CHAPTER - VIII

Religious Service
RELIGIOUS SERVICE

In the field of religious service, the Brothers contribution is quite impressive and substantial. The present world does have enough and more people who can divide this world on many accounts. The consecrated people are invited to become brothers to all at all times. Thus they initiated a new model of relationship, a new way of relating to one another. Hence any distinction based on birth, caste, colour, language or gender has to disappear before God. It is called Christian brotherhood.

It is believed that every missionary is sent by Lord Jesus Christ “to annexure the Gospel to make disciples and to be His Witness everywhere”*. It inspires the priests to take service as the main theme of their ministry. The priests task of establishing the God’s Kingdom in the earth through servant leadership is a tough collaboration job. The priest leads the people, shows the way, guides and bears witness with his own life. Each one is given a servant role in the realization of God’s Ministry. It is in this service, some as priests, others as teachers, leaders or in any other role, continue steadfastly until the man becomes the perfect human person¹. All these elements contribute to the great variety of types of sanctity found in the Church and constituting so many spiritualities. Spirituality is the particular way of conceiving and of realizing the ideal of the Christian life².

Following the footsteps of Lord Jesus Christ, Father Caussanel spared no pain to preach the word of God in Tuticorin, Palayamkottai and the various substations till his death³. He reached out to all in every nook and corner of the parishes and

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* Buddhism was the first missionary religion of the world. Lord Buddha told his disciples “Go Ye bikshus you do and teach, I have taught you”. Buddhas disciples went to various places and spread Buddhism. Asoka the Great established a department of the dharma mahammatras (missionaries of dharma) to spread the tenets of Buddhism.

² Gabriel M. Braso, Liturgy and Spirituality, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota (USA), 1960, p.3.
substations to nourish his flock with spiritual food. He wished that this vital work of missionary activity should be continued in perpetuity. Hence Fr. Caussanel bequeathed this mission to the Congregation of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart he had founded. True to their call, the Brothers have been concentrating on this vital work zealously and indefatigably. Their evangelisation apostolate has three specific areas viz., evangelisation, Pastoral and Animation and Re-evangelisation. The Congregation was founded with the primary object of evangelization and the Brothers have committed themselves to ample this cause. The formation of the new diocese of Palayamkottai is a testimony to the missionary endeavours of the Brothers over the years. Till 1936 the only apostolate of the Brothers was preaching the good news among non-believers and tribals.

Besides, they were assisting the priests at various levels. They were visiting villages and bringing many to Catholic faith. They never failed in teaching the truths of Catholic Christian religion in giving practice in religious observances and in encouraging and strengthening the faithful.

A remarkable achievement of the early Brothers was the conversion of a large number of tribals called Kanis of Kattalaimalai in the Western Ghats to whom Fr. Caussanel was drawn and to whom civilization had not penetrated. A school was started for their children. They were taught to pray. Social contact was established between them and the people of the plains. This was in the early part of the present Century. During the middle part of the Century our Brothers reached out to the hill tribe called Muthuvars in another part of the Western Ghats called Kanthalore.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p.10.
Bringing several of them to the Catholic Christian faith, they have established a High School for their children. In the latter part of the Century, our Brothers reached out to still another hill tribe in Jawathu Hills. Working in their midst at Athipet for the past two decades, they have established a Higher Secondary School in the locality for their children and formed agricultural communes to raise their living standards.

Later evangelization has assumed a new dimension. Formation of lay collaborators, Formation of Gospel villages, Promoting Ecumenical and tuter faith dialogue, promotion of inculturation and Animating diocesan evangelization commission are the new techniques which adopted by the Brothers. Through mass media and through literature and other indigenous methods, they are effectively taking the word of God to the people. Brothers’ evangelization apostolate aims not only at the spiritual growth and nurture of the people but also at improving the socio-economic and political condition of the people as well. The Congregations’ high ideals are simplicity, humility, prayer and love of work. Standing on these ideals, the Brothers are expected to take up the service of evangelization. From its inception, they are engaged in evangelical and catechetical works. They have reclaimed many villages and spread their Gospel among the hilly tribes. Hence they call the Congregation as the ‘Tarnished India’s Solitary Boast’.

