



Malankara Catholic Youth Movement

Theme- 2023



Youth, Arise and Walk together with haste

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Introduction

Recognizing the signs of time, the Church takes the path of communion (synodality) in the life and mission of the Church. The new way of living the Christian faith is not a spontaneous act but a conscious and responsible journey together by all. Exhorting youth to walk together, the Holy Father Pope Francis shares with us a message from the life of Blessed Virgin Mary who after the event of annunciation arose and went with haste to encounter Elizabeth. Inspired by the message of the Holy Father for the 37th World Youth Day which will be held in Lisbon in 2023, the Malankara Catholic Youth Movement (MCYM) takes the theme of 2023, “Arise and Walk Together with Haste” for giving orientation to the activities of youth of our Church in this year. Let us reflect deeply on the theme to give motivation to youth in this post covid situation and to work together for building our Church in the third millennium.

I. Life of Mary in the New Situation...

A new situation begins in Virgin Mary’s life with the event of annunciation. Being filled with the grace of God, she, without any fear, welcomes the Light of the world wholeheartedly. She encounters Jesus for the first time and it becomes a new beginning. At the threshold of youthhood Mary received a call from above to lead a life of virgin and a mother at the same. That means, become a mother without breaking virginity. The new situation could have created misunderstandings and confusions in her life. It could be a life of rejection as well as criticism. There was a chance that her mind would be filled with clouds of anxiety. There was also a possibility that the light of hope might be fading.

The contrasting realities are twined together in her call of becoming the mother of God. When opposing realities (virginity and motherhood) are coming together the spontaneous reaction of the human mind is to reject one and accept the other. The mental tension between contrasts in life is deeper than our descriptions. For young people, the experience of contrasts creates internal tension which they can bear no more. Seeking a solution immediately will increase the volume of this tension. We have to recognize that the experiences of inclusiveness that are difficult for the human intellect to digest are events of God’s interventions. Persons need more time to comprehend such mysteries.

The challenging situation would have pushed Mary into a slumber of despair and fear. On the contrary, the Gospel gives the account that Mary arose when she received the Good News of incarnation. History gives the testimony that Mary never stepped back. At the same

time, putting confidence in the Almighty she marched forward. It was a relaunching of hope and joy in her life. A resetting of everything begins in her life.

A New Situation Emerged with Covid 19

The Covid-19 pandemic affected worldwide and no one could escape from its clutches. The world had undergone severe pain of losing their dear and near ones. All experienced the feeling of being locked in. Everyone had the mixed feeling of being saved and safe on the one side and the fear of diseases and death on the other side. Moreover, the necessity of isolation closed all doors of social interactions. The situations of lockdown created not only physical stresses but also psychological breakdowns. The isolation created fear and fear generated slumber. Many thought that it is not possible to find a way out of this drastic situation. As the days of passiveness prolonged, the young people started to enjoy the state of slumber and remained sleepy for many hours, because they thought that the miseries of the worldwide pandemic will be unending. Many lost hopes and their hearts were filled with despair.

Now, the post covid situation gradually emerges. We are getting slowly relieved from the fear of this traumatic situation. Post covid situation demands a new lifestyle in which sharing and caring reduce our fear and despair. For that we have to reset our concerns and priorities. Moreover, walking together decreases the internal tension between opposites that we faced during the covid situation.

In the new situation created by Covid, there are occasions when people discourage us from doing the little things possible. After watching the caritative works done by St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, someone once asked the mother of poor: "What you are doing is a mere drop in the ocean". And she replied: "But if I didn't do it, that ocean would have one drop less." Do little things with great joy and hope. We are called to be like little drops in the great ocean. The synodal journey becomes imperfect without each one's contribution. Human history gives testimony that we can go beyond the days of darkness if all stand together.

First Step: Encounter with Christ

Mary encountered 'Word became flesh' and this gave a new beginning in her life. She started to meet others with a new vision and mission. She could not but meet others. The joy of encountering Jesus overwhelmed in her heart and she ran fast to others. Such encounters further doubled her joy. This is what we see when Mary met Elizabeth. Their joy was indescribable, because it was not the happiness of the world but eternal joy which never ceases. Like Mary, if we want to enjoy such eternal joy we need to encounter Jesus as well as our brothers and sisters. In fact, don't forget that the movements in the Church like MCCL, MCYM, MCA are ecclesial platforms for such encounters.

Our encounter with Christ is the foundation of every other encounter. Encounter with Christ is also an act of conversion. St. Paul encountered with Jesus on the way to Damascus and it is recorded in the Scripture as an event of conversion (Acts 9:1-9). He was converted to accept the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. That changed his whole life. If one really encountered Jesus, there will be a corresponding change in his/her life. Therefore, Pope Benedict says: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (Deus Caritas Est, 1).

