



"If we wish to accomplish great things, let us be ready to follow the Saviour not only up to Mount Thabor but also up to Mount Calvary"

Fr. Jordan



**Salvatorians
Otto Hopfenmuller Study House
Mawlai Mawroh
Shillong - Meghalaya - 793 008
Tel: 0364 2591976
Email: salvatoriansshillong@gmail.com
Website: www.salvatorians.in**



In The Shadow Of The Cross



Vol. II, Issue - 1 (April - October, 2012)



"You accomplish to the extent that you apply yourself"

Fr. Jordan

Laitkynsew: A mission built on Sweat, Blood and providence of God



St. Paul & Peter mission in Laitkynsew is celebrating the 100 years of its existence as the dwelling place of God almighty. Its history is the history of divine grace up on the people of Laitkynsew. In answer to the repeated requests from the people of Shella, the mission superior in Shillong sent Fr. Ignatius Bethan SDS and Fr. Gebhard Abele SDS in January 1893 to start a mission. Shella lies in the southern slopes of Khasi hills at a distance of 70 Km. from Shillong. At the time of the arrival of the missionaries, Shella was a village of 6000 inhabitants. The beginning of the mission was not easy, they had to live in a small hut of a villager for three months before they purchased "devil's place" as the people called it because the dead were cremated there. They bought it for a low price and constructed a chapel and a residence. The first German Salvatorian sisters arrived in Shella in 1896 to take care of the women and the girls. But in 6 months of their arrival Sr. Bernarda Reichl, the superior died. The mission progressed under the hard work of committed priests and Nuns. The sisters opened a small orphanage in course of time to support the children of the area.

The earthquake in 1897 washed away the hard work of the missionaries. Everything was completely destroyed and life was badly affected. They shared the pain of the people. The missionaries walked bare footed in the rain whole night to reach a safer place and fed on cheap potatoes for days. The land had become beyond recovery. Thus the mission was transferred to Laitkynsew, which was on the top of a hill. They built a temporary house which was also used as chapel. A small printing press and an orphanage also were opened to boost the evangelization process. A mission chapel was built in 1899 but that too was destroyed in an earthquake and thunderstorm in 1908. The mission suffered setbacks till 1911, when the mission headquarters in Shillong took up the work of reestablishing the center. Br. Symphorian Hass was designated to look after the construction work. On the feast of the Queen of the Apostles in 19th May 1912, the church was blessed by the mission superior. The Catholic population in Laitkynsew celebrated the day with dance and songs.

The Catholics in Laitkynsew still cherish those evergreen memories as told by their fore parents. The faith filled and colorful opening ceremony of the Centenary celebration testifies their love for the Church and the first German missionaries. The centenary celebration was officially inaugurated by Fr. Andrew Urbanski, the Superior general in the presence of his Excellency Archbishop Dominic Jala on 22 January 2012. This jubilee year is set to promote faith and witness.



General Visitation

"If you live by faith and see in the superiors the representatives of God, great peace will fill your souls" –Francis Jordan

The general visitation to the Indian mission vicariate took place between 10th November and 4th December. Fr. Piet Cuijpers and Fr. Paul Portland represented the Generalate. It was a great joy to see Fr. Piet after an unusual gap of 2 years, as he had been visiting India every six months for the past 12 years. We were also glad to welcome Fr. Paul Portland and interact with him since he was familiar to us only through Emails and letters. They visited all the Salvatorian communities in the Indian mission vicariate. They met the professed members individually and interacted with students in groups. Through this sharing many ideas and views were exchanged. They appreciated the signs of growth as a vicariate and at the same time pointed out the drawbacks and problems persisting in the vicariate. They called for the greater concentration on self-sufficiency and more universal approach. They asked the students and young confreres to take the Salvatorian vocation seriously.



During the visitation they attended many functions among which were the inauguration of the CBSE wing in Nagaon, and blessing of the temporary shelter for the Carmelite sisters in Dhing. They also visited the communities of the Salvatorian sisters and the neighboring communities. Fr. Paul illustrated the status quo of the society around the world through a power point presentation. While Fr. Piet shared with us his hopes

for the society in the future. The visitation ended with the words of Fr. Piet, "Things are set now for good and consistent growth, which will come about in the years to come if all continue their great commitment."

OPENING OF JORDAN MINOR SEMINARY



Establishment of a seminary signifies the growth of any religious order. Fr. Andrew Urbanski SDS, Superior general blessed JORDAN MINIOR SEMINARY at Tokabari in the presence of Fr. Rosario Chinnappan, the Vicariate superior and the community. The seminary would serve as a study house for the minor seminaries of the vicariate, who are perusing secondary school education at Christ Jyothi College,

Nagaon. Fr. Andrew wished that the seminaries would discern the will of God and surrender themselves into His hands during their period formation and thereafter.

WEBSITE LAUNCHING

Responding to the needs of time, the Indian Mission Vicariate launched its official Website by the name **www.salvatorians.in** by Fr. Selvanathan, the Vicariate vicar in Bangalore. The website would help the young Vicariate to reach out to masses. Fr. Sunil, the president of the website, thanked the designers and those who contributed in the making of this Website on behalf of the Vicariate.



BLESSING OF CBSE SCHOOL EXTENSION



The new CBSE Wing of Christ Jyothi School, Nagaon was inaugurated on 26th November 2011 by Fr. Paul Portland SDS, General Secretary. Fr. Piet Cuijpers SDS, Vicar General blessed it in the presence of fathers, sisters, and teaching staff. This better infrastructure would enable us to accommodate the growing number of students to our School.

TEMPORARY SHELTER FOR THE CCR SISTERS



The blessing of the temporary shelter for the CCR sisters took place on the 26th November. Fr. Piet and Fr. Paul, the general visitors presided over the function. The sisters help us in Christ Jyothi School Dhing. Sr. Catherine, the superior of the CCR community thanked all those who made that day possible.

EASTER MINISTRY

The theology students of Shillong joined the parishioners of Mawbri, for the celebration of the Holy week. Fr. Leo Mary, the parish priest was happy to introduce us as Salvatorians to the people. Visiting the families and helping the parish in liturgy were our main assignments during this time. It was amazing to join thousands of faithful for the celebrations and to share their Easter joy.



SINCERE GRATITUDE & BEST WISHES

Fr. Selvaraj, the administrator of Shillong community was given a grand send off on 22nd March. We had a colourful cultural evening to mark the event. Fr. Peter, the Rector thanked him for the services that were rendered to our community. The Apostolic boys who were under his care remembered his fatherly kindness. The theology students mentioned that they would miss his presence in the community. At the end we wished him all the best for his future apostolate in Bangalore.



EDITORIAL

ALLELUIA THE LORD HAS RISEN!

“After Jesus rose from death early on Sunday morning, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene” (Mk16:9). Some of us might wonder why! Why the Good Lord has to appear to a woman, a sinner, an outsider before appearing to his beloved apostles. Was it fair enough to put aside those whom he has called and consecrates, and give priority to an outcast, condemned, and spiritually empty being? From our human point of view, it seems ridiculous and absurd, but the Lord was only confirming what he had said “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10).



Turning to Mary Magdalene we might wish to converse with her like: What makes you so close to the Lord? What is the reason that you are so mad of him? Why are you so restless that Saturday night that you got up early on that first day of the week to rush to the tomb, only to find it empty? Can you not just stay at home after the burial and be content with some home chores like others? Her simple answer would be ‘I was dead but now I’m alive. I was lost and now I’m found (Lk 15:32). My spirit has been narrowed down to the ground by my own sinfulness and my body to the point of being buried in rubble of stones. In fact for me that fateful day was a Good Friday experience. But just before everything was about to take place, there comes my Redeemer my Saviour, who brought me out from the jaws of death and from the tomb of sins and darkness. So it is impossible to forget Him, and just relax. Yes you are right; I love him very much, because I was forgiven much, much more than anyone in the whole of Israel. It is true that He appeared to me first, but are you jealous? Do you know why? The reason is simple, I was searching for him, because I just remembered his words that says “search and you will find” (Mt 7:7).

So it an example for all of us to begin with, if we wish to find, encounter or experience God in our every life then we better search for him right away. Then like the first Christians we too can echo together; “Alleluia, the Lord has truly risen!”

Yours in the Divine Saviour
Fr. Peter Kordor Nengnong SDS
Rector

Religious and Priestly formation: A Formative Model for Salvatorians



Fr. Joseph K J SDS

He has Completed M.Th in Spirituality

Priestly and Religious vocation is a gift of God rooted in baptism. It is a call to become disciples of Christ and to form communities, bearing witness to the Good Shepherd's love for the world that all may have life and have it abundantly.¹



Jesus called his Apostles to be with him, and to be sent forth to preach the Gospel. He Patiently and lovingly prepared them and gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them into the fullness of Truth. Like Apostles, today a person responds to the divine call either as a priest and/or as religious.

Formation is the joyful acceptance of the gift of one's vocation and its actualization at every moment of one's life and in every situation by participating in the grace of the Spirit. To achieve its objectives, formation today needs

to focus on certain points. It must understand the context within which a



vocation develops, be in tune with the Church and be docile to her guidance, feel with her experience together with the experience of the founders' charism and adhere to the pattern of formation. In the traditional setting of formation the stress was on spiritual, personal, intellectual and pastoral formation. But, now there is an increasing emphasis on employing psychological methods in formation. With the arrival of this human science, psychological dimension of the formation began to be stressed from the time of second Vatican Council onward. In the past the concept of 'human formation' was given neither sufficient attention nor a particular emphasis in formation houses. It was confined to the area of good manners, right

¹ CCBI Commission for Vocations, Seminaries, Clergy and Religious: *Charter of Priestly Formation for India*. New Delhi: Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India, 2004, p. 1.

conduct and polished behaviour. But today's findings in various disciplines of social sciences underline and insist upon the imperative of cultivating human qualities and personal values to build a healthy and emotionally stable person/society.

Human Formation in Terms of Developing Ideal Self

Human formation can be defined as 'facilitating the process of becoming fully and genuinely human.' A balanced human formation should enable a formee/ seminarian to accept,



appreciate and responsibly care for his/her 'body-self,' health, and bodily needs.

In the context of the sexual abuses by the clergy, it is good that the (i) formees be helped in developing deep friendships both

with men and women, basing it on the findings of the studies and surveys conducted by the psychologists. Psychologists are also of the opinion that Social isolation and difficulty with social and personal relationships are often key indicators of persons vulnerable to psychological difficulties. Fear of intimacy is a major problem in various sexual disorders. Hence assisting the candidate to make improvements in areas of social and personal relationship and become more comfortable with intimacy can help them manage sexual impulses in more healthy ways and experience greater

integration of their sexuality and spirituality. Deep friendships enable one to be open and vulnerable and share one's struggles with a trusted other. Talking about one's sexuality with other person in a completely open and honest manner is a great support for handling sexual conflicts and anxieties. (ii) Persons with emotional imbalances need being listened to, with respect and sensitivity and it can be very healing and comforting. (iii) A well informed and well formed moral development is possible only when a person is able to make a decision on the basis of the three levels of integration (psycho-physiological, Psycho-social, Rational-spiritual) and to apply finally the rational-spiritual level to make a final decision on each of the issues addressed. In the words of Adrian Van Kaam, "we must seek to establish in our life the primacy of the transcendent dimension of our human form. Its light illumines all other dimensions of our life."²

The Challenges of Formation and the Means to Cope With Them



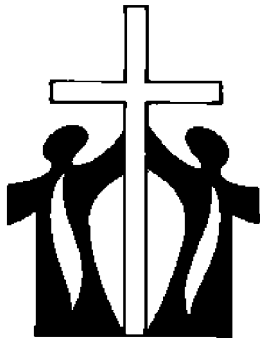
Traditional spiritual means were highlighted as a way to address these challenges and to live integrated lives. But it should not be understood as an exclusive principle devoid of the contributions of the human sciences. Word of God, prayer, meditation and contemplation, celebration of the sacraments particularly daily Eucharist, regular confession, psychological counseling and inner healing, devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary, *etc.* are proposed as the best traditional helps to live authentic priestly

2 Adrian Van Kaam: *Formation of the Human Heart*, Vol.3. p. 6.

and religious life. To put it in the words of the late Holy Father John Paul the II, “...for our part we must therefore seek to be as open as possible to light from on high from the Holy Spirit.”³ All the above mentioned tools should be used by the priests and the religious of the future as well as the present and ultimately open themselves to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to live a life in accordance with the prompting of the Spirit. It is reflected in the Letter of James thus, “Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (Jas 1:22).

