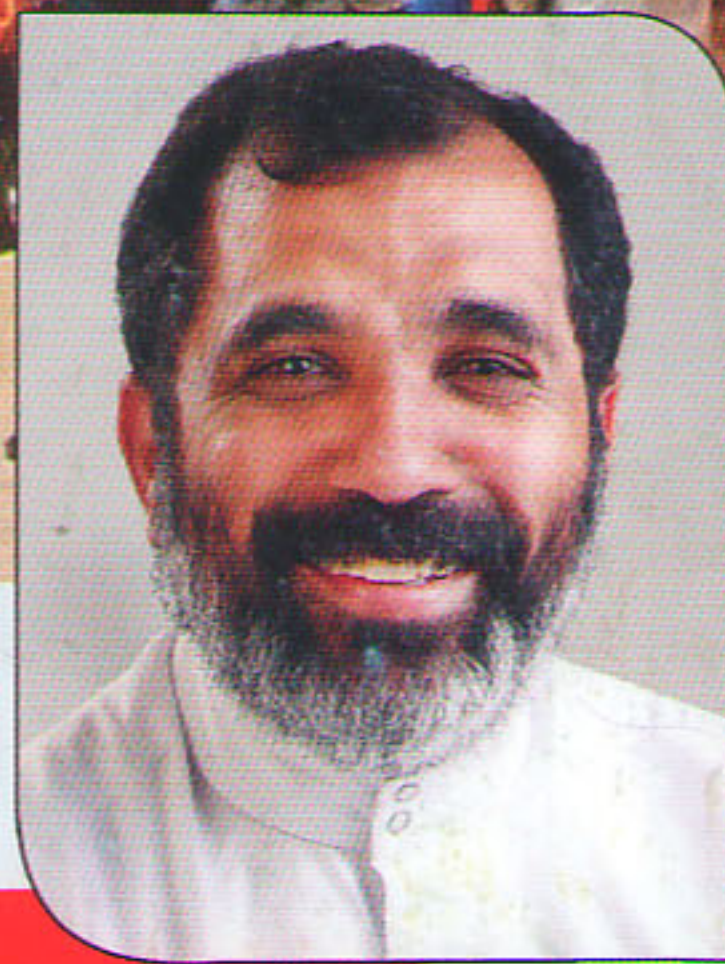
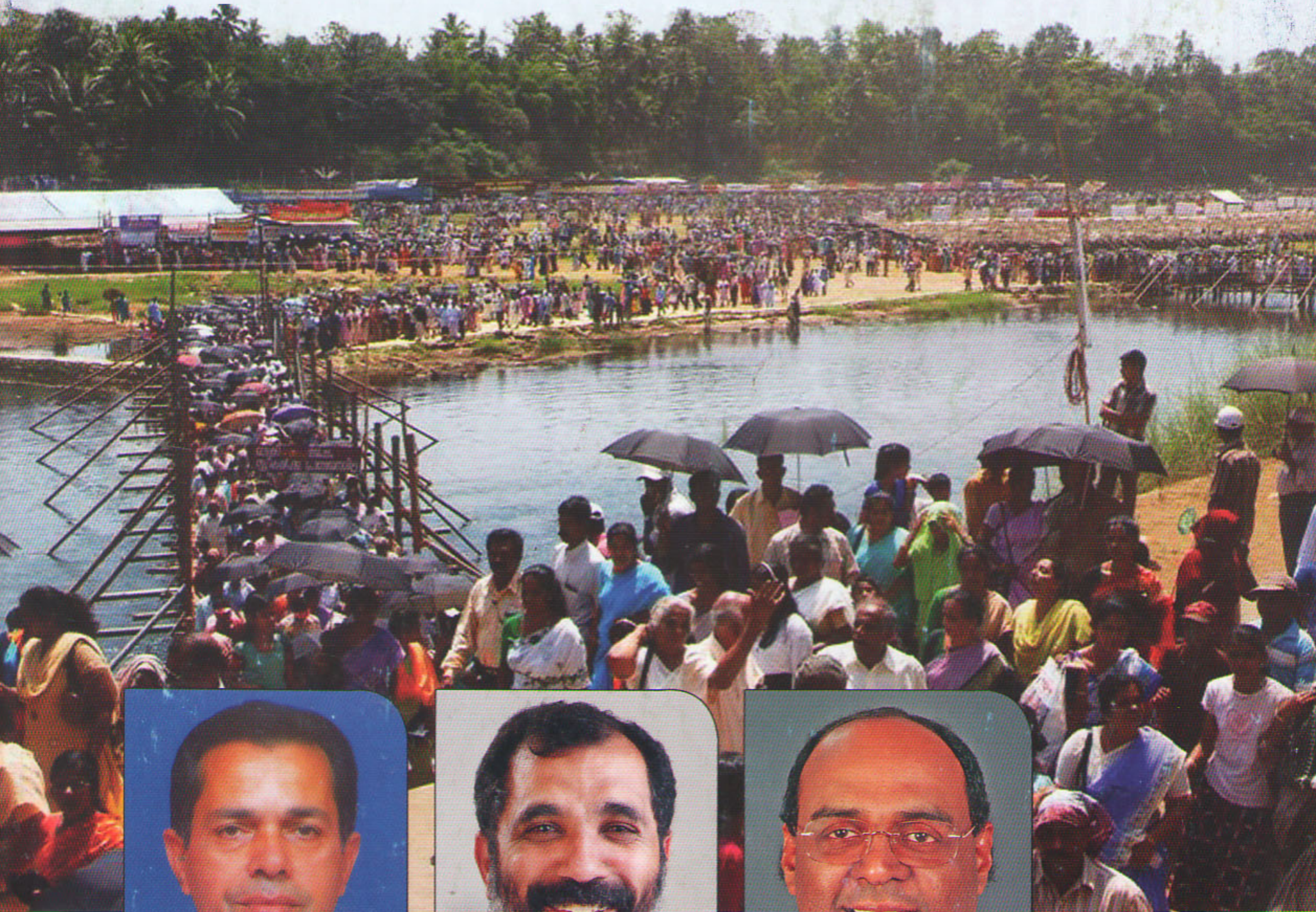




MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

APRIL 2011



**Gospel and Challenges of
Post Modernity**





OUR STAND

NEW CAR KEYS

ARE KEY TO SAVING ON CAR INSURANCE.

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



Tel: (718) 464 - 8500

Fax: (718) 464 - 4230

Roycthomas@allstate.com

ROY C THOMAS, LUTCF

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



Allstate®

You're in good hands.

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

Mar Thoma Messenger



VOL. XXX No. 2

APRIL 2011

The Official Publication of the
Diocese of North America & Europe

For Private Circulation only

EDITORIAL BOARD

Diocesan Secretary
Rev. Vinoy Daniel
516-377-3311
Fax: 516-377-3322
marthoma@aol.com

Associate Editors:

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

Lal Varghese, Esq. [Dallas]
(972) 788-1555 attylal@aol.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alan John [Detroit]
(734) 525-1946
alangjohn@chennithala.com

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Chacko Mathew (NY)
Diocesan Treasurer
(516) 364-1854
mathewc@hpd.nyc.gov

Manager
James T. Philip (NY)
(718) 761-1295
(718) 869-3395 (Cell)
jtphilip@hotmail.com

T. A. Mathew (Houston)
Manager/Advertisement
(832) 771-2504
tamathew@hotmail.com

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

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

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

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

Varughese P. Varughese (NY)
(718) 761-6847
vpvarughese@aol.com

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

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

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

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

ADVISORY BOARD

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

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

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

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

George Philip [Washington, D.C.]
(301) 549-2421

Websites:

Diocese of North America
www.marthomanae.com

Mar Thoma Church
www.marthomasyranchurch.org

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

CONTENTS

Message from the Metropolitan	2
Message from the Diocesan Bishop	3
Letter from NCCC General Secretary	5
Post Modern Reading of the Bible— Challenges and Possibilities Rev. V. M. Mathew.	7
Border Lives and Border God: Diaspora..... Rev. Y. T. Vinayaraj	10
Wrong Notion of Development: The Cause... Prof. John M. Itty	15
Naveekaranam Mohan Mathew Philip	18
Holy Qurbana Dr. John P. Abraham	21
Denominationalism to Post-Denominationalism..... Dr. Prema Kurien	24
Maramon Convention Articles (Malayalam)	27
The Mar Thoma Malayalees—A Cultural View George Thomas	30
Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land Dr. Jesudas M. Athiyal.	32
Through Some Mission Fields in India M. C. and Grace Alexander	35
Kids Corner	37
Cross Word Puzzle	38
Three more Bishops to the Mar Thoma Church	39
Diocesan/Parish News	40

Themes for Upcoming Issues:

July 2011—Family: Concepts and Constructs (plus 2011 Family Conference & 175th Anniversary of Naveekaranam)

October 2011—New Trends in Ecumenism (plus Diaspora & 175th Anniversary of Naveekaranam)

Cover: Newly Elected Shepherds of the Mar Thoma Church

Cover Design: Biju Mathew, Immanuel MTC, Houston

Subscription Rates:

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

Advertisement Rates:

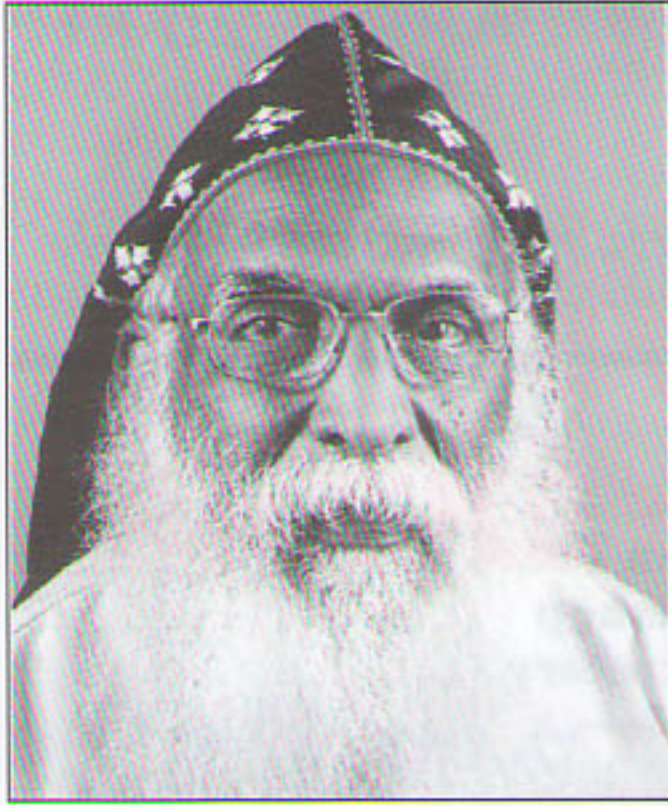
	Four Issues	One Issue
Back Cover	\$2,000.00	\$525.00
Front/Back Cover Inside	\$1,500.00	\$400.00
Inside Full Page	\$ 500.00	\$150.00

Mailing Addresses:

Mar Thoma Messenger **Eapen Daniel**
Sinai Mar Thoma Center 165 Springflower Court
2320 S. Merrick Avenue Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
Merrick, NY 11566

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

Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly beloved in the Lord,

The great Maramon Convention, by the grace of God, was conducted in a blessed spiritual atmosphere from February 13–20, 2011. I thank all those who have endured in making this great evangelistic convention a big success. This year we had to work hard to make the sandy expanse of the Pampa River usable for

thousands of believers who came to attend the convention, during the 8 days. The Almighty blessed us. God always reminds us that nothing is impossible by Him. Let us, in humility, praise God for His grace which always fills us in our shortcomings and weaknesses.

This year's Convention raised certain notable questions. God's direct questions to the first and second generations were very important. He asked Adam, "where are you?" and to Cain "where is your brother?" In today's context, God asks us, "Where are your children? Where are your aged parents?" Many such meaningful and timely questions are being raised unceasingly in today's social set up. What reply are we going to provide to these challenging questions? Those who came from various parts of the globe, sharing the Word, were able to bring clarity to the questions and to give proper directions to find answers to the probing questions. St. Peter's advice to us during the last days of his earthly life makes us all the more vigilant. "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11). When we observe this enthusiastic vigilance, we derive the marksmanship that God offers through the prophet, Micah. "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). The multitude of people who assembled on the river sand returned to their homes, areas of work, and life's favorable and unfavorable experiences, from the blessed atmosphere of Convention that fondled them with the breeze of Grace, giving them spiritual complacency. We praise the Heaven for the messages. May God confer His blessings upon us to restructure our life with God and bring forth the sweet fruits of transformation, in accordance with the vision we obtained from the Convention.

The cyclone of change is lashing even in this New Year. The Egyptian President had to relinquish his power in the surging flow of people's opposition. Libya, Tunisia, and other Arab countries are in the grip of Peoples' revolution.

Last month we saw the rising of millions of people who are conscious of the value based democratic system and are bent upon bringing about changes from autocratic and authoritarian reigns to Democracy that gives the clarion cry for equality, brotherhood, and freedom.

Now we as a Church have entered into the last month of the financial year. May I remind the respected clergy and the officials of the parishes to perform their responsibilities in a time bound manner.

The '*Snehakaram*' project intends to extend aid to needy persons suffering from AIDS, Cancer, Heart, Kidney, and other serious illnesses. We hope to form a Corpus Fund as a fixed deposit, the interest of which we could give a maximum of Rupees 50,000 to each person who undergoes surgery in such areas of sickness. The interest thus accumulated could be included in the budget of each year for the effective utilization of this project. I invoke all the Dioceses and parishes to collect money for this noble cause so as to involve meaningfully in the dire need of our society. Jesus touched the leper to heal him. He healed the blind, smearing mud on the blind man's eyes. The hunch back woman was able to stand straight praising God. Let me remind you that this project is a means to share in the Church's healing ministry that the Lord has entrusted us with. We should be ever vigilant not to misappropriate this mission. It must reach only the needy.

We are entering the period of the Great Lent. Apostle John reveals the Lord who is happy along with others who are happy in the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. There was a crisis in that house. The Lord extended His helping hand and raised the members of that home to great joy. God knows each and everyone by name. He wants us to get rid of our anxiety which is useless. We must not be fearful. We must be brave. First of all you must seek His kingdom and righteousness. Then you will receive what you asked for. The leper put all his needs before Jesus. Jesus healed him. The same Jesus will do this for us too. Note the humility of the Centurion. He humbled before Jesus and admitted that it is not his merit, but His grace. Let our attitude to all those who undergo suffering in society be like the four young persons who brought before Jesus the helpless paralytic of the Capernaum.

During this Lent season we should not be satisfied with fasting only. I sincerely pray that we derive the real experience of Lent that the Holy Spirit offers through the prophet. "Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard" (Isaiah 58:8).

Grace be with you all.

Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



I am writing this as Japan is facing a natural calamity of unprecedented proportions. The magnitude of the recent massive earthquake and the devastation caused by the consequent tsunami are quite disturbing. The loss of thousands of lives and destruction to land, livestock, and property is heart-wrenching. The impact of what has

happened to the land and to the people of Japan is affecting the entire world. The loss and sorrow of the people of Japan touches the hearts and minds of everyone in the world.

Though Japan has advanced technology, and a relatively better economy than many other countries in the world, this natural calamity once again reminds us that human beings are not able to control nature, which belongs to God (Psalms 24). It is commendable to note that some of Japan's high-rise buildings with its strong foundations and sophisticated engineering withstood the power of those tidal waves. Indeed, Japan's technological superiority and preparedness enabled that country to implement precautionary measures that may have minimized what otherwise could have been a much greater extent of death, damage, and destruction. Nevertheless, the loss of thousands of lives, the damage to its nuclear facilities, the potential for nuclear irradiation, and the oil and gas explosions show us how powerless Japan is in spite of all its obvious advances. Such events, should give us pause to realize that human inventions and the technological progress have limitations.

The words of the Japanese Prime Minister "We will overcome" inspires hope not only to the Japanese people but the world. This is a time for the whole world to join its forces to help Japan overcome this recent calamity. In addition, it should be a time for all of humanity to appreciate the power of nature and work out a balance with nature to bring back harmony within the entire cosmos. It should also be a time for people to reflect on the immense power of God, and on His grace that sustains us.

Our Maramon convention this year had the theme: **Where are you? Where is your brother?** These questions are two sides of the same coin. God asks both these questions. The first question was to Adam (Gen. 3:10), and second was to his son Cain (Gen. 4:9). These questions are also pertinent to each of us, and we should find an answer for them before God. At the same time, these questions concern the intergenerational relationships in our homes, families, and

society. The omnipotent God knows where we are and where our brother is, but God still wants us to seriously consider these questions and respond to them, if we wish to remain as His children. God's wisdom enables us to find out where we are and where our brother is. The scribe who came to Jesus knew all the divine laws and he was practicing them. Yet he was not able to recognize who his neighbor was. Jesus enabled him to find out how he could be a good neighbor. The vision and insights that these questions give are quite essential for our spiritual well being. I thank God that the 116th Maramon Convention, which coincided with the 175th Anniversary of Malankara Reformation, was a blessing to all.

These are days when our Diocese and the whole church are having elections at various places to select representatives to the Diocesan Assembly and the Prathinidhi Mandalam. Our Church has a democratic pattern of administration. President Abraham Lincoln explained democracy as "from the people, by the people and for the people". People are important more than the positions, status and power of the elected representatives. Jesus Christ taught us the significance of Servant Ministry (Mk. 10:35-45). St. Paul stressed that we should respect others as 'more important' than ourselves. I am thankful to the people who step up to take on the various responsibilities in the Diocese. However, I am also concerned that the same people may be taking up the various positions for many years, and seem to be exchanging their seats of power, as if they are playing musical chairs. If this is true, it will not help bring newer people to positions of leadership and it will not motivate our younger generation to come forward and take responsibility for continuing the work of the Church. Decision making and democracy should not be viewed merely in terms of having a numerical majority. Of course, our Sabha Constitution allows for decisions to be made based on the numerical majority. But the emphasis of the Church, as we see in the Bible, must be based on the ability of the community to gather together to seek God's will and be guided by the Holy Spirit—Acts 1:4, 6, 15, etc. Therefore, democracy will have meaningful significance only when we base our democracy on moral foundations, which we discern as the values of the kingdom of God.

I also wish to draw your attention to the happenings in Egypt, Libya and the other Arab countries, where we see a rising tension between Monarchy and Democracy. In Egypt, and in Libya, people have expressed their desire to participate in decision-making bodies. When there is disparity between the rich and the poor, people cry for better governance and the sharing of resources. When people are denied privileges and marginalized; they raise

their voice for better administration. Power and wealth can bring in corruption, and misuse of authority can erode value systems. Power can be misused and freedom can be misunderstood. There are great lessons to be learnt not only from natural calamities but also from such historical incidents. One can very well ask the question as to what is the role of the church in our world today. The Church has to remain a called-out community to be a catalyst ministering towards the total transformation of the cosmos, in accordance with the will and purpose of God.

We are happy and proud that our special Sabha Mandalam elected Revs. Dr. Varghese Mathai, Dr. Oommen George, and K. V. Varkey as the new bishop designates. The Ramban consecration of these three Achens will take place at Ernakulum on Saturday, May 7, 2011, and their Episcopal Consecration will take place at Thiruvalla on Monday, August 15, 2011. We will inform all the parishes and congregations, through Kalpanas, about the details of these consecrations. All our bishops were present at the special Mandalam and we need to remember all of them in our prayers, especially because some of them are new to providing leadership for the consecrations. The bishop designates also need our regular prayers as they prepare themselves for the special ministry to which God has called

them through the Church. This is also a time for all the members of the Church to renew their commitment to Christ our Lord and Master. It is befitting that we are in the midst of the 50 days of Lent, where we follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ who incarnated, walked through the streets of Galilee, died on the Cross and rose from the dead. May all these events bring renewal and transformation in our lives and remind us that we look forward with hope to His coming again to judge the quick and the dead.

This issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger has the theme: **Gospel and the Challenges of the post Modernity.** Gospel is Jesus Christ. "Repent and believe..." is His message. Post Modernity should help turn the attention of human beings living in the modern era, from selfishness and materialism in a technocratic world, to be more conscious of the presence of the Ultimate Reality and to hold on to the values of the Kingdom of God.

May the Spring season refresh and renew us with added life, and the Summer that follows enable us to bear fruits for the glory of God.

Yours in Christ's Ministry

Geevarghese Mar Theodosius (Diocesan Episcopa)

DIOCESAN BISHOP'S ITINERARY

Please visit the Diocesan web site at www.marthomanae.org for the detailed itinerary of Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa.

NATIVE AMERICAN MISSION-2011

Summer Programs—30 to 40 Mission Volunteers are needed

Native American Mission of the Diocese of North America and Europe has arranged the following mission activities for June, 2011:

1. Israel Folsom Camp, Broken Bow, Oklahoma—June 6-10 Monday to Friday 2011
2. Vacation Bible School, Mount Vernon, Alabama—Sunday June 19- to Saturday 25, 2011
Aldergate Methodist Church, Mt. Vernon, Alabama

Nature of work include: Medical Mission, directing and providing leadership for Church Bible School- teaching, Music ministry, giving devotional messages, cooking, sports and games, operating electronic equipments for audio visual aides. This is an opportunity to engage in evangelism, medical mission, witnessing in the community, sharing faith and cultures and learning more about Native Americans and their struggles. This is a great opportunity for some interactive experiences with Choctaw Indians.

Age of the volunteers should be age 18 and over.

For more details please contact:

Nirmala Abraham, Convener, Native American Mission
Tel. **302 239 7119** or E-mail ocnirmala@aol.com



National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 800, New York, NY 10115-0050 ☐ www.nccusa.org
Office of the General Secretary ☐ P: 212-870-2025 ☐ F: 212-870-3112 ☐ E: mkinnamon@nccusa.org

January 28, 2011

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius
Diocesan Bishop
Mar Thoma Church
2320 Merrick Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

Dear Bishop Theodosius:

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

On behalf of my colleagues on the National Council of Churches delegation, I want to thank you and other members of the Mar Thoma Church for the wonderful hospitality you extended to us during the church to church visit on December 20. It seems particularly appropriate that the visit was held during the 175th anniversary year of the Reformation that gave rise to the Mar Thoma Church as we now know it. The anniversary is a reminder of your identity as a bridge church, integrating orthodox and reformation traditions and giving rise to generations of ecumenical commitment.

My colleagues and I were deeply impressed by many things you shared with us (in addition to the delicious food!), including

- the theological underpinning of Mar Thoma worship and the clear connection between liturgy and mission;
- the emphasis on leadership development, coupled with the conviction that “every Mar Thomite is a missionary”;
- the neighborhood ministries, as well as your wider mission projects in Mexico and among Native Americans;
- the commitment to work ecumenically in those places where you have extensive mission activity;
- your own openness, and that of other Mar Thoma leaders, to new directions that God may be calling the church.

Our conversation also surfaced at least three issues that would seem to demand more dialogue, both within the Mar Thoma Church and within the community of communions that is the NCC:

1. The challenge of being an immigrant church as it both values its heritage and adapts to a new context. There seemed to be agreement that the Mar Thoma Church in this setting is not an Indian church with “branch offices” in America, but an American church with deep roots in India. But this raises other issues or tensions with which you are obviously wrestling:

- the “generation gap” between first-generation immigrants and those born in the United States;
- the possible tension between leaders, including bishops, who are born and educated in India and those who are US natives;
- the need to give priority attention to the mission imperatives of this setting and the need to show mission solidarity with the church in India;

- the challenge of moving from the time when ethnic identity was inseparable from ecclesial identity to the time when the church is far more multi-ethnic and multi-cultural (as you put it, a truly “global church”);
- the tension between holding on to rich, inherited patterns of worship and embracing forms of worship that speak to the new generation.

2. The challenge of engaging in mission in other settings, while also addressing the mission needs of our immediate neighborhoods. As I mentioned during the discussion, many Christians in all of our churches find it easier to relate to persons who are far removed than to those who are “different” next door.
3. The need to make “family” a focus of concern, a central item on the church’s agenda. This was an issue named at every stop of my visit to Kerala, especially the care of the elderly; and I sense that it is also of great importance here in this diocese, where the Mar Thoma Church faces an inevitable tension between Indian understandings of family and those of a western cultural context. Issues related to the role of women in church and society may fall under this heading.

In my judgment, each of these issues is of real importance for other churches in the NCC community as well, and should, therefore, be on the Council’s agenda. Discussions in that ecumenical setting may be of use to you, even as the experience of the Mar Thoma Church can be of help to others.

I want to close by affirming what I trust you already know: that the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, this community of thirty-seven Christian communions, would be deeply impoverished without the presence and contribution of your church. May God bless you, my good friend, in your ministry of pastoral, missional, and sacramental oversight. And may this church we both love be ever attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Warm regards,

Michael

Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary

P.S: Please feel free to share this letter with others in your community, and to use it as you see fit to raise issues for internal discussion. If you feel that I have misread the conversation during the church to church visit, please don’t hesitate to say so.

cc: Mr. Dennis Frado, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Bishop Herbert Donovan, Consultant to the Presiding Bishop for Anglican Communion Relations
Rev. Nicholas Genevieve-Tweed, African Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. Martin Kraus, Orthodox Church in America
His Grace Dr. Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
Mr. Sarosh Koshy, Mar Thoma Church (NCC)
Ms. Clare Chapman, United Methodist Church (NCC)

**NCCC GENERAL SECRETARY REV. DR. MICHAEL KINNAMON’S
CHURCH TO CHURCH VISIT TO THE MAR THOMA CHURCH**



Post Modern Reading of the Bible— Challenges and Possibilities

Rev. V. M. Mathew, Anicadu

No definition is comprehensive enough to explain what Postmodernism is. Dr. Al Barry, president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod offers this simple definition: “Postmodernism is a cultural force and societal trend that leads many people to believe that there is no objective truth, no sure and certain right and wrong, no way of ever being sure about anything, other than what brings personal pleasure and appeals to one’s personal interests and tastes.” Ryan La Mothe, in the article *Challenges of Faith: Transitional Objects, Faith, and Post modernity*, lists the following characteristics of Postmodernism. They are a) the disbelief in any ultimate reliability in knowledge or truth, b) the disbelief in being able to “discover” the essential nature of an object, c) the doubt regarding unity, understood as sharing a common language, ethos, and language, and d) the denial of the transcendence of norms and values.

Come West, who works in the fields of philosophy and theology, has suggested in lectures at Yale that we approach postmodernism as “anti-foundational, anti-totalizing, and demystifying.” Postmodernism is anti-foundational in that it resolutely refuses to posit any one premise as the privileged and unassailable starting point for establishing claims to truth. It is anti-totalizing because postmodern discourse suspects that any theory that claims to account for everything is suppressing counterexamples. Postmodernism is also demystifying: it attends to claims that certain assumptions are “natural” and tries to show that these are in fact ideological projections. Postmodernism is a development from modernism.

Historical Survey

A historical verification of world views that emerged in the last post Christ era is needed to understand Postmodernism. These world views in some way or the other have influenced the reading of the Bible in these years. In the first stage which is called the medieval period and until the emergence of renaissance, Western society was collective, theistic and static. It is also called the pre critical era in biblical interpretation. But the emergence of Renaissance in the 1500’s changed this mindset and emphasized refreshed learning and scientific advances. The role of reason was given importance and humanism replaced theism in the western mindset. Philosophies basically concentrated on individuals and believed in individual solutions in various problems. René Descartes, one of the philosophers of renaissance and enlightenment, advocated doubting in everything and questioning the truth in everything.

Descartes concluded that there was one thing he could not doubt—his own existence. Accordingly, he founded his new philosophy on his famous *axiom, Cogito, ergo sum*—“I think, therefore, I am.” This philosophy became influential and paved the way for the development of modern world view.

Modernism started with renaissance and flowered under the enlightenment. Three things were stressed in the enlightenment era, the belief in human capability, the scientific method, and the certitude of knowledge. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), one of the philosophers who led the prevalence of Modernity, in his work, ‘*Critique of Pure Reason*’, argues that knowledge depends on the structure of the mind. We are able to comprehend reality because categories exist within our minds that actively generate perception. These categories, Kant assumed, are universally the same in all people. Thus, we all perceive the world in the same way. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), as observed by many as the person most responsible for transitioning philosophical thinking into postmodernism. Completely rejecting Kant’s theory of transcendental categories, which are supposedly shared by all people, Nietzsche concludes that truth is nothing more than an illusion. The sixteenth century also witnessed the Reformation in the Roman Catholic Church, which led to the widespread reading of Scripture.

