



**AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies** |

67/3-4 May-Aug 2022, ISSN P-2249-1503 E-2582-791X | **62-75**

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6853252

Stable URL: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853252>

## **Prof Dr Subhash Anand (1943-2022): Passionately in Love with India and the Church**

**Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ**

Creighton University, Nebraska, USA

---

**Abstract:** This article is a tribute to Professor (Emeritus) Subhash Anand, who was part of both Papal Seminary and Jnana Deepa, Institute of Philosophy and Theology, for more than thirty years. His unexpected death urges us to recall his heritage, his love for India and devotion to Jesus. In this article, we first look into the person of Subhash and then explore one of his most significant books, dealing with the Eucharist. He was passionately in love with India and with the Church. Rooted in his Christian tradition, he tried to understand and reach out to the Hindu brothers and sisters.

Cite as: Pandikattu, Kuruvilla. (2022). Subhash Anand (1943-2022): Passionately in Love with India and the Church (Version 1.0). *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, May-August 2022 (67/3-4), **62-75**. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853252>

**Keywords:** Subhash Anand, Indian Philosophy, Church in India, Eucharist.

We are immensely saddened to hear of the demise of Rev Fr Subhash Anand who had been part of Jnana Deepa and Papal Seminary for more than thirty years both as staff and as a student. He was a man of deep conviction and commitment. A person of vision and values, he was critically and creatively committed to the Indian Church. He radiated a sense of fairness and calm in his undertakings. Forthright and articulate, he could put forward his views forcefully and articulate himself clearly.

### **The Person and His Vision**

As a professor of Indian Philosophy and Religion at Pune, he cherished both the ancient Indian wisdom and their contemporary relevance. In his classes, he tried to make the Indian insights applicable to the modern times. He could perceive the larger story or vision of the Indian way of life, which is very valuable for the contemporary Church. His doctorate from Benares Hindu University helped him assimilate the Indian insights to the Christian experience. It was this experience of his Indian identity and profundity that made him change his name from Benedict Alvarez to Subhash Anand.

Subhash was very much concerned about the poor and cherished poverty as a way of life. He was very much supportive of the marginalised. He had a special commitment to the secular institutes in and around Pune and served them with devotion.

He was very much concerned about the poor and cherished poverty as a way of life. He was very much supportive of the marginalised. He had a special commitment to the secular institutes in and around Pune and served them with devotion.

After his retirement from Jnana Deepa and Papal Seminary in 2008, he developed a special devotion to the Bible. So he arranged for a large library on the Bible on his own and brought out the monumental work: *The WALD-BULCKE BIBLE*

BHASHYA ; in · Hindi. This 1192 page Biblical commentary which contains reflections on every book in the Bible and published in 2018 is a monumental contribution to the Indian Church. He managed to involve 75 scholars who worked on this volume.

He used to visit Papal Seminary every year after his retirement mainly to acquaint himself with the happenings in the seminary and also to make use of the Jnana Deepa library.

His publications include *The Local Church and Inculturation* (1985); *The Way of Love: The Bhagavata Doctrine of Bhakti* (1996); *Story as Theology: An Intrepretative Study of Five Episodes from the Mahabharata* (1996); *Siva's Thousand Names: An Interpretative Study of Sivasahasranama* (1998); *Hindutva: A Christian Response* (2007); *Hindu Inspiration for Christian Reflection: Towards a Hindu-Christian Theology* (2004); *Major Hindu Celebrations: A Christian Appreciation* (2008); *The Eternal Stranger: An Interpretative Study of Five Siva Episodes in the Mahabharata* (2009); *A Preface for an Indian Christology* (2070), *May They All Be One: Towards an*

*Ecumenical Theology of the Church* (2012); *Postmodern Sage* *Premodern Wisdom* (2019); *The Divine Feminine* (2015) and *Seven Baskets Full : The All-Embracing Lord's Supper* (2021). The last book with 877 pages challenges the Church to live the Eucharist in the contemporary context.

