

Called to be the Warriors of Truth

**(Speech delivered by H. G. Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan
On 14.11.2020 in response to the Felicitations)**

Esteemed Bishops, Dignitaries on the dais, social, political and religious leaders, Clergy and dearly beloved in Christ, my loving greetings to all of you.

I praise God for this meeting arranged after the Metropolitan installation. How great is the grace of God showered through the ages on the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, founded and known by St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. Let us be grateful to God for all the erstwhile leaders of the Church who worked tirelessly to make this possible.

"For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3: 16). 'That God loved the world' is the Gospel. The mission of the Church in the present is to become the carrier of the transforming love of God. The Church belongs to God. God who loves the world expects from us a ministry that takes the world and the people of the world seriously. A spiritual search that avoids social intervention is a search for holiness that keeps away from the world. The witness of the Church is to be carried out in the society as a whole. For achieving this, we have to strive for the transformation of the world. The Church should not aim only at its own growth. It should, on the other hand, realize its calling to be a transforming power of the entire society.

The reformation in the Malankara Church provided a new vision to the Indian Church regarding mission. It also made it possible to analyze the personal, social, ethical and religious stances taken in the light of the Word of God, and to get rid of those things that did not concur with it. This in fact brought out a process of purification in the Church as well as the society. It was instrumental in addressing the prevalent structures of injustice, and transforming the inhuman practices. It sought to include and accept all people and further interact with them, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or race. This in turn led to opening wide the doors to the weaker sections, facilitating their entry into spaces that had been hitherto forbidden to them. Thus the Church witnessed a great social transformation.

The witnessing of discipleship has always entailed social and political dimensions. The Reign of God is a space where democratic rights and civic senses are to be celebrated in their entirety.

Health care, education and developmental areas require special attention and care of the Church. The world has to realize the indiscriminate exploitation of human helplessness. Healthcare and basic education are the rights of every citizen. Proper healthcare should be ensured for all. What we need is lasting and sustainable development, and the church should aim at and encourage such advances.

The world is on the brink of a tremendous environmental disaster. As a result of climatic changes and global warming, floods and natural calamities are on the increase. In addition to these, we feel choked by pandemics the world over. The new age demands of the members of the church to learn to live with nature. I hope and pray that the United States of America will soon rectify its decision to back out of the Global Climate Pact, and join the rest of the world for the equilibrium of the environment.

It should be possible for the church to hear the warnings and create alternative models along with those who dream of a new world. What the church needs is a creative approach towards the power of God that makes everything new. In the race for quick profits, the basic human needs, healthcare, education, and

even faith have become market commodities. Money and power have created new gods. As a result, today we face an extraordinary situation that extinguishes the human capacity for social and ethical conduct. So the world is now on the lookout for people who can overcome such decay by means of alternative concepts.

Today is children's day, which, as we all know, is the birthday of the great visionary Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister. He also endeared himself to the people through his great works like 'The Discovery of India' and 'Glimpses of World History'. In this context, we also try to seek a new explication for what Jesus said: "Let the little children come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God". Children's' day marks the celebration of hope in a child. Children are buds that are ready to bloom. As they fly high, the world too will attain great heights through them. However, the problems faced by children today are many. The Church should be able to take such challenges seriously.

It is remarked that we live in a period that can be termed Post - Truth Age. There used to be a time when society moved in the way of truth with the banner of love. Today it makes use of weaponized lies as bombs instead of truth as the weapon. The world is exasperated by the combatants of evil wearing the invisible weapon of falsehood (untruth). This is the biggest challenge of the society and the Church in the 21st Century. The Mar Thoma Church is also under the shadow of this threat. Many have become warriors trying to prove the falsehoods propagated by some for their own devious reasons. Ours is an age that has blemished all the good aspects of the media, making information a tool for destroying others. So the greatest challenge of today is to lead the people to truth and dharma. The Church and its members are called to be the warriors of truth.

Even in the post COVID period we may be able to go out only wearing a mask, which means we will not be able to see each other's faces fully. In such a situation, we must definitely learn to open our minds.

I had the good fortune to study at Shantinikethan, Vishwabharathi University in Kolkata founded by Rabindranath Tagore. Let me wind up my address with Song no. 35 of Tagore's Gitanjali, the celebrated work that won him the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.**

Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan