



THE PARISH MESSENGER

Church of St. John the Baptist
Secunderabad



Presbyter-in-charge's Message



To

**The Members of St. John's Church,
Secunderabad and Christ Church, Lallaguda.**

Dear Members,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord!

This letter is going to be my last as Presbyter-in-charge to you all. Since September 2005, it has been a great experience for me and my family serving you as a pastor. My family and I have thoroughly enjoyed my association with you all.

- ◆ St. John's is a congregation with a great heart and mind.
- ◆ St. John's is a worshipping community that is deeply spiritual.
- ◆ St. John's is a gathering - very dynamic and a creative assembly.
- ◆ St. John's is an international and interdenominational community.
- ◆ St. John's is truly an open and friendly community.
- ◆ St. John's pastorate committee is a deeply committed body for the church and does its

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Sponsorship

This special edition is sponsored by the children of the late Mr D David Thomas in fond remembrance of their beloved father who was promoted to glory on 16th February, 2007.

(A Tribute on p 7)

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Theme
Celebration of Salvation

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work very efficiently and systematically.

- ◆ St. John's worship services are very orderly and deeply spiritual.
- ◆ St. John's organises its finances and activities quite efficiently.

"It is really a blessing" to be part of this community.

I am grateful to our Bishop in Medak and Moderator of the Church of South India, the Most Rev. Dr. B. P. Sugandhar for giving me this privilege of serving at St. John's and at Christ Church. Thanks to Rev. James Cecil Victor who was Resident Presbyter from September 2005 to June 2006 at St. John's.

The Secretary Mr. James Samuel and Steward Mr. Bharath Kumar have been doing excellent work in the running of the church and its administration. My immense thanks to them.

Mr. Norman Isaac as Treasurer has been keeping an accurate account of the finances of the church. Mr. Devadatham, our Property Secretary has been judiciously taking care of our church property matters. Thank you Norman and Mr. Devadatham for your great and hard work.

Rev. K. Lungmuana, and Rev. D. S. Sathyanjan have been actively participating in the worship services including at times Thursday morning prayers and Sunday Evening worship. Thank you Rev. Lungmuana, Rev. Sathyanjan for your deeply dedicated service to St. John's.

Mr. D.J.S. Sekhar, as Editor, has been very patiently and diligently publishing *The Parish Messenger*, the news letter. Thank you Mr. Mark for taking care of the bulletin every Sunday. Thank you Mr. Sekhar and Mr. Mark for your excellent work.

Thank you Mrs. Yashodhra Desappa for leading the Women's Fellowship so

effectively in the church. Thank you Mr. Martin David for leading the Youth Fellowship and Mr. Jason for leading the Men's Fellowship.

Thank you Mr. Hartwig, Commodore Champion, and Mr. Vivek for your musical contribution to St. John's. Thanks to the choir for accompanying in the singing.

Thank you Mr. Udaia Kumar for helping out St. John's in many and varied ways as a source of strength and dependability.

Thank you Sunday School children for your participation and making our services joyful by your presence. Thank you Mrs. Usha Sagar for your leadership of the Sunday School. Thank you to the Youth who continue to help out in various activities like VBS.

Thank you all who have been sponsoring tea, snacks and altar flowers, and lesson readers Sunday after Sunday.

Thank you Philip and Rani for your excellent care of us after the services and also maintaining the church and attending to all matters as caretakers.

Thanks to the Secretary, Mr. David Dorairaj and members of the Church Committee of Christ Church, Lallaguda for your great cooperation in running Christ Church administration. I would express my heartfelt thanks to Rev. Dr. C. V. Rao for his continuing assistance at the worship services. Thank you Mr. Williams for your service at Christ Church and running around all the time attending to Church errands.

Last but not least, thanks to Mr. Yadhiah, who has been my driver during my service here at St. John's and at Christ Church. You have done a great job.

God bless you all at St. John's, Secunderabad and Christ Church, Lallaguda.

- Rev. Dr. P. Surya Prakash



Recall it as often as you wish, a happy memory never wears out. - Libbie Fudim



Secretary's Corner

Beloved in Christ :

Greetings in the blessed name of our Risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ !

It is my great privilege and pleasure to first of all congratulate our presbyter-in-charge Rev Dr P Surya Prakash who got elected as the 5th Bishop of Karimnagar Diocese. May God bless him and his family as he takes up this great responsibility! We also welcome Rev G Suresh Kumar who is to take over as Resident Presbyter. We will have the honour of our Bishop and Moderator, the Most Rev B P Sugandhar as the Presbyter-in-charge.

* * *

We take pleasure in welcoming the following **NEW MEMBERS** and their families into St John's family.

Mr A William Anup Kumar
Dr Madhulatha Alexander
Ms Ruth Khanna
Mr A S Sangeeth Rao
Ms Reena Frederick
Mr Manoj Francis
Mr Jeevan Katary
Mr VPS Parimala Rao
Mr M Dayavanth Emmanuel
Mr G Prakash

* * *

We had the joy and privilege of witnessing the dedication and **BAPTISM** of :

Thoyeja V Jeremiah
Cecil V Jeremiah and
Anjali Khanna

* * *

We regret to record the demise of Mr D David Thomas, one of the senior members of our church.

* * *

May the joy of Easter fill our hearts and minds and transform us for His glory !

- *M James Samuel*



THE BIBLE STUDY

On the Book of Exodus

Every Saturday 6.30 pm

St. John's Church

All are welcome

To our Members ...

Please note the following while contributing articles, etc to *The Parish Messenger*.

- The article may not exceed 700 words; a floppy thereof is welcome.
- Type only on one side of the page.
- Mention your name, designation and the contact number.
- Articles are subject to editing and in rare cases rejection as well.
- Contributions may be handed over to any member of the Editorial Board.
- The Editorial Board has decided on the following **THEMES** for the ensuing editions of our Newsletter:

June - July 07 : God's offer of salvation : our response

Aug - Sept 07 : Possibilities and pitfalls for youth

Oct - Nov 07 : Children - Gift of God, handle with care

Dec 07 - Jan 08 : Christmas special

You are requested, as far as possible, to stick to the themes.

