

EVANGELISATION AS THE JOYFUL EPIPHANY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

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As the Syro-Malabar Church of the Saint Thomas Christians of India celebrates the Mission Year marking the golden jubilee of the Chanda mission, it is appropriate to review, revive, and renew the missionary vocation of the Church. The Church, “the universal sacrament of salvation (LG 48), is missionary by her very nature” (AG 2). It is to be recalled that “missionary activity is nothing else and nothing less than a manifestation or epiphany of God’s will and fulfilment of that will in the world and history” (AG 9; MP 1.5). The Church is a covenant community, an ecclesial community, the Mystical Body of Christ. The Church is a communion of persons in Christ through the Spirit oriented towards the glory of God and the flourishing of people on earth. It is a communion of the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. So whatever one does is done in the name of all others. The Church “exists in order to evangelise” (EN 14). “Evangelisation is not an individual act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial” (EN 60). It is a great joy and a responsibility that the members undertake in the name of the Church. “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16). As a member of the Church, I, too, share the Good News of the Lord in order that my joy may be in others and their joy may be complete.

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Evangelisation, like discipleship, is a following of the Lord. Following the path of *Mar Toma Sliha*, emerging from the Gospel narrative, there is a possibility of developing a *marga* of evangelisation valid for time. *Mar Toma* was courageous (Jn 11:16), curious (Jn 14:50), and committed (Jn 20:28) in following his Lord. The approach of Saint Thomas can be seen as corresponding to that of *karma marga* (courageous), *jnanamarga* (curious/inquiry), and *bhakti marga* (commitment/devotion) to our land.¹ *Mar Toma Margam*, the long-lived tradition of the Saint Thomas Christians in the field of evangelization, has been one that is non-confrontational, non-competitive, and non-compromising. The conquering mentality has always been foreign to the Saint Thomas Christians of India. At the same time, there was never any compromise of their faith. They were courageous in defending it, risking their own lives in following the footsteps of *Mar Toma Sliha*. In other words, the method of the *Mar Toma Margam* was one of co-existence, co-operation, and commitment. The Christians were well-inserted into and integrated with the socio-politico-cultural fabric of India. They were committed to the person of Christ and to the spread of the Gospel. In other words, *Mar Toma Margam* has a lived theology of Incarnation and a theology of dialogue – a dialogue of life without compromising the faith and always committed to faith in Christ.

In what follows I wish to reflect on the mission of evangelisation as 1) the epiphany of the joy in Christ; 2) the epiphany of the Christian life; and 3) the epiphany of the Christian family.

1. The Epiphany of the Joy in Christ

Evangelisation is the epiphany of one's joyful encounter and experience of Jesus Christ, the unique and universal Saviour of the world, as a member of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. It is enough to turn to Christ to understand the core of evangelisation. In his conversation with the disciples, Jesus observes, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11). This verse of the Gospel reveals the foundation, the force, and the focus of the mission of evangelisation, which the Master has commissioned his disciples to carry out until the end, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20) and "Go

¹Paulachan Kochappilly, "Mar Toma Margam: A Theology of the Way," in *The Way of Life*, ed., P. Kochappilly, Geo Pallikunnel, & Joseph Varghese Kureethara, Kottayam: Denha Services, 2011, 41-52.

into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). This missionary mandate is at the heart of being a disciple of Christ. Hence to evangelize all nations is the mission of the Christian, which one takes up and carries out most knowingly, willingly, and joyfully.

Saint John the evangelist attests great importance to the epiphany of joy in the evangelizing mission of the Church, "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1 Jn 1:4). Likewise, in the exhortation of Saint Paul, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil 4:4), the joy of being a Christian and the enthusiastic witnessing of it are echoed clearly and convincingly, which to my mind is a resounding reiteration of the teaching of Jesus, "Rejoice and be glad" (Mt 5:12). Therefore, joy – joy in the Lord and joy for the world – may be considered as the key to evangelisation. In this sense, evangelisation is not anything additional to a Christian, but existential and a matter of being a joyful Christian and sharing the joy of the Lord to the world. In other words, evangelisation is an encounter of the Lord, the source of happiness, bliss, and peace and is to be an epiphany of the joy of the Lord in the world. Indeed, joy in the Lord, presupposes and promises fullness of life, compassionate love and leading light.

