

MALANKARA

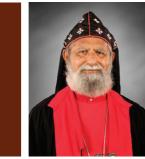
September 2023

Volume 02

Issue 09



GOD RENEW US IN YOUR SPIRIT AND RESTORE THE CREATION



BIRTHDAY WISHES!!!

Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Barnabas Suffragan Metropolitan

September 08



H. G. Dr. Theodosius Marthoma Metropolitan delivering the presidential address at Sabha Pratinidhi Mandalam meeting at Thiruvalla

H. G. DR. THEODOSIUS MARTHOMA METROPOLITAN'S ORISSA MISSION VISIT IN PICTURES



Inaugurating 38th anniversary of Khariar Road Mission. Hon. Cabinet minister of Orissa Mr. Rajendra Dholakia nearby



Foundation stone laying ceremony of Gurukul Vidyapith English Medium school,
Kariar Bnad





Independence day celebration at Khariar Road. Office bearers of Niranam - Maramon diocese nearby

H. G. DR. THEODOSIUS MARTHOMA METROPOLITAN PRESENTING VARIOUS AWARDS OF MARTHOMA CHURCH









REV. DR. RENJAN JOHN Nellimoottil

Congratulations

who won the Maliakal M. C. George Achen memorial literary Award 2023. He is serving as the Chief Editor of Malankara Sabha Tharaka

Manav Seva Award: Dr. M. A. Oommen Farmer Award : Sri. Ani V. Thomas

Literary Award: Rev. Dr. Renjan John Nellimoottil

Literary Award : Rev. Ebey Cherian



MALANKARA SABHATHARAKA

Volume 02

Issue 09

September 2023



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AUGUST -2023 LETTER FROM THE **METROPOLITAN**

Beloved in the Lord,

Greetings to all in the name of Jesus Christ.

It is joyful that the Mar Thoma Sabha Mandalam has elected Rev. Saju C. Pappachan, Rev. Dr. Joseph Daniel, and Rev. Mathew K. Chandy to the Episcopal position of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Praise God. On behalf of the Church, I express gratitude to the Mandalam members who realized the need of the church and took timely decision and to all those who prayed earnestly.

Chandrayaan-3 mission success is India's proudest and legendary success. Special appreciation goes to the Government of India and ISRO personnel who worked behind the success. India became the fourth country to land on the moon. India also made history as the first country to land on the southern side of the moon. Chandrayaan-3 mission fulfilled India's desire to reach the far away moon. Participating in the joy of the country. We have taken another step in space exploration. We should be able to hold those close to us in the same spirit that reaches out to those who are far away. This is the most difficult task of the Kingdom of God. Many fail in this mission.

The 15th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) is scheduled to take place at the Kottayam Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church. The General Assembly, scheduled to be held from September 28 to October 3, has chosen a prayer as the main theme; "God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation". The scriptures paint a rich picture of God's mind and care for man, animals, plants, and all things on earth. Disruptive nature and unruly humans are putting the very existence of planet Earth in crisis. Here we have the opportunity to transform into individuals who dare to dream and diligently labour towards a renewal fuelled by faith in a higher power, trusting in God's ability to rejuvenate all aspects of life through genuine repentance. Mar Thoma Church along with other CCA member Christian churches of Kerala is hosting the said assembly.

In August 2023, along with a 14-member team of Niranam - Maramon Diocese, I got a chance to visit the Khariar Road Mission Field in Orissa, which was started in 1985 by the special interest of Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Now there are 2 missionary Achens and 7 evangelists working among the local people. Believers regularly gather in 68 villages including the Mission Centre and pray. A hostel for girls at the mission campus is run with the help of Diocesan Sevika Sangham. A hostel for boys is also being planned under the auspices of Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam. In the mission fields, new land need to be purchased and houses of worship has to be built. The mission field features 5 chapels and 2 hostels where 58 students live and study. The mission campus needs a new chapel, community hall and compound wall. "Gurukul Vidyapeeth School" with 102 students studying in Komakh, Chhattisgarh is now functioning in rented buildings in 3 houses of locals. On Independence Day, the foundation stone of a new school building for Gurukul Vidyapeeth was laid on two acres of Diocese's own property. The mission fields in Orissa and Chhattisgarh should be remembered in prayers and the mission activities should be strengthened by providing financial assistance to the possible extent.

It is welcoming that the Supreme Court has taken up the reins of the investigation to restore the rule of law and to account for the genocide and riots that have been going on for months in Manipur. A threemember team of women judges was appointed to find solutions to humanitarian problems. And the investigation of sexual violence against women is under the supervision of the CBI. These can be seen as changes to ensure the impartiality of investigating teams. Let us pray that the steps to restore the rule of law and restore the confidence of the people will be possible as soon as possible.

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church senior metropolitan Zachariah Mar Anthonios passed away. Thirumeni served as the President of the Kochi and Kollam Diocese of the Orthodox Church. Mar Anthonios Thirumeni was a noble shepherd who earned respect for his faithful and simple life. The Mar Thoma Church joins in the grief of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and extends its condolences. Rev. E.J. George, Senior Clergy and elder brother of Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Barnabas Saffragan Metropolitan was taken to heavenly abode. Achen's personal relationships, sense of values in attitude, evangelistic zeal and exemplary lifestyle are worth mentioning. Praising God for the ministry of Achen made possible through the church. Chartered Accountant Shri. K. I. John who served as the statutory auditor of our church for a long time and gave expert advice on financial affairs passed away. Koduman Cherukara Mr. C. S. Koshy, who served as a member of the Sabha Council and Mandalam member for a long time passed away. The Mar Thoma Church joins in their grief and expresses its condolences on the loss of these loved ones.

The scriptures and themes for the month of September highlight the intergenerational integrity and interdependence of the Church and remind us of our responsibilities. The Church observes the third of September as Education Day. This day should help us to remember, pray and renew dedication to the Church's involvement in the field of education. This day's readings suggest that education should have a spiritual foundation. The theme is Care Oriented Education'. Created in the image of God, man can have fulfilment of life only in relationship with God. As Philip taught the great eunuch of the Queen of Ethiopia, only

when education becomes a process of discovering the struggle of life, education becomes a training to learn to care. Care is a heavenly investment. The goal of education is intergenerational communication.

Sunday 10th September is observed as Sevika Sangham Day. The theme of meditation is 'Women as apostles of Christ'. Lord Jesus and the disciples gave women a great role and right in the service of God's kingdom. Like Lydia, Pheba, Priscilla and Mary, there are many women who opened their hearts and homes for God. Even today, the Lord invites women to be apostles who share their experiences with the Lord. The integrity of the church and society requires that our church treat women with the attitude of the Lord.

September 17 Sunday is a day set aside for Senior Citizens. "The underlying theme is "Old Age that Combines Faith and Experience". Those who have lived to bless the generation should encourage the younger generation by their example. The older generation that waits for Jehovah and renewing their strength are different demonstrations of strength. Simeon and Hannah demonstrated this unfailing spiritual strength. May the observation of this day benefit the good culture of respecting and honouring the older generation.

On the 24th of September, we meditate on the thought of the Glorious Coming of our Lord. One of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity is that having experienced redemption through the appearing of the Lord, the world must live as witnesses of its salvation. Evangelion assures that they should live faithfully based on the values of God's kingdom and that they will be greatly rewarded. The great apparition challenges us to act with conviction of divine victory. Let us pray with the same fervour that the early church prayed, "Amen, Lord, come quickly."

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Poolatheen 31. 08. 2023

Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Mudnant

MALANKARA MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH PRATHINIDHI MANDALAM 2023

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



Praise be to the triune God. Greetings to you all in the name of Jesus Christ.

Dear Venerable Bishops, Reverend Vicars General, Officials of the Church, Respected Clergy, Beloved Sabha Council Members, loving members of the Church who have come from different parts of the world, Sabha Office staff members, Visitors, and Friends, my greetings to all of you.

Preface

Welcome to the first meeting of the Mandalam members elected for 2023-26 of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Being elected to the Prathinidhi Mandalam is a great divine ordination. The purpose of the Mandalam Meetings is to deliberate and decide the spiritual and temporal matters of the church. I earnestly desire that we may be governed by the conviction that we are all called to this great responsibility. We have come for a 5-day meeting where the 2023 Annual Prathinidhi Mandalam

Meeting and the Special Prathinidhi Mandalam Meeting under Section 21 of the Constitution are convened. All through these meetings there should be sincere participation of all of you. At the very outset, you all shall understand that this should be viewed as a most important meeting where discussions and proposals should be made so that the work of the Church be constructive and up-to-date. Today is Thiruvonam in the month of Chingam. Thiruvonam is a festival of unity that unites our people across differences of caste, religion, caste, and color. Onam wishes to all.

The Present Day: We live in an age of rapid speed through new horizons of progress. Today, the world is witnessing a huge leap in all fields like art, science, technology, health, finance, and politics. Artificial intelligence, automation, and machine learning, which replace humans with machines, bring about opportunities and challenges to us today. Global migration is leading humanity to new cultures and

possibilities. It is the pride of every Indian that India has successfully completed Chandrayaan-3. However, amidst these gains, new modes and means of territorializing are evident in the national and international scenario. War mania, the result of extreme nationalism, has gripped the world today. It is not limited to the borders of Ukraine. War has always been against humanity. It destroys, not shapes, human culture. State and state governance become individualcommunity-centered. At least some doubt whether governments and the judiciary operate impartially. The bygone year was also one that witnessed some of the most tragic battles and exodus in history. Conflicts between nationalities and caste-race-gender divisions have amplified. This is an era that makes idealistic politics seem irrelevant. Casteism and religion have prevailed over politics. The incident of burning 21 Christian churches and 35 houses near Lahore is very regrettable. It is also a time of disrespect that preys on minorities and does not respect the dignity of others. A time when the cries of the ordinary and the marginalized go unheard. The above array the advantages and disadvantages of the present time.

Contemporary Mission and Challenges of the Church: "Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains" are the words of the famous thinker Rousseau. It is also relevant to this period that man is born free but he is bound in yokes and chains. Jesus Christ intervened in history by proclaiming the liberation of the world from the imperial rule of Rome, which was characterized by slavery and oppression. Christ's statement that "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4: 18,19) also points to the contemporary mission of the church. Jesus Christ gave freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and freedom from yokes and chains to men who had been mere subjects until then. The new heavens and the new earth announced by Christ brought humankind out of the yoke of slavery and into the hopes of the new age. To some extent, Christ initiated the democratic era in human history and the gospel that later spread throughout the world.

The church is a group of people called by God to fulfill God's purpose in the world. The Church's mission is to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. The challenges faced by evangelical activities and activists in the changing world conditions are enormous. Let us remember all those who are going through crisis situations by being involved in evangelical activities. Many changes are happening around us as signs of the times. In their midst mission models have to be reconstructed to enable meaningful presence and witnessing of the church. The organizations leading the evangelical activities of the Church, the Dioceses, and the parishes have started thinking about this seriously. The ministry of the church is not a process to change the realities of the world. It is the preparation to transform oneself and become the proper Church of the times. Politicizing the church, communalizing politics, and trying to compromise democracy is contrary to the essence of the gospel. Today's need is to enable witnessing by decentralizing power, taking into account the special circumstances of diaspora churches, and including local and cultural elements.

The Free India today: It has been 76 years since the great nation of India, which has upheld high democratic values, secularism, and pluralism, has held its head high in front of the world. India was born in the beauty of diversity, with different languages, religions, cultures, peoples, hundreds of princely states, and the princes who ruled them. Our strength, beauty, and survival mantra is this unique Indian identity with its emphasis on equality, secularism, and modernity. But the time has come when pluralism and secularism are in danger. It is often forgotten that our country is the land of sages who prayed for 'Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhayantu' - that the whole world be well. French writer and Nobel laureate Romain Rolland said that, if there is a place that has made a home for the dreams of all people in the world since the beginning of time, it is India. There is no doubt that the global spiritual influence of India that Rolland

dreamed of, has faded. Today the dangerous and immature slogan of one language, one nation, one culture, one party, one law, and one leader is quickly gaining public acceptance. Hatred, a by-product of alienation and majority racism, is spreading rapidly. It is this sectarianism and hatred that causes communal riots from Gujarat to Manipur, Haryana, and many other parts of the country. These wastelands of hatred, where the poisonous flowers of hatred grow, could be scorched, if man and man hold hands. Let us hope that each mind will be transformed into a space of unity. Then the spring of peace will blossom here, no doubt. India's cry has reached heaven. The days when Almighty God will listen to Manipur's prayers and perform miracles will soon come, no doubt. Yes! God who hears the cry of the land will intervene in history.

