DISCUSSION GUIDE

Masala Chai Theology: Decolonising & Peacemaking

A Spiritual Misfits conversation with Father Joash P. Thomas

LISTEN TO THE FULL EPISODE

ABOUT FATHER JOASH P. THOMAS

Father Joash P. Thomas is a missional priest, theologian, and author of *The Justice of Jesus: Reimagining Your Church's Life Together to Pursue Liberation and Wholeness*. A St. Thomas Indian Christian raised in the Pentecostal tradition, he spent over a decade with International Justice Mission before his ordination, and now writes the Substack *Masala Chai Theology* while teaching at St. Stephen's University — inviting the church to decolonise its imagination and reclaim justice as central to the gospel.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Three short clips from the conversation are below, and can be used as stand-alone prompts for conversation. Share one to open a discussion, or use all three. Whatever works for your context. On the following page there are a range of questions and quotes to stimulate further exploration.

Watch & Discuss

01 **Masala Chai Theology**

The surprising history of chai — and how people in India turned the 'crappy leftovers' into something profound.

WATCH

02 **The Justice of Jesus Isn't a Side Quest**

Father Joash challenges the Church's habit of treating justice as an optional calling for a select few.

WATCH

03 **Decolonising the Great Commission**

Father Joash argues the 'Great Commission' is a colonial invention, and reflects on what Jesus actually taught as central.

WATCH

This resource is part of 'The Commons' created by Meeting Ground Faith Community with support from the Sydney Central Coast Presbytery of the Uniting Church and the NSW ACT Synod of the Uniting Church.

Discussion Questions

1. Fr. Joash describes his family lineage as "a long line of misfits" — St Thomas Indian Christians were labelled heretics by colonial missionaries despite 1,500 years of prior orthodox Christian faith. **Where have you felt labelled a misfit or heretic for beliefs or practices that were actually deeply rooted, just not dominant?**

2. Fr. Joash describes his work as "masala chai theology", inspired by a specific colonial history — the British exporting the best tea leaves and leaving Indian workers the "crappy parts," which they then spiced into something new and their own. **Where else do you see marginalised communities turning the unexpected into something life-giving?**

3. He says "the justice of Jesus is not a side quest for the church. It's the main mission." **Where in your own faith formation has justice been treated as optional "extra credit" rather than central? What would change if you flipped that?**

4. Fr. Joash argues the "Great Commission" as commonly understood is a colonial-era invention, distinct from Jesus's actual words about the Great Commandment — love God, love neighbour. **How does this distinction land for you? What difference might it make in how you think about mission and evangelism?**

5. Using the metaphor of gardening, Fr. Joash distinguishes deconstruction (pruning) from decolonisation (uprooting) — you can prune a weed and it grows back, unless you uproot it entirely. **What might need to be uprooted, not just pruned, in your own faith or church culture?**

6. He closes the podcast conversation arguing Christianity comes in many flavours, and you don't need to "settle for vanilla" — beyond a Western, empire-shaped theological framework, he points out traditions like Celtic and St. Thomas Christianity. **What flavours of faith — historic, cultural, or otherwise — are you curious to explore further?**

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Key Quotes

FATHER JOASH P. THOMAS

"Colonisation wasn't just bad for the global south – it was also bad for the West and the Western church, because it shaped us to resist justice movements for all our marginalised neighbours."

"If you feel marginalised for your love for Jesus and justice, you're in good company with Jesus and the saints – because the heretics of empire are the beloved of God."

"The justice of Jesus is not a side quest for the church. It's the main mission of the church."

"God doesn't call us to success. We're called to faithfulness."

Go Deeper

THE BOOK

The Justice of Jesus

Read Fr. Joash' book to delve deeper into these ideas.

FIND THE BOOK

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE THESE EPISODES ON SPIRITUAL MISFITS PODCAST

The full conversation with Father Joash P. Thomas
FULL EPISODE

If the World Doesn't End and We're Still Neighbours
AMAR PETERMAN

The Future Church is... Decolonising
SAFINA STEWART · FUTURE CHURCH CONFERENCE

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