



**Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly** is a Syro-Malabar Catholic priest belonging to the Archdiocese of Trichur, Kerala, India. The author obtained Doctorate in Theology (2013) from the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies in Kotholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. At present the author serves in Marymatha Major Seminary, Mulayam-Mannuthy, Trichur as a resident staff and Dean of Studies in the Department of Theology, Associate Editor of *Encounter - A Journal of Interdisciplinary Reflections of Faith and Life*, Trust Member of PAROC (Pastoral Animation Research and Out-reach Center) and PAROC Research Coordinator, Secretary of MEPC (Marymatha Encounters of Pastoral Challenges) Symposia. He has been serving as a Member in the Syro-Malabar Central Liturgical Committee (CLC) at Kakkanad, Member cum Secretary of Liturgical Commission in the Archdiocese of Trichur, a member in Indian Theological Association (ITA), and Executive Member in Kerala Theological Association (KTA).

### ***Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus...***

Venerable Augustine John Ukken's practical guide to the pastors of today...

Pastoral care is an art of possible...

Each pastor who is responsible for the care of the faithful should...

be a beacon of *Pastor Bonus* (Good Shepherd)...

be merciful...

be compassionate...

be a Good Samaritan...

be Eucharistic...

be a *Pastor bonus* to the sons and daughters, the lost, the last and the least...



# **LOVING ANTIPHON OF A PASTOR BONUS**



**Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly**

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# **Loving Antiphon of a *Pastor Bonus***

**Venerable Augustine John Ukken's  
Practical Guide to the Pastors of Today**

**Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly**

**Charity Publications  
Mariabhavan Generalate  
Kolazhy  
2019**

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Practical Guide to the Pastors of Today

Author:  
**Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly**

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**VENERABLE AUGUSTINE JOHN UKKEN**  
21<sup>st</sup> December 2018

- 1880 Dec. 19 : Birth  
 1900 Dec. 22 : Vestition  
 1906 Dec. 22 : Diaconate  
 1907 Dec. 21 : Ordination

## PASTORAL MINISTRY

- 1907 Dec. - 1909 Sept : Assistant Manager  
 St. Thomas School, Thrissur  
 1909 Sept. - 1909 Dec. 31 : Vicar, Kandassankadavu & Acting  
 Vicar, Vadanappilly  
 1910 Jan. 1- 1917 Dec. 31 : Rector Minor Seminary, Thrissur  
 & Vicar, Vijayapuram  
 1913 : Vicar, Chiralayam & Chowannur  
 1913 July - 1917 Jan. 13 : Secretary Mar John Menachery  
 1918 Jan. 1 - 1918 Dec. 21 : Vicar, Lourdes Cathedral, Thrissur  
 1918 Dec. 21 - 1921 April : Vicar, Kottapadi & Arthat  
 Common/Acting Vicar at Anjoor,  
 Iyyal, Vellarakkadu, Guruvayoor  
 & Orumanayoor  
 1921 June 4 - 1925 : Manager, St. Thomas College,  
 Thrissur  
 1925 Nov. 1928 : Vicar, Mattom  
 1928 Jan. 28 - 1954 : Vicar, Chowannur  
 1929 : Orphanage  
 1930 Nov. 21 : Pious Association for Women  
 1933 June 12 : Vicar, Chiralayam  
 1939 Jan. 25 - 1941 Nov. 10 : Vicar, Palayoor  
 1944 Nov. 21 : Congregation of the Sisters of  
 Charity  
 1956 Oct. 13 : To Heaven  
 2008 Aug. 24 : Servent of God  
 2018 Dec. 21 : Venerable

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Today from every nook and corner we hear the pleas for good pastors. During the Archdiocesan Assembly, Trichur (10-15 May, 2018) I could hear such plea for good pastors: the people always want their minister replaced by ‘an honest and quiet godly man’. They think that ‘a good pastor will guide his flock charitably, but a careless shepherd will annoy them mightily.’ Some others long for the better: if the pastor is a man ‘of a forward disposition apt to displease and disquiet everyone’ who worsen parochial conflicts by taking sides rather than by making peace. There are people who also think today that a pastor or a minister should ‘be no common company keeper’. It is in this context, I would like to present some pertinent reflections on the pastoral ministry in the light of the words and actions of Venerable Augustine John Ukken, a good pastor (*Pastor Bonus*).

To a successful completion of the present work *Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus: Venerable Augustine John Ukken’s Practical Guide to the Pastors of Today*, many people generously supported me in one way or other. May I bow my head in front of the Triune God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for the providential grace bestowing upon me throughout this work.

Since 2014, I have been reflecting upon the life and actions of the Venerable Augustine John Ukken. From there onwards I could write four articles on him from different perspectives: *A Man of Practical Sixth Sense: An Exploration into the Pastoral Concern of Fr. Augustine John Ukken’s Apostolate*; *Relevance of Fr. Augustine John Ukken’s Vision of Family as the School of Mercy in the Jubilee Year of Mercy*

(8<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016); Fr. Augustine John Ukken – *The ‘Good Samaritan’ of Suffering*; and Venerable Augustine John Ukken: *The Man of Eucharist Today*. Whenever I was asked to write on the Venerable Augustine John Ukken, I was really touched by his constant intercession in front of the Holy Throne. I am gratefully indebted to him for his constant intercession to complete this work.

As it was in the case of writing scholarly articles on the Venerable, to complete the present work I got instant and constant help and support, encouragement and inspiration from the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. Rev. Sr. Luciana CSC, the Superior General has made available all necessary source materials on the Venerable. For instance, his personal diaries comprises of the fruit of his recollection and reflection to others. In this attempt, I have gone through *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections* (vols. I & II), and *Resolutions* (vols. I & II). The personal diaries of Fr. Ukken, written in English, and partly in Latin were preserved in the Archives of Mariabhavan CSC Generalate, Kolazhy. They constitute the authentic words of Fr. Ukken, and his *Conferences* and *Exhortations* given to CSC Sisters, and taken down by them. Thanks a lot in this regard.

In a special way, I would like to thank Rev. Dr. Paul Pulikkan, for his inspiring articles and scholarly work (*Divine Mercy*) on the Venerable Augustine John Ukken.

I am gratefully indebted to Mar Andrews Thazhath, Archbishop of Trichur, and Mar Tony Neelankavil, Auxiliary Bishop for their support and encouraging words and especially releasing the present work symbolically on the day of announcing the Status of Venerable to the Servant of God Fr. Augustine John Ukken on 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2018. I do acknowledge gratefully for their felicitations to the present work. In a special way, I am also indebted to Mar Jacob

Thoomkuzhy, Archbishop Emeritus, for his support and encouraging words throughout my priestly life. In the course of writing the present work, Very Rev. Fr. Jaison Koonamplakkal, the Rector, the whole staff and students of the Marymatha Major Seminary, Mulayam, Trichur were the instruments of encouragement and support. I thank them sincerely.

I thank in a special way the CSC Santhibhavan Press at Kannamkulangara, Trichur for printing the present book, Mr. Suresh Kodakara who designed the beautiful cover, Sr. Nicy CSC who sketched the cover picture and the inner pictures in an eloquent manner. I do sincerely thank the Reverend CSC Sisters, Sr. Lawrence CSC, Sr. Fisher CSC, Bro. Ajith Chittilappilly and Bro. Libin Chemmannoor who made the proof reading of the text and made valuable corrections and suggestions to improve the present work in good shape.

I also remember with gratitude my classmates in the Minor Seminary onwards, my family members and relatives, my parishioners at Kadangode, and Old Students Association at Erumapetty for their continuing support and encouragements.

Thanks a lot to one and all for having been an inspiration to me in the course of completing the present work on Venerable Augustine John Ukken. I sincerely dedicate my first book to my fellow priests and the future priests in the Archdiocese of Trichur, on the day of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019. I hope, this book will inspire them to be a *Pastor Bonus* (Good Shepherd) in the present day world.

**Fr. Bilju Vazhappilly**  
Marymatha Major Seminary,  
Mulayam-Trichur 680 651  
biljuv@gmail.com

19 November, 2019





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## FOREWORD



Fr. Augustine John Ukken the founder of Congregation of Sisters of Charity was a prophet of compassionate love and a zealous pastor beyond the time who shared life with last, least and the lost. “The Lord has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have a mission to accomplish”. These words of profound conviction made Fr. Augustine John Ukken more contemplative, apostolic and secular. He celebrated and challenged his life as a compassionate pastor with animated and activated serenity.

Being a good shepherd, Fr. Ukken eagerly longed to inherit the qualities of Jesus the good shepherd. Following the example of Christ, Fr. Ukken kept always the compassion for his flock, went in search of the straying and scattered sheep, knew and called each one by their name and was ready to lay down his life for the sheep. He was a priest and pastor who grew in faith, hope and charity amidst the trials and challenges of his parish ministry. As a shepherd, he had very creative ideas and life style. He was so dare to extend his mission in the slums which the other pastors of that time was neglected. The farsighted as well as foresighted

Fr. Ukken was very much convinced about the evangelisation of families and he worked in different ways for the same cause. He was a good pastor of reconciliation and unity. Long before the Second Vatican Council, he had engaged in close collaboration with non catholic Christians.

Through his selfless ministry, Fr. Ukken bore witness in a tangible manner to the saving mission of Jesus the Good Shepherd. He speaks silently that pastors are not destined to sit in their churches, merely inviting the people to come in instead go out and walk with the people, even they are walking away from the church. He was an ambitious and magnanimous priest who wished to convert the whole world to the Kingdom of God by being a laborious proponent of faith, a great missionary, a charioteer of ecumenism, a vehement evangelist, a zealous vocation promoter and an apostle of charity.

*Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus* is an accomplishment by Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly who depicts vividly the vision and mission and the sacredness of Fr. Augustine John Ukken the good pastor. In order to achieve a more integrated knowledge about his pastoral mind and way, the text is divided into twelve chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. A careful reference with a deep reflection upon the life and actions of Fr. Ukken was taken by the author from all the literature available about him which make the study more authentic and trustworthy. A detailed bibliography gives light to further development of the text.

The first chapter is dealt with the deep and wide meaning of the term 'Pastor' with a biblical background and on Church concepts. Attitude and activities of Fr. Ukken as a '*pastor bonus*' that were explained in the second chapter inspires the hearts of pastor's to keep a burning zeal towards their sheep. Pastoral prudence narrated in the next chapter,

a creative presentation is of much value in the present context of shepherdness. He himself says that "I am a monument erected on the compassionate love of Jesus". The fourth chapter clearly shows that how did he explore the horizon of compassion through his pastoral charity.

The following two chapters deal with two aspects of a good pastor: be merciful and be a servant. The merciful face of God has to be revealed to the people through his pastors and he urges that culture of mercy is a dire need of the present Church and the society. "Not to be served but to serve" has to be the style. His life gives a great deal of these two points. Seventh, eighth and ninth chapters reveal Fr. Ukken as a man of communion and fellowship, approachable and available, and an efficient collaborator. He practised the art of personal accompaniment what Pope Francis emphasizes to pastors today. The next two chapters stress that his very life experience itself is proved him as a good soul of suffering through which he tried to become identify with Christ the crucified and he rejoiced in the Lord about the suffering.

Determination and cautiousness towards the path of holiness and the aspiration to become a saint is focused in the eleventh chapter. His spiritual diary '*Lights from Heaven*' gives confirmation of the matter. The last chapter beautifully dealt that his life was revolved around the Holy Eucharist and the great celebration of the paschal mystery helped him to become 'an *eu-chariosti* than *a-chariosti*'. In his exhortations to his spiritual daughters he repeatedly used to say 'Holy Eucharist is the central event of the day'.

The meaningful and creative conclusion, confirming the need of ongoing formation, throws light to refresh and reframe the life of priests as well as those who are doing any form of pastoral work for the Kingdom of God.

*Loving Antiphon* is a prophetic voice and a timely distillation of the life message of Venerable Augustine John Ukken, a gift to the Church for the work of the New Evangelisation. The text is speaking and asking to question the motives and aspirations of a pastor. I hope that this book will encourage each pastor to be a voice of compassion, gains insights, brings clarity and purpose into his priestly ministry. As Pope Francis constantly emphasizes the need of accompaniment to the flock in their life situations, a concern of the present context, this book specifies the urgency of a new awakening in the pastoral ministry being divine and humane. Thus '*Pastor Bonus*' paves special relevance pointing towards the style of Jesus the shepherd of shepherds.

We, the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity appreciate and are very grateful to Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly for his keen interest and enthusiasm in undertaking this task along with the great responsibility as the Dean of the Department of Theology in Marymatha Major Seminary, Mulayam-Thrissur keeping a research mind and a deep rooted spiritual disposition by going through the life of Venerable Fr. Ukken an inspiring pastor. Besides this, we thankfully remember him for the readiness and good will, whenever he was asked to write about Fr. Ukken from different perspectives. I wish and pray that the readers may experience and enjoy the healing touch of a pastor in different ways and be encouraged to become good pastors to others even in their unspoken needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sr. Lucina", written in a cursive style. The signature is underlined with a single horizontal line.

**Sr. Lucina CSC**  
Superior General

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity



**MAR ANDREWS THAZHATH**  
**ARCHBISHOP OF TRICHUR**  
Archbishop's House, Trichur, Kerala, 680005, India



## FELICITATION



“The Lord, a God merciful and gracious” (Ex 34:6). Venerable Fr. Augustine John Ukken meditated over the mercy of God. He is the Loving Antiphon. *The Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus* written by Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly approaches each one of us with the exhortation to make our lives committed to the merciful love of God. This is a very good pastoral book which will enable the readers to have the practical guidance and discernment of the truth that God is love.

Theology made simple and spirituality lived down to earth is the best way to describe Dr. Bilju's new book *Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus*. The book offers us with apt themes to weave a beautiful drama of venerable Fr. Augustine John Ukken. The author deals proficiently, coherently, intelligibly and in sufficient detail with various aspects of the Venerable Augustine John Ukken. Fr. Bilju's good knowledge of the subject and teaching experience has amply qualified him for his work.

What we read in the following pages of this book is intensified pastoral guidelines. This book is all about the ways and means to experience God's love for us. This book

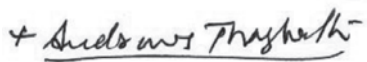


is theologically sound and spiritually stimulating that leads us to a life of grace.

While congratulating the author and all others who have worked behind, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all students of theology and associated subjects. I am extremely happy to express my words of appreciation and encouragement to Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly, for this fruit bearing endeavour.

I convey my best wishes to Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly and I am sure that this book enlightens the pastors of today with pastoral prudence. Let each and every word of it lead each pastor to a new realm of meaning of a good shepherd.

Yours Lovingly in Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mar Andrews Thazhath". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

**Mar Andrews Thazhath,**  
Metropolitan, Archdiocese of Trichur



**MAR JACOB THOOMKUZY**  
Emeritus Archbishop of Thrissur  
St. Mary's Minor Seminary  
Madona Nagar, Thrissur - 680 005, Kerala  
Ph: 0487 - 2444444, 2444488  
email: jacobthoomkuzy@gmail.com



## FELICITATION

When I read the book *Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus*, the image that flashed into my mind at once was of our beloved Pope Francis and his evergreen expression – “Shepherd with the smell of the sheep.” The *Loving Antiphon* highlights Venerable Fr. Augustine John Ukken’s life and thoughts on the pastoral ministry and it presents to us the picture of an embodiment of that typical expression of a pastor *with the smell of the sheep*. I congratulate Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly for his scholarly enthusiasm to cover almost all the realms of activities expected of a *Pastor Bonus* and to give a great deal of motivation for all those who follow ardently the shepherding ministry of Jesus Christ even today, after the model of Venerable Fr. Augustine John Ukken.

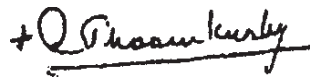
In the current crucial situation, tensed with various outcries in need of good pastors, this book provides us with a standard model worth to be relived and imitated. Being a Christ-like servant Fr. Ukken dedicated his whole life for the fortification of the then social outcasts and downtrodden. After having imbibed the whole spiritual energy and vigour from the Holy Eucharist he could successfully put into life the real spirit of *Alter Christus*

(Another Christ). Each and every line of this book reflects Fr. Ukken's pioneering mission to bridge the gulf between theory and praxis of sanctifying Christian ministry.

Without losing the equilibrium of the vertical and horizontal aspects of Christian love, I am sure that one can authentically lead a pastoral life, whatever situation one has to encounter. This pastoral thrust and apostolic zeal that one can obtain from this book shows the weight of its content. As the name suggests, Fr. Ukken's life and exhortations are presented beautifully as a pure antiphonal response to the divine call to feed the sheep that he received from the Lord.

I convey my wholehearted wishes to Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly and I do appreciate his passionate efforts behind this scholarly work. I am pretty sure that this book will serve its real purpose, i.e., to be a practical guide to the Pastors of the times.

Yours in Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

**Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy,**

Emeritus Metropolitan,  
Archdiocese of Trichur



**MAR TONY NEELANKAVIL**  
Auxiliary Bishop of Thrissur  
Catholic Archbishop's House  
P.B.No. 706, Trichur Kerala - 680 005  
Phone: 0487-2333325, 2333542  
Email: tneelan@gmail.com



## FELICITATION

Holiness is least discussed in everyday life. If at all discussed, it is either presented as a mockery or a dimension reduced to the most private life of a person with no relevance to the public. On the other hand, one also notes the attempts of human beings to search for a sense of the sacred by replacing holiness with superstitions or some kind of mysterious/irrational associations in their daily life. Often, meaninglessness and 'erring' are even glorified in virulent experiments to transcend the monotony of the *seculum*, thus ending up in utter confusion of nothingness.

Historical sciences can be of help in addressing this predicament. An unprejudiced reading of the lives of holy men and women can help people to find a proper direction and meaning in their lives. The life of Venerable John Ukken can be of inspiration in this regard. He was a priest; but went beyond the traditional clichés of priesthood. He was a public person; but surpassed the 'worldly' perceptions of a leader. One sees a convergence of the sacred and the profane in the life of John Ukken.

To the pastors, the life and ministry of Venerable John Ukken is a soft reminder of their indebtedness to Jesus

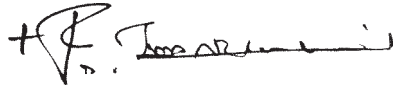
Christ, the Pastor Bonus, the Good Shepherd. The qualities of love and compassion make a pastor Christ-like. Like Jesus, a pastor has to be someone in the loving company of all, especially the poor and the downtrodden, the people in the peripheries. In this regard, a pastor intercepts the public fora, the *seculum*. What motivates him to sacrifice himself for the people entrusted to him is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross and his subsequent victory over death, which is ritually enacted in his priestly life through the Eucharist - an interception of the *seculum* into the sacred!

