



**ST. THOMAS
INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111

NEWSLETTER

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VICAR'S MESSAGE

Mother Mary: The Symbol Holiness

God's fundamental nature of holiness was given to humans when they were created in "His own image and likeness" (Genesis 1:26, 27). It is because of this holiness that all other virtues are to be seen in humans. However with the disobedience of humans they lost the holiness and consequently other virtues too. However God was kind to give Moses the commandments to capture back the holiness. But it was not easy for humans to acquire God's fundamental nature. Finally God decided to send his Only Begotten Son to redeem all humans through Him. God selected Mary the saintly girl who exhibited perfect obedience to His request. St. Mary's obedience helped her to acquire holiness.

Holiness is not an easy virtue to hunt for. It becomes elusive whenever we seek for it or work for it. It needs true dedication and utter dependence on God's grace. Many of the saints of the Church acquired this virtue partially because of their obedience and faith. Therefore it is a tangible virtue and not an impossible. Normally people will think it is an impossible matter to become holy and therefore rarely people attempt for holiness. Perhaps people do not know what holiness can bring in our life. Let me touch upon three distinct characteristics of holiness:

1. Holiness is a Byproduct of Obedience to God: Jesus taught us, "if you don't become like a child you will not see the Kingdom of God. A child's innocence is the kind of holiness Jesus was advising for us. Also He said, "Blessed that those pure in heart because they will see God". Without any doubt, condition or question children will obey others. Adam and Eve were able to obey God and remained in holiness. The moment Satan was able to manipulate them, they disobeyed God. St. Mary's obedience is unique. Even when she knew the 'impossible' nature of God's mission for her, she was ready to accept. Her obedience benefited the entire human race. Likewise our obedience will benefit other humans. Every time we read the Word of God there is a call for obedience. How many can hear



that call? Anyone who can obey the Word of God will start the way to holiness.

2. Holiness can Clean Thoughts, Words and Actions: Holiness is possible when one can clean up his/her life properly. Cleanliness in mind and actions is a great virtue. It creates trustworthy and honest people. Such people trust others and others trust them. They will not have selfish or material motives in life. They will always think of the best things that will connect them with God and the rest of the people. During Lenten time we clean up our thoughts and we are asked to have some physical controls like abstaining from certain kinds of rich foods, unclean relationships, consuming intoxicating materials, smoking etc. There are several things that we consume for our body that are dangerous to us. Many people knowingly consume that and destroy their physical life and spiritual life. But a person with thoughts of holiness will only consume the right things for the body mind and spirit. Our health is our treasure and it is possible that with a thought for holiness we can maintain it well.

3. Holiness can Create a Peaceful World: St. Mary's sanctity of life made a peace loving person wherever she went. We have never heard of her complaining or creating any bad situations. We heard the apostles asking for positions, taking revenge over enemies, running away from Jesus' sufferings and so on. St. Mary maintained her calm in all situations. She was the problem solver in the commotion that took place at the wedding in Cana. She stayed with Christ up to the foot of the cross. She was not shaken by any of the adversities that faced her son because she knew the unclean minds of evil people. People who have the holy thinking will try to maintain peace in their situations. Others will create problem in the name of something or the other. People seeking holiness are not afraid

because they always feel the presence of God with them. When we look at the world of today where so much violence and feuds happen, we can see the lack of holiness. Holiness seeking person will not seek for situation of tension, war, terrorism, cheating, stealing, scandals, and so on. They will love peace, concord, harmony, cooperation, positive growth, care for others and opportunity to serve as much as possible.

In this 15-day lent let us make another attempt to emulate these values that St. Mary is imparting us to make our life meaningful. It will be worth attempting to catch up with holiness. We can see how our own life improves and how we help others improve their life.

Lovingly,
Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

Parish News

Library News: Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John spoke about the Biography of Elder Paisios - by Elder Issac- in the Most Influenced Book on Life talk series. Next month's presentation will be by Mr. Oommen Kappil. Malayalam books can be donated to the library. Please drop your books in the shelf placed near our sanctuary entrance.

Church Perunnal: The Church Perunnal in the sacred memory of our Parish Patron St. Thomas was observed on July 2nd and 3rd. On July 2nd there was evening prayer followed by devotional message by Rev. Fr. Shibu Mathai, Vicar of St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Church, Bensalem. The traditional procession around the block was led by Rev. Fr. Eby Paulose accompanied by other priests. Our MGOCSM members played the drums (chendamalam) for the procession. Dinner was served to all in attendance. On July 3rd Holy Qurbana was led by Rev. Fr. Eby Paulose and Achen gave the sermon. There was lunch for all present.

