



MISSION

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150 Years of Chavarul at Jerusalem Retreat Centre, Thrissur



CMISSION

**News and Views on CMI Mission
around the Globe**

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CMIssion

News and Views on CMI Mission around the Globe
(A Quarterly from the CMI General Department of
Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry)

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Editorial

**CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY IN
CONTEMPORARY INDIA
An Apostle of Life-Giving Touch**

Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI

General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry

A reflection on the ramifications of the Christian mission in India, in general, and the CMI mission, in particular, in the present day context was triggered by reading a passage from the Gospel of Luke 7:11-17 in which Jesus restores life to the son of a widow. The key in this passage, to my understanding, is the 'touch' of Jesus; it is indeed a life-giving touch. It implies that a mission-centred life of any Christian should be that of a missionary of life-giving touch, after the model of Jesus Christ.

The Christian mission as well as the CMI mission is to *touch* - to touch the way Jesus had touched. At the touch of the Lord, a dead young man came back to life; he was also restored and re-united to his mother, to his family.

We live in an age when unbecoming and inappropriate touches are making headlines and headaches to the church at large. It is against this backdrop a reflection on healthy and life-giving divine touch of the Lord transmitted through the missionary touch is undertaken. For, knowingly and unknowingly, we tend to touch many; most of those touches are sterile and lifeless and a few are destructive and life-negating. They are seldom capable of initiating healing or transformation in the lives of those whom we touch. So, apparently, most of our touches may not have the quality of Jesus' touch. Although we may have a hundred and one reasons to state why our touches are not that of Jesus, and probably all our reasons may be valid, as Christians and missionaries, we cannot shy away from our fundamental

responsibility to empower ourselves and to grow into the stature of Jesus so that our touches can also be life-giving and constructively life-transforming.

This aspiration leads me to further reflection and I feel that Jesus' touch was a three-dimensional touch, which we all must emulate in our missionary life – be it in India, or elsewhere in the global missions. First of all, Jesus was in constant touch with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit that Jesus cherished in his life was the source of unending flow of life in abundance (Jn 10:10), which he facilitated through his regular retreats to the hills and mountains, especially in the evenings, late nights, or early mornings. He spent quality time in silence to have an intense experience of the Father and the Spirit. A question may be raised as to whether these retreats of Jesus were part of his mission on earth, or were they only part of a preparatory stage of the mission. With my limited knowledge of the Gospels, I am firmly convinced of the fact that those holy retreats of Jesus to the mountains were essentially part of his mission on earth.

Secondly, in Jesus' touch, there is a dimension of reaching out to the other: Jesus could reach out to the dead, and through his life-giving touch restore even the dead to life. It is interesting to note that Jesus physically touched the bier, the casket in which the dead body was carried; in fact, with his divine powers, he could have just uttered the miraculous word; or even without a word, he could have brought the dead young man back to life. Instead, Jesus preferred to touch, and his touch was unique and life-giving. I tend to think that the first dimension and the second dimension are correlated. In fact, I feel that without the first touch, namely, the constant touch of Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit (i.e., perfect Trinitarian communion), the second touch and its impact may not happen at all. In other words, the life-giving power of Jesus

is sourced in his uninterrupted intimate relationship with the Father and the Spirit. Thus, a physical touch of Jesus became dynamically transformative and life-restoring.

Finally, the third dimension of Jesus' touch is restoring the young man - now alive - to his mother. Although it is not explicitly stated in the Gospel passage, I tend to imagine - based on the text that reads "Jesus gave him to his mother" - that Jesus took the young man by hand and entrusted him to his widowed mother, the only member in the family. Thus, the young man who was restored to life was not left to himself by Jesus; instead, he was carefully brought back to his family, where he would be able to flourish and establish himself - not in isolation but in the communion of his family.

As all of us could rightly imagine, these three dimensions of Jesus' touch, as encountered in the Gospel passage, clearly spell out a three-dimensional touch that any missionary - be it in India, or Africa, or elsewhere - must practise. First of all, just as Jesus cherished a loving, intimate and constant relationship with the Father and the Spirit, each missionary should realize that his or her call is to establish a loving, intimate and constant communion with Jesus (and in him to the Father and the Spirit) as a foundational and integral part of the missionary existence. One of the focuses of any missionary's aspiration is to bring back into his or her personal and collective consciousness a contemplative spirit. For, to be a missionary does not offer us an option with regard to being and becoming a contemplative; in fact, every missionary, by virtue of being a missionary, ought to be a contemplative. In our practical day-to-day life, therefore, missionaries have to ask themselves as to what extent have they become contemplatives.

Although most of the missionaries belonging to consecrated communities already have their constitutions

prescribing for a minimum of one hour daily meditation, along with all other devotional practices, including divine liturgy, many consecrated religious already know that personally and collectively (i.e., in community) they are limping in their spiritual life, particularly in nurturing their contemplative dimension of life. Apart from identifying a few known contemplatives in the history of a congregation, seldom we come across with celebrated religious and missionary contemplatives (especially among those who are alive today). Unfortunately, it is strange to learn that, in most of the communities of the consecrated people, very rarely we come across with instances of genuine contemplatives being celebrated.

However, given the fact that the life of a missionary has already become too packed with action, deeper and long-lasting contemplative communion with Jesus becomes necessary. There are some consecrated men and women who prefer to practise their spiritual life in private; although being *incognito* is ideal especially in spiritual life, they should not forget the fact that the spiritual practices among the missionaries, if recognized by the public and the Christian faithful who receive the fruits of the missionaries' labour (for example, by the presence of a priest in front of the tabernacle, particularly before and after the celebration of the Eucharist), have great evangelizing potential. This calls the missionaries not only to be contemplatives and to involve in spiritual practices *incognito*, but also to ensure that those practices add more genuine value to their efforts of evangelization. Spiritual perspectives and practices are not an addition but an integral part of the life of a Christian missionary.

Missionaries are invited to make a resolution with regard to their spiritual life, particularly with regard to the practice of meditation. Improvement in contemplative prayer life would greatly depend on our regular bend for silence,

reading, reflection, on-going spiritual guidance, etc. Every missionary must, therefore, improve in these areas if at all they must establish a loving, intimate and constant touch with Jesus Christ. Once again, it is not to be looked upon as a preparation for mission, but essentially the Christian mission itself.

The second area of touch that Jesus made with the dead body of the young man has its rich practical implications for our evangelizing efforts. Be it in the parish context, or, in other institutions run by the consecrated, including the more popular educational institutions and other multi-faceted missionary endeavours, missionaries do come across with persons who experience death in different forms. It may be their death in Christian faith, in their relationship in the family, deadening difficulties in their personal or professional life, or the death-inducing tendencies of the new generation youngsters we encounter in the educational institutions. If we closely observe as Jesus did in the case of the young man, then we would certainly become aware of the fact that there are many who go through a death-like experience in their personal lives. This would be possible only if we would take the risk of going closer to them and into their lives. The moment we become aware of the on-going death experience of the persons whom we reach out, we would be spontaneously led to touch them, and to become an instrument of the life-giving touch of Jesus Christ.

We know for sure that, in our evangelical mission, we are called to act in the place of Jesus. That is, to touch all those who undergo a death experience, and – through our touch – to restore them back to life. Indeed, in this process, life should flow through each one of us, the missionaries. We know that this life-flow can be assured only to the extent that each missionary is intimately in touch with Jesus. It is

God's life-giving touch that shall pass through us and restore the dead back to life.

Ideally speaking, every missionary endeavour, every missionary institution is the life-giving and life-restoring avenue that consecrated communities set up for the people. But the vital question is: to what extent do we know personally the people in these facilities? Do we have settings that ensure that we get closer to them so that we are capable of knowing that some of them are on the verge of death, or, that they are in death-inducing situations? How many of the missionaries are capable of acting proactively to bring them out of their death-traps. Are the missionaries spiritually empowered to personally intervene in their lives so that they could become a catalyst who facilitates restoration of their lives?

Take, for example, the situation in a parish where we offer pastoral animation. How closely do we know the members in the parish community? Does the parish priest, who is a religious, know the members of the parish community personally? Is there a mechanism to know the wellbeing of these parishioners - both spiritually and temporally? Or else, do we get entangled with the formal administrative affairs to the extent that there is no time and energy left for personal encounters with the needy? These reflections also point out that the ministry rendered in a parish by a consecrated religious should be qualitatively enhanced from that of a diocesan clergy; if not, there is no reason for a consecrated person to undertake pastoral administration in a parish at all. The higher levels of commitment expected of a consecrated religious priest (or even that of a consecrated religious sister), naturally, calls for deeper levels of spiritual experience as well as advanced forms of commitment and availability whatever be the ministry undertaken in formal or informal contexts.

The same set of questions is also relevant for the apostolate in educational institutions. There are big and small institutions that the Church runs to impart education; but do they create space and time within these institutions to care for the persons – both teachers and students in the first circle and the parents and the larger society in the next circle? True, academic excellence and the temporal administration are key areas of institutional growth and establishment and most of the renowned Christian institutions excel in these areas. However, are we capable of attending to the needs of those children, for example, who fall prey to various types of abuses such as drugs, sex, isolation (social and cultural), etc.? Do our Christian missionary institutions succeed in making provisions for reaching out to the vulnerable children? Are our institutions capable of reaching out to the children who seem to be isolated in the classroom among their friends or even in their own families? Or, are the missionaries who are in charge of such institutions shy away from their responsibilities in these domains as they are tough situations to handle, or situations that may even endanger their own name and fame in the society, both of the persons and of the institutions?

Across the globe and, particularly, in India, presence of Christian missionaries is most prominent in educational institutions; at the same time, most of the members working in these institutions are primarily, and sometime solely, involved in the administration of the institutions. Unfortunately, these administrators – without any possibility for normal classroom interaction with students – are far too distanced from the personal lives of students and their parents as well as that of the teachers. It is felt by many that, in an administrative set up or office, many miserably fail to personally connect with others: maybe due to the formal context of an administrative set up, which is far too

rigid, any personalized communication and compassionate approach seem to be almost next to the impossible.

As education is an evangelical activity, those who are engaged in educational institutions of the Church are not only called to touch the lives of the students and the staff, but they must ensure that their touches are personally transformative and life-giving, or even life-restoring: only then it would become a mission, reflecting the enlivening truth of the Good News. Hence, along with the insistence on academic rigour and excellence, every missionary school is called for a closer accompaniment of the lives of the students. Christian missionaries must ensure that creative openings are made in these institutions to accompany them, to facilitate life-giving touches, especially to those who either feel lost on the track of their lives or those who come from families and segments that are generally pushed to the dead-ends or margins of the society.

Finally, the third dimension of entrusting those whom we restore to life into their families is equally an important dimension of Christian mission. Restoration of the young man to his mother by Jesus invites every Christian and Christian institution to prioritize families in their missionary consciousness, in the institutional policies and practical action plans. Christian apostolates would be truly genuine and holistic only to the extent that all those whom we reach out are placed in the integral context of a family.

In this context, *Testament of a Loving Father (Chavarul)*, which was given by Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, in 1868, to his own native parish in Kainakary, Kerala, becomes noteworthy, particularly for its insistent call to offer on-going accompaniment and guidance to the families by the consecrated religious. It should not be seen as a work among several other celebrated works of Saint Chavara. Instead, this *Testament* unveils a crucial dimension of the charisma of consecrated religious life in general and the

CMI life and ministry in particular. That is, the centrality of family in all evangelical engagements of consecrated communities is a necessary and unique dimension that should not be lost sight of. The instruction of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara on discipline within the family (part 1) and the principles to be followed in rearing and nurturing children (part 2) must be seen in the larger context of the essential importance of accompanying families to be touched by every consecrated religious in the Church; it is a call to touch and restore families to the fullness of their human and Christian life, as is clearly witnessed in the case of the widowed mother and her only son to whom Jesus has reached out spontaneously (Lk 7:11-17).

Founders of consecrated communities are recognized to have been prominent models of a life established in the person of Jesus, on the one side, and being engaged unreservedly in the lives of the people, on the other. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, for example, did touch the person of Jesus in an intimate manner; he is known to have cultivated an intimate and loving communion with Jesus so that it overflowed into various forms of apostolic activities, which were opened up in the course of living their religious commitment, after having discerned that these are for the good of the people as it was shown to them by the Holy Spirit in and through the signs of the times. For him, every activity – including deep contemplation – was an avenue to touch those who needed the healing touch of the Lord, or a life-giving or life-restoring touch. It was the touch of the Lord that was realized through the activities of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Moreover, all that he did for personal or communitarian enhancement of lives were oriented to the renewal of families, as family, for Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, was the cradle of faith in Jesus Christ and the wellbeing of humanity.

In the given context of Christian mission in India, we have plenty of reasons to be proud of the institutional penetration the Church has made; yet, we must realize that these institutions are the most effective but potential openings to families and their empowerment. Christian schools, for example, offer us access to the families of our students for a period of ten to twelve years, if not more. While we may succeed, generally, in reaching out to a few students and in restoring them to life through our personal interventions, we must also know that they could be sustained in their new life only if they are given sufficient support within the family. Hence, our educational institutions must look beyond statutory Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) meetings and should devise ways and means of regular contact and active involvement in the families of students. Moreover, the responsibility of a missionary educator, for example, does not – and should not – end with imparting excellent academic formation within the restricted schedule of eight hours on working days within the premises of the institution. Christian educational mission must embrace the whole person with his or her family. It is my firm conviction that the credibility quotient of Christian mission in India could be reclaimed and enhanced if all Christian missionaries – personally and collectively – sincerely and persistently practise the touch of Jesus in all the three dimensions we have dealt with in the above paragraphs.

Indeed, this calls for a serious introspection on the part of every missionary. While the Christian missionary endeavours are generally appreciated both in India and elsewhere, especially for their unqualified commitment and unreserved availability, we could make our evangelical presence and contributions significantly unique and far more effective if our constant contact with the Lord in contemplation can be re-established in the lives of each

missionary. For, if we are in touch with the Lord, His life will flow in abundance (Jn 10:10) through our personal and institutional involvements in the lives of the people whom we reach out through our ministries. As we succeed in enlivening the lives of those persons, through our personal and evangelical involvement, the transformation each missionary attains would overflow into each of them and, through them, into their families. This would result in a redemptive engagement of the whole family. Instead of running away from the task of ministering to the complex family conditions, today, following the lifestyle of Jesus, every Christian missionary is called to adopt a spirituality of engagement, which could be practised in reaching out to children, youth, and families.

VENTURING INTO THE UNKNOWN **Catholic Mission for the New Age**

Fr. Paul Achandy CMI
Prior General

Missionaries are heroes and heroines who listen to the call of the Master and leave home for an adventure. They take courage to go out beyond their present comfort zones although they are well-settled at home economically, socially, and religiously. They are not very sure on the roadmap, but they have the guts to leave the shore, of course, relying on His grace. They challenge their own *status quo* and make further journeys of suspense and excitement.

The Lord had said to Abraham: "Leave your country, your family, and your father's house, for the new land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1). A well-settled Abraham moved to an unknown land without a roadmap. The same was the story of Moses: "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt" (Ex 3:10). When Jesus calls his first disciples, he wants them to leave their family (Lk 14:26) leave their father and their nets (Mt 4:22).

In a world of demigods of power, performance, prestige, success, income, image, appearance, property, possessions, and popularity, it is not easy to say 'Amen' to a breakthrough invitation of the Lord. The life we live is intoxicated by the busy dance of things of the present, performance, pomp and glory that pass away. Even if one says, 'Yes' to God's call, temptations are there for the specially called to look back and go back to comfort zones that are left behind. People who experience the ocean of life only on the surface encounter just foam and splash. But those who are genuinely authentic dive deep and live at

depth and they move ahead against the prevailing tides. Authentic God experience always burns you, yet does not destroy you (Ex 3:2-3). They are the ones who script missionary sagas and they are the missionary heroes.

We are, however, living in bad times. Across the globe, missionaries are targeted, persecuted and brutally killed. Fundamentalism, fanaticism, and extremism are gaining control on the soft, middle-path holders. Histories and constitutions are being rewritten. Media have been totally centralized and the voice of dissent is silenced. Autocracies have been on reign and democracy has become the casualty. Hitler is again reborn; he has, unfortunately, become an icon for many leaders and his strategies of Nazi tribalism find new shoots. When countries become globalized, as John Naisbit put it, people become tribalized.

When things get tough, the tough get going. Have the challenges of the day affect the missionary momentum? Is the missionary spirit on the decline? The organized missionaries have expanded and face the danger of working like multinationals. Shepherds have been tempted to act as administrators and bureaucrats rather than becoming messengers of the joy of the Gospel. Compared to comfort zones of one's own land, I have met happier missionaries in tough terrains of Asia and Latin America and isolated regions of Africa cut off from electricity, reliable transport, communication, health and other services for basic necessities. Their passion for mission is the sole engine that moves them and their life is the testimony of the joy of the Gospel.

Since the missionary route is rough, hard, and narrow, the missionaries need reserves of spiritual stamina and constant company of the one who has been invited for the journey. Before making the outer journeys far and distant, first and foremost, the inner journey must be made to be powered by the Spirit. Indeed, as Jesus puts it, "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). The true missionary

remains in the 'city' till he gets commissioned for the mission and every day this has to go on like Jacob being blessed by the angel. In the process of encountering the climate, culture, and calamities, they might get hurt and be wounded on the way. But the true missionary learns the art of transforming the wounds into sacred wounds of redemption and grace after the example of the Master.

Today poverty and affluence coexist in almost all countries. The world has become flat and the developed world too has people who have no food, shelter, and clothing. At the same time, the virus of affluence is very active: affluence broadens choice; choice multiplies dilemmas. Discernment is the key and the Gospel has to safeguard our world of new freedom.

Let us explore the bottom of the pyramid: the children and the youth. They are the focus of attention these days. They need a new language. Most of them are in a new continent, namely, E-Continent and they are well-connected.

The Spirit shall teach us the language of the youth. It calls for a new outlook to include the youth in our discernment process. They love dialogue and they have lessons to teach us to live in the present time and to accompany them more effectively. We have been fishing on the 'left' side; now let us try on the 'right' side. Let us cast the internet on the right site. Let us wait for them with a ready breakfast offered by the Master. Today the Lord wants us to leave our comfort zones or attachments of one's own country, family, and father's house, and travel to the new land that He shows us, including the E-Land. There is a cultural lag and the distance seems to be very far. When the distance frightens us, Stu Mittleman, long distance runner, tells us: "I never ran 1000 miles; I could never have done that. I ran one mile 1000 times." We the missionaries too can do it. "For I am confident of this that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (Phil 1:6).

CMI Shepherds with a Mission Mandate

MAR PAULINUS JEERAKATH CMI
Visionary of the Church in Bastar

Fr. Josey Thamarassery CMI
Provincial, Nirmal Province, Jagdalpur

Introduction

“Strive to imbibe the spirit of Bastar and her people” was the guiding concept, which Mar Paulinus Jeerakath CMI followed in his missionary journey as the first bishop of the Diocese of Jagdalpur, who inspired his collaborators to do the same. An unassuming personality, Mar Paulinus, who made a simple way of life as his characteristic mark of his life, was called to head the new mission territory entrusted to the CMI Congregation in 1972. The mission he took up along with a handful of missionaries was to begin from nothingness. Unlike the other mission regions entrusted to the CMI Congregation, Jagdalpur is unique because of its tribal population and is the only region, which still remains tough to handle. Mar Paulinus, however, proved to be successful in this region as he could instil an everlasting missionary spirit, zeal, and enthusiasm in spite of the challenges and hardships the region offered. Therefore, this article is an effort to look back into the life of this great shepherd leader who laid a strong foundation to the mission in Jagdalpur.

Brief Geographical Information about Bastar

Bastar in State of Chhattisgarh is still unseen or unheard among many Indians. It was a single district before the formation of Chhattisgarh and was one of the largest districts in India. It was in the state of Madhya Pradesh till 2000, with an area of 39,171 square kilometres, which was

even larger than the State of Kerala and some other countries like Belgium or Israel.

As per the recent political developments, Bastar division consists of seven southern most districts of the State of Chhattisgarh: Bastar, Kanker, Dantewada, Bijapur, Narayanpur, Kondagaon, and Sukma. Bastar region has four borders: that of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and of Chhattisgarh itself. Though these border cultures make much impact on Bastar, she keeps the uniqueness of her culture in many respects.

People of Bastar

Bastar is known as the Land of Tribes. Tribal people of Bastar are still living in dense forests with their own heritages in this modern era. Seventy percent of the population of Bastar consists of tribals, constituting 26.76% of the total tribal population of Chhattisgarh. The major tribes of the Bastar region are the Gond, Abhuj Maria, Bhatra, Halba, Dhurva, Muria, and Bison Horn Maria. The Gonds of Bastar are one of the most famous tribes in India, known for their unique Ghotul system of marriage, which has almost disappeared today. Gonds are also the largest tribal group of central India in terms of population.

The tribes of Bastar region are known all over the world for their unique and distinctive tribal culture and heritage. Each tribal group in Bastar has its own distinct culture and enjoys its own unique traditional living style. Each tribe has developed its own dialect and differs from the others in their costume, eating habits, customs, traditions, and even in the worship of different gods and goddesses.

The tribes of Bastar are also known for their colourful festivals and arts and crafts. The Bastar Dussehra is the most famous festival of the region. The tribals of Bastar were also amongst the earliest to work with metal and have expertise

in making beautiful figurines of tribal gods, votive animals, oil lamps, carts, animals, etc.

Christian Presence in Bastar

We do not have any historical reference regarding the beginning of Christian presence in this remotest region during the early centuries as the region did not capture any attention during the earlier periods. However, we do have references to Christian presence from the nineteenth century onwards. So, we find the history of Bastar Christian community starting around the second half of the nineteenth century, precisely in the year 1892. It was the then British Commissioner to Chhattisgarh, Sir Andrew Fraser, who gave permission to Christians to occupy land in the region. Accordingly, Reverend Charles B. Ward, an American missionary, ventured to come to this distant land. He started his journey from New York around 1876. Crossing over the southern cities of Bellary and Hyderabad and spending a few years over there he reached Bastar and started his activities in the present Frazerpur area of Jagdalpur. He was considered to be an itinerant preacher, and so we can see Christians spread out sparsely all along the main lines of Bastar region. Around 1910 the British officers charged him of instigating the local tribals against the British regime. Unfortunately, he was asked to quit Bastar immediately.

For the Catholic Church, Bastar was part of Mylapore Archdiocese in the beginning and, later, it belonged to Vishakhapatnam. However, it was from 1966 onwards that the Catholic Church started its activities as the region was entrusted to Raipur Apostolic Prefecture. Under the patronage of Msgr. Weidner, the then Prefect Apostolic of Raipur, for a short period of 6 years, the Pilar Fathers rendered valuable services for the small Catholic communities in Jagdalpur, consisting of families hailing

from Kerala and also a few Anglo-Indian families. Names of Fathers Lulu Menezis, Nolasco, Satyadas, and Obaldo are to be remembered for their dedicated effort to initiate a Catholic mission in Bastar. Eventually, in 1972, Holy Father Pope Paul VI separated Bastar from the jurisdiction of Raipur. Through his papal bull *Indorum Gentes* (the people of India), the Pope made Mar Paulinus the Exarch of the newly erected Exarchate. On 23 July 1972, Mar Paulinus officially took charge of the exarchate of Jagdalpur.

New Impetus for the Mission in Bastar

Though the pilgrimage of Catholic Church in Bastar started in 1962, development and establishment of Jagdalpur as an exarchate gave greater impetus for the mission in Jagdalpur. In 1972, the first group of CMI and CMC missionaries reached Jagdalpur as pioneers to take up the new venture. They were well aware of the fact that the roads would not always be smooth, the valleys were deep, and the meadows not always green. They knew that it was only a starting and there were mountains to climb, streams to ford, forests to excavate before the Gospel became an integral part of the Bastar culture and got ingrained in the heart of the people of Chhattisgarh. Owing to varied reasons, especially because of the shortage of personnel, the pioneers were not able to do much in the initial stage.

In the initial years, the effort of the missionaries was to establish centres at different areas. The mission region had only two centres as they got the mission region from the Diocese of Raipur, namely, Jagdalpur and Kirandul. They started to explore the length and breadth of this vast area. They were really ignorant of the regional dialects, customs, traditions, cultural patterns, and lifestyle of the tribal folk of this area. The missionaries felt the pangs of introducing themselves to the common man of Bastar. It took almost six years to make Christian existence known to many of the

important centres, namely, Jagdalpur, Bijapur, Konta, Narayanpur, Kanker, and Kondagaon. English medium schools, adult education centres, tribal hostels, mobile health programmes, and grain banks were some of the avenues that the pioneer missionaries took recourse to get into contact with the people. Regular village visits helped them a lot to enter into the very life situations of the people. Eventually, rumours were spread that a new band of missionaries have come to convert the poor tribals by distributing wheat and used clothes. Local press did not fail to print such insinuating news reports. As Mar Paulinus himself had commented, "it was a blessing in disguise that our presence here might be widely known all over central India."

Father Paulinus to Head the New Mission

Father Paulinus was asked to take up the leadership of the new mission as it was decided to entrust the proposed new mission in Bastar to the CMI Congregation. However, to begin a new mission a vision was necessary. Father Paulinus, through handling various responsibilities in the Congregation, had proved himself to be a religious animator with a vision who could guide the destiny of a new mission territory. Therefore, the natural choice for the authorities was Father Paulinus as the question came up with regard to who would be the leader of the new mission. He was then the provincial of Saint Joseph's Province, Kottayam. It was only a few months that he took over as provincial that the province was given the prime responsibility of taking care of the missionary work of the new region of Bastar. Before that he had served as the General Councillor of the CMI Congregation too. The new shepherd set out for an unknown flock in an unknown land with a team of five priests and six sisters. The authority that was vested in the various offices which he held never made him authoritarian.

Rather it gave him a realistic picture of how he had to make new steps and ventures ensuring the collaboration and cooperation of his confreres and co-workers in mission. In the course of time, it was proved that Bishop Paulinus was a true leader who was endowed with qualities of an authentic animator who could lead from front by clearly showing his people the path to go ahead in order to accomplish the mission they had taken up. His humane and personal approach made him acceptable to his collaborators in the mission.

