes, counseling for children and parents, parents meeting, self employment scheme, women empowerment, village developments and so many other activities for the development of the children of the villages.

The Mission Field has its own Nursing School, namely, Hoskote Mission Institute of Nursing (GNM), which is approved by the government of Karnataka and Indian Nursing Council. The institute provides courses in general nursing and midwifery for 200 students and is served by 20 well dedicated faculty members. The institute also provides hospital and community training to the students in a very good spiritual atmosphere.

The Easow Mar Thimotheos Memorial Evangelistic Training Institute (Bible School) under the Mission Field

(Continued on page 29)

# Oscar Arnulfo Romero—Bishop of the People

Rev. Santhosh Thomas, Long Island MTC, New York

"I've often been threatened with death. If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people. If the threats come to be fulfilled, from this moment I offer my blood to God for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador. Let my blood be a seed of freedom and sign that hope will soon be reality." Oscar Romero told to a Guatemalan reporter just two weeks before his assassination.

When Central America was delivered from the domination of Spain it was divided into five Republics namely Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador. Out of these five Republics El Salvador was the smallest in area. It is named after 'Savior' and its capital is San Salvador (Holy Savior). Though it was liberated from the rule of Spain autocracy still continued. Power and wealth were accumulated only in the hands of a few. Majority people were poor, marginalized and uneducated. Those in power were the minority, and were not willing to have a more equitable share of nature's riches and life's opportunities. The church leadership in El Salvador encouraged the political status quo by their meaningful silence and non-intervention.

As an outcome of Vatican II, in 1968 the Latin American Catholic Bishops gathered at Medellin, Columbia. They spoke of the 'Institutionalized Sin' that afflicted and oppressed the majority of the people in Latin America and they called the Church to be a preferential option for the poor. It was in this socio-political context Romero was elevated to the post of the Arch Bishop of San Salvador. Prior to this appointment he was the bishop of Santiago De Maria, a small rural diocese, east of El Salvador. It was entirely different to be a bishop of a rural diocese away from the centre and to be the Arch Bishop in the capital city very much in the public eye. He was appointed as the Arch Bishop of San Salvador since he seemed meek in front of the powerful and hence would not cause any trouble to them. The government, military and the aristocracy were delighted to see Romero the orthodox man as their bishop. But progressive ecclesial leaders were totally against the selection of Romero because most of the period in his ministry he was politically cautious.

On February 10, 1977 he was named as the Arch Bishop of San Salvador. On February 28, 1977 there was a major protest from the people against the election fraud. The soldiers in the town square of the capital attacked protesters. Romero didn't intervene or raise his voice. On 12th March 1977, a radical Jesuit priest Fr. Rutulio Grande was murdered along with a 72-year-old man Don Manuel and a young boy Rutulio Lemus. Fr. Grande was a good friend of Romero and has been serving among the poorest people in the country. While Romero was officiating the funeral mass of Fr. Grande, the people for whom Fr. Grande died asked Romero "Will you stand with us as Fr. Grande did?" That was the Damascus experience of Romero. It turned him to a fiery prophet of justice and peace, the voice of the voiceless and a new Jeremiah, as John Sobrino speaks of him.

When Government started killing priests, Romero opened his eyes and began to look at the situation in El Salvador from the



perspective of the poor. On the day Fr. Grande was assassinated, Romero publicly announced his refusal to attend any government function until they brought justice for the death of Fr. Grande. At the funeral mass Romero asked, "Am I the pastor of those who suffer or those who oppress? Whoever touches one of my priests is touching me and they will have to deal with me". His words sent strong signal to the government. They replied with a much stronger tone, "Cassocks are not bullet proof. We put you where you are now sitting. We can get rid of you whenever we want and if necessary will eliminate tens of thousands of El Salvadorans."

Remembrance was key to Romero's entire struggle. Every week he announced the names of the dead and the disappeared from the pulpit of the Cathedral. By remembering his dead friends and priests, his dead congregants and the suffering poor he was inviting the anger of the government. His Sunday homilies were broadcasted nation wide on radio. Every Sunday morning at 8 am the country came to a standstill when he spoke. In 1978 Easter Monday he opened the Seminary in down town San Salvador to welcome any and all displaced victims of violence. Hundreds of homeless, hungry and brutalized people moved into the Seminary, transforming the quiet religious retreat into a crowded, noisy, shelter, makeshift hospital and play ground. For him the Church is not to be measured by the governments support but rather by its own authenticity, its evangelical spirit of prayer, trust, sincerity and justice its opposition to abuses. He became a voice of hope for the oppressed people. He began to feel that his enemies are targeting him.

On May 23, 1980 Romero made a request to the government, "I want to appeal in particular to the men of the army, to the ranks of National Guards that we are brothers. Why do you want to kill your own brothers? The Church cannot remain silent in the face of such abomination. In the name of God and in the name of those suffering people whose cries rise to heaven with increasing despair, I beg you, I beseech you, and I order you to stop repression". Within twenty-four hours, while he was celebrating the Mass at the chapel of Divine Providence, as he raised the bread and wine on his hands a shot rang out. The well-aimed bullet pierced his heart, blood splattered across the altar and on to the elements, which he was about to consecrate. Assassination of Romero led the nation to a civil war, which lasted so many years and death and disappearance of thousands of innocent people of El Salvador.

Five years ago at the 25th memorial mass for Oscar Arnulfo Romero, when the papal nuncio announced, "we are gathered here to remember Arch Bishop Romero", people started chanting, "Arnulfo, Arnulfo" followed by "Queremos un obispo que anda con los pobres" (We want a bishop who will walk with the people). At that gathering Liberation Theologian Gustavo Gutierrez said "Jesus is the homily of God and Romero is the homily of Jesus in our presence". Each year on May 24, the people of El Salvador and around the world commemorate the life of Bishop Romero. The year 2010 is more significant because it marks the 30th

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# Nothing but Awe and Wonder on Retracing the Footsteps of St. Paul and St. John

Abraham Mattackal, Los Angeles

**S**aint Paul's surviving writings constitute a small corpus of nine letters addressed to particular churches, one private letter to Philemon and three letters to Timothy and Titus, excluding, at the same time, letter to Hebrews, whose authorship is questionable. Apart from Acts, the letters of St. Paul to the churches he had founded or with which he was familiar, are the other main source of our knowledge of his apostolic work and of course the Apostle himself. The missionary work of Apostle Paul involving a total of four missionary journeys from A.D. 45 to A.D. 63 during which time he covered over 14,000 kilometers passing over sea and land, rivers, mountains and deserts. Antioch is where Saint Paul commenced his mission and he often used the city as his base. The first missionary journey of Saint Paul from A.D. 45 to A.D. 49 covered Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Jerusalem besides, of course, Antioch (Acts 14 and 15). During the second missionary journey (A.D. 50 to A.D. 52) the Apostle Paul visited Syria and Cilicia (Tarsus the capital of Cilicia was Paul's hometown), Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica (modern day Thessaloniki), Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchrea, Ephesus, Caesarea, (Acts 16-18). The third missionary journey of the Apostle Paul involved visits to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Philippi, Troas, Samos, Trogyllium, Miletus, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Caesarea and Jerusalem (Acts 18-26). On his fourth and final journey to Rome (A.D. 60-61) the Apostle Paul visited Caesarea, Sidon, Myra, Cnidus, Crete, Cauda, Malta, Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli, Forum of Appius and Three Taverns and Rome (Acts 27-28).

The Apostle Paul was undoubtedly the greatest missionary of all time. During his missionary journeys, he came into contact with many people in many parts of the then known world. He was to preach the Word of God, to baptize, founding Churches and to fight for their dominance. Although it is inconceivable for anyone to undertake a tour of each and every place that Paul visited during his four missionary journeys with the same mode of transportation that Apostle Paul had to depend on, the thought of retracing his footsteps in at least those places which he addressed his epistles to, gave us a lot of excitement and wonder. A group of 77 people of different Christian denominations from different parts of the United States could undertake such a tour in late March of 2010, arranged by Mr. K. K. Raju of MTC, Dallas, Farmers Branch, which included a visit to the island of Patmos. Our visit to the following places helped us a great deal to understand the 'Acts of the Apostles' and the 'Book of Revelation' in a little more different and better perspective.

## Thessaloniki

The city known in Bible as Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by General Kassandra and was named after his wife



Thessaloniki (the sister of Alexander the Great). Thessaloniki is the capital of the region of central Macedonia and is the second largest city in Greece with a population of over 1.2 million people. Few other places have such a density of world-class historic monuments as Thessaloniki. Visitors will come across the city's fascinating history at virtually every street corner. Roman Ruins, Byzantine castles, Ottoman monuments and 20th century architecture are all great attractions to tourists visiting the city. The archeological museum, St. Demetres Basilica with splendid mosaics, St. George's Church are some of the most interesting attractions. It was during Paul's second missionary journey that he visited Thessaloniki with Silas.

## Kavala and Philippi

Kavala is an affluent Greek town with a large beautiful natural harbor. Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke visited this ancient city of Neapolis. We could see the Roman aqueduct and the ruins of Acropolis. Our journey by bus then continued to Philippi. Philip II, King of Macedonia, built this ancient city in 358 B. C. At Philippi, there was an overseas Jewish community, but, they had no synagogue for their Saturday meetings. They used an open air space near a river. "On the Sabbath, we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank where we supposed that some people met for prayer and we sat down to speak with some women who had come together" (Acts 16:13). It was during this time God opened the heart of a lady merchant of expensive purple cloth named Lydia and she accepted what Paul was saying. "She was baptized along with other members of the household and she asked us to be her guests. Lydia was the first European to become a Christian. However, the test of persecution was very close. "A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silos and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten and they were thrown into prison" (Acts 16:22-23). When Paul cast out the evil spirit from the slave girl and her masters realized that their income from her fortune telling would be wiped out, they conspired to bring him to the authorities who sided with the crowd and put Paul and Silas into prison. The Lord miraculously saved them and they had the chance of evangelizing the jailer of the prison and his household. A walk through the ancient remains of the Agora, the Greek theatre where 6000 people could be seated, the Acropolis and the prison cave wherein Paul and Silas were imprisoned and the riverbank where Lydia and her household were baptized, would give us a sense of wonderment and joy. After visiting two of the world famous Byzantine monasteries of western Thessaly perched precariously on the outcrop of giant rocks which form Towers and Pinnacles ranging in height from 100 to 150 Meters and where monks sought isolation, refuge and spiritual salvation, we boarded a cruise ship to visit Greek islands and Turkey.

## Ephesus

Ephesus is in the western part of Asia Minor, which today forms part of the Republic of Turkey. The ruins of Ephesus are magnificent. Though hundreds of years have passed, and in spite of the ravages of time, they have survived to the present day, and even more than that, they still preserve their grace and elegance. Ephesus was known the country of great Artemis, the goddess of hunting and the chase. Diana was the Roman name for goddess Artemis. Artemis temple was accepted as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The Temple of Artemis was an architectural masterpiece, which attracted people from all over the world for at least one thousand years as a holy place for pilgrimage. St. Paul and St. John lived in Ephesus. The former spent about five or six years trying to preach and proclaim Jesus' teachings in his workshop in Ephesus and also at the Agora near the temple. The latter spent the last years of his century-long life here, wrote part of the New Testament and also died here.

Of all the troubles that St. Paul had to encounter during his ministry in Ephesus, the one created by Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business, manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis, stands out as the most serious one. Realizing that his business was going down the hill because of fewer people buying silver shrines as a result of Paul's messages, Demetrius along with other craftsmen and their supporters could move the public opinion against Paul. He added that Paul's message not only damaged their business, but also "robbed the magnificent goddess Artemis of her prestige" (Acts 19:27). Then the government took a hand in this affair and it was brought to court. As a result, St. Paul was compelled to leave the city. Paul sent for the believers and encouraged them. Then he said goodbye and left for Macedonia. Many of the theologians proclaim in their writings that the Virgin Mary followed St. John to the city of Ephesus. No visitor to Ephesus neglects to visit the remains of the Church of St. Mary and St. John which is very interesting not only from the spiritual point of view but also for its architectural beauty.

## Corinth

The ruins of this once splendid city lie high up on a hill above the modern town of some 20,000 inhabitants, overlooking both the Corinth and the Saronic gulfs. The principal sights include the temple of Apollo (6th century B.C.), the columns of which are monolithic, a rare architectural feature in ancient times. The fountain of Pirene, the market place, theatre and odium, several Roman buildings, and the tribune from where St. Paul delivered his sermons to the Corinthians in A.D. 51. An earthquake in A.D. 521 destroyed what remained half-damaged by the Roman and Gothic invasions.

Paul went to Corinth on his second mission. Corinth was the sin city of the Asia Minor, in the ancient times. That may be the reason why Apostle Paul in his Letters to Corinthians repeatedly talked about sexual immorality in their midst. Paul stayed in Corinth for almost eighteen months teaching the word of God. In Corinth the model of the "house-church" spread rapidly. The first house offered as a Church, was the house of Aquila and Priscilla. Another "house-church" was that of "Titus Justus a Gentile who worshipped God and lived next door to the synagogue" (Acts 18:7). In Corinth, Paul had a special vision of the

Lord who gave great strength to all the members of the missionary team.

## Patmos

After an overnight journey on cruise ship from Rhodes where we saw the temple of Athena on the majestic rocky Acropolis with the blue Aegean Sea beneath it, we arrived at the beautiful rocky island of Patmos where the exiled apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation. Patmos lies between the islands of Icaria and Leros when travel along the coast of Asia Minor in the northeastern Aegean. Patmos has an area of 34 square kilometers with a population of less than 3000 inhabitants. The center of the island is commanded by the impregnable monastery of St. John the Divine built in 1088 A.D. and the cave where St. John wrote down the Apocalypse, the closing book of the New Testament, are both unique monuments of orthodoxy, which attracted thousands of pilgrims and visitors. As we descend the steep steps to the cave of the Apocalypse and the surrounding Church of Ayia Anna, the inscription that awaits at the entrance of the cave and the Church will flood anyone with awe and deep emotion: "As dreadful as this place is, it is, nevertheless, the house of God and this the Gate of Heaven". While we are inside, we felt a sense of reverence when greeted by the sound of chanting and smell of incense. It is the kind of environment where your pace slows, your eyes drop, your senses quicken and you become speechless. Five laymen chant a cappella in stalls on the left, the priest responding mainly from the altar area behind life-size icons. Tourists at any given time outnumber the faithful who come and leave quickly, crossing themselves, lighting candles and kissing icons. The service is mysterious, ancient, mesmeric—unfamiliar to western believers—and yet there is a sense of richness and holiness that transcends culture and language.

History says John was taken to Rome where he was thrown into boiling oil at the Latin gate, emerging unscathed and was then exiled to the island of Patmos. He is believed to have lived in what we now know as 'The Cave of the Apocalypse'. It is incredibly moving to see the ceiling of the cave, so low that we could touch it, and the terrible cleft in the huge rock, the triple schism—symbol of the Holy Trinity, through which, according to tradition, John heard the voice of God—"a great voice as a trumpet saying what thou seest write in a book." The traces of St. John's residence in the cave can be seen in the niche carved in the rock where he rested his head and another niche that he used to help himself up. Right next to these recesses, at the height of a man, yet not made by any human hand, there is a sort of bookstand where, according to tradition, Prochoros, disciple of John, wrote down everything that his teacher (John) dictated to him.

## Athens

Greece begins in and revolves around this city one of the most ancient capitals of the western world. Everything and everyone in Athens seems to be drawn towards the Acropolis, the 156 meter high limestone rock that crowns the city. Clearly visible from any part of Athens the dazzling white columns of the Parthenon stand out against the blue background of the sky. It is temple of the virgin Athena (in Greek "Parthena") and took 15 years to build. (447-432 B.C.) A visit to the Acropolis Museum where archaeological finds of 800 to 300 B.C. periods are kept in chronological order and the Theatre of Dionysus where plays

of the great dramatists (Sophocles, Euripides, Menandrus ) were first presented, is informative and interesting.

In the Acts of the Apostles chapter 17:16-34, an account is given of Paul's stay and activities in Athens. While waiting for Silas and Timothy to come from Macedonia, Paul strolled around the city in the synagogue and the Agora to talk about the resurrected Christ. The Areopagus (modern day Mars Hill) was principally the hill to the west of the Acropolis where St. Paul used to go and present his teachings analytically. Paul's appearance in front of the Areopagus was certainly not insignificant. The Athenians listened to Paul with a repose that stemmed from their interest in new ideas and philosophical positions. Our tour group held a prayer meeting on the Mars Hill as well.

## Rome

At last Paul was in Rome so also we were! After two days visit to Vatican City, Museum, the Roman Forum, St. Paul's Basilica, St. Peter's Cathedral, the Sistine Chapel and Coliseum, we bid goodbye to each other and left for our hometowns. Once in Rome, although a prisoner, he uses the limited amount of freedom still allowed to him by the Roman authorities to continue the work of evangelization. "For the next two years Paul lived in his own rented house. He welcomed all who visited him, proclaiming the kingdom of God with all boldness and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him" (Acts: 28:30-31). Feeling his death to be near, Paul still in prison writes to Timothy, whom Paul considers 'his son.' "As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. Please come as soon as you can" (2 Timothy 4:6, 9). ■

## Hoskote Mission Field in Karnataka *(Cont'd from page 24)*

was started in 1991 in memory of late Rt. Rev. Dr. Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa of Mar Thoma Church. This institute conducts three year Bible diploma course in Kannada medium and consists of 15 students and 10 teaching staff. Most of the students were those who came to Christian faith from other faiths especially Hindu faith. So far 125 students completed the course from here and are serving at different mission fields in Karnataka and also in Andhra Pradesh, one of the neighboring State.

The Mission Field also has a Tailoring Training Centre providing training to 50 persons per batch and the course consists of 6 months training and is served by two staff members. At present the Out-Patient department, Leprosy Ward, HIV/AIDS Counseling Centre, X-Ray room are located in a very old building which needs relocation to a new building. We are also in the process of upgrading the Nursing School into a Nursing College so that we may offer bachelors degree courses in Nursing. We need infra structure to be completed as per the norms of the Indian Nursing Council before we can get approval for the Nursing School. We really need the financial support from all persons especially members of the Mar Thoma Church to strengthen the weak, enable those who have fallen to stand on their own and to show love and mercy to all. The love of the Cross exhorts us to go ahead together for the extension of the Kingdom of God.

As part of our 63rd anniversary celebrations, we are arranging a program followed by Holy Communion service

on June 20, 2010. Our Metropolitan Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma will be the chief guest and we will also celebrate the 80th birth day of our Metropolitan on that occasion. We cordially invite all of you to be part of this mission program. We kindly request your prayers and financial support for the continued mission work in the unreached areas of Karnataka. You can also volunteer in areas that may be of interest to you or in any areas in which you are qualified to serve in the mission field for any period of time. If you are just interested to spend some time in the Mission Field during your summer vacation or any other time that will be fine too. We also welcome youths as groups from parishes or organizations or families to visit or serve in this Mission Field. If you are interested to serve here or just visit this Mission Field, please send an e-mail to me and I will make sure that you will enjoy a pleasant time of stay and mission experience in this mission field which you can cherish in your memories for ever. You may also obtain more information about the Hoskote Mission Field and its activities by visiting our web site at: [www.hoskotemission.com](http://www.hoskotemission.com).

**Editor's Note:** Rev. James Veeramala, former Vicar of San Francisco MTC, CA is now serving as the Director of the Hoskote Mission and Medical Center near Bangalore, Karnataka in India. Achen can be contacted at telephone 011-91-80-27931279 (O) or at 011-91-09986448784 (Cell) or at e-mail address at: [director@hoskotemission.com](mailto:director@hoskotemission.com).

## 11th National Sevika Sanghom Conference

Hosted by: St. Mark's MTC Sevika Sanghom, Tampa, FL

Date: September 30–October 3, 2010

Theme: "She will be remembered (St. Matthew 26:13)

Leaders: **The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa**  
**Rev. Vinoy Daniel and Mrs. Rachael George**

We cordially invite all Sevika Sanghom members to attend this year's conference.

**Mrs. Checha V. John**, Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Secretary

# നഷ്ടപ്പെടാതെ നേടാനാവില്ല

ഡോ. സഖറിയാസ് മാർ തെയോഫിലോസ് സഫ്രഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ

നേട്ടം കൈവരിക്കുക 21-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ പ്രബലമായ ലക്ഷ്യമാണ്. അതിൽ അപാകതയില്ല. ഏതൊരു രംഗത്ത് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നവരും ആ രംഗത്ത് നേട്ടം ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ അവിടെ പിടിച്ചുനിൽക്കാൻ കഴിയില്ല. അതിവേഗം പുറംതള്ളപ്പെടും. ലക്ഷ്യം നേടിയെടുക്കുന്നതിൽ പ്രോത്സാഹനത്തിന് വലിയ പങ്കാണുള്ളത്. Motivation(പ്രചോദനം) കൂടാതെ മുന്നോട്ടു പോവുക വിഷമകരമാണ്. ഉള്ളിന്റെയുള്ളിൽ നിന്നുയരുന്ന പ്രചോദനമാണ് അനേകരെ ഉയരത്തിൽ എത്തിക്കുന്നത്. ഉന്നതമായ ലക്ഷ്യബോധമുണ്ടായിരിക്കണം. നേട്ടം കൊയ്യുന്നതിനാവശ്യമായ കഠിനാദ്ധ്വാനം ചെയ്യണം. Incentives and awards പ്രോത്സാഹനങ്ങൾ എല്ലാ രംഗങ്ങളിലും എല്ലാവരെയും കൂടുതൽ നേടിയെടുക്കുന്നതിന് സഹായിക്കുന്നതാണ്. ഇത് പഠനരംഗത്തും കായികരംഗത്തും വ്യവസായ രംഗത്തും ഇന്ന് നാം കാണുന്ന വസ്തുതയാണ്. ഡോൾഫിൻ മത്സ്യത്തിന്റെ അഭ്യാസങ്ങൾ ഇന്ന് മിക്ക അമ്യൂസ്മെന്റ് പാർക്കിലും മുഖ്യമണ്ണാണ്. അവയെ പരിശീലിപ്പിക്കുന്നത് ഒരു പ്രത്യേക രീതിയിലാണ്. ഓരോ അഭ്യാസവും പൂർത്തീകരിക്കുമ്പോൾ അതിന് സ്വാദിഷ്ടമായ ഭക്ഷണം നൽകി തൃപ്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. കൂടുതൽ കൂടുതൽ സ്വാദിഷ്ടമായ ഭക്ഷണം കൊടുക്കുംതോറും കൂടുതൽ ഉയരത്തിലേക്ക് ചാടുകയും മനുഷ്യനെ വഹിച്ചു നീന്തുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഇതിനെല്ലാം പിന്നിലുള്ളത് പ്രോത്സാഹനമാണ്, അഭിനന്ദനമാണ്.

താലന്തുകളുടെ ഉപമയിൽ 5 താലന്തും 2 താലന്തും അധികമായി സമ്പാദിച്ച വേലക്കാരോട് "നന്ന് നല്ലവനും വിശ്വസ്തനുമായ..... അധികത്തിന് വിചാരകനാകും" എന്നാണ്. മടിയനായ ദാസന്റെ താലന്തുകൾ കൂടി ഏറ്റം നേടിയവന് സമ്മാനിക്കുന്നു. തികഞ്ഞ പ്രോത്സാഹനം. മത്തായിയുടെ സുവിശേഷം 25-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിലും അന്ത്യന്യായവിധിയുടെ വിചാരണയിലും യേശു ഇതേ ആശയമാണ് വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നത്. നല്ല ദാസൻ യജമാനന്റെ നിത്യ സന്തോഷത്തിലേക്കും, ദുഷ്ടദാസൻ നിത്യ നാശത്തിലേക്കും തള്ളപ്പെടുന്നു.

