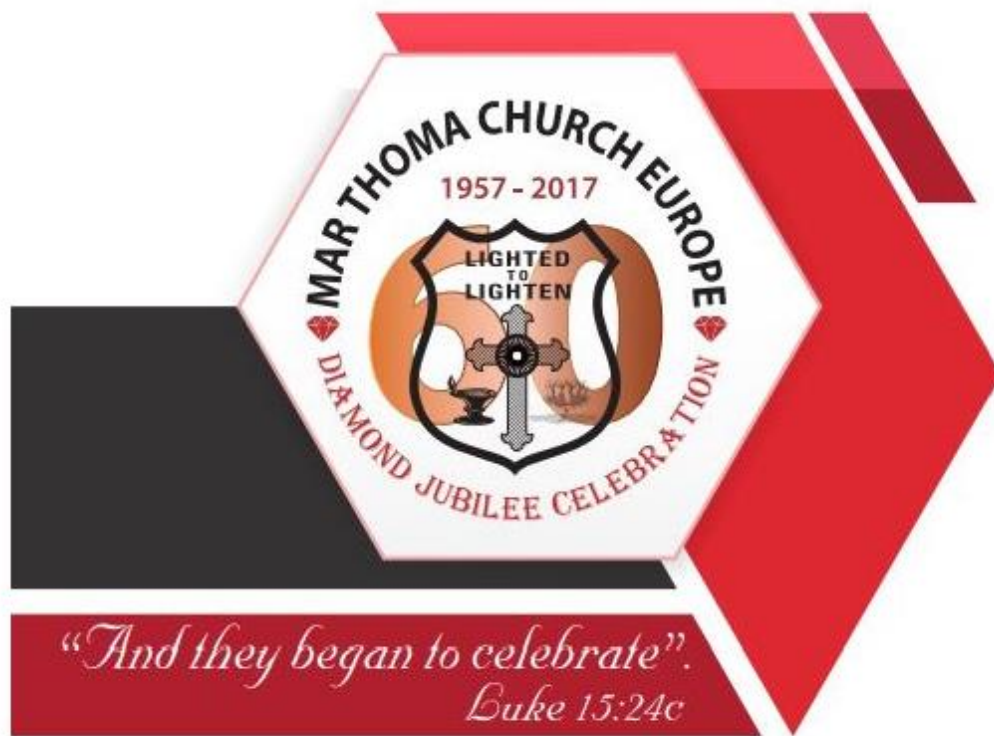




The Mar Thoma

ECHO

UK & EUROPE 2017
DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE



A Publication of the Council of Mar Thoma Parishes in Europe



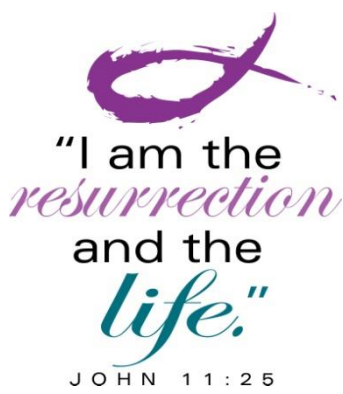


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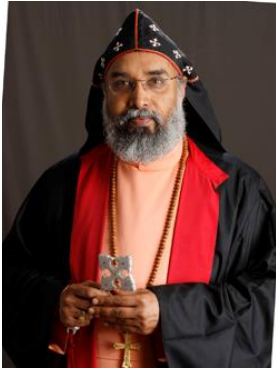
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Message from Diocesan Episcopa



Dearly beloved in Christ,

Let us thank God for making the ECHO a medium to connect the Diaspora Mar Thoma community to the wider world and to understand the current trends in Christian mission and ministry. The living conditions at various countries become much more complex these days. Christian community is either targeted or made responsible in different ways, which open our eyes to the realities of life. In many places we see the ethnic communities lose its identity in totality by integrating with the given socio-cultural life situations. However, in many nations the good values and traditions of the ethnic groups are kept, while assimilating to the new settings as the immigrant community. While the Mar Thoma parishes in UK and Europe will be celebrating its Diamond Jubilee in August along with the Family Conference, a soul searching exercise can help to know our strength and shortcomings, as a community living in the region for the last many years.

Often the question is asked, is the church “open” enough instead of a “closed” ethnic church? As a worshipping community, the primary Christian responsibility is spreading

the Word, bringing others to Christ and witnessing the Lord or being a disciple of Christ. Here, as a faith community church becomes an instrument in shaping the people and community at large on the basis of the Gospel and the Kingdom values. I am sure that the faith community will be geared up to take such responsibilities where ever they are, and bring glory to God through our life and witness.

It is our prayers that may God continue to strengthen us to carry on the task entrusted to us by our Lord, to be in the world, and make everyone as His disciples, in the name of the Triune God.

With warm regards,
Isaac Mar Philoxenos



Editorial

Diamond Jubilee of the Mar Thoma Community in Europe

We see Israel's Jubilee laws and traditions in Leviticus chapter 25. This was set out to regularise and sanctify Israel's economic and social life. It operated within the context of Israel's special privileged position with God and relationship. God no longer administers redemption through a single elected or chosen political state. We must therefore view the jubilee from our current vantage point of liberation and freedom in Christ.

This year has already seen a number of jubilee functions. But its most lasting memorial would be the rebirth of an energetic, generous Mar Thoma Community with dedication to the common good and the rebirth of a recognition that we live less than human lives if we think just of our own individual good. Let us listen for a moment to St Paul. 'We have gifts that differ according to the grace given us - the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. Outdo one another in showing honour, extend hospitality to strangers, rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, live in harmony with one another; take thought for what is noble in the sight of all'. Dedication to the health and well-being of a community is all this and more. May we be given the grace to rediscover this as we give thanks sixty years of our life in Europe.

Jubilee is a time for reflections and stock taking. Psalmist helps us here to raise a

question for us: "How can I repay the Lord for all His gifts to me?" (Pslams116:12).



We know the story of ten lepers who received blessings from Jesus, but only one returned to give thanks to our Lord. Thanksgiving means expressing our indebtedness for abundant blessings that we receive every second in our lives. The source of that blessing is the salvation that we received through the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. This miracle of salvation is with us at all times and helps us to remain grateful to God for all His actions on our behalf. How can we give thanks to God for all his benefits towards us? Giving thanks to God is not reading few thanksgiving Psalms in our Sunday worship, it is not what we say in our revival meetings, and it may not be even what we do. Giving thanks to God is about who we are in our heart, in our whole being; that is where giving thanks begins. The Diamond Jubilee is an occasion for us to celebrate with grateful hearts to our Lord for His infinite mercies during the past sixty years and His continued blessings today and tomorrow.

'Celebrating Life in the Way of Christ' is the theme of the 35th family conference in connection with the Diamond Jubilee.

Understanding 'the way of Christ' and walking with Jesus is important for all of us. Jesus emphatically said, "I am the way, the life and the truth" (John 14: 6). Therefore, for us as Christians, we have so much to celebrate for the good news of the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. We are called to celebrate this good news of the kingdom of God at every God-given moment of our lives. Therefore, the 35th family conference is indeed a celebratory event for our spiritual and physical existence in this world.



Under the theme of the conference we will be looking at the factors for celebrating life. We celebrate life because we are children of God and we have the understanding and the picture of an amazing Father in the parable of the 'Prodigal Son'. 'Going away and coming back' is a recurring theme in the Bible, and celebration is part of the homecoming. In the above parable Jesus illustrates, in an allegorical way, the joy of the penitent sinner and of God, ending in a celebration. Jesus also shows us the attitude of the unforgiving elder brother who is incapable of joining in the celebration of the homecoming of his brother.

