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**MESSENGER**

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 2013

Mar Thoma Chapel - Mexico Mission

Church:  
Journeying with Christ



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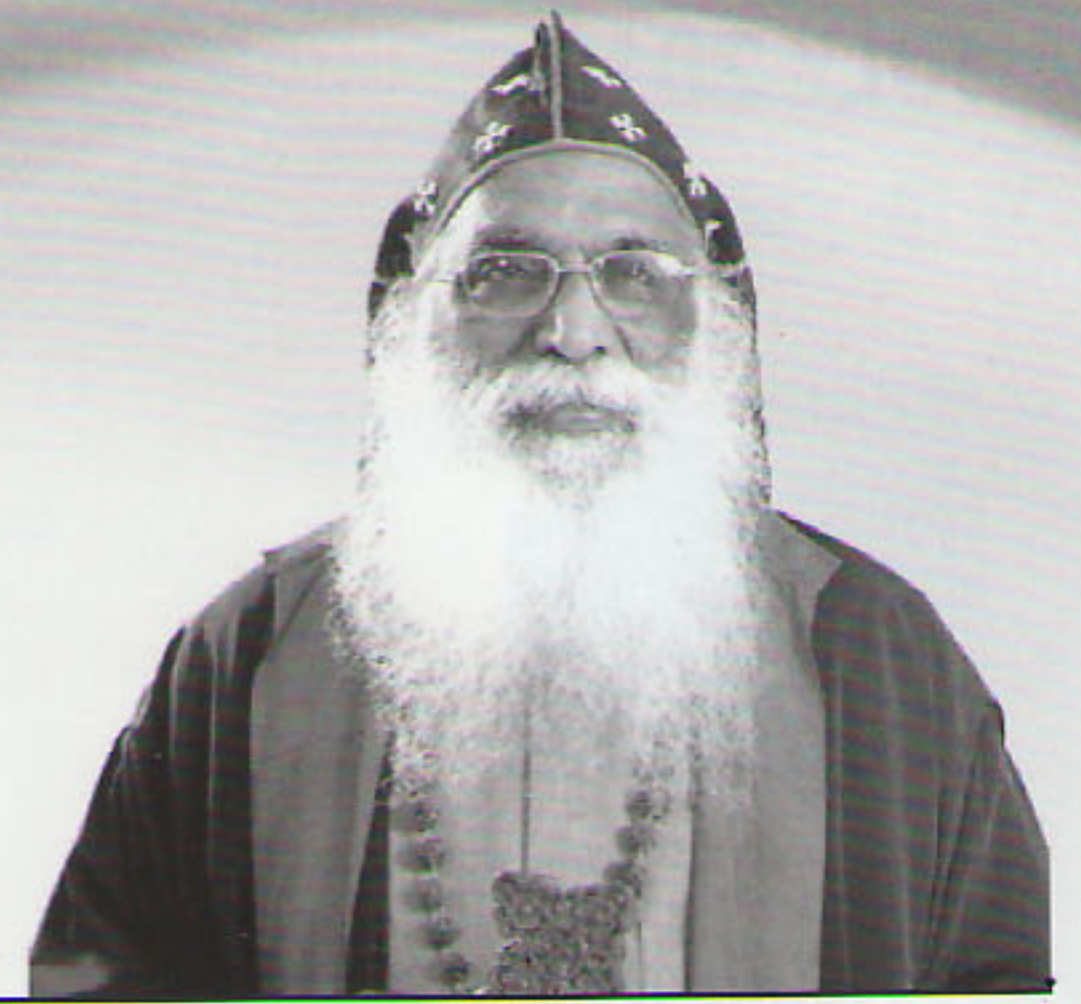
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# Message from the Metropolitan

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

As first quarter of the year pass by, we were able to witness many notable changes in the history of the global Christian Church. This is a time when the world keenly tries to observe the changes that occurred in the leaderships of the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church. After his consecration, Pope Francis said to the world, "Each individual should be the protector of the other." The new Arch Bishop of Canterbury made it clear that the Church has the serious responsibility of answering the many issues faced by the world and the Church today, owing to the infiltration of modernity. When looking back to the history of the Church, we come to know that the Church was able to overcome many adversities. God strengthened the Church that was redeemed by Him to the wholeness of humanity through His only Son, Jesus Christ, to spread the light of witnessing even in the midst of these hard times. Let us praise God for his grace and mercy in redeeming this universe, though the eclipse of darkness enveloped the Church at times. "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies"(Rom. 8: 22, 23). Let us wait with alacrity to find out the mission and message that the body of believers might get through the mighty power of resurrection.

We already finished one month of the new financial year. Those parish executive committees that are not able to finish their responsibilities by May 31st will have no right to continue according to the constitution. In some countries the financial year comes to an end on December 31st. In such a situation the parishes there will have to finish their responsibilities by February 28/ 29. The new elected committee should take charge on March 1st, and the secretary elected for the New Year must serve notice for the executive committee meeting. Without getting the Kalpana for the transfer of the Vicar from proper authority, nobody is allowed to arrange sendoff meetings and give gifts to the vicars. It has come to my notice that some trustees behave as if they are employers and they consider the vicars like employees. The respected priests are not the employees of the parish. Action will be taken against such trustees according to the constitution.

I want to refer to two sorrowful recent occurrences. Two of our respected priests died in accidents. Rev. K. G. Koshy Achen of Pathanapuram was drowned while he was taking a bath in the sea. Rev. Thomas Mathew Achen who was the vicar of the Pune Mar Thoma Church was killed in a bike accident. The funeral was conducted at Chachipunna Mar Thoma Church, Achen's mother parish. We have to pray for the comfort, peace, and courage of the bereaving families of these our beloved priests.

The summer vacation is a time when we conduct meetings and camps for our youngsters and students. Pray that these will lead them to Christ and inspire them to take new decisions in life. Such meetings must benefit the community of young people. These meetings must enable them to grow up with higher visions in spiritual and social areas. What our society need today is good teachers, leaders who can lead the Church and the nation in the right path, and persons who can serve society selflessly. The older generation has the responsibility to train the youngsters in these ennobling areas of social life, too.

According to the directive of the Velloor Medical College Hospital, I underwent the periodical evaluation process and came to know that a complete cure has occurred after two and a half years of treatment. The doctors said that I need to go only after one year for another evaluation. I praise God for His mercy on me. I thank the several thousands of people who prayed for my cure. I request all to pray for more grace. I glorify God for His grace to extend this life for working in His vineyard effortlessly.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euy akim Mar Coorilos Episcopa recently moved to a unit in the newly built quarters intended for the Sabha Secretary and the Vicar General. I praise God for the love and care I received from Thirumeni for the last 17 months when he was living in the Pulatheen. Pray for God's grace to have Thirumeni's services more and more blessing to the Church. Thirumeni is providing very fruitful leadership in the activities of the Niranam- Maramon Diocese. His services are very helpful to me.

We meditate the festivals of Ascension and Pentecost during the month of May. These give us great inspiration for a good and God centered life which compels us to observe purity in family relationships and all the other areas of social life. Holy Spirit is a person. The power of Holy Spirit is the energy we derive when we come under the influence of that person. The Father in heaven is the Creator. The son is the one who was born. The Holy Spirit is the one who comes from the Father and is being held in the Son. I praise God for the grace I received for attending the consecration service of the Arch Bishop of Canterbury. Amen, He is God in fullness and human in fullness. We see God in the Son who is God. In the Son we see the human face of God. Let us praise God for the wisdom we got in the understanding of this knowledge.

Grace be with you all

**Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan**

# Message from the Diocesan Episcopa



Dearly beloved in Christ,

The Diocese of North America and Europe is celebrating Jubilee Sunday on July 7, 2013. Every parish in the Diocese is expected to celebrate Jubilee Sunday with worship, thanking God for the blessings He has showered upon us and committing (in keeping with the Silver Jubilee theme) to journey with Christ. It will be befitting if a prayer vigil is organized during the first week of July to prepare for the Jubilee Day celebrations. I urge the members of each parish to find a mutually suitable time for conducting a prayer vigil.

The Diocese is preparing and circulating Bible study lessons to the parishes so that the various organizations and the prayer groups can use these lessons for studying the silver jubilee theme, Church: Journeying with Christ. God, the Holy Spirit has guided about ten persons, old and young, male and female to study the Bible texts and prepare the lessons. I encourage everyone to study these lessons in small and large groups with prayer and reflection.

The Jubilee as we see in the Bible is a redemptive movement for the restoration of the wider community. The Jubilee is a liberative movement to safeguard the rights and privileges of the poor, needy, debtors, slaves, captives, and orphans in the community (Lev. 25: 8-24, Lk. 4: 18-19). The Jubilee is a freedom movement giving rest to the land, release of the captives, liberation for the slaves, and returning of the properties to the original inheritors. The organizations in our Diocese are planning to give houses for the houseless, marriage-financial-assistance to the economically poor, support for the differently-able individuals, assistance to the aged in Mandirams, assistance to the believers who wish to have musical instruments, educational assistance for the higher education of deserving students, and support to our mission fields such as the: Mexico Mission, Native American Mission and Neighborhood Mission. I am glad that about 50 youth members from our parishes are going to five different places in India this summer, to observe and understand how our church is enthusiastically involved in the mission activities and taking time not only to welcome the believers but also to nurture them in Christian faith. I believe that these visits will empower our youths and help them to transform the mission of our Church in the western hemisphere.

So far, the regional Jubilee celebrations have taken place in three different regions. The inauguration of the year-long jubilee celebrations was held in the Houston area in January, after the annual ecumenical gathering. The members of our church and sister churches also gathered in Philadelphia and Chicago for the Southeast regional celebrations and the Midwest regional celebrations, respectively. Regional celebrations are also planned at Los Angeles, Toronto (Canada), United Kingdom, Florida, and New York. The enthusiasm of our members in organizing the regional celebrations is encouraging. These meetings add life to the church and bring people to participate in the mission and ministry of the church with renewed spirit.

The parishes in Europe have formed a Council of Mar Thoma Parishes in Europe (COMPE) to assist the parishes in that region with their administration. Such administrative arrangements in various regions will help the parishes in USA, Canada and Europe to address their needs, such as obtaining visas for Achens, separately and according to their local requirements. In addition, the formation of regional units in the Diocese will help to deal with the other local requirements pertaining to the laws of State and the Federal Governments.

The Regional Activity Committees (RACs) are looking into the possibility of developing regional programs/projects to support the new phase of the growth of our Diocese. The Northeast region has decided to form a Christian Education Forum which caters to the spiritual needs of members and non-members through the 'Word for the Day' daily medication, and Christian Education Lessons. It is noteworthy that the Christian Literature Society is also functioning from the Northeast region. The Southeast Region of the Diocese is contemplating to empower our families (the basic units of the Church and Society) through dialogue and counseling. The Midwest region, and Canada region are working together to reach a consensus project. The Southern region is hosting a Bible devotional session called 'Thirusannidiyil' via telephone conferences. The Diocesan Voluntary Evangelists Association is also supporting this program and a number of people are participating in it for their spiritual upliftment. The parishes in Dallas area are looking into the possibility of developing a youth center. The parishes in Houston are looking into the possibility of buying a plot of land and developing it as Mar Thoma Center for multi-purpose programs.

I am glad that after a series of dialogue with the youth members of the Diocese, our liturgy is revised and abridged and the chants in English have been added to make them closer to the pattern of praise and worship that the youth like. These modi-

fications are done with the consent of our Metropolitan and after proper decisions and approval from the Episcopal Synod.

The Jubilee year celebrations have included opportunities for a seminar, dialogue and training for members to appreciate the life of the Church and to participate meaningfully in its ministry. It will be a blessing, if each parish would organize these meetings for the parishioners at the local level.

As a part of the Jubilee year initiatives, parishes are witnessing the formation of 'Altar Boys' and 'Covenant Girls.' This is done by selecting communicant boys and girls who are above the age of 12 and willing to use their time and talents to learn and assist in the worship services. Ideally, three persons would be selected every year from each parish and given training for three years, before they go to universities and colleges. We also need the young members who have participated in the three previous leadership conferences to be 'mentors' to these teenagers. This will enable the teenagers to come back to the church life after their university education. All these activities and initiatives will bear fruit only when the parents and our parishes prayerfully and sacrificially support these programs. The Northeast region is organizing a weekend training program for the 'Altar Boys' and 'Covenant Girls' in the month of July. Let us also praise God that the ordination of the 10th youth from this Diocese will take place at the Epiphany MTC, New York on the second week of July. This also points to the need to develop a 'Minor Seminary' in New York to give practical training to those who are interested to go for full time ministry.

The finale of Jubilee celebrations is planned for the third week of November. Our Metropolitan Thirumeni has agreed to bless us on that occasion and to give the key-note address. The details of this event will be announced in due time. We are glad that Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Thirumeni and Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Thirumeni blessed us at the Chicago and Philadelphia events, respectively. In the coming months, we are expecting Dr. Euyakkim Mar Coorilos Thirumeni, Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Thirumeni and Gregorios Mar Stephanos Thirumeni to bless us with their presence, messages and prayers at Florida, Los Angeles, and Toronto, respectively. The news and photographs covering these Bishop's visits and the regional celebrations are posted on our website, online Besorah, and the quarterly publication Mar Thoma Messenger.

The Jubilee year of the Diocese is not only an occasion to look into the past to remember with gratitude the commitment and sacrifice of our early immigrant community in the formation of our Diocese but also to commit the members of the present generation, mostly citizens of their respective country to continue their spiritual journey and reach new heights in the life of the Church, in her mission and ministry. As a Diocese, we have to come up with better ways to love, care and respect the senior members in our parishes. We should encourage the new generation members to worship regularly in English and take up leadership positions and support the Church.

Therefore, what does it mean to be the Church? Kornard Raiser, the former secretary of the World Council of Churches corrects this question with the phrase, 'Being the Church'. That means Church is not a static monument. It is the manifestation of Christ in the life of the total community in each place and in time. That is where "Church happens." It becomes the transforming experience through fellowship, solidarity, love, care, justice, peace and compassion. We need the spirit of mutuality in the church where the other is wanted and has a part in the molding of one's spiritual life. The Church needs our availability and accessibility for the abundant life of those who go through tragic experiences of human life. The Church will relate with those who need restoration so that those who are on the margins and those who feel rejected will be redeemed to face life with determination and grow towards experiencing their God-given humanity. Church life becomes meaningful only when the experiences of repentance and transformation become real in the life of the members and with whom they get connected. The true church, the body of Christ, is living and dynamic, subject to change and transformation. As a Church, we journey with the risen Christ to the reign of God. Let us continue this journey.

God bless us all

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## PRAYERFUL BIRTHDAY WISHES



Most Rev. Dr. Philipose  
Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma  
Valiya Metropolitan – April 27th



Most Rev. Dr. Joseph  
Mar Thoma Metropolitan  
June 27th



Rt. Rev. Geevarghese  
Mar Athanasius Episcopa  
April 26th



Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas  
Mar Theethos Episcopa  
May 10th



As a modern human community, we are moving along a culture that is slowly growing thin by eroding family values and fear of God. History reveals that human civilization evolved with the development of a few isolated towns which later became metropolis – Babylon, Nineveh and Tarsis. At later points these city states gave birth to the earliest nations – Assyria, Egypt, Israel, Chaldea, etc. All along the history of these nations, God was given the utmost ownership and the prophets and “men of God” oversaw the actions and dealings of the citizens. Punishment was inevitable in cases of disobedience and criminal actions, and the wrath of the Lord fell on the whole nation. The current situation of mounting evils points to a world that is disintegrating with increasing number of hostile communities. Hopeless future attracts youths to evil behaviors and actions out of frustration. Some become addicted to religious fanaticism and join fights for self-defined ways of ‘truth’. As we see, these kinds of actions disrupt the growth and prosperity of many communities around the globe. We tend to distance from those who are different from us – in color, religion, or behavior. In Deuteronomy it is mentioned “Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” God has given us a free will to make our own decisions. If Christ does not dwell in our hearts, this ‘free will’ can make us do things that will hurt our families, societies, and communities, leading to self-destruction. In the Book of Proverbs, there are many mentions of wisdom that starts with “wisdom calls aloud”. These words are vitally important for our Christian existence.

As we are celebrating the Jubilee year of our Diocese, we ought to think back to our roots and our past paths. We are empowered with many rich blessings of physical and spiritual nature. Our members are well-to-do immigrants of this great land. But, are we doing our Christian duties as Christ expects of us? Are we taking full responsibility of our future generations to be worshipping in truth and spirit? Christ once cursed the barren fig tree, because it was fruitless with a lot of leaves. The tree appeared full, but without any fruits. As a growing church, we may stand tall and full for the on-lookers, but when the master is looking for fruits, will He find any? While struggling for prosperity, did we lost the vision and are wandering in the wilderness? “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels” (Proverbs 1: 5). Are we listening to the tunes of time? Are we seeking the wise counsel? As stated in the book, “For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them” (Proverbs 1: 32). Let us not turn away, and let us not gather for vain.

Recently I have received couple of letters from Messenger readers concerning senior and retired members of our various parishes. The writers expected the Diocese to organize programs for such individuals on a regional basis. As a long term resident in this Diocese, I humbly recommend each parish committee to consider actions involving youths, youngsters and working members to come up with ideas to engage our senior and retired friends in possible ways within and outside the church. We must utilize their time and talents for the growth and betterment of our parishes and our communities. As parishes, help can be provided to those seniors and retirees in various ways if needed.

Good to see that we have more youth chaplains and vicars now serving in this Diocese, who are born citizens of America, who went to India and completed their theological studies and served short terms back in India. As a growing Diocese, we are thankful to the Metropolitan, the Synod, and our Diocesan Bishop for considering the empowerment of our younger generation, by making such service arrangements. I hope and pray that our youths will greatly benefit from these provisions.

**Dr. Eapen Daniel**

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# Church: Journeying with Christ - Martha and Mary - Two Ways of Discipleship:

Nirmala Abraham, Philadelphia



The focus of a Bible study is to help us understand where we are in our faith journey. Becoming a faithful disciple of Jesus is a transforming experience. It is a journey, a process and it takes time. This Bible study focuses on the discipleship of Bible's most familiar set of sisters, Mary and Martha as seen through the eyes of Evangelist Luke. He was a companion of Apostle Paul (2 Tim 4:11) and was referred to as the "beloved physician" (Col. 4: 4). Luke's gospel is believed to be written around AD 60 to his friend Theophilus. The focal point of this gospel is the distinct nature of the divinity and humanity of Jesus. Luke also reveals to us the priority Jesus placed in becoming a part of our earthly journey in a very personal way and teaching us a better way of life. He mentioned more women in his gospel than any of the other gospel writers.

## Martha & Mary: (Luke 10: 38-42)

This story, only recorded by Luke, has merely four verses, yet very complex. It has been a source of inspiration, interpretation, and debate for centuries. John's story says the sisters had a brother named Lazarus (John 11:1). The three siblings seemed to have been young, independent and affluent. The two sisters had complimentary personalities. Martha may have been the older sister and the head of the household. She appears to be an action oriented woman who was articulate. Mary was probably the younger sister and is often seen as a more scholarly or spiritual woman. They were friends of Jesus. The name Martha means, "lady of the house" Mary means a 'wise woman'. It is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Miriam or Mariam.

## Setting of the Story:

The village where Martha and Mary lived is unidentified in Luke's Gospel. However, we understand from the gospel of John that it was located in the village of Bethany (John 11: 1). Bethany was two miles east of Jerusalem on the eastern slope of Mount of Olives on the way to Jericho. The word Bethany means "House of dates". Modern name of Bethany is El Azariah. Jesus often visited this home, which was close to Jerusalem. Let us review the story and understand how the sisters responded to Jesus' visits.

## Martha Opens Her Home:

As Jesus and his disciples were on the way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him" Luke 10: 3 Jesus' ministry had an interpersonal connection. As he traveled from village to village, people invited him to their homes where he preached. In this passage, Martha welcomes Jesus to her home as Zacchaeus had welcomed Jesus to his home in Jericho ( Luke 19:5). Martha's invitation indicates her openness to spiritual matters.

## Mary Sits at Jesus' Feet Listening:

"She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said" Luke 10:39 Here we meet the young Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus like Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). It is usually a posture taken by a learner or a disciple. At a time when women were forbidden to learn the Torah, Jesus' action in encouraging Mary to learn the word of God, was a radical step. It cuts across the conventional social order of that time.

## Distracted by the preparations:

"But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made" Luke 10:40a Martha had invited Jesus to her home. In the context of the first century Jewish setting, serving a meal to a guest was a very important part of the hospitality. Martha took her responsibility seriously and was bustling around to serve the meal. She expected her sister to help her. She became resentful when Mary continued to sit at the feet of Jesus. Martha's preoccupation with the housework distracted her from prioritizing her time to hear the word of God.

She did not realize that "one does not live by bread alone" Luke 4:4. Tell her to help me: "She came to him and asked 'Lord don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me'" 10: 40b Martha, overwhelmed by her tasks, comes to Jesus and interrupts his teaching. She seems to be rebuking Jesus for not caring, for not having ordered Mary to help her. She commands Jesus, the honored Guest to "tell her to help me". Martha--you are worried and upset. Only one thing is needed: "Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her. Luke 10: 42 What is that 'one thing'? Jesus, the Messiah was visiting her home and had very important message to share. At this time, Mary's choice

to listen to the word of God was a better choice than Martha's choice to fully concentrate on household tasks. Mary chose what was really important in life: communion with God. Mary exemplifies what it means to "Love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul -----with your entire mind." Luke 10: 27

**Conclusion:**

We have concluded a brief study of the two sisters, Mary and Martha, as narrated in the gospel of Luke. Though different in basic personalities, they are very similar in their commitment to Jesus. They both loved him in their own way. In the Luke story, Martha missed the golden opportunity to learn the word of God but later in the Gospel of John, (John 11:27) we see a transformed Martha confessing, "Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Christ the Son of God". She steps up to the rank of Apostle Peter (Matthew 16:16) when she makes the profound messianic declaration. John also gives us a glimpse of Martha quietly and graciously serving a meal to Jesus while Mary anointed Jesus' feet.

**Life Application/Reflection:**

Centuries have passed since Jesus stated, 'Martha, Martha you are worried and upset about many things but only one thing is needed. Our challenge today is what author Bob Hostetler in his book American Idols, calls it as 'Martha malady'. "Our exaltation of busyness, our Martha-like obsession with muchness and manyness" has become an idol. The results of the idol of busyness results in self-centeredness, which is one of our major problems. Let us look at Martha's words to Jesus: 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me.' "Life has become a series of 'MY and ME. I am the martyr, I am the center of the storm attitude develops." The Martha malady creates less time to commune with God. We become separated from God. Busyness cheats us of those 'better things' in life. A frantic and frenzied lifestyle robs us of the

better things in life as Martha experienced.

**Questions for discussions:**

1. How does this story in Luke relate to our walk with Jesus today? How does it help us to reflect upon the challenges we face in becoming a faithful disciple?
2. Service or diakonia is very important in churches. Yet, do we sometimes forget the purpose of the ministry and get caught up in the details of the operation?
3. With the explosion of the media, Facebook, texting, tweeting, etc., do we get time to sit and quietly commune with God?
4. In what ways do you find yourself busy, upset and troubled like Martha? Has the idol of busyness negatively affected our lifestyle?
5. What practices would you institute in your life that would make you more like Mary?
6. When we are upset and angry with someone we love, do we have the courage to directly tell them how we feel like Martha did or do we express our feelings indirectly and keep grudges in our heart for a long time?
7. Jesus ignored the traditional role of the women of his time. How does our church and community work towards gender equality?

# OBITUARY

## T. E. THOMAS, TEANECK

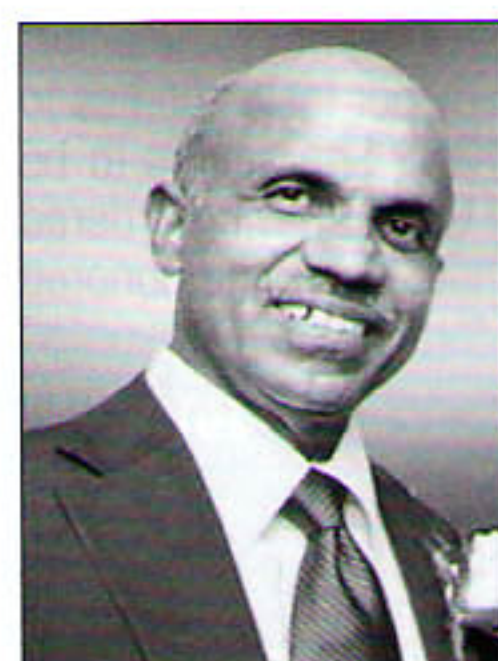


T. E. Thomas (87), member of St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, Teaneck New Jersey was called to be with the Lord on April 20, 2013. Mr. Thomas graduated from South India Bible School (SIBS), Bangarapet, Kolar with a BTH degree in the year 1951. During one of his village field visits to a place called Devenahalli, Mr. Thomas along with two other evangelists were held hostage and beaten up for preaching the Gospel. They were dragged and taken to a local Hindu temple in the middle of the town and forced to bow down facing the temple. Thomas asked his tormentors what were they bowing down and worshipping. They told him to do as ordered. Thomas refused to bow down, knowing that he would be beaten up by the crowd, God inter-

vened and one of the tormentors told Thomas, you have nothing to lose by bowing down since Hyder Ali, a Muslim ruler had raided the town and destroyed the sanctum of the

temple by removing all the Hindu gods. Thomas was moved by the ignorance of these people who had a huge Temple in the middle of the town with no God and made up his mind at that moment that he will come back to this town and give them a God that they were missing. That was the beginning of the mission work in Devenahalli started by Thomas and his friend C.A. Thomas who supported the Mission work financially through Karnataka Navajeevan Samithi (KNS). Today the work that was started in 1971 has close to 6,000 believers and 17 churches. The remote village that was called Devenahalli is on the global map with an International Airport (Bangalore). One of his desires was to be with the believers that he preached the Gospel to even after his worldly journey. Even though he traveled the world and lived with his children in the United States, God allowed him to rest in peace in Devenahalli. Mr. Thomas leaves behind five children, twelve grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

## PHILIPS (JOB) PHILIP, NEW JERSEY



Philips (Job) Philip, born February 7, 1950, loving husband of Susan and devoted father of Jeril, Anita (daughter-in-law) and Cecil, was taken by Our Heavenly Father on May 5, 2013. Born in Venmoney (Alummootil Malayil House), Kerala, India, Joby was the third child of the late Philipose GeeVarghese and Mariamma GeeVarghese. Since arriving in the United States in December 1980 and settling in Cedar Grove, New Jersey, Joby spent more than three decades as a dedicated electrical engineer on the staff of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in New York City. As a faithful and devoted member of the Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey, Joby served the church in many spiritual and administrative roles continuously over the

years. Relentless in his service for his family, friends and church and community, Joby

was driven to make life happier for all those around him. Joby is survived by Susan, his wife of nearly 33 years and mother of Jeril, Anita (daughter-in-law) and Cecil. Joby raised Jeril and Cecil to be men of strong faith and instilled in them the Christian values that will serve as the foundation for their family in the days ahead. In August 2011, Joby was blessed with a daughter when Jeril married Anita. Joby is also survived by his mother and brothers P.P. Varghese and A. P. Alexander and sister Mariamma Kurian and the spouses, children and grandchildren of his siblings. Joby is also survived by Susan's brothers and sisters and their spouses and children. He will truly be missed by his family, his many friends and his church and community. The diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Gevarghese Mar Theodosius led the funeral service.

# Jesus Christ is the Glue, the One in Whom all Things are Established

Rev. V. G. Geevarghese (Former Vicar, Sinai MTC, London)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (NIV)

The Christo – Centric hymn of Colossians 1:15 -20, establishes the fact that Jesus Christ is the foundation of everything in this visible world and the invisible world, which is yet to come. Jesus is the one, who connects the creation to the creator. All created things are directly connected to Christ. Hence it is not expected anyone to go away from this created order - 'creator – creation connectedness'. Jesus Christ is the alpha and omega. He gives life to all and he redeems the creation from the death and released the creation from "slavery of the fear of death." (Hebrews: 2: 15). This amazing love of God the Father, through the son, made the creation's life in this world and the world yet to come, possible and rhythmic. In that sense, the creation is dependent on God and Jesus Christ for its life sustenance.

Creation is under the Authority of Jesus Christ Vs. 15 and 16 clearly says that Jesus Christ is the author of life and the creation, not merely first among all creation but the one, who actively participated with the Father in the creation. Christ has therefore not only the temporal priority over all creation, but also has the authority over the realm of the creator. The more we know about this astonishing creation of God, the more we are bound to wonder. The creation itself is the result of the activity of Jesus Christ, who is the exact representative of God or the very image of God ( I. H. Marshall, Incarnational Christology in the New Testament).

For the more we know of the love of Christ and his authority over the creation, the more we must stand beside him to keep the life and rhythm of the creation. However, we are living in a world, which worship speed and proficiency. We do not have the time to think the beauty and the order of the creation and the creator. There is something wrong about the whole perspectives of our life. This is the ground for all estrangements in this world. The estrangements such as: divine – human divide, human – human divide, and human – creation divide. These divides eventually results in the loss of reconciliation and lifelessness in the creation. There are certain things in life for which we should make time. The first thing we should make time is to know the connectedness of the creation through Jesus Christ, to make our life more meaningful in this world by our sincere reconciliation with the Father and the Son.

Jesus Christ Reconciles Divides – 'Human –Divine' and 'Human-Creation' in the creation Jesus Christ is the God of life, who reconciles the creation. The creation came into being 'through him' and 'in him.' Vs. 16 says, " All things created through him and for him." This shows Jesus Christ's unique relation with the creation. This unique connection made his position above of all authorities and principalities in the world. He has a special privilege with his father, who is the creator. The creation was existed in the mind of Christ, even before the creation took place. So any act contrary to the life sustaining purpose of God would eventually lead to the doom for the creation. Since the creation came into being through His power, authority and ability, the creation should depend on him for its sustenance. Jesus Christ is the one in whom all things are created and provided a creative order in the cosmos. Therefore, Jesus Christ's ongoing role is to sustain the creation in its in-



tended shape and purpose. This is the point where we stuck on the purpose of His journey from Bethlehem to Golgotha and to the mount of resurrection and to the point of ascension. Jesus Christ's unique position to sustain the creation is binary: Jesus connectedness with the Father, and Jesus' relation to the creation.

Jesus is the Goal of Creation - In fact, the book of Colossians reminds us that Creation exists for Jesus Christ and His purpose of life. Creation expected to exhibit Jesus' glory and authority. Finally he will be glorified by the actions of His creation. Here is the specific purpose of the church – His Body - resides. The Church should exist in this world and the invisible world to display Jesus' glory. To achieve this goal, God foresaw a mission in Jesus. Mission of God is the same ministry of reconciliation, which welds the divides that divide human from God, human from human and human from creation.

The tragedy of the contemporary world is that the dominant culture of the world separated God from their daily actions in the name of secularization. Therefore so many people, who would resent being called atheists, even from with the Christian fold, are practicing a life without contact with the visible church and the invisible church and with God. Hence they lost their connectedness with the eternal strength. To reinstate the lost connectedness, Jesus Christ is the visible sign of the invisible God and He is the goal of all creation. It is essential to look unto Him, and imbibe the life pattern of him.

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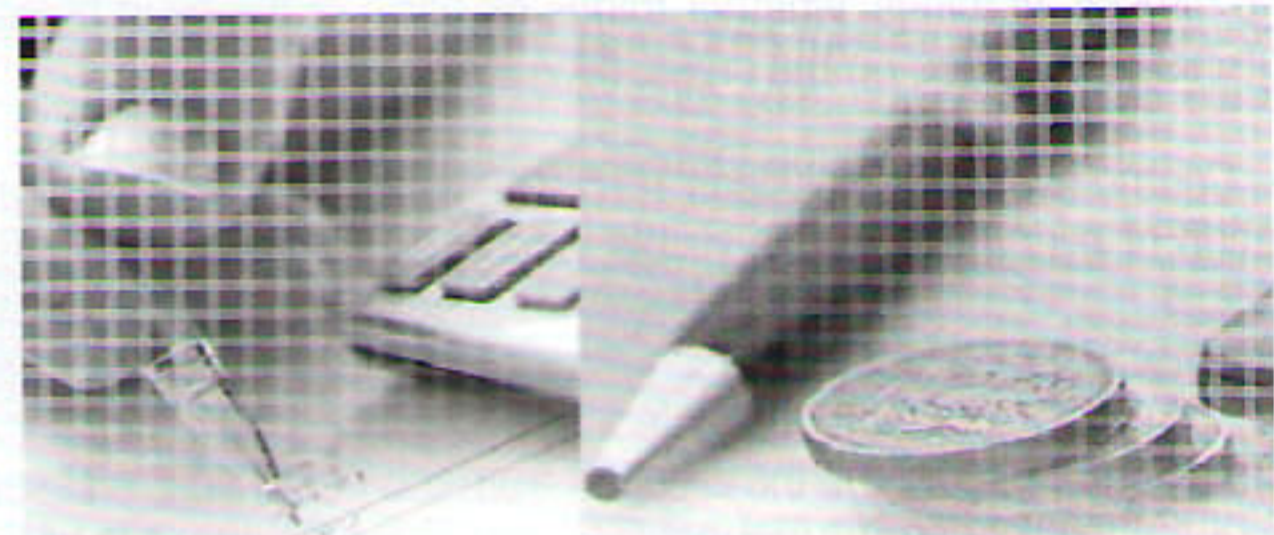
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# Let Children Come to Me

Rev. Sam Koshy T (Elanthoor)



WHO prevented the children from coming to Jesus? Will they be prevented from coming closer to Him? Is it paining Christ that our children are kept away from Him due to the prevalent culture? If so, the purpose of this study is to know what pains Christ. Christ is the divine path in the pursuit of complete godliness and complete humanness. It is the same path that leads to godliness and manliness. What pains Christ is that the children are kept away from this path. What every Christian starts from the time of baptism is this marathon race. We are responsible for preventing the children from pursuing this journey to attain godliness and humanness.

Children grow into godliness through worship in the church. This is why baptism of the child, i.e., bringing the new-born to the church for the first time, is a sacrament. Albert Schweitzer says in his autobiographical noting that though he did not understand all that was said in the church during his childhood days, it helped him cultivate a sense of awe and wonder about our life and our quest for survival. By not bringing the children to the church from the very early age, we are not only depriving them of the opportunity to know about life and the journey to godliness but are also throwing them to materialism, greed, and malformation. The church should become our second home. At least one-third of the seating space of the church should be reserved for children. God will rejoice over this. We come to know God through the word of God. The thrust of the reformed church is also on the sacred word of God. I recently got acquainted with a five-year-old boy - 'Vattakkottayil Thomas' of Pathanapuram (son of Dr. Sam and Dr. Selin). He can recite verses like Isaiah: 54: 7-17, Psalms 1, 121 and 91. He learned them from his grandma who recited verses for him daily.

When children learn Biblical verses by heart, the verses penetrate into their mind. In the process, they imbibe the essence, language, meaning and style of the divine words. What pains Jesus is that our children do not care to learn by heart the verses, though they learn by heart many other things. It is the participation in the holy sacraments that makes the children understand the mystery and experience the wonders of divinity. It is through these sacraments that they feel the magical experiences of life. These get painted in different hues in the minds of children. What understanding of life and its complexities can a child have if he has not attended a wedding, a baptism or a funeral? It is such children who remain ignorant of life situations, though they may be familiar with the Internet, use mobile phones and enjoy cartoons etc. It is this action of ours, keeping away the children from attending and participating in the holy sacraments that is paining Christ.

Children grow into maturity through activities like sports and games. Playing is a must for a child to grow into a complete human being. It gives the child various experiences like making friendship, breaking friendship, winning, losing, working in groups, working as a team, getting alienated from a group, joining hands to form a team etc. These are reflections of life and these happen in real life also as one grows. It is through these childhood activities that children realize their innate strengths, weaknesses and USP and learn to observe rules, remain within the boundaries, to have aims, strive to win, adjust with others, appreciate others, reconcile with others etc. Christ is certainly pained to see that the children are glued to TV/Video/Computers and they do not go out and play, which is a must for growing as good human beings.

Children grow as normal human beings by doing their household chores themselves. Eating food without hard work is sin. Washing clothes, cleaning the house, doing gardening, helping in the kitchen, hosting and taking care of guests, buying household goods and groceries, keeping the account of money being handled... all these make the child grow into a mature human being. Willingness and patience to do work, whether a boy or a girl, is a must in one's growth as a mature human being. Many highly qualified professionals are impatient and frustrated and fail in their married life, mainly because they pursued only studies and were devoid of the above normal basic things of life in their childhood.

In the Bible we have references of Jesus helping his father in his carpentry work. Christ is pained that children are reared up without involving them in the day-to-day household



chores and responsibilities. We grow into human beings through relationships. We imbibe human qualities from our friends and relatives. It is not easy to maintain relationships. But such relationships give us a lot of strength and courage.

Mary's journey -- taking Jesus to her relatives, traveling through the rough desert and hilly terrain -- should be a challenge for us. If we consider our relatives and friends as a hindrance and not up to our standard and remain away from them, we are certainly moving towards isolation. The main reason for today's increased psychological problems is the absence of good healthy relationships. It is through good relationships that we grow as good human beings.

Jesus always says: "Let the Children come to me". It is His pain through all the ages that children are not allowed to go to Him. Jesus is concerned that the children should grow enriched in divinity and humanity. His pain is for all those children who remain at the back of the church, instead of being in the front, the children who do not attend the sacraments of wedding/baptism but attend only receptions and parties, children who are addicted to SMS, e-mail, chatting and do not read the word of God or learn by heart the verses, children who are smart and who excel in studies but do not share any household work and responsibilities, children who are isolated from their relatives and friends and drifts tragically into solitude and frustration. When we take the pain of Jesus as our pain, we will grow in Christ. Let us revive the child in us and also renew our children. Change is must and is most needed.

Editor's Note: Rev. Sam Koshy is the Vicar of Kuwait MTC. The article, which originally appeared in Malayalam in the Sabha Tharaka, was translated into English by Elizebath Philip, a member of St. James MTC, New Delhi.

# The Church as a Journeying Experience

Rev. Saju Samuel C., Princeton, NJ



Today, in the most technologically and scientifically enlightened age the world has ever known, there still exists a passion towards spirituality and the Church at large. There are many people who admire the constructive values of the Church, irrespective of denomination. The Church as a whole fosters spirituality by revealing that spirituality is not just a mental exercise but a way of life, and as part of the global church, the Mar Thoma Church plays a significant role in molding a creative and meaningful life. However, there are many people who denounce the relevance of the Church. Identifying the Church with a building, or as an organization with certain worship patterns and institutions, they argue that the Church is static, boring, and dead. They question the significance of the Church in being constructive and creative. These opposing views open up discussions to ponder the significance and functions of the Church. Hence, we need to perceive the real meaning and mission of the Church. This essay is an attempt to redefine the concept of the Church and the function of the Church at large, ecclesia.

