

Active Mystic Beyond Times

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Translated by

Sr Treasa Martin CSC



ACTIVE MYSTIC BEYOND TIMES



Humbly Dedicated to

the loving memory of our founder father

VENERABLE AUGUSTINE JOHN UKKEN

AD 1880 - 1956



KALATHEETHANAYA KARMAYOGI

(Malayalam)

Sr Lawrence CSC

ACTIVE MYSTIC BEYOND TIMES

(English)

Translated by

Dr Sr Treesa Martin CSC

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Superior General

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Translated by
Dr Sr Tresa Martin CSC

Maria Bhavan Generalate
Kolazhy, Thrissur
2020

A Word on the Translated Book

Let me quote the saying of Antoine de Saint - Exupery, "One man may hit the mark, another blunder; but heed not these distinctions. Only from the alliance of the one, working with and through the other, are great things born."

The English translation of the biography of Venerable Augustine John Ukken - 'Kalatheethanaya Karmayogi' has emerged as an elegant piece of work executed with considerable toil, skill and willing efforts that it calls for great appreciation. I thank and congratulate Revd Sr Treesa Martin CSC on behalf of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity for this marvellous work. This book stands mainly as a source to illuminate the great divine call of a mere orphan boy, John Ukken who turned his unnoticed and rejected life situations and events into pearls of God's compassionate love for the salvation of souls.

We, the children of the farsighted visionary and missionary, Venerable Augustine John Ukken, would like to acquire strictly that farsightedness so as to fulfill his instruction, "*Pray for all engaged in fishing souls the world over in the freezing zone and scorching tropics*" (Lights from Heaven 18 December 1932). The English translation will serve a far reaching effect in carrying his valuable life and message across the globe transcending

linguistic peripheries. More readers, especially those who do not know our mother tongue, Malayalam will be exposed to his benign and humane edifications and will gain greater opportunities to delve into the biography, an unending fount of spiritual wealth.

Our charism that identifies with the Crucified Christ by radiating the compassionate love of Jesus among the poor and the needy for their integral liberation is the crystal clear and comprehensive image of a CSC sister. Our motto love, service and sacrifice provides direction to be relevant in the future since it is the fruit of the strategic planning modelled on Christ as foreseen by our founder. To be successful and to be pure is a challenge each religious faces in this era to become another Christ to redeem the world from its enigmatic paths. The upright personality wrapped in perfect spirituality was the iconic combination of Fr Augustine John Ukken who taught his children to spill out divinity through manifold life activities.

I wish all success for this book that it may inspire many more towards the god-given qualities of Venerable Augustine John Ukken, our founder which in turn may lead everyone to our Saviour's compassionate Love.

Sr Lucina CSC

Superior General

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity

Translator's Note

“Oh loose my hands to do good works, my feet to run to you” [Lights from Heaven 26 September 1903]. Let me imbibe this enlightening quote of our founder father to strengthen me since I was stepping an unfamiliar territory and it was not a trouble-free enterprise. Translating the biography of our founder father, ‘Kalatheethanaya Karmayogi’ was a surreal undertaking. It was much harder than I thought but more rewarding than I could have ever imagined. None of this would have been possible without the guidance of my Superior General, Revd Mother Lucina CSC. She really stands out in courage and inspiration with a coalesce of spirituality. Doubtless, she is the first one who was interested and intuited with this type of hectic venture. She stood by me during every struggle of my first literary translation attempt and blessed me with every success. I have validated the trust kept in me and I accepted the work wholeheartedly. This is the maiden translated book in English in our Congregation. I do keep in my heart the General Council team for sustaining me with timely advice. I am deeply grateful to my Provincial, Revd Mother Sila CSC and team for their support in bringing this work to its finalization.

‘Kalatheethanaya Karmayogi’, the Malayalam book is well written and exposed magnificently the spiritual and illuminated life of Revd Fr Ukken. The authoress Revd Sr Lawrence CSC, cited many of the founder father’s quotes from his Diary Notes which complemented her narration. Diary Notes are authentic and spontaneous expressions of his meditations and reflections which were penned down by himself as it originated in his heart. It became a parental property to each one of us, his children. The passage of time has wreaked some ravage on the manuscript.

Respecting and following our founder father’s most valuable, educative, moral and spiritual reflections, I have retained them intact in this book as they are in his Diary Notes without changing even punctuation marks, capital letters, sentence pattern etc. Some quotes taken from the Diary Notes are written in italics within quotation marks (" ") which depicted exactly his own sentences. Some other quotes given in italics without quotation marks denote both his ideas and excerpts from his conferences that he conducted for CSC sisters. Still a few others are in italics with quotation marks (" ") and asterisk marks (*) stand for the sayings of our founder father which were transferred from generation to generation by the pioneer CSC sisters, the true witnesses who received training from him directly. His writing has the contextualized bilinguistic beauty - a commixture of Latin and English. Wherever Latin is commixed in quotes, that is highlighted in this translation invariably and its meaning is given in the brackets. Mixed language marks a new ethnic style. This type of usage also indicates him as a prophet of the times: a farsighted charisma. As this work is completed I felt a little more enriched and spiritually a whit grown as I could walk lovingly behind the great soul-our founder, in the shade of his reflections

and instructions. His spirit permitted and helped me to complete this endeavour undertaken.

I am eternally grateful to Revd Sr Felicita CMC, former Principal of St Mary's College, Thrissur who took extra care to enlighten me about the real figure of our founder father as she had seen him many times. I truly have no idea where I would be if she hadn't given me the proper direction and assistance when she went through this whole literary work with utmost care even in minute depictions about the writings from his Diary Notes.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to Prof Usha Paulose, retired from English Dept, Vimala College for augmenting my confidence to realize the perception pattern in this piece of work and to reach the right blend of impeccability and lucidity in literature. She proofread and edited the draft with much enthusiasm as she herself experienced the miracle touch of Venerable Fr Augustine John Ukken extending to one of her relatives.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude, the moral support and love from my batchmates, my superior Revd Sr Primia CSC and co, Haldaur; Revd Sr Jessil CSC and co, Mullakara; Revd Sr Nelcy CSC and co, Varadium; my friends, sisters specially Revd Dr Sr Varsha CSC who helped me in Latin explanation and my family members especially Antony and family. It was their selfless and instinctive stimulation together with constant challenging queries which motivated me to persevere and to reach the end of my work.

Gratefully I cherish the work done by Santhibhavan offset press, Kannamkulangara for taking up the printing of this book and Smriti Design for designing the cover page.

Let me stand on -my-knees with folded hands and bowing head before my LORD, the Crucified to bless me ever. May I

gorify God Almighty by dedicating this humble piece of endeavour to Jesus, the Crucified and Mary, our mother of perpetual help through the intercession of our founder father.

Dr Sr Treesa Martin CSC

Contents

Introduction	xix
Preface	xxvii
Foreword	xxxii

CHAPTER 1

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Family Prestige	2
Turning Point	10
John at Church Bungalow	14

CHAPTER 2

JOHN AT FORMATION

Set Apart for God	26
-------------------------	----

GROWTH IN SPIRITUALITY

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament	30
Devotion to the Sacred Heart	35
Devotion to Mother Mary	38
Devotion to St Joseph	47
Devotion to the Guardian Angel	49
Union with Jesus	50
Awareness of the Divine Presence	58

PERSONALITY FORMATION

Faith Bearer	63
Hope - Centred Life	67
Charity - the Creed of Life	70
Obedience - Lifestyle of John	74
John Embraces Poverty	78
Devout Heart in Jesus	82

Synonym of Humility	84
Renunciation in Actions	87
The Meek	92
The Compassionate	93
Desire for the Salvation of Human Beings	98
Christ's Disciple who Practised Enemy Love	102
Abhors Sin	103
Hard - Worker	105
One who Fulfills God's Will	107
Ardent Desire to Become a Saint	109

LAST YEAR IN THE SEMINARY AT KANDY

ANOINTED FOR CHRIST

Christ's Warrior in Kerala	118
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER 3

THE DARING SOLDIER OF CHRIST IN HIS FIELDS

Assistant Manager at St Thomas School	139
Parish Priest at Kandassankadavu	142
Minor Seminary Rector	146
Secretary to the Vicar Apostolic Mar John Menachery ..	152
Parish Priest at Lourdes Cathedral	156
Parish Priest at Kottappady	160
Manager at St Thomas College	161
Parish Priest at Mattom	169
Parish Priest at Chowannur	173
Fr Ukken - The Family Apostle	176
Village Reformer	179
The True Missionary	184
The Evangelist	188
Catechist	190

Prophet of Ecumenism	191
Fr Ukken - The Compassionate Towards the Sick	193
Refuge of the Poor and the Destitute - Through Execution of Justice	196
The Friend of Sinners	200
Apostle of Love	204
The Prophet of the Time	209
The Farsighted	212
The Hero of Kunnamkulam	219
Retreat Preacher	221
Jubilant	223
Guest Entertainer	226
Art Enthusiast	230
Parish Priest at Chiralayam Church	233
Parish Priest at Palayur	235
The Sixtieth Birth Anniversary	240
Back to Chowannur	243

CHAPTER 4

FOUNDATION OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

Charism of the Founder	262
The Early Training	268
Comrade of Lepers	276
Helping Hand Extends Again	279

THE CONFERENCES THAT FR AUGUSTINE JOHN UKKEN CONDUCTED WITH THE FIRST MEMBERS

Mental Renunciation	283
Ways to attain worthiness	284

Meditation	286
Holy Mother	288

WAY OF THE CROSS

CHAPTER 5

THE EARLY HOUSES

CHAPTER 6

THE EVENING OF LIFE

Bodily Departure - A Spiritual Birth	309
Pen-Portrait	316
Congregation of the Sisters of Charity in Their Pastures	320
Congregation of the Sisters of Charity in the Church and in the Modern World	322
From Diary Notes	326
From Conferences	331
Milestones in the life of Fr Augustine John Ukken ...	336
Abbreviations	340
Bibliography	343

Blessing

Two thousand years ago Jesus came to the world as light and hope to those who were wrecked in the dark corridors of life. God has specially chosen certain individuals to continue this mission from time to time. The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was sown in the fertile land of Thrissur diocese by Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken, the founder whose vision was compassionate love towards the poor and the afflicted. He started his pastoral work in Kunnamkulam and nearby places to uplift the helpless and the poor with the inspiration of this love. He founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity in response to this vision. It is really praiseworthy that the authoress has sincerely tried to present the biography of this brave 'Active Mystic' who co-operated with the challenges of the time and it is based on his inner visions which were expressed through his Diary Notes of meditations and reflections. It is with great pleasure I remember the endeavours taken to publish this book at this momentous time of the Golden Jubilee of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity which was sown and grown up under the care of Fr Ukken. Extending good wishes to let this book be a help to arise and shine in the power of the charism of the founder father.

*With love,
in Christ*

(Signature)

Bishop's House

28.08.1994

On St Augustine's Feast Day

✠ Mar Joseph Kundukulam

Bishop of Thrissur Diocese

Introduction

It was a wonder for me when I was asked to write an introduction to this biography of Fr Augustine John Ukken who was born in the last century and had entered the pastoral service of priesthood in the beginning of this century and remained active for half a century in the pastoral work of the diocese of Thrissur. I consider this as an honour given to me. Since I was closely associated with the activities of the diocese of Thrissur, I do remember Fr Augustine John Ukken, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity and also because of my familiarity with the members of the Congregation, they might have considered me as a very close person to Fr Ukken.

However, the truth is something else. His figure as a priest deeply impressed in my mind; and his ideals rather than familiarity. His sharp glance and attractive smile haven't vanished from my mind even now. Whenever I meet his children who have not seen him, I used to tell them proudly that I have seen him; and share with them what I know about him. I guess this may be the reality why I was entrusted with this mission. It is a great service to introduce him to those who have not known him, through this book. And it is also a precious treasure to the members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity.

I met Fr Ukken when I was a high school student. He had been there in my parish as a parish priest from 1925 to 1928, nine years before my birth. It was he who started the Marian Sodality of Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary in our parish.

I remember it because while I was working there as the secretary of the Sodality, his name was repeatedly mentioned and read in the report. But I saw him when he came to our house. It was in the years between 1948 and 1950. He had a close relationship with our family when he was the parish priest at Mattom Church. That may be the reason why he was called as a mediator many years later, when there was a dispute about the partition of property in my family. He was the parish priest of Chowannur Church and he was engaged in the initial work of the foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity at that time. I still remember his visits to my house often - his coming and dining with us. We, children stealthily watched his coming, sitting at the dining table and going back. The discussions were going on in the upper room so we were not able to hear it. Yet I could recall, his raised voice at times in a scolding tone. He had a very strong influence over issues and further he was a divine person. This is the thought about him affixed in my mind.

It is an undisputed fact that his personality helped me to preserve high ideas about priesthood. His relationship with Mattom Church, my parish was recollected on many occasions which also has helped to deepen such convictions in me.

Marian Sodality is one of associations that influenced my life. I was an active member of it. I took interest in learning and singing the new and old songs of Mother Mary and took the lead to say the prayer 'Oppees' in the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There were not many songs available at that time as we have today. Whenever the report of the Sodality was read, I have noticed that Fr Augustine John Ukken, the founder was reminisced repeatedly with many special attributes.

The Clarist convent had a great influence in the spiritual growth of the parish, Mattom. When I was a young boy I had heard many parishioners saying Fr Ukken established that convent

in Mattom. The silver jubilee of the Sodality and the Clarist convent were celebrated solemnly in the Mattom parish while I was studying in the ninth class and I was the secretary of it at that time. I remember even today the way they recalled the sweet memories of these two movements in connection with Fr Ukken.

Fr Ukken was known again in connection with the then, Bishop George Alappatt, Bishop of Thrissur diocese. Revd Fr Varunni, the first parish priest of my parish from 1939 to 1944, the first one who is etched in my memory and I remember it very clearly even now. Later he became the bishop and was known as Bishop Dr George Alappatt. Fr Ukken was the rector of Fr Varunni. I do remember when we were the students in the seminary, Bishop Alappatt spoke about Fr Ukken and his loving behaviour. The usual trend at that time was to allow the candidates to join the seminary during their high school studies. Therefore it is my firm belief that Fr Ukken's example and inspiration would have motivated the bishop to answer the divine call. Fr Ukken greatly influenced Bishop Alappatt who played a significant role in the growth of the diocese in both ways, as the bishop for twenty-six years in the diocese of Thrissur and before it as a rector in the seminary.

There is no exaggeration to say that Fr Ukken made a lasting imprint on all religious congregations in Thrissur diocese.

He co-operated with Revd Mother Clara to start a Clarist convent in Mattom and he worked cordially with the members of the Carmelite Congregation in Chiralayam and thus he tried to improve the nominal Catholic atmosphere there and to ensure the impact of the Catholic Church.

The influence that he had on the Sacred Heart convent, Thrissur as the Chaplain of the convent is also decisive. His pioneer endeavours there have been of great influence for that

school in Thrissur town and later for the prestige of St Mary's and Vimala Colleges.

The Holy Family Congregation has spread far and wide today. Fr Ukken became an instrument in God's rearing to overcome the hardships at its beginning stage. Revd Mariam Thressia in Kuzhikattussery had a strong desire to develop it as a community with the encouragement of Revd Fr Joseph Vithayathil but there were many obstacles to get its approval. There was a delay to get the revelation of the Will of God to the then Apostolic. One day unexpectedly the one who had denied the sanction, called his secretary Fr John Ukken and sent him to bless their home, Ekanthabhavan where she had started to live. It wasn't mentioned clearly whether Fr Ukken's strong influence was behind it or the bishop was self-inspired and sent him there. Neither was revealed in the history. Whatever be the case, it became a part of the true history that the first house of the Holy Family Congregation was blessed by him.

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity had just progressed a little ahead on its way by overcoming the initial infantile troubles when Revd Fr Kizhakoodan was busy with the formation of Martha Sisters in the diocese of Thrissur. Fr Ukken opened an untrodden path, through charitable works in the religious life of Thrissur diocese. When Revd Fr Kizhakkoodan asked for the help of the CSC sisters, he generously offered their service and this act caused him to have a great influence over that congregation also.

The compassionate love which filled his heart was immeasurable. Leprosy and lepers were considered as a curse and the challenges they raised too were formidable. Nobody other than the religious with dedicated service could confront that pitiable situation and no one dared to enter this field of service for which Fr Ukken had an ardent desire. But the

circumstances were not favourable. His request was not granted by the concerned authority. Msgr Paul Chittilappilly, professor of St Thomas college and later the Vicar General, came forward to solve the problems of lepers who were seen in the suburban towns of Thrissur during the same period when Fr Ukken's desire was not granted. He too understood the need for the dedicated sisters as he started the work. He approached most of the existing religious communities but no congregation was willing to co-operate with this service. The dreadful attitude, lack of scientific knowledge and practical difficulties were the justifiable blockades to deal with this activity. But when the Vicar General approached Fr Ukken, he responded positively and offered happily the service of the sisters without taking into consideration the difficulty of sending the appropriate hands from the community. He prepared them for this heroic service which he had fondled in his mind. The Samaritan Congregation was a new religious community formed to work in this new initiative. The sisters who were sent there from the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity to help them, later became members of the Samaritan Congregation. The beautiful scenario of Fr Ukken's influences !

However, Fr Ukken has been known as the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. In fact, they got the golden opportunity to transmit Fr Ukken's 'heart' to the next generations. It is the truth that the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity received a treasure, in the providence of God. The book which is going to be published now is able to illustrate the history of the treasure that God prepared for them. His heart was throbbing with God's love from the beginning till the end. The indescribable gratitude towards God's blessings, a longing thirst to fulfill the will of God, a pure heart, charity that reflects God's love, the practical style that transforms the experiences of life for goodness etc are all the special traits that had emitted light throughout his life.

Everyone who reads his Diary Notes can realize that his priestly activities never reduced the zeal that he had developed as a student in the seminary. Instead, he was able to apply it to the practical level literally what he had imagined about priesthood in the solitude of the seminary. He had been able to achieve what few individuals could implement.

It was an empirical evidence of Fr Ukken that the devotion and its exercises were deeply rooted in his early childhood, had grown steadily and produced greater results. It is the history of an orphan boy who although could not get the proper caressing love from his own people, he could enjoy the caring love of God's providence in his dire needs miraculously. That's quite a rare happening. The secret of his life is that he reached at the greater heights of life by relying solely on God and adhering to it entirely. The truth is that God took care of him in an exceptional manner. Look at the strength of God's providential care manifested through Fr Kuttikkat, the parish priest. The tremendous power of the invisible hand of God was revealed in him who had been taken to the seminary, attracted by the Vicar Apostolic when there was no chance at all for a village boy to be noticed. The priestly training period in the seminary at Kandy caused a firm rootedness in the devotional exercises. His whole life testifies how much the devotion he had to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, the Blessed Sacrament, St Joseph etc. The enthusiastic pastoral services of Fr Ukken proved that the notes he had taken while he was a student in the seminary were not mere paper scribblings at certain moments of devotional fervour.

Fr Ukken after returning from Kandy as a scholar and a matured person started his work in the town of Thrissur. The field of his work was popularly known and admired by all here. But people were surprised to see when his pastoral service centre was shifted to Chowannur and Kunnamkulam later. The miracle of God's providential care can be seen in an ordinary village

where he found the completion of his life's aspiration even though he had been reputed for his personal identity as an eminent priest in different positions like the Manager of the College, Rector of the Minor Seminary, Vicar of the Cathedral Church and Secretary to Bishop.

As we understand from his Diary Notes that God had been leading him to an unknown area which was not clear to him. He was giving himself up totally to the inspirations of God before coming to a final decision whether it might be a religious community of priests in the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a brotherhood association for leading social activities, a community for poor women longing for dedicated life, for virgins dedicating their own lives for Jesus' sake inspired by charity, a missionary group to reach the sweet voice of Jesus to different parts of the world, an ecumenical group that strengthens the Church through the reunion of all Churches etc. *"If God helps me, my idea is to sever my connection with the college and go to Kunnankulam and there conducting a small church, pave the way for opening an orphanage, asylum for the aged, workshop, press etc. If possible to form an Association of Priests, Brothers and Sisters"* (Lights from Heaven 2, Sep 1924).

Everything is specified and obvious today. The exemplary life of Fr Ukken became a great movement of refuge for the poor and the downtrodden of the society through its charitable works.

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity will witness to many hundredfold activity fields that he had designed in his mind and it will be revealed through times if this Congregation preserves the religious formation which he had given, the vision of life that he had drawn out and the lifestyle through which he made its members to grow.

Fr Ukken's farsightedness is something that everyone emphasizes today. Let his Diary Notes and the views that emerge through this biography inspire us to find the right areas of his

perspective. Fr Ukken was led by the unconditional love of Jesus, devotion to Mother Mary and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He disclosed through his own experience that real devotion will flow like a broken bund with the creative power of human love, without being trapped in devotional exercises alone. He was able to see everyone as equal in that creative power. Further more, he tried to gather everyone together. He departed from this world after he had entrusted his children to continue this mission. His sharp eyes are following us from heaven. Even today he says, *“Your task is to love....”*

There is a large number of people around us who do not know Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken, who died from us about thirty eight years ago.* The members of the Congregation also have an ardent desire to learn more about the founder father. So Sr Lawrence CSC has done a very commendable service in this field. She was able to sketch a real picture of him, whom she had not seen but by diving through his Diary Notes, chronicles, witness experiences and placed it in front of the generous people. She deserves appreciation for this book on Revd Fr Ukken and I have great pleasure to introduce this literary work to the public. May this book enable millions to know him closely and to emulate his blessed life.

✠ Mar Paul Chittilappilly
Bishop of Kalayan Diocese

* 64 years on 13 October 2020

Preface

Man is called to lofty positions, to the perfection of holiness and to the immortality of the future. Jesus appeals to the children who are created in the image and likeness of God, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). He has manifested a plan for us to experience the warmth of God’s Fatherly affection forever. “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt. 25:40). Jesus said that He lives in those who approach you without food, shelter, clothes, sick, imprisoned... When they are comforted, they enjoy His merciful love through you. To serve them is to serve Him. That is the true love; worship in Spirit and in Truth.

Jesus said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). This real presence of God is expressed through selfless service. It is revealed in history through spirit-filled individuals. Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity in Thrissur diocese is a perfect model for it.

Fr Ukken, who had lost the fondness of family love at an early age, did not limit himself in sharing the kindness and tenderness that he experienced later from God’s love and shared it unconditionally with many people. He inspired his children also to follow suit. All his meditations and reflections that he had drawn from God the Father were written and preserved by him served as a profound investment of spiritual wealth for the

coming generations. All these are brought to light only recently after his death. He has formulated a lifestyle and action plan of thirty one years of his God experience. He has written the daily meditations in an intermixture of Latin and English in his diary and named it “Lights from Heaven.” It was with great pleasure we tried to get into the depths of those inscriptions like the one who found a hidden treasure. He has written the vision of his life systematically and diligently and it has been translated into a simple and pellucid prose and presented in a very opportunistic way in this biography.

“I am simply an effect of divine mercy” (Lights from Heaven 1 December 1903). He penned his vision of life at the very outset of his seminary life. He journeyed a long distance in destitution and he ardently desired to make his brethren experience the mercy and tenderness of God’s love that he had experienced during that long journey. On 19 June 1903 he added if he had been the lord of all hearts, he would have submitted them to Him. He strongly designed a plan for it. *“Act always and everywhere as Jesus, as my good master, my model, would have acted or acted”* (Lights from Heaven 28 December 1903). It was the gift that he presented to Jesus, his Master. *“If I live only for your glory, for the accomplishment of Thy Holy Will”* (Lights from Heaven 3 November 1907). He already planned what his mission execution would be like.

Fr Ukken who entered priesthood, proceeded ahead embracing the eternal values he had accumulated during his seminary life. He found the image and likeness of Jesus in the rich and the poor; in the outcast and of the same caste. He did not abandon anyone from his pastoral care. When there were no mobile clinical facilities for serving the sick, he strictly insisted on his children to go and serve the patients at their homes. It was the result of his experience of God’s compassionate love

and it inspired him to spread the message of love specially among the rejected low caste of the society. When he was the Manager of St Thomas college he thought, *“If God helps me, my idea is to sever my connection with the college and go to Kunnankulam and there conducting a small church, pave way for opening an orphanage, asylum for the aged, workshop, press etc ”* (Lights from Heaven 2 September 1924).

What a beautiful moment it was when he surrendered his abandoned life to God the Father! Then an opportune time arrived for him to get ready to return to his hometown as a newly anointed priest. He had no bag and baggage nor sufficient money for his journey. Neither were there any relatives and friends to make preparations to receive him nor financial aid to make arrangements for the first Holy Qurbana in his hometown. Unknowingly tears rolled down his cheeks when he remembered all this while he was in the presence of God one day. But at the next moment he was consoled by the Word of God. “My God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:9). Without being contented, he regretted about his weakness of anxiety! He was awfully grateful forever to God, his Saviour who safeguarded him from all possible chances that he would have perished as an orphan boy without adequate protection.

He firmly believed that he would get realization and fullness of life, if he responded harmoniously to the life experiences that are on his journey to perfection. As a special effect of it, there emerged a re-creation of the practical forms that perpetuate life. Thus, the clear ways are formed to put into practice his plan of 1924. He started the initiatives in a small scale to protect the destitute who were ignored by the society. Later, he embraced all the sources that came on his way to make easy the flow of God’s love wherever he was unable to enter. He became ‘simply

an effect of divine mercy' when he fully depended on God and became a tool in His hands. The biography of the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity is the fine picture of it.

When we go through the biography of Fr Ukken, the founder father, we find him as a creative and versatile person who responds creatively to the relationship between God and human beings, the creation of God; and nurtures his physical, psychological and spiritual aspects to achieve comprehensive liberation of each individual. He was committed to the ideals that he had developed and utilised all the possible conditions to attain the perfection of life. He made use of utter destitution, monotony and frustrations that he had experienced in life as a tool to draw closer to God the Father. The spirit he gained from it helped him to give solace to those who were perplexed in the conflicts of their ordinary life situations.

In this biography, Sr Lawrence has succeeded in presenting, the vision, spirituality and ideals of the founder father by transferring the language of the emotion of his heart in a lively and timely manner. Her first venture in the vernacular literature is quite substantial even though she is handling science subjects. Her hard work and dedication that is rooted in the spirituality of the founder father together with his blessings have made this piece of work a success. Congratulations to Sr Lawrence CSC from all the members of the Congregation. Hearty thanks to Sr Ruth CSC who edited the book blending harmoniously the ideas of this composition.

Let us embrace the zealous voice of this blessed and benign soul, Revd Fr Ukken who offered his whole life to the Omnipotent God Almighty and dedicated everything for the betterment of others.

Lovingly,
Dr Sr Donata CSC
Superior General

Foreword

Love is a special gift that God has invested in everyone which is life-giving, delight to the ear and the heart and every body wishes to have it. Besides, love multiplied is love shared. The lack of it leads to despair and destruction of life. Many are the individuals and families that perish in its absence. This is one of the challenges of the twentieth century.

It was Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken, founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, who was called by name and had been given a special charism by God in the last decades of the nineteenth century as an answer to this challenge. He saw his father in Jesus and mother in Virgin Mary when he started to understand the pain of destitution from the age of six. He who assimilated the shining qualities of Jesus and Mary was embraced by their compassionate love. His blessed life was a gratitude for it. He who loved mankind reached villages and families to infuse the compassionate love into their hearts to satiate their thirst for a drop of love. He inspired and encouraged others also. *"I am simply an effect of the divine mercy"* (Lights from Heaven 1 December 1903). *"Let me here below and there above in the firmament be a monument of God's mercy, a star giving light to glorify and proclaiming His mercy"* (Lights from Heaven 28 July 1904). This ardent desire blossomed on 21 November 1944 when the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was founded. *"Love, is your task, let nobody surpass you in love"* (1944).

This book is a humble attempt to uncover the spirituality and history of the founder father in the light of his Diary Notes. By providence, it is Revd Dr Sr Donata CSC, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity who asked me to write this book and encouraged me with timely advice and corrections. Many sisters have helped me to complete it. Revd Sr Tryphonia CSC is one among them whose name has to be specially mentioned. Moreover, others supported me through their prayers and encouragements. Revd Sr Ruth CSC corrected the manuscript and Revd Sr Nicy CSC did the cover design. Let me thank all of them profusely.

I am highly obliged to Bishop Mar Paul Chittilappilly, Bishop of Kalyan Diocese for his introduction and Revd Fr Sebastian Poonoly, Vicar General, CMI Congregation who has graced it with a book opinion and appreciation.

I do remember gratefully St Joseph's IS press, Patturaikkal for the great care taken to print it.

I submit reverently this humble book at the foot of the founder father for the glory of God.

With Love,
Sr Lawrence CSC



Venerable Augustine John Ukken

Founder

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity

Chapter 1

Birth and Childhood

According to the needs of each era, Jesus Christ the founder of the Catholic Church outpours charisma to certain personalities to promote and strengthen the Church. Further, while unfolding the leaves of the history of the Church, it was revealed that such persons with exceptional charisms led her through massive waves of crises of various categories giving more meaning, depth and life to it. They were guided by the Holy Spirit¹ and became risen cult exemplars of an excellent new lifestyle with the Gospel values to face the challenges of each epoch, to whom common people were attracted easily and became their disciples. Amidst the hindsighted, insighted and foresighted saintly scholars, Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken was a zealous foresighted persona in the diocese of Thrissur, a prophetic voice in the first decade of the twentieth century! Yes, an instructor and

a messenger of love in a period of frantic pursuit for love! The driving force of his life was his intense love of God that generated compassionate love and kind-heartedness towards the poor. This resulted in a change of mind and it inspired him to the inception and foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity for the upliftment of the destitute and the poor. Thus, his untameable hope blossomed and he spelled out, *“Let me be here below and there above in the firmament a monument of God’s mercy, a star giving light to glorify, proclaim His mercy.”*² Yes, there has arisen a new star in the empyreal realm of the Church of Christ. A star that ever radiates the bright rays of compassionate love of Christ.

Family Prestige

The ancestral traditions of one’s family disclose the identity of a person. There are well known historical records that John’s ancestors were generous. Passing through the history, studies have brought to light ‘Alangad’, a place situated at the extreme north boundary of Travancore where Syrian families had migrated and it occupied a very significant place in the Syrian Church history. In the seventeenth century, there lived a family called ‘Mathilakathu’ with all its prosperity and glory in that fertile wealthy land. They originally hailed from Mahadevarpattanam (Cranganore), also known as Kodungallur and they thrived well in that fertile land of Alangad. This was evidently substantiated by government documents. In 1655, due to the despicable administration of the Portuguese missionaries, there crept in a split among the Syrians themselves and emerged two different divisions as ‘Pazhayakoor’ and ‘Puthankoor.’ When

this news of the chaotic state of affairs reached the Holy See, the administration of the Church was assigned to the Carmelite Congregation in the year 1660 and thus for the first time they stepped into this Malayalee land. As a result, the Syrians were freed from the Portuguese. A specific amount was sent regularly for their expense from Rome. Unfavourable circumstances again cropped up and the particular payment of money was withdrawn suddenly. Their life was subjected to tough times. At this juncture, they asked assistance from the forefather of Mathilakathu family who joyfully gave three thousand rupees to maintain fellowship among everyone. They were lost for words to express their gratitude to him for the timely financial assistance. This help continued for almost forty years.

After a long time, Rome sent the whole amount to the missionaries and they reimbursed the amount spent by the forefather of the Mathilakathu family. Out of his generosity he returned the money for the welfare of the diocese. This benevolent act touched the minds of many and Revd Dr John Bavadhista, a kind-hearted person, the then Bishop of Varapuzha diocese from 1712 to 1750, approved this donation and with praiseworthy words brought it to the notice of the Holy See. In consequence, the forefather was raised to the rank of 'Duke' with symbols of sword, seal and chain. Besides, he was given a book explaining the events of the Gospel, an extraordinary flower from eastern Egypt which blossoms only in hot water but wilts in cold ordinary water, relics of the twelve apostles and of a few saints, a miraculous lily from Jordan and a monstrance with a beautiful image of the Holy Mother with Child Jesus at its

centre. Along with these an honorific 'Thiruvezhuth' (a piece of holy writing) on a segment of white leather with praises and apostolic blessings in golden impression was gifted as an appreciation and acknowledgement from Rome, a testimony, for everything that they had sent to the forefather. It was sent to him through Varapuzha missionaries.

The descendants of Mathilakathu family also made use of this title of honour. In due course, the traditionally used term 'Duke' or 'Dukka' in Syrian is made deformed gradually, underwent transformation and later it ended up as 'Ukken.'

The offsprings of Mathilakathu family got scattered into several places but no progeny directly from Alangad Mathilakathu family or Ukken children survived. As it was written in the history of Travancore, almost all family assets had been abandoned and the members absconded fearing for their lives during the plundering of Tippu Sultan in Alangad and Paravoor. Majority of them reached Thathappilly and Edakulam. Many years passed by before Tippu's attack ceased. Meanwhile they started building houses and buying properties. Among them, Anthappan Edakulam Vadakkoot, from the maternal lineage lived at Punnamparambu.³

Acharunni, his sister was married to Chiramel family in Parappur. A few years later, after her marriage, Anthappan came to the land of his brother-in-law and settled there.

Parappur village is located at a distance of 14 km to the north west of Thrissur town. Thrissur is the cultural hub of Kerala where celebrations, festivals and advanced science and technology thrive. This village borders with Mullur lake on one side and the stream Kadamthodu on the other.

Moreover, this village was prosperous with the natural beauty of rivers, lakes, brooks, paddy fields and arecanut plantations. The peasants over there were enriched with many skills, gentle nature and of noble birth. Hard working families were the ornaments of that village. Love, care for each other and brotherly attitude were all their typical qualities. Kol farming, puncha (summer crop-rice from December-January to March-April) and mundakan (winter crop-rice from September-October to December-January) farming and arecanut cultivation raised this village to abundance and prosperity. Moreover, the group of faithful who lived there had strong faith and fear of God. This blessing of the Lord was their greatest wealth. Not only did they practise deep spirituality but they were also good at encouraging and nurturing their wards to embrace the divine call. They felt proud of it. The vocation of the children sharpened into focus through their teenage years. Touring this village, it was hard to pinpoint what stood more impressive, farming or spirituality. Either way they had given importance to both, and even today this phenomenon stands hand in hand as their ancestral heritage.

Anthappan came to Parappur, purchased a piece of land and called it 'Ukken Parambu'(Ukken land). He was a good reciter of the 'Puthenpana' (a poetical lamentation of Mother Mary on the death of Jesus written by Johann Ernst Hanxleden, otherwise known as Arnos Pathiri) and both his songs Puthenpana and Amma Kanya Mani thante: (starting verse of another poem describing the Paschal Mystery) are very popular in Parappur. God did not create man to be all alone. Apt to the biblical verse, "Male and female He created

them.”⁴ God intended to bring them together in holy matrimony. Partnership between men and women gives a primary form of fellowship among individuals. After settling down in Parappur, Anthappen thought of entering into wedlock with Annamma Chalackal, who was a beautiful, modest girl from an aristocratic family in Thoyakkavu as his life partner. She was a suitable bride to Anthappan. They shared together happiness and sorrow; success and failure. They moved ahead loving each other and their house was a source of unity and devotion. Jesus too is ardent to restore the marital majesty and the integrity of families.⁵ St Paul also points out the deep affinity that exists between the secrets of marriage, with Christ and the Church.⁶ This couple believed that the functional and fundamental unit of the Church and the society is family which is also the cradle of life, love and purity.⁷ From here the pillars of future are born and grown. The first child John was born to Anthappan-Annamma couple who lived in sanctity. The first-born is often raised with more attention. It was true with Anthappan’s family as well. The small kid was affectionately brought up but luck was not with them, the child went to the heavenly abode at the age of two, leaving the grief-stricken parents all alone. The loss of the child was the most devastating experience they faced and the loss was never replaced. The verse is true, “But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come out like gold.”⁸ Nevertheless, they kept a strong faith in God and survived the pain of fatality and continued their life. They showed holiness and inseparability of marriage through their own life as a model.⁹

19 December 1880

Another golden day burst into their life to take pride with the blessings, the birth of their second baby who filled their life with love, affection and rays of happiness.



Home at the Time of Founder Father's Birth

“To make known the depth of the ancestral family of Ukken
Gain of humanity, pearl of knowledge, be victorious! Hail!”

Later, this was the testimony of others who enjoyed the compassionate love and tenderness from him. This graceful child, Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken who became the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was born (Thoyakkavu) on 19 December 1880. This child was baptised according to tradition after seven days (within eight or ten days) on December 26 at Mount Carmel Church Enamavu, his maternal parish. Thus he became a partaker of Christ's salvation mystery. He was dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ and was a sharer of the holy life of Christ.¹⁰ Though he was named John (certificate shows Yohannan), the memory of their first son's death lingered, may be out

of fear of giving that name, he was called Augustine John (not exactly known how the name Augustine was added but he himself used to write Augustine John Ukken from his seminary times. However, it was noted Augustine as the heaven-given patron in his spiritual diary). He was lovingly called Lonappan, a pet name and was brought up as a well-cared-for kid. By this sacrament, Augustine John was resurrected in the life of the Son of God and unified with both Christ and body of the Church. Accordingly, he was anointed by the Holy Spirit making him a spiritual shrine.¹¹ The parents are the first to communicate faith to their children and to educate them.¹² The Ukken couple was alert to perform their responsibilities through good family atmosphere and personal example. Along with breast milk, he suckled all the sweetness of love which in turn blossomed into very good traits like generosity, mercy, humility and devotion to God. Parents are the backbone of children till they attain maturity, fulfilling their needs and supporting them at proper times. Parents have a greatest responsibility and obligation to provide primary education to their children.¹³ John, who ran around like a free spirit attracted everybody. He became the centre of attraction of Ukken family. The love of a mother is irreplaceable in the life of a child but infant John was compelled to accept the deprivation of his mother's care when he was barely two and half years old. She breathed her last and slipped into eternity leaving the infant who had started smiling, in the hands of his loving father who stood frozen by the grief of this unfortunate quietus! He was brought up cautiously, not letting him know

the traumatic memories about the demise of his mother. It was very meaningful to the verse that infant John grew up in wisdom and in years, in divine and human favour under the shade of his father's fondness.¹⁴

Regrettably, infant John was not able to enjoy the warmth of his father's love for a long time. In 1886, when he was six years old, Anthappan was infected with cholera, without having proper treatment at that time, he confronted death face to face. The thought that his only son would become an orphan made him more miserable. Before his death, he affectionately called him near, patted him with tear-filled eyes, embraced and advised him with a last departing kiss and entrusted the documents of the family property and the key of the money box in his tender hands. The last kiss of his father moved him very much. His father floated away from this life to enter eternal bliss, leaving him all alone in the turbulent ocean of life. The six year old John became the only one left in the ancestry of Ukken family. The thought of being orphaned caused a tidal wave of emotion in that kid's tender mind. 'The hands of fate did not know the torments of bereavement'. Nobody knows the plans of God Almighty. "All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose."¹⁵ God chose him for His work.¹⁶ He who was to become the father of the destitute, the helpless and the downtrodden of the society was purified by the fire of afflictions throughout life. He quoted, "I have refined you, but not like silver; I have tested you in the furnace of adversity. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it."¹⁷ This was God's plan for John.¹⁸

Turning Point

The moments of the death of his father marked a decisive turning point in his life. A special interest was generated in him towards the poor and the downtrodden of the society. He surrendered himself totally seeing his mother and father in Jesus, the great treasure and he embraced Mary calling her 'Mamma.' He heard an inner voice "You are my dear son, my darling child, my heart is delighted for you, I feel boundless mercy on you."¹⁹ In this bond of love John grew up day by day. He noted, "*To-day it seemed to me to hear Jesus telling to me: I will not leave you helpless and orphan. for I am here to intercede for you and turning to his mother he cried out to her, "Ecce, mater, filius tuus" (Mother, here is your son). Then I offered myself to my mother entirely.*"²⁰ He added again, "*I shall not leave you orphans. The apostles found in Jesus, their Master, Father, Mother etc. Now if He dies they will be orphans. Often I so like them.*"²¹

The inauspicious experiences of his childhood served as warp and woof for his future life. He drew conviction from the Word of God that the plans of God were for his welfare, not for harm but to give him a future with hope.²² After many years, he was able to recall with great satisfaction, "*Contemplation on the Love of God gave me great consolation with tears, when I recollected on the personal gifts of my infancy and boyhood when my parents abandoned me accessing to this of David, "Pater et mater dereliquerunt me, tu autem susceperunt me" (If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up). It seemed to me that God raised me above my station and deserts.*"²³

Again, he recalled it and became emotionally upset at the time of the silver jubilee celebrations of his priestly ordination thinking the way God led him, even though he was an orphan, holding his hand. *“He knows and loves me from eternity! I am known and taken notice of and become an object of love and tender solicitude of a God! In the course of time He created me and gave existence! ‘Vivit anima mea et laudabit te’ (I live that I may praise Thee). When in tender years my parents dying I was stranded on the wide world ‘Pater et mater dereliquerunt me tu autem suscepit me’ (If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up). My education, entry to seminary and the pleasant life there, priesthood and so many covetable posts in the diocese, even held in honour now, Jubilee celebrations.”*²⁴ He continued recalling, *“Colloquies to father, the S. Heart and Mary, as a birthday present I begged of them never to permit me to sin mortally and venially: then with a heart to love and to let my love flame into zeal for souls”*²⁵ (Sacred Heart).

John saw his father and mother in Jesus and Virgin Mary respectively and thus he grew up. He made assurance and put pen to paper, *“Pater” (father) he is to us by creation, etc thanks and congratulate myself, that I am an orphan has a special right to call Him Father.”*²⁶ *“I give myself to God as to my father: I am an orphan...”*²⁷ Parents had invested in the young boy John a firm belief that God who feeds the lilies of the field and the birds of the air²⁸ would protect him. He has always pleaded for the intervention of Mother Mary on this journey of life, a combination of happiness and sadness. He implored, *“Like a swan her dying accents fall swelter on the ears of her children. Mother forget me not, I am an orphan, Oh forget me not.”*²⁹

Acharunni, the paternal aunt took charge of boy John. She brought him into her own house and looked after him there. That is how Revd Fr Ukken had the relationship with Chiramel family. They are the descendants of Chiramel Chakkoru Palu who built the Ollur Church. When Samoothirippad attacked the Thrissur Kotta, Chakkoru Palu, the ruler of Ollur petta, rejected the request for financial assistance of the great king of Cochin. As a result, the king commanded the destruction of his house fully. The soldiers demolished their house and dug a pool in that location so that never would anything more come up there. That is the 'Chirachikulam' in Ollur. The members of the Chiramel family fled to different places to save their lives. One family reached their relative Puthussery Tharakan. Later, they moved to Parappur, the inhabitants there called them Chiramel Puthusserikaran. At this ancestral family John grew up with his aunt.

John was sent to a Church school where he finished fourth grade but at that time education was not given any importance. So he remained at home helping his aunt in domestic matters. "He was obedient to them."³⁰ Thus the Word of God was fulfilled in John too. She taught him catechism through which he gained basic knowledge about Church and the parish community.³¹ As he grew up he gained virtues like love, generosity, humility and devotion. Apparently, he did not like domestic work still he helped in feeding the goats. He had a lot of painful experiences during that period. A real mother cannot be substituted. He liked to dress up like other children and friends but his attire was only a bath towel; wearing it, he used to collect cow dung

from the roadside daily. During this time there was a wedding conducted in their relative's home. John also liked to attend the wedding feast. But there wasn't any wedding dress for him. The young boy who was supposed to flutter like a butterfly had to dress up in a bath towel and hungrily entered the wedding pandal and sat there to enjoy the banquet. Since he was wearing a dress unsuitable to their dignity and nobility he was brutally thrown out of the pandal. Tears welled up in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks, turning and looking at the wedding pandal he went away crying loudly rubbing his eyes harder with each sob. As the sweet memories of his parents rushed in, the sleeping buds of compassionate love and mercy towards the destitute and the less fortunate started to sprout in him coincidentally. Adverse circumstances prepared John to do great things in future. It is noteworthy to understand how thankfully he remembered this incident of rejection later in his life. This prompted him to work salvifically thereafter, for no one should be expelled from the wedding banquet³² prepared by Jesus in heaven. St Paul describes what the dress should be, "Let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."³³ The apostle continuously said to clothe with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and love.³⁴ And he tirelessly worked to free them from darkness to enjoy His banquet by wearing the qualities of Jesus. He also mentioned the perils of giving over importance to the mortal body, he asked "*When I consider on the state of my dear body in the*

grave after 5 days, is it worth the while that I bestow upon it such cares even at the detriment of my soul? See worms coming out, going in, a mass of rottenness. May I not be willing to serve such an idol!”³⁵ He advises *not to dishonour the human body raised by Jesus, with uncleanness.*³⁶

John experienced the heart-rending sufferings of human beings from his childhood onwards. Experience is a precious wealth. Sirach says, “An inexperienced person knows few things.”³⁷ So he had been able to live up to suffer everything in his life with joy. He could connect it with the verse in the book of Sirach, “*I shall not look when I have to suffer in anyway, how much it costs me or how miserable I am; but how I am becoming similar to my most sweet master and mother! I shall feel happy when I have to serve and if I am left in the background then shall know that I am becoming similar to my master.*”³⁸ And he learnt from Mother Mary “*Paradox is the parent of much glory.*”³⁹

He made a decision. There are many in the world like him as orphans, sick, destitute, abandoned by the society and grief-stricken. He considered, it was his responsibility to raise such less privileged ones to the fullness of mercy and tender love of Jesus that he experienced in his life and he dedicated his energy, time and entire life for them who were left ignorant of God. Out of zeal he proclaimed, “*I will be a monument erected in honour of your Infinite Mercy.*”⁴⁰

John at Church Bungalow

Parish is the pivot of spiritual life and repository of missionary activities. Priests have been placed in the midst of the laity to lead them towards the unity of love.⁴¹ It is their right and duty. They should understand the faithful

under their care individually for the execution of their duty. Revd Fr Ouseppachan Kuttikkat, the then parish priest of Parappur was a good shepherd who knew his flock very well.⁴² The special devotion, zeal in studies and excellent character of John impressed him. The parish priest allowed him to stay at his residence and taught him the subjects for fifth standard. It was a period when the Church had a Church school. The great saying is that age does not matter with the sagacious. John like a teacher taught the children who came for catechism in the Church to read books.

At this time, with great expectation he approached the prior of the Carmelite Congregation to seek entry into the religious life. However God did not answer John's that desire in order to perform great things in the diocese of Thrissur. The invisible hands of God were still following him. During his stay at the residence of parish priest, Bishop Medlikkot, the then Vicar Apostolic of Thrissur, reached Parappur parish for his pastoral visitation. In olden days, a bishop was usually inaccessible to common people. And there was a deep chasm between the shepherd and the sheep. 'King the apparent deity' was the law of that period and all such positions and honours were reserved to the bishop also. Yet John got a chance to meet the bishop directly and they cordially exchanged pleasantries on varied matters. The parish priest joyfully introduced John to the bishop and talked about his exceptional characteristics, intellectual sharpness, devotion, humility and the ardent desire to become a priest. While returning, the bishop took John along with him to the minor seminary and gave him an opportunity to study sixth, seventh and eighth standards. John was really thrilled by

the verse which became fruitful in him, "When God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through His grace, was pleased."⁴³ It became very much meaningful to him. He could realize and discern his call to give Jesus' kindness and compassion to the whole humanity overlooking caste, creed and colour. It did not take much time for John to become the apple of everyone's eyes and was highly commended by teachers and classmates. Helping the sick, the needy and being merciful to them were his shining distinctive features.

The minor seminary is the field of training to develop the seeds of vocation through appropriate spiritual direction to follow Christ, the Redeemer with generosity of spirit and purity of heart.⁴⁴ Here there was a favourable environment to grow in devotion to Mother Mary, the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Sacrament in its heights and that influenced and outlined his life later. It was also from here the decision to dedicate himself to God's service was re-inforced. He affirmed it with the Holy Mother and tabulated, "*My vocation is like yours to give Jesus to the world.*"⁴⁵ He continued in meditation and expressed, "*Dear master I am by my vocation to be another Christ, then let me love your peace and cherish it, establish it between sinners and God.*"⁴⁶ And that's exactly what Jesus also did. He meditated on the verse, "And through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."⁴⁷

John was diligent to grow up in God's call that he accepted and discerned it with a grateful heart in all stages of his life. He understood from the verse, "You did not

choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.”⁴⁸ God ordered each plant to produce fruits of its own kind at the time of creation. Likewise, He commanded each Christian to be active plants of the Church and produce fruits according to their call and nature.⁴⁹ John, chosen by God, was convinced that his Father would help him to boldly perform the duties of his call in order to grow, develop and produce fruits so that he would continue the work of God. *“Jesus sends him to preach to those very men who reject Him. How often he has sought me when I left my God; now then that I am willing to serve Him, He will not abandon me.”*⁵⁰ He meditated on God’s great call, moved one step further and said, *“Besides there is great similarity in our vocation. I am also called to be the guardian of Jesus.”*⁵¹ He says without being satisfied with it, *“Salt is to season and render food palatable and to preserve things from corruption. I am by my word and example to reconcile sinners and keep away corruption.”*⁵² Thus, *“I am also called to make known Jesus and His kingdom.”*⁵³

The Son of God came down from heaven to earth to lead human beings towards the spring of everlasting grace by extending the hands of mercy to those who are plunged in the abyss of sin. Christ was not satisfied even though He shed the last drop of His blood to manifest the infinite love of God. Love has a desire to give oneself fully to friends and to be united with the loved ones. He imitated Jesus who came to call not the righteous but the sinners.⁵⁴ John had a special alignment with sinners and suffering people. He nourished and nurtured it at each stage and set apart his

life for it. *Jesus broke his body and shed his blood to the last drop for the poor. Being a priest his time, health, abilities and personality must be kept apart for the poor. John realized that God had owned him from time immemorial*⁵⁵ to accomplish it. Moreover, he understood he was called to *discharge greater things, not for less expensive material things.*⁵⁶ Beloved founder father wanted this work to be continued even after his life. He always prayed to remain in the divine call, the great gift of God. He is more comprehensive in his saying, *“Lord let me be freed from inordinate affection to my relatives and friends! You are my father, Mary is my mother.”*⁵⁷ *“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*⁵⁸ Again, *“I follow you whithersoever you go.”*⁵⁹

When John was studying in the eighth standard, that was the time of recruitment of candidates to the seminary at Kandy. Revd Dr John Menachery, the then Vicar Apostolic, the first head of Thrissur Vicariate remembered John and Bishop Menachery sent him to Kandy for further studies of priesthood realizing the need of devoted, zealous priests from Thrissur. It required financial assistance. On 17 April 1898 at the age of 18, after bidding goodbye to his aunt, he entered in the seminary at Kandy and started studies with rupees 350/- obtained by selling his father’s property of Ukken land and thirteen para (traditional paddy measuring unit in Kerala) field in Pannikkol.

Jesus said, *“The harvest is plentiful, but labourers are few.”*⁶⁰ Lord Jesus called John to work in His field. He acknowledged that call and started to travel across an unknown country to know what the will of God was, leaving courageously his home and hometown.

Endnotes

1. Cf. Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, “*Perfectae Caritatis*” 1.
2. Lights from Heaven 28 July 1904 [219].
3. Cf. “History of Fr Ukken” 1114.
4. Gen 1:27.
5. Cf. Mt 10:3-9.
6. Cf. Eph 5:22;6:4; Cf. Col 3:18-21; Cf. 1 Pet 3:1-7.
7. Cf. “Christian Faithful” 40.
8. Job 23:10.
9. Cf. II Vatican Council’s Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, “*Apostolicam Actuositatem*” 11.
10. Cf. Rom 6:3-11.
11. Cf. “Christian Faithful” 10.
12. Cf. II Vatican Council’s Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, “*Apostolicam Actuositatem*” 11.
13. Cf. II Vatican Council’s Declaration on Christian Education, “*Gravissimum Educationis*” 3.
14. Cf. Lk 2:52.
15. Rom 8:28.
16. Cf. Jn 15:16.
17. Isa 48:10.
18. Cf. Jer 29:11.
19. Jer 31:20.
20. Lights from Heaven 21 May 1903 [48].
21. Ibid 1903 [19].
22. Cf. Jer 29:11.
23. Lights from Heaven 1922 [347].
24. Ibid 19 December 1932 [378].
25. Ibid 19 December 1932 [378].
26. Ibid 30 July 1904 [220].
27. Ibid October 1904 [262].
28. Cf. Lk 12:24.
29. Lights from Heaven 24 May 1903 [49].

30. Lk 2:51.
31. Cf. II Vatican Council's Declaration on Christian Education, "Gravissimum Educationis" 3.
32. Cf. Mt 22:11-13.
33. Rom 13:13-14.
34. Cf. Col 3:12-14.
35. Lights from Heaven April 1902 [12].
36. Cf. Ibid 5 November 1904.
37. Sir 34:10.
38. Lights from Heaven 27 September 1904 [256].
39. Ibid 2 November 1904 [270].
40. Ibid 1 December 1903 [11].
41. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, "Presbyterorum Ordinis" 9.
42. Cf. Jn 10:14-15.
43. Gal 1:15.
44. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 3.
45. Lights from Heaven 5 December 1902 [154].
46. Ibid 25 July 1904 [216].
47. Col 1:20.
48. Jn 15:16.
49. Cf. "Christian Faithful" 166.
50. Lights from Heaven 1902 [4].
51. Ibid 1903 [25].
52. Ibid 27 July 1904 [218].
53. Ibid 24 June 1903 [62].
54. Cf. Mk 2:17.
55. Cf. Lights from Heaven 5 May, 18 August 1903.
56. Cf. Ibid 11 November 1903.
57. Ibid 10 September 1902 [107].
58. Lk 9:62.
59. Lights from Heaven 10 September 1902 [107].
60. Mt 9: 37.

(The exact excerpts from 'Lights from Heaven' are indicated by their numbers in square brackets in the endnotes.)

