



FAITH IN

Jesus

A Passionate Call for Liberation

Fr. Thomas Kocherry



This is the 'Year of Faith' and therefore a reflection on the Faith in Jesus is very relevant. Faith in Jesus can be understood only in the context of Jewish history. We encounter Jesus Christ through the events of enslavement and liberation, institutionalisation and priesthood, temples, gods and idols that were part of Jewish history. Above all, we meet him in and through the Spirit filled prophetic calls.

Yahweh was the only God of the Israelites. Yahweh has no image. Yahweh is Spirit. Israelites lived among people who worshipped many gods and idols. Israelites had no kings in the beginning, but always wanted to have kings and temples. They were enslaved by pagan kings and lived as slaves.

In order to comprehend our Faith in Jesus, we must reinterpret the Old Testament (OT) from the perspective of Jesus and attempt to understand the God of Genesis, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Jacob, the Temple, and Prophets in the way Jesus did.

CREATION AND THE FALL

Creation embodies the beauty of God, and are called to be co-creators with God. The “fall” in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of time was a radical shift from our original trust in God, and of living and working with God to our taking control of our lives and managing it our way. In modern times, we describe this as “civilization” where sinister powers rule the world. This so called civilization is an exclusive expression of profiteering consumerism of a few at the expense of the vast majority. The forces of globalization, neo-liberalism and militarism are manifestations of these powers that have transformed us into such selfish consumers, destroyers of nature and life.

God has given us life which, however small it is, cannot be taken away by the state or any human structure. Jesus came to free us from these powers and principalities and re-establish our trust in God. Jesus promises that when we first seek the Kingdom of God, our food, drink and clothing (the things we need) will be provided to us.



CALL OF ABRAHAM

God called Abraham around 1450 BC: “Leave your country, your people and your fathers, household, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you, I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and the people on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:1-3). Through his obedience to God’s call, a new community of believers was established.



Yahweh was present in the community. They experienced Yahweh’s abiding presence by carrying the Scroll of the Ten Commandments with them wherever they lived.

Slavery was considered to be a source of division and sin. Holiness meant unity and freedom from division and slavery. However the Israelites were made slaves by other kings. They wanted to have their own kings, idols and temples. In the midst of these struggles, Yahweh continued to remain as the only God in Spirit. In this context, slavery, idol worship, temples and gods were seen as sin. Holiness implied unity and adherence to Yahweh’s will. However Jesus also wanted to convert the den of thieves into the House of God (Mt. 21).

CALL OF MOSES

The Israelites continued to live in oppression. In 1250 BC Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob chose and appointed Moses to liberate the Israelites from the Egyptian slavery (Ex. 3:1-22). Yahweh led them from Egypt towards the Promised Land. However, they did not embrace freedom. Instead, they created a golden calf and started worshipping it.



The Israelites soon got fed up with the manna God gave them and went to the extent of complaining to Moses that they would rather go back to Egypt and its fleshpots. Moses was frustrated and requested Yahweh to spare him from this call of leading a stubborn and stiff-necked people. At this, Yahweh gave his Spirit to all the elders. Yahweh took his spirit and gave it to all the elders saying that from then on they would be a team – a community, sharing the burdens of each other (Num: 11). Here we understand that sin was slavery and idol worship. Holiness, instead, was team work, community building, liberation from slavery, and worship of Yahweh in Spirit. Jesus came to recapture this spirit of liberation-“let the people go” (Ex. 5/1-3).

SABBATH

Sabbath was created for the freedom of slaves, who without any rest were forced to work all the seven days of the week. With the inauguration of Sabbath law they were given a day of rest. Every 7th year would be called sabbatical year, and the slaves got a whole year to rest. Along with them, the land too got rest - sustaining creation. The produce of the land could be taken by the slaves for their consumption. Every 50th year was to be a Jubilee Year, the acceptable year of the Lord,



when all the slaves were freed, their debts written off, and each of them got her/his land back (Lev. 25).

Jesus saw his mission as proclaiming this acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4/18). Unfortunately, once institutionalised, this law of the Sabbath lost its radical nature, reducing

itself to a ritual. The ritualistic observance was devoid of the liberating value of the Sabbath. We are told that the Disciples of Jesus broke these rituals in front of the critical eyes of the Pharisees. In fact, Jesus came to fulfil the law and to recapture the original, radical dimension of the Sabbath law (Mt. 12/18).

JERUSALEM TEMPLE

The demand of the Israelites to have kings to rule over them and to have temples built became more intense as time passed. In 900 BC, Solomon was anointed as the first king of Israel. Later he built the Temple in Jerusalem. The scroll of the Ten Commandments was placed in the Holy of Holies. Although they took pride in this Temple, it became a cause for division among the Israelites. The creation of the Holy of Holies gave rise to the institution of the cultic priesthood. Only two persons were allowed to enter the Holy of Holies - the king and the priest. While men alone were allowed into the main hall, women and children were kept outside the Temple.