Tendencies of Modernity can be illustrated as follows: (i) Rationality; (ii) Autonomy; (iii) Objectivity (iv) Science as the objective arbiter of truth; (v) Knowledge produced by science is “truth” and is eternal; (vi) Value of progress and perfection (vii) Order; (viii) Language is rational and transparent (it means exactly what it says); (ix) Rejection of that which does not represent order; and (x) Rejection of that which is considered “other” i.e. lack of tolerance.

Following Nietzsche, philosophers grappled with two major issues which gave rise to postmodernism. The first issue is that of hermeneutics - textual interpretation. It asks: “How do I know the true interpretation of a text?” Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) concluded that an interpreter cannot objectively understand the exact mind and intent of the original author of a text. Rather, a meaning for us emerges from a text only as we engage in a dialogue with it.

The second issue is that of language. It asks: “Can language objectively describe truth?” Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) concluded that language cannot objectively describe truth. This is because all language is socially conditioned. We understand the world solely in terms of our language games—that is, our linguistic, social constructs. According to Wittgenstein, truth, as we perceive it, is itself

XXIX MAR THOMA FAMILY CONFERENCE

DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE



Date:

June 30—July 3, 2011

Venue:

Radisson Hotel, Edmonton

Theme:

Discipleship: "if you hold to my teachings, you are my disciples." John 8:31

Hosted by:

Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton

Inspiring and thought provoking messages from Thirumeni's and Marmon Convention Speakers

*

Testimony and Witnessing

*

Thrilling musical experience by Choirs and Praise and Worship teams

*

Exciting Sightseeing from Majestic Canadian Rockies to Fossil Hunting.

CONFERENCE LEADERS



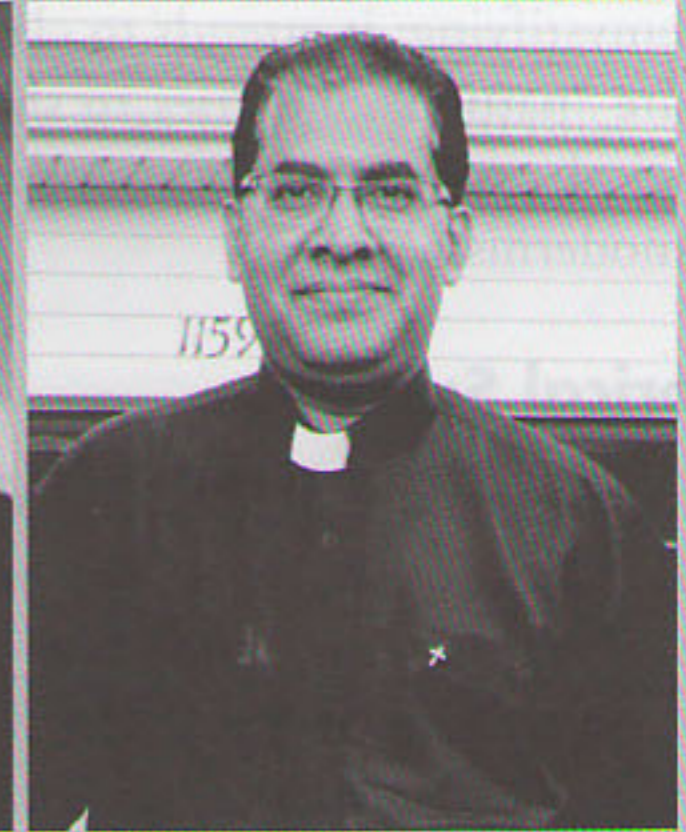
Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius—Diocesan Episcopa



Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa



Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse Professor, Multnomah University



Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla (Youth Chaplin)

President: Rev. Reji John (780) 450-9621
 Secretary: Mr. Thomas Varghese (780) 461-7636
 Souvenir: Mr. Mathew Koshy (780) 450-4972

PRAY & PARTICIPATE

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND ONLINE REGISTRATION PLEASE VISIT US AT:

WWW.MTFC2011.ORG

socially constructed. During the twentieth century, major philosophical figures such as Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) and Richard Rorty (1931-) built on these developments to define the essential boundaries and issues of postmodernism. Rev. Y. T. Vinayaraj, in his book *“Re imagining Dalit Theology: Post Modern Readings”*, explains the following characteristics of Post modernism: (i) An epistemological turn to find alternative knowledges; thus envisages epistemological and anthropological pluralism; (ii) A quest for ‘mini narratives’ or ‘mere narratives’. From universal to local or little stories; (iii) Rejects the universal regime of knowledge and aims to recuperate suppressed epistemology; (iv) Post modernists say that there is no fixed subjectivity or guaranteed truth but only interpretations; (v) Deconstruction : undermines binary opposites—brings out the politics behind the construction of meanings—allows ‘marginals’ to present themselves as active social agents in social space but not as binary opposites; and (vi) Rejected all unitary theories and gives special attention to the particular/local/little.

I would like to present the challenges and possibilities of Post modernism in reading the Bible with the following three questions:

Is Bible a Meta Narrative?

One of the basic contours of Post Modernism is the rejection of Meta narratives. At its simplest, the word means “Big Story.” The Meta narrative of the Bible is its story about God. One may ask “What is the Bible all about?” The answer could be, “the Bible is the story of God’s self-revelation to the world through a chosen people.” Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), the postmodern philosopher, said: “Simplifying to the extreme, I define the postmodern as incredulity towards meta narratives.” God revealed himself to this world through different means. The Bible presents the umpteen ways in which God revealed himself to the world. These individual stories constitute the entire story of the Bible. I do believe in the small stories and voices that are being heard through the narratives of the Bible. Nobody can undermine the local/small voices of the Bible through which an individual experiences God’s revelation. When you project and explain the Bible as a Meta narrative, these small stories in the Bible will be undermined. I do not deny the connecting link of God’s self revelation throughout these small stories but that should not result in the rejection or acknowledging the importance of these individual experiences.

During the Modern period, the Bible was presented as a Meta narrative and that gave a different color to the entire message of Bible. The missionary movements used this image and became ‘crusaders’ to different cultural and religious contexts. The value of individual experiences was neglected and it was presented with absolute claims. But Post Modern reading of the Bible opens an unending explo-

ration of the possibilities of personal experiences. I believe in the importance of personal experiences in the spiritual realm in each one of us. If the post modern reading of the Bible can lead us to that realm then it has a positive impact in our lives.

Post modern emphasis on the small or mini narratives paved the way for the voices in the margins to be heard. In the modern period these were ignored or suppressed to project the dominant and mega voices. The dominant church and missionary movements decided which voices are to be heard. But a post modern reading of the Bible enabled these small voices like the voice of the Dalits and Tribals in India, the voice of women and the voice of other marginalized groups throughout the world. I believe that the voice of the Bible is the voice of the marginalized and oppressed. But in the modern period we were restricted from hearing these voices because of the attention given to the Mega voices. Post modernism opened a door to hear these little voices.

Text oriented or reader oriented?

In the reading of the Bible, a major problem is the question, “which do we give importance to the reader or the text?” This is a complex question to answer. There is always a tension between the importance of the text and the reader. Few Post modern philosophers advocate even the death of the author. But Post modernism gives importance to a reader oriented approach especially in the reading of the Bible. Edger V. McKnight in his book *‘Post Modern use of the Bible’* argues that a satisfying role and function of the Bible will emphasize the role of Biblical literature in the life of the reader. This will not minimize the role of the text. The text must have been written in antiquity but a reader oriented approach brings the text into the context of the reader so that the text should not remain strange and ancient. Here the reader becomes the subject and text becomes the object. I propose that we use the available methods to analyse the text but only to create construction of the text in today’s context. This approach rejects the so called ‘sacred’ nature of the text and re imagines the sacred nature in the life and experiences of the reader today. So when a postmodern reader reads the Bible not only does he/she identify the God in the text but also identifies a God within the reader. Then the text becomes relevant to the reader. We are trained to see God who is within the text and I do not undermine that experience. But when we are able to place ourselves in the text and identify the God who is within us that experience will give a different spiritual experience. When a post modern person reads the text, the text also reads the person.

This reading also destructs any monopoly over the reading of the text. There is no ‘the interpretation’ of the text but a varied reading of the text. This allows a person to experience God in his/ her context and constructs an experience of God which may be different from another person.

(Continued on page 13)

Border Lives and Border God: Diaspora Reconfigures Heritage, Mission and Theology

Rev. Y. T. Vinayaraj

“Where do you come from?” I asked one veteran gentleman, during my visit to one of the Mar Thoma congregations in the United States of America. Instead of replying to my question, he began to sing an old Malayalam song; “*oridathu jananam, oridathu maranam, chumalil jeevitha bharam...*” (Birth and death happen in different places; the only thing that is left in the shoulder is the burden of life). “*Achen* (pastor),” he continued, “it is not fare to ask such a question to people like me who have been living here for the last four decades as citizens of this country. Better you ask the question “where are you between?” Of course, migrancy is a border life experience that finds its location ‘in-between’. Diaspora as it is called today, in fact signals a new mode of being in the contemporary world. It is a new location that defines life, ethics, aesthetics and politics in the postmodern/ postcolonial/post-industrial context. As far as the migrant Christian communities are concerned, diaspora constitutes the theological location through which they try to reconfigure their heritage, mission and theology in a ‘foreign’ land. It is not intended here to discuss the issues and problems of migration; rather to attend the complexity and heterogeneity of the category—“diaspora” and to offer a theological appraisal for that living condition.

Diaspora as a mode of being in the world

Due to the impact of globalization the cultural formations are inherently *glocalized* today. ‘Crossing the border’ has become a common phrase that signals the new aesthetics of human life. The words such as hybridity, liminality, interdisciplinarity, de-territorialization, trans-national, transgender so on and so forth have become very common and familiar in this context. Social theories of ‘post-isms’ such as postcolonialism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, post feminism, post ethnicity...inform us further that the cultural or ethnic identity is no longer exists as fixed or essentialist or localized; rather it must always be mixed, relative and inventive.² It marks the specificity of the contemporary cultural/political life that attends or depends on the issues of migration, multi-culturalism, transnationalism. Hybridity-the diasporic condition reveals a new mode of our being in the ‘globalized’ world. Diaspora is not just yet another social location; rather it is a significant location through which we look at problems and possibilities of a particular mode of existence in the world.³

Diaspora is the word used by the people living outside their country of origin to describe themselves. In the Greek root as it is used in the Bible, it refers to the scattered Christian communities. Robin Cohen defines diaspora as



the communities of people living together in one country who acknowledge that ‘the old country’—a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty, emotions, identity and subjectivity.⁴ In this sense each member of that diasporic community is shared a common story (memory) of their past migration history and a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background. Sometimes it is a political strategy to forging solidarities against the continuing racial oppression in the new country.

As the Bible testifies, migration is not a new problem. It has always been in the cultural history of human beings. The Bible talks about many stories of migration, exile, exodus, and mass displacement. But the issue of migration in this globalized era is totally different from the biblical context, and hence the old solutions are not tenable. The new communicative systems and other technological advancements have already transgressed the issues of space and time. The distance between the old and new territories is being lessened and thus memory has been tainted by new *simulacra*.⁵ Many of the migrants have found ‘home’ in the new land and for them ‘home country’ is not at all nostalgic because of the new possibilities of the new spaces. However, the diaspora identities are not homogenous but varied and contested in accordance with generational/ gender differences. The younger generation may not be sharing the same passion to the ‘story of the past migration’ and ‘old country.’ Thus diaspora identities are contested identities which must be attended differently. Another category which is more useful here is the condition of diaspora-hybridity.

Hybridity-living ‘in-between’

The experiences of living in diasporas have animated much recent postcolonial literature and theory. The post colonialists use the word hybridity to describe the “betwixt-and-between” culture of the diasporized communities.⁶ According to postcolonial theories, hybridity does not mean any kind of miscegenation or mixed breeding; rather it is an intermediary location where the self and the other re-locate themselves in proximity, alterity and difference.⁷ It is to reject the single or unified identity and to give preference for multiple cultural locations and identities. Homi Bhabha, one of the prominent proponents of this concept, calls hybridity as ‘the third space’ or possibility ‘in-between’ that we find the words with which we can speak of ourselves and others.”⁸ By the ‘third space’, Bhabha means to ‘living on both sides of the symbolic fault line without allegiance to any.’ For him it is a possibility of both reconciliation and resistance by which the interlocutors deconstruct their sub-

jectivities and differences in a dialogical proximity and hospitality. It does not speak about the bleedings of 'encounter' but honors the wisdom in its 'mutuality.' Thus the category-hybridity is being used here as a location or passage of fraternity, proximity, and hospitality.

Here, I would like to discuss some of the special features of the Diaspora through which it explain its complexity and heterogeneity.

"Not-at-Home-ness": Home is in the making

Home gives us a sense of our place in the world. To be in 'home' is to occupy a location where we are welcomed, where we can be with people very much like ourselves. But what does it mean to the immigrants who live far from their 'own' lands of birth or origin? Diaspora theorists such as Avtar Brah and Robin Cohen propose that the idea of 'home' is a mythic one. In their perception, "it is a place of desire and longing that sits oddly with the present, chosen location of the immigrant. In this sense it is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin."⁹

This "un-home-like" existence is well explained by Sebastian Chrest-Jones, one of the main characters in Julia Kristeva's novel *Murder In Byzantium*: "I neither fled nor chose. And yet in my home I am not at home. And when I travel abroad I recognize on the faces of strangers the familiar look of being nowhere. Is it really how they are or only my momentary impression as an uprooted passerby? I am of no place, as for time; perhaps I am of a time that shrinks into something outside time."¹⁰ The potentiality of this notion "not-at-home-ness" is that it speaks of open spaces and burst limits in contrary to our traditional notion of fixed space-home. It reconfigures our borders and envisages new spaces, new relationships, and new homes on the roads. In the above mentioned novel, towards the end of the narrative, Sebastian re-visits or re-locates his initial concept of home and concludes: "My home is on the road (*In via in patria*) and with strangers, who like me, belonging nowhere."¹¹ Home is in the making as we encounter the strangers in our journeys. According to Derrida, it is the coming of the Other, the stranger, the messiah, the impossibility that determines our homeness.¹²

What is our heritage? Derrida speaks on heritage: "heritage, in order to save its life, demands reinterpretation, critique, displacement, that is an active intervention, so that a transformation worthy of the name might take place: so that something might happen, an event, some history, an unforeseeable future-to-come."¹³ The enclosure of heritage rejects its possibility of blossoming. Thus, keep it open so that the impossible would come in to it and make it a fragrance for others. The discourse on heritage thus transcends our 'memory of the past' and locates itself in a new spectrality of time and space—a transition from *roots to routes*.¹⁴

Diasporic Identities: "To be in-beyond"

Stuart Hall in his studies on diasporized people, proposes a 'real heterogeneity of interests and identities' and argues for

'new ethnicities' that deny ideas of 'essential' cultural/ethnic identity.¹⁵ Identity or heritage or inheritance is not given but a discursive formation. It is well explained by Kwame Appiah while he talks about the black identity in a post-colonial context: "we are all already contaminated by each other."¹⁶ It reminds us that there is no 'pure'/'uncontaminated' identity or culture which survived the inevitable interaction or mediation especially in a globalized context.¹⁷ Hybridity or non-essentialist diasporic identity, as seen in the postcolonial theory, is the answer to the dangers of cultural binarism (us/them) and the fundamentalist urge to seek 'pure' cultural forms.

While Bhabha defining the notion of hybridity- "the third space" or "the space in-between," he tries to articulate a new notion of identity- "to be in-beyond," "not based on fundamentalist exoticism or any kind of eclectic identity of the multi-culturalism." This non-fixity/fluidity of identity is well explained by Judith Butler, a postmodern feminist theoretician. For Butler, identity is performatively constructed by the very "expressions" that we said to be its results.¹⁸ The potentiality of this notion of identity is that, as Foucault reiterates, the possibility of being other than this. The postmodern psychoanalysts design the postmodern self as "one self but many stories." For Kristeva, identity is a "signifying practice" in which the subject makes it intelligible through its words and acts.¹⁹ According to these perceptions of identity, diaspora identities are "to be in-beyond" and capable enough to re-draw itself through the "signifying practices" of counter ritualistic re-memories, creative hermeneutical engagements, and interactions of hospitality and fraternity.

Liminality: Life at the cutting edge

Liminality is another word which the postmodernists use to denote the diasporic life condition. Liminality means "a threshold", the life at the cutting edge or 'in-between.' It signals the temporality of space, time and self. It is an experience of 'in-between' pain and hope, being nomad and belonging. It is a location in-between 'native' and 'foreign.' It is the space in between self and other, subject and object, spirituality and materiality, and in short life and death. Thus liminality is sacred, alluring, dynamic and at the same time dangerous.

The liminality of time is the eschatological time when the impossibility comes into our being. It is an open-ended space. It is a location where one can have alternative ways of saying, doing, being, engendering and inspiring. That is why Catherine Keller re-imagines apocalypse as the kaleidoscope that reconfigures our time, space and self.²⁰ Each moment is an eschatological moment in which we see the infinity at the face of the other.²¹ Liminality, according to postmodern theology is not a state of confusion and pain but it is the 'dis/closure' of new passage and hope. As Lux Xun, a Chinese philosopher of the 20th century Said: "Hope can be neither affirmed nor denied. Hope is like a path in the country side. Originally there was no path—yet, as people are walking all the time in the same spot, a way appears."²²

Towards a Diaspora theology: Border lives and border God

The task before the Diaspora Theology is to attend the hybridity, liminality and the creativity of the diasporized identity. The Bible refers to the varied experiences of diaspora such as Jewish experiences of nomadism, mass displacement of the slaves, and scattered experiences of early Christian communities. The biblical understanding of the exilic people and their concept of the journeying God become pertinent in the Theology of Diaspora. By drawing the Jewish figure of *Shekhinah* who embodies precisely the notion of moving divine presence, the Bible alludes to the concept of 'divine not-at-homeness.' The *Shekhinah* God is the one who accompanies the exiled and dispossessed of the land. Becoming a 'tent-like divine mobile dwelling,' *Shekhinah* becomes a 'home away from home' or 'home in the making' or 'home on the road' for the displaced people. *Shekhinah* invites us to explore notions of exile and home through a concept of God who is outside God-self, and so a sense of identity and home found in the not-at-homeness.

Shekhinah is the divine sanctuary for the exiled Israelites, in which they continue their anti-imperialistic practices to keep transformation of their covenantal subjectivities. Through counter liturgical and social institutional practices, they were able to uphold the counter imagination of their social existence while keeping it open ended for being hospitable to the strangers. While discussing about his migrant Latino spirituality and theology, Elaine Padilla explains this more clearly: "The hope in relation to *Shekhinah* emerges as a nuanced understanding of the biblical promise for a home with a vision for a worldly hospitality of inclusion that is tightly knit to a nomadic sense of self."²³

The coming of Jesus is witnessed by the evangelist John translates that 'he tabernacled with us' (John 1:14). The 'tent-like dwelling' signals a 'liminal God'—a 'border God' who becomes a passage of hope to those who live in the margins or borders. The book of Revelation is actually a perception of the displaced or the marginalized on the possibility of life at the cutting edge of imperialism, domination and death. It informs us that eschaton is the liminal space in which it dis/closes an opening- a threshold to new self, new other, new earth and new heaven.

Conclusion

Diaspora theology no longer asks "where do you come from?" but asks "where you between?" It attends the diasporic 'in-between' life. Diasporic life is a border life at the same time a bridge in-between. Diasporic identity is "to be in-beyond"; not left behind but in the midst of it. Diaspora Theology envisages a 'border God' who is present in the liminality/ marginality of human life. It is the place of eschaton in which we find the infinity at the face of the other. Thus, for diaspora theology, mission and being become inseparable. It is the threshold to which our theology, missiology, ecclesiology are being interrogated, reconfigured and transformed.

Mar Thoma Church that inherits a rich legacy of hybridity of East and West, Orthodox and Anglican, mis-

sion field and diaspora, Tradition and Modernity embodies a possibility of TRANS-localization and TRANS-formation. It is well evident in its recent routes to the rest of the world through its missiological engagements and the migration of its members. Diaspora, hence, signals a new face of the Mar Thoma Church through which it witnesses its heritage, mission, and theology to the world Christian community in the postmodern context. ■

It is my privilege and honor to write an article in the festschrift volume that celebrates the life and vision of Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan. It is Metropolitan Joseph Mar Thoma who encouraged me to pursue my theological studies. It reveals his hospitality towards the unattended and his respect towards the voices of differences that he believed to be helpful for the enrichment of the mission and theology of the Church. I always admire his love and care towards me as a son of an evangelist, a youth from the mission field, and a minister of the Mar Thoma Church. The title Tradition and Modernity is appropriate for this festschrift, as it encapsulates the Metropolitan's perceptions and perspectives on heritage which is transcending, transgressing, and open-ended. This article comes out of my recent experience with the Mar Thoma diaspora communities in the United States of America.

- 1 Robertson suggests that the term 'glocalization' more adequately describes the relationship between the local and the global as one of interaction and interpenetration rather than of binary opposites. See Robertson, Roland (1995), 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity' in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London: Sage.
- 2 Clifford (1988:10) cited by Marwan M. Kraidy, "The Global, the Local, and the Hybrid: A Native Ethnography of Glocalization" in *Ethnographic Research, A Reader*, ed., Stephanie Taylor (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 182-209
- 3 Russell King, John Connell and Paul white (eds.), *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (Routledge: 1995), xv
- 4 Robin Cohen, *Global diasporas: An Introduction* (UCL Press, 1997), ix
- 5 Simulacra is the term coined by Jean Baudrillard, by which he explained that our contemporary world is constituted by the media with its 'floating signifiers'. Thus the contemporary world that is presented to us is an unreal world. See Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 170
- 6 Hybridity gained its traction from Homi Bhabha, who used it to refer to the conflicted ways in which Indians under British colonial rule internalized British and Indian identities. For more details see, Homi. K. Bhabha, "The Third Space," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed., Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990). But this category is being used here just to draw out the cultural interaction between the guest and host communities rather than the power equations embedded in it.
- 7 This word is misleading if it has racial or biological connotations, or if it suggests that, culturally speaking, a person is combining two pure traditions into one impure tradition. All cultural traditions are attempts to creatively syncretize diverse, pre-existing ideas and practices from within or beyond their geographical levels in to complex wholes. For an interesting experience sharing of this hybrid identity read, Jay McDaniel, "I Listen, Therefore I Am: An Asian American Approach to Post-Materialist Living", *Dialog*, Vol. 49:9, Dec 2010, P.323-331.
- 8 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

- 9 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (Routledge, 1997), 192
- 10 Julia Kristeva, *Murder In Byzantium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 52
- 11 Julia Kristeva, *Murder In Byzantium*, 217.
- 12 Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000)
- 13 Jacques Derrida., *For What Tomorrow...* Translated by Jeff Fort (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 4
- 14 I borrowed this idea from Paul Gilroy. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Verso, 1993).
- 15 Stuart Hall., *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed., David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 441-9
- 16 Cited by Marwan M. Kraidy, "The Global, The Local, and the Hybrid" *Op.cit.*
- 17 While attending the issue of the non-fixity of subjectivity, Deleuze and Guattari talks about Nomads. For them, a nomad is someone who lives in an open space without restriction. Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, 1986. Erni calls them

as the impossible subjects (Erni, 1989). For Allor, nomads have no physical space, only discursive positions and hence they are cultural chameleons (Allor, 1988). Abu Lughod uses the word 'halfies' to refer to people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage (Abu Lughod, 1991: 137). See, John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000)

- 18 Cited from *A reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, eds., Raman Selden et.al (London: Pearson, 2005), 211
- 19 Cited from *A reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, eds., Raman Selden et.al (London: Pearson, 2005), 211
- 20 Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then, A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996)
- 21 This idea is well explained by Emmanuel Levinas. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. By Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969)
- 22 Cited from Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then, A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), xii
- 23 Elaine Padilla, "Border-crossing and Exile, A Latina's Theological Encounter with Shekhinah", *The Ecumenical Review of the World Council of Churches*, (Geneva: Dec 2009), 381-38

Post Modern Reading of the Bible—Challenges and Possibilities *(Cont'd from page-9)*

So Post modernism allows us to move closer to God using our own experiences and feel a God who lives within our own contexts.

Is there an absolute truth?

The modern world view concentrated on the claim of an absolute truth. They were intolerant against other world views that also claimed to be absolute. The two major movements that emerged in relation to Christianity are the Evangelical movement and Fundamental movements. Both claimed to be the owners of exclusive claims. They did not respect any other claims of truth. The intolerance and disrespect towards any other truths created a kind of military attitude. In a way, the Bible was also presented as intolerant toward the other scriptures and other religions. Without respecting the faith of the other person, the Christian faith was imposed on other people. The modernist gave little importance or no importance to the personal experiences of truth. Anyone could claim to believe in an absolute truth without having a personal experience. Absolute claims on truth created a kind of arrogance and disrespect toward the other person and communities. Modern preaching became a kind of coerced preaching without respecting the personal beliefs and experiences. Modernists preach to believe in Jesus Christ without focussing on the practical aspect of it. They also concentrate on doctrines and coerced teachings. They believe in universalized solutions to individual problems. In this context the postmodern position on claims of

absolute truth influenced many. The Postmodern world view rejects all kinds of absolute claims of truth. They believe in the personal and experiential realms of truth. While maintaining respect of the other person who also has a faith, one can believe in his/her own religion and truth.

I do not want to deny the belief of a person who believes in the ultimate truth that is God. But my point is that it should not have a dominant nature. I also believe that God is the ultimate truth but I cannot comprehend the length and width of this truth. A major problem with modernity is that it claims to know this truth and that has led to domination of all other truths. A human being cannot claim absolute knowledge and ownership of this truth. So the post modern reading of the Bible strengthens us to respect the truth experiences of the other people .

I conclude this article by saying that every world view that emerged during these years has influenced the reading of the Bible. Each stage has its own merits and demerits. But the post modern readings of the Bible really enable us to give more importance to the small, the little and respect each one to have a peaceful living. It also emphasizes the importance of having a personal experience with God and strengthens our own experiences in the spiritual journey. It teaches us that our spiritual experience is not 'the' experience but it has its own value and meaning in it. ■

Rev. V. M. Mathew is a M.Th. student in the department of Old Testament in the Gurukul Theological College Chennai.

Major accidents involving individuals "texting while driving" and "Talking on Cell Phone while driving" are on the rise. In some areas, these statistics are exceeding even DUI cases recently.

"DO NOT USE PHONE WHILE DRIVING—IT TAKES ONLY LESS THAN A SPLIT SECOND TO CAUSE A TRAGIC ACCIDENT"

move to

DALLAS &

Pick

y
o
u
r



dream

HOME



I'll walk you thru'

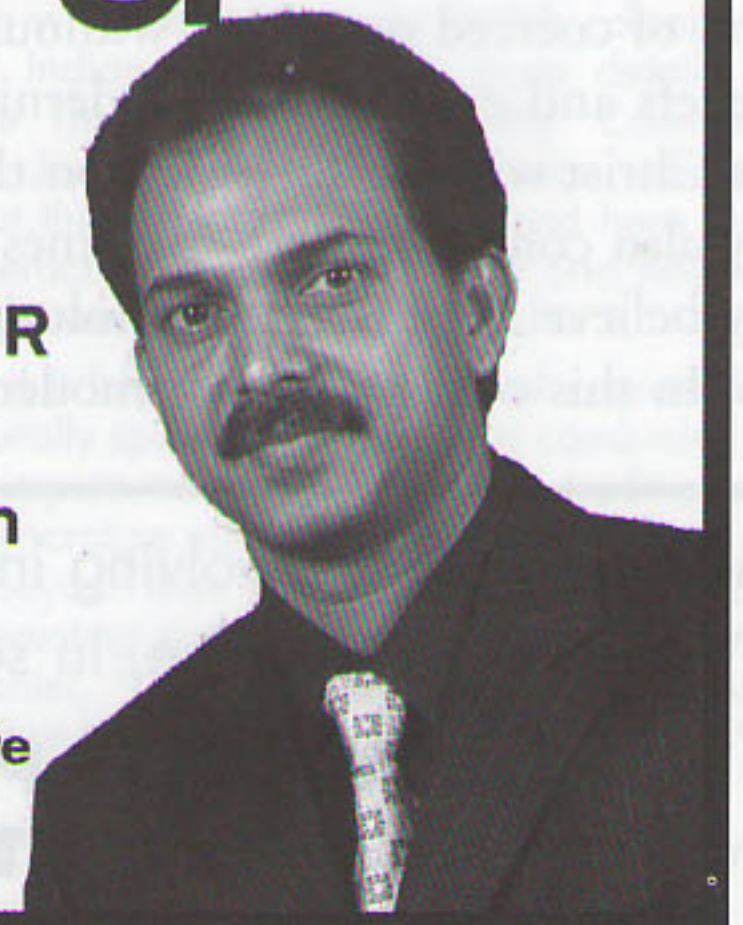


Jose Cherian SFR

214-789-5429

realtorjose1@yahoo.com

**Multi Million Producer
Castle Hills Sales Award
Top Selling Realtor Beam Real Estate
Short Sale & Foreclosure
Resources Certified**



(A Member of The Marthoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch)

Wrong Notion of Development: The Cause of Poverty, Ecological Damage and Distortion of Faith

Prof. John M. Itty

Introduction

The world today is being shaped by middle class aspirations to development. The dominant notion of development not only directs the use of resources but also the thinking and behavior of the people. Even religious faith and the image of God got reshaped by the ethos and values of the popular model of development people uphold. A different paradigm of development is necessary for eradication of poverty, protection of ecology and recapturing of true religion/faith. This paper seeks to examine the distortions in our understanding of development and to unearth the essential ingredients of the model of development that is just, sustainable and spiritual.

