



**A**ND all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. (Matt 21:22)

The House of the Lord is a House of Prayer and Worship. *It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.* (Luke 19:46) Unfortunately most churches operate today on a business model and not the prayer model. Our seminaries, for the most part, stand on the ruins of their former biblical foundations. More is taught of 'conflict resolution,' seeker friendly, sophisticated, politically correct, and resource management than is taught of God's Holy Word. Of course, there are exceptions and I thank God for those exceptions in our day. The thieves inhabit the branches of a church grown unnaturally large as the "birds" nest in the branches of the Mustard herb that became a tree instead of its proper size. Money and prestige attract the greedy in society.

I will relate a short story of an event that took place in the Anglican Orthodox Church eighteen years ago that both humbled and inspired us. It renewed our faith in simple prayer.

We had lost our beloved Bishop of our Church of Pakistan to the Angel of Death whom God sent to relieve a man who had labored his all for Christ. We were in desperate need of a Bishop to be consecrated to preserve that vital ministry in Pakistan. We prayed to the Lord for guidance, and found that man in the Rev Ernest Jacob. Rev Jacob graduated from our Cranmer Theological Seminary a decade and a half earlier. He was a young man of impeccable character and an in-depth understanding of theology based upon a profound measure of biblical knowledge.

The Church Standing Committee, along with our clerical staff, called Rev Jacob to that position; but he must come to our Convention in Statesville, North Carolina, by 20

October 2000, in order to be consecrated. Due to a growing terrorist threat sourced in the Middle East, visas were a bit difficult to acquire for Pakistani citizens to travel the United States.

We sent a letter of invitation and sponsorship to Rev Jacob, but that little sufficed to achieve its purpose. As the Convention date drew near, we became more and more anxious. It seemed every attempt to persuade the US Embassy in Pakistan fell on deaf ears. We enlisted the good offices of a friend of our church, Senator Jessie Helms; but his staff was unable to pull off any concessions from the US State Department. Believe it or not, we even stooped to request the help of Hillary Clinton to no avail. As the week of the Convention drew near, we were practically ready to throw in the towel on getting the visa.

Bishop Thomas of India and Bishop Isaac Moekoena of South Africa were on hand to facilitate the consecration of myself and Ernest as Bishop. Wednesday, before the Friday of the consecration, came with no success. Early on Thursday morning, Ernest called and reported he had just visited the Embassy for the third time and was rejected.

As the AOC family sat around the conference table grimly considering our options, the good Bishop Moekoena, an Oxford man of diminutive stature, asked what all we had done to get the visa for Ernest. We recounted the files of paperwork we had submitted and the political connections we had made – the numerous phone calls. It seemed that none of these could help us.

Bishop Moekoena sat in silent thought for a few seconds and then said, with much assurance, “Well, friends, we have contacted all of the people who cannot help us. Why not contact the One who can!” What a novel thought!

I, along with Bishops Thomas and Moekoena, Mrs. Hoffman, the Rev. Roger Jessup, and a host of the other members, went immediately into the sanctuary and prayed fervently for God’s intervention on Ernest’s behalf.

I do not exaggerate in the least in saying that within thirty minutes of our leaving the sanctuary, a call was received from Ernest gladly proclaiming the Embassy called and approved his visa! He was on his way! To be honest, we were shocked at such news, but we should not have been. We had prayed from the depths of our hearts that it would be God’s will for Ernest to come and be consecrated. God heard our prayers and it was, indeed, His Will. Never be surprised when God answers prayer. Bishop Ernest Jacob serves today as Bishop of the Anglican Orthodox Church of Pakistan, to the glory of God!