

"The Truth Must Be Told"

by Easwaran Rutnam

After much controversy and speculation, the movie *According to Matthew* is set for release. Directed by Chandran Rutnam, *According to Matthew* was screened to a VIP audience last week, which included journalists and movie critics. The screening took place amidst speculation the movie may not see the light of day in Sri Lanka as it was shrouded in controversy. The biggest concern was by some members of the Christian community who felt the movie may harm the image of Christianity in Sri Lanka.

The movie is about Father Mathew Peiris, a Christian priest who murdered his wife and the husband of his mistress.

The movie stars singer/songwriter Alston Koch as Father Mathew Peiris and former Miss Sri Lanka Jacqueline Fernandez as his mistress.

The film is based on court records in the murder case of the priest who was sentenced to death but was later freed in November

1997 under a general amnesty. "I believe that the truth (however hard to accept) must be told as we now find out that evil men do the strangest of things in the name of God and their belief is that they are above the law," Alston Koch told *The Sunday Leader*.

He said it was a very difficult role to play considering that everyone who lived in that era knew the story and he dared not do anything that was unacceptable.

"I always felt that Fr. Mathew Peiris was always watching me and I dare not step out of line," Alston Koch said.

The movie mostly involved amateur actors as Rutnam says it was easy to work with a new cream of talent.

According to *Matthew* will see Jacqueline Fernandez

entering Hollywood after making her mark in Bollywood.

"Jacqui and I were close friends before as I knew her Dad Elroy and Mum Kin very well. Jacqui is a very committed actress and very serious in this role. We had some fun times together and I enjoyed her being there next to me supporting me along the way when I had to make things work through a hard schedule," Alston said.

He also noted that Chandran Rutnam is an amazing man and is well experienced and very talented and it shows in the film.

Alston says he believes the movie will make the Hollywood grade as the movie already has some of the best distributors looking at it seriously.

"The preview was just the start and now it goes to Hollywood for the final treatment," he said.

"This is one of the most diabolical murder cases in history. A very unusual but a true story. This was the talk of the town in the 70s when he was arrested and tried for murder along with his mistress. I wanted to do this for a long time. I discussed the story once with father Mathew. But he had a different side to it. It was not practical so I stepped back from the project. But now I'm doing it based on court records and what I knew of father Peiris. He was my pastor at St Paul's Kynsey Road. I've known him for a while. He also stayed with me in Los Angeles. There was a lot of good in the man as well as the deceit and arrogance that he displayed during his life which was unknown to us at that time and was revealed to the world during the trial," Chandran Rutnam told this journalist while on the set of the movie in 2013.

Rutnam said that the priest, whether he was good or bad at the start, his dastardly acts were eventually detected and he was brought to justice.

Incidentally Rutnam had even once discussed the idea of making the film with father Peiris and the priest then insisted that he play the role himself.

"Obviously that was not possible," Rutnam, the man who has already made it to Hollywood with his movie *A Common Man* said.



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