PERSECUTION RELIEF
FAMILY STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE FAMILIES
OF THE MARTYRS AND THE INJURED.
For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Corinthians 4:17
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CHIEF
EDITOR’S
NOTE

God is Sovereign and establishes and removes kings. It is “God Who promotes one and deposes another” (Ps. 75:6);

CHOWKIDAR - WATCHMEN

The Bible encourages us to watch and be alert.

“I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isaiah 62:6-7).

In ancient times, ‘Chowkidar’s’ stood guard on a city’s walls to see to the welfare of its citizens and to warn of coming trouble. Who is to do that job today in a dangerous world moving closer to a crisis? We are repeatedly encouraged to be ready for Christ’s coming. But the devil tries to make us comfortable when we should be uncomfortable. The church is tempted to sleep and not be ready for the enemy when he comes.

God chose lowly messengers like Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others, who have stood in the role of a watchman to God’s people, urging them to heed to His warnings and return to the ways of God.

In today’s scenario, we are the watchmen. Each one of us, bought and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, are called to a unique role – as Chowkidars - Watchmen, appointed by God for the country we live in. Our role is to safe guard and protect God’s people. We never fight the battle alone; our job is to alert about the approaching danger – to blow the trumpet and announce every attempted attack against the Kingdom of God or Kingdom principles.

As spiritual watchman, God has equipped our eyes to see or ears to hear of danger. He has also equipped us to know how to blow the horn and to give warning, call an assembly to pray and cry out to God.

Jesus prophesized about the end times, urging his disciples, three times, to “watch” the times leading to His second coming, in Mark 13:32-37.

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants,
We interact with multiple organizations and institutions and have a level of connection that brings out the unheard voices and concerns of the community before the administration. We consider ourselves as the watchmen for the persecuted Christian community in India. This is a huge responsibility, playing our role, to safeguard the minorities and voiceless people, as far as possible by us.

Would you let God assign you?

Would you open your heart to God to be a spiritual watchman to hear and see what others may not, and will you say to God;

“Whatever You show me that is putting Your people in danger, Lord, give me the spiritual boldness and courage to put the trumpet to my lips and blow the warning so that nobody will be lost but found paying attention”.

Shibu Thomas
Chief Editor
Voice of the Christians

Dear Readers,

We regret to inform you that owing to inadvertent and unavoidable circumstances, we were unable to print “Voice of the Christians” magazine, February and March editions.

If you need a ‘Pdf’ copy of these issues, please write to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com or WhatsApp us at + 91 9993200020.

Subscribers who have missed these 2 editions, will receive an extension of 2 months, to their existing subscription.

Thank you for your understanding and support.
A Message of Awakening the Church

THE LORD REIGNS OVER ALL THE NATIONS. I AM, THAT I AM, THE GOD OF THE NATIONS

The awakening of the Church is not new but has been happening as a pre-cursor to every radical move of God. It has always come to wake up the Church - His body to the truth of the Kingdom and the move of God in that season. The message for each awakening has always been strategic for each move and pivotal to the Kingdom of God manifesting on earth as it is in heaven.

The book of Revelation, so rightly starts with a message to the Churches to reveal the heart of God, to the body Of Christ.

Revelation 1:1 The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place

In submission to this word, the spirit of God has impressed upon my (Bro Onassis’s) spirit, a message for the body of Christ for such a time as this.

Like all Awakenings are largely about an identity crisis. This one is too. God is moving in a very powerful way and ready to break forth a mighty outpouring. He never does anything without saying it to His prophets first, so,

“Wake up O Sleeper, Arise!! for the Lord Jesus Christ desires to shine on you.” (Ephesians 5:14, Isaiah 60:1)

Wake Up to Happenings Worldwide

People are killed in masses in the mid-east and are being displaced from their lands. The people are therefore carrying the heart of a refugee. Majoritarianism is passing the rulings of the world. Shouldn’t it be the prayers of the humble people of God be doing so?

Climatic changes are drastic and are causing unusual disasters and calamities. Jammu and Kashmir in India saw a disaster flood, North East US saw unusual snow storms and Indonesia saw typhoons. The list is unending. These weaken economies and give rise to darkness rising in the hearts of man to manage survival.
Direct onslaughts against Churches in many nations with Witches and Corrupt leaders raising their heads against the knowledge of Christ.

Leadership of countries like in India, subtly penetrating the system of the country, trying to weave an impregnable cloud of deception by introducing many efforts to make the epic of religion a reality. Masking truth with a lie spoken many times in many ways.

Amidst all of this, the Spirit of the Lord says “Listen to what the Spirit says to the Church - Revelation 1:2-3”

**Behold! The News of Heaven**

God is going to showdown His glory like never before. No matter the things that are happening around, The Lord reigns over all the nations.

