

Vol. 23

Issue 2

MALANKARA MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

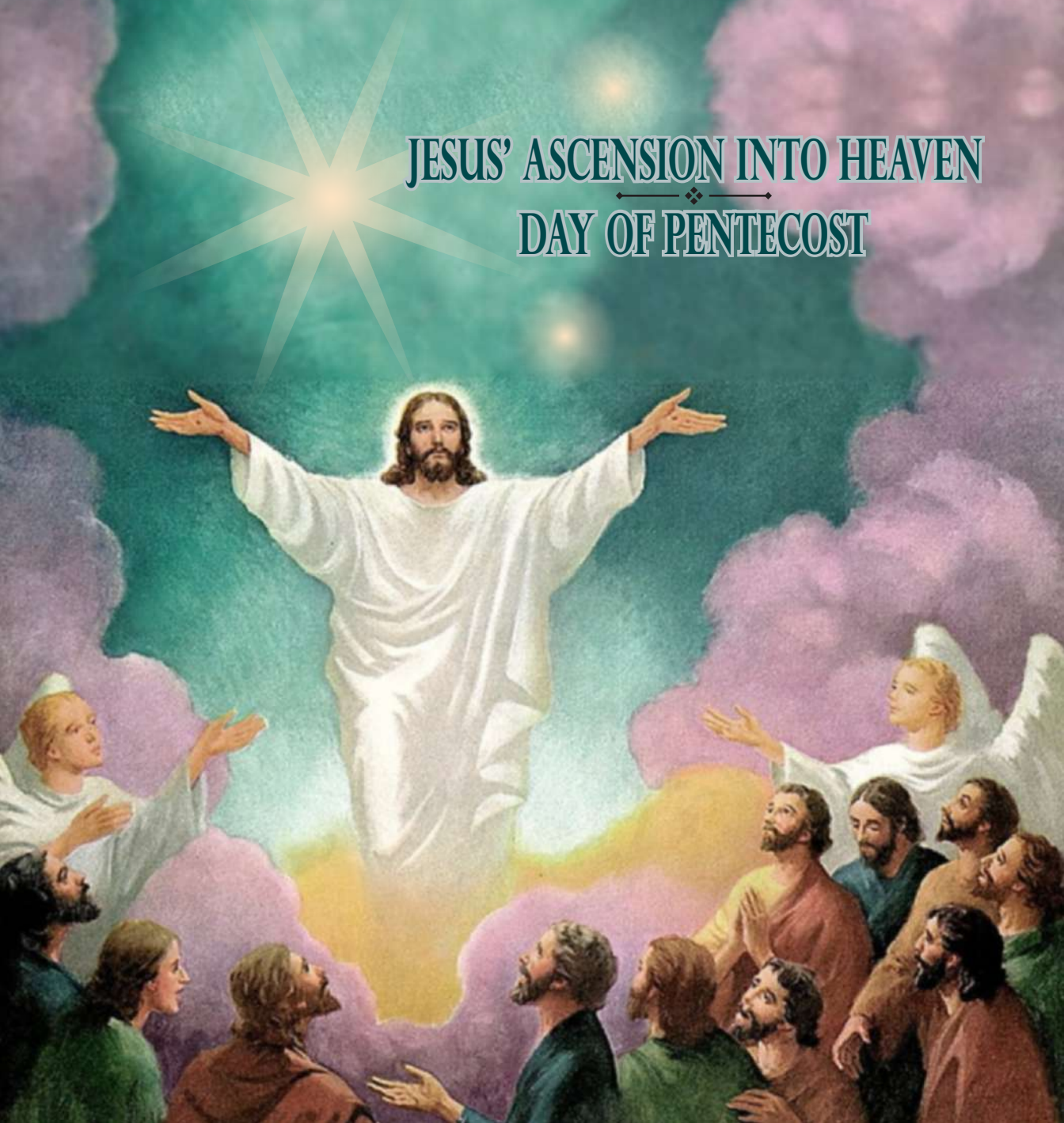


# DARSHAN

A QUARTERLY OF DELHI DIOCESE

APRIL - JUNE 2024

JESUS' ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN  
—◆—  
DAY OF PENTECOST



## EVENTS/CONFERENCES



*Felicitation of the newly consecrated Bishops at Bhopal*



*CCI Meeting at CSI Church Vikaspuri*



*Republic day flag hoisting*



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# Wise Staff

**RT. REV. ZACHARIAS MAR APREM EPISCOPA**

*Dearly Beloved in Christ,*

*Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

**W**e have successfully completed a financial year and entered into another one. April is a month of transition, reflection and the start of new beginning, both financially and academically. The Greek Philosopher Plato rightly said that, "the beginning is the most important part of any work." Therefore, it is very much important for us to begin each step and initiatives in faith. Our nation is preparing for elections during the coming months. Every nation needs leaders who will govern with justice, integrity, and compassion. May those elected be guided by the principles of love, humility, and service to all people, especially the marginalized and vulnerable. April 22nd is celebrated as World Earth Day. We, as God's stewards must raise awareness about environmental issues and promote sustainability. There must be initiatives at Parish levels to address environmental challenges such as climate change, pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss.

The month of May begins with International Workers Day or Labor Day. It is a time to acknowledge the contribution of our workers who strive hard with their efforts and contributions to make our society a better place. The first Sunday in the month of May is set apart as Bhoo Bhavana Daanam Day, followed by Sundays dedicated to commemorating the Pentecostal Feast, DSMC Sunday and Holy Trinity.

The Apostle's Fast or Sleeha Nombu is observed in the month of June. The Apostles did great work to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. They, chosen and sent by Christ proclaimed the Gospel to the nook and corner of the world. This inspires us to imbibe an apostolic vision on our part. Let us prepare ourselves to be sent as missionaries into the spaces we are and to reflect and radiate Christ to those around us. Let us resound their proclamation saying, "Blessed are those who receive and believe in God's Kingdom."