സഭയുടെ മിഷൻ പ്രവർത്തനത്തിലും ഫലവത്തായ പ്രവർത്തനത്തിന് ശക്തമായ പ്രോത്സാഹനം ആവശ്യമല്ലേ? നമ്മുടെ മിഷൻ ഫീൽഡുകളിൽ മുഖ്യമായും മിഷനറി പട്ടക്കാരും സുവിശേഷകരും വിശ്വാസികളും ഒത്തുചേരുന്ന കൂട്ടായ്മയാണ്. നല്ല പ്രതിബദ്ധതയുള്ളവരും ക്ലേശങ്ങൾ ഏറ്റെടുക്കാൻ സന്നദ്ധരും പ്രവർത്തന മേഖലയുടെ പശ്ചാത്തലവും സംസ്കാരവും ഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നവരും സാമ്പത്തിക സാമുദായിക യാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളെ വിലയിരുത്താനും പൊരുത്തപ്പെടാനും കഴിയുന്നവരല്ലെങ്കിൽ മിഷൻ പ്രവർത്തനം അന്വേ പരാജയപ്പെടും. ദരിദ്രരോടും അവഗണിക്കപ്പെടുന്നവരോടും മാനസികമായ മമത, ശക്തമായ ദൈവിക ഭാഗം, അവരുടെ ഉദ്ധാരണത്തിനുള്ള പ്രതിബദ്ധത എല്ലാം വളരെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടതാണ്. ഇതിന് ആഭിമുഖ്യമുള്ള വ്യക്തികളെ അനുഭവിക്കുകയും പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുകയും പിന്തുണയ്ക്കുകയും ചെയ്താൽ മാത്രമേ മിഷൻ പ്രവർത്തനം ഫലപ്രദമാകയുള്ളൂ. ഉപജീവനത്തിനുള്ള തൊഴിലായി മാത്രം സുവിശേഷവേലയെ കാണുന്ന സുവിശേഷകർ സുവിശേഷീകരണത്തിന് ഒരപവാദമാണ്. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിന്റെ തീപ്പെരി ഉള്ളിലുള്ളവരും മിഷൻ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ എരിഞ്ഞ പ്രശോഭിക്കുന്നവരും ആയിരിക്കണം നമ്മുടെ സുവിശേഷകർ. അവരുടെ ജീവിതം സന്തുഷ്ടമായിരിക്കണം. "എപ്പോഴും സന്തോഷിപ്പിൻ" എന്ന പൗലോസിന്റെ വാക്കുകൾ സുവശേഷകരുടെ മുഖത്തുനിന്ന് വായിക്കണം. ധന്യമായ കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഉടമസ്ഥരായിരിക്കണം. വാസയോഗ്യമായ പാർപ്പിടം, പ്രാഥമിക ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള സൗകര്യങ്ങൾ, കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് വ്യാകുലപ്പെടാതെ പഠനം നടത്താനുള്ള

സൗകര്യങ്ങൾ ഇതെല്ലാം അവർക്കുണ്ടാകണം. അപരിചിതമായ ഭാഷ ഉത്സാഹപൂർവ്വം സ്വായത്തമാക്കുന്നതിനും. ക്ലേശങ്ങൾ സ്വയം ഏറ്റെടുക്കുന്ന ഉത്തമ ക്രിസ്തുശിഷ്യൻ ആയിരിക്കുന്നതിനും സുവിശേഷകന് കഴിയണം. ഇതിനാവശ്യമായ പ്രചോദനവും പ്രോത്സാഹനവും സഭയും സമൂഹവും നന്നായി നന്നായി നൽകണം. മിഷൻഫീൽഡിലെ സുപ്രധാന ഘടകം വിശ്വാസികളാണ്. ഒറ്റക്കുള്ള വിശ്വാസിയേക്കാൾ ഉപരി വിശ്വാസികളുടെ കൂട്ടമാണ് നിലനിർത്തുന്നത്. കൂട്ടായ്മ ശക്തീകരിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ശ്രമങ്ങൾ സുവിശേഷകരുടെയും മിഷനറിയുടെയും സഭയുടെയും ഭാഗത്തുനിന്നുണ്ടാകണം. ഒരുമിച്ച് കൂടാനുള്ള സംവിധാനം, വിശ്വാസസമൂഹത്തിന് അധികം അകലെയല്ലാതെ ഒരുക്കിക്കൊടുക്കണം. അവരുടെ ഉള്ളിന്റെ ഉള്ളിൽ നിന്ന് വരുന്ന ആരാധനാ ഭാവങ്ങൾക്ക് അവരുടെ സംസ്കാര പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ നിന്നുകൊണ്ട് രൂപം നൽകാൻ അവസരവും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യവും ഉണ്ടാകണം. കൃത്രിമമോ അപരിചിതമോ ആയ ആരാധനാശൈലിയുടെ സ്ഥാനത്ത് സ്വഭാവീകമായ ആരാധനാ രൂപഭാവങ്ങളെ പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കണം. വിശ്വാസ സമൂഹം വെറും ഒരു ആരാധനാസമൂഹം മാത്രമല്ല, ജീവിക്കുന്ന കൂട്ടായ്മയാണ്. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ എല്ലാ മേഖലയിലും നല്ല പിന്തുണ അവർക്ക് ലഭിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. കരുതലിന്റേയും ശക്തീകരണത്തിന്റേയും ഉദ്ധാരണത്തിന്റേയും ശക്തമായ സഭയുടെ സാന്നിദ്ധ്യവും സഹകരണവും വിശ്വാസ സമൂഹത്തിനുണ്ടാകണം. വേദപുസ്തക സത്യങ്ങളുടെയും വിശ്വാസാചാരങ്ങളുടെയും പഠിപ്പിക്കൽപോലെ തന്നെ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളുടെയും യുവാക്കളുടെയും വൃദ്ധജനങ്ങളുടെയും ആരോഗ്യം, തൊഴിൽ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം എന്നിവയുടെ കെട്ടുറപ്പ് എല്ലാം മിഷനറിയുടെയും സുവിശേഷകരുടെയും, സഭയുടെയും സജീവ ശ്രദ്ധയും അകമഴിഞ്ഞ പ്രോത്സാഹനവും ലഭിക്കേണ്ട രംഗങ്ങളാണ്. ക്രൈസ്തവ വിശ്വാസം നിലനിർത്തുന്നതിനും ക്രിസ്തീയ സാക്ഷ്യം നിറവേറ്റുന്നതിനും നിരന്തര പ്രോത്സാഹനം ആവശ്യമാണ്. വിശുദ്ധ പൗലോസ് താൻ സ്ഥാപിച്ച എല്ലാ സഭകൾക്കും കൂടെകൂടെ ലേഖനങ്ങൾ എഴുതിയും സന്ദർശിച്ചും പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിച്ചത് സഭയെ സജീവമാക്കുന്നതിനായിരുന്നു. ഇത് നമുക്ക് മാതൃകയാക്കാം.

പ്രോത്സാഹനം പോലെ സുപ്രധാനമാണ് ത്യാഗം. ത്യാഗസന്നദ്ധത കൂടാതെ ക്രൈസ്തവ സാക്ഷ്യം സാധ്യമല്ല. വെറും ക്ഷമയല്ല, ദീർഘക്ഷമ മിഷൻ പ്രവർത്തകരുടെ മുഖമുദ്രയാകണം. കഠിനമായ ശിക്ഷണം, ഏത് ക്ലേശവും ഏറ്റെടുക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള സന്നദ്ധത, പരിപൂർണ്ണ വിട്ടുകൊടുക്കൽ, സ്വയശുന്യവൽക്കരണം എല്ലാം സുവിശേഷമേഖലയെ സജീവമാക്കുന്നതിന് സഹായകമാണ്. ജൂണിൽ എഡിൻബറോയിൽ നടക്കുന്ന വേൾഡ് മിഷൻ കോൺഫ്രൻസിന്റെ ചിന്താവിഷയം "Witnessing Christ Today" "ഇന്ന് ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ സാക്ഷിക്കുക" എന്നതാണ്. 21-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ സാക്ഷിക്കുക അനായാസമല്ല. എതിർപ്പുകൾ, വെല്ലുവിളികൾ, ഏറ്റുമുട്ടലുകൾ എല്ലാം സഭ നേരിടുന്ന കാലഘട്ടമാണ്. പോരാട്ടങ്ങളും സഹനങ്ങളും സഭക്ക് ഒഴിച്ചുകൂടാൻ പാടില്ലാത്തതാണ്. W.C.C-യുടെ കാൻബറ അസംബ്ലിയുടെ പഠനവിഷയം 'Struggle is form of witnessing' എന്നാണ്. Passion week-ൽ നാം ധ്യാനിച്ചത് Suffering is the new life of salvation എന്നാണ്. ആരംഭത്തിൽ സുചിപ്പിച്ച നേട്ടം ഉണ്ടാകുന്നത് നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നതിലൂടെയാണ്. കൈയൊഴിയുന്നതിലൂടെയാണ്, വിട്ടുകൊടുക്കുന്നതിലൂടെയാണ്. എന്തെങ്കിലും വിട്ടുകൊടുക്കാൻ നാം ആരെങ്കിലും തയ്യാറാണോ അതിന് തയ്യാറാകാത്തടത്തോളം കാലം മിഷൻ, മിഷൻ ഫീൽഡ് എല്ലാം മുരടിച്ച്രിക്കും. ചിന്തിക്കുക, പ്രവർത്തിക്കുക, ആശംസകളോടെ.....



# സുവിശേഷം ജീവിതത്തിലേക്ക് പകരണം

റവ. ഡോ. മാർട്ടിൻ അൽഫോൻസ്, യുഎസ്എ

പ്രായോഗിക തലത്തിലേക്കു പകരപ്പെടാത്ത സുവിശേഷം അർത്ഥശൂന്യമാണെന്നു റവ. ഡോ. മാർട്ടിൻ അൽഫോൻസ്. 115-ാമതു മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ പ്രാരംഭ യോഗത്തിൽ സുവിശേഷ ജീവിതം (live the gospel) എന്ന ഈ വർഷത്തെ കൺവൻഷൻ ചിന്താ വിഷയത്തെ ആസ്പദമാക്കി മുഖ്യസന്ദേശം നൽകുകയായിരുന്നു യുഎസിലെ യുണൈറ്റഡ് മെതഡിസ്റ്റ് സഭാംഗവും ലോക പ്രശസ്ത സുവിശേഷകനുമായ ഡോ. അൽഫോൻസ്. കേൾക്കാൻ സവിശേഷമായതു മാത്രമല്ല മറ്റുള്ളവരോടു പറയുന്നതു ജീവിതത്തിൽ പ്രായോഗികമാക്കുന്നതാണ് സുവിശേഷം. ഇറ്റലിയിലെ വിശുദ്ധനായ ഫ്രാൻസി ഓഫ് അസീസി ശിഷ്യരുമൊത്ത് സുവിശേഷമറിയിക്കാൻ ഗ്രാമത്തിലേക്കു പോയി. അവിടെച്ചെന്ന് പാവപ്പെട്ട ഗ്രാമീണരുടെ വേദനകൾ കേൾക്കാനും അവരുടെ വീടുകളിൽ കയറിയിറങ്ങി പ്രാർഥിക്കാനും രോഗികളെ സന്ദർശിക്കാനുമൊക്കെയാണ് സമയം ചെലവിട്ടത്. തിരികെ പോരുമ്പോൾ ശിഷ്യൻ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിച്ചു: ഇന്നു നമ്മൾ സുവിശേഷം പ്രസംഗിച്ചില്ലല്ലോ. അത്യാവശ്യമുള്ളപ്പോൾ മാത്രം വാക്കുകൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുക. അതാണ് യഥാർഥ സുവിശേഷം. പ്രസംഗം മാത്രമായാൽ സുവിശേഷം കപടഭക്തിയാകും.

ഭാരതത്തിൽ സുവിശേഷം അറിയിക്കാനെന്നതിന് മിഷനറിമാർക്ക് ആദ്യകാലത്ത് തെറ്റുപറ്റി. പലസ്തീൻ നാട്ടിലെ കാലാവസ്ഥയെയും ആളുകളെയും അനുസ്മരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഭാരതത്തിലെ ചില പ്രദേശങ്ങളിലെത്തിയ മിഷനറിമാർ ജനങ്ങൾ വളരെ വേഗം സുവിശേഷം സ്വീകരിക്കുമെന്നു ധരിച്ചു. കുറെനാൾ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടും മാറ്റമൊന്നും കാണാതെ വന്നപ്പോൾ മിഷനറിമാർ ജനങ്ങളോടുതന്നെ ചോദിച്ചു, നിങ്ങൾ എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണ് ഇത് സ്വീകരിക്കാത്തത്? പറയുന്നതു സത്യമാണോയെന്നു സംശയമുള്ളതുകൊണ്ടാണ് വിശ്വസിക്കാത്തതെന്നായി ജനം. സത്യമാണെന്നു തെളിയിക്കാൻ ആവശ്യമായ നടപടി സ്വീകരിച്ച ശേഷം മിഷനറിമാർ വീണ്ടുമൊരു വിലയിരുത്തൽ നടത്തി. സത്യമായിരിക്കാമെങ്കിലും നിങ്ങൾ പറയുന്നതൊന്നും പുതിയ കാര്യമല്ലെന്നായി ജനം. ഭാരതീയ തത്വചിന്തയും വേദപുസ്തക സത്യങ്ങളും തമ്മിലുള്ള സമാനതകൾ എടുത്തുകാട്ടിയുള്ള മറുപടി മിഷനറിമാരെ കൃഷ്ണി. താരതമ്യ പഠനത്തിലൂടെ ചില കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ പുതുതായുണ്ടെന്നു സ്മാപിച്ച ശേഷം വീണ്ടു വിലയിരുത്തൽ നടത്തി. സത്യമായിരിക്കാം, പുതിയതുമായിരിക്കാം പക്ഷേ അത് നിങ്ങളിൽ ഇല്ല. ഇതാണ് മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷനു മുന്നിലുള്ള വെല്ലുവിളി. സുവിശേഷത്തിൽ ജീവിക്കാൻ വിളിക്കപ്പെട്ട നമ്മുടെ സംസാരം, നടപ്പ്, ജീവിതം, പ്രവർത്തി എന്നിവയെല്ലാം മറ്റുള്ളവർ നിരീക്ഷിക്കും. ആ സുവിശേഷം നീ തന്നെ എന്നു പറയിക്കാൻ കഴിയുമ്പോഴേ ജീവിക്കുന്ന യഥാർഥ്യമായി വചനം മാറുകയുള്ളൂ.

പ്രസംഗിക്കാൻ എളുപ്പവും ജീവിക്കാൻ പ്രയാസവുമുള്ളതാണ് സുവിശേഷം. ദൈവത്തിനു പ്രസാദമുള്ള വിധത്തിൽ ജീവിച്ച് എല്ലാ പ്രവർത്തിയിലും നല്ല ഫലം കായ്ക്കുന്നവരാകണം. അതിനു ബൈബിളിലെ (എബ്രായ 11: 6) ഹാനോക്കിന്റെ ഉദാഹരണം എടുക്കാം. ദൈവത്തെ പ്രസാദിപ്പിക്കാൻ ഹാനോക്ക് ദൈവത്തോടു കൂടെ നടന്നു. എന്നുവെച്ച് ഭൗതികമായി നടന്നുവെന്ന് അർത്ഥമാക്കേണ്ടതില്ല. 365 വർഷം ജീവിച്ചിരുന്ന ഹാനോക്ക് 65-ാമത്തെ വയസുമുതൽ ദൈവത്തോടൊപ്പം നടന്നുവെന്നാണ് ബൈബിൾ പറയുന്നത്. ഇപ്പോഴത്തെ രീതിയിൽ നോക്കിയാൽ ഏകദേശം 17-ാം വയസുമുതൽ എന്നർത്ഥം. യൗവനത്തിലേ ദൈവത്തെ അറിഞ്ഞ ഹാനോക്കിനെയാണ് ഇന്നത്തെ യൗവനക്കാർ മാതൃകയാക്കേണ്ടത്. മാൻ നീർത്തോടുകളിലേക്ക് എന്നതുപോലെ ദൈവത്തിലേക്കുള്ള ദാഹമാണ് ഇവിടെ ദൃശ്യമാകുന്നത്. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങൾക്കിടയിലും ദൈവത്തോടൊപ്പം നടന്ന ഹാനോക്കിന്റെ ദാഹം നമുക്കിടയിലും ദൃശ്യമാകുന്ന കാലം വരുമ്പോഴേ സുവിശേഷം യഥാർഥ്യമാകൂ. അത് അശക്തരെയും ബലഹീനരെയും ചുമക്കുന്നതും അയൽക്കാന്റെ ആവശ്യത്തിനു തന്റേതിനേക്കാളും പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുന്നതുമാണ്. ജാതിയോ മതമോ നോക്കാതെ നല്ല ശമര്യക്കാരനെപ്പോലെയാകുന്ന അവസ്ഥയാണത്.

യുഎസിൽ താമസിക്കാനെന്നതിന് കമ്പോഡിയക്കാരെ കാണാൻ അയൽവീട്ടിലെ സ്ത്രീ ചെന്നു. പഴങ്ങളും മറ്റുമായാണ് അവർ പോയത്. കമ്പോഡിയക്കാർക്ക് അതിശയമായി. പിന്നെ അവരെ സഹായിക്കാനും പുതിയ നാട്ടിലെ രീതി പറഞ്ഞുകൊടുക്കാനുമൊക്കെ ഗ്രേസ് എന്നു പേരുള്ള സ്ത്രീ സന്നദ്ധയായി. മാസങ്ങൾക്കു ശേഷം അവർ നല്ല അയൽക്കാരായി. കമ്പോഡിയക്കാർ ചോദിച്ചു എന്തിനാണ് അന്ന് ഞങ്ങളുടെ വീട്ടിൽവന്ന് ഞങ്ങളെ കരുതുകയും സ്നേഹിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തത്? അതിന് ഗ്രേസിന്റെ മറുപടി ഇതായിരുന്നു. അയൽക്കാരെ സ്നേഹിക്കണമെന്നാണ് എന്റെ മതം എന്നെ പഠിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇന്ന് കമ്പോഡിയൻ വംശജരുടെ 13 പള്ളികളാണ് കാലിഫോർണിയയിൽ ഉള്ളത്. 60 മിഷനറിമാർ കമ്പോഡിയയിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. ഒക്കെയും ഗ്രേസിന്റെ സ്നേഹത്തിൽ നിന്നു തുടങ്ങുന്നു. ഗ്രേസ് പ്രസംഗകയോ സുവിശേഷകയോ അല്ലായിരുന്നു. ജീവിതത്തിലൂടെ സുവിശേഷം പ്രാവർത്തികമാക്കി ആ വനിത. അതിനാൽ സുവിശേഷത്തിൽ ജീവിക്ക.

**Editor's Note:** Sermons delivered at Maramon Convention 2010 held in Kerala, India and reprinted with permission from Malayala Manorama. For listening to other sermons and songs of Maramon Convention please visit the web site at: [www.mtconvention.com](http://www.mtconvention.com).

# Professional Accounting & Tax Services

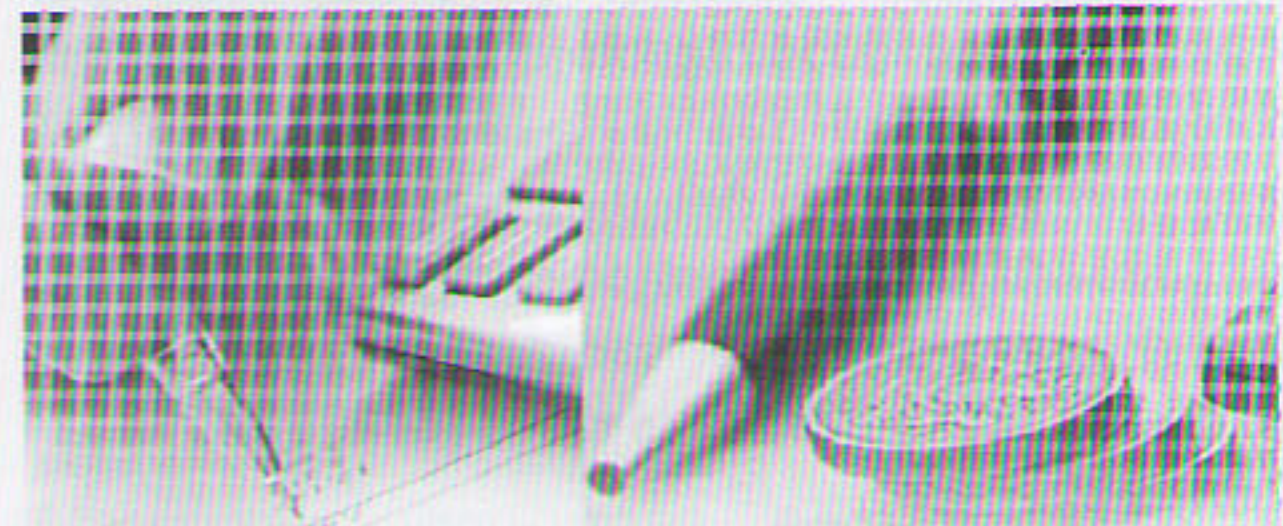
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# Diocesan Assembly—Presidential Address

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa

**T**oday, we have gathered in this august meeting of our Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of North America and Europe here at Atlanta MTC. We have come here representing the various parishes in Europe, Canada, and United States of America. As clergy and laity, we are now in the presence of God who blesses us and strengthens us for the ministry. The Holy Bible reminds us in Psalms 95:7 that, "... For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the people under His care." We look up to God to praise Him for all the blessings we receive as a Diocese and to seek His direction as we move forward. We are His people, called out and sanctified, not only to reap the benefits of being in His pasture and in His care but also to work for Him obediently and relentlessly.

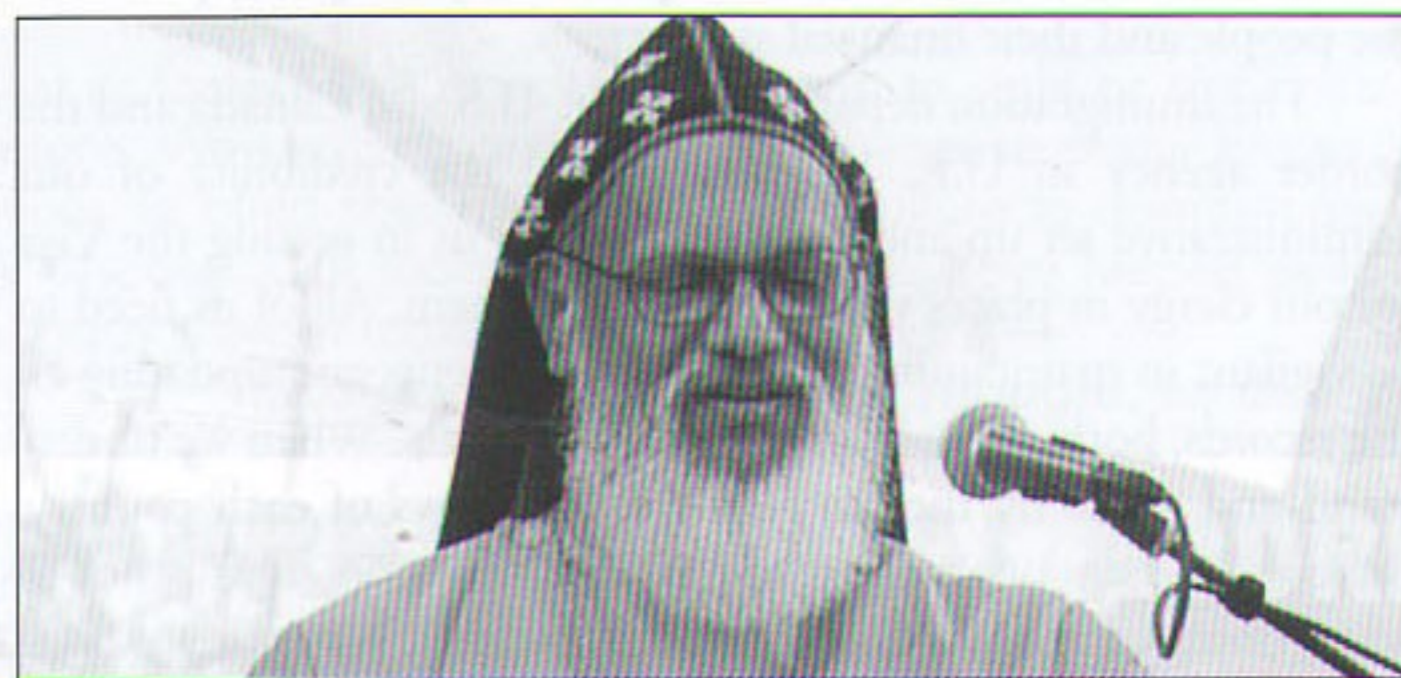
This assembly is taking place soon after the Holy week. Our meditations on the Cross of Christ enable us to understand Jesus Christ as King, Lord, and Messiah. Easter reminds us not only of the resurrection of Jesus but also of the resurrection, He imparts to us all. The power of resurrection enabled the early disciples to come out of their fear and anxiety and move out to the people and



the nations. They witnessed the resurrected Lord and revealed how the power of resurrection can bring out the hidden potential in every creature. Today, when we look back at the activities of the Diocese during the year 2009 we must be satisfied that we have accomplished a lot. However, we must not be complacent but feel even more that God wants greater things to be done in and through us not only in 2010 but also in the new decade and years to follow. The church of Jesus Christ is firm upon the rock of faith and gates of Hell will not overcome it (Mathew 16:18).