The Church is often misconstrued as an institution, an organization, a building, or a social club. It is true that the Church functions through certain institutions and organizations; however, interpreting the Church within the framework of space and time in fact limits its potential. Too many people consider the Church to be an institution for personal religious experiences and benefits. Moreover, they identify the Church with the bishops and clergy rather than with humanity as a whole. It is these misconceptions that lead to the feeling that the Church is not contextual and constructive and that the spirituality that the Church fosters is a delusion. For these many minds, God, spirituality, and religion are nothing more than superstition. They argue that an increasingly enlightened society will soon discard such superstition. In opposing this view, we need to interpret the function and essence of the Church in a constructive manner. Herein comes the question, what does it mean to be the Church?

The Church that we see in the New Testament deconstructs the misconceptions around ecclesia. In the New Testament, the Greek word ecclesia denotes a "people called out to follow Jesus." The New Testament reveals that the Church signifies a movement and a journey. Therefore, the Church is to be understood as a journeying experience with Christ. The Church cannot be limited within a certain space, time, or group; rather, the Church is the experience of journeying from a limited space, time, and group. This doesn't mean that the building and institutions of the Church are insignificant, but ecclesia has to be understood beyond the building, rituals, and customs. Moreover, it is the journey with Jesus Christ that makes the Church vibrant in society. Here comes the relevance of journeying with Christ in this modern era. What does it mean to journey with Christ? When we consider a journey, the point of departure, the journeying, and the destination are all significant. The coming passages explain the meaning and relevance of journeying with Christ.

## 1. Journeying beyond the self and selfishness

In a world where domination and discrimination persist in the name of sex, color, caste, class, and religion, the profession of a meaningful spirituality and the existence of the Church are regarded as a utopian idea. A vibrant, challenging, committed, and creative church cannot persist without creating an ethical society. The real issue behind all dehumanizing activities is that humanity often fails to move beyond the individual self and selfishness. Therefore, it is an immense challenge for the Church to create a meaningful spirituality by moving beyond the self and selfishness. Journeying with Christ leads us to a life style where humans can transcend selfishness.

Jesus Christ is the apt model of the Church to recognize the importance and efficacy of selflessness. The whole life of Jesus Christ can be explained as a life of selflessness. Therefore, journeying with Christ is nothing other than moving away from our selfish motives and interests. The journey from the manger to the cross reveals the intention of Jesus Christ and the will of God that has to be carried out through the Church. Therefore,



the Church is an experience of journeying from our selfishness to the realm of selflessness.

Journeying with Christ is not just an emotional status or a pattern of worship but a way of life. There is no doubt that journeying with Christ involves and invokes emotional changes, but these changes have to be seen in a broader sense. Journeying with Christ transcends our personal benefits by moving us beyond ourselves. Moving beyond the self is a state of selflessness. This selflessness is the thrust of journeying with Christ, and the embodiment of this idea is the Church. Spirituality must not be considered as a personal religious experience; rather, a meaningful spirituality leads us from our selfishness to selflessness. Rather than being silent in various dehumanizing activities in society, the journey with Christ reveals the immediacy of transcending selfishness. Hence, selflessness is the point of departure for the journey with Christ.

The Church is called to play a decisive role in fostering selflessness by journeying with Christ. I am pleased to say that the Mar Thoma Church embodies the principle of selflessness. The various projects of our church are instituted with a passion for selflessness. The Church as an experience of journeying with Christ motivates and inspires us to move beyond our self and selfishness, and thus to be contextual and creative. Rather than accusing the Church of being static or even dead, we as the Church have to journey with Christ from our selfishness.

## 2. Journeying toward the Other

Today we see marginalization and subjugation in the name of the Other. The act of Othering, naming a person or a group as the Other due to self-centeredness, represents a powerful weapon to delegitimize and discriminate. Since time immemorial there has always been the concept of the Other. The Other denotes a

person other than oneself. In the name of gender, race, religion, education, and socioeconomics, people consider differing persons and groups as the Other. Women are viewed as the Other by men in patriarchal societies. Racial discrimination and colonialism are examples of additional threats raised by the concept of the Other. The Other is always negatively represented and characterized, which leads to enslavement, exile, marginalization, and even extermination. When Otherness shatters the very being of the many and denounces human dignity, how can we claim the existence of the Church? Hence, affirming the Other is a necessary facet of the Church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran theologian and ethicist, discusses the empirical reality of the Church. He argues that living with one another and living for the Other are the thrust of the Church. Bonhoeffer is famous for his views on the practical and meaningful Christian religious life. He writes of Christ as the man for others and of the Church as the church for others. He opines that the Church is about learning to live together in communion with the Other. Communion between God and humanity is a prerequisite for communion among humans. In *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer argues that communion can be explained as an "I" moving/turning towards the "You." Hence, the Church as a communion and an experience is a journey toward the Other. Christ's being is significant due to the reason that Christ exists for the Other and Christ exists only in relation to the Other. Likewise, being the new community created by Christ, the Church exists only in relation to the Other. A meaningful religious experience and a meaningful life are grounded in the concern for the Other. Justice for the Other, compassion toward the Other, and affirmation of the value of the Other are some of the practical evidence of the Church that is revealed in Jesus Christ. The Church creates ethical societies that affirm justice, equality, and dignity among all creation. Therefore, journeying toward the Other—God, humans, and nature—can be considered as the main criterion of the Church.

### 3. Journeying toward the being of God

The purpose behind every journey is significant. The Church as a journey influences our being. It is essential to remold our being according to the will of God. The will of God is nothing other than God's being. Therefore, journeying with Christ is journeying closer to the being of God. Therefore, the Church has a significant role in revealing the being of God.

John Zizioulas, in *Being as Communion*, says that the being and existence of the Church reveals the being of God in Jesus Christ. Zizioulas says, "Ecclesiology assumes a marked importance, not only for all aspects of theology, but also for the existential needs of man in every age." More than an organization, the Church is a path that can influence the very being of humans. Zizioulas argues that the being of God can be known only through relationship (communion) with God. Nothing exists without communion with God and the Other. Therefore communion is the key factor of the true being of the Church. Without existing in communion with Christ, humanity fails to perceive the true being. The Church as the journey with Christ challenges humans to be in communion with the being of God. The being of God is revealed in God's passion toward love, mercy, justice, and compassion. The concern for the weak, poor, and vulnerable is carried over from the Old Testament times to the New Testament times. For the great prophets of the eighth century BCE (Isaiah, Amos, and Micah), faith in God was expressed as a creative response toward the being of God. Without acknowledging and affirming the being of God the Church can never exist.

The being of humans is something that is not attained but constructed. Humanity in Adam is fallen because the fallen community in Adam doesn't turn toward the being of God. So, sin can be defined as moving away from the being of God. The significance of the Church is that it enables humans to remold their being by journeying with Christ. The

Church reveals the transcendence of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ reveals that humanity is the priority for the transcendent God. We need to sacrifice our self-centeredness to recreate our being. The Church is constituted with a remolded being of the community.

To be dynamic the Church must journey with Christ—according to Christ's motives and interests. Journeying with Christ is not just participating in rituals or prayers; rather, journeying with Christ demands that we journey toward the being of God. The "being of the Church" or "becoming of the Church" has to involve certain virtues other than the usual prayer and worship. The Church's unique and indispensable mission and meaning is journeying with Christ. The Church is a journeying experience that happens on the margins of society rather than within the four walls of a building. The Church as a journey is very much related with space and time, but, at the same time, the Church is beyond space and time. Buildings, institutions, organizations, and social gatherings are some of the methods through which the Church functions. However, the function and meaning of the Church cannot be narrowed down within certain buildings and activities. The Church is an experience, a journeying experience with Christ—a journeying toward selflessness, a journeying toward the Other, and a journeying toward the being of God.

## CONGRATULATIONS



**Miss. Julie Thomas**, daughter of Mr. P. S. Thomas and Mrs. Thankamma Thomas, member of Trinity MTC, Houston, Texas received the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the University of Texas (UT) on May 10, 2013. We congratulate her and the parents for this great achievement.

## CONGRATULATIONS



**Rev. Roy A. Thomas**, Youth Chaplain, Houston has been appointed as the Sabha Council member from the Diocese of North America for the remaining term of the Sabha Council ending in 2014. This is the first time in the history of the Mar Thoma Church that a U. S born Achen is becoming its Sabha Council member. Sabha Council is the highest executive body of the Mar Thoma Church, which implements the decisions of the Sabha Mandalam (general body of the Church) and also closely works with the Episcopal Synod of the Mar Thoma Church. Rev. Roy A. Thomas is presently serving as the Youth Chaplain in the Houston area. Achen is the first youth from this Diocese to become an ordained minister of the Mar Thoma Church. Achen's is born in Dallas, Texas and ordained as a priest of the Mar Thoma Church in 1999. The Diocese and the Messenger congratulates Achen for being appointed as the Sabha Council member from this Diocese and pray that God may shower His abundant blessings upon Achen to continue the faith journey of the Church in this Diocese.

# Church: Faith Community that Journeys with Christ Experience

Rev. Dennis Abraham, Youth Chaplain, Philadelphia



What is the church? This might seem to be a simple question with a simple answer. When one peruses the dictionary to define this word, they are confronted with a wide variety of definitions. All of these represent different understandings of what a church is, who/what it represents, and its function and role. Church can refer to a community of faith, the place where they worship, a denomination, a parish, administration/officers of a church, body of Christ. The list is endless. The definitions are so vast that it can be considered as a noun and a verb! The word originated from the Middle English word *chirche*, which is derived from the Greek word *kyrios*, which means the Lord, Master. Therefore, it is a community that meets in the name of the Lord, for the purpose of the Lord, and to fulfill His will. Often when we define the word church, we often define it descriptively, defining what it is. We also need to define it prescriptively, focusing on what and where it ought to be.

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of North America & Europe of the Mar Thoma Church, it is vital that we retrospect on our journey as a reformed/reforming church and People of God. Our journey with Christ as a church prompts us to think about the history of the church, the struggles and challenges of the church during antiquity, and its role today. Times of celebration and jubilee are necessary, but serious reflection on our journey with Christ as a church will make this experience more meaningful.



Council of Churches helps to build unity between the various denominations, which is known as ecumenism. The Church is unified by believing in the triune God, and is grounded by the saving work of God in Church. Cyprian of Carthage stressed the unity of the Church. He uses a number of images to convey the idea of unity. He says that the Church is one, as a "sun has many rays, but a single light; a tree has many branches by a single trunk resting on a seep root; and many streams flow out from a single source." The Church must see itself as the bride of Christ. Christ must be its head and it must be united with Him. Unity itself must be seen as a sacrament and as a bond of peace. The centrality of Christ on the Cross unifies the universal Church to become one unit, united with Christ.

## Introduction

Throughout history, the church, its identity, role, and purpose has been a subject of debate among Church Fathers, theologians, and scholars. The Greek word *Ecclesia* is used for "Church" in the New Testament. The Church's challenge is to develop a distinct identity and to continue the mission that Jesus Christ started, later carried out by the apostles. This fact is emphasized by Irenaeus, a Church Father, who emphasizes that proper Christian Churches should be able to trace their lineage back to the circle of apostles. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of the Church as a living body, which has been entrusted with Christian tradition and proclamation. This is known as apostolic succession and is vital in the Church's struggle to maintain her identity. The concept of identity has found its importance at the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. When observing the history of the Church as a whole, the progression in the understanding of the Church has changed. The Church, as it was in its humble beginnings in the first century, is different from what it is today. However, the Church has retained her identity, and has been distinct from the world. In the present context, the concept of mission has been stressed in relation to the identity of the Church. The bone of contentment lies in identifying the characteristics of the Church, while emphasizing the role and task of the Church in the local context, at the present time.

## Notes & Marks of the Church

The universal church is recognized by its defining characteristics. When we read and chant the Nicene Creed, we affirm the belief that the Church is "one," "holy," "catholic," and "apostolic." These characteristics possess intrinsic value and speak much about the identity and purpose of the church.

### a. The Church as "One"

The unity of the Church has been a theme of primary importance. It refers to the idea that the Church should remain undivided. It is also vital that members within the Church maintain unity. If the Church is indeed unified in Christ, there must be unity and harmony from within the Church. Though the Church is universal, it consists of various denominations, adopted from the western and eastern Christian tradition. The concept of unity is expressed through the Greek term *oikumene*, which means, "the whole world." The World

### b. The Church as "Holy"

The Church strives to preserve her identity and sanctity as she belongs to Christ. The Church is holy and to be holy as it is established by Christ. St. Augustine, wrote that, "The Church is holy because within the Church the Holy Spirit works through the appointed means of grace to transform human lives." Thus, the Holy Spirit ensures that the Church remains holy. The visible embodiment and manifestation of the Church can be observed through its sacramental life. The sacraments are the way in which divine grace sanctifies the Church and conforms it to the life of Christ. The Hebrew term, *qadhesh*, considers holiness as "being set apart," or "cut off." There is an implication within this term, which calls for a "holy" person to be set apart for and dedicated to the service of God. They are distinguished from the world. Thus, the Church is holy and has been separated from the world, in order to serve God and bear witness to Him.

### c. The Church as "Catholic"

The word "Catholic" refers to the universality of the Church. The Church, although consisting of various denominations, is catholic in nature. The Church is considered to be an all-inclusive body of Christ, regardless of gender, race, culture, or nationality. It also



refers to the unwavering character of the Church. The Church has remained the same in character, across various time periods, from the time of its inception to the contemporary context. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Therefore, the Church is united in character and diversified in its ministry. The Church is considered catholic because it extends through the entire world. The Church also preaches the gospel and is directed towards humanity in its entirety. Thomas Aquinas said that the Church is catholic because it was for the entire world. "It is universal with respect to the condition of the people...and with respect to time." Thus its catholicity that transcends the borders of race, culture, geography, and time.

Philip Melancthon emphasized the importance of doctrinal correctness. Though the Church exists throughout all parts of the world, it still remains universally faithful to the teachings. He used the term *Kath' holou*, which means "universally," and in "general." All members, regardless of location, profess to one true doctrine, in whatever time period. This statement came after the Reformation, by which there was confusion with the catholicity of the Church in relation to the medieval catholic Church. When hearing the word catholic, many have mistaken it as a reference to the Roman Catholic Church. But as we have observed here, that is not the case.

#### **d. The Church as "Apostolic"**

The Church is apostolic in reference to its origin and task. The term apostolic emphasizes the historical roots of the gospel and Church, in its relationship to Christ. It is a chosen and sent out community, sent from Christ, and succeeding through the apostles. The Church, can be traced through history, back to the apostles, and to Christ. Henry Barclay Swete, in the nineteenth century, wrote concerning the Doctrine of Church, in England. He said that the Church was, "planted in the world by the Apostles, as adhering to the teaching of the Apostles; as carrying on the succession of Apostolic ministry." The whole Church is apostolic, in order, and through its priestly and ministerial functions. The Church is considered apostolic as it is headed by Jesus Christ, the chief apostle. The Church is apostolic as Christ was sent from God. The Church is also expected to follow the teachings of the apostles, which are considered authoritative, and not to diverge from it. Though there are many denominations, all profess to one faith, and come from one origin. The Church carrying on the succession of the apostolic ministry is called to make provisions to appoint new apostles, which is decided by the Church. Thus, the ministry of the Church exists through an unbroken line of apostolic succession. This is necessary to ensure that the community of faith and the Church is maintained, and that it remains in continuity with apostolic tradition.

#### **Biblical Understanding of Church**

The Church was established subsequently to the death and resurrection of Christ, along with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Members of the Church community witnessed that God worked through history and was continuing to work through them. The Church was known as the congregation of the faithful, as Jesus was calling them to repentance, faith, and belief in the good news. On certain occasions, Jesus would tell others, "Your faith has healed you." Faith was the basis of Christian life, and constituted the Church. This notion was elaborated by the Apostle Paul in his teaching about law and justification.

The Church is also a fellowship of the spirit, by which the Holy Spirit works through the Church, therefore making it the Holy Body of Christ. Faith was also considered to be a gift of the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit that worked in the Church in its mission, as written by New Testament authors. Christians would possess the Holy Spirit. The Church is also a community of hope, and has to understand its call and commission, and press toward the future in hope. The Church in history lives under the sign of the cross. The Church is the bride of Christ, and has been seen as an eschatological symbol of a marriage that would take place between Christ and the Church in the end times. The Church is to look toward the future for hope, while grounding its faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **The Church in Paul's Perspective**

The Apostle Paul, a major pioneer who helped shape and mold Christianity and the Church, had several metaphors describing his view of the Church. First, he saw the Church as the Body of Christ. This can be observed in Colossians 1:18, 24. In his major epistles, he didn't mention that the Church was the body of Christ, rather, Christians belonged to the body of Christ. In comparison to this, Paul opines that Jesus Christ is the head and Lord over the Church. When Paul refers to Body, he is stressing that the Christian community is to be a body, with special focus on the individual and his/her responsibility within the com-

munity. Each Christian is considered to be a member of this body. For Paul, the only way a person can be incorporated into the body of Christ is by baptism. Paul integrated the Hebraic tradition to his view of concept of Church, especially in addressing the needs of new Christians who have converted from Judaism.

The Church was also considered to be the New Israel of God, for St. Paul. In Galatians 6:16, it says, "Peace be upon the Israel of God." The Church consists of the people of God, and is not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. It refers to the residence status of the Church and how it is staying in the world.

#### **Early Church**

The doctrine of the Church has gone through much change throughout history. Most of the Greek patristic writers of the first five centuries would describe the Church using scriptural images. The doctrine of Church came, as the Church communities felt obligated to define themselves in relation to Judaism. They wanted to have a sociological distinctiveness. To be a Christian demanded a change in one's social location. The Church had to struggle with persecutions and false teachings which were rampant throughout the Roman Empire, thus demanding doctrinal formation of the Church. The Church was seen as a spiritual society, which replaced Israel as the people of God in the world. It was known as the "New Israel." The Church was inclusive in nature, and open to all, which was a concept contrary to Hebraic understanding and religion. The Church was not only for Jews, but also extended to the Gentiles. The Church was to be a repository of true Christian teaching. The aim of the Church, was to grow in faith and holiness. This understanding of the Church was a direct reflection of the societal and political attitude towards Christianity at that time. The first century was a time of immense persecution, notably throughout the Roman Empire. It became increasingly vital that the Church maintained a distinct identity and continue the mission of Jesus Christ. After Emperor Constantine's conversion, Christianity took a different turn. The Church began to include the concept of "Pope," or the "Bishop of Rome," who was to head the Church. This was to continue the apostolicity of the Church, as it was believed that the pope was the successor of St. Peter. This was in direct reference to Matthew 16:18, which says, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

#### **Contemporary Malaise**

The Church has been at the center of attention in theology. This came as a result of ecumenism, in which there is an association between people of various denominations. Thus, there was a need for each of the denominations and the Church as a universal entity, to clearly define itself in order to reflect its distinctiveness in the world. The World Council of Churches began with its first assembly in 1948. This was an attempt to create unity in the universal Church, and is of primary importance in the present context. The Church exists not for its sake, but for the world. The Church exists as an instrument which executes the mission of God in this world. In the present understanding, the Church is called to perceive where God is at work, and to take



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visible shape and form in these places, and to call others to the struggle. The Church is to reflect and respond to the social, political, and economic structures in the modern world. The Church is to be open and visible in its character and mission.

**Conclusion**

The concept of Church has been interpreted differently at different stages in its history. Several key events, such as the reformation, have had an immense impact on the course of history, and how the Church was seen and identified in relation to society and the world. The Church's struggle was to be a living reminder of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross, and share this good news with people all around. The Church has struggled to maintain her identity, as time has progressed, has had many factions, some of which exist today. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." The Church is going through much social change, and the articulation of doctrine is necessary in communicating the gospel message and values. But the fundamental doctrines, beliefs, and practices of the church cannot change. Furthermore, the interpretation of Church, traditions, and doctrines of the Church vary by geographic area, as many of the Churches have formed from various apostles. Nevertheless, the doctrine of Church is vital for the identity and growth of the Church as it stands as the footstool of God in the world today.

**What Can We do NOW?**

Normally any piece of writing ends with a conclusion. I willfully intended to add this section as a challenge. We have investigated different interpretations of the church in the descriptive (what it is) – now it is time to get prescriptive (debate on where we ought to be). The question is: how do we bring this all into practice? What is the challenge? We have investigated the marks of the church, what defines it, and its purpose. The church we belong to is the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar. The Mar Thoma Church is a global church, with a thriving diasporic fabric. We have parishes in many parts of the world, wherever our members migrate. The parishes in the Diocese of North America & Europe are indeed growing exponentially. We need to think and meditate: Where is the church now? Where is the church headed? What are the challenges laying ahead for the church? How are we as a community of faith translating and communicating the faith through our witness and surroundings?

Today's church faces many challenges, which makes the life of witness a struggle. The society in which our grandparents and parents lived in has a sharp contrast to the life we live, let alone a comparison of our childhood to the modern social landscape. The social scenario in which we exist is dynamic and continues to change to a level that has become unpredictable, to an extent. Youths and the second/third generations are facing challenges, issues and struggles differ from that of earlier generations. It is the church's role to respond to and meet the needs of all, and to make and present Christ in a way that relates to all. On the special occasion of the silver jubilee of our diocese, we must commit to harbor communication across generations, so that faith traditions and experiences of our fore-generations may be transmitted to our younger generations. Each family has their own history of faith, and this needs to be communicated, just as the forefathers of Ancient Israel would sit with their children. (Deut 6: 4-9) What tradition and faith do we have to offer for our next generation? Is this something that can be passed on for future generations?

The Mar Thoma Church originated from India. The responsibility is given to the church to lay and sow its seeds into the present soil, and build up the next generation of youths and children. The church is the only organization/institution in the world that exists for its non-members. Therefore, it must be a spiritual hospital for all, regardless of any socially-constructed categories. Only when the church addresses the issues and needs of the people can it thoroughly fulfill its mission as Christ intended. The second & third generation Christians are growing and finding their roots in the present land. It is our responsibility to cater to their spiritual needs, and make them the torchbearers of the church, for they are the leaders of tomorrow, without destroying the inherited traditions and practices of the church. Today, we find a decaying spirituality. Some do not feel that the church life, prayer, or simple being "spiritual" is relevant/meaningful to their lives and eventually abandon the churches. Some attend church on a "seasonal" basis, while others do not find the need to attend. Furthermore, many non-traditional, so-called "Christian movements" are shadowing over the church today and threaten to destroy the fabric of ecclesiastical identity and what the true aim of the original church was. We need to push forward and empower coming generations to take up the role of building up the faith community, and the Christian Faith at large. In a world in which the divine voice of God is progressing towards an esoteric sound, let us bring God's presence back to the world, and remind oth-

ers about the living God. We need to educate/inform others about the same.

Let us be reminded that our church is Apostolic in origin, Universal in nature, Biblical in faith, Evangelical in principle, Ecumenical in outlook, Oriental in worship, democratic in function, and Episcopal in character. Let us take it as a challenge to bring this church up the way it should be, so that all may be able to glorify God together as an authentic faith community. Our faith journey will bring us to junctures of danger and promise. Let us challenge ourselves in maintaining the faithfulness to our God. On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of North America & Europe, let us thank God for the faith, teachings, and examples of our forefathers and mothers, and dedicate ourselves as a faith community to renew our commitment with Christ through the church, ever remembering that we are a one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Let us journey with Christ together.

**Editor's Note:** Due to space limitations and compatibility issues we are unable to include reference as given in the original article. For references please contact the author.

**OBITUARY**

**ATTATHARAYIL JOHN PHILIP  
PHILADELPHIA**



Attatharayil John Philip (Kunjunjukutty), Attatharayil House, Vayalathala, Kozhencherry (Philadelphia, PA) was born on April 20th, 1936. He was third among seven children of the Late Philipose Yohannan and Late Aleyamma Yohannan. He was a member of Christos Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. Philip is survived by his wife, Annamma Philip, and children Rev. Dr. John Philip Attatharayil (Jose Achen), Aleyamma Thomas (Jolly), and Joggy Alvin, and his daughter-in-law Beena Susan John, his sons-in-law: M T Thomas and Alvin Alexander, and grandchildren; Anu Sneha John, Anju Mariam John, Jiby Thomas, Joby Thomas, Joel Alex Alvin, and Abel Alex Alvin Philip was a God-fearing religious man with deep conviction, a great father, and a sincere friend to many. Prior to his migration to USA, he served as an Engineer in Himachal Pradesh Government. Funeral Services were held at Christos Mar Thoma Church followed by interment at Sunset Memorial Park Chapel in Feasterville, PA.

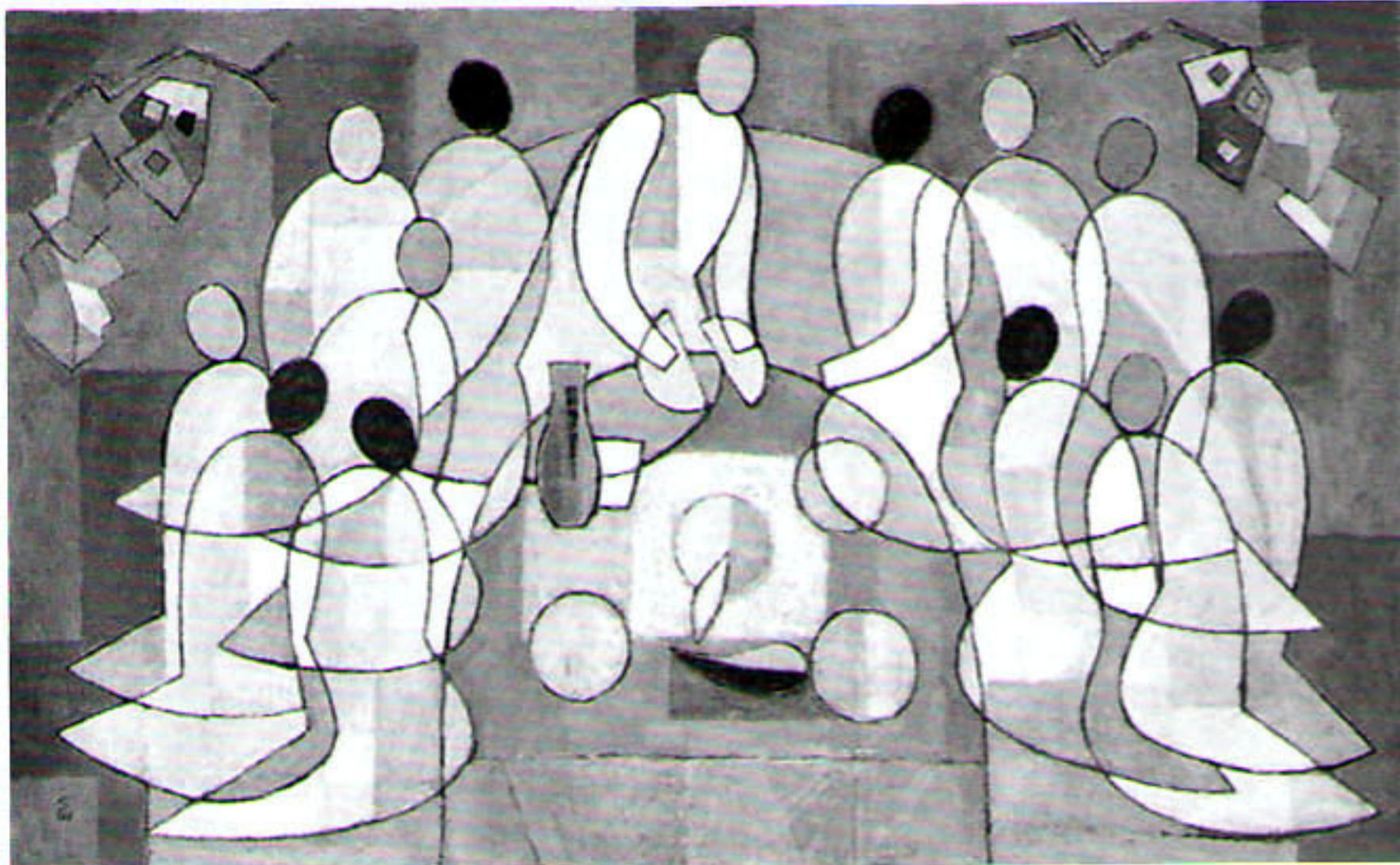
**Theme for October Issue**

**God of Bible - People of Migration and Mission of the Church**

Dead line for articles / reports: Aug 15, 2013

# We are One in Christ

The Very Rev. Douglas Travis (Former Dean of Studies, SW Episcopal Seminary, Austin)



(A Presentation on the Occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Diocese of North America and Europe, held at Houston, TX on Jan 19, 2013))

My grandfather was born on April the 11th, 1901. On December the 17th, 1903. When Granddad was 2½ years old, for the very first time in human history, Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved heavier-than-air human flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Granddad lived to hear Neil Armstrong utter his famous words, “[O]ne small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind” on July the 21st, 1969 as Armstrong became the first human being to walk on the surface of the moon. Think about that! Granddad was born before human flight was possible and he lived to see the moon landing. In 1986 I bought my first computer – and IBM XT. It was a wonderful computer and served my purposes admirably, never once giving me a bit of trouble. I paid \$7,000 for it! Today, 26 years later, my Apple iPhone is immensely more powerful than that XT was and it serves a variety of purposes that XT never could. It also costs roughly 7% of what my first computer cost. This matters because when one lives in a world changing as rapidly as is ours, one is on a journey whether he wills it or not. We are all of us on a journey. Indeed, we are all of us on several journeys simultaneously.

When Bishop Theodosius first issued me an invitation to speak to you today I asked him what he’d like me to talk about. He shared with me that “Journeying with Christ” is the theme of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church. He also asked that I talk about how best to empower the second and third generation of Mar Thoma Christians in this country “to understand the role of the Church in the growth and extension of God’s kingdom and to understand the modern challenges in carrying out the divine ministry in the world.” Now I have to confess, this poses a challenge for me. The last time any of my ancestors immigrated to this country was in either the 1880’s or the 1890’s, and most of my forebears have been here since before the Revolutionary War. Indeed, one of my ancestors was in New Amsterdam before it became New York! I’m also a sixth generation Texan. In the conventional sense of the word, for many generations the journey which is immigration has not been a part of my family’s history. I simply don’t know what it’s like to exercise the courage and determination to move my family from one continent to another, from one culture to another.

But there are other journeys that are common to the Christian enterprise, and you and I are very much together on these journeys. We are all of us on the journey from our births to our deaths. Implicit in that journey is the pursuit of psychological and spiritual maturity. For Christians this is Christian maturity, best pursued by devoting ourselves to the journey into the mind of God. And we’re especially privileged because in that journey we

have Jesus Christ as our friend and our fellow pilgrim and we make the journey in the power of the Holy Spirit. The journey to Christian maturity can also be termed, as I recently heard Bishop Theodosius call it, the journey into “God consciousness.” While our families’ histories may differ, in this culture you and I have been subjected to the same profound, constant and overwhelming change – change which takes us on a journey regardless of whether we consent to traveling! For in today’s world, whether we like it or not, we all constantly travel. I mean this literally – I often spend three and four days somewhere other than at home. But I also mean it figuratively. Subjected as we are to the constant barrage of change that marks our society, we cannot but travel from one level of technological complexity to the next.

Simply put, in what is now called the “post-modern” world, it is impossible to stand still in one place. It seems that nothing stays the same. This is the world we inhabit, but we inhabit this world together, brothers and sisters in Christ, created in the image of the same God. We are all of us going on a journey! Let us go forward together – with our Lord’s example, presence, and strength to sustain us. From this standpoint of being brothers and sisters in Christ, but also children of a rapidly changing world and culture, I’d like to ask three questions:

- 1) What’s a denomination for?
- 2) What does the Christian journey look like?
- 3) How can we boldly, ever more and more together, go into the Christian future together?

## WHAT’S A DENOMINATION FOR?

In 2005 while the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in The Woodlands, we hosted a Renovaré Conference at which the keynote speakers were Richard Foster and Dallas Willard. It was an incredible experience. Foster is the famed Quaker pastor and author of such books as *Celebration of Discipline*. He and Willard have been close friends for over thirty years. Willard himself is an ordained Southern Baptist minister and professor emeritus of philosophy at The University of Southern California. But more than that, he is the author of life-changing books such as *The Divine Conspiracy*.

Imagine this: over 800 Christians from 21 denominations and at least 180 different individual congregations gathered... to do what? Essentially to discuss Christian discipline and the formation of small groups. But a Renovaré Conference is about much more than that. Renovaré means “renew” in Latin. These conferences are precisely designed to renew the Christian Church by calling Christians to lead together the lives of “discipline” all “disciples” of Jesus are called to live. The conferences achieve their purpose by being a mini-ecumenical movement in pursuit of the unity of

the Church. Rather than achieving its goal by beginning at the top of any given denomination's hierarchy, Renovaré starts at the bottom with common Christians. Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and Quakers gather beneath one roof in one house of worship to celebrate our common heritage and our common devotion to one Lord. Amazingly when we're all side by side I can't tell the difference!

Ellen Chary is a professor of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and an Episcopalian. With four other Christian thinkers Ellen was featured on the cover of the February 8, 1999 *Christianity Today* as one of "The New Theologians". The subtitle of the article was this: "In a realm once dominated by theological liberals, many of today's top scholars are orthodox believers." But despite being theologically conservative, Ellen is critical of what she calls the tendency of the contemporary Church to be ever more "fissiparous." What does "fissiparous" mean? It's a technical term from biology, but if we take the term outside its scientific locus it means "tending to break up into parts: DIVISIVE." Ellen's point? We Christians are forever forming new denominations or new congregations because we find ourselves disagreeing either with our own denomination's stance on a given issue, or we find ourselves at odds with fellow members of our local faith community. And so in a supposed devotion to "God's truth" we determine that we have to form a new congregation or denomination. I grew up in a little town in the Panhandle of Texas. In this small community where no denomination really needed more than one congregation, one denomination had two. Why? Because there were those in the original community who, upon discovering that "Sunday School" is nowhere mentioned in the Bible, determined that they needed a new congregation devoted to honoring this otherwise obscure truth!

Bill W., the spiritual genius who first organized Alcoholics Anonymous, had real problems with much of the traditional Church. Why? "The problem with organized religions, Bill Wilson once complained, 'is their claim how confoundingly right all of them are.'" Wouldn't it be glorious were Christians to be able to gather en masse devoted not to being right but to knowing, loving, praising, and emulating their Lord? Wouldn't it be extraordinary if Christians from all denominations and parishes were enabled, in the power of the Spirit, to gather together to remember that "There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all...." (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Well, believe it or not, this is exactly what Foster intends with Renovaré, and it's exactly what's achieved in a Renovaré Conference. One emerges from a Renovaré conference conscious that all our great Christian traditions have their contributions to make. And the challenge, at the most basic level, is for Christians to gather with Christians to celebrate our variety of gifts, seeking not to splinter into ever smaller bodies, but rather to find the common ground, the common Truth, Who unites us all. Clearly "Truth" with a capital "T" matters! Both Foster and Willard would land on the conservative end of most reflective people's theological spectrum. But perhaps we Christians do our best work in spreading the Gospel by granting the benefit of the doubt to those with whom we disagree and by always listening to them – something you're doing with me today and for which I'm very grateful.

Foster's hope is clearly that an ecumenical movement of some variety can begin at the grass roots level. In his marvelous book *Streams of Living Water* he identifies six different traditions in the larger river of Christian experience. They are the contemplative, the holiness, the charismatic, the social justice, the evangelical, and the incarnational or sacramental traditions. My own Church, the Episcopal Church, probably finds the incarnational and the contemplative traditions most congenial. (I would be intrigued to know where you all place the Mar Thoma Church). I benefit from the wisdom and experience of the adherents of all the traditions. My soul has found immeasurable solace and wisdom in the evangelical musings of Dallas Willard, and I am increasingly drawn to such social justice projects as Habitat for Humanity. Again, all of the traditions have enriched me.

This is a lesson I'm increasingly convinced God has been at pains to teach me. My roots are Presbyterian (three generations of ordained pastors!). Most of my teachers in graduate school were Roman Catholics. But perhaps the most dramatic instance of an ecumenical force working on my soul occurred while I was serving a parish in Dallas. The Church next door was the Church of Christ. One day their youth minister came to my office to tell me, "Our congregation has just completed a year of prayer and fasting to discern God's call for us as a community, and we've concluded that God is calling us to pursue Christian unity." I doubt there are words adequate to express the incredulity I felt. I simply didn't believe him, and so – while I was courteous – as soon as the conversation was over I ignored what he had to say. As I did the next two or three times members of their church entreated

me to enter into conversation with them. But finally I realized they were serious, and so we began an experiment. I preached in their Church. Their pastor (a wonderful and holy man) preached in ours. We had a joint Thanksgiving Day worship service. Our congregations began to become true and fast friends. And then one day their pastor shared with me that one of his favorite authors is the great evangelical, Anglican John Stott (author of numerous books including *Basic Christianity*). My friend wondered aloud, "Do you think we might be able to get Stott to come address our congregations together?" I was dubious but figured it couldn't hurt to issue an invitation, so we did. Imagine our surprise and delight when this famous English preacher and thinker accepted our invitation!

After he finished delivering one of the most wonderful sermons I've ever heard on the meaning of the Church to our joint congregations, as we were drinking tea I asked him, "Dr. Stott, what impelled you to accept our invitation?" He said simply, "When I received an invitation from an Episcopal parish and a Church of Christ congregation to address a joint gathering of their communities, I thought to myself, I must accept this invitation. This is the Church." I am especially delighted to be invited to address my sisters and brothers in the Mar Thoma Church. It gives me great joy that we are in full communion, one with another, and I rejoice that we are "one Body" (Ephesians 4). As members of the same body, the body of Christ, we are all on the same journey, the journey into the mind of God with Christ as our teacher and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's turn now to that journey.

### THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

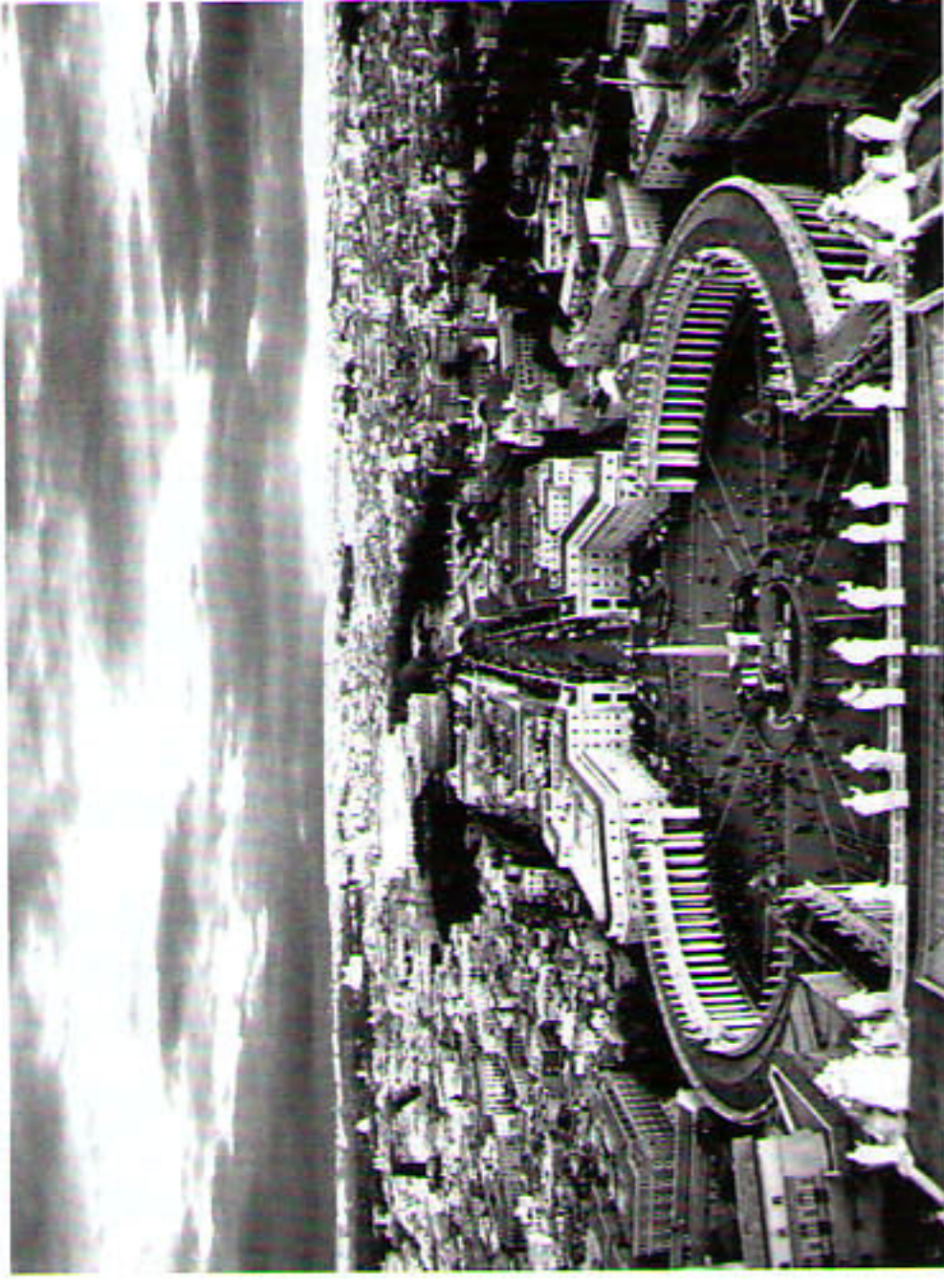
In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul famously writes, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Then we will see face to face. When the Kingdom is realized, when Christ is all in all, then we will truly see each other as we truly are. Then we will truly love each other as we truly are. Have you ever noticed how, even with identical twins, if they're beyond a certain age you can tell them apart? History, attitude, character – all of these come together to mark each of faces, and our faces mark each of us radically unique and distinctive individuals. We acknowledge and embrace another person's reality and identity by looking her squarely in the eye, by taking in the details of her face, by coming to know her. In a less well-known passage, from his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul observes that coming to be able to see God face-to-face is at the very heart of the Christian journey. This is the journey that assumes, fosters, and nourishes our transformation. Listen to what Paul writes: "[W]hen one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:16-18).



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We are all of us – you and I – being transformed into the IMAGE of the Lord by seeing the GLORY of the Lord, even though we only see that glory as though reflected in a mirror. But the more closely we gaze, the more we see God's face; and the more we see God's face, the more we see God reflected in our own faces and in the faces of those around us. This is the Christian journey: to come to see God, to come to know God truly, and by knowing God truly to know ourselves and each other in God's light and in God's image. The connective thread is love, Christian love, the very love of Christ himself flowing through our arteries and veins. I just quoted 1 Cor. 13:12 – “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” Listen now to the very next verse, 1 Cor. 13:13 – “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

1 Corinthians 13 is, of course, the great chapter on love. I don't know if this is true in the Mar Thoma Church, but in the Episcopal Church 1 Corinthians 13 is read at virtually every wedding. The problem is, Paul is not talking only or even primarily about romantic love, the love between a man and a woman, the love between lovers. Paul is talking about the love between fellow Christians, sisters and brothers in Christ, fellow members of the body, fellow members of the same church. “Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” When this love manifests itself between two people – regardless of their age, their sex, or their position in society – what do you have? You have friends, true friends.

### **ABIDE IN MY LOVE THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY AS THE JOURNEY INTO FRIENDSHIP**

The older I get, the more I see Christianity as being about friendship – friendship with God in Christ and, in that friendship, friendship with each other. And nobody describes this friendship better than... Jesus! John 15:9-17 says: As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

What does it mean to be the friend of Jesus? I'm going to take a few minutes to really parse this passage. Take the first two verses – John 15: 9-10. Abide in my love! Dwell in my love! Make my love your all in all. As I dwell in you, so shall you dwell in me! We all know the famous passage from John which, in the King James version, was translated, “In my Father's house there are many mansions” (John 14:2). The word there translated as “mansion” is the noun form of the verb that is here translated as “abide”. What does it mean to abide? To dwell, to make some place your permanent place of residence. For you and me as Christians this is the still point in the ongoing journey that is the Christian life, the center from which everything else flows. And how do we do this? By keeping his commandments. But what are his commandments? Much more than just rules – much more. This is the thing I love about the image of “dwelling”. It's much more than just keeping the rules and doing the right things. It's a matter of constantly being in God's presence, of being constantly aware of God's presence, of being in active relationship with God. To my mind, this is the “God consciousness” that Bishop Theodosius so eloquently describes. Jesus says all of these things to us for a reason. Why? “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11).

The Christian life is to be an inherently joyful life, the Christian journey an inherently joyful journey. It is God's will that we be joyful! But let's be clear: joy is more than just being happy. If I want a new car, and I get it, I'm happy – for a while. But cars wear out. Joy comes from the deep-seated sense of having come into the presence of God, of finding oneself firmly rooted in the divine mystery, of knowing that one is loved, totally and completely, as one is, as one was created to be. This joy is rooted in more than just being aware of the presence of God – it is rooted in being aware of the presence of God in each other. This matters so very, very much. In his first letter, John puts it very, very simply: God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. **THOSE WHO SAY, 'I LOVE GOD', AND HATE THEIR BROTHERS OR SISTERS, ARE LIARS; FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE A BROTHER OR SISTER WHOM THEY HAVE SEEN, CANNOT LOVE GOD WHOM THEY**

**HAVE NOT SEEN.** 21The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also (1st John 4:16, 20-21).

What does Christian love look like? The commandment to love one another was scarcely new with Jesus, and it's scarcely unique to Christianity. What makes Jesus' example different is that he so perfectly models this love (cf., John 1:14 “Love one another as I have loved you!”). In Jesus God shows us what God's love looks like! And what does that love look like? No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you slaves any longer, because the slave does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father (John 15:13-15).

To grasp the full significance of this passage we have to understand something about ancient Rome. Fully a third of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves. A third! It was simply an accepted reality, a necessity to the economy. The Roman Empire would never have survived without the institution of slavery. A horrible reality, but for all of that nonetheless true. In many versions of the Bible this passage is softened by translating the Greek word “doulos” as servant. But the word doesn't mean “servant”. A servant was a “diakonos” – the word from which we get our word “deacon”. A servant was somebody hired for a wage. He could quit if he wanted to. A slave can't quit. A slave is property. In ancient Rome if you killed one of your slaves, you weren't guilty of murder. You were guilty of imprudence for you had destroyed a valuable piece of property. Nothing more. Now notice what Jesus says. “I do not call you slaves anymore.” The disciples are sitting with the very Son of God Himself, God become incarnate in human form! If God wants to call us slaves we don't really have much room to protest. After all, God did create us! We are God's!

But what does the Son of God say? “I no longer call you slaves but friends!” Friends! Imagine what it must have been like to sit in that upper room that night and hear these extraordinary words! These were not members of the upper class! These were not rulers or wealthy people! These were common folk – fishermen, tax collectors, day-laborers. And the very Son of God himself is elevating them up to his level by making them his friends! You and I are the friends of God! Friends of God! Why? Listen to what comes next: “You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last . . . I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another” (John 15:16-17).

Sisters and brothers, we did not choose Jesus. He chose us, you and me, and he still chooses us so that we might bear fruit, fruit that will last. The invitation he extends to us – to be friends with him – he expects us to extend to others. There's a price to being friends with Jesus. If we're going to be friends with Jesus, we have to agree to be friends with his friends, and so far as I can discern he extends his invitation to everybody. When all is said and done, Jesus is really

not very discriminating! He appears to love everybody! And here's the rub – he expects us to do the same. This is the fruit that lasts: so extending the invitation to the kingdom that the kingdom grows and grows and grows because more and more people know just how much God loves them.

### Going Into the Future Together

This brings me to the last passage I want to scrutinize with you today. As were all the earliest disciples, so was Peter a devout Jew, and like all devout Jews, Peter did his best to eat kosher; that is, Peter abided by the dietary laws of the Old Testament. So imagine Peter's surprise in Acts 10 when he realizes he is hungry, suddenly falls into a trance and sees a sheet lowered from heaven with all kinds of unclean animals in it and hears the words, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." Peter's response? "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean!" Peter's dilemma is that Leviticus 11 prohibits his eating the animals in that sheet. But then notice the words he hears: "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This happens to Peter three times! (I love this about Peter – it gives me hope for myself! Peter always has to be told things three times before he gets it!)

What's happening here? God himself is telling Peter, "The dietary laws of the Old Testament no longer matter to you. I have made these animals clean. You may eat them." But God has done far more than just change the dietary laws of the Old Testament, for notice what happens next. As soon as the vision is completed men sent to Peter by Cornelius, a Gentile, appear to request that Peter accompany them to Cornelius' house, for Cornelius has had a vision commanding him to send for Peter! Now Cornelius was a Roman centurion, a Gentile! As a good Jew, as surely as Peter was commanded to not eat certain foods he was commanded to neither associate with nor visit a Gentile, but Cornelius has invited his relatives and close friends to be with him when he meets Peter. What does Peter say? "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection" (Acts 10:28-19).

Peter has gotten the message. The Jews who have known Jesus had to come to understand that in his death and resurrection all people have been declared clean because Jesus died for all people! You see, in the earliest church the question was, do I have to first become a Jew in order to become a Christian? And the answer revealed to Peter and to Paul was, no, you do not have to become a Jew first. Peter and Paul came to understand that many of the old ways which they had thought essential to their faith simply were not. And it was with this message that they began their incredible journeys all over the Roman Empire declaring the Good News that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

Many of the things that we think are essential simply are not. Coming out of the great Reformation of the 16th century we Anglicans drew a sharp distinction between matters essential and adiaphora. Adiaphora is simply a Greek word for "matters indifferent" – things that in the grand scheme of things just don't matter that much. On the essentials – the things which mark the essence of what it means to be a Christian – we Anglicans and we Episcopalians will not compromise. But on matters indifferent we're more than willing to trust and follow local custom. What are our essentials as Anglicans? There are four that together comprise what we call the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
2. The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
3. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

In other words, we Anglicans will compromise on just about anything except:

1. The centrality of the Bible as containing the things necessary to salvation
2. The Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed
3. The Lord's Supper and Baptism
4. The centrality of Bishops

I never will forget Professor Martin Marty at the University of Chicago reminding us that in 19th century America, Italian Americans were much more likely to actively attend the

Roman Catholic Church than were their cousins who remained in Italy. As strangers in a strange land, first and second generation Italian Americans discovered that church played a profoundly important role in their lives by giving them a sense of home, of family, of belonging. But as you would expect, successive generations remembered less and less of the old country and were more and more assimilated to their new culture. Insofar as the culture they were entering – American culture – was a good and healthy culture, being assimilated as Americans was a good thing. With this process the church may not have played as large a social role as it once had, but the process creates space for the church to play a new role in the lives of the children and grandchildren of immigrants. Perhaps successive generations are freed to focus more on what is essential in their tradition. The Apostle Paul reminds us that "in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26-28).

There was absolutely nothing wrong with Italian Americans attending the Roman Catholic Church because it provided them with community, a common heritage, and a sense of belonging. It made all the sense in the world. But as successive generations became less and less Italian and more and more simply American, I surmise that they had greater opportunity to attend Church for the simple reason that here they meet God in Christ and here they know their sisters and brothers in Christ, regardless of national origin. I do not know what the matters essential in the Mar Thoma tradition are, but I know the Spirit has gifted you with certain marks which are uniquely yours as members of your ancient and wonderful church, and I know that the rest of us Christians hope you'll continue to share your tradition and your gifts with us. As time marches on and Kerala becomes more and more a thing in your past, it is the gifts and marks of your tradition that will come to matter more and more. Embrace them fully – and share them generously. Few things delight me more than that the local Mar Thoma congregation in Austin worships in the chapel at Seminary of the Southwest. Few things delight me more than that our two churches are in full communion with each other. I cherish our already deep but still developing friendship. All of us in this church are Christians. My simple hope is that as time passes you will embrace the essentials of your tradition ever more resolutely, share them ever more generously, so that together we can rejoice in declaring that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." In conclusion, and in the power of the Spirit I simply want to say, thank you. Thank you for bringing your wonderful culture and your wonderful Christian tradition and Church to the shores of this continent. Thank you for sharing your remarkable energy and intelligence and creativity. But above all, thank you for being my friends in Christ.

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# The Origin of the World Council of Churches

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The 10th assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) will take place in Busan, Republic of Korea, from October 30 to November 8, 2013. This article deals with a brief historical survey of the beginning of modern ecumenical movement and its institutional form, the WCC. The Mar Thoma church is an active member church of WCC from its inception and has contributed great ecumenical leaders to the world ecumenical movement. During the eve of its 10th assembly we have to go through the formation period of this great ecumenical movement. Ecumenism refers to the movement to overcome the division within the church of Christ and restore its unity as a universal people of Christ. It is the search of the world-wide church to witness Jesus Christ as the one Lord and Redeemer of modern secular history. The story of the origins of the WCC reminds one of the developments of a theme in a symphony. The WCC, the most visible international expression of ecumenical movement, was constituted at the first assembly at Amsterdam on 23 August 1948. The history of WCC is not isolated from modern ecumenical movement and the circumstances lead to the situation. It is a result of integration of many ecumenical streams. A historical outline of ecclesiastical situation in the Christian world from the protestant missionary movement is needed for the beginning of discussion regarding modern ecumenical movement and its great institutional form WCC.

## Early Background:

The ecumenical activities of Christians affected by the general situation of the Churches and the changing climate of social, political, and international affairs of secular world. The 16th century was a century of reformation and 17th century was dominated by the Counter-Reformation directed principally by the Jesuits. The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the great expansion of Christianity in the non-western lands. This geographical expansion of Christianity corresponded with the colonial expansion of the western political powers. The Christian Missions accepted western imperial expansion as providential as it opened the non-western world to the gospel proclamation. The 19th century was a great century for the Christian churches. Churches which had long lived in geographical or denominational isolation found themselves changed into a new world-wide fellowship and responsibility.

## Missionary Movement in Modern Era

The immediate background of the modern missionary movement was the evangelical awakening in the protestant churches in the west in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It differed in its origins in different countries but its spirit and the motives were the same. The revival overcame the national boundaries and resulted in the birth of a number of mission societies, Christian voluntary movements, and youth and student organizations. The political and cultural power of European colonialism aided the missionaries and these movements in penetrating all parts of the globe. It was the missionary movement and the churches in the mission field that gave impetus for the emergence of modern ecumenical movement at the beginning of the 20th century.

## Conferences in the Mission Fields

There were many missionary gatherings and conferences in regional, national and continental level in mission fields and in Europe and North America. These gatherings were clear indications of people's seriousness and interest about unity and world mission. The era of ecumenism began with missionaries of different mission societies coming together first for holidaying and then entering into theological discussion. This culminated in the organization of the first international missionary conference in Edinburgh in 1910. According to T.V. Philip, "The central purpose of such meetings was the exposition and discussions of the facts and problems of missionary work. The meetings also provided opportunity for special fellowship and social intercourse. It helped dissipate suspicion, prevent misunderstandings and create an atmosphere of friendliness and co-operation. There was no



questioning of denominational ecclesiology as such, instead they felt that there was sufficient spiritual unity among them to co-operate in missions." The world missionary conference at Edinburgh 1910 was the logical conclusion of missionary conferences in the mission field and in the West. It was also a new beginning and historians often speak of Edinburgh as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. If the 19th century is known as the missionary century, then the 20th century must be called the ecumenical century.

## Other Christian Activities

There were other areas of Christian activity within which a sense of unity in fellowship and purpose was experienced. Bible societies and Christian literature societies in Europe and America were best examples. Their primary purpose was translation and distribution of Scriptures but in this task they drew together representatives of a great diversity of nations and denominations. The formation of S.P.C.K. and S.P.G. are the best examples. Christian student and youth movements were another factor for the experience of unity and co-operation. The chief ecumenical agencies among student and youth movements were Y.M.C.A, Y.W.C.A, S.V.M and S.C.M. These movements reached out to the intellectuals among students and youths. The members of these movements have been mem-

bers of different denominations, 'but they have known that they belong to a world-wide Christian society, with a single, central loyalty and common purpose'. In the words of Ruth Rouse, "There are the 19th-century organizations-missionary, evangelistic, and reform societies, each with a definite objective, Bible societies, Christian literature societies, anti-slavery societies, conferences for the deepening of spiritual life, etc. — which, decade after decade, steadily forwarded their specific aims and at the same time brought Christians of various Churches into understanding touch with each other. This great service to Christian unity they continue to render as they carry on their work in the 20th century".

### **The Ecumenical Results of the Missionary Movements**

The missionary movements that arose out of the evangelical awakening were unconscious pioneers of the movement for Christian unity. Christian missions and ecumenism are inseparable. Missionaries of different Churches realized their fellowship and interdependence. The new missionary enterprise gave rise at once to co-operation and unity amongst Christians of different Churches and promoted contact and understanding between the churches. Extensive missionary activity in the 19th century gave rise to the problem of mutual relations between denominations in the same field and suggested the possibility of common planning at home. According to Ruth Rouse, the missionary movements were not ecumenical in objective or aim; but they were ecumenical in result and created a consciousness of Christian unity and a sense of togetherness among different churches and Christians of different nations. The idea of the universal church as a bearer and goal of an ecumenical, evangelical mission took shape in the more sensitive among the missionaries. Their concerns for justice and peace began to recognize that united action in social and international affairs was weakened by the divisions in western Christianity. The idea of ecumenism as the sign and foretaste of the Kingdom of God grew in strength in the movement. This strong current which emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries drew Christians of many communions together in a unity.

### **The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910**

A World Missionary Conference was held in 1910 at Edinburgh. It was the out growth and climax of earlier missionary gatherings. The conference took place at a time when missionary enthusiasm was at a high point. There was a sense of optimism about missionary enterprises. It was primarily a consultative assembly, and the missionary agencies planned together the next steps in giving the Gospel to the world, and enabled them to form a common mind and joint action. The conference was concerned about strategy of mission work among non-Christians and the emphasis was on co-operation in the mission field. From it many new movements towards Christian unity took their origin. It is probably an over simplification to focus ecumenical origins so narrowly on one event, but the movement for church unity in the 20th century clearly owes a great deal to the inspiration and insights of the missionary movement.

### **Ecumenical Result of Edinburgh 1910**

Edinburgh 1910 was in a remarkable way a training ground for those who were later to be leaders of the ecumenical movement. The conference produced outstanding ecumenical statesmen in the persons of John R. Mott, Joseph H. Oldham and others. The years which followed in Edinburgh 1910 witnessed a development of the regional missionary bodies and rapid multiplication of additional organization for collective planning and action. Edinburgh 1910 did not end with the inspiration of its own sessions but made provision for carrying on its work and goal and with this purpose a Continuation Committee was formed. It kept the ecumenical interests alive and promoted its interdenominational and international vision.

In K.S. Latourette's opinion the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, was the birth place of the modern ecumenical movement. The period from 1910 was a time of growth of co-operation among denominations. All the international conferences of post-Edinburgh era marked further advance in the development of ecumenical movement and the period from 1910 can be called ecumenical era. Ecumenical Era: Institutional form of Ecumenism

### **New Ecumenical Streams**

The period after Edinburgh saw the development of three major streams of the 20th century ecumenical movement, which later joined to form the World Council of Churches: The International Missionary Council, the Life and Work Movement, and the Faith and Order Movement. According to Visser't Hooft these three movements considered the apostolate, the catholicity and the 'diaconia' as the basis of the ecumenical ideal, and which re-

cruited their own supporters. With great conferences these movements helped the churches to enter into conversation with each other, after so many centuries of isolation.

### **International Missionary Council**

One significant impact of Edinburgh was the formation of International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921 which reflect the concerns of Edinburgh. The functions of the IMC were to stimulate and investigation on missionary questions, to help co-ordinate the activities of the national missionary organizations in different countries through common consultation. The IMC gave room for interaction between the thinking and active efforts of the western churches and missions on the one hand and the non-western churches on the other and it helped mutual understanding and formulation of theological guidelines and practical policy lines for Christian response to the life and mission of the church. IMC integrated to the WCC at the New Delhi assembly in 1961.

### **Life and Work Movement**

The idea of forming a worldwide movement of churches to work for peace and justice between nations had been often discussed in Christian peace movements before the First World War. The disaster situation of the war created the urgency of the movement. At the end of the war the churches started plan for a conference which would help work for a just and lasting peace and formulate a Christian response to the economic, social and moral issues in the post-war world. Nathan Soderblom, Archbishop of the Lutheran church of Sweden was the main leader. Soderblom was determined that this would support the idea of an ecumenical council of churches. He instilled his ecumenical vision into a pioneer event — the universal Christian conference on life and work, in Stockholm August 1925. The conference carefully eliminated the question of faith and order because it was believed that theological debate would spoil the practical and realistic quality of the conference but surveyed the whole range of Christian social concern. The words 'life and work' expressed the organizers determination to set forth the Christian way of life as the world's greatest need. The movement became a laboratory of fertile ideas and projects for ecumenism and social concerns. Many of the activities, later more fully developed by the WCC, had their prophetic beginnings in the early stages of this movement. The purpose of the movement had been to challenge and to educate the churches in the field of social and international responsibility.

The Stockholm Conference failed to measure up the expectations of the period. The harsh realities of increasing political and economic disorder in the years 1923 to 1933 and the rise of Hitlerism and other totalitarian systems frustrated the optimistic and idealistic hopes of Stockholm, forcing the movement to engage in deeper analysis and study of the world social and spiritual situation and determined to find more solid theological and ethical foundations. The second world conference of Life and Work Movement was held at Oxford in 1937. It can be characterized as an ecu-

menical study conference on a world scale. It was designed to be a culminating point in a continuing process of clarifying and crystallizing Christian thought and strategy in regard to the burning issues of human society. The conference's report on its central theme 'Church, Community and State', represents the first theologically formulated statement on the Christian task in the modern world.

Nils Ephrenstrom concluded his article about Life and Work Movement in the book *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948* that, "to say that Life and Work died in 1938 would be to give a wholly false impression of what happened; the movement merely changed its name, to continue its work and witness with undiminished vitality within the wider embrace of the World Council of Churches".

### **Faith and Order Movement**

Gunther Gassmann defined Faith and Order movement in the following words, "The Faith and Order Movement serves the churches by leading them into theological dialogue as a means of overcoming obstacles to and opening up ways towards the manifestation of their unity given in Jesus Christ". Soon after the Edinburgh conference of 1910 a commission emerged to bring consideration of questions touching Faith and Order. The first international conference on Faith and Order took place in 1927 in Lausanne. Over four hundred participants, representing Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed and Free churches assembled under the leadership of Bishop Charles Brent to register the apparent level of fundamental agreements within the conference and critical points of disagreement remaining.

The Second World Conference on Faith and Order assembled in 1937 at Edinburgh and decided to enter into a further step towards a World Council and participated with the Life and Work movement and agreed that Faith and Order should become part of the World Council of Churches when its first assembly was held.

### **Origin of the World Council of Churches**

Visser't Hooft pointed out three proposals which emerged in the years immediately following the First World War paved the way for the origin of World Council of Churches. In 1919 Archbishop Soderblom gave a proposal concerning an ecumenical council in the form of League of Nations. In the same year the Ecumenical Patriarchate sent an Encyclical on Koinonia of Churches. In 1920 J. H. Oldham presented a proposal for the formation of an international missionary Conference.

The main purpose of these proposals was to set up a representative body to be controlled by the churches as such, which would serve as a permanent link between them and enable them to bear a common witness to society and especially to international society. These proposals became a need of realization by the middle of 1930's.

### **Integration between Faith and Order and Life and Work Movements**

The second world conference of Life and Work movement on Church, Community and State was held at Oxford in 1937. Very soon after this gathering the second world conference of Faith and Order movement was held in Edinburgh. This combination was deliberate and at the close of each of these conferences decisions were taken to be cooperated into a single and new organization, the World Council of Churches and each of them passed a resolution in favoring of this. They expressed their willingness that the new council should take over and continue the tasks of the Faith and Order and Life and Work organizations. The pressure of political developments, plus a general deepening of theological perspective in the protestant world, had been drawing the Life and Work and Faith and Order movement closer together.

A Committee consisted of fourteen members from both movements was set up in 1937, took responsibility for shaping the World Council. This committee met with the church leaders took place in Utrecht in May 1938, and created a provisional committee responsible for the World Council of Churches in process of formation and drafted the constitution of World Council. Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, the General Secretary of the Federal Council of Churches in America, suggested the name 'World Council of Churches'.

In 1938, it sent out formal invitation to hundred and ninety six churches to take part in the establishment of the World Council of Churches including Vatican Secretariat. At Tambaram (India) Conference in 1938, the IMC expressed interests in the WCC plan but decided to continue as a separate body and eventually integrated in 1961. In 1939 the

provisional committee planned the first WCC assembly for August 1941, but the Second World War intervened, and the period of formation lasted for another decade.

### **Second World War: The Formative Period of WCC**

Because of the outbreak of Second World War in 1939 and its consequences created a delay of eleven years in the formation of the new Council. Even though during the war period the World Council could not function institutionally, several activities contributed to the witness of the church such as chaplaincy service, work among prisoners of war, assistance to Jews and other refugees etc. The war years strengthened the determination of the churches to manifest their fellowship. In the period of crises and uncertainty, so many churches decided to participate in the establishment of the World Council. After the war it was reported that ninety churches had already accepted the invitation and proved that they have confidence in the future of the council.

### **The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches**

The preparation for the first Assembly was started after the World War. The main theme was, "Man's Disorder and God's Design". The Assembly held at Amsterdam, 22 August - 4 September 1948. Delegates came from 147 churches and 44 countries, ready to participate in the establishment of the World Council. All confessional families except the Roman Catholics were represented. "Man's Disorder and God's Design" was the theme of first assembly which sobered by the disorder of the postwar world, but confident that God himself is at work rebuilding his own order.

The process of formation of the World Council was completed in 1948 but at a meeting of the Central Committee held in Toronto in 1950 led the adoption of the Council in an explicit agreed statement. This is also known as Toronto statement of 1950. According to this statement the WCC is not and must never become a super church, the purpose of the WCC is not to negotiate unions between churches, but to bring the churches into living contact with each other and to promote the study and discussion of the issues of Church unity, the WCC cannot and should not be based on any one particular conception of the Church. It does not prejudge the ecclesiological problem. Regarding the question, "Who founded the World Council? Who was its chief Architect?" Visser't Hooft answered that it is not possible to answer by giving the names of a few people. We must rather think in terms of a kind of relay race – of a few people carrying the torch for a while, and then passing it on to others. Among these torch bearers we find men of different confessions or denominations: Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed or Presbyterian, and Methodist. It cannot be said that the idea of the Council belonged to any one confession, for many made their contribution.

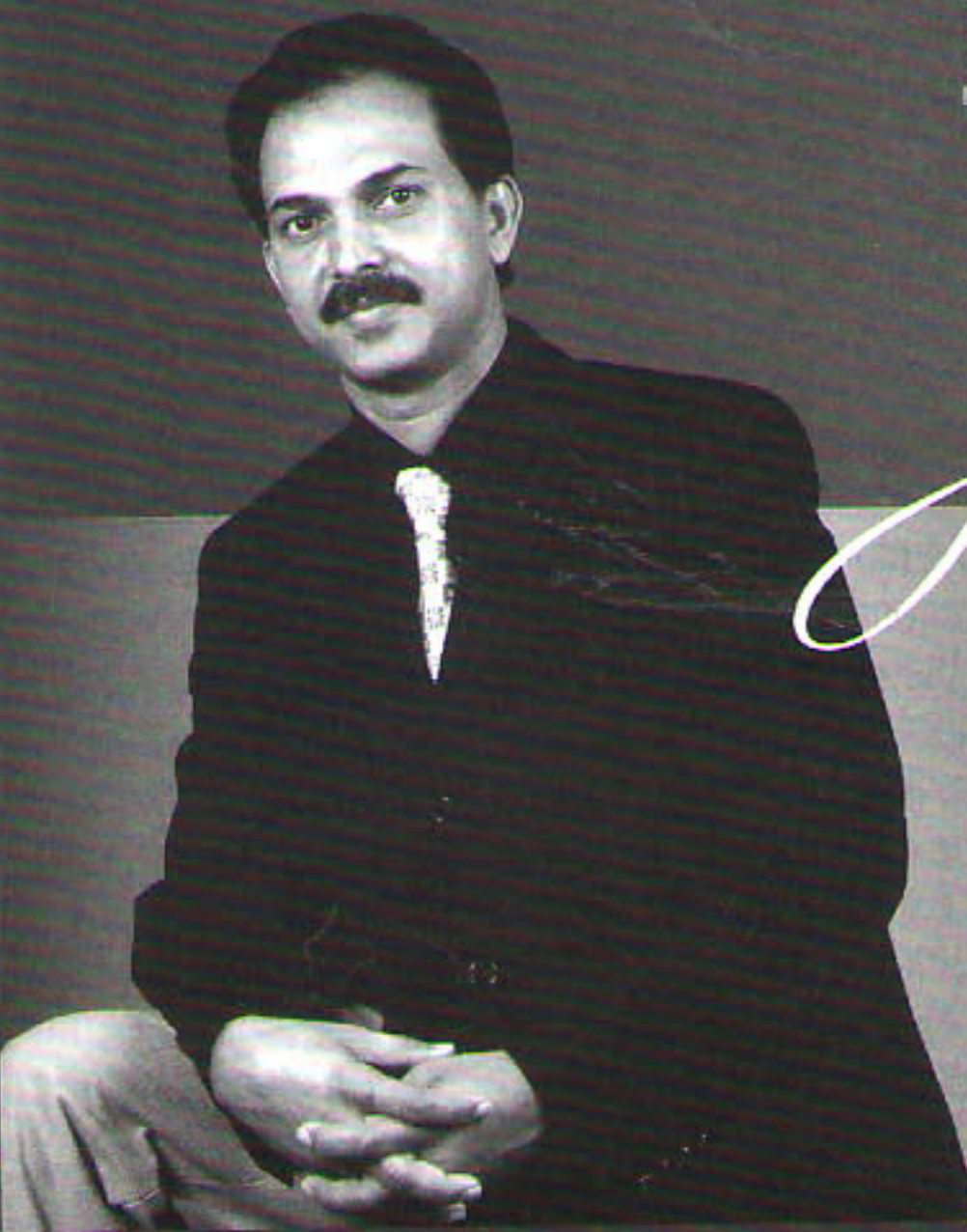
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# Daiva Suthar: Children of God

Rev. Merin Mathew, Guwahati MTC



Romans 8: 12- 17: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

This passage shows the Trinitarian nature of God. Trinity is a very important doctrine, so let me emphasize it before I concentrate on the passage above. There is always trouble in understanding the Trinity. Trinity emphasizes that God is one in three persons. That sounds like a paradox. The Infinity of God is beyond our understanding. But in the Three persons, God reveals three aspects of God-head, so that we can comprehend him. Bishop Kalistose Ware in his book *The Orthodox Way* explains the three Aspects or Persons in the following manner: A) God who is Beyond Us. God said to Moses, "I am who I am.[a] This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3: 14). This answer will help us understand that Moses here was trying to make God more tangible for the people. He wanted to accommodate God in the conceptualization of humans. But God cannot be domesticated or accommodated in our boxes of thoughts. "I am That I Am" can also be translated from Hebrew as "I Will Be Who I Will Be". It points to a Dynamic God who is on the move and beyond our grasp. There are many things in our life that makes no sense to us. Many things are beyond our reach. We did not decide to be born on our own terms choosing our parents. We do not even choose our death. It is beyond us. When everything is fine in our lives something disturbing happens and we just do not know what the meaning of this is. There are so many aspects of our planning that have gone for a toss. We have to have the humility to accept that "God is beyond us and our understandings". This is not a very comforting thought for a control freak generation like us. But accepting this reality helps us to open ourselves to many realities in lives. It helps us to fight against our patterned thinking and minds filled with hatred. B) God Who is With Us. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1: 14a). This passage like Matthew 1: 17 shows Emmanuel: God with us. Humans always struggle with uncertainties and change. If God Beyond us helps us to accept this reality, God who is with us helps us to deal with this reality. God has given assurance that He is always with us – a God who suffers with us, cries with us and celebrates with us. In a world where we see purposelessness written all over the place, God who is with us gives meaning and purpose to our life. Viktor Frankl says that "in the madness of the concentration camp where humans became beasts, the God who was with me helped me to carry on. I was not alone. I had hope." Friends, we live in times where feeling lonely and alienated is very easy. With the boom in technology and communication one realizes that this does not assure fellowship and brotherhood but has pushed people to depression and acute loneliness. Let us remember that we are not alone. We have a God who is travelling with us. We are not alone. C) God who is within us: Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own (1 Corinthians 6: 19). Philip Yancey says that on the day of the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit took residence in our flawed and sinful human body. The Holy Spirit lives within us. It is the Holy Spirit that helps us discern the presence of God in a world that denies the very existence of God. There are moments in life that devastate us. We do not know what to do. We do not know what to pray for. We doubt ourselves. In such a moment the verse that gives me comfort and assurance is "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Romans 8: 26).

The passage before us. Paul is talking about our slavery to flesh. We are slaves of our desires and think only of ourselves. It is here that Paul reminds us that by the Spirit of God we become the Children of God. "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.[a] And by him we cry, "Abba,[b] Father!" (Romans 8: 15). The Holy Spirit

has called us to be sons and daughters of God. It has called us to be in relationship and in perpetual love. My mentor Rev Sunny George says that the chant before the Holy Qurbana "Daiva Suthar....." conveys this meaning of adoption. "Daiva Suthar Naam Aayiduvaaan, Jeevicalayi Nadaanapol". It says of the work of the Holy Spirit that has called us from our state of beastly nature (Jeevicalayi) to the possibility and grace of being the Children of God (Daiva Suthar). After the Delhi rape case, my wife's cousin updated on Face book as follows: "Well the World did not end on 21st December 2012. So what? Humanity ended long ago. We live in times where calling humans as beasts is an insult to the beasts. It is in such times Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit has transformed us to be Children of God. This is just not a word of comfort. It is a call to be responsible human beings.

Yesterday, when I was travelling by train, I happened to see the movie *Schindler's List*. I was so moved by this movie of a man who was a Nazi official. He was a German industrialist who exploited the German invasion of Poland. He used the opportunities in Krakow by employing Jews in an enamel ware factory. He made a fortune out of sheer ambition. He bribed and looted people to get ahead in his business. He was a favorite of the Nazi SS and was their frequent guest. While witnessing a 1943 raid on the Kraków Ghetto, where soldiers were used to round up the inhabitants for shipment to the concentration camp at Płaszów, Schindler was appalled by the murder of many of the Jews who had been working for him. This encounter changed him. He now tried to save the Jews who worked for him. He bribed and used his influence to get his work done. In the context of war he had to shut down the enamel ware factory. He therefore schemed to start an ammunition factory where he had a list of Jews typed up by his assistant Ishaq Stern. He listed 1,100 Jews and they became part of his factory. Wives, children, and even persons with disability were shown to be necessary mechanics and metalworkers. His factory was a place where Jews were treated with utmost dignity; they were allowed to pray and follow the Sabbath. What was the most moving part of the movie was the ending when Schindler had to escape and he cries as he believes he could have saved more Jews. He says, "If I had sold my car I could have saved 10 more Jews". Oskar Schindler died a penniless man but solely responsible for the survival of a generation of Jews called the Schindler Jews.

We live in times where we see no hope. But the Holy Spirit calls us to be "Daiva Suthar". It is a comfort; moreover, it is a commission and a responsibility to realize the Kingdom of God. As it is said "Today we do not need successful people. We need people who are comforters, healers, story tellers and prophets." May the Triune God lead us on.

# Life and Environment: A Biblical Perspective

(2012 Sabha Mandalam Study Material - Chapter 2)

Translated by Dr. Anita Daniel

## Life and Environment: Vision Aspects

The root of the environmental crisis lies not in nature, but in society. Changing the society to nature's ethics is the way for a balanced environment. It is impractical to separate the social environment from the living environment. Man's birth, his growth, and his death are akin to the other creatures of the universe, which undergo the same process along with man. Man's place is not above any other beings, but equal to theirs. Man's duty is to support a more meaningful life. The environmental activities are a reflection of divinity. A deep environment vision not only asks for a change of man's lifestyle, but also strives to build a new social structure. Social justice is the core thesis of such a vision. In the relationship between man and the environment, a practical approach is developed when social nature is rearranged on the basis of moral environment. Social relationships, political vision, religious beliefs, etc. should then become means to reflect environmental aspects.

## What is Nature?

Usually, 'nature' and 'environment' are words used either to mean the same thing or to convey something of a similar nature. Any study on environment or nature should begin with a clear definition of these two terms. These words actually have two different connotations. Environmental study concentrates on man and his living conditions, whereas nature is something given. Scottish philosophers<sup>1</sup> use the word 'nature' as God's gift. When talking about nature's law, Samuel von Pufendorf<sup>2</sup> considers this as Godly and sacredly given laws. The real meaning of the word 'nature' itself is 'given' and is 'the creation of God'. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork (Psalms 19:1). One such definition is found in Webster's Dictionary which defines nature as the sum total of all things in time and space. This is not man's creation, but it is given by God to man. It is the foundation of the relationship between man and God that leads the sociological and theological sciences to approach nature in such a manner. The Law of nature and the rights of nature go together and cannot be separated. The belief that Nature is the foundation of any law or of any social relationship stems from this realization.