With the minimum resources they had with them, Mar Paulinus inspired his collaborators to find out new pastures where they were really wanted by the people. The situation of the region, at the time of taking over the mission, remained very much underdeveloped. The majority of the tribal population did not have much exposure to the world outside. Education and healthcare became the priority for the new team to step into the field. Therefore, the apostolates the missionaries took up in the new centres helped them to get into the lives of the people. However, through such activities Mar Paulinus had no intention to dilute the missionary spirit or responsibility. He firmly believed in what Vatican II said: "It is not enough that the Christian community be present ... nor is it enough that Christians exercise the apostolate by good example... For this purpose was the community founded and is present, that in word and deed they should proclaim Christ to their non-Christian fellow citizens and help them towards a full acceptance of Christ... The Church sent by Christ to manifest the love of God for all men and nations, understands missionary work as its immense task, still to be performed" (*Ad Gentes* §15).

Seeing the progress the Exarchate made within the short span of five years, in 1977, it was raised to a diocese and Father Paulinus was appointed the first bishop of the new

diocese. He was consecrated the first bishop of Jagdalpur on 11 May 1977.

Vision of a True Shepherd

Bishop Paulinus had his own vision of how to be a shepherd in the new mission diocese of Jagdalpur which was closely associated with the life and culture of the tribal people who formed the majority in the diocese. For him, the establishment of the Church in Jagdalpur was basically for the people of the place and, therefore, is at the service of the tribal people in Bastar. Any endeavour that the Church takes up in this region needs to take into account the interests of the people of the place. So, his vision for the Church in Bastar was based on the life, culture, and mentality of the tribal Bastar, which taught him a lot as a newcomer to this region.

As a missionary bishop for the tribal folk of Bastar, he held them and their culture in high esteem. He did not want to offend in anyway the sentiments of other people, especially of the tribals. He was very much sensitive to their cultural beliefs and customs and respected them. He used to remind his fellow missionaries that they should make the strange people of Bastar their friends, the unfamiliar and alien culture of Bastar one's own culture. Our missionary vocation is a personal invitation to follow Jesus and simultaneously to establish friendship with everybody that a missionary comes in contact with. Every missionary should allow the other to experience the love of Christ and the Gospel values like forgiveness, fellowship, compassion, etc., being that which a missionary would cherish in life.

Mar Joseph Kollamparampil, the present Bishop of the Diocese of Jagdalpur, shared his experience which he had with Bishop Paulinus who was also his predecessor during the time of his Aspirant stage in Jagdalpur in 1976. They were fresh from Kerala and everything was new for them.

They had to go for their classes in a Hindi medium school. Before starting the school year, the three seminarians, including Mar Joseph Kollampampil, reached the Bishop's room seeking his blessing. He told them that they should try to make friendship with everyone in their class as they reach the school. They should learn their way of talking Hindi, try to understand their specialities in behaviour, etc., even at the cost of forgetting the Kerala atmosphere of seminary life. That was the ideal missionary spirit that they had to bear in mind during their formation. According to him, formation of a missionary takes place along with his missionary action.

Later, Father Abraham Thuruthumalil, a veteran missionary of Jagdalpur, recalled his memories of Mar Paulinus in the following words: "Bishop Paulinus very often used to inspire us to lead a simple life. He used to tell us to strive to imbibe the spirit of Bastar and her people. He often challenged us to imitate and be inspired by the common man of Bastar telling us to observe how simple and happy these people were. Often after the tiresome work of the day they returned home jubilant with smiling faces, holding on to each other's shoulders, singing and dancing. These are the people of Bastar who are simple, sincere, straight-forward, and innocent who really challenged every missionary." Bishop Paulinus not only exhorted his fellow missionaries to learn from the life of the tribal people, but also tried to learn a lot himself from them whose culture he appreciated very much. The tribal simplicity was a characteristic feature in his life as the shepherd of Bastar. He learned from their life and, so, he remained always simple in his words and deeds. Therefore, hard work became the motto of his life; manual work was but a hobby for him. He always wanted to remain simple and humble in his life.

After Vatican II, inculturation gained relevance and, as he assumed the leadership of the church in Bastar after the great event of the Council, he wanted to bring into the

Church of Bastar a new spirit of missionary endeavour. He imbibed the spirit of the Council very well and it reflected in every sphere of the involvement of the church in Bastar. He took keen interest to establish a Church in the tribal region of Bastar which was in harmony with their tribal culture. He promoted tribal adaptations very much in the lifestyle, liturgy, church architecture, etc. He understood that the spirit of the Council is to put an end to transplanting or reproducing another church in the tribal land, rather to develop a local church in its true sense, deeply rooted in tribal values and cultural patterns. Cultural pluralism was a theme not only for the Church in Rome but also for Bishop Paulinus as a missionary bishop in the Indian Church. A priest, for example, asked him permission to celebrate Mass sitting according to the Indian style. His answer was that he neither prohibited anyone from such a celebration nor gave the permission although he could make his own experimentations. He told further that, on a later stage, all that is experimented and practised should be taken for a common discussion and, in consultation with the more enlightened experts in this regard, a better position could be adapted for the Church in Bastar.

A Memorable Year of God's Providence

The year 1987 was a memorable year for the Diocese of Jagdalpur, as it had completed fifteen years of existence. The same year witnessed a great violence targeting the Christians in Bastar. The perpetrators of violence targeted a flourishing centre at Chivurgaon, some 45 kilometres away from Jagdalpur. The centre was founded by Father Simon Stock at the request of the villagers who wanted the missionaries to open a school for their children. The Panchayat allotted a plot of land where a school in Hindi medium and a convent of the MSMI Sisters as well as the presbytery were built. Instigated by the then Commissioner

of Bastar, who was very much hostile to Christians, a group of hooligans came and demolished everything that existed in the centre. It was a great trauma for the diocese; of course, for Mar Paulinus it was a test of his firm faith in the Providence of God. He requested the Sisters, considering their safety, to go back to Jagdalpur; but he preferred to remain in the village as the villagers offered them shelter in their own homes and to continue with the school.

In the course of time, this centre has become one of the largest centres of the diocese and the school is a well-reputed and much sought after from all corners of Bastar, as it imparts quality education to the children, especially of the tribals of the locality.

In the background of the Chivurgaon demolition, Bishop Paulinus wrote in his pastoral letter: "Regarding our diocese, 1987 will be counted a very special year. The diocese has completed 15 years. 15 is a critical age. Boys and girls of that age experience a kind of disorientation in their life. They are no more children; neither have they grown mature. So, they are at a loss to relate themselves to the world around. During these 15 years, our diocese was slowly taking root in Bastar. It has not grown big, nor has it grown very strong. But it has been proved that it has taken roots in this soil. Let us thank God for this experience. The hostility this small Church has experienced is a proof that we have grown enough to be taken note of. We are sure that God has been lovingly fostering the growth of His church here. The present trials, which he has mercifully permitted, are a sign that He considered His church here strong enough to face the test. It is also a necessary process to make the church drive its roots to deeper and firmer grounds."

Bishop Paulinus believed that the Chivurgaon incident had given a chance to respond in a strictly Christian way. With deeper faith in the Lord, he took it as an occasion to deepen the faith and confidence in the Lord. The incident

proved how much the activities of the diocese gained support of the people of the locality as well as of the people who valued and appreciated the humanitarian works rendered by the diocese for the welfare of the tribal people. It manifested the unity of the diocese as all stood united and faced the turbulent time. It was a difficult time for Bishop Paulinus as the head of the diocese who had to take right and prompt decisions at the right time taking his collaborators in confidence. Mar Paulinus exhibited his strong faith in the Lord who entrusted him the noble responsibility of shepherding the diocese. Thus, he reiterated the motto written on his coat of arms: "with boldness and without fear" (Acts 4:18-31) in the service of the Lord. He asked the whole Christian community to be firm in their dedication in and through their humble service to the poor.

A Man Who Opted for the Poor

Bishop Paulinus really loved the poor. He always tried his best to help all the needy, who knocked at his door. He used to inspire his co-workers also to do the same. Without any distinction of caste and creed he tried to make everybody happy by his consoling words. In his last pastoral letter of 1989, he wrote: "We share in the humanity of Christ and whatever we do to help humanity we are doing to Christ himself (Mt 25:34-37). Whenever we humiliate and wound humanity, we wound the humanity of Christ (1 Jn 3:14-18). It is with this conviction that he dedicated himself to the service of the fellow human beings and advocated his collaborators too to be serviceable to the people who came seeking help. He made no discrimination of anyone as every human being for him - without the distinction of colour, sex, language, religion, culture, education, or anything else - is worthy of respect, love, and service. It was with this great desire of serving the poor people of Bastar that Bishop

Paulinus started a religious congregation called *Deen Bandhu Samaj* on 29 June 1976.

A Man of Prayer

Bishop Paulinus was a man of prayer. Often, he was found in the chapel with the Bible in his hand meditating on the Word of God in solitude and in adoration. He drew strength and courage to carry out his responsibility in prayer. Imbibing the spirit of the CMI Constitutions, he often used to advise his fellow missionaries: "Prayer life and apostolic life are so intimately knit together that a religious missionary cannot remain spiritual without a happy blend of them" (CMI Constitutions, Article 4). His life of prayer was the source of his inspiration and it created in him a sense of being a fearless child in the hands of the Lord. He used to tell his collaborators about the need to cultivate such a sense of belongingness to God using the imagery of a child resting in the arms of its mother without any worry or fear of any kind of adversity that could occur. Such a faith in God and firmness in prayer inspired him to take the motto "with courage and without fear" (Acts 4:18-31) for his service as the shepherd of the diocese. He could remain calm and quiet in the face of problems and difficulties that threatened the diocese, thanks to the firm foundation he had in prayer. People who knew Mar Paulinus still remember that whenever he spoke about the boundless love and mercies of God, he would become sentimental that his eyes would be filled with tears. Such a firm faith was very much evident during his last days of serious sickness. He was able to accept the destiny of his life with great fortitude and firm trust; for, believed that the good Lord knows the best for our life. He could comfort and give solace to his well-wishers and friends who really expressed their deep sorrow and were sad about the sickness of the bishop.

An Epitome of Hard work

Bishop Paulinus was an epitome of hard work who never wasted away his time. In the initial years of the diocese, as there was scarcity of personnel, he took care of keeping accounts by himself and doing the work of the secretary along with his main responsibility as the head of the diocese. He found time to write all his letters personally and people still cherish having received personal letters from him as he made it a point to respond to the letters at least by writing a few lines by himself in spite of his busy schedule. Garden work was a manifestation of his love for manual labour and the well-maintained rose garden and the gardens on both sides of the bishop's house with lot of flowers and a variety of plants were taken care of by himself. He included one hour gardening in his daily schedule; he never excused himself from it. If anyone wanted to meet him after 4 o'clock, he would invariably be found in the garden only. Once a group of people who came from Kerala to attend the profession of the sisters wanted to meet the bishop and seek his blessings. They went to the bishop's house and searched for him everywhere, but couldn't find him. Finally, someone directed them to the garden. It was unbelievable for them to find a bishop removing cow dung from a pit. They were really astonished at the sight and it was really a strange experience for them.

He taught through his life that every work, no matter how menial or low it may be considered by others in the society, is valuable, good, having its own dignity. So, every work must be fulfilled with honesty and seriousness and with due diligence. This alone could create harmony in the society. Therefore, he never hesitated to take up a spade and clean the garden or carry cow dung from the cattle shed for the plants which he cared for.

Hard work was for Mar Paulinus the best expression of gratitude towards God for the talents and abilities he had

bestowed upon each and every human being. When we are grateful we have to work hard to develop them and to make use of them for the benefit of the society. Therefore, he insisted that the attitude for hard work should also be inculcated among the seminarians and students who were entrusted to his care. As a hard-working man, he found always time to read and update his knowledge with the latest literature. In spite of the heavy work he had, people found him reading new books.

A Man of Principles

Mar Januarius was a man of principles and these principles formed the sum and substance of his life. The good things that he taught the seminarians and sisters during classes and on different occasions could be summarised up in the following principles:

- Keep peace with one another in the community and don't take revenge on anyone for the wrong that they have committed. We may quarrel at times but let it not be continued for hours and days.
- Our communities should not be like Ashok stump but should be like the Trinity.
- Respect and love others unconditionally.
- Never forget that as you need others, they need you too.
- Count the graces that you have received from God and thank Him.
- We should be open in the community; that is the key to its success.
- Justice is to give the due thing to the due person in due time. Otherwise, it is injustice.
- Find the better side of others and don't exaggerate their shortcomings or degrade them.
- Keep smiling even in the midst of suffering; for, our heavenly Father doesn't want us to be seen unhappy as our earthly parents don't.

- If we want to do a good thing here and now, don't postpone it.
- A good missionary is someone who doesn't complain of anything but is happy and content in all circumstances.
- Every person in this world is good. God hasn't created any one bad.
- We should not make ourselves a burden to the community.
- Our life should be a model before others; for our life is the most effective Good News we proclaim to others.
- It is better to pray within the mind for a minute than just reciting the prayers from books without being aware of them.
- Let our answer be always 'yes' or 'no'.
- The weakness or shortcomings of others should make us mend our own shortcomings.

Just like a loving father, he taught, corrected, and led his co-workers and youngsters on the path of perfection. He never judged anyone. Yet, once a complaint was made against someone, he sought to have dialogue with both the parties in order to restore peace and harmony.

Founding of an Indigenous Congregation for Bastar Mission

In order to prepare and avail religious for the specific mission in Bastar he became instrumental in founding a religious congregation for women called *Deen Bandhu Samaj* on 3 July 1976. The reason behind the founding of such a religious group for women was his strong conviction that there should be an indigenous congregation formed in the soil of Bastar itself to work among the people of Bastar in order to realize and fulfil the aims and vision of the diocese. At that time, in God's plan, a few women came forward and offered their selfless service for the tribal people of Bastar. Bishop Paulinus took it as God's providence and welcomed

them whole-heartedly. Foreseeing God's design in their venture, he encouraged them to start a new congregation and named it *Deen Bandhu Samaj*. This very name was chosen by the Bishop himself from his inner inspiration on his journey to Konta to visit the mission station. This manifests the charism and spirit of the new religious society to be founded deriving its original inspiration from Jesus, who showed sympathy with the hungry and suffering, the poor and the oppressed, the ignorant and the sinful. Hence, the call of the new congregation was to become friends of the poor and the abandoned of Bastar, who should find the love and compassion of the Lord through the members of the new congregation. Saint Thomas, the Apostle of India, was the patron of the congregation, whose confessing faith in Jesus as "my Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28) and loyalty even to the point of death (Jn 11:16) ought to be the inspiration for the congregation. The first batch of sisters made their first commitment on 22 June 1978. The congregation, which was founded in Jagdalpur, was raised as an Eparchial Congregation on 11 February 2003. At present, there are 140 professed members who are committed in the field of evangelization, social developmental activities, medical service and education, both formal and non-formal, for the development of the people of Bastar. But, at the same time, they are also spread in different dioceses in northern India and abroad like Italy and Germany.

Last Journey

After his golden jubilee celebration of religious profession, in the year of 1987, which also was the year of the demolition of Chivurgaon mission centre by some anti-social elements, his health started deteriorating. He became often sick due to fever, swelling on his legs, and other weaknesses related to it. He was not very much worried

about those symptoms that often became a companion in his life journey. Finally, due to compulsion from his own priests and sisters he agreed to go for a medical check-up, which turned to be a testing stone for him. He was diagnosed to have advanced leukaemia, which was to become fatal for him. Having known about it from Tata Institute of Cancer, Mumbai, he remained serene and calm, and accepted it as the will of God. He tried to keep his fellow priests and sisters, who were saddened by the news of his terminal illness, happy and joyful through his pleasant smile. The doctors and sisters who attended him during his illness were highly impressed by his humble submission to God's inscrutable designs. One of the doctors, who attended him in Saint John's Medical College, Bangalore, appreciated the serenity and contentment which Bishop Paulinus radiated in spite of the serious and terminal illness he had and remarked that although he had the chance to treat many bishops, he never saw such a serene person.

Although the medical science gave him a lifespan of less than a year due to the acute leukaemia, divine Providence granted him more time in order to see his long-cherished dream fulfilled. A Cathedral for a diocese and for a bishop is a significant blessing and Bishop Paulinus wanted to see a Cathedral built for the Diocese of Jagdalpur. He was fortunate enough to bless the Cathedral by himself on 19 March 1990 in the presence of several bishops, priests, religious, and laity in Jagdalpur. He told, in his thanksgiving words, during the occasion of the blessing that this Cathedral would add to the beauty of Bastar.

After the blessing of the Cathedral, another major function of Bishop Paulinus was to be co-consecrator of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Vijay Anand CMI, the second Bishop of Chanda, on 3 July 1990. From that function, he proceeded to Saint John's Medical College, Bangalore, for his regular treatment. All through these

months his health condition showed much improvement although there was a steady deterioration taking place within him. Even on 6 August 1990, the last day of his life, nothing special was noticed and the day began for him as usual in the hospital. He talked, laughed, and jested. In the evening, he asked for an early supper, but never thought that this would be his last supper. After the supper the situation slowly began to change and the agony of his last moments started. Information was sent to Dharmaram College and to Jagdalpur. Fathers from Dharmaram rushed to his bed. The severe pain of death lasted for an hour. Then, his great soul set out for its eternal reward.

After the homage and a Solemn Mass for Bishop Paulinus, celebrated by His Eminence Antony Cardinal Padiyara with other bishops and priests at Dharmaram College, where he was once a professor of philosophy, his body was brought to Jagdalpur, a diocese which he had reared in its infancy and witnessed its steady growth for eighteen years. The diocese bid farewell to him a week after his sad demise. His mortal remains were laid to rest in the tomb of the newly blessed Saint Joseph's Cathedral on 10 August 1990 in the presence of several bishops, priests, religious, and the laity gathered from the entire diocese.

Conclusion

Though years have passed since the passing away of this great soul and first bishop of the Diocese of Jagdalpur, the rich heritage and sweet remembrance still continue to inspire the diocese even today. It is an indisputable fact that whatever Jagdalpur as a mission diocese has achieved today undoubtedly is the fruit of the hard labour of Bishop Paulinus along with that of the pioneering missionaries of Jagdalpur. He laid a strong foundation for the diocese upon which the coming generations could build up further. He had followed a unique path in laying the foundation for the

mission, which was entrusted to his care. Although Chanda and Sagar missions provided the CMI Congregation with ample experience in the missionary endeavour, Mar Paulinus developed a unique idea and plan for the new mission of Jagdalpur. He ensured that the plan is realized through the collegiality and collaboration of his co-workers whom he encouraged and motivated through his regular but informal visit to the mission stations. Every new idea or initiative got acceptance before Mar Paulinus and if they were really practicable and good, he supported them in their execution. The financial constraints of the diocese did not dissuade him from going ahead with the initiatives for the good of the mission. He, in fact, helped them, totally depending on the Providence of God to find out ways and means to execute them. Certainly, therefore, in Bishop Paulinus Jeerakath CMI, the first bishop of the Diocese of Jagdalpur, we have a shepherd who guided the destiny of the diocese with unfailing fatherly care and genuine missionary zeal.

Celebrating CMI Missions 1

THERE IS MORE FUN IN THE PHILIPPINES
Pastoral Outreach of CMIs in Manila

Fr. Joshy Vazhappilly CMI

Chanda

Introduction

“There is more fun in the Philippines!” All around Manila city and elsewhere in the country one is welcomed with these placards, which proudly speak of the great hospitality with which Filipinos welcome foreigners to their lovely and tiny island nation – a group of nearly seven thousand and six hundred small and big islands nestled in the Pacific Ocean – east of Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and China.

“Where are you from?” is a spontaneous question every Filipino would pose at a newcomer and the immediate response would be “Welcome to the Philippines!” Wherever you turn, you will be mused to see smiling faces all around – on the streets, in the hotels, at the marketplaces, and in the bistros – everywhere. The elderly, children, vendors, and fishermen: all would smile at you after the initial surprised look that would cross their face. Filipinos are great on smiles. They will always find a reason to smile, in almost every situation and for any reason: they smile at work, they smile on the streets in traffic jams, and they even smile in an argument! Even when disaster strikes, when nature shows its nasty side and when grief is a part of daily life, a Filipino will react with a smile. This is the reason why the Philippines is known as the land where Asia wears a smile, and is ranked as one of the happiest countries on earth.

The people of this wonderful archipelago are in general considered optimistic and carefree. Filipinos are fun loving people with a richly endowed sense of music. Everyone loves to sing. A luggage porter at the airport sings, a shop

assistant even at 4 am in the early morning sings, a guy selling tickets for a local bus sings, staff members in hotels sing. Further, karaoke is more common than bakery shops even in small villages. There is even karaoke in the jungle! No matter how small or devastated a town or village is after a typhoon or any other natural calamity, one can still find enthusiastic Filipino youngsters pitching up a quick-make post and board for basketball – on the courtyards, in the streets, perching the fields...

The Land

The Republic of the Philippines is a Unitary Sovereign State and Island Country in the Southeast Asia. Situated in the western Pacific Ocean, it consists of 7,641 islands that are categorized broadly under three main geographical divisions from north to south: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The capital city of the Philippines is Manila and the most populous city is Quezon City, both part of Metro Manila. Bounded by the South China Sea on the west, the Philippine Sea on the east, and the Celebes Sea on the southwest, the country shares maritime borders with Taiwan to the north, Vietnam to the west, Palau to the east, and Malaysia and Indonesia to the south.

The Philippines' location on the Pacific 'Ring of Fire' and its closeness to the equator makes the Philippines prone to earthquakes and typhoons, but also endows it with abundant natural resources and some of the world's greatest biodiversity. The Philippines has an area of 300,000 square kilometres and a population of approximately 103 million. It is the eighth most populated country in Asia and the twelfth most populated country in the world. Approximately, 10 million additional Filipinos live overseas, comprising one of the world's largest Diasporas. Multiple ethnicities and cultures are found throughout the islands.

The Religion

The arrival of Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer, in 1521, marked the beginning of Hispanic colonization. With the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi from Mexico City, in 1565, the first Hispanic settlement in the archipelago was established. The Philippines remained part of the Spanish Empire for more than 300 years. This resulted in Catholicism becoming the dominant religion. The Filipinos, who till then were participating in polytheistic religious practices, quickly turned to the light of Christianity. Today, though officially the Philippines is a secular state, Christianity is the dominant faith and it boasts of being the only Christian country in the whole of Asia with 80.58% of its people professing Catholicism. Around 37% regularly attend Mass and 29% identify as very religious. Protestants are 10.8% of the total population, mostly endorsing Evangelical Protestant denominations that were introduced by American missionaries at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; they are heavily concentrated in Northern Luzon and Southern Mindanao. The Philippine Independent Church is a notable independent Catholic denomination. Iglesia-in-Cristo is a Restorationist denomination in the country. Islam is the second largest religion. The Muslim community of the Philippines is roughly estimated to form 5.57% of the total population.

Devotions and Worships

The Philippine Church is known for its religiosity. Filipino Catholics are not very concerned about the dogmas and doctrines. They are more at home with pious practices. Popular devotions and practices are fervently observed than adhering to the religious principles, traditions, and dogmas of the Universal Church. Filipinos have their own world vision and understanding, their own way of practising and

living the faith. In that way, the Filipino people are unique: thanks to their rich cultural background! The third largest Catholic population in the world, the Filipino Catholicism is fervent and wide-ranging. Filipinos stand out for their devotional fervour. Catholic practices here are unusually material and physical, built especially on devotions to Blessed Virgin Mary, the suffering Christ, and the Santo Niño (Holy Child), and on powerful celebratory and penitential rituals practised and experienced in a wide variety of Filipino vernacular forms. Feasts like the Black Nazarene, which draws millions to the streets of Manila in January, the Simbang Gabi novena that precedes Christmas, and the month-long Flores de Mayo offering to Mary illustrate distinctively Filipino forms of devotion.

Shrines and Pilgrimages

The Filipinos, in general, are a very loyal people as they have great devotions to religious figures. The devotion that the Filipino people are most known for is their devotion to the Child Jesus or more popularly known locally as the Santo Niño.

Santo Niño, Cebu

The Santo Niño, the Holy Child, is a figure of the Child Jesus venerated by Filipinos all over the world. Devotional practices to the Santo Niño with large crowds are unique to the Philippines. In Cebu, devotion reaches a fever pitch early in January, when crowds celebrate Sinulog, a ritual dance said to be inspired by and performed for the Holy Child. The Santo Niño is usually clad with expensive and flashy clothing, which is usually lined with jewelry. The statue has been in Cebu since 1565 and is the oldest relic in the country. It is housed in the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño which is located in Cebu City.

Black Nazarene, Manila

The Black Nazarene is the patron saint of Quiapo, a small but popular area of Manila that is also home to many establishments such as the Quiapo market and several other stores that line up on the streets. The Black Nazarene is a life-sized image of a 'black' Jesus Christ carrying the cross and, since the year 1787, it has been housed in the Saint John de Baptist Church or the Minor Basilica. The statue is only brought out on two occasions, its Feast Day, which is celebrated on January 9 and on Good



Friday.

The statue was in the Philippines, as early as 1607, brought by the Spaniards aboard a ship. The statue was burned when the ship caught fire, thus the name Black Nazarene. Despite the burns and the damage, the people made an effort to preserve and honour it. Several miracles have been reported by those who have touched the image.

Every year, on 9 January, millions of Filipinos gather in Manila for a procession of the Black Nazarene. Few religious celebrations anywhere in the world can match this feast in terms of the number and fervour of devotees surrounding the procession.

