

www.malankaralibrary.com

FR. JOHN KUZHINAPURATH
THE MISSION LAMP



Peter C. Abraham

Translated by:

Dr. Shirley Stewart

Fr. John Kuzhinapurath
The Mission Lamp

Peter C. Abraham

Transalated by:

Dr. Shirley Stewart

Fr. John Kuzhinapurath

The Mission Lamp

Author : **Peter C. Abraham**

Transalated by: **Dr. Shirley Stewart**

Publishers :

The Commission for Theology & Publications,

Major Archbishop's House, Pattom,

Trivandrum - 695 004, Kerala. India.

Mob: 0091 - 81294 82279

Cover Design : Nimmy Ann George Parakkal

Printed at : Akshara Offset, Trivandrum, Ph # 0471 - 2471174

First Published :

January 2020

Price : ₹ 200/- \$ 5

**THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHDIOCESE OF TRIVANDRUM**

MORAN MOR BASELIOS CLEEMIS
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP-CATHOLICOS OF
THE MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH &
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF TRIVANDRUM



THIRUSANNIDHI
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE
PATTON, TRIVANDRUM-695 004
KERALA, INDIA

FOREWORD

The life of our forefathers who shone in the missionary fields of Malankara Syrian Catholic Church is still the lamp posts which provides directive consciousness to our community. Our Sainly Prelate the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios and the early fathers who worked with him and the troublesome missionary pathways they took still stand as influential ideals before us.

Rev. Fr. John Kuzhinapurath O.I.C. (The Great Fr. John) was the key associate in the historic event of Reunion on 1930 September 20th. The holy eulogist who recognized the divine call in the childhood itself walked the fiery pathway of the then absolutely strange monastic life in Puthenloor Community! He has shown considerable firmness from his younger age to rightly perceive the efficacy of monastic life and to put that into practical application. Moreover, the enlightening life of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, his mentor and master, has always been a guide for the life of Johnathan. This missionary had to face a series of hardships in his life from his stay at Mundanmala. The monastic Father (Mar Ivanios) decided to embrace Catholic faith with the complete backing from the leadership of Malankara Community. But, later Archbishop Mar Ivanios and his associates had to pass through that emotional crisis when all who backed him up left him when the auspicious occasion came for a value judgement. At all those times, Fr. John could stand with his master as the sentinel of truthful trust just St. John, the disciple of Christ. May be because of this that Fr. John could get the opportunity to be the only priest in the five gems of the reunion event embraced Catholic faith, which was held in Kollam Bisho's House.

A Bethanian, Fr. John's initial missionary activities were in Thiruvalla. It was he who first sowed the seeds of the belief of Catholicism in areas like Kallooppara, Kadamankulam, Vennikkulam, Chengaroor etc. Today when Malankara Catholic Church stands spreading out like a great tree in these areas, this holy priest might be feeling blissful in

Heaven. In moulding an original style of a life based in Catholic faith in these areas by distributing rosaries and photographs of Saints, Fr. John played an important role.

Later when Vettinad and nearby mission centres in Trivandrum became his target of missionary activities, Fr. John was always alert in offering a helping hand to raise the people spiritually, socially and financially from their deteriorated states. What is memorable especially is the fact that he did all these missionary activities by travelling long distances in bicycle.

This old missionary didn't feel to rest even in his age of seventy five. Later Fr. John found his mission campaign among the abandoned T.B patients in the hills of Pulayanarkotta in Trivandrum. The Rehabilitation centre and the Prayer centre began with the guidance of Fr. John to revamp them will be the long standing monuments of his influencing missionary life.

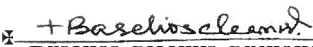
The life of this missionary became incentive for several to choose their vocations. It can be undoubtedly said that today Kuzhinapurath family is well-off with Priestly and Religious vocations because of Fr. John's missionary archetype, his motivation and prayers. In addition, his life has been a spur for the members of the family to grow interested in social services.

I praise the Lord for publishing the biography of Fr. John Kuzhinapurath who belonged to Bethany Ashram and who played a crucial role in uplifting Malankara Catholic Ecclesiastical Society from its initial tribulations. Sri. Peter C. Abraham, who wrote the biography named The Lamp of Mission, is specially appreciated in this occasion. The missionary interest of Fr. Thomas Kuzhinapurath, who is the descendant of Fr. John, is also exists behind the creation of this book and he deserves special mention.

Let the Almighty God bless the writer and all those who lend a hand for this writing venture. The Lamp of Mission is presented before the general public wishing all a spiritual awakening and repletion of mission vitality.

Thirusannidhi

15.01.2010


The Major Archbishop of the
Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

FR. JOHN KUZHINAPURATH OIC: THE MISSION LAMP IN THE GOLDEN HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN KERALA



Rev. Fr. Bernardine Vallathara, OCD

(The writer who passed to heavenly glory on 11 January 2015 was the confessor of our hero)

The great and holy visionary of happy memory Fr. John Kuzhinapurath OIC, a true humanitarian, was born as the last son of Eapen and Kocheetha on 6 July 1904 at Omalloor near Pathanamthitta in the revered Pakalomattam Kuzhinapurath family. After his primary education he continued his studies at Pathnamthitta Middle School. In 1919 he received his diaconate from the Catholicos of the Orthodox Church Mar Baselios. His conviction that God was calling him for the life of a Sanyasin made him drop his college studies. He walked into the religious life at a very young age which was not something common among the Puthankoor community in those days. In 1927 he joined the sanyasi orders of the Bethany Ashram. That very year he received ordination from Servant of God Mar Ivanios.

In 1930 following the footsteps of Mar Ivanios he left Mundenmala at Perunad and came down to Vennikkulam along with the Ashramites. Then in the historical reunion that happened on 20 September 1930



he joined the Catholic faith along with Servant of God Mar Ivnios in the presence of the Kollam Bishop Benziger Aloysius OCD. Thus he received the priceless privilege of becoming one of the five gems of the Reunion Event.

He received his religious formation at Carmel Hill Monastery under Fr. Lucas, a venerated priest of revered memory. During that period the great example of Bishop Benziger who abdicated his Bishopric to lead the like a novice became a great inspiration for Fr. John. Later when the rural parish of Vettinad near Tivndrum and its nearby regions became his missionary field he did yeoman service in uplifting the marginalised of those places financially as well as spiritually and socially.

Even at the age of 75 this aged missionary was very active. He found his place of mission amongst the people affected by Tuberculosis in the sanatorium at Pulayanarkotta. The rehabilitation Centre and Prayer centre there are eternal testimonies of his missionary life. Along with these services he also served faithfully as Novice Master and Superior General of the Bethany Ashram. He taught them to lead an exemplary life in almost the same way that Pope Francis leads the Christian Church with the example of his life now a days.

Thus Fr. John after leaving a trail of unforgettable memories entered eternal glory on 28 January 2015. His mortal remains are interred at the Bethany Ashram at Nalanchira.

Saintly Fr. John intercede for us!

(Courtesy: *Carmel Magazine*, Vol 1/7, February 2014, Page 492-494)



WRITING AS A MISSION

The real sight is insight. That is how I met great luminaries and reinterpreted them through words. But Fr. John Kuzhinapurath is a great visionary whom I met also with my naked eyes. From the younger days when I was destined to travel alone to all the celebrations related to the church and at all reunion celebrations Fr. John Kuzhinapurath was a glorious presence. Even in his eighties I have seen this great missionary travelling through the capital city in his old cycle in search of the poor and the downtrodden. Weren't those cycle travels a silent witness to the holy gospel that charitable acts were a sure way to salvation during our transient lives. How long ago we should have recorded his holy life. It makes us wonder whether the lives of these great men who will spiritually inspire future generations has become a liability for us.

Even then God has chosen me to present the life of this great missionary priest to be an inspiration and a witness to the world in this international year of Priests which also happens to be the centenary of the priestly ordination of Servant of God Mar Ivanios. I take this as a divine vocation in my mission as a writer. I bow my knees in salutation before the incomparable and priceless words of blessings bestowed through the profound foreword written by His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos. The deep foresight of Fr. Dr. Thomas Kuzhinapurath who has set about the awesome task of portraiting for posterity that glorious life not just as a member of the family but as a prominent member of the Syro - Malankara Catholic Church deserves special mention. I thank him sincerely for finding the relevant historical documents necessary for this biography. I sincerely thank Fr. Barnadeen for his blessings, Malnkara Catholic Publications for publishing this book, Fr. Justin Thundumannil OIC for the rare pictures, Sr. Neeha SIC, Sri. Toms John Kuzhinapurath and family for their support and inspiration during the second edition of the book. My sincere thanks to Akshara Offset for the beautiful layout and printing.

Mu humble thanks to all my dear readers whom I am sure will get spiritually energized reading the life of the central character who I have presented before you.

Peter C Abraham

Charivuparambil

Mylapra P O, Pathanamthitta

Phone 0468 2320960, 9497227818

15 January 2015

THE FIVE PILLARS OF REUNION



Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Bishop Mar Theophilos,
Fr. John Kuzhinapurath OIC, Dn. Alexander OIC, Kiliyileth Chacko,



The portrait of Fr. John etched on tinted glass at St. Mary's Cathedral,
Mavelikkara

CONTENTS

Foreword	Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos	3
The Mission Lamp	Fr. Bernardine Vallathara OCD	5
Writing as Mission	Peter C. Abraham.....	7
Chapter 1	An ardent Devotee	11
Chapter 2	Celebrated Personality	14
Chapter 3	An Enlightened Childhood	17
Chapter 4	A Divine Prophecy	20
Chapter 5	To Bethany in search of Peace.....	23
Chapter 6	Farewell to the World	26
Chapter 7	Sacrificial Pilgrimage	31
Chapter 8	Divine Choice.....	33
Chapter 9	First Priest.....	36
Chapter 10	Novice Master	38
Chapter 11	A Vigilant Teacher	41
Chapter 12	Amusing Innocence	44
Chapter 13	Guardian of Faith.....	49
Chapter 14	Homes as Churches	62
Chapter 15	The Good Shepherd.....	66
Chapter 16	Sweetness of Tolerance	72
Chapter 17	Waveless Profundity	74
Chapter 18	Achanappachan	77
Chapter 19	Inidan Damian	83
Chapter 20	Let Me To My Final Slumber Go	88
Appendix	Wikipedia Article.....	93



By the Sick Bedside of Archbishop Mar Ivanios,
Archbishop Mar Gregorios, Fr. John and other Priests



The tableau of the reunion event enacted at 82nd Reunion Day
celebrated at Pathanamthitta. At the extreme left is the actor who
represents Fr. John



Chapter 1

AN ARDENT DEVOTEE IN THE HALOED FOOTSTEPS OF THE GURU

“I Need You My Dear God, You only My Dear God”. This is the inscription on the wooden plaque stuck on the front of the bamboo Asramam roofed with grass. Whose motto is this? There is no need to scrutinise whether these words belonged to St. Francis of Assissi or St. Augustine or Servant of God Mar Ivanios because these are the words tattooed on to the hearts of every man of God. And these words do epitomise the ultimate goal of the saintly priest who abodes in this Asram.

This Asram-the Bethany Asram was built by the Syro Malankara Catholic Church to cater to the welfare of a group of marginalised Adivasis and natives. Within its precincts was an ordinary lamp burning day and night. Sitting in the rays of its glowing embers



+

is a radiantly handsome elderly sanyasin bent over a notebook on the table while seated on a cane chair. Even in the simplicity of his dress we see the reflection of the spiritual guru of Nazareth. His cloak was hardened by the grubby soiled water . How often he had refused the costly polyester clothes offered to him by his well wishers. He was willing to go to any extremes to keep up his simplicity. “ Oh Man you are a mere mortal..mere soil. You have to return to the soil.” His saffron robe seemed to manifest this great truth to his own conscious self. Every once in a while this great saint was kissing the wooden cross on the black thread entwined around his neck in deep introspection. Every action of his was an indication of his undying desire to throw himself into the eternal fire of God’s love. Everything that is not holy will be incinerated into flames and what remain will be the precious pearls of good deeds.

We can call this holy man as the patriarch of the Bethany Asram. He is the first priest of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, the epitome of priesthood to the priests of the Catholic church, just like St. John Maria Viyani the heavenly intercessor for priests. Born on a Wednesday 6 July 1904 he was the youngest of the seven children of Eapen and Kocheetha of Kuzhimeppurath House about 3km into the serene interiors of Omalloor away from Pathanamthitta Town. (Kuzhimeppurath was a branch of the ancient noble family of Pakolomattom and is presently known as Kuzhinapurath.)

Baptised Yohannan and called John he was a true and ardent follower of John, the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ. The John of the Bible was a person who idolised the Son of God as his beloved and who had the rare privilege of leaning affectionately and crying on the breast of Jesus on the night before His death. John came running in ecstatic joy to see his master who rose to Heavenly glory shattering the rocky tomb of Death. In words and deeds and even in his thoughts he celebrated and cosseted his celibacy. Our Fr. John consciously and wilfully followed John of the gospels.



