

Beloved in Christ,

Few years ago, in a Church Retreat, people were given helium filled balloons and were told to release them at some point in the service when they felt like expressing the joy to the Lord. Since they were rather reserved Marthomites, they weren't free to say ***"Hallelujah, Praise the Lord."*** All through the service balloons ascended, but when it was over there were still 1/3 of the balloons that had not been released. WHY? Grumbling, complaining, dissatisfaction, etc., But Scripture clearly commands us to express gratitude – ***"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."*** Col. 3: 17 & ***"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*** 1 Thess. 5: 18. But why it is important? Since God needs nothing from his creations, the obvious conclusion is that expressing our appreciation both honors Him and benefits us. How? Let me jot down few telegraphic words to tell how expressing gratitude helps us. Expressing gratitude means grateful hearts:

- 🌸 **Redirects** our attention, our perspectives from ourselves to our awesome God, who loves and cares for us.
- 🌸 **Reinforces** our faith in our God
- 🌸 **Refreshes** our relationship with the Lord.

But we often say, *"I'm feeling down, forgotten, frustrated, distressed, because nobody cares for me"* – This is the time to start praising God. Rehearse all His past blessings, rejoice in the ways He's guided and protected you, and see the difference it makes in your outlook. This Thanksgiving, do your thing! Enjoy a big delicious meal! But also do what is right! Be overwhelmed by God's goodness to you, by His blessings and give Him all the thanks and praise you can! Let your balloon of praise go! LET YOUR PRAISE BE HEARD BY THE LORD! He deserves it!

Praise God for the meaningful **Mission trip to Mexico**. Colonia Mar Thoma – a mission to fisher folks of Mexico conceived 12 years ago, is producing bountiful results for God's glory. But the need of the hour of Colonia Mar Thoma is:



- 🔴 A **Volunteer** to be there to nurture the 48 families in Christian faith and fellowship, because Mr. P. T. Abraham, who is ministering to their needs has just celebrated his 77th birthday and his health concerns are increasing, but still running with vigor for the Lord.
- 🔴 Life – empowerment skills, as now few months ahead no fishing no food for them.
- 🔴 Food, Clothing, Medical facilities, Education, etc.

As the needs are there, we should thank God for the ministry continuing there, which enabled few of them to pursue higher studies and are employed and still few will be graduating in the coming years.

Time has come to elect new Office bearers for the Church. Whom should we elect? Bible tells us how the early church decided on the matter: ***“Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.”*** Acts 6: 3 New office bearers are to be elected, who can spare their life in total for HIS glory and not for saying, *“It was best time during my tenure.”* If it happens so, it is well and good, but all glory to be to the LORD who gave wisdom, strength and health to do things in a meaningful manner.

We will be celebrating Diaspora Sunday on Nov 23rd, 2014. Diaspora word comes from Greek word, διασπορά, means "scattering, dispersion". The term Diaspora thus means a scattered population with a common origin (*Kerala Malayalees*) in a smaller geographic area (*Los Angeles, California*). Diaspora also refers to the movement of the population from its original homeland (*Kerala*). So it's a time to thank God for sustaining us in our adopted lands, for keeping us steadfast in faith and defending us from all adversaries. Being a Diaspora community, we should remove the traces of hatred and bias in our hearts for our fellow immigrant brothers and sisters, other immigrant and ethnic groups, thus rededicating ourselves for the calling we have - ***“...that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”*** Esther 4: 14.

Let me close with a small prayer: ***“The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.”*** Num. 6: 24 – 26.



Yours in Christ's service,

John Oommen Achen