

BOOK REVIEW

Thomas Mampra, *Chavara Retreat*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2018, Pages 91, Price Rs. 100.

Thomas Mampra, the author of the book *Chavara Retreat*, has designed it as a five day personal or group retreat programme. He has used for it mainly the selected parts of the life and charism of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the CMI-CMC founder. Although the general theme of the retreat is "Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity" (Introduction), the focus of each of the five days is differently placed as (1) self-awareness, (2) prophetic role, (3) commitment, (4) conversion and reconciliation, and (5) priest of God and servant of His people respectively (Foreword).

The book follows the format of three talks a day for five days, with a rather long introductory talk and a short conclusion. Besides, the format includes biblical readings for each day's Eucharistic celebration as well as a few points for group discussion (*satsang*) as part of the retreat.

In his Introduction, the author mentions three main contexts that have contributed to the specific nature and themes of the retreat: (1) declaration of the year 2014 as the year of consecrated life to celebrate the golden jubilee of the promulgation of *Perfectae Caritatis*, the decree on the Renewal of Religious Life by Vatican II, (2) the canonization of the Founder of the CMI-CMC on 23 November 2014 and (3) the call of the CMI General Synaxis 37 (2014) with its focus on the renewal of prophetic and communitarian life and global mission.

Chavara Retreat seems to be a climax of Thomas Mampra's own personal journey, striving to be an excellent religious leader of the CMI community at different levels such as the Rector of the Major Seminary of the Congregation, as Provincial Superior and as the Prior General of the Congregation. In a lively and personal style, with stories, examples and anecdotes here and there, he leads the readers to the life and spirituality of St. Chavara. He explains that the central point of this spirituality is the 'divine sonship of man'.

According to the author, St. Chavara believed that this New Testament theme of divine sonship/daughtership was not properly understood and appreciated by the Malabar Christians for various reasons. Apart from this basic dimension of Christian life in Chavara's

spirituality, which urged him always to serve all people without reserve and discrimination, there are also other salient features of his spirituality, which emerge from his life and work on the one hand, and from his spiritual and literary compositions on the other. The author has identified them as (1) Eucharistic devotion, (2) devotion to the Holy Family, (3) deep sense of justice, kindness and forgiveness, and (4) ardent love for the church and its unity (pages 68-73).

I am delighted to warmly recommend this volume to anyone, especially to those devotees of St. Chavara who have a genuine interest in spiritual renewal and wish him/her a refreshing 'Chavara spiritual experience'.

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