Salvatorian Elements of Formation and Some New Models

A burning desire to encounter the Lord and to know His will and doing that will in everyday life context constitute the core of spiritual life and formation. Of course, in this process of becoming whole or perfect, God too



takes keen interest providing all the necessary graces. The desire of becoming whole is not something small or in pieces. We witness in the lives of saints a remarkable sense of generosity to follow the footsteps of the Lord. They had their limitations but they had the generosity. They made themselves available to the Lord generously so that they could learn from His presence and form themselves. Having received a personal as well as precious call one must strive generously and march forward in trusting

in the goodness of the Lord. To put it in the words of Fr. Jordan, “steadfastness, constancy, perseverance is of great importance, especially for a member of our Society. This steadfastness, this constancy will be a real asset for you in your work of self-sanctification and the sanctification of the neighbour.” Again he says, ‘*Gutta cavat lapidem non vi, sed saepe cadendo.*’ this means ‘constant drops of water wear away the stone’. Therefore, have constancy, patience, steadfastness!”⁴ It is the founder’s unique approach to achieve perfection which is the ultimate goal of formation.

Everyone has to strive to reach this state of total perfection and the consequent blessedness through the physical, mental and spiritual growth. This is what I mean by ‘wholeness of life in formation.’ Psycho-spiritual integration and wholeness occur naturally when the personality and the soul meet, each honoring the other for its natural way of being. Personality and soul should meet sitting at the feet of the Lord, and being in His presence with total humility and self-surrender.

Conclusion

The objectives and the methodology of formation must be constantly attuned to a pastoral reading of cultural situations, and those in charge of formation must become capable of a dialogue which takes account of both elements. To put in the words of Lawrence Pinto, “One has to be convinced that one has to be psychologically and humanly healthy in order to grow spiritually. We need to help our seminarians to grow in human maturity so as to

3 John Paul II: *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: p. 11.

4 Francis Jordan: *Exhortation and Admonitions*. p. 189.

be able to grow in spirituality.” Our candidates in formation sometimes fail to achieve the fundamental goals of formation because of the lack of inner freedom arising out of inferiority, fear, insecurity, anger and lack of affective maturity. The lack of psychosocial maturity prevents them from becoming well-rounded



persons. The harmony, unity and wholeness of the persons shall be maintained throughout the formation. The fundamental premise of psychospiritual formation is that we are spiritual beings with an urge toward personal growth and self-transcendence. Christian spirituality is essentially a relationship with God, others, creation and oneself; with what one is, with what one has and with what one does. Of these three dimensions, the first one becomes the basis of the other two and hence my emphasis on spiritual life, built up through prayer life without losing the sight of the contributions of new human/social sciences. This is the core and essential conclusion of my study.

“There Francis of the Cross will show
the unwalked path I am to go...
Both father and Founder is he
and strong support will he always be...
There, too, I will draw my final breath
And sink into God in quiet death.”

- Blessed Mary of the Apostles

“When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long
and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one
which has opened for us.”

- Alexander Graham Bell

A Discerning Journey



Martin Edward

Salvatorian Novice in Bangalore

A New Beginning

It is undoubtedly challenging to be religious in this sophisticated world. Hence Novitiate, a journey of discernment, a time for spiritual edification, becomes an inevitable beacon to lead the youngsters along the way. We were initiated into religious life by Fr. Vinoy, in the presence of the Novice Master Fr. Sunil and the community, in a simple ceremony on 1st May, 2011.

Our minds surged into curiosity and expectations about what sort of life we were going to have in the novitiate, as we had already heard from many about the uniqueness and prominence of novitiate in the formation of a religious. After taking heed of the instructions



given by the Novice Master on the very first day, we became aware that Novitiate is the entrance

to consecrated life. Few days later, while I was pondering upon it I instantly jotted down the thoughts that were lingering within me.

*As I opened my eyes at the dawn
I felt the sun, lighting from heaven,
Filling my heart with the presence of God.*

*Immersing in His grace and love,
I carried out my daily tasks at the noon.
Though the rugged path pained my feet,*

*The caring arms of God at the eve
Soothed my pain and cheered my heart
To rest a while in peace of God*

Yes, life too is like a day, just as the mood of the morning determines whether the day and evening are worthwhile or not. when we consider the consecrated life, if novitiate is the morning it has to be certainly pursued with an



ambience of deep experience of God, to discern and venture into the noon, which is the time to toil and yield, amidst the challenges of mission and to cherish the evening with inner joy and contentment prior to our entry into eternity.

Sacrifices and their Fruits

The first few weeks seemed to be dry and boring since we had to renounce our times of active interaction with the world outside and sacrificing several other leisurely activities. All for the sake of being deeply rooted in profoundly experienced faith in God as well as to grow in love for the society in order to shine out as remarkably spiritual persons, and to become committed Salvatorians. Because renunciation and sacrifice entails a divine power to harness our emotions and impulses which consequently can purify our lives into radical self-giving to God just as St. Alphonsa uttered out of experience, **“Renunciation and suffering are the stones with which we build our heavenly mansions”**. However as the days passed on our souls started getting attuned to spend the serene moments in prayer, contemplation, reflection and introspection fulfilling the desire of the founder Venerable Francis Jordan that he has inscribed in his spiritual diary, **“Be truly interior, walking always in God’s presence and conversing with him”**. Furthermore considering it as an apt occasion, we began learning to live in the community with fraternal love and mutual understanding looking **into the interests of others** (Phil 2: 4) and **bearing one another’s burden** (Gal 6:2) which was the wise advice of St. Paul.

