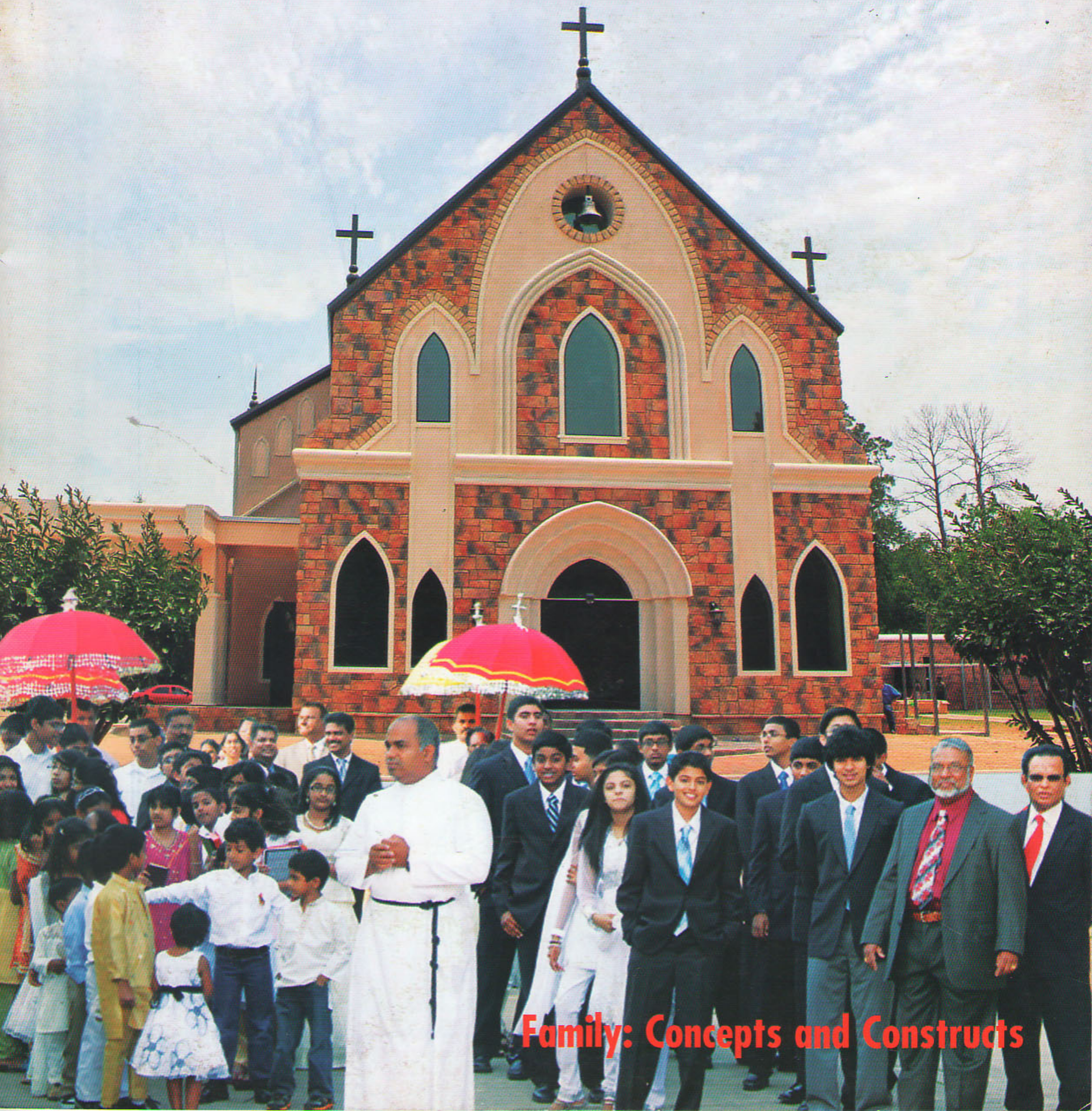




# MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 2011



**Family: Concepts and Constructs**





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## CONTENTS

Message from the Metropolitan .....	2
Message from the Diocesan Bishop .....	3
An Ideal Family in God's Plan Rev. Moncy Varghese ..	4
Family a System: Concepts and Constructs (Malayalam) Rev. Dr. Jacob Cherian .....	6
God of Life—Lead us to Forgiveness and Reconciliation Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph .....	8
A Theological Perspective on Family Relationships Dr. V. T. Samuel .....	10
Kudumbam (Malayalam) Rev. Dr. Daniel Mammen .....	12
Christianity in Kerala... Thomas George .....	17
Kudumbam (Malayalam) Rev. K. Thomas .....	21
The Key to Knowledge Isaac George .....	24
On Equal Footing Rev. Thomas George .....	25
Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross Lal Varghese, Esq. ....	27
Contract Between Generations Dr. Zac Varghese .....	29
Institute on Counseling 2011: Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph K. ...	34
The MTC Philadelphia Prof. Dr. Mathew Thomas .....	36
Cross Word Puzzle .....	38
Youth Corner .....	39
Kids Corner .....	41
Diocesan/Parish News .....	42

### Theme for October Issue:

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



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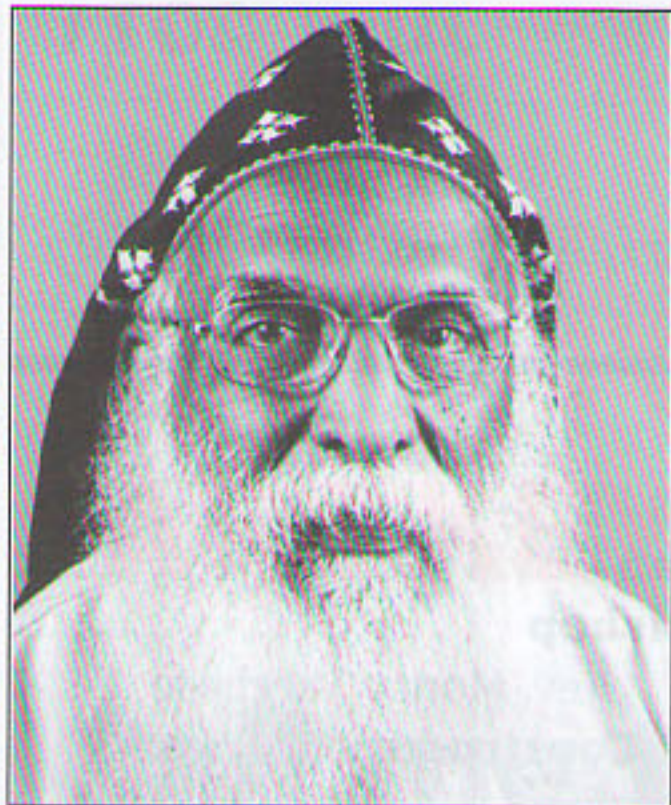
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# Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly beloved in the Lord,  
From the beginning of this year the flambeau that was raised from the light of the Malankara Church brightened all spheres, surpassing the boundaries of the Churches. As the Holy Word is now obtainable through the mother-tongue of the worshipper, the worship becomes an instrument to imbibe a divine vision

which transcends every heart to the Lord. The Holy God calls forth every worshipper for holiness. Then the nearness of the Almighty is being experienced by the believer through the worship. The term namely, Immanuel—God is with us—becomes one that expresses many life values. The sight of the ordinary believer is being benumbed, when God, in the beauty of the twilight, came down in search of His own creation in the place where he is and where he works. They heard the foot steps of the Lord who was coming in search of them in the peace of the evening (Gen. 3:8). A very grand moment that ought to be a grand experience for them! Their hiding paved the way for a new interpretation for man's spiritual vision. The Lent, the Passion Week, the vision of the Cross, and the power and strength of Resurrection are the inevitable outcome of the distorted human defeat in the Garden of Eden. Our Lord is with us even today comforting us constantly in our misery and providing His mercy abundantly equipping us with strength and courage to move forward in faith, thus defeating death and evil to give us eternal joy and life. Peter was resolute. He was able to say bravely to Jesus, "You are the Christ of God." But he later, at a crucial moment, disowned Jesus. Then he, along with other disciples, hopelessly turned to fishing. Christ had given them responsibilities and tasks. They failed to perform them. Jesus had entrusted them with important missions. They discarded those missions and as a result they became failures. But the Lord's love follows them. He says to them, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will get the fish." When they came to the shore, they understood their Master's love and might again. The breakfast was ready for them. How great is Jesus' love! The question that follows is really a question to each of us. "Do you truly love me more than your profession in which you have completely depended?" This question must reverberate in our ears. The disciples waited for the promises given by the Lord. We read about it in Acts Chapter one. Let us also wait for the new promises.

Our Valiya Metropolitan, along with us, celebrated his birthday and has entered into his 94th year. He is active and he happily accepted all the best wishes of the people from various strata of life, remembering God's grace and praising

the Almighty abundantly, though in the midst of the clouds that occurred owing to the deaths of three persons in the family. Valiya Thirumeni participated in the Holy Communion Services and the meeting conducted for felicitating him.

Let me congratulate all those who selflessly and successfully carried out the responsibilities of the last financial year. I pray for all those who are newly elected so that God grant them His grace to do well in their duties in the current year. When we enjoy friendships and providence in our life, we must not forget those who are unfortunate in many ways, those who undergo bitter experiences because of calamities and catastrophe. It is our Christian duty to extend our love to such people. We must remember, in this context, the words of the late Yuhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan that it is not our large heartedness or kindness, but our responsibility to give them the touch of love. Let us renew our vision for upholding the new interpretations of humaneness in a society where humility and civility are considered a weakness.

Kerala has a grand tradition of friendliness among religious communities. Let us hope that our politicians and Members of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, newly elected, act in such a way as to keep up these good traditions, and never do anything that may eclipse the good trends of religious and communal harmony. I wish them the very best.

Our sorrows know no bounds when West Asia and Northern Africa are witnessing mass killing of people. Let us pray incessantly to the Lord for the creation of peace in these areas. Japan and Myanmar underwent terrible natural calamities. The people of Japan have undergone two nuclear tragedies in the history of mankind. It is time the conscience of the world declares solidarity to the people of Japan. Let us pray for it.

Our three priests are called for Episcopacy of the Mar Thoma Church. Let us pray for these three Rambans so that God may shower upon them His blessings to strengthen them to lead the Church according to the mission entrusted to them.

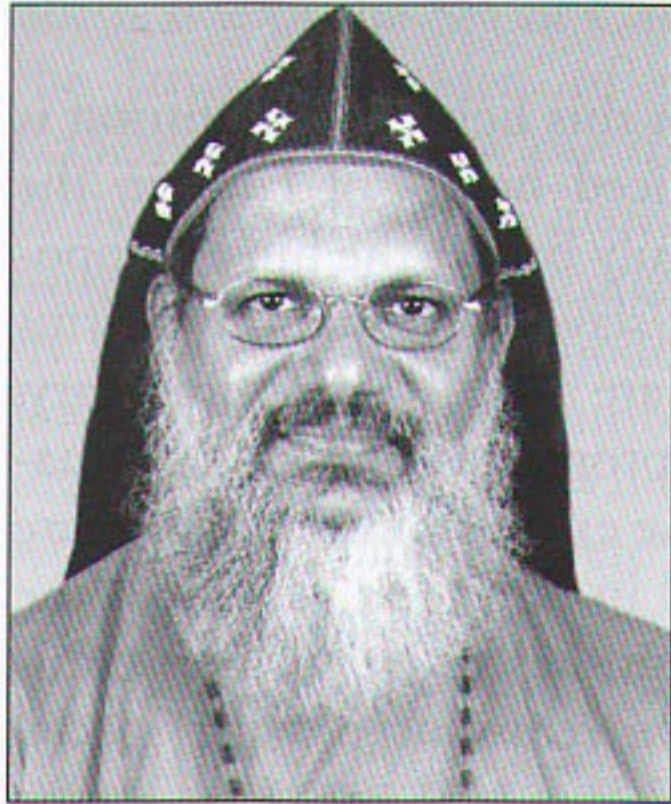
Many conferences and camps are being held during the summer vacation. Our young generation has to gain from these meetings and camps. They must get nearer to the Lord. We should praise the Lord for the youngsters who have completed their theological studies. They are going to be Deacons and Kassissas of the Mar Thoma Church in the near future. Let us all pray for them. May God strengthen them in the servant-hood of the Lord. "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: if any one would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

Grace be with you all!

Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan



# Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly beloved in Christ,  
Greetings to you all in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I am writing this after the Diocesan Assembly meeting and the Diocesan Council election, held at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York, on May 27-28, 2011. Glad to see that most of the Assembly members from various parishes of our Diocese attended the

Assembly sessions, which went smoothly by God's grace and with the co-operation of all. I congratulate the newly elected Diocesan Council and welcome them to the future ministry of this Diocese. I rejoice that God has called us to work together with Him for the new term. Let us pray and seek His wisdom to continue our ministry for the glory and furtherance of His Kingdom. Special thanks to the outgoing council and various sub-committees for their dedication and diligence in completing their assigned tasks. This year 13 new Achens joined our Diocese via appointment by the Episcopal Synod. I welcome the new Achens and pray that their ministry will enrich the parishes, the Diocese, and the Mar Thoma Church at large.

By God's grace we were able to acquire the residential property, adjacent to our Diocesan Center. A significant part of the down payment for this property was obtained through a Diocesan Souvenir fundraising. I thank all the members of our Church who has graciously stepped forward to contribute their share to help with the down payment and support the Diocese. Also we paid-off the loan balance on our Diocesan Center—Sinai in April 2011.

The newly published study DVDs on the Holy Qurbana, Liturgy and Baptism are to be used as study tools in the parishes for educating all our members, including various organizations and first communicants. I am happy that as per the revised By-law the new centre-region set up and organizational activities are going on well complying with local, central, regional, and diocesan operational requirements..

These days we are organizing the Family Conference and National conferences of various Diocesan Organizations. I congratulate the organizers and hosting parishes for their whole hearted efforts and urge all the members of our Diocese to participate in at least one of these conferences. The new office bearers of the Diocesan organizations have taken charge and they are planning the upcoming programs. Let us all join together to make our involvements more relevant and meaningful in the local—regional and Diocesan levels. As announced earlier, this year our Diocese is proposing new projects for establishing Study and Training Centers in various regions of our Diocese. The Assembly members in each region with the leadership of our Achens are expected to choose an appropriate project and discuss and propose the ways and means of implementing them. This is to be accomplished during the term of this Assembly. The devel-

opment of the Diocese in the coming years is to be visualized and materialized, depending on our Lord's providence.

Our church is now blessed with three Rambans. Very Rev. Dr. Varghese Mathai Ramban, Very Rev. K. V. Varkey Ramban and Very Rev. Oommen George Ramban, who are to be consecrated as Episcopas of our Sabha. I request all of you to pray for this, so that the consecration and their ministry in the Church will bring glory and honor to God's name. This year, our Sabha is commemorating the 175th year of Reformation. Reformation is transforming the existing Church for a fruitful living. Today as we commemorate its 175th year, it should be celebrated with a lot of prayer and a disciplined evaluation of the needs of the people. Regional meetings are to be arranged in this line. The motto of our Church is "Lighted to Lighten". Let us keep the light shining on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of Reformation and remember that the Church is the body of Christ and is established for spreading the good news that Jesus Christ is the Savior and the light to the whole world.

This year, we are having three 'Family Conferences' in the Diocese: one in Edmonton, Canada on the first week of July, second in UK in August and the third one in NY, USA on the last week of October. Family is the basic unit of the Church and Society. The wholeness and integrity of the family are important for the existence of the Church and well being of the Society. *Concepts and constructs of the Family* is the theme chosen for this issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger.

We live in a fast changing world. The construct of the family is taking new turns with the use and influence of the internet in our digital world. How are the families shaped by the digital culture? The administration of President Bill Clinton dreamt 'Electronic Global Village' and initiated steps by which all schools, libraries and hospitals are connected to the internet by the dawn of this new century. What is the result? This media revolution is changing the way in which we think and behave. Now all the parents face the challenge to raise their families in a media—saturated world. Our children and youth are more influenced by the present media architecture. Beginning in the early 1990s and continuing into the early part of the 21st century, a powerful combination of technological, social and economic trends has placed our children and youth at the centre of the new digital world. Tech-savvy among them moves freely about in cyber space, though found physically in their bedrooms, using internet to be a laboratory for experimentation and innovation. These are changing the value concepts of family structure which will bring far reaching consequences in the lives of the people and the family. This necessitates a serious look into the biblical and theological concepts of a Christian family. May the articles in the Mar Thoma Messenger and our study through the conferences enable us to have a strong foundation to the family structure which helps us in turn to understand the Church and the Kingdom of God meaningfully and relevantly!

May God bless you all

Yours in Christ

Mar Theodosius (Diocesan Episcopa)



**Introduction**

The narrative of the centurion and his terminally ill servant speaks to us on various levels. First, we see Luke's concern to present the radical inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry, evident in the numerous scenes in this Gospel in which Jesus reaches out to groups typically marginalized by society at large, a practice conditioned by factors both social and religious. Secondly, the narrative introduces the sublime values and life of the Roman centurion and his family. Thirdly, it is a healing narrative, which directly connects to the gentile context.

Here I would like to explore the alternative life styles and values of the gentile centurion and his family who break the traditional parameters of society for the sake of kingdom of God. We can trace different qualities of an ideal family from the Holy Bible like the Roman centurion. Here there is no indication about his family. My hypothesis is that the Roman centurion lived with a blessed family for the sake of the Kingdom of God. "Centurion," which is a word that comes from the Latin "*centurio*," literally means "a commander of a century, or a hundred." He was what would correspond probably, in our modern day thinking about the military, a captain. He was one of the persons upon whom depended the welfare of his nation's interests. He was not high enough in the echelons of the military to be uninvolved, and yet, he was high enough to have an involvement that gave him authority over the common troops that were stationed here in Capernaum.

**Deconstruction of class structures (binary opposites/dualism) like masters and slaves**

The dominance of Roman imperialism existed within the system of binary opposites or dualism. (Theory of Hegemony by Antonio Gramsci) (Jewish/gentile, man/woman, ruler/subjects etc.). The Roman centurion deconstructs the strong binary opposite of masters and the servants. The Roman political power and Jewish religious hierarchy propagated class discrimination as well as social inequalities to maintain monolithic power. The Roman military system was an organ for establishing dominance and power over society during the time of Christ. The Roman centurion was the commanding officer and symbol of Roman power. Yet we see a gentile Roman officer in command of a hundred men who cares about a servant. The centurion serves as a role model for gentile believers. He is concerned about the well-being of those who are around him, even slaves. His solidarity extends to the Jewish community as well. He has not met Jesus, but because of what he has heard about Jesus from others, he has faith that Jesus can help, and he turns to Him with his request. The centurion, therefore, is a model of compassion for weaker persons, goodwill in the midst of divisive tensions between ethnic groups, and faith in Jesus because of

the testimony of others. Seen in this light, the centurion is one of the unsung and unnoticed heroes of faith in the Gospels. In other words the family breaks the binary opposites inside the family (master/slave). The family affirms that the controversial opposites are actually complimentary. Today we know that the family propagates all kinds of binaries within the social system. The expressions of dualism are sometimes arrogant and hatred in family as well as in the society. The spirit of binary opposites produced and cultivated inside the family will be reproduced with special effects in social system.

The centurion, when he heard of Jesus, made supplication to Him (Luke 7:3). Masters ought to take particular care of their servants when they are sick, and not to neglect them. This centurion begged that Christ would come and heal his servant. As a centurion, he has enough servants from the military, yet he cares about this one ill servant.

At that time, there were many servants and slaves in the Roman Empire, and all were regarded as the property of their masters. If they were healthy and useful, their masters treated them well, but if they became ill and useless, their masters got rid of them as we do with broken chairs or dishes. But this centurion was different. He valued his servant highly. He saw his servant, not as a piece of property, but as a fellow human being. He did his best to take care of his servant, especially when his servant became ill.

**Christ also breaks binaries (internal complexities) through His ministry**

There was no inequality between man and woman in Christ's ministry. The Jewish religion and the Roman political imperialism established male/female inequality. The temple and the synagogue proposed the traditional conservative methodology of patriarchy. The ministry of Christ eliminated all kinds of traditional, conservative binary opposites for the propagation of the Kingdom of God. As a Jew, Jesus Christ transcended the border between the Jewish community and the Samaritans.

**Deconstruction of political and military mission to the mission of the kingdom of God**

Perhaps the centurion experienced the divine charisma of Jesus during the time of his military mission in Capernaum. The centurion's understanding of Christ was—in some respects—logical, objective, and scientific. The centurion sent some of the elders of the Jews to Christ to present and solicit his case, out of respect for Christ. Because he was an uncircumcised Gentile, he perhaps thought Christ, being a prophet, would not care for conversing with him. For that reason he sent Jewish elders, persons in authority, so that the dignity of the messengers might give honor to the sender. He does not approach Jesus directly, but diplomatically



sends the Jewish leaders, who could vouch for the merit of his request. The resulting picture is one of good relations among all parties. Capernaum is in northern Israel on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, so these were probably not the Jerusalem leaders of the Jews, but local leaders in Capernaum. Here we can trace that the family was involved in the community life, instead of ethnicity. The Roman centurion and his family created a new understanding of equality rather than the methodology of the binary opposites of Jewish/gentile. The centurion's family lived in various dominant epistemologies of faith (sorcery, gnosticism, emperor worship, etc.) but they were turned back from the mission of the imperial military system to the mission of the Kingdom of God. The centurion and his family had faith in the person of Jesus. They had faith in what Jesus could do for him. He said to Jesus "Say in a word and my servant shall be healed." The strongest faith is not only based upon the person of God, it's also based upon the word of God. The word of God is true, steadfast, sure, and reliable. Jesus said, Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away. Don't ever forget and don't ever underestimate the power of God's word. God spoke and the world was created. God said let there be a light, and there was light. The power to change lives is in the Word of God. In a nutshell we can say that the epistemological realm of their faith is very strong in the midst of that particular context.

Normally the Jewish elders would not give their hearts to help a Roman centurion whom they would consider a mere invader and infidel. But this Roman centurion had won the hearts of the Jewish elders. Today, consumer culture propagates the new trends in Christian faith and its expressions. Post-colonial imperialism imposes strong binary opposites in the social system. These trends are eliminated when the kingdom values enter society. Here our task is to demolish these new trends by the interpretation of the word of God.

### **Deconstruction from Emperor Worship to the worship of Almighty God**

They came to Jesus, earnestly saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue" (verse 5). This centurion built a synagogue at his own proper costs and charges, and probably employed his soldiers to keep them from idleness. He must have let his hundred soldiers put down their swords and engage in construction work for the Jews. When the Jewish elders saw the Roman soldiers working to build the house of God, they must have thought the vision of God in Isaiah 2:4 fulfilled, which says, "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

The Roman centurion and his family have been moved by the beauty of Jewish society, based on the Law of God and the worship of the one true God. As a sign of his sincere love for the nation of Israel, he built a synagogue for the Jews, rather than a gym or amusement park. Michael Foucault generally use the term *dispositif*, deployment or apparatus to refer to the various institutional, physical, and

administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures which enhance and maintain the exercise of power within the social body. The roman political imperialism imposed a great level of power over the military rulers. Here we can explore another social analysis theory of body-politic to investigate the context as well as the social system of Roman centurion and his profession.

Body politic was also understood to mean "the physical person of the sovereign" (in monarchies and despotisms- the emperor, king, or dictator and in republics- the electorate). In other words, a group of persons politically organized under a single governmental authority. The centurion was the military officer or physical person under the Roman sovereign power.

Emperor worship as well as hero worship was very common and prominent during the time of Christ. Some times the Roman centurion could attain privileges by constructing various temples for the establishment of emperor worship, but he built the synagogue for the almighty God (Yahweh).

The Roman centurion replaced all kinds of dominant hegemonic conditions in his context for the establishment of the Kingdom of God by constructing the synagogue. Here the synagogue is a space which transcends all kinds of monolithic power of Roman imperialism and the Jewish religiosity. Today our society is more attached to the trends of religious fundamentalism as well as communalism. The monolithic power structure of religion propagating the negation of polyphonic identities. (Heterogeneity, Plurality, Multiplicity). The new capitalist methodologies establishing consumer culture in religion rather than the true spirituality (the worship of almighty God).

### **Deconstruction of his space, subjectivity, and identity to the Kingdom of God principles**

The centurion has a very clear sense of Jesus and His authority. His humility is grounded in a profound respect for Jesus. In comparison, the centurion sees himself as unworthy to even invite Jesus into his home. And since he sees himself as undeserving, he is all the more aware of the pure grace with which Jesus operates.

Jesus is on his way to the centurion's house to heal his servant. When Jesus is very close to the house, the centurion sends friends to Jesus and says to Him, "Look, I am not worthy that you should come to my household. Just say the word and my servant will be healed." And he says this because he recognizes that Jesus is operating under divine authority. He seems to understand that Jesus is submitting to the authority of the Heavenly Father and just as Jesus is a man under authority so is he as a Roman soldier. He says in verse 8, "I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." So the soldier says, "Jesus, You don't need to come yourself. I'm not worthy that you should enter into my house. You just say the word and my servant will be healed." Jesus marvels at him and says, "I have not seen such great faith!" And the Bible says in verse 10 that when those who were sent returned to the house they found

*(Cont'd on page 9)*



# കുടുംബം ഒരു വ്യൂഹം (System) : ധാരണകളും നിർമ്മിതികളും (Concepts and Constructs)

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## ആമുഖം

കുടുംബം ഒരു വ്യൂഹമാണ് (System). കുടുംബം അതിന്റെ ഉപവ്യൂഹങ്ങളാൽ (Sub-systems) പരിരക്ഷിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. വിശുദ്ധ പൗലോസ് സഭയെ ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ശരീരമായി വിഭാവന ചെയ്യുമ്പോൾ അതിനെ ഒരു വ്യൂഹമായാണ് ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നത്. സഭയിലെ ഓരോ അംഗവും ശരീരത്തിലെ വിവിധ അവയവങ്ങൾ എന്ന നിലയിൽ പരസ്പരം പൂരകങ്ങളായി വർത്തിക്കണമെന്ന് പൗലോസ് ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. (1 കൊരി. 12). പ്രസ്തുത ഉപമ കുടുംബം എന്ന വ്യൂഹത്തെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നതിന് സഹായകരമാണ്. ഈ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഒരു 'ഘടന' എന്ന നിലയിൽ കുടുംബത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ധാരണകളും നിർമ്മിതികളും ചുരുക്കമായി ഈ ലേഖനത്തിൽ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

## കുടുംബം ഒരു വ്യൂഹം (Family: A System)

കുടുംബത്തെ ഒരു വ്യൂഹം എന്ന നിലയിൽ സമീപിക്കുമ്പോൾ അതിനെ അംഗങ്ങളുടെ കൂട്ടായ്മ (കൂട്ടം) എന്നതിനേക്കാൾ പൂർണ്ണതയുള്ള ഒരു ഘടകം എന്ന നിലയിൽ വീക്ഷിക്കണം. വിവിധ ഘടകങ്ങൾ (members) ചേർത്തു വയ്ക്കുന്നതിനേക്കാൾ അവയെ അതിലംഘിക്കുന്ന ഒരു ആളത്വം അതിനുണ്ട്. ഇതുകൾ ചേർത്തു വയ്ക്കുന്നതിനു അപ്പുറമാണു പുതിയ സവിശേഷത. മാതാപിതാക്കൾ, ഭാര്യ, ഭർത്താവ്, മക്കൾ എന്നിവർ ചേർന്ന് വരുന്ന ഒരു ഘടനക്കപ്പുറമാണ് കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ഉണ്മ (Identity). ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിൽ വിവിധ ഉപ വ്യൂഹങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ട് (Sub-systems). മാതാപിതാക്കൾ (Parental Sub-system), ഭാര്യഭർത്താക്കന്മാർ (Spousal Sub-system), മക്കൾ (Sibling Sub-system) മുതലായവയാണു അവ. ഉപവ്യൂഹങ്ങൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള ബന്ധം ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ആരോഗ്യത്തെ നിർണ്ണയിക്കുന്നു.

## അതിരുകൾ (Boundaries)

വ്യക്തികൾക്കും (Individual Members) ഉപവ്യൂഹങ്ങൾക്കും അവരവരുടേതായ അതിരുകൾ ഉണ്ട്. പരസ്പര വ്യവഹാരങ്ങളിലൂടെ (Mutual Interaction) ഈ അതിരുകൾ വെളിപ്പെടുന്നു. ഒട്ടകതികളുടെയും ഉപവ്യൂഹങ്ങളുടെയും അനന്യതയും സ്വത്വവും (Identity) നിലനിർത്തുകയും വളർത്തുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നത് അതിരുകളാണ്. കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥ (Homeostasis) നിർണ്ണയിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത് അതിരുകളുടെ നിർണ്ണയമനുസരിച്ചാണ്. അതിരുകൾ ശരിയായി പാലിക്കപ്പെടുമ്പോഴാണ് കുടുംബം എന്ന വ്യൂഹം ആരോഗ്യകരമായ, ഗുണമേന്മയുള്ള സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥയിൽ എത്തുന്നത്. ആരോഗ്യകരമായ അതിരുകൾ വളർത്തപ്പെടുന്നതിലൂടെയാണ് പരസ്പര ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ ആഴം സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത്. കാർക്കശ്യമുള്ള അതിരുകൾ (Rigid Boundaries) മുതൽ വളരെ അയഞ്ഞ അതിരുകൾ (Flexible Boundaries) വരെ ഉണ്ട്. മക്കളെ വളർത്തുന്നതിൽ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വമെടുക്കാതെ മാറി നിൽക്കുന്ന പിതാവിനും (Disengagement - Rigid Boundaries), അമിതമായി മക്കളുടെ കാര്യത്തിൽ എപ്പോഴും ശ്രദ്ധിക്കുന്ന ഒരു മാതാവിനും മക്കളുമായും അന്യോന്യവും ആരോഗ്യകരമായ ബന്ധം വളർത്തുവാൻ കഴിയാതെ പോകുന്നു. മറിച്ച്, മക്കളെ വളർത്തുന്നതിൽ തങ്ങളുടെ പ്രായത്തിനനുസരിച്ചുള്ള വികാസം പ്രാപിക്കുന്നതിന് ഉള്ള സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം അവർക്ക് ലഭ്യമാകുമ്പോൾ ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ ഊഷ്മളത സാധ്യമാകുന്നു.

## മുദ്രകൃതപ്പെടുന്ന രോഗി (Identified Patient)

സാധാരണയായി ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ പ്രതിസന്ധി (Crisis) വെളിപ്പെടുവരുന്നത് ഒരു അംഗത്തിലൂടെയാകാം. ഈ അംഗത്തിന്റെ ശാരീരികമോ മാനസികമോ ആയ എന്തെങ്കിലും വികലമായ പെരുമാറ്റങ്ങൾ ആ കുടുംബം വ്യൂഹമെന്ന നിലയിൽ അനുഭവിക്കുന്ന സംഘർഷങ്ങളുടെ ലക്ഷണം മാത്രമാണ് (Symptom). ഇവിടെ തിരുത്തപ്പെടേണ്ടത് വ്യക്തിയുടെ പെരുമാറ്റത്തോടൊപ്പം ആ കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ആകമാനമുള്ള പെരുമാറ്റമാണ്. കുടുംബത്തിലെ ഒരംഗം അനിയന്ത്രിതമായ ദേഷ്യം പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കുന്നത് ആ കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ബന്ധങ്ങൾ സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥയിലേക്ക് കൊണ്ടുവരാനുള്ള മുന്നറിയിപ്പായി നമുക്ക് വീക്ഷിക്കാം.

ഉദാ. രക്തദുഷ്യം കൊണ്ട് ശരീരത്തിൽ വൃണം ഉണ്ടാകുമ്പോൾ വൃണം കെട്ടുന്നതോടൊപ്പം രക്തശുദ്ധീകരണത്തിനുള്ള ചികിത്സയും നടത്തപ്പെടണം. കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ പെരുമാറ്റ രീതിയിലുള്ള വികലത പരിഹരിക്കപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ വ്യക്തിക്ക് പെരുമാറ്റത്തിൽ വ്യത്യാസമുണ്ടാകുന്നു.

## വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ അനന്യത (Differentiation of Self)

ഒരു വ്യക്തിക്ക് തന്റെ ബൗദ്ധിക തലത്തെയും വൈകാരിക തലത്തെയും വേർതിരിച്ചറിയുന്നതിനും മറ്റുള്ളവരിൽ നിന്ന് തന്റെ സത്തയെ വ്യത്യാസപ്പെടു കാണുന്നതിനുമുള്ള കഴിവ് ആർജ്ജിക്കുമ്പോഴാണ് ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിൽ മെച്ചമായി വളരുവാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നത്. തന്റെ സത്തയെ നിലനിർത്തിക്കൊണ്ട് തന്നെ വൈകാരികമായി കുടുംബത്തിലെ മറ്റ് അംഗങ്ങളോടുള്ള ബന്ധം വളർത്തിയെടുക്കുവാനുള്ള കഴിവിനെയാണ് വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ അനന്യത എന്നതുകൊണ്ട് അർത്ഥമാക്കുന്നത്. കഴുകൻ കൂടിക്കി കണ്ടതുങ്ങളെ പറക്കുവാൻ പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നതുപോലെ ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിൽ സ്വയം നിൽക്കുവാൻ (മറ്റുള്ളവരോടുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ) ഒരു വ്യക്തി പരിശീലിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടണം. അല്ലെങ്കിൽ അനന്യത നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട് വൈകാരികമായും മാനസികമായും എല്ലാ കാര്യങ്ങളിലും മറ്റുള്ളവരെ ആശ്രയിക്കുവാൻ ഇടയാകും.

## ചക്രീക കാരണങ്ങൾ (Circular Causality)

കട്ടിക്കാല ജീവിത അനുഭവങ്ങൾ ഒരു വ്യക്തിയുടെ പെരുമാറ്റത്തെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുന്നു എന്ന സമീപനം കുടുംബ മനഃശാസ്ത്ര ചികിത്സയിൽ പ്രബലമാണ്. എന്നാൽ കുടുംബത്തെ ഒരു വ്യൂഹമായി കാണുമ്പോൾ കട്ടിക്കാല അനുഭവങ്ങളെക്കാൾ ഇപ്പോൾ കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള ആശയവിനിമയം, പെരുമാറ്റം എന്നിവയിലേക്കാണ് പ്രശ്ന പരിഹാരത്തിനായി ശ്രദ്ധകേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നത്.

## ത്രികോണ ബന്ധം (Triangulation)

കുടുംബ ബന്ധങ്ങളിൽ സംഘർഷത്തിനുള്ള സാധ്യതയുണ്ട്. കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളിൽ രണ്ടുപേർ തമ്മിൽ സംഘർഷത്തിലാകുമ്പോൾ (Conflict) അതിന്റെ കാഠിന്യം കുറയ്ക്കുന്നതിന് കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളിൽ മൂന്നാമതൊരാളോട് ഇത് പങ്കുവെച്ച് അദ്ദേഹത്തെ കൂടെ ഈ സംഘർഷത്തിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. ഇപ്രകാരം കുടുംബ ബന്ധങ്ങളിൽ ത്രികോണങ്ങൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ഇത് സംഘർഷങ്ങൾ സങ്കീർണ്ണമാക്കുന്നു.

## പരസ്പരമുള്ള ആവശ്യങ്ങളുടെ പൂർത്തീകരണം (Mutual Need Satisfaction)

ഓരോ അംഗവും അവരവരുടേതായ ആവശ്യങ്ങളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും കുടുംബത്തിലേക്ക് കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നു. പരസ്പരം ബഹുമാനിക്കുമ്പോഴും മറ്റൊരു വ്യക്തിയുടെ ലോകത്തു നിന്നുകൊണ്ട് ആ വ്യക്തിയെ മനസ്സിലാക്കി ഇടപെടുമ്പോഴാണ് പരസ്പര സന്തുപ്തി ലഭ്യമാകുന്നത്. വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ഇഷ്ടാനിഷ്ടങ്ങൾ ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിന് ഭീഷണിയല്ല, മറിച്ച് അതിന്റെ ഗുണമേന്മ വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിന് സഹായകരമാകുന്നു. പരസ്പര ബഹുമാനത്തോടെ ഇഷ്ടാനിഷ്ടങ്ങളെ സമീപിക്കുമ്പോൾ മെച്ചമായ സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥ കുടുംബത്തിൽ പരിരക്ഷിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു.

## ഉപസംഹാരം

മേൽപ്പറഞ്ഞ പ്രത്യേകതകളെ മനസ്സിലാക്കി ഓരോ അംഗവും കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ പ്രതിസന്ധിയിൽ തങ്ങളുടെ പങ്കിനെ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ മൊത്തമായ സുരക്ഷിതത്വത്തെ ലാക്കാക്കി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുമ്പോഴാണ് കുടുംബ ജീവിത സന്തുപ്തി സാധ്യമാകുന്നത്. ഏത് പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലും ഏത് സംസ്കാരത്തിലും കുടുംബത്തെ ഒരു വ്യൂഹമായി മനസ്സിലാക്കി കുടുംബ സംഘർഷങ്ങളെ സമീപിക്കുമ്പോഴാണ് ക്രൈസ്തവ കുടുംബ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ അർത്ഥവും ആഴവും കണ്ടെത്തുവാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നത്.



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# God of Life—Lead us to Forgiveness and Reconciliation

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Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph, Kottayam

**T**he ecumenical calling of the Church is to build just societies by participation in the struggles of the people for human dignity. So human rights questions are vital concerns of forgiveness and reconciliation. Christian commitment to justice is deeply rooted in the prophetic biblical tradition as we find in Is. 1:17 ("learn to do good; seek justice"); Is. 2:4 (the will of the Lord for the nations of the world) and Amos 5:24 (Justice shall roll down like waters and righteousness like an overflowing stream").

The WCC's "Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches seeking Reconciliation and Peace" (2001-2009) was indeed a call to critically examine the Biblical basis for inter-faith relationship so as to build a culture of peace all over the world. "Peace on Earth" is the call of the Spirit addressed to all across any cultural or religious divide. The ultimate goal of peace making is to build a community of communities for the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21: "that you may become the righteousness of God"). This is possible only if the mission of the Church is geared to social amity and wholeness rooted in justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. The issue of peace in pluralistic societies particularly in Asia calls forth the evolution of just social structures for which the spirituality of religion rather than its religiosity is required. Forgiveness and reconciliation are to be made visible in areas of "sinned against sectors:" namely violation of human rights, degradation of human dignity, gender discrimination, displacement of the weaker sections in the name of development, anthropocentric attitude to life, adjusting with corruption in public life, indifference to violence and terrorism, eulogizing the digital divide, neglect of social sectors, conspiracy of silence in speaking about the environmental rights and lack of transparency and accountability in public life. Forgiveness and reconciliation have much to do in our social network.

There are no sectors of life without its impact. M. M. Thomas spoke of the tension between "the priestly ministry of liberating reconciliation and the prophetic ministry of liberating conflict". And he asked, "How can we be at once messengers of peace in a world of strife and messengers of strife in a world of false peace?" Jeremiah asked the same question long ago when he said, "They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'peace, peace' when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). Reconciliation is possible only when justice has been achieved and those responsible for acts and structures of injustice have been brought to repentance. What is before the Church is justice over order! One should remember that wound should never be justified and justice should never be wounded.

"There is no reconciliation between justice and injustice, good and evil and God and the devil" (Konard Raiser). Struggle for justice should have priority over the work of reconciliation. Truth is the mediating term between justice and reconciliation.

In Jesus' acts of solidarity with the marginalized and the oppressed, God acts. In His suffering, God too suffers. In His resurrection, God gives us a new impetus for action. This is clearly stated in the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55).

There is an ethical imperative in Eph.4:32: "...and be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ have forgiven you." God's plan to create "one new man in place of two is a process in history" (Eph. 2:13-15). This is quite visible in the earthly ministry of Jesus when he received "the dishonest tax collectors and other notorious sinners" (Luke 15). Church being the Eucharistic presence of the Kingdom on earth is being sent to continue the work in history so as "to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth".

## Liberation and Reconciliation

Liberation and reconciliation are paradigms for mission. In 2 Cor. 5:17-20, one finds five connected issues: i) Reconciliation is the work of God, ii) God's reconciling work begins with the victim, iii) God makes both the victim and the wrongdoer a new creation, iv) The Christian places the suffering inside the story of the suffering and the death of Christ (cf. Phil. 3:10), and, v) This is the message of the Cross.

*In the process of reconciliation, two things are imperative:*

**1) Truth telling:** Truth telling is an essential ingredient for the reconstruction of the community. There is need for the cleaning of wells which have been polluted by age old deposits of prejudice, discrimination, inequality and violence. In the case of the Post-Apartheid South Africa, Truth, Reconciliation and Justice played a significant role in the process of restoration.

**2) The pursuit of justice:** It is a pre-condition for reconciliation and a way of healing the past. There are three forms of justice: punitive, restorative, and structural.

All these efforts shall lead to the healing of memories. Healing of memories simply means that memories are no longer toxic. Forgiveness is not forgetting, but remembering it in a different way. "In forgiving one establishes a different relationship to the perpetrator who is also a deeply



wounded person. He also needs a healing touch. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has rightly said, "There is no future without forgiveness". This is the call of the Spirit in Romans 8:19-26.

### **Forgiveness: Divine in Human Hearts**

"Forgiveness is an empowered form of giving" (Doris Donnelly). It is an event, not an idea. In forgiving, one owns and disowns what had blocked the flow of love in relationship. The Greek proverb "if the camel hadn't knelt down, it couldn't have been loaded" adds luster to what St. Paul wrote: "...in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, *not counting their trespasses against them...*" (2 Cor. 5:19). God does not die the day we cease to forgive others, but we become dust on the day we cease to be illumined by the radiance of divine forgiveness. "One loving spirit sets another on fire" (St. Augustine).

### **Church as a reconciling community**

The Church as reconciling community should be understood against the background of a broad biblical vision of God's reconciling and peace making mission. The Old Testament vision of **Shalom**, a dynamic concept for restoration and renewal, speaks of primarily the future in God's sight for all. The biblical vision of **Shalom** is indeed a vision of wholeness, of harmony and social amity. It embraces the entire order of creation (cf. Is. 2:1-4; 9:2-7; 11:1-9; Ezek.

34:23-31; 37:24-28; Ps. 85:8-13; 122:6-9, Lev. 25:3-7; Deut. 8:7-10; Mal. 2:5). "It functions always on a firm rejection of values and lifestyles that seek security or well-being in manipulative ways at the expense of another part of creation, another part of community, or brother or sister" (Brueggemann). Jesus calls upon His disciples to practice "righteousness" so as to become perfect in the sight of God. So we read in Matthew 5:23-24: "When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister and then come and offer your gift". The same idea is found in the parable of the two debtors (Matt. 18:23-32). The whole life of Jesus could be summed up in the very act of forgiving as we find in Luke 23:24: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do". The *marga* of forgiveness is being followed down through the centuries by noble men and women. When Godse shot Mahatma Gandhi down in the gardens of Birla Mandir, Gandhi crumbled instantly "putting his hands to his forehead in the Hindu gesture of forgiveness to his assassin" (quoted from P. N. Benjamin, Viay Times 30 Jan. 2006). Gladys Staines preached the greatest sermon ever heard in missionary movements when the media sought her response after the sentence of Dara Singh and 12 accomplices. She said: "I have forgiven the killers. Nothing I say or do will bring Graham and my sons back". She added, "Forgiving helps in the healing process". ■

### **An Ideal Family in God's Plan (Cont'd from page 5)**

the servant well. Here we can explore the real and sublime confession of the Roman centurion and his family before Christ. The centurion and his family proclaimed the deep confession that their household was not worthy of Him. Here the Roman centurion and his family deconstructed their royal place, subjectivity, and identity for the kingdom of God.

### **He compared his military commandments (royal word) with the Word of Christ. He compared the power of Christ and his mundane authority**

In verse 7: The centurion who understands something of authority and from it he extrapolates to learn a lesson in all authority, and this tells us something about his view of Christ. He says, "I know what happens when a man has authority. He merely says the word, and I recognize you as a man who has all authority. Therefore, all you need to do is speak the word, and it will be done." Here authority supplies a lesson in all authority. He was ready to understand something of the sovereignty of God. Spurgeon says, "The centurion, according to the best rules of argument, was led to this conclusion, and his practical mind made immediate use of the inference. Now, that was fine reasoning." Spurgeon also says, "The centurion did not wish to make his metaphor go

on all fours, and our Lord did not treat it as if he did." Jesus understood exactly what the man was saying.

The centurion and his family affirmed the power and authority of the divine Word instead of royal military commandments. They proclaimed the self-emptying (passion, crucifixion, death and resurrection) power and authority of Christ instead of Roman imperialistic power. The centurion's family declared that Jesus Christ has authority and power over everything, demonstrated here in His ability to not only heal a sick person at the point of death, but to heal that person at a distance just by saying the word. In brief, Jesus Christ acknowledged the faith and value system of centurion's family for the wide expansion of his kingdom ministry. Jesus says, "Not even in Israel have I found such great faith!" The point being, "We would expect God's people, the Jews, to have this kind of faith, but here's a Gentile whose faith is greater than any Jew on the face of the planet!"

We are living in a world of unnecessary pride and egoism. The new trends of careerism and individualism nourish the competition, as well as egoism instead of humility and humbleness.

Knowingly or unknowingly we have constructed our personality (identity, subjectivity) with unhealthy authority and power. Here our task is to negate the individualistic methodologies of our time like the centurion's family. ■



# A Theological Perspective on Family Relationships

Dr. V. T. Samuel

**T**he institution of family has undergone radical changes during the industrial and post-modern society. Sociologists define family in different forms, terms and constructs and categories which include nuclear, extended, and joint family systems. These are most familiar to immigrants from Asian, Africa, Middle East and South American countries. According to the 2010 US Census data, "A family is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family". The focus of the family sociologists is on the types, functions and roles, the challenges of family systems including, young, middle aged, retired, separated, divorced and single parent families. Social scientists generally agree that the family is under pressure and stress from within and without and are looking for various adaptive mechanisms to face serious challenges faced by family in the modern society. In this context, it would be appropriate to have a basic understanding of the theological basis for understanding family relationships.

The first family, according to the Bible, was instituted by God (Genesis 1-3). This model of father-mother-children has become the theological basis for God's relationship with the people of Israel. The divinely instituted family model offers us the family structure for parenting characterized by caring, loving, disciplining, giving, respecting, knowing and forgiving.

God's creational and creative relationship with humankind (Adam and Eve) and His covenant relationship with Israel are considered to be the basis for understanding the theology of man (theological anthropology). The implication here is that without acknowledging the relationship of God as a creator, human life becomes unfulfilling. The history of Israel as recorded in the Bible illustrates this cardinal truth.

As mankind is eternally dependent on God, so also is Israel; without the covenant relationship, Israel has no existence. This interdependence of human life is exemplified in the relationship between husband and wife which underscores and underlines the biblical concept of family life.

There are seven relational components (Stuart McLean) of the covenant as the beginning of family in a given society. They are: (1) people are social and live in a community; (2) the basic unit of the family and of covenant is the dyad; (3) families living in the community will experience challenges, conflict, and harmony; (4) the ability to forgive and experience forgiveness (5); bondedness of the husband-wife dyadic relationship; (6) a pattern of order and relationships; and (7) the awareness of the memory of the past, present and future.

A sound theology of the family should focus on four sequential stages: (1)covenant; (2)grace; (3)empowerment; and (4)intimacy. The beginning point of any family is the covenant (mutual agreement), unconditional love and understanding of one another. The order may not necessarily be sequential and may even overlap one another.

## Covenant

The first covenant relationship in the Bible is God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:18). God says to Noah: "I will establish my covenant with you ..." Later on God says: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendents ...." (Gen 9:9-10). The second reference to God's covenant is found in Gen 15:18 where a covenant is extended to Abraham. These are conditional covenants meaning the covenant relationship will continue as long as the other partner (humans) continues to abide with the basic conditions stated in the covenant. But this was further reinterpreted by Jesus in the example of the unconditional love illustrated in the story of the "prodigal son". The unconditional nature of God's love is affirmed in 1 John 4:19: "We love because He first loved us". But to continue the relational and the bilateral nature of God's unconditional love is anticipated in human life, especially in family life.

## Grace

The second element in the theology of family relationship is grace which requires family members to forgive and be forgiven. Everyone is called to live in a gracious relationship with God who has endowed His unmerited grace upon family life. Family relationships are meant to be lived out in the context of grace which gives freedom from legalism. Family members behave responsibly out of love and consideration for one another. Christ came in human form to demonstrate the divine love and forgiveness which becomes the basis for human love and forgiveness. There are plenty of scriptural references that talk about the ideal for family relationships, but none of us can measure up to that ideal. Only divine grace can continuously encourage us to love and forgive another as God in Christ has forgiven our sins. The application of grace in our family relationships is a challenge as we continue to map out family structures, roles and rules. Order, regularity and discipline are present for the sake of each other when grace is the dominant guiding principle in family relationships.

## Empowerment

The third element of the covenant model is empowerment, which enables us to have the power to serve and be served.



Empowering in a biblical model is quite different from the common use of power in society. It is a dynamic and an intentional process of enabling another person to acquire power to deal with challenges in daily life, whether it is familial, social or spiritual. It is the process of helping another person recognize strengths and capabilities within him/her. It is a reciprocal process in which empowering takes place in mutually enhancing ways. If covenant is the love commitment and grace is the underlying attitude of acceptance, then the empowering is the action of God in people's lives. This is reflected in the scripture: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). The power given by Jesus is the supreme example of human empowering, enabling us to fulfill the mission of love in action. This quality of Jesus' earthly life is what family members need to emulate the most. Empowering in relationships stems out of the covenant and grace offered in Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells in believers and enables them to empower others. This empowering makes it possible to serve and give to each other in unlimited ways by building each other up. Divine empowerment builds up the dyadic relationships between parents, parents and children and between siblings.

## Intimacy

Humans are unique in their ability to communicate and to know each other better than the rest of creation. Throughout the Bible, we observe a major theme which would point out that God wants to know us and be known by us. Marital intimacy in family life has its origin in the first family of

Adam and Eve. It is a divinely approved relationship. Families based on the covenant live in an atmosphere of grace and empowering will enable family members to communicate and express themselves so that they intimately know and are known by one another. A sincere, wholehearted effort will be made by such families to listen, understand and want what is best for the other. In such families differences are accepted with respect for the uniqueness of the other person. Family members communicate feelings freely and openly with each other. Trust and commitment will be enhanced. This insight is found in I John 4:16: "God is love... there is no fear in love... But perfect love drives out fear."

The unconditional love exemplified by Jesus gives us a true picture of the communicative intimacy desirable in family relationships that leads the relationship to full maturity.

## Conclusion

Four aspects of family relationships are identified as part of the theological foundation derived from the scripture. They are mutual commitment based on a bilateral covenant; continuity of family life maintained in an atmosphere of God's grace; the resources of family members used to empower one another; and intimacy leads to caring, understanding, communication, and cooperation with others. These elements of Christian family relationship must continue in a dynamic process. As families mature in their relationship, they are likely to reach out to others outside the boundaries of family. ■

**Ref:** Balswick, Jack and Judy Balswick. *The Family: Heaven or Haven? In The Sociological Perspective: A Value-Committed Introduction.* (Michael R. Leming, Raymond G. De Vries, and Brendan F. J. Furnish, Eds.)



## "The Christ"

Aileen Amy Thomas (Benzy). 10th grade

*Beaten and spit upon was He  
When He was being sent  
To be judged. Another was let go  
And He was the One left.  
"What shall I do with Jesus then?"  
Many yelled, "Crucify!"  
A crown of thorns was placed upon  
His head- He knew He had to die.  
He went to the place of the skull-  
Golgotha was its name.  
He was sent to save all mankind  
Hist'ry was ne'er the same*

*And so, they all crucified Him,  
Casting lots afterwards.  
Thieves were crucified on each side  
They too, said some harsh words.  
"My God, my God, why hast thou for-  
Saken Me?" He cried 'loud.  
This was at the ninth hour- then  
His ghost went to the clouds  
Like a lamb sent to the slaughter,  
He was slain to save us  
From our sins and from death itself-  
As he hung on that cross.*



# കുടുംബം: നിർമ്മാണവും ശിഥിലീകരണവും

റവ. ഡോ. ഡാനിയേൽ മാമ്മൻ

കുടുംബം എന്നത് വ്യത്യസ്തഘടകങ്ങളാൽ നിർമ്മിതമായതും, കൂട്ടിച്ചേർക്കപ്പെട്ടതുമാണ്. അതിനുള്ളിൽ പുരുഷനും സ്ത്രീയും ഉണ്ട്. കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങളും പ്രായമായവരും ഉണ്ട്, ഭൗതിക സമ്പത്തും സാധ്യതകളുമുണ്ട്, അയൽപക്കം ഉണ്ട്, പ്രകൃതിയുണ്ട്. ഇതെല്ലാം ചേർന്ന ഒരു യൂണിറ്റിനെയാണ് കുടുംബം എന്ന് വിളിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ ഓരോ ഘടകവും അതിന്റെ പരസ്പരബന്ധത്തെ ശക്തമാക്കി ഊട്ടിഉറപ്പിക്കുമ്പോഴാണ് കുടുംബം ആത്യന്തികമായി നിലനിൽക്കുന്നത്.

എന്നാൽ ഇന്ന് ഉത്തരാധുനികലോകം ശക്തമായ ശാസ്ത്രസാങ്കേതികപുരോഗതിയുടെയും, നൂതനങ്ങളായ പല ചിന്താസരണികളുടെയും ഫലമായി നിരന്തര പരിവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് വിധേയമായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്. തൽഫലമായി മനുഷ്യമനസ്സുകളിൽ നവീനമായ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളും ചിന്തകളിലും, പെരുമാറ്റങ്ങളിലും കാതലായ മാറ്റങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടാകുന്നുണ്ട്. ഈ വ്യതിയാനങ്ങളുടെയും കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളുടെയും ഫലമായി മുൻപ് പരിപാവനമായി കണക്കാക്കപ്പെട്ടിരുന്ന പലതും ഇന്ന് ഒരു പുനപരിശോധനയ്ക്ക് വിധേയമായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. സവിശേഷമായ ദർശനത്തിൽ അധിഷ്ഠിതമായി ഭൗതികവും ആത്മീയവുമായ ജീവിതം പങ്കുവെയ്ക്കുന്നതിലൂടെയാണ് ഓരോ വീടും കുടുംബമാവുക. ഭവനം കുറച്ച് മനുഷ്യജീവികളുടെ ഒരു പാർപ്പിടം മാത്രമല്ല. അത് ഒരു ഊഷ്മള സ്നേഹസൗഹാർദ്ദമാണ്. ഒരു ചിന്താ രീതിയാണ്. ഒരു തത്വശാസ്ത്രമാണ്, ഒരു ദർശനമാണ്.

കുടുംബത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ക്രൈസ്തവവീക്ഷണത്തിനു ചാരുതയുണ്ട്, വ്യക്തതയുണ്ട്. ഉന്നതങ്ങളിൽ സ്വർഗ്ഗസ്ഥപിതാവും, താഴെ ഭൂമിയിൽ ദൈവസുതരും, അങ്ങനെ സഹോദരങ്ങളും ഉള്ള ഉദാത്തമായ ദർശനമാണ് ക്രൈസ്തവവീക്ഷണത്തിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രബിന്ദു. ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നത് കുടുംബമായിട്ടാണ് - പുരുഷനും സ്ത്രീയും ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന കൊച്ചുകുടുംബം. സന്താനസമൃദ്ധിയോടെ വളരുന്നതിനും പ്രപഞ്ചത്തെ പരിപാലിക്കുന്നതിനുമുള്ള ദിവ്യനിയോഗം ഏറ്റുവാങ്ങിയ ആദിമകുടുംബം. മനുഷ്യന്റെ പതനത്തിന്റെ ചിത്രം രൂപപ്പെടുന്നതും ഈ ആദിമകുടുംബത്തിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലാണ്. ബാബേലിന്റെ ചുവട്ടിലെത്തുമ്പോഴേയ്ക്കും മനുഷ്യവംശമെന്ന മാനുകുടുംബം ശിഥിലമാകുന്നു. എന്നാൽ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ ചരിത്രം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നതും കുടുംബത്തിലാണ്. ഭൂമിയിലെ സകല ജനതയ്ക്കും അനുഗ്രഹീതരാകുവാൻ വേണ്ടി വിളിയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ട അബ്രഹാമിന്റെ കുടുംബത്തിൽ, രക്ഷകന്റെ ജീവിതവും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും ഒരു കുടുംബപശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലാണ് ബൈബിൾ വിവരിക്കുന്നത്.

ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ നിർമ്മിതിയിൽ അതിന്റെ ആത്മീയമാനത്തിൽ (Spiritual phase) കാതലായ മൂന്ന് ദൈവദർശനങ്ങളാണ് അടങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്നത്.

1. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഇച്ഛയിൽ നിന്നും നിശ്ചയത്തിൽ നിന്നും നിർമ്മിക്കപ്പെട്ട ദൈവികസ്ഥാപനമാണ് കുടുംബം. (*Family is an institution constructed by the will of God*).

കുടുംബം ഒരു മാനുഷിക പദ്ധതിയല്ല. അത് ദൈവിക പ്രോജക്ടാണ്. പുരുഷനും സ്ത്രീയും അവർ ഒന്നായിതീർന്നു. ദൈവാനുഗ്രഹത്താൽ മക്കൾക്ക് ജന്മം നൽകി തന്റെ സൃഷ്ടികർമ്മത്തിൽ പങ്കുചേരാനുള്ള ദൗത്യമാണ് നൽകിയത്. കുടുംബനിർമ്മാണ രൂപീകരണത്തിലേയ്ക്കാണ് ആദ്യമനുഷ്യൻ വിളിക്കപ്പെട്ടത്. ദൈവമാണ് ഈ കുടുംബം എന്ന സ്ഥാപനരൂപീകരണത്തിന് മുൻകൈ എടുക്കുന്നത്. അതുകൊണ്ട് അടിസ്ഥാനസ്രോതസ് ദൈവമാണ്. ദൈവത്തോടു ചേർന്ന് ജീവിക്കാനുള്ള നിയോഗമാണ് മനുഷ്യനുള്ളത്. ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നും മാറി കുടുംബജീവിതം ആസ്വദിപ്പാൻ ഉദ്യമിച്ചാൽ ആ ആസ്വാദനം ഒരു ലഹരിയായി മാറും. ദൈവം ജീവദായകമായി നിർമ്മിച്ചുതന്ന കുടുംബം നമ്മുടെ തന്നെ തകർച്ചയ്ക്കും മരണത്തിനും കാരണമാകാം. ക്രൈസ്തവ വിവാഹം പുരുഷനും സ്ത്രീയും ദൈവവും എന്നിങ്ങനെ മൂന്നുപേർ ചേർന്നുണ്ടാകുന്ന ബന്ധം ആണ്. ശാരീരികവും മാനസികമായും, ആത്മീകമായുള്ള ഐശ്വര്യവും ഒരുമയുമാണ് ദൈവനിർമ്മിതമായ ആ ബന്ധത്തിന്റെ ഉള്ളടക്കം.

കുടുംബത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ആത്മീകദർശനത്തിന്റെ രണ്ടാമത്തെ തലം 2) സ്നേഹത്തിലധിഷ്ഠിതമായ ഒരു നിർമ്മാണ, ഉടമ്പടി ബന്ധമാണ് കുടുംബം. (*Family is a covenant relationship rooted and constructed in love*).



കുടുംബനിർമ്മിതിയിൽ സ്നേഹബന്ധത്തിന് വൈകാരികമായ ഒരു തലമുണ്ട്. അതും പ്രധാനം തന്നെ. ആളത്തങ്ങൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള ഒരുമയിലേക്കുള്ള വളർച്ചയാണ് സ്നേഹബന്ധത്തിലൂടെ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കേണ്ടത്. അതൊരു നിശ്ചലാവസ്ഥയല്ല. ഏക ശരീരബന്ധത്തിലുള്ള വളർച്ചയും പുരോഗമനവും ആണ് കുടുംബബന്ധത്തിൽ ലഭ്യമാക്കുന്നത്. ഒരുമയിലേക്കുള്ള വളർച്ചയിൽ, ഭാര്യയും, ഭർത്താവും ഒരുപോലെ പങ്കാളികളാണ്. സ്നേഹം പകർന്നുതരുന്ന അന്യോന്യതയിൽ ഊന്നിനിൽക്കാൻ കഴിയണം. പരസ്പരം സഹായിച്ച്, ആശ്രയിച്ച്, സഹകരിച്ച് ആഴമായ സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ പങ്കാളിത്തം (Partnership) കെട്ടുപണി ചെയ്യുക എന്നതാണ് ദൈവിക പ്രതീക്ഷ.

മൂന്നാമത്തെ ആത്മീകതലം, ഒരു സമൂഹമായി അയൽപക്ക ബന്ധത്തിൽ വളരാനുള്ള ദൈവ വിളിയാണ് കുടുംബത്തിനുള്ളത്. (Family is called to live together with other families as community).

ഒരു കുടുംബം അതിൽത്തന്നെ അടഞ്ഞ ഒരു ഇടമായി തീരരുത്. അതിന്റെ വാതിലുകൾ തുറക്കപ്പെട്ടതും, പരസ്പരം ബന്ധങ്ങളിൽ ജീവിക്കുന്നതുമായിരിക്കണം. ഒറ്റപ്പെട്ട തുരുത്തുകളായി കഴിയാനുള്ള പ്രവണതയിൽ നിന്നും ക്രൈസ്തവ കുടുംബങ്ങൾ മോചനം നേടണം. ഇതര കുടുംബങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു അനുഗ്രഹമായിരിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് ക്രൈസ്തവ കുടുംബങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ദൈവിക പ്രതീക്ഷ. അബ്രഹാമിന്റെ വിളിയിൽ അന്തർലീനമായിരിക്കുന്ന സത്യം ഈ ആശയത്തെയാണ് പ്രതിഫലിക്കുന്നത്. “നിന്നിലൂടെ സർവ്വജാതിയേയും അനുഗ്രഹിക്കും”. സർവ്വർക്കും അനുഗ്രഹമായി തീരാനുള്ള ഒരു ഉപാധിയാണ് ദൈവകരങ്ങളിൽ അബ്രഹാമിന്റെ കുടുംബം. ക്രൈസ്തവ കുടുംബ നിർമ്മിതിയിൽ ഓരോ കുടുംബവും സംരക്ഷിക്കേണ്ട ദൈവിക പ്രതീക്ഷകളെ താഴെപ്പറയുന്ന വിധം സംഗ്രഹിക്കാം.

1. ദൈവമാണ് കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ആധാരശില എന്ന സത്യം തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് അഗാധമായ ദൈവ വിശ്വാസത്തിൽ അധിഷ്ഠിതമാവണം കുടുംബം.
2. കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങൾ തമ്മിൽ ആഴത്തിലുള്ള സ്നേഹം കരുപ്പിടിപ്പിക്കണം. എല്ലാ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കും അപ്പുറംനിൽക്കുന്നതാകണം ഈ സ്നേഹ ബന്ധം. ആതിനാവശ്യമായ പ്രാക്ടീസുകൾ ഭവനത്തിനുള്ളിൽ ഉണ്ടാവണം.
3. കുടുംബം ഒരു ആത്മീയ പാഠശാലയാവണം തലമുറകളെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിൽ നിർണ്ണായക പങ്ക് കുടുംബത്തിനുള്ളിൽ ഉണ്ടാകണം. ഇതിൽ മാതാപിതാക്കൾക്കുള്ള പങ്ക് തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് നിർവ്വഹിപ്പാൻ കഴിയണം.
4. കുടുംബ ഭദ്രതയ്ക്കായി കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങൾ ഒന്നിച്ചു യത്നിക്കണം. അമിതമായി സമ്പത്ത് ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്നതിലല്ല ചുമതലബോധത്തോടുകൂടി അദ്ധ്വാനിക്കാനും പങ്കിടാനും സാധിക്കണം.
5. ആധുനിക സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ ഉയർത്തുന്ന സങ്കീർണ്ണ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ നേരിടുവാൻ അർത്ഥവത്തായ കുടുംബ കൂട്ടായ്മകൾ ഉണ്ടാവണം.

എന്നാൽ സമീപകാലത്ത് കുടുംബത്തിനുള്ളിൽ സംഭവിച്ചു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന പുതിയ മാറ്റങ്ങളും, കച്ചവടമനോഭാവങ്ങളും, അയഞ്ഞ വ്യക്തിത്വാനുഭവങ്ങളും, സ്വതന്ത്രസ്നേഹവും മറ്റും കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ശിഥിലീകരണത്തിന് കാരണമാകുന്നു. ഒരു കാലത്ത് കർക്കശ്യമായ മതപാരമ്പര്യരീതികളുടേയും പ്രാദേശിക സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റേയും അതിർവരമ്പുകൾക്കുള്ളിലാണ് ഗ്രാമീണ കുടുംബം നിലനിന്നുപോന്നിരുന്നത്. ഓരോ കുടുംബത്തേയും വിശ്വാസത്തിലും വിശ്വസ്തതയിലും നിലനിർത്തുന്നതിനും, കുടുംബ ബന്ധങ്ങൾ, കടപ്പാടുകൾ ഇവ പരിപാലിക്കുന്നതിനും പ്രാദേശിക സംസ്കാരത്തിനുണ്ടായിരുന്ന ശക്തിയേറെയായിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് നൂതന ചിന്താധാരകൾ പരമ്പരാഗതമായ കുടുംബ ജീവിതത്തെ പലതരത്തിൽ സ്വാധീനം ചെലുത്തുന്നുണ്ട്.

