

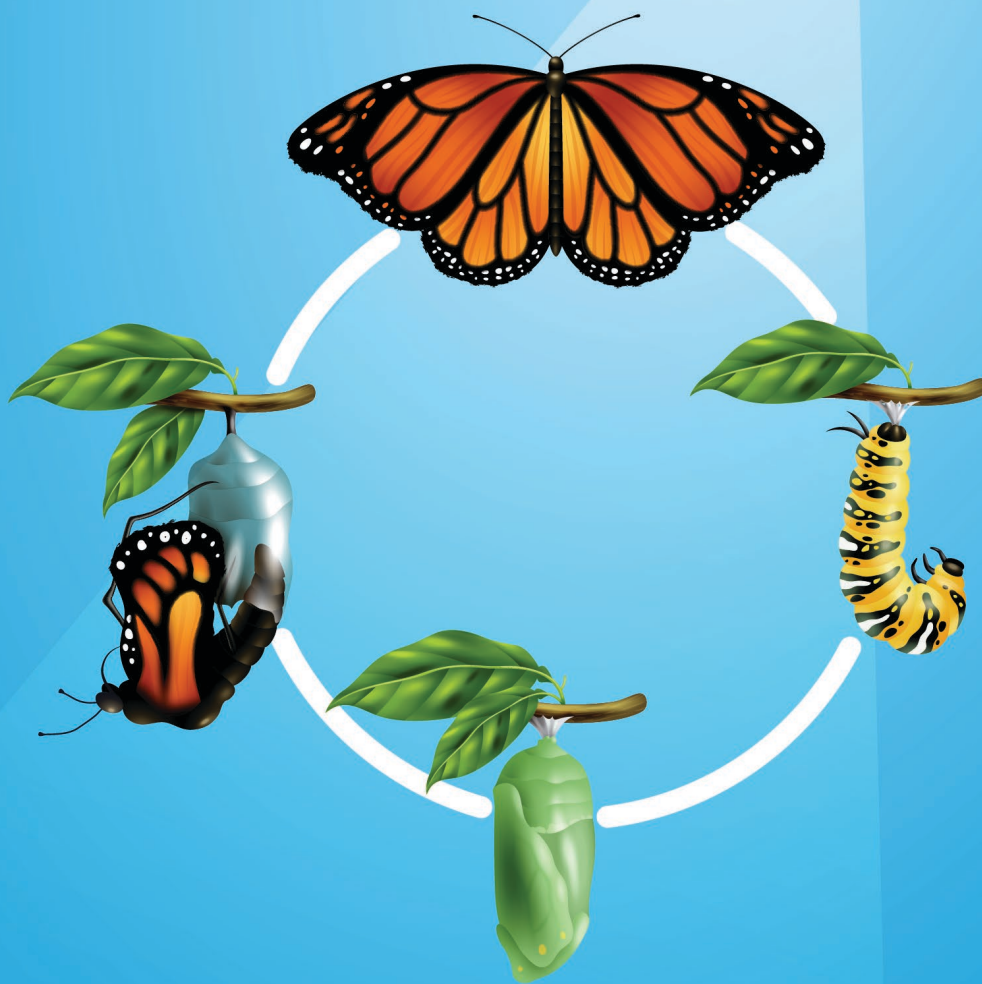


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PROMISE & TRANSFORMATION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Spirituality: Being an Informed and Responsible Citizen



Church Enlightened - Informed and Responsible Citizenship 2023 Seminar





Promise and Transformation by the Holy Spirit

EDITORIAL »

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is with great joy and anticipation that I write to you today reflecting on the profound promise and transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is the divine presence and power of God working within us. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are granted the assurance of God's unfailing love and the promise of eternal life. As we embark on this spiritual journey, let us open our hearts and minds to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.

The promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled when Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Spirit to dwell among us. This promise is not merely a comforting thought but a powerful reality that has the ability to transform our lives from inside out. The Holy Spirit empowers us, guides us, and helps us to live according to the will of God.

Through the Holy Spirit, we are transformed into new creations. Our old selves, characterized by sin and brokenness, are washed away, and we are made new in Christ. The

Spirit works within us, convicting us of sin, leading us to repentance, and empowering us to live a life pleasing to God. The transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit is a continuous process, as we yield ourselves to His work in us.

The Holy Spirit also equips us with spiritual gifts for the edification of the Church and the fulfillment of God's purposes. Each of us is uniquely gifted by the Spirit to serve and build up the body of Christ. Let us not neglect or underestimate the gifts bestowed upon us, but instead, let us use them diligently for the glory of God and for the advancement of His kingdom.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit guides us in our daily lives. He comforts us in times of sorrow, grants us wisdom in times of decision-making, and provides us with strength and courage in times of difficulty. We are called to rely on the guidance of the Spirit and to be attentive to His gentle promptings, trusting that He will lead us in the paths of righteousness.