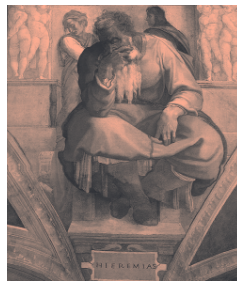


Male domination and priestly class became very distinct. Naturally, and before long, Jerusalem and the Temple became centres of religious and political powers. Thousands of priests were involved in offering worship at the Temple and they formed part of the money making racket (1 Kings: 1, 6, 7, 8). Jesus did not come in this line of ritualistic priesthood. He was a layman in the context of Jewish religion. But he became the High Priest for all, when he accepted death on the cross, in obedience to the will of the Father and as a prophetic call. Priesthood of the Church should be in this line of Jesus: a Prophet for liberation.

CLASSICAL PROPHETS

The prophets of the Old Testament protested against the institutionalised, powerful, and priestly Jerusalem, resulting in their martyrdom. They were spokespersons for Justice and freedom to the poor and the slaves (Is. 10:1-4). Isaiah spoke against Jerusalem (Is. 22). He warned against the priests and the Temple (Is. 28:7-22). His was a voice of liberation (Is. 61:1-2). In fact, all the prophets were champions of Justice (Is. 65:17-25) and the forerunners of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus.

Jeremiah invited the Israelites to repent (Jer. 3:6-13). If not, Jerusalem would be destroyed, he said (Jer. 21:1-10). The destruction of Jerusalem became a reality (Jer. 52:1-34). Ezekiel too declared punishment for Jerusalem (Ez. 9). Hosea demanded repentance (Hos. 14). Joel's call to repentance was directly addressed to the priests (Joel 1:13-20). Such a call for repentance was again repeated by Amos (Amos 5:1-9).



Jonah was a prophet who was exclusive and elusive but God demanded him to be inclusive by accepting the people of Nineveh and preaching to them to repent. It signified not only a conversion of the people of Nineveh but also of Jonah himself. He needed an attitudinal change to be able to accept and include them as people chosen by God (Jon: 1,2,3,4). John the Baptist came as the final link in this long line of prophets. He had to “prepare the way of the Lord” - the Prophet par excellence - Jesus.

FAITH IN JESUS - INDICATIONS

What I have narrated above is a preparation to dive into the depths of faith in Jesus. Jesus was born in a manger, as a migrant (LK. 2:1-7). He had to run away to Egypt in order to escape from being murdered by Herod (Mt. 2:13-18). He grew up under the care of his parents, who were well versed in the OT (LK. 2:41-52). He was baptised at the age 30. He was faced with temptations prior to the declaration of his Mission. He proclaimed his mission – promise of an all inclusive freedom for all – the acceptable

‘Year of the Lord’ (Lk. 4:18). He challenged every one to seek the Kingdom and its justice. Those who accept the challenge would receive everything else in fullness (Mt. 6:33).

His mission, the proclamation of the Kingdom, led him to face opposition from religious and political leaders of his time (Mt. 23). Though he was innocent, he was sentenced to the biggest political punishment of being crucified on a cross between two notorious criminals (Mt. 27:11-26). His crucifixion and death ended in victory as he rose again, defeating sin and death (Mt. 28). The acute pain of separation he experienced in the face of death ought to lead us to an even more acute sense of expectancy and faith, and a more intensively burning love towards Christ, who suffered but overcame death through his resurrection.



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The apostles, disciples and all those who believed in Jesus lived and proclaimed his life and message. In fact, his life was his message. From birth to death he owned no private property. He totally depended on God, who gave him the fullness of life, as promised (Mt. 6:24-33). We cannot be satisfied with repeating what Jesus said, we should analyse our times in the same spirit that he had analysed his times. “We are called to preach the Gospel ever anew, Renewed Hope, Renewed Hearts, Renewed Structures for Mission.” (1)

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS OF FREED SLAVES: EARLY CHURCH AND MARTYRS UP TO 200 AD

Jesus followers were known as Christians, which meant people who were willing to die, like the Master. They lived as a closely knit community and shared everything in common. They remembered the Master at the breaking of the bread and in the narration of his stories and words (Acts 4:32-35). They were arrested and jailed (Acts 5:17-20). They feared no one. Stephen was stoned to death for his adherence to Jesus (Acts 7:54-60). Paul, the enemy of Jesus was converted to become a great apostle (Acts 8:1-9). The Christians became a big challenge to the Romans.