**1. കുടുംബം അനിവാര്യമോ?**

പരമ്പരാഗതമായ കുടുംബ ജീവിത വ്യവസ്ഥിതി മാനസിക വളർച്ചയ്ക്ക് അനിവാര്യമല്ല എന്ന നിലപാട് ഒരുപറ്റം ആളുകൾ താത്ത്വികമായിട്ടെങ്കിലും സ്വീകരിച്ചുകഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട്. സ്ത്രീ പുരുഷന്മാർ ഓരോ സംസ്കാരവും നിർണ്ണയിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള വൈവാഹിക ബന്ധത്തിലൂടെ ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിൽ മക്കളെ ജനിപ്പിച്ചും വളർത്തിയും ആജീവനാന്തം ജീവിക്കാൻ അനുശാസിക്കുന്ന ജീവിത ക്രമം മനുഷ്യനു ആവശ്യമില്ലാ എന്നതാണ് അവരുടെവാദം. ഇത്തരം ചിന്താഗതികൾ വികാരങ്ങൾക്കും വൈയക്തിക ബന്ധങ്ങൾക്കും നൈസർഗീക വാസനകൾക്കും അർഹിക്കുന്ന സ്ഥാനം കൊടുക്കുന്നില്ല എന്നതാണ്. ഒരുവന്റെ സുഗമവും അമൂല്യവുമായ വളർച്ചയ്ക്ക് ആഴമേറിയ വൈയക്തിക ബന്ധങ്ങൾ എന്നും



ആവശ്യമാണ്.

### 2. സ്വതന്ത്ര സ്നേഹവും സ്വതന്ത്ര സഹവാസവും

സ്വതന്ത്ര സ്നേഹവും സ്വതന്ത്ര സഹവാസവും ആധുനിക സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ മുഖമുദ്രകളാണ്. ഓരോരുത്തരും അവനവനിഷ്ടമുള്ള രീതിയിൽ ഒന്നിലധികം സ്ത്രീകളുമായോ, പുരുഷന്മാരും മായോ വൈവാഹിക തലത്തിലുള്ള ബന്ധം നിലനിർത്തിക്കൊണ്ടു പോകുന്നതിൽ പലരും അപാകതയൊന്നും കാണുന്നില്ല. വിവാഹത്തിനു മുമ്പും വിവാഹത്തിനു പുറമെയും ലൈംഗിക ബന്ധം പുലർത്തുന്നതിനെ ധർമ്മീകമായി ശരിവയ്ക്കുന്ന ചിന്താഗതി ഇന്ന് പ്രബലമായിട്ടുണ്ട്. തത്വത്തിൽ ഇത് അംഗീകരിക്കുന്നില്ല എങ്കിലും ഇതിൽ വീഴുന്നവർ ചുരുക്കമല്ല.

സ്വതന്ത്ര സഹവാസം എന്നുദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നത് ഔദ്യോഗികമായി വിവാഹബന്ധത്തിലേർപ്പെടാതെ പരസ്പരം ഇഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന സ്ത്രീയും പുരുഷനും ഒന്നിച്ചു താമസിക്കുക എന്നതാണ്. സമൂഹവും മത വിശ്വാസവും അനുശാസിക്കുന്ന തലത്തിലുള്ള യാതൊരു കരാറിലും അവർ ഏർപ്പെടാറില്ല. കുടുംബ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ധർമ്മീകത ഇവിടെ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യപ്പെടുന്നു. ഇവിടെ കുടുംബത്തെ അതിന്റെ സ്രോതസ്സായ ആത്മീയതയിൽ നിന്നും അടർത്തിമാറ്റി ഭൗതികതയുടെ കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ പ്രതിഷ്ഠിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. കുടുംബത്തെ അതിന്റെ ഉഷ്മള ബന്ധത്തിന്റെ മൂല്യത്തിൽ നിന്നും പഠിച്ചുമാറ്റി മാർക്കറ്റിന്റെ ഇംഗിതത്തിന് ഇണങ്ങുന്ന ഘടകമാക്കി തീർക്കുന്നു.

### 3. വിവാഹ മോചന സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം

വിവാഹ മോചനം എന്നത്തേക്കാൾ ഇന്ന് ശക്തിപ്പെട്ടുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. നിയമപരമായി വിവാഹമോചനം നേടാതെതന്നെ പരസ്പരം വേർപിരിഞ്ഞു താമസിക്കുവാനുള്ള പ്രവണത ഇന്ന് സാധാരണമായി കഴിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നു. വിവാഹത്തെ ഒരു തരം കച്ചവടമായി കണക്കാക്കുന്നവർക്ക് ലാഭ നഷ്ടങ്ങളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ വിവാഹമോചനത്തേയും സമീപിക്കാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടില്ല. അയഞ്ഞ ലൈംഗിക സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം, സംശയം, കുടുംബ വഴക്കുകൾ, അവിശ്വസ്തത, മുൻകോപം, വ്യക്തിത്വവൈകല്യം, മാനസികരോഗങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങിയ പലതും വിവാഹ മോചനത്തിന് കാരണമായി ഭവിക്കാറുണ്ട്. മാതാവിന്റെ യോ, പിതാവിന്റെയോ അസാന്നിധ്യവും, കലഹിക്കുന്ന മാതാപിതാക്കളും കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ അസ്വസ്ഥതകൾ കാരണമാകുന്നു.

### 4. കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ബാഹ്യവൽക്കരണം

നാം നേരിടുന്ന മറ്റൊരു പ്രതിസന്ധിയാണ് (Externalisation of the family) മനുഷ്യ ശിശുവിന്റെ ശൈശവകാലം നീണ്ടുവരികയാണ്. പണ്ടുകാലത്ത് പത്തോ പതിനഞ്ചോ വയസ്സാവുമ്പോഴേക്കും കുട്ടികൾ അതിജീവനത്തിനാവശ്യമായ ഉത്പാദനപ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ ഏർപ്പെടാൻ തുടങ്ങും. മാതാപിതാക്കളിൽ നിന്ന് ഒട്ടേറെ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം നേടിയിരിക്കും. ഇന്നത് 20-22 വയസ്സായി ഉയർന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. ഈ ഒരു കാലയളവിലാണ് ഒരു കുട്ടിയുടെ ധർമ്മീക - ആത്മീയരൂപീകരണം സാധ്യമാകുന്നത്. ഇതിനെ ഏറ്റവും സുരക്ഷിതമായ ഇടം ഭവനം ആയിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് ആ അവസ്ഥ മാറിയിരിക്കുകയാണ്. ആധുനിക മാധ്യമങ്ങളുടെയും, Internet, cyber world ഉപാധികൾ ഭവനത്തിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. അത് കുടുംബഗങ്ങളെ ഏറെ ബാഹ്യവൽക്കരിച്ചു എന്നു പറയാം ഭവനത്തിനകത്തെ ആത്മീയപരിപോഷണം ലഭിച്ചിരുന്ന സ്ഥാനത്ത് ഇന്ന് പ്രതീകങ്ങളും, പ്രതിബിംബങ്ങളും, കൗമാരമനസിനെ ഇന്നിന്റെ ഉപഭോഗസംസ്കാരത്തിന് ഇണങ്ങുംവിധം രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുകയാണ്. ഈ രൂപപ്പെടലിനെ വിമർശനപരതയോടെ വിലയിരുത്താനോ പ്രതിരോധിക്കാനോ നമുക്കു കഴിയുന്നില്ല എന്നത് നമ്മുടെ കുടുംബഭദ്രത നേരിടുന്ന മറ്റൊരു വെല്ലുവിളിയാണ്.

5. കുടുംബത്തിനുള്ളിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്കും, പെൺകുട്ടികൾക്കും എതിരായി നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന വിവേചനമാണു മറ്റൊരു പ്രശ്നം. പുരുഷമേധാവിത്വ ഘടനയിൽ രൂപപ്പെട്ട കുടുംബങ്ങളിൽ സ്വന്തം അധികാരവും പുരുഷന്മാരെ ക്രന്ദീകരിച്ചാണ് നിലകൊള്ളുന്നത്. അതിനുള്ളിൽ സ്ത്രീകളുടെയും പെൺകുട്ടികളുടെയും അവസ്ഥ പലപ്പോഴും പരിതാപകരമാണ്. സ്വന്തം സുരക്ഷിതത്വത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് സ്ത്രീകൾ ഉത്കണ്ഠാകുലരാണ്. പ്രത്യക്ഷവും പരോക്ഷവുമായ നിരവധി അതിക്രമങ്ങൾക്ക് അവർ ഒരേ സമയം വിധേയരായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്. സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് ഏറ്റവും സുരക്ഷിതമായ ഭവനത്തിനുള്ളിൽതന്നെ ഏറ്റവും കൂടുതൽ സ്ത്രീകൾ കൊലചെയ്യപ്പെടുന്നതും, മറ്റ് പീഡനങ്ങൾക്ക് ഇരയാകുന്നതും, വീടിനുള്ളിൽ വെച്ചാണ്. ഇതിന് സഹായകരമായ ബോധന പ്രക്രിയ കുടുംബത്തെ ക്രന്ദീകരിച്ചുണ്ടാകേണ്ടത് ഈ പ്രതിസന്ധിയെ അതിജീവിക്കാൻ ആവശ്യമാണ്.



6. പല കുടുംബങ്ങളും ഇന്ന് പരാജയത്തിന്റെ ചുഴിയിലാണ്, നിരന്തരം കലഹങ്ങൾ, ശാരീരികപീഡനങ്ങൾ എന്നിവമൂലം കുടുംബാന്തരീക്ഷം തീർത്തും താറുമാറാകുന്നു അതേ സമയം ഒരു കുരയ്ക്കുകീഴിൽ കഴിയുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നവർ നിരവധിയാണ്. മദ്യപാനത്തിനടിമപ്പെട്ട് സ്വന്തം ജീവിതവും, കുടുംബജീവിതവും താറുമാറാക്കിയവരുടെ എണ്ണവും കുറവല്ല. ഇത്തരം കുടുംബങ്ങളെല്ലാം ആരോഗ്യപരമായ ആത്മീയപരിപോഷണത്തിന് കെൽപ്പം നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടവരാണ്. എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണ് കലഹത്തിനും തകർച്ചയ്ക്കും കാരണമായിത്തീരുന്നത് എന്ന് നാം പരിശോധിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്

**1. ഭാവനയും യാഥാർത്ഥ്യവും തമ്മിൽ പൊരുത്തക്കേട് (Difference in fantasy and reality)**

സ്വന്തം കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ശൈശവപ്രായത്തിൽ ലഭിക്കുന്നതും പീന്നീട് മാതാപിതാക്കളിൽ നിന്നും, തന്നെ സ്വാധീനിച്ച ആളുകൾ, മാദ്ധ്യമങ്ങൾ മുതലായവയിൽ നിന്നും കണ്ടെത്തിയ ഗുണങ്ങൾ മനസ്സിൽ സൂക്ഷിച്ചാണ് ഒരു വ്യക്തി കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിൽ പ്രവേശിക്കുന്നത്. ഒരു പക്ഷേ താൻ പ്രവേശിച്ച കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിൽ പലതും ആദ്യമായി ശ്രദ്ധിക്കുന്നതും, ഇതുവരെ ലഭിക്കാത്തതുമായ കാര്യങ്ങൾ തനിക്ക് ആവശ്യമായി വന്നുചേരും ഈ വിധം യാഥാർത്ഥ്യവും ഭാവനയും തമ്മിൽ ഒരു പൊരുത്തക്കേട് അനുഭവപ്പെടാൻ തുടങ്ങും ഇവിടെ മാനസിക പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ ഉടലെടുക്കാൻ മതിയായ സാഹചര്യം ഒരുങ്ങുന്നു

**2 മാറിവരുന്ന സാംസ്കാരിക സാഹചര്യവും സ്ത്രീ പുരുഷ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വവും (The changing culture and roles of men and women)**

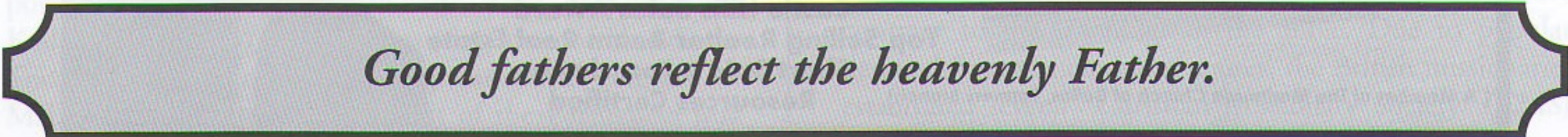
ഓരോ സംസ്കാരത്തിലും സ്ത്രീ, പുരുഷ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വത്തിന് പ്രത്യേക ശൈലികൾ രൂപപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. ആ കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ പുരുഷ മേധാവിത്വത്തിന്റെ ശൈലികൾ നിലനിന്നിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് സാമൂഹ്യനിലയിൽ വലിയ മാറ്റം വന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. സാമൂഹ്യ, സാംസ്കാരിക, ഭരണ മണ്ഡലങ്ങളിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് വ്യക്തമായ സ്വാധീനങ്ങൾ കൊടുക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുന്നു. ഒരു വീട്ടമ്മ എന്ന ഘടകത്തിൽനിന്ന് കുടുംബഭാരവും ഔദ്യോഗിക ജീവിതഭാരവും ഇന്ന് ഏറ്റെടുക്കേണ്ടി വരുന്നതിനാൽ കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ അകത്തളങ്ങളിൽ സംഘർഷങ്ങൾ പലപ്പോഴും ഉളവാകുന്നു. അവിടെ പുരുഷന്റെ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങൾ, പങ്കാളിത്തം, എന്നിവ ചർച്ചചെയ്യപ്പെടുകയും മനസ്സിലാക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടതും ആവശ്യമാണ്.

**3. ചില പഠനങ്ങൾ നൽകുന്ന വിവരങ്ങൾ** 1. ഏപ്പോഴും കലഹിച്ചുകഴിയുന്ന കുടുംബങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ട് (Conflict habituated) 2. സന്തോഷവും ശക്തിയും കൈമോശം വന്ന കുടുംബം (Devitalised marriage) 3. വൈകാരിക മരവിപ്പ് അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്ന കുടുംബം , ഒരു വീട്ടിൽ കഴിയുന്നു എങ്കിലും ദമ്പതികൾ അധികം സംസാരിക്കാറില്ല (Passive- Congenial family) 4. നല്ലത് എന്ന് തോന്നിക്കുന്ന വിധം ഉള്ളത് (The vital marriage) 5. എല്ലാം ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുകയും തമ്മിൽ മനസിലാക്കുകയും ആരോഗ്യമുള്ളതുമായ കുടുംബം (The total Marriage or Progressive Relationship)

**പ്രതിവിധികൾ**

കുടുംബ ശിഥിലീകരണം ഒഴിവാക്കപ്പെടണമെങ്കിൽ സംഘർഷാവസ്ഥകൾ മാറ്റപ്പെടുകയും സ്നേഹിക്കുകയും സ്നേഹിക്കപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുക എന്നതാണ്. കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിനു ദൃഢത നൽകുന്ന ഘടകങ്ങളെ മൂന്നായി തരം തിരിക്കാം.

1. കുടുംബത്തിനുള്ളിൽ - ആരോഗ്യകരമായ വീക്ഷണങ്ങളും യാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളുമായി ഇണങ്ങിപ്പോകാനുള്ള കഴിവുകളെ സമ്പാദിക്കുക. ഉറച്ച വ്യക്തിത്വവും വൈകാരിക പകരതയും വളർത്തിയെടുക്കുക
2. കുടുംബത്തിനു പുറത്ത് - കൗൺസിലിംഗ്, വ്യക്തിപരവും സംഘടിതപരവുമായ കൗൺസിലിംഗ് വിവാഹത്തിന് മുമ്പും, പിമ്പും കൊടുത്തുവരുന്ന പതിവ് വ്യാപകമാക്കുക. (Marriage encounter Programme, Marriage study programme, Parenting Class, Family therapy) എന്നിവ ഫലപ്രദമായി ക്രമീകരിക്കുക, അവയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുക.
3. ആത്മീയഘടകങ്ങൾ - ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുക, ആത്മീയ മൂല്യങ്ങൾ മുറുകെപിടിക്കുക, ഒന്നിച്ചുള്ള കുടുംബ പ്രാർത്ഥനകൾ ആരാധനകൾ ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുക, ക്രമമായി നടത്തിക്കൊണ്ടുപോകുക. കുടുംബ ധ്യാനയോഗങ്ങൾ, കുടുംബകുട്ടായ്മകൾ എന്നിവയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുക.





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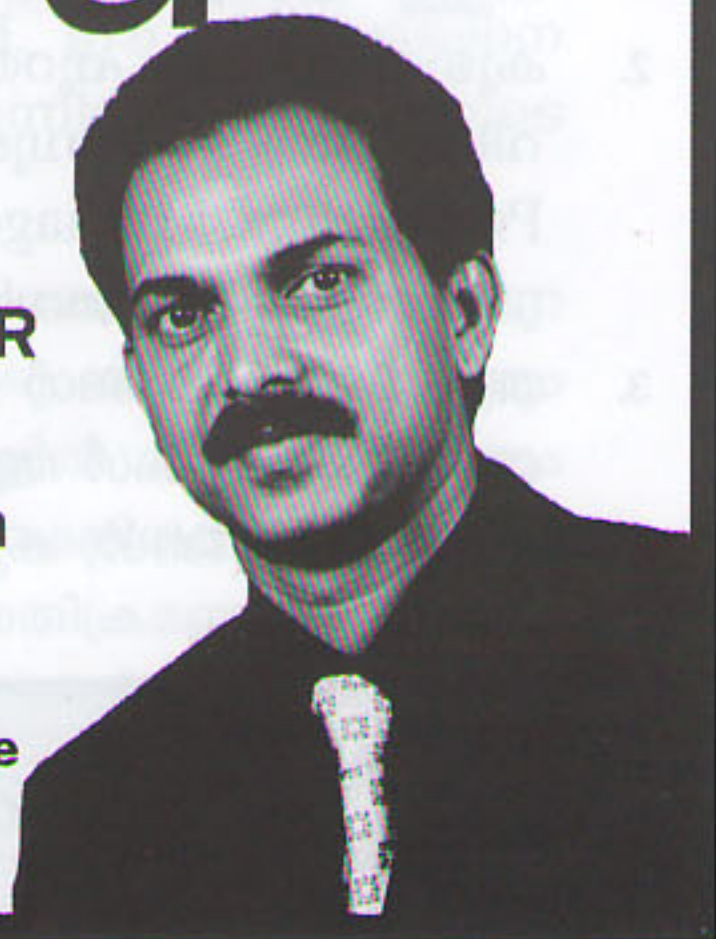


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( A Member of The Marthoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch)



# Christianity in Kerala and the Origin of Mar Thoma Church

## A Brief Retrospection

Thomas George, Othara

**T**radition says that St. Thomas landed in Malabar in 52 A.D. at a place called Maliankara which was later on commonly being used as Malankara—a prefix to a few church names. The word Malabar is a combination of the Malayalam word—“Malay” meaning mountains, and an Arabic word “bar” meaning land. This is the land mass between the Western Ghats of the Sahya Mountains on the east, and Arabian Sea on the west. This area also stretches from Mangalapuram (Mangalore) in the north to Kanyakumari (Cape Comerin) in the south. Thus, the two words, Malabar and Kerala are to be accepted as synonymous.

When St. Thomas arrived in Malabar, there existed already a Jewish spice-trading community. It is believed that St. Thomas first preached to this Jewish community and converted some of them. Subsequently, St. Thomas received his majority of converts from different Hindu communities such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nayars and Chetties. These converts were called Nazaranis which means the followers of the man from Nazareth—Jesus. It should be specially noted that these people were known as “Malankara Nazranis”, or “St. Thomas Christians” until the seventeenth century.

Unfortunately we do not have sufficient historical writings and reliable evidence about the existence of organized Christian communities in Malabar during the first millennium. However, one of the most reliable and undisputed evidence comes from the writings of the Venetian traveler Marco Polo who travelled through India to China in about A.D. 1295. He spoke about the Nestorian Christians of Malabar, and mentions the tradition that St. Thomas died in India in A.D. 73. He also mentioned that these people had their subsistence merely from forest resources.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were periods when the Pope sent several Roman Catholic missionaries to India and a few to the Malabar Coast. They were Franciscan and Dominican friars, monks, priests, and bishops. Europe was experiencing a new renaissance and reformation in the fifteenth century which was also the end of the middle ages.

In Malabar, a major event took place by the arrival of Portuguese sailor and conqueror, Vasco da Gama in Kozhikode in A.D. 1498. With this event commenced the European encroachment into India and particularly to Malabar. During the early sixteenth century, the Portuguese established their political and trade supremacy over the powerful Zamuthiri's of Kozhikode, Rajas of Kochi and Kodungalloor and to the various kingdoms of Venadu in Travancore State, encompassing the entire region of Malabar. The greatest achievement of the Portuguese was

the capture of Goa as their political, trade and ecclesiastical capital and centre of action. For Portuguese, the missionary activity was also a state enterprise. During the sixteenth century, the Roman Church was exceptionally efficient in maintaining their ecclesiastical hegemony over the Christians of Malabar. Although Latin was the ritualistic language, a few Roman and Portuguese missionaries learned Malayalam and Suriyani (Syriac) in order to communicate with the native Christians.

Another very significant event occurred by the arrival of Portuguese Archbishop Alexis de Menezes in 1592 in Malabar who held the famous Synod of Udayamperoor in 1599, a small village in the Cochin state. The pulse of the Synod was to convince the Malabar Christians that they should acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope as the supreme head of the Universal Church of Christ in Rome. Thus, there existed a Romo-Suriyani group of Christians who were loyal to Pope.

At this juncture, we need to realize that there was also in existence, perhaps for centuries, another Christian sect, who might have been known as Suriyani Christians of Malabar simply because their liturgy was in Syriac language. Since the seventeenth century, this group of people intermittently got their priests and bishops ordained and consecrated by various Patriarchs in Antioch, Syria. This paved a way for the Antiochan Jacobite Church to interfere in the affairs of the Malabar Christians which initially started in about A.D. 1650. As the time passed by, the amount of this interference became more aggressive, authoritarian, intolerable, and ugly as they wanted full ecclesiastical and administrative control over this Church. In short, the entire period of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century's were riddled with Schisms, cliques, manipulations, patriarchal bulls and sustained efforts by successive Antiochan Patriarchs and their deputies to maintain full control over these Christians whose combined body was known as Malankara Suriyani Church of Malabar.

With the arrival of British in India in the eighteenth century, there started a new beginning in the missionary movement as the English East India Company did not discourage such activities by the Anglican Church of England. Since the beginning of 1800 to 1850, several British missionaries came to Malabar to enlighten the native Christians. They pointed out various things which were contrary to the teachings in the Bible. Due to popular demand from the common masses, the British missionaries established several “Christian Missionary Society” (CMS)



churches between 1830 and 1880. Thus, by 1840 the Archbishop of Canterbury took the decision and brought the CMS Churches of Travancore and Kochi under the direct supervision of the Anglican bishop of Madras. This was the only Church in the history of Malabar where the largest number of non-Christian population was converted and brought under the enlightenment of the gospel. At first, these churches had the Holy Communion conducted under the old Suriyani order which was discontinued later on and substituted with the order of service according to the Book of Common Prayer. Thus, we now have a third church - the Church Missionary Society of Travancore and Kochi—that was also in existence in Malabar, which is today known as the **Church of South India** (CSI).

The first thunderous big bang of the Reformation had occurred among the Suriyani Christians of Malabar on Sunday August 31, 1836. It was on that day Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan (malpan means reverend teacher) celebrated Holy Qurbana in the Malayalam language in the Maramon Church. With this epoch-making event Abraham Malpan assisted by Kaithayil Geevarughese Malpan of Kottayam, challenged the supremacy and exclusive usage of the Syriac in the church liturgy. This was also the beginning of Malayalam language which was thus far neglected in the ecclesiastical realms of the Suriyani Church of Malabar. There were twelve priests who were ardent supporters of Abraham Malpan in this spiritual awakening. As one body, they submitted a petition to the British Administrator of the State of Travancore against the presiding Metropolitan Cheppattu Mar Dionysius IV. That petition listed twenty-three points regarding some of the church practices that were abhorrent to them. Four leading items were as follows:

First of all, there was no special language for God and as such, the people's language of Malayalam should be used for all religious rituals. Secondly, they wanted redemption from all vain external ritualistic practices. In order to assert this point, Abraham Malpan did a very daring thing in his own church. He threw away into the Maramon Church well a wooden statue of a saint called "Muttappan" to whom people prayed on a certain perunnal-birth anniversary. This incident had aggravated and infuriated the people but the practice of carrying this statue ceremoniously around the Maramon church was stopped forever. Thirdly, the petition asserted that there was no need for a mediator between God and man, thus making the part of priest as an intermediary was made irrelevant. Fourthly, they wanted people to realize the folly of obtaining salvation through prayer after death.

The Metropolitan Cheppattu Mar Dionysius IV, also made a complaint against Abraham Malpan. As a result, the State government of Travancore imprisoned Malpan in 1837 for creating disunity and unrest in the Christian community.

Abraham Malpan did not want to abandon the mother church but to preserve the apostolic succession of the priesthood. It was alleged that Abraham Malpan himself was a disillusioned man at this time since he took a second ordination as a priest from an Antiochan bishop in order to refute the criticism that his own first ordination was not done according to apostolic tradition. Thus he sent his brother Thomas Malpan's son, one Mathews who was a student at the Madras Christian College, to Antioch. The Patriarch of Antioch ordained him as **Mathews Mar Athanasius** and sent him back with a patriarchal bull appointing him as the Metropolitan of Malankara Suriyani Church of Malabar. Thus, we have the first Metropolitan from the Palakunnathu family. Abraham Malpan, the Father of Reformation, passed away in 1845 at the age of 49, followed by Dionysius IV in 1855.

A large majority of the people at that time were afraid of the influence of Reformation especially because of the activities of Metropolitan Mathews Mar Athanasius. So in 1865, these people elected Pulikoottil Joseph and got him ordained by an Antiochan Patriarch as Metropolitan Joseph Mar Dionysius V. Another significant setback happened to the reform movement. The Devan of Travancore State government made a proclamation in 1863 that all those who oppose the supremacy of the Antiochan Patriarch can separate from the mother church and establish their own churches. There were thirteen parishes under that category during the period of 1850- 1865. The paramount question that faced the reformists was this: who were the people that had allegiance to the Patriarch and who were the ones that were opposed to that concept?

In the meantime, Mathews Mar Athanasius consecrated his cousin, Abraham Malpan's second son, in 1868 as **Thomas Mar Athanasius**. Now we have the second Metropolitan from the Palakunnathu family. At this ceremony, another milestone had happened. Metropolitan Mar Koorilos of the Malabar Independent Suriyani Church of Thozhiyoor also took part, with which a firm bond was established, which still remains as a very coveted relationship between these two churches of Kerala.

The next few years witnessed ugly skirmishes between these two Metropolitans. In 1875, Mathews Mar Athanasius was excommunicated by Patriarch Peter III who was in Malabar at that time. Before his departure, the Patriarch held a Synod at Mulanthurithy in 1876 at which Pulikoottil Joseph Mar Dionysius V was declared as the senior Metropolitan of the Church. Mathews Mar Athanasius passed away in 1877.

During that particular period of time, the notorious "Vattipanom" litigation was going on which originally started in 1840. The entire church hierarchy was wholly involved in that shameful episode. The final verdict came down in 1889 which was against Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasius. Thus, in 1889, the group of people who



were known as reformist believers established a new church called **Malankara Mar Thoma Suriyani Church**. These reformers walked out of the mother church with a heavy heart and with the enlightenment which they received from an open Bible. The Anglican Bishop Stephen Niel wrote about the formation of this new church in these words: "A church deeply rooted in principles in spite of the loss of worldly possessions". The party of Dionysus V called itself as Malankara Jacobite Suriyani Church which today is known as **Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church**.

Mar Dionysus V passed away in 1885 and Thomas Mar Athansius in 1893, the latter without leaving a successor. However, the new Mar Thoma Church followers gathered together at Niranom Puthen Palli and elected Abraham Malpan's fourth son and consecrated him as Titus I in 1893 by the head of Thozhiyoor Church. Subsequently, Titus I ordained his cousin in 1910 as Titus II as his successor. Once again, the new church had the third and fourth metropolitan from the Palakunnathu family. Both these servants of God passed away in 1911 and 1944 respectively.

During the first six active decades of the existence of Mar Thoma Church, she had undertaken innumerable noteworthy ventures which are too many to list here. A special mention must be made about the formation of Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association in 1890, and the commencement of Maramon Convention in 1896. If we could characterize the first six decades as a period of arithmetic progression for the Church in Malabar, the second six decades saw a geometric progression in all realms of church ministry not only in India, but also in four corners of the world. The Church was blessed with eminent and venerable Metropolitans during the past six decades in the persons of Abraham Mar Thoma, Juhanon Mar Thoma, Alexander Mar Thoma and Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma successively. At the present time, the Church is privileged to have **Joseph Mar Irenaeus** as its head, and as the fifth

Metropolitan from the blessed and celebrated Palakunnathu family of Maramon. This article will be seriously amiss if it did not say a word about our current Metropolitan.

Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan was born on June 27, 1931. He had his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Bangalore United Theological College and was ordained as Reverend P. T. Joseph in October 1956. Rev. Joseph had his higher studies predominantly from Virginia Seminary, U.S.A., which Alma Mater later on conferred upon him the Doctor of Divinity degree.

Besides these, he also took further biblical studies from Oxford University. In 1975, he was consecrated as a bishop, and in 1995, elevated to the position of Suffragan Metropolitan. On October 2, 2007, he was elevated again to the current coveted position as the chief steward of the Church.

Dr. Stanley Jones said: "You can do little things in a great way and you can do great things in a little way". Irenaeus Thirumeni is a person who accomplished both equally in a magnanimous fashion. Dr. William Carey said: "Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God". How true this profound statement was about Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan.

By birth, first of all, he was a man with an envious and prolonged family background.

Secondly, he was endowed and blessed with rich tradition. His administrative ability and efficiency excels and challenges others. He stands very tall in achieving and completing so many worthy and monumental infrastructure projects. As the Church is commemorating the 175th anniversary of the Reformation Movement, and our Metropolitan is celebrating his 80th birthday, both in 2011, let the living Lord bring it to fruition His plan and purpose for His bride in this new century. ■

The author is a retired civil servant who now lives in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and a member of the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton.

## MAR THOMA CHURCH OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



**WORLD DAY PRAYER:** The World Day of Prayer was celebrated at a combined gathering of the Sevika Sanghom and the Edavaka Mission on April 2, 2011. Rev. Varghese Ninan chaired the meeting. Sevika Sanghom members led

the special order of worship. Mrs. Alice Mathew introduced the theme and explained the significance of observing the World Day of Prayer and a brief introduction about the nation of Chile.

In her message based on Mark 6: 38, she focused on the following points:

1. Take responsibility instead of running away from responsibility.
2. God is calling us to the ministry of service to others.
3. God will bless us when we offer our service to others.

Rev. Varghese Ninan in his message reminded everybody the responsibility of sharing their talents and blessings with others. Lunch was served to all participants.

**Alice K. Mathew, Sevika Sanghom Secretary**



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# കുടുംബം - അതിജീവനത്തിന്റെ ആഘോഷം

Rev. K. Thomas, Director and Counselor, Mar Thoma Counseling Centre, Thiruvalla

വേദഭാഗം - രൂത്ത് 1:19-22

ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ദൗർഭാഗ്യങ്ങളിലൂടെ യാത്ര ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു കുടുംബത്തെ അവതരിപ്പിച്ചുകൊണ്ടാണ് രൂത്തിന്റെ പുസ്തകം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത് എങ്കിലും "ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ നദി നിറഞ്ഞ് കവിഞ്ഞ് ഒഴുകി തീരങ്ങളെ നനയ്ക്കുന്ന കാഴ്ചയാണ് നാം പിന്നീട് കാണുന്നത്. 'സ്നേഹം' എന്ന ദൈവീകഭാവത്തെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഉപമയാണ് രൂത്തിന്റെ പുസ്തകം. "ജീവിതത്വയുടെ കൗദാശികതയാണ്" രൂത്തിന്റെ പ്രതിപാദ്യം. ജീവനെ നിഷേധിക്കുന്നിടത്ത് അതിജീവനത്തിന്റെ ആഘോഷമാണ് രൂത്തിന്റെ പുസ്തകത്തെ വ്യത്യസ്തമാക്കുന്നത്. അപ്പത്തിന്റെ ഭവനമായ ബേത്ലഹേമിൽ ക്ഷാമമുണ്ടായപ്പോൾ എലിമലേക്കും കുടുംബവും മോവാബിലേക്ക് പലായനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. മോവാബും അവരുടെ ദേവനായ കെമോശും യഹോവയുടെ അപ്രീതിക്ക് പാത്രീഭവിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള വിവരം അവർക്ക് നേരത്തെ തന്നെ അറിയാമായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ കയ്പേറിയ ദുരന്തങ്ങൾ നേരിടേണ്ടി വരുമ്പോഴാണ് തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിന്റെ നന്മതിന്മകളെ അവർ തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നത്. മടക്കയാത്രയുടെ മഹത്വം തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് ദൈവീക തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പുകളിലൂടെ മുന്നേറുന്ന ഒരു കുടുംബത്തെയാണ് നാം പിന്നീട് കാണുന്നത്. എങ്ങനെയാണിത് ആ യാത്രയുടെ മുന്നേറ്റം.