- God is raising up an army to awaken the Church - A rumbling.
- Do not judge the different parts of the body of Christ on how They have invested in the Kingdom
- There is going to be a revival of expats in US
- God is going to re-ignite missions in Europe.
- Islam is not going to explode but is going to implode.
- Millions are going to reject Islam and shut doors to it in the West.

God is in the relentless process of plundering hell and populating heaven. You are invited to be a part of this magnificent move of God.

**Gods Move - Many Roads to Damascus**

In all spheres of influence, Media, Government, Education, Business, Religion, Arts, Entertainment, Family, etc. God is and has created many roads to Damascus experience for those Saul’s who are currently on an assignment against the Churches. These roads are to be radical encounters with God and turn arounds for these Saul’s to become Paul’s.

An Army of Paul’s are going to overtake the Levites. The Church right now is asleep to this move and is going to be alarmed to see these radical Paul’s take the world for Jesus.

God is looking for His sons and daughters to partner with Him in this move. So, the question in His Spirit is,
**Ananias - Where are you?**

Today the Lord is not thinking about the Damascus Road of Saul, as He on His own is revealing His mighty self and bringing the transformation of many numerous Saul’s worldwide. But the Road of Ananias is the one that the Lord is looking at.

Saul will have all sorts of things to do in and for the Kingdom of God, but the man God relies upon in this hour is the child of God who has been trained for such a time as now - Ananias. How lovely that God would choose a man whose very name, in its derivative Hebrew form, means “the LORD is gracious” or “the LORD shows grace” to be such a lavish instrument of grace!

It was Ananias who revealed the abundant grace and love of God to embrace Saul into the fold of God - His body. Even today, God has not changed. He has created multiple Damascus roads in all spheres of influence and is orchestrating an encounter with all the Saul’s on those roads. But where are the Ananias of God? Are they ready?

**Who is the Ananias?**

Ananias doesn’t need any help recognizing the LORD when he is spoken to. When the LORD speaks to this man, Ananias’ immediate response is “Here I am, LORD!”

Ananias receives great detail in the revelation of the journey to Paul. He is given the street name, the homeowner’s name and Saul’s name. He is told what Saul is doing at the moment and what Saul is being told by God. He is told what he is supposed to do and say. He is even told why his mission is so important – God Almighty lets Ananias in on his long-range plans for the life of Saul and, in so doing, the life of the church itself.

The safety and security of Ananias are secondary to the importance of the mission.

Faithful Ananias was listening and ready for the mission, because God amazingly allowed him to fully understand the mission, because Ananias allowed the mission to be more important than himself, this faithful, obedient and utterly wonderful guy Ananias got to see the miracle of grace in Saul’s life and harvested Paul.

If the mission isn’t more important than you, the mission will never be accomplished. This is the heartbeat of Ananias.
What must the Church do?

Saul’s are ready to rush up to the Ananias. A great harvest of Saul’s are present in India.

The body of Christ must reveal the heart of the Father (Luke 15), they must

- Prepare
- Sharpen their gifting
- Raise Up and Look to God

- Children and Young people have a great role in the coming revival. A generation of Josephs, Elisha’s and David’s.

- The global Church should connect with the Churches that are broken and take responsibility for them.

- The Church should rise, not in fear but in radically taking their rightful possessions as sons and daughters of God.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,

“Whom shall i send? And who will go for us?”

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?
Adopt a persecuted family

Prayerline24.com
- Daily 6 to 6.45 pm (New York time)
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Detained by Police on allegations of conversion, Uttar Pradesh

Religious fanatics charged into a private residence where Christian families had gathered for a thanksgiving prayer meeting.

Pastor V. J. Jose has been faithfully serving in the Lord’s vineyard, in Ghazipur District of Uttar Pradesh for the past 26 years, affiliated with FFCI (Filadelfia Fellowship Church of India).

Beechu Ram had put his faith in Jesus Christ when he was healed, after he sought prayers from Pastor Jose. He wanted to give thanks to God and invited Pastor to his home to conduct a prayer meeting.

On 10th April, Pastor Jose, along with his Ebenezer Jose and a few others, visited Beechu Ram’s house in Ghatampur Village in Zamania Block in Ghazipur District of Uttar Pradesh State.

The meeting commenced with prayer, praise songs and reading of Psalms. Just then, a youth trespassed into the house and started recording a video of the proceedings and taking pictures. Before the residents could realize his intentions, the youth contacted the local Police and falsely alleged that conversion activities were taking place in the home!