This means that the mission of evangelisation is an epiphany of the divine bliss, the wellspring of joy. It is a matter of mingling with the *ananda* of the divine mystery and sharing it with others so that there may be the awakening of *ananda* in everyone and leading it to completion and perfection. It amounts to saying that evangelisation is a spontaneous and solid sharing of the love of Jesus Christ. Jesus instructed his disciples, "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35). It is a vocation to love and serve the world. Saint Paul attests great importance to the existential urgency and necessity of the mission of evangelisation, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1Cor 9:16).

The mission of evangelisation is like singing a hymn of praise, worship, thanksgiving, and adoration to the Lord for his wonderful works of salvation. Indeed, evangelisation is similar to the *Magnificat* (Lk 1: 46-55) of Blessed Mother Mary. It is a joyful act or event of raising the heart to God in one's own historical, social, economic, cultural, religious, and political context. The liturgical celebration does this act wonderfully. "In the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, the work of redemption is accomplished, and it is through the liturgy, especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and

manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (SC 2) The liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana gives a taste of evangelizing joy and praise, "I will sing your praises in the midst of people, I will praise your name before the people."² The singing of joy of the Lord to the world involves walking the way of the Lord, "Christ, our Lord! Enlighten us in your laws, inflame our minds with your knowledge, and sanctify our souls with your truth so that we may be faithful to your words and obedient to your commandments."³ Seen from this perspective, evangelisation is a way of observation - observation of the law of Christ in the freedom of the Spirit. This simply means that persons who live by the knowledge of truth, goodness, and beauty are bound to discover joy in their life and, in turn, they will be enthusiastic to share this joy with others.

The mission of evangelisation is like telling a story - the story of the person and the gospel of Christ. One who is happy with an encounter of a person will joyfully share it with others. In this sense, evangelisation is making Jesus Christ known to the world. "Let all the people on earth know that you alone are the true God, the Father, and that you sent your beloved Son Jesus Christ,"⁴ is echoed marvellously in the liturgical celebration of the Church.

The *Mission Policy* of the Syro-Malabar Church instructs the faithful, "St. Thomas Christians become genuine missionaries when they share the faith with others and lead them to enjoy the fullness of life in Jesus Christ. To achieve this goal they have to become the light of the world, the salt of the earth and the leaven in the society" (MP, p.8). This sums up the principle of evangelisation and its process. The principle of evangelisation is unmistakably to enjoy the fullness of life in Christ. And the process of evangelisation demands a genuine transformation of persons. This process underscores the importance of being and becoming like Christ in order to share the joy of Christ. Thus, evangelisation is an overflow of one's faith experience. It is an extension and expansion of the person transformed in Christ. The same document gives us a glimpse of the approach our ancestors used in evangelizing which "consisted in communicating the living faith from a believing community to another community (of other faiths), that it too may form and develop into a community of living faith. This was done to a large extent through a monastic type of evangelisation" (MP 3.3). On the one hand, this is in recognition of

²The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana (=Qurbana), Mount St Thomas, Kochi: Secretariat, Commission for Liturgy, Major Archiepiscopal Curia, 2005, 18.

³Qurbana, 33.

⁴Qurbana, 56.

the great role monasteries played in the mission of evangelization, and on the other, is an invitation to reinvest our time and resources in making monasteries or ashrams centres of enlightenment, enrichment, and enjoyment of the mysteries of Christ. It is time that Christian ashrams and monasteries again become places of privileged space and time for the faithful to recover and restore the celebration of their faith in Christ, instilling in them enlightenment, energy, and enthusiasm to carry out the mission of evangelisation. Ashrams and monasteries were once catalysts of change in the Church. In this age of new evangelisation, it is urgent that these temples of learning, worship and work again focus on this fundamental and existential vocation of the Church. It was also religious communities that pioneered evangelisation all over the world. "It was like sowing 'seeds of faith' in a heathen soil, which would take its own time for fruition" (*MP* 3.4). The words of Jesus come true in this context, "I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (*Jn* 12:24). Every Christian is invited to live the Paschal Mystery, and consecrated religious in the Church respond to this call more radically. Thus the joy of Christian life is made visible by each and everyone in the Church.

The projected aim of the approaching synodal assembly is to trace "the new methods and means for transmitting the Good News to people in our world today with a renewed enthusiasm proper to the saints, who were joyous witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ."⁵ The *Lineamenta* reiterates its thrust, "We therefore approach the new evangelisation with a sense of enthusiasm. We will learn the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing, even at times when proclamation might seem like a seed sown among tears" (*NE* 25). It is a matter of rediscovering the joy of mission of evangelisation.

