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The Bhakti Dimensions of a Biblical Sage

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Abstract

The paper tries to articulate certain features of the biblical spirituality of Fr. Canisius CMI, the Servant of God. Thus we can summarize them: Thy Will My Will, Maran Atta Perspective, Prayer as Rest, Praising Dynamics, Rejoicing in the Spirit, Ideology of the Suffering Servant, Religious Call to Become a Loving Fellowship, Administration a Spiritual Charism, and the Christian Family as a Tiny Heaven.

Introduction

The Servant of God, Fr. Canisius CMI was avowed as a Man of God who lived in a world of Word. This Bhakta Yogi lived as the spiritual and biblical vision of Jesus. After giving a brief life sketch, I invite the attention to some salient features of his spirituality.

A Brief Life Sketch

Fr. Canisius was born on 12 May 1914 at Anandapuram in Kerala and baptized on 6 June 1914. During 1931-1934 he lived as an aspirant at Pavaratty. On 24 November 1935, he made his First Vows. His Priestly Ordination took place on 21 December 1942 at Mangalapuram. Fr. Canisius was the first Doctor in Sacred Scripture of India. He earned his degree from the Pontifical Institute, Rome. During 1957-1959 this biblical scholar served as professor and spiritual father at Dharmaram College, Bangalore. Then he was appointed as its Rector (1960-1966).

In the General Synaxis of 1966, he was elected as Prior General. After finishing that office, he was chosen as the Provincial of Devamatha Province, Thrissur. During 1978-1981 Fr. Canisius became the Vicar General of the Congregation. Then he retired to CSR Pariyaram and spent his days in prayer, as well as in giving spiritual direction and spiritual retreats, hearing confessions of thousands of priests, religious and the people of God. As his health became deteriorated, he was transferred to Ambazhakad Monastery of Irinjalakuda Diocese. There he died and was buried on 29 January 1998. Fr. Canisius was canonically declared as the Servant of God on 29 March 2014.

Some Traits of his Spirituality

Fr. Canisius, one may say, lived his life in the divine milieu. He was endowed with a profound spiritual vision that was rooted in Christ's ideas and ideals. I would thus encapsulate some of its salient features: Thy Will My Will, Maran Atta Perspective, Prayer as Rest, Praising Dynamics, Rejoicing in the Spirit, Ideology of the Suffering Servant, Religious Call to Become a Loving Fellowship, Administration a Spiritual Charism, Christian Family as a Tiny Heaven.

Thy will my will. "The will of God/Christ, all of it, and that alone" – this was the motto of the saintly Fr. Canisius. It had a longer version: "Lord, Your will, all of it, and that alone! This is my enthusiasm [*jwaram*], my delight [*santhosham*], my bliss [*samtriphthy*]" He inherited this ideal from his parents. In My Life Experience, he thus avows this fact: "The most important grace that the Lord had bestowed on me is my father and my mother. Their law of life was this: The will of God, all of it and that alone." According to Sr. Sarseela, his sister the boy, Kochouseph had a vision of Mother of Carmel, urging him to join CMI Congregation. In his final years Fr. Canisius thus wrote in My Life Experiences:

"Briefly speaking this was my firm decision - to be only there, where the Lord demands me to be; to do fully whatever He asks me to do, without any further worries. I have tried my best to firmly persevere in that determination, without caring what the flesh and blood were saying. This was also my attitude towards accepting responsibilities and their execution."

Throughout his life, Fr. Canisius sought God's will. He was never tired of speaking, writing, and teaching of it. According to him "every member of the religious community has accepted the divine will, all of it, and that alone as the only enthusiasm of his life" [Notes on Religious