*May the Lord Almighty continue to bless us.*

**Rt. Rev. Zacharias Mar Aprem Episcopa**



# Moving Moments



REV. SAM ABRAHAM

**“Let those of us who are mature think this way..” Philippians 3:15a**

Apostle Paul was aware of the importance of the mind of man. The wise man wrote, “for as he thinks in his heart, so is he..” Prov 23:7a. Thoughts and attitude of an individual greatly affect the day to day life of a person. As God's people, we ought to know well of a godly thinking pattern, so that our practical life will be right and acceptable before the Lord. Paul speaks of the growing Christians, who move forward in their spiritual life. Their mindset or attitude is different from the immature believers. In this passage (Phil 3: 12 – 15) the writer presents four unique realities a growing Christians comprehends.

## **1. 'I have not yet attained'. V.12, 13.**

It's mere childishness to assume that one has achieved everything even when the truth is just the opposite. A growing Christian admits his need to go still further and never boast on the achievements. They know that Christian life is a pilgrimage. It's a continuous process; we cannot claim to have reached the zenith as long as we continue our journey. Always there is still much more to pass through, much more to possess etc. To admit this real state, we need to be aware of the scripture and God's plan for His people.

## **2. 'I need to make every effort to go forward'. V. 12 – 14.**

A growing Christian is not lazy or complacent. With all his energy doing all he can to advance. That's why Paul says, “I press on” / “I follow after” / “One thing I do” etc. Straining all our spiritual muscles and exerting full strength we must fulfill our spiritual obligations. Take extra efforts in personal preparation and service to reach the areas where you have not made it

so far. An inactive and idle Christian is a disgrace to the cause of Christ; he cannot be healthy and productive in spiritual life.

### **3. 'Christ has laid hold of me for a purpose'. V. 12b, 14.**

A believer realizes that since conversion, the Lord Jesus has taken hold of him for a purpose. He has made us His own and He has a long term plan for us. It is to that goal we have to aim, not our selfish ambitions. So a growing Christian acknowledges the Lordship of Christ and he is aware of the intention for which the Lord has called him. In fact, the more one is focused on this truth, the more he is challenged and motivated to move forward.

### **4. 'I forget those things which are behind'. V. 13.**

Many things may have taken place in the past; many victories and many failures. We can always look back and learn lessons, draw inspiration from the past. Similarly remembering the failures of yesterday may not strengthen us to go forward today. That does not mean that one can simply forget the evil committed and behave as if nothing happened. Any sin whether done against God, others or self must be confessed and settled on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ as promised in 1John 1:7, 9. Without such a judicial settlement one cannot escape from his / her transgressions.

However, once confession is made and the Lord has graciously forgiven us, we do not need to dwell on it. If God does not remember our sins any more why should we focus on it? (Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 10:17). It is satanic deception to remind us of settled issues of the earlier period to accuse and condemn us. Let us examine our mind-set in this new season and see if it's worthy of a mature believer as Paul says here. With all humility let us admit that we have not yet reached the place where we ought to have reached.



# In Touch



REV. TOMS NINAN

## Greetings in the matchless name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

After experiencing the Joy of Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have now entered the Pentecostal Season.

While Pentecostalism began as a mechanism for renewal, their understanding of how renewal is enacted has shifted over time. This is perhaps reflective of their changing eschatology. If renewal in the earlier Pentecostal community emphasised separation from the depraved and corrupt world, renewal for the present Pentecostal community—particularly in Western contexts—is about transforming the world. It is a shift from an other-worldly outlook to a this-worldly emphasis. This shift is perhaps most reflected in our engagement with society and culture. Pentecostalism today seeks to be an alternative community that is shaped by the biblical narrative that overflows in mission to the world and engagement with culture.

As we enter a new journey this year, let me conclude by mentioning a note of thanks and gratitude for the life of our dear E.George who was the NIZA treasurer and who served the church with utmost zeal despite many health challenges, let us continue to uphold their family in our prayers. Let us also pray for our beloved Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Zacharias Mar Aprem who celebrates Thirumeni's birthday in April and also for the new NIZA Treasurer. Let us pray that their able leadership and the support be a blessing for the overall development of the diocese especially the school under NIZA.

May the Almighty Lord Bless us all.





# Between the lines



REV. NITIN S. CHERIAN

*Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!*

As we enter into this new quarter, we reflect upon the profound significance of Jesus' Ascension into Heaven, Day of Pentecost and its enduring call to evangelism. Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, marks the beginning of Church's Mission towards the spreading of the Gospel.

The flames of Pentecost ignited a fire that has burned brightly for over two thousand years, compelling us to share the Good News with zeal and passion. It is a powerful reminder that we are not alone in our mission; we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Christ's love and salvation.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells His disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This scripture not only recounts the promise fulfilled at Pentecost but also serves as a blueprint for our evangelistic efforts today.

As members of Delhi Diocese, each of us are called to be an evangelist in our own unique way. Whether through acts of kindness, words of encouragement, or sharing our personal testimonies, we can all contribute to the spread of the Gospel. Let us be inspired by the apostles' courage and unwavering faith as we seek to make a difference in our families, societies, and beyond.

In this edition of Darshan, we have received contributions from Delhi Centre, which focuses on the theme "Pentecost and Evangelism". We hope these articles will inspire and equip you to embrace the call to evangelism with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

As we celebrate Pentecost in this quarter, let us remember that the same Spirit that empowered the early Church is with us today. Together, let us be the light in the world, shining brightly with the love of Christ.

Yours in His Service,  
Rev. Nitin S Cherian







REV. CHRISTO JACOB GEORGE

# PENTECOST AND EVANGELISM

## Shavout and Pentecost

For Jews *shavout* was a harvest festival, it was a time when they brought the first fruit to God. It's usually celebrated 50 days after the second day of Passover. Jesus disciples, women and others had joined together in the upper room, 50 days after Passover, to celebrate the *shavout*. Later from 70 CE onwards this day is also observed to commemorate the receipt of Ten Commandments from God through Moses at Sinai Mount. Shavout signifies the proclamation of God's word through Moses to a nation- Israel. Whereas the people who assembled at upper room in Jerusalem on the 50<sup>th</sup> day (Pentecost)

received the Holy Spirit like a fire of divided tongues which led to the proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ to many nations.

