

## **MUTHOOT JOYCHAYAN: MY FRIEND AND BROTHER**

Sri. M. G. George Muthoot, Known as Joychayan or Joy among his friends, relatives and in the ecclesiastical circles of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, was a real man of joy, who could evoke joy in many. I am not sure if I can call him my friend, because he is much elder to me and stays at the higher end of the ladder, much higher to me in all respects. But still he respected me as a priest and loved me like a friend. He was like an elder brother for me. He always interacted with me with that brotherly affection, encouraging and felicitating me whenever necessary and even chiding me a little if needed. As in the case of most of you, me too received the news of his demise with a shock.

Even though I knew Joychayan since several years as an active member of the Managing Committee of the Church and as the husband of one of my distant cousins, I started knowing him more intimately from 2007 only, the year in which both of us were elected as co-Trustees of the Church. It was only from that time I understood him deeply, his commitment to the Church, his ardent desire for the development of the Church. At times he Used to call me and Dr. George Joseph (the then Secretary of the Malankara Syrian Christian Association) to small unofficial meetings to discuss and sort out new programs which would be beneficial for the Church. He used to tell us that we should not sit idle for the next five years, but should be active and do everything possible within our limits for building up the Church physically and spiritually.

Joychayan was not a man of mere words. He tried to implement what he said. That was the reason why, after discussions between us he came up with a new project of dividing the Managing Committee into nine sub-committees, each group working in a specific area, aiming at different aspects of the Church's life. He even pointed out areas which required special attention. After long discussions, the Managing Committee accepted the proposal and groups were formed; but unfortunately due to lack of adequate follow up the sub-committees slowly withered away and became non-functional.

Joychayan was always ready to help the Church, its diocese and its members. While executing the various charitable projects of the Church, he used to help where ever funds were insufficient. He thought it was necessary to create new diocese for improving the efficiency of the Church's institutions. When the Church decided to create them, some of them had to pass through a period of financial crisis and then he intervened stretching a helping hand. I think his overall concept about wealth itself was different. "Whatever God has given in my hands is for sharing with those who need it"; might have been his concept on wealth. I don't mean to say that he was a saint. He was an ordinary man with extraordinary thoughts on human values. He was a successful businessman who was ready to share the fruits of his success. His Church was his first consideration for sharing. He was among the top donors of the Catholicate Day Collections. Whenever the Parumala hospital project faced financial crisis, he was always there to help. He used to help both our Theological Seminaries generously. It was one of his greatest ambitions that our Church should have a centre in Kodungallore where St. Thomas landed in India. He did

everything possible to acquire some land for this purpose. Let us hope and pray that the Church would be able to fulfill his ambition tomorrow or the day after.

With the demise of Sri. M. G. George, the country lost a business man who contributed to the growth of our economy, whereas the Church lost a philanthropist and one of its faithful sons. He was always eager to keep the traditions and practices of the Church. He was proud to be member of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and always ready to acknowledge it publically in his speeches. He used to say “*nammude athrayum uthamamaya sabha vere illa*. Its traditions, liturgy and faith are the best”, he would affirm. As his son said in his speech at the end of his funeral, *ente sabha* was important for him. I know from other sources that he was always prompt and punctual to say his daily prayers, attending church services regularly and observed fasts and feasts as a dedicated son of the Church.

As far as I know his dealings were very friendly. He has invited me to his residence in Delhi and also in many places in Kerala. He took good care of me at every instance. He used to call me if I forgot to call him for a long time. Working with him as co-Trustee for ten years was a beautiful experience. It is hard to believe that he has joined his ancestors in the other world, leaving those who loved him in this world in deep grief and sorrow. His unexpected departure was a real loss for the country and for the Church. I hope and pray that the Almighty may receive him in the heavenly abode.

**Fr. Dr. Johns Abraham Konat**

Principal, Orthodox Theological Seminary