There was no institutional Church until 200 AD. "In fact, every thing the church owned at that time belonged to the poor. The affairs of the poor were the affairs of the church; it supported bereft women and children, the sick, and the destitute. This love made even the Christian women of rank give away their property and become beggars" (2). The priests came into being as part of necessity as teachers and leaders of the church, who dedicated their life to help others. They were there to guide and console the living Church – the people. They presided over the breaking of the Word and the Bread, which was a way to remember and relive Christ, his life and message.

GRADUAL INSTITUTIONALISATION

In 325 AD, the conversion of the Roman Emperor marked a turning point as it led to the institutionalisation of the life of Christians. Baptism became common (Rom. 6:1-11). The Church assumed a hierarchical and male dominated structure. Pope, Bishops and priests came into existence- though in the case of Peter, it was the strong faith in Jesus made him the leader of the people who followed Jesus (Mt. 16/13-19). Cathedrals and churches multiplied. Royal attires began to be used by the Pope and the Bishops.

The focus of the Church was turned towards quantity rather than quality. Rituals and dogmas replaced faith in Jesus. Formal mass, baptism and other sacraments became popular ways of practicing their Christian faith. Egyptian Monks were part of a protest movement, which was followed by the Monastic movement. Gradually more Religious groups came into being, vowing to the evangelical radicalism. However these too got institutionalised and they lost their original vision.

The Vatican II challenged all these institutions to 'return to the sources' - to understand and adhere to the original vision and commitment. It is in this context that we must consider our faith in Jesus today.

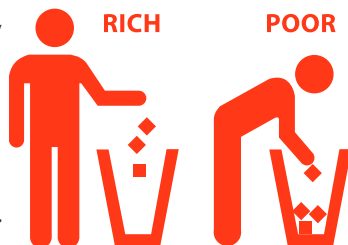


Faith in Jesus as a Liberating Force

THE CONTEXT: GLOBALIZATION, CAPITALISM

We are part of a world that is focussed on economic globalization and capitalism. Globalization means free movement of Capital. It facilitates amassing of profits by a few at the expense of the vast majority of people who do not have even the basic needs in life. Urge to amass wealth has led to unjust ways and means. In the process, justice, morality, labour laws, and respect for environment are thrown to the winds.

Corruption and price rise are thus linked with globalization. Worst of all, even the Church services have become money making rackets. Education and Health care are turned into profit making business.



The amassing of wealth by a few Billionaires has been protected by the powerful forces of the state. Nuclear plants churn out nuclear waste. Weapons of mass destruction are used as ways to protect the wealth of the rich. The vast majority are slowly being killed by these unjust structures that are controlled by corrupt and inhumane leaders of the world. This is the biggest violence in the world today. When the victims confront the unjust systems with arms they are termed as terrorists. When the State suppresses these violent movements, it is called war on terrorism. Peace is possible only if all violence is put to an end. That will be the dawning of the Reign of God. This is the Kingdom of God that Jesus envisioned and came to inaugurate.

PROPHETIC CALL IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

We need to understand the prophetic calls within the institutional Church. The responses to this call by these great men and women of the Church, especially Stephen, Paul, the Apostles, Martyrs, Francis of Assisi, Archbishop Romero, Sr. Rani Maria, Sr. Valsa John, Fr. A.T. Thomas, Graham Steines and his two sons, the Martyrs of Kandhamal, Fr. Roy Bourgeois MM, Fr. Tony Flannery, Dr. Martin Luther King, stand out as examples before us today. What we need today is the courage to live and express our faith in Jesus as each of them did. Jesus warned his disciples: "On my account you will be brought before governors and kings. All people will hate you because of me" (Mt. 10:18, 22). And so it happened and continues to happen to all those who uncompromisingly follow Him. Like Roy Bourgeois we have to express our faith in



Jesus through Liberative Actions. "Liberation theology recognizes and responds to a loving God who does not want anyone to suffer from poverty, oppression, violence, or discrimination" (3). The Church of today is not the Church of Christ if it does not demonstrate the courage to protest against the evils that are going on today.

We have only one Master. Books on rituals and dogmas are not of the true masters. This is very well expressed by the great Sadhu Sundar Singh: The Master never wrote anything down, nor did he ask his followers to record his teachings. His words are spirit and life. Spirit can only infuse spirit. Life can only infuse life. The Master's teaching cannot be contained on the pages of a book. Other great teachers left behind books to replace the living voice, to guide and help their bereft followers. But the Master did not do this, because he has not left us. He is always with us, and his living voice guides and counsels us. His followers recorded his teachings after his ascension as a help to those who cannot yet perceive his living presence. In the end, however, when people ask me, "What made you a follower of the Master?," I can only answer: the Master" (4) .