We do not have to stretch our imagination too far to see the high-minded attitudes of people who divide our parishes and churches all over the world. However, the invitation to the celebration is always there with overflowing unconditional love of God and His amazing grace. We celebrate life by living God's love; we live God's love with generosity, joy, compassion and courage. Living the love of God should make a difference to those around us, meeting their practical and hidden needs. What are the places and situations where Christian love needs to be put into practice for the sake of the World? It could be in the life of person with depression or mental illness who feels isolated and unloved; it could be a child struggling with school examinations and grades. It could be in our parishes divided along power politics and factionalism; it could be in the inequalities of the world with abundance of wealth and luxurious living in the midst of poverty and starvation; and it could be living without a care and concern for the earth's fragile echo system. We have a tendency to blame others for all the above maladies, but we have to take ownership of the above fault-lines. Let us pay attention to the world around us. Perhaps we, or people we know, are experiencing terrible tragedies like the recent killings in Manchester, London and the disastrous fire of the Grenfell Tower. Certainly, there are places all over the world that are ravaged by war, privation, oppression or violence. Let us become more aware of the pain of our world.

As the second oldest Diaspora Mar Thoma community in the world, we have so much to thank God for. Diamond Jubilee is an opportunity to reflect about our past and to collectively look forward to challenges facing

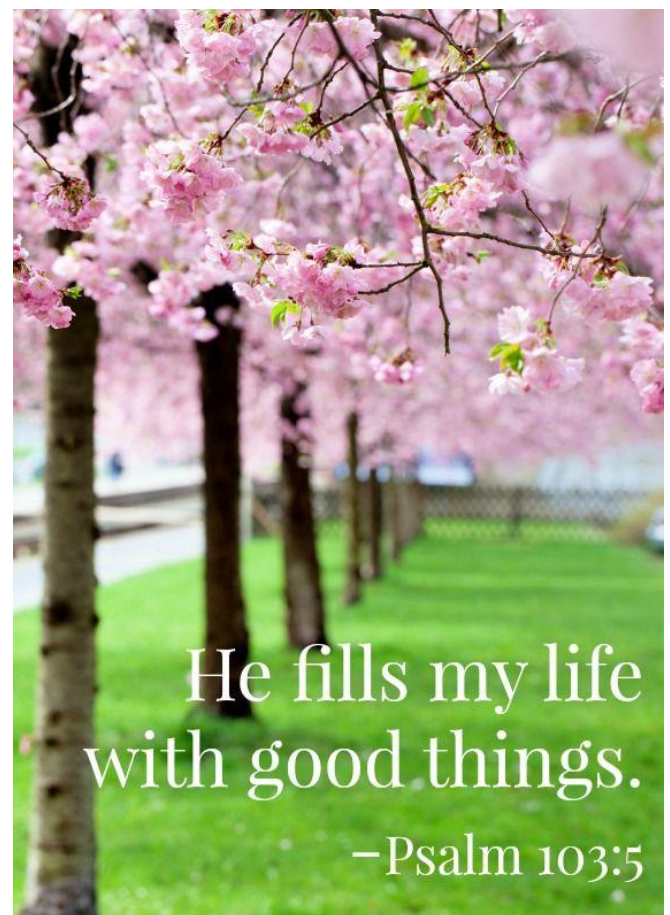
our community and mission for our future in the UK and wider Europe. Thanksgiving means expressing our indebtedness for abundant blessings that we receive every second of our lives. The source of that blessing is the salvation we received through the cross and resurrection of our Lord. This thanksgiving has two important components: firstly, it is a personal commitment to God and secondly it is a public declaration of our faithfulness to God, a binding declaration of loyalty to His kingship and the Kingdom. Both these elements are beautifully combined in our family conference and the valedictory function of the Diamond Jubilee.

In Europe our loyalties are imprisoned within our parish boundaries; the time has come for us to think as one united Mar Thoma Community in Europe and dedicate ourselves individually and collectively for the Common good of the whole community, we should not think ourselves just as members of a particular parish or congregation, but we should consider ourselves as members of the Mar Thoma Community in Europe. Let this be the single most important achievement of the Diamond Jubilee. We also should be mindful in integrating with host communities and get involved in local mission activities. It is our hope that the 'Council of the Mar Thoma Parishes (COMPE)' would help us in achieving this most important aspect of our life in the UK and Europe. The Mar Thoma ECHO is our communication channel and it is important that all of us should get involved in helping this publication to grow and blossom. A community without communication is a dead community. It is up to all of us to keep it alive.

The Diamond Jubilee is an amazing occasion for us to celebrate with grateful hearts to our Lord for the infinite mercies during the past sixty years and His continued blessings. Therefore, it is with joy in our hearts we invite all the members of the Mar Thoma Church in Europe to join us in these celebrations. May God continue to bless us.

Editorial Board

July 2017



Celebrating life in the way of Christ

Revd Dr. Prakash K. George*



Talk I

God is the author and sustainer of life. Human life is a gift from God and like any other gift it can be misused and spoiled. Life is both a task and a mystery: a task that needs nurture, care and love, and a mystery that we cannot fully comprehend, both in its micro and macro level (Ps 139: 19).

The Bible underscores the worth of human beings. Humans are formed from dust, having the very breath and image of God. In Psalm 8, the worth of humans is discussed—on one hand humans are insignificant but on the other, humans have a special place and role in creation. The value and worth of life is assessed in relation to God's glory and majesty.

The vantage point from which we view life is significant; the place, space, time, relationships all matter. When we view life with Christ our perceptive and receptive abilities gets transformed. We realize that life is to be respected, valued, loved, and to be cared for. There is always a temptation to live life without God. In Genesis chapter 3, the temptation was to see the world and the life apart from God (delight, taste, knowledge). It was an invitation to be autonomous. After the temptation, their perceptions and receptive faculties change.

Jesus was also tempted to view life apart from the divine purpose (Luke 4). It was an invitation by Satan to re-vision Jesus' life and ministry. The temptation was to fill up, to furnish, and to celebrate the emptiness of the forty days. Jesus had to choose between the way of the cross and the path of power and worldly glory. Jesus celebrated life by doing the Father's will in his life. Jesus celebrated his life by living in proximity with his Father, showing great familiarity to the word of God, and being close with people and nature.

Often, we are concerned about what others think about us and adjust our life accordingly. We spend time and take effort to impress others. There is often a great gulf between what we are and what we appear before others. But being with God can transform these perceptions. God affirms the intrinsic worth of all his beings and Christian life begins with this assurance of acceptance by God.

Your blessings are
not to
impress others
but to
bless others.

Celebrating life in the way of Christ is a call to be with him and for him on the way of the cross. It is a way of self-denial, both life-affirming and life-giving. It is also a call to experience life, life in abundance. It is an invitation to share the joy, pain and passion of Christ. In a world where value and respect for life is decreasing, this theme invites us to walk with Jesus so that we may see the world through the eyes of Jesus Christ. It is a call to see, hear and smell the reality around us as

God's gift; to make life more sacrificial and sacramental.

Main Talk II

Celebration of life is a celebration of relationships. Even God is relationship. Trinity underlines this concept. Our God is not a mono God. Broken relationships in all realms of life hinder the celebration of life. The Bible affirms relationships. Creation and the Sabbath are all an affirmation and celebration of life in relationships. Genesis 3-11 narrates the story of broken relationships – between God and human, human and human, and human and nature. The whole created world is God's oikos and all are related to one another, thereby affirming 'kinship'. One is related to the other and one is responsible for the other. In an individualized society this is often considered a burden, but the biblical vision is that you are related to the other. True celebration of life can only happen in community life. We are called to edify each other, carry each other's burdens and compensate for each other. The other is not an incarnation of God but by his or her face God is revealed to us (Gen.33: 11; Mathew 25:25fl.). The other is not a threat but an extension of our own being.

Most of the crises experienced in human life is brought on purposefully. The root problems are most often greed, selfishness and apathy. Celebration of life in the way of Christ is to continue Jesus' mission of bonding—bonding work of creating loving and meaningful relationship among people. We are called to build authentic relationships that are vital for meaningful collective human existence.