Obedience]. As a Christmas greeting, he wrote thus on 19-12-1983: “His birth in a manger and life in a cottage filled with fragrance, the lifestyle hidden and simple, always concerned with the one thing necessary, performance of the will of God.” These words wonderfully articulate the inner core of the mystery of Christ’s birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and the sending of the Spirit. It shows that the venerable Father had penetrated into the depths of religious obedience. He thus writes about the essence of obedience: “To do the will of the Father is my food – such a strong faith is the essence of the religious obedience.” According to him the Constitution of the Congregation is the document form of a life of obedience. The venerable Father could thus console all who approached him with their problems: “It is Jesus, and not we who do everything. Let this thought be imprinted in your mind. Then we could enjoy peace, and everything will become positive.” He thus spoke about confession: “The account which I present about the state of my soul to the visible representative of the heavenly Father.” In his last days, Fr. Canisius continuously raised and lowered his right hand in obedience to the doctor’s instruction, by saying, “the will of Jesus, only that and all of it.” On 30-10-1991 he wrote to a family about his sickness: “Whatever the heavenly Father gives, is a gift of his paternal love.” On 3-5-1996 he informed a religious sister: “My pain and all other ills remain as usual. Let the divine will be fully accomplished.” In the composition Three-dimensional Rosary he penetrates into the inner being of the Blessed Virgin: “At all the moments of suffering your heart-beats, ‘behold, the handmaid of the Lord’ reached the presence of the Father as a gentile wave.” He thus advised a family on 28- 12-1991: “Father, all for you! If it is so, the only thing which we have to do on earth is to perform the desire of the Father, only that, and all of it. This is what is written in the Letter to the Hebrews, ‘Here I am – I have come to do your will, O God’ [10:7]. Let us help each other through prayer to accept and realize this as our life task.” One who knew this man of God thus testifies: “He was a model religious who had tried to put into practice not only the decisions of the superiors but also their desires, which he could guess and understand.”

Fr. Canisius like Jesus and Mary was a living paradigm of the listening person and a listening being. To do the divine will was his food and drink. This ideal religious could say thus during the last days on earth: “when I look back, I believe that I had done only the will of God.” Seeing his terrible sufferings some of his friends wanted to pray for his recovery.

Disagreeing with them he said: “It is the will of God that I should suffer. You are going to pray that God should take away the chalice of suffering from me. I cannot agree with it. If you pray, God may though unwillingly relent. However, it is not the divine plan concerning my sanctification. I want that the divine will be fully accomplished.” He thus wrote to a spiritual lay son: “Let us help each other with prayer for the grace to give the utmost importance to the determination, ‘the Lord’s will, and it all at once’” [Letter dated 22-01-1990]. In one of his letter, Fr. Canisius thus confessed: “By the eternal mercy of God I had used every charism at its maximum possibility [77 years]. Now at this moment, he tells me, ‘it is enough’; yes, yes. The fiat of our Mother.”

Come, Lord Jesus. One may call Fr. Canisius a *mārān ‘āttā’* being. In his notes entitled *Life Experiences*, published on September 1984 in *Devamatha Bulletin* he says: “My setting days have come. I welcome them! Wholly welcome!” The venerable Father composed a five step Rosary, which is a meditative reflection on Mary’s different periods of life. In the introductory prayer, he describes human life as a pilgrimage towards God, our Lord. The fourth step reflects on Christ’s resurrection and ascension, which he thus describes, “the triumphant journey through the sky towards the Father, in the company of the heavenly hosts.” According to Fr. Canisius, Mary, during the Assumption was accompanied by celestial hosts. The last prayer has the petition for the help to persevere in faith, finish the race, and earn the crown of victory. Here we find biblical references to 1Thes 2:19; 2 Tim 2:5; 4:8; Jam 1:12; 1Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10; 3:11. For the use of his spiritual children, the venerable Father had also written a three-dimensional Rosary. After invoking the Blessed Virgin as our precursor and modal in the pilgrimage of faith and religious consecration, he thus writes: “We would like to spiritually follow you through the different periods of your pilgrimage...” He calls the Rosary a pilgrimage. Fr. Canisius concludes by invoking the Mother to pray for these sinners now and at the time of our death, to attain victory in the pilgrimage.

He wrote in *The Testament* that: “At this time when the moment of my departure approaches...” “I request you humbly, please forgive me and pray for me, so that after the departure I could soon see the divine countenance.” He concludes: “Let us fight bravely in the arena of life in order to attain complete victory till we all join together in the house of the Father. For that let us help each other through prayer. Farewell.” As

Fr. Canisius left C.S.R, Pariyaram, where he had spent many years in prayer, his glance was fixed on everything as if he were bidding farewell to all his favorite beings, animate and inanimate, promising to see them in the abode of his Beloved. At the last day of his earthly life, he told one of his spiritual sons that the time of his departure was at hand and asked him to bless him.

