

Praise the Lord

God has given us new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Today we stand here with great joy in our hearts to proclaim the glory of God and the blessings he bestowed upon us. So let's begin.

We started our retreat on Sunday, 12th August 2018 with open minds and enjoyed all the talks given. Even the children were extremely excited to be there and participated actively in the children's retreat. Everything was going well. All of us had a good, heartfelt confession on Wednesday, 15th August, and were really content with how the retreat was going. We were waiting for the inner healing session that was to happen the next day, on Thursday.

On Wednesday night, 15th Aug 2018, after celebrating the independence day of India and mother Mary's feast we went to sleep happy and content, looking forward to attend the inner healing session the next day. It rained heavily, continuously that night. We were woken up at 5:00 am the next morning on 16 August because of the heat in the room and that's when we realized that the electricity had gone in the building. When we went out to see what had happened, we saw that knee-level water had accumulated all around our building. The water had entered the electric sub-station and spoiled the machines. The water also managed to get into the generator and break it open because of which all the diesel from it started to flow out and got mixed with the water.

Due to the rising levels of water that was surrounded around us, we were unable to exit the building. The water tanks in the building also ran out by 7:00 am and now people began to panic as nobody knew what exactly was going on. Nobody knew what to do next, or how to help ourselves out of the situation. We were 200 people in that building; from little infants to seventy year old grandparents, everyone in the building started praying together.

All of us prayed from the depths of our heart. Having completed a good confession, and with all those days in retreat, everyone trusted the Lord and his mighty power and gave each other strength and support. It didn't matter if we knew each other or not, we were all one, in our prayer, in front of God. We requested our family to pray for us and Melvin Uncle requested Br. Alfred to devote special prayers for us. Br. Alfred requested everyone in the Sharjah prayer group to also specially pray for us.

The rains kept pouring down. With lightning and thunders, the rainstorms kept getting heavier and stronger and did not stop for even ten minutes. It felt like as if thousands of people were pouring mighty buckets of water, non-stop. The water level was approximately 4 ft and kept increasing with the constant rains. Just like we were stuck in our building, there were people stuck in several more buildings around us, with no food nor drinking water.

When the water level was about 6 ft, we saw few men and priests of the center, coming with bottled water for all of us. Nobody remembered that they were starving since the morning because we were all just happy to see drinking water being available to us. There were few men in our building who were willing to take up risks for everyone. It was as if God appointed them to be our guardian angels in that time of need. They mustered all their courage and decided to go swimming to look around and see if they can find things for us to eat. They found a shop close by, so they broke open the lock and brought ice cream bars from there as lunch for our everyone. Trust me when I say this, I've never eaten a tastier ice cream bar in my whole life. Praise the Lord!

With great struggle and a lot of dedication, the same men were able to arrange some rice and dal for children and women around, when they went on their second swim trip. They stalked the food up in the building for emergency and distributed it to everyone when the water level had increased to 12 ft. Because now, we all knew we were going to be stuck here for a while.

The water by now, had already entered the building, and so everyone decided to move two floors up. Thank God we were in a building that had four floors. All of us moved up two floors immediately. The rains constantly poured down and the water levels continuously rose. The ground floor was full of water, the water had entered the rooms and there was no way anyone could enter the ground floor anymore. All the boundary walls, the road signs, trees, bushes, statues, everything that we admired around the campus when we first got there, was now all submerged in the water. There was no sign of anything around us. All we could only see was dirty, muddy, diesel filled water floating everywhere with high amounts of pressure.

But alongside the sound of the heavy rain you could always hear constant prayer. On every floor, in almost every corridor, people had formed little groups and were all praying with all their might.

Soon, night dawned upon us and because there was no electricity, we were all forced to be in our rooms. We decided to continue praying in our room, in darkness. Around 8:00 pm that night, my sister, Larissa, complained about a severe headache. It was so unbearable that she started crying. We gave her some medicine, asked her to lie down and try to sleep. Suddenly, while we were still deep in prayer, Larissa woke up with a start and told us to open the Bible to Matthew Chapter 5, verse 2 onwards. Quite confused, I asked her if she was okay and she told me her headache was gone and that Jesus was talking to her! She said, she heard Jesus tell her, **“Be patient, my child, I am coming”**. All of us rejoiced and praised God for letting us know that he was in our presence, trying to help us out.

Matthew 5:2-5

²and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

He said:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn,

- for they will be comforted.
- ⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
- ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
- ⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
- ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
- ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
- ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We quickly ran to everyone, and spread the news about the message that Larissa had received. It was like a ray of hope, to everyone there. All of us thanked and praised God together because this was evidence that Jesus was with us and would not let us down.

At night, some of the guys who were helping since morning thought of approaching the MLA from Mangalore to help us with arranging food and water supplies. All of us together started messaging and talking to the authorities to get help to be rescued from this place. We had only few phones, with barely any charge in them and no cellular network around us. There was just one spot in our room that caught some network, enough for a few WhatsApp messages to go through. With whatever we had, we tried our best to gather help, of course with the support of our families and friends here. Praise God. We did all of this in the night, without electricity, in pitch darkness. But God was mighty and supportive in every little step we took.