Enlightenment and Inspiration

Keeping in mind the words of our founder, **“However fertile the field, it cannot be fruitful without cultivation”**, we offered

ourselves to the guidance of the Novice Master who gradually led us to study and analyze in detail the documents of the society: history of the society, the biographies of the founder as



well as the other pioneers of the society, the charism and the constitution of the society. The study on our society gave us a sense of pride that we are part of an association of dedicated people who are called to be the **fishers of men** (Mt 4: 19) for the kingdom of God, following the example of the founder. The life and works of Venerable Francis Jordan, his rock-like faith in God, devotion to the mother of God, love for the church, unshakable hope for salvation, love of neighbour and zeal for souls astounded us and persuaded our innermost being to inculcate in us the virtues and values he practiced.

The common Novitiate program at Claret Bhavan, which consists of classes on various topics related to consecrated life namely charism, vows, mission, psycho-spiritual and psycho-sexual integration, community life etc, is of greater avail for us not only to enrich ourselves with a lot of insights about religious life but also to interact with the novices of other congregations and broaden our views on different aspects of our life and mission. The sparks thrown on us by various faculties, who came to enlighten our minds, impelled us to make stern discernment, for they gave us the glimpse of the future challenges and temptations that we are to face. Besides their lectures some of their lifestyle and rigorous

pastoral activities, about which they shared with us, too inspired us.

Pastoral Exposure and Ashram Experience

Thank God for the privilege he has gave us to render our service to the HIV/AIDS patients at Snehadaan. While caring and consoling those impoverished souls we tasted the deep joy of pleasing Jesus himself as Mother Teresa convincingly said, **“I am touching the living body of Christ in the broken bodies of the sick and the suffering”**. The inspiration drawn from her life and words instilled in us enormous energy and strength to give them our whole hearted love and care which is more valuable than giving material things out of pity. Though the experience was challenging and risky, nevertheless put into our hearts the



sacrificing spirit of the candle that melts itself into nothing to dispel the darkness and to **give light to others** (Mt 5:14).

We spent one week at Vidyavanam Ashram in prayerful silence and reflection where we also made our discernment retreat. The methods of meditation that we learned there are very powerful to deepen our faith and experience God. The talks of Frs. Veneeth and Antony,



the directors, were vibrant enough to create in us an awareness of the purpose of our religious vocation and provided us the toolkit for our perseverance. **Led by the spirit of God** (Rom 8: 14) we still

journey to reach the point that God has destined for us.



”The cross is your life,
The cross is your salvation,
The cross is your glory,
The cross is your hope,
The cross is your shield,
The cross is your protection,
The cross is your portion.
The cross is your joy.”

-Fr. Francis Jordan

A Brief Sketch on Bodo Tribe



Lalit Kerketta

Student of Theology in Shillong,
Meghalaya

Origin and Development: Assam is a multiethnic and a multicultural state of northeast India. Many of the tribal and indigenous groups in Northeast India have its origin in the Mongolian races, who were living in the vast Tibetan Plateau. They were constantly on move to find greener pasture



and better living. Some families of China-Tibetan Mongoloid group migrated to the Brahmaputra valley of Assam about 2000 BC. Though they occupied the Brahmaputra valley in the beginning, the pressure from other new migrants and also their own growing number forced some of them to move further to Garo Hills and the Hills and plains of Cachar and Tripura and other surrounding regions. In course of time these various scattered groups acquired variations in their language, customs, and cultures and even to some extent in physical features through

inter-marriage and close association with other local inhabitants and subsequently they acquired a separate tribal name.

The most predominant and original group now known is Bodos. They mainly inhabit the Brahmaputra valley and few other districts of Assam and surrounding districts. But Historians are not sure about the name

by which they were known during their stay in their original habitat in Tibet. However there is some similarity between the Bodos and the present Kham tribes of Tibet. It is the largest minority group of the state of Assam and they are considered to be the most traditionally and culturally rich community of the state.



Language: The Bodos have a rich tradition of folk-literature. In the folk-society, songs of the folk, tales, legends, charms related to various religious festivals and performances, various myths, riddles, idioms and sayings are still prevailing as relic of the folk-knowledge. After having travelled far and wide and split into several groups and sub-groups, the Bodo language has undergone various stages of metamorphoses due to contact, association and sometimes intermarriage with the other races. Hence, their language and customs are influenced by the surrounding traditions. There were many attempts made in the recent past to unite the Bodos and preserve their culture from further adulteration. They have formed an association called *Bodo Sahitya Sabh* to unite all the Bodos under one banner across India and to restore their culture and language. But traditionally Bodo has no script of its own. It was the Christian Missionaries who first took the initiative and collected the folk literature and adopted the Roman script for writing while some Bodo writers have used the Bengali and Asamiya scripts.

Dress: Weaving is integral part of Bodo culture. Many families rear their own silkworms, the cocoons of which are then spun into silk. Bodo girls learn to weave from a young age, and no Bodo courtyard is incomplete without a loom. Most women weave their own Dokhnas (the traditional dress of the Bodo women) and shawls. The Bodos are also expert craftsmen in bamboo products.



Food habits: Bodos have some of the mouthwatering dishes. They are very much fond of conventional drink called *Zu Mai*. *Zu* means wine and *Mai* means rice. Rice is the staple food but is savored with non vegetarian dishes. Among the non-vegetarian dishes they favor pork and chicken. A Bodo household is incomplete without a pig-sty and a fowl pen which are always kept well stocked. They also like fish, particularly the dried variety. Some of their dishes are *Oma Bedor*:- pork fried, roasted, or stewed and often smoked in the sun for several days. *Napham*:- made by grinding smoked fish, specific leafy vegetables, ground powder, and the mixture is allowed to age in a sealed bamboo cylinder. *Onla*:- it is gravy made from rice powder and slices of bamboo shoots cooked lightly with spices and chicken or added pork.

