

# HERALD OF THE EAST



**CHAVARA JAYANTHI SPECIAL**

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# HERALD OF THE EAST

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## CHAVARA JAYANTHI SPECIAL

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## **BLESSED CHAVARA: SHINING STAR OF THE INDIAN CHURCH**

*Major Archbishop His Beatitude  
Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil*

What is being inaugurated here is the beginning of the Jayanthi celebrations of 200 years of the birth of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara. The whole year will be a Jubilee year. It was Cardinal Moosa, prefect of the congregation for Eastern Churches, that was to preside over these celebrations. He had agreed to come over here today. As he was unable to come, I have had the fortune to preside over these celebrations. I thank God for this. By celebrating the Holy Mass along with five Bishops, more than 200 priests, and with the people of God of the place, not nearly of Mannanam, I was able to thank God for all the good things bestowed through Blessed Chavara on the Syro Malabar Church, the Church in Kerala and in India. I am extremely happy about this. In a way I feel it my light. For Blessed Chavara was once the Vicar General having authority over all members of the Syro Malabar Church. Today by the providence of God I have been chosen to preside over the Syro Malabar Church. Therefore in a way I may be said to be the successor of Blessed Chavara. That is why I said it is my right to preside over these Celebrations.

I wish each one of you all the blessings of the Jubilee Year, especially for the members of the CMI and CMC Congregations. For these Congregations were founded by Blessed Chavara. The CMI and CMC Congregations have today grown greatly and do service not only in India but the whole world. The reason for my developing a special relation with Blessed Chavara was that as I was doing research some 50 Years ago in Rome in the archives of the Holy See, I came across two very important documents concerned with the holiness of Blessed Chavara. These



documents had not been made public till then. I took copies of these documents and when I returned to India, I sent these to the person in charge of the Cause of the canonization of Father Chavara, hoping that this might promote the process of canonization. This must be the reason why without delay I was called as a witness in the court at Mannanam for the Cause. I was a priest then. It was for the first time that I visited Mannanam. Father Paulinus, who later became bishop, was the president of the court. Then I said, the documents I got from Rome were very important; they showed his holiness; even from my childhood I have heard people of the place say that this father was a great saint. My parish is Varapuzha Puthenpally. Koonammavu is situated in Varapuzha Puthenpally parish. It was in Koonammavu that he spent the last eight years of his life. It was at Koonammavu too that he died.

I need not describe all the things that blessed Chavara did. During the Liturgy Bishop Kuriakose Kunnassery gave a detailed description of all these. He has done great service to society and Kerala as well as in educational and cultural fields. There is no doubt that he was a great personality that Kerala has seen. The Government of India has issued a postal stamp in his honour. This proves how much India honours him. I would like to mention two things; first, when he was Vicar General under threat of punishment he issued an order to all parish priests that each Church should have a school attached to it. Then Syrian Catholics were very back ward in education. More over, Dalits were not admitted to the schools of high caste people. But he gave them admission to our church schools. This was a great things. He made a beginning also in the field of publication. He was a poet. Another great contribution of his was when bishop Roccas came here in 1861, almost all Syrian Catholics were ready to go along with Bishop Rocose. Many Churches welcomed him. Roccas was a schismatic bishop. If Father Kuriakose Chavara was not there, humanly speaking, the present individual Church, the individual Church founded by St. Thomas the Apostle, might have gone astray. Thus the contributions of Blessed Chavara to the Kerala Church are great.

The real source, however, of all these services, was his deep spirituality. He was a person who lived in God. It was a life absorbed in the love of God. He did not go after fame and position. What he had learned from the Gospel was to empty himself and serve others. He was a great scholar. He had deep knowledge of the Bible. He has written poems. But what touches us most is his spirituality. Blessed Chavara considered a day lost if he did not do some service to others. Moreover, his great friend and spiritual director Father Leopold Missionary has testified that Blessed Chavara did declare at his deathbed that he had not lost the divine grace he received at baptism. Divine life was at work in him. It was only through the divine life that he was able to forget himself and dedicate his entire life for the service of others. Therefore, on this occasion this is what I want to say to all of you, especially to the members of the CMI and CMC Congregation: you might have grown immensely externally; but you have to speed up and strengthen your spiritual growth. During this Jubilee Year may almost cent percent of your attention be focused on this. Give witness to this in personal and communitarian life. May this be your most important celebration!

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*(From the Inaugural Address of His Beatitude Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil on January 3, 2004 at Mannanam at the Chavara Jayanthi public meeting.)-*



pay attention to norms, customs and traditions. Rules are for peace. What the Holy Father has emphasized is that there should certainly be norms and rules also in the families. It is in the absence of this that there are very often quarrels in the families. There should be norms and customs in the relations between husband and wife, between parents and children and also with the neighbors. In the introduction to the book Blessed Chavara has written that a good Christian home was like the heavenly bliss. If in mutual relations such norms are observed it would be a great blessing not only for the families but also for the society. Another thing was the attention he paid to the media. The Cardinal has mentioned this here. Blessed Chavara had to suffer great hardships to start a printing press. In those days it was not easy to see the model of a printing press, how it would look like. Even to get permission from the government, there were many hurdles in those days.

The interest we have to take in the matter of communication media is very important. We should have a clear vision regarding what to accept and what to reject from the news and views by the media and how to evaluate the media. It is obvious that Blessed Chavara had a great vision regarding this even in those days. It was certainly by realizing the importance of this that the 'Deepika' and other publications were brought out later. We should also become aware of the changes that the media make in us. We should not only use the media more and more, we should also train the coming generations to make a proper use of them. Other wise, our future would not be bright.

Blessed Chavara did pay attention to all fields of life. We have many things to speak about social and educational activities. But fundamentally he was a spiritual man. That was why till death he was able to keep the purity that he obtained at his baptism. It was on the basis of this purity that he was able to see all things objectively and do all the things that he did. I wish that this Jayanthi provide an opportunity for all to understand that spirituality and to travel forward along that path of holiness!

*(From the Presidential Address at the public meeting in inaugurating Chavara Jayanthi at Mannanam.)*



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*(From the Presidential Address at the public meeting in inaugurating Chavara Jayanthi at Mannanam.)*



## BLESSED CHAVARA: INSPIRER OF INDIAN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LIFE

*Mar Kuriakose Kunnassery,  
Bishop of Kottayam*

On the Mannanam mount, noted for scenic beauty, in a pleasant, beautiful atmosphere, in this monastery, its towers viewing the vast paddy fields spread like a green carpet that may be described as Northern Kuttanad, today we are celebrating the Divine Liturgy in grateful commemoration of the bi-centenary of the birth of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara.

Whenever I recall Blessed Kuriakose Chavara, I remember St. Benedict who is described as father of European monasticism. It was in imitation of the Rule of the Benedictine Monastery, started by St Benedict in the fifth century, that all European religious institutes, whether contemplative or active, of men or of women, had their origin. It was the Monastery at Monte Casino that gave vigour and inspiration to all these institutes. It was the Kerala Carmelite Congregation and its activities, that Blessed Chavara founded in collaboration with Father Palackal and Father Porukara with the permission of the Latin bishops of the period, at a time when the Syrian Catholics did not have a bishop or diocese of their own, that became the basis for the foundation of many religious institutes of both men and women in India. Therefore, we may call Father Chavara 'Indian Benedict,' and Mannanam, 'Indian Monte Casino'.

Ever since the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, declared Father Chavara "Blessed" at Kottayam in 1986, whenever I met the Holy Father, he used to call me Kuriakose and tell me that he prayed to the Blessed everyday. This was because the Holy Father was convinced of the valuable leadership that Blessed Chavara gave to the Kerala Church, which he learned from the 'Positio' that Rev. Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal prepared on the life of Father Chavara for the cause of his canonization. The most important aspect of the leadership that Blessed Chavara gave to the Kerala Syrian Church, was the starting of an indigenous religious Congregation. These priests then known as Kerala Carmelites, used to lead a contemplative life, preach



retreats in parishes, and hear the confessions of the people. These priests were known among the ordinary people as "Kovendapattakar". Whenever these priests in their brown habit, with a belt, scapular and cowl, went to the churches to hear confession, the people flocked to them more than the diocesan priests. Ordinary faithful had the conviction that they were good and holy. It was Blessed Chavara who gave mainly leadership in the formation of these priests.

As blessed Chavara was convinced that holy diocesan priests were necessary for the spiritual growth and pastoral ministry of parishes and dioceses, these religious priests started centers for the training of priests under the leadership of Malpans, at Mannanam, Elthuruth, Koonammavu and other places. To strengthen the prayer life of priests Father Chavara examined prayer books in Eastern Syriac and got them published with the permission of the Church authorities. Today diocesan priests, religious priests and women religious have all prayer books. Many people, however, do not know that it was Blessed Chavara who started all this.

Blessed Chavara who knew well the signs of the times, gave great importance to the apostolate of the printing press. He was convinced that there should be schools attached to church, and that there should be prayer books and other publications related to faith. The colleges and technical institutions and publications like the Deepika that the CMI Congregation presently has are the fruits of the subsequent growth of this line of thinking.

Father Chavara was the Vicar General of the Syrians in the diocese of Varapuzha. In that position he was loyal to the then bishop of Varapuzha and at the same time he was able to work for the growth of the Syrian Church with the approval of the bishop. There are today at least a few people who deplore the Varapuzha connection of Blessed Chavara. It is not correct to judge the past on the basis of modern situations and ecclesiology.

When in the 19<sup>th</sup> century most of our parishes joined the Roccas schism, it was Blessed Chavara who waged a war against it, informed Rome about it, and convinced the people that Roccas had not been sent by the Pope. Sovereigns are called "Defender of



Faith". In modern times some bishops are honoured with the title "Helper of the Holy See". If Blessed Chavara had not fought Roccas, the history of the Syrian Church in Kerala would have been quite different. It was about this time that Blessed Chavara wrote to Rome that the Syrians should have a bishop of their own.

Today we have thousands of religious who work in India outside Kerala, and abroad. When Father Chavara lived, the Eastern Syrians did not have any religious house for women. Blessed Chavara who knew that good and educated women religious were necessary for doing well the activities of the church, started the present CMC Congregation. Today it has grown immensely. Later other religious Congregations for women also came into existence: the Clarist Congregation, Visitation Congregation, Adoration Congregation, Holy Family Congregation, Sacred Heart Congregation and so on.

Blessed Chavara who knew Latin, English, Syriac, and Portuguese, used to include in his sermons and exhortations quotations from the Bible and its commentaries. The parting exhortation that Blessed Chavara gave to the religious and the laity are known as "Farewell Discourses of Blessed Chavara". The parting exhortations of this helper of the Church and Defender of Faith who swam against the current are guidelines for all of us to lead a Christian life.