Fr. John used to bring together the marginalised and the poor and impart spiritual physical and psychological knowledge. He sat in his chair with the appointment of composing songs rich enough to carry hearts to heaven. Even the Psalms glorify songs as equivalent to prayers twice a day. The songs sung in unison to the accompaniment of clapping hands by these deprived and marginalised tribals was enough to open up the orioles of heaven in blissful joy. Here is a simple and spiritual song that flowed through the nibs of his pen.

“ I will praise the sweet name of Jesus / I will praise the name forever

Open my sight only to your holy form my Lord Jesus.... (I will
praise..)

Open my years only to your blessed voice my Lord Jesus....
(I will praise..)

Lead my feet only in thine own way my Lord Jesus.... (I will
praise..)

Let my hands do thy labour only my Lord Jesus.... (I will
praise..)

Let my mouth sing only thy praises my Lord Jesus.... (I will
praise..)

May my heart endeavour only to seek your love my Lord Jesus....
(I will praise..)

Let your will may I seek always my Lord Jesus... (I will praise..)

Play the rhythm of your love in my heart strings my Lord Jesus.
(I will praise..)

Let your words my Lord Jesus be my only fortune (I will
praise..)



Chapter 2

CELEBRATED PERSONALITY

It was not only his golden tinted words that immortalised his life. However we see God's love overflowing through his songs and even in his Book "Sahana Yagnam." In Sanskrit there is an adage that states that a person who knows thousand slokas is himself a half poet. In that sense there was a clear stream of poetry that enriched the life of Fr. John. It is this love for poetry that made him quote phrases from Kunjan Nambiar and Nalappadan and Sr. Mary Beninja in his works. He had a rare insight of Eternal truths which he was able to put across in a simple and transparent style which was a signature of his writing skills and language proficiency. The first stanza of "Sahana Yagnam" is an epitome of this unique style: " Does anyone like a time where there are no nights? Light is always better than darkness. We live in a special age where we remove the darkness of the night using electric lights. Even then we do not curse or hate the Nights. That is because we know that light and darkness, day and night are complementary and is required to make the Day whole. We need



the Nights to enjoy the loveliness of the Day.”

He never considered himself a saint. But those who knew him well would say without any hesitation: “Here is a living Saint”. Following are two testimonies given by two people.

“ The life of respected Fr. John is an inspiration for all of us worthy to be emulated. He lived a saintly life. And He died a saint. What a blessed life!” (Fr. Jacob O I C, former Superior General of Bethany Asram and Writer)

“ I can very boldly say that Fr. John is a saintly spiritual guide who leads everyone to Lord Jesus. The psychological and physical pain which he had to suffer in the eve of his life was a painful dedication to the glory of God similar to the sacrificial endurance of Saint Theresa of Lisieux as seen in her autobiography. Fr. John was a purification for the Malankara Church and for all of us. Lord Jesus said “ I Thirst” on the cross. Fr. John was a missionary called to satiate this thirst for souls and till the last moments of his life he strived for its actualisation.” (Sr. Dahiya S I C, Thiruvalla.)

Definitely Fr. John was not indifferent to religion. But it is a fact that there are very few spiritual leaders who practised universal brotherhood the way Fr. John did. His ascetic missions on cycle and by foot were missions to interact with people. It is notable how he was able to manifest the essence of various religions put forth by himself in his “Sahana Yagmam” through his endeavours to wipe the tears of the less fortunate irrespective of caste, creed or race.

“The pristine question of Jesus Christ as to who can indict him of crime earned him the cross. The passion of Christ was suffered with prayers for those who abused Him. What an immaculate model to follow!”

“One cannot imagine the hardships faced by Prophet Muhammed when he exhorted everyone to live according to the teachings of Allah. Sri Krishna who taught the Geethopedesham in the Kurukshetra war was destined to die with an arrow shot by a hunter”



Later he saw the people of the world as one family and wrote like this:

“ We are all children of God. If so the entire world is a single family Every good deed and bad deed every agony and ecstasy affects each member of the family. We continue to enjoy the fruits of the good deeds of our forefathers; similarly the effects of bad deeds. Maybe the agony and pain that we suffer today is for the ablation of the sins of members of our extended family”.

The conclusion of “Sahana Yagnam” exemplifies and glorifies this universal thought.

“When man loves man/ God is born in the minds
When man loathe man God dies in the minds.”



Chapter 3

AN ENLIGHTENED CHILDHOOD

Kunjan Nambiar has observed that “Even in a multitudinous crowd there will be only a handful of people with a faultless personality.” This maxim perfectly fits the last child of Kuzhinapurath family. He had such a handsome figure and innocent smile accentuated with a sweet communication skill and vibrancy that would endear him to anyone at first sight itself. He was a beacon of pride for his family and church. His sense of humour and his voluble laughter became his hallmark.

He was a strict adherent to prayer in all the seven Yamas (a period of three and a half hours). The thirst for Biblical knowledge reigned supreme in this youngster for whom prayer was an inevitable fuel for his life. One could fathom a tiny angel in the prayerful stance of this child when he knelt in prayer with folded hands and closed eyes. He was a balm to the hearts of his parents and family.



John had a happy childhood in the warm embrace of his father's love. The untimely death of his father formed a burning hole in his life. But he continued his spiritual journey with the torch of hope from amidst the darkness of personal agony. The responsibility of the household was taken up and followed without erring from his father's path by the eldest son Koshykunj.

"I had this deep desire to study" Fr. John used to say about his quest for knowledge whenever he went down memory lane. He was a bright student but there were no schools in Omalloor during those days. So he started his education in a Government school in Pathanamthitta walking several miles a day. His father wanted him to become a Doctor in service of the nation. Since there were only three classes, his future education was a question mark but providentially every year the classes were upgraded one year at a time. He reached third form at the age of thirteen. He was in a race for knowledge and nothing could distract his concentration. He had to give up Sanskrit studies and doctoral learning as he had a lot to study in his syllabus. His only concern was to reduce the time spend in walking.. So he requested his brother who was the head of the household then to buy him a cycle. His brother who was going through trying times replied that he will buy him a cycle if he studies better. On reaching Fourth form he had a brilliant success with scholarship. As a reward his brother bought him a brand new Humber Bicycle

That inaugurated his unending cycle journey for the next seven decades of his social service. If his brother had promised him a cycle on the basis of his sixth form result he would never have got a bicycle because he failed that year. He suffered from severe fever and was bedridden at the time of the exam. But this did not deter him from his journey. With steadfast faith and hope he pursued his studies with a determined smile.

That was the time John who was born a Jacobite had an undying desire to meet the legendary Fr. Geevarghese Panicker. Fr. Panicker was the first priest to have secured an M A Degree and hence was affectionately called M A Achan. His was a



magnetic personality a scholar par excellence, born orator and administrator, incomparable in his impeccable style. His administrative skills earned him the Principalship of Kottayam MD Seminary at the very young age of Twenty seven. His educational endeavours include his distinguished spell as Professor of Serampore University, the only Christian University in India. He did not have any qualms in letting go his position as Professor drawing a salary of British Standards in his endeavour to embrace the Christian ideals of selfless love and sacrifice. He decided to lead the life of a Sanyasin even living with the Hindu Rishis to acquire their simple lifestyle. He went and stayed in Gandhiji's Sabarmathi Asramam, Rabindra Tagore's Santhinikethan and in the Sriramakrishna Asrams. He adorned himself in Saffron robes and set up the Bethany Asram. He got as his disciples the young academicians whom he had helped educate at Serampore utilising his salary.

His goal was to spread the cooling balm of Christian gospel through the length and breadth of India. In this connection he reached Maakamkunnu near Pathanamthitta. It was at the beginning of the historical Makkamkunnu Convention. Amidst the thronging crowd that came to see the Bethany Pithav in the plenitude of his glory was Kuzhinapurath John. Without batting even his eyelid John sat in the front row devouring the oratorical skills of the father of Bethany. Concluding his speech he said:

“Children, I have given refuge to a few orphans in my Ashram at Mundanmala. We my fellow sanyasins and me, found them amidst our journey begging alms. Kindly deposit any pieces of money you have with you in the offering boxes, in order to help them.”

Hearing this John counted the money in his pocket which was just enough for his return journey. Without thinking twice he deposited all the money in the offertory box and with a contented heart walked all the way back home.



Chapter 4

A DIVINE PROPHECY

Bidding goodbye to his native place he came to Kottayam. That was in search of his innate and intrinsic yearning to attain higher education. He took admission at the famed M.D. Seminary. John was thrilled at the spiritual ambiance there with the presence of enlightened scholars, regular prayers, and library that transported people to realms of knowledge.

Right from his childhood he had a deep down desire in his heart nurtured by prayer. He had openly expressed this desire every time he was asked what his ambition was. He had a dislike for all transient desires of the world and wanted to align himself with the Triune God who is the alpha and omega of heavenly life. John desired to follow the footsteps of the Son of God who died on the cross for the salvation of the world. His only desire was to be ordained in Christ.

People from his church and family encouraged him. When people, who are erudite as well as chaste, decide to become



priests, definitely they will become great assets to church and society. The path to priesthood is filled with thorns. It is filled with sacrifice and impediments. It is a path for those who love Lord Jesus above everything else. They have to drink the same cup of perseverance suffered by Jesus. They have to carry the same wooden cross. Most people opt for the broader way in their search for physical pleasures. And in their journey they seem to grumble sarcastically “What God, what eternity, what paradise”. Some families try to throw muck at the vocation of priesthood. But that won’t hinder the heart of a person fixed on the love of God. John too chose that path to grow in the love of God.

John received the Korooyo order with a glowing heart and a smiling face from the Catholicos Mar Baselios in 1919. The continuing years were dedicated to spiritual study and physical education. As his studies in Physics his mind became more focussed on the truth that is God. Now everything about Bro. John became focussed on the brilliance of the Almighty. He became more humble as he became more ardent in God’s love. Even the rhythm of his heart resonated the sound of Ohm. He got the Diaconate from Kundara Mar Gregorios (the third Catholicos) at the Omalloor Jacobite Church on June 24, 1919 at the age of seventeen.

He continued at the D. M. Seminary for three years. It was a period of profound study of theology, sacraments and Syriac. Acquisition of knowledge became his heartfelt vocation. As his Seminary education neared completion, John approached the Catholicos and humbly asked him whether he can study some more.

“Good” he answered. Brother go home to your native place and study as much as you want. After that you can come back. “

There was no use going back to his native place where there was no facility for higher education. The Catholicos was not aware of this. So he went to Pala where his elder brother K. E. Paul was the owner of a bank. There he joined the prestigious St. Thomas High School.



Even amidst the strange circumstances Bro. John endeared himself to everyone there. He excelled himself in curricular and co-curricular activities. His speaking skills made him popular. During this time the prelate of the Diocese of Changanacherry, His Excellency Bishop Kalassery came on a visit to the school where he was accorded a grand welcome. Bro. John had the privilege of speaking on that occasion. In a very logical and spiritual manner he spoke with a clarity and beauty that would remain in the hearts of all those who heard it. As he bowed to the audience to leave the stage the Bishop with a smile on his face called him to his side. As the audience looked on he almost ran to the Bishop's side and received his blessings. And at that moment as if in prophecy His Excellency said " Brother you are destined to become a Catholic priest in the future."

Semmasan was stunned. How can he an ardent follower of the Jacobite faith become a Catholic? How is it possible for a member of the Kuzhinapurath family who are ardent followers of the Jacobite faith leave the fold. Joining the Catholic faith had never crossed his mind and even thinking about it was beyond all possibility.

Even as he kissed the hands of the Bishop and sat in his seat, his mind was agitated: "Will something like that happen".



Chapter 5

TO BETHANY IN SEARCH OF PEACE

The sole aim of Bro. John was to realise with distinctive clarity Godly things so that he can indulge in them with devotion and enter a devout priestly life. But what was prevalent in the church destined to shape his priestly life was contrary to his yearning. The Jacobite Church was entangled in legal issues with the Congregation divided on two sides fighting tooth and nail for power and wealth. There was a visible decline in spirituality as the Church grouped itself into two factions-one paying allegiance to the Patriarch of Antioch and the other expressing loyalty to the Catholicos at Kottayam. Bishop Vattaseril was dragged to the court for several years to give witness. Spirituality was at its lowest. There was even an instance of the body guard of the Metropolitan being murdered in broad daylight on the banks of River Meenachal, near the Old Seminary. The various litigations and the money loan business associated with the church saddened M. A. Semmasan so much that he took upon himself to assuage



+ the aridity in the church through his ennobling messages on the sacraments. He also published various spiritually exhilarating books intended on nourishing the ebbing of faith in the Church.