Religion: Majority of the Bodos are Hindus. They believe in one God, called the *Bathou* or *Sibury* (the supreme god). The different gods and goddesses whom they worship on different occasions are the different images of *Bathou*. They observe various ceremonies and festivals in relation to birth, wedding, death and agricultural activities. Rice, fruits, male goats, pigs, cocks, pigeons and ducks are sacrificed to please the gods and goddesses. The plant called *Sijou* (*Euphorbia Splendor*) is worshiped as the symbol of *Bathou*. It is planted in the North Eastern corner of their courtyard and every evening they light an earthen lamp facing the plant. With the arrival of Christian Missionaries a considerable section of people were converted to Christianity. Today, we find that the Catholic Church among the Bodos

(continue on page 11)

is one of the most vibrant and growing Christian communities in Northeast.



Bodo's history has a glorious past. They have contributed a significant share in the cultural diversity of the Northeast India. The Bodos

have become more aware of their uniqueness and cultural identity and thus there are many recent movements to preserve the culture and language from further mutilation. Though they are susceptible to the influence of modernization and globalization, they still keep the spirit of oneness among themselves. Their rich culture, tradition and language have helped India to be called truly incredible, side by side with so many other ethnic groups that dot this beautiful land.

DO YOU GO TO CHURCH?



The parish priest was standing at the door after the Mass as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed a young man by the hand and pulled him aside

The priest said to him "you need to join the Army of the Lord."

The young man replied "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Father."

The parish priest questioned, "how come, I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"

He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

"No matter where you are in life right now, no matter who you are, no matter how old you are - it is never too late to be who you are meant to be."

- Esther ☞ Jerry Hicks

THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUE IN *THIRUKKURAL*



Stephen Louis

Student of Theology in Shillong,
Meghalaya

Thiruvauvar's *Thirukkural*: An Introduction



*Thirukkural*¹ is one of the most notable literary and ethical treatises in the Indian languages. It portrays the right way of living and morality of the highest order. It is said that in perfection of form, profundity of thought and purity of ethics no other

ethical text can be compared to *Thirukkural*. Hence, Albert Schweitzer², in his tribute to *Thirukkural* rightly says: "There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom."³ *Thirukkural* literally means the holy couplets. It is the work of the great saint of South India, named Thiruvalluvar.

The age in which Thiruvalluvar, the author of *Thirukkural*, lived is shrouded in mystery. He was probably born during the *Saṅgam* age⁴ when Tamil civilization was at its peak. In regard to the life of Thiruvalluvar,

1 The word *Thirukkural* comprises of two parts: 'Thiru' and 'Kural.' *Thiru* means "sacred, honourable" and *Kural* means "short, brief, concise or abridged." 'Kural', in the Tamil language, literally means 'anything short' and refers to the couplet-form. It is interesting to find that the *kural* form is comparable to the *sūtra*-style adopted in Sanskrit literature to convey ethical and philosophical ideas. Brevity seems to be the handmaid of lucidity, as employed in the *kural* form of the Tamil language. It should also be noted that *kural*, unlike the *sūtra* form, is elegant poetry, a work of art.

2 Albert Schweitzer was a theologian, musician, philosopher, physician and a committed humanitarian. He received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of "Reverence for Life".

3 Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1960) 203.

4 *Saṅgam* age (c. first century B.C. to third century A.D.) is considered by the Tamil people as the golden era of Tamil language. This was the period when the Tamil country was ruled by the three crowned kings the Cheras, Pandyas and the Cholas.

it is accepted by eminent researchers that nothing definite is known.⁵ Thiruvalluvar's understanding of faith and religion is disputed. There are accounts that he was a Jain but others portray him as a Hindu who had a modern and secular outlook to the world. G. U. Pope, a great scholar who translated the entire *Thirukkural* into English in 1886, even traced Christian influence in *Thirukkural*.⁶ Besides, the Buddhists, the Saivites and the Vaishnavites also claim it as their scripture. In any case, Tamil people consider Thiruvalluvar to be a holy man who has given them one of the best texts on life. It is generally believed that his works were secular and neutral towards all religions. Hence, *Thirukkural* can be very well accepted as a universal ethical text on the art of living.



Structure of *Thirukkural*

Thirukkural consists of 133 *adhikarams* or chapters. Each chapter consists of 10 *kural*s, thus, making 1330 *kural*s in total. Each *kural* is a couplet. Each couplet consists of seven words, with four words on the first line and three on the second. Therefore, the title of the work given by the Thiruvalluvar is “*Muppāl*,”⁷ meaning three parts. The three

parts are broadly divided into *Arathuppāl*, *Poruṭṭpāl* and *Inbathuppāl* of which the first deals with *Aram* (virtue or the moral values of life), the second discusses *Poruḷ* (wealth or socio-economic values of life), and the third on *Inbam* (love, depicting the psycho-social values of life). Therefore, the three books of the *Thirukkural*, respectively, deal with the ideal approaches to virtue, wealth and love, covering all the major aspects of life.⁸

Ethics of *Thirukkural*

The ethics propounded by *Thirukkural* is eminently practical and universal. Its concern is primarily the world of all of us. It is realistic in its approach to human life. Thiruvalluvar, the author of *Thirukkural* gives supreme importance to virtue. According to him, all aspects of human life and all stages of human life should be governed by virtue. Hence, he deals with a wide range of virtues to be cultivated and negative qualities to be eschewed in one's personal and socio-political life.

Virtue: A Way of Life

Thiruvalluvar considers virtue as way of life, a way of harmonious living that leads to social happiness. According to *Thirukkural*, virtue yields ‘honour’ and



5 Gopalan, *The Social Philosophy of Tirukkural*, 23.

6 Subramanian and Rajalakshmi, *The Concordance of Tirukkural*, xii.

7 Just as the term *trivarga* is used to refer to the values of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* in Brahmanic Hinduism, the term *muppāl* may also be used to refer to the values of *aram*, *poruḷ* and *inbam* of the *Kural*.

8 S. Ramasamy, *On Translating Tirukkural* (Chennai: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 2001) 29.

‘wealth’ and, so, there is no other thing more fruitful for life (*Kural*, §31).⁹ Besides, it says,

*Araththinūngu ākkamum illai aḍanai
Maraththalin ūngillai kēdu.*

No greater gain than virtue. No greater loss than its neglect.¹⁰

In other words, if virtue is neglected we lose everything such as honour, dignity, the right way of life, and the very purpose of life itself. On the other hand, if we hold on to virtue, then everything will come back to us.