The Catechist Brothers visit select villages periodically and look to the need of every one. Individual attention has been given to these villages in converting, which is found to be rewarding. In 1978, an evangelization centre was started at Paramakudi.
and in 1979 at Mayiladuthurai of Tanjore District. In 1982 another one evangelization centre was started at Devikulam near Munar and in 1995 at Illichira of Kerala State\(^\text{16}\).

Evangelization is not easy because the Brothers have to overcome many hurdles and meet many challenges. Although they do engage themselves in various other activities, evangelization receives most of their attention. The spiritual rededication of these Brothers in evangelized work left unfinished by their fore runners. Earlier Brothers were examples of dedication and devotion to their missionary work\(^\text{17}\).

They are doing their services in many villages around Tirunelveli such as Chettikulam, Pottal, Kuppakurichi, Vellaikovil, Chatiram, Thatchanallur, Nattarkulam, Kurichi, Kulavanigarpuram, etc\(^\text{18}\). Other places which receive their attention are Sidambarapuram, Karuthapillaiyur, Ambalavanapuram, Theravalli, Kuravar Manakkadu, Thonithurai etc\(^\text{19}\).

In the task, the Brothers continue to have close liaison with the priests of the parishes. They go to many houses and try to solve family problems which affect certain families. They teach Catechism to the poor villages and explain about the importance of family prayer\(^\text{20}\). According to Rev. Patrick Peyton, “the family that prays together stays together\(^\text{21}\)”. They thus help bring about reunions and good understanding among the members of families.

\(^{18}\) P. Valanarasu (ed.), Centenary Celebration Souvenir of St. Xavier’s Cathedral, p.49.
\(^{19}\) P. Valanarasu (ed.), Priesthood Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Rev. Bishop Irudayaraj (Tl.), Palayamkottai, 1984, p. 64.
\(^{20}\) Viladugal, p. 231.
At present the Brothers adopt modern ways and means of spreading the faith. They spread Gospel of God by the way of showing film shows. Evangelization centres are started in Tamil nadu and Kerala. To do evangelization, they are preparing a band of Catechists in Tindivanam.

“Ithaya Jyothi” in the name of a centre where they are trained and dedicated to the task ahead of them. It is a prayer cum research centre. The Brothers go there in group, spend a few days in prayer, study the ideals of spirituality and return to their field of evangelization after having been trained spiritually, physically and socially. In their apostolate work they make use of Indian Literature, specially Tamil which is rich in spiritual materials.

Besides groups of laymen are also trained by the Brothers to take up their role in the church. It has gone to the extent of a movement. It is spreading the faith of God. The centre is found to perform its task well. In addition, there is a Bible group. This group sacrifices its time, energy and money in spreading the good news. They meet on a stipulated day in every week and discuss matters relating to their task. The centre also creates social awareness among the people through street plays, retreats, rites and rituals of Liturgy and feasts and above all through their direct involvement in their problems. It has a major share in spreading the Catholic culture of European countries in Tamil Nadu especially in Tirunelveli District.

The Brothers engage themselves in various religious movements. A movement called Friends of the Sacred Heart was started on June 6, 1976 by Bro. R. Amaladoss

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23 A Souvenir to Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Rome,  p.9.
24 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
26 Ibid.
with the blessings of the then Bishop Irudayaraj. It developed with the support of the then Superior General Bro. T. Gabriel\textsuperscript{28}. It has been launched and animated by the Brothers which has become a powerful instrument for propagating Sacred Heart devotion and for revitalizing Christian families to be witnesses in the world of today\textsuperscript{29}. It’s inspiration is “I call you friends”. The motto of this movement is “Love and Service”\textsuperscript{30}.