*Pastor Bonus* is not a romantic term; it means a real engagement in life with all its complexities. The life of Venerable John Ukken reveals that such situations demand efficient multitasking, effective collaboration and able administration.

Rev. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly, a priest belonging to the Archdiocese of Trichur, a professor teaching at Marymatha Major Seminary and a researcher coordinating the Research Centre of PAROC Research Institute, Trichur, who authored this book, knows very well how important it is to cater skills for participatory pastoral ministry, pastoral accompaniment and building up relationships in the society, the Church as well as in interfacing Church and society. The lessons from this book are of great help for both theoreticians and the practitioners.

May I congratulate Dr. Bilju for his attempt to decipher these lessons from the life of Venerable John Ukken for the benefit of the society and the Church and for bringing out the interface of the two. I wish that the esteemed reader finds ways and means to build links, connections and

networks in his/her personal life as well as in societal engagements that lead to an often surprising sublimation in life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Neelankavil', with a stylized initial 'T' and 'N'.

**Bishop Tony Neelankavil**

Auxiliary Bishop of Trichur

## FELICITATION



The life and message of Venerable Fr. Augustine John Ukken is ever relevant today as it was in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when this blessed priest lived among us. His approach towards people's issues, pastoral vision for the parishes and the Religious Congregation he established and the personal rapport he kept with all those who came into contact with him, and above all, his spiritual depth act as guidelines for contemporary pastors. Whenever we recall the pastoral models of Fr. John, his compassionate approach comes to the fore. He did not want to adopt a 'brainy' approach – an intellectual approach to solving pastoral problems. Nor did he go for so much bureaucracy and paper work. No personal interests or agendas led him in the pastoral work. Not only the poor, the lay people and the sisters, but his fellow priests themselves could find a loving shelter in the presbytery of this *pastor bonus*. This approach of heart is all the more necessary for today's shepherds.

Fr. Dr. Bilju Vazhappilly, with great enthusiasm and craft, has given us the memorable portrait of this *Pastor Bonus* in book. I warmly congratulate him on the achievement of this work where he analyzes the pastoral approaches of Fr. John

and relates them to contemporary priestly contexts. May Venerable Fr. Augustine John Ukken continue to be a guiding light for the priests of today.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Pulikkan", with a horizontal line underneath.

**Fr. Dr. Paul Pulikkan**  
Marymatha Major Seminary,  
Trichur





## IN THE BEGINNING...

“To speak about God is to speak about humans; to speak about the relation of humans to God is to speak about relations between humans”<sup>1</sup>. In this book my main concern is to explore how a man of God related himself with the children of God in his day today life. Such person’s relation to God is fully manifested in his relations with the fellow beings, irrespective of caste, creed and colour. In other words, his personal, intimate and profound relation to God become made flesh in his relations with the downtrodden, the orphans, the marginalized, the outcaste and so on. It is none other than the Venerable - Fr. Augustine John Ukken (1880 - 1956), the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity.

Fr. Ukken lived in a context very different from that of ours, but he lives even now among us when we contextualize his charism in the present day scenario. The present work *Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus* is such an attempt. Fr. Ukken wrote in his dairy of his obligation to be a good shepherd, a good pastor:

If you are my pastor, I am your sheep, let me inherit your qualities, I am to become a pastor myself! Oh, make me meek and humble!... I know them that are mine and I lay down myself for them! Jesus knows me, with all my difficulties, weaknesses! Oh, save me from the wolf of devil, from the thief of self-love, from the mercenary of the world. The attachment of the shepherd is such that death alone can separate him from them... Oh, mother of the Good Shepherd, give all pastors the same charity, zeal...<sup>2</sup>

On the outset I make a humble attempt to go through the Venerable Ukken’s pastoral life from the beginning.

The zealous John thought that Christ expected from his priest “not riches, not learning, but love”<sup>3</sup>. This urged him to sell all the property that belonged to him (*Ukken Parambu* and a small plot of paddy field) and joined in Kandy Seminary. After the ordination on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1907, Fr. John served the Vicariate (later diocese) of Trichur in many responsible positions: the Assistant Manager of the St. Thomas School at Trichur (1907-1909), Parish Priest at Kandassankadavu (1909), the Rector of the Minor Seminary at Thope, Trichur (1910-1917), the Secretary to the Vicar Apostolic Mar John Menachery (1913-1917), Parish Priest at Lourdes Cathedral (1918), and at Kottapady (1918-1921), the Manager of the St. Thomas College (1921-1925), Parish Priest at Mattom (1925-1928), Parish priest at Chowannur (1928-40) and Chiralayam, the Chaplain of the CMC Convent (1933-40) and Common vicar of the parishes at Arthat, Anjoor, Cheroor, Eyyal, Orumanyoor, Guruvayoor, and Vellarakkad (1933-1940), and Parish Priest at Palayur (1940-1941) and again Parish Priest at Chowannur (1941-54), and the Chaplain of Charity Convent at Chowannoor (till 1956)<sup>4</sup>.

Of course, Fr. Ukken was a genuine pastor who found time to work for the poor and the marginalized. He took great care of the flock entrusted to his care in all the parishes where he was posted. Imitating Jesus, the Good Shepherd (*Pastor Bonus*), he led the flock to green pastures, protected them from all harms, and inspired them to follow the Master. He had the special love for the poor and the abandoned. In spite of the many highly responsible posts that he held, he still sought them out and found time for them.

While exploring into the pastoral concern of Fr. Ukken's apostolate I may generally claim that his pastoral concern is mainly aimed at helping the people to find integration of faith and life and thus to uplift them and to bring them into the mainstream of life in their society. Here what we have to bear in mind is that any theory concerning human beings must firstly be valued and verified in accordance with its consonance with reality. Thus we may be able to find out the pastoral thrust behind one's apostolate. The same is my humble attempt in this book *Loving Antiphon of a Pastor Bonus*.

How the Venerable Augustine John Ukken handed over a practical guide to the pastors of today is the main focus of this book. In the present challenging world Pastoral care is a challenge, and at the same time, an art of possible. Therefore, each pastor who is responsible for the care of the faithful should be a beacon of *Pastor Bonus* (Good Shepherd). Each pastor has to be merciful, compassionate, approachable, available, prudent with practical sixth sense, a servant, a door, not a barrier, a man of communion or fellowship in the Church, collaborative, a Good Samaritan of suffering and holy. All these salient features of a *Pastor Bonus* revolve around the Eucharist. Thereby each one is called to be *Eu-charistoi* rather than *a-charistoi* to the sons and daughters, the lost, the last and the least of the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. At the last but not the least, "so whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31): *ad majorem Dei gloriam!* As St. Paul claimed, we can attribute the same to our Venerable Augustine John Ukken: "Just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own

advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 10:32).

### Endnotes:-

- 1 Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan SJ and Madeleine Beaumont, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995, 504.
- 2 *LMMRI* (17.9.1903), 114. Fr. Augustine John Ukken’s personal diaries, written in English, and partly in Latin, are codified in 4 volumes, entitled *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections* (LMMR) I (reflection in the Year 1902-1903); *Resolutions I* (December 11-20, 1903); *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections, II* (16-7-1904 to Christmas 1904); and *Resolutions II* (1905 – 1932).
- 3 Sr. Lawrence CSC, ed., *Lights from Heaven, Spiritual Diaries of Rev. Fr. Augustine John Ukken – the Founder of the Congregation of Sisters of Charity* (Kolazhy, India: Mariabhavan Generalate, 1994), (29.6.1903), 46. Hereafter we use LH, instead of *Lights from Heaven*.
- 4 Paul Pulikkan, “Servant of God Augustine John Ukken- Apostle of Charity,” in *Nalla Idayante Vazhikal (Paths of Good Shepherd): Sacerdotal Centenary Souvenir of Servant of God Augustine John Ukken*, ed. Sr. Donata CSC, (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 2008), 45.




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**“I am the door. Whoever enters by me will be saved,  
and will come in and go out and find pasture”**

**(Jn 10:9)**

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“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:2-3).





# PASTORAL CARE AS AN ART OF THE POSSIBLE

## Pastor

The term pastor comes from the Latin *pasco* or *pastum* meaning to feed. “The Greek word for shepherd or pastor is *poimen*. It means him to whose care and control others have committed themselves, and whose precepts they follow; additionally it means the overseers of the Christian assemblies<sup>1</sup>. The Hebrew word for shepherd and pastor is: “ra` ah (raw-aw’). It means to pasture, tend, graze, feed, keep, and companion.”<sup>2</sup> In the etymological senses, in the whole Christian circle, the pastor is a minister of the Gospel. He has the charge of a church/parish and congregation. His duty is, on the one hand, to watch over the people of his charge, and on the other, to instruct them in the sacred doctrines of the Christian religion.

Biblically speaking, the term shepherd illustrates the care and leadership style of the minister. As Jesus invites Peter to feed his sheep—to feed his lambs— He offers him a noble position of overseeing God’s people (cf. Jn 21:15-19). In the First Letter of Peter we read: “Be shepherds of God’s flock



that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:2-3). These words express the true face of a good pastor in the past, present and future.

## **Pastoral**

As we know, the term “pastoral” comes from Latin *pastoralis*, meaning having the simplicity or natural charm associated with pastureland. The concept is modeled on the Good Shepherd (*Pastor Bonus*), Jesus Christ, who goes ahead of His flock and leads them to green pastures. Etymologically the term pastoral means everything that is necessary for the care of souls. In this sense, this term pertains to a pastor or the spiritual care taker of a congregation. In other words, this term refers to a teacher’s responsibility for giving moral care or guidance<sup>3</sup>.

## **Pastoral Care**

A shepherd is pastoral only when he leads his flock with knowledge and courage, with fidelity and farsightedness toward the goal of their path. Here the term “pastoral care” is derivative from the image of the Good Shepherd. It refers to an object or matter of concern for the other and thus direct to something to be done or seen to<sup>4</sup>. As a commission of the Church as a whole, it aims at forming the faithful as Christ’s flock and at making accessible to them the sources of strength on the green pastures of the sacraments. In this sense, we have to rightly comprehend the pastoral concern which is aimed at inviting the people to the faith experience and at (re)building up in them Christian beliefs. Thus

pastoral care serves its purpose of moving the flock toward its Happiness and Bliss. This is clearly explained in the *Code of Canon Law*:

A Parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor (CIC 515 # 1).

## **Pastoral Care as a Configuration of Theory and Practice**

Pastoral care is considered as a configuration of theory and practice. That means, "The anthropological is the place of every possible theological", and at the same time, "The most 'spiritual' happens through "the most corporeal."<sup>5</sup> Of course, by translating theology into pastoral terms, one may be able to do the works related to the mission of the Church today. If we understand it clearly, the pastoral concern should be aimed at inviting the people to the faith experience and at (re)building up in them Christian beliefs.

## **Pastoral Care as a Care for the Church and for the People**

At this juncture, pastoral care is a care for the church and for the people done by the responsible. At the same time this pastoral practice is an art of the possible. Therefore, each pastoral responsible has to accumulate such art by means of theological studies and commitment to the pastoral activity. Precisely to say, it is not an appendage to one's pastoral career, but its centre itself. It is to be fostered along with the triple duties of the pastors: to lead (Kingly Role), to sanctify (Priestly Role) and to teach (Prophetic Role).

## Pastoral Care an Art of the Possible

Pastoral care as “an art of the possible”<sup>6</sup> plays a vital role here. From a broadened sacramentality of life, pastoral care can be a journeying with the faithful “step by step slowly progressing in a combined movement of human respect, friendship and insertion in a small community”, in view of bringing all of them “at their own rhythms of life, to the fullness of the sacramental sealing”<sup>7</sup> which authenticates, perfects, and sends forth. If it is the case, it cannot be thrown into waste bins.

To sum up: pastoral care is both a concern and an attitude of those who engage themselves in the pastoral field towards the people who request for the rites of passage; it is a practice as an art of possible to be accumulated; and it is a configuration of theory and practice to be pastorally negotiated. It is the way of life and manners of the pastors / shepherds; and piety is the life and soul of pastoral fidelity. We shall see in the following pages how the Venerable Fr. Augustine John Ukken assimilated and lived in his life and manners, the beacons of pastoral care received from the Good Shepherd (*Pastor Bonus*), Jesus Christ and shared them with his fellow priests, his own Charity Sisters, and the people around him.

### Endnotes:-

- 1 Leo Jones, *The Role of a Pastor: As an Authentic Faithful Servant of God*, A Thesis for Master of Sacred Theology (Columbus, Ohio: Trinity Lutheran Seminary, May 2014), 12.
- 2 *Bible Works 8, Software for Biblical Exegesis & Research* (Norfolk, VA: Bible Works, 2008). See also, Jones, *The Role of a Pastor*, 12.
- 3 See in this respect, Guido Rodheudt, “Pastoral Liturgy and the Church’s Mission in Parishes– The Dangerous Hermeneutic of a Concept,” in *Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and*

*Mission of the Church*, ed. Alcuin Reid (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 273.

- 4 Louis-Marie Chauvet, "A New Culture and New Ritual Requirements: Challenges to the Church", in *Stages of Life and Christian Experience*, Solange Lefebvre and Susan Ross, ed., (London: SCM Press, 2007), 33. See also, Rodheudt, "Pastoral Liturgy and the Church's Mission in Parishes," 274.
- 5 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 152 & 146 respectively. See also, Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 65.
- 6 Chauvet, "A New Culture and New Ritual Requirements: Challenges to the Church," 29.
- 7 Kristiaan Depoortere, "From Sacramentality to Sacraments and Vice-Versa," in *Contemporary Sacramental Contours of a God Incarnate*, eds. Lieven Boeve and Lambert Leijssen (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 62.





“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff – they comfort me”

(Psalms 23:1-4).



"If you are my pastor, I am your sheep, let me inherit your qualities, I am to become a pastor myself! Oh, make me meek and humble!... I know them that are mine and I lay down myself for them! Jesus knows me, with all my difficulties, weaknesses! Oh, save me from the wolf of devil, from the thief of self-love, from the mercenary of the world. The attachment of the shepherd is such that death alone can separate him from them... Oh, mother of the Good Shepherd, give all pastors the same charity, zeal..." (Venerable Augustine John Ukken)





## **BE A PASTOR BONUS (GOOD SHEPHERD)**

**“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me”**

**(Psalms 23:1-4).**

### **Rejoice in Being a Pastor**

In a conversation with some representatives of the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Rome on November 15, 2015, a young boy named Julius asked Pope Francis this question:

What do you enjoy most about being pope? He said: “Actually, what I enjoy most is being a parish priest, a pastor. I don’t like paperwork. I don’t like those jobs. I don’t like



giving formal interviews – this one isn't formal, it's family!  
– But I have to do it. So, what do I enjoy most? Being a parish priest<sup>1</sup>.

Surely, each pastoral responsible is a true shepherd of souls after the example of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd (*Pastor Bonus*). “I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). Therefore, to strive to develop a pastoral personality after the model of the Good Shepherd is the need of the time. Such pastoral personality includes the special qualities of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, such as leadership, love, care, compassion, empathy, solidarity, joy, and so on. All these qualities of the Good Shepherd should, in one way or other, be manifested in the pastoral ministry of the pastoral responsible.

### **Shine as a *Pastor Bonus* in Life**

Coming to Fr. Ukken's apostolate, I could in fact realize that the above said qualities were manifested in one way or other, wherever he was placed in (to name a few: parish, school, college, chaplain in the convent, court, Panchayat, etc.), and in whatever situations he was involved to settle the disputes or issues. As an assistant Manager at St. Thomas School (1907-1909), Fr. John corrected the students from their errors, mistakes and even their sinful ways steadily and prudently but always with great sensitivity and calmness. Being a loving father and brother to them, Fr. John won respect and trust from his students too<sup>2</sup>.

Fr. John was really a *Pastor Bonus* in words and actions. With the same spirit of a *Pastor Bonus*, he intermingled with the parishioners, his own Rev. Sisters and people of other denominations and faiths. He was readily available to the ordinary people, the rich and the poor, the sick, the

afflicted, etc. The Catholics and Jacobites, non Christians and people of different ideological persuasions could meet him in times of need. When there arose disputes and quarrels, it was Fr. John Ukken whom people of Kunnam kulam area approached for settlement of such issues<sup>3</sup>.

### **Start with a Burning Heart of a *Pastor Bonus***

As Jesus' message embodied in his life and work, Fr. Ukken started his parish ministry as well as other missions entrusted to him with a burning heart. Start with a burning heart of a *Pastor Bonus* is the message from his own life, to be given to the pastors of today. As a young priest he worked hard, day and night in his diocese. At the age of 36 he became the Minor Seminary Rector, Secretary to Bishop, and Vicar of the Lourdes Cathedral Church. He proved himself as an efficient and effective pastor, formator, administrator and teacher.

### **Parish as the Environment for the Spiritual Life**

As a parish priest, Fr. Augustine John Ukken could animate the parishioners entrusted to him to become agents of the proclamation of the Word of God, witnessing through both their words and deeds. Therefore, Fr. Ukken has always emphasized that his parish must remain as the usual environment for the spiritual life of his parishioners.

### **House Visit as Way to Parish Renewal**

Fr. Ukken used to make family visits without looking caste and creed. He went around the parish to meet every family members, Christian and non-Christians, Catholics and non-Catholics, the rich and the poor, the sick and the afflicted. He made this opportunity a way to parish renewal for their integral liberation. He renewed their life internally and

externally. His love for the poor and the needy was also in the fore-front of all these activities.

## **Pastor with the Smell of the Sheep**

Fr. Ukken attracted people not to himself but to the parish for the daily Holy Mass and also for prayer meetings. Imbibing the power and strength from there, he constructed roads, schools, church, and orphanage at Chowannur with the generous help of the people around him. He was in the heart of the people. They used to call him 'Achan Thampuran'. Of course, Venerable Ukken is worthy to be called pastor "with the smell of the sheep"<sup>4</sup>

### **Endnotes:-**

- 1 Pope Francis, "No Closed Hearts," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition), no. 47 (20 November, 2015), 8. This was Pope's Conversation with the Lutheran Evangelical community of Rome, at Christuskirche Parish on Sunday evening on 15 November [2015]. This conversation is also available at: [http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/fie\\_vangluth.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/fie_vangluth.htm) [Accessed on 15 October, 2018].
- 2 Paul Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy: The Servant of God Fr. Augustine John Ukken (1880-1956)*, (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 2012), 39.
- 3 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 69.
- 4 Pope Francis, "Homily at His First Chrism Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on March 28, 2013," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition), no. 14 (3 April, 2013), 5.



