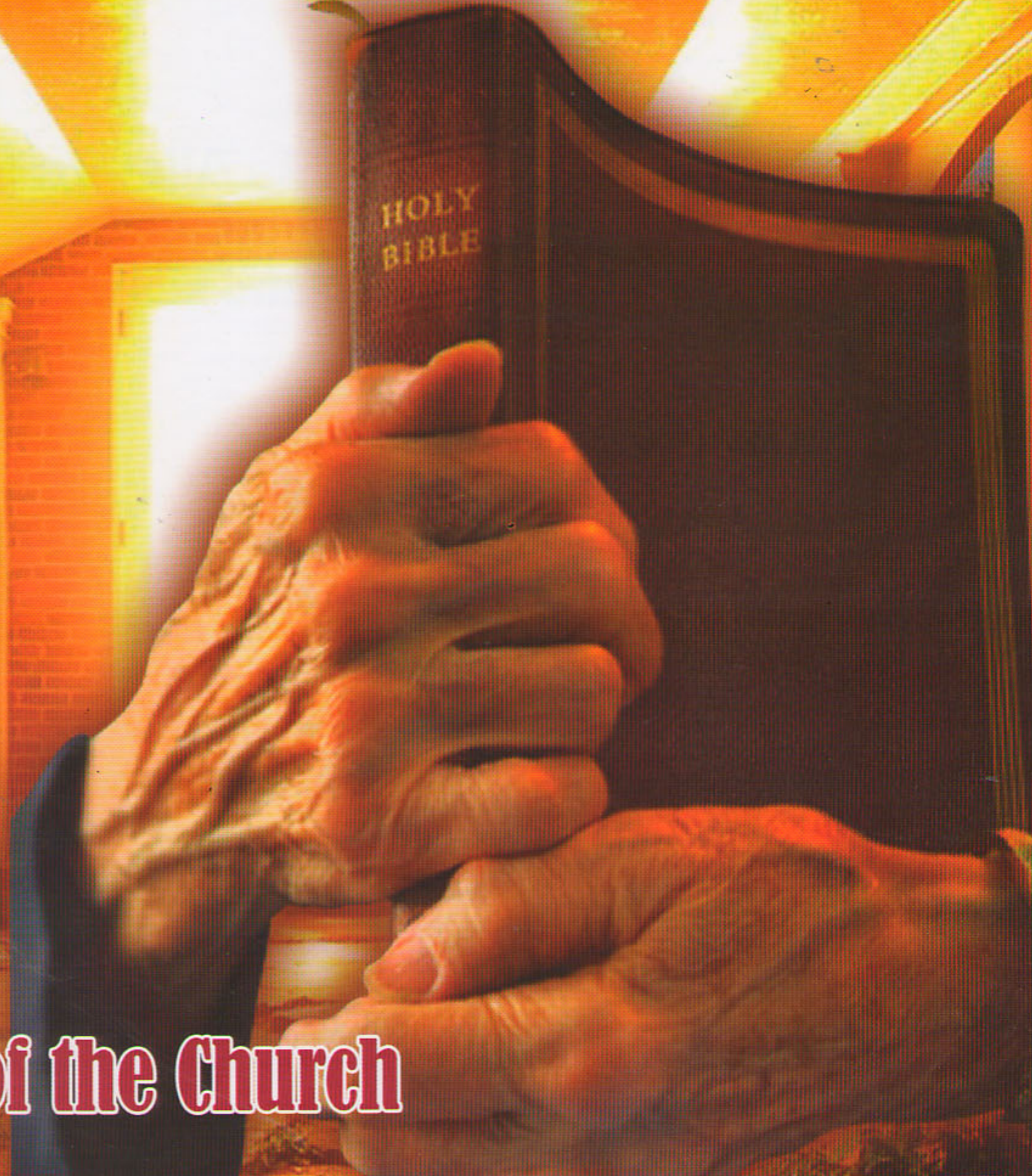


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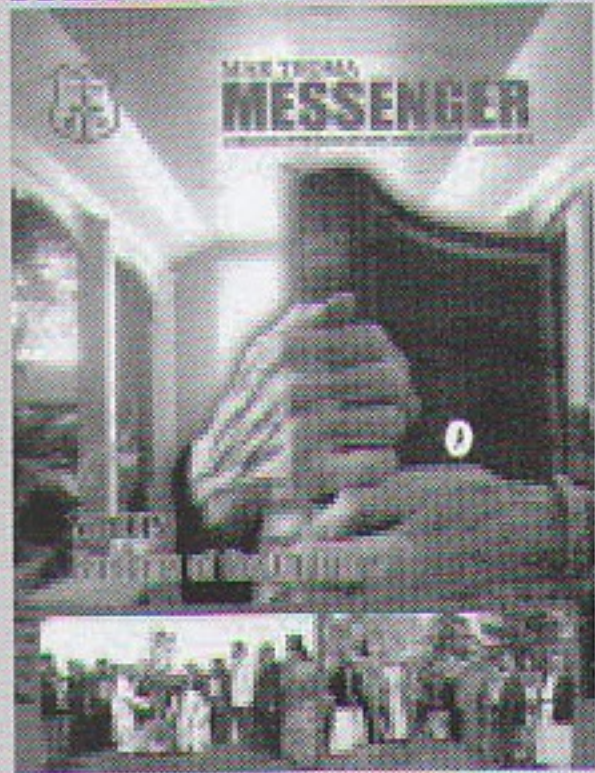


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Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The commendable achievement of the Indian scientists in the successful completion of the 'Mangalyaan (Mars Spacecraft) Mission' has helped millions of Indians to fly high the Indian tricolor at its zenith in their minds. The fact that the very first Mars Mission of our nation was a success adds luster to this achievement, when we consider that the attempts of different nations faced setbacks and failures in the beginning before being successful. Moreover, the money spent for Mangalyaan is far less than that spent by other nations. Congratulations to Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, the head of this project and the source of our pride, and his team for this gain. Recognizing the notable contributions that Dr. Radhakrishnan is giving to the scientific world and to our nation, we, as a Church, have honored Dr. K. Radhakrishnan by giving him the prestigious award of our church, Attumalil Georgekutty Award on February 1, 2014. The speech he gave after receiving the award threw light into his personality, dedication, vision, his simplicity, sincerity and humility. God has created us not to become the victims of circumstances but to transform the circumstances and to use them for the good of the society and to create new ones. When the humans put to proper use the God given creativity and imagination they would be able to soar to heights of the vast universe. Mangalyaan Mission is an example that the Creator God has given us the ability to know the greatness of His creation. In this context, a portion worth remembering is given in the Book of Job. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes have seen You" (42:5). This should be our response when we get new knowledge about the universe. Then we will be able to say with David, "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord and the earth His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1).

Nowadays Kerala is going through a fiery ordeal. Congratulations to the people of Kerala for the new initiative to bring an end to the problem of alcoholism which ruins the health of individuals and paves the way to terminal illnesses and the breaking of families. The initiative taken is an opportunity to bring a qualitative change in our society, instead of simply uttering the hollow words, "God's own Country". If all the political parties can join hands together with the view that it is not by the revenue from liquor that the government should find funds for welfare projects, there will certainly be a qualitative change in the Kerala society. It is a known fact that a sizable amount of the income from liquor is being spent by the government on alcoholism and addiction-related problems and diseases. It is the duty of every person, irrespective of political affiliation, who advocates human welfare and brotherhood to give full support to the initiative taken by the Chief Minister of Kerala Mr. Oommen Chandy and his government to have a liquor-free Kerala. At this juncture, the observation made by the judiciary that prohibition cannot be regarded as a violation of human rights is worth noting. We must not forget that when God has given humans all the resources, blessings, and position, He has entrusted us with the responsibility of using them with a sense of stewardship.

We can be proud of the fact that we are the largest democracy in the world, where elections are held without fear of favor. The strength of our nation to replace one government and install another in its place, without any hitch or problem, was quite evident in the last general election and the transfer of power. The results are the verdict of the people against the corrupt and unstable governance of the coalition government. In spite of that, still we can see that there are attempts to form temporary, narrow, opportunistic, and selfish coalitions in different states. Let us pray that the new government will utilize the time ahead as an opportunity to establish value-based democracy, taking heed not to shift to autocracy, and to fulfill the great vision of Mahatma Gandhi to see everyone as God's child. Our nation has completed 67 years of independence. Now, the words of the late Gandhian, Prof. M. P. Manmadhan, comes to mind. He said that just as body gets weak in old age and we need a cane or some support to move around, the Faith in God must be an experience which gives us strength. Let us pray for the realization of the vision of the Kingdom of God.

The verdict of the Courts showing that whatever be the office or position one holds, he/she will be brought before the court of law and that all are equal before the Law, is a blow and a stern warning to those who try to hide corruption using the power of their position.

The spread of the Ebola virus from the African continent has become a great threat to the whole world. Thousands of lives were taken by this epidemic. It may affect the health of the people and the world economy. The medical field is still engaged in the search for a preventive

medicine. Let us pray that God will help us to find a suitable remedy for this disease.

It is a fact that the rights and privileges of children are violated and threatened in many nations. Child labor is indeed child abuse. Kailash Sathyarthi of India who campaigns against child labor and Malala Yusufzai of Pakistan who fights for the education of girls won the Nobel Prize for Peace this year. It is the recognition they got for their untiring service. Congratulations to these two who fight relentlessly, amidst crises, for their noble causes.

By the grace of God this year's Mandalam was a blessing. The agenda could be completed within the stipulated time. The new council for 2014-2017 was constituted and the projects and plans for the next three years were chalked out. Let us pray that the sincere prayer, cooperation and the combined effort of all concerned will be a blessing to the Church. When the Dioceses and parishes plan projects, instead of giving emphasis just to one or two segments, we should take into consideration the people of different categories who deserve our help.

The construction of the Poolatheen is progressing well. The structure is complete. Now the remaining work has to be completed. The prices are rising day-by-day resulting in the rise of the overall cost of the project. Dioceses and parishes are asked to send the amount allotted for this project to the Sabha Office before December 31, 2014. We could pay the bills without fail so far. The prayer and cooperation of everyone is solicited so as to complete the entire project by March 31, 2015.

Even before the rise of the Ecumenical Movement, there was the spirit of ecumenism in the relationship between the Mar Thoma Church and the Malabar Independent Church (Thozhiyoor), even though there were doctrinal and liturgical differences. The 13th Mar Thoma of Malabar, Mathews Mar Athanasius Metropolitan came from Antioch receiving the consecration and authority as the Metropolitan of Malabar and took charge. When the Metropolitan passed away suddenly, without consecrating a successor, it was the Metropolitan of the Thozhiyoor Church who helped the church in that crisis by consecrating Titus I Metropolitan in spite of opposition from other circles. The Valiya Metropolitan of Thozhiyoor Church, Joseph Mar Coorilos was taken to the heavenly abode suddenly while resting after celebrating Holy Communion in a church. He was able to strengthen and improve ecumenical relations with other churches in India and abroad during his tenure as Metropolitan. The heartfelt condolence of the Mar Thoma Church was conveyed to the Malabar Independent Church and our bishops attended the funeral.

One of the senior Achens of our Church, Rev. V. K. Mathew Vettathu, Maramon (85) was called to eternal rest. He was a role model for our Achens because of his creative and dynamic ministry that was done with nobility. We convey the church's condolence to the bereaved family.

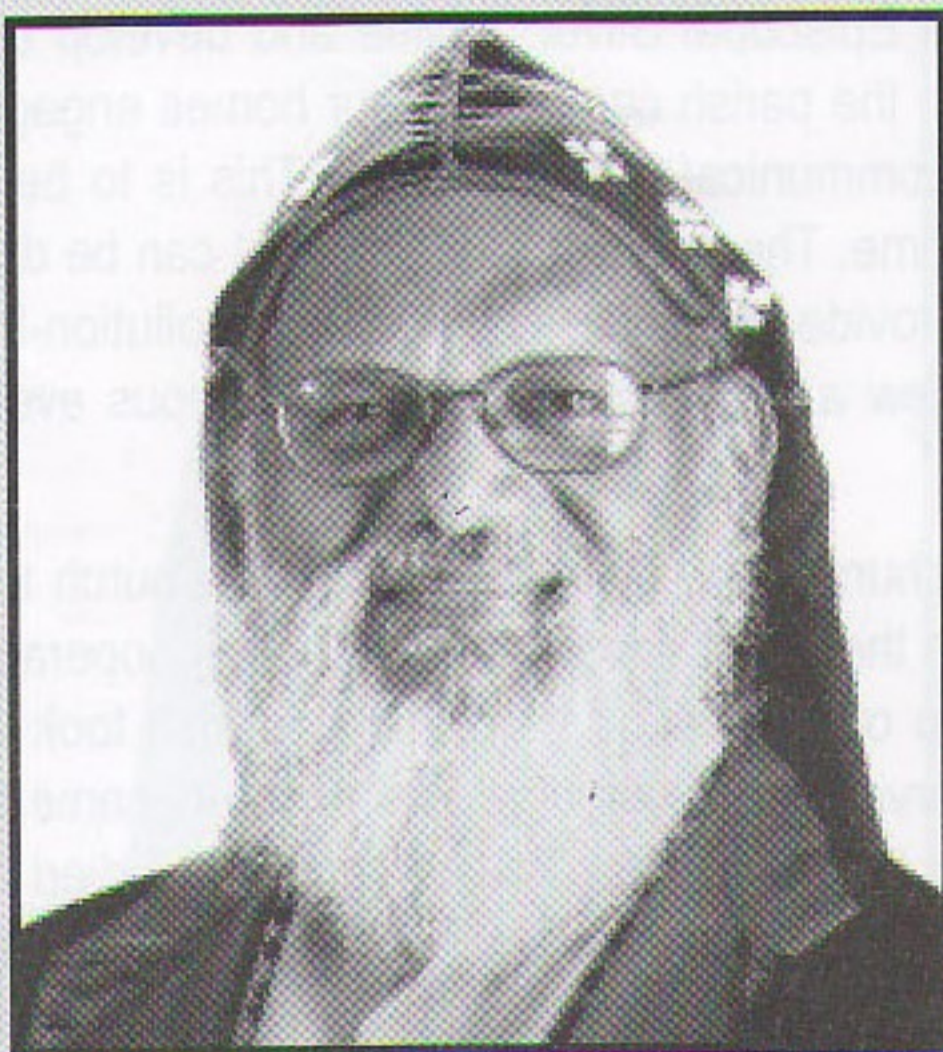
In the Advent Season, could we say with Mary, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it according to your word" (Luke1:38); "He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name" (Luke1:49).

The Grace of the Lord be with you all!

Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan

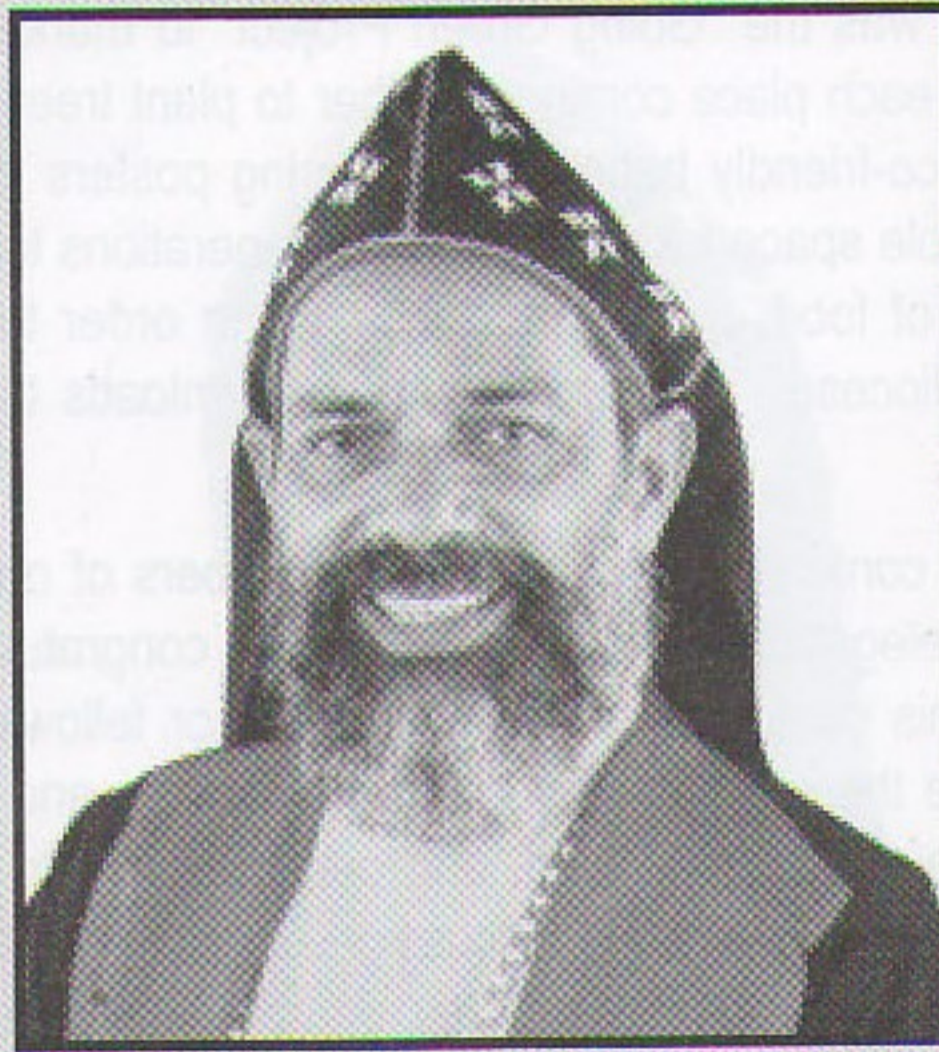
(This message was translated from the Sabha Tharaka by Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese, New York)

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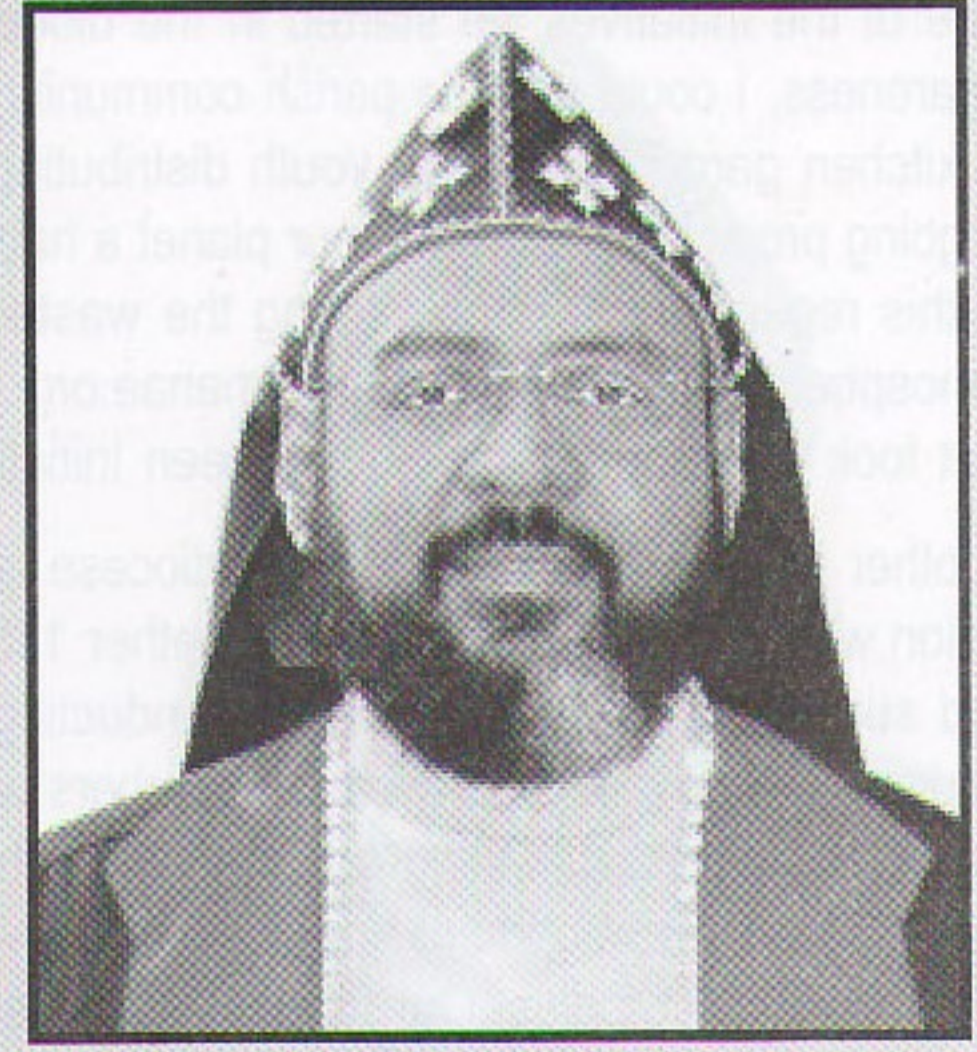
Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar
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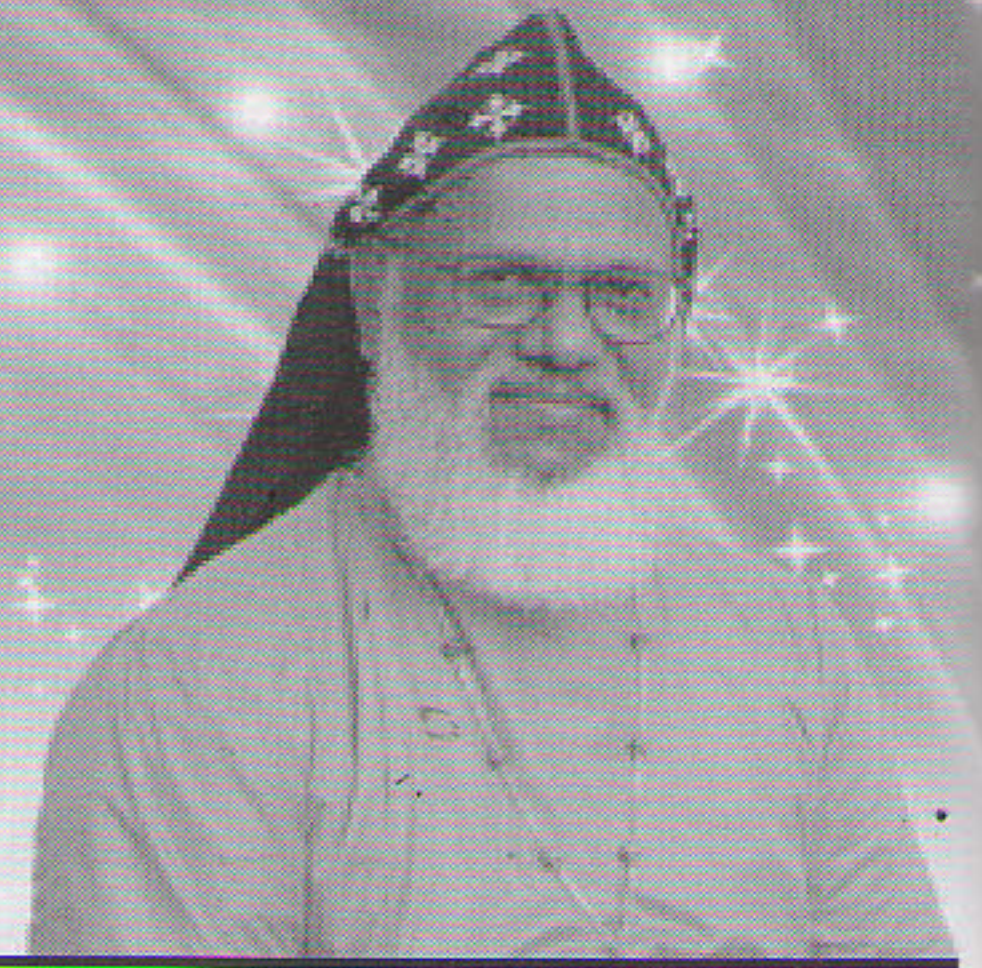
FEBRUARY 25



Rt. Rev. Gregorios Mar Stephanos
Episcopa

MARCH 16

Message from the Diocesan Episcopa



Dear Friends in Christ,

2014 has been an eventful year. The new Diocesan Assembly met, and the new Diocesan Council has started functioning with the help of subcommittees to bring fresh attempts and new beginnings in the various diocesan activities. We are the body of Christ in the given space and time. To be with Christ means to be in the presence of the Triune God, where redemptive activities are going on. Christ always spent time with His Heavenly Father even as He confronted all harsh realities in the world. In His public ministry, Jesus was found in the neighborhood/vicinity of human confusion and suffering, giving preference to those in need and those who were mercilessly marginalized (John 5: 1-15). As followers of Christ, we are a worshiping community, regularly meeting in the respective places of worship with a liturgy that is meant for corporate and inclusive worship. Also, we are a serving community in the chaos of the world, continuing Christ's redemptive and healing ministry. We are in the world to bring glory to God and to live for the establishment of God's kingdom.

Community living is very vital for the Christian Church. We have four seasons in our land, and these seasons tell us about the growth of life in the midst of odds, extremes, and multiplicities. Church-life brings us closer to other Christians who have multiple talents and it saves us from being lonely disciples of Christ (John 20: 24-29). We receive our life from God, and it is nurtured with prayer, love, and fellowship with our fellow human beings. When our lives are so interwoven, it is important to celebrate diversity, and at the same time, live in unity. Christian nurturing takes place when we live as the Christian community.

We had more than 10 diocesan conferences in 2014, with ample opportunities to cater to the different age groups. To pick an example, the Sevika Sanghom Conference was on the theme, Empowering Women and Enriching the Families. It brought together 284 delegates from different parishes and gave room for discussing the challenges faced by women in enriching the families in the American context. The thematic presentations and Bible Studies in the conferences helped the delegates grow spiritually and come together for strengthening corporate living in the Christian community. You can find out more details about these conferences on the 2014 Diocesan Conferences slideshow on our website at: www.marthomanae.org/diocese/announcements/downloads.

One of the initiatives we started in the diocese was the Going Green Project to mark the Episcopal Silver Jubilee and develop eco-awareness. I could see the parish community in each place coming together to plant trees on the parish campus, at our homes engaging in kitchen gardens, and the youth distributing eco-friendly bags, and preparing posters to communicate the message. This is to be an ongoing project that will keep our planet a habitable space for us and for the generations to come. There are more things that can be done in this regard such as preventing the wastage of food, water, and electricity in order to provide clean air, water, and a pollution-free atmosphere. Explore www.marthomanae.org/diocese/announcements/downloads to view a slideshow recalling the various events that took place under the Going Green Initiative.

Another initiative that began in our diocese is a conference for the senior members of our church. The Detroit Mar Thoma Church took action within a short time to bring together 135 delegates from different corners. I congratulate the parish for the wholehearted cooperation and support of all its members in conducting this conference. Though the senior fellowship of the Detroit Mar Thoma parish took the leadership, the youth and women members were there preparing food in the campus and serving it to everyone. The parish became the family of families, providing a home atmosphere, homemade food, and personal care to all the delegates. The conference studied the theme, Faith Development and Stewardship. There were panel discussions, medical classes, recreational activities, along with thematic talks and Bible Studies. Our former vicars Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph and Rev. John Mathew (Kuriannoor) gave leadership.

