

SANTHOME

MISSION



MST'S FOURTH MISSION REGION:

St Mary Queen of Missions Region, Delhi



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Christmas always brings to our minds the feelings of joy, peace, serenity and security. But 2021 December 25 was an exception for the Christians in India as the Christmas morning broke with the news about the denial of renewal of the FCRA accounts of Mother Theresa sisters of Calcutta. Missionaries of Charity, the congregation started by Mother Theresa, acclaimed internationally for its work of charity and mercy, depicts the human face of Church and Christ around the globe, particularly in India. Bringing such an NGO of global claim and appreciation under government scanner and scrutiny and denying their rightful privileges alarmed the Christians in India in general and religious organizations in particular. Upsetting the accounts of MC Sisters was not an isolated event. Happenings of such genres, whether under the aegis of the government or some fringe Hindutva groups of the country, are on the increase and are not just alarming in themselves but often causing threat to the life and property of the Christians of the country. It is with great fear and angst that one can witness the recent attacks on churches and shrines in Karnataka as well as assault on Christian religious men and women in different parts of the country. Passing of the anti conversion bill in different states and delaying or denying the rightful permissions for diverse activities of Christian organizations have disturbed the smooth functioning of many Christian institutions. Other external factors that threaten the existence of Christians in India are the

menace of fundamentalist Jihadi groups and militant political ideologies which in a deceitful manner, try to snatch its members away from the folk.

Implementation of the missionary mandate of Jesus has been an uphill battle down the history similar to the mission of Jesus himself. While his message and mission was good news to the poor and the oppresse, it was a threat to the powerful ones in the society. Harsh exchange of words and heated arguments with the scribes and the Pharisees often became part of his mission and intolerance of the authorities made his mission very difficult and often he had to carry on his mission on the verge of life and death. He knew that the cost of his mission is his life and has often mentioned this fact to his disciples and audience. His ultimate sacrifice on the cross at the age of 33 was the ransom he had to pay for his mission on earth. At the time of his death his mission was seen as an absolute failure, unattaining the goal of establishing the kingdom of God, his disciples deserting him to an agonizing loneliness and being convicted by the authorities to die an ignoble death of a traitor on the cross. But cross was not the end of his destiny and a tomb could not contain the abundant life he would give to all those who believe in him. His resurrection and the apparitions to his disciples signify the ultimate victory of his mission though his death was seen as an utter failure in darkness.

The mission of the apostles too was very bruising similar to their master's that all twelve of them except one sacrificed their lives as martyrs for the accomplishment of the missionary command they had received from their master. St Paul himself before being martyred at Rome, says "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in

danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11, 24 - 28). All the apostles, through their life and death, showed that the cost of discipleship is one's own life. This made Tertullian say "Plures efficitur, quotiens metimur a vobis: semen est sanguis Christianorum." The history of the Church is not a story of sailing through calm waters. But the conclusion of every agonizing missionary journey, in the long run, ends with a glorious resurrection experience of a new Christian community.

Thus, persecution of Christians can be historically traced from the first century of the Christian era to the present day. Christian missionaries and converts to Christianity have both been targeted for persecution, sometimes to the point of being martyred for their faith, ever since the emergence of Christianity. Christian mission was always carried out under the shadow of the cross. The attitude of Christians to the persecutors was not one of animosity. Jesus asks his disciples to pray for those who persecute and he himself prays while dying on the cross that God will have mercy on his persecutors. St Stephen, the first martyr too gives us the same example. The extraordinary witness of faith and an attitude of praying for the oppressors have converted many persecutors themselves. The biblical solution to persecution is to recourse to the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised wisdom to the persecuted when they stand before their judges and have to give testimony; the Holy Spirit will indeed instruct them in what to say (Luke 21:12-15; Matthew 10:19-20).

In the current scenario of our country, persecution has a political or cultural nuance. Persecution of Christians and

Christian organization is being carried out with a clear political agenda. It could be vote bank politics, tarnishing the charitable face of Christianity or creating a theocratic nation based on some misinterpreted conceptions. Today the services given by the missionaries are also taken up by corporate and by other individuals, and many are jealous of the success of the services given by the missionaries and try to menace the missionaries in the name of false conversion. Similarly the polarization of religions that is taking place in different parts of the world turns even the members of peace loving religions into fanatics attacking the places of worships and members of other religions. Whatever may be the intrinsic reason, the fundamental cause for every Christian persecution is the implementation of the missionary Mandate of Christ. In many of our activities we are fighting against the forces of darkness and this causes hostility to the Good News. Jesus told us "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves". So it is better for the missionaries to be prudent in all apostolates and activities when they are in this world. The Great Missionary has promised us together with persecutions eternal life in the age to come. The culmination of every heavy cross is a victorious crown.

In this edition of the Santhome Mission we have variety of articles. The cover story depicts the joy in the elevation of Mary Queen of the Missions Delegation Delhi in to a Mission Region. All other articles are very topical dealing with current affairs in India and around the world. We are living in a country with freedom of expression and our authors have freely expressed their ideas and their point of views to evoke the thinking of the readers. I wish a very fruitful and reflective reading of this edition of the Santhome Mission.

Fr Francis Kureeckal MST
Chief Editor

Johnson Kuppayil MST

WHY DOES THE GOOD NEWS MAKE THEM ENRAGED? A LOOK INTO AND BEYOND THE RECENT CHRISTIAN PERSECUTIONS IN INDIA

The bygone year 2021 will be marked for the irreparable damages the variants of Covid-19 exploded in the life of millions of people in the world. The havoc this pandemic has wreaked on mankind is yet to be measured. The outrageous rage of this killer continues to pounce on us with sporadically mutated variants. Every human being is affected by it without bias to one's religious adherence, cultural affiliation, social status and political standpoint. However, it is shocking to learn that even the pandemic failed to 'humanize' the right-wing Hindutva groups [RSS, VHP, Bajrang dal] and their affiliated associations in India. Christians were sketched, targeted and defamed for their faith. Despicable attempts were made to turn the joyful moments of the Christmas season into a pall of fear and gloom. Like-minded divisive forces and organised groups through disguised attempts are also relentlessly active through intimidations, deliberate undertakings to disrupt peaceful coexistence and incidents of maligning our faith proclamations in Christ. Following are some of the reflections on the persecutions against Christians from different strata.

Right-wing Hindutva Groups

India witnessed a tyrannical rampage of attacks against Christians in 2021. More than 300 incidents of violence against Christians were reported across the country. However, official cognizance of this ruthless and well-sketched violence was sarcastically 'tolerant' with only 30 complaints registered by police so far. The proponents of Hindutva were seen with wicked scowls at the helplessness of the missionaries and Christians, especially during the festive days of Christmas. The whole nation witnessed the wanton parade of hooliganism. The intimidation went on the spree from the slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" to the unfounded routine accusation of conversion, vandalism to the desecration of the churches, instigation to chase missionaries away to blatant ultimatum to chop off heads. Though the attacks against Christians in India are not unprecedented, it is horrifying that the savage influence of the extremists even causes the journey of Christians across the country traumatic due



to the fear of being humiliated for their Christian belief.

The despotic hardliners are making inroads into different spheres with their destructive ideologies. New States are being added to their noxious laboratory. The States are in the race to introduce the draconian trap of anti-conversion bill. Defying strong opposition from all corners, Karnataka government took devious delight in introducing it to facilitate harassment of Christians at whim. According to data compiled, Karnataka



alone witnessed at least 39 incidents of attacks on Christians in 2021 till November. Shockingly, it happened even before the Karnataka Assembly passed the anti-conversion bill on December 23, 2021.

The frantic waywardness of the hardliners were exposed in the dreadful events that occurred in different States across our country: Charity Sisters' Shishu Bhawan in Kanpur (UP), St. Joseph School in Ganj Basoda (MP), St. Francis Orphanage in Shampura, Sagar (MP), Nirmala School and College in Mandya (KA) and several Christmas gatherings and prayers in Haryana and Assam.

