

VAIHARAI

(The Dawn)

A Theological Half-Yearly

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The main scope of VAIHARAI published by THEDAL VELIYEEDUGAL is to foster reflection on theological issues in India and elsewhere in the light of the Christian faith and other religious traditions. The opinions expressed in the Journal are those of the author and not necessarily those of the editorial board or of the publisher.

VAIHARAI

New Forms of Pastoral Ministry

From Editor's Desk

Jesus remained, remains and will forever remain a basic foundation for our pastoral ministry. He came to serve and called all of us to serve others. "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). His penultimate act of kneeling down to wash the feet of the disciples before he was laden to carry the cross was to show them and us how we ought to emulate his servant model of ministry in our day to day lives. After the Pentecost, being rejuvenated by the Holy Spirit, the disciples set out to serve the people of God through their ministry. The mission that Jesus entrusted to his disciples continues today and according to the need of the hour takes new forms of pastoral ministry.

The Scriptures and the teachings of the Church have classified the pastoral ministry in terms of *tria munera*, i.e. ministry of Sanctification, ministry of Word and ministry of Governing. The Second Vatican Council played a pivotal role to go beyond these traditional forms of ministry and encouraged new forms and new approaches to pastoral ministry by reading the "signs of the times" (*Gaudium et Spes* 4). One must never forget that this was and has been a special call of the Holy Spirit to the entire Church.

Since the time of Pope John Paul II we have been living in the era of new evangelization. Consequently, amidst of new situations the new concept of "new way of being Church" has emerged in the Asian Church.

In the new evangelization, the Church awakened to acknowledge and respect the goodness and the rays of truth present in other religions. The awareness of being part of a multi-religious and multi-cultural world expanded vistas of the Church to take initiatives to dialogue with other churches, religions and cultures. This calls the Catholic Church to design more relevant and appropriate methods of proclaiming the Word of God in the face of the multi-religious and multi-cultural context of India.

According to Pope Francis, “Pastoral care is to bow down before the wounds of the human person, to understand, cure and heal them is the task of the Church that trusts in the light and strength of the Risen Christ”. Pope Francis does not fail to inspire the people every day with his simplicity, compassion and pastoral zeal. Pope Francis reminds the pastoral workers to give merciful accompaniment to the people who are in difficult situation. He expresses his concern to the wounded by stating that the church is the ‘field hospital’. Also, he instructs the pastoral workers ‘to take on the smell of the sheep’, and ask them to ‘go towards the periphery’. Since the time he became the Pope he has been a beacon of pastoral concern and hope. He can be rightly called the ‘father of the renaissance of the pastoral ministry’. His life stands a greater witness to the gospel message and the kingdom of God. His embrace of the sick, his choice of being poor and being with the poor, and compassion and care for the prisoners, aged, differently-abled, migrants, divorced and remarried, homosexuals and etc show that he is epitome of introducing and encouraging new forms of pastoral ministry in the post modern world. He leads us by example to perform effectively new forms of pastoral ministry in the particular cultural context. We just need to open our eyes and allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit and do the kingdom ministry as a humble servant of God.

We present here five articles on the theme of New Forms of Pastoral Ministry. Most Rev. Dr. Singaroyan S. in his article writes on the new

approaches to pastoral ministry today. According to him pastoral ministry is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ which has origin from God. Pastoral ministry is nothing but participation in God's work of transforming the community of faith. He says the new situations place before us the new avenues and newer vistas for pastoral ministry. He also discusses clearly in a new perspective the pastoral methodology required for today's changing world. In the new approach to pastoral ministry the author gives 50 different types of pastoral ministry and 12 essential characteristics for doing effective pastoral ministry in our parishes. Hence all the pastors are invited to seek, discover and formulate new perspectives and new methodology in their pastoral work.

Dr. Ubald M. in his article brings out clearly the new forms of ministries, its need and biblical basis. He says that the Church is a movement...a movement of Faith, Hope and Love. Church is an organism...an organism of Life, Joy and Peace. Hence the movement and organism join together to create a living Church which is expressed in its variety of ministries in the global village. These very many new ministries go in accordance and conformity with time and space of the moving earth. Therefore the universal Church and local churches involve deeply into the lives of the people as the flour until it is all leavened (Matthew:13:33). The Church is effective not because of its numbers but because of its values called kingdom of God. Only various ministries to various people as Jesus lived and did could be signs and symbols of this kingdom of God. Therefore the new forms of ministries that appear today in the Church may appear radical but are deeply rooted in the Scriptures.

Dr. Antony Raj A. in his article on the Ministry to the Elderly speaks that aging is indispensable. As a man is born anew so should he be aging. He gives a positive stroke to the elderly that aging is part and parcel in one's life. No one can escape from this trap. The elderly must have a positive

approach to their status of aging and must actively engage themselves in contributing their expertise to the society. They must accept old age as a possibility for hope and for fuller life. The author biblically illustrates that longevity is wisdom; wisdom is a gift of God to be accepted by every elderly. The Church pays greater respect for the elderly and the elderly people must be prepared to accept that the normal span of lives increases and their physical capacities are often diminished. The author concludes with a few concrete pastoral suggestions for the care for the elderly.

Dr. Benedict Sathianathan in his article on “Healing the Wounds of the Divorced and the Remarried” puts forth pro and con arguments for admitting the divorced and remarried to Holy Communion in the Catholic Church. He shows the appeal of Pope John Paul II that the pastors should not lump together all the divorced and the remarried under same category, rather to make a careful pastoral discernment and to note carefully those who are not subjectively guilty. He continues to say that Pope Francis is also no way departing from the long standing traditional teaching of the church on marriage and indissolubility. Instead, he invites the pastors not to condemn everyone equally, but to evaluate the verity of situations of the divorced and remarried and to provide special pastoral care for those who are innocent and guiltless subjectively.

Bro. Starlin S.L. deals with the topic on “The Theological Discussion on Refugees”. He very well depicts the theological perspectives on the existing problem of refugees. It is refugees who were chosen by God as his people: he walks with them in the land, and protects them throughout the history. They too are the image of God. The author beautifully states that the Word of God motivates and inspires us to care for them and to be at their side through our mission. Since God gives care and protection they are not invited to be present in refugee status of life. It is an invitation to each one of us to listen to the God of refugees and to be like God in showing solidarity with

them. God calls us to love and befriend the refugees. Thus, this article reveals a new theological understanding on Refugees and call each one of us to render urgent pastoral care for the refugees.

Dr A. Albert

Editor