**“And his master commended the dishonest manager  
because he had acted shrewdly; for the children  
of this age are more shrewd  
in dealing with their own generation  
than are the children of the light”**

**(Lk 16:8)**



“When you have serious matter to decide, don’t take the decision by the urging of the passion, wait after a good sleep, imagine yourself on your death bed and what would you think at that time about and taking or giving such a thing..”

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**





## BE PRUDENT WITH SIXTH SENSE

**“And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of the light”**

(Lk 16:8)

### **Prudence as the Gift of Holy Spirit**

Throughout his apostolate, Fr. Ukken was indeed a pastor, retreat preacher, teacher and spiritual guide to his parishioners and others. To be a *pastor bonus* in his life, what he had throughout his pastoral ministry, was “*a spiritual potential*” with the help of the Holy Spirit and with the benevolent protection of Mother Mary. The spiritual potential he had in his whole apostolate is said to be “*a practical sixth sense*”<sup>1</sup> which was so precious in his pastoral care and still valid in the present apostolate of each pastoral

responsible. Such practical sixth sense has to be understood as pastoral “prudence”.

### **Pastoral Prudence as Practical Sixth Sense**

The pastoral prudence is a kind of discerning ability of what is to be done in the given situation. It is “a gratuitous area where God can operate and conversion becomes possible”<sup>2</sup>. As Fr. Ukken used to exhort his sisters, they should not “act on impulse but act prudently after thinking. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Prudence is the core of all virtues”<sup>3</sup>.

### **Be Shined as a Prudent Person**

Indeed his prudence and tact would have made Fr. Ukken agreeable to all sections of the community. That is why, he was elected as the Panchayath President unanimously<sup>4</sup>. He showed his curtsy to the legal rulers of his day and to the systems of law and order. This is shown in the fact that he was ready to serve as the village court Judge and Panchayath President in Chowannur. In these times, the judge had official powers to settle disputes that took place in the village<sup>5</sup>. To name a few: Fr. John’s diplomacy in dealing with the tough situations came to the fore at the Aranattukara East church cemetery issue<sup>6</sup>. Once there was the death of a child, belonging to the lower castes, and the burial in Aranattukara East Church cemetery was rejected by the parishioners. The church was closed by the order of the bishop and the parish priest was withdrawn from the service. The parish did not have the regular spiritual activities and was under a deep spiritual crisis. The threat of Mellusian schism also loomed large. It was at this juncture, Fr. John Ukken used his good influence to prevail upon the bishop to withdraw the order. Due to Fr. John’s tactful intervention, the bishop withdrew his order and the parish priest came back to the church. Peace was restored to the whole parish<sup>7</sup>.

Fr. Ukken was also instrumental in bringing about a peaceful settlement to the Kavady issue<sup>8</sup>. Once during a Hindu festival, while Kavadi procession was proceeding before the Church at Chiralayam, there was tension between Hindus and Christians. Those who carried Kavadi would normally stop dancing before the Church. But one year, those who carried Kavadi, did not stop dancing before the church. This reached to a communal flashpoint and became a court case. Fr. John directly came to the chamber of the Judge and made an amicable settlement possible, thereby bringing communal amity between the two groups<sup>9</sup>. His sagacious advice was quite to the point:

When you have serious matter to decide, don't take the decision by the urging of the passion, wait after a good sleep, imagine yourself on your death bed and what would you think at that time about and taking or giving such a thing...<sup>10</sup>

According to Fr. Ukken, it is erroneous to think that it is always wrong to get angry. Following Jesus, each pastoral responsible too is obliged to show courage by virtue of one's own office<sup>11</sup>.

### **Be Prudent in Settling the Hot Issues**

If there was any discord and quarrel in the parish, Fr. Ukken would soon enter the scene with a message of reconciliation. There were many such incidents in those times – the disputes especially due to quarrels on property, land, etc. He strongly drove home the message of Christian forgiveness. He always preached that forgiveness must be a basic virtue among Christians<sup>12</sup>. Wherever Fr. Ukken was placed, he visited the families of the sick and tried to reconcile the families that were living in enmity for a long time. The many family disputes, property litigations, boundary issues were settled amicably as far as possible.



His continuous contact with the people through house visits was an important point of his charism that he later imparted to the CSC<sup>13</sup>.

Fr. John was an able and patient intercessor for those who flocked to him in disputes and he was able to settle their differences<sup>14</sup>. In all these sorts of issues, Fr. John always sought the support of divine help. He called on Blessed Mother who “crushed all heresies, protected the Church from her material and spiritual enemies”<sup>15</sup>.

### **Being and Becoming Prudent Pastoral Responsible– A Resolution**

Fr. John paid great attention to the spiritual renewal of the poor in the slums in Kokkalai at Trichur and he had an extraordinary courage to work among these people, as in those days slums had been entirely neglected by the pastoral workers as well as by civil authorities<sup>16</sup>. In this manner, Fr. Ukken found the respective value of his identity both as a Christian and as a priest. He achieved such value only being made reference to the others. Therefore, it would be absurd to think of his apostolate as without any ethical concern for others.

### **Value for the Ethical Concern for Others**

Here those who dare to understand the apostolate of Fr. Ukken should bear in mind the words of Jesus: “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40) and “in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me” (v. 45). To be precise, what makes his apostolate a spiritual potential and thus makes him a man of practical sixth sense is not its “matter” but the “form” which is given it by love understood as a response to God’s love, which came first (1Cor 13)<sup>17</sup>. That is the ethical

testimony of mutual sharing. This is to live as “an expression of Jesus’ own service to humankind”<sup>18</sup>. Such ethics of sharing between brothers and sisters in the society or believing community or in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity is inevitable. This sharing is both an act of affection for and an act of charity for others (Acts 1:14, 2:46, 4:24, 5:12).

In such ethics of service to others, we might notice that it is not the degree of our generosity towards others, which makes our ethics of dailiness brought from the Eucharistic or liturgical celebrations. Rather, Fr. Ukken’s apostolate demands from us that it is our responsibility to live according to this gift, which we receive from God. Then only the liturgical practice or the pastoral concern in the apostolate becomes the divine service rendered to others, brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters of Jesus Christ in the world we live “in-between time”<sup>19</sup>. This would help us to become a prudent pastoral responsible of the present age.

### **Give Significant Place to the Discernment**

Moreover, the pastors of today should give a great importance to discernment in their lives and ministries. Pastoral sixth sense is an outcome of discernment. Discernment is a charism which calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. The pastors must implore for this ineffable gift, granted by the Holy Spirit. The pastors should seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel. Then they will grow in spiritual endowment<sup>20</sup>.

In *His Address to the Bishops Ordained over the Past Year*, Pope Francis stressed the importance of discernment in their pastoral governance in this manner:

Discernment is the grace [given] to the holy faithful People of God by the Spirit, who constitutes it a prophetic People, endowed with the sense of faith and that spiritual instinct that makes it able to feel cum Ecclesia. It is a gift received in the midst of the People and is oriented towards their salvation. Since the Spirit has indeed dwelt in the heart of the faithful since Baptism, the apostolic faith, beatitude, righteousness, and evangelical spirit are not strangers to them<sup>21</sup>.

### **To Love is Your Duty**

In brief, to practice the practical sixth sense (prudence) what Fr. Ukken's apostolate puts forth each pastoral responsible of today is nothing other than his famous dictums: "To love is your duty. Let no one surpass you in Love"<sup>22</sup> and "Charity is the ladder to perfection. Love is patient and kind. It aims only at the prosperity of others"<sup>23</sup>. While starting a pious association for the women, Fr. John demanded from the members three important things to be observed in their day to day life: they should grow in the love of God and love of fellow human beings; they should be humble and available, always reaching out to the people; and they should grow in holiness and humility and with an apostolic fervor to do charitable works<sup>24</sup>.

By avoiding the two enemies of faith which are "pride that comes from imperfect knowledge and impurity from lust"<sup>25</sup>, "by conforming our thoughts, words and deeds, and also by observing and considering persons, objects and events in the light of faith"<sup>26</sup>, the pastors may be able to put into practice both faith and prudence, love and care in their pastoral ministry and apostolate in accord with the charism they received via Sacred Orders or authentic mandate.

## Endnotes:-

- 1 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 200.
- 2 Chauvet, "A New Culture and New Ritual Requirements," 30.
- 3 Sr. Corthuna CSC, *Exhortations*, Kolazhy, June 1951, f. 172. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 123.
- 4 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 123.
- 5 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 70.
- 6 Sr. Corthuna CSC, *Exhortations*, (Kolazhy, June 1951), 45. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 123. A number of Hindus belonging to the lower castes were brought to the light of the gospel, with the work of the CMI monastery at nearby Elthuruthu. The superior of the monastery asked the permission of the bishop to use the cemetery for these poor low caste Christians. The bishop allowed that they could use the cemetery of Aranattukara East church. However, a great many in the parish opposed Bishop's decision. These were the times of sharp caste distinction even among the Christians in Kerala.
- 7 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 45. See also, J.C. Chiramel, in Sr. Grace (ed.), *Adaranjali (Tribute)*, 1956-81, 10-11.
- 8 Sr. Corthuna CSC, *Exhortations*, (Kolazhy, June 1951), 69. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 69, 123. Kavadi is a decorative art work honouring the deity carried by people in Hindu procession, with dancing.
- 9 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 69-70.
- 10 *Resolutions II*, (19-12-1932), 61. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 70.
- 11 LMMR I, (17.12.1903), 173. See in this respect, Sr. Libertha CSC, *Written Testimony*, (Kolazhy), f.23; and Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 70.
- 12 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 40.
- 13 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 57.
- 14 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 68.

- 15 *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections II* (15-09-1904), 48. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 45.
- 16 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 46.
- 17 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 41-42.
- 18 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 28.
- 19 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 41-42 & 147.
- 20 Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate* (19 March, 2018), available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html) [accessed on 18 May, 2019], no. 166.
- 21 Pope Francis, *Address to the Bishops Ordained over the Past Year* (14 September 2017), available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170914\\_nuovi-vescovi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/september/documents/papa-francesco_20170914_nuovi-vescovi.html) [accessed on 15 June, 2019].
- 22 *Conferences 1944*. See in this respect, Sr. Lawrence, *Kalathinatheethanaya Karmayogi* (Malayalam) – *The Active Mystic beyond Time* (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 1994), 249; Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 68.
- 23 *Exhortations*, Sr. Alberta CSC, (Kolazhy: June 1951), f.5. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 85.
- 24 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 59.
- 25 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 109.
- 26 Sr. Trifonia CSC, ed., *Pithruvanikalude Manicheppilninnu* (Malayalam) – *From the Treasure Box of Fathers Sayings* (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 2001), 9. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 109.



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**“But love your enemies, do good, and lend,  
expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be  
great, and you will be children of the Most High;  
for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked”**

**(Lk 6:35)**

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“Love your God with your whole-heart, that is the greatest and first precept. Oh how easy to love! It is not to obey or mortify that God asks, 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 will be only a continuation...” **(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**





## **BE COMPASSIONATE AND LOVEABLE**

**“But love your enemies, do good,  
and lend, expecting nothing in  
return. Your reward will be great,  
and you will be children of the  
Most High; for he is kind to the  
ungrateful and the wicked”**

(Lk 6:35)

### **Explore the Horizon of Compassion**

Jesus, the Good Shepherd’s whole life is a continual manifestation of his pastoral charity or rather a daily enactment of it. For, the pastors of today have to imitate the pastoral charity of the Good Shepherd in their own pastoral ministry. Therefore, to explore the horizon of compassion is very much needed in the life of a pastor.

Compassion means to get down to the level of the other (poor, weak, sinful, hopeless, out-caste, afflicted, etc) or to feel one with them. The presence of the pastor in the moments of agony, pain and loss, and his loving and



continued support in the struggles of life can effectively communicate the presence of God Himself to those in pain and struggles<sup>1</sup>. In this sense, the pastors are those people who are having tenderness and mercy, walking with people, who listen, discern, accompany, forgive, bless, speak boldly and courageously, who weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, and who strive to integrate people back into the community of faith.

In his *Address to the Congregation for the Clergy*, on November 20, 2015, Pope Francis said:

It isn't normal for a priest to be often sad, irritable, or harsh. It's no good and it does not do good either to the priest or to his people... We priests are apostles of joy, we proclaim the gospel that is the supreme 'good news'.<sup>2</sup>

### **Compassion as to Suffer with**

Indeed, Fr. Ukken, the man of compassion was firmly convinced that the root meaning of the term compassion is “*to suffer with* – by participating in the struggles and tensions of the people” and also wanted to imitate Jesus’ “great compassion to the poor, the sick and to the sinners” throughout his life<sup>3</sup>. On 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1903, Fr. Ukken while in the seminary firmly believed that he was a monument erected on the compassionate love of Jesus.

### **Compassion as Love for the Well-being of the O/other**

“To become a pastor, love is essentially required”<sup>4</sup>. Love means to share, to care for one another, for the disinherited, the marginalized, and the despised in particular. The prime duty of a pastor is to communicate the love of God. This love is neither a feeling nor a word, but effectively meeting the needs of the needy in their total historical context. Thus

the main concern of the pastors of today is for the total well being of persons entrusted to them irrespective of color, caste and creed.

## **Compassion as the Life of Charity**

Coming to the pastoral life of Fr. Ukken, we can notice that he regarded a life of charity as the greatest occasion to thank God.

Love your God with your whole-heart, that is the greatest and first precept. Oh how easy to love! It is not to obey or mortify that God asks, 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 will be only a continuation...<sup>5</sup>

The *Statutes of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity* clearly acknowledges Fr. Ukken's (the Founder of CSC) pastoral vision in a beautiful manner:

Our Founder's heart was ablaze to reciprocate the compassionate love of God that he experienced in an ongoing identification with the crucified Christ through the heroic and life-giving acts of charity. God bestowed upon him a unique grace to share the love and compassion to everyone, especially the poor and the downtrodden and to uplift them, so that Christ, the redeemer might be reborn in the lives of all<sup>6</sup>.

Imbibing the true spirit of the Founder's vision, this congregation still continues the family apostolate which aims at an "integral welfare of the families of the poor, the destitute and the abandoned"<sup>7</sup> with "a lifestyle of simplicity and humble service inspired by the merciful love of Jesus"<sup>8</sup>.

## **Family as the School of Charity and Compassion**

According to Fr. Ukken, family is the first school of a person. Parents are the first teachers who teach faith and love to their children. Parents taught Fr. John the lessons of faith and love through their life of witnessing and thereby they fulfilled the responsible parenthood<sup>9</sup>. This is the explicit reference on our subject matter. However, I have seen many glimpses of the subject matter from Fr. Ukken's childhood onwards. Recalling his childhood days Fr. John acknowledged many times how he had been moulded as a monument erected on the compassionate love of Jesus.

After the death of the first child John (2years of Age), Anthappan and Annama couples got another child on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1880 called Augustine John: "Anthappan saw God's mercy shown to him when a second child was born"<sup>10</sup>. But, at the age of six, Fr. John lost both his parents. Even though Fr. John felt the pains of loneliness and orphanhood during his childhood days and even later, he used to get sympathy from kith and kin. However, he was able to understand the all embracing care of God the Father in those days:

From childhood itself an extra-ordinary vitality and mentality to help and uplift and an unquenched thirst to serve the poorly stricken people were shaded in him. So he could develop a life style submerging his deep God experiences and emancipatory activities<sup>11</sup>.

## **Value the Divine Providence in Life**

Indeed, Fr. John believed fully in the divine providence of God and His great designs. He always remembered St. Paul's words: "all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). This Word of God was a driving force that led him to

become later the father of orphans, of those who were abandoned and rejected by their families and relatives. In other words, Fr. John learned from his family the virtues of love, generosity, kindness and fear of God, utter trust in Him and the lessons of hard work.

To put some more instances: as the Parish Priest in various parishes, where there were number of poor people in the parish, Fr. John showed an empty hand to none who came to him for help. He helped them from even his own pocket and also exhorted the rich members of his parish to help the poor and the needy<sup>12</sup>. Being the Lourdes Cathedral Vicar, Fr. John had paid great attention to the spiritual renewal of the poor in the slums. There, especially in Kokalai at the southern side of the Trichur town, they lived in abject squalor and immorality<sup>13</sup>. As a parish priest, Fr. John also found time to visit the families of the sick and tried to reconcile the families that were living in enmity for a long time<sup>14</sup>.

## **Be a Monument Erected on the Compassionate Love of Jesus**

Being a monument erected on the compassionate love of God, Fr. John became an effective instrument in the hands of the Almighty and succeeded in imparting God's compassionate love to all, especially to the poor and the needy. Being an orphan at a very early age, he experienced the plight of the poor and the abandoned, which enkindled in him a very deep compassion for them.

Fr. John viewed his priesthood as a service to execute the compassionate love which he acquired from Jesus and Mother Mary. During the years of seminary life John wrote in his diary, "I am simply an effect of divine mercy, I am saved by an all powerful effort of divine mercy. A priest is

*Alter Christus, Bonus Odor Christi*, It is necessary that I should.”<sup>15</sup> So when he was ordained priest on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1907, he discerned that he was ordained and sent to the world to continue the prophetic mission of Jesus in the world for the integral liberation of humanity. This earnest desire urged him to give birth to the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity in order to become witnesses of Christ in the world by the uplift of the downtrodden<sup>16</sup>.

### Endnotes:-

- 1 John Ponnore, *Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest* (Raipur, India: Archdiocese of Raipur, 2016), 220-221.
- 2 Pope Francis, “Address to the Congregation for the Clergy,” (20 November, 2015), available at: <https://www.popefrancisdaily.com/priestly-ministry-in-the-mind-and-heart-of-pope-francis-7-points/> [accessed on 10 July, 2019].
- 3 Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 112-113.
- 4 *Lights from Heaven* (29.6.1903), 46.
- 5 LMMR I (9.9.1903), 108.
- 6 *C.S.C. Statutes, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity* (Syro-Malabar Church), (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 3 2014), 3 (Ch. II, 003). Here after we use *Statutes*.
- 7 *C.S.C. Statutes* 37 (Ch. IV. 109).
- 8 *C.S.C. Statutes*, 5 (Ch. II, 008).
- 9 Excerpt from Fr. Augustine John Ukken’s personal diaries written in English (partly also in Latin): *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections, Vol.I* (reflection in the Year 1902-1903), 171. See in this respect, Renewal Team & Secretariat of Evangelization, *Uravidangalile Nirjari vol. I* (Malayalam)– *Stream in the Sources* (Kolazhy, India: Charity Publications – Mariabhavan CSC Generalate, 2014), 48.
- 10 Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 12.
- 11 *Lights from Heaven*, xiii.
- 12 Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 40.
- 13 Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 46.
- 14 Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 47.
- 15 *Resolutions II* (1907), 22
- 16 Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 30-31, 82-83.