The year 2009 was a blessed and joyous year for the Diocese. The Lord strengthened me to visit almost all the parishes in the Diocese and to worship with the people and to study the Word of God. Ministering with the clergy and laity continues to be a blessing for me. The members of the Diocesan Council and Assembly enthusiastically participated in the administration of the Diocese. Wherever I went, I experienced the selfless love and care of our members. God has formed us as a community, body of Christ, and we gather at various places for worship using the same liturgy. The liturgical worship unites us. We are called for community living. This is possible only when we realize that we are bound by the love of God revealed in Christ and we grow by mutual love and care. We are God's people (I Peter 2:9-10).

One of the challenges we faced in 2009 was to listen to the young members of our Church. We had a series of dialogues arranged with the help of the Planning Board and some of the



local parishes to meet with the young groups and young couples at various places and on different occasions. This helped the Diocese to identify their general concerns and then to propose ways and means of meeting those needs along with strengthening the parish and youth ministry. The findings are given on our website, made available to the parishes and published in the Mar Thoma Messenger. All this will bear fruit only when we as a community with one mind and accord start implementing them one by one.

I have been hearing about our liturgy from the day of my arrival. At first, the study on the liturgy of the Holy Qurbana was made available through the 'slides and slide notes'. Later on, at the recommendation of the Diocesan Assembly, we made a DVD and our parishes are now using these materials. In addition, we are preparing a number of DVDs to have effective ways of teaching and learning through electronic media. The topics include the Holy Bible, Liturgy, Faith and Practices of the Church. These DVDs are in the formative stages and therefore all those who can help are welcome to improve our efforts and make them relevant and useful. These materials, when available, can be used in our parishes and various organizations for teaching and learning. They will be more useful for the LEAD classes, first communicants and for the senior Sunday School classes. Once it is found useful in our Diocese, and I am certain that it will be, we can extend it for the use in our worldwide Church.

There is a significant need to recognize the concerns of the elderly people who gave their time, talents and money for the



growth of the church here in USA, Canada and Europe. They also enabled their children to grow as citizens of this country and reach reasonably good positions. All of us owe a lot to them. Our expressions of gratitude need to bear meaningful and respectful ministry among them. In this regard, we should consider having centers of assisted living. This is an area that the Diocesan Assembly and the Diocesan Council will have to look into, to

study and submit their proposal for implementation. Let us be grateful for our people in the parishes, in the administrative roles of our organizations, sub-committees and the Diocesan Council. All the activities of the Diocese are possible by the participation of the people and their financial support.

The immigration department in the U.S and Canada and the border agency in U.K. have recognized the credibility of our administrative set up and continue to help us in getting the Visa for our clergy in places wherever we need them. All of us need to be vigilant in maintaining all these requirements and updating all the records, both at the local and national levels. When we understand and abide by the State and Federal laws of each country, there will be smooth process of the administration. This is not to water down our loyalty to the Church but to assume the responsibilities of the Church that people have in each place. Vigilance is the price of liberty.

Giving is a virtue. We speak about tithing in the context of the Bible. The parable of the Good Samaritan, the widow whom Jesus pointed out, the words of Zaccheaus—all help us to understand that giving has to transcend all counts regarding the benefits one derives out of giving. The general policy of our church even today is 'voluntary giving'. This is not to let anyone abstain from giving or to remove the membership of any member but to help take the responsibility to meet the needs of the less fortunate people within the parish. As Christians, we also share and support the responsibilities of our fellow members. The Church is a sharing and caring community. The very fact that we are considered a charitable organization is not to exploit the provision of income-tax exemption but to realize that the government recognizes our giving. We must not give for the benefit of the donors themselves. Instead, our giving should be in return for the services we receive and for putting more life into other people. Participation of each person in the offertory is to be understood as a symbol of offering oneself into the hands of the creator God, who created us and continues to give all that we need in our lives. **The One, Who sees, sees our giving with its spirit and intentions.**

It is not proper to use the earmarked funds for any other purpose. We all need spiritual discipline even in economic matters. Once recognized by our Episcopal Synod, all the parishes have to grow in the discipline of the Church, meeting the requirements of the country and following the practices meant for the Worldwide Church. It is disturbing to hear that some of the parishes collect all the earmarked Sunday collections as onetime payment by circulating an envelope annually and distributing the amounts.

Some groups once followed these practices while they were smaller fellowship groups or congregations. It should not be the practice of a recognized parish. To be more specific, all the parishes in the Diocese have to give the entire offertory collected on Palm Sunday, through the envelope or otherwise for the earmarked collection meant for our Theological Seminary. All parishes should follow this practice of giving the entire offertory collection for the specified Sunday's cause.

We live in an electronic era. We do many things electronically. People call this a paperless revolution. However, we are not yet come to the level of getting rid of all hard copies. All the parishes are reminded to keep hard copies of all minutes, reports and accounts, bound together year wise. It is also necessary to keep the valuables in lockers and to keep the records in the office of each parish. Office bearers of each parish or any other person are not allowed to remove the documents, records and money from the parish office to keep in their homes.

The Sunday offertories are to be counted in public by more than one person and recorded in the registers including the worship register. The Vicar must be informed about each Sunday's collections and other money transactions. If not marked separately, both the cash and checks coming into the offertory bag/plate is an income for the same offertory to which it is earmarked.

We have classified the mission activities of the Diocese into four: (1) Mission in India, (2) Mission in Mexico, (3) Mission to Native Americans, and (4) the Neighborhood Mission (Acts 1:8). I want each parish to look specifically into their relevant mission in the neighborhood and budget an amount for it each year. Identifying, 'Christ in Action' in your neighborhood in the lives of the least, the last and the lost is the mission of the local parish. It is in that manner that our parish becomes the salt of the earth and light of the world. Here the significance is not on the amounts that are spent, but on the involvement of the members of the parish in the incarnational ministry. We participate with the mission of Christ by adding life to the people among whom we live and work thereby making it true that Christ is present not only to give bread but also to give life and abundance of life (John 10:10).

I welcome initiatives from parishes in Canada to have an outreach ministry in that country in place of Mexico mission and likewise from the parishes in Europe. Until something materializes, we must work together for the cause of Mexico mission. Let us all rejoice where the Heavens rejoice. God bless all of us and ministry of the Diocese. ■

## Oscar Arnulfo Romero—Bishop of the People *(Cont'd from page 25)*

anniversary of the murder. In March 2009, Marcio Funes was elected president of El Salvador. In the memorial service on May 24, 2010 President Mauricio Funes declared that his government to be a follower of Romero's preferential option for the poor. There is now hope for a more just and peaceful El Salvador. I would like to close this tribute by the comment from a San Salvadoran woman, "For me, in his likeness Christ passed through El Salvador".

Our Church is in the process of selecting three more Bishops to lead and guide the Church in the years to come. Let us pray that God may provide His grace on our Church to select the ded-

icated and committed persons to lead the Church in its faith journey. Let me also thank God for all our Bishops who lead and guide our Church presently in its faith journey. Mar Thoma Church was not a persecuted Church, but it was a Church that had nothing when reformation took place. But God had showered abundant blessings upon our Church and its Bishops in the past and now it has become a global Church. We have more responsibility to be the witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ in the places where we are planted. Let us all walk together along with our Church leaders in the faith journey of the Church so that God's name will be glorified. ■

# Ministry in Technocratic World in Global Context

Thomas Cheriyan, St. James MTC, NY

Human beings are not the biggest animals. We're not the strongest or fastest. We're not the sharpest in sight or smell. It's amazing how we survived against the many fierce creatures of nature. We survived and prospered because of our brains. We evolved to fill the cognitive niche. We learned how to use tools, to build shelter, to invent agriculture to domesticate livestock, to develop civilization and culture, to cure and prevent disease. Our tools and technologies have helped us to shape the environments around us. The same principles apply in today's organizational world.

*(Business @ the Speed of Thought. Bill Gates)*

**Giving orders to the people:** *"When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. (Joshua 3:3 [NIV])"*

In the past several decades our churches and economies have seen rapid changes from agricultural society to manufacturing society and now to an information society due to accelerated scientific breakthroughs and competitiveness. The world has profoundly changed since the beginning of the Information Age. The unprecedented growth in technology, computer software and hardware and electronics has given a new meaning to organizational development and communication. We had reached a moment in history when the information age economy and self-esteem has created new demands on our psychological resources. Ministry in the current technocratic world requires interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles of a different order of magnitude. The call and need of this new era require a new mind-set, new skill-set and new tools to adapt in this increasingly complex, challenging, and competitive world. Just as the Israelites were preparing to possess the Promised Land, Joshua admonished the people to 'keep your eyes on God and His purposes ... since you have never been this way before'. The Israelites were about to face issues they had not faced before. The land they were entering was a different culture from what they knew. That is why they were told to keep their eyes on the Ark (God). When we keep our eyes on God and His purposes, then we are able to stay on track as we adapt our methods to changing conditions.

Joshua and Daniel are the two books of the Old Testament that are especially important and relevant today; that every Christian should master. These books and the messages are primarily designed to help Christians when faced with the opposing powers—conflict and victory. Joshua led the Israelites out of the wilderness of doubt, from restless wanderings, and mere subsistence into Canaan, into the full blessing of the Spirit-led experience, into the wisdom and care of God. The Promised Land is described as abundant and far-reaching; a land in which you will find all you need, in every area of life. But we find



that it is also a land of both conflict and victory. Although it is a place of conflict, every conflict can be a victory. It is a frontier. Joshua's own lips set before the perils and dangers in the land that must be guarded against in order to remain in the place of victory that the land represents. The challenges and opportunities that the Promised Land and the World Wide Web offer are similar to an extent. The secret of living in the land and in the world today includes both a promise and a presence; an obedient heart and an empowering spirit.

Christian futurist Bill Easum describes today's dynamics that challenge our ability to be effective in ministry as 'a collision of paradigms.' He says, "Everything is uncontrollable, and everything is working both for and against. It's called paradox. There is no one way to do anything anymore." Perhaps we are moving from liturgy as 'integrated experience' to liturgy as 'fragmented experience' (the digital 'surf'). On the other hand, the growing interest in liturgical renewal seems to reflect a taste for personal and experiential worship. As we go on this uncharted journey, we are forced continually to innovate, experiment, learn, and adapt. Some of our previous successes and accomplishments mean nothing. If we don't continue to learn, our ministries will become irrelevant to the culture, and we will miss opportunities God is offering us.

**We must become the change we seek in the world.**

*Mahatma Gandhi*

Twenty-First century is all about velocity and unprecedented level of competitiveness. When the increase in velocity is great enough, the very nature of culture changes. How information is gathered, managed, used and how strategies are planned will determine whether you win or lose. The changes are too fast and too many. If we are not learning, growing, and adapting our methods and strategies rapidly, in a few years we will be ineffective and irrelevant. Because we operate in new territory, the ability to live with the unknown is essential. To function in the digital age, we have to develop a new digital infrastructure. Church and

organizations need to have the ability to run smoothly and efficiently, to respond quickly to emergencies and opportunities, to quickly get valuable information to the people in the organization that need it, the ability to quickly make decisions and interact with interconnected world.

In a very real sense the key to the new age of knowledge workers is to think in terms of release, not control; in terms of transformation; not just transaction. The key for our Church is to reinforce the 'looking to the Ark'. "You don't live these principles just to 'succeed': you live them because they're right. But in an age of many business scandals, Christian life proves honesty is more than right: it's your biggest competitive differentiator." (*Winners Never Cheat: Even in Difficult Times*, Jon M. Huntsman).

Joshua had to plan the strategy for taking the city of Jericho. He must have been a perplexed and bewildered man. How could he take this huge, walled city with this 'army' of people, untrained in battle? As he looked out in the moonlight over the city, he saw a man standing there with a drawn sword, and said to him, "I have come to take over. It isn't your job to plan the strategy of battle. That is my job. I have given the city of Jericho into your hands." Then the man told Joshua the most remarkable battle plan that has ever been arranged. He was to have the people simply march around the city once a day for six days and on the seventh day, seven times; and then to blow a long blast on the trumpets and the walls would fall down. That was all there was to it. It is still very relevant even in this age of information superhighway; we need to look to the Lord, the center pin to which you can anchor yourself through all the inevitable changes.

There is an amazing thing about this type of problem. When we follow the strategy outlined here—simply walk around it, displaying the Ark of God (the presence of God)—the walls will fall down. It isn't the visible obstacle that is the problem, but our attitude towards it; as soon as the attitude changes, the problem dissolves. Day after day, while walking around this city, they had time to think about God in their midst, the power that He had displayed, and what He could do. Gradually their attitude changed so that on the seventh day they shouted in triumph and the walls fell down. There was nothing to it when they obeyed.

Some of the adaptive challenges and possibilities for our Church include:

1. Communication flow over e-mail: There is no doubt that e-mail flattens the hierarchical structure of an organization. People come to know for themselves how respected, appreciated and valued they are. Their opinions are sought, their input respected, their unique experience valued and they are encouraged to speak up. They are participants. It encourages leaders to listen to their feedback. A good e-mail system ensures that bad news can travel fast, but people have to be willing to send the news. Power comes not from knowledge kept but from knowledge shared. The most important job as a leader is to listen for bad news. If you don't act on it, your people will eventually stop bringing bad news to your attention. And that's the beginning of the end.

## **Share the vision. Make it tangible. Make it visible.**

2. Use digital systems to capture data and delivery for use by everyone: In the new organization, the people are no longer a cog in the machine but are an intelligent part of the overall process. All things are created twice. Path finding is the first creation. The leaders need to cascade the vision by setting up the structure, right people, tools and support, and then get out of the way and give help as requested. Then the culture develops a life of its own. In the digital age, we need to make knowledge workers out of every member possible. There are numerous potential trim-tabbers (biblical examples: Joshua and Caleb) who can lead and exercise initiatives that can positively affect the entire organization.

## **All organizations are perfectly aligned to get the results they get.**

*Arthur W. Jones*

3. Stay abreast of technological shift. We must understand and utilize technological advances in full capacity. We should eliminate paper work and convert to digital process; this would also enable knowledge users to devote more time to important tasks.

## **Wisdom denotes the pursuing of the best ends by the best means.**

*Frances Hutcheson*

4. Be part of the digital nervous system: Information work is thinking work. When thinking and collaboration are significantly assisted by computer technology, you have a digital nervous system. The knowledge management framework integrates people, processes, and technology to ensure performance and learning for sustainable growth. Maintaining a learning attitude is not optional, it only takes a few years for our skills to become outdated. Churches that survive the 21st century will continually renew themselves and learn. Our church should consider itself as a learning organization, promoting a culture that constantly interacts with its members and learns to incorporate best practices into everyday routine.

## **The future isn't always welcome, and—without nurturing—it may not stick around.**

5. Use digital tools to help people solve problems for themselves: The Internet doesn't replace people. It makes them more efficient. By moving routine interactions to the Web and enabling people to do some things for themselves, we've freed up our people to do more mean-

ingful things. Smart churches will combine Internet services and personal contact in programs that give their customers the benefits of both kinds of interaction. But we have come to a point in the evolution of our industry where our cottage roots must give way to technological advances at the system level. We should move pure transactions to the Internet, use online communication for information sharing and routine communication, and reserve face-to-face interaction for the activities that add the most value.

**Creative thinking involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in different ways.** *Edward de Bono*

6. Fast-growing role of digital photography/videography: A picture is worth a 1000 words—still is. The current technology has enabled the Church to share the messages from the sand beds of Maramon to the global community.

**Share the vision. Make it tangible. Make it visible.**

7. A word of caution: The technocratic world is also a place of temptation with trail marks. This also has helped uncover and bring into light many of the crimes and scandals in a remarkably speedy pace. Ai, then, is a beautiful picture for us of those inward problems arising out of our own wants for that which God says we cannot, and must not have. We experience failure and defeat, as Israel did. But the minute this sin was confessed, they went up to Ai and it was no longer a problem. Through it, they gained victory over the problem of the flesh.

**One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.**

*Mahatma Gandhi*

Today's ministry is facing adaptive challenges. Changes in societies and technology around the globe are forcing Churches to clarify values, develop new strategies and learn new ways of operating. And the most important task for ministers in the face of such challenge is to mobilize people throughout the organization to do adaptive work. We know we have built an excellent digital nervous system when information flows through our organization as quickly and naturally as thought in a human being and when we can use technology to marshal and coordinate teams of people as quickly as you can focus an individual on an issue. It's coordinating and organizing activities at the speed of thought. The use of new technology in today's ministry is a combination of art, craft, culture, science and most importantly faith. This greatest lesson the Promised Land teaches us is that you have no strength in yourself to stand, no matter how long you have walked before God. You can never have a moment of strength to stand by yourself. Your strength comes out of weakness and your sense of dependence on the one God who can arrest the sun in its flight. Your sense of your constant need of God's strength is the only thing that will keep you.

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## Edinburgh 2010 Re-visioning the Mission of the Church for the 21st Century *(Cont'd from page 17)*

tion of all churches and communities to be engaged in witness and mission of God is the primary concern of churches. Such motivation also needs to be a common agenda in the common missionary task of each church especially to overcome the parochial and denominational rivalry. Edinburgh 1910 has been a symbol of the churches' quest for unity in mission. It inspired the mission and unity aspirations of churches all over the world during the 20th century. A century later in 2010, our aim should continue to focus on re-discovering the lost meaning of the identity, and significance of mission and overcome the fragmentations.<sup>10</sup> ■

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# The Power of Prayer

## KIDS CORNER

Sarah Zachariah (8th Grade), Ottawa, Canada

As a part of our daily devotion, my family and I read the "Upper Room", a set of inspirational readings, centered on Bible verses. We have been reading this for as long as I can remember and one of the many popular stories that the writers tell, is about the power of prayer. They talk about things like how when their family member was dying, they prayed and the next day they found out that their family member experienced a miracle and was okay. Of course, there was more to the story than that, but I constantly heard of people who had something happen to them exactly the way they wanted it to happen. Then I noticed something: none of these big, miraculous things ever seemed to happen to me!

The more I thought about it, I thought that it probably did happen to me, but I just didn't notice it. Most likely, something did happen, but not exactly how I asked for it to happen. And plus, I was only 12 at the time, so I definitely had a lot more prayer opportunities ahead in my life to wait for. I didn't think much about this again until I heard a sermon about prayer that really stuck to my mind. The thing that stuck was this: you have to completely and totally believe that God will answer your prayer in some way. You can't just ask that your father gets better and expect it to happen because the Bible says that God loves you and will help you through everything. You have to completely believe that God will help you in some way with all your soul.

At first, it was a little hard. I had to think more and continually ask myself whether I truly believe that it would happen. Then another thing happened. I read about two things in the Bible at different times that changed the way I prayed even more. I first read this: "Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to those who knock. Would any of you who are fathers give your son a stone when he asks for bread? Or would you give him a snake when he asks for a fish? As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:7-11)

I had read this verse countless times before and when I heard it that time, I truly understood it. Sometimes, God won't give you exactly what you asked for, but instead he will give you something even better and life changing in the bigger picture of

your life. Maybe you asked God to help you get this promotion, but instead, you lose your job and you are confused about why God didn't help you get it. God sees the whole picture and knows your future, so He knew that you just had to lose that job to be able to get that other promotion that God planned for you to have in another job. God still answered your prayer, but just in another way.

The next verse I read was: "And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Suppose one of you should go to a friend's house at midnight and say, 'Friend, let me borrow three loaves of bread. A friend of mine who is on a trip has just come to my house, and I don't have any food for him!' And suppose your friend should answer from inside, 'don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' Well, what then? I tell you that even if he will not get up and give you the bread because you are his friend, yet he will get up and give you everything you need because you are not ashamed to keep on asking.'" (Luke 11:5-8)

Like the previous verse, I had read this before, but never quite grasped the full meaning of it. From this verse, I learned that it's okay to continuously ask for something in your prayer. Months later, my mother started looking for a job after staying at home with my siblings and I for four years. She had sent many letters but did not get a positive response. After about a month, I started praying more earnestly for her to find a good job soon. At that time, I did feel completely assured that God would help and when I asked myself whether I truly believed that God would do something, the answer was a confident yes. I asked everyday and I started this thing that I would ask God specifically if my mother could get a job in the next 7 days. Each day, I would continue the countdown. On day 5, my mother got the chance of an interview and by day 1, she had gotten the job!

This is what I had been waiting for! This really did seem like a pretty amazing prayer experience to me! Now I know how exactly to pray: believe completely that God will help you in some way, continuously ask and be specific. I think the most important part is to truly have faith in God because sometimes, prayer to you could be something that you just say for God to hear without completely meaning it. The power of prayer is very strong and we should all know that the Lord will help us no matter what the circumstance is! ■



## My Little Poem

Joel Cherian

I have a little poem for you  
Please do everything I say to you.  
Pray to God everyday  
Even in March, April and May.  
Read the Bible, Old Testament and New  
Two chapters would be good for you.  
Give some money to the poor  
For they won't be living with a broken door.

Sing songs of glory and praise  
Sing them twice a day.  
Re-attempt to repent and be forgiving  
Praise the lord and you will have  
eternal living!  
This way you'll know all God's commands  
Please spread them throughout this  
wonderful land.



## God's Will

Sujit Philip, St. Thomas MTC of Chicago

**P**roverbs 21:31 reads, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord". I would like to give you my humble insight on this verse because it struck me as a powerful and relevant proverb in today's world. I feel this verse is relevant to all of us who are constantly faced with making decisions, no matter what age group that you might fall under. If you are an adult, some of the questions that you might be facing may be: Should I lose my job? Should I get this new Lexus? How should I send my kids to College by paying their tuition? If you are a young adult, the questions might be: Where should I go for college? What kind of profession should I select, a doctor or a computer engineer? What should my new facebook profile picture be? But the question that I want to ask you is: Do you know where God's will is in all of these? Are we making decisions in our lives based on our own selfish desires or are we actively searching for God's will in all of these life changing situations? When you follow the will of God, the grace of God will protect you. It is for our own good to listen to our Father in Heaven for He knows what is best for His children. For the proverb says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not as your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths."

Many of us have heard of the famous Christian missionary, David Livingstone. He was a man of God who left the comforts of his home in England to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Africa. Prior to one of his trips to Africa he wrote a letter to his son Tom. In this letter he wrote: "My dear Tom, I am soon going off this country and will leave you to the care of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps and never disappoints and put your trust in Him. If you make Him your friend, He will be better to you than any companion can be. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. May He grant you grace to seek Him and serve Him. I have nothing better to say to you than to have God as your Father, Jesus as your savior, and the Holy Spirit as your sanctifier. Please do this and you are safe forever. No evil can then befall you. Hope you will learn quickly and well so as to be fitted for God's service in the world."

What wonderful words of truth that David Livingstone tells his son. I read this letter and asked myself the questions that are being brought up and hope that you may be asking yourself the same questions. Questions such as: Are we making the Lord our friend? Are we making God our Father? Are we making Jesus our savior? Are we making the Holy Spirit our sanctifier? I hope and pray that everyone answers these questions without any doubt in their heart and say "Yes Jesus, you are my friend, you are my Father, you are my savior, and you are my sanctifier." If you were



unsure of these answers, it is time to kneel down and pray for the will of God to take control of your hearts. The truth is that when you let the will of God take control over your hearts and minds you will begin to rely on God to answer the questions and worries that you have. And when you let God take control of your decisions, you can expect **Victory** in your lives!

Now I would like to repeat the Bible verse that I began with, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord". To me, what this verse tells us is you can

try to fight the battles of this world with your own strength, knowledge and money but ultimately if you want victory, you have to turn to God and listen to what He has to say. Let me tell you my friends, no force in this world can stop us if we follow the will of God. But how do we know what the will of God is? Turn to Luke 11:9, which says, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks the door will be opened." Too often, we try to do fight the battles of the world by ourselves, instead of asking God, seeking God, and knocking on the door for God. When we try to fight the battles of this world with our own will, we are setting ourselves up for failure. But when we rely on God's will, there is only victory.

In my own personal life, I have experienced and witnessed that the power of the will of God can change our lives if we choose to accept the same. When I first left my home for my freshman year in college, I noticed a big difference in my life. My parents were not around me to watch what I was doing. I had all the freedom in the world to do whatever pleased me. For the first time in my life, I purposely let my relationship to God take a backseat and to have fun and to hang out with my friends. I was just not interested in praying or reading the scriptures anymore. It all seemed like a bore and took too much time away from me having a good time with my friends. I began to notice this destructive attitude spread through my life. The less time that I spent with God, the more I became a person that I did not want to be in my thoughts, words and actions. I was able to witness the pain that comes with walking away from God. I could not bear to see the futility of living such an unholy life. So I began to spend more time reading the scriptures and listening to what my God had to say. This I believe brought me to this very moment where I can witness before you what the power of the will of God has when you choose to embrace it. What a great God we serve! I give all praise to my Father in heaven, who never let get of me even when I tried to push Him away.