You'll never realize Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you've got. - *Mother Teresa*

Rev Dr P Surya Prakash : A Church Visionary

(Based on the interview the Editor had on 14th March, 2007, days before Dr Prakash was consecrated as the Bishop of Karimnagar Diocese)

It was a quiet time after the lenten service in St John's that we sat together in the vestry providing an opportunity to probe the mind of Dr Surya Prakash on various ecclesiastical and related matters that interest us day in, day out. Wife Vindhya was there to chip in here and there with her views and the scenario was enlivened by the presence of Amritha, his elder daughter. Hot snacks served by Sexton Philip and Rani provided the necessary impetus to the conversation.



Now that God has entrusted him with the episcopal responsibilities, it's time to reflect on the man and his mission.

Academic Pursuits

The Rev Dr Perumalla Surya Prakash's scholarly stature is easily reflected in his academic pursuits all along. He graduated in Divinity at the reputed United Theological College, Bangalore (1972-76) and did M.Th both in the UTC and Boston Varsity of Theology, USA (1980-82). But before that he was initiated to the ministry as a Deacon on 18-8-76 and ordained as a Presbyterian in the Medak Diocese on 31-7-77. His thirst for knowledge and scholarship is unquenchable. He went to Germany and obtained Doctor of Theology in Homiletics. Thereafter he had a long innings in the UTC as Professor of Practical Theology from 1991-2000. For the next five years he went as Liaison Secretary, EMS in Germany

and subsequently as Dy. General Secretary until he started serving St. John's as Presbyterian-in-charge from September, 2005.

Motivation for Ministry

What prompted him to enter the ministry ? He felt the call of God even during his school days which was intensified while in college.

Ecumenism

Asked about church unity, he opined that great strides were made in this direction. The CSI is the result of efforts for the church unity. The CSI and CNI came closer and so did Marthoma Church. Inter - denominational marriages are solemnized in our churches as well as sharing of pulpits by pastors of different denominations.

Indianisation

Dr Prakash strongly favours indigenisation and Indianisation. According to him we must express faith in our own cultures and practices. He loves to remind Sadhu Sunder Singh's words, "The cup of salvation in Indian Cup" and also Robin Boyd's assertion : The Indian Church should be liberated from western captivity.

Christians : Social Evils

Now we Christians are constantly pained to see base politics in our Churches, the caste factor in our relationships especially in marriage alliances, etc. Dr Prakash feels that

Vision is the art of seeing things invisible. - Jonathan Swift

in a democratic pattern, we have to necessarily respect elections, but these should be based on Christian values. When we do that we should recognize talent, merit and commitment while making our choices. "Elections are good but not electioneering; also there is no place for negative electioneering," he quipped. "For all the ills, God works in His own ways", he exuded confidence. "It is the informal meetings of the congregation for example over a cup of tea after the worship services as we do in St John's that help find solutions to the problems that besiege us as a community. Structured dialogues don't bring people together. People must share not their concepts, but experiences", he averred.

Social Justice

Dr Prakash is a champion of the marginalized, oppressed and suppressed. He is firm that the church should be in solidarity with every suffering community. Jesus is our example. The church should think of caring for the widows, the orphans, the sick and the less privileged.

Focus on Family

Dr Prakash is all praise for his better half Vindhya, for her role in the upbringing of their children and for being supportive of his ministry.

Mrs Vindhya Prakash is a Church leader in her own right. She worked as a teacher both in India and Germany. She is a good speaker endowed with a sense of humour. Mrs Prakash has been deeply involved in the Church Sunday School ministry and the Women's Fellowship. The couple are blessed with two daughters - Amritha and Sarah who pursue their studies in Germany. St John's congregation remembers Amritha as a gifted and talented singer.

St John's Church

On his association with St John's, his spontaneous reaction was, "It was short but sweet." It is a loving, caring and supportive

congregation. Whenever there is need people respond and give generously. St John's is bereft of politics and there is more ministry. He summed up his experience with St John's : Peak of my ministry.

And finally asked about his vision for St John's Church, he reflected "It should grow more in faith and it should find an expression in singing, praying and witnessing. Church is a gift of God for the people and they should use it as individuals, family and community to meet their emotional and spiritual needs."

Dr Surya Prakash made a tremendous impact on St John's congregation for their spiritual edification. His sermons week after week for over 16 months have been down to earth, simple, transparent and heart - touching. They bear the stamp of authority. He intersperses spiritual truths and insights with day-to-day life experiences which mark him as a distinct preacher. His English is lucid and so simple that even school children can comprehend. His messages I'm sure have been a great blessing to the congregation.

We in St John's, hope and pray that God may continue to bless his ministry and his family more so in the context of his elevation to the episcopacy as the Bishop of Karimnagar Diocese.

- D J S Sekhar

Ten Commandments

An enthusiastic church member said to her pastor, "I'm so anxious to make a trip to the Holy Land, climb to the top of Mount Sinai, and shout the Ten Commandments."

The pastor replied, "I've got a better suggestion : stay at home and keep them."

The secret of success is constancy to purpose. - Benjamin Disraeli

Town DCC Women's Fellowship : A Report

“One thing is needed - to sit at the Lord's feet and listen”

On the 10th of February, 2007, nearly 250 women of the Town District Church Council's (DCC) Women's Fellowship, gathered at our church. It was organized by St. John's Church and Christ Church, Lallaguda. It was a wonderful time of worship and fellowship. We began our fellowship with tea and snacks sponsored by Mrs. Sulochana Samuel. The opening prayer was led by our



Presbyter-in-charge Rev. Dr. P. Surya Prakash. The women were welcomed on behalf of St. John's Church by Mrs. Vindhya Surya Prakash. A special welcome was given to our Medak Diocese Women's Fellowship President, our Bishopamma and Moderatoramma Mrs. Nalini Sugandhar. Also present were the DCC Women's Fellowship Convener Mrs. Vasantha Devaraj, Town DCC Women's Fellowship Secretary Mrs. Sarayu Charles, and Town DCC Women's Fellowship Treasurer Mrs. Nirikshana Yesushankar. Reports of the wonderful work being done by the Women of our diocese were presented to us by the various women leaders. Mrs. Yashodhra Desappa, our Women's Fellowship Secretary gave a fine report of the activities of our church women. Many local women's fellowship groups delighted us with songs and skits and there was a thought-provoking message by our Presbyter. We appreciated the Women leaders by presenting them with flower pots and the presbyters' wives

received a small token of our appreciation. After this time of fellowship, we shared a meal and had a good evening. Everybody appreciated the work of the St. John's Women's Fellowship and encouraged us heartily to actively join and participate in the Town DCC Women's Fellowship.