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**“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”**

**(Lk 6:36)**

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“I am simply an effect of divine mercy, I am saved by an all powerful effort of divine mercy. A priest is *Alter Christus, Bonus Odor Christi*, It is necessary that I should.” (**Venerable Augustine John Ukken**)





## BE MERCIFUL

**“Be merciful, just as your Father  
is merciful”**

(Lk 6:36)

### **Be the Merciful Face of God the Father Today**

In the *Opening Address of the Second Vatican Council* (on 11 October, 1962) Pope John XXIII made a remarkable statement: “Now Church, the bride of Jesus Christ, chooses the medicine of mercy rather than the tool of harshness”.<sup>1</sup> In 1980 Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy), presented to the world that our God is rich in mercy (cf. Eph 2:4) and revealed it to us in the Holy Bible and in Jesus<sup>2</sup>.

Surely, Mercy is the divine attitude that embraces us amidst our sufferings. “In Christ and through Christ, God also becomes especially visible in His mercy” (*DM* no.2). It is to be firmly acknowledged that by sacrificing his life on the Cross, Jesus attained the peak of His mercy. Put it succinctly, “The Paschal Christ is the definitive incarnation of mercy” (*DM* no. 6). “The Church must profess and



proclaim God's mercy in all its truth, as it has been handed down to us by revelation" (*DM* no. 13).

Here the call of the Church in the present world is to become a medium for the flow of divine mercy to the people, since "mercy is the basis of the life of the Church" (*MV*, no. 10)<sup>3</sup>.

The Church proclaims the truth of God's mercy revealed in the crucified and risen Christ, and she professes it in various ways. Furthermore, she seeks to practice mercy towards people through people, and she seen in this an indispensable condition for solicitude for a better and 'more human' world, today and tomorrow. However, at no time and in no historical period – especially at a moment as critical as our own – can the Church forget the prayer that is a cry for the mercy of God and the many forms of evil which weigh upon humanity and threaten it (*DM* no. 15).

After a few months of his election as Pope, Pope Francis remarked that "Our age, *kairos*, is an age of mercy, age of opportunities"<sup>4</sup>. This is clearly expressed in his papal coat of arms. Pope Francis has chosen his motto – *miserando atque eligendo* (He felt mercy on me and chose me) and it is the same as a program of his life<sup>5</sup>.

## **Explore the Horizon of Mercy**

The wide horizon of the etymology of the term mercy (Latin terms *miser cordia* and *Charis*, Greek term *eleos*, Hebrew terms *hesed*, *hen*, and *rahamim*)<sup>6</sup> gives us a new impetus to explore what mercy is to be. Mercy is "firstly an attribute of God and secondly a necessary quality in our relationships with others"<sup>7</sup>. Here mercy is "not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are" (*MV* no. 9). That is to say, mercy is to be considered as the expression of his relationship with God

and people, concretized in his service among the poor, the afflicted, and the downtrodden. That means, mercy is both “a matter of attentiveness and sensitivity to the concrete needs we encounter” and “a matter of overcoming the focus on ourselves that makes us deaf and blind to the physical and spiritual needs of others”<sup>8</sup>.

### **Mercy as the Striving Force in the Life of a Pastor**

In this context, mercy is thus to be understood as the striving force both “that reawakens us to a new life and instills in us the courage to look into the future with hope” (*MV*, no. 11) and “that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon” (*MV*, no. 9). Thereby, for us, the Christians, mercy becomes the foundation of our Christian life. Precisely in showing mercy to others, we can foster mercy as an incredible virtue in ourselves. This virtue is to be practiced in such a way of showing “discernment in one’s dealing with others rather than harsh treatment rendered to the sinner”<sup>9</sup>. That is to say, mercy is to be expressed in our own human encounter with others. This implies that in our encounter with the adversity of others, mercy becomes a matter of dissolving the hardening of our hearts to God’s call for being merciful. Therefore, the gift of mercy has to be concretized by way of our attitude, disposition and actions in terms of human relationships.

### **Mercy as Fundamental Law of the Pastoral Life**

Mercy in human encounters might have augmented Pope Francis to define mercy in this sublime manner: Mercy is both “the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life” and “the bridge that connects God and man” (*MV*, no. 2). As Pope Francis clearly stated in *Misericordiae Vultus*, “at times we are called to gaze even

more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives" (*MV*, no. 3).

### **Mercy to Make Present the Church Today**

Since "Mercy is the foundation of the Church's life" (*MV*, no. 10), the Church thus makes present herself to believers through love, care and tenderness. That is to say, "without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile" (*MV*, no. 10). For be '*merciful like the Father*' must thus be "a programme of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace" (*MV*, no. 13). In this programme of life,

the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality through which he reveals his love as that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a 'visceral' love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy (*MV*, no. 6).

### **Mercy as Forgiveness**

In our striving for developing the above mentioned programme of life, we have to bear in mind that the mercy of God is "his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel" (*MV*, no. 9). For instance, pardoning offences is "the clearest expression of merciful love" as well as "an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves" (*MV*, no. 9).

### **Mercy through the Charitable Services**

Moreover, the charitable services which take place all around the Globe is a reflection of the divine mercy. The

caring of the sick, the old and the afflicted, the palliative care, mental hospitals, children homes, homes for the disabled and the destitute accomplish a great deal of the mission of the Church to become the mirror of mercy<sup>10</sup>.

## **Be the Star of Mercy in the Church**

The Synodal Fathers strongly recommended that the family today must play a vital role of an “agent of pastoral activity” of *be Merciful like the Father*:

through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely solidarity with the poor, openness to a diversity of people, the protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families, including those most in need, commitment to the promotion of the common good and the transformation of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives, through the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy <sup>11</sup>.

In *Amoris Laetitia* we read, “All family life is a ‘shepherding’ in mercy. Each of us, by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others” (AL, no. 322). It further describes that “When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is ‘a symbol, witness and participant in the Church’s motherhood’” (AL, no. 324)<sup>12</sup>.

## **Fr. Ukken’s Vision of Family: the First School of Mercy**

The life of Fr. Augustine John Ukken shows that how he was formed as a man of mercy from his childhood onwards being moulded in the family as the school of mercy.

Little John learned from his mother Annamma “the virtues of love, generosity, kindness and fear of God” and

from his father Anthappan “the utter trust in God and the hard work”<sup>13</sup>.

The untimely death of his parents before the age of 6 paved the way for him to undergo the pain of being an orphan and to understand the all embracing providential care of God the Father. This was indeed “a school of training prepared by God for John as he was to become later the father of the orphaned, those who were abandoned and rejected by their families and relatives”<sup>14</sup>.

While recalling his bitter experience of growing up in an environment of neglect and poverty (when he was brought up by Acharunny, his Aunt), Fr. John in his personal diaries wrote that “I am simply an effect of divine mercy, I am saved by an all powerful effort of divine mercy”<sup>15</sup>.

“Training to be merciful begins from one’s childhood”<sup>16</sup>. That is to say, from the time of their birth, children are continuously urged by their parents as well as by pastors to be merciful, producing works of mercy in their daily experiences, since “mercy belongs to each person both as a need and as an inalienable capacity”<sup>17</sup>.

The experience of divine mercy is to be rekindled in various situations: when the children or family members are educated with the *Our Father Prayer* to be capable of mercy; when they are frequently initiated to the Eucharist which is “the bread of the mercy of the heart of Christ”<sup>18</sup>; when they are catechized about the liturgical year as the “never-ceasing calls of God’s mercy”<sup>19</sup>; and when they are at the prayers of the Liturgy, throughout the liturgical year and in the sacraments. All these prayers of the Church “transmit the Lord’s immense mercy, both as a memory of the Savior’s gestures of salvation and as a sacrament and example of daily Christian life”<sup>20</sup>.

## **Produce the Fruits of Divine Mercy**

Wherever he was planted, Fr. John produced there the fruits of his experience of divine mercy.

While he was rendering the services as a parish priest, rector of the minor seminary, secretary to the Bishop, and manager of St. Thomas college, Thrissur, in the most honorable manner, he found time to visit the families and solve their problems. For him, the pain of others was the pain of his own. He acted and responded according to the demand of the age... He consoled the sick and aged paying visits in their houses<sup>21</sup>

Another instance for spreading the rays of divine mercy can be seen in the initial stages of the Priests' Home in Thrissur. In this endeavor, Fr. Augustine John was instrumental and could prompt Bishop John Menachery. This shows "Fr. John's concern and sense of solidarity towards his fellow priests"<sup>22</sup>. Most of the sweet and bitter experiences during his whole life time aroused the feeling of generosity and mercy in Fr. John. He understood the cost of orphanacy and determined to uplift the destitute.

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 1904, Fr. John again acclaimed that he would become, here on earth and in the firmament above, a star proclaiming God's infinite mercy and spreading His glory. Of course, his ardent desire came to be true on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1944 when the Congregation of Sisters of Charity was formally erected<sup>23</sup>. Still this star of divine mercy shines on earth in and through this Congregation inviting each one of us to foster a culture of mercy.

## **Culture of Mercy: A Dire Need**

After the models of Christ, the face of the merciful God the Father, and Mary, the Mother of Mercy, Fr. Ukken shines

in the Church as the star of mercy inviting us to foster a culture of mercy in the Church and society.

The society in which we live is suffering from a variety of things: Children die by under-nourishment and malnutrition; there is a lack of potable water; everywhere we see an increase of migration, problem of the homeless and the street children; depersonalizing trends in the health care system are on the increase; deficiencies in educational system and the unavailability of education and training are seen in every nook and corner of the country, etc. In an age when the sense of sin is lost among people, the contemplation on the divine mercy will help each one to have thoughts of repentance and sense of sin and thereby the conversion of hearts. It is in this juncture, I speak of how we can foster a culture of mercy as a dire need.

Since mercy is “the reflection of God’s glory in this world and the epitome of the message of Jesus Christ”, it was “given to us as a gift” and therefore “we are to further bestow it on others”<sup>24</sup>. That means human person not only receives and experiences the mercy of God but he or she is also called to practice mercy towards others<sup>25</sup>. In other words, it is our primary duty to treat Love and mercy as “the fundamental condition for community life and for the co-existence of peoples”<sup>26</sup>. Indeed, how we can foster a culture of mercy in this world is an intriguing question to be answered.

Those who want to cultivate a culture of mercy, will have to lead a life of self-transcendence, which is an “ability to leave behind one’s interest, likes, plans, attitudes, practices, culture and language and to act upon the basis of true love”<sup>27</sup>. Secondly, we should have a deep experience of God. Experiencing deeply God’s unconditional love, genuine acceptance of self and a certain amount of freedom from conflicts and blocks, we may develop our own capacity for

self-transcendence. Therefore, we will have to be aware of the common blocks that hinder our tremendous capacity to love and to be loved, to be kind and merciful and to experience the merciful love of others.

### **Get Rid of the Blocks in the Way of being Merciful**

The common blocks are lack of experience of God's unconditional love, lack of freedom, perfectionism, anger, unforgiving attitude, competition, pride, greed, and legalism<sup>28</sup>.

We shall see how Fr. Augustine John Ukken got rid of the above mentioned blocks. Through a simple reframing of the history, Fr. John could look at his past painful experiences and he could see the positive intentions behind and thus understood those who inflicted him with his merciful heart. In other words, "When a person is stuck in past hurts, wounds and negative experiences which are not yet healed, it is difficult for that person to experience inner freedom, love and compassion"<sup>29</sup>.

As we know, competition prevents us from entering into full solidarity with each other. Therefore "to be merciful, we would have to give up the dividing lines, differences and distinctions"<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, Fr. John had this attitude of letting go and letting be. This might have helped him to accept things as they are and at the same time he cultivated the habit of indifference to success and failures and thus he became satisfied with what he has and what he is. Moreover, counting the blessings received from God and appreciating the goodness of other people, Fr. John could also rejoice over the success and positions came to him. Besides, practicing the virtue of humility and going through the experiences of humiliation, Fr. John could also counteract the pride. To be precise, the "more one is happy and content



with what one is, and one has, the more one would be able to feel with others, to be merciful and share with others what one has”<sup>31</sup>.

In short, to foster a culture of mercy in the family - the school of mercy, on the one hand, the children are to be convinced that showing mercy is in fact doing mercy and that merciful love means “recognizing in every person the face of God and doing good to everyone in need”<sup>32</sup>. On the other, they are to be motivated to have the experience of divine mercy which “encourages and obliges [them] to become witnesses of mercy and to deploy on behalf of mercy in the world” they live<sup>33</sup>. Mercy poured out from his heart as a stream of love and flowed to the valley of the poor.

### Endnotes:-

- 1 Pope John XIII, *Address on the Occasion of the Solemn Opening of the Most Holy Council* (October 11, 1962), available at: [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/speeches/1962/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_spe\\_19621011\\_opening-council.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council.html) [accessed on 15 June, 2019]. See also, Francis Xavier Murphy and Ferrer Smith, eds., *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII* (Washington, D.C.: TPS Press, 1964), 423-435; <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=3233> [accessed on 15 June, 2019]; and Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents, vol. I* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1975).
- 2 Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy – 30 November, 1980), no. 1, available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30111980\\_dives-in-misericordia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html) [accessed on 12 May, 2019]. This second encyclical of Pope John Paul II is a modern examination of the role of mercy, on the one hand, God’s mercy, and on the other, the need for human mercy. Such role of mercy is introduced with the biblical parable of the Prodigal Son as a central theme.
- 3 Pope Francis, *Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy) on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 (Trivandrum, India: Carmel International Publishing House,

- 2015). The Bull is also available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa\\_francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa_francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html) [accessed on 11 May, 2019].
- 4 Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli* (New York: Random House, 2016), 5-6.
  - 5 The papal coat of arms symbolizes the beginning of his total consecration to God in His Church. This coat of arms is the expression of St. Bedemiserando atque eligendo. In St. Bede's Homily 22 on the Feast of Matthew, we read: "Vidit ergo Jesus publicanum, et quiamiserando atque eligendovidit, ait illi, 'Sequere me'" [Jesus therefore sees the tax collector, and since he sees by having mercy and by choosing, he says to him, 'follow me']. Once appointed Bishop and later Pope, His Holiness chose this as a motto and as a programme of life. See in this respect, "The Shield," *L'Ósservatore Romano* (March 19, 2013).
  - 6 Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, trans. William Madges (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 12, 21-22, 42-43; Joseph Mattam, SJ, "Mercy and Mission," *Asian Journal of Vocation and Formation*, XXXXI, no.01 (2016): 11-12; and Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, *Mercy in the Fathers of the Church* (Bandra, India: St. Pauls, 2015), 19, 56-57.
  - 7 Gabriel Mathias OFM, "Mercy: A Franciscan and a Psychological Perspective," *Asian Journal of Vocation and Formation*, XXXXI, no.01 (2016): 20.
  - 8 Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel*, 143.
  - 9 Mathias OFM, "Mercy," 23.
  - 10 Cf. Pulikkan, *Monument of Mercy*, 64-66.
  - 11 Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia – The Joy of Love* (19 March, 2016), no. 290, available at: [https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia\\_en.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf) [accessed on 11 May, 2019]. See also, *Relatio Finalis – The Final Report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father – XIV Ordinary General Assembly* "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World" (24 October, 2015), no. 93, available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/)

- documents/rc\_synod\_doc\_20151026\_relazione-finale-xiv-  
assemblea\_en.html [accessed on 11 May, 2019].
- 12 Cf. John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* (22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1981), no. 44, available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html) [accessed on 15 June, 2019].
  - 13 Paul Pulikkan, “Servant of God Augustine John Ukken- Apostle of Charity,” in *Nalla Idayante Vazhikal (Paths of Good Shepherd): Sacerdotal Centenary Souvenir of Servant of God Augustine John Ukken*, ed. Sr. Donata CSC, (Kolazhy, India: Mariabhavan Generalate, 2008), 43.
  - 14 Pulikkan, “Servant of God Augustine John Ukken- Apostle of Charity,” 43.
  - 15 LMMR, Vol. I, 153, (1.12.1903). See also, Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 13.
  - 16 Mattam, SJ, “Mercy and Mission,” 15.
  - 17 *Mercy in the Fathers of the Church*, 48.
  - 18 *Mercy in the Fathers of the Church*, 44.
  - 19 Pope Leo the Great, *Sermon 49*, 1, quoted in *Mercy in the Fathers of the Church*, 41.
  - 20 *Mercy in the Fathers of the Church*, 40.
  - 21 Sr. Lawrence CSC, ed., *Lights from Heaven*, xv.
  - 22 Pulikkan, *Monuments of Divine Mercy*, 41.
  - 23 Sr. Lawrence CSC, ed., *Lights from Heaven*, xv.
  - 24 Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel*, 218.
  - 25 Quoted in Sr. Tessa Churanadu, SCSC, “Blessed are the Merciful (Mt 5,7),” 51. See in this respect, Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*– 30<sup>th</sup> November 1980, AAS 72 (1980): 1177-1232.
  - 26 Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel*, 197.
  - 27 Churanadu, SCSC, “Blessed are the Merciful (Mt 5,7),” 52.
  - 28 Cf. Churanadu, SCSC, “Blessed are the Merciful (Mt 5,7),” 52-57.
  - 29 Churanadu, SCSC, “Blessed are the Merciful (Mt 5,7),” 52.
  - 30 Churanadu, SCSC, “Blessed are the Merciful (Mt 5,7),” 55.
  - 31 Churanadu, SCSC, “Blessed are the Merciful (Mt 5,7),” 56.
  - 32 Churanadu, SCSC, “Blessed are the Merciful (Mt 5,7),” 49.
  - 33 Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel*, 129.



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“just as the Son of Man came not to be served  
but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many”

(Mt 20:28)

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“To become a pastor, love is essentially required... To love is your duty. Let no one surpass you in Love... Charity is the ladder to perfection. Love is patient and kind. It aims only at the prosperity of others”.

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**



# 6

## BE A SERVANT...

**“just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many”**

(Mt 20:28)

### Be a Christ-like Servant

Fr. Ukken’s fundamental orientation was to be a Christ-like servant. As St. Paul advised Timothy, Fr. Ukken in his words and actions put into practice the qualifications of a bishop as well as a deacon: temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, serious, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money, not double-tongued, and hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (cf. 1 Tim 3:3, 8-9).