## Proclamation of Pentecost

Jesus' death creates a vacuum in the disciples' lives. That vacuum leads to fear and anxiety. But the appearance of Jesus after resurrection adds peace and hope to their lives. Acts of Apostles 1:2 expresses that Jesus appeared to disciples at many instances for 40 days after resurrection. Then Jesus ascended into heaven at the Mount Olive. Disciples came back from olive mount to the upper room where they stayed in Jerusalem. Thereafter they

constantly devoted themselves to prayer. But the quest for evangelization begins on the day of Pentecost, when they are filled with Holy Spirit. They began to talk in different tongues. It was Apostle Peter who initiated the talk with the 11 other apostles, about Jesus Christ, his life, death, resurrection and ascension.

The aim of Evangelization is to bring the humanity to the salvation received through Christ Jesus. This is possible by helping the people to call the name of the Lord; through praying, preaching, listening and meditating the word of God by being the believers of Christ in this world.

### **Evangelize in the power of the Holy Spirit**

Evangelization is introducing Jesus Christ to the world. Acts chapter 2, clearly states that evangelization is a witness to Jesus' resurrection (v.36). It is also proclaiming Christ as Lord and Messiah. When we are filled with Holy Spirit, we are able to proclaim Christ as Lord and Messiah. It is also witnessing the promise of the holy spirit, that Christ gives to this world, that is the pouring out of God's spirit on all flesh. The proclamation of each and every one will be more meaningful, when we are filled with Holy Spirit. That proclamation with the power of Holy Spirit resulted in the

baptism of around 3000 people into the Christian fold on the day of Pentecost.

### **Evangelizing the whole world**

"We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God"

We have many indigenous Mar Thoma churches in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and North India. The importance of these churches is the use of liturgy in their own local languages. Conveying the word of God through native language has a great value. It creates a sense of belongingness, and right understanding about the teaching of the word of God. I do interpret the gift of speaking in different tongue as proclaiming of the word of God to people from different languages. Evangelization is moving beyond the boundaries and gaining many for Christ. If *shavout* is transmission of God's word to the people of Israel, Pentecost is the communication of word of God by Holy Spirit to people from different identities and culture. It is also connected with Jesus' commission "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." (Mtt.26:19). One who is filled with Holy Spirit can't remain silent, but proclaim the gospel of salvation which we have received through Jesus Christ. Therefore, Evangelization is a call to 'repent and baptize in the name of the Lord'.





# PENTECOST AND EVANGELISM:

## Catalysts for Social Transformation

REV. THOMAS K THOMAS



### Introduction:

The relationship between Pentecost and evangelism is deeply intertwined in the Christian faith, as Pentecost marks a significant event that empowered and propelled the early disciples into evangelistic action. Pentecost and evangelism are closely related as Pentecost ignited the fire of evangelism in the early church by empowering believers with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit equipped the disciples with boldness, wisdom, and spiritual gifts necessary for effective evangelism. Commissioning them for mission, enabling effective communication, this multilingual communication facilitated evangelism on a broader scale. Demonstrating God's power, transforming hearts, the supernatural manifestation drew people to inquire about the Gospel message, leading to opportunities for

evangelism and discipleship, and providing ongoing guidance and empowerment for evangelistic efforts. This connection underscores the foundational role of the Holy Spirit in the spread of the Gospel and the continuation of Jesus' mission through His followers.

The narrative of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 is not merely a historical event but a blueprint for evangelism and social transformation in today's socio-political landscape. By examining the themes of Pentecost and evangelism in Acts 2, we can draw some insights and applications for addressing contemporary challenges.

### Empowered by the Spirit: Pentecost's Relevance Today

Acts 2 portrays the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the early believers, empowering them to speak boldly in different languages.

Acts 2:4 - "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." This supernatural empowerment transcended linguistic and cultural barriers, signifying the universality of the Gospel message. In today's diverse socio-political context, characterized by linguistic, cultural, and religious pluralism, Pentecost reminds us of the Spirit's power to bridge divides and unite people under the banner of Christ.

### **Evangelism as Social Engagement: Peter's Message and Its Implications**

Peter's sermon on Pentecost emphasized repentance, forgiveness, and salvation through Jesus Christ. Acts 2:38 - "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' He contextualized the Gospel by quoting from the prophet Joel and addressing the socio-political realities of his audience. Similarly, Christians today are called to engage in evangelism that speaks to the socio-political issues facing the nation. This includes advocating for justice, equality, religious freedom, and human rights—all rooted in the transformative message of the Gospel. Joel 2:28-29 - "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and

women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." The response to Peter's preaching led to thousands embracing faith in Christ and experiencing life transformation. Pentecost demonstrates evangelism's potential to bring about radical change in individuals and communities.

### **Addressing Socio-Political Challenges: A Pentecostal Approach**

In the contemporary socio-political landscape, marked by religious tensions, caste discrimination, economic disparities, and political complexities, Pentecost offers a paradigm for holistic engagement. The Spirit's empowerment equips believers to address these challenges with courage, compassion, and prophetic wisdom. Just as the early Church's evangelism led to societal transformation, Christians are called to be agents of positive change in their communities and nation.

### **Conclusion:**

Pentecost and evangelism are not isolated events of the past but dynamic forces for change in our socio-political context. Christians are called to embody the Spirit's power, engage in transformational evangelism, and address socio-political challenges with prophetic courage and compassion. By embracing the spirit of Pentecost, we can catalyse social transformation and advance the Kingdom values of justice, reconciliation, and love in the contemporary world.







# PENTECOST:

## A Call to Renew Our Call

REV. KOSHY VAIDYAN



### **Pentecost: A Call to Renew Our Call**

Luke, the author of one of the four gospels and Acts of the Apostles, clearly portrays that the story of Jesus never ends with Easter Sunday, but it continues in the community of men and women who believe in and follow Him. On Easter Sunday, the disciples of Jesus were dispirited, fearful, and broken. But on the day of Pentecost, the broken community became a fearless, resurrected community. For Jews, the day of Pentecost fell on the fiftieth day after Passover. It will be the end of the reaping season when all the wheat and barley have been cut and gathered. It is also known as the day of the first fruits (Numbers 28:26). On this day, the first fruits of the barley and wheat harvested were presented to God. The feast of Pentecost marked the end of the Passover. Many pilgrims from various parts of the world visited during this time. The same day marked a new beginning for the disciples. The

Spirit that comes from the risen Jesus initiated a new chapter in the lives of the 120 disciples and for the believing community. In the contemporary world, the Pentecost event speaks to us in many ways, making all our lives more fruitful for God.