During the last days of his life his spiritual daughters frequently visited him, and according to his desire the sisters used to sing “Come, Come Lord Jesus.” To those who asked him what song he would like to hear, without hesitation, he would joyfully answer them “Come, Come Lord Jesus.” Fr. Canisius sang with them. Those who stood nearby experienced that he sang with his heart and soul as if his whole person had become one with that invocation. They felt that the holy man was inviting his beloved Lord to come and fetch him to the eternal abode. As the singers came to the last lines, his voice became more and more inaudible. He dozed off as if he had entered into a trance (*samādhi*). Even on January 28, the last evening of his life on earth the sisters sang that song in the company of Fr. Canisius. Later he said to one of his spiritual sons: “The time has come for my departure; my end has come.” The blessed soul finally welcomed his beloved Jesus on the early morning of January 29. *Mārān 'āttā'*. And the Lord came.

Prayer is my rest. Fr. Canisius, all acclaim, was a man of prayer. Even while he was in Amala hospital, he was found by others as being absorbed in prayer. Fr. Canisius was happy to spend time in prayer with some Holy Family sisters, who used to visit him in the hospital. As they thought he was very tired, they advised him to take rest. Then he replied: “Prayer is my rest.” This utterance sums up in a solemn and celestial way the biblical vision concerning the call of a human being. At CSR, Pariyaram Fr. Canisius faithfully stuck to a daily program which consisted of various forms of prayers like family prayer, night prayer, and intercessory prayers.

Fr. Canisius had prepared and delivered a detailed paper on the Governing Ministry and Prayer Life, in which he stressed the need for the superiors to become guides and models of prayer life for the community. He summarizes the main elements of prayer life: Spousal Prayer, Professional Prayer, and occupational Prayer. In prayer life, the superiors have to give emphasis to mission orientation, intercession orientation, and Carmel orientation.

In his memoir entitled *My Life Experiences* published in the official organ of Devamatha CMI Province, Thrissur in September 1984 he writes about his particular charism: “There used to arise in me boundless sympathy and solicitude for the suffering brethren. Immediately by offering them to the Lord I used to pray insistently for them: “Help, please”... “It is not my presence that is essential to them, but the presence of the divine Master. Therefore I will compel him to bless them by his helping presence... I am convinced that it is my vocation to engender in them the needed insight, hope, and courage by prayer and penance, of which nobody may be aware.”

In 1978 he wrote: “It is my desire to continue my days in an unknown atmosphere an unbroken simple life in prayer and penance and in the spiritual and material service for the poor.” The Lord granted this desire of his devotee in 1981. He was blessed to continue such kind of life till 1996 at the Centre for Spiritual Realization, Pariyaram. The venerable religious wrote on 20-6-1981 to S.H Mother General: “I will be in our prayer house. There I will be engaged in prayer and exposition of the Word of God, which may help one to pray. If those who come there are interested, I will pray with them.” According to the witnesses saintly person used to pray during the one-hour adoration at *Sannidhi* [chapel] on his knees and with folded hands, even if he was very tired. One could notice a special brilliance reflected on his face. Others testify about his praying attitude in the church: “Although he was facing the tabernacle, his eyes were closed. There irradiated splendor on his smiling face.” The smile reflected the different states of inner soul such as rapture and delight of the intimate communication with the Lord.

While he was staying as a sick person at Ampazhakad, he daily spent one hour for listening to the word of God, with keen attention, his face and eyes being gleaming with heavenly joy. To many who approached Fr. Canisius requesting for prayer, he used to say, “I will pray and bless you.” To those who were suffering, he used to tell “I am praying for you.” Four days before his death the sisters told him, “let us pray, dear Fr. Canisius.” He answered: “Yes we shall pray, daughters.” The sisters prayed for him, as it was their last prayer with the saintly person. While leaving him, they said, “let us once more pray;” then they spent a few minutes more in prayer. As they visited him three days before his death, they found him vigilantly praying. Once more they prayed together. Prayer, in his words, was the tonic for his health.