He was a prolific writer. Even after his retirement, he continued to write and some of them were very provocative. The Church in India will miss him very much. Papal Seminary and Jnana Deepa, Pune, owe quite much to his contribution.

**The Book: Seven Baskets Full: Genuine Sharing of Jesus' Presence**

What inspired Subhash to write his *magnus opus* on the Eucharist? He started by challenging the question: "Nego suppositum!" The Christian community as a whole is plagued by an almost irreversible original sin: the belief that Jesus instituted a new liturgy. Sharing food with others, especially the poor, was a foreshadowing gesture. Liturgy assumes an institution with its own tradition, which becomes increasingly centralized and communalized; more patriarchal and oppressive. A prophetic gesture is invariably subversive. This helps to explain the

Risen Lord can now be found throughout the universe. This is the ancient Church's belief. When humans meet in his name, in love, this presence becomes salvific for them. As the Risen Lord, He, the entire reality of Jesus the Christ, is present to them. That presence becomes real when people come together in love. It transforms into an interpersonal communion. We become Christ's one body. The Eucharist is not a metaphysical miracle, but rather a hermeneutical reminder.

conflict between priests and prophets. This explains Jesus' execution: the Good News was subverting Israel's official religion; the Good News will always subvert institutional religion. This explains why some theologians have been silenced, if not

excommunicated. The soteriological explanations are post-Easter constructions to deal with the first disciples' embarrassment: how could a good man die in such a horrible way? (Anand, 2021a).

His goal in writing *Seven Baskets Full*, a book on the Eucharist, (Anand, 2021b) was to demonstrate that neither the historical Jesus nor the earliest believers saw the breaking of bread as requiring a clear creedal, cultic, or canonical framework. The Last Supper was meant to represent the gathering of all, not by sharing a common creed, cult, or code, but by loving, caring for, and sharing as much as we can with one another. This is the clear message of the washing of feet and the subsequent discourse. We will unite if we truly believe that God first loved us. As a result, at the Last Supper, Jesus gathers the twelve for the final time: one will betray Jesus, the second will deny him, and the remaining ten will abandon him. Only the disciple who believed Jesus loved him, as well as a few women, would be with Jesus. No amount of solemn symbolic activity can replace genuine sharing. Real sharing does not necessitate priests, ritual texts, cultic garments, holy days, or locations; all of these can serve as convenient alibis. We don't need bulky missals and lectionaries, which may require hernia surgery for the poor undernourished sacristan. Rituals can be extremely soothing placebos. Genuine sharing is a truly universal sacrament as well as a uniquely salvific sacrifice. To the best of my knowledge, God expects no other sacrifice from us.

He wanted to make it clear that he did not believe the Eucharist was instituted by the historical Jesus. What he found particularly disheartening is that even young priests are unfamiliar with the current debate over the historical Jesus and its theological and pastoral implications. They do not appear to be comfortable with an open discussion of questions that some of our educated laity have. If they do not come to us for answers, it is possible that they believe we are incompetent or that we are

closed. Some of us believe that ignorance is bliss. It certainly ensures that we have the funds that the official Church always seems to require.

He suspects that, while most of us emphatically reject Doceticism, we build our theology primarily on Doceticist assumptions. God was Jesus. He knew everything and could do it all! But Jesus knew as much or as little about his future as John the Baptist did. For nearly three centuries, the Eucharist was commonly celebrated without the words of institution and the anamnesis mandate.

Subhash believes that the Risen Lord can now be found throughout the universe. This is the ancient Church's belief. When humans meet in his name, in love, this presence becomes salvific for them. As the Risen Lord, He, the entire reality of Jesus the Christ, is present to them. That presence becomes real when people come together in love. It transforms into an interpersonal communion. We become Christ's one body. The Eucharist is not a metaphysical miracle, but rather a hermeneutical reminder. The Risen Lord is the broken bread for humans. This breaking was not a reference to Jesus' passion and death, but to Jesus of Nazareth's actual praxis. Jesus could not have spoken of his passion and death as a certainty, but rather as a possibility. When we become the bread broken for our needy neighbours, the remembrance becomes real. That is the only acceptable sacrifice to God. When we are transubstantiated, this will occur. That cannot be realized through our liturgy. Only the experience of God's love has the power to transform us. We must transition from cult to contemplation.