Thirukkural’s s u p r e m e commandment for the practice of virtue is to be pure in mind. The cultivation of good qualities purifies the mind. A mind free of the

impurities of evil thoughts and hankering after sensual pleasures is the basis of virtue. In the absence of purity of mind the so-called righteous conduct becomes nothing but a mere show (*Kural*, §34). Therefore, according to *Thirukkural*, what constitutes virtue is leading a life free from the evils of envy, anger, desire for enjoyment of sense object, and harsh and unkind words (*Kural*, §35). These four evils are indeed bad qualities. They will pull a person down to inhuman state. On the other hand, one who is free from these

evils cultivates virtuous qualities of love, compassion, kindness and contentment and attains peace and happiness.¹¹

According to *Thirukkural*, the outcome of virtue is also pure happiness. *Kural* §39, for example, says:

*Araththān varuvadē inbam marrellām
Purathḍa pugazhum ila.*

Virtue alone gives true happiness; all else is empty and inglorious.¹²

Along this line, Rajagopalachari would say that only the joy that comes from right conduct is true happiness whereas, other pleasures are really sources of pain and causes of shame.¹³ Virtue means purity of mind and true happiness springing from the pure mind. Even in family life, real happiness comes only from love ennobled and sublimated by virtue. Hence, Thiruvalluvar’s concept of pleasure is not based on lust but on divine love between two souls.

Benefits of Virtue

In order to derive the benefits of virtue, *Thirukkural* exhorts us to practise three things. They are:

1. To practise virtue always by all means and in all possible ways open to us. In other words, we should not miss even one single opportunity for practising virtue (*Kural*, §33).

9 O. R. Krishnaswami, *The Wisdom of Thirukkural: A Guide to Living* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2004) 118.

10 Thiruvalluvar, *Thirukkural*, §32 (Krishnaswami, 116).

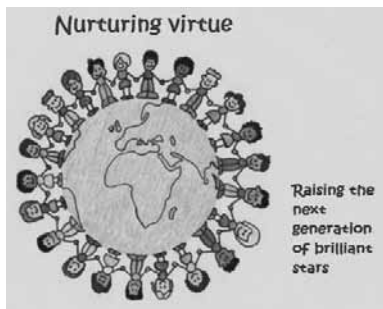
11 Krishnaswami, *The Wisdom of Thirukkural*, 118.

12 Thiruvalluvar, *Thirukkural*, §39 (Krishnaswami, 117).

13 C. Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiruvalluvar* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970) 2.

2. To practise virtue ‘here and now’ without postponing till the end of life. If we do so, the effects of our virtuous deeds themselves, will be a deathless companion at the hour of our death (*Kural*, §36).
3. To do good deeds without wasting even a single day. If we do so, then, the effects of the deeds themselves will serve as a stone blocking the chain of rebirth¹⁴ (*Kural*, §38).¹⁵

Thus, *Thirukkural* emphasises the importance of leading a virtuous way of life in thought, word and deed from the very beginning, without wasting even a single day. This is very relevant because our life here on earth is uncertain. If we think, “Why should I



bother about good deeds now? I can do them in my old age,” we would never be able to practice virtue, because we would be ruining ourselves by our failure to practice virtue. Even if we get good sense at a later stage in life, circumstances and those around us may not cooperate. Moreover an eminent factor is that death may come to us at any time.

According to *Thirukkural* one can attain freedom from suffering and from the cycle of births and deaths, only by purifying the mind by practicing virtue, and by doing selfless service in all possible ways without expecting any reward. What we are today is the result of our past dispositions and deeds. The unequal situation in the society such as poverty, discrimination, illness and injustice is a call for us to live virtuously. We have the free will to practice virtue in this lifetime irrespective of our social status and walk of life. The path of righteousness is open to all. So, the right way of life is to shun evil and stick to virtue.

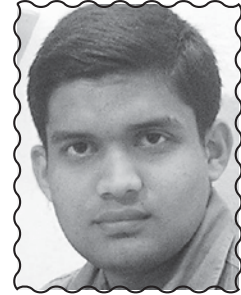
¹⁴ Rebirth or Law of Karma should be understood from the Indian mind-set where liberation or salvation is understood as to end the cycle of rebirth.

¹⁵ Krishnaswami, *The Wisdom of Thirukkural*, 119.

Ability is what you're capable of doing.
 Motivation determines what you do.
 Attitude determines how well you do it.

- Lou Holtz

Fr. Francis Jordan: An Icon of Youth



Joby Philip

Student of theology in shillong,
Meghalaya

The period designated as “youth” is the most beautiful yet challenging phase of human life. Youth are upbeat, optimistic, idealistic and are ‘reservoirs of talents’. Youth is also the most frustrating and vulnerable time in life. It is a period when one is hardly old enough to be his own and yet is facing a sense of independence. It is the time to set goals and search for identity in life.



The youth today is called by many names; it is this generation X, which is going to lead the nation and the world. ‘Leaders of tomorrow’ is what they are called as. They need to be adequately prepared to meet the challenges of life ahead. Sadly, many youth are unable to grow in a holistic environment due to single parent household, bad company, adverse influence of mass media etc. While they are the future of the society, they have the same potency for good and bad.

Over the years, history has proved the impact of harnessing the youthful energy both for constructive and destructive purposes. Adolf Hitler understood the dynamism of young people. He formed the ‘Hitler youth’ and ‘German league of young girls’. They were taught to revere Hitler and serve him without question. They were malformed in their youth to take up arm for false pride and wage war against humanity. But there are also various examples in the Bible, which teach us the constructive aspect of youthfulness. Joseph of the Old Testament stands tall among all the heroes of his time for his dignity and high moral principles. He played a prominent role at his young age in the formation of Israelites. Kings David and Josiah had rendered their youthfulness to serve the people and became well known rules of the Israel. Jeremiah, the “weeping prophet”, Mary, the mother of God, and



Timothy, the companion of Paul are few examples to sight the constructive realm of youthful vigor and energy.

