

## **VIBRANT MACAF HAS A MISSION**

**Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ**

If anyone needs a proof, the grand silver jubilee celebrations have offered more than a proof that the Malayali Catholic Fellowship (MACAF) is vibrant as ever. The silver jubilee celebrations have manifested MACAF as a dynamic association of Malayali Catholics in the dioceses of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar.

For me, MACAF is known for 5 Ts; namely, unity, loyalty, availability, religiosity and reliability. MACAF has steadily grown over the past 25 years. MACAF undertakes a variety of activities and offers a wide range of services to its members and others. These activities and services are possible only with the united efforts of all MACAF members. The successful jubilee celebrations would not have been possible without the united efforts of all MACAFians.

Indeed, unity can be considered a hallmark of MACAF. The Malayali Catholics belonging to different rites like Latin Rite, Syro-Malabar & Syro-Malankara Rites all are united one organization, that is, MACAF

MACAFians show their availability for services to the community and the society at large through rendering so many services like and helping the people specially the needy through projects like blood donation, eye donation, educational sponsorship, death benevolent fund, emergency financial aid, micro financing schemes as well as special programmes for senior citizens, youth & nurses.

Then, the priests who have worked with MACAFians can testify for the reliability of Malayali Catholics. For instance, Fr. Ornellas Coutinho, S.J., the Parish Priest of St. Xavier's Parish, Navrangpura says that, "Malayali Catholics are most reliable. Any work entrusted to them, it will be done. They are also available for any work in the parish."

The loyalty and religiosity are the virtues of MACAFians, which are widely appreciated not only by the people in the Church but also by the people at large who have opportunities to work with and profit from the services of MACAFians. For instance, the Parish Priest of St. Ignatius' Loyola Church, Naranpura, Fr. Freddy D'Souza, S.J. says, "I appreciate their loyalty and commitment to the Church. They work hard even against odds and face difficulties squarely. In the process they improve themselves and their families and thus contribute to the growth of the community and the society at large.

I am of the opinion that the underlining factor of MACAFian vibrancy is the religiosity of its members. The MACAFians nourish their religiosity with spiritual activities like regularly attending Sunday Masses, conducting charismatic retreats and other spiritual renewal programmes.

In the civic meeting of the MACAFian silver jubilee celebrations at Ahmedabad, the Chief Guest Bishop Peter Celestian Elampassery, OFM Cap of Jammu Srinagar called the MACAFians to get fully integrated into the local people and their communities. The bishop exhorted the MACAFians to master the local language and culture. This is a formidable challenge for most

MACAFians who resort to English and Hindi to communicate with non Malayalis. But it is not an impossible task for MACAFians who are accustomed as Fr. Freddy D'Souza has said, "to work-hard against odds and face difficulties squarely."

While mastering the Gujarati language and integrating themselves culturally with the local people, I see a unique mission for the MACAFians. They have received the gift of faith in Jesus Christ and his Church. This gift to faith is not something to be preserved as a valuable treasure for oneself. The gift of faith it is preserved best when it is shared with the people of other faiths. The Christian faith with its values like love, service, forgiveness, etc has contributed immensely for the growth and development of MACAFians individually and as a community.

In fact, a Catholic who appreciate his own gift of faith and is possessed by Jesus, the Saviour cannot contain himself/herself but to proclaim Jesus and his values to the people of other faiths. A true MACAFian like Jesus Christ himself, needs to become a person for others. One way, of showing that one is a person for others, is by sharing one's faith and showing its effects on one's life as well as by being loving, forgiving and being helpful to other people.

I am sure, MACAFians have friends and contacts, who want to know more about Jesus Christ and the Bible. Such people can be helped to contact CISS for free literature on Jesus Christ and Bible in Gujarati. CISS is looking for donors to buy and make such literature in English available to the people of other faiths. (words-740,contact the author: [ciss@satyam.net.in](mailto:ciss@satyam.net.in))

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