



## Gideon Jebamani


One of the world's longest continuous oppressions of a people is the caste-based discrimination in India against the Untouchable. The Dalit. Gideon Jebamani was born into that world and raised as a field laborer. But by the grace of God he was admitted to an educational hostel and given the chance for an education. Today he is the holder of multiple degrees, and a respected advocate for human rights on two continents. Gideon serves now as the Protestant Chaplain to Greenhaven Prison in Dutchess County. There, one inmate told this bishop, "At first a lot of the men didn't know what to think of this Indian priest. But he won them over with his love."

Over thirty years ago, while a seminarian in Madurai, Gideon and another student organized the city's manual scavengers, those laborers consigned to the daily removal of human waste from the streets and cesspools, and brought a strike. Within three days they brought the city to its knees, and won important safeguards for the workers. The scavengers union continues in Madurai today, with many hundreds of members. A dozen years later, Gideon sustained a brutal and systematic beating by an enraged mob, for which he endured a lengthy hospitalization, for the "crime" of attempting to build a parish church on land which the church owned, to serve a local Dalit congregation.

Gideon's advocacy has not only been for the Dalit but to the Dalit. Within that community he has been a champion of equality for women, of dignity and worth for the girl child, and of recognition of LGBT people. He understands intimately what it means to be an Outcast, Untouchable, and makes no peace with oppression wherever he finds it, whether to his own community or within it. Now, in America, Gideon has been the organizer of international Dalit conferences in Washington DC, New York, and other cities at which hundreds of Dalits gathered in convention have given voice not only to the oppression they have endured, but the rising threat of caste discrimination among us within the Indian diaspora, including the presence of caste discrimination within Christian churches and communities.

Therefore, in recognition and gratitude for his witness to the gospel imperative of human rights and human dignity, and for his sacrificial and tireless self-offering in service to Dalit liberation, offered to the glory of God, we, on this 11th day of November 2017, in the sixth year of our consecration, do award him

### The Bishop's Cross

  
The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche  
XVI Bishop of New York