Several members of our parish young and old helped in decorating the church, arranging the procession, cleaning up the premises and serving food. Many thanks to all!

General Body Meeting Half yearly and Accounts of 2015: Conducted on 7/17/2016, Sunday at 12.30 PM. 43 eligible members attended. 2015 Accounts, 2015 Annual Report and Half Yearly account for 2016 passed. The General body of our parish decided to construct parking lots on the site leased from PECO. Each family is requested to take part in this work with a minimum contribution of \$500.00 towards this cause. This project is expected to complete this year itself.

Prayer Meetings conducted:

- 7/9/16 - Residence of Mr. Santhosh Baby.
- 7/16/16- Residence of Mr. Oommen Gheevarghese.
- 7/23/16- Residence of Mr. Binu K. Mathew.
- 7/31/16 – Residence of Mr. Biju Mathew.

Hadootho:The MGOCSM local Camp was held in the first week of July at Villanova University campus which was attended by approximately 100 youth of the seven parishes in our area. Local priests were in attendance.

“Karuna” Cancer Awareness Program: The “Karuna” program for cancer awareness was planned for August 6th but because of the demise of Mrs. Amminikutty Kochamma (wife of Rev. Fr. K. K. John and mother of our Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John). It is postponed to Saturday, August 13th. Please cooperate with the program. The proceeds will go to a children's cancer research institute in the USA.

Upcoming Events: Annual Picnic: Saturday, August 27, 2016.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Zeena Jacob	Aug 1	Joel G Panicker	Aug 13	Aben G Panicker	Aug 21
Chinnamma Varghese	Aug 2	Jibin Verghese Jacob	Aug 13	Isabel J Mathew	Aug 22
Jijo George Varghese	Aug 2	Augustin Babu	Aug 13	Varghese Varghese	Aug 22
Cherian Philipose	Aug 2	Liana John	Aug 14	Bindu Job	Aug 23
Saya Alina Thomas	Aug 4	Johan Anto Panicker	Aug 14	Anooj Thomas	Aug 23
Dony Davy	Aug 4	Alexandra Geevarghese	Aug 14	Sajan Thomas	Aug 23
Vinitha Varghese	Aug 5	Jojoy Varghese	Aug 14	Kochupurackal Thomas	Aug 24
Jaison Daniel	Aug 5	Achamma Cherian	Aug 15	Riny Saju Mathew	Aug 25
Jonathan M Cherian	Aug 5	Nadukemuriyil Thomas	Aug 15	Shawn Stephen	Aug 25
Abraham John	Aug 5	Rachel A Varghese	Aug 16	Jonah Thomas	Aug 25
Tibin John Prince	Aug 6	Tincy Raju	Aug 16	Philip Raju Markos	Aug 26
Aleyamma George	Aug 6	Reena Rose Antony	Aug 17	Annamma Mathew	Aug 26
Lambert Thomas	Aug 7	Christina S Thomas	Aug 18	George Varghese	Aug 27
Leelamma O Panicker	Aug 8	Shelby Alisha Thomas	Aug 18	Agin G. Thomas	Aug 27
Mathews T Varghese	Aug 8	Thomas Abraham	Aug 18	Nallumalayil J George	Aug 27
Josh Job	Aug 9	George Abraham	Aug 18	Judy Philip	Aug 27
Crisia Maria Shibu	Aug 9	Hannah Mary Thomas	Aug 19	Molly Prince	Aug 28
Sheena Jose	Aug 10	Ninan Mathai	Aug 19	Sharon Jacob	Aug 29
Varghese Mammen	Aug 10	Paul P Mavely	Aug 19	Anugraha T John	Aug 30
Blessy George	Aug 10	Stephan Kalthil	Aug 20	Bibin George	Aug 30
Ashok Paulose	Aug 10	Sherin Sara Anish	Aug 20	Cijo Joseph	Aug 30
Eliza Leela Panicker	Aug 12	Flamy Philip	Aug 21	Betsy George	Aug 30
Sneha Reynold	Aug 13	Aaron George	Aug 21		

