

# VAIHARAI

(The Dawn)

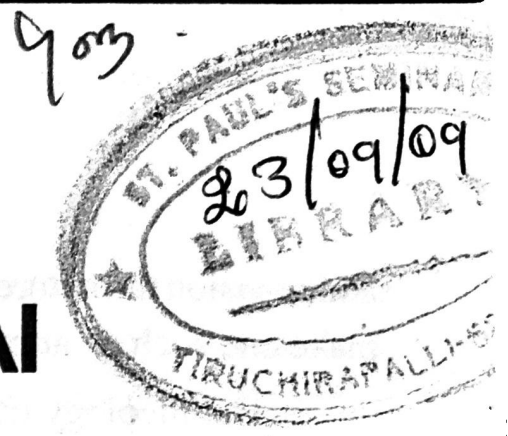
A Theological Half-Yearly

Vol.14 No.1

Jan - Jun 2009

## Contents

- |    |  |     |
|----|--|-----|
|    | Editorial  | 1   |
| 1. | To be a Christ to the Community:<br>Challenges to Priestly Life and Ministry<br>- Fr. Jacob Parappally, MSFS | 5   |
| 2. | The Identity of the Ministerial Priest in<br>Communion with the Bishop<br><i>Most Rev. Agnelo</i>            | 23  |
| 3. | The Role of Presbyter and the<br>Mission of Laity in India Today<br>- Fr. D. Alphonse                        | 37  |
| 4. | Priest, Minister of the Sacraments<br>- Fr. S. Arulsamy  | 60  |
| 5. | Diocesans Daring to Dream Different:<br>Evolving Creative Models of Ministry<br>- Fr. V. Maria Alphonse      | 81  |
| 6. | A Case for the Ongoing Formation of the<br>Diocesan Clergy<br>- Fr. Lawrence Pinto msji                      | 100 |
| 7. | An Assessment of Common and Ministerial<br>Priesthood in the Light of c.517§2<br>- Fr. Norbert Thomas        | 122 |
| 8. | Theology of D.S. Amalorpavadass Aimed at<br>Making Human Community<br>- Fr. Susaimichael Peter Roy           | 137 |



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## Editorial

Pope Benedict XVI has declared June 19, 2009 – June 11, 2010 as the year of priests with a clarion call to the priests for “interior renewal and commitment” patterned on the life and ministry of St. John Mary Vianney. The Pope suggests that priest’s commitment to the people should flow from his commitment to Christ. Of course commitment to Christ should not and can not be separated from commitment to people, because the former should find its expression in and through the latter. However, a priest’s commitment to the people is basically formed, nurtured, nourished and energised by his personal relationship with Christ. The more he is tuned by the heart and mind of Christ, the more effective his ministry is. To be tuned by the heart and mind of Christ one has to personally relate with him. In other words, a priest’s service to the people should spring from his personal relationship with Christ.

However, Pope’s express call also means much more than interior renewal. As much as we give importance to the interior renewal, we should also, in the light of the theological developments that has taken place in the last couple of decades, make attempts to redefine and reorient the very concept of ministerial priesthood, its role and its mission today. Failing which, we may sometimes lay more and undue accent on the cultic function of priesthood. In such a case, the interior renewal may not issue in the desired commitment. Therefore we should take the Pope’s call seriously and make necessary attempts to rethink

and re-vision the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood. We make one such an attempt in this issue of *Vaihari*.

The theology of priesthood and subsequently the identity of priests have developed much since Vatican II. Yet, a good number of Christians still perceive the priest as a mediator between God and humans. In this context, Dr. Jacob Parapally throws light on what it means to say that Jesus is the only mediator between God and humans. He also discusses the concepts *alter Christus* and *in Persona Christi* to explain the incarnational leadership role of the priest in a community.

The relational nature of the identity of the priest also includes his relationship with the presbyterium presided over by the bishop. Communion with one's bishop is a necessary prerequisite for a priest to exercise his priestly ministry effectively. However, sometimes the relationship between the priest and his bishop is strained for various reasons. Investigating what constitutes 'presbyterium' from the vantage point of communion ecclesiology, Bishop Agnelo Gracias points out certain consequences it has on both the bishop and the priests and discusses the identity of priest in terms of his relationship with the bishop.

To respond creatively to the various pastoral needs, priests assume different roles in their ministry. We are sometimes confused as to what the identity of the priest is and what role he should assume. These questions have become more pertinent in the context of the laity becoming increasingly conscious of their role in the Church and society, and in the context of the developments that have taken place in the theological arena. Taking the changing context and the theological developments into account, Dr. D. Alphonse shapes the contours of the identity of the priest in relation to the identity and mission of laity in India.

In a priest's every day life one of his chief activities is administering sacraments. Reflecting on this ministry, Dr. Arulsamy

stirs our mind raising certain pertinent questions as to whether the priests are serious with their ministry as the ministers of the sacraments and suggests different ways to celebrate the sacraments meaningfully.

While the majority priests are very comfortable with the routines in their life, there are priests who are pathfinders and trend setters in the pastoral ministry. Many a time these innovative and creative pastors' inspiring and challenging ministries are not brought to the limelight. Fr. Maria Alphonse culls out four of such creative models of ministry and highlights them to make other priests become aware of their creative potentials.

Ongoing formation of the diocesan priests in India should be one of the topmost priorities of the Indian Church. As of now, the Indian Church pays scant attention to this reality. Fr. Pinto passionately argues for a systematic ongoing formation of the diocesan clergy, indicating the areas as well as a tentative structure of such an ongoing formation.

Viewing the relationship between the common priesthood and ministerial priesthood from canonical perspective, Dr. Norbert Thomas, in reference to c.517 § 2 offers some clarity on the collaboration between the laity and the clergy in living out the threefold mission given by Jesus.

**P.S. Sebastian**

**Editor**