



## **Called to be the Lamb of God Offered for the Integral Liberation of Humanity: Interview with Fr Joy Ainiyadan**

### **How do you evaluate the major crisis in the Catholic Church?**

JA: The present situation of the accusations related to sexual abuse of the leaders of the Church must be seen from a realistic perspective. Is it not too idealistic to expect every spiritual leader in the Church to possess moral integrity? If there is one priest out of one hundred, who is sexually abusing women and children, how many cases of sex-abuse will be there in the Church? If there is one bishop out of three hundred, who is failing miserably in moral integrity, how many cases will emerge? I get an impression that there are many victims who haven't yet got the courage to come forward and reveal shocking realities of sexual abuse. The Church must be prepared to face hard realities of sex-scandal. Strict actions must be taken against the accusers, and the victims must get justice. The Church authorities should have the courage to tell the people that they will not protect any offender, and they will refer the cases to the state authorities for honest trial and investigation. All dioceses and religious congregations should have a crisis management team and a complaint cell to receive the complaints of the

people related to sex abuse, and to ensure quick and just actions taken on the issues brought before them.

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

JA: Sex abuses are the result of the fast spreading Pharisaic tendencies in the Church. Pretence of holiness is the easiest way to bridge the gap between Is and Ought. Since a person cannot attain the perfection and holiness his religious status demands from him, he begins to act as a holy person. He talks and behaves in public, exactly in the way a holy person behaves, but when left alone, his true self comes out. Within him many of the suppressed feelings and emotions will look for satisfaction. The efforts to quench the thirst for sexual pleasure is like pouring water in a sieve. This person will never be fully satisfied with the little pleasure sought in porno-films, masturbation, or any other secret ways of attaining sexual pleasure. If such persons happened to find cooperating individuals for sexual pleasure, or defenceless persons who can easily be exploited, they will fall into sexual relations with them. Once fallen, there is every possibility to seek occasions for repeated actions. This will naturally lead to several false ways to cover up such evils, and making compromises towards successful hiding of the immoral status of their soul.

Moral integrity should be considered as an uncompromising value, to be attained and preserved, in the life of every spiritual leader. One will attain it only through the undivided love towards his Divine Friend, and total commitment towards his mission. For this, he has to concentrate on disciplined ways of living his spiritual life. Meaningful celebration of the Holy Mass, daily meditation, personal prayer, examination of conscience, regular confession, and the recitation of Divine Office should form part of the day-to-day life of a priest or Bishop. He

should take extra-care to value simplicity in life, and not to permit anything luxurious creeping into his life-style. Eternal vigilance is the custodian of celibate life.

**What you say about the crisis of declining Church attendance?**

JA: Declining Church attendance tells us about the impact of the liturgical celebrations in the lives of the participants. It depends on whether or not the people attain anything valuable through the participation in liturgical celebrations. If they don't, they would prefer to use the time for something more valuable and more useful. Bishops and priests have to make an objective evaluation of their liturgical celebrations and make necessary changes both in the content and mode of celebration in order that such celebrations become more participative and people-friendly. Most of our priests enjoy extending the duration of celebration because they are the centre of attraction, being placed in the bright light, in colourful vestments, seen to everyone in the church. The priest must learn to be humble, to make the people participate actively in the celebration, to bring their joys and sorrows in the prayers, and to make genuine efforts to make every celebration Jesus-centred and people friendly. The attendance in the offerings of such priestly will never come down. Whether or not there is lively and active participation, to a great extent, it depends how a priest celebrates the liturgy.

**There is also a decrease in the vocation to the priesthood and religious life. How do you respond to it?**

JA: Earlier times, many young men and women were attracted to priesthood and religious life, and they considered the selection to religious leadership as something highly appreciated in the society. The present youth don't think in that way. They don't find anything challenging and attractive

in religious profession. We have to attract the youth by making earnest efforts to improve the moral integrity of priests and religious, and also by reaching out to the people through regular house visits and personal contact. Let's not complain about decrease in vocation. Let us live our priestly ministry with maximum dedication and self-less heart. Things will change for the better.

### **What can the Church do currently to make the crisis an opportunity for growth?**

JA: The present crisis related to sexual abuses in the Church must be taken as the costly lessons the Lord is teaching us about some radical changes to be introduced in the life and mission of our priests. First of all, we have to tell our people that we are mistaken in our assessment of the value of celibate life, and we have failed in our commitment to give undivided love towards God and his people. Secondly, we have to take some precautionary measures by strictly avoiding vulgar jokes, porno-films, inappropriate friendships, and any other pleasure seeking activity deviating our attention from celibate life. Thirdly, the Church authorities have to take systematic efforts for the spiritual empowerment of the priests and to make them faithful to their own inner-self and accountable to the People of God. There is no substitute for on-going formation and accountability in priestly commitment. Let our pastors be *Alter-Christus*, genuine representatives of Christ who was the Lamb of God offered for the integral liberation of humanity.

Fr Joy Ainiyadan, is Rector, Paurasthya Vidyapitham, Kottayam, Kerala.