The mark of stewardship is primarily “fitting the example of Jesus Christ himself”<sup>1</sup> who “came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). Whatever his temperament, gift mix, capacities, or sphere of influence, Fr. Ukken made necessary sacrifices in this

regard. He sought always people's "progress and joy in the faith". This resulted in the greater glory of God (cf. Phil 1:25; 2:9-11).

## **Servanthood as Selfless Service**

Serving others selflessly has two dimensions, namely, a) ability to understand the needs, problems and aspirations of the people, and b) ability to identify oneself fully with those one is serving<sup>2</sup>.

## **Be Loyal to Christ in the First Place**

For Fr. John, Christ — not public approval, position, or financial security — has his primary loyalty. He always sought the glory of his Master who chose him and offered the gift of priesthood. Throughout his life, until the last breath of his life, Fr. Ukken observed Jesus' words as the primary rule of his life and as the light of his paths: "The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood" (Jn 7:18).

Fr. John showed the willingness to come down from the throne of prosperity, positions, name and fame, and lived with the poor and for the poor. Each and every act he did for the betterment of the downtrodden and the backward. He left all his pleasures, convenience, happiness, and took the challenge of poverty and starvation as his friends for the upbringing of the exploited<sup>3</sup>.

## **Be a Steward of the Good Shepherd**

The power of being a servant is the authority of a shepherd<sup>4</sup>. It is the service. As we read in *Pastor Bonus*, "the task of its shepherds or pastors was indeed to be that service which is called very expressively in Sacred Scripture a diakonia or ministry"<sup>5</sup>. In this sense, it is worthwhile to note

that pastors' authority is linked to service, especially to the care and protection of the poorest and weakest, the least important and mostly forgotten. Therefore, after the example of the Venerable Augustine John Ukken, pastors of today are advised of leaving their comfort zone and must have "real contact with the poor and the marginalized"<sup>6</sup>. The pastor's primary role is thus that of inspirer and servant of the people, standing by them and participating in their struggle, consoling them and helping them to learn what God wants them to be<sup>7</sup>.

Venerable Augustine John Ukken served the believers by providing care as shepherd: "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me" (Jn 10:14). He interceded for them as priest: "It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us" (Rom 8:34; cf. Heb 7:25). Thus he has earned the right to direct or govern the church / parishes.

### **Be a Servant-Leader**

The life of Venerable Augustine John Ukken reminds the pastors of today that pastor must also be a servant-leader. In the first place, pastor must be a "servant". That is to say, he must play the roles of providing model, teaching and shepherding (1Tim 3; Tit 2; 1Pet 5:3). At the same time, pastors must be aware of the fact that they are accountable for the well being of the sheepfold under their care (Ezek 34:1-16).

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice (Ezek 34:15-16).



The Pastors of today is also “leaders.” They can be good leaders by playing roles of motivating, equipping, vision-building, mobilizing or empowering others for service (Eph 4:12-16). This is clearly depicted in the prominent lives of Joshua and St. Paul. As Joshua urged people forward (Josh 24:14-24), and as the apostle Paul served in suffering and humility while giving leadership (1Cor 4:6-13; 2Cor 6:1-10), the pastors of today are to be equipped with such true qualities of a good leader. To accomplish his desire to be like Jesus as Servant-Leader, Venerable Augustine John Ukken served the sick and the poor, started the schools to educate the people for their progress in every field, assimilated the way of life of St. Vincent de Paul, and sowed the seed of the Congregation of Sisters of Charity which has grown into a large tree over the past years<sup>8</sup>.

### **Diakonia for Building up the Church**

While enumerating how Fr. Ukken became the true servant of Christ, the Servant of Yahweh, it is worthwhile to mention the book *Jesus on Leadership* that I recently read. There the author listed out seven observations: Jesus humbled himself and allowed God to exalt him; Jesus followed his Father’s will rather than sought a position; Jesus defined greatness as being a servant and being first as becoming a slave; Jesus risked serving others because he trusted that he was God’ Son; Jesus left his place at the head table to serve the needs of others; Jesus shared responsibility and authority with those he called to lead; and Jesus built a team to carry out a worldwide vision<sup>9</sup>.

The proposed servant-leadership principles are, in one way or other, in correspondence with the pastoral life of Fr. Ukken. He humbled his heart; he moved away from the head table; he tried to first be a follower; he could find greatness in service; he even took risks; he could take the

power and lead as servant; he was humble enough to share responsibility and authority; and finally, he built a team (Congregation of the Sisters of Charity) to continue his charism in the Church and the Society. Put succinctly, this diakonia or service is very peculiar to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and then to Peter and his successors. It is necessarily related to the diakonia of the other apostles and their successors. As they served, Fr. Ukken also served the Church and the society with the sole purpose of “to build up the Church in this world”<sup>10</sup>.

### Endnotes:-

- 1 *Pastor Bonus*, no. 2.
- 2 George Kaitholil SDB, *The People and the Priest* (Mumbai, India: St. Pauls, 2009), 134.
- 3 Leena Kaitharath CSC, “Mercy is an Act, not a Feeling,” *Showers of Mercy* 9, no. 2(2016), 44.
- 4 Cf. *Pastor Bonus*, no.2.
- 5 *Pastor Bonus*, no. 1.
- 6 Cf. Pope Francis, *Homily of his Inaugural Mass on March 19, 2013*.
- 7 Kaitholil SDB, *The People and the Priest*, 134.
- 8 Sr. Dhanya CSC, “The Forerunner of in the Field of Family Apostolate,” in *Nalla Idayante Vazhikal (Paths of Good Shepherd): Sacerdotal Centenary Souvenir of Servant of God Augustine John Ukken*, ed. Sr. Donata CSC, (Kolazhy, India: Mariabhavan Generalte, 2008), 114.
- 9 Cf. C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 11-12.
- 10 *Pastor Bonus*, no. 3



**“I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.  
I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.  
So there will be one flock, one shepherd.  
For this reason the Father loves me, because  
I lay down my life in order to take it up again”**

**(Jn 10:16-17)**





“Respect all the churches, the Holy Church has recognized. Do not say bad things about them nor deprecate them”. (**Venerable Augustine John Ukken**)





## **BE A MAN OF COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP**

**“I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again”**

(Jn 10:16-17)

### **Be an Instrument of Dialogue**

Be a man of generating communion or fellowship in the Church is the want of our time. Therefore, pastors of today must be agents or instruments of dialogue. What the Lord requires of the pastors today is boldness and courage to be open to all, to be pastoral ministers who listen deeply to others, accompany them on their arduous journeys through life.

## **Be a Promoter of the Culture of Encounter**

Pastors of today must be promoters of the culture of encounter, where they live as “sacraments of the embrace between God’s riches and [their] poverty”. At the same time, they should try themselves to be “witnesses of the abasement and the condescension of God who anticipates in love [their] every response”<sup>1</sup>.

## **Be a Guru – Removing Darkness**

Coming to the life of Fr. Ukken, he tried in his various apostolates to lead people from ignorance and superstition to the light of the Truth. He identified himself with the downtrodden and oppressed. He worked hard for the uplift of the poor especially in Chowannur where the majorities were Hindus and non-Catholics<sup>2</sup>. Thus he earned an honorary title *Achan Thampuran* (Lord Priest) from the people in respect and appreciation of the service he did for the people, especially the scheduled castes and other non-Catholics<sup>3</sup>.

## **Fr. Ukken: A Great Ecumenist<sup>4</sup>**

Before the Second Vatican Council and when ecumenical movements were unheard of in Kerala, Fr. Ukken started the ecumenical activities in Chowannur, Arthat, and Kunnamkulam. He chose this place as it was a fortress of heretics, and was the strongholds of Christians of Antiochene tradition, and of other Orthodox Churches. With utmost sincerity for the unity of the Churches and with the ecumenical mind Fr. John worked hard in the surroundings. In the spirit of the reunion movement, initiated by Mar Ivanios, Fr. John had a strong hand in it. That led to the reunion of the small group of Thozhiyur Church into the Catholic Church, later Syro-Malankara Church in 1930<sup>5</sup>. Thus he is worthy to be called as a Great Ecumenist.

Fr. John realized his dream of ecumenism through his works of mercy. In Luke we read, “Be merciful, just as your father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). Fr. John wrote in the diary:

it is the principal or rather the only duty of a priest or qualification. What is it? A great desire, coupled with labor even in spite 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.<sup>6</sup>

In the year 1943 a dispute arose between Orthodox Christians and Hindus at Arthat. Contrary to the custom of keeping silence in front of the Chapel during the *Kavadi*, the Hindu people used drums in front of the Chapel. It resulted in a dispute. Many Hindus were beaten and Orthodox Christians were arrested. Fr. John had good relation with civil authorities. Mr. P. P. Devassy the Diwan of the then Cochin King approached Fr. John to settle the case peacefully. Fr. John’s intervention led to the release of the Orthodox Christians and settlement of the case. Many Orthodox Christians embraced the Catholic Church afterwards.<sup>8</sup>

### **Ecumenism through Charitable Works**

Fr. John decided to realize his ecumenical vision by working among the poor and the abandoned. He also wanted to identify himself with Jesus. Jesus had predilections for the poor:

Jesus knowing our weakness set a life-long example of poverty! He chose poor parents, poor stable, poor Nazareth, poor profession, poor apostles, lived poor without a home where in to rest his head in his public life, was stripped off even the last shred of linen before his death !!<sup>9</sup>

In Chowannur and Kunnamkulam, by striving to “alleviate the sufferings of our poor *pulayas* and to ameliorate



their condition to bring them up to the equal social condition”<sup>10</sup>, Fr. Ukken became a veritable model in interreligious dialogue and ecumenism.

### **Be Respectful to the Non-Catholics**

Fr. Ukken always exhorted his parishioners and Charity Sisters that they should show respectful and loveable behavior towards the non-Catholics. “Respect all the churches, the Holy Church has recognized. Do not say bad things about them nor deprecate them”<sup>11</sup>. He also dreamed to realize unity through merciful works. He noted it in the diary. “I hope to open a home for the aged and sickly at Kunnamkulam near the government hospital and have Mass and other services regularly conducted there, thus to make a breach in the heretical fortress.”<sup>12</sup> Before Vatican II, separated Christians were considered as heretics.

However, Fr. John had foreseen the renewal in the attitude of the Catholic Church at the Vatican II towards non-Catholics and Oriental Churches. In this regard, I could see in his life a praiseworthy action: St. Mary’s Orthodox Church and St. Thomas Catholic Church at Arthat were situated side by side. The whole land near to the road belonged to Roman Catholic Church. There was no entrance from the road to the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Christians submitted an application to get 20 cents of land with the recommendation of Fr. John to Bishop George Alappat, the bishop of Trichur. Fr. John mentioned in his recommendation letter the idea of re-union underlying in such an act. The bishop gave permission in writing.<sup>13</sup> The chapel there now stands as an eternal monument of Catholic-Orthodox fellowship.

### **Kunnamkulam Ecumenical Fellowship**

Fr. Ukken started an ashramam for the ecumenical endeavours in Kunnamkulam, later known as Kunnamkulam

Ecumenical Fellowship (KEF) in 2003. Its main focuses can be summarized in four words: **learn** together, **pray** together, **proclaim** together and **work** together. This Fellowship gather together on the first Monday of each month. Their gatherings were focused on the words of Christ: “they all may be one” (Jn 17: 21a). They also gathered together on other occasions like, the anniversary of KEF, Christmas and Ecumenical Prayer Week<sup>14</sup>.

### **Be a Person of Communion and Fellowship**

One of the examples of being a man of communion and fellowship can be seen in the life of Fr. Ukken: a large gathering of people, irrespective of caste and creed, participated in his funeral procession. This expressed their sincere appreciation and gratitude to a life, spent in love of God and fellow human beings. It is still remembered as the symbol of communion and fellowship irrespective of caste and creed<sup>15</sup>.

### **Be not a Barrier or Screen Blocking**

In today’s world, each pastor should not be “a barrier or screen blocking personal communications and dealings” between God and the faithful, or restricting them with conditions<sup>16</sup>. In this attempt, each pastor must be “the facilitator for communion and the sharing of concerns, and must be ever more so”<sup>17</sup>. More to say, the pastor must be a brother and companion to his people, a fellow pilgrim who shares in their burden for their faith<sup>18</sup>. The authentic humility and simplicity of life of the pastors inspire and call forth belief and apostolic zeal and generosity from among whom they serve. Here each pastor should follow the words of Jesus, saying: “I am the door. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture” (Jn 10:9).

## Lead a Spirituality of Communion

Communion is one of the few words in the English language that has a general meaning but maintains a sanctified use. Communion relates to things and persons. It is a joint participation in anything whatever, good or evil, duty or enjoyment, nature or actions. In other words, Communion is a relationship or union with someone or something. Because it is a relationship of persons, it tends to involve the whole self, body, mind, spirit, and emotions. In such understanding, the concept communion implies both the gift of self and the reception of the other person. Fr. Ukken was a man of communion and fellowship, since he had been very much interested in making, and fostering the relationship with all, irrespective of caste, creed and colour<sup>19</sup>.

At this juncture, it is worthwhile to reflect upon the concept of the *spirituality of communion*. It is the concept added by *Vita Consecrata* (1996)<sup>20</sup>. Accordingly, spirituality of communion is the concept which “promotes a way of thinking, speaking and acting which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension” (VC no. 46).

Later, in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, his Holiness Pope John Paul II explained the concept succinctly<sup>21</sup>. Accordingly, a spirituality of communion indicates above all “the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us” (NMI no. 43).

Another meaning of spirituality of communion explained by Pope John Paul II is that it is “an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as ‘those who are a part of

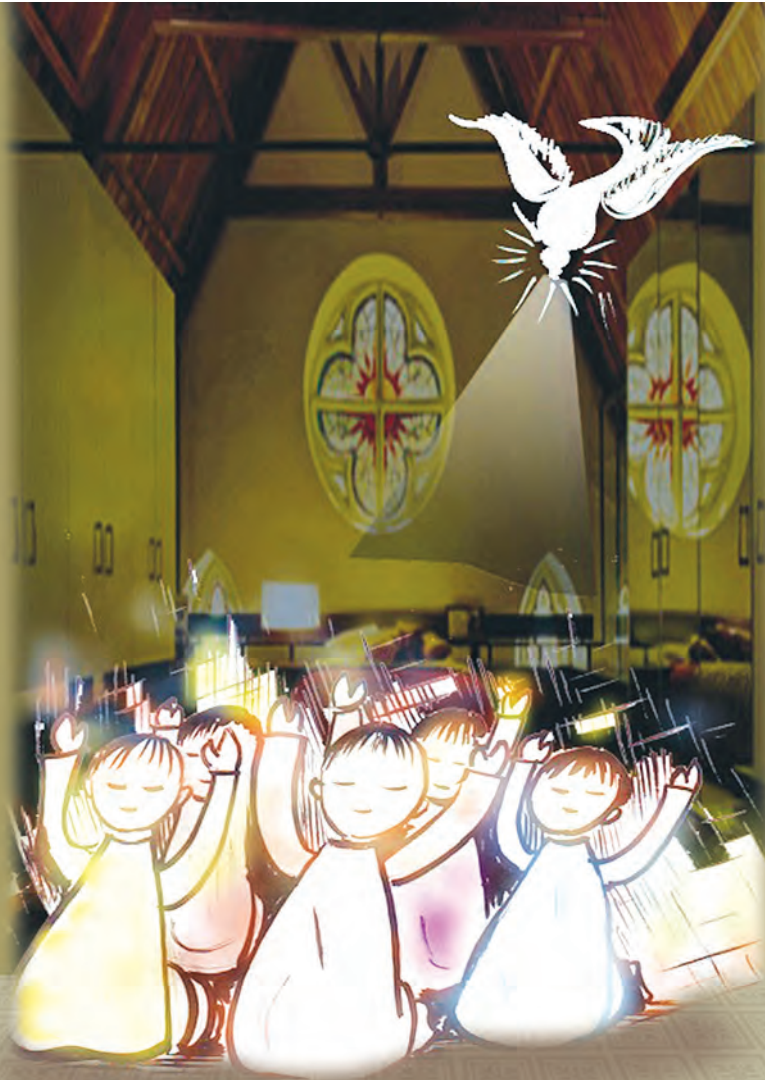
me” (NMI no. 43). It is the ability which each pastor should acquire. That is to say, pastor must be able “to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God” (NMI no. 43). At the last but not the least, a man with solid spirituality of communion, must have the ability “to know how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters, bearing ‘each other’s burdens’” (Gal 6.2). ...” (NMI, 43).

In sum, the communion and fellowship seen in and around Kunnankulam between the different Churches are outcomes of Fr. Ukken’s ecumenical works. A disciple of Christ should be an evangelist of unity. All his works were in an ecumenical mentality of co-existence, co-operation, fellowship and commitment to others. His life was oriented towards the unity which Christ desired. He tried to accomplish it through his works of mercy.

### Endnotes:-

- 1 Pope Francis, *Address to the Bishops of the United States Gathered in St. Matthew’s Cathedral on September 23, 2015*, available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_201509\\_23\\_usa-vescovi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_201509_23_usa-vescovi.html) [accessed on 15 June, 2019].
- 2 *Lights from Heaven* (4.9.1924), 229. Cf. Pulikkan, “Apostle of Charity”, 47.
- 3 Pulikkan, “Apostle of Charity”, 47.
- 4 For a detailed study see, Sr. Brighty CSC (Marykutty A.K.), *Merciful Love – A Model for Ecumenism: An Ecumenical Approach of Fr. Augustine John Ukken, the Venerable to Empower Ecumenical Movement in the Archdiocese of Trichur Today* (unpublished B.A. Research Paper), Leuven: Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, 2109), 9-17.
- 5 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 64.
- 6 Augustine John Ukken, *Resolutions Volume II* (1905-1932), (Kolazhy, India: Archives of Mariabhavan CSC Generalate, 1994), 67. Hereafter we use *Resolutions II* as short title.
- 7 In connection with the Hindu temple festival Kavadi is used. Kavadi is a decorative art work honouring the idol carried by the people in Hindu procession, with dance accompanied by drums.

