

DMI Passion Week 2026
Easter Eve Workshop – 4 April 2026

SESSION I
Reflections on Being Mizo
– A paper by Prof. Joy Pachuau

1. What are the main characteristics of the traditional Mizo tribal society?
 - the Mizo world was full of fearful '*rau*' who had to be appeased through various sacrifices
 - there was a social order that gave precedence to the chief and his council and the religious personnel.- there were commoners as well as *bawi*.
 - constant wars for gaining territory;
 - The concept of *Pialral* for the after-life existed but mainly for men because becoming *thangchhuah* was next to impossible for women.
 - lots of *zu* and social interactions were marked by the drinking of *zu*.
 - largely egalitarian society; most people followed the same occupation - namely agrarian; although there could be iron-smiths, hunters etc they too followed agriculture as their main occupations.
 - the difference between the rich and the poor although existing was not great in material terms; however, hierarchies of status, age and sex did exist. Widows and orphans were looked down upon - many stories reflect the utter despondency of such people.
 - However there was social solidarity; social life was governed by *tlawmngaihna* and respect for authority, whether of age or position. Young men (*tlangvals* and *val upa*) were also give much authority. It was they along with the chief who regulated society, the social norms etc. Social and village solidarity was important, there was not much room for individuality (i.e. moving away from social norms) although one could be a *pasaltha*, but that, too was within the social norms. One can see that an individual's security, his identity as a person as well as physical safety came from being part of the whole.
2. What did it mean for the early Mizos to become Christian. What did it mean for them to be followers of Jesus?
 - The early Christians moved out from the security of their village and social life in order to follow Christ. Some would have given up families, status, wealth in order to follow Christ. They would have faced ridicule. Mizos - we feel safe when we are with our own; our security comes from being with fellow-Mizos; we feel lost without our kin and neighbours - imagine a situation when they had to give up all that- leave villages, families and set up new villages with new people. From such radical beginnings, wherein people gave up so much we have normalised our faith to one that gives us security, comfort and luxuries. It is these material things that give us our security rather than the God whom we proclaim to believe in.
3. What kind of a society are we in now?

- Colonialism and Christianity brought in several changes. Colonialism introduced us to modernity through education and participation in the wider world. Christianity enabled us to engage with that wider world. Our traditional religion responded to very local needs; but with our opening up to the wider world, Christianity was able to provide answers to many of the larger questions that could encompass the whole world.
- We are part of the modern world today. Modernity* - our economy has changed - we have different occupations now and the gap between the rich and the poor has increased radically.
- At the same time many things remain the same; our need for one another- as seen in any occasion, joyous or otherwise, that requires the support of the community. In the past, the village community was held together by a chief, his elders, the *valupa* and the members of the *zawlbuk* with the ethic of *tlawmngaihna* guiding social norms. This has been substituted by the church, the YMA and a mix of the Christian world view and *tlawmngaihna*. What I am hinting here is that the past practices continue within the garb of modernity and Christianity. Modernity and Christianity are the tools that enable us to express the same ideas and practices that we had of old. Nothing has really changed. Our worldview has not changed because of Christianity . In other words, we are Christian in name, but Mizo in practice. This does not mean that all Mizo way of doing things are bad, but the question is has Christianity changed how we view the world ? Another point we need to remember is that the Mizo way of doing things is not static. It has not been changeless. If people from times past saw us today, they would probably consider us very different. And, yet, we think of ourselves as traditional Mizos. The church, the YMA, the state, other *tlawmngai* pawl consider themselves the custodians and protectors of being Mizo.
- So what has changed from the past? The main thing of course is the access to wealth, the access to means to get wealthy-firstly through education and then various kinds of occupations, whether government, private/secular or religious.
- Christians of old, the first generation Christians were asked to give up their old ways, and many were faithful in doing so. We can't blame them or the missionaries but many of the old ways were closely associated with the old religion, and it was felt better to give up those than continue to be associated with them thus for example, the case of the Mizo '*khuang*'. We might condemn the initial banning of them. But since it was so closely associated with the old faith, it was perhaps wise to ban it in the early phase of the faith. In terms of cultural practices the early Christians were thus given a framework of operation for living.

* “Modernity has its roots in the intellectual revolutions that ended the Middle Ages and brought about such changes as the growth of science and rationality, the birth of the nation-state and the global shift toward capitalism, and shifts in work and family life. The term refers to both the modern era and also the ideology associated with the changes: a belief in progress, reliance on science, and faith in the value of objectivity.” Source: <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/characteristics-modernity>

- However, it looks like not much was taught about what was required about the new society they were to confront. And this perhaps continues to be an area which the church does not stress upon as much as they should. There is a lot of focus on beginning a relationship with Christ but not so much on how to face the challenges of modern day living besides certain do's and don'ts. People were also still quite poor until the 70's and 80's. Statehood brought in more access to wealth and this has drastically changed our relationship with the faith.
- Unlike the early Christians, can we say that there is nothing radical that we do to exemplify our faith and our beliefs? Will it be wrong to say that societal norms fashion the way we express and understand our faith more than the obedience to Jesus.
- Has following Christ cost us in Mizoram today? Is believing in Jesus a means to make us more comfortable? To take us from our poverty to a middle-class existence? Is it a means to improve our status. Is it a means for us to fit in, rather than be radical? Does modern day living blunt the radicalness of the faith we believe in?