A testimony of the wonderful work of our Women's Fellowship was displayed at the World Day of Prayer organized by Mrs. Vindhya Surya Prakash and Mrs. Yashodhra Desappa on March 9th, 2007. The theme for this year's World Day of Prayer was

'United under God's Tent' prepared by the Women of Paraguay. Nearly 30 women of our church attending this prayer meeting and everybody, including old and young participated in the order of worship. We learnt a lot about the Women of Paraguay through this order of worship which was designed by them to educate us on their country's welfare. We started the service by bringing in a blue tent to symbolize our being under God's one tent. At the end of the service, the tent was cut and a piece was given to each member present to symbolize the presence and protection of God's tent in our daily life. Mrs. Yashodhra Desappa and Mrs. Anna gave us an insightful and lively message about Unity in God and other members enlightened us about different ways to fast in the Lent season.

- Mrs. Vindhya Surya Prakash

Fellowship is fundamental to mission! Commitment to Christ, commitment to each other in Christ, is prerequisite to authentic Christian witness. - Richard C. Halverson



Didla David Thomas : A Tribute

Pamela Thomas*

"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory..." - I Sam 2:8; Ps 113:7

Mr. David Thomas who was promoted to glory on 16-2-07 at the age of 86 was a mighty soldier of God. He was born in a poor agricultural family in a remote village in Krishna District. He was named Reddamma after his father's elder brother Venkat Reddy who died of snake bite on the farm. At the tender age of seven his mother Subbamma died. Then he lost his two younger sisters. His father wanted his only son to study and be of use to the community.

In 1940 at the age of 19 David was married to a Christian teacher's daughter, Kamala Manoharam. She went to be with the Lord on 1-2-96 at the age of 73.

Life after marriage was difficult because of abject poverty. By God's grace he completed his B.A. Then he went on to study at the Madras Law College, but by force of circumstances had to discontinue.

As a young boy David Thomas always had a particular dream of his soul leaving his body. The next morning he would wake up, worried. Many a time, he escaped from the jaws of death. As a young boy he was saved from tetanus. Then he almost drowned in the river Krishna. Another time he almost got swallowed up in quick sand. Once, some upper caste men tried to kill him. While studying at Chennai he almost got run over by a moving train.

David Thomas was a gifted orator, writer and wrestler. He came out successful at the UPSC interview and was posted as Inspector Grade I in ESI Corporation. At that time the Regional Director, ESIC made a scathing remark on his caste. David Thomas decided to leave Hinduism, because he felt it did not give any honourable place to people. It was Bro Yesuratnam of Hebron and his gentle wife Kamala who were instrumental in bringing him to the Lord. Rev JJ Wesley of Ramkote Wesley

Church baptised him along with his two elder children. He changed his name from Reddamma to David Thomas.

Disappointments are God's appointments. When he went to visit one of his daughters at Dubai, his eldest son died of a heart attack at Chennai. This was a shattering blow for him. But every failure in his life was a chastening tool to cleanse him in the furnace of God's engulfing love.

David Thomas lived life on his own terms. He was always active. His memory was phenomenal. He would spend hours on his knees praying for his children. He fell and injured his head in his son's home in Hyderabad. He came out of his coma. He saw his children, his 12 grand children and great grandchild.

Just after his cardiac bypass surgery ten years ago he published two books. His third book "Meditations on the cross" will shortly be completed by one of his daughters.

David Thomas was a member of St John's for over 10 years. He never missed a Sunday Service save one. Whenever there was a need or appeal for a cause, his response was spontaneous. He always spent time after the Service meeting with friends and new people as well, talking to them and encouraging them with his words and blessing them. The large gathering of mourners at the burial service in St John's is a testimony to the love and affection he enjoyed in the hearts of so many people.

David Thomas's earnest appeal and prayer was that all people may come to know of the one and only true God, Jesus Christ. The Lord had never left him nor forsaken him. It can be truly said of him, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness." II Tim. 4:7-8a.

*Ms Thomas is daughter of the late Mr David Thomas and Lecturer in English, St Theresa's Autonomous College, Eluru



Resurrection

I P P Prabhakar Rao*

Man since long has been looking for eternal life. As Indians we have the tradition of greeting youngsters specially babies "Deerghayush" (May you live long) and address them as "Chiranjeevi" (Eternal life possessor)-this shows man's longing for eternal life. An ancient prayer in Sanskrit translated reads as follows. "From darkness, lead me to light, from falsehood to truth, and from death unto life." It is not surprising Jesus Christ answered this prayer and affirmed,

"I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12) and "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6). These words would be very

appealing to those whose prayer for light, truth and life had been made since olden days. Yet today those who prayed so do not come to Jesus to receive what they prayed for.

Jews also had a problem. We can read it in John 12:34. They believed that according to the Law the Messiah abideth for ever. So if Jesus claimed to be the Messiah how could He talk about his death ? (v 33) They missed out an important link - the Resurrection which connects death and eternal life. Sudducees did not believe in resurrection but the rest did. Resurrection is the bedrock of Christian faith. The very basis of our conviction and a vital link between death and eternal life. Paul literally hammers this point into the minds of the Corinthian church. In 58 effective verses he strongly makes out why resurrection is a necessity (1 Cor. 15:1-58) not only for the believers but also for the non-believers. Without resurrection nobody needs to live a clean life since death ends it all. The good the bad and the ugly all will have the same end.