Democracy is stifling: Democracy is in peril all over the world. India is ranked 66th out of 100 in the "Freedom in the World" report published by Freedom House, which assesses the Freedom Index in the world nations. This decline of broad democracy is attributed to the fact that India, like Russia and Turkey, is becoming an elected dictatorship. It can be described as an Electoral Autocracy. Fascist tendencies are characteristic of governments today. Governments should not become an elected dictatorship. In these times when India's characteristic pluralism is being questioned, what we need is the freedom of pluralism. It is a universal freedom that embraces the diversity of pluralism, the unity in diversity. As the title of Dr. Jose Parakkadvil's recently released book, India is 'the unity among a lot of diversity.' Insurgence sows its seeds where minds are divided.

Fearful silence, roaring bulldozers: The silence of the authorities, who are silent even when the land is in shambles, frightens us. Silence becomes the trumpet of power. It goes without saying that many mob attacks and killings are fuelled by the silence of governments. 'Do not disturb, justice is sleeping,' laments the poets. Bulldozers have become the new sign of authority. There is a tendency to uproot everything that the authorities think is wrong. There is no doubt that there should be legal measures to prevent illegal encroachments and eviction. However, trying to implement a political agenda under the guise of legislation is a challenge to democracy and its basic values. In a democratic-secular country like India, the bulldozer should not be the symbol of justice.

Loss of freedom of expression, increasing Dalit persecution: The most beautiful aspect of democracy is the freedom to criticize. If the freedom of speech is lost, the platform to express opinion will disappear and eventually the country will be led to the days of dictatorship. The number of people being killed and jailed for opposing voices is increasing in the country. India's relegation to the 161st position out of 180 countries in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index needs to be taken seriously. Democracy and freedom of expression must be protected not only at the national level but also in the Church and our various decision-making bodies. Don't get involved in hiding the truth or denying the justice of others by making noise or grabbing. We need an approach that embraces different perspectives, respects the individuality of others, and listens to small voices.

Discrimination against Dalits and women in the country still remains unchanged. Dalits are being beaten to death, the water in the tank used by Dalits is mixed with waste, freedom of worship is being denied, etc. There are people who do not want to accept that Dalits are also human beings. In this era, there should be a unity of human minds that stands beyond narrow sectarian thinking. Every Christian should be able to create a world of care based on the love of Christ. Locally there should be secular public spaces that are inclusive of all people.

Uniform Civil Code

A uniform civil law may seem to help the unity of the country. However, considering India's diversity and complexity of civil laws, this is not an easy task to implement. We all know the caste-religious differences and diversity in the tribal traditions. The Constituent Assembly then expressed the opinion that this law should not be enforced until a consensus is reached. We must recognize the real face of those who initiate such discussions with political agenda. In a country as multicultural as India, a single personal law that applies equally to all is likely to do more harm than good.

Educational institutions that dispense the light of letters: Let's not forget that the church has established Church schools along with Church buildings to bestow the land with knowledge. But today the schools run by the Church and other communities that are around one hundred and twenty-five years old are facing a crisis. From getting approval for an appointment in the schools to the maintenance of the building poses a huge challenge to the management. Today, the government has taken the approach of overturning such schools, which were once the backbone of our education sector. What is wrong with asking the Government of Kerala, Hon'ble Chief Minister, and Minister of Education to urgently consider our aided schools as well, along with the government schools in Kerala?

It is also the mission of the church to ensure value-based higher education. The need of the hour is to liberate the education sector from the decadence faced by the higher education sector. The Higher Education Commission of the Church should implement a timely reform in this regard. The Higher Education Reform Cell has been mandated by the Government to submit proposals and procedures for granting private universities and constituent colleges within the state of Kerala. It is imperative that we upgrade the facilities and standards of our colleges in line with the changes implemented by the government. This year our Kozhencherry St. Thomas College has secured an A (+) (+) grade in the 4th cycle of NAAC Accreditation. We have secured a CGPA of 3.67. We should raise the standards of all our colleges and make them centers of excellence in higher education. The composition and appointments of the governing board of our colleges should be by keeping the development of the colleges in mind. Our schools have achieved excellent results in the recent SSLC and Plus Two examinations. Let us also take this opportunity to congratulate all those who have achieved high marks and those institutions that have achieved high-quality accreditation at the national level.

Local parishes should take the lead in raising the standard of our aided schools. We should explore the possibilities of utilizing the facilities of institutions that are facing closure due to a lack of students now for various curricular and extracurricular projects. Church institutions that conduct civil service courses, smart schools, etc. should be guiding lamps for all students in the society. On this occasion, we recall the education aid schemes run by our various Dioceses to help economically backward students. Through the 'Light to Life' project facilitated under the auspices of the North America Europe Diocese, around 5,000 children are being helped in education and personality development. The Church has now taken up the higher education of 32 deserving students through the 'Lakshya' education scheme implemented as part of the Golden Jubilee of the Metropolitan's Priestly Ordination. Through scholarships, endowment funds, and awards, various parishes and churches are accelerating educational activities. But we still have a long way to go. Is it not possible for us to come up with a project to find the best students of the church and others and take the necessary steps to make them part of world-class institutions through the help of our parishes outside Kerala and abroad? There should be suggestions and advice from each and every member of the Mandalam in this regard.

Nature out of rhythm: Encroachment of forests, landslides, and land clearing; all disrupt the rhythm of nature. And the world today is facing global warming due to the worldwide use of fossil fuels. Due to this, the El Nino-like phenomenon that changes the ocean temperature leaves even the month of Karkadakam, rainless. If it rains, it will be torrential, if not, it will be a severe drought. Major changes in climate have wiped out many plants and microorganisms. As the Yamuna River overflowed, the city of Delhi was submerged in flood waters. Even in areas where

floods are very rare, floods and landslides are experienced one after the other. In August 2018, Kerala was drowned in floods, but in August 2023, severe drought is staring us in the face. The land is crumpling in Joshimath. Many people lost their lives due to landslides in Himachal Pradesh. Winter left Europe and became a scorching place. When the island of Hawaii in the US burned, people had to jump into the sea with no end in sight. This time the flood caused great damage in our Upper Kuttanad too. We should think about what we can do as a church in the face of the life crises that global warming and resulting climate change will raise and formulate action plans.

Gandhian thought is relevant in this context that, the natural resources should not be exploited to the maximum, but on the contrary should be used with restraint. This essence of Gandhian moderation is essential behind every decision taken by the church and parishes. The Church should also, as far as possible, embrace the United Nations' vision of sustainable development (Sustainable Development). Our Environment Commission and Card KVK should be able to make some recommendations in this regard. Rainwater harvesting and soil water conservation should be urgently implemented in every household at the parish level. The institutions of the church should set examples in this regard. Society should be sensitized and action plans should be formulated. Announcements are not enough in the agriculture sector; strong interventions are needed.

Another challenge facing modern times is waste management. A culture of throwing away is growing in us as much as amassing. The Brahmapuram plant burned for days with heaps of waste. The people in the area were tormented by breathing smoke. We should show maturity by not throwing garbage including plastic on public roads. Effective measures should be taken in waste management and government measures should be supported.

Lives trampled by addiction: Today there is a painful situation where our children are addicted to drugs and are attracted to criminal acts, at an early age. In Kerala, which is suffering from the miseries of intoxication, the state government's new liquor policy is to allow more bars, foreign liquor shops, and pubs to push the people into intoxication. There are big rackets behind the drug addiction that have roots even in the villages. Every day we hear about the atrocities committed by those who are mentally deranged by the use of alcohol and drugs. The prevalence of alcohol and drugs, the influence of social media, and the gluttonous culture reinforce the suspicion that Kerala is becoming a land of the mentally ill. Not a single day goes by without hearing news about atrocities against children and women. Kerala is witnessing many atrocities committed by drug addicts. The murder of Dr. Vandana Das of Kottarakkara and the killing of the fiveyear-old daughter of a migrant laborer in Aluva freezes the human conscience. It is very sad that the accused in the murder of Vandana Das is a teacher who should be a mentor to society. It is clear from the statistics that most of the murders in Kerala in the last year were committed by people who lost their minds due to drug abuse. The church has a great responsibility to save the modern generation that is being destroyed by alcohol and drugs. The Church is undertaking strong awareness and counselling programs and rehabilitation activities. The goal for a mentally healthy society requires major actions and plans. We must further strengthen our de-addiction centers.

Mandalam Study Topic: The topic 'Migration of Marthomites and Ministry to the Mar Thoma Diaspora' has been selected for this year's Mandalam Study. The study book is published and made available to all members. It is hoped that this study will be accepted wholeheartedly by the mandalam members and will be subjected to further study at different levels in wider areas and parishes outside the mandalam. Human migration is as old as human history. For various reasons, the number of people who cross the border

and go to another place or country to work, study or settle is increasing day by day. The Church must also take a serious look at the complexities of migration and devise plans to address its challenges. It is the duty of the church to provide pastoral care and support for the diaspora church members. Accepting such reminders and responsibility, we pray that this study will help the church to realize that we are ambassadors of Christ and the church wherever we go and live.

In the case of Mar Thoma Church, which is a global church, through immigration, in a sense, the church is broadening and diversifying. The Church should stand with people who migrate to different countries. The church owes a lot to the diaspora believers who are the children of the church who have worked as a source of transmission of faith and the growth of the church. Outside India, Mar Thoma Church is blessed with the leadership of North America-Europe, Malaysia-Singapore, Australia-New Zealand Dioceses. The leadership of the parishes in the spiritual nurturing of diaspora communities in the Gulf regions is commendable. It is important to note that the church has decided to set aside a Sunday as Diaspora Sunday (Diaspora Sunday) considering the diaspora communities that are a global reality today. The biggest crisis Kerala is facing is the increasing number of lonely old agers due to migration and lack of human resource capacity. Parishes in Kerala should become parishes that care for the older generation who live alone. And various schemes should be devised among the migrant laborers. Their service has become indispensable to us. We should be able to respect their dignity, without considering them as a threat to us, seek their welfare, and be neighbors in need without making false propaganda and accusations against them.

Many young people from Kerala go outside Kerala, especially abroad, for study and work. The church has a responsibility to create the necessary spiritual nurturing conditions in the places where they go. Special care should be taken in assigning chaplains to work among students and young people. Such work taken up by the Diocese and parishes in North America Europe Diocese and Gulf regions is commendable. There is no doubt that the youth ministry centered in the urban parishes in India will be effective in this way.

Episcopal election: The role of bishops is very important in accelerating the growth of the church and coordinating church activities at the pastoral level. Following the death of Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan, Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Suffragan Metropolitans Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilos and Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius, the duties they were carrying out are now being entrusted upon other bishops as additional duties. There is a need today to elect more bishops and appoint them to ministerial positions in the Church. Understanding this urgent need, the Episcopal Nomination Board has given 3 names for the consideration of the Mandalam as per the decision of the Mandalam. Nominated with full conviction that they are qualified to be Bishops of the Church, Rev. Saju C. Pappachan, Rev. Dr. Joseph Daniel, and Rev. Matthew K. Chandy are proposed by ENB. It is the right of Mandalam members to elect them as an example of the good democratic order of the church. Mandalam members should act and exercise their right to vote by understanding the present need of the Church. It is desired that everyone should be alert and work for the common good of the church. Everyone should strive to unite the church and work towards the common good of the church. Let us pray before God that everyone will receive God's grace and vision to choose the right people according to God's will.

Ecumenical Field: The Mar Thoma Church has been able to make thoughtful contributions to the ecumenical field and church unity movements from time to time. In 2023, a delegation of 8 people, led by the Metropolitan, attended the WCC conference held in Germany. Our Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa Thirumeni has been elected as a member of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC). General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia and member of the Mar Thoma Sabha Council, Dr. Mathews George Chunakara has been elected as the Moderator of the International Affairs Commission of the World Council of Churches, and Dr. Celin Abraham who is also a member of Mar Thoma Sabha Council, has been elected as a member of the Commission on Health and Healing of the World Council of Churches. Along with that Rev. Dr. Sham P. Thomas serves as the Director of ECC, Rev. Dr. Y. T. Vinayaraj serves as the Director of CISRS, Dr. Aswathi John serves as SATHRI Director, Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew serves as the NCCI Executive Secretary, Adv. Prakash P. Thomas serves as the KCC General Secretary, the Metropolitan and Mr. Abraham Itticheria serves as the Chairman and Treasurer respectively of the Nilackal Ecumenical Trust celebrating its Ruby Jubilee in 2023. We convey the congratulations and greetings of Mar Thoma Church to all who have been assigned to the leadership of ecumenical movements and theological institutions.

Former Chief Minister Mr. Oommen Chandy: Former Chief Minister of Kerala Shri, Oommen Chandy's death is a loss to Kerala society. Shri. Oommen Chandi always considered politics to be a tool for the upliftment of the poor. He was a phenomenon who went on to become the polar star of Kerala politics, taking Gandhiji's compassion, love of people, and concern for the poor as his starting point. Some have commended him as a school of politics and social work. Shri. Oommen Chandy was an active presence in all the gatherings of the Church especially the Maramon Convention. He maintained warm relations with all the leaders of our church. Praise God for that blessed life. I express the condolences of the Church.