The study of environment as implied by the term 'ecology' comes from the Greek word, "oikos". The meaning of this word is "home". "Oikos" is often used in connection with villages and dwelling places. Oikos relates with human living conditions. Ecology is the branch of sociology that is concerned with studying the relationships between Nature and Culture. Generally, its meaning is the study of living things and its environment. Environmental theology teaches that ontological wisdom is more practical than epistemological knowledge. Ecology is a search of social discipline in a biblical manner. Today, there are two powerful theories regarding environment. The first one proposed by the Philosopher Arne Naess, called "deep ecology", emphasizes that man is just another animal in nature, who has no rights other than the rights enjoyed by all the other creatures. However, this theory is considered to be impractical by the proponents of the second theory who believe that, man is the only animal that has the power to creatively interfere in environmental issues, and is the only one who has the authority to devise practical and relevant solutions to address the pressing problems with regard to protecting nature. Murray Bookchin is the key thinker of this theory which is known as the "social ecology movement". The approaches of social ecology see the roots of environmental problems in society and not in nature. Social ecology claims that the environmental crisis is a result of the hierarchical organization of power & the authoritarian mentality rooted in the structures of our society that has weakened social relationships in society. They believe that natural disasters are caused by the turmoil in social relationships. Deep ecologists however consider natural calamities as environmental problems, and suggest that man should reduce population growth and come back to nature. As per deep ecologists' views, man is nature's enemy. But as per the views of the social ecologists, man and nature are deeply connected. Man is called to make every effort to correct his mistakes and realign his God-given relationships. Social ecologists seek relevant and practical solutions for the current environmental problems. The core of environmental protection lies in the care for life and its enrichment.

## What is life?

Usually, man points out growth as the symbol of life. But now, growth alone is not considered as a mark for life. A thing in existence is a symbol of life. The great mountains, deserts, and rivers are nothing but symbols of life. Even the least things we consider have a place in enriching life. The hills we take over, the wetlands we level with soil, the paddy fields we convert to a bank or shore, are expressions of our encroachment over life itself. When the mountain of rocks disappears in a minute, man should realize the fact that the connection chord of life is being cut. Life is a chain of several interdependent relationships of which some are visible and others are not. Men, animals, and galaxies are all interconnected. The borderline between the living and nonliving is slim. In human life, we should not respect living things alone. We should also respect things we consider to be waste and unclean. The cost for environmental destruction starts when we believe in the theory that wasteland is good for nothing and is unproductive. The predominant thought nowadays is to value things that have marketable value and are useful for man. A creative approach that rips such thoughts from our minds is essential so as to solve the challenges facing environment today. Most of the discussions that strive to find an amicable solution to the environmental problems emphasize the connection between man and nature, or environment and culture. Nature and civilization are inseparable entities.

## Nature and Civilization

Civilization cannot be differentiated from nature and man is an integral part of nature. Civilization was developed by man in order to survive socially and biologically. It is the continuation of organic nature. In nature, man developed civilization for the betterment of his growth and prosperity. Man's evolution continues to happen with modern civilization. The development of civilization leads to the destruction of organisms. When all the other beings evolve with nature, man through civilization skips the natural evolutionary process. As per the 2006 National Geographic report, mosquitoes outlive global warming. Civilization separates man from the living nature. The social status between rich and poor, abuse, animosity, respect, and reverence are all a part of supplemental exchange between man and nature.

The man who tamed nature is the one who enslaved his fellow beings. In order to exploit the land, man made his fellow beings work hard and consequently, the owner-slave relationship got formed. In order to protect and keep profits, women's sexuality became exploited. A wide gender gap was made between man and woman and as a result woman became instruments for business, and their sexuality exploited for profits. Looking from the perspective of environment, this problem is not because of inequality in the relationship between man and woman, but because of an imbalance created in environment. The disproportion

in the social structure and in the reproduction rate has led to the mortification of women in the family.

### **Social Structure**

The weakness of the relationship between man and nature is reflected in social relations. The story of Genesis teaches us to see the destruction of environment as an outcome of the breach in the covenant relationship between God and man. The weakness in the relationship between God-man-nature results in environmental disasters. These take the form of flood (Genesis 7) and fire (Genesis 19) to destroy mankind. Anything that happens in society is the result of what man does to nature. The man who made nature his slave also made his fellow beings his slaves. Whatever changes man creates in nature gets reflected in the social body. The incompatible relationship between man and nature results in social destruction. The responsibilities of man on earth are specified in Genesis 2:15, "then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it". The responsibilities of man on earth are pictorial. God has given man the responsibility to work hard and to guard the earth. Here reproduction is seen as god's gift. When man switches his responsibilities from being a steward, to being like God, by stealing the fruit, reproduction becomes painful. The Earth turns against man. Its fertility disappears. Work becomes drudgery. The breach of the covenant with God makes the earth unyielding (Genesis 3:16). The problem that Cain faces in life is also of a similar nature. The land where his brother's blood falls, yields thorns and thistles and denies him its productivity (Genesis 4:12). Man's journey becomes an unending chain of stories. Environmental crisis begin with the breakdown of relationship between man and God. Only by returning to hard work and custodianship can new relationships be established. Man's callousness towards nature and the hostility of nature towards man are actions contrary to God's divine will, and it is sin and a curse.

The one who robs the fruit of the tree from the center of the garden finds his eyes opened to new sights. That opening is the breaking up of the intimacy between man and nature. The thought that he is naked creates a sense of self-consciousness in him. Through this action, man realizes that he is naked. He creates his 'self' through his nakedness and eventually moves away from the busy life to a world of discrimination. By turning away from nature through his actions he was in reality, turning away from God. The result of man's self-determination gets reflected in the weakening of fertility in both, soil and women (Genesis 3: 13-19). Woman becomes man's slave. A social structure of slavery and despotism gets created. Environmental problems of this kind stem from the problems related to the breach of the covenant relationship between God and man, and the problems that arise from the struggle for power among men. The insight we receive from this understanding is that the root cause of environmental problems should not be searched in environment, but in the social nature. The story of Genesis says that the land became unproductive when the relationship between man and God was broken. Building a new relationship is the real solution for contemporary environmental problems. We need to open the way to go back to God and open a way for repentance among fellow humans.

### **Technological Solutions**

Today, technological solutions for contemporary environmental problems are being investigated by man. A counter technical education is gaining prominence. Is counter technological knowledge suggesting any solutions for environmental crisis? Environmentalists see the root cause for modern environmental problems in industrialization and its profit-oriented social structure. The Reo conference of 1992 sought to find solutions to the environmental problems through scientific knowledge. The major partners of this conference were multinational companies. These companies, who had been manufacturing toxic pesticides and weapons for decades in the industrial area, blamed environmental problems on the growth of technological science. They put forth eco-technological knowledge to find solutions for these problems. This system of confining destructive technical science to the third-world countries, and modern verdant technological science for the developed countries, is creating a new empire called green empire.

### **Technological knowledge and its political usefulness should come into environmental discussions**

Numerous western influence and monopoly over the third world countries is underway behind the garb of environmental concerns. Today, verdant or green technological science is making the poor countries poorer. We should seek technological knowledge just as a temporary solution and must find a permanent solution for these problems. Vandana Shiva, the renowned environmentalist from India defines ecological protection as "Strengthening of biodiversity". She voices against controlling life through genetic engineering and patents. She states that it is the arrogance of western knowledge that is

looting 'indigenous knowledge'. Changing the world according to western culture and tastes, she believes, is the reason for environmental disasters.

### **Social Solutions**

Thinking logically, it is impossible for man to return to the past or to go back to a make-believe nature. Therefore, the solution for any environmental problem should not stem from our imaginations, but from the practical world and from man's need to find solution therein. We cannot surge ahead with our present living situation, or with the consciousness that he has acquired from the world. A new person needs to be born from newer consciousness. Beyond technological solutions, man requires revamping in his ethical system and his perceptions. It is imperative for the church to transform lives with this new understanding of the environment. This thought may be criticized to be Anthropocentric in nature. Even so, the community before us is one that has been ripped apart by several societal experiences. Globalization and internet technology have invaded the lives of individuals and society with their diverse influence. In this context, social organizations are developing in a new direction. Today, the most beneficial intervention in the environmental field is done by those who develop new projects after having critically assessed their present living conditions. Kandal Pokkudan's efforts to conserve Mangrove forests and the fisherman from Thankasseri, A Andrews' knowledge of the sea, are worth remembering in this context. Against the backdrop of globalization and new technological knowledge, the church should enrich environmental values to such an extent that it becomes part of their self-consciousness. Man should be educated through a process that makes him appreciate the life-generating capacity of the soil and also the utility of waste lands. Programs that encourage the minimal consumption of resources and energy and foster a simple lifestyle are inevitable.

Usually, environmental protests are being questioned in the name of 'development' and 'impracticality'. Our basic hypothesis towards 'development' should go beyond concentrating on the idea of protecting life and enrichment of biodiversity. It is not cultivation alone but decision regarding cultivation that should become part of the environmental efforts. The things that should emerge through the environmental works are; the application of knowledge, a way of life, self-realization, a cultural involvement, the making of a new creation, and building of a new moral science. Rationally thinking in the social sense, moral science is not against social activities but in the environmental view, morality is the restriction allowed on freedom in the struggle for existence. The core for these two definitions is man's coexistence. A mutual dependence (symbiosis) is what we envision. Instead of independently competing with each other in the field of economic and social fields, we should cultivate an atmosphere of mutual agreeable ethics. The church's practical environmental activities should lead in this direction. God desires the way to repentance and a turning back. In the environmental protection process, an intervention to strengthen the social relationships should be there. We can accomplish this through the idea of strengthening the biodiversity.

# Knowing the Distinction Between Virtue and Vice...

Mathew Abraham, League City, Trinity MTC, Houston



There was a time (not long ago) when this land "was the spring of hope, was the epoch of belief, had the age of wisdom, and was the season of light"; her populace – mostly migrant freedom seekers – striving and passionate. Soon they had everything before them flourishing, and they "saw that it was good." It was "the best of times". From time to time, more and more folks from around the globe joined and began building their dream too, and they called it – the American Dream. Certainly, not everyone was equally rich, but they were all rich in spirit and blessed with equally rich opportunities. Gradual change in urbanity, or abruptly "the era became the age of foolishness and incredulity" – not sure which, perhaps both – seems to have contributed to a great divide among her citizens – the rich and the poor. Regardless, the country became polarized – to make the differences between groups or ideas ever more clear-cut and extreme, hardening the opposition between them, or become ever more clear-cut and extreme in this way – resulting in uprisings such as OWS (Occupy Wall Street). A lot of naive folks jumped on such bandwagons blindly. Surprisingly, they were/ are not the only group in the battlefield, but a few who are in key leadership positions (hierarchies) of some churches and of other formally organized religious groups were/are also a part of it. They managed to drive their socialistic agenda successfully again in the 2012 US elections and won. Although, slightly more than half of the population (53%) now seems to be contented with the outcome, this article examines the issue differently – whether egalitarianism and its tenets are justifiable to sustain the continued existence of communities of people-of-Indian-origin settled in US of which, we Marthomites and other Kairalities, are integral parts.

Next to seeking political asylum, socio-economic advancement was/ is the foremost motive behind anybody's migration to US. The migratory chronicles of people from the Indian subcontinent to the United States are no exception. Although the first person of Indian origin is said to come to America in the 1820, it was after the introduction of the Luce-Celler Act of 1946, that immigration and naturalization rights were established for Indians in the US. Now, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, "the Indian population in the United States grew from almost 1,678,765 in 2000 (0.6% of U.S. population) to 2,843,391 in 2010 (0.9% of U.S. population), a stunning growth rate of 69.37% – one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States". To the same extent, within the last quarter century, the Indian community advanced to the top 20 percentile (majority of them in the top 10%) of the US socio-economic spectrum. The Mar Thoma community in the US is identified as one of the major stakeholders in this process. Nevertheless, it will be an exaggeration

if someone deems that early Indian immigrants came to US with silver spoons in their mouths, and were fully excluded from all aspects of racial, religious, and social discrimination. Yet, they decided to make the most of their God-given talent to achieve the American exceptionalism without depending on minority quota, social promotion, and government handouts. The men and women of early Indian migrant communities were hardworking, judicious individuals with a conservative outlook. They managed their hard earned income for their needs – NOT for their wants – and conducted their major financial liabilities (credit cards and mortgage) cautiously and prudently. Unlike the egalitarians and their modern kin's, they didn't demand for Free education and health care; instead they worked multiple jobs (perhaps husband and wife both) to raise their offspring and to pay for their education. They did not insist on Fair distribution of labor and living wages; instead they proved themselves worthy to qualify for career advancement and higher salaries. They didn't demand the government for Guaranteed right of access to housing, retroactive foreclosure forgiveness, social rental housing, or promotion of housing cooperatives; instead they upheld the pride of ownership and defied entitlement. They were fine examples of an emerging society. They understood what the American Dream was all about – being able to put their trust in God, work hard, succeed, and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Prophet Isaiah probably would have envisioned a community like this when he said, "Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs".

This belief shall not be construed as the 'prosperity gospel' teaching where the believer is told to use God; on the contrary, I say, it is about the truth of biblical Christianity — God using the believer for the prosperity of humanity. The word 'prosper' appears many times over and over in the Old and New Testaments. The most common word for prosper in Hebrew is tsalach (tsaw-lakh'); it means, to advance, make progress, succeed, be profitable, to experience prosperity. Another Hebrew word shalom (shaw-lome'), also mean prosperous or completeness. The Greek word euodoo (yoo-od-o'-o) which means prosper give another broad meaning – 'to have a successful journey through life.' In that case, was it God's plan to call for economic and social equality for the entire population throughout their journey through life, or did people just assume so? The dynamics of humanity shows the latter! Besides, if we survey the Bible, we see over and over that God blessed people with bountiful wealth. It is also clear that God's approach to inheritance, dis-



tribution and management of wealth is a combination of God's blessings, personal effort and practicality to select individuals (not communal) – the paradigm of God's planning for the prosperity of humanity.

Yet, some groups have taken a unilateral moral standard that material distinctions is an element of ungodly living. They think that collective action is needed to systematically "re-distribute" material prosperity. To establish their talking points further, these Christian egalitarians are willing to misconstrue and equate "the message of The Cross" to the unruly actions of an undisciplined, rowdy, apathetic crowd. Their mistake is to mistake that God is against prosperity, and/ or to displace God's plan of economics with so called manmade fairness doctrine – take money from the successful and give to the indolent and make everyone equally poor. Comparing levels of income is not a means of practicing fairness or compassion. In reality, it is an expression of 'unrighteous anger or anger of jealousy' against income inequality. This is often mistakenly interpreted as compassion. Compassionate people give aid or help those in need. When it is forced or becomes a mandate to give, the whole process breeds resentment – resentment toward the stipulation and to the mindset for such entitlement. The ill-effects of redistribution or the consequence of sharing an individual's legally owned possession with the indolent are well demonstrated in Christ's teaching, the parable of the ten maidens. How wrong are we then, when we take moral advice only from a biased group to expand the mystery of God's plan for the material world?

The US federal government collects most of its revenue through income tax from the top 20% wage earners, and most Indians in the US are 'bracketed' in this set. "In 2010 tax year, out of the 143 million returns filed 68.5 million (48% of the total) paid no income tax", according to Tax Foundation, a Washington-based research organization. Not only that, 90 percent of this group received government refund through tax credits. This amount according to IRS was a whopping 105 billion dollars. Additional federal funding flows into communities in many ways, much of it in the form of cash assistance and usually funneled through state and local agencies. Most of these, on closer scrutiny, are subsidies and government handouts that support behavior-based lifestyles and wants not needs! Who are these people? Are they all low income people or as poor as they claim? Not always. According to the most recent Internal Revenue Service data, 96 percent of these non-payers made \$50,000 or close. A quarter of a century ago, the (upper end) household income of most Indian families was significantly less than \$50,000, and there were no provisions for refund through tax credits like in the present. They paid their fair-share and were able to manage and pave the way for building up a successful community. Then, how is it fair to demand more taxation from them to support the 'wants' of the indolent? This hardly seems consistent with the definition of fairness – 'free from self-interest, or favoritism'. Haven't we gone too far when half the population gets a free ride at the expense of the other half? Think again; is there any fairness in 'the fairness doctrine' when it demands the redistribution of the fruits of someone's labor (it could be yours), earned in accordance with the rules or standards and without cheating or trying to achieve unjust advantage?

I will come right out and say it; the income inequality in the US is NOT because of a failed economic system or discrimination. The problem is the mindset of the people. The system really works, but it works only for proactive disciplined folks! That's all. In Thomas Jefferson's words, "Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude." Case in point: the current socio-economic profile of people of Indian origin in US. Obviously, early Indian immigrants had no difficulty comprehending the intrinsic meaning of the term 'equal opportunity' – that it is not a guarantee for equal promotion or success for all unless equally qualified and strived for. The Bible undoubtedly clarifies the above concept in the parable of talents. It also expounds other socio-economic issues such as distribution of talents (including wealth), individual capabilities to enrich it, the fate of the apathetic, and so forth. We must differentiate virtue from vice. Supporting a cause or an organization whose extent and objectives are not virtuous should not be our mission statement. Finally, now is the time to focus on the perils of losing our hard-earned distinctiveness in terms of ethics and faith, conservative family structure, rules of moral behavior, social norms and rightful ownership, if we are not to be tricked by badly-informed pop-culture liberals and their dogma. These are matters of grave importance to us, the Marthomites and other Kairalities in the US. Failure to endorse these concepts could undermine the character, hard -earned socioeconomic eminence, and perhaps, the stability and continuity of our communities in the US.



# സാന്ത്വനം

വിഷാദ ഗർഭമാം മനസ്സിനുടമയായ്  
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കേഴേണ്ട "ഞാനുണ്ട്" കൈകളിൽ താങ്ങുവാൻ  
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നോക്കേണ്ട പിൻപേ പതനാതെ പോക ...

- Mariamma Jacob, Edmonton

# The Church at Crossroads



Thomas Thazayil, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch

In my humble view, the Mar Thoma Church is facing the greatest challenge in its history. It is not a challenge from the outside; it is one from within. One of the challenges the Church is facing is its relevance. The Church has grown physically beyond anyone's wildest dreams, crossing geographical borders of its birthplace to become a global entity. However, the irony is that though the Church has grown globally it still remains 'local' in its outlook, structure and mission. Sadly, the Church has not become relevant to the second and future generations, particularly those outside Kerala and more specifically in the US and other countries. A second area of concern is the need for continued reformation. Two years ago, the Church celebrated the 175th anniversary of its first reformation. During the year of celebration, we highlighted areas where the Church reformed itself: omitting certain prayers and worshipping any form of idol or icon (e.g., throwing the idol of muthappen in the well was an example of reformation). One thing we forgot to do during those celebrations was to look at the future and see where reformation was needed. This spirit of reformation is an ongoing process. 'Muthappens' come in different forms and shapes, and are now replaced by other forces such as excessive materialism, lust for power, money and relativism. Are we going to recognize these forces and find avenues where reformation is needed? The Church is at a critical juncture; it can move forward the same old way or make a change to reform, renew and regenerate from within. The purpose of this article is to highlight some areas where challenges prevail and immediate action is required.

## Global, but Local

Examining the growth of our Church in the past fifty years or so, one can easily see that tremendous growth of the Church has occurred outside Kerala. More than thirty percent of the total churches are outside Kerala and multiplying. What about within Kerala? We see little or no growth! Membership either stays the same or goes down in Kerala. How many new churches have been formed in Kerala in the past thirty years? May be a few. Compare the growth of the Church outside Kerala during the same period. It has been phenomenal outside India, especially in the US. Thanks to the efforts of bishops who took a personal interest, we have taken our mission even to the corners of Europe, Africa and Australia, though in smaller measure. One country where the Mar Thoma Church has witnessed tremendous growth is the US. I have witnessed the phenomenal growth of the Mar Thoma Church within my own city of Dallas over the past 30 years, from a small congregation with fewer than a hundred member families in the 1970's to the present four parishes with more than five hundred families. This is about a fivefold growth in membership and a fourfold growth in the number of parishes. This is true of most parishes in large metropolitan areas in North America. The first generation that formed and nurtured the parishes in North America is gradually waning and leaving space for a new generation. One of the major problems of parishes in the US, and I assume the same is true for other countries, is that the church has become less relevant for the second generation. If the church has become less relevant for the second generation, what will happen to the third, the fourth and further generations down the road? When I look at other churches from India similar to ours, I see that Mar Thoma Church thrives better than others do in structural matters

and growth. However, I must submit that I see a huge vacuum in the transfer of ownership, passion and true commitment to the next generation. The Orthodox Church does much better in transferring these key elements to the next generation. We may wonder why. While there is no simple solution to the problem, there is need for analyzing the root causes for the Church not becoming relevant to the next generation. To cite a simple example: about a year ago, I heard a circular for Sunday school read in Malayalam. This circular had material directed towards both the children and teachers. One hundred per cent of our children and at least fifty percent of teachers are non-Malayalam speaking! How do we expect them to understand? A second example: I was looking for a marriage banns certificate from last year. There was one in Malayalam in the constitution. What is a second generation American going to do with such a form in Malayalam? These seem like minor things but tell a lot about where we are today. One thing is true, we have become global in physical presence, but not in spirit, in influencing the younger generation or in our outlook.

## Positive Influence of Family and Church Community

I have looked at a piece of data of children who were members of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas in 1984. I followed up to try to determine where they are today. The data is astonishing. My database consists of 156 children who were members of The Mar Thoma Church of Dallas from ages six months to approximately fifteen or so in 1984. They now range from 28 to 43 years of age or more. Out of these, less than one-fifth (twenty percent) come to the Mar Thoma Church on a regular basis anymore! More than a third has left the Mar Thoma Church completely. The remaining comes occasionally to participate in a sacrament. This generation of youngsters has done extremely well in education and career building. The table below shows the number of children from Mar Thoma Church of Dallas in 1984 and how they did in education and career selection.

Data from available source	Number	Percentage
Total number of children in Mar Thoma Church of Dallas in 1984	156	
Number of children graduated from high school.....	156	100
Number graduated from college.....	101	64.7
<b>Career and Employment</b>		
Business and Accounting.....	38	24.35
Physicians.....	24	15.38
Computer Programming.....	14	9
Healthcare and Allied.....	8	5.12
Engineers.....	7	4.48
Lawyers.....	5	3.2
Military.....	2	1.28
Pharmacy.....	3	1.92
Ph. D.....	2	1.28
Priest.....	2	1.28
Various Other careers.....	52	33.33

What this data tells us is that the Mar Thoma community in the US has placed a high value on education and it yielded some good results; one hundred percent of the children graduated from high school. A good number went to college and graduated with higher degrees, produced a high per capita number of physicians, engineers, nurses, accountants and priests compared with an identical local US population, indicating an excellent trend. I assign the success of these youngsters, among many factors to the stability of families, the value system they embraced and the influence of the Church and Church community placed in their early migration effort. I am positive that Church life affected these individuals. Thank God for this phenomenal blessing and thanks to the host country for giving such opportunities. If the numbers are compared with a similar local population from the Dallas area, these numbers are much lower for the local population sample. For example, less than sixty percent graduate from high school in the local population, and fewer entered college or university to further their education. However, it is regrettable and unsettling to see that most have left Church or are not active anymore. The model we see is that children are very eager and enthusiastic in the Church until they graduate from high school. Once they are in college, things change. Most of the children are not interested in the traditional Mar Thoma Church any longer. The Diocese of North America has made significant effort in this area in the past several years. However, results are not very encouraging.

### **Sandwich Generation**

I call this generation a sandwich generation between the first immigrant community and the next generation. The problems of the sandwich generation are multi-faceted. They seem to be neither fully in the American or other foreign culture nor fully part of the Indian culture. They are becoming less interested in traditional types of worship. They seem to like shorter worship with messages that apply to their life. They seem to get such worship services within the local community outside the Mar Thoma Church. While the Mar Thoma Church cannot be flexible to the interest of a generation, allowances may be made to contain them. The young who become uninterested, leave and join local churches where they find church life more suited and relevant. We will ask the question: What is wrong with that? Nothing. However, as parents, we would not like to see our children leave the Church, but stay within it. Is this phenomenon happening in India or in other countries? In my opinion, the sandwich generation goes through a stage of evolution in their spiritual journey split between conflicting philosophies of reason and revelation (Athens vs. Jerusalem). We should be able to offer an approach to influence this generation by facilitating a process of discovery, offering sound Bible study, discussion and fellowship. Adding more complexity to this are multiracial and interfaith marriages. How can multiracial couples cope with the reality of Mar Thoma Church in their life? Though it is a minority now, multiracial and interfaith couples are growing in number and becoming more visible.

### **Is the Mar Thoma Church ready for a Second Reformation?**

If the need of first reformation was for doctrine, the need for second must be directed toward being relevant and engaging with the contemporary, global world. A good model is what the Catholic Church did through the Second Vatican Council, which met from 1962 to 1965. The second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church was a landmark step taken by that church to be relevant. After years of study and dedicated work, the committee selected for the task brought forth a document that transformed or rather reformed the church from within. We can adopt change in one of two ways; one is a proactive approach, similar to the Second Vatican Council and the other is reactive. In the proactive approach, the system will identify the need for change in a timely manner, explore areas where changes are needed and try to implement them for the growth and development of individuals within. The other type is reactive; this happens only after the system has reached a critical stage where it seems to have failed requiring a radical change. It might be too late for such a change to yield longstanding positive results. A proactive approach is far more desirable for any healthy system. In my opinion, this is the right time to make changes happen in our Church. What are the changes needed?

### **Worship**

A common remark that I have heard from most people is that our worship takes too long. This may be a subjective remark. Worship service in many large parishes may take well over three hours or even four hours including the time taken for announcements and other things that arise. There must be a way to streamline and reduce the time. The manner in which elements are distributed during Holy Communion service is to be reviewed. In my own church, it takes at least one hour for the distribution of bread and wine by one Achen. The liturgy in both English and Malayalam needs modification. The language and content need revision. It is heartening to see new forms and editions of worship books and liturgy, particularly in North American diocese. However, more changes are needed.

### **Seminary Training**

As the church becomes global, there is need for our Achens to become more proficient in the global language and culture. Is this the case now? We forget the fact that more than thirty percent of the parishes are outside Kerala; Achens have to minister them where the language is English or another local language and the culture is divergent. I am not being critical, but there is need for improvement in several areas of training. Can we make improvements in the training in our seminary, taking into account some of these factors? Is the library in the seminary adequate? Should we invest more resources in these areas of language training and other modern tools that will help communicate with the younger generation more effectively? These are important investments we need to make to become more relevant.

### **Constitution**

The constitution of our Church needs revision to incorporate the wellbeing and practical matters of parishes outside India. There needs to be more flexibility in non-essentials. I quote Saint Augustine, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in all things charity." The constitution that we use now is framed when the Church was confined within the borders of Kerala and to suit parishes in Kerala. It is time to evaluate the constitution and see if it is relevant to the 'global church community' in every detail. I would like to make the following suggestions to consider.

A committee may be formed by the Global Mar Thoma Church with clearly defined mission and objectives to study in depth how the Church can become more relevant to the 21st century and beyond. What should the structure of this committee be? This committee needs to have representation based on the ratio of global presence, consisting of bishops, clergy and laymen. Their task must be to study how worship can be made more relevant, what changes need to be made in the constitution, administration and training to make the Church a global entity. Local parishes and individuals may contribute their opinions to this committee. This committee may be asked to complete the study and submit recommendation within a defined time, at least a year or so after its inception. Their report needs to be reviewed by the Synod, Council and finally by the Sabha Mandalam for approval and implementation. A second area where change can be made immediately is to begin structured Bible study in each parish for both young adults and older people. A good example for structured Bible study is to model something like the Bible Study Fellowship (BSF), which is an international organization. BSF offers a good forum to study the Bible and for effective fellowship. Our Church can either invite BSF into our own facilities or develop material that matches their model.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the status quo is not an acceptable option. Changes are needed in major areas of worship, administration and our outlook. Are we prepared to accept these challenges? Does the spirit of reformation that our ancestors inhaled continue within us for being good witnesses to the Gospel? I pray that the Holy Spirit guide us to make changes that will glorify His name and make us His witnesses.

# മലയാളി

മനുഷ്യാഭിരുചി നമ്മുടെ സുഹൃത്ത്


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## PATRICK MARUTH, DALLAS WE MISS YOU



Patrick Cherian Oommen Maruthmmotil was born on March 1, 1987 in Coimbatore, India as the only child of Mr. Cherian and Jessy Oommen. Patrick spent his formative years in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, receiving his high school diploma from Our Own Indian School. He was an exceptional student and often competed in various math and science competitions. He also enjoyed playing cricket and soccer. As a teenager, Patrick stumbled onto a love for music when he discovered his mother's guitar and collection of music lesson books. Having taken piano lessons as a child, Patrick quickly taught himself how to play the guitar. Years later, music would grow into a passion for Patrick and the guitar would become inextricably tied to his identity; indeed, it was a rare sight to see Patrick without his guitar in tow.



In 2004, Patrick moved to Dallas and received a full-tuition scholarship to complete his undergraduate Electrical Engineering studies at the University of Texas at Dallas. Patrick was very active on campus. Serving as the Senior Orientation Team Mentor, he assisted new students with the transition into university life. Patrick also served various leadership roles in organizations such as UTD Student Ambassadors, Christians on Campus, and Golden Key Honor Society. Patrick was on the Dean's List and graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2008. In May 2010, Patrick completed his Master's degree in Electrical Engineering and began working at Texas Instruments Inc., as a Failure Analysis Engineer, while pursuing a second Master's degree in Systems Engineering. Patrick was a fully-devoted follower of Christ, serving as a praise and worship leader, Sunday School teacher, Youth Fellowship advisor, and mission trip volunteer and coordinator. In addition, Patrick was a mentor and tutor to many middle school, high school and college students. Patrick loved playing volleyball with his church family. In fact, one of the exceedingly rare times Patrick demonstrated any frustration was when his cousins missed a volleyball shot. This was usually conveyed with a comical grimace with both hands on top of his head. Patrick was affectionately known by his friends as "Pat Daddy" or "Project Pat" (ironically, also the name of a gangster rapper - don't ask).

Patrick was known for his radiant smile that could light up any room. He had the rare gift of being able to connect with people of all ages. From young children to the elderly, Patrick was able to draw out the best in people. His faith in Christ was rock-solid. He trusted the Lord whole-heartedly and reassured friends and family of God's sovereignty in every situation. Patrick left all of us to be with our Lord Jesus Christ on June 4, 2013 and is survived by his parents. He is also survived by Sunny John and Susan Sunny, who serve as his second family in the United States, as well as numerous relatives and friends. It is an understatement to say that he will be missed. The Mar Thoma Metropolitan Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma, The Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Most Rev. Alexios Mar Eusevius, Metropolitan of SW Diocese of Malankara Orthodox Church attended the wake and led the service at St. Pauls Mar Thoma Church, Dallas.

St. Paul's MTC Youths and Youths of the Diocese

## OBITUARY

### MARIAMMA GEORGE THARAKAN, PHILADELPHIA



Mariamamma George Tharakan (Aliamma), Kaippanchalil House, Nedumpuram, Thiruvalla, was born on April 27th 1937. She was the 9th among 10 children of the late Ouseph Ouseph and Mariamma Ouseph.

Mariamamma is survived by her husband Mr. Mathew George Tharakan, and her children Babu, Biji, Joe, and Gem, son-in-laws: Joykutty and Reji, daughter-in-laws: Jenncy and Sunitha, and grandchildren; Lisa, Linda, Lina, Jeffrey, Sandra, Sreya, Gifty, Jithin, Cerena, Crystal, and Chinnu. Aliamma was a model mother, daughter, sister, and a friend with her selfless love. Mariamma lived in US for the last 10 years, and was a member of Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. Funeral Services were conducted at Ascension Mar Thoma Church followed by interment at Rosedale memorial Park in Bensalem, PA.

### THATTAMANNIL JOHN THOMAS WASHINGTON, DC



Mr. T. J. Thomas, son of the late T. C. John upadeshi and Rahelamma of Punalur, was born into the Thattamannil house of the Vellareth family on June 9, 1917, in Thuruthicad, Mallapalli, Kerala. He was married in 1943 to the late Saramma of the Parakkat family until her demise in 1989. During their 46 years together, they were blessed with three children and their spouses (Dr. Rachel Kurien and Pratap, the late John Thomas and Jessy, and Dr. Mathew T. Thomas and Nancy), eight grandchildren (Beena, Biju, Vijay, Ajay, Sanjay, Alisha, Varsha and Joshua), and five great-grandchildren (Roshan, Aaron, Joshua, Daniel, and Ethan). He is also survived by his brothers Rev. T. J. Abraham (Trivandrum/Atlanta), Mr. T. J. John (Virginia) and Mr. T. J. Samuel (Florida). From rather humble beginnings, he rose to become a teacher, a commissioned army officer, an employee of the South Indian Railways, and retired as the Accounts Officer of the Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL) in Thiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. He was a blessing to all around him. He was a devoted husband, a loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, an affectionate brother, a faithful friend, and a conscientious worker. He feared the Lord and walked in His ways. He was greatly loved by his family and friends. He leaves a legacy for his family and all who were touched by his life. He has a special place in the hearts and minds of all who knew him and will always be affectionately remembered as "Pappa." The Wake/viewing for Mr. T. J. Thomas, which was held on Saturday, April 13, 2013, at the Southern Asian Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SASDAC) in Silver Spring, MD. The funeral service was officiated by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Episcopa, on Monday, April 15, 2013 at 9:00 AM at the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington in Takoma Park, MD. Mr. T. J. Thomas was buried at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, in Silver Spring, MD.

# Be a Peacemaker



Saramma Chacko, NY

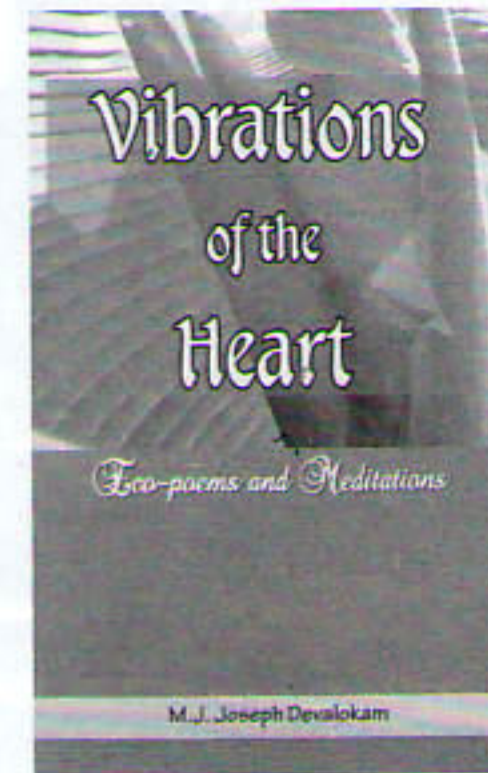
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God". (Matthew 5:9). God expects us to be a peacemaker and to be at peace with everyone. Philemon was a partner in Paul's ministry. He was a slave master as well. One of his slave, Onesimus ran away from him. We don't know why he ran away, was it because of abuse or he stole from his master and decided to flee. In the interim he met Apostle Paul. We don't know exactly where they met, possibly in jail where Paul was imprisoned for the gospel. But the encounter and influence of Paul, transformed Onesimus from a useless person into an asset for Christ's ministry as he became a new creation in Christ. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" [2Corinthians 5:18-21].

God's spirit of transformation works through earthen vessel, through us, human beings. As aged Paul was in prison, he could not physically take Onesimus to Philemon. So, in an attempt to bridge the gap between Philemon and Onesimus, he wrote a recommendation letter with his tremulous old hands while he was in chains, encouraging Philemon to accept Onesimus as he would accept Paul. He used his influence to promote peace. He describes Onesimus's new identity as Paul's begotten son. Though formerly unprofitable, now as he is a new creation in Christ, is useful. In this context, Paul is a shadow of Christ in the life of Onesimus, a mediator advocating on his behalf and thus trying to reconcile him to his master. He was separated from his master for a season. This created an opportunity for Onesimus to grow in faith in Christ and also into a useful person in His ministry. God knows to use our estranged circumstances to transform us. Paul initially in his letter to Philemon appreciates his ministerial work then he tactically encourages Philemon to change his mind set about Onesimus with his old flaws. He tries to restore and revive the broken relationship between them. He expects Philemon to voluntarily accept him as a brother in Christ. He wants him to have a fresh start, erasing his past. Paul agreed to pay any debt that Onesimus owed him for he was unable to pay. Paul reminds him that he owns credit for bringing Philemon to Christ, the Light of the world. Paul tries to ignite brotherly love for Onesimus in Philemon. Philemon has to forgive him to accept him. Paul does the task of a peacemaker and appeals to give him a second chance. He pleaded for a renewal of relationship. If it was not for Paul, Philemon would have probably punished Onesimus for his mistakes. The book of Philemon throws light on the importance of the ministry of reconciliation in the community.

When we are in Christ, our vertical relationship with Father God is restored so also our relationship with our fellow human beings. The vertical relationship cannot exist without our horizontal relationship. That is why Jesus said "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. Firsts be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift". [Mathew5: 23-24].

We ought to forgive others and give them another chance the same way God in Christ forgave us, cancelled our debts at the cross and gave us a fresh start, a clean slate. We are justified because of Christ's finished work, not because of our deeds that we should boast. God, who flung the stars in the sky, glittering like diamonds, is able to transform anybody's life. He does not give up on anybody, He does not write us off. Like Onesimus, we all are His masterpiece, created in His image for a purpose. He forgives us when we fail; all we have to do is repent. He has redeemed us with His precious blood. Like Paul, we must step in to restore broken relationships. The imminent need of today's society is peacemakers. We are one in Christ, so we must act like that, trying to lift up the ones that are falling. Galatians 3:28-2928 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

## VIBRATIONS OF THE HEART (Anthology of Poems by Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph)



The whole world is driven according to the will and pleasure of the poets. They are the "unknowledged legislators of the world". Poets and philosophers receive directly from the fountain of cosmic intelligence. When the Individual intelligence becomes attuned to the universal intelligence, direct communication starts and seers start prophesying and poets send vibrations. Rev Dr. M.J Joseph belongs to the category of seers and poets. His 'Vibrations of the Heart' is an excellent collection of eco -spiritual poems. He has strong convictions about the destiny of God's planet, the home of all living beings. As a gifted writer he is saddened by the plight of the ill fated Earth, which he wants to restore to its pristine beauty. The poems of this collection express the yearnings of a visionary who wants to direct the world in its journey towards the Kingdom of God.