To prove that there is a resurrection after death Jesus rose from the dead and to prove that all the resurrected will have an immortal body. He had put on an immortal body. This lives on in eternal life for the believers and in eternal life for the believers and in eternal death for the non-believers. The Book of Revelation calls this as 'second death' Rev 20:14-15. The resurrection of Jesus assures us of our own resurrection and of a glorious eternal life after death.

Without resurrection no body needs to live a clean life since death ends it all... Victory over death means death cannot end life because resurrection restores life

It's for this very truth of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and the resulting hope of eternal lives, His

disciples and millions laid their life. It is for this very truth many more million men and women bore ignominy, suffering emotionally and physically, living in voluntary poverty, etc. They proved this truth within their lives and deaths.

Ironically Satan also knows this to be the truth and very essential for a Christian's faith. Having failed in preventing Jesus from His dying on the Cross, he has since then set out to debunk this truth and to destroy Christians' faith and hope. He is using lies and greater lies to trip Christians from walking in their faith. To counter this we celebrate the Holy Communion commemorating His death and resurrection Sunday after Sunday . . . for 2000 years Satan has been trying many ways to achieve his goal.

Many heresies and cults say that Jesus did not die and did not rise from death, etc. It is this Christian Doctrine that is under attack

*Mr Prabhakar Rao is a ret'd. Superintending Engineer (Irrigation) Govt of AP

the most all through these two millennia. It is interesting to know that Quran also says this. Surah 4:157 says this "we punished them (Jews)... and (due to) their (Jews') saying, 'we killed Messiah, Isa the son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah.' They did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but for them, (he the crucified one) was made to resemble (Isa) and those who differ in it are certainly in doubt about it. They do not have any knowledge of it, they follow nothing but conjecture and they certainly did not kill him." (A simple translation of the Holy Quran by Dr. Mir Aneesuddin, published by Islamic Academy of Islamic Sciences, Hyderabad. First Edition 1993). This verse prevents our Muslim brothers in believing the Saving Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

limiting Him to be a prophet (messenger) who escaped death by the power of Allah. But for us, Resurrection is the victory over death won by Jesus which we appropriate to ourselves and is the reason for our own victory over death. Victory over death means death cannot end life because Resurrection restores life. God is going to raise us His children surely at our death. Death does not hold fear for us. Death itself is going to be destroyed ultimately - the death which ruled over us with fear since the time of Adam's sin. Rev. 20:14. Resurrection is the victory stand on which we stand to receive what we had hoped for at the end of the race. Praises be to Jesus who led us from death into Life ! Hail Jesus, the conqueror of death ! ■

"Lovest thou Me ?" John 21:17

Jesus, I see Thee led to Calvary,
There to endure, in bitterest agony,
An awful loneliness; that I might be
Set free from sin - 'Yes, Lord. I love Thee.'

Saviour, I see Thee silent in the tomb;
Thy followers despairing in the gloom;
The door is closed. That stone has sealed my doom.
It was my death - 'Yes, Lord. I love Thee.'

My Lord, I see Thee rising from the dead,
And through the earth Thy radiant light is shed
In darkest places. Death holds no more dread.
This, this is life - 'Yes, Lord. I love Thee.'

Someday, my Lord, I'll see Thee come again
With angel hosts, o'er all the earth to reign;
I'll see an end to sin, and grief, and pain,
In that great day - 'Yes, Lord. I Love Thee.'

- Maurice Cose

*Contributed by
- Laila Furtado* ■

God proved His love on the cross. When Christ hung and bled and died,
it was God saying to the world, "I love you." - *Billy Graham*

It's too easy

Yashodhra Desappa*

I read about an instant cake mix that was a big flop. The instructions said all you had to do was add water and bake. The company couldn't understand why it didn't sell—until their research discovered that the buying public felt uneasy about a mix that required only water. So the company asked customers to add egg also in the recipe. The idea worked and sales jumped dramatically.

That story reminds me of how some people react to the plan of salvation. To them it sounds too easy and simple to be true, even though the Bible says, **"By grace you have been saved through faith...; it is the gift of God, not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9)**. They feel that there is something more they must do, something they must add to God's "recipe" for salvation. They think they must perform good works to gain God's favour and earn eternal life. But the Bible is clear— we are saved, **"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy" (Titus 3:5)**.

Unlike the cake-mix manufacturer, God has not changed His **"formula"** to make salvation more marketable. The gospel we proclaim must be free of works, even though it may sound too easy. We are saved by Christ dying and not our doing.

Look again at the cross. Look at the One dying there. He never sinned, yet Jesus is on the cross to bear the penalty for the sins of the whole world. He's dying there on your behalf. That should be you, on the cross.

If you are a follower of Christ, coming one more time to the cross should fill your heart with gratitude for what He did for you there. As your sacrifice and substitute, He made it possible for you to be forgiven and to be saved from your sin. Why don't you give Him your thanks right now? Then determine to walk in obedience to God.

Your sin is real. You cannot do anything at all about it— except to trust in Jesus

Christ. Don't wait. Tell Him that you believe in Him as your personal Saviour. Ask Him to save you from judgement. He will, because it was for you that He died on that terrible cross. He was your sacrifice. He paid the penalty for your sin. Trust Him now!



ABCs for a better life :

Jesus offers hope. He announced, **"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10)**. To experience this for ourselves is in one sense, as simple as ABC.

Admit that you are a sinner :

The Bible says that **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23)**. To escape sin's penalty, we need Divine forgiveness. And it's ours through **faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believe on Jesus Christ :

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). Just a medicine is not a remedy until it is taken, so knowing the story of Jesus is not enough to save us. We must **personally receive** the Lord Jesus Christ.

Confess your faith :

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). To confess our faith is to tell others of our belief in Christ. This should be a spontaneous outflow of the change in our heart.