Chapter 2

John at Formation

17 April 1898

17 April 1898 was the blessed day when John entered the seminary at Kandy (in Sri Lanka), accepting the call of Jesus, his Master, to stay with Him, to be seated at His feet, to see and hear from His face in order to continue His salvific work. It is a place where proper training¹ is given aiming to create excellent spiritual directors modelled on Jesus Christ who is the Good Shepherd, Teacher and Priest. The voice of Jesus “come and see”² and “learn from me”³ as answer to the question of His disciples who went in search of the residence of the Guru, vibrated in John’s ears. He penned in his diary, “*The End of my existence is to know and love God.*”⁴ He prayed to *Mother Mary to help him understand Jesus more and more.*⁵ His heart thrilled *to realize Jesus, to enjoy the sweetness of Jesus and to become like Jesus.*⁶ He said, “*My only resolution*

is to become “alter christus”⁷ (another Christ). *He will pray fervently to Mother Mary to make him like unto her dear Son.*⁸

John, the missionary of love, imbibed the love of *Jesus who is his Guru, leader and father*⁹ and was eager to give it for all especially to the needy and the destitute by moving around just like Jesus’ feet, hands and lips. Jesus said, “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.”¹⁰ He understood, “*Jesus requires from His vicar not riches, not learning, but love.*”¹¹ And he continued, “*To become a pastor love is essentially required.*”¹² He prepared himself for it. Every circumstance and every moment was used to collect the pearls for his future life. He never wasted a single minute. As St Paul says, “So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is,”¹³ he made use of full time and spent day and night for it. He insisted on everyone to realize that *time is too short to carry out our responsibilities and never allow to miss a single minute.*¹⁴ Later he advised precisely his daughters, “*Make good use of every minute.*”¹⁵

He dedicated the seminary at Kandy, the abode of the preceptors and his studies over there, which was the basis of his personality development as well as his future life in the hands of Mother Mary. This offering was very obvious in his words, “*Mamma, you are all my hope, I choose you as my Patroness of study and above all of the spiritual progress!*”¹⁶

The seminary at Kandy was entirely a different place in socio-cultural atmosphere from his own home town. There he felt a newness in everything viz in his own individuality, perception, feelings, daily routine, friends, unknown language, culture etc. Smart and pleasing John very soon accustomed to

the new atmosphere and friends. He had no complaints about anything because he had selected Mother Mary as the mediatrix of his life. He proclaimed about her love, *“She must be knowing all our troubles and difficulties, if she knows them, will she be indifferent to our troubles? Then can He deny anything to her? She loves us more than all the mothers together; she wishes our salvation much more earnestly than we ourselves wish it.”*¹⁷

The time spent on the Word of God is an excellent investment. There, they were trained to intuit the depth and the richness of the Word and its manifestation, to delve deeper into its meaning by focusing on reading, grasping, meditating, assimilating the hidden treasures and to present it through preaching and other ministerial activities. It was a training mainly for the ministry of the worship of God and sanctification. By his prayers and partaking in the sacred meal, Holy Qurbana, John learned how to deal with salvific mystery which is achieved through the celebration of Holy Eucharist, the pinnacle of the salvific action of God and also by administering other sacraments. During this period he received guidance for pastoral care. It enabled him to represent Christ before people. He firmly believed in the verse *“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as ransom for many.”*¹⁸ Slowly he absorbed the mutual love, consideration and missionary zeal of the seminarians at Kandy. Both Fr Grotian and Fr Duppo who were excellent trainers to give discipline uniformly in studies, recreation and missionary activities, greatly influenced his life. Very soon he became the favourite of his masters and classmates. Like Jesus he prepared himself thoroughly for

his public ministry. *Jesus prepared thirty years for three years of His public life. As a carpenter's son, He assisted His father in carpentry and helped His mother in domestic work. Jesus was obedient to His parents. John's seminary life was also a preparation for continuing the work of Jesus.*¹⁹ It was the first time an orphan boy from Thrissur undertook the formation into a zealous soldier of Christ and as the father of the destitute and the disadvantaged people. He never wasted time during the training period at the seminary, as he learned everything that was in need for the life of a priest in future. He was at the fore both in holiness and studies in the seminary under the instruction of the spiritual directors because there were the invisible and sustaining hands of Jesus and Mother Mary to help him. For this, he concluded, "*Master, Jesus who came down to teach us. Tutor, Mary, seat of wisdom and Mother of good counsel to instruct me, to keep me steady without tottering in faith.*"²⁰ John had been pleading continuously to Jesus for strength and enlightenment needed for his study like Him who had amassed strength incessantly from God the Father in course of His life through loving conversation.²¹ He underlined and recorded in the book of his life, "*There is none to help me dear Lord.*"²² "*To sanctify myself and direct others, to lead many to the knowledge of Jesus; so grant the light to my intellect, my God and creator! Make my memory capacious and retentive to hoard up many things, move my will and heart efficaciously to put in practise all that I know.*"²³ He was outspoken and prepared himself like, "*Mary prepared herself for the reception of the Holy Ghost by prayer and mortification. and others also she prepared by counsels. do like that.*"²⁴ The charismatic changes that

occurred in the disciples who received the Holy Spirit²⁵ made them to work for the salvation of souls for Christ. He earnestly yearned to have these changes in his life also to gain many souls for Christ. John used truly the long run in the seminary for that purpose. He jotted down, "*The Holy Spirit appeared in the form of fire to illuminate and kindle the apostles, who in their turn may do the same. Come and illuminate me and dispel darkness and warm my tepid heart. As tongues, to enable them to speak and teach. Oh give me also to speak correctly and as I ought, spiritually.*"²⁶ He sketched out a scheme to accumulate the wealth of knowledge necessary for his future life. He defended his decision and remarked, "*Prepare the class, have wide open your ears during lecture and take notes and complete them by other books and from repetitions. Spend as much time as you can for these studies and read often the Old and the New Testaments with their commentaries! Let me do all these my God and become a useful instrument in your hands!*"²⁷

John gave keen interest and importance to learning during the continuous period of formation at the seminary. He foresaw that godly wisdom rather than temporal wisdom is more needed to immerse in the work of God the Father. He noted down, "*We have to fall in with the time. Therefore, won't it be a pity if a Professional Power whose knowledge in Theolo. a few scrape of scrip. which he would spout out, referred to a Catholic priest who studied during ten or 12 years.... only because he can Luring English a trifle matter. It is a mistaken view. But it is so*"²⁸ (theology, scripture). He added, "*Study is a work; so seriously and constantly apply to it.*"²⁹ He believed that there will be the help of the heavens always to do all

these works adroitly. *“I hope to carry them out exactly in the infinitely sweet Father’s assistance, which is denied to none who seriously asks for it. Yes, I will do all these in the grace of God, in my God. ‘Omnia enim possum in es qui me confortat’ (I can do all these things through Him who gives me strength). I will do all these in the succour of Mary, my dearest mother, I will lie in her lap and do all. My good angel is not for nothing with me; he will rejoice himself and make the Heart of Jesus and Mary rejoice. My patron saints will assist me by their prayers.”*³⁰

Set apart for God

The vestition ceremony of John was on 22 December 1900. The rite of vestition impressed on him that the cassock is not just a robe or vestment but a symbol of becoming Christ. Thus he became a true seminarian not only in his manner and mode but also in living a life of purity. He was bright in studies. Even when he was an eighth standard student, he was able to converse in English fluently just like foreign students and was also very good at using Latin. He unflinchingly lived in the innocence of the grace of Baptism, selected Jesus as his life companion and sacrificed himself as a burnt offering for Him. The verse, *“See, I have come to do your will”*³¹ was true in his life. He ensured his decision, *“In baptism I solemnly renounced devil and his works! When received tonsure I publicly took the Lord for my portion.”*³² *“My God and My Father asked the sacrifice and I cheerfully made it as long as it is His good pleasure and together with it I gave over my whole being through the most sweet heart of Jesus and my most sweet Mother, as a holocaust to be burned down and consumed at any moment for His greater glory and for the*

souls. Now cost what may, I shall not budge an inch! Oh dear Jesus your food was to do thy Father's will. Oh make me do the same. Oh most sweet mother, you said; let it be done according thy word. Oh keep this my resolution in the most sweet heart of your beloved and see to its execution!"³³ He expressed his thought loudly, "Jesus looks for a victim of immolation. Oh Lord, how I desire to be one! Oh take me to suffer humiliations, contradictions for your sake with you."³⁴ He added, "Otherwise to whom shall I give it."³⁵ He accepted Mother Mary as his model for complete dedication. He explained it in his words, "On the presentation of Jesus, Mary pleased God very much, perhaps the most: for she submitted herself to the law of purification. b) she offered such a precious gift. c) delivered her son to bitter torments d) with so great a resignation."³⁶ He continued his meditation and wrote, "She knew the sufferings that were in store for her son. resignation."³⁷ He continued, "Mother said: 1. 'Dominus possedit me ab initio' (Lord created me from the beginning). 2. 'Audi filia et vide, inclina aurem tuam; oblivisei populum tuum et domum patris tui' (hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear; forget your people and your father's house). She did so at once: when shall John get detachment. 3. Bossuet remarks: Today the temple is offered in the temple, the sanctuary in the sanctuary, the ark which really contains God, to the ark of figure. Mother, you were so worthy, but won't you, rendering me humble, make me too worthy of acceptance!"³⁸ He offered himself saying, "I consecrate myself entirely to your service, by the hands of Mary, my Mother."³⁹ He firmly believed, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."⁴⁰

Thus, John who was called by his name to work for Jesus,⁴¹ offered himself to be burnt in order to become a

sacrifice. He understood the mortality and disbelief of the world. So he accepted Jesus as his soulmate to consult everything with. *“Our Lord in the Holy Communion told me, all carnal and earthly friendships shall not last, they will abandon, disappoint, will be displeased. So to choose Him, Him alone and when others make me sad by their desertion remain with Him in B. Sacram...”*⁴²

John grew up in the faith that Jesus knew him before the beginning of the world and He desired only his well-being. He realized, *“Just as He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him in love.”*⁴³ And he finalised that he was selected to become another Christ.⁴⁴ Jesus chose His disciples not merely to meditate and worship sitting around Him but to follow His exemplary life courageously. The spiritual journey that Jesus started from Galilee and ended in Jerusalem must be carried on from there till the end of the world.⁴⁵ Spiritual growth is indispensable to carry on this mission. He underwent all the appropriate formative processes. In all these circumstances he desired, *“As I live I wish to be like You, with You!”*⁴⁶

GROWTH IN SPIRITUALITY

It's quite a sobering thought: every Christian should be a Christ bearer. In that temple of spirituality, training was given to the seminarians to put on Christ in soul and body through prayer, learning and activity with a view to become Christ bearers. The ongoing spiritual formation should be closely related to both pastoral training and philosophical studies. The long decades of spiritual training in the seminary at Kandy induced John to cultivate a strong and lasting

friendship with Jesus in the Holy Spirit and he was able to spend his entire life in unity with Him in order to derive the image of Christ who is a Priest through divine anointment. This situation caused him to incorporate the Paschal Mystery into his life that John vigilantly sought Christ through active participation in the holy mysteries especially the Holy Eucharist, divine office and honest daily meditation on the Word of God.⁴⁷

John acquired specifically all devotional exercises to emulate the remarkable qualities of Christ, his Master. As a seminarian he wanted to procure for himself the life of Jesus at any cost. It can be discerned from his personal prayer. He wanted to follow Jesus closely. He implored *Mother Mary to let him live under her mantle, to allow him to dwell in the Sweet Sacred Heart of Jesus, let him to learn the qualities of Jesus and finally to imbibe His secret life, humility, obedience, enthusiasm, missionary activities and the sacrificial life. He wanted to suffer in spirit and in body. Further, he is so proud to dwell in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He proclaimed Jesus is his only model and he sings His praises forever.*⁴⁸ The doctrine of the spiritual life of John is evident in this prayer. It indicates his keen desire to grow in love for Jesus and also in lofty humility. He wanted to follow Jesus more closely. He clarified it, “*Then I wish to love Jesus by imitating Him.*”⁴⁹ He recognized the core of his spiritual life was the love for Jesus especially the love that overflowed from the Heart of Jesus. He decided if he lived, he would be with Him and wanted to be like Him.⁵⁰ He underscored this hidden message. “*Now enter Jesus and for good take possession of my heart.*”⁵¹ It projects the internal message of his soul. “*Act always and everywhere as Jesus,*

*as my good master, my model, would have acted or acted.”*⁵² He repeatedly said, *“Prepare me so as I may follow Him in the period to come.”*⁵³ This deep attachment was created through his profound unity with the Blessed Sacrament and Sacred Heart of Jesus along with his filial love to Virgin Mary.

Devotion To The Blessed Sacrament

The Church describes the Holy Qurbana as “the source and summit of the Christian life.” John was a close associate of the Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament from his childhood onwards. His Eucharistic devotion started in his early childhood and it intensified over time. In 1898 when he began his priestly studies in the seminary at Kandy, he was plucked and planted carefully in this fertile soil, where his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament got deep-rooted and enriched. He was interested in frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament during that time also. For him study, activities or even the environment never became a hindrance to this practice. He summarized, *“I know Jesus is in the B. Sacrament and He yearns to be united with me and He makes me taste Him, yet, how ungrateful I am. Oh lord, ‘mihi peccatum’ (I am a sinner). I wish to love you, I will often visit you, will receive you spiritually and sacramentally.”*⁵⁴

When human beings gave Jesus thorns, cross, offenses and insults, as a reward for it and motivated by love He instituted the Blessed Sacrament to dwell with the children of men.⁵⁵ *When humans were separated from God, loving God the Father did not want to punish them by creating a new world filled with pain and suffering.*⁵⁶ Instead, God the Father gave the Body and Blood of His beloved Son. Deeply affected by the divine act of love, his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament

increased day by day. He added, “*Our dear Lord out of infinite love for us, when men were preparing for Him cross and other tortures, by an effort of His omnipotence instituted this sacrament of the altar. What ingratitude therefore I prepare not to receive Him, embrace Him not when He came to me! How can I neglect spiritual communion when it is so easy for me to make it and so advantageous and our Lord so earnestly wishes it? What shall I say of visiting the prisoner of love?*”⁵⁷ Jesus gave His Body and Blood to those who hurt and rejected Him. See the climax of love. He wanted His Body and Blood to be taken with much earnestness. Anyone who breaks His desire and receives it unworthily, does wrong against the Body and Blood of the Lord.⁵⁸ So it was a compulsion for John to prepare himself honestly with real conviction to receive the Holy Communion.

By his meditative persuasion he ascertained that Jesus’ love for being with His children and the thirst of the human heart for mortal love are at different poles. He pointed out, “*Jesus was not content with having spent with us 33 years. He miraculously remains with us till the end of the world. Is it because the redemption is not complete? Since it is so, oh, how much Jesus feels our ingratitude, our utter forgetfulness, our indifference! Specially His conversation has no bitterness, His company tediousness. How Jesus sees places of pleasures resorted by good many always, friends visiting friends and He left alone like a “Solitary Sparrow”. Oh Jesus would that I could love you!*”⁵⁹ He was not at all tired no matter how much time he spent in front of the tabernacle. His heartbeats and thoughts were habitually with the Eucharistic Lord. He expressed his feeling, “*Jesus is on our altars to enrich us. He is*

*not like earthly monarchs whose benefices are not received by all. Jesus calls all. How men run long distance for a penny while they budge not an inch, for such immense riches. I am grieved for such ingratitude. Jesus, once for all draw me out of this awful pit of shame and crime! Jesus let me belong to you! Let me love you!”*⁶⁰ Eventually it became absolutely clear for him that if those invitees were not coming to the banquet He prepared, He would give it to those who were not invited, sitting on the roadsides.⁶¹ So with great enthusiasm and devotion, he offered the daily Holy Eucharist.

The posture of John, standing still in front of the tabernacle without blinking his eyes for long hours generated the presence of God in and around specially to the devotees and onlookers. He was so determined that our hearts should turn towards the Blessed Sacrament just as the Sunflower always turns toward the direction of the Sun. He emphasized, “*Heart of Jesus is there perfectly happy, yet He has no gold nor riches and vanities, no pleasures, nor does He indulge in eating and drinking! Jesus there minds only souls, only spiritual things. Eyes well intently fixed on the Sun cannot see anything below immediately after, so should be a soul.*”⁶²

He considered the frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament motivated one to live in union with Jesus who is all alone in the abode of the tabernacle. He also intensely yearned to celebrate night vigil for long hours with Jesus, the loving prisoner of the tabernacle. He had not forgotten to pray in front of the Holy Sacrament before or after any journey and also when engaged in big or small tasks. *The central event of each day should be the worthy receiving of the Holy Communion.*⁶³ It was a compulsion for him to prepare well for it.

He put down in black and white, "*Preparation for the Holy Communion. as soon as I rose I thought to myself that I am a shepherd keeping my flock i.e my affections and desires (St. Francis de Sales) and I am called by my good angel, immediately leaving everything after me, took with me best affections, to present to dear little Jesus. In the chapel I sang "adeste" (song-Adeste Fideles-O come all ye faithful) and adored Jesus and told Him, your own did not receive you, neither had you place in the inn, come to my heart! Alas it is filthier than the manger; then go to my brothers' and fathers' hearts. Oh, how cruel that I cannot receive my little Saviour! Mother, most sweet and dear prepare my heart by your virtues and merits, holy dispositions and bring (place) Jesus in my heart. Dear Jesus, you have taken this form of an infant to drive away from me all fear! I approach you and take you and embrace you and love you, kiss you. I am sorry for my sins and sins of others, specially for those that will be committed today.*"⁶⁴

Receive Holy Communion each time as the Last Sacrament.⁶⁵ Just as a baby resolves his annoyance towards his mother by suckling breast milk, children of God make harmony with Jesus through receiving His body and blood.⁶⁶ He recognized the limitless power and salvific effects of receiving the Holy Sacrament daily. John compared the Holy Qurbana to a banquet that God the Father gives with inexpressible love. A great banquet he recalled, "*In the great banquet He was feeding me with His own body and blood, there was at table the happy mother of the child i.e Mary.*"⁶⁷ He also explained how to receive the Lord of hearts, "*I gave Him the welcome of Mary, when He was found in the temple and asked mother to give Him her welcome in the incarnation, nativity ie*

ardent desire, burning charity, transcendent purity and humility with caresses and kisses!”⁶⁸ He again outlined how our demeanour should be after receiving the Holy Communion: “*We become like unto angels, angelic nature, free from matter, entirely spiritual, free from temptations and passions.*”⁶⁹ “*Ask Him to dissipate the darkness, take away the veil that hides the beauty of spiritual things.*”⁷⁰ He expressed his view in the verse, “*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.*”⁷¹ “*Jesus knows of the cold embrace of many, the mortal and horrid one of several Judases, yet He loves this union with His children. Jesus seems to prefer this to the feeling of horror which has for sacrileges!*”⁷² He was determined that soul, body and Church should always be clean. So, *as a beadle, John took care to wipe the Church clean off dust.*⁷³

He believed that all the detestable things are committed against the prisoner of love during the night. All the dark forces are at work in the silence of the night. Judas went away immediately after receiving the piece of bread⁷⁴ and Peter denied Jesus three times at night time.⁷⁵ The chosen people are obliged to do reparation for all these kinds of actions. So he advised his daughters about the need and importance of the night vigil. This is what Jesus asked of His disciples too. He quoted the verse, “*So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray.*”⁷⁶ Love is repaid by love alone. This was proved apparently through his life.

John approached the altar frequently to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Upon entering the Church, his appearance and

conduct will be humble and reverential. The long hours of his stay in adoration and conversation with the Blessed Sacrament filled him with God's love. Later it steadily overflowed and spread over to the poor and the needy. *He has always lived in harmony with God*⁷⁷ and there is no wonder that *he became a useful tool in God's hands*.⁷⁸

Devotion To The Sacred Heart

From childhood onwards, John had a deep attachment towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus which is the source of love and the shelter of sinners. Jesus' Heart always beats for love towards the children of God but He receives only reproaches from them. A perception initiated and it bloomed in him that he should do reparation for all the insults and injuries done towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a reciprocation of His love. The practice he received from the seminary at Kandy helped him to enrich it meaningfully. The commendable devotional practices ie the worthy traditions of the Church are nurtured there.⁷⁹ He had an intense thirst to conform himself with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Its sparks glittered throughout his Diary Notes, "*My God on the eve of my ordination I implore you either make me a good priest after the Heart of Jesus or reject me, make me die now.*"⁸⁰ He continually prayed, "*Make me humble O Jesus, meek and humble of Heart.*"⁸¹

As years rolled by, through contemplation he understood that the Heart of Jesus thirsts for mere love but in turn receives only ingratitude. He vowed to do penance, "*Behold this Heart which has loved man so much, receives only ingratitude!! Eternal Truth says that He loves us, I thank you, most sweet Heart of Jesus; He says, He receives only Ingratitude,*

sorrow fills my heart. At least you, my daughter, do something. How anxious was Jesus to become man and deliver us from slavery; how even from His tender infancy that Heart suffered and even after a cruel death. Even among His chosen souls, are there not many who pierce that most sweet Heart? Heart of Jesus says: I thirst and I burn with love! Oh love so badly and coldly repaid! How earnestly Jesus asks for reparation! If men were to show love for love! I would count all my sufferings as nothing; at least you do something. What shall I do, dear Jesus? I consecrate myself entirely to your service, by the hands of Mary, my mother.”⁸² He continued, “Why does He ask for my heart? Otherwise to whom shall I give it? If I will not give you my sweet Saviour I will lose it! Today Jesus asks from His children reparation. Today I will spend always adoring you, Oh Jesus.”⁸³

Jesus’ Heart though being pierced, loves the human children. The Divine Master who taught us the great lesson of love by loving enemies, offers us various promises. He meditated on, “Not satisfied with to have opened the immense treasures of the most sweet Heart. 1) In order to show his infinite love and goodness 2) to move the selfish and interested people Jesus makes those really beautiful promises.”⁸⁴ John passionately longed to love his friend and make Him happy. He says with excitement: *the pierced Heart of Jesus is our refuge. Let me live in it forever.*⁸⁵ He added, “Oh goodness! Oh, sweetness, I am your captive by the same promise.”⁸⁶

He grew up in the devotion of Sacred Heart and was eager to spread it among the believers. He started First Friday devotion, Sacred Heart feast celebrations and “Vanakka masam” in the month of June (a special devotion to the

Sacred Heart is observed only in Kerala) to increase this devotion. Being a devotee, he thought of starting an organization of priests to widen this devotion afterwards. *“I shall reconsecrate myself as a member of the Ap. union and try to be a faithful member and try to get others for...”*⁸⁷ (the Apostleship of Prayer is a worldwide association of Catholics and other Christians who strive to make their ordinary, everyday lives apostolically effective). He tried to circulate the Sacred Heart devotion together with Fr Mathayo Krowli. *“Do not hurt the Lord’s Heart ”** was his special advice. He conducted one hour adoration at midnight every First Friday, dedicated to the Sacred Heart. He urged everyone, *“Seriously try to make the holy hour on the eve of first Fridays! On which when possible sing H. M”*⁸⁸ (High Mass). He continued, *“Out of love for the S. Heart and zeal for abandoned souls I will join the confraternity of abandoned souls in Montelezion and also renew the heroic act.”*⁸⁹ In the later years he slowly copied the devotional activities which were thriving in Jesuit Congregation from his spiritual directors and became its devoted missionary. As a devotee, he desperately desired to impart and nurture it in his daughters as well.

His spiritual diary ended with a meditation on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was a clear proof of his intense feelings of love towards Sacred Heart. He remarked, 1) *“A lance thrust is casually made to make certain of His death. But it was the fulfillment of 2 prophesies and with a design behind it. So as regards your life a loving Providence works out, shapes everything, faith and cheerfulness to take well. 2) One drop of the precious blood was amply sufficient to redeem world but Jesus wished to shed till last drop, what divine liberality! If one*

is permitted to shed his vile blood in this cause! 3) Manifestation of the Heart, seat of love was the great design of God, which was perfected by the revelation to St. Margaret Mary. 4) It was opened. It is as the ark of Noah: the strong and impregnable fortress, wherein soul that fear the world, distressed, disgusted with world can enter, like the dove into the ark. How many souls are forcibly drawn, spiritually warmed up, daily perfected! I must be one of them. 5) Mamma, lance though made a visible wound in the body of your beloved Son, pierced thee. By that poignant grief pray to S. Heart to make me a slave to that loving Heart.”⁹⁰

Fr Ukken, the devotee of the Sacred Heart realized that it is the Heart of Jesus which gives life to the mother Church, encourages missionary zeal and stimulates its spirit. So he took the pledge, “*Henceforth by my example, by my prayers and words I shall try to spread this devotion.*”⁹¹ and tried to fulfill it until his death.

Devotion To Mother Mary

Love is the basic principle of the Gospel. Yes, love for God and love for our fellow beings. Mary helps to deliver the message of God quickly⁹² to human beings, so that Christ can be born in their hearts. Holy Mother, who appears through the Gospel and also through the entirety she had received in heaven gives a sure promise and peaceful vision to the modern man. She provides modern man victory over anxiety; friendship in loneliness; tranquility in distress; beauty and Joy in weariness and desperation; above all eternal vision over worldly vision and life over death.⁹³ Marian devotion is the essence of Christian worship and it reminds us of her specified position amidst the people of

God, as she is the dignified member of the body of the Church, a typical example of God's people and a beloved mother. Devotion to Mary is an opportunity for the laity to grow in grace. She stands with motherly affection and willingness to help her children. The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven is the image and beginning of the Church that is to be completed at the end of the world. She shines on the earth until the coming of the day of the Lord⁹⁴ as a sign of enduring hope and solace to the people of God during their pilgrimage on earth, the biggest planet.⁹⁵

Mother

She is a synonym of love and a perfect illustration of tolerance. A baby enjoys mother's love along with the breast milk and also learns the first lessons from his mother. Well, the very first word a little baby utters is 'Amma.' But before baby John could become conscious of his mother's love, she slipped into eternity to enjoy eternal bliss. So he accepted Mother Mary as his own mother. John imagines that *it was him(John Ukken) that Jesus had in mind when He said, "Here is your mother."*⁹⁶ Then he offered himself to her completely. His heart longed to enjoy the love of the Mother and to imbibe her virtues. He inscribed in his diary, "*I followed my mother in everything.*"⁹⁷ He flew to Mother Mary in all his needs like a child seeking its mother's help and found shelter in her. John said *he would call and pray on his mother's name in all his needs.*⁹⁸

John began to grow up in the devotion to Mother Mary through the evening prayers. Seminary life enabled him to

immerse in that devotion. There, he learned to love and venerate her with a filial trust.⁹⁹ As a son he submitted all his prayers and pledges to her. *“I will do all these in the succour of Mary, my dearest mother, I will lie in her lap and do all.”*¹⁰⁰ On another occasion he said that *he would incessantly ask her to teach him to imitate his bridegroom.*¹⁰¹

He clearly spoke about the faith and obedience of Virgin Mary, the Co-redemptrix as if he foresaw the council studies about her. He wrote, *“Mary is not at all concerned about her virginity, her Son’s safety etc. For she knows God has care for her; He as a good Father has greater desire to give than she to receive!”*¹⁰² She faithfully accepted the Word of God. ‘Magnificat,’ her thanksgiving hymn clarifies she was a prayerful virgin. He wrote, *“As soon as Mary was praised she attributes every good to God as to the source: she says let my being be a hymn of praise to God, my intellect, will, heart etc. She was in the habit of referring everything to God. She rejoiced in the Lord. Mother, teach me to rejoice in the Lord.”*¹⁰³ He wanted all to be seated at her feet like children because she is our mother as well as the mother of the Church. *There should be a strong faith and love towards Mother Mary like a child. The delight and happiness of the religious life must be in her.*¹⁰⁴ He determinedly believed in the mediatory power of Mary and also was convinced that God would give anything she asked for. He commented, a) *“As she obeyed the Father so exactly, He will not refuse her anything. b) As Mary refused nothing to Jesus, He will be too glad to pay his debt. c) As she kept her whole heart to Her spouse so jealously, Holy Ghost will think it an honour not to be out done. Now I need only expose my needs. Then I wish to love Jesus by imitating Him.”*¹⁰⁵

He continued, “As she is our mother and patroness, she must be knowing all our troubles and difficulties, if she knows them, will she be indifferent to our troubles? Oh, what confidence we should have in her patronage!”¹⁰⁶ Again, “Now there is one heart that loves God, there in one who is able to disarm God’s wrath and hasten the coming of the Messiah! How often you did arrest God’s anger, in favour of me! Oh a thousand thanks! to you. I cry now to teach me to love God. I have now a mother, more tender than my own mother! I congratulate myself. I ask you, sweet mother, teach me to love you as a child!”¹⁰⁷ He went on saying, “Between our sinful family and God’s is a wall and Mary by reason of her motherhood belongs to God’s family, contacts with God such as essential relation as to merit to go over the wall.”¹⁰⁸ She would gratify my desire. “God the Son, who granted His mother’s request before she asked! So too if would have asked any favour, that would have been to belong to God from eternity and to be pleasing always, in His sight.”¹⁰⁹ He continued, “What confidence the holy Church in Mary’s powerful intercession! in all her needs she addresses herself to this sweet mother! She calls upon Mary, who instantly succours! To commemorate the mercy of our sweet mother, she institutes this octave! and so many big and small feasts does she keep. Do I take proper care to keep them all and increase in my love towards this august mother?”¹¹⁰ Mary, who delivered Jesus to the world, lived in communion with Him. John also prayed for this type of grace in him. He made a note, “Familiarity with God means, familiar and child-like and open way of speaking with God, as “amicus ad amicum, filius ad filium” (friend to friend, son to son). Mary, dear mother sets an example of it in the finding of Jesus in her sweet complaint. Let me

understand it and practise it.”¹¹¹ Mother Mary became the queen of martyrs accepting calmly the sufferings and adverse circumstances. She was not present when Jesus was hailed with ‘Hosanna’ but in His great sorrow she followed Jesus to His crucifixion and death with tearaway agony.¹¹² She gives a good example of tolerance. He wrote in his dairy, “As Jesus was suckling, as Jesus was growing ... time of his sufferings drew near and near! Her love was the measure of her sufferings. She loved Jesus with a supernatural love as God as natural love as her son! She loved Him a thousand times more than herself and her life! Then follow her weeping this sorrowful journey and understand, if you can, the intensity of her sorrow! She is the Queen of Martyrs: her sufferings if shared to all men, each man won’t be able to bear his part: martyrs for Jesus suffer and reach Jesus by death. Mary is separated from Jesus! So other martyrs are represented with cross, sword etc. Mary is with the lifeless body of her beloved son! Mary obtains for me something to suffer today! Let me be like you in a little thing at least!”¹¹³ He continued, “The body taken from her for the burial and after the burial she is asked to go back to the house! Unconsciously what sufferings are caused to her by those who love her! Where is her home but in the heart of Jesus?”¹¹⁴ Again he added, “Mary is in the crowd and tells me, follow your king, fight courageously under the banner of Jesus and go with him everywhere and do not desert Him on calvary: suffer with us both, my child.”¹¹⁵ “Oh holy mother get graces for me to stand in adversity.”¹¹⁶

Mary’s offertory was perfect. Likewise John wanted to offer himself fully to the service of God. He meditated, “*Our dear mother would be like a body without soul, without Jesus*

the object of her love and life, yet conquering maternal tenderness for the glory of God, sacrificed Him.”¹¹⁷ He put in writing, “The temple is offered in the temple, the sanctuary in the sanctuary, the ark which really contains God, to the ark of figure. Mother you were so worthy, but won’t you, rendering me humble, make me too worthy of acceptance!”¹¹⁸ And he declared, “I offered myself.”¹¹⁹

He depicted the Assumption of Mary as he contemplated *“I hear sweet music. Then the archangel signifer goes before all, shouting. After him many flying banners emblazoned with the many pictures of the Incarnation. Angels carry many instruments of music, virgins stand with flower baskets in array, censers are swung, especially by St. Stanislaus, St. Ephrem... Then the gloriously decorated chariot comes. In it the queen is placed on the right side of the king, her beloved Son, who congratulates his beloved mother! I also join the procession, singing her praises ‘ea mea labia nunc annuntiate, laudes et pror conia Virginis beatae’ (now my lips shall praise and proclaim the Blessed virgin). Then the solemn and soul-stirring procession approaches the gates of Jerusalem. ‘Extollite, portas vestras, principes’ (Lift up your gates, O ye princes) is the unanimous cry of all! The chariot makes its triumphal entry into Heaven. The sweetness, fiery ardour with which Holy Trinity embraces and kisses this sweet, lovely creature. The Father crowns her with his omnipotence, The Son with his wisdom, The Holy Ghost with his love! and constitutes her the queen of all! Mary acknowledges her nothingness, her abjection, her vileness and rising in tones “The Magnificat” which is taken up by the universal chorus of that Jerusalem!! Then angels and*

saints come to offer her felicitations and proclaim themselves her subjects and vassals!! I am also yearning to become your vassal, your slave and your child. Oh, today receive me to be your child; I am a wretched sinner, a child of wrath, that is no reason why I shouldn't be your child! I am entirely yours then, mother."¹²⁰

A mother - son relationship evolves which is emotionally overwhelming. He maintained a deep-rooted bond with Mother Mary. Out of passion, he called her 'Dear mamma'. This Marian devotee eagerly steered his way safely through observation and imitation of her qualities while moulding his personality. John, who considered himself the son of Mary knew he would be able to reach Jesus through Mother Mary, who always kept unity with Jesus in her spiritual pilgrimage.¹²¹ So also Rosary was the powerful fortress in the crises of all the stages of his life and he propagated it. He promised, "*I will recite my beads with attention and as time permits me, I'll say extra ones to relieve poor souls and to extend God's kingdom.*"¹²² The greatness and fruitfulness of the recitation of the Rosary is really a wonder. He mentioned, "*When we give a wreath to our mother, we feel happy: now how happy should we be if we can do the same to our celestial mother! Rosary enables us to do so! The prayers it is composed of... It renders us an occasion of revolving in our mind the mysteries of our redemption!*"¹²³ He realized it as, "*It is useful for me: how many graces for my soul and body have I not received? Just like the mysteries of Rosary, are there not periods of joy and sadness and some glorious actions in my life?*"¹²⁴ He wondered and prayed, "*How many graces, vocations...*

*through this Rosary- devotion that I have! Promise and ask to blot out from the face of the civilized world the error and impiety by holy Rosary, and ignorance and superstition to dispel from pagan world of India.”*¹²⁵

The Immaculate Conception of Mary was largely unaccepted in those times when he, the Marian devotee, fervently wanted and prayed for it to be declared as a dogma and he even thought of offering his First Holy Qurbana in gratitude of it. “*To say my first mass to thank God for her Im. Conc.*”¹²⁶ “*What is meant by the Immaculate Conception? What are its effects? It is an ineffable, indicible, unintelligible privilege, quite unique, singular and unheard of, by which the mother of God was gloriously redeemed and powerfully snatched from sin, in provision of the merits of her beloved son!*”¹²⁷ He earnestly prayed, “*There is an infinite opposition between God and sin; so it is Mary, who has been always left out when there was a question of sin. I believe it. I am ready to lay down my poor life in defense of it. so many desired to see this day and before this ‘auctoritatis’ (authoritative) declaration loved to profess it. Now let all profess and let none resist! Oh Jesus make this sweet mother be known and loved more and more by all men.*”¹²⁸

John understood the need to be born again to imitate mother. Meditatively he noted, “*Mary lies in her cradle so lovely, so beautiful and fair; she is loved by God. God is hovering over her form saying: This is my beloved daughter! Oh, would that I too could be born again! Let me be born to a better life! Mother, you be my parent! Oh, it is necessary that I should be reborn “Unless you be born again you shall not enter into the kingdom!” In what way? Let me be born to a life of mortification... and prayer. Oh, bless my good resolve!*”¹²⁹

After becoming an anointed priest, he formed an organization called 'Sodality' to promote the devotion to Mother Mary in the parishes and its operation was activated. His decision was, "*This month I should start in the convent chapel under me a monthly meeting of the sodality for girls, another of apostleship of prayer.*"¹³⁰

*The months of May and October (in the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church) are especially dedicated to the veneration of Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. During these months, a deep Marian spirit induced him to decorate Mother's pedestal beautifully.*¹³¹ "*For the month of May: a nosegay of fresh flowers every evening, meditation ... converse oftener with your mother, read of her and speak of her and thus grow in her love and child like confidence.*"¹³² Later, he asked his children also to do this. He did not forget to pray for her mediation by reciting more number of Rosaries in these months. He explained, "*Holy church invites her children to say rosary with more fervour and consecrate to this month to the Mother of God. How I rejoice to give a second month entirely to the mother of God.*"¹³³ He used to conclude all his work with beautiful Marian hymns. He made sure of it and penned, "*I am your property forever!*"¹³⁴

There is no room for wonder that he wished to have the presence of Virgin Mary near his deathbed because of his filial love towards her throughout his life. He considered, "*At the moment of Death, when the whole hell is let lose on us, when despair, remorse, regret possess our heart, when our intelligence has become so dull, our will so powerless, half-dead, she is our consolation, our joy.*"¹³⁵ He liked to say, "*I implore you to be by my side to soothe my aching brow and anxious heart when my last moment draws nigh and to render me all*

*assistance, which a mother's ingenuity is capable of."*¹³⁶ He prayed to let him reach as quickly as possible to see the glorified Mother Mary.¹³⁷

*"Mary's protection is upon us in life and death and after life in purgatory and may I not say also in heaven her children have a special happiness in being tenderly devout to her during life?"*¹³⁸ He who proclaimed this very loudly was called to enjoy eternal life after finishing his pilgrimage in this world, on Saturday 13 October 1956, the feast of our Lady of Fatima (on the sixth apparition date of Mother Mary in Fatima). At the time of his death, it is believed that Mother Mary rushed quickly down to earth singing hymns of praise to carry him along with her.

Our beloved founder advised his daughters to *submit all the communities under the protection of Mary*.¹³⁹ He might have been smiling now from heaven looking at his children who have dedicated to Mother Mary as per his wishes.

Devotion to St Joseph

John had a special affinity towards St Joseph. The loss of his parents hurled him into orphanhood, a helpless situation, so he embraced St Joseph as his foster-father since he was the foster-father of Jesus who was John's everything. He believed St Joseph who played a major role in bringing up Jesus, would also safeguard him similarly; moreover, Revd Fr Kuttikkat inspired him to grow in the devotion to St Joseph. The seminary at Kandy, his 'Sacred Gurukul' which nurtures enthusiastically the devotional exercises that are encouraged by the holy tradition of the Church, provided him a favourable atmosphere to grow in this devotion.¹⁴⁰

St Joseph, an ordinary worker who led a simple life in a remote village of Nazareth was rich in family dignity and character. Having deep faith in the mediation of St Joseph, the protector of the Holy Family, he gave himself up to his upbringing, he recorded in his diary, “*His dignity here below. 1) Spouse of Mary 2) foster-father. He stood Proxy for God the Father and the Holy Ghost: congratulate him and ask him to take you as his client. What a happiness to serve him. His glory should be great above for honour of those with whom he is in relation; his power also, for Jesus cannot refuse him anything since Joseph refused him nothing.*”¹⁴¹

John behaved like a son to St Joseph who laudably executed the great mission of fostering Jesus. And there found a similarity in the call of God in both St Joseph and John. He usually called him “My father St Joseph.” This shows the relationship between the son and the foster-father. He acknowledged this realization as, “*1) Husband of Mary: he thus enjoyed the holy conversation for 30 years and reflected in himself all the extraordinary privileges of the mother of God in himself. 2) Foster-Father of Jesus: shadow of the Eternal Father. Jesus depended on Joseph. If Joseph did not work, Jesus starved! I call you henceforth “my Father Joseph.” Besides there is a great similarity in our vocation. I am also called to be the guardian of Jesus.*”¹⁴²

St Joseph endured undefinable torments, both mentally and physically: when he came to know that his wife, Mary was pregnant,¹⁴³ on the journey to Bethlehem¹⁴⁴ and on the flight to Egypt.¹⁴⁵ In all these circumstances he was completely dependent on God. St Joseph didn’t dishearten at all before afflictions that came to him, one by one. On the other hand, he grew up relying firmly in the providence of God.

St Joseph who faced calmly and courageously all the crises and gave protection to the Holy Family is also the guardian of the Holy Church. He explained, *“His election to be the spouse of the queen of heaven and earth and to be the legal Father of Jesus shows his greatness. congratulate you dear Father Joseph and commend the holy church to you.”*¹⁴⁶ He prayed and jotted down, *“See, O dear father Joseph, the holy church, the mystical body of Jesus is hated, persecuted, you have the means to protect it; defeat her enemies by converting them.”*¹⁴⁷

John took pride in proclaiming that St Joseph was an integral part of his heart. He declared proudly, *“In the course of his life he had the ineffable happiness of the sweet converse of Jesus and Mary and their example! Since you were inseparable, I will never separate you from my heart.”*¹⁴⁸

John elucidated in his spiritual diary about the “Happy death” of the patron of happy death, his foster-father. He also desired to get a happy death. What defect is there in his desire? *“St. Joseph embraces...Jesus.”*¹⁴⁹ He prayed and expressed his hope, *“Happy end in the arms of the author of life and amidst the tender care of Mary. Oh, what a death. by your happy death assist me in my last moments.”*¹⁵⁰ He continued, *“Oh dear father come to conduct me when I am to pass from this world!”*¹⁵¹ He celebrated the month of March specially in honour of his foster-father St Joseph.

Devotion to the Guardian Angel

*“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*¹⁵² It is a call from God to follow Him strictly. God gave each one of us a guardian angel as a guide to continue

the spiritual journey to reach home safely without tumbling down on stones or thorns. We should be grateful to them, the caretakers of our spiritual wealth. Since John had the self-awareness that he was so weak, he firmly grasped the hands of his angel to continue the journey of his life. Obviously, he depicted in his diary *“Their dignity natural and supernatural. naturally their intellect understands the most abstruse truths and their knowledge is superior to any man’s science and their will follows only that which is purely good. Supernaturally adorned with graces untold, their intellect dives into the abyss of God’s essence and their will is an ever burning taper before God. Here looms up an unmistakable proof of God’s goodness: the most sweet Heart commanded his angels to watch over us and thus more than sufficiently supply our weakness! I thank you sweet Father! I will respect my angel as a token of my thanksgiving. They go with us and deliver us from every evil of body and soul and propose to us good things, suggest efficacious means! And leads us to final happiness! My angel’s charity and specially his patience with me is marvellous! I will often invoke him, praise him, thank him, try to please him by a life of mortification. I will make a colloquy to my good angel on Tuesdays and invoke him in all my necessities. If I have no confidence in him, I despise divine providence and insult my angel as if I needed no help and as if I acknowledge not his power! Never!”*¹⁵³ He grew up more and more in devotion to his guardian angel, whom God had chosen to protect him.

Union with Jesus

Meditation is a beautiful art that draws souls closer to God and forces them to renounce sin. This art, also like any other art can be achieved through constant training of inner

faculties. God gives the grace of induced meditation only to a handful of persons.

John who yearned strongly to become another Christ understood that the best way to do so was by experiencing Jesus' proximity, attaining His likeness and thus becoming one with Him. He suggested the following points to make it easy: *there must be a preferable ejaculation always in mind, daily activities must be done intentionally with the same purpose and prepare personally and steadily for this all day long.*¹⁵⁴ To attain it, silence is essential. Jesus' exemplary life teaches what kind of person one should be. He comprehended it from his childhood and beyond. *Jesus never spoke unnecessarily in His public life. He often spent time in loneliness.*¹⁵⁵ *Not only is silence the origin of all other virtues but it is also the door that leads us to heaven.*¹⁵⁶

Jesus was a man of prayer. He appropriately marked the verse, "In the morning, while it was still very dark, He got up and went out to a deserted place, and there He prayed."¹⁵⁷ Jesus prayed by bringing His human circumstances closer to God the Father in order to fulfill God's will. He was strengthened in prayer with a view to accomplish completely the will of God the Father.¹⁵⁸

"By reason of the gift and role of divine maternity by which she is united with her Son, the Redeemer and with His singular graces and functions, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church."¹⁵⁹ The first and the second chapters of St Luke, the evangelist reveal Mary as the symbol of prayer. He followed Jesus, his ideal teacher and Mary, his mamma as typical models of his life.

It is really a fact that Fr Ouseph Kuttikkatt only firstly influenced him a lot to nourish and blossom his prayer life and to exercise meditation, the resultant treasure trove of prayer life. John used to observe closely all the devotional images kept in the father's presbytery, his room, his behaviour as well as his prayer life. He tried to imitate Revd Father's art of dealings with people in various matters and activities. Moreover, Father explained very interestingly to him all about the devotional images. It touched him very much. As he grew up, there were enough and more things to be meditated upon. During meditation he starts thinking about God from the intellectual level, gradually ended up in the heart level where the working of the Holy Spirit occurred and slowly led him through meditation to contemplation and finally entering into the union with Jesus.

Later when he was a seminarian it became very easy for him to practise the exercises of meditation. *Love meditation and incorporate it into everyday activities.*¹⁶⁰ He discerned from his life experiences that *meditation brings about heavenly tranquility and happiness in every difficulty.*¹⁶¹ He liked to spend long hours in meditation before the Eucharist. *Meditation is the powerhouse of spiritual life.*¹⁶² He chose the Word of God for meditation. God reveals Himself through the Holy Scripture and invites us to have friendship with Him. He is present in His Word, since it is He who speaks when the Holy Scripture is read in the Church. The Word of God is active and vibrant.¹⁶³ The events in the Holy Scripture were taken usually to meditate on and compared it with his own life. And he made resolutions to develop his spiritual life. His Diary Notes are proof of it. See how he meditated

upon the topic “Jesus in the temple.”¹⁶⁴ 1) “All three go to the temple with love: ‘laetatus sum, cum dicta sunt...’ (I was glad when they are called...) and assist at the sacrifices with great piety. Then consider my mode of visiting, hearing mass, praying in the chapel. 2) Jesus knowing well in such a tender age his mission stays behind to awaken in the minds of the Doctors of law the ideas about the Messiah, to instruct them by prudent, modest questions, forcing them to consult, to read much to answer him... If he had told it to his parents they would allow him, but they would press to remain and in a certain way manifest him, or hinder him: but he would not all that. Besides he knew why he is sent; to do the will of His Father he would break every tie even the most sacred, thus to set an egregious example. In this point I well understood a) that I am come to the seminary to become a saint: all the rest should be postponed, neglected. Oh give me the grace to do what I so well understand, what is so obvious to me now: b) Jesus did not teach imperiously, arrogantly. Oh I could get that meek, charitable way of teaching, correcting that directly goes to the heart! Give it then! c) Mary is not scolding when she said: ‘Quid fecisti...’ (what have you done) for that would argue that she did not understand her beloved son, his mission etc. She here understanding Jesus always did well, asked an explanation, my son, may I know for my instruction.... Here for me is the lesson of knowing God’s ways to do accordingly.”¹⁶⁵

John converted meditation into an art and he chose appropriate yoga asanas with an eye to deepen it. *The shorter the meditation time the longer the preparatory time would be.*¹⁶⁶ *Accept a sitting posture that should not lead you to sleep.*¹⁶⁷ It was compulsory for him to take resolutions during

meditation, to write them down, to read them repeatedly and to examine whether there was any growth in his own spirituality. He made it mandatory to tabulate one's own shortcomings and deficiencies howsoever trifling and that they must be corrected continuously and timely. He explained how to take resolutions, "*Generally on the 5, 6, 7 day of the Retreat. 2 or 3 a year, to be done, not after 10 years but following year. Clearly state the motives, both general and particular that actuate you, foresee the obstacles, which you had already previous year, calculate the means and often a small sanction. All in short, not a dissertation, not to be published, not to be read by another (none will be tempted to show his resolutions to another). Purposes in vague to be taken in the meditations and in free times, determine and given shape. During the year when those things are no more so well present to our mind and you see you have not kept your resolutions, you are inclined to throw them away. Do not. let them alone; after all, they won't bite you; on a monthly recollection or following retreat you can read them again, humiliate yourself and take more practical ones for the ensuring, next year.*"¹⁶⁸

He had a clear conviction of what the aim of each annual retreat should be. The objectives in short:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. "Diformata reformare | <i>(reform the deformed)</i> |
| 2. Reformata conformare | <i>(conform the reformed)</i> |
| 3. Conformata confirmare | <i>(confirm the conformed)</i> |
| 4. Confirmata transformare | <i>(transform the confirmed)</i> |

For that.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Ingresse totus | <i>(Enter fully in retreat)</i> |
| 2. Mane solus | <i>(Stay alone)</i> |
| 3. Egredere alivs | <i>(Emerge enlivened).</i> " ¹⁶⁹ |

He also mentions the need to continue in that mental disposition after meditation. *Immediately going from a hot climate to a cold, there are chances to generate diseases like cough etc. So it is necessary to adapt to the changes gradually step by step. The same is applicable to annual retreat also. Continue retreat without stopping it all of a sudden. The end of a retreat is not the end of everything. It is only a start. Because the retreat days are the preparation days to start the fight with evil. You have to fight until you win. Charitable deeds are the only remedy to win. Therefore engage fully in doing good. Do not make any changes in the fight according to our wish. If the employee is frightened and withdraws, there will be no reward.*¹⁷⁰

He spent long hours in meditation to experience Jesus and to identify with him. *As he was growing up in meditation everyday, he rises from creatures to the creator.*¹⁷¹ Omnipotent God Almighty showered upon him unlimited blessings when he tried to fulfill his part sincerely. And slowly John entered into contemplation. *The infinite God showered infinite graces*¹⁷² upon him. He explained, *“I saw the crib, Jesus and Mary and Joseph, heard the angels, I was with the shepherds and timidly and lovingly approaching the most holy Mother I begged her to place my dear little Saviour in my arms! When she did so, I prayed Jesus pressing him to my lips to know him better, to love him ardently and follow him closely!*

1. *The circumstances: in the winter the coldest hour, outside of his own house in the vilest place; men and women servants are not there; in utter poverty, dire need and necessity; he acts in diametrical opposition to the ways of the world. The world seeks honours and convenience, abounds in everything! Who is right? The world is wrong, since the infallible wisdom of God*

acts so, he is not deceived, nor can be deceived. My soul we have been fools! Now at least let us begin to be wise.

2. Acts of Jesus: he suffers cold... he feels the ingratitude of men, he is not received by his own, he feels for the sins of the world, he weeps! he prays for the world to his eternal Father! My soul, do not think Jesus does not understand anything! Weep with him. for he weeps owing to you! Weep at least, because of the hardness of your heart! Mother, let me weep. Oh dear Jesus teach me the innocence, the humility and silence and charity of thy infancy!”¹⁷³

Of course, quite quickly he mastered the art of meditation and it surprised his colleagues. The ever glittering sanctuary lamp before the tabernacle signifies the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He knelt before the tabernacle for hours and hours with his bright unblinking eyes which were aimed at the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. He remained there with his folded hands in supplication. No movement on his lips. The silent communication with His Father goes on. The most powerful moments. The vivid description, “*As I was pursuing the ghost of fleeting honour, clutching or being hooked rather and trammelled by riches and as I was wallowing in the mire of all carnal pleasure, there comes to me an odour of exquisite sweetness. Oh indeed the air is impregnated with the odours of Mary as she triumphantly drives homeward! My ears catch the sweet melody of angelic voice: ‘Tu gloria Jerusalem’ (you are the glory of Jerusalem)...sing, sing ye angel bands etc. Thus shall be honoured, whom the king has a mind to... ‘attollite portas vestras quae est ista’ (lift up, O gates, your God, who is on my side)... above all, as the procession reached heaven there in the solemn stillness, the sweet Virgin*

*intones her beloved canticle. Magnificat. It is instantly taken up by the angelic and saints' choir and soon it filled and resounded those eternal abodes! My soul, all these in honour of our mother. Oh mother how I rejoice with you, Oh I love you, you are more dear to me than my very life!"*¹⁷⁴

John was not aware of the time flying by.

*"What a sight for my eyes! what gorgeous pageantry! What glorious scene! The brilliant clouds! Dazzling brightness! The shining angelic bands! The arrays of saints in the captivating beauty of redeeming grace, still fresh in the blood of this lamb! What then their queen! Her snow white dresses! Her whole person! 'Tu certa gloria Jerusalem' (you are the glory of Jerusalem)! The joy of the elect; the only one that is lovely after my Mother! I again rejoice, I love you oh draw me to thee and tenderly press me to thee!"*¹⁷⁵

He meditated one hour daily without fail even after he became a priest. He used to kneel down during the meditation. He led many to the divine presence with his unique way of transmitting the divine light that he had received or led others to God through meditation. His spiritual diary is the compilation of these meditational thoughts which he named 'Lights from Heaven' (Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections-4 parts - LMMR). Will this sacred soul have ever thought that the bright light he had received from the heights would illuminate many?

At the time of training the candidates for the foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity and also at the beginning of the community, he instructed them to meditate everyday morning. Selected topics were provided for devout meditation. Sincere directions given on meditation reveal

that he was imparting his own methods of meditation. To achieve this, he exhorted them to meditate daily and to write down the meditating points with its resolutions. Besides, he urged them to make self-preparation for monthly recollection and to draw out an action plan for it. He has also written a meditation for a monthly recollection with an action plan and kept it for the use of CSC community. This was based on the Gospel. He taught very particularly his daughters, “*To unite active life to contemplation.*”¹⁷⁶ Beloved father instructed his daughters that the *external activities should be the outcome of the contemplative life.*¹⁷⁷ The teaching of the Vatican Council II pointed out, “It is necessary therefore that the members of every community, seeking God solely and before everything else, should join contemplation, by which they fix their minds and hearts on Him, with apostolic love, by which they strive to be associated with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God.”¹⁷⁸

He prayed, “*Now enter Jesus and for good take possession of my heart!*”¹⁷⁹ His whole life became a meditation as he grew in personal love with Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament. He proved through his own life that meditation is unceasing like a constant dripping of oil.

Awareness of the Divine Presence

The basis of prayer is the conviction that each one of us is in the presence of God. Each human being is in the presence of God because of his very existence. We have to feel God’s presence just like we breathe air that gives us life. John stressed, “*The End of my existence is to know and love God.*”¹⁸⁰ When Jesus said to keep awake and pray,¹⁸¹ He wanted

nothing else but to keep the presence of God in us. When the awareness of Divine Presence is born in us every moment, it becomes a constant prayer. Every heart beat and every breath will be a rise of our hearts towards the presence of God.

John's life was a constant incensing of the awareness of the presence of God. His spiritual directors trained him *to be always with God and in God*.¹⁸² During this period, he learnt a number of ways to maintain this sense of keeping up God's presence in his daily activities. It was visible to everyone how he raised his heart heavenwards to have direct contact with God in between his activities just like a hen looking upwards while drinking water. Many times a day repeatedly he prayed, "Ne permittas umquam a te separari" (*do not allow me to be separated from you*). It had been his most favourite love expression. He was taught in the seminary how to keep special intentions for everyday prayers, works and sacrifices and also to pray for the needs of everyone without differentiating between the rich and the poor. Additionally, he ferreted out a way to overcome laziness by fixing earlier a number of virtues to be accomplished and then later checked it by counting how many ejaculations, sacrifices and charitable works were done in one day. *He spent a good deal of his time to earn virtues without losing even a single minute knowingly*.¹⁸⁴ He carefully observed it and proclaimed, "Make good use of every minute."¹⁸⁵ Thus every breath of this blessed soul, who had united himself with God in so many ways, was for the greater glory of God. So he confirmed, "Let me be here below and there above in the firmament a monument of God's mercy, a star giving light to glorify, proclaim His mercy."¹⁸⁶ He penned, "How good it is to live always united

with God, in the spirit of prayer, raising our heart from temporal things to spiritual."¹⁸⁷ He was able to say it during his training period itself. Through his own life he declared aloud what he had experienced and trained. Thus, *he thought to be like a pilgrim since heaven is his home and this world is a foreign land. So John hurriedly walked, hoping to reach his hometown soon, ignoring the pleasures of the world.*¹⁸⁸ Yes, this man of prayer was achieving spiritual growth continuously during the long period from 1898 to 1907. He accepted Jesus who engaged in conversation with God the Father in the silence of the night after His zealous commitments of the day, as his model. He noted, *"Follow this loving infant Master and Saviour and model."*¹⁸⁹ Prayer is, human beings' answer to God who gave him existence and allowed to approach Him calling 'Abba Father.'¹⁹⁰ This is also the life of the soul.¹⁹¹ John learned that one can reach God by faith alone and the search must be made in the hope of meeting God quickly.¹⁹² So he conducted an emotional enquiry. *"As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."*¹⁹³ That merciful-hearted wished to be like the Father whom he had searched for and experienced. He jotted, *"As I live I wish to be like you, with you."*¹⁹⁴

By the time he understood about the two aspects of prayer: vertical and horizontal. Vertical aspect turns to God which prompts man to offer worship, praise and gratitude. He prayed, *"Oh loosen my tongue Lord, then it shall sing your praises, mercies that of your mother."*¹⁹⁵ The horizontal aspect turns to people that obliges man to pray and act against war, poverty, injustice, violence and slavery. These two levels

are linked to each other. Moses' example gave him strength.¹⁹⁶ Life after his ordination proved the compatibility of these two facets in his personality. He was a heroic man who wanted to die loving God. His prayer life too was an intrepid one, as it was practised and disciplined with great difficulty throughout his life. It never stood as an obstacle to the charitable work. When prayer life deepens, the charitable work increases. No doubt he was a true brother to his classmates. The exact ability to keep up prayer and action complementary to each other raised him incontrovertibly as a man of prayer.

John was enabled to lay a solid spiritual foundation in this period, to embrace his divine calling with his own matured reflective thinking and to consolidate his life through spiritual formation.¹⁹⁷ The future priest of Christ lay on the burning fierce furnace of training and was transforming into another Christ. He tried to assume the personality of Christ, "*My only resolution is to become "alter Christus" (another Christ).*"¹⁹⁸ He promised, "*Act always and everywhere as Jesus, as my good master, my model, would have acted or acted.*"¹⁹⁹ He was eager to imbibe the characteristics of Christ to himself. During this time, a unique personality similar to spiritual growth was developing in him. He quoted the verse, "*Jesus grew in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.*"²⁰⁰ It became true in John too. He received everything needed for spiritual growth: like environmental conditions, manure and water in plenty from that 'Sanctum Sanctorum' (*Temple of Spirituality- Seminary*). With that his personality developed into its true form and in course of time, it rooted in spirituality and later, he became the father of the sick, the destitute and the needy.

God called!

John answered !!

God nourished !!!

John brought forth fruits!!!!

PERSONALITY FORMATION

It is quite instinctual nature of children to seek and imitate ideal persons who inspire their lives. Knowingly or unknowingly each child in this age identifies with an ideal one and imitates him unquestionably. Jesus is the one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.²⁰¹ He is not at all far off, not a strange or an unreachable person. He is unselfish, broadminded, an imperial lover, a mighty ruler and a lover of human beings who dwells with them to guide and protect. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."²⁰² Through this verse, without hesitation Jesus invited each one to follow Him. There is not even a speck of ignorance, falsehood or hypocrisy in Jesus. He has a pleasant attitude and is enthusiastic in His dealings. Idealism, steadfastness, prudence and so forth are His qualities. He was not fickle minded, and not like the 'one sitting on the fence' or like a 'swaying reed in the wind'. He gave innovative life principles that would last until the cessation of the ages. The handsome and helpless John, accepted Jesus as his ideal. He said *he would be only for Jesus in his life and death.*²⁰³ He made sure, "*He is our model.*"²⁰⁴ He was eager to imitate his ideal. He said *he would follow Jesus everywhere.*²⁰⁵ Jesus was the consoler of John. "*Who is better consoler than Jesus?*"²⁰⁶ John was brought up through the incinerator of orphanhood and destitution in order to emulate the underlying principles of Jesus in his life. Thus he became a refuge of the destitute

and the poor to announce the liberation message to them. He proved this later through his life without the tardiness of time.

He was trained in the seminary with the objective to live in accordance with the Gospel principles. As a student he learned it and was strengthened in faith, hope and charity; thereby he grew in zeal to gain all men for Christ.²⁰⁷ The life regularizations over there were filled with spirit of devotion, solitude and service. He utilized the training period as a stepping stone with an eye to his priestly life in the future.²⁰⁸

Faith Bearer

Faith is the human reliance and refuge in divinity.²⁰⁹ It is a divine gift. Christian faith is based on the belief in Christ and in His attitude of faith. The unbelievable power of faith is illustrated through equating it with miniscule mustard seed which could move mountains.²¹⁰ The tiniest bit of faith produces an unimaginable outcome that indicates the supernatural power of faith. Faith opens the door always to God to work in man. Surely, it inspired people to cling on to Jesus Christ for achieving impossible things, ascertained on their belief that God the Father is Almighty. Christ's assurance is that one who believes will be able to do all things²¹¹ and Christ's answer is, it shall happen just as he believes. Faith has the power to determine human destiny.²¹² Believe means to be willing. Man dedicates himself to God's will through faith. The completion of faith is in imitating Christ because He is the Lord of faith and the one who fulfills our faith.²¹³

Faith is receiving of the message of salvation. Regulate life according to this secret revealed in the world. Because

this belief is salvific. Its effectiveness comes from the death and resurrection of Christ.²¹⁴ Faith gives the awareness of the New Covenant and its relationship to mankind.²¹⁵ It is faith that is inevitable for this state of life when it leaves everything for Messianic discipleship.²¹⁶ Thus it helps to turn away from everybody and everything to share in the spiritual union with Christ throughout life, to share in the salvation mystery of the Lord and in His poverty,²¹⁷ carrying of the cross,²¹⁸ humiliation, torture and abandonment.²¹⁹ It is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher and for a servant to be like his master.²²⁰ Thus the disciple is worthy to enter the kingdom of God which He has established and to share in His glory.

