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LIGHTEN

# MALANKARA SABHATHARAKA

January 2023

Volume 02

Issue 01

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## NEW YEAR

A WAKE UP CALL TO THE LIGHT



His Grace the Marthoma Metropolitan, Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, Rev.C.V.Symon (Sabha Secretary) being received by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala Mr.Pinarayi Vijayan at Trivandrum for the Christmas dinner hosted by the Hon'ble CM



Hon'ble Governor of Goa Mr.P.S.Sreedharan Pillai inaugurating the public meeting organised by Niranam-Maramon diocese in connection with Marthoma Sabha dinam celebrations.



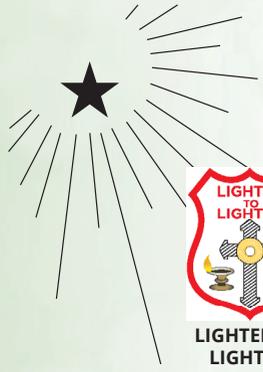
Secretary of Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Most Rev. Brian Farrel L.C. visiting His Grace the Metropolitan in the presence of Dr. Joseph Mar Barnabas Suffragan Metropolitan, Thomas Mar Coorilis and other dignitaries.



His Grace the Metropolitan inaugurating the centenary celebrations of C. S. I. Bethel Ashram, Varikad, Thiruvalla



His Grace the Metropolitan inaugurating the annual clergy conference at Charal Mount

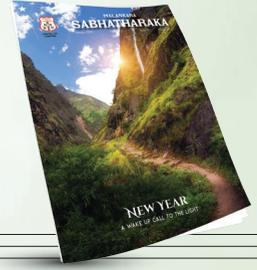


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JANUARY -2023

## LETTER FROM THE METROPOLITAN

Beloved in the Lord,

Greetings to all in the name of Jesus Christ!

The year 2022 is bidding bye. Praise be to God who has taken care of us so magnificently from the beginning to the end of the year. 2022 was a year that seemed to have a new world order after Covid. But it turned out to be a year that witnessed some of the most tragic wars and exodus in history. Conflicts between nationalities and caste-ethnicity-gender divisions have increased. With the increasing flow of refugees from South Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Ukraine, migration of the young generation from developing countries like India to developed countries is a reality. We are direct witnesses to the human struggle to escape from the devastation caused by political insecurity, economic mismanagement, wars and natural disasters. This journey of survival across geographical boundaries compels us to dream of a world order in which equitable distribution of resources is possible. God by His mercy ushers us into the new year of 2023. Beyond adding another year to the chronology, the New Year is all about new resolutions and visions. God who controls time, seasons and the course of history, is with us. A world that provides abundant life for all should be possible. That is the core message of God's kingdom. Such a world is the hope of the New Year.

On 21st December we commemorate St. Thomas the Apostle, who came to India with the great commission of the Lord Jesus to "be my witnesses to the ends of the earth". It is good to see that most of the parishes have made arrangements to

set apart the Sabha Day 2022 as a day of prayer and organize intercessory prayer or prayer chain. A special meeting was held at Niranam Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church under the auspices of Niranam-Maramon Diocese. Goa State Governor Hon'ble Mr. P.S. Sreedharan Pillai and Archbishop of Changanacherry Mar Joseph Perunthottam were special guests for the function. Let me congratulate the Niranam-Maramon Diocesan officials and the Niranam Jerusalem Mar Thoma Parish Committee. I pray that it will be possible through these kinds of endeavors to uphold the vision and work with renewed vigor in our mission and dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of the assignments.

It is a great relief that the extremely controversial and contentious Vizhinjam strike has finally been settled. The strike that extended for 140 days came to an end after a discussion of the strike committee with the Chief Minister. The main consensus is on rehabilitation. The government will complete the construction of flats for those who lose their homes due to coastal erosion within one and a half years. It should be ensured that this is considered an urgent need and implemented without delay. I appreciate the Latin Catholic Church, which led the struggle of tolerance without bending the knee in the face of great pressures. The Church truly becomes the Church when it joins the people's struggle to preserve life.

It would be advisable to try to resolve the disputes regarding buffer zone through negotiation. The Government of Kerala should take steps to address the concerns of the people regarding the satellite survey prepared for the determination of eco-sensitive areas. In a densely populated state like Kerala, the land limitation for human habitation also complicates this issue. There is also a need to provide clarity about residential areas. There is a possibility that a few lakhs of people will lose their homes and farms. People's right to life is violated by this. This will create huge consequences in the society and affect the legal life and work of the people. Let's pray that it will be possible to open the doors of dialogue beyond the struggle between the government and the farmers. There should be instantaneous intervention of the government to eliminate the panic of the people.

In Kota, Rajasthan, 14 children who were preparing for medical and engineering exams committed suicide this year alone. In the last five years, 56 children have committed suicide. The reason for suicide is said to be anxiety and stress of studies and their inability to fulfill the expectations of the parents and their respective educational institutions. Such events reveal the hollowness of the middle class society, which still thinks that engineering and medicine are the only noble jobs, and the government systems that are not capable of training the bright children according to their abilities. It would be better if we understood that education is not only a weapon for livelihood, but also a training that leads to the perfection of life. Everyone should realize that suicide is not a solution to anything. Let's shape generations that can take life back with the spirit of survival.

January 18th to 25th is designated as Unity Octave. This year's theme is "Learn to do good; 'Seek Justice' (Isaiah 1:17). The order of worship has been arranged by the Minnesota Council of Churches, USA. It is very remarkable that this year's thought is based on a prophetic call in a social context where injustice and inequality were prevalent. It would be advisable to organize unity worships locally. Sunday 22nd January is designated as National Council of Churches in India Day. In our special prayer let us remember all the activities that encourage the collective nature of the churches.

In some states of India, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh, violence has been unleashed on some churches on the grounds of religious conversion. In Chhattisgarh, it is very painful that around two hundred Christians in a village were evicted from their homes. Everyone should think whether it is right to harm the fundamental right of a person to believe in any religion or ideology. We are faced with special situations where the police and government agencies become mere spectators when powerful people encroach on the rights of vulnerable people.

For the past few weeks, the FIFA World Cup has been attracting the attention of the people of the world. The excitement of the World Cup matches is also evident in the small villages of Kerala. It

is a fact that sports such as football help bring people together in today's era, which is fraught with differences and communal conflicts. Although Western countries have dominated global sporting events in the past, African and South American countries have made impressive appearances at this year's World Cup football. Special congratulations to Argentina for winning the World Cup. Let's hope that India will also perform well in global competitions like Olympics and FIFA World Cup in the coming years.

The visit and friendly conversations of Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Fr. Hyacinthe Destivelle, Director of the Ecumenical Studies Institute to our church headquarters were a very heartwarming experience. Archbishop of the Malankara Catholic Church Tiruvalla Arch-Diocese Dr. Thomas Mar Koorilos Metropolitan, our Dr. Joseph Mar Barnabas Saffragan Metropolitan, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia Dr. Mathews George Chunakkara and other officials of the church were also present on the occasion. There is no doubt that such visits will be helpful for the mutual coexistence of churches and collective witnessing. Guests also visited our church museum.

The dedication of the new face of Shrothas, the welfare project of an assisted living home, under the leadership of Thumbamon Shreyas Charitable Society of Chengannur-Mavelikkara Diocese, the newly constructed building for the Mar Chrysostom Palliative Center at Arattupuzha Tharangam Mission Action Center was performed. It was a special that we were able to perform these dedications on the birthday of Chengannur - Mavelikkara Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa (December 13). We pray that the services possible through these institutions may glorify God Almighty. We especially appreciate Timotheos Thirumeni and the Diocesan officials, the officers and workers of the said institutions.