The Police promptly arrived and without listening or investigating what really transpired, demanded that the congregation report to the Police Station. Intimidated by the turn of events, Pastor Jose, and his terrified son, and 2 other youth below 18 years of age, who were attending the meeting, their sisters – all minors and the House Owner Beechu Ram – 8 persons in total, to Sohaval Police Station.
The Police began questioning Pastor on the serious allegations made by the complainant. Pastor maintained his innocence stating that all he does was share the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Jobin from Church of God and Bro. Prabhan Mathew and a few others, contacted Persecution Relief, to alert on this incident.

Persecution relief Team contacted Dr. Arvind Chaturvedi, Superintended of Police (SP), who was empathetic and expressed concern over the unsubstantiated and spurious accusations of forcible or fraudulent conversion raised by religious fanatics.

We were later informed that 5 persons, including Pastor Jose, were booked by the SDM (Sub-Divisional Magistrate) under Section IPC 151

S151: Knowingly joining or continuing in assembly of five or more persons after it has been commanded to disperse

By the grace and mercy of God, all 5 of the detained Christians were released on the same night. The following day, they applied and secured bail.

Pray that God will continue to use Pastor Jose and Beechu Ram for His glory and honour.

Relief Provided:
“I CANNOT EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE ENOUGH TO PERSECUTION RELIEF FOR THE TIMELY HELP PROVIDED, FOR SPEAKING ON OUR BEHALF TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, DR. ARVIND CHATURVEDI, EXPLAINING THE TRUTH ON THE GROUND. THANK YOU, PERSECUTION RELIEF AND GOD BLESS, BRO. SHIBU FOR SUCH AN IMPORTANT MINISTRY.”

Pastor Jose
Indian Evangelical Team College” (IET) in Pipariya, Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh, one of the prestigious institutes in the city, was hosting their 48th Bible College Graduation ceremony, on Saturday, 13th April, 2019.

Hectic preparations for the graduation ceremony were underway at the College, for the culmination of a 3-year learning for 26 students, who earned their coveted degree, which was a major accomplishment. Graduates from the previous year, as well as current graduates, were invited to participate in this ceremony; parents and close relatives had travelled from all across India, to share and celebrate the joyous moment of their children.

On Friday, 12th April, at around 6 pm, the Sub Judicial Magistrate (SDM), the Town Inspector (TI) Mr. Satish and a mob of right-wing religious protestors, on motor bikes, rode into the College Campus. They protested and barged into the Principal’s office, questioning and disrupting proceedings and preparations for the ceremony.

With no sense of decorum or propriety for the significance of the event that was being
Persecution and Relief

FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN INDIA IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT GUARANTEED BY ARTICLE 25-28 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA. EVERY CITIZEN OF INDIA HAS A RIGHT TO PRACTICE AND PROMOTE THEIR RELIGION PEACEFULLY.

IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2019, 130 INCIDENTS OF PERSECUTION HAVE BEEN RECORDED BY US. ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN INDIA, THE DOORS OF A MULTITUDE OF CHURCHES HAVE BEEN SEALED AND SCORES ARRESTED ON FALSE CHARGES OF INDULGING IN CONVERSION ACTIVITIES.

organised, they arbitrarily questioned the stunned students, and parents. They accused the organisation of indulging in conversion activities, the common rhetoric used by the fanatics to attack innocent Christians.

Later the same evening, around 8 pm, the SDM and TI arrived again, and started questioning College authorities. In what is seen as an attempt to harass and inconvenience the College authorities, they demanded that they be provided with a list of all people, in the Campus, by 10.00 am the following day.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, the Principal of the College, Dr. Sam George, mentioned that it was impractical to make a list at such short notice, on the eve of the graduation ceremony.

“The SDM was very cooperative but TI was shouting and raising his voice, when we asked him why is it that we cannot hold a spiritual meeting in our private campuses”.

Bishop Sam Varghese from Trivandrum, informed Persecution Relief of the developments. Bro. Shibu Thomas, promptly spoke to the Superintendent of Police (SP), Hoshangabad, and informed him about the gravity of the incident, who assured prompt action.

Later, the following day, speaking to Persecution Relief, Rev. Shaji Varghese, General Secretary/ Vice President (IET) expressed gratitude.

“The graduation service went ahead peacefully, without any problems. I am really grateful to all the prayers that were lifted up at a time like time”.

Donning Caps and Gowns, students graduating from the College, were jubilant, rejoiced and gave thanks to God while receiving their Degree certificates.

Rev. Shaji Varghese added that, he was saddened about the turn of events. He expressed deep concern that a few months ago, his effigy was burned by a mob of fanatics, who demanded his arrest.

“It is only by the grace and mercy of God that nothing untoward has happened to me”.

Pray that IET College will continue to produce valiant Christians, who will fearlessly
proclaim the name of Jesus Christ, for His glory and honour.

Alongside, there was a Training Program for Pastors being held, for Pastors across India, at the College Campus, which is a routine practice. Close to 60 Pastors were attending this Program.

