

## **EDITORIAL**

This second issue begins with a thought-provoking article from South Africa of relevance to Christians everywhere. Brian Pearce then introduces one attempt in the UK to embody what Archbishop Desmond Tutu urges on us all. Two pieces from Nigeria illustrate both the possibilities and the necessity of dialogue, as well as highlighting some of the difficulties. In an extract from his annual Letter from Jerusalem, President-Bishop Samir Kafity illustrates some of the worries and complexities in a particularly fraught situation which continues as a focus of our prayers. Roger Chung seeks to shape a prayer for all people out of our striving for dialogue.

The final contribution - a Pastoral Letter from the Bishop of Lahore - was written in the heat and emotion of a traumatic incident earlier this year in Pakistan. Such stories cause us all pain, yet also urge us on in the Gospel work of building bridges wherever we live.

Please continue to keep in touch and send in contributions. In the next issue we hope to include news from Fiji and Malawi. We would welcome your stories too.

## **LET US CELEBRATE OUR DIVERSITY**

We have all thrilled as we watched the Berlin Wall toppling, signalling so dramatically the collapse of what President Reagan perversely described as the 'evil empire' of communism. This exhilarating development has sadly had a sombre downside. It signalled the beginning of major social, political and economic change. It has been accompanied by a global recession and we know that at such times as we saw with the rise of Nazism and Fascism, people are prone to look for scapegoats on whom to shift the blame for their economic plight. The demise of Communism and the end of the Cold War ushered in a period of tremendous transition -we saw many dictators biting the dust in several Third World countries as the masses agitated for democratic, participatory sociopolitical and economic dispensations.

### **Periods of Transition**

Periods of social upheaval and upheaval such as the one we are experiencing are also periods of considerable uncertainty. Familiar landmarks are shifted or removed from the landscape and people are disorientated because they have lost the things that have helped to give them their bearings. And at such times there is a nostalgia for absolute certainty and straightforward answers. People become impatient with ambivalence - President Reagan was popular in part because he made people believe that the world was a great deal less complex than they were in fact experiencing it to be - that it was always a choice between our obvious and unambiguous right and an equally glaring wrong. The world tended to be conveniently divided into goodies and baddies, 'cops and robbers' and the goodies in that kind of universe always managed to triumph over the baddies, that virtue always got the better of vice and the hero always would rescue the damsel in distress in the nick of time and would live happily ever after. Unfortunately life has not been quite so conveniently neat. That, however, is a truth people have not always wanted to face up to courageously.

### **Longing for certainty - hatred of diversity**

And so in a time of transition such as ours when familiar landmarks have disappeared, people tend to be impatient of, if not openly hostile to diversity. We see it in the opposition to e.g. ethnic diversity. You do not want to make room for people who differ from you ethnically. They could be awkward in so many ways. You hanker after homogenetics and abhor heterogeneity and so it is not surprising that we see the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia or the genocide in Rwanda. That happens to be the ugliest side of a phenomenon existing slightly more benignly elsewhere. Despite the efforts of European Union with its Maastricht Treaty, it is true that many European Countries are actually raising their borders to shut out aliens and immigrants and others. There is a disturbing rise in xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism all over Europe and the Americas - in France and the United Kingdom with their National Front and the ghastly spectre of neo-Nazism in Germany with the skinhead attacks against Turkish auslander. We rejoice that many in these lands have demonstrated passionately against these evils. Yet the fact is that they are a reality we cannot deny. People think there is a kind of security in being with those who are like you in appearance, in culture, in thought and behaviour.

We are aware too of an impatience with, indeed a hostility towards different points of view. People are scared that there may be too many options competing for their patronage in the market place, thus exacerbating their present uncertainty and sense of insecurity. Hence the upsurge of fundamentalism. There can be only one truth authoritatively propounded by someone who cannot be challenged'- in reality not authoritative but authoritarian. Differences of opinion are not tolerated even within the same groups. All must give allegiance to one often simplistic definition or assertion which brooks no questioning because this would undermine and subvert that authority and inflict a damaging blow to the particular community, so it is believed. Dissent is subversive whether politically, ideologically or theologically. There can be only one source of ineluctable truth and all must make obeisance to that. There is thus a resounding 'No' to all diversity, to difference, to dissent.