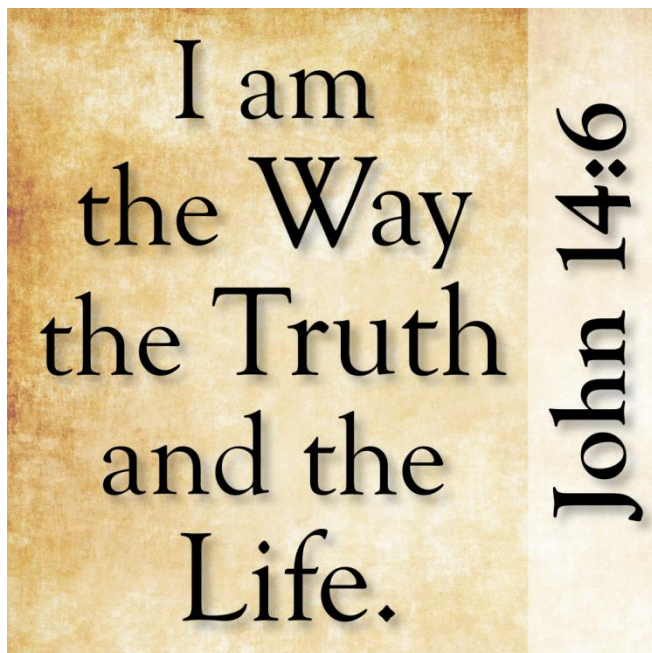
Jesus came to this world to restore all broken relationships and he calls us to celebrate life in relationship with him. We can either abide with him or abandon him. Abandoning or running away from Christ means running away from commitments and responsibilities. The current market philosophy is 'how to use others for our benefit' while for one who follows Jesus the philosophy of life is 'how we can be useful to others'. Celebrating life is embracing and receiving the other with his or her limitations (Luke 15:11-32) and showing the love of Jesus in all our relationships.

* Revd Dr. Prakash K. George is the principal of the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

A Christian worldview in St. John's Gospel

Dr. Zac Varghese, Sinai MTC

The theme of the 35th Mar Thoma Family Conference of the UK and Europe is 'Celebrating Life in the Way of Christ. The Chinese Philosopher, Lao-tzu, in 5th century BCE wrote: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." The Christian worldview is simply that our first step in our spiritual journey should be with Jesus. St. Thomas was absolutely straightforward and courageous in telling Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" To this Jesus replied: "**I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me**" (John 14:5-6). Jesus is the way, the path and the gate for our salvation and our life in the Kingdom of God.



St. John's Gospel is a very special Gospel. He has not borrowed stories from other sources like the first three Gospels and hence it is not synoptic. It is also the last of the four gospels written around 60 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. We also know that John was Jesus' most beloved disciple, and from the cross Jesus entrusted His mother to the care of John. It is a mystical Gospel; John

is telling the story of Jesus in a different way, there is a much deeper story behind the story. Professor Ravi Ravindra, a Professor of Physics in the University of Halifax, Canada, compared this Gospel to Bhagavad Gita in his book: 'The Yoga of the Christ.'

There are seven 'I am' statements in St. John's Gospel. Through these statements Jesus is telling us who he is. It is His bio data, it is about his identity. The Christian theology is centred on this, and it is indeed a Christian worldview: A worldview allows us to understand society, the world, and our place in it. And it could help us to make critical decisions which will shape our present and the future. It is important to appreciate the statement of Anslem of Canterbury, a 12th century Archbishop of Canterbury, before we discuss this: "**I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.**"

The Belgian philosopher Leo Apostle has coined the term 'worldview' and devoted his life to the development of an integrated secular worldview. He assembled scholars from various disciplines to write an integrated worldview covering theology, sociology, biology, theoretical physics and psychiatry. It is a framework that ties everything together.

A Christian worldview tells us three things:

1. Where did we come from, and why are we here?
2. What is wrong with the world?
3. How can we fix it?

A Christian worldview, answers these three questions.

Where did we come from? As we read in Genesis, we are God's creation, designed to govern and take care of this world and have fellowship with God. It is all about

stewardship, authority and responsibility towards the created world.

What is wrong with the world? We sinned against God because of our self-centeredness and the subjected the whole world to a curse. The fall and the flood and so forth as we read in the Genesis are part of this curse.

**“Father, I’m broken.
It hurts.”**

*Come My child. Give me the broken pieces.
I will fix it for you. Just trust Me. I don't want to
see you hurt like this. I love you so much...*

- God♥

How can we fix it? We cannot, but God can and He will. God has a master plan for fixing it through Jesus, because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. God himself has redeemed the world through the sacrifice of his son and will one day restore creation to its former perfect state. The Old Testament stories reveal this curse on mankind and God's covenants of blessings through Abraham, patriarchs, Moses and others.

A Christian world view leads us to believe in moral absolutes, miracles, human dignity, human freedom and the possibility of redemption.

It is important to remember that a Christian world view is comprehensive. It affects every area of life, money, marriage, family life, social relationships, leisure, work and politics. True Christianity as explained in the Bible is a worldview on how to live. The Bible never distinguishes between a religious and secular life. For us, **the Christian life is the only true life there is**. Therefore, we should work hard and pray intensely for making secular sacred. Jesus proclaimed himself that He is the way, the truth and the life. In doing so Jesus' life and ministry is indeed our

worldview. The other I am statements in St. John's Gospel is also part of this world view. It is a transformation from fragmentation into integration

How did this worldview come into the life of Jesus?

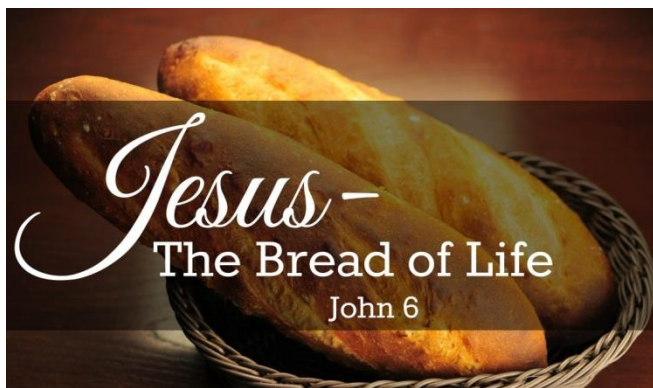
Jesus began His life as a baby of Mary at Bethlehem with an individual human conscience. He then entered into the collective conscience of Judaism through His circumcision and other religious observances. From There Jesus moved into the Universal conscience as the son of God at His baptism, when he heard, 'you are the son of God' (Luke 3: 21-122). But the statement of Jesus: 'I am the way, the truth and the life' at the third level of development of His God-centred, Father-centred conscience. Here we see the fusion of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. We see these developments in four stages in Jesus' life:

1. Birth as a human baby- Individual conscience
2. On the day of His circumcision Jesus entered into the collective conscience of the Judaism.
3. During His baptism, Jesus came out of the womb of Jewish religion and entered into the realisation of the Universal Fatherhood of God- the development of a Universal conscience.
4. It is during His ministry Jesus entered into the fourth stage and realised that Father God and Jesus are one, which made him say to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth and the life." It is with this divine conscience He inaugurated the Kingdom of God and established kingdom values. It was indeed the fulfilment of the Prophecy in Isaiah 61: 1 and Luke 4: 18-19: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has

sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of the sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of Lord's favour." With this background let us briefly and quickly scan through the seven 'I am' statements.

1. The Bread of Life

Then Jesus declared, in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."



Jesus had recently fed the 5000. Incredibly some were still asking for a miraculous sign to help them believe He was who He claimed to be. Here we could think about the manna Israelites forefathers had eaten in the wilderness, I believe Jesus was saying the manna was meant to be a model of the Messiah. Whoever accepts Jesus will never again know spiritual hunger.

