

Mar Gregorios of Pampady: An Icon of Grace

Kuriakose Mar Gregorios: A Personal reflection

(Fr. M. K. Kuriakose)



Knowing the limitations of reflecting on a person whom I never met I am making this humble attempt to express my personal feelings. I am hesitant to touch upon the life of a saintly person because it is impossible to fathom the spiritual depth of anybody. In the case of Pampady Thirumeni this attempt is simply a personal witness of how we the Orthodox reflect on lives of saints and help ourselves and others to reach the heights that other saints have climbed.

I am indebted to two authors who brought light to my life, first Prof. K. M. Kuriakose and second Mr. K. V. Mammen who through their books allowed me to open my eyes to a saint's life. I heard some anecdotes from different people about His Grace. One day His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas Metropolitan of the American Diocese shared the incident of Pampady Thirumeni's love of animals and the way they responded to him. The incident was that of the female dog that used to come to the Aramana (bishop's residence) everyday. The pregnant dog did not appear for a few days during the confinement and one day it returned to the Aramana. His Grace asked, "Where are your babies?" The dog instantly went and brought one of its babies in its mouth and left in front of the bishop. I later searched for books on His Grace and found the above authors.

My reading progressed and my life changed slowly. Let me express three of the major points I learned and that which I am trying to practice in my life.

1. Humility in Real Life: His Grace has shown utmost humility in all aspects of life. Whether it is towards his teacher, a Hindu or to the members of the General Body of

the parishes, His Grace dealt with them soberly and gently. His Grace could solve problems in parishes not with arrogance and administrative power but with humble approach. Often people with humility are considered weak. Pampady Thirumeni proved that humility is strength.

2. Faith-filled Courage in Real Life: His Grace faced life without any fear of consequences because he knew that God is in charge. Even when His Grace did not have much to eat at the Aramana, he gave to the needy from what he had. The incident of giving away a little measure of rice that is kept of dinner to a beggar shows his courage to give to others ignoring one's own needs. But God provided His Grace with more than what he gave to others. I learned this truth more powerfully from His Grace. True faith is true courage.

3. Respond to Evil with Good: It is a rare thing to see in the world of today. All problems begin when people use evil means to respond to situations to solve problems. From the Church's court cases to parish administration, there is severe tendency in the minds of people to retort using evil ways. Pampady Thirumeni will not respond any evil with an evil response instead; His Grace would pray over the matter and take the suffering. Goodness cannot be destroyed because goodness is from God. No one can kill God and so is the case with goodness. Temporarily goodness may appear to be losing but those who can suffer to the end will be victorious. Often I have taken a lot of abuse from many people because I did not respond evil with evil. Most of our people are revengeful. I used to have the same mentality but fortunately I got enough strength when I read from Pampady Thirumeni to take a soft approach to problems. Many considered it a weakness. I don't worry about convincing people about it because people do not think spiritually. Most of our people are trained in the worldly demeanor system that is alien to Christ.

I hope many will read from this great saint and convey that simplicity and truthfulness to others as well. I used to read a small portion from His Grace's biography just before night. Often I slept with tears still rolling down from the eyes but when I woke up I had an inexplicable joy and peace to begin the way with hope and trust in God.

I am happy that I could share these feeling with other members of the Indian Orthodox Church about what

I learned from a saintly bishop of our Church. Hope God will raise many more

Pampady Thirumeni (A Brief Biography)

H. G. Kuriakose Mar Gregorious of Kottayam diocese is a jewel of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church for the grace he radiated from his saintly life. Many have seen miracles while he was alive. Christ said one who believes in him will never die, because "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14.6). His Grace is still living in Christ even though he has traveled away from his earthly body, and is still staying as a refuge to millions. Many have testified the power of intercessory prayers of Thirumeni including metropolitan of Kottayam diocese H. G. Geevarghese Mar Ivanious for his miraculous healing from cancer.