I would like to emphasize an important component to embracing the will of God. This component would be spiritual food. Reading the word of God and praying to God is often compared to having spiritual food. Now I want to step back and ask you about actual food we are eating every day. I am talking about Chor (rice), Payar Thoran (beans) and Chicken Curry. How many times and how long do we eat? I have to assume that for most of us since we all began eating and at least two times a day. It brings to mind that if we are feeding our self every time when we are hungry, are we feeding our self on the same frequency to fill our spiritual hunger. Or are we starving ourselves spiritually, by waiting for our Sunday church services or the area prayer group meeting? Also are we satisfying ourselves with stale food, that is, are we praying and reading the Bible just for the sake of doing those things? Or are we truly looking to build a true and authentic relationship with our Lord and Savior?

Now on top of feeding yourself spiritually, are you also spiritually working out? I am not talking about going to the gym and lifting weights every day. What I mean is, are you putting that spiritual food in to use within your daily lives. If you are doing that, then you would be following the Will of God which is to actually spread the love of Christ through your actions. Mother Teresa once said, "Pray and you will believe, believe and you will serve, serve and you will love". Sadly, many times our Christianity is purely cosmetic and we do none of those things. We put a cross on our car hanging from the handle of the rear view mirror or

in the dashboard (since we are ashamed to show that we have a cross in our car) or we have the picture of Jesus nailed to the wall on our homes or wear a golden cross hanging down from the chain presented to us by our parents. But how many times do we lose our temper and use bad language when some one cuts us off while we are driving? Or how many times do we gossip and judge a person, with the picture of Jesus hanging right on the front of our houses or a cross hanging at the end of the chain on our chests? If this is happening in your lives, we need to reevaluate our actions. Let us stop being Sunday Christians and let's live our lives that are worthy as followers of Christ.

A journalist once asked Mahatma Gandhi what he thought about Christianity, he said "I like your Christ, but I do NOT like your Christians. You Christians are so unlike your Christ". When I was reading his response, and it caused pain in my heart since it had so much truth in it. Now think yourself about those words. Each day we go to our work places or schools. How many people do we come in touch with every day that feel the same way Gandhi felt about Christians? If this is the case, then how terribly we are failing at our duty to spread the Word of our Savior? So let us make that change in our words and actions to be more Christ-like. The late Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan said, "Every Marthomite is a Missionary". So let us follow that call to be a missionary in our words and actions by listening to the will of God and let's make a lasting impact on other people's lives for Christ. ■

## Prayer

By Joel Sajan, 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.

## KIDS CORNER (Continued from page 33)

**Adoration:** Adoration is to praise and 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 my 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 our 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. ■

# Dedication of St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey



The formation of St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church is the result of answered prayers, unconditional support and hard work of our members, and the utmost mercy of our Almighty. St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church was dedicated on April 11th, 1999, by Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa. The parish was formed from South Jersey Fellowship, which was a prayer group of Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia.

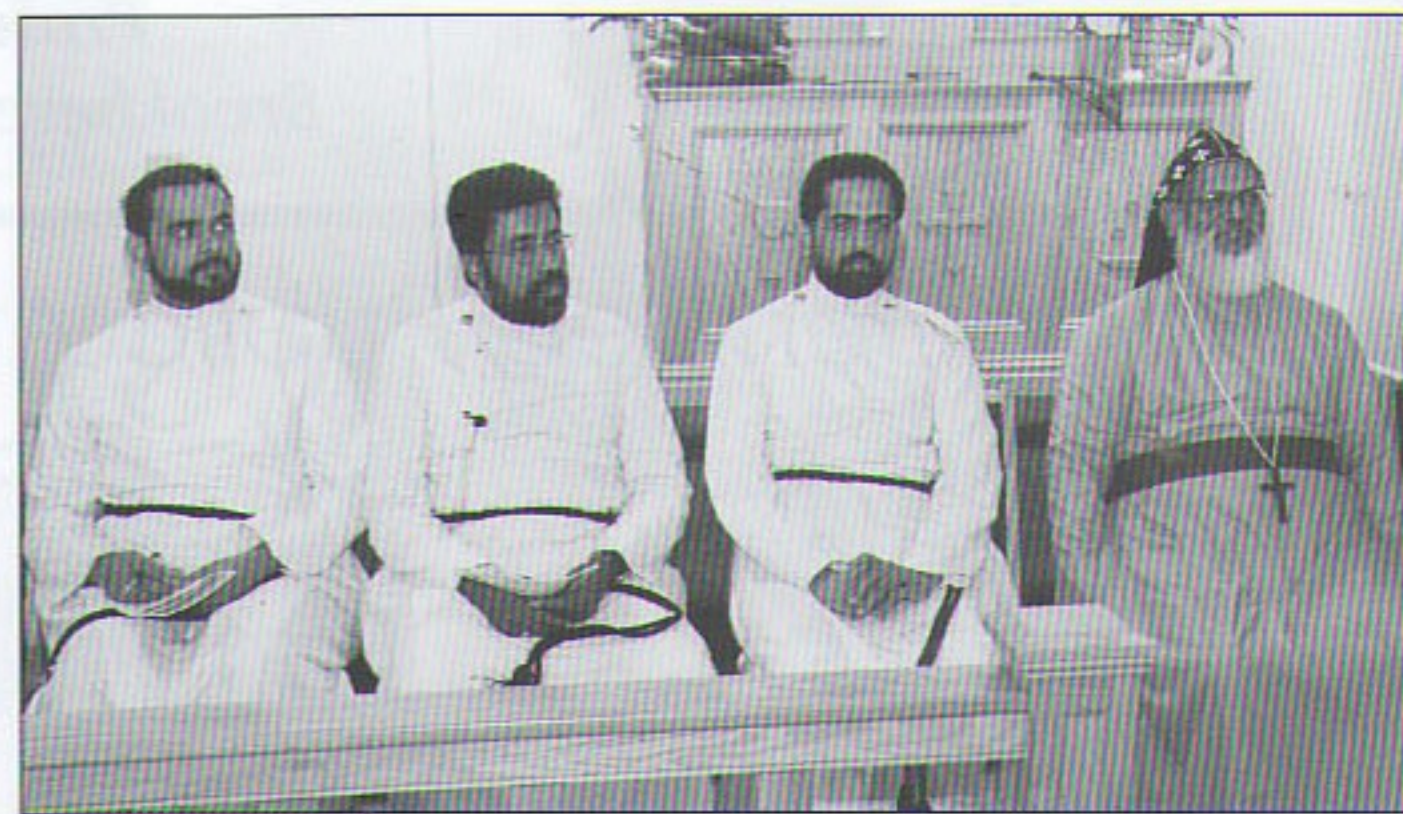
The long awaited prayer for a House of Worship of our own were answered, not when we had thought it would be answered but answered in His time, which was December 2008. We continued to worship at St. John's Episcopal Church, located at the corner of Hoy and Hamilton Ave, Fords New Jersey till the consecration of our new place of worship.

The existing church building was in need of a major renovation, especially rebuilding of the Madhbaha. All necessary renovation work was with the decision of the General Body and the approval of the Diocesan Episcopa in accordance with our Sabha Constitution. On March 28th 2009, during the 10th anniversary celebrations, our new church was consecrated for the use of Holy Sacraments with the approval of the Mar Thoma Metropolitan His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, our diocesan Bishop.

Consecration ceremony started with the traditional procession led by the Church Choir followed by the bond

nations, delegates and hundreds of our members, family and friends.

A public meeting and inauguration ceremony was conducted immediately after the consecration of the new Church. Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa was the chief guest. Rev. Biju Cherian, Rev. Mathew Skariah, Rev. K. V. Thomas, Rev.



Binu John, Rev. M. C Skariah, Fr. Joy Alappatt, Rev. Cannon Martin and Rev. Jacob David were among the other dignitaries. Our Vicar, Rev. Abraham Cherian gave the introductory remarks, Mr. John Matthews welcomed the guests, parish report was read by Mr. Anil Mathew and the Honorable Thirumeni delivered the presidential address. During the public meeting, inauguration of Church Photo Album was done by Thirumeni by giving the first copy to Mr. Jacob Chacko, Album Committee Convener.

The inauguration committee gave recognition plaques to the following individuals: Rev. Abraham Cherian, Mr. John Mathews, Mr. Anil Mathew, Mr. Joseph Abraham, Mr. Regi K. Thomas and Mr. Mathew Johnson for their time and efforts during the church building. Dr. John Varughese has given token of appreciation speech.

Delegates from sister parishes and other organizations gave felicitation. Auxiliary organizations of the church have actively participated in the event. Inauguration committee convener, Dr. Joemon T. Varughese gave the vote of thanks. The meeting concluded with the closing prayer by Mrs. Suja Abraham and benediction by Honorable Thirumeni. A delicious dinner was served.

**Dr. Joemon T. Varughese, Secretary**



reading by the trustee Mr. Jomon K. Thomas. Mr. Joseph Abraham along with our Vicar Rev. Abraham Cherian handed over the Church key to Thirumeni. The ceremony was blessed with the presence of clergy of other denomi-

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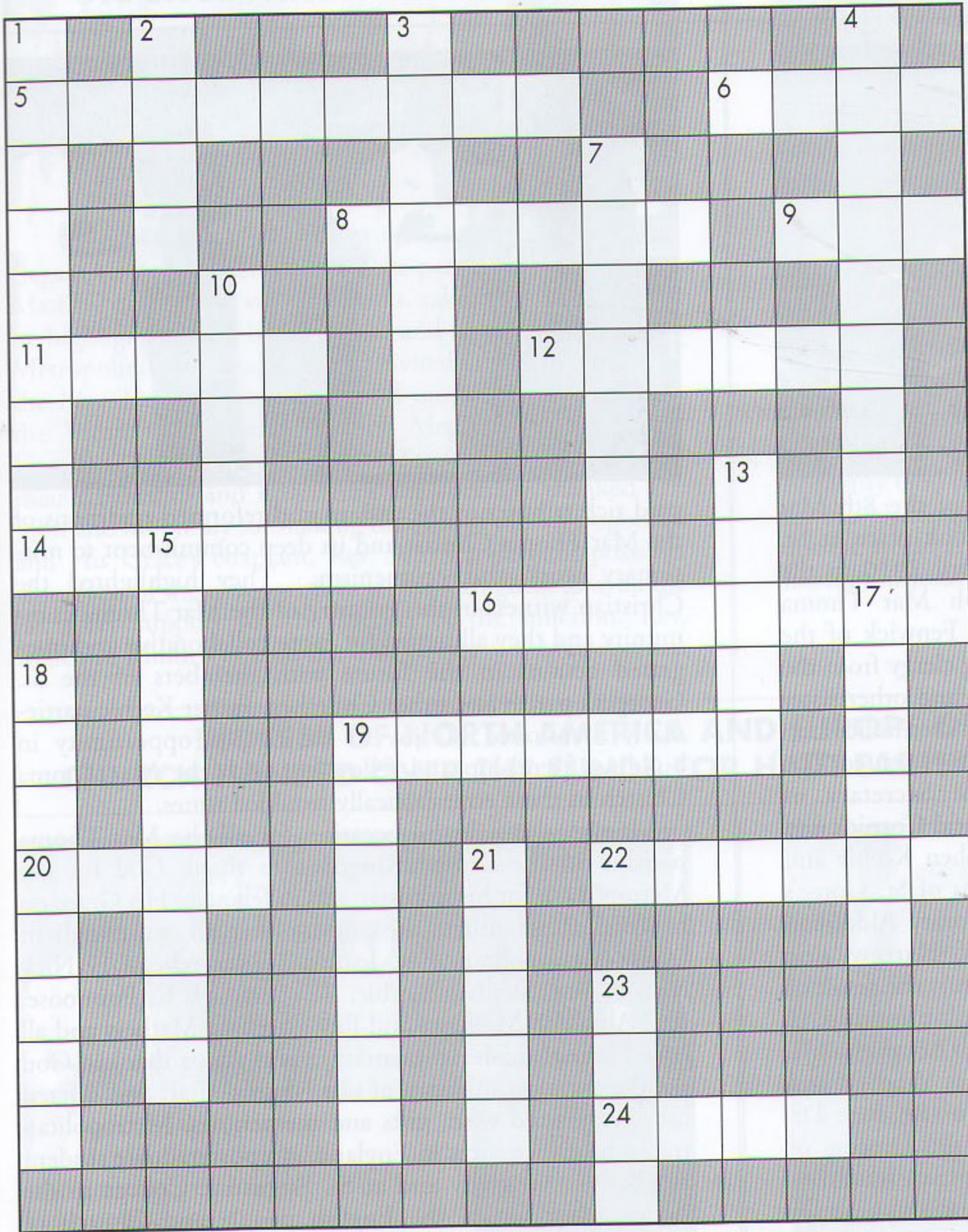
Email: philipthomascpa@yahoo.com

*A member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch*

# BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV BIBLE  
THE BOOK OF GENESIS: CHAPTERS 26-37

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



## Down

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was the king of the Philistines who made a treaty with Isaac.
2. Esau started on his way back to \_\_\_\_\_ after meeting Jacob.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ helped Jacob to trick his father and get his blessings.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ was one of Pharaoh's official, the captain of the guard.
7. Isaac named the well \_\_\_\_\_.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ was the father of Shechem.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ was the name of Jacob's daughter.
15. Ephrath was also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Jacob's new name was \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Esau married \_\_\_\_\_, the daughter of Elon the Hitite.
19. Joseph's brothers were grazing his fathers flocks near \_\_\_\_\_.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ defeated Midian in the country of Moab.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ is the son of Dishon.

## Across

5. The Lord appeared to Isaac at \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Esau was also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
8. At \_\_\_\_\_ Jacob made a vow to give God a tenth of all that God gives him.
9. Jacob's \_\_\_\_\_ was wrenched when he wrestled with God.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ said to Jacob, "You are my own flesh and blood".
12. \_\_\_\_\_ was the name of the son born to Rachel.
14. Israel sent Joseph from the valley of \_\_\_\_\_ to his brothers.
16. Jacob named that place \_\_\_\_\_ where the angels of God met him.
19. Jacob went to \_\_\_\_\_ after meeting Esau.
20. Bilhan, Zaavan & Akan were the sons of \_\_\_\_\_.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ tried to rescue Joseph from his brothers' hands.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ discovered the hot springs in the desert.

### BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE AND WORD SEARCH WINNERS (April 2010)

1. Jessie John	Canadian MTC, Toronto	15. Sicily Skariah	MTC Dallas Famers Branch
2. Elizabeth George	Canadian MTC, Toronto	16. Annamma K Philip	N.Pontomac, MD
3. Rony T Puthenparampil	Carmel MTC, Boston	17. Thomas Geevarghese	Phildelphia, PA
4. Pranav Varghese	Carmel MTC, Boston	18. Mercy Abraham	Phoenix MTC, Arizona
5. Paul Isaac	Carmel MTC, Boston	19. Priya S. Varghese	Sehion MTC Dallas
6. Riya Ann Thomas	Carmel MTC, Boston	20. Josh Jacob	St. Andrew's MTC, NY
7. Oshin Mathew	Carmel MTC, Boston	21. Bindu L. Abraham	St. James MTC, NY
8. Kevin George	Carmel MTC, Boston	22. Annamma John	St. Luke MTC, Florida
9. Elisa Oommen	Carmel MTC, Boston	23. Prince John	St. Peter's, NJ
10. Akhila John	Carmel MTC, Boston	24. Shirley Varghese	St. Thomas MTC, NY
11. P. Mathew	Collegeville, PA	25. Kunjumma Thomas	Trinity MTC, Houston
12. Sneha Mathew	Detroit MTC, MI	26. Mariamma Thomas	Trinity MTC, Houston
13. Suma Susan Samuel	Long Island MTC, NY	27. Achamma Chacko	Trinity MTC, Houston
14. Shaila Mathew	MTC Dallas Famers Branch		

Please mail your answers to:

**Philip Manuel, 23 Lake Street,  
Billerica, MA 01821**

**DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS:  
SEPTEMBER 15, 2010**

# DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

## FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT OF THE MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN TO THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE DEDICATION OF THE SINAI MAR THOMA CHURCH NORTH LONDON



The dedication and thanksgiving service of the 8th Mar Thoma Parish in the United Kingdom took place at St. George's Church, Headstone on 18th April 2010 in the presence of The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Juhanon Fenwick of the Free Church of England and many visiting clergy from the Mar Thoma Church, Church of England, and other sister Churches. Canon Joanna Udal represented the Archbishop of Canterbury; Prebendary Nick Mercer represented The Lord Bishop of London, The General Secretary of Churches Together in England Rev. Dr. David Cornick and Mrs Corinck were also present. Rev. Stephen Keeble and Rev. Malcolm Mullins and Churchwardens of St. George's Church, Headstone gave guidance. Honorary Alderman Keith Toms represented The Mayor of Harrow Eric Silverman. The formation of the new parish is the result of several years dreaming and praying and nine months of planning by the ad hoc conveners: Mr. Jacob Abraham, Mr. Mathew Koshy, Dr. George Mathew, Dr. Zac Varghese and Rev. Jose Varughese under the patronage of Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Bishop of the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church.

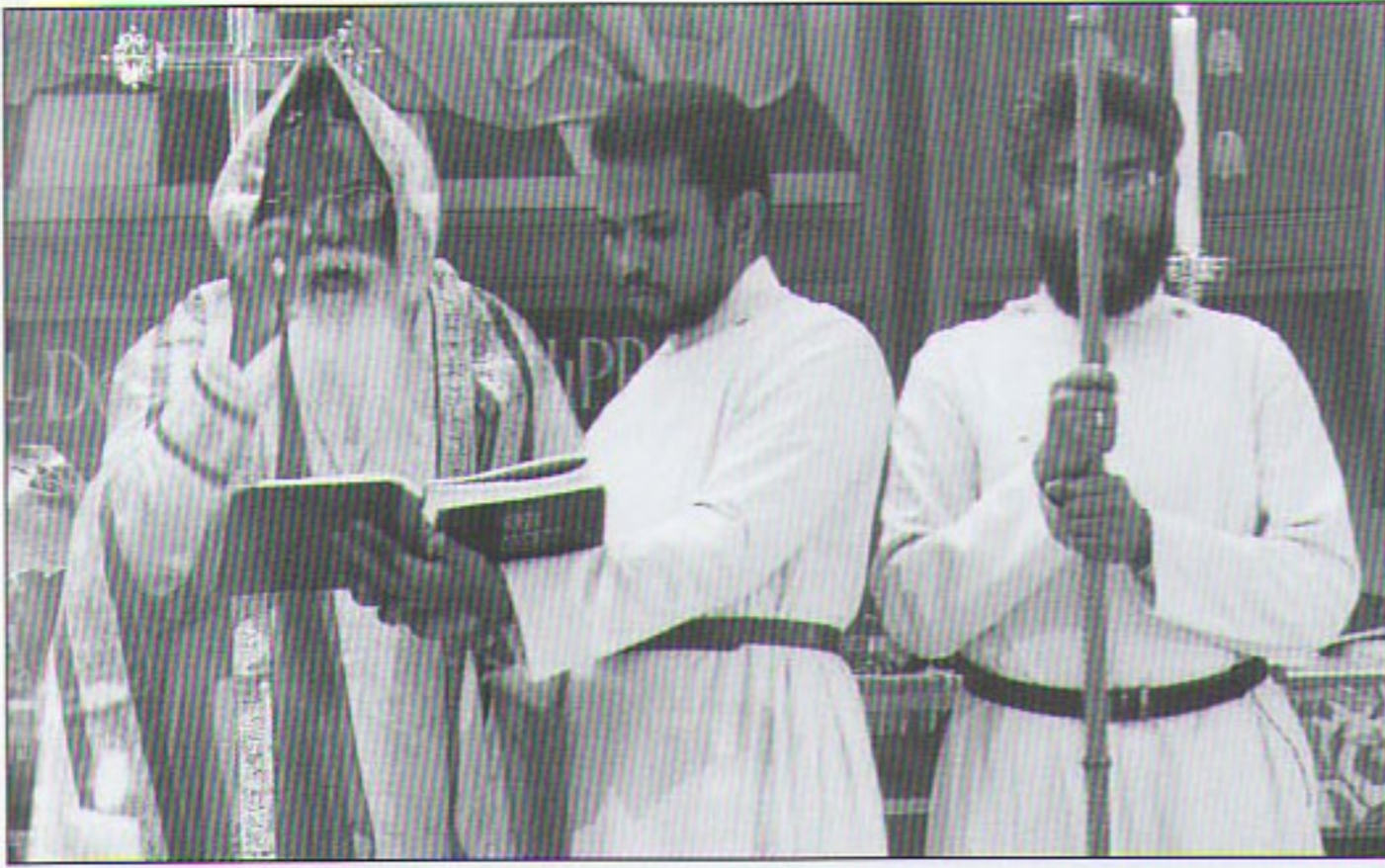
This brief report expresses our gratefulness to God for all his abundant blessings. This was also an opportunity to give a reception to Metropolitan for His Grace's first visit to the United Kingdom after his enthronement as the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church, which has grown as a global Church. Over 400 members of the Mar Thoma community and their friends gathered for this celebration of dedication of the new parish and the first Holy Communion service. A bright and beautiful spring day gave us the perfect setting in this beautiful parish in Harrow. The welcome and hospitality that we received from the members of St. George's Church added special warmth.

It was a very memorable and historically important occasion. Bishop Fenwick and other dignitaries present



paid rich tributes to the eastern and reformed traditions of the Mar Thoma Church and its deep commitment to missionary work and ecumenism. They highlighted the Christian witness in this country of the Mar Thoma community and they all hoped for more collaborative and integrated actions in the future with members of the St. George's parish and other Churches. Father Keeble particularly mentioned his joy in having the opportunity in building friendship and fellowship with the Mar Thoma Church in these ecclesiastically troubled times.

It was also a joyful occasion for all the Mar Thoma parishes in the United Kingdom to thank God for the Metropolitan for his ministry and to felicitate His Grace on his first official visit to the country after his enthronement as the Metropolitan. Rev. Joanna Udal, Prebendary Nick Mercer, Rev. Stephen Keeble, Rev. Mathew K. Punnoose, Rev. Abraham Mathews and Rev. Varghese Mathew and all Mar Thoma parish representatives and guests thanked God for the amazing ministry of our Metropolitan and offered him every good wish, gifts and mementoes. Metropolitan traced his experiences in England as a postgraduate student at Oxford University and at St. Augustine College in the sixties and thanked the English people and Church of England and the Anglican Communion for the friendship and hospitality. His Grace wanted the Mar Thoma community to engage more dialogue with the local Christian and other communities through joint mission activities with Church of England Dioceses in the United Kingdom. His grace spoke about the expansion and the opportunities available to the Mar Thoma Diaspora community in the United Kingdom and congratulated the pioneers and new members who have done so much for the growth of the Church in Europe. He particularly thanked the Vicar and the members of the St. George's for providing facilities for the continued worship of the members of Sinai Mar Thoma Church.



Councillor V. M. Abraham introduced guests in most elegant terms and welcomed all the participants. Dr. Robin Mathew proposed a vote of thanks, taking very special care in highlighting the involvement and contribution of the Metropolitan and many of our invited guests, members of the Mar Thoma community, and our clergy. He thanked the Vicar, Churchwardens Mrs. Meg Pointer and Mrs. Floretta Lewis and members of St. George's Church for their friendship and hospitality. He specially thanked Dr. John and his family for making the visit of the Metropolitan and His Grace's chaplain, Rev. Saju Pappachan, possible. The Vicar of the new parish Rev. Jose Varughese gave all the necessary support for the success of the function. Rev. Malcolm Mullins offered the final prayer and Metropolitan



blessed everyone with his benediction. This was followed by a celebratory lunch.

We hope and pray that the Sinai Mar Thoma Church North London will develop strong links with the community of St. George's Church, Headstone. We further hope that the Mar Thoma community in the United Kingdom will help the people in this country to a better life in Christ by our identifiable Christian lifestyle. We offer thanks to Almighty God for the formation of the new parish and pray for His blessings on the Mar Thoma communities throughout the world and our ecumenical partners through our fellowship in Jesus Christ, our Lord, redeemer, and protector.

**Prof. Zac Varghese**

## DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH HANDED OVER THE FUNDS FOR HAITI EARTHQUAKE RELIEF TO NCC-USA



*Mar Thoma Church supports Church World Service Haitian relief with a check for \$131,775.00. From Left to Right: Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Diocesan/Bishop's Secretary; The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, NCC-USA General Secretary; The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, Diocesan Bishop; and Mr. Chacko Mathew, Diocesan Treasurer.*

The Diocese of North America and Europe Mar Thoma Church raised \$131,775.00 for recovery efforts in earthquake-devastated Haiti. The Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, along with Diocesan Secretary Rev. Vinoy Daniel and Diocesan Treasurer Mr. Chacko



*NCC-USA Deputy General Secretary and COO Clare Chapman passes along the Mar Thoma gift to the Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director and CEO of CWS.*

Mathew presented the check for the amount of \$131,775 to Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, Secretary of National Council of Churches in U. S. A. (NCC-USA) on April 17, 2010 during the Diocesan Assembly meeting held in Atlanta. "This is a remarkable example of ecumenical cooperation," said Kinnamon. "The Mar Thoma Church has no congregations in Haiti, yet as members of the body of Christ they felt

obligated to do whatever they could do to help sisters and brothers in Haiti. Church World Service (CWS) has been doing important work in Haiti—before and after the earthquake—and this generous contribution will make an enormous difference.” Kinnamon added, “I wish other churches would do more of their relief work through CWS as an expression of our common life in Christ and the common calling we have received to help those in need in His name.”