Fr. Canisius could participate in the divine rest in the act of praying, which was the status of remaining turned to God. For him the tonic for his health or rest, both physical and spiritual was prayer. As he prayed, there irradiated on his face as well as in his whole person the heavenly bliss. By declaring that “prayer is my rest,” he, during his last days became the living witness of an authentic human being, Christian, priest and religious person. It seems that he had delved into the depths of Christ’s personality and lived it, moved in it, and had his being in it [Acts 17:28]. Like his Master, this disciple turned to God with his heart and soul, strength and mind [Dt 6:5]. He turned to the Lord in his health and sickness, in his disabilities and disfigured status, in his agonies and ecstasies, in his humiliations and elevations. This existential man raised his eyes to the Bridegroom of his soul. He turned to others and offered to the merciful Lord their worries and needs, defects and difficulties, virtues and vices. Fr. Canisius spent long hours in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He interceded for missionaries, leaders of the Church and state, for the religious and the faithful. Indeed, he became the personification of shub being. Like Jesus this man of God had a special kind of prayer, listening alone to God. He used to make remember the Lord to give all light, the needed enlightenment, strength, and humanness as he attested in a letter dated 10-11-1990. For him, prayer was not a monotonous, mechanical and tiresome act. It was his rest in the biblical sense. Like the resting God and the resting Son, he lived as a being of rest [*nuah*], celebrating the creation, incarnation, redemption, resurrection, ascension and the descent of the Spirit. Indeed, this nuah person became a pneumatic being. His earthly body was transfigured into a heavenly body – to use the terminology of Paul in his first letter to Corinthians, 15:35-49. Let us pray for the grace to exclaim with Fr. Canisius, “Prayer is my rest.”

A Being of Praise. The saintly religious was gifted with a profound and mystical sense of praise dynamics. That was why he almost always uttered words of praise. To put it differently, he became already on earth a being of praise. Here itself he has joined the celestial community by celebrating the divine glories. Some examples of his praising acts are given below.

Fr. Canisius always found joy in singing the praises of the Lord. “May the Lord be praised every day and always” (letter dated 21-9-1983). “Eternal praise to the infinite love who had called and elected us!” (letter dated 24-5-1986). In his Life Experience, he wrote: “Eternal

praise to the divine Artist who kindly used this brush which has worn out because of frequent use.” He thus concludes his thoughts, “praise to God” (published 1984 September). “May the divine hands lead us at all times! Our hands may be feeble. But His hands are always strong. This is the reason for our hope. Eternal praise to Him!” (letter dated 18-4-1984). “All my organs have worked at their best for the Lord. Now they have become exhausted. What a great joy! When we are fully poured out as an offering, the objective of our life is accomplished. Praise to Him!” (letter dated 18-4-1984). “I am not bed-ridden. Now I could continue my programs. Only there is no certainty whether my head will be properly functioning when I get up in the morning. Praise to God who gives me life to do things as well as joy” (letter dated 12-7-1984). On 24-5-1988 the blessed one wrote to Sr. Octavia: “Praise to the Lord who totally makes use of each moment of ours... there is no wonder that my fingers which were faithful to me 75 years have now become weak.” “The Lord says to the hand which had incessantly worked for him about 70 years, ‘let this work stop for a while.’ Very many thanks. Let his name be praised, which always gives us directions” (letter dated 4-7-1990). “Since three months my left hand has become inactive. The reason was a fracture to the bone; it was put in plaster for two months. Now plaster is removed. The hand is slowly getting better. Many thanks for your sincere prayer. Now I can write with my right hand. Praise to God, the Father!” (letter dated 30-10-1991).

- Fr. Canisius remembers his novitiate days in the Centenary Souvenir of the Ampazhakad Novitiate house (1889-1989): “Church, chapel, playground, cashew nut grove, recreation hall – all these places were unforgettable elements of the period of novitiate – centers of rest, joy, and the community experience...Praise to God”

- In the letter dated 25-7-1985 he exclaimed: “Praise to Him” for the grace of to pray to the Eucharistic Lord in the company of many people in which he found the foretaste of the heavenly bliss.