Just like all the other people in the church thirsting for spiritual and morally peaceful faith, Bro. Kuzhinapurath John was also attracted to the Bethnay Faith and its proponent M. A. Achan. Bro. John started his journey to the Bethany Asram set up in the Forest fulfilling a long cherished desire of his heart.

Bethany: There is no better and apt name. That was not a name picked by M. A. Achan. It was manifested by the divine aura within his heart. It was shown to him when his hand involuntarily touched a name in the Biblical Dictionary with closed eyes while searching for a name for the Asram. Bethany means a House of Solace. Bethany became a beacon light, founded by the Saintry M.A. Achan, in the Jacobite church deluged by litigations and lack of peace and consolation.

Mundanmala is at the zenith of the steep Perunadu from the banks of River Kakkat. Around 500 acres of forest land had been cleared as a combined and concerted effort by the founding father of Bethany with the help of his 25 followers. An inexplicable joy assailed the heart of Bro. John as soon as his feet touched the soil of Bethany. The intense oblation of the Asramites and their vigilant prayers along with the simplicity of their life was an exciting experience for Bro. John. They used to wear clothes dyed in muddy water and wear crowns of thorns and carry heavy crosses. They used to kneel and beg for food saying “ give us something to eat” and ate the most basic of food enough for survival.

“Can I see the Bishop?” John asked the disciples. It was going to be the fulfilment of an intense desire that budded in the mind of Bro. John to meet the Bethany Head in person, who was instrumental in igniting goodness in the Church. He was later consecrated Bishop with the name Mar Ivanios. “ Aabo, is there in the grass hut yonder”. The disciples used to call him ‘Aabo’



which means father.

It was an orphanage attached to the Asram. Bro. John walked towards the hut thatched with grass and made with wild bamboo. Orphan boys irrespective of their caste or creed were being taken care of at this orphanage. The aim of Bethany father was not confined to the welfare of Christians. He had the marginalised as a whole in his scheme of service. He adopted several villages with Hindu majority. The excruciating pain he suffered in his legs did not deter him from visiting his less fortunate brethren, on his white pony and serving them medicines and food and embracing them with his loving words. He enjoyed eating with them in the slums, hugging them and kissing them before bidding goodbye on his journey to the next village.

The sight Bro John witnessed on reaching the door of the hut was to remain with him the rest of his life. Aabo was nursing a very sick orphan boy keeping his head on his lap and applying medicine on his forehead. He had no qualms in wiping his flowing nose with his own handkerchief and lovingly calling him ‘son’.

Tears rolled down the eyes of Bro. John. No one but a saint can only behave the way Bethany father was behaving. This sight was enough to incite him to a life of intense commitment. He made a commitment in his mind: “Yes I want to lead the life of a Sanysin” like this great man of God.



Chapter 6

FAREWELL TO THE WORLD

A Sanyasin cannot but bid farewell to his family , relatives, home and everything that is personal in his immense love of God. Bethany is the first Asram to be set up in the Jacobite Church . The other priests in the church were all married priests. Therefore everyone was surprised at the decision of Bro. John. His family was distraught at the decision. But Bro. John was unmoved. He was quite sure. He said: “Once you become a family man service is not possible. A life of total dedication and discipline is essential for the life of a Sanyasin..” No obstacle could take the spirit out of Bro. John. Which group of rocks can stop the river from reaching the sea!

It was an age of reason and science impelling people to go beyond the horizons in search of knowledge. But one had to overcome that desire too. The greatest war is to overcome the self. Spirituality has to lord over the life and the flesh. That is



what is meant by being dead to the world. When St. Paul who got his erudite scholarship from the likes of Gamaliel from a renowned University got enlightenment he cried out to the world “who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword” (Rom. 8:35).

Bro. John was getting ready for his higher education after passing Intermediate with flying colours from the renowned C.M.S. College at Kottayam. But how spontaneously he submitted himself to the call and will of God. There ended his desire for Higher education. At that moment his heart was yearning to become a Priest and that too an Asramite Priest. He was led to this decision by the philanthropic deeds of Bethany and its founder.

The father of Bethany with his divine intuition welcomed the new comer with his whole heart. The disciple started his thorny path of devotion accepting the regimented and strict routine of training. On 21 January 1928 he was inducted into the Ardhpatha of discipleship. After a successful completion of this phase the elated Guru inducted him into the final phase or the Dharmasishya phase of discipleship.

The venerated Fr. Joshua was his Guru. Bro. John was a role model for his peers. This was a period of great devotion and sacrifice when one forsakes all physical desires and concentrates solely on the Almighty. It was during this time that a relative came all the way from Omalloor to the interiors of the forest in search of Bethany Asram. The news he carried was beyond acceptance. His mother had gone on to the next world. But he bore it with a stoic silence. Only his eyes teared and his lips quivered with agony.

“Oh my dear Ammachi, how will I come?” John asked in anguish.

He could almost hear his mother speaking to him “My dear son, Sanyasasram is the paradise on earth, so my dear child you stay in the Asram and pray for this mother. Please ask Bishop Mar



Ivanios also to pray for my soul. My child may God Almighty bless you to serve the Lord for a long time. We will meet on that beautiful shore in the presence of our Lord”.

With abject pain he told his relative to return without him. “ I will pray for the repose of her soul along with my fellow Asramites. It is wrong to leave the disciplined life of the Asram. Later I will pay my obeisance at her tomb”.

Sanyasins visit their homes only once in five or six years. If Bro. John desired he would have got permission from the authorities to attend the funeral. But he did not want to sever himself from the rigid discipline of the Asram even for a day. So he spent the whole day in fasting and prayer. Like St. Paul he could challenge death and assert that even death could not deter him from his call.

Only Saturdays are holidays for the Asramites. That day everyone would come together and toil in the agricultural land along with the tribals. They will collect the produce of the land like Tapioca, gooseberry, guava, lemon, mangoes, banana etc. They will rectify the damage caused to the agricultural field by wild boar. With axes and other work knives they would collect firewood and bark of trees for future use. It was also their duty to make lunch. But that was one chore Bro. John was not adept at. He did not enjoy cooking. Neither did he enjoy eating tasty food. For him food was only subsistence.

The main food at Bethany was porridge and pulses. Meat was completely avoided. Still the tribals used to trap wild animals and bring it to the Asram. Tasty meat was prepared in the Asram. Sometimes it was prepared and given to the children at the orphanage. Though not adept at cooking he also helped in the kitchen. He helped in drawing water, bringing firewood, cutting vegetables . scraping coconut etc.

People from various walks of life and faith used to visit Mundanmala almost every day. During lent and Passion Week thousands of people used to throng the Asram to listen to the words of Mar Ivanios. During this spiritual endeavours Bro John’s



vitality and zest was very evident.

It was from Dharmasishya phase that John started growing his beard. He was a very handsome and appealing person with fair colour and bright twinkling eyes. He had a permanent smile on his face which accentuated his divinity and spirituality. On October 30, 1929 he took his temporary vows from the blessed hands of Mar Ivanios at the Bethany chapel,

Before he was ordained priest he had to undergo three months of rigorous retreat life. Just like a butterfly undergoing the rigorous life of the cocoon Bro. John was going through the period of retreat when the next blow hit him. His brother passed away. This time he went home for a fellowship after a long time. He knelt beside his brother's dead body and prayed for a long time. And without causing any hindrance to his devotion he immediately went back to his Asram.



Chapter 7

SACRIFICIAL PILGRIMAGE

“Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered” how significant were these words even in the life of the Father of Bethany. The very same people who sang Hosaana rises up and unites in revolt and use abusive language.

Bro. John like the John of the Gospels leaned on to the heart of the Father of Bethany sharing in his moments of agony. The Catholicos party had so far seen Bishop Mar Ivanios as a saint and scholar. Bethany was the lifeline of the church. The church was eager to ordain him as the next Catholicos. Even in the synods where the Catholicos and Metropolitans of the Malankara church came together the words of Mar Ivanios was heeded above others as his words were futuristic and visionary. It was only because of the heroic leadership of a thirty year old MA Achan that a Catholicate throne was set up in Malankara. Even Bishop Vattasseril during the legal questioning acknowledged the authorship of the Catholicate throne to Mar Ivanios. The synod was forced to comply



with the laws which gave independent existence to Bethany and will be controlled only by the trust. The church will not have any say in its functioning. “I don’t want to be a Bishop” declared this saint of Bethany as the church in its full faith decided to ordain him the Bishop of Bethany. It was only after repeated requests and compulsion that he agreed. And he agreed because he believed that if he was ordained Bishop he will be able to do the profession of ten sisters whom he had sent to Barisol for training in Sisterhood as Bishop Vattasseril had declined to do so. Even so M. A. Achan put forward several conditions. One among them was his insistence that he will not follow the Jacobite tradition of cursing the Holy Pope Leo at the time of the ordination. Even to this the Synod agreed. The ordained Bishop of Bethany in the presence of the huge audience declared: “We should all join the Catholic church which is the original church set up by Jesus Christ.” It was a long and searing speech, which was quickly written down and sent for publication to the Bethany magazine by Bro. John. It consumed about forty pages of the Bethany Magazine. The Catholicos and Bishop Vattasseril were proponents of the reunion. In 1923 the court ruling was against the Catholicos faction and had ordered the transfer of all its properties including their Seminary to the Patriarchal faction. Therefore the only solution was to reunite with the Catholic faith. In this regard the aging Bishop Vattasseril went to Baghdad and requested the Patriarch Rehmani who had reunited with the Catholic church from the Jacobite church to include them also in the reunited church. Soon the Synod that met at Parumala Seminary decided to reunite with the Catholic Church as soon as possible and entrusted Bishop Mar Ivanios of Bethany to bring it to realization.

The church authorities who were singing the praise of Mar Ivanios shifted their stance after four years when a court order came in favour of the Catholicos faction restoring all former glory and property to it. He was ordered to step away from the reunion movement. But Bishop Mar Ivanios stood his ground and continued his journey of truth until he got a positive response from Rome.



Bro. John was a silent witness to the agonised prayers of his master who used to physically afflict himself, physically beating his chest as he cried out to God almighty.

He was given orders not to set up any more Bethany churches. People were restrained from giving offerings to the Bethany offering boxes. The harassment continued through these controlling orders. The very same authorities who extolled him as a living saint started abusing him as “the wolf in sheep’s clothing, who came down from the Bethany forest to swallow the Syrian children”. Deacon John along with a majority of the Asramites supported their master. Even while some of the disciples were reluctant and hesitant Deacon John became a spokesperson for the Reunion movement. This was an example for the others to follow.

Although he could rule over the five hundred acres of land which was under his authority Bishop Ivanios decided to give it up for a greater cause. He was incited by the spirit of God to leave it/ He was giving up everything he had for procuring a land of treasure. It was an explosive decision as the Bishop climbed down the Bethany hillock on 20 August 1930 along with Bishop Theophilus and twenty disciples. There started the pilgrimage in search of the land of Canaan throwing away the shackles of the Pharaoh of Misrem...from the spiritual aridity to the land of milk and honey.



Chapter 8

DIVINE CHOICE

The entourage was staying at Vennikulam with the support of some Hindu brethren who extended boarding and lodging to them. They had bid adieu to the jacobite church but they have not been accepted into the Catholic faith either. The following days and nights of abject hunger were a learning experience for Deacon John to experience the divine ways of God. They were like the refugees by the rivers of Babylon who hung their lyres on the nearby branches and cried out remembering Zion. Deacon John too cried in agonised spirituality in hope. They were the predecessors of the future ... the New Jerusalem. As they swallowed the bitterness of existence battered and abused they knew there was light at the end of the tunnel..for the coming generations...the foundation for an affluent and flourishingly prosperous posterity.

It was a period of constant and incessant prayers. It was in this divine ambience that preparations started for the ordination of



Deacon John. On Wednesday 10 September 1930, he received his priestly orders from the blessed hands of Bishop Mar Ivanios at the Bethany Church, Vennikulam. From there started the journey of Fr. John.

As he proceeded to the altar for his first mass amidst a divine atmosphere there was a radiance of piety about him. Every word that was uttered seemed to proceed from his heart. In deep concentration he offered the mass with his voice breaking at times and eyes overflowing. In a heavenly ambience he uttered the prayers with a clarity that manifested the relevance of each word of the prayers.

One week went by. Bishop Mar Ivanios was stationed at Thirumoolapuram. Fr. John came to Thirumoolapuram from Vennikulam to discuss certain matters of importance. Deacon Alexander who was an skilled engineer was also along with him. Deacon Alexander, a beloved disciple of Bishop Mar Ivanios was the architect of several Bethany churches. But when the church authorities riled against Bishop Mar Ivanios and his attempts for the reunion, Deacon Alexander was disturbed. He deserted the camp of Bishop Mar Ivanios and the awareness classes led by the Bishop and took up a contrary cause taken up by four other deacons. But Deacon John had been attending all the awareness classes diligently. He used to advise Alexander constantly and it was this persuasion which led to his kneeling down before the Bishop of Bethany in the last minute at 11.45 pm on 19 August 1930. He too expressed his willingness to leave Bethany Hills and join the reunion movement.