- 8 J. C. Chiramel, "Responsible Fr. Ukken," in *Adaranjali* (Malayalam) – Tribute: 1956-81, ed. Sr. Grace, CSC (Kolazhy, India: Mariabhavan CSC Generalate, 1981), 11.
- 9 Augustine John Ukken, *Lights from Meditations and Monthly Recollections Volume II* (reflections from 16.7.1904 – Christmas 1904), (Kolazhy, India: Archives of Mariabhavan CSC Generalate, 1994), 3, (1904). Hereafter we use LMMR II as short title.
- 10 *Lights from Heaven* (9.9.1904), 179. See in this respect, Vincent Kundukulam, "Fr. Augustine Ukken, Apostle of Religious Harmony" (Malayalam – Mathasauharda Preshithan Augustine Ukkanachan), in *Nallidayante Nalvazhikal – Sacerdotal Centenary Souvenir of Servant of God Augustine John Ukken*, ed. Sr. Donata CSC (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 2007), 144.
- 11 Lawrance CSC, ed., *Kalathinatheethanaya Karmayogi*, 378.
- 12 Ukken, *Resolutions II* (1922), 29.
- 13 Lawrance CSC, ed., *Kalathinatheethanaya Karmayogi*, 231.
- 14 Jose Franko CMI, "Ecumenical Activities and Fr. Ukken" (Malayalam), in *Nallidayante Nalvazhikal – Sacerdotal Centenary Souvenir of Servant of God Augustine John Ukken*, ed. Sr. Donata CSC (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 2007), 139.
- 15 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram* (Malayalam) – *A Culture of Love* (Kolazhy, India: Charity Publications Mariabhavan CSC Generalate, 2018), pp. 109-110.
- 16 *Pastor Bonus*, no. 8.
- 17 *Pastor Bonus*, no. 8.
- 18 Kaitholil SDB, *The People and the Priest*, 134.
- 19 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram* (Malayalam) – *A Culture of Love*, 137-138.
- 20 Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata – The Consecrated Life - The Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation* (25 March, 1996), available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_2503\\_1996\\_vita-consecrata\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_2503_1996_vita-consecrata_en.html) [11 May, 2019].
- 21 Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte – At the Beginning of the New Millennium – Apostolic Letter* (06 January, 2001), no. 43, available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_20010106\\_novo-millennio-ineunte.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html)[accessed on 11 May, 2019].



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**“Day by day, as they spent much time together  
in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their  
food with glad and generous hearts,  
praising God and having the good will of all the people.  
And day by day the Lord added to their number  
those who are being saved”**

**(Acts 2:46-47)**

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“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... I must then seek friendship with my good brothers to be able to carry out the work of my Master”.

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**





## BE COLLABORATIVE

**“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who are being saved”**

(Acts 2:46-47)

### **Need of Collaborative Ministry**

Collaboration is the suitable means for doing pastoral ministry efficiently. This implies that a pastoral leader should not be an autocrat. On the contrary, he should be a man of dialogue. He should also learn to share his work with others. Therefore, collaborative ministry is a must for an effective pastoral leadership.

In the *Extra Ordinary Synod of Bishops* held in Rome in 2018, the bishops observed that



Pastors need to have the capacity to increase collaboration in witness and mission and to accompany the processes of joint discernment so as to interpret the signs of times in the light of faith and under the guidance of the Spirit, with all the members of the community contributing, starting with those on the margins<sup>1</sup>.

## **Pastoral Ministry *for-and-with* Others**

Pastors are not only to work for others but also to work with others. Thus pastoral work becomes a participatory team-work. This team work will become possible only when the pastor is willing to recognize the team members (Parish Council, Trustees) as collaborators and not as his subordinates who are expected only to take orders from him<sup>2</sup>.

## **Pastoral Ministry: Collaborative in Nature**

To be collaborative means to “co-labour,” or “labour together.” It is a contemporary short-hand way of expressing a New Testament vision of church ministry as a creative, mutually-formative relationship between: “*ordained / authorized*” ministries (picture of St. Paul and other apostles preaching, teaching, laying hands on new leaders and then moving on) and the *ministries of all the baptized* through the gifts of the Spirit (Ephesians 4; 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12)<sup>3</sup>.

Collaborative ministry means the working together with all men and women of good will to build a more just world, a more fraternal world, one that is in greater solidarity. In fact, the communion precedes collaboration:

For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence the focal point of our total presentation will be man himself, whole and

entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will... (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 3).

### **Fr. Ukken a Man of Collaborative Ministry**

Fr. John has also requested for the co-operation of the people irrespective of caste-creed-colour, in social matters. Such cooperation attempt is later affirmed in the documents of the Vatican II. The Council Fathers clearly affirmed such co-operation in a succinct manner:

Since co-operation in social matters is so wide spread today, all men without exception are called to work together; with much greater reason in this true of all who believe in God, but most of all, it is especially true of all Christians, since they bear the seal of Christ's name.<sup>4</sup>

### **Trust in the Divine Providence a Hallmark of Collaborative Ministry**

Fr. Ukken was the instrumental for the growth of all the congregations of the diocese of Trichur at that time. For instance, when Msgr. Paul Chittilappilly, the then Vicar General of the diocese (1957-63) approached Fr. Ukken to send CSC sisters to serve the lepers in Mulayam. Later these sisters became the first sisters of the Congregation of the Samaritan Sisters in 1964, founded by Msgr. Paul. Fr. Ukken also contributed a lot to the formation of the Carmelites and Clarists and later of the Holy Family Sisters at Puthenchira. All those activities clearly manifest the collaborative spirit of Fr. Ukken, even in the growth and formation of different congregations<sup>5</sup>. In all these attempts, Fr. Ukken firmly believed in the providence of God. This is a hallmark of a man with an extraordinary character of collaboration.

While Fr. Ukken was the parish priest in Palayur, a terrible tempest and rain struck the entire Kerala on 28 May 1941.

Palayur and its surroundings were destroyed drastically. Many have lost houses, and buildings were destroyed. Fr. Ukken's spirit of selfless help by offering medicine and reaching out help by all possible means, especially building houses for the newly homeless was a sign of his collaborative character<sup>6</sup>.

## **Visionary Leadership a Prerequisite for a Collaborative Ministry**

For a collaborative ministry, one must have a visionary leadership. Fr. Ukken is impregnate with such leadership. Fr. Ukken teamed with Msgr. John Palokkaran brought up St. Thomas College into excellence in academic and extra-curricular activities. He could also start Science group in the College at the International level. Only a visionary leader like Fr. Ukken can bring high standard in intellectual, moral, spiritual and human formation of the students in the St. Thomas High School as well as in the College<sup>7</sup>.

## **Priestly Fraternity and Collaborative Ministry**

Priestly fraternity is a must to nurture collaborative ministry. While Fr. Ukken was the parish priest in Kottapady, he used to go to Mattom to help the parish priest there. This is an example for the ideal of collaboration with his fellow priests. Fr. Ukken's initiatives for the support of his fellow priests were praiseworthy. Once he has written in this manner: "I must then seek friendship with my good brothers to be able to carry out the work of my Master"<sup>8</sup>.

To facilitate priestly fraternity Fr. Ukken has formed a Priests' Union<sup>9</sup>. In this regard, it is useful to recalling some words from one of his Diaries: "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"<sup>10</sup>. His vision is later

seen in the Church document by the Congregation for the Clergy in 2016. Accordingly, Priestly Associations are “meant to encourage the unity of the priests among themselves, with rest of the presbyterate and with the Bishop” (GDV no. 88f)<sup>1</sup>. They are also helpful to find fraternal support in their “progress on the journey to holiness and to be sustained in their pastoral endeavours” (GDV no. 88f).

To actualize Priestly Union, Fr. Ukken has organized fraternal meetings. He found time for prayer with his fellow priest by reading the Word of God or whenever needed he helped them in Confessions; he also spent some time together with those priests irrespective of age.

In sum, as in the *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation* (2016) stated, the fraternal meetings “in their various forms are the simplest and most common expressions of priestly fraternity. In any case, it is strongly desirable to promote them” (GPV no. 88).

## Endnotes:-

- 1 Extra Ordinary Synod of Bishops, *Final Document of the Extra Ordinary Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment* (2018), no. 124, available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20181027\\_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20181027_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html)[accessed on 15 June, 2019].
- 2 Kaitholil SDB, *The People and the Priest*, 133-134.
- 3 Michael Wood, “Why Collaborative Ministry? An Australian’s Story,” available at: <https://anglicanpastor.com/why-collaborative-ministry-an-australians-story/>[accessed on 14 March, 2019].
- 4 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no.12, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed., Austine Flannery, O. P. (New Delhi, India: Theological Publications in India 2007), 417. Hereafter we use UR as short title.

- 5 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram (Malayalam) – A Culture of Love*, 90-91; and Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 85-86.
- 6 Cf. Sr. Grace CSC, ed., *Adaranjali (Tribute)*, 1956-1981), 49. See in this respect, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 75-76.
- 7 Cf. Sr. Grace CSC, ed., *Adaranjali (Tribute)*, 1956-1981), 63. See in this respect, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 48.
- 8 LMMR II (18.8.1904), 32; *Resolutions II* (Retreat December 14-23, 1906), 13. See in this respect, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 47.
- 9 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram (Malayalam) – A Culture of Love*, 89.
- 10 LMMR II (18.8.1904), 32; *Resolutions II* (Retreat December 14-23, 1906), 13. See in this respect, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 47.
- 11 Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalibus Institutionis Sacerdotalis – The Gift of the Priestly Formation* (8 December, 2016), (Vaticana: Libreria Editrice, 2017).



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**“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them”**

**(Mt 4:23-24).**

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“always and everywhere I want to do, as my guide and model Jesus Christ would have acted”.

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**



# 9

## BE APPROACHABLE AND AVAILABLE

**“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.”**

(Mt 4:23-24)

### **Availability as the Hallmark of a Good Pastor**

Fr. Ukken was known as the person frequently on the virtue of availability. His availability made the parish, as Pope Francis claims, “a house with open doors, a refuge of sinners,



a home for people living in streets, a place of loving care for the sick, a camp for the young, a class room for catechizing children about to make their First Communion”<sup>1</sup>

Fr. Ukken was always available to the people for hearing Confessions. Quickly getting to the heart of the matter, he helped them to identify the underlying sins in their lives and advised them how to develop practical plans to grow in holiness in their day to day Christian life.

Fr. Ukken was readily available to the ordinary people. The Catholics and Jacobites, non-Christians and people of different ideological persuasions could meet him in times of need<sup>2</sup>. On many occasions Fr. Ukken worked especially for the eradication of the evils of the Caste system and untouchability. He ardently prayed for the emancipation of the dalits and hoped for an equal treatment of the mariginalized people<sup>3</sup>. He fought against the Caste System where the high caste Hindus who were the landlords unscrupulously exploited the tenants was given on the basis of the payment of the land taxes and thus only the high castes were eligible to vote<sup>4</sup>.

### **Approachability as the Passport of a Good Pastor**

Fr. Ukken was well convinced that approachability was the passport to real pastoral ministry and pastoral leadership in the Church and the society. From the seminary life onwards he was well-equipped for teaching and preaching the Word of God, by means of thorough intellectual formation. He had the good habit of reading books, particularly solid theological books. Since he was solid in Catholic doctrine, he could preach outstanding sermons Sunday after Sunday<sup>5</sup>.

Not only preaching, but also Fr. Ukken loved to discuss theology, debate doctrinal issues, and tell people how to

apply the truth of God's Word to everyday life. He is also gifted with the ability to quickly get to the heart of the people. He spoke to them from heart to heart<sup>6</sup>.

Fr. Ukken could gain the applause from the people because of his elegant approachable nature. This made his people feel safe. He always cultivated attitudes and relational habits that encourage people to open up and draw near. Thus they could recognize that they are welcome to approach him with questions, concerns, or even criticism. When I went through his biography, I was well convinced of the fact that his people could approach him safely with questions, personal problems, and especially criticism, no matter how graciously it was offered.

### **Be the Man of Humility**

Fr. Ukken was the man of actual humility. His humble nature could gain the heart of the people. He always paid considerable attention to the Pauline words in his words and actions: "consider others better than yourself" (Phil 2:3-4). This resulted in valuing the thoughts and interests of the people as highly as his own<sup>7</sup>.

### **Avoid Harsh and Divisive Language**

The pastors of the Good Shepherd have to avoid harsh words and divisive language. As Pope Francis urged, "Harsh and divisive language does not befit the tongue of a pastor, it has no place in his heart; although it may momentarily seem to win the day, only the enduring allure of goodness and love remains truly convincing"<sup>8</sup>.

### **Approachability and Availability as an Art of Personal Accompaniment**

Fr. John has learned the art of personal accompaniment in his pastoral life. He was taught how to remove his sandals

before the sacred ground of the other (Cf. Ex 3:5). For him, the art of accompaniment is this. The pace of his accompaniment was steady and reassuring. His closeness and compassionate gaze towards the other in need (irrespective of caste, creed and colour) healed, liberated and encouraged their growth in life, physical and spiritual.

In sum, as Pope Francis said with enthusiasm, we can also say about the pastoral life of Venerable Ukken in this manner:

Wherever God's people have desires or needs, there is the priest, who knows how to listen (*ob-audire*) and feels a loving mandate from Christ who sends him to relieve that need with mercy or to encourage those good desires with resourceful charity<sup>9</sup>.

### **Endnotes:-**

- 1 Pope Francis, *Homily on Holy Thursday Chrism Mass* (2014), available at: [https://saltandlighttv.org/blogfeed\\_getpost.php?id=69181](https://saltandlighttv.org/blogfeed_getpost.php?id=69181) [accessed on 15 June, 2019].
- 2 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 69.
- 3 LMMR II (9.9.1904), 46.
- 4 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 69.
- 5 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram* (Malayalam), 108, 49.
- 6 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram*(Malayalam), 108
- 7 Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram* (Malayalam), p. 107.
- 8 Pope Francis, *Address to the Bishops of the United States Gathered in St. Matthew's Cathedral* on September 23, 2015.
- 9 Pope Francis, *Homily on Holy Thursday Chrism Mass* (2014).



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**“But a Samaritan while traveling came near him;  
and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.**

**He went to him and bandaged his wounds,  
having poured oil and wine on them.**

**Then he put him on his own animal,  
brought him to an inn, and took care of him”**

**(Lk 10:33-34).**

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“...let me also have compassion for the weak and do similarly to ameliorate their condition, specially when I will be the innkeeper as a priest”.

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**



# 10

## BE A GOOD SAMARITAN OF SUFFERING

**“But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”**

(Lk 10: 33-34)

### **The Reality of Suffering on Earth**

The reality of suffering on earth is too obvious and too familiar to need description. It is a day-to-day experience, which enters into every human life regardless of position, standard or nationality. The existence of suffering and evil has prompted many to question the existence of a good and omnipotent God. People of all cultures have wrestled with the problem of suffering. It is difficult to understand the meaning of suffering. People often feel consumed by

failures, physical pains, mental sufferings, difficulties in daily activities and so on. Suffering is a reality that all fight against since it is a negative force. But the question remains: how can we deal with suffering? To approach suffering in a positive manner, one must have a supernatural vision that comes from faith in God. It is in this context, I make a retour through the life of the Servant of God Fr. Augustine John Ukken and try to bring front how much he understood the value of suffering in his life. First of all, I explain the notion of suffering from a catholic point of view and then I elucidate Fr. Augustine John's vision of suffering. Finally, I make an attempt to call this Venerable today the 'Good Samaritan' of Suffering.

## **The Christian Suffering**

Christian tradition perceives suffering as an indispensable reality of life. The field of human suffering is much wider, more varied and multi-dimensional.<sup>1</sup> Christians accept the fact that human suffering is unavoidable by the fact that we are heirs of fallen humanity. Though all the religions deal with the origin, problems, inevitability and remedies about human suffering, the Christian perspective is more positive, because "Christians understand suffering to permit greater identification with Jesus, who is believed to have suffered for the benefit of all, providing a model of virtuous sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> Ever since the human history is known, there were people who succeeded to see the salvific aspect of this most mysterious reality of life. And there were people who, without questioning the 'why' of this reality, accepted it as part and parcel of life in fulfilling the divine will. They were so immersed in the love of God that they aspired to have the grace to suffer like Christ for the sake of others. When we go through the biography and personal diaries of Fr. Augustine John Ukken<sup>3</sup> it is obvious that he was a man

of unwavering faith and blameless character who suffered deeply in all dimensions of his existence- physical, political, social, spiritual and emotional.

### ***Ukken House: the Cradle of Suffering***

Any kind of suffering will be meaningful if it is considered as a suffering for something good. It will have some kind of effect on the person who suffers or it will be helpful for someone else in one way or other. Any single answer to the meaning of suffering is not complete, because suffering helps different persons differently. The infancy narratives in the biography and personal diaries of Fr. Augustine John Ukken make us convince that *Ukkenparambu*, the place he spent during his infancy period is the cradle of suffering and it is the place where he started to practice suffering from a catholic point of view.

The name Augustine John itself speaks of the story of suffering availed in the Ukken family. The name John made evoke the sad memories of the first child of Anthappan-Annamma couples. “Although the parents christened the child the name John, they used to call him Augustine.... (However, officially he was called John...)”<sup>4</sup>. Besides, at the age of two and half, his mother died. Naturally, he could not enjoy the maternal love. When he was just six years old, he lost his father Anthappan too. There he really started to feel the pains of loneliness and orphanhood. He began to entrust his whole life into the hands of the good God who never abandons his faithful children<sup>5</sup>.

After quitting his studies due to the family responsibilities the little John had to help out the shepherding of the cattle and the various household chores and do manual labour. The orphaned John began to experience the bitterness of growing up in an environment of neglect and poverty. All



the painful memories moulded the Good Samaritan in him and he harboured no ill will towards the aunt Acharunny, sister of Anthappan. He recollected the same on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1904 in this way: “I shall not back 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”<sup>6</sup>.

In the infancy period, one could claim that Augustine John tried to learn what suffering is meant. For him, suffering is not the pain of loneliness and orphanhood but that of submitting oneself to the all embracing care of God the Father as well as that of learning the virtues of love, generosity, kindness and fear of God. This is clearly reflected in one of his personal diaries:

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.... It seemed to me that God raised me above my stations and deserts..<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the invisible hand of God guided him amidst all the trials of this world.

### **Fr. Ukken’s Life: a Treasure of Suffering**

Being in the Kandy Seminary, the Brother John showed the capacity to be moulded in the Mould of Vicarious Suffering. As he wrote, to be trained and moulded as a priest of Christ, John submitted himself to all the hardship of training<sup>8</sup>. During his pastoral ministry, Being the instrumental in the establishment of the Priests’ Home in Thrissur in 1915, Fr. Ukken’s concern and sense of solidarity towards his fellow priests were appreciated by all<sup>9</sup>. Besides, even when many of the slum dwellers lived in abject squalor and often in immorality, Fr. Augustine, during his busy

schedule, visited them and paid great attention to their spiritual renewal and even showed extra courage to work among them<sup>10</sup>.