- Fr. Canisius praises God for the favor granted to him to look at the souvenir picture of the Golden Jubilee of his sister and remain united with her in the divine presence (letter dated 6-12-1984).

A Happy Being

The children of an officer, who frequently visited and consulted Fr. Canisius with his family, once asked him: “Papa, why this Father smiles whenever he utters the name, Jesus?” He answered them: “That smile is the strength of his personal love-relationship with Jesus... Whenever

others mention the name of a person whom we love, there often blossoms a smile in our hearts, is not it? I think that the Father was in intimate love-relationship and union with Jesus.” The little ones had keenly observed that whenever the venerable religious uttered the name Jesus during the conversation, he could not but smile with inner joy. This fact speaks volumes; it reveals his spirituality of joy. The happiness of Fr. Canisius emanated from his habitual meditation on and appropriation of the sacred mysteries. According to him Jesus and Mary were beings of joy since they were intimately related with Satchitananda. In his reflection on Annunciation, he calls it the message of inexpressible joy (The Threefold Rosary). He thus puts the mystery of Resurrection: “Exult O the queen of heaven! This is the last victory of your unshakable faith” (The Threefold Rosary). According to him the act of Ascension “thrilled Mary’s maternal heart with joy.”

In Fr. Canisius we can find a happy being in its biblical sense. One may say that the God of Joy enriched him with the grace to enter into the inner depths of the Christian Joy. Others found in him the face of Jesus, the incarnated form of bliss. He wrote on 21-11-1990 in his Last Testament: “I gladly hand over to my brethren my wealth, i.e. my testimony of experience that it is possible to live in the divine presence with pure heart, joyful countenance and innocence by keeping religious values.” These words speak for themselves and do not need for explanation.

This man of God found celestial joy in everything and in whatever happened to him and others. It was always with a smiling face that Fr. Canisius appeared and approached others. As an apostle of joy, he communicated the message of Christian happiness to all who visited him.

When his right arm was paralyzed, and he could not speak with clarity, he murmured, “I am so happy.” Fr. Superior gives the following testimony: “Fr. Canisius still has the former ills such as difficulty to walk and bodily pains, but he takes with joy every suffering.” On 18-04-1984 he wrote: “Almost all my bodily organs are slowly getting unfit. They show the signs of fatigue according to climatic changes. By the special grace of God, I feel contentment and pride at it. Every organ has done its work at its full capacity. Now they are exhausted and fade away. What a great joy!” On 16-08-1990 Fr. Canisius wrote about the uncertainty of cure and his health: “God will make it known at the opportune time clearly. My only joy is to accept it totally.”

He wrote on 20-12-1990: “I am fully happy.” At his last confession, he said: “I do not have any complaint. I am very happy,” It seems that Fr. Canisius had been given the grace to enjoy the fruits of the garden of Carmel, namely “the joyful nature of St. Teresa and her followers” and “the evergreen beauty which engenders love for commandments.”

A Suffering Servant. God provided Fr. Canisius an in-depth experience and sense of the mystery of suffering. Hence he wholeheartedly welcomed the sufferings as his beloved friend. The son of St. Teresa of Avila seemed to make his own her motto, *aut pati aut mori* (either suffer or die). He used to tell thus his spiritual daughters who came to him with their problems: “Jesus did not come to explain away suffering or remove it. He came to fill it.” One may find in him a living and loving portrait of the suffering ebed of Is. 52:13:1-12.

Already in 1984 Fr. Canisius became a prey of Rheumatoid arthritis a chronic disease, characterized by stiffness and inflammation of the joints, loss of mobility, weakness, and deformity. It effects tremendous pain. He used to present it as a trifling ache and swelling. But the patient could not stretch out his hands and legs as well as bend them. This saintly soul suffered all the pains without any trace of impatience and murmur, and told the bystanders with a smile, “let the divine will be fulfilled;” The magnetic treatment reduced his pain a little, but the disease did not disappear. Also, he was affected by dermatosis, inflammation of the skin.