### **Opposition to Religious Plurality**

Equally we are seeing a hostility that refuses to acknowledge the validity of a plurality of religious faiths. Despite the obvious fact that, for instance, Christians do not have a monopoly of truth or virtue and that adherents of other faiths do happen, inconveniently, to be people of unarguable goodness, probity and holiness (e.g. a Mahatma Gandhi); to have access to truth as for instance an Albert Einstein, many Christians hold to the view that non-Christian faiths are devoid of all truth and even that they are paganism of the worst kind. Those who assert this position hold to a simplistic interpretation of such texts as "no one comes to the Father but by me", When you ask whether e.g. Moses or any other Old Testament religious figure did have an authentic encounter with God or you ask that if indeed they did, as most reasonable people would have to concede, then you ask, was our Lord, if this be an authentic dominical ipissima verba referring to the pre Incarnate or the Incarnate Logos? Then you are met with an incoherent and illogical anger and vehemence. Somehow it seems God is diminished if we should acknowledge the undoubted verities and goodness that reside in non-Christian faiths and the virtues to be found among their adherents. Is God really any less honoured that the Dalai Lama happens to be a transparently holy and serene Buddhist?

### **Sensitivity To Other Faiths**

Jesus Christ for me is the full and final revelation of God. I will not compromise my belief in His absolute uniqueness. But I don't need to be obnoxious. I don't have to trample in mudsoiled boots all over what the adherents of another faith consider to be their holy ground. God is too great to be apprehended only by a finite Christian. I am ready to hear what the Buddhist, the Muslim, the Sufi etc has seen of 'the divine splendour'. I would want to show them the best of all, but not by bible thumping and abrasive disregard for their susceptibilities. In the Johannine Gospel Jesus gives an important evangelising principle - 'Come and see'. I believe that we will commend Christianity most credibly not so much by our eloquent sermons but much more by who we are, by what others will see in us when they respond to our invitation 'Come and see'. They say Gandhi often said he would have been a Christian, attracted as he was by what he read in the New Testament of our Lord's life, but when he looked at what Christians had become, what they were, then he was repelled. Waldo Emerson has said 'What you are is so loud I can't hear what you are saying'. Was this not the greatest evangelising tool in the early Church? Did the slaves not flock into the Church then, not so much because they heard moving sermons as by the fact of what they saw of the lifestyle of this new Koinonia? 'How these Christians love one another.' They observed and they were bowled over.

May God help us to become what we are - the Reflection of this Jesus Christ who took a towel and washed the feet of His disciples, 'who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor so that we through His poverty might become rich; who became obedient even unto death, yes the death on the Cross. Therefore God has now highly exalted him and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...' To be a fellowship of compassion and caring, of forgiveness and reconcillia-tion, of being the voice of the voiceless, being there for the marginalised ones, being there where God would be, where Christ would be - this Christ who could say 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it to me.'

+ DESMOND TUTU

## THE U.K. INTER FAITH NETWORK CODE

The Inter Faith Network for the UK was established in 1987 and links seventy organisations with an interest in relations between the different faith communities in Britain. Its affiliates include national and local inter faith organisations, educational and academic bodies, and most significantly, representative bodies from within the main faith communities themselves, including the Churches' Commission for Inter Faith Relations of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.

Recently, the Network formed a multi-faith working group to examine the relationship between mission, evangelism and dialogue in the light of concerns expressed in other faith communities when the Churches launched their Decade of Evangelism/Evangelisation. The result was the booklet on "Mission, Dialogue and Inter Religious Encounter". This argues that what is needed is a consistently principled approach in all our dealings with people of other faiths and beliefs, regardless of whether our primary purpose is mission or dialogue, and points to the overlap between the two. The report concludes with a short "code of conduct" on "Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs". The text of this, (which is set out below,) was discussed among the Network affiliated organisations and its final version was endorsed by all of them.