Christians across India, have been facing a rising wave of violence in the past few years. Many attacks are believed to be politically motivated, in an effort to polarize the community, especially in the run up to the elections in April 2019.

Freedom of religion in India is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 25-28 of the Constitution of India. Every citizen of India has a right to practice and promote their religion peacefully.

In the first quarter of 2019, 130 incidents of persecution have been recorded by us. Across the country in India, the doors of a multitude of Churches have been sealed and scores arrested on false charges of indulging in conversion activities.

Church, continue to fast and pray for Madhya Pradesh and for India.
Strong-arm tactics to grab IPC Church land, Telangana

IF ANY OF YOU COME OUT OF YOUR HOME, WE WILL KILL YOU AND BURY YOU HERE, THEY SHOUTED.

Certain lawless persons, illegally trespassed into a private property belonging to a Christian, with a JCB, deceitfully trying to grab private land. Pastor Varukunnel Mathew Kutty lives on a plot of land measuring around 1 ½ acres, purchased some 40 years ago, legally registered to IPC (Indian Pentecostal Church of God) name. He ministers with the IPC (Indian Pentecostal Church of God), Gummadidala village in the outskirts of in the Medak district in Hyderabad, Telangana.

As the land prices are sky-rocketing for this prime piece of land, the original owners, expressed interest to buy back the property. A Church building has been constructed and over 400 believers gather to worship at the Church, which is surrounded by mango groves.
After consulting with the Head Office, Pastor politely communicated that they had no interest in selling the property, of which IPC (Indian Pentecostal Church of God) was the rightful owner.

In spite of this, on Wednesday, 17th April, in a brazen violation, a mob of 40-persons, along with a JCB, drove into the Church property, yelling and shouting at the inmates of Pastor’s residence, trying to intimidate and terrorize them, in an attempt to grab the land.

“If any of you come out of your home, we will kill you and bury you here”, they shouted.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Stephen Abraham, son in-law of Pastor Mathewkutty, said that he lives around 25 kms away from where this property is located.

There were 3 persons on the Church property at the time of this intrusion. On hearing the news, Pastor Stephen took along with him several Church Leaders and members, and rushed to the site of the intrusion.

Pastor, unprepared to say the least, was shocked to see the full extent of the damage done to the property. He found a part of the fencing demolished, ripped up mango trees, some burned and some cut up and a lot of debris throughout the property.

The persecutors, the old land owner relatives, Buchaiya and family, told the Police that the land was allegedly “gifted” and that they were entitled to take it back. However, when the Police demanded to see the Sale Deed, the Police determined that the land was indeed legally sold to IPC (Indian Pentecostal Church of God).

The Police were supportive and fair. They abused the persecutors and forced them to give a written statement that the land did not belong to them and that they will not indulge in harassing the family in the future.

Pastor believes that Christians are seen as a “soft target” and hence targeted.

“Just because Christians do not fight back and forgive, we are seen as vulnerable, but Jesus is our refuge and strength”.

JUST BECAUSE CHRISTIANS DO NOT FIGHT BACK AND FORGIVE, WE ARE SEEN AS VULNERABLE, BUT JESUS IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH.

CHRISTIANS ACROSS INDIA, HAVE BEEN FACING A RISING WAVE OF VIOLENCE IN THE PAST FEW YEARS. MANY ATTACKS ARE BELIEVED TO BE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, IN AN EFFORT TO POLARIZE THE COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY IN THE RUN UP TO THE ELECTIONS IN APRIL 2019.
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Indian police protect convent, school following mob attacks

Nuns injured and property damaged after student commits suicide over exam stress

Police are protecting a Catholic convent and a school two weeks after mobs attacked and injured several people, including four nuns, in southern India’s Tamil Nadu state.

Indian bishops on April 6 appealed to political leaders in New Delhi and Tamil Nadu “to deal sternly” with criminals who attacked the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and its Little Flower Higher Secondary School in Chinnasalem town on March 25-26.

“All the injured nuns are back from hospital now but police continue to guard the school and convent,” the congregation’s provincial superior, Sister Devaseer Mary, told ucanews.com on April 7.

Mobs attacked the school and convent after a grade 10 student committed suicide in the school hostel on the afternoon of March 25, hours after she had taken her mathematics exam after expressing fears of failing it.

Local police officer N. Ramanathan told ucanews.com that the violence began after the school management refused to entertain a demand for 1 million rupees (US$14,250) in compensation.

Sister Mary said the school management refused to pay any compensation because the school had not committed any mistake. But those who demanded compensation on behalf of parents of the deceased student “left angrily saying they knew how they could get this amount.”