As for our thirst, remember how Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that the water He offered would cure her thirst forever. Pointing to Jacob's well, before which they were standing, He said, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14).

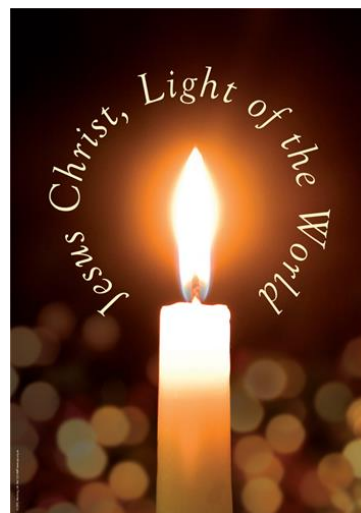
Jesus also said in John 7 vs 37-39 "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By

this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

The Psalmist wrote, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God". (Psalm 42:1). In Jesus our spiritual hunger is satisfied and our spiritual thirst is quenched. Once we have the Holy Spirit, our search for spiritual fulfilment comes to an end, and we never need any other sustenance. The God shaped hole in our heart is finally filled with Jesus.

2. The Light of the World

When Jesus spoke to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)



Literally this means that those who join Jesus as one of His followers will not be ignorant of spiritual matters but will have the power of understanding especially of the spiritual truth that brings eternal life.

When we take the time to learn and apply these truths in faith we discover that the old adage is true. Whatever the spiritual question, Jesus is the answer. St. Paul wrote to Philipians: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. . . And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:4-7, 19).

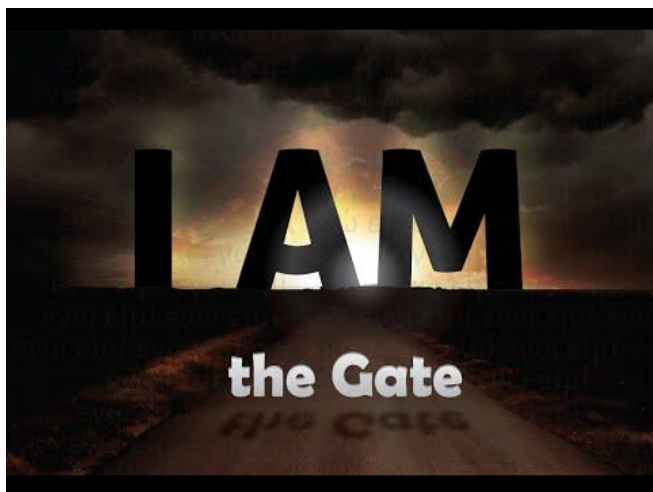
Do we carry a burden of guilt because of our sins?

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9). Whatever the spiritual question, Jesus is the answer.

It is interesting to note that Gautama Buddha who lived in the middle of 5th century BCE also said the following about light: “May I become the source of unlimited Light, freeing and radiating the treasures of my wisdom and virtue, enlightening all lands and emancipating all suffering people. . . The Buddha of infinite Light and boundless life is ever living and ever radiating his truth. In his pure land there is no suffering and no darkness, and every hour is passed in joy; therefore, it is called the land of Bliss. . . Make yourself a light. Rely upon yourself; do not depend on anyone else. Make my teaching your light. Rely upon them: do not depend upon any other teaching.” One of the universal prayers has the following lines: “Lead us from ignorance to truth; from darkness to light and death to eternity.”

3. The Gate

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. (John 10:9)



This is a reference to the Kingdom and recalls the words of **Psalm 23:2**, “*He makes me lie down in green pasture.*” Salvation is found

through Jesus, He is the gate to the Kingdom, and no one can enter except through Him (**John 3:3, John 14:6**). Having entered through Him we will have the freedom to come and go as we please, live in a state of peace in the midst of plenty. Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (**Psalm 23:6**).

4. The Good Shepherd

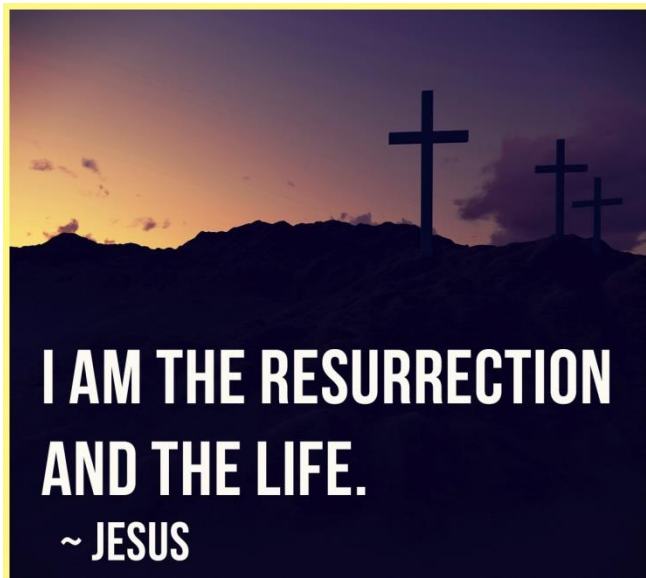
“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)



No one expects sheep to be responsible for them. Therefore, owners of herds hire shepherds for that purpose. A shepherd’s job is to accept responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of his flock. Most shepherds think that their life is worth more than that of a sheep. A few would be willing to risk their lives to protect their sheep, but our Shepherd knowingly and willingly died to save us, because there was no other way. Now the gatekeepers are poachers. We should be careful of the religious gatekeepers and some of them are poachers too.

5. The Resurrection and the Life

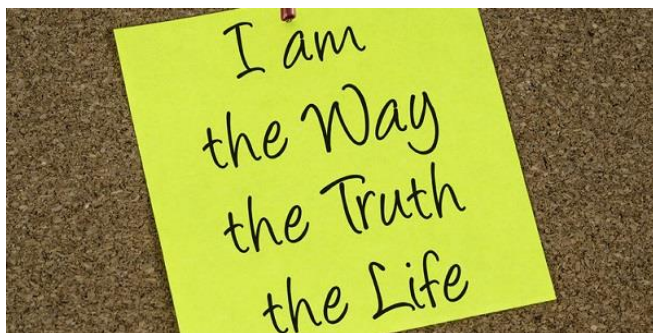
Jesus said to Martha on Lazarus death, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*” (**John 11:25-26**)



This is an amazing statement. The Lord had already said that whoever believes in Him would not perish but would have eternal life (John 3:16). Here he provided more detail, saying that even though a believer experiences physical death, he will still have life. He was referring to the resurrection of those who die in faith. Jesus was talking about that at the end of time, one generation who will be alive when He comes for the Church, and will receive eternal life without dying first. And once again the Lord confirmed that the single qualification for eternal life is to believe that His death paid the entire price for our sins.

6. The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

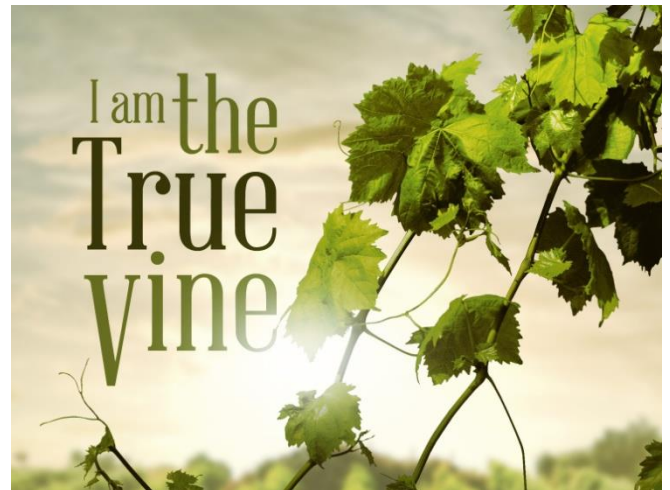


There is no other way into the presence of God than by accepting the Lord's death as payment in full for our sins. As Peter said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no

other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) Jesus is the only remedy God has provided for man's sin problem. He is the only way to eternal life. This is the truth of God's Word.