What is Development?

Defining 'development' is the key. Many people understand development in terms of industrialization, modernization, prosperity and growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is an inadequate or distorted way of understanding development because while contributing to development, these also impede development.

As per reports, between 1947 and 2000, in India, 60 million people were forcibly displaced for the construction of dams, development of mines and setting up industries (Fernandez 2007, Council for Social Development 2008). Industrialization comes at huge human cost. Industrialization is needed for development, but to think that industrialization is development is wrong. Indiscriminate industrialization would only endanger real development.

Many people equate modernization in the form of express highways, flyovers, modern airports, big shopping malls, etc. with development. In advanced countries, such facilities are built and maintained with surplus funds generated from within the economy. Therefore, such facilities for consumers do not hinder further industrialization. Contrary to this, in developing countries, these infrastructural facilities are built with funds borrowed from abroad. It must be remembered that the development of railways and ports during the colonial period helped only the extraction of raw materials from the colonies and the import of finished goods from abroad; both impeded industrialization in the colonies.

In the past, urbanization was the result of industrialization, and therefore, the surplus generated by the latter was used to handle the problems created by the former. In

India, people in rural areas are driven to cities as a result of growing destitution. Therefore, growing urbanization today is an index of growing deprivation, and not development.

Historically, poverty in poor countries is a creation of the modernization and commercialization of agriculture. People's habits of food, dress and shelter used to be molded largely by geographic, climatic and cultural factors. It is the pattern of consumption/ production constructed by geography and culture that helped to maintain food sovereignty and insurance against poverty for thousands of years, except during natural calamities. By literally going against the grain, the global market has jeopardized food security worldwide. The neoliberals propagated the message of uniform taste and fashion in order to create and capture a global market for Transnational Corporations (TNCs) unmindful of the consequences.

Other casualties of indiscriminate modernization are knowledge systems, practices and technologies that have proven useful and valuable for thousands of years. For example, traditional systems of watershed management are found to be more productive and cost effective than modern methods of irrigation and drainage. Rejection of many such systems of knowledge and practices in the name of modernization contributes to another 'deficit of development'.

It has been repeatedly proven that growth of GDP cannot contribute to the well-being of the people. Therefore, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced Human Development Index (HDI) which is a composite index that includes per capita income, health and education status as an alternative index to measure the well-being of the people. While India and China boast high rates of growth of GDP, their HDI rankings are 127 and 81 respectively. What is needed is a concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which is the best index of development.

Bhutan, a small country in the Himalayas, has taken a heroic decision. The goal of Bhutan is not a higher GDP, but GNH. Under the new constitution, all government programs are judged not by the economic benefits they offer, but by the happiness they produce. The Planning authority of Bhutan produced an intricate model of well-being with four pillars, nine domains and 72 indicators of happiness. The four pillars of a happy society are the economy, culture, the environment and good governance. In all other countries, happiness is sought by ignoring the last three. The planners break these pillars into nine domains: psychological well-being, ecology, health, education, cul-

ture, living standards, time use, community vitality and good governance. Each domain has its own weighted and un-weighted GNH index. All these domains are to be analyzed with the use of 72 indicators. Under the domain of psychological well-being, for example, indicators include frequency of prayer and meditation, feeling of selflessness, jealousy, calm, compassion, generosity and frustration as well as suicidal thoughts.

This approach to the well-being of the people is definitely the best alternative yet to the idea of development in capitalism. It is based on Buddhist ethos that questions the pillars of capitalism—spirit of accumulation, profit motive and neglect of everything other than economic benefit. It is based on Buddhist doctrines of right livelihood and denouncing desire. The basic difference between this and the capitalist model of development is the difference in the approach to materialism. While capitalism seeks well-being through material accumulation alone, a non-materialistic approach is the key to well-being and happiness. So what is needed is a non-materialistic paradigm of development. The experiment in Bhutan is a humble beginning.

Development is the well-being of all

From the above discussion it is clear that the popular understanding of development in terms of industrialization, modernization, urbanization, prosperity and growth of GDP is wrong. Defining development is the key to achieve it. Myrdal (1968) defined development as the rise in the level of living of the masses. Improvement in the level of living of the masses is necessary to ensure the well-being of all in any society because in a society where poverty prevails, even the rich will feel insecure and sleepless. Therefore, well-being should be the essential criterion of development. Protection of the environment is a pre-condition for sustaining well-being.

Here, it must be noted that well-being depends largely on non-economic factors. According to World Development Report (WB 2003), ensuring sustainable development requires attention not just to economic growth, but also to environmental and social issues. Dreze and Sen (1998) held that the calamity of the Chinese famine during 1958-61 was largely due to the absence of political freedom in the form of free press. Sen (2001) conceives of development as freedom. Dreze and Sen (1998) identified that public action in the form of adversarial pressure from the people demanding action from the government helped to check hunger and deprivation in the state of Kerala in India. Parameswaran (2004) conceived development with three ingredients: physical, spiritual and social quality of life. Bhaduri (2005) argues for 'development with dignity' for which not only are growth and distribution to be integrated, but also there should be attempts to systematically break the social barriers of discrimination and prej-

udices based on gender, caste, language, religion and ethnicity. The Human Development Report (UNDP 2004) focuses on bringing issues of culture to the mainstream of development thinking and practice. The findings of all these experts underscore the fact that development/well-being is derived largely from socio-cultural and political factors. Therefore, we define development as the process that ensures the well-being of all with reasonable and sustainable supply of material goods, that assures freedom from all sorts of discriminations, and that gives rise to a spirituality that cares for the people and ecology.

How do we achieve well-being/development?

According to Smith (1961), the father of economics, the first object of political economy is to provide subsistence for the people. Kurien (1996) says "The economy is about people (and not merely about things, commodities and money) and about relationships among people". Diwan (1996) writes: "Human well-being does not depend on material conception. It follows from stable family relations and a viable community. There is now ample evidence that policies targeted purely for economic growth are not only inimical to family stability but are positively destructive of family and community. Communities in all industrial societies have broken up and now there is an increasing pressure to break up the last vestige of community, the family". Stiglitz (2007) holds that development is about transforming lives, not just economies. Sen (1999a) holds the view that economics should be concerned with real people. Sen (1999b) argues that political economy should ensure entitlements for the people to be adequately nourished, decently clothed, minimally educated and properly sheltered. Sen (1984) again holds that development should be understood ultimately not as economic growth, industrialization or modernization, but as the expansion of people's 'valuable capabilities and functioning': be well nourished, be able to read and write and communicate, take part in literary and scientific pursuits, and so forth. Nussbaum (2007) holds central human capabilities to live a full life, engage in recreational activities and participate in politics constitute the framework of development. The World Commission on Environment and Development (United Nations 1987) writes that sustenance not only of humans, but of all living organisms and ecology should be the concern of economics. The Human Development Report (UNDP 1990) states: "The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy longer, healthy and creative life. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth". The well-being of humans and the environment are mutually dependent. Therefore, the issue of development should be addressed from these perspectives.

On the basis of the discussion above, the requirements of development can be identified as follows:

1. Food, clothing, shelter, basic education and health care for every human being.
2. Good relationships in the community with the feeling of mutual love, co-operation, caring and sharing.
3. A value system/ spirituality that ensures not only peace and security, but also good air, water and sanitary surroundings, absence of radiation and toxic substances, and conservation of biodiversity and climate.
4. Absence of social, cultural, political and gender discrimination.
5. A situation that ensures human rights and people's participation.

A model of development embedded with ethics

While our economists and planners pay lip service to the first requirement referred to above, the other four do not find any place in the agenda of development. It must be reiterated that the achievement of the first requirement alone cannot promote well-being/development. Therefore, the question of how to achieve development is more specifically how to achieve these five sets of requirements. Unfortunately, religions, especially the Church, expected to

emphasize the importance of the non-material aspects of life through their teaching and witness, actually they are strengthening all the wrong notions of development cited above. In the craze for development people are building mansions by destroying homes and human relationships. As a result of development in the West, the Churches are becoming vacant. On the other side of the globe, in order to thank God for helping them to achieve development, Christians in Kerala are constructing big and impressive Church buildings by destroying the House of God. Some economists feel pain at the degeneration of the science of economics caused by the dissociation of ethics from economics. They identify the wrong model of development as responsible for the latest financial crisis and realize that this situation can be overcome only by upholding a different paradigm of development that is loaded with non-material aspects. But unfortunately, established religions do not care about the dissociation of ethics from religions. This is the basic cause of the prevalence of poverty in the midst of unprecedented increase in wealth creation, demise of morality and noble values and ecological damage. A strong critique on the popular notion of development from religions is necessary to bring people to the right path. This is more urgently needed in the context of the economic, ethical and ecological crises, the world faces today. ■

Matrimonials

Marthomite parents settled in New York invite marriage proposals for their God-fearing, family-oriented, daughter (31 yrs/5'3"), born and brought up in USA, currently doing her residency in a reputed University Hospital in New York. We welcome interested and compatible grooms, between the ages of 31 and 34 years, God-fearing professionally qualified, raised and settled in USA to respond with a recent photograph and bio data to: JM5721120@yahoo.com or call: (646) 326-8024.

Marthomite parents settled in the U.S. invite proposals for their son. He is 26 years old, 5'11" tall and completed his Masters in Engineering from an Ivy League university in the U.S. and currently works as a Senior Manager at a Fortune 100 company. He does not drink/smoke and is active in the Marthoma church and is currently serving as a Sunday School teacher. We invite proposals from Christian parents (any denomination) to send a photo and biodata to tkt2987@gmail.com

Marthomite parents settled in New York invite proposals for their son 26 years old 5' 8" tall masters in Mechanical Engineering employed in New York as an Engineer, good looking, family oriented with christian values. We invite proposals from parents of professional girls with christian values. Please respond with a recent photograph and biodata, email: kolangara.raj@gmail.com or contract (516) 849-2927

Marthomite parents settled in Georgia, invite marriage proposals for their U. S. born daughter, 25 years/5' 2" Pham.D. (Doctor of Pharmacy) is an earning professional in a well known hospital. We welcome interested and compatible marthomite grooms, between the ages 28-30 years, family oriented with strong Christian values, may contact thru e-mail at mlk1985ga@gmail.com or by phone 678 984 7547.

Naveekaranam

Mohan Mathew Philip

The 175th anniversary of Naveekaranam prompts for reflections on the necessity of knowing the truth, its praxis and abiding in truth to sustain the spirit of reformation in the Malankara Syrian Mar Thoma Church.

Naveekaranam (Reformation) can be simply put as restoration from evil ways to a normal good state in accordance with the doctrines of the Bible, which was what its proponents had achieved in the then Malankara Syrian Church in the light of the training imparted by the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society in Central Travancore in the mid 19th century. Deeper knowledge and understanding of the Word led them (the reformers) to light and knowing the truth. Knowing the truth thus liberated them as Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you are my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will liberate you", (John 8:31b-32).

On the other hand the 16th century reformation initiated by Martin Luther in the Catholic Church was a movement within the Western Christendom to purge the church and the papacy of medieval abuses, and to restore the doctrines and practices that the reformers believed conformed with the Bible and the New Testament model of the Church. It had then tremendous impact on social, political, and economic life, and its influences are still felt even today. Against this background, the mid 19th century Naveekaranam in the Malankara Syrian Church initiated by Abraham Malpan and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan sought to infuse new life into the Malankara Church under the influence of and the knowledge imparted by the 'Mission Help' movement of the Church Missionary Society. The prominent of the veteran missionaries were Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fen and Henry Baker. The Naveekaranam Movement set to work in teaching the children, preaching the Gospel in the churches and educating the clergy. Thus 'The Mission' was able to make a spiritual impact upon the church in the direction of the purification of the life of the members in accordance with the Christian standards on the basis of the Word, although it was rejected by the Church synod of Mavelikara in 1836. Also the reformists sought for the removal of the unscriptural customs and practices which had crept into the church, especially under the influence of the local customs and context. The reformers' intention was to restore the nascent and pristine positions before the Menezean period in the church.

The torch lit by the pioneers of the Naveekaranam Movement in the then Malankara Church was later propagated and implemented against heavy odds under the vision and unique leadership of their excellencies Mathews Mar Athanesius, Thomas Mar Athanesius and Titius-1, in succession, and notably with the support and clout of the loyal

regional vicars (in which Greater Cheppad had an important role to play) with strong convictions which had resulted in the formation of the Mar Thoma Church of what it is today!

Reformation of the church, therefore, is a continuous ongoing process from time to time intended to dispel customs and practices not in synchronism with the biblical tenets. The Reformed Church should uphold truth which only can bring about true liberation and witness of Christ. The following points highlight the importance of upholding truth at all cost.

Knowing the Truth of God

This is an invitation to have a close sustaining relationship with the Trustful God. In Jesus' trial before the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate's question is well known, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Pilate's question does not justify his occupying the judge's seat as if he were ignorant of the meaning of it and his indifference to truth. Perhaps Pilate knew only 'the truth of power' rather than 'the power of truth' (as Miroslav Volf had put it). Jesus, the truth in His very being is the very embodiment of truth, is standing as a victim of the religio-political powers of the day, and not at all from a position of power although He could have had it. In spite of this, Jesus is content and truthful enough to refer to Himself as the witness to truth. John couples truth with grace and loving kindness (John 1:17). Pilate did not have the interest to know the truth nor had he any respect for human life which prompted him in the end to 'wash his hand' of the incident involving Jesus. Knowing the truth of God is foundational for a liberated existence which is what Jesus said, knowing the truth will liberate us from sin and death. Jesus, the truth is the divinely revealed reality of God. Therefore, for us knowing the truth of God means to unite with Christ, the truth. Today the indifference to truth and justice what Pilate had shown is haunting the Church of Christ. As the people of the Reformed Church we have a special responsibility to know the truth and to reveal it to others to make them free, too.

Doing the Truth of God (Praxis)

Knowing the truth of God makes us to practice it in our real life and in relation to others in the community. John 3:21-22 says, "But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God." In the first epistle, John (1 John 3:18) pints out, "...let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." This clearly shows that not only hearing, learning, speaking, teaching and learning the truth, but also doing

the truth (praxis) is of paramount importance for the reformed believer. Moreover, whoever boasts of being in light while hates his/her brother or sister is still in the darkness, says the John (1 John 2:9). Light is thus a metaphor for truth of God and for the revealed Word of God.

Abiding in the Truth of God

This involves a new relationship involving communion with one's fellow beings. This way of life is the theme in 2 John 4, "walking in truth". The first letter of John (1 John 1:3) is an invitation to join fellowship which is the fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The communion with God and Christ involves communion with our brothers and sisters, thus extending to a wider community of fellow human beings which should be based on truth. As children of God we should be truthful in all our actions, dealings, in words and even attitudes. On the other hand lack of truth (lying) destroys the very nature and fabric of a truthful and trustful human relationship which is against the will of God.

To conclude the truth of God is integrally related to life as God intends it for all human beings which calls each

reformed person to be truthful in his/her own life in relation to the truthful God and the fellow human beings in order to keep up the spirit of Naveekaranam to be a continuous process. Raj Mohan Gandhi (grandson of Mahatma Gandhi) once said 'a moral re-armament' is the cure for the social evils! This should caution us that the Reformed Church, for that matter the Reformed Christian, should be spiritually transformed to be equipped for effecting a moral and spiritual re-armament in the wider community. Then only the Church can witness the Good News of the Kingdom to the world. The Good News of the kingdom encompasses not only the human beings, but also all living organisms, the eco-sphere and the environment. This is because without the preservation and sustainability of the eco-sphere and the environment, the human life on earth can not be sustained. Truthfulness is thus the key to sustain a reformed, revived and transformed spiritual life in the world created by God for all creations. ■

(Re-printed with permission from: Sabha Tharaka Editor and Sabha Website Manager)

Chrysostom Thirumeni: A Model of Retired Life

Prof. Dr. Zac Varghese, London

Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan's active retirement ministry prompted me to write for his ninety-second birthday celebrations. Valiya Thirumeni's retired life is an amazing model; he is forging a path in old age that no other bishop of our church has ever entered. Jesus is indeed a man who lived for others and Valiya Thirumeni has been emulating Him all his life. People say, 'We have added years to life and not life to years.' It can only be done by breaking ego barriers and letting other people into our lives. Friendship is really living within the life of another. Counting friends is a game we play in old age.

It is usually lazy people who complain they cannot find time to do things they like to do. "If only I had the time." In fact, it is not really lack of time but the commitment that is wanting. Ask a busy man who has the discipline to find the time for another person's need. One of the advantages of retired life is that we can choose our own work; we keep our diaries, our diaries do not keep us.

There are three kinds of retirements: voluntary, forced, and mandatory. Chrysostom Thirumeni's is a voluntary retired life. Swedenborg imagined that angels reverse their life cycle and return to their youth, so that the oldest angel is the youngest; we see this in the retired life of our Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan. I am told that Thirumeni is very active for his age, involved in speaking engagements several times a week and meeting visitors.

Chrysostom Thirumeni is showing a model of retired ministry without the straitjacket of constitutional restrictions. He is enjoying his freedom and so can retired priests. If blessed with health in old age, we should regard it as a gift which needs to be continually shared with the needy. Everything we are able to do after a certain age may seem to be a miracle through the amazing grace of God.

I am very fortunate in knowing many retirees who return so much to their communities. I will mention just three (actually five, including spouses): Mr. Mathew Kallumpram of Manchester, 87 years old and continues to be active along with his wife in building ecumenical relationships and just wrote a book, *One world, one God*; Professor George Zachariah of Washington, continues to write for journals and teach; and, an amazing couple, Drs. Abraham and Mariamma Thomas of New Jersey, who contribute so much through their work with the American Association of Physicians and Dentists to the Mar Thoma Church. They are indeed members of a very specially privileged club whose membership, unfortunately, is declining with time.

Chrysostom Thirumeni finds support and strength in his old age because his gift is to obtain goodness from everything, which is indeed an amazing gift. May God help us to enjoy the blessings of Valiya Thirumeni's retirement ministry for many more years and may God continue to bless him with the comfort of good health and happiness.

Professional Accounting & Tax Services

110 Jericho Turnpike, Suite 102 Floral Park, NY 11001
Tel. (516) 352-8755 • Fax (516) 352-8757 • E-Fax 815-301-2757
E-mail : shajusam.ea@gmail.com



Shaju Sam, EA, MS (Tax)

Licensed to Practice Before the IRS

Member American Institute of Certified Public Accountants

Member National Association of Enrolled Agents

Member National Association of Tax Professionals



- ☑ **Individuals**
- ☑ **Corporations**
- ☑ **Partnerships**
- ☑ **Limited Liability Companies**
- ☑ **Sales Tax and Payroll Services**
- ☑ **Financial Planning**
- ☑ **Formation of Business Entities**
- ☑ **IRS and State Audit Representation**

RAMAN ABROL, CPA
1130 Rt. 46W, Suite 9 • Parsippany, NJ 07054
Tel. (973) 331-5178 Fax (973) 718-4666

Holy Qurbana

Dr. John P. Abraham

Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, University of Texas Pan American

Introduction

Jacob, who was renamed Israel, went to Egypt with his eleven sons and their families to join Joseph, Jacob's most beloved son, who was already there ruling over Egypt as second to the Pharaoh. They were received as royalty and enjoyed the benefits of Egypt for a season. When a new ruler who did not know Joseph reigned over Egypt, the status of Israelites changed to that of slaves. Just as the prodigal son enjoyed sinful life for a season, all that are drawn to sin enjoy it first until they become slaves. Israelites were in bondage in Egypt and they had lost all hope of redemption, until God sent Moses. Moses was trained in the palace and knew the ways of Egyptians. He was humbled to be used in the hands of the Lord to redeem Israelites from Egypt. Preparation for redemption included the Passover celebration. The redemption of Israel is similar to the redemption of mankind from death and sin by the Lamb of God.

Passover

Passover, known as Pesach, is a feast of remembrance. Parents were instructed to tell their children the meaning of Passover. Passover begins on the 14th night of the month of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar. Passover falls on the first full moon after the spring equinox. An equinox occurs twice a year, when the tilt of the earth's axis is inclined either away from or towards the sun. Nisan falls in March or April of the Gregorian calendar. Celebration of the Passover is prescribed in Exodus Chapter 12. On the 10th day of Nisan each family large enough to consume one animal will choose a lamb or wild goat. Exodus 12:5-6: "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats. And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." The animal was full grown at the age of one. It must be male without any blemish. It must remain within the family circle for four days, from 10th through the 14th. Jews considered end of Nisan 13th to end of Nisan 14th as the preparation day and celebrated the preparation day with an elaborate meal among family and friends. Jewish days are from sunset to sunset. These bits of information are necessary to understand the rest of my writing.

The animal was chosen on the 10th of the month and kept until the 14th and sacrificed in the afternoon, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., of the 14th of Nisan. The animal was sacrificed in the presence of the congregation with a minimum quorum of 30 adults. It was then roasted in fire using

pomegranate skewer (wooden spit). The meal was eaten along with unleavened bread (matzo) and bitter herbs (maror) on Nisan 15th, which, if you recall, starts at sunset. None of the bones of the animal shall be broken during or after the sacrifice.

Jesus our Passover Lamb

In order to discuss Jesus as the Passover Lamb, we need to establish certain dates. Historians and scholars have been arguing over dates for centuries. We just need to accept the most plausible date and leave the argument to scholars. Luke 3:1-3 gives us enough clues to pinpoint that Jesus' baptism occurred in AD 29 which was the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness." Based on the accounts given in the gospels, it is well accepted that the ministry of Jesus spanned about 3.5 years. After A.D. 29 Passover occurred on a Sabbath only twice between 30 A.D. and 33 A.D. There are many who accept 30 A.D. as the year of crucifixion. NASA (<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEhistory/LEhistory.html>) reports that the lunar eclipse on Friday, April 3, A.D. 33 lasted 2 hours and 50 minutes. Many Christians accept A.D. 33 as the year of Christ's death. There is a difference of two days between the Julian and Gregorian calendars when referring to 33 A.D. Julian calendar will show April 1, 33 A.D. as Friday whereas the Gregorian calendar will show April 3 as Friday. Galilean Jews and Judean Jews celebrated Passover on different nights, Thursday and Friday. There were two methods for determining the beginning and the end of a day: morning to morning and evening to evening. The Galilean Jews adhered to the old way, morning to morning, while Judean Jews observed the latter method. I refer you to the many postings on the internet regarding crucifixion dates and Passover celebration. For this writing I chose April 3, Friday as the date of crucifixion.

Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on Nisan 10th (Monday, March 30th, the year of our Lord 33) on a colt. Jews accepted Jesus on that day as the Messiah (Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19:28-40). He was our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), a male without blemish at the fullness of his youth with no broken bone even after his death. It was a practice to break the leg bones prior to Sabbath so that victims would die for lack of air. But, the Roman soldiers

noted that Jesus was already dead so there was no need to break His bones.

Jesus remained in Jerusalem for four days just as the lamb had to be kept for four days. On Nisan 14th (Friday, April 3, 33) about 12 noon (sixth hour) Pilate presented Jesus to the whole congregation and they shouted "Crucify him!" (John 19:15). Jesus gave up His life at about 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon just as the Passover Lamb (Matthew 27:4). The body of Jesus was hurriedly prepared for burial before sunset, the beginning of Nisan 15. It was on Nisan 15th that Jews celebrated Passover.

Jesus was a Galilean and He and His disciples celebrated Passover feast in the upper room on Thursday night while the Judean Jews celebrated it the next day. Some believe that since Jesus was crucified and died before the day of Passover, it is obvious that He did not celebrate the Passover feast with His disciples, even though He really desired to. He had the Last Supper with his disciples on the previous day (Thursday after sunset), the day of preparation. Therefore, I can't be certain if the Last Supper was a Passover meal. But while reading the synoptic gospels we are led to believe the Last Supper was indeed a Passover meal. I subscribe to the belief that Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples on Thursday night.

The Last Supper

Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 all refer to the first day of the unleavened bread. We have to assume that it was the preparation day or Thursday as John stated. It becomes clearer when we look at passages Matthew 27:62, Mark 15:42 and Luke 23:54 that it was the preparation day when Jesus told them to prepare the upper room. It was the preparation day for the Judean Jews who controlled the temple. However, it was the Passover day for Jesus and His disciples since they were Galilean Jews. On that day Jesus had His Last Supper which was also the Passover with His disciples (John 13:1). Luke 22:14: When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table. Luke 22:15: And He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Luke 22:16: For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Luke 22:17: After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. Luke 22:18: For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes." Luke 22:19: And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:20: In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. It is important to point out the bread and the wine that was used on the Passover day would have been unleavened. Jews took great deal of care to put out all fermentation from their midst before the Passover meal.

The Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion, Holy Qurbana

Jesus instructed His disciples to observe the last supper in His remembrance. The Church was born on the Pentecost, A.D. 33 and the believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer," Acts 2:42. Again, in Acts 20:7 it is recorded that they came together on the first of the week (Sunday) to break bread. Initially the Lord's Supper observance was referred to as 'breaking bread'. Paul elaborated the practice in 1 Cor. 11:23-26: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: (V 24) and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (V 25) After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Jesus Himself referred to as the bread in John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." He continued in verses 53-55, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." It is appropriate that I add a caveat not to add or subtract from this.

The breaking of the bread was celebrated on the first day of the week when believers came together to worship. This observance was also called Communion to indicate oneness in Christ, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16-17). We shall not participate in this celebration in an unworthy manner, casually or as a ritual, "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:27-32).

Continued Observation of the Lord's Supper

From Paul's epistles we can deduce that the Lord's Supper started as a full supper, each family bringing their own food sharing with one another. There was an equality enforced here. Paul warned about eating their own food rather than sharing each others. The meal was to unite and equalize

Jews, gentiles, the free, slaves, rich and poor. The Lord's Supper was part of the broader meal.

After taking into consideration every New Testament teaching regarding the subject, we turn to tradition as written in early writings. The Didache is considered to be teaching of the Apostles to the nations written about 100 A.D. It deals with the practices in the church including Lord's Supper. The teaching was considered to be included as part of the New Testament canon, but was rejected. It has become part of the broader canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Regarding the Lord's Supper, I cite from Didache 9: "But as touching the Eucharistic thanksgiving give ye thanks thus. First, as regards the cup: We give Thee thanks, O our Father, for the holy vine of Thy son David, which Thou madest known unto us through Thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory for ever and ever. Then as regarding the broken bread: We give Thee thanks, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou didst make known unto us through Thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory for ever and ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. But let no one eat or drink of this eucharistic thanksgiving, but they that have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord hath said: Give not that which is holy to the dogs. And after ye are satisfied thus give ye thanks: We give Thee thanks, Holy Father, for Thy holy name, which Thou hast made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which Thou hast made known unto us through Thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory for ever and ever."