It has been 100 years since we started our South Travancore Mission. Thiruvananthapuram -Kollam Diocese has organized centenary celebrations with various programmes. As a token of gratitude for

this historic event, a Sneha Sangamam gathering was held at the Kattakkada Christian College grounds on 30th December. It was a reminder of the history of a region, a people, and a mark of their journey of faith spanning a century. The South Travancore Mission is the realized result of the Mar Thoma Church's evangelical advancement and mission implementation with the vision of reformation. We pray that the Sneha Sangamam will be more than just a gathering and become an opportunity to energize the journey towards new mission goals and convey all the best wishes.

Our church member Mr. M. Thomas Mathew Sir's work "Aashante Seethayanam" has won the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award for Literary Criticism. Distinguished by his ideas and style of language, Mr. M. Thomas Mathew Sir's comprehensive contribution to the literary world is immense. Former MLA of Thiruvalla and our Adv. Elizabeth Mammen Mathai has taken charge as a member of the Kerala State Women's Commission. Congratulations to both of them on behalf of the Mar Thoma Church. The National Service Scheme Unit of Tiruvalla SCS Higher Secondary School has been awarded as the best NSS Unit, and the teacher Shri. Senmon V. Phillip was selected as the Best Program Coordinator and the student Abel Finny was awarded the Best Volunteer of Pathanamthitta District. I congratulate them on behalf of the Mar Thoma Church.

Rev. Reji Thomas who was undergoing treatment at Vellore Christian Medical College and Rehabilitation Centre completed his treatment there and reached his home in Chunakkara. Before coming home, Achan was able to perform Holy Mass at Vellore Mar Thoma Church in a wheelchair. Praising God for the wonderful deliverance He has given. I thank everyone who has extended their hands to Achan with prayers and other help. From 15 December, Achan has been appointed as the Chaplain of our Kattanam St. Thomas Mission Hospital. Let us continue to pray for Achen.

Three senior clergy of the church Rev. C. G. Thomas (Iravankara), Rev. P. G. Mathew (Kumbazha), Rev. Varghese M. Thomas (Mathra) entered into eternal rest. Let us praise God for their blessed and noble life. Commissioned by God through the Church, it

was possible for them and their families to carry out the services blessedly. Condolences of the Mar Thoma Church are placed on record, while joining the bereaved families in their moment of grief. Praying that God comforts the grieving family members.

The topics of thought and readings given for worship in the month of January are related to the mission of the church and the life testimony of the children of the church. Sunday 1st January, which also happens to be New Year's Day, is set aside as Bahya Kerala Mission Day. The subject of thought is Good News for all Humanity (Matthew 28:16-20), and the mission of the ascended Lord to his disciples is the plot of the Evangelion for that day. The strengthening of the evangelical mission of the church should take place on that day. It is the presence of God which is with the world as much as it inspires the community of disciples. Disciples should be influenced by the holiness required by God's presence and the conviction that they are bearers of God's instruments. Like St. Paul, there must be conviction about the preaching of the gospel. May the first Sunday of the New Year be a day of renewal of the dedication of our church called for the spread of the gospel.

Sunday 8th January is observed as Temperance Day. The theme of meditation is 'Body: Temple of God to be kept in holiness'. Daniel, determined not to defile his body with unclean food, is an active example for all time. He who guarded the temple of his body in sanctity was able to maintain the temple conviction and God consciousness even in the hostile situation of Babylon. The Gospel passage (Luke 11:33-36) refers to the eye and sight. Each person's views determine their views. It is the light within that makes life bright. May God help us to see our surroundings with a sense of value controlled by God. Then our bodies will become temples where God resides.

The theme for Sunday, January 15th is "Fruitful Christian Living" (John 15:1-11). In order to bear fruit branches have to be on the vine itself. We are all branches grafted on to Christ, the true vine. God has great purposes for every life. God is preparing suitable conditions for it. We may also experience the refining process from God for

greater fruitfulness. God has also given the Holy Spirit to help produce results. May we bear fruit in an active relationship with God.

We observe 22nd January as Ecumenical Sunday. The theme is 'Unity of the Churches – God's Will'. The church, which is the Lord's body, must not be divided. Different empowerments and cultural backgrounds may result in some diversity in appearance, but the Church of Christ must be one in essence and purpose. In these times of many challenges, a consistent Christian witness can only be achieved through the unity of the churches. The Lord's High Priestly Prayer makes it clear that unity is necessary for the world to believe in Jesus (John 17:18-26),

On the last Sunday of the month, on 29th January, the meditation 'Trust in the Providence of God' is intended. Jesus said that those who believe in God's provision need not worry (Matthew 6:19-34). God miraculously delivered His people from the hand of Sennacherib, who threatened and deceived Israel. Those who lean on God's mighty hands will be lifted up in due time. Those who believe in the values and ideals of God's kingdom do not accept the worldly preference. We will experience God's care only when we first seek God's kingdom and its justice. May God help us with that.

Happy New Year everyone.

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

Poolatheen

31. 12. 2022



**Dr. Theodosius  
Mar Thoma Metropolitan**

## BRIMMING AFRESH FOR NEW MISSIONS



Pathways never end; they just emerge as another. Likewise, ultimate goodness and absolute truth are unchanging. The Lord who proclaimed 'I am the Way, The Truth and The Life', showed us that way by offering himself as sacrifice on the Cross.

Life is assumed to be the journey to attain God's level of goodness. God is the epitome of goodness. Man stands perplexed at the various intersections of life unable to overcome the hindrances in his journey forward. It's the Word of God that helps one in such situations, to endure these difficulties. This is where as the famous literary critic, K. P. Appan observed - *the Bible becomes the armour of light and the lamp on the path.*

Globalisation creates a culture of self-centeredness and materialism—a phenomenon that brings the whole world under one umbrella. It creates a gain and loss centred business culture. A false culture that gives not the slightest value for humaneness or mutuality. It creates an avaricious mind and an increasing acquisitive life style. While globalisation makes the world a global village, it also creates small islands. The reality is that every man becomes an isle. The ramification of globalisation is one's inability to perceive life's reality beyond one's walls by the time one becomes cognizant of the phenomena that occurs in outer

space, the changing shapes of snowy mountains and the highs and lows of the market system. Here, the world pursues the prophetic voices of a society that composes rousing song with distorted value system of neo-humanism.

It is Jesus' proclamation of the good news of liberation and freedom that leads those who have lost their will power because of slavery and extortion, to the wholeness of humanitarianism. Christ's vision of freedom for the captives, restoration of sight for the blind and setting the oppressed free, accords the message of complete liberty.

'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'. This was the assurance that the Resurrected Lord granted to the Church that was sent. The Holy Spirit's fullness that lights the mission paths has also been bestowed to the Church. The declaration that when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power and you will be my witnesses everywhere is the commission to witness. Let us be able to continue the journey of life in the New Year embracing the ministry of the Risen Christ.

Wish you a blessed New Year!

**Dr. Mathews Mar Makarios**  
**Episcopa**

# BEACON OF HOPE

The master opened his haversack sitting under an oak tree. First came a sandalwood bow with an amazing fragrance. Then a bow. Finally, a handkerchief, white as lilies. He asked to be blindfolded with it. “How far am I from the flower?”, he asked the disciple. “A hundred feet”, the answer came. “Have you seen my archery skills?”, he asked. “I have seen you hitting sharp from three hundred feet. Never failing, not even once” replied the disciple. Then the master, with his feet firmly on the ground, aimed at the flower on the tree, blindfolded, and loosed the arrow. But it missed the target and hit a log far away. “What happened, master?” enquired the disciple.