Building up the Church; intergenerational belief formation: We still have a long way to go in our quest for mission. It is also our duty to keep our children and young people as a part of the faith and tradition of the Church. For which appropriate spiritual disciplines, studies, and associations should be strengthened. We should seriously consider whether the next generation is with us in spiritual matters. The main theme of the annual conference of Clergy is "Youth of the Present: Vision, Perspective, and Implications for Pastoral Ministry." It can be thought that these studies will be helpful in keeping the generations together with the Church and the basic beliefs of the Church. We must improve the discipline of reading the Bible, worship, and sacraments. The advanced possibilities of science and technology can be utilized for faith transmission. Today's need is to give impetus to the search for a mission that will enable the holistic growth of the faith community. When all the organizations of the church are active, the parish can work together with the different ages of a parish. Senior Citizen Fellowship and Development Department have been recognized as official organizations in the last Prathinidhi Mandalam Meeting. It is urged that all should be eager to form the local units of these organizations in all the parishes and to activate the Centre-Bhadrasana-Kendra activities.

Small things, big changes: Malignant diseases and rare neuro diseases are on the rise. The number of in-patients requiring palliative care is increasing. Due to increasing medical expenses, many families go into debt. The intervention of the Church in such matters needs to be improved. Schemes like 'Snehakaram' of the Church are helpful to a great extent. Our youth should be more encouraged to write PSC and UPSC civil services exams. More importance should be given to reading, thinking, and discussion. Don't give up books and magazines even in the digital age. Official publications of the Church should reach every home. Malayalam language and worship in local languages should be encouraged more. Drivers should adopt a caring driving culture. Use of private vehicles should be limited to essentials. Shared taxis that travel together should also be thought of at the parish level. Use of Carbon-free vehicles such as bicycles for short journeys and the implementation of agricultural markets dealing with local agricultural produce at the parish or prayer group level are also beneficial.

Church: Community of Witness: As we pass through a period of crisis in many ways, our attitudes and lifestyles must be seen as a reflection of faith and conducive to a sense of witness. The public affairs that has lost sanctity and the leadership that has lost morality are today's realities. As materialism grows, so does the warmth of family relationships. Even the noblest of intentions hide pitfalls. No one can trust anyone. Without being able to even put down the burdens of the mind, every human being has become an island. Divorce cases pile up in courts. Families are the basis of society. Those who kill their friends by mixing poison into potions and alcohol; those who attack others for want of love; those who perform human sacrifices for money; all these people, we should remember that they live in Kerala, God's own country. The treachery of friends is more terrible than the enemy's attack. How difficult it is to lie in fear of the one you sleep with. We have been infected with the idea that money is greater than any relationship or friendship. The responsibility of the church is increasing here. Challenges abound in the modern age but don't lose sight of the possibilities. The creation of good families should be the responsibility of the church. Parishes should become a place to unburden for all in the locality. Prayer meetings should be strengthened. Friendly groups should grow without distinctions. Forums should be prepared for open discussion. Each one of us is called with vigilance to be the salt and light of the land. We should be able to bring not only ourselves but also our societies and other brothers and sisters belonging to different castes and religions to this shadow of love. We must become a society with a distinctive witness to it. Let us take up the call to be advocates of redemption. In small groups, we can dream a new world in cooperation with each other. Christian churches must come together and envision a broader coalition that includes other community organizations, religious groups, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. It is possible indeed. There the

Christian witness will take flesh, and we will be the advocates of transformation.

Conclusion: Praise be to God for His grace that He has so blessedly led this little church in its past work. No claim to perfection. But we can continue to devote ourselves to God's blessings that forgive shortcomings and fill the deficiency. The joint work of all our dear Bishops, Vicars General, Clergy, Evangelists, and Church members, is definitely precious. We especially remember the Mandalam members and the members of the Sabha Council who worked in the last term. They worked on transitions from the Covid era to the post-Covid era. There were many challenges. God has empowered them all gracefully. Construction of Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Navathi Office Complex, Episcopal Election Procedures, Recommendations for Constitutional Amendment, Resource Mobilization in Crisis, Mar Thoma Vision Channel, Abhayam Housing Project and Study on Revival of Mission Activities are some of them. Sabha Secretary Rev. C. V. Symon, Sabha Trustee Mr. Rajan Jacob, and Clergy Trustee Rev. Monsi K. Philip's leadership was very timely and meaningful. They fulfilled their responsibilities with excellence. Thanks to them.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things (Phil. 4:8). God, who loved the world by giving his Son, calls us to join in the plan towW redeem the disordered world. For that, let's entrust ourselves to God's hands. Daily events should wake us up, not wear us down. Abraham, the father of all believers, was reminded by God that 'you must be a blessing to the land', this reminder should always guide us. May this year's Mandalam thoughts, discussions, and decisions prepare our hearts and minds to recognize the ideas, divine mandates, and action plans to lead the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in a new way. May God bless us.

Thiruvalla 29.08.2023 Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan

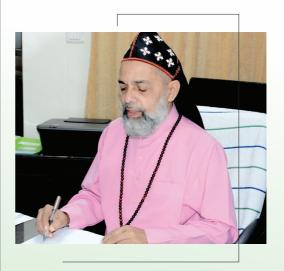
The creation of the Universe is not by accident; rather it is God's creation. This belief is one of the basic doctrines of Christian theology. In the Church's Declaration of Faith, it's stated that we believe in the one true God, 'the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible'. The Holy Spirit who brings to life everything has been at work since the creation of the universe; and it's the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit that constantly renews and reforms creation.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the creation process is noteworthy. The presence of the Holy Spirit enabled to bring about order out of chaos. Creation is renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that convicts the world of sin and righteousness and leads to renewal and reformation. The presence of the Holy Spirit being perpetually at work is recorded in both the Old and New Testaments. In the prophetic book of Ezekiel, we read about the Holy Spirit reviving those who had lost their lives; the dry bones are transformed/ resurrected into a new community by the Holy Spirit's action. It is that same Holy Spirit who fills us with a new vision, strength and love and makes us a new creation.

We read in the book of the Acts of the Apostles about the changes that took place in the early church community when the Holy Spirit that renews all things was involved. Pentecost wasn't just the birthday of the visible Church; it was also the event when Christ's disciples were commissioned to be the conquerors of the world. All those who received God's commission had the association and guidance of the Holy Spirit. That's why those who received God's commission were moulded to be the light of the world with a new vision.

HOLY SPIRIT: THE GRAND DESIGNER **OF CREATION**



Crises of today's world are indescribable. A spirit of hatred prevails over the world. There are many reasons to hate people and communities, to disregard them and to ignore them. In this context the church is called to renew itself for the redemption of the world. The fruit of a community renewed by the Holy Spirit is only love. In the spirit of that love, let us prepare to embrace each other, hold the world together and restore creation.

On the shores of commissions

The Spirit hovers even today.

To bring order out of chaos..

To create God's kingdom experience..

Dr. Mathews Mar Makarios Episcopa

>>> EDITORIAL

SHOPS OF LOVE

Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis written in 1915, Gregor Samsa, the protagonist, wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a monstrous vermin. Initially he thinks it to be just an illusion. Then he assumes it would be temporary. The plot of the novel consists of the internal and social conflicts he experiences following his metamorphosis. More than a hundred editions of the work have been published. Generally, the work is interpreted as a psychological narrative. But a socio-critical approach to this book seems very relevant in the context of Kafka's life, which was riddled with socio-political conflicts. Kafka presents the complexities of identity amid political uncertainties. In today's complex political socioreligious scenario, a rereading of this novel seems imperative.

The prayer 'Renew us in the Spirit of God' becomes very relevant as the society has become a marketplace of lovelessness, hatred, malice and communalism. The continuation of this prayer would be the plea to restore nature to its pristine beauty through reformation. What can man, amidst his internal turmoil, do to restore nature? What is most important is the essence that forms even in the midst of the current complexities.

We witness a strange phenomenon today where people simultaneously rave about God's love and remain active in hateful and apolitical WhatsApp groups. A metamorphosis is inevitable for the political guile that proclaims 'loka samastha sukhino bhavantu' and concurrently promotes the vested interests of one's own family and party. It is high time for a deconstruction of religious consciousnesses that place god-men above God and turns dynamic movements into dead monuments. Ethical ideologies that prescribe a return to primitive moral laws, ignoring Moses' reformation and Christ's radical reforms, need critical revisioning. It is clear that the existing clerical, political and ideological alliances will do whatever it takes to impede the opening of the shops of love in the marketplaces of hatred. And, against all odds, if they open, there are mercenaries who have been trained to destroy them. In this context, the prayer of the 15th CCA conference becomes meaningful. A serious transformation is possible only if the Holy Spirit intervenes powerfully.





Rev. Lijo C. Joseph Chathannoor

A JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF FIREFLIES

Romans 8:18-22



ow let me introduce a firefly to Ashitha. A firefly is the one creature which flits about, comes and goes at will. We do not see stars or fireflies during the daytime. They appear only on utterly dark nights like the benign light of God (The Letters of Ashitha.)

The Bible portion presents a large number of persons who long for the benign light of God in the challenging experiences of life. The realization that the painful experiences in the life of every creature does matter and is meaningful is itself a great comfort. Spirituality does not isolate one from anyone or anything elseneither from human beings nor from other living creatures- on the other hand it only unites all creation.

The Illuminating Vision of Freedom

All creation submits itself to the hope that freedom which is the glory of all God's children will liberate it from the coils of mortality. Two words – servitude, independence- give similarity where there is none among God's creation. The sense that all creation is mutually connected and interdependent has been lost. Instead, each is now confined to separate distinctive pockets thus destroying God's beautiful dream of peaceful coexistence among all creation. Today there is a rapidly growing culture of segregating creation into different categories of wealthy lives, wounded lives and insignificant lives. It is here that all creation waits for the glory that is to be manifested. The greatest misfortune that servitude causes a person is that he is unable to determine his leisure time or the extent of his freedom. If a person is able to obtain these, there opens for him a new world of imagination and

creativity. Therefore servitude or slavery is not merely the history of painful ordeals, it also curbs the creativity and inspiration of God's creations. Through servitude all thoughts and convictions that might lead to the establishment of a new world order, its renewal and reformation are put in chains. When Christian consciousness floods our being we are enabled to connect with all creation and we must be able to provide them with new dreams. All creation that has the experience of servitude is exiled from the world of knowledge, power and wealth despite their having plenty of resources. The worship on Sunday is not merely a spiritual experience but it is also a day that makes sure of the complete fulfillment of all creation. We willfully forget that all creation has its own wishes, desires and the longing to fulfill them. Christ becomes the sole refuge for all when we are able to communicate with the wind and the waves. In the Garden of Eden, Man and other creatures could communicate with each other and thus were a symbol of the equal and dependent relationship among all creation. No creature in a culture of servitude can experience rest or leisure. Divine glory can be perfect only when all creation is able to enjoy and experience them in different ways. We push even our dear ones into servitude when we allow them to deny their food in order to feed others, when they take over the work of someone else so that the latter could rest, when they set aside themselves so that others may enjoy leisure. It is the mission of the church to redeem all creation who are in danger of living such lives.

The New Vision for being Born Again

All of creation right to the present time groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. Apostle Paul considers the troubles of all creation and compares them to the agony of childbirth. The pain of childbirth is the sign that heralds the birth of a new life. A new life, new hopes can never be realized without the pangs of childbirth. That is why the agony of childbirth will end in the birth of a new life. Through this agony all creation will be redeemed from the decay of servitude and transformed. The pangs of childbirth symbolize a gentle feminine culture which becomes the central point of the liberation of all creation. This culture which stands above the masculine culture of aggression and mastery gives promise of new hopes. Those pains which had been silenced or relegated to the shadows are now transformed into a new system of values.

My writings are the weeping and gnashing of teeth in order to preserve self respect.

(C. Ayyappan)

The present-day reality is that, without being consciously aware of it, we can neglect and ignore the problems faced by our fellow beings. We must be able to extend the map of our faith through discussions and debates to accommodate those fellow beings who lead lives different from ours.

'A sound is heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping, Rachel is crying for her children...'

Here we can hear the echoes of never-ending resistance, of feminine culture, of increased energy. Such people will fill this world which they have transformed entirely, with their creative presence. It was the birth pangs of the Holy Virgin Mary that brought forth Jesus Christ, the Door of salvation opened for sinful humanity. Let us make a purposeful effort to receive the feminine culture that recognizes the anguish of all creation

The need of the hour today is to realize the interdependence of all creation, to recognize the yearning for transformation, to learn the Word of God with dedication and commitment. It is good to pray to the Lord to fill and renew us with the power of the Holy Spirit and make. But even more important and relevant is the need to take a stand and make selfless sacrifices to preserve it. Through our sensitive interventions and dedication may our wait for God's children in all creation end successfully.