It is obvious then that we need a faith in Jesus lived as a prophetic call for liberation. We cannot continue to use rituals and dogmas without seeking the Kingdom and its justice, without bringing about the "acceptable year of the Lord". Sr. Valsa John was murdered because she stood with the tribals and their rights. She was murdered by the MNCs who were exploiting the tribals in Jharkhand. What is important is to create a vibrant, radical and revolutionary movement that remains energetic, radical and revolutionary.

CLASS CONTRADICTION AND LIBERATION

All around the world, there are several millions of victims of globalization who have organised themselves against the evils of globalization and they are fighting for justice and freedom. Over ten million fisher people are part of the 'National Fish Workers Forum' fighting against the import of 2660 deep sea industrial fishing vessels, resulting in stopping the import of these destructive vessels. This was one of the biggest victories against globalization in the world. The temptation for power, wealth and the use of short cuts was also faced by Jesus, as we do today (Lk. 4/1-12). We have to overcome these temptations through people's movements. We have to seek the Kingdom so that all the basic needs will be given to us (Mt. 6/24-34).

In Odisha, the victims of SEZ have been fighting against the Multi National Companies under the banner of POSCO. The fight is against the acquisition of their land for a South Korean MNC. For the past six years people have been fighting to protect their land, the only source of their livelihood and without much success so far.



Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) has been fighting against the Sardar Sarovar dam for the past 25 years, creating awareness among the people against the dangers of big dams. Millions of poor people are displaced putting their livelihood at stake. About 1 million landless dalits marched from Gwalior to Delhi, demanding implementation of Land Reform as mandated by the Indian Constitution. It was finally settled by the State to provide land to all the landless within a year. The work is progressing. Similarly in Chengara, Kerala the landless occupied an Estate for about two years. Finally it was settled by the Government to give 25 cents land to each of the families involved.

There are many movements in India: National Alliance of Peoples Movements (NAPM), Fisher Peoples Movements (NFF) (WFFP), Peasants Movements, Adivasi Movements, Women's Movements, Construction Workers Movements, and several trade unions around the world working towards a better and classless society. Many of these struggles are secular in nature, we experience the reign of God in each of these struggles, working towards the realization of the Kingdom of God and its justice. It is here that our faith in Jesus becomes real and tangible. This is the venue for seeking belief in the so called "non-believers" and unbelief in the so called "believers". We should be able to find truth and goodness in other faiths, religions and movements, and we should be able to discover our weakness through self criticism.

COMMUNITY BUILDING WITHOUT PRIVATE PROPERTY

In 1857, the Chief of the Whites from Washington came to Seattle to meet the Chief of the Red Indians, he brought with him gold in order to buy land from the natives. The Red Indians asked: "How could you buy air? The Creator created the Planet, land, water and air, meant for all humanity. It is crime if you amass land and water". In 1857, the British enacted the law legitimising all the conquered land as private property. It is a denial of God the Creator if we amass the land that actually belongs to all who have no land. It is time that through People's Movements we proclaim the 'acceptable year of the Lord' (Lk. 4:18), the Jubilee year (Lev. 25).



Jesus opened up the struggle against private property. He himself had left all that was his own; He had abandoned all privileges and given up all he possessed in order to go the way of love and sacrifice (Mat. 8:20). He is our example because he wanted no property. From the manger to the Cross, he was the poorest.

Gather no treasure for yourselves, gather no property; instead, store up something different for yourselves, that is, the love of your fellows. Let go of money, the perishable wealth, and instead take hold of imperishable wealth; then you will

be rich (Mat. 6:19–20). If we are true followers of Jesus we would be like Jesus. We should be poor like Jesus.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND LIBERATION

The gender contradictions in the Church and the society have become a burning issue today and everyone is part of this. Jyothy Singh Pande has become the heroine of today in the hearts of youth. The ideal paradigm is that of Jesus with the Samaritan Woman. We need to create a society of Jesus and the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:1-16), respecting one another like brother and sister.

The committee, which was tasked with suggesting legal reforms to deal with sexual assault cases, however said the minimum sentence for a rapist should be enhanced from 7 years to 10 and that life imprisonment must always mean jail for ‘the entire natural life of the convict’. It has also recommended the formation of a new constitutional authority like the CAG for dealing with issues related to education and non-discrimination of women and children. Presenting the report on ‘Amendments to Criminal Law’, Mr. Verma said at a time when there are talks of abolishing the death sentence, the committee has “enhanced the punishment to mean the remainder of life”. An overwhelming majority of scholars and women’s organisations had told the committee they were strongly against death penalty (6).