Second Step: Listen to God's persons

Mary first recognized Gabriel as a person from God and listened. A spokesperson of God announced the good tidings to her. "And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son... He will be great, and will be called the Son of the highest... He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Lk 1:) In fact, Mary poses a question very relevant to all youngsters: are you able to recognize the people from God while you stand in amidst of struggles and challenges? Can you identify those persons who can reveal the will of God in your life? Without realizing the people who speak the word of God, we cannot listen and accept the message of God.

Recognizing the divine things and divine persons is not a simple act in this world of consumerism. Do you recognize angels while standing amidst your "chunk friends"? Can you see angels while standing in front of a coffee shop or a supermarket? To whom do you listen in your daily life? Those who are in royal suits or flickering stages? Remember, those who speak for God may not speak in pleasing tunes. Are you able to listen to people who speak the truth but in rough words? Unless you recognize such divine persons and listen to them it will be difficult for you to come out of your challenging situations.

Third Step: Recognize Divine Symbols

Looking at stars the three kings reached Bethlehem and encountered infant Jesus. Those who follow divine symbols can reach at Jesus Christ. "Being at the age of passion and fashion", young people may tend to look at worldly things than divine things. Mary could raise her eyes to heaven and put her goals in the highest. For Mary when the look became good, actions became excellent. Thus, that life became a blessing to the world.

Heaven always reveals us divine through symbols. They are signboards to Christ. They will enlighten our routes and guide us through the synodal path. Do you recognize the stars send from heaven in our path of synodal journey? The time demand us to march from symbols to reality. We have to realize that our life is not in virtual world but in real world. To live in a concrete life situation is a challenge and a blessing.

Fourth Step: Creative and Collaborative Leap

Mary had openness to the word of God. This openness gave her energy and enthusiasm to face all the challenges ahead. The divine encounter becomes a turning point in her life. In fact, she blindly jumped into the hands of God even when the clouds of anxiety remained dark. The leap Mary took was a new dawn.

For her, openness to the Word of God is not just receiving everything but accepting only what gives eternal life and happiness. By accepting what is eternal, Mary has become the mother of God. The Holy Spirit further blessed her to become the mother of humanity. It was a creative and collaborative beginning in her life. It was creative because it brought life and happiness. It was collaborative because she held the hands of God as well as the hands of brothers and sisters at the same time. "Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah" (Lk 1:39). she arose with great joy of encountering others.

Fifth Step: Arise with the Power of Holy Spirit

Youthhood is a beautiful season of our lives. Like Mary, our youthhood remains unceasing if we make can make creative and collaborative leaps at every juncture of darkness and light in our life. This leap we shall not remain in the old situation but enter into new situations.

Hence, we shall not lose our hope amidst of tensions created by contrasting experiences but rather stand up and march forward. First of all, we should get up from the slumber created by fear. Don't waste our time by standing in front of the mirror contemplating ourselves and our problems. We could no longer remain silent and passive towards the miseries of others and never think that we can do nothing.

'Standing up and getting ready for something' is a conscious act that a human person can do. It becomes a divine act when you get up with the power of the Holy Spirit. Filled with the Holy Spirit Mary got up and set ready for meeting Elizabeth, a person with whom God has already intervened miraculously. That visitation was an encounter of persons with divine touch. It was a sharing of friendship between two persons who were undergoing the same experience. We need to make friendship with persons who had divine touch. In order to relaunch joy and hope in our hearts amidst of all our anxieties and worries it is necessary to meet such people.

II. Arise to Mission

Bible gives the account of many people, at the age of youthhood, who listened to the voice of God and woke up to take up new missions. The Apostles, like ordinary young people in Galilee while struggling for their livelihood, encountered Jesus. The call of Jesus awakened them from their slumber of tiredness and they were given a new mission of hope and life. At once they left everything behind and followed Jesus (Mk 1:18). Looking at the young dead man, Jesus told, "young man, I say to you, get up" (Lk 7:14). Jesus was telling him that he could not sleep anymore because he is the only hope for that lady who was a widow. He was the only son who can wipe out the tears of his mother. It means that as a young man, he cannot but wake up to change the present situation of miseries. Hearing the voice of Jesus, he woke up from his sleep of death.

There is an explicit change in the life situation of Mary Magdalene who met Risen Christ. She was filled with divine Joy. So, she cannot stand still anymore. She arose and "left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (Mt 28:8). She wants to change the sorrowful situations of his brothers who were in despair after the crucifixion of their Guru. Again, the disciples who were travelling to Emmaus in despair after encountering Risen Christ were filled with hope and joy. They never wanted to remain in that house anymore. "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem" (Lk 24:33). There they met the disciples with others who were gathered there. The encounter with the Word incarnated or with the Risen Lord became a turning point in their life, because no one could remain passive after that. They arose with the divine power from their slumber. Among their companions they were not shy to stand up because they were empowered from above. Are you ready to stand up in all situations of life?

