

**ST. THOMAS
INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111**



NEWSLETTER

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VICAR'S MESSAGE

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

This is a very delightful season for us. Inside and outside our homes signs of the great festivity related to this joy are seen. The Christmas decorations all around us and throughout the streets and malls are all giving us great excitement and joy. What is this delight and what is this excitement? Definitely it is not an experience of meeting a God in person but the delight of our personal happiness that is generated with the visual effects of our surroundings. It is amazing that the surroundings can create a great deal of joy in our life. In other words, we can create joyful tidings and seasons of joy and make others happy. The simple decorations in our homes and church would give us the indication that Christmas is arriving. We will be planning to get gifts to our dear and near ones. The stores are all spending such a huge amount in attracting people to it and spread out so many attractive things for us to purchase. And we will purchase some of them. We are happy and those whom we give gifts are happy. Therefore, there is an intrinsic happiness in all the good things we do during the Christmas season.

At this time, it will be worth pondering whether our joy is purely selfish or outgoing! Gift giving is a great virtue because giving something to a needy person is making that person happy. But are we giving gifts to those who really need them or simply those whom we like or love?



When the Lord took flesh it was a total gift to the entire world regardless of the background. St. John the Apostle in 3:16 said, "God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son..." The world needed the Son in order to redeem everyone from his/her sins. The ultimate sacrifice was enacted from birth to death of that Son. Therefore, His birthday which is Christmas became the greatest season of joy. We sing the song, "Joy to the world the Lord is come...."

I am sure more than all the festive materialistic expressions the joy of Christmas is the deliverance we experience in Christ. Christ who gives us the freedom from sin, hatred and all kinds of evils can definitely make us happy. We all know very well that our internal joy is the true joy. All external joys attached to the material world will disappear but the joy of having Jesus in our life can give us lasting and deeper joy. I wish and pray that this Christmas also will give us all that experience of knowing the Lords a little closer and deeper.

Happy Christmas to all of you!

Parish News

Prayer Meeting –

11/05/2016 At Chapel hosted by Thomas Daniel and Family

11/12/2016- At the residence of Sam Kurisinmoottil and family

11/13/2016- At the residence of Sosamma Juby and family

11/19/2016- At Chapel hosted by Alex P Symon and Thomas Varghese

11/26/2016- At the residence of Thomas George and family

Events

Bake Sale :

The MMVS organized a bake sale on Sunday, November 6th after Holy Qurbana. A net profit of \$1106.00 was collected. Many ladies and male volunteers helped organizing this program. Many came on Saturday to prepare for the bake sale. Many thanks to all who supported this endeavor.

Parish Thanksgiving on Sunday:

It was on Sunday November 11th. All members brought Big Offertory as it is customary. We collected more than \$18,000 through this and expecting more people to bring in their Big Offertory in gratitude to God's gifts to them. Turkey lunch was serviced to all.

Sunday School Anniversary was conducted in the church after Holy Qurbana. The Annual Report of the SS was presented by Susan Samuel and trophies for talent competition winners were distributed. Many thanks to all who cooperated with it.

St. Gregorios Memory:

We observed the sacred memory of St. Gregorios of Parumala on November 6th. Neyyappam was distributed to all after Holy Qurbana.

Forthcoming Events

Annual Election and Budget General Body:

On Sunday, December 4th the Annual election of the office-bearers, the representatives to the Malankara Syrian Christian Association and the budget approval for 2017 will be done. All our members must attend the General Body.

Christmas Lent (Advent Season Lent)

The Christmas Lent will be from December 1 to the day of Christmas. All members are encouraged to observe this lent as we are preparing to receive the Lord into our life.

Christmas Caroling:

This will Start from Saturday, December 3rd. This time also we are planning to cluster together in each neighborhood to make it easier to cover all homes. Please welcome the caroling team. Please give the coin boxes to the Treasurer.

Christmas Social Program: This year our Christmas Social will be on Saturday, December 24th at 3 pm. All spiritual organizations are participating in this event exhibiting talents. Please cooperate with it.

Christmas Day: Christmas is on Sunday this time. There will be traditional Christmas worship, Holy Qurbana and sumptuous lunch for all.

New Year Day: New Year is also on a Sunday this year. We will have Holy Qurbana and lunch that day.