Both Fr. John and Deacon Alexander reached Thirumoolapuram. Bishop Mar Ivanios and his right hand man Bishop Jacob Mar Theophilus were waiting in the Verandah dressed for travel. They were waiting for the car of Melamparampil Oommachan who was an important member of the congregation. As they kissed the hand of Bishop Mar Ivanios he said: ‘ It is the holy spirit that brought you here. Both of you come with us’.



Rome had given the consent for reunion. It can be considered a miracle in the realm of Christianity. It was at a time when the various Catholicos factions were getting ready to unite with the universal Catholic Church that the Bethany church started its communications for reunion. But all the others except for the Father of Bethany and his handful of followers were still rooted in the physical “plains of Jordan”. It was really miraculous that a separate church was given consent for an autonomous church. The realization that only seventeen rites were allowed in the Catholic Church in the twentieth century enhances the importance of this individual church. It was a new interpretation of the Biblical words: ‘Fear not little flock, for it is your father’s pleasure to give you the kingdom...’. The mother church was lovingly beckoning her beloved children to join her in spite of the innumerable letters of dissent sent to Rome.

The directive from Rome was that this reunion with the Catholic Church after two hundred and seventy seven years should be prayerfully done in the presence of the Bishop of Kollam His Grace Maria Aloysius Benzigar. It was for the fulfilment of this order that Bishop Mar Ivanios was about to embark. In divine providence the tradition of taking a priest and a Brother with the Metropolitan on such journeys would also be fulfilled.

Fr. John and Deacon Alexander were thrilled. When Oommachan’s car came the Bishops sat in the back seat and Fr. John was also seated with them. Deacon Alexander sat in the front. It was then that Kiliyileth K. G. Chacko affectionately called Manager Chackochan came to see the Bishop. He was one of the first followers of Bishop Mar Ivanios and a constant companion who left his lucrative business to be with M. A. Achan right from the time he became the rector of the M D Seminary. He was also the first inmate of the third Asram set up by His Grace for Lay people. On knowing the purpose of the journey he too requested to be taken along with them. He got in along with Deacon Alexander and the car speeded towards the Bishop’s House at Thankassery, Kollam.



Chapter 9

FIRST PRIEST

By the time the group of five reached the Bishop's House at Thankassery the torrential rain which was pouring heavily was now slowly subsiding. Though tired and exhausted, Bishop Benziger was waiting joyfully for them. He hugged the guests warmly and spent two days in devotion and prayers. And there after arrived that day which is to be forever written in golden letters - 20 September 1930 which was a Saturday. On that day in the afternoon around three o' clock Bishop Mar Ivanios and Bishop Theophilus were accepted into the universal Catholic Church.

The Bishop had decided that he will induct the remaining three into the Church on his return to Thirumoolapuram.

That day seemed brighter than other days though the sky was overcast with Monsoon clouds. Bishop Ivanios and his fellow followers decided to take a walk through the pearly banks of the seaside near Thankassery. It was during these walks that solutions



to many problems come to his heart which was like a transistor receiving messages from God. He was in constant communion with God. This time too, the Holy Spirit revealed a divine purpose.

“ Let the reunion of the remaining three people happen today itself. Do you know why it is special?”

Bishop Mar Ivanios was ecstatic. If they are also reunited there would be a congregational completion. The new church will be represented by Bishop Mar Ivanios, Bishop Mar Theophilus, Fr. Kuzhinapurath John OIC. a priest, Alexander Attupurath, a Deacon and Kilileth Chacko, a layman.

Together they went back to the Bishop's House immediately. Bishop Ivanios himself wrote the pledge to be taken. Bishop Benziger himself inducted the other three into the Church. It is a matter of privilege that the first five members of the Malankara Catholic Church were members of Bethany. That is the reason why Bishop Ivanios referred to Bethany as the cradle of the reunion movement. From that day till his demise at the age of 91 beloved Fr. John Kuzhinapurath worked ceaselessly and diligently for the growth of the reunion. Being the first priest, he was committed to the cross of the Church. His dedication to the Church which is the manifestation of Christ was something resembling the life of Jesus. He was ready to take on the destiny of nurturing the newly formed church with a staunch and unwavering loyalty which was strong enough to overcome all oppositions that arose. He was on a heroic pilgrimage knowing that the covenant was between him and his Lord.



Chapter 10

NOVICE MASTER

To become a Sanyasin at Bethany one needed to be trained for twelve years. But Fr. John had not received so many years of training. He joined the Asram in 1927. He was ordained priest after just two and a half years. Therefore the Bishop told him “I am going to send you to the Asram at Pangode in Trivandrum”.

He believed in the supreme model of Jesus Christ for a sanyasin. So he was eager to be trained in that fashion. He was being sent to the Carmelite Monastery , OCD. When he reached there for a training of one year , he was welcomed into the monastery by His Grace the former Metropolitan of Kollam Aloysius Maria Benziger. His Grace had set aside the Bishopric due to the hassles of old age and was spending his declining years in silent meditation at the monastery. His life of austerity and piety was an inspiration and motivation for Fr. John. In the profound spring of spirituality prevalent at the monastery there arose a deep bond of student and teacher which continued throughout his stay there. He



was stationed in a room which was named “hope”.

God Almighty was slowly and steadily leading the toddler church through its infancy amidst many adversities. God in his infinite mercy continued to provide the daily needs of the church through the days of hardships and privation. Slowly the church was able to acquire its own property to set up the Bethany Asram at Nalanchira near Trivandrum. The buildings for the Seminary were built and the first batch of seminarians was admitted on 21 November 1933. There was no dearth for seminarians as people from elite families came forward responding to the divine call. To lead them in their spiritual journey there was Fr. John as their rector. He was to be an inspiring teacher to many including Thangalathil T. E. Varghese who later took on the name Arch Bishops Benedict Mar Gregorios. Though he was only twenty nine years of age, he proved to be a conscientious and scholarly teacher as experienced by the students.

With his meticulous regime of prayer at every hour of prayer he became an assiduous role model for his students. Apart from this rigid observance of prayer he had a constant communion with God when he prostrated regularly before the Tabernacle and the Holy Qurbano. If anyone enquired what he had been doing inside the chapel for such a long time he answered in the words of blessed John Maria Vinayani. “I just look at him and he at me”. The spiritual energy and vitality he received as a result of his direct communion with God was exquisite. It was this spirituality he was imparting to his disciples. He inculcated in them deep values of subservience to authority. He was at peace with all inconveniences at the Seminary wearing the very same type of clothes that was decided by Bethany. He wore only white pants. He lead a very pristine life all through praying even at midnight in the chapel like an ever glowing lamp.

With the establishment of the hierarchy the Dioceses of Trivandrum and Thiruvalla came into being. Bethany Asram was also bifurcated according to the Diocese. Fr. John was one among the six Sanyasins sent to Thiruvalla to set up the Asram. There



too he became the teacher of the seminarians who were enrolled there.

He liked to be one among the disciples and did not want to be an authoritarian. And he became a role model leading an ascetic life. Though he was a friend laughing with the seminarians and playing with them in the playgrounds, he was a strict disciplinarian when it came to prayers and devotion. He had a sense of humour which he displayed while in the playing fields especially while playing Volley ball.

The Professor was a beacon light amidst the personal problems of the seminarians. He used to write soothing letters of consolation to those who shared their tribulations with him. He was a leading light of immense faith leading retreats and delivering spiritual talks, thereby dispelling the darkness engulfing many a life. This is the reason why Sr. Theophin SIC said of this saint: “ Apart from God the reason for my calling is Fr. John.” The same sentiment is expressed by Sr. Vincent SIC also of Thiruvalla: “ Fr. John was lead everyone whom he met with to the presence of God. Setting aside all his tiredness and fatigue he was constantly bringing souls to the bosom of Jesus.”



Chapter 11

A VIGILANT TEACHER

“A Good novice is like a piece of cloth in the hands of a tailor”. These were the first words of Fr. John to his students on the first day of class. The clothes should be cut according to measurement. Its stitches should be strong. In short, he was insistent on the perfection of the new seminarians until they reach the nomenclature of children of God. This endeavour was easy and effortless for Fr. John, whose every minute of existence was devoted to vigilant confirmation of saintliness. Every member of the order of the Imitation of Christ should instruct their lives in the image of Christ.

Father John did not train with the support of law or knowledge but from the understanding acquired through years of devotion. Sr. Francina DM remembers Fr. John who was the novice spiritual father with the Daughters of Mary for eighteen years: “All the spiritual discourses of Fr. John were based on his personal experiences. He does not use notes or books while teaching. He



+

was not eager to teach new philosophies or ideas. But in very simple language he was sharing those personal experiences which he received through the grace of God. He also shared snippets of news from the news papers, anecdotes from the lives of other people, newer realms of knowledge, the good things around in the society etc. The essence of his advice was to experience the perpetual love of God and create an eternal relationship with God. He also emotionally explained the profundity of a close communion with God. With an ardency which outweighed his age, health, time and space he took upon himself the task of bringing souls to the presence of God. He indulged in all these soul saving activities without expecting any returns sometimes distributing tracts, books, rosary, medallions, prayer cards etc.”

He spent a lot of time with his students in meditation and prayers. He evaluated their prayer life and gave necessary instructions. He taught that a saint is a second Christ manifested through the secrets revealed by the Almighty through Christ the lord.

He spent half an hour at dawn and dusk everyday with his students in meditation. It was a time of intense devotion spent on the knees in abject concentration oblivious to the world around him. The good teacher was leading his students with the divine light obtained through intense devotion and affection to God. He aptly qualified for the name “Guru” as it is a combination of the words “Gu” which means darkness and “Ru” which means one who dispels it. The great Author, Retreat preacher and former Superior General of Bethany Asram Fr. Jacob Perumbral OIC has observed that it was a great privilege to have been a student under the tutelage of this great master. He also witnesses that Fr. John used to shut himself in his room to observe hard and severe physical penance often beating himself with a hard stick to coax his soul in the ways lead by the Holy Spirit.

He taught all the subjects excellently well. He single handedly managed all the subjects : Ascetic life, penances, devotions, hourly prayers, godly way of life. He shared with his students the



spiritual lives of saintly people which he had experienced. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Theresa of Lissieuex Aloysius Gonzaga, John Berchmans, Stansilavos et all were recreated to the students to manifest the profoundness of a saintly life. He trained them in the saintly life experiences and ways of devotion of St. Clara and St. Ignatious during the Novitiate period. He made writing Diary and homilies along with spiritual readings compulsory. He was a hard taskmaster in all these things. When students did not comply, he gave them severe punishments. Once when a student who was deputed to water the plants came late from his bath and was not able to carry out his assignment, Fr. John made him stand with a fully filled flower pot outside the classroom for the entire duration of the class.

All the thirteen seminarians of the batch completed their twelve years of priestly formation and got ordained. This was a rare spectacle as not even one of the seminarians deviated from their calling. The reason for this great achievement was the path of wisdom and spirituality of this great man of God. It was also a singular occurrence as there were brothers in that group. May the name of those thirteen priests who with their overwhelming presence made the Malankara Catholic church proud become a bouquet of gratitude to the revered memory of the great teacher. They were the Rev. Vincent, Ignatius, Dominic, Mathew, John Berchmans, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas, Stansilavos, Pius, Clement, Beneventure, Dominic Savio and Jerome.

When the space for study and boarding did not suffice for these thirteen people, Fr. John built a new place for their stay. He also prepared a good Volley Ball court for them. He created a vineyard out of the arid land. He along with his students toiled in the land and planted trees and vegetables which gave a fruitful produce. There were no wild plants or non yielding trees among them. If he found any he would lovingly comb their branches and await patiently for them to bear fruits. He watered and manured it with care. He was the heavenly gardener who nurtured his land and the human beings in his care to create a heaven on earth peopled with good human beings.



Chapter 12

AMUSING INNOCENCE

Even in his commands there was an aura of humour. He was not always harsh in his punishments. Fr. John Berchmans OIC describes such a facetious experience. There was one novice who was slightly naughty always. On almost all days, after breakfast he wouldn't wait to clean the surroundings, but run to the jack tree in the corner of the yard: he would then climb a low branch and lie upside down balancing himself from the branch using his legs, with the expertise of a monkey. While swinging and swaying in that position there was a naughty song on his lips:

‘Let me climb, twist and jump on the branches of this wild tree
Holding myself with my tail, let me swing
I will show such physical tricks, and achieve fame
If you tailless people know this, you will run with raised tails.’



