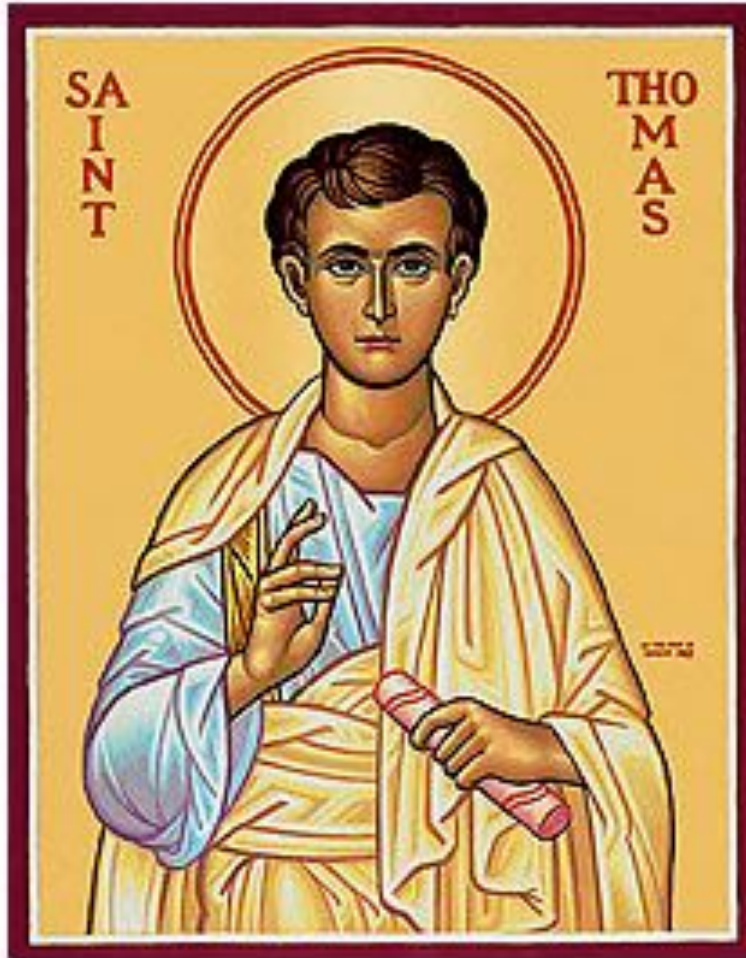


**ST. THOMAS
INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111**



NEWSLETTER

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VICAR'S MESSAGE

LESSONS FROM ST. THOMAS

Very recently I asked a question in the Youth League meeting about the year St. Thomas reached India and the year of his martyrdom. To my pleasant surprise a few people knew the answer. I am glad that our learning in the Youth League is bearing fruits.

As early as 52 A.D. St. Thomas reached India. Many centuries before England or America received the Gospel, India received it. Being an unfamiliar land and language St. Thomas must have used the Jewish community in Kerala to evangelize. The climate for religious conversion in India was not very positive at that time. Indian social system was such that the "chatur varna" system or the four categories of society: Brahmin (the religious group), Kshathriya (the warrior/soldier group), the Vaishya (farmer/worker group) and the Shoodra (the menial laborers group) was prevalent at that time. The caste system was so strong that no one would think of converting from one caste to another. It is presumed that the mission of St. Thomas was among the Brahmins which means no other caste can be converted into that group. Therefore the spread of Christianity like it happened in other countries was nearly impossible in India. Even among the Brahmins the conversion was limited. In the adverse climate St. Thomas was guided by the Holy Spirit to establish congregations and ordain priests. It is learned from history that his work lasted only for 20 years. In 72 A.D. he became a martyr.

The martyrdom account learned from the 'oral tradition on St. Thomas' is that the Brahmin priests of Madras peeled his skin and left him in a cave. This place is now called the St. Thomas Mount in Chennai where small a cave is maintained. St. Thomas stayed in the cave for three days and then he was pierced with a lance and he died from that wound. The tomb of St. Thomas is found in Mylapore, Chennai. In the 4th century merchants from Edessa took the relics and a feast was announced in the Edessan Church on July 3rd which is now copied by almost all Indian Churches too. Later the relics of St. Thomas was stolen and brought to Ortona, Italy. A good account of St.



Thomas' ministry is seen in the Acts of Thomas a book written by Bardaisan, a Syrian writer in the second century.

We have a few lessons to learn from St. Thomas.