Indiscriminate Barricading of Financial Sources

To block the inflow of foreign financial assistance to the Catholic Church in India has been always a high priority for the exponents of Hindutva. When they are at the helms of power, repercussions are to be expected. However, such an attempt is not without reason. A simple glance at Government's website that lists the foreign contributions to different NGOs brings to light that a good number of them belong to the Catholic Church. Not only are they found in almost every part of India, but also they are functional and successful in implementing thousands of projects for the good of humanity. This fact does disturb the hate mongers. If the foreign account of the Missionaries of Charity can be taken for a ride, it is much easier for the stakeholders, with vested interests, to take control of any others of a

similar kind. The deep-rooted hatred against Christian missionaries has deafened the supporters of Hindutva to the cries of the poor. It is heart-rending to see the misanthropists take pleasure in blocking the endeavours aimed at empowering a large section of the Indian population and snipping off the channels of service to the lepers, orphans and the 'dregs' of the society.

Threats from Various Disruptive Forces

Though physical attacks on Christians from jihadi groups are not yet reported in India on a large scale, their presence on social networks is widespread. Some of the Islamist preachers are infamous for their extreme views on many issues, especially in insulting and defaming the Christian faith. Mr. Shamsudheen Fareed, a Salafi preacher, is under scanner for his hate speech, quoting a Saudi Scholar, asking Muslims not to have any emotional bonding with non-Muslims. Some of the fiery speakers like M.M. Akbar



and Mujahid Balussery are notorious for hate campaigns. Some of them even did not delay a moment in attributing praises to the Taliban regime, the usurper. Their undue interest shown on the internal issues of the Church can only be looked at with suspicion. Social media platforms are flooded with instigating and derogatory speeches by radical Islamic preachers against Christian beliefs. The vicious vibes they create in the minds of the people, especially youth, are to be taken with utmost vigilance. The proponents of radical Islam have sown seeds of communalism in a peaceful coexisting State like Kerala. Serious concerns are raised from different corners about suspected sleeper

cells of the Islamic State (IS) operating in the State. Several instances of intellectual hijacking of our youth have come to light. The intensity and depth of this menace became explicit when an alarm bell was rung by Mar Kallarangat, the bishop of Pala, to be cautious about the traps laid by these radical groups.

When Impunity is Frightening

Amid all these blatant attacks, what is dangerous and saddening is the impunity of the regime. The offenders are not shown their place. Rather, in most cases, it seems



that their heinous actions against Christians are ratified and applauded by the dreadful silence of those who are supposed to maintain the law and order in the country. The police are very often either insufficient to prevent a violent mob or become mute spectators and thereby turn to be silent abettors. Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime minister of India, tweeted on Christmas Day: "We remember, with immense joy, the noble thoughts of Jesus Christ. He epitomised the spirit of service and compassion, devoting his life towards alleviating human suffering. His teachings inspire millions across the world." However, his tweet provided no solace for the Christians when surrounded by the bullies on Christmas. Rather, Mr. Modi's 'holy silence' emboldens the miscreants for further rampages. Silence to violence perpetuates more violence.

Facing with Faith: A Life-Giving Response

The Good news of an innocent Child's birth in the manger enraged the powerful Herod in the palace. Whether mystery or paradox, the

fact is, it still disturbs the hate-mongering 'Herods' in the palaces. Why are they enraged? Reasons may be attributed to political, religious and social equations. However, it still remains cryptic what Simeon said about Jesus that the Child is to be a sign that will be opposed" [Lk 2:34]. Various challenging missionary apostolates taken up by the Church in different parts of India have benefitted millions. We continue to shed the liberating rays of Truth into people's convictions, outlooks and perceptions of human life in different ways. This journey of sharing our faith in Christ cannot be stopped because our mission is not a human initiative, but divine. Obstructions are set to trap on the way, but 'Magi will come from the east' to help those who walk in the path of God's justice. It stands proved even today when Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odhisa, came forward to support the Charity Sisters with a lump sum of 79 lakh to continue their service of compassion for humanity. A similar voice of comfort and support came from Mamata

Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal. It is not the bulk of funds they promised, but their courage to recognize the selfless service of the missionaries that must be appreciated.

Ultimately what gives life to our mission is not finance, but faith in Christ. As long as our priority is to carry forward and spread the freshness of the Good News, God will open up ways and means for it. The scars of persecution inflicted on us because of our faith in Christ will become footprints for many to come to Christ. Allow us to be guided by the Holy Spirit so that we may become prudent enough to explore ways not only to proclaim our faith but also to protect it. Let the compassionate face of Christ shine evermore through the missionary activities of the Church. Come whatever may!



C. D. Sebastian MST

EDUCATING THE EDUCATED: COGITATIONS OF A PRIEST EDUCATOR

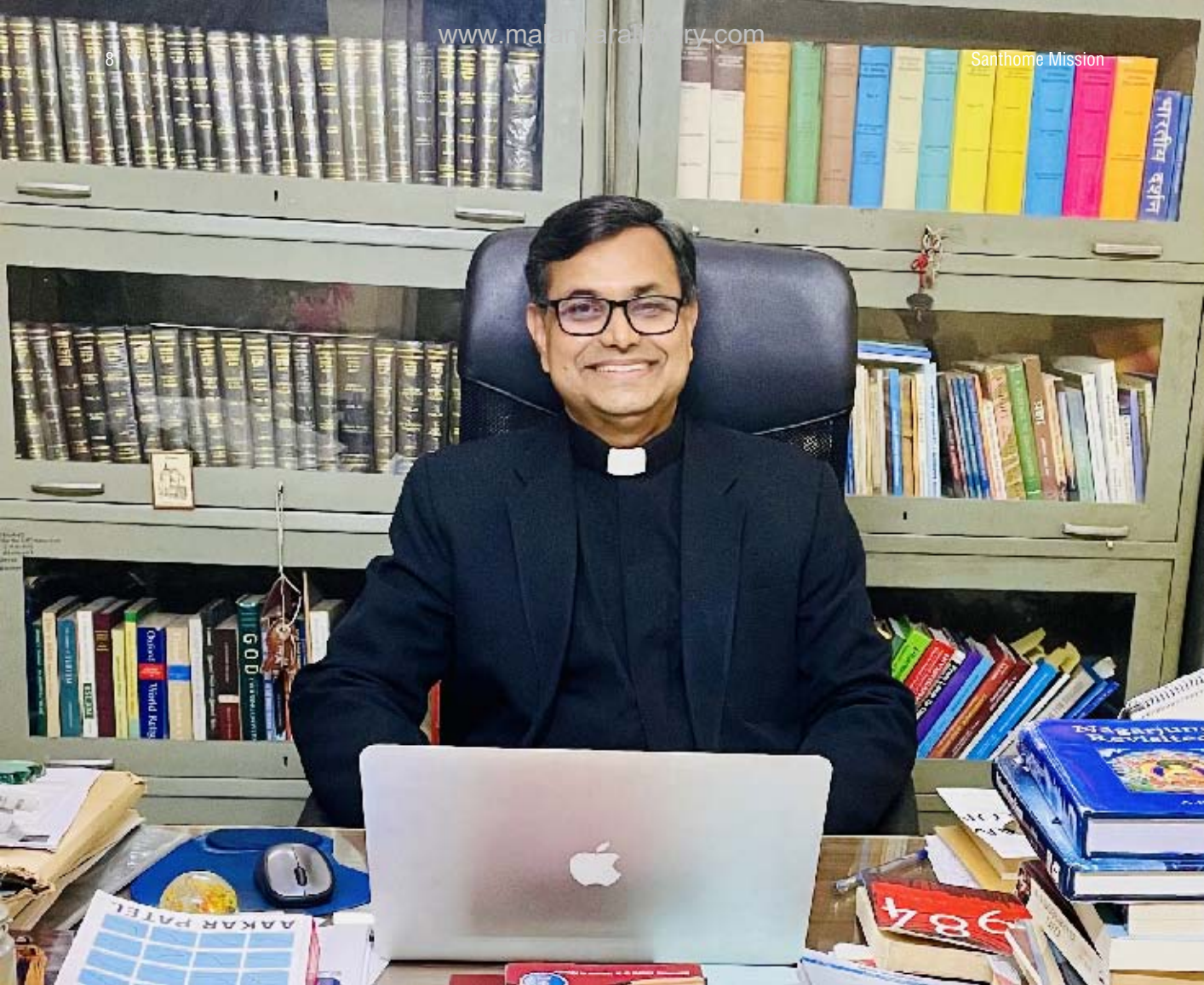
St Thomas Aquinas, in his moralis-consideratio (moral consideration) asserts that morality has to do with our entire relation to God (motus rationalis creaturae in Deum). That meaning has been narrowed down in our day, and, consciously or unconsciously, it is true that God does not come to the centre when morality is considered. As for me, the statement of Aquinas is cent percent true, since my life as a priest educator has come to be regarded as comprising the sum of my relations to God. The presence of a priest who has been sent out (Mk 3: 14) in the Gospel sense of the term in educational institutions is the point of discussion here. In what follows, based on my formal and informal experience as a priest, teacher and educator for the last eighteen years, I sketch and reflect how I see the presence of an educating priest in an institution of higher learning.