1. Mission in the World

When we think of the mission of Mary, it is clear that she focused on the needs of her elderly cousin than her own. The needs of others got a preference in her concern. This missionary zeal of Mary is more relevant during this age of the pandemic. Caring and sharing come from this other oriented approach. In fact, the synodality demands from each one to consider the needs of others more important than oneself. Thus, we reduce the tension of opposites that we come across in our daily life.

Arising is not a fruitless act if there is a mission. The risen Lord commanded St. Paul: "Arise! I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen" (Acts 26:16). He arose and set ready

for a mission given by their Lord. Mary without being sad about what is going to happen next recognized her mission. In fact, she was getting ready for a mission. She had two missions: carrying Jesus within her and taking Jesus to her cousin Elizabeth. Our mission, on the one hand, demands being with the Lord and, on the other hand, being with those who are lonely, weak and oppressed.

2. Mission: A Fulfilment of Expectations

In fact, to arise we need to recognize our mission too. Those who have fire of mission in their heart cannot but set ready for that mission. Mary arose with haste to realize two expectations: First, the expectation of the Heavenly Father to accept his Son as her own. She received and cared Jesus as her own child. Jesus possessed Mary and Mary owned Jesus. This two-way process changed her life as St. Paul clearly states: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Possessing Jesus as our own is in itself a mission. Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios realized this mission and hence gave a mission motto for evangelization of India: “To possess God is nobler than to Serve God” (Mar Ivanios, Girideepam, 61) Second, the expectation of her elderly niece to be with her. After replying: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Lk 1:38) to the annunciation, she started her journey to meet Elizabeth. Mary journeyed with haste to fulfill the expectation of Elizabeth. She could give first preference to the needs of others than herself. Mary accepted realizing the expectations of God and brothers as her call and mission from God.

3. Missionary Presence

Becoming a mother at an old age created mental joy on the one hand and physical stress on the other hand in the life of Elizabeth. In order to decrease the tension created by these opposites it is necessary to get more care and affection from dear ones. Mary gave her presence to Elizabeth and cared her with great happy while forgetting her needs as a pregnant woman. Truly, the presence of young Mary changed the life situation of old Elizabeth.

Elderly people always expect visits from youngsters and their physical presence while they are undergoing the feeling of loneliness. In such situations, the energy and enthusiasm of youngsters fill their hearts and mind with new hope. This will change their situation of tiredness, loneliness, despair, etc. Such visits can be qualified as ‘Emanuel events.’

4. Emmanuel Presence

The visit of Mary to Elizabeth is, most of the time, interpreted as a charity project. A young lady voluntarily helping an old lady. Such social interpretation of passages in the bible cannot reveal the full meaning of Gospel. Mary’s visit has more meaning than an act of charity. It is a religious act of a person who carries Jesus with him/her to another person and there occurs an anointing of the holy spirit. In that sense, we have to understand that it is not the activities of Mary but the her very presence changed the situation of herself and of her cousin. Therefore, to be with someone is more deeper than to give something to somebody or to do action for someone.

Emmanuel events are always joyful experiences because they tell us that God is with us. Carrying Jesus inside, Mary was happy to be with others. The feeling of being with someone gives us the conviction that God is with us. This further gave them joy and both are filled with the Holy Spirit. Not only Elizabeth but also her child in the womb was filled with God’s grace. Their encounter was an event of receiving “grace upon grace” (Jn 1:6). Every encounter leads us to a life of grace. In this world of self-centeredness, young people can make a revolution by being present with “those little ones of Jesus Christ.” Because “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40).

III. Be Haste to Others

Mary was “anxious to bring the good news to others.” The same haste compelled the Samaritan woman to rush to her friends. She shared with them her personal encounter with Jesus (Jn 4:1-42). Likewise, women who met Jesus first at the Tomb ran towards disciples to announce the great joy of encountering risen Christ. After the Pentecost event, being filled with the power of Holy Spirit disciples started their mission with great zeal. Pope Francis says: “The haste of the young woman of Nazareth is the haste of those who have received extraordinary gifts from the Lord and feel compelled to share them” If you are blessed with extraordinary gifts and talents, then get up quickly and walk hurry towards others.

1. Life-giving Haste

In general, when things are done in haste, they tend not to be fruitful. There is the risk of being barren and lifeless. But here the haste of Mary we see in the scripture is a zeal to get into the life of others. There is healthy haste which drives us always upwards and towards and unhealthy haste which drives us to live superficially and to take everything lightly. Mary's hurry is to realize her God given mission. “Mary's haste is thus a sign of her desire to serve, to proclaim her joy, to respond without hesitation to the grace of the Holy Spirit.” Like, Mary we need life-giving haste in our life always.