The check, designated for Haiti relief efforts of the NCC’s sister agency, Church World Service, was presented to CWS Executive Director and CEO, the Rev. John L. McCullough by the NCC’s Deputy General Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, Clare J. Chapman. Upon receiving the check, Rev. McCullough said, “On behalf of the many we serve in Haiti—children, the disabled, and others—we are grateful to the Mar Thoma Church and to Bishop Mar Theodosius for their extraordinary effort,

answering Christ’s call to help the needy.” The NCC and CWS, while no longer joined in a common legal structure, share a common history and are composed of the same 36 member communions.

Two days after the January 12 earthquake, Diocesan Bishop Mar Theodosius issued a letter to members of all parishes in the Diocese, urging them to make contributions for Haitian relief. “I have directed our Mission Board and Planning Board to find ways by which the Mar Thoma Church can offer a helping hand to the people of Haiti to rebuild their lives,” Mar Theodosius wrote. The result of the process was the presentation of the check to Church World Service. The Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India traces its origins to the missionary work of the Apostle Thomas in 52 A.D. The Diocese of the North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church, one of the 36 member communions of the National Council of Churches and Church World Service, was established in 1982.

## TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON



**Laying the Foundation Stone:** The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa laid the foundation stone for the Trinity Mar Thoma Church’s parish building renovation project. Many members of the parish gathered to celebrate the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Trinity Mar Thoma Church. A short meeting was held before laying the foundation stone. Thirumeni encouraged all parish members to actively participate in the parish building renovation process. Our Vicar Rev. M. J. Thomaskutty presided over the meeting. Vice president Mr. Abraham Joseph welcomed Thirumeni and all other guests to the meeting. Accountant Mr. Pulinthitta George briefed the building project plan during the meeting. Secretary Mr. Shajan George expressed vote of thanks to Thirumeni and all others for their support and participation. Following will be few of the significant amenities available after renovation of the parish building is completed.

- The total seating capacity in the sanctuary will be increased by 250 seats, bringing to a total of 756 seats.
- A new full restroom equipped with a baby changing station.
- Fully furnished 150 sq ft dressing room on the 2nd floor.
- Centralized audio and video control unit.
- A 750 sq ft fully covered, double height, air-conditioned foyer.



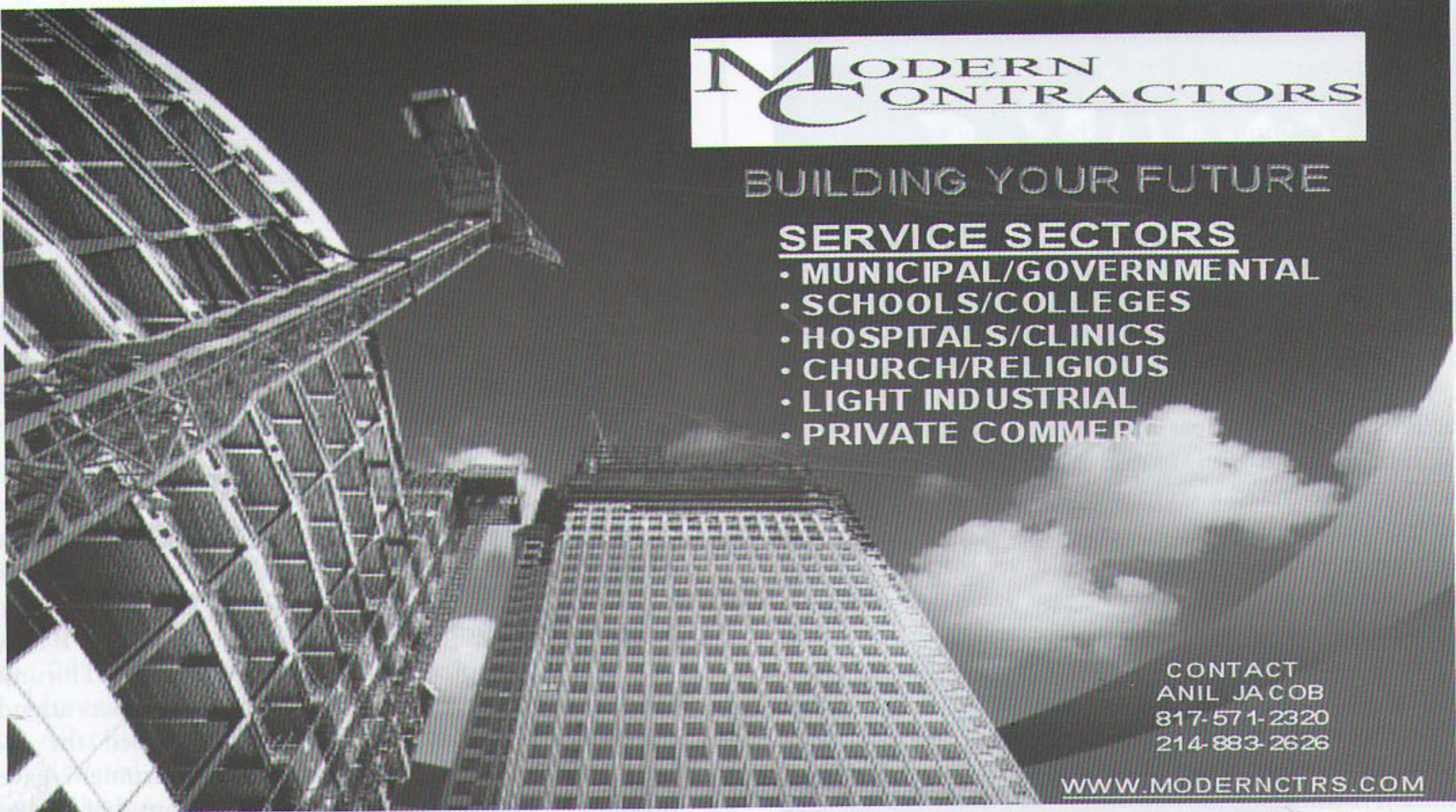
- A beautifully designed three-dimensional front elevation adorned with 3 crosses and a church bell symbolizing the Malankara tradition of the Eastern Churches.

**Unveiling the Trinity Monument:** Thirumeni also unveiled the Trinity Monument the ‘Garden of Hope’ with Mar Thoma logo ‘Lighted to Lighten’ at South Park Funeral Home and Cemetery, Pearland. This monument was placed to remember our heritage and traditions by partnering with South Park Funeral Home and Cemetery where our departed members are laid to rest. As a Parish we are very proud and honored to be the first Mar Thoma parish in this diocese to have its own place to lay our departed dear ones and to have such a historical monument placed in a foreign land. Vicar Rev. M. J. Thomaskutty, Youth Chaplain Rev. Shibi Abraham along with many members attended the monument unveiling ceremony. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all parish members for their financial contributions and prayerful support. We also express our gratitude to Mr. T. A. Mathew, a senior member of our parish for his initiative and efforts made to achieve this great event in the history of this parish. We also express our profound gratitude to our beloved Thirumeni for unveiling and dedicating this monument for our dear ones who departed from us.

**Shajan George, Secretary**



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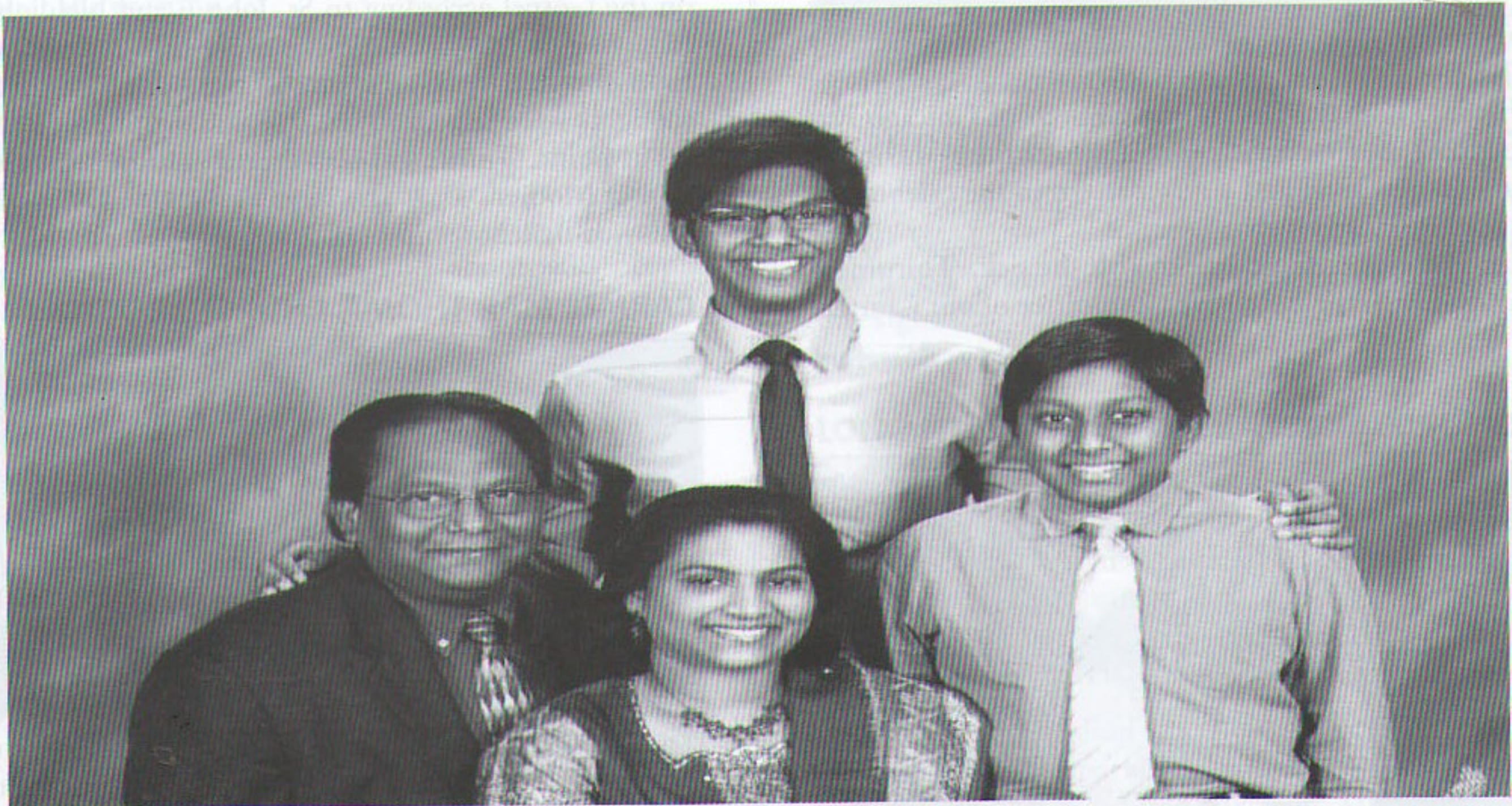
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## EPISCOPAL VISIT

### ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, CHICAGO



The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago, Lombard, IL, was honored by the visit of Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, our Diocesan Bishop. Thirumeni took time to spend with the youth and young couples. Mar Theodosius delivered a truly deep, profound and inspiring message themed 'Endurance through Suffering'. Thirumeni reminded us that we do not have to suffer through our personal dilemmas ourselves. Because of Jesus' suffering and fulfillment of God's will, we can face and overcome all of life's trials and tribulations with confidence, strength, and peace, in knowing that God is with us, always.

During his visit, Thirumeni led the First Communicant's Service, 12 of our youths participated and obtained full communicant membership into the Church. Thirumeni delivered an inspiring message, reminding these young members of the beauty, importance, depth and meaning of the Holy Qurbana.

The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago was honored to be the first parish to be able to witness the introduction of a new song and a new pattern in the celebration of the English Holy Qurbana service.

Mar Theodosius took time to visit the sick. Thirumeni also engaged with the Executive Committee of our Church.

**Manoj V. Mathew, Secretary**

### MT CONGREGATION, CHATTANOOGA, TN



Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited the Congregations on Sunday May 9, 2010. Rev Jai Varghese, Vicar of Atlanta Mar Thoma Parish, conducted the Holy Qurbana service in the presence of the Bishop, Mar Theodosius. There was a dedication service for the two First Communicants blessed by the Diocesan Episcopa. After the service there was a Mother's day celebration and

Thirumeni rendered a meaningful message and blessed the occasion. Also, Thirumeni encouraged the members and gave valuable insights about the future growth of the congregation into the status of a parish. The service concluded with Kaimuth followed by fellowship dinner.

The Twelve Mar Thoma families living in Chattanooga met in the presence of the Diocesan Episcopa and discussed the possibilities of becoming a parish. Thirumeni appreciated their enthusiasm. Rev Jai Varghese will continue to give the congregation pastoral ministry. This being the first Episcopal Visit to Tennessee and particularly Chattanooga Thirumeni took time to see some of the panoramic view of the place.

**Rev. Jai Varghese, Vicar**

### THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND

The Diocesan Bishop visited the Staten Island Mar Thoma Church on May 8-9, 2010. On Saturday May 8th Thirumeni spent time with families of the parish and also conducted a house warming service and Rev. Biju P Simon assisted Thirumeni. On the Evening of May 8th, Thirumeni led the Sandhya Namaskaram and many members attended the same. On May 9, 2010 Thirumeni led the Holy Qurbana Service. During the service Thirumeni gave a meaningful message on the topic Jesus the bread of life based on the Gospel according to St. John 6 and highlighted the following points. **1. God owns every life, 2. God provides food for life, 3. God's son is the bread of life.** These thoughts were related to the role and significance of mothers at home. Thirumeni also greeted mothers on the occasion of Mother's Day. The service concluded with Kaimuth followed by fellowship meal arranged by the parish.

### CARMEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, BOSTON



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited the Carmel Mar Thoma parish, Boston from April 30 to May 3, 2010. On April 30th Friday, a meeting with the youth of the Parish was arranged. On Saturday, Thirumeni visited the sick and the bereaved members of the Parish.

The young families of the parish met with the Bishop on May 1, Saturday. On Sunday, Thirumeni led the Holy Communion service and for the first time, an English adaptation of the liturgical hymn "Velivu Niranja Rakshakane" was sung with the help of the parish choir at the service. Five youths received their First communion from Thirumeni.

On Monday May 3, Mar Theodosius visited the Trinity Church in the city of Boston which is an Episcopal Church and part of the world wide Anglican Communion founded in 1733.

### MAR THOMA CHURCH OF GREATER WASHINGTON



On Saturday, April 24th, 2010, the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa arrived at the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington, Takoma Park, Maryland. We had an evening ordinary service in Malayalam on the same day at 7.30 p.m. Thirumeni led the service and also delivered a meaningful message about the topic of 'Endurance of Suffering' based on the Bible text Matt. 26:36-46.

More than 100 members of the Parish attended the service. After the service, Thirumeni met with the members and answered many of their questions and concerns and offered answers and clarifications. Refreshments were provided after the meeting.

On Sunday, April 25th, 2010, Thirumeni led the Holy Communion Service in English. Thirumeni delivered a short and powerful message keeping in mind the First Communicants. After the sermon Thirumeni led the First Communicant Service. Nine children participated for the first time in the Holy Communion. A total of 220 people participated in the Lord's Table and about 400 people attended the service.

### ATLANTA MAR THOMA CHURCH



Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, our Diocesan Episcopa visited Atlanta Mar Thoma Church from April 15-18, 2010. Atlanta Mar Thoma church had the great privilege of hosting the Diocesan clergy conference and Diocesan Assembly during the month of April.

On Saturday, after the Diocesan Assembly meeting Thirumeni met with the members of the parish committee and listened to their concerns and clarified the doubts. On April 18th Sunday, Thirumeni celebrated the Holy

Communion. There were 10 first communicants. After the service Thirumeni distributed the awards to the Christmas card competition winners, later he had a separate session with the Sunday school children and youths. Before Kaimuth service, Thirumeni thanked the parish for hosting all the diocesan events and suggested that the parish may attempt to host one of the national family conferences in the year 2012 or later. The members welcomed the idea. The Episcopal visit ended with a community lunch.

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



The newly consecrated parsonage.

The Diocesan Episcopa visited the parish during the Holy Week and conducted the Maundy Thursday service followed by Holy Qurbana. Thirumeni spoke on the significance of the Passover meal in which Jesus Christ offered Himself as the Passover lamb.

### ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK

The Diocesan Episcopa visited the parish during the Holy Week and conducted the evening service on Tuesday. Thirumeni spoke on the significance of lent and the significance of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and the events that followed.

### LONG ISLAND MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK

The Diocesan Episcopa visited the parish during the Holy Week and conducted the evening service on Monday. Thirumeni concluded the service by speaking about the silence of Jesus.

### HERMON MAR THOMA CHURCH, ATLANTA

The Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa along with the Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Vinoy Daniel, visited Hermon Mar Thoma Parish, Atlanta on Thursday, April 15, 2010. Thirumeni conducted the evening worship with a devotional talk from Philippians 2:1-10. This was followed by listening to the members regarding the parish concerns. The Diocesan Episcopa gave necessary guidance to the Hermon Mar Thoma Parish who bought a new place of worship and also twenty plus families who want to form a separate parish. Rev. Thomas Mathew, the vicar, was advised to follow up

the matter and to divide the parish into three prayer groups. The meeting ended with prayer and benediction.

### **EBENEZER MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK**

The Diocesan Episcopa visited the parish during the Holy Week and conducted the evening service on Wednesday followed by Holy Qurbana. Thirumeni spoke on the significance of lent and the significance of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Several members of the parish participated in the Holy Qurbana.

### **NORTH CAROLINA MAR THOMA CONGREGATION, RALEIGH**

The Diocesan Episcopa visited the North Carolina Mar Thoma Congregation on Sunday April 18, 2010. Rev. Samuel Santhosham, the Vicar, solemnized the Holy Qurbana service and Rev. Varghese Ninan, vicar of LA parish, gave the message. The Diocesan Episcopa conducted the general body meeting at 6pm and gave guidance to the members of the congregation to make things in order that they can grow as a parish in due time. Thirumeni directed that steps had to be taken for the incorporation of the congregation with a restated by-law, maintain the website in the name of the congregation, keep all documents safe, and registration of the congregation. He formed an ad-hoc committee to assist the Vicar and the Diocesan Episcopa for the general administration. Thirumeni exhorted the members that a separate resolution needs to be passed as to where they should have a place of worship of their own. The meeting concluded with prayer and benediction by 10:00 p.m.

### **PHILADELPHIA MAR THOMA CHURCH**



The Episcopal Visit to Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church was on 2nd April 2010, Good Friday. We had the service at 9:00 a.m. at the Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia. In the three parts of the Good Friday service, we conducted the first part in English and the remaining sessions in Malayalam. Thirumeni gave message on "the Cross of Christ". After the service Thirumeni and the vicar visited few people who are not well in their homes. Thirumeni visited the bereaved family of (late) Mr. Abraham Panackal. On Saturday, 3rd April, there was an informal meeting for the Executive Committee. Thirumeni gave advices to them for the spiritual growth of the parish.

### **ST. JAMES MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK**

**40th Friday Holy Communion Service:** His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa celebrated Fortieth Friday Holy Communion in St. James Mar Thoma Parish, Hillburn, New York on March 26th 2010. On this special occasion Thirumeni spoke from St. Mathew chapter 4 and emphasized the importance of understanding the significance of lent and silence of Jesus and the right understanding of the word of God. Parish arranged a fellowship dinner in honor of our Thirumeni.

### **ECUMENICAL RECEPTION TO MAR THEODOSIUS BY THE MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**



The Commission on Christian Unity of the Massachusetts Council of Churches arranged a luncheon reception for Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of North America & Europe of the Mar Thoma Church, co-hosted by Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Boston at the Diocesan Office on Boston Common. Ms. Lauora Everett, MCC Associate Director spoke on the structure of Commission on Christian Unity and Introduced the guest Bishop Mar Theodosius. Mar Theodosius thanked the MCC for the luncheon reception and spoke on the Ecumenical witness of the Mar Thoma Church and presented a paper which gave a clear insight into the mission and the priorities of the Mar Thoma Church, especially in the North American context. Rev. Jack Johnson presented the book "That They all be One", (2002) to Mar Theodosius in appreciation for the Ecumenical witness of the Mar Thoma Church and expressed joy in inviting Mar Thoma Church to be a member of the MCC. In return Mar Theodosius thanked the Council and the Bishop and presented the book "In Search of Christian Identity in Global Community" (2009). Dr. Jesudas Athyal and Secretary of the Carmel Mar Thoma Parish, Mr. Christy Mathew along with the vicar Rev. K. C. Varghese represented the Mar Thoma Church.

### **MAR THEODOSIUS' VISIT TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY**

Mar Theodosius visited the Boston University on May 3, 2010 and met the Dean Rev. Dr. Mary Elizabeth Moore. Boston University school of Theology is a seminary with roots in United Methodism, but its branches out into the International Ecumenical, Interfaith Movement. It combines a 170 year heritage of Academic distinction with the

flexibility to lead the reshaping of global religious life. Some of the students who studied at the seminary are Rev. Oommen Koruth (Rt. Rev. Dr. Zechariahs Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan), Rev. K. U. Abraham (Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos), Rev. Dr. Alex Thomas, Rev. Alexander M. Isaac. Dr. Moore expressed the interest in having students from the Mar Thoma Church in the coming years. Mar Theodosius discussed the Visa formalities and the funding possibilities. Both expressed the desire to grow together in shaping the future of the seminary and the ministry of the Church.

#### **DIOCESAN YUVAJANA SAKHYAM 12TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION KICK OFF**



Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam 12th National conference registration Kick-off, web site inauguration and Souvenir advertisement Kick-off was held on Saturday April 3rd at 4:00 p.m. at New Jersey Mar Thoma Church, Randolph, New Jersey. Meeting started off with song and prayer. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa presided over the meeting. After the welcome by Rev. Jose Abraham T., Thirumeni gave the inaugural address, and inaugurated the 12th national conference registration and received the first registration check from Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Treasurer Mr. Biju Chacko. Thirumeni also inaugurated the national conference web-site and the advertisement of souvenir kick-off.

#### **PARSONAGE DEDICATION OF MAR THOMA CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO, CA**



By the grace of God the members of the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco had the privilege to celebrate the

dedication of their Parsonage. We were blessed with the presence of our Diocesan Episcopa His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius. April 07, 2010 is yet another milestone in the history of the Parish. The parish was able to buy a house for the parsonage at 8579 Mahogany Place, Newark, CA. and dedicate it to our Lord for the glory of His ministry. The dedication service was officiated by the Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius. The Parish is praising and giving thanks to the Almighty Lord for enabling the Church to achieve this milestone in the silver jubilee year.

#### **DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEMBERS WITH REV. MICHAEL KINNAMON, NCC-USA**



The meeting of the Diocesan Council was held at Atlanta Mar Thoma Church presided by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Episcopa. Mr. Gigi Tom led the devotion which was based on the Gospel of St. John 21:19. The Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Vinoy Daniel, welcomed Theodosius Thirumeni and all the diocesan council members to the meeting. Theodosius Thirumeni welcomed the council members and expressed appreciation for all Diocesan Council members for the efforts to prepare the annual report and accounts for the Diocesan Assembly. Thirumeni also expressed appreciation to Rev. P. J. Varghese for his active service in the Diocesan Council. The Council decided on various agenda items. There was a fellowship meal to bid farewell to the Diocesan Council member Rev. P. J. Varghese. Rev. Michael Kinnamon (General Secretary) of NCCC-USA, invited guest of honor for the Diocesan Assembly was also present.

#### **THE PARSONAGE DEDICATION OF BETHANY MAR THOMA CHURCH; ORANGEBURG, NEW YORK**

The Dedication Service of Bethany Mar Thoma Church's Parsonage was held on Sunday, March 28th, 2010. His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius dedicated the Parsonage. Thirumeni celebrated Palm Sunday, First Holy Communicants Service with Communion and blessed the Congregation with the Parish Day message. Bethany Mar Thoma Church members and many well wishers attended the service and made it a very joyous and blessed occasion.