The above events from the life of Fr. Ukken clearly make us convince that like Christ, the disciples also suffer. Jesus says: “Unless you are willing to lose your life, you cannot gain your life” (Mt 16:25). Here He teaches the fundamental principle of suffering, namely the loss of one’s self in the way to the divine.

### **Way of the Cross: the Best Spiritual Deed**

To suffer means to carry the cross and accept it joyfully till the end. Whoever gives one the cross, be glad that they are raising that person to eternal glory. Even if they are sinners, they are God’s instruments to make one closer to him<sup>11</sup>. With his firm conviction that the Way of the Cross is the best spiritual deed, Fr. Ukken used to make the Way of the Cross and asked the sisters to do so. His meditations on each station of the Cross clearly express this fact. For him, suffering helps one to offer oneself completely in God’s hand without despair. The 12<sup>th</sup> Station of the Cross reminds us this fact, even at the time of humiliation, or at the time of leaving one’s religious vows and going out to the worldly life<sup>12</sup>. In this context, it is to be remembered one of the great sayings of Fr. Augustine John Ukken: “just like the natural place of the fish is in water, so is the natural abode of the religious sister under the cross” and “when sorrow, tribulation and obstacle take place, go to Jesus, at least, in heart”<sup>13</sup>.

### **To Suffer Means to be Identified with Christ**

With regard to human suffering, there is no other satisfactory answer than that which Christ gives. “Christ does not explain in the abstract the reasons for suffering, but

before all else He says: Follow me! Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering; through my cross.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, for Fr. Augustine John Ukken, suffering is the means to be identified / conformed with Christ.

This identification takes place only in bearing cross with Christ. I should follow Christ, accepting the cross-bearing Christ. When we make the way of the cross, we follow him in spirit. After the reception of the Holy Communion, this is the best spiritual deed for the soul <sup>15</sup>.

During his instructions to the Sisters of Charity, Fr. Augustine John often reminded them to suffer silently as Jesus suffered. He encouraged each one of them to offer one’s suffering as a reparation for one’s acts of accusing others or hearing other’s mistakes. Whenever happens wrong allegations, blame, misunderstanding, loss of good name, etc. to them and when one suffers all these patiently, Jesus will raise him or her greatly<sup>16</sup>. It is obvious that Fr. Ukken regarded “sufferings as his inheritance from Jesus. Jesus’ sufferings were the source of strength for John, by his suffering, Jesus teaches us the ideal of detachment”<sup>17</sup>.

## **The Beauty of Vicarious Suffering**

According to St. Paul the life of a Christian is stretched between two poles: living and dying with Christ.

Suffering therefore is not a privilege of the apostle, or of certain Christians, but it belongs to the very essence of being a Christian. It is a special grace, greater even than the grace of faith.<sup>18</sup>

Our Christian faith in the Crucified Lord teaches us how to integrate suffering into our life. Therefore, Fr. Augustine

John looked at the sufferings positively: “in our suffering we have to pray repeatedly and pray for liberation, for God is our Father and does everything for our good”<sup>19</sup>.

To grow in the spirit of sacrifice, Fr. Ukken wore thorny chain. He wore it as punishment for his sins, for the sins of others and conversion of sinners. This is done also to become more similar to Jesus’ suffering. He did penance in order to gain indulgence for the souls in purgatory<sup>20</sup>. In one of his personal diaries, Fr. Ukken wrote that “mortification and penance should be undertaken to avoid sin and keep up fervour”<sup>21</sup>. During his personal interactions with his religious sisters he used to tell them that “The unhappy things that occurred to you could be accepted with the motive of penance for your and other’s sins”<sup>22</sup>. This is the suffering for O/others, i.e., the vicarious suffering for the better good.

## **Suffering on Earth: A Foretaste of the Joys of Heaven**

God is very near to the people at the time of their suffering and He gives strength to people in times of suffering. Suffering was seen in the background of a future hope (Mic 4:4). There is hope after suffering. Here every Christian, like Christ, is to be a holocaust. Fr. Ukken lived this principle and asked the sisters to be holocausts in realms such as spiritual, physical and worldly spheres<sup>23</sup>. As Fr. Ukken understood, the numerous crosses and trials that we encounter in our daily lives shall not deter us from our Christian path; it should lead us to think of Heaven<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, he always encouraged the sisters to “Ask to know the joys of heaven and excite your heart after them. In heaven we have perfect happiness”<sup>25</sup>.

## Be the ‘Good Samaritan’ of Suffering

Suffering is a hard time for everyone. Even though suffering is very hard, the redemptive meaning of suffering supports Christians to bear it. One can overcome it by the power of Christ. St. Paul writes in the Second Letter to the Corinthians as follows: “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor 12:9). Second letter to Timothy states: “And therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed” (2 Tim 1:12). And in the letter to the Philippians he points out: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me” (Phi 4:13). It is in this context we make an attempt to interpret the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) describes the Gospel of suffering and speaks about compassion. Here we consider suffering not from the perspective of the sufferer but from the perspective of those who encounter the suffering person. Pastor’s task in these circumstances is to be like the Good Samaritan: to notice the suffering person, to stop whatever else we are doing, to feel compassion for them, and to provide them with generous help. The name ‘Good Samaritan’ fits every individual who is sensitive to the sufferings of others, ‘who is moved’ by the misfortune of another.<sup>26</sup>

Of course, Fr. Ukken’s option for the poor is visible in the readiness to dedicate his whole life for the poor. Recollecting the parable of Good Samaritan, he wrote in his diary dated on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1903: “...let me also have compassion for the weak and do similarly to ameliorate their condition, specially when I will be the innkeeper as a priest”<sup>27</sup>.

In the life of Fr. Ukken, his suffering was oriented with total determination and zeal to make the life of the poor

and the marginalized a better one. He understood that suffering always invites a person not to turn away from the needy. Thus bearing it in mind and being burnt with the compassionate love of Jesus for the poor and the marginalized, Fr. Ukken never turned away from those who approached him seeking food, shelter, clothing or even money. Moreover, his renouncement of the high positions and seats of security to respond to the current social realities around his world with sensitivity, sensibility and solidarity made him the 'Good Samaritan' of Suffering in the present age.

In short, the problem of suffering persists in every generation because the experience of suffering is common to all humankind. The major problem, I believe, with respect to suffering, is not the 'why,' but its 'how;' not the finding of a satisfactory explanation, but the finding of the means to meet it without being crushed. In the present age, Fr. Augustine John Ukken is the best role model in this regard not only for the CSC sisters but also for each Christian. His life is unique in its rootedness in the spirit of the Cross.

The little ways of the life embraced by Fr. Ukken was an eye opener for the world then and will be an inspiration for the world in future. His life was also the sharing in the life of the crucified Christ and he recommended his religious sisters to rejoice in suffering as the right and privilege of those who possess the Spirit of the Lord. He, the 'Good Samaritan' of Suffering, showed them a ray of light in the shadowy areas of this world of afflictions. CSC sisters who possess the Spirit of the Lord prove that they take pain, not for the sake of anything else, but for the sake of love.

### **Endnotes :-**

- 1 John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, Apostolic Letter on the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering (Trivandrum, India: Carmel International Publishing House, 1984), 5.

- 2 E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, vol. IX (London: Routledge, 1998), 214.
- 3 The personal diaries of Fr. Augustine John Ukken, written in English (partly also in Latin) have been preserved in the Archives of Maria Bhavan CSC Generalate, Kolazhy. They consist of four parts: *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections Vol. I* (1902-1903), *Resolutions Vol. I* (11-20 December, 1903), *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections Vo. II* (16.7.1904 – Christmas 1904), and *Resolutions Vol. II* (1905-1932).
- 4 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 12.
- 5 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 13.
- 6 *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections II*, (16.07.1904- Christmas 1904), 51.
- 7 *Resolutions II*, 1905-1932 (Annual Retreat 1922), 30. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 14.
- 8 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 21.
- 9 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 45.
- 10 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 46.
- 11 Sr. Trifonia, ed., *Pithrevanikalude Manicheppilninnu* (Malayalam) - *From the Treasure Box of Father's Sayings*, (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan CSC Generalate, 2001), 109.
- 12 Sr. Trifonia, ed., *Pithrevanikalude Manicheppilninnu*, 110-111.
- 13 Sr. Lawrence, *Kalathinatheethanaya Karmayogi* (Malayalam) - *The Active Mystic beyond Time* (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan CSC Generalate, 1994), 377-379.
- 14 John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, no.26.
- 15 Sr. Trifonia, ed., *Pithrevanikalude Manicheppilninnu*, 107.
- 16 Sr. Trifonia, ed., *Pithrevanikalude Manicheppilninnu*, 108.

- 17 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 124. See also, *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections I* (1902-1903), 64, (23-24.06.1903).
- 18 Bertrangesa, *The Bible on Suffering* (Winconsin: St. Norbert Abbey Press, 1966), 55.
- 19 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 125. See also, *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections I* (1902-1903), 174, (18.12.1903).
- 20 *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections I*, (1902-1903), 117, (23.9.1903).
- 21 *Resolutions II*, (1905-1932), 39, (2-8.9.1927).
- 22 As quoted in Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 126.
- 23 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 127. For a detailed study, see Sr. Sheena CSC, "Be Thou a Holocaust: SD. A.J. Ukken's Vision of Christian Existence", *Karunardram – Showers of Mercy*, 2, no.01 (2010): 24-27.
- 24 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 127.
- 25 *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections I*, (1902-1903), 141, (1.11.1903).
- 26 Sacria Kanniyakonil, *Wait for God's Call: Catholic Perspective on Euthanasia* (Kottayam, India: OIRSI, 2011), 102.
- 27 *Lights from Meditations, Monthly Recollections I*, (1902-1903), 85.







“Be perfect therefore as your  
heavenly Father is perfect”

(Mt 5:48)



“I implore you, either make me a good priest after the Heart of Jesus or reject me, make me die now... Reform what is deformed, confirm what is reformed, stabilize what is conformed and transform what is stabilized”.

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**





## BE HOLY

**“Be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**

(Mt 5:48)

### **Spiritual Diaries as Hallmarks of Inner Holiness**

The spiritual diaries of Fr. Ukken, *Lights from Heaven* show how determined and cautious he had been towards his path of holiness. They also show forth the inner saintliness of Fr. Augustine John Ukken. His firm faith in God’s providence, thirst for reconciliation with Him, and the readiness to propagate the faith are all well testified from his spiritual diaries. They are the hallmarks of his inner holiness<sup>1</sup>.

In his annual retreat in 1907 at Candy seminary, Fr. John has already written the true meaning of being and becoming holy by means of annual retreat as follows: “reform what is deformed, confirm what is reformed, stabilize what is conformed and transform what is stabilized”<sup>2</sup>.

## **Holiness: To be Like Christ**

To be like Christ was the goal of the young priest Augustine John Ukken. He wrote it in his spiritual diaries in a beautiful manner: “I shall configure myself to Christ. Nothing less that ideal is fitting to me”<sup>3</sup>. This is the typical actualization of the words of St. Paul: “My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal 4:19); and “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). That is the holiness of being Christ-like! In all things he had one ambition to imitate Christ. He lived in Christ and for Christ.

## **Holiness: the Perfect Union with Christ**

The perfect union with Christ is called Holiness. Therefore, holiness is to be sought, loved and practiced in order to get near to God. Fr. Ukken was convinced that all are called to holiness, as Pope Francis later exhorted in his *Gaudate et Exsultate* (2018). He implored many times while at the front of the Blessed Sacrament: “I implore you, either make me a good priest after the Heart of Jesus or reject me, make me die now”<sup>4</sup>. For that, he firmly believed that all have to see the holiness in the people around. In this regard, Fr. Ukken writes: “always and everywhere I want to do, as my guide and model Jesus Christ would have acted”<sup>5</sup>. Surely, his work among the poor, especially in the last phase of his life at Chowannur, basing himself on the ideals of the Gospel is yet another dimension of his holiness<sup>6</sup>.

## **Aspire to Become a Saint**

Fr. John aspired to be a saint and his journey to spiritual perfection is marked with struggles to win over the inclinations of his body and the passions of the world<sup>7</sup>. He readily admitted the inner tensions of his soul and

acknowledged the inclinations of his character to sin. His sense of sin and the humility of confession the sinfulness itself became paths to holiness, by which he overcame these temptations. He applied himself to rigorous fasting and an austere way of life<sup>8</sup>.

### **Life as a Pilgrimage to Eternity**

Fr. Ukken believed that life is a pilgrimage to the eternity. We are the pilgrims. Our ultimate goal is Heaven. In the eternity, his father and mother are awaiting for him. His fasting, works of charity, making himself humble, suffering, abstinence, etc. are the wealth that he accumulated for the eternal life. To lead a holy life he sought the help of Blessed Virgin Mary. He always prayed to the Lord Jesus: Lord make me Holy, a holy Priest!<sup>9</sup>

Fr. Ukken also practiced what the Prophet Micah explained:

What God requires not burnt offerings with the thousands of rams, nor with ten thousands of rivers of oil, nor with the firstborn for transgression, nor with the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, but rather he has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic 6: 6-8)

For Fr. Ukken, he did not long for a long lasting life, but longed for a good life full of justice, love, kindness and humility<sup>10</sup>. I firmly believe, that is why, the funeral of Fr. Ukken drew thousands of people, both Christians and non-Christians, who had experienced the sanctity and benevolence of this noble pastor. They proclaimed in one voice “we lost a man of God”<sup>11</sup>, a man of justice, a man of love and kindness, and a man of humility.

## Endnotes:-

- 1 *Lights from Heaven* (8, 10. 7. 1903), 49-51. Cf. Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.
- 2 *Lights from Heaven*, 218.
- 3 *Lights from Heaven*, 225.
- 4 *Lights from Heaven* (6.10., 1907), 224.
- 5 *Lights from Heaven* (December 1903).
- 6 *Lights from Heaven* (8, 10. 7.1903), 49-51. Cf. Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.
- 7 Varghese Ukken, *The Moral Vision of Rev. Fr. Augustine John Ukken* (Kolazhy, India: Charity Publications Maria Bhavan Generalate, 2006), 10-20, 18-19. Cf. Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.
- 8 Ukken, *The Moral Vision of Rev. Fr. Augustine John Ukken*, 10-11. Cf. Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.
- 9 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram* (Malayalam), 134-135; *Resolutions II*, 13, 20-25, 32-33.
- 10 Cf. Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Oru Snehasamskaram* (Malayalam), 135; *Resolutions II*, 13.
- 11 Sr. Lawrence CSC, *Kalathinatheethanaya Karmayogi* (Malayalam), 357. Cf. Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.



**“This is my body which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.  
This cup that is poured out for you  
is the new covenant in my blood”**

**(Lk 22:19-20).**





“Jesus is our all. Our God, our Creator, Our Saviour,  
Our Brother, Our Friend, Our Bridegroom, Our Food, Our  
Drink. Can Jesus become more than these things?”

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**





## **BE AN *EU-CHARISTOI* RATHER THAN *A-CHARISTOI***

**“This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”**

(Lk 22:19-20)

“Jesus is our all. Our God, our Creator, Our Saviour, Our Brother, Our Friend, Our Bridegroom, Our Food, Our Drink. Can Jesus become more than these things?”<sup>1</sup> In these words of Fr. Ukken, the theology of the Eucharist is comprehensively explained.

### **Eucharist not Part of the Day, but Heart of the Day**

Eucharist is the central event of the day. In this regard, I personally remember the Apostolic advice given by Mar Jacob Thoomukzhy during my Sacred Ordination

(31 December 2002, at Infant Jesus Church, Kadangode) that 'Holy Mass is not part of the Day but the Heart of the Day'. At the same time, His Grace urged me to see the daily Offering of Holy Mass as the First Holy Mass as well as the Last Holy Mass in my life.

For Fr. Ukken, the Holy Mass was the chief event of the day. He also saw the Eucharist as the source of spiritual power against the temptations<sup>2</sup>. Fr. Ukken had a compassionate heart to those who were broken by economic hardships and financial debt traps. It was the love from the heart of Christ that Fr. Ukken tried to imbibe everyday in the Holy Mass and Eucharistic meditation<sup>3</sup>. Every day Holy Mass was for him the power house. It was the source of spiritual power against the worldly temptations<sup>4</sup>. As in the case of the Eucharistic celebration, the quality of a parish is tied inextricably to the quality of the pastor.

When Fr. John started his mission in Chowannur, there was only Sunday Holy Mass and no daily Holy Mass. The Church was only a thatched shed with mud walls. There was no proper altar or any other facilities needed for a church. It was here that Fr. John found his real pastoral field. Therefore, he started daily Holy Mass and inspired people to attend daily Holy Mass and also prayer meetings for different groups of people. For Fr. John, Holy Qurbana was the central event of the day<sup>5</sup>. *Holy Mass is not the part of the day, but Heart of the Day.*

### **Eucharist: The Breakfast of the Day**

For Fr. Ukken, Eucharist is the Breakfast of a Christian in his or her daily life. Such thought is derived from the meditative reflection on Jn 21:1-14. The meditation on the Miraculous Catching of the Fishes at Tiberias Sea highlights this theme. Fr. Ukken explained it in this manner:

when they came near to the bank of the Sea, they saw Jesus had prepared food for them. Jesus distributed it to them. See Jesus' love! In the same way, we and Jesus together takes Breakfast every day. That is the Holy Communion<sup>6</sup>.

Fr. Ukken also acknowledged that Holy Qurbana is the Greatest Banquet! It is a big Agape. It is a fraternal meal. In this Agape, Jesus gives his own flesh and blood as food for us. Fr. Ukken also saw the presence of His Happy Mother at the Table of this Agape<sup>7</sup>. Participating in the Holy Qurbana as a great banquet, he always received it with great joy<sup>8</sup>.

### **Eucharist: The Viaticum**

Our life in this world is a journey. In this journey there is a possibility to fall down due to the attack of the Flesh, the Satan and the World. The Holy Qurbana, the *Viaticum* (food on the journey) gives us the strength to continue our journey without falling down<sup>9</sup>. Fr. Ukken exhorted his Sisters as follows: just as the mother gives her own flesh and blood as food to her children, Jesus gives his own flesh as food for us (as the Pelican fosters its own kids)<sup>10</sup>.