The Monasteries that Blessed Chavara started were all people's movements. It was the laity of the Syrian church who contributed the land, stones, soil, timber and helped with money and manpower of founding them. This fact can be known if you read the chronicles of each Monastery. Blessed Chavara had envisaged not Monasteries away from the people, but Monasteries started with the help of the lay people, people-oriented Monasteries for the good of the laity.

By participating in this Divine Liturgy, seeking the intercession of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara, let us pray for a Syro Malabar Church firmly established on the theological foundations of faith and love, sharing with all what she is and what she has!

*(The Sermon of Mar Kuriakose Kunnassery during Chavara Jayanthi Solemn Holy Mass at Mannanam on 3 January 2004).*

## **BLESSED KURIAKOSE CHAVARA A LOVING FATHER OF FAMILIES**

*Bishop Lawrence Mukkuzhy,  
Bishop of Belthangady*

Blessed Chavara was like an angel or prophet who arrived at a critical period of the Church in Kerala to restore and renew it. At a period when the church was backward spiritually, socially and educationally, Blessed Chavara was able to discover the true identity of the church and to make great contributions in social, religious and spiritual fields. There was no aspect of the then society that he did not touch. Blessed Chavara made significant contributions in the fields of priestly formation, liturgy, family life, religious life and other similar fields. It would not be wrong to say that the orientations that the church has now accepted were all initiated by Blessed Chavara. For he was a person who had a profound desire that the church should have an identity of its own but also needed innovations to suit the times. Accordingly he focused his attention in four areas.

The visions that Blessed Chavara had regarding the life of lay people, priests and the religious were quite valuable. He had definite views on the sanctity of the family and the promotion of the family.

The "Farewell Recourse" (*Chavarul*) of Bl. Chavara as a rule of life for the family is very famous. When I read it I was very happy. In fact, I thought it would be very good if every family had a copy of the book. If couples and children, parents and brothers and sisters read and obey it, they will be able to lead a life of great holiness. When we read the book we understand how holy an idea Bl. Chavara had about life in the family. I believe that over a century now the teachings of



Bl. Chavara helped the Kerala Church to preserve the tradition of family sanctity especially in married life.

Likewise, Bl. Chavara had a clean vision on priestly life. For over 35 years he was a seminary professor too. Therefore from personal experience he could make many contributions to priests. He has spelt out the mission of priests and the things they had to do in social and personal life. It would not be wrong to say that Bl. Chavara inaugurated the modern type of seminary formation in India, more particularly in the Syro-Malabar Church. In fighting and defeating the Roccas Schism, he was in fact saving the church from a great danger. Bl. Chavara's loyalty and love for the church and his unconditional submission to the Roman Pontiff is a great model and inspiration for us.

Religious communities have a great role to play in the life of the church. They help to build up the church in pastoral ministries and missionary activities through their collective enterprises. As for the Indian Church it was through the leadership of Bl. Chavara that two religious congregations were formed, one for women and the other for men. The Indian Church is proud of this great gift inspired by God through Bl. Chavara. The CMI, CMC congregations that he founded by integrating Indian and Oriental spirituality with Carmelite spirituality and prayer life and adapted to the culture of the Indian nation, have been great instruments in the growth of the Indian church. Bl. Chavara, the heroic son of the Syro-Malabar Church, has cut out for us many avenues to work for the glory of God.

Bl. Chavara's thoughts and actions in the social sphere, paved the way for great reformation. He started the ideal that every church should have a school attached to it. It is my conviction that it was through the vision of Bl. Chavara that our church today gives so much importance to education.

Today with the start of the third millennium there is a new awakening in the care for the poor. This ideal can be seen also in the life of Bl. Chavara. He had programmes for the care of the poor in the vicinity of churches and monasteries. So one century and a half ago Bl. Chavara put into practice



the care of the poor which we consider today a most modern programme of the church.

Thus we see that many of the teachings of the second Vatican Council, were already proposed by Bl. Chavara, that too a century and half ago.

What I have personally experienced is Bl. Chavara's personal life of holiness: personal prayer, deep faith in and devotion for the Holy sacrament, and commitment to pray the liturgy of the hours. He took the pledge to live the baptismal innocence throughout his life so that on his death bed he could say: "I have been able preserve pure the white dress I received at baptism". Only a person with the most profound spirituality will have the courage to speak so in death bed. I feel this saying alone is sufficient to understand the whole spirituality of Bl. Chavara. Therefore today Bl. Chavara is a great model for priests and also bishops. In fact ours is a blessed church in having Bl. Chavara.

Even if the Italian and Portuguese missionaries of the Latin church who were working here, had certain objections to the Syro-Malabar church, we see that they had great admiration and respect for Bl. Chavara. It is said that when Bishop Benardin visited Bl. Chavara in his room, there being only one chair, the bishop made him sit in it himself sitting on a box. Considering the position of a bishop in those times, we can consider this only as a symbolic act. This shows the great veneration in which Bl. Chavara was held. His life and activities were an inspiration not only for the 19th century, but also for the church today. I think that in every sense we are bound to respect him.

Bl. Chavara today is known in the church, but he is not known everywhere. Therefore, all of us, especially the CMI's, have an obligation to make him known, that too during this bi-centenary year. For this, small books may be published; all may not be interested in big books. Similarly, Bl. Chavara may be introduced to children through picture books.

Bl. Chavara's "Chavarul" is very helpful. We should see to it that every house has a copy of the book. Today all dioceses have marriage guidance courses in preparation for mar



riage. It would be very good if Bl. Chavara's "Chavarul" or "Family Rule" can be included in the syllabus of marriage guidance courses. The ideas contained in it are of lasting value. The couples can be given these as a rule of life. Moreover, earlier we had a prayer book in all our houses (*Nithyaradhana*). These prayers have to be revised, prayers to be said in a family be included along with the rosary. To this may be added Bl. Chavara's vision of the family. I feel that it would be very good if every family has such a prayer book.

All those who leave the seminaries every year after priestly ordination should receive in a summary form the view points of Bl. Chavara on priesthood. Young priests would read them with great zeal. In the Major Seminaries Bl. Chavara's vision of religious life and work for the unity of the Church, could very well become a topic for studies. Teaching Bl. Chavara's vision of religious life in the novitiates may be helpful for the spiritual renewal in our religious communities.

Finally, I would like to tell the CMI's to revive the spirit of Bl. Chavara. Today many CMI's do not go to preach retreats. I doubt whether CMI's have not lagged behind in leading a life rooted in the word of God and preaching retreats. CMI's have to divide the country into many zones and go to all the parishes. CMI's today take more interest in educational institutions. But it was Chavara who also insisted that the word of God should be preached in all churches. He also went round the churches in the company of fellow-priests preaching good retreats. Therefore, it is necessary to revive retreat preaching as a great charism of the CMI's.

Blessed Chavara is undoubtedly a person about whom the CMIs and CMCs can certainly feel proud. Moreover, the life and work of Bl. Chavara is a great inspiration for renewal and spiritual enrichment of the universal church.

## BLESSED CHAVARA: A HEROIC MODEL IN SPIRITUALITY

*Fr. Mathew Kaniamparampil, CMI*  
*Vicar General*

The Church in India has entered into the 200<sup>th</sup> Birth anniversary celebrations of one of its greatest stalwarts in its history. That great soul of our Country is Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara. He was an ecclesial leader unparalleled and unique in the Indian Church history on account of his intense love for the Church and the initiatives he took for its integral growth. His greatest pioneering contribution to the Church was in the most important area of its spiritual growth.

He is widely acclaimed as a great visionary who took several concrete steps in order to impart spiritual vitality to the 19-century old Church in India. He was also a great reformer and defender of the faith. He was aware of the crisis his particular Church was deeply immersed in since three centuries. The confusion and unrest caused by the arrival and interference of the Portuguese in the affairs of the local Church was immense. Certain decisions of the Synod of Diamper inflicted a traumatic experience among the St. Thomas Christians. There followed a centuries-long turmoil, divisions and disunity. Consequently, the main pre-occupation of the local Church was the restoration of the ecclesiastical identity and autonomy. All those struggles caused a serious and radical divergence and sidetracking of the real issue, namely, the spiritual growth of the people. On the one hand the struggle for the restoration of the ecclesiastical structure was on the boiling point, while on the other hand, the inner spiritual craving for a genuine ecclesial and sacramental life was facing a lamentable decline.

This was the background and the reason for the young Chavara to visualize a radical spiritual renewal of the Church.



With a prophetic vision, Chavara dived deep into the multifarious and deep-seated problems, and recognized the real blocks which strangled the genuine spiritual growth of the people of his period and region. Like an expert doctor, Blessed Chavara was able to make a diagnosis of those ills and limitations with their root causes. He gave the Church a prophetic and courageous leadership at a decisive time of its existence and brought it to the track of spiritual dynamism and vitality over and above all other considerations.

### ***A great dream of his Seminary days***

The most fundamental question that captivated, gripped and strained the young mind of Chavara even during his Seminary days was how to bring his 19-century old Church to spiritual vitality and dynamism. According to him, the spiritual revival of his Church occupied the greatest and paramount importance. He studied meticulously the history of his Church steeped in constant turmoil. Simultaneously, he learned from his teachers in the Pallipuram Seminary, especially from his Rector Fr. Thomas Palackal, the stories of great saints and spiritual stalwarts who brought about spiritual vitality and vibrancy in the global Church. The lives of those Saints fascinated him. Their teachings inspired him to do something beautiful for his Church in this Country too. Chavara firmly believed that a Particular Church could be considered vibrant only in so far as and as long as it has been capable to produce stalwarts of spirituality, namely, Saints. The vitality of a Church community can be judged by the criterion of its commitment to a genuine spiritual vision, a congenial spiritual atmosphere, and a consequent spiritual growth of its members. This basic vision finds realization in the emergence of at least a few heroic models of Christian discipleship from that community. Chavara had learned that the saints are those charismatic leaders of the Church who practiced virtues heroically. They are the most genuine and radical followers of Jesus and of his Gospel values. Officially recognized by the universal Church, they stand out before the world as powerful symbols of the spiritual vitality of a particular Church.



Chavara was also introduced to the stories of Religious Congregations which existed in the global Church and how actively they defended the faith, made the sacramental life of the faithful vibrant and imparted spiritual vitality to the particular Church. He also noticed that most of the Saints hailed from Religious Congregations. He studied thoroughly how those religious leaders reformed, defended and protected the mother Church, especially when divisions plunged the Church into deep crisis during the protestant revolution four centuries ago in the western hemisphere.

The young Chavara used to lament that his Church, which was as old as Christianity itself with a long history of almost two millennia, was unable to produce even a single saint. Why this spiritual *infertility*? How can we bring about a substantial change in this situation? Is heroic practice of virtues and personal sanctification as well as religious life and asceticism possible only to the believers beyond the seven seas and out of reach for our Christian community in this ancient land of spirituality and God-experience?

