

SEND IN YOUR
NEWS
TO

THE EDITOR
THE MORNING STAR
NO. 39, FUSSELS LANE,
COLOMBO-06,
SRI LANKA.

THE MORNING STAR

Registered as a News Paper at the General Post Office, Sri Lanka

Established 1841 A Christian weekly Published Every Friday

Vol. 1 - Jaffna - Friday 9TH MARCH 2001 No. 4

Righteousness Exalteth A Nation But Sin is a Reproach to any people.

MORNING STAR RATES:
Annual Subscription Foreign \$ 10.00
Life Subscription Foreign \$100.00
Annual Subscription Local Rs. 100.00
Life Subscription Local Rs. 1000.00

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The Predicament of Young Women in North and East"

Several young women live in the district are unable to come to a decision whether they are widows or not as they do not know whether their missing husbands are dead or alive," said Mr. G.Kirushnamoorthy the Chief Secretary of the North-East Provincial, while addressing a public meeting organized by the Provincial Ministry of Women Affairs at the Trincomalee Town Hall on Thursday, March 08, 2001 in connection with the International Women's Day. Mr. S.Amirthalingam, Provincial Ministry Secretary said that the number of widows in the district increases because of the war. It is said that over four thousand women in Trincomalee have become widows in some parts of the district due to the ongoing war. This year's observance of International Women's Day brought out in various ways the aspects of the suffering of women and the hardships they undergo and their struggle for empowerment. Through out the country people could witness to a large number of women participating and performing street plays, dance, art exhibition. The International Women's day coordinating committee in Vavuniya organised a march through Vavuniya with the slogan "let us go, let us go in freedom". Hundreds of school children in Vavuniya town also joined the procession. The oppression of women was depicted by Tamil theatre activists.

54TH DIOCESAN COUNCIL, VADDUKODDAI [March 02-04] BISHOP'S CHARGE

Sisters & Brothers in Christ, Greetings!

I welcome you all most heartily for the fifty-fourth Council Sessions of our Diocese. When we met last year in the month of March on the same dates. At that time the offensive in East Jaffna had not started. Even though we felt that we were sitting on a volcano, members of the clergy and the delegates from many parts of the Island including Vanni, Batticaloa and Nuwara Eliya were with us. Much has happened since March 2000. The outbreak of the hostilities during the third week of March 2000 brought untold misery and suffering to our people. Four of our Church buildings in East Jaffna were badly damaged. The members had left their houses and moved to places in Vadamardchy and Valgamam. Many of them have lost all their belongings. We were able to find houses for some of them and with the help of international organizations and the Synod of the C.S.I., we were able to do some rehabilitation work. But the trauma and mental agony they underwent in parting with their ancestral homes, cattle, poultry and paddy fields do still torment them.

Nobody knows what lies ahead. It may be God's wish that a solution is found to the ethnic problem of Sri Lanka and the people are enabled to go and live in their own houses.

"But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,
and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of host
hath spoken it" (Micah 4 : 4)

EXODUS CONTINUES

The matter of great concern for the Church in the North is the exodus of people from the Peninsula. After the offensive in March 2000, thousands of people abandoned their houses and moved to Colombo. The Northeast has become so inconvenient, risky and dangerous area to live. Poor medical facilities, transport difficulties and night curfew have made people leave their country of their birth. This has affected the Church and its institutions very badly. We have quite a number of talented and skilled people living in Colombo. But they are reluctant to come and serve in Jaffna. One or two persons who were living in foreign countries dared to be different and came back to Jaffna. Unless some of these people living in Colombo make the brave decision to come and serve our land, we will continue to face many problems. No doubt large number of poor people are coming into the fellowship of the Christian Church. In the birth narrative of Jesus we read that the wise men and the shepherds went to see the infant Jesus. The Church needs both the wise men and the Shepherds. Till our new members get the necessary training and leadership qualities, the few families - the faithful remnants have to work hard - putting their trust in the infinite wisdom and mercy of our Lord.