### **Eucharist: The Real Presence of Jesus par Excellence**

Fr. Ukken was convinced of Jesus' Eucharistic presence as real par excellence. In his own words: "I recognize that Jesus is present in the Eucharist. Jesus longs to be united with me and to do a friendly conversation with me"<sup>11</sup>. His exhortation to his sisters clearly explicates the theology of real presence in the Eucharist.

Look at well the glory of Jesus in the Heaven: How angels not being able to bear the glare hide their faces with their wings! Then consider the same Jesus rests in the Tabernacle in the form of a small piece of Bread. Jesus does not get

any respect, glory while being there. However, He longs to rest there in the form a piece of Bread<sup>12</sup>.

To be insensitive to the Eucharistic presence of Jesus was considered as a sign of ingratitude<sup>13</sup>.

## **Eucharist: The Great Celebration of the Paschal Mystery**

Fr. Ukken firmly believed and taught his Sisters and the Parishioners that Holy Qurbana includes the life mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paschal Mystery includes the mysteries starting from Incarnation up to His Second Coming. For him, the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ includes His whole life mysteries which are salvific. Incarnation, Public Ministry, Passion, Death on the Cross, Funeral, Resurrection, Ascension, Sending the Holy Spirit, and the Second Coming are the life mysteries of Jesus Christ. Fr. Ukken encouraged the Sisters to put into practice in their daily lives His Life mysteries. He also exhorted them to participate in the Eucharistic celebration meditating on His Passion and Death on the Cross<sup>14</sup>.

## **Eucharist: The Sacrifice**

Sacrifice may be defined as an expression of a community's or person's self-surrender to God who accepts it. In fact, the fundamental purpose of sacrifice is bestowal of life. In this sense, the sacrifice or self-offering of Christ is to be understood. The sacrificial aspect in the life of Jesus is seen in his being the Servant of God (Lk 4:7-21), in his serving and in the giving of his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10: 45), in the setting up a new covenant in his blood (Mk 14: 24), and in the paschal lamb (I Cor 5: 7). In other words, the sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God in praise and thanksgiving, petition and propitiation.

Fr. Ukken taught with conviction that Jesus instituted the Holy Qurbana at the Last Supper. He explained this fact in such way: when the human being prepared for Jesus the passions and crucifixion, with His divine power and unending Love towards us He instituted on the Altar the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Love. Therefore, Fr. Ukken acclaimed that when Jesus comes near to him in the form of Eucharistic Bread and Wine, if he then does not receive or embrace Him that will be considered as a great ingratitude towards Jesus<sup>15</sup>.

Fr. Ukken earnestly wished to become a sacrificial lamb. Whenever he encounters the negativities and humiliations in his life, he used to offer himself by suffering all for Jesus and by loving Jesus. In the Eucharist, we have to become a Sacrifice with Jesus. It can be a self-kenosis. Therefore, he exhorted that we have to consecrate our sweats, our blood drops and tears together with the wine in the Cup. Our day today life should be a life of sacrifice... The crosses we experience in our lives, the denunciations we take ourselves are all making us the sacrificial object<sup>16</sup>. In this sense, he understood the Eucharist as the sacrifice, the best example of self-kenosis.

## **Fr. Ukken's Devotions to the Eucharist**

Fr. Ukken is the Good Pastor who planned and executed the following strategies to draw his flock to the Eucharistic Jesus.

### **Feast of Corpus Christi**

Fr. Ukken started to celebrate the Feast of *Corpus Christi*. It is known as the Feast of Holy Qurbana. To celebrate it solemnly he began a Celebration Committee of the Feast of *Corpus Christi* which includes only 20 persons. Every year he celebrated this feast solemnly.

## **Frequent Visit to the Blessed Sacrament**

Fr. Ukken frequently visited the Blessed Sacrament. He firmly believed that Jesus the Divine Mercy is imprisoned in the Tabernacle. He is the Prisoner of Love. He lives there a solitary life. Therefore, Fr. Ukken visited Him frequently and made a face to face dialogue with Him.

Whenever he went out and came in, Fr. Ukken made such visit. This was his daily routine. In this way he taught that the Eucharistic Jesus is his fellow traveler, his light on the way. He firmly believed that Jesus is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:16). He also taught his flock that the last word in his worries, the firmness in his decisions, and the answer of his queries were those that he received from the Blessed Sacrament.

## **Spiritual Holy Communion**

One has to be responsive to Jesus’ love in the Eucharist by constant visits and by a worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist<sup>7</sup>. Fr. Ukken considered the spiritual communion as the most precious treasure in his life<sup>8</sup>.

## **Long Hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament**

His spiritual diaries also bear witness to his ardent devotion to the Holy Eucharist. He also resolved to do a vigil of one hour adoration on the First Friday of the month<sup>9</sup>. This manifests his profound meditation of the Sacred Heart. In one of his Spiritual Diaries he wrote:

Manifestation of the Heart, seat of love was the great design of God... It is as the Ark of Noah; the strong and impregnable fortress, wherein the soul that fear the world, distressed and disgusted with the world can enter like the dove into the ark. How many souls are forcibly drawn, specially warmed up, daily perfected. I must be one of them<sup>20</sup>.

Fr. Augustine John Ukken spent long hours in silent meditation before the Blessed Sacrament. These were moments of his own personal sanctification and those of the community he served<sup>21</sup>. Being meditated on Jn 21: 15-19, Fr. Ukken claimed: “Jesus being seated in the Tabernacle asks us: do you love me? Examine whether we can say ‘Yes Lord’ as Peter answered. O my Loving Lord, teach me to love You as Peter loved You”<sup>22</sup>. Many of his fellow priests as well as his parishioners and Charity sisters sincerely acknowledged it as an edifying gesture before the Blessed Sacrament<sup>23</sup>.

Fr. Ukken frequently asked his faithful in the parishes as well as his Sisters to be fully immersed in the Eucharistic presence. They should look at this Eucharistic presence as the one looking at the sun cannot see things around<sup>24</sup>.

### **Foster a Eucharistic Culture Today**

In the whole apostolate of Fr. Ukken we could see the practice of what is just and right toward the widow, orphan, downtrodden, marginalized, and stranger. Here we can notice that justice and judgement are the two pillars of the throne of God. Fr. Ukken respected the goods of others, and shared what he has and what he is with the most destitute. At the same time, he performed the acts of kindness towards others, specially the needy ones amidst of the children of God, imbibing the strength and power from the daily Eucharistic celebration.

### **Be an *eu-charistoi* rather than *a-charistoi***

Only by being gracious to our fellow beings and by seeing the face of God in the faceless, one can become gracious toward God. In this sense, we can claim that Fr. Ukken has become *eu-charistoi* (grateful) than *a-charistoi* (ungrateful).



That means, he had been grateful rather than ungrateful to God as well as human beings. This is really manifested in one of the events in his apostolate. Sr. Bridget CSC states that Fr. John wanted the sisters to have a dispensary, attached to each convent. He trained his daughters to see Jesus in the sick and the marginalized. When Kunnamkulam was ravaged by plague, together with Fr. Anthappan Valiavettill, Fr. Ukken (known as Father of the Poor' in Kunnamkulam) used to visit each plague-struck family. While visiting the poor families, he helped them financially. In his own words: "it is blessed to give than to receive"<sup>25</sup>.

Being and becoming *eu-charistoi*, one has to be ready for being a sacrifice. It is very easy to offer a sacrifice. But it is very hard to be a Sacrifice. Etymologically the word sacrifice comes from the phrase *sacrum facere* which means 'to make sacred'. It simply means 'to do a sacred act'. Sacrificial offerings were made: To praise or give homage to the deity / God, to render thanks, to make supplication (petition) so that the cosmic order would be maintained or a favor received, and to expiate evil or morally wrong deeds which had been committed either consciously or unconsciously.

The second step for being and becoming *eu-charistoi* is the readiness to be broken and to shed for O/others. In other words, it is the willingness to give oneself, one's own time, one's having and being for the betterment of the other. That means it is living for the other in day today life.

During the Eucharistic celebration the early Christians used to offer a part of their wealth (in the form of gold, silver, money, food and clothing) in the Church. This was to indicate the self-surrender of the Christians together with Christ. At the same time they understood that in the

Eucharistic celebration the Church was offering Christ to the Father. In the same way, Fr. Ukken also gave up all his wealth to embrace Jesus the Rich Man. He became a Qurbana (means Offer). The remembrance of Jesus is communicated to others only by means of this ardent desire to be broken and shed for others. Eucharist is the memorial celebration of Jesus' commandment at the Last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19).

The third step in the process of being and becoming *eucharistoi* is to be a man of gratitude. *Eucharistia* means a word of thanksgiving or expression of gratitude. *Eu* means good. *Charist* means grace be with you. Grace is given us and we have to render it back. Then it becomes *eucharistia*. In the Eucharistic celebration, we always recite the acts of thanksgiving.

### **Be a Living Witness to the Eucharist**

Fr. Ukken always exhorted the flock and his Sisters about the importance of being a living witness to the Eucharist in their day today life. Though Fr. Ukken lived before the Second Vatican Council was convoked, he convincingly taught the importance of active, full and conscious participation in the Eucharistic celebration. He urged his Sisters and parishioners that they should participate in the Eucharist with good and rightful dispositions. They should be eager to know the signs and symbols used in the Eucharist. He taught them how to participate in the Eucharist. He explained the terms and ideas being used there. He frequently informed them that they are not spectators but participants in the Eucharistic celebration.

In sum, we can say aloud that Fr. Ukken is worthy of to be the Venerable, since he meditated the Holy Qurbana and received the power and strength to live as Eucharist. His

visions on the Eucharist and his exemplary life according to the Eucharist are always inspirational. For him, it may be said that Holy Mass is the First Mass and the Last Mass. He urged: "Receive the Holy Communion as the Anointing of the Sick is received"<sup>26</sup>.

### Endnotes:-

- 1 *Lights from Heaven* (1903), 95.
- 2 Sr. Lawrence CSC, ed., *Lights from Heaven*, (8 and 10.7.1903), 49-51. Cf. Paul Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.
- 3 Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 68.
- 4 Cf. LMMR, I, 70-71 (8 and 10.7.1903).
- 5 *Exhortations*, Sr. Rosily CSC, f. 127.
6. *Solitary Meditation- Notes taken by Sr. Florence* (June 27, 1955, at 9.30am). The sayings of Fr. Ukken were collected from the notebooks of Srs. Pauline, Rosily, Serphena and Florence CSC who attended the conferences. These saying are found in Sr. Trifonia CSC, ed., *Pithrevanikalude Manicheppilninnu - From the Treasure Box of Father's Sayings* (Kolazhy, India: Mariabhavan CSC Generalate, 2001).
- 7 *Lights from Heaven* (November, 1904). Cf. LMMR vol.I, 70-71; and *Lights from Heaven* (8 and 10.7.1903).
- 8 *Lights from Heaven* (8 and 10.7.1903), 49-51. Cf. Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.
- 9 *Lights from Heaven* (8 and 10.7.1903), 95.
- 10 *One Month Meditation - Notes Taken by Sr. Seraphine*. Cf. Sr. Trifonia ed, *Pithruvanikalude Manicheppilninnu* (From the Treasure Box of Father's Sayings), (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate, 2001).
- 11 *Lights from Heaven* (December, 1903), 136.
- 12 *Lights from Heaven* (December, 1903), 136. See also, LMMR vol. I (22.10.1903), 135.
- 13 *Lights from Heaven* (December, 1903), 136.
- 14 *Written Testimony* by Sr. Bibliana.

- 15 *Lights from Heaven* (December 20, 1903).
- 16 *Lights from Heaven* (June 30, 1903).
- 17 *Lights from Heaven* (December, 1903), 136.
- 18 *Lights from Heaven* (December, 1903), 136. LMMR, vol. I, 176 (December, 1903).
- 19 Cf. Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 51.
- 20 *Lights from Heaven* (19.12.1932), 242.
- 21 *Lights from Heaven* (8,10.7.1903), 49-51. Cf. Cf. Pulikkan, "Apostle of Charity," 48.
- 22 *Solitary Meditation – Notes taken by Sr. Florence* (June 27, 1955 at 9.30 am).
- 23 *A.J. Ukken Testimony* (AJUT), AJU Archives (Mullakara), 9
- 24 *Lights from Heaven* (9.10. 1903), 95.
- 25 Sr. Bridget CSC, *AJU Testimony* (Kolazhy, India: Maria Bhavan Generalate), 105-106. See also, Pulikkan, *Monument of Divine Mercy*, 136.
- 26 *Conferences 1946*, in Sr. Lawrence, *Kalathinatheethanaya Karmayogi*, (The Active Mystic beyond Time), (Kolazhi, India : Maria Bhavan Generalate 1994).





**“In the same way, let your light shine before others,  
so that they may see your good works and give glory to  
your Father in heaven”  
(Mt 5:16).**

**“So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,  
do everything for the glory of God”  
(1 Cor 10:31).**



"See God in all things, depend on him. Try always to do his holy will, and increase his Glory. Our light, strength, peace, and the coming heavenly life are contained in the two words - God Alone".

**(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**



## ***AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM***

**“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:16). “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”**

( 1 Cor 10:31)

### **Ongoing Formation**

Becoming pastors is not something that is finished at the moment they are ordained or commissioned. It is God who makes them every day “pastors after his own heart” (Jer 3:15). In other words, “This journey is the natural continuation of the process of building up priestly identity begun in Seminary and accomplished sacramentally in priestly ordination” (*The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, no. 81).



Ongoing formation is the gratuitous moment to rekindle the gift received at Ordination. Therefore, drawing strength from prayer and intimacy with the Heart of the Good Shepherd (*Pastor Bonus*), those who are responsible in the pastoral field have to work throughout their lives.

### **Be a Demanding and Self-demanding Shepherd**

Preaching, visiting and administering the sacraments all over in the Catholic community of the Diocese of Trichur, the Venerable Augustine John Ukken too was a demanding and self-demanding shepherd of his flock. He was exemplarily devoted to his pastoral tasks. He took great care of the moral and intellectual qualities of his clergy. In his view, holy priests - good shepherds - would sanctify a community, whereas unworthy priests would have a fatal effect, because their flock would go astray. Therefore,

The gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks out, walks alongside and leads his sheep, will form a serene, prudent and compassionate outlook in him. He will exercise his ministry with a disposition of serene openness and attentive accompaniment in all situations (*The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, no. 120).

### **Make Your Heart a Library of Christ**

Fr. Ukken always inspires the Rev. Sisters as well as his parishioners to “study the Bible every day, make your heart a library of Christ”. The same is for the pastors of today: Make your Heart a library of Christ! “Therefore, a relationship with the Word of God holds a preeminent place in the process of spiritual growth” of a pastor (*The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, no. 103).

### **Be a Good Preacher**

Being a good preacher was an essential prerequisite for a good priest. The sermon was a crucial instrument in

mobilizing the Catholics as well as to attract non-Catholics in the audience. Bad sermons would leave the faithful unprotected. Pope John Paul II clearly explained it in a beautiful manner: Preacher's role is "not to teach his own wisdom but the Word of God and to issue an urgent invitation to all men to conversion and to holiness" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 26).

## **Be Equipped with Sound Doctrine of Faith and Morals**

It was his duty to confront the flock with sound doctrine and the moral demands of faith. Therefore,

The organic and serious study of philosophy and theology is the most suitable means of acquiring that *forma mentis* that enables one to address the questions and challenges that are encountered in the exercise of the sacred ministry, and to interpret them in the light of faith (*The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, no. 118).

Moreover, Good shepherds are always devoted to the care of souls. To become truly a shepherd after the heart of Jesus, the priest must be

aware of the undeserved mercy of God in his life and in the life of his brothers, he must cultivate the virtues of humility and compassion towards the People of God at large, especially those who feel themselves extraneous to the Church'

## **Practice Heroically the Virtues**

The Venerable Augustine John Ukken has given outstanding testimony to the Kingdom of heaven by the heroic practice of virtues<sup>2</sup>. In his times, and later to the Church and Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, he is the very "outstanding in the splendor of charity and other

evangelical virtues” proper to a good shepherd (*Pastor Bonus*)<sup>3</sup>. Later through *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, the Church exhorts the pastors of today as follows:

Overtime, it is important to cultivate some specific virtues in those called to priesthood and pastoral ministry: faithfulness, integrity, consistency, wisdom, a welcoming spirit, friendliness, goodness of heart, decisive firmness in essentials, freedom from overly subjective viewpoints, personal disinterestedness, patience, an enthusiasm for daily tasks, confidence in the value of the hidden workings of grace as manifested in the simple and the poor (GPV no. 115).<sup>4</sup>

### **Stand for the Least, the Lost and the Last**

The very foundation of the priestly life and ministry of Fr. Augustine is his love for the poor and downtrodden, a spirit of utter humility, pastoral care of the families, education of the young, health apostolate, etc. They all still shine as the eternal values of God’s kingdom.

The dear and near ones of the Venerable Augustine John Ukken would acclaim in one voice: he was always “simply an effect of divine mercy”<sup>5</sup> a committed and enthusiastic pastor, a farsighted efficient administrator, an ideal leader of ecumenical activities and a man with compassionate heart towards the least, the last and the lost of the parish and society.

### **Give Glory to God always**

Seek always the glory of God! Nothing less than this should be the ambition of a *Pastor Bonus*! Each pastor is the lamp lighted on the mountain. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:16). As St. Paul interprets the words of Jesus, the Good

Shepherd: “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). This is or should be the attitude and aptitude of a *Pastor Bonus* (Good Shepherd) of today.

See God in all things, depend on him. Try always to do his holy will, and increase his Glory. Our light, strength, peace, and the coming heavenly life are contained in the two words - God Alone.<sup>6</sup>

### Endnotes:-

- 1 Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests* (31 January, 1994), no. 46. Cf. *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, no. 115.
- 2 Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* (25 January 1983), available at, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_25011983\\_divinus-perfectionis-magister.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_25011983_divinus-perfectionis-magister.html) [accessed on 11 May, 2019].
- 3 *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*.
- 4 Cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 26: AAS 84 (1992): 700.
- 5 *Lights from Heaven*, 115
- 6 *Exhortations*, Sr Corthuna CSC (25.9. 1951), f. 23.







“If you are my pastor, I am your sheep, let me inherit your qualities, I am to become a pastor myself! Oh, make me meek and humble!... I know them that are mine and I lay down myself for them! Jesus knows me, with all my difficulties, weaknesses! Oh, save me from the wolf of devil, from the thief of self-love, from the mercenary of the world. The attachment of the shepherd is such that death alone can separate him from them... Oh, mother of the Good Shepherd, give all pastors the same charity, zeal...” **(Venerable Augustine John Ukken)**