Youth are the pillars of the church. They define the face of the church. As Blessed John Paul II rightly puts it “**youth, you are the hope of the church and without this youth face, the church would appear disfigured**”. Thus church has got the indispensable duty of channelizing the energy of the youth for constructive mobility and innovative purposes. Among the various factors which play predominant role in the formation and motivation of youth, the role of an icon is indispensable. Icons are men and women who have excelled in the fields or who have chartered a different course in life or in career. The youth need people to rely on and learn from. The youth icons play the role of a guiding star in the character formation and development of a positive philosophy in the life of young people.

Fr. Francis Jordan is one of the inspiring icons, the universal church can promote to invigorate the youth and motivate them. I would like to highlight ten qualities of Jordan which can be inspirational for the youth of the 21st century.



1. Having fun and being energized- Jordan was a lively and mischievous boy in the positive sense of the word. He enjoyed the company of friends and was looked up on as a hero among his peer group. He was not devoid of prankish actions which entertained others without offending



anyone. He was filled with life and enjoyed outdoor, especially fishing. His mother sometimes affectionately called him a “little rowdy” .He enjoyed

every bit of the electrifying period of youth. Youth are called to celebrate the vitality of life responsibly.

2. Innovative and creative- Youth need to be innovative. But many are content to keep the status quo. They prefer to be in a rut than risk being different and doing things differently. Jordan was an ordinary man of many talents as well as weaknesses. He had excelled in drawing and was extraordinary in learning languages. He realized his abilities and inabilities and travelled extra miles to add new dimension to his God given talents. He considered his weaknesses more complimentary than a burden. Jordan was an ordinary man but grew up to be extraordinary through his sheer hard work and constant endeavour. Youth can transform the world through their innovative skills and creative abilities.

3. Perplexed yet focused- Human life can not be an ocean with out any waves. Jordan had many perplexed moments to his life. The loss of his father as a young boy of 15 was a great blow in his life. Poverty caused a smoke screen in discerning his goal at an early age. He had to forgo studies for the sake of supporting the family. He was not

ashamed to work in the laying of the bricks, construction of dam etc. Though he had to face the heat of many adverse situations yet he never lost focus on his real purpose in life. In every stage of his crises and setbacks he was discerning his goal and equipping himself to face the future. He had to swim against the current to be successful. Modern world demands a lot from the youth. Failures are bound to happen in this period but the strength of each individual depends on how quickly one is able to bounce back and carry on to do better.

4. **Don't quit before you have started-** Youth can easily succumb to identity crisis, mood swing, emotional dryness, personality swift etc. These can leave lasting impact on them. Any new venture or decision is a huge challenge in the life of youth as they may have to challenge their own comfort zone or conventional ideas. When there are setbacks in life it is easy to quit but hard to persevere and be successful. As Jesus said **“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God,”** anyone who wants success should venture into it. The path of a successful person is thorny and hazardous. One may have to face many hurdles. Jordan had to pay a huge price to fulfill his dream of becoming a priest and to establish a new congregation. Poverty, age, poor health, and obligatory military service could not force him to drift away from his real purpose in life. His life teaches that success comes only through great suffering.
5. **Focused on priorities-** When we have clear vision of purpose in life, it is easy to solidly say “no” to something and “yes” to others. There are two kinds of priorities in life.

The first is the things which are important and secondly the things that are urgent. To be a good time manager one must learn to control one-self to do the important things prior to urgent things. If only our life is built on a vision and a set of values we can set long and short term goal in life.

Jordan had categorized his priorities. His most important priority in life was to serve God and to save souls for Christ. He expressed it thus, **“O Lord, what else can truly and fully console me except that I live entirely for Thee and employ all my strength for the future of the glory and salvation of souls and sacrifice my life for Thee.”**

He never wavered from his vision and principles. His life



was a constant struggle to accomplish the priorities in life till the end. Youth is the apt time to set goals and prioritize the needs in life and work to accomplish them because their mind is capable of achieving what they desire the most.

6. **Strong self belief, coupled with humility and sincerity-** Jordan believed in himself and the power of the providence. He understood himself correctly. He neither underestimated nor overestimated his capacities. He gave strong emphasis on character formation and integrity of life. He never compromised on sincerity for the sake of mere success. He dared to fail in his Mathematics exam rather than passing out of malpractice though he was helped to do so. He was not boastful about his capacity to learn languages or the skill to draw.

He was remembered as a humble, noble, good at heart, quiet and holy young man by his friends and associates. He accepted the reality of life and was content with little. Youth can enhance their abilities and productivity if they believe in themselves and seek the help of God in their daily life.

- 7. Passion for learning and intense curiosity-** Youth of today have ample opportunities to acquire knowledge. Knowledge has become a distance between finger tip and key board. But one must be prudent and assiduous enough to distinguish between our wants and needs.

Jordan was a self made man. He gained much of the knowledge through self learning. Age could not bridle his inquisitiveness for knowledge. He did not bow down to the conventions of the time. In order to fulfill his requirement to enter the Gymnasium (classical School of the first rank, preparing for the university) he relied on private instructions. His teachers were spellbound at his curiosity and dedication at a very late age. Young Jordan to used wait for his private teacher for hours, studying all by himself, either sitting in the room or on the steps. He used to carry a book



or a slip of paper while walking from Gurtweil to Waldshut to study on the way. While in the university, apart from the subjects

prescribed he enrolled also for extra language subjects with great assiduity. He used his vacation each time travelling, in order to make practical progress in the languages. He kept up the spirit of learning till the end of his life. It is the need of the hour for the youth to update and acquire knowledge to fit in to a competitive and fast moving world.

- 8. Committed to make a significant difference-** N. Eldon Tanner says “**Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth.**” God has created every individual with a mission to contribute for the betterment of the world in his life time. The youth especially can accomplish greater things for the world as they are ‘the power house’ of the society.

Jordan was an ordinary man but his contributions to the society is highly appreciated by the Universal church and admired by many even after a century of his death. Thousands of young men and women have joined him to share in his noble endeavour. Jordan did not do any extraordinary things but he did ordinary things in an extraordinary spirit with great conviction and love for the church. He committed his life for a cause and invested every bit of his energy for it. His life and contribution still speaks volumes and attracts millions around the world.