7. The Vine

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)



It's important to understand that salvation is a fruit bearing event, so in this statement Jesus was talking about our life after we're saved. Of course a non-believer may not bear fruit, and even after we are saved, believers are not automatically fruitful. But if we yield our life to Him, and respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit He sent to guide us we can bear much fruit, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22). Fruitfulness is not a matter of success or failure from a worldly stand point. It's a matter of motive and commitment. It is by the grace of God we become fruitful.

In summary, let's put each of these seven "I am" statements together.

I am the bread Statement tells us that Jesus is the one who spiritually sustains us.

In I am the light statement we learn that through Him we gain spiritual understanding and wisdom for living.

In the I am the gate Statement Jesus explains that He has given us free and unlimited access to His Kingdom.

In the good shepherd Statement Jesus shows us how He became a good shepherd by paying our entrance fee with His life

In the resurrection and life statement we learn that whether we die before His second Coming or are taken live in it, He has guaranteed our eternal life with God.

In I am the way Statement, Jesus explains that He is the only one who can do this for us.

The 7th Statement shows that Jesus is the vine and our everlasting relationship with Him. It is in this communion with Jesus we have fruitfulness and meaning of life

Jesus also proposed four ways through which we can enter the kingdom of God.

1. The way of repentance and rebirth (John 3.3).

2. The way is becoming like little children; it is the way of innocence and dependence on God (Matt 18:2).

3. The way of losing oneself or dying to self (John 12. 24). It is about being centred in Jesus Christ without being self-centred.

4. The way of grace. As Paul said, Thy grace is sufficient for me. May God's grace help us to live by the Christian worldviews. Christ is the way; Let us 'Celebrate Life in the Way of Christ'.

Celebrating Life in Christ

Abraham Varghese, Hermon MTC, Midlands

"The thief comes only to steal, slaughter, and destroy. I've come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).



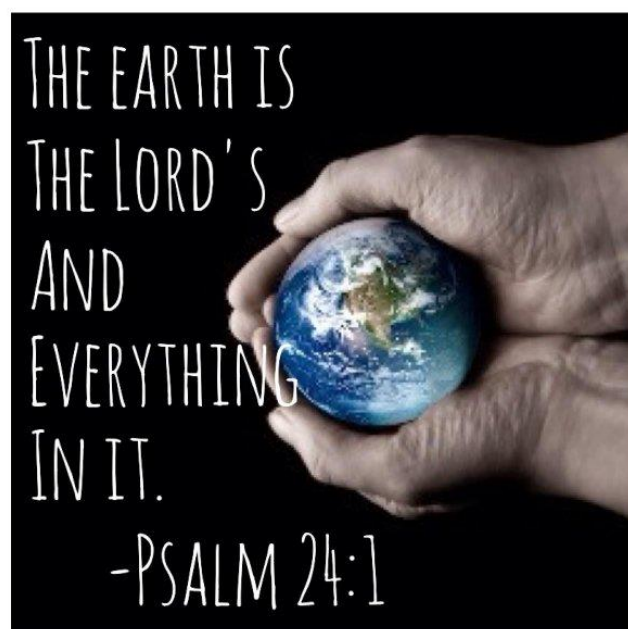
Celebrations, big and small, are very much at the heart of humanity; there are Hieroglyphic inscriptions that list Egyptian festivals going back to 2500 BC and in the Mayan Empire of S America, believe it or not, every 20th day was a festival day! Many of us who have lived or grown up in North India are sure to have fond memories of Diwali, the festival of light, which is also said to date back to the BC era. In our own times, celebrations do not have to wait for set time-tables; event management is a profession today, ready to make a reality anyone's whims, fancies and fantasies of parties and celebrations, 24x7, 365 days a year.

What then should we do to celebrate life in Christ? Are celebrations meant for us, or rather, what is the right kind of celebration in a Christian life? Jesus, in the verse from the Gospel of John says He came to earth so we may have an 'abundance of life'. This phrase has been casually interpreted to signify an abundance of possessions in one's life, but I think Jesus is pointing elsewhere. The first miracle of Jesus recorded in the Gospels is the one that took place in Cana in Galilee. It is

very significant, I think, that the context of the very first miracle was a local wedding, an occasion that is celebrated universally in all cultures and all times. Through the miracle of turning water into wine, Jesus was declaring the blessedness of marriage, and equally, was casting the Divine vote in favour of humanity's celebrations. The partying at the wedding venue in Cana was in full swing, and perhaps well past the half-way mark when Mary pleaded with her son, Jesus, on behalf of the host family for more wine. Jesus could very well have responded, 'I think they have had enough wine, and you know Mum, alcohol is not good for you.' But the Son of Man added to the revelry and merrymaking of ordinary men and women by coming up with the best wine they had tasted, and an abundance of it – six stone jars of twenty to thirty gallons, according to the Bible, which works out to about 900 bottles of wine!! That certainly was no small celebration!!

Celebrating life in Christ, in other words, is not all about the spirit – it is about celebrating in body, mind and spirit. God has placed us in this world, in this life, which is full of beauty at one moment and terror the next – a mystery which we cannot know or understand fully. But that is no reason to hide, to stay back and watch life go by; '... whoever wants to save his life will lose it. . .', said Jesus. We must celebrate life – by laughing with those who laugh and weeping with those who weep. We celebrate life by being good citizens of the society and community that we are placed in. One mighty thing that stands in the way of celebrating life is cynicism, which means a state of mind in which you are constantly questioning the motives of people around you. There is a Malayalam saying which

describes cynicism wonderfully, which says, "*kudal eduthu kaanichaal vazha naaru aanennu parayum.*" Cynicism is very common among Indians and the Indian diaspora when the subject of discussion is politics or the government; the desperate attempts by septuagenarian politicians to hold on to power, or the callous attitude of 'Sarkari babus' in positions of authority makes us mad and frustrated, and rightly so. If we are not careful, however, the attitude of cynicism can spread its wings and make us distrust everyone and everything, forgetting that "...the earth is the Lord's and EVERYTHING in it. . ." (Psalm 24:1).



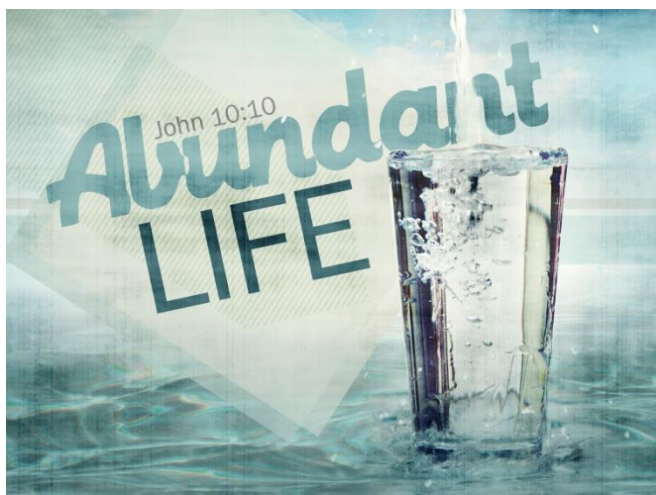
True, we live in a dangerous world; the shocking terrorist attacks in Manchester and London made us realise that we are not safe in England, even if we are far from the chaos of the Middle East. But that is no reason to be cynical, to cut ourselves off from being faithful where we are. There is an Old Testament story that is most relevant for cynics in times such as ours, in the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah, like many other Biblical prophets, was not exactly 'the flavour of the month' in his times. King Zedekiah did not like his gloom and doom preaching about