The imposition of the transubstantiation dogma was a pastoral disaster. Previously, the Church meant a community as the body of Christ. The emphasis was on one-on-one pastoral care. That is now being overlooked. The pastor spends much more time in the church (building), presbytery—waiting for people to come and meet him, and occasionally supervising the gardener. He is no longer with the Church—the People of God; he is no longer a part of their life struggle. People are leaving the Church as a result.

The liturgy has evolved into its own institution. Commercialization and consumer glamour are all too common in our liturgical celebrations. Building expensive cathedrals, churches, and chapels have taken precedence over developing vibrant faith communities. Costly patens, chalices, ciboria, monstrances, vestments, altar decorations, and lamps are valued more than the authenticity of our pastors' and people's faith. We witness solemn liturgies but hear appalling homilies. Pastors are increasingly confined to their small church, where the Eucharist is kept. They imagine themselves as the stewards of Christ's body (Mt 27:65-66). As a result, they, like the first custodians, fail in their tasks and become like dead men.

With regards to epiclesis, According to our author, there are two accounts of Pentecost: the gifting of the Spirit and the birth of the Church, the body of the Risen Lord. The first is true, but not historically accurate: the resurrection occurs when Jesus dies (Jn 19.26-30). Here, John employs the verb *paradidōmi*, which means "handing over." As a result, *paradosis* refers to what is passed down, i.e., tradition. For John, the resurrection occurs when Jesus dies, and thus he is able to bestow his Spirit on his Church (Jn 7:37-39). The Church is now formed by gathering the disciples whom Jesus loved and the women who were close to Jesus even after his death. They are the Church that has been sent (*apostolos*). His presence in all of creation makes it sacred ground. The temple and its priests are no longer required.

The second account is dramatized by Luke. The twelve are back together (Acts 1:21-26) and this ushers the birth of the New Israel. The second account serves as a hermeneutical proclamation: Jesus fulfilled all of the promises made to the Israelites. Despite our unfaithfulness and sin, God remains faithful; he remains Emmanuel: God with us. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection represent God's transforming presence with us.

Jesus' resurrection is his final transfiguration by the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist becomes a symbol of the Risen Lord's vivifying presence, forming the Church. The two epiclesis could be interpreted as liturgical expressions of New Testament narratives. The epiclesis preceding the institution draws our gifts into the realm of symbols, while the second confers the symbolic character announced in the institution on the consecrated gifts. They are true representations of the truly risen Christ. As a result, for the majority of non-Roman Churches, the second epiclesis is far more important than the institution narrative.

Further, Subhash notes that we have removed the scandal from the Last Supper and Christ's death on the cross from our liturgy. Consider a priest celebrating the Eucharist with a concelebrant. This was something the latter had not anticipated. The former never misses an opportunity to make disparaging remarks about the latter. Nonetheless, before communion, he turns to give the latter "the kiss of peace." This is taking place! The primary reason for this is a shift in the semantic axis of Jesus' meal-sharing. Giving his best to the needy was a horizontal concern for Jesus, sustained by his Abba experience, through the hours he spent with the Father. He saw himself as a servant; he was not and could never be a ministerial priest. The vertical concern of our liturgy is worshipping God in a cult made possible by a human narrative: the ministerial priesthood. Because it is largely interpreted by ministerial priests and people brainwashed by them, not only our liturgy but also the New Testament have lost the foolishness of the Cross.