The Mar Thoma Messenger has brought out four quarterly issues on different valid topics in 2014. The last one was, Women: Enriching the Church. The present issue is on senior members as the builders of the Church in the western world. Several of our senior members who started building the parishes in North America and Europe are with the Lord now; some are ill; and some are active. We cannot forget

the leadership of the Late Rev. Dr. V. V. Alexander in Europe; Late Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Late Rev. Dr. T. C. Thomas, Late Rev. Abraham Lincoln and others like them in Canada; Late Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, and Late Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan in North America whose work laid the foundation for the growth of the parishes in our diocese. The book, *In the Beginning and Journeying with Christ*, as well as, other publications speaks about our historical growth. The present issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger will speak about the challenges and concerns of the senior members and areas of their interest. I encourage you to read the message written by our Valiya Metropolitan Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom in the book, *Journeying with Christ*. I am glad the first resident bishop who built the Sinai Center, Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan has also contributed a very relevant and valid article on the topic in this issue.

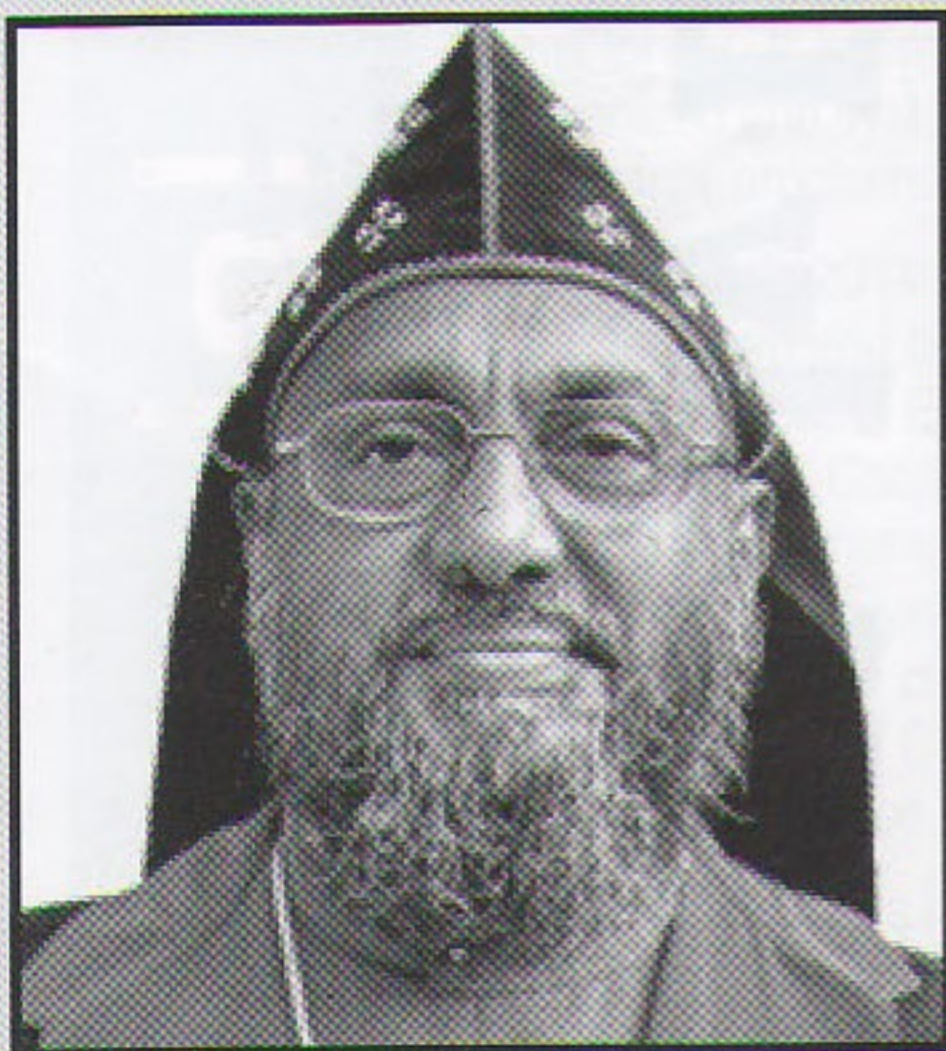
It is very encouraging to see that the regions of our diocese have started functioning and some of them have registered for effective and fruitful activities on the local level. Our diocese has to grow more now through decentralized and diversified activities at the regional level. The parishes in Europe have regional conferences, a quarterly publication known as ECHO, and efforts for neighborhood-outreach mission under the banner of COMPE. The parishes in the Northeast Region have the Christian Education Forum (CEF) with the "Word for the Day" ministry (to read the devotion for each day, you can access it on the home page of www.marthomanae.org), regional conferences for children, neighborhood mission initiated by the youth, and such other initiatives. The Northeast Region is also organizing the 31st Diocesan Family Conference in Connecticut in July 2015. These are models for other regions to follow.

Christmas reminded us of God's incarnational ministry. God of Life emptied Himself to redeem and enrich our lives. He embraced the poorest of the poor human condition to identify with us and also to show us the way to pattern our human life. "Love as I have loved you" is the new commandment which He has given us. It speaks volumes and volumes as we meditate on it and try to translate it in our lives. Matthew 25 speaks of His second coming and final judgment exhorting us to be vigilant and careful about being faithful and obedient even in the little things that challenge us. The series of things that are said there, such as: "I was hungry...I was thirsty...etc." are asking us to discipline our lives to live according to His teachings and be accountable for our life, time, talents, and opportunities. Anything that contributes to the construction of a more humane world is a sacramental act. This requires commitment as a mark of our love for the living God. The New Year 2015 is a fresh opportunity God has given us to be the followers of Christ. Let us express our love for Him through our spiritual life and commit ourselves afresh to continue to serve Him.

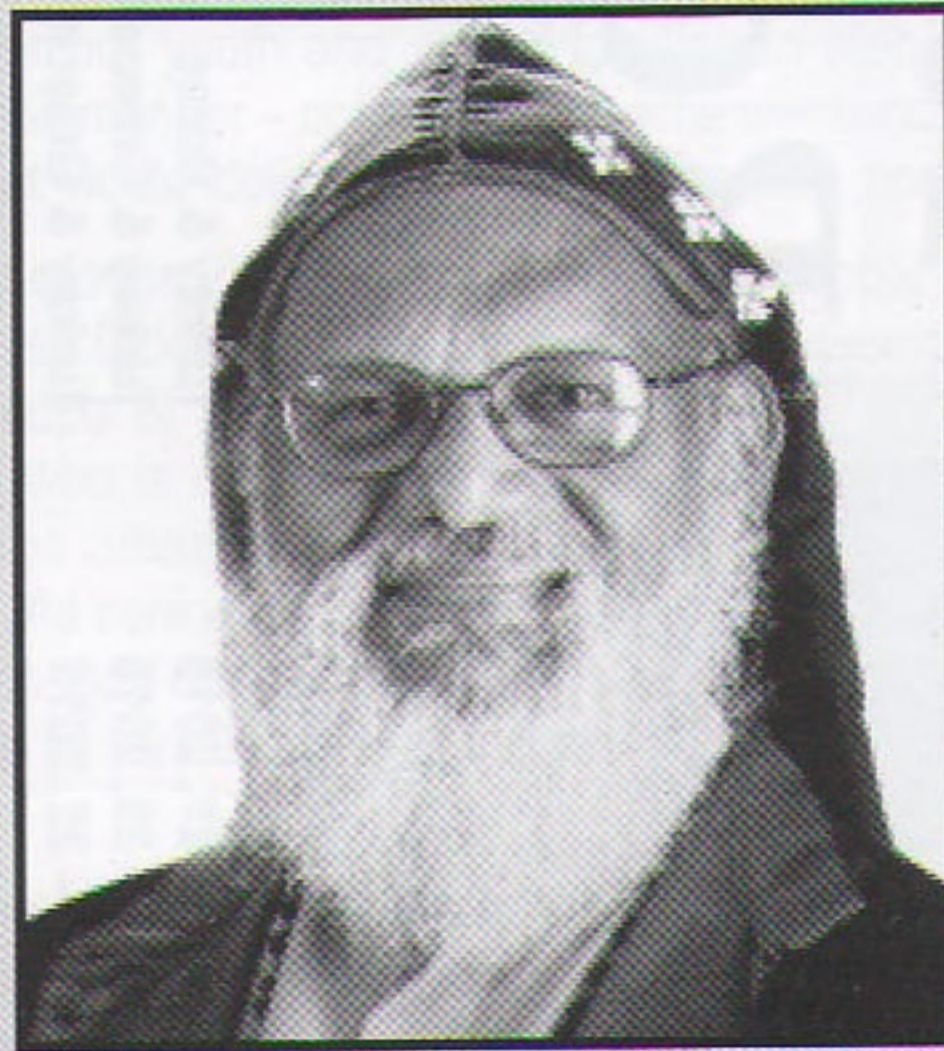
I wish you all a very Blessed and Happy New Year.

Yours in Christ's Ministry,
Mar Theodosius+

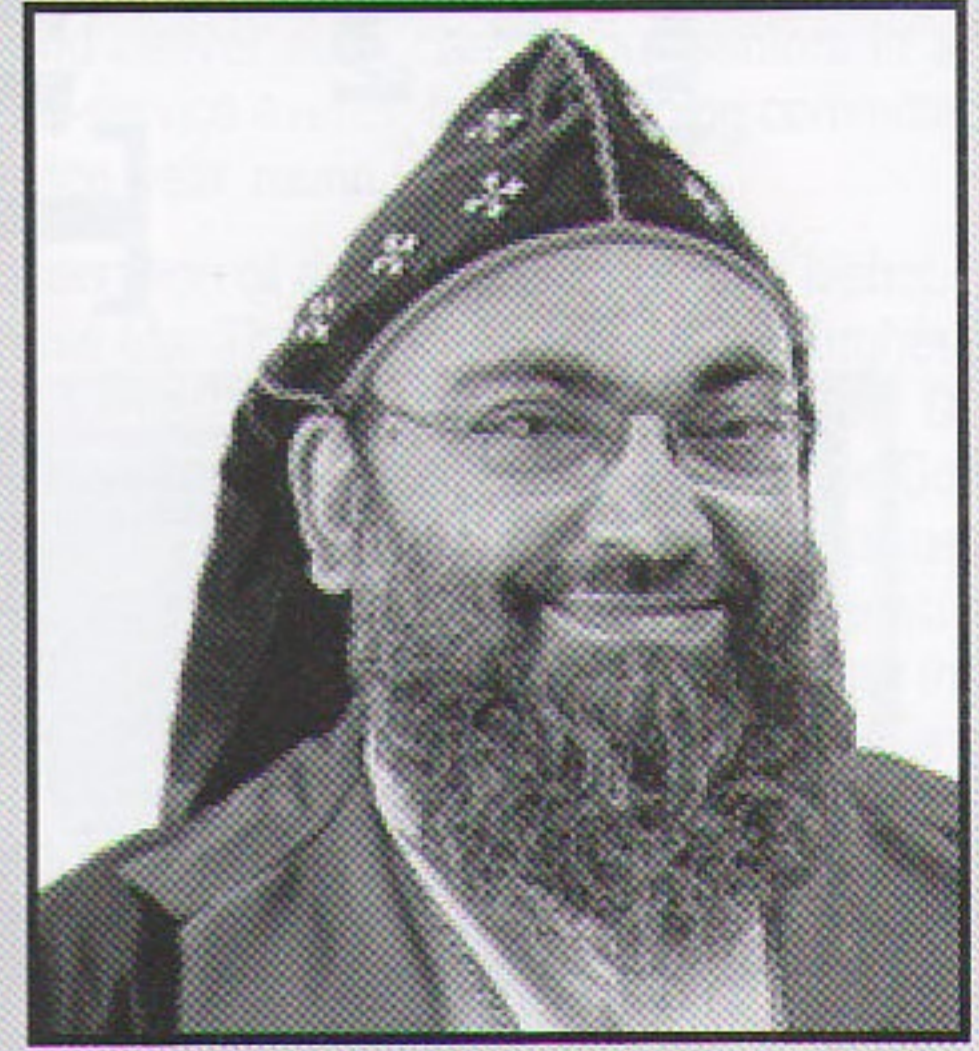
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Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius
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Wishing you all a Happy New Year! May 2015 be a blessed year in which our desires and wants are attuned with God's will!

This issue of the Messenger is focused on the theme "Seniors – Builders of the Church." We consider "seniors" as those who have paved the way for those who follow. Our "seniors" have played a key role in building the Mar Thoma Church across North America, and Europe. Due to their foresight, commitment and dedication, today we take pride in having established 78 worshipping units within USA, Canada, and Europe. These establishments were also possible because of God's grace and the leadership and guidance of many of our bishops and clergy. Most of those bishops and clergy have returned to India and are serving elsewhere, but most of the seniors have stayed on. Some of our founding bishops, clergy and seniors have departed to a life of eternity, while others journey on. Some continue to serve in leadership positions. Many of them have retired and live independently; some of them are weak or ill; a few continue to live with or close to their children, while some live alone and often in loneliness. Most of the churches that they built are thriving with new found leadership. Are the younger folks and current leaders aware of how they got to be where they are today? Are the newer generation leaders interested in or committed to caring for the seniors?

Our Diocesan Episcopa, through a recent Kalpana, directed the parishes and congregations to set apart and celebrate November 23, 2014 as Diaspora Sunday. This celebration is meant to be a time for parishes and congregations to assemble their members, especially the younger generations, and teach them about our past and how we got from where we were to where we are today. These celebrations should also serve as a time to learn from our seniors about their past experiences (Job 12:12). For many of them, the road was long, tortuous, and at times treacherous, yet insightful. The celebration is also meant to be a time for introspection and improved understanding of who we are. The exercise of planning and honoring Diaspora Sunday should be taken up seriously, and learning about our past should be an ongoing process; if not, we will have generations that do not appreciate the struggles of our seniors and elders and ill-prepared to endure the challenges of the future.

Even in our personal lives we owe a lot to our elders, our grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, siblings, teachers, neighbors, strangers... this list could go on. Despite the stature that we have attained, we cannot but be thankful to those before us who have done something small or big to get us to where we are. If some of these people who helped us along the way are still alive, how are we engaged in their well-being? Don't we share some moral responsibility for their welfare?

A practical action item for current leaders and members of the church in the endeavor to honor the past is developing and executing programs that genuinely care for our seniors. Traditional "senior fellowship" meetings are a wonderful idea, and will be beneficial for the spiritual nourishment of those who can afford to travel and carry out normal activities. Some parishes and interest groups are considering the development of "senior centers" that could provide housing and daily assistance. However, the challenge for the current generation of church goers is to find ways to render care for those (not just the seniors) who need higher levels of assistance. For example, those who are no longer ambulatory, those who cannot cook for themselves, those who have failing vision, and those who ail from acute and chronic illnesses. We should also find ways to comfort those who are lonely. It is time for our youth and young families to step up and deliver such care to our seniors in an organized and systematic manner – not just as one-time weekend social-service events, but as ongoing committed rotational programs that would deliver the needed attention and service year round.

December 9, 2014 marked the 25th anniversary of the Episcopal Consecration of three of our esteemed bishops: our very own and beloved Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius; Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius, Episcopa of the Ranni-Nilackel Diocese; and our former Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos who is currently the Episcopa of the Kottarakara-Punalur Diocese. We must thank God for giving us these three amazing and gifted individuals to lead the Mar Thoma Church in various capacities over the past 25 years. As seniors of the church they and the other bishops of our church have shown us the way; as leaders of the church they have led us along, and as compassionate human beings they have carried out the mission of Jesus Christ to various parts of the world and shared His joy with others through their teachings and exemplary service.

The articles in this issue of the Messenger carry a considerable amount of information about the topics discussed above and should inspire readers to gain insight and knowledge for practical action. As always, we look forward to your constructive feedback.

Dr. Mathew T. Thomas
Chief Editor





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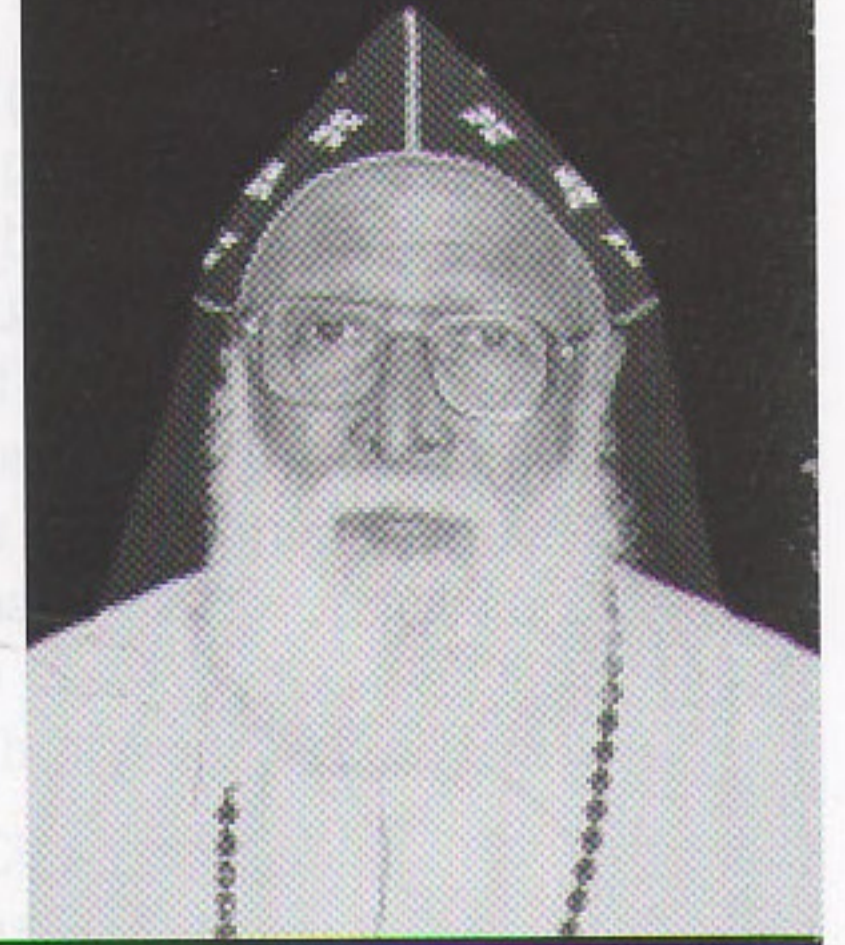
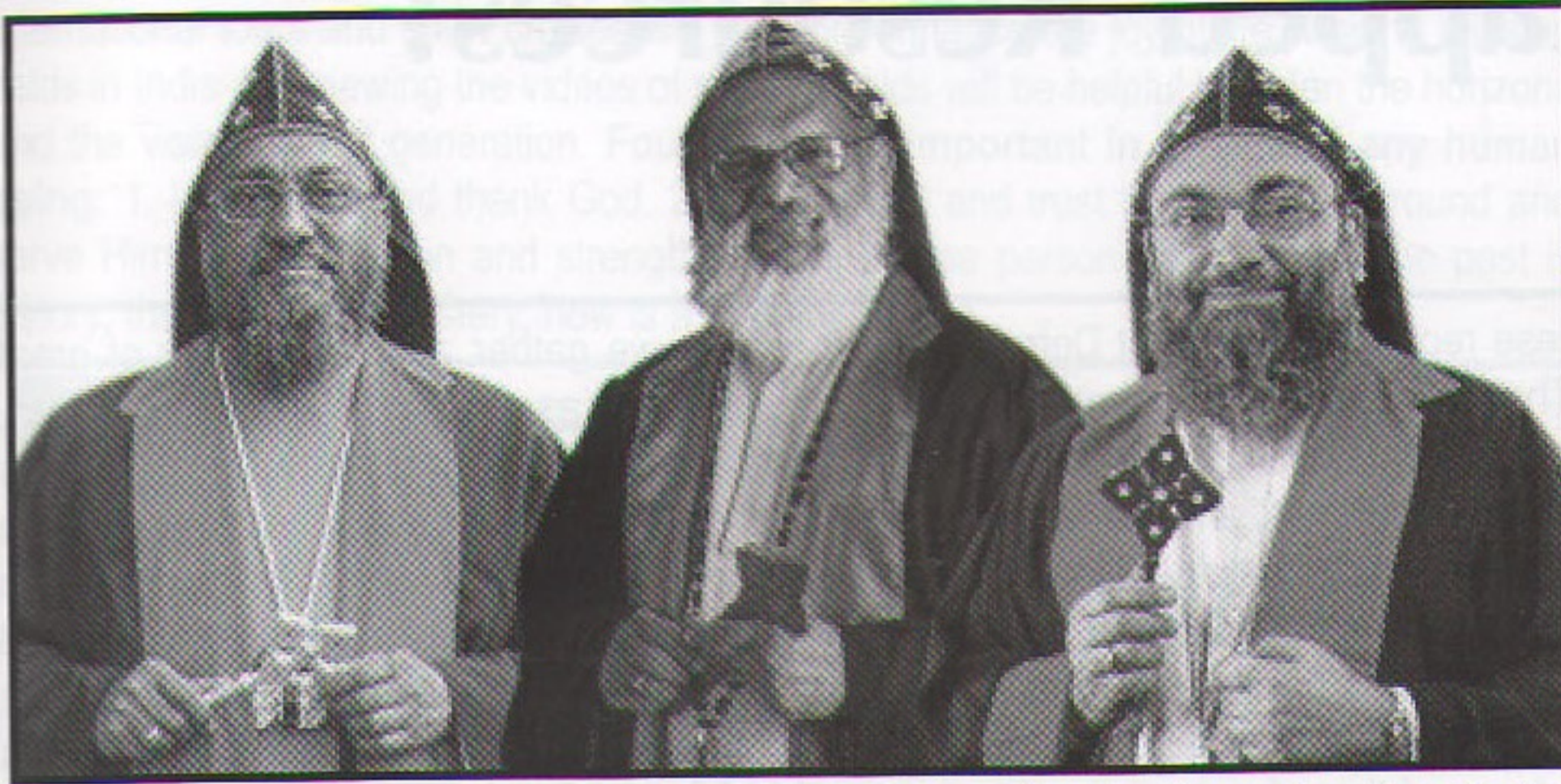
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Greetings to the Three Mar Thoma Bishops Celebrating their Episcopal Silver Jubilee!

The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan

Adapted from "Beyond the Diaspora – Mar Thoma Church: Identity and Mission in the Context of Multiplicity"



The service of bishops Geevarghese Mar Athanasius, Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, and Euyakim Mar Coorilos to the church both as priests and bishops are to be recorded in red letters in the history of the church. I thank God for them, along with all the members of the Mar Thoma Church, for the outstanding way in which they lived and ministered in the church. They were ordained at a time when the church was in need of three more bishops because of the increasing number of parishes.

The development of the church and the increase in the number of parishes was the work of lay people and not of the clergy. Because of the difficulty that people in Kerala had to find jobs, the industrious among them moved to other places in India and abroad in search of livelihood. People in each of those areas met together for prayer meetings. These meetings were the nuclei of the present dioceses in different areas outside Kerala. The Diaspora of the Mar Thoma Church is the result of the vision and determination of the young people in search of employment. Generally the church organizes the mission, but in the case of the Mar Thoma Church, the secular challenges and needs of the society were the root cause for the formation of the Diaspora. This means the church basically belongs to the people at large.

In the gospel of St. John we read, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have live everlasting." The root of the mission is not the act of the church but the act of God in Christ and through Christ. It was love that impelled Jesus to forsake heaven and live in the world like an ordinary citizen and ransom human society to be the body of Christ. To say whether this is secular or spiritual is very difficult, and I would say that such a division is not valid. There is no spiritual without the secular; there is no secular without the spiritual. The authentic reality is God. All other things have only dependant reality. So without God nothing is real. In God everything becomes real. To discover God in everything that is in history is the mission of God that Christ fulfilled. We say that the cross reveals God. The popular understanding is that the cross is the revelation of the love of God and the sin of man. I would say the cross is the expression of the deep love of God. Love is not an emotional expression of the feelings of a person. It is central to life and helps to make man human. Any man without love is sub human. Love is not a part of one's feeling, but the very core of existence, and the church becomes human when love, the embodiment of God, becomes part of its existence. So the Diaspora is not a group of people bound together by manmade ideals. Diaspora becomes human community when it becomes

a community bound together in love, rejoicing in each other and going out in love to the whole of creation. Man goes out to other areas of life not just for employment and existence, but for discovering the other so that together they discover the God who is Creator, Preserver and Sustainer of ALL. Diaspora is not just a person moving from one place to another in search of comfort and stability. It is man discovering his consummation in the context of people different from himself. Diaspora is the first step in the realization of the fullness of man in Christ and through Christ. That is what is achieved in the Church, the body of Christ. The church is not separate from the world, but it is qualitatively challenging the world to be genuine and authentic. The church is in the world and for the world. My understanding is that there is no church in heaven! Consequently there are no priests or bishops in heaven! In heaven, when you come there, if you ask for Bishop Chrysostom, the Angel Gabriel will say, "He is not here; perhaps he may be at the other place." But if you ask for Philip Oommen, he will show you an old man enjoying a conversation with God. So 'Diaspora' becomes meaningful when man through his relationship with the God of history enters the kingdom of God where human beings become the children of God. The world should see the Kingdom of God in the Church. We should look at the church we belong to (The Mar Thoma Church) and examine how far it reflects the Kingdom of God.

God has blessed these three bishops, who have done pleasing and wonderful things over the last 25 years in the church for the wellbeing of man and the glory of God. I wish and pray that the Episcopal Jubilee of these blessed bishops will be a blessing to the Mar Thoma Church and the people of God in rediscovering the Jesus of history, and transform the church to challenge the world to be the Kingdom of God.



Senior: Drained Assets or Untapped Resources?

I am so happy to learn that the seniors of our Diocese recently gathered at Detroit Mar Thoma Church for a fellowship and celebration. That was great. The young persons who initiated the Mar Thoma Church in North America have gradually grown to become seniors. We all are proud of them. But for their initiative, enthusiasm, and hard labor, the Church in North America would not be as it is now. So we need to salute our seniors for their great service, sacrifice, and contribution. The senior generation of our church is slowly vanishing from the scene as a result of the feebleness of old age, illness, and death. Now, we have a good section of retiring and retired persons as a valuable resource and reservoir. Will we spot them and make the best use of them for strengthening our church? The general concept was that aged people are **the glory of the past**, but I would say, they are our asset for the present and for the future. In contemporary society, the number of children is terribly decreasing while the aged are numerically increasing. The former may be due to education and family planning, and the latter due to modern healthcare and increased longevity. Although, society has been taking care of the children all through, now it is time to take care of the aged, for they are a dominant chunk of the community. Someone once said, **"Take care of the aged, for they have taken care of you while you were young."** Now, it is a big challenge for society to undertake special programs and projects for this section of society. They are not a liability, but a big asset.

Back in Kerala, most of our Dioceses give top priority to the care of the aged. Many parishes have daycare centers for persons over sixty, where they're brought by vehicle, and the whole day would be spent in interesting programs like singing, Bible classes, health awareness programs, discussions, workshops, games, and so many other energizing, joyful activities. They even share a meal together before they disperse. This type of fellowship among senior persons seems to have reduced the death rate among them, as well as, increased the quality and longevity of life. Such programs have remarkably elevated the gloomy, lonely and disappointed ambience of their life to a robust, joyful mood desirous of living it up to the brim until the last.