Babylonians and threw him in jail (Jeremiah Ch. 32). Babylon had already captured parts of the Judean kingdom 'in the tenth year of King Zedekiah' when Jeremiah decided to buy a piece of land in Anathoth, in the tribal territory of Benjamin. Buying land as an asset is ever popular, be it 21st Century AD or 6th Century BC; humans have not changed a whole lot in 25 centuries. However, the field that Jeremiah was thinking about in Anathoth was not exactly prime farming land – it was under Babylonian occupation. Imagine yourself writing a cheque for a few acres of land in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, and receiving the title deeds!! That's exactly what Jeremiah did. Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would fall to Babylon, but that was not the end of the story. He also said that Israel would return one day to the captured lands; in fact in the two chapters preceding this incident, the prophet declares many times that people of Judah WILL return to their ancestral lands. Buying the field in Anathoth was the prophet putting his money where his mouth was; it was a sign for the Israelites that one day, God will restore their broken lives and lost fortunes. It was the prophet declaring unequivocally that one day, Israelites would return home to plough fields, rebuild homes, raise children and 'sing praises to God on the lyre'. That, to me, is a celebration of life – decisions taken and acts performed trusting in the God of Israel, God of all creation. To celebrate life in Christ is to make our faith visible – to the cynic, to those who have lost their faith and to those looking for answers.

Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States of America, was a Christian by faith, and he has remained one in the 35 years since he left the Oval Office in 1981. A Baptist

Christian, Mr. Carter studied, prayed and acted upon his faith throughout his life. At his presidential inauguration, Mr. Carter spoke the words of the prophet Micah: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what the Lord requires of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Mr. Carter's humble walk with God has been visible for everyone; his outstanding contribution to his country and the world was his emphasis on human rights, both home and abroad. The Carter Centre, the foundation set up by Mr. Carter and his wife Rosalynn, has been quietly working towards eradicating some of the world's nastier diseases that do not make the headlines, such as the Guinea worm, river blindness and trachoma. In an interview with The Guardian, Mr. Carter said, "If the World Bank or Harvard University or whoever is adequately taking care of a problem, we don't get involved. We only try to fill vacuums where people don't want to do anything." What could be more illustrative of 'walking humbly with thy God' for a man of his stature? Throughout the Carter presidency, not a single shot was fired by American soldiers; not a single bomb was dropped anywhere. The day Mr. Carter lost his bid for re-election to Ronald Reagan, he made a pledge to the public and the press: he would not engage in any money-making activity using his experience as a president. No seats on the boards of Corporations for him, no money-making speeches to the rich and powerful. One more striking fact about Mr. Carter, making his faith visible for all: throughout his life, Mr. Carter has been a Sunday school teacher. Every Sunday (unless he was away on an international mission of some kind) he would always be found in his home church in Plains, Georgia (U.S.A.),

giving a presentation on the day's Scripture readings. Such sessions would be packed; there would be busloads of tourists on any given weekend wanting to see and hear a living President of the United States. But that would not be the only reason: these new "congregants" would also come to hear what a man of faith would have to say about these scriptural passages and how it applied to life—and how it especially impacted his own life. In the year 2015, Mr. Carter announced that he was suffering from cancer which had spread to his brain; he added that he would continue with his Sunday school mission nevertheless – at the ripe old age of 90. If that is not celebrating life in Christ, I do not know what is!!



Jesus' words from the Gospel of John quoted at the beginning of this article are quite striking; He came so we might have abundant life, says the verse. The phrase 'abundant life' makes me think of life as a celebration, the subject of our discussion. Our lives should not just be about survival, and that is not what God wants for his creation, according to Jesus. We see that abundance in the miracle at Cana, as well as other signs that Jesus performed. When Jesus fed the crowds with five loaves and two fish, there was plenty to go around and then some twelve baskets of leftovers were collected by

the disciples. We see the same abundance in the miraculous catch of fish, where the fishing nets were stretched by the large quantity of fish to the point of being torn. We see the same abundance of life and love in the way Jesus accepted the Samaritan woman with a not-too-respectable past; she was so shocked by Jesus' words and attitude to her that she instantly became a missionary to her own people. We see the abundance of life and love in how Jesus turned Zacchaeus' life upside down; remember, Zacchaeus was a Jew working for Romans as a tax collector and thus very much a traitor to his community. Overnight, the greedy tax collector turned into the local philanthropist. Life will challenge us with similar encounters big and small; we celebrate life in Christ when we face up to those people and situations and respond with open hands and hearts, as sinners who have been redeemed by Christ's abundant love.

Maya Angelou the American poet and civil rights activist said, "Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." The Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus and many others had their breath taken away in their encounter with Jesus. In order to truly celebrate life, we need such moments as well in our daily life. This is where our spiritual habits – whether it be bible readings or meditation or prayers or being a Sunday school teacher – play their essential role. In cultivating our own spirituality, we lay the seeds of celebration not only in our own life but also in the lives of our family, friends and the wider community.

Reflections on the Bible Studies of Maramon Convention-2017

*Dr. Ninan Daniel Kuruntholical, Tabor MTC,
Manchester*

[It is with gratitude we publish the following notes on the Bible classes of the 122nd Maramon Convention. Dr. Ninan has brought to us the flavour and the essence of these studies for us to meditate and pray. May his very valuable ministry help us in our spiritual journey.]

I thank almighty God for the golden opportunity given to me to attend the Bible classes of the Maramon Convention in 2017 for six days from Monday the 13th February to Saturday the 18th of February. Two eminent theologians shared the classes this year – The Revd Dr. Cleophus Laru of the Princeton University and Revd Dr. Lord Leslie Griffiths of the Methodist Church of the United Kingdom.

These classes were chaired by The Rt. Revd Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, the president of the Mar Thoma Evangelical Association. The Rt. Revd Thomas Mar Timotheos and The Rt. Revd Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos were also present.

On Monday, 13th February: Speaker: Revd Laru; Translator: Revd Abraham Pulinthitta
Revd Laru mentioned at the outset that it was the third time that he was attending the Maramon Convention.

He opened his discourse by referring to St. Paul's first letter to Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 1 to 9. He concentrated on the Corinthian Christian Community and their problems. Corinthian Christians, a cross-section of the community, required guidance in their lives. This was a church best with problems and undesirable practices.

Nevertheless, it was a gifted and talented church filled with enthusiasm and energy.

He reiterated the following points:

1. Forces that are opposed to God are around us all the time. What was true about Corinth is true of every church today. He referred to Matthew Chapter 13 and said good and bad grow together. Corinth had been described as the Sin City.
2. The Church should be a welcoming place. It should open its doors to all. The Church should reflect a mix of the people of the wider community.
3. The people who came to Corinth brought their baggage; Paul had to face a complex set of people with different mental baggage.
4. Christianity was not the predominant religion in Corinth. The practices of the Aphrodite bordered on the outrageous. Paul addressed them as the Church of God. We are the Church of God, been sanctified by God. We have been called to be saints, to a new way of life; have been called from darkness to light. In Christ we are better.

Revd Laru Concluded the morning session by singing a famous Afro-American Hymn:

“What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought,
Prince Jesus Came to my heart;
I have light in my soul for which long I have sought,
Since Jesus came to my heart” (Rufus H McDaniel's 1914).

**Tuesday, 14th February: Speaker: Revd. Laru;
Translator: Revd Abraham Pulinthitta**

Revd Laru started by refreshing on what he had spoken the previous morning. Corinth was a seaport city. Paul goes there to

establish a church. He told Corinthians that they were God's chosen people.

His text was 1 Corinthians, 1: 10-17. Paul was God's International traveller and ambassador His modus operandi was to go into a city, establish the church and move on. Paul moved to Ephesus after accomplishing his mission in Corinth. But there were problems brewing in Corinth. He had very reliable information about their conduct from:

1. Choles' household
2. by letter from Corinth
3. by word of mouth from Stephanas.

Paul Recognises conflicts, strife and divisions in the church at Corinth and pleads for peace and reconciliation.