1. The Ethos of Educational Institutions

There is a significant role of the educational institutions in the formation of the vision, value, and future life of those who pass through the portals of such institutions. The main thrust and ethos of the institutions and the value system of the teachers, consciously and unintentionally, educate the students for their future life and career. As among the four causes according to Aristotle, the final cause is the most important - the purpose for which something is made/conducted - so also an institution is expected to bring into being that which it is meant for. Plato in his Republic stated that "by a good education" people are made "reasonable men," and educational institutions are not just meant for "a lesson," but a life. We educate young minds for life, or to live one's life meaningfully.

Institutions function as agents through which any entity, organization or nation-state translates its aspirations. The ethos of an educational institution is formed by the value-system that gets evolved by the team of teachers who are moved





by a common value-based education. In this sense, the entire team of teachers instil in and impart to the students the culture and ethos of an institution. And hence, the role of the teachers is of paramount importance in any educational institution. The presence of priest educators in educational institutions will enhance the value-system of an institution, if such priest educators are driven by the Gospel values.

2. Educational Experience and the Priest Educator

Education is an experience where personal and social convictions are formed together with technical or so-called “scientific” knowledge. One of the twentieth-century philosophies of education, which was neither subject-centred nor student-centred, nor

teacher-centred, was the one known as “experimentalism” or “progressive education” where the emphasis was laid on ‘learning by doing,’ and, in it, problem solving and critical thinking went side by side. The most prominent philosopher of experimentalism/progressive education was John Dewey. In his writings on education, Dewey incessantly emphasised experience, experiment, purposeful learning, and freedom. Dewey argued that the quality of an educational experience is the decisive factor that would form the future of the students. According to him, all teaching should be experiential. What one learns in real-life will remain with her/him without being memorised because they have made a difference in the life of the learner. Taking a cue from ‘progressive education,’ I would submit, at a personal

level, that a priest educator who is moved by the values of the Gospel will be such a person whose presence will give acceptance to the Gospel values among the people with whom he lives.

The education, rather the formation, here, as far as I am concerned, will provide a basis for deliberations, direction, and decision-making for the students. In this sense, there is an inspiring presence of a priest-teacher (I use the term 'priest-teacher' deliberately here, as it is different from the role of a headmaster/principal of a school/college whose function is that of an administrator only in contemporary Indian scenario) in educational institutions. There is an influence of a priest-teacher who could selflessly and dutifully live his religious life, conviction and teaching-profession to instil the ethical, spiritual and other facets in the lives of the students and colleagues. Further, I would say, quoting from the celebrated *The Idea of a University* of St John Henry Newman that "an influence thus gradually acquired endures" in the students as well as in the institutions.

In the educational institutions where there is the presence of a priest-teacher the young minds could or would learn, imbibe and assimilate the ideals for their future life, if the said educator is having those ideals. The students form their vision of real life in the precincts of the educational institutions. John Henry Newman wrote: "Young people, especially, because they are young, colour the assemblage of persons and things which they encounter with the freshness and grace of their own springtide, look for all good from the reflection of their own hopefulness, and worship what they have created." As envisaged by Cardinal Newman, formation of character is to be achieved through students living together in community in schools, colleges, universities, and residential halls or hostels, where the example in virtue provided by senior members, would provide leadership for students, and thereby helping them over time to more easily choose the good. It is more correct to speak of such institutions "as a place of education, than of instruction... Education is a higher word; it implies an

action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connection with religion and virtue." Similarly are our institutions where we live and work, and where the young minds get the "mental training with faith and devotion", and "add the education of the intellect to the education of heart." And those students who have been formed by us in course of time will be "the proudest achievements" of such institutions as well as of the educators.

3. The Value-System and Character of a Priest-Educator

The quality of the personnel in educational institutions and formation houses makes a significant contribution to the value-system of the educated. The educational institutions need to have a fairly detailed projection about what kind of manpower is needed, and, accordingly, have to build the ethos within. The mission and identity of the educational institutions shape the future of the students. Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* is a review on Newman's book *The Idea of a University*. It speaks of the sense of educational mission and identity of each institution. Our institutions need to remind themselves constantly of their mission and identity. A difficult



formation in education could be because of motivational issues, as the students and teachers lack some auxiliary attribute/qualities which they are expected to have. Here I would state again what I said at the outset that the life as a priest educator has come to be regarded as comprising the sum of his relations to God. A priest-educator's relation to God, his value-system, motive and compassion play "as a factor that augments the meaning and purpose of life. Compassion, being and feeling with another in her or his existential predicaments, angst, agonies, illness, sorrows, sins and sinfulness, gives meaning to the fulfilment in life that could be richer and rewarding. The theology of compassion educates us that God is compassion." The empathetic life of a priest-educator would influence the educated.

It is a known fact that teachers play a vital role in the life of students when it comes to values and ideals. Let me quote Pope John Paul II in this connection: "Today I think back with gratitude all the superiors, spiritual directors, and professors who contributed to my formation during my time at the seminary." Further, he asserted that the people who are decidedly influential in shaping the future career and life are the exemplary people who are associated with such institutions. "A powerful influence on



our whole period of formation for the priesthood was exercised by the towering figure of the prince Metropolitan, the future Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha, whom I remember with affection and gratitude." Educational institutions that have such ideal figures in their precincts will definitely influence the students who would look up to them as role models.

The ideal and value based life of an educator, particularly that of a priest-educator with Gospel values, will inspire a good system of education and formation that would, in turn, enhance good disposition in the educated. Plato said long ago, "adherence to a good system of nurture and education creates good natures, and good natures, receiving the assistance of a good education, grow still better than they were..." If the educational institutions and the teachers, the ones who "nurture" the students, do not play a fitting role in the formation, the students who pass out will not have anything to take with them from their alma mater in order to build up their future. Let us consider the following write up in this connection: "Though I graduated only a short while ago, I am surprised how little I remember of what went on there, how little impressed me or registered in my mind at all... and teachers, with few exceptions, characterized only by varying degrees of mediocrity." Callous and casual attitude in educational institutions and teachers can adversely affect the future of the students. All that I want to say is that the role of a priest-educator who has his moorings in the Gospel values will definitely inspire the



people, atmosphere, and the institution perse. What would be the most vital point in this regard is the quality of the priest-educator.

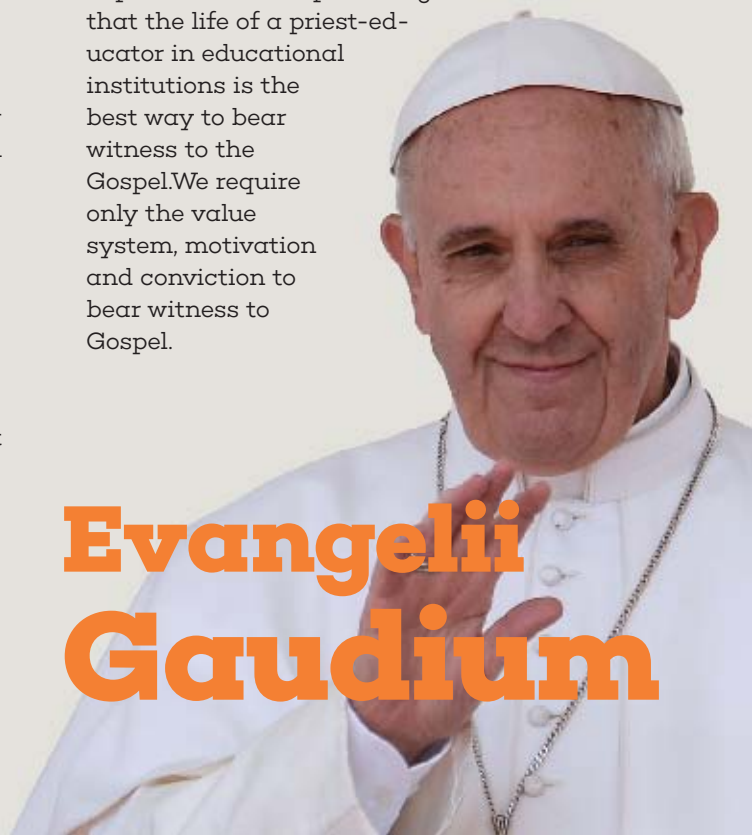
4. The Priest-Educator, Life-Witness, and Evangelii Gaudium