Conclusion

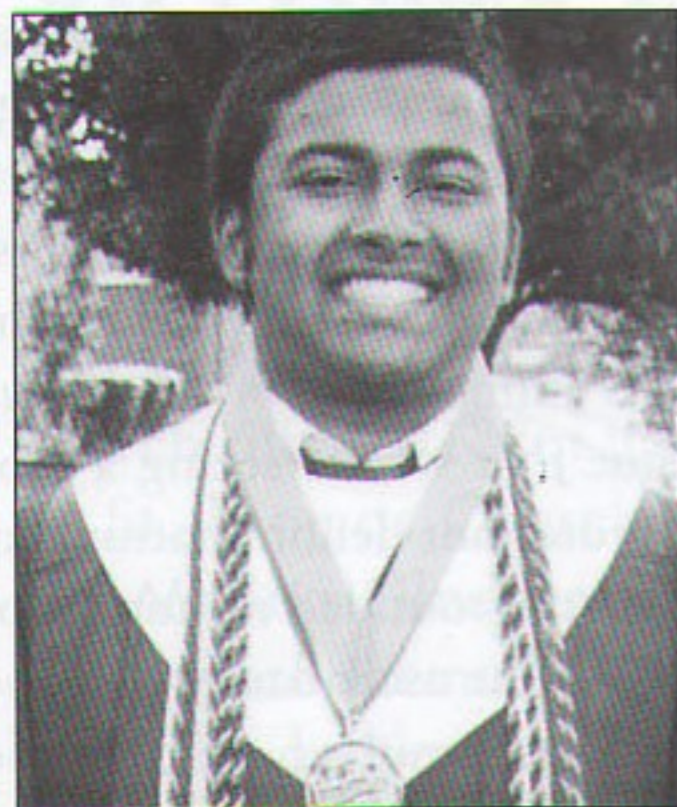
The experience of Holy Qurbana is the ultimate experience for man where we remember the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord, and obey the commandment He had given us. I refer you to Isaiah 53: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and

we esteemed him not. (V. 3) Surely he hath borne our grieves, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (V. 4) But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (V. 5) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (V. 6) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (V. 7)

The Testament, covenant, is established through Lord's Supper, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." Our Lord provided us a bridge between the Old and New Covenants, and purchased us with His blood and grafted us to the chosen people. The Holy Eucharist has been celebrated beginning at Pentecost continuing through generations and practiced by all Churches that believe in Jesus Christ. I remember my parents fasting for days leading to the Communion. It should not be taken for granted or become a ritual.

On October 13, 2010 thirty-three Chilean miners were rescued from 2,000 feet under the surface of the earth after being trapped there for 69 days. This happened on a Wednesday. I had a dream early morning on Friday: I was preaching using the Chilean miners' experience as an example of how humanity is lost in sin without any hope just as the miners. I went on to expound how the families up above missed those miners and how they were consumed with thoughts of their loved ones trapped down there. Then the thought came to me (all in my dream) as though the Lord was speaking to me, "My thoughts are consumed with you. All I asked you to do is this in remembrance of me." I woke up and started writing down the sermon I preached in my dream. I delivered it to the Rio Grande Valley congregation the following week. This experience led me to the extensive study and I thank the Lord for allowing me to share it with you. ■

Submit your comments to jpabraham@yahoo.com or jabraham@utpa.edu



VALEDICTORIAN AWARD—2010

The Diocese of North America & Europe honored Alvin B. John, the valedictorian from Mesquite High School, Mesquite, Texas at the 28th Mar Thoma Family Conference held in Dallas, Texas from July 1-4, 2010. The award was presented by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa during the Diocesan award ceremony. Alvin is son of Babu & Mini John, of St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church, Mesquite, Texas.

Report submitted by Mrs. Aswathi Mathew, Diocesan Valedictorian Committee Convener

Denominationalism to Post-Denominationalism: Changes in American Christianity

Dr. Prema Kurien, Syracuse, NY

In his 1955 book *Protestant—Catholic—Jew*, about religion and ethnicity among European immigrants to the United States, Will Herberg argued that while immigrants or at least their children were eventually expected to give up their homeland language and traditions to become Americans, this did not involve abandoning their religious traditions. On the contrary, the structure of American religious pluralism meant that they were expected to obtain “an identifiable place in American life” by establishing their churches as American denominations. In his study, *The Denominational Society*, published in 1972, Andrew Greeley draws on Herberg’s analysis to argue that American religion was successful precisely “because American religious denominations are ethnic groups . . . [where], members of a religious denomination are able to obtain from their religion means of defining who they are and where they stand in a large and complex society” (pg. 108). In the American denominational society, each denomination maintained unique traditions, liturgy, and theology based on its history and culture but developed similar organizational structures. Being part of such a community of faith was central to the identity and grounding of individuals. Although originally a Protestant phenomenon, in the United States it became an accepted principle for all the religious groups including Catholics and Jews. However, beginning from the 1980s, scholars started noticing that denominationalism had become less important and that a large number of individuals were switching denominations, often more than once. The current consensus is that the United States has become a “post-denominationalist” society.

Scholars have linked the move from a denominational to a post-denominational society to several interrelated developments. First is the spread of a voluntaristic and anti-institutional religious climate which encourages people to choose forms of religion that resonate with their own perspectives rather than rely on their ascribed denomination. Religious voluntarism is in turn linked to a consumerist approach to religion, where individuals choose not just their religious tradition but also various religious doctrines and practices, and cobble together a product to satisfy their individual tastes. Related to religious voluntarism and consumerism is a therapeutic understanding of religion, the idea that religion should meet the psychological needs of individuals. In response to these changes, a new, nondenominational evangelical Protestant church model has developed.



Unlike denominational churches, nondenominational churches de-emphasize theology, sacraments, and the sacred liturgical calendar of the church. Services are informal, anti-liturgical, and anti-ceremonial. They are held in buildings that avoid religious symbolism, by clergy who do not wear the traditional robes, who may not have theological degrees from established seminaries, and are sometimes not ordained. Such churches tend to have minimalist but clear doctrines, which include the certainty that Christianity is the only true religion,

the assurance of salvation to those who are “born-again” in Christ, and the belief in the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. They also have well defined moral positions on hot-button contemporary American issues such as abortion, homosexuality, gender roles within marriage, and pre-marital sex. Instead of following the church lectionary, sermons delivered by clergy are topical and practical, relevant to everyday life. Another hallmark of such churches is the use of spirited contemporary music with a rock band (instead of the traditional hymns accompanied by an organ), and multimedia presentations, sometimes including skits and plays. Many of the churches are very large, with multiple weekly services for thousands of attendees at a time, and therefore have the staff and the equipment to produce a professional, “concert quality” production, meticulously planned to the second to provide an uplifting religious experience. Nondenominational churches also tend to have decentralized and flat authority structures and provide considerable autonomy to the local church and the lay leadership.

Such churches articulate an individualistic concept of religion that stresses individual salvation, with Jesus as a personal savior. The goal of attending church is to obtain “spiritual food” or sermons applicable to life, which will help the individual to “grow spiritually.” Growing spiritually in turn is believed to result in individuals becoming more loving and joyful, and obtaining inner peace. Since the goal of Christianity is believed to be to create a new community in Christ, culture and ethnicity are often seen as barriers to achieving a Christian identity. As a consequence of these changes, scholars like Stephen Ellingson (*The Megachurch and the Mainline*, 2007), argue that we are seeing a movement away from a variety of Protestant denominations to “a more unified Protestant tradition, grounded in nondenominational evangelicalism” (p. 7). The ascendancy of nondenominational evangelicalism has resulted in the older Protestant denominations losing their membership, partic-

ularly their youth. In response, many traditional Protestant denominations have tried to adopt some of the music, worship practices, and even the theology of nondenominational evangelicalism.

This raises the question, if earlier European immigrants became incorporated through denominationalism, how does post-denominationalism affect the religion, identity, and incorporation patterns of contemporary Christian immigrants? How does the move from denominationalism to post-denominationalism affect immigrant churches?

Existing research points to three different patterns manifested by the churches of Caucasians, Hispanics, and East Asian Americans. Ethnic Orthodox churches like those of the Armenian Apostolics studied by Timothy Fisher (2005) in Los Angeles experienced a substantial loss of their youth and young adult population to mainstream evangelical churches. Unlike many of the mainline Protestant churches however, the leadership of the Armenian Apostolic church was not interested in incorporating ideas and programs from evangelical groups to stem the outflow of their youth. Instead, their strategy was to emphasize the difference between American Protestantism and Armenian Apostolic Christianity and to affirm the value of their own tradition. Other research suggests that many ethnic Orthodox churches (including Orthodox Malankara Syrian Christian churches) are adapting to the American religious environment by de-ethnicizing in order to identify with a larger American Orthodox Christianity, and are stressing the religious uniqueness of the Orthodox faith instead of their particular Orthodox tradition. It appears as though Orthodox Malankara Syrian Christian Churches are also beginning to follow this pattern.

American-born Hispanic and East Asian youth are also strongly attracted to evangelicalism, but race and cultural difference seem to play an important role in shaping their responses, in contrast to Armenian Americans. For instance, research indicates that most Hispanic and East Asian American Christians do not attend mainstream non-

denominational churches but instead worship with co-ethnics. Some scholars have argued that this is because they feel socially and racially marginalized within mainstream churches. Evangelically influenced Hispanics either attend evangelical Protestant Latino parishes or modify traditional Catholic services to incorporate charismatic practices. Both of these types of parishes are often multigenerational and have services in both Spanish and English. Second-generation Korean and Chinese Christians, on the other hand, do not worship with their parents but have separate English worship services that adopt the practices and theology of evangelical churches. On reaching adulthood, they typically form a separate evangelical English congregation within the immigrant church, or leave their parents' church to form independent evangelical English ministries. In short, they practice evangelical American Christianity but in an ethnic context.

At a time when the Mar Thoma Church is celebrating the 175th year of its reformation in 2011, it is important that the Church develops an adequate understanding about these changes in American Christianity and how they might affect our American-born children. There should be studies conducted, especially with respect to similarly situated ethnic churches and the ways that they have addressed these issues. The approach of the Mar Thoma Church should be to emphasize the differences between non-denominationalism and its own rich heritage deriving from the Eastern Episcopal denominational tradition while also making it more meaningful and relevant to our younger generation. ■

Editor's Note: Prema Kurien is Associate Professor and Graduate Director in the Department of Sociology and the Director of the Asian/Asian American Studies program at Syracuse University. She is the author of two award winning books, 'Kaleidoscopic Ethnicity: International Migration and the Reconstruction of Community Identities in India' (2002) and 'A Place at the Multicultural Table: The Development of an American Hinduism' (2007) and over thirty articles. She is currently doing research on evangelicalism and ethnic churches, based on a study of the Mar Thoma church, and on Indian American civic and political activism. She can be contacted at pkurien@syr.edu.

XII SEVIKA SANGHOM CONFERENCE KICK-OFF—2011

St. Thomas MarThoma church Parish will be hosting the XII Sevika Sanghom Conference from September 29th, through October 2nd, 2011. To memorialize the conference a souvenir is being published as well. The kick-off for the Registration for the Conference and sponsorship of the Souvenir was held on March 6th, 2011 at the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church in Lombard, IL. Rev. Sabu Thomas, the Vicar of St. Thomas Church officiated the kick-off. Dr. Joyce Samuel inaugurated the Registration while Dr. Merina Gladson launched the sponsorship of the Souvenir. The theme of the souvenir mirrors the conference theme: **Choice—Is it Right?** Details regarding the Registration, Souvenir Sponsorship and Competitions can be found on the website: www.sevikasanghomconference2011.com

We know the lay and law of the Land

For real estate and legal solutions in Kerala,
get our expert advice and assistance.

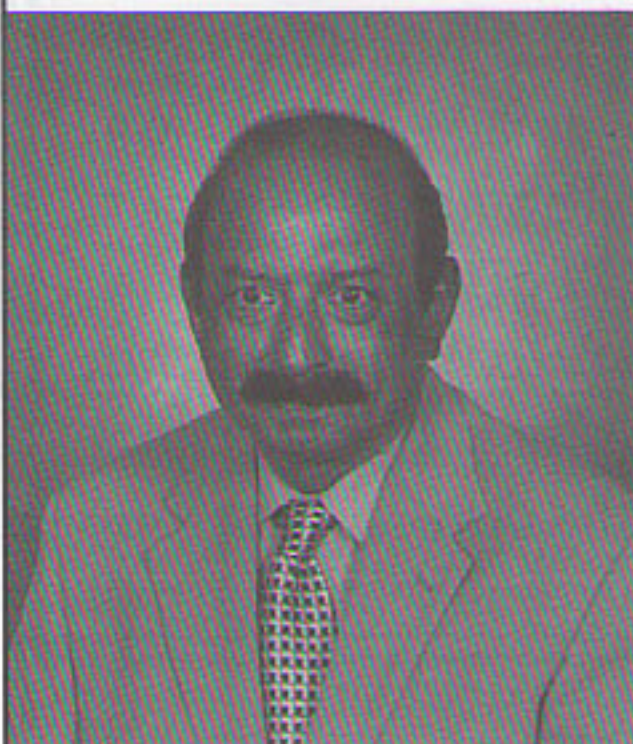


Real Estate Solutions

- Building and Construction
- Advice on sale or purchase of immovable property
- Will construct villas at clients' site according to clients' plan or will provide a plan to suit clients' need and budget.
- Guaranteed work with quality and convenience in mind.

Legal Solutions

- Conduct of the legal cases, in case of any dispute involving clients' property
- Recovery Solutions
- Corporate Services / Solution
- Civil, Criminal, Taxation and Consumer Cases
- Documentation Services



P.S. Cherian

"A member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas,
Farmers Branch, Texas"

Regd Office:

India: Palmko Building, Ground Floor,
Puthenthope P.O, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala 695586

Tel: +91 471-6522134, Mob: +91 9249297317

U.S.A: 1917 Arbor Creek Dr., Carrollton, TX 75010, USA.

Tel: 972-4922032, 214-2748468

Website: www.globalsolutionsindia.org | Email: info@globalsolutionsindia.org



**Global
Solutions
India**

ഒരുതുളളി ചോദിക്കുന്നവന് ഒരു കൂടം നൽകുന്നത് നവീകരണം: ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം വലിയ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത

സുറിയാനിയിൽ നിന്ന് മലയാളത്തിലേക്ക് ആരാധനാക്രമം മാറ്റുന്നതല്ല മറിച്ച് മനസ്സിലിടാൻ നവീകരണമെന്ന് ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം വലിയ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത. മനുഷ്യന്റെ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾ നിഷേധിക്കപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ മനസ്സിലിടാൻ കഴിയാതെ വന്നിട്ടുള്ളവർക്ക് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ആത്മാവിലാണ് ജീവിക്കുന്നതെന്നു പറയുന്നതെങ്ങനെയെന്നും വലിയ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത ചോദിച്ചു. മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ യോഗത്തിൽ ചൊവ്വാഴ്ച രാവിലെ സന്ദേശം നൽകുകയായിരുന്നു അദ്ദേഹം. ലോകത്തെ നശിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ദോഷങ്ങളെ കണ്ടു മനസ്സിലിടാൻ പരിഹാരത്തിനായി സഭയും ജനങ്ങളും സജ്ജരാകണം. നീ എവിടെ? നിന്റെ സഹോദരൻ എവിടെ എന്നു ചോദിച്ചാൽ എന്തായിരിക്കും മറുപടി? ഞാൻ ഇവിടെ, എന്റെ സഹോദരൻ അവിടെ. ഈ കൺവൻഷൻ കഴിയുമ്പോൾ ഞാനും എന്റെ സഹോദരനും ഒരിടത്താണെന്നു പറയാൻ കഴിയണം. നമ്മെ ആവശ്യമുള്ളവരെയല്ല നമുക്ക് ആവശ്യമുള്ളവരെയല്ല നാം കാണുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ, യേശുക്രിസ്തു ലോകത്തെ കണ്ടു, സ്നേഹിച്ചു. ദൈവം സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നത് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സൃഷ്ടിയെയാണ്. ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടിയെ സ്നേഹിച്ചു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സ്നേഹം വേണമെന്നു നാം പ്രാർഥിക്കുമ്പോൾ ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടിച്ച ലോകത്തെ സ്നേഹിക്കാൻ നാം പഠിക്കണമെന്നും മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം പറഞ്ഞു. സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ അടിയന്തിര പ്രശ്നങ്ങളോട് മനസ്സിലിടാൻ പ്രതികരണമാണ് നവീകരണം. ഒരുതുളളി ചോദിക്കുന്നവന് ഒരു കൂടം നൽകുന്ന അനുഭവമാണത്. മനസ്സിലിടാൻ യേശുവിന്റെ ആത്മാവ് ആകെ തുക. അത് സ്വാംശീകരിക്കാതെ ദൈവരാജ്യം കണ്ടെത്താൻ കഴിയില്ല. നമ്മുടെ ഇടവകകൾ ചുറ്റുമുള്ളവർക്ക് ഭക്ഷണവും വസ്ത്രവും നൽകുന്ന കാവൽ സമൂഹമാകണം. മനുഷ്യന്റെ ആവശ്യങ്ങളും അത്യാവശ്യങ്ങളും നിരാകരിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹം എങ്ങനെ നവീകൃത ദൈവസൃഷ്ടിയാകും? സമൂഹത്തെ അറിയുകയും അറിഞ്ഞതിനോട് ഗാഢമായി പ്രതികരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നതാണ് നവീകരണം. നമുക്ക് ആവശ്യമുള്ളവരെ കാണുകയല്ല നമ്മെ ആവശ്യമുള്ളവരെ നാം കാണുകയാണ് വേണ്ടത്. നമ്മുടെ പ്രാർഥനകൊണ്ട് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മനസ്സു മാറ്റാനാവില്ല. എന്നാൽ ദൈവഹിതമെന്തെന്ന് തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നതാണ് പ്രാർഥന. ആമേൻ എന്നത് നമ്മെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിന്റെയും സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നതിന്റെയും ചിഹ്നമാണ്. ആമേൻ പറഞ്ഞിട്ട് പറഞ്ഞതിനോട് പ്രതിബദ്ധത കാട്ടാതിരിക്കരുത്. ഈ കൺവൻഷൻ കൊണ്ട് എന്തു സാധിക്കണം എന്നാണ് നാം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നത്? കടലാസും പെൻസിലും തന്നിട്ട് ഈ ചോദ്യത്തിന് ഉത്തരം എഴുതാൻ ആവശ്യപ്പെട്ടാൽ ദൈവമായ കർത്താവേ ഇന്ന് ലോകത്തിന്റെ യഥാർത്ഥ ആവശ്യമെന്തെന്നു നിങ്ങൾ നിന്നു മനസ്സിലാക്കി പരിഹാര പ്രവൃത്തികളോടു സഹകരിക്കാൻ എനിക്കു മനസ്സു നൽകണേ എന്നു ഞാൻ എഴുതും. ഇന്നത്തെ പ്രശ്നം എന്താണെന്നു ചോദിച്ചാൽ, കാര്യങ്ങൾ നമ്മൾ നിശ്ചയിച്ചിട്ട് അതു നടത്താൻ ദൈവത്തെ ഏൽപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ്. ദൈവം നിശ്ചയിച്ച കാര്യം ഞാൻ നടപ്പിലാക്കുകയാണോ ഞാൻ മനസ്സിൽ കണ്ടത് ദൈവത്തെക്കൊണ്ടു നടപ്പിലാക്കുകയാണോ എന്നു ചിന്തിക്കണം. നമ്മുടെ പ്രാർഥന ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മനസ്സു മാറ്റാനാണോ നമ്മുടെ മനസ്സു മാറ്റാനാണോ? രോഗികളെക്കുറിച്ചു മനസ്സിലിടാൻ ഇവിടെയിരിക്കുന്ന എത്രപേർക്കുണ്ട്? പ്രാർഥന കഴിയുമ്പോൾ ആമേൻ എന്നു പറയുന്നത് പ്രാർഥനയിൽ ഓർത്ത ആവശ്യങ്ങളുടെ സാധ്യതയ്ക്കു ഞാൻ എന്നെ സമർപ്പിക്കും എന്ന അർത്ഥത്തിലാണ്. അല്ലാതെ ദൈവത്തെ കളിപ്പിക്കാൻ പറയുന്നതല്ല ആമേൻ. ആമേൻ നിങ്ങളെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്താനുള്ള വാക്കാണ്. അനീതിയും ദോഷവും കണ്ടിട്ടും ഒന്നും ചെയ്യാതിരിക്കുന്നതു തെറ്റല്ലേ? ഈ മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷനിൽ ഇരിക്കുകയും നിൽക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന നിങ്ങൾ ഇന്നത്തെ ലോകത്തിന്റെ സ്ഥിതി കണ്ടിട്ട് എന്തു പറയുന്നു. നമുക്ക് ആശുപത്രികളാണോ കള്ളുഷാപ്പുകളാണോ കൂടുതൽ? കോഴഞ്ചേരിയിൽ ആശുപത്രിക്ക് അടുത്താണ് കള്ളുഷാപ്പ്. അതൊക്കെ നമ്മൾ ബുദ്ധിപൂർവ്വം ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷനിലാണോ അവിടെയാണോ കൂടുതൽ അച്ചടക്കം എന്നു ചോദിച്ചാൽ ഞാൻ ഒന്ന് ആലോചിച്ചേ ഉത്തരം പറയൂ. ഈ സ്ഥിതി കണ്ടിട്ടു നമുക്കു മനസ്സിലിയുന്നുണ്ടോ? നമ്മൾ സുവിശേഷങ്ങളിൽ വീണ്ടും വീണ്ടും വായിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്, ക്രിസ്തു രോഗികളെ കണ്ടു മനസ്സിലിടാൻ എന്ന്. എന്താണ് മനസ്സിലിടാൻ? പോകുന്ന പോക്കിൽ രണ്ടു ചക്രം കൊടുത്തേച്ചു പോകുന്നതാണോ മനസ്സിലിടാൻ? മനസ്സിലിടാൻ കഴിയാതെ വന്നിട്ടുള്ളവർക്ക് പരിഹാരം വരുത്താനും നാം ശ്രമിക്കും. ഇവിടെ ഇന്നുള്ള എല്ലാ ആളുകളും ഒരു രോഗിയെ, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ വീടില്ലാത്തവനെ, ഭക്ഷണമില്ലാത്തവനെ സഹായിക്കു മെന്നു പറഞ്ഞാൽ തോമസ് ഐസക്കിന്റെ ബജറ്റിനേക്കാൾ വലിയ ബജ

റ്റാകുമത്. മദ്യത്തിന്റെ വിപത്തു നാം സർക്കാരിന്റെ ശ്രദ്ധയിൽ കൊണ്ടു വരണം. ഈ കള്ളുകുടിയന്മാരെ കണ്ട് ഒന്നു മനസ്സിലിടാൻ സർക്കാരിനെ പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കണം. ഇവർ കള്ളുകുടിക്കുന്നത് ആരുടെ കുറ്റമാണ്? ഞാൻ കുടിയന്മാരെ പഴിക്കില്ല. ചിലപ്പോൾ അവന്റെ ഭാര്യയുടെ കുറ്റമായിരിക്കും, അവന്റെ പട്ടക്കാരന്റെ കുറ്റമായിരിക്കും, അതിനേക്കാൾ, എന്റെ നിസംഗതയായിരിക്കും - മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം പറഞ്ഞു. മനുഷ്യൻ അവന്റെ ആവശ്യം അനുസരിച്ച് ഇടപെടുന്നതാണ് നവീകരണം. അവൻ ദൈവത്തെ അറിയണം. അവൻ ദൈവകൃപ അനുഭവിക്കണം. അവൻ കൃപയുടെ സമൃദ്ധിയിൽ ജീവിക്കണം. ഒരിക്കൽ ഞാനും കുറെ ബിഷപ്പുമാരും കൂടി നാട്ടിലെ കള്ളുകുടിയെപ്പറ്റി പറയാൻ അന്നത്തെ മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി ഇഎംഎസിനെ കാണാൻ പോയി. ഞങ്ങളുടെ ആവശ്യം കേട്ടപ്പോൾ ഇഎംഎസ് പറഞ്ഞു, കള്ളു നിരോധിച്ചാൽ ചെത്തുന്നവരു പിണങ്ങും, കുടിക്കുന്നവരും പിണങ്ങും, വിൽക്കുന്നവരും പിണങ്ങും. അതുകൊണ്ട് ഞാനൊരു ബുദ്ധി പറയാം. നിങ്ങൾ ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികൾ മുഴുവൻ കള്ളുകുടി നിർത്തേ. ബാക്കി കാര്യം ഞാനേറ്റു. മണിക്കൂറുകൾ പ്രസംഗിക്കുന്ന ഞാനടക്കമുള്ള ബിഷപ്പുമാരുടെ നാവ് ഉള്ളിലേക്കിറങ്ങി. ബിഷപ്പുമാരുടെ നാക്കിനെ വയറ്റിലേക്ക് ഒളിപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ് നിങ്ങളുടെ ഈ കള്ളുകുടി - അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. എനിക്ക് ഇപ്പോൾ കാഴ്ചയും കേൾവിയും കുറവാ. അതുകൊണ്ട് എഴുതിയതാണോ വായിക്കുന്നതെന്ന് അറിയാൻ മേല, അത് സഭയിലെ വേറെ ചിലർക്കുമുണ്ട്. ഞാൻ പറയുന്നതല്ല അവർ കേൾക്കുന്നത്. ഞാൻ എഴുതിയതല്ല അവർ വായിക്കുന്നത്. ചിലപ്പോൾ എനിക്ക് നിന്നു പകർന്നതായിരിക്കും. ഞാൻ പറയാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത് ഈ കൺവൻഷനിൽ ചില തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ നമ്മൾ എടുക്കണം എന്നാണ്. ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നു പഠിച്ചു, ദൈവത്തെപ്പോലെ മനസ്സിലിടാൻ ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നവിയം. മനുഷ്യരുടെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ പരിഹരിക്കാനാണ് നാം ഇവിടെ നിന്നു പോകേണ്ടത്. ഈ നവീകരണത്തിൽ ദൈവത്തെ അനുസരിപ്പിക്കുന്നവർ ദൈവത്തെ അനുസരിക്കുന്നവരായി തീരണം. മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ ഇവിടെ വന്നിട്ടില്ലാത്തവർക്കു വേണ്ടിയാണ്. ഇവിടെ ഇരിക്കുന്നവർ വന്നിട്ടില്ലാത്തവരുടെ അടുക്കലേക്കു പോകണം. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ വലത്തു ഭാഗത്തെ കള്ളനാണ് ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം തിരുമേനി. ഇടത്തു ഭാഗത്തെ തിരുമേനിയാരാണെന്ന് എനിക്ക് അറിയാൻ മേല - മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം പറഞ്ഞു. വ്യക്തികൾ, കുടുംബങ്ങൾ, ഇടവക, സഭ, സമൂഹം ഇവ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന കൺവൻഷനായി ഈ കൺവൻഷൻ മാറണം. മാർത്തോമ്മാക്കാരുടെ ലഹരി ഉപേക്ഷിച്ചു എന്ന സന്ദേശം മുറുകെപിടിക്കുവാൻ നമുക്കു കഴിയാതെ പോയത് ദുഃഖകരമാണ്. സ്റ്റാൻലി ജോൺസിന്റെ കാലത്ത് സാമൂഹിക തിന്മകളെ ഉപേക്ഷിക്കാനുള്ള ആഹ്വാനത്തോട് ജനം പ്രതികരിച്ചത് മടിക്കുന്നതിലെ പുക്യില ഈ മണലിൽ കുഴിച്ചിട്ടുകൊണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ഈ മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ ചരിത്രത്തിൽ ചരിത്രം സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്ന ഒരു വലിയ കൺവൻഷനാവണം. മാറാമണ്ണിൽ നിന്നുള്ള മടക്കം മനുഷ്യത്വം നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യന്റെ അടുക്കലേക്കാവണം. അയൽക്കാരുടെ നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട ജനം നമ്മുടെ ചുറ്റുപാടും ജീവിക്കുന്നു. അയൽക്കാരനും ഞാനും ഒന്നിച്ച് ഒരു അയൽക്കൂട്ടം നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നതിനു നമുക്കു കഴിയട്ടെയെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. സമൂഹത്തെ കെടുത്തുന്ന തിന്മകളിൽ നിന്ന് അകന്നു നമ്മളുടെ അതിരുകളിൽ നില നിൽക്കണമെന്നു ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം വലിയ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത. നാം വളരുന്നതുപോലെ സഹജീവികളും വളരണമെന്ന ചിന്ത നമുക്കു വേണം. മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ ആവശ്യം മനസ്സിലാക്കി അവർക്കു വേണ്ടി ജീവിക്കാൻ പഠിക്കണമെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷനിൽ സാമൂഹിക തിന്മകൾക്കെതിരെയുള്ള സമ്മേളനം ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്യുകയായിരുന്നു അദ്ദേഹം. നമ്മൾ ജനിച്ചതിനു ശേഷം ലോകത്തിന് എന്തു മാറ്റമുണ്ടായി എന്നു ചിന്തിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ? എന്റെ കാര്യം എനിക്കറിയാം. ഞാൻ ജനിച്ചപ്പോഴുള്ള പമ്പാനദിയല്ല ഇന്ന്. ഈ ഒഴുകുന്നത് പമ്പാനദിയുടെ മുതശരീരമാണ്. ഞാൻ ജനിച്ചപ്പോഴത്തെ മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷനിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്ന മാറാമണ്ണുകാരും കോഴഞ്ചേരിക്കാരും ദൂരെ നിന്നു കൺവൻഷനു വന്നവരെ കൂടെ കൂട്ടി ഭക്ഷണം കൊടുക്കുമായിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് സ്വന്തം പെങ്ങളെ കണ്ടാൽപ്പോലും നമ്മൾ നോക്കില്ല. നിന്റെ അയൽവാസി ഭക്ഷണമില്ലാതിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ നീ ഭക്ഷണം കഴിക്കുന്നത് നീതിയോ അനീതിയോ എന്നു ചിന്തിക്കണമെന്നും വലിയ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത പറഞ്ഞു.