Anti-AFSPA champion Irom Sharmila had been charged with attempting to commit suicide by launching a fast unto death at Jantar Mantar in 2006. Ms. Sharmila had undertaken an indefinite fast since November 4, 2000 demanding repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. In the national capital, she hogged the limelight



with over 40 foreign newspapers and electronic media taking her interviews. She conveyed to journalists her disappointment at people not coming out openly to support her campaign (7).

Rape of the Earth and the Rape of women are intimately linked. The vulnerability is on the increase. This is what we see around us daily. The Capitalist mode of production based on growth is killing the earth and women in the world today. Ending violence upon women includes moving beyond the violent economy shaped by capitalist patriarchy to non-violent peaceful, economies which give respect to women and earth.

Women's priesthood in the Church has to be understood in the context of gender equality. "Doesn't the call to the priesthood come from God? Who are we, as men, to reject God's call to women?" (8) I feel that the Pope and theologians generally accept that there is no theological difficulty in ordaining women, but only the tradition in the Church creates a barrier in acting in favour of women! What a pity, that we are tied down by the tradition, rather than motivated by the Word of God! It is very consoling that there are numerous women's movements fighting gender inequality in the world today. The Church should pay heed to their struggles.

CASTE CONTRADICTION AND LIBERATION

Caste disparity has been going on in India for centuries. The urge to amass wealth has led to unjust ways and means. The struggle has been going on for centuries. Of course the need for reservation in jobs and education to the people of lower castes is understandable as it offers them opportunities for professional growth. We need to encourage inter-caste marriages all over India. Caste mixing in schools/educational institutions is very important.

The many movements working to restore equality in our society also concentrate on education as a process of empowerment. They work to secure the rights of admission to schools, drawing water from the public wells, entering temples and using roads. Christians are beyond all customs, caste, race and colour (Rom. 7:1-6). The words of Truth from Ambedkar to the dalits are themselves liberating: "My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organize; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side I do not see how we can lose our battle. The battle to me is a matter of joy. The battle is in the fullest sense spiritual. There is nothing material or social in it. For ours is a battle not for wealth or for power. It is battle for freedom. It is the battle of reclamation of human personality" (9).



ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRADICTIONS AND LIBERATION

The uneven growth model of development due to globalization is associated with pollution and the emission of carbon dioxide, directly contributing to the destruction of the Ozone layer. This is leading to climate change in the world today. This is the end result of today's growth model development. The ongoing struggles against globalization, corruption and price rise have become global.



Another destruction of environment is due to nuclear plants with all their uncontrollable radiation. Over 50,000 people have been fighting against Koodankulam Nuclear Plant in the state of Tamil Nadu for nearly two years. They are facing hundreds of police cases including sedition charges. They have contributed about 6 million rupees towards the fight against nuclearization. All the expenses are met by the earnings of the fisher people.

Soumya who has grasped the power of such movements, says: "Yes we know, in the far south of our nation, people are writing their own salvation, cradled by the sea, caressed by the wind. A brave new India is awaiting coronation" (10). We are waiting for a new Jerusalem where we have total harmony in nature (Rev.21:1-4). The life of the planet and the dependent health of the whole humanity should not be sacrificed by the greed of a few.

SACRAMENTS AND LIBERATION

Faith in Jesus clearly demands moving away from ritualism and dogmas towards liberation experience and prophetic proclamation. Baptism is a conscious adult decision of one's mission and call. It has to be a liberative call to mission (Mt. 3:13-17). Eucharist and priesthood have to be a commitment to the mission and one has to pay the prize for it (Mt. 26:26-29). Sacrifice is an indispensable part



of the Eucharistic celebration. Jesus in his prophethood, priesthood, and kingship, was the bearer of a new possibility of human, social and therefore political relationships. His baptism is the start and the cross and resurrection the culmination of the new regime which his disciples are called to share. Multiplication of loaves in the Gospels is related to the feeding of the hungry

(Jn. 6:5-14). Jesus is alive fully in these activities. "As long as you did it to the least of my brothers/sisters you did it to me" (Mt. 25:31-46). Confirmation is a conscious affirmation and courageous decision of commitment (Rom. 8:1-5). Confession is a public admission, reconciling with the community as part of the Eucharist (Mt. 6:9-14). Jesus says: "In praying do not heap up empty phrases...Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Mat 6:6-7). And He concludes:"... if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (6:14-15). If this prayer, then, is not a matter of " empty words" to inform God what we need but is a matter of forgiving one another, then it is suggested that it expresses a four-fold relationship: to God, one another, things and to structures. Marriage is an expression of these as a community in the Mission (Lk. 8:19-21), doing the will of the Father. We are asserting that we are saying good bye to come back with a new life. Thus all the sacraments become signs and reality of the reign of God (Lk. 17:29-31). Church as people of God is a sign of the Kingdom of God and its Justice.