“We travelled to this wilderness just for one purpose; to share my practical wisdom with you. I did this to emphasize the need to define one’s life goals with clarity; the importance of seeing clearly where one is headed. You can never achieve a goal that you cannot see. Living a self-satisfied life of passionate opulence, dynamism and fantasies is not enough. One must

record one’s objectives and strive to attain them. There must be a constant introspection about the meaning and significance of life”. This is a narrative from Robin S. Sharma’s *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. At a time of obscurantist doctrines and discourses from religious ideologies, such thoughts become relevant. Murukan Kattakkada’s observation in his poem ‘Kannada’ (Spectacles), about the political, religious and social ‘cataract’ affecting our society, is significant. Many lives have been gloomed by the pandemic. Many more are rowing towards the isles of hope with fortitude. Another pandemic surge and economic recession seem to be threateningly real in many parts of the world. People are moving forward with prayers and flickering candles for some light ahead. We must seek to be led by the light within. And, it is the light of God. For, God is light, and in him there is no darkness. “Oh glorious saviour who has come to shine the light of the gospel upon all, make this gospel fruitful that men may shine, receiving sight”.

Let us persevere in this pursuit of light. In these valleys of darkness may eyes be opened to light, boldly.

Wish you all a blessed new year!



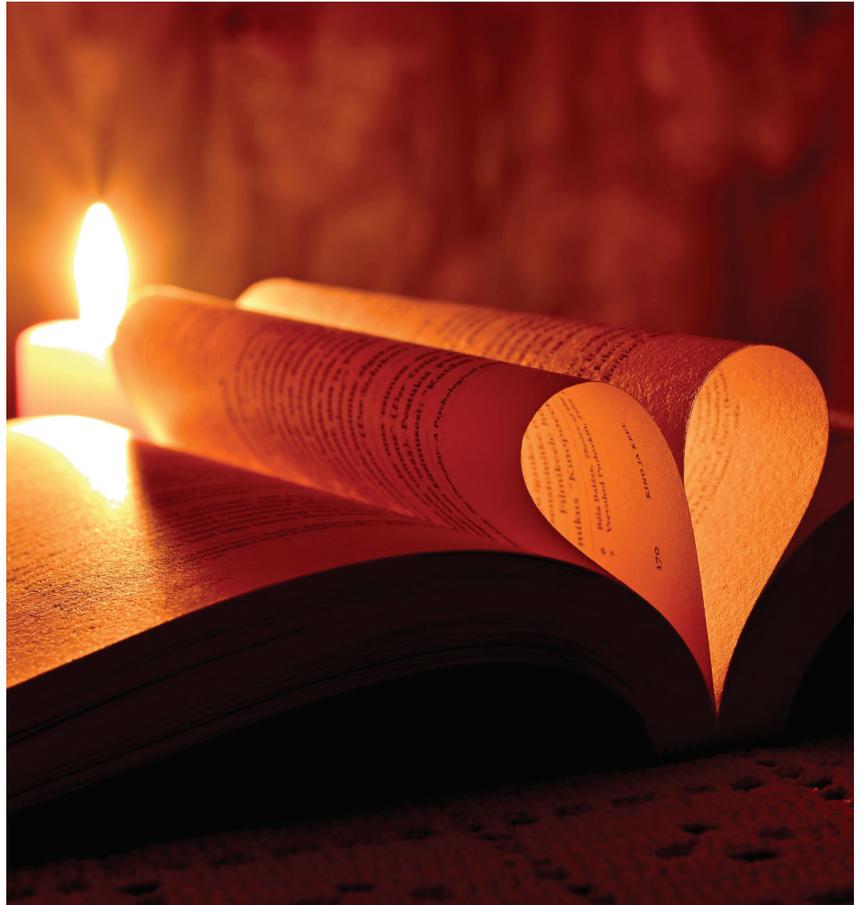
# FLAMES OF FIRE IN HUMAN HEARTS

2 Chronicles 7: 1 – 22

**Rev. Shaimon Elias**

Director, Deenabandhu Mission Centre  
Kunnamkulam

**K**ing Solomon and the people of Israel gathered together to dedicate the temple of Jerusalem. They had planned and worked tirelessly for quite some time constructing a permanent and grand abode to fix the Ark of Covenant. On the day of the dedication people gathered together and ‘Solomon prayed’. At the culmination of the prayer, heavenly fire came down and consumed their offerings to God and the whole temple was filled with His grace (2 Chron. 7:1). God’s ways to extol a place or a person is inconceivable to human imagination. This biblical part teaches us what happens in the life of a person who is incorporated into God’s mission and plan.



## **The flames of heavenly grace that purifies humans**

Fire always shows God's presence and it purifies His people. He speaks to Moses through a burning bush. The heavenly fire that consumes the offerings on the altar of Mount Carmel subsequent to Elijah's prayer is an answer to him and it declares Elijah as the Man of God. God proves His presence as wind and fire among the first Christians of Jerusalem declaring them as His chosen people. God's Holy presence was revealed to King Solomon and his people through heavenly fire that filled the temple with His grace. Those who are true in their love and beliefs of God may be segregated and humiliated, but by enduring such persecutions they are purified.

Christ wished and prayed that all his followers could abstain from worldly ambitions. He never wanted them to be removed from the world, but prayed that they may be protected from the evil one. "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, they may also be sanctified in truth" (St. John 17:15 – 19). Christ uses the idea of consecration / sanctification thrice in these verses. It means 'to set apart and declare as holy, or to purify and make free from sin'. St. Paul the apostle's exhortation to believers to abstain from worldly ambitions and sanctify themselves as obedient children to the call of Jesus Christ too, echoes Christ's ideology.

Saints are always true to God, and they keep themselves away from worldly ambitions and ensuing sins. These people are devoid of fear and loss as all decisions in their lives are taken with God. They live, think and speak in the same language. Their speech, actions, beliefs and logic will be the same in their homes, society and church.

The laws of Physical Science states that two masses cannot occupy the same space at the same time. It is true as far as our heart is concerned. God and sin can never occupy human heart at the same time. Our hearts will be transformed into God's temple and God's spirit will dwell in us when we become true to Him by genuinely repenting and confessing our sins regularly. Let us reflect on ourselves with these questions: Is there purity in me? Do I abstain from worldly ambitions? Is it

Christ, or my sins that own my heart?

## **Experience of the all-consuming fire of God induces us to worship God**

On the day of the dedication of the temple of Jerusalem, after King Solomon's prayer, "when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped, and praised the Lord saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever" (2 Chron. 7:3). We worship God in response to His sanctified and glorious presence amongst us. Our prayers in fact, express our love for God. Sincere prayers make us feel the warmth of God's presence in us. It invariably leads us to be purified through His forgiveness and we will eventually display God's plan and God's power.

Those who have a strong bond with God will firmly love God. They always visualise God in His full glory. They have an intense urge to see God while they worship because they know that worship is not a confrontation with God, rather it is a face-to-face meeting. Do we wish to meet God in our worship? Are we ready to respond to His glory and goodness?

## **The all-pervasive fire of God leads to affirmation**

Fire incinerates and purifies. It even spreads fast.

*"Prayer denotes the bond between the creator and his creation. If we do not spend time with God, it will be difficult to get acclimatized with God."*

God wants us to sense His powerful presence within our hearts like a wildfire that spreads fast. Worship and affirmation are closely related. As we affirm our faith in God, new communities of believers arise. Our meaningful worship encourages people to trust in God and slowly, we will have the urge to spread the message of His enduring love and unending mercy.

God apprized Solomon: "If my people, whom are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron.7:14). The two-lettered word 'if' plays a vital role in deciding upon the destiny of individuals and states. The verse stated above was the message God conveyed to Israelites through Solomon after

the dedication of the temple.

Church symbolises our commitment and worshipping relationship with God. Solomon was authenticated to carry on God's fire to the world, and Israelites were entrusted with the task of proclaiming the message of God's forgiving and healing power. It is the duty of every listener to spread the flame of God's unending forgiveness and healing power. God has chosen everyone of us as He had chosen King Solomon. He reminds all his followers that we are the chosen people like how He had chosen the people of Israel. As God's fire falls on us, we are compelled to spread it to others rather than keeping it to ourselves.