In the North American locale of the Diocese, there are still unused skills and talents of a number of persons which we need to channelize for further strengthening the Church here. During the seventies, when the present senior generation was in their heyday, they had to commute long distances to reach the basements and worship halls, sparingly made available for us for worship. The young families spent whole Sundays for the church and within the church. They never forgot to carry their little children wherever they went, though it was very tough and cumbersome. Now, with dwindling mobility, their participation and contribution may not be at the same level. Youngsters with more skills and knowledge have emerged and are ready to be entrusted with more authority and leadership positions. It would be good to blend the vast experience of the elders with the new aspirations of the youngsters in molding church life. Church should never become a place of worship for a single homogenous age-group. Many para-churches have become worship places only for youngsters. The Church has continued for centuries,

because we gather around a liturgy of great heritage, and as a family of families. Children, youth, elders, men and women of various cultures, and concerns come together, to form a community of faith, hope, and love. Church is not a crowd, but it is a community founded on Christ moving towards eternity. Only when it becomes a purpose-driven community, does Church become relevant and contemporary. We need to discover the purpose of the Mar Thoma community, be involved in the search for its relevance and strive for its fulfillment in its North American existential reality. It is in a dialogue among the members of the church and confronting the context in which it is placed that we shall discover the nature, the purpose, and method of life and work of the Church.

The so-called retirement never comes into the life of a church person. Retirement may be a reality, in the sense that it is a **"change of work."** On retirement, time is at your disposal. You are your own boss, and you can make your own decisions on what to do and what not to do, what to choose and not to choose. Therefore, you should have a plan for the retirement period. All of us should have a life plan, a retirement plan, and I would say, even a plan for death and dying. I mean, a preparation for death too is important, as none of us would escape it, though we may not know the moment we will embrace it. As we grow old, eyesight decreases, hearing is impaired, walking becomes unsteady, voice becomes shaky, and we need the support of each other to carry on. As mobility minimizes, we need to maximize connectivity through all means and ways. Senior persons should live actively by communicating with their friends and people of the same age and interests through tele-conversations, internet, etc. New ventures like

the international prayer line is a fine opportunity for those with reduced mobility to hook up with birds of the same feather and make their lives more meaningful. Quarterly regional get-togethers of seniors as well as annual general conferences are very good steps in the direction of developing a more cohesive senior community. Some publications such as brief bulletins for private circulation with open space for the expression of experiences, dreams, and visions could be another method of life-sharing. Providing a special webpage for seniors in the Diocesan website would be mindful. Community living centers have become a great need of the day. Periodic national or international tours and short cruises will certainly enhance the joy of life. Visiting mission fields in India and viewing the videos of mission fields will be helpful to widen the horizons and the vision of that generation. **Four looks are important in the life of any human being:** 1. Look back and thank God. 2. Look ahead and trust Him. 3. Look around and serve Him. 4. Look within and strengthen Him. A wise person has stated, "The past is history, the future is a mystery, now is a present – a gift."

Life is the greatest gift of God. Time is the most valuable gift received by everyone. How to make the best use of time and life lie before us as the multimillion dollar question. Since the best is yet to be, make the rest of our time the best of our life. May the Giver of life and time enable us to fulfill what is expected of us! It doesn't matter how you began, but it matters more how you end up – never in a mess, but always a blessing.

Yours in Christ's Love,
Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Suffragan Metropolitan



STANDING ON THE PROMISES

Dhanya Elza Mathew
Phoenix MTC

In the pitch black byways of life,
I stumbled on my sins and fell.

In the surrounding murkiness I lost my way;
In the piercing silence, all seemed bleak.
A silver lining from a lone cloud shone above,
A gentle whisper through the night I heard,
"Fear not, I am with you,
Stand on my promise, is all I ask."

Through the deafening noise of the crowd,
When I couldn't hear even the shouts of my very soul
As the feeling of loneliness permeated through the horde
I felt there was no hope beyond.

A gentle touch on my shoulder, a loving caress,
Soft words through a benign smile
"I will guide you, take you home"
I knew I could stand on that promise.

When I floundered in the heavy rain of tears
As the thunder rolled, over the howling winds of doubt,
I thought back on His promises.

Promises of love, hope and future,
Promises of staying by my side no matter what,
Promises of healing, joy and an eternity.

I realized that I couldn't face the storms and rains alone;
I had to stand on the promises of the lover of my soul.

Alone, I walked on the bridge of the in-between,
But strong reassuring hands held my frail, nimble hand.
However, tiny doubts began to raise their heads in my innermost being.

I looked up at Him; He smiled at my doubtful face.
Then, peace that surpasses all understanding filled my soul,
It covered me, engulfed me and I was lost in it.

I smiled, because even when I was walking to my final home with Him,
I was still standing strong on the promises of my Lord.

ONE SHOT



Mary Aswati Varughese,
Chicago MTC

Football.

World Cup.

One shot at glory

Wrapped in Sweat soaked Jersey

One shot at history.

Sweat, tears, pain and Passion,

Many get but one shot

At the rainbow.

You get one shot

To be father/mother to a child

Be prepared, fearfully.

You get one shot

To be a Son/daughter

Be a blessing.

You get one shot

At life

Make it count.



ദൈവമേ എനിക്കൊരു നൊമ്പരം തരണമേ

(വേദഭാഗം: ലൂക്കോ 10:25-37)

Rev. John Mathew Kuriannoor

മലയാള ഭാഷയിൽ വ്യഭാൻ എന്ന വാക്കിന് വർദ്ധിച്ചു വരുന്നവൻ എന്നൊരർത്ഥമുള്ളതായി കേട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇവിടെ കൂടിയിരിക്കുന്ന എല്ലാവരും വ്യഭാൻമാരാണെന്ന് സമ്മതിക്കയാണെങ്കിൽ ദൈവം ഈ ആയുസ് നീട്ടി തന്നിരിക്കുന്നത് താലന്തുകളുടെ ഉപയോഗത്തിൽ വർദ്ധിച്ചു വരുവാനാണ്. നാം പല കാരണങ്ങളാൽ നിർത്തിക്കളഞ്ഞ നല്ല പ്രവർത്തികൾ തുടരുവാനും ഒരിക്കലും ആരംഭിക്കുവാൻ സാധിക്കാതിരുന്ന നല്ല കാര്യങ്ങൾ ആരംഭിക്കുവാനും സാധിച്ചാൽ ആയുർ ദൈർഘ്യം ധന്യമായി.

നല്ല ശമര്യക്കാരന്റെ ഉപമ ഏവർക്കും സുപരിചിതമാണ്. ശമര്യക്കാരൻ എന്ന സാധാരണ മനുഷ്യൻ 'നല്ല' എന്ന നാമ വിശേഷണത്തിന് പാത്രിഭുതനായത് അയാളുടെ പ്രവർത്തിയുടെ മാഹാത്മ്യം കൊണ്ടാണ്. കർത്താവ് ഒരവനിൽ നിന്നും എന്താഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു എന്നതാണ് ഇതിന്റെ സൂചന. പരമ്പരാഗതമായി യഹൂദനിൽ നിന്നും പ്രതീക്ഷിച്ചിരുന്നത് ഇതാ ഒരു ശമര്യക്കാരനിൽ നിന്നും ലഭിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. Every one has the potential to emerge differently from the average. നീയും അങ്ങനെ ചെയ്യുക എന്നതിൽ ആയിത്തീരലിനു (becoming) വേണ്ടിയുള്ള ആഹ്വാനമാണ്. True religion is not feeling; it is willing എന്ന Tozer ന്റെ പ്രസ്താവന എത്ര പ്രസക്തം!

വഴിമദ്ധ്യേ കർത്താവ് കണ്ടു മുട്ടുന്ന ഒരു ന്യായശാസ്ത്രിയുടെ സുപ്രധാന ചോദ്യത്തിന് കർത്താവിന്റെ കഥാരൂപത്തിലുള്ള ലളിതമായ മറുപടിയാണ് ഈ വേദഭാഗം. Jesus meets a crucial question with a casual answer. 'സംഭാഷണം' എന്ന കലയുടെ പ്രാധാന്യം ഇവിടെ വ്യക്തമാണ്. പല കഠിനമായ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്കും സൗഹൃദ സംഭാഷണം പരിഹാരം കാണിക്കും. Conversation is pro-active; it clarifies, comforts and transforms. It gives new hopes, opens up new awareness and inspires people for new ventures. വളരെ യേശു ആശയ വിനിമയ സൗകര്യമുള്ള ഈ ലോകത്തിൽ അടുത്തിരുന്നുള്ള സൗഹൃദസംഭാഷണത്തിന്റെ പ്രാധാന്യം കുറയുന്നു. Information and communication is no substitute for conversation. വേദപുസ്തക സംഭാഷണത്തിന്റെ പ്രാധാന്യം നമ്മെ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ഉല്പത്തിയിൽ ദൈവം നിരന്തരമായി സൃഷ്ടിയോട് സംഭാഷിക്കുന്നതായി നാം വായിക്കുന്നു. ദൈവം ആദ്മിനോടും, കയിനോടും, ഹാനോക്കിനോടും, നോഹയോടും, അബ്രഹാമിനോടും പിന്നീടുള്ള എല്ലാവരോടും സംഭാഷിക്കുന്നു. ഇത് ആധുനിക ലോകത്തിൽ ഒരു പാഠം അല്ലേ? തീൻ മേശയിൽ നിന്നു പോലും സംഭാഷണം മാഞ്ഞു പോയിട്ട് വ്യവസായിക പ്രാധാന്യമുള്ള സംവേദനം (business

communication) തൽ സ്ഥാനം പിടിച്ചടക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നു. പരിണിത ഫലമോ വീടുകളിൽ അകൽച്ചയും, അന്ധകാരവും, ശൂന്യതയും. അടുപ്പം കുറയുന്നിടത്ത് വ്യക്തികൾ (persons) ഒറ്റയാന്മാരായി (individuals) തരം താഴുന്നു. സമൂഹം ചിതറിപ്പോകുന്നു.

ഈ മനോഹരമായ കഥയിൽ രണ്ടു തരം ജീവിത ശൈലികളാണ് അവതരിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്.

1. സ്വയം കേന്ദ്രീകൃത (self centric) ജീവിത ശൈലി
2. ജീവൻ കേന്ദ്രീകൃത (Life centric) ജീവിത ശൈലി

കഥയുടെ ഒന്നാം ഭാഗത്ത് സ്വയം കേന്ദ്രീകൃത ജീവിതശൈലിയുടെ ഉടമകളായ മൂന്നു കുട്ടരെ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. (1) ഒറ്റയ്ക്കു യാത്ര ചെയ്യുന്ന മനുഷ്യൻ (2) മനുഷ്യനെ ആക്രമിക്കുന്ന കൊള്ളക്കാർ (3) മുറിവേറ്റവനെ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കാതെ മാറി കടന്നുപോകുന്ന ലേവ്യനും പുരോഹിതനും. ഇവർ മൂന്നു വ്യക്തികളല്ല; മൂന്ന് മനുഷ്യ സമൂഹങ്ങളാണ്; മൂന്ന് ജീവിത പ്രമാണങ്ങളാണ്.

1. യെരൂശലേം-യെരിഹോ പാതയിൽ അപകടം പതിയിരിക്കുന്നതിനാൽ തന്നിയെ ഒരാൾ യാത്ര ചെയ്യുന്നത് അസ്വഭാവികമാണ്. എന്നാൽ ഇവിടെ അസ്വഭാവികമാം വിധം ഒരാൾ യാത്ര ചെയ്യുകയും കള്ളന്മാരാൽ പിടിക്കപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഇതൊരു സൂചനയാണ്. എവിടെ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം നിയന്ത്രണ വിധേയമല്ലാതാകുന്നുവോ അവിടെ ജീവിതം

തകരുന്നു. Interdependance is the right form of independence. ഇതു നമ്മുടെ കൂട്ടി കളും യുവതലമുറയും പ്രത്യേകം ഓർക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യത്തിന് ശിക്ഷണവും അത്യാവശ്യമാണ്. നമ്മുടെ നാട്ടിൽ നിന്നും നാം ഇവിടേക്കു കൊണ്ടുവന്ന ഏറ്റം വലിയ നിയമി ശിക്ഷണവും നിയന്ത്രണവുമായിരുന്നു.

2. കള്ളന്മാർ ആധിപത്യ മോഹികളാണ്. അവർക്ക് ആക്രമണമാണ് ജീവിതശൈലി. മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ നൊമ്പരമോ വേദനയോ പ്രശ്നമല്ല. അവർക്ക് അതു സംബന്ധിച്ച് ദുഃഖമില്ല. അവർക്കു രക്തം കണ്ടാൽ ഒന്നും തോന്നുന്നില്ല. അവരിലൊന്നെ അവരിൽ കാട്ടുപൂച്ചയുടെ സ്വഭാവം രൂപപ്പെടുന്നതിനാൽ ദൈവം നൽകിയ സ്വരൂപം (Image) വിരൂപപ്പെടുന്നു.

3. കഥയിലെ ലേവ്യനും പുരോഹിതനും ഒരു കുറ്റവും പ്രത്യക്ഷമായി ചെയ്തില്ല. അവരിൽ നിർമ്മനുഷ്യ (Amoral) സ്വഭാവം എങ്ങനെയോ വന്നുകൂടി. Their religion made them incapable for compassion (John V. Taylor). ചെയ്യരുതാത്തത് ചെയ്യുന്നതു മാത്രമല്ല, ചെയ്യേണ്ടത് ചെയ്യാതിരിക്കുന്നതും പാപമാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാന സ്വഭാവമായ സ്നേഹം പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാനാകാതെ ഒരാൾക്ക് എങ്ങനെ ദൈവമക്കളായി ജീവിക്കാൻ കഴിയും?

കഥയുടെ രണ്ടാം ഭാഗം ജീവൻ കേന്ദ്രീകൃതമായ ധർമ്മശാസ്ത്രമാണ്. (Life centric ethics) അതിന് മൂന്നു ജീവിതശൈലികൾ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുകയാണ്.

- 1. ശമര്യാക്കാരൻ 2. സത്രം ഉടമസ്ഥൻ 3. സ്നേഹ ശുശ്രൂഷ തുടരുന്നവർ

1. ശമര്യാക്കാരൻ: തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ട ദൈവജനം എന്ന് സ്വയം വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നവരാൽ പാർശ്വവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട വ്യക്തിയാണ്. അയാളിൽ ഒഴുകുന്ന ജീവരക്തം സംശുദ്ധമല്ല എന്ന് യഹൂദർ വിശ്വസിച്ചിരുന്നു. തള്ളപ്പെട്ടവരുടേയും പീഡിതരുടേയും പുനരുദ്ധാരണം വേദപുസ്തകത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാന സന്ദേശമാണ്. പുറപ്പാട് സംഭവവും യേശുയുടെ പ്രവാചകന്റെ പ്രസംഗങ്ങളും (അദ്ധ്യായം 35, 61 മുതലായവ) ദൈവം സ്നേഹമാണെന്ന് ശമര്യാക്കാരൻ വിശ്വസിക്ക മാത്രമല്ല തന്നിലേക്ക് ഒഴുകി വന്ന ദൈവസ്നേഹം മറ്റുള്ളവരിലേക്കു പകരേണ്ടതാണെന്ന അവബോധവും അയാളെ ഭരിച്ചിരുന്നു. ശമര്യാക്കാരനെ യേശു അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിൽ പല സൂചനകളുണ്ട്. തള്ളപ്പെട്ടവരിലും നന്മയുണ്ട്. അതു പ്രോത്സാഹിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടതാണ്. തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ടവർ എന്നു കരുതുന്നവർ പരാജിതരാകുന്നിടത്ത് ദൈവം തള്ളപ്പെട്ടവരെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത് ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു.

2. സത്രം ഉടമസ്ഥൻ: അയാൾ ഒരു ദൈവ വിശ്വാസിയോ, മതനേതാവോ എന്നൊന്നും കഥയിൽ സൂചനകളില്ല. ഒന്നുമാത്രം വ്യക്തം. അയാളുടെ സ്നേഹം, സ്വീകരിക്കലില്ലായ്മയും ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തലില്ലായ്മയും അയാൾ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തി. അനേക മതങ്ങളും സംസ്കാരങ്ങളും അതിന്റെ പേരിൽ വേർതിരിവുകളുമുള്ള ഈ ലോകത്തിൽ സത്രം ഉടമസ്ഥനിലെ നീതിബോധം എത്ര അനുകരണീയം. അയാൾ ഇടമില്ലാത്തവന് ഇടം കൊടുത്തതിലൂടെ ആധുനിക ലോകത്തിന് ജീവൻ കേന്ദ്രീകൃത സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ മാതൃക കാട്ടുകയാണ്. True religion is relatedness to reality എന്നത് ഇവിടെ അന്വർത്ഥമായി.

3. സ്നേഹശുശ്രൂഷ തുടരുന്നവർ: ഇരുവരുടേയും തുടരെയുള്ള പരിചരണം ഇവിടെ കാണാം. ഇനിയും വല്ലതും ചെലവിട്ടാൽ പിന്നെ വന്നു തന്നുകൊള്ളാം

എന്ന വാഗ്ദാനം ശുശ്രൂഷാരംഗത്തെ ഒരു മാതൃകയാണ്. നമ്മുടെ സേവനരീതികളിൽ താൽക്കാലികതകൾ ഉണ്ട്. വികാരാവേശത്തിൽ നാം ചിലതു ചെയ്യുന്നു. (Charity) എന്നാൽ പിന്നീട് ആ വ്യക്തികളെയോ സ്ഥാപനത്തെയോ ഓർക്കുന്നില്ല. സഹായത്തിന്റെ തുടർച്ചയില്ലാതെ നമ്മുടെ എത്രയോ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ നട്ടംതിരിയുന്നു എന്നത് ഇത്തരൂണത്തിൽ ഓർക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്.

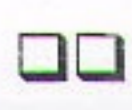
If there is no kind man there will be no mankind എന്ന സത്യം നാം തൃജിച്ചുകൂടാ.

കെവിൻ കാർട്ടേഴ്സിന്റെ ജീവിതകഥ സുപ്രസിദ്ധമാണ്. വലിയ ഫോട്ടോഗ്രാഫറായിരുന്ന അദ്ദേഹം അസ്വസ്ഥനാകാൻ കാരണം താൻ എടുത്ത ചിത്രങ്ങൾ ഒരു സ്ത്രീയുടെ ചോദ്യമായിരുന്നു. അദ്ദേഹം ചിത്രത്തിനു കിട്ടിയ അംഗീകാരം സ്വീകരിക്കാനായി എത്തിയപ്പോൾ അവർ പറയുകയാണ്: പട്ടിണി കൊണ്ട് മരിക്കാനായ കുഞ്ഞിനെ കഴുകൻ കൊത്തി കൊണ്ടു പോകാനിരിക്കുന്ന ചിത്രം വളരെ ശ്രേഷ്ഠമാണ്. എന്നാൽ ഒരു ചോദ്യം ചോദിക്കട്ടെ, Now where is that child? ചക്രവാളങ്ങളിലൂടെ അലഞ്ഞുതിരിയുന്ന ആ ചോദ്യം അയാളെ അസ്വസ്ഥനാക്കി. ഒടുവിൽ അദ്ദേഹം സഹിക്കവയ്യാതെ ജീവനൊടുക്കി.

സിസ്റ്റർ ജൂലിയയുടെ പ്രാർത്ഥനയോടെ ഈ പഠനം ഉപസംഹരിക്കാം.

- Lord, give me three wounds
The wound of contrition
The wound of compassion
The wound of longing for God

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GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph



An Introductory Note: My wife Beela and I got the unique privilege of being invited to attend the first Diocesan Conference of Senior Fellowship of the Diocese of North America and Europe. It was hosted by the Detroit Mar Thoma Church from 16 to 18 October 2014. Under the leadership of the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa over a hundred and thirty delegates from several parts of the Diocese participated in the conference. The theme, *Churching the Diaspora - Faith Development and Stewardship* was very appropriate and well discussed. We were impressed by the well organized way in which the conference was run and the participation of the young people of the parish in providing hospitality to the delegates.

This first-time gathering was motivated by great expectations from the Seniors. It was an occasion of mutual enrichments. It is good to note that the conference will continue on an annual basis. This will be an effective channel for sharing the rich experience of the Seniors in the total ministry of the Church in the Diocese.

The following article includes the thematic presentation I was asked to make and some reflections on other subjects discussed in the conference.

The thematic presentation was on *faith development and aging*. In order to make the session participatory, we used a workshop approach using a worksheet.

The Joy of Growing Old: Caleb was eighty five years old when he asked Joshua to assign him the hill country of Anakim giants, and he captured the city of Hebron and drove out the giants. Michael Angelo was still designing churches at the age of 88. Albert Schweitzer was opening a hospital in Africa at the age of 89. Keeping ourselves in creative actions is an effective way of using our productive years of old age. In spite of our physical ailments and limitations we can be of great use to ourselves and the community. Many senior citizens found joy in playing the role of grandparents and watching grandchildren grow. Some others found meaningful experience in small group get-together and gardening. Watching TV shows has been common factor for most of the participants. Much more than their counterparts in India, almost all were keen to keep themselves fit physically. Also, the workshop looked at the possibility of examining our life in a continuum of pain and pleasure. In the Freudian scale, people always wish to stay in the area of physical pleasure. As we grow old we need to practice the art of discovering "pleasure" in "pain" and sacrificial life. It is the joy that we get when we help out our

indisposed spouse or keep awake by her/his bedside to ensure that regular hourly medicine is administered. It is the pleasure we get out of being the sole companion to someone in loneliness. It is the satisfaction we get when we feel that we are still useful to others and being wanted.

Affirmation About Aging: Billy Graham said, "old is authentic, old is genuine, old is valuable" We affirm that growing old is part of the creative plan of God for human beings. "I have cared for you from the time you were born. I am your God and will take care of you until you are old and your hair is gray" (Isaiah 46: 3, 4).

The *mountain climbing model* is the best affirmation and perspective of growing old. Many people consider life like climbing a mountain. At childhood the climbing begins and then continues through adolescence to youth when a person reaches the pinnacle of the mountain. Then, after a while, the going down starts through retirement, old age, and finally to the bottom of the pit which is death. The Christian perspective of growing old is totally different. Life has no descent. We continue to go up and up and on the way we meet the golden door of death which takes us to the real mountain pinnacle! Shutting off of eyes and ears and decline of physical and mental faculties, and finally, the shedding off of the whole body is necessary for this heavenly launch.

Renewing Life: The disappointment in many hearts is, because of the feeling that old age cannot be controlled, maneuvered or renewed. This feeling is not true. Life can be totally renewed as we grow old. The *eagle model* is a prime example. The eagle has, perhaps, the longest life among birds. It can live up to 70 years. However, at the age of 40 the eagle has to make a crucial decision, *to die* because its beak is bent and broken, its talons unable to catch prey and the old feathers stuck to the chest making flying almost impossible, or *to renew its life*. For renewing its life it has to go back and sit on the nest. First, it has to hit its old beak on the rock and tear it away. A new beak will come after a few days. It has to do the same with its talons. Finally, it has to pull out all the old feathers from the wings. After some days new feathers will appear. Thus after 150 days the eagle can fly back to live another 30 years!

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount on wings like eagles. As we grow old we have to give up many old habits. We need to develop the will to renew ourselves. A useful and enriching exercise in renewal process is to re-write one's life story giving it new meaning, weaving experience of joy and sorrow as well as success and failures into a *colorful tapestry* to present to the Almighty.

Major Concerns of Growing Old: The conference took time to discuss almost all major issues that cover old age. It may be good to highlight some of them here. In the inaugural message His Lordship Geevarghese Mar Theodosius affirmed that the vision and rich experience of the Seniors are resources which are the strength of the present and inspiration of the future.

Other concerns expressed and discussed were about sustaining the values of marital relationship and family set up, the immigrant family in the purpose of God, general health and things to remember, expectations of seniors, pain management, and dealing with finances. Rev. John Mathew's Bible studies rolled down a canvass to draw a composite picture of all these. Regular physical activity sessions kept the Seniors fit and active.

Expectation of the Seniors: Special mention needs to be made about this. Mainly, it was about the expectation of the Seniors from the Church and its ministry. The Seniors are happy that the Church has finally recognized them as a category within its total ministry, just like Sunday School, Youth league and Sevika Sanghom. However, they seriously felt the need of the help of the Church for other services to the Seniors.

Major issue is about coping with loneliness. Many seniors live alone or with their spouse. What is required is an ongoing ministry to visit them on a regular basis and assist them in their urgent needs. Such a mechanism needs to emerge in all parishes. What was suggested was the formation of special assistance committees/groups in all areas of the parish.

Another need was the provision of Senior citizen's/old-age homes which could be run by the parishes. Many seniors thought that this was a viable idea. There was a positive movement towards the realization of this concept. However, some were skeptical about the Mar Thoma Parish's ability to run such institutions.

Preparing for death: Everyone is convinced about the certainty of death. However, preparing for death is totally another matter. In the conference the discussion about this went into lighter veins; there are only two ways of facing death - die smiling in hope, or die crying in frustration. Why not die smiling?

The first step in preparation for death is to consciously include death in the agenda of life. We need to have much moral and spiritual courage to include this special item in life's program. Many of us are afraid to do it; some are frustrated to do it, and some others, unwilling. The second thing is to put our house in order. It would be nice to make a list of things we want to accomplish or complete before we die. Many write their will and sell off unwanted properties. Some others even prepare their burial place and keep it ready. Thirdly, reflecting on life after death can be another spiritual exercise we can practice to gain courage. Jesus' assurance is the most strengthening word: "I am the resurrection and life". The death and resurrection of Jesus is the prolepsis of our life to come. Along with these, we can restore our broken relationships with others and lead a holy life.

A great lesson Jesus taught us about death was through his own death. For him death was not an unwanted thing but the most wanted thing to fulfill his mission. He knew that death was necessary before resurrection. He spoke about it many times. So death came to him as an *expected event* of life. More important was the fact that for Jesus death was an *act of freedom*.

During the last days of his life Jesus spoke about his suffering and death. He told his listeners that he had the authority to give away his life and take it back whenever he wanted. So, on the cross he said, "It is finished!" and "Father, in your hands I place my spirit". That was a purpose-driven death. So for all the faithful need to consider their death as an act of freedom.

So do not be worried. The best is yet to come!
Grow old gracefully!



When You Drink the Water, Remember Who Dug the Well

Lal Varghese, Esq., Dallas



Recently, while I was reading the latest issue of Texas Bar Journal, a magazine published by the State Bar of Texas for its member Attorneys, I read the above title in an article. I thought it will be an apt title to this article, which reflects on the pain and suffering taken by the early immigrants to form the parishes and diocese here. Joshua 24: 13 says: 'So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.' In a sermon delivered by C. H. Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on June 26, 1879 he said: "The Israelites, when they came into Canaan, entered into possession of a country which was thoroughly prepared for their occupation. There were walled cities and houses exactly adapted for their use and in habitable repair. The vineyards were in full bearing and the hills terraced for cultivation. They were not like immigrants to the wild west who had to clear forests and turn over prairies! They did not even have to take possession of ruined cities and to rebuild them! For the most part, everything stood waiting for them, 'houses full of all good things,' and even "the old corn of the land" stored up for their immediate use! They entered into a possession of wells which they had not dug, cities which they had not built, olive trees and vineyards which they had not planted."