Having been deeply moved and taken up by the above thoughts, the young Seminarian Chavara made a firm determination to bring his vision to realization, from the day one of his priestly life. The intention of his *First Mass* on Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1829 was that our land may receive from God a special grace for the starting of an indigenous Religious Congregation, in view of the reformation of the Church. Our land witnessed the realization of that great dream by the trio of the founding of religious life in the Indian Church. Those trios were Fr. Thomas Palackal, Fr. Thomas Porukara and Fr. Kuriakose Chavara, three diocesan priests belonging to the ancient Church of the St. Thomas Christians. That great event of the foundation of the first Religious House took place on the Mannanam hills on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1831. Fr. Chavara was a young priest of only 24 years at that time. During those decades, there was only one Bishop in Kerala, the Bishop of Verapoly. Despite his ill health, he was present there for that function. 50 Parish Priests, i.e., almost all the pastors at that time, irrespective of their Rites, participated in that foundation



ceremony. It shows how enthusiastically the Church accepted and encouraged the inception of religious life in our land.

### ***A Religious Congregation by the Church and for the Church***

The newly established Religious Congregation, presently known as the CMIs, was totally dedicated to the spiritual renewal of the Church. From the very beginning, its members were earnestly engaged in various pastoral activities related to the faith formation of our people. The first spiritual endeavour they initiated was retreat preaching. They visited all the parish Churches, both Syrian and Latin, from south to north of Kerala and preached retreats for the benefit of the faithful. They used to go in groups of three or four priests. They stayed in those parishes for four days. During those days, they used to visit all the families. Wherever there existed any type of disunity, mutual hatred or any spiritual or moral disintegration, these priests would bring them back to the right path. The preaching of these Fathers as well as their family apostolate brought about a radical renewal in those parishes. The Parish Priests and the people were longing for their arrival earnestly. Through their presence, people were moved to repentance and reconciliation. Their sacramental life was revitalized. It became a custom that the Bishop used to request these Fathers to have their retreat conducted in all the parishes as an immediate spiritual preparation for making his canonical visitation.

People called these Fathers *darsana pattakkar*, namely, priests of God-experience. And that typically spiritual dimension of their new movement was the identity and secret of their success. Fr. Chavara and other leaders of this religious Congregation were very particular that all the external activities of their members must emerge from their asceticism and basic prayer experience. The name they gave the first religious House at Mannanam was *darsana veedu*, i.e., house of God-experience. Within a short time, the Church realized that the ultimate goal of all the activities



of this Congregation was the spiritual renewal of the Church, and all their energy emerged from their own fundamental vision of personal sanctification. As a result, their lives became down to earth spiritual and people-oriented. They loved the Church and the Church loved them too.

### ***Envisioning a radical programme***

When Fr. Chavara and the other founding Fathers travelled through all the parishes and met with the people, they came to the realization that the real follow up of the renewal initiated would depend upon the proper and systematic training of pastors who are to be the leaders of the Church. For this leadership, there arises the need of a systematic seminary formation. The Priests should be holy, efficient and well trained. They should possess human and divine qualities. This required the starting of a formal Seminary for the whole Church in Kerala. Fr. Chavara and the other founding Fathers launched their daring step in this regard in 1833 itself. The Bishop entrusted this great task to them by giving them the title 'Professors' or *Malpans*. The Mannanam Seminary was the first Major Seminary of the Syro-Malabar Church. There was a time when about 150 Seminarians at a time were trained in that Seminary. The priests who were trained in Mannanam were in the forefront when Blessed Chavara gave the leadership to fight successfully against the Roccas schism which affected the local Church in the year 1861. It was specifically on that occasion and in view of making a concerted effort to fight against the schismatic movement that Fr. Chavara was appointed Vicar General of the whole Syrian community. And the Seminary, established in Mannanam, continued there till 1894. It was amalgamated with the Seminary at Puthenpally. Later it was transferred to Alwaye in 1932.

During those times, the celebration of the Holy Mass and the Canonical Prayers were not well organized. Blessed Chavara realized how important it is for the sanctification of priests. In 1862, he prepared a complete manuscript of the Syriac Breviary.



In 1865, he prepared and printed the first liturgical calendar of the Syro-Malabar Church. In the same year, he prepared the text of the funeral services in Syriac. In 1868, he prepared and printed the *Thukkasa*, the rituals for the elegant and devout celebration of the Holy Mass. These innovations helped the priests to grow in sanctity. Blessed Chavara believed that the spiritual growth of the faithful, to a large extent, depends on the personal sanctity of their priests. Fr. Bernard, who wrote the first history of the CMI Congregation in the year 1908, writes: "Our founding Fathers knew that the spiritual growth of the people would depend upon the sanctity of the priests. Just as our people are reformed through spiritual retreats, Confessions and exhortations, the scholastics in the seminary also should be trained to transform all their daily activities into moments of virtues". (*CMI Congregation in the First Decades*, Fr. Bernard, 1908, p. 128).

### ***Emergence of a new spiritual enthusiasm***

The great spiritual contributions Fr. Chavara and his associates introduced in the local Church were the following: First of all, the mode of ascetical life they initiated on the hillock of Mannanam became a beacon light of intense prayer and asceticism. Diocesan Priests as well as people from far and wide flocked to that mother house of Indian *Samnyasa*. The prayer life and asceticism of those fathers not only made their own lives luminous, but also they imparted extraordinary spiritual experience to the people who frequented there, an experience they were earnestly craving for.

Blessed Chavara and his associates popularized a great devotional practice called the *Way of the Cross*. They fixed 14 Crosses from the bottom of the hill to the top. Ascending the hill, meditating on the sufferings of Jesus, the Mannanam Fathers, led the people to great heights of repentance and transformation of life. It was a regular and solemn celebration which became very popular, and it remains popular even today, everywhere in the Church. Fr. Bernard describes an incident: "Our Fathers



conducted a retreat in the main Church at Changanacherry. 5000 people participated in that retreat. On the last day of the retreat they led a big procession through the main road. A huge Crucifix was carried in front. On various stations, our fathers delivered speeches on the sufferings of Jesus. Moved by intense sorrow and repentance, people screamed loudly and shed tears. That was a rare spiritual experience for the people of that entire locality." (*CMI Congregation in the First Decades*, Fr. Bernard, 1908, p. 131).

Another important innovation introduced by Blessed Chavara in the local Church was the Eucharistic devotion. It came first in the form of the *40 Hour Adoration*. It started first at Koonammavu in 1866 and then to all the CMI Ashrams established by Blessed Chavara. People came from far away places for participating in it. The solemnity and the devotional atmosphere created by these adorations impelled the people to a radical conversion of heart. Hundreds of people made their Confessions and received Holy Communion. More people used to go for the Holy Mass. Those three days of the solemn adoration of the Eucharistic Lord were indeed days of great spiritual experience and renewal for everyone. The local people used to accommodate them in their own homes as guests. Now a days, especially since last four decades, there has been a serious set back in the Eucharistic devotion, for various reasons. The recent papal encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* emphasizes this devotion saying how it helps to build up the Church. Moreover, the Holy Father has initiated a *Eucharistic Year*, and that is a preparation for the forthcoming Bishops' Synod in Rome next year.

All the above devotional practices, together with the other practices which emerged simultaneously, i.e., the Rosary, the Evening Family Prayer, etc. became also instrumental in promoting religious, priestly, and missionary vocations from the local Church. This is true especially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is an evident fact that almost 75% of the missionaries serving in North India today are hailing from the Syro-Malabar Church. This is another excellent and practical expression of the spiritual vibrancy of this Church.



Blessed Chavara, along with his spiritual Director Fr. Leopold, OCD, initiated in the year 1866, a religious Congregation for women. That was the CMC Congregation and it was the first of its type in the Syro-Malabar Church. The first Convent was established in Koonammavu. His long experience of leading the CMI Congregation so far helped him to impart to the new Congregation the same spirit of asceticism and deeper prayer experience. His intention was that in future, these well-trained Nuns would become catalytic channels of family apostolate, especially for the spiritual growth of the women folk and little children of the Church.

### *Golden years of the Church*

Blessed Chavara's innovations in the local Church for four decades starting from 1831 till his death in 1871, are golden years in the history of the Indian Church. The Church in India must be thankful to this great soul of India for the spiritual vitality he brought about among the people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The faith formation he imparted the people a right direction and an impetus for greater spiritual growth. The devotional practices he introduced, embellished their Christ experience. It strengthened their desire for spiritual perfection. People had greater enthusiasm to participate in the Divine Liturgy, as the source and summit of all spiritual experiences. They were impelled to more active sacramental life. Christian life in general entered a new era of vitality and vibrancy. The religious congregation he headed for about four decades became a source of inspiration for the emergence of scores of other congregations in the Indian Church.

Chavara is also acclaimed to be an innovator in the socio-cultural fields during that century. It was he, for the first time, who impelled the cause of education among the people and triggered the growth of literacy. It was he who started the first printing press of the Catholics. It was also he who started publishing books for the benefit of the people. However, these innovations too were not unrelated to his fundamental spiritual vision. His ultimate intention was the strengthening of the religious experience of his people. He would have thought that the faith should not be merely a matter



of feelings and emotions. They should be established on the strong foundations of knowledge, wisdom and personal conviction. Only such a faith will have consistency. With a prophetic vision, he also visualized that the Christian community should become a model before others for an integral development of the human nature. At this point, one is reminded of the great St. Irenaeus of the Apostolic times, who said, *God's glory consists in man becoming fully alive.*

Holy Father Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of the beatification of Blessed Chavara on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1986, said: "Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara is raised to the ranks of the Blessed in the great communion of Saints. This member of the Syro-Malabar Church advanced to great heights of holiness through his whole-hearted cooperation with the grace of God....

All of his 65 years of earthly life, he laboured generously for the renewal and enrichment of the Christian life. His deep love for Christ filled him with apostolic zeal and made him especially careful to promote the unity of the Church. With great generosity he collaborated with others, especially his brother priests and religious in the work of salvation." On that great occasion, the Holy father also recalled the unique contributions of Blessed Chavara in the spiritual field. He said: "Blessed Chavara contributed to the Syro-Malabar Liturgy and spread devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Family. In particular, he dedicated himself to encouraging and counselling Christian families, convinced as he was of the fundamental role of the family in the life of society and the Church." The Pope's final words on that occasion were very inspiring. He said: "Truly extraordinary is this day in the history of the Church and of Christianity on the Indian soil. It is the first time that I have the joy of raising to the glory of the altars a son and a daughter (Blessed Alphonsa) of the Church in India. Holiness is the work of divine grace. When we proclaim it solemnly in the midst of the people of God in this land, we give glory to the Most High. In the words of St. Augustine, we praise God, saying: *In crowning merits, you are crowning your own gifts.*"



(Cfr. *Herald of the East*, January 3, 1992, pp.82, 83 and 86). The above words of the Holy Father are a directive and a challenge for the Church of today. Receiving inspiration and enlightenment from the spiritual vision and great mission of this great son of our land will only give a boost to our ecclesial endeavours.