In 1990 Fr. Canisius began to feel giddiness, which was caused by spondylitis. Also, he had to suffer urinal troubles; because of it, he underwent prostatic surgery. By 1992 he was suffering intense pain on both shoulders. Once he told the sisters who promised him their prayers, “please pray, but not for the cure, but for the strength to suffer the pains.” The loss of eyesight caused great suffering for Fr. Canisius who had till then found happiness in reading the Holy Scriptures. He was forced to undergo an eye operation in 1955, which helped him to recover eyesight. After some time there appeared on both his knees dry scurf and puss of ulcers. He was admitted to the hospital. To spend in the hospital, for which he was constrained, was an agonizing thing for this saintly religious who wanted to live always inside the monastery.

What had brought out most of his illness? According to doctors Fr. Canisius had lived a life of severe penance by frequently fasting and eating only vegetarian food. Thus his body did not get essential elements

to function properly. It was certain that the saintly man practiced this kind of austere life because of his love for the suffering Lord.

In 1995 another infirmity brought terrible suffering to this venerable religious, herpes zoster, a viral infection causing an eruption of vesicles along a nerve path on one side of the body, accompanied by severe neuralgia. Because of pain, he was wriggling in the bed, often muttering, “my Mother (Mary), my help.” He was taken to the hospital.

Fr. Canisius loved to wear the religious habit, and that of the Carmelite tradition – brown cassock, scapular, and hood. But because of Rheumatoid Arthritis, he could not raise his arms and wear the cassock, or even a shirt. Thus he was forced to be clothed in a loincloth, of saffron color. He had to cover his chest with a shawl. This caused him great inner suffering. As he could not take a bath by himself, his superior asked the servant to bathe him. This affected his delicate sense concerning nakedness. A whole day he spent in prayer. He offered himself to the Lord who was deprived of clothes during the crucifixion and earned strength to face that suffering. At those days, the saintly person practiced asceticism even during the celebration of Holy Mass. He did not want to enjoy the cooling effect of the fan. He declined to sit on a chair but preferred a stool which was uncomfortable to the patient.

In one of his sermon notes Fr. Canisius says: “Suffering is not to be considered as a frightening dream; rather it is the foretaste of consolation.” Fortified by his experience, he exhorted others: “Find consolation through suffering. There is no need of running away in fear of suffering; better embrace it and find joy in suffering. One may think that a suffering person had lost everything. But in truth, he is reaping a harvest. The sense of loss is only a temporary phenomenon. If one thinks in a lofty way, the loss is merely in this world. One acquires a hundredfold profit, which one will get in this world itself, and in the other world eternal life. Thus what we are supposed to attain, (eternal life) is won easily through suffering.”

Although Fr. Canisius wanted to lead a humble and unknown life, he was forced to undertake many high and responsible offices in the Religious Congregation, such as Prior General, General Counsellor, Provincial, Rector of the Major Study House, Bangalore. Submitting to the divine will the venerable Father tried his best to perform the duties. Although he could bring out innovative and creative growth in every field, he had to pay the high prize. Certain of his decisions and actions were highly

criticized which wounded his delicate soul. Still, he did not utter a word of complaint and offered all the suffering to his Lord. Whenever he made a mistake, he was willing to acknowledge it and was ever ready to ask pardon even to students and inferiors.

The Testament of Fr. Canisius

Fr. Canisius has left his Will for the Carmelites of the Mary Immaculate that was written from CSR, Pariyaram, dated 21/11/1990. As this period of the time of my departure is approaching, the thought what I should leave for my dear brothers of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, after this long life, often used to come to my mind.

(1) As this period of the time of my departure is approaching, the thought what I should leave for my dear brothers of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, after this long life, often used to come to my mind.

(2) I do not have anything of worldly material and riches. The one for whom I had left everything in my young days to follow Him, had given me everything I needed without any shortage through my religious community. Therefore what I have now – from the cassock which I wear to the precious books on my table – everything belongs to my community.