Editor's Note: Reprinted with permission from Malayala Manorama online www.manoramaonline.com

നീ എവിടെ എന്ന ചോദ്യം മനുഷ്യനു പാപബോധം നൽകാൻ:

റവ. കാനൻ പീറ്റർ മെയ്ഡൻ

ദൈവത്തോടു അനുസരണക്കേടു കാണിക്കുന്ന മനുഷ്യനു പാപബോധം വരും തിരിച്ചറിയും ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്നതിനാണ് 'നീ എവിടെ?' എന്ന ചോദ്യം ദൈവം ചോദിക്കുന്നതെന്ന് റവ. കാനൻ പീറ്റർ മെയ്ഡൻ. നമ്മെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ച ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മുന്നിൽ സകലവും തുറന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. സൃഷ്ടിയിലുള്ള ഒന്നിനും ദൈവത്തോടു മറഞ്ഞിരിക്കാൻ കഴിയില്ലെന്ന യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം ഓരോ നിമിഷവും മനുഷ്യൻ മനസ്സിൽ കരുതണം. ഉൽപ്പത്തി 9:3, വെളിപാട് 3:20 എന്നീ വേദഭാഗങ്ങളെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി പ്രസംഗിച്ച മെയ്ഡൻ ദൈവത്തെപ്പറ്റി മനുഷ്യർക്കിടയിലുള്ള വ്യത്യസ്ത സങ്കല്പങ്ങളും ധാരണകളെയും പറ്റി പ്രതിബാദിച്ചു. ചിലർക്ക് ദൈവം ഉപദ്രവകാരിയായും ചിലർക്ക് ഉപകാരിയായും അനുഭവപ്പെടാം. ചിലർക്ക് ദൈവം ദുരസ്ഥനാണ്. ദൈവം നമുക്ക് ഒരിക്കലും തടസം സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നവനല്ല. നാം കണക്കു ബോധിപ്പിക്കേണ്ട ദൈവസന്നിധിയിൽ സകലവും തുറന്നിരിക്കുകയാണ്. ദൈവം നമ്മെ അന്വേഷിച്ചു വരുന്നത് നാം എവിടെയാണെന്ന് അറിയാത്തതു കൊണ്ടല്ല. നമ്മുടെ ആധ്യാത്മിക അവസ്ഥ നമുക്കു തന്നെ തിരിച്ചറിയാൻ വേണ്ടിയാണ്. ഈ ചോദ്യം നമ്മുടെ നന്മയ്ക്കായാണ്. അല്ലാതെ ന്യായം വിധിക്കുന്നതിനോ തള്ളിക്കളയാനോ അല്ല. ദൈവത്തോടുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ അനുഭവിക്കുന്ന സന്തോഷം പുനഃസ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ചോദ്യമാണിതെന്നും റവ. മെയ്ഡൻ പറഞ്ഞു. പാപത്തിന് അടിമപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യനോട് ദൈവം ആദ്യം ചോദിച്ച ചോദ്യമാണ് 'നീ എവിടെ?' എന്നത്. ദൈവം എല്ലാ സൗകര്യങ്ങളും ഒരുക്കിയ ഏദൻ തോട്ടത്തിലാണ് ആദമിനു വീഴ്ചയുണ്ടായതെന്നു മനസ്സിലാക്കണം. അസംതൃപ്തിയുടെ നടുവിൽ പൈശാചിക പ്രലോഭനങ്ങൾക്ക് ആദം അകപ്പെടുകയായിരുന്നു. ഏദൻ തോട്ടത്തിന്റെ എല്ലാ സന്തോഷവും തകർത്ത് ആദം സ്വന്തം വഴിയിലൂടെ നടന്നു. മനുഷ്യനെ അന്വേഷിച്ചു വരുന്ന ദൈവം പാപത്തിൽ അകപ്പെടുന്ന മനുഷ്യനോട് ചോദിക്കുകയാണ് നീ എവിടെ എന്ന്. മനുഷ്യൻ ദൈവത്തെ അന്വേഷിക്കുകയല്ല, ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനെ അന്വേഷിക്കുകയാണ് ഇവിടെ. പാപത്തിന് അടിമപ്പെട്ടു പോയ മനുഷ്യൻ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സാന്നിധ്യത്തിൽ സന്തോഷിക്കാൻ തനിക്കു കഴിയില്ലെന്നു വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു. പലരും ചെയ്യുന്നത് പാപമാണെന്ന് അറിയാമായിരുന്നിട്ടും പാപക്ഷമയ്ക്കും അനുതാപത്തിനുമുള്ള മനസ് കാട്ടുന്നില്ല. നാം അകലും തോറും ദൈവം അടുപ്പംകാട്ടുകയാണ്. യേശുവിനെതിരെ പ്രലോഭനവുമായെത്തിയ പിശാചിനെ ചെറുക്കാൻ ദൈവത്തിനു കഴിഞ്ഞത് ദൈവദൂതന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷ ഉള്ളതുകൊണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കരം ചേർന്നു നടക്കുമ്പോൾ അവന്റെ കരം നമ്മെ ശുശ്രൂഷിക്കും. പരീക്ഷണങ്ങളെ ഇല്ലാതാക്കാതല്ല, പരീക്ഷണ ഘട്ടങ്ങളെ അതിജീവിക്കാൻ മനുഷ്യരെ പ്രാപ്തമാക്കുന്നതാണ് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സാന്നിധ്യം. ദൈവത്തെ രക്ഷിതാവായി അറിയുമ്പോൾതന്നെ പാപം കീഴ്പ്പെടുത്തിയ അനുഭവം നമുക്കുണ്ടായിരിക്കാം. നിങ്ങൾ ദൈവത്തിലേക്കു മടങ്ങിവന്നെ മതിയാകൂ. അവന്റെ വിളിയെ നിരസിക്കാൻ കഴിയില്ല. ഏദൻ തോട്ടത്തിൽ സങ്കടകരമായ ഒരു കാര്യം സംഭവിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ആദമും ഹവ്വയും ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ഒളിച്ചിരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു എന്നതാണ് അത്. പാപം നമ്മെ എന്തുമാത്രം പമ്പരവിഡ്ഢിയാക്കുന്നു എന്നതിന് ഉദാഹരണമാണ് ഈ സംഭവം. ദൈവസൃഷ്ടിയായ ആദം ദൈവസൃഷ്ടിയായ മരത്തിന്റെ മറവിൽ നിന്ന് തന്നെ ദൈവം കാണുകയില്ലെന്ന് വിചാരിക്കുന്ന മുഡനാണ്. സർവതന്നെയും കാണുന്ന ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ഏദനിലെ ഏതാനും മരങ്ങൾക്കു തങ്ങളെ ഒളിപ്പിക്കാൻ കഴിയുമെന്നു വിശ്വസിക്കുന്ന മുഡന്മാരാണ് ആ മനുഷ്യരിൽ നാം കാണുന്നത്. ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ഒളിച്ചിരിക്കാൻ ഒരിക്കലുമില്ലെന്നു നാം അറിയണം. സർവവ്യാപിയായ ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്ന് നാം എവിടെ ഒളിക്കാനാണ്. സർവജ്ഞാനിയായി ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്ന് നാം എന്താണു മറച്ചുവയ്ക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത്? ദൈവം നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതം കിളച്ചു മറിക്കുകയാണ്. എല്ലാ ഭാഗങ്ങളും അവൻ കിളച്ചു മറിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്ന് നമുക്ക് ഒന്നും മറച്ചു വയ്ക്കാൻ സാധിക്കില്ല. ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നു മറച്ചു വയ്ക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത് പരമ വിഡ്ഢിത്തമെന്നല്ലാതെ മറ്റൊന്നുമല്ല. മതാനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളിൽ സജീവ സാന്നിധ്യമായിരിക്കുമ്പോഴും ആന്തരിക ആത്മീയ അനുഭവത്തിൽ പലരും പിന്നിലാണ്. വെളിപാടു പുസ്തകത്തിലെ ലവോദിക്യ സഭയുടെ ക്രമാനുഗതമായ തകർച്ച ഉണ്ടായത് ഇതു മൂലമാണ്. ഒന്നുകിൽ ശീതവാനായിരിക്കുക, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഉഷ്ണവാൻ രണ്ടും ഇല്ലാതിരുന്നാൽ ശീതോഷ്ണവാനായിരിക്കും. അങ്ങനെയുള്ളവർക്ക് ദൈവത്തോടു ചേർന്ന് നടക്കാനാവില്ല. ഒരു നിലപാട് എപ്പോഴും ആവശ്യമാണ്. നിന്റെ ജീവിത വാതിലിൽ ചാരി നിൽക്കുന്ന ദൈവത്തിന് അനുകൂല നിലപാടാണ് എടുക്കേണ്ടത്. ദൈവം അദ്യശ്യ

നായിരിക്കുന്നു എന്നതുകൊണ്ട് ദൈവം നമ്മെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നില്ല എന്നു കരുതരുത്. പാപം നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിലേക്കു വന്നു ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നു നമ്മെ അകറ്റിക്കളഞ്ഞെങ്കിൽ അതിനെ നേരിടേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. തിരസ്കരണങ്ങൾ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ നന്മയിൽ നിന്നു നമ്മെ അകറ്റി നിർത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ടാവാം. നമുക്കുവേണ്ടിയുള്ള അവന്റെ വലിയ സ്നേഹത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഓർമ്മ നമ്മിൽ തങ്ങിനിൽക്കണമെന്നു ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നതായും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു.

മനുഷ്യൻ വീഴുന്നിടത്തെല്ലാം ദൈവം അവിടേക്ക് കടന്നുചെന്ന് നീ എവിടെ എന്ന ചോദ്യം ഉന്നയിക്കുകയാണെന്ന് റവ. കാനൻ പീറ്റർ മെയ്ഡൻ. ദൈവം നമ്മെ വിളിക്കുകയാണ്. വിളിയോടു മറുതലിച്ചു നാം നമ്മെ തന്നെ വഞ്ചിക്കരുതെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. തകർന്ന് ബന്ധം പുനഃസ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നതിനു ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നിരന്തരമായ ക്ഷണമാണ് 'നീ എവിടെ?' എന്ന ചോദ്യം. അതിൽ ക്രോധമില്ല, കുറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലില്ല ഞാനുമായുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ നിന്ന് നീ അകന്നു മാറിയല്ലോ എന്ന പരിതാപം മാത്രമാണുള്ളത്. നീ ഇവിടെ ഇരിക്കേണ്ടവനല്ല, എന്താണ് എന്റെ അടുത്തേക്കു വരാൻ കൂട്ടാക്കാത്തതെന്ന കരച്ചിലിന്റെ ഭാവമാണ് ആ ചോദ്യത്തിലുള്ളത്. ആയിരിക്കുന്ന ഇടത്തേക്ക് ചെന്നു കരഞ്ഞുകൊണ്ട് തിരിച്ചു വിളിക്കുന്നവനാണ് നമ്മുടെ ദൈവം. നിങ്ങൾ എന്നെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തതല്ല, ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തതാണ് എന്ന യേശുവിന്റെ വാക്കുകൾ ഈ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ വേണം കാണാൻ. കാണാതെ പോയതിനെ അന്വേഷിച്ച് ഇറങ്ങുന്ന മൂന്ന് സംഭവങ്ങൾ ലൂക്കോസ് വിവരിക്കുന്നു. നൂറിലൊരാട്, പത്ത് നാണയത്തിൽ ഒന്ന്, തേടിയിറങ്ങുന്ന ഉടമസ്ഥൻ എന്നിവയാണത്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വിളിയെ നിരന്തരമായി പ്രതിരോധിക്കുന്നെങ്കിൽ 'നീ എവിടെ?' എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിന്റെ ഊന്നൽ മാറും. ബന്ധം പുനഃസ്ഥാപിക്കാനും ഉണർത്താനും ചോദിക്കുന്ന ചോദ്യം ന്യായവിധിയുടെ ചോദ്യമാകും. നാം ദൈവത്താൽ തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ടവരാണ്. ദൈവം ഇല്ലാതെ ജീവിക്കാമെന്നു നാം കരുതിയേക്കാം. എന്നാൽ, ദൈവത്തിനു നമ്മെ ആവശ്യമുണ്ടെന്നു മനസ്സിലാക്കണം. പാപം നമ്മെ മയക്കത്തിലാക്കും. ഒരു പക്ഷേ, നമ്മുടെ ആധ്യാത്മികമായ തളർച്ചയിലേക്കും മന്ദതയിലേക്കും അതു നയിച്ചേക്കാം. അങ്ങനെ ദൈവശബ്ദം നമ്മൾ കേൾക്കാതെ പോകുന്നു. ഈ മന്ദതയിൽ നിന്ന് ഉണരാനാണ് ദൈവം ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്നത്. ദൈവം കോപിക്കുകയല്ല, നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന മനുഷ്യനെ ഓർത്ത് വിലപിക്കുകയാണ്. എന്തിനി ബന്ധം തകർത്തു എന്നോർത്തു ദൈവം സങ്കടപ്പെടുകയാണെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു. നമ്മുടെ മറുതലിപ്പിനു നാം ഉത്തരം പറയേണ്ടി വരും. ന്യായവിധിയെ നേരിടേണ്ടതായി വരും. വേദനകൾ ഇല്ലാതാക്കാൻ ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവത്തോടു ചേർന്നു പ്രവർത്തിക്കാനാണ് നമ്മെ വിളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. പ്രാർഥനകൾക്കു ഫലമുണ്ടാകാതെ വരുമ്പോൾ ചിലർ വിചാരിക്കും ദൈവം ഇടപെടുന്നില്ലെന്ന്. എന്നാൽ, പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നതിനു താൽപര്യപ്പെടുന്നൊരു ദൈവമാണ് നമുക്കുള്ളത്. വഴിതെറ്റിപ്പോയതിനെ നേരായ മാർഗത്തിൽ നടത്താൻ ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു എന്നും നാം മനസ്സിലാക്കണം. നീ എവിടെയെന്ന ചോദ്യം നമുക്കു സ്വയം ശോധനയ്ക്കും ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഹൃദയം കാണുന്നതിനുമുള്ളതാണ്. ഏദനിൽ നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട മനുഷ്യനെ ഓർത്തു കരയുന്ന ദൈവമാണ് നമ്മുടേത്. ധൂർത്തപുത്രനെ കാണുമ്പോൾ ഓടിയെത്തി സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന പിതാവാണ് നമ്മുടെ ദൈവം. കാണാതെ പോയ ആടിനെ കണ്ടെത്തും വരെ തേടിയലയുന്ന ഇടയനാണ് നമ്മുടെ ദൈവം. മറുതലിക്കുന്നവർ പോലും സ്വർഗീയ വിരുന്നിന്റെ ഭാഗമാകണമെന്നു ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. സ്വയം നീതീകരണക്കാരായ നിങ്ങളോട് ദൈവഭവനത്തിന്റെ അകത്തേക്കു വരാൻ നമ്മുടെ പിതാവ് അപേക്ഷിക്കുകയാണ്. ഇവിടെ കൃപ കവിഞ്ഞൊഴുകുകയാണ്. ഈ ആഘോഷത്തിൽ പങ്കുകാരാവാത്ത ഒരാളു പോലും ഉണ്ടാകരുതെന്ന് ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. നമ്മോടു ചേർന്ന് ഈ ആഘോഷം നടത്താൻ ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. നീ എവിടെയാണ്? എവിടെയായിരുന്നാലും പിതാവിന്റെ ഭവനത്തിലേക്കു മടങ്ങി വന്ന് ആഘോഷത്തിൽ പങ്കുകാരാകണം.

സഹോദരനോടുള്ള വിരോധം നിറഞ്ഞ മനസ്സുകളുടെ പ്രാർഥനയും ആരാധനയും വ്യാജമാണെന്നു റവ. കാനൻ പീറ്റർ മെയ്ഡൻ. ദൈവത്തെ ആരാധിക്കുന്ന അതേ നാവിൽ നിന്നു സഹോദരനെക്കുറിച്ചു പരദൂഷണം പറയുമ്പോൾ ആരാധന എങ്ങനെ ഫലമുള്ളതാകുമെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം ചോദിച്ചു. മാറാമൺ കൺവൻഷനിൽ സന്ദേശം നൽകുകയായിരുന്നു അദ്ദേ

മൺചിരാതുപോലെ ചുറ്റും പ്രകാശം പരത്തുന്നവൻ വിശ്വാസി ഗീവർഗീസ് മാർ അത്താനാസിയോസ്

വിശ്വാസി മൺചിരാതുകളുടെ ധർമ്മം അനുഷ്ഠിക്കേണ്ട വനാണെന്ന് മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭാ രാന്നി-നിലയ്ക്കൽ ഭദ്രാസനാധിപൻ ഗീവർഗീസ് മാർ അത്താനാസിയോസ് പ്രസ്താവിച്ചു. 116-ാമതു മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ വെള്ളിയാഴ്ച രാവിലത്തെ യോഗത്തിൽ പ്രസംഗിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു മാർ അത്താനാസിയോസ്. യേശു എല്ലാവർക്കും ലഭ്യമായിരുന്നതുപോലെ വിശ്വാസി വെളിച്ചം അന്വേഷിക്കുകയും അതു നേടിയശേഷം അന്ധകാര നിബിഢമായ ഇടങ്ങളിലേക്കു പോവുകയും ചെയ്യണം. എവിടെയും പ്രകാശം പരത്തുന്നതാകണം അവന്റെ ജീവിതം. ദൈവം എല്ലായിടത്തുമുള്ളതിനാൽ പിന്നെന്തിനാണ് പള്ളിയിൽ പോകുന്നതെന്നു ചോദിക്കുന്നവരുണ്ട്. അതിന്റെ ഉത്തരം ഇതാണ്. ദൈവം എല്ലായിടത്തും ഒരുപോലെയാണെങ്കിലും ഞാൻ എല്ലായിടത്തും അതുപോലെല്ല. മുന്നിൽ നിൽക്കുന്ന മുൾച്ചെടിയിൽ നിറയെ പൂക്കളും എന്നാൽ ഇലകൾ കുറവുമാണ്. സൂഷ്മാവിന്റെ ഉദ്ദേശം പൂർത്തീകരിക്കുവാൻ ഈ ചെടിക്ക് അതിനപ്പുറം ഒന്നും ചെയ്യാനില്ല എന്നതാണ്.



ജോസഫും മറിയയും യേശുക്കുഞ്ഞുമായി പലായനം ചെയ്യുമ്പോൾ കൊള്ളക്കാരുടെ കയ്യിൽ അകപ്പെട്ടു. ഭയചകിതരായി തീർന്ന അവർ കുഞ്ഞിനെ മാറിമാറി നോക്കി. ആ നിമിഷം ഒരു കൊള്ളക്കാരൻ തന്റെ തുരുത്തിയിൽ നിന്ന് അൽപ്പം വെള്ളം ആ കുഞ്ഞിന്റെ ചുണ്ടിലേക്കു പകർന്നു കൊടുത്തു. മറിയ നന്ദിയോടെ ആ കൊള്ളക്കാരനോടു പറഞ്ഞു: നീ ചെയ്ത ഉപകാരം ഈ പൈതൽ വളർന്നുവരുമ്പോൾ അവൻ മറക്കില്ല. ഈ

ഓർമ്മയാണ് യേശു ക്രൂശിൽ വെച്ച് കള്ളനു കൊടുത്ത പരുദീസയുടെ വാഗ്ദാനം. ഓർമ്മകൾക്കു മരണമില്ല. കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷം വിശുദ്ധനാട് സന്ദർശിച്ചപ്പോൾ ഈജിപ്റ്റിലും പോയിരുന്നു. നൈൽ നദിയിൽ ഞാങ്ങണയുടെ ഇടയിൽ നിസഹായനായി കിടക്കുന്ന മോശയുടെ ഓർമ്മകൾ മനസിലേക്കു കടന്നുവന്നു. ആ പെട്ടകത്തിനു പിന്നിൽ ആരുടെ യൊക്കെയോ കഠിനാധ്വാനമുണ്ട്. സഹോദരിയും പ്രിയപ്പെട്ടവരും ചേർന്നു പെട്ടകം ഒരുക്കി. സ്നേഹം എന്ന വികാരവായ്പ്പുകൊണ്ട് അത് പൊതിഞ്ഞു. ആ കുഞ്ഞിന് ജീവിക്കുവാൻ തങ്ങളാൽ ആകുന്ന എല്ലാ സാധ്യതകളും സൃഷ്ടിക്കുകയാണ് മാതാവും സഹോദരിയും.

എന്നാൽ അവൻ വളർന്നു വലുതായപ്പോൾ ഏറെ മാറിപ്പോയി. ആരുമില്ല എന്നുകണ്ടപ്പോൾ കൊലചെയ്ത് കുഴിച്ചിടാൻ മടിക്കുന്നില്ല. നമ്മിൽ പലരും ഇപ്രകാരമാണ്. ആരുമില്ലെങ്കിൽ എന്തു ചെയ്യാനും മടിക്കാത്തവർ. ധനാക്കേണ്ടവനെ നോക്കാനുംകാണേണ്ടവനെ കാണാനുമാണ് ഈ കൺവൻഷൻ. കേരളത്തിലെ കുട്ടികളുടെ അവസ്ഥ ഏതാനു ആഴ്ചമുമ്പ് മലയാള മനോരമ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ചു. വാടരുതീ മലരുകൾ എന്ന ആ പരമ്പരയിൽ സ്കൂൾ വിദ്യാർഥികൾപോലും ലഹരിക്കും ലൈംഗിക അരാജകത്വത്തിനും വിധേയരാകുന്നതായി നാം കണ്ടു. അവരെ അകപ്പെടുത്തുവാൻ കറുത്തശക്തികൾ രംഗത്തിറങ്ങിയിരിക്കുകയാണ്. മാതാപിതാക്കൾ അറിയുന്നതിനു മുമ്പേ അവരുടെ ജീവിതം അഗാധ ഗർത്തങ്ങളിലേക്കു വീഴുന്നു. കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾക്കു മാതൃകാപരമായ ജീവിതം കാട്ടിക്കൊടുക്കാൻ മാതാപിതാക്കൾക്കു കഴിയുന്നുണ്ടോ? യോഹന്നാൽ സ്നാപകനും യേശു ക്രിസ്തുവും വാടാത്ത മലരുകളായി ശോഭിച്ച രണ്ടു വ്യക്തിത്വങ്ങളായിരുന്നു. സ്നാപകന്റെ പിന്നിൽ അവനു കരുത്തായി ഉന്നത ജീവിത മൂല്യങ്ങൾ ഉയർത്തി സഖരാവും എലിസബത്തും ജീവിച്ചു. തച്ചനായ ജോസഫും മറിയയും യേശുവിനു പിന്നിലുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. യോഹന്നാൻ സ്നാപകന്റെ ശിരസ് ചേദിക്കുന്നതിന് മകളെ അയക്കുന്ന മാതാവിനെ നാം കാണുന്നു. പിന്നെയെങ്ങനെ ആ മലരുകൾ വാടാതിരിക്കും? സത്യത്തിന്റെ സാക്ഷ്യം പറയാനെന്നതിന് ആ മലർ ഒരിക്കലും വാടിയില്ല. ക്രിസ്തുവാകുന്ന മലരും വാടിയില്ല. ഒരേ വസ്ത്രമായതിനാൽ തിരിച്ചറിയാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടേണ്ട. നിങ്ങൾ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്ന നസ്രായൻ ഞാനാണ്. ഇന്ന് ആരെയും ഭയമില്ല എന്നതാണ് പ്രശ്നം.

ഇന്നു നമ്മുടെ ചുറ്റുപാടുകൾ ഏറെ ദുഃഖസാന്ദ്രമാണ്. ഓരോ ദിവസവും പിറക്കുന്നതു ദുരന്ത വാർത്തകളുമാണ്. സൗമ്യയുടെ മരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെട്ട ഒരു ചുവരെഴുത്ത് ഇപ്രകാരമായിരുന്നു: നിഷ്ഠൂര കരങ്ങൾ കശക്കിയെറിഞ്ഞ നിർമ്മല പുഷ്പമേ നിന്റെ സ്മരണയ്ക്കു മുന്നിൽ ഞങ്ങളുടെ ഹൃദയാഞ്ജലി. ഓർമ്മകൾ ഇവിടെ മരിക്കാതെ നിൽക്കുന്നു. ഇതു തന്നെയാണ് ഗാന്ധിജിയും പങ്കുവെച്ചത്. അണിഞ്ഞൊരുങ്ങിയാലും ഇല്ലെങ്കിലും മനുഷ്യാ നീ നിഷ്കളങ്കനായിരിക്ക. കർത്താവേ നിന്റെ കൂടാരത്തിനരികെ ആർ പാർക്കുമെന്നാണ് സങ്കീർത്തനക്കാരന്റെ ചോദ്യം. നിന്റെ വിശുദ്ധ പർവതത്തിൽ ആർ വസിക്കും. നീതി പ്രവർത്തിക്ക, നിഷ്കളങ്കനായി നടക്കുക. ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ളവർക്കെ അവന്റെ കൂടാരത്തിൽ പാർക്കാനാവൂ. ഇത് അൽപ്പം പ്രയാസമാണ്. യേശുവിനോട് ശിഷ്യർ ചോദിക്കുന്നു. ഗുരോ നീ എവിടെ പാർക്കുന്നു? കാൺമീൻ എന്നായിരുന്നു കർത്താവിന്റെ മറുപടി.

നിന്റെ ഹൃദയം എവിടെയായിരിക്കുന്നുവോ അവിടെയാണ് നീ എന്നുള്ളതാണ് അതിന്റെ സത്യം. സൗമ്യ എന്ന പെൺകുട്ടി നിഷ്കളങ്കയാണ്. അവളെ കശക്കിയെറിഞ്ഞ നിഷ്ഠൂര കരങ്ങൾ നമ്മുടേതാണ്, ആ തിരിച്ചറിവ് നമുക്കുണ്ടാകണം. തന്റെ ലംഘനങ്ങളെ മറച്ചുവയ്ക്കുന്നവന് ശുഭം വരികയില്ലെന്ന് വേദപുസ്തകം നമ്മെ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. യേശുവേ നിന്നെ ക്രൂശിച്ചിടത്ത് ഞാനുമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു.

The Mar Thoma Malayalees—A Cultural View

George Thomas, Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma

One of the strengths of the Mar Thoma Church is that it is a cultural church. Our rich history and traditions not only enhance our worship, but also adds new dimensions to the family structure within our church. However, our strength can also be our greatest weakness. It is because of this cultural identity that we tend to lose the most fundamental aspect of what a church is really about...community. It appears that some individuals and families started leaving the church because of this "community" crisis. Many of these families have a genuine desire to seek God, to learn His Will and to implement that in their lives. Many of them actually do enjoy the liturgical service and the worship that accompanies it, but something goes wrong. So what do they desire? What is it that we as Mar Thoma Church is missing?

This is a two-fold question. First, we have to look at the inner community; we must look at our interactions and attitudes towards those that are already inside the church family. Then, we have to look towards the larger community outside our walls. Let's examine three points for further reflection.

The Love Feast

First, let us also look at our own personal attitudes in attending the church services or any of the church related programs. I am reminded by Paul's correction of the early Church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:17-33. Paul was critical on the early Church in Corinth for their profound disrespect and dishonor of the Lord's Supper during the "Love Feast". Their meetings apparently "do more harm than good" (vs. 17). The members of this early church do not come to celebrate the Lords Supper, but "they get drunk" (vs. 21); "humiliate those that have nothing" (vs. 22); there is no preparation before partaking in the Qurbana (vs. 28); they do not "recognize the body and blood of the Lord" (vs. 29); and they do not wait on each other (vs. 21 and 33). They make a mockery of this Love Feast and destroy the community within.