In the initial stage there were 17 members, but at present its strength has increased to 2500. In this moment there are twenty five basic cells and three larger cells. It is functioning in six dioceses. The Chief residence of the FSH Movement is at the Congregation of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, Palayamkottai\textsuperscript{31}. It consists of large number of laymen. It feels the love of Christ and share it with others through service. It has become a family movement of love and friendship. It helps to unite spiritually and otherwise. Twenty is declared as the eligible age to become a member of this movement. Those who are below twenty can have the chance of framing themselves into a youth wing of this movement\textsuperscript{32}. There are three directions in the movement a Director, Assistant Director and Secretary. More than 40 brothers are serving as animators of FSH Movement\textsuperscript{33}. The FSH movement releases a few publications. They are FSH Prayer Method editions I & II, Thavalum Kulanthai, FSH Guide Book, Ithya Malar, Ratha Suvadugal and Iyangidum Iyakkam. By the publication of these books, the Brothers spread the devotion of the Sacred Heart\textsuperscript{34}.

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\textsuperscript{28} Centenary Jubilee Souvenir 1903-2003, Op. Cit., p.61. \\
\textsuperscript{29} Brothers of the Sacred Heart (India), Op. Cit., p.10. \\
\textsuperscript{30} Iyangidum Iyakkam, (Tl.), Brothers of Sacred Heart, Palayamkottai, 1989, p.1. \\
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp.3-5. \\
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., pp. 7-9. \\
\textsuperscript{34} Iyangidum Iyakkam, p.7.
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There are four major evangelization centres functioning at present. They are Ave Maria Mission Centre of Devikulam, Arputha Yorthan Centre of Caussanelpuram, Arutchandru Nilayam of Paramakudi and Divine Mercy Centre of Mailaduthurai\textsuperscript{35}.

Their programme aims at taking the Good news first to the doorstep of houses in and around the centre with a view to help the members of the family both young and old. To experience the word of God in their daily life, to overcome the evils of society in which they live by the power of the word of God and to build up basic Christian communities in which there may be a spirit of unity, oneness and fellowship among the members are their other objectives\textsuperscript{36}.

The General objectives of the evangelization centres are i) to come together to experience fraternity and brotherhood and sisterhood in a realization of the people of God, ii) to actualize that we are the Brothers and sisters of God iii) to rediscover our role as authentic Christians iv) to partake in the sufferings and joys of the poor families and make them economically, culturally and politically liberated v) to transcend of casteism and to prepare the mind of the people for inter caste marriage vi) to have intra-faith dialogue with other religious people periodically vii) to respect and learn the richness and heritage of other religions, viii) to banish illiteracy, fight for justice and help the landless of the Gospel village ix) to make the villagers to come together to solve problems that arise in the village and to work for the total development of the village x) to form the Christians as basic Christian Communities, xi) to form the Village people as basic human communities\textsuperscript{37}.

\textsuperscript{35} All Commissions Six Years Report 2006-2011, pp. 171-178.
\textsuperscript{36} A Report on the Role of Brothers in Evangelization -2000, Evangelization a Vision and Mission, Brothers of the Sacred Heart, Paramakudi, 2000, pp.4-5.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., pp. 16-17.
The evangelizing groups adopt small villages as “Gospel Villages” for their intensive field work. Besides preaching the Good news, they strive to make them model villages. They aim at a multifaceted growth of the Villages they have adopted. Visiting the Gospel villages, as often as possible, the evangelizers mend the broken families restore the fallen and bring about peace and harmony among different communities. The Gospel villages are helped by the evangelizers to be self-sufficient and self-supporting. People are helped to start small scale industries and cottage industries. They are taught cleanliness and hygiene. They are encouraged to contribute to small savings schemes. Libraries are opened for them. Local Panchayats are formed for setting disputes.

In addition to preaching the Gospel, the Evangelizers do social service in these villages with a view to improve the living conditions of the people. A small village inhabited by poor people and which is easily accessible is selected by the evangelizers of the region. Plans are then formulated for its development without expecting any monetary assistance. The adopted village is visited frequently and the people are taken into confidence. They are helped to live on useful life. People are redeemed from evils such as superstition, addiction to alcohol, immorality and the like. Christian values are taught and the people are encouraged to pray and read the Holy Bible.