Seeing this wild behaviour Fr. John slowly came out of his room unobserved by the acrobat and instead of shouting at him “what craziness are you upto” which would have surely made him fall headlong on to the ground, he came to his side and slowly started talking about everything other than his misdeed. He talked about a lot of other things very softly and our character was forced to hang like a bat upside down unable to move either up or down. He could not utter a word. Fr. John continued to talk. When it reached appoint when he would have fallen down with a disheartened and repentant heart he asked him to come down slowly without falling. Immediately on hearing it he sat straight, jumped down and ran for his life. That was the beginning of his run beyond the walls of the seminary to his home.

Silence was to be sternly observed every day after night prayers till the Holy Qurbano was over the next day morning. During this time there will not be any communication using words. If there was any emergency they could use gestures to communicate. Fr. John was incessantly disturbed from his sleep by the hordes of mice that left their holes to raid the pantry and create hara-kiri. Coming out of their holes in large numbers, their pranks during the middle of the night were numerous. When they started destroying everything in the Asram including the cassock of Fr. John, he decided ‘enough was enough’ and with the help of his students decided to completely eradicate the menace. Fr. John took out the stick which he had kept under his bed for self persecution and ran behind the mice. But the mice were too smart for him. They would race away to the nearby fence and sit atop it as though challenging him to come after them. If he trained his torch at them, they would jump away to the adjacent plots. This game of hide and seek used to send Fr. John into peals of laughter which used to reverberate across the Asram. His laughter was a celebration to the seminarians and a panacea for the pressures in the Asram. Writes Sr. Francina. “Fr. John used to crack jokes and laugh loudly and send the listeners also into peals of laughter. He used to say that laughter is a good medication. The ever smiling face of Fr. John was a sure stay of peace, calmness and serenity to



all who approached him with the tribulations of life. His presence near the death beds of patients was a consolation and assurance. Fr. John had a magnetic personality. He proved to be food for the hungry, roof for the roofless, medicine for the sick and freedom for the prisoners. He was the epitome of simple living, lofty ideals and heavenly life.”

Fr. Victor OIC who had the privilege of being his student reminisces his life : “ He was an ever burning lamp constantly dispersing light. Immaculate and pristine purity was evident in every stance of his. He was never angry and he was never known to be annoyed with anyone. He used to speak about eternity with such intensity that one would think Fr. John’s only desire in life was Life after death. An ethereal ambiance prevailed in the Asram in the presence of Fr. John.”

Brother Victor an excellent student among the batch of ten.. very insightful and scholarly. Once Fr. John told him “ Brother, I know that you are excellent in your studies. But let education be not your goal.”

Fr. Victor who had a literary bend of mind remembers with gratitude the ability of Fr. John to gauge the talents of others and further it. Bethany Asram used to publish a magazine “Kathirukal”. Fr. John had read an article written by Bro. Victor who was only 17 years, published with the title “Ngangal” and congratulated him and then made arrangements for it to be published in “ Kathirukal’.

Even those people who came to him depressed would beam with hope by the time they left him. He was compassionate even to those who were criminals. In short he was a benediction to all who met him.

Some incidents that happened in the life of Fr. John in the last seven months of his tenure as novice master is described here. One night a thief broke into the room of Fr. John. It can’t be said broke into rather walked into as Fr. John did not have the habit of closing his room even while sleeping. As Fr. John was in deep



sleep he found it very easy to search everything in detail. But finally he had to leave the room disappointed and empty handed as there was not a penny in his room. He never had the habit of hoarding money and if at all he came in the possession of some money, he would become happy only when he spends it on some deserving poor.

Once while he was returning from Nedumangad he lost the Rs. Fifty he had in his hand. That left him with no money even for bus fare. He could have easily got the money from some acquaintance. But he decided to walk the long distance to Nalanchira in scorching heat. He was a perpetual student enhancing his horizon of knowledge through his continuous reading of latest articles both in Malayalam and English. He was well aware of the socio political climate around him. He was the first to inform the seminarians of the demise of Sri. Lal Bahadur Sastri, the second Prime Minister of India. He took the students to see Indira Gandhi when she came to visit Trivandrum which were manifestations of his patriotism. Not only that he used to tell the class about Political and National leaders like Nehru and Gandhi. On certain days he would say: “ we are going somewhere. Get ready fast.” These were days of local travel to tourist destinations. If the travel was to faraway place it would be informed sufficiently early. The seminarians who participated in these tours can never forget their memorable visits to places like Kanyakumari, Munamp, Kovalam, Kakki dam Sanghumugham, Archbishop’s House Pattom etc. An interesting anecdote remembered by his students relate to his sleeping episode near the Kakki dam. Tired from the journey Fr. John just lay straight on his back on the meadows near Kakki Dam and immediately fell into deep slumber. When it was time to return, his disciples woke him up. Immediately still half asleep he knelt on the grass and started praying thinking he was in his Asram room.

The loud peals of laughter which sometimes overpowered his ever smiling face were extraordinary. He had a rare sense of humour which was innocent but thought provoking. Once during



the Bethany day celebrations which is filled with fun, frolic and talents showcased, he wrote the script for the plays to be presented. The script was galore with incidents from everyday seminary life presented in a lighter vein. One snippet from it related to Fr. Beneventure OIC who was proceeding the next day to Oklahoma University for further studies. The anchor for the programme was Bro. Victor.

Fr. Beneventure though busy with getting ready for the travel was cordially invited to the festivities. There was a dialogue in Malayalam which said “ If by chance Fr. Beneventure could not study in ‘Okkalama” University (in Malayalam Okkalama resembles the word equalant to impossible) let him study in any ‘Okkunna’ University (Possible University).

Hearing this Fr. Beneventure thinking the dialogue was written By Bro. Victor who was also his nephew told him “You just wait for my return from America as I don’t have time to deal with you now.” Thank God Fr. Beneventure is still abroad.



Chapter 13

GUARDIAN OF FAITH

“Truth will set you free”. Fr. John had a mind that loved these words from the New Testament. His strength was the realisation that Jesus is the eternal truth. The truth has only one face: it has no masks. It is this proclamation of the ultimate truth that glows through the church founded by Jesus Christ. That he was able to embrace this ultimate truth at least in his twenty sixth year gave him great satisfaction. He was fortunate to be in the lap of the Church reunited with the Universal Catholic Church, which is the true Church Doesn’t the greatness of being the first priest of the reunited church demand missionary zeal from him? Till his last breath the growth and existence of the church would be his only goal. The words of Fr. James Mammoottil OIC certify this. “With laughter that continues without stop, the continuous cycling, innocent facial expressions, kindness without limits, total dedication to meditation and that uncommon quest for truth combined in him, Fr. John glows in heaven as the guard and mediator of the church’s Reunion Movement.”



When Malankara Reunion Movement became an exodus making the universal spirit ecstatic, the non catholic opponents lost appetite and sleep. They began spending the huge sums squeezed from the public not only for litigation, but also for the destruction of the reunited church. In various stages they began a tirade against the Roman Church. The “Roman Church, you can’t be rescued: time out for your church”. The satirical tirade was spear headed by a Semmasan Zacharias from the north who was adept at using abusive language at various places of the land including Kallooppaara, Vennikkulam, Chengaroor etc making a cess pool of words to smear the Roman Catholic church. Fr. John cycled to and intruded into every convention centre. Father presented books on the history of the true church to those who were confused by the diversity of ideas. Those who were not sufficiently aware of the history of the Church, came to get a feel of the age old tradition and divinity from those books. They realized that churches, other than the Catholic Church, were just assemblies born out of personal interests and differences of opinion with it, and that after many centuries. They also realized that the Jacobite church was a mere assembly of people, not established by Christ the God, but founded by a mere man, Jacob Burddano over a dispute on the personhood of the Triune God. Those Jacobites realized that the Church which recognized St. Peter the head of the apostles and the Church which is headed by the successors of St. Peter is the only true Church as per the New Testament and realizing this, they became Catholics with the help of Fr. John.

Fr. John used to laugh aloud narrating the funny fate of some orators who challenged the reunion movement. One such incident is about a pastor who was on his way to Thumpamon for a talk. The travel was through Venmony, with two followers. It was dusk. When they came near a sacred grove, some one started howling at them. “That cannot be a ghost. Some one is deliberately trying to ridicule us by howling”, the Evangelist thought. Any way since somebody was laughing at him, the Pastor gave up his decision



to speak and went back. Actually no one had tried to laugh at the Evangelist. It was the foxes howling from the sacred grove. See how the Holy Spirit effectively stopped the speech against the reunified church.

Another incident happened at the Southern Mission. The speech was at Mathilumbhagam near Thiruvananthapuram. The expert orator who had the ability to spit sarcasm at Malankara Catholic Church has already reached there. His speech laughing at the Reunion of Churches, with apt body language was reaching its crescendo. Suddenly a dry frond from a nearby coconut tree fell exactly on his head with a loud thud. The orator became so scared and ran away with gesticulations, for his life, giving up his speech. The people assembled there also scattered.

The awareness campaign initiated by Fr. John progressed and it became very effective. He used to cycle long distances and he used to befriend all whom he met during his travels. Who could have resisted his attractive smile? He used to distribute printed articles and pamphlets that imparted information on the Catholic Church which is the True Church.



THROUGH THE MISSIONARY STRIDES OF FR. JOHN



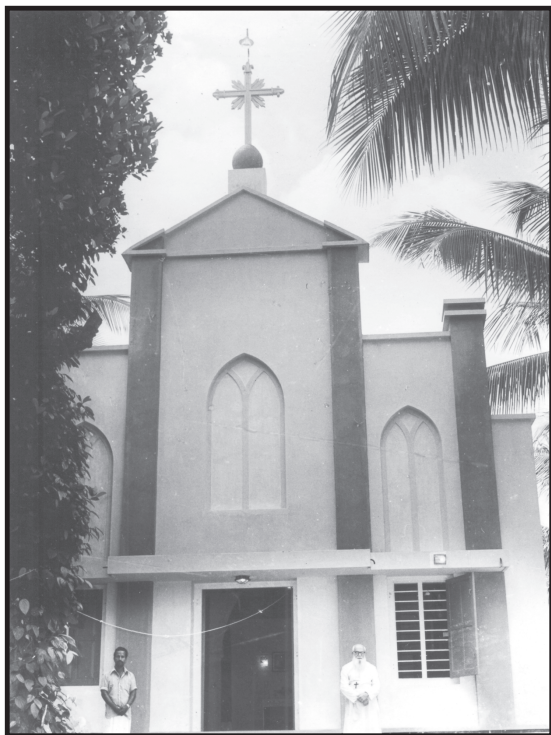
















**CHEEKKANAL PARISHIONERS ALONG WITH
THE FAMILY MEMBERS THE GOLDEN JUBILEY CELEBRATION
OF FR. JOHN'S PRIESTLY ORDINATION**





WITH THE COMMUNITY OF THE PROFESSED





Chapter 14

HOMES AS CHURCHES

The Gospel testifies that “Jesus went about doing good deeds”. This child of God also wanted to indulge his time doing good deeds to the maximum as our life on earth is transient. Wherever he went Fr. John saw his mission with compassion. His first commission was in the rural areas of Thiruvalla especially in places like Kallunkal, Pandanad, Kalloopara, Chengaroor, where there was spiritual as well as financial aridity. He was a renowned social reformer, missionary serving the sick and the poor with a passion that benefitted thousands. He started several mission centres and worked hard for its upliftment and development. The mission centres that prosper in places like Kalloopara, Kadamankulam, Chengaroor, Mulloor, Mallappally etc are the fruit of his labour. He was familiar to the people of Kadamankulam as there was a Bethany Asram there even before the Reunion Movement.



The deeds and actions of Fr. John endeared him to the people and was a source of solace comfort and blessing to them. “Every sentence he uttered during the mass was profound and came from the depths of his heart. Therefore anyone who attended his mass got a heavenly feeling of devotion” writes Sr. Candida SIC.

He trained the spiritually starved reunited people from the Jacobite church who were thirsting for faith in the traditions of the Catholic Church like the Holy Mass, adoration, veneration, Thursday night adoration, rosary etc.

This shepherd made house visits an inevitable part of his life which was intended to know them closely. He considered everyone as the children of one God and used to visit the homes of people irrespective of caste or creed or religion. He came to be socially accepted as the mentor of the land.

He never indulged in irresponsible words even during casual conversation. He was concerned only about the spiritual life of the people he met. He used to enquire about their sacramental life, their interest in reading the Bible, their attitude to the reunion movement, the faith formation of their children were some of the areas of concern for Fr. John. Even those who were not very keen on these issues transformed under the loving concern of Fr. John. By the time he asked them to kneel in prayer, they would be eager to offer their supplications with one mind. After offering a heart rending prayer, he would end with the kukiliyon of intercession to Mother Mary. In that prayerful ambience, the home would automatically transform into a house of prayer. People used to wait eagerly for the visits of Fr. John.