### Brian Pearce, Director

In Britain today, people of many different faiths and beliefs live side by side. The opportunity lies before us to work together to build a society rooted in the values we treasure. But this society can only be built on a sure foundation of mutual respect, openness and trust. This means finding ways to live our lives of faith with integrity, and allowing others to do so too. Our different religious traditions offer us many resources for this and teach us the importance of good relationships characterised by honesty, compassion and generosity of spirit. The Inter Faith Network offers the following code of conduct for encouraging and strengthening these relationships.

As members of the human family, we should show each other respect and courtesy. In our dealings with people of other faiths and beliefs this means exercising good will and:

- Respecting other people's freedom within the law to express their beliefs and convictions
- Learning to understand what others actually believe and value, and letting them express this in their own terms
- Respecting the convictions of others about food, dress and social etiquette and not behaving in ways which cause needless offence
- Recognising that all of us at times fall short of the ideals of our own traditions and never comparing our own ideals with other people's practices
- Working to prevent disagreement from leading to conflict
- Always seeking to avoid violence in our relationships

When we talk about matters of faith with one another, we need to do so with sensitivity, honesty and straightforwardness. This means:

- Recognising that listening as well as speaking is necessary for a genuine conversation
- Being honest about our beliefs and religious allegiances
- Not misrepresenting or disparaging other people's beliefs and practices
- Correcting misunderstanding or misrepresentations not only of our own but also of other faiths whenever we come across them
- Being straightforward about our intentions
- Accepting that in formal inter faith meetings there is a particular responsibility to ensure that the religious commitment of all those who are present will be respected

All of us want others to understand and respect our views. Some people will also want to persuade others to join their faith. In a multi faith society where this is permitted, the attempt should always be characterised by self-restraint and a concern for the other's freedom and dignity. This means:

- Respecting another person's expressed wish to be left alone
- Avoiding imposing ourselves and our views on individuals or communities who are in vulnerable situations in ways which exploit these
- Being sensitive and courteous
- Avoiding violent action or language, threats, manipulation, improper inducements, or the misuse of any kind of power
- Respecting the right of others to disagree with us

Living and working together is not always easy. Religion harnesses deep emotions which can sometimes take destructive forms. Where this happens, we must draw on our faith to bring about reconciliation and understanding. The truest fruits of religion are healing and positive. We have a great deal to learn from one another which can enrich us without undermining our own identities. Together, listening and responding with openness and respect, we can move forward to work in ways that acknowledge genuine differences but build on shared hopes and values.

## A NIGERIAN OVERVIEW

*Nigeria, with a geographical area of 923,768 square miles, has a total population of 88,514,501 people. Over 40% of the population of Nigeria is said to be Christian, with 40% being Muslim and the rest being adherents of traditional religions.*

Nigeria is divided by both cultural and traditional values. This division encompasses multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. In the diverse complexity of the many societies, it is necessary to understand the people according to their background. It is helpful to understand that Nigeria is a pluralistic federation.

Islam in Nigeria predates Christianity by many centuries. The followers of Prophet Muhammad came down across the Sahara desert from the North as Muslim merchants, the majority of whom were of Berber stock. By and large, Islam came to be seen more as a blueprint of the social order than as a private, personal belief system. So, when discussing the fortunes of Islam in Nigeria during the 19th centuries, the period when Christianity was brought to Nigeria by the European Missionaries, we are already confronted by the increasing penetrations of European powers into the Muslim territories. We will probably not be wrong to claim that the unhealthy rivalries between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria took its root from this episode. This has since divided the country into North and South even after its amalgamation by Lord Lugard in 1914, the North being a Muslim stronghold while the South is a Christian stronghold.

The first years of independence, however, recorded some change in the relationship between the two religions. The commitment in both the North and South after October 1960 was to make independence work. "Bridge the gap" between the North and the South became a political slogan. Unfortunately, this co-operation was short-lived and soon gave way to new tensions. This continuing disharmony gives us some understanding of the relationship between religion and power encounter and why and how political discourse is being carried out in a religious context.