Larissa also received one more message at night to read Mathew Chapter 9, which speaks about miracles and healing. This was a strong indication from our Lord that he will make a miracle for us to remember and all we had to do was keep faith in him and be patient.

That night all of us, including the children, went to bed without any food. There were many men who had not eaten anything since morning and were surviving just on water. None of us were able to sleep because it continuously rained heavily that night. We were sure the water would reach the second floor, looking at the amount it was raining. But the Miracle of the Lord was such that the water level did not increase drastically, just by a feet or two, even after receiving that much of rain the previous night. Praise the Lord!

That Friday morning, on the 17th of August, we had to face the challenge of arranging water and food for the day as there was no sign of any food being available around us anymore. In the morning, my father Lancy, went to the terrace to collect rain water so we could use it for the toilets, when he suddenly thought of using the tap from the geyser of the top floor in hope of getting some water. Praise the Lord! That was yet another miracle in store for us. Not only did we get enough water from that tap, the whole building was able to collect at least two buckets of water to use. This tap that my father randomly found was actually connected to a tank that was

used for rain water harvesting. Many of us used the same water to drink as there was a shortage of drinking water.

Around 9:30 am we started hearing helicopters hovering around us. All of us ran up to the terrace to grab it's attention in an attempt to seek help. We kept running up and down the floors seeking help for food and water. Unfortunately, the navy forces that came to help saw the whole retreat center as one, and dropped off all the food at the main building alone. Since the water level was too high we were unable to get the food from that building. And so, with all the hope we had, we continued reaching out to the helicopters, waving at them with red shawls, jackets, t-shirts and what not. We were constantly praying, reciting the divine mercy rosary, praising God and singing hymns.

After a while, we noticed that the rain had stopped pouring, the sun had slowly started to shine too. Slowly and steadily, the water levels around us started to reduce. Few men, tried swimming out of the building and getting us food from the other building. Around 11:30 am we were blessed with **1 slice of bread and 1 Parle G biscuit that had the power not only to satisfy our hunger but to make us feel full. Praise God!**

The whole day we ran up to the terrace to get help from the helicopters and ran back down to see the status of the water level. All of us must have gone up and down those floors more than 30 to 40 time but none of us were tired. We were using all our might to try to help ourselves out of the situation. One of the trips up and down, my dad and uncle noticed that there were yummy looking coconuts on the trees around us. With the help of some strong brothers, they got the coconuts off the trees, jumped into the water and collected all the coconuts that had fallen. They broke them open and also distributed them around the building. The coconuts were juicy and the little bites that we got out of it were really tasty.

By the evening, two boats from the Navy forces of India reached the retreat center. They provided us with a few loaves of bread. After distributing it to all the 200 people in the building, everyone received three slices of bread, as dinner for the night. We were extremely happy to be blessed with that. A group of local fishermen also rescued people from outside the campus and brought them to the buildings in the retreat center, to keep them safe. There were several fishermen all around Chalakudy doing the same.

Before going to sleep that night, we checked the water level and although some of it had receded, there was still around 13 ft of water flowing around us. This was around 10:00 pm. The rain poured that whole night, too.

The next morning, on Saturday, 18th of August, we woke up at 5:00 am and went out to see what the state of the water was. To our surprise, there was absolutely no water anywhere around us!!! The rain had stopped pouring by the morning and the water was all just gone! We were shocked to see what we saw as there was no way in the world 12 to 13 ft of water could just go away in a matter of 7 hours. This only had one explanation, for it to be the working of God's glory!

We packed our bags immediately and left the retreat center. The moment we got out to the road, out of nowhere we got two rickshaws. It was like as if an angel sent it just for us. We tried to go to the local train station, but found out that there was no way we could go there as

water had still not decreased from there. We then went to the Trissur train station with the same rickshaws. When we got there we found out that all the trains have been dismissed and will not be running till the next morning. From the train station, we decided to hire a car and set out to the Kerala-Karnataka border. Several of our fellow brothers and sisters from the retreat center also decided to leave the place and we met them at the train station. We arranged for three tempo travelers and set out on road from Trissur to Mangalore, together. We faced several hurdles on our journey, but the Lord Almighty made sure to keep us safe and deliver us from all danger. All of us reached our destinations, safe and sound. We dropped off some of our Goan brothers and sisters to the Mangalore train station, dropped off a few brothers to their homes in Mangalore and finally the 11 of us reached our home sweet home, in Karkala, Mangalore on Sunday morning, at 3:30 am, on the 19th of August.

The tremendous dropping of the water level, and us reaching home safely without facing any major troubles, was really a big miracle blessed upon us by the Lord! We thank God with all our hearts and praise him forever. We also thank Br. Alfred, each and every one of you, all our family and friends for believing in the Lord and constantly praying for our safety. God can do wonders; all we need to do is believe.

Praise the Lord and Glory to His name!