Translation: Dr. Susan Varghese



JOURNEY ALONG WITH THE **MISSIONARY**

Mathew 24: 42-51



Rev. Ebey Cherian Deepthi Bhavan, Pallippad

The practical instruction given by Christ to all his disciples is that they should be able to read the writing on the wall. As He talks about the signs of His Second Coming, Christ has laid emphasis on the need for extreme caution and alertness. Christ points to the degeneration within, which is more terrifying than the sights seen beyond the open window. Hence, he insists that the householder must remain ever alert so as not to allow him to break into his house, since he does not know the time that the thief comes. During the time of His resurrection, Christ makes clear to His watching disciples, the reality of His Second Coming. But the period or time of his grand appearance are not revealed (Acts:1: 11). This is why the particular moment is compared to the time of the thief's coming. The Gospel writer, talking about the disciples' coming near Jesus to show Him the work of the Temple, notes thus: "When Jesus had left the precincts of the temple, He was going away." The reason is that He never returns to this place. History records how Herod extended and beautified the Temple that had been rebuilt by

Ezra and Zerubabel after the complete destruction of Solomon's temple by the Babylonians (Ezra 6:15). Christ foretells the destruction of this Temple which had become the tower of pride for the Jews (Matthew 24:2). However, the Law of those days insisted that any statement made about the Temple in society had to be made with great prudence. Jesus Christ spoke thus at a time when the death sentence was given for statements made against the Temple (Acts 6:13). However, forty years later, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed the Temple as Christ had prophesied.

The disciples raised two questions before Christ regarding these prophesies. They wanted to know when this would take place, and asked Him to enlighten them as to the signs foretelling Doomsday, and the second Coming of Christ. They ask these questions when Christ was sitting on the Mount of Olives. It is then that Christ tells them about the signs indicating the Second Coming. Later, pointing to the fig tree, Christ teaches them a parable (V.32). The appearance of new, tender leaves on the fig

tree indicates the coming of summer. Christ makes clear that as the signs mentioned occur, that indicates the coming of the Son of Man. Through a parable, Christ teaches them the things that they need to know, and need to keep in mind regarding His Second coming.

1. Wait every moment with hope

Hope is a pointer that leads one to maintain alertness. Christ uses the image of the thief to convey the message that He would come unexpectedly, without any previous warning. A thief never breaks into a house in the presence of others. This is why Christ reminds us through his Gospels that the shepherd makes his entry through the front door, while the thief opts for the back door. The community of disciples is a community that waits with hope. However, waiting should never lead to slackness or slumber. The wicked one lurks where there is slackness. The Church which needs to be ever vigilant, should not withdraw even an inch from its mission as instances of persecutions unfurl repeatedly. We need to keep in mind the fact that when the door is kept open for the enemy, we allow him to break into the house.

2. The Mission is completed when intelligence and dutifulness converge

The servant is assigned the duty of preparing food for the family till the master's arrival. He is termed fortunate when the task is performed faithfully and intelligently (V. 46). God has placed the earth in Man's hands so that he may tend the garden and work here (Genesis 2:15). We are not fit to be defined servants if we fail to perform this duty faithfully. The master selects his servants not on the basis of their skills. He needs people who are honest and faithful. To work in His vineyard the master calls forth at different times, men who have remained out of work hitherto, without being called upon by anyone (Mathew 20:1-16). It was from among the fisherfolk and tax payers that Jesus Christ selected His disciples. The ones who serve faithfully and wisely are perceived as the virtuous disciples in the kingdom of God.

3. Heavenly rewards are amazing

If the servant who is assigned the duty of preparing food, performs his duty faithfully, Christ assures him the reward of being made the Lord and Master over everything. Heavenly rewards are always like this. Christ teaches us that though spurned by the world, the rewards may be seamless if honoured by Him. It is amazing that the wages awarded are equal. The thief on the Cross also receives the reward of Paradise. The reward that Christ gives is different from what is given by the world. It is beyond human understanding.

4. Punishment shall befall on those who fail to obey

Towards the concluding verses, Christ gives the warning that those who fail to obey the instruction of the master of the house would face punishment. Christ here gives the strong warning that those who act disregardful, torture fellow servants, or destroy everything thinking that His arrival is not imminent, would rot in hell eternally (Vs. 48-51). Satan's biggest lie is his claim that there is neither God nor hell, and that He will not come again. Those who say so would be subjected to punishment and damnation. Christ reminds His followers that those who fail to carry out His mission faithfully would meet with serious consequences.

Christ's second coming is imminent. Let the refrain, "Be Alert" resonate in our ears always. As the events of the Final Days occur one by one in various places, let us not be asleep, but remain awake and alert as God's own people, and fulfil the duties that God has entrusted us. Let us remain as good servants of Christ who remain unchanged in a changing world.

Translation: Dr. Elizabeth J. Thomas



Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph Kottayam

Scanning the Theme

It is quite appropriate that the 15th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) has taken an initiative to select a topic which is being widely discussed and reflected for a meaningful dialogical existence in the plural world of today. The Assembly will be held on the theme "God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation" from September 27 to October 4, 2023 at Kottayam in Kerala.

The point is to seek for an avenue of convergence by pooling the religious and secular resources of the world for an authentic spirituality which speaks of a common tomorrow in the name of the Creator God. In the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, one could notice a strong sense of inclusiveness. The following prayer of the WCC makes better sense when we say together, "Almighty God as your son our saviour was born of a Hebrew mother, but rejoiced in the faith of a Roman soldier; welcomed Greeks who sought him and suffered a man from Africa to carry his cross. So teach us to regard the members of all races as fellow heirs of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ our Lord". This means that there is a compulsion in Christian faith to transcend the boundaries of caste, creed and cult with a view to affirming God's grace in human relationships and in the created order.

The key words in the theme of the Assembly ,"renew" and "restore" require further reflection as they speak of human co-operation with God as His co-workers in historical moments for a better tomorrow. The word "renew" simply means "make new again" and the word "restore" has the meaning of "bringing back to a former or better state". Both the words are interrelated and speak of our missionary obligation in God's one world. As a prayer, the theme invokes God, the creator, to have mercy upon the entire creation as the visible presence of his Kingdom on earth. "Your kingdom come on earth" is an invocation to addressing God, the Father, to have divine compassion on us for a meaningful pilgrimage on this planet earth. The reference to "creation" in the theme makes the meaning clear for our inclusive attitude in our inhabited earth. At the very outset Sirach. 1813 (cf. Ps. 145:9) is to be borne in mind for a holistic understanding of renewal and restoration of God's creation: "The compassion of man is for his neighbour, but the compassion of the Lord is for all living beings". In order to bring back the creation to a former or better state, human beings need to



live with ecological repentance. The ecological sins such as air pollution, water pollution, light pollution and sound pollution which are indeed symbols of death have to be turned to symbols of life. This is the ecological challenge before us. A theological understanding of our care for creation needs to live with a dialogical approach to life as we are all "bird's of the same nest". In our feeble attempt to restore what is lost, we need to remember that "the Earth is the Lord's". The earth which God created does not belong to us; but we belong to the earth". Ps.104 and Job. 38-41 are reminders to us when we think of our caring attitude to God's creation for its renewal and restoration.

Let me quote from a message of the 9th WCC Assembly held at Port Alegre (Brazil). "God of grace, open our hearts to love and to see that all people are made in your image to care for creation and affirm life in all its wonderous diversity. Tranform us in the offering of ourselves so that we may be your partners in transformation, to strive for the full visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ and to become neighbors to all, as we await with eager longing the full revelation of your rule in the coming of a new heaven and a new earth. "The message goes on to pray as: "God hears the cries of all creation, the cries of water, air, land and all living things, cries of all who are exploited, marginalized abused and victimized..."

Beyond the Seen and the Unseen

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1) "The earth is the Lord's" (Ps.24.1). "..for the world and all that is in it is mine" (Ps.50: 12b, 89:11). The above texts speak volumes to us about the sacramentality of creation. By sacramentality, I mean the very talk about God and his created order. In 'God-talk', we search for the reverence of life and interrelatedness between God and humans, humans and creation. So we need to look for the buckle that binds all human beings with the flora and fauna on this planet. This is in tune with the compassion of the Lord (cf.Sib. 18: 13). We also read in the Bhagavad-Gita that the Supreme (or the Almighty) is pleased with a gift from nature, be it a flower or a fruit." Whomsoever shall offer Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, in the spirit of devotion and with purity of mind, that offering I accept" (IX, vs.26). The prayer is a hymn of praise and gratitude to the one God of life: leaf is a symbol of life and growth; flower is the fulfillment of becoming; fruit represents the ultimate goal of being, and water is that which refreshes all living beings on this planet. In a bio-centric attitude to life, there is always praise and thanksgiving from all that breathe (cf. Ps. 150: 6). The Eco- prayer of Francis of Assisi be recalled as it speaks of the divine stamp on all creation: "Be praised, my Lord, for brother wind and for the air, cloudy and clear and all weather by which you give sustenance to your creatures; Be praised, my Lord, for our sister mother earth who sustains and governs us, and produces fruits with colorful flowers and leaves". This gives us the biblical vision of connectivity in the order of creation for a better tomorrow, which we call sustainable future. Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life. The sacramentality of creation is in fact the pillars of life for a qualitative aspect of life.

How Great Thou Art, O Lord

Let me illustrate the above point with excerpts from a song of Jim Reeves: "We thank Thee each morning for a new born day, We thank Thee for the sunshine and the air that we breathe... We thank Thee for the river that runs all day.... We thank Thee for the flower that blooms, birds that sing; fish that swim;... We thank Thee for the pastures where the cattles may mow;,... We thank thee for the love so pure and free, O Lord". The lessons that we learn from the order of creation is that life is meant for giving and that nature is the best gift of God to all across any religious or cultural divide So Jesus said "for he (the heavenly Father) makes his Sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rains on the just and the unjust" (St.Matt.5: 45) The Psalmist adds a note of exclamation, as "the heavens are telling of the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (19:1). The above words of wonder could be summed up in the famous hymn, "All things bright and beautiful; All creatures great and small; All things wise and wonderful; The Lord God made them all. "The hymn takes us to the height of response when we sing: "He gave us eyes to see them; And lips that we might tell; How great is God Almighty, Who has made all things well". The great eco-hymn, "O Lord, my God when I in awesome wonder "takes us to the cave of the heart for praise and thanksgiving. The eco-vision of St. Paul is vividly brought out in Romans 1:20 where we read: "Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power, and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made".

The veil of nature is rendered transparent and helps us to breathe afresh in a world choked by the noxious gases of greed, lust and profit making. As ecology is an art, we need to develop esthetics for adoration and appreciation. The words of the French Philosopher Paul Caudal are worth recalling when he replied to someone who said "everything in the world is illusion". The French poet said, "No" "everything is allusion." Ecology thus becomes a platform for the affirmation of life across religious or ethnic divide. In our affirmation of One God and One human family, nature paves the basic thread of life. This is the theological basis of the ecological concerns of the Church. If life is the gift of God, life is to be preserved, protected and promoted from the onslaught of Death dealing forces. The task is tremendous as the symbols of life (water, air, earth, fire, and space) have become the symbols of death!

Call to Live by Ecosophy

If we entertain a new vision of One God and one human family on earth, we need to talk about ecosophy. "Ecosophy implies a new world encountered not as "it" but as "thou" (Thomas Manickam). One may have to drive a note of dissent to the philosophy of Martin Buber when he speaks of IT and I-Thou relationships in the order of creation. If we opt for one existence in this planet, the question of I-It relationship does not arise. It is not possible for us to separate a monkey from its tail. A tree in the courtyard and we are connected. As ecosophy is a "passionate concern for the well-being of all beings" (cf.Gita. 12: 4), the ecological man will have to see his role as one of being a steward (parent) of creation. A steward is not the owner. The concept of an ecological universe where every created entity has an intrinsic value may serve God's purpose of creation. In Deep Ecology, this idea is affirmed. God is concerned about the falling of "even a sparrow" (Matt. 10: 29). Christian ethics should be one of conservation ethics and the connectivity is to be celebrated. God's question to Cain, "where is your brother" is a question of human connectivity and God's command to Noah's to preserve all the species of creatures in the ark is indeed a divine mandate

to keep bio-diversity in God's one world. The UN year of bio-diversity in 2010 had reminded us to preserve all living species on this planet. We are committed to live by the ecological values such as conservation, not consumerism; need not greed; enabling power not dominating power; integrity of creation not exploitation. These values are for a genuine spirituality.