### **Conclusion**

It is against the above background and the reformation initiated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that we have to evaluate the blossoming of several flowers of sanctity in the local Church during the last few decades. The global Church has recognized recently several *Blesseds*, *Venerables* and *Servants of God* from among the ancient St. Thomas Christians of our Country. All of them belong to the past two centuries. It is surprising and it looks providential that the list is topped by the name of Blessed Chavara himself, who earnestly longed for a spiritual fertility in this land. It was in 1986 that Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the CMI Congregation was beatified along with Blessed Alphonsa of the Clarist Congregation. It was the most golden moment in the whole spiritual history of the Indian Church. It was followed by the beatification of Blessed Mariam Thresia of the Holy Family Congregation in 2000. Mother Euphrasia, C.M.C. was elevated to the ranks of the venerables in 2002. Fr. Augustine Thevarparampil, a diocesan priest who was full of missionary zeal, was declared venerable in 2004. The present *Servants of God* in this particular Church are the following: Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry, Archbishop Mathew Kavukatt, Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil and Fr. Joseph Vithayathil. Indeed it is great and beautiful. All these people are flowers of sanctity. They are also expressions of a dynamic and vibrant spiritual patrimony. They will inspire many more souls for many more generations to strive after heroic practice of virtues and become luminaries of the faith in our land.

# **BLESSED KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA**

## **HIS LIFE & PIONEERING SERVICES**

### **His Life**

Birth	10 <sup>th</sup> February 1805 in Kainakari, Kerala
Priestly Ordination	29 <sup>th</sup> November 1829
Death	3 <sup>rd</sup> January 1871 at Koonammavu
Burial	4 <sup>th</sup> January 1871 at Koonammavu
Mortal Remains transferred to Mannanam:	24 <sup>th</sup> May 1889
Beatification by Pope John Paul II	8 <sup>th</sup> February 1986
Postal Stamp released in his honour by Sri R. Venkataraman, President of India.	20 <sup>th</sup> December 1987
200 <sup>th</sup> Jayanthi Celebrations started	3 <sup>rd</sup> January 2004

### **His pioneering Services**

With Fathers Thomas Palackal and Thomas Purukara, founded the First Religious Congregation for Men in India (CMI);	1831
Popularized the Sunday Homilies and Retreats for Priests and Laity in the Kerala Church;	1831
Established the First Syro- Malabar Major Seminary:	1833



Introduced 'the Way of the Cross' in the Kerala Church:	1840
Started the First Catholic Charitable Organization to help the dying for a happy death:	1843
Founded the First Press And Publishing House of the Syro-Malabar Church:	1846
Founded the First School (Sanskrit) in the Kerala Church:	1846
Founded the First Syro-Malabar Catechumenate:	1853
The First Vicar General after the time of Archdeacons in the Syro-Malabar Church:	1861
Took the Leadership in protecting the Syro-Malabar Church from the schism of Bishop Roccas:	1861
The Author of the First Malayalam Narrative Poem - ' <i>Anasthasyaude Rakthasakshyam</i> ':	1862
Implemented the idea 'A School for a Church', in the Kerala Church as Vicar General:	1864
innovator of the Divine Office, Liturgical Rubrics and Calandar in the Malabar Church:	1862-1869
With Fr. Leopold OCD, an Italian Missionary, founded the First Indian Religious Congregation for Women (CMC) in the Kerala Church:	1866
Started the 40 Hours Adoration in the Kerala Church:	1866
Prepared the first instruction manual as 'a Testament of a Good Father' for the Christian families of Kerala:	1868
Founded the First Home of Charity and 'Confraternity of St. Joseph' for the Sick and Destitute of Kerala:	1869

COLLECTED BY FR. THOMAS PANTHAPLACKAL CMI

## RELEVANCE OF BLESSED CHAVARA TODAY

*Sr. Sergius, C.M.C.*

Great men live not only for their own times but for ages. Their presence, visions, teachings and writings withstand the test of time and they live for centuries with fresh vigour and meaning. Bl. Chavara Kuriakose Elias, a brilliant star of the Indian Church, belongs to this time of great men. Born in the reputed Chavara family at Kainakari on 10th February 1805, he grew up in solid Catholic atmosphere and became the founder of C.M.I and C.M.C., the first two indigenous congregations for men and women in our land.

The relevance of a person in a particular era is mainly based on his vision and ideals - what he stood for - that has its impact on posterity. The millions of modern families evoke much concern and anxiety to a very great extent. Why did such a situation arise? We may put the blame on the changes of the time, culture etc. But, to be sincere, do modern parents fulfil their duties to their children and family. It is time to think seriously. History produced a Hitler because of his family atmosphere. History contributed a Bl. Chavara also because of his family atmosphere. As the child's personality is formed in his childhood, family plays a very important role in forming the culture and history of the society. Bl. Chavara's upbringing in his family laid the foundation of a true human Christian life - life in union with God and total commitment to the people. His mother was a devoted lady who used to get up at midnight to pray and baby Kuriakose also used to be with her while praying. Bl. Chavara himself speaks how he imbibed spiritual nourishment even in his infancy.

"Mixed in her sweet milk, she regaled me  
With thoughts of heaven, and words of grace pure !  
And when reason grew strong, my little mind  
Patiently informed, to lisp holy names



Huddled close to her feet, I learnt aright gently of matters sublime, of my faith. As at midnight she rose and knelt at prayer. Warding off sleep and petty dullness to the air.

Long hours, on her knee in prayer she stayed  
Learning on her, then I would seat myself  
While devoutly a string of pins words  
To Mother of God and the Christ, King of Kings  
In thanks and praise, heart string with solid Faith:-  
'Light Eternal, Jesus Christ, save us all  
Hail, earth-born flower, Lord in mortal'!  
Thus she'd pray in her melodious voice  
And I, listening to the lullaby sweet  
Near my gentle mother quietly reposed  
And, when my infant tongue 'gan to lisp  
Up to the sky, her finger, Mary and Joseph  
She, my noble mother made me repeat"

*(Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Vol.II Compunction of the Soul, Cento I lines 49 - 69)*

Broken families, being the main problem of the modern world creating terrorists, murderers, robbers etc., Bl. Chavara stands out neither sweet memories of his family, praising God with grateful hearts. Modern generation also has this inner thirst for God, for peace, for love and the longing to raise their hearts in thanks giving to God. Responsible parenthood can definitely pave the way for it. Chavara's life is a living example in this arena.

His own experience of a loving happy, peaceful, God - fearing family life urged him to use his influence to form such families in Kerala and hence prompted by this inner compulsion he wrote the testament for families ..... as 'Chavarul' or 'Kudumbachattangal' for the people of his parish - Kainakari. The guidance he has given to families in this 'Chavarul' was useful not only for the people of his age but also for posterity. Many of the family problems we confront today can be evaded and solved if we abide by his guidance. For eg. he has made it very clear that it is not money or physical beauty that counts in marriage but true devotion and trust in God. How many suicides should have been prevented if we paid heed to such an advice. Let us not forget that though Kerala is the first in literacy in India, she stands first in suicide rate too.



Though the 'Chavarul' was written 150 years ago, most of its content speaks to us very powerfully even today. What a lot of creativity and prosperity should have been ours if there were good families? Mar Mathew Kavukatt, late Archbishop of Changanacherry has written: "Bl. Chavara was a religious priest with extraordinary sanctity. He is an exemplary model and an inexhaustible source of inspiration with his dynamic personality, broad vision, powerful progressive outlook and never tiring, never-fearing, dauntless hope."

Shri P. Ramachandran, former Governor of Kerala spoke of him: "Father Chavara is the pride not only of Kerala, but of entire mankind. It is rare indeed where so many, sterling virtues have blended so perfectly in one individual. Father Chavara was born a mortal, but the good he did over a span of six and a half decades cast him in the mould of immortal of humanity. Yesterday, today and forever to the last syllable of recorded time this 'God-realised soul' will remain among mankind's most cherished possessions."

In our world, people are in search of men with God-experience, people who can be in the presence of God. Chavara's spirituality centred on 'God-with-us' experience. In his spiritual diary Bl. Chavara points out how enamoured he was about the divine indwelling. His holiness is reflected in the words "If anyone loves me he will keep my word. My Father will love him, we shall come to him and make our home with him" (Jn 14:24). Once when he was brought to court through false accusations, the magistrate looked at him and asked the opponents: 'How dare you bring this man of God to court?' God reflected Himself through Chavara.

For him, God was a 'loving Father.' In his colloquies with his 'heavenly Father' he calls 'God-my Father' thirty two times. Again in 'Compunction of the soul' we have plenty of references where he refers to God as his Father who cares for him and provides him with everything. Chavara trust in the Lord who leads him by the hand is quite evident in the founding of the C.M.C. Congregation. He had only Rs.18/- with him as he started the construction of the first C.M.C. house at Koonammavu. The great capital which he depended on, was, in his own words, this very trust in God's providence. Our Lord amply rewarded him. Human tendency to grab and amass money and things has a strong grip on man.



Consequently, providence of God and trust in the Lord may not sound very sensible for the modern age. But until and unless man returns to this faith and hope, the way to peace and salvation may be far away. It may exist only as a dream. Bl. Chavara shines like a bright star beckoning man to turn to the Almighty and rely on him whole heartedly along with human effort. He did what we read in the 2nd book of Maccabees, chapter 15, verse 27 – "Fighting with their hands and praying to God in their hearts, they laid low at least thirty five thousand and were greatly gladdened by God's manifestation." With the firm conviction that God is with him to support and strengthen he moved forward.

Man, by his very nature, clings to the earth and earthly possessions. He finds it hard to raise his thoughts to heaven and divine things. Many keep God away from their lives provided they have every material comfort and convenience they seek. For them God may be a strangle reality though they too are the sons of God created by Him in His own image. In contrast to this situation and as a challenge to it, we see Bl. Chavara believing in the all sufficingness of God. "The Lord is my portion and cup" (Psl. 16:5) was the slogan and the guiding word of God in his life. As a seminarian he had to face a crisis that proved his metal. His father, mother and the only brother died and he was compelled by his relatives to go back home and take charge of the home affairs. At this juncture, we see Bl. Chavara on knees before the blessed sacrament with full trust in His providence, affirming his life – principle and entrusting the task to his sister. In our world, where values are turned topsy-turvey when we are not able to make out what is right and wrong, Bl. Chavara is a striking model of a man who stood for his principles at any cost. Like St. Paul, he realised the greatness and might of the person whom he relied on and his own sinfulness.