The evangelizers have started a movement called “Jesus Youth” in which more than 100 Young men and women have enrolled themselves. Another one programme called “Infants of Infant Jesus”. This programme of the Brothers brings children to

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38 Ibid., p.17.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
41 Ibid., p.10.
Jesus. They visit the homes where there are little children, talk to them, pray for them and ask them to pattern their lives on the life of the Infant Jesus.\footnote{Ibid., p. 13.}

Audio visual equipments are used as a media to strengthen the evangelization ministry. To find out the Gospel values scattered among the culture, literature, folklore and myths of the people periodically new audio and video cassettes are produced\footnote{Ibid., pp. 18-19.}. For instance on May 14, 1995, Sacred Heart devotional songs cassette was issued and on November 15, 1995 “Ithaya Punal” cassette was issued\footnote{Alasanai Peravai, Op.Cit., pp. 122-123.}.

Ave Maria Mission Centre of Devikulam is much benefited the Tea Estate Coolie workers. The surrounding villages which are benefited as Lackadu, Manilai Middle, Factory Division and Ellaipatti. The Friends of the Sacred Heart Youth Movement conducted regular retreats Fasting Prayers and Night Prayers\footnote{All Commissions Six Years Report 2006-2011, Op. Cit., p. 171.}. The Brothers visit the estates of Deviculam region called Pooparai, Pannaiyar, Chinna Kanal, Periya Kanal, Kulamangai Estate, Kundumalai, Vaduvarai, Silent Valley and Rajamalai to conduct all kinds of prayers\footnote{“Nam Seythi” Journal (Tl.), Brothers of the Sacred Heart, September 1999, pp.7-8.}.

Bro. M. Arockiaraj is specialized in Biblical Theology. He is a Charismatic preacher and a full timer of the Bible Commission in the Diocese. He is the editor of monthly Journal “The Evangeliser”\footnote{A Report on the Role of Own Brothers in Evangelization 2000, Op. Cit., p.18.}. He is the Director of “Arputha Yorthan” Evangelization centre. Monthly Retreats and Dark Moon Night Prayers are conducted every month at *Sacred Heart Church at Generalate in Palayamkottai and elsewhere. From December 2009 onwards, the Dark Moon Full Night Prayer is conducted and especially it is familiar for Inner wounded heart Healings. In this team, nearly 35

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\item \footnote{* See Plate No. 14.}
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volunteers are doing their service in State level. The average total beneficiaries are above 7000 from the surrounding places of Tuticorin, Madurai, Kottar, Dindigul and Palayamkottai. From December 2011 onwards, the new circulation of magazine are getting launched in the name of “Yorthan Malar”. In the year 2012, the Brothers focus the evangelized events into media of Television with the new WEB TV\textsuperscript{48}. From the Arutchandra Nilayam, Evangelization Centre of Paramakudi, the Brothers’ Ministry has created an awakening both among Christians and non-Christians of Ramnad and Sivagangai Districts\textsuperscript{49}.

The Brothers of the Sacred Heart performed Evangelical service in abroad also. The Brothers went to Liberia in Africa and involved them in social and Educational Service. The people of Liberia are reeling under distress and unrest for the long civil war which has caused much damage to peaceful living in a non-violent atmosphere. There is fear and dismay in the eyes of the general public before 2007. Now the situation is some what calm and quiet at present. The Brothers do their best for the good of the society especially for the children\textsuperscript{50}. On September 12 to October 4 of 2007, the Brothers of “Arputha Yorthan” Evangelical Centre had gone to Sri Lanka and performed many Evangelical services. They preached doctrines to Indian traditional poor Tamilians of Tea Estates and many affected people of Sri Lanka and tried to liberate them from distress and frustration\textsuperscript{51}. Thus by the evangelization work the Brothers not only shaping the society but also their service is expanding year after year in a remarkable way and more and more people are reached and gathered into the fold\textsuperscript{52}.