Well what about us? Let us take Paul's correction and examine our own attitudes and actions. Do we spend the time to pray and prepare before the Qurbana service or do we run into the Sanctuary late with our Bibles at home? Do we pay attention and take notes during the sermons or are we nodding off asleep? Do we understand the great sacrifice of our Lord as we pray the confession and prepare to take the Holy Body and Blood of our Savior or do we just go with the motions? Even more, let us judge our actions during general body meetings, committee meetings, even just the "lounging around time" after the service. Are we patient on each other, waiting on them, displaying love? How would you respond to this statement..."your meetings do more harm than good..."

A Lighted Community

Second, are we really tackling the main issues that many of our youths and members of the church deal with? This may be part of cultural infusion within the western context. Sorrowfully we have to admit the facts that there are people struggling with alcohol, sex, drugs, and divorce, within our community. What can we do that tackles these issues...any support groups? There are those that are trying to seek God through the hardships in their lives, they are trying to find His reality in their life. But God can only be real when His Church portrays Him. So as a Church, what should our response be, to those in need? Our responses appear mixed? If someone is sick or dying in the hospital, we are there for them...as a whole community. However, a hospital bed and a grave are not the only times that people need each other. As a Church, do we tend to ignore, lecture, gossip, or even ridicule those? But again, these are not what Christians are supposed to be doing. We are called to be the "light of the world", the "salt of the earth", to love. 1 Corinthians 13 gives a complete description of Love; do we follow what the Biblical standards of love? As Marthomites, are we really a "Lighted Community to those that are Un-lightened"?

The "Others"

Finally, another noteworthy point is that we have only very limited impact in the community around us. In many of our churches, we tend to act more like Malayalee get together. We tend to be very insular only focused within a particular approved or comfortable group and we become very activity oriented, focusing on prayer meetings, parish day celebrations, church picnics, etc. But while all these activities are good to foster fellowship between the church members, we are not supposed to be limited to them. This is our staggering weakness. We have virtually no connection with the larger community that is around us. If there is no connection, then there is no service. If there is no service, then there is no love.

1 Corinthians 1:2 will be one of the greatest challenges that we as Mar Thoma Christians face in today's world. Paul does an amazing thing here; he extends the family of Christianity. He simply states, "...with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Paul refers to a more global Christianity. He understands that we are connected to each other. When we say brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not just talking about those people in our local church or denomination, but all those Christians everywhere. Having such a global understanding of our faith puts life and our church affairs in perspective.

Faced with this challenge, how do we as Mar Thoma Christians respond? Let us take a real look at our Church, how often do we have events that include those in our sur-

rounding neighborhood? How often do “non Indians” come to our church? Do we have any kind of outreach or service activity to the poor, the outcast, or the marginalized? Sure, we have our token gifts or donations we give to the Mexico Missions Project, the Native American Missions, or some other Missions in India. However, do we actually go and partake in any of these projects. How about a soup kitchen, food drive, habitat for humanity, or a shelter for abused women or children right in our own backyard?

Conclusion

The very definition of “The Church” is a “Community of Believers”. In no way, does it specify location, nationality, or

culture. Rather, we are all “One Church”, one community under Christ. With this definition, we should reconsider our attitudes toward each other, our local activities, and our big projects and see if they really reflect the global calling that is required of us—both in our surrounding community and in the larger world we live in.

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

Reflections—In Times of Grief

Mrs. Saramma Poikail

Almost two years ago, I wrote an article in *The Messenger* titled ‘When My Husband Passed Away.’ On December 18, 2010, it was two years or seven hundred thirty (730) days since George passed away. At first, I thought I would not survive a month or a year in this world without him. Well, the good Lord took care of everything. He enabled me to not only survive but also thrive. He is true to His promise that, “He will never leave you alone.”

Although the loss of a loved one is probably the most common and painful type of grief, we do mourn for many different reasons. I learned a big lesson from the life of Job who experienced just about all the reasons to grieve.

Perhaps no one in history has had more reasons to mourn than Job did. He experienced a series of tragic losses that could only be brought on by the devil. God gave Satan permission to test Job for a time so that Satan could see how faithful Job was to God.

Job lost all his wealth. He had been a very rich man. He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys (Job 1:3). He also had scores of people watching over his investments for him. He had it made. Yet, one day he lost it all.

One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you”. While he was still speaking another messenger came and said, “the fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you”. While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “the Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you” (Job 1:13-17). While the messenger was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the

oldest brother’s house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the house. It collapsed on them and they are all dead” (Job 1:18-19). Evidently, something like a tornado struck the home of Job’s oldest son and killed everyone inside. Violent crimes and natural disasters had robbed Job of everything. He lost all his wealth and all of his employees who had faithfully worked for him. He lost all his children; he had seven sons and three daughters. He loved them and was constantly praying for them. We think it is tragic when we hear on the news that a parent has lost one or even two children in an accident. Can you imagine what it would have been like losing all ten children at once? Job experienced intense and unfathomable grief in life: the death of a child, times ten.

Furthermore, Job’s health failed when Satan afflicted him with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes (Job 2:7-8). Losing one’s health not only leads to discomfort and pain but also often is followed by the loss of other important elements of freedom and friendship. In his anguish, Job questioned God but he did not abandon God. He still knew where to turn for comfort and seek answers to his questions.

The period of grief, sorrow and pain seems to last forever. The moments crawl by and you become convinced that the pain will never go away but eventually all that pain will fade away. That is the time you feel that you are closer to God. He will give you strength to carry your burdens. That is the power of God’s promises.

During the last two years of my grief, I learned many lessons from God. I have drawn closer to Him more than ever. Every day, I feel His presence that gives me strength to pull on when I face the realities of life. He gives me the grace and strength to go on. His unchanging love and promise keeps me always above the soaring waters. “My God is able and faithful”.

Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land

Dr. Jesudas M. Athyal

The search for identity is one of the greatest needs of our times. Today people are desperately seeking places where they feel welcomed and at home. Once upon a time, our people, especially back home in Kerala, tended to stay in one location. Most people lived and died within a few miles of their birthplace. Family and lifelong friends lived nearby. Faces on the street were familiar and strangers were a novelty. Time has changed, and it is now a different world. Today we live in a mobile society, in a suitcase culture. Families are scattered not only across the country but also around the world. People regularly move from one place to another for studies, employment, better prospects and so on.

Our search for identity leads us today in different directions. School students join clubs and teams. Colleges have fraternities and other campus groups. Adults become members of civic and social organizations. People form online communities around common interests or blog about their personal lives. There are organizations for every imaginable interest. Immigrant churches cater to not only the spiritual and pastoral needs of its members but also serve as social and cultural forums. These groups form a vital part of any human community. They provide the settings for friendship, purpose, and meaning in life. They enrich both our individual lives and our community life.

It is in this larger context that we review our identity and mission as primarily an immigrant group in the United States.

The American Context

Facilitated by radical changes in the immigration policy of the U.S. Government in the 1960s, large scale migration took place during the next few decades, in the process altering significantly the demographic, cultural and religious landscape of this country. Migration poses a severe challenge not only to social and economic life but also to the religious and cultural identities of the migrants and of the 'hosts'. Immigrants—often from traditionally pluralist societies—seek to re-discover their identities in a modern pluralistic society. The newcomers to the United States have often been called upon to strike a balance between the social and cultural realities of their new homes and the values they bring along with them. The responses to this tension have been complex and varied but a dominant one has been for the immigrants to remain in their new locations as ghetto communities clinging to fellow immigrants and to familiar symbols and rituals, especially for spiritual and cultural sustenance. The emergence of the second and subsequent generations of immigrants, however, adds a new dimension to this situation.

One of the largest groups that migrated to the United States in recent decades has been the Indian community. The brief history of Indian migration in the US is the

account of a traditionally pluralist society re-discovering itself in a modern pluralist society. Side by side, along with the established Anglo-Saxon traditions of the country have come to exist the Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and a variety of other religious and cultural groups. The challenge for us is to discern how the growing Indian presence in the United States influences—and is influenced by—the local context which itself is in a process of flux owing to a plurality of factors often clashing with each other.

Migration is a profoundly challenging experience for both the immigrants and for the host society. While ethnically large sections of the Indians share a common heritage, culturally and religiously, they are as diverse as any group. India is home to one of the most ancient civilizations. Diverse religions and cultures have existed together there for several centuries. While the pluralist ethos of India is a model for the rest of the world, it must, however, also be noted that the institutionalization of caste and gender discrimination in the social order has clearly been out of tune with the tenets of democracy and social justice.

For most immigrants for whom "land" is not only a person's dwelling place and means of livelihood but also a source of spiritual and cultural identity, migration is a traumatic experience. As challenging as the uprooting from their indigenous societies is, so is the process of assimilation in their new location.

Migration also brings profound changes to the host society. The immigrant is the "alien" in the land who is often viewed with suspicion, distrust and hostility. The mere presence of the outsider can threaten the local customs, practices and lifestyle. In times of economic hardship, there is greater hostility as immigrants also lay claims to the cake that is getting smaller. For both the newcomers and the hosts, therefore, the process of migration is a profoundly challenging experience.

While these fears are real, it also needs to be acknowledged that the immigrant presence in the American soil has historically had a redemptive value for both the "guests" and the "hosts". The United States is a nation of immigrants; the country has traditionally been energized by newer migrant populations. The diversity the immigrants bring with them equips the host country to re-define its local cultures and traditions in terms of inclusivity and democratization. America has the unique distinction of extending hospitality to both refugees who flee political and religious persecution as well as immigrants who come here for economic or intellectual reasons. The Biblical dictum of hospitality to strangers has been extended by modern democratic societies including the United States. While the generosity of the official immigration policy allowed diverse communities to reach American shores, the hospitality of civil society to immigrants ensured that they took roots here.



Homes

24 HOURS GATED RETIREMENT COMMUNITY



The Development is Over. Lots are Being Sold NOW !!!

So HURRY !

Select Your BEST LOTS.

For Details:

John Titus: john.titus@aerocontrols.com

Dr. Thomas Alexander 678-442-0094

Abraham Thomas 770-237-5593

Mathen Mathew 678-428-2395

www.keralagardens.com

Biblical Understanding of Hospitality to Strangers

The command to offer hospitality to foreigners is a cardinal teaching of the Bible. Abraham is the typical Old Testament refugee who was called to leave the familiar to go elsewhere. Abraham, who journeyed in the strange land himself becomes the one who welcomes strangers, as at the oak of Mamre (Genesis 12:1-2). In Leviticus, God instructs the people to treat the alien living among them as one of their native-born. "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as a native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Remembrance is an essential component of Christian hospitality. The Lord invites Israel to a life of radical hospitality by first calling them to remember. Remember when they were slaves in Egypt—strangers in a strange land. The Lord acted mightily and delivered them from the place of sin and death. Based upon their experience with God, they are commanded to treat strangers like family. God commands the Israelites to let their collective memory of Egypt—the stories of oppression and slavery passed down through the generations—remain vivid and sustain in them a lifelong passion for hospitality to foreigners.

We too are called to remember. Can we recall the last time we were strangers in a new setting? Remember what it felt like to move into a new town, job, school, home, or church? Get in touch with that anxious feeling in the pit of your stomach when you entered a room filled with unfamiliar faces.

But there is another side to this commandment, because it is not only the experience of oppression but also the experience of liberation and God's provision that was to inform their life together. When they were oppressed, God freed them; when they were vulnerable, God protected them; when they were unpleasant and downright disobedient, God did not give up on them. In Egypt they learned the heart of an alien but in the Exodus they learned the heart of God. It was in the Exodus that they experienced the deliverance and provision of the Lord. So they are to also let this memory of God's goodness be a model for how they treat the vulnerable among them.

Jesus Christ, of course, was born as a refugee, as a homeless child. Christ, the stranger, stands for all the strangers and homeless in our midst. In the current political atmosphere in the U.S. surcharged by debates on "illegal immigrants", Shaun Casey of the United Methodist Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C. insists: "Jesus was an illegal alien and that ought to shape how we enter the current debate."

As Dr. Casey analyses, when Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt to protect the baby Jesus from a wrathful King Herod, they were illegal immigrants and somehow role models for today's debates about immigration. "They, too, fled to Egypt, suffered persecution, were redeemed by God, and then were empowered to live lives in solidarity with

sojourners and aliens wherever they encountered them," he states. Likewise, the disciples of Jesus throughout history are called upon to pick up the same ministry of solidarity with the displaced people.

It is not only the memory of suffering but also the experience of being welcomed that teaches us how to welcome others; it is the experience of being loved that teaches us how to love; the experience of receiving hospitality that teaches us how to offer it to others.

Paul wrote to the church in Rome: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." (Romans 15:7) In another translation, the verse reads: "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." We are called to treat others the way that God has treated us. Radical hospitality is based upon and rooted in our own experience of God.

Christian Mission in Our Context

True hospitality is born in us, not only from the experience of being unwelcome or remembering our time as foreigners; true hospitality is also born from the experience of being welcomed—by other people and by God. It is when the memory of exclusion is paired with the reality of Christ's welcome that God forms us into people of true hospitality. Our calling then, as heirs of the Exodus and as followers of Christ, is to welcome others as Christ has welcomed us.

The Church has the unique opportunity to become a home for the alien. The body of Christ was created to be a refuge of warmth and intimacy in a cold and cruel world. Our congregations need to be the place that the Lord meant us to be: the family of God that welcomes both the familiar and the stranger.

An example from a familiar context: For long, the Mar Thoma parish in the Boston area did not have a church building and the Episcopal Church in Burlington graciously invited us to worship in their premises. We worshipped there for several years. Today we have our own church building and we allow a Brazilian congregation, who do not have their own building, to use it for worship. We had received hospitality in the past and today we extend our hospitality to those who are in need. The growth of the Mar Thoma Church outside Kerala, of course, was facilitated largely by the hospitality extended to us by our sister churches. Today it is our turn to reciprocate the goodwill. The mission work of the North America Diocese in Mexico, among the Native Americans and elsewhere is a mark of us extending our hospitality in the strange lands that we call home now.

The Church is called not only to minister to the people in the Diaspora, but theologically speaking, the Church itself is a Diaspora community—a pilgrim community that is involved in a journey to fulfill God's ultimate purpose for humanity and for all God's creation. We, as pilgrims, are called upon to extend hospitality to each other and to the "strangers" in our midst. Hospitality is not simply politeness or good manners; it is a mark of Christian discipleship. It is integral to who we are as God's people. We are called to love as we have been loved. ■

Through Some Mission Fields in India

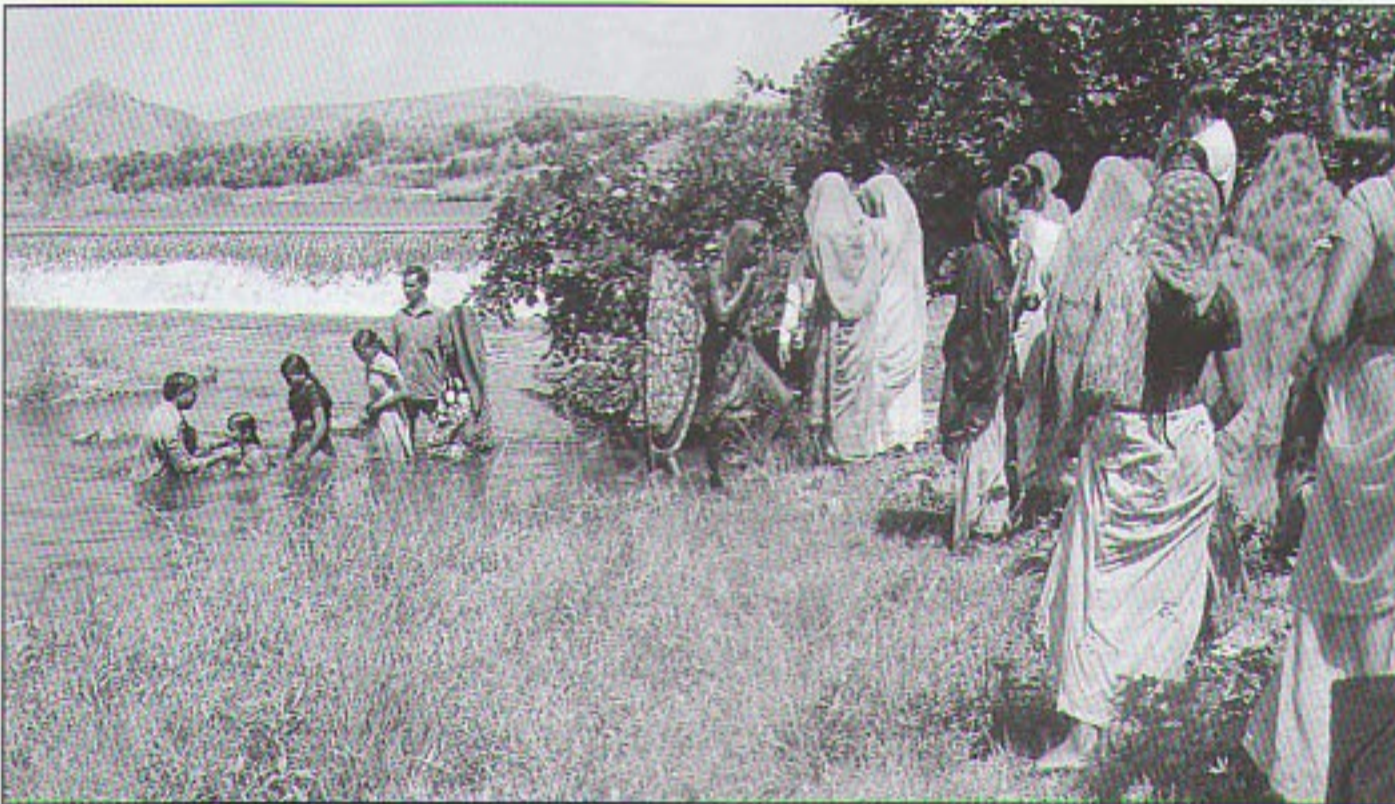
M. C. Alexander and Grace Alexander, New Jersey MTC

"All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"

Mathew 28:18-20

A visit to our mission field was a cherished dream—a dream that I had nursed for a very long time. Towards the end of 2010 we decided to take a few days off and experience what life was like in the Mar Thoma mission fields in different parts of India.

Many tribal communities still live in the forests and hilly areas of central and north India, where the light of civilization has not reached yet. They still reside in caves and huts surrounded by wild animals. They are unaware of the huge leaps of 'progresses made by humans living in the 'civilized' parts of the world. They are afraid of other people visiting them. There are no educational or health facilities in those areas. They have to travel miles to get any medical



assistance. It is hard to believe that such communities still exist in the world in the 21st century.

We are proud to report that the Mar Thoma Church is well aware of this situation and is making a determined effort to help these communities with the limited resources the Church has. It is unfortunate that most Marthomites are not aware of the work that our missionaries are doing.

The following were the members in our mission trip team: Mr. Koshy Thomas and Mrs. Mariamma Thomas, Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston; Mrs. Annamma Mathew, Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church; Mr. M. C. Alexander and Mrs. Grace Alexander and Mrs. Geetha Cherian, New Jersey Mar Thoma Church.

We started from New Jersey on August 30, 2010 and reached Bangalore on September 1st. Mrs. Geetha Cherian picked us up from the airport, and within a few hours, we



set out on the first leg of our visits to Chintamani, to see the mission work of Karnataka Navajeevana Samathy (KNS). On the way, we met one of the founding members of KNS, Rev. K. Thomas, who had visited United States a few years ago and explained the work of KNS. The entire project that was controlled by KNS will now be taken over by the Mar Thoma Diocese of Madras. On the way, we stopped at Chickabellapur Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church for breakfast. Rev. Renny Philip is the vicar and administrator of the operations there.

Chintamani is a small village made up of poor and working class people. The founders of KNS first arrived in Chintamani by bicycle. They were beaten by the villagers



and sent back to Bangalore. Thomas achen explained his experiences during the early days of their mission. Today, the mission has a hostel for boys and girls, a technical training center and a small church.

After lunch, we visited nearby villages to experience the actual mission work. We met some believers and non-believers in that area. When we came back, we were greeted by the hostel inmates and we joined them for the evening prayer. They are a set of well-guided, very pleasant and disciplined children. The way they worshipped God amazed us. We stayed in the guest quarters that are available there. This area has lot of potential and we can do some of the following: (i) Sponsor boys and girls in the hostel; (ii) Provide medical aid in this area; (iii) Provide funds for the con-

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV BIBLE
THE BOOK OF EXODUS: CHAPTERS 16-40

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

1		2			3									
									4	5		6		
7					8									
		9				10								
									11		12			
13				14					15					
		16									17			
18	19				20						21		22	
									23					
				24										
		25							26		27			28
	29													
		32												

Across:

- The cloud of the Lord was over the ___ by day.
- "Make the robe of the ___ entirely of blue cloth."
- When the ___ grew hot, the manna melted away.
- The Lord asked Moses to bring two stone tablets to Mount ___.
- ___ was the son of Zipporah.
- "They will know that I am the ___ their God."
- "Each one is to gather as much as he ___."
- Bezalel was the grandson of ___.
- The Lord said "I will test them to see whether they will follow my ___."
- "Remember the ___ day by keeping it holy."
- "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the ___."
- Moses stayed on the mountain for ___ days and nights.
- The Lord said to Moses, "Everyone is to ___ where he is on the seventh day, no one is to go out."
- "Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the ___ of the Lord your God."
- The Lord wanted them to make a ___ so that He could dwell among them.
- My father's ___ was my helper.
- The Lord instructed Moses to make garments for Aaron for his ___ as a priest.

Down:

- The ark of the ___ was to be placed behind the curtain.
- Moses called the altar The Lord is my ___.
- Joshua mistook the ___ of the people shouting as a sound of war in the camp.
- The ___ are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done.
- "do not hold back ___ from your granaries or your vats."
- ___ was the wife of Moses.
- Moses's father-in-law told Moses to select ___ men who hate dishonest gain.
- Oholiab and Ahisamach are from the tribe of ___.
- The Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, "If ___ we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt."
- "put in the ___ the Testimony which I will give you."
- "anyone who ___ his father or mother must be put to death."
- The Lord said to Moses "I am pleased with you and I know you by ___."
- ___ had let people get out of control and so became a laughing stock to their enemies.
- The Lord gave Bezalel and Oholiab the skill and the ability to ___ out the work of constructing the sanctuary.
- The observing of the Sabbath is to be a ___ between the Lord and the Israelites forever.
- The sacred anointing ___ was made of fine spices.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE WINNERS (January 2011)

1. Santha Varghese	Ascension MTC PA	23. Rajamma Thomas	MTC of Greater Seattle
2. Thomas GeeVarghese	Bethel MTC, PA	24. Susan John	MTC San Francisco, CA
3. Oshin Mathew	Carmel MTC, Boston	25. Omana T Titus	MTC Seattle
4. Paul Isaac	Carmel MTC, Boston	26. Omana Rajee	MTC Staten Island, NY
5. Nisha Mathew	Carmel MTC, Boston	27. Philip Jacob	MTC Staten Island, NY
6. Kevin George	Carmel MTC, Boston	28. Pannamma Mathew	MTC, PA
7. Rony Thomas	Carmel MTC, Boston	29. Mercy Abraham	Phoenix MTC, Arizona
8. Riya Ann Thomas	Carmel MTC, Boston	30. Mariamma John	Sehion MTC, Dallas
9. Shanta Mathew	Chicago MTC, IL	31. Jasmine S Yohannan	St. Andrew's MTC, NY
10. Ashwin Daniel	Christos MTC, PA	32. Josh Jacob	St. Andrew's MTC, NY
11. Preethi Alex	Christos MTC, PA	33. Javy Jacob	St. Andrew's MTC, NY
12. Sneha Mathew	Detroit MTC	34. Annamma John	St. Luke MTC, Florida
13. Kochumol Reji Varghese	Emmanuel MTC, Houston	35. Prince John	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
14. Alice Jacob	Epiphany MTC NY	36. Sajjan Varghese	St James MTC, London, UK
15. Saramma Chacko	Epiphany MTC NY	37. Aleyamma Ninan	St.Thomas MTC, NY
16. Aleyamma Mathai	Epiphany MTC NY	38. Achamma Chacko	Trinity MTC, Houston
17. Rejin Jean George	Horeb MTC, CO	39. Kunijamma Thomas	Trinity MTC, Houston
18. Aleyamma Mathew	MTC Los Angeles MTC	40. Tony Eappen	Trinity MTC, Houston
19. Sicily Skariah	MTC Dallas Famers Br	41. Mariamma Thomas	Trinity MTC, Houston
20. Aleyamma Mathew	MTC Dallas Famers Br	42. Gracy P Vattakunnel	Trinity MTC, Houston
21. Shaila Mathew	MTC Dallas Famers Br	43. Mariamma Thomas(Molly)	Trinity MTC, Houston
22. Shaji David	MTC Dallas Famers Br	44. Chinnamma John	Trinity MTC, Houston

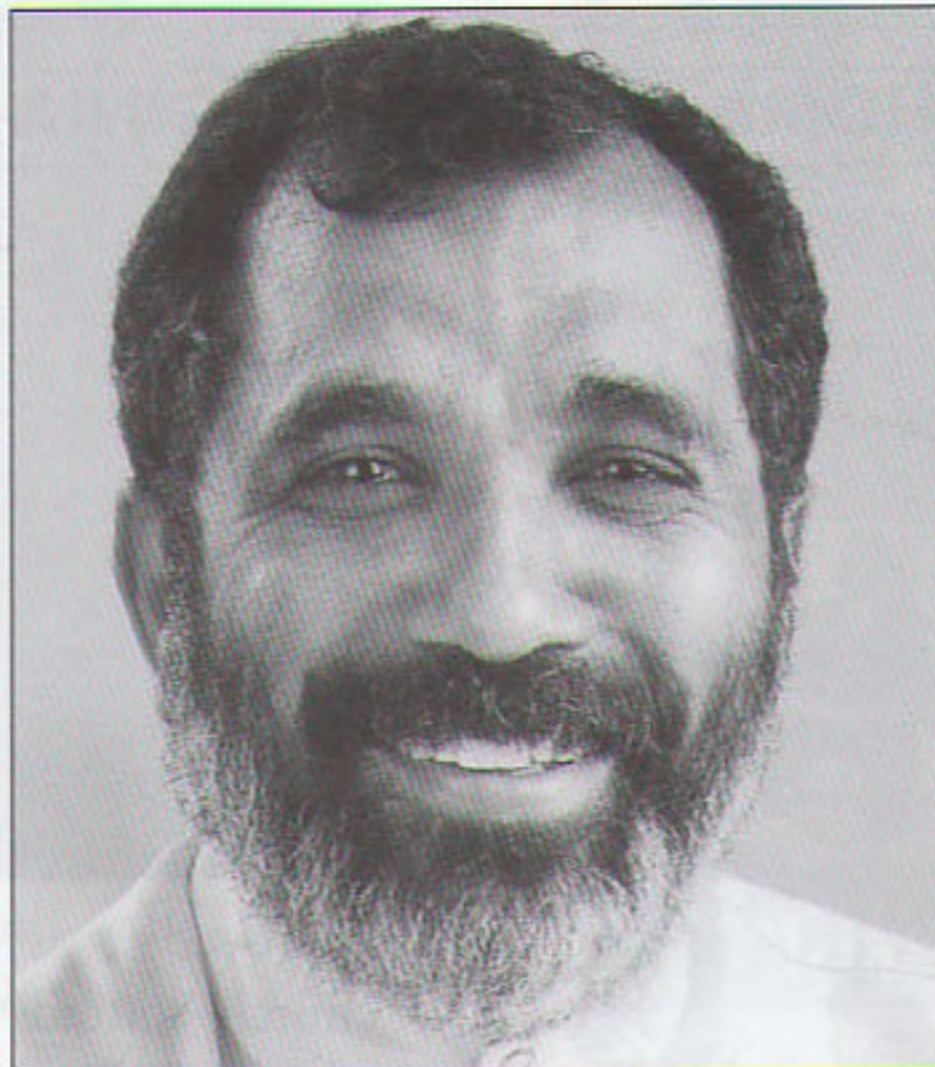
Please mail your answers to:
**Philip Manuel, 23 Lake Street,
Billerica, MA 01821**

**DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS:
JUNE 15, 2011**

Three more Bishops to the Mar Thoma Church



Rev. Dr. Varghese Mathai
Thumpamon



Rev. Dr. Oommen George
Adoor



Rev. K. V. Varkey
Kochi

The Mar Thoma Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam (General Body of the Church) elected Rev. K. V. Varkey, Rev. Dr. Oommen George and Rev. Dr. Varghese Mathai as Bishops of the Church on March 8-9, 2011 at Thiruvalla, Kerala. As per the constitution of the Church each person nominated by the Episcopal Nomination Board must secure 75% votes of the laity and clergy separately.