PROBLEMS WITH MIZO CHRISTIANITY- -

1. Our Idols

What are idols – people, things, perceptions that take the place of God and we have many of them, more than we realise it. Idols take the place of God in that the idol prompts us to act, behave and do things instead of God.

- The external is more important than the internal: e.g. Sunday school *kaikim* is most important, irrespective of whether we have heard or learnt anything or slept through the year during these lessons. Having a form of spirituality but denying its power. Being pious, acting pious is more important and we do not allow the Gospel to work in our internal lives. We use the faith to assuage our insecurities, our fears, but do not allow for it/ or trust it enough to let it move us out of our comfort zones.
- Closely associated with the above is *Mi MIT a lan that*. - the people are our idols - we do everything to please people rather than to please God- [white washed tomb stones – all clean and nice on the outside, but rotting inside. Also Ananias & Saphira.] While at times pleasing God and pleasing men can be one and the same, it is not always so. We attend funerals because we are afraid there won't be people who will be there when we face such misfortunes. Many more such examples. Do we do things out of love, or out of fear for our own misfortunes.
- Materialism is our new idol: Since God is invisible, Materialism is the worship of the visible, the material. *Lal ngai lo lal a na*. This is true of wealth too. In the past we were poor, and now that we are reaping the benefits of modernity in material wealth, we have no idea how to handle it. Perhaps the church has also not given good teaching in this regard. Materialism essentially means excessive dependence on wealth, money, material things. Is it Christian to want the latest of every thing, the latest attire, the latest gadget, the latest make-up, the latest beauty treatments the latest vehicle, the latest house etc. We never think about whether these things come in the way of our obedience to God; rather we let whether we have the money or not to determine whether we have these things or not. Our desire for more and more also comes in the way of protecting the environment. The more things we have, the more we throw away and that in turn means the use of the earth's resources. When Jesus said you cannot serve God and mammon, mammon here

refers to a spirit that rivals God. In other words, the obsession for the material is a rival god. We need to think whether the money we get/earn is our money or God's money. If we think it's the latter, we will spend it more wisely – the idea of stewardship thus comes in, we are mere caretakers of God's money and not to do with it as we please.

- We are our own idols. Our image is so important and social media creates an environment where all of this becomes legitimate. We sometimes are so concerned about our image, that we dress, eat, act, write according to that image we want to portray. These are often times very far from who God wants us to be. Self-promotion, image creation all can be far-removed from the concerns of God. It's also not too far from showing-off (May I never boast of anything, except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewellery, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.)
 - The idol of our identity: While it is God who has created the various nationalities, the question we need to ask is why was this so? Like everything else, all nations are created to glorify God; the people of Israel were chosen so that they would honour God and be a blessing to others. Identities therefore are created to honour God. It is through our identities that we praise God, we worship God. And yet, we want our identities to get all the praise and honour; we want our identities to be great; the identities themselves become an end rather than a means. Our identities are to be a means, not an end in itself. Unfortunately, national churches can often propel people into the direction of national/ethnic pride. Christians all over the world, every race, every tongue are one nation under God.
2. There is a lot that Mizos also need to learn in terms of self-discipline. The Spirit is the Spirit of self-control. The fruit of the spirit is self-control. Do we allow the spirit to work in us – whether it is in the matter of 'zuk leh hmuam', (can we ever find a time when the Mizo mouth is not chewing something?), or in terms of screen-time binging, or wanting to eat pork all the time ☺; most illnesses in Mizoram are life-style illnesses – diabetes and blood pressure and to an extent cancer – is it because we lack self-control, as well as disciplining ourselves to exercise? Leave aside having Quiet time, we also find it very difficult to exercise – again another area wherein we should exercise self-control and self-discipline.
 3. Family is an area where our Christian faith has not changed our world view.
 - Our society was patriarchal – meaning the dominance of fathers and young men. We tend to read patriarchy into Scripture because that is the way it suits an already male dominant society. We need to rethink this because this model does not seem to be successful. The Bible calls for servant leadership, it calls for serving one another and respect for each other.
 - Mizos did not regard children or babies very highly (uite rim an nam etc, hlamzuih deaths etc). in today's world we have probably gone in the opposite direction because we have the means to do so. We compete with each other in giving lavish gifts and in showering children with all possible things, sometimes not for the children, but for others to see. The careful disciplining of a child and the

responsibility as parents, not that of giving the child everything they want, is being forgotten. The individuality of the child needs to be recognised and the idea that they are created for God's purpose, not for parents to fulfil their own desires and dreams. A home of love, warmth, service, mutual respect and the ability to articulate emotions needs to be encouraged.

4. The last and final area we need to talk about is in relation to work. If we look at the division of labour in traditional society, there is a somewhat a clear-cut division of work (as man's work and women's work) and even here, it looks like women worked harder than men. Women's work extended to the fields, whilst the men stopped work at the doorstep. Being part of modern society necessarily means that there cannot be a set division of labour in terms of women's work and men's work. Without the breaking down of such barriers we cannot be part of the modern world. Moreover, the attitude of a Christian towards work is that it is not just a means to make ends meet but a sense of purpose, a vocation that God has called us to, to participate in the establishment of God's kingdom. This would require diligence, faithfulness, sincerity as well as creativity.