\textsuperscript{50} “Institute of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart”, Journal (English), Brothers of the Sacred Heart, Palayamkottai, February 2008, p.4.
\textsuperscript{51} “Athirvalai” Journal(Tl.), November 2007, pp. 42-44.
Inter-Religious Worship Movement:

The Brothers interested in inter-religious worship. To avoid ups and downs of the society, they involved in this worship. The inter-religious worship Centre of the Brothers situated at Mayiladuthurai of Tanjore District. In this “Pal Samya Mantram” many Brothers and lay people are members. It meets four times in a year\(^\text{53}\). Only after got training in Theology, Catechism, Psychology and Bible verses the Brothers joined in this movement. They got the training of Theology at Tiruchi or Bangalore, Catechism at Tindivanam, Psychology at Kerala, Pune or Vellore and Bible training at Poonamalle in Chennai\(^\text{54}\).

The Brothers conducted 3 days seminars or retreats and give training to the participators. By conducting Inter-Religious camps in Schools, the Students can cooperate with each other and understand the skill of unity. To boost the glory of this movement, a cassette and journal of “Malarum Uravugal” was issued in the year 1997\(^\text{55}\). Many young men and women are joined in this movement and very often the Brothers conducted workshops and rallies regarding the Inter-Religious unity to create awareness in the society. This kind of worship is frequently conducted at Vickramasingapuram, Irudayakulam, Ramanathapuram and Palayamkottai\(^\text{56}\).

On the March 14, 1999 a “Pal Samaya Manram” meeting was conducted at Christhu Raja school campus at Palayamkottai. More than 500 members were participated in that meeting. Pal Samaya Mantram of Vadamalai Samudhram and Sathyai Sai Samithi took an important part in that meeting. Jalal Mustafa an editor of an Islamic Journal and many of the Sarva Samaya members gave speeches about Sarva

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 111.
\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 109.
\(^{56}\) Ibid.
Samaya Manram. Finally, the District Collector of Tirunelveli K. Dhanavel, gave a special speech about human harmony\textsuperscript{57}.

Likewise, on September 13, 1999, Sarva Samaya Manram seminar had been took place in Sacred Heart High School at Singampatti. The Singampatti former Zameen Murugadoss, Theerthapathi Raja presided over the meeting. Bro. R. Amaladhas and Bro. K.P. Arul Joseph welcomed the participants. Special speeches were delivered by Mr. Maria Michael who was an Engineer, Mr. Soundararajan a Tamil pandit and Gilal Mustafa, the editor of “Islamiya Sahotharthuvam”. Bro. M.D. Sebestiyan gave some highlights on International Inter Religious Conference held at Canada\textsuperscript{58}.

On September 24, 2003, a Pal Samaya Manram Meeting was hold on Mayilduthurai under the leadership of Dr. Sivashankaran. Alhaj Seyyad, Mr. Bernard and Mr. Gnanasekaran were the Chief Guests of that meeting. Prayer song was sung by Bro. Manuel Raj and Bro. Davamani Xavier delivered the welcome speech. A book in Tamil ‘Uravil Valarvom’ was issued in that meeting. Christians, Hindus and Muslims gave their nice opinions\textsuperscript{59}.

Pal Samaya Students Movement was firstly started at Mayiladuthurai. Two teachers were appointed as guides and more than 50 students were admitted. It was decided that in every Monday the verses of Bible, Quaran and Bhagavat Geetha had read in the School meeting\textsuperscript{60}.

On October 21, 2007, Pal Samaya Manram celebrated Deepavali, Ramzan and Christmas functions at Vickramasingapuram. Bro. S. Jeyaraj presided over the

\textsuperscript{57} “Nam Seythi” Journal (Tl.), April 1999, pp. 17-18.

\textsuperscript{58} “Nam Seythi” Journal (Tl.), October 1999, p.21.

\textsuperscript{59} “Nam Seythi” Journal (Tl.), January 2004, p.10.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p.11.
functions. Fr. Antony Cruz, Pulavar V. Senthil Nayagam and Janab Haji. Mohideen Alim delivered special talks on “Religious leads to Human love”. In that function, the verses from Holy Bible, Quran and Bhavat Geetha were read. Bro. Lawrence, the Headmaster of Sacred Heart High School and Vickramasingapuram Imam Mohamed Hasini delivered special addresses. Mr. S. Sundararajan, the Sub-Inspector of Vickramasingapuram provided dresses to the poor people. Really it was a wonderful function.