EXCLUSIVE PROFIT MAKING EDUCATION VS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ALL

Christian missionaries were the pioneers of education among the poor. But today, education has become a money making business. English Medium schools and professional colleges, with profiteering motives is the main interest of Religious orders and dioceses. In 1969, the Church in India Seminar unanimously decided that Church institutions should not take appointment fee, admission fee, and capitation fee. But what is happening today?



Our faith in Jesus should take us to an all inclusive education for all with service mentality not profiteering. This commitment should be in every religious as a characteristic quality of our faith in Jesus. We have to collaborate with the GOI in the free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14, which is a constitutional commitment in India.

MEDICAL BUSINESS VS HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

Training Curriculum for
Community Health Workers



Dr. Anna Dengel was the pioneer of Medical service to the poor Muslim women in Rawalpindi, even instrumental in changing the Canon Law. This was the beginning of Medical Mission Sisters (MMS). As years passed by, the MMS hospitals became big Institutions catering to the rich. After the Vatican II, the MMS undertook a

socio-economic-political analysis of their institutions and found that they deviated from their original charism. They started giving up their big Hospitals catering to the rich. Unfortunately other Religious Orders started taking up big hospitals. What we need is a Church committed to the Medical field catering to the poor with basic health care. Faith in Jesus demands such prophetic call in Religious Orders and the Church. We need to collaborate with the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan of the Indian circle of the People's Health Movement, a worldwide movement to establish health and equitable development as top priorities through comprehensive primary health care and action on the social determinants of health.

SPIRITUALITY OF LIBERATION STRUGGLES

Contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the world that our financial systems, our advertising culture, and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully, honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter. This "internal" transformation is not more important than action for justice, but without it our search for justice or for peace becomes another exercise of human will, undermined by human self-deception.

The two callings are inseparable, the calling to "prayer and righteous action", as Dietrich Bonhoeffer puts it, writing from his prison cell in 1944. True prayer purifies the motive. True justice is the necessary work of sharing and liberating in others the humanity we have discovered in our contemplative encounter.

The price missionaries have to pay is the cross. We cannot escape the cross if we are committed to the Mission of Christ (Mt. 10:17-25). Cross, sufferings, and martyrdom are the price we have to pay for these struggles for liberation. Jesus' birth points us ultimately to his death and thus to his resurrection (12).

"We cannot escape the pain of the Cross. Even when everyone despaired at the hour when Christ was dying on the cross, Mary, serene, awaited the hour of the resurrection. Mary is the symbol of the people who suffer oppression and injustice. Theirs is the calm suffering that awaits the resurrection. It is Christian suffering" (13).



CONCLUSION

"There can be no true liberation until people are freed from sin. All the liberationist groups that spring up in our land should bear this in mind. The first liberation to be proposed by any political group that truly wants the people's liberation must be to freedom from sin. While one is a slave of sin – of selfishness, violence, cruelty, and hatred – one is not fitted for the people's liberation (14).

Let me conclude with the words of Pope Francis during his audience with journalists, in Vatican, on the Saturday after his election: "I would like to see a Church that is poor and a Church that is for the poor."

The Pope made this comment while explaining the reason for choosing the name Francis, after St. Francis of Assisi, the saint who is a symbol of peace, austerity and service to the poor (15). He called Francis "the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man.



Yes faith in Jesus is a passionate call for Liberation through non-violent means, and of being a Suffering Servant. We are at the end of the final battle, caught in the tussle between Life and Death. Remain, then, under God's command. The old world is overthrown and Jesus' Kingdom, it alone will arise from the ruins.

May His Kingdom come for all on earth and on all other planets. Amen.

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SOME COMMENTS

Thanks for the article, much appreciated. Pace e Bene,

Paul Hansen, CSSR, Canada.

I like this article and your reflection on faith in Jesus from the context of our society and the church. It is a timely contribution in the YEAR OF FAITH.

Dr. Mathew Paikada, OFM (Cap), Provincial.

I like the way you have gone about the article through the OT and then the NT and early Church and the process of Institutionalisation... and then applying to our context in India...

Thanks for sharing with me, all the best Tom

Your confrere

Dr. Ivel Mendana, CSSR, Redemptorist Seminary, Bangalore

A beautiful exposition of the Christian mission challenging us to respond to the world as Jesus did. Everything else in life is of relative value when it comes to the Family of God and its justice. I share your passion for justice and peace. I realize now more than ever how you gather strength for the unceasing striving for justice, peace and communion of all. May His Kingdom come.