A person who has a very strong relationship with God is forced to propagate His glory and goodness to others. As we grow under God's love and care, we tend to become His strong witnesses. We have heard about the uncontrollable urge and enthusiasm of many of our missionaries, forefathers and mothers who took the initiative to spread the Gospel due to their firm belief in God. A passionate relationship with God elicits empathy to the needy people around us. They will certainly disclose the greatness of God to others. Let us conduct a spiritual audit on ourselves. While worshipping, do we respond to God? Are we the confident witnesses of God?

Fire cannot be created in a vacuum. Unless we are moulded with inflammable materials, we will not catch fire. Our spiritual fabric should be modelled to reflect spiritual response like fire that emanates heat and light. God has given us the equation to light our souls with spiritual fire. God's plan to strengthen His grip on His people is seen in 2 Chronicles 7:14 "humble themselves ... pray ... seek my face ... turn from their wicked ways ...." But there are certain responsibilities that we need to observe to fulfil this calling.

#### **A. Undertake personal responsibilities**

It is our responsibility to establish a personal relationship with God and get acclimatised with His ways. No other person can interfere in this special partnership to change its texture.

#### **B. Disparage oneself before God**

Humility is an attitude. Jacob disparages himself to reconcile with his brother Esau. Such an attitude is necessary on our part to get reconciled with God Almighty. Jacob kisses the ground seven times

before facing his elder brother. It is noteworthy that the word humus that carries the meanings dirt or soil is the root word for humility and insult. We should glorify Christ who denounced His godliness to be born as an ordinary human being to maintain a close relationship with us.

#### **C. Spend more time with God**

Prayer always denotes the bond between God the Creator and Man. It is difficult to conform with the ways of God if we do not spend more time with Him. A personal relationship with God is difficult if we do not have our daily conversation with Him through prayer.

#### **D. Long for the divine presence**

We always search for God's hands and presence expecting Him to perform on our behalf and for us. We should not think of what God can do for us, but should sincerely search for Him and get accustomed to His ways. If we search for God only to satisfy our demands and needs, we are spiritual idol seekers and worshippers.

#### **E. Walk towards God**

The theological explanation for repentance is our walking away from sinful, unholy paths of life back towards God. Repentance means 'turning away'. It signifies our realisation that we have been travelling in the wrong direction, and the resulting spiritual conversion should take us back on the right path. Penitence does not entail a feeling of loss, or finding fault with others for our 'wrongdoings', but it invariably is a change in the direction of heart. It involves a change in our outlook and thinking process. The root word in Greek, "metanoia" means 'change of heart of a man; think in a different way; change of heart from sin to God' Repentance needs self-awareness and personal choice for change.

Church edifices and riches of the world may not catch the attention of many, but those who genuinely worship God and testify His wonderful deeds will certainly attract people towards their heart, where burns the divine flame of God. They are capable of encouraging people move towards God. Do we earnestly attempt to lead people towards God? ●

# Counter imaginations in a Suffocating World



**Rev. Alex Mylchal**  
Mar Thoma Theological Seminary,  
Kottayam



It is a pivotal principle of Christian faith that God created man by breathing His life-giving breath into him. How beautiful is the concept of a God who shares His own breath with man! However, it is only a truth that in the contemporary times, both the world and humanity are suffocating. The sentence 'I can't breathe' is the motto of a movement known as 'Black Lives Matter'. Eric Garner repeated this sentence eleven times before being killed brutally. When the knee-bones of the policemen clamped onto the throat of George Floyd for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, he also repeated the above sentence. The same sentence was repeated by Breonna Taylor, Jordan Edwards, Michael Brown, and Manuel Ellis before succumbing to death. As quoted by the New York Times in 2020, at least seventy people have repeated this sentence before dying in police custody. The fact that all this people were coloured itself authenticates discussion. We have to realize that 'You can't breathe' is the disturbing corollary to 'I can't breathe'.

## Reading the Revelation

That it constantly provokes re-readings is very important when we consider the aesthetics of the Book of Revelation. Pablo Richard the Chilean priest in the perspective of political subjugation, Allan Boesak in the perspective of South Africa, Elizabeth Schussler Florenza according to the Feminist perspective, and Gregory M Stevenson in relation to countering imperial forces are among those who have shaped re-readings of Revelation. In order to have a significant interaction with the contemporary socio-politico-religious discourse, we cannot but politicize the Bible. What makes the reading of Revelation different is the acknowledgement of the way in which Apocalyptic literature imparts new hope to the Christian community suffering under the rule of the Roman Empire.

## The Relevance of Apocalyptic Literature

The word 'apocalypse' has the meaning 'unveiling' or 'revealing'. Gregory M. Stevenson in his book 'A Slaughtered Lamb' shares the vision that apocalypse is a response to evil and suffering. For Leonard L. Thompson, apocalyptic literature is the response to crisis and also a counter- imagination. Revelation literature contains the new hope of a people constantly persecuted and ostracized.

## Unveiling Imperialism

Revelation 13:12 reads: 'It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed' (NIV). If we read revelation chapter 13 carefully, we will understand the historical background. The said Bible passage describes the inception of imperialism. In verses 1 -10 the beast from the sea and in verses 11-18 the beast from the land are mentioned. It is possible to read the book of Daniel Chapter 7 in relation to this passage. In Arundhati Roy's book 'The Shape of the Beast' there is a chapter titled 'Outline of the Beast', where the structure of imperialism is marked out. The beast of Imperialism precipitates certain suffocating experiences, which can be marked as dots. As Roy says, 'the dots have been joined and the shape of the beast has emerged'. Emperor worship in Rome commenced during the time of emperor Domitian, when statues of the emperor were installed in different parts of the Roman Empire.

### The strangulating structure of the Roman Empire

Networks of hegemony come into being. The illusion that the whole world is under Roman rule is created. Myths such as Roman Peace (Pax Romana), Roman Nationalism, Eternal Peace, Eternal City etc. are propagated. The suffix 'Victoria' is added to the name of the Roman emperor, reinforcing sovereignty. Rev. 13:15 reads: 'And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed' (KJV). The imperial propaganda becomes very clear here. The label 'Lord and God' is affixed to the emperor. Icons are created, and the beast gets the authority to make or mar. We should not forget that we are living in the times where factions create and propagate an alternative Constitution of India. Anti-conversion Bill, Khar Wapsi, prohibition of beef, rebellion and lynching, Unified Civil Code, the saffronization of universities etc. all together chart out the outline of the Beast. The Beast is not an individual or nation, but an ideology. The trumpet has sounded, and if

we join the dots the contemporary Beast will take shape.

In the words of the respected Isaac Mar Philoxenos thirumeni, the wounded body of Jesus proposes the nature of His ecclesia in the world. Hegemonic structures abrogate the place of God who shared His breath with man. When the Beast gets the power to impart the spirit, suffocating life situations are created. Here is where ecclesia, the body of the slain Lamb, becomes relevant. The saints covered in the hide of animals and destined to die in the scorching sun, those thrown into boiling oil, the beheaded, the exiled, those thrown to the wild animals, those ridiculed as 'Little Christs', those labelled as anti-national religious heretics (religio illicite) ... the Church remains as a survival space for all. When the Church becomes the solace of -the homo sacer ('the accursed man' as conceived by Giorgio Agamben) its relevance is enhanced, implying that ecclesia is not imperium or basileia, and also that the Early Church was more a new political community than religious advancement as such. When the Church becomes a haven to those with shattered dreams encountering the crisis of survival, when our pulpits empower the helpless to dream, when our liturgy keeps open a pathway to life, that is when the Church acquires its relevance. That is where missionary imaginations originate. When the Church is conceived into being by mission, it will have life. The trajectory of ecclesia becomes all the more relevant in these times when forces of imperialism are exerting their stranglehold over human existence. The challenges of pastoral ministry in the contemporary times need careful analysis.