A very striking feature in the personality of Bl. Chavara is his sense of sin. When prophet Isiah stood before the majesty and glory of God, he realised that he was a sinful man. The same is true of St. Peter and other great saints. Similarly Chavara, who never lost his original grace, very often laments of his sinfulness.

"But alas! when I grew up, my fervour dimmed  
My infant pretty, I gently forsook  
I thought and spoke unseemly unholy words

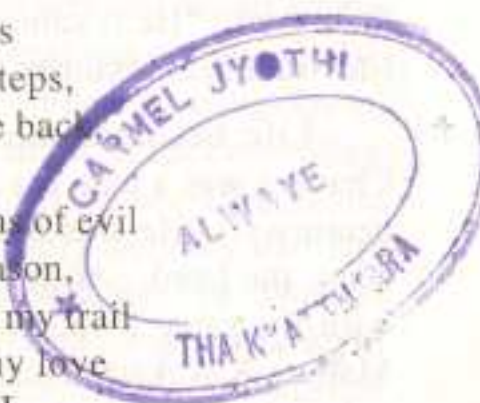


In headless speech, like a silly sot  
A giddy headed lout, woe to me  
Veinly a prodigal son, in those cursed days"

*(Compunction of the soul, Camto II line 25-32)*

Again, let us listen to the cry of his heart in Canto 7, lines 332 - 346

"I am your Father, I, your loving God,  
Yet utter shame I bend down my head  
And when despite all my intellect dull  
Goes a hunting base worldly passions  
You in sheer sympathy dog my foolsteps,  
Showing love and mercy you call me back  
O pity, I, a sinner, steel my ears  
And woefully persist in treading paths of evil  
Frequent ways of sin and dismal treason,  
You, like a father, patiently followed my trail  
Whispered unto my heart 'you are my love  
Mark ye, my son, a good Father am I  
And a mother both'."



This missing point in our world that leads to frustration and disappointment is this sense of sin and repentant heart. God's grace is poured out into a repentant soul in abundance and peace permeates such a soul. Like Judas people are troubled and overcome by a sense of guilt. Bl. Chavara exhorts the modern man to replace it sense of sin and repentance. When we look upto God even in utter sin and misery, His saving almighty hands are ever ready, stretched out to hold us and lift us up from the dungeon of sin.

Bl. Chavara is a man who created history. He was a contemplative in action. Drawing deeply from the cultural and religious traditions of India, he lived his cherished gift of christian faith in single minded commitment and ardent devotion to the Lord on the one hand, and in deep communion with and selfless service to his fellow human beings on the other. In his life and in that of his community, the good news of Jesus of Nazareth found a new and refreshing expression, spreading its splendour and fragrance far beyond the confines of his neighbourhood. When people are searching for tenth and inner freedom, Bl. Chavara invites us to lead them to 'The Tenth, the way and the Life'. "Blessed Chavara is an inspiration to posterity because he was able to brighten all his



deeds in this world by spiritual energy" (Prof. M.K. Sanu) Man, without God is zero. What we in our age lack; is the realisation of this truth; we depend on our own power, to build for ourselves, ignoring God's grace and spiritual energy. When spiritual energy infiltrates our actions it becomes all the more powerful and effective. Bl. Chavara did so. Hence "I am the horizon of history, this saintly man will shine forever as a golden star of fearless hope of eternal light" (Prof. M.K. Sanu). This star will show the way and the goal to those who go astray and those who are unaware of their goal. "He is saintly as a guru of integrity and perfection of life" said Sri. Sukumar Azhikode.

Life becomes meaningful when we live for others. Bl. Chavara was a man for others, not only for his own time, but for centuries. "He was a priest who dedicated himself to love and serve the Lord. At the same time, he committed himself totally with the same love, to love and serve humanity" wrote Bishop Mathew Kavukatt. This led him to be the pioneer of many spiritual, cultural, educational and social reforms. He is a luminary in the field of spirituality, education mass media etc. He stood as the champion for the cause of women, the downtrodden, the poor, dalits etc.

True spiritual life reflects itself creatively in human and material life Chavara was and continues to be a source of inspiration in educational cultural organisational and social arenas. His instinctive capacity for leadership derived inspiration from practically all these fields. The question of the leadership of the masses is engaging the attention of all people interested in the welfare and solidarity of the nation. The seeds that Bl. Chavara sowed in the above mentioned fields bear lasting fruits even now. Deep revolution, rather, reformation is the flame of spiritual experience. When Bl. Chavara stood for the uplift of women and the downtrodden, he was realising this deep revolution in our country. Until then, certain castes were considered to be 'untouchables' and he took pains to bring them to the forefront of society and proceeded to make them educated. Even after one and a half centuries, this problem is not yet completely solved at least in our attitudes. Bl. Chavara is a man who deserves appreciation for the insight, foresight and efforts he made to pinpoint such problems and draw the attention of the society towards it. The reforms he introduced in this field are very significant and



relevant. He was the first one to introduce and institute a house of charity for the orphans irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Today everyone pays homage to Mother Theresa for her charitable work. More than 150 years back, Bl. Chavara started a 'Dharmasala' for the uncared for, the aged, the sick, the wandering and the same charitable work is continued in some of the houses of C.M.I, C.M.C. Congregations founded by Bl. Chavara.

Every human being wants to be recognised and accepted as a person and he has the right to get it too. Ours is a world where man is reduced to a number or a crowd. Centuries ago we see Bl. Chavara respecting every human being. When he commenced the construction of the monastery at Mannanam, in the chronicles, he clearly mentions by name each and every person who contributed to it by money or work. He enlists not only persons like Bp. Mauralius Stabilini, Rev. Fr. Thomas Palackal, Rev. Fr. Thomas Porukara but also ordinary people like Mathan Periyappurathu, Eapen Kochupurackal, Kittan, Ojanarumethar etc. He worked with the people, helped them and sought their help. This is a time when Bishops, priests, religious and the laity have to work hand in hand and bring love, peace and harmony in the world and thus establish God's kingdom here. Bl. Chavara was a pioneer in this field and he will definitely intercede for us.

Bl. Chavara is a man who did not confine himself to the four walls of his monastery. His heart was as broad as the world. He forgot himself and his needs. Even neglecting his own health he worked for the welfare of others because he saw everyone as God's child just as God is his Father, God is 'the Father' of everyone and we belong to one family. This sense of brotherhood / sisterhood and belongingness made him work for the good of others. In this ego age where relationships are dwindling and where very often people consider the other as a stranger, let the spirit which led Bl. Chavara permeate over everyone so that fanaticism and unhealthy communalism can be abolished and friendliness and harmony be established.

The over dominion of materialism and greed for money and power make man blind to the presence of God in nature and man and interdependence and mutual love among human beings. The blooming flower, the rising sun, the cool breeze and everything in nature filled Chavara with divine experience. But, over and above all these, it is the throbbing human heart, burdened with the problems



of life, his weeping eyes that prompted him to raise his heart to God. He spent long hours continuously before the Lord in the blessed sacrament interceding for them and seeking ways to comfort and console them God revealed his ways to Chavara and thus comes the renovations, and reforms that he introduced. His contributions and innovations still having their positive, lasting and effective influence in the lives of the people are innumerable.

A very significant field to be mentioned is education. Becoming aware of the ignorance of the people that stands in the way of Progress, it was he who introduced schools in Kerala Church for the first time in 1846. This reform paved the way for the high literacy rate in Kerala and high standard of education. Bl. Chavara started schools to enable people to gain divine and material knowledge. We have to go a long way yet to gain real wisdom. The words of Sree R. Venkataraman, the former President of India are worth noting: "Father Chavara regarded education as a means of uplifting the poor..... He ensured that all parishes maintained schools as auxiliary to them. Going further, Fr. Chavara threatened to close down those parishes which failed to comply with his instructions regarding the maintaining of schools. It is remarkable that his schools were open to members of all communities who sought admission including Harijans - Christian missions worked among Adiwasis, the aboriginals and among Harijans in a practical implementation of christian ethics of service. Few people have exemplified this dimension of Indian Christianity as memorably as Fr. Chavara".

Another area which he has touched and made useful is the field of massmedia when press was very rare in Kerala, he went to Trivandrum and made a model of the printing press with a planter tree from the government press and this is the forerunner of all the rotary press, offset press etc. that we have today. He was aware of the tremendous change that can be brought about in social, cultural and spiritual realms with the help of the printing press and the vast widespread knowledge it can bring in.

We have progressed scientifically and technically. Yet we are surrounded with various types of problems everywhere. "The young and the old are lying on the ground in the streets. My young men and young women have fallen by the sword" (Lamentation 2:21). Is this not the scene today? "Arise, cry out in the night, at

the beginning of the watches! pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to Him for the lives of your children who faint for hunger at the head of every street" (Lamentation 2:19). The powerful intercession of Chavara and his heart-rending prayer for the suffering straying humanity is to be the model for modern man. When Bl. Chavara prayed, the whole of humanity was with him. The cry of the people of God to save humanity from the clutches of sin and evil will pierce heaven and showers of blessing will be poured down. This a responsibility of every human being especially the religious who are specifically committed to love God and man.

Bl. Chavara's greatest contribution is the founding of the first two indigenous congregations – C.M.I and C.M.C. in Kerala. They have spread far and wide and serve the whole world. Their presence and service in different parts of the world in various fields itself speaks of Chavara's relevance in our age. "As the founder of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, the first and largest clerical religious congregation of the Syro-Malabar Church, and if its sister congregation of the Mother of Carmel, Blessed Fr. Kuriakose was a significant contributor to the gradual process of canonical recognition of the ancient oriental church of South India, which has reached its culmination with the establishment of the Major Archbishopric of Ernakulam - Angamaly" (John Cardinal O' Connor, Archbishop of New York).

Let the life and vision of Bl. Chavara be our guiding light to make this world more worth living.





## History of the Roccas Schism

(Contd)

*Fr. Lucas Vithuvattical cmi*

### *Roccas arrives in Cochin*

In the month dedicated to our Lady which was celebrated in our monastery at Mannanam, news came that the Syrian bishop had landed in Cochin. It was heard that he was met at once by some people, including a few from Palai and Bharananganam and by a few priests on their way back to the parishes with the holy oil from Verapoly. Then rumours rose and news spread like floods.