Ladies used to cover their heads and respectfully kiss the hands of Fr. John. Children used to be attracted to Fr. John who used to carry sweets and candy in his cassock pocket. Children felt free to sit on his lap and converse with him. Even non Catholics responded positively to his advice. Sr. Dahiya SIC remembers an incident : “ Once Fr. John visited my house with Fr. John Kizhakkethayyil who had come to Kadinamkulam Parish for a



+

retreat. As they were about to leave Fr. Kuzhinaurath gave me a book on St. Little Flower as asked my parents whether they would give me to the Church as a “SISTER”. When I finished my tenth standard Mother Huba SIC welcomed me to the convent at Thirumoolauram. I knew Fr. John was behind this welcome and as I started my higher studies there, I continued to get spiritual succour from Fr. John who used to provide me with biographies of saints, books by them and books related to faith. Once he presented me with the book “Faith of our Forefathers” written by Cardinal Newman. I was inspired to become a nun. But Fr. John cautioned me and asked me to get the permission of my parents before I take any decision. My brother came with the permission of my father to Thirumoolauram. Immediately Mother Huba took me to Bishop Severios who was residing at Cherupushpagiri. He received me into Catholic faith. On hearing this Fr. John asked me to inform the mother that “ the person you were praying for has joined the Catholic church.”Fr. John was a man of prayer who set aside his life to pray for others and to make others pray for the abetting of souls. “”

Sundays were busy days for Fr. John. Immediately after the mass there will be special meetings for men named Catholic witness group. He developed the Women’s fellowship. Sunday School was in the afternoons. He would regularly lead at least one class. Though constructed with mud he saw to it that each church housed a library. He selected the books for the Sunday School students as moral and spiritual books were unavailable elsewhere. He lead the Christmas programmes. He took the children to the nearby convent to visit the sisters. The decorated crib in the convent was a special treat for the children. He took the image of Baby Jesus from the crib and made the children reverently kiss it. He used to take classes on Family life and priestly life and gave them the freedom of choice. If he found that any of the children were interested in priestly formation they were given special training and time for devotion.

He was an educationist who exhorted the children to read



books. As he believed that better books were in English he forced the children to learn English language. He took personal initiative to send children abroad for Higher studies. For this he even got sponsorship from foreign citizens through a series of letters written by himself to communicate with the sponsors.

Sr. Selka of Trivandrum talks about her personal experience thus: She belonged to a European congregation at first. But midway through, they stopped their mission in India. Fr. John came as a solace to the perplexed Sister. He told her of the Bethany Sisters who were the first congregation in Kerala to get Pontifical status. She joined the congregation and continued to enjoy the patronage of Fr. John. She learned a lot of spirituality from Fr. John including her devotion to the sacred heart, to the Eucharist, to the saints with an intensity she did not have before. He taught the values of sacrifice and perseverance and advised adherence to the hardships of missionary work.

He told the sisters deputed to visit houses to become aware of the needs of the families and respond to their requirements. They followed his advise and became financial advisers and consultants for everyday life. The compassion of Fr. John showered on a leprosy affected patient at Kalloopara is noteworthy here. He used to visit him, give him medicines and clean his wounds. Says Sr. Francina “ Be perfect like Jesus Christ who is perfect”. He tried to follow this principle whole heartedly. He was a good shepherd who lead many to the garden of God’s love. He was by the side of the sick and the downtrodden healing the spiritual, physical, mental malaise of the people with the balm of loving care based on the love the Lord.



Chapter 15

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

His extended mission in a few places made him the supreme head of all the people in the locality. Till 1937 he was the vicar of the parishes of Nettayam and Nalanchira. After 1937 till 1945 he served in Thiruvalla in the Parishes of Kadamankulam, Chengaroor, Kallungal, Pandanad etc. Later he was raised to the position of Superior General of Bethany Asramam. As the hierarchy of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church was set the Asramam was shifted from Vennikulam to Nalanchira. A few of the Religious was sent to Thiruvalla on the request of Bishop Mar Theophilus. This bifurcated the Bethany Asramam into two on the basis of the Dioceses. This did not seem in good bearing. The right way was to have a Religious group under one Superior. A memorandum to this effect was submitted to Mar Ivanios which was accepted and led to the reformation of Bethany as a single entity. The St. Thomas Mission Centre at Chengannoor was chosen as the Generalate. The Holy See



appointed Fr. Francis Sales TOCD as the Canonical visitor and Fr. Augusta Lombardi as the apostolic visitor with the intention of expanding the Bethany congregation. It was in 1953 that the Generalate was shifted to Trivandrum from Chengannur. As the Superior General of Chengannur Generalate Fr. John also served as the vicar of Chengannur

He had a rare sense to gauge the needs of the people. He prioritised these needs and started the building of the chapel at Chengaroor. He exhorted a few men of importance of Kudamankulam and entrusted them with the work. The walls were built with mud onto which planks of wood were fixed. It was a tedious work. As the work was progressing one of the parishioners died. It was difficult to bring the body for burial to Kadamankulam. Fr. John had an answer. He chose a special place at Chengaroor. He placed a cross in that soil. People who were waiting for a chance to indict Fr. John gave a case against him in the Police Station accusing him of interring the dead body in a place which has not been sanctioned by the Government. On the day of inquest by the Police the tough members of the traditional families of Thangalathil, Parayanolikkal, Kakkanad were present. Maybe scared of their presence, none of the people who gave the case was present to give witness. The Police left without registering any case.

Fr. John had to face a similar crisis while at the Thatta Parish in Pathanamthitta. It was the early days of the Re union . As a result of the relentless work by Fr. John several people were reunited with the Catholic church. Fr. John made arrangements for attending the Mass and for burying their dead. A case was registered with the police accusing him of using Government land for these purposes . At the end of a long legal battle the verdict was in favour of Fr. John. The foundation laid by Fr. John at Thatta has now blossomed into a huge Parish. Showers of blessings can be witnessed in all the fields of activity in which Fr. John indulged. The Parish at Chengaroor founded by Fr. John has today grown in stature with its profound vocations and committed members. The



Parish at Kadamnkulam can boast of the most number of priests which is definitely a manifestation of the sacrificial commitment of Fr. John. The charismatic divinity of Fr. John manifested in his compassionate eyes and divine words became an inspiration for his successors. His life became a motto for his followers for they all wanted to be “ I too want to be a Lord’s disciple like him”. Every priest is sent into a Parish not as just a priest but as the shepherd of the community in which the Parish is situated. In today’s fast-paced world where the new generation priests are unable to even complete house visits of the parishners definitely the Church authorities will be reminded of the sacrificial services rendered by Fr, John.

For a long eighteen years from 1953 onwards he remained a shining beacon of light indulging in the wholesome development of the Vembayam Mission which included people of different castes and creeds. He started brick building units, small scale holdings using bamboo and pappad manufacturing giving the mission settlers a steady income. Several homes were built for the poor. He taught them small skills and got them loans from the banks. He visited the Adivasi settlements and gave them food and other amenities. He collected clothes to be given to the poor. He got together people to buy a Kisan Charka using which people were taught to spin. Taking the lead to buy 35 cents of land to cultivate coconut trees was a highlight of his life there. A social service organisation named Social Service Sangh was also registered. He was able to instill a community feeling by building a new church and a nourishment centre near the Pirappancode Hospital for the needs of the local community. He was instrumental in amassing money for 28 houses and 14 wells. This led to 62 families becoming members of that church and Fr. John baptised 246 people in this Parish alone.

Remembering his loving presence Karikkakom Varghese G. B. writes “tearful regards and love to the revered memory of that great saint who literally lifted us out of the dumps into the mainstream of life prayerfully imparting the knowledge and



teaching he received from Bethany serving the marginalised for eighteen long years.”

The Parishioners of Chiramukk also have tears in their eyes when they speak about Fr. John. The church started with just five families with the mass being conducted in a thatched shed belonging to Joshua Thevancode. Before Fr. John came there Fr. Lawrence who later became Bishop Lawrence Mar Aprem was the vicar. With the assistance of Evangelist James who was a member of the Chiramuk Parish, Fr. John visited the nearby houses of people belonging to the CSI, Pentecost and Sabath Followers who were the majority. He offered solutions to their problems and agreed to pray for them. He devised schemes to entice them to the Lord through peaceful and joyful ways. In the first few days itself 48 families joined the church. To those non Catholics who refused to budge he entreated “ Atleast for an experience come to mass next Sunday. I will be waiting for you,”

Though not wholeheartedly, they came to see the mass next Sunday. Some of the youngsters who scoffed at the proceedings were affectionately educated and were made altar boys. Later they went on to become the most trusted children of the Church

Immediately after the mass at Vembayam he will proceed to Chiramukk. His vehicle was a cycle through difficult terrain. The altar boys who accompanied him used to push the cycle of their spiritual father. He bought them the white dress to be worn in the altar. He used to fulfil all their needs and used to send the youngsters to the vocation camp at St. Aloysius Seminary every year. He was very observant to the needs of the people around him and helped the families in education and weddings. He used to distribute Milk powder and wheat and oil and clothes and other amenities to those in need.

It is very rare to find priests with such profundity. Like others he could have also gone on European tours and for higher studies abroad. But his was a divine journey sacrificing every selfish desire. Every Priest at the height of his youth sacrifices



all physical pleasures and commits to a journey of nothingness in their undying desire to serve the Lord. They willingly take up the cross of sacrifice and make their lives a lifelong voyage of devotion and asceticism.

Hey priests... thou art the present day Christ... don't be disheartened even when you are dragged to the accusations and slanders by the contemporary Pilates whose eyes are focussed only on ambitious positions and full of avarice....for you are the followers of the man who was shouted 'crucify crucify' even after a lifetime of service to mankind. Even as you struggle forward dripping blood from the body broken by the whiplash of negative forces and wounded by the cruel fangs of the media ...as you bleed from the holy grail of your wounds remember there are no Veronicas or Simons to wipe your wounds. Neither does the Priests who are the manifestations of Christ desire for any such care. Their only goal is eternal reward for the God's children how they can be catered to physically and psychologically. Similarly the only focus of John's life was the upliftment of others. Fr. Ignatius Kadayamkudy who visited Fr. John during the eve of his life at the Nalanchira Asramam asked him:

"Father, you were good in studies. But you gave importance to working for the welfare of the poor. Weren't you interested in going abroad for higher studies? Did you approach the authorities in that regard?"

He gave a contented and remarkable reply, "I liked to study and go on foreign trips. But the immediate need was missionary work. So I never thought about the former anymore. Working among the sad and weak gave me the highest of pleasures."

C.N. Rajan Kophathumoola who was the key keeper and sexton at Chiramukku remember Fr. John as a warm lamp that burnt for others. He also adds that father used to talk at length about the matters of the church with him and that his family had the good fortune to kiss the lifeless body of the Saintly Father. The next day at the church, the candles on either side of the altar



burnt unusually and was reduced to wax in seconds. This was his first experience of the kind in his entire life. He considers this to be an omen. He was so dear to the society who burned like a candle that melts to give light to others.



Chapter 16

SWEETNESS OF TOLERANCE

The great soul knelt on the ground and prayed "Oh dear God, we are sure that you won't give us pain that we cannot tolerate. But kindly bless us with tolerance to withstand our agony since we are getting weaker. We pray for your blessing to bestow love upon us, to bring down the fire of our sufferings. Oh beloved Lord, let your name be glorified through our pains."

Through his only book "Sahanayagna", he comforts the people who suffer. "Comforts come like guests but sorrows stay like friends.", he asked the believers to follow these lines. He hid the story of his extreme physical pain behind the laughter that always played on his lips. Even when he experienced extreme pain in his life, he hid it very successfully behind the facade of a smile.

Later on he suffered from serious stomach ache which totally weakened him physically. Many associated diseases followed. Various treatments including allopathic, homeopathic, Ayurveda



were tried. He was not in a state to consume food. But to continue the medication, he was asked to eat Milk and brown bran. He didn't discontinue any of his spiritual practices even during this time. The visitors who rushed in to see the sick Fr. John were surprised to be welcomed by his smiling face.

At last an efficient doctor diagnosed and confirmed the disease. It was due to a microbe called "Payeria" and the disease was curable. But there will be a lot of pain to suffer. People around him including the church authorities were distressed to learn this, but Fr. John didn't panic even a bit. He was ready to endure any extend of pain.

The doctors declared that "all his teeth should be removed as a part of the treatment". To lose the teeth at this young age was hard but Fr. John was already prepared for it. All his beautiful teeth were removed one by one on alternate days. The stronger teeth had to be removed by cutting open gum and one can only imagine the pain he had suffered. Even saliva would create intolerable amount of pain inside his mouth which was literally ploughed. His disciples' heart ached when he smiled at them without teeth but with as innocence as ever before. Artificial teeth were fixed on the gum. And he became healthy and energetic again.