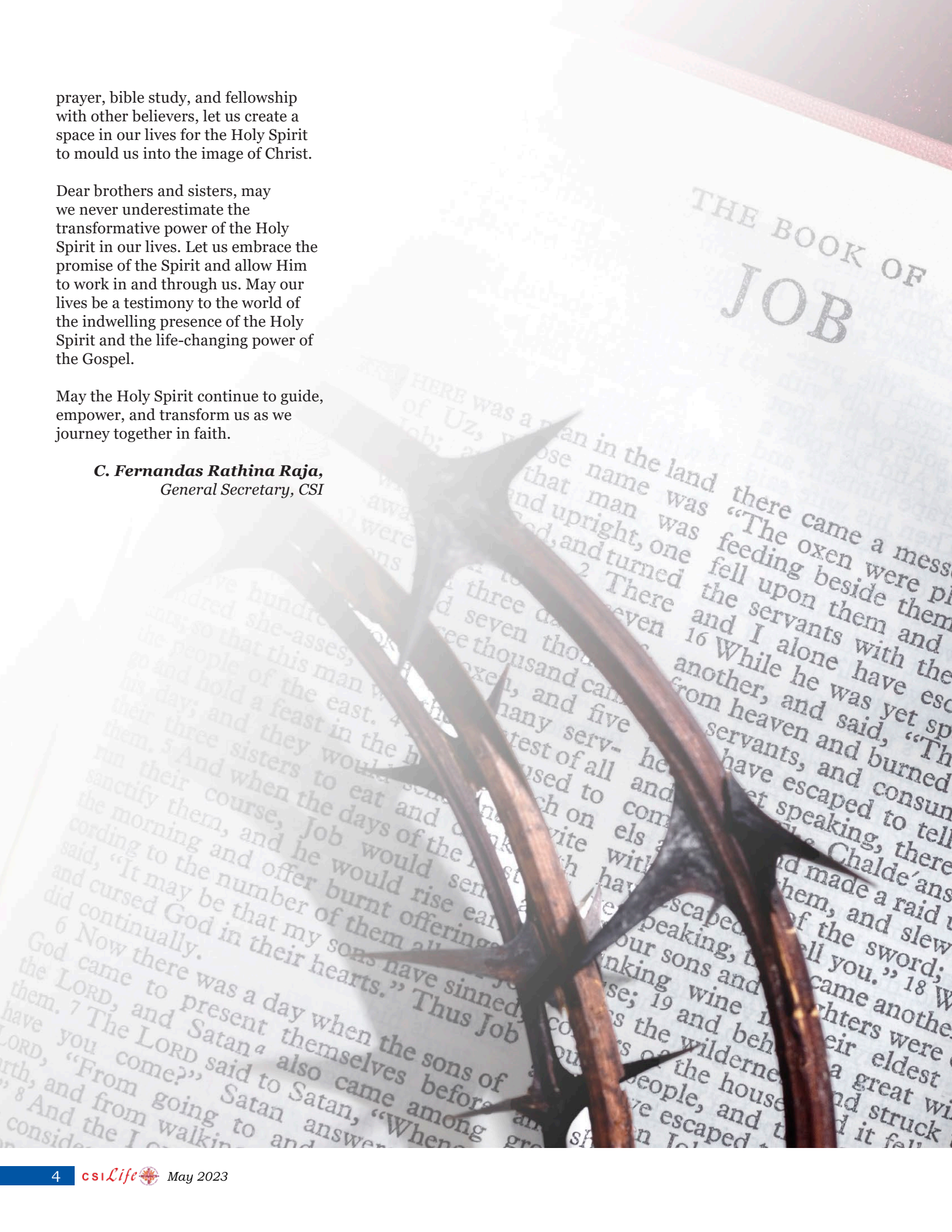
As we reflect on the promise and transformation by the Holy Spirit, let us seek to cultivate a deeper relationship with Him. Let us be open to His leading, surrendering ourselves to His work of sanctification. Through

prayer, bible study, and fellowship with other believers, let us create a space in our lives for the Holy Spirit to mould us into the image of Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, may we never underestimate the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Let us embrace the promise of the Spirit and allow Him to work in and through us. May our lives be a testimony to the world of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and the life-changing power of the Gospel.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide, empower, and transform us as we journey together in faith.

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Promise and Transformation by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is one of the fascinating, faith-giving, inspiring, ontological, and epistemological yet disputable phenomena in Christian faith. Ontology of the Holy Spirit raises the basic questions, who or what is the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit act in relation to human persons? Epistemology asks the fundamental question, how do we know what we know about the Holy Spirit? What is the basis for our truth claims? Theologians over the years have struggled to explain the existential and experiential aspects of the Holy Spirit. For John Wesley the power of the Holy Spirit leads humanity to the understanding of Scripture and thus to salvation and therefore it is by the Spirit that the image of God is restored within fallen humanity. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not some peripheral aspect of the Christian life; it is at the very centre. Wesley states that without the indwelling of the Spirit the individual cannot be considered as a Christian at all. John Cobb emphasizes that the Spirit is not an external force, like the potter on the clay, but rather it works within other powers to empower, enliven, and direct. The ontology of the Spirit is the highest expression of the life of the Christian. Samuel Rayan says, "Holy Spirit is the heart of the Christian Gospel." James Cone writes, "Holy Spirit is the agent of political change." For the Christians, there is much that remains a mystery about the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit do for us as Christians? Is the Holy Spirit controversial or contentious? Is the Holy Spirit essential and crucial or irrelevant and insignificant? These questions affect the core of our Christian faith. The Council of Florence has made it clear by explaining the Trinity, "The Father (God) is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit. The Son is wholly in the Father (God) and in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father (God) and in the Son. None precedes another in eternity, exceed it in greatness, or surpasses it in power". The point that

clearly emerges from this conciliar statement is that the divine perichoresis precludes any relation of power or subordination among the three persons but all are equally eternal and infinite. Jesus' life, teachings and ministry show the presence of the Spirit, an expression of the new life of communion among the divine persons. He is the vehicle of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who enables Jesus to perform wonders and deeds of liberation. This clearly indicates that without the power of God's Spirit we can have no deep, close relationship with God, nor can we become the children of God (Romans 8:14-17). However, the Holy Spirit is an area that has been used as the potential to cause much division among Christians. The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for God's people says A.W.Tozer. The multitude of materials produced by Biblical Scholars, the interest shown by the ecumenicals and of course by the sudden growth of the Christian charismatic groups have a new raised the need for redefining the promise and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. A proper understanding of the Holy Spirit therefore is needed.

Holy Spirit Energizes Communities

The word Spirit in the Bible is rendered in Hebrew as 'ruah' and in Greek as 'pneuma' and mean 'wind or breath.' Both thoughts are in the word as applicable to the Holy Spirit (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 104:30; Jn 3:6-8; Jn. 20:22). To be specific ruah or even pneuma does not admit translation by any single English word. This word is used in four different categories such as physical (Gen. 3:8; 8:1; Ex. 15:10; Jer. 49:36), Psychological (Ps. 104:29f. Ps. 31:5; Gen. 2:7-19; Eccles. 12:7), Psychical (Mic. 2:7; Judges 8:3; Job 4:9) and Supernatural (Is. 63:11, Eze. 37:14; 2 Kings. 19:7). Prophet Isaiah enumerates the seven spiritual gifts as 'wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord'. All these show that Spirit is



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conceived as divine dynamic entity by which God accomplishes God's purposes. The Gospels refer Holy Spirit as the Messianic endowments of Jesus and his teachings on the reign of God. The Acts of the Apostles is in every sense the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is considered as a personal divine person and the historic development of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the Society. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, is sovereign, invisible, inscrutable, indispensable life giving and irresistible; also seen as the vital energy of the divine nature and the creative and vitalising force of the world. Holy Spirit is an out breaking of God with the intention of energising the early Christian community. Fellowship denotes the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Community. It describes the quality of the relationship within the Community itself created by the Spirit. The Community of goods (Acts 2:44; 4:32) is the spirit of fellowship in - action. It is the putting into practice the kind of Community life which Jesus sought to create and foster among his disciples during his ministry on earth although it was so often marred by petty

personal ambitions. Fellowship most importantly is listening to Christ when he said 'be not anxious for your life', and again, 'Sell all that you have and give to the poor'. The Latin American Bishops assembled at Puebla stated that: "Our God, in his (God's) most intimate mystery, is not solitude, but a family. For he (God) intrinsically contains paternity, filiation, and the essence of the family that is love: this love in the divine family is the Holy Spirit." The early Christian community ascribed to the continuous living activity of Jesus. Holy Spirit was promised when Jesus shared the final meal with his disciples before his death on the cross he tells them that he will send them the Holy Spirit to teach and remind them. His disciples were troubled about his death; Jesus assures them that he will not leave them on their own. The Holy Spirit will come to them and remain with them forever and will also teach and remind them of what Jesus had said and did.