Let Jesus give you a new life right now. Admit your sin. Believe that Jesus is your only hope of salvation. Confess the Lord Jesus. These are the ABCs for a better life. ■

*Mrs Desappa is an Entrepreneur and Women's Fellowship Secretary, St John's Church



The liturgical seasons of the Church keep changing cyclically round the year starting with Advent. The Liturgical seasons from thereon are:

Advent	<i>Four Sundays preceding Christmas</i>
Christmastide	<i>One or two Sundays following Christmas</i>
Epiphany	<i>6th Jan is the Epiphany Day</i>
Lent (Passiontide)	<i>Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday (40 days not counting Sundays)</i>
Easter	<i>First Sunday after Paschal Full Moon following vernal equinox</i>
Ascension	<i>Ascension Day is forty days after Easter</i>
Pentecost	<i>Seven weeks after Easter (Whitsunday in the Anglican tradition and Trinity Sunday is the Sunday following Whitsunday)</i>
Ordinary Time	<i>(Kingdomtide) is about 25 Sundays until the next the Advent</i>

There is a specific church music for each of these liturgical seasons. Most of us would have noticed, we sing the 'Kyrie' (*pronounced 'Key ree yea' - an inscipit which means 'Lord have mercy'*) in our Sunday liturgy starting from Ash Wednesday, instead of the traditional 'Gloria'. Christmas music has all the glamour with varieties of music – from the most classical style to the 'jazzed up' style of carols. Passion music, on the other hand, is far from jubilant, intensely devotional and its performance needs the serene ambience of the church. Of the many classical composers who wrote Passion music, the name of J.S. Bach is outstanding thanks to his great oratorios *St. John - Passion* and *St. Matthew - Passion*, which are high-water marks for depth and complexity. In the Passion according to St Matthew, Bach has set chapters 26 & 27 of the gospel to music, scoring for solo voices, double choir and double orchestra and two pipe organs, something unimaginable in today's context. Incidentally, the Lenten hymn 'O Sacred head' we sing during lent is a chorale from St Matthew's Passion.

The Lenten Cantata 'The Crucifixion' by Sir John Stainer and 'Olivet to Calvary' by J.H. Maunder are some of the other much-loved passion music performed by most church choirs, apart from excerpts from Handel's Messiah. Paradoxically, 'Hallelujah Chorus' from Handel's Messiah, which essentially celebrates the Resurrection and not the Nativity, is sung by most choirs during Christmas. "He was despised" is yet another moving 'aria' from Messiah which can bring tears in our eyes. One would have to listen to it in quiet ambience to know the kind of feeling Handel has embedded into his music for this scriptural text. ■

*Commodore Champion VSM (Retd) is Hon. Organist, St John's Church

Easter : Resurrection

P Dawson Adams*

Resurrection is the greatest power. It surpasses the power of atom, hydrogen, cobalt or uranium; they destroy but resurrection has the power to give life to the dead.

Easter

This word appears only once in the Bible (ACTS 12:4). It is used there as a translation of the Greek word Pascha, which is translated correctly as "Passover" in the 28 other places where it occurs in the N.T. The English word "Easter" is thought to be derived from the name of a Teutonic goddess of spring, Eastre, and to have been adapted by Christians to its present usage about the 8th century after Christ. It is the annual commemoration of Jesus' Resurrection. Easter soon became the chief festival of the early church. Easter is a movable feast falling on the Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. At the dawn of Easter, those who had been prepared were baptized; all received communion. It has been suggested that much of I Peter originally formed part of an Easter homily in Rome when there were candidates for baptism I Peter 3:21. From the 9th Century we hear of the custom of Christians greeting one another with the words: "The lord is truly risen"

The miracle of Easter is the heart of the Christian Faith and message. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just important to Christianity, it is central to the claim that Jesus is true; He indeed was in God, and because of this He shed blood on the cross, paid the penalty for all sin.

Resurrection

At the end of the Old Testament period the doctrine of resurrection was

unmistakably proclaimed, as conceived in the Book of Daniel, it is to be a resurrection of both the just and unjust (Dan - 12:2). A general resurrection in which the Gentiles would share was scarcely conceived in the O.T. By New Testament times a chief characteristic of the Pharisees was their belief in a resurrection Acts.23:8. Martha doubtless expressed the popular Jewish belief of her time when she declared that she knew Lazarus would rise again (John 11:24) through his teachings, miracles of resurrection and his own rising from the dead, Jesus more than any other has enriched our understanding of the subject. He proclaimed Himself to be the resurrection and the life and asserted of the Christian believer that He would "Raise Him up at the last day" (John 6:40, 44) Jesus distinguishes between the resurrection of the righteous alone Luke 14: and a general resurrection where the wicked also are included Matt: 25:32, John. 5:29. There are thus to be two resurrections (I Thes - 4:16; Rev. 20:5,6). Christ himself empowers the first resurrection that of the just. How that of the wicked is to be affected is not revealed. Jesus taught that those who are raised shall be as angels Mark 12:25. His resurrection miracles Matt 9:25 Luke 7:11-15, John 11: 1-44 are not to be classed with his own resurrection in as much as the persons raised were not introduced into a permanent or final state. His own resurrection is full of authenticated facts of history.

The resurrection and the cross are the main themes of Acts and of the Epistles. Peter

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speaks of, the one whom God hath raised up, having broken the pains of death' in his speech at Pentecost Acts 2:24

The doctrine of the resurrection is the foundation doctrine of the New Testament. The resurrection is mentioned 104 times in the NT. Christianity is the only religion with a living Originator. Jesus said that He would die and rise again from the dead on the third day Mt 16:21. This is the miracle on which all other miracles stand or fall.

Christ Resurrection : Testimony

Christ's resurrection is historically attested: by the fact of the sudden change in the lives of apostles—the eleven were cowards at the crucifixion, but men ready to give their very lives 50 days later at Pentecost; the descent of the Holy spirit in fulfillment of Jesus promise, the changing of the day of worship from the Jewish Sabbath to the first day of the week as a testimony to the day upon which Christ arose;

the sudden and amazing growth of the Christian Church. Resurrection is the greatest power. It surpasses the power of atom, hydrogen, cobalt or uranium; they destroy but resurrection has the power to give life to the dead.