AUGUST WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Rajan	Aug 2	Mr. & Mrs. Biju John	Aug 20
Mr. & Mrs. Diboo A Daniel	Aug 11	Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Kuruvilla	Aug 20
Mr. & Mrs. Abraham K. Varughese	Aug 14	Mr. & Mrs. N V Thomas	Aug 21
Mr. & Mrs. Renji Varghese	Aug 15	Mr. & Mrs. David Philip	Aug 21
Mr. & Mrs. Jiji Mathew	Aug 15	Mr. & Mrs. Ajo Raju	Aug 21
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Baby	Aug 15	Mr. & Mrs. Shibu Thomas	Aug 22
Mr. & Mrs. Mathew P Cherian	Aug 15	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Vakkayil	Aug 22
Mr. & Mrs. Georgeyo Oommen	Aug 16	Mr. & Mrs. Vinod Jacob	Aug 24
Mr. & Mrs. Rajan Koshy	Aug 17	Mr. & Mrs. Jiju Mathew	Aug 26
Mr. & Mrs. Ashok Mathew Koshy	Aug 17	Mr. & Mrs. Kochupurackal Thomas	Aug 27
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Mathew	Aug 18	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas C Thomas	Aug 28
Mr. & Mrs. Cibu Joseph	Aug 19	Mr. & Mrs. Alex P Symon	Aug 29
Mr. & Mrs. Manoj Thomas	Aug 19	Mr. & Mrs. Suresh Cherian	Aug 29

Sunday School News

*Submitted by Oommen Kappil, Principal
(Tel.: 267.902.8500, email: kappilr@yahoo.com)*

Sunday School Opening and New Admissions

Classes for the new school year will begin on Sunday, Sept. 4, 2016

New Student Enrollment

For new admissions, the minimum age requirement is as follows:

Lower Pre-K : 3 years

Upper Pre-K : 4 years

KG : 5 years

Grade I : 6 years

(Age as of September 01, 2016):

Sunday School has an open admission policy which allows parents to enroll children later in the year as long as the age requirement is met. If your child turns 3 in December, you are allowed to enroll your child at that time. Application for enrollment is available in the Sunday School Office. Please submit the applications by Sunday, Aug. 14, 2016. Please see Santhosh Baby for Admissions.

Event Reports

Orthodox Vacation Bible School (OVBS)

-Submitted by Anu Jacob

The Philadelphia Area OVBS was held at our church on July 28th thru July 30th. The event was coordinated by Annie Varghese and Anu Jacob along with Paul Maret (Area Coordinator) and Sunday School Principals from our Area. About 300 students attended the event along with 50 to 60 volunteers. We had 146 registrants from our church including 16 guests. This year's theme was from Psalms 43 vs 3. "Then I will go to the altar of God...to Him my exceeding joy." There were 3 morning devotionals presented by Rev. Fr. M.K. Kuriakose, Very Rev. K. Mathai Corepiscopos and Bobby Varghese (Seminarion from New York). The children also had more in depth lessons in class, learned new songs and enjoyed sports. The event concluded with a magic show from D.J. entertainment and a performance by Dany Wilfred's band. The OVBS charity this year was Prerena, a home for mentally challenged children located near Nagpur Seminary. The goal was to raise \$4000 for the children of Prerena, but we raised \$7000 thanks to the generosity of our children and parents! Numerous volunteers from our church made this a successful event by helping with registration, teaching, providing food, songs, arts and crafts, sports, first aid and cooking. We thank everyone for their involvement and cooperation.

Felicitation of Graduates

The graduates from Middle School, High School, college, and those who earned professional licenses or awards were honored on July 10th.

On-going Events

Summer Study Series

'Topic Sundays': Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John is leading study classes for students in Grade 7 and up. Achen leads discussion on different topics every Sunday until the end of August.

Sing Along Songs: Suja Abraham leads sing-along song session for kids, starting at 12.15 pm on Sundays. Children learn popular hymns and songs. Kids in Pre-KG to Grade 6 are invited. Adults also are welcome! The program will continue until the end of August.

Malayalam Class

Malayalam classes are being offered during the summer, until the end of August. Meets every Sunday from 12 to 12:30 pm in the Sunday School hall. Ajin Abraham is the lead Teacher.

Upcoming Events

Talent Competitions -2016

Talent Competitions (Sunday September 18th)

The registration for the Talent competition will begin on Sunday August 7th.