### *Fr. Thondanatt writes to Fr. Prior*

Towards the end of the month of May when preparations were being made at Mannanam for the usual retreat, a man from Anakallu brought a letter from Fr. Antony Thondanatt: *"We have landed with bishop Mar Thoma who has been consecrated and sent by our Patriarch on the orders of the Holy Father Pope Pius IX. We are troubled by nothing but the anxiety to proceed only wisely. But the person who has come for our sake is being humiliated by some of us, and that by the priests of your order. Therefore please inform all about everything, and keep everyone from deviating from the truth. As my intention was to meet you personally, I put off writing and hence the delay occurred in intimating these facts to you. An early reply is expected"*.

From the bearer of the letter we came to know that the Syrian bishop has stayed with the Jacobite bishop Mar Murillos for some days following the arrival; that he stay now in a house rented out for him by those who had joined him; that letters had been sent to the churches both in the North and in the South, and to all the Malpans, and that many were coming and seeing him, and that some were joining him. I wanted to go and see him, as mere words would not otherwise convince the people, as they were already asking 'why I had not yet gone'. But I hesitated, for even if I went only to look into the matters, it would be spread that I felt convinced. At last I decided to go only after the retreat, and even then only with the permission of our archbishop.



### *The Prior's declaration against Roccas at the Retreat*

The retreat began. Among those who came for the retreat there were Fr. Jacob Athirampuzha, uncle of Fr. Alberthos Rector and Fr. Francis Kinyavally Athapally, Vicar at Kudamalur. During the intervals the talk among the priests was about Roccas. And it was going on even after the matters were clearly explained in the course of the preaching. So the Prior went out of his way to declare boldly *that he was ready to swear with his hand on the crucifix on the altar, that this bishop had come without any order from the Pope, and that anyone who submitted to him would fall under the excommunication announced by the Archbishop.* This convinced most of the listeners, because they knew that I would not have so strongly spoken unless it was true. But it did not convince Fr. Jacob Kochupurackal at all. On the other hand it hurt him as if it were an insult directed against him. 'Without seeing or hearing him how could Fr. Prior say this? You need not honour him. But, why should you insult him?' asked Fr. Jacob with indignation and grief. We wondered why the statement should give him such offence.

### *Fr. Jacob joins Roccas*

Though he said so, he did not show any displeasure outside, but was happy about others visiting Roccas. He somehow finished the retreat with or without confession. He was heard to remark that as so many were going, seeing and hearing Mar Thoma, he also would anyhow go and see. His nephew, the Rector, at once pleaded with him not to go, and he replied he would not. But, he was a little wavering in his loyalty to the Church. While departing, he asked the Prior for advice: "Should I not go? Everyone else is going, though you are not". The Prior answered that he said what he knew and felt to be true; each one however is free, according to each one's light. Dissatisfied with the reply, he left for Athirampuzha. We later heard that he, with our students Luka Illichira and Alencherry had joined Roccas forsaking his family and relatives and leading many members of his parish to spiritual destruction.

Next day a few of the youngsters, who, as already mentioned, had gone to Babel from here, and were now back with the bishop were brought here from Cochin by a boy of Kattakayathu from Kumarakom. It seemed that he was taking them around to show the places. They were wearing black cassocks with a belt at the waist



and had caps similar to those of the Arabs. They talked Syriac. I didn't go out to see them. They waited for some time. But they were warmly received by some of our inmates. From here they were taken to Athirampuzha, where they were welcomed and entertained by the priests.

### ***More supporters for Roccas***

In the meanwhile many came to see Mar Roccas, and several others were going over to his side. Among them were those from Elanji and Konthuruthy. Frs. Cherussery from Cherpunkal and Tharavattam from Anakallungal kissed his hand and pledged him submission. Fr. Kunnel, the man behind all these, now reached Athirampuzha to work. He wanted to get the support of influential people from Palai to mobilize the people.

He met at Palai some well-known people, like Thmman Vellapattu, Kizhakekara, Kaniarakath Kuruvilla etc. They thought it would be clever on their part if they could get Malpan Kattakkayam, and Muprayil Aipe of Palai involved in this, as they were very rich and influential among their students, through whom they plotted a plan. There was Malpan Karakunnath. Though sometimes he got his head off, there was a positive point in him that he knew Latin pretty well. Hence he should be brought. For this they sought a letter from Malpan Aipe. He was a simple minded man. He was indignant with the Archbishop, as His Grace did not want him to continue among the malignant parishioners. Instead he was asked to teach at Pulincunnu if he wanted to get his students ordained. He informed the clerics too that they won't be ordained if they continued to study under him. This being the situation he would easily fall a prey to the instigations of the dissident group. Understanding this Fr. Prior Himself and our Fr. Chandy<sup>33</sup>, the nephew of the Malpan, who had written to the Malpan several letters strengthening him not to join the dissident group. Besides, Fr. Chandy Illickal, the Vicar of Palai also tried to persuade him not to take sides with the dissidents. Nevertheless he gave his signature to the letters they had brought.

### ***Roccas' Faction at Palai***

The letter was at once taken to Malpan Karakunnath, who because he was not accustomed to appear in public, pleaded that he was not well enough to go to Palai in response to Malpan Iype's invitation. Then a litter was brought. They pleaded with him and persuaded him



respectfully to get into it. He was carried to Palai church in a solemn procession along the streets with great cheers. There he was received by Malpan Iype. Now it was planned to take the Malpan through the nearby parishes, all the way to Cochin, to meet Roccas. In spite of Fr. Illimoottil's objections, the procession continued with the cooperation of Fr. Kurishumoottil of Lalam church and some junior priests and parishioners of Palai, Lalam and Bharananganam.

### ***Malpans of Palai proceed to Cochin***

The procession reached Cherpunkal and as they entered the church, they came upon Fr. Arackal Kuncheria and some younger priests coming along the street. It was taken as an auspicious sign and they were asked to join. Fr. Arackal asked them to go to Mannanam and promised to join them there. But Fr. Cherussery and deacon Vattamattathil went over at once with some people. They reached Punnathura. But the people there would only walk behind them, and so they passed through. The Malpans, especially the Malpan of Palai insisted on going to Mannanam. For the sake of convenience, Vellapattu put them and their party, including Fr. Kurisummoottil in two country boats in the afternoon. By dawn they found themselves at the church of Kottayam. It was explained that the boat-men had lost their way and the Malpans were told that they could land at Mannanam on the way back.

### ***Parayil Tharakan joins the Roccas' Faction***

They proceeded to Thaikkattussery and there asked for Avira Parayil Tharakan<sup>34</sup> to come with them. He, being a friend of the Archbishop, had promised through Fr. Pittapillil vicar of Kumbalam, to build at his own expense the Carmel monastery. But after having donated up to Rs. 600, he said he had not promised to meet the whole expense, but was ready to donate as much as he could. If he joined them now, he would alienate the Archbishop; but, if he did not, he would be prevailed upon to donate more. So he said he was not coming and would go later, after their return, if they felt convinced that the Syrian bishop had come with the proper credentials. But, they stayed here for three days saying that they would go forward only if he also came with them, for they knew that he would bear all the expenses and appease the Government if he joined with them. They put a crown on his head saying that there was no one like him in their group. And if he refused to join, they all would turn back. As they said this and as they did not leave, he agreed to go with them.



### *The Malpans from Palai before Roccas*

On reaching Cochin, they were shown a letter from the Patriarch that he was consecrating a bishop on the authority given by the Pope Pius IX, and the letters from the bishops who took part in the consecration (This is what I heard, but not what I saw). Malpan Karakunnath read the letters and said that they were enough. And all of them kissed his hands and then decided to leave. But, Roccas said he would be able to go with them only after receiving the reply from the Resident. So they visited Gnarakal, where the vicar was Fr. Itticheria Valiaveetil of Eerattupetta, a renowned and revered priest and a relation of Parayil. He received them well. They persuaded him and his people to join Roccas. They thought that once Gnarakal came over, Verapoly, Puthenpally etc. would soon follow. The Vicar, like Ahithophel the Galionite who deserted David to join Absalom<sup>35</sup>, decided to accompany them with his councillors to Cochin.

### *The Malpans decide upon future course after consultation*

All the way they consulted together and on reaching Cochin invited Roccas to go with them to Thaikkattussery. Bishop Kurillos<sup>36</sup> who was present, counselled them not to take Roccas with them unless they could assure him that they would not later desert him and thus humiliate and break with him. He expressed his willingness to look after Roccas until he decided to leave. He also added a false remark that the bishop of Verapoly had joined them. Parayil Avira Tharakan replied that he was capable and willing to take care of Roccas even if all the other left him.

### *Roccas proceeds to Thaikkattussery*

Upon this understanding Roccas Mar Thoma got into a boat with his secretary, the Malpans and those who had come with him from Babel. In one boat Fr. John Kudilungal with his parishioners and in another boat Parayil Tharkan and the rest got in after his nephew Avira junior had gone in advance to Thaikkattussery. The boat reached Konthuruthy, and as it was late, the Bishop and his retinue spent the night there. Next day they set out to Thaikkattussery.

### *Roccas group plans to take Mannanam for the official residence*

It was rumoured that after bringing Roccas to Thaikkattussery, his supporters were planning to take him to Mannanam for his residence. They were arguing that Mannanam was his seat by right,



because it had been built with the funds from all the Syrian churches. Now that the bishop proper to the Malankara Church was come, Mannanam should be his official residence.

Very Rev. Fr. Marceline who reached Alleppey on his way to Quilon received an urgent letter from the Archbishop of Verapoly, to be communicated urgently to the Prior at Mannanam. Accordingly we received the communication from Fr. Marceline which reads: "*It is heard that once the bishop starts from Cochin escorted by Parayil Tharakan and others, they intend to come directly to Mannanam and to occupy the monastery by force if needed. We do not know what all things are going to happen. Therefore without delay approach the Taluk office and file a complaint at the Magistrate's office etc*". Though we were a little upset by this communication, we had the confidence in the protection of St. Joseph and we did not approach any office nor filed any complaint.

### ***Malpans of Palai come to Mannanam.***

Next day when we were in the church at 3.00 p.m. for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the Prior was told that some distinguished visitors, the Malpan of Palai Fr. Kurisummoottil, Vicar of the old church at Lalam and two others were at the seminary. We received them, but led them not to the monastery, but to the Nungalow occupied by Vicar Fr. Kalluthara. The Prior wanted to know what game they were playing. They asserted that these things would not have happened if the old man, the Very Rev. Francis had been the Archbishop<sup>37</sup>, and these were all their making. At this our fears subsided. They further asserted that Fr. Antony<sup>38</sup> had assured them that there would be no orders from Rome against him and his group. The Prior asked them how this could be taken as the last word and whether they had in their hands any proof of his authority strong enough to demand our submission. They replied that there was enough: the Patriarch's letter and the letters of a few bishops certifying the consecration. The prior enquired if they had with them the copies of those letters and how exactly they were worded. The Malpan of Palai answered that copying these lengthy letters was not easy, nor could he remember the exact wording. He revealed that it was not he, but Malpan Karakunnath who had read the whole and assured them that it was enough. He even asked: Is not the new bishop, after all, one of ours? They felt that it was not proper to leave him among the strangers in Cochin and so we brought him to Thaikattussery. Now they were leaving the rest



to the Prior and his men to take matters further. He also showed us the precious gifts they had been given - an abridged text book of Theology printed by the Propaganda. The Prior suggested that they all could write to Rome and wait for an answer. The Malpan agreed to that. But Kurisummoodan insisted that we should write to the Patriarch, but not to Rome. The reply puzzle us.