Pope Francis sets forth a vision for giving the entire Church, at every level, an evangelising thrust in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. He calls for renewal and rethinking the way every person and every institution live their faith, focus their energies, and bear witness to the Gospel. This proclamation of the Gospel through life-witness embraces every facet of our worldly, professional and academic life. He says: "Proclaiming the Gospel message to different cultures also involves proclaiming it to professional, scientific and academic circles. This means an encounter between faith, reason and the sciences with a view to developing new approaches and arguments on the issue of credibility, a creative apologetic that would encourage greater openness to the Gospel on the part of all. When certain categories of reason and the sciences are taken up into the proclamation of the message, these categories then become tools of evangelization; water is changed into wine. Whatever is taken up is not just redeemed, but becomes an instrument of the Spirit for enlightening and renewing the world" (EG: 132). There is a thrust in renewing the place, culture, individual, attitude, and all that is human.

An interaction, a dialogue and a theologising with the surroundings of a person, based on the Gospel values, is seriously urged in *Evangelii Gaudium*. "It is not enough that evangelizers be concerned to reach each person, or that the Gospel be proclaimed to the cultures as a whole. A theology – and not simply a pastoral theology – which is in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences is most important for our discernment on how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultural contexts and groups. The Church, in her commitment to evangelization, appreciates and encourages the charism of theologians and their scholarly efforts to advance dialogue with the

world of cultures and sciences. I call on theologians to carry out this service as part of the Church's saving mission. In doing so, however, they must always remember that the Church and theology exist to evangelize, and not be content with a desk-bound theology" (EG: 133). A priest-educator, as we have stated above, can evangelise the entire ethos and atmosphere of the educational institution.

The life and role of the priest-educators, and all other Catholic educators, in educational institutions are a paradigm that *Evangelii Gaudium* envisages. Universities, higher education centres, and elementary schools – are the best avenues to live one's gospel values. "Universities are outstanding environments for articulating and developing this evangelizing commitment in an interdisciplinary and integrated way. Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture, even in those countries and cities where hostile situations challenge us to greater creativity in our search for suitable methods" (EG: 134). I am convinced of this verity which Pope Francis is emphasising that the life of a priest-educator in educational institutions is the best way to bear witness to the Gospel. We require only the value system, motivation and conviction to bear witness to Gospel.



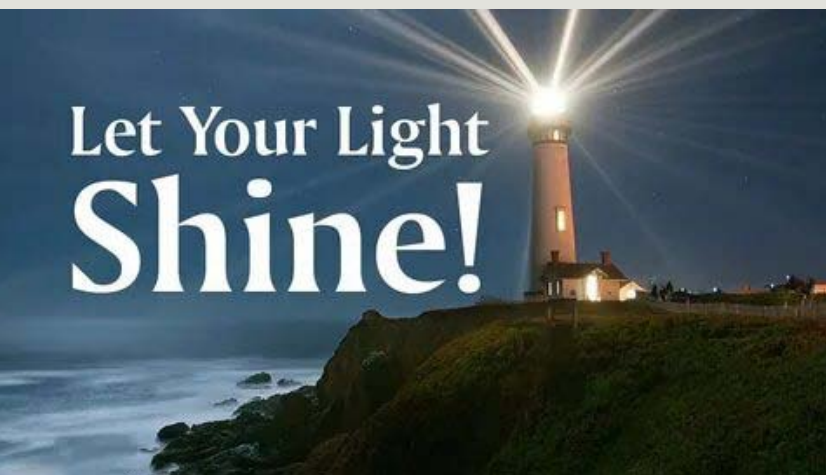
Evangelii Gaudium

5. Let Your Light Shine: A Constant Reminder to a Priest Educator

In his *Veritatis Gaudium*, Pope Francis exhorts all the faithful to pay greater attention to the words of Jesus: "Let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mt 5: 16). The document states: "The joy of truth (*veritatisgaudium*) expresses the restlessness of the human heart until it encounters and dwells within God's Light, and shares that Light with all people. For truth is not an abstract idea, but is Jesus himself, the Word of God in whom is the Life that is the Light of man (cf. Jn 1:4), the Son of God who is also the Son of Man. He alone, 'in revealing the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself and brings to light its very high calling'" ("Foreword" to VG: 1). This is a call for life-witness which shall be a constant reminder for a priest-educator. Bearing witness to Jesus as his disciple is an indispensable part of Gospel life. "In fact, the ministry of witnessing began on the Pentecost when the Spirit came down among the disciples of Jesus." The Acts of the Apostles revolves around the important verse: "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Let us remind ourselves that Luke has recounted twice (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8) the final wish and command of Jesus, by underscoring the

the subsequent Christian tradition witnessing implies not merely leading a good life at a personal level, but much more than that. It implies that the whole person with her/his being and doing (activity) is fully involved in order to carry out the final commission entrusted to the disciples by Jesus Christ. The sole purpose of witness is to lead people into faith in Jesus Christ and, hence, it has a theological aspect which is soteriological.

A priest educator has a considerable period of time in his ministry. This is another facet of the life of a priest-educator that he "remains" in the educational institution for a longer term, and he bears witness to Gospel values. Remaining faithful to the spirit of witnessing that we see in the Acts of the Apostles, a priest-witness of the Gospel takes time to "stay" with the community that is in the educational institution. Being a part of such a community that is mainly of non-Christians is to bear witness to the teachings of the Gospel in a concrete way of living gradually. The use of the word "remaining" (*meno, epimeno, katameno, perimeno*, etc. in Greek as used in the Acts) is used not for "a static or sterile presence," but "a transforming presence" which is a dynamic ongoing process. And I am convinced of this aspect all the more as time goes by.



importance of final instructions left behind by Jesus.

The call 'let your light shine' is to bear witness. In The Acts of the Apostles and in

The life of a priest educator, as he is constantly conscious of his call, is after the model of Jesus as he "went around doing good" (Acts 10: 30). A priest educator, inspired by the Gospel, does the same ministry in an educational institution with a special love for God and neighbour by assisting those who are in need. There is a greater element of personal touch in the places where things are happening mechanically and artificially as is the case with many educational institutions propelled by good result-oriented

competition and management, with rules and regulations. Here, compassion, selfless love, and ethics of care take the upper hand. I have lived my life in this way, and I have real experiences in this regard.

A priest educator in an educational institution brings a value system to the fore. Allow me to quote again the words of Jesus: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Mt 5: 16). In educational institutions, the good works of a priest educator which bear witness to a priest's commitment to his Lord and Master will be the evaluating points for the students and colleagues. They will realize the authenticity of the priest in all that he does. He is driven by the values of the Gospel. His honesty, service-mindedness, commitment to his duty/job, graceful and prayerful dealings, his sense of fairness and justice, his option for the poor and the marginalised, and all will tell of his life and commitment. In short, he could live all that Gospel stands for. As seen in the Acts of the Apostles, "for Luke becoming witness has much to do with an acceptable behaviour of a person. Through integrity and fidelity, one can gain the approval of well-disposed people enabling the witnesses to gain more followers for Christ. An upright behaviour pattern is not only an aid to discover a person's identity but it also lends credibility to what he presents." The same Lukan acceptable behaviour is the mainstay of the presence of a priest educator in the work place of his ministry.

Authenticity is of great significance. A priest's "credibility will give rise to convincing power. That is what the evangeliser needs today. On the one hand it is grace. At the same time, it calls for a response from human agent." The convincing power that he has, will "come only from sincerity and authenticity" that "can even transcend cultures. Sincerity in words and authenticity in life." The recognition of such an authenticity by others is nothing but the fruit of a life based on the Gospel that a priest-educator lives daily. Here we come to the uniqueness of witnessing that we find enshrined in *Verbum Domini* (VD): 97, which brings to us a profound statement: "Just as the events of Christ's life were a hermeneutics of the Word he announced, the same is true for Gospel labourers: their life must be a clear and immediate hermeneutics of what He

announces." Such a priest who is in an educational institution is a writer of the Word through his life-witness in the hearts of his fellow beings. "Today more than in other times, life lived according to the radicalism and newness of the Gospel helps it be understood and made credible." A life lived with credibility and authenticity influences the life-situations and the people with whom one lives and interacts, a life of *agape* and *koinonia*.