Thirumeni was born to Chacko and Ilachi on April 5th, 1885 at Pampady, Kottayam. Baptismal name given to him was Kuriakose. Education started at the age of 5. The kid grew with amazing attachment to the Church and worship and was ordained as sub-deacon (korooyo) at the age of 14 by Paulose Mar Athanasious at the Pampady Church. After becoming a deacon, Thirumeni proceeded to the Old Seminary for theological studies. The young deacon led a prayerful life.

During vacation time, the young deacon served his church at Pampady. One year, the villagers faced severe drought and the deacon during a sermon during the Holy Qurbana on Sunday declared that everyone should fast and pray intensely for three days for the mercy of our Lord. While kanji was served on the third day, heavy rain started pouring down. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him." (1 John 5: 14, 15).

The deacon was ordained as a priest on 8th July, 1906 by H. G. Paulose Mar Gregorious, followed by the Ramban ordination on 9th July, 1906. He stayed first at the Pampady Church and later shifted to Parumala Seminary. Life at the place of St. Gregorious (Parumala Thirumeni) tremendously influenced the Ramban which is evident on his life afterwards. Pampady church was later closed due to fights between the two factions when Ramban had to find another home. He earned the land, which was donated by his former school teacher Madathil Ashan, and a church and dayara was built. Vattaseril Mar Dionysius christened the dayara as "Thabore Dayara". The reconstruction of the church and dayara started on 28th of May, 1920. During the construction of the center pillar, a shining star was witnessed in the sky. Consecration of the new church took place on 20th January, 1923.

Ramban was ordained as the Metropolitan on February 16th, 1929 by the late Moran Mar Baseliouis

Geevarghese II Catholicose. Thirumeni was a symbol of love even when fights were going on between the two factions. He visited the deceased bishops of the other faction. He prayed and fasted intensely during the times of court cases and issues for peace. Thirumeni was a refuge to many poor and needy by helping them in different ways. He has supported many students for their education needs, has helped the poor and the aged and stayed as a guardian to many.

'Kantheela' was administered to Pampady Thirumeni on Dec 8th, 1962 by Catholicate Designate Augen Mar Themothious Metropolitan, Mar Ivanious, Mar Athanasious and Mar Kuriakose. In Kantheela, a patient is anointed in the name of Christ to absolve one of sins as much as to relieve from ailment. 'Kantheela' was administered to Pampady Thirumeni on Dec 8th, 1962 by Catholicate Designate Augen Mar Themothious Metropolitan, Mar Ivanious, Mar Athanasious and Mar Kuriakose. In Kantheela, a patient is anointed in the name of Christ to absolve one of sins as much as to relieve from ailment. Catholicose designate Augen Mar Thimotheus Thirumeni, during the Holy Qurbana at Pampady dayara on 09th June, 1962 said: "We solemnised the 'Kantheela Susroosha' for Gregorious Thirumeni after Holy Qurbana yesterday. We consider it a big blessing. Even though physically present with us, Thirumeni is one who has left everything mortal, with his mind full of thoughts about heaven. There is none in our church like him. We all think about material things much more. But Thirumeni is fully prepared to go to Heaven. We consider it a real blessing that five Metropolitans and fifty achen could solemnize the function in the presence of thousands of believers. This Achen (Fr. P. C Yohannan) looks after him more than blood children would do for a father. Moreover there are a few young men who are prepared to do anything for Thirumeni here in the dayara".

Thirumeni's health deteriorated and was admitted to the hospital on March 11th, 1965. No improvement was shown and he was shifted back to the dayara. On April 4th, 1965, at 2.35AM, the soul of our beloved Thirumeni started his journey to meet his Lord in the heaven to praise and intercede for all his loving children. May the biography of this blessed servant of Lord be a guide to us all in our journey of salvation. May his intercessory prayers be a refuge to us all in times of tribulations.

My blessed children, even if I am physically removed from you, I shall be with you spiritually. Remember what good I may have done for you. Pray for me.
(Pampady Thirumeni)

(Compiled from www.pampadydayara.com)