### **Pentecost: An Experience of Understanding Language of Unity in Diversity**

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the only member who was in on the conception and birth of Jesus, who is also present at the conception and birth of the community. The Holy Spirit that conceived Jesus in Mary's womb now conceives the Jesus community with 120 followers. After receiving the Holy Spirit, they spoke in different languages about the deeds of God through Jesus. The languages they spoke were understood by the pilgrims, who came from different regions of the world.

Thus, the language barriers were broken. Jesus was instilled into the hearts of the people gathered there. Therefore, it was a new day for the entire humanity where a new language of love, unity, and hope had begun irrespective of race, colour, and ethnic divisions. Even though they spoke different languages, they were united for God. A new language of faith, freedom, truth, and love was inaugurated on the same day. The Spirit enabled disciples to get clarity about their identities and vocations. In these challenging times, where political, ethnical, racial, and religious differences are at their peak in our country, as Christians, do we have any clarity about our identities and vocation? Are we speaking God's language, or are we upholding the language of divisions? We are silent about many atrocities, which is a greater sin. We should be able to speak God's language by empowering the downtrodden communities with true freedom and love. Through the Holy Spirit, we should be able to impart life to the communities despite the challenges.

### **Pentecost: An Experience of Understanding Redemptive Power**

The word power is a critical word in its understanding. The power in the wrong hands can become exploitative and ruthless. But when Jesus uses the power, it gets a new meaning. The reign of God is a new reality, with the power exercised by Jesus. Before

Jesus' ascension, he tells the disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (Acts 1:8). The disciples were clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit. The power redeemed all their fears. The power they received was not meant to take revenge against the Roman and Jewish authorities who crucified Jesus but to bring the Good news to everyone. It is a call to become witnesses for Jesus Christ even to the ends of the earth. The event of Pentecost is also called the Second Babel experience. As recorded in the Old Testament, when the tower of Babel was built, the people relied on human-driven power and ignored the authority of God in creation. Thus, God confused their language and ended chaotically. But here, the disciples understand they were directed by the power of the Holy Spirit where they fix their eyes on the creator God. The power of God is always exercised in personal ways: creating, saving, healing, and blessing. The power of God is always entrusted in love. The love of Jesus continues through the work of the Holy Spirit. We should be able to discern between human-centred power and God-centred power. God-centred power always leads us to fullness. To understand God-centred power, we must follow the footsteps of Jesus. The power exercised by Jesus was not to divide but to unite. The disciples, after receiving the Holy Spirit followed the same. The Holy Spirit entrusts us to do the same.



# DHARMA JYOTI VIDYA PEETH

## A Gospel Luminary in North India

REV. DR. ABRAHAM SCARIA, P.  
*Principal, Dharma Jyoti Vidya Peeth*



**The Malankara Mar Thoma Church** embodies two distinct strands of mission traditions: the missionary praxis of St. Thomas in the first century and the influence of Western missionaries in pre-independent India. In 19th-century Kerala society, the Mar Thoma Church distinguished itself through Bible-based worship, a fervent commitment to mission, and high moral and ethical standards in daily life, thus establishing a unique identity. Over time, mission fields were established beyond Travancore, extending into neighboring states and eventually reaching North India. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan and Rt. Rev. Easow Mar Timotheos harbored a vision for a theological training center in North India, in order to produce dedicated missionaries proficient in local languages and well-

versed in Indian rural life and culture. Dharma Jyoti Vidya Peeth, founded in the year 2000, stands as the realization of their aspirations.

Dharma Jyoti is situated in Chandpur village, a one-hour journey from Faridabad amidst farms and lush greenery. Over the past 24 years, Dharma Jyoti has undergone remarkable expansion, a journey blessed with divine providence, the wisdom of Metropolitans and Bishops, and the selfless dedication of former principals and faculty members. More than 200 students have graduated from DJVP and they all are actively contributing to the mission endeavors of churches and mission organizations across India. Moreover, DJVP has played a pivotal role in training a large number of lay people worldwide for lay ministry.



In addition to academic pursuits, students are actively involved in outreach programmes, farming activities, and campus sustainability efforts, fostering a holistic educational environment. While serving as an ideal setting for camps and retreats for up to 50 adults, the campus also hosts larger

Affiliated with Serampore University, Dharma Jyoti offers various courses, including BD (Regular-4Yr.), BD (Integrated 5 Yr.), and BCS (Non-residential). DJVP is committed to gender sensitivity and ecumenism and gives priority to admitting candidates from Hindi-speaking regions, aiming to strengthen mission efforts in North India. At present there are six ordained ministers of the Mar Thoma Church serving as full-time faculty and four part-time instructors.

Dharma Jyoti provides a comprehensive learning experience encompassing worship, academic, study, prayer, library access, community engagement, sports, cultural activities, skill development, and practical exposure to mission contexts.

groups for picnics and day meetings. However, maintaining the institution necessitates an annual budget of approximately 75-80 Lakhs Rupees. We are thankful to the members of the Mar Thoma church particularly those from the Mumbai and Delhi diocese for their unwavering support throughout the years.

As Dharma Jyoti approaches its Silver Jubilee year in 2025, plans are underway to launch a new course catering to students from economically disadvantaged rural backgrounds without a formal degree, as well as to enhance infrastructure by constructing a concrete road and renovating the chapel and old structures. The institution appeals to all supporters to continue upholding Dharma Jyoti and its ministry in prayers and to extend all possible assistance in the years ahead.