Fr John Ukken's whole life was a search to see the face of his merciful Father. It is possible only for those who forget themselves and focus on God. Human nature is to worship and praise God through faith.²²¹ "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth."²²² Faith is the essential virtue we need in the journey of spiritual life. Jesus praises the centurian's faith.²²³ John prayed to enrich his soul with such faith and remarked, "*The ruler asks our Lord to come and cure his son! He had confidence, therefore he sought Jesus. When he apparently refused, he pressed still more earnestly. Have I confidence? Then he merited to hear "Thy son liveth." Say Jesus the same to my soul!*"²²⁴

The nature of faith is to rely on God's mercy and love. When we complain about our weaknesses, we ignore the spirit of faith. The great evil is, not believing in the Risen Christ. The true believer is one who places himself at the

feet of God when burdened with sin and asks mercy and pardon by confessing his sins. This was true to John's life. He etched St Augustine's meditation, "*I am indeed a very grievous sinner and my conscience upbraids me with numberless and heinous transgressions against God and his most righteous laws. He compares his soul to a dilapidated house. I have been deceived by appearances: my mother, refuge of sinners what shall I do? Confidence! Where sin hath abounded, there grace has much more abounded (Rom 6.1). To despair is to rob God of his beloved attribute, which is the highest outrage and injustice that man can possibly commit against God. Man does as much as in him lies against God them. I know whom I have believed (2 Tim. 1:12) it my Father who has adopted me! Neither the quality of my sins nor their number terrifies me when the death of my Saviour comes into my mind. He has a sanctuary for me in his wounded side. He embraces the whole world by his out stretched arms. He kisses me by his inclined Head! Make me a saint.*"²²⁵

Faith overcomes fear. Jesus rebukes His disciples who were scared rather than believing.²²⁶ Peter was able to walk over the water on the command of Jesus. Faith supersedes doubts. What is needed is the faith that overcomes fear and obstacles. The cause for it is the assurance about God's power, mercy and presence.

Jesus performed miracles only after testing the depth of faith. Fr John compared sin to leprosy and sores. He believed that if it was kept in front of Jesus, the merciful Jesus would cleanse and cure it with the ointment of His love. For this, we should have a child's simple faith in order to fall at the feet of Jesus. He commented on the attitude of

the leper and explained, “He is not ashamed to show his leprosy to Jesus and to all those who were with him. He acknowledges his divinity by prostrating himself before him. He believes he is able to effect the cure! Do I acknowledge my leprosy, my internal corruption and believe in the power of Jesus? Mother of hope and fair love, incline to me and teach me and instruct me in all!”²²⁷ He believed God who created him has complete power upon him. Let God use him in whatever way He wanted. He was completely God’s own.²²⁸

All those who have deep faith will be like Blessed Virgin Mary. She did not understand the words of the angel.²²⁹ Still she knows, “For nothing will be impossible with God.”²³⁰ He prayed, “Her faith was far superior to that of the Patriarch Abraham, to believe that she could be mother of God and remain Virgin. Then when I am asked to do apparently contradictory or according to human way of thinking impossible, shall I not rather look at God’s power to effect everything!”²³¹ He continued writing his prayerful intuitions, ‘Fiat mihi’ (let me). (she doesn’t say: ‘faciam’) (I’ll) i.e I am not worthy nor can I do anything to fit me to so exalted a rank. all I expect from that all powerful “fiat” which made heaven and earth. I too ask God to make me a saint, but I am able to effect nothing, let my sanctification be his work entirely.”²³² He added, “Her faith in seeing in her son, her maker and redeemer!”²³³ Mary became the true witness of faith which is described in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the letter to Hebrews. Imitating Mother Mary and looking up to Jesus who is the Lord of faith and one who brings it to perfection, John ran the race with perseverance.²³⁴

Hope - Centred Life

Hope is a spiritual reality found in the Holy Scripture as one of the basic attributes of a true devotee. It was pretty

perspicuous that the believers in the Old Testament and the New Testament were hopeful people. In both cases, God's promises made them to have faith in Him. They saw a God who is always faithful in the promises as an assurance of hope. In the Old Testament it is 'Yahweh,' who is the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. But in the New Testament it is the 'Loving God the Father' whom the believers experienced through Messiah, the Saviour.

The rays of hope appeared first in the book of Genesis.²³⁵ God gives hope of salvation to the first sinner. The picture of hope becomes even clearer, from Abraham onwards. God the Father promised earthly blessings to Abraham.²³⁶ It is the worldly blessings that persuaded Israel to put their hope in God.²³⁷ The prophets who talk about the physical gifts, afterwards give Israel hope by promising them spiritual gifts.²³⁸

Jesus is the one who radiates the rays of hope into the human hearts in the New Testament, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."²³⁹ God's kingdom was not earthly but it is an experience of heaven to those who believed in Jesus. All hope of the Church is focused on the Second Coming of the Lord. The gifts of the Holy Spirit strengthen the Church to spread the hope in the Messiah, the fulfillment of the promises.²⁴⁰ The coming of the Messiah,²⁴¹ the Day of the Lord,²⁴² the Revelation Day²⁴³ etc were the terms which expose the glory to come. The apostles and their colleagues were urging the early Christians not to waver amidst their sufferings, temptations and trials but to wait and look forward with hope.²⁴⁴

The hope of the coming of the Lord creates an attitude of temperance and renunciation among the children of the Church.²⁴⁵ Those who live in this hope are able to partake in the divine nature and those who have hope will always be in prayer.

Hope is the direct manifestation of the life of faith. The promise of God makes a Christian hopeful and hope is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus was the only hope of John. His life was an unflagging effort to gain oneness with Jesus, his model. He had strong faith and fine hope that he would be able to share in the salvation that Jesus achieved through His crucifixion. *He had unlimited hope.*²⁴⁶ So he moved ahead embracing and grappling God tightly in all adverse situations. It is evident throughout his diary. Revd Fr Ukken *considers his whole life as a pilgrimage to heavenly Jerusalem.*²⁴⁷ He urged, “As a traveller gather everything conducive to this travel, so by the mortifications, humiliations, accumulate wealth for my eternal life, nothing however small will lose its merit and reward.”²⁴⁸ He travelled through this. Further he understood, “Narrow path is only for you and for your beasts of burden i.e passions and luggage i.e your riches, honours there is no room. God and you! They are few, very few in this path! struggle I to be one in that few!”²⁴⁹ He wanted to enjoy eternal bliss and added, “Sufferings not very much nor for long time, but see and calculate if you can his glory. Oh my soul have the common sense, time is short. Suffer for our Lord willingly without grudging, love him for His Sake.”²⁵⁰

John has described the heavenly fortune, his life’s goal, “What love and happiness reign there! With what complacency

God the Father who to redeem slaves sacrificed His only Son, regards his adopted children. We shall be like princes; now disregard the little inconveniences, troubles etc. Eternity will soon dawn, our Father and Mother await us!"²⁵¹ *We would be delighted in heaven of eternal bliss.*²⁵² He continued, "*Ever fixing my eyes on heaven. as Jesus is there.*"²⁵³ It is clear from it what he lived for. He rushed to his own home singing the hymn of thanksgiving with all other sojourners whom he met on this pilgrimage like his Mother.

Nevertheless, he understood that it was his obligation to save the souls who hadn't reached the destination yet. He decided in his heart, "*They are dear to Jesus and Mary and Jesus would be willing to die a thousand times more, but why, he has enriched the holy church. now there is need of one to direct it or apply it. Even that I do not do for my parents... and poor souls.*"²⁵⁴ He continued, "*They are like men after ship wreck trying to reach shore, but a small wave carries them, farther and farther, as often as they strive! As the beatitude consists in the vision so their principle pain consists in its privation. I pity them. for after the separation of the soul, it has special light to see God's goodness, so it yearns to be united. yet so far from the embrace of the spouse! I believe I can help them.*"²⁵⁵ *All must be saved without anyone perishing.*²⁵⁶ John fully cooperated with the salvation mystery of Jesus. For this, gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are necessary. By means of prayer and renunciation he was prepared to receive the promised Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. He wrote down, "*He will not deny me His gifts. for you being evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more God, as I ask Him. Effects: knowledge of scriptures, of languages, courage to*

*preach and suffer cheerfully. I also must ask gifts of preaching (not myself) but Word of God clearly, forcibly and sweetly.”*²⁵⁷

He had an enduring faith and an unyielding expectation in God’s promises. His heart throbbed to let the people whom he met during his pilgrimage enjoy the fullness of hope and expectation of life in Christ. He led all who were living in dishonesty to honesty, darkness to light and death to life with an ever smiling face, hopeful lips and blooming words. Moreover, he was able to see Christ in the destitute, the poor, the ignorant, the sinful and raised them towards the banquet of Christ by spreading the rays of hope. Having identified with Jesus he broke the bondage of various types of slaveries and freed everyone from evils that existed in the society. Its waves spread to the villages. Thus he became the embodiment of hope for all and through him salvation came to many.

Charity - The Creed of Life

*Charity is the highest form of love, signifying the reciprocal love, a chain that relates man to God. We should love both friends as well as enemies and never love anyone either for own benefits or for just increasing the number of friends. As long as God loves all, we must love others since they are the children of God. We ought to give special consideration to the poor, the sick and the ignored of the society.*²⁵⁸

Love is the nucleus of Christian life. The great words, God is love²⁵⁹ and love one another²⁶⁰ are the summit of the revelation that came through the New Testament. It was through love that Jesus fulfilled His mission just as His incarnation was from God the Father’s love. He loved his people so much. “As the father has loved me, so I have loved

you; abide in my love.”²⁶¹ Jesus listened to everyone and promised His forgiveness and help to all invariably.²⁶² So also He loved the most disgusted and the outcasts of the society.²⁶³

Jesus called to Him those whom He wanted to share His life with.²⁶⁴ He led them from slavery to the fullness of love²⁶⁵ and loved them till the end.²⁶⁶ He showed interest in their needs.²⁶⁷ They were saved from their critics.²⁶⁸ Jesus’ command to love God and the neighbour is the full essence of His exhortation. It is also the ‘most important commandment of the law’²⁶⁹ and a requirement to inherit ‘eternal life.’²⁷⁰ The principle that measures Christian life is love. The fullness of Christian love must be assessed by the love for one another.²⁷¹ Love is the work of the physical body of Christ. A Christian should be rooted in love.²⁷²

As my Father loved me, so I have loved you. Just as I have loved you, love one another. The criteria of charity for Jesus is the Father’s love for Him and for us it is Jesus’ love towards us. Jesus loved us by shedding the last drop of His blood. Similarly we should shed blood for others if needed. Or it will be a shameful murder of Charity daughters.²⁷³ He who doesn’t love his brother cannot love God.²⁷⁴ “All who hate a brother or sister are murderers.”²⁷⁵ The second commandment is, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”²⁷⁶ He prayed, “I do not wish any evil to me, prosperity is always welcome! Oh how many saints loved their neighbours more than themselves! give me my Good God true charity for my Brothers.”²⁷⁷

You should not have any obligation to anyone other than loving each other. For he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. Love does no harm to a neighbour. St Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilment of the law.²⁷⁸

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”²⁷⁹ Their mutual love is a sign of recognition as disciples of Christ. Early Christian community was recognized by other people because of their mutual love.²⁸⁰ Jesus and Mary taught us the same through their lives. He explained *“Mary hastens to do good.”*²⁸¹ He continued, *“Charity of Mary is prompt and ready; it disregards all difficulties and troubles it forgets. I must see in my brothers the person of Jesus, then it would be easy, to perform acts of charity, for who would refuse an office or service when Jesus himself asks for it?”*²⁸² He was definite, *“Our dear Jesus and his most Holy Mother during all their lives were merciful. It is written of Jesus that he went about doing good. curing the sick; casting out devils; resuscitating the dead. jesus’ mercy. for all, in all sorts of miseries and through charity, not expecting any return.”*²⁸³

John who emulated the model of Jesus and His mother, pledged to work just like his Guru, to improve the conditions of the poor and the weak, loving them as a response to the infinite love that God had bestowed upon him during his childhood. He prayed and promised, *“Mankind wounded by devil lies half dead. the ancient law can do nothing, then our Lord saves him and entrusts him to his church. I was robbed of my baptismal robe and wounded, then our Lord cures me and gives me over to the seminary. What goodness of thy heart! how willingly you poured your wine of blood upon me! So let me also have compassion for the weak and do similarly to ameliorate their condition, specially when I will be the inn keeper as a priest. oh, make my heart like unto thine!!”*²⁸⁴ We have seen here the hearty vibrations of gratitude of a

twenty-three year old seminarian, who experienced the invisible sustaining hands of God Almighty with mercy and love throughout his adversities. Fr Ukken, the father of the poor, changed these vibrations of heart into his lifestyle, later on exhorted his children to treat everyone with love. He taught, “*Show charity so dear to the S. Heart to all, in thought, words and actions wounding any is touching of the pimple of the tender eye of my loving Master.*”²⁸⁵

The beloved father gave his children some of the laws of love for their observance. They are:

- *Never judge anyone rashly or interpret any action uncharitably.*
- *Never wish evil to any. Never have any aversion to any.*
- *Never utter harsh and ironical words that would wound charity and leave an impression of sadness or dejection in the heart.*
- *Towards equals.*
- *Love and esteem everyone.*
- *Do not exaggerate their defects, question good intentions and never be harsh and think yourself better than them.*
- *Help other sisters in their needs before they ask help from you.*
- *The fragrance of love for each other should spread among the sisters like the perfumed oil poured over Aharon’s head which flowed over his body and spread the fragrance over the entire Hermon mountain.*²⁸⁶

John who experienced the love, made haste to convey the same experience to others like Mary Magdalene, the first

witness of the greatest event in the Paschal Mystery.²⁸⁷ Yes, his life was a perfumed oil that spreads the aroma of love everywhere.

God's love showered upon John.

John received it;

Poured Heavenly Father's love

Changed to a perfumed oil!!!

OBEDIENCE - LIFESTYLE OF JOHN

Obedience is to know and work in harmony with someone else's mind. To obey, however is to listen and respond.²⁸⁸ It means, to hear and act according to the voice of God that reveals through our conscience and to see in authorities the representatives of God and submit to their commands.

Being a creature, man is bound to obey God. Even though he was created in freedom, the completion of it happens when he identifies himself with God's mind.²⁸⁹ All authority is from God.²⁹⁰ Jesus accepted God's authority even from Pilate who condemned Him to death. He said, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above."²⁹¹ Man obeys God whenever he obeys the proper authority.

The greatest example of obedience is manifested in Christ. The mystery of His birth itself is the obedience to God. We actually obey the Father when we fulfill the will of God by remaining in our specific life situations. He openly declared that He came to earth to fulfill the will of the one who sent Him.²⁹² A magnificent example of Jesus' obedience is explicated in the prayer at Gethsemane. Even when he

confronts the fierce face of His terrific death He said, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done."²⁹³ In the Gospel we meet Jesus who obeys His Father until death, yes, a death on the cross.²⁹⁴ In all His teachings the main message focused on was to fulfill the will of the Father. He said that His mother and brothers are those who fulfill the will of God, ie His beloved ones.²⁹⁵ Christ's obedience must be the inspiration, the centre and the model for each Christian's life.

The evangelists have written, "He was obedient to them,"²⁹⁶ about the thirty years of the life of Jesus. Christ came to the world to fulfill his Father's will.²⁹⁷ He accepted the role of a servant.²⁹⁸ He learned obedience through sufferings.²⁹⁹ Christ himself submitted to His Father with the objective to serve His brothers. "Just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."³⁰⁰ Jesus obeyed His Father from birth to death and fulfilled His will even in the hostile circumstances. Jesus who answered Himself to the divine will of God said, "Not my will but yours will be done" and Virgin Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy will" and submitted herself to the plan of God. These acts turned into an imitative model of obedience for us.

It is no wonder, John whose models were Jesus and Virgin Mary, eagerly imitated them and succeeded in effectuating obedience by yielding himself to the authorities as a means to consummate the will of God till the end of his life. His words serve as a proof, "*St. Joseph and B. Mother obey the edict of Augustus without questioning. That is the spirit of Jesus. that is the second thing he asks us to do.*"³⁰¹ (first is

humility) He continued, “*When Augustus ordered an enrollment Mary did not examine his motive, whether actuated by the glory of God etc nor his qualifications. she did not even think of the inconvenience to herself. she did not seek a pretext to spare herself. she did not seek a pretext to dispense herself. I admire your obedience and I congratulate yourself and I implore you. What facilitated your perfect obedience! Mary saw in the emperor, God: now who is so foolish as to resist the will of God if he personally asked us to do something? So my mother, give me that faith to see God in my superiors, whoever they may be!*”³⁰² Emulating Mother Mary, later he was able to say, “*Obey those whom God appoints, behave with them with humble reverence.*”³⁰³ He continued, “*So leaving aside our reason, that proud faculty which roles us part of our merit, we should obey. without interval of time i.e prompt. generously, exteriorly and interiorly, without murmuring etc.*”³⁰⁴

By this, everyone joins with God’s salvific will more securely and consistently. Therefore, we must obey the authorities according to the rules and regulations and humble ourselves in the spirit of faith and love to fulfill God’s will. We must use all the abilities of mind and intellect and all the gifts and graces of divine power when we discharge the entrusted duties and when we obey the commands. By doing so, we are building up the body of Christ.³⁰⁵

John infused the obedience of Jesus into his life. He describes heartwarmingly the example of Jesus, who even though being the Most High was submissive to His creatures, “*Jesus as tender child allowed himself to be carried wheresoever his parents wished. He was as wise and intelligent as later on. Yet never did he approve or disprove any of their actions by*

*any sign. Oh how am I? Jesus in the B. Sacrament acts in the same way. nay more, he obeys wicked priests too! What a shame for me dust and ashes! Can I now at least begin to obey without distinction any superior? Yes, Lord! I am resolved to obey all with alacrity: assist me by your grace and example! God, creator, Lord was subjected to men, to creatures, to servants. Oh, shall I ever again be foolish as to murmur and criticize orders! For 30 years. Why so long a time? For Jesus knows to our nature how difficult it is to submit and on the other hand, as St. Ignatius say: obedience is the mother of all other virtues. Eternal thanks be to Thee O sweet Jesus! Oh assist me to obey promptly and without questioning! The obedience of Jesus shone more splendidly in his sacred passion. In the garden of Gethsemane, Father, if it is possible let this chalice pass away from me. However not as I will, but you. This perfect example of perfect obedience you have set for me, Oh dear Jesus. I thank you, from the bottom of... This act of obedience cost Jesus so many sufferings, scourging, crowning with thorns etc till death on the cross! I have never so great difficulties. Let me be obedient in everything, let the excellence and nobility of obedience be known to me!"*³⁰⁶

He also mentions the relationship between authority and subjects, "*The superior holds God's place.*"³⁰⁷ So your conduct with the authorities must be like a five year old child and you ought to behave with the spirit of integrity regarding obedience and faith.³⁰⁸ Because obedience is better than sacrifice.³⁰⁹

John was obedient to the will of God,
God worked great things through him!!!

John Embraces Poverty

In temporal terms, the poor people are those who do not have enough food,³¹⁰ wealth, material possessions³¹¹ and

also those who suffer poverty³¹² to sustain their life. In the book of Psalms, those who are subjected to the forces of sin and evil are also referred to as poor.³¹³ Those who are the weakest and most vulnerable in terms of health and mental strength are also included in this category.³¹⁴ Over and above, who are oppressed by the rich³¹⁵ and tormented by the wicked³¹⁶ belong to this class.

Christ entered His public life with the message that 'the poor are the blessed' and He proclaimed they are the special heirs of God's kingdom.³¹⁷ The Messiah of the poor is a poor man. Bethlehem,³¹⁸ Nazareth,³¹⁹ public life³²⁰ and Calvary³²¹ are all the different configurations that corroborated the poverty of Christ. Jesus warned his disciples that wealth would create inordinate dangers.³²² He demanded that those who follow Him closely, must be really poor.³²³

John made the poverty of his ideal man as his life document. Though He was rich, He became poor to make us rich by His poverty.³²⁴

Jesus, Son of God didn't get a place for His birth or death. Poverty was prevalent throughout the life of Jesus. John understood that poverty was his right also, on account of his model. Jesus was born poor, lived poor and died poor. He abandoned everything fully and he quoted, "*some quite thorough going abandon everything 'hic et mea te' (here and I will) follow the Master.*"³²⁵ With an eye to witness poverty both in spirit and in reality, it is necessary to create a moderate and simple lifestyle in the use of material goods.³²⁶ Let their treasure be in heaven.³²⁷ He also devoted his life to help the poor, imitating his Master, who loved the poor so much. All should love the poor with the compassionate Heart of

Christ.³²⁸ He meditated, “Parents of Jesus are poor: so they cannot afford to pay much for the place in an inn; relatives do not mind these poor people; yet they should a place to pass the night, for Mary to give birth to her son. There is only a cave.. So Jesus is born, as it were, in the street! His throne is a little straw. Was I ever, will be in such poverty, destitution? Now complain of your necessities, needs! Take my soul every necessity as a precious token of Jesus love for you; If you have, deprive yourself willingly of something. Shepherd boys (cattle-boys) are called first! If the angels were sent for the rich, powerful they would have come in procession to adore him. Surely His predilection is for the poor; ‘Pauperes evangelizantur’ (Good news, preach to the poor). Try to love the poor, the less attractive: the rich will have many others.”³²⁹

John heartily accepted Jesus’ teaching on poverty and decided to practise it in his life. He surrendered himself totally to the providence of God. He altogether placed his faith in God the Father, devoid of anxiety and relied absolutely in God’s plans for him.³³⁰ He cogitated and promised, “*Poverty is subject of the first beatitude! a) poverty at heart i.e all though risk so live disengaged as to quit them at any moment for the love of God, if it is required. Lord, I am ready to part with everything for the love of you; I love you above all, Oh my only love, only Good. 2) Jesus knowing very well our weakness, cupidity, set a life-long example of poverty! he chose a poor mother, poor foster-father, poor stable, poor Nazareth, poor profession, poor apostles, lived poor without a home wherein to rest his head in his public life, was stripped off even the last shred of linen before his death!! Oh dear Master, Eternal thanks to you, oh today my soul yearns to be in need of not only useful*

things, but sometimes also of necessities of life to be like unto thy most sweet heart! Lord, at least rid me of all superfluities!! And lead me slowly to imitate this virtue so dear thine mother's most tender heart! For being poor voluntarily they throw off all fetters and trammels and mortify their cupidity and so render themselves free and able to give all attention to things eternal and some way buy heaven for themselves even in this world by the forestate they get! Meanwhile they are not wanting in anything, for their Father has care of them, who said. First seek the kingdom of heaven etc... what a happy state, my soul... sweet mother you who knew the value of this virtue and loved it in your son and imitated it from him as he lay on your knees, working by your side, preaching before you, hanging on the cross, teach me to know and esteem and love and imitate it. Make us practise poverty! Loving Jesus, I promise..."³³¹

Jesus gave more importance to life testimony than lip worship. He lived the poverty which He taught. He exercised justice for the oppressed and the needy, and proclaimed the Fatherhood of God.³³² John accepted Him as his Guru, imitated His poverty and made it as a law of his life. "Jesus who was to preach extreme poverty and humility "Son of man hasn't when to lay His head take not crisl, money, staff and two coats..." showed the example. He who would come to judge the world in power, splendour and Majesty, now... He shivers from cold! Wherever lived in extreme poverty and humility. Poverty that is rarely seen in any! The Son of man who did not have a place to lay His head never searched for coat, bed and money. He who would come to judge the world in power, splendour and majesty, set us an example. The infant shivers from cold!

Wherever we look we find men amassing riches; using them for pleasures, havens...Plan of opposing poverty and humility is excellent. Then he made a voluntary surrender of all these. "Having many things and possessing nothing." I asked for a real spirit of poverty and being destitute follow this loving Infant Master and Saviour and Model."³³³

Jesus again says, "*Foxes have holes... I have nowhere to lay my head. I, the creator of foxes, have provided them with holes...I have nothing! How often I serve you, Lord. for things unworthy of you! Jesus shows the necessity of poverty to serve God and sets such an example!*"³³⁴ *Curses for the rich for they have got joy and comfort in this world itself. He sent away the rich empty-handed. John promised to love Jesus and to follow His poverty.*³³⁵

Founder father who wore poverty as his attire, was a living model of poverty for his daughters. He advised them it was forbidden to keep money of their own. He straight-forwardly pointed out that *a religious sister who keeps a penny as her own is not worth a penny.*³³⁶ *It is inappropriate for a religious to keep one's own money and give things to others without permission.*³³⁷ He continued his advice, "*We are strangers and travellers here; and will be called away at any moment. Thy soul will be required of thee this very night. Fool, that I am. detach me and make me love you. "Thesaurus in coeli"* (treasures in heaven). *Why? There, there is no moth, nor thief; and there ought be your conversation and your heart!*"³³⁸ The first factor to obtain the kingdom of heaven is poverty.³³⁹ If so, undoubtedly we can say that Fr John Ukken, Christ's beloved disciple who truly embraced poverty, enjoys eternal bliss today in heaven.

Devout Heart in Jesus

Celibacy for the kingdom of God³⁴⁰ is an extraordinary gift of grace from God. Chastity frees the human heart from worldly pleasures in a special way that it causes to love God and all human beings more and more excitingly.³⁴¹ Assuredly, it is an indication of heavenly treasures and the best way to dedicate oneself happily for God's service and other missionary efforts. Those who embrace celibacy should not depend fully on their own strength and must trust in God's help and practise abstemious habits and also restrain from desires.³⁴²

Brahmachari is a devotee, who stays in Brahman (in God) without any deviation. His thoughts, words and deeds are all equal to God. The one who is dedicated to God is also the same. He mediates with God; speaks and acts for God. His goal is to enter into communion with God. John offered himself completely to Jesus and made promises to live as a celibate throughout his life. To remain steadfast in this, he appealed for the mediation of Mother Mary. He made promises and jotted down, *“Keep better modesty of eyes and restrain the imagination, above all guard your affections: do not be too tender, do not seek affections: remember Jesus and Mamma love you so much! I must be entirely pure to be like unto Mamma. She so pure, I so impure! Also to keep my vow made to God before the whole church on my ordination.”*³⁴³

Vow of chastity is the submission to the universal love³⁴⁴ and to the availability of the apostolic integrity. John acceded to the celibatic call with the intention of serving God the Father and humanity through his vowed life. It enabled him to love everyone without any limits, to allocate a place for

everyone in his heart and also to dedicate himself for everyone. It can be fruitful only through mutual love. He proved this with his own life.

“Castitas in temperantia motus appetitus consistit; omnis buno motum plus minea experietur, quia est homini inditus... Nemo tenetur hoc sacrificium facere, sed semd factum... sacrilegium...”³⁴⁵ *(His philosophy of celibacy is remarkable. The control of bodily aspirations is essential for celibacy. All these have been vested within every human being from birth itself and it influences every person in one way or the other. Nobody is compelled to make this submission. But once dedication is made no one should make it a blasphemy. It requires penance). He advised his children that it should reflect even in the formal letters. He was determined not to touch anyone or let anyone to touch him. He was meticulous to keep a distance from the other sex even if they were his own relatives or kith and kin. This is a big sacrifice; but it is blessed. Because there are chances of catching fire even from a purified candle.*³⁴⁶

*This virtue is appreciated both by God and man. It eliminates many obstacles and offers great core values and rewards.*³⁴⁷ Everybody had a place in his magnanimous heart. Yes, he was the father of all.

Moved in Brahma

Lived in Brahma

Became one with Brahma

Contained the whole world inside

The broad-minded one !!!

Synonym of Humility

The fundamental principle of humility is the fact that man is completely dependent on God.³⁴⁸ Humility respects

itself.³⁴⁹ It is the source of sincerity,³⁵⁰ and illustration of spirituality.³⁵¹ Modesty is the best offering to the Lord.³⁵² It is necessary to be united with God and to love God. The power of the Most High is manifested in the lowly ones.³⁵³ Jesus introduced Himself as humble-hearted.³⁵⁴ He upholds the humble and lowly ones and gives His message to these category of people.³⁵⁵ He accepted the lowly ones³⁵⁶ and makes the last, the first.³⁵⁷ He loves and blesses children.³⁵⁸

Humility is a statute to enter the kingdom of God.³⁵⁹ The principle of Jesus: exaltation through humility stands in the lead of His teachings.³⁶⁰ Jesus says everyone should serve one another with meekness.³⁶¹ The Messiah, head of the physical body brought liberation of humanity through his tranquility and humility of heart. So the children of the Church, the parts of the body, bring about the liberation of others and themselves through humility.³⁶²

It is a virtue which is difficult to practise by human beings but Jesus, the Divine Master asked them to learn it from Him. Jesus said that *He is meek and humble of Heart and to learn from Him. Humility is the quality that needs to be filled in us to receive His consideration.*³⁶³ John learnt it from Jesus and Mother Mary. *“I see true greatness is in being humble.”*³⁶⁴ So he prayed, *“Let me be humble as the sand that is tread upon by all feet.”*³⁶⁵ There are references about modesty in many places in his spiritual diary. Humility, furthermore, helps to stay away from sin and to grow in holiness. He stressed, *“One who is lying on the ground has no fear of falling so a humble does not fall into sins. all his virtues are under the cover of humility and are not dispersed by the wind of pride.”*³⁶⁶ He persistently prayed to make him humble enough to

become God's beloved. He penned the line, "*Humble men always are beloved to God and blessed by him.*"³⁶⁷ He continued, "*Humility is pleasing to God. There are so many proofs in scripture and great promise. Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart and you shall find rest for your souls.*

God lets the proud fall and gives grace to the humble. My God, I who am dust and ashes, who am 'tam que nihilum ante te' (so that I am nothing before Thee), have neglected your promises and despised your threatening. God my Father, make me humble. Pride hateful to men; where pride is, there is reproach also. Proud men practising virtues are like those who carry dust before wind; with shame I confess, I am such thinking myself to be a saint, without foundation Lord, help."³⁶⁸

It is remarkable how John describes the importance of humility and how much it is needed specially for a priest. "*The higher the house the deeper should we sink its foundation. Now the edifice of priesthood is the sublimest, so the corresponding humility... The higher the tree the deeper does it strike its root... So Abraham called himself dust and ashes and became the father of the elect. Peter said, depart from me O Lord for I am a sinful man then he merited to him; you shall catch men. Centurion also was praised by our Bl. Lord. Make me humble, Lord. Mary said "Ancilla" (behold the hand maid of the Lord) and became the Mother of God. Oh mother, I implore you to make me thoroughly humble. For Jesus says: If anyone among you wish to be first let him become the last. Learn of me... wash one another's feet as I have done. Tender mother...I hope. Blessed are the poor in spirit ie humble. Unless you become like unto the little children... The who humbles*

himself shall be exalted. how many places and how many different ways the necessity of this virtue is expressed. A priest by his office should ask blessings for his flock, reconcile the guilty Now: To whom shall I have regard but to the humble. Devil cannot bear humility. So there is no better means of overcoming temptations and defeating satan than humility.”³⁶⁹

Jesus who journeyed on the donkey, gave us the best example of humility.³⁷⁰ John longed to become His disciple by edifying the lesson of humility that Jesus offered. He put in writing, ‘Et Verbum Caro factum est’ (*And the Word was made flesh*)! *This is the greatest humiliation. more than Calvary itself. For by taking flesh he becomes a member of that family whose head is Adam and Eve; whose members are Cain...the Luxurious Romans, the proud Greeks... his brother given into impurities of every shape and colour, adoring beasts, plants, stones... plunged into all degradation... so he appeared before his angels. Although free from sin, walking, eating, sleeping like any other animal.. How he was humiliated before his Eternal Father: all that for the love of me! My soul lovingly speaks to thy Brother, flesh of thy flesh and blood of thy blood that, as you offered yourself last meditation to follow him whithersoever he goest to love humility, to desired to be humiliated for his sake publicly i.e for me 40 or 50 people only, but for Jesus before his angels, who always saw in him the splendour of the Father, and before the whole creation and before his Father, who is more than all the creations actual or possible.”³⁷¹ He continued, “First look at well the glory of Jesus in heaven; how angels not being able to bear the glare hide their faces with their wings! Then consider Jesus in the tabernacle, a little piece of Bread. And institute the comparison between him the king*

of glory and you, dirty worm, dust and ashes! Oh, God make me humble!"³⁷² The first quality that Jesus wants from us is humility. John had always been asking the mediation from Mother Mary to practise this virtue. He reflected, "*When Mary was told of the divine Motherhood, she could not understand its meaning. For she had such a low opinion of herself.*"³⁷³ Again, "*The mother of God goes first, salutes first...and renders her cousin, if not servile, at least household services! humility. Do me good...*"³⁷⁴

He learned great lessons of humility from the school of his mother, Virgin Mary and model, Jesus. Unquestionably he made a brave pledge that *never be swooned by praise, be deceived or to receive any undeserved honour.*³⁷⁵ The practice of this virtue helped him to get down to the needy who were ignored by the society. The most humble one wished if his daughters were to take a fourth vow, it would be humility that they should be humble in all situations at all times.

Renunciation in Actions

Suffering is an intangible experience. This reality is rooted in the very existence of human beings. Only faith can give meaning to these disturbing obscure experiences. Jesus and His crucifixion, death and resurrection can give new dimensions to the sufferings of humanity. Jesus changed human suffering into a salvific act through His crucifixion. Each Christian participates in this salvific work through his day to day life sufferings. Faith assures him that there will be resurrection along with the cross.³⁷⁶ Those who partake in suffering will certainly share in His glory.³⁷⁷ The salvific act to restore humanity is fulfilled through the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ and now it reaches its completion

through human sufferings.³⁷⁸ Man must be able to cling on to the power of God in his suffering than rely on his own strength. A Christian should be able to suffer with those who suffer.³⁷⁹ When one organ suffers all other organs suffer together with it.³⁸⁰

Son of God came to earth to bring all men who had gone astray from God closer to Him. Jesus' life was full of tolerance. He gladly endured till the crucifixion to save mankind. Thus Jesus gave a great example of tolerance. He asked everyone to take up his own daily cross and to follow Him.³⁸¹ Either cross or tolerance is the patrimony of His followers. John discerned that his Divine Master who offered His life as a reparation for the sins of the world, asked for the same from him. The sacrificial life of Jesus gave strength to John and he meditated upon it, "*Jesus was refused place to be born in: he was in the open sky in the bitter cold winter night and what filth was there! oh sweet Heart of my little Infant Savior! How much you suffered!. On the occasion of the Circumcision how much blood was shed! I am then more tender than you, oh sweet Jesus! oh, tower of strength, give me courage, fortitude to suffer!! The most sweet heart of Jesus knowing all that is to come upon him offers himself in the temple. What generosity is there! After this Herod seeks his life, he must save himself by a shameful flight! What fatigue in that journey to that tender infant! How Jesus teaches us, me detachment! Let me be detached.*"³⁸² He continued, "*Consider the cruelty and wildness of men and weight and sharpness of the instruments, the delicate constitution of our dear Lord's body and the number of blows and wounds! Dear Jesus for me you suffered, nay from me... Jesus shows his infinite love for us in*

submitting himself to this torture instead of us; his humility as a slave, his fortitude and patience! He would have expired at the pillar had not someone cut the rope. Jesus, the Son of God felt that direlection so much that he thought even God had abandoned him. He did not complain. it is to give us a lesson. Jesus did not seek consolation, even from God. Shame on me! but Lord I am a poor weak creature!”³⁸³

Jesus asks us for renunciation even today. He understood, “*It is a fact our Lord is dishonoured, displeased, outraged. Our Lord asks for reparation.*”³⁸⁴ Jesus urges, those who would like to follow Him, to go through the narrow path and also to bear the cross. He envisaged, “*Broad way leads to perdition and many tread it. There is no law, no restriction, like the beasts of the field they wander whithersoever they will! Oh my sin this is enough for me, now retrace your steps to narrow path. Narrow path is only for you and for your beasts of burden i.e passions and luggage, i.e your riches, honours, there is no room. God and you! They are few, very few in this path. Struggle to be one in that few! For here struggle is necessary. Jesus says, you have only to follow him, who carries his own cross before you and die on it! Oh, sweet spouse, inspite of my weakness, cowardice, I implore you by your holy mother, to give me a big share of the cross, let me be like unto you! Amen.*”³⁸⁵

John’s explanation about the greatness of the cross is quite notable, “*The Son of God bore it on his shoulders, soaked it in his blood and used it as his death bed! I adore you, O cross! Is it not the instrument of our salvation? Did it not serve as a key? It is our armour. ‘In hoc signo vincens’ (in this sign you can conquer). It is our hope. ‘hace est scala peccatoris’ (a scale for the sinners). When I am sad Let my courage rise by you, cross.*”³⁸⁶

John who learned the sacrificial life of Jesus, the greatness of the cross, the need for suffering and penance, made pledges at various stages of his life.

“Wear chain every day, as a punishment for your sins and sins of others and conversion of sinners. to become more similar to Jesus’ suffering: to attach yourself to Mary! My soul, temptations will come; but we will not be always tempted. Follow the example of Jesus in the garden—‘ora et patere cum amore filiali’ (open mouth and pray with filial love).”

“For the salvation of souls you can and you must observe the rules of union and be attentive to obtain indulgences for the living and the dead; for the holy church does not give them in vain, and oftener repeat the heroic act of charity. And do all other penances as usual.”

“If you have the spirit of penance every little thing that comes either from the part of elements, of your brothers etc you can receive. as punishment for your sins and sins of others.”³⁸⁷

John, who liked to conform with Jesus, also joined in His sufferings. It was clear for him, *“Persecution can be against the body and soul, fortune or fame, from the devil and his satellites and wicked men. Pain endured as penalty of sin committed is not persecution... Jesus in his life patiently suffered persecution that no one ever suffered! I love you Jesus! And yearn to be like unto you; and so give me much and for long to suffer for the love of you and your most holy mother.”³⁸⁸* He continued, *“I shall feel happy when I have to serve and if I am left in the background then shall know that I am becoming similar to my master. I shall not look when I have to suffer in any way, how much it costs me or how miserable I am! but*

how I am becoming similar to my most sweet master and mother!!”³⁸⁹

John who had sworn to become a sacrificial offering of reparation for sins by imitating his Master, invariably grew in it after his ordination. He promised, “*Leave all if necessary to gain God and His love and grace. As I had also some consolation when making the station of the cross daily. I must, whenever time permits in my afternoon visits to the Bl. Sacrament make piously the way of the cross and piously meditate also on the sacred-passion of our dear Lord and practise some penance and true mortification. As I feel diffident of myself, gift of perseverance should be earnestly begged through Mary. For a month when possible shall say vespers kneeling closed doors.*”³⁹⁰

Sacrificial life is an indispensable part of spiritual life. Having understood the need to make sacrifices for the spiritual growth, beloved founder father wants his children to pursue the same life pattern to grow in holiness. He advised, “*Wear chain every day, as a punishment for your sins and sins of others and conversion of sinners: to become more similar to Jesus’ suffering: to attach yourself to Mary!*”³⁹¹ *Let all the five sense organs be shut against the world.*³⁹²

It is not at all a suitable religious thought that there is no need to practise sacrifices in this modern era. *The religious are called to carry the cross of Jesus. They must take part in carrying the cross for the repentance and reparation of sins of self and others too.*³⁹³ So, *the natural abode of a religious sister is at the foot of the cross just like the natural habitat of fish is in water.*³⁹⁴ Fr John Ukken, who learnt about the necessity of suffering and the greatness of the cross was able to say that

*the sweetness of the cross would be understood only after getting much closer to it.*³⁹⁵ Again he said, “*When I am sad Let my courage rise by you, cross.*”³⁹⁶

Fr Ukken counselled his daughters that endurance and trials are mere stepping stones to attain the glory of God. He exhorted them that *crosses are signs of God’s love. God makes those who love Him equal to His only begotten Son, the crucified.*³⁹⁷ *Crosses heal our spiritual sickness and draw us to God.*³⁹⁸ *Sufferings and crosses that are sent to the world, can be considered as whack with a cane for the humans not to go astray from the real path of life.*³⁹⁹ Beloved founder father insisted on his children to gain strength through suffering and to enter everlasting glory.

Reparation gave power and strength to John’s life;

It motivated him to sacrifice his life for souls.

John who changed the bitter experiences of life into sweet memories

Took hold of those who were suffering from pain!!!

The Meek

The specific character of the Heart of Jesus is meekness. Jesus wanted us to learn this quality from Him and He appreciates calmness very much. In the verse, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”⁴⁰⁰ Meekness makes a person accessible to everyone and everyone is made closer to him. John who decided to work for the sick and the poor, imitated the meekness of Jesus. He prayed, “*Affability in words and manners, repression of anger, suffering injuries in silence constitute the virtue of meekness. I blush that hitherto. I made no attempt to practise it. Let the meek heart supply... Jesus proposes his meek heart to our imitation; he would not*

break a bruised reed nor extinguish a smoking linen!... Give me too, the grace and to all those who work for souls. Oh Immaculate mother, you loved this virtue in your Son and copied it in you!"⁴⁰¹ Having the thirst for the imitation of the Heart of Jesus, he used to pray repeatedly "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine." This can be achieved only through continuous efforts and he learnt it from the exemplary life of St Francis de Sales. He hoped, through the intercession of Mother Mary it would become an integral part of his character. John described the effects of calmness as follows, "*By their sweet and winning manners they would attract all men to them, would be displeasing to none, avoid all friction as to equivalent by possessing the whole earth! See again Jesus gives himself as an example and to captivate the cupidity of those who won't care for him, promises rewards! Oh that sweet Jesus, to how many means has He recourse! Who would not love thee, my love...*"⁴⁰² Guru heard the prayer of the disciple, who extended a helping hand for many in his service arena. John became the epitome of calmness.

The Compassionate

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."⁴⁰³ This call stands as a unique testament of God's attitude toward man. The perfection that Christ requires from His disciples⁴⁰⁴ is contained in identification with God, the heavenly Father.⁴⁰⁵ Jesus emphasizes the attitude of the mind that accepts a more practical level than the sheer feeling of kindness. In Christ, this inner impulse stands as an inspiration for external activity. The kindness of Christ stimulates to give light to the blind,⁴⁰⁶ heals the leper,⁴⁰⁷ provides knowledge to the ignorant,⁴⁰⁸ resurrects the dead,⁴⁰⁹ feeds the hungry,⁴¹⁰

liberates the suppressed from the delicacies of Jewish Law⁴¹¹ and thus prompts to radiate it among the less fortunate. The mercy of Jesus is able to make a man perfect along with his sins and limitations.

Jesus is compassionate that He grants refuge, love and consolation to all without distinction of caste and creed. Jesus shows His Sweet Heart and calls to Him whosoever entangled in pain and intricate problems. Everyone has a shelter in His Heart and can approach Him at any time. Jesus attracts the repentant sinners towards Him in a special way and embraces them lovingly. In the Gospel, one could see a father who rejoices over and pours out profusely his love upon the lost son⁴¹² on his return. Our model is Jesus who forgave the sinner caught in adultery, accepted her by calling 'daughter' and showed her mercy.⁴¹³ He was so tender-hearted that he pitied the hungry people and gave them bread⁴¹⁴ with compassion, and healed a man who was blind from his birth.⁴¹⁵

In fact, we also see the compassion of Mother Mary who is more concerned about giving protection to her children. He thanked God, "*Mary seeing her children in this valley of tears exposed to so many dangers, surrounded by so many enemies, was moved to pity and devised a mean against all the dangers of soul and body by giving us her livery, by clothing us in the maternal habit of protection and tender solicitude and took upon herself so many obligations on our regard! I praise Mary's goodness, I thank God for having created her so good and given us as our dearest mother.*"⁴¹⁶ He continued, "*Our Lord investing her with such power, gave her to be the Patroness and Protectress of the church; to guide her, to defend her against*

the snares of her enemy. Mary with a mother's tenderness watches over her... all the founders of the various Religious Orders have placed their institutes under her protection. now experience shows they have not trusted in her in vain. I give myself to her imploring to hold over me the aegis of her protection, the shield of her good will."⁴¹⁷ John, who experienced the merciful love of Mother Mary was never tired of telling about his experience. He appended, "*Mary's maternal heart is pierced by the same lance and more keenly for Mary was alive. Compassionate that most sweet Mother. Mary is overjoyed to see such a refuge for her children. Mother, lead me thither, may I settle there for time and eternity!*"⁴¹⁸ He continued, "*She was melting away like a candle out of compassion for Jesus, sinners and for me.*"⁴¹⁹ While hearing the holy name of Mary, "*It awakens in us all the kindness and tenderness of our mother.*"⁴²⁰

John who experienced the mercy of Jesus explained it through the Gospel. "*In so many places of the holy writ it is said that our dear Lord wept! In the manger, Lazarus' tomb etc. But I do not weep! To weep tears, does not depend upon me, at least to have and hug a broken heart for Jesus. You threaten us, saying: woe to you who now laugh you shall mourn and weep. Dear Jesus give me the triple tears of contrition, of compassion and devotion. Mary, mingle mine with those of thy son and thine and offer them for the glory of God... It is never said in the Gospel that Jesus ever laughed. remarks St. Basil. It was plain to all that always ached like man and risibility is a perfection of a man, that he enjoyed too. In laughing there is an imperfection of being surprised, but Jesus would have feigned that too as so many other points, he ached always*

*“justa consuetudinem” (appropriate customs). The weeping and bewailing our Lord teaches, consists in shunning extravagant and foolish mirth and in attending the bewailing one’s misdeeds and those of others towards so good a father, and in bewailing one’s condition here so far from the fatherland and Father’s embraces and caresses.”*⁴²¹ He continued, *“By his providence watches over with tender solicitude. I shall abandon myself into his hands! How often have I offended such a father! Henceforth I must show myself a child to Him, Oh Father! Let me call you such once with affection.”*⁴²²

St Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation nun, who was so dear to both Jesus and Mary presented herself to Jesus wholeheartedly. Consequently, John describes the results of His merciful love on her, *“Jesus gladly accepted her. He gave her from infancy to Mary to be formed according to his Sacred Heart to become the apostle of the same Heart and He himself jealously watched over her heart. Once Jesus spoke thus to her to quell her trouble. what a child so beloved as you are be lost in the arms of her all-powerful Father! Fear nothing, said Mary, as I am your good mother! I thank you, Jesus and Mary for your tenderness for my sister and I implore you to make me imitate her love for you!”*⁴²³

Similarly, the love of St Francis of Assisi to God: *“He loved God above all things: “My God and My all” and he loved Jesus’ passion and meditated on it and compassionated our Dear Lord; so he merited to bear on his own person, the sacred stigmata: what is my love for God? My God let me love you more than everything, even more than my very self.”*⁴²⁴

John prayed earnestly and continuously for the compassionate love that overflowed from his Guru and Mother, should be there in the priest, the image of Jesus.

He added, “*St Peter on the lake of Genezareth was ashamed of his sins and seeking occasion for atoning. So our dear Lord mercifully and delicately gave it. How am I? To become a pastor love is essentially required. “Dilig is plus his?” (do you love them more than these).*”⁴²⁵ He continued, “*God who devoted an acteroity to love me is offended by me; give me compunction of heart and give me tears of blood to wash away all my guilt ‘miserere mei Deus’ (God have mercy on me).*”⁴²⁶

John thankfully recalled the compassionate love of God that he experienced and enjoyed throughout his life, from the beginning till the end. He set down carefully, “*He knows and loves me from eternity! I am known and taken notice of and become an object of love and tender solicitude of God! In the course of time He created me and gave existence! ‘vivit anima mea et laudabit te’ (I live that I may praise Thee). When in my tender years I lost my parents dying I was stranded on the wide world “Pater et mater dereliquerunt me tu autem susceperunt me” (Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive)... My education, entry into seminary and pleasant life there, priesthood and so many covetable posts in the diocese, even held in honour now, Jubilee celebrations...*”⁴²⁷ He added, “*The father’s kindness is superhuman. It is only divine.*”⁴²⁸

John transformed the throbs of the compassionate heart of Jesus into a law of his life. When he reached the poor and the needy, there happened the breaking of the embankment and love flowed steadily to them. As a reward and response for it, he made a sweet rule that the poor, the helpless, the orphans and the downtrodden in the society must be given the compassionate love of Jesus and he gave it to his daughters to observe.

Throbbled for the poor
 Descended to the poor
 Provided an experience to the poor
 Became very beloved of the poor
 John, the merciful hearted!!!

Desire for the Salvation of Human Beings

Jesus thirsts for the souls who have disobeyed God's plan and had gone astray from His love. He regained them through His redemptive mystery and empowered them to experience Father's love again. *Jesus wept bitterly on seeing the misused precious Blood. In fact, it increased His pain.*⁴²⁹ John was convinced that he had to satiate Jesus' love for souls while he was in the seminary. Jesus' example was an inspiration for him. He meditated, "*Jesus seeing the glory of His Father so much forgotten, neglected and men in such miseries offers Himself.*"⁴³⁰ But, "*The grief of the sacred heart in seeing a great number of souls seeking their own, leaving out the interest of Christ!*"⁴³¹ Because, "*Soul is noble by nature as it is the image of God, nobler by graces as it is redeemed by a God, noblest by beatitude to attain which it is made. So attend to your own salvation and neglect not others.*"⁴³² This is the example Mother Mary gives us. She invites her children to make atonement for the repentance of sinners. "*Mary sends Jesus into the world, depriving herself of the joy for saving the world.*"⁴³³ He continued, "*At the circumcision her heart was pierced at the sight of Jesus already so tender shedding blood. oh sinners are hoard upon my son, even now sins weigh so heavy upon Him. give me love of penance.*"⁴³⁴

He constantly prayed to toil for the salvation of souls following the example of Virgin Mary, his mother and Jesus, his Master. "*Jesus deplored sin, prayed for the sinners, appeased His Father, treated with His Father about the affair of salvation.*

*oh Jesus let me follow you.”*⁴³⁵ He wished to be *burned down for the sake of souls.*⁴³⁶

*“Jesus was salt of the earth; so he redeemed the whole world and those who will read his word and shall model their lives upon his, shall not see corruption; oh most excellent master make me like unto you.”*⁴³⁷

John promised to work diligently for the salvation of souls according to the example of Jesus: *“I sent you as my Father has sent me.”*⁴³⁸ He added, *“My Father sent me for the salvation of souls, I brought it about by much suffering; so do ye; help shall not be wanting, receive ye the holy Ghost. Forgive sins: oh goodness of God who gives power to men to forgive the sins which they commit against God!!”*⁴³⁹ Again, *“She prayed for the conversion of sinners, propagation of faith. I do the same.”*⁴⁴⁰ He continued, *“I am brought to this fountain of living and saving waters: freely have I received why should I not give freely?”*⁴⁴¹

Indisputably, a good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. He doesn't allow even a sheep to be perished.⁴⁴² Jesus teaches this as the most important function of a shepherd. So John genuinely thirsts for the souls and to expand the kingdom of God. While he was in the seminary he used to pray for the sinners and the oppressed ones. He enthusiastically prayed to *Sweet Jesus not to allow anyone to get ruined.*⁴⁴³ It echoed as his perfect thirst for the souls. When he became an anointed priest he dedicated his life to fulfill it. He jotted down, *“I gave over my whole being through the most sweet heart of Jesus and my most sweet mother, as a holocaust to be burned down and consumed at any moment for his greater glory and for the souls.”*⁴⁴⁴ He prepared himself fully to expand the kingdom of God. He decided, *“As Jesus*

*we must also shed our blood if needed for the salvation of the world. As I was snatched from hell so many times, so I must try to snatch as many as I can as an act of thanksgiving.”*⁴⁴⁵ It is worthy to note the eagerness of Fr Ukken to travel around the whole world to save souls. He explained, “*It is the principal or rather the only duty of a priest or qualification – what is it? A great desire, coupled with labour even inspite of difficulty. It is an ardent, burning desire for the glory of God by the expansion of God’s kingdom through the salvation of souls. Also the determination to down all the enemies on the way, (world, devil... passions of men...) So God is jealous; but in us jealousy implies powerlessness to put down the rivals and competitors—in God not. The zeal may cost us something, sufferings, death... This is required everywhere, specially in the missions. The holy church expects it. It is a great virtue from the object, (souls for glorifying God). This is the only instance in which we can do to God something. (God is internally infinitely perfect and cannot receive farther). He looks at what is not yet done like St. Francis Xavier.*

So study, sweep... as a preparation for the ministry, to become more able to save more souls. Then self love has no part in success. I did not do this for gratifying or being admired, it is for souls and it is too holy. Missionary is sent for God’s glory and that should be our characteristic virtue. Where a fountain is, there is a stream; as a stream flows from a fountain, so the tower of God pours itself out in love to man.

To have a zeal one must be animated with, actuated with perfect love of God, well persuaded, intimately and practically penetrated that God alone is good, He alone can satisfy the human heart. He has made all to Him. I esteem Him, I love Him,

*but that is nothing. I am not content with having converted 20 or 100. Even after the conversion of the whole world, one is not satisfied, because God is infinite and glory afforded is nothing. Pray for your field of work, God will prepare them. Apostolate by giving edifications, be a stimulant to perfection.”*⁴⁴⁶ Is this not the desire to quench the thirst of Jesus, who thirsts for the souls? *The activities for the salvation of souls will be accelerated when lots of people work together.*⁴⁴⁷ After the realization of this he wanted to form a congregation for the priests. *“If possible to form an Association of Priests.”*⁴⁴⁸ *It is Jesus who gathers the souls together and inspires to facilitate the activities of missionaries.*⁴⁴⁹

Fr Ukken, the enthusiastic missionary, highly desired the congregation which he was going to establish must include an authentic missionary spirit. What was wrong in his wish to see his daughters engaged in the missionary activities across the globe? He hoped the whole human race would turn to God and he constantly prayed, *“Oh loose my hands to do good works, my feet to run to you.”*⁴⁵⁰ He continued, *“Do Lord, send many zealous apostles.”*⁴⁵¹ Didn't all these prove a clear affirmation of the enthusiasm of Fr Ukken?

The good shepherd John, through imitation of his Master who prayed for sinners, entered into the midst of sinners in order to uplift them!

The splendid disciple of Jesus who gained sinners for the glory of God assiduously worked to spread the kingdom of God!!

The motivated missionary wished to travel around the world and to cross over the hill tops and forests to gain souls !!!

The true missionary was eager to sing praises to God by saving the less fortunate who were made and neglected by the same society!!!!

Christ's Disciple who Practised Enemy Love

Jesus who gave the lofty lessons of love taught that those who love his enemies are the true disciples of Christ.⁴⁵² John who accepted Jesus as his model advised his daughters to *practise Jesus Christ's love of enemies in their lives*.⁴⁵³ He compared his life with the life of Jesus who prayed for the enemies. He reflected, "*The blow from the servant. Who beats? Whom? For what purpose? to instruct Him. He has no resentment. Am I so to my offenders? Am I meek to my enemies? If He is constrained to speak of our sins, he attributes all to our ignorance – Father forgive them.*"⁴⁵⁴

Jesus accepted death on the cross to save those who hurt Him. Without being satisfied with this, He gave His flesh and blood to nourish them and His soul to strengthen and guide them.⁴⁵⁵ What a marvellous love!

Jesus, the Divine Master gave a great example of enemy love. John imitated his Master and he prayed for them throughout his life. He remembered them each in his Holy Qurbana. Thus he proved through his life that enemy love is a seal and slogan of Jesus Christ and it can turn foes to friends.

Abhors Sin

So many references about sin and its hardness can be seen in the Holy Bible. Sin indicates the distancing of man from God. Sin is against God.⁴⁵⁶ Sin is portrayed in the Old Testament as disobedience,⁴⁵⁷ ungratefulness,⁴⁵⁸ disloyalty⁴⁵⁹ and above all the greatest injustice against God. Sin is referred

to as folly and sinners as fools.⁴⁶⁰ It starts from the ignorance of man about God.⁴⁶¹ All the prophets had drawn the true picture of the ferocity of sin. Since sin is the rejection of love, to remove it, a new thing must be started shortly. God is the only one worthy of it. God is jealous.⁴⁶² That jealousy originated from His love.⁴⁶³ It is the unquenchable thirst of God that all should love Him. Therefore a sinful man must turn to God through contrition, repentance, confirmation of faith and confession.⁴⁶⁴

Jesus is not concerned about the sin but more bothered about the sinner. "We have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin."⁴⁶⁵ Jesus hated sin, loved sinners and lived in the midst of the sinners. Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁴⁶⁶ John who desired to walk towards the perfection of God the Father used to compare himself to Jesus and Mother Mary. He tried to eradicate even the venial sins and to grow in holiness. As the knowledge and experience of God increased, a true sense of sin also increased in him. Whenever there were failures, his heart hurried to regret and come back to enjoy the Father's love. He prayed, "*Here again how striking it is to remember, God did not create so imperfect a world, full of sorrows and death man thwarted His plan! one sin brought such evils to the world! What horror we should have for sin? Mary, you alone remained innocent, your will alone was not included in that of Adam, teach us to know the malice of sin.*"⁴⁶⁷

Jesus taught God's infinite mercy on sinners. That's what He did through the parable of the prodigal son. Through this parable He explicated sin as a big abuse against God and if not retraced, it would become a great contempt shown to

God. Jesus taught the attitude of God towards sin and sinners through His actions rather than words. He not only did accept the sinners with love just like the father in the parable⁴⁶⁸ but he even acted to bring disquiet among others just like the elder son who did not understand the deeds of his father.⁴⁶⁹ John describes the picture of the loving Father, who accepts the repentant children. He meditated, *“Here, although the Father had plenty at home, his faithful son, rest of the family, he was sad, anxious for his son, that struck me. Really how the most sweet heart pursues me (a sinner) with his graces invites him, urges him to come and when come, without a word of reproach clasps him to bosom.”*⁴⁷⁰

John who was going to be an anointed priest of Jesus recognized his weakness and confessed it with a contrite heart addressing, ‘Father, I have erred’ and sought comfort from God the Father. He continued his meditation, *“In this med. I was struck to see that a priest by his essence is meant to be between God and man, to meddle, as it were, when God strikes,... on the other hand he is born like others in sin, by his conduct he is sinful like others etc when I considered my past disorderly life, I asked God the Father lest I should pollute the order of his holy ministers and bring dishonor to his holy name rather than glory, to chase me away: next moment I was emboldened to request Him to keep me: for the useless instrument brings more credit to the skilled workman and ascribes nothing to itself.”*⁴⁷¹

John at all times lamented over his weaknesses and sinfulness like St Paul who when convinced of his own sins cried out, *“Wretched man that I am!”*⁴⁷² And John too lamented loudly, *“I am indeed a very grievous sinner and my conscience upbraids me with the numberless and heinous transgressions*

against God and His most righteous laws.”⁴⁷³ “I am a stain both socially and morally.”⁴⁷⁴ He had the feeling of the psalmist, saying, “I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears.”⁴⁷⁵ John also confessed like St Augustine, “Oh Lord in truth I confess my carnal life with my worldly principle.”⁴⁷⁶ He considered even the venial sins with great compunction of heart and repented all times with overwhelming pain that he wounded Jesus and His mother. He promised, “I detest my sins, I promise you to lead a pure, spotless life; only help me. amen.”⁴⁷⁷ He continued praying, “I implore you to obtain for me such a horror and detestation of sin as my high calling demands! My vocation is like yours to give Jesus to the world! Mamma help me, sinner!!”⁴⁷⁸

John who confessed his sins, experienced the love of the Father. As a recompense for his sins, he devoted his entire life to raise the people who had fallen into the abyss of sin. He, the disciple of Jesus Christ hated sin, urged to impart the love that he experienced to the poor.