- 9. Dreamer and a visionary-** Dream can transform and transcend life. As former president of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam said “**Dreams are not what you see in sleep. They are the things that do not let you sleep**”. The failure of today’s youth is that they either fail to dream or they dream to fail. The facilities of modern world are the sweat of many great dreamers who had the courage to actualize them.

Jordan too nourished a dream. Every single breath of his reflected the impulses of that dream. He dreamed to be a true child of the Church and a steward of Christ. He worked toward the realization of that dream unceasingly. He contributed his best and God added the rest to it. But God was gracious enough to grant his dream beyond what he dreamed.

10. Faith in God- A good meal is incomplete without a desert. All the above nine qualities of Jordan would not be complete without his favorite theme. i.e., prayer. It is the word which reoccurs number of times in his spiritual diary. Every good action is a prayer; hence the life of Jordan was a humble prayer to his creator.



Prayer has enormous powers. Prayer is the aftermath of faith. One can overcome their impulsiveness and insecurity if they are aware of a supreme power in their life. Faith can work wonders in youth. Fr. Jordan experienced the power of faith and exhorts the youth saying “he who trusts in the lord will not give way, will not fall. He whose strength is in the Lord will not sink down.”



Happy moments, Praise God.
 Difficult moments, Seek God.
 Quiet moments, Worship God.
 Painful moments, Trust God.
 Every moment, Thank God.

“I leave to you perpetual
 poverty,
 As a great treasure and a
 precious pearl
 Which God will ask back
 of you
 On the day of judgment”

-Fr. Francis Jordan

“And in the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”

- Abraham Lincoln

CONTENTS

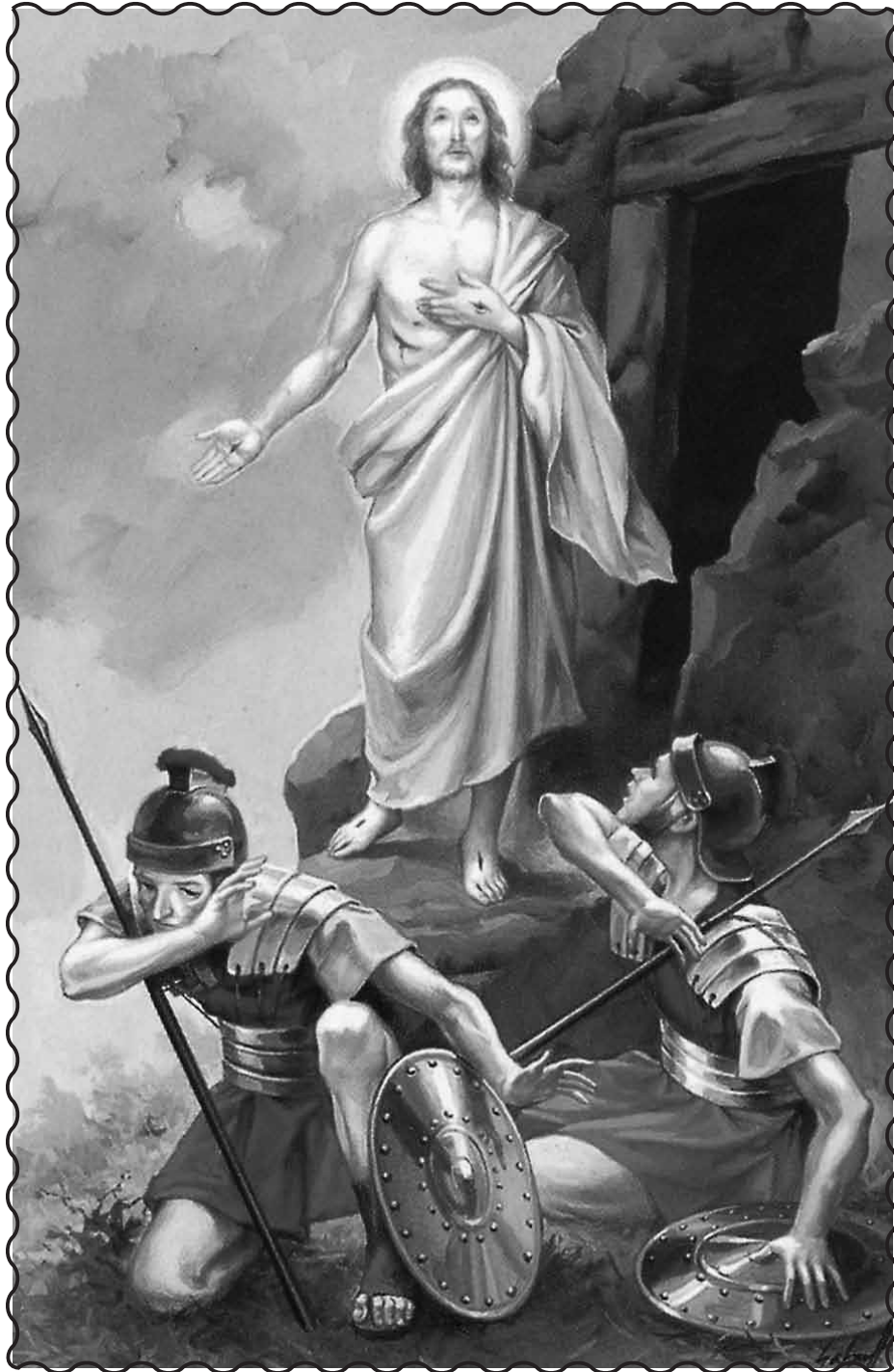
Editorial.....	1
Religious and Priestly formation: A Formative Model for Salvatorians	2
A Discerning Journey	6
A brief sketch on Bodo Tribe	9
The Importance of Virtue in Thirukkural.....	12
Fr. Francis Jordan: An Icon of Youth	15

EDITORIAL BOARD

Fr. Peter K. Nengnong SDS
The Students of Theology
Otto Hopfenmüller Study House
Shillong

For Private Circulation only

Alleluia, Christ has risen!!!



Otto Hopfenmüller Study House wish you;

Happy Easter