(Contd' on page 04)

Price of Eggs goes up

It is reported that there has been a sudden increase of Rs.3/- in the price of eggs in Jaffna. Eggs are now being sold at Rs.12/= per egg.

Curfew relaxed

Curfew in Jaffna Peninsula was lifted on Wednesday the 21st February to allow the Hindu devotees to worship in the temples and keep vigil throughout the night. The night was marked with many dramas, Katha Pirasangams, discourses,

bajans and poojas. Some devotees were able to go to the temples in Karainagar Keerimalai.

Person under custody escapes

One of the ten persons arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and brought from Colombo escaped from the Jaffna Bus Stand on the 22nd February after assaulting a jailer who gave him permission to attend a call of nature. The other nine persons had been handed over to the Officer-in-Charge of the Jaffna Prisons.

CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION & SOCIETY [CISRS]

Dr. Daya Somasundaram Professor in Psychiatry at the University of Jaffna spoke on the "Social Effects of the War Situation" at a seminar held at the Seminary Hall, Maruthanamadam on Saturday the 17th February 2001. It was presided over by the Rev. A.A. Paul, the Chairman of the CISRS. Many medical students of the University and members of the clergy were among the large number that participated.

WINS BRONZE MEDAL

We are happy to record that Miss. N.C. Rajitha Kantharatnam of Colombo Church of the CSI has won the Bronze Medal at the "Address To The Jury" contest on Krishanthi Kumarasamy Rape and Murder Case, held at the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo.

Rajitha is reading for her L L B Degree and is presently in her third year (English Medium) at the University. She has also won Gold Medals in Oratory Contests conducted by the Lions and Rotary Clubs. Rajitha is the daughter of late Mr. A.S. Kantharatnam and Mrs. Rajini Kantharatnam. She is an Old Girl of Uduvil Girls' College.

RESOLUTION ON GUJARAT

The 54th Council of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India which met at Vaddukoddai on March 01-03, 2001, resolved to express its deepest sympathy to the people of Gujarat who had undergone much hardship and agony because of the earthquake on the 26th January 2001. As a token of its solidarity with the suffering people of Gujarat it would send One Hundred Thousand Indian Rupees to the Synod for Gujarat Relief Fund.

Hand Grenade with household goods

A hand grenade was found inside a kettle among the things an internally displaced person brought from Chavakachcheri. It was fortunate that it was detected at the right time before it exploded. The police took away the grenade when they were informed.

Winslow Diary in Tamil

The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion & Society, Maruthanamadam with the support of the Solidarity Fund has published the Tamil translation (Part I) of the book "Memoir of Mrs. Harriet Wordsworth Winslow combining a sketch of the Ceylon Mission," translated by the Rev. D.R. Ampalavanar, Dean of Students, Christian Theological Seminary. It is priced at Rs.200/= per copy.

To women:
You and I, being
women,
we have this tremendous thing in us,
understanding love.
I see that so beautifully
in our people, in our poor women,
who day after day, meet suffering,
accept suffering for the
sake of their children.
I have seen mothers going
without so many things
even resorting to begging,
so that the children may have
what they need.

Mother Teresa

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EDITORIAL

Cultivating the Culture of Peace:

Overcoming Violence June 04, 2001 was a remarkable day in history when the World Council of Churches [WCC] launched the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace [2001-2010] in Berlin. It was the first Ecumenical gathering in Berlin since unification of Germany. Decade to Overcome Violence, DOV as it is called, is not a programme of the WCC, rather it is the mandate for all churches in the world to join together to overcome violence in this decade. Hence, it is drawn up as a focus of ecumenical attention and common action in this decade. It is of pertinence to note that this launch took place in conjunction with the United Nations who proclaimed the years 2001-2010 "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World." Asia Sunday-2001 will focus on "Cultivating the Culture of Peace: Overcoming Violence." Violence pervades human lives, communities, the world, and the whole created order. Twentieth century has borne witness to two world wars and the rise to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The latter still threaten global annihilation. It has also experienced the wars of aggression and decades of colonialism. There were acts of genocide and the persistent assertion of racial and ethnic domination that led to new forms of discrimination and oppression within and between societies. The twentieth century also witnessed to a new proliferation of local and regional wars within and between nations that unleashed indiscriminate weapons of ever expanding destructive impact on civilian populations. Overcoming Violence in Asia is an important task. Specific areas can be identified and priorities set for the future involvement. The church has to clearly understand the nature of violence that rips human community apart, violence against women and children; violence against the poor; violence against the nature and environment, violence against ethnic and religious minorities. The list goes on. What is the way possible to overcome violence? It comes to my mind a book I read some ten years ago, "Violence, Non-Violence, Jesus' Third Way" by Walter Winks. Jesus was able to see the root cause of violence in the society and that he met with a violent death. It is easy to talk about non-violence. We should go beyond that perception to talk about "anti-violence." This was Jesus' third way to tackle violence. Don Helder Camera, the Archbishop of Recife, Brazil who passed away last year spoke of the "Spiral of Violence." Structural violence is the root cause of all violence. However, the people's resistance to it is usually considered to be violence and terrorism. It may be important to bring to mind what Aram I, Catholicos of the Armenian Orthodox Church and the Moderator of the WCC Central Committee has recently said, "Violence is evil but may be necessary to restore justice." He further said, "we cannot legitimate violence under any circumstances. Nor can we condemn violence when it is used as a 'last resort' for the cause of justice and dignity." What Aram I tried to say was that peace is impossible without justice. Cultivating the Culture of Peace is the pre-requisite to Overcome Violence. Peace is not just a word of greetings in day to day living. It is not just the absence of war. It analyses the different forms of violence, it questions the reasons for such violence, it engages in theological reflection to overcome the logic, spirit and practice of violence and it works to break the cycles of violence. Churches are called to rethink their mission. It is not just doing some social work, rather it should take them beyond deeds of charity to acts of justice for Peace is not just the absence of violence, it is in fact the presence of justice!

Thaya

A Service for the Repose of the Soul of MICHAEL SUGUNADEV ARASARATNAM

(Born 1st December 1957 . . . Called to Rest 18th February 2001)

Morning Star regrets to notify the death of Michael Sugunadev, beloved son of Mr. K.D. and the late Arunthavam Arasaratnam, occurred in his sleep on Sunday the 18th February, 2001 in Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

A Service for the repose of the soul was held at the CSI Colombo Church on the 22nd February at 6.30 p.m. Michael Sugunadev had his Primary and Secondary education at St. Thomas College and



graduated majoring in Physics from the Madras Christian College. He excelled well both in studies and games. He represented the Athletics, Cricket and Rugger teams while at St. Thomas'. He had the distinction of captaining the Madras Christian College Cricket Team. Before migrating to Canada, he worked in the Computer division of the Bank of Ceylon and was associated in computerizing many of its branches. At the time of his demise he held the position of Senior Analyst Programmer in a prestigious Firm. He was named

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the 'A S Professional of the year' at the A S / 400 conference held in San-Diego, California in spring 2000.

His sudden demise is of intense shock and deep grief to his dearly beloved wife Dawn Arulnalini, his precious son Arundev, his devoted father and his sisters Mangaladevy Rajkumar and Priyadarshini Thamotheram, and a host of relations and friends, who loved and admired his amiable ways.

The Morning Star extends its deepest sympathies to all loved ones who mourn his loss. May his soul rest in peace. The readers may remember that his mother Arunthavam also passed away suddenly in September last year.

"The righteous perish, and no one ponders in his heart. Devout men are taken away and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace. They find rest as they lie in death." (Isaiah 57: 1-2).

We give below the words of the special song which his sister PRIYA rendered at this service:

I'll Fly Away

Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away,

To my home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away,

I'll fly away oh glory; I'll fly away,

When I die hallelujah by and by,

I'll fly away.

When the shadow of this life is over, I'll fly away

Like a bird from prison bars has flown, I'll fly away,

When I die hallelujah by and by,

I'll fly away,

Just a few more weary days and then, I'll fly away,

To a land where joy shall never end, I'll fly away,

When I die hallelujah by and by,

I'll fly away,

Polonnaruwa Church attacked

The new political party Sihala Urumaya is suspected to have been behind the recent attack of the Christian Church at Polonnaruwa. It has been reported that the church had been badly damaged and three worshipers had sustained injuries in the attack.

Death of Student

Thavamalar, a female student of Jaffna College, who had qualified herself for university admission to the Faculty of Arts, died on Sunday, the 18th February. The funeral took place at Kalikovilady on the following morning.

54TH DIOCESAN COUNCIL,.....

PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS:

Christians in many parts of Asia and Africa are undergoing much hardship and harassment. According to the monthly magazine "Inside Out" of the C.W.M., the number of Christian martyrs which was 165,000 per year in the 20th Century will rise to 210,000 per year in the first quarter of the 21st Century. We are saddened that not only illiterate and religious fanatics, but also intellectuals of high calibre coming out with venom against Christians.

Recently a famous journalist in India wrote a book with the title "Missionaries in India - Continuities, Changes, and Dilemmas". It became so popular among the Hindus. Even the seventh edition of this book has come out this year. The thesis is that a conversion team consisting of administrators, missionaries and Indologists was at work aiming at the subversion of Hinduism and Hindustan. This seems to be the thinking of many intellectuals in India.

The people of Sri Lanka are not carried away by this kind of emotion. But we have problems with the rapid growth of sectarian groups and the fundamentalist Church. We are surprised to see the response of the poor people and the attendance at these Churches. It is very difficult for us to understand their theology, sociology and their interpretation of the Bible. But who are we to judge their aims and achievements? We can only repeat the words of Gamaliel to the Senhendrin.

"Keep away from these men and let them alone;
because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail;
but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them —
in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"

(Acts 5: 38-39).

But the Hindu Community in the North Sri Lanka appears to be restless. Very often we hear speeches about the proselitization activities of the Churches. So far we have had extremely cordial relationship with our Hindu neighbours. Even now important leaders of the society who were old students of Christian schools have great admiration for their Christian teachers. What lies ahead we do not know. Like in the time of Moses in Egypt, a Pharaoh who did not know Moses may appear. At that time we may not have friends in the Hindu Community to discuss and deliberate, analyze and argue. I have told some of my Hindu friends to make an exhaustive study of the Churches and institutions in Jaffna. The reformed faith brought by the congregational Churches of America in the early 19th century were with the firm conviction that education was the only avenue in all kinds of progress. They also felt that the light of erudition had been always favourable to Christianity and they did not believe in giving material gifts to win converts. We are the inheritors of this tradition. No doubt, the task is difficult, but we are confident that we will be able to serve in the land of our birth as God's people and our activities will make the people who see us glorify our Father who is in heaven.

THE PLIGHT OF WOMEN:

As God's people in troubled homeland we are also very much concerned about the plight of women. "Serve the least among you" is the command given to us by our Lord. The unmarried, uneducated, unemployed outcaste girls and women are the most vulnerable, harassed segment in our society. Suicide rate among the women in North East Province of Sri Lanka is the highest in the world. Last year two young women who were very active members of our church killed themselves, one of them after donating Rs.50, 000/- to the Church building fund. It only shows how bleak the future is for the young women in our land. With the help of our Partners in Mission we have set up Vocational Training Centres for these women. Sometimes a small capital is given to them to start a workshop, so that they will not be a burden to their parents. The Muslim community and the Roman Catholic Church have some alternative avenues for women who are unable to get married. This aspect is totally neglected in the Protestant Church. We would appeal once again to the Women's Fellowship of our Diocese to take more effective and meaningful steps to provide Life in its Fullness to these people.

GUJARAT EATHQUAKE

On January 26, 2001 the news of the massive earthquake of 6.9 intensity in Gujarat shocked the whole world. This has been described as one of the worst to strike India in recent human memory. According to the official estimate, more than 15, 000 people have died in this disaster. Some Christians made the unkind remark that it was all due to the atrocities against the Church in the State. This mode of thinking undermines the entire Christian Message of love and charity. The Bible says "love rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in love."