Hard - Worker

John who imitated Jesus always and everywhere copied His hard work into his life. Jesus who helped His mother and father, hid the truth that He was the Son of God. Thus, *He respected work as something great, and that labour is good both for soul and body.*⁴⁷⁹ He esteemed Jesus, “washing pots, sweeping etc! But Lord, see you are the great messiah, Reformer of the world, that one expected...”⁴⁸⁰ As he wished to imitate Jesus, he did even the least work in the seminary with great joy. He was always available to everyone. “Do not sparing, do not seek compensation, nor expect any gratitude.”⁴⁸¹ He progressed in life with this intuition. Not only had he accepted heartily St Paul’s preaching ‘those who do not work do

not eat'⁴⁸² and also the commandment, "By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread."⁴⁸³ He understood labour is an ornament to those who embrace the poverty of Jesus. John, who followed Jesus, became a model for his companions. He wanted his children to *do all the work themselves in the monastery (convent)*.⁴⁸⁴ It was compulsory for him to *do every work with particular intentions. So he advised them to do every work as a preparation for death*⁴⁸⁵ And, "Imitate him by sanctifying your ordinary actions"⁴⁸⁶ He continued, "Ordinary actions make one a saint"⁴⁸⁷ *Each action of a religious sister appears as an act of Worship before God. When works are done in their real spirit, they become a sacrifice.*⁴⁸⁸ He prompted, "Try to do each action of mine as he did."⁴⁸⁹

John utilised the long-term training in the seminary to formulate his personality properly. The circumstances and also the training from there allowed him to estimate and learn the esteemed virtues which are held in high regard by men and which are recommended as ornament for a priest of Christ.⁴⁹⁰ In this period, he achieved the ability of readiness to listen to others and to open up his heart and mind in the spirit of charity and compassion to the various situations and needs of men.⁴⁹¹ Very soon, he who was to become the father of the fatherless and the destitute, gathered the necessary pearls from the crucible of ten years of training for his future life. Yes, through the 'Pupa' stage, the orphan boy John developed into a perfect disciple of Christ, for the salvation of the destitute, the relief of the suffering people and the liberation voice of the oppressed. He had been preparing for ten years to become an anointed priest, like Christ who had thirty years of preparation for three years of His public ministry.

One who Fulfills God's Will

Jesus said, "See I have come to do Your will"⁴⁹² and Mary answered, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."⁴⁹³ Both are glorious divine personalities who fulfilled the will of God. Who could be John's model other than them? Jesus converted the will of God into His own will and fulfilled it even in divergent circumstances and different environments. John understood that he too was obliged to fulfill the will of God; so he dedicated himself to it just as Jesus was busy with His Father's concerns. Time proved that nothing could make him to deviate from his dedication to the divine call. He meditated, "*Jesus loved Mary very much... Mary loved her Son, even more than her soul. for she was right. now Jesus tells her that the time appointed by his Father for his public ministry, for founding his church has come, he will never live again with his mother, not even to visit the house... Mary has recently lost her guardian, she has no support, she is about 50... yet they hasten to execute the will of God... what good lesson for me?... Here again I saw clearly my first and foremost work is to do the will of God i.e perfection. Jesus does not avail himself of this display of celestial glory, the testimony of His Father or that of St. John, to preach to the people, to prove his mission, but modestly retires into the desert to fast and pray... lesson, modesty.*"⁴⁹⁴

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work."⁴⁹⁵ The aim of His life was to fulfill the will of God, the Father. He made a note, "*As body lives by food, so soul lives by doing the will of our Father.*"⁴⁹⁶ There are many prophets and fathers who

understood and responded to the will of God in the Holy Bible.⁴⁹⁷ In the same way, we meet those who deviated from the Holy Bible after understanding and knowing it well. He distinctly described it in his diary about the young man who excused himself saying, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father”⁴⁹⁸ even after he received the call of God. He says, “*Let me bury my Father! It is a good action! Yet at this moment the call of God is to be obeyed, because everything is good in as much as it is the will of God.*”⁴⁹⁹ “*A design behind. So as regards your life a loving Providence works out, shapes everything faith and cheerfulness to take well...*”⁵⁰⁰ He decided and proved it through his life experiences. In its climax, he proclaimed boldly, “*I abandon myself into the hands of my heavenly Father. He took care of myself to long.*”⁵⁰¹

John was fully convinced that God called him by His grace and chose him specially even when he was in his mother’s womb.⁵⁰² During this period, he discerned the salvific mission of Jesus was to be continued throughout his life. He, the dedicated one urged to speak out against injustice and to break the chain of slavery, to establish His kingdom of love and power among the poor. The disciple of Christ, who submitted himself completely to the will of God, became the ransom for those who were in a variety of bondages.

Ardent Desire to Become a Saint

John hated even the minor offenses and expressed his gratitude in return for the love of the Father who loved him very much and at its summit he intensely craved to become a saint. He believed that his growth in holiness was the best response to all the blessings he had received so far. *As a priest he must grow up in holiness. A high level of holiness that suits*

*him.*⁵⁰³ He expressed this desire throughout his spiritual diary. He was confident that everything was possible with the help of his Mother and Guru in spite of his weakness. But, ‘God who created you without you, will not save you, without you.’ John determinedly believed in this and cooperated fully with God’s plan. He decided, “*So I should do all that I can, for becoming a saint and rely for the rest in Jesus.*”⁵⁰⁴ Jesus asks very little from us to cast lots of blessings upon us. It is evident from His own words, “*Jesus asks her simple water to give her in exchange living waters, how little Jesus asks to give so much. He asks for my good will to make me a saint. May I well understand this, O sweet Jesus.*”⁵⁰⁵ He continued, “*My God, you have called me an unworthy wretched sinner to so high a calling as priesthood and daily give me so many graces and solicit me, push me, and nay order me to become a saint. I shall not, slight thy grace any longer, I shall try to become a saint and it is clear. O my God, that my sanctification must be all thy work as my calling, so I hope for everything from you, every help and assistance and of course all glory and honour thereof should be yours; so God, o my God, God of my heart.*”⁵⁰⁶ He instructed, “*Be earnest to pray to become a saint according to the loving Heart of the master.*”⁵⁰⁷

Mary unreservedly cooperated with God’s will to become the mother of God. She firmly believed that nothing is impossible with Almighty God. John also had the same attitude. He put in writing, “*She does not say ‘faciam’ i.e I am not worthy or nor can I do anything to fit me to so exalted a rank. all I expect from that all- powerful ‘fiat’ which made heaven and earth. I too ask God to make me a saint, but I am*

able to affect nothing, let my sanctification be his work entirely.”⁵⁰⁸ Again he prayed, “*Oh dear Jesus save me, save me abundantly to become a saint.*”⁵⁰⁹

John knew that the strong faith in his Father would raise him to the saintly status. Because all saints were ordinary people. But they never abandoned their hope in God even when they were entangled in sin. John’s meditations throw light on this, “*Where sin hath abounded, there grace has much more abounded. (Rom 6:1) To despair is to rob God of his beloved attribute, which is the highest outrage and injustice that man can possibly commit against God. Man does as much as in him lies against God them. I know whom I have believed (2 Tim 1:12)it my Father who has adopted me! Neither the quality of my sins nor their number terrifies me, when the death of my Saviour comes into my mind. He has a sanctuary for me by his wounded side. He embraces the whole world by his outstretched arms. He kisses me by his inclined Head! Make me a saint!!*”⁵¹⁰ He said that even though he was nothing before God the Father, He showers and keeps on showering His blessings upon him and therefore he would become a saint.⁵¹¹

His Diary Notes indicate that he wished to become a saint. *If he and she can, then why can’t I.*⁵¹² This reference can be seen throughout his diary. It was sure for him that *he was called to do great things, therefore he was not a person who thinks of vile matters.*⁵¹³ He proclaimed it without any hesitation. He adjusted all his life circumstances accordingly.

God lifted John up from orphanhood to a blessed life. In return, the beloved son of Virgin Mary wanted to grow in

holiness and thereby to join the group of saints as his expression of gratitude. He was certain that his Mother would not refuse his wish. So he promised his children, *“I will be in heaven and help you from there ever more than now.”**

LAST YEAR IN THE SEMINARY AT KANDY

22 December 1906

It was a blessed day that bloomed when John received the Sub-diaconate Ordination. He who devoted unconditionally to serve God, entrusted himself absolutely in the hands of God to make use of him in the way He wants. He offered himself perfectly, *“By my sub-diaconate Jesus has taken me entirely into his sanctuary. I am a vessel consecrated to the divine service.”*⁵¹⁴ In the final year, he received an intensive training for spiritual and physical development of personality. He decided to work more zealously for God’s glory and the salvation of souls. He put down in black and white, *“My zeal for God’s glory should consist in my sanctification and in my studies. I must strive to be an agreeable saint for the love of God and souls. I must make all the studies I have to do this last year, cheerfully and conscientiously. I must also try to do the beadle’s work well simply obeying superiors, loving and esteeming my brothers, saying a word to them either to exhort them to better or to amend something; for I have, as a beadle and senior, that influence. I must love “union” and be a good member with the hope to get other priests later, so that more work for souls may be done by many.”*⁵¹⁵ Thus during the last years of his seminary life he accepted the mission, *“To edify all as an apostolate.”*⁵¹⁶ For that he took a pledge, *“I will keep the rules, specially rules of silence.”*⁵¹⁷

John spent very carefully the remaining six months in the seminary. He marked, "*These 6 months before my ordination should be principally to sanctification, then to pick up every bit of information useful for my ministry.*"⁵¹⁸ Thus, he who collected the spiritual wealth needed for the fulfillment of his mission, explained about his prayer which he was going to say on the day of his priestly ordination, "*My God on the eve of my ordination I implore you either make me a good priest after the Heart of Jesus or reject me, make me die now. Alas have you called me from the mire of sin and from the lowest of men to live selfishly? Mamma sanctify me; give me the true spirit of my holy vocation.*"⁵¹⁹

John, an orphan and who considered himself a sinner, dedicated himself to the Heart of Jesus gratefully for he had been raised to the highest status of priesthood. He made this dedication in the previous week of his priestly ordination. He prayed, "*Knowing well my utter unworthiness and unpreparedness with great confidence I entered the most sweet Heart of Jesus to be purged there in the purifying fires of divine love, to be illumined by the lights of the same Heart and to be strengthened by the strength of the same Heart and to share the glories of the divine Heart; remained under the mantle of Mamma to be modelled by her upon the sweet Heart of her divine Son. Let your most holy will be accomplished in me my God and my Father and let me know your holy and loving designs over me in as much as I knowing them do my part faithfully that You may be the better glorified by me and in me vile creature and ungrateful child; have mercy on me.*"⁵²⁰ It is clear from this dedication how genuinely John prepared to receive the priesthood. Right around this time, he also made the outline for his priestly life.

“A priest is: alter Christus (*another Christ*) Bonus odor xi”
(*fragrance of Christ*) *I should be like that.*”⁵²¹

A Priest:

- lives in the world without the desire of the world.
- has no family but a member of each family.
- is the one who participates in all sorrows.
- enters into the secrets of all hearts.
- heals every wound.
- Takes the intentions and prayers of the people and carries it to God.
- returns from God and brings forgiveness, peace and hope of God to all human beings.
- blazes with mutual love and strong in chastity.
- always forgives, teaches, comforts and blesses.

During this period he learned that a priest’s life is a highly noble one.

He renewed his dedication frequently. An insatiable thirst to become like Christ was expressed in his every renewal, “Sicut xus in oblatione sui est sacerdos, magus, ego configuratus ad eum meipsum quotidie totaliter Deo offerre et impendere me omnibus modis pro animarum salute debeo. Minorem gradum perfectionis me dedecet. Ergo in 1. Ministerio Zelosus rite callere ea omnia quae sacramentorum administrationi spectant. 11. In re pecuniaria magna justitia et imo Scrupulositas servari debet. 111. In amicitia, numquam quaeram nec tribuam teneros affectus neque tangere nec tangi patiar.”⁵²² (*Christ, the high priest was also like that in the execution of responsibility.*

I should be as perfect as Christ by submitting myself to God everyday and always work for the salvation of souls. Lower level of perfection is not suitable for me as a priest. Therefore, I must be zealous while performing sacraments. It is needed to exercise justice in money transfers and act in harmony with conscience. I do not love anyone too much or go to anyone looking for love. I do not touch anyone for love or allow anyone to touch me).

3 November 1907

There was only a month left for John to make crucial preparations himself to become an anointed of Christ. Yes, he would be anointed exactly after one month. Then he must return to his homeland for his First Holy Qurbana and thereupon to perform priestly duties. He remembered his actual situation. Involuntarily there occurred a series of flashbacks. No parents, no siblings, very few close relatives and friends. There is no one in his own relation. Will the local people recognize him? Will he become a gentile in his hometown? His mind has gone wild and disturbed with the thoughts, for this time unknowingly tears gushed down his eyes. There are no suitable or sufficient dresses and other essential commodities needed for the journey. Certainly, a poor orphan! Jesus was emotionally disturbed seeing the true picture of salvation mystery He should administer.⁵²³ The condition of John, the seminarian was not different from that. John too turned to God the Father just as Jesus who had been strengthened by His Father in heaven.⁵²⁴ He regained the trust in Jesus who had rescued him so far, would look

after him in everything. It was years ago he had adopted Jesus as his father, mother and teacher. He was ashamed of his imperfect thoughts and weaknesses he had and he firmly believed in God's providence. He described the scene, "*I was very much distressed by reason of my poverty and powerlessness to provide the necessary articles of clothes for travelling. But today I abandon myself into the hands of my heavenly Father. He took care of myself to long... now... I prayed long and made many acts of contrition and shame, acts of hope and purpose for the future! My God show me what I should do to please you; lead me to the work you are preparing; henceforth I desire to die to cease to sin; if I live only for your glory, for the accomplishment of Thy holy Will. Jesus master, Mamma.*"⁵²⁵ With the help of Jesus and Mother Mary, John prepared himself with much enthusiasm for that great day.

ANOINTED FOR CHRIST

21 December 1907

The solemn day arrived! Long-term expectations have blossomed! It was the great day when an orphan child of Kerala became an anointed priest through the anointing of the hands with holy oil, after ten long years of pupa stage consisting of study and training to give the message of the compassionate love of Jesus to the poor.

It passed through the mind of John, the deacon like a lightning what he learned about the anointment of oil. In the Old Testament, a high priest is anointed as a sign of being dedicated to God.⁵²⁶ Thus the consecrated priest is set apart for God.⁵²⁷ Christ is the only 'anointed one' who perfectly completed the meaning of the anointment in the Old



Newly Ordained Priest

Testament. He was anointed as Prophet, King and Priest. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power.⁵²⁸ Jesus, Son of God was anointed at the beginning of His public ministry for the fruitful operations of His teaching and proclamation of the kingdom of God. That was fulfilled on Calvary.⁵²⁹

The Church bells reverberated in the seminary at Kandy. The choir sang rhythmically. The one who is going to be anointed, humbly moved towards the altar and knelt there. At this graceful moment, it is assumed that the angels and heavenly choir made a floral offering - showers of blessings upon him. On that auspicious hour, John, the ordinand knelt facing the bishop, was consecrated and became an anointed Priest of Christ through laying on of hands (and various rituals viz prostration, anointing of hands, giving of

the chalice and paten) by Bishop Mar Clemente Pagnani OSB (first Bishop of Sri Lanka), Apostolic Vicar of Kandy. He publically proclaimed that he dedicated his life for the greater glory of God and for the service of God's people. There was a huge tidal wave of emotions surged in him. His promises, prayers and dedications were offered along with the sacred things on the holy altar. Tears of joy rolled down his cheeks. It was the red-letter day in the life of Fr Augustine John Ukken. He was so fortunate to carry Jesus the first time in his hands. The very next day he offered the first Holy Qurbana. That was the thanksgiving Mass for raising an orphan boy to such an honourable high position. During his first Qurbana, he recalled everyone who helped him to pave the way to reach the altar. Once again he offered Jesus, his life's desire, to shelter and to uplift the weak and the destitute through compassionate love and mercy.

Seminary officials had testified on the day of his ordination that the newly ordained priest would be a man of sacrifice, respectful and submissive to the commands of the superiors, efficiently steadfast to resist and fight against the adverse conditions with devotion as his investment. John proved through his life that this testimony was true.

Christ's Warrior in Kerala

John studied in the seminary at Kandy for more than a decade and became a great knowledgeable and practical figure in advanced theology, culture and was filled with love of God, a contemplative cum activity-oriented personage. He returned to Kerala as a volunteer soldier of Christ with an exceptional zeal of a newly ordained priest and also with a message of the Divine Lord's love. He went to the bishop's

house in Thrissur and met Bishop Yohannan Menachery and exchanged pleasantries. The bishop saw in the newly ordained priest a scholar, philosopher, enthusiastic hard-worker, loyal, obedient and above all a humble person. With the blessings of the bishop of the diocese he travelled to Parappur his hometown where he was born. But there were no relatives from his ancestry. Then he went directly to Parappur Church in search of Revd Fr Ouseppachan Kuttikkat. He came to know from the reliable sources that Revd Fr Ouseppachan joined the Carmelite Order in Mannanam six years ago. When he was thinking about a way to meet him, the trustee, Chummaru Lonappan, Njalil Chittilappilly told him that he was in Elthuruth Ashram. He became very happy and immediately started to Elthuruth on foot. There was no vehicle facility at that time. He passed through Mullur backwaters and crossed Vilangan hills, reached Elthuruth Ashram around 7.30 in the evening. He rang the bell. It was the evening prayer time for the ashram inmates. He told the purpose of his visit to the brother who came there and waited in the visitors' room. After the prayer, Fr Kuttikkat came to the visitors' room. Suddenly the young priest prostrated at his feet. "Oh what is this? I do not understand. Young priest, where are you from?" Fr Ouseppachan asked. 'I am Lonappan Ukken who was sent to the seminary at Kandy by you, Father.' Father recognized him and made him stand up and embraced him lovingly. They spoke for a short while. The young priest requested Fr Ouseppachan to accompany him to participate in the First Holy Qurbana, the next day at 7 am at the parish church. Fr Ouseppachan informed the Prior about this matter. Fr Prior did not allow him to go back that night and told him to leave in the wee hours in the

bullock cart of the ashram after taking supper and spending the night there. They left at 3 am in the morning and reached Parappur Church exactly at 7 am. To wonder, a large crowd had assembled in the Church premises to receive the newly ordained priest. Many thousands of people had gathered there to receive him who had no one. God never refuses the prayers of a humble person. God said not to worry or to be anxious, He would take care.⁵³⁰ The providence of God was evident. The invisibility of God was visible to everyone. The first Holy Qurbana of Fr Ukken, the newly ordained priest, went on very well with pomp and show in the Parappur Church. Fr Ouseppachan and the parish priest of the Church were the concelebrants assisted the main celebrant from either side in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. After the Holy Qurbana Fr Ouseppachan blessed him telling that he would be filled with the blessings of God. He received the same reception from his maternal parish, Our Lady of Carmel Church, Enamakkal where he was baptised. Thus, both Parappur land and Enamavu parish became reputed places. After the first Holy Qurbana, he serenely approached Mar Yohannan Menachery, the then bishop of the diocese of Thrissur, to find out further plan of God for him.

Endnotes

* Oral Tradition

1. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, “Optatam Totius” 4.
2. Jn 1:39.
3. Mt 11:29.
4. Lights from Heaven 20 June 1903 [61].
5. Cf. Ibid 1903.
6. Cf. Ibid 20 July 1904.
7. Ibid 20 June 1904 [203].
8. Cf. Ibid 20 June 1904.
9. Cf. Ibid 1903.
10. 1 Jn 4:16.
11. Lights from Heaven 29 June 1903 [64].
12. Ibid April 1902 [3].
13. Eph 5:17.
14. Cf. Conferences 1946.
15. Lights from Heaven - 20 August 1923 [350].
16. Ibid 14 November 1903 [147].
17. Ibid 15 November 1902 [147].
18. Mk 10:45; Cf. Jn 13:12-17; Cf. Decree on the Priestly Training, “Optatam Totius” 4.
19. Cf. Lights from Heaven 27 June 1903.
20. Ibid 23 December 1903 [202].
21. Cf. Lk 6:12, 9:18, 9:28, 11:1; Mk 6:46.
22. Lights from Heaven 29 October 1903 [138].
23. Ibid 23 December 1903 [202].
24. Ibid 22 May 1903 [48].
25. Cf. Acts 2.
26. Lights from Heaven 19 November 1903 [147].
27. Ibid 23 December 1903 [202].

28. Lights from Heaven 25 June 1905 [316].
29. Ibid 20 December 1903 [197].
30. Ibid 11-20 December 1903 [194].
31. Heb 10:9.
32. Lights from Heaven 18 November 1903 [14].
33. Ibid August 1904 [205].
34. Ibid 30 June 1903 [64].
35. Ibid 19 June 1903 [61].
36. Ibid 13 May 1903 [45].
37. Ibid 14 May 1903 [45].
38. Ibid 21 November 1903 [148].
39. Ibid 1 June 1903 [53].
40. Phil 4:13.
41. Isa 43:1.
42. Lights from Heaven 1902 [1].
43. Eph 1:4.
44. Cf. Gal 2:20.
45. Cf. Mk 16:15.
46. Lights from Heaven 23 September 1903 [116].
47. Cf. Decree on the Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 8.
48. Cf. Lights from Heaven December 1903.
49. Ibid 29 May 1903 [51].
50. Cf. Ibid 23 August 1903.
51. Ibid 25 August 1904 [243].
52. Ibid 11 December 1903 [189-190].
53. Ibid 3 September 1903 [103].
54. Ibid 1 July 1904 [65].
55. Cf. Mk 14:22-24; Cf. Lk 22:17-20; Cf. 1 Cor 11:23-26.
56. Cf. Lights from Heaven 1903.
57. Ibid 20 December 1903 [197].

58. Cf. 1 Cor 11:27-28.
59. Lights from Heaven 15 June 1904 [59].
60. Ibid 16 June 1904 [59].
61. Cf. Lk 14:15-24.
62. Lights from Heaven -9 October 1904 [127].
63. Cf. Conferences 1946.
64. Lights from Heaven 25 December 1903 [184].
65. Cf. Conferences 1946.
66. Cf. Ibid 1946.
67. Lights from Heaven November 1904 [294].
68. Ibid November 1904 [293].
69. Ibid 10 July 1903 [69].
70. Ibid 8 July 1903 [68].
71. 1 Cor 11:27.
72. Lights from Heaven 17 June 1903 [60].
73. Cf. Ibid 23 December 1903.
74. Cf. Jn 13:30.
75. Cf. Mt 26:70, 72, 74.
76. Mt 26:40.
77. Cf. Lights from Heaven December 1903.
78. Cf. Ibid 19 December 1903.
79. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 8.
80. Lights from Heaven 6 October 1907 [336].
81. Ibid 6 July; 10 October ; December 1903 [128].
82. Ibid 1-5 June 1903 [53-54].
83. Ibid 19 June 1903 [61].
84. Ibid 6 June 1903 [54].
85. Cf. Ibid 1903.
86. Ibid 14 June 1903 [58].
87. Ibid 1922 [346].

88. Lights from Heaven 20-25 August 1923 [349].
89. Ibid 20-25 August 1923 [350].
90. Ibid 19 December 1932 [379].
91. Ibid 13 June 1903 [58].
92. Cf. Lk 1:39.
93. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, "Lumen Gentium" 57.
94. Cf. 2 Pet 3:10.
95. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, "Lumen Gentium" 68.
96. Cf. Lights from Heaven 31 March 1902; 21 May 1903.
97. Ibid 21 May 1903 [48].
98. Cf. Ibid 11 September 1904.
99. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 8.
100. Lights from Heaven 11 December 1903 [194].
101. Cf. Ibid December 1903.
102. Ibid 25 November 1903 [149].
103. Ibid 29 November 1903 [150-151].
104. Cf. Conferences 1946.
105. Lights from Heaven 28, 29 May 1903 [51].
106. Ibid 15 November 1903 [146].
107. Ibid 3 September 1903 [103].
108. Ibid 5 December 1903 [154].
109. Ibid 6 December 1903 [155].
110. Ibid 15 September 1904 [253].
111. Ibid 20 November 1903 [147].
112. Cf. Ibid April, 1902.
113. Ibid 20 September 1903 [114].
114. Ibid 1903, [32].
115. Ibid 1903, [28].
116. Ibid 1903 [27].

117. Lights from Heaven 1903 [16].
118. Ibid 21 November 1904 [148].
119. Ibid 1903, [15].
120. Ibid 15 August 1903 [88-89].
121. Cf. Mariological Encyclical by Pope John Paul II, "Mother of the Redeemer" 5.
122. Lights from Heaven 1 October 1903, [121].
123. Ibid 1 October 1904 [257].
124. Ibid 4 October 1903 [124].
125. Ibid 2 October 1904 [257].
126. Ibid 19 December 1903 [200].
127. Ibid November 1904 [280].
128. Ibid November 1904 [284-285].
129. Ibid September 1903 [104].
130. Ibid 4 September 1922 [346].
131. Cf. Ibid 28 April 1904.
132. Ibid 28 April 1907 [331].
133. Ibid 1 October 1903 [121].
134. Ibid 4 August 1903 [81].
135. Ibid 1903 [13-14].
136. Ibid 7 August 1904 [227].
137. Cf. Ibid 1903.
138. Ibid 16 July 1904 [206].
139. Cf. Conferences 1946.
140. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 8.
141. Lights from Heaven 1903 [23].
142. Ibid 1903 [25].
143. Cf. Mt 1:18-25.
144. Cf. Lk 2:5-7.

145. Cf. Mt 2:13-15.
146. Lights from Heaven 28 October 1904 [137].
147. Ibid 2 May 1903 [39].
148. Ibid 28 October 1904 [137].
149. Ibid 31 March 1903 [27].
150. Ibid 28 October 1904 [137].
151. Ibid 31 March 1903 [27].
152. Mt 5:48.
153. Lights from Heaven September, 2 October 1903 [102,122-123].
154. Cf. Ibid December 1903.
155. Cf. Conferences 1946.
156. Cf. Ibid 1946.
157. Mk 1:35.
158. Cf. Mk. 14:36; Cf. Jn 4:34.
159. Dogmatic constitution, "Lumen Gentium" 63.
160. Cf. Lights from Heaven December 1904.
161. Cf. Conferences 1946.
162. Cf. Ibid 1946.
163. Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, "Sacrosanctum Concilium" 7.
164. Lk 2:41.
165. Lights from Heaven December 1904 [300-301].
166. Cf. Conferences 1946.
167. Cf. Ibid 1946.
168. Lights from Heaven December 1904 [299].
169. Ibid 1905 [319].
170. Cf. Ibid December 1903 [176].
171. Cf. Conferences 1946.
172. Cf. Ibid 1946.
173. Lights from Heaven 25 December 1903 [185-186].
174. Ibid 15 August 1904 [235].

175. Lights from Heaven 15 August 1904 [235-236].
176. Ibid 8 May 1901[43].
177. Cf. Conferences 1946.
178. Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, “*Perfectae Caritatis*” 5.
179. Lights from Heaven 25 August 1904 [243].
180. Ibid 20 June 1903 [61].
181. Cf. Lk 22:46.
182. Cf. Lights from Heaven December 1903.
183. Ibid 1903 [176].
184. Cf. Conferences 1946.
185. Lights from Heaven 20 August 1923 [350].
186. Ibid 28 July 1904 [219].
187. Ibid 11-20 December 1903 [195].
188. Cf. Conferences 1946.
189. Lights from Heaven 14 December 1932 [367].
190. Cf. Rom 6:16.
191. Cf. 1 Cor 13:12.
192. Cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Cf. 1Jn 3:2.
193. Ps 42:1-2.
194. Lights from Heaven 23 September 1903 [115].
195. Ibid 1902 [4].
196. Cf. Ex 32:7-14.
197. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, “*Optatam Totius*” 12.
198. Lights from Heaven 20 June 1904 [203].
199. Ibid 11 December 1903 [189-190].
200. Lk 2:52.
201. Cf. Heb 4:15.
202. Jn 14:6.
203. Cf. Lights from Heaven 1903.

204. Lights from Heaven 25 June 1902 [63].
205. Cf. Ibid 1903.
206. Ibid 8 June 1903 [56].
207. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 8.
208. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 9.
209. Cf. Heb 11:1.
210. Cf. Mt 17:20, Cf. Mk 11:23.
211. Cf. Mk 9:23.
212. Cf. Mt 15:28.
213. Cf. Heb 12:2-3.
214. Cf. 1 Cor 15:3-5.
215. Cf. Gal 3:23, 4:21-23; Cf. 2 Cor 3:6.
216. Cf. Mk 1:18, 10:28; Cf. Lk 5:11.
217. Cf. Mt 8:19.
218. Cf. Mk 8:24.
219. Cf. Mt 10:17-22.
220. Cf. Mt 10:25.
221. Cf. 1Pet 1:8.
222. Jn 4:23.
223. Cf. Lk 7:6-7.
224. Lights from Heaven 18 October 1903 [132].
225. Ibid 19 August 1903 [93].
226. Cf. Mt 8:23-27.
227. Lights from Heaven 20 October 1903 [132-133].
228. Cf. Ibid 7 November 1904.
229. Cf. Lk 1:34.
230. Lk 1:37.
231. Lights from Heaven 4 November 1904 [270].
232. Ibid 4 November 1904 [271].
233. Ibid 5 November 1904 [274].

234. Cf. Heb 12:2.
235. Cf. Gen 3:15.
236. Cf. Gen 12:1-3.
237. Cf. Gen 49; Cf. Ex3:8,17, 23:27-33; Cf. Deut 28.
238. Cf. Isa 11:9; Cf. Hab 2:14.
239. Mt 4:17.
240. Cf. Acts 2:33-39.
241. Cf. 1 Thess 2:19.
242. Cf. 2 Cor 1:14.
243. Cf. Heb 10: 25-37.
244. Cf. Jas 5:7-12; Cf. 1 Thess 1:4-10; Cf. 1Pet 1:5-12.
245. Cf. 1 Thess 5:8; Cf. 1Pet 4:7; Cf. 1 Cor 7:2-40.
246. Cf. Lights from Heaven 14 September 1903.
247. Cf. Ibid April 1902.
248. Ibid April 1902 [2].
249. Ibid 22 September 1903 [115].
250. Ibid April, 1902 [3].
251. Ibid April 1902 [1].
252. Cf. Ibid 1903.
253. Ibid 21 May 1903 [48].
254. Ibid April 1902 [5].
255. Ibid 2 November 1904 [268-269].
256. Cf. Ibid April 1903.
257. Ibid 9 December 1932 [381].
258. Cf. Ibid December 1903.
259. Cf. 1 Jn 4:8.
260. Cf. Jn 13:34.
261. Jn 15:9.
262. Cf. Lk 5:32.
263. Cf. Lk 7:36-50,19:10, 23:43; Cf. Jn 8:1-11.

264. Cf. Mk 3:13.
265. Cf. Jn 15:15.
266. Cf. Jn 13:1.
267. Cf. Mk 6:31.
268. Cf. Mk 2:18-20, 23-27.
269. Cf. Mt 22:36.
270. Cf. Lk 10:25.
271. Cf. 1 Jn 4:20-21.
272. Cf. Eph 3:17.
273. Cf. Lights from Heaven 1903.
274. Cf. Ibid 1903.
275. 1 Jn 3:15.
276. Mt 22:39.
277. Lights from Heaven 9 September 1903 [106].
278. Cf. Rom 13:8-10.
279. Jn 13:35.
280. Cf. Acts 4:32.
281. Lights from Heaven 10 May 1903 [44].
282. Ibid 2 July 1903 [65].
283. Ibid 23 July 1903 [214].
284. Ibid 7 August 1903 [83].
285. Ibid 20 June 1904 [380].
286. Cf. Ibid 1902 [cf. 10, 327, 330].
287. Cf. Jn 20:18.
288. Cf. Gen 22:18; Cf. Ex15:26; Cf. Mt 7:21; Cf. Mk 3:35; Cf. Rom 2:13.
289. Cf. Gal 5:13.
290. Cf. Rom 13:1.
291. Jn 19:11.
292. Cf. Jn 4:34.

293. Lk 22:42.
294. Cf. Phil 2:8.
295. Cf. Mk 3:35.
296. Lk 2:51.
297. Cf. Jn 4:35, 5:30; Cf. Heb 10:7; Cf. Ps 39:9.
298. Cf. Phil 2:6.
299. Cf. Heb 5:8.
300. Mt 20:28, Cf. Jn 10:14-18; Cf. Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, "Perfectae Caritatis" 14.
301. Lights from Heaven 30 November 1904 [296].
302. Ibid 17 July 1903 [73].
303. Ibid 20 June 1904 [380].
304. Ibid 1903 [15].
305. Cf. Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, "Perfectae Caritatis" 14.
306. Lights from Heaven 18,19,20 July 1903 [73-74].
307. Ibid 4 September 1922 [343].
308. Cf. Conferences 1946.
309. Cf. 1 Sam 15:22.
310. Cf. 2 Sam 3:29.
311. Cf. Deut 15:7,24,14.
312. Cf. Deut 28:48.
313. Cf. Ps 9:18-19,12:5,69:23.
314. Cf. Job 24:28; Cf. Ps 8:3; Cf. Jer 40:7.
315. Cf. Isa 3:14; Cf. Ezek 18:16-18.
316. Cf. Ps 10:2; Cf. Isa 14:32.
317. Cf. Mt 5:3; Cf. Lk 6:20; Cf. Jas 2:5.
318. Cf. Lk 2:7.
319. Cf. Mt 13:55.
320. Cf. Mt 8:20.

321. Cf. Mt 27:35.
322. Cf. Mt 6:19; Cf. Lk 8:14.
323. Cf. Mt 19:21-27; Cf. Lk 12:33.
324. Cf. Mt 8:20; Cf. 2 Cor. 8:9.
325. Lights from Heaven December 1932 [370].
326. Cf. Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, "Perfectae Caritatis" 13.
327. Cf. Mt 6:20.
328. Cf. Mt 19:21,25:34-36; Cf. Jas 2:15-16; Cf. 1Jn 8:17.
329. Lights from Heaven 30 November 1904 [297].
330. Cf. Mt 6:25-34; Cf. 1 Pet 5:7; Cf. Phil 4:19.
331. Lights from Heaven 17, 18 July 1904 [208-209].
332. Cf. Rom 14:17; Cf. 2 Cor 8:14-15.
333. Lights from Heaven 15 December 1932 [366-367-368].
334. Ibid 10 September 1903 [107].
335. Cf. Ibid 18 July 1904 [209].
336. Cf. Conferences 1946.
337. Cf. Ibid 1946.
338. Lights from Heaven 18 September 1903 [113].
339. Cf. Mt 5:3.
340. Cf. Mt 19:12.
341. Cf. 1 Cor 7:32-35.
342. Cf. Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, "Perfectae Caritatis" 12.
343. Lights from Heaven 15 December 1906 [329].
344. Cf. 1 Jn 4:12.
345. Lights from Heaven 12 December 1903 [160].
346. Cf. Ibid 12 December 1903.
347. Cf. Ibid 12 December 1903.
348. Cf. Ps 103.

349. Cf. Sir 10:28.
350. Cf. Sir 10:27.
351. Cf. Sir 19:26.
352. Cf. Mic 6:8.
353. Cf. Lk 1:48.
354. Cf. Mt 11:29.
355. Cf. Lk 4:17-19, 6:20.
356. Cf. Mk 9:41.
357. Cf. Mk 10:31.
358. Cf. Mk 10:16.
359. Cf. Mk 10:15.
360. Cf. Mt 23:12; Cf. Lk 14:10.
361. Cf. Mk 10: 43-44.
362. Cf. Phil 2:5.
363. Cf. Lights from Heaven October, 1904.
364. Ibid October 1904 [260].
365. Ibid 2 May 1903 [39].
366. Ibid 12 October 1903 [129].
367. Ibid 12 October 1903 [129].
368. Ibid 26 August 1903 [98].
369. Ibid 12,13,14 October 1903 [129-130].
370. Cf. Lk 19:34.
371. Lights from Heaven November 1904 [295-296].
372. Ibid 22 October 1903 [134].
373. Ibid 14 November 1903 [146].
374. Ibid 8 November 1904 [272].
375. Cf. Conferences 1946.
376. Cf. Phil 3:10-11.
377. Cf. Rom 8:17; Cf. 2 Cor 4:17-18.

378. Cf. Col 1:24.
379. Cf. Rom 12:15.
380. Cf. 1 Cor 12:26.
381. Cf. Lk 9:23.
382. Lights from Heaven 22,23 June 1903 [62].
383. Ibid 26,27 October 1903 [136-137].
384. Ibid 3 July 1903 [66].
385. Ibid 22,23 September 1903 [115-116].
386. Ibid 14 September 1903 [111].
387. Ibid 11-20 December 1903 [196].
388. Ibid 26 July 1904 [217].
389. Ibid 27 September 1904 [256].
390. Ibid 4 September 1922 [348].
391. Ibid December 1903 [196].
392. Cf. Ibid April 1902.
393. Cf. Conferences 1946.
394. Cf. Ibid 1946.
395. Cf. Conferences 1946.
396. Lights from Heaven 14 September 1903 [111].
397. Cf. Conferences 1946.
398. Cf. Ibid 1946.
399. Cf. Ibid 1946.
400. Mt 5:5.
401. Lights from Heaven 19 July 1904 [210].
402. Ibid 19 July 1904 [210].
403. Lk 6:36.
404. Cf. Mt 5:48.
405. Cf. Lk 6:36.
406. Cf. Mt 20:34.
407. Cf. Mk 1:41.

408. Cf. Mk 6:34.
409. Cf. Lk 7:13.
410. Cf. Mt 15:32.
411. Cf. Mt 9:14-15, 12:1-18, 12:10-12,15:1ff.
412. Cf. Lk 15.
413. Cf. Jn 8:1ff.
414. Cf. Mk 6:30.
415. Cf. Mk 10:46.
416. Lights from Heaven 16 July 1904 [206].
417. Ibid November 1904 [279].
418. Ibid 1903 [30].
419. Ibid 1903 [23].
420. Ibid 10 September 1904 [252].
421. Ibid 20 July 1904 [211].
422. Ibid 30 July 1904 [220].
423. Ibid 8 October 1903 [126-127].
424. Ibid 5 October 1903 [125].
425. Ibid 1902 [3].
426. Ibid 1902 [22].
427. Ibid 19 December 1932 [377-378].
428. Ibid 18 1932 [364].
429. Cf. Ibid April 1902.
430. Ibid 1902 [15].
431. Ibid 4 December 1903 [153].
432. Ibid 3 December 1903 [152].
433. Ibid 17 May 1903 [46].
434. Ibid 13 May 1903 [45].
435. Ibid 27 June 1903 [64].
436. Cf. Ibid 24 August 1904.
437. Ibid 28 July 28 1904 [218].
438. Lights from Heaven April 1902 [36].
439. Ibid 30 April 1903 [36].

440. Lights from Heaven 31 May 1903 [52].
441. Ibid 6 November 1903 [142].
442. Cf. Lk 15:4.
443. Cf. Lights from Heaven April 1902.
444. Ibid 7 August 1904 [205].
445. Ibid 1902 [2].
446. Ibid (unknown date) [384:385-386-387].
447. Cf. Ibid 28 December 1906.
448. Ibid 2-7 September 1924 [351].
449. Cf. Ibid 1903.
450. Ibid 26 September 1903 [117].
451. Ibid 17 August 1904 [237].
452. Cf. Mt 5:44.
453. Cf. Conferences 1946.
454. Lights from Heaven 1902 [24].
455. Cf. Jn 16:13.
456. Cf. Gen 39:9; Cf. Ps 51:4.
457. Cf. Gen 3:17.
458. Cf. Isa 1:2.
459. Cf. Jer 3:1.
460. Cf. Deut 32:62; Cf. Jer 4:22,5:2.
461. Cf. Hos 2:8, 4:1-6.
462. Cf. Ex 20:5; Cf. Deut 5:9.
463. Cf. Isa 63:15.
464. Cf. Lk 15:7, 10,24.
465. Heb 4:15.
466. Mt 5:48.
467. Lights from Heaven November 1904 [290].
468. Cf. Lk 7:36,19:5; Cf. Mk 2:15; Cf. Jn 8:10.
469. Cf. Lk 15:28.
470. Lights from Heaven November 1904 [293].
471. Ibid November 1904 [289].

472. Rom 7:24.
473. Lights from Heaven 19 August 1903; 11 December 1932 [93].
474. Ibid 2-7 September 1924 [352].
475. Ps 6:6.
476. Lights from Heaven 28 September 1903 [118].
477. Ibid November 1904 [281].
478. Ibid 5 December 1903 [154].
479. Cf. Conferences 1946.
480. Lights from Heaven 1904 [302].
481. Ibid 16 August 1904 [238].
482. Cf. 2 Thess 3:10.
483. Gen 3:19.
484. Cf. Conferences 1946.
485. Cf. Lights from Heaven 14 December 1906 [328].
486. Ibid December 1904 [298].
487. Ibid 17 May 1903 [46].
488. Cf. Conferences 1946.
489. Lights from Heaven 20 June 1904 [203].
490. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 11.
491. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, "Optatam Totius" 19.
492. Heb 10:9.
493. Lk 1:38.
494. Lights from Heaven December 1904 [306].
495. Jn 4:34.
496. Lights from Heaven 28 July 1903 [77].
497. Cf. Jer 1:4-10; Cf. Isa 6:8; Cf. Jon 1:1; Cf. Gen 6:13-22, 22:1-3, 26:2-5, 28:13-22.
498. Mt 8: 21.
499. Lights from Heaven 10 September 1903 [107].
500. Ibid 19 December 1932 [379].
501. Ibid 3 November 1907 [337].
502. Cf. Gal 1:16.

503. Cf. Lights from Heaven December 1903.
504. Ibid 24 July 1903 [76].
505. Ibid 27 July 1903 [76].
506. Ibid 11 December 1903 [189].
507. Ibid 20 December 1903 [383].
508. Ibid November 1904 [271].
509. Ibid 28 December 1903 [187].
510. Ibid 19 August 1903 [93].
511. Cf. Ibid December 1903.
512. Cf. Ibid 20 July ; Cf. 28 August; Cf. 12 September 1903.
513. Cf. Ibid 11 November 1903.
514. Ibid 1906 [321].
515. Ibid 1906 [330].
516. Ibid 28 April 1907 [331].
517. Ibid 4 August 1907 [333].
518. Ibid 20 June 1907 [332].
519. Ibid 6 October 1907 [336].
520. Ibid 13 December 1907 [338].
521. Ibid 20 December 1907 [339].
522. Ibid 28 September 1913 [340].
523. Cf. Mk 14:33-36.
524. Cf. Mt 26:45-46.
525. Lights from Heaven 3 November 1907 [337].
526. Cf. 1 Chr 29:22; Cf. Lev 4:3-5,16,16:15; Cf. Dan 9:25.
527. Cf. Lev 4:5, 16:32.
528. Cf. Lk 4:18; Cf. Acts 10:38.
529. Cf. Isa 42:17; Cf. 1Jn 5:6.
530. Cf. Jn 14:12.

(The exact excerpts from 'Lights From Heaven' are indicated by their numbers in square brackets in the endnotes.)

Chapter 3

The Daring Soldier of Christ in His Fields

The young priest who has completed theological study and pastoral training prepared himself to venture into his sphere of activity like Jesus¹ who became equal to His own brothers in all respects other than sin and like St Paul, the advisor of the Gentiles who set himself apart for the Gospel of God and became everything for everyone to save all.² Priests are the intermediaries between God and His people. They accomplish the mission of the Church among the public.³ He learned the ethics of the priesthood that required from him to seek the sheep which were not included in the sheepfold like good shepherds who knew their sheep well to make them hear the voice of Christ in order to form one sheepfold and one shepherd.⁴ The people of God are united by the Word of the living God. It is alive and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides

soul from spirit and joints from marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.⁵ During the first phase of his training, he understood the supreme duty of a priest is to proclaim the good news to everyone. "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."⁶ Accepting heartily this commandment of Christ, he went down to the fields bravely to offer himself as a pleasing sacrifice⁷ acceptable to God by enlightening and rearing the people with the Word of God. Fr Ukken had the real expressions of a true discipleship of Christ. He had an intimate relationship with Christ.⁸ The disciple of Christ is one who listens to His teaching and identifies himself with the life of the Saviour.⁹ Partaking with Christ is the hallmark of the disciple of Christ: ie to take up the cross,¹⁰ to drink from His chalice¹¹ and to be worthy of the kingdom of God.¹² The discipleship of Jesus is a sharing in His personality. It has to be fulfilled through ordinary life situations and activities. Jesus chose the disciples to be with Him and to send them out to preach...¹³ With the same attitude, seeing God in his authorities, he accepted gladly the order of the bishop. He set out for his first venture of apostolic activity with the blessings of the bishop.

Assistant Manager at St Thomas School 1908 - 1910

It is customary for the newly ordained priests who have completed their studies to be appointed under experienced priests. Accordingly, in 1908 Fr Ukken was appointed as Asst Manager of St Thomas School. He worked as a support to Revd Fr Chirayath, the Rector and Manager. The main duty of the Asst Manager was to look after the discipline and character formation of the students. The Kandyan humour

and discipline helped him to do his job successfully. Fr Ukken, the young priest, who had always a charming smile became the beloved of the students. He paid attention to their moral growth and catechetical teaching along with their studies. The Children expressed their contentment in his loving protection and discipline. He worked diligently for their spiritual and physical growth. The childrens' love, respect and appreciation towards him increased day by day. 'A zealous priest!' was the opinion formed in the young minds about their assistant manager. He took advantage of this opportunity to instil in their hearts a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart, to the Blessed Sacrament and to Blessed Virgin Mary. Even though he made arrangements for various facilities for their physical and mental entertainment, he never allowed them to waste time in vain. He compulsorily reached the class room at four o'clock sharp daily to teach them catechism. He taught the prayer 'Our Father' and all other prayers, giving stress on exactness of words and correctness of intonation with a warm smile on his face. Being a Marian devotee, he was very particular to end the classes with a Marian hymn. In the beginning of the year itself each child was given a catechism text in English which was brought from Bombay and a calendar with daily indications. It seems, he understood the importance of catechism much earlier than the significance given to it today. One of the primary obligations of the Church is to teach catechism. There is a reason for it. Christ gave the apostles one final commandment before ascending to God the Father after resurrection. He told them to go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation, baptise them

and teach them to obey what He commanded.¹⁴ He entrusted them the mission and authority to proclaim the living Word to the human race, “What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands.”¹⁵ According to the commandment of Christ, the whole missionary efforts implemented by the Church regarding both faith and morals for its members altogether is known as catechism. He understood that the aim of it is to build up the body of Christ through baptising people in Christ’s name, leading them to the faith that Christ is the Son of God: thus to have life in His name and also to teach and train them in that life.¹⁶ He had foreseen that in the near future there would be disintegration of faith if they were not given catechism properly. Teaching catechism was one of his resolutions, “*Catechism and school with the same view.*”¹⁷ He conducted prayer meetings for children every First Friday.¹⁸ It was his another resolution. The tender hearts came to know that prayer is necessary for a soul just like food for a body. Besides, he never closed his eyes over faults but he was able to correct their mistakes contextually without hurting them and succeeded in earning the respect and confidence of the person whom he corrected. He advised and taught them¹⁹ like his dear sons in accordance with the teachings of St Paul: be diligent and punctual in season and out of season, blame and reprimand with knowledge and gentleness.²⁰ Because of these kind of actions, children did not see him as a manager but as a loving father. He shouldered this position for two years. As time went by he became a favourite of the authorities and was appointed to administer the parish.

Parish Priest at Kandassankadavu

Fr John Ukken who was always experiencing the divine presence of God, reached Kandassankadavu parish located 15 km away from Thrissur to make others experience the presence of God and to teach Christians to attain maturity and perfection in faith with a heart burning with love. He walked straight towards the altar to dedicate himself and his flock to Jesus. He spent some time there without a blink of his eyes. He remembered in a flash the pastoral training he had received and the exhortation of the bishop at the time of his priestly ordination 'to be mature in wisdom' and 'your teaching should be a spiritual medicine to the people of God.' The pastoral work of a parish priest is closely related to the instruction of Christian doctrines. Not merely exhortation but its practice is needed. A priest is a faith preceptor and he is obliged to check: whether the faithful observe the call to be a Christian according to the teaching of the Gospel, whether they are moving towards love that is sincere and work-oriented, whether they are reaching to the freedom that Christ has gained for us and whether they are following the direction of the Holy Spirit.²¹ With a new stream of thought and gaining strength from Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the High Priest, he optimistically embarked on to his grazing field.

No sooner had he reached the parish, his activity field, than he made a new plan ie family visit. The main aim of it was to spend time with each family to perceive spiritual, financial and temporal conditions of his parishioners personally and directly. He stood with them in their afflictions, strengthening them in love with compassion and

patience in order to build up families that truly radiate divine spirit.²² This visit helped him to seek those who were lost in the stygian path of sin and to persuade them to lead a virtuous life. The moment he came to know of any type of disturbance in any family, he rushed to meet them. It was his personality trait to inquire about the issues of the family from each member individually. He foreknew the importance of the family apostolate many moons ago and he himself came forward to implement it. He used to comfort the mourners and would give a chance to settle their disputes by talking each other their grievances. In the end, each one would be given the necessary advice and thus he would make them satisfied. Above all he had valued peace and mutual love. That is the sign of the sons of God. John, the lover of God did not have to struggle so much to change the revolutionaries and the haters into children of God through his natural brotherly love. No one can deny the fact that even a great sinner or a stubborn heart if happened to meet Fr Ukken would attain divine contentment and peace. He was able to draw many families which were in the harem of dissensions and discord closer to God. It was the first time the parishioners saw a good shepherd coming down to their midst to know the whereabouts of his sheep and to enquire about their well-being personally. He advised believers to actively participate in the Holy Qurbana, to receive the sacraments more devotedly, to conduct other devotional exercises precisely and to intensify the catechism classes. Moreover, his exemplary life benefited for the virtuous dealings with all.

By the ministry of the shepherds, priests are obliged to rule, nurture, teach and sanctify each Christian. Since he understood the poor and the destitute were specially entrusted to the priests, he behaved with a special love towards them.²³ His soothing tender words and sympathetic look were enough to give comfort to the sorrowful hearts. When he saw those who suffered, his heart melted for them. Talking very gently with a smiling face and helping out with money were his usual ways of dealing with the destitute. Usually he makes enquiries about the concerns of the needy who approached him and expedited a solution for it. He was a refuge for the weak and the helpless.

Fr Ukken had to face many people who were involved in disagreeable and dissenting issues like land disputes and property fixing during this period. He could bring about peace accords through his advice, pacifying words, offering constant prayers and reconcile them with each other. He was never upset by the problems. He had a special dexterity to find solutions for the predicaments, especially family issues. He could easily find solutions to untie the gordian knots and free the parishioners when they were entangled both in spiritual and physical dilemma. His closeness brought happiness and satisfaction not only to his own people but also among people of other religions. Priests are not sent only to Catholics but to non-Catholics as well as to the people of other religions.²⁴ The unfathomable union with Jesus strengthened him to do all this. *“Try to do each action of mine as he did or in his life easily are found some actions, in general for the love of J. and M”*²⁵ (Jesus and Mary). This was his promise. He had always sought the advice of his role

models, Jesus and Mother Mary, “*Jesus and Mamma help me!*”²⁶

Practice what you preach was a characteristic feature of Fr John Ukken, the ideal and humble-hearted person. A Christian community cannot be built up without Holy Qurbana as its central point and foundation. ‘The practice of social consciousness must begin with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana.’²⁷ His immense devotion towards the Holy Eucharist was adequate to attract others to Jesus. He comprehended that no one can lead a true Christian life, no matter how much wisdom one has about the religion. God’s abundant grace is inevitable for it. Hence he tried to make plans to attract everyone to the Holy Eucharist, the source and the giver of all graces. As St Paul, the Apostle says Fr John led many souls to the path of heaven through his life in God. Correspondingly, He directed his life ahead in pursuance of the exemplary life of the Divine Lord who dwelt among the human race, “Just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as ransom for many.”²⁸ Therefore by loving and serving God and mankind, his heart burnt as a holocaust at the altar of offering. He was able to lead his flock in the spirit of Christ’s love towards the path of truth and the light of faith.

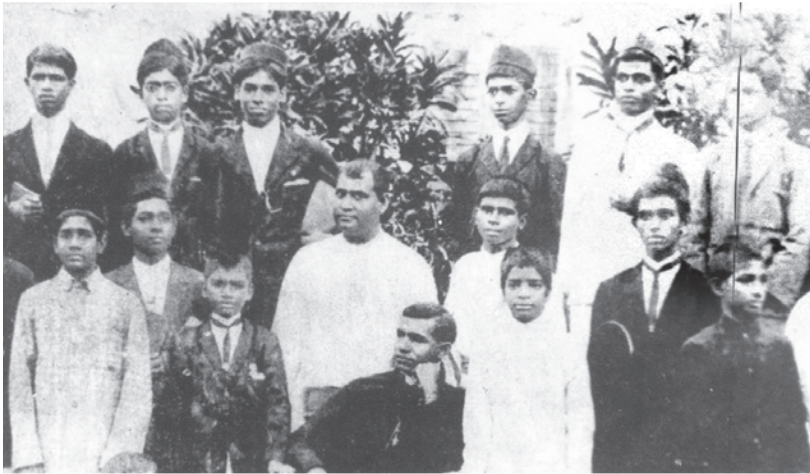
The celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the centre of all prayers, filled with spirit and love evinced visible signs of divinity in him. There was a great overflow of humility, faith and love from his heart and it was conspicuous when he offered the Holy Qurbana. He loved the liturgy of the Church with its changing liturgical seasons. Prior to the important feast days in the Church, there will be novena for a few days

as a preparation for the feast celebrations which generated devotion in the hearts of the faithful. He defined the feast days as forerunners of the biggest feast day celebration in Heaven. He exhorted the believers to observe the monthly veneration, one of the devotional rituals piously.

In spite of all these activities he had to overcome many critical exigencies. Christ, the Good Shepherd was his model in confronting all those situations. His humility was sufficient to defeat the evil doers at the time of combat. Whenever there was interaction with disagreeable persons, the broad-mindedness and tolerance that manifested in him attracted everyone. Kandassankadavu parish became very much blessed and famous with the arrival of the young priest who had smartness, sanctity of life, an attractive personality and who was also cultured, generous and above all, a true lover of God. His conversation, attractive smile and good behaviour were pleasing to all irrespective of age, caste, creed, colour without kuchela (poor person) and kubera (wealthy person) difference. But they have been fortunate only for a year to experience it. By giving prominence to mutual love and humility, he who had exercised divine authority to promote it was appointed as Rector of the Minor Seminary to train zealous workers in the field of Jesus in the following year.

Minor Seminary Rector 1911 - 1917

Seminary is the brain of a diocese. The aim of training in the seminary is to formulate the seminarians into suitable devoted spiritual directors in the image of Christ the Master, Priest and Good Shepherd of the flock by developing the seeds of the vocation. The training of the seminarians



Rector of the Minor Seminary

depends not only upon the intellectual laws but also mostly on the skills of the educationists. So the trainers must be well-trained noble persons. They should have comprehensive knowledge, pastoral experiences and exemplary skills in spiritual and educational training.²⁹

They experienced the love of a real father in the rector, a courageous idealist, action-oriented and a humble person blazing with love of God. He was a father, mother, master and a friend at the same time for them. He arranged all facilities and favourable conditions for the multifaceted growth of the seminarians in the seminary. He who led a simple life was always approachable to them. Relevant importance was given to prayer, learning and recreation and he himself was a model to them. He repeatedly advised them, “*To be like Jesus and to learn from Jesus.*”* He planned training programmes with a sense of reality in accordance with time, place and situation. From the beginning onwards

he advised the seminarians, their preparation should be centred on the mysteries of Christ. He also provided some practical exercises to achieve human and mental maturity. What proof is needed other than this to prove the foresightedness of Fr Ukken who had foreseen the studies of Second Vatican Council? The exemplary life of the rector influenced them to grow in devotion to the Holy Sacrament, to the Sacred Heart and to Mother Mary. He insisted on them to visit the prisoner of love in the tabernacle at short intervals. He also instructed them to imitate the meekness of the Heart of Jesus, faith of Mother Mary and the spirit of Charity. He gave guidance to grow in the theological virtues like faith, hope and love to conform to the image of Christ. He also initiated well-designed action plans for personality development.

He was paying best attention to the resources for the progress of his children. The rector becomes one with the seminarians during the recreation time soon after supper. Positive criticism, daily happenings, funny events, healthy gossiping without hurting anybody and humorous jokes without losing dignity were exchanged between the master and the disciples during this time and it generated a new awakening in them. Fr Ukken has a motherly heart pulsating with love. Once the master and disciples together went out for a picnic. It was a boating trip. That night they stayed in a house, which was uninhabited. That day the disciples got a chance to enjoy the deep concern of their master's motherly affectionate heart. He enthusiastically went around seeing to all the facilities for bath, food, bedding and sound sleep. He hurriedly approached everyone forgetting himself like a

loving mother to enquire whether each and everything was satisfactory and rectified the shortcomings. They experienced the generosity and love of that maternal heart. He used to render his selfless service even keeping vigil all through the night sacrificing all conveniences whenever any of his wards fell sick. They enjoyed the sweetness, kindness and tenderness of motherly caring. He specially considered those who had been left behind in studies and gave them the assistance they needed. It was his unique feature to empathize with those who were in pain in any way.