REV. THOMAS JOHN (MARAMON)

# A VISIT TO HUMAYUN'S TOMB

One of the perks of living in Delhi is the opportunity to visit beautiful historical monuments here. These monuments are a witness to the events that shaped our land since time immemorial. A history buff that I am, when I visit them, I often feel a sense of connecting to the past. Our present is enriched by our past. Its ups and downs, its victories and failures, its intrigues and controversies and the various colorful personalities that shaped history, seem to come alive whenever we visit such a place. And that is the sheer spell that Humayun's tomb complex casts on every visitor.

I happened to visit the monument in October last year. The climate in Delhi was at its pleasant best. During my visits to various monuments across India I have often been disappointed with the bad condition in which

many of our sites are in today. Crumbling infrastructure, land encroachment, infestation by bats and rodents and shady human characters are a common feature of many of our archeological sites and monuments. Infact, even when I visited the Taj Mahal, I was appalled to see that Agra city is dirty and the place surrounding the Taj is infested by dogs and monkeys that may pose a hazard to humans, not to mention touts that are eager to make a fast buck out of every gullible traveler. But Humayun's tomb clearly exceeded my expectations and wowed me since the moment I arrived at the place. There is a neat parking facility. The place was uncrowded when I visited it. The gardens and monuments were immaculately maintained, which added to the delight of the photographer in me. Every place within the complex is kept clean and well labelled. And

we cannot help but appreciate the efforts of the Aga Khan Trust and the Archeological Survey of India that labored to repair and maintain the structure during the 90s. When we walk through ancient doorways which are more than 500 years old, we are struck by the fact that it all survived the test of time. On entering the complex, we first arrive at an area where we see several beautiful structures like Bu Halima's tomb, Bu Halima's gate, the Isa Khan Tomb, the Isa Khan mosque, the Arab Serai gate, etc. Nobody is sure who Bu Halima was, but it is speculated that she could have been Humayun's wet nurse and a Mughal noble woman. The Arab Serai was a resting place for the Persian artisans. We finally enter through the West gate where the grandeur of the Humayun's tomb's main building finally comes into view.

Humayun Tomb is a magnificent tomb complex of the second Mughal emperor, Mirza Nasir al-Din Muhammad commonly known as Humayun (1508-1556) situated in Nizamuddin East in Delhi near the Purana Qila (Old Fort). The construction of the complex was commissioned by Hamida Banu Begum, the first wife of Humayun, fourteen years after his death. It took nearly seven years to complete the construction of the tomb. Construction began in 1565 and was completed in 1572. The remains of the Emperor, which was entombed initially in Purana Qila, was moved to this final resting place. According to estimates, it cost 15 lakh rupees back then to build and was designed by and Persian architect Mirak Mirza Ghiyath. It is the first garden tomb built in

India, a style known as Charbagh. The Charbagh resembles the garden of paradise mentioned in the Quran. Hence this complex has a central building surrounded by a square garden, which is divided into four main squares by water channels and pathways radiating from the building. It inspired several major architectural innovations, culminating in the construction of the Taj Mahal, more than a century later.

The main structure here is a large red and white sandstone double-storey building. It has a white marble dome and the central dome is surrounded by four smaller domes. The sheer size and proportion of each structure will amaze you. The building is 42 metres high (140 Feet). The gold finial on the very top is 5 metres tall in itself (18 Feet). That's as tall as a two story house! Humayun's grave is located on the lower floor of the monument and his tomb is represented with a beautiful marble cenotaph. The room is lit softly with the outside light filtering in through the sacred geometric shapes and latticed screens of the windows, also known as jaalis. All the walls and ceilings in the structure are adorned with beautiful designs.

Other than the main tomb of Humayun, the complex houses various other tombs, many of which are unknown. And moreover, there are other large monuments that contain tombs of rulers and the elite some even predating Humayun's tomb and some built later. Prominent among the are the Isa Khan tomb, Nila Gumbad (a beautiful structure just outside the main complex

enclosing a tomb called so because of the blue glazed tiles), Nai Ka Gumbad (tomb of Humayun's barber) and the Afsarwala tomb.

In all, there are over 150 graves within the entire complex, including many on the first level terrace of the Humayun's tomb structure, earning it the name "Dormitory of the Mughals". Again, since the graves are not inscribed their identification remains uncertain. Some known graves include some successive Mughal emperors and sons and their wives.

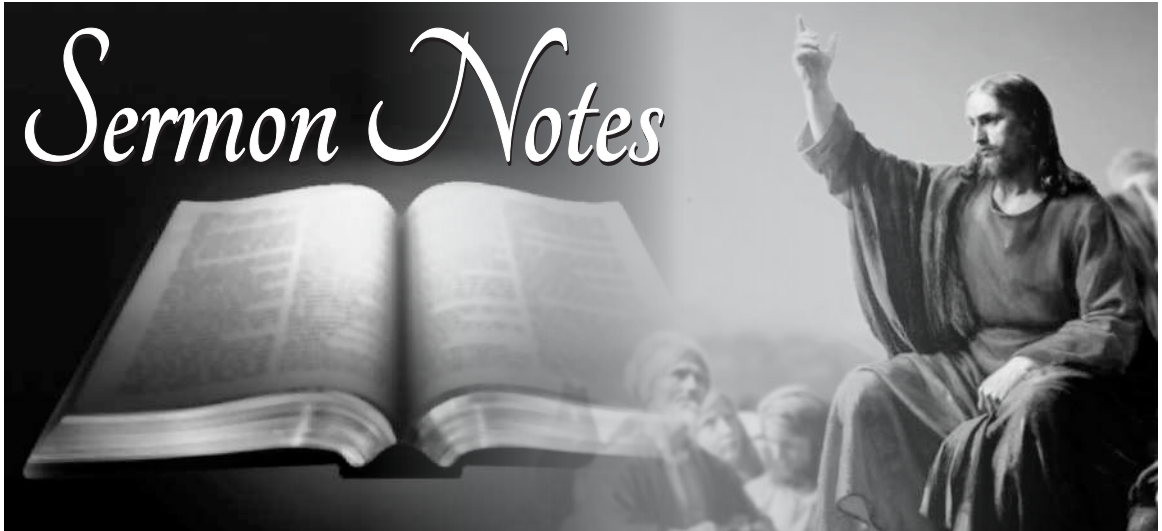
Let me share certain interesting facts that I came to know from various online and print sources. It is believed that Humayun, the successor of the founder of the Mughal Empire, Babur, was not as strong and successful as a ruler as his father. Hence, he had to face several defeats and at a time, was driven out of India. He returned to India and defeated his adversaries only with help from Persia and that's how Persian influences came with the Mughal Empire to India, making its mark in administration, poetry, architecture, art and language. There is some mystery about Humayun's death. Humayun was known to be an avid reader and a collector of immense volumens of manuscripts in his library where he spent long periods of time. Also, he was a strong adherent to the prayer and practices in Islam. Once when he was carrying some manuscripts up the stairs of his library, the azan call for prayer rang out. The emperor knelt on the stair where he was at that instant and stumbled and fell down the stairs and died.