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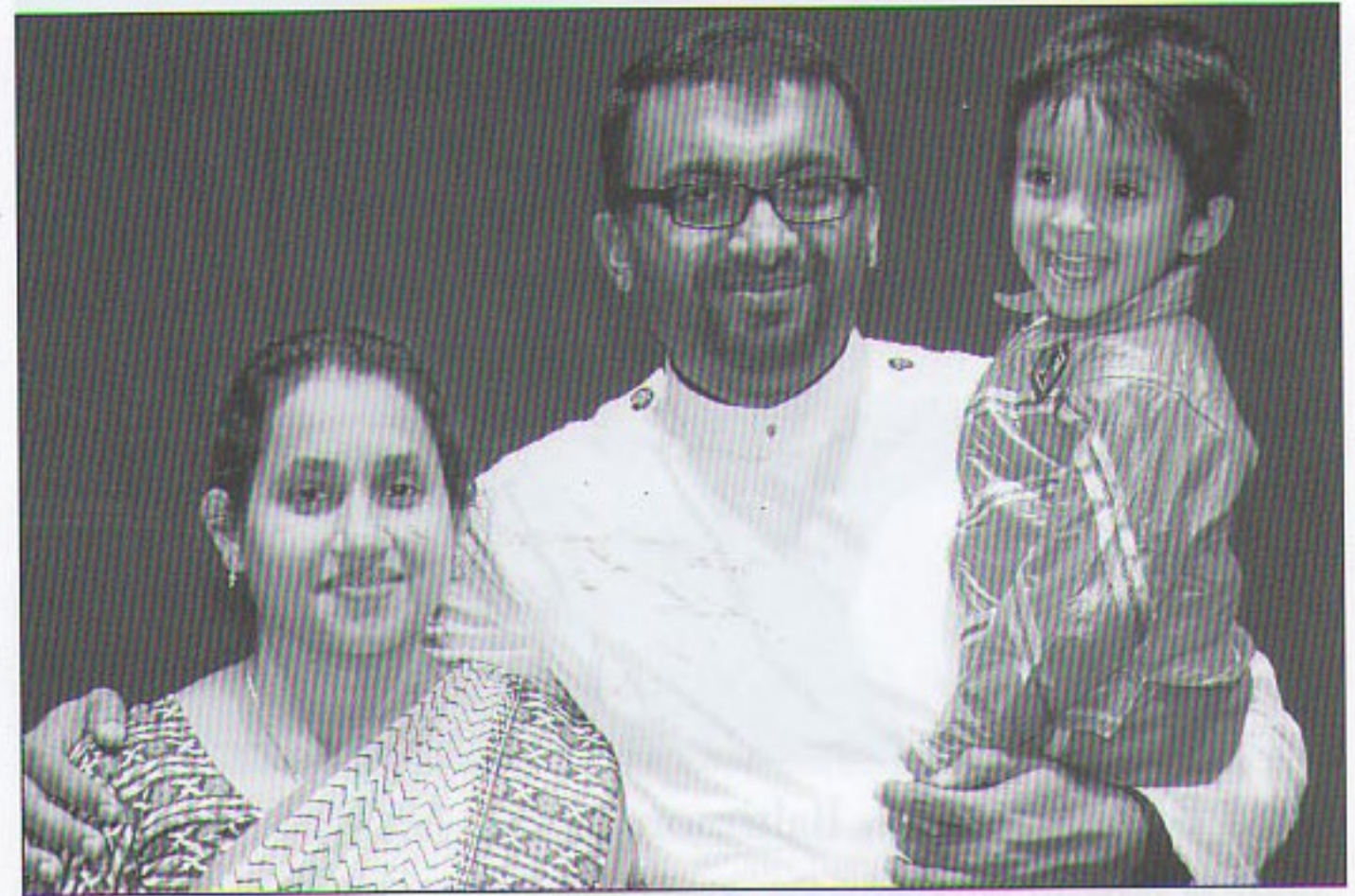
## OUR NEW ACHENS



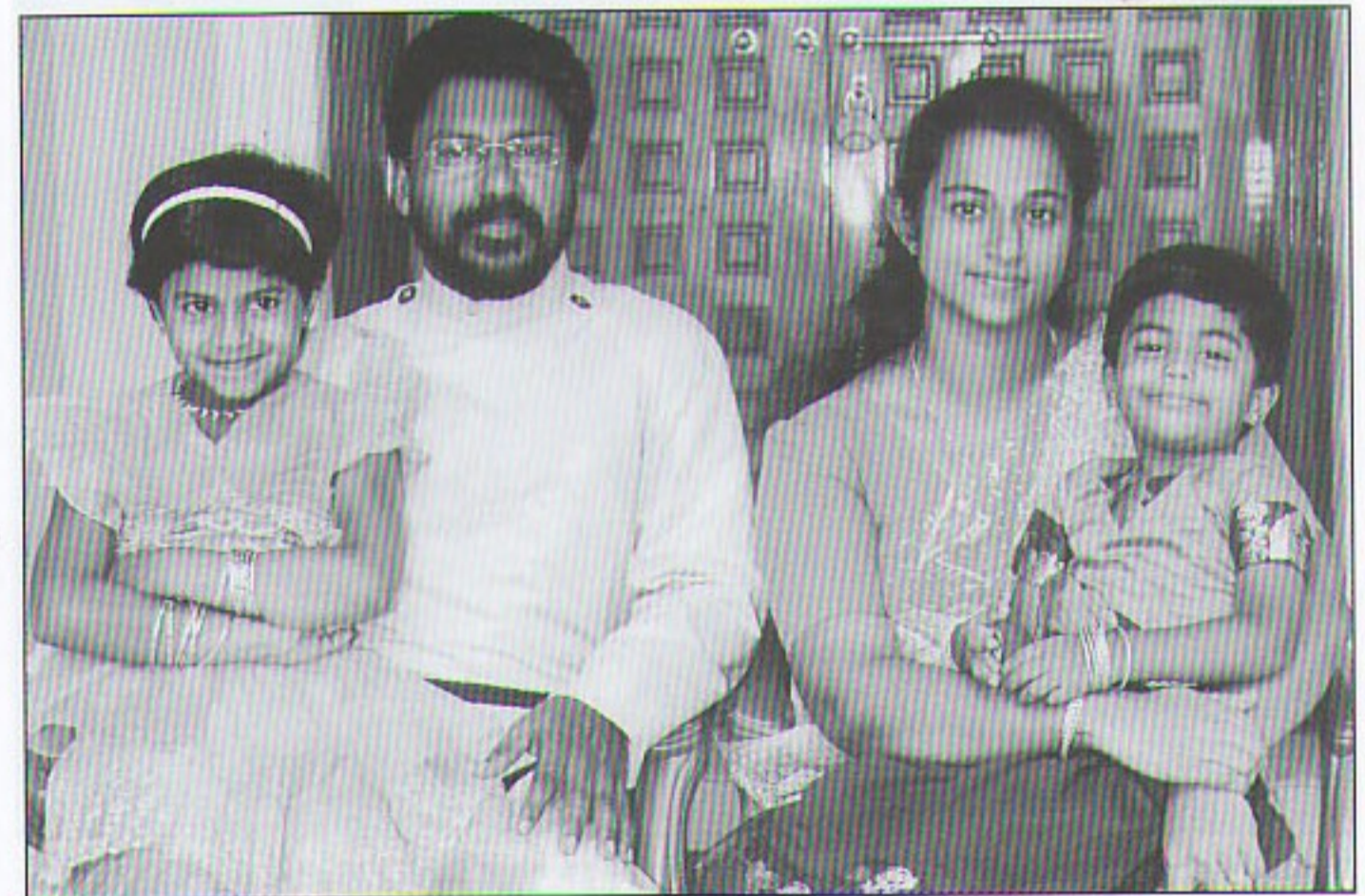
**REV. A. T. THOMAS**, Immanuel MTC Houston, TX  
*Mother Parish:* Konnappara Salem (Konny)  
*Education:* B.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* June 15, 1999  
*Parishes served:* Shivanapara Mission; Kallely St. Thomas; Oottupara Bethel; Aruvapulam Tabore; Vadasserikara Carmel; Edakkulam Bethlehem; Chembur MTC Mumbai  
*Wife:* Smitha Merin  
*Children:* Chris (8 yrs.), Jis (4 yrs.)  
*Contact Information:* (281) 561-9147  
*(Cell)* (832) 660-4281 *Email:* atachen@yahoo.com



**REV. ABRAHAM THOMAS**, Detroit MTC, MI  
*Mother Parish:* St. Thomas MTC, Kozhencherry  
*Education:* B.Sc., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* July 28, 1986  
*Parishes served:* Kampamcode All Saints MTC; Vayakal St. Thomas MTC; Andoor Jerusalem MTC; Ambornath MTC, Mumbai; Ullasnagar MTC; Pazhanji MTC; Ayoor Salem MTC; Nellikkala MTC; Puthencavu MTC; Budhanur MTC; Revival MTC Karakkod; Immanuel MTC Pennukkara  
*Wife:* A. J. Annie  
*Children:* Tibi (21 yrs.), Tini (18 yrs.), Toni (15 yrs.)  
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*(Cell)* (248) 792-1134  
*Email:* revatpunnackamannil@gmail.com



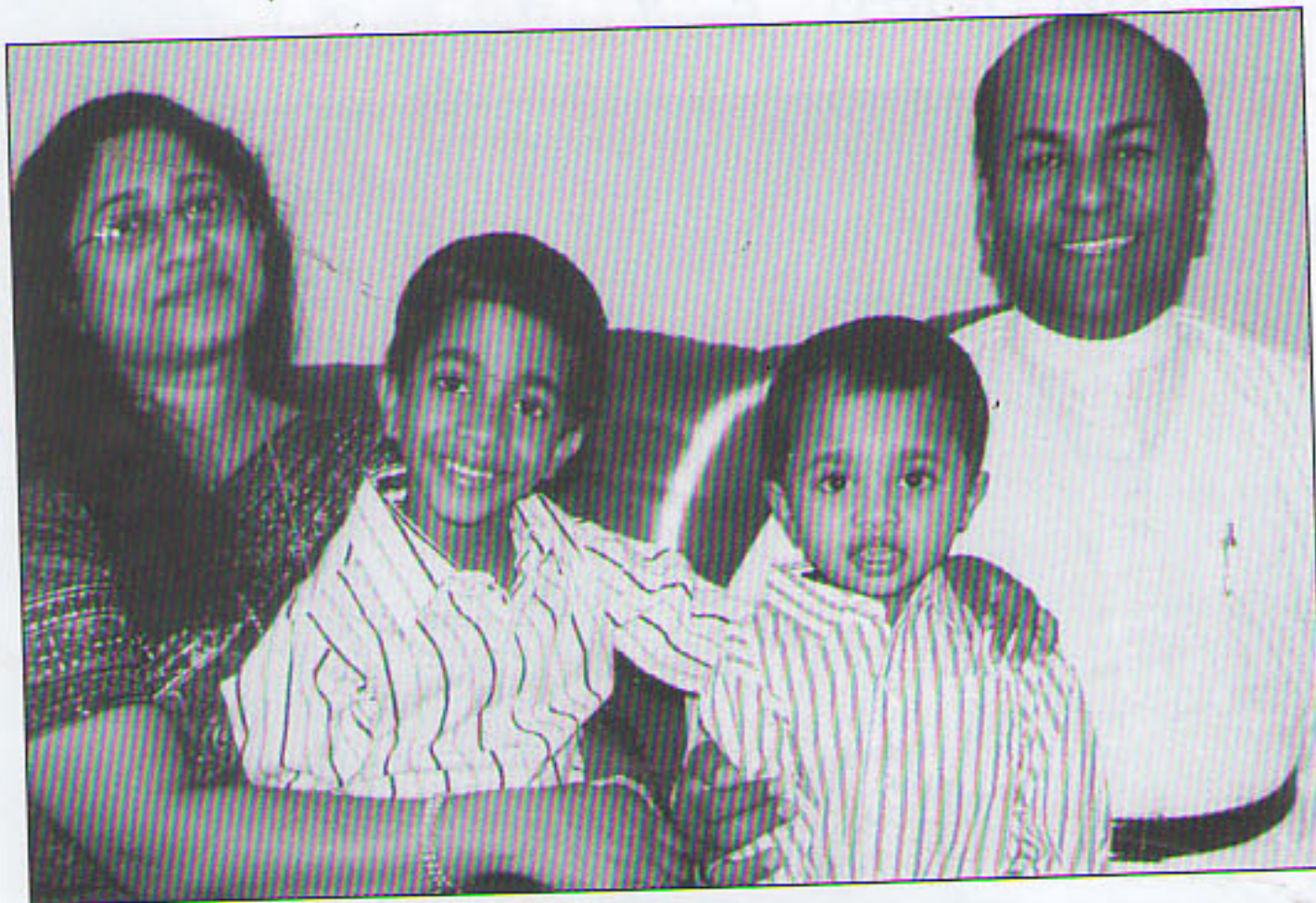
**REV. ALEX PETER**, Bethel MTC, Frankfort, IL; Youth Chaplain, Mid-West  
*Mother Parish:* Kottayam St. Thomas MTC  
*Education:* M.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* September 01, 2000  
*Parishes served:* Salem, Neyvelli, Thalachira, Podiyattuvilla, Kokkadu, Odanavattom, Amalagiri, Ayamanam, Nattasserry  
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*Children:* Aastha Alex (3 yrs.)  
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**REV. BABY JOHN**, The MTC Staten Island, NY  
*Mother Parish:* Immanuel MTC, Kadampanad, Adoor  
*Education:* M.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* September 05, 2000  
*Parishes served:* Banswara, Dungapur-Rajasthan; Ratlam, Nagda-Madhya Pradesh; Kottara, Valiyode-Kerala; Eruthavoor, Ponnumangalam, Vellapally, Vandanoor-Kerala  
*Wife:* Deepa M. Baby  
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**REV. BENU JOHN**, Baltimore MTC, MD  
*Mother Parish:* Jabalpur St. Andrews MTC, Madhya Pradesh  
*Education:* B.Sc., M.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* January 08, 1998  
*Parishes served:* Chavara St. Thomas; Thevalakara Hebron; Kottanallor Salem; Manakala; Bristol MTC; Dublin MTC; East Area London; Belfast MTC; Chenamkery MTC; Kalyan East St. Andrews  
*Wife:* Jolly Joy Benu  
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**REV. GEEVARGHESE KOCHUMMEN**, St. Stephen's MTC, NJ  
*Mother Parish:* Christos MTC, Karippuram, Kundara  
*Education:* BD  
*Date of Ordination:* July 24, 1995  
*Parishes served:* Kochera MTC; St. Paul's MTC, Kumily; St. Stephen's MTC, Angamaly; St. Thomas MTC, Perinadu; MT Central School, Varkala; Immanuel MTC, Pune  
*Wife:* Mini Geevarghese  
*Children:* Abel (6 yrs.), Josh (2 yrs.)  
*Contact Information:* (732) 568-4853  
*(Cell)* (732) 770-1968 *Email:* edayila.achen@gmail.com

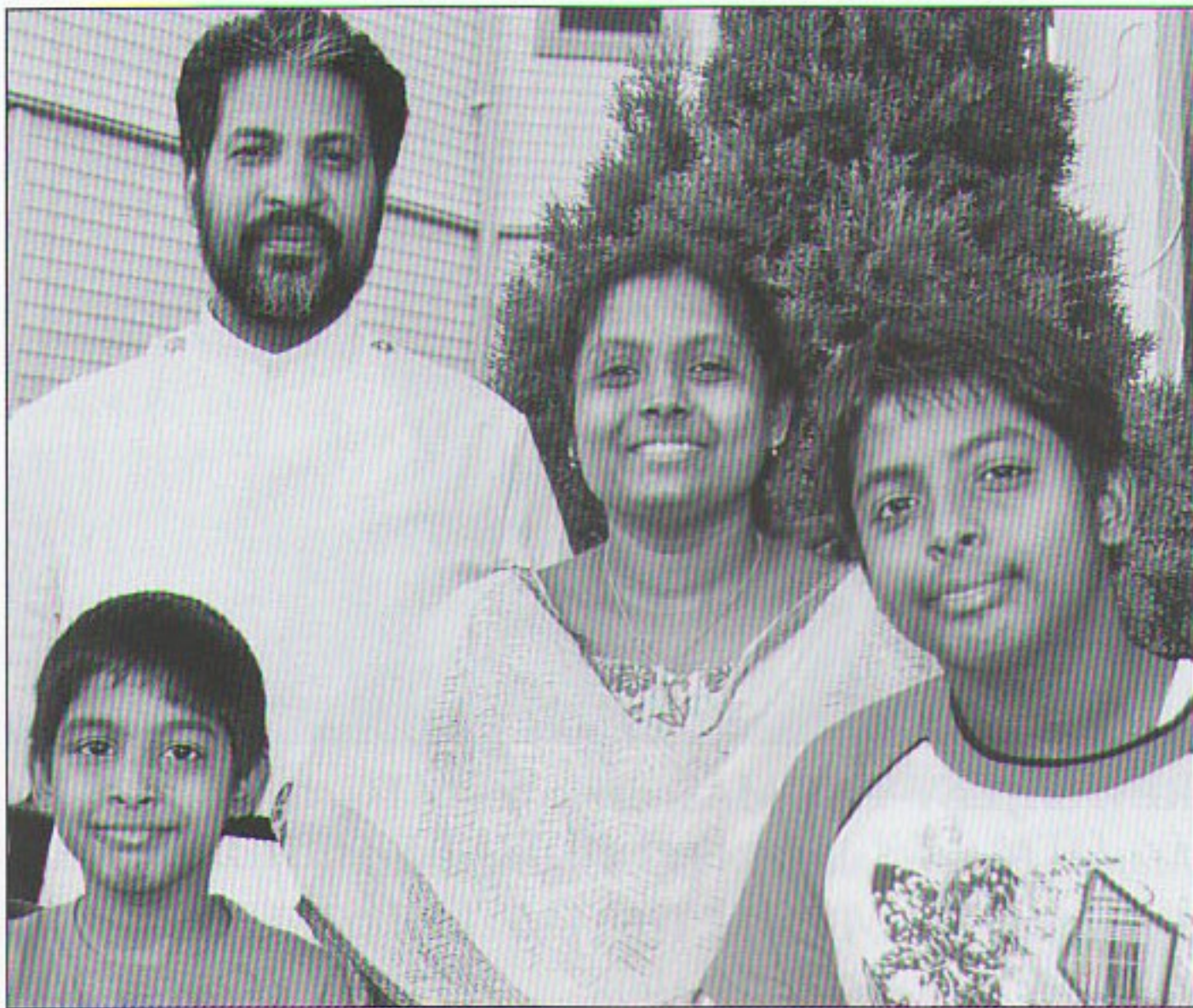


**REV. DR. JOE JOSEPH K.**, Youth Chaplain, Philadelphia  
*Mother Parish:* St. Thomas MTC, Santacruz, Mumbai  
*Education:* B.A., BD, M.Th, D.Th  
*Date of Ordination:* June 18, 1988  
*Parishes served:* Chennai, Kundara, Chenamkery; General Secretary, MT Sunday School Samajam; Professor of Counselling, MT Seminary, Kottayam; Director & Counsellor, Diocesan Counselling Center, Thiruvalla  
*Wife:* Sairah  
*Children:* Ashish (16 yrs.), Anjali (13 yrs.)  
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**REV. JOSEPH DANIEL**  
 Rev. Joseph Daniel currently serves as the vicar of the Mar Thoma Congregations in Switzerland and Germany. He has served as the vicar of the Mar Thoma Parishes in Mylom, Bangalore and Singapore. A recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund Award and University Merit scholarship for academic excellence for MA, and a gold medallist from the Mahatma Gandhi University, Rev. Daniel holds two post graduate degrees in History and Theology. He is now pursuing doctoral studies as the 'Die Christkatholische Kirche der Schweiz', scholar in the field of Church History and Ecumenical Theology at the University of Berne, in Switzerland.  
 Rev. Daniel, a former chaplain to the late Metropolitan, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, has participated in the general assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and conferences conducted by the World Council of Churches (WCC). He was also a member of the Singapore government's 'Inter Racial Confidential Circle' (IRCC); the general committee of the 'National Council of Churches in Singapore' (NCCS), and the executive committee of the 'Fellowship of Indian Denominational Churches in Malaysia and Singapore' (FIDC). Rev. Daniel is a member of the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Kochukoikal, Seethathodu.