The resurrected body of Jesus according to biblical sources – it had flesh and bones. It had a glorious body . It was an immortal body. It was a spiritual body. The Resurrection is the Gibraltar of Christian evidences. It is the waterloo of infidelity, agnosticism and atheism. Because Christ rose, materialism, communism, atheism must fall. Resurrection is a greater power for it breaks the power of the grave. The empty tomb and the risen Christ-triumphantly say –"O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy Victory?" 1Cor15:55

Let us all be conscious that Jesus is alive as He Lives in our bodies. Victory is ours as we march forward with the conquering Christ as the Head of the church militant. ■

Words that Feed Us

Sam Prasadam*

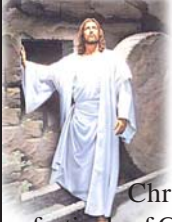
When someone says : "How are you?", just to respond saying, "I am fine" is not really the answer. When we talk to one another, we often talk about what has happened, what we are doing, or what we plan to do. We must encourage each other to share the details of our daily lives. But we also want to hear something more. We want to hear : "I have been thinking of you today", or "I missed you", or "I wish you were there at the party", or "I love you". It is not always easy to say these words, but such words can deepen our bonds with one another.

Telling someone "I love you" in whatever way is always delivering good news.

Nobody will respond by saying, "Well, I know that already, you don't have to say it again !" Even saying words of appreciation of someone's dress, hairstyle or work can boost that person's ego. Telling our domestic workers that their work was good can make them feel joyful. Saying a word of 'Thank you' or 'God bless you' to the auto driver who brings you home safely, or to the railway porter who carries your heavy luggage can make a great difference to their day.

Words of love, appreciation and affirmation are like bread to the soul. We all need them each day, over and over. They keep us truly alive inside. ■

*The Rev Prasadam is a retired Presbyterian, CSI and a fellow worshipper at St John's Church



The Significance of Easter

C Aseervada Rao*

Christmas and Easter are the main festivals of Christians all over the world. While Christmas is almost wholly an occasion for rejoicing, Easter and the days which precede it, commemorate the sufferings of Christ, the crucifixion, the burial and finally, the resurrection.

The countdown to Easter commences on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Lent is the 40 - day period from Ash Wednesday to the day before Easter. During Lent season, some Christians fast and give up activities which they enjoy, in memory of Christ's suffering. Holy week is the week before Easter Sunday.

In today's world of rush and hurry, we have no time "to stand and stare" or to think seriously about any thing. Lent stops us and compels us to think about the great sacrifice. What a wonderful thing it is that God's own son should come from heaven and die for sinners !

"They tell me God the Son came down from His bright throne to die that I might wear a starry crown and dwell with Him on high".

While death itself is a great sacrifice the persecution which preceded Christ's death makes it all the more painful and unique. The spitting, smiting, nailing, stabbing, these are things which the stoutest heart cannot stand. While watching the persecution scenes in Christian films, we invariably hear muffled wailing all over the theatre.

The cross was an inhuman punishment reserved for criminals of the highest order. People were hung on crosses and left to die as a punishment. It was degradation. Probably Christ's detractors wanted to degrade Him by crucifixion. But what happened was just the reverse. Christ did not get any degradation from

the cross. The cross got all its sanctity from Christ. It is today used as a symbol of Christianity. Many Christians wear small crosses on chains around their necks.

Easter supplements and complements Lent. If Easter were not to be there, the story of Christ would be just like the stories of several rebels and revolutionaries, who spoke and acted differently from their contemporaries, and whose voices were stifled for ever. But Easter, and the resurrection it commemorates, make, Christ's story unique in the annals of history. Christ was not killed; He gave up the ghost. It was not an execution; it was a sacrifice. His ideas did not perish with Him; they have spread all over the world and pervade human civilization.

The first Easter brought a lot of hope and courage to Christ's disciples and believers. These simple men and women were overcome by grief and despondency on Good Friday. Easter restored their hope and courage. Christ has risen. The sting of death has been neutralized. The victory of the grave has been nullified. Christ has conquered death. So shall we, with His strength. This is the hope of all Christians at every Easter.

"Soar we now where Christ hath led, following our exalted head;

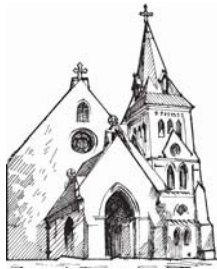
"Made like Him, like Him we rise, ours the cross, the grave, the skies."

Dozing in Church

"Did you hear Robinson snoring in church this morning ? It was simply awful."

"Yes, I did - he woke me up."

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Worshipping in Church

E Siddanth Mark*

**Lord Help us see how much we need each other
As we walk along the Christian way,
In fellowship with sister and brother
You will keep us growing day by day**

- Hess

**Sow a thought, and you reap an Act,
Sow an Act, and you reap a Habit,
Sow a habit, and you reap a Character,
Sow a Character, and you reap Destiny**

- Anon

Let us think, that we have to attend the Church every Sunday morning on time without an excuse. If we are not attending the Church then what ? Well !

Let us together as a family attend our church and praise our Lord with enthusiasm and willingness to gain the bountiful of Blessings, most importantly Peace and Joy. Let us reap an Act.

Let us not disturb our brothers and sisters while they are worshipping in the Church, by switching off the cellphones.

Let us make it a habit to send our children to Sunday School.

(Please refer to Proverbs 3:5-8 and Psalm 84:1-3).

**The little choices we must make will
Chart the course of life we take
We either choose the path of light
Or wander off in darkest night**

- D.De Haan

Let us, brothers and sisters, praise the Lord with all our might. It is being told by the teachers that when we sing and praise the Lord, the angelic power inside the church becomes more powerful. Then why hesitate while saying our Prayers and singing the songs.

(Please refer Psalm 147:1; Psalm 33:1-3).

**Sing Praise to God who reigns above,
The God of all creation,
The God of power, the God of Love
The God of our Salvation**

- Schiitz

Answers for Easter Quiz

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Mary Magdalene | 6. "Just as my father has sent me, even so I send you." (John 20:21) |
| 2. Peter and John | 7. Thomas |
| 3. Because they went home (John 20:10) | 8. First day of the week. |
| 4. The call of Jesus (John 20:16) | 9. Peter |
| 5. Jesus appeared to them and said, "Peace be unto you." | 10. "My Lord and my God." |

*Mr Mark is an active member of St John's Church

Life

"To the preacher, life's a sermon,
To the joker, life's a jest,
To the miser, life is money,
To the loafer, life's a rest.

