



## **BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH**

Office of the Metropolitan, Synod Secretariat, Thiruvalla, Kerala, India.

### **SHEPHERD'S LETTER**

**September 2018**

Barekmor!

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.✠

To all my brothers and sisters scattered all across our parishes, who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Just like St Paul says, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all you, because your faith is being proclaimed all over the world" (adapted from Romans 1:7–8).

Most of you must be aware of the natural disaster which hit the state of Kerala. Thank you for supporting our parishes here, especially with your prayers, and in the days ahead, as lives are being rebuilt, please do remember our believers and parishes in your prayers.

It is once again my privilege to write to you, as your spiritual father, about what God has placed in my heart. In this letter, I would like to share with you about what it means to be an 'authentic church'.

Every nation in the world has a national flag and an anthem. Citizens of that country will know that it is distinct and different from any other country's flag or anthem. Furthermore, even after many years go by, you cannot change the colours or shape of the flag, or add a comma or a dot to the national anthem. So it is with God's Holy Church. It is two thousand years old, and with a background of four thousand years of God preparing the church to be revealed in the Old Testament, there are certain distinctives and indispensable signs of what a church should be like.

If someone asks you, as a member of the Believers Eastern Church, how old our church is, the only true answer you can give is, "Our church is two thousand years

old!” Why? It is because the faith, traditions and worship of our church are all the continuation of that which was handed down to us from the apostles and fathers of faith. Unfortunately, there is a tendency today (primarily due to the influence of television preachers and independent churches) for many to think that the church is only 100 or 200 years old. But the truth is, we are called to be part of the ‘one holy apostolic catholic church’ (taken from the Nicene Creed) that is two thousand years old.

Like I had mentioned before, just because people gather, sing and preach from a religious book, that never automatically means it is an authentic church. There are certain distinctives and indispensable signs, both visible and invisible, which should be there to indicate an authentic church. Now you might ask, “what are they?”. Based on the two thousand years of history of God’s Holy Church, here are some of them.

- The adoration of the Trinity
- The teaching and reading from God’s Word, the Bible.
- Corporate prayers of people
- Confession and absolution of sins
- Public proclamation of the Nicene Creed—the condensed Bible in one page
- Saying the Lord’s Prayer, etc.

All these distinctives and whatever else happens during a church service can be described in one word—worship (the pure orthodox faith).

Please remember that when we gather together to worship:

- God is the audience; not the preacher or music group. (This is the reason why our podium is not at the center.)
- We gather to *give* worship. Satan’s goal is to distort and dilute real worship by making it something *we* do for *our* feelings or *our* benefit, forgetting the *One* we came to worship. False worship is as good as no worship.

- We have no mediators between the people of God and God himself. (This is the reason why our priests lead the people in worship while facing the altar or thronos.)
- We engage our five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and taste) in worship.
- We don't start worship when we come to church. Worship is going on for eternity past, and we are joining in worship along with the saints in heaven and all the angels, archangels, etc. (Isaiah Chapter 6 and Revelation Chapters 4 and 5.).

Do not be deceived! There are literally tens of thousands of gatherings led by charismatic men who attract people by their eloquent preaching, miracles and promising prosperity to followers. Many who teach false doctrines will try and discredit all what we do in our church during our worship service. But please understand, literally everything we do as part of worship in Believers Eastern Church, whether it be the gathering of people, the confession of sins, the censuring, proclaiming the Nicene Creed, etc., are based on teachings of the Bible and traditions handed down to us by the fathers of faith, starting from the first century apostolic times.

What this means is that one of the most sacred things we can do while living on earth is to worship God. Therefore, when you come to your parish on the Lord's Day, let us show our reverence for God's presence by pausing for a moment before we enter in, bowing our heads and drawing the sign of the cross on ourselves. When we do that, we are saying to ourselves, "I'm here to meet my God and not to get something from Him."

Dear brothers and sisters, as you worship God in your parish, remember you are a part of 15,000 parishes saying the same prayers, proclaiming the same Creed and reading the same portions of scriptures, thus visibly making us part of one church—Believers Eastern Church. Remain loyal to your church, be faithful to attend and be part of the activities of your parish, never miss the Holy Communion, give your resources, tithes and offerings to help the church grow and continue to help spread Gods' love.

May God's abundant mercies be upon you all.

✠Dr K.P. Yohannan Metropolitan