



Celebrating Old Age

Ten years ago, I visited Mar Chrysostom at his residence in Maramon, after hospitalization at Ernakulam. He was ninety-three years at that time. A part of his intestine was removed due to cancer. He had cardiac and respiratory problems. Daily he had been taking insulin injections and survived with medicines. He could not walk much and also stand up for a long time. Despite all these weaknesses, he travelled all over India and the middle east.

As I was a regular visitor to the house at Maramon, I advised him to cut short his busy, hectic programmes. He rejected my advice and said.

“Do you know what the secret of my health is?” There are two facts. From Morning to evening, I attend different functions. They welcome me using words of admiration. I like these welcome speeches even though they are exaggerated. They say my leadership is essential in a secular society. These type of words are a stimulant for my health. The second fact is I like meeting people. When I encourage them to be active in their vocation, they shower me with their love and affection. I am interested in the community.”

I stopped my advice. With all these health problems, he has been attending programmes irrespective of caste and creed from morning till evening.

During our journey to Ernakulam, we dropped into a Hotel for Breakfast. He enquired the well being of every staff in the Hotel. After breakfast, before entering the car, he noticed, one staff was watching all this from the corner of the room. Mar Chrysostom called him and inquired of his whereabouts.

“Where is your native place?” “ Paravur”. “How often do you visit your home?” “ Once in a month”.

“ When you visit your home once a month, will your wife still recognize you as her husband?”

Everybody laughed. During our journey, I reminded him of an incident mentioned in one of the books, how he became a fool in front of others while acknowledging people. As he had forgotten the incident, I explained it to him.

While Chrysostom thirumany was in active service, he visited a Church. After the Church service, he noticed that one lady was standing alone. All the parishioners said hallo the Bishop except this lady. The Bishop enquired about this lady to the Vicar. The Vicar also could not identify that lady. The vicar is expected to know his parishioners. To escape from the attack of his superior, the Vicar said she is the wife of Scariachen. The Bishop approached that lady and asked the well being of her husband Scariachen. The lady said: “Thirumany, my husbands' name is Thommachen and not Scariachen”. Mar Chrysostom know how to cover up such embarrassing situations. He again asked: “How is Thomachen.”

The lady replied: “My husband died three years ago”.

“Sorry, Nobody told about that to me, How are your Children.”

The lady replied: “Thirumany I have no Children”.

“How often do you visit your home”.

“Thirumany, I am born and brought up here”.

Mar Chrysostom decided not to ask any more questions.

On hearing this old incident, Mar Chrysostom also laughed.

We were travelling together for the shooting of a teleserial of ‘ Mar Chrysostom Speaking Oru nutandinte Sabdam’. **Mar Chrysostom was very particular in appreciating the other person's good qualities with a sense of humour.** While we met Dr.Thomas Issac, Issac recognised the bold step taken by Mar Chrysostom in supporting Janakeeyasuthnam. Mar Chrysostom replied: “ Dr.Thomas Issac is a good economist and a good politician, that is why I am supporting all your endeavours.” Mar Chrysostom appreciated Mr.KM Mani in his record of presenting twelve Budgets in the assembly”. Mar Chrysostom praised Mr.V.S.Achutandan during his visit for his relentless fight against corruption. In turn, VS said: “I respect you very much because you are committed to the cause of the poor people in this country. A Bishop with a social Commitment”. While Cardinal Clemmis visited Mar Chrysostom, Mar Chrysostom humorously remarked: “Mar Clemmis is a very good man even though he is a Catholic”.

We visited Mr Mullakara Ratnakaran’s constituency. Mar Chrysostom inaugurated a campaign against alcohol in Ittiwa Panchayat. Mullakara would like to make the Panchayat alcohol free within one year. Mar Chrysostom said: **“ I never attended a function like this during the last 95 years of my life. Around 4000 people of Ittiwa Panchayat gathered here to say goodbye to alcohol from their Panchayat. I have been trying to get rid of this habit of drinking from the People in my Church. Not even a parish is**

free from this. Hence I am requesting Mullakara to take charge of my Church or teach me the secret for this”.

Mar Chrysostom was not keeping well during the inauguration of telefilm on Chrysostom. He was in a Hospital at Kumbanadu. While he was in Hospital, I told him that Mr. Oommen Chandy, the Chief Minister, would be coming to inaugurate the telecast of the teleserial Mar Chrysostom Speaking. While he was in the hospital, he could not talk or even sit erect. During the inauguration of the telefilm, Mar Chrysostom came to his residence at Maramon accompanied by his Doctor and attended the function. Mr Oommen Chandy narrated the humour of Mar Chrysostom during that meeting. When Mr Oommen Chandy was the finance minister of Kerala, there was a financial crisis. The Treasury had been closed down several times. During that time, Mr Chandy came for a session of Maramon convention. Mar Chrysostom introduced Mr Oommen Chandy to the Public.

“ The finance minister of Kerala is speaking to us today. The finance minister is more powerful than the Chief Minister. Do you know the reason? All the Money is with him. Hence he has control over all the ministers and all the developmental activities of the State. Such a powerful person is delivering the keynote address. The Key of the Finance box is with Mr.Oommen Chandy. Unfortunately, no money is in his box.”

When Mr.Oommen Chandy explained the story, everybody laughed. Mar Chrysostom enjoyed his own words which came from Oommen Chandy. When appreciation poured to him, he became active, ignoring the earlier condition. He appreciated Oommen Chandy and his marathon activities.

In one of the meeting, a person felicitated Mar Chrysostom to live five more years to complete century. Immediately he retorted:” My father lived up to the age of 105. Are you not wishing me to live till my 105th birthday”.

Mar Chrysostom’s message can be summarized in this way. If you want good health, appreciate each other and actively involved in community life. Acknowledge every person irrespective of their status. Encourage and bless them.

In 2018, Mar Chrysostom was hospitalized in a critical condition. Because of the immediate attention and proper care of the Doctors in Fellowship Hospital, Kumbanadu, he overcame the critical stage. Visitors were not permitted and he could watch only the television and sleep. He saw the sex scandal related to orthodox Clergy. When he was discharged from the hospital, while he was moving in a wheel chair, a lady doctor approached him and requested one of his chains in his neck. Thirumany had a collection of chains to wear for different occasions. Thirumany humorously said, “ Yes, I will give you one. But don’t put it as a piece of evidence against me, later.”

I have been publishing his views in a magazine, New Vision, regularly since 2005. He used to reveal his revolutionary ideas through the interview of mine, which provoked many conservative Christians. I used to show the provocative letters of the readers which I was getting after each interview. His response was cool, “ I said all these from my conviction, and I want them to think. They can meet me and present

their arguments if I am wrong, Biblically. Jesus loved all types of people, including sinners, outcasts, etc. I also love all people irrespective of caste, creed and religion”.

During one of my interviews with him, while he was bedridden, I asked him what his message to the readers. “ Do you know the mind of the people during the deluge of September 2018? All the people joined together, worked together, irrespective of caste, creed, religion. I envisage a society like that in Kerala”.

Mar Chrysostom had a vision beyond the borders of the Christian Church taking care of all human beings as the Children of God. He is the only Bishop in India who loved all the people, respected and encouraged their culture and their religion. That is why People irrespective caste, creed and religion loved Chrysostom Metropolitan. He lives forever in the hearts of people.

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