1. **Zeal for Christ and Obedience:** The travel to India was not an easy task those days. By ship and through land St. Thomas came to India. In the Acts of Thomas story says that St. Thomas initially unwilling to go to India because the land was far away and language was unknown. Jesus came in the disguise of a merchant who sells people to other countries and sold Thomas to a merchant came from India looking for good carpenters. The purpose was to build a palace for an Indian king. In the Gospel of St. John we read that St. Thomas told other apostles, "let us go and die with him" (John 11:16) and so his decision to go to an unknown land was with the conviction to obey his master. Obedience is the foundation of faith. Without obedience no one can show true faith. Many people claim to have faith but practically are not truly obedient. The Word of God is our commands and we should be perfect doers of that.

2. **Fear of the Unknown:** St. Thomas taught us not to be afraid of the unknown. St. Thomas was sure that the land where he is going to be will be totally alien to him but he knew the Lord is capable of guiding him. Many of us were once upon a time afraid of the unknown when arrived in this land. We all trusted in the guidance of the Lord. The only difference St. Thomas made was that he used all his time and resources for the spreading of the Kingdom of God than use it for his personal use. We instead took all the benefits from God but settled our accounts with God giving a small leftover portion to the needy. We have no more fears here but still we hesitate to spread the Gospel to our own family.

3. **Facing Suffering and Death:** St. Thomas was ready to take suffering and death as we read in St.

John's Gospel. The holy Apostles of Christ with the exception of St. John all others faced martyrdom. St. Thomas followed the path that the Lord showed him. This is the ideal way of bearing witness to Christ. Unfortunately the history of the martyr Church is no more seen in the present days. Everybody looks for comfort, security and prosperity. This is so alien to Christian faith. A true Christian never looked for prosperity and comfort. That is why in an age of comfort-seeking people we are unable to practice our Lord's commands. The King Gondaphorus imprisoned St. Thomas when he thought St. Thomas was spending all the money he got from the King to spread the Gospel and feed the poor. But in a dream the King's deceased brother appeared and told him that a beautiful palace has been built for Gondaphorus in Heaven. We know what Jesus said, "There are many mansions in my

Father's house, if not I would have told you." Thus the King became confident of his mansion in heaven. Just imagine how many of us will have a house in heaven? If we spend all our resources in building an earthly mansion, we will lose a house in heaven. Ever since I knew this truth I was hesitant to purchase a bigger or costlier home for us. And we got enough opportunity to help the needy.

St. Thomas gives this challenge: do you want to obey the Lord? Are you always living in fear of the unknown? Are you afraid of suffering and death? On this memory of St. Thomas let us look up to him and learn some of these lessons.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose

Parish News

HOLY MASS

Following Bishop and Priest Visited our Parish

5th Sunday – Rev Fr Jacob Baby conducted Holy Qurbana

8th Wednesday – HG Mathews Mar Theodosius, Bishop of Idukki Diocese conducted Holy Qurbana at the Chapel

NEW BORN

Jia Elizabeth Varghese – Congratulations to Parents Varghese Jacob and Suvarna Varghese.

PRAYER MEETING

6/12/2016- At the residence of Mr. John Panicker and family

6/25/2016 – At chapel hosted by Mr. David Philip and Family

Bake Sale-

MGOCSM conducted a bake sale in our Parish on 6/26/2016 and for their annual fund raising for Hadootho Camp.

LIBRARY NEWS

Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose delivered a wonderful talk about the most influential book in his life Head First authored by Norman Cousins in the library. The book is available for readers in the library. Fr.

Gheevarghese John will lead July session.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Church Perunnal – July 2nd and 3rd.

Felicitation of Graduates – July 10th.

Hadootho Camp- July 6th to 9th.

Family and Youth Conference – July 13th to 16th

Parish Half Yearly General Body on Sunday, July 17th.

OVBS – July 28th to 30th.

Couples Forum on July 31, addressed by Dr. Binu.

Annual Picnic; Saturday, August 27, 2016.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Mohan Samuel	Jul 1	Sylvia S Renji	Jul 10	Aleyamma Rajan	Jul 22
Rachel Nebu	Jul 1	Abigail M Alexander	Jul 10	Binju Elias	Jul 22
Meenu Ann Mathews	Jul 1	Saramma Thomas	Jul 10	Charly Mathai	Jul 22
Joy Jacob	Jul 2	Achamma Thomas	Jul 11	Kuncheria P V.	Jul 22
Isabella George	Jul 2	Leah Mariam Thomas	Jul 11	Sujith Mathew Thomas	Jul 23
Reesa M Antony	Jul 4	Felix Ronnie	Jul 12	Angela S Panicker	Jul 24
Diboo A Daniel	Jul 4	Thomas Koshy	Jul 13	Remya Brown	Jul 25
Sosa Philip	Jul 6	Reji Joshua Varughese	Jul 13	Cynthia Vattasseril	Jul 25
Geevarghese K John	Jul 7	Messina Ann Abraham	Jul 14	Reshma Brown	Jul 25
Joel George Varghese	Jul 7	Regi Mathai	Jul 14	Reeza Saji	Jul 26
Hannah Marie Jacob	Jul 7	Jacob George	Jul 15	Mariamanna Joseph	Jul 28
Mathew P Cherian	Jul 8	Rev. Fr M K Kuriakose	Jul 15	Thankachan K Mathai	Jul 29
Suvarna Varghese	Jul 8	Prasad George	Jul 15	Chinnu Reba Mathews	Jul 29
Jancy Joy	Jul 8	Emil John Sam	Jul 16	Alwin Panicker	Jul 30
Jiji Mathew	Jul 8	George Joseph	Jul 17	Sobin Benny	Jul 30
Manoj Thomas	Jul 9	Anupama Jacob	Jul 18	Amelia Annie Paul	Jul 30
Beena R John	Jul 9	Reeza A Antony	Jul 19	Thomas Vaidian	Jul 30
Mathew N K.	Jul 10	Beena Thomas	Jul 19	Thomaskutty Varghese	Jul 30
Sabu Abraham	Jul 10	Joseph M C.	Jul 20	Thomas George	Jul 31
Annamma Chacko	Jul 10	Dana Job	Jul 21	Suja Elizabeth George	Jul 31