"To the soldier, life's a battle,
To the teacher, life's a school.
Life's a great thing for the thinker,
But it's folly to the fool.

"Life is just one long vacation,
To the man who loves his work,
But it's constant dodging duty
To the everlasting shirk.

"To the faithful, earnest worker
Life's a story ever new;
Life is what we try to make it -
What in truth is life to you?"

- Unknown

THE VOID BETWEEN INTENT AND PERFORMANCE

"We sing 'Sweet Hour of Prayer' -
and content ourselves with a few minutes of prayer
each day, if even that much.
We sing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' -
and wait to be pushed into the Lord's service.
We sing 'O For a Thousand Tongues' -
without rightly using the tongue we have.
We sing 'Blest Be the Tie That Binds' -
and let the least little offense sever it.
We sing 'Serve the Lord With Gladness' -
and gripe about all we have to do.
We sing 'I Love to Tell the Story' -
and never mention it all year to our friends and associates.
We sing 'Cast Thy Burden on the Lord' -
and worry ourselves into nervous breakdowns.
We sing 'The Whole Wide World for Jesus' -
and never invite our next-door neighbours to church.
We sing 'Throw Out the Life Line' -
and content ourselves with throwing out a fishing line on Sunday."

- Unknown

Contributed by - **H W A Hartwig**
Organist

God asks no man whether he will accept life. That is not a choice. You must take it.
The only choice is how. - *Henry Ward Beecher*

Finished . . .

K K Karunakar Rao*

"It is finished" (John 19:30) were the words spoken by the greatest achiever of all time. These are not easy words. One utters these words when one reaches the target. In the present day competitive world, every Managing Director of corporate office is trying to say this, running towards targets and trying desperately to reach them. But there is a difference. The aforesaid word 'finished' is a preplanned and prophesied great task (Gen. 3:15). Generally targets are fixed by somebody and 'finished' by someone else. But here, the target was fixed by the Almighty God and finished by the same Almighty God in the form of His Son.

What is the target ?

Redemption from the bondage of sin is very tough, because bondage is made by strong enemy in the form of a serpent. If a python coils around any animal, it does not leave it unless either it swallows or leaves hurt. Sin is a great attraction because it spreads to all and causes death (Rom. 5:12). Sin is stronger than a lion, quicker than any fast deer; more communicable than any airborne infection; more poisonous than any deadly poison like cyanide. And therefore it made the Almighty to get down from the throne with humility to die on the cross.

Plan of redemption

In the beginning God was speaking directly to people (God was speaking to Abraham, Lot, et al), afterwards through people right from Moses to Malachi correcting the people, warning and saving them. God has made all attempts to keep His people in order. But none of the attempts could redeem the people from the bondage of sin. And God sent His beloved Son to take on Himself the sin of the world and the humanity stands redeemed by the death of Jesus on the Cross and His resurrection.

On the Cross

Even while hanging on the Cross, Jesus uttered seven words. With the completion of His mission of redeeming the world, he uttered this last word, "It is finished". After saying these words, He surrendered His soul to the Father.



After finishing targets in the world, parties and celebrations follow. What a great joy if we as partners are saved by faith and our names are written in the Book of Life ! It is our Christian belief and faith that we are on the way to heaven, as we are privileged to get all things by the grace of God.

On the other hand we are sad because Christian population in India at the moment (as per the survey of religious parties) stands at 6.7% (previously it was 2.3). 93.3% are yet to be saved. Hence our celebrations are incomplete and happiness misplaced since lots of people are far from the truth of salvation.

Then what should we do ?

- ◆ We have to live as a true Christian in the society.
- ◆ Pray and preach the gospel to your neighbour.
- ◆ Pray and support the missionary organisations.

'Either you go or send'. Your support to spread the gospel is all important. And then you can say at the end of your life it is 'finished'.

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Are you going to leave your grave ?

MAnthony David*

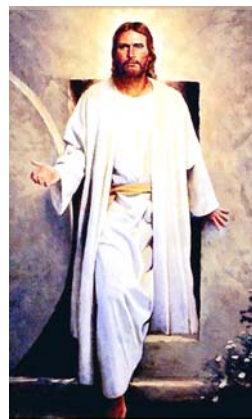
Salome sighed. "How will be able to roll that huge stone away ?" Carrying a bag full of spices, she was walking briskly in the twilight of the dawn, along with some other women. "Well, perhaps the soldiers guarding the tomb will be able to help us," ventured Mary Magda-lene. Susannah reacted immediately, "Why will they help us? Their job is make sure that no one tampers with the official seal !" They were all on their way to the garden of the tomb, where their Lord Jesus Christ was laid on Friday evening after his crucifixion and death.

Bags straining with fragrant spices, they eagerly entered the garden and sought the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, in which their Lord was laid. Running into a gardener in the way, they asked, "Sir, would you please help us ? We want you to open the tomb stone of our master. We were unable to apply the customary spices to his body on the preparation day due to the advent of the Sabbath."

The gardener was a tall and well built young man. He fingered his beard as he replied, "Well, Jesus was truly a great teacher. I can help you women. But what about the Roman soldiers who are on watch ?" Pressing a bag full of gold coins into his hand, Salome replied, "Will this help ?" He smiled. "Perhaps it will. Let me try."

Minutes ticked away. Stealthily the small group of women worked in the semidarkness of the tomb. The soldiers were busy with the wine and the dice. The gardener was standing guard nearby. Quietly they finished their work and got up. As they melted away from the grave, Mary Magdalene lingered. "Mary! Mary!" Salome called her softly, "It is dangerous for us to be here as the day dawns. Let us be away, quick." They thanked the gardener and stole away from the garden as quickly as they had come.