This is exactly true in our case also. Our earlier immigrants dug the soil and built the walls of our sanctuaries, they furnished it, they maintained the same, they bought parsonages for our Achens, and they planted everything and watered it and nurtured it. Like the Israelites ate the fruit of the trees which they had not planted, we the later immigrants are enjoying the fruits of their labor. We have many blessings showered upon us, which impose corresponding obligations. God asked Israelites to worship only Him and not any other gods. Similarly, our responsibility is to worship our Lord in truth and spirit and at the same time to honor and pay our respect to the earlier immigrants who paved the way for our continued faithful journey in this diocese. Our obligation is to be faithful to them, and their families who struggled with them, so that we could enjoy the fruits of their labor. Similarly the later immigrants have an obligation to the new generations. Who planted those vines and live trees? Those faithful who came before us. Then let us plant more for those who will come after us. Our forefathers taught us and prayed with us – and their parents taught them and prayed with them - and therefore let us do the same thing; pray with our children and grandchildren and teach them the path they have to move forward.

Often, we forget such great people who sacrificed their time, money and talents, especially at a time when very limited resources were available in the sixties and seventies. My aunt, who came to Dallas in 1971 along with two other Marthomite nurses (BTW both of them passed away) usually tells me about the struggles they undertook to settle down in a foreign land after migrating from India. They did not have cars to ride to work or to go shopping for groceries (that was their major shopping at that time). They used to walk together to work and also walked together for grocery shopping. There were only

limited numbers of families of Malayali origin in Dallas during that time. But, they worked, married, brought their spouses, and raised their children in spite of all the difficulties and the struggles they had to go through. But it seems that the second or third generation seems to be less concerned about their welfare now. They do not reflect about the struggles the first generation had taken to nurture a new generation of Malayali origin in this land.

This is equally true in the case of our church members also. We have large parishes and bigger congregations now. We have English worship and Malayalam worship services every Sunday. We have English speaking and Malayalam speaking Achens doing pastoral ministry in this diocese. But, how many of us remember the earlier immigrants who struggled to establish parishes and diocese here? It is to be remembered, the church leadership once discouraged the earlier immigrants from establishing congregations here and asked them to join the Episcopal churches here. Then Metropolitan Most Rev. Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma even issued a Kalpana (August 1, 1973) declining the request of people from New York area to form a Mar Thoma Congregation. But God's will and purpose was the other way when on February 5, 1976, the church leadership changed their attitude and approved the first congregations in New York.

In this connection it is noteworthy to remember that 2014 is the centenary year of the first known Marthomite Deacon N. M. Abraham (Late Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan). He graduated from Wycliffe College, University of Toronto (1912-1914) and received his M. A., and an honorary D. D. Abraham Mar Thoma

was the first college graduate, who entered the ministry of the church in 1911. Later several laity and clergy came for higher studies including Mr. K. K. Kuruvilla, who graduated from the Hartford Seminary Foundation, Connecticut, in the early 1920s. He is the first lay person to become the principal of Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, before it was upgraded as a graduate degree college. Several years later Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma studied at Hartford Seminary and obtained his Ph.D., and he is the first Mar Thoma Bishop to earn a doctorate degree. Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma was student at Union Theological Seminary, New York (1928-1930), followed by Rev. K. K. George, who studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey in the 1940s, who later served as the Sunday School general secretary for 38 years (1944-1982). It is to be remembered that our present metropolitan Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thomas (Rev. P. T. Joseph), was a student at Protestant Episcopal Seminary in Virginia and conducted worship services at various places during the period 1965-1970, and also encouraged the laity to form prayer groups and congregations at various places. The late Rev. Cherian Thomas and Rev. K. T. Alexander followed their training there. We also remember the two of our Bishops Rt. Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Theophilus and Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius visited various places in this Diocese during the period 1970-1975 and paved the way for establishing prayer groups and congregations.

Similarly, regular worship services began in Toronto since 1972 with the arrival of Rev. Abraham Lincoln and continued by Rev. C. I. George (Athanasius Thirumeni) who was the Vicar since 1975. Rt. Rev. Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa joined in 1976 and rendered services to the congregation for a short period, but had to leave immediately followed by Rev. Ipe Joseph from 1977-1980. Our present Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa also rendered sacrificial services to the congregations in Canada while Thirumeni was a student at Mac Master University Hamilton, Canada. Thirumeni played the key role in establishing family conferences in this Diocese by taking leadership to conduct the first family conference in Toronto in 1982. Now, we have 8 parishes and one congregation in Canada, which are the wells dug and vines planted by the earlier immigrants and those who followed.

We can trace occasional worship being conducted according to Mar Thoma rites from 1930 in England. But it was in 1957 that Rev. V. V. Alexander started a regular service according to Mar Thoma rites at the chapel of the Indian YMCA at Fitzroy Square, London, and it continued there for 21 years. In 1978 the gathering became an official congregation of the Mar Thoma Church. In October 1978, the Diocesan Bishop Mar Chrysostom, approved the congregation as a parish. The first vicar was Rev. Philip Varghese and by the grace of God Rev. V. V. Alexander remained as the emeritus vicar until 2010. At present there are 10 parishes and 3 congregations in the Europe region, which also reflects the sacrifices of the earlier immigrants and those who followed them.

The first congregation to be formed in this Diocese was in 1972 in New York, which was later approved as a parish in 1976. That parish was divided into four different parishes in 1980 covering the following areas: 1) Manhattan, Bronx, Yonkers 2) Queens, Brooklyn, Long Island 3) New Jersey, and 4) Staten Island. The story in other places also was not very different. In places like Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago, Houston, Boston, Philadelphia, prayer groups were formed first and later became congregations and finally approved as parishes. The first parish building built was for the Trinity MTC, Houston in 1984. A zonal council was formed in 1982 and continued until the diocese was formed in 1988. At present, we have 71 parishes, 7 congregations and 70 priests including retired priests and student Achens in this Diocese serving in United States, Canada and Europe. The Diocese was officially formed in 1988, and the first Diocesan Bishop was the late Most Rev. Dr. Alexander

Mar Thoma. He was followed by the Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom. The first resident Bishop was Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Saffragan Metropolitan, followed by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa. At present Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius is serving as the Diocesan Bishop since January 2009. We purchased the first diocesan center at Philadelphia in 1984, later the present diocesan center in Merrick, New York in 1998. We have completed 40 years in this diocese after establishing congregations and parishes, and 25 years after being approved as a diocese.

Our growth in this diocese is remarkable, and we have grown in the number of parishes, membership, and Achens serving in this Diocese. But we often forget one important thing, how many of our second and third generation is attending our parishes on a regular basis? A recent article written by me under the title "The Religious Nones of Mar Thoma Church", and which appeared in Sabha Tharaka, April 2014, is worth reading in this connection. Only about 25% of the second and third generation Marthomites, who were either born or brought up in this diocese attend our parishes on a regular basis. Where are the 75% of the younger generation Marthomites? It appears that both the parishes and the diocese are less concerned about them. We are also less concerned about their parents who established parishes and finally the diocese here. It is high time that as a diocese we need to start projects like retirement homes for the early immigrants who are mostly living by themselves. They need the support of the community, our caring, and love to sustain their lives in a fruitful way.

We have several diocesan level organizations with its own national conferences including by Sunday School, Youth Fellowship (Student Conference), Edavaka Mission, Sevika Sangham, Yuvajana Sakyam. Several diocesan committees like Literature Society, Mission Board, Family Conference (now regional family conferences), Native American Mission, Mexico Mission, Neighborhood Mission, regional centers (RAC) and Mar Thoma Messenger are formed and working in remarkable ways only because of the earnest efforts of the earlier immigrants. At times, we even forget to recognize people who envisioned the formation of such organizations. Let us not forget them and their efforts when we tread the new paths in our faith journey. Let us not forget them when we draw the water from the wells that

we did not dig; when we reap the fruits from the plants that we did not plant. Let us continue to nurture our faith in the footsteps of the earlier immigrants and remember them every day when we worship in our sanctuaries.

It is good that as a diocese we celebrated the fourth week in November as Diaspora Sunday. Every year, the diocesan Bishop issues a Kalpana to parishes requesting them to celebrate the Diaspora Sunday and arrange programs for the earlier immigrants and also offering them opportunities to assist the Sunday service in different ways including leading the special service, reading Bible portions, delivering the sermon etc. It is sorrowful to note that only very few parishes celebrate the Diaspora Sunday and recognize and appreciate the earlier immigrants in this diocese. This is where the title of this article becomes relevant – ‘When you drink the water, remember who dug the well.’ Isaiah 51:1 reminds us also the same thing; *“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn.”* We often forget them and even fail to appreciate them at least once a year. Let us make an effort beginning this year that all our 71 parishes and 7 congregations celebrate the 5th Sunday of November as Diaspora Sunday. Let us remember those who went before us, paved the way, and took the struggles and the pain so that we could worship in comfortable sanctuaries with beautiful stained glass windows.

I also urge the Mar Thoma Church leadership to recognize the last Sunday of November (which is also the Thanksgiving Weekend in United States) as Diaspora Sunday and to celebrate the same in all the Mar Thoma parishes around the world recognizing the sacrifices undertaken by the earlier generation in establishing parishes around the

world especially in the Middle East, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore and other places. I also urge the church leadership to recognize Diaspora Marthomites as an official organization of the church and also to arrange a meeting during one of the days of the Maramon Convention, where most of the earlier immigrants gather for attending the convention and also to meet earlier settlers from different parts of the world. Let us look into the rock from where we are cut, when we are enjoying the fruits of the labor of the faithful who have gone before us. Let us remember those who dug the wells, when we drink the water abundantly. It is our responsibility both as individuals, families, parishes, diocese, and as a church to acknowledge the sacrifices that were undertaken by those faithful who have gone before us so that we could worship as a community of faithful witnesses in the continuing faith journey of our church.



The Exodus of the Youth



Yohann Kuruvila

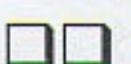
As a 16 year old who has been raised in the west, my observation is that we are an excellent church when it relates to celebrating our lives with Christ, but we are challenged when it comes to retaining our youth within the Mar Thoma faith. I see many of my brothers and sisters in faith leaving the church for a multitude of reasons. I do not like this, but I can understand the reasoning they give for leaving the church.

One of the reasons youth leave the church is because their voices are not heard when they try to voice their opinion on matters. Many of their reasonable requests are denied by the leaders of the church for reasons that seem incomprehensible to them. As a result, many youth get frustrated that no one is listening to their requests and hence look outside the church for their spiritual needs. They usually head to non-denominational churches which tend to be more relevant in addressing the needs of their generation and tend to allow them to have more involvement in church related matters. If we do not allow our youth to assume responsibilities relating to the church, they tend to leave because they do not feel a personal involvement in church matters and hence feel no kinship towards the church community. The solution to this problem is to involve the youth in more matters and taking the time to listen to their questions with constructive criticism in order to make them feel that they are part of the church and hence a part of the church's loving community. The other branches of the church should also mentor the youth so that they are prepared to lead the church when the time comes for the torch to be passed down to the youth.

Another reason youth leave the church is because they are confronted with objections they do not know how to answer, and as a result they tend to 'de-convert' from Christianity.

This is more due to incomplete teaching of theological matters to the youth rather than the church leadership. More theological teaching should be done in Sunday School, since the world will be pushing its agenda 24/7 for 5 days a week and the church needs to counteract that and push Christ's message to all of its students. As of right now, our Sunday school mainly teaches the background of the Mar Thoma church and trivia from the Bible. This is beneficial, but not as beneficial as it could be. If we were taught how to answer objections about Christianity, it would help the youth to be prepared for the questions they will be asked by the world at large

By engaging the youth in church related matters, and teaching them how to deal with objections they will receive from the world, we can reduce attrition. My prayer is that our church will be able to keep up with the times and retain the younger generation, like me, so that we may be a light to the community around us.



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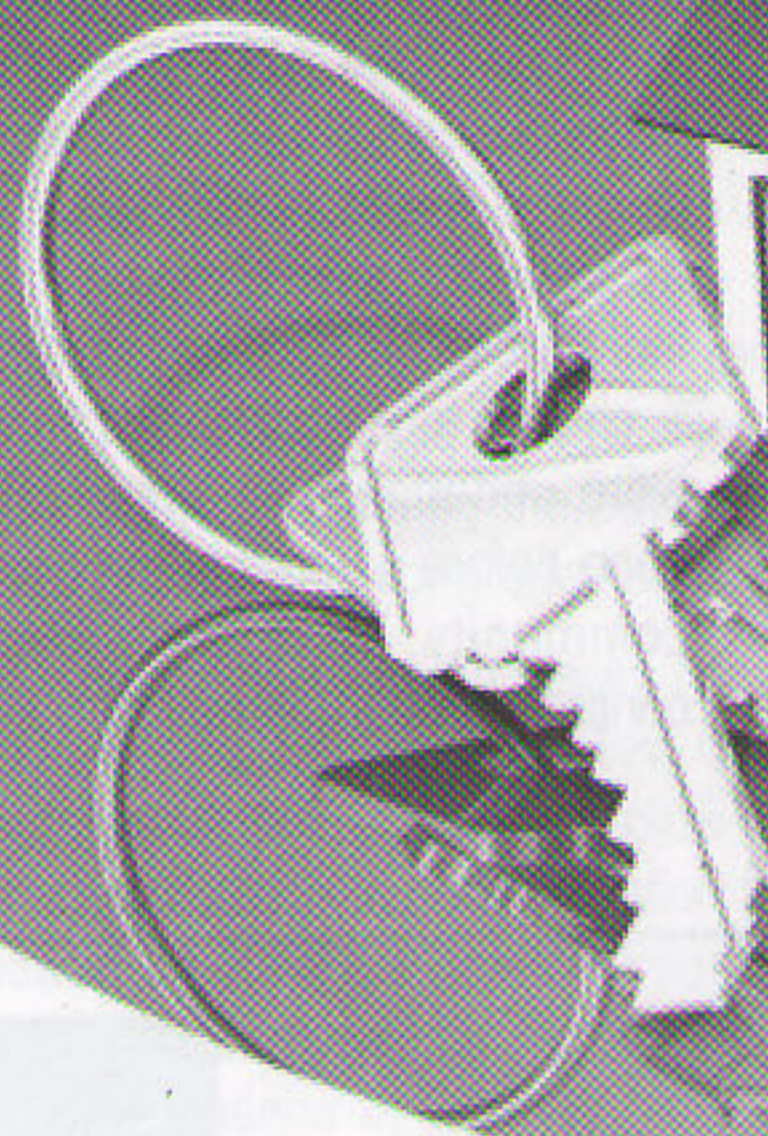


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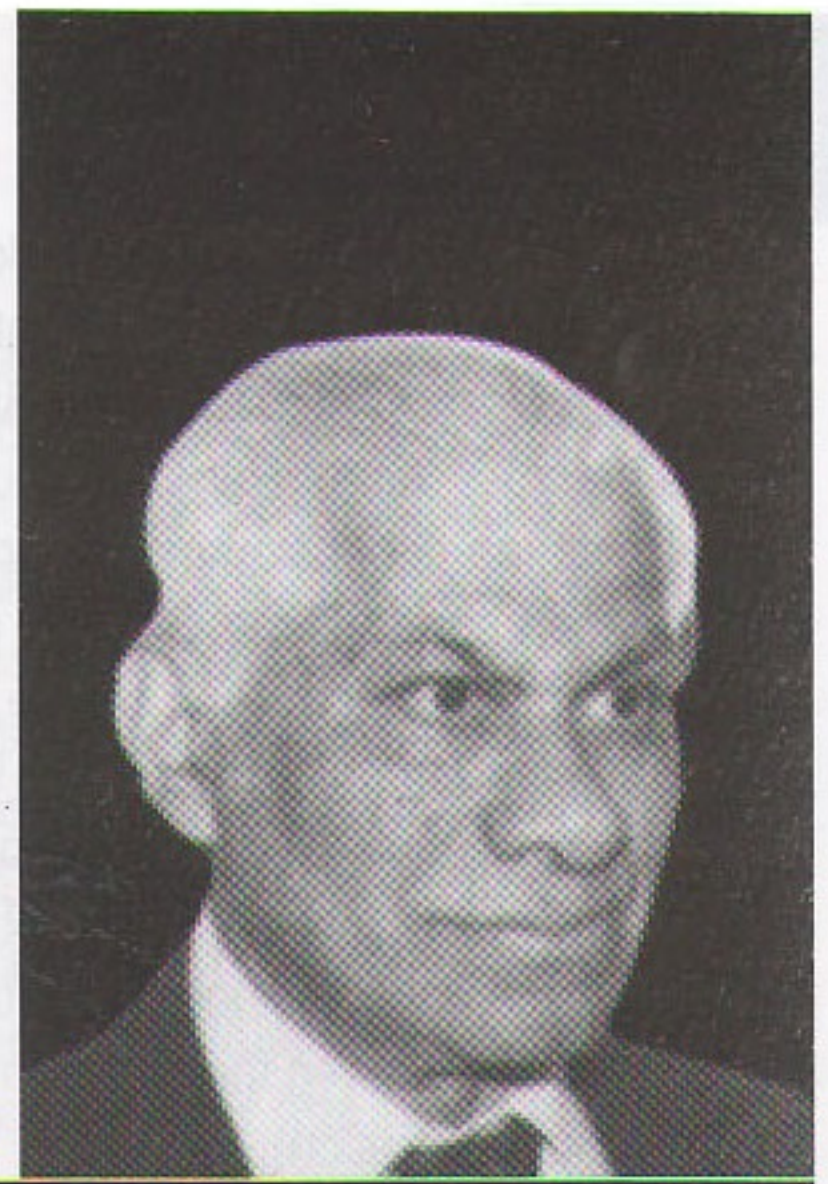
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Retired Life and Aging in America

Dr. T. M. Thomas



Here I discuss some central questions on teaching after doing the work of a professional teacher for over fifty years. Though my official teaching ended, and my retired life began in the Spring of 2005, I had the opportunity to teach a course or two from time to time. During my retired life, I continue writing books and articles on "Research and Publications." The process of aging in America is the focus here. In this aging process we become wiser (characterized by the quality of wisdom).

There are two sections on this. The first is a paper which I presented at a conference three years ago soon after I started my retirement in 2005. It is on 'Aging in America as understood in different cultures' (a comparative perspective). It was modified in 2009. In the second section I raise a few central questions. They all are related to the process of aging in retired life.

Section One: Aging in America: Contemporary Psychological Studies Compared to Earlier Understanding of Religious Views

America is considered a youth-oriented culture. When I came to this country in 1963, I was advised not to ask questions regarding one's age and a few other topics such as salary, death and other personal questions. Though appropriate advice for the 1960s, today these topics are not taboo in society. In that case, when did this change occur? My answer is that it happened in the 1980s, for the most part. I have seen colleges including my own, the University of Bridgeport, start new courses and programs in Gerontology, the study of old age. We offered courses in "death and dying," "loss and grief," "human consciousness," and others, through our counseling department. Hospitals trained doctors and nurses to deal with the process of dying, along with "pain and suffering" or "pain management..."

Recent Social Forces in America

There are a few other social forces working in favor of senior citizens in American society. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, rather than limiting itself to the rights of African American population, began to spread to other groups and causes. The weaker segments in society received greater recognition and voice, starting with women in the 1970s. The Elder segment of the population was seen in a different light by the next decade. The organization formed for these senior citizens, called AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) emerged as a strong organization for adults above 50. It promoted "independence, dignity, and purpose for older persons," as well as to "enhance the quality of life for older persons." After a humble beginning in 1958 by a retired high school principal, Ethel Andrews, AARP grew as a powerful organization, in the last five or six decades. Another influential person in understanding older adults is Betty Freidan, the author of "*Feminine Mystique*" (1963). After becoming the leader of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s, she

moved on to a study of older adults, both men and women. She published her book, "*The Foundation of Age*" (1993), not the "Fountain of Youth" in a country like America. Older adults can also be studied by relating this stage to previous stages as a life cycle approach. Let me explain this new approach in the study of older adults.

Life Cycle Studies in Psychology

In the growth of Psychology as a social science in the last 130 years (the first psychological laboratory established in Germany, 1879), the Life Cycle Studies emerged with Erik Erikson, with his publication of "*Childhood and Society*" (1950) and the eight stages of life. Though Erikson is known all over the world for the study of adolescents and the "identity of crisis," his contributions to the study of adults seem to be the most valuable. He divided adult life into three stages, followed by five early stages which are 1) Infancy (stage of trust), 2) Early Childhood (stage of autonomy), 3) Play (stage of initiative), 4) School Years (Industrious stage), and 5) Adolescence (stage of identity formation). The last three stages are 6) Young Adulthood (marked by intimacy vs. isolation), 7) Generativity vs. Stagnation, and 8) Integrity vs. Despair. During the stage of Intimacy of Young Adulthood, close relationships are formed. In the next stage, the middle age, the coming generation will be the primary concern when the family grows. Finally, in the eighth stage, integrity of old age, a person realistically looks at death, loss, separation, meaning of life and other related questions. In each stage there is the potential for positive and negative developments. The adjustments made at one stage will affect the next positively or negatively and hence the crisis in different stages. The personal crisis is related to the social structure as shown in his studies of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther, Hitler, and others.

Following Erikson, another psychologist, Gail Sheehy, continued more recent studies and published her findings and interpretations in two books. They are "*Passages: Predictable Crisis of Adult Life*," A Bantam Book in 1976 and "*New Passages: Mapping Your Life across Time*," Random House, 1995. Sheehy, in her research on life cycle has noticed that the dimension of life cycle has been fundamentally altered and it happened within a short span of time, just one generation. Puberty arrives earlier by several years. Adults live much longer than before, and life expectancy is on the rise. The number of people reaching the old age 70, 80, 90 and even 100 is much higher than before. Active participation in adult life is much longer from age 21 to age 65, if not longer. (If I were teaching in India, I would have retired at age 55 in contrast to America, where the retirement age is 65. Actually, I continued teaching at my college till age 71, four years ago when I retired. Even then it was my "voluntary" retirement since there was no pressure from the administration).

Sheehy has separated the longer years of adulthood into three. She called them: (i) Provisional Adulthood (ages 18 to 30), (ii) First Adulthood (ages 30 to 45 or 50) and finally (iii) Second Adulthood (ages 45 to 85+). To both Erikson and Sheehy, the older adults are marked by the stage of Integrity. During this final stage, people try to integrate the disparate aspects of life into wholeness to achieve the fullness of living. The issue of the search for meaning becomes the central one.

Understanding of Old Age by Religions

The contemporary understanding of Old Age is based upon "scientific" studies. From this, we now pass on to the Religious understanding of the Old Age. We begin by selecting India and its major religion, Hinduism. According to this religion, a person is expected to pass through four different stages in life. The first one is the stage of a student or *bramachari* when the student leads a celibate life. Student lives at the home of the teacher or *guru* and becomes a part of the household. The second stage is the life of a house-holder, when a young person takes care of his own family. The involvement in the world through work diminishes over the years when the person becomes a forest dweller, a retired life as a hermit. It is the third stage. Eventually, the hermit becomes a *sanyasin* or an ascetic without attachment to the world, the fourth stage. Though he returns to the world, he shows the virtues of detachment to the world. While passing through these four different stages, he attains all the four goals of life. These goals in the life of a Hindu are *artha* (wealth), *Kama* (physical pleasures), *dharma* (duty), and *moksha* (liberation). The supreme goal in life is to attain liberation from birth and rebirth when the individual soul becomes part of the Supreme soul and *moksha* is finally attained.

Biblical Understanding of Old Age

The Biblical understanding of life is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The patriarchs and the leaders like prophets and kings described in the Old Testament lived a long life, a blessing from God. They include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Moses, Joshua, and others who followed them, the prophets, the kings, and other rulers of nations. Women in general had a hard time, especially when they were widows. There were special ways of taking care of these widows and others living on the margins of society. The God of the Old Testament was seen as a Just God interested in leading people to live under righteous systems.

In the New Testament times, God is seen as one who cares about all human beings, including the disabled, poor and the marginalized. Though He died fairly young, Jesus showed the path of humility and service or sacrifice to others. The human dignity and worth of all human beings became the focus of Christianity over the years. Jesus came to establish God's Kingdom on earth. This kingdom is open to all who love God and all his creations. This love is manifested through our day-to-day living in this world. We

continue our life in eternity. Eternal life begins in this world and continues in the next. Jesus taught us about eternal life, and he showed the way to attain this life, which is the greatest purpose of living in this world.

The Retired Life of Persons in Old Age

All of a sudden, the regular routine activities we have been doing for many years are taken away from us. The new situation demands a great deal of readjustments, including financial planning and psychological adjustments. Some of the dreams in life unfulfilled thusfar can be planned during retirement. A good example is traveling and seeing new places. However, we learn that we cannot accomplish everything we want. The body becomes weak and frail. Sickness and visits to doctor's office or hospitals become the new routine. In spite of such limitations, it is possible to find new ways of life fulfillment. Voluntary work, new games, exercise for body, fellowship with others of the same age group and other such activities have their role to play for a new life. These changes assume that there is no retirement in life, rather we move on to greater fulfillment and perfection.

A recent study shows that children born in 2009 will have the highest chance for living the longest life possible among all human beings. Already, we have noticed the increase of life expectancy during these years. Adult life-study is now undertaken by dividing it into two or more stages. Such life cycle studies, as initiated by Erikson and Sheehy, are presented in this paper. Old age, sickness, death, and purpose-driven life are not taboo subjects anymore, but significant topics dealing with the realities of contemporary modern living.

From the contemporary scientific developmental studies we tried to give a glimpse of early periods in history by selecting the Hindu view of life cycle and the Biblical understanding, both the Old and the New Testaments. The world and all human beings in it are explained by relating to God. The Old Testament explains how human beings are related to the God of Justice while the New Testament presents the God of Love and Sacrifice. All stages of life are explained in relationship to God, to nature and to other human beings. They all move to greater

perfection or wholeness. In my view, a person can say that the "best is yet to come" at all stages of life, by the young and the old, if the Christian hope is kept. In the "journey of life," the last round in the "race" is significant because the reward or the "crown of righteousness" is closer than ever. An elderly person can meaningfully say that the "best is yet to come" only when he or she has the "Christian hope" which the world needs today more than anything else.

Section Two: Stage of Integrity

We presented adult studies of Erickson and Sheehy in the above section. Now, in this second section (added in 2009) we concentrate on the last stage and its significance. In life-span studies each stage has its tasks to accomplish and finally in old age integration of personality will happen. Individual and social life undergo evaluation or assessment in order to realize both the accomplishments and failures. If there is a greater sense of achievements the person experiences integrity, not despair. In the Indian thought, the third and fourth goals are fulfilled in the last stages and they are dharma (duty) and moksha (liberation). The two other goals of life are artha (wealth) and Kama (physical pleasures). The Judeo-Christian heritage relates to a God of Justice (OT) and a God of sacrificial love (NT). All human relationships are explained with God at the center.