A bigger attack followed on March 26. About 200 people armed with sharp weapons, iron rods and wooden batons entered the compound. They attacked the convent, its chapel, school offices and staff in what appeared to be an organized criminal plan. They beat up nuns and school staff, destroyed furniture, windows,
computers and shelves in the school office, and desecrated the chapel.

Ramanathan said police estimated the loss to be worth 200,000 to 400,000 rupees only.

A preliminary inquiry has revealed the girl hanged herself because of exam-related stress, he said.

In an April 6 statement, Catholic bishops said they were “appalled and worried by the violence unleashed against the school staff and the sisters and we condemn it unequivocally.”

“What saddens us is that the school was attacked twice within 24 hours as this reflects the terrible face of mobocracy that we have been condemning time and again,” said the statement.

Church groups have been complaining about increased attacks on Christians and their institutions since the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in New Delhi five years ago. The BJP supports the idea of establishing a Hindu-only nation.

“The special targeting of the sisters, of the religious places in the campus and the sacrilegious attack on the crucifixes of the sisters, with attempts to strangulate the sisters with the chain holding the cross, reveals the darkest side of human beings,” the bishops said.

Sister Mary said nuns plan to hold a meeting with parents next week.

“There was involvement of a political party, and we are still living in fear. Police have provided some security for now, but we need it to continue until the situation becomes normal,” she said.

Credit: uca.news.com
CHRISTIANS FACE UNCERTAIN FUTURE AS SYRIA ENTERS POSSIBLE LAST YEAR OF CIVIL WAR

By World Watch Monitor Syria

As the Syrian civil war enters what might be its last year, Christians are trying to rebuild in the face of an uncertain future.

The conflict, which grew out of the tiny spark of anti-government graffiti 15 March 2011, has claimed more than half a million lives. More than 11 million people have fled their homes; half of them have left the country.

Few have returned. In neighboring Jordan, which hosts more than 1 million Syrian refugees, only a few thousand have returned to their homeland in the five months since the opening of a vital border crossing between the countries, reported Al-Monitor.

Those who decide to go back find that the persecution they escaped is still there, according to Foreign Policy. They disappear in the prison system or are conscripted into the army.

Many Christians fled the violence too, especially when Islamic State militants swept into the country and seized villages and cities. Before 2011, Syrian Christians comprised around 8-10% of a 22 million population, a 2017 report said; 80% of those Christians have since left.

POLITICAL PARTY CAMPAIGNS FOR NEPAL TO BECOME A HINDU STATE

By World Watch Monitor

A pro-Hindu political party in Nepal has launched a campaign calling for the country to become a Hindu theocracy, reports Asia News.

The right-wing pro-Hindu Rastriya Prajatantra Party launched the initiative in all seven provinces with a conference in the capital Kathmandu on 27 February. The party has been calling for the reinstatement of a Hindu state and monarchy ever since Nepal became a secular republic in 2008.

While Nepal is constitutionally secular, the Hindu faith is afforded special protection. Religious minorities, such as Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, are denied registration of their places of worship.
UNITY AMONG CUBAN CHRISTIANS UNPRECEDENTED FOLLOWING CONSTITUTIONAL VOTE

By World Watch Monitor Syria

Cubans search their names in lists as they prepare to cast their vote on Cuba’s new constitution in Havana, against the backdrop of an image of late Revolution leader Fidel Castro.

Cuba’s vote for a new Constitution was characterized by an unusual level of opposition as well as an unprecedented unity among churches. Nearly 87% of the voters approved a new Constitution in a referendum held last Sunday (24 February), while about 15 percent stayed at home and more than against it.

Such a level of dissent is remarkable in the one-party country, even if it does not challenge the Communist regime. Still, “when you create a precedent that people can mobilize politically to pursue policy differences with the government, it’s not so easy to put that genie back in the bottle,” William Leo Grande, a professor of government at American University and a specialist in United States-Cuba relations told the New York Times.

INDONESIA: CHRISTIAN STUDENT FACES JAIL SENTENCE FOR BLASPHEMY

By World Watch Monitor Syria

Thousands of Muslims gathered in Jakarta, Indonesia, in October 2018 after a Muslim flag was burned. The incident also triggered a response from a Christian student, who has been accused of blasphemy.

A Christian student in North-Sumatra, Indonesia, faces 18 months in prison for insulting Islam, reports the Catholic news site UCAN.

