



Report of Conference on “The Challenge of Peace and Harmony”

**27th Conference of the Association of Moral Theologians
of India At Papal Athenaeum/Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth
Pune, 23rd -25th October 2015**

**Theme of the Conference: *The Challenge of Peace and
Harmony - An Indian Moral Theological Perspective***

The 27th Conference of the Association of the Moral Theologians of India (AMTI) began with the Holy Eucharist presided over by the President of AMTI Prof. Dr. Clement Campos, CSSR. In his homily and presidential address, he insisted upon the inner struggle of human beings between good and evil both at personal and socio-political level. He insisted that the promotion of peace is urgent in the age of violence and war which have overshadowed the humanity. The Secretary Dr. Augustine Kallely, the Treasurer Thomas Parayil, the local organizer Dr. John Karuvelil SJ coordinated the conference, which had paper presentations from diverse perspectives by scholars from different parts of India.

Dr. Selva Rathinam, President, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India, the host University, pinpointed the need of the hour for the moral theologians of India to respond to the current scenario in India. He spoke on the biblical understanding of peace and highlighted the interdisciplinary approach in our efforts to realize peace and harmony in India. Dr. Morris Antonymsamy elaborated on the precarious relationship between

religion and violence from the perspective of Mimetic theory of Rene Girard. Dr. George Kodithottam made an analysis of justice and peace tradition in the evolution of Catholic Social Teaching. Prof. Dr. Paulachan Kochappilly, the President of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram of Bangalore, insisted upon the need of prayer in our inter-religious efforts for promoting peace.

Dr. Michael SVD presented a paper on the current scenario of the struggles and problems of the Tribals in India. The participants felt the need to preserve the tribal identity on the face of the cultural onslaught of their multidimensional identity and survival. Dr. Amrit Tirkey (SJ) who hails from the Oran Tribe from Jharkhand addressed the deeper dimensions of the alienation of the Tribals from their land. Dr. Aind Bisu Benjamin pointed out from his personal experience the serious threat by Naxalites in India. He brought out the triple agony of the Tribals: first, their natural resources are robbed by Corporates with the help of the government; secondly, the Naxals themselves threaten the security and mobility of the Tribals; thirdly, in the name of controlling the Naxalite areas, the State machineries torture and persecute the innocent Tribals.

Dr. John Chathanatt's paper was read out due to his inability to participate in the conference. His paper focused on the need for integral development from the perspective of the Catholic social teaching. Dr. Jose Thayil, SJ, the Rector of Papal Seminary, made a short survey on the history and development of the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism. He touched upon various religious traditions in understanding its deeper dimensions.

The Conference attempted to make a contextual response to the recently promulgated encyclical *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis. Dr. Christopher VimalRaj expounded a preferential option for the earth from justice perspective. He articulated the

major shift from the preferential option for the poor to the option for the earth. Dr. Benny Abraham approached the encyclical from a Catholic anthropological perspective, particularly, by overcoming the dichotomy between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Dr. Stanislaus Alla looked at the encyclical from a Hindu perspective, namely, *nature as mother*. It was followed by an open hour whereby the participants of the conference contributed their own perspectives and approaches to the question of eco-ethics.

The Conference was fortunate to have eight new members including two who have recently defended their doctoral theses. They were given opportunity to present salient elements from their research. Dr. Seena Rose (MSMI) articulated certain important findings of her thesis, *the Moral Dignity of Marriage and Marital Fidelity among Christian Families in Kerala*. Dr. Christopher Vimalraj introduced his research project on *Legalisation of Euthanasia in India: A Moral Theological Reflection and Response*. He brought out some challenges and approaches from Catholic point of view. He referred to the case of Aruna Shanbaug who suffered 43 long years after being strangled.

Before the conclusion of the conference, the participants evaluated the current proceedings of the conference and suggested ways and means to improve the participation in future. The organizing committee welcomed ideas for venue and theme for the conference 2016. It was agreed upon to meet in Goa, from 21-23 October 2016. The organizing committee was thanked and appreciated for their efforts they put in for the success of the Conference. Totally thirty moral theologians participated in the conference.