Already many Church related organizations of India have appealed to us for a contribution for their relief and rehabilitation work in Gujarat. We have sent small contributions to some of them. We have to make a substantial contribution for the Relief Work of the Synod. During this Council Sessions we will see how we are going to raise money for the Synod Relief work.

OUR VISITORS

During the course of this month some important leaders of the Church are going to be with us. Four members of the Jaffna College Board of Trustees will be with us from March 5-10, 2001. They are coming to see, listen and assess the potentialities and opportunities of our Church and above all, to express solidarity with us during these perilous times. Then on the 15th of March, Dr. Konrad Raiser - the Secretary General of the W.C.C. is coming to Jaffna to meet us. We are anxiously looking forward to seeing and welcoming them in our native land.

Let the three days we are going to spend here be a time of spiritual and intellectual experience. Let us discuss and deliberate on what we can do, to instill hope in a war-torn country.

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE & THANKSGIVING

A service of remembrance and thanksgiving for the life and work of Miss. Elizabeth Manoranjitham Deva & Miss. Leena. Pushparani Deva (Retired Vice Principals, Chundikuli Girls' College, Jaffna) was held at St. John the Baptist Church, Chundikuli on Saturday, the 10th February 2001 at 4.00 p.m.

The service opened with the bidding prayer offered by Mrs. A.K. Aloysius, the Vice-Principal of the College. The Principal Mrs. T. Rajaratnam, while delivering a Litany of Remembrance thanked God for their loyalty and leadership in their fields of work, their living examples of excellence in whatever they did for their Alma Mater in a tireless and fearless manner, and for their commitments and efforts.

The College students sang a special anthem. Mrs. M.L. Mahendran and Mrs. R.S. Sathianandan (staff) read the lessons. Mrs. R.S. Jeyakumar (staff) and Mrs. Mahila Rajasingham (Manageress) while paying glorious tributes remembered the valuable services of these precious lives and the legacy they have left behind. The Rev. J. Jebaratnam in his message drew comparison to Martha and Mary in the Bible. He also said that these two sisters played a very great role in the life of the Church, the School and the Community. The Rev. S.P. Nesakumar said the closing prayer and pronounced the blessing.

Miss. E.M. Deva came to Chundikuli as a fresh young graduate from the University of Andhra. Her ways of simplicity, discipline and high thinking were some of the outstanding qualities that made everyone look up to her with full admiration. She was a very successful teacher beyond pay. She took up her responsibilities in full capacity. Very soon she became the warden of the girls' hostel. She was appointed Vice Principal in 1970. She retired after having given thirty solid years of service to the College.

Miss Leena Pushparani Deva was also a graduate of the University of Andhra. She graduated in Home Science with academic excellence securing a First Class. She was an old girl of the College. She served her Alma Mater with love, loyalty and devotion for over thirty years. She had imbibed the qualities of the Chundikuli girl, of being forward and taking an initiative stand in all that she stood for and all that she did. She was also a great social worker. Her leisure hours were devoted in helping societies such as the Red Cross, Girl Guides, and Women's organizations and in forming prayer cells. She would always speak out for the down trodden and the suffering which was a great quality in her. She was appointed Vice Principal in 1996 and retired in 1999 due to health reasons.

For all the saints who from their labours rest
Who thee by faith, before the world confessed
Thy name oh Jesus, be for ever blest.

Change in Jaffna-Colombo Flights landing procedure

The Civil Affairs Office Jaffna has announced that the flights from Jaffna will land at Katunayake instead of Ratmalana for two weeks beginning from February 24, 2001 due to the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Air Force to be held at Ratmalana.

12 Students to visit South Sri Lanka

The Department of Education Jaffna Region has selected 12 students from 12 schools to visit Colombo, Kandy and other places in the South from the 8-12 March 2001.

REFLECTIONS :

"I do believe that when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence.... I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless victim to her own dishonour. But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment.

Mahatma Gandhi