The attempt by the Catholic theologian St. Bonaventure is worth recalling. As he elaborates, A Theology of the Sacramentality of Creation, he presupposes that the created world is considered as the footprints of Christ (see Christ of creation in St. John and Colossians). Any attempt to disrespect creation is to deface the image of Christ present in all creation. Hence, he says Christ suffers not only when people are denied their rights but also when seas, rivers, wetlands, hills and forests are desecrated. When we consider the whole creation as sacramental, our relationship with others is also challenged to move from one of anthropocentric to biocentric attitude to life.

The Kingdom of God- a new social consciousness

The Nazareth sermon of Jesus as recorded in (LK.4:18-19) speaks of the vision of the Kingdom for the transformation of the world. This is an enactment of the Jubilee vision in Lev:25.8-17:25-28. The oikoumene vision in the Lord's prayer also represents a vision for humanity. The reign of God on earth (Gen.) is to blossom into a community of people, caring for nature, forgiving each other and praising God for the gift of divine providence in creation.

The liberation of all those who are sitting on the margin is a gospel mandate. References to the widow of Zarephath and Naaman in the Nazareth sermon make it mandatory for the Church to pursue its mission in Christ's way. When the Church speaks of a movement from diakonia (service) to dikasosune (justice), there is space for making the marginalized as subjects of their own history. For Jesus, it is the weak and the marginalized who make the community authentic. "A great city is one that handles its art and garbage equally well". This means that there should have a holistic approach to human development..The church being "the voice of the voiceless" (Uppsala Assembly WCC-1968) and "the conscience of the world" (Vatican II), should always aim at transforming the crowd (ochlos) into "a people" (laos)

Mission in Christ's way

"There is no participation in Christ without participation in Christ's mission to the world". In God's work of transforming the world, there is a pattern to follow. Mission in Christ's way is the line to be pursued for living in harmony (Rom.12:16). The Church is called to speak the language of the Pentecost in each age. In an age of Information Technology, the dispossessed lack the words of connectivity. In a globalized world, the unskilled and the semi-skilled are not recognized as players in the drama of life. There is no compassion, no brotherhood or sisterhood in the Market system. There is no adequate search for the alternatives which are vital for the survival of the weaker sections. The biblical imperative of "fighting against the world around us"(1Jn.4.4) seems to have lost its sense of urgency today. The church is called upon to collaborate with God in a world where wolves, robbers and thieves are active. Their main job is "to rob and to kill," through their methods of exploitation, competition and manipulation. The necessity is laid the people of good-will to explore and to implement the ways of protecting the weak for the glory of God. This is the call of the Kingdom. By welcoming the sinners and the publicans to table fellowship (LK.15:1-3) Jesus sets new standards for the community to move "outside the gate".

For the transformation of the entire creation, one has to speak the language of love, compassion and reconciliation. "To welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed us for the glory of God"(Rom.15:7) is the key to social amity. This is meant to create an household of God on earth with compassion and love. The message of forgiveness and reconciliation as entrusted to the Church (2Cor:5.18-21) in terms of the word (logos) and the ministry (diakonia) of reconciliation is a divine call. Peace builders are "eyes to the blind and feet to the lame" (Job.29:15). The gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation is an unseen leaf in all the religious books of the world. This is to be made visible through word and deed as co-workers with God. Reconciliation is possible only when justice has been achieved and those

responsible for the acts of violence and structures of violence have been brought to repentance. To build a culture of peace and forgiveness, we need to identify and to collaborate with peace net- works. There is no reconciliation between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and evil. Truth is the mediating term between justice and reconciliation. Liberation and reconciliation are paradigms for mission today. Jesus affirmed that truth alone shall set us free (Jn. 8:32). To this, St.Paul adds that he and his colleagues couldn't do anything against the truth but only for the truth (2 Cor.13:8). As co-workers with God, the work of transformation is to be carried out within the plan of God.

The most vulnerable groups in the world are related to the Mother earth. For example, the dalits to the land, the tribals to the forest, and the fisherfolks to the sea. A paradigm shift from a pure anthrocentric attitude to an earth-centric attitude to life is the need of the hour. The earth spirituality of the above groups provides a legacy for the survival of all people.

Conclusion

God of Grace, according to Christian Faith, is a God who acted in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The possibility of God in raising Jesus from the dead has become a power at work to speak with boldness for love and justice. Christ's first diciples were shepherds who were simple folks. His early followers were fisher men. Both of them were prompt in responding to God's invitation to change the world. They were called "the people who have turned the world upside down" (Acts.17:6). Let me conclude with a quote from the message of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches which met in ECC Bangalore in (1978). "Christian faith is a resistance movement against fatalism"

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Article

GOD, RENEW US IN YOUR SPIRIT AND RESTORE THE CREATION



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The world is passing through a unique time ▲ in human history. We have experienced unprecedented progress alongside substantial trade-offs, giving rise to serious global threats that challenge the very foundations of the creation that God created. Present crises stem primarily from human-induced rather than natural causes. Contemporary lifestyles underscore technology's potential for transformative impact, both advantageous and detrimental, as it becomes increasingly entangled with human life. The pitfalls of technological development also induce concerns—evident in the race for new weapons, avenues for competition, or even bio-ethical concerns of artificial intelligence and posthumanism. Although economic development has in some nations led to improved standards of living, increased life expectancy, and reduced infant mortality, poverty and inequality remain broad and entrenched problems. While we are hopeful of eventually being able to eradicate extreme poverty, we face the sobering trajectory of irreversibly elevating the Earth's temperature, with enduring repercussions on the well-being of people and the planet.

Environmental degradation leads the planet to destruction. Degeneration of the environment; depletion of natural resources; poor quality of air, water, and soil; devastation of ecosystems; ecological imbalances; habitat destruction; the extinction of wildlife, animal species, and plants; pollution through toxic chemical waste; acidification of oceans; reduced access to drinking water; deforestation; and increased global warming are serious concerns of the day. Never before has humanity had such a great capacity to influence the ecosystem, the basis for the sustainability of all life on earth, yet the fears and anxieties concerning the future of creation have never been greater. We will soon reach planetary boundaries and tipping points for the earth's capacity to sustain life, and if we do not heed God's call of renewal and restoration, the impending catastrophe will be impossible to avert.

Christian spirituality and Biblical theology often tend to focus only on humans, disregarding the significance of God's wider creation. Our predicament concerning God and creation is due to our limited comprehension of God the Creator, who owns the oikoumene. (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 24:1; Isaiah 48:13; Job 38:1-41). The biblical theology of creation reveals the recurring patterns of creation, fall, redemption, renewal, restoration, and new creation, from which we understand how God ultimately redeems, renews, and restores His creation. The initial act of creation emerged from nothingness (Genesis 1:1); God is the giver and sustainer of all life (Psalm 104:24-32); all visible beings are of God's creation (Genesis 1:3-5); God established order out of chaos and formed the sea and the dry land, and made the earth fruitful (Genesis 1:9-13; Isaiah 45:18); the existence of all things was owing to the will of God, as also was the creation of all things (Revelations 4:11) and the harmonious co-existence of all God's creatures (Psalm 104:10-23); God provides abundant and diverse resources to cater to the natural needs of humankind and all other creatures (Psalm 104:10, 18, 21, 27, 28); God created humans to be partners with God in caring for creation (Genesis 1:28, Psalm 8:6); and everything God created was interconnected (Genesis 1:5-35).

The Bible has rich narratives related to the diversity and ingenuity of God's creation, underscoring the profound interconnectedness among God, humanity, and nature. The sacredness of the cosmos, crafted by God, is an ever-evolving entity. Christian faith teaches that the cosmos was created from God's own being: "For from him and through him and for him are all things" (Romans 11:36). The Church, which is called to carry the vision of God as the ultimate creator, possess the potential to contribute to a just and sustainable ecosystem while preserving creation's integrity. The Biblical roots, theological undergirding, and patristical wisdom and teachings are examples to be shared relentlessly, articulating the vision of renewal and restoration of God's creation. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, and all things have been created through him and for him; in him, all things hold together, through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven. The Church, as the body of Jesus Christ, is the starting point and goal of creation, the kingdom of heaven on earth, uniting creation with its creator (Colossians 1:15-18).

The Old Testament's prophetic traditions provide a rich tapestry for the implicit nature of God's intervention during creation's turmoil. Prophetic narratives reveal God's care, concerns, assurances and expectations, and processes of renewal and restoration. In prophetic traditions, creation is not understood as one among many other topics, but it reminds us that care for creation is paramount in God's priorities. Prophetic literature establishes creation as foundational, illuminating its theological relevance within salvation, and a triad of creation, de-creation, and re-creation. For example, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi focus on reforming a de-created world. Zephaniah depicts the progressive loss of dominion over creation by humanity and its resulting de-creation. Jonah reflects his progressive dissent away from creation, from life towards death, and obedient creation against disobedient humanity (Jonah 4:6–11). Amos eloquently states how creation becomes a de-creation and re-creation as well as the correct understanding of creation as a prerequisite for recreation. For Hosea, the reversal of creation order portrays anti-creation. Micah shows the involvement of the earth in salvation and judgment. Isaiah's creation metaphors like 'maker,' 'potter,' establish a personal relationship. Nahum describes God's sovereignty as creator. Jonah defines himself as a follower of the Creator God and states "I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9). Creation in Nahum is connected to the 'day of the Lord' and the description of its characteristics reminiscent of creation: "He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it" (Nahum 1:4-5).

Ezekiel's prophetic voice, akin to Jeremiah's, is also about pulling down and building up, judgement and mercy, destruction, and restoration, reflecting a magnanimous and powerful God who gathers and restores. This

is what we see in the case of when the forlorn and desperate condition to which the whole nation of Israel was reduced; they desperately said: "Our bones are dried up and, our hope is lost; we are cut off completely" (Ezekiel 37:11). When they were in the most desperate situation, and there was not much hope left of their being retrieved, God asked Ezekiel to inform the poor, dejected, desponding Israelites of their errors and revive their hope with a new promise and declaration of His merciful intent. The voices of the Old Testament prophets who affirm their convictions on God's creation speak about God who listens and cares about the complaints, worries, concerns, and anxieties of His people who answers them (Isaiah 64:1-12). When they pray, their voices are echoed: "We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand." The answer of God to the prayers of His people is now given with a promise that new heavens and a new earth will be created. The blueprint God designed for a new creation is made known through the transformation of nature to be in harmony with a renewed humanity (Isaiah 65:17–23). The final answer of God to the prayers of his people is a promise that the prevailing condition will be changed positively. God promises and reveals His plans to create new heavens and a new earth. The blueprint God designed for restoring the whole creation, "I am making all things new" (Revelation 21:1-5), becomes humanity's enduring hope.

The biblical theology of creation recognises God's rule and intent in God's creation. The presence of sin introduces chaos and eventual judgment, but God remains committed to redeeming His creation. Notable instances of "new creation" emerge following significant events such as the flood, the Tower of Babel, the exodus, and the exile. Through the commission of Noah, the covenant with Abraham, the Mosaic law, and the promises of the new covenant, God initiated a renewed creative work. God looks to creation to care for and save the world from its chaos. While this work is ongoing, the ultimate culmination will occur at the end of the age when God brings forth a complete renewal, dwelling among His people in the new creation. The new covenant, through Jesus Christ, encompasses the whole of creation, fulfilling the promise to Noah and all created beings on the earth. This is what St. Paul makes clear: "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:20-21).

Amidst various crises affecting God's creation, our response lacks responsible stewardship; in caring for, protecting, and upholding the integrity of God's creation. We tend to forget the fact that God who created the entire universe, and the vision that the "earth is the Lord's" calls for a just and sustainable social and economic order, free from greed, domination, misuse, and exploitation. We often disregard the reality that the land, its means of production, and its resources belong to God who created them for all, God who cares for the well-being of all creatures. The Psalmist's words resonate: "How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (Psalm 104:24).

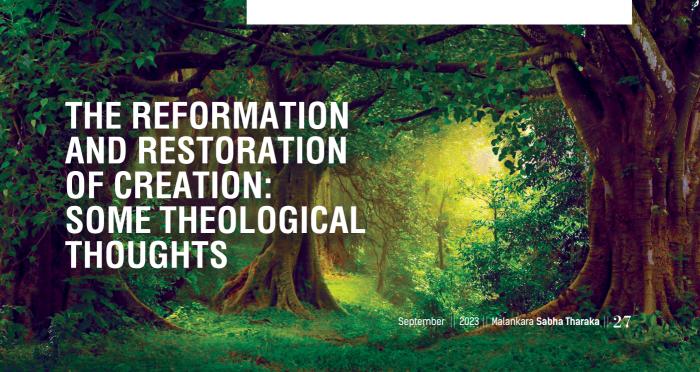
Created in the image of God, human beings were given the task of 'dominion' (to be understood always as stewardship) over creation, often expressed as the household of God, oikonomia. To bear God's image is to assume the role of a caretaker or steward, acknowledging that "the earth is the LORD's". The all-encompassing vision of the creation, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it: for He has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers" (Psalm 24:1-2), signifies the cardinal principle and fundamental value of Christian faith; namely, that God's love extends to all creatures in the oikoumene. The Creator God who is responsible for creation, and who designs life and destiny, calls for our Christian commitment to care for God's creation.



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66 To there a way for man to live without destroying something else?" Vaikkom Muhammed Basheer, legendary Malayalam novelist of yore, once asked. He wrote his famous story titled 'Inheritors of the Earth' during the time when rebellions were on the rise against the insensate destruction of the Silent Valley rainforests. The story starts with a hero, who has just acquired two acres of coconut grove with a house within it, dreams of economic security by selling coconuts. Convinced that he is invincible in his compound protected by a formidable iron fence, gate, and a hunting dog named 'Shan', he's shocked by the entry of some unannounced guests into his premises: birds, butterflies, termites, rats, and poisonous scorpions. The novelist conveys the message that these are in fact the inheritors of the earth, thereby destabilizing the notion that man is the monarch of the earth.

From time immemorial, certain religious traditions have contributed to ascribing man sole dominion over the earth, especially marked in many Jewish/Christian dialogues. The 15th General Assembly of the Christian conference of Asia has adopted as its main theme a prayer that challenges the above perspective: 'God, renew us in Your spirit and restore creation'. Here we dedicate ourselves to providential renewal, and desire for the renewal of all creation. This prayer originated on the basis of the belief that God's love, which forms the crux of Christian faith, extends to all creation. But through an unfortunate warping of reality, some creations have emerged as creators and lords of other creations, which makes it high time that the churches viewed the reinstatement and reformation of creation seriously.



Scriptural insights that demand rereading

Those who viewed Gen. 1: 28 (Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." NIV) as an exhortation to conquer and maintain hegemony originated an anthropocentric life order. Although the contemporary interpretations and historic re-readings of the above passage are available now, it was not considered a part of Christian spirituality to consider other creations, especially because man was considered as the crown of all creation. Prominent British philosopher and animal rights apologist Mary Midgley uses the phrase 'narrow humanity' to signify the way in which man uses the earth and its resources for his own benefit. She exhorts us to move away from an ideology that privileges liberal individualism to a relative value system that privileges interdependence, compassion and ethics.

Jürgen Moltmann in his studies on Sabbath based on Gen. 2: 1-4 and Ex. 20: 10-11 maintains a similar perspective. Moltmann points to a God who chooses to spend Sabbath with his creations, taking rest from all endeavours. God who consummates creation through Sabbath invites man to share the experience. Walter Brueggemann, an expert on Old Testament, explicates the consummation of Sabbath on the basis of Ex. 15: 1-17 and Leviticus 25: 1-22, strongly emphasizing the fact that what God really intends is a redemption of the whole earth through the observation of the Sabbath which makes possible the liberation of the oppressed, the earth's rest and the cancellation of debt. We need more of such counter-readings of the Bible and their applications in the current times.

Spirituality in the Indian perspective, and **Christian insights**

Convinced that the challenges of modernity can be seen in Jewish Christian religious traditions as well, Indian theologian Fr. Sebastian Kappen talks about the ancient religious philosophies of India. We can see that modern science is creating more problems than solutions, and that it is not able to suggest a way in which man can use his own resources to solve all problems. In the creation stories, creation is often described as the consequence of a war between God and nature. This can be understood as something that anticipates priesthood and prophethood. In the priestly tradition the presence of God is signified as a powerful wind that moves over chaos. In the prophetic tradition God is described as a potter who moulds clay to form man. Kappen points out that in both these traditions God's power and control over nature are exemplified in one way or the other. Hence to 'subdue' (Gen. 1: 28) became a reality in the life of a man, and he used it as the primary cue in his relationship to nature.

In ancient cultures mother God was described as the root of all fertility. She is often seen as the God of flora and fauna, manifested as a cow, a plant, a river etc. In everything we can see the impulse of life. The mother God becomes one with the seed, the plant that sprouts from the seed, and also the earth from which it grows. In the explorations done in the archaeological site at Harappa, an emblem was found in which the naked goddess was pictured upside down, a plant sprouting from her womb. That the goddess herself should be made fertile for good crop was an ancient belief. Such beliefs often manifested as ritualistic sowing or copulation, which explains why even today among tribal world views, fertility rites are markedly sexual in nature. Kappen posits

that in the contemporary world we should go back to religion to reclaim the primordial world views.

The reconstruction of religion and telluricerotic spirituality

According to Kappen, religion is the primary dimension of a man's existence, and not the consequence of economic alienation as posited by Marxian thought. However, we can see that religions have been contaminated by modernistic viewpoints and hegemonic ideologies. Hence Kappen marks the dissonant voices inside religions as forces capable of redeeming them out of turbidity and transforming the society. We cannot enter into nature-bound philosophies without thoroughly critiquing religion. Kappen systematically establishes how all religions forsake their real insights and place stumbling blocks in human minds. While exhorting us to reconstruct our own religions in a new light, he underlines the duty of social transformation inherent in religion.

In ancient priestly gnosis, the rising and the setting of the sun, the flowing of streams, the blossoming of plants and the appearance of fruits on trees are different manifestations of eros. In that sense eros can effect coexistence within every society. If eros can be seen as one of the underpinnings of Indian philosophy, Christianity focuses on agape, which is selfless or sacrificial love. Kappen argues that agape is indeed epic in authentic humanity. An agape without eros does not carry either the depth of the cosmos or the warmth of life. Hence it is fragile. Christian thought that views eros only as sexual urge is a form of reductionism and against real spirituality, something that goes back to

Augustine with his pronouncements on sin, as argued by Kappen. In order to forge a spirituality that includes all humanity and all nature, Kappen advises a combination of the scriptural interpretation of eros, the choice of agape, and the celebration of womanhood, which he terms 'telluric- erotic spirituality'.

Conclusion

Telluric- erotic spirituality is an expression of an emotional relationship between man, nature, and all creation. Such a spirituality originates itself in the different ways in which religions interact and their practical implications. Even though each religion has unique perspectives and methodologies regarding life, it is a fact that religions share certain basic existential ethics in relation to man's quest for the meaning of religion. Religiosity is inherently related to the healing of the whole world. Christ's teaching that we must love our neighbours as ourselves is based on this. The word 'neighbour' can be understood as 'the needy'. In its extended meaning, 'neighbour' signifies man and consequently all creations of God. The time is not far when theology will have to address a dialogue that concerns not only man but all other creations on earth. A theology of inclusion and coexistence must arise, and it should imbibe from each religion forces that conserve and improve life.

Let us join together in praying 'God, renew us in Your spirit and restore creation'.

Translation: Dr. G. Koshy



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THE HEALING FOR ABUNDANCE OF LIFE AND WHOLENESS **OF CREATION**

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (St. John 10:10).

Throughout history, mankind has faced numerous pandemics, each capable of shattering the illusion of human dominion over the universe and all of creation. COVID-19, like its predecessors such as plague, spanish flu, and HIV/ AIDS, has unpredictably weakened human existence in different periods. It's essential to understand that the crisis associated with every pandemic extends beyond health; it has the potential to destabilize all aspects of human life. The words of United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Antonio Gutierres about the COVID-19 period stands testimony to this fact - 'It's much more than a health crisis; it's a human crisis.'

In this post-COVID era, we must reflect on the fact that a tiny virus has not only impacted our physical health but has also disrupted our mental, spiritual, and social well-being, transcending the apparent boundaries of human existence. Beyond these unexpected pandemics, there are other factors that threaten human well-being. The rise of lifestyle diseases, which have increased mortality rates in both developed and developing countries, and the modern epidemic of mental illnesses, particularly among the younger generation, offer little consolation. Undoubtedly, the 21st century has witnessed unprecedented achievements in science and technology, particularly in medicine. Moreover, the impending integration of robotics and artificial intelligence promises to revolutionize healthcare.

The fundamental question that arises here is. "Why is man still so weak?" "Why is human life so fragile?"

In this context, where the wholeness of creation is being undermined, let us explore the significance of health and healing within the biblical framework.

Health and healing have been subjects of human pursuit since ancient times. Definitions of these concepts vary across religious, cultural, social, and geographical philosophies, making it challenging to provide a unified definition relevant to all times.

What is health? When can we deem an individual healthy? While we often equate health with the absence of disease or symptoms, it is more than that; it encompasses a dynamic perspective that goes beyond the physical aspects of human existence.

In 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as an experience of well-being, encompassing physical, mental, and social dimensions. However, this definition overlooks the spiritual and invisible realms of human life. In 1990, the World Council of Churches introduced a more comprehensive definition. It includes not only physical, mental, and social aspects but also spiritual, economic, and political factors, emphasizing harmony among humanity, the universe, and God. This holistic view of health draws inspiration from biblical teachings.

The Holy Bible frequently references health and healing as spiritual concepts. The creation narratives in the book of Genesis offer the first vivid indications of these ideas. Genesis 1:31 portrays God as the Creator crafting the universe with flawless precision, stating, "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." This reflects the primordial state of a healed creation. References to man, created in the divine image and likeness, given life by the Creator's breath, and "becoming a living spirit" (Genesis 2:7), emphasize the wholeness of creation that extends beyond the physical dimensions to include the mental and spiritual levels. The human healing experience mirrors this wholeness, where the body, mind, and spirit come together.

From biblical perspective, human health and healing experiences are holistic and relationshiporiented. This is illustrated by the harmonious relationship between humanity, the universe, and God depicted in the creation account. However, due to the fall of early man, creation lost its state of complete healing, resulting in a curse on both creation and the universe (Genesis 3:1619). The Bible teaches us that the harmonious relationship between humanity, nature, other creatures, and God was shattered. Subsequent Old and New Testament teachings provide hope for the restoration of humanity through divine love and the redemption of creation and the universe.

Although biblical philosophy employs various words to describe the health and healing experience, the Hebrew word 'Shalom' encapsulates the concept beautifully. 'Shalom' signifies holistic well-being, encompassing the integrity of a person's being, where the body, mind, and spirit are in perfect communion. It also represents the divine harmony in the relationship between humanity, the universe, and God. The fall of early man disrupted this essence of 'Shalom,' leading to a holistic breakdown affecting all facets of human existence and relationships. The Bible conveys the hope for the restoration of creation from this state of disintegration, as stated in Romans 8:22: "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains." This represents the perfection of the healing experience envisioned by biblical teachings.

Therefore, according to biblical philosophy, human health is complete only when the entirety of human existence, including the body, mind, and spirit, is restored to wholeness. Moreover, it requires redefining the relationship between humanity, creation, and God. Hence, health in the Bible is not confined to the physical domain, and healing goes beyond mere physical cure.

Herein lies the answer to the oft-posed question: "Why is humanity so weak?" Human beings achieve fullness and complete well-being only when they redefine and restore their relationships not only with fellow humans but also with other creatures, nature, and, above all, the Trinitarian God, transcending material experiences. It is in this space that Christ's promise of "life... the experience of abundant life" is realized, making the experience of healing an alternate possibility of life-an endeavour contributing to the wholeness of creation.

'We cannot separate our attitude to health from our attitude to life. Like life...It is an open... unfulfilled possibility' - Bishop David Jenkins





Rev. Dr. John G. Mathews Trivandrum

n the recent decade, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has captured our interest and sparked curiosity due to its relevance in this era of technological omnipresence. AI has taken various forms, making significant impacts across all facets of life. Its integration into human existence has brought about profound changes. While the biological body holds numerous abilities beyond AI, the latter has its unique strengths. With this perspective, let's explore some AI trajectories and reflect on the 15th General Assembly theme of the CCA, "God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation." This theme implores God to renew, revive, and restore the entire created order. According to the Biblical creation account, humans were created in God's image, designed to reflect that image and act as created co-creators. God bestowed upon humans the agency of creation, which led them to shape the world without fully comprehending the distortions caused to the divine Image. Among human creations, AI stands out as a biomimetic product, mimicking biological phenomena artificially. This prompts us to question whether AI, an image of human creation, truly reflects the divine Image instilled in humanity.