The use of religion as a political metaphor has affected religious peace and harmony in Nigeria. This, in a sense, explains how religion continues to provide meaning, direction and purpose for individuals as well as groups in African Societies. This calls our attention to the need to see how religion, representing a vital force, is capable of generating profound consequences over the collective affairs of a modern state.

At a time of peace, Christians and Muslims in Nigeria often find themselves in community development projects, social welfare, clubs and voluntary organisations which try to assist the poor and the underprivileged members of the society. These are rather in the line of social assistance or self-help projects.

As religious bodies, Christians and Muslims are making contributions which promote unity at all levels. The Christian Church has an enviable record of education, health services and general social upliftment of those who have come under her influence. Although some recent official policies of the government have tended to control, reduce or even neutralise the social impact of the Church on the Nigerian community, still the Church continues to seek ways of maintaining her presence.

Muslims came late to the scene in the field of running modern social institutions like schools and hospitals, but they have made giant strides in recent years. As regards help for the poor, we must note that the Muslim community in Nigeria does take the Islamic precept of almsgiving rather seriously. Beggars litter the front of Mosques and many rich Muslims provide daily meals for large numbers of destitutes. While this may not be an ideal solution for the problem of economic disparity, it does achieve the immediate purpose of filling some empty stomachs.

In Nigeria, however, and most parts of Africa, it is difficult if not impossible for Christians to enter Islamic Institutions or University departments. This is partly because objection has been voiced against non-Muslims teaching Islam in schools. For example, in a press release of the Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies, 14th August 1976 the fourth resolution reads: "that in order to check the current practice in certain schools whereby non-Muslim teachers teach Islamic Religious Knowledge, the Federal and State governments are urged to ensure that such practice ceases with immediate effect and that only Muslims should teach Islamic Religious Knowledge in schools, and other educational institutions."

The University of Ibadan Religious Studies department where I had my first degree B.A. in 1983 and M.A. (O.T.) in 1988, has two Christian Islamicists. Joseph Kenny O.P. and S. Babs Mala, a Nigerian member of Christ Apostolic Church. Christian students only have the possibility of studying Arabic language as a subsidiary in the Islamic department and of consulting with Muslim Islamicists.

While the University of Ibadan now provides programmes at various levels, the National Institute of Moral and Religious Education (Project T.I.M.E) in Lagos has a certificate level programme for teachers in training, providing courses in both Islam and Christianity for students of both faiths. The inter-faith character of this institution is reflected not just in the students in-take and staffing, but much more so in the course content which provides for the in-depth study of both Christianity and Islam by their respective adherents.

Under "contents of religious education," Muslim professors teach the Muslim students the Qur'an, Islamic theology, Islamic Philosophy; while Christian lecturers teach Christian students the Old Testament, New Testament and Christian theology. In a section under "moral education and social studies," the students are made to look at "World value systems with emphasis on Christianity, Islam and Secularisation." It is here that "Introduction to Islam" is offered to Christian students only, by a Muslim lecturer, while similarly, "Introduction to Christianity" is offered to Muslim students only by a Christian lecturer.

All the students (Muslims and Christians) also study together "African Cultural Heritage" including the African Traditional Religions. All this completes the professional training of the students which includes principles and practice of education, educational psychology and sociology, development and communication skills etc.

As Pope John Paul II said, "wars can be decided by just a few people; but peace requires the strong commitment of all." The adherents of various religions in Nigeria can work together to promote peace. Not only can they do so, but they should do so. Christians and Muslims should be in the frontline, beginning from the University Professors, lecturers, students, church leaders and the Muslim Umma.

By so doing, the Kingdom of God, which Jesus sees in terms of relationships rather than a period of time, will be at easy reach in Nigeria. Insofar as Jesus and the church work towards changing the relationship between rich and poor, and among people of living faith, the reign of God will continue to "come on earth as it is in heaven."

*L Funso Fasola (Revd. Canon)*

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## **INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES IN IBADAN DIOCESE OF THE PROVINCE OF NIGERIA**

Islam and Christianity have a long history in Nigeria. Regarding the history of Islam, scholars are not precise about its first entry in Nigeria. The available sources of information indicate that Islam came to Nigeria in about 11th century through Sunni/Sufi Muslim traders and religious men who infiltrated the country through Kanem-Borno from where it spread to Hausaland and later to the coast land in the south.

The Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio of 1804 consolidated Islam in Northern Nigeria, especially in cities such as Sokoto, Zaria, Kano, Kaduna, Ilorin and so on. These cities became emirates in the established Sokoto caliphate.

Islam arrived in Ibadan - southern Nigeria in about 1830 through commercial activities between Hausa and Yoruba traders and Muslim religious men. (It should be noted that Ibadan is in the South-West of Nigeria and the south westerners are known as Yorubas). Gradually Islam was adopted firstly by the Yoruba traders who often had regular contacts with Hausa Muslim traders, and later by few natives in Ibadan and its environs.

Christianity was first introduced to Nigeria in 1551 by the Portuguese traders/missionaries who came through Delta (Warri). Unfortunately, the missionaries made little or no impact. 1842 witnessed the advent of Christianity in Nigeria by the CMS missionaries: notably the Revd & Mrs David Hinderer and several others who came to Nigeria through Badagry, Lagos, Ijebu to Ibadan. The missionaries were warmly received by both the Traditionalists and Muslim members in the community.

At the initial stage of Islam and Christianity in Ibadan there was no cause for tension or religious intolerance. With the establishment of missionary schools and western education, tension began to mount from the Muslim community as their children in missionary schools were voluntarily opting for Christianity. One of the main reasons

given for the adoption of Christianity by Muslim pupils in the missionary schools is the advantage of job opportunity which Christians had after leaving schools, over the Muslims in the missionary schools and those in Arabic/Quranic schools. This apparently led to the establishment of Islamic schools for Muslim children by the Muslim community whereby they encouraged the teaching of secular subjects such as English, Arithmetic and sciences alongside Arabic and Qur'an.

With the inauguration of Ibadan Anglican Diocese in 1952, the need for Evangelism, Religious Understanding and Tolerance was greatly felt. The Diocese launched a powerful evangelism which resulted in increase of membership and rapid growth. Consequently more Churches and schools were built in cities and villages.

With the awareness of the growth of Islam and the fact that the adherents of both Faiths have much in common, the Diocese set up a Board for Christian Muslim Relations in 1958. The aim of the Board is to promote peaceful co-existence, tolerance and religious understanding between Christians and Muslims. For effective implementation of this objective, the Board set up two sub-committees for women and youngsters. The Board and the sub-committees regularly organise programmes that would strengthen harmonious coexistence as well as promote religious understanding between the two communities. The Board mostly organises conferences, seminars and workshops to discuss topics that are related to the aim of the Board. Some such topics are:-

- Interfaith marriage: Expectations of spouse.
- Neighbourhood: The role/duties of Christians to their neighbours
- Jesus in the Qur'an
- Prophet Muhammad and Islam
- Christianity and Islam: common ground
- The importance of the Bible and the Qur'an to mankind
- Need for understanding and co-operation between Christians and Muslims in nation-building

These programmes have been helpful in fostering peaceful co-existence through sharing and learning together. It has also been tremendous in repairing broken homes which had been rent asunder by religious differences.

Other than these programmes, the Diocese also trains Christian Islamists locally and overseas who organise dialogue with intellectuals of both faiths. Most of the topics discussed at intellectual level include: The Sonship of Christ; Trinity; Death and Resurrection of Christ; the unity of God (Tawhid); Ramadan and Lenten seasons; the importance of Hajj to Muslims and Pilgrimage to Jerusalem/Israel to Christians; the significance of Zakat, Ti'he and freewill offerings to both Christians and Muslims.

The inauguration of the Board for Christian-Muslim Relations in Ibadan Diocese by Bishop G.I.O. Olajide has since been helpful in stemming the tide of religious intolerance and fanaticism in Southern Nigeria. It needs to be pointed out that the much-publicised religious violence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria has mainly been in the North. The intolerance and violence of 1986, 1987 and 1991 resulted in the deaths of hundreds of innocent people and the destruction of public and private property. In major cities such as Kaduna, Kano, Zaria and Kafanchan, Churches, Mosques, vehicles and private homes were smashed and set on fire. People were molested in towns and villages.