Rev. Dr. Varghese Mathai, who was born on February 25, 1953, is the son of Mr. K. E. Mathew and late Kunjamma of Kalayil Kannanpoikayil at Thumpamon, Pathanamthitta. Achen was ordained as a deacon on April 22, 1978 and as a priest on May 22, 1978. Achen was teaching at Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur and also at Vaideeka Seminary, Kottayam. At present serves as the Vicar of Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, Othara in Chengannur. Achen received 336 votes from the clergy (84.42%) and 619 votes from the laity (81.99%), thus secured 75% of votes from both clergy and laity on the first day of the election.

Rev. Dr. Oommen George, born May 10, 1959 is the son of late P. N. George and late Aleyamma of Kottakkad Puthenveetil at Kannankode, Adoor. Achen was ordained as a deacon on June 1, 1985 and as a priest on June 14, 1985. Achen was the principal of Indore Higher Secondary School. Achen also served at our Diocese in parishes namely, Long Island MTC, New York, St. John's MTC, New York, and St. Andrew's MTC, New York. At present serves as secretary to Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Valiya Metropolitan of the Church. Achen is also the Vicar of the Mar Thoma churches at Chirayirambu and Pularikad, near Kozhencherry. Achen received 308 votes from the clergy (77.39%) and 616 votes from the laity (81.59%), thus secured 75% of votes from both clergy and laity on the first day of the election.

Rev. K. V. Varkey, born on March 16, 1959, is the son of Mr. K. P. Varkey and late Kunjamma of Parayil House in Kochi. Achen was ordained as a deacon on June 27, 1986 and as a priest on July 30, 1986. Achen was the principal of Ranchi St. Thomas School. At present Achen is serving as the Vicar of the Ebenezer Mar Thoma church at Kavumbhagom, Thiruvalla and also as the Secretary of the Mar Thoma Medical Mission. On the first day Achen received 292 votes from the clergy (73.37%) and 611 votes from the laity (80.93%), hence Achen did not receive the required 75% votes from the clergy on the first day of the election. On the second day of voting, Achen received 323 votes from clergy (83.25%) and 529 votes from the laity (82.14%), thus secured the required 75% of votes from both the clergy and laity as per the Church constitution.

The two-day meeting was presided over by Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Most. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Suffragan Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Issac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa were also present during the meeting on both days. Sabha Secretary Rev. K. S. Mathew spoke during the meeting. With the consecration of these newly elected Achens, Mar Thoma Church will have thirteen (13) Bishops. The newly elected Achen's Rampan consecration will be held on May 07, 2011 at Ernakulam and the consecration as Bishops will be held on August 15, 2011 at Thiruvalla. ■

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

IMMANUEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, VIRGINIA—INAUGURATION



The formal inauguration of the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Virginia took place on Sunday, December 26, 2010 during a public meeting held at the Community Lutheran Church in Sterling, VA. Immanuel Mar Thoma



approved it as an independent Mar Thoma Parish. The church started with 30 Mar Thoma families in Virginia who desired a Sunday school and worship services in northern Virginia, and these families started worship services in January 2010 pending approval by the Episcopal Synod. Present membership of the church is 40 families.



Church, Virginia came in to being, on April 15th 2010 when the Episcopal Synod of the Mar Thoma Church



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa along with the Vicar Rev. M. M. John and the





Senior Pastor of Community Lutheran Church, Rev. Dr. Joseph Vought lighted the lamp to signify the event. Thirumeni also inaugurated the church website and released a souvenir to mark the inauguration event.

Many from the community and sister churches graced the event and offered felicitations. The dignitaries included Rev. Dr. Vought, Senator Mark Herring (VA State Senate), Mr. T. S. Mathews (2nd Secretary, Indian Embassy—Washington, DC), Dr. G. V. V. Rao (Durga Temple, Fairfax, VA), Rev. Laby George Panackamattom (Vicar, St. Gregorios Orthodox Church), Rev. Benu John (Vicar, Baltimore Mar Thoma Church) and Dr. George Zachariah (Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington).

The public meeting started at 4:30 p.m. after the Holy Communion Service by Thirumeni. Rev. M. M. John welcomed all to the event and Mrs. Indu Jacob emceed the



event. The opening ceremony included musical performances by the IMTC choir and the IMTC Sunday School, felicitations from the dignitaries, remarks by IMTC Vice President, Mr. Thomas Varghese, report from the IMTC



Secretary Mr. John Cyrus, Vote of thanks by the Inauguration program Convener, Mr. Joseph Abraham and Prayer by Rev. Benu John. A sumptuous dinner completed the activities of the evening. The IMTC moves forward in 2011 under our new Vicar, Rev. Philip Varghese.

MAR THOMA VOLUNTARY EVANGELISTS' ASSOCIATION 8th National Conference

Hosted by: **Detroit Mar Thoma Church Edavaka Mission**
www.detroitmarthoma.com/EMNC2011

Venue: **Cross Passionists Retreat & Conference Center**
www.passionist.org/stpaul

Date: **July 22, 23, 24, 2011**

Theme: **"Be Imitator's of Christ"** (Ephesians: 5:1)

Leaders: **The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa**
Rev. K. E. Geevarghese • Rev. Y. T. Vinayaraj • Rev. Abraham Thomas

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER-2011



World Day of Prayer, Philadelphia

Theme 'How many loaves have you?' Mark 6:38

The World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement which brings Christians of many traditions together to observe a common day of prayer each year. Through preparation and participation in the worship service, we can come to know how our sisters of other countries, languages and cultures understand the Biblical passages in their context. Around the world about 16 million people in 170 countries, in 90 languages participated in the worship services.

Each year the service is prepared by a different country. The Christian women of Chile, South America, prepared the service for March 2011.

The Republic of Chile is a country that has been much in our news recently—with miners trapped underground in August and the massive earthquake back in February. It is a country with many climates and landscapes. Chile is a country rich in resources—especially copper. To-day, Chile is a country heading towards prosperity and increased stability.

Diocesan Sevika Sanghoms provided active leadership in conducting the 2011 World Day of Prayer services ecumenically as well as at Parish levels. Following is a brief report from some of the Sanghoms. Special thanks to all of those who shared their time and talent to make the 2011 World Day of prayer a blessing.

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

Philadelphia: The 2011 World Day of Prayer, hosted by the Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian Churches in Philadelphia, was held at St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church on March 12th from 10:00–1:00 p.m., followed by lunch. About 450 people, men, women and children attended the service.

We were blessed to have 148 persons from 13 parishes take part in the service as well as the creative presentations exemplifying the theme, *how many loaves have you?* They participated via Worship, Message, Malayalam choir, English youth choir, youth band, liturgical dance, skit titled, *the widow of Zarepath* and presentation on Chile. It

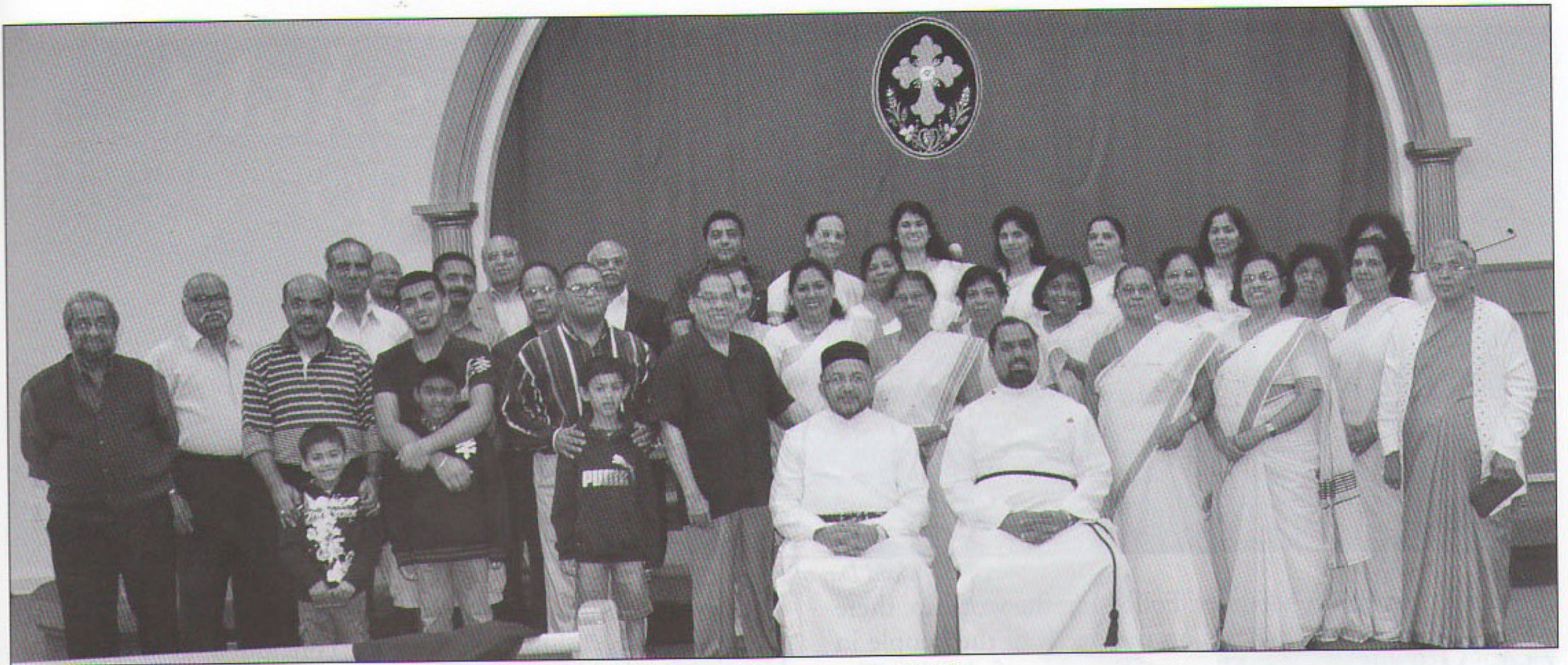
was great to have an intergenerational group. The guest Speaker was Mrs. Rachel George from Epiphany Church, New York. Representatives from several media covered the event.

New Jersey: Ecumenical Christian Fellowship of New Jersey observed World Day of Prayer on March 5, 2011 at St. Peters Mar Thoma Church, Teaneck with an afternoon prayer, worship, songs, children's worship and devotional message. Around 300 members from many Christian denominations have participated in the event. The meeting was presided over by Rev. Dr. Jacob David President of the Ecumenical Christian Fellowship of New Jersey and the Vicar of St. Paul's & Resurrection Church, Wood-Ridge. Rt. Rev. Dr. George Ninan, Retired Bishop of CNI was the Chief Guest and Key note speaker. The Bible study was lead by Mrs. Dr. Anita Daniel, St. Peters Mar Thoma Church, Teaneck and Mrs. Gini Paul made a presentation that enabled the audients to understand the religious and socio-economic conditions of CHILE, the country of focus of this year's World Day of Prayer. Mrs. Grace Alexander of New Jersey Mar Thoma Church extended the Welcome and Susan Philip of St. Thomas Syrian Orthodox Church, Dover expressed the vote of thanks. Mrs. Shaija George was the MC for the function and the meeting ended with a prayer by Rev. Jose Abraham T. of New Jersey Mar Thoma Church and Benediction by the Bishop.

Grace Alexander, Coordinator of WDP, New Jersey

Tampa, Florida: St. Marks Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom Tampa hosted the World Day of Prayer worship service in cooperation with the Kerala Christian Association of Central Florida on 11th March 2011 from 7:00p.m. at the St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, Tampa. Apart from the members of the hosting parish, Parish members of the Churches under the KCAC, also actively participated.

The worship service including Bible readings, by an interdenominational worship team of 23 women, were seamlessly incorporated in the worship service. The hymns both in English and Malayalam were sung by the special



World Day of Prayer, Tampa, Florida

Choir including the youths of St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church. An inspiring message based on the theme, given by Mrs. Saramma Verghese touched everybody's heart.

President of the St. Mark's Sevika Sanghom, Tampa, Rev. T. Johnson welcomed participants and the Ecumenical Secretary Mr. Shogy Easow gave the vote of thanks.

Rev. T. Johnson

Horeb MTC, Colorado: Horeb Mar Thoma Church Colorado celebrated the World Day of Prayer on March 5,



World Day of Prayer, Colorado

2011. We integrated our fasting prayer, using the order of service for the World Day of prayer. Rev. K. A. Abraham, Vicar San Francisco MTC was the chief guest and his thoughtful message was based on the theme. He reminded us about the women of Chile and the obstacles they face and also exhorted about the need of sharing of our blessings with the needy. Sevika Sanghom and Edavaka Mission members led the worship service. The service ended with a prayer of dedication.

Jane Daniel, Sevika Sanghom Secretary

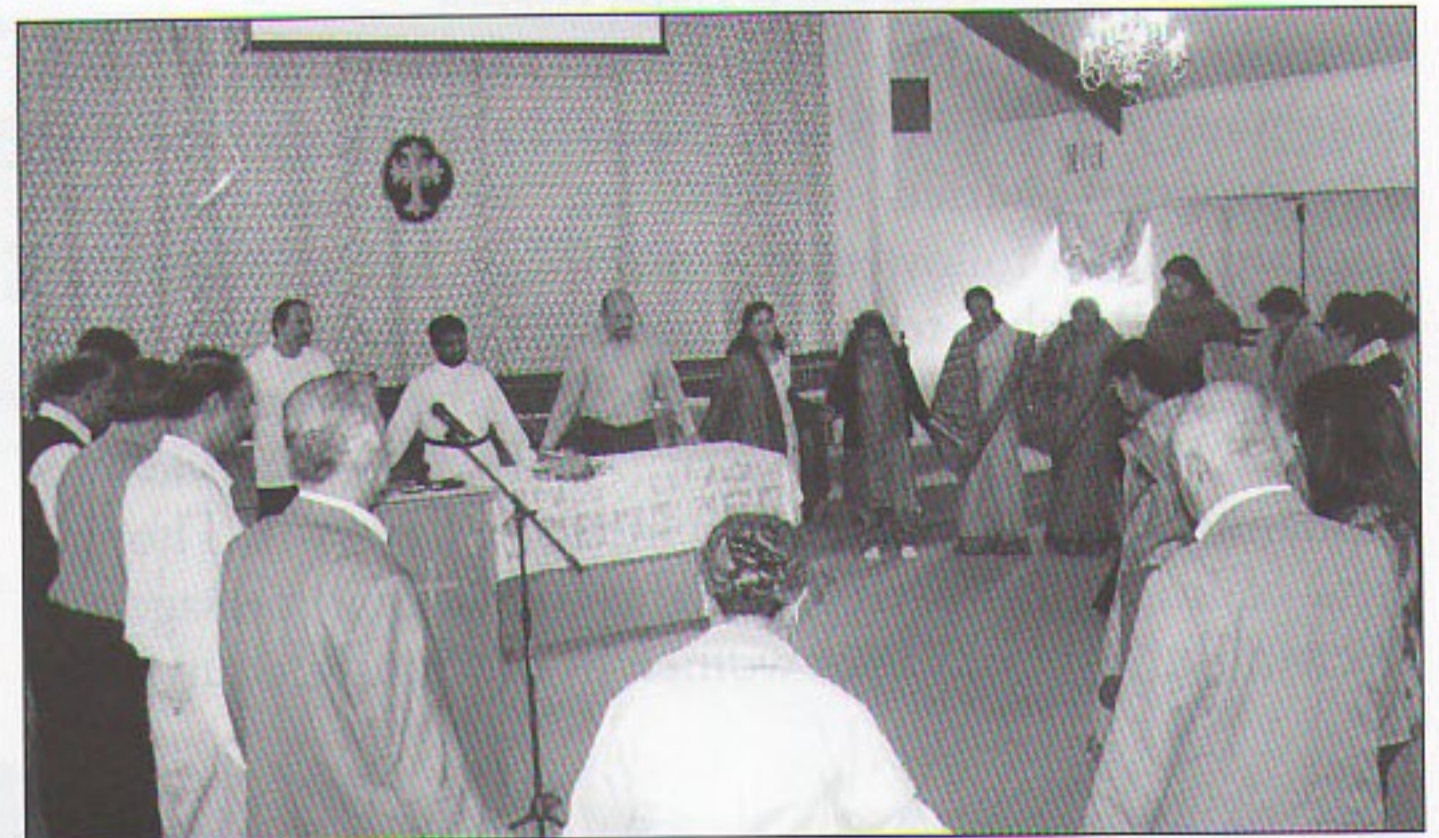
Mar Thoma church of Dallas (Farmers Branch): The World Day of Prayer in the Dallas area was observed on Saturday March 5th at St. Mary's Orthodox Church of

Dallas. The convener was Mrs. Sally Thampan. Approximately 250 women including Sevika Sanghom members from all Mar Thoma parishes and 23 Sister Churches in the Kerala Ecumenical Christian Fellowship came together to participate in the prayer and worship service.

Ms. Ceena Varghese, M. A., M. Th., from Baltimore was the main speaker. Ceena compared the five loaves to the five senses and how they can be used as gifts to transform lives. Greetings in the regional language of Chile were taught to the participants and a slide show of the Chilean women and culture was also presented.

Mrs. Elsy Andrews, Sevika Sanghom Secretary

San Francisco: Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco celebrated the World Day of Prayer on March 5, 2011. Around 30 individuals participated in this prayer fellowship. Rev. Regi Zachariah (Vicar, Colorado MTC) was the chief guest and through his message, Achen challenged us to have a



World Day of Prayer, San Francisco

burden for others in their sufferings and to support and pray for them in their needs. Sevika Sanghom and Edavaka Mission members led the worship service. Mr. Kurian Varghese, Edavaka Mission Secretary, did a presentation on Chile. The presentation was prepared by Rebecca



World Day of Prayer, Chicago

Abraham, our Youth Member. Following the worship, there was a prayer session, focused on the needs of the people in Chile. Mrs. Ponnamma Ninan, gave vote of thanks. The service ended with lunch and it was a blessed fellowship.

Susan John, Sevika Sanghom Trustee

Houston Mar Thoma Parishes: The World Day of Prayer worship service was held in Houston on Saturday, March 5, 2011 jointly by Immanuel and Trinity Parishes. This year's



World Day of Prayer, Houston

meeting was hosted by Trinity Mar Thoma Church Sevika Sanghom. A total of 55 members attended the meeting. The program started at 9:00 am with prayer by Rev. Zachariah John followed by worship service. The members from both Parishes took leadership in the worship service, reading Bible lessons and collecting the offertory. Mrs. Smitha Thomas, wife of Rev. A. T. Thomas, vicar of Immanuel Parish gave the main message. Rev. A. T. Thomas, vicar of Immanuel parish gave the concluding message and stressed the importance of women in the family, church and

in the community. After prayer and benediction by Rev. Zachariah John, the meeting concluded at 11:00 a.m. Refreshments were served.

Valsa Mathew, Secretary, Sevika Sanghom, Trinity MTC, Houston

Chicago: Chicago Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom observed World Day of Prayer at Chicago Mar Thoma Church on the 5th of March. Around 100 people from our church and the sister parishes attended the program.

The prayer started with a possession by little children holding the Panera Bread while choir singing a special song, followed by opening prayer by Rev. Roy P. Thomas, Vicar of Chicago Mar Thoma Church. Mrs. Susan Philip from St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church welcomed the participants. Following the special order of worship, Mrs. Asha Roy Kochamma delivered the message based on the theme. Kochamma delivered a powerful message that has touched everyone's heart. Stressing the Biblical question "where is your Brother" Kochamma reminded the attendees that we should care for other's needs and stretch our hands out for helping others. Mrs. Saleena Kuruvilla and Mrs. Sujatha Abraham presented a wonderful slide show about Chile's culture, background history, life style, Motto, and importance about the Panera Bread. Rev. Sabu Thomas from St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church prayed at offertory. The program ended with Vote of Thanks by Mrs. Sally Varghese, Sevika Sanghom Secretary, and a closing prayer by Rev. Ham Joseph from Orthodox Church.

Rev. Roy P. Thomas, Vicar
Sally Varghese, Sevika Sanghom Secretary

For information on our Diocesan administration, activities, organizations, events, photos, Parish and Clergy lists, and many other useful links, please visit:
<http://www.marthomanae.org/2010/>

Make Your Life Less Taxing

Get the Right Advice at the Right Time.

Philip Thomas, MBA, CPA

*Professor of Accounting
Brookhaven College, FB, Texas*



Certified Public Accountant since 1982

Member:

American Institute of CPAs

Texas Society of CPAs

Dallas Chapter of CPAs

*Tax Laws Change Always & Successful Retirement Living Requires
Professional Tax Planning*

For more information contact:

972.394.1349

Email: philipthomascpa@yahoo.com

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

ASCENSION MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA



First Communicants with Theodosius Thirumeni.

Episcopal Visit: Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia, was blessed with the visit of His Grace Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Bishop, on March 13, 2011. Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Communion, which was a heavenly experience for the gathering. Nineteen children of the parish expressed their faith and received their first communion. Thirumeni also



Executive Committee with Theodosius Thirumeni and Geevarghese Achen.

conducted the dedication service of the Executive Committee members for 2011. Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, President and Vicar, delivered the welcome speech and Ebby Varughese, Secretary, rendered vote of thanks. Kaimuthu service was followed by a fellowship lunch.

Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Vicar
Ebby Varughese, Secretary

SALEM MAR THOMA CHURCH, EASTERN LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK



NEVIN P. DANIEL RECOGNIZED: Nevin P. Daniel, Ward Melville High School Senior, won second place in the 2010 national Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology, one of the prestigious science research competitions in the USA for high school

students. His project, Novel Asymmetrical Bow-Tie PAMAM Dendrimer Conjugates as Model Systems for Anticancer Taxoid Drug Delivery, was on develop-

ing and building a molecular structure that could potentially be used to treat cancer cells by successfully attaching a targeting component and a drug to the dendrimers.

Nevin has also won 2010 Siemens New York state award for Advance Placement (AP) mathematics and science courses. In 2010 Popular Science magazine named him one of the Top high school inventors of the year. He is a member Salem Marthoma Church in Long Island, NY. Nevin is the son of Pappachan Daniel (Baboy) and Sudha.

Rev. Varghese Mathai, Vicar
Mr. Abraham C. Thadathel, Diocesan Council

LOS ANGELES MAR THOMA CHURCH (LAS VEGAS PRAYER GROUP)



CONGRATULATIONS!

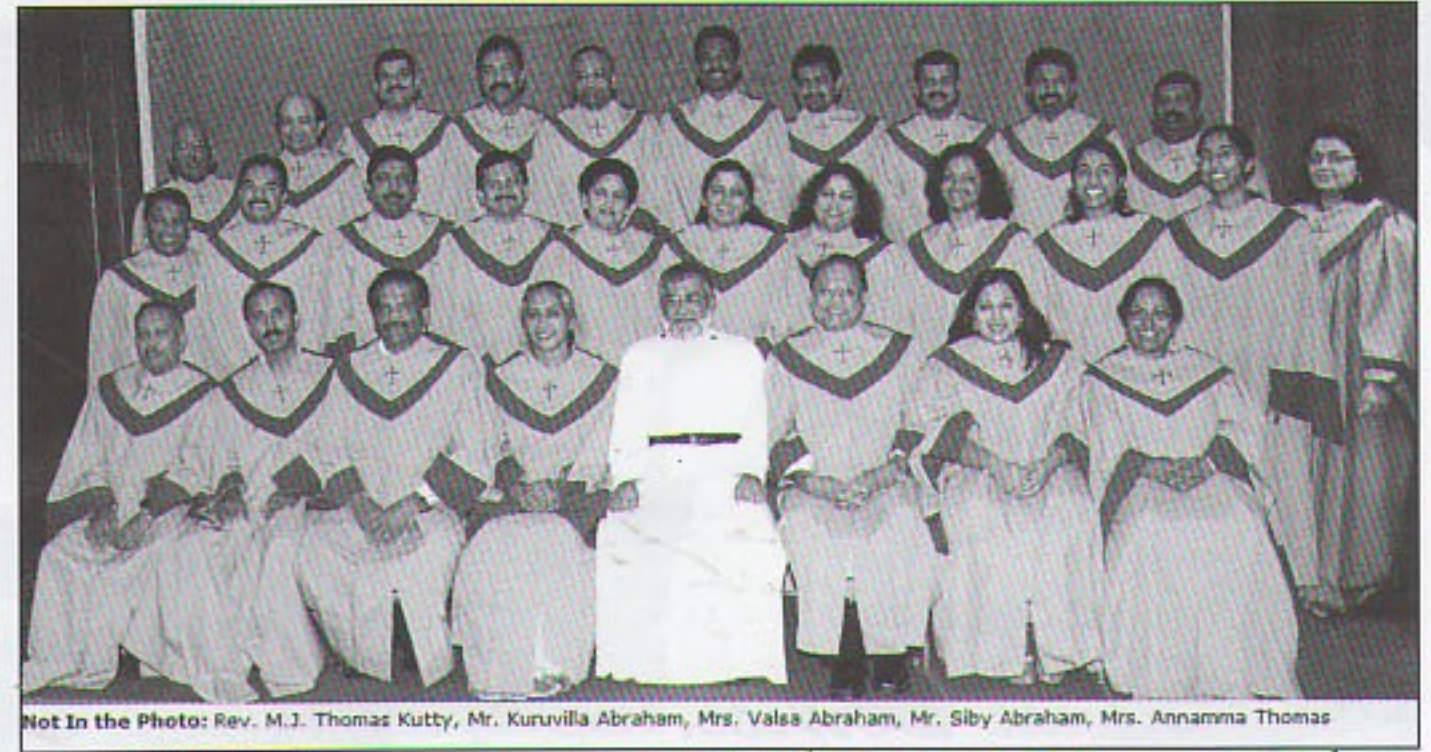
Annie Mathew, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Y. Abraham, Kalyan, Mumbai (Mundakka Thottathil House, Kozhencheri, Kerala) was awarded Ph.D. in Nursing Practice from Rocky Mountain University, Utah, USA. She is the wife of Mr. Regi Mathew, Las Vegas, NV. They are members of Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church, (Las Vegas Prayer Group).

Rev. Varghese A. Ninan, Vicar

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH CHOIR, HOUSTON

A Mission Project by Malayalam and English Choirs: Last year, the Trinity Mar Thoma Church Malayalam and English choirs embarked on a project, recording our own CD "*Divya Thejas*", in celebration of its 25th anniversary. The vision of the project was to utilize our talent for a worthy cause. We featured a variety of Malayalam, English, and Hindi songs based on the message of Christmas. This project required dedicated hours of practice and rehearsal from both choirs.

The project received great support from members in our community as we proceeded to sell about 450 CDs. Proceeds generated from the sales were used for the Give Sight Mission Project, facilitated by St. Thomas Mission Hospital in Kattanam, Kerala, to provide intraocular lens placement surgery for those with financial hurdles. The total cost of this surgery is around 10,000 Rupees. As a part of charity, if those who need such surgery can bring in 1000 Rupees, St. Thomas Mission Hospital will provide the remaining 9000 and this service is provided only for those with financial difficulties. By God's grace, the proceeds from our CD sales resulted in over 180 vision correction



Not In the Photo: Rev. M.J. Thomas Kutty, Mr. Kuruvilla Abraham, Mrs. Valsa Abraham, Mr. Siby Abraham, Mrs. Annamma Thomas

surgeries. We express our gratitude to our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa for his introduction to the CD and Rev. M. J. Thomas Kutty for his leadership and support.

The mission of the choir is to glorify and worship God through meaningful songs. Not only do we use our God-given talents to experience His glory in our worship service, but we also strive to carry His love beyond our church walls. Ultimately, we pray that our choirs impact those around us as we humbly continue to do His calling.

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON—THE PRISON MINISTRY

The Prison Ministry is one of the mission activities of the Diocese of North America and Europe. There are over 1.4 million prisoners in the U.S. Prison System in need of proper guidance, support, and prayers. The Prison Ministry focuses on developing ways our Diocese can support and assist prisoners and their families in developing a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our duty as ambassadors of Christ is to carry out the redeeming ministry among prisoners who have fallen and are estranged. Training and awareness programs are being organized locally around the Diocese in conjunction with prison fellowship ministries. The main

activities that are currently being planned and carried out around our Diocese include prison Bible studies and the Angel Tree Program. In the past, members of our Diocese from Los Angeles, New York, Detroit, and Houston attended training sessions prior to conducting "in" prison Bible studies. For more information about the Prison Ministry or if you are interested in learning more about how your church can assist prisoners in your area please contact Mariamma Thomas via email at mariammatx@gmail.com or by phone at 832-606-4346.