There are 47 poems in this volume which testify to the ecological concerns of the author, which he has accepted as his life vocation. The underlining philosophy of all these poems is about the stewardship of human beings so as to nurture and protect the Earth instead of plundering and destroying it. We live in an era where soundness of our planet has become a hot subject and ecological concerns gain importance day by day. Earth Summits become an important agenda for the nations of the world. It is the cry of so many poets and other writers which resulted in a massive concientisation regarding this subject. Poets ever since the time of Plato have been imagining world as a replica of heaven, which unfortunately the people did not consider seriously. Nations around the world were competing to create a hell, for which we are forced to pay heavy prize today. Poets like M. J Joseph are trying to re emphasize the mimetic aspects, leading us towards regaining the cosmic balance for the establishment of Gods Kingdom upon the planet Earth.

**Dr. Abraham Karickam**

Former Principal, Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla

# PRAYER

Alex Thomas, Tennessee



Prayer is talking with God or our communication with God. Prayer is our meeting with God, praising God, a petition, a request or an address to God in words or thought. When we pray, we express our devotion to our heavenly Father, inviting Him to talk to us as we talk to Him. Prayer is a way of communing with God.

Prayer is an act of faith. For God to answer our prayers, we must have a believing heart and ask according to His will. (Mathew 9:29, 21:22, 1 John 5:14-15). In Mathew 18:20 Jesus stated that, "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them". We see in Chronicles 7:14 that, "if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land".

It means:

1. We must humble ourselves
2. We must pray and seek His face
3. We must turn from our wicked ways

Then God will:

1. Hear our prayers
2. Forgive our sins
3. Heal our land

Pray according to the will of God. For that we have to surrender ourselves to the will of God. When we surrender to the will of God, He guides and directs us how to pray and what to pray for. He deposits His thoughts in to our minds so that we articulate His desires through our words.

Through prayer we worship and fellowship with God. Through prayer, we also learn to yield ourselves to God. Through consistent prayer, we receive God's direction (Proverbs 3:6, "In all our ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight). Through prayer, God meets our needs (Mathew 6:11). Through prayer He will supply all our needs according to His riches in Glory (Philippians 4:19). Through prayer God allows us to cooperate with His divine will (James 5:16, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective").

Prayer is asking, seeking and knocking:

Asking petitions: "Ask and it will be given to you".

Seeking answers to life's problems (seek and you will find).

Knocking to gain entrance into a more abundant life (knock and the door will be opened).

God knows everyone's heart. Acts 15:8, Acts 1:24  
As children of God, no matter how diligently one may strive to please God in all other phases of his responsibilities, "a prayer less person is a powerless person".

### How does God communicate with us?

The way to know the will of God is to stay in His word (John 15:7, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you". John 16:23, "whatever you ask the father in my name He will give you". God also talk to us through prophets and people who have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes God speak to people in their dreams. Through prayer, we talk to God, whereas meditation is when we listen to God.

### Are all prayers answered immediately or whenever we want?

God answers our prayers in different ways: It may be an immediate "yes" answer, because you deserve it. Jesus told the person who was crucified with Him on the right side that "today, you will be with me in the paradise". It may be "not yet" because, the best is yet to come. Delays are not denials. God will answer our prayers in "His time". For example, Lazar was brought back to life only on the 4th day. God also answers our prayers according to the "will of God". Sometimes the answer may be "no" because, you deserve better. Even Jesus prayed that, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done".

King David was known to be a man after God's heart. Yet David sinned by taking Uriah's wife Bath Sheba away from him. David did it all in secret, but God sent Prophet Nathan to David to inform David that, as a punishment for his adultery, their child would die. David fasted and prayed, but the first child of David and Bath Sheba died, though later another son born to them, Solomon, succeeded David as the King of Israel.

A few examples of Jesus in Prayer:

1. Before choosing the apostles. (Luke 6:12-13).

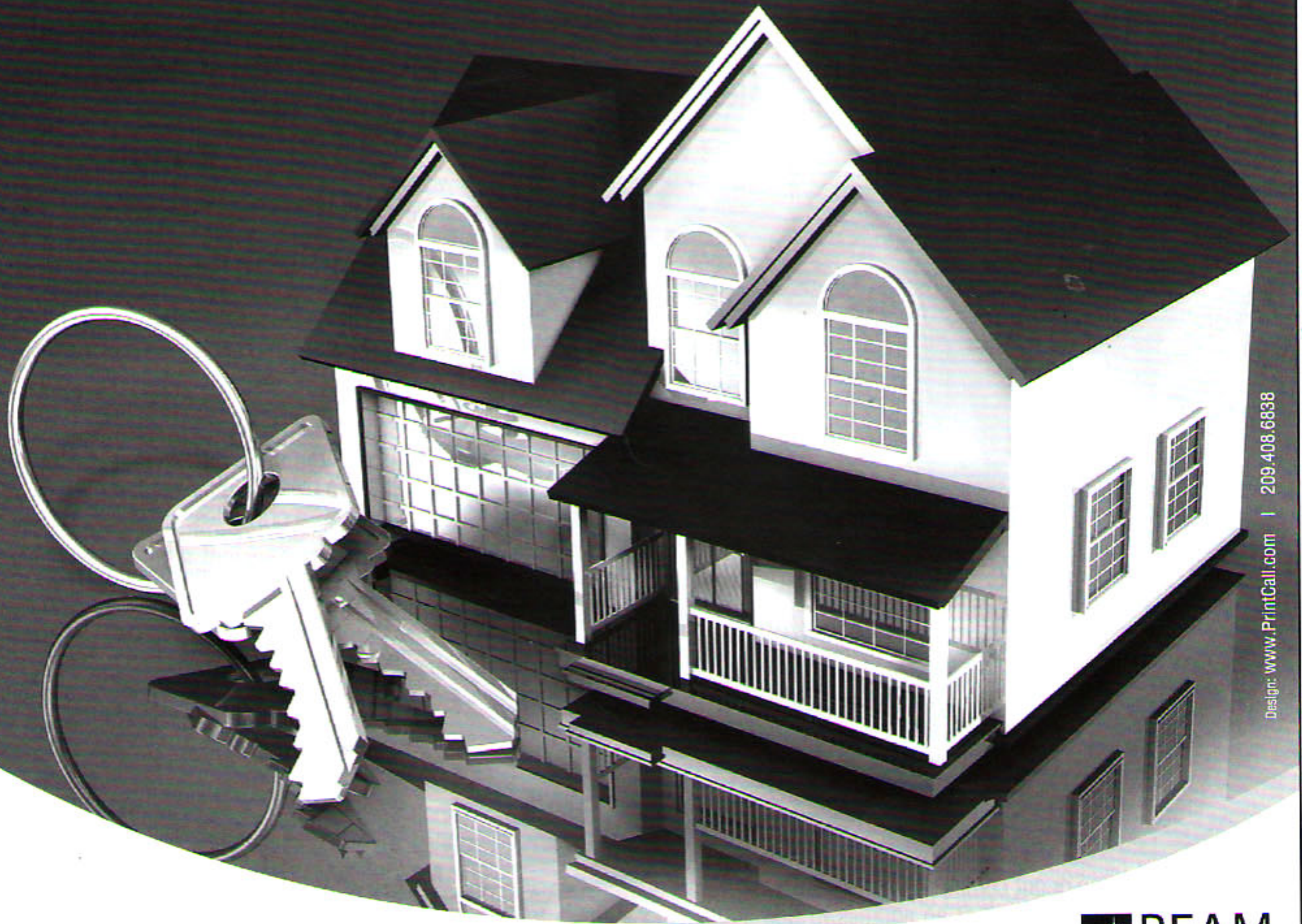
2. For Jesus, prayer was a mechanism of asking and receiving from the Heavenly Father (John 11:41-44).

3. Jesus prayed for the church (John 17:14-21).

4. His earthly life ended in prayer (Luke 23:46, "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit").

### The elements of Prayer/Ways of Prayer.

No one is required to follow a special order or pattern



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in praying as prayer is part of one's personal relationship with God. Someone told me that when he prays, he follows the order of A C T S (not the book of ACTS, but the acronym ACTS), Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. When we look at the worship books of most of the denominations, we will see that several of such books follow this order.

### 1. Adoration

Adoration is the one form of prayer that is not concerned with us, but with God alone. "Prayer is a way of eulogizing God" (Acts 2: 47, Mathew 6:9). Worship is our expression of our love and devotion to God. Prayer appeals to God's love, mercy, grace and power. Prayer recognizes God and shows our reliance on Him. It exalts Him as the object of our praise as He is the source of all our blessings. God in return, hears and answers our prayers (1 John 5:14-15, Mathew 7:7-11).

### 2. Confession/Penitence

Confession is admission of one's sin and acknowledgement of guilt. Confession is seeking the truth about us before God. In John 8:31-32, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free".

### 3. Thanksgiving.

Prayer is considered as our thanksgiving for the blessings received (Phil.4:6). A Christian should be "abounding in thanksgiving" (Col. 2:6-7, 4:2). We have to have an attitude of gratitude. The more grateful we are, the more God will give us. The more we receive from God, the more we will be able to give ourselves to others.

### 4. Supplication/Petition/Petitionary Prayer

This is asking God for things for us, "give me this, and give me that". It includes pleas for one's needs (1 John 5:14-15). Supplication is an intense pleading of a desperate person for help.

Intercession: Intercessory prayer is a form of petitionary prayer for another person. "Exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1). Intercessory prayer holds up another person before God. Intercession is a technical term for approaching a king. We approach our God, the king of kings in intercession. When we pray for others, we are actually praying for ourselves.

### How to Pray?

#### 1. Pray Continually.

In Thessalonians 5:16, we read, "Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus". Jesus told His disciples that, "they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1).

#### 2. Pray earnestly.

"Being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Elijah prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for 3 1/2 years. Later he prayed for rain, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. In Acts 12: 5 we see that, Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying for Him. The night before Herod was to bring Peter to trial, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the prison. The chains fell off Peter's wrists and Peter followed the angel out of the prison. Even the iron gates of the city opened for them by itself.

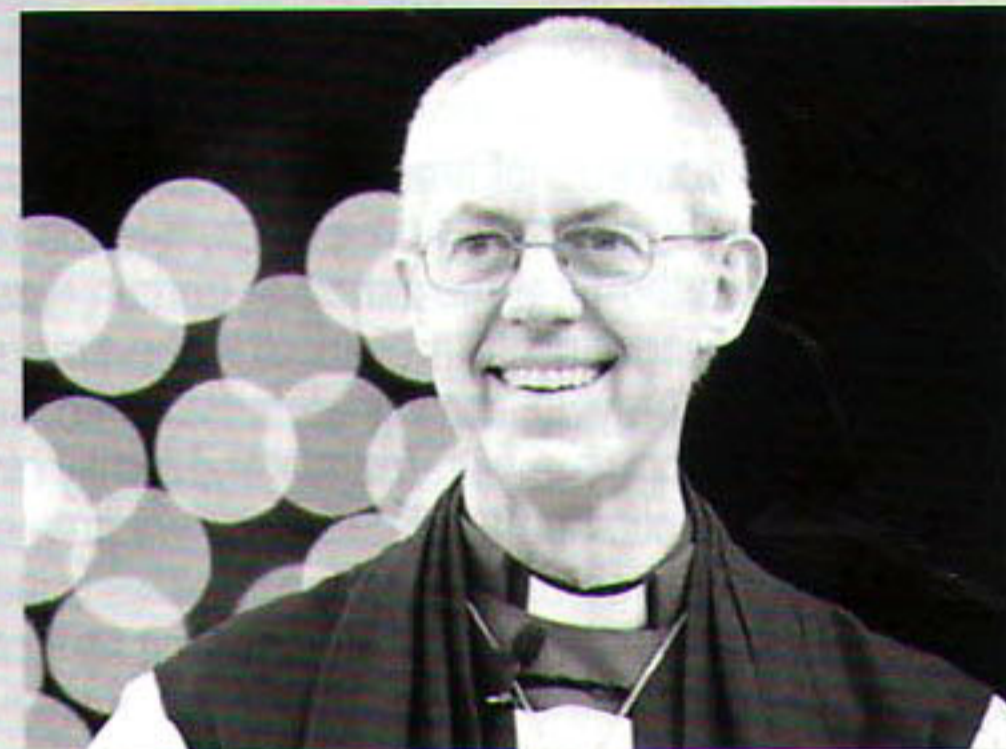
#### 3. Pray Persistently/Importunity.

Importunity is persistence in prayer until God answers; the determination to hold on to God and not let Him go until He answers (Gen. 32: 24-28, Jacob wrestled with God).

#### 4. Watch and Pray.

Mathew 26:41: In the garden of Gethsemane, those who slept instead of watching in prayer yielded to temptation and denied the Lord. Another example can be seen in Mathew 25:13; the parable of 10 Virgins. There were newspaper reports to the effect that research showed that, on an average, people who prayed recovered from illness faster. "Prayer brings with it, as food does, a new sense of power and health. We are driven to it by hunger and having eaten, we are refreshed and strengthened". It is said that, "a family that prays together, stays together". It is also said that, "prayers can't be answered unless they are prayed". So let us continuously pray earnestly and persistently.

## The Enthronement of the 105<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury



Most Revd. Dr. Joesph Mar Thoma, Rt. Revd Joseph Mar Barnabas and Revd Abraham Pulinhitta of the Mar Thoma Church attended the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby. On 21 March 2013, approximately 2000 guests were in attendance at Canterbury Cathedral during the enthronement service of the Most Revd Justin Welby, the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury. Amongst those attending were the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, Prime Minister David Cameron, cabinet ministers, and other members of parliament, with representation from all the Anglican provinces, churches in communion, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and the whole breadth of Christian Churches, denominations, and expressions. It is the first time the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church attended the enthronement of an Archbishop of Canterbury with one of the Diocesan bishops. His grace met the archbishop at the Nikaeen club dinner with Barnabas Thirumeni and exchanged greetings. Metropolitan made the following statement: "After having attended the enthronement service for the His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Official Nikaeen Club dinner, we pray for the continued good relations between our Churches and our common witness here in the United Kingdom, India, and other places on so many fronts and at so many levels. At this pivotal time during which we have witnessed the appointment of new leaders in the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, we pray that there is a common heart and intention for ecumenical fellowship, and for collaboration on valuable witness and testimony, not only for members of our own Churches but for the whole world. I echo the words of His Grace, the Archbishop, in saying that 'there is every possible reason for optimism about the future of Christian Faith in the world, and this country.'"

- Dr. Zac Varghese London

# How an Article in the Tharaka Influenced My Prayer Life

Dr. Zac Varghese, London, UK



Greeks had two concepts of time: *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is the familiar chronological time that can be measured on a clock; it is the time based on earth's rotation around the sun; *kairos* is the time measured in certain type of experiences. This is the magical time spent on giving birth to a child; it is the time spent on reading an engaging book, painting, writing, praying, having an intimate conversation with God, walking, climbing mountains, spending time with friends and family over a meal and so forth. In these and other similar authentic human experiences we create the miracle of transforming chronological time to an extraordinary *kairos* time. This is indeed a miracle; in these moments we do not look at our watch, there is no time limit for it. An evening in the company of a good friend has no definite time limit.

In our busyness we are slaves of chronological time; but it is indeed a spiritual experience to find timeless *kairos* moment in every encounter. The romantic moment we met our spouses might have changed our lives forever, we do not count them in seconds, minutes or hours. Such small moments could be eternity itself. Under the spell of *kairos* experience 'a thousand years are like a day.' This year we are celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of 96 year old Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan's consecration as a bishop, the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of North America and Europe and also the 120th Anniversary of the Sabha Tharaka; these are *kairos* moments as well. The following is a *kairos* experience that I enjoyed by reading an article in the Tharaka 25 years ago.

I knew late Mr. Abraham Eapen Palampadam from 1969; therefore; I was particularly keen to read his article on Juhanon Metropolitan in the Tharaka in December 1987 (vol 95, no.12, p 7-9). Avarachen, a prominent Jacobite Christian, wrote this article eleven years after the death of the Metropolitan. This article reveals three aspects of Juhanon Thirumeni's life: (1) How to care for friends by living within the life of his friends and relations, living within the life of the other is the most meaningful definition of friendship. (2) How to lead daily intercessory prayer for others (3) how to have real ecumenical concern for sister churches by building Biblical scholarship of clergy of other churches. I am very much convinced that Thirumeni's concerns, care, and prayers for the clergy of our and other churches has elevated the Biblical scholarship and prayer life of many churches in Kerala over the last sixty years.

Once, in *kairos* time, while staying with Avarachen's family in Kottayam, at the breakfast table, Thirumeni confessed that he regularly prayed for him and his family every day in Thirumeni's early morning meditations. Then Thirumeni enquired whether Avarachen occasionally, at least, prayed for the aging Metropolitan. Avarachen shamefully admitted that he did not pray for Thirumeni at all mindfully, but promised to pray from that day onwards. During this amazing conversation Thirumeni carefully explained in a detailed way how he practiced his daily intercessory prayer early in the morning. Thirumeni explained the power of the intercessory prayers, what it meant to him and said it is by praying for others and their needs we begin to understand the amazing power of prayers.

Thirumeni's early morning prayer was a unique model in which he engaged himself in a telepathic travel from Thiruvalla through Eraviperure, Maramon, Kozhenchery, Ranny, Pathanamthitta, Trivandrum, Quilon, Karthikapally, Kayamkulam, Allepy, Mavelikara, Thiruvalla, Kottayam, Perumpavur, Eranakulam, Shornnur, Coimbatore, Madras, Madanapally, Bangalore, Delhi, Calcutta, Singapore, Colombo, Bombay, Kuwait, Geneva, London, Montreal, and New York. This route was quite well planned and within each towns and villages he had identified specific homes and people to pray for. Thirumeni visited specific people in their homes at these places every morning in his telepathic journey. He identified with people and places and prayed for them. This authentic personal testimony touched



me enormously and helped me to follow this model of prayer for the last 25 years. I also worked out a regular route for visiting people and for praying for them, starting from Trivandrum to many places in the world where my relations and friends live. I am grateful to both Juhanon Thirumeni and Avarachen for this very simple but very effective method of prayer and my very special *kairos* moments. Late Revd. V. V. Alexander who lived in London for more than sixty years used to discuss with me the effectiveness of cosmic telepathic journeys. Achen was a psychologist who practiced meditation for many years. I recommend this Tharaka article to you to understand how our previous generations so carefully nurtured our faith and revealed to us the power of prayer. I once asked the editorial board of the Tharaka that they must reprint this article because it has an amazing message for all of us.

There is also an interesting story in this article on how Juhanon Thirumeni introduced the New Testament scholar William Barclay to Avarachen and through him to the ministers of the Jacobite church. Thirumeni was concerned about people and did God's mission through teaching, living the gospel, and through social action by caring for the poor. The Biblical concept of justice has been summed up as building right relationship at three levels: to God, to the neighbor and to the created world. Thirumeni's life and mission was an answer to the question, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8).

# മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ പ്രസംഗങ്ങൾ

## മനുഷ്യരാശി സഹോദരഭാവം വീണ്ടെടുക്കണം:

റവ ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പ് മൺ സ്റ്റീഫൻ

ലോകവ്യാപകമായ വലിയൊരു കുടുംബത്തിലെ അംഗങ്ങളാണെന്ന തിരിച്ചറിവിൽ മനുഷ്യരാശി ഒരുമയോടെ രക്ഷയുടെ പാത പിന്തുടരണമെന്ന് റവ ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പ് മൺ സ്റ്റീഫൻ (യുഎസ്) പ്രസ്താവിച്ചു. മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ ഉദ്ഘാടന ദിവസം മുഖ്യസന്ദേശം നൽകുകയായിരുന്നു ലണ്ടൻ ചർച്ച് മിഷൻ സൊസൈറ്റി എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് ഭാരവാഹി കൂടിയായ ഡോ. സ്റ്റീഫൻ. ഓരോ മനുഷ്യനും ദൈവത്തിൽ സഹോദരീ സഹോദരന്മാരാണ്. ദൈവത്തെ പിതാവെന്ന് വിളിക്കുന്നതിനാലാണിത്. ദൈവപുത്രനെങ്കിലും മനുഷ്യനായി ജനിച്ചതിനാൽ യേശു നമ്മുടെ സഹോദരസ്ഥാനത്താണ്. ദൈവത്തിൽ നാം മക്കളും സഹോദരങ്ങളുമാണ്. നിങ്ങൾ കേരളീയനും ഞാൻ യൂറോപ്യനുമാണെങ്കിലും നമ്മൾ സഹോദരീ സഹോദരന്മാർ. ലോകമെങ്ങും വ്യാപിച്ചുകിടക്കുന്ന വിശ്വാസികൾ അതിനാൽ തന്നെ സഹോദരീ സഹോദരന്മാർ. ആഫ്രിക്കയിലെ ദശലക്ഷണക്കിന് ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികളുടെ പേരിൽ സ്റ്റീഫൻ മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ അഭിവാദ്യം അറിയിച്ചു. ലണ്ടനിലെ ചർച്ച് മിഷൻ സൊസൈറ്റിക്ക് മാർത്തോമ്മാ സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗം സംഘവുമായി ബന്ധമുണ്ട്. നവീകരണം 175 വർഷം മുമ്പ് തുടങ്ങുമ്പോൾ പിന്നിൽ സിഎംഎസുമായി സഖിതമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. സിഎസ്എയുമായും ബന്ധമുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ ലോകവ്യാപകമായ ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ അംഗം നമ്മളെന്നത് പ്രധാനം. പിതാവായ ദൈവത്തിൽ നാം സഹോദരങ്ങളാണ്. ദൈവസഭകളുടെ കൂട്ടത്തിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയ്ക്കു നിർണായക പങ്കുണ്ട്. ദൈവസഭയുടെ ഭാഗമാണ് നാം. ആംഗ്ലിക്കൻ, ഓർത്തഡോക്സ്, കത്തോലിക്ക, നവീകരണക്കാർ എന്നിവരെല്ലാം ദൈവസഭയുടെ ഭാഗമാണ്. പിതാവായ ദൈവം എന്ന ഒരു കുടുംബനാഥനാൽ നാം ബന്ധിക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. വിവിധ സഭാ വിഭാഗം ഇവിടെയുണ്ടെന്നത് സന്തോഷകരമാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഭവനക്കാരായി നാം മാറുന്നു. അപ്പോസ്തോല പ്രവർത്തികളുടെ പുസ്തകം ഒന്നാം അധ്യായത്തിൽ ഉന്നയിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന രണ്ട് പ്രധാന ചോദ്യങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റിയാണ് ഇന്ന് ചിന്തിക്കുന്നത്. അപ്പോസ്തോല പ്രവർത്തി ഒന്നാം അധ്യായം ആദ്യ ഭാഗം എഴുതിയ ലൂക്കോസിന് തീർച്ചയുണ്ടായിരുന്നു എല്ലാവരും ദൈവഭവനത്തിലെ അംഗങ്ങളാണെന്ന്. ലൂക്കോസ് 2 പുസ്തകം എഴുതി. യേശുവിന്റെ ജീവിതമാണ് ആദ്യ പുസ്തകം. മറ്റിടങ്ങളില്ലാത്ത ഉപമകൾ ലൂക്കോസിന്റെ പുസ്തകത്തിലാണ്. മുടിയൻപുത്രൻ, നല്ല ശമര്യക്കാരൻ തുടങ്ങിയവ ഉദാഹരണം. എന്നാൽ രണ്ടാം പുസ്തകമാണ് അപ്പോസ്തോല പ്രവർത്തികൾ. ഇതിന്റെ ആരംഭത്തിൽ ഇങ്ങനെ പറയുന്നു. യേശു തുടങ്ങിയ കാര്യങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റിയാണ് ഇവിടെ പറയുന്നത്. യേശു ചെയ്യുന്ന കാര്യങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റി ഈ പുസ്തകം പറയുന്നു. ശിഷ്യന്മാരിൽകൂടി ചെയ്ത കാര്യങ്ങളും ഇതിൽ പറയുന്നു. അപ്പോസ്തോലന്മാരിലൂടെ യേശു ചെയ്ത കാര്യങ്ങളുടെ വിവരണമാണ് ഈ പുസ്തകം. യേശു ഇന്നും ഈ പ്രവർത്തി തുടരുകയാണ്. ഏകവും വിശുദ്ധവും സാർവലൗകികവുമായ സഹോദര്യത്തിന്റെ ഈ പ്രവർത്തി ഇന്നും തുടരുകയാണ്. നമ്മെ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഭവനക്കാരനാക്കാൻ യേശു എന്തു ചെയ്യുന്നു. തന്റെ ഭവനത്തിലൂടെയാണ് യേശു പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത്. ക്രിസ്ത്യാനിയായി ജനിച്ചയാളല്ല താനെന്ന് സ്റ്റീഫൻ പറഞ്ഞു. ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികളായ ആളുകളാണ് ആദ്യം യേശുവിനെപ്പറ്റി എന്നോട് പറയുന്നത്. യേശുവിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തി അതുപോലെ അവർ ചെയ്തു കാണിച്ചു. എന്നിക്കുവേണ്ടി കരുതി എന്നോട് പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു. സാർവലൗകികമായ ഈ സഭയുടെ ഭാഗമായത് അങ്ങനെയാണ്. സ്നേഹിച്ചവരുടെ ജീവിതം കണ്ടപ്പോൾ ആകമാനം കർത്താവിന്റെ ഭവനക്കാരനാകാൻ പ്രേരണയായി. മാതാപിതാക്കളോ സ്നേഹിതരോ യേശുവിനെപ്പറ്റി പറഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ടാവും. എന്നാൽ യേശു എന്താണെന്ന് പറയുക മാത്രമല്ല യേശുവിൻ ഭാവം ജീവിത പ്രവർത്തികളിൽ പ്രതിഫലിക്കുകയും വേണം. യേശുവിനെപ്പോലെ പറയുകയും അതുപോലെ ജീവിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തവരാണ് തന്നെ യേശുവിലേക്കു നയിച്ചതെന്നും സ്റ്റീഫൻ അനുസ്മരിച്ചു. ഉയിർത്ത ശേഷം ശിഷ്യന്മാരായ അപ്പോസ്തോലന്മാരോട് തന്റെ സഭയെ മുന്നോട്ടു കൊണ്ടുപോകണമെന്ന് പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ഈ പ്രബോധനത്തെ ഇന്നു നാം ഊരവമായി കാണണം. ആദ്യസഭ അപ്പോസ്തോലന്മാരുടെ പഠിപ്പിക്കൽ ശ്രദ്ധയോടെ കേട്ടു. ദൈവസഭ വളർന്നത് അങ്ങനെയാണ്. യേശുസഭയിൽ ആളുകൾ ചേർന്നു വരണമെങ്കിൽ നാം ആ പഠിപ്പിക്കലുകൾ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളണം. അപ്പോസ്തോലന്മാരുടെ പഠിപ്പിക്കലിനു നാം ഇന്ന് മനസ് നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ടോ? ശ്രദ്ധാപൂർവമായ ഭക്തിയുണ്ടോ നമുക്കിന്ന്? ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി വളരണമെങ്കിൽ വചനത്തോട് ശ്രദ്ധാപൂർവമായ സമീപനവും പിരണനയും വേണം. അപ്പോൾ സഭ നമ്മിലൂടെ വളരും. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് വരുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾക്കു ശക്തി ലഭിക്കും. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മ ദാനത്തിലൂടെ കർത്താവ് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. യേശുവിന്റെ അതേ ആത്മാവാണ് പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ്. സഭയിൽ യേശു വസിക്കുന്ന അനുഭവമാണ് പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ്. കർത്താവ് സഭയെ വിട്ടുപോയിട്ടില്ല. ജീവിക്കുന്ന സാന്നിധ്യത്തെ കർത്താവ് പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിലൂടെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. സഭയിലൂടെ യേശു നമ്മുടെ മധ്യത്തിൽ ജീവിക്കുന്നു. ആഭാജ സഭയുടെ ഭാഗമായി ലോകത്തെ പരിവർത്തനം

ചെയ്യാൻ യേശു പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവ പദ്ധതി എന്തെന്നു ശിഷ്യർക്ക് അറിയില്ലായിരുന്നു. സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യ പ്രസ്ഥാനം പോലെ എന്തോ ഒന്ന് ഇസ്രയേലിൽ കർത്താ ആരംഭിക്കുമെന്ന് അവർ കരുതി. എന്നാൽ ലോകത്തെ കുറിച്ചാണ് യേശുവിന്റെ പദ്ധതി. ഇസ്രയേലിനെക്കുറിച്ചു മാത്രമല്ല. ഭൂമിയുടെ അറ്റത്തോളം സാക്ഷികളാകാനാണ് ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിച്ചത്. യെരൂശലേമിലും ശമര്യയിലും ലോകത്തിന്റെ അറ്റത്തോളം ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സ്നേഹസാന്നിധ്യം യാഥാർഥ്യമാക്കാൻ ദൈവം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. റോം നരം പോലും എങ്ങനെ സുവിശേഷ പരിധിയിൽ വന്നു എന്ന കഥ അപ്പോസ്തോല പ്രവർത്തിയിൽ നാം കാണുന്നു. ഈ പുസ്തകം അവസാനിച്ചിട്ടും സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ അലകൾ അടങ്ങിയിട്ടില്ല. എല്ലാ ദിശകളിലേക്കും സുവിശേഷം കടന്നു ചെല്ലുന്ന കഥയും പ്രവർത്തി പറയുന്നു. തോമസിന്റെ പൈതൃകം പേറുന്ന സഭ അങ്ങനെ മലങ്കരയിലും വന്നു. ശിഷ്യർക്ക് സാക്ഷികളാകാനുള്ള ശക്തി മാത്രമല്ല, തന്നെപ്പോലെ ജീവിക്കാനുള്ള ശക്തിയും യേശു പകർന്നു നൽകി. ഇതൊരു പ്രവചനവും വാദനവുമാണ്. സാർവലൗകിക സഭയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വാദനം ഇവിടെ കാണാം. നിങ്ങളുടെ സാക്ഷ്യം ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്ന സ്ഥലങ്ങളുണ്ട്. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മ ശക്തിയിൽ ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ സ്നേഹ ശക്തിയെപ്പറ്റി അപരനോട് പറയണം. അപരനും ഈ ഭവനക്കാരനാവും. കർത്താവിന്റെ സാക്ഷികളാവുകയാണ് ഓരോ ജീവിതങ്ങളും. വീട്ടിലും നാട്ടിലും അയലിടങ്ങളിലും സാക്ഷ്യം വേണം. കേരളത്തിലും ഭാരതത്തിലെങ്ങും ലോകത്തിന്റെ അറ്റത്തോളം ആ സാക്ഷ്യം നീളണം. അവൻ നമ്മെ ഉപേക്ഷിക്കയില്ല, അനാഥരാക്കില്ല. വാദത്തങ്ങളും ആജ്ഞകളും ഏറ്റെടുക്കാൻ ദൈവം ശക്തി നൽകട്ടേ. എവിടെ അയച്ചാലും അവിടെ സാക്ഷികളാകാം- ആമേൻ.

## സഭ ഇരുട്ടിൽ

മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം

ലോകത്തെ പ്രകാശിപ്പിക്കാൻ ചുമതലപ്പെട്ട സഭയിൽ വെളിച്ചമില്ലാത്ത അവസ്ഥയാണെന്ന് ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം വലിയ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്ത. 118-ാം മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷൻ ചൊവ്വ രാവിലത്തെ യോത്തിൽ പ്രസംഗിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം. ചിരിയുടെ പതിവു വഴി വിട്ട് വിമർശനത്തിന്റെയും ആത്മപരിശോധനയുടെയും വേറിട്ട വഴിയിലൂടെ സഞ്ചരിച്ച ഡോ. ഫിലിപ്പോസ് മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം മാരാമണ്ണിൽ ചിന്തയുടെ പുതുവസന്തം വിരിയിച്ചു. എന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ സഭ ജനറേറ്റർ വച്ചു. പക്ഷെ, പലപ്പോഴും ഡീസൽ കാണില്ല. അതു വാങ്ങിച്ചിട്ടു വരുമ്പോഴേക്കും കറണ്ടും വരും. പിന്നെ കറണ്ട് പോകുമ്പോൾ പറയും എണ്ണയുണ്ട് പക്ഷെ ഓയിലില്ല. എന്റെ ഈ വീടുപോലെയാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭ. ഡീസലുള്ളപ്പോൾ ഓയിലില്ലാത്ത അവസ്ഥ. ഇതു മാറണമെന്ന് മേൽ പൂട്ട സ്ഥാനത്ത് 60 വർഷം പിന്നിടുന്ന സഭകളിലെ ഏറ്റവും പ്രായം കൂടിയ ബിഷപ്പ് ഉപദേശിച്ചു. ഈ വർഷവും വരാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞതിൽ ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കുന്നു. പത്രക്കാർ ചോദിക്കും- ചെറുപ്പത്തിൽ കൺവൻഷനു വന്ന അനുഭവം

പറയാമോ എന്ന്. ഒരേണ്ണം അവർക്കു വേണ്ടി പറയാം. വോക്കർ സായിപ്പ് വന്ന കാലം. എനിക്ക് ഇംഗ്ലീഷിലെ ചില വാക്കുകൾ അറിയാമായിരുന്നു. ഏബ്രഹാം മാർത്തോമ്മാ തിരുമേനിയോടൊപ്പം സായിപ്പ് നടന്നുപോകുന്നതിനിടെ ഞാനും ഒപ്പംകൂടി. ഇത് തർജ്ജമ ചെയ്ത അച്ചന്റെ മകനാണെന്നു പറഞ്ഞാണ് എന്നെ പരിചയപ്പെടുത്തിയത്. സൺ എന്ന വാക്ക് പറഞ്ഞത് എനിക്കു പിടികിട്ടി. പ്രസംഗനായി എന്ന് പറയണമെന്ന് എനിക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. പക്ഷെ പ്രസംഗം എന്നതിന്റെ ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് എനിക്കറിയില്ലായിരുന്നു. എങ്കിലും വെരി ഗുഡ് എന്ന് ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞത് സായിപ്പിന് ഇഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു. മത്തായി 5:16 ൽ പറയുന്നു: മനുഷ്യർ നിങ്ങളുടെ നല്ല പ്രവർത്തികളെ കണ്ട് സ്വർഗ്ഗനായ നിങ്ങളുടെ പിതാവിനെ മഹത്വപ്പെടുത്തേണ്ടതിന് നിങ്ങളുടെ വെളിച്ചം അവരുടെ മുമ്പിൽ പ്രകാശിക്കട്ടെ. ഒരിക്കൽ എന്റെ സ്നേഹിതന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ സുമുഖനായ ഒരു സന്യാസി വന്നു. ആരാണ് എന്തു വേണം എന്ന് ധ്യാനാത്മൻ ചോദിച്ചു. അത് അറിയാനാണ് വന്നത് എന്ന സ്വാമിയുടെ മറുപടി കേട്ട് സ്നേഹിതനു ദേഷ്യം വന്നു. തിരികെയിറങ്ങും മുമ്പ് സ്വാമി ചോദിച്ചു- എന്റെ ചോദ്യത്തിന് ഒരു മറുപടി തരാമോ? നിങ്ങൾ ആരാണ്? നിങ്ങളുടെ ആവശ്യമെന്താണ്? അതിനു ഞാൻ എന്തു ചെയ്യണം എന്നീ മൂന്നു ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ വിശ്വാസിയെ സംബന്ധിച്ച് പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടതാണ്. നിങ്ങളുടെ വെളിച്ചം അവരുടെ മുന്നിൽ പ്രകാശിതമാകണം. ഇരുട്ടിലായ ലോകത്തെ പ്രകാശത്തിലേക്കു നയിക്കാൻ ഈ കൺവൻഷനാൽ സാധ്യമാകുമോ. ദിനംപ്രതി അധഃപതിക്കുന്ന ലോകം ദൈവത്തിനു മഹത്വമാണോ വേദനയാണോ നൽകുന്നതെന്ന് നാം ചിന്തിക്കണം. ഇന്ന് മാറാമൺ എന്താണ്? ചെറുപ്പത്തിൽ ഈ പ്രദേശത്തെല്ലാം മണലായിരുന്നു. വെള്ളത്തിനു പ്രയാസമില്ലായിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് പുല്ലല്ലാതെ മണലില്ല. ഇന്ന് പുല്ലും പോയി. പകരം മുൾച്ചെടിയാണ്- കൺവൻഷന്റെ മുഖ്യവേദിക്കു മുന്നിൽ കാഴ്ചവേ കൂട്ടാൻ സംഘാടകർ വച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന മുൾച്ചെടിയെ നോക്കി മാർ ക്രിസോസ്റ്റം വിമർശനത്തിന്റെ അമ്പയച്ചു. മുൾച്ചെടി ദൈവത്തിനു സന്തോഷമാണോ നൽകുന്നത്? എന്തുകൊണ്ട് ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടിച്ച മനോഹരലോകം ഇന്ന് മുൾപ്പുരപ്പായി? കുർബാന കഴിയുമ്പോൾ അച്ചൻ പറയും- ഈ തിരുശരീരവും തിരുരക്തവും ശിക്ഷാവിധിക്കു കാരണമാകരുത്. മറിച്ച് ജീവനും രക്ഷയ്ക്കുമാകണം. ഇതൊരു ദൈവശാസ്ത്ര പ്രതിസന്ധിയാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നിയമമാണോ ദൈവകൽപ്പന അനുസരിച്ച നിയമമാണോ വലുത്? ദൈവം ചെയ്യുന്നതു കൊണ്ടാണോ അതോ നല്ലതായതുകൊണ്ടാണോ ഒരു നല്ല കാര്യം നല്ലതാകുന്നത്. നല്ലതാണോ ദൈവമാണോ ഉന്നതം തുടങ്ങി ഒട്ടേറെ ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ ഈ സംഭവം ഉയർത്തുന്നുണ്ട്. ദൈവത്തിനു നന്മ മാത്രമേ ചെയ്യാനാവുകയുള്ളല്ലോ. നാം കുറെ നല്ലകാര്യങ്ങൾ കണ്ടു പിടിച്ച് ചെയ്ത് ദൈവത്തെ പ്രസാദിപ്പിക്കുകയാണോ അതോ ദൈവം പറയുന്നത് തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് ചെയ്യുകയാണോ. ദൈവമാണ് ശുദ്ധിയും അശുദ്ധിയും കൽപ്പിച്ചത്. ഇടതുവശത്തു കൂടെ ഓടിക്കുന്നതാണ് നമ്മുടെ രാജ്യത്തെ നിയമം. ചിലയിടത്ത് ഇതു വലതുവശത്താണ്. ഏതാണ് ശരി? ഭൂലോകാധിപനായ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഇഷ്ടത്തിനാണ് നാം പ്രാധാന്യം കൽപ്പിക്കേണ്ടത്. നന്മ ദൈവം മാത്രം. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കൈകളിലാകുമ്പോൾ നാം നന്മയാകും. നല്ല പ്രവർത്തിയുടെ രൂപത്തിൽ അതു വെളിപ്പെടും. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഇഷ്ടം നിങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യുമ്പോൾ മറ്റുള്ളവർ നിങ്ങളിൽ ദൈവത്തെ കാണും. ഇന്ന് ലോകത്തിൽ ദൈവം എന്തു ചെയ്യുന്നു. അതിൽ ദൈവത്തോടൊപ്പം പങ്കാളികളാകാൻ നമുക്കു കഴിയുന്നുണ്ടോ? ഇന്നത്തെ കൊലപാതക ലോകത്ത് മനുഷ്യരുടെ സൗഖ്യത്തിനായും അവർക്ക് പാർക്കാൻ ഒരു വീടിനായും ദൈവം ചെയ്യുന്ന കാര്യത്തിൽ നാം പങ്കാളികളാകുമ്പോഴാണ് നാം മനുഷ്യരാകുന്നത്. പത്രക്കാർ എഴുതും രണ്ടായിരം ആളുകൾ വന്നുവെന്ന്. അല്ലാതെ മനുഷ്യരെന്നല്ല എഴുതുക. അവർക്കു ദൈവശാസ്ത്രം അറിയാം. ഞാനുൾപ്പെടെ ഇവിടെ പ്ലാറ്റ്ഫോമിൽ ഇരിക്കുന്നവർ മനുഷ്യരാണോ? അവർക്കും അറിയില്ല. എനിക്കും അറിയില്ല. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഇഷ്ടമാണോ നമ്മിലൂടെ നിറവേറുന്നത്? ഇന്നു പ്രാർഥിക്കേണ്ടത് നശിക്കുന്ന ലോകത്തിൽ വന്ന് ജീവിച്ച് പ്രാണനെ നൽകി ലോകത്തെ വീണ്ടെടുത്ത് ലോകാധിപതിയായി ജീവിക്കുന്നവനെ നീ ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യാൻ കൃപ നൽകണേ എന്നാണ്. അപ്പോൾ സംഭവിക്കുന്നത് ചെവി കേട്ടിട്ടില്ല, കണ്ണ് കണ്ടിട്ടില്ല. പുലിപ്പാലിൽ ഉളിക കഴിക്കണം എന്നു പറയുന്നതുപോലെ അപകടകരമായ പ്രവർത്തിയാണ് ചിലർ നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നത്. ദേശത്ത് ദൈവേഷ്ടം മുൻ വർഷത്തേക്കാൾ മെച്ചപ്പെട്ട രീതിയിൽ നടപ്പാക്കാൻ മാറാമൺ മുഖാന്തിരമാകുന്നുവോ എന്നത് ചിന്തിക്കേണ്ട കാര്യമാണ്. സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗം സംഘം ട്രഷറർ എന്റെ സുഹൃത്ത് എന്ന് ഞാൻ കരുതുന്നു. ഇങ്ങോട്ടു പോരുന്നതിനു മുമ്പ് അദ്ദേഹം എന്തോടു പറഞ്ഞു- സംഘത്തിന് കടമുണ്ടെന്ന് തിരുമേനി പ്രസംഗത്തിൽ ഒന്നു സൂചിപ്പിക്കണമെന്ന്. ഇങ്ങനെ ഓരോരുത്തരും പറയുന്നത് പറയാനാണെങ്കിൽ പിന്നെ എന്നെ വിളിക്കേണ്ടല്ലോ. എന്നാലും അതിൽ ചില കാര്യങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ഏബ്രഹാം മാർത്തോമ്മായുടെ കാലത്ത് സംഘത്തിന് കടഭാരം ഏറിയപ്പോൾ പിരിവിനു പന്തലിൽ ആഹ്വാനമുണ്ടായി. പാണ്ടനാട് ചാക്കോച്ചൻ എന്നയാൾ എഴുന്നേറ്റ് എല്ലാ കടവും താൻ വീട്ടാമെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു. കമ്മട്ടക്കാർക്ക് മൺവെട്ടി വാങ്ങി കൊടുക്കണമെന്നും അദ്ദേഹം നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു. പിറ്റേ വർഷം പേരു വെളിപ്പെടുത്താത്ത ഒരാൾ കടം വീട്ടി. ഞാൻ അന്നേ പറഞ്ഞില്ലെ ഞാൻ കടം വീട്ടാമെന്ന് എന്നായി ചാക്കോച്ചൻ. എനിക്ക് പേർ അറിയില്ലെന്ന് ഇഷ്ടമല്ലെന്നു കൂടി പറയാൻ ചാക്കോച്ചൻ മറന്നില്ല. ഇത്തരം ആളുകളെല്ലെ വേണ്ടത്. എന്നാൽ മറ്റൊരു വിഭാഗം ഇതിനു നിശബ്ദമായി മറുപടി പറഞ്ഞു. ഇനി മുതൽ കടമെടുക്കേണ്ട എന്ന് സംഘം തീരുമാനിച്ച കാലത്താണ് ഞാൻ ഉപദേശിയായത്. മാസം തോറും ശമ്പളം