### ***The Malpans not allowed to say Mass at Mannanam***

We also felt unhappy thinking of the problems that would arise next morning, when these guest-priests would come to say Mass. Forbidding them at that time would be a great offence. They may even say Mass in defiance. So we thought it would be better to make matters clear now itself. Hence immediately after the meditation, at 6.00 p.m. the Prior passed on to him a note written on a small piece of paper: *As you have come after kissing the hand of bishop Thoma (Roccas), we are afraid that we will be indited by the Archbishop if we let you say Mass here. On the other hand our refusal will be humiliating to you. So it would be better for both of us if you go away quite early tomorrow without showing your intention to say Mass here*". The Malpans read it and next morning they left very early.

### ***Letters from Roccas to the Prior***

Fr. Prior was asked by persons from Athirampuzha, Kudamalur etc. why he, having announced in advance that an unauthorized Syrian bishop was coming, now sat quiet without meeting him and finding out whether he had the authority he was claiming for himself. Seeing that the only way to solve this problem was to meet him, the Prior set out for Verapoly to get the permission of the Archbishop. On the way at the Vechoor-church-jetty, he was met by deacons Vattamattom of Cherpungal and Mekkattilkunnel of Kudamalur, who delivered to him a letter: *Greetings from Mar Thoma, the Vicar of Chaldaean Syrians in Malabar to our beloved son Malpan Kuriakose, Prior at Mannanam: As you desired, I reached Cochin on 9th May, and had been going about among our brethren in Malabar. After getting Resident's permission I set out to see you accompanied by people from several parishes. Now I am staying at Thaikattussery eagerly looking forward to meet you in person and getting your suggestions on how to proceed. Hope you will come as soon as you receive this letter. Wish you peace in the Lord*".



### ***Prior instructed by Archbishop to accept Roccas, if he had authority***

I read this signed and sealed letter written in Syriac and with this I reached Verapoly. I met the Archbishop and told him everything. The Archbishop replied that he was permitting not only me, but every vicar and Malpan from the North and the South to go and see him. His Grace even expressed his willingness to allow us to submit to him if we found that he had orders from the Holy See or the Propaganda authorizing him to rule over us.

### ***The Prior convenes an assembly at Pallipuram.***

I decided to invite the Malpans of the North: Malpan of Edakulam and Malpan Mathai Panikulangara, all the students of Malpan Thomas Palackal and all the students of Malpan Abraham Kuthiathottil Thachil, who unlike Malpan Kattakayam, had not joined bishop Pandari and now Roccas and the Vicars of the churches of the North and the South and the prominent persons, like Aranattukara Tharakan to gather in the church at Pallipuram, where Malpan Abraham had resided and taught for long. The invitation, stating that the purpose of the gathering was to go together to Thaikattussery to meet the newly arrived Syrian bishop and to see his credentials for which there was the permission of the Archbishop, was sent without delay. All the invitations to the North were sent together through a messenger to Fr. Geevarghese Thopil, vicar of our monastery at Elthuruth in Aranattukara to be distributed quickly to the addressees. But as times had changed and the people concerned were different, things did not workout as we planned.

### ***More people and Priests go to see bishop Roccas***

For, in the meantime several priests, persons and groups had gone separately to Thaikattussery. Even our Fr. Chandy set out with Tharakan. The latter had to leave on the way because he had to meet the Maharaj and the Dewan at Cochin in this context. Among them were Fr. Thayil from Palai, vicar at Thripunithura, the vicars of Kadanatt and Kaniavally, Fr. Pittapilly, vicar at Kumbalam and the vicars of Muttom and Vaikom. The Vicar and some people from Alleppey and some people from the parish of Muttuchira, Kaduthuruthy, Athirampuzha, Vadayar and Chempu proceeding to Thaikattussery. They met and talked with Malpan Karakunnath who was returning from Roccas. The Malpan confirmed about Roccas. Then they hur



ried on before the Prior could reach back from Verapoly and dissuade them. But Fr. Paulose from Palliparampil of Muttuchira, though he had agreed to go with Malpan Karakunnath and Nilapana, had some after-thoughts and stayed back to come over to us.

### *Those from the North did not turn up. Why?*

In response to my invitation only a few turned up from the North. These are the rumours I heard about how and why this happened, and so I cannot guarantee for the truth. Fr. Abraham Pallath of Anakallu, vicar of Aranattukara and Fr. Itticheria Valiaveetil of Aruvithura and the vicar of Gnarakal were held in high esteem by the archbishop. But Fr. Itticheria had warmly received the Malpans at his church when they had come there from Cochin after being convinced of the authenticity of bishop Thoma Roccas. He had accompanied them back to Cochin. Felt convinced, he communicated his conviction to the vicar of Aranattukara, who too consequently got converted because the people of the North knew these vicars to be capable in discerning and had them trustworthy. Many priests and laymen of prominence, including Tharakan were persuaded to set out to see Roccas. All the time these vicars managed to appear as still attached to Verapoly. Our Fr. Chandy came to Verapoly with this news. When he returned to Aranattukara the Prior's invitation for meeting Roccas together had already reached there. Tharakan and a few others had second thoughts. They suggested to the vicar and those with him to wait, attend the meeting at Pallipuram and then decide to go or not. But Fr. Abraham and some people at Aranattukara stuck to their earlier decision saying that they were not prepared to dance to Tharakan's tunes. They set out at once to Thaikattussery and were joined by priests, including Malpan Mathai and people of Pazhayur. Fr. Pallissery of Ollur who knew a little Portuguese and who was self-willed and self-styled, had been restrained by the Archbishop to stay and say Mass only at Aranattukara monastery. Feeling that this was then the time to break his shackles, hurried to Verapoly. He proposed to meet the prior, and if he got the permission from the Archbishop he too would go to Thaikattussery. He voiced that if bishop Roccas had the authorization from the Pope, let him show it. Saying thus he approached the Archbishop, requested and got the restriction on him withdrawn. Those from the North, as a whole, thus rejected the invitation.

### *Assembly at Pallipuram*

However the Prior, a few members of the monastery and the priests mentioned above assembled at Pallipuram. Suspecting that by the influ-



ence of Parayil, the police may be set against them, the Prior sent a letter to Antony Thondanatt, secretary to bishop Thoma: *"Yourself and also bishop Thoma had written to us that Bishop Mar Thoma and you all had reached here. But, at that time we had the monthly devotion of our Mother and also the annual retreat of priests in our monastery and so we were not able to respond to your letter immediately. But now we find ourselves free and having sought the permission of our Archbishop we are come to Pallipuram. Please let us know when and at what time it would be convenient to meet the bishop. Besides, if you have the copies of the letters of authorization of the bishop, please send them too through the messenger"*.

### ***Reply of Fr. Antony Thondanatt to the letter of the Prior***

A reply was received, which reads: *"The bishop is ready to meet you at any time you choose. Copies of the letters can be seen at the time you come. So he does not feel any need for sending them now. The test has come too late. For if it is found that he is authorized, then your earlier presumption to the contrary would fall flat. It is the duty of the elders to reprove promptly the younger ones when they are found to go astray. If they omit it, what would happen is known from the fate that befell Elley and his house. More on meeting"*. (Fr. Antony Thondanatt)

### ***Fr. Prior and his group set out for Thaikkattussery***

Now that this reply was with us and could be shown to the police, we dared to go. So the next day, after saying Mass we started for Thaikkattussery. On the way we heard that he had complained to the police that we are intending to attack and that as soon as we approached the church we would be arrested, removed and detained. So we avoided the church and went direct to Ayyanatt the house of Avira Parayil.

### ***Attempt to arrest the Prior***

In the meantime, the Roccas group, thinking that we were going to the church, put guards at the door of the church and the bishop's room and did not allow anyone to enter; and had sent for the government officials. The village officer was already there. Several laymen and priests, like Pallissery and Mani Kaniyarakath, who all till yesterday were on our side, went over and stood with them suspecting our intentions and frowning at us, as if we were their enemies who had come to humiliate and hurt them.



### *Fr. Prior and his group at the house of Parayil*

Avira Parayil came out as if he were doing an unwilling favour, because we were now in his house. The Prior took him aside and sitting together apart from the others and asked him how he got convinced of the bishop's authenticity so as to join him. His reply was that the Malpans were convinced that he had come after being authorised by the Holy Church and thinking that we all would be only happy about it if he had joined. Avira Parayil did not also have any axe to grind.

Then the Prior explained to him at length how it had developed. The Prior showed him: 1) The letters to Fr. Prior sent by Antony from Mossul in Baghdad; 2) Letters to Rome from the authority representing the faithful in Mossul; 3) Letter to the Patriarch from Rome summoning him, after Rome had received a letter from the Apostolic delegate in Mesopotamia reporting this bishop's consecration by the Patriarch; 4) Letter from our archbishop, received from the Perfect of the Propaganda, Cardinal Barnabo about this.

Seeing and hearing all these he was a bit shaken. I proceeded to suggest that all of us, on both sides, should together sign and send a letter, a provisional draft of which I read out to him, to Rome and wait for three months for a reply and act according to the reply. He agreed and urged me to go alone and meet the bishop.

### *Fr. Prior willing to kiss Roccas' had or even foot, but not the ring*

I asked him to get the bishop's permission after telling him that I would see him within closed doors, because I would not kiss his ring, though I was ready to kiss his hand or even foot. But others should never see that I did not, and think the less of him. Let people take it in their own way. Avira did explain all these to Roccas and if he agree, I would go and meet him. He agreed, as also his nephew Avira junior. Then I also made it clear that I came here less out of eagerness to look into bishop's credentials and more out of affection to Avira's family. His family had been of great help to us in the past. We expect this help in future also. Seeing it slip may lead so many others into spiritual perdition. My main concern was that his family and many others should not be led astray, rather than my attachment to Roccas and Fr. Antony Tondanatt.

