

BOOK REVIEW

Maryann Madhavathu CMC, *Humble Minister of the Living Mystery: Liturgical Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, (Theological Studies on Saint Chavara 11), Kochi: Chavara Central Secretariat & Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2023. Pages xxvi+209. ISBN: 978-98-92996-33-7.

Maryann Madhavathu CMC presents Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara's liturgical vision in a unique manner through her book, *Humble Minister of the Living Mystery: Liturgical Vision of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*. Primarily, the author connects the liturgical vision of Saint Chavara to Alexander Schmemmann's concept of *homo adorans*. According to the author, Chavara reached the perfection of his vocation as "a worshipping being" through incessant adoration and unparalleled celebration of the paschal mystery. However, Madhavathu points out that Chavara has been misunderstood despite his invaluable contributions to reforming and preserving the liturgical legacy of Marthoma Nasranies. It is quite clear that liturgical renewal was not an easy task; Chavara's farsighted vision enabled him to revive the liturgical legacy of the Syrian Christians of Malabar based on a clear vision of the Church, the mystical body of Christ. The book is well furnished with a foreword by Bishop Thomas Elavanal MCBS, the Bishop of Kalyan, and a presentation by Professor Joris Geldhof who highlights the accuracy with which the book is written; and a detailed bibliography and index at the end for further research on the theme.

The author in the present volume, successfully presents Chavara's inclusive vision in fostering organic growth in the Church by incorporating various elements of devotion from other traditions. This sense of inclusivity makes him unique and compelling; thus, the author presents the life of Saint Chavara as an interpretation and extension of the paschal mystery. This is the fundamental premise that makes this book distinct from others that deal with the liturgical vision of Chavara. Chavara's liturgical vision, as presented in this book, is wholesome. Rather than focusing on Chavara's particular contributions to the realm of liturgy, perceiving his integral liturgical vision enables the author to make a sincere proposition: "Chavara had a profound liturgical vision,

which led him to the ministry of the divine mysteries." One can infer his ministerial contributions to the salvific ministry from his numerous good deeds. Thus, the author is trying to prove that Chavara's pioneering work for renewal in the Church has its roots in his firm liturgical vision, which is the cornerstone on which the Syro-Malabar Church is built. The author succeeds in presenting liturgy and spirituality as one, which must help the people of God live out the legacy of liturgical spirituality. Chavara initiated liturgical reformation among Saint Thomas Christians long before the liturgical movement was in full swing in the Occidental world.

Chavara's inclusive vision of a liturgical spirituality meant the active and deliberate participation of the people of God in the celebration of the Paschal mysteries—both celebrated and lived in the Church. The liturgical experience of Chavara compelled him to take this daring step to go ahead of his times, especially to accommodate the changes of the day. According to the description of the author, like Moses, Chavara led the people of God from the slavery of ignorance and other vicious evils to know and love God with utmost purity and devotion. Thus, Chavara's aim was to prepare the people of God to enjoy the real freedom of the children of God in worshipping Him. By examining the traces of Chavara's zeal and passion for the Lord reflected in his works and other contributions, the author tries to point out that Chavara integrated a perfect life of liturgy into the paschal rhythm of Christ with full participation in the celebration of the divine mystery. The author succeeds once again in depicting the life of Chavara as an interpretation and extension of the paschal mystery.

The present work is mainly divided into three parts: the first part analyzes the real sense of mystery which was meditated upon by Chavara. This sense of mystery can be traced throughout his writings, and we can call this Chavara's doxological participation in the mystery of salvation. It is more contemplative than rational. The second part analyzes the lived dimensions of mystery by Chavara. This aspect is solely an ontological participation that forms an imitative dimension. The final part explores the multiple activities of Chavara's ministry of mystery that he lived. This part focuses purely on what he meditated and mediated; it is purely a missiological participation in the mystery. Moreover, it can be viewed as praxis-oriented by employing inductive reasoning. Towards the end, the author reiterates Chavara's liturgical vision as a clarion call for the renewal of the Church in particular.

This book is an invitation to broaden our horizons and notions concerning liturgy and liturgical life. Often, liturgy is identified as a matter of dissension and conflict; the book provides an inclusive vision to analyse liturgy through the life and mission of Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Thus, it reveals the meaning of liturgy that enables us to become *homo adorans*. Let the path trodden by Chavara be a model in reviving the Church according to the needs of the time.

I hope that this book would serve not only as a tribute to Kurikose Elias Chavara for his painstaking efforts to renew the Church but also a source of inspiration for all who seek and pray for the renewal of the Church.

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