Holy Spirit Transforms the Church

On the day of Pentecost, (Acts 2:1-13) a new power was given to them

the ability to speak in tongues. Speaking in tongues is accepting the language of the 'other', also the ability to understand the language of the 'other'. The term 'other' describes the reductive action of labelling a person as vulnerable or subaltern as one who is considered as socially and economically low of the other. Holy Spirit transforms the 'otherness' by reconciling different cultures, people with different ethnic identities reminding that we are living in diverse cultures in which no one is superior or inferior to the 'other'. Community of the spirit is a reconciled community. Holy Spirit does not breed consumers for it is not a commodity. Mills observes that trivialization and commercialization of the things of faith is a more general phenomenon in our day. He writes, "today the most immediate threat to faith is rarely evil or radical doubt; what should trouble us more is the astonishing rate with which the things of faith may now be diminished, trivialized, commercialized and appropriated." In consumer-driven societies, Holy Spirit has been commercialised. Human cannot predict the moving of the Holy Spirit or confine the Holy Spirit within



the stained glass church buildings. Holy Spirit is moving outside the Church buildings and therefore we are expected to open our churches and allow the power of God moving inside the Church too. James Cone says that all those who are filled with the Holy Spirit will no longer engage themselves in analysing the society why poor remain poor and why racism still exist, rather they will say poverty is sin, the sin of the rich and racism is evil, kill it. Church is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit who re-formates a sharing egalitarian society.

Church is a theophany community, the manifestation of God. The Church that learned how to pray why failed to learn sharing? Irenaeus of Lyons says, "For where the church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God, there is the church and all grace." The concept of the open Church unfortunately opened the resources of the Church for a few who holds power. But, the openness of the church represents a window of opportunity to transform socio-cultural constructs. The church as a "rainbow community" is capable of accepting the diversified cultures and become a sign of hope.

"The Church is the Church only when it exists for others...not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell (hu)men of every calling what it means to live for Christ, to exist for others" says Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Questioning the life destroying forces in the Church, questioning the clergy, chasing the tables of those who use their tables for power and profit and chasing those who marginalised the poor, women and the socially divided ones are considered as the rudest forms of sin in the Church. Gospels vividly explain that these were done by Jesus when he visited Jerusalem Temple. Why wouldn't one believe that Jesus 'sinned' after he got angry and fought in the Jerusalem temple? We must rethink our understanding of 'sin'. These are not the sins against the Holy Spirit, in fact the Holy Spirit makes us to do such 'sins'. In this sense we can take critically Dietrich Bonhoeffer's idea 'the community of God, the Church, is a community of sinners.' The Holy Spirit is nudging us out of our comfort zones, the Noah's ark, the Church to restore the fabric of humanity. The transforming Spirit of God transforms the Church into:

Shalom Ecclesia

The noun shalom is translated as wellbeing and being well. Walter Brueggemann says "Shalom comes only to the inclusive, embracing community that excludes none." He goes on to point out three dimensions of shalom. In its cosmic dimensions shalom is 'orderly fruitfulness.' In its political dimensions, it is "equitable justice." In its personal dimensions, it is "generous caring." To the have-nots, the slaves in Egypt, or the poor of the land when the kings ruled, or the exiles in Babylon, shalom means "freedom, salvation, and liberation." There is no shalom without justice. Nicholas Wolterstorff, in his book, 'Until Justice and Peace Embrace', points out that shalom is more than justice. Church as shalomaic community in her original vision should become a channel of justice.

Ecclesia Familia Catholica

Ecclesia Familia Catholica is a total all-embracing Church as family, the Church extending over other domains, the Church parenting with Parents, parenting to the parentless. Parenthood shows the character of God being relational, loving, and

caring. Understanding the interaction of families and relational networking is a mark commonly missed by the church. Church must ensure that families receive positive and loving relationships and are able to have hope and vision for the future.

Ecclesia de Eucharistia

This means the Church from the Eucharist. For eucharist, the early Christian family gathered together often and they ate their bread with generosity and simplicity, they shared in meals together. The early church broke bread door to door with family members, feeding the poor and the destitute women. Samuel Torvend in his book *Luther and the Hungry Poor*, explains Martin Luther's frustration with church practice that separated the breaking of bread at the altar from the Christian call to share bread with the world. Reflecting on the Eucharist, Martin Luther wrote, Learn that this is a sacrament of love. Eucharist must be shared with everyone who is in need, irrespective of their religio-creedal belongings. Church should be a place that allows people to experience the love of God by addressing their beliefs, convictions, cultures and a place of celebration, creating a safe and loving environment to support the spiritual nurture and equips them in how to translate life principles into practical actions.

Radicalised Ecclesio Communio

Church has to wrestle with new issues and challenges and radically affirm for an open Church with open hearts, open minds and open doors. The Church should be a place where everyone is welcome and feels welcome. A radical reshaping of the ecclesiology will cultivate Church an alternative community. New Alliances will involve respect for others and hospitality to the impoverished, the victims of social oppression, and the migrant communities, the victims of the pandemic and the victims of marginalisation and discrimination, others with different opinions. Addressing all those issues in a postmodern Christian

culture is challenging for it involves deconstructing the sexual orientation and gender identity constructs. Church is the Family and Families.

Miroslav Volf suggests a "theology of embrace" as the way of loving and reconciling with the other. He suggests a process of opening of arms as a sign of hospitality, and closing of arms as a sign of acceptance and again opening that will make the embrace. The open arm spirituality transforms the other member of the family. This integrated theology of the Holy Spirit spirituality will make Church as a community of equal partners who share God's unconditional love and demonstrate the love of God to others. The ecclesial community is waiting in hope and praying in expectation for the empowering of the Holy Spirit.