**1. കലവറകളെ അന്വേഷിച്ചു - കല്ലറകൾ പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെട്ടു.**

ധാന്യക്കലവറകളിൽ ആകൃഷ്ടരായി, ജീവന്റെ നിലനില്പിനായി അഭയം ചൊല്ലിയ മോവാബ് അവർക്ക് മരണത്തിന്റെ നാടാകുന്നു. ഇതാ മൂന്ന് കല്ലറകൾ - ഏലീമലേക്കിന്റേയും, മഹ്ലോന്റേയും, കില്ലോന്റേയും. കല്ലറ - എന്ന വാക്കിന് 'വഴിയില്ല' (No exit) എന്നാണർത്ഥം. കല്ലറയിൽ വഴികൾ അവസാനിക്കുന്നു. ജീവന്റെ അവസാനത്തെ കണികയും നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഇടമാണ് കല്ലറ. ജീവിക്കുവാനുള്ള എല്ലാ പ്രതീക്ഷകളും കൈവിടുന്ന ഇടമാണ് കല്ലറ. 'ഇനി അപ്പുറത്തേക്കില്ല' എന്ന് എഴുതിവെച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു കല്ലറയിൽ. കല്ലറ നവോമിക്ക് ഒരു പുതിയ പേര് നൽകുന്നു. "കയ്പ് - മാറാ". നിലയില്ലാത്ത ദുരന്തങ്ങൾ ഏറ്റുവാങ്ങിയ ജീവിതത്തിന് 'സന്തോഷം' - എന്നർത്ഥമുള്ള പേര് യുക്തമല്ല. ഈ പേരുമാറ്റം സ്വാഭാവികമായി ജീവന്റെ കുറവു ചെയ്യലല്ല, സ്വയം നിർവ്വചനത്തിന്റെ തിരുത്തലാണ്. വിശ്വാസ ജീവിതയാത്രയിലെ നിർവ്വചന നിമിഷങ്ങൾ. (The defining moments in our faith journey.) - "എന്നെ മാറാ എന്ന് വിളിപ്പിൻ". ഏകാന്തതയാണ് നവോമിയുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിൽകൂടി കടക്കുന്ന വാൾ. വൈധവ്യത്തിന്റേയും, അനാഥത്വത്തിന്റേയും 'കയ്പ്' ഏറുന്ന 'മാറാ'. കലവറകൾക്കുമുന്നിൽ പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെടുന്ന കല്ലറകൾ നമ്മുടെ യാത്രകൾ അവസാനിക്കുന്നിടമായി മാറുമോ?

ഇന്ന് കല്ലറകൾ ഭവനത്തിന് പുറത്തല്ല ഉള്ളിലാണ്. അത് വ്യക്തികളുടെ മരണം മൂലമല്ല സംഭവിക്കുന്നത് മറിച്ച് വികാരങ്ങൾ മരിക്കുന്നതു മൂലമാണ്. [Emotional Deadness]. പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാത്ത വികാരങ്ങൾ കുടുംബത്തിൽ പ്രതിസന്ധി സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. വ്യക്തികളുടെയും അവർ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കുന്ന വികാരങ്ങളേയും ഒഴിവാക്കുമ്പോൾ (alienation) കുടുംബം പ്രശ്നബാധിതമാകുന്നു. ചിലഭവനങ്ങളിൽ വികാരങ്ങൾ വളരെ പരിമിതമായി മാത്രം പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കുകയും (Lower level of emotion), അതു പോലും ശരിയല്ലെന്നും പഠിപ്പിക്കാറുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ ഭവനം അംഗങ്ങളുടെ വികാരങ്ങളെ മാനിക്കുന്ന (Respect the feelings) ഇടമായി രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടേണ്ടതാണ്. എല്ലാ വിധ വികാരങ്ങളേയും, മോശമെന്ന് നാം കരുതുന്ന വികാരങ്ങളും (Negative feelings) പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാനുള്ള അനുവാദം ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കണം. അപ്പോൾ മാത്രമേ വികാരങ്ങൾ തിരിച്ചറിവോടെ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാൻ കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങൾ പഠിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. ഇവിടെ നവോമി സന്തോഷം മാത്രമല്ല, കയ്പും ശരിയായ വികാരമായി ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുകയും, അത് അർത്ഥപൂർണ്ണമായി ഏറ്റെടുക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. പരസ്പരം കുറ്റപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനോ (blaming) സ്വയം സഹതപിക്കുന്നതിനോ, (self-pitiying), പിൻമാറുന്നതിനോ, (withdrawal) സ്വയം ഇല്ലായ്മചെയ്യുന്നതിനോ, (suicide) പരിശ്രമിക്കുന്നില്ല. മറിച്ച് എന്റെ യജമാനൻ ജീവിതാനുഭവങ്ങളെ പുനർ നിർവ്വചിക്കുന്നവനാണ് (My Master Re - defines) എന്ന തിരിച്ചറിവിലേക്ക് അവൾ പ്രവേശിക്കുകയാണ്.



നവോമി ഈ തിക്തമായ അനുഭവങ്ങളെ നേരിട്ടതെങ്ങനെ?

അവൾ പറയുന്നു. “എന്റെ കർത്താവാണ് എന്നെ ശൂന്യമാക്കി മടക്കി അയച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. എന്റെ സർവ്വശക്തൻ എന്നോട് ഏറ്റവും കൈപ്പായുള്ളത് പ്രവർത്തിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. അവനാണ് എന്നെ കഷ്ടതയിലൂടെ കടന്നുപോകാൻ അനുവദിച്ചത്.(Ch: 1:20) ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ കുരിശുൾ താഴ്വര കളിലേക്ക് എന്നെ കർത്താവ് അയയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ - എന്നെ അതിനായി അവൻ ഒരുക്കി അയയ്ക്കുന്നു.(God by his grace prepare us for all such changes especially the great change). കഷ്ടതയുടെ നടുവിൽ കർത്താവിന്റെ കരമല്ലാതെ ദൈവപൈതലിനെ ആശ്വസിപ്പിക്കാൻ മറ്റൊന്നില്ല.(Nothing contributes to satisfy a gracious soul in the affliction than the consideration of the hand of God in it) നിന്നെ ശൂന്യമാക്കുന്നവൻ നിന്നെ നിറയ്ക്കാനും കഴിവുള്ളവൻ. എന്റെ ശൂന്യതകളെ നിറയ്ക്കുന്നവൻ - സർവ്വശക്തൻ. നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതയാത്രകളിൽ നവോമിയെപ്പോലെ പ്രവാസത്തിന്റെ ദുരന്തങ്ങൾ പേറിയവരാണ് നാം. പകർച്ചവ്യാധികൾ, പ്രകൃതിയുടെ ദുരന്തങ്ങൾ, പെട്ടെന്നുള്ള മരണം. എന്റെ ജീവിതയാത്രകൾ അവസാനിപ്പിക്കേണ്ടിവരുന്നതിങ്ങനെയോ? “ഭൂമി നമുക്ക് കൈപ്പായുള്ളത് തന്നെക്കാം എന്നാൽ സ്വർഗ്ഗം നമുക്ക് വളരെ സമീപസ്ഥമാണ്”.(Earth is embitterd to us that Heaven may be endeard.) കല്ലറകളെ രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ ഭവനമാക്കി മാറ്റിയവൻ നമ്മോടുകൂടെയുണ്ട്.

**2. മടക്കയാത്രകൾ - ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ തിരിച്ചറിവ്**

ഇടറിപ്പോകാവുന്ന ചുവടുവയ്പിലൂടെ നവോമിയും രുത്തും ബേൽഹേമിലേക്ക് മടങ്ങുന്നു. സ്വന്തം ദേശമായ മോവാബ് രുത്തിന് തിക്താനുഭവങ്ങളെയാണ് പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ നവോമി എന്ന വ്യഭയവും, വിധവയുമായവളോടൊപ്പം ബേൽഹേമിലേക്ക് മടങ്ങുവാൻ തീരുമാനിക്കുമ്പോൾ - ആ തീരുമാനം അങ്ങേയറ്റം ത്യാഗനിർഭരമാണ്.

**എന്തുകൊണ്ട്?**

അവൾ - തന്റെ ദേശത്തേയും, മാതൃഭവനത്തേയും, ജീവിതസുരക്ഷയുടെ സാധ്യതയേയും ത്യജിക്കുന്നു. മാത്രവുമല്ല യൗവ്വനത്തിന്റെ അഭിലാഷങ്ങളേയും. “ഭക്ഷണത്തിനും, കിടപ്പാടത്തിനും മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ ഔദാര്യങ്ങളെ ആശ്രയിക്കേണ്ടവളാണ് വിധവ.” ഒന്നും പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കാനില്ല. - എങ്കിലും ബലഹീനനായവളോട് ചേർന്ന് നിൽക്കാൻ തീരുമാനിക്കുന്ന രുത്ത് - ബന്ധങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു പുതിയ ഭാഷ്യം നൽകുന്നു. അവൾ ബന്ധങ്ങളെ ആഘോഷമാക്കി തീർക്കുകയാണ്. (Celebration of relationship) രുത്ത് വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ അഞ്ച് കൽപ്പനകൾ (Five commandments in a relationship)

**1. നീ പോകുന്നിടത്ത് ഞാനും പോകും.**

ഞാൻ കണ്ടിട്ടില്ലാത്ത ദേശമാണ് എന്റെ ദേശത്തിൽനിന്ന് വ്യത്യസ്തമാണ്. എന്നാൽ ‘നിന്നോടൊപ്പം യാത്ര ചെയ്യുന്ന വഴികളെല്ലാം സന്തോഷമുള്ള വഴികളായിരിക്കും.(With you every road shall be pleasant.) നടന്ന വഴികൾ എന്നെ മടുപ്പിച്ചില്ല, തകർത്തുകളഞ്ഞില്ല, സന്തോഷത്തിന്റെ നാഥൻ നിന്നോടുകൂടെയുണ്ട് എന്ന് ഞാൻ തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നു.

**2. നീ പാർക്കുന്നിടത്ത് ഞാനും പാർക്കും.**

നിന്റെ ഭവനത്തിന്റെ രൂപവും ഭാവവും ഒന്നും നിശ്ചയമില്ല. ഒന്നെന്നിക്കറിയാം. യാക്കോബ് ബഥേലിൽ കല്ല് തലയണയായി വച്ച് ഉറങ്ങിയ ഇടത്തേക്കാൾ മെച്ചമായിരിക്കയില്ല. മറിയയ്ക്ക് ബേൽഹേമിൽ ലഭിച്ചതിനേക്കാൾ മെച്ചമായിരിക്കയില്ല (കാലിത്തൊഴുത്ത്) എന്നാൽ ഭവനത്തിന്റെ മഹത്വം വലിപ്പത്തേക്കാൾ, അതിന്റെ രമ്യതയിലാണ്.

**3. നിന്റെ ജനം എന്റെ ജനം**

നിന്റെ ജീവിതശൈലിയിലൂടെ അവരെയും ഞാൻ ഗ്രഹിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. (I understand your faith community). നവോമിയുടെ വിശ്വാസംമൂലം രുത്ത് ആ സമൂഹത്തെ മുഴുവൻ ആദരവോടെ കാണുന്നതിനും, അവരുടെ വിശ്വാസത്തിൽ മഹത്വം ദർശിക്കുന്നതിനും സാധിച്ചു.

**4. നിന്റെ ദൈവം എന്റെ ദൈവം:**

ആ യാഗപീഠത്തിലേക്ക് ഞാൻ അടുത്തുവരുന്നു. (I am coming to the very altars which strengthened you in the midst of these struggles.) നിന്നെ കരുതിയ, കണ്ണുനീർ തുടച്ച നീ കണ്ടെത്തിയ ദൈവം - എന്റെയും ദൈവം.



നവോദയം രൂത്തം യോജിപ്പിക്കപ്പെട്ട ആത്മാക്കൾ. അവൾ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. ഈ മൺകൂടാരം പൊടിയായി തീരും. അത് പ്രത്യാശയിൽ ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽക്കും. വരുവാനുള്ളതിലും ഒരുമിച്ച് കാണപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യും.

ഭവനം - അതിലെ അംഗങ്ങളുടെ പരസ്പര സമർപ്പണത്തിലാണ് കെട്ടുപണി ചെയ്യപ്പെടുന്നത്. (commitment to each other). ഇന്ന് ബന്ധത്തിന്റെ ശക്തികുറയുന്നു. തള്ളിപ്പറയലിന്റെയും, ഉപേക്ഷണ പത്രത്തിന്റേയും ഇടമായി ഭവനം മാറുന്നു. മാതാപിതാക്കൾ ഭാരമായിത്തീരുന്ന കാലം. ഭവനം- അന്യോന്യ മുള്ള കല്പനകൾ പാലിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ട ഇടമാണ് (Inter - personal Commandments) ഭാര്യാഭർത്താക്കൻമാർ തമ്മിലുള്ള വിശ്വസ്തത (Faithfulness), മാതൃകകൾ (modelling), മക്കൾക്ക് മാതാപിതാക്കളോടുള്ള വിധേയത്വം അനുസരണവും (Obedience) എഴുതപ്പെടാത്ത കല്പനകളാണ്. ഭവനത്തിന്റെ ഉയർച്ചതാഴ്ചകളിൽ ഒരുമിച്ച് മുന്നേറുവാൻ, വ്യവസ്ഥയില്ലാത്ത സ്നേഹത്താൽ അന്യോന്യം സ്വീകരിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുമ്പോൾ, ഭവനത്തിന് ഒരുമിച്ച് വളരുവാൻ കഴിയും.

**3. മടങ്ങിവരുന്നവർക്ക് - ദൈവകൃപയുടെ കൊയ്ത്തുകാലം.**

കല്ലറകളിൽ ആരംഭിച്ച്, വിശ്വാസയാത്രയിൽ പുരോഗമിച്ച് കൊയ്ത്ത് കാലത്തിന്റെ സന്തോഷത്തിലേക്ക് യഹോവ ആ ഭവനത്തെ മടക്കിക്കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നു. കാലാപെറുക്കിലൂടെ ആ ജീവിതം ബേൽലഹേമിൽ പുനരാരംഭിക്കുകയാണ്. കലവറകൾ നിറയപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

എന്നാൽ

കളപ്പുരകളെ നിറയ്ക്കുന്ന സന്തോഷമല്ല പിന്നെയോ നിന്റെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പാണ് യഹോവയുടെ സന്തോഷം. (The purpose of God is not simple retention. but redemption.) ധന്യവും വീണ്ടും വർദ്ധിച്ചപ്പോൾ അവർക്കുണ്ടായതിലും അധികം സന്തോഷം നീ എന്റെ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

എന്താണ് ആ ഭവനത്തിന് നൽകിയ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പ്.

**രൂത്ത് നൽകുന്ന വെളിപ്പെടുത്തലുകൾ**

1. നിരന്തരമായ ദൈവീകകാരുണ്യം (steadfast love എന്റെ ശൂന്യതകളെ പ്രത്യാശയുടെ മുഖാന്തരങ്ങളാക്കി മാറ്റി. (God transformed my misfortunes as Occasions for Hope) മരണത്തിന്മേലും ജീവന്റെമേലും അധികാരമുള്ളവന്റെ കരങ്ങളിൽ ജീവനർപ്പിച്ച് ഉറപ്പുനേടി. (കല്ലറകളിൽ നിന്ന് കലവറയിലേക്ക്)
2. ദൈവകൃപ മാത്രമാണ് എന്നെ കൃപയുടെ ദാസിയാക്കി തീർത്തു. (servant of grace). ദൈവകൃപയുടെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പുകളെ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞു. (മോവാബ്യസ്ത്രീ യഹോവയുടെ ദാസി)
3. ദൈവകൃപ - ഏറ്റവും ബലഹീനമായ എന്നെപ്പോലും അവന്റെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ ഉപകരണമാക്കി.

(The instrument of redemption.) (രൂത്തിനെ മ്ശിഹായുടെ അമ്മമാരിൽ ഒരാളായി ഓർക്കപ്പെടും) ഒബേദ്- ദൈവജനത്തിന്റെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിനായി ജഡം ധരിച്ചവൻ.. (Obad - "Redemption incarnate for the people of God") മശിഹായുടെ വംശാവലിയിൽ പങ്ക് ചേർത്തതിലൂടെ യിസ്രായേലു കൂടുംബങ്ങളിൽവെച്ച് ഉന്നതവും മാനുവുമായ നിലയിലേക്ക് ആ കുടുംബത്തെ യഹോവ ഉയർത്തി. കല്ലറകളിൽനിന്ന് - കാലാ പെറുക്കുന്ന അപ്പത്തിന്റെ തൃപ്തിയിലേക്ക് മാത്രമല്ല കർത്താവ് നിന്നെ നയിക്കുന്നത്. ഒരു കൊയ്ത്തുകാലം ഒരുക്കി നിന്നെ സന്തോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നവൻ മാത്രമല്ല, നിനക്കൊരു വീണ്ടെടുപ്പുണ്ട്. നീ അനേകരുടെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന് കരം കൊടുക്കുവാൻ വിളിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. "കാലാപെറുക്കുന്നവൻ കർത്താവിന്റെ ദാസി" പഴയനിയമത്തിലെ 'മറിയ' എന്ന് രൂത്തിനെ നമുക്ക് വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കാം. പരീക്ഷകൾ, ശോധനകൾ ഉണ്ട്. തിരിച്ചറിയുക, മടങ്ങിവരുക. ദൈവകൃപയുടെ തണലുകളിൽ ആശ്രയിക്കുക. കൃപയുടെ ഉപകരണങ്ങളായി വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷയിൽ നമുക്കും പങ്കുചേരാം.

നമ്മോടുചേർന്ന് യാത്രചെയ്യുന്നവരുടെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിനായി പ്രയത്നിക്കുവാൻ കർത്താവ് നൽകിയ നിയോഗം നമുക്ക് ഏറ്റുവാങ്ങാം. ക്രിസ്തീയഭവനം വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ ശുശ്രൂഷകൾ നിർവ്വഹിക്കുന്ന ഇടമാണ് (Space for the redemptive ministry) നമ്മോട് ചേർന്ന് യാത്രചെയ്യുന്നവരുടെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിനായി പ്രയത്നിക്കുവാൻ നിയോഗിതരാണ് നാം. കർത്താവേ എന്നെയും നിന്റെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ പദ്ധതിയിൽ ഒരു ഉപകരണമായി തീർക്കേണമെ.- ആമേൻ





# The Key to Knowledge

Isaac George, St. John's MTC, London

One always wonders whether the Bible is relevant in our daily life. I was reading the Gospel of Mark 5 the other day and verses 1 to 20 makes very interesting reading. It's about the man possessed by evil spirits in the region of Gerasenes. May I encourage you to read it and I would like to share 3 verses from that passage which I believe bears relevance to us in our daily life.

In verses 6 and 7, the possessed man's reaction is fascinating. He sees Jesus from a distance runs towards Him and falls on his knees before Jesus. He then asks Jesus the strangest question. What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I find this strange because the running towards and prostration is the action of a man who wants to be healed but the question raised is aggressive and impolite. What one realises when reading the passage is from the depths of his heart, the man recognises Jesus and with his freewill makes him run towards Jesus to be healed. The evil spirits who possessed the man, controlled his physical faculties, including speech but could not overcome his freewill to thwart the man's run to Jesus. The man recognised God and so did the evil spirits.

The man was healed but verse 17 illustrates a remarkable twist of circumstances. Here was a man possessed by spirits, whom the people of the Decapolis left alone in the graveyard, tried to tie up with chains and failed often, who cried out night and day. In short, he was a nuisance and an outcast. And when he was healed, instead of rejoicing, in verse 17—the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. Now why in the whole world would anyone in their sane mind ask someone who has healed one of their own, and took away the nuisance factor—plead with that person to leave? The same thing happens in Exodus, when the people tell Moses, you deal with God. We do not want to hear Him, He scares us. You know why? Holiness exposes the darkness and they felt the discomfort of the presence of Holiness.

The man now wants to leave with Jesus. And verse 19 is Jesus' response to the man—Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you. In the darkness of the Decapolis, one healed man is asked to be a light to his family but see what the man does. He tells everyone in the Decapolis what Jesus did for him.

One of Jesus' statements to the teachers of the law in Luke hits home hard—Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.

Jesus talking to each of us as Christians. What Jesus was plainly saying is this—When you read the word don't just read the text, understand what lies behind the text. So, for example when the Pharisees are appalled that as a Rabbi Jesus did not wash His hands before sitting down to eat, Jesus answers their question with "don't you think that the creator who made the outside also made the inside and don't you think the inside is much more important?" Or when He explains about

adultery and says it is not just the physical act but even the lust that brews in one's mind which is an act of adultery.

When the law says do not covet—it means do not even think about it. So, for example when we say I wish I had that car my neighbour has or I wish I had a larger house, what we are essentially telling God implicitly is—I am not happy with what I have and you are not giving me what I need. For those of us who are parents, can we hear our children asking for things and can we listen to our answers to them? Relate to that. There is a difference between—do I want it or do I need it!!

The Word is Truth and the Truth shall set us truly free. We need to read the Word and understand what lies behind the written word. Jesus says this is in John 17: Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. The Lord is with us when we recognise Him and run to the Word.

When Jesus gave the command to the healed man to stay behind, He was only being consistent with the laws set out by Him for all mankind. He wanted the man to continue to love God and more importantly to extend that love to all his neighbours. In John 15, this is made clear by Jesus: "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

The Word, the Law is the ultimate understanding, the ultimate knowledge—the knowledge of God. Everything is answered in the Word. That is why in the lessons of life we learn from the world, it comes to our acceptance that the Bible is the true Word of God and in it lies the key to knowledge and into this knowledge, as Christians, we are expected to enter and share, not hinder!

The learning from the story of the demon possessed man is this:

- However dark our hearts are, however deep we are in situations we think we cannot come out of, God always allows Himself to be seen. We need to recognise Him and run towards Him. He looks into our hearts and not what keeps us away from Him —He will heal us.
- We must be careful not to shut the door on Christ in fear—unlike the citizens of Decapolis who chased Him out. Our Lord is non-invasive and does not force Himself on us. His humility is demonstrated and our free will is not violated because He says—Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. But if we ask Him to leave as the citizens of Decapolis did, He will because He will not violate our freewill.
- The healed man now requests Jesus if he can leave to tell his family. Jesus commands Him to stay and be the light for the people in darkness, for the people who do not believe.

Unless we allow the Holy Spirit to act and we open our hearts to read and listen to God's Word, we cannot recognise Jesus and make the word relevant in our daily life! ■



# On Equal Footing

Rev. Thomas George, Kuala Lumpur

In a multi-religious country, people can be strong observers of their own faith without putting someone else's down.

In athletics, all runners start from the same point. No one starts first because they consider themselves better than the other. It is only at the end of the race that we find out who the best runner is. This is also the case with religion. We all begin the race—our faith journey—on an equal footing the moment we are born. We are each only one participant among numerous participants on our journey of life which starts from the womb and ends in the tomb. The journey is not over until our death and the judge is God. Therefore, we need to be much more subtle in our evaluation of religions. If anyone sees the concept of religious pluralism as a threat to the supremacy of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism or any other religion and fear that it would result in a religion being equated with other beliefs, then he or she is wrong.

Religious pluralism is not about the superiority or inferiority of any religion; it is about active engagement with diversity. Even if one claims to be superior, such claims will have no standing outside one's own faith circle. Religious pluralism is the view that all religions are equally valid. Thus, no one religion is inherently better or superior to any other religion unlike "exclusivism" (where one religion is supremely true and all other religions are false) and "inclusivism" (where followers "tolerate" the other religion on the assumption that everyone is saved by the religion of the inclusivist). History proves that religions are not necessarily affirming. At times, they can be destructive, oppressive, discriminative, and gender and racially biased as we see in our world today. Hence, religions not only can ennoble and value humanity, they can also shame, degrade, devalue and trample it. So, on what basis can we call a religion superior, when all religions and those who propagate it are in constant need of transformation and reformation? How can we say we are better than the other? Even religions that claim to be "true" are often distorted when it comes to real-life situations and actions. In that sense, no religion can claim to be "true" because many times our acts disprove our faith. "True" religion becomes "false" many times. Many incidents in our own society and our personal experience prove this fact. If any religion claims that it is not on an equal footing with another religion because it considers itself more superior, it provokes the question of "who is who to judge the other". We cannot be participants and judges at the same time. If we judge, that amounts to blasphemy because we are taking on the role of God.

All religions are human constructs that originated in particular socio-religio-political contexts. They are only meant to serve God and revolve around God. This is best illustrated by John Hick, a theologian, in the well-known parable of the blind men and the elephant, according to which each of a number of blind men holding different parts of the same elephant believes he is holding a different

object from the other and each describes his part as if it were the whole. The same goes for religion. The Christian believes he has the whole truth, likewise the Muslim, the Buddhist, the Hindu and so on. Yet, each in fact perceives only a part of the divine object which reveals Himself equally to all of them. This also means that we are incapable of keeping any particular religion, be it Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism at the centre of world religions and demand that everyone else revolve around our religion. Instead, we should keep God at the centre. From this perspective, the problem of religious pluralism is the problem of how to "think" about the "other". It is not only the issue of how members of one religious tradition are to think about the members of another tradition, but of how to think about the 'other', both inside (intra religious) and outside of one's own tradition (inter religious). We err when we take one approach within our religious circle to please one group and then take another stand outside our religious circle to please another group. Such a stand will not achieve the purpose of understanding the "other". This means that there must be coherence of thought, dialogue and action both within and outside. One has to commit to "pluralism" based on one's "exclusive" religious experience in order to build respect for the other. In this sense, pluralism and exclusivism work together, i.e. pluralism in terms of our relationship with the other and exclusivism in terms of our own religious experience with God.

Each religion can be considered exclusive only in terms of its religious experience. Even within a religion, the religious experience of its followers can be different from one to the other. When we say religious experience, we mean one's personal experience in one's relation to God. It is a personal conviction that one holds. We cannot say one's experience is superior to another's. We can only affirm our difference in terms of our religious experience, which also includes our understanding of God, death, and eternity. We cannot force it on somebody. We can only live it. We live our religious experience through practising the Golden Rule of all religions i.e. "Do unto others what you want others to do for you". In this way, our religious experience intersect with the "other" in society. Therefore, if we are antagonistic towards religious pluralism based on our religious experience, then we are disqualified even before the dialogue starts. This would also mean that our religious experience promotes selfishness and self-centeredness, and has no regard for the other. Even when we claim that we have regard for the other, it is only a self-satisfying religiosity i.e. "the other is good as long as they are good to me" attitude. This approach places the other in an inferior position and poses serious difficulty for inter-religious harmony. Our religious experience and our love for our own religion should not become a stumbling block in fostering fellowship with our fellow human beings and to see the "other" as they are.

*(Continued on page 35)*



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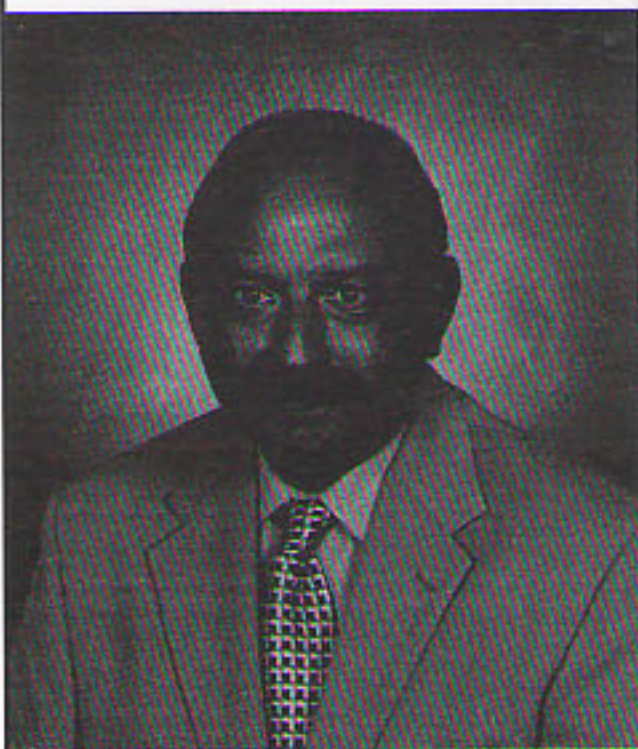


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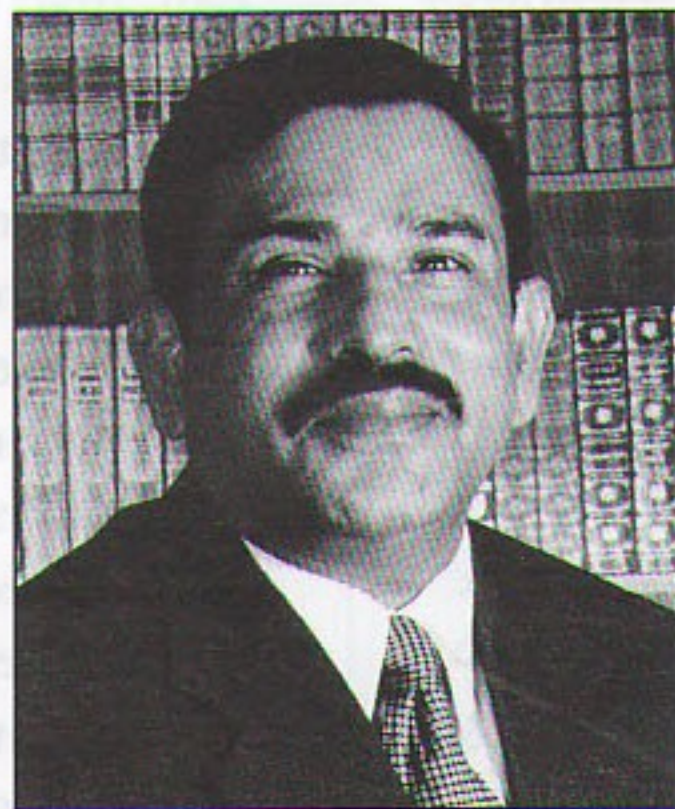
# Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross

Lal Varghese, Esq., Dallas

The old rugged cross, which revealed the glory of God and promised eternal life, is still witnessing to the sacrifice of Son of God for the sins of mankind. The power of the Cross is Jesus Christ Himself, who became flesh and blood and one among us in order to redeem us from our sins and transform us into children of God. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). There were always elements of strangeness and pragmatism in Jesus' actions. He selected twelve ordinary men and not the so-called elite, educated religious people of His time to be His Apostles. He was questioning and challenging the ritualistic and legalistic society which failed to follow the commandments of God given through Moses.

He chose the Cross of which the wood was rugged; the path He travelled was rugged and the atmosphere at Golgotha was rugged too. They mocked Him and spit on Him and hung a title on top of His Cross which read 'Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews' written in Hebrew, the language of the Israelites, not Latin, the language of the religion, and Greek, the language of the culture of that time. When Pilate refused to change the inscription by saying, 'what I have written, I have written,' (John 19:20-22) Pilate was only acting as an instrument in the divine plan of God to reveal to the world that He is in fact the son of God and King of Kings. Max Lucado points out in his book *No Wonder They Call Him Saviour*: "Pilate thought he could avoid making a choice. He washed his hands off Jesus. He climbed on the fence and sat down. But in not making a choice, Pilate made a choice. Rather than invite Jesus to stay, he sent Him away. Rather than hear Christ's voice, he heard the voice of the people." The crowd, who followed Him uttering 'Hosanna' a week ago, now uttering the words 'Crucify him,' make their choice.

James A. Valence, in his article titled 'The Old Rugged Cross', which appeared in the book, *The American Pulpit* has written about the ruggedness of His death on the Cross. 'Stained, shamed, discredited, rejected, his foes in a frenzy of glee over his fall, his friends in a frenzy of fear over his defeat, his strength gone, his body broken, Christ staggers on over the rough stones of the narrow street, under the crushing load of his heavy cross, toward a spot so grim and ghastly and hideous that the Romans called it Calvary, and the Jews, Golgotha, the place of skull.' We must not forget the rugged paths and the rugged cross upon which they nailed the body of an innocent man only to seek their vengeance. We must not forget the old rugged cross stained with the blood and sweat of Jesus and yet to which He clung until His death to save us



from our sins and to fulfill the promise of eternal life by giving us the hope of His return.

The sun hid behind the clouds, the earth shook with its fearsome sounds and the curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom when Jesus died on the rugged cross. Jesus was clinging to the rugged cross to fulfil His ministry in the world so that the world may be saved through His blood shed on the Cross. But God did not see the end of His ministry and purpose planned for this world on the rugged cross. For Jesus, it was a humble beginning

through twelve ordinary men whom He selected in anticipation for His death on the Cross. The Apostles also betrayed Him by leaving Him on the rugged cross. There stood only three women with some hope by the Cross of Jesus. They were His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. They were actually clinging to the rugged cross in the hope that He will save Himself from the Cross (John 19:25; Matt. 27:55, 56; Mark 15:40, 41; Luke 23:49). When His body was taken and buried at the tomb in the garden of Gethsemane, they were waiting at the entrance of the tomb, hoping that He will be raised from the dead as promised.

The power of the Cross is not in its fullness, but revealed only when it is emptied as stated by Paul, 'For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power (1 Corinthians 1:17; 1 Corinthians 2:1, 4, 13; 2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6; 2 Peter 1:16). When the thief on the Cross next to Him requested to have mercy on him, he was actually clinging to Jesus' cross for his redemption by making his choice. It was the Holy Spirit who interceded through him at that time, so that God's glory may be revealed at that rugged time in Golgotha in the form of salvation. It is the faith in Jesus that helped the three women and the thief to cling to the cross and continue to hope for the best for mankind. Our choice of the Cross should be a living experience. Christ is the embodiment of the wisdom and power of God as revealed through the Cross. The Cross is not a reflection of His failure, but of His success over the prevailing system and the anarchy in society and redemption of sinners. For the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:21, 23, 25; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 2:15; 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; Rom. 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Corinthians 15:2; Acts 2:47). The Cross was a means of hope for one of the thieves, but it was a means of folly for the other thief and the crowd who mocked Him.



Paul says that there is nothing in this world for him to boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which and through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Here Paul, the 'Apostle of the Gentiles' declares the hope for the entire world. In other words, there is nothing in this world for him to cling to except the Cross of Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 2:2; Phil. 3:3, 7, 8; Rom 6:6). He declares that Jesus has reconciled us both to God in one body through the Cross (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20-22; 1 Corinthians 12:13) and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, and making peace by His blood on the Cross (Colossians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Eph. 1:10; Eph 2:13; Eph. 2:14). Our old self is nailed to the Cross along with our sins by the death of Jesus on that rugged cross. We are new creatures and part of the body of Christ through which the glory of God must be revealed to others.

There is reason to cling to Cross since He canceled the record of debit that stood against us with its legal demands and set aside the same by nailing it to the Cross (Colossians 2:14; Acts 3:19; Rom 7:4). Freedom from sin is the reward for those who cling to the cross by looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 1:3 Hebrews 12:2; Luke 24:26; Phil 2:8; Isa 53:11; Psalm 22:6, 7, 69:19; Isa 53:3). We are indebted to the Cross since it redeemed us from our debts and sins and assured us eternal life. We are transformed as children of God and we should resemble God in our lives. That is the true meaning of witnessing for Christ and to be part of His death on the Cross. We remember Christ every time we take part in the Holy Communion, but we fail to follow the centrality of the Holy Eucharist. We cling to the Cross only at times of need and helplessness, but as Jesus said, those who want to follow Him must carry His cross daily. Carrying His Cross means carrying His death on our body and clinging to His Cross daily.

To quote James A. Valence's article one more time: *'We must not forget the rude cross, splintered and rough-hewn, coarse and inartistic, on which the body of the Son of God hung in holy expiation for the sin of the world. We must not allow our Christianity to become so soft, so artistic, so diletante, so lacking in grim reality, so empty of the rich, red blood of Calvary, as to forget the old rugged cross. Christianity is a rugged religion. It is built around a rugged cross – not around a throne, but a rugged cross, not around an altar, a church, but around a place of expiation, not around a pageant of victory, but around a scene of defeat.'* Jules Soury, in his book *Studies*

*of Jesus and the Gospels* (1881), points out: 'When we follow the ordinary level roads, we are lost among the crowds who frequent them; it is in the rugged paths of the mountain that must walk he who would leave his mark on humanity. Jesus, as events shown, was such a one.' Christianity is not a religion to be practiced on Sunday morning in the sanctuary at the pews alone, but it demands extreme from each one of us. It demands that Christians, the so called followers or Christ tread the rugged roads and unfrequented Samaritan wells to make our relationship with others and God deeper.

We need to seek Christ in the rugged scenes of our daily lives by re-visiting rugged roads of our villages, and the unfrequented Samaritan wells and experience the rugged realities of lives. According to James A. Valence, *'Christianity is rugged in the devotion it demands for the Hero of the old rugged cross. Christianity is rugged with the realism of Calvary, a real birth, a real life, a real death, a real resurrection, a real redemption.'* But, now Christianity has become a ritualistic religion without the experience of the rugged Cross. It has become a religion that has no Calvary's experience. We need to turn back to the old rugged Cross to experience the grim tragedy unveiled over there centuries ago. In a very popular 19th century art, rather than worshipping the Cross per se, a woman who was shipwrecked and in danger of being swept away is seen clinging to the Cross to be saved from drowning in the stormy sea. The art reminds us that in the storm of our life, we just need to reach out for salvation by clinging to the Cross only and nothing else.

The central message of Bible is of one of rescue for those who make that choice by clinging to the Cross. There is joy in the presence of angels of God over one sinner repents (Luke 15:10). We were all dead in our transgressions, but because of His great love for us, God, in His mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:1, 5). Philip Yancey writes: 'The good news of the gospel is that in spite of our state, God seeks after us and responds to every plea for help. You might say that God in the rescue business.' Let me conclude with a few lines from the famous song written by George Bennard in 1912, who was reminding us of the choice we need to make by clinging to the old rugged cross. ■

*'So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
Till my trophies at last I lay down;  
I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
And exchange it someday for a crown.'*

***Compassion is always active.***



# Contract between Generations

Dr. Zac Varghese, London

**R**eformation of the St. Thomas Church in the 19th century was a very significant event in the history of Indian Christians. We celebrate this event in our collective memory in many ways: on the birth and death anniversaries of Abraham Malpan, the Martin Luther, of the reformation of the Malanakara Church, and anniversaries of significant historical dates or milestones such as the 175th anniversary.

Time after time, we are reminded that reformation is not a one off event, and that the Mar Thoma Church is a reformed and reforming Church. Church historians have different perspectives about this reformation: some people think of it as the result of enlightenment and renaissance reaching the Malabar shores through CMS missionaries and the result of the translation of the Bible into Malayalam and so forth; others may think of it as the result of theological and sociological formularies expressed in the 'trumpet call' and translating liturgy into Malayalam and using Malayalam liturgy for making worship meaningful to laity; yet others may see it as personality conflicts and power struggles. The distinction between the essential and circumstantial, fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith, scripture and tradition, matters of subjective opinions and collective will of the people motivated Reformation. It also helped to expose the 'fraud of the priest craft' by purging magic and myths, and their power struggles. The love for a national and autonomous Church was also a very important impetus for the Reformation. Whatever the emphasis, we cannot forget the fact that something very significant happened in 1836, which shook the Christian community of Malabar. It is necessary to thank God for this and commit ourselves to continue this Reformation for doing God's mission through the Church in India and through its worldwide diaspora.

In the April issue of the Messenger we read the Malayalam transcript of a talk given by Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan at the Maramon convention on reformation. Thirumeni in his characteristic and most eloquent way summarized the core theology of reformation of our Church, which he said is simply giving 'a pitcher of water when someone begs for a drop of water.' Thirumeni used the most touching, most meaningful and unforgettable Malayalam phrase: "*Oru thulli chothikunnavanu oru kudam kodukunna naveekaranum.*" This is indeed the real essence of Reformation. It is time for us to reflect on this to find out how far we have travelled in achieving this objective and what else we need to do to continue our journey on this tortuous road of Reformation without taking permanent rest in comfortable wayside inns. These wayside inns come in



different star ratings and tariffs, but we need to get out of these varied comfort zones to continue with our Reformation. Finding a 'pitcher of water' is not easy; it needs an in-depth understanding of what is needed and where it is needed, and responding to it with God's grace; it needs a God-given sensitivity for making good an infinite number of irresponsibilities that we practice. This article addresses one way of continuing our journey of Reformation through reaffirming the 'contract between generations' through the grace of God.

In order to continue with our Reformation we need to pray continually and work to transform our 'chanting-liturgical communities' into living faith communities and so honor the 'contract between generations.' Most of our efforts in our local parishes are devoted to oiling the nuts and bolts of Sunday morning worship through chanting, singing and preaching. We mostly use these occasions for projecting personalities and honoring ourselves in various ways. What does 'contract between generations' mean? It is an unwritten code endowed with responsibility and stewardship shared between different generations, which is based on the assumption and convention that future generations will take care of the needs of a generation that has previously done the same caring service to an older generation; it is a contract for caring for everyone in the community irrespective of their age, physical and spiritual needs, and status.

This model is very much part of the joint family system, which was a norm in India for thousands of years. Contract between generations implies that parents look after children when they are little and children care for parents when they are old and need support. But this convention does not only apply to families, but also to all people in mixed generations that live together in a community. This is the essence of being human, of loving and caring for others and of placing others and their needs first. This matured and culturally sophisticated attitude has somehow or the other been lost with the development of nuclear families and reliance on welfare handouts from governmental agencies and charitable organizations. England with its state-sponsored welfare commitment has divested people of their family-oriented responsibilities and given them to outside agencies. However, David Cameron, the present Conservative Prime Minister, is beginning to talk about the idea of a 'big society,' where people would be encouraged to take social responsibilities to create a caring culture once again. There is absolutely no doubt that English society has an amazing culture of caring, but it is funded and managed



through taxation; it is operated at arms length; people have no direct involvement or accountability. One's parents and grandparents are looked after by a team of carers from the local council and children are mentored by nannies and nurseries. We protect our interest and superficially maintain our responsibilities through developing a 'blaming culture:' things go wrong because of someone else. Transposing guilt to someone else is the insurance policy that we rely on.

Richard Niebuhr<sup>1</sup> shows how we may act responsibly in society. Responsible action in society is the spontaneous response to another person within or without one's own community and in the presence of God. This is finding a God-directed response to what is happening around us. Joseph's response to his brothers was an example of this appropriate response under the guidance of God's grace: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (Genesis 45:5). This sense of 'sentness' is essential in finding appropriate responses to various situations in life. Niebuhr sees three types of responsible actions or social contracts: firstly, individuals enter into contracts with each other in order to obtain limited common objectives, mostly self-centered. Secondly, by honoring the old Hobbesian<sup>2</sup> contract in which every aspect of self-existence is conditioned by the membership of the community. Here we have an understanding of the self as a social being, living in response-relations to other selves in the community. We see this model operating in some of the Israeli Kibbutz and in some Christian communes like the Lee Abbey<sup>3</sup> community in north Devon and in African tribal communities. This gives people the opportunity to say to each other in gratitude '*ubuntu*,' which means "I am what I am because of you." It is in and through other human beings, in networks of relationships, that we find our full humanity. Third response is developing an 'I-Thou' relationship, which Martin Buber<sup>4</sup> advocated. This responsible action also includes our respect and stewardship of nature as well. Bonhoeffer<sup>5</sup> also wrote about responsible action in his work on ethics: "Responsibility, as life and action in deputyship, is essentially a relation of man to man. Christ became man and He thereby bore responsibility and deputyship for men." Responsible action is undertaken for honoring the contract between generations.

In civil societies individuals by a process of mutual consent agree to abide by common rules and accept corresponding responsibilities for the common good. In the absence of a social contract, life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."<sup>2</sup> Today there is the threat of a breach of the contract between generations because of the growth of dysfunctional families. Most of the societal problems can be traced back to the breakdown of family life. Family is the primary and basic social unit; when it becomes dysfunctional, everything else goes topsy-turvy. Emphasis on consumerism, profit-motivated market economy and

Thatcherism in the eighties questioned the basic tenets of society itself. There is not only an emphasis on self-orientation and self-centeredness in every area of human living, but also the selfishness of the present generation about the generations to come. In one way, it is true that the present generation is squandering the inheritance of the future generations and is rightly labelled the 'SKI' generation, which stands for 'spending kids' inheritance.' The present ecological crisis and climate change are part and parcel of this scenario of an uncaring attitude toward the future of this planet and future generations. The debt burdens of families through mortgages and credit card spending and the sovereign debts of many countries are millstones around the neck of future generations. It is wrong to enjoy the benefits of borrowed money now and defer the accumulating interest and burden of repayment to generations to come. When the present paradise bubble bursts, the next generation will fall into an abyss of despair and despondency. We must feel an obligation to hand over land, air and water to the coming generations without pollution and ecological imbalance.

Contract between generations is absolutely necessary for the continuity and existence of mankind in a civilized modality. Those of us who emerged from farming communities in Kerala know that traditionally the paternal land and farms that one inherited were handed down to one's children without damaging it. However, now we have no qualms whatsoever in selling it to the best bidder without a care or concern about how the buyer would be using the land. Because of the demographic changes and migration it is not possible, even with the best will in the world, to hang on to one's ancestral properties any more, but we need to acknowledge that we are washing our hands off of our hereditary obligations with these inevitable transactions. Therefore, we need to think about how we can honor contract between generations in the present context and in our own varied personal situations. It is not easy, but collectively we need to pay attention.

Sociologists discuss many issues relating to different generations within the society and when they find difficulties in connecting these generations they use the phrase, generational gap. These gaps can only be filled in or bridged through contract between generations. In our parishes we know of many conflict situations between youths and seniors, which often involves from an all inclusive prejudice against another generation. Young people often forget that their parents and seniors were also young once and had gone through similar issues when they were young. Older people often forget to recollect the issues they faced when they were young; such amnesia is often the cause of conflict between generations. We need to get into each other's shoes to appreciate each other's concerns to forge understanding and appreciation. We need to work for fairness in relationships between children, youth, adults, and elders; this would help us to achieve intergenerational equity.



How can we achieve this fairness or equity? In our parishes we should be able to distribute our resources (economic, intellectual, manpower, and spiritual) in a just way for the needs of all identifiable groups and generations. Generations can be grouped chronologically as age groups (children, youth, elderly, etc.) or in cohorts such as 'Baby boomers,' 'Internet generations' or 'diaspora generations' or in any such identifiable and distinct groups. This concept of 'generational equity' was first set out in 1974 by James Tobin<sup>6</sup>, who wrote, "The trustees of endowed institutions are the guardians of the future against the claims of the present. Their task in managing the endowment is to preserve the equity among generations."

We need a very sensitive and thoughtful approach in establishing fairness through pastoral intergenerational ministry. Such a ministry encourages relationships between age groups and encourages mixed-age groups. This is not the same as we have now in many of our parishes in terms of youth ministries, parish missions, women's groups, choir ministries, and senior citizen groups. These types of conventional ministries divide the parish into water-tight compartments and may create a parish within a parish or create parallel organizations. These ministries have their own hierarchical endowments in a few charismatic leaders who minister didactically to members under their charge with autocratic patronage. Intergenerational ministry, by contrast, includes the whole parish and all age groups and generations. My own experience is that children attending Sunday school and youth programmes without the involvement of parents are less likely to continue as active parish members later in life and particularly after a sojourn in a university campus, compared to those who attend parish activities with parents and are integrated totally into the parish community. However, the numbers of families doing this are very limited in every parish, but those who do this are enormously blessed and they stand out in our communities as role models. Joshua renewed the covenant at Shechem with the declaration: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Therefore, it is incumbent upon elders of parishes to encourage young people to take an active role in the ministry to all sections of the parish; parish activities should involve and encourage participation of all generations. From this perspective, segregation of one particular Sunday of the month as youth Sunday is certainly not the right

thing to do; every Sunday should be considered a youth Sunday or a senior citizens' Sunday. We live in families and we must worship God as families of all generations. This is an ideal way to avoid division and create wholeness and unity. Disunity is the death knell of a community. Biblical model of worship is an intergenerational model; this is indeed the model described in Deuteronomy. "You, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all decrees and commands that I give you, so that you may enjoy long life" (Deuteronomy 6:2). God expects us to worship Him together in the company of all generations, past, present and the future; we see the beauty of it in its fullness in our liturgy.

God's covenants with Abraham was binding to all patriarchs and subsequent generations. Equally, the new covenant written with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is binding to all generations. We must celebrate human life in its entirety in time and space with all men and women, children and adults, youth and elders, families and communities of all generations. We need to establish a solemn contract with all generations and 'mother earth' in the presence of God. This is indeed a much needed prescription for healing this broken world. We must incorporate this contract into our ongoing Reformation. This Reformation also should find ways and means of protecting us from the menace of organizations and institutionalization. We are in desperate need for Reformation because we are divided at various levels, spoiled by our successes and economic prosperity, controlled and imprisoned by structures to safeguard limited short-term interests. We should not take a 'wait and see' attitude in the hope that things will get better. In utter humility, we must seek Reformation continually not cosmetically or superficially for beautifying ourselves, but for confessing and placing God at the centre of every transaction of life. ■

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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"**



# Book Review

## Ormakalude Edanazhiyiloode

Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan  
CSS Publications Kerala January 2011.

**(A lyrically crafted memoir in Malayalam with fascinating anecdotes and compelling life events)**

For a few years now, I have veered away from the habit of leisurely reading due to a busy work schedule and a plethora of social commitments. So when Zacharias Thirumeni autographed and gave me his recently published book in Malayalam, *Ormakalude Edanazhiyiloode*, during my visit to Kerala in May 2011, and asked if I could review it in the upcoming issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger, I was both thrilled and humbled by his request.

*Ormakalude Edanazhiyiloode* is compiled as a memoir with many thought-provoking experiences, and visionary insights into the memorable life events of Thirumeni, starting with his school years. We read about his enriching childhood experiences, eventful years growing up to become an adult, blessed and fruitful years after his ordination, and world tours on behalf of the Church, explained in a panoramic picturesque style, that many of the Keralites can clearly relate to, and proudly enjoy. The illustrations about his struggle to survive during Boston Education summer vacation time outside the campus, is touching and humorous at the same token. A great book that you cannot put down, once you start reading!!

Beginning in the early 80s, Thirumeni has merged into the global religious mainstream, while continuing to portray his distinctive spiritual velocity and eagerness for moral and social righteousness. In fact, while reading his book, I realized that Zacharias Thirumeni has planted and nurtured strong ties between the Mar Thoma Church and an array of global churches and denominations from almost all nations and those links have bloomed. Reading between the lines, I believe that Thirumeni has even inspired some leaders to break out of their religious conservatism in the interest of humanitarian concerns. An occurrence during a religious march organized by world church leaders that took place in Australia, where Thirumeni was a participant, depicts Thirumeni's concern for equality and acceptance of the so-called "common men". Santhigiri Ashram, which was visualized and initiated by Thirumeni, has reaffirmed the



common belief that one's urge to help the needy by urging others will uplift and sustain Christian Values.

This intriguing and captivating book will be liked by everyone who knows Thirumeni and his work as an ordained Bishop of Mar Thoma Church. The book is published by CSS in Kerala (ISBN # 978-81-7821-303-3) and will be available in the Diocese of North America & Europe via the Literature Society in the summer of 2011.

**Dr. Eapen Daniel (Chief Editor, Mar Thoma Messenger)**

*It's good to have questions,  
but it's even better to search for God's answers.*





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# Institute on Counseling 2011: An Institute on Empowerment

Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla

Every year our Diocese plans institutes to help members of our Church to understand the faith and the practices of our Church, so that they are able to live meaningful life through the expression of their faith in daily living. Last year the Diocese conducted an institute on liturgy to help our members understand the significance and importance of the liturgy that we use for our worship. The North American Diocese has always been innovative in many ways. Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa has always seen to it that if the Church needs to bolster its mission in the local context, then the members of the Church be empowered through the ministry of the Church both locally and globally. This year the Diocese has planned an institute on counseling, an institute on empowerment. Thirumeni has been instrumental in organizing this institute on counseling. I am happy that Thirumeni has entrusted me to do this enormous task of conducting this institute. My main aim in writing this article is to enlighten the readers of the Mar Thoma Messenger and also the members of this Diocese on the relevance of the institute on counseling.

Counseling is one of the most important ministries that the Church has to do today to make itself relevant to its people. The famous author Scott Peck, in his renowned book **The Road Less Traveled** says that "Life is difficult." Hence, he says that living in a modern, fast moving society where change is the norm of the day, it is not surprising to find numerous people who feel that they have problems coping with the challenges to their mental, spiritual, emotional and physical health. It is in such a context that the Church has to play a relevant and meaningful role in the life of its people, hence, the planning of the institute on counseling. Jesus Christ has given us the mandate to be involved in a ministry that brings healing and empowerment in the life of both individuals and society.

Counseling involves a caring relationship between the counselor and the counselee, between a pastor and his parishioner and also in the wider context between human being, God and the Word. Nowadays in our parish setting, counseling is experiencing a growing credibility and demand whereby the clergy are grappling with the dilemma of how best to minister to the physical, emotional, intellectual, relational and spiritual needs of people who are seeking counseling. Hence it is also important for the church to organize lay leadership and also empower the ministry of



the laity so that both the clergy and the laity work together in doing God's ministry. It is in this broader Christian perspective that the institute of counseling has been planned. The objective of the institute is threefold.

## A. Objective of the Institute on Counseling

(1) To Empower the Individual; (2) To Empower the Family; and (3) To Empower the Parish

The first objective of this institute of counseling is to empower the individual. This is basically because every individual has to be empowered to understand the context that they live in, the socio-economic, cultural and religious factors that affect their life and they also need tools that help them to cope with challenges in life. Another aspect of empowering the individual is to help the individual to creatively deal with crisis both developmental and accidental and also in the process experience wholeness in life through Jesus Christ.

The second objective is to empower the family. Today in the North American context a majority of the families seems to live an isolated existence. They are not able to connect with other families for various reasons. Hence it is important that every family is able to relate to other families so that families in turn become a support to each other and other families. Another aspect that is emphasized and which is the need of the hour is the enrichment of the family. Unknowingly the Church sometimes is not able to cater to the needs of the family and hence the Church needs to organize enrichment session for families so that they are able to live their family life more meaningfully. When the individual is empowered, it should lead to the empowerment of their family and thus bring growth, change and enrichment in individual and family lives.

The third objective is to empower the parish. One of the hallmarks of today's North American parish is the growing number of young families. There are some who are active in the parish while some are not. Hence it is important that young families be brought to the forefront of parish activities and helped so that they take up the responsibilities of the parish. But if young families need to be brought to the forefront of the parish and its activities, it is important that we address the issues that young families face. Does the present administrative setup help young families come to the fore? Is the worship, the liturgy, the sermon relevant to them? What are the changes that the



church and the parish need to formulate so that the ministry that the parish and the Church does is meaningful to the young families in this multicultural context? These are the issues that are being addressed through the institute on counseling.

## **B. Target Group**

Whenever we plan something it is important to identify the beneficiaries. The institute of counseling is planned so that the lay leaders of the Church are equipped, the young families are empowered and the present leaders of the Church are strengthened and given support to continue a complementary and supportive ministry along with the Clergy. Hence the target group for this institute include the present and future lay leaders of the church, youth leaders, the young families and the present leaders of the parish.

## **C. Organizing the Institute on Counseling**

The Diocese intends to do this institute in six areas of the Diocese. These areas are Toronto, Houston, Dallas, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York. Every region will be headed by a Clergy and a lay person, who will function as the coordinator of the institute. There will be another coordinator for each of the parish so that people can be mobilized and the institute is planned in an orderly manner so that everyone who attends the institute can benefit from it.

The sessions of the institute begin one month before the actual session begins in that particular area. Every participant of the institute will be sent reading and study material by mail so that they are able to read and reflect on the

different issues and topics that will be dealt with during the course of the institute. The purpose of such a methodology is that every participant comes prepared for the institute and everyone is also able to connect with another person even before the institute so that when they attend the institute they are able to attend it meaningfully.

## **D. Curriculum of the Institute**

Some of the topics intended for study during the course of the institute are: 1. Principles of helping relationship; 2. Dynamics of a Christian family and its effective functioning; 3. Understanding family and parish in a systemic context; 4. Principles of empowerment through Jesus Christ; and, finally, 5. Empowerment of the ministry of the parish.

## **E. Resource Person**

The resource person for this institute on counseling is the present youth chaplain of the South East Region of our Diocese, Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla.

## **F. Date and Venue**

1. Toronto—May 17th—May 19th
2. Chicago—September 8th—10th
3. Houston—September 15th—17th
4. Philadelphia—October 21st—23rd
5. Dallas—November 10th—12th
6. New York—December 1st—3rd

## **PRAY PARTICIPATE AND BE EMPOWERED ■**

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## **On Equal Footing** *(Cont'd from page 25)*

By religious pluralism, we are not talking about who has A grades or Bs or Cs and so on, as in ranking examinations. If we have this approach, we will be dividing ourselves like children in class A, B, C, D and E, who are divided according to the marks obtained in their exams. Since we segregate students based on the marks, it is possible that students who are in top classes develop a superior attitude and consider themselves better than others. Unfortunately, we are incapable of making such segregation in religion. By religious pluralism, we are not seeking the unity of the religious experience of humankind, but its ever increasing diversity. In religious pluralism, the issue is not how to bring about religious unity based on a single religious experience, but how to constructively manage diversity of religious experience, religious change and conflict that is affecting our nation today and how to do so meaningfully. For this, one has no choice but to commit to a pluralistic approach based on his/her "exclusive" religious experience because it is all about co-existence with the "other". The Interfaith Councils established at the federal level and in Penang are commendable as long as these are meant to accept, understand and manage this diversity of religious

experience in this multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural country of ours. In this way, we can be a strong observer of our own faith without putting somebody else down.

Finally, let us all remember that we are not just interacting with Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Taoists, Bahais, Sikhs and so on, but with our fellow human beings in all their diversity. If we take this position and keep God at the centre, we can overcome feelings of superiority, the question of equal footing and religious pluralism. After all, we are talking about God and let us all understand that God doesn't need the certificate of any religion to prove that He is the creator of the whole universe. Last but not least, it is only our actions and how we relate to the other that would prove if our religion and our religious experience are true or false. ■

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Rev. Thomas George is a priest of the Mar Thoma Church and an activist of the Malaysian Interfaith Network (MIN) and Inter Spiritual Fellowship (In SAF). He is currently the chairman of an Interfaith Working Group visiting religious places of worship, understand various religions and foster goodwill and fellowship among adherents of different religions.



# The Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia

## A Perspective from a senior member of the Parish

Prof. Dr. Mathew Thomas

This article contains a brief history of the Parish and excerpts from the speech delivered by the author during the public meeting after the dedication service of the church on March 26th, 2011.

### Brief History

The roots of The Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia go back to the late 1950s and early 60s. It started as a non-denominational Christian congregation by the efforts of a few Graduate Students in the Philadelphia area who reached USA from different parts of Kerala, with different backgrounds. Their social gathering evolved into Sunday worships using Malayalam liturgy.

During the early 70s the immigration laws of the United States were relaxed and more people started coming for higher studies and also seeking better jobs. The number of Malayalee Marthomites increased considerably by the mid 70s and consideration to form a Mar Thoma Parish started to take shape. The late Rt. Rev. Easow Mar Timotheos Thirumeni encouraged the idea during his visit to Philadelphia in 1976, to foster the faith and practices of our parent Church in Kerala. A special meeting of the Mar Thoma Church members living in the Philadelphia area was convened on October 1, 1976 under the leadership of Rev. K. S. Mathew. It was decided in that meeting to form a Mar Thoma Congregation in Philadelphia. A special committee was formed to draft the By-laws. The name adopted for the new congregation was 'Mar Thoma Christian Congregation of Philadelphia'. The congregation adopted the by-laws in early 1977 and was approved by Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom—the missionary bishop at that time. The congregation was officially recognized by the parent church in Kerala on September, 1978 and Rev. K. S. Mathew took charge as the first Vicar of the Congregation.

In 1983 the congregation was recognized as a parish by the synod and the name of the congregation was changed to "Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia" which was approved by the state of Pennsylvania in 1985. On June 28, 1989 the parish acquired the property at 2060 Orthodox street Philadelphia, PA 19124, as a permanent place for worship. The first Holy Communion Service was officially conducted on December 3, 1989 and the dedication service was conducted on June 9, 1990 by our then Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom.

In April 2004 under the great leadership of Rev. Sunny George, the general body of the church unanimously decided to relocate the Mar Thoma Church



Philadelphia to a better place with adequate parking and easier access. A church building committee was also formed with a convener and about 30 members.

In 2010 a facility was located at 1085 Camp Hill Road in Fort Washington, PA. This office building with 24,000 sq. ft. in area has 4.6 acres of land around it and a parking lot for about 200 cars. The general body of the Parish unanimously decided to choose this property as the new location for the Church and purchased the property in December of 2010. Rev. Philip George, our vicar played a vital role in acquiring this property by unifying every family to move together to this new location. The executive committee and the church building committee worked together to make our dream a reality on March 26, 2011, the day on which we dedicated our new location. Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa conducted the dedication service and presided over the public meeting which followed.

We are blessed with the outstanding services of our beloved Diocesan Bishops Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa and Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa. The encouragement and support of Theodosius Thirumeni is well appreciated at this time.

The following priests served our church since its inception in 1976 as full time vicars: Rev. K. S. Mathew, Rev. Thomas P. George, Late Rev M. V. Benjamin, Rev. Abraham Thomas, Rev. A. G. Mathew, Rev. A. I. Issac (assistant), Rev. P. S. Daniel, (assistant) Rev. M. C. George, Rev. Joseph Ayroorkuzhy, Rev. M. P. Yohannan, Rev. P. P. Thomas (assistant), Rev. Joseph Chacko, Rev. Sunny George, Rev. T. P. Zachariah, Late Rev. C. P. Wilson and Rev. Philip George. The spiritual leadership of all of them has greatly enriched our parish.

### *(Excerpts from the Speech)*

What a glorious day indeed! Years of planning, years of hard work, years of sacrifice have culminated into this day. What a joyous moment! Let us thank God for his mercy and compassion on us. If our hearts are pounding with emotions, if your eyes are filled with tears of joy, it is quite natural indeed. Our dream for the past 34 years has come true as a reality. I see many faces in front of me who made



it possible. I see families with children who found a way to give. I see members with fixed income who found a way to give. I see members with family hardship in tight economic times who found a way to give. Together we have raised about 1.5 million dollars strictly within the parishioners. It is amazing and admirable.

During the past 34 years, three sister churches has originated from this parish for different reasons. Thanks to God that they all are flourishing today.

Our beloved Philip George Achen is the leader God provided us to make this great day possible. His energy, enthusiasm, God given spiritual leadership made it possible. WE BOW OUR HEADS WITH GRATITUDE IN FRONT OF THIS LOVING FAMILY FOR SERVING OUR NEEDS ) Thank you !

Dear Thirumeni, your continuous support, advice and encouragement are very much appreciated and indeed helped us in getting through difficult periods.

Christianity is an outdoor religion. Jesus Christ chose seashores, mountains, and valleys as His venue for His mission. It is only after the 4th century A.D. the Church started acquiring buildings, Basilicas and Cathedrals. St. Paul reminds us "our body is God's residence." Dr. Mirch Elliad, a Rumanian scholar and the chief editor of Encyclopedia of religion said - All worship places are the recreation of the universe "That's exactly what we declare in our dedication service prayers.

The dedication of this church, is hence is an ideal opportunity to realize this Biblical insight and acknowledge our need for personal and institutional repentance. Therefore the dedication service of this church is essentially the dedication of the people.

Matthew chapter 8 ver 1-5 describes this. The sanctity that heals and transforms does not incubate and insulate. It expresses itself in reaching out, in being sent out. The commandment of sanctification is GO. We are called to be sent out. And this church must for ever nurture the culture of outreach, especially the outreach of being sent out ourselves, under the yoke of Christ, to be with those in need in the sphere of our calling; for Jesus has chosen to identify Himself with them, "Whatever you have done to

the least of these, that you have done to me." This very solidarity of love and compassion must be this church's holiest of holies.

This church should not be a place to which people retreat in search of sanctity and solace, but a reservoir from which the waters of Godliness flow out to nourish the entire world around.

First of all, a place of worship must be a place for prayer for all nations. To Jesus loving thy neighbor is the basis to loving God. Churches should provide peacefulness to experience God's presence. Secondly worshipping God in the Church cannot be separated from the integrity and quality of life we maintain outside the Church. Keep in mind, the very purpose of worship is to make us integrated personalities; people who are the same on Sundays and weekdays. Thirdly, the worship life of a religious community will be corrupted if it admits any discrimination whatsoever. Acts of The Apostles chapter 10 verse 34 explains very clearly, "in truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida, the post modern literary and deconstruction critics have already proved that it is not in words that the meaning is contained, but on the imaginative explanation every book can be expanded into thousands of books. Thus every religious book should also be explained into thousands of different theological truths.