Our Lady of Peñafrancia, Naga City

On every third Saturday of September, Naga City, which is located in the Bicol Region, celebrates the feast of Our Lady of Peñafrancia. Whether rich or poor, Bicolanos will be in Naga City to meet their families and friends to celebrate the feast but, most importantly, to venerate the Virgin of Peñafrancia, whom they fondly call Ina. On the first day of the novena, the image of the Virgin, which is a copy of the Madonna located in Peñafrancia, Spain, is transferred from its shrine to the Naga City Cathedral. On the last day of the

novena, the image returns to her shrine through the Naga River route. This procession fills the banks of the river with spectators and devotees who chant “Viva la Virgen” upon the arrival of the image. After the flatboat reaches its destination, the devotees again chant “Viva la Virgen” and the image is carried back in a procession of thousands to the Cathedral.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Baclaran

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is an image of the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus in her arms as the Archangels Michael and Gabriel hold the articles of the passion, the cross, and the nails. Saint Luke is said to have been the original artist of this image.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help first came to the Philippines in 1906 through the Redemptorist priests as part of their mission to spread the devotion. Novena prayers and Mass, on every Wednesday, are held to honour Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The Baclaran Church, known as the Christian Church with the largest population and the Marian Shrine in the Philippines, attracts several hundred thousands of people who wish to show their devotion. The feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is celebrated on 27 June and, on this date, devotees gather in the National Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Baclaran for thanksgiving and to pray for their intercessions.

Our Lady of Manaoag

The veneration of Our Lady of Manaoag began with the Augustinian fathers in charge of the spiritual administration of the Manaoag town in the early seventeenth century. The ivory image of Our Lady of Manaoag was brought to Philippine shores by Padre Juan de San Jacinto from Spain via the Acapulco galleon trade.

According to folklore, a native man was journeying home and heard a Lady's mysterious voice. He was stunned upon

seeing the radiant Lady clutching a Rosary on her right hand and a Child on her left as she stood on a cloud veiling a treetop. The man then fell on his knees and he soon told the people of what he had seen. After that incident, on the spot where the Lady appeared, a church was built in her honour. It was called 'Manoag' and a town quickly grew around it. During World War II, the Church was damaged by four bombs that were planted above the church. Three bombs detonated on the plaza and the facade, destroying them both. The last bomb landed in the sanctuary, but miraculously failed to detonate.

Regina Rica, Tanay

One will feel the divine embrace as one treads on the holy ground trail on the way up to a hill composed of 308 steps of paved stairs leading to a towering statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the young Jesus in one of her arms. The



71-foot high image of Our Lady is known as *Regina Rosarii*, Queen of the Holy Rosary.

The construction of the statue started on 7 October 2009 and the blessing took place on 19 March 2010. It was inspired by the Dominican tradition of Our Lady's protective mantle that shelters her devoted children. Below the statue is a canopy of clouds where the faces of seventeen angels can be seen.

Some Unique Practices

Christmas and Epiphany

Christmas in the Philippines, Filipinos like to say, stretches longer than anywhere else in the world, namely, from September to January with carols and gift-giving, novenas and Masses, feasts and processions. There is a unique practice in the Philippines known as *Simbang Gabi*, which

will not be found among any other communities anywhere in the world except among the Filipino Diaspora.

On each of the nine mornings leading up to Christmas, Filipino Catholics gather in the pre-dawn hours for *Simbang Gabi*, a novena of Masses that anticipates the celebration of Christmas. Churches generally overflow with people, or, usually, the Mass is held outside to accommodate the swelling crowd. The timing of the Mass, which begins as early as 4 am, helps make the event special and highlights the seasonal sense of anticipation. The experience of rising early in the morning and travelling to church in the dark adds an element of sacrifice and uniqueness. The experience of eating together among the crowds in the plaza soon after the Mass, before heading to work, adds a sense of festivity and camaraderie. Many Filipinos believe that petitions brought to the Baby Jesus at each of the nine *Simbang Gabi* Masses are most likely to be answered.



Holy Week and Easter

During the Holy Week, Filipino devotional culture takes on an especially penitential tone, in ways that particularly reflect its Spanish colonial heritage intertwining with its pre-Christian heritage, but one that has continued to evolve over the years. The order of Holy Week liturgical celebrations in the Philippines matches that of the Church worldwide, but popular devotions assume a very important role alongside these. Taken together, these practices allow believers to observe, follow, and actualize the events of the Passion to somehow participate in the sufferings of Christ.

The images of Holy Week in the Philippines that often get the most exposure in media worldwide are from places like San Pedro Cutud, San Fernando, and Pampanga where male devotees whip themselves bloody or are even tied or

nailed to a cross to manifest the sufferings of Jesus. These devotions are discouraged by the official Church, but often are respected by the faithful. Less extreme acts of *penitensya* are often typically part of Filipino Catholics' Holy Week practice. Filipinos, young and old alike, often make a *panata*, a vow to participate in certain devotions, or to abstain from smoking, liquor, soft drinks, or meat over the course of the week.

Processions play a significant role in Filipino celebrations throughout Holy Week, and can occur with different variations on various days of the week. Big processions with statues of Jesus, Mother Mary, 12 Apostles, and many saints take place on Holy Wednesday from 6 am until evening.

Another important pious tradition, the *Visita Iglesia*, or visit of the churches, takes place during the remainder of the day on Holy Thursday and can extend into Good Friday. It involves visits to seven churches for prayer and reflection on the Passion. *Pahalik*, a devotion that involves kissing of the dead body of Jesus is a Good Friday devotion that takes place in every church. In some churches, it includes a procession of the *Santo Entierro*, the Holy Burial, which includes carriages with statues from the Passion description. The main carriage is an elaborate casket in which the body of Jesus can be seen laid out, ready to be taken to his tomb.

Holy Saturday is sometimes known in the Philippines as Black Saturday. Practices like *Visita Iglesia* and Stations of the Cross and confession are part of the day for many families who have not done this already.

Midnight Mass, the Easter Vigil, is celebrated as elsewhere, usually with an outdoor fire built from wood, and the blessing of the Paschal candle. Easter typically begins with a pre-dawn celebration known as *Salubong*, "welcoming," wherein statues of the risen Christ and Mary are taken to meet one another. Men typically accompany the statue of Christ, and women, still in mourning until they

meet Christ, accompany the statue of Mary. The meeting is an occasion for joy and celebration. Masses are crowded to overflowing even more than usual, often into the square.

Flores de Mayo and Santacruzán



Across the Philippine archipelago, a tradition known as Flores de Mayo, a daily offering of flowers to Mary, the mother of Jesus, is observed throughout the month of May. Typically the celebration culminates with a *Santacruzán*, partially a beauty pageant and partially a religious feast, that marks the finding of the True Cross by Reyna Elena, or the queen Saint Helena. At the end of a month-long child catechism in May, children line up in procession, taking the statue of mother Mary through the lanes of the village with rosaries and flowers in hands. The celebration culminates in the Solemn Liturgy at the end of which everyone offers floral tribute to our Lady.

Obando, the Fertility Feast

Each year, *Obando*, a three-day feast, is held that draws people from throughout the country for Masses, long dancing processions through the streets, and frenzied devotion inside the church. The feast is known for its fertility dance that serves as a form of prayer for couples trying to conceive.

CMIs in the Philippines

2 January 2013 was a bright sunny day. I landed in Manila International Airport (NAIA) at around 16 hours. Doubts and anxiety abounded my mind as I was stepping outside the Airport after the emigration clearance. Lulling all my fears and anxieties to rest, there stood Fr. Martin Kuzhuvélil CMI to receive me. Soon Frs. Wilson Chakkyath CMI and Anil Thalakkottoor CMI joined him and all my fears withered

into thin air. We headed for East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI), where I was to spend the next three months attending a crash course in Pastoral Management. Fr. John Palluthuthil CMI was there ahead of us to make sure that I got a decent accommodation in the institute. That evening the CMIs in Manila gathered at Fr. Wilson's parish in Kamias in the Diocese of Cubao to welcome me into the CMI fraternity in Manila. This parish in Kamias, subsequently, became my dwelling place and *karmabhoomi* for the next five odd years to follow. Thus began my Philippine stint which lasted till July 2017.

It was Fr. James Thayil CMI from Rajkot, who was instrumental in my arrival in the Philippines. He used to say, "CMIs in Manila are of a different breed." Truly so, our CMI community stands out from the rest in other parts of the world in the warmth, we-feeling, and the camaraderie we enjoy. Though belonging to different provinces and different age groups, and many seeing each other for the first time after having come over here in a foreign land, we are a small but a closely-knit unit with a very warm and friendly communion.

Many CMI members have rendered their stupendous services here for nearly quarter of a century. This includes names like Fr. Varghese Kottoor and Fr. Antony Puthenangady, Fr. Oliver Inchody (Bhopal Province) who was priest-in-charge of a Quasi-Parish for some time as well as a faculty member at Ateneo de Manila University, Fr. Thomas Muppathumchira, Fr. Davis Varayilan, Fr. Anto Vattakuzhy, Fr. Paulson Thaliyath, Fr. James Thayil, Fr. Ginu Abraham, Fr. Aju Varghese, and a lot more. I do not dare to mention the names of all for the want of time and space. Currently, there are 8 CMIs here in Manila.

All these CMI priests have been pursuing different streams and disciplines of studies in different universities in this country, while at the same time serving the local church

in the capacity of 'Guest Priests'. The church authorities recognize and appreciate our services here and the people are immensely happy about our availability and commitment. For, we CMIs here are not just students, but fulltime pastors as well. Unlike our student-priests in Rome, Belgium and elsewhere, we do not have the luxury and liberty of living in the security of a CMI community or the campus of a seminary or university, purely engaging in study pursuits, but rather we Manila CMIs serve in the parishes while pursuing our studies. We are more of a pastor than of a student! We come together regularly, fostering a feeling of comradeship and oneness, celebrating important days of the Congregation, serving different parishes all the while! We have been serving this church for more than the past 25 years and the church has high regard for our service, the expressions of which are found in the following *verbatim*s: Fr. William Garcia (Parish Priest at Kamias): *"Please get someone from your community for your replacement, Father, because with you people, we do not have any worry as you are always available for the community"* (in a row, 3 CMIs have been serving this parish for the past 10 years, beginning with Fr. Seby from Bhopal, Fr. Wilson from Coimbatore and me for the past 4 years). Mgr. Ronald Macale (Apostolic Vicar of Cubao Diocese): *"Thank you for serving our church; we are so edified by your commitment; the diocese is very happy with the services rendered by the Indian priests, especially you Carmelites."* Fr. Dong (Co-Ordinator of Guest Priests): *"Thank you brother-priests for showing us Filipino priests how to be different as a committed and consecrated priest."*

This is a humble attempt to bring to the notice of our larger community the vibrancy of Philippine Church and the uniquely specific nature of CMIs in Manila, a community that puts in action, in a very telling way, the CMI charism. While speaking of CMI mission and the

missionary thrust that our founder Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara has bequeathed to us, as a true CMI, I feel proud of our CMI identity and am happy that we are able to render our service in Philippines, the only Christian country of Asia, in such a substantial manner and for such a long period of time.

Conclusion

Philippine Church poses a great opportunity for anyone zealous for missionary and pastoral endeavours, more so with the existence of many ills in the Philippine Church. In spite of being genuinely and uniquely rich in devotion and piety, the Philippine Church has so many challenges that need to be addressed effectively. The faith of the people is shallow; they are easily given into superstitions, if not all; a good number of the clergy is money-oriented and fail in the duty of instructing the faithful in matters of faith and traditions; the youth is slowly distancing itself from the Church and the higher authorities seem to be unaware of this phenomenon; absence of regular Sunday catechism robs of the new generation the opportunity to get proper faith formation; vocations to religious and priestly life are dwindling. The list is long. Along with these, there is a steady flow of students from our mother church in Kerala to different universities of the Philippines. A concerted effort from the part of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy and the missionary congregations of India needs to be taken to cater to the needs of these communities and serve the local church. With the rich missionary charism that the CMI Congregation possesses, we have a unique responsibility to spearhead this mission in the contemporary times, in the islands of Philippines.



150 Years of Chavarul at Jerusalem Retretat Centre, Thrissur



Saint Chavara Feast, USA, November 2017



*Retreat Preacher Fr. Johnson Valiyakulathil CMI
with the Retreatants in Kenya*



*Participants of a Liturgy in Kenya with Fathers
Johnson and Jose*

Celebrating CMI Missions 2

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF KALIYAL MISSION CMI Mission in Kanyakumari

Fr. Benny Thottanani CMI

English Translation: Ancy George

Different groups of missionaries have been active already in the beginning of the nineteenth century in Kanyakumari-Nagarkovil area. London Mission Society, Church Mission Society, etc., have started missionary work in Travancore in the first decade of the nineteenth century itself. Salvation Army started English education in 1806.

It was in 1967 that Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) Congregation became active in Kanyakumari District. This Congregation is still active in Kaliyal, Muzhuckode, Penuthadam, Netta, Plamkala, Pallickonam, Kanyakumari, and Anchugram. It is only twenty years since the Diocese of Thuckalai has been established; till then it was spread up to Chenkotta. The ecclesial communities such as CSI, Marthoma, Jacobite, Pentecostals, and different Protestant groups competitively work here. The Diocese of Kottar and the Malankara Diocese of Marthandom are very active in this area.

People of this area live in peaceful collaboration. Though they are passionately religious, their tolerance towards the other religions deserves special mention. Members of the same family might belong to different churches. There are instances that the husband may be a Hindu, wife a Pentecostal believer, and children in the Catholic Church. When we go for the family unit meetings, we may see figures of Hindu deities at the portico. Along with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we may also find the statue of Ganapathi. Along with the pictures of Saint Theresa of Lisieux, Saint Joseph, and Virgin Mary, we can see also the

pictures of MGR and Karunaanidhi (namely, celebrated political leaders of the region). In the same vein, the teachers of our school in Kaliyal belong to all religious denominations.

The majority of people belonging to the local parish are from Nadar community. Most of men are good masons and sculptors. Women work in tailoring shops, cashew nut factories, and in rubber estates. The areas of Kaliyal, Penu, Netta, and Marthandom are known for cultivation and rubber trade. The setback in rubber trade has heavily affected the population here. However, their faith is very strong. They give priority to church and festivities. Every year a good number of people are attracted to faith and they receive baptism. There are people under catechetical training in view of receiving baptism at the time of the parish feast. Their religious fervour will tremendously inspire us. Are not these the gifts that the priests and the nuns who work in the missionary fields can receive?

Many people are to be remembered when we speak about the mission in the southern area. CMI Congregation started its activities in this area since 1942 in connection with the Reunion Movement. Fr. Hormis Perumalil is the first among them. The first missionaries of the recently established Diocese of Parassala were CMI priests. It is Fr. Hormis who founded and nourished the Kirathoor mission. Fr. Hormis and other CMI priests played a great role in the mission fields of Kaliyickavila, Balaramapuram, Kirathoor, Thettityode, Aruvancode, Padanthal, and Parassala. Archbishop Mar Ivanios had great appreciation for the works of Fr. Hormis. Frs. Egbert, Amos, Julius, and Antony were the first missionaries in this area. These Fathers took great pain to realize the reunion dream of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara during the period 1942-1966. Entrusting the mission stations and institutions they had started to Archbishop Mar Ivanios towards the end of his tenure, they

withdrew from these missions. This withdrawal might not be mentioned in history – but a successful and graceful withdrawal in the true sense of Christian mission!

It was in 1955 that the Syro-Malabar Church was granted permission to undertake mission work in Kanyakumari District. So, the expression 'Kanyakumari mission' may not be found in the documents. Christ Nagar in Trivandrum has already been recognized as a sub-centre of Southern Mission. It is really appropriate to remember these missionaries for their contributions towards the establishment of the Malankara Diocese of Parassala. They were the morning stars which came before the sunrise. Fr. Hormis said goodbye to the Southern Mission and went to Malabar in 1953. He is the architect of Davagiri College and Amalapuri in Malabar. It is CMI Fathers, starting with Fr. Athanasius in 1925, who began parishes and schools in the prominent migrant areas of Mukkam, Thiruvampadi, Kodencherry, Koodarani, Nilampur, and Bathery. Southern Mission and Malabar Mission were the two regions of the undivided CMI Saint Joseph's Province.

Fr. Benedict Pinamaruk started a monastery on 4 January 1967 at Kaliyal and gradually a Christian community was formed there. He founded a nursery school the same year. Fr. Valerius became the superior of the monastery at Kaliyal in 1968 and he upgraded the nursery school to a primary school. This school is known in his name. Frs. James Joseph Kuzhimattom and Chacko Basil, who served as superiors of this monastery, put in a lot of efforts to develop it as a high school and a higher secondary school. Fr. James Joseph Kozhimattom, Fr. Chacko Basil, and Fr. Titus can be considered as a triad here. When I go for house visits, people speak of Fr. Titus, who identified the starving families and for whom he brought food. The financial aid obtained through Fr. Antony Vallavanthara was a great asset in the development of Saint Mary's School, Kaliyal.

Fr. Mathew Anthiyankalam is a suffering servant to be mentioned in the history of Kaliyal. Though only for a short period he was the superior of this house, it was a period full of activities. Parishes and mission stations of Netta, Penu, Muzhuckode, Pallikkonam, etc., were the activities of the monastery at Kaliyal. As the parish priest, his travel to these mission stations for the Holy Mass was really adventurous; he went either on foot or on bicycle. Many times, he reached the stations either fatigued or with injuries. He was the manager of schools at Kaliyal and Netta. He worked very hard to develop these schools as a high school teacher. Teachers and sisters taught here without getting salary for many years. He had to go to Madras many times to seek the approval of the school. The local people, unfortunately, forced to close it down for a while in connection with the appointment of teachers. The locals even manhandled Fr. Anthiyankalam a few times. Once, when he was returning after the Holy Mass at Netta parish along with his own sister, who was a CMC nun, he was blocked and manhandled at Kaliyal. Some of the locals tortured him mentally. These events turned out to be protests. Police protection under the direction of DYSP was given for school and convent at Kaliyal. It was with great distress that he said goodbye to Kaliyal. The situation has been calmed down through the prudent intervention of Fr. Chacko Basil, his successor. It was Fr. Jose Njavally who came after Fr. Chacko Basil. When the locals tried to manhandle him, he left the place through the backdoor, leaving a note to the Provincial Superior: "Before I shed blood in the battlefield of Kaliyal, I would like to visit my dear ones; pardon me!" It is good to remember the priests who suffered greatly. The prison life of Fr. James Joseph Kozhimattom is also to be remembered.

The service of CMC Sisters at Kaliyal should never be forgotten. In the initial period, they used to come here from

the convent at Marthandom. CMC Sisters started a convent at Kaliyal in 1969. The development of Kaliyal Mission became a reality only with their help. They very sincerely continue to co-operate in the missions at Netta and Muzhuckode. Along with teaching at the School, they give leadership for the associations of Mothers and Fathers, Vincent de Paul Society, Mission League, Catechism, and family units within the parish. Sisters Lillit and Agnes, who taught many years in this school, and Mother Vinaya, Sisters Mercina and Deepa are the members of Carmel Convent at Kaliyal. I still remember visiting Mr. Manikandom of Tripparappu, whose both legs were paralysed and whom Sr. Lillit took to Thiruvananthapuram for treatment for three months and brought back healthy.

Sr. Basil was the first teacher at the School at Kaliyal. Sr. Agnes, who took up teaching assignment in 1971, and Sr. Lillit, who started in 1972, continue to serve the parish. Srs. Vinaya, Agnes, and Betty have rendered great service as headmistresses. Homoeopathy Dispensary run by Sr. Julita was a great help to the people. Mrs. Chempakam, the first teacher of the nursery school at Kaliyal, also is to be remembered. She is the wife of Muthayyan, the son of Appiyamma, who was the first one to receive baptism at Kaliyal parish.

I pay homage to Sisters Betty, Basil, and Collite who worked with us at Kaliyal in the initial stage. The service of Sisters Gacious Crispin, Carolin, Joselin, Seligurin, Mercinam, Deepam, Jennet, Teresa, and Elsa also contributed greatly towards the development of Kaliyal. Sr. Jissa Teres, who died at a young age, is considered a saint by the local Christian community at Kaliyal. She is buried at the cemetery at Kaliyal parish. There are two churches under the pastoral care of the CMI Monastery at Kaliyal: Saint Mary's Church, Kaliyal, where the Holy Mass is celebrated in Tamil and Saint Mary's Church, Penuthadam,

where the Holy Mass is celebrated in Malayalam. The first church of the Diocese of Thuckalai is Saint Mary's Church, Penuthadam. The church at Penuthadam was started as a chapel of the church at Ampoori. There was a school also adjacent to the church. When the number of pupils decreased, the school was closed down.

Most of the members of this community are working either at the estates or in rubber plantations. Though small in size, the tradition of faith of the parish at Penu is marvellous. There are only a few Tamil families in this parish. Fr. James Kuzhimattam and Fr. Chacko Basil endured great pain for stabilizing this parish. The fifty years of service by the Carmelite Sisters deserve special mention. This church was beautifully renovated through the initiative and leadership of Fr. Byju Karukappallyil.

The Superior of this Mission Region is Fr. Davis Karukappallyil. The superior of the monastery at Kaliyal is Fr. Augustine Thottanani; Fr. Tinu Kottackapparampil is the assistant parish priest. It is Fr. Tinu who developed the central school at Kaliyal. Fr. Joseph Anithottam, who is a teacher at the high school at Kaliyal, helps out in the activities of the parish. The service being rendered by Fr. Ajin and Bro. Jaison is very unique. Fr. Mathew Anthyankalam, Fr. Kanjamala, Fr. Varghese John, Fr. Dosithemoos, Fr. Njavally, Fr. Joseph Kocheri, Fr. Abraham Thayyil known as Unneesho, Fr. Varghese Kottoor, Fr. Antony Elamthottam, Fr. Ludvick Pathickal, Fr. Joby, Fr. Painel, Fr. John Chirayil, Fr. Meenappally, Fr. Job Kizhakkepuram, Fr. Kaduthanam, Fr. Puthukkalam, Fr. Chalangadi, Fr. George Thevalakkara, Fr. Joshy Thevalakkara, Fr. Albert, Fr. Byju Karukappally and Bro. Lins have made significant contributions over a period of time for the Kaliyal Mission.

The blessing of the renovated Saint Mary's Church is scheduled to take place on 8 October 2017. Most Rev. John

Rajendran SDB, the Bishop of Thuckalai, will officiate the function, which will be followed by festivities for a week. The celebrations will get over with the Eucharistic celebration of the golden jubilee on 15 October 2017. The contribution and encouragement extended to the local Catholic community by the parishioners and the Saint Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram, towards the renovation of the church is very inspiring. It is Fr. Byju Krukappally and Fr. Tinu Kottackaparampil, who gave leadership for the renovation work of the church. The names of Mr. N. G. Roy, Mr. Augustine (convenor of the jubilee committee), and Mr. Rajan and Mr. Vijayakumar should be remembered with gratitude for their immense service to conduct and coordinate the jubilee celebrations of the Kaliyal Mission.

THE MONK WHO DONATED HIS BODY Swami Sadanand CMI

Fr. James M. L. CMI

As Fr. Swami Sadanand registered his testament on 2 November 1998 and the news was published in a local daily, it became a sensation. What does a man bequeath in his testament, when he has renounced the world and all his material belongings?

Swamiji had only his mortal remains to donate. He expressed his decision to give away his body to a medical college for research and study purposes. It was Swamiji's desire to do good for humanity not only until his death, but even after his active life would come to a standstill.

In the Christian religious circles, the opinions were divided. Disposal of the body of a Catholic priest in this manner after his death was till then unheard of. While being a professed monk in a religious order, had he the right to decide on the matter? How would it be possible to reverently put to rest his mortal remains according to traditional Christian manner and according to the traditional Christian funeral rites? Where would be a tomb erected to mark his resting place?

Swamiji faced all types of criticisms with an unperturbed mind. He was convinced of the correctness of his action. "I have offered my whole life for humanity, following Christ through religious consecration. How can I hold back my body, my only possession from my self-gift?"

Swamiji's self-renouncing life evolved through a gradual process. In the years of his transformation, then a young and energetic Catholic priest, he undertook a strenuous and ardent pursuit of a kind of its own, nothing less than a struggle, searching for a new identity and mission. In his

early days, he was known as Fr. Michael Purattukara CMI. With the desire to live as an Indian Sanyasi, adapting himself to a lifestyle of abject poverty and perfect self-discipline, he adapted the name Swami Sadanand, became a professed vegetarian and took to simple life in every sense. The young missionary was inwardly driven by an impetus to identify himself with the people he was expected to serve. A down to earth man who would go to any extent to explore possibilities, decided to experience the struggles of life of daily labourers who survived on a hand-to-mouth existence, working at construction sites in Banaras. Barefoot and scantily clad, he looked like any other daily labourer; no one ever identified him as a priest. Fr. Sadanand spent his days sweating out and standing in bee line in the evening to get his hard earned daily wage from the contractor. More often than not, the labourer in disguise had to intervene and plead for his co-workers, whose wages the contractor would hold back under one pretext or another. Soon he befriended all people in the workers colony and won their hearts. He too thoroughly enjoyed the company and shared the joys and sorrows of those hapless masses; all the while they kept wondering who the stranger could be who came to join their company for no known reason. He always ate with them and in the evening sang Bhajans and hymns, playing the cymbal always, his favourite musical instrument. In the late night, he would sneak out of their company for personal prayers, meditation, yoga and also the Holy Mass in the privacy of the hut (shanty) he had made for himself with polythene sheets and loose bricks.

His hard work, unassuming personality, polite demeanour, and the readiness to walk the extra mile endeared him to the contractor who was no less than a tough taskmaster. After four months the pleased contractor was kind enough to grant him a promotion and appointed him as his domestic servant. The new domestic servant was

to do the dishes, cooking, cleaning, laundry, and feeding the cattle. The domestic hand turned out to be an earnest and excellent worker. After four months at the construction site and three months as a domestic servant, Fr. Michael gained first-hand experiences of a daily labourer. He could feel their pains and pangs, anxieties and hopes. The seven months of hard work and depravity enriched him with the experience of a lifetime. With leaner frame and a resolute will Fr. Sadanand returned to Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, to involve himself in the transformation of the society as a radical social reformer. He chose Tada, an interior and isolated village in Sagar district, as his launch pad. He set up a single room Ashram with mud floor, thatched roof, and clay walls. It looked like any other hutment in the village.

With deep respect to the Mother Earth he gave up his sandals. In scorching summer heat and biting cold winter he would go around barefoot. In solidarity with poor rural folk around him, he simplified his lifestyle and food habits. "When a large number of people are struggling for a single meal, how can I enjoy three meals a day?" This was his thinking and he decided to have only one single simple meal a day. Once, while travelling in a train, he saw a poor man with scanty clothes. It was a cold winter night and the man was shivering. Swamiji did not hesitate to give the man his pants and kurtha. From then onwards he reduced his clothes to a single dothi.