Chapter 17

WAVELESS PROFUNDITY

Christianity isn't about the separate thoughts and deeds of you and me, it is the single feeling about "us". In the words of Jesus Christ "treat your neighbor as yourselves"; you and your neighbor are not two entities but a single one. Everybody is ready to sacrifice anything for fulfilling one's own selfish deeds and needs. Every real Christian should be ready to give up everything and do anything for others too. Christ, from giving up his life for the mankind showed us that the love for others is endurance and sacrifice. It is in the zenith of that selfless deed that happiness and bliss embrace you. That happiness is the ritual of immortality. Saints were those who held up these ideologies in every circumstance without any flaw. Fr. John too dedicated the moments of his endurance and good deeds to the growth of Syro Malankara Catholic Church.

Those heavenly fragrant flowers blooming amidst thorns were



always loved dearly by the saintly father. In the book ‘Sahanayagna’ which describes those holy souls who have found the definition of endurance in life, he relates the endurance of a holy woman born in Kerala who has been an epitome of endurance.

There is no one who hasn’t heard about Sister Alphonsa from Bharananganam. With a lifetime of pain and endurance, she became the epitome of perseverant suffering. That beautiful soul described endurance as follows: “it is difficult to eat a raw banana, but it appeals to our palate when it is made small and fried in hot oil. This is the case with human life as well.”

When he was around 60 years of age a deep wound formed on the leg of Fr. John, which later became infected and no medicine could cure it. The pain was more than any one could bear. The wound was cleaned every day with hot water in which medicines were boiled, puss was removed and covered tidily on a daily basis. This continued for a long time. Though he was going through excruciating pain, he welcomed those who visited him with a pleasant smile rather than showing his pain. When people wondered how he could retain the smile without showing a tinge of pain on his face he replied:

“When compared to the pain our Lord Jesus Christ underwent for humanity, the pain I endure is negligible and I dedicate this suffering to all of us in the community.”

When many get shattered from unpredicted disorder in their lives, the endurance and patience of Fr. John inspired them a lot. The realization that human beings shall meet any kind of illness or danger without the knowledge of the Almighty helped him to maintain his peaceful and calm attitude. Sister Susan SIC narrates one of her experiences like this: “Her granduncle passed away in Thiruvananthapuram. She got into a vehicle at five o clock in the morning to attend the funeral. There was Fr. John and another priest in the same vehicle as they were on their way to Nalanchira. The weather was turbulent. The sky was overcast with rain clouds and torrential rain poured like it has never rained in a decade. The



+

surroundings looked as if nature was ready to destroy everything around. Nothing could be seen, roads were flooded with water. Giant trees fell and destroyed the fields, everything seemed to be in total mess. I sat completely engulfed with fear in the back seat; seeing the panic on my face, Fr. John came to me leaving his seat and asked me with a smile whether I have had something to eat as he was really hungry. Though the journey had started about 6 hours before and I had not eaten anything, my hunger was overruled by fear of what was happening outside. Vehicles formed a huge queue behind our vehicle, people tried to remove those trees that created blocks. I wondered how he could behave such calmly in such a fearful atmosphere.”

“When I searched her bag for food and found nothing but a packet of peanut candy, I wondered how I could give that to him as the candy was hard and he was really old, with his artificial teeth set. Anyhow I gave it to him, and in no time he popped it into his mouth and started chewing it using his artificial set of teeth. This scene made me laugh, forgetting all fears and thoughts. We reached Nalanchira somehow, where Fr. John has to get down and I needed to go to Bethany Hostel, Palayam. But he hesitated to send me to the hostel alone in such a weather. So he made the other father to accompany me to the hostel and reminded me to inform him as soon as I got to the hostel.”



Chapter 18

ACHANAPPACHAN

Instead of visiting his family in his ancestral home, it was much easy for the family to visit Fr. John in his monastery. Though he cherished family moments and would have loved to be in their presence, he was intensely dedicated to mission activities. Attracting people daily to the Syro Malankara community and making the community grow was his dream. Those mission activities started early in the mornings and usually ended only at nights, so it was difficult to think about and concentrate on his own family. Though he was busy with the community mission activities, the moment one of his relatives' or friends' face came to his mind, happiness bloomed on his face, and to wait for the person with affection writ large on his face would be the next thing.

Even though he was hectic with his mission activities he never failed to visit his hometown Omallur, several times a year. He



+

enjoyed the bliss of his bloodline and did his best to make their happy moments happier, and sad moments lighter by his presence. His family called him ‘Achanappachan’ out of love. Once the news of ‘Achanappachan’s arrival is informed via call or letter the whole family would await him, counting the days. And those of the younger generations would wait eagerly for him at the roadsides to welcome him before he is at home. No matter how long it took for the father to reach Omallur, they waited unflinchingly by the road side. He would get down with the loveliest of smiles and would be then welcomed by the children. They would then get hold of the cloth bag he always carry and as soon as they get into the house, they would clamour over the sweets Achanappachan has brought.

Every ceremony that happened in Kuzhinapurath house was done under his surveillance. His blessed presence was inevitable in almost every ceremony whether it be marriages, funerals, baptism or first Holy Communion.

Prayer, for him was not a rule imposed by the church or his fatherhood but that was a basic need just like breathing, for him. He always wished his family to also follow this attitude towards prayer. His devotion to Mother Mary and the Saints was profound. His way of communion with Jesus Christ was through rosary prayers to Holy Mary. Rosary prayers and those holy words kept him calm and gave him moral strength in every stage of his life unto his death. “My Mother, My Asylum”, were his words which had the power to reach beyond the horizons of this world; none of his wishes went unfulfilled. That is why, though he never had any kind of savings, he could help thousands of destitutes who were hungry and shelterless.

When he was in Vettinadu parish, he built a beautiful grotto and church to St. Jude opposite to M.C. Road. St. Jude is the intercessor of invincible and impossible things. Thousands of people passing through M.C road daily get a holy glance of St. Jude with or without their knowledge. The blessed figure of St. Jude and the holy writings etched there “ St. Jude, Pray For



Us” never fail to bless the thousands of them passing through the road, and of course those holy words were a solace to those who were living in heart wrenching pain. Even today a sum of Rs.50000 is collected under the leadership of Sri. K.K. John (Thankachan) Kuzhinapurath and the family trust and is given to the poor families of Vettinadu in name of Fr. John.

When he gifted small pictures of saints, medals or rosaries to children who gathered around him, his only aim was to make those young minds devotional. The prayers he sent upto the heavens irrespective of day or night strengthened their moral power and filled them with an insatiable desire for devotion.

The news of Father’s arrival to the ancestral house attracts all relatives and family members to the ancestral house. Every problem, distress, complaints and arguments that happened in their families would be discussed and sure as day a solution for all those problems would come from him, like the coolness of the flow of Jordan River.

He always tried to return from the ancestral house on the same day of his visit and if some eventuality made him stay there for a day he was very strict in not causing any discomfort to anybody. He was never particular about his food habits. The simpler the food is, the more he liked it. He would never let anyone to wash his clothes, as he always wanted to wash them himself. The only thing he asked the members of the house he slept in was to give him, two blocks in order to lift the leg side of his bed, which was a habit of him, a part of controlling the blood circulation as part of yoga.

The majority of Cheekkanal parish was formed by Kuzhinapurath family. All parish members were looked upon by father as his own children. He kept his eye on each and every individual and catered to every iota of their wellbeing. For the good of the parish and the place, he offered holy masses along with the parish members.

He was very keen in keeping the intensity of personal relations



safe with his acquaintances. He circulated the copies of his self-written book “Sahanayagna” for free to all the houses in the parish. His aim was to channelize good thoughts of truth and honesty among the members through his words etched in divinity and delightful philosophies. It was then that, Rajumon, who was a mere eight years old got a copy and he read the book on one sit. The seeds of good thoughts were planted on his mind enriched with fertile soil. Like every other member of the family, this kid also found the love, lessons and moral living of Fr. John who was called with love as Achanappachan inspiring. It was this path of inspiration that made him a devout and fervent Seminarian and while being a newly ordained priest himself, after completing an intelligent student life at the seminary, he became the Chancellor of the Arch diocese, Judge of the Church tribunal etc. This boy was none other than Rev. Fr. Dr. Thomas Kuzhinapurath.

He also played major role in leading one of his family member Sister Keerthana to the life of a religious. He used to visit the Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram daily to comfort the sick patients. The S.D Sisters (Sisters of Destitutes) used to take care of the poor and the weak at the hospital. There were instances when the government directly appointed them as hospital employees. They were known as the Chunungumveli Sisters as the S.D Generalate was established at Chunungumveli.

Fr. John considered it a blessing to send at least one member from his family to the abode of the sisters who were the epitomes of compassion and care. It was with this intention that he sent his niece’s daughter Sussamma to become a Sister. Later she led a life of service to humanity as Sr. Keerthana.

Inspired from the life of Fr. John, several members from his family followed his path of religious life, service and love.

Fr. Joshua Chuttippara (Elder brother’s grandson)

Fr. Justin Thundumannil O.I.C. (Elder brother’s grandson)

Fr. Thomas Kuzhinappurath (Elder brother’s grandson)



Fr. Thomas (Jubi) Kuzhinappurath (Elder brother's grandson)

Fr. Varghese Kizhakkekara (Elder brother's granddaughter's son)

Fr. John Thundiyath O.I.C. (Elder brother's granddaughter's son)

Fr. Koshi Punnamoottil (Father's Elder brother's son's grandson)

Sister. Neeha S.I.C. (Elder brother's daughter)

Sister. Esther S.I.C. (Elder brother's daughter)

Sister. Prashantha S.I.C. (Father's elder brother's granddaughter)

Sister. Flora S.I.C. (Elder brother's granddaughter)

Sister. Keerathana S.D. (Elder brother's granddaughter)

Sister. Ardra S.I.C. (Elder brother's granddaughter)

Sister. Jyothi S.I.C. (Elder brother's granddaughter's daughter)

Sister. Poojitha S.I.C. (Elder brother's granddaughter)

He was the symbol of kindness for the society and a moral icon for the ordained in the family. His brother E.K. Paul was the owner of a big bank at Pala at a time when bankers was scarce in Travancore. But, the business empire of his brother was faltering on one side. A few jealousy driven enemies were behind this. The natives saw him as an outsider because he settled there after selling his properties in Pathanamthitta. They decided not to allow the growth of outsiders. The enemies used business tricks and frauds to bring down his business. The public started withdrawing all the money and eventually the bank was closed. E.K. Paul became a pauper from a prince. He was emotionally and psychologically tormented and finally succumbed to heart attack. His wife and children were thrown into the dumps of helplessness and despair. Fr. John came to comfort them even though he knew that they were beyond words of comfort. The family had to sell their palace



like home at Pala and the properties to settle their financial crisis. They needed a home and money to educate the kids. Fr. John gave his share of property at Omalloor to the family. It was more than enough for the family to lead a good life. The successors of the family to this day light candles of gratitude before Fr. John's immense and intense love and care that has no parallels.



Chapter 19

INDIAN DAMIAN

There is a Chinese proverb that says “Poetry, sweetness of voice, willingness to give; these cannot be attained, they are ingrained in a person”. Compassion can be added these qualities. It is through a legacy of holiness that sympathetic hearts are born. The son of God proclaimed that he felt compassion when he saw the hungry multitudes. It was a reflection of the immense manifestation of God’s compassion to a world that was steeped in sin.

Fr. John became the perpetuation of the heredity of Jesus, who with his magical touch of love cured leprosy and cleansed the wounds of the suffering. The legacy of social service he inherited from Mar Ivanios also added sparkle to the the heredity of Fr. John. Fr. John inherited the quality of Mar Ivanios who took care of a child from a lower caste cuddling him on his own lap. The life of Fr. John after that was an outpouring of service. He strived to be worthy of this heredity right from his times of



service as young priest when he took care of a destitute man suffering from a serious communicable disease. It was the path to hear the proclamation of the ultimate “Oh my good and faithful servant, everyone you took care in my name was actually myself. So come, receive my heaven.”.

The profundity of his prayers and the quality of his social service were gems adorning his crown. He always kept chanting and spent his immense energy on keeping the devotees of God safe. He had the sympathetic spirit which made him listen to the laments of the people. He couldn't turn a deaf ear to the cries of people; almost a manifestation of the agony of Christ's life which was full of hardships from birth through the walk to Calvary.

He walked as a savior radiating his divine gaze on the patients suffering from epidemics whom even the doctors and nurses feared to take care. He took care of the patients suffering from tuberculosis and leprosy like his own family. Visiting patients occasionally, listening to their laments which no one else would listen to, praying for them with wet eyes, teaching them to pray, taking them on a path of spirituality, distributing books and magazines that imparts holy thoughts from eyes to consciousness and from consciousness to inner-self, were all part of his service towards the suffering patients.