The story of the Samaritan woman further elucidates the truth concerning the sharing of joy to the people. Nothing stops the Samaritan woman in announcing the good news to the people, "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (*Jn* 4:39). Testimony is powerful in directing attention to God. The testimony of the Samaritan woman gathered people to Christ. She did not attract people to herself, but to Jesus, the Saviour of the world. This is obvious in the statement of the people as well, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is truly the Saviour of

⁵*The New Evangelization for the Transmision of the Christian Faith, Lineamenta*, Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2011, 9.

the world" (Jn 4:42). The joy of the people in encountering the Lord is the key to evangelisation.

2. The Epiphany of the Christian Life

Recalling the method of evangelisation in the Syro-Malabar Church of the Saint Thomas Christians, Varghese Pathikulangara observes that it was a "sharing through living."⁶ He explains this concept further, "Sharing through living seems to be the preferred method of evangelisation according to the Mar Thoma Margam. When we delve deep into the faith expressions of the Thomas Christians, they show themselves as "conscious Christians" in contrast to mere "ritual or routine Christians". They tried to live according to the commitment they had made to Jesus Christ through their Apostle Thomas. They were not deterred by adverse circumstances in professing and practicing their religion. At the same time, it was never their practice to force anyone through external means to embrace their Christian life-style; if on the other hand, anyone attracted by their distinctive life-style desired to follow it, they readily admitted him to their community.⁷ This unfolds the faith of the Saint Thomas Christians of India in the context of plurality of religious and cultural traditions. It is a testimony to the truth of the mission of evangelisation of the Syro-Malabar Church, which formed a constituent component of the Church. This method speaks volumes on the theology of dialogue – "dialogue of life", which is a catchword in contemporary theological discussions, was always the path and practice of evangelisation of the ancient Church of the Saint Thomas Christians. Coexistence and cooperation with people of other faiths was the norm. All the same, there was no lack of clarity and conviction concerning the mission of evangelisation. The concise and comprehensive characterization of Placid J. Podipara about the Saint Thomas Christians, "Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship,"⁸ sums up their life of cultural symbiosis, religious identity, and liturgical affinity. All these helped them to survive as a community and to bear unwavering testimony to their faith in Christ. His Beatitude Mar George Alencherry alludes to this when he observes, "Our ancestors interpreted the gospel through their life-witness."⁹ This reiterates the

⁶Varghese Pathikulanagara, "Mar Thoma Margam and Evangelisation," *Christian Orient* 8, 3 (1987) 107.

⁷V. Pathikulanagara, "Mar Thoma Margam and Evangelisation," 107.

⁸Placid J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship," *Ostkrichliche Studien* 8 (1959) 82-104.

⁹George Alencherry, "Foreword," in Andrews Mekkattukunnel and Joseph Puthukulangara, *Vedapusthakam Varthmanapusthakathil*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2011, 12

genuine method or *marga* of evangelisation as living out our faith in Christ. Jesus, in giving the new commandment, instructed and insisted on the path of loving service and sacrifice, as the characteristic of Christian living and witnessing

This idea of “sharing through living” is expressed in a different and more radical way by James H. Kroeger. According to him, “To live is to evangelize!”¹⁰ The way or method of evangelisation should be a natural approach, not something artificial for a Christian. To live a genuine Christian life means every Christian has to take faith in Christ sincerely and seriously and live life according to the commands of Jesus Christ.

I would add that evangelisation may further be elaborated as *the celebration of life in Christ*.¹¹ The idea of celebration makes a beautiful link between joy in Christ and faith in Christ. All the different areas of our life are to be fine-tuned towards the celebration of life in Christ – the quintessential of our faith. There is no area of life which does not require faith in Christ. Hence evangelisation as the celebration of life in Christ addresses the entire relationship of oneself with God, the world and with others; with the past, present and future; with the cosmic and eschatological realities. The faith in Christ is to be celebrated everywhere, especially in the home, for every Christian celebration is a channel to transmit the values of the faith. Moments of family prayer, penance, and almsgiving make a strong appeal to the faith of the family. *As you celebrate, so you live*. To revive and restore the ancient practice of families spending a few moments in prayer and benediction prior to a journey and the practice of the elders blessing the children by praising the name of the Lord Jesus Christ would instil in the members a sense of the missionary spirit and an accompanying sense of the presence of the family as each one carries out his own mission.