In order to prevent the re-occurrence of such massacre, intimidation and harassment in Northern Nigeria, some of the northern Diocesan Bishops have set up their own Board for Christian-Muslim Relations. With the recent subtle penetration of Islam to Christian strongholds in Eastern Nigeria and the midwestern States of Edo and Delta, local Bishops have also organised a Forum for Christian-Muslim Relations. Please pray that the activities of these various Boards across Nigeria will ameliorate unhealthy relationships and prove helpful in building a nation which respects the rights of individuals and values the lives and dignity of all its citizens.

*Revd Lawrence Lawal,  
Area Adviser PROCMURA Nigeria South West*

## A LETTER FROM JERUSALEM

The role of the three Abrahamic faiths in prompting reconciliation and peace among and between themselves, is of fundamental importance in promoting a wider peace. That role continues to be significant and the need for continuing conversations between the representatives of the three faith communities is both urgent and to be encouraged. It is therefore important that attention and energy not be diverted from this primary task, although the headlines in recent weeks have focussed on other matters.

The signing of a Fundamental Agreement by the State of Israel and the Vatican State on December 30th grabbed much media attention both here and abroad. That the Holy See wishes to recognise the modern State of Israel and move towards an exchange of diplomatic representatives is largely a political and internal matter. Our concern is that the\* State of Israel should not speak with the Roman Catholic Church as if it were the voice of the Christian community here. The Agreement speaks of preserving the rights and privileges of other Christian Churches in the Holy Land, but there are real anxieties about the future of the status quo which, since the time of the Ottoman Empire, has regulated Church/State relations in this land. Whilst the Agreement has been hailed as a new phase in the history of Jewish/Christian relationships and as giving fresh impetus to the ending of anti-semitism, the broader ecumenical dimension should not be lost sight of and not least as that relates to the local and indigenous Churches. The voice of local Arab Christians needs also to be listened to and heard, for the indigenous Churches will have an important role to play in establishing the longed-for peace and stability in this land, as will their Muslim brothers and sisters.

Likewise, the recent international conference on Religious Leadership in Modern Societies, convened as an essentially Christian/Jewish dialogue, seemed to ignore both the local and tripartite dimensions. Whilst Jerusalem and the Conference were hosts to an eminent collection of scholars and visitors, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Ratzinger, it seemed yet another missed opportunity to bring together the leaders of the local and indigenous faith communities to make their own distinctive and particular contributions to an issue so significant for the future of religion and faith in an increasingly secular world. Of course, some would not come even if invited to such a gathering. My concern, however, is always to facilitate an atmosphere of trust and confidence in which the old suspicions and prejudices may be set aside, and that new understanding and mutual respect be established. In all this, I would suggest, we ignore the Muslim dimension at an unknown cost to a continuing Christian presence and the peace and stability of this region. I do not believe that we can afford to pay such a high price.

Yet, we are not discouraged. The regular gathering of Jewish, Christian and Islamic scholars, which I mentioned in my last letter, continues to provide a forum for ongoing discussion and mutual understanding of each other's religious and cultural standpoints.

That Christians may have something important to say to the world of Islam was underlined for me by a personal invitation from the King of Morocco to attend and address a meeting of the Islamic Council in Casablanca last October. For my wife Najat and myself it was an enormous privilege to be so invited and enjoy the generous hospitality of our host. More especially, it was both humbling and encouraging that such a body should want to hear and be ready to listen to a Christian voice. I have been equally encouraged in recent weeks by the gracious invitation of King Hussein of Jordan to be a member of his Royal Commission on Jerusalem - yet another opportunity for the minority Christian voice to be heard by and among the Muslim majority. A further opportunity has come by way of an invitation to make a private visit to the Sudan: a land torn apart by bloody conflict and great human suffering. My visit comes in the wake of that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was able to share with me some of his own impressions of the difficult and complex situation which is the cause of much human misery in a land where the Christian community is both courageously witnessing to the faith and seeking to sustain its presence in the midst of a Muslim majority. Continue to pray for us as we keep you in our prayerful remembrance.