The latter half of the 20th century witnessed various scientific revolutions, including the double helix model of DNA, Alan Turing's test, and Richard Feynman's groundbreaking idea in nanotechnology. Progressing into the 21st century's first decade, scientists delved deeper into understanding human complexity. However, the second decade saw a new turn, with scientists venturing into engineering the "stuff of mind" within machines. The creation of diverse AI forms and the pursuit of singularity have captured much recent attention. AI, an advanced algorithm, operates based on a mathematical formula, emulating human

cognition. Alan Turing's iconic test in 1950 marked AI's inception, proposing that if an interrogator cannot distinguish between a human and a machine in a three-party interaction, strong AI has been achieved. Despite significant advancements, the transference of human cognition to a nonbiological substrate remains a challenge, with predictions varying widely. This phenomenon raises questions about the exceptional role of human intelligence and the complexity of nonhuman intelligence.

Before delving into theological reflections, understanding the distinction between Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) or strong AI and narrow AI or weak AI is crucial. Pei Wang and Ben Goertzel explain that AGI stresses generalpurpose intelligence, similar to human adaptability in various environments to solve problems. AGI possesses human-like intellectual capabilities, including handling unpredictable situations. On the other hand, weak AI involves supervised programs for specific tasks, lacking autonomous cognitive adaptation. While narrow AI has practical applications, the desire to transfer human cognition onto non-biological substrates is a subject of debate. Some predict this transition is imminent, enabled by biotechnology, nanotechnology, cognitive science, and robotics, while others argue for a timeline spanning centuries. However, the notion of a distinct separation between the brain and the rest of the body is a reductionist viewpoint that requires critical examination. Studies reveal the intricate interplay between the brain, body, and environment, suggesting that intelligence is a social construct.

The General Assembly theme emphasizes the renewal of humanity and the restoration of creation, rooted in the belief that God is the source of life. This conviction is derived from biblical teachings portraying life as emanating from God, underscoring the sanctity of human life and the distinction between Creator and the created. Human beings, made in God's image, reflect profound complexity and interdependence with other created entities. Thus, defining a person solely based on physical attributes is inadequate. Instead, a person is an intricate interplay of subsystems, embedded within their surroundings, and influenced by connections at micro and macro levels. The Christian concept of imago Dei emphasizes the relationship between personhood and God. Therefore, AI developers seeking to transfer the human brain to a nonbiological substrate must grapple with the meaning of persona in light of imago Dei. The image of God encompasses not just intelligence, but the entire human composite. AI's attempt to replicate the human image primarily focuses on intelligence, neglecting other aspects like embodiment, emotions, consciousness, and social interactions.

The themes of renewal and restoration underscore multi-layered connectivity, reflecting the trait of intersubjectivity inherent in both humans and the Triune God. Intersubjectivity involves shared states among subjects and is crucial for interaction, generating feelings and relatedness. Edmund Husserl is of the opinion that intersubjectivity is the domain of inquiry that spans the entire scope of human experience. It is not only the shared or mutual understanding but it is a precondition for interaction. AI's progress should be assessed through this lens. Its applications, such as in warfare and entertainment, raise ethical concerns. The pursuit of transferring human cognition to non-biological substrates disregards the role of the soul, and speculations about immortality through AI bypass the soul's significance. Amidst these debates, the call for renewal and restoration emphasizes the affirmation and revitalization of creation, not its deletion or replacement.

In an era dominated by technology, a vigilant observation of AI's progression becomes paramount. As AI permeates every aspect of life, questions about ownership, control, and benefits arise. However, AI's trajectory frequently leans towards replication and substitution, rather than the profound renewal and restoration we seek. As AI advances, it subtly chips away at the distinctive human essence, slowly but surely altering the divine Image we carry. This prompts us to contemplate the extent to which AGI can genuinely encapsulate human traits, while adhering to the guiding principle of reflecting the divine Image. This dynamic interaction between human creation and technological innovation underscores the ongoing theological discourse, reminding us to tread this path with a profound sense of ethical responsibility.

Article



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EDUCATION TO LEAD TO **RE-THINKING**



"In the preaching of Him we exhort every man, and admonish every man with all wisdom, that we may make every man perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

n educated population is an asset to the nation and society. Education is essential for all economic, political, scientific and cultural growth. Thinking and rational intelligence is what distinguishes man from all other living beings. Living in a world where there is no limit to knowledge, we have to add knowledge and experiences to shape our lives for the betterment of society through fair attitudes. For that, emphasis should be given on value based education. On September 5, India's most relevant President Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's birthday, celebrates as Teacher's Day. He was the guru who taught that knowledge is power, love leads to its perfection, and that the product of education should be a free creative man who can fight against historical circumstances and the adversities of nature.

It seems that education today needs some rethinking. Today, despite the abundance of universities, there is a poverty to see universal human beings. The shrinking of man from universalism to narrow attitudes and from openmindedness to narrow-mindedness suggests that education should be ready for rethinking. The educational system, where the children are burdened by the burden of study, the burden of books, the burden of work, and the parents with the financial burden and the burden of conflict, is hindering the creation of better societies. Education activists Gopalakrishnan and Vijayalakshmi points to the truth('Affordable Education', DC Books) that the majority of educated people are not taking care of their parents and the society. The young generation fleeing to study in foreign universities, because of high unemployment, is a glimpse of today. Educational systems that do not grow with the new times are being questioned today. We need to find an answer to this.

1. The teacher model set by Jesus

It is truly observed that Jesus Christ was an educator. The evangelist Luke, who observes the childhood of Jesus, paints a picture of Jesus interacting with the scribes at the age of twelve after becoming the son of the law. Jesus' study of

the law has paid off if the emphasis in education is thorough inquiry and debate. Luke sums up the childhood of Jesus in this way, "Jesus grew in wisdom and growth and in the grace of God and men" (Luke. 2:52). The word 'grew' in Greek is 'prok-op'-to'. The word means 'a path that carves itself out and shapes itself,' another meaning is like 'iron that is matured in a furnace and shaped as needed'. Jesus shaped his life and mission through self-discipline. It is a new path that no one has ever seen and travelled. The gist of it is that the life of the Guru Jesus was one that recognized the complex realities of life and matured them according to need. The lesson is that what makes Christ great are the attitudes and the approaches that which Jesus himself refined with the enlightenment and the wisdom.

2. Education is enlightenment which realizes the original

The relevance of value-based education should be discussed in the context of growth of knowledge and science leads us to the sight (Hiroshima and Nagasaki events) of hate market places that which create violence and hatred instead of enriching living spaces. The Sermon on the Mount is characterized by the positive observations shared by the Guru Jesus for the safety and survival of society. (New Law Codes for new Humanity). When it is said that complete education is a combination of knowledge, information and understanding, Jesus is teaching the social convictions necessary for the existence of a society, instructions for a just society and active relationships. Jesus Christ taught the social lesson that man should live, do good and walk with justice in God's face and man's face. The point is that the main symptom of an academician is recognition and not the academic certificates he has earned.

The purpose of Christian education is to make every man perfect in Christ. St.Paul uses the expression "every one" when admonishing the church in Colossae. 'Everyman' is an allusion to society without boundaries. The essence is that Paul strives to make the source of divine knowledge accessible to all. Here the universal dimension of the gospel of Christ is made clear. Jesus Christ is the ultimate knowledge that is opened to the barbarian, slave, free, male and female in the time when the ideologies of hatred that create boundaries are cultivated.

3 Education breaks boundaries

Social change is created when the space of knowledge becomes a space of transgressing boundaries. The early church's proclamation that salvation was free to all was a revolutionary message that broke the boundaries of the current social structure. The goal of evangelism is an open possibility in God's grace, to form all men to maturity in Christ. The term 'everyone' was repeated thrice. Christian discipline leads to knowledge that makes all perfect in Christ, as opposed to the infallibility of wisdom given only to some. To be perfected in Christ is to grow into Christ the head. The idea of being perfected in Christ hints at the vigilance that the believer must maintain throughout eternity. The synoptic gospels describe the vision of a rich young man coming to accept Jesus as his teacher. Jesus asks him who is interested in accepting Jesus as his teacher that if you want to be perfect, sell what you have and give to the poor. Your knowledge will lead you to eternal life, not when you turn a blind eye to the poor, realities of society, but when you respond by constructive sharing, unconventional attitudes, and respond to cries on the fringes. Christian education should make it possible for those who need to raise their voices for justice to raise their voices for those who have lost their dignity. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mathew 5:48).

The divine wisdom revealed through Jesus Christ invites us into the warm communion of relationships that lead life spaces to meaningful spirituality. Let us also participate in the educational process of growing up to Christ the head and being perfected in Christ.

Translation: Mrs. Nisha Cherian



ar Thoma Suvisesha Sevika Sangham is a women's movement that has to its credit a history of 100 years. It dawned on a time when there were no other organisations or associations that catered to the uplift and well-being of women in society. Towards the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, the idea of women having their own organisation was quite unacceptable to our society. Empowerment of women was an unheard concept on those days. The concept of feminism came into existence in the West only after 1929. Debates on the equality and rights of women came into limelight with Virginia Woolf's seminal work, "A Room of One's Own", which was published in 1929. This work highlights the sad plight of womanhood that was incarcerated and forced to remain within the four walls of a house. Feminist ideology that later gained wide currency in the West was actually set into motion by the thoughts and writings of Woolf. But ten years prior to this new line of thinking set in motion in the West, precisely speaking, in 1919, the leaders of our church laid a strong foundation for women empowerment through Sevika Sanghom. It was instigated by the reformation process in Malankara Church. The women leaders in Mar Thoma Church were encouraged to think and visualize the role of women in family, society and church in a way quite different from the traditionally accepted roles. Women who had imbibed this neo-liberal ideology rose to the leadership of the Church and they initiated the founding of Sevika Sanghom that could cater to the development of women's potential and individuality. The contributions of this women's league during the past 100 years can broadly be classified under two heads:

- 1. The role played by Sevika Sanghom in building up the capacity of women is immeasurable. Women of the 1920s were destined to remain at homes, but Sevika Sanghom groups of each parish, enriched them spiritually and equipped them to contribute to the socio-cultural development of their society. Slowly, women got acceptance within their families, and they sensed the need to attend schools to enrich their knowledge. The corresponding societal change promoted the blooming of their personality and promoted leadership skills in them. Many of the studies show that women belonging to the Mar Thoma community, who had acquired selfconfidence and excellence in character due to their active involvement in the Sanghom activities, were the first to gear up to jobs offered by firms both in India and abroad. The financial development of many families that lived in and around Pamba-Manimala river basins was due to the educational progress of women in these families. The role played by Sevika Sanghom in realizing this uplift is praiseworthy.
- 2. Sevika Sanghom has played a vital role in transforming the women community in Church to serve the needy and unwanted around them. During the past 100 years they have come up with many projects. Vanitha Mandiram, Elanthoor Balika Bhavan, Mukthi Mandiram, Shanthi Asramam, Visranthi Bhavan, Salem Children's Home, Snehatheeram, Halfway Home, Kudumbajyothi, Sakshya, Vanitha Bodhini, Vanitha Hostel, are some of their contributions to society through Church. It is deemed as one of most actively working appendages of the church. The huge gathering of women crusaders of the Mar Thoma Church during the Maramon Convention of 2019 proves the unquenchable thirst of the empowered women of the church to serve God and their fellow beings and this has found its place in Church History.

- The present century offers unlimited opportunities to women to practice allinclusive charity work. Our positive response to such situations and opportunities will make the activities of Sevika Sanghom more relevant. Many possible steps could be initiated to heighten its relevance.
- 1. Sevika Sanghom may be used as an effective platform for 'unlearning' many of the traditionally transmitted erroneous beliefs like, 'woman is weak' which creates a feeling of inferiority in our minds. We should be conscious of the strength and creative power God has implanted within us with all its variety. The effort we take to change our outlook is very important.
- 2. Sanghom can create an awareness among families to foster a male-female relationship based on equality. The number of women who refuse to be constricted within the traditional framework of family is increasing every day. Rift among husbands and wives in our families are directly or indirectly connected to the reworking of power equations within a family. In traditional families, men were the decision makers and women were mostly 'unheard', but modern women insist that their voice should be 'heard' and decisions should be taken in consultation with them. So, familial issues should be dealt with in a more democratic way.
- 3. Women should realise that they are descendants of a great legacy. It is our call to be a part and parcel of God's mission of deliverance of the needy, the sick and the poor in the contemporary world. women are more actively involved with protecting and sustaining life in nature. The purity and simplicity of showing compassion to life is certainly, a gift of God. Though they are always marginalized as the 'weaker sex', they were the first to visualize the glory of life beyond the death in the tomb. They were the first witnesses of the gospel that was going to revelutionize the whole world.

