



## **From Eros to Love through Love and Asceticism**

**An Interview with Paul Thelakkat**

*How do you evaluate the “Major Crisis in the Catholic Church?”*

PT: It is indeed a crisis of moral leadership in the church. This incident is said to have taken place on May 6, 2014. It has been smouldering in Jalandhar for such an amount of time. The local ordinary had the responsibility to settle the matter either by himself or with the help of others in the church. He failed. Now I heard him accusing the nun in public. The sister has approached the local parish priest, the bishop of Pala and the major archbishop, they did not do anything to settle it in time. She complained to the Nuncio. Everybody seems to say they have no jurisdiction; it is true that neither the major archbishop nor the KCBC or the CBCI have any disciplinary power over a bishop. But anybody can take up the issue and tell the proper authority of the issue and seriousness of the same. Nothing credible seen happened. Apparently the whole church system failed and the issue broke out in the street. Even after 70 days the Police did not act but dragging on the complaint. Added to this we hear of the influence of the bishop and the might of money. There is space is given to the criticism that every attempt to justice was aborted by influence and power from above. This was the sad situation in which the nuns resorted to public protest and strike. This situation is the effect of high handed approach and deafness in which the complaint was getting suffocated. We are weak and

frail, we may fall, that is not the crisis of the church but we seem to cover up and pretend to be holy.

The police action concerns the criminal part of the issue but there is moral issue which I believe the church authorities have to act. No action has taken place except appointment of an apostolic administrator; Bishop Franco remains the bishop of Jalandhar. I hope decisions are impending. There has to be some thorough overhauling of the congregation of the sisters so that they can freely and authentically live and fulfil their calling within a congregation of the Catholic fold.

### *What are your views on Crisis in sexual morality?*

PT: There is a crisis of sexuality in the society which is being mirrored in the church. We are living in a sensate society with consumer mentality holding the sway over everything. The ascetic culture is collapsing and private interest is globalizing. The objectifying look of the ego is pervasive and entering even the sanctuary. Mimetic rivalry and mimetic violence are snowballing in the society. The religion of sacrifice creating scapegoats is prevalent. The victims are sacrificed for the appeasement of the society. Even in the case of Bp Mulackal this communal tendency of protecting one own tribe, caste and commune is seem to be underneath. We are facing a religion which forgets responsibility and morality. We see the same phenomenon is the lynching cases in the Hindi belt in the name of holy cow. Every religion has its own holy cow. How do I understand so many priests and nuns accusing those unfortunate sisters? I request them to read the Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis

*To the People of God on August 20, 2018.* Pope speaks of the victims: »But their outcry was more powerful than all the measures meant to silence it, or sought even to resolve it by decisions that increased its gravity by falling into complicity. The lord heard that cry and once again showed us on which side he stands.” The attitude of stoning replaces self-

criticism and confession. The church must remember the past of burning witches and heretics. Perhaps the Charismatic movement has helped to aggravate the communal feelings.

***Do you draw any conclusions from the declining attendance in the Church?***

PT: The winter of faith happened in the West with convents and monasteries and parishes getting closed. The Christians in the West are not against Christ or His Gospel. But they leave the church. Philip Larkin wrote the poem “Church Going.” The Church may go away from the people. Slavoj Žižek wrote a study of the failure of Communism and the title of the book is “*For they know not what they do*”. He uses G.K. Chesterton to explain the fall and consider being the reason which “conspiracy of morals.” Moral sense conspires against any system which refuses to clean up its of Aegean staples. When it is evident that even within “the closest retreats and strictest watches” there is no security to chastity, girls and families will think more than twice to enter such places. People can get disgusted with the ways of the church.

***How can the Church make this crisis an opportunity for growth?***

PT: Every crisis is also an opportunity for self-evaluation and regeneration or reform which primarily spiritual. To love God means to follow his commandments. God is to be found in ethics. Morality begins when freedom, instead of being justified by itself, feels itself to be arbitrary and violent. The face of the other is the primary scripture. Showing concern for ‘the widow, the orphan, the stranger and the beggar’ is an approach that must not be made with empty hands. The sacrifice worth doing is the animal sacrifice which Cain refuses to make; he did not sacrifice the animal which is himself. To hold that the other has to sacrifice himself for others would be to preach human sacrifice which is paganism. The Eros has been transubstantiated to love

which involves asceticism and prayer. The aspiration to a just society is an eminently religious action. And in concrete terms this means that each person acts as though he were the Messiah. “Whoever the poorest of the poor are, they are Christ for us – Christ under the guise of human suffering” said Mother Theresa, Mother Theresa. This is the identity of Christianity. Silence when the poor and weak are denied justice is the snare of the demon, and the more one keeps silent the more terrifying the demon becomes; but silence is also the mutual understanding between the God and the individual. We are in the critical situation which is call for renewal. A spring of the church is possible with the Grace of God. Our history comes upon its greatest danger and its greatest opportunity. Only Christianity can do this work.

Paul Thelakkat is the editor of “Light of Truth.”