### Reframing ecclesia

John was able to establish the right perspective in this society which is based on emperor worship. Reframing ecclesia is the need of the times. The church is a community which is able to imagine a counter worship in a time when imperialism apocalypses as emperor worship. In the Book of Revelation there are seven passages that describe counter worship (4: 2-11, 5: 8-14, 11: 15-18, 14: 1-5, 15: 2-4, 19: 1-8). John underlines the fact that only the slain Lamb is worthy of worship. The Church

is the body of Christ, which is a tortured and mutilated body. This is crucial while reframing ecclesia.

### **Taking flanks**

Jesus was crucified outside the camp, as described in Hebrews. John attempts to view imperialism from the outside. In the words of Bastiaan Wielenga, John addresses not only victims of violence, but also those of attraction. In P. Sainath's documentary titled 'Nero's Guests' his contention is not with Nero, but with the guests. Nero orders Christians to be tied to pillars and burnt alive. When his guests enjoy a dinner in the light emanating from the burning site, how cruel is their silence! In a time of development and neoliberalism, it is difficult to escape the attraction of imperialism.

### **Discerning the truth**

To discern the truth, not being influenced by the structures of dominion or the attractions of imperialism, is a real challenge. The beast that climbed from earth appeared like a lamb, but John was able to discern it as the beast. Rev. 13: 16-17 reads: 'It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name' (NIV). This passage must not be interpreted so as to signify equity among all. The Roman empire was very carefully divided between the upper and the lower class. For the upper class, worshipping the beast was easy and pleasurable. But for the lower class that comprised the poor and the disenfranchised, life was just the challenge of survival. When you realize this truth, the question arises whom the church should stand with. Here is where the vision of Dr M. M. Thomas becomes relevant: 'We need a new pattern of combining Christian self-identity and secular solidarity with all human beings'. The vision of the Reformed Church is nothing else.

### **Dismantling dichotomies**

The overall theology of the Book of Revelation is centred on the dismantling of

dichotomies. In Revelation 21:1 we read, 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth'. Gregory Stevenson opines that through the vision of the slain Lamb, John transforms dichotomies into a welcome space for plurality. The Church that celebrates plurality at Pentecost is an originary vision for us. Basal Mission and Zenana Mission were able to transcend casteism and factionalism and rebuild a society based on a new vision of God's Kingdom. May the vision of a new society that involves love and inclusion be the icon of the evangelizing Church.

### **A counter-imaginative community**

The number 666 is the apocalypse of imperialism. It is the total value of the Greek letters involved in the name 'Nero Caesar'. Seals are not only that are branded on slaves, but they also signify structures of dominion. Language, culture, religion, and politics are strangled by demonic structures, and all hopes wither away. In this context the Book of Revelation becomes a map for finding our way in suffocating life situations. Rev. 13 describes how all hopes die out, bearing the seal of dominion. But John comes out with a counter-vision in Rev. 14: 1: "And I looked and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion: and with Him were one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads" (NIV). The church prepares for us a view of new counter-imaginings when we feel that everything is over: 'Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there' (John 19: 42 NIV). From there we can see a new vision originating: 'After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb' (Mat.28:1 NIV).

### **Conclusion**

When in the contemporary times imperial structures aggrandize and victimize many, let our cry 'Thy Kingdom come' rise. Lord, we look forward to Your second coming. Amen, Lord, come soon •

*(Translation: Prof. Dr G. Koshy)*

# Beneficence of the New Year



**Dr. Cyriac Thomas**  
Former Vice-Chancellor  
M.G. University

In the horological reckoning table of the world, which we commonly call ‘calendar’, we have put a year behind us and have included another. The word ‘time’ comprises many layers of meaning, and is used in a variety of ways. When we see someone nearing his death we say that ‘his time is up’, and when we see another person becoming lethargic because of old age we may comment that ‘he is past his time’. When referring to the death of spiritual leaders we use the phrase ‘passed away,’ where in the case of ordinary people we may simply use ‘expired’ or ‘died’. ‘Passed away’ might imply a person travelling past time. And in the case of the erstwhile who are still fresh in our memories in spite of the passage of time, we may say that they are those who have ‘transcended time’. In India we commonly refer to Mahatma Gandhi, who can be included in that very selective list. When we are wont to label some things as ‘conforming to the times’ we also refer to some time-tested philosophical concepts such as justice, dharma etc. as ‘beyond the confines of time’. I was just trying to indicate the amazing semantic depth of the word ‘time’.

Christmas can be seen as a timeless festival celebrated all over the world that supersedes religious, casteist, or national boundaries. Christ is not simply a historical figure, but One who created history. No one other than Jesus Christ has been able to part history into one before and after Him. That is where we witness the uniqueness and illimitability of Christ. How He totally reoriented not only time, but the entire moral and ethical rubric of the world was by substituting the New Testament with its lessons on love and forgiveness in place of the Old Testament with its canons of hatred and revenge. He demolished even the age-old Jewish concepts of ethics and morality. When he was twelve he went to the temple, where he kept scripture pundits in the synagogue on their toes by quoting from the scripture to support his arguments, and asking ‘Haven’t you read these?’, thereby leaving them flabbergasted and short of answer, as we read in the Bible.

Christ countered the philosophy of retribution with the spirituality of forgiveness. To the Pharisee who asked him how many times he should forgive his brother, He came out with the instant reply, 'seventy times seven'. He made mincemeat of the filthy rich in the church who were making a show of their magnanimity by depositing huge amounts in the church coffers with the instance of the humble widow's mite.

Jesus warned that the Kingdom of God will be far away from those who are reluctant to reform their lives by changing their mindset and their approach to others. He openly declared that the very purpose of His coming into this world was for the reformation of the world. What each New Year demands from us is a reformation in Christ which is the real implication of the phrase 'to take off the old self and put on the new'. But the process of 'taking off' will not be easy, since we will have to get rid of certain inveterate habits which may be difficult to live without. Many habits might have become so rooted in us, so that to break free from them may require extraordinary willpower, and most importantly, the grace of God. The familiar song which says 'I will depend on the grace of God...' (ദൈവകൃപയിൽ ഞാനശ്രയിച്ചു) is very meaningful. Only when we realize this will real reformation be possible. The season of Christmas is the time for this realization. The good news that was announced 2000 years ago was that a Redeemer is born for us. We celebrate this good news each Christmas, and it forms the basis of our meditations during the Yuletide.

In a way both Christmas and New Year are interlinked and mutually complementary. New Year is the way time steps forward by crossing the festive threshold of Christmas. What we have to foresee is that when we enter the new year, we will have to leave our old ways behind and travel along the new. It's commonly said that 'today is the first day of the rest of your life', which is in fact a truth that we should reiterate to ourselves every New Year day. The Three Wise Men described in the Bible who returned after seeing Baby Jesus with their gifts were great scholars. King Herod had instructed them to return via his palace that was on the way they had come. But after they saw Baby Jesus, they had a revelation from an angel saying that they should return by another road. What the angel said is a perennial truth: Once we encounter our Saviour, the trajectory of our lives will be very different. Regarding the return journey of the Magi or the Wise Men, there is only one sentence in the Bible – 'they went back by another road'. After recognizing our Saviour, we will have to leave our old ways and travel back on the path of redemption.

That is the beneficence of the New Year, and that is where Christmas and New Year converge. It is the way of redemption and love, a way of consideration to others, a way forgiveness without limitations. The beneficence of the New Year lies somewhere along that way. Don't you think it is exactly the same message the calendar is trying to convey? ●

*(Translation: Prof. Dr. G. Koshy)*

# LEAD KINDLY LIGHT



**Thomas Alexander**  
Mukhathala

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom

Lead thou me on

The night is dark, and I am far from home

Lead thou me on

Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see

The distant scene, one step enough for me

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou

Should'st lead me on

I loved to choose, and see my path but now

Lead thou me on

I loved the garish day, and spite of fears

Pride ruled my will, remember not past years

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still

Will lead me on

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone

And with the morn those angel faces smile

Which I have loved long since and lost a while.