O Come Holy Spirit



P o e m

Make us more like Jesus
Teach us the Art of Transformation

Santify us, strip away our Sinfulness
Help us spread Love and to freely flow to
bear Witness

Bind Us, so we share the Spiritual Fruit
Guide us into Truth

Reveal us the word of God
Convict us of our sinful Words

Bring us closer to Other Believer
Comfort us with the promise of Deliverer

A Heart of Stone to a Heart of Flesh be our
Transformation.
A New Beginning for yet another
Reformation...



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Empowerment by the Holy Spirit

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

The promise of the Holy Spirit is first mentioned in the Old Testament, where the prophet Joel speaks of a time when God would pour out His Spirit on all people. Joel 2:28-29 says, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit."

This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in a powerful way. Acts 2:1-4 says, "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the church and the fulfillment of God's promise to pour out His Spirit on all people. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life that is pleasing to God and to fulfill the mission that Christ has given us. This event was the birth of the Church. The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to preach the Gospel, and thousands of people were saved and baptized. The Holy Spirit continues to empower believers today, and He is just as active and powerful as He was on the day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit helps us in several ways, he teaches us and guides us. Jesus said in John 14:26, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that

I have said to you." The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Word of God and to apply it to our lives.

The Transformation by the Holy Spirit

As Christians, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, who resides within us and gives us the ability to live a morally upright life. We are changed and drawn closer to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the agent of transformation.

Therefore, if anybody is in Christ, he is a new creation, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17. The old is gone, and the new has here. The transformation that occurs as a result of placing our faith in Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit is described in this verse. We transform into brand-new beings with fresh aspirations, perspectives, and actions.

The Holy Spirit transforms us in a variety of ways through working within us. He first persuades us of our sins. We recognize our need for a Saviour and turn to Christ for redemption when we are confronted with the reality of our sins. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit aids us in overcoming sin and temptation. He endows us with the ability to withstand pressure and lead godly lives.

The Holy Spirit also changes our minds. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind," says Romans 12:2, "that you may by testing discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." By providing us with a fresh outlook on life and by assisting us in seeing things from God's perspective, the Holy Spirit aids in the renewal of our thoughts.

The Holy Spirit transforms our character. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,



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faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law.” The Holy Spirit produces these qualities in our lives and helps us to become more like Christ.

The Holy Spirit transforms our relationships. He helps us to love others as Christ loves us and to serve others as Christ served us. The Holy Spirit also gives us the power to forgive others and to reconcile broken relationships.

Finally, the Holy Spirit transforms our mission. He gives us the power and boldness to share the gospel with others and to make disciples of all nations. Acts 1:8 tells us, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The Social Transformation of the Holy Spirit

The transformation of the Holy Spirit is a vital aspect of the Christian life. It is through the Holy Spirit’s work that we are made new and become more like Christ. Let us open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit’s transformational power and allow Him to work in us and through us for God’s glory.

This transformation is a process that continues throughout our lives. The Holy Spirit helps us to become more like Christ, conforming us to His image.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, we become more loving, more patient, more kind, more faithful, and more self-controlled. We become more like Christ in every way, and our lives begin to reflect His glory.

Social transformation, accordingly, refers to change in human relationships, communities and the living conditions of the people. It is the processes of change in the condition of life of people, and the

qualitative change in the nature and character of human societies.

In the same, Steven define transformation as the “change in the whole of the person, material, social and spiritual as well as in the community, economics, social, and political.” is perspective carries God’s vision for people and their communities that is to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). As already mentioned, for development to be transformational, it must be enlightened, guided, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit can, therefore, be seen as the source of power (Lk 24:49) that transforms lives and fosters integral human development of individuals in society

The Transformation to Empower

The Holy Spirit has been at work since the Old Testament era to empower people for special services. The empowerment fostered social transformation, as Luke testifies, the early community continued devoting themselves to fellowship and brotherly love. As a result this common fellowship united disciples to the apostles teaching and also to their disposition to share goods.

Holy Spirit does not only empower believers for the ministry but also purifies and sanctifies them. “the continued transformation of moral and spiritual character so that the believer’s life actually comes to mirror the standing he or she already has in God’s sight - Grudem”. Life in the Spirit brings about holistic transformation in the life of believers, the society and their surrounding environment. This can be made possible by the church acting as the instrument of the Spirit to transform people from their self interest and become members of the society that work for the good of others.

Transformation from sin is also concerned with poverty, oppression and the integral liberation of human beings and their society.

The Holy Spirit’s empowering of the disciples was necessary for them to be able to contribute to the developmental process of fostering individual and group-level spiritual, social, and physical transformation. In a same vein, the wider Christian church should be enabled by the Spirit to offer the same kind of contribution.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, and may His Holy Spirit empower you to live a transformed life.



The Spirit of God Leads to Transformation

One's lifetime is insufficient to capture in words the extent of the Spirit's work towards the transformation of any individual. The Spirit was involved not only in the creation of the world (Gen.1:1,2) but also is involved in the creation of every human being that comes into the world. But, more importantly, it is through the Spirit that the believer is regenerated (transformed) and becomes a new creation in Christ. Among the various roles of the Spirit includes witness, calling, conviction, conversion, regeneration, intercession, confirmation, sending, outworking, gifting, direction, supervision, guidance, teaching, perfection, and transforming. In the book 'A Return to Love' Marianne Williamson says that "We're all assigned a piece of the garden, a corner of the universe that is ours to transform. Our corner of the universe is our own life, our relationships, our homes, our work, our current circumstances exactly as they are. Every situation we find ourselves in is an opportunity, perfectly planned by the Holy Spirit, to teach love instead of fear." J.I. Packer says that "The Holy Spirit's main ministry is not to give thrills but to create in us Christlike character."

Person and Promise of the Holy Spirit

Gospels' presentation of Jesus's teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit by addressing the seeming "non-pneumatic" or "non-charismatic" character of the life of Christ and the relatively limited teaching by our Lord on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels. The study of the ministry of the Holy Spirit by historic Christians often focuses on Acts, with its emphasis on the extraordinary work of the Spirit. N. B. Stonehouse in "Repentance, Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Spirit" reminds us of the Trinitarian character of Acts and that "Acts is not narrowly pneumatological," since it honours the Spirit's Trinitarian relationships by the phrase "the promise


of the Father" and that it is "the exalted Christ who pours out the Spirit". "Nevertheless," Stonehouse admits, "it is the baptism and enduement of the Spirit that is pervasively and most conspicuously in the foreground."