Mary's life is a challenge for those who seek attention of others (especially in social media) or the approval of others (counting likes). She, as a genuine missionary, was in constantly connected with others by encountering and sharing Christ-experience with others. Like Mary, let us be connected with those who expect our visits not through social media. Our elders and children are our co-pilgrims and hence youth should be hurry to visit them with your charming faces.

2. Youth, Arise from Slumber

Youngsters as protagonists of synodality cannot live passively while the whole world is under the tension of pain and hope. They should wake up and be ready to bring eternal joy and happiness to the world. Wake up is the first step of a journey forward. In this pilgrimage of hope and joy, nothing shall prevent youth from being part of this journeying together.

Being at an age of creativity and courage, youth should lead the journey of togetherness. This journey is to be held by holding the hands of all. In this regard, pay special attention to that no one is kept away from our communion. Like Mary, we have to arise for our present life situation. We need to arise from our slumber of being passive in order to make our new life situation fruitful. In the young and vibrant youthhood, each one is called to stand up from their ordinary life situation to fill hope and joy in their surroundings.

3. Dialogue between Generations

Entering youthhood is like stepping into a new life situation. From the dependence of childhood, they have to enter into a life of self-sufficiency. For that, they need to take time and have patience. To become self-sufficient, one needs life experiences. For that they should share time with their elders who are more experienced than the youth. Hence wake up and arise presupposes a healthy dialogue between elders and youngsters, a dialogue of generations. Here we see the relevance of MCYM, youth movement in our Church, which creates platforms

for encountering and having dialogue with people of different generations and status.

As Mary spent time with her elderly cousin, journeying together of generations is a need of the time. Such journeys make our synodal journey deeper and more meaningful. Holy Father Pope Francis exhorts: “Young people always represent the hope for new unity within our fragmented and divided human family. But only if they can preserve memory, only if they can hear the dramas and dreams of the elderly.” Meeting elderly people and being in their presence as well as having a dialogue with them make our synodal journey fruitful and joyful.

4. Freedom to get into others with haste

Youngsters always experience the tension between freedom and responsibility. Desire for freedom sometimes tempt us to go away from our responsibilities. Over burden due to responsibility may create the feeling of losing freedom. When one concentrates more on freedom then loses sight of responsibility and vice versa. Many times, young people find it difficult to synthesize freedom with responsibility. Those who forget their mission run away also from responsibilities.

The elders criticize them for using freedom without responsibility. There is a danger of falling into slumber when the young people cannot enjoy freedom and take up responsibility for a long time. They need to stand up amidst the tension between freedom and responsibility. When young people give preference to the needs of others, then the tension of opposites can be simplified and they both freedom and responsibility can be twined together without. They should hurry to use their freedom for reaching out to the people in need.

5. Synodality: a path of proximity and encounter

Mary never focused on herself and her worries and fears about her new conditions. She took a ‘path of proximity and encounter.’ She was pouring out herself as God’s blessing to others’ life. Pope Francis qualifies Mary as an image of the pilgrim Church. In history, we have the account of visits (how many places and how many times?) by Mary to nations. Her apparitions in the world are like her pilgrim to those who are in need. She is there when the human race has been in trouble, in problems, in anxieties, in calamities, in helplessness, etc. She reserved no time to start journey to others. Immediately she goes and is with those who are in urgent need.

When faced with concrete and urgent needs, youth need to act quickly. Our interventions should be the manifestation of justice and love in the world. Remember the common saying, justice delayed is justice denied. Delayed goodness is no more good. When we are not in hurry to meet the needs of others, then we are culpable of doing nothing. It is a fact that many like, elderly, kids, refugees, sick, imprisoned, unemployed, those who are wounded by others in the society, those who are exploited by the public, those who are suffering due to the violence in the society, those who are addicted to drugs, persons from broken families, etc. are in need of a look of sympathy from others and a affectionate visit from their brothers and sisters.

Encounter means an experience of the miraculous intervention of God. It gives us the chance to have an unexpected experience of meeting Jesus and further we become instruments for such encounters. Hence Pope Francis exhorts: “Dear young people, now is the time to set out in haste towards concrete encounters, towards genuine acceptance of those different from ourselves.” Don’t wait till you get older. Start now. Walk together with haste.

Self-examination

- 1. Do you look at heaven?**
- 2. Where do you set your goals?**
- 3. Who represents God in your life? Do you listen them seriously?**
- 4. Have you ever accepted the message spoken by those who are sent by Lord to your life?**
- 5. Can you make friendship with divine people?**
- 6. Are you courageous enough to make a creative and collaborative leap?**
- 7. Are you open to the needs of those who are elder to you and younger to you?"**
- 8. Do you listen your co-pilgrims?**
- 9. Are you hurry enough to bring good news to others?**
- 10. Do you identify your mission in this post-covid situation?**