Report Prepared by

Dr. Morris Antonysamay & Dr. J. Charles Davis



Our Contributors

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Fr. L. Joseph is a Catholic priest ordained for the diocese of Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu, India, in the year 2002. After his Master's Degree in the Biblical Theology from St. Peters Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, he taught in the Major Seminary

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Prof. Sebastian M. Michael, SVD did his PhD from the University of Mumbai and post-doctoral research at Anthropos Institute, Bonn, Germany; he is a Professor Emeritus of Cultural Anthropology, University of Mumbai; he is a visiting faculty of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune; he has several books to his credit, which include: the edited volume *Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values* (1999), a best seller of Sage Publications, *Dalit's Encounter with Christianity* (2010), *Christianity and Cultures: Anthropological Insights for Christian Mission in India* (2015); he is a Consulter to the Pontifical Council for Culture and Inter-Religious Dialogue, Rome. He is presently the SVD Zonal Coordinator for Asia (simmichaelsvd@gmail.com).

Dr. Amrit Tirkey, SJ is the Superior of the Regional Theology Centre, Ranchi. He served the Centre as Director in the past. He has earned his Licentiate and Ph.D. in Moral Theology from Gregorian University, Rome. He teaches Moral Theology. He is a visiting Professor at St. Albert's College Ranchi. He was a visiting Professor at Regional Theology Centers Patna and Calcutta. He has published a book with the title: *Conscience in the Thought of M.K. Gandhi: A Study in the Light of Vatican II*. (amrittirkey@gmail.com; amrittirkey@yahoo.co.in).

Prof. John Chathanatt, SJ is a Jesuit belonging to the Delhi Province of the Society of Jesus, is Professor emeritus and former Principal of Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi. He has his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, U.S.A. He was an International Visiting Fellow at the Woodstock Theological Centre, Georgetown University, Washington DC, in 2001-2002. He is a Visiting professor in many Theological Faculties and was also a Research Fellow cum Visiting Fac-

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Prof Jose Thayil, SJ teaches Moral Theology (General Moral Theology, Social Justice and Human Rights, Marriage and Sexual Ethics, Basic skills in Pastoral Management, Eco-Theology) at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, from June 2006. He has been the rector of Papal Seminary from June 2010. He has also been the animator of *Tarumitra* (ecological awareness programme) in JDV, Chairperson of Doctoral Committee in JDV (2013-2016).

Dr. Morris Antonysamy has done his PhD in Social Anthropology, at Leopold-Franzens University, Innsbruck, Austria. He has published several articles and presented papers at the national and international conference. He has been a Catalogue Associate for German at the Amazon Development Centre, Chennai; he teaches German at the Tony Language Academy, Perungudi, Chennai, and at MGR University, Maduravoyal, Chennai; he is also a visiting professor at the Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras and at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. (aromorris@gmail.com).



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SCIENCE-RELIGION DIALOGUE

“Two things continue to fill the mind with ever increasing awe and admiration: the starry heavens above and the moral law within” (Philosopher Immanuel Kant)

“Science and religion are two windows that people look through, trying to understand the big universe outside, trying to understand why we are here. The two windows give different views, but both look out at the same universe. Both views are one-sided, neither is complete. Both leave out essential features of the real world. And both are worthy of respect.” (Physicist Freeman Dyson)

“As a blind man has no idea of colors, so we have no idea of the manner by which the all-wise God perceives and understands all things.” (Scientist Isaac Newton)

Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish.... We need each other to be what we must be, what we are called to be.” (St John Paul II)

“Culture (science) is the form of religion; Religion is the substance of culture (science).” (Theologian Paul Tillich)

“Traditional religious creation stories and evolution are complementary. Science and religion together can weave a rich tapestry of new meaning for our age.” (Theologian Philip Hefner)

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