Wisdom

Also, during earlier time periods, old age was respected because people gained wisdom as they grew older. In recent years with the advancement of technological knowledge and skills, the younger generation gain greater recognition or acceptance in society. As already discussed the Greeks associated knowledge with virtues and wisdom as explained in the knowledge-virtue relationship. In the modern period, especially after the 18th century knowledge has been explained as facts, information, and skills along with speed and a busy life. The meditative life associated with everyday living has disappeared. The enrichment of life in prayer and solitude has been altered completely. Fundamental questions related to life are ignored. What are these questions?

Fundamental Questions

They reveal our ordinary troubles and aspirations as human beings. It begins with the most simple and common questions and they include: 1) Where do I come from? (What is the origin of life in general and specifically human species), 2) Where do I go? (What are the goals and purpose of life), 3) What are the realities of life I encounter? (How do you explain the realities of birth, growth, and death) and 4) What are the central choices you make while living? (How do you make your choice or decision related to job (vocation), marriage (choice of a life partner), and aging (growing old and visits to doctors of different specialization)).

There is a human tendency to evade or even deny central questions related to living. Instead of facing them, we tend to select a few superficial or even silly questions and devote our energy in handling them. Instead, how do we focus on the most important issues? How do we determine the priorities of life? Stephen Covey helps us in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. The first habit Covey advocates is to "be proactive" rather than being "reactive." Reactive people are often affected by their physical environment. For example, if the weather is good, they feel good. If it is not, it affects their attitude and their performance. Proactive people can carry their own weather with them. Rain or Shine does not impact them. Let me select one more habit among the seven he presents in his book as it is also suitable in this context. The third habit is, "put first things first."

Since Buddha was brought up in a palace he did not experience some of the ordinary day-to-day realities of life. He saw three instances of suffering when he moved out of his palace. They were old age, sickness and death. When he saw these sights, he raised the question, "What is life?" and in order to find the answers he moved to the forest for meditation where he became the "Buddha" or 'the enlightened one'. For a long time in America the youth oriented culture was considered as a "death denying" society (the famous remarks of Arnold Toynbee already noted in this book).

Life will be more rewarding and enriching if we learn lessons from reflecting on suffering and death. When death is accepted as a fact of life, living itself will be enriching. Hence Plato has mentioned many centuries ago that a person who knows how to die is the person who knows how to live. He has noticed it in his master's (Socrates) execution.

Meaning and Purpose in Life

The purpose of a person's life is more than a personal fulfillment or peace of mind or even happiness. The search for meaning should assume a creator God. Even atheist, such as Bertrand Russell would agree: "Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purpose is meaningless." We must begin with God, the Creator of everything. Human beings are "meaning-making animals." We create meaning out of the raw materials of sickness, war, death as well as routine events. We search for "something more," to use William James' phrase. The search for meaning distinguishes the human beings from other animals, according to Victor Frankl.

Conclusion

Retirement is the time when we raise questions about the meaning and significance of life by relating to God and we spend more time in meditation and prayer. In this way we become wiser which is usually associated with old age.

This article is adapted, with the author's permission, from the book, "Joyful Vocation of a Teacher" - recommended reading.



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HEALTH NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS

STROKE (BRAIN ATTACK)

& HEART ATTACK



Dr. M. V. Mathew, Chicago MTC

This presentation was made at the 1st Senior Fellowship National Conference at Detroit, Michigan on October 17, 2014. These are helpful tips. Readers are strongly advised to consult their physician for addressing their personal medical needs and obtaining medical advice.

Stroke and Heart-attack are common medical conditions that can lead to major disabilities and even death. These can be more serious in Seniors with catastrophic consequences. They are not curable but manageable and controllable. More notably, they are highly preventable if they are taken seriously at the right time.

STROKE is also known as Brain-Attack or a cerebrovascular accident (CVA). A Stroke occurs when the blood supply to your brain is interrupted or reduced. This deprives your brain of oxygen and nutrients which can cause your brain cells to die. A stroke may be caused by a blocked artery (Ischemic stroke), or a leaking or burst blood vessel (hemorrhagic stroke). Some people may experience a temporary disruption of blood flow through their brain (transient Ischemic attack, or mini or warning stroke).

Ischemic Stroke: About 85 percent of strokes are ischemic. This occurs when the arteries to your brain become narrowed or blocked causing severely reduced blood flow (ischemia). The most common Ischemic strokes include:

- **Thrombotic Stroke:** This occurs when a blood clot (thrombus) forms in the arteries that supply blood to your brain. A clot may be caused by fatty deposits that build up in arteries and cause reduced blood flow (atherosclerosis).
- **Embolic Stroke:** This occurs when a blood clot or other debris forms away from your brain commonly in your heart and swept through your blood stream to lodge in narrower brain arteries. This is called an embolus.

Hemorrhagic Stroke: Hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel in your brain leaks or ruptures. Brain hemorrhage can result from many conditions that affect your blood vessels including uncontrolled high blood pressure (Hypertension) and weak spots in your blood vessel walls (aneurysms). A less common cause of hemorrhage is the rupture of an abnormal tangle of thin walled blood vessels (arteriovenous malformation) present at birth. Types of hemorrhagic stroke include:

- **Intracerebral hemorrhage.** A blood vessel in the brain bursts and spills into the surrounding brain tissue damaging brain cells. Brain cells beyond the leak are deprived of blood and damaged. High blood pressure, trauma, vascular malformations, use of blood thinning medications and other conditions may cause intracerebral hemorrhage.
- **Subarachnoid hemorrhage.** In subarachnoid hemorrhage an artery on or near the surface of your brain tissue bursts and spills into the space between the surface of your brain and skull. This bleeding is often signaled by a sudden severe headache. Often due a rupture of Berry aneurysm (Berry shaped out-pouching) of an artery.

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA): also called a mini-stroke is a brief period of symptoms similar to those you have had in a stroke due a temporary decrease in blood supply to part of your brain which usually lasts less than five minutes but could last longer. Like an ischemic stroke a TIA occurs when a clot or debris blocks blood flow to part of your brain but blockage is temporary. Seek emergency care even if your symptoms clear up soon because a serious underlying problem may exist which could lead to a full blown Stroke.

Risk Factors for Stroke: 1) Hypertension, 2) Smoking, 3) High cholesterol, 4) Diabetes, 5) Obesity, 6) Valvular Heart disease with Atrial Fibrillation, 7) Obstructive Sleep Apnea, 8) Family history, 9) Associated atherosclerotic heart disease and peripheral arterio sclerosis, 10) Hormones and birth control pills especially with smoking, 11) Blood disorders.

Symptoms: 1) Trouble with walking. Stumble with sudden dizziness, loss of balance or loss of coordination. 2) Trouble with speaking and understanding and with slurring and confusion.

3) Paralysis or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side. Try to raise both the arms above the head at the same time and if one arm begins to fall this could mean a stroke. One side of your face may droop. 4) Trouble with seeing in one or both eyes or double vision.

5) Head ache: Sudden severe head ache which may be accompanied vomiting, dizziness or altered consciousness.

When to see a doctor: Seek immediate medical attention. Think "F.A.S.T." and do the following:

- **Face.** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **Arms.** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

- Speech. Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is his or her speech slurred or sound strange?
- Time. If you observe any of these signs call 911 or local emergency no. every minute counts. Earlier the treatment, better the outcome. To maximize the effectiveness of evaluation and treatment the patient has to be treated in a hospital within three hours after the onset of symptoms.

Tests: A good history and physical examination. Blood tests, EKG, Echocardiogram, CT Scan of the head, MRI, Cerebral angiogram, carotid Duplex. These are some of the tests done to evaluate a stroke patient and the treatment will be decided upon the findings of the tests.

Treatments:

For Ischemic stroke:

- Aspirin. One adult aspirin if the stroke is not hemorrhagic.
- TPA (Thrombolytic or clot buster. Is given intravenously if necessary within three or four hours. TPA may be given directly into the brain with a catheter if the neurologist thinks it is safe and helpful.
- Mechanical clot removal if appropriate.

For Hemorrhagic Stroke: Treatment depends on the cause.

- If due to blood thinners of any kind, stop the medications, and give the proper antidotes like blood and plasma if warranted.
- Blood pressure control, controlling Diabetes, lowering cholesterol etc. to be pursued.

Risk modification:

- The person who suffers a Stroke is prone to recurrent strokes and aggressive risk modification is to be pursued. Long term control of high blood pressure, Diabetes and cholesterol is to be checked. Smoking cessation, weight reduction if obese by diet and exercise and medication if necessary.
- Aspirin and antiplatelet medications to be continued as per the direction of the physician.
- Long term treatment: Intensive physical therapy and Speech therapy to be started early. Close medical supervision to be continued.

As stated before Strokes can disable and kill people. If you survive a stroke you may be left with considerable disability and perhaps long term dependency on other people. Knowing the consequences of such a disease it will be much better to control the risk factors early and avoid such a predicament, especially since it is a very preventable disease.

HEART ATTACK usually occurs when a blood clot blocks the flow of blood through a coronary artery (a blood vessel that feeds blood to a part of the heart muscle). This blockage leads to the damage of a part of heart muscle. A heart attack is also called a Myocardial Infarction and can be fatal. It is crucial to promptly recognize the symptoms and call 911 or emergency medical help.

Causes: Over a period of time coronary artery becomes narrowed from the buildup of various substances, including cholesterol and other substances. This buildup collectively known as plaques can also occur in other parts of body and is called Atherosclerosis. When the atherosclerosis narrows the coronary artery it is known as coronary artery disease and is the cause of most heart attacks. This process can take years and is known as a disease which goes from the "womb to the Tomb." During a Heart attack one of these plaques can rupture and spill out cholesterol and other substances into the blood stream. A blood clot forms at the site of the rupture and if large enough it can completely block the flow of blood through the coronary artery. Heart attacks can also be caused by a spasm of a coronary artery which can be spontaneous or due to drugs like

cocaine. A heart attack can also be due to a tear in the coronary artery. Other uncommon causes line small blood clots or tumors from other parts of the body. Heart attack can also occur if the blood flow to the heart is severely decreased due to conditions like Shock.

Risk Factors:

- 1) Age: Men above 45, and women above 55, are more likely to have heart attacks.
- 2) Smoking and long term exposure to second hand smoking damage the interior wall of the arteries and allow the deposits of cholesterol and other substances. Smoking also increases the risk of deadly blood clots forming and causing Heart attack.
- 3) High Blood Pressure: can damage arteries over a period of time.
- 4) High blood cholesterol and triglycerides play a major part in the deposition of plaques. A high level of low density lipoproteins (LDL or bad cholesterol) increases your risk of heart attack. High level of Triglycerides also increases your risk. However a high level of high density lipoproteins (HDL or good cholesterol) protects the heart from heart attack.
- 5) Metabolic Syndrome: This is a major risk factor. This is a combination of findings like low levels of HDL (the good cholesterol), high triglycerides, insulin resistance, abdominal obesity (kudavayar) and hypertension. This increases the risk 2 or 3 times. As South Indians we should know that these factors are more common among us. We are to be more concerned about low good cholesterol which is more prevalent among us. The *kudavayar* which was considered a sign of affluence and *mahima* is to be regarded as not so good any more.
- 6) Diabetes due to the decrease of insulin production or ineffective utilization of insulin increases the risk.
- 7) Family history of heart attack: If your siblings, parents, or grand-parents had early heart attacks, before the age of 55, you are at increased risk.
- 8) Lack of physical exercise. An inactive life style increases cholesterol and obesity.

- 9) Exercise decreases obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.
- 10) Obesity, stress, and illegal drug use : Cocaine and amphetamine increases the risk.
- 11) Pre-eclampsias which increase the blood pressure during pregnancy increase the lifetime risk of heart disease.

Symptoms:

- Severe chest pain or pressure behind the sternum is the most classical symptom of heart attack.
- The pain may radiate to the arm, shoulder, back, jaw or even to the teeth. The pain can be severe or mild. Many times the pain may not be typical and may be in different parts of the chest. You may feel fullness in the abdomen, nausea, indigestion, heartburn or abdominal pain.
- Shortness of breath can be prominent. Profuse sweating may be present.
- Feeling of anxiety or impending sense of doom.
- Severe fatigue and lack of desire to do any activity.
- Lightheadedness and dizziness. Insomnia may be present.
- Women may have more atypical symptoms which lead to delay in diagnosis and treatment. 10 to 15 percent of patients has no symptoms with a heart attack and diagnosed incidentally with EKG or echocardiogram. This situation is more common in patients with diabetes.

When to seek medical help?

- If you suspect a heart attack get immediate medical help and call 911 or emergency no.
- Take a nitroglycerine tablet if your doctor prescribed it.
- Take an Aspirin 325mg or an adult aspirin as recommended.
- Treatment and Drugs.
- Depends on the situation. You may be treated with medications, invasive procedures or both
- Depending on the seriousness of the condition and the amount of damage to the heart muscle.

Medications given to treat a heart attack:

- 1) Aspirin 325 mg.
- 2) Thrombolytics (clot busters): Help to dissolve the clots. The earlier you get this medication the better your chance of survival and lessening the amount of damage to your heart muscle. This is used when you don't have immediate facilities for cardiac catheter laboratory where you can get immediate invasive procedures.
- 3) Super-aspirins: Doctors in the emergency room may give antiplatelet medications which are more powerful to prevent further clots. e.g. Plavix (clopidogrel) etc.
- 4) Other blood thinning medications like Heparin may be given I.V. or S.C.
- 5) Pain relievers like morphine may be given if the pain is severe.
- 6) Nitroglycerine used to treat Angina may help to open up the blood vessel temporarily.
- 7) Beta Blockers: These drugs relax your heart muscle, slow your heartbeat and decreases your Blood Pressure and making your heart's job easier. They can also limit the amount of heart muscle damage and prevent future heart attacks.

- 8) Ace inhibitors: These drugs lower Blood pressure and reduce stress on the heart.
- 9) Cholesterol Lowering medications: Drugs called statins help lower cholesterol, and if given soon after a heart attack and may improve survival.
- 10) Surgical and other Procedures: Coronary angioplasty and stenting. Emergency angioplasty opens blocked coronary arteries and improves blood flow. A long thin tube called a catheter is inserted through the artery in the groin or arm. This catheter is equipped with a special balloon which can be inflated to open up the blocked coronary artery. At the same time a metal mesh stent either a drug eluting or bare metal one is inserted into the artery to keep it open. These procedures should be done early enough if facilities are available.
- 11) After stenting, 81 mg of Aspirin, and antiplatelet medications like clopidogrel or Ticagrelor should be continued for one year. Aspirin should be continued for the rest of your life.
- 12) Coronary artery bypass surgery: In some cases where stenting is not possible bypass surgery is performed. The timing will depend, but usually 3 to 5 days are allowed for the heart to recover. Lately, robotic surgery is performed with lesser time for recovery. Patients are kept in the hospital for recovery. Patients are discharged with medications and diet instructions.
- 13) Cardiac Rehabilitation including exercise and diet instructions are highly recommended.

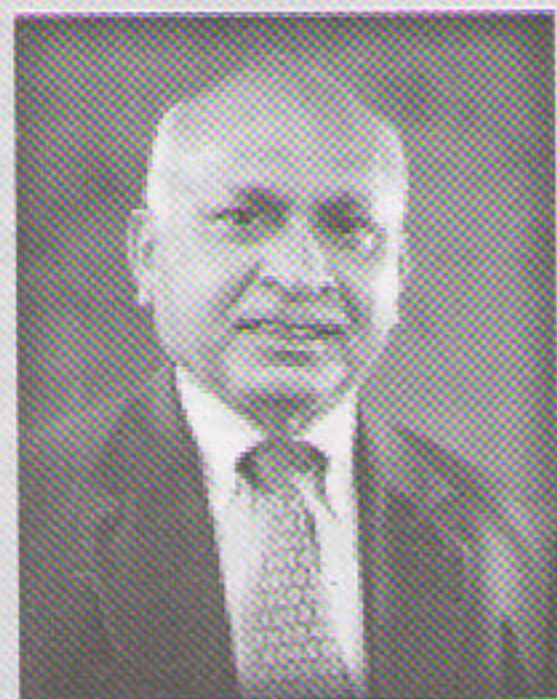
Long term medications and the above described procedures are not curative but help to manage the patients to lead normal productive lives. It is extremely important to follow a strict diet low in calorie, low in fats and carbohydrates, aerobic exercises like brisk walking, bicycling, swimming, treadmill exercise and strengthening exercises should be pursued. All the medications as prescribed by your physician should be continued. Regular medical check-ups should continue. Weight should be optimal. Smoking should absolutely be stopped. Relaxation and yoga is recommended. The importance of Prayer and Spiritual activities cannot be overemphasized. As stated before it is not a curative disease but eminently preventable with life style modification, proper diet and regular physical activity and staying away from smoking. □□

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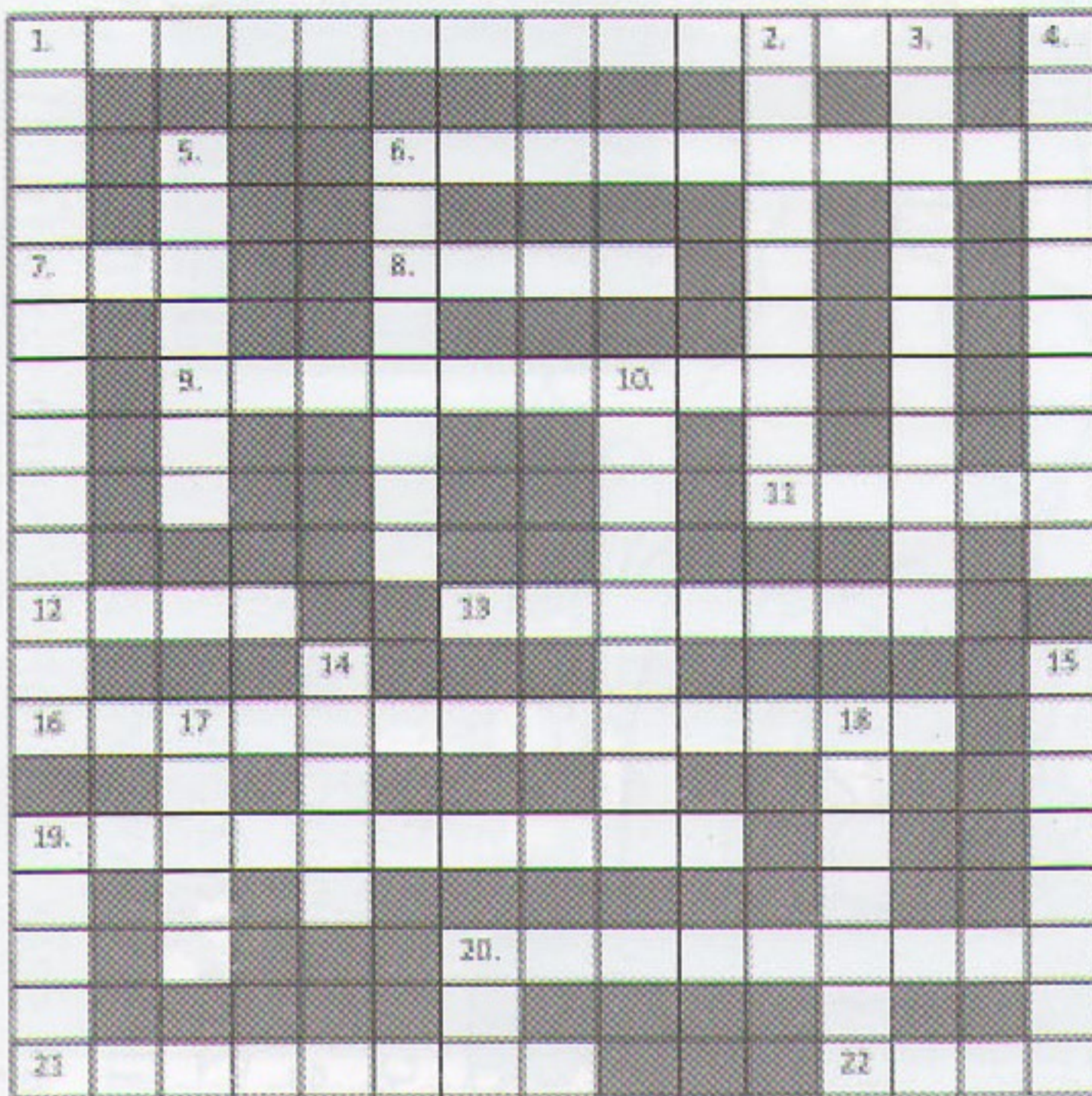
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BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE - as in NIV Bible – II Chronicles – Chapters 19 -36



ACROSS:

1. All the officials and all the people brought their ____ gladly, dropping them in the chest until it was full.
6. Hezekiah said to the Levites, "Remove all ____ from the sanctuary"
7. Hezekiah said to his military officers, "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and his vast army. With him is only the ____ of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles."
8. Jehu asked Jehoshaphat, " Should you help the wicked and ____ those who hate the Lord? Because of this, the wrath of the Lord is upon you."
9. Jehoram's letter from Elijah read, "You yourself will be very ill with a ____ disease."
11. As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the first fruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the field produced. They brought a great amount, a ____ of everything.
12. ____ did evil in the eyes of the Lord as his father Manasseh had done.
13. Eliezer prophesied, "Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the Lord will ____ what you have made.
16. Hezekiah spoke ____ to all the Levites, who showed good understanding of the service of the Lord.
19. Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he ____ a fast for all Judah.
20. After the death of Jehoiada, Judah ____ the temple of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and worshipped Asherah poles and idols.
21. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom.

22. In the eighth ____ of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David.

DOWN:

1. Hezekiah's letter read, "If you return to the Lord, then your brothers and children will be shown compassion." for the Lord is gracious and _____. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."
2. Then Jehoiada placed the ____ of the temple of the Lord in the hands of the priests who were Levites.
3. Jotham grew powerful because he walked _____ before the Lord his God.
4. The prophet said to Amaziah, "I know that God has ____ to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."
5. The Lord had ____ Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he has promoted wickedness in Judah and had been most unfaithful to the Lord.
6. The men in charge of the work were ____ and rebuilt the temple of God according to its original design.
10. Jehoshaphat told the judges, " Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no _____ or partiality or bribery."
14. Azariah, Berekiah, Jehizkiah and Amasa confronted those arriving from war, "You must not bring those prisoners here. For our ____ is already great and His fierce anger rests on Israel.
15. Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the ____ of His holiness.
17. Jehoiada and his sons brought out the king's son put the ____ on him: they presented him with a copy of the covenant.
18. While Uzziah was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord's temple, ____ broke out on his forehead.
19. But after Uzziah became powerful, his ____ led to his downfall.
20. Jehoshaphat told the priests, "____ with courage, and may the Lord be with those who do well."

Deadline for Answers: February 15, 2015

Mail to: Philip Manuel
23 Lake Street, Billerica, MA 01821
Phone: 978-663-3203

Scanned - via Email: Varampath23@msn.com
Please include your name, your phone number, name of your Parish and State of residence.

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

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THE MEXICO MISSION - COLONIA MAR THOMA, MATAMOROS, MEXICO UPLIFTING THE LIVES OF MANY BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES...



- 2003: Initiated mission activities in Matamoros, Mexico. Built houses for the fisher families in the Ponte Norte and Fantasia islands
- 2005: Hurricane Emily made landfall in Yucatan peninsula and devastated the Ponte Norte and Fantasia islands.
- 2007: The diocese purchased two parcels of land. One property (7.4 acre) was developed to a housing project (Colonia Mar Thoma, meaning Mar Thoma Community). This housing development consists of 67 houses, three school buildings, a chapel, a mission house and a small store.
- 2008: The Colonia Mar Thoma housing project was completed as the part of Valiya Metropolitan's Navathy Celebration and it was inaugurated.
- 2011: The Diocese initiated programs to develop Colonia Mar Thoma as a stable, empowered, physically and spiritually nourished community.

Focus areas for the mission work and accomplishments include:

Infrastructure and Housing since 2010:

- Kitchen and bathroom facilities were constructed for each of the houses.
- The compound has two fully refurbished evangelists' quarters and a fully refurbished parsonage.
- The colony is fenced and has a controlled access entry gate to provide security.
- Electric connections and running water are available.
- On October 12, 2013, the Iglesias Mar Thoma de Matamoros Jubilee Chapel was consecrated and provides a gathering place for spiritual activities.

Education:

- Eight students received assistance and have graduated with degrees in the fields of Engineering, Nursing, IT/Engineering, and Vocational.
- Twenty-four students are currently receiving tuition support. Currently students are enrolled in medical school (1 student), university (8 students), high school (8 students), and middle school (7 students).
- Thirty-five students currently attend grade school at the Colonia Mar Thoma School, which is located on the mission field compound and was started in conjunction with the Mexican state education department.

Food Assistance:

- In June 2011, initiated a food assistance program, Manna program, for a weekly distribution of groceries and basic hygienic essentials to the residents.

Spiritual Development:

- Every year, Youth Fellowship members from the Southwest region churches spend three days conducting Vacation Bible School in the Spanish language. The 2014 Mexico Mission VBS had over thirty volunteers and 80-100 local students in attendance. In 2014, the mission field also had its first clergy-in-training, Mr. Mat Stan Samuel, live at the parsonage on site and cater to the general ministry. Since the Fall of 2014, clergy from various parts of the Diocese have been visiting the mission field on a monthly basis and conducting Holy Qurbana services at the Jubilee Chapel.

Medical Assistance:

- A group of volunteer doctors and staff conduct medical check-ups and counseling for residents.

Self Sufficiency & Economic Development:

- A program called "Tree for Family" has been instituted.

- A tailoring institute and a seafood processing facility are available.
- There is a convenience store at the entryway of the compound, which is leased by a family living at the colony and is run as a profitable business.

Future Plans

- Enhancing ongoing programs.
- Developing jobs for the residents of Colonia.
- Identifying a full-time evangelist for Colonia Mar Thoma.
- Arranging reliable transportation to ensure students are able to travel to institutions for higher education, access to basic medical care, and for adults to get to their places of employment.

How You Can Help

- Plan a trip to the Mexico Mission venue.
- Support the financial needs of this mission.
- Continue to keep the Mexico Mission activities in your daily prayers.

The hard work and dedication of Mr. P.T. Abraham, Local Coordinator, Mr. John Thomas, Program Administrator, and all the leaders and volunteers are greatly appreciated.