6. Conclusion

If one is chosen by God as a priest and educator, it is for the *Missio Dei*, Mission of God. "The Bible is clear that whenever God chooses someone, it is not principally for that person's own sake but for the sake of others" and the real worth of that choice is for the greater glory of God. Let me conclude with an anecdote from Professor Paul Williams of Bristol University, UK, who was received into the Catholic faith in 2000. He mentions in his book *The Unexpected Way* the "evangelising presence" of his Catholic colleges at the University which made him a Catholic. He writes about his Catholic colleagues' influence on him. "I want to dedicate this book to my old friends and colleagues Denys Turner and Gavin D'Costa. Very devout Catholics, they never spoke disparagingly of my Buddhism, but showed always respect, interest and tolerance. They were astonished yet delighted at my becoming a Catholic. We do not really know what influence we have on others. Their firm faith and wonderful examples of goodness, humanity, sensitivity and fun have been important to me, and I am very grateful to them. They were and are the very best sort of friends and evangelists." Paul Williams also recalls his association with R. C. Zaehner who got received into Catholicism. We do not know how our life-witness would influence others! It encourages me, at least, to live a life of witness to Him amidst the people of different faiths, as His own words echo in me constantly: "be my witnesses" (Acts 1: 8) and "let your light shine" (Mt 5: 16).

Santhosh Olapurackal MST

MST'S FOURTH MISSION REGION: ST MARY QUEEN OF MISSIONS REGION, DELHI

INTRODUCTION

MST is a Society of Apostolic Life with an exclusively missionary charism whose sole goal is to spread the Kingdom of God through witness and apostolic involvement. Drawing spiritual enthusiasm from St Thomas, the Apostle of India and her patron, MST is committed to take up missionary responsibilities anywhere in the world through collective apostolate. The way of life of the members of the Missionary Society is determined, spirituality enriched and life sanctified by their dedicated missionary apostolate.



The Presence of MST in Delhi

The inception of the pastoral cum mission work by the Syro-Malabar Church in Delhi and the subsequent establishment of the Faridabad Archdiocese in 2012 can be traced back to the missionary initiatives, hard work and dedication of MST priests. In early 1980s the Syro Malabar Bishop's Conference entrusted Bishop Mar A D Mattam of happy memory, the then Bishop of Satna to do the needful for the migrant Christians of Delhi – Faridabad area. Different regions of India were entrusted to different Syro-Malabar dioceses for the pastoral care of the migrants from Kerala. At



the request of Bishop Mattam, Fr Manuel Karimpana MST and Fr Sebastian Kizhakkeyil MST were sent to Faridabad to prepare the ground for taking care of the Syro Malabar migrant Christians there. Bishop Mattam bought an old house in sector 23, Faridabad, because there were a good number of Malayali Christians there. Once the house was renovated Fr Sebastian Kizhakkeyil moved into that house. Fr Sebastian left for Kerala in 1987 and Fr James Mandapam MST was appointed in his place. Fr James continued his ministry among migrant Christians until priests from



Ernakulam were entrusted with Delhi – Faridabad area for migrant care. Fr James did a great deal of work much for the organization and growth of Syro-Malabar community in and around Delhi. Fr MD Thomas MST started his mission in Delhi as the CBCI Secretary to the Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue. He continues his work of interfaith dialogue through the Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies.

Fr Thomas Karamel MST and Fr Sabu Maprakavil MST pioneered a new ministry, under the guidance of His Grace Arch Bishop Vincent Concessao in 2004, working





for the empowerment of people living with the HIV /AIDS. Ever since a number of MST priests have been working in Delhi in different capacities. The priests who worked very hard as the pioneer missionaries in Delhi. Rev. Frs Thomas Karamel, Sabu Maprakavil, Siby Vadakeputhenpurackal, Joseph Koren, Sajan Chackalackal, Jose Akkattukudilil, Tomy Madhavappillil, Mathew Moothasseril, BinoyKoottumkal, LijoKavunnukattil, Johnson Kuppayil and Siju Kolthambrayil – are remembered with great appreciation and profound gratitude for their initiatives, hard

work and commitment to the mission.

Erection of St Mary Queen of the Mission Delegation

For the effective apostolate and administrative purposes MST establishes regions and delegations. In view of extending its missionary work in the extreme northern states of India, MST established a new delegation namely St Mary Queen of the Mission Delegation in Delhi in the year 2014. St Mary Queen of the Mission Delegation, Delhi, the



fourth organized missionary initiative of Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle (MST), came into existence on 15th July 2014. Rev. Fr Joseph Vallikatt MST was appointed as the first Delegate along with Frs Joseph Kulathumkal MST as the first councillor and Fr Kurian Kochettonnil MST as the second counsellor and procurator. Then in 2016, Fr Joseph Muthuplackal MST succeeded Fr Vallikatt as the delegate together with Fr Abraham Chempottickal MST as the first councillor and Fr Santhosh Olapurackal MST as the second councillor and procurator. In the year 2018, Fr Santhosh Olapurackal was appointed as the third delegate together with Fr Joseph Karodan MST as the first councillor and Fr Shijo Thettalickal MST as the second councillor and procurator. Upon the elevation of the Delegation into a mission Region on 22 Feb. 2022, Rev Fr Santhosh Olapurackal is appointed the first Regional Director of St Mary Queen of the Mission Region, Delhi.

The Elevation of the Delegation to a Mission Region of MST

Taking into account the fast developments of the Delegation, the MST decided to elevate the Delegation to a Mission Region on 22nd of February, 2022 retaining Najafgarh as its head office. The Mary Queen of the Missions

Region is geographically spread across five North Indian states, namely Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. The region is coextensive with the area of the eparchy of Faridabad. The region has designed an



integral model of missionary work offering opportunities for people to meaningfully encounter Christ's love and mercy as well as to make the Church more relevant and appreciable to the peoples.

The Administrative Team of the Region

Regional Director: Rev Fr Santhosh





Olappurackal MST

First Councillor: Fr Joseph Karodan MST

Second Councillor and Procurator: Fr Abin

Kochupurackal MST

The Manner of Evangelization

The three main thrust areas of the Region are 1) Mission among Peoples, 2) Pastoral Care of the Migrants of Syro Malabar Church, 3) Works of Mercy, Empowering processes and Charitable Activities.

1. Mission among Peoples: Right now, there are five Christian communities under formation in the villages near Bathinda, Bhadaur and Delhon in Punjab, and Rohru and Chidgaon in Himachal Pradesh

2. Work of Mercy, Interfaith activities and Human Promotion: Work of Mercy and empowering activities are carried out under Deepti Foundation Trust.

Projects are mainly implemented under this are:

Empowering the children and families involved in rag picking

Child Resource Centre for the children involved in rag picking

Empowering people living with HIV/AIDS

Empowering women and children from the urban clusters of East Delhi

Care home for the HIV/AIDS infected boys

Hostel for the children from the families involved in rag picking.

Interfaith activities carried out by the institute of Harmony and Peace studies by Rev Fr M D Thomas at Dwaraka

Two schools of formal education in Delhon and Bathinda, Punjab

3. Pastoral Care for the Syro-Malabar

Immigrants: In the diocese of Faridabad, four parishes are managed by MST priests. In all the mission centres especially in Bathinda, Bhikki, Dhuri and Delhon pastoral care of the migrants are taking place.

Mission Centres of the Region

The Mary Queen of Missions Region (MQMR) has 12 centers of apostolate in different places of this vast territory. Among the 12 centers, six are in Punjab, four in Delhi and two in Himachal Pradesh. As of now, there are 34 MST priests assigned to this Mission Region and 16 of them are already part of the missionary team of this new Region.