The celebration of life in Christ takes place through the celebration of the mysteries of salvation. It takes place in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. In fact, the celebration of life in Christ begins with the mystery of baptism, which is the proclamation of one’s new birth in Christ undergoing the paschal experience of death and resurrection. The mystery of baptism is the epiphany of the Christian life, which is dialogical in character: the divine revelation and the human response

¹⁰James H. Kroeger, “Asia’s Rich Diversity: Pathway into Mission,” *Sedos*, 43, 5/6 (2011) 108.

¹¹Paulachan Kochappilly, *Evangelization as Celebration*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002.

to it. Baptism is the explicit event of saying amen to the preaching of the Good News. The communication of the Gospel leads to the conversion of heart which culminates in the consecration of the person to Christ publically. It is the great moment of professing the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the fellowship of the Spirit, which in turn becomes an epiphany of Christian life, for the essence of evangelisation is the mystery and the ministry of the most holy Trinity. This is acknowledged and accomplished at the moment of baptism. On the one hand, persons are incorporated into the mystery of the Trinity and on the other hand, they are incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ. The Church, in this way, serves as the sacrament of salvation. This is for everyone to see and praise the Lord. So also the mystery of crismation or confirmation is the celebration of one's growth in Christ. One is required and enabled to the will of God and to defend the faith against adversities. The mystery of the Eucharist is the epiphany of one's nourishment - food and drink - on the path of faith. In celebrating the memorial of the Lord, the congregation accomplishes the command of the Lord and learns the primary lessons of Paschal Mystery of Christ, which is the quintessence of the Good News. The Eucharistic liturgy is the epiphany of the source, centre, and summit of Christian life. It is the event of experiencing and expressing the Christian life. It is the school of learning, teaching, and living the basics of Christian programme of life. In fact, the celebration of the Qurbana is an epiphany of the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. In it the mystery of Christ unfolds progressively and programmatically. Hence the Eucharistic celebration in the Church is an excellent and efficient epiphany of Christian life. The mysteries of the reconciliation and the anointing of the sick reveal the healing aspect of evangelisation. These mysteries celebrate the healing mission and ministry of Christ in the Church and bring people to wholeness and holiness. The mystery of marriage celebrates the one-flesh union in the Lord, which empowers the couple to collaborate in the creative and generative mission of God in the world. The mystery of marriage points to the mystery of Christ and Church. It forms the domestic church, which has a special mission in establishing the kingdom of God on earth. The mystery of the holy Orders is an epiphany of the ministry of Christ in the world. In this manner the celebration in the Church, the mysteries of salvation, is an epiphany of the evangelizing mission of the Church in the world.

The living of the programme of Christian life enshrined in the Gospel, especially the Beatitudes presented by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, is of paramount importance as far as evangelisation is

concerned. The Beatitudes form the new charter of Christian life. "Blessed are the humble, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be well satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3-10). These Beatitudes shape the mindscape of Christians and they show the path of Christian living. Those who live the Beatitudes are blessed here and hereafter. It is said that these Beatitudes are nothing but the self-portrait of Jesus. This is the path of Christ – the path of the cross – the path of salvation. And this is the programme of Christian life. Those who live their life enlightened by the Beatitudes make their faith in Christ known to the world – they become the epiphany of Christian life.

The Christian life is manifested through its charity. In the life and teaching of Jesus charity has an exalted place. The decisive thing for a Christian, according to the teaching of Jesus, is to serve the needy in truth and charity. "For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me" (Mt 25: 35-36). Jesus reminds his disciples, "Truly I tell you, inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25: 40). In this manner, the life of Christians in the covenant community becomes a fitting epiphany – the evangelizing mission of the Church.