Sr. Leela Jose, Executive Editor, 'Companion' Monthly

The ec/soc/pol/ rel. situation today in our country and the world calls for a complete turn over, if the common people are to be treasured and recognized as human, for didn't Christ take on our humanity precisely to liberate us from all that is inhuman. The conclusion from Oscar Romero gives a very good ending to the whole article. Thanks Tom for sharing with me, wishing you good health for the daily challenges that await you.

Sr. Colette, RGS, Bangalore

It is a well thought out comprehensive document dealing with faith, liberation theology, gender issues, freedom...etc. Well done. I can hardly add anything. Good luck and congratulations for speaking up...

Dr. Pia Povan, MMS,

Mary Giri Hospital, Bharananganam

It is very gratifying to learn that I have been of use to you. Thank you very much for the copy of final draft. May your article ignite in the hearts of people a faith that does justice!

Antony Arulraj, CBCI, Delhi

It is a very thoughtful article, which makes us think about our community and help us to come to realization that we, humans, should have same aim to overcome our fears, sins and stop being selfish. That only possible if we have real faith in Jesus, and his visions. We need to take care of each other as Jesus would want us and only together can we strive to better future. Need to be united facing the problems, challenges and dilemmas of the current "modern" times, keeping in our heart and mind what Jesus did for us and what we could and should do NOW. Let the fire in our hearts burn with a zeal to be there for our Lord.

With love,

Svetlana, Russia

Thank you very much for sending this wonderful article to me. I am not qualified enough to comment such a beautiful narration of the TRUTH! (Truth shall set you free!). I can only stand afar and admire the great work you continue to do with your life's example! My view on the subject is not of importance as it might seem be too extreme for some. It pains though, when we find people missing the whole essence of the message our Messiah delivered. We still find people twisting his words to suit their selfish purpose, in day to day life. The few who got it right, shout to the world to correct itself! But they are crucified, as history is repeated. All the best with this wonderful article. Let your words find it's true purpose – reach and ignite the right fertile minds, where it will flourish, spread and change this world as the Lord intended!

Loving regards,

Rajesh George, Dubai

Thanks ever so much for sending me your reflections. I read them with increasing interest as I came down the listings. One of the things that people like me believe is that Jesus offers redemption and freedom from contemporary forms of evil - the capitalists, the multinationals, Poscos and RSS. Your writing upholds the view people like me hold. We should, I think, use the bible in the civil society movement in a revolutionary way, hope to discuss these issues with you sometime when we meet and have time together, or at some seminar on the theme of the revolutionary content of the teachings of the Christ.

John Dayal

john.dayal@gmail.com www.johndayal.com

Thanks for trusting to share your article with me, I appreciate this very much. As I read your article, what came to me this is something we should use for Holy Week. Though you have not published this article, I feel it should be used in seminaries and novitiates to understand what Faith is all about. I would like that you would have given some practical suggestions for people to get engaged with those who are continually being denied their rights and are being victimized. How can we be their voices and power. I feel many of us have moved away from being

on the side of those being denied their rights and I get concerned as to how to make this happen. As I read more and reflect deeply I shall send you some more feedback. Thanks for taking the trouble to write and bringing in fresh and new thinking.

With many Blessings,

Dorothy Fernandes, PBVM, Patna

The article is very relevant in the context of the Church observing the Year of Faith. Faith is presented by the leaders of the Church today generally as the belief in the dogmas, rituals, traditions and ecclesiastic authority. The declaration of the year of faith appears to me as a return to the Pre-Second Vatican teachings of the Church. The Charismatic movement is contributing to make the Christians more superstitious and even obscurantists. All over the country there is a great revival of religiosity; the middle class is flocking to religious centres and god-men and they generously contribute to the construction of worship centres and organizing mega religious rituals. Pilgrimage has become religious tourism. Commercialization and politicization of religions have converted religions into a great divisive force and fundamentalism is being revived in all religions, including the Catholic Church. Against this backdrop your article tries to throw light on the meaning of faith in Jesus. The analysis clearly brings out that faith is the commitment to the vision, mission, values and principles of Jesus and living these values and principles at any cost. The reach of Jeevadhara is very limited. Hence the same article may be summarized and published in some popular magazines. It could also be published in Indian Currents.

With cordial regards

Fr. Jacob Peenikaparambil, CMI

Very interesting article. Although I would agree with most of what you have raised there, I have only one point of dissension. You should view all this in the context of the role of the Church in affairs of state. Do you feel that the Church should play a more active role in shaping civil society and take a pro active role in politics and civil governance? Then yes, the Church should shape itself to fit this larger role. If, no, then, the Church should confine itself with pastoral care and leave matters of state to the state. Although civil society is directly impacted by what Governments do, the compulsions under which governments work have to be assessed in order to make judgments or take positions. The Church does have a major role in civil society and this cannot be ignored. Perhaps the best guidance for this comes from Jesus himself "Let your light shine before men..." The Church should lead by example. And so the Church should perhaps begin by setting its own house in order. Let us pray for the right guidance. Thanks for the thoughts, keep up the discussions, we need more enlightened leaders to play a more active role in the Church and thereby in society.

