

Let us bow our heads in Prayer

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight
O Lord, My Rock, and my Redeemer. Amen.

I love the mission statement of the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection because Resurrection is functioning according to that mission statement. It is very close to the idea of Mother Teresa. Once, Saint Teresa of Avila said, “we are the hands and legs of God.”

As we are created in the image of God, we are living members of the body of Christ, are called to show the love of God with others. I believe that if we live according to the commandments of Jesus Christ, people will see God in us, and people will boldly say that God exists. Because we are living members of Christ's Body, our lives should reflect the life of Christ through the showing of the unconditional love of Christ to every human being and creature. This makes others realize the presence of God, and wipes tears and fulfills the basic needs of our neighbors through a Christ-like lifestyle. So, we are called to act to show the existence of God among us. God is present with us in spirit. God is suffering with us when we suffer.

I am so inspired by the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection's work, and I learned that the parishioners are like a family: they help each other, eat together, and share with others. When I saw these people, I was reminded of the qualities of the ancient Christians. I am also inspired by the forum meetings every Sunday after the service. Many churches fail to educate their parishioners. I plan to implement this adult education system when I return home to my community because many Christians do not know the Bible, Christian doctrine, Church rules and regulations, the Book of Common Prayer, and their Church Constitution. The Church's duty is to educate its people to provide proper theological education so that they can take part in God's work.

I want to continue my friendship with the Church of the Resurrection. Now we are connected with each other because of the modern technology. You are always welcome to Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Thank you so much for blessing my community with backpacks and school supplies. It would be an encouragement for students for their education in my community.

I thank God for the opportunity given to me to experience the living church so that I may better understand God's action in the community. I take this opportunity to thank the Rector Rev.

Mother Jo, my Lay Support Team (Dr. Bea Taylor, Mr. Ray Isaacs, Mr. Jay Madden, Peggy Tiedemann, and Lea Fowlie, Convener) Ms. Kathy, Ms. Betsy Fega, Ms. Kathleen Turner and the community of the Church of the Resurrection for their love and kindness and concern for my growth during my time at VTS.

In the first reading, we read that Peter and the believers saw the Holy Spirit poured out on the gentiles. We are all children of God. God loves everyone.

Professor Robert Heaney says in the book of *God's Church for God's World* that the Mission of God is always inter-cultural, and therefore, being a disciple of Jesus Christ means learning across inter-cultural similarities and differences.

We as Christians affirm that God created all men and women in God's image, and that God wishes all to enjoy that fullness of life in God's presence which we know as salvation.

Scripture describes the purpose of God's action in human history. No one culture, people or language is sufficient to express the richness of God's grace.

God's plan of redemption has been at work before the church was established on earth. We affirm that Christianity needs to be lived and presented as 'a way of life,' rather than a 'static set of beliefs'.

Claiming Jesus as the Way, therefore, requires us to respect the dignity of every human being to understand the richness of God and how our God acts in other cultures. The love of God that Jesus expressed in presence, compassion, healing, and justice through which we are called to live in mission.

In the 19th Century, because of the American Presbyterian and Congregationalist Missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission, the river of God's love flowed into Jaffna, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) from Massachusetts in America. These American missionaries propagated the Christian faith within our Tamil community. They learned to speak and write our language. They ate our food and wore our traditional dress. They taught and shared the Gospel of Christ Jesus as beloved members of our community. They lived, died, and were buried in our land. There is often criticism made against missionaries globally, but these Americans were missionaries who sacrificed their entire life for others.

I come from a multi-religious context, and Christianity is a minority religion in my country, Sri Lanka. My relatives, neighbors, and friends are mostly from other faiths. They are Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists. The majority religion in this world is Christianity but sixty-

eight percent of the world's population is non-Christian. However, I do not think our Loving God will condemn all the non-Christians to hell. I hope and pray that as Christians, we are called to live according to the word of God, so that this world will come to know Jesus through our exemplary lives, and that we can win the hearts of people of other faiths and help them to know Jesus. For me, we as Christians cannot limit God's action only to Christians. God of all humanity and for all creation. God is present everywhere. God works through people of other faiths as well. I have seen the richness of God with my own eyes in other cultures. I have seen the qualities of Jesus Christ in other faith communities.

Aquinas says that God is omnipotent. God is Omnipotent meaning God is all-powerful. God is Omniscient meaning God is all-knowing. God is Omnipresent meaning God is all-present. Even in those places that believe themselves to be completely secular, like the universities in Europe and America, God is still present there even if hidden. Therefore, Omnipresent God is everywhere and works despite cultures, religions, color, and ethnicity. Lord Jesus came to this world to save all of us. Saint Paul rightly says that "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3: 28)."

Our God and Savior is Jesus Christ. Scripture is the primary source through which we know about Jesus Christ. The word of God is Jesus, the word revealed in Jesus. The word is described in the Holy Bible. This is a Christocentric approach. God is revealed in Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the embodiment of God. Jesus is the revelation of God. Jesus is the one who shows us who God is. Therefore, for Christians, Scripture is the authority. Revelation is Jesus Christ, the ultimate sacrament, and our epistemology. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word found as the primary revelation of all Scripture. Christian Scripture is a sacred book and unique. The primary source for theology is the Bible. Even though it was written 2000 years ago, Scripture still speaks to us and strengthens us when we read and meditate on it in our daily living.

I thank God Almighty for calling me to be a Teacher and School Chaplain at St John's College, Jaffna, in an Anglican School and to serve as a non-stipendiary Priest in the Diocese of Colombo, Church of Ceylon, Sri Lanka, and to participate in God's mission. While I serve as a teacher and a chaplain and a non-stipendiary priest for my students and community, I do not only serve Christians but also Hindu students and the other cultures of Sri Lanka. I am called by God

to serve his people and all creation. God's love for God's people and God's mission of salvation comes from the very heart of God. God has given us an opportunity to live together and love each other across differences, cultures, and religions. I have seen the richness of God in other cultures and religions in many ways and how the God of all acts across differences. Archbishop Desmond Tutu rightly said: "I have gifts that you do not; and you have gifts that I do not. So, we need each other to become fully human and to realize the fullness of our potential. God is smart, making us different so that we will get to know our need for each other."

While here, I have been learning and sharing with the VTS community, itself diverse. I served as the president of the International Student Association and as an assisting priest at the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection. God has given me the opportunity to expand my network all over the world to participate in the mission of God and to understand the richness of God's grace across cultures. Before I came to VTS and at the beginning of my first year, I had a different perspective about culture. Now I have a better understanding that God loves everyone despite any differences: whether you are straight or LGBTQ, White or Black, rich, or poor, disabled or not, Christian or Non-Christian. We are called to build up the body of Christ in holistic and life-giving ways. We are called to love one another and care for one another and point each other to God's love to fulfill the mission of God.

Amen.