01. Bathinda(Punjab): Sant Yusuf Sadan

Established:	2015
Patron:	St Joseph
Institution:	St Thomas Convent School (ICSE)
Apostolates:	Education, Social apostolate and Pastoral apostolate for migrants
Female Congregation:	Congregation of the Sisters of St Francis of Assisi

02. Bhadaur (Punjab): St Joseph School

Established:	2015
Patron:	St Joseph
Institution:	St Thomas Convent School
Apostolates:	Pastoral Apostolate and Education

03. Bhikhi(Punjab), Maria Bhavan

Established:	2015
Patroness:	St Mary
Apostolates:	Pastoral Ministry and Social Apostolate

04. Dilshad Garden (New Delhi): Deepti Nivas

Established:	2015
Patroness:	Mary Queen of Missions
Institution/s:	MST House at Dilshad Garden, New Delhi,
Apostolates:	Head office of Deepti Foundation, the social work wing Mary Queen of the Missions Region, Delhi.

Projects implemented:

- 01. Community-based rehabilitation of people living with HIV/AIDS
- 02. Empowering women and children for a sustainable and self-dependable living.
- 03. Empowering children and families involved in rag picking at Bhalaswa Dump yard, New Delhi

05. Bhalaswa(New Delhi):Gyaansarovar Child Resource Center (CRC)

Established:	2021
Patron:	Jesus the Teacher
Apostolates:	Empowering children and families involved in rag picking at Bhalaswa Dump yard, New Delhi

06. Chirgaon (HimachalPradesh): Holy Trinity Catholic Mission

Established:	2021
Patron:	Holy Trinity
Apostolates:	Pastoral Ministry and social apostolate

07. Dhuri (Punjab): St Alphonsa Bhavan

Established:	2019
Patroness:	St Alphonsa
Apostolates:	Education, Pastoral Ministry and Social Apostolate

08. Dwaraka (Delhi): Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies (IHPS)

Established:	2014
Institution/s:	Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies
Apostolates:	Interfaith Activities

09. Khmanon (Punjab): St Francis Assisse catholic Mission

Established:	2021
Patron:	St Francis Assisi
Apostolates:	Social apostolate, Education and Pastoral care

10. Ludhiana (Punjab): Mother Teresa Catholic Mission

Established:	2021
Patroness:	Mother Teresa
Institution/s:	St Thomas Convent School
Apostolates:	Education and Pastoral Ministry
Female Congregation:	Congregation of the Sisters of St Francis of Assisi

11. Najafgarh (Delhi): Deepti Ashram

Established:	2012
Patroness:	St Mary
Institution/s:	Care Home for the HIV/AIDS boys and Hostel for the girls from the families involved in rag picking
Apostolates:	Social Apostolate and Pastoral care
Female Congregation:	The Congregation of sisters of Charity

12. Rohru (HimachalPradesh):Kristjyoti Catholic Mission

Established:	2018
Patron:	Christ the Light
Institution/s:	Kristjyoti Catholic Church
Apostolates:	Pastoral Ministry and Social Apostolate

Conclusion

Mary Queen of the Missions Region, Delhi is committed towards the development of the entire humanity. We believe that any effort we take towards this objective is less compared to the need of the target group. Let us thank and accept the cooperation, support and encouragement of many generous people and organizations and institutions that have enabled us to extend our hands towards the needy, exploited and forsaken people of the society. Our effort is to recognize and accept them and enable them to have dignified human life. It is indeed the dedicated and committed work of our fathers that has helped us to plan and flourish within this short span of time.

Joseph Vallikatt MST

A CALL DIFFERENTLY LISTENED AND LIVED

Fr SIBY NELLOOR MST – A MEMOIRE

I had an absolute break, Valli,” was the response in extreme excitement Fr Siby Nelloor made when he first met me a year after he had joined the Salatian Theological College in Shillong for his Theology studies. It was indeed a breakthrough for his life and vocation which Fr Siby actually wanted to live from the day one of his minor seminary. I was as happy to observe his elation as would I with anyone who treads a path untrodden!

Fr Siby, who had a short but courageous and consistent fight with Leukaemia, left us on 22 October 2021; but his legacy would not. It would be too naive for us to consider Fr Siby as a simple priest just like anyone of us who as a priest fulfilled some conventional responsibilities, but unfortunately succumbing to an illness without even racing half of his life's lap.



Characterising Fr Siby as a “funny priest” would be a cruel joke on him as would many superficially do! Indeed, I came across a few incidents where Fr Siby was glorified for his funny and witty character which he was not, and which he always detested. He used to be disappointed about the very feudal and conventional community which has always



been tempted to fit people in definite boxes. Up until the last moment of his life he wanted to live a life inspiring others to travel through higher and different terrains.

What probably brought us together for a friendly ride lasting for more than 30 years, would be this shared spirit for traversing the barriers, crossing into the unfathomable territories of our missionary vocation. As a seminarian Fr Siby could establish a space in theatre, art, as a successful presenter and performer. After ordination, we took up joined ventures in a number of areas ranging from empowerment programmes, to exhibitions, working for the marginalised to developing human resources, forming priestly candidates to inspiring catholic youth to be lively witnesses of Christ availing the possibilities of media. In each of these areas of his work he left an inimitable stamp of his own.

Fr Siby was primarily concerned about his unique identity as a member of the MST. He often challenged others to identify their missionary identity. He would encourage the youngsters in the MST to say that they are essentially MST missionaries rather than simply priests. And he used to tell them to show the MST stamp wherever they would be. He loved the MST Society and its various missionary activities.

As a fellow traveller with him, it was fascinating to observe Fr Siby's gradual but constant development of his own missionary awareness. He wished to live his vocation tuning it to the highest spirit of the MST's Constitutions. Though his demise happened earlier than expected, the apostolic community that he formed in Rohru in Himachal Pradesh (HP) remains to be a living proof for this. He took all exceptional means and put all his hard work to establish the first mission station of the Syro Malabar Church in HP, breaking the box of conventional missionary patterns.

Fr Siby was a missionary who thought globally, and acted locally. He wished that the MST's name should shine in golden glitters all around the world. His first appointment was apparently in a remote district in MP namely Rajgarh. Later, he took up a parish in a rural Italian village. In either place, as well as in all places he worked, Fr Siby invested all his energy to be a down to



earth missionary with a professional or classical touch. He wished to bring the best things and practices in the world to the local setting as well.

Fr Siby loved the Mother Church and tried to live the Thomesine spirituality. He esteemed the oriental heritage and was committed to spread it. While in Italy, he had a rare chance of visiting the Cathedral at Orthona when the tomb of St Thomas the Apostle was opened and he officially secured a first-class relic for the MST. Similarly, he used to take the neophytes to Kerala for a first-hand cultural experience. He believed in a faith which is experiential and had the capacity to share that faith with same intensity as he had experienced.

When doing things, he always came up with really fantastic and wild ideas. One of the best manuscript magazines in the history of Deepti seminary was brought out under his guidance. They used hand-made paper and a carved wooden chest for Arun magazine that time. An inter seminary exchange programme was Fr Siby's dream project which was attended by 10 minor seminaries around Bharananganam. In Rajgarh, he was instrumental in organising a musical concert of priests, which was the first in history. And

there are several firsts which could be attributed to Fr Siby.

Media was his passion. He demonstrated his talents both before and behind the camera. He was the lead anchor in many TV programmes such as the Kadukumani Mission Quiz produced by the media department of the MST. Later, he opted to professionally qualify himself in media which helped him direct stories, and advance his skills in visual editing and studio work. Yet he was more conscious to employ his media skills to the missionary apostolate and faith





sharing. His master mind research on participatory communication for formulating faith communities was a pathbreaker. The study as well as his further work has produced some illustrious impact on the faith formation of the youth in Kerala.

During the monotonous and isolated period of the first lockdown, when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, he presented a paper on catechetical formation through visual media as the future mission of the Church in a national conference I hosted. Neither did he nor I knew at that time that it would be his last serious performance. A couple of days later he called me to share the disturbing news about his illness. That was the beginning of a combat that he fought with full vigour and hope. It was an inspiring fight as he came back to the mission field after a course of chemotherapy.

Fr Siby, a great soul has departed us, but leaving behind a rich vestige. He beckons us to walk on his footprints. He remains to be an unfading light at a time when the Missionary Society he belonged to grapples in missionary darkness. Anyone who wants to mature into a true missionary, can take the intercession of Fr Siby as he had broken the boxes, and listened to His call in a different but fascinating fashion.