*Bl. Chavara finishes his narration under the tile "Certain Episodes of the past" with the above paragraph. But we can complete the history of the Roccas schism in his own words, from the first volume of Bl. Chavara's chronicles.*

*(to be continued)*

## Maxims of Blessed Chavara

1. A good Christian family is likened to heaven above.
2. A family is constituted by persons related by blood and united in mutual love giving due respect and obedience to parents and elders, fostering devotion to God and living in peace with fellowmen, making every effort according to each one's particular state of life, to attain eternal salvation.
3. Amidst the tribulations and sorrows of this world, it is most consoling to live in a family in which there is peace and order founded on charity.
4. May you live in mutual charity and love.
5. Forget and forgive mutually the defects and shortcomings of others.
6. Our Lord himself has said that a kingdom where there is discord among the citizens will not survive; so also a quarrelsome family will surely perish.
7. If you wish that others forgive your defects, should you not forgive the evils done to you by others?
8. Civil suits destroy families.
9. Don't borrow money unless for some particular essential needs.
10. If your parents have left any obligations of restitution, or have enjoined any obligation of offering holy Mass, fulfil them with diligence and devotion.
11. If one makes a show of his glories and achievements, he/she belittles himself.
12. If anyone makes a show of his riches, he will soon become a beggar.
13. In festivities and celebrations spend according to the prevalent customs and according to your capacity.
14. The glowing light coming from a heap of straw in fire will soon be extinguished; a tiny light coming from a small lamp is much better.
15. Dear brothers, had you not lighted the lamp during daytime, you could have lit it during night.



16. Don't try to establish relations which are indisciplined and which are not founded on fear of God.
17. Don't receive in your family all kind of people, but only those who are polite and who live in fear of God.
18. Here is a proverb: Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you, who you are.
19. Wealth of the family consists not on the quantity of properties, but on the quality of properties.
20. To remain idle without doing any work is not the habit of honourable people.
21. Idleness is the mother of all vices and would induce one to the habit of drinking.
22. Unjust merchants have never attained an honourable status in life.
23. Consumption of alcoholic drinks is something most odious before the world and very sinful before the Lord.
24. What you have achieved by crooked means or by theft will soon melt away like snow
25. The day in which you have not done good to your fellowmen will not be recorded in your book of life.
26. Desire that others love you, and not that they fear you.
27. Beggars should not leave your door empty-handed.
28. Stinginess and extravagance, both are equally sinful.
29. The wealth of a stingy man will be eaten away by worms; and the wealth of an extravagant will disappear like smoke.
30. Select one carefully from a thousand. He/She who does not love God will neither love you.
31. Do not allow a stolen article to be kept in your house even for a moment.
32. Don't deny just wage to the labourer, not delay the wage due to the labourer, because it is a sin before the Lord.
33. Don't humiliate a poor man, nor create difficulties to him, because if God happens to see their tears, surely he will question you.
34. Take special care to keep modesty while you sit, or walk or lie down.

35. Abandon yourself to the holy will of God in all your trials and difficulties and in your sickness.
36. If one maintains patience only when he/she is happy he/she is a feeble person.
37. The treasures you can acquire and hand over to your children are good spiritual books that strengthen devotion to God, and good philosophical books which nourish your thinking.
38. To keep bad books in your house is like fire that you hide beneath a heap of straw.
39. Your children are big treasures that the good God has entrusted to you.
40. If it happens that even one of your children perish due to your negligence, you are engendering your own salvation.
41. Parents should often offer their children to God, and commit them to the care of Jesus, Mary and Joseph of the holy family and pray quite often for them.
42. Thinking that children do not understand do not utter un-decent words, nor speak ill of others before children.
43. If you correct children using abusive words it will not make them better, instead when they become of age, they will treat their children the same way.
44. Teach the children to be specially devoted to our Blessed Mother.
45. Let the mother teach children to respect and honour the father by her exemplary behaviour; the same way the father also.
46. If the parents do not love and respect each other, their children will neither love nor respect them.
47. When the children come of age, give them complete freedom to choose their state of life.
48. Dear children, by the law of God itself, you are obliged to obey your parents and not to wound their feelings. Remember therefore, that those who violate the 4th divine commandment, will be punished by the good God in this world itself.
49. God does not dwell in the hearts loaded by sin.
50. Meditation is a conversation with God, just as friends communicate to each other.



## Favours received

P.K. Surendran writes from Elanji on 1-5-1999

I am by religion a Hindu. My name is Surendran. In July 1998 I fell down from a palm tree. Three vertebrae were broken and below the vertebrae there was infection. Both the legs had become motionless. I was operated at the Kottayam medical college. The infection below the vertebrae inflamed emitting pus. For medication I was advised by Dr. P.S. John to go to the Government hospital at Elanji. I was also told that the wound below the vertebrae would be healed only if blood comes to the wound. While I was thus on bed at the Government hospital Sr. Tharsila cmc, who had been my teacher met me and gave me a Novena leaflet of Bl. Chavara. She advised me to say the prayers of the Novena 9 times a day, for 9 days.

The Novena prayer leaflet was given me on October 21. I began to say the prayers from that day. The next day I found the result. Blood began to flow from the wound. The right leg showed signs of motion up to the knees and I began to feel severe pain. I said the prayers for nine days. On the 10th day I went to the medical college. The doctor put plaster over the wound and advised me to visit him after a week. When I met the doctor after a week, he took off the plaster and found the wound being healed. He put the plaster again, and said that the wound was almost healed. I am happy now. I pray that Blessed Chavara be declared Saint as early as possible.

P.K. Surendran (sd)

V.V. Mathai, Veluthedathuparambil writes from Kanjirathanam on 15-5-1999

Saibin Mathew is my eldest son. At birth he was found a little abnormal. The medical doctors, after examining the child declared that the child would not walk. Then we prayed to Bl. Chavara and promised to give his photo to the Chavara Museum in gratitude. We also participated in the Novena conducted at Mannanam. When he was two years old he began to walk normally. We are grateful to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara for this singular favour.

Sabin Mathew is my second son. At birth he had no deformity at all at the age 3½ years suddenly he became paralytic. The doctors of the Medical College, after examining the child said that the child would

not get up and walk normally. We had great confidence in the intercession of Bl. Chavara. We participated in the Novena for nine consecutive Saturdays. We also promised to place his photo at the Chavara Museum. The boy now walks normally and is found very smart.

We are very thankful to Bl. Chavara for the great favour he has done to our family.

V.V. Mathai (sd)  
Velluthedathuparambil  
Kanjirathanam

Br. Shinto Mulanjananiyil, writes from Thodupuzha on 12-6-1999

I am a seminarist in the third year. At the beginning of the third year I had an inflammation in the intestines. I consulted a nearby hospital. They were not able to diagnose the disease. Suspecting that it was intestinal piles the doctors also operated on me twice. But, after the operation my disease worsened. So I went to the Devamatha hospital at Koothattukulam. They diagnosed the disease and also said that it could become cancerous. Hearing this I participated in the Novena to Blessed Chavara. As a result I go completely cured. Besides at that I was a student, P.D.C. second year. Because of my disease I was not able to study till the end of November. Hence I prayed the intercession of Bl. Chavara and studied during the months that followed. I not only passed in the final public exam, but also secured first class in the public examination.

I am thankful to God, and to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, for the great favour he has obtained for me.

Bro. Shinto Mulanjananiyil (sd)  
Thodupuzha

Miss Ligi writes from Anamchery on 20-1-1999

On both sides of my neck I had an inflammation each, bulging out like a small ball. I went to the Medical college hospital, Kottayam. After examining, the doctors said that these could not be operated, because by operation the blood vessels and the nerves that to the brain be damaged. Hearing this I was very much disturbed. With great confidence I prayed to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and also participated with much devotion in the Novena publicly conducted in the church, on every Saturday.



I was very much surprised to see after the second week of the Novena, that the inflammations on both sides of the neck completely disappeared without leaving a mark. I am fully convinced that it was through the intercession of Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara that these inflammations disappeared.

I am very thankful to God and to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara for this great miraculous favour.

Ligimol John  
Pandarapalliyil  
Amalagiri

Mrs. Munjamma Shaji writes from Abudhabi

I am writing this letter from Abudhabi. Consequent to the prayer we made to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the disease of my father was miraculously cured.

One day the blood pressure of my father considerably increased and he went into coma. Immediately he was admitted at the medical mission hospital, Kolenchery, in the I.C.U. ward. After examining, the doctors said that three blood vessels that went the brain (nerves) had been affected, and advised us to pray God fervently for the cure. Promising we would declare this publicly during the Novena at Mannanam through a letter, we began to say the Novena to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara. We all in the family joined in the prayer. On the 18th day he was discharged. The doctors said that it was only through the special grace of God that he was cured. Now he walks around in the house.

We are fully convinced that it was through the intercession of Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara that my father was cured.

We are thankful to God and to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara for the miraculous favour we have obtained through the intercession of Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara.

Kunjumol Shaji, Abudhabi.

Jolly Joy Kolattukudi, writes from Manjapra on 21-11-2000

Over the ovary I had a tumourous growth. In January

2000 I underwent an operation in the hospital. The doctors understanding that it was a malignant tumour, directed me to the regional Cancer Centre, Trivandrum for chemotherapy. Though the treatment was going on normally, even in the hospital I was making the Novena prayer to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Though I had several complaints in the course of the treatment, with great confidence in the intercession of Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, myself and others also were praying for me.

After the chemotherapy, I was regularly being examined by the doctors. On November 1, 2000, when I was examined the doctors said that I was completely normal.

I am fully convinced that I got the complete cure of cancer through the intercession of Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara.

I am very thankful to God and to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara for the great miraculous favour I obtained through the intercession of Bl. Chavara.

Jolly Kolattukudy  
Manjapra

Mrs. Grace George Erumkoottil writes from Ettumanoor on 18-2-2000

Five months ago I felt great pain in the abdomen. Immediately I went to the medical college hospital, Kottayam. The surgeon referred me to the gynaecologist. After examining, the doctor said that it should be scanned and that I should show the result immediately to the casualty department and there might be the need of an operation. As the O.P. time was coming to an end, I was greatly upset especially because my husband was away, and I had gone to the hospital with the help of a neighbour. When I came home and narrated all these, they too were upset. They thought of informing the husband immediately. But I intervened, saying that next wee I would go the Caritas hospital and after test there, we could inform the husband. Next day I went to the Caritas hospital. There too I was told that it should be scanned. Then itself I took the decision that the scanning could be done after the Novena of nine Saturdays at the tomb of Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara at Mannanam.



Immediately I prayed to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and began to participate in the Novena. After the 4th week of the Novena, in the church itself I felt that the pain in the abdomen ceased. I completed the Novena. The pain has completely disappeared and I feel quite normal.

I am very confident that I got a miraculous cure through the intercession of Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara.

I am thankful to God and to Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara for the great miraculous favour obtained through his intercession.

Mrs. Grace George Erumkoottil  
Ettumanoor, Kottayam

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