His final act of renunciation was giving up his body for the benefit of humanity. When he left for his heavenly abode, the CMI Congregation gave his body to AIIMS Medical College, Bhopal, fulfilling his final act of total self-sacrifice for Christ and for humanity.



A Bishop and a Priest Reaching out to Mission Stations in Ecuador through Tough Terrains



Trip to a Mission Station inside a Reservoir Area in Ecuador



Women and Children Empowerment Centre in Ecuador



Ecuadorean Missionaries during ar Pastoral Visit

Celebrating CMI Missionaries 1

CMI ECCLESIASTICAL EDUCATION MISSION Shining Stars among Philosophers and Theologians

CMI Theologians and Philosophers Forum organized a two day seminar at Dharmaram College, Bangalore, during 27-28 October 2017. It was an earnest attempt to recollect and celebrate the “CMI Legacy of Contextual Ecclesiastical Education and the Evangelizing Mission of the Church.” Fr. Joseph Pathrapankal offered a keynote address on “Scribes Trained for the Kingdom of God.” In all, there were seven panel discussions on relevant themes in the domain of ecclesiastical education. Fr. Thomas Aykara spoke on “CMI Legacy of Ecclesiastical Education: Dream for the Future.”

Recalling with joy, Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, spoke about the burning zeal with which the founding Fathers of the CMI Congregation began their first apostolic ministry, namely, seminary or ecclesiastical education in Mannanam in 1833, just two years after the very foundation. Along with Malpan Thomas Palackal and Malpan Thomas Porukara, Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara was not only involved in training apt pastors for the Indian Church, but opened up new avenues in carrying out effective formation by transforming the Malpanate system into a full-fledged centre of formal training of priests for the Catholic Church. It is this great vision that is being continued by the CMI members who are currently involved in imparting ecclesiastical education in a number of institutions of higher learning and formation, including Dharmaram College, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (Bangalore), Darsana Institute of Philosophy (Wardha), and Samanvaya College of Theology (Bhopal-Rishikesh-Kolchur).

The most unique part of this meet of over sixty CMI philosophers-theologians was the honouring of four veterans in the domain of ecclesiastical education. They were Professor Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal CMI, Professor Dr. Francis Vineeth Vadakethala CMI, Father Joseph Constantine Manalel CMI, and Professor Dr. Lucien Legrand MEP. All these four have been involved in critical and creative research writing and publications and inspiring teaching of thousands of students, particularly candidates for priesthood and consecrated religious.

As Fr. George Edayadiyil CMI, Rector of Dharmaram College, Bangalore, put it, these veterans “are the ones who travelled the road less travelled: the narrow road. They are the trail blazers and path finders who opened new avenues in theologizing in the context. Their commitment and zeal to make theology contextual is evident in all their articulations, especially in their writings. They challenge us, inspire us, motivate and encourage us on our way to be on His path.”

In the following sections, the citations presented to the four luminaries from the domains of philosophy and theology.

Prof. Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal CMI

Honouring you, we honour your defence of the *Text and the Context*,

Vivifying innovative methods of biblical hermeneutics you raised,

Developing models of exegesis, pressing questions for your listeners,

Blazing your academic trail in passionate defence of faith.

Emulating you, we admire the doctrinal imprints you left,

Pushing scriptural and theological research frontiers,

Evolving an approach to Pauline *Metanoia, Faith and Covenant*,

Venturing into the *Biblical and Theological Time and History*.

Following you, we pursue the exegetical path you forged,
 Merging novel hermeneutical and phenomenological
 perspectives,
 Travelling between scholarly originality and intellectual
 creativity,
 Churning mystical depths for higher hermeneutical
 relevance!

Looking at you, we behold the finest scholarly mind you
 carved,
 Being rooted in the past, engaged with the present, open to
 the future;
 Representing pristine orthodoxy historically and doctrinally
 faithful,
 Inspiring with energy, passion, excitement, you blaze on
 and on...!

We, the CMIs, acknowledging your unique contributions,
 Pay our rich tributes and pray for God's blessings,
 On Friday, 27 October 2017 at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram,
 Bengaluru.

Prof. Dr. Francis Vineeth Vadakethala CMI

Mystic, you walked in search of the ineffable!
 You sought God through an inner passion.
 An Asian monk, you have carefully shaped Vidyavanam.
 From the inner cave of your heart, gushed out the fragrant
 brook,
 Orient and Carmelite contemplation bloomed and groomed.
 Around you clustered *sadhakas* in search of spiritual depth,
 With dignity you guided them to the transcendence and
 wholeness;
 They heard your favourite mantra, 'knowing is becoming'!
 Like a candle, you radiated the joy of your priesthood;
 In you met the East and the West, the *Guru* and the *Sishya*.

In *Call to Integration* your vision and mission rhythmically danced;

An eminent academician and an *Acharya* of spirituality;
Combined Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas in you;
The seeds of *Upanishads* and *Vedanta* flowed like honey and milk.

Salutations, respect and admirations O! Amazing Son of the CMI;

The amazing flute that made melodies divine
Awakening human consciousness to the beyond!

We, the CMIs, acknowledging your unique contributions,
Pay our rich tributes and pray for God's blessings,
On Friday, 27 October 2017 at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram,
Bengaluru,

Rev. Fr. Constantine Joseph Manalel CMI

You remind us of the footsteps of the CMI founders,
Lonely as a hermit in the woods,
Moulding and motivating the multitudes,
With the vision of *bethrauma* in modern parlance.

You carved a niche as a seasoned theologian reformer
Along the breadth and length of Indian nation,
Signalling waves of change and uncompromising
challenges,
Enthroned like an emperor among Indian theologians.

You dared to think, talk, and walk into the future
A *dhaara* of ideas and an avenue with a profound sense of
jeeva

You founded Indian Theological Association;
You edited and published *Jeevadhara*, a bilingual,
You organized an enlightened lay faithful in the Church
With your unfailing motto founded on Incarnation:
"Nothing human is alien to theology."

You are a star on the horizon of Indian theological education
And share the CMI legacy of contextual education for
mission.

We, the CMIs, acknowledging your unique contributions,
Pay our rich tributes and pray for God's blessings,
On Friday, 27 October 2017 at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram,
Bengaluru,

Prof. Dr. Lucien Legrand MEP

You travelled distances to make a distant country your
home;

Its people your brethren.

The power of the *dabar* has been your strength
And you have been living to make this power
knowledgeable

With academic rigour and pastoral solicitude.

No colour, caste, or ethnicity became a stumbling block
In your noble mission of proclamation of the Word of God.
With the healing power of the Word,
You have shown the way forward for evangelization and
mission.

Rooted in the orthodoxy of the Scripture and the Church,
You guided many to biblical scholarship and orthopraxis.
Your life is a witness to the joy of the Gospel
And we all joyfully join to admire your commitment
To the proclamation of the Word of God
Through teaching, preaching, and evangelization.

We, the CMIs, acknowledging your unique contributions,
Pay our rich tributes and pray for God's blessings,
On Friday, 27 October 2017 at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram,
Bengaluru.

Celebrating CMI Missionaries 2

FATHER MOSES KALLARACKAL CMI
Letter from Bonnie Bean, Nashville

Bonnie Bean

Carmel Center, Nashville

Note from the Editor

The following write up contains excerpts from a letter Bonnie Bean (Nashville) wrote to Fr. Jose Cletus Plackal CMI soon after the demise of Fr. Abraham Moses Kallarackal CMI

“... I was just asking about him the other day, when a visiting CMI was here. He replied that Fr. Moses liked to play cards at the monastery. I read your email this morning. What a jolting message that was!

As you know, Fr. Moses and I worked together as trail-blazers, in a manner of speaking, for our now-established house of prayer. When we made our first exploratory meeting with the Bishop of Nashville, Fr. Moses flew from Brooklyn while Larry and I drove from Florida to Tennessee. Bishop James D. Niedergeses interviewed us individually in the presence of his Comptroller and, at the conclusion of the meeting, was quite excited about the prospect of establishing a retreat center in this diocese. He was ready to help us find land to buy! (We had to phase in Larry’s replacement team at Conax Florida first.)

After our successful meeting with the Bishop, we three drove out to pick up my Mom at her house. (She had been away from the Church for several years, due to a misunderstanding with the regular pastor.) We went to Springfield and borrowed the key to St. Michael’s Church from the temporary fill-in pastor. (He did not know there was no running water at this very old church. He told us we

would find everything we needed there. We learned later that ladies from the Altar Society had been taking water from their homes to fill the cruet.) Then four of us, Mom included, drove to St. Michael's Church, about ten miles away in the countryside. Fr. Moses was very attentive to Mom ... like a sweet, gentle rain falling onto parched, dry land. Fr. Moses vested, and I began setting up the altar. I could not find any water. I looked for bottled water, searching all the drawers and cupboards: no water could be found. Since there was nothing he could do, Fr. Moses, fully vested, went and sat with Mom in the second pew from the front while I continued to ransack the sacristy in my search. Larry was on the front porch of the church, smoking. I was about to go and get him to drive to a neighbour's house and ask for a cup of water for the Mass - but when I entered the main part of the church, I saw Fr. Moses leaning toward Mom and speaking in a quiet monotone. He was hearing her confession! My heart seemed to stop for a moment as I realized this. I returned to the sacristy and started to cry. I could not violate their sacred space. I wondered what to do about the water situation.

Just then, with a very loud KA-BOOM of thunder, the skies opened up and a deluge of heavy rain poured down all around the church. The Lord had sent water from heaven! In absolute delight, I then began searching for a container to catch some rain water. There were no buckets, cups, glasses, or bowls in that room. Then I saw a chalice sitting on a sideboard, just waiting. I took the chalice and went out the back door of the sacristy. In a kind of jubilant, euphoric state, I stood in the rain and held the chalice high in the air, laughing and crying at the same time, and thanking God with all my being. I was soaking wet, but I soon had enough water for the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

As I returned to the sacristy, I met Fr. Moses coming into the same room. "It is done. She made her confession," he said. Through tears, I responded: "Thank you, Father, and here is your water." He looked and said, "Oh!"

The Feast that day was the Birth of John the Baptist. Father gave a very poignant homily. In part of it, he quoted from the Reading something like this: "As the people wondered and asked, 'What will this child be?' So we also can ask, 'What will this nascent movement of the CMIs become in the Diocese of Nashville?'" As we were leaving the church, Fr. Moses signed the guest book. He was the first CMI priest to offer Mass in this Diocese.

I hope that he is now in a position to see and/or realize the value of all his hard work in being the 'pioneer' or 'scout' for establishing the Carmel Center of Spirituality. Already, countless souls have been touched by the life-giving breath of Christ our Lord here on these grounds. Even an Episcopal priest has converted fully to Catholicism as a direct result, he told me, of reading a book in one of our guest houses (hermitages) entitled, "By What Authority?" I don't know the author. Quite a few of his parishioners followed his lead and came into the Catholic Church, as well. That book, he said, set him to seriously thinking about his faith. Thanks be to God, again and again!

Fr. Moses was a very dedicated, hard-working man who sometimes felt overwhelmed by the multitude of his responsibilities, but he continued to serve the Lord at full steam and did not complain. May he rest in the blissful peace and love of the Lord forever!

CMI Mission Avenues

HARMONY FESTIVAL
Bridging between the Religious and the Secular

Fr. Paul Poovathingal CMI

Chief Co-ordinator, Harmony Global Music and Dance Festival

“Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavantu”

Let there be Peace and Harmony all over the world.

In Search of a New Model

An ever increasing burning need to create fascinating new models and approaches to engage in dialogue among various religions is being projected as a Herculean task in the modern society. But the experiences emanating from music and dance performances teach that they can evoke transformative moments that enhance communication and bridge the gaps of ideology and practices of various religions. Today, as we experience incidents of fundamentalism and instances of communal riots in various parts India and the rest of the world, performances of music and dance offer new bridges between religions, between religious and secular. History has proved that performing arts have enormous capacity to heal wounds and broken relationships and build new bridges of mutual respect and healthy dialogue between religions.

Music and Dance: The Creative Tools to Dialogue between Religions

It has been noted that traditional forms of Indian music and dance have immense potential to create new levels of peace building and transformative communication among peoples of differing faiths. Every religion in the world is aiming at the purification of body, mind, and soul and the total liberation of human beings. In other words, search for truth in every religion is something fundamental and every

religion in the world promotes the love towards God and human beings as their central teaching. The best definition of art is that it is the manifestation of truth. Therefore, every art form has the capacity to lead humanity to the supreme truth. Music and dance, in their essence, are universal and they are beyond the barriers of any religion, caste, territory, or tradition. But, at the same time, it can be expressed only through certain particulars where there are space and time.

In India, fine arts are created for liberating human beings from the fetters of materialism and worldliness. When people deserted God and spiritual values due to the addiction to worldly pleasures during the time of kings, the great God Brahma asked Sage Bharata to create something by which they should be able to liberate human beings from the slavery of mundane pleasures and to lead them to *Mokshamarga* (way of liberation). After years-long *tapas* and *sadhana*, sage Bharata came with a solution by creating *Natyasastra* (a treatise on dramaturgy, dated between second century BC and second century AD) to lead people to divine ways through the performances of fine arts. Later, *Natyasastra* was known as *Panchama Veda* (the fifth Veda). Sage Bharata created *Natyasastra* to bridge the gap between God and the humankind, whereas today fine arts, especially the performances of dance and music, have become a bridge between universal religions.

Vision of Harmony Festival: A New Model for Communal Harmony and Dialogue

Harmony is a musical term which denotes communion or inseparable relationship between musical notes. Later, it has been used in many other fields also to denote different phenomenon in the universe such as harmony of planets, harmony of religions, harmony of cultures, harmony of family, harmony of body and mind, etc. Harmony is a state where everybody enjoys peace, respect, happiness, and

immeasurable positive energy. Therefore, the ultimate aim of Harmony Festival is to bring peace among people of different faiths by bridging the gap with soulful cultural performances.

Harmony Festival is a global music and dance festival to promote performing artists, inter-religious harmony, and Christian performing art forms initiated by Marthoma Research Academy, at Marthoma Pontifical Shrine, Azhikode, Kodungallur, Thrissur, Kerala, India. This is an annual cultural festival connected with the feast of Saint Thomas, an apostle of Jesus Christ, who reached India in 52 AD. For the past five years the three-day festival has been organised under the leadership of CMI Devamatha Province, Thrissur, which had been appointed by the Vatican to administer the Marthoma Pontifical Shrine.

The idea and vision of a performing arts festival at Saint Thomas Shrine at Azhikode was contributed by Father Paul Poovathingal CMI during a brainstorming session at Azhikode, which was organised by Father Jose Frank Chakkalackal CMI, Director of Marthoma Research Academy. Father J. B. Puthur CMI, who is behind the modernisation of the pilgrim centre, is the founder and visionary of MRA. The then Provincial of Devamatha Province, Father Paul Achandy generously and strategically supported the initiative and the festival. Present Provincial of Devamatha, Father Walter Thelappilly, as the patron of the festival, has helped the Centre to enter the next phase of its qualitative growth. Father Jose Frank, Festival Chairman, and Dr. C. K. Thomas (former director, Thrissur Doordarsan Kendra), and Prof. George S. Paul (art critic) as its festival directors, Father Paul Poovathingal, as its National Coordinator, a full-fledged festival committee is working for its success. Pontifical Shrine Rectors, Fathers J. B. Puthur, Jose Chittilappilly, and Antony Velathiparambil have contributed remarkably for its impressive progress.

Support from the Kerala Government

Government of Kerala has approved this festival and included in its cultural festivals' map and has extended financial support to the festival from the Ministry of Tourism.

It is a fact that, within a span of five years, Harmony Festival has become a festival of the people from multiple faith traditions. It has become a people's cultural movement for unity and fellowship and togetherness irrespective of their caste or creed. Artists from various parts of world showcase their talents in the form of music and dance. Due to the interfaith cultural performances, harmony festival has become an eagerly awaited event among people of different religions. Interfaith cultural performances open various opportunities and challenges than the mere ongoing participatory models. A hundred member-strong (from among various religious affiliations) committee is working hard round the year for the success of Harmony Festival at Azhikode.

Promotion of Christian Performing Arts

Although Christianity existed in India right from the Christian era (52 AD), the Christians in India had been isolated from the mainstream Indian culture due to various reasons. Although a bit late, now Indian Christians realise that art in India has been for many centuries a *marga* (way) to lead people to moksha (liberation from the mundane world). In short, Indian performing art forms are deeply spiritual and always try to bridge between the divine and human, and purify body, mind, and soul. Traditional Indian music has been treated as *nādayoga* (union of two sounds, namely, *Paramātma* or the universal soul and *Jeevātma* or the individual soul). In the past, many great musicians have been using music as a means to attain God realisation (*Sākshātkāra*).

In the eighteenth century, a German missionary John Earnest Hanxleden, popularly known as Arnos Pādiri, after having realised the depth of Indian culture, studied Sanskrit and Malayalam in depth and engineered a great model by writing the epic poem *Puthenpāna* (Life of Christ) in the pattern of *Jnānapāna* of Hindu devotional poet Poonthānam. Later, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, many Christian musicians tried to create an Indian Christian musical identity by adapting Christian themes into Karnatic music. For example, (1) Vidwān Vedanāyakam Pillai (Trichy), (2) Vedanāyakam Sastriyar (Tanjavur), (3) Abraham Panditar (Tanjavur), (4) Vidwān Kutty Achan (Kollam), and (5) Mosavalsala Sastriyar (Neyyattinkara).

Even after many centuries, Christian performing arts and artists in India are in a slow mode, where they need a lot of promotion, uplift, and refinement. One of the purposes of Harmony Festival is to systematise and promote Christian performing arts such as Bible musical concerts, Bible Bharatanātyam, Bible Mohiniyāttam, Bible Kathakali, Bible Ottamthullal, Mārgamkali, Parichamuttukali and Chavittunātakam, etc. Every musician or dancer or performer comes here as part of their religious-cultural pilgrimage and they offer their art-form as an *archana* (offering) and they get spiritually recharged at Azhikode Saint Thomas Shrine, the Cradle of Christianity in India.

Friends of Harmony Festival

Success of any major cultural festival in the world is greatly dependent on its universal support base. Friends of Harmony Festival are an international fraternity, which supports harmony festival financially. People from different parts of the world have become members of this fraternity. Anybody who is willing to support Harmony Festival financially can become a member of this fraternity. Yearly

subscription by the members creates a strong financial foundation for the Harmony Festival. Once a year we used to conduct a thanksgiving day in order to express gratitude to all those who extend a helping hand to the Festival. On that day, most of the members visit the Festival venue and Pilgrim Centre (i.e., Marthoma Pontifical Shrine) to express their solidarity.

Dynamics of Harmony Festival

The annual three-day festival is usually conducted on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Friday is dedicated specially for Music Festival. On this day, students, junior and senior musicians perform Christian classical compositions with the accompaniment of violin, mridangam, and ghatam from morning onwards. Each student sings a single composition where as senior musicians perform short duration concerts. These will be followed by cultural programmes by local people, including Muslims and Hindus. In the past, musicians from different parts of India, USA, Africa, and Europe performed various styles of music.

On Saturday, the second day, students and senior dancers perform classical dances with Christian themes from 10 am onwards. Since there are many venues for light and folk music dances here we promote only Christian classical dances. On the same day, we begin inter-religious meeting for the promotion of communal harmony at 6.30 pm. This will be followed by classical and folk programmes from Punjab, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and other parts of India. It also includes, Bamboo Orchestra, Bible Bharatanatyam, Bible Kathakali, Western music ensemble, etc.

On the third day we organise Christian folk art festival including art forms such as Margamkali, Chavittunatakam and Parishamuttukali, etc. This will be followed by valedictory function. During the public meeting we present Harmony International Award (memento, citation, and

Rupees one hundred thousand) to an eminent artist who has contributed remarkably in the field of music and dance. Harmony International Award winners in the past include Padmavibhushan Dr. K. J. Yesudas (2013), Padmashri Kalamandalam Gopi (2014), Padmashri Dr. K. S. Chitra (2015), Sri Umbayee, Gazal singer (2016), and Padmabhushan Dr. S. P. Balasubramniam (2017).

Vasudaiva Kutumbakam: The World Is One Family

The bridging of communities and religions through music and dance, a towering task indeed, is conceived to make this world one family where everyone enjoys mutual respect, peace of mind, and security. Distancing between humans, inhuman killing and attacking each other in the name of religious differences and in the name of God undoubtedly spoil the integrity and oneness of any community or nation. Therefore, it is the duty of every man and woman in this world to work towards interreligious harmony and universal peace. Let us unite and work hard for the betterment of our society and world where we live in. It is hoped that, in future also, fine art, which is a combination of creativity, imagination, *sadhana*, and truthfulness, will play a vital role in the promotion of communal harmony and global peace among the masses of different faiths so that everybody can live on this planet without fear and hatred.

Mission Visit

A VISIT TO KANYAKUMARI MISSION

Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI

It was the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of CMI Mission and St. Mary's Church in Kaliyal, Tamil Nadu, and its parish feast that made Fr. Antony Elamthottam and myself to decide in favour of visiting Kanyakumari Sub-Region of St. Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram, during 14-15 October 2017.

On our way to Kaliyal, apart from our visit to the St. Joseph's Provincial House, Thiruvallam, we visited CMI communities in Vizhinjam, Kuchappuram, and Netta and were amazed to see the missionary zeal of our Fathers and their concerted efforts to enhance the communities of the faithful as well as the institutions. Even though the Catholic communities are not numerically large, their readiness to reach out to them and serve them without fail deserves attention and appreciation. Moreover, their collaboration with other religious communities and diocesan authorities also is commendable.

After having had lunch at the CMI House in Kaliyal, in the evening, we celebrated the parish feast of its patroness Mother Mary. The celebration began with a solemn rosary, which was followed by a solemn Qurbana in Tamil, which was presided over by Fr. Antony Elamthottam, who had served Kaliyal community earlier as its superior and parish priest. Fr. Joshy Thevalassery, another former vicar, and myself concelebrated. For me, personally, this was the first experience of celebrating the Holy Qurbana in Tamil language, after I left my novitiate in Saravanampatty in Coimbatore in 1985. Indeed, I had to take practice before I gained confidence to concelebrate. Yet, as the Qurbana progressed, I felt happy and proud that we took the trouble

to celebrate in Tamil, as most of the Congregation is Tamil-speaking. The wholehearted participation of the liturgical congregation, especially their loud and clear recitation of prayers and their devout singing in unison deserve everybody's appreciation.

Although it was heavily raining the whole day, the Parish Priest Fr. Tinu had asked for the earnest prayers of the whole community to ensure a trouble-free feast celebration. By the time the Holy Qurbana was over, practically there was only very light and negligible drizzling. But the solemn procession through Kaliyal town and up to Potta, where a Cross is erected for public worship, began with earnest hope and unflinching determination. In their strong faith in the Lord and the powerful intercession of Mother Mary, none of them had any doubts about the outcome. Although the procession was about two and a half hours long and although heavy rain was almost about to begin, none of them went back on their determined course of the procession. At the end, Fr. Tinu, the parish priest, received back the statue of our Lady and installed it in the church. The finale of the celebration came with a solemn play by the drummers who accompanied the procession and a moderate display of fireworks.

As both of us stayed overnight with Netta CMI community, we began our second day with the Qurbana celebrated in their church, which was followed by a very tasty breakfast. Then, we began the second leg of our mission visit by first visiting the pilgrim centre at Kaattadimala, where Blessed Devasahayam Pillai was martyred. The mountainous surrounding, though suited for silent prayers and conducive for communion with the Lord, offered us a deserted feel; yet, the location of now-famous martyrdom of Devasahayam Pillai is both awe-inspiring and faith-enhancing for the visitors.

Our next halt was Anchugramam, where Fr. Augustine Thottanani is the superior and principal of the parish and the school. Being a Sunday, Fr. Augustine had to celebrate three Holy Qurbanas, back to back, one in Tamil and two in Malayalam; hence, we could not meet him personally. Yet, our visit to the house and school offered us a vivid idea of the mission and the institutions attached to it. I really felt proud of the hard work of the CMI fraternity for its determined mission work against all odds.

On our way to Pilankala, we had a short break at Muttadichampara, another pilgrim spot associated with Blessed Devasahayam Pillai, who was miraculously given a drink from the hard rock, where otherwise we do not find any trace of water. Both of us consumed from the miraculous fountain before we came out of the pilgrim facility, which is being renovated.

The next halt was the CMI Malar Nilayam in Pikankalai. Apart from the Forane Parish Church, this community runs an aided Tamil medium school. These schools are appreciated for the quality education imparted for the uplift of the people of the locality. The parish church is being renovated and the furnishing works are in the final stage; the structure as well as its furnishing already looks really elegant, although a lot of finishing work is still underway. The plan is to consecrate it soon after Christmas and, then, to hold the priestly ordination ceremony of Deacon Anto CMI as the first sacramental event in the newly constructed church. Thanks to Fr. Thomas Pokkuvarayathu and Pilankalai community for their loving welcome and sumptuous lunch.

On our way back to Kaliyal, we visited three more parish churches. The first church in Kaisalavilai, St. Xavier's Church, is just two kilometres away from Pilankalai and its pastoral administration is carried out by the Pilankalai community; the construction of a new parish church is

underway. Although the community is smaller in size with about fifty families, their enthusiasm to have their own new church is commendable and all of them are in the forefront to contribute their mite for the completion of the construction work. The second one was SH Church, Pallikonam, and its priest-in-charge is Fr. Chacko Akkathara CMI; it is a small but well-furnished church with a small rectory and facilities for Sunday catechism. The next church we visited was Chavara Bhavan and St. Thomas Church at Muzhukode, where Fr. Chacko Akkathara CMI and Fr. Chacko Basil CMI live. They administer two parishes. The church attached to the CMI community is also being renovated.

The last leg of our visit to Kanyakumari Sub-Region was the highlight of our mission trip. It was the golden jubilee celebration of the St. Mary's Church and CMI community in Kaliyal. It was in 1967 that this community was started with one priest and four baptized members. The parish community now has grown into more than 180 families with close to 500 Catholics. Along with the parish, this community also has established an aided Tamil medium school as well as a CBSE school, which have made tremendous impact in the transformation of the people of Kaliyal.