Group song and Bible Quiz practice are in progress. You can access the rules as well as the specified solo songs (both English & Malayalam) from the website <http://nesundayschool.org/competitions/competitions/>. Those who need guidance in Solo Song, Elocution or Story Telling may contact *Bishel Baby, Coordinator of Talent Competitions*.

Talent Competition events	Groups
Solo song (Mal & Eng)	1-7
Story Telling	1-3
Elocution	4-7

Note: Groups are decided based on Secular School Grade as of Jan. 1, 2016. This means, those who graduated from 12th Grade in June of this year are still eligible to compete.

GROUPS

GROUP 1 (grades Preschool & KG as of 01/01/2016):

GROUP 2 (grades 1 & 2 as of 01/01/2016):

GROUP 3 (grades 3 & 4 as of 01/01/2016):

GROUP 4 (grades 5 & 6 as of 01/01/2016):

GROUP 5 (grades 7 & 8 as of 01/01/2016):

GROUP 6 (grades 9 & 10 as of 01/01/2016):

GROUP 7 (grades 11 & 12 as of 01/01/2016):

Elocution Topics

Group	Grades	Topics
4	5 & 6	James 4:10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you."
5	7 & 8	Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart."
6	9 & 10	Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."
7	11 & 12	Proverbs 19:21 "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established."

2016 Sunday School Calendar

Event	Date	Venue	Coordinator
Prize distribution-Assigned competition	Sunday, Aug 14	Our Church	Liz Pothen
First Alphabet writing	Sunday, Sep. 4	Library	Susan Mathew
Sunday School Opening Day	Sunday, Sept.4	Our Church	NA
Class Exam Trophy distribution	Sunday, Sept 25	Our Church	Santhosh Baby
Talent Competition-Parish level	Sunday, Sep. 18	Our Church	Bishel Baby
Talent Competition-Area level	Saturday, Oct 8	St. Johns Church	Bishel Baby
Talent Show/Competition-Diocesan level	Saturday, Oct 29	Our Church	Betsy George/ Bishel Baby

Falling Asleep of Amminikutty Kochamma



With faith in Christ and in the hope of resurrection, we inform you of the passing away of our beloved Amminikutty Kochamma, wife of Reverend Father K. K. John (Vicar of Saint Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church of Philadelphia (Mascher Street) and mother of our Assistant Vicar Reverend Father Gheevarghese John. Kochamma passed away on August 4 surrounded by her loved ones. She was a loving, and prayerful woman who will be remembered for her warm smile, and gentle spirit.

Amminikutty John was born to Mr. P. M. Abraham and Mrs. Aleyamma Abraham, Perangattu House, Konni, Kerala, India on November 7, 1952. On May 15, 1978, she was married to Mr. Kunjukunju John, Kochuthundil House, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India. Later, they moved to Bangalore. She was a model housewife and gave birth to two children: Susan and Gheevarghese John.

On Feb 22, 1986, Amminikutty and family migrated to Philadelphia, PA (USA) and for over 24 years, she was employed at Cardone industries where she was admired for her dedication to achieve highest level of quality and recognized as model employee.

In her Church life, she was always heavily involved in spiritual activities of the Church. During her younger days, she actively participated in the spiritual activities of Attachakkal Marthoma Church, as youth leader, secretary and choir member. She was a very good singer. Upon coming to America, she remained active in the church by serving in all church activities including Diocesan General Secretary of the St. Mary's League of the Syrian Orthodox Church, North America for three years. Finally, her motivation and guidance was instrumental in inspiring the ordination of two priests: both her husband Rev. Fr. K. K. John and her son Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John. She will always be remembered as a devoted housewife, mother, and loving sister to her siblings.

She is survived by her husband Rev. Fr. K. K. John, daughter Susan Kurian and her husband Sunil Kurian, son Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John and his wife Linju John, grandchildren Callista Kurean, Bethenny John and Nina Kurian, brothers Mathew P. Abraham and Varghese P. Abraham, and sisters Annamma George, Mariamma Abraham and Sosamma Philip.

The following is the schedule for the wake and burial services of our beloved Kochamma, Mrs. Amminikutty John:

All services will be held at St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, 1009 Unruh Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19111

Sunday, August 7, 2016
4:30PM to 9PM - Wake Service

Monday, August 8, 2016
9AM - Final Service of Burial at Saint Thomas Indian Orthodox Church
11:30AM - Interment at Forest Hills Cemetery (25 Byberry Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006)

May the memory of our beloved Amminikutty Kochamma,
be eternal!