We should be like salt, which provides taste to the food and preserve it from decay. We should permeate in to the society like salt loosing itself and taking care of the medium it dissolved into. We should also act like lamps on high poles . Our role is to be lighted to lighten the world around us.

Let me finish with a couple of verses from the Book of Zachariah chapter 4 verses 5-7: "The angel told me to give Zerrubbabel this message from the Lord; you will succeed, not by military might, or by your own strength, but by my spirit; Obstacles as great as mountains will disappear before you. You will rebuild the Temple, and as you put the last stone in place, the people will shout Beautiful Oh! Beautiful." ■

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# BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV BIBLE  
THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS: CHAPTERS 1-27

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

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## Across:

- Do not put \_\_\_\_\_ marks on yourselves.
- I will set my \_\_\_\_\_ against any person who eats any blood.
- "You may eat any animal that has a split \_\_\_\_\_ completely divided and that chews the cud."
- "Do not \_\_\_\_\_ my holy name."
- The Lord put to death Nadab and \_\_\_\_\_ for disobeying His command.
- Then the Lord said to Aaron, "You must teach the Israelites all the \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord has given through Moses.
- Atonement is to be made once a \_\_\_\_\_ for all the sins of the Israelites.
- A person will be held \_\_\_\_\_ if he does not speak up and testify in public regarding something he has seen or learned about.
- Do not lend money at \_\_\_\_\_ to a poor countryman.
- The high priest who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments must not let his \_\_\_\_\_ become unkempt.
- Do not \_\_\_\_\_ your brother in your heart.
- If you \_\_\_\_\_ my laws, I will bring upon you sudden terror.
- Do not \_\_\_\_\_ yourselves with detestable customs.
- If anyone takes the \_\_\_\_\_ of a human being, he must be put to death.
- The Lord said, "If you continue to be hostile toward me, the \_\_\_\_\_ of your enemies will devour you.
- Each of you must \_\_\_\_\_ his mother and father.

## Down:

- The priest will make \_\_\_\_\_ for anyone who swears falsely.
- Do not eat any fat or blood, this is a lasting \_\_\_\_\_ given to the Israelites.
- If anyone \_\_\_\_\_ his father or mother, he must be put to death.
- Do not make your countrymen work as a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Moses placed the \_\_\_\_\_ on Aaron and put the Urim and Thummim in it.
- I will look on you with \_\_\_\_\_ if you follow my decrees.
- The seventh day is a Sabbath of \_\_\_\_\_.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof.
- "\_\_\_\_\_ yourselves and be holy because I am holy."
- The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the \_\_\_\_\_ towns.
- Aaron and his sons did everything the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ through Moses.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ of everything from the land belongs to the Lord.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is Aaron's uncle.
- Bring a \_\_\_\_\_ offering of firstfruits to the Lord.
- \_\_\_\_\_ in the presence of the aged.

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24. Mathew P Joseph	MTC Okalahoma		

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

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



The Native American Mission of the Diocese of North America provided leadership to conduct a week-long residential Youth camp at Broken Bow, Oklahoma for the Choctaw Youth. The camp was held from June 6th to 10th, 2011. About 60 children and youths as well as 20 adults participated in the camp. Majority of these young people do not attend a local church on a regular basis.



The leadership for this camp was primarily provided by the 16 young volunteers from our Diocese. The majority came from Dallas and others from Philadelphia and New Jersey. We were blessed to have the Youth chaplains: Rev. Jaisen Thomas, Rev. and Mrs. Shibi Abraham, as well as adult leaders from Dallas, Philadelphia and the Choctaw community. Special thanks to Ms. Kezia Cherian of St. Paul's MTC for coordinating the Camp programs, Dr. Fay Simon for working as the camp medical director. Mr. and Mrs. George Mathews and Abraham Mathew from Dallas MT Church, Farmers Branch for the innumerable hours in preparing delicious meals for the campers. We are thankful to Dallas MT Church, Farmer's Branch for graciously providing funds for the meals for the last few years. We are also grateful to Rev. Thomas, father of Rev. Jasen Thomas, the Vicar Rev. Minoy Kuruvilla and members of Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Farmers Branch as well as Rev. George Varghese, and members of Sehion Mar Thoma Church for visiting the camp.

The following is a reflection of the Camp experience from one of our volunteers, Miss Lisa Jacob, a member of the Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Farmers Branch.

**Nirmala Abraham, Convener**

### Réflexions—Choctaw Mission, Oklahoma

I was blessed with the opportunity to be among the group that went to Camp Folsom. When looking back at my experience this year, I'm reminded of a story about a missionary who went to China in the late 1800s. The man was a poor, one-legged school teacher who seemed to have very little to offer. Before leaving for his trip, a renowned missionary approached the man about his intentions. When asked, "With only one leg, why do you think of going as a missionary," the man replied "I do not see those with two legs going." This story exemplifies the heart of the team that served in Oklahoma this June. We were all far from perfect, but armed with the Gospel, we gave what we could. We were teachers, singers, cooks, dancers, comedians, janitors, doctors, preachers, counselors and above all else, lovers of Jesus. It was amazing to see this team truly reflect 1

Corinthians 12 in that as one body, we each played key roles in loving the children well.

Many of our team and most of the children left camp on Friday with puffy red eyes and drippy noses as we said our final goodbyes. With promises to return, our team left forever changed—changed by the faces of the children we met, changed by the stories we heard, and changed by the love we received from people we had only known for a week. The idea of change itself is rather odd to think about. Change often occurs as a result of redefining internal realities. So when I say that our team left changed, I do believe each of us had the Lord tune our hearts to a slightly different beat. Short-term trips lead to short-term relationships. As much as we can share about the Lord for a week, Jesus Himself illustrates the idea of going alongside and making disciples of His people. So what does this mean in regards to our short-term service? Does this mean we should stop going? Does this mean we shouldn't serve? Certainly not! As undeserving as these sounds, I've come to believe that God uses these trips to serve those who go. God takes these opportunities to redefine our internal realities- to create change in our lives. God uses our short-term ministry to



mobilize us to both prayerfully intercede and live out missions for a lifetime. We do what we can for a week, and we plant seeds in hopes that God will water and grow the seeds into the well-watered trees as Jeremiah described. And that in itself brings greater glory to our Father. Having been in Oklahoma for only a week, I can already see the fruit of our prayers from years ago; our God is faithful not only to the prayers of our church but also to the cries of the Choctaw people. On my very first trip to Broken Bow, very few of the children had ever heard the name Jesus. Coming back four years later, not only did the children recognize our Lord's name, but they also began to absorb the stories of His life. This may not seem much, but this is certainly evidence of the seeds that have been planted by our Lord.

I thank God for having the opportunity to go to Oklahoma this year. In one week, God realigned my heart to the vision of His heart and our church- we are lighted to lighten. I praise God for the amazing work of people like OC Uncle who organized our efforts, Kunjumon Uncle, Monachan Uncle, and Lisy Aunty who prepared our meals, the achen and church members who came throughout the week from Dallas to encourage each of us, and each person who volunteered to come to this trip.

**Ms. Lisa Jacob**



# അമേരിക്കൻ വിസ ?

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## Fulfilling Christ's Will

Paul J. Isaac, 4th Grade, Carmel Mar Thoma Church, Boston

I am a child of immigrant parents and God has enabled me to worship freely in a church of my faith unlike some fellow Christians who have been denied this opportunity by the government in other countries such as the Middle East. How lucky are we to have this opportunity!

In 1 Cor 12: 27 it says Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.

The church is the body of Christ, with Christ being the head and the believers its organs. The real treasures of the Church are the precious Holy Bible and the faithful congregation that makes the family of God.

Just as the different organs perform the duty of the body, the Church fulfills the will of Christ on earth. Jesus entrusted the Church to continue His work. The commission of the Church is to experience Jesus and His kingdom in this world.

Each one of us is very precious and valuable to God unconditionally.



Each of us, with our different gifts, is a part of the body of Christ. We need each other and our unity is what makes it effective in being 'Jesus' to a broken world.

Using our gifts alone does not work well. We need the gifts and talents of other people too to help some others. God made us to be together like different parts of the same body. We are all essential to the well being of the body. We need faithful Christians to keep this body healthy. He who stands alone will not flourish as much as those who stand together.

If one part of the body hurts, the whole body is in trouble so when one part of the body of Christ hurts, it is our responsibility as part of the same body to help lessen the pain.

We can all remember a time when we have been hurt by someone's mean and hateful words. God hears every word we say and He knows every thought we have in our heart. It is important for us to be careful about the things we think and say, because hateful words come from an unclean heart.

## God: The Solution to your Problem

Sarina Bobe Simon, Grade-6, Carmel MTC, Boston

Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened... Mathew 7:7. When we try doing something and we have trouble with it what should we do? We should pray and ask God for help.

In Exodus 14 we read that the Lord sent 10 terrible plagues upon the Egyptians in order to help the Israelites to get out of Egypt. After those terrible plagues the Pharaoh released the Israelites and Moses led them to the Promised Land. However, the Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to capture the Israelites. The Israelites were at the bank of the Red Sea and were trapped. They could hear the army's horses galloping closer but they couldn't cross the sea. They were trapped - they didn't have boats or rafts to get across.

The Israelites lacked faith in God and complained to Moses and asked him why he let them out of Egypt. They also said it was better to work as slaves than be killed or drowned. But, Moses didn't lose faith in God. Moses



prayed and asked God for help. God answered by parting the Red Sea. This is God's solution to an impossible problem.

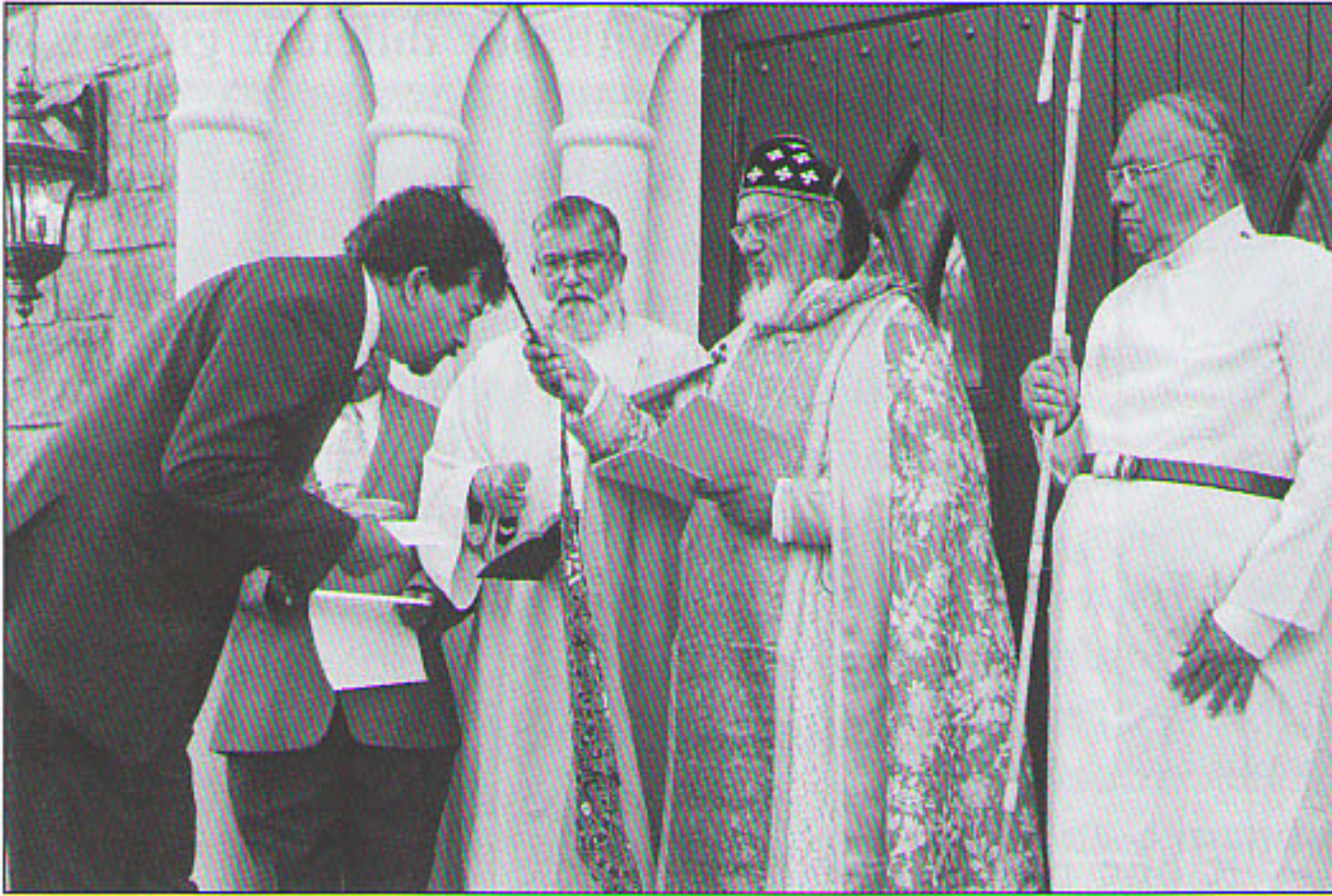
We all encounter problems. It could be big or small but God can help us only if we believe. For example, at my school I had to take swim class but was terrified of the water because I feared drowning. One day the coaches asked me to try to swim without any help. I gave it a try but when my feet couldn't touch the floor I got scared and feared that I was going to drown and I was going to give up. But I wanted to learn to swim so I immediately prayed and asked God to help me. Suddenly I got the courage and confidence to swim the whole length of the pool. I felt happy and all my friends were congratulating me and giving me high fives. God found a solution.

Mathew 7:8 sums it up everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds.



# DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

## TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON, TEXAS



*Theodosius Thirumeni receiving the Church key from Mr. George Muthalaly, the Trustee*

**DEDICATION OF THE RENOVATED CHURCH BUILDING:** Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston was established in 1974. His Grace Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan conducted a prayer meeting at Houston in April 1974 with 10 families and that was the humble beginning of Trinity Mar Thoma parish, Houston. By the grace of God we could complete 37 successful years as a worshipping community in this part of the world under the providence of God Almighty and we are indeed grateful to God for His abundant blessings, guidance and protection.

Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston is one of the first Mar Thoma congregations in the Diocese of North America



*Re-dedication of the Church by Thirumeni on Sunday, May 22, 2011*

& Europe and has the first self built Church building in the Diocese. The Church building was dedicated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan on July 14, 1984. We thank God Almighty for the countless blessings that we have received over the years. Our parish is growing rapidly and experiencing a steady growth in our membership. To serve the growing need of our members in a meaningful way, the General Body held on February 22, 2009 had unanimously decided to renovate the Church building.

This marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the parish. On April 11, 2010, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese



*A view of the audience*



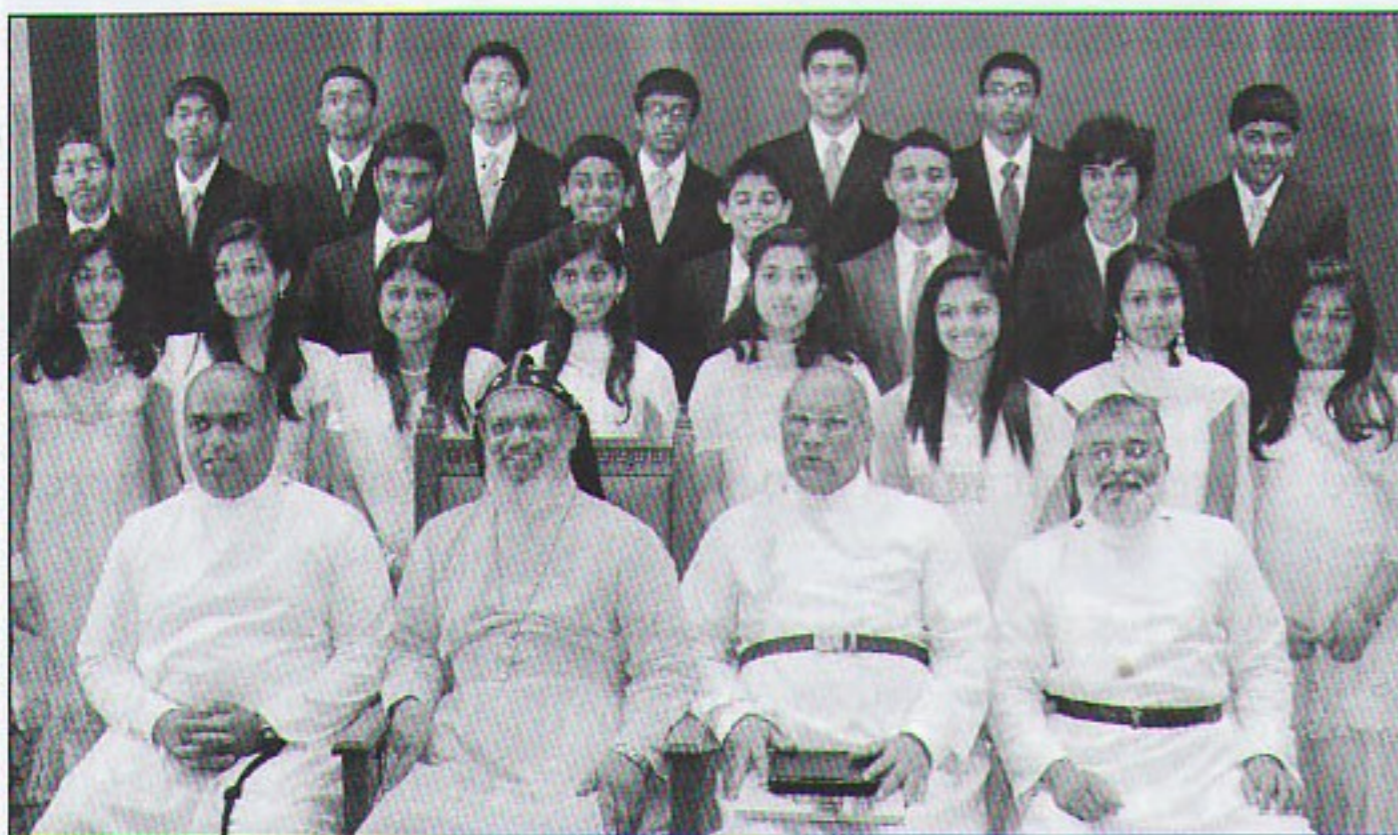


*Re-dedication of the Church by Thirumeni on Sunday, May 22, 2011*

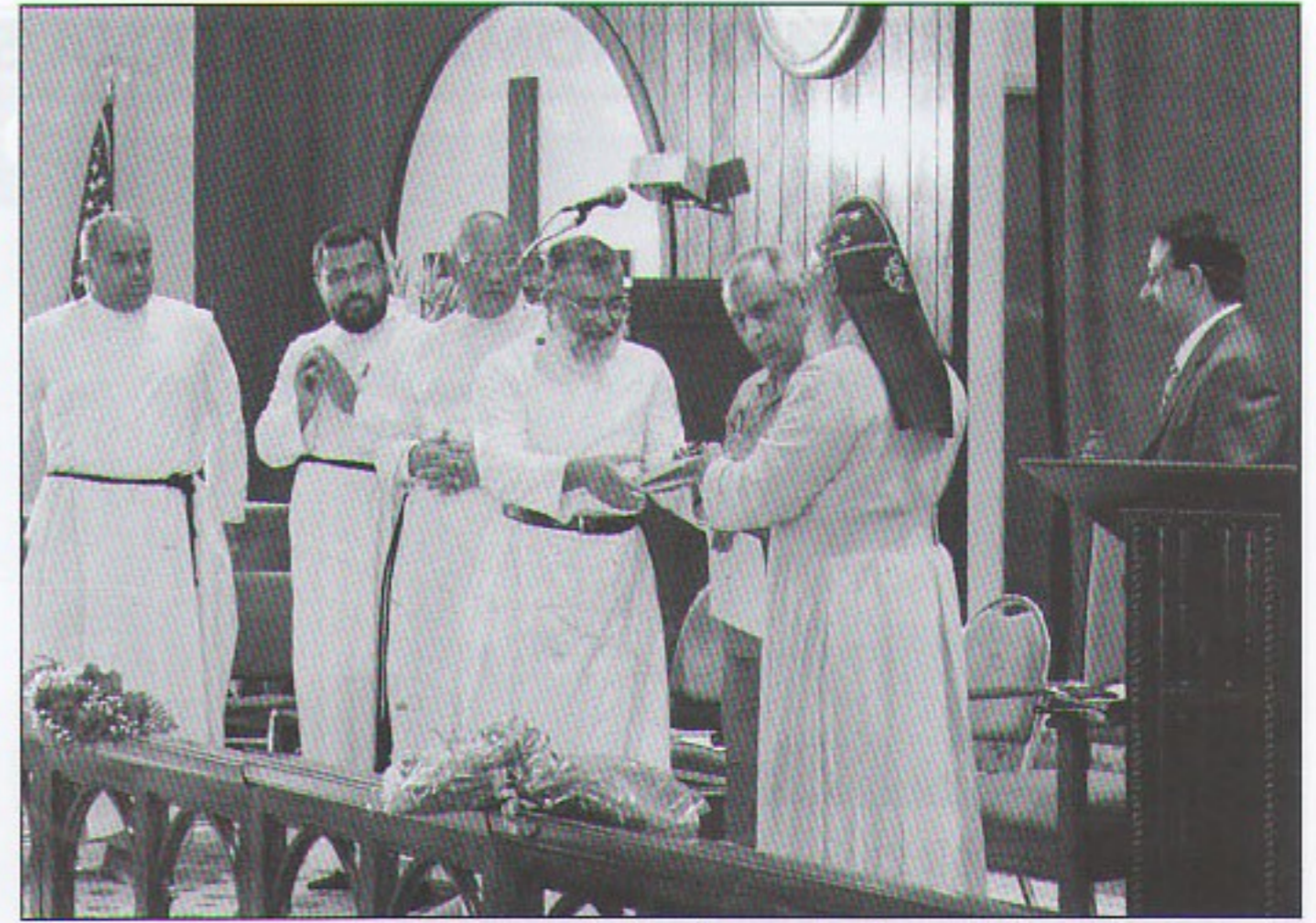
Mar Theodosius Episcopa laid the foundation stone for the renovation of the Sanctuary and by the grace of God, the dedication ceremony of the renovated Sanctuary was solemnized by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa on May 22, 2011.

The dedication service started with a solemn procession at 9.00 am, attended by the Sunday school students, Choir, Clergy and Executive Committee members respectively. While the procession reached at the main entrance of the Nave, the Trustee Mr. George Muthalaly in the presence of Vicar Rev. Zacharia John and the Account Trustee Mr. Babu T. George, read the deed, of transferring the ownership of the renovated Church to the Mar Thoma Metropolitan and submitted the keys to the Diocesan Bishop. At the end of the dedication service Thirumeni unveiled the dedication stone. Approximately a gathering of 850 believers and Clergy attended the ceremony. Holy Communion service followed and there was special service for the first communicants. Twenty one youngsters of the parish received Holy Communion for the first time.

Public meeting started immediately after the Holy Communion service with an opening prayer by the youth chaplain Rev. Shibi Abraham. The Vice president Mr. Thomas Varghese welcomed the Diocesan Bishop, distinguished guests, Clergy, members of sister parishes and Trinity Family. Rev. Zacharia John in his presidential address congratulated the members of the parish for their sincere cooperation and support in the building project and



*First Communicants with Theodosius Thirumeni and Achens.*



*Thirumeni received a copy of the Souvenir from Mr. John Chacko (Convener) and releasing it by giving a copy to Rev. Zacharia John, Vicar.*

called on for mission as a renewed worshipping community. Mr. Abraham Idiculla, Parish secretary, presented a brief report about the parish history, organizational activities and the building project. Thirumeni appreciated the efforts of everyone in his inaugural address and urged to widen the walls of our hearts to love the Lord and work together for the spiritual growth of the parish and society. Rev. A. T. Thomas, Vicar, Immanuel Mar Thoma Church Houston and Rev. K. A. Joshua blessed the occasion with their felicitations. Mr. Chander Mohan Manchanda, Assistant Consul General of India extended his warm felicitation to the parish. Mr. P. M. John, convener, building committee, expressed his felicitation. Mr. John Chacko, Souvenir Committee convener, invited Thirumeni to release the souvenir. Thirumeni released the first copy and presented it to the Asst. Consul General. The melodious singing of the parish Choirs (both English & Malayalam) added much flavor to the program. Mr. Titus Abraham expressed vote of thanks to everyone. Mr. Varghese Joseph provided the professional Photography and Mr. Thomas Mathew coordinated the media for the day. Members and various church organizations deserve special thanks for their time and talents.

The Executive committee from 2009 to 2011, especially the Trustees Mr. Thomas Mathew, Mr. Pulinthitta C. George, Mr. George Muthalaly and Mr. Babu T. George, Convener Mr. P. M. John, Mrs. Binila Muthalaly were heavily involved in the total process of the renovation project. The Building sub committee spent countless hours to plan and manage the project. As part of keeping up our culture and traditions, the front elevation of the church building is modeled in the "Malankara Eastern Tradition". Mr. George Muthalaly, the designer, deserves special appreciation. With the new addition, we have a total seating capacity of 730 in the main Sanctuary. The hard work and generous contribution of all parishioners and well wishers together with the grace of God made this dream a reality. Currently we have 278 families and Rev. Zacharia John provides leadership and guidance as the Vicar since May 2010.

**Rev. Zacharia John, Vicar    Abraham K. Idiculla, Secretary**



## XII MAR THOMA YUVAJANA SAKHYAM NATIONAL CONFERENCE



"Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to the entire world". (Isaiah: 12:5)

The New Jersey Mar Thoma Church Yuvajana Sakhyam was privileged to host the 12th National Conference of the Yuvajana Sakhyam as part of its 10th Anniversary on October 8-10, 2010 at Holiday Inn, Somerset, New Jersey. The theme of the conference was **"Mandate of the Church in a Groaning World"**. The speakers for the Conference were, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa



(Diocesan Bishop), Rev. Vinoy Daniel (Diocesan Secretary), Rev. Oommen Varkey (Vicar, Epiphany MTC), Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvila (South-East Region Youth Chaplain), Mr. Tenny Thomas, and Dr. Anita Daniel. A well organized children's program based on the theme **"Shine like Stars"**, was one of the highlights of this conference.

Our Sakha Yuvajana Sakhyam decided to support 4 projects in connection with the conduct of the National Conference and as part of its 10th anniversary. The projects were, to raise funds for marriage aid, educational aid, medical aid and housing aid.



The Souvenir chief editor Jeena Jacob presented the Souvenir and a copy of the Souvenir was given to the Diocesan Bishop by Alex Mathew for release. Theodosius Thirumeni released the souvenir by presenting to the chief speaker Rev. Oommen Varkey. The Conference edition of 'Yuvadharma' was released by the Diocesan Bishop. The conference was attended by 20 Clergies and Delegates from 19 parishes, totally 340 participants. Mr. Alex George, Fr. Joy Alappatt, Mr. Santhosh Abraham and Zachariah Koshy offered their felicitations. The General Convener Mr. Alex Mathew gave the vote of thanks. Mrs. Elizabeth George served as the MC for the inaugural program.

At the very outset I thank God Almighty for enabling us to conduct a Conference of such great value and purpose. I wish to place on record our gratitude to our Diocesan Bishop the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa for his steadfast guidance and vision of the conference. I thank our Vicar Rev. Jose T. Abraham and family for their leadership and support. Special thanks to the Choir which rendered beautiful songs during the conference. Special thanks to Sujith Abraham who served as the choir master



and to Dony Oommen and Jeena Mathew for playing the key board during the sessions with children. I thank Roshen Mammen for helping us in developing the logo, the registration tariff, the souvenir tariff and in designing the Banner. We supported Five Housing projects, Eight Medical Aid, Three Education, One marriage aid and two church buildings with total amount of \$10,000. The main sources of income for these funds were the National Conference and a raffle that was conducted during the 10th Anniversary.

**Rev. Jose Abraham T., Conference President**  
**Alex Mathew, General Convener**



## UPCOMING PROGRAMS-2011

### Regional Convention—2011

*Speaker: Rev. Dr. & Mrs. T. J. Thomas*

Place	Date
Europe	August 1-8
Canada	August 9-15
Seattle-Los Angeles	August 16-22
Houston	August 23-28
South Florida	August 30-Sept. 4
Philadelphia	September 6-11
Chicago	September 13-18
New York	September 20-25

### Workshop on Counseling—2011

*Leader: Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla*

Place	Date
1. Toronto	May 17-19
2. Chicago	September 8-10
3. Houston	September 15-17
4. Philadelphia	October 21-23
5. Dallas	November 10-12
6. New York	December 1-3

### Other Programs for the year—2011

**June 30-July 3**

**Family Conference, Edmonton, Alberta**  
Theme: Discipleship

**July 3-4**

**Clergy Family Conference**

Edmonton, Alberta  
Theme: 'Ministry in the digital world'

**July 7-10**

**Diocesan Youth Fellowship Conference,**  
New York

Theme: "A City on a Hill" Mt. 5:14-16

**July 11-12**

**Youth Chaplains Conference, New York**

**July 14-17**

Junior/Senior Conference, New Jersey  
Theme: "Truth shall set you free" John 8:32

**July 22-24**

MTVEA National Conference, Detroit  
Theme: "Be Imitators of Christ (Eph. 5:1)"

**August 5-7**

Family Conference, U. K.  
Theme: "True mark of a Christian Family"

**August 18 onwards**

Diocesan Convention at various regions

**September 29-October 2**

Sevika Sangham National Conference, Chicago  
Theme: "Choice—Is it right?"

**October 7-9**

Yuvajana Sakhyam National Conf, Dallas  
Theme "Living the Gospel in different cultures"

**October 14-16**

APDM (Physicians' Conference, New Jersey)

**October 28-30**

Young Family National Conference, New York  
Theme: "As for me and my house ....."  
(Joshua 24:15)

## DIOCESAN BISHOP'S ITINERARY

Please visit the Diocesan web site at [www.marthomanae.org](http://www.marthomanae.org) for the detailed itinerary of Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa.