Camps and Conferences of the Diocese - 2015

No.	Date	Program	Venue / Host
1	January 1 – 4, 2015	Diocesan Leadership Conference, Boston	Host Parish: Carmel MTC, Boston
		Theme: Rooted in Christ.	
2	Tuesday June 30 at 7.30 am to July 1, 2015 at 5 pm	Diocesan Clergy Family Conference	New York
3	July 2 ,2015	Diocesan Assembly	New York
4	July 2 -5 ,2015	Diocesan Family Conference, New York Theme: "Harvest in the Family of Families and Hope for Humanity"	Connecticut
5	July 9 - 12 ,2015	Junior/Senior Conference, Northeast Region	Ramapo College, New Jersey
6	July 16-19, 2015	Junior/Senior Conference, Southeast Region	Ramapo College, New Jersey
7	July 23 – 26, 2015	Diocesan MTVEA Conference	Host Parish: Immanuel Mar Thoma Church; Houston
8	July 30 – August 2 ,2015	Diocesan Youth Fellowship Conference,	Host Parish: St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Delaware valley
9	August 21-23 ,2015	Regional Family Conference, Europe	Host Parish : St. John's Mar Thoma Church, London
10	October 8 – 11, 2015	Diocesan Sevika Sangham Conference	Woodbridge ,NJ Host Parish: St. Stephens Mar Thoma Church ,New Jersey
11	October 14-17, 2015	Senior Fellowship Conference	Trinity MTC, Houston
12	October 23-25, 2015	Southern Regional Family Conference	St. Marks MTC, Tampa
13	October 30- Nov.1 ,2015	Young Family Fellowship (YFF) conference	Long Island MTC ,New York
14	October 2 - 4, 2015	Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Conference Theme:	San Francisco MTC

Rev. Binoy J. Thomas, Diocesan Secretary

SENIOR CITIZENS: HERITAGE AND LEGACY

Dr. George K. Zachariah
Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington



When I was asked to contribute to this special edition of the Mar Thoma Messenger devoted to the concerns of the senior citizens of our church, I was pleased as it gave me an opportunity to think of a group of people who are generally forgotten. The emergence of an older but more vigorous population is the most significant social story of our times. In 1900 life expectancy in the US was only 47. But look at it now. Scientists predict that if current anti-aging experiments in mice were to work as well in humans, the life span could well become 110 years. When Zacharias Thirumeni was our diocesan bishop, he asked me to organize a seniors' fellowship, which I did. The late Rev. T. C. Joseph served as its president and I as the convener for a few years. The group was formed in several places and I hope that they serve the purpose for which they were created. Recently they held a national conference at Detroit. The word "senior" has not been clearly defined; I will frame my discussion around those who are over 60 years of age.

Our church celebrates seniors on a designated Sunday and that is proper. It is a time when we can as a church consider the role of seniors and recognize their yeoman services in the past and dedicate them for continued services. It is an opportunity to reflect upon the past and to chart out plans for further services from and for them. At best such attempts have been limited in their appreciation and if someone calls it mere tokenism, it will not be far from the truth. Many people come to my mind who led the diocese in its formative years here but where are they now? Their record of service is not remembered and recognized formally. This is not stated as a criticism but as a reminder of the responsibility of our church community to thank our Lord for guiding them in the past. The record must be updated in every congregation and respect that is warranted be paid to them. We should not have the "Dangerfield Syndrome" in that they are not given due respect simply they should not be forgotten.

I used heritage and legacy for the title of this paper. Heritage is looking back. Legacy is looking forward. Observing senior citizen's day or grandparent's day is respecting heritage. We must celebrate their legacy as well. Alfred Korzybski described our distinctive qualities as "time binding", a characteristic that includes the ability to recall the past and to plan for the future, as well as the capacity to recognize and analyze sequences of cause and effect, a capacity that is amplified as knowledge is developed and passed on from generation to generation.

There was a time when we constantly talked about the "generation gap" in our families and church. Recently, when I was studying the Old Testament, the thought came alive from the stories there and some case histories of this phenomenon in Ancient Israel. On whose side am I? With the young men and women or the fathers and mothers? Frankly, I cannot take sides because both parties are significantly part and parcel of what we call the church. Whom God approves for specific functions is the real test.

I see two dangers in this effort of taking sides. One danger is that the generation gap, with allowances and all, may go underground and intergenerational communication will become either superficial or hypocritical. The other is that the younger generation might become premature conformists and follow the suit of the older without making serious evaluation and thus can stunt their own growth towards self-identity by blind imitation. We know that it can lead to endless repetition. What we have to see to is that this gap does not widen to form a chasm. We have to try to see the internal point of view of the other to understand it sympathetically. The older generations' unfinished work must be recognized and used to develop the younger generation's self-identity and must be a part of the agenda of the church as a whole. In the conflict now raging between generations our hope is that a new vision may evolve: a vision that fulfills the hope of young and old alike as only the vision of God can do. Hope we will have time: time to embrace; time to learn; time to love – as only the children of God can love.

Most of us approach retirement and post-retirement days with a real sense of accomplishment. Apart from matters of finance, housing, investment, taxes and health services, there are other concerns in preparing for and enjoying one's older years, which are subjective and must match one's personality and life experience. We need to plan and develop as many lines of activity as possible, which can be continued after retirement and can contribute to a sense of accomplishment. Ideally, many such activities should involve valuable service to others, not oneself alone. The test of all this is – does one get a true sense of accomplishment – or is one fooling oneself. As in working life, purely recreational activities in old age are valued more if they are not the main means of filling time.

Let me borrow from the history of science according to Thomas Kuhn the metaphor of a

paradigm shift. This is indeed a time of transformational learning. Biomedicine has created a profound change in the human condition. A new developmental stage has been inserted into the lifecycle, a second stage of adulthood, not an extension tacked on to old age.

According to the well-known developmental scheme of Erik Erikson we are talking about the two periods of adulthood and old age with their crises of generativity verses stagnation and integrity verses despair. The two basic strengths he suggested were care and wisdom. In our country useless old things are taken to the dump. But we have introduced "recycling". Even though we don't take our old folks to the dump we certainly don't do enough towards their recycling. That is the burden of this essay. "While historical, anthropological, and religious documents record that long lived elders of ancient times were applauded and even revered, this and former centuries' response to an aged individual is often derision, words of contempt and even revulsion. Naturally, pride is wounded and respect is in jeopardy."¹ The age span has considerably increased but "no program of how to incorporate elders into our society and living arrangements has been adequately envisioned and designed."²

In my younger days there were some senior laypersons who commanded the respect of the church at large. At present there is apparently a dearth of lay people who are recognized. Why? I want you to think about it. The bishops and the leaders of the church owe a great responsibility for that malaise which I see as a great challenge to the church. If I may exaggerate a little bit our obituaries have already been written or at least no more is expected of us, which to me is nonsense.

A new term has surfaced lately, the theory of "Gerotranscendence". According to the theory, the "Gerotranscendent individual experiences a new feeling of cosmic communion with the spirit of the universe, a re-definition of time, space, life and death, and a redefinition of self. This individual might also experience a decrease in interest in material things and a greater need for solitary meditation."³ To grow old is a great privilege. It allows feedback on a long life that can be relived in retrospect. With the years, retrospect becomes more inclusive; sense and action become more real and present.

One of the burdens of old age is that of independent living. But that is simply an illusion. From a global perspective all of us are ever dependent on others. "The reality we speak of is interdependence. We need to live our lives in such a way that we both give and receive learning to do both with grace, seeing both as parts of a simple pattern rather than antithetical alternative."⁴ Needless to say taking care of the old is a very profound and solid obligation. The church has a great responsibility that provides the context that makes further participation possible.

"The senior years present us with an exhilarating challenge to think about and approach our later lives with the full force of imagination, curiosity and enthusiasm."⁵ In Mary Catherine Bateson's words, "we live longer but we think shorter." They have a key role to play contributing their perspectives and their experience of adapting to change. Seniors will have to appreciate and flourish within our current set of circumstances recognizing that it is a glorious time in our life. We can set our own goals -which of them you pursue and achieve are mostly up to you. We all know that retirement is more about attitude than anything else. You are on a journey of self-discovery. However, you must not confuse retirement with drifting. The church has a responsibility to assist the elderly in setting reasonable goals and guide them for proper fulfillment of those goals.

Carolyn Heilbrun wrote about this period as the "last gift of time." "One of the key issues in conversation with older adults concerns legacy- not only the material and monetary legacies they will be leaving, but the values and commitments and skills they have striven to model and pass on that constitutes a non-material legacy, to kinfolk as well as the larger society, often rooted in contributions made through life long participation."⁶

Coming back to the church, John Mackay's prophetic words come to mind. He said, "let the church be the church," that is, "let the church be in its historical existence what it is in its eternal essence". The church is true to its communal essence and responsibility when, as a community, it lives as Christ's servant and as an instrument of God's glory, that is, when it makes manifest to the world the full dimension of God's being and purpose. We are witnessing today a revolt against the concept that church structures constitute the Christian ultimate. The Charismatic movement, the rediscovery of the reality and power of the Holy Spirit is in point.

The context of the church's heritage must be recognized and respected. It is to a considerable extent the service of the seniors who through their loyalty and participation have enriched the quality of our common life in the faith community, the church. We are obligated to remember in a thoughtful manner the precious gifts of the old in our community. Therefore let us not disregard them or treat them lightly in our church parlors. We have to thank God constantly for their lives and spirit of service they evinced. They are realities that are abiding and so should not be taken lightly or forgotten.

The Church can help exercise the nascent power by becoming part of our action network. The church can establish a liaison network to help the elderly in taking care of the usual concerns that they have about their health, their will; helping them to feel a unique sense of place; making a directory giving basic information about their life, long term care insurance, estate planning; provide opportunities for them to have physical exercise; collect pertinent stories that will help others; build a library of books especially for the elderly; remind them of the facilities that are available to meet their needs. They have to feel wanted. I just remembered what Freud once wrote to Romain Roland: "our inborn instinct and the world around us being what they are, I could not but regard that love as no less essential for the survival of the human race than such things as technology" (1926).

The church must learn to listen. It is the mark of a great church. We know the church does not possess all the answers to our problem. We must keep the dialogue open and so provide opportunities for the same. What is

lacking is a ministry to persons. It involves knowing people, listening to people, identifying with people, believing in people. It seems that the church leadership has not heard all its constituents and is moving on following established patterns. Christ makes this judgment and we are witness to it. We must recognize that conflict is inevitably involved in change. There is no exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land without conflict. There is no exodus from the old man to the new, from a life of sin to a life in Christ, without crucifixion. And there will be no change in our iniquities and inequalities without conflict and hurt. We must stay clear both of the romanticism of the status quo and the radicalism of revolutionaries.

Consider senior stage as a calling – a passion where the activity itself is its own reward. A calling can be any line of “work”. It is a matter of finding an activity that provides challenges that mesh with one’s unique strengths. Reprogram their time by getting them involved in hobbies and volunteering. We need what Gene Cohen has called “social portfolio planning”. You have a chance to make a difference. What is involved is a recalibration of identity. Use the opportunities to travel given a new vigor to the mind. Entertainment does the same. Recently some churches took the initiative to have community residences for the elderly near the church and a hospital. The church should initiate and bless such initiatives. The older citizens must be given a permanent organized place in the worship. It was shocking to learn that when some senior citizens offered to teach Sunday school and be part of the church choir they were turned down because of constitutional restraints. That is age discrimination. That is ridiculous, isn’t it? Such participation I am convinced will help seniors reach the end of life with a sense of completion and fulfillment. Catalog the strengths of people and see that they are used in specific areas.

When I was young, I was told to search for the life wisdom of older people. They have a unique source of knowledge that the rest of us do not. They have lived their lives and have an enormous advantage of life experience. It is worthy to recognize and remember that Sabbath was instituted for man and not the other way around. The pilgrim church is in a mode of exodus from an old order and the realization of a new vision. President James McCord of the Princeton Seminary observed many years ago that the greatest problem of the church was the grasshopper neuroses of those of us who serve it. The church has been counter revolutionary, moving away from the head or Lord of the church. You want to leave a legacy behind; something that tells your story and puts your life on the record. “Most often a legacy is a testament to struggle.”⁷ A legacy is a kind of memoir. It captures your life themes; you want to speak to the next generation. “A legacy is a gift. It has its own destiny.”⁸ “We only die when we fail to take root in others,” said Leon Trotsky. “Did I matter?” is the question they ask. We all try to find a way to be saved from insignificance. “Our legacies are the quality of the lives we leave behind.”⁹ They are seeking an opportunity to give back to the church. The church should definitely help in this endeavor.

The church must learn to listen. It seems that the church leadership has tried not to hear all the clienteles and is moving on following the established patterns. What we must teach those who hold power is that only through listening to all can society be helpful

and responsible. As someone said, our greatest problem is our eighth deadly sin, indifference, the arrogant neutrality that is less than human. I remember reading somewhere that the church must be in permanent exodus mode. Not settling down over the status quo, but moving out to new prophetic ministry, to new areas of witness and service. Mission to and for the elderly is such an avenue. An important matter to be reckoned with is accessibility to our church buildings for our disabled. That’s a great concern. As part of the 89th Birthday celebration Nelson Mandela announced the creation of “The Elders” a group of “wise men and women” from all over the world who were supposed to meet twice a year to consider global issues and offer both their expertise and their guidance to current leaders and political figures. He said, “I am trying to take my retirement seriously.” It is a model to be considered particularly in the church arena.

In conclusion, we are still living with the paradigm that says that old people are a drag. We are sometimes considered as greedy geezers who are taking away what should be going to young people. Research shows that as people get older they become more open-minded, more tolerant of ambiguity and less involved in sharp black-and-white distinctions. Older people have long and wide experience. Conversation is the expression of such experiences. A life of reading enriches one’s life. Interest in music helps. Travel experiences have their own reward. Communication with family and friends is a vital support to happiness in old age. We should not neglect the routine that is a blessing, as we grow old. Naturally there will be physical limitations. It is then that the subjective resources of mind and spirit bring the strength to keep physical limitations in their place. Finally, there must be formal representation in governance of the church.

□□

¹ Erikson, Erik H., Erikson, Joan M. The Life Cycle Completed (Extended Version)

² Erikson, Erik H., Erikson, Joan M. The Life Cycle Completed (Extended Version)

³ Retirement: Life’S Mt. Everest: Man’s Journey Through Psychological Hell By Peter K.

Rimbach/Gerotrancendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging by Lars Tornstam?

⁴ Bateson, Mary Catherine. Composing a Further Life: The Age of Active Wisdom

⁵ Bateson, Mary Catherine. Composing a Further Life: The Age of Active Wisdom

⁶ Bateson, Mary Catherine. Composing a Further Life: The Age of Active Wisdom

⁷ Trafford, Abigail. My Time: Making the Most of the Bonus Decades After Fifty

⁸ Trafford, Abigail. My Time: Making the Most of the Bonus Decades After Fifty

⁹ Chittister, Joan. The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully

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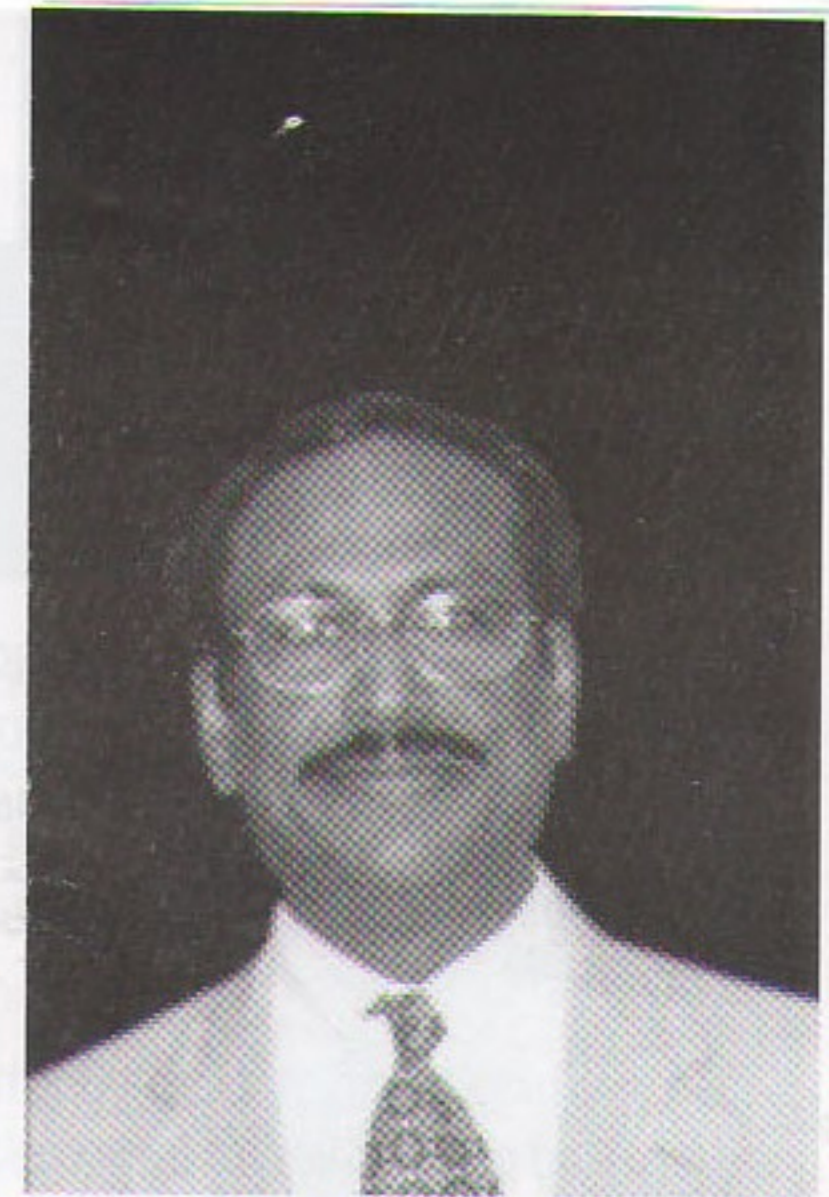
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VALUES DERIVED FROM MARITAL RELATIONSHIP AND FAMILY SET-UP

Abraham Mattackal
Los Angeles MTC



Family is the foundation of society. Family relationships are at the center of all human relationships. The place where each of us begins to learn about how relationship works is within the family. Each of us will leave a legacy and the life we chose to live, will have an impact on those who come behind us that is far greater than what we imagine. However, with the breakdown of the Family in recent decades in the West values are rocked in many instances.

Values derived from marital relationship will depend largely to the family set-up the husband or wife was accustomed to while they were growing up. So before we concentrate on marital values, let us concentrate on family set up. A family that gives right upbringings and values can make the kid into a kind-hearted, loving and caring person. If the parents are religious, the children might take on those beliefs. Without going to the Church on Sundays, if parents spend time in drinking, smoking, and taking drugs, that may become a habit for the child too. We cannot choose our parents and we might be influenced in negative ways, so it is up to the individual to discover their own values and expectations for themselves.

We learn from our parents or grandparents or caregivers because they are also our role models. This does not necessarily mean that we would carry these values throughout our entire lives though. As we grow older, we have our own experiences from our schools, colleges and work places which too will have greater influences on our behavior and actions. There are two ways that families influence values and expectations of their children directly and indirectly. Most of the parents directly teach their children values. This includes teaching right and wrong, religious education, rules within the family to follow through, faith and practices of faith etc. Children watch their parents interact with others, make choices, and determine right and wrong for themselves.

The success of the family set up is based on the values it creates:

1. **A sense of belonging:** It is important that each member of the family feel that they are loved, respected and important like anyone else in the family.
2. **Communication:** Failure to communicate will likely lead to misunderstandings and unhappiness. Communication is not only spoken words, but also the tone, body language, facial expression and willingness to listen.
3. **Respect:** One has to give respect to gain respect. In a family, children need to respect their parents. Parents need to respect and consider their children's points of views as well.
4. **Honesty:** This is an important factor in human relationship and family set up. Without honesty, relationship cannot last long.
5. **Forgiveness:** Many a time, we find it hard to forgive those who abused us verbally or made stories about us. In the family set up too there are occasions when it becomes

difficult for one member to forgive another for a wrong word, or accusations about a wrong doing. Get issues out in the open and gain some understanding.

6. **Responsibility:** Responsibility is something the children learn from parents at a very early stage. After playing with toys, they are asked to keep them in a box or at a particular place. They are told to tidy up their room when they are not playing. This sense of responsibility extends well into adulthood.

Now coming to the subject of marital relationship and the values derived from it, which too depends to a large extent what kind of family set up the husband and wife are coming from. Marriage is ordained by God and it must be between one man and one wife. Marriage is characterized by leaving the authority structure of one's parents and joining together to form a new structure. Marriage is a covenant before God between a man and woman as we read in Malachi 2: 14.

God has ordained that children be brought into the world only through the procreative activity of a husband and wife and only to married couples. The ordinary privilege and responsibility of married people is to have and rear children (1 Timothy 2: 15).

Marriage requires patience, skills, tact, emotional and spiritual growth. Don't even think or hope to change husband or wife through criticisms or personal verbal abuse. It takes a wise and patient wife or husband to make a good partner. These days, when divorces are rampant, honest efforts are not made by husbands and wives to forgive and forget each other's complaints or accusations. It is not difficult for a husband or wife coming

from a God fearing and Church going family set up to adjust to the changing environment and follow a few life changing steps.

What can a wife do to establish a happy, loving environment at home for her husband and children?

1. Give praise and affection instead of seeking it always (Eph: 4: 29). *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."*
2. *Do things your husbands like to do. If he loves basket ball, go with him to watch or play with him.*
3. Do not hide anything from your husband. This is equally applicable to husbands too. Very little can be hidden from the family for too long. Husbands and wives will discover the truth about each other very soon. It is true not only for the sin we try to hide but it is also true for who we really are on the inside.
4. Give your husband a breathing space. If he is a person liked to be left alone leave him alone for some time.
5. Provide a peaceful place (Proverbs 17: 1). *"Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife."*

Sometimes work days would be very troublesome and painstaking. It is good to have a quiet place for the members of the family to relax when they come home after a tired some day.

Let us now examine how the husbands help to create an environment in which wife would always feel loved and cared for at all times.

1. Assign top priority to your marriage relationship. Ephesians 5: 2 reads, *"Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it."* Husband should consider always wife as a partner in his life.
2. Give praise and reassurance. Wives need assurance that they are not only an

essential part of the family set up but also a partner in every step of the growth of the family in many ways.

3. Listen without feeling the need to solve the problem. One common complaint wives always tell their husbands is about the unwillingness on the part of husbands to spend time listening to their points of view on issues affecting their relationship with others, or problems that they encounter in their work place or in the home.
4. Avoid criticisms. A man who constantly criticizes and puts down his wife can produce numerous negative results in his wife and in the family life.
5. Remember the importance of each person and his or her events in life. Birthdays, anniversaries, and special days are important to wives. Remember them together and celebrate. Love is not just a feeling; it involves positive actions which can mean a lot to women.

The most important value that can be derived from marital relationship, in my opinion, is the following: Focus on the person you can change, and that is you.

(This is a paper presented at the Senior Fellowship Conference, Detroit in October 2014)



MATRIMONIAL

◆ U.S. Marthomite parents invite proposals for their son (from any Christian denomination). He is 30 years old, 5'11" (180 cms) tall and graduated top rank with Masters degree in Engineering from an Ivy League University and works as a Manager at Fortune 500 global company. He's very active in Marthoma church (served as Sunday School teacher and leader in Youth Fellowship) and is looking for a suitable partner. If interested, please email mk993238@gmail.com with biodata and recent photos.

◆ Christian parents settled in the U.S. invite proposals for our daughter, 28 years old, 5'4, born and brought up in the US. She has strong Christian and family values, and she is well accomplished, working as Senior Federal Financial Management Consultant in North East US. We are looking for well-educated boys with strong Christian and family values, employed in the US. If interested, please respond with details along with photograph to jacobk1950@gmail.com

◆ Marthomite parents invite proposals for their US born son, 29 years old, 5' 11", and medical graduate currently doing his 2nd year residency. We are seeking a girl with similar educational background from a conservative Christian family, preferably a Marthomite. If interested, please respond with details and recent photography to youbthe1@yahoo.com or [956-966-0590](tel:956-966-0590).

◆ Marriage proposal invited for daughter, 31 years old, 5' 2", BS, MD. She is a Diagnostic Radiologist and on the faculty at a major university teaching hospital. She is God fearing and family oriented. We are members of the Mar Thoma Church. Marthomite, CSI, or Jacobite preferred. If interested or need further information please write with pictures and details to mabraham9999@gmail.com

OBITUARIES

Mr. K. V. Varghese, a founding member of the Mar Thoma Church of Baltimore, was called to eternity on October 27, 2014. He was 69 years old. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Mariamma Varghese; his daughters, Teena, Tegi, and Tebi; his son-in-laws, Sravant, Sonu, and Joel; and six grandchildren, Avinash, Asha, Rachael, Samara, Andrew and Christian. He left a lasting imprint in the history of the Baltimore parish and in the lives of many, having given of himself selflessly to help others. He will be dearly missed by his family, friends and the parish.



Rev. Alex Kolath, Vicar, Baltimore MTC

Mr. T. S. Varughese (Avarachen), an active member of the St. Peter's MTC passed away on December 2, 2014. He was born on January 18, 1936. He worked for fourteen years at the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam. He is survived by his wife, Aleyamma Varughese (Elsie); children Mini, Gini, and Zach; his son-in-laws, Shaju, and Paul; his daughter-in-law Leena; six grandchildren, Victoria, Jonathan, Allison, Nathaniel, Logan, and Miranda; siblings T. S. Mathai, T. S. Chacko, Hannah Varughese, Saramma Abraham, and the late Mariamma Abraham.



Rev. Roy Mathew, Vicar, St. Peter's MTC

Mrs. Aleyamma Mathew, member of Seattle MTC and w/o the Late Mr. P. T. Mathew, Punnamoottil Vadakkal, Kuzhikala, passed away on July 3, 2014, at the Overlake Medical Center, Seattle. She is survived by the families of Lizy and Babu (Kerala), Mariamma Joseph and Mathew Joseph, Thomas Mathew and Omana, P. M. Mathew and Susan, Valsa, Abraham Mathew and Suma, Joseph Mathew and Susha (all in Seattle). Her funeral service on July 16, 2014 was at the Kuzhikala MTC and conducted by Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus.



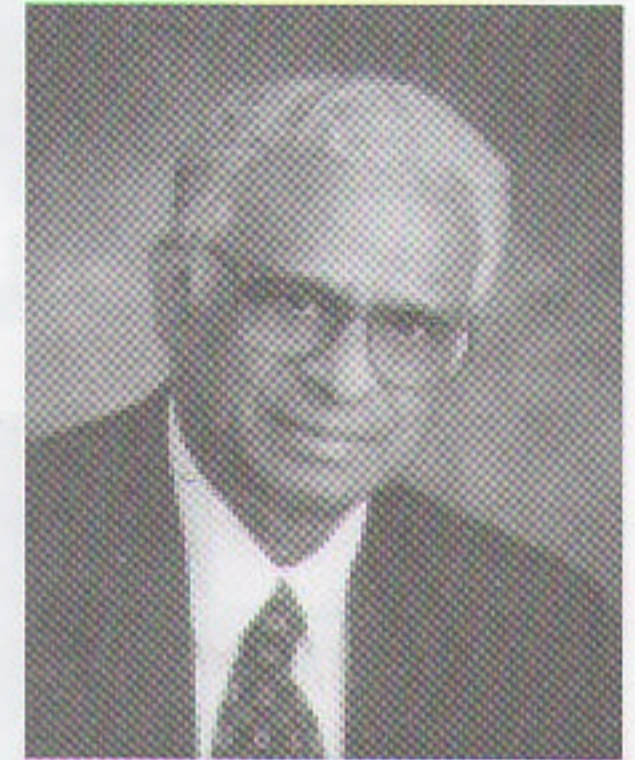
- Rev. Mathew John, Seattle MTC

Mrs. Saramma G. Poikail, member of the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington (MTCGW), passed away on October 12, 2014. She was born on January 7, 1933, and was the wife of the late Dr. George Poikail. They were a couple that dedicated their lives and contributed much for the growth of the Mar Thoma Church. Mrs. Poikail served as the Vice-President of MTCGW. She will be missed by her family and friends.