On behalf of the Pal Samayana Mantram Students Movement of Christhu Jyothi Higher Secondary School at Caussanelpuram. 40 students had gone to religious harmonized tour under the leadership of Bro. M.D. Sebastian in the month of November 2007. They visited St. Mary’s Church of Malayankulam, Ervadi Darha, Nambi Kovil of Thirukkurungudi, Fatima Church of Valliyoor, Deva Sahayam Pillai Pilgrim centre of Aralvoymozhi, Xavier Cathedral of Kottar, Anjaneyar temple of Susindram, Vivekananda Rock, Gandhi Mandapam, Kamarajar Mandapam etc., This tour really created oneness among the students.

On July 20, 2007, Pal Samaya Manram function was conducted at Vickramasingapuram. Bro. S. Jesuraj presided over the function. The in-charge of the Tirunelveli District Collector Mr. G. Srinivasan was the Chief Guest. Member and leaders from three religions were participated. Prizes were given to the students of Xth and XIIth standard. Uniform dresses were provided to 25 poor students. Finally the function came to an end with cultural activities performed by the students.

Pal Samaya Manram seminar was conducted on January 24, 2009 at Caussanelpuram. More than 120 students of 7 schools from Tirunelveli and Tuticorin

took part in that seminar. Bro. M.D. Sebastian and Bro. Jokkim were the leading persons of that seminar. It was stressed that, radicalism, terrorism and riots should be avoided in the society and the human beings should love each other. It was very useful to the students\textsuperscript{64}.

On 11\textsuperscript{th} September of 2009, the Pal Samaya Manram members met at Jamia Pallivasal (Mosque) at Vickramasingapuram under the leadership of Bro. S. Jesuraj. Imam Seyyad Muhamed Kisni started ‘Iftar’ event. They realized that they were the brothers and delivered special Ramzan addresses. The meeting ended with the final address given by Bro.S. Jesuraj. Really it created fraternity among themselves\textsuperscript{65}.

Forty students and two staff of Pal Samaya Manram of St. Thomas High School of Kurichi near Palayamkottai had gone to St. Michael’s church and Arul Migu Kasi Visvanatha temple of Tenkasi on March 20, 2010. After visiting St. Michael’s church they went to Kasi Visvanathar Temple. They worshipped the Sannathi of Kasi Visvanathar, Arul Migu Chandigeswarar, Bala Murugan and Ulaga Nayaki Amman. Then they visited Jama Althapur Rappaniya Arabic College. The Principal Haji M.H. Samsudhin Ulavi emphasized the importance of five times Prayer custom. Then they went to Courtallam and after that they had gone to Sorimuthu Ayyanar temple of Papanasam. Then they visited Antony’s Church of Kallidaikurichi and they returned to home\textsuperscript{66}.

The 33\textsuperscript{rd} World Congress of International Religious Conference (IARF) was held at Cochin in Kerala State from September 1 to September 7 of 2010. Bro. M.D. Sebastian, Bro. Albert Xavier, Bro. Inigo and Bro. Savarileo took part in that conference. This conference was presided over by Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist

\textsuperscript{64} “Athirvalai” Journal (Tl.) March 2009, p.15.
\textsuperscript{65} “Athirvalai” Journal (Tl.) October 2009, p.20.
\textsuperscript{66} “Athirvalai” Journal (Tl.) April 2010, p.21-23.
leader. Fraternity was emphasized in that conference. Special talks were delivered under the topic of “Beyond conflict to reconciliation – the challenge of 21st Century”. It created oneness among the participants.

The Religious work of the Brothers and their collaborators in the various sub-centres is expanding year after year in a remarkable way and more and more are benefitted. They aim the emergence of a new culture in which humanness will be enjoyed and the hands, minds and hearts of people will be tuned to the liberation ministries so that the men and women of today may become better men and women of tomorrow. The Brothers lead the way for others to learn and the people realize the impact of their religious service.