## OUR NEW ACHENS AND FAMILIES

**REV. A. B. BINU**, Long Island MTC



*Mother Parish:* Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Mekozhoor

*Education:* BA, BD, MTh

*Year of Ordination:* 1999

*Parishes Served:* Neduvaloor Bethel MTC; Bilaspur MTC; Chattisgarh Missionary; Gwalior MTC; Kumily St. Peters

*Wife:* Shobha Binu (MCM)

Denil Binu, 10 yrs. 5th Grade; Calvin Binu, 6yrs. 1st Grade

*Contact:* 516-208-3523 – Parsonage; 516-589-1606 - Cell

**REV. ABRAHAM P. A.**, Philadelphia MTC



*Mother Parish:* Bethlehem MTC, Elavumthitta

*Education:* St Thomas College, Kozhencherry

*Date of Ordination:* June 22nd, 1994

*Parishes Served:* Vayyatupuzha Bethel; Attachackal ST. Thomas; Chengara Bethel; Kadammanitta Salem; Uthimoodu Mar Thoma; Ranny Christose

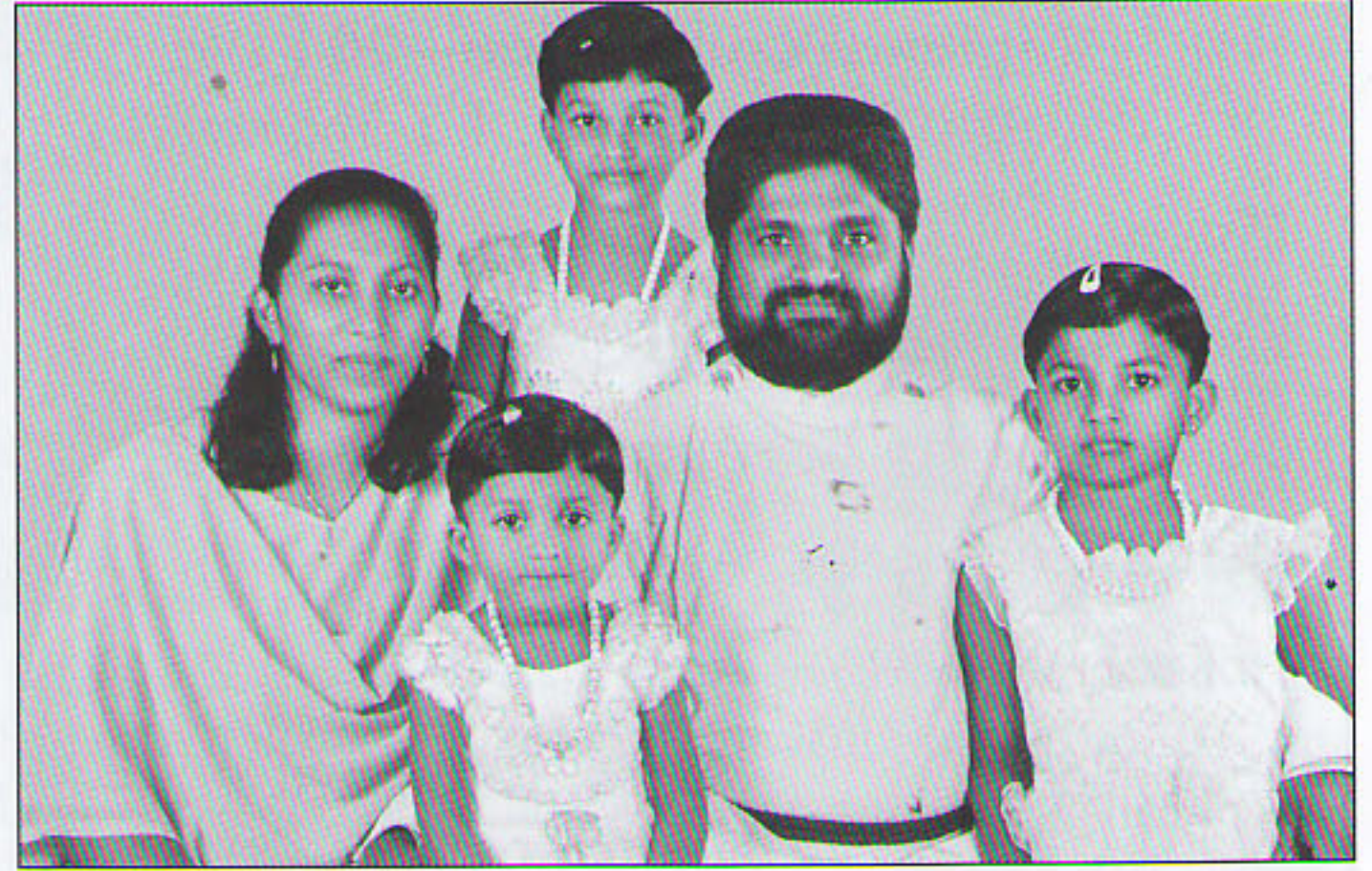
*Wife:* Rosamma Abraham

*Native Place:* Pulimoottil House, Eraviperoor

*Children:* Feba Sosa Abraham B.E. (Kerala); Lydia Elizabeth Abraham B.Tech (Kerala); Julia Mary Abraham 9th Grade–Philadelphia

*Phone:* 215-677-7979 (H) 215-510-1601 (C)

**REV. ALEXANDER VARUGHESE**, Bethel MTC, Phila.



*Mother Parish:* Maramon Mar Thoma Church, Maramon

*Education:* UTC, BD

*Year of Ordination:* 2000

*Parishes Served:* Kokkathodu Mission Field–Orekkar Emmanuel; Kattikkuzhy Ebenezer; Mukkoottuthara Ascension; Edakadathy Emmanuel; Plaveliniravu Salem; Pune–Pimpri St. Thomas; Kalevadi St. Stephens; Kottarakkara–Plappally Bethel; Vettikavala St. Pauls

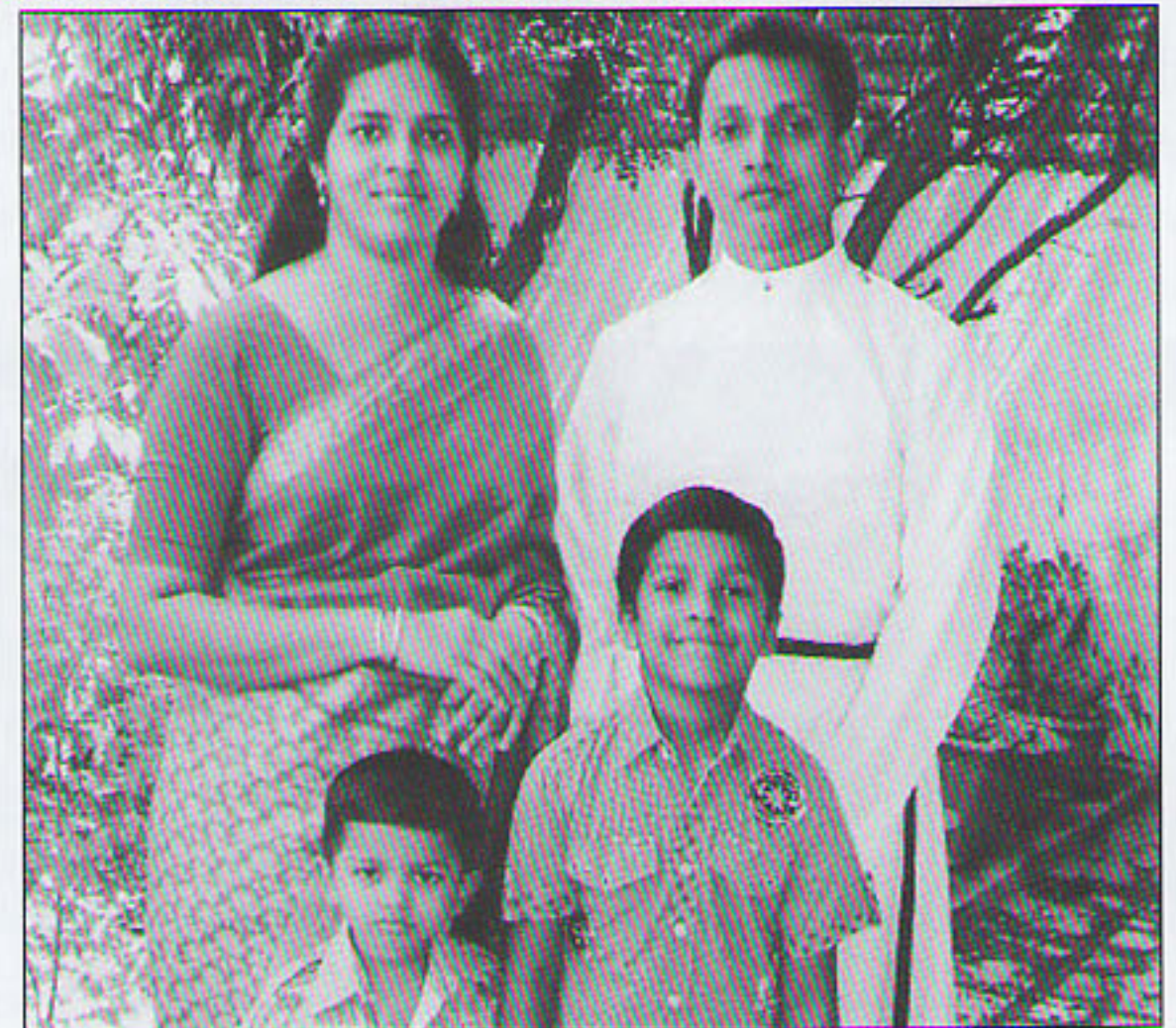
*Wife:* Sherly Alexander

*Children:* Chaitanya Alexander (Kripa) 8yrs; Charutha

Alexander (Kaniv) 6yrs; Chathurya Alexander (Kiran) 4yrs

*Contact:* 215-725-9774 (Res.) 215-480-3752 (Cell)

**REV. ANTHONY T. VARUGHESE**, Ascension MTC, Phila.



*Mother Parish:* Mar Thoma Church, Uthimoodu

*Education:* (B.A.) & A. P. Sing University, (M.A.); B.D.

*Ordination:* September 2000

*Manager:* Christa Jyothi Seva School

*Parishes Served:* Bethel MTC, Kollapally; Immanuel MTC, Paruthipara; St Thomas MTC, Kota, Rajasthan; MT Congregation – Rawatbhata, Rajasthan

*Council Member:* Delhi Diocese

*Wife:* Bincy Anthony

*Children:* Hemant Antony 7 years; Nishant Antony 4 years

*Phone:* 215-947-4274 (H) 267-312-9755 (C)



**REV. JOHN KURUVILLA**, St. Mark's MTC  
Tampa/Orlando Cong., FL



*Mother Parish:* Thuruthikad MTC

*Education:* BD

*Year of Ordination:* 1983

*Parishes Served:* Edanad Salem; Arattupuzha Bethlehem; Ezhumatoor St. Thomas; Punnamood Ebenezer; Punthala Marthoma; Kalayapuram Salem; Mannady Marthoma; Mannor Salem; Piravanthoor St. Thomas; Elikatoor Zion; Kovillor Salem.... etc.

*Wife:* Leelamma John (Teacher)

*Children:* Twinkle Mery John, 21 yrs. Nursing (3rd year)

*Contact Numbers:* 813-774-8855 (h), 813-562-3793 (c)

**REV. JOHN N. ABRAHAM**, Lubbock and Austin, Texas



*Mother Parish:* Thumpamon Sehion/Thumpamon

*Education:* BA, BD

*Year of Ordination:* 1977

*Positions Held/Parishes Served:* MTVEA General Secretary; BAJM Hospital, Palakkad Administrator/Missionary; Dharmagiri Mandiram President; Fellowship Hospital, Kumbanad Chaplain; Sabha Council member; Vaidika Selection Committee Member; MTEA Managing Committee member; Niranam Maramaon Diocesan council member; Served as vicar in 25 parishes

*Wife:* Mariamma John

*Children:* Johncy P. John / 31/ M.Sc.; Jency E. John/ 27/MBA

*Contact Numbers:* 806-368-8639, 806-368-1792

**REV. DR. P. L. JOHN PANICKER**, The Canadian  
MTC, Toronto



*Mother Parish:* All Saints Marthoma Church,  
Kampamcode, Kottarakkara

*Education:* B. Sc., B.D., M. Th

*Parishes Served:* Kumili, Anakkara, Vandanmedu, Kallar, Nedunkandam, Kochara, Mylom, Kalayapuram, Karickom, Andoor St. Peters, Jerusalem, Ummannur, Parankode, Ambalakkara, Mathaimukku, Anchal Jerusalem, St. Pauls, Vilakkupara, Pazhayeroor, Channapetta, Anakulam, Thalappady Nazareth, Anchery Christos, Valankara Ebenezer, Keezhvaipur Jerusalem, Vettiyakkonam, Kombady St. Peters.

*Special Positions:* Principal of the Marthoma Episcopal Jubilee Institute of Evangelism; Registrar of the Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture (FFRRC); Senate Member, Academic Council Member and Research Supervisor of the Serampore University; Professor of Religions in Marthoma Seminary, Kottayam and Mulanthuruthy Malankara Syrian Orthodox Seminary; Diocesan Secretary of Thiruvananthapuram – Kollam Diocese, Sabha Council member, Vaidika Selection Committee member, Superintendent of the Kottarakkara Jubilee Mandiram, Convenor of the Anchal ITC Committee, Governing Board member of Ayur Marthoma Engineering College, Marthoma Seminary, Kottayam, Bangalore CISRS and Chungathara Marthoma College

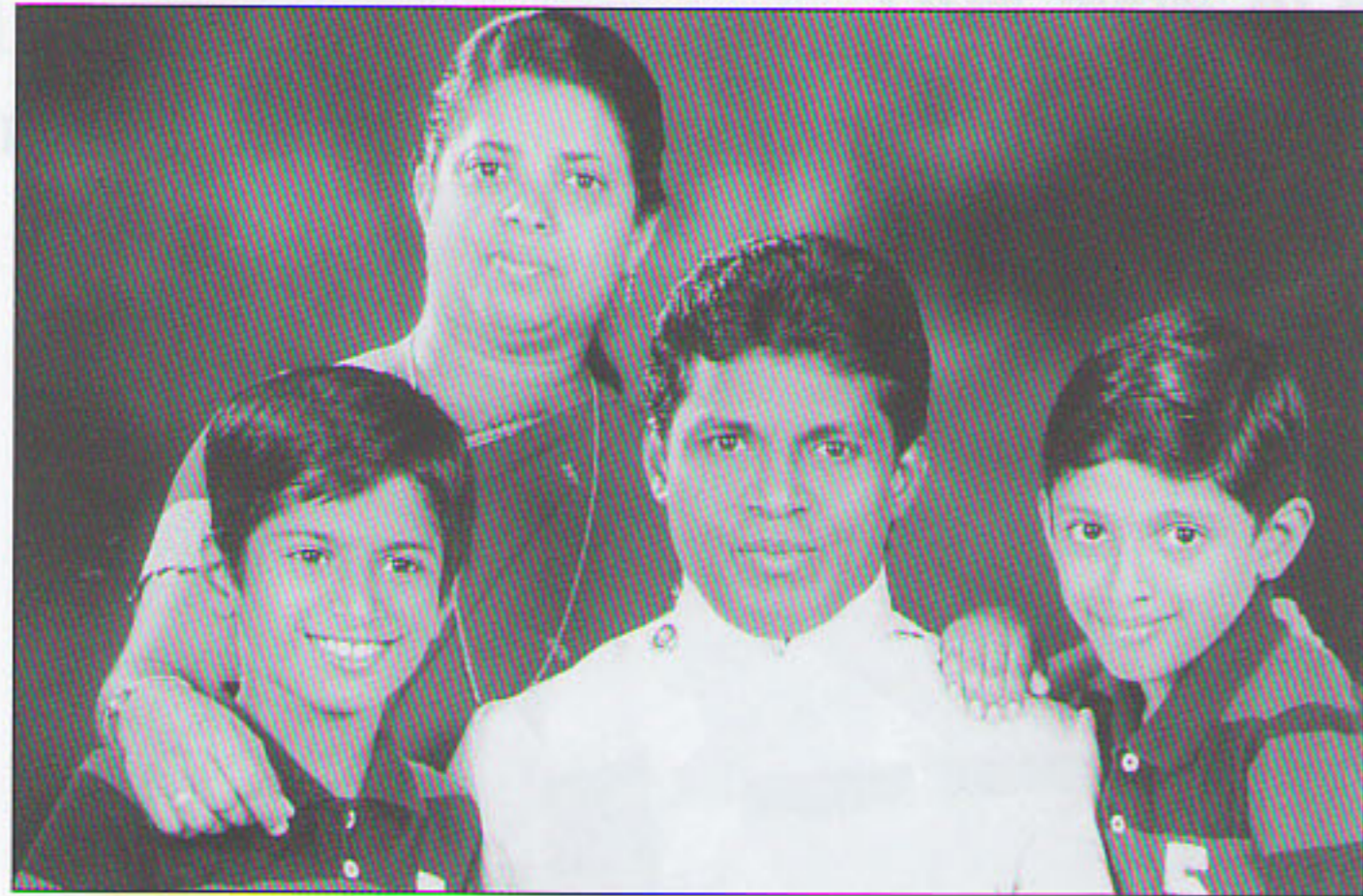
*Publications:* Communalism in India and Gandhi on Pluralism and Communalism

*Wife:* K. J. Rahelamma, M.A., B. Ed., Principal - SC Seminary Higher Secondary School Tiruvalla

*Children:* Dr. Joji John Panicker (Kottayam with his wife Ancy and their daughter Joann); Jijo Mariyam and her husband Benoy John are in Kuwait; Jeena Rachel and her husband Baiju are in Sweden



**REV. ROY GEEVARGHESE**, Christos MTC, Phila.



*Mother Parish:* St. Thomas MTC, Pooyappally

*Education:* M.A., BD

*Ordination:* 1997

*Parishes Served:* Vadattupara Salem (plus 3), Thattackadu Tabor, Karukachal St. Thomas, Naranammoozhy Nilackal and St. Thomas, Edamon Tabor and St. Pauls, Nasik St. Thomas, Valanjavattom Ebenezer & Kattanam St. Thomas

*Manager:* CARD, Council member—Kottayam Cochin Dioces and Ranni Diocese

*Vice president:* Kottayam Kochi Diocese Yuvajana Sakhyam

*Wife:* Anie Roy, Kumplampoika (Edamala House)

*Children:* Asish Roy 7th grade; Adarsh Roy 4th grade

*Phone:* 215-698-1610 (O) 215-808-7410 (C)

**REV. SAM JOHN**, Tabor MTC/Carmel MTC/Edinburgh MT Congregation, UK



*Mother Parish:* St. John's MTC, Thalavady

*Education:* B.Com, BD

*Year of Ordination:* 1986 May 23

*Parishes Served:* Anaprambal Mar Thoma Church; Chennamkeri St. Paul's & Bethany, Ranny; Karikulam; Neeratukavu; Thonikkadavu Christos; Anicadu Arohanam; Chelakombu St. John's; Kadammanitta Kalleli M.T.C.; Othara Eben Ezer M.T.C., Kizhakenmuthoor St. Paul's; Anamala St. Thomas; Kaviyoor Valliyapalli; Kotoor Emmanuel

*Positions Held:* Niranam Maramon Student's Chaplain; Anaprambal J.M.M. Jubilee Mandiram

*Superintendent;* Sunday School Samajam Managing

Committee Member; Chengannur Thumbamon Bhadrasana Council Member

*Wife:* Saly Sam (Teacher)

*Children:* Sajith John Sam (B.E.); Saumya Mariam Sam (B.A.)

*Contact Information:* 011-44-1612208376,

011-44-7852557598; Email: revsamjohn@gmial.com

**REV. THOMAS JOHN**, MTC Los Angeles, CA



*Native Place:* Elanthoor

*Education:* M.A., B.D.

*Parishes Served:* Attachackal St. Thomas; Chengara Bethel; Vadakkupuram Salem; Valankara Ebenezer; Keezhvaipur Jerusalem; Vayalathala St. Thomas; Antthiyalankavu Salem; Ranni Vaikom; Vadasserikara St. Johns

*Missionary:* Hoskot Mission

*Secretary:* M.T.E.A Thiruvalla (2005 – 2011)

*Wife:* Jaya Thomas (M.A., B.Ed.)

*Son:* Jerin John Thomas; *Daughter:* Merin Sara Thomas

**REV. VARGHESE K. ABRAHAM**, St. Mathews MTC, Toronto



*Mother Parish:* Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, Thuvayoor

*Education:* BD, MT Theological Seminary, Kottayam

*Year of Ordination:* 2001

*Positions/Churches Served:* Chaplain to the Metropolitan, Poolatheen, Tiruvalla; St. Stephens, Mukkajiram; St. Johns, Anjilithanam; St. Thomas, Mundiapally; Thirumoolapuram Bethany; Kallumkal St. Pauls;

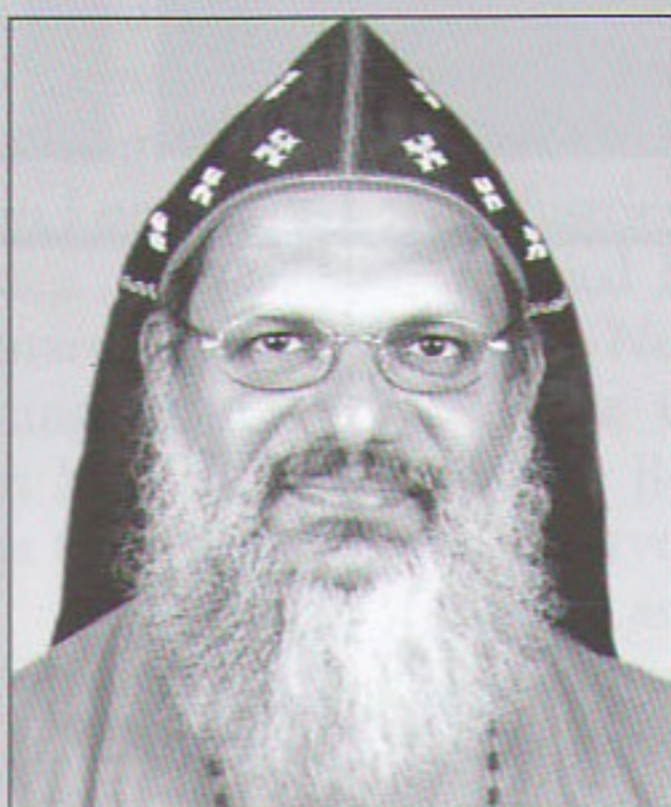


Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church, Elamkulam; Kolencherry St. Thomas; Mamala Jerusalem; Valakom Mar Thoma Church; St. George Mar Thoma Church; Fort Kochi  
 Wife: Asa Elizabeth Varkey, Kottayam  
 Children: Abel Abraham Varghese -7yrs; Aiden John Varghese—5yrs  
 Contact Number: 905-455-4717

**REV. VIJI T. KURIKESU**, San Francisco MTC, CA  
 Mother Parish: Mukhathala MTC, Kollam  
 Education: M Com, BD  
 Year of Ordination: 1999  
 Parishes Served: Chengaroth Immanuel; Anakulam Sehion; Chempanoda Carmel; Mannoor Salem; Anakulam Ebenezer; Manacode St. Thomas; Kovilloor Salem; Kuttamala Immanuel; Mezhakode St. Thomas;  
 Director—Department of Sacred Music and Communications  
 Wife: Anitha Viji  
 Native Place: Kottarakkara Thalachira  
 Children: Sagara Anna Viji 4 1/2 yrs



**DIOCESAN YUVAJANA SAKHYAM OFFICE BEARERS**



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

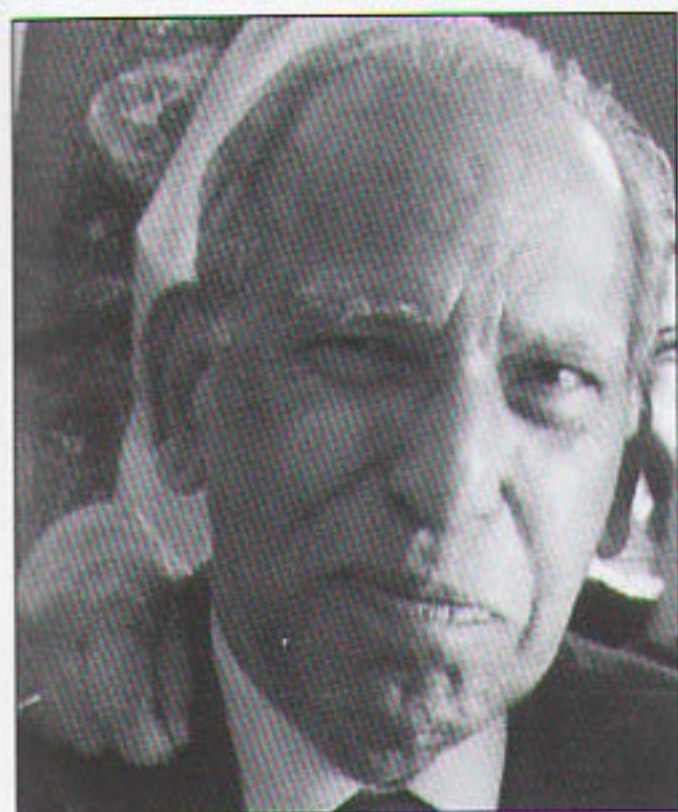


**Thomas Thaimuriyil (Aji)**  
REALTOR/LOAN OFFICER



## OBITUARY

### MR. MATHEW ABRAHAM KALLUMPRAM



1921 – 2011

(Kochukunju), who has died in Manchester aged 89, was variously a family man—a patriarch, a business man, a church-man, a mediator, a community builder, a writer, a counsellor, and a God-centred gentleman. To his family, he was a loving husband, a father, a father-in-law, a grandfather, brother, and uncle; to intimate friends he was known as 'Kochukunju', meaning little prince.

Mathew was born into a traditional Mar Thoma family at Kuzhikala, in the bible belt of Kerala, in November 1921. His mother died very early in his childhood; his father remarried and he was brought up by his stepmother. His elder brother, Late Rev. Dr. Ninan Kallumpurath, was a very distinguished priest of the Mar Thoma Church. Mathew had two brothers and three sisters. Mathew came to UK in 1947, when he was just about 26 years of age, 6 months before India achieved her independence. It was a period of renaissance and revolution in India. Mathew was a devotee of Mahatma Gandhi and the non-violent movement; he made his patriotic contributions in Bombay and in London for India's freedom struggle; it is a very proud legacy.

He subsequently returned to India to get married to Susan in 1955. Susan comes from a very distinguished Kerala family, Palakunnath, which gave Abraham Malpan, Martin Luther of the reformation of Mar Thoma Church, and five Metropolitans.

Mathew was very proud of his children Suma and Ashok, son-in-law, John, daughter-in-law, Anna, and their grandchildren.

Chrysostom Thirumeni once said he was an unofficial ambassador of the Church in Europe. He published a history of the Mar Thoma Church in English with Dr. Zac Varghese; founded and funded the society of St. Thomas and St. Augustine in 1984 with Dr. Zac Varghese and Bishop Dominic Walker. He was the first secretary of the UK Mar Thoma parish and travelled from Manchester to London, a four-hundred mile journey, most weekends to organise Sunday worship. He was a member of the Manchester Council of Community Relations, the Manchester Community Health Council, the Princes Trust, the Anglican Deanery and Diocesan Synod, and on the Committee for minority Ethnic Anglican concerns.

Rt. Rev. Peter Foster (Bishop of Chester), Rev. Canon Roy Arnold, Rev. Varghese Mathew, Rev. Eapen Abraham, Rev. Sajeev Thomas and Rev. Geevarughese were present for conducting the funeral service on Friday 15 April. Dr. Zac Varghese, his long time friend, gave the funeral eulogy and in which among other things he said, "Mathew's abiding happiness was not in accumulating wealth, but in giving

himself up to what is greater than him, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, to the ideas of justice, of humanity, of morality, of common good, and of God.

Mathew was a true pioneer and great lay leader of the Mar Thoma Church in Europe and he helped the church in many ways to build relationship with Church of England and other churches from 1947.

**Dr. Zac Varghese, London**

**SUNNY ABRAHAM** known as Sunny Anaparackal, was born on July 29, 1962 in Nellimala (Kumbanad), Kerala. He was the youngest of seven children born to the late Anaparackal John Abraham and Annamamma Abraham.



1962 – 2011

Sunny attended S.N. College, Chengannur. He was active in the Kerala Congress in the district level and participated in various political and religious activities. He served in the Development Department for the Mar Thoma Sabha and also as a Mandalom member. In 1990, he came to America and joined Cardone Industries, where he worked 18 years. On May 11, 1991, he married Binu (Daly) and was blessed with three children: Linsa, Noel, and Sojel.

He was an active member of various organizations within Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. He has also served as a writer for various Indian newspapers and served as the Philadelphia Bureau Editor for Malayalee Sangamam. He served as the Secretary of the Philadelphia Chapter of India Press Club in the year 2009-2010. He was one of the Board of Directors of the Press Club Philadelphia for the current year.

He was a loving husband, father and brother. He is survived by his wife, Binu (Daly) Sunny, children Linsa, Noel, and Sojel.

*(An innocent life cut short on the street by another human being)*



1988 – 2011

### MOHAN VARUGHESE

'Binu' was born on February 5, 1988 to the late Odikandathil P. Varughese and Ann Varughese in Philadelphia as twin brother of Mathew and younger brother of Manu. Mohan has completed his college studies at Penn State University and was set to graduate on the 13th of May 2011. In April 2011, Mohan accepted his



first full time job with the University of Pennsylvania Health System. With his work expertise and college education, he aspired to be a school psychologist where he could bring comfort to troubled youths. Mohan had a heart of gold, always offering a helping hand to anyone without hesitation. As an active member of Bethel Marthoma Church, Philadelphia, Mohan has developed a strong friendship circle that included youth from all around this city of brotherly love. His contagious smile can never be forgotten by anyone who had met Mohan.

The viewing was held on May 13th 2011 (the day he was expected to attend his graduation ceremony) at Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia—a viewing attended by thousands. Funeral Service was conducted by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa and burial was held at Forest Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia.

**MARIAMMA OOMMEN** was born as a member of the Pullankeril family in Chengannur, Kerala. She was married to late Oommen Mathew of Kaniampampil, Ennackadu



1921 – 2011

and was blessed with five children. Mariamma migrated to Philadelphia in 1993, past the death of her husband. Mariamma lived a fruitful Christian life as a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and a great-grandmother. Her prayerful and meditative life practices instilled strong Christian faith in her family members and her friends. Mariamma is survived by her children Mrs. Sarah Kovoor

(husband Thomas Kovoor), Mrs. Grace Kuruvilla (husband Mathew Kuruvilla), Mr. Mathew Oommen (wife Annamma Mathew), Mr. Philip Oommen (wife Lucy Philip), and Mrs. Elsy Kurian (husband Kurain Varghese) and 10 grand children and 4 great grandchildren.

The viewing and funeral services were held at Christos Mar Thoma Church and internment at Forest Hill Cemetery.

**ANNAMMA JOHN** (Thankamma) was from Anjilimoottil House, Mallappally and worked in Bhilai Steel plant since 1966 (section officer—Education Dept).

Annamma migrated to USA in 1989 with her husband Mr. K. K. John and three children: Anita, Sunita, and Vinita. Annamma was a loving and caring mother, a model wife, a great sister and a good friend. Annamma was a very dedicated and active member of Christos Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia and was especially involved in all activities of the Sevika



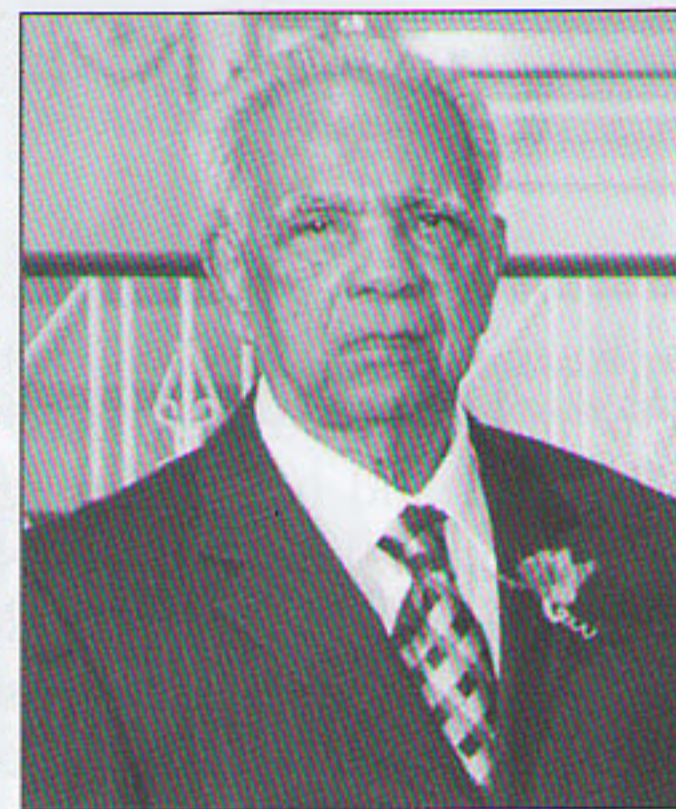
1942 – 2011

Sanghom. She was very compassionate to others and always had a warm smile.

Annamma is survived by her husband Mr. K. K. John, daughters Anita, Sunita, and Vinita, son-in-laws Binu Philip, K. C. Varghese, and Dr. Mathew K. Cherian, and grand children Alex, Amy, Christina, Cynthia, Andrew, and Kevin. Viewing and funeral services were held at Ascension Mar Thoma Church and at Forest Hill Cemetery respectively. She was laid to rest on Saturday May 7th 2011.

**MR. K. J. VARGHESE**, Kidayitharayil Varampathu Pullad, Tiruvalla, beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather, passed away on Tuesday, June 14th, 2011 at the age of 85. Mr. Varghese

was a retired government employee of the Kochin Naval Base and was a much-loved member of St. George Mar Thoma Church of Fort Kochin, Ernakulam, and later came to New Jersey to live with his children. He is survived by his 4 children: John Varghese and his wife Mrs. Sudha John, Sheela Daniel and her husband Mr. C. G. Daniel, Shobha Alex and her husband Dr. Alex Thomas



1926 – 2011

and Mathew Varghese and his wife Mrs. Reena Varghese; 7 grandchildren: great-grandchild: Elijah D. George. He was deeply loved and will be missed.

**DR. K. O. GEORGE** son of late Rev. K. G. Oommen and late Thankamma Oommen, one of the founding members



of the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles, was called to eternity on March 28th, 2011. In 1977, he immigrated to United States with his family to further his professional training. He co-founded Hahnemannian Research Center and HRC Labs in Irvine, CA. He is well known nationally and internationally as a leading authority in Homeopathic Medicine and

was a regular speaker on "Chronic Degenerative Diseases". He was a contributing editor to several books and articles. He is the brother of late Rev. K. O. Sam. He is survived by his son Dr. Oommen. K. George, daughter in law Dr. Suma Oommen, grandchildren, Joshua and Joann, brothers K. O. John and K. O. Thomas, sisters K. O. Mariamma and K. O. Aleyamma. The burial Service was held at the Crystal Cathedral, California on April 2, 2011. Rev. Varghese. A. Ninan conducted the Service.