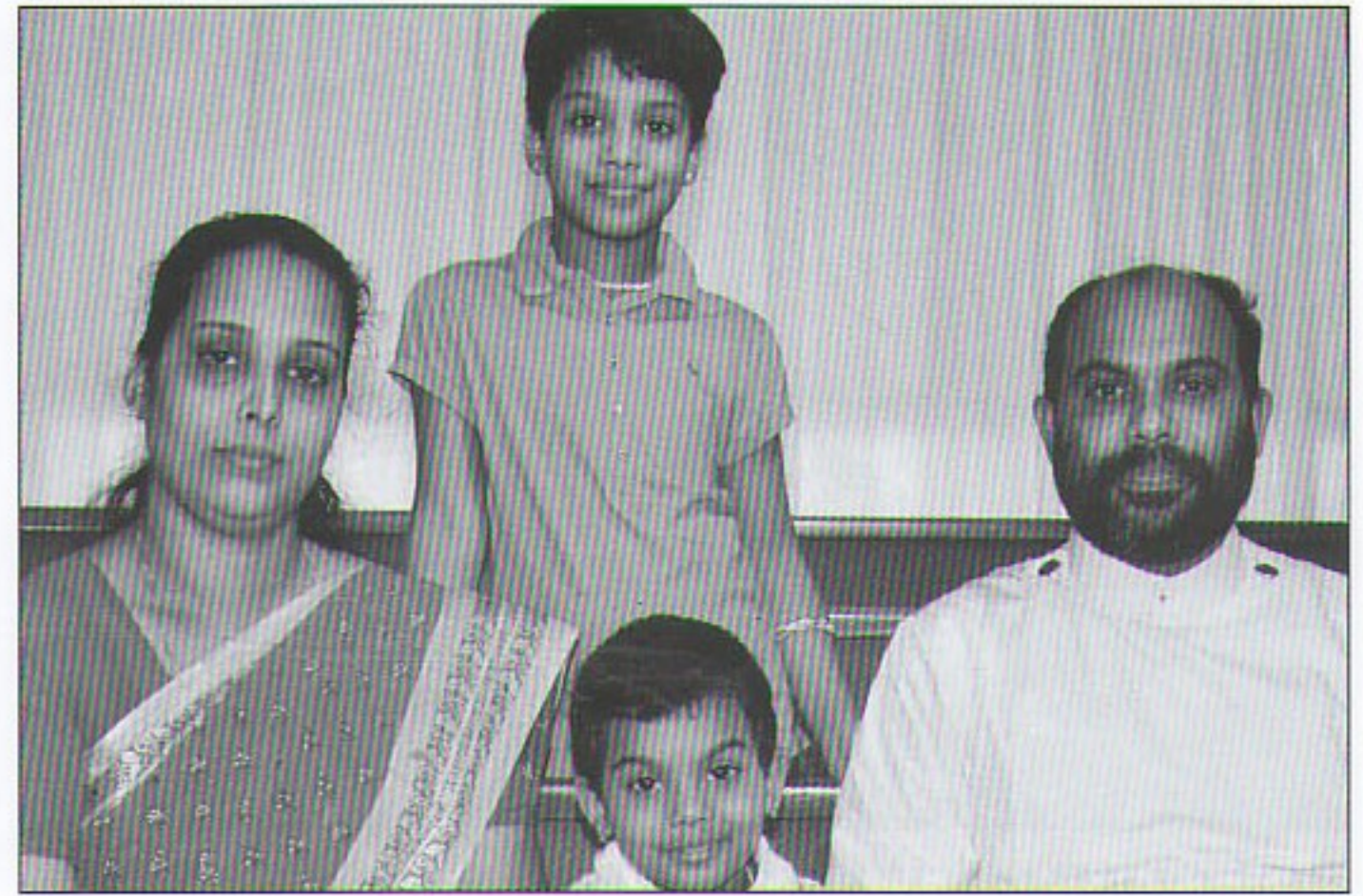




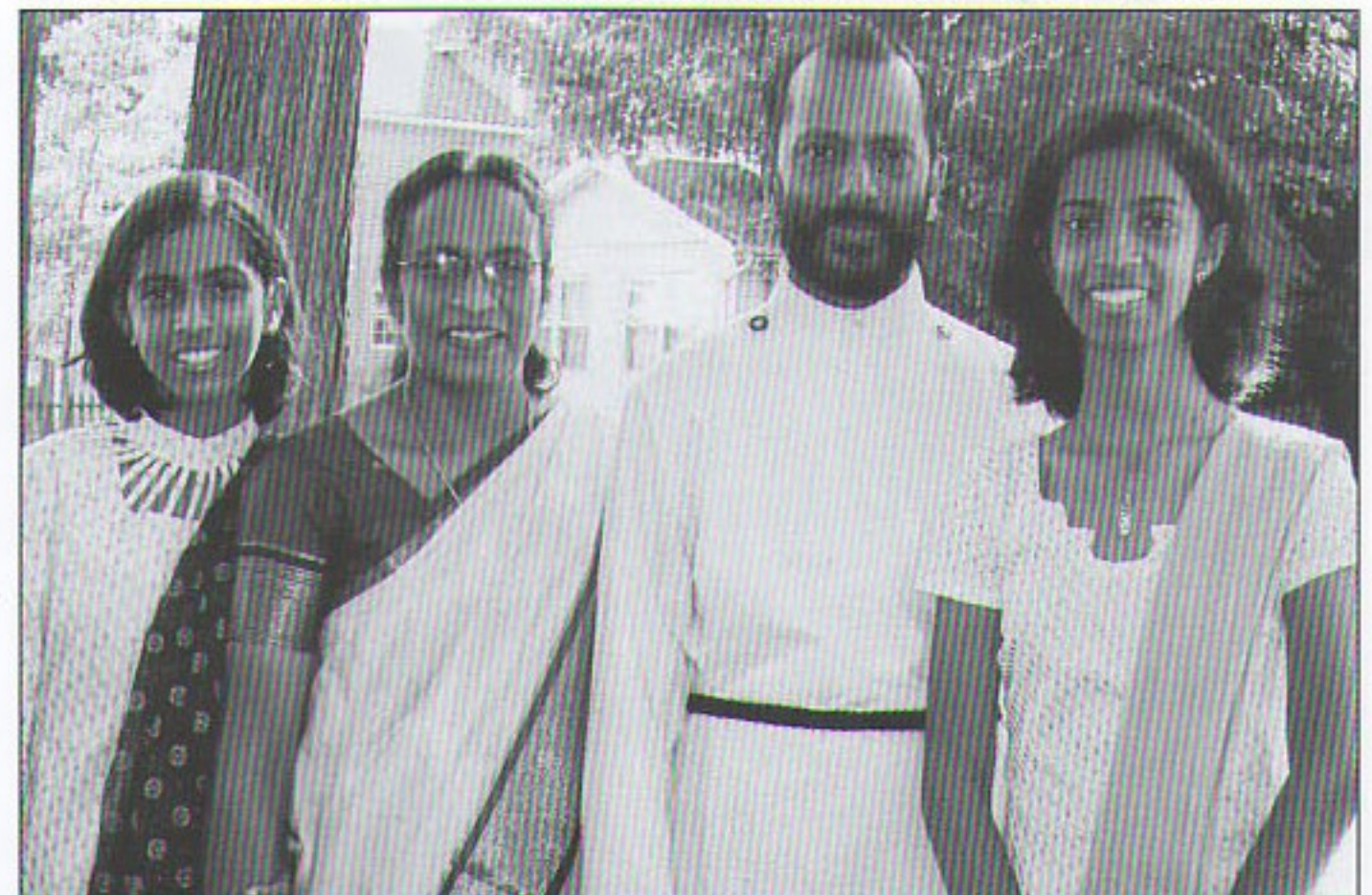
**REV. JOSEPH JOHNNY**, St. Thomas MTC, NY  
*Mother Parish:* Puthencavu Mathilakam MTC  
*Education:* M.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* June 21, 1995  
*Parishes served:* Jamshedpur, Asansol, Durgapur, Bilaspur, Korba, Ambikapur, Bhisrampur, Edamuri, Thompikandom, Peruvayal, Kothamangalam, Ayakkad, Vengdor, Nellimattom, Pothanikadu, Kolenchery, Valakom, Mamala, Keezhvaipur St. Thomas  
*Wife:* Preetha S. Philip  
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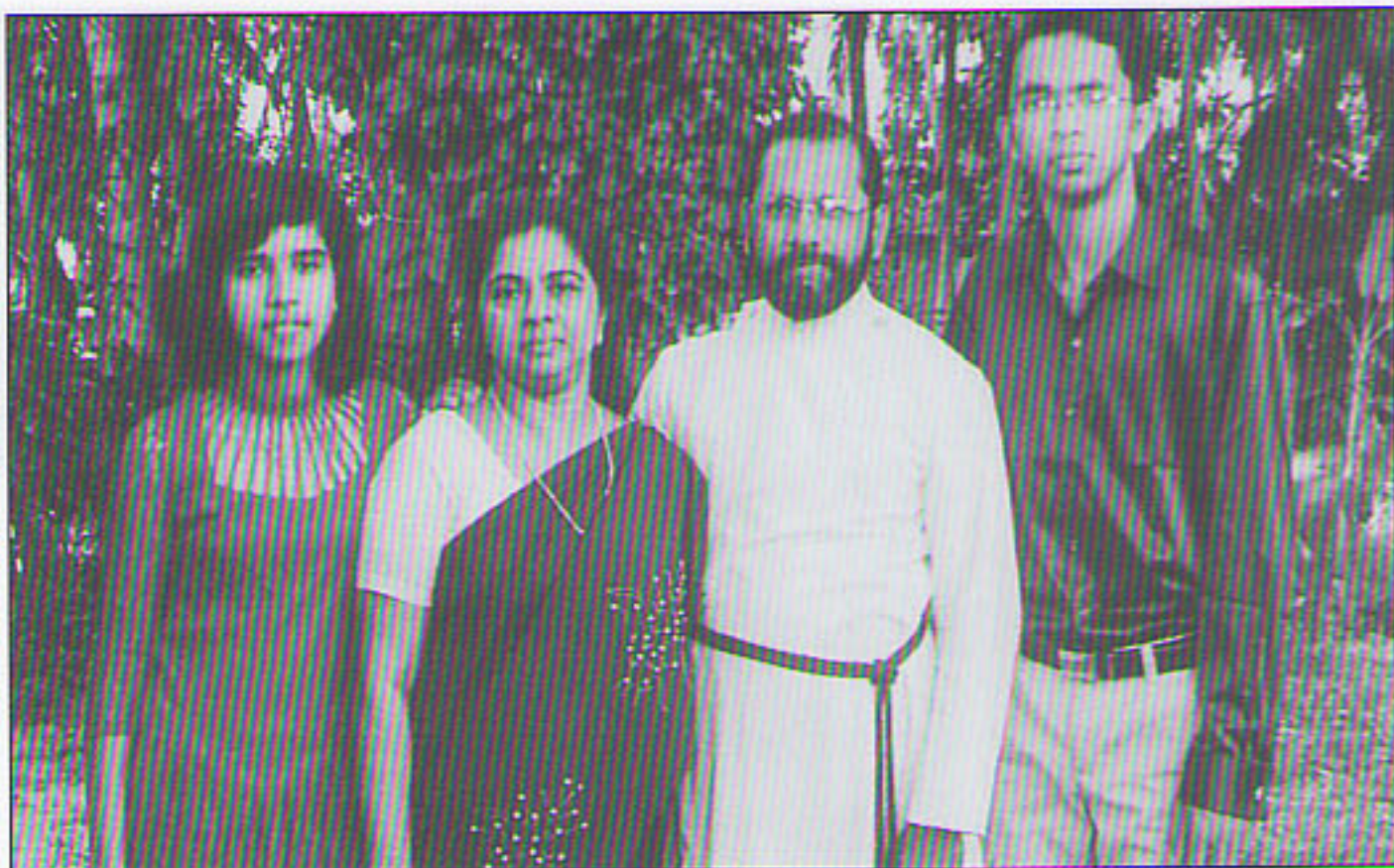
**REV. K. E. GEEVARGHESE**, Ascension MTC, Philadelphia  
*Mother Parish:* Salem MTC, Njakkanal, Kayamkulam  
*Education:* M.Sc., B.Ed., BD, M.Th.  
*Date of Ordination:* August 3, 1999  
*Parishes served:* Bethel MTC, Krishnarajapuram, Bangalore Bishop's Secretary-Thiruvananthapuram-Kollam Diocese Bishop's Secretary-Chennai-Bangalore Diocese  
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**REV. K. P. THOMAS**, MTC of Carrollton, Dallas, TX  
*Mother Parish:* Trinity MTC, Kochukoikal, Seethathodu  
*Education:* M.A., BD, M.Th.  
*Date of Ordination:* October 23, 2000  
*Parishes served:* Cherukole MTC, Mavelikara; Bethel MTC, Thannithode; St. Thomas MTC, Thekkuthode; Salem MTC, Manneera; Maramon MTC; St. Luke's MTC, Vallamkulam  
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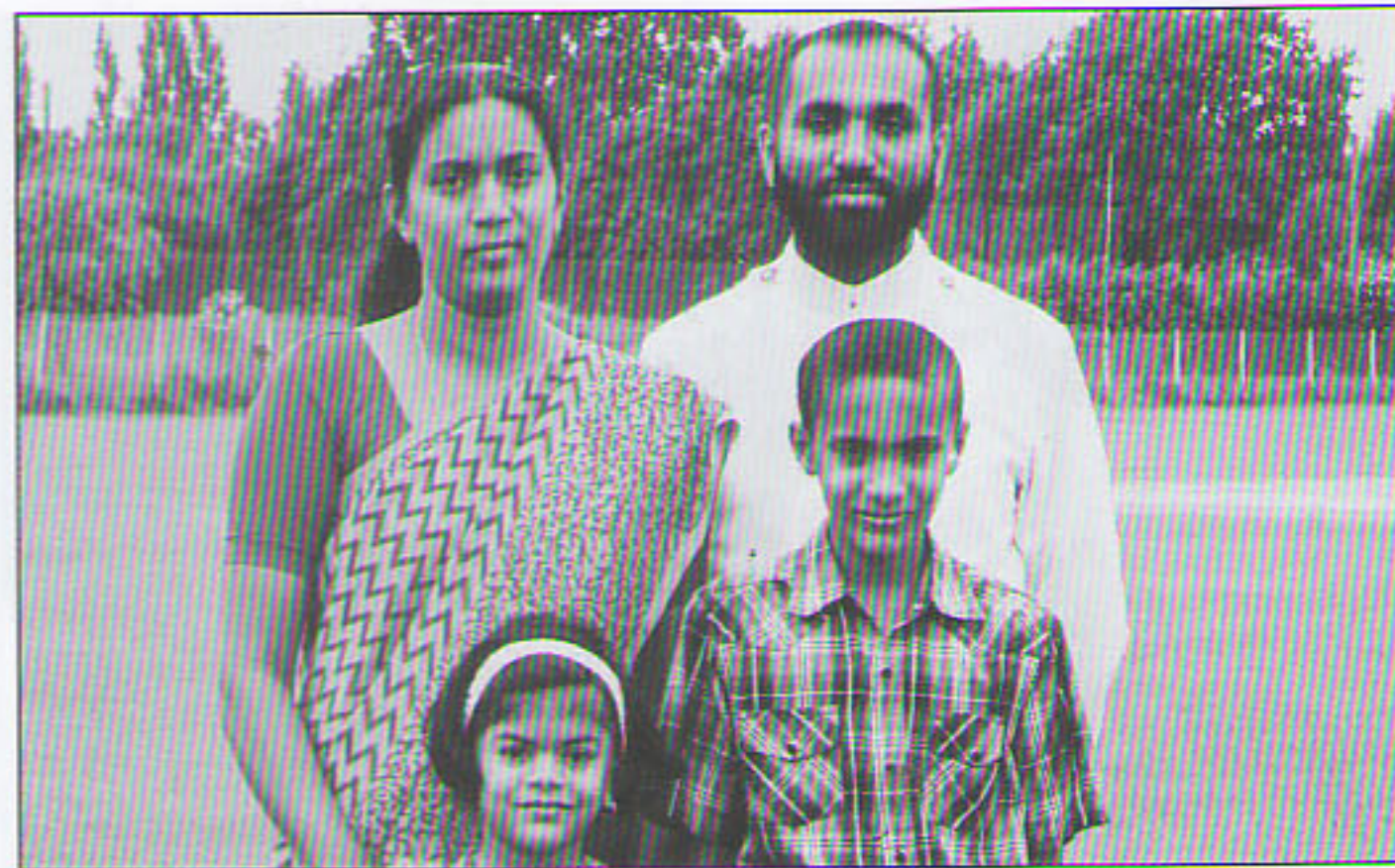
**REV. M. S. DANIEL**, St. Peter's MTC, New Jersey  
*Mother Parish:* St. Andrews MTC, Thuvayoor  
*Education:* B.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* May 29, 1991  
*Parishes served:* Bethel & St. Thomas MTC, Hyderabad; Bethel MTC, Neduvaloor; Ebenezer MTC, Parappa; St. Thomas MTC, Thonnamala; St. Paul's MTC, Pariyaram; Maramon MTC; St. Thomas MTC, Ezhumattoor; St. Pauls MTC, Vengazha; St. Peter's MTC, Manganam; St. Thomas & Immanuel MTC, Niranam  
*Wife:* Anitha Mathai  
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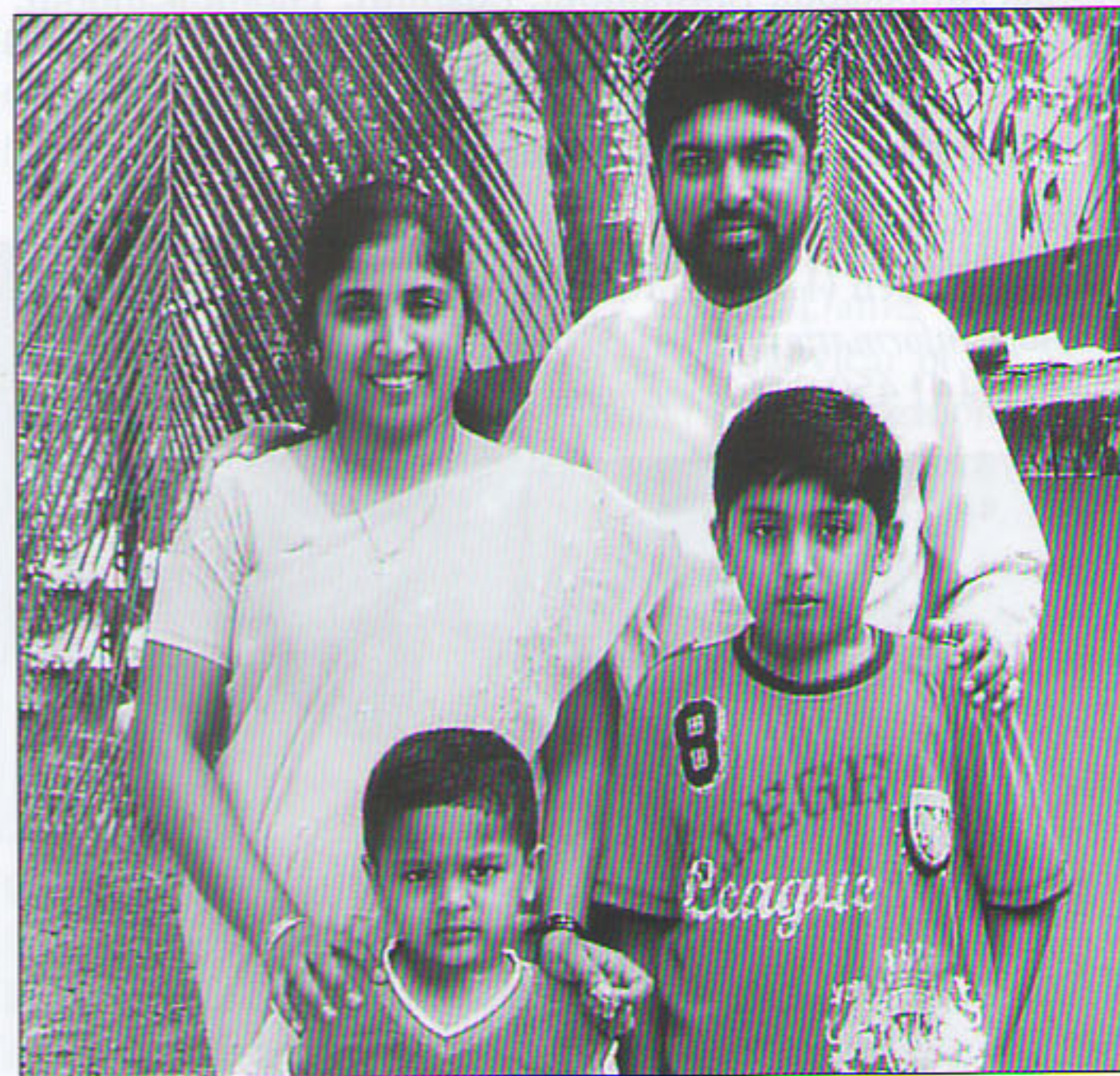
**REV. OOMMEN V. VARKEY**, Epiphany MTC, NY  
*Mother Parish:* Nedumpuram Christos MTC  
*Education:* B.A., BD, M.Th.  
*Date of Ordination:* May 28, 1985  
*Parishes served:* Student Chaplain, TVM; Assistant Director, CARD; St. Thomas MTC, Punnaveli; Bethlehem MTC, Kollad; Director, Thomas Mar Athanasios Research & Orientation Centre, Manganam; St. Mary's MTC, Kottayam; Director JMM Study Centre, TVM  
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**REV. SABU C. MATHEW**, St. Peter's MTC, London, UK  
*Mother Parish:* Bethel MTC Chemmarappally  
*Education:* B.A., B.Ph., B.Th.  
*Date of Ordination:* January 2, 1991  
*Parishes served:* St. Peter's Manganam; Sinai Ambalamukal; Immanuel Thiruvamkulam; Jerusalem Elamkulam; Immanuel Nellikunnam; St. Thomas Vilangara; Jerusalem Kanakappalam  
*Wife:* Maggie  
*Children:* Jewel Maria (8 yrs.), Angel Ann (6 yrs.)  
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**REV. SAJEEV THOMAS**, St. James MTC, London, UK  
*Mother Parish:* Salem MTC, Chungathara  
*Education:* B.A., BD, M.Th.  
*Date of Ordination:* July, 1998  
*Parishes served:* Middle and North Andamans (Rangath, Betapur, Mayabunder, Diglipur, etc.)  
*Wife:* Mary Sajeev  
*Children:* Aaron (10 yrs.), Hannah (5 yrs.)  
*Contact Information:* 011-44-208-859-5111  
*(Cell)* 011-44-793-802-3889 *Email:* sajeevachen@gmail.com



**REV. V. G. GEEVARUGHESE**, Sinai MTC, London, UK  
*Mother Parish:* Jerusalem MTC, Vallianthy  
*Education:* B.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* March 15, 1997  
*Parishes served:* Harihar & Hubli MT Congregations, Karnataka; Trinity & St. Thomas MTC, Kochukoickal; Bethel, Kottamonpara; Ebenezer, Puthukulam; Immanuel Mundackal; St. Thomas, Attachakkal; Bethel, Chengara  
*Wife:* Suja Varghese  
*Children:* Nivin (9 yrs.), Nigel (3 yrs.)  
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*Email:* revvggeevarghese@yahoo.com



**REV. VARGHESE GEORGE**, Bethany & Tabor MTC, NY  
*Mother Parish:* St. Paul's MTC, Pallickal, Vathikulam  
*Education:* M.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* January 6, 1990  
*Parishes served:* St. Paul's, Anakara; Nazareth, Kochara; Immanuel, Thumpamon; St. Thomas, Pennukkara; Salem, Karipuzha; St. Thomas, Kollimel; Bethany, Venmoney; St. Thomas, Verampoore; St. George, Cheruvalloore; Salem, Bhopal; Bethel, Itarsi  
*Wife:* Kunjumariamamma  
*Children:* Georgy (20 yrs.), Christo (17 yrs.)  
*Contact Information:* (845) 613-7728  
*Email:* revvarghesegeorge@yahoo.in

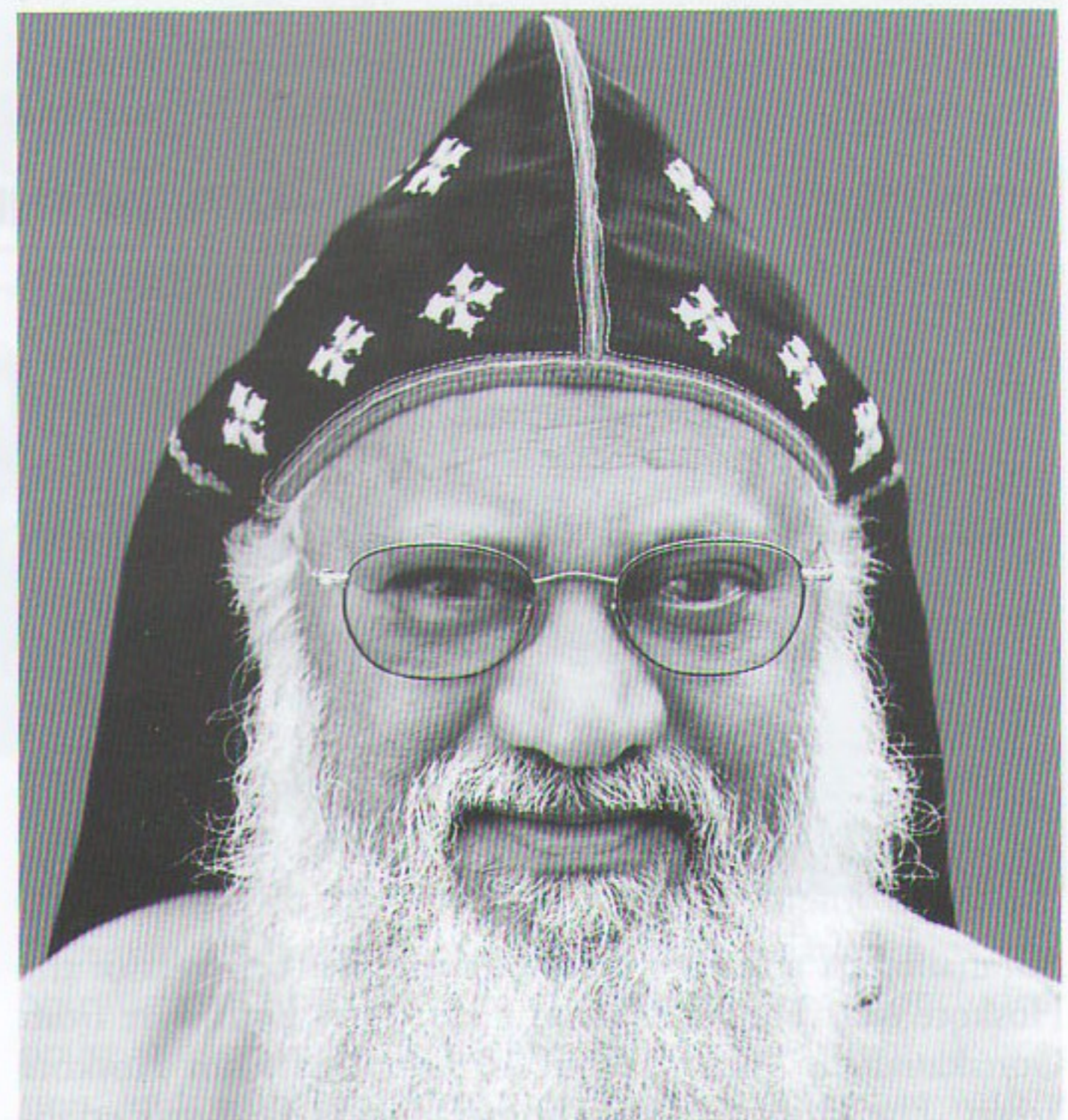


**REV. ZACHARIA JOHN**, Trinity MTC, Houston, TX  
*Mother Parish:* Ebenezer MTC, Kavumbhagom  
*Education:* M.A., BD, MA (Syriac, Liturgiology)  
*Date of Ordination:* May 14, 1982  
*Parishes served:* St. Thomas, Vettiya; Immanuel, Thannikunnu; Immanuel, Iranikudy; Immanuel, Pattoor; MTC Patna; Sehion, Christ, Thumpamon North; St. Peter's Manganam; MTC Bangalore City; Ebenezer, Puthukulam; Immanuel, Mundackal; MTC Arthat Kunnamkulam; Horeb, Puthuppally; St. Paul's, Chathenkary  
*Wife:* Sophy Mary Zacharia  
*Children:* Sonia (23 yrs.), Stanley (18 yrs.)  
*Contact Information:* (281) 261-4603  
*(Cell)* (713) 408-7394 *Email:* achenkunjuachen@gmail.com



**REV. JOSE P. ABRAHAM**, South Florida & Jacksonville MTC, Florida  
*Mother Parish:* St. Thomas MTC, Karakkal, Thiruvalla  
*Education:* M.A., BD  
*Date of Ordination:* June 10, 1983  
*Parishes served:* St. Paul's & Bethany, Chennamkary; St. George, Alappuzha; St. Thomas, Patna; Sehion, Mallapally; Vikhroli & Mulund, Mumbai; St. Paul's, Jamnagar, Gujarat; St. Paul's & St. Thomas, Mavelikara; Bethel & Nilemel MTC, Kollam; Salem, Angadical, Pathanamthitta  
*Wife:* Jessy Jose  
*Children:* Ashish (25), Adharsha Miriam (20 yrs.)  
*Contact Information:* (954) 577-1964  
*(Cell)* (954) 849-4919 *Email:* revjosepa@gmail.com

**RT. REV. DR. ZACHARIAS MAR THEOPHILUS  
 SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN**



**Our prayers and best wishes for Zacharias Thirumeni upon celebrating 30th year as an Episcopa of the Mar Thoma Church. May God continue to shower His abundant blessings upon Thirumeni in the continued faith journey of the Mar Thoma Church.**

## CLERGY CONFERENCE AT ATLANTA MAR THOMA CHURCH, GA



The Diocesan Clergy Conference was held at Atlanta Mar Thoma Church, GA on April 15th, and 16th, 2010. The theme of the conference was **“Christian witness: Rethinking the Mission of the Church”**. Rev. Philip George from Philadelphia gave the biblical exposition based on Acts: 20:18-35 under the title *Christian Witness: Revisiting the Mission mandate of the Church*. He emphasized the importance of self-sacrificing Christian witness, based on the life and mission of St. Paul. Thirumeni gave the inaugural address reminding the clergy in this Diocese that these meetings should be a time of refreshing, rethinking about mission, educating, revitalizing, reenergizing, and empowering each other for ministry, not just to view these meetings as simply a get together. Thirumeni reminded everyone that the church is the people of God. Rev. P. J. Varghese, Epiphany Mar Thoma Church presented the

study material of *‘Sabha Pratinidhi Mandalam’* entitled **“Christian Witness: Revisiting the Mission Mandate of the Church”**. Rev. M.P. Yohannan from Detroit was the moderator for this session. Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas, youth chaplain from Dallas area made a thematic presentation entitled **“Christian witness: Rethinking the Mission of the Church”**. A farewell meeting was arranged to the outgoing clergy from this Diocese. Representing clergy, Rev. Varghese Mathai offered felicitation and Rev. P. J. Varghese offered the reply speech. Rev. V. T. John led the singing session and Rev. M. P. Yohannan, intercessory prayer. The Diocesan Secretary expressed gratitude to the Vicar and members of the Atlanta Mar Thoma Church for hosting this conference. Rev. Regi Zachariah expressed the vote of thanks for Thirumeni and attending clergy.

**Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Diocesan Secretary**

## TRIBUTE TO MRS. SARAMMA—ONE OF THE FIRST BELIEVERS OF HOSKOTE MISSION FIELD



Abrahamappa and Saramma were the first believers of the Hoskote Mar Thoma Mission Field. They both were from Gonakanahally village, about 10 km away from Hoskote Town. The Hoskote Mar Thoma Mission field was established in June 1947 near Bangalore City in Karnataka by the Mar Thoma Church. This couple was the first who willingly came forward and accepted Jesus Christ. They took

the names Abraham and Sarah (earlier known as Narashimahamma and Pillaamma). They were baptized on 9th December, 1956. Their actual age is not known because of the lack of birth records available at that time in their native village. Abraham died on 9th August, 2006 and was buried on 10th August in a simple ceremony at the Mar Thoma cemetery at Gonakanahally village. Saramma (in her late eighties) passed away on Saturday 15 May 2010 in the Santhimandiram (Old Age Home), in Hoskote Mar Thoma Mission Field. The funeral was held in the Mar Thoma Mission Cemetery in Ghonakanahally Village in the presence of a large number of believers. Abrahamappa and Saramma worked selflessly for the Mar Thoma Church in Karnataka villages from 1956. Their commitment for service and steadfast faith in Jesus Christ lasted till the end and will not be forgotten by the villagers and the people of Hoskote Mar Thoma Mission. There is a Mar Thoma parish at Gonakanahally Village. The parish is being looked after by a resident Evangelist and the services are conducted in Kannada language. Please uphold the family and the Mission Field ministry in your prayers.

## EPISCOPAL VISIT TO THE MAR THOMA CHURCH OTTAWA, CANADA



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Episcopa, visited The Mar Thoma Church Ottawa ([www.ottawamarthoma.ca](http://www.ottawamarthoma.ca)) located in Canada's capital city, Ottawa. This was Thirumeni's first visit to this parish as the Bishop of the North America and Europe Diocese. During the visit, Thirumeni conducted Holy Qurbana service, assisted by the Vicar Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Rev. Brian Kauk of the St. Mark Anglican Church, Ottawa. During Holy Communion service, five young members of the parish received their first communion from Thirumeni and also affirming their faith in the Mar Thoma Church.

After the service, a felicitation program was held to welcome Thirumeni to the parish and to Ottawa. Dr. John Zachariah, Vice-President delivered the welcome speech. Chief guests Rev. Brian Kauk of St. Mark Anglican Church delivered felicitation message on behalf of the Anglican Church. Father Sebastian Payyappilly, representing Catholic Church offered felicitations and applauded parish's effort and leadership role in their ecumenical outreach to members of other Churches. Mr. Wingson Karavally also spoke on behalf of the St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Ottawa. Parish secretary Mr. Reji Alex reported on the current status and activities of the parish. Mr. Mathew Thomas and Mrs. Aleyamma Samuel reflected on Thirumeni's services and the accomplishments made during his tenure as Vicar of the parish. The felicitation program was attended by a large number of people including members of sister Churches and visitors from out of town.

Theodosius Thirumeni established the Ottawa parish as a congregation in June 19, 1982 while working on his doctoral studies at McMaster University, then Rev. George Jacob. The congregation was later elevated to the parish status by Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Mar Thoma Valia Metropolitan, who was then the Diocesan Bishop.

**Reji Alex, Secretary**

## 24TH CANADIAN ANNUAL REGIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE



The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto hosted the 24th Annual Regional Youth Conference from May 22-24, 2010 in Guelph, Ontario for youth above 13 years old in Toronto and surrounding regions. The theme for this year's conference was "Crave", based on 1 Peter 2:2-3. More than 100 youth representing 5 different Mar Thoma parishes in Ontario and New York took part in the three-day weekend, by participating and leading in three different sessions on the topics they were interested. Rev. Biju P. Simon (Youth Chaplain, New York) led the session for Juniors (approx.

13-21 years old) whereas Tony Thomas, Chicago led the sessions for the Seniors. They were joined by various track leaders who led discussions on various topics including: Acceptance, Direction, Missions, Music, Relationships, and Spirituality. Other activities of the weekend also included: praise and worship sessions, recreation, talent night, dedication, and a bonfire. Delegates left the conference with a renewed faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and a better understanding of what they crave for.

**Thomas George, Convener**

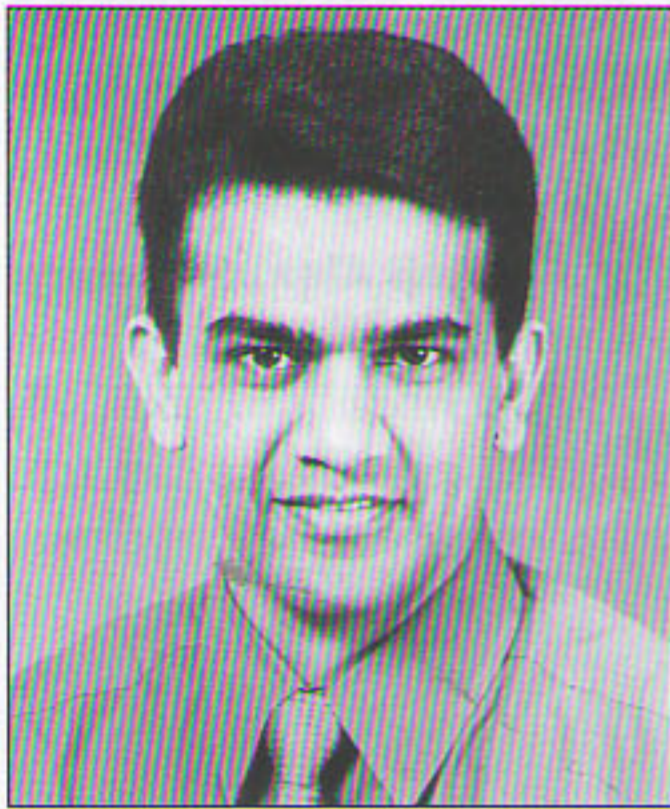
## PROCEEDS FROM MUSIC ALBUM CONTRIBUTED TO MCRD



Proceeds from the sale of the Music Album produced by George Varghese (Jayan) of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch, was handed over to Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa, Patron of MCRD, during a function held at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church Kozhencherry. Rev. Eapen Cherian, Director of MCRD, Thelliyoor along with

Vicars of St. Thomas MTC, Kozhencherry and children from MCRD were also present. The proceeds will be used for the development of MCRD, Thelliyoor, which is a project of the Mar Thoma Church for the physically challenged children. A Physical Therapy unit and an Occupational Therapy unit with required equipments will be installed with the proceeds at a cost of about 4 Lakhs Indian Rupees. George Varghese (Jayan) is a talented singer and composer and has produced seven music albums and the proceeds from all the previous albums were contributed to various mission projects of Mar Thoma Church during the past fourteen years. All the songs in the Music Albums were composed by Jayan. Personal Experiences and meditation on the Word of God are the sources of all Jayan's compositions. Jayan's songs were also selected in the past for the Maramon Convention. Recently, Kuwait Mar Thoma Church has selected, "Seeyon sanchari bhayapedenta..." composed by Jayan as the best song in the Maramon Convention for the year 2008.

## BINOY V. VARUGHESE AWARDED Ph.D. IN AIR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT



Binoy V. Varughese, a member of the Greater Seattle Mar Thoma Church, was awarded with Ph.D. in Air Transport Management from Canfield University, England. His dissertation was based on the subject: "**Demand Driven Swapping in Airline Industry.**" He has a bachelors and masters degree in Mechanical Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In addition,

he has earned master's degree in Airline Management

from Embry-Riddle and a master's degree in Business Administration from Seattle University. Binoy is the author of several papers and holds two patents awarded in 2003. Presently, he is working as the program manager for the Boeing P-8 India Indigenous Programs in Seattle. Binoy joined Boeing Company in 1997 and was involved in several strategic international projects. He is the son of Mr. V. V. Varughese and Mrs. Susamma of Patoor St. Thomas MTC, Thiruvananthapuram. His elder brother Binu Varughese is employed in New York. Binoy is married to Dr. Neena Varughese of Bency Cottage, Quilon and they have one son, Jonathan Varughese.

**Rev. Binu Varghese, Greater Seattle MTC**

## RYAN PHILIP SELECTED IN U.S. TEAM



Ryan Philip, son of Mr. Saji Philip and Mrs. Mini Philip, is a 7th grader in Crossroads North Middle School in South Brunswick, NJ and a member of the New Jersey Mar Thoma Church. Ryan has a sister, Meghna Philip. He has been playing soccer since 5 years old. He was invited in 2007 to play for the Player Development Academy (PDA) in Zehrapath, NJ. PDA is one of the top ten soccer academies in the country.

Recently, Ryan made in to the US team in the thirteen years age group and played VW Junior Masters World Finals at Madrid, Spain. Even though the U. S team lost in the quarterfinals to Germany, but finished 9th in the standings. Teams from twenty countries around the world participated in this event and US team overall did very well. According to Ryan, he is truly humbled and blessed to have this opportunity to represent United States and thankful to God and his parents for giving him this opportunity. Ryan's parents are also really thankful to the Lord almighty for giving their son Ryan the tremendous opportunity to represent United States at this young age. It has always been his dream to play soccer at the highest level in his age group and he hopes to play more for his country at the international level. Theodosius Thirumeni appreciated Ryan's earnestness and thanked God for the talents and offered his prayers and best wishes and encouragement to do well in the future.

## REGISTRATION KICK OFF OF THE 11TH NATIONAL SEVIKA SANGHOM CONFERENCE



The 11th National Sevika Sanghom Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe is scheduled to be held from September 30 to October 3, 2010 at the Christian Retreat and Conference Center, Bradenton, Florida, USA.

The Sevika Sanghom of the St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, Tampa, Florida is hosting this year's conference. A Souvenir will be published at the conference to commemorate the event. The theme of the Conference is '**She will be remembered**' (Mat. 26:13). The leaders of the conference will be Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Bishop; Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Diocesan Secretary; and Mrs. Rachael George (wife of Rev. Oommen Varkey, Epiphany MTC, NY). The Registration kick off of the conference was inaugurated by Rev. T. Johnson, conference President, on 16th May 2010 soon after the Sunday service at the St. Marks Mar Thoma Church, Tampa, Florida. He accepted the first registration from Mrs. Deenamma Abraham, one of the senior members of the Sevika Sanghom of the parish. For more details and Registration online facility, please log on to [www.stmarksmtctampa.org](http://www.stmarksmtctampa.org).

## VOLUNTARY EVANGELIST ASSOCIATION 7TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Registration kick off of the Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelist Association 7th National Conference was held at Sinai Mar Thoma Center. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa gave the first conference registration to Mr. Mammen Samuel of the Long Island Mar Thoma Church. Those attended were Rev. Santhosh Thomas, Rev. George M. Kuruvilla, Mr. Yohannan Jacob, Mr. K. Varghese, Mrs. Sally Thomas, Mr. Varghese K. Joseph, and Mr. Roy C. Thomas. The conference will be held from July 23rd-25th at National Christian Conference Center, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

## MAR THOMA STUDENTS' CONFERENCE—CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Mar Thoma Students' Conference is an official organization of the Mar Thoma Church founded by Titus II, the then Metropolitan in 1910. It is the annual get-together of University students including professional students from around the world. From May 19-22, 2010, the Centenary Session was conducted at Charal Mount, Kerala with 325 delegates from all over the world, including 5 persons from USA under the leadership of Rev. Jason A. Thomas.

The theme for this year's conference was "*My Lord and my God*" and the studies were led by Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa and Rev. A. T. Zachariah. Rev. Sajan P Mathew led the singing sessions. The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan inaugurated the conference on the 19th in the presence of with Most. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan, other Bishops of the Mar Thoma Church, clergy and senior friends.

The Centenary get together was conducted on 21st May in which the former Union Minister Shashi Tharoor was the chief guest. Most Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Coorilose Metropolitan of the Mumbai Diocese of the Orthodox Church was also present along with our Bishops. Prior to the

meeting, the Centenary Bible Quiz in the name of Late Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan was conducted. Ani Alex Kurien from Bangalore won the trophy along with the first prize package of a Holy Land Trip. The meeting was followed by cultural programmes and dinner which was attended by about 1000 people.

The conference has taken up the projects in association with the centenary celebrations:

1. A Boarding home with the name "Mar Thoma Gurukulam" for students dedicated for full time church ministry and will be located in Manakala, Adoor, in the land donated by the children of late Thazhamadom Achen.
2. Chaplaincy Training Institute to train students' chaplains to be employed in various colleges and student centres, in and outside Kerala. This will be associated with AMM Bible Institute, Kombady, Thiruvalla.

All the sessions of the conference were a great blessing and new spiritual experience for all who participated. The next annual student's conference will be hosted by the Chennai centre and Dr. Manu Thomas was elected as the President for the 101st session.

**Prof. Thomas Mathew, General Convenor**



Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius was the chief guest at the 29th Parish Day Celebration of the Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey. Thirumeni stressed the importance of parish as the family of families. Sunday School Students pictured performing at the Parish Day Celebration.

**OTTAWA MAR THOMA CHURCH YOUTH WINS 2010 YOUNG AT ART AWARD**

Priya Alex, a member of the Ottawa Mar Thoma Church, Ottawa, Canada, and daughter of Reji & Asha Alex won two awards at the "Young at Art" annual competition held at Ottawa, for her self-portrait titled "Indie Girl".



The "Young At Art" program is a celebration of the creativity and talent of Ottawa's young visual artists and a conduit for them to bring their work to local art galleries across the City of Ottawa. The competition held annually

since 1996, represents a tremendous opportunity for the recognition of young local artists and the public exhibition of their work. A total of 590 artworks were submitted citywide from 364 artists representing 65 schools in Ottawa. A jury based award committee recognized 20 artists for their work, during the award ceremony. Priya received two awards—the *David W. Jones*

*Award* presented by Canada's foremost landscape artist Mr. David W. Jones and the *City of Ottawa Painting Senior award*. All winning entries will be on display at different Art Galleries across the City of Ottawa.

**MAR THOMA CHURCH OF BALTIMORE**



First Communicants with Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa and Vicar, Rev. Benu John.

**Matrimoniaals**

Mar Thoma parents settled in USA, invite marriage proposals for our US born son 29 years 6' 2" Medical Doctor practicing Medicine in Pennsylvania. We are looking for proposal from a family oriented beautiful suitable Christian girl. Interested, please contact us at Tel: 610-358-1649 or at E-Mail: johnmathews01@hotmail.com.

Mar Thoma parents invites proposals for their son 27 years old MD from medical school in USA doing 2nd year residency. He is 5' 8" fair, seeking suitable Marthoma, Jacobite or CSI alliance from parents of girls with similar qualifications from US schools. Please respond with a recent photograph and bio-data to thomasthomasny@yahoo.com

Marthomite parents settled in the U.S. invite proposals for their son. He is almost 26 years old, 5' 11" tall and completed his Masters in Engineering from a prestigious university in the U.S., currently works as a Manager at a Fortune 100 company. He does not drink/smoke and is active in the Mar Thoma Church by serving as a Sunday School Teacher. We invite proposals from parents of God-fearing girls with a photo and bio-data to malluproposal09@gmail.com



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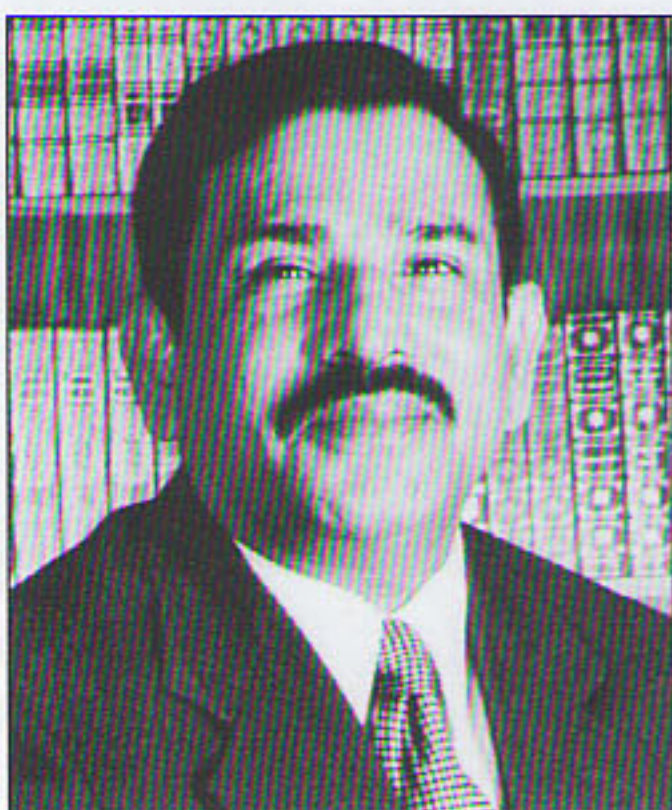
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# EDITORIAL



The theme of this issue is *"As father has sent me, I am sending you."* (John 20:21). This is also the theme for the upcoming Family Conference in Dallas. The mode and meaning of the word "mission" needs to be understood in the context in today's world. The mission should not be

confined to just preaching the Word of God, but should extend to living the Word. Jesus is the perfect example of one who "lived the gospel." He walked the rugged roads and frequented the Samaritan wells, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out the demons, and enabling sight to the blind. Merely offering charity from our surplus confines our mission within the walls of the sanctuary; mission should take us to the market places and nearer to the less fortunate and marginalized.

The Edinburgh Mission Conference held in 1910 in England, which made revolutionary decision that the Church should be a global missionary community, has celebrated its 100th year from June 2-6. Let us "live the gospel," which was also the theme of this year's Maramon Convention, and continue in the mission of the Church entrusted to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our children are back from college and are enjoying time with family and old friends. We congratulate everyone who graduated this year and pray that God may continue to keep them in His providence while they pursue higher studies and in their efforts to find suitable jobs. Family is the place where our children need to learn about our faith and heritage. Let us become more committed and faithful parents to our children so that they may grow in the heritage and faith of our Church.

God created the earth for man to till the soil and enjoy the fruits of his labor. Instead, we are destroying it for our selfish gains. The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is another example of the exploitation of the earth and

its resources for selfish gain by man without adequate measures for the safety to preserve the living things in the sea and to assure the livelihood of people who depend on fishing and other jobs associated with the sea. Natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunami, and extreme climatic variations occur now more than ever in the past. Recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile have devastated the lives of thousands of people.

Our motherland India is going through the pain and agony of the plane crash in Mangalore; 158 people were killed and only 8 survived. Many bodies are yet to be identified since they are beyond recognition. We express our sincere condolences to the members of the bereaved families and pray that those who are in the hospital may recover soon.

Our Metropolitan Joseph Mar Thoma is celebrating his 80th birthday on June 27, 2010. We wish a happy birthday and pray that God may continue to keep Metropolitan Thirumeni in His providence to lead the Church. I congratulate Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Suffragan Metropolitan, for celebrating 30 years of episcopacy as a faithful servant. Our Church is in the process of selecting three more Bishops to lead and guide us. Let us pray to God for His abundant blessings so that faithful and committed servants may be selected to lead the Church in the years to come.

We welcome all the Achens and families who joined us this year to this diocese. We also express our sincere gratitude to all the Achens and families who served in this Diocese for the past three years and were transferred back to India. May God shower His grace upon our Achens and their families in their continued faith journey of the Church.

Let me express my sincere gratitude to Theodosius Thirumeni and Mr. Eapen Daniel, Chief Editor, for bestowing on me the responsibility of publishing and to James T. Philip, Manager for bringing out this issue of the Messenger in a timely manner.

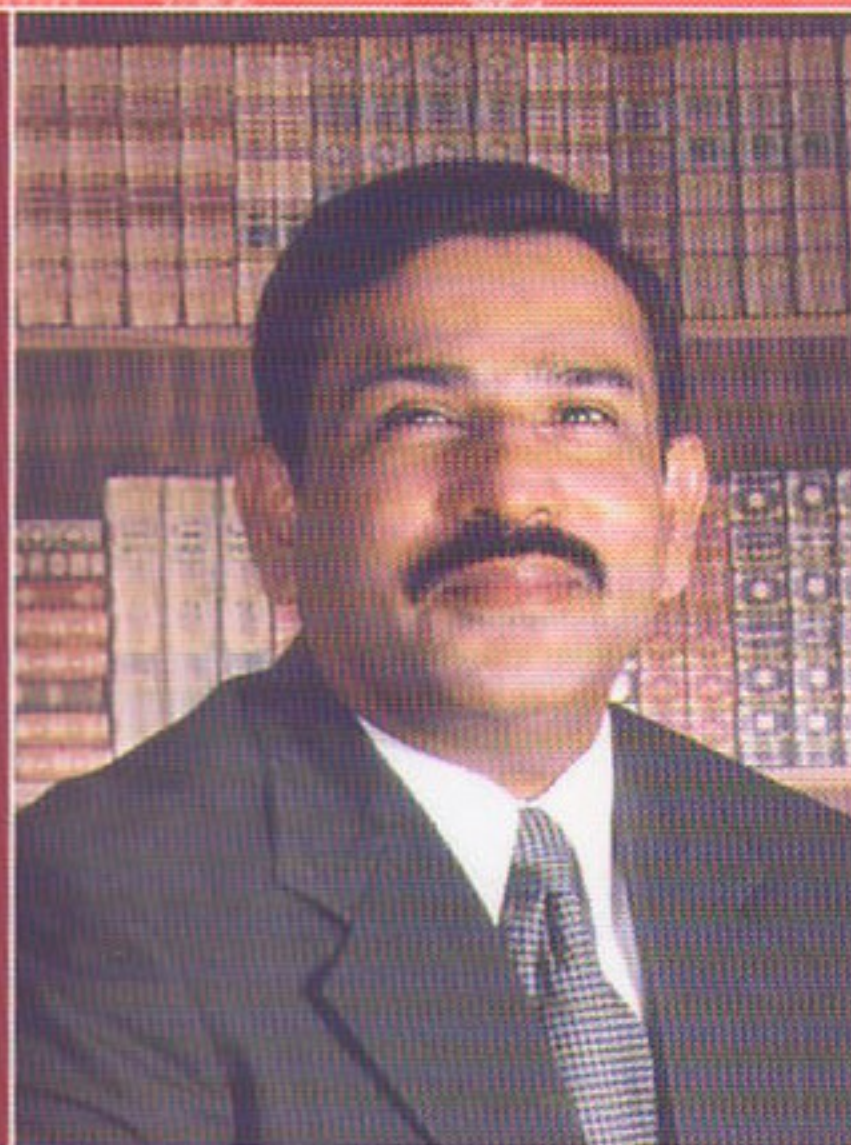
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*Associate Editor*

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