They met the disciples at home and reported, "We have managed to finish the ritual smearing of spices on our Lord's body. The Roman guard is still around. We got a sympathetic gardener to help us." Peter nodded, his thoughts elsewhere. He quietly went out. John noticed this and quickly



came out to follow Peter. They trudged their way to the tomb and found the guards asleep in drunken stupor. They had a word with the gardener who was hovering around and quickly slipped away. The sun was shining brightly on them as they slowly made their way to their home. But their hearts were full of the night of doubts and regrets. "What was the point of the master's vibrant ministry ? Such words of life as He spoke, can we ever hear again ? What is going to happen to us ?", cried John, tears streaming across his face. "Perhaps we ought to try and follow all His teachings in our lives now", said Peter desperately trying to control his own tears.

* * *

Surprised ? Well that was just imagination. Perhaps that would have been the scenario had not the Lord been resurrected. But Praise God ! The facts are that the women at the tomb had no need of anyone to roll the stone away. It had already been rolled away. They were confronted with an open grave and an empty grave ! This central fact of Resurrection has since then turned the world upside down indeed !

This historically attested fact : the fact of Resurrection is the USP of our faith. We should go all out and celebrate our faith on

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Resurrection Day, Easter rather than on Christmas, I believe. For every religion and every faith celebrates the birthday of their founder. But here is a founder who resurrected! There is no other who did this in all of history !

Three days after his death on the cross, a fact attested by the fact that both water and blood came out from his side, the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected ! His resurrection validated all that He said during His ministry on earth. He claimed to be the Son of God and proved it by His Resurrection ! But for His resurrection, the lives of all Christians would be dark and dreary indeed !

The Apostle Paul conjures up a similar scenario of no resurrection. He writes, "If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it - if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of bare - faced lies about God, all those affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ — sheer fabrications, if there's no resurrection."

He continues, "If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't because he was

indeed dead. And if Christ wasn't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever... If all we got out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries." (I Corinthians 15:12-20 : THE MESSAGE : Eugene H Paterson's paraphrase)

The Lord is risen !
He is risen indeed !!

As we affirm this historical fact, let's accept this Risen and Victorious Lord into our hearts. Convicted, let's confess our sins and turn from them as we let Him into our hearts. Then He will surely come in and cleanse us from all our sins. He will fill us with the joy of salvation. It is this salvation which each of us needs to celebrate this Easter.

The Lord is risen - A historical fact. It can remain historical unless we own it up. May the Lord be risen indeed in each of our hearts, dear readers. All of us then can be sure that we will indeed follow Him, out of our graves inglorious resurrection at His second coming !

Kids' Corner

Easter Quiz



Dear kids, as Easter is just round the corner, can we have a quiz on Easter day ? If you are not able to answer, please take time to read the 20th chapter of John and try again.

1. Who was the first visitor to the sepulchre of Jesus ?
2. Who were the two disciples who ran to the sepulchre ?
3. Why didn't the disciples see Jesus at the same time as Mary did ?
4. What caused Mary to recognize Jesus ?
5. How did Jesus quiet the fears of His disciples ?
6. What new commission did Jesus give to His disciples ?
7. Which disciple did not believe that Jesus had risen ?
8. On what day did Jesus rise from the dead ?
9. Which disciple entered the sepulchre first ?
10. What was the response of Thomas when he recognized the risen Lord ?

For answers see p15

contributed by
- Neema Rajakumar

The Gospels do not explain the Resurrection; the Resurrection explains the Gospels. - *John S Whale*

Animal adventures in the Bible - The series - 2 **Sherlock - The Long awaited journey**

Neema Rajakumar*

Dear kids, I'm Sherlock the sheep. Thanks a lot for choosing to read my story. I'm sure you will enjoy my adventurous story. You can read Genesis Chapter 22: 1-19 to know the relevant story in the Bible. Happy reading!

The stones and the wood were laid on them; they are a feast to our eyes. They are the things used to make an altar for sacrifices. I remember my mom telling that a sacrifice with us pleased God the most as we fear the Lord and are very timid. Mom also told us that when we were sacrificed on the altar, people's sins were forgiven. So, when an altar is prepared and one of us brought to it, we get frenzied. We get so much excited because we know that we're going to see the Lord very soon. So the journey to get sacrificed before we die is the most long awaited journey by all of us. Now, as I had grown old, I almost lost hope that I would ever get that golden chance.

One day as I was grazing as usual in the foot of a hill, I saw an old man and a young man climb up the hill. The old man had a knife in one hand and fire in the other. I was very curious to see what they were up to. I followed them without making a noise. After they reached the top, the old man started building an altar. He looked quite disturbed, but he was continuously praying and singing praises to God.

The altar was ready in a little while. The young man went up to the old man and asked, "Father, where is the sheep?" "Are they father and son?" I gazed. "But, where is the sheep?" I too asked myself.

To my greatest shock, the father tied up his son and put him on the altar. The son did not speak a word, but remained calm. The father took out the knife and raised his hands up to sacrifice his son. I was trembling with fear. I couldn't believe my own eyes! Have you ever heard of a father sacrificing his own son?

Suddenly there was a bright flashing light. I felt blinded and fell to the ground. An angel stood by the altar and said, "Stop Abraham.



Don't kill your son. Now I can see that you trust God with all your heart." I was so relieved when I heard this, but still I couldn't get up on my feet. I could only say, "Baa... Baa..." Abraham heard me and was overjoyed to see me there. He walked up to me and lifted me. I knew that it was my long awaited journey. A journey that would please my Lord and that would take me to the Lord to glorify Him!

Just as Sherlock had asked us, have we ever heard of a father sacrificing his own son? Yes, that great sacrifice has brought salvation for all mankind. God sent His only Son Jesus Christ to be sacrificed on the cross so as to forgive all our sins. Though Jesus felt the pain physically, in his heart he was glad like Sherlock that he was going to save all of us through his death. There's no need to search for Sherlocks anymore to ask for forgiveness. God forgives us freely now if we repent and ask for forgiveness. Jesus not only died, but also rose again to be with all of us for ever and ever. Let's celebrate Easter with this in mind and be thankful to God always for His invaluable sacrifice. ■

*Ms Rajakumar is a freelance writer on Christian themes