Another interesting aspect of the Humayun's tomb is that it was commissioned by a woman, Hamida Banu Begum, the first wife of Emperor Humayun. In what we could construe as a patriarchal society and period, the begum, on her own accord, visited Mecca and commissioned the famous Persian architect Mirak Mirza Ghiyath, whom she brought from Herat in present day Afghanistan. She and her son Akbar took decisive action during a tumultuous time in their history and exhumed the body of Humayun when they had to escape from Delhi during attacks by their enemies and after a period of time, finally brought the remains to its final resting place at Humayun's tomb.

All in all, the Humayun's tomb is worth a visit for all – be it for the solo traveller or for a relaxing family outing or for avid photographers. It brings before us man's need to leave a legacy or memory that will outlast one's lifetime. I wonder, is it man's vanity or a sign of his love for his loved ones that they want to erect such a structure that will stand even after the passage of time and remind subsequent generations about them. Just as the Mughal empire is an irreplaceable part of India's history, the tomb of Emperor Humayun left its indelible mark in the collective consciousness of people down the ages. That is why it served as an inspiration to Shajahan when he wanted to create a memorial in his wife's memory that would be the biggest and most beautiful mausoleum that the world has seen – the Taj Mahal.



# Sermon Notes



April 7 | John 20 : 24-29

## Jesus Christ, the Lord and God (New Sunday)

*By: Mr. Jeffin Sam (St. Thomas MTC, Karol Bagh)*

**I**n **St. John 20:24-29**, John records one of the major events post Jesus' death where Jesus appears before Thomas. This portion is very familiar to all of us and sometimes casually known as 'Doubting Thomas'.

For context, Jesus appeared multiple times before his disciples. However, when He appeared for the first time, Thomas was not among them. So, when the other disciples told Thomas what had happened, he as any sane and rational human being did not believe them. And Thomas demanded that he will only believe, if he sees the nail marks and puts his finger where the nails were and put his hand into Jesus' side. Then after a week Jesus appears before Thomas and he believes. Moreover, Jesus tells them that it is good that you believe after you saw but blessed are those who believe without seeing. We cannot blame Thomas here for not believing. Thomas had a rational nature as all of us. We won't go to the market and buy anything that the shopkeeper tries to sell us without seeing it and making sure it's genuine.

If we look closely, Jesus doesn't criticise Thomas for not believing instead exposes the human condition of doubt and fear so that their faith becomes firmer. The belief that Jesus mentions, is for eternal life in his kingdom. When Thomas got the assurance that it was Jesus, his doubts got cleared, his questions got answered and he became even more strengthened in faith. When he believed, he never doubted again. And his faith became the root of our faith, the 'St. Thomas Christians'.



In the same way, it is okay for us to have doubts and questions. Without having doubts and questions, we won't be able to grow in faith. In today's world, where intelligence can be artificial and it is becoming difficult to tell what is real, let us pray to the Lord for more strength to keep firm in faith and to be like Thomas who believed and never looked back.

April 14 | John 21 : 1-14

## Jesus Christ who Restores

*By: Mr. Allen B. Alex (St. James MTC, Dwarka)*

**I**n John chapter 21, verses 1 to 14, we are invited to witness an interaction between the resurrected Jesus Christ and his disciples. The disciples venture out into the sea on their boat to fish and despite their best efforts throughout the night, their nets remain barren. Come dawn Jesus appears and advises the dejected disciples to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. When they obeyed, they found themselves unable to haul the net back into the boat due to the overwhelming abundance of fish.

The dejected state of the disciples mirrors the struggles and disappointments we often face in our lives. Like them we are also bound to encounter moments of despair, uncertainty and discouragement. However just like Jesus appeared to the disciples in their moment of need, the teachings of Jesus and the holy spirit can guide us towards joy, contentment and our goals.

Today, many of us find ourselves constantly preoccupied with societal temptations, leaving less to time for us to introspect on the teachings of Christ and diminishing our openness to be influenced by the Holy Spirit. How many of us find the time to gather our thoughts and communicate both with our inner selves, and with God? Therefore, if we dedicate time towards personal introspection and spiritual growth, we open our hearts and minds to the Lord's presence, allowing Jesus to deliver us from our troubles.

April 21 | Luke 24 : 13-35

## The Resurrected Christ who encourages the dispirited

*By: Ms. Aksa Elizabeth Johnson (St. Peter's MTC, Patparganj)*

**T**he narrative in Luke 24:13-35 captures a profound encounter between the resurrected Christ and two despondent disciples journeying to Emmaus. As they walked, shrouded in sorrow and confusion over Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus himself drew near, yet they did not recognize him. Through conversation and the breaking of bread, their eyes were opened, and they recognized the risen Savior in their midst. This poignant story resonates through the ages, offering hope to the despondent and reassurance of Christ's abiding presence.

In today's tumultuous world, marked by uncertainty and despair, the message of Christ's resurrection remains profoundly relevant. Romans 15:13 declares, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Similarly, Psalm 34:18 reminds us, "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Just as the disciples on the road to Emmaus found solace and renewal in encountering the resurrected Christ, so too can we draw strength from his promise of redemption and eternal life. In moments of despair, may we cling to the hope found in Christ's resurrection, trusting in his unfailing love to guide us through life's darkest valleys.