കിട്ടുമെന്ന് കരുതി. എന്നാൽ കിട്ടിയില്ല. സഭയ്ക്ക് ആവശ്യം വന്നപ്പോൾ ശമ്പളത്തേക്കാൾ എന്റെ സഭയുടെ ആവശ്യം പ്രധാനം എന്നു പറഞ്ഞ മുൻ തലമുറയാണ് ആ മറ്റൊരു വിഭാഗം. മാറാമണ്ണിൽ നമുക്ക് പ്രചോദനമാകേണ്ടത് ഇവരാണ്. അന്നവർ ധൈര്യമായി പറഞ്ഞു ജനങ്ങൾ തരുന്നത് മതി. അങ്കോലയിൽ പോയത് ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തിലാണ്. സീഹോറയിൽ പട്ടിണി കിടന്നു. പട്ടിണി കിടന്നാൽ ഉമ്മൻ പിന്തിരിയുമെന്നു ചിലർ പറഞ്ഞു. അന്നു ഞാൻ അച്ചനായിട്ടില്ല. നല്ല പ്രവർത്തിയെന്നാൽ ദൈവം ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന പ്രവർത്തിയാണ്. ഇന്ന് അനേകർക്ക് വീടില്ല. പലരും പട്ടിണിയിലാണ്. ആവശ്യമില്ലാതെ വീടിനു മുകളിൽ ഒരു വീടുകൂടി പണിയുന്നതല്ല നല്ല പ്രവർത്തി. സഹോദരന്റെ ആവശ്യം മനസിലാക്കി ജീവിതത്തെ ക്രമീകരിക്കുക. നല്ല ശമര്യക്കാരുടെ കഥ എല്ലാവർക്കും ഇഷ്ടം. അച്ചൻമാർക്ക് ഇത് ഇഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടില്ല. ശമര്യക്കാരുടെ സംഭവത്തിലെ ആക്രമിക്കെതിരെ പള്ളിപ്രസംഗത്തിനിടെ അച്ചൻ ശബ്ദം ഉയർത്തും. അവനു വേണ്ടി പ്രാർഥിക്കും. എന്നാൽ ഈ വ്യവസ്ഥിതിക്ക് എതിരെ ഒന്നും ചെയ്യില്ല. ഇത് നന്മയല്ല. എന്നാൽ അവനെ എടുത്ത് സുത്രത്തിൽ ആക്കി കൂടുതൽ വല്ലതും ചെലവായാൽ ഞാൻ വന്ന് തരാമെന്നു പറയുമ്പോഴാണ് ശമര്യക്കാരുടെ അനശ്വരനായി മാറുന്നത്. മാറാമണ്ണിൽ വന്ന് 100 രൂപ ഇടുന്നതല്ല നന്മ. നാം ചെയ്യുന്ന ഇത്തരം വേലകളല്ല വലുതെന്ന് പറയാൻ ആർക്കു ധൈര്യമുണ്ട്. തുടങ്ങിയപ്പോഴത്തെ ചിരി ഒന്നും നിങ്ങളിൽ കാണുന്നില്ലല്ലോ. മനുഷ്യത്വത്തെ നശിപ്പിക്കുന്ന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കെല്ലാം നാം എതിരായി നിൽക്കണം. വല്ലതും വേണമെങ്കിൽ ഇനിയും നൽകാമെന്ന മനോഭാവമാണ് രൂപപ്പെടേണ്ടത്. മനുഷ്യൻ നന്നാകുക എന്നതാണ് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. എന്റെ ഇഷ്ടമല്ല, നിന്റെ ഇഷ്ടംതന്നെ പ്രധാനമെന്നാണ് യേശു അന്ത്യ സമയത്തു പറയുന്നത്. ഈ പാനപാത്രം നീക്കണം. പക്ഷെ ഞാൻ പ്രാർഥിച്ചതു കൊണ്ട് മാറ്റമുണ്ടാകുന്നു. കർത്താവ് പറയുന്നു. ദൈവത്തെ ബോധവൽക്കരിക്കലാകരുത് നമ്മുടെ പ്രാർഥന. ഇവനു കാൻസറാണ് ഇവിടെ പ്രാർഥിക്കുമ്പോൾ അവിടെ നിന്ന് സൗഖ്യം അയക്കണമെന്ന ഓർഡർ ഇടീലും അല്ല പ്രാർഥന. തുടങ്ങിയതുപോലെ എഴുന്നേറ്റാൽ അതു പ്രാർഥനയല്ല. നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതം ദൈവത്തിനു മഹത്വമാകണം. മനുഷ്യന്റെ മഹത്വമാണ് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ നന്മ. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മഹത്വം മനുഷ്യന്റെ കരുണയും. സ്വർത്തിൽ ചെന്ന് എപ്പോഴും സ്തുതി സ്തുതി എന്ന് പറയുന്നതിനേക്കാൾ നരകത്തിൽ പോയി രണ്ട് ഇടി കൊള്ളുന്നതാണ് നല്ലതെന്ന് ചിന്തിക്കുന്നവരും ഇന്നുണ്ട്. മനുഷ്യന്റെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിനായി യേശു തുടങ്ങിയവച്ച ദൗത്യം പൂർത്തിയാക്കുന്നവരായി നാം മാറുമോ. പ്രസംഗം കൊണ്ടല്ല പ്രവർത്തിയിലൂടെ ഇതു പ്രതിഫലിക്കണം. ശമ്പളം കിട്ടിയില്ലെങ്കിലും സുവിശേഷ സംഘം കടത്തിലാകരുതെന്നു ചിന്തിച്ച തലമുറയുടെ ത്യാഗം 125-ാം വർഷത്തിൽ മറന്നുപോകരുത്. ദൈവത്തെ മഹത്വപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന എന്തു പ്രവർത്തി മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷം നടന്നു. നമ്മുടെ സ്തുതിയും ഹാലേലൂയ്യയും അടുത്ത വെള്ളപ്പൊക്കത്തിന് പോകും. ഏതു വെള്ളപ്പൊക്കത്തിലും പോകാത്ത ശാശ്വത പ്രവർത്തികളാണ് നടക്കേണ്ടത്. ആരാണ് നിങ്ങൾ എന്ന സ്വാമിജിയുടെ ചോദ്യം ആവർത്തിക്കട്ടെ.

# രൂത്ത്: വെളിച്ചം പകർന്ന പെൺകുട്ടി

ഗീവരീസ് മാർ അത്താനാസിയോസ്

രൂത്തിന്റെ പുസ്തകം സുന്ദരമായ നോവലെറ്റ്. ധീരപുരുഷനായ ബോവാസ് നമ്മുടെ മുന്തിലേക്ക് വരുന്നു. ന്യായാധിപന്മാരിൽ നിന്ന് ശൗലിലേക്കുള്ള പാലമാണ് രൂത്തിന്റെ പുസ്തകം. മോവാബിൽ ആരംഭിച്ച് ബത്ലഹേമിൽ പര്യവസാനിക്കുന്ന ഈ ദുഃഖകഥ മതസ്ഥമെന്നതിലുപരി സാഹിത്യ ഗ്രന്ഥമാണ്. അർഥപൂർണ്ണമായ പേരുകളാണ് ഇതിൽ നിറയെ. എലീമേലേക്ക് എന്നാൽ ദൈവം രാജാവ് എന്നർത്ഥം. നവോമി എന്നാൽ സന്തോഷവതി. ദൈവത്തിലുള്ള അചഞ്ചല വിശ്വാസം ഇതിൽ ഉടനീളം കാണാം. നരയ്ക്കുവോളം ചുമക്കുന്ന ദൈവം രീഭത്തിൽ തന്നെ പേരുവിളിക്കുന്ന ദൈവം, ഏതു സാധാരണക്കാരന്റെയും, ചിത്രം ഉള്ളുകയ്യിൽ കോറിയിടുന്ന ദൈവം. ഉദയത്തിലും ഉപചയത്തിലും (കുന്നുകുട്ടൽ) മാത്രമല്ല ദർശനം ഉണ്ടാകുന്നത്. അസ്തമയത്തിലും അപചയത്തിലുമാണ്. ജീവിതം പൂർണ്ണവിരാമത്തിലേക്കു നീങ്ങുമ്പോഴാണ് മനുഷ്യൻ ജീവിതത്തെ വിലയിരുത്തുക. വിരഹദുഃഖത്തിന് വിലയുണ്ട്. ആർനോൾഡ് ടോയൻബി ചരിത്ര ദർശനം അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നത് ഈ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ. ക്ഷാമകാലം തരണം ചെയ്യാൻ അപ്പന്റെ നാട്ടിൽ നിന്ന് മോവാബിലേക്ക് യാത്ര തിരിക്കുന്ന എലീമേലേക്കും കുടുംബവുമാണ് രൂത്തിന്റെ പുസ്തകത്തിൽ ആദ്യം തെളിയുന്നത്. ബത്ലഹേമെന്നാണ് സ്ഥലപ്പേരുകിലും കാമ്പ് നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു. രൂത്തിന്റെ ഈ പുസ്തകത്തിൽ എല്ലാമുണ്ട്. വിസ്മയമുണ്ട്. ദുർബലമുണ്ട്. കറ്റകളെ നോക്കി വന്നവർക്ക് ഒടുവിൽ തിരികെ പോകുമ്പോൾമിച്ച് മൂന്ന് കല്ലറകൾ. നവോമിയുടെ ഭർത്താവും രണ്ടു മക്കളും മോവാബ്യദേശത്ത് മരിച്ചുക്കൊല്ലപ്പെട്ടു. ഇതോടെ നവോമി വിധവയായി. രണ്ടു മരുമക്കളിൽ ഓപ്പാ അമ്മാവിയമ്മയെ ചുംബിച്ച് പിരിഞ്ഞെങ്കിലും രൂത്ത് ഒപ്പം നിന്നു. അസാമാന്യ ദർശനങ്ങളിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്രയുടെ തുടക്കമായിരുന്നു ഈ തീരുമാനം. ദൈവമേ എന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ എത്രയോ മൃത്യുദേവങ്ങൾ എന്ന് നവോമി വിലപിക്കുന്നു. മോവാബ് ദേശക്കാരായ രണ്ടു മരുമക്കളുടെ ജീവിതം ബലികഴിക്കാൻ അമ്മാവിയമ്മ ആഹ്വാനിക്കുന്നു. മിന്നും സൂര്യരേഖയായ രൂത്തിന്റെ ഗ്രന്ഥത്തിൽ വാടിപ്പോയ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ചിത്രമാണ് വരച്ചിടുന്നത്. അരങ്ങത്തു നിന്ന് ദൈവം മാറിയോ എന്ന് സംശയിച്ചപ്പോൾ അവർ മാറാ എന്നു പേരുമാറ്റി. നവോമി, രൂത്ത്, ബോവാസ്, എന്നിങ്ങനെ അസാമാന്യ വ്യക്തിത്വങ്ങളാണ് ഇവിടെ നിറഞ്ഞു നിൽക്കുന്നത്. വിളവു തിന്നാത്ത വേലിയായ ബോവാസ് ഇവിടെ എല്ലാ പുരുഷന്മാർക്കും മാതൃകയാണ്. തന്റെ കൃഷിയിടത്തിൽ ലൈക പീഡനത്തിനെതിരെ ശക്തമായ നിലപാടെടുത്ത ഭൃ ഉടമ. നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പൂമുഖത്ത് വസന്തം ഒരുക്കുവാനാണ് ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ അരങ്ങിൽ നിന്ന് ദൈവം ഇടയ്ക്കു മാറി നിൽക്കുന്നത് എന്ന സത്യമാണ് രൂത്തിന്റെയും അമ്മാവിയമ്മയായ നൊവോമിയുടെയും കഥയിൽ വ്യക്തമാകുന്നത്. മാവാബ് വിട്ട് ബൈബത്ലഹേമിലേക്ക് തിരികെ പോകുമ്പോൾ കറ്റ തേടിവന്നവർ ഇവിടെ അന്ത്യവിശ്രമം കൊള്ളുകയാണ്. യൗവനക്കാരിയായ നീ പെയ്കൊള്ളാൻ തന്നെ നൊവോമി പറയുന്നു. സ്വർ. സർവശക്തിയുമുപയോഗിച്ച് നൊവോമിയോട് പോരാടുന്നു. നൊവോമി തിരിച്ചുവരവിനായി നിശ്ചയം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ജീവിതത്തിൽ ഒരു തിരിച്ചുവരവ് പ്രധാനം. മുടിയനായ പുത്രൻ തിരികെ വന്നതുപോലെ.

നവോമി ദൈവ വിരുദ്ധമായി സംസാരിച്ചു. നമ്മുടെ പ്രതിനിധിയാണ് നവോമി. വിജയത്തിന്റെ ലഹരിയിൽ മുല്യങ്ങളുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം ഇന്ന് ബഹിഷ്കൃതമായി. അതിനെ ആട്ടിടാടിയിരിക്കുന്നു നാം. മുല്യം രൂപയിലാണ് നാം അളക്കുന്നത്. ഇതാണോ ജീവിത വിജയം. വിധവയായ തകരപ്പെട്ട സ്ത്രീയുടെ ആലംബമായി രൂത്ത് മാറുന്നു. ദൈവത്തോടും മണ്ണിനോടും ബന്ധം വിടാതെ അവൾ പാലിക്കുന്നു. ബന്ധത്തിനു പുതിയ ഡൈമനഷൻ നൽകി രൂത്ത്. തോറ്റുകൊടുക്കാൻ മനസ്സുള്ളവർ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തുവാനുള്ള മനസ്സുള്ളവരാണ് മനുഷ്യർ. രൂത്ത് അചഞ്ചലയായി വൈധവ്യം പേറി നീങ്ങുന്നു. കരുതുന്ന സഭയുടെ ദൃശ്യം ബോവാസിൽ നമുക്കു വായിച്ചെടുക്കാം. നവോമി വരുതിയിൽ വാടിയ ജീവിതം. അൽഫോൽസാമ്മ ഒന്നും ചെയ്യാഞ്ഞിട്ട് വിശുദ്ധയായി. ക്രൂശോട് ചേർത്ത് ജീവിത വേദനകളെ വച്ചതാണ് അൽഫോസമ്മയുടെ മഹത്വം. കെടുതിയിൽ കെടാതെ നിന്ന് വെളിച്ചം പകരുന്ന പെൺകുട്ടിയാണ് രൂത്ത്. കല്യാണം നാലുമണിക്കാക്കിയാൽ ഒരു ലക്ഷം ലാഭിക്കാം. ആർക്കുണ്ട് ഇതിനു ധൈര്യം. 3. 6 കോടി കിട്ടാൻ എത്രനാൾ സഭ കാത്തിരിക്കണം. രൂത്തിന്റെ പുസ്തകം ന്യായാധിപ കാലത്തെ സംഘർഷത്തിന്റെ പിന്തുടർച്ച. രൂത്ത് എന്ന പുസ്തകം വായിക്കേണ്ടത് ഇന്നത്തെ പീഡനത്തിന്റെയും ക്രൂരതയുടെയും പശ്ചാലത്തിലാണ്. മെതിക്കളത്തിലും വയലിലും നിലനിൽപ്പില്ല. വയലേലകളിൽ നിയമം നടപ്പാക്കുവാൻ ബോവാസിൻ ഇച്ഛാശക്തിയുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. റാസിയുടെ ഇച്ഛാശക്തിയാണിത്. പുതപ്പു മാറ്റിയപ്പോൾ ഒരു സ്ത്രീ, വിളവു തിന്നുന്ന വേലിയായി മാറുന്നില്ല ബോവാസ്. വിശ്വസ്ഥനായ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പുകാരനായി മാറുന്നു. ബോവാസിനെപ്പറ്റി നവോമിക്ക് ചില ധാരണകളുണ്ട്. ഇതിൽ നന്മയുണ്ട്. കണ്ണുകോട് പള്ളിയിൽ അടക്കം ചെയ്ത് ഡിഡിയെപ്പറ്റി നാട് സാക്ഷ്യം പറഞ്ഞു. യൂഹാനോൻ തിരുമേനിയുടെ കാലം മുതൽപറയുന്നു കല്യാണം, വസ്ത്രം എങ്ങനെ ലളിതമായി വേണമെന്ന് ആരു കേൾക്കാൻ.

കരുണ കാണിക്കാൻ ബോവാസ് തയ്യാറാകുന്നു യേശുവിന്റെ മുൻപായി ബോവാസ് മാറുന്നു. രൂത്തിന് കറ്റ ഇട്ടുകൊടുക്കാൻ വേലക്കാരോട് പറയുന്നു. അപ്പത്തിന്റെ

നടായ ബേൽഹേം പേരു നിലനിൽത്താനുള്ള കാമ്പ് നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തി. വ്യസന ഹേതുകൾ എന്റെ ഉള്ളിൽ. തിരിച്ചു വരവ് അസാധ്യം. തന്റെ ജീവിത യാത്രയിലെ എല്ലാവർക്കും അത്താണിയാണെന്ന് കരുതി ബോവാസ്. കാർക്കശ്യം മുഖമുദ്രയായി മാറിയ നമ്മൾ. ഇതിൽ നിന്ന് രക്ഷപെടണം. ചുഷണത്തിന് വിധേയമാക്കാതെ അവളെ രക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. ഇന്ന് പലരും നിശബ്ദർ. ബോവാസ് മൗനിയായ വ്യക്തിയല്ല. സഹയാത്രികരെ രക്ഷിക്കുന്ന രക്ഷകനാണ്. ടി. പത്മനാഭൻ. കഥകളുടെ അധിപൻ. വെളിച്ചം പരത്തുന്ന പെൺകുട്ടി എന്ന കഥയിലെ വെളിച്ചം പരത്തുന്ന പെൺകുട്ടി രൂത്തിനെപ്പോലെ ഒരുവളാണ്. ലഭിച്ചതെല്ലാം സ്വീകരിക്കണമെന്ന പക്ഷക്കാരനല്ല ബോവാസ്. നടുവിലെ മരം തിന്നരുത് എന്ന ഉപദേശം. വേലക്കാരനെ അറിയുന്നത് യജമാനന്റെ അസാന്നിധ്യത്തിലാണ്. കൃഷ്ണൻ നായരുടെ ട്യൂട്ടോറിയിലിൽ തോറ്റുതൊപ്പിയിടുന്ന ഇവനെ ജയിപ്പിക്കണം എന്ന് മാതാപിതാക്കൾ പറയും. അടുത്ത് വിളിച്ച് പറയും. ചില ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ ഞാൻ പറയാം. മകനേ ചിലതെല്ലാം വിട്ടുകൊടുക്കുന്നതിലാണ് ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ മധുരം. എല്ലാം കയ്യടക്കുന്നതില്ല ജീവിതവിജയം. ചിലതെല്ലാം വിട്ടുകൊടുക്കുന്നതിലാണ്. ഏദന്റെ മരച്ചുവട്ടിലേക്കല്ല, കാൽവരിയിലേക്ക് ബോവാസ് നടന്നടക്കുന്നു. സുന്ദരിയായ രൂത്ത് രാത്രിയിൽ നിന്റെ കാൽച്ചുവട്ടിൽ. ലൈക ചുഷണം അനുവദിക്കില്ലെന്ന ഉറച്ച നിലപാടുള്ള ബോവാസിനെ കണ്ടാൽ പിന്നെ എങ്ങനെ ചത്തേ ചത്തേ എന്ന് ജീവിക്കാൻ പറ്റും. അലങ്കരിച്ച ദേവദാരു പോലെയുള്ള ജീവിതം കണ്ടിട്ട് നീട്ടപ്പെടുന്നതെല്ലാം എല്ലാം വേണമെന്ന് പറയാനാവുമോ. യേശുവിന്റെ നിയമം മറന്ന് സമൂഹത്തിലെ ആഘോഷങ്ങൾക്കു നാം കൂട്ടുനിൽക്കുകയാണോ? സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യാശയുടെ കൊടി, വിശ്വാസം സേനേഹം എന്നിവയാണ്. പിടിച്ചു നിന്ന വിജയാളികളാണ് ഈ വിധവകൾ. വിധവകളേ, വീണ്ടെടുപ്പിന്റെ ബോവാസ് നിങ്ങൾക്കുണ്ട്. വിധവകളേ ബോവാസ് എത്തിക്കഴിഞ്ഞു. രക്ഷാകാലം എത്തിയെന്നറിഞ്ഞ് തല ഉയർത്തുക. ബോവാസ് ലോക രക്ഷകന്റെ വ്യക്തിത്വത്തോട് അടുക്കുന്നു. ഓബേദ് എന്ന ആ മകനാണ് ദാവീദിന്റെ അപ്പനായ യിശായിയുടെ അപ്പൻ. ആ വംശാവലിയിലാണ് ക്രിസ്തു പിൻകാലത്ത് ചരിത്രത്തിലേക്ക് അവതരിക്കുന്നത്. കെടുതിയിൽ കെടാതെ രൂത്ത്. ആരാണ് ദൈവം. ജീവിത അരങ്ങിൽ നാം ദൈവത്തെ കുറ്റം പറയുന്നു. എന്നാൽ നവോമി പ്രതിസന്ധിയിൽ എന്റെ ദൈവം എന്നു പറയുന്നു.

എവിടെയാണ് യേശു. ജീവനുള്ളവനെ മരിച്ചവർക്കിടയിൽ തിരയരുത്. ന്യായപ്രമാണ നിയമത്തിനപ്പുറം കാലാപെറുക്കാൻ വന്നവർക്കും അവരുടെ അമ്മായിയമ്മയ്ക്കും തണലാകുന്ന ബോവാസ്. ദാവീദ് ഇശായി ഓബേദ് നീ യേശുവിന്റെ വംശാവലിയിൽ പെടുന്നു. നിന്റെ മടിയിൽ ഒരു ശിശു ജനിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. ഒബേദ് യേശുവിന്റെ വംശാവലിയിൽ ജനിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. സഹയാത്രികൻ ആശംസം നൽകുന്നത് ബോവാസിനെപ്പോലെ വേണം. സഹയാത്രികരുടെ ജീവൻ നമ്മുടെ ജീവനാൽ ശബ്ദമുഖരിതമാകണം.

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### തെറ്റുകൾ ഉപേക്ഷിക്കൽ

ഡോ. ഗീവർഗീസ് മാർ തിയഡോഷ്യസ് വർഗീസ് സി.തോമസ്

തെറ്റുകൾ ഏറ്റുപറഞ്ഞ് ഉപേക്ഷിക്കുകയാണ് നോമ്പ് ആചരണത്തിന്റെ പ്രസക്തിയെന്ന് ഡോ. ഗീവർഗീസ് മാർ തിയഡോഷ്യസ്. മാരാമൺ കൺവൻഷനിൽ ഇന്നലെ രാത്രിയോടൊത്ത് പ്രസംഗിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു അദ്ദേഹം. തെറ്റും ശരിയും തിരിച്ചറിയുക ഈ കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ ഏറ്റവും വിഷമമുള്ള സംതിയാണ്. തെറ്റിനെ തെറ്റായി ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിക്കാതിരിക്കാൻ പലപ്പോഴും പ്രലോഭനങ്ങളുണ്ടാകും. തെറ്റ് ശരിയാക്കി പറയാനാണു പലരും ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത്. തിന്മകളെ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിച്ച ക്രിസ്തു നമ്മെയെല്ലാം ശുദ്ധി ചെയ്യും. പൊയ്മുഖവും കാപട്യവും ആദ്യന്തികമായി വിജയം കൈവരിക്കുകയില്ല. യഥാർഥ സാക്ഷിയാകുന്നതിന് ഇതു സഹായിക്കുകയുമില്ല. നോമ്പുകാലത്തു തിന്മകളെ പൂർണ്ണമായി വർജ്ജിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. മേച്ചമരമായ കാലുകൾ സംശുദ്ധ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ പതിയാൻ നാം ഇടയാക്കരുത്. ഹൃദയത്തെ ഓരോ ദിവസവും ശുദ്ധീകരിക്കുകയാണു നോമ്പിന്റെ ദിവസങ്ങളിൽ നാം ചെയ്യേണ്ടത്. ഹൃദയശുദ്ധിയുള്ളവർ ഭാവനാർ, അവർ ദൈവത്തെ കാണുമെന്നു വേദപുസ്തകം വാദനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ദൈവാലയത്തിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്ര യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്രയാണ്. ക്രിസ്തു നമ്മിൽ ഓരോരുത്തരിലുടേയും വെളിപ്പെടുന്നു. നാലു കാര്യങ്ങളാണു പ്രധാനമായി ക്രിസ്തുവിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്രയിൽ നമ്മോടൊപ്പം ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കേണ്ടത്. ആളുതന്നെ അറിയുക എന്നതാണ് ഒന്നാമതായി വേണ്ടത്. ക്രിസ്തു എന്ന രക്ഷകൻ എല്ലാത്തിന്റെയും ഉടയവൻ എന്ന തിരിച്ചറിവ് ഉണ്ടാകണം. ക്രിസ്തു പഠിപ്പിച്ച കാര്യങ്ങൾ കേൾക്കുകയും പറയുകയും മാത്രമല്ല, അത് ജീവിതത്തിൽ പ്രാവർത്തികമാക്കുക കൂടി ചെയ്യണമെന്നതാണു രണ്ടാമത്തേത്. ദൈവാലയത്തിലേക്കുള്ള യാത്ര രൂപാന്തരത്തിനു വഴിയൊരുക്കണമെന്നതാണു മൂന്നാമത്തെ കാര്യം. പാപിനിയായ സ്ത്രീയും ക്രിസ്തുവിനോടൊപ്പം ക്രൂശിക്കപ്പെട്ട നല്ല കള്ളനും രൂപാന്തരത്തിന്റെ വലിയ ഉദാഹരണങ്ങളാണ്. ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ അനുമാനിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് നാലാമത്തേത്. വിശുദ്ധ പത്രോസ് ക്രിസ്തുവിനെ പൂർണ്ണമായി അനുമാനിച്ചിരുന്നു. മറ്റു ശിഷ്യന്മാരെപ്പറ്റി പത്രോസ് ആശങ്കപ്പെട്ടപ്പോൾ നീ എന്നെ അനുമാനിക്കുക എന്നുള്ള മറുപടിയാണ് ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ നിന്നു ലഭിച്ചത്. പൂർണ്ണമനസ്സോടെ അനുമാനിക്കുന്നവരെ ദൈവം യഥാസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുത്തുമെന്ന് അദ്ദേഹം കുട്ടിച്ചേർത്തു. ദൈവരാജ്യം സഭയിൽ മാത്രമല്ല, സഭയ്ക്കു പുറത്തും

കാണാൻ സാധിക്കും. അതിർവരമ്പുകൾ കെട്ടിയുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഒരിക്കലും ദൈവം ഇഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നില്ല. അതിരുകളില്ലാത്ത പ്രവർത്തനം നടത്തുന്നവർക്കു മാത്രമേ യഥാർഥ സാക്ഷികളായി മാറാൻ കഴിയൂ. വാലന്റെൻ ദിനത്തിൽ പോലും കാമുകിയെ വെടിവെച്ചു കൊല്ലുന്ന ഭീകരമായ വാർത്ത കേട്ടാണ് ഇന്നലെ നമ്മൾ ഉണർന്നത്. യുവാക്കൾക്കും യുവതികൾക്കും പങ്കാളിയോടു നീതി പുലർത്താൻ കഴിയുന്നില്ല. പലരും വഴി തെറ്റിപ്പോകുന്ന ലോകത്തിന്റെ മോഹങ്ങളിൽ അകപ്പെട്ടു പോകുന്നു. സത്യവും നീതിയും തിരിച്ചറിയാൻ വൈകുന്നു. ബലിയാടാകുന്നവൻ മറ്റുള്ളവരോടും ബലിയാടാകാൻ ആഹ്വാനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. തനിക്കു കിട്ടുന്ന വെളിച്ചം മറ്റുള്ളവരിലേക്കു പകരാൻ നമുക്കു കഴിയണം. ക്രിസ്തു ശിഷ്യനായ അന്ത്രയോസ് അതാണു ചെയ്തത്. യേശു മുടന്തനെ സൗഖ്യമാക്കിയതിലൂടെ ഏറ്റവും വലിയ സാക്ഷ്യം നൽകുകയായിരുന്നു. അപ്പോസ്തോല പ്രവൃത്തികൾ മൂന്നാം അധ്യായത്തിൽ പറയുന്നതു പോലെ പൊന്നും വെള്ളിയും എനിക്കില്ല, എനിക്കുള്ളതു നിനക്കു തരുന്നു, കർത്താവായ യേശു ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ നാമത്തിൽ നടക്കുക എന്ന വചനം വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെയും പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനത്തിന്റെയും വലിയ ഉദാഹരണമാണ്. ക്രിസ്തു ലോകത്തിനു ചെയ്ത നന്മകളിലൂടെ ദൈവത്തെ സ്വീകരിക്കാൻ വഴിയൊരുക്കുക എന്നതാണു യഥാർഥ സാക്ഷിയുടെ ദൗത്യമെന്ന് മാർ തിയഡോഷ്യസ് പറഞ്ഞു.

## Episcopal Diamond Jubilee Celebration (60th) for Valiya Metropolitan

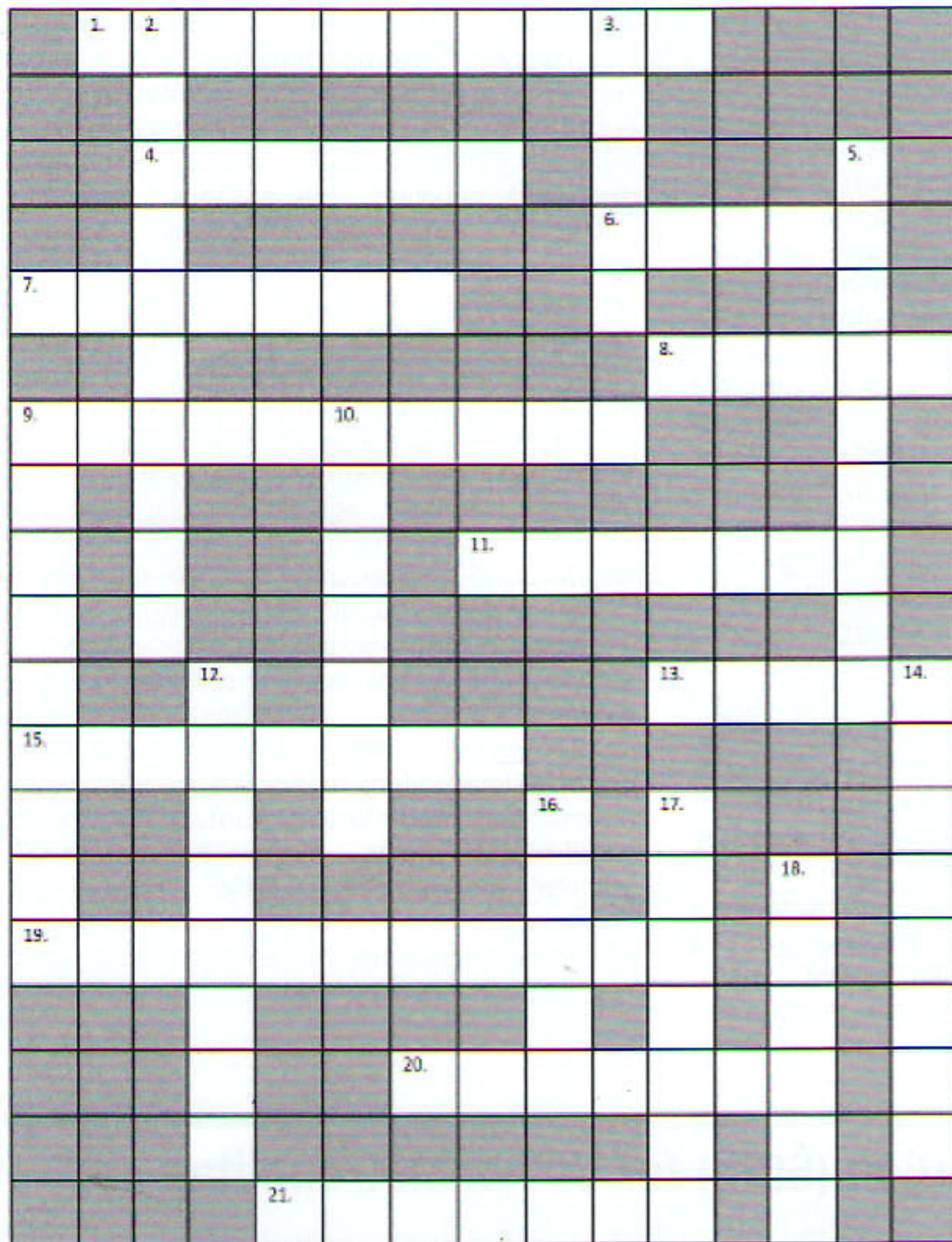


The Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Episcopal Consecration of the Most Rev. Dr. Philiphose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan was held on Saturday, the 25th May 2013 at the Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Auditorium, Thiruvalla. Shri. Oommen Chandy, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala inaugurated the function. Prof. P. J. Kurien gave the main address, His Grace The Metropolitan Joseph Mar Thoma pre-

sided over the meeting, and felicitation speeches were given by Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan, and other distinguished guests. The event was live streamed @ tv.marthoma.in with a successful viewership of about 10,000 people.