The Eucharist is said to be the church's attempt to make Jesus' body present even after his presence has been taken away. The Risen Lord's presence cannot be, in fact, taken away. If the real body of Jesus is not present to us, the Church – body of Christ – cannot exist. If we perceive him to be absent, it means that we do not love sufficiently. We must feel his presence as the Risen Lord. Only contemplation can help with this. Cult by itself is useless. When the



world sees Christians as truly loving and effective caregivers, the Risen Lord becomes truly present to it.

The enactment of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection is called liturgy. According to Subhash, the word *leitourgia* (liturgy) is used twice in the New Testament to refer to the Old Testament temple cult (Lk 1:23; Heb 9:21). It is also used four times in a Christian context: the collection for poor Christians in Jerusalem (2 Cor 9:12); the risk of martyrdom faced by Paul and Epaphrodite was viewed as a service to the Philippians' faith growth. Because he "has obtained a ministry (*leitourgia*) that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is

Pope Francis has frequently lamented that arrogant clericalism is the Church's main problem. There can be no salvation from clericalism unless we radically rethink our worship. The Eucharist is supposed to make us more humble, open, loving, and caring. So, for Subhash, true sharing is the one-of-a-kind salvific sacrifice

better, because it is enacted on better promises," Jesus abrogates the Old Testament ministry (Heb 8:6). He wishes for us to be guided more by the New Testament than by Canon Law in understanding liturgy. Only then will our liturgy become more meaningful and contextualized. Canon Law represents the pinnacle of institutionalization. Christian worship must be liberated from its shackles. Without a doubt, some law and order are required. For that, we can rely on our common sense, especially those who claim to be elders (presbyter).

Unfortunately, common sense is a rare commodity among those who have been raised in a closed and protected environment for many years. When the Church is perceived as oppressive, bloody anti-clericalism ensues. This is supported by events in Western Europe, North and South America. Pope Francis has

frequently lamented that arrogant clericalism is the Church's main problem. There can be no salvation from clericalism unless we radically rethink our worship. The Eucharist is supposed to make us more humble, open, loving, and caring. So, for Subhash, true sharing is the one-of-a-kind salvific sacrifice (Anand, 2021a).

Subhash was deeply concerned that clericalism is so rampant in the church, and that serves as a formidable fortress protecting the clergy (Anand, 2017). The bishops of India too seem to be aware of this problem. The final statement of the 32nd Plenary Meeting of the CBCI lists "Shunning excessive institutionalization, clericalism and extravaganza" among its proposals (CBCI, 2022).

Some of the clergy believe they can do whatever they want with impunity; that they can even engage in criminal behaviour and get away with it. Clerics believe that the clergy will always support its man.

If we are to rid the Church of this cancer, we must first address its source. Postmodern thinkers have called our attention to the authoritarian and oppressive nature of even what we call theological truths. This is easy to see when we consider that the vast majority of Catholic theology, spirituality, liturgy, and law have been designed almost entirely by a small group of clerics.

Even stranger, theology, spirituality, liturgy, and law of marriage have been formulated by a small group of clerics who claim to be celibates and are far removed from the experience of married couples.

We can say that the discourse shaping the Roman Church – theology, spirituality, liturgy, and law – is of, by, for, and accountable to the clergy. As a result, if we truly want to free the Church of Jesus from the cancer of clericalism, we must engage in an alternative discourse. This is entirely feasible.

If some of us, priests and bishops, are guilty of serious wrongdoing and still get away with it, it is because our lay people have accepted

the awe and aura that we have successfully surrounded ourselves with. It is time for our lay people to engage with contemporary Biblical scholarship, keeping in mind that the majority of scholars are just as concerned about Jesus and his community as you and I are.

Contemporary Biblical and theological scholars are presenting some very profound new insights into the origins and development of Christianity. Their findings are published in theological journals that few bishops and priests read. There is a troubling gap between the advancement of knowledge and the stagnation of our pastoral

practice. This ignorance can be a source of great bliss and security for those in power, but it is a terrible disaster for the vast majority of God's people.