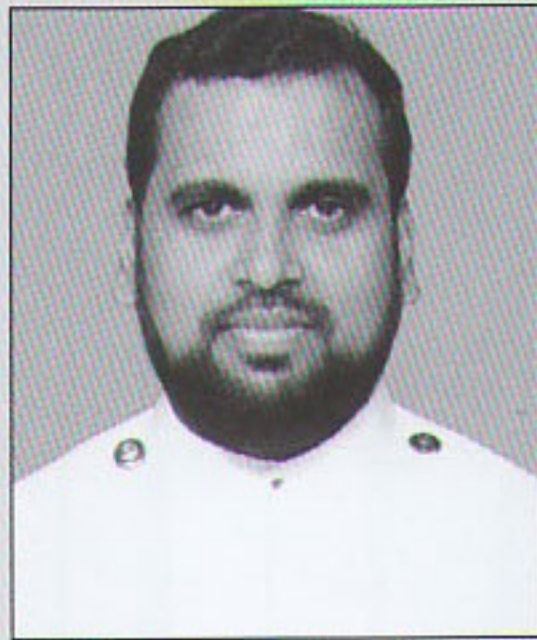
Messenger expresses its deepfelt condolences to all the bereaved families.



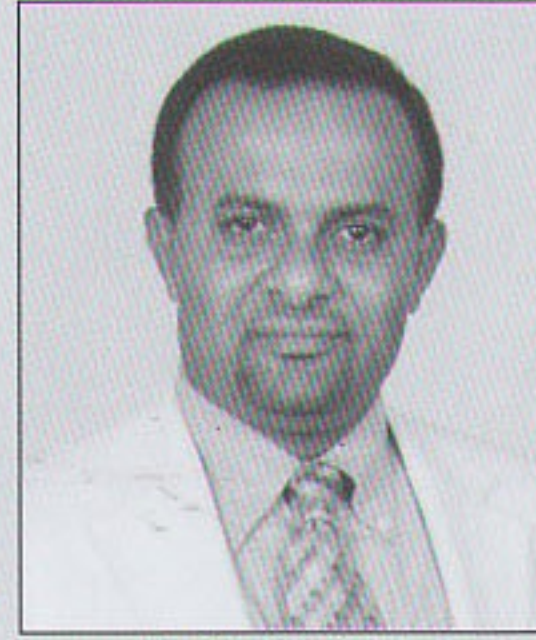
# Our New Diocesan Council



**Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa**  
Diocesan Bishop



**Rev. K. E. Geevarghese**  
Diocesan/Bishop's Secretary



**Mr. Chacko Mathew**  
Diocesan Treasurer



**Mrs. Grace John—Center 1**



**Mrs. Laila Anie Philip—Center 2**



**Mr. Varughese P. Varughese—Center 3**



**Mrs. Checha John—Center 3**



**Dr. Mathew T. Thomas—Center 4**



**Mr. Shaji Mathai—Center 4**



**Mr. Georgy Varghese—Center 5**



**Mr. Alan John—Center 6**



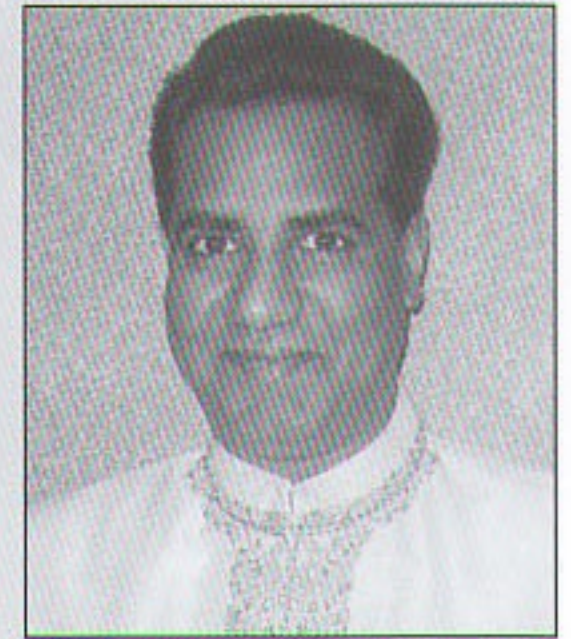
**Rev. Roy A. Thomas—Center 7**



**Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas—Center 7**



**Ms. Arlene Mathew—Center 8**



**Mr. George Samuel—Center 8**



**Ms. Anita Sujit—Center 9**



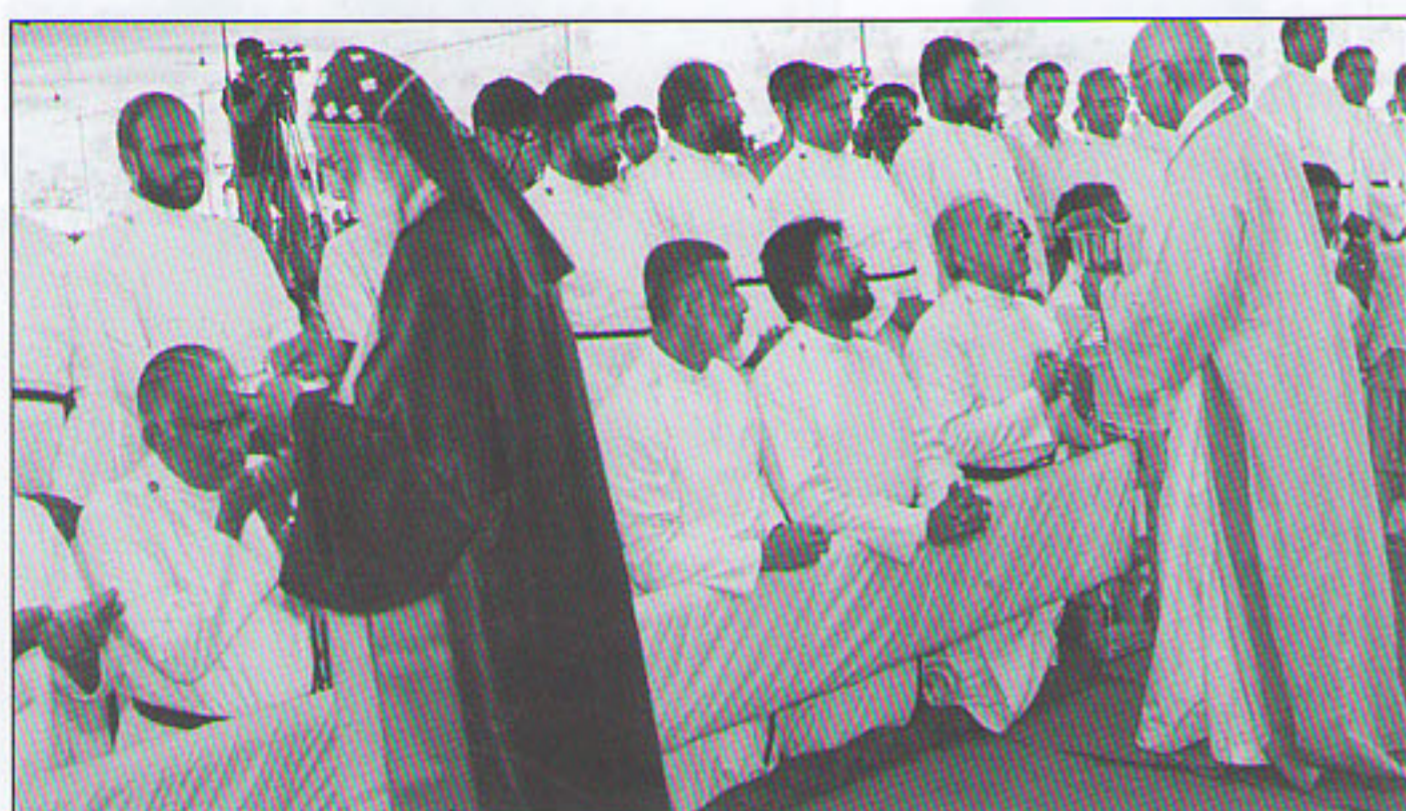
**Dr. Varghese Manaloor—Center 10**



**Rev. Sabu C. Mathew—Center 12**



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



## BOOK REVIEW: Joyful Vocation of a Teacher

**Autobiographical Reflections on Life and Teachings by Dr. T. M. Thomas. Publisher: CSS Books, Thiruvalla, Kerala. Distributor in North America: Mar Thoma Literature Society, 2320 South Merrick Avenue, Merrick, New York, 11566. Price: US \$15**

Writing an autobiography is considered to be an immense and time consuming task because one has to recollect chronological life events moored in cultural and historical contexts. This book has a different approach in that the readers will find significant life events in context with personal reflection on events at the end of each of the two dozen short chapters that meant a great deal of inspiration for the author to prepare for each successive stage in life, including familial, academic and professional endeavors. One who has lived in multi-cultural contexts and with similar professional interests would find strength and derive inspiration from the reading of this.

This book reveals the portrait of an erudite, versatile, and exemplary scholar-teacher with over half a century of experience in teaching in India and America as a high school teacher and University Professor respectively. Reminiscing on selected life experiences in chronological order, some challenging, and others eye opening, inspirational and thought provoking, this veteran educator provides few unique cross-cultural perspectives on trends, advances, and best practices essential to successful teaching. Early educational experiences in high school and Colleges through "Distance Education" (based on the distance to schools and colleges one had to travel in India the 1940s and 1950's) proved to be useful in furthering his advanced academic pursuits in interdisciplinary training in education, philosophy and sociology at reputable graduate schools and Universities in USA which led him to successful decades of

teaching as a professor at University of Bridgeport with intermittent sabbatical leave teachings at higher institutions in India.

According to Dr. T. M. Thomas, successful and effective teaching depends on three factors: knowledge of the subject, pedagogy (teaching skills), and disposition (temperament or inclination). Influenced by the philosophy of his mentor and one of the most famous professors, Dr. Theodore Brameld of Boston University, the author restates the cardinal purpose of social-self-realization is "to become a unique, free, responsible human being and to create a better world by constructive social changes and the central concern of education."

The author continuously reaffirms his Christian faith through his life-long commitment to community service. This is reflected in his role of helping the growth of his mother church, Mar Thoma in the United States, his years of Sunday school teaching and in the production of Sunday school literature for youngsters growing up in America. The life events which led him to become a successful and accomplished academician, author, and community leader is not viewed as "chance events" but as "God-incidence" the author's term for divine guidance.

This is a book which should be read by all youngsters who are aspiring for a career in education as well as those facing challenges in their chosen profession. Members of the "diaspora" would also find how life can be meaningfully spent along with their professions or careers serving fellow human beings.

Dr. V. T. Samuel, Professor of Social Work at Rust College and Director of International Social Work, Marian College, Kuttikkanam, Kerala, India

### ST. PAUL'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, MESQUITE (DALLAS)



March 20, 2010 was one of the most historic days of our church. On this day, our new Church building was consecrated by the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese



Mar Theodosius Episcopa in the presence of city officials, clergies and believers from churches across the country. It was the outcome of several years of prayers and hard work.





Honorable Mayor of the City of Mesquite Mr. John Monaco, as part of his felicitations declared the 20th day of March, 2010 as "The St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church Day" in the city of Mesquite. The Church decided to celebrate the first anniversary of this historic day in a very special way...by giving back to the city/community. On March

19th, we made 500 sandwiches and distributed it to the homeless people in Dallas. We also put together 250 care packages for the poor and needy. Parish worked in partnership with Solomon's Porch ministries in Dallas to reach out to around 250 people and care for their physical and spiritual needs. We organized prayer sessions, praise & worship and sermon for the homeless people. On March 20th, the Honorable Mayor of the City of Mesquite Mr. John Monaco attended a special program that was organized immediately after the worship service. The Mayor commended St. Paul's-Mar Thoma church's ministries and felicitated us with another Proclamation. It is indeed an honor to have this proclamation in back-to-back years. I thank God for the manifold blessings that He has showered upon us. I also thank and appreciate the hard work of each and every member of our church for making a dream come true.

**Soji Skariah**

## Matrimonials

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their slim and beautiful daughter (35) with masters in Library Science and Information from good looking christian professionals. If interested, please forward a recent photograph and details to [remanypappy@yahoo.com](mailto:remanypappy@yahoo.com) or phone: (516) 225-7148

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their 28 year old good looking son with a degree in computer engineering and working as a software engineer in New York from good looking pofessional girls. If interested, please forward a recent photograph and details to [remanypappy@gmail.com](mailto:remanypappy@gmail.com) or phone: (516) 225-7148.

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their daughter 28 years, 5'3" born and brought up in USA. She has doctorate in Clinical Psychology and currently doing her fellowship. We welcome interested and compatible grooms between the ages of 29 to 32 years, professionally qualified, born and brought up in USA. Please respond with recent photograph and bio data to: [jsam1812@yahoo.com](mailto:jsam1812@yahoo.com) or contact 630 985 1756.

Marthomite parents settled in Texas invite marriage proposals for their daughter (26 Years), born and brought up in USA, currently working as a PA in a reputable medical clinic. We invite proposals from Marthomite grooms with strong Christian family values. For information please contact: [jb80sing@yahoo.com](mailto:jb80sing@yahoo.com)

Marthomite parents settled in New Jersey invite proposals for their son. He is 31 years old, 5'8", M.D. Born and brought up in U.S. He completed residency and starting fellowship in July 2011. He is a strong christian, family oriented, looking for a strong God fearing and family oriented girl in the same field. Interested parents please contact with recent photos and details to: [sammy2050@aim.com](mailto:sammy2050@aim.com) or call 201-692-7753 or cell: 201-400-4834.



**THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK**



Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited the Parish on Sunday, June 12, 2011 and celebrated Holy Communion Service. Seven of our youngsters received Holy Communion for the first time.

During the Church Service the dedication of the graduates of 2011 was also conducted.

**PARISH DAY CELEBRATION:** The 30th Parish Day was celebrated on Sunday, June 12, 2011 immediately after the Holy Communion Service. Theodosius Thirumeni was the chief guest and honorable KPCC President and MLA Mr. Ramesh Chennithala was our surprise guest. In his speech Mr. Ramesh Chennithala congratulated the Mar Thoma Church for undertaking many worthy projects for the benefit of people of Kerala and all over India. Theodosius Thirumeni gave a brief description of the things he wishes to get done in the coming years. Our Vicar, Rev. Baby John welcomed the guests. Parish Secretary Mr. Prince Mathew gave a brief report of the parish and Accountant Mr. Sony K.



Ninan gave vote of thanks. Committee member and long time Sunday School teacher Mr. Varughese Raju



congratulated the graduates. A plaque sponsored by one of our members was presented to each graduate.

**Rev. Baby John, Vicar**

**NEWLY PURCHASED 2000 CARMAN COURT PROPERTY—ADJACENT TO THE DIOCESAN CENTER AT 2320 SOUTH MERRICK AVENUE, MERRICK, NEW YORK**



2000 Carman Court



Theodosius Thirumeni, Vinoy Achen, Chacko Mathew, Thomas Oommen, Abraham C. Thadathel, Varughese P. Varughese and Dr. "T" after the property closing.



## IMMANUEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, HOUSTON



Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited our parish from June 3rd to 5th, 2011. Thirumeny attended the meeting with Contemporary Worship (G3) team on Saturday, followed by parish Executive Committee meeting. Following the meetings, Thirumeny unveiled and solemnized the "Immanuel Mar Thoma Church Cemetery" sign board on the newly acquired plot at the Forest Park Cemetery property, Houston.

On Sunday, June 5th, Thirumeny celebrated the Holy Communion service along with our vicar Rev. A. T. Thomas and Rev. Prasad V. Kuzhiyath. Twenty three First Communicants received Holy Communion. After the worship service, Thirumeny distributed the VIP tickets to our



members for the Fund Raising variety entertainment program scheduled to be held at our Immanuel Center on September 18th, 2011.

Thirumeny inaugurated the newly formed parish Library which was completed by the efforts of our parish Yuvajanasakhyam. The library which carries religious, fiction and non-fiction books and magazines, aimed at the spiritual and social enrichment of our church community. After the fellowship lunch, Thirumeny met the H.O.P.E. mission group and also the Youth Fellowship and stressed the importance of their presence and activities in the Church.

**Rajan Daniel, Secretary**

## ASCENSION MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA



The Ascension Marthoma Church acquired a beautiful parsonage in 2010. The younger generation of our church has courageously volunteered to raise the money to help our church materialize this historic step. The Youth Fellowship, Young Family Fellowship, and Yuvajana Sakhyam decided to host a magic show on Saturday August 28, 2010, by the famous magician John Bundy and Morgan. This program was a great success and by the grace of God we were able to meet our goal and donate the proceeds towards the parsonage fund. Below are our pictures with the magician and our handing over the check to the church executive committee.



The Ascension Marthoma Church Youth Fellowship and Young Family Fellowship had the calling to do community service and neighborhood ministry for the past few years. This past summer we were able to start organizing community service and we volunteered at Philabundance on Saturday August 21, 2010. Our youth members and young family fellowship were able to help sort food that will be given to needy individuals in the community. We thank God for giving us this opportunity and we pray that we get more opportunities in the future.



**PHILADELPHIA MAR THOMA CHURCH—DEDICATION PICTURES**





# Eat Right

## Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the American Dietetic Association

### Step Up to Nutrition and Healthy Living

The food and physical activity choices made today-and everyday-affect your health and how you feel today and in the future. Eating right and being physically active are keys to a healthy lifestyle. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans can lead the way to a healthier you.

### Make smart choices from every food group

Give your body the balanced nutrition it needs by eating a variety of nutrient-packed foods every day. Just be sure to stay within your daily calorie needs.

#### A Healthy Eating Plan

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.
- Is low in saturated fats, trans-fats, cholesterol, salt (Sodium) and added sugars.

#### Get the most nutrition out of your calories

- Choose the most nutritionally rich foods you can from each food group each day-those packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but lower in calories. Focus on fruits. Eat a variety of fruits-fresh, frozen, canned or dried. For a 2,000 calorie diet, you need 2 cups of fruit each day.
- Vary your veggies. Eat more orange and dark green vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes, broccoli and dark leafy greens. Include beans and peas such as pinto beans, kidney beans, split peas and lentils more often.
- Get your calcium-rich foods. Have 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk-or an equivalent amount of low-fat yogurt and/or low-fat cheese every day (1 1/2 ounces of cheese equals 1 cup of milk). If you don't or can't consume milk, choose lactose-free milk products and/or calcium-fortified foods and beverages.

**Make half your grains whole. Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice or pasta every day. Look to see that grains such as wheat, rice, oats, or corn are referred to as "whole" in the list of ingredients.**

- Go lean with protein. Choose lean meats and poultry. Bake it, broil it or grill it. And vary your protein choices with more fish, beans, peas, nuts and seeds.
- Know the limits on fats, salt and sugars. Read the Nutrition Facts label on foods. Look for foods low in saturated fats and trans-fats. Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little salt (sodium) and/or added sugars.

### Find your balance between food and physical activity

- Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness-plus it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.
- Children and teenagers should be physically active for 60 minutes every day, or most days
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week.
- For even greater health benefits and to help control body weight, be physically active for about 60 minutes a day.

### Play It Safe with Foods

- Prepare, handle and store food properly to keep you and your family safe.
- Clean hands, food-contact surfaces, fruits and vegetables to avoid spreading bacteria.
- Separate raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing or storing.
- Cook meat, poultry and fish to safe internal temperatures to kill microorganisms.
- Chill perishable foods promptly and thaw foods properly.

### Consider This

- If you eat 100 more food calories a day than you burn, you'll gain about 1 pound in a month. That's about 10 pounds in a year. The bottom line is that to lose weight, it's important to reduce calories and increase physical activity.

### For more information about:

- Food groups and nutrition values or to pick up some new ideas on physical activity:  
[www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)
- My Pyramid food guidance system, including a quick estimate of what and how much you need to eat:  
[www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)
- Additional nutrition resources: [www.eatright.org/gml](http://www.eatright.org/gml)

Public Information for "Healthy Living" by American Diabetes Association



# Book Review: 'ORMAKALUDE THERUVEEDHIYII'

(Autobiography of Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph, in Malayalam)

In its 'Foreword', Justice K. T. Thomas highlights the essential nature of this beautiful book by suggesting that it is more than an autobiography; it is a comprehensive record of events of the later half of the twentieth century that contributed to the mission and ministry of Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph who was a former principal of the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, and director of the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore. The author has candidly outlined the twin movements of his faith journey: first, his journey with his family and through people and places opened to him through the agency of the Mar Thoma Church; and secondly, his flight on 'the wings of wider ecumenism,' ecological issues and eco-spirituality. It is this amazing journey which has given birth to this book. In that sense, it is a travel log with a difference; Achen's style of writing has a compelling influence on making the readers co-travelers with him and makes them share memorable experiences with achen. Our faith has a story telling tradition; it is in the same tradition that Achen has woven a beautiful tapestry of his life and mission with the fibers and fabric of other people who influenced him in his life. Thus, it is not just an autobiography but it is a lived out authentic history of a crucial period of twentieth century, which we are invited to reminisce with him.

Structurally, the book is beautifully crafted: the first five chapters deal with his early life, education and ministry

within the confines of the Mar Thoma Church. Chapters 6 to 9 describe his postgraduate studies, exposure to 'World Council of Churches', other ecumenical journeys and involvement in ecological issues. Chapter 11 is a section for expressing his gratitude to a large group distinguished church leaders, and laymen who influenced and helped him in his journey. Chapters 11, 12 and 15 deal with achen's voluminous writings and interaction with other literary figures. Chapter 13 deals with achen's contribution to the Ecumenical Christian centre at Bangalore. The final section, comprising Chapter 16 to 20, is a summary and reflection on achen's momentous journey so far.

I find this book highly original and engaging; it is a bold attempt in interpreting various events in Achen's life as part of a divinely choreographed journey with his intimate family, spiritual guides and friends that he met on his way. Calling, commission and delegation are all part of this eventful journey. I highly recommend this book to people interested in pastoral ministry, ecumenism, social and ecological activists, and historians.

Joseph, M. J., 2010. Rev. ORMAKALUDE THERUVEEDHIYII CSS, Tiruvalla. The book costs \$20 including postage. For placing orders, contact: [drmjjoseph\\_65@yahoo.co.in](mailto:drmjjoseph_65@yahoo.co.in)

Dr. Zac Varghese, London  
April 2011

## NEW JERSEY MAR THOMA CHURCH, RANDOLPH, NJ

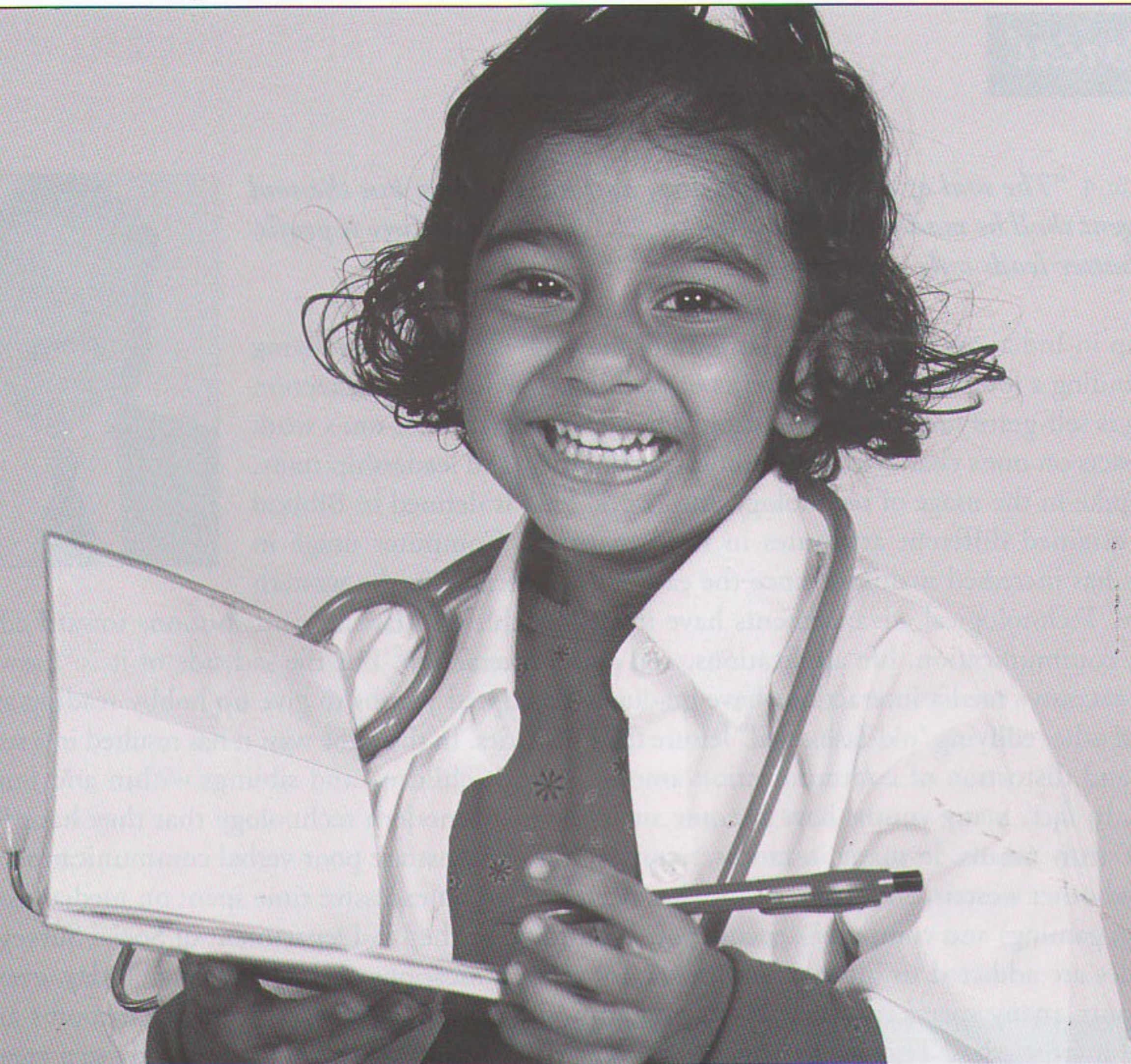
**CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES TO RAINA SAMUEL:** On June 12, 2011, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius released Raina Samuel's, (a 19 year old author), first published novel: *Skull and Bones: A Pirate's Odyssey*. She is a freshman at Rutgers State University and is the daughter of Samuel Mathai and Selene Samuel, members of the New Jersey Mar Thoma Church at Randolph. At the inauguration ceremony, Thirumeni, spoke and praised about her perseverance to write a novel, how she never gave up when she had certain thoughts and forced herself to write.

Raina had first come up with the idea for this book when she was twelve years old and has been working on it and fixing it for the past seven years. She explained how from an early age, reading and imagining had influenced her love of writing. In addition to her talent of words, she also is an excellent artist and musician. The event was



blessed by the presence of family and members of New Jersey Mar Thoma Church and Staten Island Mar Thoma Church, Rev Jose Abraham, and Rev. Baby John. For more information about her novel and where to purchase it, visit: <http://www.wix.com/rasamuel92/skull-and-bones>.





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Proverbs 13: 4 *“The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.”* Proverbs 14: 23 *“In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty”.*

Growing up in India, my parents emphasized not only the necessity of studying hard and finding a job, but also the benefits of working. The joy and satisfaction of working is self-gratifying and long-lasting. The type and nature of one's work clearly impacts on one's character, communication abilities, and leadership traits. With the spike in the usage of technology, the “work” that is defined in Biblical terms has attained different attributes in modern times. Computer usage in households has increased manifold since the early 80s, especially in the western hemisphere. Technological advancements have made valuable and lasting contributions toward education, healthcare, communication, life applications, and social interaction. But the sad side of it is: Easy internet access and excessive media interactions have gradually prompted youths to give up hobby reading and letter writing, and other edifying “old-fashioned” leisure time activities. In the same way, it has resulted in a substantial reduction and distortion of communication among parents, children and siblings within and outside the household. In fact, many youths have become such ‘slaves’ to modern technology that they have forgotten what ‘work’ truly means. In many instances, many youths demonstrate poor verbal communication skills. In America and other western countries, obesity has been blamed on excessive time spent on media (excessive TV watching, gaming) and computer dependency. According to the US Department of Social Survey (2009), more females are addicted to internet and media for communications and networking. Today, even during working hours, many spend countless hours going on ‘shopping networks,’ entering chat rooms and using other social internet sites. These behaviors are unknowingly corrupting the mind and body to a great extent. US Department of highway safety has reported that between 2005 and 2010, the number of traffic accidents caused by usage of cell phones while driving has tripled in many cities. In some cities this number has surpassed the number of accidents caused by drug and alcohol use.



This issue of the Messenger has chosen family as its main theme. Parents have a great responsibility in guiding their children from early childhood on and making them understand the importance of work, communication, and also limiting media dependency. If the children are spending too much time behind closed doors on the computer and TV, it should prompt questions. Since an idle mind is a devil's workshop, one must learn to use free time productively, choosing activities based on the given circumstances. Productive work brings prosperity and also leads to independence. Hard work also boosts self esteem, feeling of responsibility, and self confidence.

Within a two weeks period between end of April and beginning of May 2011, my former Sunday school student Mohan Varughese (23 years old) and my long-time friend Sunny Abraham (49 years) were called to eternity. Mohan's untimely demise was more shocking and painful. When we try to analyze such sad events with our limited power, we are short on answers. I pray that God console the families both have left behind and provide them heavenly guidance.

I would like to welcome the new Diocesan Council and congratulate the newly elected members. I pray to the Almighty that the teamwork of the council members, assembly members, and subcommittees will foster growth in our Diocese and the Mar Thoma Church. We are planted here for a reason. Let us not forget that it is part of a DIVINE plan.

**Dr. Eapen Daniel**



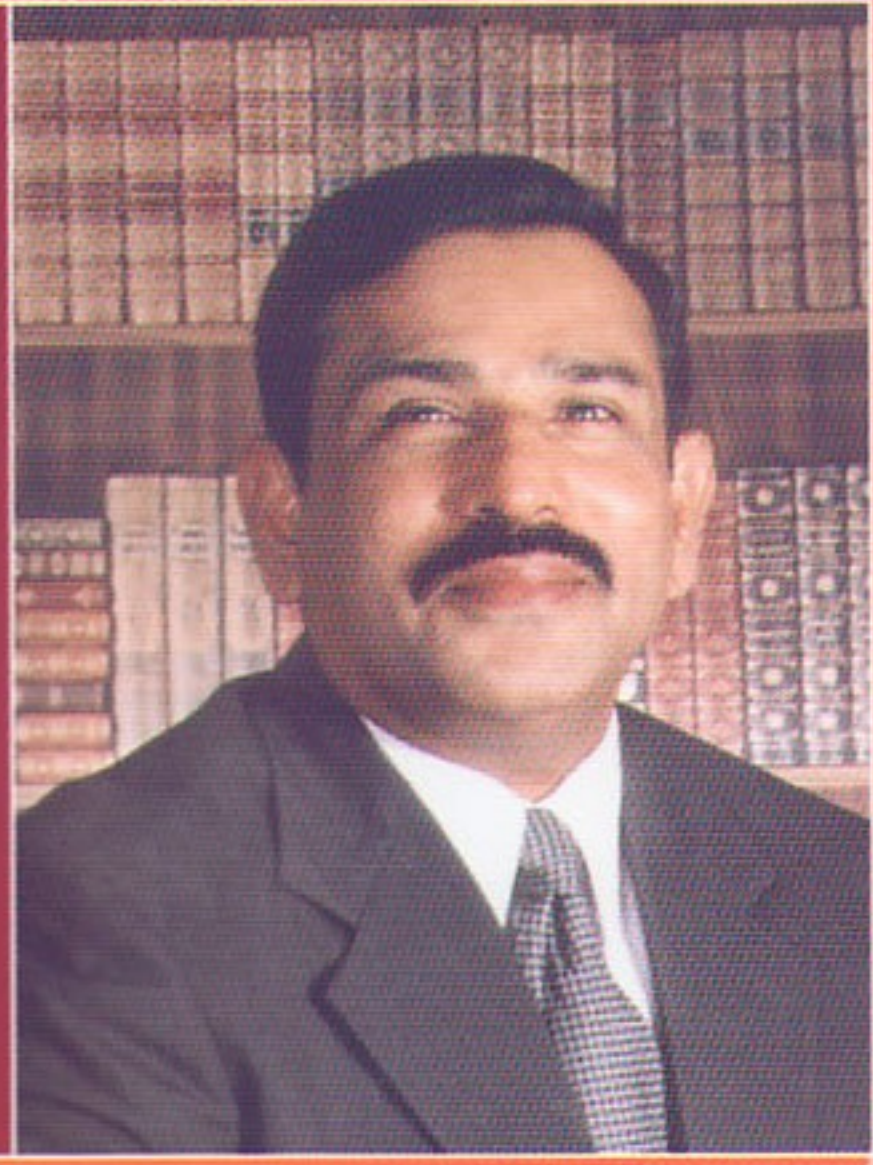
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