There is a common practice during the training period in the seminary to meet the rector in his room to know and to report the up-to-date information. When the seminarians reached his room he would affectionately enquire about their advancement. It was his custom to talk about their family matters, studies, spiritual and physical growth like a beloved father. He was particularly concerned about providing advice and suggestions for their further growth. When he sensed faults in the seminarians, he corrected them benignly without hurting and thus gained their confidence. "For the Lord disciplines those whom he loves."³⁰ He was cautious enough that his own disciples, the seminarians should gain exact training in discipline, in punctuality and in traditional courtesies just like him. Even though the seminarians went to his room with a little dread, they returned very happily strengthened in love. He stated in his diary how to make conversation. "*Conversation means a talker and a listener but informed to learn something from companions. If we find few good conversationalists there are still fewer good listener (Father Faber). Each one has his strong point; either a holy nor the*

more signified term for which he feels taste and aptitude. Let him to talk about it and then we can give more than a deep browse study of several hours."³¹ It is clear, how sweet his conversation was and how much time he spent to listen to others.

He specifically realized the success of the character formation of the seminarians depends a lot on the thinking and the behavioural pattern of their directors. He joined with the seminarians in such a way that he was able to produce a feeling of oneness among them and form a real family spirit in response to God's request "To allow them all to be one."³² Moreover, it was sufficient to give them more happiness in their call. During this time, Bishop Mar Alappatt joined the seminary. Thus he got a decisive role in the bringing up of a future bishop. The skillful talk of Fr Ukken caused wonder among his disciples. He had an exceptional ability to catch the attention of the listeners, to make them happy and satisfied through his long colloquy and sermons which were filled with care, humour, timely thought-provoking words, examples, maxims and personal experiences. Those Gospel proclamations were the reflections he received from the training of his seminary life which he nurtured and developed. He himself described it, "*Citation to be short and well brought out; examples to be beautiful, authentic, appropriate; to reasons you must join as far as possible some good comparison, as our Lord in the Gospel. In sermons, a sweet eloquence, grand language, well regulated action and venerable appearance. A fund of affections and exclamations to be provided, the enunciation to be distinct and slow and the greatest care to be taken to speak in a natural voice and with variety of*

intonation.”³³ His Holy Qurbana and Gospel proclamations were spirit-filled and were apt to influence everyone. A particular efficiency together with his commanding respectability, provided a new effectiveness to his words. The triumph of his eloquence was the capacity to bring a real change in faith and life of others through the power of mercy. He was a faithful instrument of the inner voice of God for his disciples.

Fr Ukken was a spiritual lamp to the seminarians and a model to be followed in the spiritual zone for everybody. He instructed the persons in charge of the chapel duty to open the chapel before their morning ablutions. He reached there exactly at the time of opening the chapel. The seminarians used to see the rector in contemplation in the chapel. “*Reach the Church first, leave the Church last*”^{*} was the part of his daily routine. The secret of victory and the source of strength of Fr Ukken was nothing else other than this. He was accustomed to say the Rosary and also to do the examination of conscience along with his students. As usual he was the first one to reach the chapel for these prayers also. Perfect spirituality and creativity were synonymously blended in him. Even in his busy schedule, he found time to go down to the poor with a flame of human love derived from God’s love and thus to become a prophetic voice of Jesus. It was his strong spirituality that gave him inspiration.

If he saw any of his children’s face gloomy and lips compressed, that tender-hearted would become anxious. His maternal heart would be throbbing fast to find out the reason and to ward it off. He had a special knack to make them happy. He had an exceptional consideration for the grieving

and suffering people. He had experienced what pain was. He never sent away the needy empty-handed. Keeping aside the 'staff and hat' of the rector, he became one among them like St Paul, to gain his disciples for God.³⁴ On their way out for the evening walk or picnic, they used to see a friend in the rector who was cracking jokes and competing with them. Fr John had been able to give training to the youth in such a way that they could follow the foot-prints of Jesus. They were the selected ones called by God leaving out the weeds. He tried to induce in them a spirit of sacrifice and devotion to God. Even now his disciples testify that the pieces of advice he had given were inscribed in their hearts forever. Revd Bishop Alappatt and others approved and talked many a time about his ideals, courageous deeds, punctuality in work and in short, the discipline that they received from him had greatly contributed to their life in the major seminary.

Secretary to the Vicar Apostolic Mar John Menachery 1913 - 1917

Revd Fr John Ukken also held the position of secretary to Bishop Menachery while he was the rector. He worked as the right hand to bishop in all things and was an eminent adviser. Fr Ukken who never denied any help to anyone became a comfort to many people with problems. He acquired wisdom from the Holy Scripture and the epistles to provide correct answers to the complicated problems of human beings. Thus what the bishop had said at the time of his priestly ordination, "To become mature in wisdom" was turning out to be true. This matured teaching became a spiritual medicine for those who approached him.³⁵

He subdued those who were burning with anger by calmness. It was possible to settle many burning issues of the diocese at that time because of his ingenuity and policy. One of them was the cemetery issue in Aranattukara. Many low caste Hindus came to the Carmelite Monastery, stayed there to study about Christianity and were baptised after their training. At times, some entrants for baptism died during their stay there. So Fr Prior requested the bishop of Thrissur that His Excellency would allow the body of the dead to be buried in the nearby Church cemetery. The bishop granted permission to bury them in the nearby cemetery of Aranattukara East Church. But the parishioners of Aranattukara East Church did not allow it. They objected the burial of the newly converted low caste people (Pulaya and Paraya) from Elthuruth, along with their forefathers in that holy place. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life."³⁶ He who keeps on walking with Him is not in the darkness. The converted people who had openly declared they would move along the 'true path' of the Divine Lord were not accepted by the 'true Christians' of Aranattukara, who saw the converted as lower than them so that they could not respect the command of the bishop. It was the period of racial prejudice. So they asked the bishop to withdraw the command. The bishop also did not understand what was wrong in burying them in the Catholic cemetery those who believed and were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, who accepted His crucifixion and death for the salvation of the whole human race. There is nothing wrong in disbelieving that there will be observance of untouchability even after death. Christ too prayed that they may be one, as we are one.³⁷

Many months went by. In the mean time, there was the death of a child from a baptised family in Elthuruth. The relatives brought the corpse of the child to the East Church of Elthuruth, Aranattukara for burial. The parishioners blocked their way. The dead body was sent back. Violation of command! The bishop became very angry. The parishioners of Aranattukara parish became arrogant and adamant. They locked up the Church and sent away the parish priest. All the holy rituals were stopped. Revd Fr Koikkara, the parish priest went to the West Church. If anyone died, people would carry the dead body saying prayers in a procession of two lines towards the cemetery and would bury the body themselves by reciting prayers. New born babies were not given baptism. The Church was just awakening from the pandemonium of Meloos Schism. Whenever there were flaming blasphemies in the Church, Fr Ukken was steadfast in faith and succeeded in fighting the enemies through the mediation of Rosary *to destroy the albigensian heresy: ask to blot out from the face of the civilized world the error and impiety by holy Rosary.*³⁸ Fr Ukken who was a veteran devotee of Rosary entered the field to face the crisis. The loving child of Mary experienced that *it was not possible for her to reject anyone who kept trust in her.*³⁹ He studied the problem and situation well. Fr Ukken, the secretary, informed the controversy with its deserved seriousness to the bishop. As a result, the first command was withdrawn and a new order was issued. Aranattukara Church was re-opened, parish priest came back and there prevailed a calm atmosphere.

Despite his heavy work, Fr Ukken proceeded without losing his tranquility and he was approachable to everyone.

Whenever the poor held out their hands for help, he gave them whatever there was in his pocket. He never sent back any needy empty-handed. He reserved time easily for the poor in whom he had seen Christ. The verse, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me"⁴⁰ always echoed in his ears. So, even when there was not enough money for his needs, he would help the needy. He had a unique ability to create a family atmosphere while making enquiries about the welfare of the visitors who come to the bishop's house.

He treated his fellow priests with love like members of a family. He showed special interest in other priests who were sick, those afflicted by troubles, burdened by hard work, oppressed and lonely. The Lord Himself invited the wearied apostles to take rest. "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."⁴¹ Besides, he helped them to progress in their spiritual and intellectual life.⁴² He expressed sincere respect and compassion towards the old. The priest home which was built in Thope was a typical example of the attitude of love and concern towards them. Till then, there were no arrangements for the wearied priests who were sick either due to diseases or advanced age, to lead a relaxed life or to stay during their treatment. The ardent desire of Bishop Menachery took the shape of a building with stone and lime because of the support and enthusiastic efforts of Fr Ukken, the secretary of the diocese, the adviser and the director of the Thope institution. The inaugural function of this building was in 1915. Does it not show the love for the old and the sick? He was always merciful to the invalid and the helpless. Whatever be the great post he held that never

hindered him from extending a helping hand. The saying 'from cradle to grave' is true in his case also. The seed of compassionate love and tenderness that the Lord has sowed in Fr Ukken's heart, the fertile soil when he was a child, sprouted and were growing. It flourished, laden with fruits, and made it enjoyable for others.

Fr Augustine John Ukken was also a good advisor of Bishop Menachery. It was not a difficult thing for a person who entered into deification with God through spiritual life, to consult with God, to understand the Will of God and to preach it. Fr Ukken who venerated the Mother and worshipped the Guru, submitted all his adverse conditions and problems at the feet of his Mother and Guru was always unrivalled in the matter of self control. It was a well known fact that there was nothing to equal his spiritual strength. As such, he became a respected figure. He who can conquer the mind is more honourable than the emperor.

"The man who ever conquers himself

Is greater than a brave warrior who conquers countries."

It is true, Fr Ukken who surpassed everyone in self-control won the hearts of all. He had done the two tasks with great commendation. The past years' training in the seminary at Kandy was adequate to create the earlier mentioned attitude in him. Fr Ukken, a perfect Kandyan became brilliant both in the seminary and in the diocese court. The bishop appointed him the parish priest of Lourdes Cathedral as well.

Parish Priest at Lourdes Cathedral 1916 - 1919

Fr Ukken shouldered the responsibilities associated with the triple posts such as Rector of the Minor Seminary, Vicar of the Lourdes Cathedral and Secretary to Bishop Mar John

Menachery for one year. It is possible to imagine the esteem that the bishop had for Fr Ukken as he had been selected to perform three important positions simultaneously. He had an alluring and praiseworthy personality. Being versatile, he successfully carried out the different responsibilities at different levels. He was equally available to the bishop, to the seminarians and to the parishioners. He was quick to effectuate the various needs of the people. A ceaseless operator! An Accessible person to everyone! A man of prayer! Since *Fr Ukken prepared each day's programmes the day before*,⁴³ he had enough time for everything and was able to do plenty of work. He could win over the hearts of the people in all the arena of his work. He had shown an extraordinary administrative expertise at all times along with a remarkable ability to tactfully fascinate his disagreeable flocks to find solutions for their complex problems. His determined and farsighted approachability was worthy to be imitated. Strong faith, great missionary zeal, service-mindedness and erudition combined in Fr Ukken who became a beloved to everyone. He listened to the cry of the oppressed and the afflicted. There was always a divine spirit illuminated on his smiling face.

In 1917 Fr Ukken, parish priest of the Cathedral Church and the first member of the diocesan administrative body was relieved from the seminary to make his work easier. Really it was a heartbreaking incident for him to say goodbye to the entrusted ones whom he loved very much as his own children. All the inmates of the seminary assembled in the chapel. There was pin drop silence every where. The hearts that loved each other, silently exchanged their emotions.

Their misty eyes suddenly burst into a flow of tears. He was not able to finish the farewell speech. Everyone choked with a lack of words and it soon turned into sobs and weeping. He cried like a child while blessing the seminarians. The scene was quite similar to the tender-hearted Jesus sharing the grief of His friends and crying with them.⁴⁴ Fr Ukken, the warm-hearted was reduced to tears in front of his beloved seminarians. Hurriedly he stretched out his hand to be kissed and climbed down the staircase as fast as he could and suddenly left for Lourdes Cathedral Church.

There he was completely engrossed in the parish administration. He visited each family of the parish with the same ethics of the Good Shepherd who came down to the earth in search of the flock and to bring back those who had gone astray from the real path. It was necessary to give a clear orientation, correction, timely help, encouragement and discouragement to the activities of the faithful who were immersed in worldly worries. His pastoral service was not merely for those who frequented the Church or devoting themselves to prayers and also not for those who were only in need of spiritual help. As the Council says, ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the education of men to Christian maturity.⁴⁵ His activities demonstrated that he had foreseen it earlier. He tried to inculcate various factors of Christian maturity in them like, knowing the will of God manifested through the smallest to the biggest events of life, realising one's mission in this world, being faithful to it and by showing kindness to others. He worked assiduously to mould energetic believers by transcribing their visions

and ideals of life into their temporal life activities in a responsible and earnest manner through the reformation of the Christian community. Accordingly, he had a clear consciousness and understanding about all the aspects of Christian perspective of principles which included sanctity and paths towards it. Thus as a priest, as a prophet and as a leader he became the very own of all his sheep. He energized them to act in agreement with the command of the intellect by surviving their innate instincts and always to be in God's love and in divine inspiration of the conscience. In fact, they saw a 'Spiritual Guru' in him.

He built a presbytery during the three years of his administration of the parish. While he was decorating the positions viz Rector of the Minor Seminary, Secretary to Bishop Mar John Menachery and Vicar of Lourdes Cathedral, he used to visit the slum in Kokkalai, a squalid and over crowded place which usually generate dislike and disgust in all. Here the slum dwellers led an immoral life and they were rarely visited by others, but he stepped in and tried to lead them to the path of morality. Besides, he offered Holy Qurbana twice a week in the chapel in Kokkalai. Fr Ukken himself suggested the chapel to be dedicated in St Augustine's name, his heavenly patron. The responsibility of the Church to plan innovative projects for the human race was fulfilled through Fr Ukken according to the demands of time.⁴⁶ At that time no great importance was given to the family apostolate and to the slum development activities. Moreover, it was not considered as a desirable task for a priest. Therefore it was not a surprise that he received arrows of criticism and insults from his colleagues and authorities.

When criticism was levelled against him, he remained steadfast. He who burnt with love to save souls was ready to sacrifice his life for them imitating his Master. He knew the harsh experiences that emerge during the search of new grazing fields for souls are salvatory when one is consumed with a desire to institute and expand God's kingdom. "*He looks at what is not yet done like St Francis Xavier.*"⁴⁷ Thus, he made great efforts to become one sheepfold and one shepherd soon.

Parish Priest at Kottappady 1919 - 1921

After three years of commendable service in Lourdes Church, Fr Ukken was transferred to Kottappady as the parish priest. There also he witnessed the invisible providential hands of God. It helped him to go down to the poor and to make family visits more energetic. He had a special talent for settling family problems harmoniously. He consoled them with pacifying words and by visiting the patients at home and hospitals. He was so strict to conduct catechism classes and found time for that. He who led a Word-bound life, preached the Word clearly, sweetly and strongly. He accepted Jesus who was engaged in God the Father's work at the age of twelve as his model.⁴⁸ The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.⁴⁹ His Gospel proclamations were enough to lead the faithful to belief. His oratorical powers and eloquence in speech were well known. He was a well respected priest by the young and old. When the Word of God entered Mary she ignored her own inconveniences and ran quickly through the hills of Judea to her relative, Elizabeth to help.⁵⁰ Similarly, the son who

imitated the Blessed Mother *did not refuse help to anyone*.⁵¹ He cultivated happiness in helping his brother priests in their difficulties. Believing more work can be done for souls with many other priests working together, he behaved in a brotherly manner to all. He scribbled, "*I must love "Union" and be a good member with the hope to get other priests later, so that more work for souls may be done by many.*"⁵² He used to go to Mattom parish to assist the parish priest in Church matters when he was a parish priest in Kottappady. Love never knows obstacles. He worked with vigour and zeal for the spiritual and physical growth of the parishes, parishioners and thus earned public acclaim. When Fr Ukken was the parish priest in Kottappady, the Most Revd Dr Mar Yohannan Menachery, after 23 years of service, slept in the Lord on 19 December 1919, and Fr Ukken was appointed the Manager of St Thomas College, Thrissur in the place of Fr Francis Vazhappilly who was nominated Vicar Apostolic of Thrissur Vicariat on 5 April 1921.

Manager at St Thomas College 1921 - 1925

St Thomas college, a temple of knowledge stands out proudly in the heart of Thrissur town, the cultural centre. This temple of learning has rendered great service in the field of education and moulded many great personalities. No lesser is its contribution in the field of arts and culture. Along with the usual curricular and co-curricular activities, this institution also ascribed proper importance to the character formation of students. Fr Ukken has chaired the manager post of this famous temple of education. He is culturally rich, a nobleman, a scholar and a farsighted visionary whose style of administration is well-known. He played a great role in

leading this temple of knowledge to soar to greater heights of prestige over times. It is not surprising that the person who possessed an attractive personality captured a place in the hearts of the young generation. During his tenure he taught French and Latin. He mastered these languages privately while studying in the seminary at Kandy. Students used to speak excitedly about the classes taught by Fr Ukken. He was adept at adding a touch of humour to the subjects he was teaching. BA classes started in St Thomas College during his tenure. He was the Chaplain of the Sacred Heart Carmelite convent at that time. He fostered spiritual growth in the students by giving day to day advice and by conducting monthly recollections and yearly retreats intending their character formation. While commendably serving in the college, he had been paying attention continuously to his own spiritual growth. Hating sin strikingly, this disciple of Christ zealously avoided all occasions of sin and practised penance for the sins of others. He resolved, *“I see familiarity with... is an occasion for sin...I must by the grace of the S.Heart avoid... 15 minutes wear chain on Fridays and Saturdays, special days ofcourse excepted. For a month when possible shall say vespers kneeling closed doors”*⁵³ (Sacred Heart). He strove hard to co-operate wholeheartedly with his superiors. Seeing God in his superiors, he submitted himself to their orders even when there were differences in opinion. He decided, *“I find it difficult to spare my views with those of my superior. I should at any cost try to tally them. Superior holds God’s place. He is alone responsible to God regarding the things... He is guided by the H.Ghost.”*⁵⁴ Hence he taught to *be like a five year old child in the spirit of belief, obedience and truthfulness while interacting with superiors*.⁵⁵

Fr Ukken never fell back from spreading his devotion, howsoever busy he was with other every day duties, on account of his deep devotedness to Mother Mary. He founded the Marian Sodality, a pious organization in the name of Immaculate Virgin Mary and took various steps to encourage its activities. He taught the youth it is possible to reach Christ through Mother Mary, impossible things would become possible through Mary's intercession and Jesus cannot refuse whatever Mother Mary asked for. This is what had happened at the wedding feast in Cana. He conducted prayer meetings similar to those we conduct now-a-days. Fr Ukken's farsightedness is truly amazing. He determined, "*This month I should start in the convent chapel under me a monthly meeting of the sodality for girls, another of apostleship of prayer.*"⁵⁶

Fr Ukken's entire life was a hymn of gratitude to God for the awesome blessings showered on him. The fumes of gratitude always arise from his heart and move towards the presence of God. He felt as if, *the more the expressions of gratitude the more the showers of blessings upon him.*⁵⁷ He says if he recalls the grace that he received, there won't be enough time to express his thankfulness. He wrote, "*Today when thanking God for the graces, consolations it struck me that when I thank Him, He bestows fresh graces upon me. so finally, I am beaten.*"⁵⁸ Instead, as a reward for it he pledged to work more fervently for the salvation of souls. "*On the S. Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ gave me the idea of spending myself for souls out of love for Him, who loving me delivered Himself upto death: device some work I for salvation of souls*"⁵⁹ (Sacred Passion). "*Last of conversion work with some monthly*

contribution."⁶⁰ In other words, he thought to spend the money they got as monthly collection to operate some repentance work. He decided to do acts of penance and sacrifice for it. He understood that he must go to great lengths for the salvation of souls through meditation and reflection and he committed his whole life to attain it. He determined, "*Out of love for S.Heart and zeal for abandoned souls I will join the confraternity of abandoned souls in Monteleigion and also renew the heroic act*"⁶¹ (Sacred Heart). *He reached at a realization that God chose him specially to go in search of people who were abandoned by the society and moreover, if needed to give up his life for them. He feared whether the high positions he held become a hindrance to it. Again, he strongly doubted whether he was spoiling the particular plan God had for him.*⁶² Our Lord suffered great torments for saving souls. Deeply meditating and shedding tears over the passion of Christ, an idea occurred to him. "*Meditation on the Passion of our dear Lord gave me tears and desire of doing some initiative work for souls, probably at Kunnamkulam.*"⁶³ He inferred, "*I will with permission of His Lordship our Bishop, try to enter a religious order or choose a humbler Post. If permission to become a religious is denied, I hope to open a Home for the aged and sickly in Kunnamkulam near the hospital and have Mass and other services regularly conducted there, thus to make a breach in the heretical fortress.*"⁶⁴ Thus Fr Ukken systematized a clear vision of his future plan of action. Just like the prophets of Israel, who appeared at critical stages in order to uphold the true religious beliefs and morality, Fr Ukken decided he would proceed to serve in the villages of the miserable people who

were under starvation, slavery, sickness and sin to fill them with the Word of God. He firmly believed that he was selected from his mother's womb to become a comprehensive redeemer who would work to bring a new era with a dawn of equality, love and justice in all spheres, tearing apart the channels of liberation by engaging pro-actively with God and man. So he sought to transform himself like Moses, who provided food for the people and alleviated their legal problems. He considered the resuscitation of the spiritually dead was his obligation. Lord Jesus is the refuge of the poor and the exploited like wise Fr Ukken was called to remain as the true representative of God in the world. This can be achieved by venturing into the villages. Not only that, he desired to establish congregations with the same purpose. Fr Ukken prepared a master plan in his mind. *"If God helps me, my idea is to sever my connection with the college and to go to Kunnamkulam and there conducting a small church, pave way for opening an orphanage, asylum for aged, workshop, press etc. If possible to form an Association of Priests, Brothers and Sisters!"*⁶⁵ He had to wait twenty long years for his long-made design to bloom into reality, to give a lively appearance by giving flesh and marrow to it, the most cherished desire of his early childhood ie to commit his life entirely for the weak, the oppressed and the downtrodden of the society and to work with a compassionate heart among them. He who had firm faith in the providence of God, perseveringly awaited with renewed hope for the advent of that blessed day without losing his expectation.

Why did Fr Ukken who worked in Thrissur town want Kunnamkulam to be his place of work? Among the various

Christian denominations of Kerala, the Jacobite Church in numerical strength stands second place next to Catholics from 1876 onwards. The Jacobite Church started growing at a faster pace and its headquarters was at Kunnankulam, situated about 20 km north of Thrissur. Kunnankulam is known as a Jacobite centre even today. The great visionary, Fr Ukken soon perceived that the fast pace of the Jacobite growth was not confined, this would eventually sway the progress of the Catholic Church which had little presence over there and he feared that Catholic believers might embrace the Jacobite belief unless satisfactory spiritual services were rendered to them. He had a farsighted inkling of the future unity talks between the Churches of Kerala.

The love of God towards man is revealed through the fact that God the Father sent his only-begotten Son Jesus to earth. He humbly became man and with His death on the cross accomplished His salvific mission to provide humanity a new life and unity. Before handing Himself over to His tormentors as a spotless sacrificial lamb to be crucified, Jesus prayed to His Father for those who believed in Him, "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."⁶⁶ Christ instituted in His Church the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist. This sacrament represents the uniqueness and the realization of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. He gave a new commandment to his followers that they should love one another. Through the Holy Spirit, He called and unified His chosen people of the new covenant towards the unity of faith, hope and love. St Paul teaches,

“There is only one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”⁶⁷ Because those who were baptised have clothed themselves with Christ and for that all of them are one in Christ.⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit dwells in those who believe; pervades and rules over the Church as a whole, and brings about the wonderful communion of the faithful and their intimate union with Christ. Thus the Holy Spirit is the cause of the unity of the Church.⁶⁹ He understood that God’s Church is the only one and the re-establishment of unity among all Christian Churches is the desire of Christ. This should be the duty of a priest who continues the mission of Christ.

Besides, Catholics in Kunnamkulam were very poor. The starving ones! Everywhere pangs of hunger! Enslaved in the clutches of sin and sickness! Subjected to injustice and exploitation! He resolved to sacrifice himself as a burnt offering to the poor by identifying with them and to live a life of poverty for the wellness of his poor brethren. A great urge grew in him to impersonate the example of Moses who upon hearing the groans of his people reeling under the yoke of Egyptian slavery, left the sanctuary of his own security and comfort and offered his own life for them. In the same manner Fr Ukken deeply desired to become a sacrament of Christ the liberator by fighting against the immoral social set-up and oppressive regime. He also sketched an action plan to save the people from the bondage of superstitious beliefs. They are: by organising *Gospel proclamation, sending out missionaries for evangelisation if possible, seeking out*

*idol-worshippers, eliminating disbelief, promoting monotheism by conducting catechism classes, orphanage, employment training centres, press etc.*⁷⁰ He decided to derive the power for it through prayer. We get the mental strength for active life from our strong spiritual life. Jesus set an example for us. He spent forty days and forty nights in fasting and prayer. He conversed with the heavenly Father prior to choosing his apostles.⁷¹ Before all important events He spent time in prayer.⁷² The pledge took its clear form, *“Seemed to so very reasonable that I thought of retiring to shut myself up somewhere and praise God in secret. I was drawn to Jesus by display of Power, Glory and His generosity to each and every one who suffered with Him. I took the resolution of serving Him better and following Him closer.”*⁷³

Fr Ukken left no stone unturned to spread the devotion toward the Sacred Heart. *“These days I had the idea of forming a band of Priests for a community life with all the interests of the Sacred Heart at heart. The spirit of the S.Heart as practised by St. Francis de Sales and St. Little Flower should be insisted upon”*⁷⁴ (Sacred Heart).

It can be said that the period from 1921 to 1925 was a critical turning point in the priestly life of Fr Ukken. He realised the aim of being anointed as a priest and sent out to the world was to continue the salvific work of Christ on earth, and like the divine call of the fathers of the tribe and the prophets, his call was also for the liberation of the community. It was a need of the Holy Church at that time.

Thus he successfully carried out the work of the Holy Church which was entrusted to him through his superiors. He hoped that his mission would begin in the fullness of time. He was appointed as the parish priest of Mattom Church in the month of November 1925.

Parish Priest at Mattom 1925 - 1928

Fr Ukken took up the responsibility as parish priest soon after his appointment to Mattom parish. He made sincere efforts to bring drastic changes in the spiritual, physical, cultural and financial fields. He was a great lover of God, an active mystic who gave equal importance to both work and prayer. He presented the world a typical example of selfless love and service and it was a strong step towards the renovation of the society. He started the renewal programmes foreseeing the ideas of the Second Vatican Council. He who was a dynamic celebrant of the Holy Eucharist visioned the change and redemption of the society, in the kingdom of the Holy Eucharist in this world. Ultimately, he himself got transformed into a sacrament of love in lieu of his deep unity and love for the Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of love. Here also, he made a plan to start visiting houses in order to know the flock of his parish individually. Slowly the parishioners came to know that they got a good shepherd who was able to understand their miseries and troubles with exact remedies to solve it. His readiness to share their happiness and sorrows was much more appreciated. Now-a-days everyone thinks it is very compulsory to conduct family apostolate activities specially like family visits. If it is so now, in those days Fr Ukken had

foreseen it as an unavoidable activity and he made it practical and showed through his life. He took an interest in all levels and focused on the basics of the virtuous life like the observance of ten commandments and commandments of the Church, receptivity of the sacraments, moral life of the faithful and Christian love in families. He desired each Christian should become a second Christ and each Christian family should be a model of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Fr Ukken's charitable works are famous. He showed a special interest towards the poor who struggled to make both ends meet. He searched for this category of people in order to associate with them to extend necessary help. He affirmed compassion to those who approached him and never sent anyone back with empty pockets. Sometimes, he knowingly offered assistance to those who were ashamed to ask for help because of their family dignity and traditions. He valued those kinds of acts of mutual love to the fellow beings more than any other help.

Being a devotee of Mother Mary, Fr Ukken made every effort to foster his flock in the devotion to Mary. He converted many sinners through the mediation of Mother Mary. *She is a Mother for both a saintly person and a sinner; both can approach her with hope. If a sinner approaches her for shelter, he would surely reach the harbour of heaven.*⁷⁵ The style of his sermon gave hope and love and its charm was unique. He strictly advised to pray Rosary in every house without fail. He is the one who founded Sodality of Immaculate Virgin Mary in Mattom parish also. He led all people, young and old to Jesus 'through Mary' by giving hope that Jesus would reward those who venerate Mother Mary.

Fr Ukken attempted to induce the devotion to the Sacred Heart in everyone and also to make it more vibrant. Whenever possible he conducted one hour adoration and solemn Qurbana every First Friday. It was usual to read 'Vanakkamasam' (a devotional prayer) to the Sacred Heart in the month of June. This month is specially consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He constantly advised everybody to find refuge in His Sacred Heart. His advice, no one should hurt that loving Heart and also to learn from that Heart which is the seat of humility and love was so touching.

Fr Ukken understood that Gospel proclamation and catechism teaching are the most important things a priest should do for the salvation of souls. His verbal ingenuity was renowned. He showed a great interest to conduct catechism classes for children on Sundays. He was diligent to make firm the Catholic teachings and beliefs in the minds of the young children as well as to observe it perfectly. He insisted on teachers and parents to teach their wards religious matters too while imparting scientific knowledge. When the activities of his catechetical field were evaluated, it could be loudly announced that Fr Ukken, who was a farsighted magnanimous person foresaw its relevance highlighted in today's world. He trained the children to become altar boys and gave them quintessential encouragements to sustain their interest. Collecting oranges in his pocket and distributing them among the altar boys was his most favourite pastime.

The signs of perfect spirituality were visible in him. He received inspiration to establish convents, the abode of

spirituality, in the parishes and thus promote vocations. It was during his tenure as a parish priest that young people from Mattom parish went to join the monastery for the first time to lead a religious life. When late Revd Frs Malachias and Yustus wished to join the CMI Congregation, they had to face many obstacles. Beloved Fr Ukken helped them to ward off all the obstacles tactfully at that time together with needful encouragements for their going ahead. Fr Ukken was permitted to establish a branch house of FCC in Mattom parish for the betterment in the spirituality of the parishioners. In May 1926, their convent started functioning in a rented house and on 28 January 1928, the foundation stone was laid for it.

The thought of spending more time and rendering more efforts for the salvation of souls bothered him at this point also. *“In the medit. on Hell gave me the generous idea of saving souls from it as a token of gratitude to God, who so lovingly delivered me from it. The medit. on the agony of Jesus in the garden was better and more convincingly understood than ever. The adequate satisfaction for sin makes the Son of God to waver and shudder... Hence the soil of sin!! I got an impulse to work for souls that as many may profit by the fruits of so heart rending a passion!!”*⁷⁶ (meditation). Also *“Conceived the desire of doing something arduous and great for the glory of God, who so faithfully reward the least service!”*⁷⁷

Seeing the rapid growth of the Jacobite Church, the beloved son of the Catholic Church became very anxious. Their centre was in Kunnankulam. The fear that even the true Catholic believers might leave their belief was brought

into the notice of the then Bishop Dr Francis Vazhappilly, diocese of Thrissur. The holy soul believed if there is a convent and a school of Catholic nuns in Kunnamkulam, the centre of the Jacobites, it will energize the activities of the Catholics over there. In 1926 a branch house of the Carmelite Congregation (CMC) was established in Kunnamkulam (Chiralayam) as a consequence of his great persuasion. There were only four sisters at the time of its establishment. Since the sisters faced a lot of afflictions caused by the Jacobites and also the difficulties at the inception stage of a new convent, Fr Ukken, the parish priest of Mattom had gone often to their convent in Kunnamkulam to guide them. He consoled and helped them in their adversities and needs. In 1927, the foundation stone was laid for the school in Chiralayam. Fr Ukken, the parish priest, Mattom was present at that function.⁷⁸

Fr Ukken who worked relentlessly for the extensive growth of Mattom parish and brought many reforms there received a memorable place in the hearts of the people. Everyone said without exaggeration that his administrative period was the golden time, even though it was short. After the praiseworthy service of three years, in 1928, he was appointed as the parish priest in Chowannur.

Parish Priest at Chowannur 1928 - 1940

It was a Saturday. Here comes a man of magnetic personality to Chowannur Church at the dusk of the day. There arose a spectrum of light in the horizon of Chowannur. Yes! It was the official entry of Fr Ukken, the parish priest



Founder Father's Room

who was to spread the rays of scintillating light of Christianity in and around Chowannur.

CHOWANNUR is a small village twenty km away from Thrissur town, situated at the north and near to Kunnankulam. This parish is on the boundary of the diocese of Thrissur with lowest grade in cultural, financial, spiritual and moral aspects. If anyone wants to see the poor, they can have a look at the Catholics in Chowannur. It was an era when crucial division prevailed among the people depending upon their caste and creed. This external division was inversely proportional to the distance in their minds. It was the time when the heart-breaking picture of the most treacherous and deadliest battle of World War II filled the minds of the people. Injustice, violence, sin, sickness, poverty

and exploitation prevailed everywhere. The relation between capitalists and workers ended up in conflicts and slavery.

At that time, there was only one Holy Qurbana celebrated on Sundays in Chowannur parish. Many parishioners used to go to Chiralayam Church to participate in the Holy Qurbana. In those days these two Churches were under the administration of the same parish priest. When Fr Ukken took charge as the parish priest of this Church, it was in a very pitiable condition with thatched roof, muddy walls and floors caked with cow dung. There were no spacious rooms or seating area for the people, no altar to celebrate the Holy Qurbana and no proper road to reach the Church. Of course here everyone suffered a lot due to the lack of facilities. People from Iyyal, Ayyamparambu, Parem padam, Porkulam, Kundannur, Vellarakkad were all parishioners of this parish. They could maintain only a distant relationship with the Church in those days.

Fr Ukken realized that he had reached the precise grazing field where his long-cherished desires of mission could be fulfilled. He entrusted all his desires and decisions to Mother Mary and received her blessings before his entry into the battlefield without any delay. It was a day he very specially dedicated to the mother. And he stepped to the midst of his flock like a liberated prophet to argue and to work for a new world with justice, love and equality. He proved through his life that his call was not merely for his own development but for the service of others. He did it by allowing the stream of love to flow over the hardships and the foam of love floats over its surface finds its way to overflow through the new channels of emancipation to

liberate everybody from slavery, where man does not love man. The mission of a prophet is to stand up for the suppressed and the exploited and to have a moral indignation against social injustice. He has taken Jesus who stood with the mourners and the sufferers in their misery, as a model to stand for justice and to give freedom and truth through his own life. He entered his battlefield to work very hard to mould communities in love just like the early Christian communities, to become the image of God in the world like Christ who is the shelter of the poor and the exploited, to bring liberation to the whole human race and to break off the chains of all bondages to release the poor. He enabled everyone to lead a new life in Christ by changing the thoughts of sectarianism⁷⁹ and made it clear that the relationship between man to man and man to God is not unattainable. He brought development at all levels in Chowannur which was the most underdeveloped remote village of the diocese of Thrissur and he was ever ready to create a mass of people there based on Christian faith. Fr Ukken who was very much interested in the good of others acted mercifully to remove all kinds of blemishes and evil customs of the society and to spread love among all disregarding caste and creed. For that he planned an action plan - the family visit.

Fr Ukken - The Family Apostle

A good shepherd is the one who knows his sheep well individually and goes in search of those gone astray. Having a loving heart he reached to bind them with the chain of love like the early Christians and also to maintain the individual relationship with his flock. He visited all families without any discrimination of caste and creed, rich and poor,

literate or illiterate. Thus by not becoming the father of one family he became the father of every family. By giving advice, helping in their difficulties, providing remedy for problems, strengthening and catalyzing their spirituality, he extended them the aid they needed. The aim of the family visit is the all-round development of the family. He enumerated the consequential attitude, “*Mary hastened as she received or conceived Jesus. Charity of Mary is prompt and ready, it disregards all difficulties and troubles it forgets.*”⁸⁰ *By helping out Elizabeth in her needs, Mother Mary enriched Elizabeth’s family through the example of her life which was based on the Word. He was so determined to have such a transformation in each family with his visit.*⁸¹ Consequently, he wanted to reach the persons who visited him and those whom he visited to cross over this ocean of worldly life to heaven, the other side safely. For this, the suitable reservoirs ie the sacred virtues like wisdom, patience, abstemiousness, mercy, truth, straightforwardness, giftedness, self-restraint and happiness were all found in plenty in him. He had a special consideration to the poor and the sufferers. He neglected his own needs and gave importance to fulfill the needs of others. Fr Ukken was always available to the less fortunate and their call was answered instantaneously. Showing mercy to the poor people, arranging refuge to the helpless women and giving spiritual advice to many, he captured the hearts of many. Thus it was easy to settle many quarrels among the parishioners and to resolve every complicated problem of the fellow citizens in harmony through his mediation. He was tactful enough to deal with the cases related to the families. “By this everyone will know that you are my

disciples, if you have love for one another.”⁸² He put this commandment of God into practice and propagated it among the people. “From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live.”⁸³ All the people are created in His own image and likeness and are called to the same aim ie to reach God. So the first and foremost law is to love God and the fellow beings. He taught this through his own life. The Gospel teaches it is impossible to pluck and separate God’s love from the love of brethren. “Love is the fulfilling of the law.”⁸⁴ The commandment of Jesus is, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”⁸⁵ Fr Ukken after being enriched with God’s love made personal relationship with all families and became a rock of shelter for them. He who was farsighted, had foreseen all the teachings about the family apostolate, *advised to visit all families invariably and to give priority compulsorily to the poor.*⁸⁶ The most important and prominent role of family in the social sphere cannot be neglected. In the final analysis, all types of issues and mental problems together with its remedies are closely related to the family. It is from the family man begins to learn the qualities that make the society strong, happy and contented. Similarly, all anti-social evils also crop up from the family atmosphere. The best way to improve our society is to build up a good family environment.⁸⁷

Family is a school of elevated humaneness. “But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking co-operation of parents

in the education of their children.”⁸⁸ It was clear for him that if family becomes good, both parish and society will become good and he knew the fundamental unit of a parish is the family. He also wanted his children to continue this missionary work and provided them the necessary practice from the early stages of their training period. He stepped forward to uplift both the society and the village with the experience he had gathered during his family visits.

Village Renovator

Fr Ukken behaved in a brotherly manner with all as an answer to his call and went down to the villagers with a glint of love to redeem them from ignorance, darkness, bad customs, beliefs and caste rivalry. Mercy, sense of justice and love towards the weaker sections of the society are the hallmarks of the Christian lifestyle. He prepared fully for it at the time of his priestly training. He promised and prayed, “*To blot out from the face of the civilized world the error and impiety by holy Rosary, and ignorance and superstition to dispel from pagan world of India.*”⁸⁹ It was Fr Ukken’s insatiable thirst to struggle for the fulfillment of Jesus’ wish by ending the slavery and inequality that prevailed in the society. He sincerely longed and offered a prayer, “*Obtain for me and our priests a spark of that true charity that we may strive to alleviate the sufferings of our poor Pulayas (one group of low caste) and to ameliorate their condition, to bring them up to the equal social condition! Jesus our Master come to destroy all slavery and establish brotherhood.*”⁹⁰ He prayed for the suffering people and who were in slavery either spiritual or worldly. He kept his nose to the grindstone to bring freedom to the children of God. He depicted the mercy of our Lady,

*“How Mary moved to pity by the misery of the Christian slaves under the moors, appears, at once to St. Peter Nolases, St. Raymond Pentafort and king of Arragon, asking them to found an order, whose object is to redeem the slaves, even if necessary by taking their place! How she is the mother of mercy! Praise her mercy and thank her... Ask her to destroy the slavery in Malabar, of the Pulayas.”*⁹¹ The son who assimilated the spirit of Mother Mary regarded the problems of the suffering ones as his own trouble and he experienced it as his own pain. Jesus says, “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.”⁹² He has taken heartily the message of the Gospel that it was to his brothers and sisters who are poor, the banquet must be given by opening the door of the heart hearing the gentle voice of Jesus.

Untiringly Fr Ukken endeavoured to liberate the villagers who were under the yoke of slavery and forged them to experience the agape, the love of God’s creativity, the universe. He was convinced that all human beings are brothers and sisters and they too have the right to inherit God the Father’s property. So he raised his voice against the prevailing capitalist system. He taught the people about the complete change from self interest to charity which is the primary need of the society. “God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, the created goods should be in abundance for all in the like manner.”⁹³ Even though the common people were having the right for the ownership of

property, the landlords kept their deeds with them and enslaved them ignoring their rights of ownership. Fr Ukken prudently bought these deeds from them and returned to the original owners. He planned programmes to create self-employment for the wanderers. He insisted on starting business with financial assistance to those who are in difficulty to make both ends meet. Uplifting the women and the neglected, he made them to experience the freedom of the children of God. He became a revered person in everybody's heart, and they called him 'Achan Thamburan', (father god) 'Valiya Thamburan' (great god) and 'King' as sobriquets because he was a shelter in their needs. Young people who went to work in other countries were sending letters to their parents in Fr Ukken's address since their parents were uneducated. This makes one to comprehend the influence he had among the people. Fr Ukken who earned the respect and appreciation of the majority of the people was very soon unanimously elected as the Panchayat President of Chowannur. The Ayyamparambu-Chowannur road which we see today is made as a result of his efforts.

Fr Ukken toiled day and night to settle peacefully the land disputes, property dealings and family quarrels to inculcate love and unity among them as if they were the children of one father and to create a community there like that of the early Christian community. The real unity springs up from the unity of the heart and mind. He made it known to the world. He did not ignore anyone rather he loved and respected everyone. All were great in his sight. It was obvious and he believed that the development of his constituency was possible only through the upliftment of the villages.



The Cradle of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity

It was also the idea of Gandhiji. His accepted method was to approach everyone with merciful love. He strictly followed the example of the compassionate Jesus. He planned to embark on the construction of an orphanage out of mercy for the helpless women and children who were relentlessly segregated from the society. In 1929, he purchased a plot of land near Chowannur Church, trusting in the Lord's providence to help the poor. He was ready to spend any amount for the poor. Thus a centre was started for the poor, the helpless, the destitute and the downtrodden of the society. After one year on 21 November 1930, he established a pious association of women, aimed at the upliftment of the poor. It can be attributed as the inception of the Congregation. It was the day of the Presentation of Blessed Virgin Mary. So he consecrated everyone to the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady. He ensured all members to be filled with God's love, charity and humility. They should be available to

everyone and work hard in the midst of the people. Seven ladies were the first members of this association. Even though they were born with silver spoons in their mouths, they were very much humble in attitude and behaviour. He perceived that they were highly suitable for the activities he visualized. He asked the help from the Carmelite sisters to train them well. There was no particular constitution for the pious association at that time. They advanced courageously confronting various natural crises.

It is education that executes man's social and cultural needs and makes him intellectual, active and energetic. Education is the pathway invented for human progress by the Church which is trying to build up a new heaven and a new earth by fully developing the human personality, and by reforming everything in Christ. He started a school for the poor and the uncivilized village people who were unable to go to the highly renowned educational institutes. He built a small ground work in the same area where the school is located today. Since the work was not completed, the classes started in the veranda of Chowannur Church. But he was unable to continue the work due to certain technical problems. Thus he tried ceaselessly to wipe away the tears of those who were in pain and to lift them up.

Fr Ukken was a refuge of those who were in pain. It was a fact that inspite of his physical strength, he was too weak to see the tears of others. Once a rich man's business failed and ended up in a dreadful loss. As a last resort he pledged his house as security for loan. He approached Fr Ukken with a heavy heart. Fr Ukken blessed him and said, "*Son go in peace, you will be able to recover whatever*

you lost.”* This blessing was fulfilled and he became successful businessman within a few years. He suffered with the suffering people and raised their spirit with consoling words and financial support. People from Kunnankulam, Chiralayam, Chowannur, Vellarakkad and Eyyal rushed to seek solution for their problems from Fr Ukken, their mainstay. There was a divine glow in his ever smiling face. He who imbibed the spirit of Christ was a man of deep spiritual life. All his activities were mere reflections of it.

The True Missionary

The will of God that all men must find salvation is the urge behind the apostolic activity. A missionary is one who is sent out to the world with this aim. Christ is a missionary of God the Father because He was sent with a special purpose. “For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”⁹⁴ It was the mission of Christ. Christ Himself says about His mission, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.”⁹⁵ Christ, the first missionary started His mission at the age of twelve. Fr Ukken who reflected upon this, prepared himself for apostolic activity. He prayed to attain the same spirit of Jesus since He is his model. “*Since the world was wallowing in sins Jesus’ delight was to be with his holy parents, but he quits them for attending to the affairs of His Father! Am I also in such sentiments! Today I will leave some satisfaction for that purpose. Jesus teaches the doctors meekly; I have not to teach so, but how much good I can do by my example and words and by prayers! Don’t you know that I am to be in the things of my*

*Father? Jesus was to teach us by his whole life, not only at 13 He is our model, yet in the 13th year directly engages him in the mission! Is it not too late for me? Oh heart of Jesus, give me some zeal.”*⁹⁶ Jesus’ apostolic work was not to end with His earthly life. It will be continued till His Second Coming. He chose His disciples, gave instructions and advice to fulfill this mission and commissioned them for His ministry. “*Then suiting action to the word he sent them 2 by 2 giving them power to... Two by Two: To be mutual help, consolation and to be sure of, witness of the doctrine they taught! I must then seek friendship with my good brothers to be able to carry out the work of my Master! How freely Jesus gives workmen all sorts of help!*”⁹⁷

“The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature.”⁹⁸ “The Church, appointed by Christ to reveal and to communicate the love of God to all men and nations, is aware that there still remains a gigantic task for her to accomplish.”⁹⁹ Fr Ukken was fully aware of it. So, according to the wish of the Church, he prayed to do the apostolic work. “*Jesus moved to pity and groaning because of his infinite charity, says many look for the light of the gospel; many are still in the shadow of death. oh give me and to all priests a little of thy charity, zeal. Do Lord, send many zealous apostles, I unite my prayers with those of my sweet master and tender mother the queen of the apostles!*”¹⁰⁰ Fr Ukken absorbed the missionary spirit from Jesus and selected the villages where no one has yet reached as his grazing field. The uneducated and uncivilized villagers too were included in Jesus’ plan of saving everyone. He who absorbed the same spirit from Jesus Christ, worked incessantly for them to attain salvation by giving the Word of God.

He dedicated his time and health to actuate this task. "The Church must be present in these groups through her children, who dwell among them or who are sent to them."¹⁰¹ Understanding this truth, he worked with mutual love and respect to testify Christ effectively among the villagers who did not have any refinement at all. Down he went amidst them with the same spirit of love to proclaim God who wants us to love each other as God has loved us.¹⁰² Fr Ukken, the farsighted sensed the great need of a large number of missionaries to make the message of love of Christ reach the whole world. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."¹⁰³ The same idea is reflected in his Diary Notes also. "*19 centuries have glided away since the work of redemption, yet how many sit in darkness! Increase the number of zealous missionaries.*"¹⁰⁴ It was an unquenchable thirst for him to engage in the missionary work. He was eager to enter every nook and corner where the missionaries have not yet reached to give Jesus. He was strengthened in Jesus to overcome all adverse conditions with great determination. He wanted many people to come forward for it.

Eyyal was another village situated in the boundary of Chowannur parish. The Catholics from there approached Fr Ukken with a request to have a Church in Eyyal. It was a herculean task to erect a Church there because it was a centre where Hindus were thickly populated. He was ever ready to face anything for the propagation of faith. He was a man of great courage to perform his duty. He never closed his eyes

towards the needs of the poor. Confronting all kinds of protests, he bought a piece of land for Catholics in Eyyal, built a small chapel and offered the Holy Qurbana there. Church in Eyyal today is the result of his early work. The will power, efficiency and compatibility enabled Fr Ukken, the active visionary witness Christ among non-Christians in all critical junctures.

After many years, Fr Ukken went to Eyyal chapel to offer the Holy Qurbana on its great festive day. The rhythmic sound of the band and the fireworks reverberated through the whole atmosphere. Suddenly, some government officials reached there with a written document and commanded 'not to offer the Holy Qurbana in the chapel'. All were stunned.



In the Midst of Troubles

All of a sudden the bandset stopped, no more fireworks! All believers were frightened like a flock of sheep scattered by a wolf. Dilemma was visible in everybody's face. What would happen? The crowd asked each other. Immediately Father with two others went to Thrissur in a car. Believers who gathered in the chapel doubted whether the High Mass of the festivity would be suspended or stopped. Fr Ukken came back within one hour and got down from the car with a paper in his hand. Within no time the bandset resounded, the fireworks resumed followed by the High Mass of Fr Ukken. He had taken the district collector's permission to offer the Holy Qurbana. He had rushed to Thrissur for this purpose. Of course, he was willing even to die to protect the faith.

*“All missionaries should have a lot of Patience and expect the Lord's visit... pray for all engaged in fishing souls the world over in the freezing zone and scorching tropics!”*¹⁰⁵ It is clear from this the zeal of Fr Ukken as a missionary. Once Fr Ukken, the true missionary told his daughters to *go down discreetly wherever God requires*.¹⁰⁶ Beloved Fr Ukken advised his children to fulfill the desire of Christ by gaining souls for Him. He insisted on them to accept the suitable missionary work wherever God wanted according to the time and needs of the Church. He exhorted, *“Do not be sparing, do not seek compensation, nor expect any gratitude.”*¹⁰⁷ This enthusiasm was reflected throughout his life.

The Evangelist

Knowledge of the Holy Scripture is the essential quality needed for a missionary who is sent to continue the work of Christ. The first and foremost task of a missionary is to give

the message of Christ to the whole world. All missionaries are the Gospel proclaimers. Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me so I send you."¹⁰⁸ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."¹⁰⁹ Another time He says, "Go into all world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."¹¹⁰ The Church should spread throughout the world, preaching the Gospel to all. She brings everyone to salvation through the Gospel proclamation. The aim of the Gospel proclamation is to open their eyes so that they can turn from darkness to light and from the power of satan to God.¹¹¹ He constantly prayed for the gift of proclaiming the Word according to Jesus' will. He pleaded, "*Make me and all those who work for souls wary to dodge the poisoned arrows of the iniquitous and to give sound doctrine opportunely simple, looking only to procure God's glory by saving souls.*"¹¹² The power of the Holy spirit is needed for it. The first disciples were strengthened through the descend of the Holy Spirit upon them.¹¹³ Fr Ukken specially prayed to be strengthened with the Holy Spirit in order to proclaim the Word of God. "*Knowledge of the scriptures, of languages, courage to preach and suffer cheerfully. I also must ask for knowledge, according to: 'Labia Sacerdoteum' (availability of holy lips)... gifts of preaching (not myself) but Word of God clearly, forcibly and sweetly. Colloquy with the H. Ghost*"¹¹⁴ (Holy Spirit). *For this he had studied the holy scripture with its interpretation.*¹¹⁵ He used the Gospel to teach and advise his children. He sought permission from the bishop of the

diocese to read the Holy Scripture in English. The Diary Notes provide excellent evidence that he was a Gospel scholar. Wherever God has given the chance to proclaim the mystery of Christ,¹¹⁶ there he was ever ready to preach¹¹⁷ the living God and Christ who was sent by God the Father for the salvation of mankind¹¹⁸ with great confidence and boldness¹¹⁹ to everyone.¹²⁰ Thus he was eager to proclaim Christ who is the Way, Truth and Life¹²¹ equally among his own people and Gentiles. He made resolutions, “*To give missions and to send out missionaries if possible.*”¹²² His sermons based on the Gospels were mind-blowing. He tried to do the work entrusted by Jesus perfectly. Fr Ukken was really a true evangelist and his life was a proclamation of the Gospel.

Catechist

Catechism is equally important like proclamation of the Gospel to make the message of Jesus known to everyone. Children and young adults need systematic and regular religious instruction. They learn and understand the fundamental dogmas of beliefs and truths that God revealed to human beings and also what the Church has taught clearly in its long run of history through the instruction of catechism. It not only involves just understanding the principles but also decides and practises its activities that comply with leading a disciplined Christian life.¹²³ Fr Ukken had foreseen about the need of teaching catechism and he executed it actively in all parishes wherever he had been a parish priest. He encouraged the children by giving them small gifts. When he was the manager of the schools, he made catechism compulsory in schools. He was also a catechism teacher when he was the Asst Manager of St Thomas School.

Considering the significance of catechism, he took a promise to run schools with the aim of teaching catechism. He determined to conduct, “*Catechism and school with the same view.*”¹²⁴ He ascertained that teaching catechism is one of the duties of a priest who is a devotee of the Sacred Heart. He noted down, “*The work of the priest of S.H. may be. to conduct catechumenates*”¹²⁵ (Sacred Heart). He prepared a suitable environment for the proclamation of the Gospel through catechism.

Prophet of Ecumenism

There is no exaggeration in saying Kunnamkulam is the centre of activities of different Christian denominations. Among all these, the Jacobite Church was more flourishing. An enthusiastic Gospel proclaimer cannot bear this situation. He had great thirst for ecumenism among the Christian Churches. Jesus prayed to His Father the night before His death that they may all be one.¹²⁶ Fr Ukken indicated the meaning and its depth long before the teachings of the Vatican Council. That is why he worked for the unity of different Churches and accepted them with love and reverence as if they were his own brethren. For this reason he mainly chose Kunnamkulam as his pastoral field. He did his level best for the reunion of the Jacobite brethren in Kunnamkulam when he was the parish priest of Chiralayam and Chowannur. His devotion to Our Lady increased his strength to involve in this work vigorously. The statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is seen even today in the Jacobite Church in Chowannur. This reminds us of the consecration of everyone to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1949. Shortly, after the restoration of unity among all

Christians under the leadership of Mar Ivanios Thirumeni, this movement became more powerful with a variety of scopes. At the end of the long awaited 26 years, Fr Ukken, the parish priest of Chowannur Church was able to bring many non-Catholics to the Catholic Church through his interminable prayers and arduous efforts. Fr Ukken was a person who really understood his responsibility to give the light of faith that emerges from the uncountable blessings of God to the people who were in the darkness of ignorance and disbelief. Two persons who belonged to a very strict Hindu Nair family along with a few other Hindus embraced Christianity due to his earnest attempt. Among the two converted, one stayed with Fr Ukken. The Nair lady who embraced Catholic belief stayed in the orphanage later. He incessantly tried to keep up the friendship with the Jacobites. St Thomas Catholic Church and St Mary's Jacobite Church, Arthat are situated side by side. The land close to Kunnamkulam-Guruvayur road belonged to the Catholic Church. Jacobites forwarded an application with a recommendation letter from Fr Ukken to Bishop Mar Alappatt to get the twenty cent land lying close to the road. If granted, there would be a chance for the reunion of these two Churches was mentioned in the recommendation letter. Bishop allowed it without any delay. Catholic-Jacobite friendship progressed a lot. A loving memorial of it is the chapel today in Arthat. Revd Fr Kakku who joined the Catholic Church had taken refuge with Fr Ukken even before the restoration of unity among Christians by Mar Ivanios. He stayed as a guest with Fr Ukken for many years. His entire expenditure was met by Fr Ukken. Revd Fr Kakku (Yaccub) Panackal, a Jacobite Father

was the pioneer, the morning star of the restoration of unity among the Christians. He belonged to the Bava Kakshi and was a good orator. Once he was invited to preach in a Methran Kakshi Church. As he stepped on to the pulpit to deliver the speech, another group of the Church caught him by hand and brought him down from the pulpit. Later he realized that the Jacobite Church to which he belonged is itself a divided community and this type of division is unchristian. Slowly he understood only the Catholic Church stands without division and it is the real Church, hence he embraced the Catholic belief forever. Fr Ukken was ever ready to suffer any type of sacrifice and to spend any amount of money for the conversion activities. He tried to attain the fullness of unity that Christ desired, by prayer, sermon and action through the impulse of the Holy Spirit. "The sacred council exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism."¹²⁷ Long years ago, Fr Ukken put this advice of Vatican Council into practice in his life. This made him a prophet of ecumenism, one can say it undoubtedly. He had a heart that thirsted for souls.

Fr Ukken - The Compassionate Towards the Sick

Our Lord Jesus is the one who suffers with the sufferers and weeps with those who weep. Fr Ukken embraced the life of Christ who healed the sick and comforted the troubled. And he became a real compassionate tender-hearted person. Knowing the needs of the tormented, he pacified them with his soothing words, helped and blest them with the peace of Christ. He, the compassionate visited and consoled those who had been hated and abandoned by the society and who

were survived the caste system, the challenges of time. Patients were visited at their homes and comforted. He met Christ in all these groups of people. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."¹²⁸ *There are many references in his diary about Jesus who favours the poor.*¹²⁹ Fr Ukken learned all about these from Jesus, his model and went in search of the disabled, the depressed, the sick, the downtrodden, the imprisoned and those who were dying in the society. The zeal of God's love compelled him to go from house to house to assuage and help each one who was worried and wearied because of sickness and the departure of their dear and near ones. He prepared those who were at the verge of death to get a happy death. Keeping in mind, how Jesus visited Mary at her deathbed and prepared her to die in God's Love, we also should prepare those who are nearing their end, he said and he drafted, "*As Mary lay languishing Jesus accompanied by myriads of singing angels enter the room and accosts her by that ever sweet name "Mother" and prepares her for the departure. My son, says she, after receiving the viaticum, into thy hands I commend my spirit'. oh happy death. Mother, oh assist those who are in their Last agony. Oh let me die in the love of God.*"¹³⁰ He prayed continuously for the dying. He transferred the same spirit to his children also. He made it a lifestyle to provide relief to the less fortunate and the needy, he took a promise, "*To run or at least visit hospitals.*"¹³¹

If an institute is started near the government hospital in Kunnamkulam, his promise can be fulfilled easily. It was the wish of the compassionate. He made regular visits to the government hospitals and helped them with manpower and money. He instructed his children to have a small dispensary in every convent to help the poor and the helpless, to visit their houses and provide first aid to them. He was aware of the necessity of the mobile clinic much earlier. Once two sisters shared with him in detail the horrible and poor condition of a patient they visited. A man wrestling with death due to starvation and disease! No food, no dress, not even a mat to lie on. Before they finished giving the details about the patient, father called all his children near him. Since it was the early stages of the Congregation there was no furniture except a table in the convent. Still he told them to take that table which was used for the purpose of ironing dress to that patient's house. "*Let that man lie down at ease.*"* This was the touching response of that generous beloved father. He provided food and medicine for that man. Normally he was disturbed by the tears of others. He advised his children, "*They too are God's children.*"* On another occasion a man, gnawed by poverty and disease approached him. His horrendous figure could generate dislike and aversion in anybody. Fr Ukken saw Jesus in that man. He gave his own food to the man and satiated his hunger. He was given bath, dress, medicine and was allowed to stay with him. He treated that patient like a merciful mother. This is the spirit that he who lost his parents in his early childhood, learnt from Virgin Mary. After one week that patient died in his room. That pure soul departed to eternity receiving the

loving tender care from his patron. "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."¹³² Like St Paul who proclaimed this, Fr Ukken saw Christ in his own brethren and he continued Christ's salvific work. There was not a single man in Chowannur, who had not received the love and service of Fr Ukken. The sorrowful, the afflicted, the diseased and the worried all found a haven in him. Fr Ukken, the philanthropist thus shared the love of God the Father with plenty of people. Neither his job nor his health hindered him from visiting and pacifying the patients. He was kind to everyone. "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."¹³³ These words of God had been ringing in his ears ever since. Its vibrations were apparently visible throughout his life. He advised his children to continue the same life style.

