

I belong to the Kalmannil branch of the Family. My paternal grandmother was from Kalmannil family married to Puliveil-Malayil in Vadsherikkara. I migrated to USA in 1977 after completing a Degree in Electrical Engineering from Kerala University. I am sharing the personal experiences with our loving Thirumeni while he frequently visited USA when he was our diocesan bishop.

I am greatly honored to be in the same family tree of our beloved Bishop Chrysostam, a bishop God consecrated and destined for the humanity at large. A new text book could be written in homiletics based on Thirumeni's artful mastery of humor in affirming our faith through the sacred mysteries of benevolence. God has blessed him to be an intellectual giant with an impressive RAM (random access memory) without much aging effects to be quick on his wit and still stay focused on the message from heavenly inspiration. Irrespective of age group, culture, religious affiliations, Thirumeni could capture the attention of any size of audience for his messages to the duration that he chooses and the eagerness to hear him again never fades.

My son, Ben, who was 5 years old in 1987, was playing a game of Nintendo when the Thirumeni arrived at our home in Philadelphia. Thirumeni was eager to take a seat with my son and became a partner with him to play for more than an hour. Ben lovingly remembers "Nintendo playing Bishop" to uniquely identify the Bishop. It was amusing to watch Ben offering tips and coaching Thirumeni on how to shoot down the ducks flying away in the game! They two had wonderful conversations together much more than what I had that weekend.

Once, I was coming to meet with the Bishop for taking him to a distant location. Unexpectedly a person in need approached him. Bishop was quick to pull out his purse and offer everything he had in his purse. He did not allow me to substitute for him in offering the help. What touched me was the statement he made after we started driving away and we were alone. Thirumeni said, "Do not worry about my purse being empty; I have operated with empty purse often. God always provided for the needs." A lesson on the leap of faith in following the Great Master. Our Thirumeni truly lives by what he preaches.

Whenever he had more than a day at my residence, it became a habit to visit the local book stores. As an ardent student, his spectrum of interest was very wide. While I tried to lead him to theological books, his interests were to remain atop on current affairs and trends. This explorative search of current events and recent publications are devised to refine his messages to the ever changing context. I continue to see that he has an uncanny aptitude to bring out life applications for every Biblical text that he chooses to share.

During a family conference, I had some time with him and we discussed the challenges in raising a child in the American environment. I told him that I taught my son to pray before the meals and during one of my visits to the McDonalds I started eating as soon as we got the burgers. My son said, "Stop! We did not pray!" This became an illustration for the next message for our Thirumeni. The spin on the event was insightful, "The child had more impeccable character than the father who tried to teach an attitude of gratitude". My close friends knew where the illustration originated and they had a few more laughs at my cost. This illustration made that message to be remembered for ever.

May God add years to our Thirumeni and keep him as a great instrument in the Divine Mission.

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