## CONGRATULATIONS FOR SABHA THARAKA AWARD RECIPIENTS





**ACROSS**

- 01. Samuel asked the Israelites to rid themselves of the foreign gods and the \_\_\_\_\_ and to serve the Lord only.
- 4. Nabal and his wife, Abigail lived at \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6. Samuel's home was in \_\_\_\_\_ where he built an altar to the Lord.
- 7. The Lord was \_\_\_\_\_ that he had made Saul king over Israel.
- 8. David triumphed over Goliath with a sling and a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 9. David said "the Lord who delivered me from the lion and bear will deliver me from the hand of this \_\_\_\_\_."
- 11. Abinadab's son \_\_\_\_\_ was consecrated to guard the ark of the Lord.
- 13. "This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my \_\_\_\_\_."
- 15. Lord said to Samuel that the people of Israel had \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord as their king.
- 19. The Lord brought \_\_\_\_\_ upon the people of Ashdod and afflicted them with tumors
- 20. "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in \_\_\_\_\_ the voice of the Lord."
- 21. "If I had the least \_\_\_\_\_ that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you"

**DOWN**

- 2. The people of Beth Shemesh chopped up the cart and \_\_\_\_\_ the cows as burnt offering to the Lord.
- 3. The Lord said to Samuel, "Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the \_\_\_\_\_."
- 5. The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ with loud thunder and the Philistines were routed.
- 9. Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, who served as judges, accepted bribes and \_\_\_\_\_ justice.
- 10. The Lord struck down \_\_\_\_\_ men of Beth Shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord.
- 12. The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ to Samuel that he is to anoint a man from the land of Benjamin as leader over Israel.
- 14. "... The life of my master will be bound \_\_\_\_\_ in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God"
- 16. The king's officials were not willing to \_\_\_\_\_ a hand to strike the priests of the Lord.
- 17. Someone said to Saul "Look the men are \_\_\_\_\_ against the Lord by eating meat that has blood in it."
- 18. The Israelites went to \_\_\_\_\_ and confirmed Saul as king in the presence of the Lord

# Bible Crossword Puzzle

**Chapters: I Samuel: 5-31 NIV**

Deadline for Answers: August 15, 2013

Mail to: **Philip Manuel**, 23 Lake Street, Billerica, MA 01821

Phone: 978-663-3203

By Email (pdf format only): Varampath23@msn.com

Please include your name, name of Parish, State and phone number.

Prepared by Mr. Philip Manuel & Mrs. Laila Anie Philip, Carmel, MTC Boston.

## Bible Cross Word Puzzle- Winner List For April 2013

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 01. C G George          | Ascension MTC, PA     |
| 02. Hemant Anthony      | Ascension MTC, PA     |
| 03. Manju Mathews       | Ascension MTC, PA     |
| 04. Santha Varghese     | Ascension MTC, PA     |
| 05. Susan Alex, Dr.     | Atlanta MTC, JK-TN    |
| 06. Paul Isaac          | Carmel MTC, Boston    |
| 07. Alice Kurian        | Chicago MTC           |
| 08. Minimol Johnson     | Chicago MTC           |
| 09. Lysamma Mathew      | Christos MTC, PA      |
| 10. Sneha Mathew        | Detroit MTC           |
| 11. Saramma Chacko      | Ephany MTC, NY        |
| 12. Ardra Giboy         | Hermon MTC, UK        |
| 13. Aleyamma Mathews    | Horeb MTC, LA         |
| 14. Thankamma Paul      | Horeb MTC, LA         |
| 15. Molly Mohan         | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 16. Sara Philip         | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 17. Sheela Alexander    | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 18. Sosamma Varghese    | Immanuel MTC, Houston |
| 19. Ajitha George       | MTC Dallas Farmers Br |
| 20. Aleyamma Mathew     | MTC Dallas Farmers Br |
| 21. Andrews, M J        | MTC Dallas Farmers Br |
| 22. Jincy James         | MTC Dallas Farmers Br |
| 23. Mariamma Daniel     | MTC Dallas Farmers Br |
| 24. Shaila Mathew       | MTC Dallas Farmers Br |
| 25. Sicily Skariah      | MTC Dallas Farmers Br |
| 26. T C Zachariah       | MTC Oklahoma          |
| 27. Elsy Jacob          | MTC, NJ               |
| 28. Fiona A Thomas      | Phoenix MTC, AZ       |
| 29. Mercy Abraham       | Phoenix MTC, AZ       |
| 30. Hannah Daniel       | Salem MTC, NY         |
| 31. Saramma Koshy       | Salem MTC, NY         |
| 32. Mariamma John       | Sehion MTC, Dallas    |
| 33. Marykutty Thomas    | South Florida MTC     |
| 34. Chris Babu          | St. John's MTC, NY    |
| 35. Joel Philipose      | St. John's MTC, NY    |
| 36. Annamma John        | St. Luke MTC, FL      |
| 37. Sheela Thomas       | St. Luke MTC, FL      |
| 38. Mathew Varghese     | St. Mark's MTC, FL    |
| 39. Elizabeth George    | St. Mathew's MTC, ON  |
| 40. Kezia Cherian       | St. Paul's, TX        |
| 41. Aleyamma George     | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 42. Aleyamma Varghese   | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 43. Annamma I Varghese  | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 44. Annamma P John      | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 45. Annamma Thomas      | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 46. Elsie George        | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 47. Mary Simon          | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 48. Sheline Samuel      | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 49. Sosamma Varghese    | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 50. Thomas George       | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 51. Rachel Philip       | St. Peter's, NJ       |
| 52. Aleyamma Ninan      | St. Thomas MTC, NY    |
| 53. Chacko Alex K       | Staten Island MTC, NY |
| 54. Koshy P Koshy       | Staten Island MTC, NY |
| 55. Omana Rajee         | Staten Island MTC, NY |
| 56. Reji Mathew         | Staten Island MTC, NY |
| 57. Achamma Chacko      | Trinity MTC, Houston  |
| 58. Chinnamma L John    | Trinity MTC, Houston  |
| 59. Gracy P Vattakunnel | Trinity MTC, Houston  |
| 60. Kunjamma Thomas     | Trinity MTC, Houston  |
| 61. Mariamma K Thomas   | Trinity MTC, Houston  |



# World Day of Prayer 2013

## Philadelphia

World day of Prayer 2013 was celebrated on February 23rd at St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church in Philadelphia. The women's forum of Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian Churches in Philadelphia provided the platform for the women in Philadelphia area to stand in solidarity with the lives of their sisters worldwide. Being an immigrant community, the celebration of this year's theme served as a reflection on our renewed relationship with Christ and our surrounding communities. The program for World Day of Prayer began with a worship service. Mr. Varghese Abraham and Mrs. Suma Chacko from Philadelphia MTC coordinated the translation and editing of the worship service order. Mrs. Laila Alex provided an overview of WDP. The Ecumenical Malayalam Choir, led by Mr. Reji Jacob, provided the music for the worship service. The worship was led by the women of the 19 participating Ecumenical churches.

Following the worship service was a public meeting and Rev. Santhosh Mathew, Chairman of the EFICP, gave a brief welcome to all those in attendance. Nupura Dance Academy performed a liturgical dance, using the music of France, choreographed by Mrs. Aji Panicker. Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, Coordinator of World Day of Prayer, gave an introduction into the country of France with the aid of a brief video. We had two musical programs which highlighted the World Day of Prayer theme music. The first was the Youth band, 'Christos Sound of Music,' directed by Dr. Eapen Daniel. The second was the English Choir, coordinated by Ms. Jovilin Joe, Mr. Alex Pappachan and Mr. Ronnie Mathew of Philadelphia MTC. The songs and music are the same worldwide, which provided unity and conformity in the WDP program.

Our main speaker was Dr. Mrs. Anita Daniel, spouse of Rev. M. S. Daniel, former Vicar of St. Peter's MTC, NJ. She gave an insightful look into the theme and encouraged future generations of women to take their stand in this world. She was able to draw from personal experiences, as well as touch on the importance of sharing our love in a dark world. Following the sermon, we had four monologues, each highlighting the life of a French woman. Young women from the participating churches, dressed in traditional garments presented the monologues, which allowed us to place ourselves in someone else's shoes and consider the trials in their walk of life. The theme skit: 'Aparichithanallatha Yeshu' (I am no longer a stranger) was coordinated by Mrs. Valsa Jacob & Mrs. Sheela Daniel of Christos MTC, Philadelphia. Directed by Mr. Biju Mathai & Mr. Binu Philip, the skit was very well organized and relatable to every person in attendance.



The World Day of Prayer is naturally centered on PRAYER. Prayer and Action are inseparable, therefore, we had some time for intercession and reflection. Ms. Sophy Alex and Ms. Phitha Philip led the intercessory prayers. The offertory collected was sent in its entirety to WDP committee to be utilized for the underprivileged immigrant women and children of France. Following the public meeting, everyone enjoyed lunch together. The clergy, office bearers of Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian churches in Philadelphia and a core group of women from different churches in Philadelphia organized and led this event. A group of 100 participants consisting of women and youth participated in the various programs. This program was well attended by more than 400

people from different churches in Philadelphia. We are blessed to have the WDP become such a fruitful Ecumenical Event. The leaders of this event come from various churches, and each one deserves recognition for their hard work and dedication to the body of Christ and all its events. The World Day of Prayer is a great way to come together and truly reflect on our place in the world. Furthermore, WDP is an avenue in which the women of the church can come together, take leadership, and instill these values on to the next generation.

## Boston

The World Day of Prayer was held on Saturday, March 9 at the Carmel MTC in Boston. The theme for this year was "I was a stranger but you welcomed me." More than fifty women from various Churches including Syro-Malabar Catholic, Indian Orthodox and Ascension CSI participated in this well-organized meeting. The welcome and theme presentation was given by Thankam Vinu George. The WDP liturgy was used for the prayer. Rev. Sam T. Panicker presided over the meeting and Seena Abraham gave the main sermon. Our guest Francine Gunderson, born and raised in France gave the power point presentation starting out in her native tongue with "Bonjour" to all. She talked about the Church history of her country and the Church's influence in the government and the persecution of Protestants in the 17th century. She talked about French culture and cuisine, including their famous cheeses and wine. Francine shared that the shapes of the wine bottles represent the different regions of France and she brought French crepes for everyone to enjoy. She showed pictures of famous French monuments and architecture such as the Eiffel Tower and noted that the famous Statue of Liberty was gift to the United States of America from France. Anna Meade, originally from Poland, was also in attendance.



Seena Abraham cited Luke 10, 30-37 noting that Christianity will be judged by two actions: 1) How much we love God and 2) How we will demonstrate that love by loving our neighbor. The example she gave is that of the Good Samaritan. She talked about how love is a painful exodus and asked who is our neighbor? - to which she answered: every person who needs our help; every soul which is wounded and everyone who is the property of God. And then she addressed the role of the Church wherein the Church should be either an inn/hospital or hospice and that our roles are that of inn-keepers. Dr. Viji S. George and Elizabeth Abraham led the choir and the theme song. The youth group presented the monologue. In total \$400 was collected and sent to the WDP Committee, USA. The meeting adjourned and lunch with crepes followed.

## New York

The New York North East Region world day of prayer was conducted ecumenically on April 6th 2013 at 3.30 pm, held at the St. Johns MTC, Queens Village, NY. Two hundred and fifty delegates representing thirteen churches around New York participated. Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar

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Paulose Episcopa of New Delhi Diocese was the chief guest. This year's theme was "I was a stranger and you welcomed me", based on gospel of Mathew Chapter 25 and with a focus on migration, was written by the women of France. St. Thomas Ecumenical federation President and the Vicar of St Johns MTC Rev. Joji K. Mathew was the chair person for the meeting. The Program started with a procession of choir members, worship leaders, committee members and priests followed by the Bishop. The worship was coordinated by the ecumenical women's forum chairperson Mrs. Annamma Philip (member of the Epiphany MTC) and it began with the St. Johns MTC choir leading everyone in song. Representatives from thirteen churches led the worship service. Mrs. Leji K. Alex gave the devotional talk. An introduction of the world day of prayer and a slide show was shown by the North East Regional Sevika Sanghom Secretary Mrs. Mariamma Abraham, reflecting the life and culture of the country France.



The public meeting started with an opening prayer by Rev. Mathew George, (Vicar of Salem MTC, New York) welcome speech by Mr. George Thomas (the Ecumenical Vice President of 2012) which was followed by introductory remarks by Rev. Joji K. Mathew (Ecumenical President). The inaugural address was given by Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulose Episcopa. The wonderful devotional song sung by the St. John's MTC choir, monologues and group song in a French dialect by the Epiphany MTC Sunday School as well as a solo by Master Denil Unnuton were the highlights of the program. The function was blessed with the presence of Rev. Fr. Jesudasan Pappen (Cor Episcopa) Rev. Joji K. Mathew (St Johns MTC) Rev. Mathew George (Salem MTC), Rev. Fr. C. A. Thomas (St Joseph's Knanaya), Rev. Nebu Zachariah (Seaford CSI) and Rev. Dr. Varghese P. Manikkatu (St. Mary's Jacobite Floral Park Church). The Ecumenical Federation arranged a farewell meeting for Rev. Oommen Varkey, (Vicar of the Epiphany MTC) and Rev. Nebu Skariah (Vicar of the Sea Ford CSI Church) who were transferred to India after their services in the USA. Felicitations were delivered by Mr. Rinu Varghese (St Thomas Ecumenical Secretary of 2012). The offertory collected on that day will be sent to the W.D.P Committee of France. The meeting concluded with vote of thanks by Mr. Cherian Perumal (St Thomas Ecumenical Secretary), prayer by Rev. Fr. Jesudasan Pappen and benediction by Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulose Episcopa.

Mrs. Mariamma Abraham, Secretary  
North East Regional Sevika Sanghom.

## Seattle, Washington

Sevika Sangam members celebrated the Women's world day of Prayer on the 3rd of March 2013. We had a special order of worship for the day and Neeni George, Molly Mathew, Susha Mathew, Shema Joseph



and Menaka Abraham led the worship during the Qurbana service.

## Staten Island, NY



World Day of Prayer (WDP) 2013 was celebrated as an ecumenical worship service on Saturday, February 23, 2013 at 5PM at Staten Island MTC. Members from five sister churches, including SIMTC, actively participated. Approximately 125 people attended the event and the entire offertory collection amount of approximately \$600 was sent to the WDP USA committee to benefit the women of France. Mrs. Liji Alex (Malankara Orthodox Church) gave the devotional message, focusing on this year's WDP theme. With Baby John Achen's and Deepa Kochamma's leadership, many of the SIMTC Sevika Sanghom members, and Young Women's Fellowship (YWF) members in particular, were instrumental to the success of the event by helping in various ways including coordinating the event, singing in the choir, worship participation, cooking and many other tasks. YWF took the lead in organizing World Day of Prayer (WDP) 2013.

## Lubbock, TX



The Sevika Sangham members of the Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock celebrated the World Day of Prayer on March 2nd, 2013. Dr. Annie Lincoln

did an overview of World Day of Prayer and talked about Church Women United and how the Mar Thoma Church became a part of Church Women United. The Church Women United was an inspiration for our women to be leaders in the church, which resulted in the beginning of the National Sevika Sangham Conference. Dr. Lincoln also briefly talked about this year's theme, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Rev. Saji

Thomas, Vicar of the Sehion MTC, Dallas, delivered the message about World Day Of Prayer and this year's theme. It was a great blessing for the members of our church and friends from other parishes. The offertory has been sent to WDP USA already. We pray that God continues to bless the work of Church Women United.

Dr. Annie Lincoln  
Member CWU - Local Chapter

## NEW ACHENS JOINED IN MAY 2013

**REV. DENNIS ABRAHAM**  
YOUTH CHAPLAIN, PHILADELPHIA



Mother Parish: St. John's MTC, New York  
Education: B.A. (Psychology) B.D.  
Year of Ordination: 2011  
Parishes Served:  
Sehion MTC, Venmony (Asst. Vicar), St. Peter's MTC, Changamala, Venmony  
Tel: (215) 698-1023 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (215) 661-7844 (Cell)  
E-Mail: dennisachen@gmail.com

**REV. LARRY PHILIP VARGHESE**  
HOREB MTC, LOS ANGELES



Mother Parish: Trinity MTC, Houston  
Education: BS (Electrical Engineering),  
PG Studies in Electrical Engineering, B. D.  
Year of Ordination: 2012  
Parishes served:  
Ebenezer MTC, Othara, Chengannur (Asst. Vicar)  
Spouse: Roshin Abraham, Anikkad MTC  
Tel: (949) 478 - 4682 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (714) 600 - 2174 (Cell)  
E-Mail: larrypv@gmail.com

**REV. CHRISTOPHER PHIL DANIEL**  
ST. STEPHEN'S MTC, NEW JERSEY



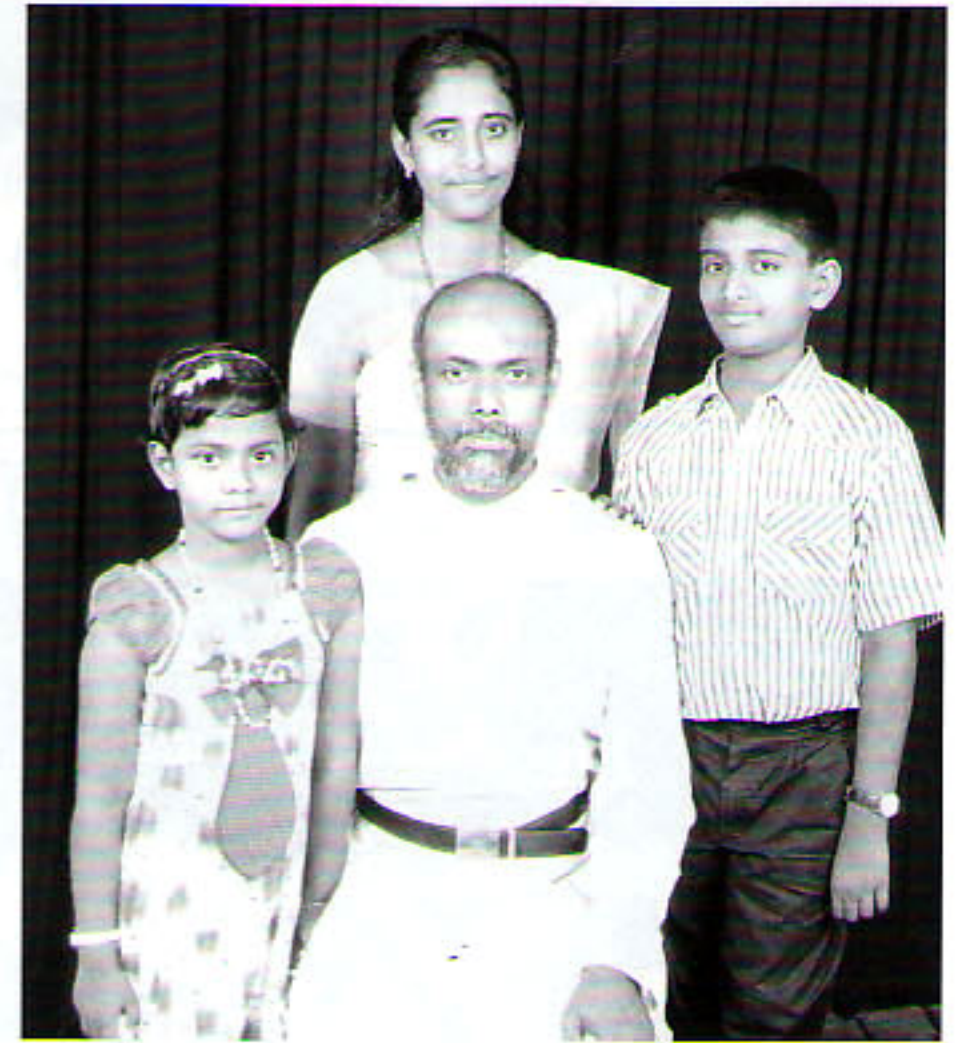
Mother Parish:  
MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, Dallas  
Education: B. S (Biology), B.D.  
Year of Ordination: 2012  
Parishes Served: Kattickallaruv St. Paul's MTC, Thonikadavu Christos MTC  
Spouse:  
Neethi Prasad, Primrose MTC, Bangalore  
Tel: (732) 568 - 4853 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (732) 754-8131 (Cell)  
E-Mail: chrispdaniel@gmail.com

**REV. ALEX GEORGE KOLATH**  
BALTIMORE MTC



Mother Parish:  
MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch, Dallas  
Education: B. S (Computer Science), Westminster Theological Seminary, MAR in General Studies, B.D.  
Year of Ordination: 2011  
Parishes Served:  
St. Thomas MTC, Thiruvalla (Asst. Vicar)  
Spouse: Priya Kolath, St. Andrew's MTC, NY-  
Tel: (410) 602 - 1112 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (443) 517- 7155 (Cell)  
E-Mail: kalex76@pobox.com

**REV. MATHEWS ABRAHAM**  
STATEN ISLAND MTC, NEW YORK



Mother Parish:  
St. Paul's MTC, Kizhakkenmuthoor, Thiruvalla  
Education: B.Sc., M.A., B. D.  
Year of Ordination: 1994  
Parishes served: Salem MTC, Elappara, Bethel MTC, Kattapana, St. Andrew's MTC, Cheenthalar, St. Mathew's MTC, Mathaipara, Salem MTC, Pampady, Sehion MTC, Pampady, St. Thomas MTC, Velloorkonam, Trinity MTC, Kuriathy, Salem MTC Pachapalode, Bethel MTC Vithura, Bethel MTC Kulapally, St. Paul's MTC, Eruthavoor, MTC, Ponnurangalam, St. John's MTC, Mariapuram, Immanuel MTC, Mudavoorpara, St. Peter's MTC Vellapally, Carmel MTC Vandannoor, Bethel MTC, Konniyoor, Ebenezer MTC, Poovachal, Carmel MTC, Veeranakavu, Sehion MTC, Kannampally, Immanuel MTC, Kalluvathukkal, St. Thomas MTC, Marakulam  
Positions Held: Administrator, Bharain Centre, Chathanoor, Director, Mar Thoma Mission Centre, Peyad, Administrator, World Vision Project Pachamala, Principal, Salem Mar Thoma School, Elappara, Diocesan Council Member Kottayam - Kochi Diocese (1997-2000), Diocesan Council Member Trivandrum -Kollam Diocese (2000-2003 & 2007-2010)  
Spouse: Ani Mathews, Salem MT C., Vazhuthackad, TVM  
Children: Abraham Mathews 7th Grade, Ann Anna Mathews 2nd grade  
Tel: (718) 370 - 7660 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (917) 932 - 4575 (Cell)  
E-Mail: kunnumpurathu.achan@gmail.com

**REV. K. K. SAMUEL**  
**ST. THOMAS MTC, NEW YORK**



Mother Parish: Old Syrian Church, Chengannur  
 Education: B. Com, M. A. (Sociology), PG Diploma in Counseling, B. D.  
 Year of Ordination: 1996  
 Parishes Served: Chaplain of Nagercoil MT Center, Elamkulam Jerusalem MTC, Kattapana Bethel MTC, Kochera Nazareth MTC, Mannoor Salem MTC, Manacodu St. Thomas MTC, Anakulam Ebenezer MTC, Jodhpur MTC, Bikanur MTC, Karickom Christos MTC, Pulamon Bethel MTC, Thamarakudy Emmanuel MTC.  
 Positions Held: Superintendent of Vayojana Mandiram, Kattakada & Mission Field Parishes – Kuttichal Salem MTC, Palottukonam Bethel MTC, Kariamkodu St. Thomas MTC, Villuchari Bethel MTC.  
 Spouse: Suja Samuel  
 Native Place: Trivandrum  
 Child: Sandra Anna Samuel (9th Grade)  
 Contact: Tel: (914) 376-6530 (Parsonage)  
 Tel: (914) 450-3162 (Cell)  
 E-Mail: kksamuel61@gmail.com

**REV. V. G. VARUGHESE**  
**HOREB MTC, COLORADO, PHOENIX**



Mother Parish: Karimpa St. Thomas MTC, Palakkad  
 Education: B. A. B. D  
 Year of Ordination: 1989  
 Parishes Served: Thannithodu Bethel MTC,

Thekkuthodu St. Thomas MTC, Mannira Salem MTC, Visakhapatnam MTC, Jagadapur MTC, Kottanalloor Salem MTC, Kottara Bethel MTC, Elampallickal Salem MTC, Puthupally Horeb MTC, Manganam St. Peter's MTC (Assistant Vicar), Vakathanam Immanuel MTC, Karukachal St. Thomas MTC, Thottackadu Thabor MTC, Panaji St. Thomas MTC, Vasco Ebenezer MTC, Amalagiiri St. John's MTC, Ayamanam Hermon MTC, Nattassery St. Paul's MTC.  
 Positions Held: Diocesan Council Member, Mumbai Diocese  
 Spouse: Sarakutty Varughese  
 Mother Parish: Niranam St. Thomas MTC  
 Children: Pheba Mary Varghese (B. Tech 2nd Year)  
 Phinny V. Varghese (8th Grade)  
 Contact: Tel: (303) 953 - 0880 (Parsonage)  
 Tel: (303) 875 - 2581 (Cell)  
 E-Mail: vg\_varghese@yahoo.co.in

**REV. Y. GEORGE**  
**BETHANY MTC, TABORE MTC, NY**



Mother Parish: Jerusalem MTC, Thuruthikara  
 Education: B. A., B. D.  
 Year of Ordination: 1991  
 Parishes Served: Salem MTC, Mannoor, Bethel MTC, Manacode, Missionary Pachamukku, Thalavoor Bethel MTC, Manjakala Trinity MTC, Immanuel MTC, Pattazhy, Palakuzhy Ebenezer MTC, Cuttack – Bhuvanewar MTC, Chandanakavu MTC, Ezhamkulam Ebenezer MTC, Pazhayeroor MTC, Thrikkanmangalam Salem MTC, Vilayanthoor Ebenezer MTC, Inchakkad Bethel MTC, Plappally Bethel MTC, Ampalakara Immanuel MTC, St. Paul's MTC, Pazhinjam, Pannavely Bethel MTC  
 Positions Held: Evangelistic Association Managing Committee Member, CARD Managing Committee Member.  
 Spouse: Soosamma George  
 Native Place: Muthupilakkodu  
 Child: Krupa Rachel George (Plus 2 Completed)  
 Contact: Tel: (845) 613 - 7728 (Parsonage)  
 Tel: (854) 426 - 2733 (Cell)  
 E-Mail: georgeyachen@gmail.com

**REV. ROY MATHEW**  
**ST. PETER'S MTC, TEANECK, NJ**



Mother Parish: Jerusalem MTC, Kanakapalam, Erumely  
 Education: B. D:  
 Year of Ordination: 1988  
 Parishes Served: Kottayam Jerusalem MTC, Akamkudy MTC, Karikatoor MTC, Ealapara MTC, Attachakal MTC, Thadiyoor Emmanuel MTC, Bethel MTC, Puthusari Mala, Kunnamkulam Deenabandhu Mission, Kannur MTC, Malaysia MTC, Villur MTC, Mylom Kottarakara MTC.  
 Spouse: Daisy Roy Mathew  
 Native Place: Edakulam, Ranny  
 Children: Mrs. Rinu Anish, Speech Therapist, Rejo Mathew Roy B.Com Illrd year, Rini Grace Roy B. Sc. Psychology, IInd year  
 Contact: Tel: (201) 692 - 9565 (Parsonage)  
 Tel: (201) 294- 2699 (Cell)  
 E-Mail: revroymathew@gmail.com

**REV. JOHN MATHEW**  
**S. FLORIDA MTC, JACKSONVILLE CONGREGATION**



Mother Parish: Karuvatta MTC  
 Education: B. Com., B. D.  
 Year of Ordination: 2002  
 Parishes Served: Bethel MTC, Mundakayam, Jaipur MTC, St. Andrews MTC, Kalyan East  
 Spouse: Resily John  
 Native Place: Mepral, Thiruvalla  
 Children: Johan Mathew John (3rd Grade), Neha Elsa John (2nd Grade)  
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 Tel: (954) 867- 4360 (Cell)  
 E-Mail: johnmathewachen@gmail.com

**REV. SHIBU MATHEW**  
**EPHIPHANY MTC, NEW YORK**



Mother Parish: Thuruthicad MTC, Thiruvalla  
Education: B. A., B. D.  
Year of Ordination: 2001  
Parishes Served: Davangere (Student Chaplain), Harihar, Hubli (Missionary), Thamarassery St. Peter's MTC, Puthuppady Ebenezer MTC, North Bombay (Mulund) MTC, Punnavelly St. Thomas MTC.  
Spouse: Jubi Shibu, Kuriannoor St. Thomas MTC  
Children: Mervin Mathew Shibu (5th Grade), Mithun Varghese Shibu (3rd Grade)  
Contact: Tel: (718) 845-2920 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (718) 612-1891 (Cell)  
E-Mail: shibuachen2412@rediffmail.com

**REV. JOSE PUNAMADAM**  
**ST. JOHN'S MTC, LONDON**



Mother Parish: Othara Ebenezer MTC, Mangalam  
Education: B. A. (English), B. D., M. Th (Mass Communication), Research Student in Communication and Iconography  
Year of Consecration: 1988  
Positions Held: Mar Thoma Channel Committee Member, Member Kerala Cartoon Academy, Director Mar Thoma Press, Secretary Mar Thoma Publication Society, Faculty Member Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Executive

Member Kerala Cartoon Academy, Patron Kerala Animation Academy  
Special Recognitions: Sabha Council Member, Vaideeka Selection Board Member, 12 books published Including Varayum Mozhiyum – Mar Chrysostom Cartoons and stories.  
Special Honors: Mar Thoma Sahithya Award (2006), Best Cartoonist Puraskaram Central Travancore Development Society (2006), Dubai Navathi Puraskaram for Mar Chrysostom Cartoon Exhibition, Special Cartoon Puraskaram from Kottayam YMCA (2012)  
Spouse: Pushpa J. Punamadam  
Native Place: Othara  
Children: Jithin J. Punamadam, MBA Student, Neetha J. Punamadam, Plus 2 completed  
Contact: Tel: 011-44-20 8-5 77- 9981 (Parsonage)  
Tel: 011-44-7890519047 (Cell)  
E-Mail: punamadam@gmail.com

**REV. KOCHU KOSHY ABRAHAM**  
**TRINITY MTC, HOUSTON**



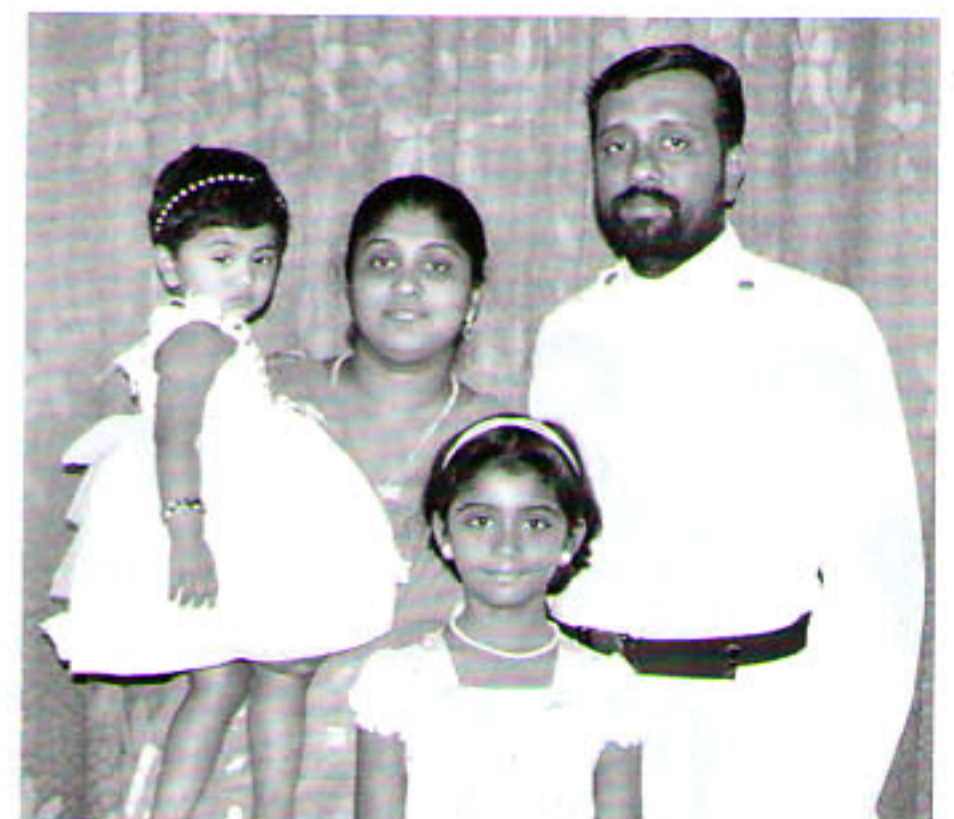
Mother Parish: Vathikulam Bethel MTC, Kattanam  
Education: B.A., M.A., BD  
Year of Consecration: 2001  
Parishes Served: Arohanam MTC, Arabi, Kannur, Hermon MTC, Kolihattu, Kannur, Iritty Mission, Kannur, Angadisserithattu Mission, Kannur, St. Stephens MTC, Marol, Mumbai, Trinity MTC, Sakinaka, Kannur, Immanuel MTC, Cherianadu, Chengannur, Bethel MTC, Kadai-kadu, Chengannur  
St. Thomas MTC, Valiyakavu, Ranny, Immanuel MTC, Chethackal, Ranny  
Spouse: Gijilu Maryan George  
Native Place: Thumpamon  
Children: Elijah Kochukoshy (6 years) Abijah Kochukoshy (3 years)  
Contact: Tel: (281) 261- 4603 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (713) 408 -7394 (Cell)  
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**REV. BINU THOMAS**  
**ST. LUKE'S MTC, FLORIDA,**  
**HERMON MTC, ATLANTA**



Mother Parish: Thevalakkara MarThoma Valiya Pally.  
Education: B.Sc., B. D.  
Year of Ordination: 2003  
Parishes Served: Karikkode MTC, Mulakkulam MTC, Pampakkuda MTC, Mallappally MTC, Patna MTC, Gwalior MTC, Jhansi MTC  
Spouse: Annie Binu  
Native Place: Thammanam, Palarivattom, Ernakulam  
Children: Ashitha Elza Binu (Grade 3) Thomas Binu Vaidyan (4 Years)  
Contact: Tel: (954) 510-7187 (Parsonage)  
Tel: (954) 415-1290 (Cell)  
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**REV. SAM MATHEW**  
**MTC DALLAS, CARROLLTON**



Mother Parish: Madras MTC, Chennai, Tamil Nadu  
Education: B.A. (Sociology), B.D.  
Year of Ordination: 2002  
Parishes Served: Charummood Christose MTC, Ellippakkulam St. Thomas MTC, Mulakulam Christ MTC, Pampakuda Immanuel MTC, Karikode MTC, Plappally Bethel MTC, Inchakkad Bethel MTC, Jaipur MTC

Spouse: Ancy Sam  
 Native Place: Pampady, Kottayam  
 Children: Jerusha Ann Sam, 4th Grade, Jemimah Ann Sam, 2 Years  
 Contact: Tel: (972) 394-7919 (Parsonage)  
 Tel: (214) 493- 7024 (Cell)  
 E-Mail: samachen06@rediffmail.com

**REV. SAJU MATHEW**  
**IMMANUEL MTC, HOUSTON**



Mother Parish: Chachipunna Salem MTC, Pathanapuram  
 Education: B. Sc., M. A (Sociology), B. D.  
 Year of Ordination: 2002  
 Parishes Served: Anakara MTC, Chakkupalam MTC, Vandanmedu MTC, Jhansi MTC, Vechoochira St. Thomas MTC, Chathenthara Sharon MTC, Ayroor Sehion MTC, Thadiyoor Bethel MTC  
 Positions Held: Diocesan Council Member (Ranni-Nilackal Diocese), Managing Committee Member Sunday School Samajam, Director, Gram Jyoti Schools, Director, Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma & Mathews Mar Athanasius Holistic Centre, Ayroor  
 Spouse: Binsy Sajú  
 Native Place: Nellimala, Kumbanadu  
 Children: Joel Mathew Sajú, Grade 4, Joanna Susan Sajú, 5 Years  
 Contact: Tel: (281) 561 - 9147(Parsonage)  
 Tel: (832) 660 - 4281(Cell)  
 E-Mail: sajuachan74@gmail.com  
 themagicachan@gmail.com

**REV. GEORGE CHERIAN**  
**YOUTH CHAPLAIN, MIDWEST REGION**  
**(CHICAGO/DETROIT),**  
**ST. THOMAS MTC, INDIANAPOLIS,**  
**BETHEL MTC, FRANFORT, IL**

Mother Parish:  
 Immanuel MTC, Borivli, Mumbai  
 Education: B.Sc., B. D.  
 Year of Ordination: 2002  
 Parishes Served: St. Paul's MTC, Lalghatti,



Bhopal, St. Peter's MTC, Bhopal (Asst. Vicar), St. Mathew's MTC, Thevaracadu, Eraviperoor, Immanuel MTC, Eraviperoor (Asst. Vicar)  
 Positions Held: Assistant Secretary: Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam, Missionary at Sehatganj Ashram, Bhopal  
 Contact: Tel: (847) 749 - 3288 (Parsonage)  
 Tel: (516) 428 - 0722 (Cell)  
 E-Mail: gcachen@gmail.com

**REV. VINOJ VARGHESE**  
**ST. PETER'S MTC, EAST LONDON,**  
**HERMON MTC, BIRMINGHAM**



Mother Parish:  
 Immanuel MTC Velikkad, Palakkad  
 Education: B.Com, B. D.  
 Year of Ordination: 2002  
 Parishes Served: Missionary, Devana Hally Mission, Middle and North Andaman Mission, Students Chaplain, Chennai, St. Thomas MTC, Bijuvara, Devana Hally, St. John's MTC Musthoor, Devana Hally, St. John's MTC Rangath, North Andaman, St. Peter's MTC Betapur, North Andaman, North Madras MTC Chennai, St. Thomas MTC Vechoochira, Ranny  
 Spouse: Reeba Vinoj  
 Native Place: Pathanapuram  
 Children: Nivedhitha Susan Vinoj 3rd Grade, Arpitha Elizabeth Vinoj 3rd Grade  
 Contact: Tel: +44 208 491 4049 (Parsonage)  
 Tel: +44 782 598 8500 (Cell)

**MATRIMONIAL**

Marthoma parents settled in U.S since 1977 invite proposals for their daughter. She is 30 years old, 5'3". M.D, doing her final year residency in New York and will start fellowship in July 2013. She is a strong, God fearing, family oriented Christian looking for a boy with similar values in the same field or other qualified professionals. Interested parents please respond with details and recent photos to sammy2050@aim.com or call at 201-692-7753 or 201-400-4834.

\*\*\*\*\*

Marthomite parents settled in the UK invite proposals for their 24 year old daughter (5' 6"). She is a God fearing, fun-loving, cheerful and family oriented individual and we seek proposals from well educated, professional men with similar attributes, in UK, Canada and USA. Our daughter completed her further studies in Economics from a prestigious university in London and has since been working within investment banking and now with a reputable consultancy firm. Interested parents, please contact benny.abraham@btinternet.com

\*\*\*\*\*

Marthomite parents invite proposal for their US born daughter, 29 yrs, 5' 3", slim, attractive and God fearing. She has completed MPH and working as an epidemiologist in the public health department of the state. Also she is about to complete PhD in public health. We welcome God fearing & family oriented grooms professionally qualified between 29 to 32yrs. Please contact us at (954) 319-0929 or v84mph@gmail.com

\*\*\*\*\*

Marthomite parents settled in the U.S. invite proposals for their son. He is 28 years old, 5'11" tall and graduated top rank with a Masters in Engineering from an Ivy League university in the U.S. He currently works at senior management level at a top Fortune 500 company. He does not drink/smoke and is very active in the Marthoma church by taking on leadership positions in Sunday School and Youth Fellowship. We invite proposals from families of any Christian denomination to send a photo and bio-data to ddk8921@gmail.com

\*\*\*\*\*

Proposals are invited from parents of Mar Thomite girls, graduates or currently pursuing professional qualifications, for our 25 year old son, US born engineer (Masters Degree) employed in a major corporation in Texas, 6' tall, medium build, disciplined and grounded in Christian principles. Interested parents may please contact at Houston57@outlook.com.

(To be continued...)

# EPISCOPAL VISITS

## St. Andrew's MTC, New York



The Episcopal Visit to St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, New York coincided with a workshop for lay leaders and altar boys on Saturday, March 9, 2013 as part of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Diocese. The Diocesan Episcopa presided over the meeting where 50 representatives from the parishes of the North East region attended the meeting. In the afternoon Mar Theodosius with the help of the Vicar Rev. Abraham Oommen visited some members of the parish who are aged and cannot attend the regular worship in the church. Being the lent season there is a Sandhya Namaskaram organized in one prayer group area where Thirumeni led the service and gave devotion address.

On Sunday March 10, 2013 there was a Holy Qurbana service after the Sunday School classes where almost all the members participated. The parish choir led the parish worship with melodious songs. There was a dedication of three altar boys. A large number of the parishioners participated in the Holy Qurbana. The Diocesan Episcopa preached from the gospel of St. Luke 13 and spoke on the purpose of having a local place of worship for the faith community. There was luncheon fellowship after the Kaimuthu service. The parish also released a revised directory of the member families.

Rev. Abraham Oommen, Vicar

## Trinity MTC Edmonton, Alberta - Canada



Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada on March 14-16, 2013. His Lordship's visit to our Parish was part of the Diocese's Silver Jubilee Celebration. A seminar on the 'Identity, Vision and Mission of the Mar Thoma Church' was held and Trinity MTC was the host for the western Canada region. During his visit Thirumeni met with the Youths of the Parish on Friday evening.

Parishioners from the sister church St. Thomas MTC, Calgary were also able to attend the Seminar. Mr. T.S. Thomas started the seminar with prayer and Rev. Rajan Koshy welcomed Thirumeni and all the guests. Dr. Varghese Manaloor of Trinity MTC, Edmonton led the Talk - I with the identity of the Mar Thoma church and Dr. Titus Mathews from St. Thomas MTC, Calgary led Talk-II with the visions and mission of the Church. The Attendees of the seminar were divided in 4 groups for discussion sessions. Each group was given two questions to discuss, and their thoughts were brought back into Seminar. Thirumeni moderated discussions, Dr. Varghese Manaloor and Dr. Titus Mathews answered some questions and Thirumeni concluded with a talk. The Seminar was inspirational and insightful. Rev. Biju K. George, Vicar of St. Thomas MTC Calgary closed the seminar with prayer followed by benediction by Thirumeni. Saturday evening, at 6:30 PM Theodosius Thirumeni also celebrated Holy Communion Service for the parishioners. Two children received their first Holy Communion and thereby entered into the full fellowship of the Church. Thirumeni gave an inspirational sermon from St. Mark 10: 46-52. After Service the Parishioners enjoyed fellowship with Thirumeni.

Saju Samuel, Scretary

## St. Thomas MTC of Delaware Valley



Episcopal visit of Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa to St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Delaware Valley was held on March 29 (the Good Friday) 2013. Members of the Delaware Valley MTC were blessed with Thirumeni's leadership in Good Friday's service and thought provoking sermons. The first part of the service was in English and the second and third in Malayalam. To make it home for the youth of the Parish there were songs added to the first part of the Liturgy.

In order to cater to the English and Malayalam speaking members, the first sermon was in English and the other in Malayalam. Thirumeni gave a message in English and one message in Malayalam. Many of the parish members commented that it was one of the blessed Good Friday services that they ever attended. There was a fellowship meal for every one present where the Diocesan Episcopa was also participated. That gave an opportunity for the members to interact with Thirumeni. The parish expressed sincere thanks to Thirumeni for the Episcopal visit.

Rev. M. E. Shaji, Vicar

## Bethel MTC, Frankfort, IL

Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Thirumeni visited Frankfort Bethel MTC on March 25th 2013 during Passion Week and led the Holy Communion service on Maundy Thursday. Communion Service was a blessing to the parish members, who very enthusiastically participated in it, even though it was a weekday. In his meditation from Word of God Thirumeni exhorted people to live a life of a Disciple





and be fruitful to God, Church & World. After the communion service there was a meeting arranged with the parishioners. Thirumeni graciously took time to inquire about the different needs & activities of the parish, and updated the parish about the Jubilee Celebration of the Diocese and the different projects connected with the Jubilee. Thirumeni strongly encouraged everyone to be part of the celebrations and projects as individuals and also as parish, especially in the Midwest Regional Celebration planned on April 12th 2013 at Chicago mar Thoma Church. After the meeting there was a fellowship dinner arranged at parish fellowship hall.

During his visit Thirumeni also took time to visit the Bahai Temple situated in Wilmette, Chicago. One of the oldest surviving temples of Bahai Faith, Wilmette temple is not only a beautiful architectural feat, but also a strongest symbol of inter faith peace, unity & harmony. Thirumeni himself a scholar of Religious Studies took immense interest in understanding the architecture, faith traditions and worship styles of Bahai faith. As a parish we are surely blessed by Thirumeni's visit and are very thankful to Thirumeni for taking time to visit us in midst of all busy schedules.

Rev. Alex Peter, Vicar

## Bethel MTC, Philadelphia



The Bethel MTC, Philadelphia, was blessed and honored by the Episcopal visit of His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, the diocesan Episcopa on Easter Sunday March 31st, 2013. Thirumeni conducted the Holy Communion Service in Malayalam during which 9 children received their first Holy Communion. The dedication of the First communicants was a blessed experience for the congregation, especially for the first communicants, their immediate family members and their Godparents. On behalf of Diocese, Thirumeni presented beautifully designed greeting cards and certificates to all the first communicants and the Church honored them by giving Holy Bible during the service. Mar Theodosius Thirumeni blessed the Easter celebration with an inspiring and thought provoking message based on the Gospel according to John 20:15 and Matthew 28:1-10 in which he highlighted the resurrection event of Christ in painful cries and agonies of human being. Celebration of Easter empowers and enriches life and its potentialities to the entire world which journeying with Christ today.

Thirumeni also met all the members of the parish immediately after the service to discuss the various concerns of the parish. He gave directions to take appropriate decisions for the overall development of the parish. After the service, people received Kaimuthu from Thirumeni and there was a fellowship meal in which the members shared the joy of being with Thirumeni. On the whole, we as a parish are honored and blessed

by the gracious presence and leadership of our Diocesan Episcopa. We record our heartfelt gratitude to Thirumeni.

Rev. Alexander Varughese, Vicar

## Orlando MTC, FL



Orlando Mar Thoma Parish had the Episcopal Visit on April 6 and 7 by Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, the Diocesan Episcopa and celebrated Holy Qurbana at the Church on Sunday April 6 at 10 am. The members of the parish and friends from the nearby sister Churches attended the service. Mar Theodosius spoke from John 20 on Jesus leading Thomas the Apostle to faith. Before the Kaimuthu service Thirumeni exhorted the members to participate in the various conferences and the Jubilee celebration of the Diocese, coming up in Florida during the year. The Episcopal visit rejuvenated the members of the parish to grow in their faith and to remain loyal to the Church. Mar Theodosius found time to visit some elderly persons of the parish on Saturday and Sunday evenings. The organizers of the National Yuvajana Sakhyam Conference met the Diocesan Episcopa to discuss with him the program and report the progress of the registration.

## Baltimore MTC



The Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited the Baltimore MTC on Maundy Thursday. The Maundy Thursday service was at 7 p m. He also delivered a sermon on the significance of Jesus celebrating the pass over meal with His disciples and instituting the Holy Qurbana. A good number of parishioners attended the worship service. In the post Qurbana address Thirumeni spoke on the various needs of the parish. He also gave away the prizes for the Sunday school church level competition and the prizes for the prayer group level bible competition. Thirumeni shared in the fellowship dinner along with the church members. Thirumeni also discussed with the parish office bearers about the concerns of the parish. The parish was blessed by the visit of the Diocesan Episcopa.

Rev. Benu John, Vicar

## MTC Chicago, Lombard, IL

Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius graced the St. Thomas MTC, Chicago with his Episcopal visit from March 22-24, 2013. On Friday, March 22nd, Thirumeni celebrated Holy Qurbana service on the 40th day of the Great Lent. On Saturday 23rd Thirumeni



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met with the executive committee and office bearers of the parish organizations and the committee members shared with Diocesan Bishop their concerns in an open discussion. Thirumeni also discussed his vision about the church and emphasized the need for participation in the mission of the Church and Diocese. Thirumeni also spoke of the need to regularize the meetings and programmers of the organizations so that we can create togetherness among the parish members. On Sunday March 24, Palm Sunday service began at 8:30 am, which was led by Thirumeni. His message was based on Mathew 21:5-11. There was dedication service for 27 first communicants during the service. The first communicants were presented with a copy of the Holy Bible on behalf of the parish. Thirumeni distributed certificates to the first communicants. Following the first communicant's dedication, four altar boys were also dedicated. After the Holy Communion service Vicar Rev. Shaji Thomas and Trustee Jacob K. George felicitated Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius. This was followed by the Kaimuthu service. About 400 people attended the service and took part in luncheon fellowship in the church parish hall organized by the families of first communicants. During his visit, the Diocesan Episcopa visited a few members who are not keeping well. This year, St. Thomas MTC of Chicago, Lombard is celebrating its 10th anniversary as a parish. The Members of the St. Thomas MTC were blessed and honored by the visit of the Episcopa.

Rev. Shaji Thomas, Vicar

## Colorado Horeb MTC



The Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited Colorado Horeb MTC on Sunday, April 14, 2013. Thirumeni started the hectic day meeting with our Sunday School children prior to celebrating the Holy Communion service. Thirumeni communicated to the Sunday School children the importance of reading from the Bible daily. Thirumeni reminded everyone how Bible keeps us away from sin and sin keeps us away from the Bible. Psalms 119:11 was the key verse. His Lordship led the Holy Communion service and gave an inspiring message. Ian Thomas and Hannah Philip received their First Communion from Thirumeni during the service. Thirumeni dedicated and blessed Jibin Abraham, Jijo Abraham, Jeffrey George and Jason George as Altar Boys. The 12th Parish Day was celebrated soon after the Service, with Thirumeni as the Chief Guest. The Vicar, Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese presided over the meeting. Rev. Fr. Mathew Zachariah was present as a guest and gave felicitations. After special songs by the Sunday School and the Choir Mr. Thomas Daniel presented a brief history of the Colorado Horeb Mar Thoma Church. Following the Parish Day celebration, Thirumeni conducted the Baptism Service for Abigail Kayle George, daughter of Sam

and Sara George. There was fellowship lunch after the baptism, hosted by the George family and families of the first communicants.

Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese Vicar

## MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch



Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited Mar Thoma Church of Dallas Farmers Branch from Friday April 19th to Sunday April 21st, 2013. During his visit Thirumeni met with the leaders of the contemporary worship service on Friday April 19th, 2013 and gave necessary guidance and advice. He supported the continuation of the service and suggested few changes to be implemented to make the worship service meaningful and more participatory. On Saturday April 20th, 2013, Thirumeni met with the church Executive committee. Thirumeni reminded the committee members that each is representing the worshipping community. Thirumeni took time to listen the concerns of the committee members and shared his thoughts and assured support in the endeavors of the parish. On Sunday April 21st, 2013 Thirumeni led the Holy Communion service. The service started at 8.30 am and more than thousand parishioners attend the service, out of which six hundred and eighty seven people participated in the Holy Communion. During the Holy Communion service, Thirumeni dedicated Thirty-two (32) first communicants. There were 4 Altar Boys. Thirumeni later congratulated the first communicants and altar boys and requested the parish members to support them through prayers as they grow in faith. Thirumeni after the worship service took part in the fellowship lunch organized by the parents of the first communicants. Thirumeni took the opportunity and had fellowship with the church members. The parish is hosting the National Conference of the Voluntary Evangelists' Association for 2013. There was a kick off for registration. The members of the organizing committee met the Diocesan Bishop. The parishioners took time to meet the Bishop during the days of the Episcopal Visit. Thirumeni's visit was a blessing to all in the parish.

Rev. Jose C. Joseph Mathew, Vicar

## Detroit MTC

Detroit Mar Thoma Church was blessed and honored by the annual visit of the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa on April 27, 2013. On April 28th Sunday at 9.30 am Thirumeni lead the celebration of the Holy Communion in English, during which five girls and 4 boys were dedicated and had their first communion. During this ceremony, Thirumeni presented the certificates and mementos to the first communicants. Besides the Vicar the Rev P. Chacko and the Rev Philip Varghese assisted in the service. After the service and announcements, Thirumeni inaugurated the fund-raising event for the Mid-West Regional Youth Conference that will be hosted by the Detroit Mar Thoma Church Youth Group. Thirumeni also addressed the congregation and elaborated the various projects of the Diocese as well as emphasized the need to address the concerns of the Youths. He also applauded the efforts of the Vicar, Rev. Abraham Thomas who is transferring back to Kerala and appealed to the members to welcome



the new Vicar, Rev. C. K. Kochumon. The service ended with Thirumeni's Kaimuthu. About 450 people attended the service and had a luncheon fellowship in the parish hall hosted by the first communicant's families. After lunch Thirumeni visited the homes of a few member families. Thirumeni left Detroit on Monday April 29th morning. The parish expresses our heartfelt thanks for the Episcopal visit.

Rev. Abraham Thomas, Vicar

## PARISH NEWS

### St. Thomas MTC, Yonkers, NY Celebrating 33 years: Parish Day



St. Thomas MTC, Yonkers, NY is blessed to celebrate the 33rd parish day on Sunday, January 27, 2013. Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius led the Holy Communion in English. Diocesan Secretary, Rev. K. E. Geevarghese and Vicar, Rev. Joseph Johnny assisted the worship service. During the worship service the First Communicants' Service was held, where 13 children participated in the Holy Qurbana for the first time. Also during the worship service there was a special dedication service for Altar boys where 4 young youths participated. A public meeting was held immediately after the worship service. Rev. K. E. Geevarghese led the opening prayer followed by welcome speech by Vicar, Rev. Joseph Johnny. Diocesan Episcopa Mar Theodosius gave parish day message. Special guest, Yonkers Mayor, Hon. Michael Spano attended the public meeting and gave a felicitation and advised us to be

more involved in our neighborhood asking us to unite together to make Yonkers a better city. Mayor Spano also gave a proclamation honoring January 27th as St. Thomas Mar Thoma Day. During the public meeting we honored our Senior Citizens by giving them each a Ponnada. We are grateful to our seniors for their dedication and prayers towards the growth of our parish. The parish secretary presented the parish report of 2012, and vote of thanks by our Vice-President, Mr. John C. Thomas. Fellowship lunch was served to all who attended after the meeting.

Rev. Joseph Johnny, Vicar

### Ascension MTC Youth Fellowship Annual Basketball Tournament



By the grace of God the Youth Fellowship of Ascension MTC was able to host the 7th Annual Ascension MTC All Stars Basketball Tournament on April 6, 2013. There were 14 men's teams from around the region participated for a day of fellowship and competition. There were 6 Mar Thoma parishes competed in the tournament. The other teams composed of Orthodox, Catholic and Pentecostal churches. The purpose of the annual tournament is to raise funds for charity of the parish. The proceeds amounting to \$1,500 from this year's tournament was handed over to Simons Fund Charity, which is a local charity in Philadelphia that screens children for signs of sudden cardiac arrest. The Youth Fellowship expressed their gratitude to all players, spectators, volunteers and sponsors for helping us in our efforts.

Rev. Antony T. Varughese, Vicar

### Ascension MTC Youth Fellowship



The year 2012 was a very eventful year for the Ascension Youth Fellowship. The year 2012 was declared as "the year of service". Community service is an integral part of helping out our community. The Youth Fellowship planned out at least one community service project per month. These community service projects included visiting sick members of the parish and conducting youth meetings with them, volunteering at soup kitchens, food shelters, hosting a community car wash and many other events. This project not only brought the Youth Fellowship members closer but it also made us to realize about issue of poverty in our society. By the grace of God, we were able to successfully finish the year

of service and the City of Philadelphia Police Department recognized our Youth Fellowship with a certificate of achievement. The Youth Fellowship expressed its gratitude to the Vicar, Youth Chaplain and parish leaders and members of the parish, who encouraged them all throughout the year.

Jasmine Varghese, Youth Fellowship Secretary

## Philadelphia MTC



Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulose Episcopa visited Philadelphia MTC on Easter Sunday and celebrated Holy Communion and led the first communicant's dedication service in which fifteen of our children received communion first time and became full pledged members of the church. Thirumeni presented them with lighted candles and holy Bibles. It was a glorious and memorable event for the children, parents and the other attendees. A public meeting was held to felicitate Paulose Thirumeni as he has visited the parish for the first time after installation as Episcopa. Vicar Rev. P. A. Abraham, parish secretary Mr. M. G. Thomas and Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam Representative Mr. John Abraham delivered felicitations. All parishioners participated in the fellowship lunch arranged by the parents of the first communicants. Thirumeni's blessed visit was an enriching experience to the parish as a whole.

Rev. P.A. Abraham, Vicar.

## Farewell of Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla and Family



NJMTC Youth Alive was blessed with the pastoral services Rev Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla, Sara Joseph, Ashish and Anjali for the past three years as youth chaplain of this region. We are thankful to God for allowing our youth group to grow under Joe Achen's leadership and guidance. Achen was very supportive to the youth group and his presence will truly be missed by the youths of this region. The youth of the region conducted a farewell meeting for Achen and family and prayed that God may shower His abundant blessings upon in the continued faith journey of the church.

Christie Jacob, Secretary, NJMTC Youth Alive

## Reception to Rev. Dennis Abraham, Youth Chaplain, Philadelphia



The youths of the South East region gave a warm welcome to the newly appointed youth Chaplain Rev. Dennis Abraham. The youths are excited to have one among them serving as youth chaplain in this region. The youths are excited to continue the study of the Word of God and continue their walk of faith with Achen. During the welcome reception they thanked God for giving this opportunity.

Christie Jacob, Secretary, NJMTC Youth Alive

## St. Johns MTC, UK - An Afternoon With Neighbors & Stakeholders 'A Taste of Kerala'



As part of an initiative to know our neighbors and stakeholders, St. John's Mar Thoma Church UK organized an afternoon get together on Sunday, 24th February 2013 to meet them. The afternoon started with a Hymn followed by Bible Reading from John Chapter 1. Our Vicar Rev. Eapen Abraham then spoke about our roots and our faith. He then introduced a video, which took the audience on a visual journey of the Church's origins from St. Thomas' arrival in India to the Mar Thoma Church's global position as part of the WCC and showing the various mission and charitable activities of our church. This was followed by a power point presentation by co-convenor Mr. Isaac George about the Mar Thoma Church in UK. It also highlighted all the mission activities undertaken by UK Mar Thoma parishes. It was followed by the initiatives taken by St. Johns MTC including the activities run under 'CHARIS' – the umbrella organization which encompasses all of St. John's charitable and mission activities including supporting natural disasters, Education Aid to professional students, Medical Aid, the Education Care Project for 25 children at Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, India which is adopted and fully supported by members of St. Johns MTC. He also highlighted the Neighborhood Mission programs of St. John's– the Olive Branch project. The Olive Branch project works with the Homeless people in the neighborhood. Afterwards, there was a visual presentation of the natural beauty of Kerala, its harmony with all religions, its arts etc. This was followed by a traditional Kerala dance and a song 'Kathukale Kelkkunnuvo' by Mr. Saji T. Samuel. Our local councilor, Mr. Jagdish Sharma spoke highly about Kerala, its people and was very ap-

preciative of the activities of St. Johns MTC and he promised to extend all support to St. Johns MTC from the local council. We had around 20 guests who attended the program. Mr. Saji Varghese, co-convenor closed the day with a vote of thanks and invited everyone for a taste of traditional Kerala food. While everyone enjoyed the Kerala food, it gave time for everyone to interact, share their ideas in building fellowship and working together for the benefit of the local community.

## GENERAL NEWS

### Ecumenical Involvement International Consultation of Stateless People



An international consultation towards an ecumenical advocacy on the rights of stateless people organized by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) in Washington D.C. was held on 26 February to 1 March 2013. The delegates gathered together to assess the situation of stateless people including those that are stranded and confined to refugee camps during several generations and to explore ways to bring the issue of statelessness to the WCC 10th Assembly in Bussan, Korea. The delegates also sought to influence policy at the global, regional and national levels by projecting a Christian perspective to address the concerns of stateless people worldwide. Through this consultation the delegates were educated by experts from the United Nations, US State Department, civil societies, NGO's and stateless people themselves about the struggles they face as a result of not having a nationality. The United Nations estimates that there are at least 12 million people in the world that are stateless and are at risk of becoming stateless. Statelessness can occur as a result of one or more complex factors including political change, differences in the laws between countries, laws relating to marriage and birth registration, the transfer of territory and targeted discrimination, often due to race, ethnicity, gender, or religion. The impact of statelessness is manifold, access to viable employment and education, the disintegration of families, access to basic necessities of life. Stateless persons may consider themselves as citizens of nowhere and therefore people without value. This notion of being invisible leads to a debilitating sense of worthlessness, desperation, higher incidences of addiction, violence and suicide, which subjects them to exploitation such as human trafficking, kidnapping, etc. As a result of their plight, many stateless persons are forced to cross international borders and become refugees. The delegates also reflected on the theological basis of addressing this issue of statelessness. They learned that the Scripture teaches that all are created by God in unity. This solidarity and compassion are virtues that all Christians practice as signs of their Christian discipleship. Through this consultation the participants decided that the issue of statelessness must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. The states must confer citizenship to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect the basic human rights of citizens and stateless people alike. Faith communities, civil societies,

NGO's and stateless persons will work together to advocate for the remedy and prevention of future statelessness. It is in the power of God the creator, the God of salvation and the spirit of God that infuses us that will bring justice and peace to stateless persons. This consultation was represented by the Mar Thoma Church and the Diocese of North America by Arlene Mathew, an official delegate at the WCC representing the youth and women of the Mar Thoma Church, who will also attend the 10th General Assembly in Bussan, Korea in 2013.

Ms. Arlene Ann Mathew, Council Member

### Mar Theodosius Meets Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley



At his recent Episcopal visit to Boston (May 17-19, 2013), Theodosius thirumeni took time to meet with His Eminence, Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of the Archdiocese of Boston (member of the Papal Advisory Council) of the Roman Catholic Church.

Dr. George Abraham, Boston

### Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Lecture 2013



The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan and members of the Sabha Council organized the 12th Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Lecture on Saturday the 13th April 2013 at 3 pm at the Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Memorial Auditorium, Thiruvalla. Shri P N Suresh, Vice Chancellor, Kerala Kalamandalam Deemed University delivered the lecture on the topic: CULTURE- THE CAPITAL OF SOCIETY.

### Submission of Materials

Please submit your materials in word format with photos if any in jpeg format (min 300dpi) without editing / cropping. For Malayalam article materials in word format with 'FML' font

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# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Diocesan Council Meeting



Prior to the Diocesan Assembly 2013, the Diocesan Council met at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church on Friday, April 12. Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, presided over the meeting. The devotional talk was led by Mr. Alan John based on Mark 3:13-15 & 20-21. In his presidential address, Diocesan Episcopa shared the details of Jubilee celebrations around the regions and encouraged all the council members to participate and give leadership in various programmes of the year. The meeting expressed condolence on the demise of Mr. T. J. Thomas, father of Dr. Mathew T. Thomas, Washington. The Council discussed the details of Jubilee publications; Festschrift volume, Diocesan Directory and Souvenir Volume with Compliments. The Council also reviewed the arrangements of Mid-West regional Jubilee celebrations and Diocesan Assembly meeting in Chicago. The Ecumenical Dinner-2014 will be held at Toronto, Canada and Mr. Zachariah Mulamootil will be the convener of the event. Decided to install Video Conferencing facility at the Diocesan head quarters, Sinai Mar Thoma Center, New York. Diocesan Secretary Rev. K. E. Geevarghese welcomed the members and Mr. Chacko Mathew, Diocesan treasurer offered vote of thanks. Special words of appreciation were rendered to the Chicago Mar Thoma Church for hosting all the events of the weekend and for making arrangements and extending hospitality for the leaders and delegates.

Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Diocesan Secretary

## Workshop on Liturgy



A workshop on Liturgy and Lay leadership Training was organized by the North East region (New York) of the Diocese of North America and Europe. The program was held at the St. Andrew's Mar Thoma Church, New York on Saturday, March 9, 2013. This was a part of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Diocese. The Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius presided over the meeting and inaugurated the workshop. Rev. A. B. Binu, Vicar of Long Island Mar Thoma Church and Dr. Ron Jacob of LIMTC lead the study sessions. There was training for liturgical chants.

## North East Region Annual Conference

A combined annual fellowship and farewell meeting of the North East Region Sevika Sanghom and Voluntary Evangelist's Association was

held on March 23rd Saturday 2013 in Jericho, NY), which was hosted by Salem Mar Thoma Church. Two hundred and fifty five members attended the meeting from the eleven parishes of the region. Nine clergies including the youth chaplain attended and provided leadership and direction for the success of the conference. The meeting started with an opening prayer by Rev. Mathew George, and a sing along session lead by the choir of the host parish. Salem Mar Thoma Church Sevika Sanghom Secretary Mrs. Valsa Mathew welcomed the attendees. Rev. Oommen Varkey made the presidential address. Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse the well-known convention speaker gave the main talk based on the theme: Church Journeying with Christ. In his simple and inspiring talk Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse highlighted the importance of

- A Christ centered journey
- Self emptying and caring for others
- Witnessing throughout life not only by words but through deeds.

## Farewell Meeting for Achens



The region arranged a farewell meeting for Rev. Oommen Varkey, Rev. Varghese George, and Rev. Joseph Johny who transferred to India after their services in the USA. The meeting was presided over by the North East Region Sevika Sanghom president and the Vicar of L.I MTC Rev. A.B. Binu. Felicitations were delivered by Rev. Mathew George representing the clergies, Mrs. Mariamma Abraham, Mr. K A. Chacko, Mrs. Jessy Jose, and Mrs. Leelamma Chacko, representing the Edavaka Mission, Sevika Sanghom of the Region and the center A&B respectively. In appreciation of their sincere services, the N.E Regional organizations presented them with token gifts. In the reply speech Rev. Varghese George, Rev. Joseph Johny, and Rev. Oommen Varkey expressed their love and thanks to the region. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. Abraham Daniel, followed by a prayer by Rev. Abraham Oommen and benediction by Rev. Oommen Varkey. Afterwards a fellowship lunch was provided for all the attendees. We express our gratitude to the hosting parish, which has done a tremendous job for the success of the conference.

## MAR THOMA MERIT AWARD 2013

The Diocese of North America & Europe is inviting nominations for the 2013 Mar Thoma Merit Awards. Students who graduate as high school class valedictorians or have exceptional qualifications (see appropriate forms for criteria from your Vicar); who are members of Mar Thoma parishes or congregations; who attend worship services and participate in parish activities are eligible for this award. The completed form along with attachments should be mailed, e-mailed or faxed to Mrs. Checha John, 25 Gladwin Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10309 on or before July 31, 2013. If you have any questions please contact Mrs. Checha John at (718) 227-6684 or email: cj0405@aol.com

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## Diocesan Clergy Conference - 2013



The Diocesan Clergy conference of the North America and Europe Diocese was held at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church from April 11 to 12, 2013. Pastor: Journeying with Christ was the theme of the Conference. The Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius and Achens in the Diocese were the main leaders. Morning and evening worships were led by the Achens on regional basis. Rev. Joji K Mathew, St. John's MTC, New York and Rev. Alexander Varghese, Bethel MTC, Philadelphia led the singing sessions. The Diocesan Secretary, Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, welcomed the Diocesan Episcopa and the clergies who attended the Conference. There was a total Attendance of 55 Achens including Rev. V. G. Geevarghese from London, UK. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Episcopa inaugurated the conference and presented the theme, "Pastors: Journeying with Christ". Rev. Varghese K. Abraham, Vicar, St. Mathews MTC, Toronto and Rev. Binoy J. Thomas, Vicar of Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington led Bible Studies. Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla presented a paper on "Identity, Vision and Mission of the Diocese". Rev. Roy Abraham Thomas presented a paper on "The Study on the Historical Development of the Church / Lay Leadership Training". Rev. Biju P. Simon and Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas presented papers on "The Journey and Growth of the Diocese – Challenges and Concerns of the Worshipping Community". The Suffragan Metropolitan and the first resident Bishop in the North American Dio-

cese, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus blessed the Clergy Conference with his leadership. The presence of Zachairas Tirumeni was an added blessing at a time when the Diocese enters into a new phase of growth. Thirumeni expressed his happiness at the progress of the Diocese and the work of the Bishop and Clergy. Thirumeni encouraged all the Achens to realize that we can be a miracle with prayer, humility and devotion. So, we must undertake mission which is a biblical response to a contextual challenge. There were separate sessions to discuss parish and Diocesan matters and to learn about the use of IT in the ministry of the Church. Rev. Renu John, North Carolina co-ordinated talent evening and Rev Sam. T. Panicker, Boston, led intercessory prayers. The group discussion provided opportunity for Achens to look into various alternatives in the ministry of the church. It focused on Pastors' involvement in campus ministry, counseling, mission-oriented methodology, as well as, in the parish administration. Also the conference discussed various ways and means to help the younger generations in their spiritual growth and to create a more therapeutic approach in the ministry rather than an instructional one. There was a farewell session for the outgoing Achens in 2013. Rev. John Kuruvilla, St. Mark's MTC, Tampa and Rev. Mathew George, Salem MTC, New York offered farewell speeches representing the Clergy. Rev. Joseph Johnny, St. Thomas MTC, New York responded on behalf of Achens going on transfer.

Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Diocesan Secretary

## Diocesan Assembly Meeting - 2013



The Assembly meeting of the Diocese of North America & Europe was held at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church on April 12 & 13, 2013. The Diocesan Episcopa, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius chaired the meeting. This was also an occasion for the Mid-West region to celebrate Diocesan Silver Jubilee. The opening worship was led by Rev. Abraham Thomas, Rev. Y. T. Vinayaraj, and Rev. Biju P. Simon. The Diocesan Secretary, Rev. K. E. Geevarghese welcomed His Grace, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Suffragan Metropolitan, His Grace, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius and all the delegates of the meeting who met in conjunction with the Midwest region Jubilee program. Mar Theodosius offered presidential address and Mar Theophilus gave Jubilee message focused on the theme. The Annual Report and Accounts of the Diocese for the year 2012 and budget for the year 2013 were passed by the Assembly. In order to strengthen the mission engagements of the Diocese in the local level, a resolution was passed to start Regional Projects in all the 8 regions of the Diocese. The Assembly decided to start a Disaster Relief Fund to initiate immediate action in times of natural calamities. The participation of the younger generation

in the worship and administration of the church was another area of discussion in the assembly and it was proposed to have English service every Sunday, either Divine Worship or Holy Qurbana in the parishes. His Lordship also highlighted the communication efforts of the Diocese (i.e. the publication of the Mar Thoma Messenger, Besorah, and Diocesan Website) and encouraged all the members of the assembly to communicate the need to utilize these tools to the members of their parishes. On behalf of the Diocesan Assembly, Mr. Georgy Varghese offered words of farewell to the Achens who are being transferred. Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla responded to the farewell meeting on behalf of the clergy on transfer. Mr. Chacko Mathew, Diocesan Treasurer, said vote of thanks. Mr. Sabu Lukose, Assembly member, on behalf of the Diocesan Assembly expressed the gratitude of the Assembly to the Diocesan office bearers, Council and Assembly members for earnestly working towards a fruitful term. The Diocesan Assembly for the year 2013 came to a close at 12: 20 noon with prayer by Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese and benediction by Mar Theodosius. It was a time to evaluate the activities of the Diocese as well as to give a focused vision for a brighter future.

Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Diocesan Secretary

## Diocesan Silver Jubilee Celebration Mid-West Region, Chicago



The Mid-West Region Silver Jubilee celebration was held at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church on April 12, 2013. This was a time of celebration and rejuvenation not only for the Mar Thomites in the region but also for the entire Diocese as it was organized in conjunction with the Diocesan Assembly meeting and Clergy Conference for the year 2013. This gave opportunity for a wider participation from all the regions of the Diocese, including Canada and Europe. The Diocesan Episcopa, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius presided over the meeting and the Suffragan Metropolitan, His Grace, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus was the chief guest on the occasion. More than 1000 people participated in the celebration which included believers and leaders from sister churches and local ecumenical bodies.

The Jubilee meeting began with an opening worship led by Rev. Abraham Thomas, Rev. Y. T. Vinayaraj, and Rev. Biju P. Simon. Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Diocesan Secretary, welcomed all the dignitaries and delegates to the Jubilee program. The Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius gave presidential address in which his Lordship highlighted the history of the Diocese to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the laity who helped to strengthen the Mar Thoma community in America. Tirumeni invited the laity who were present in the region prior to 1981, to stand up and to be recognized. Also thanked the work of our Suffragan Metropolitan, who was also the first resident Bishop of the Diocese. His Lordship encouraged further the role of women, youths, and elderly in the church. Following the speech, Tirumeni invited Dr. M. V. Mathew to hand over a Bible to a youth member, Ms. Anju Thomas, as a symbol of the continuing the faith - vision of the church.

Following the inauguration and the lighting of the lamp by the Bishops and dignitaries, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus began the Jubilee message by acknowledging the vision and direction of the Diocese for its continued growth. His Lordship focused on the theme, Church: Journeying with Christ. Tirumeni encouraged the delegates not to stay static in our journey but to move forward with God. Our walk with Jesus Christ involves, incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. The Church is the extension of incarnation. He encouraged all to journey with Christ as a Church and as a Diocese.

Choirs from Chicago MTC, St. Thomas MTC and Bethel MTC rendered melodious songs on the occasion. Rev. Daniel Thomas, the General Convener of the programme and Regional Clergy Convener read a felicitation message from Bishop Lee of the Chicago Episcopal Diocese. Mementoes were given to Suffragan Metropolitan and member churches / congregation in the region. Rev. Dr. Mathew Idiculla represented the Ecumenical council of Chicago, Dr. P.V. Cherian represented Laymen of the Diocese, Mr. Royson Valliyail represented younger generation and Dr. Annamma Sadhu represented Lay women of the Diocese in offering felicitation in the Jubilee meeting. Mr. Allan G. John, Diocesan Council Member from the region, offered vote of Thanks. The Jubilee meeting came to an end with prayer by Rev. Shaji Thomas and benediction by

Suffragan Metropolitan. Mr. Monish K. John, member of Chicago Mar Thoma Church Emceed the whole event.

On Saturday, April 13, 2013, there was a Holy Qurbana service in English at the Chicago Mar Thoma Church at 7:00 AM. Suffragan Metropolitan was the chief celebrant. Diocesan Episcopa and Achen from various regions of the Diocese were co-celebrants. Assembly members and parishioners from the Midwest region participated in it. The Diocese is grateful to the regional committee and Chicago Mar Thoma Church for hosting the event and making all necessary arrangements.

Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Diocesan Secretary

## Christian Education Forum

### “Readers and Writers” Seminar



The Christian Education Forum Seminar “Journeying with Christ through Meditation” was held on May, 18th 2013 at the Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, NY from 9:00am to 4:00 pm. Seminar was conducted on three different topics. Meditation through the Word, Meditation through Prayer and Meditation through Community Fellowship. The Seminar was started with a praise and worship, which was led by youth members. This was followed by Opening Worship by Rev. Abraham Oommen and youths of Ebenezer MTC. Mrs. Susan Kurien, Secretary of Ebenezer MTC welcomed the main speakers and the attendees for the Seminar. Rev. V.M Mathew, the President of the Christian Education Forum did the introductory remarks. Rev. Mathew George presented a paper on Meditation through Word. Achen stated that for journeying with Christ through meditation we have to know Christ and to know Christ we should know the Word of God. After a short break and singing session Mr. Prijo Thomas presented the paper on Meditation through prayer. He emphasized the fact that we have to devote ourselves to prayer (Col.4:2) as prayer and meditation complement each other.

After lunch break and songs Dr. Jesudas Athyal presented his thoughts about Meditation through Community Fellowship. He emphasized the following; Meditation should be intellectually understood ( Philip & Ethiopian Eunuch Acts:8 26-35), Participation of Laity ( Laos/people of God) is very important, Tradition become corrupt or static as years goes on, if we don't transcend correctly, Meditation or private prayer time and study of the Word of God are very essential. And also corporate study is to be connected with others. God calls us individually but sends us in groups (Journey to Emmaus/ Sending out Disciples as two by two/Holy Communion), Liturgy after Liturgy- commission of the resurrected Jesus to go out into the world and preach the Word, Church is more than the denomination. He exhorted the participants to find time together to face the challenges of the society. After each presentation there was discussions. As a token of appreciation gifts were presented to the main speakers. Rev. Shibu Mathew, the Vicar of Epiphany MTC also graced the occasion by his presence. Ms. Grace John, Convener, CEF delivered vote of thanks. Meeting ended by prayer by Ms. Laila Anie Philip and benediction by Rev. Abraham Oommen. About 57 participants attended the seminar. It was very informative and enriching experience for those who participated in it.

Rev. V. M. Mathew & Mrs. Grace John, CEF, NE Region

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