+ *Samir Kafity*

## **A PASTORAL LETTER...**

### **Murder of one Manzoor Masih Allegedly Accused Under Blasphemy Law**

By now you must have heard about the unfortunate murder of one Manzoor Masih who was allegedly accused under the Blasphemy Law along with Mr Rehmat Masih and Salamat Masih, a boy of about 13 years of age.

The murder took place on the 5th April 1994, about mid-day outside the Punjab High Courts near the Attorney-General's Office where the accused along with one Joseph John, some relative of theirs were waiting at the wagon stop to go back home. While they were standing some assailants came on the motor-bike and shot all four of them. With the result Mr Manzoor Masih, a young man of about 37 years and having ten children, died on the spot and the other three got serious bullet injuries. Now after about 13 days the injured seem to be out of danger.

Later Mr Manzoor Masih's funeral took place on the 7th April 1994. The funeral service was jointly conducted by the Roman Catholic and the Church of Pakistan Bishops. The funeral procession was led by five Bishops together with other clergy and Church leaders of all denominations. There were almost 4-5 thousand people in this procession. The funeral procession was generally peaceful even though the emotions of the people were highly charged. On the way to the Jail Road cemetery a memorandum was also presented to the representative of the Governor of Punjab by the Bishops.

The same evening a joint press conference was addressed by the Bishops under the chairmanship of the Rt Revd Dr Alexander John Malik, Bishop of Lahore.

On Friday the 8th April a delegation met with the Governor of the Punjab under the leadership of Federal Minister Mr Julius Salik. The delegation was comprised of the Rt Revd Dr Alexander John Malik, Bishop of Lahore, the Rt Revd Samuel Parvez, Bishop of Sialkot and Moderator Church of Pakistan, the Rt Revd Samuel Robert Azariah, Bishop of Raiwind, Mr S K Gill, Executive Secretary NCCP, Fr Nadeem of Roman Catholic Church, Mr Samuel Paul and others. The Governor promised to arrest the culprits within a fortnight.

Since almost 12 days have passed and the murderer of Manzoor Masih has not been arrested, a delegation met the Chief Minister of the Punjab last night i.e. 17th April. The delegation consisted of the Rt Revd Dr Alexander John Malik, Bishop of Lahore, the Rt Revd Armando Trendade, Roman Catholic Bishop of Lahore, the Rt Revd John Joseph, Roman Catholic Bishop of Faisalabad, the Rt Revd Tony Lobbo, Roman Catholic Bishop of Rawalpindi/Islamabad, the Rt Revd John Samuel Azariah, Bishop of Raiwind along with Mr Johnson Michael, an advisor to the Chief Minister. The Bishops apprised the Chief Minister about the highly charged emotions of the Christian community over the killing of Manzoor Masih. This is the third victim where fanatics have taken the law in their hands under the pretext of Blasphemy Law. The other two are Nemat Ahmer, a teacher who was killed in his office and one Tahir Iqbal who died under mysterious circumstances in jail charged under the Blasphemy Law. The Chief Minister assured the Bishops that the murderers will be caught very soon, a handsome compensation will be given to the family of the late Manzoor Masih, proper medical facilities will be given to the injured and the law of Blasphemy will be reviewed in such a way that the false and fabricated cases may not be registered.

In the meantime different organisations including the Human Rights commission of Pakistan and other social workers are agitating for the arrest of the murderers of Manzoor Masih. There have been protest processions in Sheikhpura, Faisalabad, Gujrat, Sahiwal, Karachi, Hyderabad and Lahore etc. Another protest procession is planned for 21st April.

Friends, I am giving the details so that you can picture the trauma through which the Christian community is passing and as Bishop of Lahore of the Church of Pakistan where this sad incident has taken place I solicit your ardent prayers for the Christian community and its leadership in Pakistan.

*The Rt Revd Dr Alexander John Malik Bishop of Lahore*