The alleged blasphemy took place on 24 October last year, when Agung Kurnia Ritonga, 22, saw a picture showing three Muslims burning a flag containing Islamic symbolism and that belonged to an outlawed militant group Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Ritonga, a student at the University of North Sumatra in the province’s capital Medan, is accused of posting a comment on the Instagram social-media site that insult Mohammed, Islam’s prophet.
Mary, Mother of Jesus – Part 1

“AND MARY SAID, “BEHOLD THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD; BE IT UNTO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD.” AND THE ANGEL DEPARTED FROM HER. 
- LUKE 1: 38 (KJV)

Of all the female characters in the Bible, one name, probably the best known, is that of Mary, the mother of Jesus. One might wonder why, of all the godly Jewish maidens of the day, God chose Mary, the humble peasant woman to be the mother of the Incarnate Son of God. Why did the Father pick her, the gentle and lowly Mary of Nazareth, as the mother of His beloved son? Not only was Mary of lowly origin, she lived in a small town so insignificant as to lead Nathaniel to say, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) But out of Nazareth, and from the womb of the peasant woman came the greatest Man the world has ever known.

Mary was of the tribe of Judah and the line of David and is mentioned in the genealogy of Matthew. Her immediate ancestors are not mentioned but we do know that she became the wife of Joseph, the carpenter. As a virgin who bore Jesus Christ in a miraculous way, she is venerated and referred to as “Mother of the Lord”. Elizabeth, her cousin, praised her as “Blessed among women” because she understood in her spirit that Mary was indeed chosen by God Himself. Apart from Jesus who is referred to as her “firstborn”, we know that Mary bore other children to her husband Joseph, namely four sons and a few daughters.

We know very little of Mary’s beauty or her pedigree. The only thing that we do know about her was that she was poor. Obviously that was no impediment to the glorious plans that God had for her life. That Mary herself was overwhelmed by God’s grace in choosing her for His plan is evident from her implicit obedience to Him, where she magnified Him for regarding her lowly estate and exalting her.

It was divine wisdom that chose Mary from among all the young maidens of her time. In that humble environment it was that God the Father prepared His Son to labour among the common people of the day. The one of whom
WHAT IS AMAZING ABOUT MARY’S VERY REACTION TO THE MESSAGE FROM GABRIEL IS HER ATTITUDE OF FAITH. SHE WAS NOT SCEPTICAL OR DISMISSIVE. CERTAINLY SHE ASKED INTELLIGENT QUESTIONS OF GABRIEL AS TO HOW SHE COULD BECOME THE MOTHER OF JESUS, SEEING AS SHE WAS A PURE VIRGIN. FOLLOWING GABRIEL’S EXPLANATION OF HOW THE MIRACLE WOULD TAKE PLACE, SHE MANIFESTED A TREMENDOUS FEAT OF FAITH WHEN SHE REPLIED, “BE IT UNTO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD.” HER WILLINGNESS TO YIELD HER BODY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT ALLOWED DEITY AND HUMANITY TO BE FUSED TOGETHER TO GIVE BIRTH TO THE GOD-MAN, “GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.”

You may well ask why Mary’s sanctity and holiness were critical to her role as mother of the Saviour. This was because Mary’s divine Child was himself to be holy, undefiled and separated from sinners. When the Angel Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary that she was to bring forth a Son to be called Jesus, he recognised her spiritual fitness for the role. The woman who would give him birth, nourish and care for him in infancy, guide him through boyhood and surround him with true motherly attention until his manhood, had to be a sanctified vessel, fit for the Master’s use. That Mary fulfilled all these requirements is evident from the fact that she first conceived Christ in her heart by faith before she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit in her womb.

What is amazing about Mary’s very reaction to the message from Gabriel is her attitude of faith. She was not sceptical or dismissive. Certainly she asked intelligent questions of Gabriel as to how she could become the mother of Jesus, seeing as she was a pure virgin. Following Gabriel’s explanation of how the miracle would take place, she manifested a tremendous feat of faith when she replied, “Be it unto me according to thy word.” Her willingness to yield her body to the Holy Spirit allowed deity and humanity to be fused together to give birth to the God-Man, “God manifest in the flesh.”

he was born, the place where he was born were all arranged beforehand by the One who from the very beginning, knew everything and ordained everything. Centuries before Mary became the mother of the Saviour of mankind, there were enough prophesies that suggested so. Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Micah had predicted the birth of Christ and even the manner of his death.
Not only did Mary bear Jesus, she was also a devoted mother to him for the thirty years that he lived in the poor Nazareth home. Although she took care of all her children, she knew from the very beginning that her firstborn was no ordinary man. She nurtured him with character forming influences in his early years, so much so that we know that Jesus increased in wisdom and “in stature and favour with God and man.” At home, Jesus was subject to the ruling of his parents, even though he was divine in origin. Joseph and Mary could not give him wealth. In fact, when he was presented in the Temple, all Mary could offer was a pair of pigeons, the offering of the very poor. But little is much if God is in it!