Dunn coincides, asserting that Jesus is not presented as the "pneumatic exemplar or the first Christian charismatic." This is like-wise consistent with the Gospel of Luke, even though the second volume of Luke-Acts is so intensively Spirit-centric. "To be sure, Luke does portray Jesus' ministry in a more distinctively charismatic terms, particularly in Lk. 4:1,14, and 10:21, but Jesus is hardly presented as an ecstatic even by Luke." For the truth of God to be received, the Holy Spirit is necessary, for he alone is the Spirit of truth. The Spirit is the revealer of God to the unbeliever, since he is "sent by the Father" in Christ's "name" (John 14:26) to be the evangelist's and missionary's "Helper", by witnessing to Christ. The missionary and the evangelist are enabled by the Holy Spirit in their ministries as the Holy Spirit reminds them of Christ's teaching and guides them into truth. Thus, the nations are reached as the Spirit-inspired word is taught with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Not only does the Spirit have an inner witness to the elect, but the Spirit witnesses to the world. John 16:7-8, speaks of the elenctic work of the Holy Spirit to the world.

God creates the community of faith that is visibly present to the unbelieving world. The Holy Spirit is the power that builds the church, even though there are challenging questions raised by the diverse experiences of the Spirit's work in differing church traditions. Consistent with Jesus's teaching of the person and work of the Holy Spirit discovered in the Gospels, the eschatological age of the Spirit has arrived in Acts. The risen and ascended Christ has sent the paraklētos to come alongside each



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believer to provide the help they need to fulfill the gospel mandate. In the Gospels, however, this enablement is for ministry of the word of God, rather than for ecstatic experiences and utterances. Although the church's task during this epoch of redemption occurs in a hostile world, worldwide preaching of the gospel is possible. This is only possible because of the inspired word and imparted power of the life-giving Spirit. In the power of the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son, the church advances the Lord's kingdom until his return.

Transformation in Developments

The model of development pursued by nonreligious organization is exclusively oriented by the socio-economic approach. Even though such an approach may seem successful it will be limited if the dimension lacks the spiritual transformation of individuals. At this point, the role of the Holy Spirit in social and personal transformation becomes evident. Bowers alludes that the social transformation cannot be separated from spiritual transformation. Groenwald points out that social

transformation, accordingly, refers to change in human relationships, communities and the living conditions of the people. It is the processes of change in the condition of life of the people, and the qualitative change in the nature and character of human societies. In the same line, Winter, Steven and Hawthorne define transformation as the "change in the whole of the person, material, social and spiritual as well as in the community, economics, social, and political." This perspective carries God's vision for people and their communities that is to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). Bowers holds the same view and refers to transformation as an intrinsic part of God's plan for the world. As already mentioned, for development to be transformational, it must be enlightened, guided, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Wink argues that "unjust social systems can only be changed by strategies that address the socio-spiritual nature of institutions." The Holy Spirit can, therefore, be seen as the source of power (Lk 24:49) that transforms lives and fosters integral human

development of individuals in society. Salvation should not be understood as being spiritual only or only changing peoples' lives, but it includes all aspects of human life, it changes peoples' relationships and living conditions, it alters structures, in fact it changes the world.

Transformation is Change of Heart

The first thing to be noticed in a new believer who is going through the transformation is the way the heart changes to worship God. Paul's audience understood sacrifice (Rom 8:10) which dated back to Cain and Abel, so he used the theology of sacrifice that his audience knew and related to his message, God is not looking for animal sacrifice but of worship sacrifice to Him. Hiebert says that "when God finds an empty heart, He chooses that heart to make it His spiritual home and physically impact the world". According to Barton to understand the transformation of God and according to Paul, one can look at the situation of a caterpillar who enters the dark world of cocoon only to emerge completely



transformed into another creature and does not look anything like before, new abilities, new strengths, and completely different shape. This is exactly the transformation the Paul refers to in his letter to Rome that the desire of God is for us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, this progressive transformation in a believer creates a heart of worship.

Transformation is Renewal of Mind

The transformation that Paul is calling for is a “renewal of the mind” (Rom 12:2) but he is cautious that the believer’s new life does not shape his value with his current lifestyle and if a believer carries on letting the world culture’s dictate its lives then we are not changed, and the salvation is of no work in us. In a culture where self-righteousness is vigilant, it is required of a believer to experience the genuine change of life by completely submitting mind, soul and body to Christ. According to Noland anything that receives more devotion than the presence of God in our life is of the world and a walk that Paul reflects not to walk in or continue in but

by letting the Holy Spirit take over our minds and renew it in Christ and whatever controls our minds other than the thoughts of the Holy Spirit is an idol in our life. And transformation is inward change and this change or renewal mind is not done by self-control but by submission to God, this progressive work carried out in believers is a process that takes time and continued standing in his presence with corporate fellowship.

Participating in the Transforming Mission of God
Theologian N.T. Wright, in his article ‘Jesus Is Coming - Plant a Tree!’ that “Take away the goodness of creation, and you have a judgment where the world is thrown away as so much garbage, leaving us sitting on a disembodied cloud playing disembodied harps. Take away judgment, and you have this world rumbling on with no hope except the pantheist one of endless cycles of being and history. Put creation and judgment together, and you get new heavens and new earth, created not ex nihilo but ex vetere, not out of nothing but out of the old one, the

existing one.” While God does not call us to transform society, he calls us to be witnesses to the reality of the Kingdom of God and its King. As the people of God in the midst of a culture that robs people of life, the way we bear witness and partner with God in his mission is by demonstrating compassion, being advocates for justice, and proclaiming a Redeemer in a sinful and broken world.



Spirituality: Being an Informed and Responsible Citizen

The North Kerala regional programme for the Church Enlightened: Informed and Responsible Citizenship second phase was held on May 15 and 16, 2023, at the CSI Retreat Centre in Shoranur. 62 people from the Malabar and Cochin dioceses participated in the programme overall. Rev. Praise Thaiparambil, Clergy Secretary for the Cochin Diocese, Rev. M. Benjamin Inbaraj, Director of CSI SEVA, and Rev. Navagnana Prasad, Director, CSI SEVA gave the two-day programme its official opening. Rev. Prasad offered the opening prayer. The need for Renewed and Committed Ministry in Multi-Religious Society was highlighted by CSI SEVA's Director. He emphasised the significance of carrying out such a topic and the need for the chosen participants to advance this programme in their particular regions. Rev. Praise welcomed everyone and shared CSI SEVA's efforts through CSI; he also emphasized on the need for this programme given the contemporary context.