April 28 | Matthew 19 : 1-12

## Marriage: Call and Commission

*By: Ms. Sharlin Sara Thomas (MTC, Ghaziabad)*

**T**he passage in Matthew 19:1-12 addresses the topic of marriage, highlighting its divine call and commission. Jesus affirms the sacredness and permanence of marriage, emphasizing God's design and purpose.

One must remember that, Marriage is not a human invention but a divine institution created by God. It reflects the intimate union between Christ and the Church, symbolizing love, unity, and mutual submission. In this portion, Jesus teaches against divorce except in cases of adultery, emphasizing faithfulness and commitment in marriage. The covenantal bond in marriage mirrors God's faithfulness to His people. Marriage is a call to unity, where two individuals become one flesh, sharing life's joys and challenges. It is also a commission for fruitfulness, not only in terms of children but also in spiritual growth and ministry. Jesus also honours singleness as a valid and valuable life choice, emphasizing that some are called to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom.

To sum up, we must remember that, marriage is a divine call and commission, requiring faithfulness, unity, and a shared commitment to glorify God through the relationship.

May 5 | Matthew 25 : 31-40

## Remember the Poor (Bhoo-Bhavana Danam)

*By: Mr. Joel Johnson Varghese (Bethel MTC, Saket)*

In the given portion, Jesus describes the scene of the final judgment, where He, the Son of Man, will come in glory with all the angels. He proclaims that, He will sit on His throne, and all nations will be gathered before Him. Jesus further narrates how He will separate people. To the righteous, He will say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." This illustrates the importance of living a righteous life and the reward awaiting those who do. The righteous will ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?" They will be surprised to learn that their acts of kindness toward others were acts done unto Christ Himself. The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." This emphasizes the profound connection between our actions towards others and our relationship with Christ.

Inspired by the teachings of Matthew 25:31-40, our Mar Thoma Sabha embodies the spirit of compassion by initiating "Bhoo-Bhavana Dhanam", a program dedicated to helping the poor and needy. Through this initiative, funds are collected to provide homes for those without shelter, reflecting Christ's call to clothe the naked and shelter the homeless. This practical expression of love demonstrates our commitment to serving others honouring Christ in our actions.

Jesus teaches us that acts of compassion and kindness towards others are direct expressions of our love for Him. He challenges us to see the divine in every person we encounter and to serve others with the same love and mercy that He has shown us.

May 12 | John 14 : 14-21

## Holy Spirit, one among the Trinity

*By: Mr. Rijo Skariah (St. Thomas MTC, Gurgaon)*

John 14:14-21 highlights the intimate relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, revealing the Holy Spirit's role and presence among believers. To start with, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, the Helper, to be with His disciples forever. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and guides believers into all truth. He dwells within believers, making His home in their hearts. This indwelling presence is a profound mystery, representing

the unity of the believer with the Triune God. He reveals the Son to believers, enabling them to know and experience Christ's presence. Through the Holy Spirit, believers also come to know the Father, understanding the unity within the Godhead.

Jesus promises us that He will not leave His believers as orphans; and will come to them. Therefore, Holy Spirit's indwelling presence is a tangible assurance of Christ's abiding presence with His people.

May 19 | Matthew 28 : 16-20

### Pentecost: the Holy Spirit who renews the whole creation

**I**n Matthew 28:16-20, often referred to as the Great Commission, Jesus commissions his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This passage is deeply intertwined with the theme of Pentecost and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost, the celebration of the Holy Spirit's descent upon the disciples, marks the beginning of a new era in the life of the Church. The Holy Spirit, often depicted as the breath of God or the renewing wind, brings about transformation and renewal to the whole creation.

Just as the disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel fearlessly and baptize believers, so too are we called to carry on this mission today. The Holy Spirit continues to work in and through the Church, renewing hearts, transforming lives, and reconciling all things to God.

As we reflect on Matthew 28:16-20 through the lens of Pentecost, we are reminded of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in renewing the whole creation. May we, like the disciples, be filled with the same Spirit, boldly proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and participating in God's redemptive work in the world.

May 26 | Matthew 28 : 16-20

### The Great Commission: Church as the Herald of the Good News

*By: Mr. Joshua Aby Jacob (Ebenezer MTC, Vikaspuri)*

**T**he Great Commission is Jesus' last commandment to the disciples before His ascension. It is a call to proclaim the Good News of salvation. This commission is not just to the Twelve, but to the Church as a whole, as all Christians are His disciples. The Church is called to be the herald proclaiming the decree of salvation and good news to the whole world.



Jesus begins His commission by asserting His authority over heaven and earth. As disciples of Christ, we must recognize His authority in our lives and submit to His lordship. Jesus instructs His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. This command is to all who profess faith in Christ- it is the duty of the Church as a whole. We are to make disciples by investing in the lives of others and sharing the love of Christ.

Jesus emphasizes the importance of baptism- in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, pointing to the truth of the triune God, as the method of initiation into the Christian faith. This is to be followed by proper teaching in obedience to Jesus to nurture believers in the faith. Jesus concludes the Great Commission with the promise of His continued and everlasting presence. This assurance of His presence empowers and sustains us as we fulfil His commission.

Matthew 28:16-20 reminds the Church to fulfil Her duty as the herald who proclaims the good news of salvation to all those who are lost, to make disciples of all peoples, joining them to the church through baptism, and to teach the believers to obey the will of God. This duty can be fulfilled only through the continued presence of Jesus with the Church.

**June 2 | Matthew 7 : 21-27**

### **Education that leads to wisdom (Beginning of Academic Year)**

**I**n this given passage, Jesus emphasizes the importance of acting upon His teachings. This passage is key towards in understanding the nature of true wisdom and the role of education in forming a life grounded in Christ's teachings. Jesus begins by contrasting those who merely call Him "Lord" with those who do the will of His Father in Heaven. He warns that not everyone who professes faith will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who translate their faith into obedient action. This distinction highlights that true wisdom goes beyond intellectual knowledge or verbal confession; it manifests in practical obedience and righteous living. The parable of the wise and foolish builders that follows further illustrates this point. The wise builder constructs his house on the rock, symbolizing a life founded on hearing and acting upon Jesus' words. In contrast, the foolish builder erects his house on sand, representing a superficial engagement with Jesus' teachings—hearing without doing. When the storms come, only the house on the rock stands firm, underscoring that wisdom is demonstrated through resilient, faithful action.