Rev. Thomas Samuel, Vicar, MTCGW

Dr. T. K. Idicula (Thekkethil Kurien Idicula), youngest son of Kurien and Anna, Mannil, Chengannur in Kerala, passed away in Edmonton on November 20th 2014. He is survived by his wife, Annie, his children Dawn Mathew, Faith Philip (George), Christian (Salima) and grand children. He was a dedicated founding member of the Trinity Marthoma Church, Edmonton, Canada. He served as the Vice-President of the church for many years. Dr. Idicula earned his MRCP and FRCP with top grades and extended selfless service to the community. His funeral service took place on November 27, 2014. Dr. Idicula will remain in our hearts forever.



Rev. Rajan Koshy, Vicar, Trinity MTC, Edmonton

Mrs. Annamma Joseph, d/o the late Palayathil Anthony and late Mariam, passed away in November, 2014. She was married to the late T. C. Joseph, Thadathil house, Mavellikara in 1942. After her husband's demise in 2002, she moved to New York. She was a loving mother to her three daughters Mary & the late Chacko Philip, Elizabeth & Kochumman Varghese, Molly & P. M. Joy and her son Abraham & Sicily Joseph. She had eight grandchildren and six great grandchildren. She was buried on November 21, 2014, at Thengode MTC in Cochin, Kerala.



Sarah Jacob, Secretary

Mrs. Annie Babu, member of the Long Island MTC passed away. She was born on August 8, 1940, in Niranam, Kerala. She was the only daughter of the late Mr. Varkey Geevarughese and the late Mrs. Deenamma Varkey. Her three brothers were the late Mr. A. V. Chandy, the Late Mr. A. V. Philipose, and the Late Mr. A. V. Geevarughese - an accomplished Panchayath president. She will be deeply missed by her husband Babu, her children Benson, Berlin and Blessen; and numerous nieces, nephews and friends. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius (Diocesan Bishop) conducted the funeral service on November 6, 2014 at Long Island MTC, Merrick, NY.



Sarah Jacob, Secretary

profile

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DIOCESAN NEWS

DIOCESAN CLERGY CONFERENCE -2014



The Diocesan Clergy Conference was held from Wednesday, November 19 to Friday, November 21, 2014, at Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. The theme of the conference was "Churching the Diaspora and Mission Empowerment." On Wednesday, the Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Binoy J. Thomas, welcomed all the clergy. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Diocesan Episcopa inaugurated the session and presented a challenging address entitled, "Churching the Diaspora." He encouraged the clergy to understand the dynamics of ministry within the Diaspora context and make their ministry meaningful.

Rev. Shaji Thomas (St. Thomas MTC, Chicago) and Rev. Binu C. Samuel (Ascension MTC, Philadelphia) led the main talks. They expounded the theme and allowed ample time for discussion and reflection.

Rev. Kochu Koshy Abraham welcomed all attendees, and noted that the Trinity MTC Houston was blessed to host the clergy conference in 2014, the parish's fortieth anniversary. Videos about the history of Houston, and the various Diocesan Activities were presented.

The conference included a session that discussed the following pre-circulated reading materials:

1. *The Impact of International Migration on Home Churches: The Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Church in India* by Prema Kurian (Department of Sociology, Syracuse University).
2. A review of the paper by Dr. Jesudas M. Athiyal

Rev. Abraham Oommen, New York, Rev. George Jacob, Dallas, Rev. John Oommen, Los Angeles provided feedback. Thirumeni concluded that it was a sociological study and that it is different from how a faith community will see things; but it is good to understand how certain people perceive the Mar Thoma Church. The day ended with a talent program coordinated by Rev. Biju K. George, with several Achens displaying their talents.

On Thursday, Rev. Joji K. Mathew (St. John's MTC, New York) and Rev. K. P. Johnson (St. Thomas MTC, Bristol) led the Bible Studies that were well organized and provided new insights. The conference included a session, moderated by Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese, about the various mission activities of the Diocese. Rev. Saju Mathew (Mexico Mission), Rev. Dennis Abraham (Native American Mission), and Rev. Biju P. Simon (Neighborhood Mission) presented an overview of the respective mission activities. Rev. Aji Varghese, Lubbock, Rev. Reji Thomas, Philadelphia, and Rev. V. M. Mathew,

New York, shared their reflections and led the discussions which were lively. Thirumeni concluded the session by stating, "The church can only be the church when it is involved in mission."

Rev. P.S. Thomas, Atlanta led an intercessory prayer. The Diocesan Episcopa and Diocesan Secretary shared an overview of the programs and concerns in the diocese and encouraged clergy to do their part by leading and involving parishioners to participate in the programs. Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel (New Jersey) and Rev. George Cherian (Chicago) presented a talk on "Parish Concerns and Challenges in Ministry," both in parish ministry and the youth chaplain ministry.

The Diocesan Episcopa articulated his vision during the concluding panel discussion on the *Challenges and Concerns of the Diocese*. Rev. Daniel Thomas (Chicago), Rev. Shibu Mathew (New York), Rev. Larry P. Varghese (Los Angeles), Mr. Jorge V. Wilson (San Francisco), Dr. Ron Jacob (New York), and Mr. Philip Thomas (Dallas) also presented their views during the discussion. An open forum followed with both Achens and laity sharing their views.

The conference included a short farewell for the clergy scheduled to return to India on transfer in May 2015. The Diocesan Secretary recognized them for their ministry in furthering the diocese and the mission of the church. Rev. John Mathew and Rev. C. K. Kochumon offered farewell messages. Rev. Jacob Varghese responded on behalf of all the clergy being transferred, and thanked the Diocesan Bishop for all their blessed experiences of ministry in this diocese. Theodosius Thirumeni concluded the session by expressing his appreciation and regards to all the clergy who will be transferred.

On Friday, Theodosius Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Qurbana in English and offered concluding remarks. Thirumeni reiterated the call to churching the Diaspora in a relevant manner and supporting relationships that build cooperation and faith. He also recognized the Trinity MTC parish for their efforts in hosting the clergy conference, and congratulated the parish for celebrating its fortieth year of ministry.

Rev. Daniel Thomas rendered the vote of thanks. Thirumeni led the closing prayer and pronounced the benediction. Fifty-two Achens participated, and a group photo was taken. Rev. Mathew John (Seattle) and Rev. Sam T. Panicker (Boston) served as Chaplains and Rev. Shibi M. Abraham (Oklahoma) and Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas (Virginia) served as recording secretaries.

Rev. Binoy J. Thomas, Diocesan Secretary

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THE FIRST SENIOR FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE OF THE MAR THOMA DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE – 2014

The first Senior Fellowship Conference was hosted by the Senior Fellowship of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church from October 16 to 18, 2014. It was the personal interest, constant support, advice and encouragement of our Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, and the willingness of the Detroit parish to host it, which made this conference possible in a short time and with limited resources. Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese helped in planning the details.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa inaugurated the conference and delivered the Key Note Address. The theme of the conference was "Churching the Diaspora: Faith Development and Stewardship." Following Thirumeni's presentation, Mr. O. C. Koshy, the senior-most member of Detroit MTC Senior Fellowship commented on the goals and purpose of the Senior Fellowship and offered several suggestions to enhance its functions. Two Bible Studies on the theme were led by Rev. John Mathew. The theme was divided into five topics: 1. Stages of Faith Development (Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph); 2. The Immigrant Family in the Purpose God (Mr. O. C. Abraham and Dr. Thomas Mathew); 3. Values Derived from Marital Relationship and Family Set-up (Mr. Abraham Mattackal and Dr. Mathew Sadhu); 4. Expectations of the Seniors and their Implementation (Mr. Jacob John, Dr. Korathu Thomas and Dr. Leela Cherian); and 5. Care for the Elders (Dr. M.V. Mathew and Dr. Viji V. Thomas). Mr. Mathew George (Boston) gave a talk on 'Dealing with Finances' from a Christian perspective.

The Town Hall & Business Meeting was presided over by Theodosius Thirumeni. It was decided that the official name of the Senior Organization shall be 'The Senior Fellowship'. The 2015 Senior Fellowship Conference of the Diocese was decided to be hosted by the Senior Fellowship of Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. Delegates participated in the Talent Night Program in which they presented their skills and talents. Mr. Abraham Mattackal organized a Quiz competition. On the final day the Holy Communion Service was conducted by Theodosius Thirumeni

A notable feature was the Physical exercise led by Mrs. Susan Chacko - a licensed physical therapist. Dr. Sara Koshy and members of the Medical Team stood by to deal with any eventualities. During the time allotted for recreation, Dr. Thomas Mathew organized a Bingo Game which provided fun and relaxation to the participants

The conference ended on the 18th after vote thanks by Mr. Baby Samuel (Diocesan Council Member) and Mr. George Thomas (the Convener of The Conference), and a closing prayer. A total of 160 delegates attended the conference. The most noteworthy and unique feature of this conference was, that it was a co-operative venture of the seniors, young couples, and the members of the other organizations of Detroit MTC.

Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese



SEVIKA SANGHOM NATIONAL CONFERENCE – 2014

The 15th National Conference of the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom was held at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Laurel, MD, from October 2 to 5, 2014. This was hosted by the Sevika Sanghom of the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington (MTCGW). The conference President Rev. Thomas Samuel welcomed all the leaders and delegates.

The Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa presided over the inaugural session and delivered the inaugural address. Thirumeni emphasized how Mary was empowered with God's grace. Her unconditional obedience and role in nurturing a child enriched her family. The conference was inaugurated with the lighting of the traditional lamp to a musical rendition by Mrs. Jibi Binoy. Mrs. Nancy Thomas, the Souvenir Committee Convener, requested the Diocesan Episcopa to release the souvenir.

Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos provided the "Anugraha Prabhashanam." Rev. Binoy J. Thomas, Rev. Shinoi Joseph, and Mrs. Mariamma Abraham offered felicitations. The choir presented the theme song. A colorful and thought provoking cultural program was presented by the MTCGW members of all age groups.

Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos led the two main talks. Thirumeni exhorted the Sevika Sanghom members to have a greater role in building their families, church and the society.

Mrs. Seena Sam led the three Bible Studies. Through her Bible study Kochamma emphasized the empowerment of women in the biblical context and invited each attendee to be a good companion to others and to seek God's plan in their lives.

Theodosius Thirumeni led two sessions. The session concerning the challenges faced by women in enriching the families in the American context was an in depth study of women's role in the Diaspora context. The second session moderated by Theodosius Thirumeni was a panel discussion on the "Mission Awareness and Role of the Sevika Sanghom." Three delegates, Dr. Anitha Abraham (Immanuel MTC, Houston), Mrs. Laly B. Joseph (St. John's MTC, New York), and Mrs. Suma George (St. Thomas MTC, Chicago) presented their mission work experiences.

A special session "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants" was led by Anne Mathews-Younes, Ed.D, D.Min, the granddaughter of Evangelist Dr. E. Stanley Jones.

Diocesan Sevika Sanghom arranged a felicitation program for Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa on his 25th year of Episcopal consecration and also honored Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos on his 21st year of Episcopal consecration.

A Question and Answer discussion on pertinent medical issues ensued. Dr. Laurie Wilson from Howard University Hospital led the session on breast cancer, and Dr. Selena Thomas of Kaiser Permanente spoke on preventive treatments.

The dedication and witnessing session was led by Rev. Binoy J. Thomas. The conference choir under the leadership of Mrs. Jibi Binoy led the singing sessions. Various regional Sevika Sanghom groups led the morning and evening worship services. Mrs. Neethi Prasad, Mrs. Binu Thomas and Mrs. Lilly Simon led the devotions.

The Holy Qurbana on Sunday was celebrated by Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos along with aches. Mrs. Anujee Mathew (Kochamma, Salem MTC, NY) and Mrs. Biji Thankachen assisted.

Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos commented highly on all aspects of the conference. The torch was passed on to the leaders of the next conference - St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey. The office bearers rendered the vote of thanks. With the prayer and benediction by Timotheos Thirumeni, the XV National Sevika Sanghom Conference ended. Two hundred and seventy two delegates from various parts of the Diocese participated in this conference.

The Vicar, the Executive Committee, and the Sevika Sanghom of MTCGW remain grateful to the Lord Almighty for yet another event in this capital city.

Mrs. Mary George (Secretary)

Mrs. Mini Rajan (Convener)



MAR THOMA YUVAJANA SAKHYAM 16TH DIOCESAN CONFERENCE

The 16th Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam (MTYS) Conference of the Diocese of North America & Europe took place from Friday, October 10, to Sunday, October 12, 2014 at Hilton Garden Inn, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada. The conference was hosted by St. Mathew's MTYS, Toronto, Canada. The conference was inaugurated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa. Rev. Mathew Baby, Vicar of St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church welcomed all the attendees. Rev. Fr. Dr. Thomas George, Rev. Shibu Samuel, and Mr. Reji Joseph offered felicitations.

The Conference Souvenir was released and the first edition of Yuvadara of the year 2014 was released. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, Rev. Daniel Thomas, Rev. Shibu Mathew, Rev. Rajan Koshy, Rev. Dr. Thomas George, and Rev. Dr. Philip Mathai led the various sessions with challenging, and dynamic talks.

Donations for the activities of the newly formed Mission Board of Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam were accepted by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa and Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Treasurer, Mr. Mathews Thomas. during the conference.

One of the major activities of the Mission Board was to fund the purchase of motor bikes for two evangelists in the mission fields under the Mumbai Diocese in India. Diocesan YS supporting of the Kattakkada Old Age Home began during the conference by accepting the contributions.

Ascension MTYS received the Mathew Paul Ever Rolling Trophy for the Sakha with the most attendance in the conference. Talent Show was rich with the amazing talents of YS members and kids from various Sakha Yuvajana Sakhyams. St. Mathew's MTYS conference committee worked hard for the success of the conference. St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship members supported the kids' programs. Through melodious songs, the conference choir attracted everybody's attention. The tour arranged by the conference committee to the various sight-seeing venues of Canada including the Niagara Falls was a memorable experience for all. The conference was a blessing for all 454 delegates that attended.

Reji Joseph, Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary



EPISCOPAL SILVER JUBILEE FELICITATION PROGRAM MAR THOMA CHURCHES, DALLAS AREA

“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Jeremiah 3:15

The Mar Thoma Church (MTC) of Dallas Farmers Branch, The MTC of Dallas Carrollton, St. Paul's MTC and the Sehion MTC

(together known as the Dallas Area Mar Thoma Churches) hosted the Episcopal Silver Jubilee Felicitation Program in honor for Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius (not present for the occasion), Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius and Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos at the Sehion MTC on November 22, 2014.

Rev. Saji Thomas was the convener for the program and worked with a subcommittee to decide the schedule of events and the logistics. The Bishop of the Anglican Church of North America, Rt. Rev. Ray R. Sutton who serves as Dean of the Province and Ecumenical Affairs of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), inaugurated the program. The Dallas Area MTCs organized a combined choir under the direction of Mr. Renji Abraham to sing beautiful songs throughout the event.

The Felicitation Program began with a procession and opening song by the Dallas Area Mar Thoma Choir. The opening prayer was led by Rev. A. V. Thomas. Rev. Saji Thomas, Convener, welcomed everyone and spoke about the 25 years of ministry of all the three bishops. A slide show was presented illustrating 25 years of all three Thirumenis' service to the church when they were in various Dioceses. Rt. Rev. Ray R. Sutton gave an inspirational inaugural address and congratulated all three bishops. Rev. O. C. Kurian, Center Clergy Representative, Mr. P. V. Thomas, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch, Mr. Saji P. George, St. Paul's MTC Dallas, Mr. Santhosh Chacko, MTC of Dallas, Carrollton, Mr. Bobby C. Mathew, Sehion MTC Dallas, Professor Philip Thomas, CPA, Diocesan Trustee, and Rev. George Jacob, Dallas area church organizations, offered felicitations.

Representatives from each of the Dallas Area MTCs presented Theodosius Thirumeni and Coorilos Thirumeni with gifts. A Silver Jubilee cake was presented and cut by both Theodosius Thirumeni and Coorilos Thirumeni. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius and Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos thanked all during their address. Rev. Sam Mathew proposed the Vote of Thanks, Rev. Mathew Joseph said the closing prayer, and Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos gave the benediction. The program concluded with tea and refreshments.

Rev. Saji Thomas and Bobby C. Mathew



EMMANUEL MAR THOMA CHURCH LUBBOCK, TX.

The Emmanuel Mar Thoma Church Lubbock conducted its VBS from August 8 to 10, 2014. The theme was, "JUNGLE SAFARI." There were 22 students in three groups pre-school, elementary and pre-teen. There were three teachers and four helpers

in the VBS. Mrs. Lina Rachel Roe was the main leader. The Vicar, parents of the children, and parish members helped in different ways to make the VBS a success. Many children dedicated their lives to Christ. The VBS came to close on Sunday with a Holy Communion service.

Rev. Aji Varghese
(Vicar)

Mercy Joseph
(Secretary)

Dr. Annie Lincoln
(Diocesan Assembly
Member)

HOREB MAR THOMA CHURCH, LOS ANGELES - UNITY SUNDAY

Sunday, November 9th, 2014 marked the Festival of Unity of the Communion of Churches in India (CCI) according to our church lectionary. To express our oneness in Christ, the Horeb MTC, LA, joined the St. Peter's CSI Church for Holy Communion using the CSI order of worship. This is a reciprocal action which began last year when the St. Peter's family joined the Horeb family for worship using the MTC order of worship. Rev. Dr. George Oommen of the CSI church led the service and Rev. Larry Varghese of the Mar Thoma Church delivered the message. Our prayer is that God would continue to work through us to express the unity that is found only in Him.

Vicar: Rev. Larry Varghese



EPISCOPAL VISITS

BETHANY MAR THOMA CHURCH, ORANGEBURG, NEW YORK

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Bishop conducted English Holy Communion Service at Bethany Mar Thoma Church, Orangeburg on October 12, 2014 at 9:00 AM along with the dedication service of two Altar Boys and two Covenant Girls. The public meeting began with an opening song by the English Choir followed by a prayer by Mr. Mathew George. Mr. Sajjan Daniel, the secretary of the parish extended a warm welcome to Thirumeni, the convention preacher, and all the participants of the meeting. Mr. George Kuruvilla, lay leader of the parish felicitated Thirumeni on his Episcopal Silver Jubilee. Then, Mr. Joseph Mathew, the Trustee and Mr. Binoy Puthenmadathil, the Accountant handed a plaque and gave a ponnada to Thirumeni. Rev. Y. George, Vicar felicitated Thirumeni and spoke about the hard work and commitment in the last 25 years in our Church. Mr. Biju Mathew, Sunday School Superintendent invited Thirumeni for the distribution of the Sunday School prizes from the North East Regional Sunday School Talent Festival and Diocesan Examination. Mr. John Alex announced the names of the seven senior members aged 70 above; Thirumeni honored them by presenting a ponnada to each of them. Mr. K. V. Mathew announced the formation of the Senior Citizen's Forum in the church. Ms. Bincy Puthenmadathil presented a video presentation about going green, an effort against the use of plastic, and she handed over to Thirumeni an eco-friendly bag. After the song by the Malayalam Choir, Thirumeni gave the main message.



Mr. Binu Jacob, Vice-President of the parish extended the vote of thanks. Mrs. Annamma Jacob, Sevika Sanghom Secretary and Jessy Jose, Mandalam Member invited all for the lunch arranged by the Sevika Sanghom. After benediction and kaimuthu, the meeting came to an end. Photo session was held outside the church. Thirumeni planted a fruit tree in the church campus. The meeting of the executive committee was held at the church, chaired by the Diocesan Bishop.

Thirumeni's visit was a very joyous occasion and proved to be a blessing to all.

Rev. Y. George, Vicar, Bethany Mar Thoma Church

CHICAGO MAR THOMA CHURCH, ILLINOIS

Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited the Chicago Mar Thoma Church from November 7 to 9, 2014. The visit coincided with the Parish Annual Convention & the 33rd Parish Day.

CMTC's (Chicago Mar Thoma Church) Annual Parish Convention was held from November 6th through 8th. Renowned Maramon Convention speaker, Professor & Theologian Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse led the study on theme "Revitalizing Families in Changing Media Space". The sermons by Rev. Dr. Alphonse in English were translated to Malayalam by Mr. T. A. Abraham. We were blessed by the leadership of Diocesan Thirumeni and the presence of Chicago land MTC Vicars and priest from Ecumenical Council of Chicago.



The Diocesan Episcopa presided over a working breakfast session of Parish Executive Committee on Saturday, November 8, 2014. Thirumeni listened to member's concerns and provided guidance to resolve concerns. After the meeting, Thirumeni launched the Go Green project at CMTC by planting a sapling. The Mar Thoma Evangelistic Mission Navathi (90th) anniversary retreat under the leadership of our Diocesan Episcopa was immensely blessed and meaningful. The meeting was attended by Rev. Shaji Thomas of St. Thomas MTC, Lombard, Rev. George Cherian, Vicar of Bethel



MTC Frankfurt, and the faithful from our parish. The historical perspective of the Mar Thoma Edavaka Mission from its inception presented by Dr. P. V. Cherian and Navathi Message by Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse enriched the retreat.

The 33rd Parish Day celebrations began with Holy Communion celebrated by Theodosius Thirumeni with Rev. Daniel Thomas, Rev. Baiju Markose and Rev. Sonu Varghese serving as co-celebrants. Diocesan Episcopa elevated 14 children as communicant members and dedicated 3 Altar Boys and 2 Convent Girls. After the Holy Communion the Parish Day meeting began with "Stothra Susrusha" assisted by Mrs. & Mr. L. M. Mathew. Vicar Rev. Daniel Thomas welcomed Theodosius Thirumeni, Mrs. Rosemary Argus (Executive Director Des Plaines Community Foundation), Senator John G. Mulroe (10th District of IL), Alderman Patricia Haugeberg of Des Palines Ward-1, Rev. Baiju Markose of LSTC, Mr. Robert Argus (Director DCF) and the faithful to the Parish Day celebrations. The Episcopal Silver Jubilee of Theodosius Thirumeni was celebrated, and the Neighborhood Mission of CMTC in partnership with Des Plaines Community foundation was inaugurated. From the parish's Tithe Fund \$ 8000 was shared with the Des Plaines Community Foundation, for supporting educational aid, food pantries and winter gear programs. The parish thanked God for its elders and recognized seniors above 80 years during the Parish Day. The Parish Report for year 2014 was presented by Parish Secretary Mr. Monish K. John. The Parish Day celebrations concluded with fellowship lunch served by the parents of first communicants. The first communicant parents also identified a child who is in need of financial support and will be providing 1250 USD for educational aid.

Rev. Daniel Thomas, Vicar and Mr. Monish K. John, Secretary,

ATLANTA MAR THOMA CHURCH

We are very thankful to God Almighty for the Episcopal visit that coincided with our wonderful Sunday Worship Service, Parish Day and Silver Jubilee Inauguration meeting on October 26, 2014.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius led the Holy Communion service in English assisted by Rev. T.A. John, Rev. Skariah Varughese and Vicar, Rev. P. S. Thomas. During the worship service Thirumeni dedicated 12 first holy communicants. Thirumeni's message emphasized on the importance of Family, and its relationship to God. Soon after, the Parish day worship service was conducted by the three Achens, Rev. T. A. John, Rev. Skariah Varghese and Rev. P. S. Thomas, and the Silver Jubilee inauguration followed. The theme for the Silver Jubilee year is "Revive, Renew & Minister Together for the Lord".



The program emcee was Ms. Shoba Jacob. The meeting started with a song by the English choir followed by a prayer by Rev. Skariah Varughese. Rev. P. S. Thomas welcomed Thirumeni, the Achens, guests and parish members to the meeting followed by a song by Sunday School Students, coordinated by Youth Group. Mr. Abraham John presented a brief parish report. Theodosius Thirumeni delivered the inaugural address, which was followed by the lighting of the nilavilaku (lamp). A logo was unveiled and the Malayalam choir and the youth group sang harmonious songs. Rev. T. A. John, Rev. George Daniel (Vicar of St. Thomas Orthodox Church), Mr. Mathew Kurian and Mrs. Susan Abraham offered felicitations.

A felicitation was also rendered to Theodosius Thirumeni for completing 25 years of Episcopal ministry in the Mar Thoma Church. Mr. Vinod Mammen offered the felicitation and Mr. Mathew Varghese (Trustee) offered a gift on behalf of the parish.

Mr. Shyno Thoma congratulated Rev. T. A. John for completing 50 years of ordained minister in the Mar Thoma Church. Thirumeni presented a memento to Rev. T. A. John on behalf of the parish. Then the parish honored the Sunday School students who performed exceptionally well in the 2014 Diocesan exam. The Parish Secretary, Mr. John K. Varghese extended the vote of thanks to everyone present. It was followed by a song by the Malayalam Choir.

A birthday song was sung on the occasion of Rev. P. S. Thomas completing age 60, and he cut a cake. Mrs. Leelamma Thomas offered the closing prayer. The meeting concluded with the kaimuthu service. A photo session with Thirumeni and the First Communicants followed. Lunch was served to all the attendees.

Rev. P. S. Thomas, Vicar.

CARMEL MTC, BOSTON

The Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited Carmel MTC, Boston from Saturday, September 20 to Monday, September 22, 2014. Thirumeni led the Holy Communion Service and the First Communion Dedication Service on Sunday, September 21st. There were five first communicants. The first communicants, the Altar Boys, and Covenant Girls received certificates and badges from Thirumeni. Right after the Service, the parishioners participated in the felicitation program to honor



our Diocesan Bishop who completed 25 years in Episcopal ministry. Dr. Isaac Madathil led the opening prayer, then the Vicar gave introductory remarks, followed by a felicitation speech by Dr. George Abraham, the Vice-President of CMTC. The parish trustee, Mrs. Sheena Simon, presented a gift to Thirumeni. Thirumeni cut the cake, and shared the Vision and Mission of the Diocese. Thirumeni shared his humble beginning in the church as a clergy from a remote village near Kollam. By God's grace, the church entrusted more responsibilities as Bishop. Thirumeni appreciated the parish for their prayers and encouragement. The program concluded with prayer by Mrs. Neethu Preetham. After lunch, as part of the Diocesan Go- Green Project, Thirumeni planted trees to acknowledge the church's ecological concerns. Thirumeni also held a special meeting with the forthcoming leadership conference committee conveners to review its preparations and the program.

Rev. Sam T. Panicker, Vicar.

EPIPHANY MTC NEW YORK

The Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa visited the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York, on October 4 and 5, 2014. Sunday Holy Communion Service began with Thooyaba Service. Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Communion in English. Thirumeni also led the dedication service for the First communicants' and Altar Boys. Twenty youngsters received their first communion and 12 boys dedicated themselves as Altar Boys. During the sermon Thirumeni highlighted the role of laity as an apostle in relation to the mission and witness of the Church. He exhorted that the mission is to identify a need around us and respond to it with God's love. After the service Thirumeni met the parish members and shared his concern regarding our responsibility towards the neighborhood. After the kaimuthu service, there was a photo session along with first communicants and their families. Thirumeni also joined with the congregation in the fellowship lunch. After lunch Thirumeni spent time interacting with Parish executive committee and office bearers. As a part of "Going Green Project, a tree was planted on the church premises. The Episcopal visit was an encouragement and blessing to the parish.

Rev. Shibu Mathew, Vicar



MAR THOMA CONGREGATION CHATTANOOGA

Our respected Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited our congregation on October 24 and 25, 2014. The Holy Communion service was held at Brainerd United Methodist church on Saturday October 25, at 09:30 am. Our vicar and lay leader Mr. Alex Kurien assisted Thirumeni during the Holy Communion service. Around twenty members participated in received the Holy Communion. After the service, Thirumeni called



for an open discussion regarding church matters. Many of the members clarified their doubts and requested Thirumeni for granting permission to send requisition letters for the church building fund to members outside the Southern Region. Thirumeni explained the importance of allowing children to participate in church activities. The service ended with kaimuthu service and lunch. After the service Thirumeni visited the new church site and saw the renovation work. Thirumeni discussed the developments with Achen and church members. After the prayer and blessings at the property site, Thirumeni visited one of our senior church members, Ms. Annamma Paulose, who was bed ridden. Thirumeni's visit to the small congregation was really a blessing to all.

Rev. P. S. Thomas, Vicar and Ms. Minu Philipose, Secretary,

SEHION MAR THOMA CHURCH, DALLAS

The Diocesan Episcopa visited the Parish from November 22 to 24, 2014. He visited a few members in Dallas area and attended the services at the Church on November 22 and 23, 2014. He celebrated the Holy Qurbana at the Church on Sunday morning assisted by the Vicar, the lay leader and the Altar Boys. There was also a dedication service for first communicants.

Sehion Mar Thoma Church also celebrated its Parish Day. The program began with a song led by the English Choir. Rev. Saji



Thomas led the opening prayer. Thereafter, Thirumeni and Achen presented the certificates to the first communicants. Parish Secretary, Mr. Bobby C. Mathew presented the Parish Report. Our Seniors (above age 65) were honored with ponnada. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius gave a message congratulating the parish for celebrating its 10th anniversary. Thirumeni challenged the parishioners to continue their growth and render service for establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. Thirumeni led the closing prayer and pronounced the benediction followed by a kaimuthu service. Lunch was served to all the attendees.

Bobby C Mathew, Parish Secretary

THE NEW JERSEY MAR THOMA CHURCH, NJ

The Diocesan Episcopa visited the New Jersey Mar Thoma Church, Randolph on Saturday, September 27 and Sunday, September 28, 2014.



It was an honor and blessing for The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey and its members to have Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius along with Rev. Sam T. Panicker and with 8 other parish choirs for the first Gana Nisa under the title, *Sadhu Kotchu Kunj Upadeshi Gana Nisa*. This was a solemn occasion as other members of the Christian faith such as the Sero Malabar Catholics, Orthodox churches, and other Christian denominations came to embrace and remember the work(s) of a humble evangelist from Kerala. Over 475 people gathered and sang some of Upadeshi's classic songs along with the choirs. Theodosius Thirumeni hailed this attempt and congratulated the Choir of The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey for putting together such a unique venture. It was quite unique to see many choirs travel hundreds of miles to present a song in memory of Upadeshi. The Choirs that performed at the Gana Nisa were: 1) Bethel MTC, Philadelphia, PA, 2) Immanuel MTC, Virginia, 3) Christos MTC, Philadelphia, PA, 4) Baltimore MTC, MD, 5) Staten Island MTC, NY, 6) ST. Peter's MTC, Teaneck, NJ, 7) St. Stephen's MTC, East Brunswick, NJ, and 8) the hosts, New Jersey MTC, Randolph, NJ. The program concluded with a fellowship dinner.

On Sept 28th 2014, Theodosius Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Communion service. Prior to the service Thirumeni conducted the Thuyaba Prayer with the Parish Vicar Rev. Jacob Varughese, 5 Altar

boys, 4 Covenant Girls and the members of the Congregation. Thirumeni also conducted the dedication service for those who took the Holy Communion for the first time. Thirumeni exhorted the first holy communicants to continue their life as an example not just within the church premises but to all people who encounter them on a day to day basis. The seniors in the parish who had reached age 70 were blessed and honored with a ponnada for their life and work. Four Covenant Girls were dedicated during Thirumeni's visit. After the service, Thirumeni, Vicar Rev. Jacob Varughese and church members planted an ever green tree as a part of the **Going Green Project**. Thirumeni also met members of the congregation and the Church Executive committee. Thirumeni and Vicar Jacob Varughese also visited a pioneer parish member who was extremely sick. The New Jersey MTC was indeed blessed with the presence of Theodosius Thirumeni. His vision of the future generation and his zeal to spread the gospel to every nook and corner of the world was evident in his ministry at the New Jersey MTC.

Rev. Jacob Varughese, Vicar and Mr. Prakash Abraham, Secretary.

ST. JOHN'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK

The St. John's Mar Thoma Church was blessed and honored by the visit of Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa, the bishop of the Delhi Diocese, on August 31, 2014. Mar Paulos celebrated Holy Communion and led the dedication service for nineteen First Communicants. As it was the beginning of the new academic year, Thirumeni also led a dedication service for students. In the public meeting after Holy Communion, Thirumeni blessed the congregation with his valuable message. Representing the communicants Master Robin Varghese and Ms. Nefia Chacko expressed their gratitude to Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa and to the parishioners.

St. Johns MTC, New York Community outreach program:

Rev. Joji K. Mathew, Vicar of St. Johns Mar Thoma Church presented a check to the Principal Ms. Adam Comrie Karleen of Jean Nuzzi Intermediate School, Queens Village, New York to sponsor the school debate club. Mr. Mathew P. George and Mr. C. V. Simonkutty participated. The school debate club won several prizes at District and Citywide competitions.

Mr. Beji T. Joseph, Secretary



ST. PETER'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW JERSEY

The St. Peter's Mar Thoma Church, Teaneck, New Jersey, celebrated its Parish day and Family Sunday on October 19, 2014, with Holy Communion service in English. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa was the chief celebrant. A dedication service for two Altar Boys was held during the worship service.

Immediately after the worship service, a public meeting was held. It began with a prayer by Mr. T.S Varghese, Vice President. Mr. T.S Chacko delivered the welcome speech, followed by songs by Sunday school children and the presidential address by Vicar Rev. Roy Mathew. Edavaka Secretary Mr. Abraham Mathew presented the parish day report. Thirumeni delivered a thoughtful and inspirational parish day message. Edavaka trustee Mr. Sam Alakkattil delivered the vote of thanks. The meeting concluded with a prayer and benediction by Thirumeni. A fellowship lunch was served after the meeting.

Mr. Abraham Mathew, Secretary



ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, DELAWARE VALLEY

Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited the St Thomas MTC of Delaware Valley from Friday, October 31, to Sunday, November 2, 2014. Thirumeni conducted the Holy



Communion in English at St. Thomas MTC, Delaware Valley. Thirumeni began with the Thooyaba (Preparatory Service) with the Altar Boys.

During this service, Thirumeni welcomed six First Holy Communicants to participate in the sacrament. He congratulated the children and their parents on this important milestone of their Christian life and in the growth of the Parish.

After the Holy Communion service, the 9th parish day was celebrated. In conjunction with the "Going Green" project of the Diocese, Thirumeni and the members of the St Thomas MTC of DV planted a tree on the church grounds. After that a fellowship lunch was served by the families of the First Communicants. The Vicar and members of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Delaware Valley express their gratitude to Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius for his presence, prayers, and guidance to the church during this Episcopal Visit.

Rev. Shaji M Eappan, Vicar

ST. ANDREWS MAR THOMA CHURCH, NEW YORK

The St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church was privileged to have our Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, celebrating the Holy Communion service on Sunday, November 16, 2014. Approximately 300 people attended the English Holy Communion service that day. The Episcopal visit coincided with the Parish Day and Family Sunday. Eight members dedicated themselves and participated in the Holy Qurbana for the first time. An open forum for members to express their ideas and concerns to Thirumeni followed. The Parish Day celebrations concluded with prayer and benediction by Thirumeni. A fellowship lunch followed. All those who attended found Thirumeni's visit to be a blessing.

Rev. Abraham Oommen, Vicar; Mr. Sunil Varghese, Secretary



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SINAI MAR THOMA CHURCH, UK

The members of the Sinai Mar Thoma Church and St. Georges Anglican Parish in North Harrow and London came together on Sunday, October 26, 2014, to give glory to God through a joint Holy Communion service using the Mar Thoma liturgy. This was a very significant historical event in the intercommunion relationship with the Church of England, which started in 1936 and solidified through various stages over the last 78 years. This service was a milestone event because three children from the Anglican parish of St. Georges came forward for the confirmation and the first communion with 16 children of the Mar Thoma Church. The prophetic vision and leadership of the vicar of the St. George's parish, Father Stephen Keeble, and the vicar of the Sinai Mar Thoma Church, Revd. Dr. Thomas Philips, made this event possible.



Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Theethos of the Mumbai Mar Thoma Diocese confirmed the children, gave them their first communion, and blessed them. This event happened because of the ecumenical understanding of our Metropolitan, Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Revd. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Bishop of London, area bishop of Willesden, church wardens and the executive committee of two parishes. Over 400 people participated in the service, choirs of both parishes contributed to the beauty and serenity of the service under the leadership of the organist, Mr. Huw Jones. We look forward for more such fellowship and worship services through the grace of God.

Dr. Zac Varghese, London

HERMON MAR THOMA CHURCH MIDLANDS, UK

The Mumbai Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Theethos blessed Hermon MTC, Birmingham, with his visit on October 25, 2014. Thirumeni led the Holy Communion service at Christ Church, Birmingham, in which Revd. Mathew P, Vicar of St James MTC, Central London and Vicar Revd. Vinoj Varghese assisted Thirumeni for the service.

Thirumeni gave an inspirational sermon during the Holy Communion service in which His Lordship emphasized the importance of partaking in the Holy Communion service. He also explained that as we are taking the Holy Communion through our mouth, and hence we need to keep our mouth and body clean by saying good words and being kind to one another.

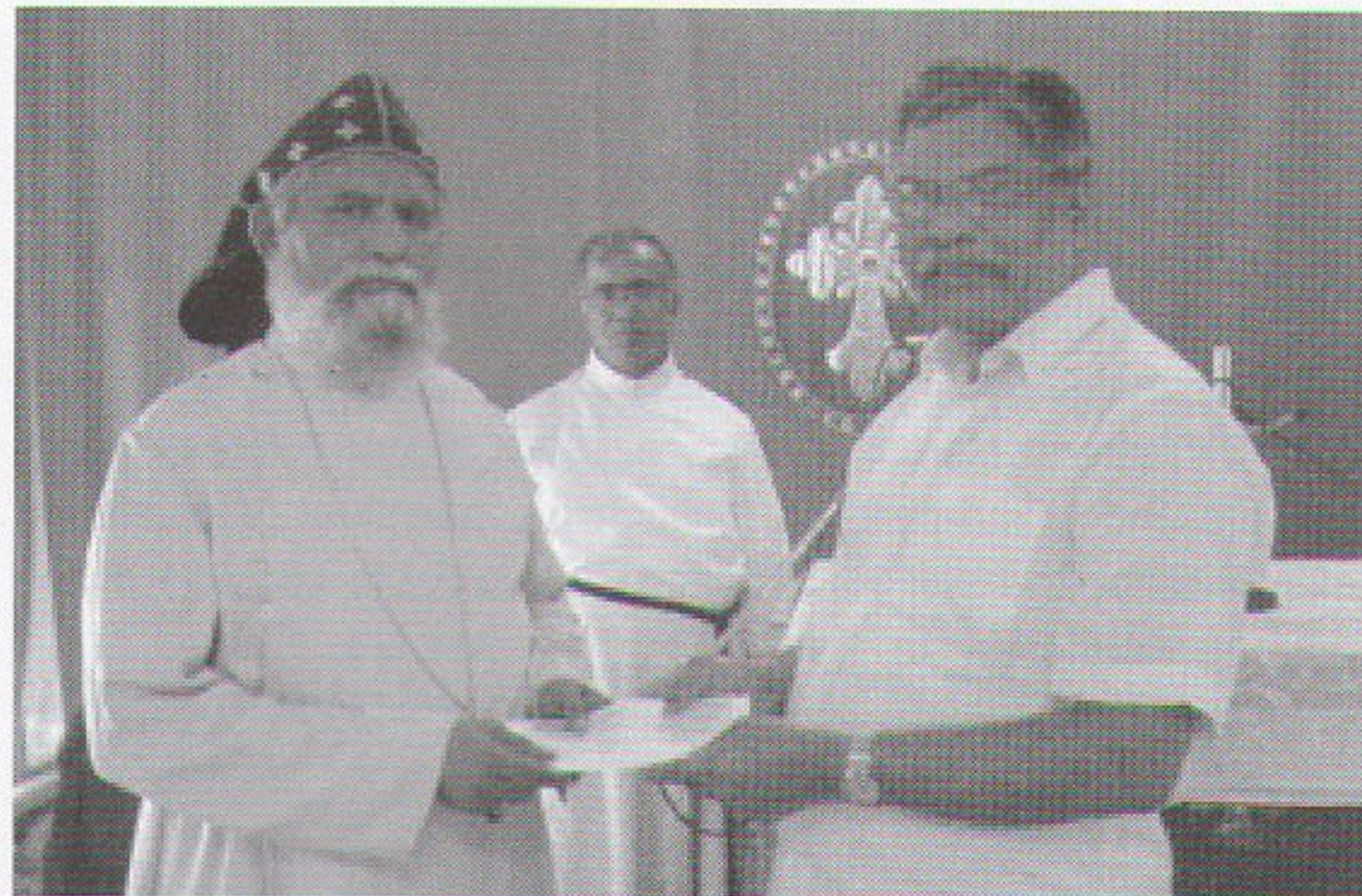
Eleven children of Hermon Parish and two children from Harrow Sinai Parish received their first Holy Communion and thereby entered into the full fellowship of the Mar Thoma Church. About 200 members participated in the Holy Qurbana and the fellowship lunch that followed.

Mr. Giboy George, Secretary



ENDOWMENT THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND

The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island instituted a permanent endowment at the **Asha Bhavan**, Pidavoor, Pathanapuram to support and to provide food, boarding and education to the physically challenged children residing in the Asha Bhavan. A check for Rupees Two Lakhs, was handed to Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa, the President of Asha Bhavan.



The Edavaka Mission of the Mar Thoma Church Staten Island instituted a permanent endowment for the **Mar Thoma Hospital Guidance and Counseling Center**, Trivandrum, to support and provide assistance to the poor and marginalized bystanders of patients seeking treatment in hospitals located in the area of Trivandrum, Kerala. A check for Rupees One Lakh was handed to Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, the President of the Center.

Rev. Mathews Abraham, Vicar

PARISH NEWS

ST. MATHEW'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, TORONTO

As part of Going Green project, members of St Mathew's MTC, Toronto, planted 14 trees on the church property during the 2014 summer

Thomas Abraham (Shaji), Diocesan Assembly Member



ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, LOMBARD, IL

St. Thomas MTC, Lombard, IL, pioneered the first ever DuPage PADs event in June that included providing dinner, making sleeping arrangements, and offering other services for the homeless. This has become a recurring activity where volunteers truly exemplify Christ's example by serving the community.

Another event, *Smrithisarani* was organized by Mr. Thomas Lathara. At this event, parents and grandparents shared their childhood memories, traditions, songs, and stories with children. Children asked interesting, amusing and challenging questions and in turn were fascinated by the answers they received. The long-term vision of 'Smrithisarani' (Memory lane) is to nurture a bond between grandparents and grand-children through the narration of childhood memories by the seniors to meet the insatiable curiosity of the younger children to listen to their stories. These short documentaries are to be preserved as a piece of the seniors' legacy that may otherwise be lost.

Smrithisarani



TRINITY MTC HOUSTON CELEBRATES ITS 40TH PARISH DAY

Trinity MTC Houston celebrated its 40th Parish Day on October 19, 2014. Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa (Trivandrum-Kollam Diocese) was the Chief Guest. The program started with a Holy Communion Service. After the service, Rev. A. G. Mathew opened the Parish Day program with a prayer and the parish vicar, Rev. Kochukoshy Abraham, welcomed everyone.



Mr. Aldrin George (Secretary) presented a brief parish report. All the initial parish members' families were honored with a presentation of a rose flower to recognize their initiative for establishing a Mar Thoma Church in Houston. During the event all those who were 70 years old (Saptathi), and all the Office Bearers for the past 40 years were honored with the presentation of a Ponnada. Special Songs were sung by the Parish Choir and the "Healing Hearts" (a fellowship of those who recovered from serious diseases). Thirumeni's Parish Day message was encouraging and he motivated the attendees to engage in mission activities.

Rev. A. G. Mathew, Rev. Saju Mathew, Rev. Roy A. Thomas, Evangelist Joy Pullad, and many members from Immanuel MTC and other sister churches attended the meeting. In connection with 40th Parish Day, a 40-hour chain prayer (from October 12 to 15), the Parish Convention (from October 16 to 18), and a Joint Convention with Immanuel MTC (on October 17), were conducted.

Rev. Kochukoshy Abraham, Vicar,

These are the answers for Crossword Puzzle in the October 2014 issue. Topics were taken from II Chronicles 1-18

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THE GRAND FINALE OF THE 40TH YEAR THANKSGIVING PROGRAM

The 40th Anniversary of the formation of the Mar Thoma congregation in Houston was celebrated on November 28, 2014. The celebrations were led by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, and began with 40 seniors from the parish planting 40 trees. In his remarks Theodosius Thirumeni stated, "A span of 40 years would make the active years of a human." He added that, "Forty years is a very significant time for the parish and a faith community." Praising the congregation for their dedication and hard work, he said, "You have made history by establishing a place of worship here."

His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius Metropolitan offered his felicitations on the occasion. Rev. Kochukoshy Abraham welcomed the gathering and the dignitaries. Consul General of India, Houston, Honorable Harish Parvathaneni congratulated the members on the occasion. Koshy Thomas introduced the Consul General and Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia who also gave his message on the occasion. City of Stafford Councilman Ken Mathews also spoke on the occasion and offered his felicitations. Rev. Saju Mathew and Rev. Roy A. Thomas also shared their messages and felicitations. A detailed presentation of the 40th Year Report was presented by Jojy Jacob, Vice President and Convener for the 40th Year Thanksgiving Program. Later, Mr. Oommen Thomas invited Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius to release a souvenir that was prepared to commemorate the historical event.

Rev. Kochukoshy Abraham, Vicar

HERMON MTC, ATLANTA

The Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, visited the Hermon MTC, Atlanta, from November 29 to December 1, 2014. Thirumeni celebrated the English Holy Communion service on Sunday morning. Four youngsters, (two boys and two girls), received their first communion and became full communicant members of the Church. Thirumeni also dedicated three Altar Boys and four Covenant Girls.

After the service, Hermon MTC celebrated its 9th Parish day. Thirumeni chaired the meeting. He delivered an inspiring message and challenged the Parish to do greater things for God. Thirumeni's Episcopal Silver Jubilee was also celebrated by the church during the program. The parish presented him a plaque and a Bishop's pectoral cross. Thirumeni presented the first communicants with certificates. Vice President Lukose Tharian expressed the church's gratitude. Rev. Skaria Varghese (Rtd.) was also present during the

worship service and parish day meeting. Thirumeni joined the parishioners during the lunch that followed.

On Sunday evening Thirumeni met the North American Anglican Archbishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Foley Beach. We express our sincere thanks to Theodosius Thirumeni and pray that God will continue to use His Grace for the glory of His Kingdom.

Rev. Binu Thomas, Vicar



EPISCOPAL VISIT

St. Mark's MTC Tampa

Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, the Bishop of Thiruvananthapuram-Kollam Diocese and President of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association visited the St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, Tampa, Florida, on October 7, 2014. It was a blessing and honor to have Thirumeni celebrate a special Holy Communion service in Malayalam, assisted by our Vicar Rev. Joykutty D. Thirumeni shared overviews of the many mission projects in India, and offered suggestions on how the parishioners could assist in different ways. After the Holy Communion service, the Malayalam choir rendered a song and Rev. Joykutty D. welcomed Thirumeni on his first visit to St. Mark's MTC. The Secretary, Mrs. Alice Kurian, in her felicitation speech elaborated on Thirumeni's leadership, ministry and service. After the service, there was a time for fellowship and dinner. Thirumeni was able to meet many of the parish members and it was a blessed occasion.

Alice Kurian, Secretary, St. Marks MTC



DIOCESAN NEWS

SILVER JUBILEE OF EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION

The Mar Thoma Church is blessed with the eminent leadership of our bishops. The contributions of our bishops towards the overall growth and development of the Church is visible from the church's inception. On December 9, 1989, the Mar Thoma Church was gifted with three prominent leaders in the persons of Mar Athanasius, Mar Theodosius and Mar Coorilos. They completed the Silver Jubilee of their Episcopal Ministry on December 9, 2014, and it was indeed a time for the church to praise and thank God for these leaders.

A Thanksgiving Holy Qurbana and felicitation meeting was arranged on December 9, 2014 at the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York. Theodosius Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Qurbana and shared the word of God. About 25 Aghens and a good number of lay people from various parts of the diocese attended the event.

Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Binoy J. Thomas, presided over the felicitation meeting. Rev. Shibu Mathew, Vicar Epiphany MTC, welcomed everyone. Rev. Sam T. Panicker, Rev. Shaji M. E, Mr. Samuel K. Samuel, and Mr. John K. Thomas offered felicitations. The choir and Baskiamos sang melodious songs. Thirumeni cut a cake that was prepared for the occasion.

Theodosius Thirumeni showed his appreciation for the Diocesan Council for organizing the event. Theodosius Thirumeni thanked God for the blessings he received along with Mar Athanasius and Mar Coorilos. He recalled receiving the Ramban ordination on November 4, 1989, at Kottarakkara, from the Metropolitan the Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma. Thirumeni also shared some of his other memories and talked about some of the people who influenced his life. He was grateful to his parents and all the dear ones in his family. He had remarkably fond memories of his parents. The prayerful life of his parents, their disciplined life, and Christian nurturing influenced Thirumeni's life and development. Thirumeni also used the occasion to express loyalty to the church. Thirumeni remembered the life of Dr. Juhanon Marthoma and his simplicity while leading the church through a difficult period. Thirumeni

especially remembered the launch of the home for homeless project. Mar Theodosius also remembered Thomas Mar Athanasius Thirumeni for his academic excellence, seriousness in the life, and discipline. He also remembered Alexander Thirumeni's preparations for the sermons, and the simple but serious approach to ministry. He also recalled Chrysostom Thirumeni's concern and care for others.

Thirumeni pointed out that the diversity within the Diocese of North America and Europe made his task very challenging. Mar Theodosius shared the various activities that he led in the previous dioceses of Kunnakulam-Malabar, Trivandrum-Kollam, Chennai-Bangalore and now in North America and Europe. He recognized that at present we are facing newer challenges and hence should carefully plan for all the future diocesan programs.

Thirumeni used the occasion as a time to rededicate himself to God. He exhorted the attendees to become partners for spreading the gospel all over the world. As a global church and a missionary church he wanted the church to minister within and outside the church.



Thirumeni emphasized that the mission of the church should be to realize its challenges and offer creative responses to the evolving situations. In this highly technological era he felt that we should not become slaves to technology and thereby forget our neighbors. He wished that the church would use technology to build a better world for reaching out to others.

Rev. Binoy J. Thomas expressed his gratitude to all who participated in the program. The program was webcast live through the diocesan website. After the program everyone enjoyed a fellowship meal.

Rev. Binoy J. Thomas, Diocesan Secretary

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD.

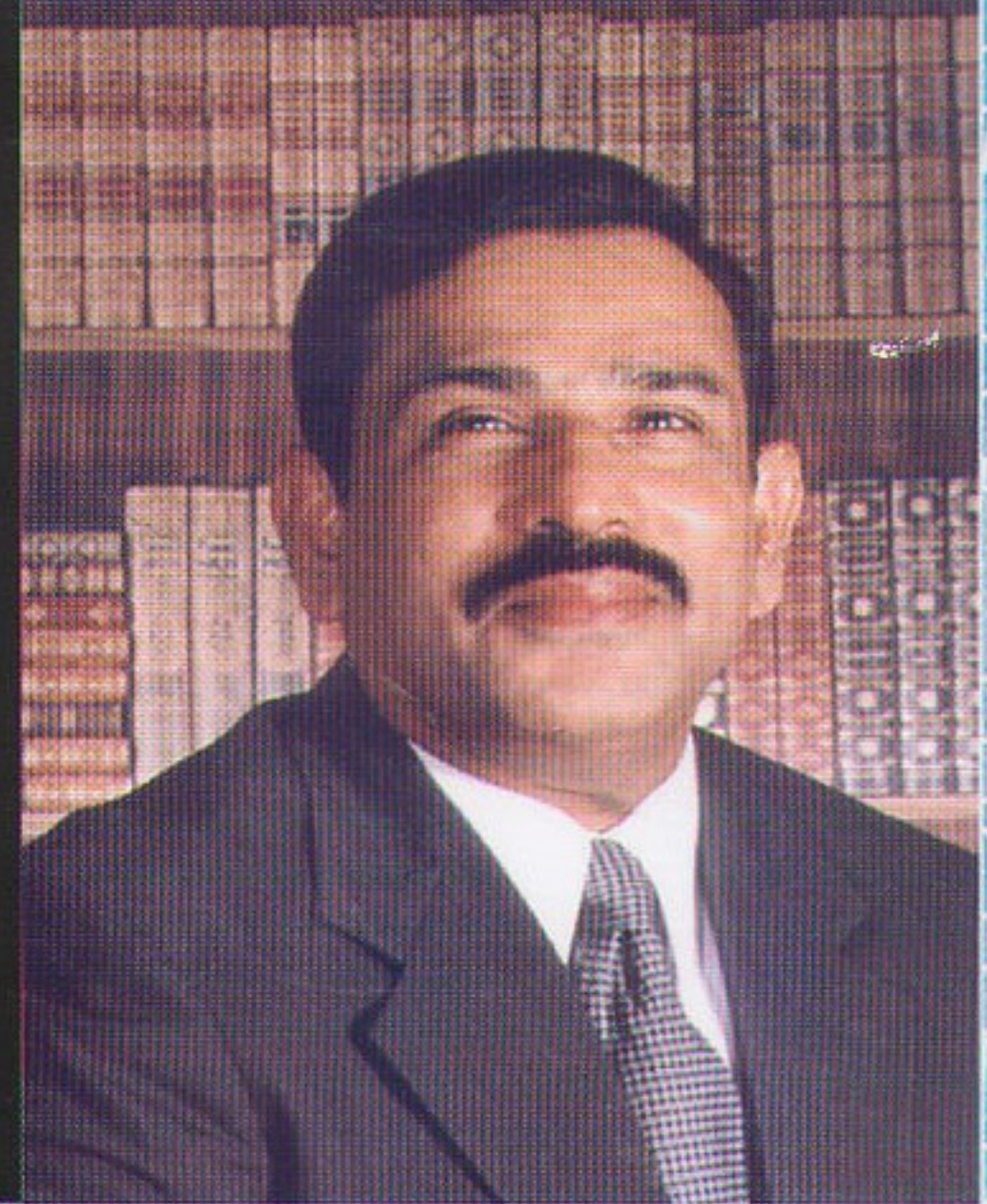
"They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

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