Adv. C.V. Alexander addressed the following session, speaking on the contemporary context and the shrinking space for democracy. He explained the country's democratic constitution before moving on to discuss how citizens' constant vigilance is the basis for democracy's proper operation. He cited the reduction of space at the governmental level as the cause of democracy's declining space. He also discussed the judiciary, executive, and legislative branches. Adv. P.K. Joseph led the session on "constitutional guarantees for protection of minority rights," during which he discussed the significance of fundamental duties and emphasised how rights and duties are always

intertwined. Additionally, he posed multiple questions, (i) Are we conscious of our rights? (ii) Are we ever conscious of others' rights? and, (iii) Are we aware of the limits within which we exercise our rights? This prompted numerous concerns and encouraged the group to continue its deliberations.

The task at hand for the participants, who were divided into three groups, was to discuss the minority rights that we as Christians have access to and who are our allies in this fight for minority rights. Following the group discussion, Adv. Vibin Chacko led the concluding session of the day on "human rights and civil liberties." He clarified the role that human rights play in creating freedom. He discussed various articles from the Indian Constitution with the attendees, highlighting the significance of Articles 25 through 28 that dealt with religious freedom. Civil liberties are the fundamental freedom that each citizen of a nation is guaranteed, he added. He started presenting some actual instances of countrywide human rights violations.

With participants from both dioceses, Rev. Robin Lawrence of the Malabar Diocese conducted a devotion to begin the second day. Rev. Robin concentrated on three key themes: (i) spiritual vision and leadership, (ii) the power of ministry and responsibility, and (iii) the difficulty of living a spiritual life in the modern world. Rev. Dr. Jacob Thomas led the discussion titled "To Profess to Propagate: Constitutional Guarantees for Christian Mission" after the devotion. He detailed the lives of Christian missionaries in India as an example of the topic. He cited the example of the Christian missionary Graham Staines, who died after being set ablaze because of his missionary work in the region. Everyone was shaken at the time by this tragedy. Articles 25–27 were also highlighted by the speaker. He additionally regarded the difficulties and problems that Christian



missionaries encountered in Indian society. In Rev. Dr. Jacob's interactive session, participants were invited to voice their perspectives on the given topic.

In the final session, groups were split into three categories—clergy, missionaries, and youth—and engaged in a group discussion yet again. They were to discuss what they had learned and how they would apply it to their different fields by coming up with an action plan. The key points from each group's presentations included: (i) increasing political involvement; (ii) assuring ordination for women who have earned a bachelor's degree in divinity; (iii) including our constitutional rights and responsibilities in Sunday school curricula; and (iv) growing the group by raising awareness of constitutional protections in local churches. Additionally, participant feedback was collected at the program's conclusion.

The CSI-SEVA would like to express its gratitude to the Rt. Rev. Baker Ninan Fenn, Bishop of the Cochin Diocese, for graciously accepting the programme's proposal and for assigning responsibilities to people who easily satisfied our logistical demands. We additionally appreciate the decision to choose and deploy energetic group from the diocese of Malabar by the Bishop Rt. Rev. Royce Manoj Kumar Victor. Rev. Praise Thaiparambil and Mr. Ajesh deserve special recognition for their continued assistance to team SEVA during the planning and implementation of the programme.

Mr. Praveen Daniel,
Programme Executive,
CSI SEVA



Church Enlightened - Informed and Responsible Citizenship 2023 Seminar

Introduction:

Welcome to the summary of the Church Enlightened – Informed and Responsible Citizenship 2023 seminar held at the CSI Epiphany Cathedral in Dornakal on May 4, 2023. This seminar aimed to foster knowledge, reflection, and collaboration among attendees, equipping them with insights and strategies for responsible citizenship and mission work in contemporary society. Let's explore the highlights of this enlightening event.

Inaugural Session:

The seminar commenced with an opening prayer led by Rev. K. Senam Raj, Chairman of the Cathedral and Principal of the Intermediate Junior College. Rev. Benjamin Inbaraj and Rev. Navagnana Prasad, Directors of CSI-SEVA, delivered introductory remarks, expressing gratitude for the participants' presence. Bishop Amma, the President of the Women's Fellowship, shared inspiring words, while the officers of the Diocese conveyed their support. Rt. Rev. Dr. Padma Roa, Bishop of Dornakal Diocese, offered the closing prayer and benediction, invoking blessings upon the gathering.

Worship:

The talented Dornakal Team led the worship segment, creating a spiritual atmosphere filled with devotion and praise. Through soul-stirring music and heartfelt prayers, the worship set the tone for the enlightening sessions that followed.

Inauguration & Felicitation:

The highlight of the inaugural session was the momentous inauguration and felicitation ceremony. Bishop and Bishop Amma, accompanied by Rev. M. Benjamin Inbaraj, graced the stage, emphasizing the importance of informed and responsible citizenship within the Church through their inspiring messages.

Keynote Address:

Rev. Seenam Raj delivered a thought-provoking keynote address on "The Need for Renewed and Committed Ministry in a Multi-Religious Society." He highlighted the significance of embracing the evolving societal landscape while upholding the principles of the Christian faith.

Sessions:

Session I: To Profess To Propagate: Constitutional Guarantees for Christian Mission

Rev. Purushottam Dasari presented an insightful session on the constitutional guarantees for Christian missions, exploring the rights and responsibilities bestowed upon the Church.

Session II: Constitutional Guarantees for the Protection of Minority Rights

Adv. Pakalapati Alexander John Sekhar Raj shed light on the constitutional guarantees in place to protect the rights of religious minorities, outlining the legal framework designed for their safeguarding.

Session III: Human Rights and Civil Liberties

Adv. Pagolu Kishore conducted an engaging session on human rights and civil liberties, emphasizing responsible citizenship in protecting and promoting these fundamental principles.

Group Discussion: Challenges - Opportunities for Mission

Participants engaged in dynamic group discussions focused on the challenges and opportunities for mission work. Through collaboration and shared purpose, strategies were explored to address specific challenges within youth, women, and missionary spheres.

Day 2:

The second day began with worship led by the Dornakal Team, inspiring attendees to deepen their faith and commitment to responsible citizenship. Bishop Amma delivered a powerful sermon centered on Exodus 21, highlighting the dangers of idol worship and the importance of aligning behavior with the teachings of Scriptures.