We have gone by yet another eventful and conflict-ridden year. The year bore witness to several painful events. Those were difficult days. Yet, we hold optimistic views about the times to come. Let us welcome the new year with a contented heart. Let us take part in the festivities of the season.

This is also a time for us to make a self-assessment before God. A time to remember one by one,

the blessings, and God's grace that we enjoyed throughout the year. Were we able to become what we had desired to be? Have we committed evil deeds in spite of having known how to do good? Have we been able to share with others the blessings that we received? Have we been unable to put into practice the resolutions taken at the beginning of the year? Have we been able to bring glory to the name of God in our personal life, family life, in our work spaces, our social life, and in our church life? We need to make an honest, sincere self-assessment regarding all this. Looking back, we need to examine and identify where we have erred in our words, thoughts and actions, our dealings, positions, personal lives and relationships etc, and correct ourselves accordingly.

Let the days of the new year be days of new hopes and new resolutions. What awaits us is the unique opportunity to make efforts towards the realization of new achievements. Let us forget the losses of the previous year. Let us wait with optimism for a glorious tomorrow. May God adorn the coming days with His blessings.

It is good, in this context, to remember the message of the Bhagavad Gita. This would be helpful for achieving a successful life.

Whatever has happened, has happened for the better.

Whatever is happening now is also for the better.

What is to happen is also for the better.

If so, why fret about what is lost?

Was it all acquired on your merit?

Why feel proud about what you have received?

Will all that you have received in life

Be with you at your death?

Everything that you enjoy today

Belonged to someone else yesterday.

Tomorrow it may be someone else's.

Change is the law of Nature.

We need to accept as good, all that happens in our life. The difficulties and tragedies, the disasters and the loss of dear ones that we encounter in life at unexpected moments, all need to be seen as God's gifts. One who cannot find satisfaction within one's present state of existence can never enjoy happiness anywhere, or at any time. 'Expect the

unexpected always; expect the best and prepare for the worst.'

We should never forget the ways in which God has guided and directed us in the past. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. (Psalms 103: 1-2). For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living (Psalms 116: 8). I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. As in the sight of the omniscient God, according to his word and will, and in such manner as to please him (Psalms 116: 9). I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will lift up the cup of salvation and praise the LORD 's name for saving me. I will take the cup of salvation and worship the Lord. (Psalms 116: 13). I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy (Psalms 116: 1).

Not standing by ourselves, but supported by God.  
Not gained, but given by God.

As we look back on the ways He has guided us  
Let us sing praises to our Lord.

Let us sing praises to God who has given us victory and has cared for us thus far. Let us pray that with His Grace, He may continue to care for us, and continue to guide us according to His will.

Obstacles and difficulties are a part of human life. The wise ones seek easy and effective ways to overcome the difficulties. How much easier it is to cross a river using a boat, rather than trying to do so by draining all the water in the river.

It is not the river, but the water within, that flows forward. It is not the time that fades away, but we ourselves. From the cradle to the grave and from childhood to old age, we continue our journey. Never postpone for tomorrow, what needs to be done today. We should be ready to translate into action, after careful deliberation, the good thoughts that come up in our mind. Time is precious. Let us not waste even a single moment. We need to think big, think fast, and think ahead, to put into action, all our plans for the new year. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11). Life becomes meaningful only when we show the courage to be different, and to make a difference.

We need to effect a change within ourselves, as well as within the society to which we belong. Never

hold hatred against another. Let the mind be free of troubled thoughts. Let us live a life of simplicity. Never expect anything from others. Give unto others as much as you can. Let us fill our lives with love. Let our surroundings be flooded with light. Shed all selfishness. Let us be people with concern for others. Let us be willing to suffer difficulties for others' sake, and to share our God-given gifts with others. Let us strengthen our family lives, our devotional lives, and the regular meditation of God's word. Let us restrict our craving for luxuries, fashions, and our extravagant life styles. Let us practise frugality in our daily lives and cultivate a saving habit, and protect and conserve Nature. Let us thus make the new year meaningful and successful.

Always be aware of the reality that each new year brings us closer to death. It is good that we recall every moment of our lives the poet's words: "Today it's me...Tomorrow it's you". "Just a short life; it will soon be past; what is done for Christ alone will last" (C.T. Studd).

Let me close this meditation with the words of St Francis of Assissi. Wishing everyone a prosperous, fruitful and happy new year. May God bless us all.

O Lord my god

Make me an instrument of thy peace.

Let me sow the seeds of love, where there is anger.

Patience, where there is harm,

Faith where there is doubt,

Hope where there is despondence,

Light where there is darkness,

Joy where there is sorrow.

Oh, divine lord!

Let me be able to comfort,  
rather than be comforted.

To understand,

Rather than be understood.

To love,

Rather than be loved.

For it is when we give that we receive.

It is when we forgive,

That we are forgiven.

It is when we die,

That we are born into everlasting life •

(Translation: *Dr. Elizabeth J. Thomas*)

## May the light in you not be darkened

'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it' (John:1:5)



**Ginju Elsa Mathew**  
Puramattom

'Some days you will be the light for others. Some days you will need some light from them. As long as there is light, there is hope and there is a way.' This is the essence of Christmas. Gabriel the Angel appeared before the shepherds and told them not to be afraid as he brought good news. Shepherds travelled to Bethlehem and saw baby Jesus lying in the manger with Mary and Joseph. They praised God for all they had heard and seen. Then the wise men followed the star to Bethlehem until it stopped over the place where the infant lay. They didn't go back to Herod and chose another path while returning. This is the sweetness of Christmas. When we meet the True Savior, there is hope and new paths will be opened for us.

Our Holy Communion starts with the following prayer :

**In Your Light, we see the light, Jesus, full of light.**

**It's Your Light that shines upon our world, light our minds.**

**May Your Light reveal the sin in our hearts.**

### **As we humbly pray, in spirit and truth**

Each word in this prayer represents the power of light in our life. Light is used as a representation of God in the Bible. When God created this beautiful world, there was darkness everywhere and He created light to remove the darkness.

In the Old Testament too, the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a blazing fire within a bush, emphasising the importance of light. Isaiah speaks of Christ's birth in Chapter 9 Verse 2, saying 'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.' Jesus himself said that I am the light of the world. 1 Peter 2:9 reads, 'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.' Thus throughout the Bible, light is referred to as a symbol of holiness, hope, goodness, knowledge, grace and revelation. Remember, God is not a kind of light, he is the light itself.

## **The Lord is my light**

Christmas is the festival of lights. We decorate our homes with stars and fairy lights to proclaim the good news: 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.'

Infant Jesus and the star are the highlights of Christmas. The star guided the three wise men to the manger. Later on, the baby who is the true light became a guide for many that followed him. As Psalm 27 says, 'The Lord is my light'.

And His light changed the world. We all were created in his image and likeness. He put His light in our hearts. When we grew up, so did the light. Our hearts shine brightly when we express love, kindness and forgiveness.

Light has a characteristic called reflection. Let us be the reflectors, to reflect the light and joy to those who are still in darkness. This Christmas beckons you to reflect your light. The world needs it. The purpose of Christmas is to be a torchbearer and as Ella Fitzgerald's song says, 'Brighten the corner where you are'. Every Christmas is a wake-up call to prepare ourselves to shine and welcome the New Year.

### **New Year: A wake-up call to the light**

We all set up alarms before going to bed. Its purpose is to wake us up on time and complete our duties before welcoming a new day into our life. Each morning lends us a ray of hope - a hope of freedom, a hope of happiness and a hope of fellowship.