John Kudiyiruppil MST

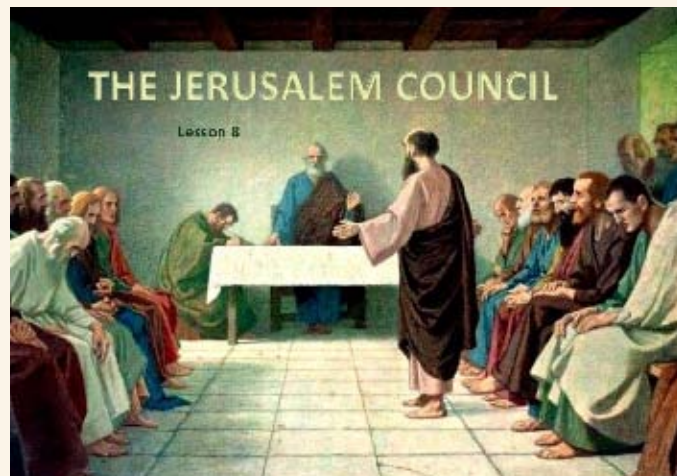
UNITY OR VERITY? AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE CURRENT LITURGICAL ISSUE

If ever there was a time in the world when the Church was put upon a crucial trial, that time is the present time and that Church is the Syro Malabar Church. Scandalous pieces of news come upon us these days like a flood. We are continually betrayed by false prelates within and assaulted by open enemies without. Day after day brings news of some fresh betrayals and blatant lies even by highly placed men. The Syro Malabar Church has at least one rebellious and recalcitrant child, and we make a grievous mistake, thinking that it will change. To the blind intolerance and fanaticism of this rebel group, to its insane defiance and senseless disobedience, we owe an immense proportion of the scandal and dissent in the Syro Malabar Church. When its decision is not the decision of the 34 other bishops in the Holy Synod, when its stand is diametrically opposed to the official stand of the Synod (celebration of the three mysteries together, celebration of Ash Monday, use of veil, veneration of St Thomas Cross, fifty-fifty formula in the celebration of the Holy Qurbana etc.) then, we must infer that something is rotten in Denmark and



that there is some truth in the accusation against this group.

The Syro Malabar Church possesses unity. Its Eparchs and members are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of Christianity because they are all taught by the same Holy Spirit - about Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, about Christ: his divinity and humanity, about Mary, about the Sacraments, about the papacy, about



prayer, about holiness, about resurrection, about judgement, about parousia, about the Taksa - about all these points there is unity. As long as they recite "Our Father", they are our brothers. If you take three or four strangers to one another from any of the thirty four Syro Malabar Eparchies and examine them on the above given points, you will find that they are all of one mind. Yet,



there is one controversy - about the direction to be adopted by the celebrant at the Holy Qurbana - that never seems to cease. The dispute, in other words, is whether it should be ad orientem or versus populum.

Versus populum does not represent the Last Supper. The reputed theologian Louis Bouyer states, "The idea that a celebration facing the people must have been the primitive one and especially of the last

supper, has no other foundation than a mistaken view of what a meal could be in antiquity, Christian or not. In no meal of the early Christian era, did the president of the banqueting assembly ever face the other participants... They were all sitting or reclining, on the convex side of a C-shaped table, or of a table having approximately the shape of a horse-shoe. The other side was always left empty for the service. Nowhere in the Christian antiquity, could have arisen the idea of having to 'face the people' to preside at a meal. The communal character of a meal was emphasised just by the opposite disposition: the fact that all the participants were on the same side of the table." Joseph Ratzinger writes, "A common turning to the east during the Eucharistic prayer remains essential. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a

question of dialogue but of common worship, of setting off toward the One, who is to come." J. A. Jungmann has much the same to say, "It was much more a question of priest and people facing in the same direction, knowing that together they were in a procession toward the Lord." Ratzinger opines that versus populum "turns the community into a self closed circle where the president becomes the real point of reference, instead of God." Unity among his followers was one thing Jesus desired to have as a last wish. In chapter 17, Jesus prayed three times for the unity of the ministers, "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:11, 21, 22). They should not only be of one heart, but one mouth, speaking the same thing. Unity of the bishops is the beauty and strength of the Church. They should be one in judgement and sentiment. However, the unity achieved losing truth is useless. Unity is a precious possession but unity without a common liturgy, without a common custom, without a common head, is a worthless unity, not deserving the name. Unity is when some things which are common and vital, bind all members. When Ernakulam Archeparchy accepts the synodal decision about the celebration of Holy Qurbana, when it begins to celebrate the three sacraments together,



when it starts the Great Lent on Ash-Monday, when it learns to venerate the St Thomas Cross, when it learns to respect the Major Archbishop, then, not till then, it will be time to talk of unity. Till then, there will be this gulf between it and the other 34 eparchies, which cannot honestly be bridged. Till then, perfect unity will be a mirage.

We cannot undervalue unity; no Christian can. Every Syro Malabar faithful longs for that day when there shall be no strife, controversy and division. We long for that day when Ephraim shall no longer annoy Judah, nor Judah Ephraim. But there can be no real unity without oneness in the faith and its expression. To celebrate a Eucharist which is annulled by the Synod, refusing to say the Qurbana approved by the majority, is an "abomination" as prophet Isaiah says (Is 1:11-15; Lk 19:46). Jesus who denounced the temple, with all its divinely ordained services, as "a den of robbers" (Lk 19:46; Mt 21:1), would have definitely taken the whip against these belligerent priests if he had been here today. How repeatedly the rebel priests have given occasion to the world to ridicule and mock us! The tide of events seems to break the ship of Thomas, if not to sink it. Our motto is "in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas" as Rupertus Meldenus teaches. The unity insisted upon is but on essentials.

I think no one in the Church shall be immune to correction and disciplinary measures, neither laity nor hierarchy, if they erred. Ordination confers no security against errors and mistakes. It is too true to see that

the greatest heresies have crept into the Church through ordained ministers. It is Hophni and Phinehas, sons of the High priest who rendered their religion ridiculous (1 Sam 2:12). The history of the Church contains many melancholy proofs that the most

distinguished ministers may for a time or even permanently fall away. Who has not heard of Arius, the Egyptian priest and Arianism? Who has not heard of Pelagius, the British monk and Pelagianism? Who has not heard of Zephyrinus, the bishop of Rome and modalism? Scores of other names could be added to them.

We learn from Antioch that to keep the Gospel-truth intact in the Church is of greater importance than to keep the peace. No man ever knew better the value of peace and unity than apostle Paul. He was the apostle who wrote to the Corinthians about charity and against division. "I appeal to you ... that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you" (1 Cor 1:10). He was the apostle who exhorted the Thes-salonians, "Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thes 5:13). He was the apostle who to the Romans wrote, "Live in harmony with one another" (Rom 12:16). Yet, see how Paul acted



at Antioch! He opposed Peter "to his face" (Gal 2:11-14). Here is one apostle rebuking another apostle. Here is Paul the junior rebuking Peter the senior. Paul publicly rebukes Peter, the head of the apostles! He runs the risk of all the consequences that might follow. He did not care for what his enemies in Antioch would say or the parties of Peter. Above all, Paul writes it down for a perpetual memorial that this public rebuke of an erring apostle be known to the world as an example. He wrote it down which now is read in more than 1500 languages. We need prelates with an inch of St Paul's bone.

Why did Paul rebuke Peter? It was because he dreaded double-play and duplicity (Gal. 2:11-14). Paul knew that a little yeast would leaven the whole lump (Gal 5:9; 1 Cor 5:6). Paul feared the loss of truth more than the loss of peace. He would not have peace at the expense of truth. Paul loved the Church more than Peter. Paul's example is one we should do well to imitate in the present.



Many people will put up with anything in faith matters, if they may have only a quiet life. They have a morbid fear of what they call "controversy." They are filled with a morbid fear of what they style "party spirit." They want to make things appear smooth, at the expense of truth. They will give up anything for outward calm. Some think like Ahab who called Elijah a "troubler of Israel" (1 Kings 18:17). They will help anyone to put Jeremiah in prison to stop his mouth (Jer 32). I do not doubt that many of these men of whom I speak would have thought that Paul at Antioch was an imprudent troubler and that he went too far! I do not doubt that many of these men would have thought that John the Baptist and Stephan were troublemakers!



We should no more tolerate false doctrines than we should tolerate sin. Jesus denounced the Pharisees, though they sat "on Moses seat" (Mt 23:2) and Jesus called them, "hypocrites" and said, "Woe to you" (Mt 23:13-29). Jesus repeats it eight times over in Matthew 23. And who would dare call Jesus a "troubler"? For truth's sake, Athanasius stood out against the world to maintain the pure doctrine about the divinity of Christ and waged a controversy with the great majority of professing Christians. Was he a "troubler"? Yes, peace without truth is a false peace. Unity without truth is worthless unity, the unity of hell. Jesus said, "Think not that I have come to bring peace to the earth: I have not come to bring peace, but sword" (Mt 10:34). See how Jesus praises the Church of

Ephesus which was intolerant of evildoers, "I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false" (Rev 2:2). See how Jesus blames another Church –the Church of Thyatira - for tolerating false doctrine, "I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants" (Rev 2:20). Never let us be guilty of sacrificing any portion of truth upon the altar of false peace. If we are ready to sacrifice truth for false peace, what is hindering us from becoming Muslims? It is the false prophets who cry "peace when there is no peace" (Ez 13:10). I write what I write from a sense of duty to the Church of which I am a member. I believe that the situation of the times and the position of the hierarchy in some eparchies of our Church require plain speaking. Honest members of the Church are disgusted and perplexed. Unity, peace, discipline and order are mighty blessings. They give strength, beauty and efficiency to the cause of Christ and the Church.

If we want to hold fast to the truth, every parish, every congregation, every Syro Malabar faithful must do their part in contending for the truth. Each one of us should pray and work as if the preservation of our patrimony depends on himself or herself and upon no one else at all. The bishops should not leave the matter to the priests nor the priests leave the matter to the bishops. The clergy must not leave the matter to the laity, nor the laity to the clergy. If we hold fast to that which is good, we cannot tolerate any doctrine which is not true and pure. Hatred sometimes is charity i.e. hatred of erroneous doctrines whether it comes from the pulpit or from the press. We should show the spirit shown by Paul who said, "Even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a Gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed" (Gal 1:8). Why didn't the Synod decry the disobedience and double-play of its own members?



If we can sit quietly when sham Christianity is poured into our ears, there is little chance of our ever doing much to resist evil. He who does not fight against error, encourages error. If we would hold fast to the truth, we must be ready to unite with all who hold the truth and love Jesus and his bride the Church. We must be ready to lay aside minor issues of subordinate importance. This is not asking anyone to give-up his/her private opinion about these points. I don't want any person to do violence to his/her conscience. All I say is that in liturgy and worship, there are questions which as St Paul says, of "wood, hay and straw" (1 Cor 3:12). There is a difference between foundation and decoration. The Philistines are upon us (Judg 16:20). Can we make common cause against the rebels? Or can we not? It is non-sense to talk about unity, if we cannot co-operate to fight against evil.

Now it remains for me to conclude what I was saying by offering some safeguards. Let us resist the tendency to condone indiscipline where ever it is found. When Peter hesitated to eat with the gentiles, it seemed but a little thing; yet Paul rebuked Peter (Gal 2:11). Let us count nothing small that concerns liturgy. Principles must govern our decisions and actions, not expediency. Nobody should be permitted to tamper with the liturgy. Making a short addition, or laying more emphasis on something, seem harmless, but once allowed, they go on from one thing to another. What look like trifles might soon become untouchable idols as it happened in the case of versus populum.

A synodal form of government rightly administered is good enough. But, the bishop's teachings and actions ought to be in harmony with the common decision taken and signed by them. The impression that the doings and deliverances of the bishops are above censure must go. History has ample examples to show that erring bishops ruined the Church. Desperate diseases need desperate remedies. Don't doctors amputate a member to save the body? If chopping away a branch will do good to the trunk of the tree, why waste time?

Excessive ornament and theatrical ceremonies will defeat the primary end for which worship is established. The mystery elements in worship help the faithful to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). We are apt to forget that Satan is labouring to bring in false doctrines. We forget that "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14), that he can make darkness appear light and light darkness; that he can make the truth appear falsehood and lie the truth. If he cannot destroy the Church entirely, he will try to spoil it and will try to rob the Church of its powered morale and that is what happens in the Syro Malabar Church now.

We need to heed the advice of Paul, "Test everything; hold fast to what is good" (1 Thes 5:21). Now what happens in our Church is that those who hold the truth hold it loosely and coldly and those who hold the falsehood hold to it tenaciously. Not only that. We see that the leaven of evil is creeping and spreading into other eparchies and parishes.

Some people may say that taking action is very troublesome and that we shall remain quiet. Some others may say, "What for all these controversies?" Let me ask: what good thing was ever received or ever retained without trouble? Gold is not found scattered in the paddy field; it is hidden in the womb of the earth. Pearls do not grow in our backyard; they lay buried in the bottom of the deep sea. Difficult situations are not overcome without trouble. No pain, no gain. Many of the blessings we are proud of are obtained through troubled times, by people who took the trouble and would not give up one jot of truth.

Lijesh Panackavayalil MST

I AM WHAT I AM BY THE GRACE OF GOD!

“Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel among you” (Is 12:6).



God is the light of mankind that shines in the darkness, giving meaning to human existence. The closer the encounter, the deeper the communion we experience and the louder the proclamation. With this vision and mission, our music ministry reaches the hearts of people by inspiring and by relevant worship hymns. Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creations" (Mk 16:15). My

worshipper who found favour in the sight of God, many people receive hope, comfort and meaning in life through the music ministry that we are engaged in. It gives me tremendous joy when people, even non-believers, give testimony to this tremendous fact. In the recent past, a believer shared with me his faith experience when he had listened to the song "Akannirikkan Kazhiyilla"...(God can never stay away...). He was able to



humble effort is to bring this good news to people and draw them to God through music, when and where long speeches and books perhaps cannot communicate easily that our God is rich in love.

I fold my hands in gratitude towards God for His limitless love and care which He has showered upon me in the past 16 years (2006-2022) of my music ministry. I have dedicated to the Church more than 200 unique musical compositions in three languages namely Hindi, Marathi and Malayalam. It gives me a sense of joy and contentment as I see these hymns are used in different retreat centres, churches and other places for prayer, meditation and meaningful worship. People, through these hymns, experience peace, consolation and the healing touch of God.

Just like King David, the singer and

experience the personal healing touch of God, a ray of hope and desire to live.

It shows that music is the divine touch of God, the greatest Musician. I have experienced the intervention of God in my works and they touch the hearts of thousands of people and bring remarkable results. I strongly believe that a call within the Call, i.e. to the music ministry, is a great one.



I find that words, even millions of them, are inadequate to thank my Lord for His goodness towards me through music.

Amalashram, (a retreat centre in Sangli Mission, Maharashtra) gave me a beautiful opportunity to render my service through music ministry and my experience there was immensely great. All walks of people, irrespective of caste and creed, gather there every week for retreat and they experience a miraculous encounter with God and a healing touch by singing the hymns with all their heart and soul.

I consider music ministry as part of the work of evangelization and as an effective medium of communicating the Gospel to people. Therefore it plays a significant role in my missionary journey. God gave me the gift of music and expects me to use it for His glory and the edification of human beings, His children.

“So it depends not on human will or exertion but on God who shows mercy” (Rom 9:16). I find these words of St Paul being translated into my life very aptly. Lord, in His mercy and compassion, overlooking my unworthiness, blesses me more than I desire and deserve. I experience a divine power when I prepare every musical work. I have not

learned the basic lessons of music and I believe that it is God who holds my hands to scribble those lines for His glory and the enlightenment of people.

At present, I work at Santhome Media, a centre of the MST. I have many more beautiful instances of God-experience to communicate to you. This communication centre organizes not only music ministry but also produces Bible reflections, mission documentaries, short films etc. and uploads on social media platforms. It was a God-given chance for me to compose and record the Syro Malabar Holy Mass hymns into Marathi and Odia languages and organize many mission awareness programmes according to the need of the time.

It is in the rich soil of the MST that I grow and develop my talents and abilities with the help of my Superiors and priestly brothers. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone. My sincere thanks go to all the collaborators and associates in this field, all my well-wishers, friends and my family members. Above all, I thank God, the Almighty who uses me as an instrument to make others' worlds a little brighter through my unique music ministry.



MST

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS

2021 - 2022



Fr Vettikuzhichalil Michael
(Shinto)



Fr Kodikulam Gervasis
(Jince)

“ GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH
THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE CREATION ”.





God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.

Redemptoris Missio 3.

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