Session IV: Contemporary Context and the Shrinking Space for Democracy

Rev. Pratap, the Principal of Bible College in Dornakal, delivered a thought-provoking session on the contemporary context and the challenges faced by democracy. He emphasized the active engagement in civic responsibilities and safe guarding democratic values.

Panel Discussions: Challenges and Opportunities for Mission II

Rev. Pratap facilitated engaging panel discussions on the challenges and opportunities for mission work in the present context. Attendees exchanged ideas.

Jason Alexander,
Program Executive,
CSI-SEVA



Mission to Seafarers Partner's meet

Mr. Thomas O'Hare, Programme Manager of the Mission to Seafarers, London meets with CSI SEVA in Chennai at the CSI Centre on the 21st of April 2023. Rev. Benjamin Inbaraj, the Director of SEVA, gave a brief introduction about SEVA on the whole. Rev. Navagnana Prasad, Director designate, CSI SEVA and Rev. Clement Rajan, Chaplain, MtS Madras, was also present at the meeting. Mr. Praveen Daniel shared the future plans of families' programme through a document which was also briefly discussed. This group also discussed about programme functionality and the need for expansion of the ministry across different areas.

The members of team SEVA from different professional specializations presented their programmes to the programme manager through a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Thomas was intrigued and appreciative of the munificent work SEVA does. There were also quite a few deliberations which took place post each presentation. Mr. Thomas also got the opportunity to visit the CSI St Mary's Church at Fort St. George, where the Church has a rich history of ministering among Seafarers.

Mr. Praveen Daniel,
Programme Executive,
CSI SEVA



Inauguration of Peace Hub on Ambedkar's Birth Anniversary - KCD/CSI-SEVA

On April 14, PISTIS, or "Peace Initiatives for Social Transformation & Interfaith Solidarities," was launched at Bangalore's Goodwill Christian College for Women by Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) of SEVA and the Social and Economic Concerns (SEC) committee of the Karnataka Central Diocese. This peace initiative coincided with the 132nd birth anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The KCD Bishop, Rt Rev. Dr. Prasana Kumar Samuel, and the Diocesan Officers unveiled the inaugural plaque in the presence of Rev. M. Benjamin Inbaraj the Director, CSI-SEVA and Mr. Praveen Daniel, the Programme Executive, and other dignitaries. The opening prayer was delivered by Rev. Dr. Dexter Maben, Vice President of the Diocese. Then, students from the Goodwill Christian School sang a beautiful song. A brief video presentation was then made to highlight the purpose of "PISTIS."

Bishop began his speech by stating that the peace of God is distinct from the peace of this world. You cannot have peace with your neighbours unless you have peace with God. He also highlighted a few concepts

to convey the significance of peace activities, Treat others as you would like to be treated, listen to what others have to say, accept differences of opinion, keep an eye on the way you speak, let go of the past, don't hold grudges, stand up for the vulnerable, and learn from people who are involved in peace initiatives. May this peace centre (PISTIS), he said in closing, be a place where people may come with conflicts, where reconciliation transpires and that there may be a profound shift in the way people perceive and interpret the world.

Greeting the momentous occasion on behalf of the CSI Synod, Director of CSI-SEVA Rev. M. Benjamin Inbaraj impressed upon the gathering the urgency of the mission of fostering peace among communities. The CSI Synod has always placed a great priority on promoting peace. No country can withstand religious fanaticism. People have a tendency to be influenced by polarising factors. To counter dividing tendencies, communities of peace must be quickly established. He also offered some suggestions for initiatives that could be taken by "PISTIS," including, periodic

study circles that begin with the Indian Constitution, debates that feature the responses of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to the discussions and issues raised in the Constituent Assembly, interreligious social activism, and training youth in democratic citizenship that focuses on more than just promoting peace. Finding reasons to stand together against dividing influences ought to be the ultimate goal.

The day's guest lecturer was delivered by Rev. Dr. Y. T. Vinayaraj, Director, CISRS, on the theme: "Ambedkar and Peace: Interpreting His Philosophy for the Contemporary Indian Context". He started his presentation with a quote by the famous Nobel laureate, Bishop Desmond Tutu, "There is no peace because there is no justice. There can be no real peace and security until there be first justice enjoyed by all the inhabitants of that beautiful land. The Bible knows nothing about peace without justice, for that would be crying 'peace, peace, where there is no peace'". He praised Dr. Ambedkar as one of India's finest philosophers who had connected peace and justice.

Additionally, he spoke about how Dr. Ambedkar described outcaste

as a destructive social structure. He continued by discussing Dr. Ambedkar's political philosophy, the prevalence of exclusionary politics, and the vast disparity between political conscience and social morality. He emphasised the importance of morally deconstructing socio-political consciousness, warning that if we don't, there won't be any peace in society. He wrapped up by saying how religion has contributed to social marginalisation in India, especially the rejection of Dalit rights.

Majoritarianism, communalism, neo-capitalism, and neo-populism are all current political trends. As a result, social, democratic, and egalitarian principles are put in jeopardy. Justice must exist for there to be true peace. After his insightful presentation, there was an engaging question and answer period during which a great deal of thought-provoking conversation took place. Rev. Christopher Samuel, Assistant Secretary of the Diocese and Chairperson of SEC, KCD, facilitated this discussion.

In his closing remarks, the Bishop stressed that we must encourage peaceful coexistence because peace



is eluding us. Bishop also offered some recommendations for how to move PISTIS forward, including (i) dialogue and communication among people, groups, and communities, (ii) education and awareness, (iii) advocacy and activism, (iv) interfaith activities and services, and (v) art and culture. All of these activities must lead to transformation; people's thoughts must be transformed in the direction of peace. Accepting each other as brothers and sisters and learning to coexist can help us grow. Moving forward in the way that God wants.

Rev Rachel, Convener, SEC, KCD, shared the vote of thanks towards the end. Rev. Sudhakar Joshua,

KCD, subsequently prayed. Rev. Naveen K. George from the diocese masterfully hosted the entire event. The CSI SEVA wants to thank the Bishop, Diocesan Authorities, and SEC Board Chairperson for their continued support and interest in peace initiatives. We would also want to thank the Principal, Treasurer, staff, and students of CSI Goodwill Christian College for Women for their hospitality and excellent arrangements. It is necessary to express gratitude to the participants who took time out to be a part of the initiative.