Refuge of the poor and the Destitute - Through Execution of Justice

Even though he was born in an aristocratic family, he admitted, he experienced poverty when he lost his parents in his infancy. He took an oath, "*As Jesus we must also shed our blood if needed for the salvation of the world.*"¹³⁴ Fr Ukken who imitated Jesus and Mother Mary till the end of his life, visited the poor from hut to hut and paid attention to the call of the impoverished. He strengthened the weak and showed them compassion. He pledged, "*So let me also have compassion for the weak and do similarly to ameliorate their condition.*"¹³⁵ Later it was converted as a law of his life and passed it on to his children to be observed lovingly. Seeing the life of his brethren in tears, he felt pity and wiped away their afflictions and lived for them. His imagination unfolded

and expanded to bloom. India is a rich country inhabited by the poor. The Indian law is for the poor. There are many loopholes for the rich to escape from the laws. The poor children of India take their birth on the streets, grow there and die there. He was anointed as a priest to uplift all these groups of people. He knew he had a duty to eliminate the growing injustice and exploitation. He strongly believed that this state of being could come to an end by preaching the Gospel in relation to place and time. "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."¹³⁶ He decided to answer the call of the hunger by convincing this truth to the people. The community of Jesus has taken its form from the experience of Jesus, who spoke only what He knew and revealed what He saw.¹³⁷ Jesus selected His disciples not only to meditate and worship sitting around him but also to follow him steadily. The journey that Jesus started from Galilee and ended in Jerusalem should be continued from Jerusalem to the end of the world. So he ran when he heard the cry of the people in order to give them succour and to offer his life as a sacrifice for them. He discharged an untiring effort to develop universal brotherhood. So he fought against the existing systems and oppressing powers by being a prophetic voice of the desert and a sacrament of Christ, the Redeemer. He gave life to those who were spiritually dead. He was a powerful prophet in word and in deed before God and all the people.¹³⁸

Wiping away the tears of those who are weeping and wailing and the tormented, he made plans to raise them up

from their most pitiable conditions. The massive dreams of Fr Ukken were: to start an orphanage for the abandoned children; to build old age homes or refugee centers for the helpless senior citizens denied of proper love and care from their own family members; to start vocational centers in order to lead people from their disappointment and desperation as they lost their way while they tried to build up a hopeful future; to give the light of faith against injustice, superstition and discrimination due to religion; to start communication social media centers; to build up a future generation with enriched ideals and ideologies; to make family visits; to give preliminary knowledge on good and evil and make an ideal family atmosphere based on ethical norms for the younger generation; to establish learning centers for leading people from the darkness of ignorance to the real path of light; to run hospitals; to comfort people who have fallen ill and suffering from pain; to spread faith through being the Gospel and giving the Gospel; to conduct prayer conferences to reach God-realization through the experience of God's presence; to organize reunion attempts to become one shepherd and one sheepfold; to make everybody to experience and enjoy the banquet and gift of God the Father and to respond to the demands of the times. He wanted to make a new sky and a new earth, which loves the poor and the sinners without exploiting anyone. As a reflection of it, he started a weaving centre to empower women. He helped to raise the youth who wander unemployed by giving each of them small amounts like ten or fifty rupees to set up a business and of course later they became very successful businessmen. He worked tirelessly to make

accessible the vast landed property of landlords to the tenants. When there was scarcity of drinking water, he dug a well in the land he purchased and made it available to the poor. The herbomineral drugs that were then popular in India were collected and preserved in Kokkalai convent with the purpose of distributing it later to the poor according to their need.¹³⁹ He found happiness in serving the destitute. Despite the shortage of essentials, he shared what he had with his fellow brethren. Everyone had a place in his generous heart; he did not leave out anyone and nobody was denied of his help. Jesus advises to abandon selfishness and unbridled covetousness that prevent a person and society from being harmonious. The failure of the person who follows materialism and selfishness is made clear through the parable of the foolish rich man.¹⁴⁰ Jesus also makes clear the divine plan about the proper use of wealth and the obligation towards brethren through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.¹⁴¹ He urged all to lead a life of righteousness and love, based on the model of the early Christian community, distributing everything to the needy by assimilating the message of the love of Jesus. He was eager to form a society where truth and justice are interwoven firmly. He took the pain of the poor as his own pain and inspired his flock to work for their upliftment. He was thankful for the love of God the Father that he experienced from childhood onwards and which he could now share with others. His dedicated life was meant only to raise the poor. All its indications were clearly seen throughout his life. The people of that time saw the image of Jesus, a friend of the poor in Fr Ukken. He who

behaved with mercy towards the poor and the weak, considered the negligence of 'charity' to them as 'murder'. Seeing such 'murders', he felt so much pain. His blessed life was a beeline to do reparation for all these types of blemishes.

The Friend of Sinners

St Luke, the evangelist portrays Jesus as the friend of the poor and the sinners very beautifully. In this Gospel, we see a kind-hearted Jesus who liberates a sinful woman lovingly.¹⁴² St Luke draws different pictures of Jesus in his Gospel like: a good shepherd who descends into the forests and thorns, hillocks and thorny thickets in search of the astrayed ones - the sinners; a sorrowing father in the separation of his son; a loving father who happily squanders his fatherly affection on the return of his lost son and a woman who sincerely enjoys getting back her lost coin.¹⁴³ He makes us understand the compassionate love of Jesus through the parable of the Good Samaritan.¹⁴⁴ He showed the greatness of honesty and mercy by leading Zacchaeus, the chief of the tax collectors to repentance and thereby changed him totally into a new man.¹⁴⁵ Zacchaeus who reconciled with God, doing penance for the injustice he had committed, can be considered as the model of 'new creation'¹⁴⁶ characterized by St Paul. Jesus who severely criticizes the hypocritical attitude of the Pharisees and the Lawyers, advises to make justice, mercy and loyalty as powerful laws of life. Fr Ukken who was eager to emulate Jesus exactly in his life acknowledged His message of love, advice, activities etc as the model of his life. He decided, "*Try to do each action of mine as he did.*"¹⁴⁷ He says that *Jesus is his model and Mother Mary is his adviser.*¹⁴⁸ Fr Ukken who

remodelled himself into the model of Jesus and Mother Mary, incorporated and assimilated absolutely the message of Jesus into his life. He specially chose the Gospel of St Luke as his life's vow. Here we see the flow of compassion of Jesus towards the poor and the sinners. And again it is evident in this Gospel that as soon as Mary received the Word of God, she ran filled with love forgetting all dire conditions and assisted her relative, a perfect action of love. He discerned that this message was especially given to him and the mission of his supreme call was nothing else. "*I must try to snatch as many as I can.*"¹⁴⁹ With this firmness he started his work. Just like Jesus who hates sin and loves sinners,¹⁵⁰ by hating sin he loved sinners. He helped them to rise from the frustrations and desperations of life and soar in the heights of expectations and hope. That is why Mar Francis Vazhappilly, the then bishop of Thrissur sent the fathers who had gone away from the true faith and who were struggling with problems to Fr Ukken. He was very good in honouring the guests with warm hospitality. He served his colleagues with love and affection and allowed them to stay with him. He also gave advice and sought solutions to their problems. Above all, he guided them on the way to the true path through his exemplary life. He was a haven to all those who were encircled by despair and deprived of getting a right solution to their issues. Since he was a tactful problem solver, he was called the 'bishop of the north range' during that period.

Fr Ukken had a special interest towards the sinners. His spiritual diary reveals it. There were many descriptions about the good shepherd who went in search of the sheep gone

astray and the joyful father who called for a celebration of joy occasioned by the return of the prodigal son in his diary. He says being a priest, he too will act accordingly. He prayed, *“I know them that are mine and I lay down myself for them! Jesus knows me, with all my difficulties, weaknesses! The attachment of the shepherd is such that death alone can separate him from them, you have died for me! I thank you! Oh Mother of Good Shepherd, give all pastors the same charity, zeal... to those.... They hear my voice and follow me. Wherever the pastor leads, they follow, to good pastures as well as dry lands! For he is a good pastor. Oh good angel make me docile to be like my good pastor.”*¹⁵¹ Fr Ukken who understood the mission of a priest very well, went in search of sinners, accepted and prepared them for repentance with love and led them to the Good Shepherd.

Fr Ukken also describes the father’s affection when he embraced his lost son who came back with repentance after realizing his own misguided life. *“The Father looks for him and sees him already from afar. When they meet he falls upon his neck and embraces and permits him not to finish his confession. What is better calculated to inspire us with confidence? A great feast! Everything best; the fatted calf, ring... The robe of baptismal innocence was given back, the ring; the pledge of friendship. Not only all the sins are forgiven and forgotten but he is reinstated with all the former privileges!”*¹⁵² Fr Ukken followed the example of his Master. Therefore, he was able to gain many sinners.

Fr Anthrayos was one among them who had lost his divine call of priesthood and lived immorally. He did not administer any of the sacraments due to negligence and

distrust. Many advised him but there was no change at all. Fr Ukken, a friend of sinners treated him like a brother and allowed him to stay with him in his room and made him to enjoy the nectar of the life of immortality; and also told his daughters to pray for him with penance. As a result he repented in his last days and received the sacraments. Fr Ukken was overjoyed on that day. "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents."¹⁵³

The great achievement was his ability to lead many from the disappointing muddy puddle of immorality to the spring of morality with tender love. He showed them a way to earn livelihood and provided a place to live in. Who would not see the love of God the Father in such a person? Besides, without being satisfied with all this he started an institution for empowering the women who were rejected from the society. There were many objections against all these types of merciful works but his love towards Jesus strengthened him to overcome everything. He was able to capture the hearts of sinners as he approached them with forgiving love. Uncompromisingly and liberally he ran behind Jesus, the Good Shepherd who wandered among the valleys, hilltops and forests in search of the ones who went astray. He continued his race till the last moment of life. When he was a seminarian, he decided to save the souls which would be the mission of a priest and he worked for it enthusiastically. Therefore, he was worried grievously at the fall of sinners and he was rapturous at their return. All the time everyone saw him as a friend of sinners. He was a real image of Christ who spent His whole life to save sinners and always kept a

place for them in His heart. Yes, evidently he was a friend of sinners.

Apostle of Love

An apostle is one who is sent. Jesus is the great apostle the world has ever seen. He is the first apostle who came to the world with the message of love of God the Father. Jesus' words, deeds and life are the real reflections of the love of God the Father. This love is unlimited and unconditional. Everybody is attracted to Jesus due to His loving Heart. It is the sum total of His actions. He even prayed for His murderers while He was struggling on the Cross. Jesus said, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."¹⁵⁴ Jesus gave us this lofty lessons of love. He wanted his disciples to follow this example. For that He has given us His message of love. But the world is even now running after mortal love. The world in and around us would do anything for getting a bit of love. There is a group of people who do not know what love is yet they thirst for it. He understood, it was his duty to give Jesus' love to them and also he realized that he had been anointed as a priest and sent back to the world for this purpose only. He set apart his life for this mission. St Paul, the Apostle explains deeply about the characteristics of love.¹⁵⁵ Faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love. The Apostle unequivocally says our aim should be love.¹⁵⁶ Justice is the foundation of individual and social life and the perfection of justice is love. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself."¹⁵⁷ Jesus stressed, "On these two

commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”¹⁵⁸ Jesus qualifies those who offer selfless and loving service to their brethren as honest persons and promises them the kingdom of heaven.¹⁵⁹ Jesus is emphasizing the importance of love that must be in mutual relationships.

The example of early Christian community inspires us to lead a life of justice and love. The Holy Bible witnesses that they lived with one heart and one soul and shared their wealth among themselves.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the Old Testament expectation that there should be none among the people of God who live in poverty¹⁶¹ was fulfilled in the early Christian community.¹⁶² St Paul exhorts to do what is honest, respectable, justifiable, holy, lovable, praiseworthy, excellent and admirable. All these commandments and examples that are given by the Holy Scripture inspired Fr Ukken to lead an affectionate and idealistic life. He was convinced of the necessity to re-energize the love that had existed among the early Christians as the need of the time. He believed that he was called to this great position to share the love that he had experienced in his childhood when he lost his parents, with his fellow-creatures. He expressed his gratitude to that love through genuine love itself. All references about it found throughout his spiritual diary. *“Love your God with your whole-heart that is the greatest and the first precept. Oh how easy to love! But to love and for that he has disposed our faculty or heart! Who can love anything else when he knows the worth of God? This is the beginning and final end of everything! If we love here below our life in heaven only a continuation. The second-love your neighbour like yourself! I do not wish any evil to me, prosperity is always welcome! Give me my good*

*God true charity for my brothers! In this the whole laws and all the prophets are contained! How easy the construction of our spiritual edifice! Only look at these two! Let me begin to live according to these precepts!”*¹⁶³ He continued, “*There is no moment of our lives, in which we do not taste some fresh instance of God’s goodness, so there should not be any neither, in which this great Benefactor, who is continually present by his mercies, should not be present also in our thoughts and thankful remembrances. Oh God, make me grateful towards you, for your manifold graces! Especially for having brought me to this seminary!”*¹⁶⁴ His whole life was an expression of thanksgiving. He received this charism from God as a gift, developed it and gave to others as a gift itself. Love does not know what sacrifice is. He is the apostle who gathered power from God, the source of charity, and passed it on to the poor who were longing for the love of God. He shared the love with them and ushered them to God the Father. He proved through his life that solutions for all problems can be reached by love. He worked ceaselessly to make all experience Jesus’ love, by removing ‘all evils’ of the society through pouring hope to the desperate; employment to the unemployed; a place for the homeless to live in; liberation to those who are slaves of the powers of darkness and extending comfort to the destitute. His presence was a relief for all these sections of people. Even now many remember with gratitude the scenario of sending back people who were in the fiercely burning furnace of problems, being consoled and soothed with peace, after meeting him. There was no one left out from the circle of love of this apostle who was assigned and sent to lead the poor and the helpless to the kingdom of

God by opening a new chapter of compassionate love. He made his life blessed by encouraging everybody and giving them meaning and scope for their lives without discouraging anyone. Having imitated his Divine Master who ever did good to everyone, Fr Ukken also desired for everyone's good, and worked for it. He founded a loving religious community with a desire to have this act must be eschatological. "*Your task is to love and let nobody surpass you in love,*"* he advised. He kept love as the hallmark of the Congregation, instituted by him. All of them experienced the love that is tested and found out its fineness through suffering. There are a number of instances he experienced in his life that can be shown as examples for his advice to behave with a compassionate and tender manner considering human weaknesses. Those who have humaneness can only respect the personality of others. Whenever anybody approached him, he used to receive them heartily. His busy job, difficult problems or official work never stood as a barrier to receive others. There was an outpouring of ideal love throughout his life. Holiness is what makes human life divine and the real holiness is love. Love cannot be hidden. It hastens to reach out to everybody and attracts everyone towards it. The devotion to the Blessed Sacrament which was rooted in him from his childhood helped to design his life. The greatest love towards the human race made Jesus to become the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus Christ's eternal transaction tendered on the cross at Calvary for the salvation of others likewise Fr Ukken sacrificed his life in Christ and through Christ for serving others. He dedicated his life as a sacrifice and the sacrifice as his life.¹⁶⁵ He adapted his life in

such a way that it can be accepted and received by everyone just as the Blessed Sacrament received by all. His love for human beings is inspired by the spirit of love that springs up from his deep love towards the Blessed Sacrament.

Fr Ukken, a good shepherd never made any delay to go down to anyone who approached him for any matter and was instantly available to them with sincerity and affection. It was a fact that those who enjoyed his love individually eulogized with one voice, "I feel Father loves me more." The holiness that filled his mind, yes, pure God's love and the philanthropy that springs from it greatly influenced and motivated people to express such high opinions about Fr Ukken. He had an unusual ability to behave affectionately with those who were financially distressed, the sick and the evildoers. No tempest could shake his tranquility. It is love that gives life to the world. What God expects and asks from us is the same. Man is the only creation who can enjoy the sweetness of love among the creatures of the universe. If a man becomes unfriendly due to lack of love, he is spiritless and becomes like a beast. In the absence of love and being in a miserable environment, the spirit of love becomes dysfunctional. Fr Ukken by spreading the spirit of love made them lively and energetic. It can be undoubtedly said what was assured of Jesus was fulfilled in Fr Ukken also: that 'He went about doing good to all.'¹⁶⁶ All his services earned a permanent place for him in the hearts of the people. He shone like the lighted wick of a lamp that gives out rays of love. He still shines brightly like a beam of light behind the curtain of times. He silently summons everybody to advance more and more in love.¹⁶⁷

The Prophet of the Time

Prophets were the exceptional persons chosen by God in Israel at some decisive phases to maintain Israel's religious faith and morality. They were the voice of Israel's conscience. The task of a prophet was to vent his moral rage by inveighing against the social injustice and stand for the oppressed and the exploited. When they saw lawlessness, their blood boiled and worked bravely for their land and people. All the prophetic calls were aimed at and perfected only in Christ, the eternal Prophet. A prophet knows the secrets of the hearts and reveals them.¹⁶⁸ In each era, according to the needs of the Church, God selects special persons for it. Jesus Christ led a prophetic mission, aimed at Calvary and He offered Himself there at the end of His sacrificial life. Following Jesus, Fr Ukken initiated a prophetic mission like Jesus and identified with His lifestyle in a particular time when people were wandering for values, individual relationships, God experience, real peace and true love. It was a period when unfortunate conditions like money evolved as a criterion of human dignity and so, violence, injustice, corruption and inequality prevailed in all walks of life. He began his work in the society with selfless service soaked in love to raise his voice against the contagious corruptive systems. He gave Jesus, the symbol of hope, to the people who suffered inferiority complex, to the broken-hearted and to the rejected of the community in order to make them experience the love of God. Jesus inspires His followers to learn from the changes of the times, to transact with maturity, to build up high thinking at the pace of the advanced times and to awake and arise in action.¹⁶⁹

For this, we should know the world's stream of thought. We should be forward enough to read the 'writings on the wall' as warnings of the time and the timely uprising challenges. Fr Ukken was a prophet who responded to the needs of the times during his life. When he saw the social context of that time, he realized that the need of the epoch had arrived to revive the spirit of charity and mutual love that prevailed in the primitive Christian community. It was not appreciated or considered to be commendable for the religious to be in the field of social service at that period. In such a situation, he decided to react like Jesus and enter into the midst of people who were with different needs. He was eager to make people who were around him to feel through him the glorious flame of the self sacrifice of Christ at Calvary, which was offered for all hearts and for all ages. He specially kept apart his life to render glory to Christian values, to administer the service, for the harmony, revival and liberation in the oriental background. He has described in his Diary Notes about his desire to make universal brotherhood leading from inequality and slavery to freedom. He said, "*We may strive to alleviate the sufferings of our poor Pulias and to ameliorate their condition, to bring them up to the equal social condition!*"¹⁷⁰ It was a time when movements were going on for the release of the Pulayas (scheduled caste) from slavery in Malabar. He interceded for them and strengthened efforts to work for their redemption. With confidence he urged, "*Ask her to destroy the slavery in Malabar, of the pulayas.*"¹⁷¹ He advised people to pray for them and to react strongly taking into account the challenges of the times. He implored to protect the faith by praying Rosary holding on to it tightly

to withstand the foes when they fight against the Church. He had been praying in right earnest for the Church in France when it became weak, “*Now mother help the poor French! Let the church triumph!*”¹⁷² He believed it was his duty to pray for India, “*How many graces, vocations...through this Rosary-devotion! Thanks...shame that I have not...promise and ask to bolt out from the face of the civilized world the error and impiety by holy Rosary, and ignorance and superstition to dispel from pagan world of India.*”¹⁷³ Again he forcibly stated when schism and heresy arose and its waves agitated the ship of the Church, a fortress must be made in order to protect the believers and all the religious ought to enthusiastically work to keep up the faith. Moreover, he firmly recommended to conduct prayer meetings and to be cautiously active in mass communication to attract people towards the Church and to protect the true faith from false theories.¹⁷⁴ He discerned that the religious should never immerse in pleasure seeking activities. He noted down, “*Ego elegi vos (I chose you)...makes it clear not to sit, eat and get fat, but to fish men : go in search of men...to bear fruit.*”¹⁷⁵ All these proved that he had responded to the demands of the time. Fr Ukken was a prophet who appeared in Kerala in the twentieth century just like the prophets who entered the scene as Israel’s conscience in the eighth and ninth centuries. He freed those who were in different imprisonments by getting into the families, villages and slums where no one had ever gone and endeavoured to shape society with truth and justice. He boldly fought against the feudal system that existed at that time, foreseeing the Church’s preaching that all natural resources are for all human beings.¹⁷⁶

Fr Ukken who received the prophetic call, advised his children to recognize the pulse of each period and to respond maturely. To attain this they had to understand the signs of the time. They should respond to that in accordance with the Gospel. In brief, arise and shine vigilantly with the Holy Scripture in one hand and the media in the other effectively. When the downfall of righteousness and rise of depravity were widespread, he tried to awaken the human conscience by putting moralism into the socio-economic, political and cultural spheres of the society. He moved forward without being inactive, with the weapon of love and with the right thinking of the disciple of Christ, who came to establish justice in the world within the failures of every sector of the society. He was as a symbol of unity and brotherhood. He urged people to uphold the greatness of humanity by loving God and their neighbours. His life was an obvious reflection of all these exhortations. Fr Ukken was a prophetic voice who responded to the challenges of the time.

The Farsighted

Perception of the future and making plans to bring it into practical life is called farsightedness. A farsighted person is one who foresees the matters much earlier than an ordinary person. Those who knew Fr Ukken and those who understood the mode of his actions had given him the name the farsighted, one among the many other attributes about him. What has this attribute gained for him? All were astonished with Fr Ukken's farsightedness. He could foresee what the scientific era of the twentieth century would be, its thought, structure, orientation of activities etc and correspondingly he anticipated what the movements in the

Church simultaneously should be. A series of thoughts from the long perspectives of Fr Ukken, the inducer, strongly inspired and enriched his fellow beings. And he became an impulse to put these inspirations into practice in order to awaken, act and think loudly. In 1907, Fr Ukken, the Active Mystic who was moulded in the crucible of Kandy landed in the soil of Kerala with a message 'to renew everything in the Lord,' to give relief and consolation to the poor and the oppressed. It was a time when there were no negotiations about renewal. The young mystic arrived with the new message of renewal. Years later The Second Vatican Council was announced by Pope John XXIII on 25 January 1959 as a means of spiritual renewal for the Church. 'Renew everything in Christ' the same maxim by Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was the most important among all other great events that attracted the attention of the world and influenced their thoughts. Fr Ukken had given to the world this message of the Second Vatican Council "Renew every thing in Christ" more than half-a-century go. This declares his farsightedness.

In the modern scientific era, there started many huge transformations and it spread around the world. Novel innovative discoveries have accelerated human progress. Man started to believe in his own power and coveted in vain to create an earthly scientific paradise by displacing God and spiritual values. It became indispensable to make some changes in the Church as well, since revolutionary changes occurred continuously in the fields of science, culture and technology. It is widely recognized that there is a need for internal reforms in the Church and the restructuring system

that arise from it must be essential. An attempt was made to restore the Church-as the centre of history-and thus to re-install the Church as a sign of salvation in the midst of the world. This is the Second Vatican Council.¹⁷⁷ It intended a multifaceted reformation of the Church. Fr Ukken tried primarily to bring changes in spiritual, physical, economical, cultural, social and communal aspects. He was a leading mystic who showed the glorious model of love and service to the world with a view to reform the society. He had begun reformation programmes regarding the Holy Qurbana with his farsighted vision along the lines of ideas formulated by the Second Vatican Council in future years. He who was an apostle of the Holy Qurbana saw the transformation and salvation of the society in the kingdom of the Eucharist in this world of Christ. He urged people to become a fountain of love by visiting frequently the prisoner of love. He who advised to call God, 'Father' taught his children the Lord's prayer 'Our Father who art in Heaven' in English. Fr Ukken had a deep mother-son affection and devotion towards Holy Mother. He fervently desired to accept the Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary as a doctrine of faith. He had a clear vision and awareness about the truth of the Immaculate Conception. He saw his real mother in Holy Mary and he had foreseen the Council study about her. He firmly believed that by imitating the example of Jesus and His mother, he could create the channels of reformation. Jesus was a noble society renovator. Jesus started the renewal of the society with the weapon of love and did not forget to question the outward rituals as well as high and low positions that prevailed among the different classes of

people in the society. He was already aware of the need to go out to the people to redeem the society by imitating Jesus.

It was a time when the studies came into force that all have the same right to enjoy God the Father's property of the universe, as a gift since all human beings are siblings. But before half-a-century, there was a humane friend who walked through the villages with the same message, that was no one else but Fr Ukken. Who could say that he was not the foresighted, who foresaw today's teachings of the Church, fought strongly against the prevailing system of feudalism and made everyone enjoy the banquet prepared by the Heavenly Father?

In this era, there happened an ongoing process of awareness about the importance of family in moulding the younger generation based on faith and ethics. The family is the school where primary lessons are imparted to the growing generation. A rich future can be formed from a pious family atmosphere. The importance of family cannot be denied in the social sphere. A strong, satisfied and renowned society must sprout from ideal parents. The sanctity of families is an integral part of the Indian culture and the Christian faith. While analysing, 'family apostolate' is an active field that comes into the notice of anyone who thinks. If it is a requirement of today, years ago it was a field where no one liked to enter. In such an aeon, Fr Ukken, the indefatigable priest had foreseen today's teachings about the family apostolate, uplifted the poor and the sinners and worked tirelessly day and night for the birth of a new epoch. In those days there were many who critically viewed his innovatory step but now they are much worried and

regretted for not having entered this arena earlier. Those who do not think seriously about the devaluation and moral degradation which are spreading across all sections of society are almost rare today. But by taking to heart the principle of Jesus to establish universal brotherhood, Fr Ukken, a brave idealist and a just man had fought for this almost half a century ago. Was it not because of the farsightedness that the Council studies about the family apostolate had been seen beforehand and he gave the laity an active participation in his parish administration?

Many are engaged today in preaching the Gospel with a slogan 'become the Word of God' and 'give the Word of God'. Everybody has the conviction that each person and society can be renewed only through the Word of God, the message of life and salvation. The preaching of the Word of God must be bound to the place and time. Then it will have the real results.

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God".¹⁷⁸ This is what Christ said about Himself and it is the same St Luke mentioned in his Gospel. This testimony is of great importance because it expresses Christ's mission fully and henceforth He said, "I was sent for it." Christ declared here that the mission for which He was sent by God the Father to walk around the cities and to proclaim the good news which is the fulfillment of the God-given covenant and promises to the poor. His incarnation, miracles, teaching, selection of apostles, appointment of the disciples, sacrifice on the Cross, resurrection and everlasting presence among His people¹⁷⁹ etc are the marvellous secret mysteries of His life and it is the proclamation of the Gospel. Fr Ukken lived

it and showed through his life that the same Gospel proclamation, the mission of Christ was his also. He strongly determined that all missionaries should preach the Gospel in all the nook and corner of the world as their mission. He envisaged, “*All missionaries should have lot of Patience...pray for all engaged in fishing souls the world over.*”¹⁸⁰ Isn't it what he foretold about the need for direct evangelization?

The major cause of the problems of today is that the Word is not lived in by individuals and communities as it should be. That is why he advised in anticipation, *the Word should be preached vigourously, clearly and heartily*¹⁸¹ and that *the Word should be studied with its correct interpretation.*¹⁸² The complete edition of the volumes of Suma Theology was in his library. All this pronounce Fr Ukken's commitment to the Word of God.

Catechism is an integral part of the Gospel proclamation. It is mentioned in the first sentence of the Apostolic Exhortation namely 'Catechesi Tradendae' of Pope John Paul II on 19 October 1979 that 'the Church has always considered catechesis as one of the primary tasks'. It is clearly said in the Apostolic Exhortation that catechism must be given at all levels like family, school and parish. Years ago Fr Ukken too expressed the same desire. He vowed to give catechism and to run schools for that and gave more importance to it in his every working field and also distributed gifts and other encouragements to foster it. He noted in his spiritual diary, "*Catechism and school with the same view.*"¹⁸³ He himself was an excellent catechism teacher. He convinced his children about its significance, made them catechism teachers and

sent them to their own parish and neighbouring parishes. He also advised them on the active participation of the religious in the Church for the all round development of the parish. All these are instances of his farsightedness.

One of the aims of the Second Vatican Council is to make arrangements to receive the message of the salvific mystery and thus to open up a way for the unity of all families. The foremost importance of this is to restore the unity of all Christian Churches. The Church is always enthusiastic to protect the truth and to spread it. As long as all people do not bear witness to the truth revealed in the plan of God, man cannot attain the full spirit and harmony of minds because God wants all human beings to know the truth and to be saved.¹⁸⁴ The true peace and eternal salvation always get on well with this revealed truth.¹⁸⁵ Fr Ukken knew this beforehand and fervently tried for the unity of the Churches. He asked the then bishop of the diocese to establish a Catholic institution in Kunnamkulam, the centre of Jacobites, for the restoration of the friendship of Jacobites and he also started a branch of Carmelite Congregation in Chiralayam. He was willing to endure any sacrifice and to spend any amount of money for the pursuit of conversion. Through his constant prayers and endeavours, he helped many non-Catholics to embrace the Catholic Church. He loved them genuinely and supported them in their needs. It was his intrinsic speciality that he received warmly all those who reached the Church to participate in the holy rituals. They saw another Christ in Fr Ukken who carried on the mission of Christ. That is the secret of his success in the reunion of the Churches. This can be done only through a

deep relationship with God. Only men of prayer can get this grace. He gained strength and courage from his model Jesus to do the necessary precautionary requisites in all the areas of the society, to foresee its future and to organize the lives in accordance with it. Fr Ukken who was a prophet and a farsighted person, exhorted his children to have farsightedness like him to execute the activities of the Congregation by foreseeing its future ahead.

The Hero of Kunnamkulam

‘Son of Man came not to be served but to serve’. Mary calls herself the handmaid. *If my mother is a handmaid then I am a servant of everyone.*¹⁸⁶ *Jesus started a new chapter of service and Fr Ukken followed Him.*¹⁸⁷ Fr Ukken’s life also was service-oriented. Christ’s declaration about His own mission was to preach the Word of God to the poor.¹⁸⁸ It was already said that Fr Ukken had a special consideration towards the poor since he loved them with brotherly affection. He was near and dear to everyone from the hut to the palace. There was no one in Kunnamkulam and nearby places who did not receive assistance from him somehow or other. He provided remedy to the most intricated issues without differentiating between caste and creed. His personality was an extraordinary one. The famous ‘Kavadiyattam’ (a colourful ritual festival-a street dance of Hindus carrying a huge bow richly decorated with peacock feathers, flowers etc) case of Kunnamkulam was one of the events which shows the greatness of his personality.

It was the time when Fr Ukken was the parish priest of Chiralayam. Usually the Kavadi carriers made a halt respectfully and then passed on when they reached in front

of the big Church at the big bazaar in Kunnampulam. That year without halting, they danced and passed the Church. The agitated men rushed out of their homes and quarrelled with them. A mere fight erupted into verbal altercation and terminated in violence. Some of them left the Kavadi and ran away. At last a case was filed and police arrested many. Understanding the gravity of the happenings Fr Ukken intervened. He went to the court and talked with the judge. As a result both groups came to a compromise. Thus Fr Ukken became the hero of the people of Kunnampulam. He could win the trust of the people. Similarly, there were many instances where people overcame crises and attained peace and tranquility.

The 'Navajeevika' illustrates his great influence on the people. In 1935, when there was the passing of the spectacular procession of Maharaja of Cochin to Thrissivaperur, he visited many Catholic institutions on his way. The representative-office bearers of these institutions expressed their respect and garlanded him. He was garlanded on his way to other places where the town and its surroundings were decorated with flowery pandals. Very Revd Fr John Ukken, the parish priest of Chiralayam Church also garlanded him representing Chiralayam Church.¹⁸⁹

Fr Ukken's devotion to Mary was well-known. He used to tell her everything calling her 'my dear mamma'. The event that took place in 1949 was an expression of his devotion to the mother as well as an evidence of his influence among the people. The appearance of Holy Virgin Mary in Fatima in 1917 was designed and modelled into a statue by an artist. In 1949 it was brought to Kerala for the first time.¹⁹⁰ Fr Ukken,

the devotee of Mother Mary was very happy and also became very enthusiastic. He thought of giving a red-carpet welcome and reception to Mother Mary. He informed the people about it. It was the wish of their 'Achan Thamburan'. A big crowd including the young and the old of different religions thronged at Kunnamkulam. He was able to give a dazzling reception, worthy to be equal to Thrissur's reception, in Kunnamkulam where the number of Catholics was only nominal. He publicly consecrated everybody to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He tried very hard to gain the Jacobite brethren through the devotion of Mother Mary.

Fr Ukken was an 'Active Mystic' who lived for God and His Children. He became a venerable man of the country and the locals. Because he considered their needs as his own need and responded to it abruptly by understanding their situations and being one with them. His memory still remains fresh in the hearts of the people.

Retreat Preacher

Very Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was one of the famous retreat preachers of the diocese of Thrissur in the first decades of the twentieth century. He was blessed with the special gift of preaching. His verbal communication was very forceful. He had the habit of writing down points while preparing his speeches. Generally his speeches can be divided into three types. (1) The speeches which were officially addressed to the public. (2) The Gospel proclamations for preaching to the religious congregations. (3) Paternal discourses with his own children (CSC daughters). His style was simple without any ornamental words and the Word of

God was preached with its ingenuous beauty which suited the time and situation. He was a remarkable linguist and his language was noble and gestures were restricted. The advice was strong, stimulating and appropriate to make renewal in the lives of his listeners. Those speeches had the capacity to make it clear that he had in mind the entire essence of the Holy Scripture. The success of his eloquence was that it brought about real conversions in the audience. Yes, he was a faithful and useful tool of the inner voice of the Lord. One of his pledges was to *preach the Word of God clearly, sweetly and touchingly*.¹⁹¹ He constantly prayed to the Holy Spirit, “*I beg of you to obtain for me the same in abundance.*”¹⁹²

The tender love and compassion of Jesus was the main theme of his sermon. *He explained heartily how to copy the various events of the Gospel in practical life*.¹⁹³ “*Meditation on the Passion of our dear Lord gave me tears.*”¹⁹⁴ He admonished that all should be engaged in the work of saving souls in response to Jesus’ salvific mystery, “*On the S. Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ gave me the idea of spreading myself for souls out of love for Him. devise some works for salvation of souls*”¹⁹⁵ (Salvific Passion). *He never concluded any retreat preaching without mentioning the divine call because it is a gift of God*.¹⁹⁶ This eloquent preacher exhorted everyone to lead a holy life before God and men as a thanksgiving for the great gift of God’s call. His speeches had a special charm. It conditioned the audience to make a radicle turn to repentance and in doing so, attain a new spirit. He was able to bring reparation in many through his retreat sermons as in works of mercy and helped everyone to lead a fully spirit-filled life shifting from drowsiness.

He achieved it through the meditation technique that he gained by constant effort. He never gave up his practice of daily meditation. *“I shall meditate carefully everyday if possible upon the life of Jesus.”*¹⁹⁷ He who imitated Jesus, his Master was a man of contemplation. His Dairy Notes make it clear that he grew up in contemplative prayer and experienced it steadily. His speeches were its expressions. No wonder, people crowded around to hear him.

Jubilarian

Fr Ukken’s whole life was filled with overwhelming gratitude because he had experienced Jesus’ mercy and tenderness througout his life. He himself described it as, *“I am simply an effect of divine mercy.”*¹⁹⁸ The orgy of thanks reached its peak during the celebration of the silver jubilee of his priesthood. He too sang along with the psalmist: “Give thanks to God, for He is good and His mercy is infinite.”¹⁹⁹ His Diary Notes reveal that he was getting ready to celebrate the Jubilee according to the instructions given in the Holy Scripture.²⁰⁰ He compared his long life of twenty five years from 1907 to 1932 to the life of his model, Jesus. The jubilee year is a time when one is to be freed from the physical and spiritual distresses that have accumulated over years. Lost paternal home and paternal property should be regained. Reconciliation should be brought about in father-son relationship and in sibling relationships. There should be re-establishment and restoration of the decayed ruins of the beautiful spiritual skyscrapers due to the passage of time. Then one has to join with all the fellow brethren in the happiness that comes after and celebrate the festivities. Fr Ukken knew that the jubilee year was a trumpet call for

him. He kept aside deliberately a couple of two weeks for meditation and reflection as a preparation for Jubilee celebration. He wanted to find out all the deteriorated and stunted growth of his spirituality, shortcomings and broken relationships that might have happened from the first moment of his life till then. He decided to become a renewed person by *putting on the new man and removing the old one*.²⁰¹ He kept apart two weeks for meditation to probe into every corner of his life. He himself describes it, *“I began the exercises by the grace of God in right earnest praying much and getting prayers of many good souls.”*²⁰²

It was remarkable that he contemplated about the existence given to him, *“I found myself as an atom drawn by God’s mercy from abysmal nothing!”*²⁰³

Fr Ukken says meditating about the divine call to his priesthood and its mission, *“Jesus like a huge magnet attracts...his face beaming, eyes shedding light and love, Heart furnace of charity...he too called me under hopeless circumstances!!! Go in search of men... to bear fruit; fruit may last...”*²⁰⁴

At this interlude, he reflected on all the mistakes and shortcomings that he had committed before his seminary life, when he was in the seminary and in his priestly life. He compared sin to festering wounds, leprosy and gout. He openly confessed that he did his retreat with a deep awareness of sins and with penitent tears of repentance. He made a note, *“A big stain in creature, an ulcer and abscess, sensuality! This was made with great sorrow and tears. The Lord showered His mercy on me. I should taper the S.Heart one festered on hand and foot, covered with ulcers from head*

to foot, one big abscess trembling like a criminal awaiting his capital punishment. Went over my many and grievous sins Regretted that I did not die before I could do such havocs”²⁰⁵ (Sacred Heart). While he was thinking about repentance he continued, “If Peter had confessed Him courageously what a consolation it would have been at that hour to His master. But our Dear Lord preferred to appoint as His ViceRoy one who is conscious of his weakness. He wrings from him sincere reparations! Do Lord with me too similarly.”²⁰⁶ And, “Peter’s sin is forgiven; the Lord will not reproach him... what loving Master, who will not serve Him?”²⁰⁷ By explaining the parable of the prodigal son Fr Ukken says, “It is veritably nectar to an aching heart, soul preparing for confession. Prodigal is my exact picture. The Father’s kindness is super human. It is only divine. What boundless mercy. ‘misericordias Dei in aeternum cantabo’ (I will sing the mercies of the Lord forever)!.”²⁰⁸

Fr Ukken was not at all satisfied, no matter how much he described about the compassionate love, God had poured on him. He commemorates it humbly with a thankful heart and with grateful emotion, “He knows and loves me from eternity! I am known and taken notice of and become an object of love and tender solicitude of a God! In the course of time He created me and gave me existence! When in tender years my parents dying I was stranded on the wild world. ‘Pater et mater dereliquerunt me tu autem suscepit me’ (If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up). My education, entry into seminary and the pleasant life there, priesthood and so many covetable posts in the diocese, even held in honour now, Jubilee celebrations. Colloquies to Father, S.Heart and Mary. As a birthday present I begged of them never to permit

me to sin mortally and venially: then with a heart to love and let my love flame into zeal for souls"²⁰⁹ (Sacred Heart).

As the Holy Scripture dictates, he prepared himself to celebrate the jubilee with a new spirit, active in full vigour removing all the blemishes and failures by pruning all the degenerated, drooped and stunted parts. On 22 December 1932 his jubilee was celebrated with due honour in Chowannur. He invited everybody disregarding caste and creed to participate on this occasion of happiness. On the jubilee day the Church courtyard was crowded with people. There were many priests and many more religious sisters. All the prominent Jacobite leaders, children and adults including all local people were present. He offered the jubilee High Mass as a graceful expression of gratitude for the glorious achievements in his life. When he remembered the innumerable blessings and infinite love that God showered on him, an orphan, his throat choked and stuttered by emotion. His white fluffy cheeks flushed red. The pent up tears flowed down his cheeks and sobs wracked his body. He took a decision to do more enthusiastic hard labour for the salvation of souls. He drafted, "*Pray for all engaged in fishing souls the world over in the freezing zone and scorching tropics!*"²¹⁰ With this firm determination he resumed his pastoral work. This discernment was his jubilee monument.

The Guest Entertainer

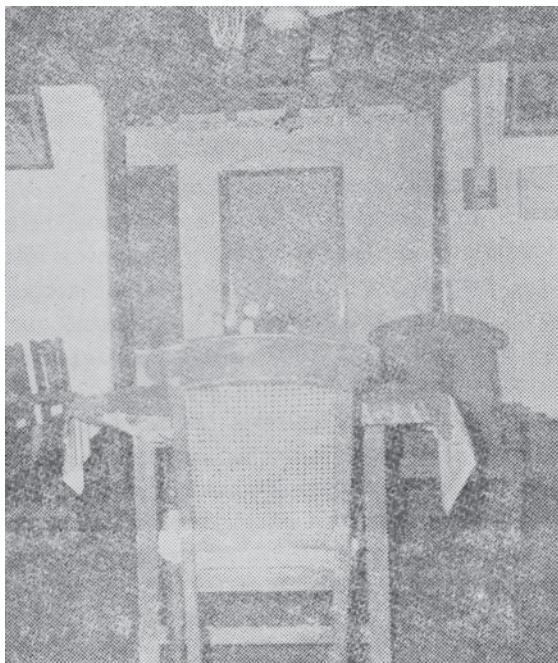
Hospitality is a courtesy that is shown to a stranger. This word indicates the spirit of acceptance and generosity shown to the one who comes to our house. It was deeply rooted in the lifestyle of Israeli people who were wandering about without a permanent habitat. They considered hospitality

as one of their primary qualities. They used to accept the guests with love and attend to them in the name of their God who loved them the most.²¹¹ The greatest host is Jesus²¹² and He always receives us. The Lord will receive you even if your father and mother forsake you.²¹³ The fineness of hospitality is regarded as a criterion of Christian life.²¹⁴ Hospitality is highlighted as one of the attributes that the nobles of the Church must have.²¹⁵

Jesus had been the host of others during his public life. He received hospitality from the house of Pharisee,²¹⁶ from Samaria,²¹⁷ from the house of Martha,²¹⁸ from the house of the chief of the Pharisees,²¹⁹ from the house of Zacchaeus,²²⁰ from the house of Simon,²²¹ from the house of Levi,²²² and from the house of Simon the leper.²²³ Jesus taught the virtue of hospitality. He washed the feet of His disciples and showed them cordiality while they were at the Last Supper. Washing legs was considered as a sign of love for one another and a thoughtful gesture to welcome guests to one's home.²²⁴ Hospitality has helped a lot to enhance the growth of the early Church. Christ sends His disciples asking them to bear in mind the hospitality of the people.²²⁵ St Paul points out how Christ accepts us for the glory of God is the basis of our mutual acceptance.²²⁶

We must accept everyone in the name of the Messiah, just as He accepted us all through His mercy.²²⁷ Jesus asks us to reach out to those who deserve help, who are humble and destitute, who are rejected by the society and to invite each and everyone without considering any personal interest.²²⁸ Hospitality is also a testimony to faith.²²⁹ God reveals that He is the one who is accepted while receiving the strangers and the neglected.²³⁰

The hospitality of Abraham, the father of the believers;²³¹ Job who takes pride in this quality of his²³² and Jesus who appreciates those who show hospitality properly etc²³³ teaches us that it is an act of brotherly love and mercy which is a part of Christian life. This is what he taught through his own life and also taught his children by making charity the law of their life. It was very particular for him to render a welcome with a warm smile to all tired and exhausted travellers-both strangers and acquaintances, in those days where automobiles were scarce. It can be seen that he got distracted and tensed about providing the guests food, clothing and accommodation facilities while making



The Living Room at Chowannur

pleasantries with them, due to lack of things. He tried to entertain the guests even with the things that he had kept for his personal use. He did pay attention to give everything sufficiently to the guests even when there was a lack of essential supply at home. Fr Ukken did not take much time to get familiar with everyone who approached him and to make them feel at home behaving in a brotherly way. At the early stages of the Congregation when there was acute scarcity of necessary things, parents and brothers of his children approached him to take their daughters and sisters back to their homes. He welcomed them all with his innate smile and entertained them moderately with what he had. By seeing his welcoming courtesy and sincerity, all of them responded in one voice if father received us all like this, he would surely look after our daughters and sisters and they went back satisfactorily.

Indian vision equates hospitality with the worship of God. Fr Ukken induced in his children the same vision. He advised his children to receive and honour guests with cheerfulness. There are many instances where hospitality was shown to guests, even when there was not enough food at home for them. His hospitality forced him to ask his children to keep aside 8% of their ration rice for the guests when ration rice was only their main food item. The guest entertainer often insisted that the sister for parlour duty ought to be a person who should be very quick to receive the guests gladly and fulfills their needs without delay. He repeatedly advised them not to allow the needy to feel bad by keeping them waiting. Scripture says, "My child do not mock the life of the poor, do not keep needy eyes waiting."²³⁴ Jesus accepted all of us out of His mercy and

Fr Ukken who experienced the compassionate love of Jesus throughout his life found happiness in rendering hospitality to the guests.

Art Enthusiast

Whatever is beautiful and whatever is enjoyable is art. Growth in art can be attained through continuous efforts. Fr Ukken loved and appreciated art. He was also an expert in delivering speeches and composing poems. His body language ie gesture, stance and facial expressions while preaching were able to capture the listeners' attention. Everyone relished the agape, the Word of God since parables, events and great sayings were stringed together with humour. It generated a desire to listen to it continuously. The Word of God which is meaningful and filled with abundant ideas brings repentance and renewal in the listeners. Yes, it was really the nectar of life.

Fr Ukken was one of the famous singers of that time. Those who did not enjoy his music fest were rare in the diocese of Thrissur at that period. Having sung in correct shruti and laya, he poured out delight to the music lovers. He was very ebullient in forming the choir groups in parishes.

The spiritual diary of Fr Ukken shows his uniqueness in the codification of ideas and in the art of meditation. Over the years, he was progressing in these arts. Besides, he was a good writer who made a promise to write prayers, "*Write out prayers.*"²³⁵

His ability to listen to others, to give advice and suggestions they needed is amazing.

Fr Ukken wanted his children to have a nonpareil growth in various arts and he gave them the training with

encouragement. He trained them to play the musical instruments and to sing melodiously from the early stage onwards. They were taught flower making and Christmas card designing by the experts. He used to enjoy the artistic and cultural performances of his children while celebrating his feast days and also gave the opportunity to the public to enjoy it. Fr Ukken, the Marian devotee, celebrated all the feasts of Mother Mary appropriately. In those days, he made his children to take excerpts from the life of the Holy Virgin and to present it in various art forms and speeches. Thus, he made it a very touching and memorable experience. He trained his children to deliver both extempore and prepared speeches about the saints on their feast days and to prepare a cultural banquet and impromptu performances during the recreation time to entertain everybody.

He encouraged them instantly by giving away gifts and a round of applause. Those who experienced it still remember warmly the moments and events of his cracking jokes to re-vitalize them. He organized a variety of games to make them happy when they were tired after working. He was unrivalled in enjoying the 'agape' prepared by God the Father to his children just like the creator who said, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good."²³⁶ He used to go with his children to Narimada (a nearby hilly area) in Chowannur on Sundays and feast days. Moments of happiness! He was thrilled to see the surrounding plains, valleys, paddy fields etc climbing on to the top of the hill and then that poet's heart sang in praise of the artistry of the Eternal Artist. Slowly he immersed himself in that natural beauty and raised his mind to its

creator in contemplation. He had a child's heart and could easily win his children's hearts when he competed in telling jokes with them. He advised them to develop their talents with a view to use it for the greater glory of God and the service of His people. Thus the lover of God desired all should be faithful before God. He still silently exhorts to *rise from creatures to its creator*.²³⁷

Fr Ukken was a man of holiness and dexterity. There was always a divine liveliness in his ever smiling face. He who embodied the divine spirit of Christ was the owner of a great inner spiritual life. He guzzled the spirit of love from the fountain of love. When it was brought into action, ordinary people saw an uncommonness in him. The poor, the neglected, the sick, the destitute and the grief-stricken found their refuge in Fr Ukken who was filled with the spirit of charity which originated from the deep love of God. He became not only a father but a mother too for them. Fr Ukken was their 'seen God'.

The signs of perfect spirituality were visible in him. His solid faith in the providence of God strengthened him to initiate any undertakings. He smoothly moved to various spheres of endeavours with a conviction that 'God would do everything.' This belief helped him 'to change whatever he touched into gold'. His childlike faith was surprising. "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move."²³⁸ The fulfillment of this promise of the Divine Master was noticed in the first decades of the twentieth century through Fr Ukken, a strong believer. He was calm and gentle before any big issues. His style of dealing matters with

foresightedness was really captivating and in addition his missionary zeal as well as service mentality were extraordinary. Everyone had a place in his heart which was very vast like the universe. Thus he was able to capture the hearts of the people wherever he had worked. There was some distinctiveness always seen in him. That is why all people unfailingly approached him to get solutions for political, social, economic, communal and family problems. The world has seen another Christ in Fr Ukken who responded like Christ to people who had various drawbacks. There were many who waited to get blessings from him. He became a flame of hope for myriads when they were made to experience the love that he had received from the abode of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He was a model for everybody in the field of spirituality. The waves of his spirituality gave consolation for many. The spirituality that sprouted from his personal relationship with Jesus transformed him into a divine person. And he became a man of worship for many.

Parish Priest at Chiralayam Church 1933 - 1940

Fr Ukken was appointed as the parish priest of Chiralayam Church and the Chaplain of the Carmelite convent there. He changed his residence to Chiralayam and thus he became the parish priest of both Chowannur and Chiralayam. Since there was no daily mass at Chowannur Church, the pious association of women also shifted their residence to a rented house at Chiralayam. It was a proper place for him to invigorate his pastoral work for the reunion of the Churches. He organized various plans to re-establish the Jacobite friendship. He treated them like his own brothers. His desire to erect a big wall against the heresy and to bring everyone

in one belief started to become fruitful. The salvation of the believers, the conversion of the non-Christians and the reunion of the non-Catholics depended upon the holy life and the co-operation of the priests to some extent. Understanding it he started to speak strongly to the priests about the need of the sacrificial life. He asked the co-operation of the fellow priests to catalyze the conversion activities. If needed, he even wished to establish congregations for sisters, brothers and fathers to fulfill it.

He made a great attempt to erect a convent and a school in Chiralayam which could help a great deal to channelize the Christianization and culturalization of that village. He was committed to lessen the difficulties they faced in the beginning stages and he used to go to the convent from Mattom to visit them. If there was anyone gloomy, he would conduct recreation and make them to break into peals of laughter by cracking jokes.²³⁹ Even though he was a very strong person he had no strength to see his brothers in pain.

The entry of Mar Ivanios to the Catholic Church at that time, strengthened the reunion attempts of Fr Ukken in Kunnamkulam. A branch of the Bethany convent of the diocese of Thiruvalla was established near Chiralayam. It was because of the diligent work and support of Fr Ukken. Whenever Mar Severios, the Archbishop came to Kunnamkulam, he used to visit Fr Ukken, discussed various matters and planned everything together adroitly. His successor Zacharias Mar Athanasios followed the same practice. Fr Ukken had an upright personality and further he was a man of knowledge, a man of integrity and a man of high-calibre. He was ever ready to do anything at any time.

A man of true love. A personality that attracts everyone. When all these blended together, there happened many conversions.

A boarding for children was started in the Carmelite convent, Chiralayam during this period. They required more space and facilities as the number of members increased. Feeling pity for the painful miseries of the sisters, Fr Ukken approached the bishop to get permission to build the convent. When the then Bishop Mar Francis Vazhappilly rejected the proposal, Fr Ukken was dejected. In 1940, he was appointed as the parish priest of Palayur Church. But when he came back to Chowannur from Palayur, under his supervision only the building work of that convent was done. The greatness of the providence of God is simply marvellous. In 1943, the construction work of the convent came to its completion with all facilities due to his untiring efforts and farsightedness.²⁴⁰

The spirit of charity is involved in helping others by understanding their needs. Fr Ukken imitated absolutely in every matter 'Jesus who went around doing good.'²⁴¹

Parish Priest at Palayur 1940 - 1941

On 11 November 1940, Fr Ukken took charge as Vicar of Palayur Forane Church, the Manager of the Palayur Church school and the Chaplain of the Carmelite convent over there. He worked incessantly to raise the parish to its deserved status where St Thomas the Apostle himself established the Church. Fr Ukken accomplished his mission as a priest, a prophet and a king assimilating the missionary enthusiasm of St Thomas, the Apostle of India. He was the

Chaplain of Chiralayam convent at that time also. He continued in this post till 16 May 1946. When he was appointed as the parish priest of the Palayur Church, the headquarters of the pious association of women returned from the rented house at Chiralayam to its original old house in Chowannur. He established an orphanage too there. He never turned back from his activities bothering about the insults of others or about the failures that may affect his plans, instead he was determined to help the poor whatever be the cost. All these were the new undertakings of that period. So many arrows of abuses were shot at him. At the crucial times also he steadily entered the field of activity and started to work for the poor and the destitute with greater determination. Fr Ukken's faith in the providence of God increased more and more day by day as years rolled by and he used to say, "*God would do everything.*"* He was still paying attention to the destitute and the helpless. Palayur also distinctly witnessed many incidents of his inner readiness to endure any sacrifice to help the needy.

28 May 1941

"*Oh Loose my hands to do good works, my feet to run to you,*"²⁴² he prayed. It was a memorable day when God had given extraordinary strength to his hands and feet. Myriads of people found shelter in him on that day. He was filled with compassionate love and tenderness. Wind blew furiously in Palayur and nearby places at 7 O' clock evening on 28 May 1941. Rain in torrents! It had been raining cats and dogs all through the night. Till 9 O' clock the next day morning nature continued the calamity. The sea raged. The roads to Chavakkad were inundated. In Edakkazhiyoor, near

Palayur, a ship sank. Many lost their homes, acres of land were destroyed, lives were in danger, dead bodies floated everywhere, dreadful pain on the departure of kith and kin, mourning over sickness and poverty and so on. What more to say, total insecurity and dissension everywhere. Fr Ukken was fully engaged in the works of mercy like burying the dead, comforting the afflicted, feeding the hungry, providing shelter to the homeless, caring the sick etc. Words were rare to explain his selfless service. The warmth of love forced him to go from house to house rescuing and soothing those who were suffering from pain. The core values of love and service urged him to fulfill the needs of others bearing affliction. His serving attitude changed into merciful love. When it appeared in action as he was entering and coming out of the dismal houses helping them quickly in his white cassock, people said 'there goes an angel.' They felt as if they themselves became divine persons because of his blessed presence there. "*My only resolution is to become 'alter christus' (another Christ).*"²⁴³ What was written in his diary years ago, came to its realization through his life.

Another incident happened in Palayur to prove his honest conscience and love towards the poor. It was the time when Fr Ukken was the Manager of the Palayur Church school. A man named John, native of Vylathur approached him in search of a job. He was highly qualified but hailed from a very poor family background. Fr Ukken being a protector of the poor, out of his concern towards the helpless, appointed him in the school and gave a plot of land from the Church property to stay in. The students also

helped in whatever way they could to build a house for the master. But the master did not give anything to the students as a reward.

A certain ex-service man whose leg was amputated lived there. He had pension also. He started spreading abuses and fabricated stories about this master, might be because of the master's good deeds and progress. Jealousy in man appears in different ways and forms. That was the story of a diamond.

It was a scorching summer, everywhere there was drought. There is no need to say about the scarcity of drinking water in India. There was a little water in the pond near the school building. This pond was the refuge for many families, just like an oasis in the desert. And it was a working day. When the son of the military man reached the pond, a serpent crawled over there to drink water. A carbuncle had fallen down from the crest of the serpent. The serpent crawled into the pond and drank water without minding the fallen gem. Serpent died as soon as it drank water. The boy got down to the water and took the precious stone. While coming back the boy met John, his master, who snatched the shining stone from the boy and kept it in his house. He gave nothing to the boy in return.

The father of the boy talked like that for many days in and around the village. But nobody paid any attention. At last that ex-service man filed a case in the court explaining this incident and raising allegations against the master. One day morning a police officer came to the spot and the master was arrested and taken to the police station. Fr Ukken was

not there at that time. When father came back, he came to know about it from reliable sources. Immediately he went to the court, he the disciple of Christ never hesitated to speak against injustice wherever it was seen. He was not able to bear anything that disrupts the love for each other. The inspector was questioning the master. He asked, "Man, have you taken even an ordinary stone from the boy?" He answered in a low voice, "No." After the questioning, the father released him on bail.

This case was transferred to Ponnani because the local court could not take any decision on it and the sessions court was more eligible to check and handle it. One judge and one staff came from there to investigate the issue. The hearing of the case was conducted in the residence of the Father and they rejected the case. Thus the Manager, Fr Ukken who was a man of justice, helped the master to escape from the concocted story.