(3) Still, I have an invaluable dripped and solidified treasure which I had got through my long life experiences. Now many consider that because of the limitations of nature, natural inclinations and temptations of the world it has become impossible to practice some essential things which the Church demands from the religious. Such statements discourage many to embrace the religious life and make some others to leave the religious life. At this juncture, I could testify from my experience that even in the midst of such factors of this world, even taken for also granted personal insignificance, frailty, feeble-mindedness, and frivolity, one could live with purity of heart, joyful countenance and uprightness before God. This is the treasure mentioned above of mine, which I joyfully hand over to my brethren.

(4) God is faithful to his promises. I would like to proclaim always and everywhere in the world the truth that He the true Father of ours with his paternal care will accept everything and always will come to the assistance of his children so that they could grow up as befitting his nobility.

(5) God's will be done and will be performed – this is the living testimony of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Such an outlook and spirit should grow in all of us, his children. For this I recommend the book, *The Reformer of the Kerala Church (Kerala Sabha Samudharakan)* which is published by our General Secretariat. It may be helpful that our Aspirants should make the subject their special study the Volume I, which provides a brief survey to the noble personality of our Father, our Postulants the Volume II which introduces one to the working style of our Father, our Novices the Volume III which illustrates the heroic model given by him, and our Juniors Volume IV which explains his deep and simple prayer style. The content of this book was presented during the Charism Retreats conducted at C.S.R. during the previous three years.

(6) I have presented at the superiors course conducted from 1987 onwards at C.S.R, things which I had felt useful for our superiors. Those talks are published and distributed by our General Secretariat under the title *The Service of Administration and Prayer Life*.

(7) Lastly, let me point out a very helpful method by which one can appropriate the vision and spirit of our early Fathers. It is the Rosary of Blessed Virgin in which one can daily practice meditatively the fifteen mysteries. Our fathers used to meditate daily thrice the fifteen mysteries. These three-faced/five-stage rosaries were presented at C.S.R. during some Retreats conducted on the occasion of the past Maryan Jubilee (1986-1988). The mysteries can be recited within the time which we take for the daily recitation of the 53 bead rosary. This new rosary reveals the mystery of success of the Blessed Virgin who is our precursor, model, and mother of the pilgrimage of faith and religious life. I have prepared them with the introductory thoughts in the manuscript form. I offer it to the contemplation of everyone.

(8) The editor-Father of *Devamatha Bulletin* had approached me in 1984 with a request to share with the members of the *Devamatha Province* my life experiences. What I had in summary form given in writing he published the same year issue of September of that *Bulletin* (pp 25-30). It is the same thing which I have to share with all the members of our congregation. (Herewith I have enclosed a copy of the original manuscript). See, these are my humble contributions which I leave for my loving community.

(9) Many of my beloved brothers had directly told me that during my long life, passed through different stages; I had without intention (surely

I had not intended) pained many through my incapability, carelessness, immaturity and bad example. I know that there are very many persons who had not told that. I humbly beg pardon to all of them. I humbly beg them: please forgive me and pray for me, thereby make it possible for me after my departure the grace to be granted the true face to face sight of our Lord. I assure that my gratitude to all of you will also endure in eternity.

Let us fight bravely and courageously for total victory the battle of our life by seeing in front of us the day when all of us will join in our Father's home! For it let us help each other with prayers. Goodbye!

A Loving Community

(It seems that this was a meditation and exhortation given to the novices at Ambazhakad).

We become the never-fading and ever-burning lamp by contemplation ('spousal prayer') in the presence of Christ, the universal Light, and by imitating His person. That is why the Vatican Council II states that the basic creed of the religious is the imitation of Christ, and through the consecrated persons it should be more and more manifested to the Christian faithful and outsiders. In this spirit, St. Paul wrote, "I consider everything rubbish, that I may gain the greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord" (Phil 3:8). The cost of discipleship of Christ is radical poverty. "Follow me by renouncing everything." In that spirit, we also have taken the decision to distance ourselves forever from sin and occasions of sin, to bid farewell for ever from the things, persons and other situations, which may affect our relationship negatively to Jesus even slightly. God's will, all of it, and that alone.