As part of the jubilee celebration, under the able pastoral leadership of Fr. Tinu Kottackaparampil CMI, the parish church was enlarged and renovated; the spacious church has a very good artistic finish and the whole new setting offers a prayerful ambience. The Eucharistic celebration as part of the jubilee celebrations was presided over by Fr. Sebastian Chamathara CMI, Provincial of St. Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram; the entire Provincial Council team concelebrated.

The grand finale of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Saint Mary's Church and CMI community was attended by

two Salesian bishops, Mar George Rajendran SDB, Bishop of Thuckalay, and Mar Jerome Dhas Varuvel SDB, Bishop of Kuzhithurai. Fr. Sebastian Chamathara CMI, Provincial of St. Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram, presided over the meeting. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Vicar General of Thuckalay, Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI, General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry, Fr. Antony Elamthottam CMI, General Councillor for Finance, Fr. Sunny Mathew, Chancellor of Marthandam Diocese, along with Sr. Viji CMC, Provincial of Chavara Vice-Province, Thuckalay, and Fr. Mathew Anthiankulam CMI, former parish priest of St. Mary's Kaliyal, felicitated during the jubilee gathering. Contributions made by the CMC sisters all through the development of the Kaliyal Catholic community were recalled by the Bishop as well as various representatives from the CMI Congregation. All speakers, including the bishops, spoke very highly about the deeper Christian faith inculcated in the Kaliyal Catholic community and their commendable collaboration for the completion of the renovation of the church. The whole celebration was made more enjoyable by the addition of excellent music and dance performances by various groups from the parish and schools.

During this visit to the Kanyakumari Sub-Region of CMI St. Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram, we could observe a new pastoral enthusiasm among the members, mostly young priests; it is very promising to see that the provincial team offers excellent support to facilitate better setup both for our CMI Fathers and for the parish communities and institutions that cater to the pastoral needs of the faithful and the society at large. The cooperation from the part of the laity is also conspicuous and commendable.



Perpetuating Marian Devotion in Ecuador



*On Board a Boat to Celebrate Eucharist in
a Mission Station in Ecuador*



*Celebrating Ramayana Month with Karkkidaka Kanji
at Azhikode*



Iftar Dinner at Mar Thoma Shrine Azhikode

THE BONDS THAT UNITE US

Prof. K. Palaniswamy BE (MTech), FIE, FIV, MISTE
Chartered Engineer

Prof. Palaniswamy, former Principal of CIT Sandwich Polytechnic, Coimbatore, joined Divyodaya in 1987 and continues his lively interest in its vision and activities. In the following pages, he shares his experiences and impressions based on an invitation from Fr. John Peter Muringathery CMI, who is the founder-director of Divyodaya.

CMI Preshitha Province, Coimbatore, founded Divyodaya in 1980 with the main objective of promoting understanding and harmony among the followers of different religions. The inspiration for the mission is the teaching of Vatican Council II, especially the vision enshrined in its document on the relation with other religions: "Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral values in other religions and cultures" (*Nostra Aetate* §2). We come across with similar inspirations in Indian scriptures as well.

Prof. Palaniswamy has visited a number of places to take part in various interreligious meetings. He was, for example, in Ooty, Chennai, Thodupuzha, Kochi, Mumbai, and Varanasi, attending inter-faith live-togethers and sharing his experiences and experiments in bridging faiths. Divyodaya is known to the wider public through people like Palaniswamy and several others from different backgrounds who are attracted by its objective. After his retirement Prof. Palaniswamy gave life to "Society for Caring and Sharing," a forum that mainly focuses on the retired from different fields. The group meets every month. (Fr. John Peter CMI)

I was attending Transactional Analysis (TA) weekend course at Divyodaya one day in 1987. Mrs. Sashi Chandran was the course director and I had given my visiting card while enrolling. As I completed the first day's session, the course director informed me that the Director of Divyodaya, Fr. John Peter wanted to see me. I did not have any idea but I met him.

He had a problem on his hand. The same day, Divyodaya had arranged a programme in connection with Deepavali and a local senior advocate had to preside over the function. Due to his preoccupation he informed the director that he may not turn up. Fr. John Peter, very cautiously, told me that I had a good background and, hence, requested me to take up the role. I enquired the details and agreed. Thus, I did a role at Divyodaya and it was appreciated.

After that first meeting, I regularly visited Divyodaya for Transactional Analysis meetings. After some time Fr. John Peter suggested that there was an interreligious conference at Ooty, Nilgiris. He strongly recommended the same. With curiosity I accepted the invitation and reached the place. It was winter; I wore protective clothing and a cap! During the programme, I faced a question: "Are you a Muslim?" After a pause, I replied: "I have Muslim neighbours." The questioner was none other than Dr. Fr. Albert Nambiarampil. I took good interest in the proceedings with the result that I became a noted person among the participants of inter-faith meetings. Eventually, Fr. John Peter and Fr. Albert Nambiarampil became my friends.

Thereafter I began to join the activities of Divyodaya and enrolled as a life member. Divyodaya organised functions embracing different religions. We used to visit local places of worship of different religions: churches, temples, mosque, Jain temple, Gurudwara. Different important religious persons were invited to Divyodaya and took part in

functions connected with interreligious dialogue, which were nourishing and well-accepted among the members.

Once, Divyodaya members visited the mosque at Ukkadam, Coimbatore. Leading persons at the mosque explained to the members the significance of the mosque and their prayers. Sri Arutpa Thangavelu, a very good singer of Hindu devotional hymns, expressed his desire to render a hymn. I told him that in a mosque, music is not permitted. Overhearing my statement, the chief of the mosque requested Arutpa to sing. It was a surprising experience but an eye-opener as well! Surprises of this sort transformed our minds in the course of our visits to various worship places.

With a select group members Fr. Albert started an ashram at Korandakkad, Kerala. He requested Advocate P. Kuppuswamy and me to participate in the activities of the Ashram. Advocate Kuppuswamy had a good grounding in Hindu literatures and he decided to go over. He wanted a companion and he pulled me in. We went by bus up to the hill station. It was, indeed, a great experience. The group was small, not more than ten and the ashram was kept neat and tidy, surrounded by lovely nature. I came to know that the participants were scholarly people in their respective fields. Naturally, I was a bit cautious at the beginning. Fortunately, I had monthly bulletin *Span*, published by USIS Embassy and it carried an article on the topic under discussion. Then, as my turn came, I spoke with the knowledge I gathered from *Span* and it was much appreciated in the group.

At another occasion, a group of Divyodaya members made a trip to Benares to participate in an interreligious function organised by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) Dialogue Commission for which Fr. Albert was the secretary. The group included Fr. John Peter, Prof. Feroze from Coimbatore, myself and some others. As usual,

we had a dip in the sacred river. That was my first trip to that holy place. As a ritual, I crossed over the river and reached the other bank. I engaged a priest to perform a pooja in memory of my departed ancestors. After that we went to the temple to worship. I was surprised to see small lanes leading to the famous temple. In North India, worshippers enter the *sanctum sanctorum* and touch the idol for pooja. I did it and it was a great moment for me. As far as I knew, in our family, only my maternal grandmother had visited Kasi.

Christmas and New Year were celebrated in a grand manner at Divyodaya, so also Diwali, Ramzan, Guru Nanak day and Mahavir Jayanti. Divyodaya printed a monthly newsletter containing its activities and similar programmes of other centres for the benefit of the members.

As a matter of fact, Divyodaya became a landmark of Coimbatore due to its atmosphere of dialogue, calmness of the place, and committed group of members who participated in an umbrella of activities, such as youth wing with leadership training programmes, competitions for school students and interreligious live-together for which participants came from other centres in Tamil Nadu.

In 1991, a new building was completed, adding reading room, library, and a meditation room (supported by Pollachi N. Mahalingam), and an art gallery exhibiting the history of different religions designed by an artist from Kozhikode.

Divyodaya has an Advisory Council in which I am a life member. Dr. Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, a reputed personality is the chairman. Advisory Council makes room for the involvement of people of good will from all walks of life in the activities of Divyodaya; it also opens up the opportunities for wider consultation in its programmes to enhance interreligious dialogue in Coimbatore.

While I recall with appreciation and gratitude the initiatives of Fr. John Peter, who founded this unique

institution in Coimbatore, with the collaboration of his CMI confreres and the public, it is a fact that, in course of time, other directors have made their unique contributions for the enrichment of the mission of Divyodaya. I had the privilege of knowing and closely associating with all of them. At present Fr. John Peter, the founder-director, in his advanced age, lives at Divyodaya and feels at home by interacting with the visitors. Fr. Dr. Jose Paul, the present director is making his second stint at the helm of affairs of Divyodaya.

The motto of Divyodaya, namely, "The bonds that unite us are stronger than the barriers that separate us," continues to inspire many in Coimbatore city, and has been embraced by many in their societal existence. This clarion call for strengthening the bonds among human beings, despite the differences in religious affiliations, has made positive ripples in Coimbatore, especially when communal disturbances arose in the city. Indeed, Divyodaya continues to look beyond the human-made barriers in ensuring that the binding forces are identified and enhanced through the proactive involvement of its members.

Concluding Note from Fr. John Peter CMI

With great interest I went through *Milestones of Palaniswamy K.*, a book Prof. Palaniswamy had authored. I know Prof. Palaniswamy for last thirty years, i.e., ever since he joined Divyodaya in 1987. As a life member, he is closely associated with the activities of Divyodaya in promoting understanding and harmony among members of different communities. He is also regular in Transactional Analysis sessions conducted there. He has visited different places with me in connection with interreligious programmes.

Even before his retirement he had planned how to make use of his time in retirement creatively for the good of his fellowmen and formed "The Society for Caring and Sharing." This forum functions regularly, offering input

sessions every month since 2004 by persons of eminence from different professional backgrounds.

In his book, Prof. Palaniswamy acknowledges his admiration for Dr. G. R. Damodaran. He admits that, in engineering institutions, the faculty members do not have Teacher Training Courses, like Arts and Science graduates. Gratefully he recalls how Dr. G. R. D. took initiatives to arrange special lectures to engineering faculty by inviting eminent personalities. "In this venture," Palaniswamy recalls, Dr. Damodaran "authored *The Teacher in You* - a booklet of great significance." I wish that his book be a source of inspiration for others.

A MANTRA FOR EDUCATORS

Fr. Martin Mallath CMI

Every year March is the time when students of standards 10 and 12 are very tense about their board exams. The over-anxiety of the parents and their recurring admonitions add to the worry. Recently, I met one student on the road about five in the morning. He was walking briskly. I was a bit curious about what was happening. I stopped him on the way and asked him where he was rushing so early in the morning. He said he was late for the tuitions, which started at 4.30 in the morning! His normal school hours start at 8 am. Before that he had to finish two tuitions in the morning. Again, after the school, the tuition continues till 10 pm. I stood there speechless as I was at a loss to understand the dynamics. As an educator, indeed, I really felt ashamed of the system and the expectations.

I could not blame the parents, as they eagerly wait for the high percentage of marks that may or may not assure a seat in a reputed college. I asked myself whether the children are able to cope with the stress and strain topped up on them by the education system, the school, the teachers, the tuition teachers, and the parents. If the month of March is the month of exams, month of May presents the stressful days of tense waiting for the exam results. Some of the students find it difficult to come out of the disappointment and despair they feel after their poor performance in the exams. Recently, some of the news items in the daily newspapers shocked me. One among them was news about student suicides at different places. Every year it happens before the board exams and after the board results are announced. It is a shocking reality that should make all of us think seriously.

At some point or other, most of us have moments of utter despair in our lives. Some people are able to cope with it and some are not. Those who are able to keep up hope in their heart are able to overcome any hurdle in life. It is better not to take decisions on the impulsive feelings. Feelings are not the guidelines in our life. Our feelings are sometimes the best cheaters; they hide more than what they reveal. They cannot be trusted; they are not objective truth. Feelings, in my opinion, act as mere indicators of subjective thinking.

It will be a fine thought that we are all persons of value in the eyes of God. A small story that I read recently is worth sharing at this point. Once, a well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a Rs. 2,000 note in his hand. In the room of 100 people, he asked: "Who would like to have this Rs. 2,000 note?" Hands started going up. He said: "I am going to give this to one of you; but, first let me do this." He proceeded to crumple up the note in his hand. He, then, asked: "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air. "Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" He, then, dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now all crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the note, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth Rs. 2,000. Many times, in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and grounded into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way, but our worth as a human being does not change," he concluded.

Sometimes we feel as though we are worthless in life. But most of the time this feeling of worthlessness arises out of comparison with others. Every comparison is odious. Each one of us is a unique creation. No matter what has happened or what will happen, we will never lose our

value. We are special. Let us not ever forget it! At the same time, it is reassuring to think that we are able to change the way we think and improve our life, with God at our side. The thought that there is a God who continues to love us, no matter what we are, is the first and foremost way to keep hope alive in life. He can lift up the downcast and give hope to those who feel lost.

It will be worthwhile to ponder what we can do as parents and educators to relieve the stress of our students. First of all, I would say that every child needs an adult in whom he or she can place the trust. It need not be necessarily the father or the mother or the teacher. If a teacher can become that trusted adult in the life of students in whom they confide and confidentially share the pangs of their life and growth, that teacher will be fulfilling his or her responsibility faithfully. If there is a positive student-teacher relationship, it will be helpful in reducing the tension the students feel. The presence of an empathetic and mature adult person, preferably a teacher to whom they can go in need and discuss their problems will have immense calming and soothing effect both on the personality and on the academic performance.

Understanding the process of developing stress and its symptoms will do good in relieving it. First of all, students and, in many cases, parents should understand that feeling stress and anxiety in life is very much normal. Rapid heartbeat, short temper, feeling of loneliness, inability to concentrate, eating too much or not eating at all, feeling of being lost, uncontrollable urge to violence, etc., are some of the symptoms people exhibit in extreme levels of stress. At some point in life, all of us experience stressful moments and their symptomatic responses in varying degrees. Psychologists say that it is the human body's natural response when it faces an immediate threat or danger to its

existence. So, there is no need to panic about it. Let the children learn to take it positively in this way.

Moreover, there is another way we can present it to the students positively: Some amount of stress can, in fact, act as a stimulus and motivator if we take them positively. Instead of sulking at the sight of problems, take them as challenges to overcome. Stress can turn out to be productive. What the teachers can do is to help children to set goals for their tasks to be accomplished. They must ensure that these targets should be realistic and the students should be helped to realize them step by step. As they go ahead accomplishing small tasks as goals they achieved, level of their self-confidence also gets enhanced.

Another thing the teacher should understand and the youngsters should be made aware of is the science behind feeling too much tense and worried in the teenage. One author explains it very briefly but beautifully in the following lines: "Adolescence is triggered by the release of the protein Kisspeptin into the brain. This affects the amygdale, which is the control centre for our emotions, making feelings more intense. That is why there is an increase in impulsive, emotional and emotive reactions during the teenage years." This understanding will help the teacher to understand the teenagers given under his or her care better. Also "it will help the students get past the initial negative emotional reactions. They can be helped to use the prefrontal cortex of brain responsible for decision making while they make choices."

The teachers and the parents can help the children to have an attitudinal difference towards the mistake they commit. Mistakes need not be considered as a very bad thing in life. We all commit mistakes and sometimes we fail in our attempts to achieve our goals. But there is a positive side to it. Our brain develops when we commit a mistake and thinks over it. Scientifically, analysing a mistake we

commit will help our brain to develop new strategies to overcome similar ones in future. It is an integral part of learning process.

Teachers and parents themselves may be going through traumatic days sometimes. They themselves may feel extremely tensed and stressful due to the workload or other commitments. Many a time there can be a tendency to vent out their frustrations and anger on the students. They become the easy targets who cannot react. A teacher may carry his or her family tensions to the classroom and, subsequently, he or she may express those frustrations in her interactions with the students in the classroom. That is something the teachers should avoid.

There are parents and teachers who frighten students about the upcoming board exams even at the beginning of the academic year. They have to remind the children of their duty to study but scaring them every morning will in no way help the students. Moreover, such children will surely feel intense tension and stress during the exams. Instead, teachers and parents shall prepare them to face any eventuality with peace and calmness. Indeed, there is a way out for every problem, and exam is one among them.

Many a student feels the heat of exam and gets extremely tensed as he or she has not managed time properly. In view of equipping such students, teachers shall conduct sessions on time management during their regular lessons. There should be input sessions on such subjects at least for students who prepare themselves for the board exams. In the beginning of the year itself, let them learn how to systematically plan their study for the whole year. Also, students should be instructed on the scientific ways of doing revision. Then, they may not feel intense anxiety and worry when exams knock on their doors.

Another problem that we face with students preparing for board exams is the fact that many schools avoid ample

physical training. There should be provisions for physical activities during the school hours as well as at home. It is scientifically proved that physical activities are ventilators for anxiety and tension. There are many parents who do not give a breathing space to the children. Life of a tenth grader is limited to tuition-school-tuition cycle. Favourite games and physical exercises are banned; TV and all entertainments are prohibited. There is no wonder if such children find their own ways of entertainment or feel unable to face the tension of failures. It is, therefore, necessary that we allow children to have enough of physical activities and entertainments to relieve themselves of the mounting stress associated with their studies and teenage life.

There are teachers who remain over-anxious and forget even to smile in the class. Laughter and humour are medicines for stress and worry. How fine it would be if teachers use these in the classroom while involved in teaching! A good laugh, in fact, activates and cools down the stress response and gives a relaxed feeling. Scientists say that laughter and humour releases dopamine that reduces stress and increases the memory. An effective teacher should know how to top up the lectures with a sense of humour. The bond of relationship between the teacher and the students is strengthened when there is a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

If teachers and parents feel hopeless at times, it is time to take some remedial measures. Let the children feel that their elders and trusted friends are there to help them. Children should feel free to share with trusted elders or a beloved teacher or a counsellor their worries and anxieties. When they talk with some trusted persons they feel half relieved. Even a glimmer of hope that their situation will turn around can keep them going. Margaret Mitchell says: "Life is under no obligation to give us what we expect." Further, Martin Luther King Jr. says: "Only in the darkness can you see the

stars.” Let enable children in our schools to keep up the spirit of hope all through their lives, especially when they are down with life’s hard realities.

PERIPHERIES TO THE CENTRE
Launch and Growth of Chanda, the First Syro
Malabar Mission (A CMI Initiative)

The formal release of *Peripheries to the Centre: Launch and Growth of Chanda, the First Syro Malabar Mission*, authored by Fr. Thomas Chirappurath CMI and edited by Fr. Benny Thettayil CMI, was held at Darsana Institute of Philosophy, Wardha, Maharashtra. Fr. Benny Mukalel CMI, Provincial of Mar Thoma Province, Chanda, presented the first copy of the book to Bishop Mar Ephrem Nariculam, Bishop of Chanda, who, in turn, released it by presenting it to Mar Joseph Kunnath CMI, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Adilabad. This voluminous book, result of about ten years of painstaking research and documentation, involving by a group of missionaries from Chanda and spread into 900 pages, is published by Dharmaram Publications, Bengaluru.

Marking the occasion, a meaningful programme was arranged at the Sant Chavara Auditorium of Darsana Institute of Philosophy, Wardha, in which Bishop Mar Joseph Kunnath gave the keynote address. Bishop Mar Ephrem Narikulam (Bishop of Chanda), Fr. Benny Mukalel (Provincial of CMI Mar Thoma Province, Chanda), Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI (General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry), Fr. Joshy Pazhukkathara CMI (Provincial of CMI Mary Matha Vice-Province, Hyderabad), Fr. Thomas Chirappurath CMI (Author of the Book), and Fr. Benny Thettayil CMI (Editor of the Book) spoke about the uniqueness of Chanda Mission, which is the first mission entrusted to the Syro-Malabar Church through the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) outside its proper territory. The unique contributions of Bishop Januarius CMI, the first bishop and architect of CMI Chanda Mission, were recalled and highlighted; so also, the vital contributions

made by the pioneering missionaries, including CMI priests, diocesan priests of Chanda, religious sisters from different congregations, and the catechists have also been given due credit in the work.

The programme was hosted at Darsana Institute of Philosophy under the leadership of Fr. George Kulangara CMI, Rector, and was attended by a large group of participants from different parts of Wardha as well as representatives from Chanda and Adilabad dioceses and the CMI Provinces of Chanda and Hyderabad.

UNITED WE STAND!
Inspirations from Malagasy People

Johnson Thaliyath CMI
Madagascar

In Madagascar, the place where I am working now, there are four parish churches; all these churches are combined together to form an ecclesiastical district under the CMI pastoral leadership (in Mahabo, where I worked earlier, we had thirty-nine churches in one district). One of them is Saint Gilles Church, Betafo, which was erected 110 years ago. The faithful in Betafo are very gentle and keep their own noble traditions. One of the specialities of this church is that it stands together with its sister church, i.e., the Catholic and Protestant churches share the same courtyard (of course, there is a small natural fence in between). Both of them have beautiful and tall bell towers as well. Also they keep the tomb of an ancestor from the royal family of Madagascar in between these two churches as a royal symbol of their dignity and ancestry.

Normally, we do not find tombs or cemeteries attached to the churches. Malagasy people think that the church is for the living and not for the dead. It is not the resting place for the dead but a place for the living to pray. But CMIs started building a cemetery attached to the church compound with a view to help the people not only spiritually but also economically, by instructing them that each and every body is called to be alive in Christ and, as a family, we all are in one family of Christ and that the church is the visible body of Christ. Moreover, economically, their funeral is too expensive if they follow their traditions and customs. Therefore, our contribution in this regard is highly appreciated by the faithful.

In this context, we have to understand the erection of the royal tomb years back in between these two churches. Both churches use the same private road. In fact, there is no road for the Protestant Church; but because of the mutual love and understanding, the Catholic Church gave consent to the Protestant Church to use part of the courtyard as its access road, even though it passed right across the main door of the church itself. This shows the tolerant nature of the Malagasy people, whatever their religion or tribe and wherever they live.

One of the reasons of the foundation of these churches is the desire of the forefathers who eagerly wanted the presence of God amidst them. So, they gave free land for both churches. Later, both of them flourished simultaneously and reached a position as we see them today.

This kind of unity is a unique feature among Malagasy people. Even in a small family one can find the sign of this unity irrespective of their different religious affiliations. Under the same roof Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims live together in the roles of father, mother, and children. No religious or fanatical discrimination crops up among them.

Whenever there is a spiritual function in the church for one of their family members, all members will go there, irrespective of their faith, to participate and share the joy. Barricades are made neither in the family nor in the church.

During the Holy Week, one can feel this togetherness among the Malagasy with its high intensity. Some Protestants find time to attend Catholic ceremonies. In some churches, for example, the "Way of the Cross" starts from the Protestant Church and ends in the Catholic Church.

In India, though we are proud of our pluralistic culture, this kind of tolerance is fast disappearing among various religions, among different Christian denominations, among different Catholic rites, and even among the dioceses of

same rite. Hence, this general outlook of mutual respect of the so-called poor Malagasy people is a model for the rest of the world.

Though we claim that we are the disciples of Jesus, do we have space in our heart for his love, sacrifice, tolerance, patience, and forgiveness? When we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, Eucharist, how can we fight each other for the man-made peripheral modifications and traditions in the liturgy? Often it replaces the Lord of the liturgy! We still crucify our Lord Jesus with our own limited convictions and intolerance; we try to chase out the sheep from the flock of Jesus to satisfy our own pride, anger, and hunger for power. First, therefore, let us be genuine disciples of Lord Jesus and, then, we shall try to lead others towards the real truth.

Servant of God Father Canisius CMI

FAMILY VISION OF FATHER CANISIUS

(Continued)

Fr. Paul Kalluveettil CMI

Letter Written to Jacob and Annamma

Although Father Canisius had regular correspondence with Jacob, the elder brother of Jose, and Annamma, his wife, unfortunately only one letter, written on 7 February 1983 from CSR, Pariyaram, is preserved in the archives. In this letter, Father Canisius rejoices at the news of the birth of a child to this couple and teaches them how to offer the baby to God, who is the choicest blessing to them by the loving God.

The saintly religious inspires Jacob and Annamma to nurture the child as the son of God. This advice reminds us of the Old Testament custom of offering the first born to Yahweh in the temple. Then, the parents used to take back the baby by promising that they will rear the infant as if it belonged to God. One can say that this was a prophetic letter, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, the couple made the boy grow up as the beloved both to God and people. He got a very good job. However, by an accident, he met with an untimely death. Jacob remembers that, before meeting the accident, his son had once more read the letter of Father Canisius. This incident fortified the faith of the couple, who firmly believe that the son, whom they had offered to God, has now been taken back by the loving God, as Job confesses in his book 1:21.

The exhortation of Father Canisius is very relevant in the modern society. Unfortunately, many Catholic couples do not consider their offspring as God's children; they do not nurture them in the fear of the Lord, helping them to lead a

devout life of obedience and respect for God, parents, and human beings.

Letter to Jose and Family

Father Canisius was also well acquainted with the family of Jose, his wife Eliyamma, and their children Manoj, Biju, and Bindhumol. He had written seven letters to them from CSR, Pariyaram.

In the first letter, dated 30 October 1991, Father Canisius congratulates the family, which took the initiative to spread devotion to Little Flower by printing the picture of the saint with a five day prayer. It was the Servant of God who had composed that prayer requesting Saint Therese of Lissieux to send from the heaven the rose flowers of graces. In the eyes of Father Canisius, it was God himself who was working through Jose and Eliyamma. He felicitates them telling them that they had become the dear ones to the Lord. Here the Servant of God seems to refer to the words of the heavenly Father at the scene of baptism of Jesus in Mt 3:17.

To appropriate and avow even slight good deeds of others are the traits of genuine humaneness. Those who live in union with God will certainly practise this virtue. Father Canisius serves as a best model. He could find goodness in all and hastened to congratulate those persons, at which act they were inspired to continue and grow in the devout practices. Unfortunately, most of the Christians in Kerala society do not have this aptitude of appreciation and admiration; instead, they try to pinpoint the defects and mistakes. The model of Father Canisius should be an incentive for us to look at the actions of others in a positive and creative way and unreservedly appreciate them.