Although Mary could not lavish her son with worldly riches, she endowed her Son with gifts of more infinite value than material wealth. From a human angle, she gave Him life, and He became bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh. Until He was weaned, her warm milk nourished him. Then, along with Joseph, she gave Jesus a home, which, although modest and simple, was yet the only home He knew in the days of His flesh. Jesus being born of a peasant maiden and having a foster-father who eked out a frugal living as a carpenter, was thus best able to sympathize with man as a man.

Because of Mary’s character, though, we are sure that her home was permeated with love and sympathetic understanding. It was definitely Mary’s purity of heart that likely led Jesus to say, when he left home to become a preacher, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Christ’s holiness was part of His divine nature, but it was also a part of His humanity, received from His mother who thought of herself as “the handmaid of the Lord.”
The sufferings of Jesus Christ brought glory to God; your suffering will also bring glory to God.

FOUNDER - PERSECUTION RELIEF
Q uartodeciman means ‘fourteen’ in Latin. Jesus Christ died on the Passover, and Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7). The day that Jesus Christ died was Friday, however the date of His crucifixion was determined by the Passover – the 14th of Nisan. In the year that Jesus was crucified, the Passover happened to fall on a Friday. The year 2019 is one of those rare years when Good Friday falls on the Passover.

Why does this happen only rarely – Because while the Passover is determined as per the Hebrew calendar and consistently falls on the 14th of Nisan / Aviv (two names for the same month), the same date falls on different days each year. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., the church had determined that the death of Jesus Christ would be remembered on Friday, and not in relation to the Passover.

Soon after the apostles died, the disciples of the apostles argued over whether the commemoration of the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ should be based on the date of the Passover or on the day Friday that Jesus died. Irenaeus who was the student of Polycarp mentions in his writings that Polycarp, the disciple of John the apostle travelled to Rome to meet with Anecitus the bishop of Rome at around 150-152 A.D.

This year (2019) is one of those rare years when the Passover and Good Friday fall on the same day. Jesus Christ is Lord yesterday, today and forever. May we as Christians not be divided over matters such as when or whether to remember the crucifixion and whether to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather let us be united in the desire to be a shelter to our more unfortunate brothers and sisters in Christ who live in our neighborhood, who work for us or with us, and who have given up their lives for proclaiming the victory that Jesus has won for us.
POLYCARP attempted to persuade Anecitus to follow the 14th of Nisan date in keeping with how John the apostle used to remember the death of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, Polycarp was unable to persuade Anecitus to follow the teachings of the apostles. Later, at about 170 A.D., a controversy regarding when to memorialize the death of our Lord Jesus Christ – on the 14th of Nisan or on the 15th of Nisan – broke out, suggesting that the church in Laodicea was still observing the teachings of John the apostle and Polycarp. Later still at about 190-194 A.D., Polycrates the bishop of Ephesus and disciple of Polycarp wrote to the Victor the bishop of Rome. As time passed, the Roman church grew powerful and the Roman practice of remembering Jesus’ crucifixion was fixed on a Friday in relation to the vernal equinox at the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

This year (2019) is one of those rare years when the Passover and Good Friday fall on the same day. Jesus Christ is Lord yesterday, today and forever. May we as Christians not be divided over matters such as when or whether to remember the crucifixion and whether to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather let us be united in the desire to be a shelter to our more unfortunate brothers and sisters in Christ who live in our neighborhood, who work for us or with us, and who have given up their lives for proclaiming the victory that Jesus has won for us.

May this year be a year of remembrance – not remembering only what has been wrought for us by Christ, but also of our responsibilities to those who bear the name of Jesus Christ. May we be bold to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in our conversations with family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. May we be disciplined in our families to hold regular times of Bible study and prayer. May we teach our children the way of the Lord. May we give up our lives for the Lord and be mightily used by our King Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Jesus was a man born with a mission. His mission was to die.

The death of Christ was not a surprise or unexpected turn of events. It was a planned event of the Triune God, which God revealed to man, repeatedly and vividly, through His prophets, through the ages. Christ came into this world as man, with just one purpose. To die on behalf of those He had created, that He might save them from the penalty of eternal death.

What can ever explain such a mission, but love.

As the Bible says in John 3:16, 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. Love so deep, so divine. The amazing love of God that knows no boundaries or has any limit. Love that is inexplicable. Love that is impossible to comprehend.

Paul in Romans 5:8 (NIV) says, but God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The famous old hymn by Charles Wesley, so well describes this wonder at the amazing love of God for each of us. What amazing love that God should die for your sin and mine?

And so, Paul states his response to this amazing love of Christ, in Galatians 5:20 - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

AND SO, PAUL STATES HIS RESPONSE TO THIS AMAZING LOVE OF CHRIST, IN GALATIANS 5:20 - I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST AND I NO LONGER LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME. THE LIFE I NOW LIVE IN THE BODY, I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.