The famous Sanskrit chant goes – "Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya (Lead us from darkness to light). Light is hope. Hope is what we need when we start a New Year. Hope gives us strength, wisdom and goodness to face the problems that we are going to encounter. Each New Year is an opportunity to walk into the truth that we find during Christmas. The Truth is Light and the Light is Christ. So, every New Year is a wake-up call to start our journey towards Christ.

## **The journey of Saul to Damascus**

We are aware of the life of Saul in Tarsus. In Acts of the Apostles Chapter 9, we can see the journey of Saul (Paul, the Apostle) to Damascus to torture the followers of Christ. When he came near Damascus, a light shone around him from Heaven. The Verse 3 says, 'And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.' A conversation was happening between Saul and the Light. The Light was Lord itself. Later in Verse 6, the Lord told Saul, "Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do".

Jesus' first appearance before Saul to show that he is alive was through light. He who went out to kill Christians became their protector. Such is the power of light. Light reveals everything; shows a clear path; provides guidance; gives meaning to life and transforms a person completely. The next phase of Saul's life is his journey towards the light he saw. He came out from the darkness. Remember, when you experience darkness it's important to have hope in your heart - to see the light beyond the darkness.

You can be a source of light too by bringing hope to others. The birth of Jesus Christ was not just the fulfillment of prophecies, it was the birth of a new dawn.

### **The choice before us**

Many Christians believe the star was a miraculous sign. But being a star is a challenge. Do you wish to become a star?

The star not only showed the way to the manger but also made Herod and the chief priests aware that the Messiah had come, a far greater King than Herod. Thus star reveals a truth. Therefore, it is our duty to preserve the light that has dawned on us.

New Year gives new hope. The light shone by Christmas can keep these hopes alive. Our prayers, fellowships and actions will prepare us to share Christ's light. You are the light of the world. It is the time to let your light shine.

Remember this light is not only for Christmas or for one day, it will last forever •

# The time has come for you to wake up from your sleep...



**Andrew M. Idichandy**  
St. John's MTC, Thalavady

“You must do this, because you knew that the time has come for you to wake up from your sleep. For the moment when we will be saved is closer now than it was when we first believed ” Romans 13: 11. Finally the calendar has flipped and we have begun a magnificent New Year. The past year 2022 – where we experienced a rollercoaster of emotions – with its mix of joys and sorrows, goals met and goals missed, relationships met and relationships lost- is behind us.

What is left with us is reality of today and a hope for tomorrow. For many, New Year is just another holiday to spend with friends, family. For others, it's deep reflection, both on the past year and on the one ahead. But for us, followers of Jesus Christ, TIME is a gift from God Almighty. It's wakeup call for us to forget about the darkness and look forward to the eternal light that will guide us to eternity.

John's gospel, talks about how light represents the good and darkness represents the evil. It also talks how light will take over darkness to matter what. Sometimes it is hard to explain what light is! For example, John 3: 19- 21 it talks about “ If someone believes the darkness their work will be evil and non existent. If someone believes in the light, their work can be seen to God”. It's talking about people's personality how if someone is evil or believe in the darkness. Their faith will be evil and God won't see any good of that person's faith. If someone is good or believe in the light,

God will see the good things that they do for others because they have a lot of faith. Choosing the path of light and staying back in the darkness means either choose Jesus or reject Jesus respectively.

### **Created in the image of God**

In reading the holy Bible, it is very clear that God did not abolish darkness at creation. God added light. But for many, darkness symbolizes all that is negative, evil and fearful. God gave equal importance and prominence to darkness and light and all life, including human, life begins and develops in the dark. It is significant that at some point man choose darkness over the eternal light. Genesis 1: 27, make it clear that “God created man in his own image”... this scriptural passage does not mean that God is in the human form, but rather, that human are in the image of God in their moral, spiritual, intellectual nature. Since we are made in the image of God, we are all born with abundant goodness. Humans differ from all other creatures because of their rational structure- their capacity for deliberation and free decision making. This freedom gives human a centeredness and completeness which allows the possibility for self actualization and participation in a sacred reality. However, this same freedom which manifest man in estrangement from God.

### **Choosing Jesus Or Rejecting Jesus.**

In John 1:19- 23, it talks about how John had to prove himself that Jesus is the light. Some people do believe and some people don't believe him. In John 1:29-34, John didn't believe that Jesus is the son of God, but he believed there is someone who is ranked higher than him. He didn't think it was Jesus. Until Jesus, said he was the spirit coming down. In John 6:60-71, a lot of Jesus's disciples didn't accept Jesus so they return back to their normal life. Even Jesus knew they didn't believe in him from the start. Only Simon Peter believes in Jesus because Jesus has the guidance to eternal life so he stayed with Jesus.

### **To live in light means to live in faith and holiness**

To live in light means to live in faith and holiness for that we must believe in God. The believers must do live in the light is to produce fruit consistent with light namely goodness, righteousness and truth. “ For it is light that makes everything visible ...” To live in trust and faith, one must believe in

God as David believed in God. In Psalm 27:1 it says that, “ The lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid...” Penned in a time of distress, David reaffirms his faith in his God by doing so he is strengthening himself by the strength of God. By having trust in the Lord, he has seen first hand on many occasions the faithfulness of God towards those whose hearts are fully devoted to him. God helped him slay the lion when his sheep were under threat (1 Samuel 17:37). God helped him slay the gaint who defied God's armies, the philistines and all other oppositions.

The only true threat to David was his own weakness. For Christian, we have such a hope that we can trust our God in any circumstance. When times are good, we can thank God and trust him to always protect us and provide us with what we need, just remember what we have now is the grace of God to bless the work of our own hands. When times are difficult, we thank God, we trust in him who is sovereign and does absolutely everything for our good.

When we are in need, the Lord is our salvation, when we are full of his abundant blessing, the lord is still our salvation. God has promised to bless us, we have only to look to him in faith. One thing we must not do, is fear, for “ the Lord is the stronghold of my life...” God knows everything we are doing every now and then. He knows the best way to handle every situation so we get the best possible outcome and we need to trust him with that. We need to follow his path and trust that he knows best, because he does. But you and I have to keep in mind is, without faith or without doing our part, we couldn't expect that things would turn out all right for us no matter what the situation might be. Faith is as important as the air we breathe. While the oxygen in the air nourishes the body, similarly faith nourishes the heart and the soul.

Paul clearly calls for Christians to preach to those who are asleep. The actions and words of Christians should speak to unbelievers – encouraging them to repent and follow Christ. He did encouraged to speak to unbelievers but also to believers, as there are many believers living a lifestyle of darkness, who need to repent. So encourage oneself to live in the path of light leading to eternal life •

# Mental Problems of the Aged



**Rev. Dr. Daniel Mammen**  
Tiruvalla

According to the definition put forward by the World Health Organization any person above the age of 65 can be considered 'the aged,' or 'senior citizens.' Statistics show that senior citizens make up 12% of the total population of the world. The people of Kerala have a lifespan that is at par with that of developed nations and studies show that senior citizens make up about 15 % of the total population.

Along with the several physical ailments that come with old age, many persons find themselves victims of mental illness too. Changes in the functioning of the internal organs and even in the brain cells caused by aging often bring about mental illness. Along with this physical condition, psychological problems may also arise. These are the result of feeling physically weak and unable to work, of thinking one is being isolated by society, of not being able to see eye to eye with the younger generation. About 25 % of the aged are troubled by several kinds of mental unrest. Psychological



problems that are not properly treated will cause already existing physical illness to become worse and thus even reduce the lifespan of the person. Ignoring the psychological problems of the aged and regarding them as the natural condition of aging and do not need treatment, will only serve to worsen their condition.

Following are some of the important mental

diseases that affect that aged:

1. **Dementia**
2. **Depression**
3. **Substance use disorder**
4. **Anxiety disorders**
5. **Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders.**
6. **Somatoform diseases**

### **Dementia**

Dementia is a mental condition which is the result of the progressive degeneration of the brain. Such degeneration causes the victim to suffer loss of memory. Hallucinations and abnormal behaviour are other symptoms of dementia. 5% of persons above the age of 80 are victims of dementia. Studies prove that about 40% of persons above the age of 65 are afflicted with dementia. The symptoms of dementia increase very gradually. Several kinds of dementia are seen in the aged. They are the following:

1. **Alzheimer's Dementia**
2. **Vascular Dementia**
3. **Fronto Temporal Dementia**
4. **Dementia that can be cured like hypothyroidism which signifies the deficiency in the functioning of the thyroid gland. Another dementia that can be treated is normal pressure hydrocephalus which refers to the excessive fluid retention in the brain cells.**

### **Alzheimer's Dementia.**

The most common dementia is the Alzheimer's Dementia. At least 50% of the people afflicted by dementia are victims of the Alzheimer's dementia. This disease which affects women more than men is found in 4 % of women over 65 years of age. The following are the most important symptoms of this disease.

- Loss of memory about actions in the recent past. One may have had breakfast but soon afterwards he/she complains about not being given food and demands food immediately. One may have kept money or other valuable

articles in a safe place but then goes about searching for these articles having forgotten all about the earlier action. These are the two most common symptoms. In other words they forget what they have done in a very short space of time. However, in the first stages of the disease they remember incidents that happened in their youth.

- They forget the names of certain articles they constantly use like the mobile phone, spectacles, pen etc. The persons suffering from Alzheimer's keeps searching for something but are unable to tell others what they are looking for. They get very angry when they are unable to recollect the names that elude them.

- As the disease progresses they begin to forget how to carry out those activities that they had been doing so easily until then.

- With the worsening of the disease they forget early memories too. Very soon they arrive at a condition when they are unable to recognize even very close relatives.

- They become furious for no particular reason. Sometimes they even attack close relatives and friends.

- When the illness becomes worse, some patients begin to show signs of extreme fear. 'Someone has stolen into the house, a murderer out to kill,' are some of the delusions that they begin to exhibit.

- They begin to have hallucinations of someone speaking into their ear when they are alone. Very often they have hallucinations of someone scolding them. When they are alone they reply to the disembodied voices they hear in their hallucinations. It has been noticed that people with these delusions sit alone and indulge in indecent talk and obscene gestures. It is not uncommon for patients to become violent.

- When the illness becomes even worse the patient will have reached a stage when he/she is unable to step out of his/her room. Symptoms like insomnia, loss of appetite become worse. The physical health of the patient deteriorates rapidly following very little food intake and very soon he/she becomes bedridden. The water content

and salts in the body will decrease and other infections will set in. As a result the patient soon succumbs to death.

Following are certain important matters that the caregivers of the patient should be aware of:

- Do not isolate the patient. It will be a great relief for the patient if there is someone to talk to.
- The patient must be put in a room which is sunny and airy.
- Hang articles like clock, calendar in places which the patient can easily see.
- When visitors come to the house, introduce them by name to the patient. Avoid testing the patient's memory by such questions as 'Do you recognize this person?' and so on.
- Help the patient to plan the daily routine of his life methodically. It is essential for the patient to have his food at the proper time and to sleep at the proper time.
- Encourage the patient to undertake physical exercises that are allowed by his health condition.
- Encourage the patient to go for walks outside the house with the support of his/her relatives.
- Patients who are bedridden should have their positions changed every now and then. This will help to prevent bed sores from developing.

The tender and loving care of relatives right from the onset of the disease will go a great way to improve the quality of life of the patient. A voluntary organization named Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) is actively engaged in different parts of Kerala.

### **Depression**

Studies prove that 2% of persons above the age of 65 suffer from depression. The likelihood of falling victim to depression is more in women than in men. About 20% of those who are suffering from long term chronic disease also suffer from depression. The main symptoms of depression are given below-

- The mind is constantly distressed for the better part of each day.
- Losing interest in many activities that had been

enjoyable in the past. Reading the newspaper, listening to music, talking to people, watching the TV are some of these activities which are no longer interesting.

- A marked change in the body weight of the patient. There is either weight gain or weight loss by more than 5 % in the space of one month. The appetite of the patient is either very less or very more.
- The patient has either too little sleep or too much sleep.
- The patient feels listless and not energetic. He loses his temper for trivial reasons.
- The patient experiences fatigue without any reason as well as constant body pain and restlessness.
- Feelings of guilt and dejection prey upon the patient.
- The inability to concentrate or even think clearly is another symptom.
- Repeated suicidal tendencies.

Depression is very often linked to severe illness in old age. The malfunctioning of the thyroid gland and heart attacks etc. often lead to a state of depression. Other physical weaknesses are also aggravated by depression.

### **Empty Nests**

The only persons living in many of the big houses in the villages and city suburbs of Kerala are the aged husband and wife. The old parents are left alone when the children settle abroad or in other states on account of their jobs. Plagued by several ailments they feel lonely and orphaned in the midst of the sea of prosperity in which they live. These old people long for the presence of their children who supply them with plenty of money. This unsatisfied longing causes a lot of distress in the old parents. In the midst of this distress if one of the spouses passes away, the living spouse falls into dreadful loneliness. This kind of emptying is a social condition called the empty nest syndrome. This is also a reason for the increase in the mental condition called depression. The neglect at the hands of the children who had been so lovingly brought up by them only serves to adversely affect their mental condition.

### **Anxiety disorders**

About 5% of the aged suffer from anxiety disorders. 30% of those who have physical ailments like heart trouble also suffer from anxiety disorders. Disturbing thoughts, feelings, pictures often of a repetitive nature engulf them. Even though they know that these thoughts are not based on reality, they are unable to overcome the obsessive compulsive disorder and control their thoughts and actions.

### **Psychosomatic Disorders**

The symptoms of physical illness which manifest themselves following intense mental stress are known as psychosomatic disorders. Symptoms of physical illness which keep changing all the time, the fear that one has contracted some disease, constant backache, diarrhoea, pain in the neck are some examples.

### **Psychotic Disorders.**

The symptoms of psychotic disorders are baseless fears, suspicions, unreasonable rages and so on. Wrong beliefs which are deep rooted in the psyche and which refuse to change inspite of being proved false – they are superstitions. Such false experiences which have no source at all

come under the category of hallucinations.

### **Insomnia**

Nearly half the number of old people experience sleeplessness due to a variety of reasons. This problem of sleeplessness can be dealt with by the technique of sleep hygiene according to which the daily routine of a patient can be planned.

Old age is not a time to remain cloistered in the house. The attempt to make old age enjoyable and worthwhile has to start from the individual himself. This attempt to make old age pleasant and healthy should begin right from youth and continue through middle age. A systematic and methodical life, exercise, balanced diet, complete abstinence from all kinds of intoxicants – all these are essential and inevitable. It is also necessary to have a good rapport with the younger generation based on mutual respect. Old age can be made truly meaningful when one takes care to pursue activities that enrich the mind and keeps the body fit. Such activities like reading, undertaking social service, doing all jobs that are permitted by one's health condition- all these help to make old age happy and fulfilling •

*(Translation: Dr. Susan Varghese)*

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Christmas celebrations of Delhi diocese  
Gloria in Excelsis 2022



Youth conference of Delhi diocese  
at Satna



Sevika Sanghom annual study conference of Delhi diocese



Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa attending the 53rd South Florida Episcopal Convention along with  
Bishop Michael Carry (Presiding bishop of American Episcopal Church) and other bishops



Delhi diocese annual clergy conference held at Dehradun

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2023 March: **Lent: Journey towards life**

2023 April: **Resurrection - Openness towards possibilities**

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