“The secret of freedom lies in educating people, whereas the secret of tyranny is in keeping them ignorant.” - Maximilien Robespierre

“The secret of freedom lies in educating people, whereas the secret of tyranny is in keeping them ignorant,” said Maximilien Robespierre, a pioneer of the French Revolution. As a result, we must bring theology to a wider audience, including people who may not have time to read lengthy scholarly articles, urged Subhash fervently.

## Conclusion

His forthright approach and clear conviction sometimes border on arrogance and obduracy at least for some of his colleagues, who found it difficult to live with him. Some of them took his long emails with ongoing criticism as a form of harassment and requested to be removed from his email list. He could be a pain for many of the authorities with his persistent questioning and

criticism. But he did it with good intention. He really wished to reform the Church from within. He wanted the church to be a source of joy for the laity, and especially the poor. He wanted the Church to be deeply rooted in the Indian culture and reach out to the Hindus. He was a man of deep and unwavering conviction, which made him sometimes unyielding and provocative. He could come across as a demanding taskmaster, especially to his students.

Even his critics will agree that he was a man of concern, care, and compassion for the students he taught and the people he served. He struggled to meet the high ideals he had set for himself and the Church.

Finally, I want to end with an unexpected email I received from a well-known Catholic intellectual ad writer who knew Subhash personally and intellectually well:

I was indeed full of sorrow at the news of the sudden demise of Fr Subash. He was an honest man who was thoroughly misunderstood by many of his companions and close associates. He had certain deep impressions and convictions to which he returned time and again. I do not think the church in India did bother about him... I feel he was on the verge of madness, perhaps he had some direct contact with God which alone made man mad. Any direct access to God definitely will make you mad. The pity is that we simply close ourselves to such people lest such things bother us. The safest way to live is thoughtlessness, unconcerned with the way the world moves. We are not evil we live the banality of evil, which is numbness of the people

The safest way to live is thoughtlessness, unconcerned with the way the world moves. We are not evil we live the banality of evil, which is numbness of the people around us and the future of us. Subash rightly or wrongly was so concerned of the future of the church in India, he was mentally disturbed.

around us and the future of us. Subhash rightly or wrongly was so concerned of the future of the church in India, he was mentally disturbed. We are not even aware of the watchman in the tower. “Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower; every night I stay at my post.” (Isaiah 21:8). I thank the Lord for the blessing which was He, RIP.

Subhash Anand loved the Church dearly, agonized over its shortcomings deeply, reached out to Hindus tenderly, and dreamt of an Indian Church that serves the nation and cares particularly for its poor and underprivileged. He was an erudite scholar, creative thinker, earnest seeker and committed pastor. He was an Indian who loved the nation, a Catholic who lived for the Church, and a priest who stood for the poor.

May God grant him the fullness of life he has been longing for!  
May he inspire us to lead lives of commitment, devotion and conviction!

## References

- Anand, Subhash. (2021a). Real Sharing Is the Uniquely Salvific Sacrifice. *Light of Truth*. Vol 12/9 May 1-15. pp. 1 & 15.
- Anand, Subhash. (2021b). *Seven Baskets Full: The All-Embracing Lord's Supper*. Delhi: Media House. 2021.
- Anand, Subhash. (2017). Uprooting Clericalism, *Indian Currents*, 10-16 April, 2017, 7.
- CBCI. (2022). “Messages - Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India.” Last modified March 9, 2016. Accessed June 21, 2022. <https://www.cbci.in/messages.aspx>



**Kuruvilla Pandikattu, SJ**, editor of this journal is currently on sabbatical at Creighton University, Omaha, USA. | Email: [kuru@jdv.edu.in](mailto:kuru@jdv.edu.in) | [www.kuru.in](http://www.kuru.in) | ORCID: 0000-0001-9815-3707.

Article Received: June 22, 2022, Accepted: July 8, 2022;  
Word Count: 3410



© by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)