Dudley Surrao, Business Consultant

Secunderabad 500 026, AP, India,

Congrats for the excellent article! The title itself Faith in Jesus: A Passionate Call for Liberation is very catchy and relevant. You have written the article on the backdrop of Human Jesus which is very inspiring and challenging and our religious call is to follow this Jesus.

Sr. Manju Kulapuram, SCSC

Religious FORUM, National Secretary

I read your article. It is a beautiful summary of God's work in human history and, pointing to our task as collaborators. By highlighting 'The Poor Church of the Poor' etc. the new Pope has taken us back to Scripture and forward to our task: authentic liberation, free of the entanglements, aberrations and deviations. Your article has freshness, substance and is timely. I found it sound.

T. K. John, SJ, Vidyajyothy, Delhi

Thanks for sending me your reflections. I have read your 19 page meditation. And I am just wondering what are we - you and I - to do here and now, today, not tomorrow. No way to change others without changing ourselves, as I see, is my humble opinion. And we all have to come up with pragmatic action programme for that, not for others but for ourselves to help change things for the better, not for a particular class called Christians, but for the whole of humanity. How to make it a humane humanity modelled on that crazy carpenter of Nazareth - who may be God for Xstians, a bastard for critics - but an ideal man for all THE SON OF MAN (the ideal human being) as he described himself.

With all good wishes,

James Kottoor

Thanks Tom for your Easter wish, your email and excellent article. I wish I could live it hundred percent.

Love,

Gemma Desa, MMS

Many thanks for your Email with the attached Article. It was great pleasure to meet you after many years and I enjoyed the evening with the company of our class mates of S.B. College. Your Article is a thought provoking document emphasizing the need and benefits of the ultimate trust and faith in Jesus Christ and his visions and preaching. I totally agreed, and history proved that the impossibilities of the past becomes possible today by the interaction of Jesus Christ and his principles through human beings of different nationalities of today, to make this world- tolerable and hopefully peaceful one day! May God bless you to continue similar activities and cherished commitments in the future years to come.

With kind regards,

C. Thomas, MS, FRCS, FACS

Senior Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Muscat, Oman, www.cthomas.info

Dear Tom,

Congratulations on the document. God bless you for the witness of your life which backs up what you have written. I am reminded of the words on Ordination when the Deacon is presented with the Bible by the Bishop. "Believe what you read. Preach what you believe. Practice what you preach".

Love,

Peter Desousa, CSSR, Mumbai

Dear Tom,

Thank you for sharing this beautiful article with me.

Very well done.

Ajay Ghosh, USA

Dear Tom,

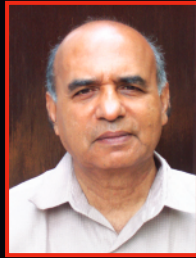
Thank you for the attached, as usual its inspiring to read, at the same time challenging too. Thank you also for mentioning us MMS, hope I can use some of your reflections as I am invited to give a talk in a Parish in Washington DC regarding what the religious groups do in influencing the UN. Many thanks for your tireless effort in living the faith in Jesus. I am proud of you!

Love,

Celine Paramunda, MMS, UN Representative

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Thomas Kocherry

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Awards and Honors

International Awards

1997: The PEW foundation announced Thomas Kocherry as the recipient of an award which carried US \$ 150,000 for marine conservation. Thomas Kocherry declined the award because the PEW award is founded by the Sun Oil Company, which is one of the biggest polluters in the world - polluting the Amazon area, Venensuela, Philadelphia etc...

1997: The FIAN International for Socio-economic Human Rights Protection, Germany, awarded Thomas Kocherry with a gold medal for his contribution in this aspect of life.

1998: The Earth Society Foundation, New York awarded Thomas Kocherry with the EARTH TRUSTEE AWARD (a plaque and citation) for his contribution in preserving and promoting marine ecology. This award was presented to him during the Earth Day celebrations at the United Nations on 20th March 1998, and Thomas Kocherry received it through a proxy.

*1999: Father won Sophie Price from Norway of \$100,000. This was shared by Herman Daly from the USA.
This is an award given every year to those who contribute to alternate politics and development
where every human in the world is equal and has a right to live.*

*Welfare Services: World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) Special Invitee,
National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), India
National Alliance of Peoples Movements(NAPM), India.*

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