Revd Laru reiterated the fact that divisions, strife, quarrels and conflicts will weaken a church despite being very spiritual. He said dissensions start in the mind. Dissensions drive the fire out of the altar and worship becomes hollow. Divine interventions lead to meeting God in worship. "Holy Spirit- you are welcome in this Place." Everything about worship should focus on God. Divisions and strife interfere with the witness of the church. He asked the gathering to refer to Acts chapter 3. Our Gathering in worship should be a joyful experience; it should be a beneficial experience; lastly, our gathering should be an uplifting experience.

He concluded the session with a prayer:
"I come to church to meet God,
Do not pass me by, my God;
I am calling you saviour,
Do not pass me by."

Wednesday, 15th February: Speaker: Revd Laru; Translator: Revd Abraham Pluinthitta.

Paul addresses the concerns of the church in Corinth. Revd Laru draws our attention to Psalm 122 verse 8: "For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, Peace be with you." He then went on to elaborate Christian

love, so eloquently delivered by Paul in I Corinthians Chapter 13.

*"Love is patient, love is kind.
It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.
Love never fails."*

1 Corinthians 13:4.7-8

"What were the most important things that the church in Corinth needed?" asked Revd Laru. It was love. The problems in the church of Corinth were caused by a lack of love. Christian love is referred to as agape – a love of rational understanding and sacrifice. It is not critical or judgemental. It is a love that goes out of its way. It is a love that opens its heart to others – the so called extended family. Christian love is rational good will; it embraces all.

The Corinthians needed a great understanding of love – a solemn duty to do everything out of love. The Revd C. K. Barrett, the British biblical scholar, divides 13th chapter of Corinthians into three parts:

1. Verses 1 to 3: love alone counts.
2. Verses 4 to 7: love alone wins, triumphs.
3. Verses 8 to 13: love alone lasts.

**Thursday, 16th February, Speaker: Revd Dr. Lord Leslie Griffiths;
Translator: Revd V. M. Mathew**

The discourse of the Revd Dr. Lord Griffiths spanning over three days dwelt on the basic fundamentals of Christian faith.

The Life of Paul:

Lord Griffiths started on the radically challenging story of Saul of Tarsus and referred to Acts of the Apostles Chapter 9.

Here the story is told in the third person, but in chapters 22 and 26 the story is told in the first person. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, the narrative was from his memory.

Lord Griffiths dwelt on the word 'transformation' (Metanoia, which means change in one's way of life resulting from penitence or spiritual conversion). Repentance is turning away from sins and turning towards the Gospel. The light that attracted Saul led him to repentance, what could only be described as a true miracle. Saul was a conservative Jew; he was a Jew by formation. He believed that the new Jewish Christians were heretics and had the authority to destroy them.

Religious people face hatred from fellow believers, said Lord Griffiths. Saul's heart was touched by the Spirit of God. He described it as a bright light. He heard a voice. Saul asked, "Who are you Lord?" The answer was "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

Ananias offers hospitality to Saul, with whom he reconciles. God has reconciled with humanity through Jesus Christ, the propagator of Christian faith.

Friday, 17th February: Speaker: Lord Griffiths; Translator: Revd V. M. Mathew

Lord Griffiths recapitulated the previous morning's talk by saying that Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the Apostle. He also described how Simon became Peter. He referred to Acts chapter 11 and described Peter's meeting with Cornelius. Lord Griffiths described the four crucial moments in the life of Peter:

1. Peter and his brother Andrew are invited by Jesus to follow him, with a promise to make them fishers of men (Mark Chapter 1).
2. Jesus Asks Peter, "Who do People say I am" (Mk.8.27)? Peter declares, "You are the

Messiah, the son of the living God" (Matt. 16: 15, 16).

3. Peter went up with Jesus to Mount Olive. Peter became aware of the Messiahship of Jesus. Acts Chapter 3 shows that Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit after the Pentecost.

4. Peter denies Jesus thrice before the crucifixion (Mark Chapter 14).

Acts Chapter 4 shows the occasion of Peter boldly addressing the Rulers and Elders of the people and saying how in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he healed the sick man. Peter ministered in the present day Joppa. Acts chapter 10 gives a very clear picture of the meeting between Peter and Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Regiment. Cornelius was a God-fearing man. He was not fully Jewish. He was a proselyte (that is, he was on the edge of faith!). Peter and Cornelius were given a vision. Peter took the road to Caesarea; he was accused of being associated with unclean things.

Acts Chapter 15 describes the first recorded Ecumenical Council at Jerusalem. Cornelius becomes a Christian. He refers to Peter as Simon. Romans saw Peter as a Jew. We look up to Peter as a model of our pastoral care, as one who strongly believed that the Gospel is to be preached as good news to every section of the society.

Saturday, 18th February: Speaker: Lord Griffiths; Translator: Rev V. M. Mathew

Lord Griffiths started his talk by saying that there is so much suffering in the world today. All these sufferings have created a compassion fatigue in the UK; it is too much to bear. He referred to the Greek word for compassion – '*splagehtrizomia*'. It is only applied to Jesus. Jesus felt the sufferings of others.

Mark Chapter 1: 40-41. A Man with leprosy approached Jesus and begged him to make him clean. Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

Mark Ch. 6: 34. When Jesus saw a large crowd that had gathered to see him, he felt compassion for them as they were sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew Ch. 15: 32. "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat." Jesus felt for the hungry. Com + Passio = Compassion. Compassion with those who are suffering.

Mark Ch. 8: 2. Here also Jesus says, "I have compassion for the crowd."

Matthew Ch. 9: 36. Here it says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Luke Ch. 7: 12-15. These verses describe how the widow's son, who had died, was raised by Jesus to life and handed back to his mother. Verse 13 says when the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and said, "Don't cry."

Matthew Ch. 20: 30 and 34. Jesus was in Jericho. Two blind men cried out for cure. Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Matthew Ch. 17:14-16. The father a boy with seizures is pleading with Jesus for pity. Jesus felt compassion for the boy, rebuked the demon and healed him.

Lord Griffiths next expanded his theme based on parables.

Matthew Ch. 18: 27. The parable of 'the master and the servant' – the servant who

had incurred huge debt. The master took pity on him and released him from slavery.

Luke Ch. 10: 33. The parable of the 'Good Samaritan'. Two religious leaders, a priest and Levite, passed by the man who had been robbed, beaten, and left on the road for dead. But the Samaritan stopped to help. He took pity on the victim.

Luke Ch. 15: 20. The parable of 'the Lost Son'. The father was filled with compassion.



Jesus empathises with the sufferers. His heart goes out to suffering people; their plight hits him hard.

Lord Griffiths concluded the session by stating that we should be able to feel the pain and suffering of others, and we, the Christians, should never suffer from compassion fatigue.

Attending the Bible classes of Maramon Convention in 2007 has been a blessed experience, an occasion to listen to world-renowned theologians, analysing and interpreting the Holy Bible. More and more people are making the effort to listen to the Holy words at Maramon Convention Bible classes. Let us pray for the Mar Thoma Church and the Evangelistic Association.

From CTEE- Newsletter for June: **Friendship Trumps Theology for Church-Seeking Students**

New Resource from Student Christian Movement

SCM - a Body in Association of Churches Together in England - reports:

Students prioritise friendship and community over theology or denomination when finding a church at university, according to a new resource published by the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Finding a safe environment that offers security and familiarity is a key concern for students moving to university, with churches often providing that steady influence in a time of great change.



The findings are part of research published in a new resource for churches, called 'Welcoming Students to Your Church'. It is a 44-page booklet packed with case studies from students and church ministers, top tips and advice on a range of issues, and practical ideas for building a vibrant student ministry that's welcoming and relevant.