Praveen Daniel,
Programme Executive,
CSI SEVA

Recasting the Mission Methods to Address the Contemporary Challenges

On April 12 and 13, 2023, the Church Enlightened: Informed and Responsible Citizenship second phase's Malayalam regional programme was organized by CSI SEVA and CSI South Kerala Diocese at LMS compound, Thiruvananthapuram. A total of 52 participants from East Kerala Diocese, Kollam Kottarakara Diocese and South Kerala Diocese participated in the programme. Rev. M. Benjamin Inbaraj, the Director of CSI-SEVA shared reflection on Mark 10: 32-45, the text talks about the demand of sons of Zebedee for reservation of seats for them in the kingdom of God. He stressed the point that Jesus was on his journey to Jerusalem and identified the contemporary church in its journey to Jerusalem. He brought

forth the various ways in which the church faces persecutions and challenges in the present times.

The seminar was officially inaugurated by Rev. M. Benjamin Inbaraj, in his inaugural address he stressed how the corporates are exploiting the resources of people for their own selfish purposes. The corporate intervention and invasion in the case of Vizhinjam Port in Kerala, recent introduction of Amul milk in Karnataka are also brought to light. Rev. Inbaraj also has drawn attention to the inhuman treatment at Fr. Stan Swamy, how those who protest for their rights are treated as anti-nationals and how the religious festivals are communalized. The corporatizing of wealth of each state by the centre is evident in the



sub-leasing of huge Government projects. Rev. Benjamin Inbaraj shared the programme's focus which was to inform the Church about the contemporary social, political, and religious situation in the nation and the constitutional benefits that we as citizens have.

The next session was dealt by Adv. Prem Dominic who highlighted the constitutional guarantees for the protection of minority rights. Indian

Constitution, which is popularly acknowledged as the supreme law of the land is based on the reformatory laws of the Bible. The base of Indian Constitution is formed by the British, since the Constitution was an enlarged version of the Indian Council's Act of 1935. The Indian Penal Code was in fact shaped by Colonel Maculay during 1860's. Though there are ample agencies and commissions for the welfare of the minority communities, the Christian communities are not properly treated. There is an urgent need of encouraging our children to channelize their potential to reach up to these reputable positions. In the sharing session, responding to a question, Adv. Prem Dominic emphasised the necessity of constituting a legal board in the dioceses of the Church of South India in order to defend the challenges that the church face in the contemporary times.

The guest speaker, Adv. Deepu Nazareth talked about Human Rights and Civil Liberties. He spoke about the need of having thorough knowledge of the fundamental rights of every citizen of the country. Though every year 10th December is celebrated as Human Rights day, the fundamental rights of the citizens are at risk now. The six fundamental rights that the Indian

Citizens are entitled to include the right to equality, the right to freedom, the right against exploitation, the right of freedom of religion, educational and cultural rights and the right to get constitutional remedies. A citizen can approach the court in the case of infringement of fundamental rights. After which, one of the participants shared his personal encounter with the system, speaking about the challenges he faced while ministering in rural context.

In the thematic session, To Profess & To Propagate: Constitutional Guarantees for Christian Mission, Adv. Vinu Vinayakan stressed the need for religious communities to enforce their rights that are guaranteed by the constitution. The right to propagate religion is subject to public order, morality and health. No one is entitled to breach these limits that violate the freedom and right of the other. He put forth examples of various legal cases involving minority institutions and individuals and to throw light upon the exercise of minority rights to religious freedom.

Valedictory Session

The Most Rev. A. Dharmaraj Rasalam, Moderator, CSI & Bishop of the South Kerala Diocese, graced the occasion with his presence. The

Moderator spoke about the current context of Mission and the shrinking space for the same. He emphasized the importance of awareness about the constitutional provisions and protection for the Mission of the Church. He advised the younger generation to become aware of the contribution made by early Christian Mission towards the Nation building of India.

During the valedictory session, the Moderator graciously presented certificates to all the participants. The Bishop, Diocesan Authorities, and Youth Board Convenor Rev. Bright are all to be thanked on behalf of the CSI SEVA for their support towards the initiative. We also want to express our sincere appreciation to the staff of South Kerala Diocese for their hospitality. This two-day event organized by Mr. George Wesley and Mr. Praveen Daniel, Programme Executives, CSI-SEVA and Rev. Bright Mohan, Youth Board Convenor, SKD.

Praveen Daniel,
Programme Executive,
CSI SEVA

** Documented with the help of Rev. Shiju R. Das and Rev. Sherin T. Raj of CSI South Kerala Diocese.*

Karimnagar Diocesan Youth Conference

Karimnagar Diocesan Youth Conference held at CSI Synod Centre from 27th to 29th March 2023 with the theme, "Spirituality of the Youth in the Contemporary World." This conference was inaugurated by the Most Rev. A. Dharmaraj Rasalam, Moderator of CSI; the Rt. Rev. Dr. K. Reuben Mark, Deputy Moderator of CSI; Mr. C. Fernandas Rathina Raja, General Secretary of CSI; Prof. Dr. B. Vimal Sukumar, Hon. Treasurer of CSI, along with the Directors of CSI and other clergy.

First Session was taken by the Rt. Rev. Dr. K. Reuben Mark, Deputy Moderator of CSI. Bishop explained the need of spirituality in the lives of

young people amidst many challenges in this contemporary world. Bishop has explained the achievements of Joseph from Genesis 39-45 chapters and appealed that young people should take up the responsibility of leading a spiritual life. Second Session was taken by Mrs. M. Sneha Prarthana Nischal, Programme Executive of CSI SEVA focusing on the theme from Sociological perspective. Third Session was taken by Rev. S. John, Presbyter from Karimnagar Diocese focusing on the theme from the Old Testament Perspective. Fourth Session was led by Rev. V. John Pradeep, Faculty from Gurukul Lutheran Theological College focusing on the theme from New Testament Perspective. Holy Communion

Service was conducted for the CSI Synod Staff and Participants. Directors of the CSI Synod explained various activities of their departments. Rev. Ch. John Nischal Kumar, Director of the Department of Youth, CSI Synod; Rev. Maxcin John, Director of the Department of Mission and Evangelism, CSI Synod; Rev. Benjamin Inbaraj, Director of CSI SEVA; Rev. Christopher Dharmaraj, CSI-EMS Support Officer and Rev. Anilal M. Jose, Director of the Department of Pastoral Concerns, CSI Synod explained their departmental programmes and activities.

Rev. Ch. John Nischal Kumar,
Director, Department of Youth,
CSI Synod

Inauguration of Peace Hub on Ambedkar's Birth Anniversary KCD/CSI-SEVA



Recasting the Mission Methods to Address the Contemporary Challenges



Karimnagar Diocesan Youth Conference



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