While etching the biography of this priest with a huge heart who had dedicated his entire life to take care of the patients suffering from deadly ills and isolated, faraway in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, The Holy father Benedict XVI announcing a sainthood that reverberated across the world. It was the declaration of the sainthood of Fr. Damian who went on to serve the people who were exiled to Molocoi Islands on being diagnosed with extreme leprosy.

The government hospital for tuberculosis cure had set up a hospital for patients suffering from Tuberculosis at the serene Pulayanarkotta Hills, Thiruvananthapuram. Fr. John is a saintly priest who will not be forgotten by the innumerable patients



who went to the hospital. He used to stay at the hospital with the patients. He was taking care of patients deserted by family and society. He was the only one who happily stepped in to service.

He passed the light of inspiration to the doctors as well. They were amazed by his level of dedication, love and care. He was on the front ensuring proper treatment, medication, food etc. to the people who came from far away lands. He wrote on the preface of his book “Sahanayagham” about his service in Pulayanarkotta as:

“This book is an outcome of my service at Thiruvalla and Thiruvananthapuram, especially Pulayanarkotta hospital for tuberculosis .. I was inspired to write this book as an exhortation to the suffering to make the patient understand that the hospital beds are real battlefields which can be transformed into times of good fortune”

In the contents of the book, we can read,

“Readers must visit Pulayanarkotta, a calm and serene abode of nature in Thiruvananthapuram. The T.B. Sanatorium houses more than five hundred patients in various stages of agonising pain. Yet many take this suffering as a part of their great journey, engage in prayers and reach the final destination in serenity”.

“Rose the queen of flowers stands amidst the thorns. Flowers of heavenly blessings stand amidst throes of pain. Great songs, movies, and prose were written on account of heavy sorrows and pain.”

Even after completely getting cured, the patients were not accepted by the society. It created a festering wound in his heart. He devised plans and actions to tackle this situation. He made sure that they were educated, given jobs and were able to lead a decent life. He wished to start a rehabilitation center near the hospital that required at least an acre of land. He explained the situation to the then Arch Bishop Benedict Mar Gregorios. They went to see the government officials and the government decided



+

to give the land for this purpose. The next big task was to find funds for constructing the building. The old priest travelled on a bicycle across the towns searching for kind hearts who could fund the cause. Many showered financial support on the priest who travelled far and wide with an energy that defied his seventy years. Slowly, a rehabilitation center was built at Pulayanarkotta adjacent to which a beautiful prayer hall was also built. The gaze of service of S.I.C. and D.M. sisters radiated there. Father used to offer Holy Qurbano every Sunday. He used to go near the bed-ridden patients and make them do holy confessions. He used to prepare spiritually the patients who were waiting for their final journey. There were many lucky souls who breathed their last lying on the affectionate laps of father and having their last drop of water from his hands. He kept his smile and energy even in his eighties and was like a messenger of God for people. He took care of people without asking their caste or religion. He believed that all human sufferings which was a way to understand at least a small share of pain that Jesus suffered. He used to cycle every day from Nalanchira to the hills of Pulayanarkotta and his journeys and travels were enough to diminish his tiredness and every iota of weariness vanishes on seeing the faces of patients. He used to collect seeds, medicinal plants etc. on his way and would take it to the rehabilitation center and plant it in the courtyard and fields near. He made the patients maintain a good vegetable field. They were given training in tailoring and book binding. He also started a library there with a good collection of books.

He used to arrange Christmas celebrations every year there. Patients, recovered people, doctors, nurses etc. took part in the celebration with hearts filled with happiness. Each ward made decorations and cribs in competitive spirit. Distribution of food and special prayers for patients was a part of the celebrations. Subhodini, a kind hearted woman who was baptized by Fr. John and appointed by him there still remain at the rehabilitation center as a witness to all these that happened.

Wikipedia, the online global encyclopedia describes the life



of sacrifice of father as: “He journeyed several kilometers by bicycle everyday for doing missionary and charitable works. He started the prayer center at the T.B. Sanatorium at Pulayanarkotta, Trivandrum.”

As a certificate of appreciation to the immense service of this great man, it is written in the T.B. Sanatorium as: “Most respected Fr. John Kuzhinapurath O.I.C. who travelled on his cycle for many years to collect funds and has built this rehabilitation center near T.B. Sanatorium to wipe the tears of the ailing and the helpless on the allotted government land in 1981. He started a prayer hall near for the patients at the T.B. hospital where every day after four in the evening, nuns lead prayers followed by prayers from other religions.”



Chapter 20

LET ME TO MY FINAL SLUMBER GO

“As for the days of our Life, they contain seventy or a maximum of eighty” say the words of the Lord. But Fr. John has defied it and led a life of service even after that. Like the fruit trees that bend down under the weight of the fruits increasing experience and old age made him stoop. Slowly his feet that had walked miles in service started weakening. The feet that had cycled for seven decades across lands caring for the sick and the needy was badly in need of rest. His days of rest were spent in meditation and continuous prayers. He thanked the people who had visited him from far and wide and requested them “to pray for so that he will have the experience of a good death”.

His health worsened during the end of 1994. Deacon Thomas Kuzhinapurath, a family member of the latest generation was



with him during the dusk of his life. The ordination of the Deacon was on December 26th. Fr. John kept his right hand on Deacons head and blessed him.

He waited for his soul to blend with eternity. Knowing that the only few days that stands ahead of him are important, he used the time to pray for the prosperity of the world and for the good of Syro- Malankara Catholics. Priests, relatives, friends etc. came to see him. He had the wish to see the head of the religious congregation of which he was a part. His wish was intimated to Fr. Jerome Peedikapparambil I.O.C, Fr. John's dear student was the one who adorned the post. Even though he was told not to come in hurry, Fr. Jerome Peedikapparambil rushed immediately to Nalanchira. He reached the place on January 28, 1995 by 6' O clock in the evening. The eyes of Fr. John fell on his student. Even though he was his student, he was also the head of his congregation. He made a failed attempt to get up and show respect. Though he was very tired a gentle smile played on his lips. Fr. Jerome asked him to pray for all .In his unique style he replied that it was his job.

The doves of prayers wet with tears flew in flocks to the heavens above. The lamp slowly burnt down on that cold holy night. The lamp that gave radiant light for ninety one years had moved into the pages of history. The death was so peaceful that it was hard for anybody to say the great man has actually passed away. He looked peacefully asleep.

He was clothed in his priestly robes and was kept in the chapel of Bethany Asram Nalanchira for the public to pay their respects. The place was a deluge of tears and was flooded with religious leaders, politicians and people who had immensely benefited from the countless missions he had undertaken. The funeral service started at the Asramam chapel on Monday, January 30 at 1.30 pm after the Nagarikanikkal.

During his last days at the Ashram, Fr. Ignatius Kudiamkunnil OIC visited him to get an interview of him to be published in



the the Jubilee issue of Ashram Papers. Fr. John was asked what message he had for the younger generations to which he replied “I have fought the good fight ; I have finished the race and I have kept the faith. Now, await the reward” This holy father who had finished the journey of his race was now weary. Concluding his message he said “Let me sleep now.” These words were a manifestation of the biblical “The death of the good man is like sleep”. His truly was a temporary sojourn earth where he was given time to dream for a new life in eternity.



FAREWELL DEAR FATHER







Appendix

John Kuzhinapurath

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kuzhinapurath as on December 6, 2019)

John Kuzhinapurath, OIC, (1904–1994), a great philanthropist was among the first priests who united with the Catholic Church along with Archbishop Mar Ivanios on 20 September 1930 in the process of the formation of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.¹

Early life

Kuzhinapurath was born on 6 July 1904 at Omallur near Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India. He was the youngest child of Pakalomattom Kuzhinapurath Eapen and Kocheetha. He had his primary education in Government Middle School at Pathanamthitta. He was ordained deacon by the Orthodox Catholicos Mar Baselios in 1919. Then he studied for priesthood at M.D. Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala. Kuzhinapurath continued his secular studies at St. Thomas High School, Pala, Kerala. He completed his intermediate education at C.M.S College, Kottayam.

Monastic practice

Kuzhinapurath joined the Bethany Ashram, the monastic order founded by Archbishop Mar Ivanios. He made his first monastic profession and Mar Ivanios ordained him priest in 1929. Kuzhinapurath followed Mar Ivanios and reunited with the Catholic Church on 20 September 1930.

He had a monastic formation of one year in the Carmelite Monastery at Trivandrum. He served the Bethany Ashram as



+

novice master and Superior General. He worked in several mission centers at Thiruvalla and Trivandrum. His mission work was mainly among the underprivileged of the society. He worked as the chaplain of TB Sanatorium at Pulayanarkotta. He cycled several kilometers every day to do missionary and charitable work. He started the prayer centre at the T. B. Sanitorium at Pulayanarkotta, Trivandrum. He founded the famous St. Jude's Shrine at Vettinadu, Trivandrum by the side of Kerala State High Way, SH 220.²

He wrote the book Sahana Yanjgam (Sacrificial Suffering).

Kuzhinapurath died on 28 January 1994.

The Bethany Ashram published a special issue of Bethany Sabdam, a compilation of memories about Kuzhinapurath in 1995.³

Commemoration

The death anniversary and commemoration of Kuzhinapurath was celebrated on 30 January 2010. Thomas Kuzhinapurath and seven other priests from Kuzhinapurath family concelebrated Holy Qurbono at Bethany Ashram, Nalanchira, Trivandrum, where Kuzhinapurath is buried, followed by a commemoration meeting presided by Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis. Mor Cleemis released the book Preshita Deepam, the biography of Kuzhinapurath, written by Peter C. Abraham. Baselios Cleemis said Fr. John was truly a refuge to the poor and the destitute.⁴ The second edition of the biography of Kuzhinapurath, "Preshita Deepam" was released at the 5th quinquennial assembly of the Great Pakalomattom family at Kuravilangadu on December 19, 2015. Cardinal Baselios Cleemis, the President of Catholic Bishops'Conference of India released book by giving the first copy to Alexander Jacob, IPS, the former Director General of Police, Kerala, India.⁵ Every year pilgrims from Vettinadu, Vembayam and Chiramukku, the mission stations he served for several years come and celebrate Holy Qurbono at Bethany Ashram, Nalanchira, where he was buried and pray at his tomb under the leadership of their parish



priest on Jan. 28, his death anniversary. His family members will gather together and commemorate him on second Saturday of January every year at his home parish at Cheekkanal, Omallur, Pathanamthitta⁶. Kathikan Basilica John staged the story of John Kuzhinapurath in the form of a Kadhaprasangam at Omallur on January 13, 2018.⁷

Notes

1. See, Thomas Inchaykkalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios* Vol. 1, 1953, pp.450-451.
2. See, John Elavinakkuzhiyil, *Bethany Sabdam*, 1995.
3. See, John Elavinakkuzhiyil, *Bethany Sabdam*, 1995.
4. *Malayala Manorama*, *Deepika*, *Mathrubhumi*, 31 January 2010
5. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/296819353/Koottayma-2016-The-Annual-Newsletter-of-Pakalomattom-Kuzhinapurath-Kudumbayogam>
6. <https://www.scribd.com/document/369074073/Koottayma-2018-The-Newsletter-of-Pakalomattom-Kuzhinapurath-Kudumbayogam>
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guNZY1AMhWo>

**The Release of *Preshitha Deepan* (The Malayalam Version of *The Mission Lamp*) - II Edition
at Pakalomattom Mahakudumbayogam 5th Quinquinial Assembly on December 19, 2015**



The Mission Lamp

Fr. John Kuzhinapurath, OIC



Fr. John was one among the important persons belonging to the Bathany Asram who fostered the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church from the initial hardships. I praise the Lord for choosing me to present this biography of Rev. Fr. John to the world.

**Baselios Cardinal Cleemis,
Major Archbishop- Catholicos**



I have read the book '*The Mission Lamp*'. It is a book worth reading. In other words, it is the beautiful transcription of a blessed life.

Dr. D. Babu Paul IAS



Fr. John Kuzhinapurath, OIC was a great philanthropist. Sainly Father John, Please pray for us.

Fr. Bernardine OCD



Peter C. Abraham

He is a remarkable writer in Malayalam Literature who excelled in both poetry and prose. He got many awards including Dr. M.V Paili Sahithya Award, Mary Vijayam Puraskaram, K.C.Y.M Sate Sahithya Award, Mar Ivanios Puraskaram, Snehasena Award, P.O.C Talent Award , St. Alphonsa Award etc.



Dr. Shirley Stewart

She is Associate Professor and Head of the department of English at Mar Ivanios College. She is a writer, orator, anchor, quiz master, editor of several magazines, contributed articles in several magazines, resource person, motivational speaker etc.