Fr Ukken made his life blessed by raising his voice against injustice and helped those who had been entangled in danger. God granted him opportunities to engage in grand pursuits. His majestic personality did not avoid any chances to discharge great things. This was the secret of his victory. "*Generally the faithful fulfillment of the ordinary actions prepare men for the extraordinary.*"²⁴⁴ He knew this when he was in the training period. So he took a promise, "*Try to do each action of mine he did.*"²⁴⁵ Not only did he make the promises but through examination of conscience, he attained its fullness. He jotted down, "*Moreover exercise virtues, by well-known means of examen, particular and general,*"²⁴⁶ and "*recollection weekly and monthly.*"²⁴⁷ Thus he evaluated himself how to practise the decisions which were taken by him exclusively.

The Sixtieth Birth Anniversary

The 'Shashtiabdapoorthi' of Fr Ukken was celebrated in Palayur. Navajeevika paper reported it thus:

On 29 December, the parishioners held an unusual public meeting presided over by Rt Revd Ramban Pulikkotil in the front stage of the Church. This big event was conducted on account of the celebrations of the sixtieth birth anniversary of very Revd Augustine John Ukken, the parish priest of Palayur Forane Church. The outstanding doyen of literary culture, Hon'ble Mr P C Vasudevan Elayath, the Chief Guest gave an attractive briefing about "Shashtiabdapoorthi." Revd Fr Francis Brahmakulam, the president of the celebration committee made the inaugural address followed by the speech of the Chief Guest. Revd Fr Antony Vellanikkaran gave the thanksgiving speech. Besides, they presented five written superb honorific presentations (Mangalapathram) to Very Revd Fr Ukken, the guest of honour. There was a one-act play named, 'Prodigal Son' staged by the students along with a cultural fest. So many priests, religious, officers and a multitude of people from all religions gathered for that public meeting. At the end, Very Revd Fr Ukken offered a heartfelt thanksgiving speech for the grand celebrations done in honour of him.²⁴⁸

The literary collections or lyrical best wishes, known popularly as "Mangalapathram" in Malayalam, read in praise of Revd Fr Augustine Ukken by the parishioners and presented on 29 December 1940, evaluated his whole life. Even though it is a document of praise, the fact narrations in it has great validity.

The content of the 'Mangalapathram' - follows:

"Palayur Forane Church holds not an unimportant place among the other seven Churches erected by St Thomas, the Apostle. You are the parish priest of the Forane Church and your administration doubled the prestige and the traditions of the parish and maintained the high status of this well-known Church. At this juncture of celebrating your sixtieth birth anniversary, the parishioners are very much thankful to you since you have given permission to express our honest and profound respect through this citation (Mangalapathram).

All the noble services that you have done in between these sixty years to the Church, very specially to the diocese of Thrissur and to the society in general, declare the success of your life. And also your deeds would become an inspiration, encouragement and guidance to your successors. On 21 December 1907 when you were twenty seven-years old, you were anointed and raised to priesthood in the seminary at Kandy. Soon after your ordination you were appointed as the Rector, St Mary's Petit Seminary, Thope, Thrissur; Secretary to the Late Most Revd Dr Mar Yohannan Menachery; Vicar at Lourdes Cathedral Church, Thrissur; Manager, St Thomas College; Vicar at Kandassamkadavu, Kottappadi, Mattom and Chowannur. In all these positions you embellished many responsible and renowned services in the diocese of Thrissur with great admiration. Furthermore, you established a Clarist convent in Mattom and a pious association of ladies in Chowannur. All these are the best examples of your admirable service.

Even though you who had been decorated with all kinds of unique features long ago, presently, administrating the

ancient and historical Palayur Church and parish for over a year, it is laudable to enumerate the spiritual and physical progress and prosperity of the Church and parish brought about by you. We remember the offering of the Holy Qurbana in Orumanayur and Guruvayur happened only because of your mercy by keeping up top-priority for all the conveniences and the spiritual growth of this advanced parish. We thankfully record that a new liveliness has been produced in this parish due to the zeal you exhibited to the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Marian Sodality and the catechism classes for the children.

Being a veteran in the field of education, the diligence and enthusiasm you exhibited in that subject is of course different. We are grateful to state that the charming highrise building in the Church maidan was the outcome of your foresightedness and industriousness. Joining with all the inmates of the school, specially teachers, students and parents, we too extend our heartfelt gratitude to the innumerable arduous efforts that you undertook for the progress and reputation of our school.

It gives us a tremendous relief to see the efforts of your dedication turned into success even when the whole country was going through a period of financial depression. It was meritorious that you administered with utmost care the financial matters of our Church without any harm in those critical times. After you had shouldered the responsibility of the Church, the Church and its surroundings gained a new spirit and vigour. Which parishioner would not be happy to see it?

We are able to see the fantastic success of your life which was due to the excellence of your disposition. The solid

spiritual life, the delightful nature that warms the hearts of all, matured behaviour, merciful compassion, the readiness to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice indubitably announce the golden steps of the success of your life. When the experience of your sixty years of life blended with your innate nature, we could see in you an unusual splendid personality.”

Fr Ukken specified one point in his reply speech. He said, *“I would like to take leave from the hectic public life of greater things since I am getting old and to enter and follow a ‘hermit’s and ‘religious’ life and to involve in spiritual matters only.”** *“I am simply an effect of divine mercy.”*²⁴⁹ He cherished to establish religious communities for the upliftment of the poor people and for charitable works. *“And if possible to form an Association of Priests, Brothers and Sisters!”*²⁵⁰ His unquenchable thirst for this simply dissolved in the air as sound waves through the deep sigh. At that time nobody thought this ‘Active Mystic’ would found a religious congregation for women and it would spread a new spirit and holiness in the Catholic Church.

Fr Ukken did only one year of pastoral work in Palayur Forane Church. In November 1941, when one year was completed, he was appointed again the parish priest at Chowannur Church.

Back to Chowannur 1941 - 1954

Once again Fr Ukken got a golden chance to work for the multifaceted upliftment of Chowannur, a poor village. He continued as the parish priest of Chowannur till 1954. He assiduously worked hard for village upliftment programmes

which he had begun years before. He wanted to give a fresh approach to it. *“So that more work for souls may be done by many.”*²⁵¹ He had realized it many years ago. It was necessary to continue such activities in order to correctly respond to the challenges posed by the period. He was convinced that it was his responsibility as a person who received the prophetic call to make a new lifestyle in the Church and to make her more energetic. A person who received the gift of the Holy Spirit could not stay idle. Fr Ukken believed that if the sisters entered into the field of social activities according to the lifestyle he designed, there can be brought about a revolutionary change in the society.

It is a need of the time to form a community intertwined with truth and justice. He sincerely wished to have the birth of a new age where no one is exploited. The exemplary life of the early Christians inspired him to lead a life of love and justice. *“The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.”*²⁵² Thus the thought there should not be anyone who suffer utter poverty among God’s people²⁵³ was fulfilled in the early Christian community.²⁵⁴ Fr Ukken, the prophet of the times understood if that spirit was regenerated there would be a remedy for the challenges raised by the present time. A world at a loss for love is around us. The biggest problem in the community is the lack of love. The absence of this is the cause of all the problems in the society. A proportionate growth of ethics and morality is essential along with the economic and technological advancement of man. It is also mandatory for the well being of life, the formation

of a community that should fully protect the dignity and the right of the individual that is embedded in the immortality of ethics. "It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love."²⁵⁵ Fr Ukken, the farsighted foresaw this teaching of the Council. The importance of family in the social sphere is considerable. All the mental problems and their means of treatment are related to the family. It is from the family only man begins to practise the qualities that make a society strong, satisfied and auspicious. Similarly, antisocial evils also sprout from families. Good families make our society better. Therefore the renewal should start from the family. If the family is good, the society will be good. From the beginning onwards, he had in his imagination a congregation suitable to go to the families and help them to experience the compassionate love of Jesus.

At that time the women religious congregations in the diocese of Thrissur were mainly involved in prayer and educational activities. Being aware of the need of the times, he was convinced about the regeneration of love among one another which was very prominent among the early Christians, for the salvation of all. It was the particular time when the religious nuns entering and involving with the most important fields of social service was neither considered desirable nor was it appreciated. It was a time when the field of medical care was totally neglected.

The horrific picture of World War II filled the minds of man. Everywhere insecurity and unhappiness reigned. Hunger, slavery, sickness and sin were gnawing at the common people. It was an urgent need to save them from this situation. So, he decided the authentic mark of the

women religious congregation that he was going to institute should be 'love'. "*Love is your task and let nobody surpass you in love,*"* he repeatedly advised them. He realized the eligible persons to embrace the lifestyle he proposed were those who had the readiness to work for the upliftment of the poor and also they should be humble and dedicated. Simplicity of life must be their investment even if they were not having educational qualification and wealth. Suddenly, he remembered the pious association of women he started in Chowannur. He came to a conclusion that if they were given proper training, they would easily respond to the needs of the time and thus he would be able to institute a new congregation which might be entirely different from the existing women religious congregations. He sought help from the Carmelite sisters to give them religious training. Meanwhile, he submitted an application for the establishment of a congregation to the then Bishop Dr Francis Vazhappilly, the Bishop of Thrissur. But the bishop categorically rejected the application and advised him to continue that group as the pious association group of the Church itself. Recognition was not granted.

Fr Ukken, the divine man remained steadfast even though it went against his expectations. He clung tightly to the powerful hands of God Almighty and moved forward because of his unlimited faith that everything will be effectuated in the fullness of time. Bishop Vazhappilly died on 12 May 1942 and soon there was the Episcopal ordination of Revd Dr George Alappatt, his beloved student, on 1 May 1944 and he became the anointed new bishop of the diocese of Thrissur.

Endnotes

* Oral Tradition

1. Cf. Heb 4:15.
2. Cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23.
3. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis, Introduction.”
4. Cf. Jn 10:16.
5. Cf. Heb 4:12.
6. Mk 16:15.
7. Cf. Rom 12:1.
8. Cf. Mt 8:19.
9. Cf. Mk 6:34;10:21;Jn 12:26.
10. Cf. Mk 8:34.
11. Cf. Mk 10:38.
12. Cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:28; Jn 14:3.
13. Cf. Mk 3:14.
14. Cf. Mk 16:15.
15. 1 Jn 1:1.
16. Cf. Catechism Today 1.
17. Lights from Heaven 20 December 1903 [383].
18. Cf. Ibid 20 December 1903.
19. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis” 6.
20. Cf. 2 Tim 4:2.
21. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis” 6.
22. Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church, “Gaudium et Spes” 52.
23. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis” 6.
24. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis, Introduction”.
25. Lights from Heaven December 1903 [203].

26. Lights from Heaven December 1903; 22 October ; 9-17 December 1904; 4 November 1906 [325].
27. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis” 6.
28. Mt 20:28.
29. Cf. Decree on Priestly Training, “Optatam Totius “ 4,5.
30. Heb 12:6-7.
31. Lights from Heaven 25 June 1905 [316].
32. Jn 17:11.
33. Lights from Heaven 20 May 1907 [315].
34. Cf. 1 Cor 9:23.
35. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis” 19.
36. Jn 14:6.
37. Cf. Jn 17:11.
38. Cf. Lights from Heaven 4 October 1903; 15 September 2 October 1904.
39. Cf. Ibid 18 May 1903.
40. Mt 25:40.
41. Mk 6:31.
42. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum Ordinis” 8.
43. Cf. Lights from Heaven 11 December 1904.
44. Cf. Jn 11:35.
45. Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, “Presbyterorum” 6.
46. Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church, “ Gaudium et Spes” 42.
47. Lights from Heaven 1904 [385].
48. Cf. Lk 2:49.
49. Cf. Heb 4:12.
50. Cf. Lk 1:39.
51. Cf. Lights from Heaven April 1902.
52. Ibid 18 August 1904; 14-23 December 1906 [330].
53. Ibid 4 September 1922 [343].

54. Lights from Heaven 4 September 1922 [343].
55. Cf. Conferences 1946.
56. Lights from Heaven September 1922 [346].
57. Cf. Ibid April.
58. Ibid April, 1902 [14].
59. Ibid 6 September 1924 [353].
60. Ibid 5 September 1922 [346].
61. Ibid 23 August 1923 [350].
62. Cf. Ibid September 1922.
63. Ibid 2 September 1924 [350].
64. Ibid 4 September 1922 [345].
65. Ibid 2 September 1924 [351].
66. Jn 17:21.
67. Eph 4:4-5.
68. Cf. Gal 3:27-28.
69. Cf. II Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, "Unitatis Redintegratio" 2.
70. Cf. Lights from Heaven 1925.
71. Cf. Lk 6:12.
72. Cf. Lk 9 :28.
73. Lights from Heaven 1925 [352, 354].
74. Ibid 1925 [354].
75. Cf. Lights from Heaven.
76. Ibid 30 August 1926 [355].
77. Ibid 2 September 1927 [357].
78. Cf. Chronicle of Chiralayam Carmelite Convent.
79. Cf. Gal 3:27-28.
80. Lights from Heaven 10 May; 2, 8 July 1903 [65,68].
81. Cf. Ibid 10 May 1903.
82. Jn 13:35.
83. Acts 17:26.
84. Rom 13:9-10; 1 Jn 4:20.
85. Mt 19:19.

86. Cf. Lights from Heaven December 1932.
87. Cf. Challenge of the time.
88. Pastoral Constitution on the Church, "Gaudium et Spes" 52.
89. Lights from Heaven 2 October 1904 [258].
90. Ibid 9 September 1904 [251].
91. Ibid 24 September 1904 [255].
92. Rev 3:20.
93. Pastoral Constitution on the Church, "Gaudium et Spes" 69.
94. Lk 19:10.
95. Lk 4:18-19.
96. Lights from heaven 25 June 1903 [63].
97. Ibid 18 August 1904 [237].
98. II Vatican Council's Decree, "Ad Gentes" 2.
99. II Vatican Council's Decree, "Ad Gentes" 10.
100. Lights from Heaven 17 August 1904 [236].
101. II Vatican Council's Decree, "Ad Gentes" 11.
102. Cf. Jn 4:11.
103. Mt 9:37-38.
104. Lights from Heaven 2 August 1904 [225].
105. Ibid 18 December 1932 [377].
106. Cf. Conferences 1946.
107. Lights from Heaven 18 August 1904 [238].
108. Jn 20:21.
109. Mt 28:19-20.
110. Mk 16:15-16.
111. Cf. Mk 16:15-16.
112. Lights from Heaven 20 August 1904 [239].
113. Cf. Acts 2.
114. Lights from Heaven 9 December 1932 [381].
115. Cf. Ibid 19 December 1903.
116. Cf. Col 4:3.
117. Cf. II Vatican Council's Decree, "Ad Gentes" 13.
118. Cf. 1 Thess 1:9-10; 1 Cor 1:18-21.

119. Cf. Acts 4: 13-19.
120. Cf. Mk 16:15.
121. Cf. Jn 14:6.
122. Lights from Heaven 1925 [354].
123. Cf. “Gospel Proclamation” 8 December 1987.
124. Lights from Heaven 20 December 1903 [383].
125. Ibid 21 August 1925 [354].
126. Cf. Jn 17:20.
127. II Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism, “Unitatis Red integratio” 4.
128. Mt 25:35-40.
129. Cf. Lights from Heaven 17 December 1903; 17 December 1904.
130. Ibid 24 May 1903 [49].
131. Ibid 1925 [354].
132. Gal 2:20.
133. Mt 25:40.
134. Lights from Heaven April 1902 [2].
135. Ibid 7 August 1903 [83].
136. Heb 4:12.
137. Cf. Jn 8:20.
138. Cf. Lk 24:19.
139. Cf. “NavaJeevika” 1949.
140. Cf. Lk 12:13-21.
141. Cf. Lk 16:19-31.
142. Cf. Lk 7:36-50.
143. Cf. Lk 15.
144. Cf. Lk 10:25-37.
145. Cf. Cf. Lk 19:1-10.
146. Cf. 2 Cor 5:17.
147. Lights from Heaven 20 June 1904 [203].
148. Cf. Ibid 25 June 1903.
149. Ibid April 1902 [2].

150. Cf. Jn 4:6ff.
151. Lights from Heaven 17 Sept 1903 [112-113].
152. Ibid 21 October 1903 [133].
153. Lk 15:7,10,24.
154. Lk 23:34.
155. Cf. 1 Cor 13:1-13.
156. Cf. 1 Cor 14:1.
157. Mt 22:37-39.
158. Mt 22:40.
159. Cf. Mt 25:31-40.
160. Cf. Acts 4:32.
161. Cf. Deut 15:4.
162. Cf. Acts 4:34.
163. Lights from Heaven 9 September 1903 [106].
164. Ibid 25 August 1903 [98].
165. Cf. 1 Cor 11:23-26.
166. Cf. Acts 10:38.
167. Cf. 1 Thess 4:10.
168. Cf. Jn 4:19.
169. Cf. Lk 12:54-57.
170. Lights from Heaven 9 September 1904 [251].
171. Ibid 15, 24 September 1904 [255].
172. Ibid 15 September 1932 [253].
173. Ibid 2 October 1904 [257,258].
174. Cf. Ibid 1922, 1924.
175. Ibid 2 December 1932 [359].
176. Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church, "Gaudium et Spes" 69.
177. Cf. II Vatican Council Decree, "Introduction" 1.
178. Lk 4:43.
179. Cf. "Gospel proclamation" 6.
180. Lights from Heaven 18 December 1932 [376,377].
181. Cf. Ibid 7 September 1924.

182. Cf. Lights from Heaven 19 December 1903.
183. Ibid 20 December 1932 [383].
184. Cf. 1 Tim 2:4.
185. Cf. II Vatical Council Decree, "Introduction."
186. Cf. Lights from Heaven April, 1902.
187. Cf. Ibid April, 13 October 1903.
188. Cf. Lk 4:18.
189. Cf. "Navajeevika" September 1935.
190. Cf. "Navajeevika".
191. Cf. Lights from Heaven 7 September 1924.
192. Ibid 22 May 1903; 9 December 1932 [48].
193. Cf. Ibid 20-25 August; 1923;1925.
194. Ibid 2-7 September 1924; 30 August;4 September 1926 [350].
195. Ibid 21 August 1925 [353].
196. Cf. Ibid 1925.
197. Ibid 11 December 1903 [190].
198. Ibid 1 December 1903 [151].
199. Ps 136.
200. Cf. Lev 25:8-14.
201. Cf. Lights from Heaven April, 1902.
202. Ibid 9 December 1932 [358].
203. Ibid 10 December 1932 [358].
204. Ibid 11 December 1932 [359].
205. Ibid 12 December 1932 [360-361].
206. Ibid 14 December 1932 [363].
207. Ibid 13 December 1932 [377].
208. Ibid 14 December 1932 [364].
209. Ibid 19 December 1932 [378].
210. Ibid 18 December 1932 [384].
211. Cf. Deut 10:18.
212. Cf. Ps 15:1, 23:5, 27:10, 73:2.
213. Cf. Ps 27:10.

214. Cf. Rom 12:13; Cf. Heb 3:1-2; Cf. 1 Tim 3:2, 5:10; Cf. Titus 1:8;
Cf. 1 Pet 4:9.
215. Cf. 1 Tim 3:2; Cf. Titus 1:8.
216. Cf. Lk 7:36.
217. Cf. Jn 4: 4 ff.
218. Cf. Lk 10:38.
219. Cf. Lk 14:1.
220. Cf. Lk 19:5.
221. Cf. Mk 1:29.
222. Cf. Mk 2:15.
223. Cf. Mk 14:3.
224. Cf. Lk 7:36-46; Cf. Jn 13:1-15; Cf. 1 Tim 5:10.
225. Cf. Mk 6:8-11; Cf. Lk 9:2-5; 10:4-11.
226. Cf. Rom 15:7.
227. Cf. Rom 15:7.
228. Cf. Lk 10:34;14:13.
229. Cf. Lk 19:1-10; Cf. Jn 1:11-12, 14:23.
230. Cf. Mt 25:35-40.
231. Cf. Gen 18:2-8.
232. Cf. Job 31:31.
233. Cf. Lk 7:44.
234. Sir 4:1.
235. Lights from Heaven 20 December 1932 [383].
236. Gen 1:18,31.
237. Cf. Conferences 1946.
238. Mt 17:20.
239. Cf. Chronicle Chiralayam Carmelite Convent.
240. Cf. Chronicle chiralayam Carmelite Convent .
241. Cf. Mt 4:23-24.
242. Lights from Heaven 26 September 1903 [117].
243. Ibid 20 June 1904 [203].
244. Ibid December 1904 [298].
245. Ibid 20 June 1904 [203].
246. Ibid December 1904 [150].

247. Lights from Heaven 27 November 1903 [150].
248. Cf. “Navajeevika “ January 1941.
249. Lights from Heaven 1 December 1903 [151].
250. Ibid 2-7 September 1924 [351].
251. Ibid 28 December 1906 [330].
252. Acts 4:32.
253. Cf. Deut 15:4.
254. Cf. Acts 4:34.
255. Pastoral Constitution on the Church, “Gaudium et Spes” 26.

(The exact excerpts from ‘Lights From Heaven’ are indicated by their numbers in square brackets in the endnotes.)

Chapter 4

Foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity

The plan of God is to bring salvation of human beings through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He instituted the Church intending to fulfill this plan. The Church will be able to answer the challenges of the times only if she brings about timely interventions for renovation in order to have the necessary growth.

God created man in His own image and likeness¹ and made each one of us the members of His family. He did it to make us the visible signs of God's glory. He revealed this heavenly plan through Jesus Christ in the fullness of time. He was born on earth to fulfill the Will of God the Father. "I have come to do your will, O God."² The aim of His coming is to re-establish the relationship between God and man.³ The broken link of God-man relationship, the result of sin was restored by His only-begotten Son by shedding

His Blood and brought about the reunion through the Holy Spirit.⁴ Christ is the head and the cornerstone of the Church that He established. The Church stands as a symbol and a tool of the mystery of reality. He gave His spirit to make the love of God available to all the people.⁵ The faithful who became the members of the Church through baptism are blessed by the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. He called us to walk towards the fullness of His Father.⁶

“However, this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, through the fruits of the grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, and thus causing the edification of others; in a very special way this (holiness) appears in the practice of the counsels, customarily called evangelical.”⁷ The evangelical counsels aiming through charity, bind the followers to the Church and its mystery in a special way. Religious consecration is deeply rooted in the baptismal grace through which a person is dedicated completely to Christ, follows Him intimately and brings forth hundredfold fruits by observing the evangelical counsels namely chastity, poverty and obedience. In this way one totally submits oneself to God and becomes fully consecrated.⁸ It brings a transformation in the person. “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.”⁹ And thus the aim of St Paul, the Apostle becomes the aim of the religious as well. The observation of the evangelical counsels stands as an able and binding visible symbol that could inspire all members of the Church to boldly perform the tasks of the Christian call. So, the religious

life relieves all its members from the worldly affairs and convinces all the faithful about the reality of the spiritual goodness that members of the religious communities start to enjoy in this world itself. Furthermore, it witnesses to the fact of a new and eternal life acquired by the redemptive work of Christ. So also it foretells the future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly Kingdom. In short, it elucidates to all men the unsurpassing glory of Christ, the king who rules with all His majesty and the infinite power of the Holy Spirit marvellously working in the Church.¹⁰

The religious life is a divine gift that the Church received from her Lord and always safeguards it with the help of His grace. The Church approved the various congregations for the miraculous growth of the people of God in goodness and for the welfare of the entire Body of Christ.¹¹ Each religious community has its own charism. The charism depicts each congregation's real personality. There are differences in charisms given to different persons by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly there will be differences in their service and activities.¹² God the Father "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."¹³ All religious communities work with this purpose to save all by using different ways.¹⁴ Fr Ukken advised his children to *respect all other religious congregations recognized by the Church, never to find fault with them and not to speak low of their esteem.*¹⁵

On the First Friday of June 1944 Fr Ukken informed the Bishop Rt Revd Dr George Alappatt, his beloved student, one month after his Episcopal Ordination about his long time ambition. The bishop was very much pleased and granted



Motherhouse - Presentation Convent, Chowannur

permission and recognition for the religious community and blessed it with the name, 'Congregation of the Sisters of Charity' as per the order no 786/44, on 13 November 1944. The bishop accepted the summarised constitution submitted for his approval and gave it for the compliance of its members. According to the order no 787/44, Fr Ukken was appointed as the Chaplain of the new religious community. There was an outflow of thanksgiving praise from his heart. He spent the whole night in gratitude without closing his eyes in front of the Blessed Sacrament. On 21 November 1944 by the order no 788/44, this religious community was officially established on the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was on the same date on 21 November St Thomas, the Apostle first set his foot on the land of Bharat. Three ladies received the head-veils on that day from

the founder father. They were Sr Kochuthressia, Sr Mary and Sr Rita, the first three members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. As he, the Marian devotee dedicated himself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, he dedicated his beloved children also to the Immaculate Heart of Mother Mary. However, it was in 1949 that he made this dedication publicly. He advised his children to make this submission like Mother Mary's dedication. Besides, he desired his children to have the zeal of missionary spirit like that of St Thomas, the Apostle. Fr Ukken the true missionary entrusted his children with the mission of leading the Jacobites from their community to the Catholic faith through the devotion of Mother Mary. Presentation convent, the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was established in Chowannur, near Kunnankulam. The blessing of the convent was done on 9 November 1944.

'Congregation of the Sisters of Charity' is a family in which the sisters lead a consecrated community life in common. They embrace an active and contemplative life together. The members of the Congregation work amidst the poor and the sinners to establish and to spread the kingdom of God with the same founding charism, identifying with the Crucified Christ. "The apostolic and charitable activity belongs to the very nature of the religious life, seeing that it is a holy service and a work characteristic of love, entrusted to them by the Church to be carried out in its name. Therefore in order that their members may first correspond to their vocation to follow Christ and serve Him in His members, their apostolic activity must spring from intimate union with Him."¹⁶

Beloved father designed a lifestyle for the members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. This lifestyle unfolds the love towards God and brethren.

- Identify with God daily. Take the spirit from Him and transfer it to the brethren. Always humbly fulfill the will of the Father.
- Sisters must have mutual love for each other and unity like the Holy Trinity, the perfect model of love and unity. They should live with family spirit, simplicity, humility, availability, cheerfulness and respect for each other.
- If they take a fourth vow that must be 'humility.' They should have clear awareness about their nothingness and have unlimited and immeasurable faith in the providence of God.
- They must perform an unending self-sacrifice among God's people specially among the poor and the sinners. Thus these less fortunate should be made to experience the compassionate love of Christ. Join with the attitude and the feelings of the poor, forgive them with a smile like a close friend, suffer happily and make them experience the real happiness.
- Be zealous in missionary activities and detach from worldly desires concentrating on the redemption of the whole world. Detachment from everything and everyone is needed to go to every nook and corner of the world for the service of God and to be available always to everyone. The spirit and charism of the Congregation is also the same.

Thus a CSC sister:

- should forget selfishness
- should consider others
- should be prudent in judging
- should have readiness to listen
- should reply honestly and honourably
- should be humble in success
- should be meek in failure
- should have the attitude of co-operation
- should be available in service

And thus always be set apart for God and His people.

All these are the fruits of love.¹⁷

The Paschal Mystery of Christ leads her :

- from slavery to freedom
- from darkness to light
- from death to life
- from destitution to eternal richness
- from loneliness to God's unity
- becomes capable to bring others to all these

Thus like the verse "That they may all be one,"¹⁸ enjoys the Father's love

CSC Sister's :

- model is Jesus
- aim is Jesus
- way is the crucified Christ.

Charism of the Founder

Charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Everyone receives it.¹⁹ But each one receives a particular gift.²⁰ “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you have received.”²¹ God has given special charisms to certain individuals according to the needs of the Church in each period. This is different from the charism which is given to each individual personally. So it has a special mission.²² It is to make the saints perfect, to do the work of service and to build up the body of Christ.²³

Those who get this type of charism :

- will have enlightenment to understand the essential needs of the Church.
- will receive grace to fulfill the needs of the Church.
- will help to determine the ways and means of operation and to put it into practice.
- will possess a strong attraction towards a particular quality in the life of Jesus and blindly imitate it. Thus they change the charism they received from God into ‘Sadhana’ through constant prayer.

The essential factors needed for founding charism :

- A life-bound awareness of the Gospel values.
- An insight into the needs of the Church of that time.
- An ability to choose the most appropriate ways in order to fulfill these needs.
- An ardent desire to get closer to certain specific moments (qualities) of Jesus life.

The founder’s personal charism and founding charism are different. Personal charism cannot be transferred to his

followers. But founding charism dynamically moved to everyone with the help of the Holy Spirit. Thus it helps to understand the signs of the times and to respond to it according to that call. Founding charism remains even after the death of the founder as it is a revealed, creative and permanent investment. It is the coordination and motivation factor of the members of the Congregation in different situations and environments. Life and activities of the religious community should be centred on this charism. The founding charism must be the basis for enabling the goals of the members of the Congregation and to enlighten them according to the periodic changes.

“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”²⁴
“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.”²⁵

These Gospel verses can be described as the ‘heart’ of Fr Ukken’s charism. It proclaims his identity with Jesus in the apostolic works.

Fr Ukken firmly decided to put into practice the special gift of the Holy Spirit that was given to him by following Jesus more closely. The core of his prayer life was the compassionate love of Jesus, specially the tenderness and mercy that flowed from His Sacred Heart. It is perspicuous from the inner message of his soul. *“I am simply an effect of divine mercy.”*²⁶ *“I must see in my brothers the person of Jesus, then it would be easy, to perform acts of charity.”*²⁷ *“My only resolution is to become “alter Christus”*²⁸ (another Christ). *“Follow this loving Master and Saviour and Model.”*²⁹ *Everywhere I will follow my Jesus.*³⁰ *Oh Jesus, “exemplar mens dea me semper facere secundum te”*³¹ (*Oh Jesus, my model let me act always and everywhere like you*). *“As I live I wish to be like you, with you.”*³² *“The End of my existence is to know and love God.”*³³ *“Manifestation of the Heart, seat of love was the great design of God.”*³⁴ Here we see an unquenchable thirst to become another Christ, to act as Jesus did in all circumstances of life and to give His love to all fellow beings.

St Luke the evangelist explains the compassionate love of God for all people. A loving Father who forgives and accepts the sinner and calls her daughter,³⁵ God who is the owner of universal love,³⁶ a shepherd who goes in search of a lost sheep,³⁷ a widow seeking a lost coin,³⁸ the father waits for his son.³⁹ A father who thinks only about his son when the son tried to forget his father, a most affectionate forgiving father: what an awe-striking generosity! He listened to everyone. Everyone was given His forgiveness and help.⁴⁰ He loved those who were the despised and the disclaimed by the society.⁴¹ Jesus’ love became greatly notable in two phases. The first phase is on the cross. Jesus revealed His

love for His Father and human beings through His suffering and death.⁴² The second phase is the Holy Qurbana. It is the fullness of self-giving. Fr Ukken pledged, to imitate Jesus who gave the example of sacrificial love, to become like Jesus and to act like Jesus. It was the special gift he received from the Holy Spirit. *References regarding these can be found in his spiritual diary.*⁴³

*The Lord's command to love God and neighbour is the essence of His teaching.*⁴⁴ *He insists on us to love our neighbour as Jesus loved us.*⁴⁵ *Not only did He love us, the sinners and the poor by shedding His own Blood but also by giving His own Flesh and Blood and sacrificing Himself on the cross.*⁴⁶ *He says that we must also shed our blood if needed for the salvation of our brethren. Thus we must snatch as many souls as possible from the abyss of sin.*⁴⁷ *He says that otherwise it will be a shameful murder.*⁴⁸ *His devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to Mother Mary stemmed from his deep love of Jesus. He gave his children the responsibilities to imitate Jesus and to give the spirit of the Gospel to the poor and the sinners.*⁴⁹ *He advised, "To unite active life to contemplation."*⁵⁰

He gave himself fully to the infinite providence of God. *"I shall abandon myself into his hand!"*⁵¹ *"I abandon myself into the hands of my heavenly Father. He took care of myself to long."*⁵² *"A design behind. So as regards your life a loving Providence works out, shapes everything faith and cheerfulness to takewell..."*⁵³ This reminds us of a deeper faith in the providence of God.

Whatever he received in his life like, experiences, circumstances and persons were made use as 'sadhanas' to

draw out the charism vested in him. The charism was growing constantly over years. Fr Ukken learned very well through his own experience what destitution was. Kunnamkulam, the centre of the Jacobites was very backward then, both financially and culturally. Years before he desired to make it his pastoral field and finally it came true. *“I will with permission of H.Lordship our Bishop, try to enter a religious order or choose a humble Post. If permission to become a religious is denied, I hope to open a Home for the aged and sickly in Kunnamkulam near the Hospital and have Mass and other services regularly conducted there, thus to make a breach in the heretical fortress”*⁵⁴ (His Lordship).

Fr Ukken always wanted to help those who were sinful, poor, helpless, sick, worried and ignored by the society. He made it clear when he was the Manager of St Thomas College, Thrissur.

*“If God helps me, my idea is to sever my connection with college and to go to Kunnamkulam and there conducting a small church, pave way of opening an orphanage, asylum for the aged, workshop, press etc. If possible to form an Association of Priests, Brothers and Sisters !”*⁵⁵

Fr Ukken had a special consideration towards the weak and the needy. *“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”*⁵⁶ He was inspired with these words.

The founding charism of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity is to lead everybody from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to life especially the helpless and the ignored of the society, the sinners and the poor;

and seeing Christ in them, raise them up and make them enjoy the banquet of God the Father; being identified with Jesus break the chains of slavery from many who are in different bondages, free them from the existing evils of the society and help them to experience the compassionate love of God the Father in this world itself. He received an inner inspiration to go around every corner of the world and to gain many souls for Jesus in order to attain the purpose of it. *“Pray for all engaged in fishing souls the world over in the freezing zone and scorching tropics!”*⁵⁷ He also advised all missionaries must be men of prayer. *A profound and intense internal life enriches the external works and the virtue that is shallow and showy declines such works.*⁵⁸ *“All missionaries should have lot of Patience and expect Lord’s visit..”*⁵⁹

*Go down discreetly wherever God requires,*⁶⁰ this is what the founder father says about choosing the field of activities.

The Early Training

Fr Ukken, the founder himself trained the first members. It was necessary to give formation to the religious sisters in the exact way he wanted them to be. Sr Gertrude CMC and Sr Baptista CMC from the Carmelite Congregation helped him. On 18 November 1944 they reached the convent at Chowannur, stayed there and gave the necessary training to the candidates.

Fr Ukken was very resolute in his decision that his children should go down to the fields of activity which befitted the charism during their candidateship itself. So from the very start, they were sent to visit patients at their homes to provide the needed service. They visited both the poor



First Novitiate House

and the aged and comforted them. They suggested remedies for the problems of the rural villagers by considering it as their own problems. Thus they were accepted by the villagers as their own. Many a time, the food which was kept for them was given to the less fortunate and hungry brethren. They felt happiness in doing so. They were going to every nook visiting each house, teaching the poor, curing by serving the sick, comforting those in pain and preparing the dying at their deathbeds for a happy death. Thus the sisters of CSC were engaged in uplifting the poor and the abandoned of the society.

Once sisters shared their feelings about a woman to the founder father after they returned from the family visit.

They explained that the lady was very sick, poor and had no one else at home to look after her. On the top of that, she had no clothes to wear, no mat to lie on. There were open wounds and oozing sores all over her body. Fr Ukken a friend of the poor and the needy suddenly felt pity for her. He requested them to go back to her home to give her a bath, to clean the sores and to apply medicine and oil on her wounds. The compassionate father sent a mat, a piece of cloth which was kept for his children to make dress, medicine and food which was kept for him along with them. They returned to her house and cleaned up the place and did everything what was needed for that patient. "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are the members of my family, you did it to me."⁶¹ They made meaningful the teaching of Jesus.

Motherhouse was a place of absolute poverty at that time. Still there prevailed true happiness and peace. They had no complaints at all even when they were sleeping on the floor or when there was lack of enough food to appease their hunger. Once he had given a hungry man the money which was kept for buying rice. While seeing it his children stood spellbound. The beloved father said to them, "*He has nobody. Let him eat a full stomach at least once. I am here for you.*"* He taught them to find happiness in troubles and to collect treasures useful for eternal life from those situations. He was always there giving them comfort and strength.

Fr Ukken prepared a set of rules and timetable for the members who were in the cradle of the religious life to obey. They observed strictly the directions given for prayer, study, food, silence, recreation, apostolic activities as per

the timetable. His exemplary life and timely advice inspired them. There was God's protection and providence always with them. He trained them to practise virtues like God's love, mutual love, obedience, humility, poverty, punctuality etc heroically. He taught them restraints by using appropriate means to exercise humility and to do humble works.

Soon the number of women who wanted to join this religious community started to increase. He felt the warmth of gratification. He asked the candidates who approached him with an application to join the Congregation whether they were willing to go down to the sick and the home-bound helpless people, to comfort and help them to carry out their individual complex tasks and needs that they weren't able to do due to their advanced age and sickness. It was very obvious that he was in need of these kind of candidates, others who did not have this charism, he redirected to other congregations.

He was very particular about the dress code of his children. It should be entirely different from that of other existing congregations. He visualized that it must be simple and suitable to the religious life, at the same time it should be convenient to perform their tasks. When he put forward his suggestions about the model of the dress to other congregations to get their opinion, they straight away asked whether religious sisters could move among the people with neck and ears exposed. On 18 March 1945 bishop of the diocese of Thrissur reached the convent at Chowannur and approved the dress code model which he had designed. The first three members received the religious habit and another new group of nine received their headveils on 3 May from

His Grace Mar George Alappatt, Bishop of Thrissur diocese in the convent at Chowannur. Seeing his first group of children standing with folded hands in thanksgiving wearing white headveil with flower-crown on head, Fr Ukken, the founder was very grateful to God with his whole heart for fulfilling the long-awaited desire of his heart. Thus, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was formed in Kerala.

Fr John Ukken, the founder wanted the sisters to carry out all the works of their community by themselves. He often said, “*We are our servants.*”^{*} It was a desperate need to have such a religious community to enter there with a flame of love to liberate the villagers from gnawing hunger, starvation, slavery, sickness, sin and to fill them with the Word of God. The presence of CSC religious community helped to facilitate everyone to lead a life in Christ by changing their sectarian thoughts.



First Three Members of CSC

The first canonical novitiate in the convent at Chowannur was conducted under the able guidance of Sr Agnes and Sr Xaviour who belonged to the Congregation of the Sisters of the Destitute from the Archdiocese of Ernakulam. Fr Ukken used to take classes every day morning and afternoon for the novices. They had meditation based on the Holy Bible twice a day and classes had been given on etiquettes once a week. With a burning spirit of God's love, he was talking about the spiritual matters elaborately and attractively to them. It was his strong compulsion to refine the gold of goodness in the novices and to make it brighter during the training period. All his advice and classes were based on the Bible, the message of the Divine Lord. He particularly used the Holy Bible to teach his children meditation, to teach English, to give advice and classes in an era when there was no importance given to the study of the Holy Bible. He urged them to read one chapter from the Bible daily. He advised, "*Breviarium in statuto tempore loco opportuno*"⁶² (*to pray breviary in appointed time and in appropriate place*). There was one month Bible meditation as a preparation before their profession of vows. He longed for his children to be knowledgeable in the Holy Scripture and to be holy ones. He insisted that sisters should have external purity and orderliness in life just like internal purity. He demanded each one of his daughters to write the spiritual diary and to correct the personal shortcomings and failures with a firm resolution to rectify it and thus attain spiritual growth. The beloved father instructed them to make pledges and put them into effect so as to achieve spiritual advancement. He also provided corrections and suggestions for it from time to time.

The founder father gave them the basic lessons of the founding charism. It was his conviction that the patrimony of his children must be the special charism that he received by sharing the compassionate love of our Lord to become a father, mother and saviour of the destitute, the ignored of the society and the poor brethren through the simplicity of life and the service of love, which emanated from the intense love of God. He had given them classes to acquire this heritage from the initial phase of their training. He instructed them to go to the villages and visit the families invariably. He had a special consideration towards the destitute and the ignored of the society, to the sick and to the sinners. He arranged provisions and sent each one to learn 'First Aid.' He started a small dispensary attached to each convent. This became a hope of refuge for the poor and the helpless patients. Moreover, he sent Sr Luisa CSC and Sr Genova CSC to Vasavada (Vijayawada) for the study of nursing course on 27 December 1945 to have deep knowledge and practice in the care for the sick (later Sr Genova CSC changed the field).

Fr Ukken encouraged and taught his daughters to lead an innocent and perfect life, to offer selfless acts of charity and above all, to live in constant awareness of the presence of God. He helped them to forgive each other's wrongful offenses and to advance in heroic charity. He prepared them to celebrate the Holy Qurbana and to receive the Holy Communion with a heart that flies on the wings of brotherly love.

Fr Ukken lovingly tended the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity like a loving father who cares for his darling kids.

The first members of the Congregation were fortunate enough to experience the love and affection of their father and mother from the founder father. The beloved father never forgot to make enquiries about everything from the physical and spiritual well-being to the kitchen matters. He knew even the trivial matters of each person in the community. If anyone's face was gloomy, he would take it to his heart painfully. He wished his children to be always happy and pleasant. Sometimes he would give some gifts and try to comfort his grieving children just as parents give their little ones small gifts to make them happy.

Whenever his children did a small task, the parental heart of Fr Ukken would heave with satisfaction and joy and he found time to appreciate them. *A philosophy of appreciation*⁶³ and *gratitude*⁶⁴ was dissolved in his life. The unsteady footsteps of the toddlers give joy to the eyes of their parents. He was very proud and delighted to see his children's abilities when they exhibited their talents and artistic skill in making flowers and decoration works. He brought experts of various arts and taught them singing, tailoring, drawing etc. He used to say, "*My little ones have to be brought up.*"*

Loving parents discipline their children when they did something wrong. This would be done only by those who wish for the well-being of their children. Fr Ukken lovingly reprimanded and punished his children when they committed mistakes. Not only that, his paternal heart was satisfied only after comforting them in a proper way if they felt very bad after his correction. He hated only the wrongdoings not the wrongdoers. He was also careful to

apologize if they felt more hurt than he expected while giving corrections.

If any of his children fell ill, he would visit the sick to provide sufficient care, forgetting his own comforts with a mother's tender love and a father's compassion. Often he gave his own food to them. Even when there was no cash in his pocket, he never postponed the treatment. His compassion that gave comfort, cheer and courage to the patient with humorous jokes and pacifying words, was amazing.

Understanding the personal talents of his children, he trained them according to their interests. He sent the candidates to Bethany Girls' School for further learning. He rented a building in Cheroor to send eligible children to the government training school for Teachers' Training. When there was lack of trained sisters to work fruitfully in the field of the care for the sick, he sent Sr Hyacinth CSC and Sr Lucy CSC who were already TTC trained, to Madras Government Hospital to learn nursing course. Thus he worked tremendously for the progress of his children in their spiritual and temporal aspects. He was sticking solidly to the founding charism and was extremely cautious to provide timely training.

Comrade of Lepers

Leprosy was an ill-fated ailment that created disgust and fear in those days. The leprosy patients were alienated from the family and society! They thirsted for love and friends but found only a mirage! The ostracized ones from their own people and relatives! They longed to see human faces. Their greatest pain is that they are isolated from their own families

and community. However, are they not the children of God? Are they not created in His own image and likeness? Are they not members of the ancestral family of God? Are they not our brothers? All these were the musings of Fr Ukken who was the patron and the refuge of the grief-stricken and helpless people. He took a firm stand to start an institution for leprosy patients who were excluded and ignored by the society. With this objective he bought a barren hilltop land at Chowannur. That place is known as Ukken Thope (Ukken grove). He informed the bishop about his wish. Can this institution be started without any capital? Bishop Mar Alappatt could not even imagine it. The student could not comprehend the 'madness' of his master's reliability in the providence of God. As a result the request was refused immediately.

Msgr Paul Chittilappilly, the then Vicar General, Thrissur Diocese came forward with the same plan during the same period when Fr Ukken's dream was not realized. Revd Vicar General, bought a hill in Kozhukulli near Mannuthy and built buildings there for lepers. The patients were getting weak day by day and dying little by little. Bishop granted permission. But the Vicar General did not get any sisters to serve and look after them. Msgr Chittilappilly went around and knocked at the door of each and every congregation in Thrissur diocese. Nobody accepted his plan nor did they respond to his call. Finally he approached Fr Ukken and revealed his troubled state. It was a plan that he himself had wished for and dreamt of! Certainly it was a time when there weren't enough sisters to work in all the endeavours that he started! Since he had taken a vow to help those in

need, he agreed to his request. Needless to say, a dire need of that particular period.

When Msgr Chittilappilly left, Fr Ukken summoned all his loving children who were there and told them about the purpose of his visit. Soon, there was a discussion session and Fr Ukken told them, *“If a highly qualified and high-ranked priest, started an institution to serve this kind of grief-stricken people who are the hated and loathed, we also ought to serve them and must go there to help him.”** Even though the sisters felt fear at the outset, later they agreed to the wish of their beloved father. He sent Sr Ignatia, Sr Cyril and Sr Berchmans to Mangalore for ‘para leper’ training as an initial step to this venture. Fr Ukken did not consider at all that Sr Cyril had finished her TTC training and was a teacher. They came back from Mangalore after 4-5 months of training.

11 February 1954

It was the day when a new chapter was added to the history of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. And it was also the day of the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Fr Ukken, the darling child of Mother Mary dedicated the sisters who were setting out on a new venture, to Mother Mary. He called Sr Ignatia, Sr Cyril and Sr Berchmans to his room and gave them the necessary advice and blessed them heartily just like a real father, in tears. Fr Ukken took the three in a car and dropped them at Damian Institute in Mulayam. Thus the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity entered a new field of service even though he himself was unable to do it. Fr Ukken was always ready to give inspiration and encouragement to those whom God allowed to do the good service even though he himself was unable to do it. This is a

sign of his heroic virtue. What made him so great was nothing other than his magnanimous personality.

Helping Hand Extends Again

Fr John Kizhakoodan, a close friend of Fr Ukken started a new religious community called 'Martha Sisters' at that time. He requested Fr Ukken to send two sisters to give them the initial training. The different organs of the body of Christ have to execute different functions. It is necessary that all the organs must acquire full growth. Notwithstanding the fact that the number of the sisters of CSC was less, Fr Ukken sent Sr Clara CSC and Sr Gertrude CSC for their help. A few days later, they were called back and he sent Sr Beatrese CSC and Sr Xaviour CSC to the novitiate house of Martha Sisters at Ponnukkara to help them. All through his life he extended his service to help others at the expense of his own needs.

On 23 October 1913 Fr Ukken, the then secretary of the bishop of Thrissur blessed the first house - Ekanthabhavan of the Holy Family Congregation. Taking into consideration all these, we can understand that he had played a significant role in the affairs of all the congregations in Thrissur diocese.

THE CONFERENCES THAT FR AUGUSTINE JOHN UKKEN CONDUCTED WITH THE FIRST MEMBERS

Love finds satisfaction in sharing. Fr John Ukken who received a special gift from the Holy spirit, grew up in God's love and poured it out to his brethren. He initiated a new chapter in the religious life. He handed down the special gift that God bestowed upon him to his children. The 'conferences' were the hearty conversations he had made with his children.

The topics dealt with were the relevance of religious life, aim, basic factors... death, eternal life etc. He discussed with his children in addition to the fine lines of the most important subjects, the minute aspects of the less important matters also which he wanted them to observe. This shows his impassioned desire for the growth of his children in holiness before God and men.

The following are the subjects of the conferences that Fr John Ukken had conducted.

How to exercise faith :

The enemies of faith, the necessity of faith, the means to practise it and the temptations against it.

The necessity of humility :

Difficult to practise but it is inevitable for the religious.

Pride :

Pride is the centre of all evils.

Community life :

This is one of the essential components of religious life. It is the foretaste of heaven. It is the martyrdom. One who abides by the laws of the religious community will become a saint.

Silence :

There is a rich and meaningful orientation for silence and solitude in religious life. It is an indispensable need for a religious to hear the voice of the Lord internally and to live in union with God.

Tepidity :

A religious who lives in tepidity starts with drowsiness and eventually it reaches slumber. Lured by the world, she lives in false prestige and arrogance. She does not

co-operate with the blessings of God. How horrible it is to have the destruction of the soul after living in a religious community !

Life of renewal :

One who is always calm, contented and upright will become a good member of the congregation. Therefore, renewal of heart is a must in us.

The ways for the renewal :

1. Control over our consciousness and to have forethought.
2. Support of the superiors and habit of reading good books.
3. Trust in prayer and steadfast in devotion.

Terminal pieces of advice in the novitiate:

Specifies the ideals to be practiced in life.

1. Why did you come here? Why did you leave your family and your home town? (St Bernard) I left all these to become a burnt offering for Christ.
2. Never subjugate to despair. Despair blocks the path to heaven.
3. Behave like a five- year-old child in your dealings with the superiors in obedience, faith and honesty.
4. Be peaceful and think it as a chance for you to receive showers of blessings when you are instructed to discharge duties which are not easy to perform.
5. Annihilate self-love.
6. 'Never say that I am not a saint' in order to justify yourself. Because if you live according to the rules and

regulations of the religious community, you will definitely become a saint.

7. Never waste a minute knowingly. Spend time usefully to earn virtues.
8. Keep silence in joy and remain faithful without saying any excuse whenever you are blamed or rebuked for something.
9. Take the slogan of Saint Francis de Sales in the spirit of faith. Live without any speciality. (slogan : give me souls; take away all else)
10. Try to conquer the main vice courageously and powerfully.
11. Determine to eliminate the frailty of character.
12. Never think about your sisters against charity.
13. Consider you are always under other sisters and only worthy to stand at their feet.
14. Strive to be a soul of prayer observing the instructions of the religious congregation.
15. Do not forget observing silence properly which is the source of devotion and happiness.
16. Have a strong interest in community life. Never ask for any special permissions.
17. A religious must be true-spirited in everything, specially in demeanour, courtesy, facial expressions, voice, control of the eyes, in grief and in joy.
18. Your convent is your family, your parents, brethren and relatives.
19. Be happy and rejoice in the solitude of the religious life.

20. You must have a daughterly affection towards your Congregation. You must show love and interest in all its affairs.
21. Be loyal even to the simple rules. If you do not care for small things, you will not pay attention to great things. Small things lead you to perfection.
22. Respect all other religious congregations recognized by the Church, never to find fault with them and not to speak law of their esteem.
23. Make an offertory prayer and say it for you as if you are the thing to be offered.
24. When you approach the spiritual father accept him as God's representative and obey him.
25. Do everything for the glory of God.
26. Have a childlike love and faith in Mother Mary. The joy and pleasure of the religious life should be in Mother Mary. She intercedes for us the grace to be ever in the perpetual vows.
27. See God in everything. Take refuge in Him. Be diligent to fulfill His will, let His will happen always in our lives and reinforce His glory ever. Let our light, power, peace and the forthcoming heavenly life be summarised in the two words 'God alone'.

Mental Renunciation

Mental renunciation consists in controlling the inner forces like memory, intelligence and mind. In order to attain mental renunciation, stop the triforces (memory, intelligence, mind) from unnecessary retrospection and bring about concentration. Say ejaculatory prayers in between each work.

Keep up the awareness of the presence of God. Stay tuned particularly to each Job.

Means to put into Practice

1. Be like a pilgrim. Walk quickly thinking to reach soon the home land, heaven which is the real home. This world is a foreign land and ignore the happiness of this world.
2. Be like a crucified woman. Run away from the pleasures of this world.
3. Be like a dead woman. Be like a buried woman without seeing and touching anything of this world.
4. Don't seek anybody's consideration, don't be known to anyone and don't be remembered or attract anyone's attention.
5. Be like a woman discarded to the darkness. Live without any pride in the spiritual growth rather be humble enough for the experience and desire for the sweetness of spiritual happiness.

Ways to Attain Worthiness

Every act of spiritual life that we have begun firmly in the grace, increases that grace. The more we multiply this gift, the greater will be our glory and fortune in heaven. This is known as attaining worthiness. Heavenly fortune is to live in harmony with God. It is felt in accordance with the measure of grace either more, or less in us. God uses man's ordinary ways as instruments to enable him to attain this worthiness.

There are two things to be noted to receive the graces:

1. Regarding action.
2. Regarding the person who performs the action.

Do with a free mind. Must be in a state of grace. Do with Christ, for Christ and rely on Him. Do with an extraordinary intention. If it is based on faith, hope and love, it will give a rewarding result. (Among the three theological virtues, love is more important). The purpose is the renewal. There will be an increase in worthiness depending on the greatness of the work done. The reward is depending upon the glory of the action, courage for the action, suffering for the action and perfection of the action.

Vow : It makes clear what vow is and explains the three vows.

The bride of the prisoner of love : Who is she?

What is the synonym of her life?

Her death: What should her departure from this world be like?

She is a sacrificial object of love and sacrifice, mother of souls - she is the Bride of Messiah: because her beloved offered Himself as a sacrifice of love, suffering and sacrifice. The right of the bridegroom is also for the bride. So her right is love, sacrifice and service. For it is love that produces equality. Therefore she must be like this to conform to her beloved. The martyrdom of love – that is the synonym of her life.

What should she do? She should lead the life of the Blessed Sacrament ie the life of the crucified Christ. She must become a nonentity like her Lord who humbled Himself to nothing. She should die little by little, and must become a burnt offering.

When? In each moment... the whole life.

Where? In every place... church, refectory, recreation room, places of Journey, class room, hospital. In short, wherever she would be.

In what matters? In all that manifests itself. In spiritual, temporal and worldly affairs, when comfort is denied, when there is no facilities for bathing, washing and working; when there is lack of necessary food, dress and other daily utility items are not received when needed.

Qualities to become a religious :

1. There should be a supernatural attraction towards the Omnipotent Power. It must be constant. It must be nurtured.
2. External qualities : perfect physique, intelligence and good conduct.

Aims of a religious :

For the glory of God, for one's own perfection, for the perfection of others and in reparation for sins.

Meditation :

The reason for man's sinfulness is his thoughtlessness and lack of mental power. Therefore he should acquire the knowledge for attaining perfection. Meditation is the deep reflection for acquiring the necessary mental power.

1. Achieve a true conviction of eternal truths, mysteries of faith and the nothingness of the worldly matters through meditation.
2. Devotional images come into our imagination, good thoughts in our minds and pious desires in our hearts are born through it.
3. It greatly inspires us to imitate Our Lord and the holy saints, to achieve the perfection in virtues (St Ligori).
4. It arouses in us the spiritual vigour in place of tepidity (St Ligori).
5. It gives an opportunity to understand one's own sins and weaknesses (St Bernard).
6. It enables to find out the devilish tricks and temptations of Satan (St Catherine of Bolonjo).
7. It causes to maintain the habit of reading and to earn the virtues. Meditation is like a pure cistern positioned in the centre of a garden to keep up the freshness of the greenery of the garden (St Chrysostom).
8. It gives an occasion to receive the unusual blessings of God. The saints had received God's intuitions during meditation.
9. In all hardships of life, it gives heavenly tranquility.
10. It causes to remain in grace till the end.

11. Meditation is the powerhouse of the spiritual life (St Augustine).

He has also explained the various stages and techniques of meditation.

Monthly Recollection

“Foreigners devour his strength, but he does not know it” (Hos 7:9). As the prophet Hosea told, the downfall that occurs in our daily lives may not be seen always. Thus, we are caught up in a lukewarm spiritual life. “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Rev 3:16). We will be forsaken by God according to this Word of God. St Augustine says, “Always increase, always progress; do not be late on the way; do not turn back; do not move to either side; if you say so it is enough, you are destroyed.” We must examine the account of our spiritual life like a merchant who defines profit and loss at the end of the month after compiling the daily business accounts. The words from the book of ‘The Imitation of Christ’ are more relevant that the situation one likes to be at the time of his death, should be lived now accordingly.

Thereafter, he explains how to prepare for a monthly recollection.

Examination of conscience

He gives a clear picture about the examination of conscience of a religious.

Death

He instructs us to prepare every moment for death.

Holy Mother

Mother of God, the queen of angels is our intercessor before God. Mother is always ready and ever waiting to

intercede for us. But the only defect is that we do not tell her precisely our concerns. Moreover, Jesus' Mother is our Mother and mine too. Jesus is the head of the body of the Church, Mother is the neck and all of us are the organs of the body. If Jesus is the Son of Mother Mary, we are all her children. Jesus is crucified on the cross. Mother Mary, St John and Mary Magdalene are standing at the foot of the cross. Jesus gives St John as a son to His Mother and Mother is given to St John as his mother. Mother Mary accepted the whole world as her children. Let us also stand at the foot of the cross. Let us accept the declaration of Jesus and live under her protection. What won't be fulfilled that is asked to such a Mother? "*Mother of God is also my mother.*"* I will show enough devotion and respect to my Mother from today onwards to justify my saying. Thank you Lord Jesus for giving your Mother as my Mother.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has started from that day onwards when the Heart of Jesus had been pierced by a lance on the cross. Jesus appeared to St Margaret Mary Alacoque in 1675 and asked her to propagate this devotion. (Once St Gertrude had a vision on the feast of John the Evangelist. She was resting her head near the wound in the Saviour's side and hearing the beating of the Divine Heart). She asked John the Evangelist if on the night of the Last Supper he had felt these pulsations, why he had never spoken of the fact. John replied that this revelation had been reserved for subsequent ages when the world, having grown cold, would have need of it to rekindle its love. Yes, faith and love have cooled down among the people now. Jesus from

the tabernacle asks me, "Son, daughter, give me your heart. Love me." Let us answer, "Lord, you see my heart. I have already given you totally. Accept the poor heart of this servant, Lord." I will do the reparation as I can against the insults and injuries done to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

- One month's retreat : This is divided into four parts.
- First week : Purification – correct the mistakes.
- Second week : Imitation of Christ – identify with the life of Jesus after purification.
- Third week : confirm it with meditation of the passion of Christ.
- Fourth week : Transformation – Transform life with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Subsequently, various techniques of meditation of the passion of Christ are given for one month. The resolutions and practical thoughts are quite remarkable.