The word 'we' stands for our loving community and the brethren of our fields of the apostolate. Our community and the places of the apostolate are at the same time our future training centers as well as today's important fields of the mission. The Community is the armory and the art collage which carve us - the raw material, the ugly logs, into beautiful and divine figures. The other members of the community are instruments – sword, chisel, nail, hammer, rasp, grinding paper, etc. We should imbibe their good examples; take prudent precaution not to comply with bad models. There we will get very many chances to forgive, suffer, show compassion and help others. We must utilize all such chances, without giving up anything. It is through this long and

difficult formation process that Christ will be formed in us. This demands self-renunciation; we have to sacrifice our own will.

There will be no chance to practice patience if there is nobody to make us angry; there will not be any possibility for martyrdom if there will not be anyone to kill us unjustly. It is meaningless to ask for obtaining the forgiving attitude if there is no occasion for practicing it and the crown of martyrdom without enduring violence. The wisest Artist makes mysterious arrangements through the persons of our community and our places of activities, as well as through the happenings, and carves unique holy images from our personalities. Yes, it is our community that is our training center.

At the same time, the divine providence has connected these areas of activities with our important apostolic field. The Lord may make me notice the defects of those who belong to my community and who work with me. These persons are indeed the objects for my real apostolic work. The Lord brings them into my notice with the invitation to heal those patients. Showing them to me He demands: “who is responsible for this situation – for their defects remaining unchanged, or for the augmentation of their faults? Earn for them the necessary enlightenment, alertness and inspiration in order to help them to get rid off these faults through your good model, prayer and penance, which will silence Me who is about to punish them.” Only when we become conscious of the secret that the true object of our apostolic activities is those who criticize us, insult us, disgrace our persons us, and persecute us, that we will get the authentic outlook of life. It is this challenge that will serve as the criterion for the Master to determine the quality of the formation which we had received. Will not He tell me, as Nathan told David who was burning with just anger, “You are indeed responsible for this?” On the other hand, if we give a hand and lift them up through our tolerance mentioned above, good model, prayer, and acts of penance, then they will be our trophies that Jesus will earn through us for eternity. This is the great wonder for which we have to yearn. Indeed it is the Divine Paradox, our everlasting memorial of victory in heaven. The persecutor, Saul, and the disowner Peter were the unparalleled memorials of victory, which Jesus had thus earned. Therefore we have to accept the inmates of our community, as well as those who are involved in our fields of apostolate – all these persons the Lord in his providence had given to

us – as they are with all their virtues, vices, weaknesses and failures. We have to grow together with them.

For this purpose, we should cultivate in us the following virtues: contentment, aptitude for suffering, magnanimity, and enduring calmness

Ministry of Administration and Prayer Life. It is necessary that our superiors maintain a high standard in the prayer life, since they have to become the animators of the community, its leaders, servants, and have to provide guidance and example in order to make the prayer life an experience for the community. Our attention should be focused on the following three important elements: Spousal Prayer, Professional Prayer, and Occupational Prayer. There are three essential factors on which we should concentrate: i. apostolic factor; ii. meditation factor; iii. Carmelite factor. These are the three parts of the essay. In the second part, we deal with the Holy Mass, in the third part of the Carmelite charism. When they need more explanation, two appendices entitled “Our Holy Mass,” and the “Carmelite Charism” was added.

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There are three themes of our special orientations that we have to insist in our prayer life: i. Apostolic Orientation, ii. Meditation Orientation, iii. Carmelite Orientation, iv. Worship Orientation, v. Uniformity Orientation.

His Spiritual Vision of Christian Families. It is an astonishing fact that this Man of God nourished a deep fellowship with his relatives, friends and spiritual children. In the letters written to them, he appears as a total man, who maintained a hundred percent humanness to his spiritual children. But his human love had its source and resourced from the love of God, and found its consummation in the divine union. Indeed, this was the design that the Creator had concerning his creatures. Humaneness has its milieu in God, its reflection, and symbol. Likewise one can designate divineness as the mark of humaneness. The Lord seems to present before us Fr. Canisius as an authentic man, a true Christian, and a real CMI.