

## NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2008

### Vicar's Message

Dearly beloved,

We are entering into another phase of our Pilgrimage, the Great Lent. Let us prepare ourselves to hear the call of God. Let it be a transforming time; a total change in our attitude, lifestyle, and our philosophy of life, if you still belong to this world. Let it be a time of "atma shudheekaranam"- purification of internal self. For this purification we can use various methods and practices in our Christian life. The following is a quotation from *The Wisdom of the Desert* edited by Thomas Merton: *"One brother asked one of the elders: What good things shall I do, and have life thereby? The old man replied: God alone knows what is good. However, I have heard it said that someone inquired of Father Abbot Nisteros the Great, the friend of Abbot Antony, asking; what good work shall I do? And that he replied: Not all works are alike. For Scripture says, that, Abraham was hospitable and God was with him. Elias loved solitary prayer, and God was with him. And David was humble, and God was with him. Therefore, whatever see your soul to desire according to God, do that thing, and you shall keep your heart safe.*

One way of purification is fasting. An abstention from food and do whatever we want does not amount to fasting under Christian values. In our understanding, fasting is at the same time abstinence from food as well as abstaining from everything that does not stand with Godliness such as evil thoughts, enmity, selfishness, malice, gluttony, avarice, and hard heartedness.

Penitence is another important practice. Confess our sinfulness and our lowliness before God and praise him for his care and grace for us. It is very difficult to accept that we are guilty and are sinners. Satan will not allow our "self" to confess that we are sinners. We will always justify our sins. Moreover, the modern managerial techniques teach that never lose before your clients, argue even though it is not true and it will lead you to victory. Dearly ones, that is the worldly victory, but you cannot hide anything from God's eye.

I Samuel 16:7 says; "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." Again, the psalmist says You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar... You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways... Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body (Ps.139).

Once, a rich man came to Jesus and asked how he can obtain eternal life. Jesus said, follow the Commandments. He replied that he has been observing all the Commandments even from his childhood. Then Jesus said, go and sell your property and then follow me. Almsgiving is another important way of attaining eternal life. When we enjoy wealth we should remember the following things: all wealth we are enjoying is God given and nothing is our own (we may think that because we have worked hard, we have earned wealth). Question: if you do not have sufficient health how can you do hard work? So everything is given through God's grace. Everything in this world is perishable, including our body. When we have leftovers after dinner we should think of the hundreds and thousands who are starving. We have the responsibility to share whatever we have and find joy in it. Really, we cannot explain the satisfaction and joy we get from such sharing. Thus, sharing can help us attain salvation.

Another important thing we have to do before beginning the lent is to reconcile with our enemies. There is no meaning in fasting with hatred in our mind. We usually begin the fast with 'subukono', which means reconciliation. This year also we have the sacrament of reconciliation immediately after the Holy liturgy on Sunday 3rd February. So, let us start the lent with a goal of self-edification and purification.

As we did last year, I would like to conduct evening prayer meeting every day during the Lenten time. Participation of everyone for the prayer meeting will be appreciated. Generally, the prayer meeting will include the following:

1. Prayer
2. House Blessing
3. I would like to spend the evening with the family hosting the prayer meeting
4. Time to open ones' heart in front of God. During this time we can talk together without any prejudice the following subjects: 1) Reconciliation: if you have any problems with me please let me know. 2) Your anxiety: in your personal life, family life, and your concern over the church's present life
5. Confession: Anybody over 12 should confess (it should be done before Palm Sunday)
6. Morning prayer

## **Building Updates**

The construction of the sanctuary has started. The builder has almost finished fixing metal studs. What remains is the frame and truss work. Site contractor will finish the final grading and thereafter the paving contractor will start paving, and hopefully by the second week of February we will have those works

completed. We are still short of almost two hundred thousand dollars. We have collected and still collecting money through the fundraising lotto that we started. But, the recent change orders have increased our shortage. The \$200,000 is needed in the next two months. I exhort everybody to open his or her hearts and help the church.

### **Birthday**

Bixa Kurian

Priya Rijju

Alka Jays

Mathew Chacko

Sneha Abraham

Sajjan George

Viju Ipe

Shiney Sam

Susan Varghese

Laly Koshy

Bijoy Joy

Chinnamma Thoams

Renjith Thomas

Varghese Abraham

Ryan George

Luke Benny

Stephan Sam

Joseph

Anu Binu

### **Wedding Anniversary**

George Varghese & Saramma

Rajan Varghese & Remani