Preethi Alice Jacob

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What a powerful statement and deep response. Paul is essentially saying three things here. He says, he has been crucified with Christ. Which means that when he, Paul, chose to believe in Jesus Christ, then Paul is dead. Paul no longer exists. He also confirms that now it is Christ who lives in and through him. And the reason? Paul’s faith in this Christ, the Son of God, the sinless One, and His amazing sacrificial love for him.

Each of us who choose to follow this Christ, who have been saved by His precious blood, are also called to have this same response. To be crucified to ourselves. We are to die to ourselves, our own needs, desires, even to our own will. Christ is to take the absolute priority in our lives, so that He alone is seen in and through our lives. Christ is to be seen in our conversations, our actions, interactions and reactions.

You and I who have chosen to believe in Christ and His atoning death on the cross for our sins, need to ‘be Christ’ to the world around us and reflect Him to the hurting world around us. Are we?
PRAYER GUIDE FOR THE
17TH LOK SABHA ELECTION

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land”. – 2 Chronicles 7: 14

➢ Pray for India to become a truly great democratic nation in the world
➢ Pray for the 17th Lok Sabha Elections to be held freely and fairly, without any riots or violence
➢ Pray for a stable, secular and democratic to be formed at the Centre
➢ Pray for all the voters to exercise their franchise without fail
➢ Pray for the Election Officers and Police Officers to be fair and sincere. Pray for their protection
➢ Pray that Political Parties and Candidates would not divide and polarize voters, in the name of religion, caste and creed
➢ Pray that Voters would reject Parties and Candidates who offer money to bribe them
➢ Pray that Voters would recognize their role and select the right candidate according to their capability and competence
➢ Pray that Voters would elect a Candidate who has the welfare of the citizens on his agenda
➢ Pray for all the Candidates to follow the rules and regulations of the Election Commissioner
➢ Pray that the EVM’s (Voting Machines), will not malfunction or manipulated

Credit: Friends Missionary Prayer Band
Schedule for Lok Sabha Election 2019

Phase-1
11 April 2019
91 Constituencies
20 States

Phase-2
18 April 2019
97 Constituencies
13 States

Phase-3
23 April 2019
115 Constituencies
14 States

Phase-4
29 April 2019
71 Constituencies
9 States

Phase-5
6 May 2019
51 Constituencies
7 States

Phase-6
12 May 2019
59 Constituencies
7 States

Phase-7
19 May 2019
59 Constituencies
8 States

Date of Counting for all the Phases
23 May 2019

Total No. of Constituencies
543

NO VOTER TO BE LEFT BEHIND
GET READY FOR LOK SABHA ELECTION 2019

Visit the websites: eci.gov.in
It is during times of trials and persecution that the people of God are separated and their real inner being comes out.

The word of God is replete with examples of trials and persecutions being like the fiery furnace and the refiners fire.

A person who is facing persecution on account of his or her faith has a potential to develop two responses. One is to fall away and the other is to become even stronger.

What will you choose?

David shares what he faced during such times:

“My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore, I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon--from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me--a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?” My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?” Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God”. - Psalms 42:3-10 NIV

He does not deny the innermost feelings of his heart as he goes through persecution from his enemies. His emotions are very real and painful. He is drenched with tears.

Yet in the midst of all this, he is able to say, in a way that is not natural but supernatural, something quite different.
He addresses his own soul, the seat of his emotions. He asks the question:

*Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.* - Psalms 42:11 NIV

The use of the word *I* signifies something very profound. *I* means who you are. *I* stands for your real identity.

Your identity is not in your soul with its varied emotions. Your identity as a born-again Christian is in your spirit, which is alive in Christ!

It is the most valuable gift that a disciple of Christ is given.

David was able to identify himself in relation to God. At times of deepest darkness and persecution, David is confident in this one unchanging fact, that at the core of his being, his identity is in the living God, who loves him and saves him.

So dear friends, when our emotions tell us something about our situation, and when we are being persecuted, can I encourage you to be real about them, and at the same time, being confident of your identity in Christ, declare your identity to yourself and to the world around you?

And what is your real identity?

That you are a child of God, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, restored to a relationship with God as his treasured possession, with the sole purpose of living your life for His glory.

God bless you dear reader.

Dr. Mathew
Comparison of count of incidents recorded from 2016-2019 (1st Quarter January to March)

Comparison of count of incidents 2016-2019
Quarter 1 - Persecution incidents recorded from January to March 2019

Quarter 1 – Media stories highlighting Christian persecution by National & International Media

Coding

Pro-Secularism & Freedom of religion

- Public condemnation by civil society
- International press highlighting growing intolerance
- Fundamentalist strategies, Promoting Ideology
- False Allegations with evil intent to incite hatred
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