- 4. The present-day challenge of Sevika Sanghom is to nurture and train women leaders with multifarious talents and skills, we need to find out new convincing reasons and logic to correct the existing understandings and beliefs. Deliverance is always 'moving against the tide'. Old Testament women like Shiphrah, Puah, Miriam, and Jochebed fight against the barbaric rulings of the Pharaoh. They resist and overcome his destructive acts with their creativity and cognitive knowledge. The same tactic and approach is visible in The New Testament where the Canaanite woman astonishes Jesus by her alternative logic.
- 5. We should imbibe the faculty of critical evaluation. Our families should learn to comprehend and discern the good from the bad. The galloping pace of technological infusion into all walks of human life is astounding. It replaces all our practices in the past, and social critics explain this change as disruptive technology. We were always ready to accept changes or reforms that could incorporate whatever good was there in the existing, or old system. However, new technology insists that we totally disregard the old, and fully accept the new. The goodness and greatness of old systems are no longer appreciated in our new world. Children belonging to the new generation carry such thoughts in their minds, and hence, they totally reject the values and beliefs of their parents. Such a conflict of values and ideologies cause tensions within homes. The number of young people who are easily deceived by social media, and invariably take

immature decisions in their lives, are increasing. Many families are affected by the evil effects of social media. What we need at this juncture is the capacity to differentiate between the good and the evil. Christ himself used this faculty to see through the meaninglessness and hollowness of the superficially beautiful promises offered by Devil. What we need is not tensions and rifts, but debates as to what we should accept, and what we should reject.

Many of the social problems like communalism, poverty, violence against women, children and the aged, environmental problems, mounting corruption, social evils, all these require active response from the part of the members of Sevika Sanghom. We have to identify the sinful acts in individual as well as social systems and initiate steps to exhort people to turn to God with remorse and genuine repentance. Sevika Sanghom should equip its members to face such situations. We need a strong foundation in Gospel teachings to achieve this. Even though we see despair everywhere around us, our final motto should be 'hope'. Even where we see the darkness of evil, there is certainly a ray of hope. The call of every member of the Sanghom in the present century is to move from the periphery to the centre to strengthen the weak minds, and pour out energy that is capable of resisting evil around them.

Translation: Dr. Achamma Alex



day, we live in a world where the question of 10 "How are you" is often met by a response of "Going On" or "Surviving" or a simple but elongated "Oookay". Gone are the days when someone could reply "Excellent" or "Beautiful" - with a gleam in their eye. Or is it that post the pandemic era, many of us have been conditioned to crumble under the immense stress that has piled up from all around - be it economically, socially, physically, and spiritually? Is there no reprieve from all this and are we doomed to live like this for the rest of our life? Or is it within our ability to turn this situation around and reboot ourselves so that we can live a life that is fulfilling and stay in a state of happiness and spiritual wellbeing - no matter what the circumstances?

Science has proven that the human brain can be trained to focus on what we want it to focus on. We could either be focusing on all the challenges we face on a day-to-day basis, talking about it all the time, and pondering about it all the time, to such an extent that we attract more challenges and stress into our life; or alternatively, we could focus on the blessings that we are all bestowed with and empower ourselves with a sense of positivity amidst the challenges, such that the spirit in us does not die.

Thankfully there are few simple techniques that we can adapt which will help us to snap out of the lows, and to revive our spirit. Almost like rebooting a computer or a mobile phone that is not functioning as efficiently as it is supposed to. However, for change to happen, we must:

1. Have a deep realization that there is a 'need to bring about a change' in our lives;

- 2. Have the 'willingness to change' our patterns, beliefs, and rituals so that we can work on making that change:
- 3. 'Take action' because just talking about change does not help; and
- 4. 'Remain committed and consistent' as it takes time to bring about a change - and we should not give up mid-way.
- 5. Be open and heed to God's direction for change.

Some suggestions to reboot spiritually and bring back that sparkle back in your eyes and lives would include:

- 1. Taking a break: In today's world, we are all caught up in a web of 'busy-ness'. Be it the routines of daily life, chores at home, or activities at work, shuttling the children from one class to another, meeting the deadlines, you name it - we are all so busy that we seldom find time for ourselves to sit back and reconnect at a deeper level. Finding time to cut off from all these for a few days and moving away on a laid-back trip, or attending a retreat, or going on a pilgrimage is one way to shake up the daily routines and patterns. A break from the daily pattern of life has always proven to bring about a profound change in our physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
- 2. Taking a digital detox: One of the first things many of us do in the mornings is to rub your sleepy eyes and look at the mobile phone. And immediately we are caught up in the many alerts

and push messages from the many social media groups and networks, that flood our brains with not just junk, but also a feeling of dissatisfaction, fear, hatred, and very often negativity - to such an extent that this feeling remains with us for the rest of the day. Cutting ourselves off from all smartphones, newscasts, TV channels, Laptops, and other digital monsters for a couple of days to a week has proven to give us more time to focus on the real priorities of our life, and to connect with other family members and loved ones at a personal level. The positive effect of a digital detox on our spiritual wellbeing is worth the effort.

- 3. **Doing Unto Others:** Getting involved in volunteerism, charitable activities, or the simple act of making someone else's day a little better is a sure way to re-charge our batteries of life, and to bring about a renewed sense of purpose and some excitement that is different from the otherwise monotonous daily life. You don't have to be a rich person to be able to do things for others. Every drop counts. A simple smile, a helping hand at home, a few kind words, and a few acts of appreciation to others - are all ways in which we could make a difference in the life of others. And when we do something good for others, the feeling of accomplishment and the energy that comes with it is a definite way to boost ourselves spiritually.
- 4. Connecting with nature: We are all familiar with the feeling experienced when we breathe in the cool and fresh air on the top of a hill station; or the pure satisfaction of taking in the lovely fragrance of a bunch of roses or a garden of jasmine flowers. A walk into lush green forests, a hike (or drive) up a mountain trail, the sound of gushing water rolling down a creek or waterfall, the soft cooing call of the cuckoo birds in the woods - are all images and sounds that bring about calmness in us when experienced. Take some time to connect with nature as often as you can, and we will definitely be spiritually re-energized.
- 5. Having your 'Me Time': Even amidst your daily schedules, find some time for yourself. It could be early in the mornings, or whenever you can. But slot it into your daily calendar of events so that you have time to connect with yourself. To

sit and relax and to catch up with your favorite music, or to read a book, or religious text, or to spend some time on a passion that you deeply cherish. Life will always be busy. But that does not mean that you should detach from what makes you 'you'. Learn a new skill, take up a music lesson or join a gym, or go to a dance class, or write a journal, or just sit in silence doing nothing - whatever your heart desires. Because we all have one life on this earth – and its up to us to make it beautiful.

6. Visualizing Gratefulness: List down on a paper all your blessings in life, you have received from God, that you are grateful for. Though we sometimes feel that everything is working against us, the simple act of writing down all the blessings in your life can help switch our perspective. Be thankful to God for all the blessings and experiences that which made you grown.

Embarking on a journey of change is as important as staying on that journey till you reach your destination. Something I notice in many of my clients of all ages is that not everyone who commences on this journey of change sustains it the whole way. Some give up too early. Change is not easy, and breaking patterns take consistency and determination. If you believe that you give up too easily, and something or another comes in your way and disrupts your efforts to reboot yourself spiritually, get a mentor or a coach. Someone with experience whom you can talk to - who guides you along and pushes you to be your very best is one way to ensure that you remain committed to your efforts and achieve success. Ofcourse Holy Spirit is our mentor, but He should be embodied in our daily life. Our mind is full of patterns and beliefs and rituals we have fed it since childhood. Sometimes, we have to unlearn somethings to take in new learnings. Science has proven that it takes a minimum of 21 days to make this happen. And many more days to realize the impact. So, you cannot afford to give up midway.

Another factor that will stand in your way is 'selfdoubt'. The questions like - How can I? What will others say? Will I be able to? Am I not too old (or young) for this? will all pop up in our minds. 'Shoo' them away, and take a decision to hit the spiritual reboot button. Because you owe it to yourself, and of course you can.

nswer of five years of continuous prayer and waiting, Lord blessed us with HIS answer as a precious blessed baby boy. We named him SAM (Samuel) saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him." We were overjoyed at Sam's birth as he was a precious gift from the Lord. Sam was a premature boy and went through so many difficulties and challenges because of that. But as it is written in scripture "All things work together for good to those who love God and called according to his purpose" (Romans 8.28).

Despite facing challenges, Sam became a boy of having different talents and abilities and thereby won many awards and certificates from many platforms. The Asia Book of Records honored Sam with the title of "GRAND MASTER". Sam achieved a place in India Book of Records and Asia Book of Records for his photographic memory. And recently SAM received Appreciation from India Book of Records for his memory of byheart all the elements of the Periodic Table (118 Elements of Periodic table of Chemistry in order and random).

Sam's ability in scripture and General Knowledge is amazing. In a very short span of time, Sam memorized the names of the 66 books of the Bible names from Genesis to Revelation (at the age of 7), the 10 commandments in English and Malayalam, the names of the tribes of Israel, the Kings of Israel, the 10 Plagues of Israel and many other bible questions and verses from many portions. He memorized many scripture verses with its reference in both English and Malayalam and some of the verses in Hebrew as well. Sam is able to memorize and recite scripture in multi languages with its reference. He recites bible verses starts with the letters A to Z with its reference and its translation as well. Teaching him now to recite one verse from each book of the Bible (from Genesis to Revelation) and it's almost done. Sam sing songs well and byheart in English and Malayalam. He knows many of our Christian Hymns in both the languages. Sam always greets people he meets with a Bible verse and that comforted the people who meet him in their trials.

Sam's imbibing of General Knowledge is also fantastic. He memorized the alphabets in different languages like Greek, French and Hebrew in a very short span of time. Sam is able to recite the Aviation Codes



used by Airline Industry, the 118 elements of Periodic table from Hydrogen (H) to Oganesson (Og) with its symbols both in order and random, The 72 Melakartha Raga Names of Karnatic Music in order and random from Kanakangi to Rasikapriya. Inventions and inventors, the numbers (Mathematics) in different languages like Malayalam, English, Hindi, Arabic. His talents and memory are many more to write.

All the Indian states with its capital, all the 50 states of USA with its capital and abbreviation, capitals of many countries etc are very well memorized in a short time. Many Channels including Christian channels reported SAM's talents & Testimonies and media like Kala Kaumudi, Gulf Madhyamam, Madhyamam and the leading English News Paper of Bahrain, "The Gulf Daily News" too reported Sam's talents. The NEWS OF BAHRAIN published a video of Sam in their website. Sam received certificates / mementos / appreciation from many dignitaries like our Thirumeni Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, Mr. Rishi Raj Singh (Indian Administrative Officer / IPS officer), Mr. Gopinath Muthukad, Representatives of Kerala Legislative Assembly, from Schools, Churches, Taluk, District level etc for his memory in diversified subjects.

I was able to find out some of Sam's talents so far and by His grace he reached upto here today. Let Lord help me to find out Sam's hidden talents for God's glory to reach more records and for the glory of the Kingdom of God as SAM always say "I will stand on stage and preach GOD IS GOOD"

Dear friends, when we go through challenges, God also provides His grace to overcome trials in life. His Grace is sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:9) and we can do all things through Him (Philippians 4:13). God provides solution for every trial we face. God's hand is behind every creation including me and you. Each one of us is clay in the hands of our creator Lord as the Prophet Jeremiah says. As the Psalmist says in 139.14, I am fearfully and wonderfully made. We are God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10). The soul of everyone including the special needs kids are the same without any disability. They too are same in the hands of the creator Lord. We cannot separate them from what we see out, but their abilities are far better than ours.

Trials are blessings in disguise if we truly understand and as I experienced through my life by taking care of this blessed boy SAM. Thank the Lord for SAM and we are proud to be his parents.

TRANSLATORS FOR THIS ISSUE

Dr. Achamma Alex Mr. Alwin Alexander Dr. Elizabeth J. Thomas Dr. Joji John Panicker Dr. G. Koshy Mrs. Nisha Cherian Dr. Susan Varghese

THEMES FOR COMING ISSUES:

October-Family: Replica of the Kingdom of God November- Childhood: From colours to completeness

PRAYERFUL WISHES!

Newly elected bishop designates of Malankara Mar Thoma syrian church



Rev. Saju C. Pappachen



Rev. Dr. Joseph Daniel



Rev. Mathew K. Chandy





H. G. Dr. Theodosius Marthoma Metropolitan inaugurating the newly constructed Sabha Secreteriat - Dr. Joseph Marthoma Metropolitan Navathy Office Complex



Town of Sunnyvale, Texas honored Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Bishop of the North America and Europe Mar Thoma Diocese and July 28 designated as the Bishop Philoxenos Day in Sunnyvale



Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Thimotheos Episcopa dedicating the mission house at Kokkathod constructed under the Jubilee project of Abudhabi Marthoma parish. Diocesan secretary Rev. Raju P. George and treasurer Mr. Saji Mukkaranath nearby



Rt. Rev. Dr. Mathews Mar Makarios Episcopa with the students at Padur Marthoma Vidya Sadanam, after the first Students' Conference and Holy Communion