Hilary Topp, SCM's National Coordinator, said: "Knowing where to start in building a vibrant student ministry can often be daunting – with other priorities often getting in the way. Too often, student ministry is considered a millstone around the neck of local churches, when instead it should be a springboard to exciting expressions of worship, outreach and community. We hope this guide can inspire more church leaders and volunteers to pour more energy and resources into making this possible."

According to Revd Jenny Morgans, a Deacon at North Lambeth Parish, students are keen to re-create a sense of family as soon as possible when they move to university – by meeting new people and making friends. Within a church context, the feeling of being part of a community was often prioritised over the need to agree theologically with a particular teaching or enjoy a particular activity.

For more information, visit www.movement.org.uk

Churches condemn Government's new two-child limit



Churches condemn Government's new two-child limit as "deliberately ignoring" needs of some of the UK's poorest children. From Thursday 6th April the Government's flagship benefit, Universal Credit, will not offer help to the third or subsequent children in a family. This fundamentally changes the benefit system so that it "deliberately ignores" the needs of some of the UK's more vulnerable children say Church leaders.

- Over the next three years around 640,000 families containing at least two million children[1] will see substantially lower Universal Credit payments.
- From November 2018 the two-child limit will also be applied retrospectively. The needs of the third child born long before the two-child limit was thought of will also be ignored.

Rachel Lampard, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, said: *"The two-child rule takes a knife to the social security safety net and hundreds of thousands of the UK's most vulnerable children will fall through the gap created. These cuts are the driving force behind the expected increases in child poverty over the next decade. The consequences for these children will last for a life-time."*

The Revd Dr Richard Frazer, Convener of the Church & Society Council, commented: *"From Thursday payments under Universal Credit will deliberately ignore the needs of some of the UK's poorest children. The Government's flagship benefit will not offer help*

to the third or further children in a family. How can a decent society look at an impoverished child - and then ignore their needs?"

Both the Government's impact assessment[2] and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) research make it clear that the two child limit is not expected to achieve its aim of reducing the number of children born to poorer families needing the support of the benefit system[3].

"We should be appalled that children's needs are being deliberately ignored, no matter what the justification. It is extraordinary that the Government has pressed ahead with this cut despite the fact that its own research says that it is not likely to achieve its aim of encouraging families to have fewer children," said Grace Pengelly, Secretary for Church and Society, United Reformed Church.

YouGov polling in October 2015 indicated that the majority (61%) of UK adults believe benefits should be high enough to cover families' basic costs.

Speaking on the statistics, the Revd Stephen Keyworth, of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, added: *"This policy flies in the face of one of our benefit system's founding principles – that families should have enough to meet their basic needs. Our churches believe this principle is important and polling indicates that the public believe this principle to be important too."*

"The two-child limit recognises that larger families have additional needs, but chooses to ignore them. We urge the Government, even at this late stage, to hold to the founding principles of the benefit system and not deliberately ignore the needs of the most vulnerable children in society."

Footnotes:

[1] The two-child rule reduces maximum entitlement by £2,780, other changes on April 6th raise this to a £3,670 total loss.

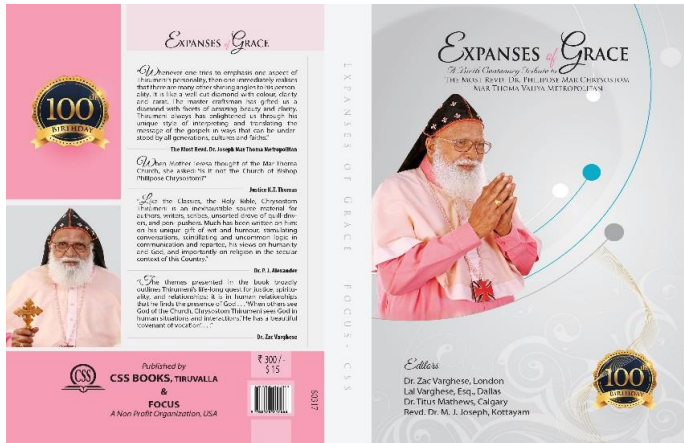
[2] Welfare Reform and Work Bill: Impact Assessment of Tax Credits and Universal Credit, changes to Child Element and Family Element.

[3] DWP review of the effects of welfare policies on fertility, concluding "On balance the reviewed literature shows that there is no consistent and robust evidence to support claims that the welfare system has a significant impact upon family structure."

A Book Review: Expanses of Grace

EXPOSÉS IN THE THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF PHILIPPOSE MAR CHRYSOSTOM, VALIA METROPOLITAN

Revd Dr. Joseph Daniel



The book, 'Expanses of Grace', throws fresh light on MALANKARA MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH VALIA METROPOLITAN, Most Revd Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom's philosophy, vision and theology; it carves out a fresh path of spirituality and vision for Malankara Church members and theologians to follow.

EXPANSES OF GRACE

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Revd DR. M. J. JOSEPH, Kottayam

Publisher: Tiruvalla: Christava Sahithya Samithy and FOCUS, 2017. Price: Rs.300; \$15 (outside India).

'Expanses of Graces' as fifty three essays written by several reputed writers; it was published and officially released by the Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma, at the

100th birth centenary celebration meeting of Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan on April, 2017. It is based on the theology of a series of lectures and sermons that Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan delivered. This book is a tribute and to honour the unparalleled legacy and contributions of Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan, who celebrates his 100th birthday on April 27, 2017. In these essays reputed writers discuss different expressions of Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan's theology and philosophy and offers a new theological pathway to move forward in a globalised world. This book undoubtedly presents him as one of the most important spiritual leaders and philosophers of this century and he presented a cosmic love approach in spirituality to the world.

In this book, writers also tries to explain brilliantly Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan's historical legacy, pastoral style, sense of humour and the power of articulation in guiding the secular Indian nation and the Malankara church towards a common vision of cosmic love to celebrate life on earth.

The book is divided into 8 parts and has an introduction at the beginning of each part about the theme covered in that particular part of the book. Each part of the book luminously explains the reflections on the themes that are relevant to the contemporary world philosophy and theology.

Part I is an appreciation and compliment to Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan, and his involvement with the FOCUS movement, which is a lay-centred ecumenical movement that stands for

Christian understanding and solidarity. **Part II** has six articles on various thoughts on the Biblical idea of the kingdom of God and how can it serve as a catalyst to transform God's creation. **Part III** is about radical Christianity and has eleven articles covering many thoughts and concerns including 'Church for the people rather than the church of the people', 'Church without walls'. **In part IV** with five articles, the book is addressing some of the issues relating to gospel and culture. **Part V** covers Human Right concerns. **Part VI** covers gender equality issues. **Part VII** discusses postmodernity and its challenges to Christianity. **Final Part, VIII**, deals with multiple issues ranging from Christianity, authentic spirituality, eucharistic spirituality, importance of the liturgical life , the need for a lay-centred church, legacy of apostolic faith, challenges of the Diaspora Mar Thoma (St. Thomas) Christians, and contemporary philosophy and theology.

Through these writings, this book opens up a new room for historical and theological vistas of research and discussion. Readers can travel on a parallel track, capturing various frames of the Malankara church philosophy, theology and liturgical tradition clearly and well focused, as if through the lens of a movie camera, without neglecting any of its historical, theological, rational authenticity and research scope.

What we experience every day as the life-force is the grace from God. Such considerations give these articles' treatment of the different aspects of life in a world of rapid change guided by God's grace, verve and vitality that are concrete and existential. Readers of this book will find a rich and

subtle extension of Chrysostom Thirumeni's theological, philosophical and logical articulations because this work is an edited work from various scholars, who made bold use of key insights from contemporary, ecclesiology, feminist and ecological theologies, post-modern and critical approaches and from charismatic movements. Newcomers will find a fascinating entrée into the heart of Chrysostom Thirumeni's vision and theology, which has the transformative potential of the future.

This book is a trendsetter, which hopefully will be followed up in the days to come.