December Wedding Anniversary

Mr. & Mrs. Roy P. Chacko	Dec 7		Mr. & Mrs. Regi Mathai	Dec 27
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas P Oommen	Dec 8		Mr. & Mrs. Biju Mathews	Dec 28
Mr. & Mrs. Shibu M Baby	Dec 11		Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Zachariah	Dec 28
Mr. & Mrs. Philip T Varghese	Dec 25		Mr. & Mrs. Paul John	Dec 29
Mr. & Mrs. Sajan Thomas	Dec 26		Mr. & Mrs. Ashok Paulose	Dec 30
Mr. & Mrs. John Panicker	Dec 27		Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Daniel	Dec 31

December Birthdays

Noel Cherian	Dec 1		N K Thomas	Dec 15		Joel Jins	Dec 24
Annamma Jacob	Dec 1		Hannah Mary Varghese	Dec 16		Shiji Daji	Dec 25
Santhamma Mathew	Dec 1		Geena Regi	Dec 17		Allie Samuel	Dec 25
Simmy Lynnson	Dec 2		Voity M George	Dec 18		Lesley T Reji	Dec 27
Josiah Thomas	Dec 4		Shaji Abraham	Dec 19		Neha Ann Koshy	Dec 27
Renu Susan Raju	Dec 7		Jolly Varghese	Dec 19		Diyaxa Jubee	Dec 27
Krupa Daniel	Dec 7		Noel Mathew	Dec 19		Jose K John	Dec 28
Samaira Binoy	Dec 7		Omana Varghese	Dec 20		Noah Philip Cherian	Dec 28
Mini Philip	Dec 8		Merin Rajan	Dec 20		Hannah Anto Panicker	Dec 29
Philip T Varghese	Dec 8		Susan Chacko	Dec 20		Betsy George	Dec 29
Elizabeth Chacko	Dec 10		Merlin Rajan	Dec 21		Anaya Anna Bivin	Dec 30
Susan Paulose	Dec 10		Samantha Philip	Dec 22		Mathew Jacob	Dec 30
Sosamma Cherian	Dec 11		Thomas Varghese	Dec 22		Sam Jacob Kurisinmoottil	Dec 31
Dilip John Daniel	Dec 11		Ria Dony	Dec 22		Alex Daniel	Dec 31
Saju Paul	Dec 12		Hannah Varghese	Dec 22		Luke Matthew Cherian	Dec 31
Sheeba P Thankachan	Dec 12		Sophia Jacob	Dec 23		Rajesh Geevarghese	Dec 31
Praveena M Joseph	Dec 12		Aleyamma Chacko	Dec 23		Jobin Regi	Dec 31
Rosamma George	Dec 14		Litty John	Dec 23			

Sunday School News

*Submitted by Oommen Kappil, Principal
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Principal's Message

November was another month with a lot of activities including the national election to elect our next President, Let us continue to pray for our country and its leaders to guide the democracy in right direction. At our parish level, we celebrated our Sunday school anniversary and Thanksgiving Day. In November we honored our academic achievers of various grades from last year, and our parish level talent competition winners. Our children did out-standing performances using their God-given talents in both areas. Glory be to the Father Almighty who has entrusted us with His precious gifts, our children. Let us continue to uphold them in our prayers so that they can continue do their best by using their God-given talents.

Sunday School Anniversary-2016:

This year by God's grace, we celebrated our Sunday school anniversary on November 20th after the Holy Qurbana, along with our parish level traditional Thanksgiving Day celebration. During a separate occasion, we recognized academic achievers of various grades by awarding trophies for first and second place holders and certificates for all students. Parish level talent competition winners were recognized during this occasion by awarding trophies. Mrs. Susan Mathews, Assistant headmaster presented the Sunday school annual report to the congregation during this occasion.

Upcoming Events:

Christmas Craft fair: Sunday school is planning to have a Christmas craft fair on December 17th at 4-6 pm in the Parish Hall. There will be Christmas themed fun activities, Santa and Mrs. Clause etc. Please sign-up at the Sunday school office so that the organizers can get an idea of the number of children and plan the event accordingly. Children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult at the craft fair. Sunday school is also planning to send Christmas gift packages to our military personals and our students who are abroad, and not able to celebrate this Christmas with their loved ones. Parents please give your children's address and contact information to the Sunday school office. Parents are encouraged to send non-perishable canned food items along with each child when they come for the Christmas Craft Fair. This is a way to teach our children to share their blessings with the less privileged during this season. Canned food collected during this event will be donated to Aid For Friends organization along with our parish level collection.

Ecumenical Christmas Program: Our Sunday school students are practicing in a nativity show at the Ecumenical Christmas program on December 10th at the George Washington High School. Students who are interested in participating this show please contact Milly Wilson, Kripaya Varghese or Tina Prince.

Christmas Eve Program: Our parish level Christmas program is scheduled for December 24th Saturday evening. Sunday School Students and teachers are practicing for Christmas program. Teachers are encouraged to combine two-three grades from primary, middle and high school and organize cultural program.

Winter Sweater/Jacket Drive: Under the leadership of 9th grade students and teachers, Sunday school is collecting lightly used sweaters and jackets to distribute to the homeless in the city of Philadelphia. Please donate your new or lightly used sweaters or jackets on or before Christmas.