3. The Epiphany of the Christian Family

The family is the basic unit of human formation. The Christian family is understood as the "domestic Church." Therefore, it is right to concentrate on the mission of evangelisation beginning with the family. The Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Church gives a fitting introduction to this topic. "The family is the cradle of Christian life and faith practices; it is also the nursery of Christian maturity and vocation; in the family a child is initially evangelized through the proclamation of the name of Jesus and the making of the sign of the Cross. Hence the family is the most effective medium of the Church's evangelisation" (MP 7.6). This is reiterated in the *Lineamenta*, "Teaching the faith essentially takes place in the family in the form of teaching children how to pray. In praying together with their children, parents accustom them to be conscious of the loving presence of the Lord and, at the same time, they themselves become

credible witness to their children.” (NE 22). Nevertheless the Church is aware of the family in the modern world “has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture” (*Familiaris Consortio* = FC 1). The changed and changing scenario of family in the modern world impels to emphasize the mission of Christian family. “Among the fundamental tasks of the Christian family is its ecclesial task: the family is placed at the service of the building up of the Kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the Church” (FC 49).

The mission of evangelisation focuses on individuals in families. “If the Church is missionary by nature, a Christian family is all the more missionary by its Christian nature” (MP 7.6). The family is the natural environment for experiencing and expressing faith in the initial stages of one’s life; it is the *Kindergarten* of faith. With the milk of the mother, the child sucks the taste and texture of faith – the unique breath of life. This is the inimitable ambience where the child imbibes the spirit of faith by observation. It is attracted to the visuals. The child also learns by playfulness. The family atmosphere is conducive to inculcate in it the experience and elementary lessons of faith through its ordinary family life. Faith is for praxis. In the context of the family, the child imitates the parents and elders and as questions of faith arise, these serve as great occasions to help the child understand and appreciate this gift.

The family atmosphere, the relationship between the parents, the rapport of the family members, the spirit of sharing and bearing, the spiritual atmosphere, the religious practices, the sense of love and service, the values of the gospels, etc., all play an important influence in the faith formation of the child. By way of living a Christian life in the family, the parents and the members of the family become effective agents of evangelisation.

The spread of Christianity in the early stages, by and large, was achieved, not by professional missionaries, but by ordinary men and women communicating their faith to those whom they contacted in their familiar surroundings.”¹² This insight is of great importance today, since the ground realities of missionary work are undergoing a global change. Hence, there is an even more urgent need to concentrate on the family so that it may rediscover its Christian identity and missionary vitality in engaging in the mission of Jesus,

¹²Mar Abraham Mattam, *Forgotten East. Mission, Liturgy and Spirituality of the Eastern Churches. A Study with Special Reference to the Church of St. Thomas Christians*, Satna: Ephrem’s Publications, 2001, 33.

and a sense of being members of the Mystical Body of Christ and belonging to the apostolic Church.

At this historical moment of the golden jubilee of the Chanda mission, it is well to recall also the Seven Point Programme proposed and put into practice by Mar Januarius Palathuruthil, CMI, the architect and first bishop of the Chanda Mission, with the support of his missionaries.¹³ It consists of the following elements of Christian identity, charity, and solidarity:

1. The Cross, 2. The image of Christ, 3. The Holy Bible, 4. The lamp, 5. The daily evening prayer, 6. The practice of unconditional forgiveness and love, and 7. The caring for and sharing with their needy neighbours

The Seven Point Programme has two facets: one, the elements are symbols of the Christian family; two, they are symbols of Christian behaviour. The first four elements comprise the symbols of a Christian family and the latter three constitute the symbols of Christian behaviour. It is a well-thought-out Christian programme of life, developed in light of the apostolic communities of early centuries and taking into account the religio-cultural context of India with reference to the living tradition of the Syro-Malabar Church. Above all, it is a programme focusing on the Christian family and its surrounding milieu. In introducing the Seven Point Programme, Mar Januarius challenged the Christians to live a highly demanding life of charity and solidarity.

Mar Vijay Anand Nedumpuram, CMI, the successor of Mar Januarius in the Diocese of Chanda walks in the footsteps of his predecessor and has elaborated on the original design of the Seven Point Programme with the Seven Inspiring Models¹⁴ of the family:

1. The Holy Trinity, 2. The Holy Family, 3. Jesus with the 12 Apostles, 4. Mary with the Apostles in the Upper Room, 5. Early Christian Communities, 6. Religious Orders/Congregations, and 7. Basic/Small Christian Communities (BCC/SCC)

These Seven Inspiring Models take us from the smaller family unit to the world at large in order to build up the universal family. They emphasise the role of the family in the history of universal salvation.

¹³ For a detailed reflection on these seven point programme see John Poovatholil, *Chanda Mission. Orientations and Confrontations in Evangelization*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1998, 314-340.