In a letter written on 28 December 1991, Father Canisius gives a beautiful articulation of the mystery of incarnation. The Most High has given us His beloved Son in the form of a human being. According to the mystic, the whole world

thus speaks in the language of silence: "Son/daughter, everything is for you!" To this, everything should respond to Him: "Father, everything for you!" For Father Canisius, we have to do only one thing in this world: "The will of the Father - all of it, and only that!" Indeed, this was what the Holy Child spoke to the Father, as attested in the letter to the Hebrews 10:7: "Behold I come, O God, to fulfil your holy will." The Servant of God entreats the family of Jose to help each other by prayer to accept this as our life task and realize it. Every Catholic family needs to appropriate these celestial reflections on the mystery of Christmas.

In a letter dated 24 December 1992, Father Canisius asks pardon for not replying the letters of Jose, since his fingers have become practically incapacitated. The Man of God receives all his ailments with thanks as divine gifts. At the same time, he praises God for enabling him to conduct spiritual exhortations for those who come over to CSR. This way he was helping many to be united to God.

The examples from the life of Father Canisius stimulated many. He was a being of gratitude and praise, who spontaneously sought pardon for the unwilling omissions. He found joy in sharing with others his biblical insights as well as divine intimacy.

The letter written on 24 February 1994 was dictated by Father Canisius. In this letter, he informed that his ailments were steadily worsening, but he remained happier as new that it was the will of God. He was blessed with a divine insight that suffering is the unique means for glorification, and that cross is crown. This is indeed the good news of salvation revealed through the mystery of resurrection, which Father Canisius, by his own life example, implicitly proclaimed.

On 2 March 1992, Father Canisius wrote a letter to Eliyamma. He congratulated the family at the good success of Manoj in examination. At the same time, he tried to cheer

up Eliyamma, who had failed in BCom examination. According to Father Canisius, the Lord has a definite purpose in allowing us to taste the bitter medicine of failure, since He wants to make us richer and holier in His sight. According to Father Canisius, this brings joy to the heavenly assembly. He exhorted Eliyamma and the family to embrace with joy the ups and downs of the earthly life. The message of the Servant of God has great relevance for everyone facing challenges and failures in life.

In another letter to Eliyamma, dated 10 June 1992, Father Canisius congratulated the mother and two children who had appeared for the examinations. He encouraged them to put their faith in the Lord who hearkens to the prayers of His faithful. Next, he refers to the robbery that had taken place at the house in Bangalore. Father Canisius assures them that all these are the trails from the hands of our beloved Lord. He is ever present with us to help in all our needs. These words had a soothing effect upon the recipients.

Letters to Francis

Father Canisius wrote seven letters to Francis, one of his spiritual children. In a letter, dated 25 June 1983, Father Canisius comforted him and infused confidence in him, who was undergoing a financial crisis: he inspired Francis to have recourse to prayer and assured him that it would help him to face the crisis and to uphold personal integrity. Next, Father Canisius congratulated him at the birth of a baby, which, according to him, converted the family into Holy Family consisting of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Here reflected upon the vision of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, for whom Christian family is a miniature heaven. This letter has contemporary relevance for the Catholic families in facing their sorrows and joys and in maintaining a heavenly orientation in their day-to-day life.

In a letter dated 18 June 1985, Father Canisius asked Francis to offer himself with childlike confidence to God, to consult Him, and to do whatever we could with the utmost trust in the Lord. Then, Father Canisius reminded him, the loving God would bless us. The saintly person affirmed that the Divine hand that ordains everything is with us. This letter serves as a model to comfort everyone in difficulties.

In a letter written on 17 August 1985, Father Canisius avowed that there is nothing impossible to God. He was speaking from his own personal experience. His words seem to refer to Rom 8:28: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

In a letter dated 5 September 1985, Father Canisius asserted that God showers upon Francis His blessings because of his good character. The saintly person, then, warned him not to abandon his good comportment and to continue to attend daily Mass, receive Holy Communion, and persist in regular family prayers – all these, according to him, would bring upon him the Divine graces. This is an admonition that can engender incentive and encouragement in every good Christian.

Father Canisius assured, in his letter written on 19 September 1985, that the Almighty would provide success to those who depend upon Him and walk through the divine paths. He pointed out three basic principles in dealing with others: respectful distance, respectful talk, and respectful behaviour. These maxims are very practical, especially in a context where fake news is in abundance and many unconscientiously engage in spreading rumours.

Father Canisius, in a letter of 1 February 1986, provided consolation and courage to Francis who was undergoing suffering due to the lies propagated against him. Father Canisius tried to infuse in Francis his own firm conviction that God is truth, and truth would certainly prevail. He

exhorted his spiritual son to take refuge in God and to face the situation calmly. This advice is valid for all times.

On 8 March 1986, Father Canisius, who was fully occupied with very important things, found time to write a few lines to Francis in order to fortify his faith in the compassionate God, who pays kind attention to our miseries. He assured him that the Lord would certainly come to his aid. This pastoral approach to engender in others an attitude of childlike total dependence on God is very relevant in contemporary times.

Letters to Other Relatives

Father Canisius had written letters to Babu and Antony, two of his close relatives. The letter to Babu is dated 3 April 1981 from the Prior General's House, Kochi. In this letter, he expressed his happiness for the chance to visit Babu and his family. The union with God did not deter the saintly person from maintaining warm relationship with his dear ones. In this letter, he acknowledged that it belonged to his daily programme to pray personally for those with whom he had got acquainted. Father Canisius was very particular to make every one of them remembered in the presence of the Divine. Indeed, his relationship of love was always oriented towards God and everyone had a place in it. This serves as a model for all of us.

Father Canisius wrote to Antony on 22 November 1964 from Dharmaram College, Bangalore. He extended a hearty felicitation to all the members of Kunjannamkutty on the occasion of the silver jubilee of her wedding. At the same time, he made them remember that the religious do not have permission to go to attend marriage celebrations. This letter attests to the strict adherence of Father Canisius to the rules of the CMI Constitutions. For him, the religious laws were the divine voice. The saintly person, then, refers to the forthcoming priestly ordination of 45 CMI deacons at the

Mumbai Eucharistic Congress and requested their prayers for these future priests. The Servant of God firmly believed in the value of the prayers of the laity.

Conclusion

All sixty-five letters of Father Canisius addressed to families attest to his divine as well as humane orientation. His love of God, one can say, found its external manifestation through his love and concern for human beings associated with him. Both this vertical and horizontal dimensions of the love seem to converge in one reality, that is, a celestial vision. In this regard, Father Canisius, like Jesus, became a worthy human being, worthy of respect from human beings and acceptance from God, the perfect example of loving relationship, exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ. These letters continue to inspire its readers in embracing authentic Christian ideology and in living it in fullness.

Training in Mission 1

**IN SEARCH OF THE DESTINY
IN GOMUKH AND GANGOTRI
Personal Narratives on a Pilgrimage
to the Himalayas**

Samanvaya Brothers in Rishikesh

Being born as south Indian doing a pilgrimage to the Himalayas was one of the dreams of my life. On the very day I landed up in Rishikesh, I started to color this dream with my imaginations. We started our journey on 2 October 2017. The journey to Gangotri became so blessed by our visit to many mission stations of Bijnor mission on our way, such as Chamba, Utharakasi and Chinyalisour. The hospitality we experienced in all mission centres was amazing and their commitment to the mission work took our hearts to the heights of admiration. The journey from Uttarakashi to Gomukh took four hours and it was impossible for me to close my eyes in front of the imposing hills and serene valleys on the way. I don't know how I could explain it, because I have seen such places only in fictions and fantasies. God is such a wonderful designer that He placed mountains one after another, painted the hills with greenery, fashioned them with gorgeous rocks and blessed their feet with a pretty and holy river called Ganges that my soul really fell in love with this perfect designer. The city of Gangotri was a shining belt for the Himalayan ranges. We spent some time in Gangotri. We went to a swami named Sundarananda and spent time with him discussing about his life and mission. He explained to us about his Guru and the struggles he underwent to live forty-eight years at the foot of Himalayas. Later, we visited Pandava Cave, one of the oldest places in Gangotri, and spent some time there.

Next day morning, we started our pilgrimage to Gomukh by 5.30 am. Though the weather was freezing my whole body, the ambition was quite warm and mind pretty cool for the trekking to the top of the Himalayas. There were Hindu co-pilgrims with us, joining the pilgrimage with an evergreen ambition. Pilgrims were warming themselves up in the frozen weather by reciting the name of Lord Shiva; within a short while they made the entire atmosphere prayerful and I really felt the change of mood, from that of an ambitious trekking to a serene and peaceful pilgrimage.

The wind made us speechless and made us observe the surroundings. I really enjoyed the beauty of the place with rising sun emerging on the horizon. The pilgrims were encouraging us to move forward. The hours passed and we defeated mountains one after another; the sun was bright, and nature did not offer us a shade for shelter. We started to wither as there were no trees around. The group got scattered and I was moving alone and, as I went ahead, the journey became tougher and tougher. Many of us became tired of hypoxia (that is, deficiency in the amount of oxygen reaching the tissues). There were no trees around; it was really a rocky place surrounded by rocky mountain dressed in snow. I was very tired and I had no strength to go forward, no friends to support, and I was thirsty and hungry. Still I kept moving to my destination. I went ahead and, after walking for (six hours by 2 o'clock), I saw the beautiful Gomukh like a white lamb among the black buffalo because it was surrounded by black rocks. I was happy to reach there; it was situated among the mountains. So, I had to climb down to see it close but there was lack of oxygen. Yet, I went down to actualize my wish. It is a little cave with ice similar to an opening part of an igloo; the water was ice cold. I could not spend much time there because of hypoxia. I was very happy because I reached my destination. I saw many people who were flocking to the place, but they were not tired. Now, with my tired feet, I had

to walk back the whole distance the same day. I heard from people that it is the real dwelling place of God. When I was coming down to our residence, many questions crossed my mind: Why do they go for a pilgrimage to Gomukh? What does really attract them to go to Gomukh? Why don't they become tired?

Ganga is the holy river. According to the mythical story, it starts from the matted locks (hair) of the Lord Shiva; it implies a personal encounter with God and to have a holy bath in the Ganges is to purify oneself. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51-7). We can experience this purification process literally taking place at Gomukh; for a sight-seer, it will be the face of a cow but for a believer it is the face of God: they really wash their impurities Gomukh. People go to Gomukh and never become tired. Usually, they don't talk to each other but only to God. They are always in a prayerful mood. They literally suffer the hardships and difficulties to reach God. In Mt 16:24-26, we read: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take their cross and follow me." If we simply walk, after a while we will be tired; if we carry something, then also definitely within no time we will be tired; that is quite natural. If we do something for our own benefit we will not get tired. If we do something with a definite aim or goal, then we will not be tired. Taking the cross and following Jesus Christ: will we be tired? Definitely it will be tiring as long as it remains something peripheral. That is why Jesus told us to deny oneself and to take up the cross, and follow him. Denying oneself calls for leaving one's own bodily passion, desires, and worldly attachments. Periphery to the core, denying oneself would mean leaving eternity and focusing on God. In this state, we will not be affected by the external difficulties; this is the state of a faithful pilgrim. I could see real example of this Word of God during my

pilgrimage to Gomukh. When I reached back to Gangotri, I tried to examine myself with two questions: What is the focus of my life? Further, most often I meet with disappointments, and do I really set a goal for my heavenly pilgrimage? As tiredness conquered me and pushed me to sleep, I went with a firm decision that "I am ready to deny myself to carry my cross with Jesus the saviour."

Jomet Chakkalayil CMI

Pilgrims visit holy places for spiritual experience and enlightenment. If a person can attain it (at least a glimpse of it) from the very journey towards that place, it is a great achievement. The places I visited during my pilgrimage to the Himalayas, the personalities I encountered, and their specialties and visions towards faith and life, the hardships I underwent, and the hunger and thirst I experienced were the real 'shrines' I visited during this pilgrimage. Positive attitude and helping mentality are the two important things I found in the people I encountered during this journey. Another important value I encountered in them is the welcoming attitude towards others. One of the most important things that I noticed during the pilgrimage was the enthusiasm present in all the pilgrims and the mutual encouragement they rendered throughout the whole journey. In general, the entire group of people I encountered in those pilgrim centres can be categorized into three: (1) the pilgrims (persons travelling to a spiritual destination), (2) the Good Samaritans (people who do real service for these people either directly or indirectly), and (3) the exploiters (those who try to make profit out of the visitors).

My pilgrimage was not at all static. Before it started, it was more of the determination of a conqueror to reach the destination so easily. During the tiresome journey, however, it became the attitude of a hopeless person trying to complete his journey somehow. After the journey I felt sad

and disappointed that I couldn't complete the entire journey. Now, I feel a bit more of happiness in my heart that this journey gave me some inspiration and a number of instances to reflect upon, which will help me and my future mission, especially as a spiritual seeker. The difficulties that I encountered can be seen as both internal and external: the internal ones consist in an anxiety (namely, whether I could reach there or not; this came prominent after starting the journey). For me, the place of Gomukh was only a geographical spot rather than a historical or spiritual site; so, the mind-set easily drifted from that of a pilgrim to that of a tourist, which also became the breeding ground for feelings of boredom and tiredness.

During this journey I did encounter a lot of contradictions as they enlightened my thought a lot. The giant and the strongest persons fall during the journey; but the weak manage to complete the journey and return. Some people pay attention to the scenic beauty around and miss the most important experience of the Divine, and some others see only God and fail to see anything else around. Interestingly, the same pilgrimage path is used for both God experience and money-making and many kinds of exploitation. This is the thing most of us forget during our journey of life. We may give more importance to external things that lack any depth, and will be instrumental in forgetting God. In this journey, sometimes we gave more importance to the things and views around us than the ultimate goal of our life's pilgrimage. Even in our religious life, we may give priority to external rituals and actions than the inner meaning and spirituality. A spirituality of ascent calls for an understanding of our real destiny of life, that is, the desire to attain God; in preparation to this, we must arrange ourselves physically and mentally to receive Him, and continue to seek spiritual direction. After attaining the

destiny we return with a unique experience of God, who will remain the Guru for ever.

Deepu Parayil CMI

To Gomukh in Four Stages

Let me compare my journey to Gomukh with the ascent to priesthood in four different stages.

First Stage: We all had good motivation and enough confidence as we all were encouraging one another as we were walking side by side. The way also was rather pleasing and simple. The same happens in the first stage of formation. All had enough enthusiasm and there were enough people around to encourage each one. The entire atmosphere seemed to be conducive to reach true goal.

Second Stage: On our way, a few found our journey difficult and decided to drop already. Most of us separated into different groups according to each one's capabilities. Though the journey was getting harder some of us pursued forward with hope and determination. A few of us, though wanted to drop the journey, did not do so, as they didn't want to be counted as losers. In seminary life too, after a period of years the vigour and enthusiasm provided by the encouragement of the outside world would be comparatively very less. Some of the companions might have already left the seminary and some may be in a dilemma whether to cling on to it or not. They start to assess the meaning, and balance between profit and loss in this life's account.

Third Stage: Of the total number of pilgrims, there are very few who go from Bhojbazza (Resting Place) to Gomukh. The Bible verses "Many are called but few are chosen" (Mat 22:14) and "For, the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Mat 7:14) we literally experienced in our journey. I met people who climb with much desire, especially the elderly

and the women. They have great desire and longing to experience Mother Ganga in its origin but they were unable to make it. There are also people who continued to walk through the hardships just to enjoy the place. They were not spiritually motivated rather their attitude was to conquer the beauty of the place. In seminary life, too, there may be people who really aspire for priesthood but somehow they fail to attain it. There would be two groups of people especially in the last stages of formation. Some really understand the meaning of life and others go forward just because of the thought that they would be considered as losers and would be accused of losing years, and above all they will have to face the big question, 'What is next?' Many of them prefer to hang on as there is a safe future ahead.

Fourth Stage: After reaching Gomukh most of the pilgrims pursued to the origin of the river Ganges. Though the atmosphere and the hardships are still harder they proceed to their final goal while others finding difficult to proceed with the hardships remain in their present condition in their own way. In priestly life, too, some go on with firm convictions and a few of them become priests and would end their lives without progress.

In my experience as a loser, who could not reach the destination (where the River Ganga originates), this is what i feel: I did not have any conviction or any devotional attachment to spiritual depth about the destination. I was quite sure that if it was Calvary I would have risked my life because it has much to do with my life and my faith. Thus, to endure in priestly life and to proceed into higher levels of life one should have deeper convictions and constant spiritual support.

Thobith Chirayath CMI

The Himalayas are the highest mountains in the world. But for Indians, they symbolize the spiritual eternity, the

precious link with the ancient ages, and much more. Hindu mythology and fascinating religious traditions are interwoven with the history of the Himalayas. For many Hindus, the Himalayas constitute the 'ultimate destination', a repository of their deep religious faith. The Holy River Ganges is the most sacred river in the Hindu religion and its source is at Gomukh.

As I reflect on why I could not fulfil my dream of reaching Gomukh, I could reach a conclusion which is similar to what we find in Matthew 17:14-21, which narrates the incident that the disciples could not cure the boy who suffered from epilepsy, and Jesus rebuked his disciples saying, "it is because of your little faith that you could not heal the boy." I feel that these disciples were not happy in their mind; they always had a kind of superiority complex. At transfiguration, which occurs just before this particular passage, Jesus took with him only Peter, James, and John. This incident really annoyed them and started to murmur among themselves, against Jesus and the three disciples; in consequence they could not heal the boy. They became unholy because of this kind of action. Jesus added: "if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move (Mat 17:20)." This is what we lacked throughout our trekking. We lost the faith and hope, that we could reach the destination. Though I was physically fit, mentally I was not feeling good at moving forward. If one has the conviction things begin to happen, and if one has lost conviction nothing is going to happen, but will only end up in disappointment. "Nobody climbs mountains for scientific reasons. Science is used to raise money for expeditions, but you really climb for the hell of it," said Edmund Hillary.

Nithin Airukattu CMI

Training in Mission 2

A DAY WITH A ROADSIDE TEA VENDOR

Jaison Velukkaran CMI

Samanvaya, Rishikesh

“He doesn’t look like a helper,” commented a customer in the tea stall looking at me. I was fully dressed with an overcoat while I was washing the glasses and plates. I felt ashamed and nervous of my insensitivity because people were staring at me. As soon as that customer left I removed my overcoat and pulled up my sleeves, hiked up my pant legs and continued my work with ease. This experience taught me to be sensitive to the context in which I live and work. This special work experience project for the second year theology students at Samanvaya, Rishikesh, resulted from Fr. Master’s suggestion for a day’s adventurous living without any money.

The tea stall on a cart was stationed on the side of a road in Rishikesh. Asking him to employ me for a day was the most difficult part of the job. The owner allowed me to work without any payment. Among several customers a policeman and a beggar woman caught my attention. The policeman, after taking tea, walked away without paying as if it is his right; but the beggar woman after a cup of tea and a bowl of rice collected a few coins from her old torn bag and gave them to the owner. He politely refused to accept the coins. The woman picked up her bag and with a grateful smile walked away. Later, the owner told me that the policeman draws high salary whereas the old woman is a poor orphan. He added: “rich people are poor in giving whereas poor people are generous.” I was reminded of Jesus’ saying: “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God; indeed, it is easier for a camel to

go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Lk 18:24-25).

When I noticed the owner selling *pan masala* and *beedi*, which are harmful to health, I asked him: "Why do you sell those dangerous items?" He was well aware of the danger so he doesn't use them. He said: "If I don't sell those items, people won't come to my shop for tea and boiled rice." Because smoking a *beedi* or chewing *pan masala* is the usual custom after rice or tea in that region.

Like the beggar woman, with a grateful heart, I returned to the seminary in the afternoon after the day's work and interaction with the tea stall owner. I realized that each day brings in new challenges and experiences into our lives. It depends on how we respond to those challenges and experiences and learn new lessons from them. Pushing myself out of my comfort zone for a day benefited me immensely in my theological reflection as well as in forming myself for the ministry of the Kingdom of God.

MY DAY OUT AS A HOUSEKEEPER

Jinto Jose Indikuzha CMI

Samanvaya, Rishikesh

Concluding the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis gifted the Church with 'The World Day of the Poor', which, in fact, is a reminder to the Church to recall its original spirit to which she is ever called. Jesus responded to the situation of poverty and exploitation prevalent during his time by proclaiming a new social order, 'the reign of God', in which poverty and exploitation will be replaced by the kingdom values. This new social order calls us to experience God's love, which is unconditional. In order to experience such a state of life one has to have a radical change of heart by creating a genuinely fraternal society characterized by freedom, fellowship, and justice.

The experience of God as Abba meditated by Jesus brings freedom and personal liberation because it sets man free from the compulsions and fears that inhibit him. Jesus has left us an enormous legacy of freedom; for, his whole life and ministry were spent in bringing freedom of every kind to the un-free, which is attested to in all the Gospels. The freedom that comes from the trust in God as father is so absolute that one needs no other security in life and, thus, becomes the foundation of a new social order that Jesus proclaims.

The freedom given by Jesus leads us inevitably to a new fellowship of mutual concern. For, man becomes truly himself only by relating to his fellow human beings in love, that is, only through the free surrender of his love that every such relationship demands. However, it is only by losing one's freedom, or by becoming a free slave, one does find it, as Saint Paul tells us in Galatians 5:13: "For you were called

to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become a slave of one another." The goal and fulfilment of human freedom is fellowship.

Where there is genuine fellowship there will flourish justice. The love kindled by Jesus is an effective love which is shown not in words but in deeds, as it is clearly expressed by the motto of the World Day of the Poor: "Love not in words but in deed." This is directed not merely to the spiritual need of women and men but to the whole human being in totality. So, the concern of the kingdom consists not only in non-judgmental acceptance of a person in forgiveness and reconciliation or in patience, kindness, and magnanimity. But it consists equally in doing good to any one in material need, namely, the poor, the hungry, the sick, the outcaste, the imprisoned, etc.

In this context, let me share one of my experiences, which happened on a challenging day in the recent past. As part of our theological training at Samanvaya, we were allowed to go out from morning till evening with no money in hand; this is to facilitate our experience of the toil of our brethren on the streets. So, I, along with my companion Jomet, worked out a possible plan. Finding a job for a day was our primary concern; therefore, on a day, soon after the evening tea, we walked to Rishikesh town with the hope of finding some work in a restaurant for the next day. When we saw the name board of 'Madras Hotel', which highlighted the South Indian dishes in its ad board, our hearts were overwhelmed with joy. Without any hesitation we went inside and introduced ourselves to the manager and the purpose of our coming. In our innocence, when we introduced ourselves as students of theology he couldn't understand what it was; but, as we reformulated it as some kind of a course on spirituality along with yoga in Thapovan (Rishikesh), he understood it perfectly well. He

was very gentle but did not want to employ us for a day. But he gave us a visiting card of another branch, which was just 500 meters away.

Locating the shop was easy, but whether we will be accommodated there or not was a question in our mind. Anyway, we introduced ourselves to the lady who was at the reception. She was in half-mind to give us some work when we said that “we are ready to do any work like sweeping, mopping the floor, or even washing the plates of the customers.” But soon a young man arrived and the receptionist explained our purpose to him. His answer to us was like a slap in our face, beyond our expectation: “There is no work for you, you may go now!” Then, he just went out with his bike without listening to us. In great despair we left the shop; yet, we didn’t give up: we walked further until we found another opportunity.

After walking about fifteen minutes we located another restaurant. We entered the restaurant with a smile on our face, hiding our desperation and disappointment. We followed the same procedure as we did in the previous instance; from his facial expressions and the way of talking it was very visible that he was not going to give us any job. But when we said that we are ready to work without pay and ready to do any work you say, his face lightened up. Then onwards he was dealing with us in a very friendly manner. He agreed to keep us for the next day morning nine o’clock and also offered us lunch and tea during the day. We were very happy and excited.

The next day, the appointed day, soon after our usual Holy Mass and breakfast, we reached the restaurant exactly at 9 am. When we greeted the manager, he replied with a long face ‘Oh you came!’ as if he was not expecting us. But we didn’t change our attitude because it was our need. Then, he called one of the housekeeping boys and sent him with us. There were two housekeeping boys and we

introduced each other. They were very friendly and took care of us as younger brothers. They showed us two rooms which were well arranged and took us to the other rooms which were to be cleaned and arranged. They showed us how to do the things in the first room; we were surprised to see the way they cleaned the toilet. After washing everything they took the bath towel the guest used and wiped even the inside and the outside of flush-toilet and other things which are in the toilet. When we asked them why they did it so, they said that the coming guest should not feel that it is a used room and toilet. By noon we cleaned almost seven to eight rooms. By one o'clock the manager came and said "for today it is enough, you may go." When we were packing the bags we expected a word of appreciation from him or rather an offer of food. But nothing happened. Although we did not express it, inside us we felt humiliation and rejection. We said to ourselves: "from morning to noon we were working without rest for a minute; the manager was now sending us out; no value for our hard work!" Not even some human consideration!

We read in the Gospel of Saint Matthew 20:1-16, the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, where the landlord pays to each one according to the agreement made, but they grumbled against him for equalizing everyone. We too grumbled in our minds against this manager for not showing any consideration and not giving us what was agreed upon between us.

Now, our main concern was to fill our stomachs; we directly went to the Gurudwara in Rishikesh city, which is run by Sri Hemakunt Sahib Trust, for our lunch. They serve *Langar* and tea, day and night, to everyone who visits them. We only need to tie a towel on our head which represents their turban, a gift of the Guru for the Sikh. The food they serve was sumptuous and sufficient to fill our stomachs.

With a thankful heart we ate the food and joined the volunteers for washing plates for some time and we left.

The experience I had in the hotel (with the manager) was an eye-opener for me. How do I behave with my fellow brethren around me? This question continues to trigger a lot of introspection in my mind. The general tendency for every human being is to look upward and compare themselves with those who have got more than them, and they never try to look around and compare with those who have received lesser than them and continue to remain dissatisfied in life.

Pope Francis' invitation to love the poor not merely with words, but with deeds, is very relevant here. This small incident really touched me to see the sufferings of the less privileged living around me and my community. When justice was not done to me by the manager, I was not affected much as I could find an alternate means for my food, that too only for one meal; I knew that when I am back to my community, my needs will be well taken care of. But what happens when just wage is denied to those people who work hard day in and out to make both ends meet for themselves and their families. Although we can't change the whole world, we can certainly bring a small change within us and around us.

Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church

Praise Be to God!

**SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH WITH ALL-INDIA
JURISDICTION**

As two more new dioceses have been created outside the 'proper' territory of the Syro-Malabar Church, let us all join our Mother Church in thanking the Lord and appreciating Pope Francis for formally granting the legitimate right for all-India jurisdiction which was long over-due.

Congratulations to Bishop Mar Raphael Thattil (formerly the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archeparchy of Thrissur) and the newly nominated Bishop Mar Sebastian (Joby) Pozheliparambil! In these new shepherds, we have two new eparchies created, namely, the Eparchy of Shamshabad (near Hyderabad) and the Eparchy of Hosur (in Tamil Nadu), covering the area that was not included in the already existing eparchies of the Syro-Malabar Church in India.

The Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) recalls with joy and gratitude to the Lord that the steps initiated by Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara and many other members of the Congregation - for example, the 'Seven Sorrows', including Mar Louis Pazheparampil, and a host of CMI missionaries who have toiled for the Syro-Malabar faithful spread across India for more than five decades and continued to explore the unknown territories for the Lord - were instrumental in working for the autonomy of the Syro-Malabar Church and in having its own native bishops to shepherd for its flock throughout India. A tough and demanding dream that it was, the price the CMI Congregation had to pay for it, today we realize, was worth the trouble for establishing the Kingdom of God in India.

In this historic moment, let us join the Major Archbishop His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry and the

entire Syro-Malabar Church in thanking the Lord and pledging to be more effective instruments in continuing to proclaim the Good News in India and to the ends of the earth!



CMI Superiors' Animation in Jagdalpur



*Peruvian Missionaries with Father Paul Achandy CMI,
Prior General*



Saint Chavara Edu-Park, Chavara School, Coimbatore



*Samanvaya Brothers with Swami Sundarananda at the
Foothills of Gangothri*

POPE FRANCIS PUSHES DECENTRALIZATION ON TRANSLATION OF LITURGICAL TEXTS¹

In a move likely to generate special reaction in the English-speaking Catholic world, Pope Francis on Saturday made a series of amendments to Church law governing liturgical translation, the net effect of which is to shift a considerable share of the power away from the Vatican and to local bishops' conferences.

More broadly, the new legal document is likely to be taken as one of Pope Francis' strongest moves yet in terms of fostering greater collegiality in the Catholic Church, meaning shared decision-making between local churches and Rome.

It is also likely to be seen as at least a partial reversal of a 2001 Vatican instruction called *Liturgiam Authenticam*, issued under Saint Pope John Paul II, which both ratified a more activist role for Rome in taking control of the translation process. However, Francis was careful to insist that the basic principle in *Liturgiam Authenticam*, of ensuring that translations into the vernacular languages are faithful to the Latin original, remains in force.

Issued in the form of a *motu proprio*, meaning a legal document issued under the pope's personal authority, "*Magnum Principium*" represents, at least indirectly, Francis' response to what has been one of the most contentious issues in English-speaking Catholic life over the last twenty years: Who should decide how Catholic worship sounds in English?

For much of the 1990s and 2000s, debates over liturgical translation were the hot-button topic par excellence in

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English-speaking Catholic conversation. At one level, it was a debate over substance: Should translations veer more in the direction of adopting the contemporary idiom in English, to make them more accessible – a principle formally known as “dynamic equivalence” to the Latin original – or should they stick as close as possible to that Latin, in order to make them universal and timeless?

For the most part, due in large measure to Vatican intervention, those tensions were resolved in favour of universality. At another level, it was a debate over process: Should the decisions be made by the local bishops, who know the realities in their backyard best, or in Rome, which ultimately has the responsibility for preserving the unity of Catholic worship? In effect, what Francis did with this new instruction was to deliver a victory for the side of the local bishops. That step is in keeping with what the Pope had described as “a sound decentralization” in the Church. “It is not advisable for the Pope,” Francis has said, “to take the place of local bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory.”

In a set of amendments to canon 838 of the Code of Canon Law, Francis specified that from here on, the Vatican will still have the authority to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to a proposed translation, but it won’t have any real role at the final stage of the translation process itself. No longer would the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments be submitting extensive lists of proposed amendments; it will confirm, or not, the results at the end.

From the Vatican 2

“FOLLOW THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

*Address of the Holy Father to the Apostolic Union of
Clergy (16 November 2017)*

Pope Francis

Dear Priests,

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). These verses of the psalm go well after the words of Monsignor Magrin, president of the International Confederation Apostolic Union of Clergy. It is truly a joy to meet and to feel the fraternity that arises among us, called to the service of the Gospel following the example of Christ, the Good Shepherd. To each one of you, I address my cordial greeting, which I extend to the representatives of the Apostolic Union of the Laity.

In this Assembly, you are reflecting on the ordained ministry, “in, for and with the diocesan community.” In continuity with previous meetings, you intend to focus on the role of pastors in the particular Church; and in this rereading, the hermeneutic key is the diocesan spirituality that is the spirituality of communion in the manner of the Trinitarian communion. Indeed, the mystery of the Trinitarian communion is the high model of reference for the ecclesial community. Saint John Paul, in his Apostolic Letter “*Novo millennio ineunte*,” recalled that “the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning” is precisely this: “to make the Church the home and school of communion” (43). This involves, in the first instance, “[promoting] a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed” (43).

One becomes an expert in spirituality of communion primarily thanks to conversion to Christ, to the docile

opening to the action of the Spirit, and by welcoming one's brothers. As we are well aware, the fruitfulness of the apostolate does not depend only on activity or on organizational efforts, although these are necessary, but firstly upon divine action. Today, as in the past, the saints are the most effective evangelizers, and all the baptized are called to reach towards the highest measure of Christian life, namely, holiness. This is even more applicable to ordained ministers. The World Day of Prayer for the Sanctification of Priests, which is celebrated every year on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, constitutes an ideal opportunity to implore of the Lord the gift of zealous and holy ministers for His Church. To achieve this ideal of holiness, every ordained minister is called to follow the example of the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for His sheep. And from where can we draw this pastoral charity, if not from the heart of Christ? In Him the celestial Father has filled us with the infinite treasures of mercy, tenderness, and love: here we can always find the spiritual energy indispensable to be able to radiate His love and His joy in the world. And we are led to Christ every day also in the filial relation with our Mother, Mary Most Holy, especially in the contemplation of the mysteries of the Rosary.

Closely linked with the path of spirituality is commitment to pastoral action in the service of the people of God, visible today and in the concreteness of the local Church: pastors are called to be wise and faithful servants who imitate the Lord, who don the apron of service and bend to the lives of their communities, to understand their history and to live the joys and sufferings, expectations and hopes of the flock entrusted to them. Indeed, Vatican Council II taught that the right way for ordained ministers to achieve holiness is in "[performing] their duties sincerely and indefatigably in the Spirit of Christ"; "by the sacred actions which are theirs daily as well as by their entire

ministry which they share with the bishop and their fellow priests, they are directed to perfection in their lives" (*Decreto Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 12).

You rightly highlight that ordained ministers acquire the right pastoral style also by cultivating fraternal relations and participating in the pastoral journey of the diocesan Church, in its appointments, its projects, and its initiatives that translate the programmatic guidelines into practice. A particular Church has a concrete face, rhythms, and decisions; it must be served with dedication every day, bearing witness to the harmony and unity that is lived and developed with the bishop. The pastoral journey of the local community has as an essential point of reference the pastoral plan of the diocese, which must take precedence over the programmes of associations, movements, or any other particular group.

Dedication to the particular Church must, then, be expressed more broadly, with attention to the life of all the Church. Communion and mission are correlated dynamics. One becomes a minister to serve one's own particular Church, in obedience to the Holy Spirit and one's own bishop and in collaboration with other priests, but with the awareness of being part of the universal Church, which crosses the boundaries of one's own diocese and country. If the mission is an essential quality of the Church, it is especially so for he who, ordained, is called to exercise the ministry in a community that is missionary by nature, and to educate in global outlook. Indeed, mission is not an individual choice, due to individual generosity or perhaps pastoral disillusionment, but rather it is a choice of the particular Church that becomes a protagonist in the communication of the Gospel to all peoples.

Dear brothers, I pray for each one of you and for your ministry, and for the service of the Apostolic Union of

Clergy. May my blessing accompany you. And remember:
do not forget to pray for me.

From the Vatican 3

FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION A “MORAL OBLIGATION”

New Document on Corruption

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Vatican

Introduction

The Vatican calls fight against corruption and the barriers it creates to peace and justice a “moral obligation,” in a document that just released outlines plans by the International Consultation Group for Justice, Corruption, Organized Crime and Mafias (ICG), sponsored by the Holy See’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Vatican Radio in English reports. The document is the outcome of the ICG’s June meeting in the Vatican Gardens, which brought together leaders in religion, law enforcement, and victim’s groups.

Outcome Document of the “International Debate on Corruption” (15 June 2017)

“That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.” This is the *universal intention* that Pope Francis has entrusted to his Worldwide Prayer Network for the month of February 2018, to commemorate once again the assassination of Blessed Giuseppe Puglisi, priest and martyr.

Starting from the month of September 2017, the *International Consultation Group for Justice* of the *Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development* will focus its efforts on this matter for the upcoming year.

The *International Debate on Corruption* has expressed the common intent to deal with various forms of corruption, organized crime, and the mafia. Corruption, prior to being

an act, is a condition: hence the need for culture, education, training, institutional action, citizen participation. The *Consultation Group* proposes, therefore, to formulate different definitions of "corruption," as stated by Pope Francis and Cardinal Turkson in the book-interview *Corrosione*, published on 15 June last.

The *Consultation Group* will not just come up with virtuous exhortations, because concrete gestures are needed. In fact, a commitment to education requires credible teachers, even in the Church.

"Let's pray for all the victims of the mafias, we ask for the strength to go forward, to continue to fight against corruption," wrote Pope Francis on 19 July 2017.

The *Consultation Group* will constitute an international network. The Church in the world is in itself a network, and for this reason it can and must serve this purpose with courage, resolution, transparency, spirit of collaboration, and creativity.

Anyone seeking alliances to obtain privileges, exemptions, preferential or even illegal pathways, is not credible. If we decide to follow this behaviour, we can all run the risk of becoming unsuitable, harmful, and dangerous. Those taking advantage of their position to recommend people who are often not recommendable – both in terms of value and honesty – are not credible. Thus, the action of the *Consultation Group* will be educational and informative, and will address public opinion and many institutions to create a mentality of freedom and justice, in view of the common good.

Normally, the consequences of corruption are not easily recognized: one is unaware that an act of corruption is often at the base of a crime. The *Consultation Group* will, therefore, intervene to fill this gap, especially wherever, in the world, corruption is the dominant social system.

The *Consultation Group* will also investigate further into the development of a global response – through Bishops’ Conferences and local Churches – to the excommunication of the mafia and other similar criminal organizations and to the prospect of excommunication for corruption. This will not be a simple road to follow: the Church is present in the world and must listen to all of its parts in order to dialogue with non-Christians as well in an active, transparent, and effective way.

Moreover, it will be essential to develop the almost-lost relationship between justice and beauty. Our extraordinary historical, artistic and architectural heritage will be a formidable element supporting educational and social actions against all forms of corruption and organized crime.

The *Consultation Group* will also propose a political mindset – with particular attention to democracy and secularism – capable of enlightening actions towards civil institutions, to ensure that international treaties are effectively enforced and laws are standardized to best pursue the tentacles of crime, which go well beyond state borders. In fact, one of the goals is to study how to apply the principles of the Conventions of Palermo and Merida.

The *Dicastery*, by statute, “expresses the Holy See’s concern for issues of justice and peace” and must echo Pope Francis’ message for justice and peace. Corruption, in fact, also causes a lack of peace, so the *Consultation Group* will likewise analyse in-depth the relationship between *peace processes* and forms of corruption.

A movement, an awakening of consciences, is necessary. This is our primary motivation, which we perceive as a moral obligation. Laws are necessary but not sufficient. There will be three levels of action: education, culture, citizenship. We need to act with courage to stir and provoke consciences, shifting from widespread indifference to the

perception of the severity of these phenomena, in order to fight them.

Goals of the Consultation Group (31 July 2017)

(Study and Educational, Cultural, Social, and Institutional Actions)

1. Define the concept of corruption within the broader fields of justice, anthropology, and cultural crisis, and each of its criminal outcomes in relation to organized crime and the mafias.
2. Raise the public opinion's awareness to build a mind-set and culture of justice.
3. Identify the consequences of corruption (social, economic, political, institutional, cultural, spiritual, criminal) starting from precise facts, processes, events, and informing the public.
4. Deepen the relationship existing between people, institutions and corruption, and between peace processes and corruption.
5. Promote common international legal measures against corruption, organized crime and the mafias and follow their implementation.
6. Identify concrete steps that can reinforce the application of policies and laws.
7. Deepen the knowledge on the history of corruption, the mafias, and other criminal organizations, and disseminate the results of such studies through various means of communication.
8. Deepen the relationship existing between corruption and social injustice.
9. Give voice to the victims and spread their stories.
10. Deepen and enhance the relationship existing between history, beauty, art and justice, promoting initiatives in this regard.

11. Create an open discussion forum following several channels (web, publishing, media, and arts) and promote a position on social media: *Michelangelo for Justice* on Facebook/Twitter/YouTube/ Instagram.
12. Outline educational and informative proposals.
13. Define a political vision in relation to the idea of democracy, secularism (laity), social justice, to promote integral human development.
14. Define the role of the Church and lay people against corruption, the mafias, and organized crime.
15. Identify and make known best practices.
16. Identify new subjects that can enrich participation in the *Consultation Group* by following the plurality of careers, sensitivities, and geographical areas.
17. Locate businesses, adequate institutions, and advocates for the economic development of the activities of the *Consultation Group*.
18. Adopt publishing initiatives, meetings, debates, and art events; promote actions on the mass media and social networks; make documentaries and e-magazines; promote actions in schools, universities, social organizations, in prisons, in charitable and educational organizations.
19. According to the Statute of the Dicastery, identify governmental and non-governmental institutions, associations and groups with which to join the network, cooperating and determining common agreements.
20. Gather texts, documents, books and audio-visual material, encouraging the exchange of information to decide shared initiatives.
21. Investigate further the possibility of spreading at a global level – through Bishops’ Conferences and local Churches – the excommunication of members of the mafia and similar criminal organizations. Also, further explore the issue of excommunication for corruption.

**TWENTY-THREE CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES
WERE KILLED IN THE WORLD IN 2017
End of the Year Statement**

Fides News Service

Twenty-three Catholic missionaries were killed in the world in 2017: 13 priests, one Religious, one nun, and eight laymen reported the Vatican Agency *Fides*, on Thursday, December 28, 2017.

For the eighth consecutive year, the highest number was recorded in America, where 11 Catholics on mission were killed (eight priests, one Religious, and two laymen), followed by Africa with 10 victims (four priests, one nun, and five laymen), and by Asia where one priest and one layman were killed.

According to data published by *Fides*, from 2000 to 2016, 424 Catholics on mission were killed in the world, of which five were Bishops.

The Agency explained that “numerous pastoral workers were killed during robbery attempts in contexts of economic and cultural poverty, of moral and environmental degradation, where violence and abuses are regarded as a rule of conduct.”

For *Fides*, this list is “only the tip of the iceberg,” because the list of pastoral workers or of “simple Catholics” who were “assaulted, beaten, robbed, threatened” is much longer, as well as that “of Catholic structures at the service of the whole population, which were assaulted, vandalized or pillaged.”

To the provisional lists drawn up annually by *Fides*, “the long list must always be added of those of whom there has been no news for a long time or whose name is unknown,

who – in the four corners of the planet – suffer and pay with their life for their faith in Jesus Christ.”

The murderers of priests or Religious “are rarely identified or condemned,” deplored *Fides*, which gave the example of the murder of Spanish missionary Vicente Canas, killed in Brazil in 1987. During the first trial in 2006, the accused were acquitted for lack of evidence; a new trial led to the condemnation of the sponsor, sole survivor of the accused.

Fides also explained that its annual list “doesn’t concern only the missionaries *ad gentes*, in the strict sense of the term, but attempts to register all the pastoral workers who died in a violent way, not explicitly “out of hatred for the faith.” “For this reason, we prefer not to use the term ‘martyrs,’ except in its etymological sense of “witnesses,” so as not to anticipate the judgment that the Church might give eventually on some among them.”

CATHOLIC POPULATION GROWING TO 1.3 BILLION

Fides News Service

As per the data released by Agenzia Fides, the information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies, in the run up to World Mission Day on 22 October 2017, the number of Catholics in the world is increasing: almost 1.3 billion, 17.7% of the world's population.

According to figures from the Church's Book of Statistics (data related to 2015) and elaborated by Agenzia Fides, the baptized are 12.5 million more than the previous year (2014). This is one of the data in the Dossier published by Agenzia Fides on the occasion of the 91st World Mission Day, which is celebrated on Sunday, 22 October 2017.

The Dossier offers a wealth of statistical information about the Catholic Church around the world.

A few statistics of interest are the following: Africa has 222 million Catholics, 19.42% of the population. The Americas have 635 million Catholics, 63.6% of the population. Europe has 285 million Catholics, 39.87% of the population. Asia has 141 million Catholic, 3.24% of the population. Figures reported show an increase on all continents, except Europe. Africa saw 7.4 million new Catholics, North and South America 4.8 million, Asia 1.6 million and Oceania 123,000. Europe's Catholic population has decreased by 1.3 million.

Despite the rise, the world percentage of Catholics decreased by 0.05% to 17.72% due to the total world population growing at an even faster rate. Oceania had the highest percentage increase at 0.24%; however, the percentage of people in North and South America identifying as Catholic decreased by 0.08% despite a

rise in the total number. The percentage of Europeans identifying as Catholic decreased by 0.21%.

The Catholic Church runs 216,548 schools in the world, attended by more than 60 million pupils. There are about 118,000 Catholic social and charitable institutes (hospitals, care homes for people with leprosy, orphanages, homes for the elderly) scattered throughout the world.

Prayer Mission

FIVE FINGER PRAYER PLAN

Pope Francis

Using the fingers on your hand, start with the thumb and pray these intentions in this order:

1. For Those Whom We Love: The thumb is closest finger to you. So start praying for those who are closest to you. They are the persons easiest to remember. To pray for our dear ones is a "Sweet Obligation."
2. For Those Who Teach Us: The next finger is the index. Pray for those who teach you, instruct you and heal you. They need the support and wisdom to show direction to others. Always keep them in your prayers.
3. For Those Who Govern Us: The following finger is the tallest. It reminds us of our leaders, the governors and those who have authority. They need God's guidance.
4. For Those Sick and Weak: The fourth finger is the ring finger. Even though it may surprise you, it is our weakest finger. It should remind us to pray for the weakest, the sick or those plagued by problems. They need your prayers.
5. For Oneself: And finally we have our smallest finger, the smallest of all. Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. When you are done praying for the other four groups, you will be able to see your own needs but in the proper perspective, and also you will be able to pray for your own needs in a better way.



Peripheries to the Centre (Release of History of Chanda Mission by Fr. Tomy Chirapurath CMI)



Release of Chavara Pen at Chavara Bhavan, Kainakary, during Kainakary Chavara Cultural Fest 2017



Efforts of SH College, Thevara, to Clean Up Fort Kochi Beach



Efforts to Clean Up Fort Kochi Beach by Students of SH College, Thevara

Mission Meditation 1

JESUS, THE PERFECT HUMAN

Bibin Changemcheril CMI

“I want this hunger for God to remain, but I want the hunger for bread to be satisfied,” says Saint John Paul II. Today by God’s grace we have a well-established Church which seldom faces heresies and schisms. The recent demonstrations like the negative response to the noble agitation by the nurses, construction of highly expensive churches, etc., depict that the institutionalised church lacks a humane face, which is, indeed, a problem in the contemporary times. Scholars make a purposeful division of Jesus Christ as ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ and ‘Christ of faith’. The ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ is a historical preview that brings to light the humane face of Christ. Through his life he conjoined the two separate fundamental commandments into a single one and gave a new interpretation to it. Here we see a transition of meaning, from ‘and’ to ‘that means’. It points out that ‘loving God’ is ‘loving your fellow brother’. Being in love with the Divine is being in love with the humans. Today’s world expects a humane face of the church besides the Divine. It means that Jesus of Nazareth needs to be first exposed before, or, at least, simultaneously with the ‘Christ of faith’. People of God become suspicious when there is an imbalance of these two which are inseparable identities in the Church. When we consider these two elements of faith, ‘today’ needs more of ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ who is an abode of all humane values, the perfect human ever lived on this earth than the ‘Christ of faith’.

The humane face of the Church helps us to associate and find solidarity with Jesus who taught us to be better and refined humans, which, in turn, makes us worthy to address God as our Father. Thus, the time demands an on-going

transformation from the attitude of a 'cat' to the attitude of a 'dog'. A cat thinks: "these people feed me, pet me, and take care of me every now and then; therefore, I must be nothing less than a God." On the contrary, a dog thinks: "these people feed me, pet me, and take care of me every now and then; therefore, these people must be Gods." There is a fundamental discrepancy in the conclusions made by these two. Being a Christian, my call is to possess the attitude of a dog; that is to say, I am the keeper of my brother and sister; my duty is to protect and love unconditionally my fellow brothers and sisters. We often get stuck in the attitude of a 'cat' when we are given power and recognition. 'Today' demands a paradigm shift, a breakthrough for a change of attitude.

This humane face is not only an internal disposition but also an action-oriented life. Someone said 'love is leaving' and this 'leaving' includes the respect paid to the freedom of the other. Individual freedom to make choices is one of the greatest gifts from God. When this freedom is constrained by various powers in and around us, Christians should have the moral power to withstand the evil powers that deny it. When various religious fundamentalist groups deny the fundamental rights and freedom, the followers of Christ have to defend it in a Christian way. They may try to associate Christianity with foreign invaders who ruled India for several centuries. Indeed, this version of Christianity is not the Christianity that the Church upholds. There was a vast difference in their words and deeds. Therefore, let us set a difference by being true Christians in this holy land of India by dynamically and personally integrating the 'Jesus of Nazareth' with the 'Christ of Faith'.

Mission Meditation 2

A DARING STEP TOWARDS THE HEART OF JESUS

Tijo Jose Chiriyankandath CMI
Samanvaya Theology College

The call of Jesus is meant for a mission. Mark the evangelist gives us a clear idea about the call and the mission of Jesus, "And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons" (Mk 3:14-15). Jesus called his disciples to send out for a mission. The mission of Jesus is the same from the beginning onwards, i.e., "to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons." The above mission statement of Jesus doesn't change because there are people who don't know about Christ and his message, and it is the duty of Jesus' disciples to cast out the demons from the people who are in the clutches of various kinds of bondages. Therefore, the call of Jesus and the mission for his disciples have got the same importance all the time.

Recently the *Sunday Shalom* respected the life-story of two eminent personalities, namely, Ellen Kelly, a famous advocate, and Martina Parady, a well-known BBC news reporter from West Belfast, in Northern Ireland. In the month of September they became members of a religious congregation. Just a week ahead of their profession, Sr. Martina told the News reporters about their decision that their call is an important step for an amazing journey. She continued: "I consider it a daring step towards the heart of Jesus." Sr. Ellen told the reporters that they are called to be holy and humble.

The mission that Jesus entrusted the twelve is well depicted in Lk 9:1-6 and Mt 10:5-15. The response to the call

we receive is actualized when we undertake the mission. When Jesus called the disciples, he had a great vision about them. The basic criterion for the discipleship and the first daring step expected from us is to respond to the call of Jesus wholeheartedly. This is what we see from the life of Sr. Ellen and Sr. Martina. They realized their call while they were doing the so-called “white collar jobs” and responded to it by taking “a daring step towards the heart of Jesus.”

The disciples received the call of Jesus and they were sent for the mission. Before sending them out, he gave them many instructions that could be summarized into four: (1) Take nothing, (2) Remain in the house where they enter, until they leave the place, (3) Cure the sick and drive out the devils, and (4) Eat what people give to them.

Take Nothing

Jesus obliged them to trust in the hospitality available in the mission. One, who goes with nothing, goes because he has to have the faith in the providence of God and trust in the people. In order to spread the Gospel unconditionally, one must get away from all possessions. Jesus also has got the same expectation from his disciples. For, material things can create hindrances for the mission of Jesus. In fact, Jesus intends that one must care for his mission and not for oneself.

Remain in the House, Until They Leave the Place

The practice that prevailed during the time of Jesus was that when a stranger arrived in a village, the neighbours, one after another, had to invite him to eat with them. This gesture consumed much time, caused unusual distraction of mind, and in every way counteracted with the success of a spiritual mission. Because of these reasons, Jesus instructed that His disciples must avoid such invitations; they were sent not to be honoured and feasted, but to call the entire humankind to repentance, prepare the way of the Lord, and proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. They

were, therefore, asked by Jesus not to move from place to place in the village until they finished the mission in that village.

Cure the Sick and Drive Out the Devils

During Jesus' times the sick and the demoniacs were excluded from the society and were sent out from the villages. It was the task of the disciples of Jesus to cure them and bring them back to normal life. Jesus sent the disciples to take the side of the outcaste in the society; for, they were entitled to share the Good News with everybody, without any exception.

Eat What People Give to Them

Jesus asked his disciples not to take away bread and money with them. According to the Law of Moses, many aspects of the daily life were divided into two categories of 'clean' and 'unclean', and the practice was prevalent among the Jews during the time of Jesus, which he wanted to break. He wanted to give more importance to the Kingdom of God rather than the meaningless laws that the people followed during those times. False traditions, He knew, can lead people to reject or neglect the Word of God.

The above mentioned four fundamental instructions help the disciples of Jesus Christ to carry out the mission in a meaningful way and announce the Word of God wherever they are sent. The mission is to announce the Kingdom of God by living out the values enshrined in the Gospels. Hence, Jesus wants that the proclamation is done not merely through the words but through genuine human actions that are far more powerful than human words.

The instructions given by Jesus are applicable to those who have decided to follow him radically. Hence, our duty is not to possess anything, but to remain in the house till we complete the mission; indeed, we must take the side of the outcaste in the society and give more importance to the

intimacy with God than the meaningless laws of the society that are capable of distancing us from the love of God.