Mrs. Mariamma Thomas (Molly), Convener, Trinity MTC, Houston

TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON—THE ANGEL TREE PROJECT

Trinity Mar Thoma Church Sunday School once again decided to take the Angel Tree Project under its wings as part of its humanitarian projects for the second year in a row. Under the leadership of Mr. Reji George, Superintendent, and Mrs. Mariamma Thomas, our Sunday School was able to sponsor seventy-five children whose parents are currently serving time in prison.

On Saturday December 18th, 2010, the Sunday School held a get-together with the Angel Tree Mission sponsored kids. Altogether we had approximately forty-six children who came with their family. Trinity Mar Thoma Sunday School children and parents and their teachers welcomed the children with food, activities and fellowship. We began the program with prayer by Rev. Zachariah John and a few Christmas songs sung by our Sunday School team. After a short worship service, Rev. Shiby Abraham spoke to the families about the real meaning of Christmas and Trinity Mar Thoma Church's purpose in being part of the Angel Tree Mission. With the help of Trinity Sunday School members, Rev. Zachariah John distributed the gifts

to the children attending the event. After the gift distribution, each child was invited to come spend time in different Christmas activity booths: cookie decorating booth, ornament decorating booth, and craft booths. This provided a unique opportunity for the Angel Tree Mission children to interact and make new friendships with our Sunday School families. Lunch and snacks were provided to all who have attended.

Trinity children took an active role in buying the gifts, wrapping, and personally delivering the gifts to the sponsored children. Our children also had the opportunity to shortly witness the hardships of young children living in tough circumstances and provide more joyfully to the children a simple Christmas present and fellowship as children of God. At the end of the program, everyone left more appreciative of God's grace and mercy and more willing to share His abundant gifts. The Angel Tree Mission is an invaluable project and we hope to continually support it in the upcoming years.

Miss Swapna Mathew (Trinity Mar Thoma Sunday School, Houston)



> EXPECT EXCELLENCE

For friendly and Professional Service.

> **CONTACT**

Thomas Thaimuriyil (Aji)
Realtor/Loan Officer
Beam Realty & Mortgages, L.L.C
14455 Webb Chapel Rd.
Farmers Branch, TX 75234
E-mail: thomast21@yahoo.com
Cell: (469) 441-6603



**Welcome
to
Dallas!**



REAL ESTATE CONSULTANT

Listing and Selling houses, MLS Listing,
Foreclosures, Investment Homes, Relocation,
Buying New or Pre-owned homes,
Arranging best Financing

[A Member of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, F.B.]



Thomas Thaimuriyil (Aji)
REALTOR/LOAN OFFICER

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



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited the St. John's parish in UK from the 3rd to 6th of February 2011. Thirumeni provided leadership to various programs that were organized at the parish.

Edavaka Mission Prayer: The monthly Edavaka Mission Prayer was held on the 4th February at 7:30.p.m. Thirumeni gave the message at the meeting about the Grace of Jesus Christ.

COMPE Meeting: Thirumeni presided over the meeting of the Council of Mar Thoma Parishes in Europe on February 5th, 2011. The meeting was organized for vicars of all parishes, COMPE office bearers and trustees of the parishes in Europe. It was well attended.

Dedication: By the grace of God, St John's Parish was able to construct a new Bishops Suite suitable for the use of Bishops who visit the parishes in UK. The Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius blessed the foundation stone on December 16, 2010. On the evening of February 5th, Thirumeni dedicated the Bishop's suite in the presence of Achens in UK and Ireland and members of St. John's Parish and sister parishes.

Thirumeni expressed happiness in having the new facility as he would be visiting UK several times a year as part of his Episcopal ministry in the Diocese. Thirumeni thanked the parish for providing space and understanding to the needs of the Bishops of the Mar Thoma Church.

Holy Communion Service: Thirumeni celebrated Holy Communion Service on February 6th. Many members from far and near attended the service. It was a blessing for all. After the service, a Thanksgiving Service was held for the successful completion of the construction of the Bishops' suite.

Thirumeni inaugurated the 29th UK & Europe Family Conference Logo and also released 'CUMI' (Arise); the Youth Magazine of the parish.



The parish also celebrated the 63rd Birthday of our beloved Thirumeni by cutting a cake.



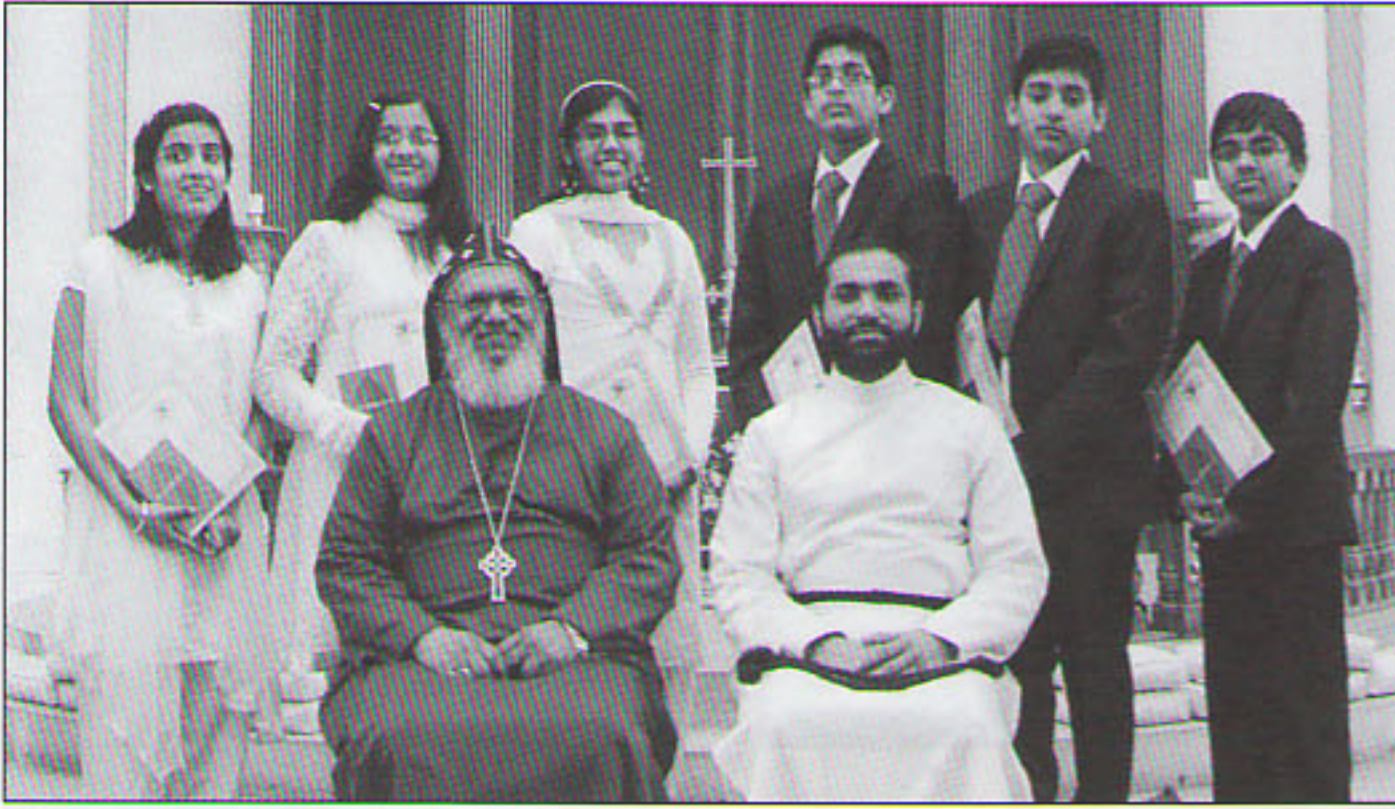
Staines Prayer Meeting: The Episcopal visit concluded with an area prayer meeting in Staines. This meeting was attended by all the members in the area. Thirumeni gave the message.



Holy Communion Service at Peterborough: On February 26th, Thirumeni visited our Peterborough prayer group and celebrated Holy Communion Service. At present there are 25 families in Peterborough. Thirumeni's visit was well attended and was a great blessing.

Varughese Mathew, Hon. Secretary

ST. JAMES MAR THOMA CHURCH, UK



Episcopal Visit: The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited the St. James Mar Thoma Church, London on February 26th Saturday and 27th Sunday, 2011. On Saturday, Thirumeni had a meaningful interactive session with the youth of St. James MTC. We had a blessed singing session in the youth meeting. Around 60 youths attended the meeting. The whole discourse was around the Faith and Practices of the Mar Thoma Church,

Bible and other pertinent theological topics. After the youth fellowship Executive committee, various other organisations met Thirumeni and initiated informal discussions concerning the parish and its various organisations. It was a very blessed time and Thirumeni had a fellowship dinner with all of attendees.

On 27th February, Thirumeni led Holy Communion in English at 10:00 a.m. There were 6 First Communicants to participate in the Holy Communion. Around 350 people gathered at the Church to take part in the Communion led by Theodosius Thirumeni. The parish celebrated Thirumeni's birthday and wished that God Almighty may guide our Thirumeni in the years to come. Thirumeni distributed the prizes of the Family Bible Quiz conducted on Family Sunday. After the communion, Thirumeni found time to interact with the Parishioners, especially with the children and youths. The Episcopal visit of Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa was a blessed occasion to the Parish.

Rev. Sajeev Thomas

NATIVE AMERICAN MISSION, OKLAHOMA



Mission belongs to God and He does it in mysterious ways. A group of faithful believers had been involved in the mission work among the Native Americans in Oklahoma for the past several years. We had been helping them with V.B.S. camp in Camp Israel Folsom, Oklahoma during the first week of June for the couple of years. For this summer camp we make extensive preparations several months ahead. However, with Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas's (Youth Chaplain of Dallas region) vision, initiative and leadership we made it possible to have a very successful mission trip for the first time during the Spring-break. With less than a week's notice and planning, a team of 14 volunteers arrived at McGee Chapel in Broken Bow, OK, on March 16th, 2011 morning. We were greeted enthusiastically by the Native Americans and after settling down, we began painting the Chapel building inside and outside. We also helped them to remove the old linoleum flooring inside the Chapel. On the next day we again assembled at McGee Chapel and visited houses of a few Choctaw Indian families. While at their houses, the volunteers sang songs, read Bible and prayed for the sick and for their special needs. Afterwards the volunteers in groups of

two each visited house to house in a housing project and invited the youths for a fellowship and fun games at the McGee Chapel in the afternoon. About 27 children, youths and some adults attended the afternoon session. We together sang songs, shared our experiences, and prayed together. It was a great moment of sharing the word of God through singing and praying. It was followed by some fun games and refreshments. Mrs. Betty Jacob and Mrs. Faith Para, the Native American leaders also joined the session and they also took us to the Mar Thoma House, we built for the youth worker in Camp Israel Folsom.

It was a great experience to visit the houses of the Native Americans and to sing and pray with them. They greatly appreciated our presence and requested us to visit them again. Everyone who participated in this mission trip expressed the opinion that it should be continued as a Spring-Break event in the future so that more youths could attend. Though it was never well planned, God worked through us to share the love of God and to be a blessing to all we met. The relationship between the Mar Thoma Church and Native Americans grew one step further by this Spring Break Mission trip. We appreciate the leadership of Rev. Jaisen Thomas for his great vision, planning and leadership for this successful mission trip. Kevin Cherian, Keren Cherian, Kezia Cherian, Patrick Maruthumotil, and Stanley Samuel from St. Paul's, MTC, Dallas, Ryan Varghese, Julie Panachakunnel, Jubu Panachakunnel, Julieanne Koor, Jijo Varughese, Mathew T. George, and Abraham Mathew from MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, and Sean J. George from Hermon MTC, Atlanta participated under the leadership of Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas.

Abraham Mathew, MTC Dallas, FB

Helping To Achieve Your Financial Success

Spectrum
Spectrum Financial Group

Spectrum Financial Group

5080 Spectrum Drive, Suite 902W
Addison, TX - 75001 - 4649

www.sfgtexas.com

sabraham@finsvcs.com

Office: (972) 455-4371



Shiju Abraham BCS
Financial Services Professional

For Individuals, Families and Business Owners

Financial Analysis
Tax Reduction Strategies
Savings & Investment Plans
Educational Saving Plans (529)

Life Insurance & Annuities
Disability Income Insurance
Long Term Care Insurance
Health Insurance *

Wealth Accumulation Strategies
Mutual Funds
Business Planning
Estate Planning

Retirement Plans
401(k) Set Up & Rollovers
IRA, Roth IRA & Simple IRA
Single K Plan & SEP IRA

Let Us Guide Your Steps to Move Up in Life

Shiju Abraham is a registered representative of and offers securities through MML Investors Services Inc, Member SIPC. Insurance offered through Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company and other fine companies. * Not offered through Mass Mutual.



We'll help you get there®

MassMutual Financial Group is a marketing designation for Massachusetts Mutual Insurance Company (Mass Mutual) and its affiliates and representatives.

INVEST
INSURE
RETIRE

REV. DR. V. V. ALEXANDER, LONDON UK



1921 – 2010

V. V. Alexander Achen was born into the priestly family of Vadakanazhikathu on 1st February 1921, in Kundara, Kerala. He was ordained as a Deacon on December 8, 1947 and as a priest of the Mar Thoma Church on April 24, 1948 by Junhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan. He served as the general secretary of the Mar Thoma Yuvajenasakyam.

In 1956 he went to the United States for studies in Industrial and Analytical Psychology and then came to London for the continuation of his studies. It is during this time late Mr. O. V. Alexander encouraged a fellowship of Mar Thoma Christians in the YMCA and Rev. Alexander was appointed as the vicar to cater for this small community in the United Kingdom and he celebrated the first Holy Communion of this very small Mar Thoma Congregation on 29 April 1957. This small fellowship that he started has now grown into 8 parishes in the UK with over 5,000 members.

The Rev. Dr. V. V. Alexander was called to eternal home on November 11, 2010, at the age of 89. His funeral service was conducted in London, UK on November 24, 2010.

The funeral service was conducted at St. John's Mar Thoma Church London on November 24th. All the six vicars of the parishes in UK gave leadership at the service along with the parish members. Rev. T. O. Joseph, who came from Kerala, also attended the service. Church members dignitaries and other friends, attended the service and paid their tribute. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius led the funeral service. The condolence message of the Metropolitan was also read. Dr. Zac Varghese representing COMPE spoke on the occasion and brought reminiscence of Achen's ministry in UK.

P. J. ZACHARIAH, PHILADELPHIA: P. J. Zachariah was



1915 – 2011

born on January 18, 1915 at Padinjattedethu Thadathukalayil House, Kuzhikala, Kerala. Zachariah became a born again Christian at an early age and started his Christian evangelistic ministry joining hands with Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi. He traveled extensively and preached the word of God, even to non-Christians under the leadership of the

Edavaka Mission of the Mar Thoma Church and was instrumental in bringing new believers to Christ.

He worked as a Sunday school teacher for 55 years at Mar Thoma Church, Punnakadu, his home parish. Zachariah was united in holy matrimony in 1946 with late Mariamma. They migrated to the United States in 1993 to join their children. He continued his service to the Lord by starting a weekly prayer group in Upper Darby.

Zachariah was a prayerful son of God, an ideal husband, great father of four daughters and one son and attended the Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. He was a role model and was loved dearly by his 13 grandchildren. Through his faithful prayer life, the Lord blessed him abundantly to live for 96 years and enabled him to see his children's children. Zachariah and Late Mariamma had 5 children: Gracy Varghese (husband C. M. Vargese), Rachel James (Laly – wife of Late James Cherian), Elizabeth Thomas (Lizy – husband Jose Thomas), Valsamma George (Elsy – husband George O. Koshy) and Sam Zachariah (wife Alicekutty Sam – Mercy)

Viewing was held at Saint Anastasia Parish in Newtown Square, PA and the Funeral Services were held at D'Anjolell Memorial Home, Broomall, PA. following interment at St. Peter & Paul Cemetery. Rev Philip George and many other local clergies attended the services.

SARAMMA K MATHEW, PHILADELPHIA: Saramma Mathew (Thankamma) was born on June 1st 1938 as daughter

of Late Mr. & Mrs. K. J. John, Kalarikattu, Melpadom, Kerala. After graduating from Vellore Medical College, Thankamma worked as a Matron of Nursing at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi. She married Mr. K. M. Mathew in 1966 and migrated to USA in 1976 and settled in Philadelphia. As a dedicated member of the Mar Thoma Church, Thankamma served in various leadership roles of Sevika Sanghom, embracing everyone with a warm smile. As a compassionate mother she has helped many in their needs, within USA as well as back in India. Her dedication, devotion, love and encouragement became a blessing for many who came in touch with her. Saramma is survived by her husband K. M. Mathew, children Sumi, Somy, grandchildren Stephen John, Gabrielle Smith, Michael Smith, and son-in-law Jasuhva Smith.



1938 – 2011

The funeral services were held at Ascension Mar Thoma church, Philadelphia following the internment at Forest Hills Cemetery. Services were led by Rev. K. E. Geevarghese and many other local priests.

DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE BOOTH AT MARAMON CONVENTION



L to R: Gigi Tom; P. C. Vishmunath, MLA; Varughese P. Varughese, Zacharias Thirumeni, Theodosius Thirumeni, Coorilos Thirumeni and Kusumam Titus.



Seminary Students from our Diocese with Theodosius Thirumeni at Maramon.

FAREWELL AND BEST WISHES TO VINOY DANIEL ACHEN AND FAMILY

After four year tenure in USA, Rev. Vinoy Daniel is returning to Kerala to continue his ministry. He was the Vicar of Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Farmers Branch for two years before he moved to New York as Diocesan/Bishop's Secretary. As an efficient administrator and a sincere priest, Achen has significantly contributed to the growth of this Diocese and its parishes. Messenger family is greatly obliged to him and Neena Kochamma for all the commendable support and guidance.

Messenger family wishes Vinoy Achen, Neena Kochamma, Vineeth and Evin, a very bright future with abundance of God's blessings. May the Almighty support you in all your future endures.



HEARTY WELCOME TO REV. K. E. GEEVARGHESE AND DR. REENA KOCHAMMA

Rev K. E. Geevarghese, who served as the Vicar of Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia for the past year, will take charge as the new Diocesan Secretary and Bishop's secretary in May 2011. Achen is known for his leadership qualities and administrative capacity. Messenger family extends our sincere welcome and we hope and pray that the Diocese and the Mar Thoma Church at large will benefit from his services in USA. Wishing him all the best!!

Messenger family welcomes Geevarghese Achen and Reena Kochamma and pray that God's providence and guidance be with Achen and Kochamma throughout their life.



EPISCOPAL VISIT TO ST. STEPHEN'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW JERSEY

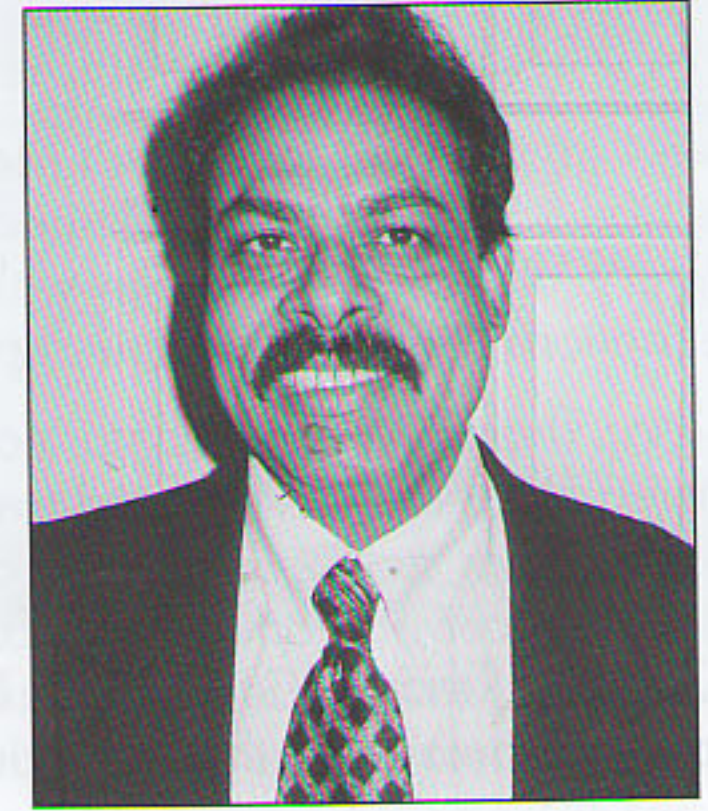


First Communicants with Theodosius Thirumeni and Geevarghese Kochummen Achen



Episcopal visit to St. Stephen's MTC, New Jersey

Utter devastation and moments of truth afflict a nation that has made the most technological advancements in modern times. Following the earthquake and tsunami, life in some areas of Japan, the island nation which sprang up from ashes to riches past the world wars, is far from normal. A land known to be well prepared to face nature's wrath is undergoing tragic feelings of desperation and helplessness. While other nations are extending helping hands, individuals and groups around the world are sincerely praying for the afflicted. This is a powerful reminder, for those who are un-impacted, that life as we see it is transient. Our secure possessions and comfort zones can vanish in seconds, leaving us with nothing but waste. Some religious followers see natural disasters as an expression of God's great ire with the world. According to Prof. Steve Friesen, Professor of Biblical studies at the University of Texas, Austin: 'Natural disasters are disruptive. When there's a disruption, people's worldviews are shaken and need to be repaired. As the Psalmist and Solomon states in Biblical verses, we ought to keep what we have learned so that we will not be swept away.'



Romans 1:18-32 explicitly reveals the nature of man and God in controversy. It is clear from this passage that when man turns his back on God or hides the TRUTH, the end result is a flow of wickedness. When humans worship creatures instead of the creator, we are losing sight of our own identity as humans who are made in the image of God. To a great extent, today's society and its materialistic affluence provoke the human mind to think and act in ungodly ways that make even the most sacred minds vulnerable. In the United States where every aspect of money and written laws was based on Biblical and Godly themes until a couple of decades ago, we as a nation are moving away from public prayers and Christian practices to become politically and socially accommodative. Did this shift bring in disruption of discipline or did it help society to gain religious freedom? When we examine the complex contexts and effects of religious persecution going on in other parts of the globe, we find that Christianity is the one that is more at stake. Christians are persecuted simply based on faith and religious practices that are deemed (by other religious majorities) to be imbued with aspirations to conquer. Discrimination and oppression are common outcomes of dislike. Such discriminations may also be results of feelings of insecurity within individuals or groups. Ironically, some religious groups are promoting social unrest against those groups and individuals who will not support their particular religious beliefs.

Our Diocese is preparing to have the newly elected assembly and council members take charge of organizational and operational matters by May 2011. Newer sub-committees will also take charge around the same time. As part of a Diaspora community, I pray that each elected and appointed individual will act with strong faith and diligence to accomplish many tasks that are before them. As the Chief Editor of Messenger, I have received letters and emails in the past as part of 'Letters to the Editor' questioning the credibility and actions of elected members, especially, Diocesan Council members. Why aspire for a position if one cannot really study, understand, and fulfill spiritual and social needs of the Marthomites of this Diocese? As stated in American law, "just being in an elected position does not qualify one to implement personal agenda or favor selected groups or individuals, but qualify one to serve people of all color, creed and different national origin in their civic and social needs". Let us hope that the new assembly and council will implement programs based on strong Christian faith and will support the Diocese, and the Mar Thoma Church at large in all its spiritual and organizational matters, especially in areas of financial needs. Within a 3 year term, each council member should be able to organize ways that will bring in financial support to make our Diocese financially self sufficient, and also design programs that will involve all ages in their faith journey. I like to congratulate the three Episcopal nominees and pray that the Mar Thoma Church, and the Christian community at large, will be richly blessed by their shepherdhood. Once again, I like to extend my sincere gratitude to those who have helped the Mar Thoma Messenger grow and flourish.

In His Service,

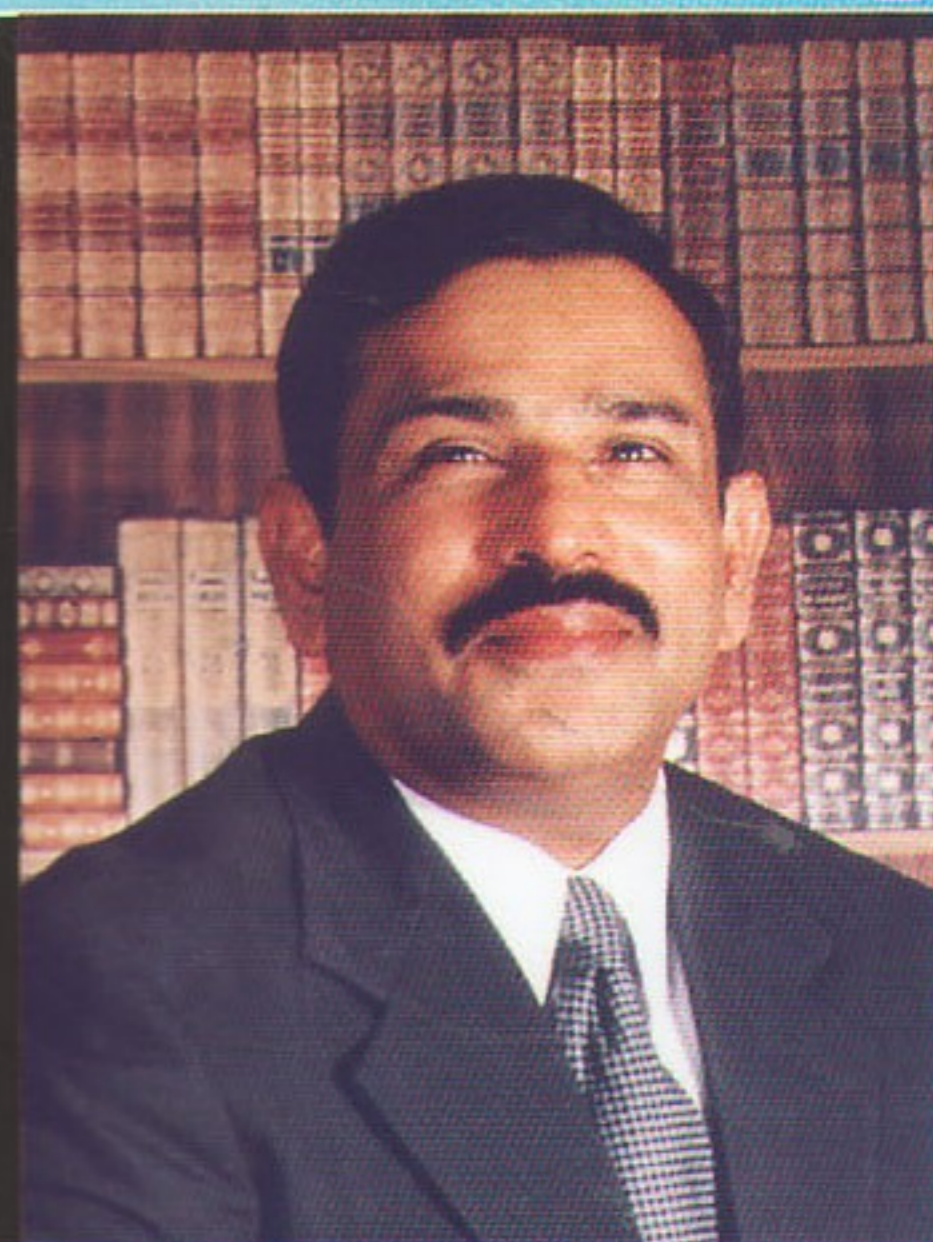
Dr. Eapen Daniel

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

Lal Varghese

Attorney at Law

U.S. Immigration
H1-B Visa
Fiance Visa
Work Permit
Green Cards
Student Visas
Visitor Visas
K-1, K-3 Visas
R1 Visas, Etc.



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

Law Offices of Lal Varghese, PLLC
1111 Kinwest Parkway, Suite 120,
Las Colinas, Irving, Texas 75063-3416

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

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



FRANK BENUCHI SHOES
ERIC SHOES
EXCLUSIVE AGENT FOR U.S.A.
Free Shipping anywhere in the USA

Best Wishes From
Varkey Abraham & Family

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

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