¹⁴Jubilee Directory 2002, Diocese of Chanda, Ballarpur, 2002, inside of front cover page.

In essence, Mar Januarius and Mar Vijay Anand speak with one voice and emphasise one thing: that the family is the starting point and summit of evangelisation.

All these insights underscore that in evolving the new way and method of evangelisation the Church must focus on the family, the central stage of faith formation and transformation.

The Christian family being the domestic Church, is the place that the celebration of the faith unfolds. The mystery of God is disclosed in marital and family life. Hence all decisive and significant moments in the life of a person – from birth to death – should be celebrated in Christ in the context of family. *As the Christian family, so the Christian community.* The marriage of the couple and the formation of a new family through the birth of a child should be solemnized, highlighting the sacrificial life and love of the parents. It is in the family where the members receive a healthy and holistic understanding of human sexuality, marriage, and celibacy. In a world of sexual liberalization and exploitation, the Christian family has a special mission to evangelise in this area through a proper sex education.

The symbols of Christian faith should occupy a special place in Christian homes. These symbols attract and direct the imagination and generate corresponding action in the members of family. An effective way of strengthening the family for mission is to promote daily family prayer, preferably by cultivating the habit of praying the Liturgy of the Hours. A family that prays together stands united. The revival of family prayers can awaken and reinvigorate the missionary consciousness in the members of the Church. Needless to say, daily prayer cultivated an atmosphere for missionary vocations, which seem to be dwindling today. The family prayer fostered a disposition to discern the will of God and provided the ambience to accept it willingly and courageously. The evening family prayer time is in harmony with the religious ethos of India as well.

The goal of evangelisation is always the establishment of *shalom* – peace, prosperity, and the presence of God. The children in the family need an atmosphere of truth, justice, freedom, and charity. Today nuclear families often take the place of the joint family system. In a changing society, it is important to revisit the family bond and find ways to strengthen the family ties, the secret of its success, and a powerful witness to the gospel of Jesus. Perhaps it is time to revisit the biblical institution of the Sabbath for our times. In an era of restlessness and increasing stress, there is the need to revive the spirit of the Sabbath – to be with the Lord, to be with his people, and to be in the presence of nature.

As we read in the Bible, the blessings of Yahweh are threefold: land, people, and the Presence. Today many do not consider land, people, and the presence of God as important as once they were. Would not today's family benefit by a larger investment of time, talent, energy, and resources to replenish itself, to discover joy in tilling the land, begetting children, and encountering the pervading presence of God in everything and everywhere? Could not these steps help restore to our families these blessings of Yahweh; namely, the land, children, God? Thus we will ensure the integrity of family life and the future of our community.

Besides the Christian family, we need to look at the covenant community and creation as part of the human family. Justice towards the cosmic community should be part of the mission of evangelisation. "An evangelizing mission that sidelines the proclamation of the Gospel in its essential dimensions of love, peace, and justice is failing in its duty" (MP 6.11). The land and people deserve justice. Any unjust and unreasonable exploitation of natural resources is sinful. People should be invited to reconciliation through a return to the covenantal precepts. The mission of evangelisation of the Church must be carried out in the context of economic poverty, religious pluralism, and cultural diversity. *The Mission Policy* enumerates a few issues to which the mission of evangelisation should attend, "Economic inequality is a shocking reality in India. Corruption and malpractices in the society hinder the growth of the nation. . . . Untouchability and caste distinction, though legally abolished, still continue in one way or other. Acts of terrorism and violence, so repugnant to the Indian culture, find their way into the society. Religious fundamentalism is a major factor in the socio-political scene of India" (MP 4.2). In order to establish the kingdom of God on earth, we need to continue our service in the fields of education, healthcare, and social welfare programme.

Conclusion

Joy in Christ is the key to evangelisation. We need to rediscover the joy, energy, and enthusiasm in our mission of evangelization, which should be seen as an epiphany of our Christian life. Evangelisation begins with the Christian family and is the hope of its future. In the process of evangelisation the Church has to hold to her heart the love for the culture of the land, the love for the faith in Christ, and the love for liturgical worship congenial to the Asian and Indian ethos. In the programme for the mission of evangelization, special emphasis must be placed on the culture of love, the culture of life, and the culture of light. The mission of evangelisation is, above all, nothing but a joyful epiphany of Christian life; a celebration of life in Christ.