WAY OF THE CROSS

A religious sister never can be identified with Jesus Christ even though she leads a peaceful life without any hardships and afflictions, excellent in virtues, holding high positions in the Congregation. Instead, identification happens when there is willingness to carry the daily cross along with the crucified Christ. I must accept Jesus who carries the cross as my model and I should follow Him. When we pray the way of the cross we follow Jesus spiritually. This is next only to Holy Communion, the most effective benefit for the soul.

First Station

When Jesus was condemned in Pilate's court, He stood publicly like a criminal, abused and insulted without having anybody to defend Him. When you entered the religious Congregation, the world condemned you to death. The world thought that you have eliminated yourself, hidden and imprisoned for ever. Moreover, the world considered you insane. But you were not at all grieved by the attitude of the world. What is your attitude when you are blamed and misunderstood by your own sisters in the religious house? You are convinced fully that you are not at fault. But all the circumstances are against you. You are guilty before everyone. What will you do when you are watched over with hatred and others have no esteem for you? Losing your good name hurts you more and more. Then say thanks first to Jesus for the chance given you to identify with Him. See, how Jesus stood before Pilate like a thief. You also do likewise. He silently surrendered to the will of God the Father and suffered everything. You ought to be silent with humility. You offer what you experience now as a reparation for blaming others or listening to the evil talk and speaking ill of others. God the Father glorified Jesus in heaven, on earth and in the subterranean world three days after His death. He never allowed your good name to be annihilated. When you patiently endure these things, He will lift you up and exalt your name. But if you try to get back your name with your own smartness and tactful words, it may become worse.

Second Station

Jesus carries the cross. He accepted the cross joyfully. Once He received it, He shouldered it without any complaint till the end. You also do likewise. You entered the religious

community abandoning the worldly pleasures and choosing the cross. Now, how happily you hug it, carry it till the end. Jesus did not choose His cross. He accepted what God the Father gave Him. He did not hate the people who gave Him the cross. Likewise, whoever gives you crosses, accept them cheerfully without hating them, think that they are lifting you up to eternal glory. You should think even if they are sinners, God selected them as tools to bring you closer to God. Leech just drinks the blood. But patients get cured. God allowed the crosses suitable to each and every one. Once a monk got a vision while meditating on the crosses that God gives to human beings. All complained to Jesus about the heaviness of their crosses. God took back all their crosses and heaped them together at a place and commanded them to choose whichever cross they liked. They went and checked many crosses and found each cross heavier than what they got earlier. Finally, each one selected the cross which was none other than the one they had given up earlier, carried it quietly and went back. Jesus never complained against the place where He was crucified or about the thieves who were crucified along with Him. You also do like this. You should not raise any complaint about the place or the companions no matter whatever be the sort you are given.

Third, Seventh and Ninth Stations

Jesus was falling down along with His Cross repeatedly. Through this He is teaching us there would be many falls in our spiritual life. It reminds us to rise energetically from every fall as Jesus got up again and again without being entangled in despair. He took refuge in God the Father and carried the cross again. We too must follow His example. Failures

eliminate our pride and self-relying intelligence and thus humiliate us to draw closer to God.

Fourth Station

Jesus meets His mother. Both do not worry about Jesus carrying the cross; no complaints at all. Instead, the two of them only say to each other silently, "God, not My will but Thine, be done." Jesus teaches us how we should treat our relatives. Religious life increases the love towards our relatives. This relationship becomes sanctified through unity with God. We need to help them without diminishing or creating a breach of love and faithfulness to our Lord Jesus. This help is not physical but it can be done through prayer and good example. We can meet and talk with them as the law of the Congregation permits. However, at this time our holy pleasant attitude, cheerfulness and interest in God's ministry should be brought out through our behaviour. Thus, our presence should be a source for more showers of blessings and means for graces of God upon them. Relatives may not be loved too much or not completely neglected. If you love them too much or neglect them totally, it may cause grievous harm. If a wife loves her relatives more than she loves her husband, it will create a rift between husband and wife. So also if a religious loves her relatives more than she loves Jesus, her spouse will not like it.

Fifth Station

Humility of Jesus is shown here. He humbly accepted help from Simon. Pride, many a time withdraws a religious from asking and receiving help from other sisters. She does it all alone without asking anyone's assistance with a wish to get the whole praise and appreciation of the work completely for herself. Let her learn from the model of Jesus. Once we come closer to the cross then only we can understand

the sweetness of it. Simon, once he touched the cross, he became mentally prepared to carry it with Jesus till the end. If we endure happily the crosses that we get daily then we will be able to understand the sweetness of the cross. Many people are attracted to God because of the good behaviour of the religious sisters with charity, compassion and mercy together with the heavenly happiness they enjoy.

Sixth and Eighth Stations

Veronica wiped the Holy Face of Jesus. Many devoted ladies comforted Him. They are really lucky ones. Still, we should not be jealous of them. We too can comfort Jesus like them. We are serving Jesus when we comfort the sick, serve the aged and the helpless.

Tenth Station

Jesus is stripped off His clothes. The cloth which was knitted lovingly by His Mother was pulled off ruthlessly. He knows those who follow Him will get the same treatment. He did not show any resistance while His clothes knitted by His Mother were removed. What is our attitude when we are separated from the places, things and companions that we like the most? Are we willing to forsake all that we have for the sake of Jesus?

Eleventh Station

Jesus is nailed on the cross. They nailed Him on the cross and was tied tightly with ropes to the cross. The nails and the ropes point out the three vows and the constitution respectively. With these we too are tied closely to the cross. The more we observe them with determination, the more we stabilize our relationship with Jesus.

Twelfth Station

Jesus suffered insults lying on the cross. The abuses increase His torment at the time of His death. "If you are Messiah, come down from the cross", the Jews boisterously laughed. Certainly, Jesus could come down from it. But He didn't do it. Just like the enemies told Jesus, the world, satan and body, the three enemies whisper to the religious to leave the vows (neglect) and to go back. A faithful religious runs away from these temptations and takes refuge in her spouse. St Peter was absconding from Rome due to persecution and on the way he saw Jesus coming against him carrying a big cross. He stopped and asked Him, "Where are you going"? Jesus answered, "I am going to Rome once again to die on the cross instead of you." Like this when a religious leaves her cross and goes away, Jesus carries that cross and asks, "My love, where are you going?" Even Jesus felt as if God the Father had abandoned Him. A religious also may feel even God abandoned her. Then without dejection she should entrust herself in the divine hands of God.

Thirteenth Station

Jesus' body was placed on His mother's lap. Blessed Mother received not the living Son but the wounded dead body covered with Precious Blood. Jesus willed himself to lie down in His mother's lap at His birth and death. Mother Mary is the heavenly mother of a religious. Jesus should be given His mother's love itself. She should love Jesus as if He is always near and should prepare a heart that Mother Mary liked. Even though Jesus died, He lay there glorified. When a religious dies, the world would think some great loss has happened. But her face shows she has achieved a great success. Her obituary note does not appear in newspapers

and magazines. But it is written in the book of eternity in detail. King Alexander looked at the sky at the time of his death, lamented and repented that he was not able to capture the heavens after capturing the whole earth. She got hold of the land - heaven - which could not be captured by Alexander. She earned it, not after she conquered the whole world, but after she left it.

Fourteenth Station

The Sacred Body of Jesus is buried. It was not done in a lavish manner. But the hearts of those who were with Him burned with love. Their grief was selfless. Likewise there is no luxury in the funeral service of a religious. But the hearts of those who follow her will be filled with selfless love and gratitude. Jesus died at the significant phase of His life. The world considered it a great loss. Likewise it may happen in the religious congregations also. Some die at an early age. Not a long life but a good life is the aim of a religious. They cried out, "If you come down from the cross, we will believe." Don't get down from the cross, my Jesus. I believe in you completely. You died for me crucified. I love you and I adore you. You be my father, saviour, friend, helper, spouse and everything ! Don't come down from the cross! But lead me to that. Let my soul that received your Precious Blood enjoy the eternal bliss. Let me have an aversion towards my sins and worldly pleasures. Bind me tightly with your cross. Let me love you. I will die for you. I am yours in my life and death.

These conferences loudly proclaim Fr Augustine John Ukken's vision of life and his wish about how his children should be. Only those persons who have received a special gift from God can give such conferences.

Endnotes

- * Oral Tradition
- 1. Cf. Gen 1:27.
- 2. Heb 10:7.
- 3. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen Gentium” 9.
- 4. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen Gentium” 7.
- 5. Cf. Rom 8:30.
- 6. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen Gentium” 11.
- 7. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen Gentium” 39.
- 8. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen Gentium” 44.
- 9. Phil 1:21.
- 10. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen Gentium” 44.
- 11. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen Gentium” 43.
- 12. Cf. 1 Cor 12:4-6.
- 13. 1 Tim 2:4.
- 14. Cf. 1 Cor 12:27-31.
- 15. Cf. Conferences 1946.
- 16. Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, “*Perfectae Caritatis*” 8.
- 17. Cf. 1 Cor 13:4-7.
- 18. Jn 17:22.
- 19. Cf. Acts 10:45-46.
- 20. Cf. 1 Cor 7:7.
- 21. 1 Pet 4:10; Cf. Rom 12:6-8.
- 22. Cf. Eph 3:7-10.
- 23. Cf. Eph 4:7-12.
- 24. Mt 25:40.
- 25. Isa 61:1-4; Cf. Lk 4:18-19.
- 26. Lights from Heaven 1 December 1903 [151].
- 27. Ibid 2 July 1903 [65].
- 28. Ibid 20 June 1904 [203].
- 29. Ibid 14 December 1932 [367].

30. Cf. Lights from Heaven 1903.
31. Ibid 11 December 1903 [172].
32. Ibid 23 September 1903 [115].
33. Ibid 20 June 1903 [61].
34. Ibid 19 December 1932 [379].
35. Cf. Lk 7:36-50.
36. Cf. Lk 10:30-35.
37. Cf. Lk 15:4-7.
38. Cf. Lk 15:8-10.
39. Cf. Lk 15:11-24.
40. Cf. Lk 5:32.
41. Cf. Lk 7:36-50, 19:10, 23:43.
42. Cf. Lk 9: 22.
43. Cf. Lights from Heaven 11 December ; 23 September 1903; 20 June 1904; 14 December 1932.
44. Cf. Ibid 9 September 1903.
45. Cf. Ibid 1903.
46. Cf. Ibid December 1903; 9-17 December 1904.
47. Cf. Ibid April 1902.
48. Cf. Ibid 1903.
49. Cf. Conferences 1946.
50. Lights from Heaven 8 May 1903 [43].
51. Ibid 30 July 1904 [220].
52. Ibid 3 November 1907 [337].
53. Ibid 19 December 1932 [378-379].
54. Ibid 4 September 1922 [345-346].
55. Ibid 2-7 September 1924 [351].
56. Jas 1:27.
57. Lights from Heaven 18 December 1932 [377].
58. Cf. Conferences 1946.
59. Lights from Heaven 18 December 1932 [377].

60. Cf. Conferences 1946.
61. Mt 25:40.
62. Lights from Heaven 11 December 1903 [158].
63. Cf. Ibid 4, 23, 26 May; 9,12,24 July; 8, 18 August; 8 November; 5 December 1903; 16, 30 July; 10 August 1904.
64. Cf. Ibid 20, 23, 26 May; 4 June; 14 August; 6, 16 September; 1 November 1903.

(The exact excerpts from 'Lights From Heaven' are indicated by their numbers in square brackets in the endnotes.)

Chapter 5

The Early Houses

Local community is the most significant factor of a spirit-filled religious community. The image of the Congregation is clearly depicted through its local communities in relation with religious life and missionary activities.

As the number of members increased, the demand for more houses also increased. Fr Augustine John Ukken who responded to the needs and circumstances instantly turned his attention to establishing new houses. Thus new houses were established on the following dates.

28	August	1946	Kokkalai, Trichur
28	October	1946	Mundathicode
2	February	1950	Nazrath Study house, Kunnamkulam
18	February	1950	Fatima Convent, Chowannur
8	September	1953	Poovathur
19	March	1954	Kallur
21	November	1955	Puthussery

He himself appointed superiors and assistant superiors to each convent in those days. He was able to establish new houses because of the generosity and co-operation of many priests and kind-hearted people of the respective localities. People will take care of those who live for them.

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity has sprouted and grown facing utmost poverty. The first members had wheat kanji and tapioca as the best healthy meal and they had to be satisfied with kerosene lamp for lighting as well as floors caked with cow-dung to sleep on in the beginning stage. There were events not rare when they had gone to the neighbouring houses to fetch a little kanji water to drink after they returned from their fatiguing work in the compound and paddy fields.

He invited skilled priests to give advice and talk for retreats to all the members of the Congregation collectively as they gathered in the motherhouse at Chowannur in the early days. The founder father often reminded them, “*Let no one be there around you whom you do not know.*”^{*} His daughters followed absolutely the advice and visited the families to look after the sick and the destitute. They did everything what they could to help them. People started to take refuge in sisters when they faced difficulties and needs. They used to visit patients in the hospitals to console them.

In 1953, he sent a group of CSC sisters to Kadamapuzha hospital, Kanjirappally to concentrate more in the field of the service of the sick. Thus the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity started to spread to other dioceses also. He found pleasure in serving the needy rather than building up superstructures.

Fr Ukken was incited to read instantly the writings on the wall since he accepted the prophetic call. Primary schools were set up in Kokkalai and Chowannur to reach out to the need of upbringing people from ignorant uncivilized areas to the light of literacy, which was essential for the reformation of the villages. Thus, the members of the Congregation began to focus on imparting education. He urged his children, "*To go down discreetly wherever God requires and serve with compassionate love.*" *

It is remarkable that all the houses of the early period were started in remote uncultured areas where the poor densely populated.

Materialistic people predict that no movement can sprout without money. The history of Fr Ukken evidently shows that there will be no failure in the realisation of the tasks if there is belief in the providence of God. The Congregation was started without any capital or financial source and received the candidates also with very little or even without patrimony. It was the era of World War II. The food items were very expensive and the price was rising daily. Food supply was restricted to the ration card holders only. Lack of money and scarcity of food availability doubled the mental agony of the superiors. Surprisingly, there stood Fr Ukken with a charming smile in those traumatic moments! Silent suffering. He felt it as an ornament. Whenever Fr Ukken's heart was in bitter agony, outwardly he spoke warmly and pleasantly and discharged his duties with a charming smile. He advised, "*Be satisfied with what you have.*"* He persuaded his children to give whatever they had to the needy even when they had nothing to eat or spare.

One day afternoon, a man with an ugly face of poverty, sunken eyes and empty stomach, of course a pathetic and

skeletal figure, who was staggering approached father slowly for a little food. There was only some kanji as noon meal in the convent at that time. He requested his children to give it to him. He was so happy that tears of joy rolled down his cheeks when he saw the man eating it greedily. What a spiritual rapture for the father who rely on God !

When some sisters told they did not have enough money to buy things, amusingly he answered, “*Now I have no ears.*”^{*} The grievances of sisters, the heap of bills to be paid and the difficulty to push life-needs forward etc never bothered him very much. He firmly believed that God would give him everything at the right time. When sisters approached him with problems of money he said with a smile, “*This congregation is not started by me, but by God. So the burden to look after it suitably is of God’s grace. He has the belief that God will raise it aptly.*”^{*} The paternal property of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity is the persistent belief of its founder father in the providence of God in all circumstances.

Endnotes

* Oral Tradition

Chapter 6

The Evening of Life

The birth of saints is a rare occurrence in the world. Their birth and life is a blessing to the world. When they are alive they make a lasting impression in the hearts of the people by their example and guidance. Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was a holy man who spread everywhere the rays of goodness by being the source of love, service and also as a shelter to his own daughters.

In 1954, at the age of seventy four he retired from the parish administration. His goal was to focus on the spiritual and physical growth of the religious community that he had sown and nurtured. Fr Ukken was their novice master, spiritual guide and the director of the temporal affairs. He wanted to hand over all these responsibilities to his children. The beloved father really wished to see the growth of his

children. He desired to handover the administration of the religious community to the general council so that he would be able to provide them the required instructions while he was alive. On the contrary, God's will was something else. He humbly informed the bishop about his wish and proposals. But the bishop opined, "Children are happy with their father's care and let everything go as it is now until the death of their father." He who had always seen God's will in the decisions of the authorities, submissively bowed down before this decision. The seventy-four year old father loved and safeguarded the ten year old Congregation of the Sisters of Charity as his own daughter.

Though his children were backward in studies, he wanted them to be in the forefront of God's love and charity. For that all the necessary, timely corrections and instructions were given instantaneously. He became very upset that his children were not progressing according to his expectations. He frequently advised that they should have sincerity and honesty of heart as their investment. He made it clear through his own life that to err is human but it should be confessed without any twisting. The moment they confess their mistakes, he forgave them and then he used to make them happy by cracking jokes. But he rebuked and corrected them whenever they were dishonest and insincere. He insisted that they should do neatly and systematically whatever they were doing. Being honest and innocent he used to believe literally everything that his children would say. As a result some of them had suffered a lot at certain times. But when the truth of the problem became clear and he was convinced of it, he wouldn't hesitate to

accumulate wealth for my ter-
 mal life, nothing however I shall
 will lose its merit & reward.

St. John says sufferings are
 very much not for long time but
 see and calculate if you can
 his glory. Oh my soul have
 the conversion made, time is
 short. Suffer for our Lord
 willingly without grudging
 - love Him for the sake.

St. Peter on the lake of Gene-
 zareth was ashamed of his
 wife seeking occasion for a change
 he was dear Lord mercy fully &
 delicately gave it. How I am?
 To become a pastor love is essen-
 tially required. "Religio plus huius"
 "Geremus adhaec Jesus se separavit
 from their coats, because they love
 best moral things. fings! more
 than him. How I am when studying
 "That delivers man unto to follow Him
 out of gratitude shall not also cost
 him to attach me to Him, since he
 has delivered me from regions!"

Handwriting of Founder Father

apologize. He had been deeply troubled by the indiscreet behaviour and unintelligible talk of his uneducated children. In fact, they could not understand their father's intentions properly. There was a big chasm in the spiritual and intellectual spheres between the children and the father. Nevertheless, he worked tirelessly giving them every opportunity to thrive at all levels.

Until then father himself has been appointing superiors for each convent after they finished three years of their tenure. However, on 30 May 1955, a new chapter was opened in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. Twenty representatives were chosen from the six convents as it was determined before and held a meeting on that day at Kokkalai convent which was presided over by Bishop Mar George Alappatt. The bishop explained the responsibility of the elected chapter members and the norms and values of the canonical election. They elected superiors for each convent and a novice mistress. The election result was as follows :

	Place	Mother	Asst Mother
1.	Chowannur	Sr Anchala	Sr Margret
2.	Kokkalai	Sr Albeena	Sr Scholastica
3.	Rajagiri	Sr Reeta	Sr Ceraphina
4.	Fatima	Sr Juliana	Sr Augustina
5.	Mullasserri	Sr Rose	Sr Alphonsa
6.	Kallur	Sr Thecla	Sr Emild

Novice Mistress : Sr Metilda

The elected superiors led the sisters honouring the desires and ideals of our beloved father. He used to correct

their drawbacks regularly and lovingly. The administration of the religious community moved on quietly in the midst of extreme poverty. He was still giving classes to the novices.

Having understood the natural law that 'death is sure but time is uncertain,' he with a deep insightful inspiration anticipated his last days and made many preparations in the months of August and September, 1956. In conjunction with this, he arranged all the documents including the sales deed and mortgage deed of the convent, labelled it clearly so that anyone could understand it easily. Then, Fr George Chirammel, the grand nephew of Fr John Ukken was summoned through a messenger. He was appointed as the executor to carry out the terms of his Will. The pain of departure disturbed Fr John Ukken constantly without anybody's notice. He was often suffering from that pain. In September, while he was advising his daughters, he said, "*Do not be afraid, my small group of sheep. I will be in heaven helping you all, more than now.*"* "*After my death, my mission is to pray for you.*"* "*This institution will grow and spread like a trimmed vine plant.*"* Even his own daughters did not realize the extent of the prophetic power of that holy man. Tears started to well up in their eyes and they were choked with grief. Their sobbing echoed everywhere. He replied, "*Without much delay I may lie dead and you all will come to know the news soon. Then weep. Do not cry now.*"* He said this several times in the same month. Still nobody knew these things were going to happen shortly. Does anyone want the departure of their beloved one? Everything was predictions of the end of his life.

Bodily Departure - A Spiritual Birth

We usually celebrate the day of the demise of the saints. Actually it is their birthday in Heaven. They will wait for that day to come soon. Fr John Ukken who longed to unite with God and to see the face of his Mother and his Guru wanted to reach his own home very soon. His life was a pilgrimage to heaven.

4 October 1956 was the feast of St Francis of Assisi. After the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, Fr Ukken gave a touching sermon cum advice about poverty and the love of God. He had slight temperature when he reached his room after breakfast. Since fever was increasing, he had to take rest. Dr Krishna Iyer, the family doctor of Fr Ukken was called in and he medicated him as usual. The fever reduced but he was not fully recovered.

Even when he was down with sickness, if he found any of his daughters gloomy, he would seek clearly the reason for it and never forgot to comfort them immediately. He considered his illness negligible but his daughters' concerns were more grievous. It was a great frustration for him to have any kind of hindrances to the classes of the novices. On 10 October he, the devotee of the Holy Eucharist received the Holy Communion. That day the novice mistress was called in and informed her that he would not be able to take classes anymore and to make arrangements for it. They still did not understand he was speaking about his end.

On 11 October bouts of cough slowly developed and the accompanying fever was indicative of double pneumonia, quite a serious condition at that old age. Bishop Alappatt visited Fr Ukken in his residence at Chowannur at 4.30 pm.

Then he said to the bishop, *“I am getting ready for the journey. I can’t do anything at all further. Everything is delivered to you, bishop.”** Then the bishop consoled him, “Relax, don’t be worried at all.” Our beloved father’s sense of humour made all shake with laughter even at that time .

13 October 1956! It was a Saturday. The feast day of Our Lady of Fatima (sixth apparition date). On this day he said to his daughters, *“Bring me my fine cassock, shoes and spectacles. All these are to be worn today to receive Holy Communion.”** All were wonderstruck. He was always strict to have his clothes to be neat and tidy just like his inner holiness. As they were getting him ready, he said smilingly, *“You are dressing me like a bride who is preparing to receive her bridegroom.”** They still did not understand that he was getting ready to see God, the bridegroom face to face. He spoke as if he got his passport to heaven. Very soon, Fr Itoop Valiyaveetil, the parish priest of Chowannur reached there and gave him Holy Communion. An hour after receiving the Holy Eucharist, his cough worsened.

Fr Marianos CMI (he gave classes for novices at that time) after the feast celebrations in Fatima Convent, Ayyamparambu, reached Chowannur to meet him and tried to cheer him up by describing the festivity but he did not succeed. The cough became still worse and his whole body perspired awfully. When sisters who had come from other convents started to say goodbye before they left, he was able to say only *“Let it be so.”** Unusually he gave them blessing thrice as if for everyone. The fit of coughing prevented him from speaking even a single word. They gave medicine but there was no relief. However, he was calm. Then

Fr Marianos also left the place. The condition became very critical by eleven o'clock and the parish priest was called in to be with him. The parish priest called Fr Marianos also. Everybody together decided to administer the Last Sacrament to him. Fr Marianos told the patient, "Revd father, the Last Sacrament is going to be administered to you." Immediately, father shook his head and lay down straight with both hands folded together. Fr Marianos administered the Last Sacrament. At the end of each prayer, he clearly replied "*Amen*."* Soon after this, the main celebrant got out of the room to wash his hands. Two minutes passed by without anybody's notice. The foster-children Peter, Jacob and Devassy were there near his deathbed. He looked at everyone meaningfully and silently bid everyone goodbye before the last journey. The time was 4.30 pm. He slowly turned to the other side and breathed his last. The merciful-hearted, calmly closed his eyes forever and left this world. Since the founder father, a true devotee of Mother Mary died on her feast day as the fulfillment of his heart's desire it is believed that Mother Mary came with all angels and saints to take her beloved son to heaven, to his own home with a song of praise on the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima (the sixth and last apparition of Our Lady of Fatima was on 13 October 1917; from 13 May to 13 October). He had proclaimed once, "*At the moment of Death, when the whole hell is let loose on us, when despair, remorse regret possess our heart, when our intelligence has become so dull, our will so powerless, half-dead, she is our consolation, our joy.*"¹

*My mother, help me in my last moments.*² It is believed, Mother Mary instantaneously responded to the constant prayer of her beloved son.

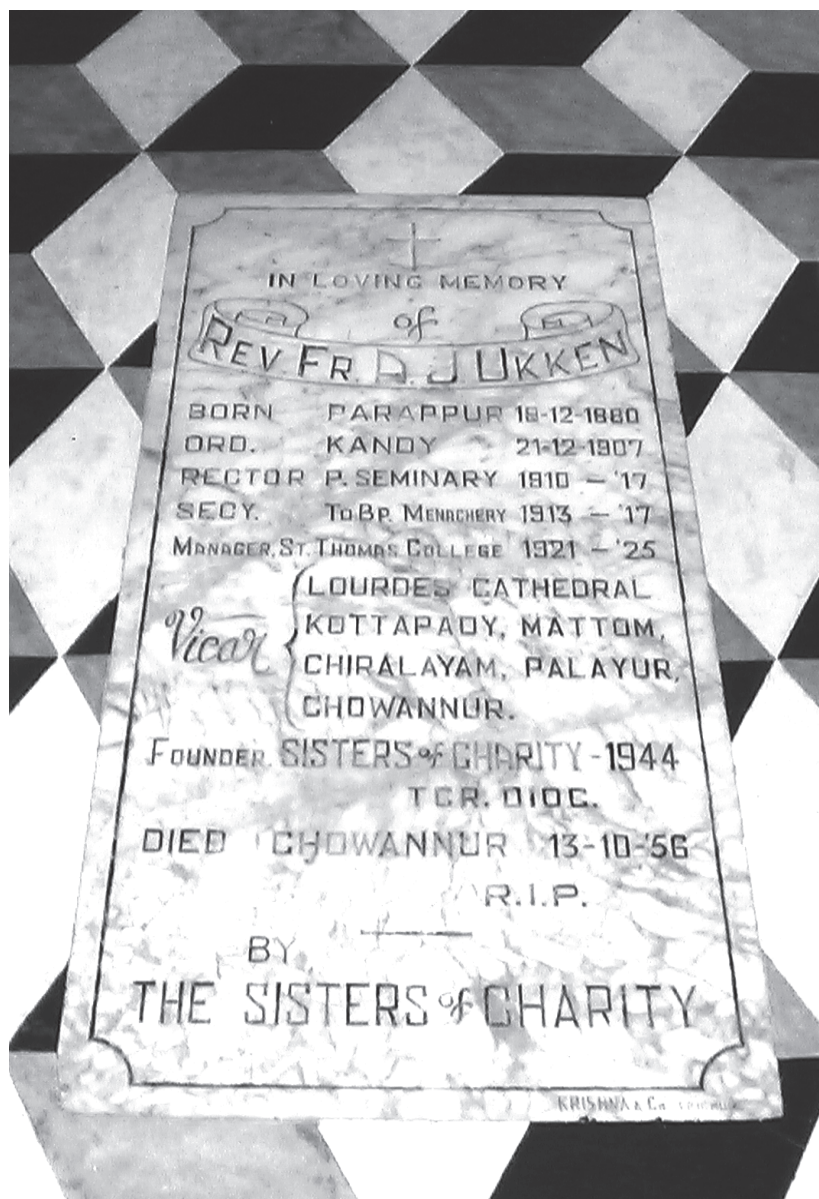
The news of the death of Fr UKken spread like wild fire. Those who heard it rushed to the spot. There was pin drop silence everywhere except the sound of sobbing. Everyone irrespective of caste, creed and colour thronged there, with tear-filled eyes and the drops of tears streaming down the cheeks to see their 'Achan Thamburan' once again. All of them had experienced his compassionate love and



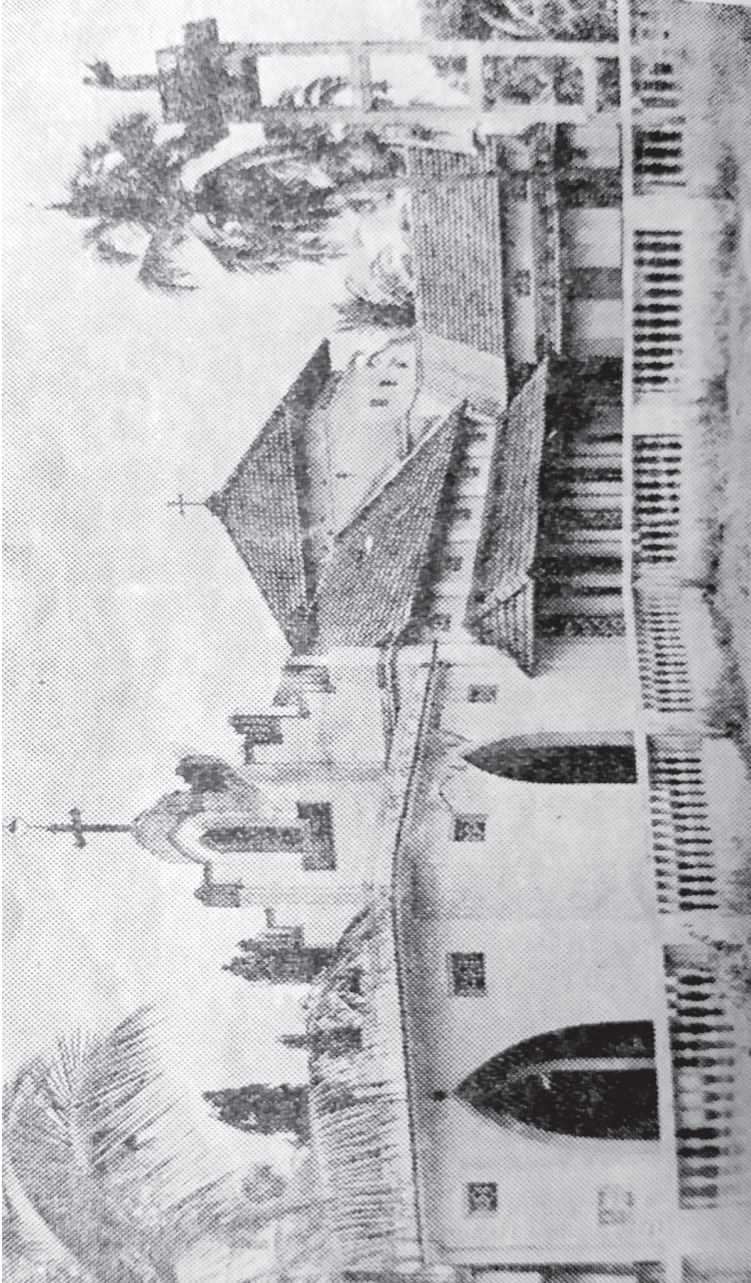
Eternal Rest

tenderness somehow or other. Fr Ukken was the beloved of everybody. All those who had thronged there cried out in one voice, "A saint is dead."

The bishop who was informed about the sad demise of Revd Fr Ukken, reached there to pay homage to his 'guru'. After praying the 'Oppees' (office for the dead), His Excellency read the Last Will of Fr Ukken in order to decide the burial place. It was stated that he should be buried in the convent chapel if his daughters asked for it. Otherwise the burial could be done in the parish Church. Since there was not enough space in the convent chapel and also due to the great influence of the parish priest, it was decided to bury him in the parish Church. The funeral rites were led by Mgr Sebastian Chirayath. The funeral service was on 14 October afternoon. Soon after the High Mass 'Rasa,' Mgr Sebastian Chirayath delivered the funeral address.³ It was followed by the usual funeral ceremonial prayers, the bier was kept in a decorated lorry and the funeral cortege started on its way which was accessible to the public in order to view the procession. Even nature has expressed its anguish over the departure of the 'great missionary of love.' As a sign of sorrow the atmosphere was cloudy and dark. She was still restrained. She did not shed her tears. Many priests, sisters and thousands of laity participated in this funeral procession around Kunnamkulam town. There was not a single person who had not experienced his love and help or who were unknown to him in Kunnamkulam and its surrounding areas. This town had not witnessed such a big solemn funeral procession until then. Even then he must have been singing the song of love looking at them from above. When the bier entered the Church, people of all ages pushed their way forward through a dense crowd in order



Tomb of the Founder Father



**Place of Eternal Rest of the Founder Father
St Thomas Church, Chowannur**

to enter the Church. They were pushing and shoving to get to the front to have a last glimpse of their 'Achan Thamburan', their king, their father, their mother, their benefactor, their patron of salvation and to kiss him to say final goodbye, to offer him flowers and garlands and lastly to receive the spirit from him once more. That was an outburst of love. The funeral service ended at about 7pm. Still the mourning sounds filled the atmosphere! People wept loudly. Again and again they cried out in one voice, "We have lost a holy man."

Fr Augustine John Ukken, the sculptor of Chowannur and the beloved of the people of Kunnamkulam rests in Chowannur Church where he had served as a parish priest for twenty-six years and showers blessings even today and ever after on those who seek his mediation.

Pen-Portrait

At first glance, one could see his physical appearance and personality traits were magnificent, attractive and embroidered with a divine spirit. He had a fair complexion, was thinly built, quite tall, with a crown of silver hair adorning his head, wide-brimmed forehead, glowing eyes, rosy cheeks slightly tilted to either side, always smiling lips and the blossoming nose contributed to his magnetic personality. Who is this most reverend priest? He is none other than Revd Fr Augustine John Ukken. The vitality of his eyes made the perspective very attractive and hearty. The broad forehead was a source of high intelligence and extraordinary memory. Meeting a person just once, he remembered all the whereabouts including that person's name, native place, house name etc for the rest of his life. The power of this

perception had been a great blessing to him and was useful in his mission. It helped him to reach everyone's heart irrespective of caste, creed and colour.

Clad in a white cassock, with a sweet smile on his face, he would appear like "an angel descended from heaven." 'Revd father's tender love' began to manifest when he spoke. As the conversation went on, the first impression would deepen and ultimately it would be firmly-rooted. Those who approached him would feel the presence of God in him. The world saw him as 'a man of God,' or 'an angel sent by God.'

His proximity comforted the afflicted, the sorrowful, the poor and the destitute. His voice that gave them relief and inspiration always echoed in their ears. They saw him as a mediator between God and man. He was cautious to protect the sheep from every danger and showed them the green pastures where water and grass were in plenty. He was a lover of simplicity and always had been an approachable loving person. There was no one who had been discarded from his love. He was so innocent that he frequently joked and laughed out heartily. Deceitful minds sometimes did take advantage of his so innocent a nature.

The world has seen a volunteer soldier in Fr Ukken who was ever ready to go anywhere to do anything. He understood that lack of love is the reason for all sorts of discomforts, disturbances, injustice, slavery, sin and disease both in the community and in the society. He strenuously worked hard to make them worthy for the agape of the Heavenly Father by imparting compassionate love and the tenderness of Jesus to a world wandering for love. Fr Ukken started visiting each house knowing if the family is good,

the community will be better. He knew everyone personally. He had a pre-eminent ability to solve family strife, no matter however serious it was. He toiled hard to uplift the low classes and also those who were abandoned by the communities during the oppressive period of caste system. He was a brave soldier fully prepared to fight against the ethical and moral evil that existed in the society at that time. His growth was vertically towards God and horizontally to his brethren. His effort to bring various Christian denominations together under one shepherd was indescribable. In fact, he was the prophet of ecumenism. Fr John Ukken, a farsighted village redeemer was the first one to provide employment opportunities for the young men and Job chances through small scale industries for young women in order to empower them.

He went to the families of the sick to meet all their needs even when there was nothing in his hand, gave his own food to them and blessed them. The on-lookers were stunned by seeing his compassion and care for the sick. When he saw people, the miserable human figures lying on the roadsides due to sickness and poverty specially those who had none to care for, seeing Christ in them, he picked them up and brought them to his room, nursed and fed them. Take care of the sick and those in pain, assist the helpless and the oppressed, offer aid to those who were created by the societies and later forsaken by the same, stop harassment of women, create awareness against the social evils, conduct catechism classes and prayer meetings, promote educational opportunities in rural areas, conduct ecumenical activities, spread the love of Jesus through social media and reach across all the corners of the globe to gain souls, like these

many were the dreams of Fr Ukken. It is remarkable that he found solution for all these through the Word of God. He established the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity to realize all his dreams. The beloved father himself gave pieces of advice, training and conferences needed for these kinds of apostolic works.

He was a man of suffering. His cup of suffering was overflowing. He suffered it till the end. He sought refuge in prayer without fail. His deep faith in God's providence and guidance led him forward. God had given him the crown of victory when he drank fully the cup of suffering. None of the activities he started was a failure. But he was undergoing severe torments and mental agony till the end. Mainly his suffering was because of the lack of money available for any developments. He experienced mental burden and heaviness of heart when he had to borrow money for daily needs. Together with that, ignorance, imprudence and insincerity of his own children were all thorns for him. Many types of criticisms cropped up because of the new ventures he undertook. He had experienced so many difficulties, worries and afflictions which were not known to others. His ability to sanctify all this for a peaceful life in heaven was his achievement. The mystery of his success was that he had a keen interest to help and support others in their sorrows by forgetting his own hardships. Thus he succeeded in the law of love to one another.

Fr John Ukken was an apostle of the Blessed Sacrament. He found time to spend hours in front of the Lord of the Eucharist during the eventful life. He always took refuge in

the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Holy Mother Mary was his real mother. He used to advise his children, “*Through Jesus to God the Father and through Mary to Jesus.*”*

He had been a challenge to the modern world in all the stages of his life: as an altar boy, a seminarian and an ordained priest. It was apparent that all the promises and ideals he had made when he was a seminarian were executed in his life. He offered a perfectly idealistic and exemplary life. That was his ardent desire. He was excited to love his brethren as he was burnt by God’s love. His life was making a beeline for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity- in their Pastures

On 13 October 1956, the holy soul left this world leaving his only twelve year old dear daughter in the hands of God. She stood helplessly staring at this sudden happening. She feared whether her existence itself would end after the separation of her beloved father who was everything for her. There were 126 members and 6 convents (seventh convent was under construction) for this religious community at that time. Lack of education and inexperience shook her. No one was willing to take up this religious community due to its financial insecurity. “I am throwing you out with both your hands and feet tied up into the middle of the deep sea. You have to learn swimming yourself. I will watch from the shore if you swim and escape or die drinking water.” This was the response of the then bishop of the diocese. But, “*Do not be afraid, small flock of sheep. Even if I am going now, I will help you more than I can now, from heaven.*”* The last advice of the beloved father at his deathbed strengthened her very much to overcome all adverse situations. The strong faith in

the providence of God that she inherited as the parental heritage, held her hand and took care of her to proceed ahead fearlessly. And thus she continued her life's journey. There were many difficulties to overcome heroically in this life of helplessness. The struggle against the crises led her from victory to victory. The sight of her fast growth loudly proclaims the powerful mediation of the founder father. The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity are engaged in various activities, enabling others to experience the compassionate love of Jesus in fifteen (now thirty) dioceses in the country and abroad. This religious community which is 'a monument erected in honour of God's infinite mercy' is engaged in spreading the love of God's kingdom among the poor. Her pastures include medical care, educational activities, social work, serving the destitute, training the mentally challenged, family development programme, upliftment of villages, employment training programme, jail ministry, slum service, offset printings, HIV hospice and missionary activities. Powerfully, she displays her compassion to the destitutes, kindness to the poor and dedicates her service with love everywhere. Thus, understanding the needs of the people, she renders her service in various scenarios and becomes Christ's witnesses through Christian ideals based on Gospel. The founder father's words always rippled in her ears, "*Love is your task, let no one surpass you in love.*"* The children of the Congregation are advancing in giving the compassionate love of God the Father, becoming the support and encouragement to the helpless, destitute and poor with perfect missionary spirit in serving the Church and society by overcoming all adversities and reactionary forces against her.

The incidental and amazing growth of the Congregation is due to the continuous inspiration, motivation and training given to its members when the founder father was alive and his powerful mediation from heaven after his death is also the continuation of the story. Being seated in heaven, he is showering roses upon us even today. He might be looking at his daughters from heaven even today and saying smilingly, “*Do not be afraid, small flock of sheep.....*”*

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity - in the Church and in the Modern World

Revd Fr Augustin John Ukken, founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was a prophet who understood and responded to the challenges and needs of the twentieth century. He was an image of Christ, the Redeemer. It was a time when the horrific pictures of World War II filled human minds and also the crucial point of time when caste system with its high caste-low caste distinction and landlordism where in land lord-tenant mentality (Land Lord - Tenant Relations Act) were very strongly rooted among them. Slavery and harassment of women were not considered as evil. The divisive thoughts swallowed the society extensively. Injustice and exploitation asserted its sovereignty in the society. Man thirsts for a drop of love. Superstitions and evil customs exist on the other side. The introduction of the religious to the families and villages was not considered to be encouraging or commendable. In such a phase of time, Fr Ukken who was a prophet, devoted his life to regain the status of world brotherhood, went down to the people, stood for them and fought against the immoral systems and repressive forces that prevailed in the society. He devoted

himself for the uplift of the poor and the sinners. He discerned the demands of the time and responded to them in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. Even though he realized the oppositions he would have to face on his way, he advanced confronting all the struggles courageously.

Realizing the importance of family which is the base of noble humane education, he went down to the families in spite of the awareness of the anti-social evils in the family atmosphere. Man begins his studies of values that make the community strong, happy and prosperous from home. Good families are the most effective source to improve the society. He raised his voice against the evils of the society that gnawed it. He spent days and nights to eradicate the superstitions from the community. He gave emphasis for prayer and penance. He wished and prayed to travel across the world to gain souls. He was in a quest to do what was not done there yet. He entrusted the same mission to his children. It is an important responsibility. We must learn about the needs of the era in which we live and the social injustices that prevail in the world today. We should open our eyes and ears to hear the cry of the times. We must fight against social injustice by learning the periodical teachings of the Church without delay and preach the Word of God for bringing about life-bound renewal. A sister of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity must be a person who responds to the needs of the times. She is also obliged to give an awareness of the social evils of each age. For that she must have the smell and taste of the land (ability

to recognize the situation and to have the up-to-date knowledge about the happenings in the world). She should embrace the culture of the land where she works.

The service of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity is mainly among the poor, the sinners, the sick, the destitute and the ignored of the community. This should not be forgotten at all.

In the twentieth century of scientific age man is wandering in search of values, personal relationships, God experience, real peace and true love. During this period, if money evolves as the criterion of human glory, the unfortunate conditions like violence, corruption, injustice, inequality, harassment of women, family breakdown etc will persist in all walks of life. The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity must enter the scene in order to raise their voice against these type of systems and to redeem those who suffer inferiority complex and live in depressed situations; and support them to experience Jesus, the symbol of hope. She must stand for the victims of exploitation and the down trodden and must be one with them and their land. The sisters of CSC who live in the midst of men with different needs must respond to their needs just like the founder father. The effulgence of the sacrifice of Calvary that radiated the dazzling lustre of self-giving to all the hearts of mankind must radiate through us.

Along with moral lapse, corruption has spread widely at all levels of the society at present. Today's man is a slave of consumerism. Cultural decline is happening everywhere making faith into a mercantile commodity. Righteousness and justice are not seen even among those who are at the

helm of the society today. Persecution of women and foeticide are now common. Families are losing their sanctity and ending up in divorce. It seems to be defamatory for heroes and heroines of the 'single child family' to look after their aged parents. Many people today are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Human life has no value. Violence, killing and looting etc are prevalent everywhere. There is no true love anywhere. The charism and spirit of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity are more relevant now. The world needs more today 'the stars that emit the glory of God and proclaim His infinite mercy.' The modern world is looking with great hope towards the kindled tiny wicks of oil lamps which are radiating the light of Jesus' compassionate love, the brightest and warmest flame that ever glows!

Endnotes

* Oral Tradition

1. Lights from Heaven 1903 [13-14].
2. Cf. Ibid 1903.
3. Cf. "Navajeevika" November 1956.

(The exact excerpts from 'Lights From Heaven' are indicated by their numbers in square brackets in the endnotes.)

FROM THE DIARY NOTES

1. "Let my soul be the spouse of the risen Lord."
1903 [33].
2. "Fight courageously under the banner of Jesus."
1903 [28].
3. "I approach you and take you and embrace you, and love you, kiss you."
1903 [184].
4. "God tries those whom he loves for their greater felicity."
9 November 1904 [273].
5. "The abuse of things only is sin; the same things can be used to glorify God!"
9 November 1903 [144].
6. "If something disagreeable takes place, befalls you whether from a necessary of a free cause say : God has been from eternity thinking of this circumstance to sanctify me, let his holy name be praised for it. I shall use it for his glory and to my sanctification."
December 1904 [298].
7. "si te cognoscem sicut Deum glorificet et agat gratias et non evenescat in cogitationibus suis"
(O God, I try to know you for glorifying you only, but not to get entangled myself in the sphere of knowledge).
24 August 1903 [97].

8. "To love contemplation uniting to our ordinary daily avocations." December 1904 [294].
9. "He crowns in us his own works and merits." 6 September 1904 [249].
10. "I am also called to make known Jesus and his Kingdom." 24 June 1903 [62].
11. "For attending to the things of the Father, I will leave some satisfaction for that purpose." 25 June 1903 [63].
12. "Every little thing that comes either from the part of elements, of your brothers etc you can receive as punishment for your sins and sins of others." December 1903 [195].
13. "My poor life begun in sin at least end in plenitude." 11 August 1904 [230].
14. "Robe of baptismal of innocence, show to walk in the way of God's commands, sing of right and heirdom!" 20 December 1932 [364].
15. "A good life is the best preparation for death." 28 September 1903 [118].
16. "If one is in sanctifying grace without any attachment to anything death is not frightful." 12 December 1932 [362].
17. "Whether in the world or in the seminary, as a merchant or as a scholar, young or old, my end is to love God." 2 August 1903 [80].

18. "Take my soul every necessity as a precious token of Jesus' love for you: and If you have, deprive yourself willingly of something." December 1904 [297].
19. "Our Lord would not communicate himself and least attachment is a hindrance...!" 15 October 1903 [130].
20. "I shall not look when I have to suffer in any way, how much it costs me or how miserable I am; but how I am becoming similar to my most sweet master and mother!" 27 September 1904 [256].
21. "(World) earth be my desolation." 8 June 1903 [56].
22. "Often in distress friends are not avail." 16 December 1932 [371].
23. "Gift of perseverance should be earnestly begged through Mary." 4 September 1922 [348].
24. "A life for, flesh, the world and to self cannot be good." 28 September 1903 [118].
25. "So do ye; help shall not be wanting" (Don't deny help to anyone). 1903 [36].
26. "Crucifix is a golden book but unfortunately closed to so many !" 19 December 1903 [201].
27. "My perfections and sanctifications consists in, remaining under the mantle of my sweetest mother." 22 December 1905 [320].

28. “Converse oftener with your mother, read of her and speak of her and thus grow in her love and child like confidence.” 28 April 1907 [331].
29. “Make also every month the preparation for death.” 14 December 1906 [328].
30. “Superior holds God’s place.” 4 September 1922 [343].
31. “Do not load yourself with unnecessary things.” 21 August 1904 [239].
32. “A design behind so as regards your life a loving Providence works out, shapes everything faith and cheerfulness to take well...” 19 December 1932 [378].
33. “Purity of the heart consists not only in shunning all deliberate sins but also in keeping away from all worldly ideas and desires and their place harbouring holy thoughts.” 24 July 1904 [215].
34. “Particular examen is a special weapon in the spiritual combat for habitual and pertinacious foes to be kept during the whole day, 24 hours.” December 1904 [291].
35. “All beautiful according to time.” December 1904 [284].
36. “As body lives by food, so soul lives by doing the will of our Father.” 28 July 1903 [77].
37. “*misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*” (I will sing the mercies of the Lord forever). December 1903 [151].

38. “He is the fountain of science, from him flows every knowledge.” 23 December 1903 [182].
39. “A kind of timetable for the following day to be fixed on the previous Evening to save time and to do much work.” December 1904 [291].
40. “Light to see my interior and to know heavenly things and the way of perfection.” 1903 [19].
41. “Self in the centre around which revolves everything.” 28 September 1903 [119].
42. “Prepare for the reception of the holy Ghost by prayer and mortification.” 22 May 1903 [48].
43. “True greatness is in being humble.” october 1904 [260].

(The exact excerpts from ‘Lights From Heaven’ are indicated by their numbers in square brackets.)

FROM CONFERENCES

1. A religious must be similar to Jesus completely. 1946
2. Jesus is the model of a religious. 1946
3. We must select and use the creatures for the praise of God, the creator just as medicines are selected for specific uses. 1946
4. Just as a baby resolves its annoyance towards his mother by suckling breast milk, the children of God attain harmony with Jesus through partaking of His Body and Blood. 1946
5. Meditation brings about heavenly tranquility and happiness in any difficulty. 1946
6. Be like a pilgrim. Heaven is our home and thinking this world is only a foreign land, hurriedly walk hoping to reach hometown, ignoring the pleasures of this world. 1946
7. We must nourish our divine call through prayer, sacrifice and above all with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. 1946
8. A religious extends help to relatives, not by any material means but through prayers and good examples. 1946
9. While talking with our relatives, our godly serenity, happiness and our interest in the service of God must be expressed in such a way that it should shower blessings of God upon them. 1946

10. If a wife loves her relatives more than her husband, there will arise a quarrel between them. Likewise if a religious loves her relatives more than Jesus, her spouse will not like it. 1946
11. The greatness remains, not by living in a holy place but by living in holiness. 1946
12. The aim of the religious life is not a long life but a good life. 1946
13. We shall not be taken up by others praises nor be deceived by them. Let us not accept the honours for which we are not worthy at all. 1946
14. The death of a religious sister is like a bride falling into the hands of her beloved bridegroom. 1946
15. Whether life is long or short, it is just a preparation to face the test at the last moment of life. 1946
16. Death is nothing but a bridge that connects the life in this world to that in heaven. 1946
17. Silence is the door that leads us to heaven. 1946
18. Silence is not just stitching up our lips but it is to savour the sweet voice of Jesus by sitting at his feet like Mary Magdalene in order to attain perfection of virtues. 1946
19. Silence is the father of prayer and soul of religious life. 1946
20. The religious must accept all the insults and misunderstandings that they confront as if they are coming from the hands of God. 1946

21. Jesus is the only obstacle for the comfortable life of a religious who leads a worldly life without having heavenly desires. 1946
22. It is destructive to enjoy the worldly pleasures in such a way that it suffocates the soul. 1946
23. If grass is given to the cattle, they will be satisfied. There is an element in human beings that cannot be satisfied with food alone. It can be satisfied by the Word of God only. 1946
24. If you love, there will be joy and prosperity. Hence love each other well. 1946
25. As the oil poured on Aaron's head flowed down to his body and its fragrance spread over the whole Mount Hermon, the fragrance of mutual love should spread among all sisters. 1946
26. A profound and intense internal life enriches the merit of external works but virtue that is shallow and showy diminishes the merit. 1946
27. We should practise Jesus Christ's love of enemies in our lives. 1946
28. Crosses are signs of God's love. God makes those who love Him equal to His only-begotten Son, the Crucified. 1946
29. Those who know the meaning of the crucifix or the good news of the cross of Christ, realise how to face life. 1946

30. The natural abode of a religious sister is at the foot of the cross just like the natural habitat of a fish is in water.
1946
31. Respect all other religious congregations recognized by the Church, never find fault with them and do not speak low of their esteem.
1946
32. There should be a strong faith and love towards Mother Mary like a child. The delight and happiness of the religious life must be in her.
1946
33. The progress of the Congregation lies in the progress of the virtues. It does not depend on the temporal wealth.
1946
34. You should have a daughterly affection towards your Congregation and show interest and love in all its affairs.
1946
35. Spend a good deal of time to earn virtues without losing even a single minute knowingly.
1946
36. The constitution of the Congregation is the most important book for a religious sister next to the Bible. She should learn the rules by heart and meditate on them.
1946
37. The profession day is the day when one sets ablaze the holocaust which was prepared continuously till that day.
1946
38. Each action of a religious sister appears as an act of worship before God.
1946

39. The spouse of Christ is a sacrificial lamb of love and renunciation. She is the mother of souls. 1946
40. A religious sister who keeps a penny as her own is not worth a penny. 1946
41. When we comfort the sick, serve the aged and the destitute, we serve Jesus. 1946
42. The religious should lead a life of service. 1946
43. Jesus never uttered a word of complaint against the place he was crucified or about the thieves who were crucified with him. So also you must not complain about the place wherever you are posted or about the companions you may get. 1946
44. Any sort of work in the religious life is great. 1946
45. Give due respect to everyone without the criteria of the world. 1946
46. When you are troubled by grief, struggles or enmity, go to Jesus at least with your heart. 1946
47. Even if you feel tepidity, hatred and idleness, do not give up the regular prayers and devotions. 1946
48. The infinite God alone can shower infinite graces. 1946

**MILESTONES IN THE LIFE OF
FR AUGUSTINE JOHN UKKEN**

- 9 December 1880 - Birth at Thoyakkavu
- 26 December 1880 - Baptism at Enamavu
- June 1883 - Demise of Mother
- 1886 - Demise of Father
- 17April 1898 - Entrance into the Seminary at Kandy
- 22 December 1900 - Vestition
- 22 December 1906 - Diaconite Ordination
- 21December 1907 - Ordination at Kandy
- 22 December 1907 - First Holy Eucharistic Celebration
- 1908- 1910 - Asst Manager, St Thomas College,
Thrissur
- 1910-1911 - Parish Priest, Kandassankadavu,
Thrissur
- 1911-1917 - Rector, Minor Seminary Thrissur
- 1913-1917 - Secretary to Bishop Mar John
Menachery

- 1916-1919 - Parish Priest, Lourdes Cathedral, Thrissur
- 1919-1921 - Parish Priest, Kottapady Church
- 1921-1925 - Manager, St Thomas College, Thrissur
- 1925-1928 - Parish Priest, Mattom
- 1928-1933 - Parish Priest, Chowannur
- 1929 - Foundation of Orphanage
- 21 November 1930 - Institution of Pious Association for Women
- 22 December 1932 - Silver Jubilee of Ordination
- 1933-1940 - Parish Priest, Chiralayam
- 1940-1941 - Parish Priest, Palayur
- 19 December 1940 - Shashtiabdapoorthi
- 1941-1954 - Parish Priest, Chowannur
- 9 November 1944 - Blessing of the Motherhouse at Chowannur
- 13 November 1944 - Permission for Establishment of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity

- 21 November 1944 - Official Recognition and Foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity
- 18 March 1945 - Approval of Religious Habit
- 3 May 1945 - Vestition of first Members
- 28 August 1946 - Establishment of St Augustine Convent, Kokkalai
- 28 October 1946 - Establishment of Christ King Convent, Mundathicode
- 1 January 1948 - First Profession of the first Members
- 2 February 1950 - Establishment of Nazareth studyhouse at Kunnankulam
- 18 February 1950 - Establishment of Fatima Convent, Chowannur
- 8 September 1953 - Establishment of Providence Convent, Mullassery
- 11 February 1954 - Entry of Sisters of Charity in the service of Leprosy Patients
- 19 March 1954 - Establishment of St Joseph's Convent, Kallur

- 21 November 1955 - Establishment of Maria Regina Convent, Puthussery
- 1954-1956 - Retired life, Chaplain of the CSC convent in Chowannur
- 4 October 1956 - Last Celebration of the Holy Eucharist
- 13 October 1956 - Towards the Abode of God

ABBREVIATIONS

Mt	-	Matthew
Mk	-	Mark
Lk	-	Luke
Jn	-	John
Acts	-	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	-	Romans
1 Cor	-	1 Corinthians
Gal	-	Galatians
Eph	-	Ephesians
Phil	-	Philippians
Col	-	Colossians
1 Thess	-	1 Thessalonians
Tim	-	Timothy
Titus	-	Titus
Heb	-	Hebrews
Jas	-	James
1 Pet	-	1 Peter
Gen	-	Genesis

Ex	-	Exodus
Lev	-	Leviticus
Deut	-	Deuteronomy
1 Sam	-	1 Samuel
Chr	-	Chronicles
Ps	-	Psalms
Eccl	-	Ecclesiastes
Isa	-	Isaiah
Jer	-	Jeremiah
Ezek	-	Ezekiel
Dan	-	Daniel
Hos	-	Hosea
Jona	-	Jonah
Mic	-	Micah
Hab	-	Habakkuk
AA	-	Apostolicam Actuositatem (Apostolate of Laity)
AG	-	Ad Gentes (Missionary Activity)

- GE - Gravissimum Educationis
(Christian Education)
- GS - Gaudium et spes
(The Church in the modern world)
- LG - Lumen Gentium
(The Church)
- OT - Optatam Totius
(Priestly Training)
- PC - Perfectae Caritatis
(Religious life)
- PO - Presbyterorum Ordinis
(Priests)
- SC - Sacrosanctum Concilium
(Liturgy)
- UR - Unitatis Redintegration
(Ecumenism)

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Active Mystic Beyond Times

This is an eventful biography of Fr Ukken, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, an active mystic beyond times who was filled with the compassionate love of Jesus. He lost his mother when he was two and a half years old and his father at the age of six. His life, budded in a lowly circumstance, sprouted through the best possible training of priesthood, blossomed into a magnanimous personality. He became an all-rounder both in the Church service and in socio-cultural field of activities. He who was a prominent member of the priests of the diocese of Thrissur became the most accepted Panchayat President of Chowannur and a beloved of the people of all castes, creeds and religions. His versatile personality is absolutely reflected here.

His divinity is perfectly illuminated in the foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. He became a beloved father and mother for them by imbibing Jesus' compassionate love into his life, shared it as the charism with the first members and formed them in Jesus. The pain and thrill he has experienced while imparting the charism is depicted here plainly.

It is a biography that is sculptured using authentic sources in simple language. His blessed life was a real inspiration for priests, the religious as well as for the lay faithful. Let this biography of Fr Ukken's destitute life be a "Lamp for the feet, and light for the paths" not only for the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity but for all of us. Wishing every success for this book...

Fr. Sebastian Poonoly CMI