Education, in this sphere, is not merely about accumulating information or acquiring skills but is about forming character and guiding action. It involves internalizing Christ's teachings and allowing them to transform our hearts and minds, leading to wise living. True education instils the discernment to distinguish right from wrong and the fortitude to act on that discernment, even in the face of adversity.

June 9 | John 3 : 16-21

## Integrity of whole creation in Christ (Environmental Sunday)

*By: Ms. Betsy Sara Mathew (Jerusalem MTC, Safdarjung)*

The given portion emphasizes on encountering the essence of God's love and the transformative power of His light. In John 3:16, we read that, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This verse reflects on the magnitude of God's love, which knows no boundaries or limitations. It emphasizes the sacrificial nature of God's love, demonstrated through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Further, Jesus discusses the purpose of His coming, i.e. to offer salvation to all who believe. It highlights the contrast between God's desire for salvation and the world's tendency towards condemnation.

This portion, encourages introspection on how we respond to God's love, through belief and acceptance or through disbelief and rejection and examines the consequences of our choices in relation to God's offer of salvation. It further, draws parallels between light and truth, emphasizing their illuminating and revealing nature and challenges us believers, to live in the light, embracing truth and righteousness, rather than hiding in darkness.

John 3:16-21 is a reminder of depth of God's love; offer of salvation through Jesus Christ and transformative power of living in His light. To this privilege, we are to respond with faith, walking in the truth, and experiencing the abundant life that comes from dwelling in God's love and light.

June 16 | Matthew 4 : 17-22

## Call and Commission to be Christ's Disciples (Beginning of Fast of the Apostles)

*By: Ms. Krupa Abraham (Immanuel MTC, Noida)*

In Matthew 4:17-22, we witness a remarkable display of Jesus' calling of His disciples. He did not select learned scholars or esteemed religious leaders; rather, He chose ordinary fishermen from Galilee, a remote and less cultured region. These men were not considered qualified by societal standards, but Jesus saw something in them that others overlooked.

Jesus' method of selecting His disciples challenges our conventional understanding of qualifications. He did not "call the qualified"; instead, He "qualified the called." Despite their lack of formal education or social status, Jesus saw potential in these humble fishermen. He saw hearts that were willing to follow Him wholeheartedly, hearts that were open to His teachings

and willing to surrender everything for the sake of the gospel. This serves as a powerful reminder that God does not look at outward appearances or worldly credentials. He looks at the heart. He is not concerned with our past failures or shortcomings; rather, He sees our potential and calls us to fulfil His purpose for our lives.

Just as Jesus equipped His disciples for the task ahead, He continues to equip and empower us for the work He has called us to do. He takes ordinary people and transforms them into vessels of His grace and power, using them to accomplish extraordinary things for His kingdom. Let us take comfort in the knowledge that God can use anyone, regardless of their background or qualifications. Let us respond to His call with faith and obedience, trusting that He will equip us for every good work and use us to bring glory to His name.

June 23 | Luke 9 : 23-27

## Discipleship: The Call to bear the Cross

In this gospel portion, Jesus articulates a fundamental aspect of discipleship—the call to bear the cross. He says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” This passage challenges us to consider the cost of following Christ and the radical commitment it requires. The image of bearing the cross carries profound significance. In Jesus’ time, the cross symbolized suffering, sacrifice, and even death. By calling his disciples to take up their crosses, Jesus invites them into a life of self-denial, surrender, and dedication to God’s kingdom purposes.

Discipleship, then, is not merely about belief or intellectual assent; it’s about action and transformation. It’s about aligning our lives with the values and mission of Christ, even when it means enduring hardship or facing opposition. Moreover, Jesus emphasizes the urgency of this call to discipleship. He warns that those who seek to save their lives will lose them, but those who lose their lives for his sake will find true life. This paradoxical statement underscores the radical nature of following Jesus—a willingness to relinquish control and embrace God’s will above all else.

As we meditate on this portion, we are confronted with a challenging question: Are we willing to bear the cross, to embrace the sacrificial life of discipleship? In a world that often prioritizes comfort, success, and self-interest, Jesus’ call stands as a stark reminder of the counter-cultural nature of the Gospel. Yet, in bearing the cross, we discover the profound joy and fulfilment of walking in the footsteps of Christ. We find purpose, meaning, and eternal significance in living out our faith authentically and sacrificially. May the Cross of Our Lord inspire us to count the cost of discipleship and respond with wholehearted devotion, knowing that in following Jesus, we find the abundant life he promises.

June 30 | Matthew 24 : 42-51

**The glorious appearance of Jesus Christ and the disciples who need to be vigilant.***By: Mr. Shijo M Abraham (All Saints MTC, Faridabad)*

**M**atthew 24 discusses Jesus' teachings on the end times and his second coming, stressing the need to remain watchful and faithful. The first part of this commission focuses on staying Watchful and Prepared. Jesus compares his return to a thief's unexpected arrival, urging us to be spiritually prepared at all times. Further, the emphasis is given onto the wise servants, who showed Faithfulness and Wisdom. Jesus praises the faithful and wise servants who fulfil their duties diligently, given to them by Him. These words of Jesus, highlights on our responsibility as believers, towards sharing the gospel. Further, this portion calls us to avoid Laziness and Wickedness. Conversely, the wicked servant symbolizes those who neglect their duties out of complacency, which leads them towards severe consequences.

To sum up, the parable of the faithful and wise servant serves as a reminder to remain vigilant and faithful, actively serving God and others, and avoiding complacency and unfaithfulness.





## EVENTS/CONFERENCES

*Felicitation to Respected Tirumeni at MarThoma Centre , Delhi*



## EVENTS/CONFERENCES