Mission Meditation 3

TO BE TORCHES LIGHTED WITH CHRIST...

Tampson Chennithala CMI

Dharmaram College, Bangalore

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” The question seems to be ridiculous for Philip because he was bringing good news to Nathaniel that he found Jesus, the long promised Messiah.

Nathaniel was apparently contemptuous. There was nothing in the Old Testament, which foretold that God’s chosen one should come from Nazareth. Nazareth was quite an undistinguished place. For his reaction, Philip was wise and he did not argue. He simply said: “come and see!”

Not many people have ever been argued into Christianity. Often our arguments do more harm than good. The only way to convince people of the supremacy of Christ is to confront them with Christ. Lots of opportunities are kept in front of us. But the question is “Are we making use of them?” Daily we come across with people like students, teachers, friends, relatives, and so on. As a missionary, do we confront them with Jesus Christ? Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta is a woman of love and compassion. She is the saint who knew and experienced Jesus Christ throughout her life. She, however, confronted many people with Christ through her life and mission.

Once a few BJP leaders supported RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat’s controversial statement that conversion to Christianity was the main objective behind Mother Teresa’s service to the poor; former BJP MP and an outstanding cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu seemed to have a different experience, which he had shared during a television show. During the sixth season of reality show ‘Big Boss’, Navjot Singh Sidhu shared the experience of his first meeting with

Mother Teresa at the headquarters of Missionaries of Charity. Recalling the moments, Sidhu said that when he had gone to visit Mother Teresa to offer some donations, she told him that she did not want money, but his time. In this instance, he also mentioned how he was forced to wait outside the hospital due to the smell of decaying bodies, while Mother Teresa was taking care of sick people.

Before we invite others to come to Jesus Christ, we have to know and experience Him ourselves. A true evangelist must personally have met Christ first. Saint Mother Teresa was a true evangelist.

Hence, we must imbibe Philip's haste in bringing the Good News and Nathaniel's eagerness to encounter Jesus. It is said: "One lighted torch serves to light many others." Let us be lighted torches that keep enlightening others with Christ.

NEWS FROM CMI MISSIONS

CMI Education Summit

CMI Education Summit was held at Christ (Deemed to Be University), Kengery Campus, Bangalore, from 30 September to 2 October 2017. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, inaugurated the meeting. Prof. John Varghese, Principal, Saint Stephen's College, Delhi, gave the keynote address on the Mission of Christ. Fr. Sebastian Thekkedathu, Fr. Ignasi Muthu SJ, Fr. Saji Varghese SDB, Mr. Guilherme Vaz, Prof L. M. Prasad and Mrs. Diana Joseph spoke on various relevant themes in the context of the education mission in India. Group discussions and presentations on the best practices in CMI institutions were also held. 150 CMI educators attended the program apart from the Major Superiors, General Council team, and the Rectors of Major Study Houses. A draft declaration on CMI Education Summit (Bangalore) was issued at the close of the summit.

Priestly Ordination in Kenya

The priestly ordination of Fr. Alexander Mutua Muli, seventh CMI priest from Kenya, was held on 1 October 2017 at Mbiuni, Kenya. It was a solemn celebration of Catholic faith as well as CMI mission. All CMI Fathers and brothers, along with many religious sisters and more than 3,500 faithful from different parishes took part in the celebration.

***Yogdan*: Triennial Report on CMI Social Apostolate**

CMI General Department of Social Apostolate, under the leadership of Fr. Varghese Vithayathil, Vicar General and the General Councillor for Social Apostolate, and Fr. Varghese Kokkadan, Secretary to CEVA, has come out with the Report of the Years 2014-2017 with the title *Yogdan*. This

work has compiled data from the CMI Provinces and institutions directly under Generalate.

History of Dharmaram College

The History of Dharmaram College from 1957 to 2017 was released by Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, by giving a copy to Fr. Paul Parakattel, Provincial of Carmel Province, Muvattupuzha, on 28 September 2017 in a function held at Dharmaram College. This work was organized by Fr. Thomas Aykara and Fr. George Edayadiyil, Rectors, and was edited by Fr. Thomas Vithayathil, Fr. Thomas Kalayil, Fr. Francis Thonnippara, Fr. Jose Chennattussery, Fr. Sebastian Edathikavil and Fr. Joseph Kureethara.

CMI World Mission Month

In the context of celebrating World Mission Day in the month of October and as a mark of fraternal and prayerful solidarity with CMI brethren around the world, the whole month of October was dedicated to remember and celebrate the CMI missionaries and CMI missions in each country; a day each was dedicated to pray for the mission in each country, thus covering all CMI missionaries engaged in mission in thirty-one countries.

In-Service Training for the Formators

An In-service Training Programme for the Aspirants' Rectors, Formation Coordinators, and Vocation Promoters was held during 5 October to 8 October 2017 at Chavara Hills, Kakkanad. 30 Aspirants' Rectors and most of the Vocation Promoters and Formation Coordinators attended the Program. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, and Fr. Varghese Vithayathil, Vicar General, gave the orientation talks and Fr. Jose Poovattil, Fr. Biju Koottplackal and Fr. Varghese Pudussery animated the sessions.

CMI Freshers' Meet 2017

CMI Freshers' Meet 2017 was held at Chavara Hills, Kakkannad. 113 Aspirants from eight South Indian provinces came together along with their Rectors and their associates. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, emphasized on the value of CMI fraternity in his welcome address and reminded them that most of the epoch-making initiatives in the history of the Church came from 'young' priests at their youth, Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara being the best example. After the solemn Eucharistic celebration in which all eight Rectors concelebrated with the Prior General, the aspirants offered variety entertainments. It was Fr. Joshy Cheruparambil, the General Formation Coordinator, who organized the In-Service Training Programme and CMI Freshers' Meet 2017 very effectively.

Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara

Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a noteworthy book, which is the first in a series of "Theological Studies on Saint Chavara," written by Fr. Thomas Kochumuttam CMI, was released by Fr. Biju Vadakkal, the Provincial of CMI Saint John's Province, Bijnor.

Chavara Award 2017

On 4 October 2017, Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, presented the Chavara Award 2017, instituted by CMI Cultural Academy, to Mr. T. M. Abraham in a function organized at Chavara Cultural Centre, Kochi. Mr. T. M. Abraham, a well-known playwright and director, took keen interest to publish the *Idayanatakangal* of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Fr. Sebastian Thekkedathu, General Councillor for Education and Media, and Fr. Roby Kannanchira, Director of Chavara Cultural Centre, took the initiative to organize the award event.

Prior General's Visit to Jammu Mission

Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, visited CMI missionaries in Jammu Mission during 9-14 October 2017. During this visit he met with His Excellency Dr. Ivan Pereira, Bishop of Jammu and Kashmir, who expressed his high esteem for the CMI missionaries serving in his diocese. Fr. Prior General visited all the mission stations and attended a meeting of all missionaries in the Jammu Mission in Noushera on 13 October in which he appreciated the missionaries working in highly sensitive areas in the borders and their commitment to the poor and the marginalized, especially for building up the Church in the most tough terrains of Jammu and Kashmir.

Prior General's Visit to Patiala and Jalandhar Mission

Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, visited CMI missionaries in Patiala and Jalandhar in Punjab during 15-20 October 2017. Fr. Prior General met with CMI missionaries in Patiala and held discussion with them on their mission experience and future plans. He spent time with three CMI members working in Jalandhar diocese and visited the centres of their ministry in the Diocese of Jalandhar, namely, the Bishop's House, Major Seminary of the Diocese, and Trinity College as well as the major centres of the Diocese. He met with Bishop Franco Mulackal, who appreciated the contributions of CMIs in his Diocese and requested to spare more CMIs to take up new mission stations.

Kainakary Chavara Chronicle

On 21 October 2017, the "Kainakary Chavara Chronicle" was released by Fr. Antony Elamthottam CMI, General Councillor for Finance, by giving the first copy to Fr. James Madathikandam CMI, former Vice-Postulator of the Cause of Saint Chavara. On the same day, Chavara Bhavan, Kainakary, also opened up an Information-cum-Book Centre along with a Snacks Centre; this new facility was

blessed and inaugurated by Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI, General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry. This new facility is established at the entrance of the Pilgrim Centre in Kainakary so that pilgrims visiting the Birth-Home of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara could be guided and better assisted by a guide throughout the day. Pilgrims could also procure some devotional articles or mementos associated with Saint Chavara from this Book Centre. As there are no other shops or restaurants in the vicinity, the Snacks Centre attached to this Book Centre is a great help to the pilgrims who come to Chavara Bhavan. This new initiative was organized by Fr. Thomas Kallukalam CMI, Director of Chavara Bhavan, and Fr. James Karoor CMI, and the team of collaborators in Kainakary.

CMI Theologians and Philosophers Forum (CMI-PTF)

CMI Philosophers and Theologians Forum organized a two day seminar at Dharmaram College, Bangalore, during 27-28 October 2017. Fr. George Edayadiyil, Rector of Dharmaram College, welcomed the gathering. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, inaugurated the seminar on "CMI Legacy of Contextual Ecclesiastical Education and the Evangelizing Mission of the Church." Fr. Paulachan, President of DVK, spoke on the Legacy of CMI Ecclesiastical Education. Fr. Joseph Pathrapankal offered the keynote address on the theme "Scribes Trained for the Kingdom of God." Bishop Mar Gratian Mundadan CMI and Fr. Sebastian Thekkedathu, General Councillor for Education and Media, felicitated the gathering, followed by 7 panel discussions on various relevant themes associated with ecclesiastical education. Fr. Thomas Aykara spoke on "CMI Legacy of Ecclesiastical Education: Dream for the Future." All the 60 participants who attended the Forum actively participated in the discussion and finally a statement has been approved based on the proceedings of the CMI-PTF. It

was decided to continue the regular activities of the Forum with a committee consisting of President, DVK (Coordinator), Deans, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, DVK, and Associate Deans of Darsana Institute of Philosophy (Wardha) and Samanvaya College of Theology (Bhopal) along with General Councillor for Education and Mass Media and Rector of Dharmaram College as its patrons.

Honouring Veteran Philosophers and Theologians

During the seminar organized by the CMI Philosophers and Theologians Forum, a colourful function was organized to honour Professors Joseph Pathrapankal CMI, Francis Vineeth Vadakethala CMI, Joseph Constantine Manalel CMI and Lucian Legrand MEP, veterans in philosophy and theology. Anjo Puthoor CMI performed a musical concert of high quality. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, honoured the veterans.

150th Anniversary of Chavarul at Thrissur

Devamatha Province, Thrissur, organized a Provincial level celebration of the 150th anniversary of Chavarul at Jerusalem Retreat Centre, Thalore, on 3 November 2017 in the presence of a large gathering of more than ten thousand people. Fr. Antony Njallampuzha CMI spoke on the relevance of the Chavarul in the contemporary times. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, presided over the Holy Eucharist and Fr. Saju Chackalackal, General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry, Fr. Walter Thelappilly, Provincial of Devamatha Province, and members of the province attended the celebration.

Koinonia 2017

Koinonia 2017, an enrichment programme on "Redefining Mission and Ministry," for CMI priests ordained during 1980-1990 was held during 28-30 November 2017 at CMI

Prior General's House, Chavara Hills, Kakkanad. 59 CMI priests participated in the Koinonia 2017. Fr. Varghese Vithayathil, Vicar General, welcomed the gathering and Fr. Paul Achandy, Prior General, gave the inaugural message. Fr. Paul Thelakkat and Fr. Varghese Puthussery gave input sessions to facilitate their reflection and discussion.

Third Anniversary of the Canonization of Saint Chavara

The third anniversary of the Canonization of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara was celebrated with Holy Mass, Novena and special prayers for students on 23 November 2017 at Saint Chavara Pilgrim Centre, Mannanam. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, was the main celebrant. Fr. Saju Chackalackal and Fr. Antony Elamthottam, General Councillors, and Fr. Sebastian Chamathara, Provincial of Saint Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram, joined the concelebration along with many other CMI priests. Fr. Paul Vadakkemury led the prayer session for the students. Around 8000 students from different CMI schools of Saint Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram, joined the celebration, which was organized by Fr. Scaria Ethirett, the Prior and the Director of Chavara Pilgrim Centre, Mannanam.

Platinum Jubilee of Carmel Vidya Bhavan, Pune

The Platinum Jubilee of Carmel Vidya Bhavan, Pune, the Silver Jubilee of Carmel Parish, and the Decennial of Christ College were celebrated during 24-26 November 2017. Mar Thomas Elavanal, Bishop of Kalyan, was the main celebrant for the jubilee Mass. Bishop Thomas Mar Anthonios, preached the homily. Bishop Thomas Dabre, Bishop of Pune, presided over the public meeting. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, Fr. Sebastian Thekkedathu, General Councillor for Education and Media, former Rectors and other members attended the program. The newly constructed building of Christ College, Pune, was blessed by

Bishop Thomas Dabre and inaugurated by Fr. Prior General. Fr. Sebastian Thekkedathu spoke during the occasion in which he appreciated Fr. Joy Puthussery, Rector, Fr. Sony Chundatt, Principal, and Fr. Anish for their hard work and dedication in making the new structure a reality.

Mission Seminar in Jagdalpur

A mission Seminar and honouring of the missionaries of Jagdalpur were held at Nirmal Sadan, Provincial House, Jagdalpur, on 27 November 2017 to mark the silver jubilee of the Episcopal Consecration of Bishop Mar Simon Stock CMI. The silver jubilee programme was jointly celebrated by CMI Nirmal Province and the Eparchy of Jagdalpur. Fr. Saju Chackalackal, General Councillor, presented the keynote address on “*The Missio ad Gentes* of the Syro-Malabar Church and the Necessary Role of Consecrated Communities.” The mission seminar was attended by His Grace Victor Henry Takur, Archbishop of Raipur, Mar Gratian Mundadan CMI, Mar Joseph Kunnath CMI, and many other major superiors of different religious congregations. Fathers from St. Joseph Province, Kottayam, and St. Joseph's Province, Thiruvananthapuram, were also present for the programme. Bishop Simon Stock Palathra presided over the thanksgiving Qurbana, which was concelebrated by Archbishop Victor Henry Takur, Bishops Joseph Kollampampil, Ephrem Nariculam, Gratian Mundadan, and Joseph Kunnath, and Fathers Josey Thamarassery, Joshy Pazhukkathara, Provincials. Mar Ephrem Nariculam preached the homily.

Book on the Launch and Growth of Chanda, the First Syro Malabar Mission

The formal release of *Peripheries to the Centre: Launch and Growth of Chanda, the First Syro Malabar Mission*, authored by Fr. Thomas Chirapurath CMI and edited by Fr. Benny Thettayil CMI, was held at Darsana Institute of Philosophy,

Wardha. Fr. Benny Mukalel CMI, Provincial of Mar Thoma Province, Chanda, presented the first copy of the book to Bishop Mar Ephrem Nariculam, Bishop of Chanda, who, in turn, released it by presenting it to Mar Joseph Kunnath CMI, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Adilabad. This voluminous book, result of about ten years of research and documentation, is spread into 900 pages. Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI, General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry, Fr. Joshy Pazhukkathara CMI, Provincial of CMI Mary Matha Vice-Province, Hyderabad, also attended the ceremony and spoke about the uniqueness of Chanda Mission.

Theological Studies on Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara

A meeting of the authors and collaborators of the proposed series of books on "Theological Studies on Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara" was held at CMI Prior General's House, Chavara Hills, under the auspices of Chavara Central Secretariat (a joint venture of CMI and CMC), during 9-10 December 2017. 45 CMI Fathers and CMC Sisters came together to present their respective projects and to discuss and review them. Fr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General, and Mother Sibi CMC, Superior General, joined the deliberations and contributed to the discussions with their Inaugural Address and Concluding Address, respectively. Fr. Joseph Pathrapankal CMI offered the Keynote Address on "The Prophetic Ministry of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara in the Society during the 19th Century" and Fr. Benny Thettayil CMI, editor-in-chief of *Herald of the East* (Dharmaram Journal of Chavara Studies), offered a session on "Orientations in Theological Research on Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara." Of the total forty-five projects already proposed, plans of thirty projects were presented during these two days' workshop. These project presentations enabled the participants to clarify their positions, enhance

the overall plan, and to understand the perspectives adopted by other authors; thus, the whole workshop was mutually beneficial. As the scope of the “Theological Publications on Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara” was better clarified, it was also proposed that if anyone other than the current group of authors wants to join the project to cover areas that have not yet been considered, they are invited to contact the general editor of the series, namely, Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI.

New CMI Members

76 CMI novices made their first profession On 8 December 2017. Fr. Varghese Vithayathil, Vicar General, presided over the ceremony in Vinayalaya, Jagdalpur. Fr. Sebastian Thekkedathu, General Councillor, was the main celebrant for the profession of vows in Kenya.

CMI Response to Ockhi Cyclone

CMI Department of Social Apostolate from different provinces have got involved in extending support the people affected by ‘Ockhi Cyclone’. Saint Joseph’s Province, Thiruvananthapuram, and Sacred Heart Province, Kochi, have got involved in providing food and in offering immediate support to repair damaged houses and in meeting other needs. Saint Joseph Province, Kottayam, has already handed over a cheque of Rs. 1,000,000 to Archbishop Soosai Pakiam, Archbishop of Thiruvananthapuram. General Social Apostolate Department reached out to the affected people through CEVA. All CMI houses and institutions were invited to collaborate with CEVA or to join hands with other provincial social apostolate departments.

Chavara Workshop

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will be held in the coming months to offer them technical support and to promote the completion of the projects as per the schedule.

**CHAVARA EDU-PARK
FOR NEW-GEN LEARNING
The Tallest Statue of Saint Chavara
at Chavara Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore**

The majestic traditionally styled charming Jubilee Gate of Chavara Vidya Bhavan is the Door of Grace as one can see breath-taking enormous statue of Saint Chavara who stands as an eloquent testimony to the field of education by bringing down in the lives of children of the deprived class of the society. His eyes speak volume expressing love, mercy, and kindness.

The mammoth statue alone is 27 feet high including the basement of 5 feet. It stands with splendour to greet children who enter the school campus with morning sun on their faces. They pass through the eye-catching Chavara Edu-Park consisting of seven exquisite panels. The first panel displays Lord Jesus Christ with children and intellectuals explaining true wisdom coming from God; when knowledge is understood and applied, education gets manifested. The second panel portrays children hanging on trees indicating that creative innovative activity-based education turns learning delightful and enjoyable to every Chavarite. The third panel exhibits a boy looking through a lens, which symbolizes every child who can play a pivotal role in exploring the wider world and change the contemporary society as a peaceful place to live in. The fourth panel unfolds the great natural leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Abdul Kalam, Mother Theresa, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who were good communicators and touched the hearts of the masses leading them to the path of honesty, morality, noble virtues and integrity. The fifth panel presents a girl wondering at

the marvel of nature and she admires and understands the sounds and silence of nature as she hears the voice of God and, thus, pays obeisance to nature. The sixth panel poses a student touching the globe with his forefinger symbolizing that every Chavarite will keep his chin up and work with new powers and strength to make path-breaking scientific inventions and unravel the mysteries of nature, the beautiful art of God. The seventh panel demonstrates how good books bring wisdom to the lives of children and make them spiritually and intellectually upright citizens of the world.

Walking through the pathway of the Edu-Park, one can observe Chavara Tree of Knowledge where one can find alphabets and numbers hanging from the branches. The young kids will have fun in learning by pointing at them. The ant, for example, imparts the message that every child will learn the lesson of hard work and perseverance. The well-known cartoon character Mowgli shows that every Chavarite will learn to be friendly with others.

Thus, Chavara Edu-Park unlocks the potential skills of every child and boosts his or her confidence to think different and to go ahead breaking free from the shackles of evil forces.

Book Notice

EMPOWERING MISSION
Learning from the Book of Life

Author: Jacob Peenikaparambil CMI; Publisher: Universal Solidarity Movement, Indore; Number of Pages: 220; Price: Rs. 250.

As the subtitle of the book indicates, it contains lessons the author has learned and the insights he gained while reflecting on events, individuals, and life situations. The book has two parts: the first part consists of twenty themes or issues which are his favourites and the second part includes a collection of articles which are very much related to the twenty themes dealt within the first part.

Writes Dr. Kochurani Abraham: "Anyone who has known Jacob personally would attest that he is a man with a strong passion for life, someone who pushes the boundaries of thought and action to make religious commitment a passionate affair. Through the cutting edge convictions that have emerged from his critical reflections on the different dimensions of religious life today, he can assert with confidence that 'in the absence of critical thinking, religious life may degenerate into slavery.'

"Jacob Peenickaparambil's work *Empowering Mission: Learning from the Book of Life* is simple and down to earth, yet contains profound insights. Certainly, this book is a source of inspiration to many religious women and men and for others who have a passion to create a world founded on justice, truth, and liberation. May this work enable its readers to learn many lessons from the book of their own lives and share them with others that the world may become a better place for all beings!"

The price of the book is Rs. 250/- including postage. Those who are interested in purchasing the book may

kindly place order with USM, using the Email address: usmindore93@gmail.com along with transferring the cost of the number of books to be purchased to the bank account of Dharama Bharati Service Society, the details of which are as follows:

Account Holder: Dharma Bharathi Service Society,
Indore

Bank: Bank of India, Saket Nagar Branch, (Khajrana),
Indore

Bank Account No: 880210100020664

IFSC CODE: BKID0008802

While placing order for books please give full postal address with pin code and contact mobile phone number.

Email: usmindore93@gmail.com; jacobpt48@gmail.com

Phone: 0731-4072057; 07869239496; 09826136577

CHAVARA PEN

A Gift Item from Chavara Bhavan, Kainakary

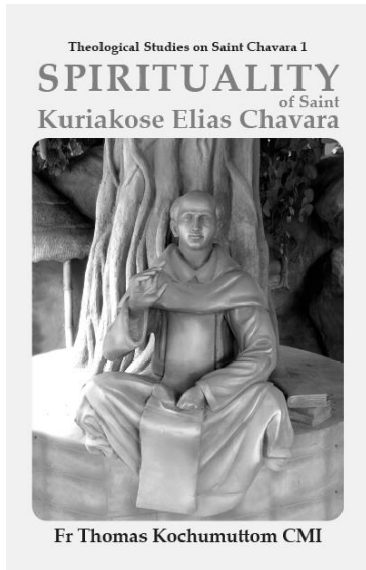
Chavara Bhavan, Kainakary, has come up with an eco-friendly gift item in the form of a ball-pen, each pen costing Rupees ten only.

This attempt is praiseworthy as it is a hand-made item prepared by a small group of women volunteers, who make use of old newspapers to prepare the pen. So, following the invitation of Pope Francis to go “for a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations” (*Laudato si* 22), Chavara Bhavan has come up with a meaningful and practically useful item to be presented to our family members, friends, and students in our educational institutions. This pen, which is an attempt to minimize the use of plastic, deserves public appreciation and support from all those Chavara devotees who appreciate an eco-friendly approach.

Chavara Pens are available in four different colours (black, blue, red, and green) and can be procured from the Book Centre at Chavara Bhavan, Kainakary. Bulk orders (for five hundred or more) will receive a ten per cent reduction on the cover price.

For more detailed information, you may contact Fr. Thomas Kallukalam CMI, Director, Chavara Bhavan, Kainakary (mobile: 78 29 792320 or 99 47 500238).

Saint Chavara Library



Thomas Kochumuttom,
*Spirituality of Saint
Kuriakose Elias
Chavara*

Published by Chavara
Central Secretariat
(Kochi) and Dharmaram
Publications (Bangalore),
2017.

Pages: xx + 416 (with
Index); Hardbound
Price: Rs. 360 (including
Postage).

Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara is a sequel to Fr. Thomas Kochumuttom's earlier work, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara* (2014). While the latter deals with the life story of Saint Chavara, the present one concentrates on his spirituality. In addition to looking at Saint Chavara's life and undertakings from a spiritual point of view, it brings in a lot of fresh data that have bearing on his spirituality. It also covers the Saint's teachings on various theological issues and spiritual life. The points of discussion are well substantiated with original documents and authentic testimonies. While quoting the relevant texts from Saint Chavara's writings, Kochumuttom makes his own translation that sets an example of accurate and lucid English rendering of such works. The presentation is scientific but simple so as to elicit interest among both the academic and the lay sections of readers.

To Order Copies: Contact Chavara Central Secretariat (9544907061) or Dharmaram Publications (080-41116137)

Appeal

**CONTRIBUTIONS SOLICITED FOR
FREE BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN LITERATURE
DISTRIBUTION**

Financial contributions are solicited from the readers of the *CMIssion* and the well-wishers of the CMI Congregation, including the ACMI members, to extend a supporting hand to the CMI Department of Evangelisation and Pastoral Ministry to promote the free distribution of the Bible (especially the New Testament) and some basic Christian literature.

Title of the Account: General Department of
Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry

Account Number: 0313053000000182

Name of the Bank: South Indian Bank

IFSC Code: SIBL0000313

Purpose of the Bank Transfer: "CMI Christian Literature
Distribution"

“CMI GLOBAL” APP

CMI Mobile Application for Android and Apple Phones



Mobile application offering updated information related to CMI Congregation and Syro-Malabar liturgical readings is available on Google Play Store (Android) as well as on App Store (iOS/Apple). Information offered on the 'CMI Global' include the following: (1) On the CMI Congregation: Brief History, CMI at a Glance, Daily Heavenly CMIs, Contact Details of Various Institutions, etc. (2) Liturgical Support: Syro-Malabar liturgical readings along with the daily saints

Coming Soon: Reminders (such as special CMI days like feasts and observances, Liturgical Feasts, feasts and birthdays of CMI members, Heavenly CMIs, etc.

Coming Soon: Work is also in progress to make the Liturgy of Hours (Canonical Prayers) by Father Abel CMI (in Malayalam) available on the 'CMI Global'.

All CMI members (and anyone interested in the ministries of the CMI Congregation) are invited to install "CMI Global" (a free mobile app) and to use it on the go.



Baptism of 36 Filipinos by Fr. Paulson Thalithath during the Christmas Season



An Empowerment Get-Together of Parish Youth in Ecuador