JULY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Mohan Samuel	Jul 1	Mr. & Mrs. Oommen Geevarghese	Jul 16
Mr. & Mrs. Manoj Mathew	Jul 1	Mr. & Mrs. Alex Pothan	Jul 16
Mr. & Mrs. Renjy Vattasseril	Jul 3	Mr. & Mrs. Binu K. Mathew	Jul 17
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Vaidian	Jul 4	Mr. & Mrs. Rajan Varughese	Jul 18
Mr. & Mrs. Isac P. George	Jul 4	Mr. & Mrs. Nebu Daniel	Jul 20
Mr. & Mrs. Cherian Varghese	Jul 5	Mr. & Mrs. Jacob P Sam	Jul 20
Rev. Fr. & Mrs. Geevarghese John	Jul 5	Mr. & Mrs. Samkutty John	Jul 21
Mr. & Mrs. Kochukoshy P Oommen	Jul 6	Mr. & Mrs. Lajy Raju	Jul 21
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas George	Jul 6	Mr. & Mrs. Sajan Varughese	Jul 22
Mr. & Mrs. John Varghese	Jul 7	Mr. & Mrs. Shaji Thomas	Jul 23
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Mathew	Jul 8	Mr. & Mrs. Varughese M M.	Jul 28
Mr. & Mrs. Oommen V Kappil	Jul 9	Mr. & Mrs. Anish Mathew	Jul 28
Mr. & Mrs. Raju T Chandy	Jul 10	Mr. & Mrs. Sanju John	Jul 28
Mr. & Mrs. Reynold Educula	Jul 12	Mr. & Mrs. Joby George	Jul 29
Mr. & Mrs. Philip K Thomas	Jul 12	Mr. & Mrs. Reji Joshua Varughese	Jul 30
Mr. & Mrs. John P Mathai	Jul 12	Mr. & Mrs. Benny Mathew	Jul 31
Mr. & Mrs. Sathees Easow	Jul 13	Mr. & Mrs. Chacko P Chacko	Jul 31

Sunday School News

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

Principal's Message

Another school year has ended. I thank all the Teachers for their selfless efforts to teach the Word of God to the children, and for leading them in the right path. Thank you parents for supporting the children. Parents indeed are the first teachers of children. Keep reading out to them starting when they are very young. Read Bible stories. Pray together at home. They won't forget what they learn when they are young.

-Oommen Kappil

Return and re-use Textbooks

Many of the students have returned their textbooks to the Sunday School office already. If you haven't, please return them by July 10th.

Upcoming Events

Felicitation of Graduates

The graduates from Middle School, High School, college, and those who earned professional licenses or awards will be honored. As a token of appreciation, our parish will felicitate graduates on Sunday, July 10th after the Holy Qurbana. Later, they will be treated with a special lunch with our Vicars.

Summer Study Series

'Topic Sundays': Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John will lead study classes for students in Grade 7 and up. Achen will lead discussion on different topics during every Sunday of July and August, starting on July 10th.

Sing Along Songs: Suja Abraham will lead sing-along song session for kids, starting at 12.15 pm on July 10th in the Chapel. You will learn popular hymns and songs. Kids in Pre-KG to Grade 6 are invited. Adults also are welcome!

Orthodox Vacation Bible School (OVBS) Registration

Area level OVBS will be held from Thursday July 28 through Saturday, July 30, 2016 in our parish. Ours is the largest OVBS program in the diocese with a lot of fun and educational activities. Last year there were a total of 250 students from 7 Area parishes. 103 students from our parish have registered already. Parents of all Sunday school students aged 5 and up are encouraged to register their students. (Students age 4 to 5 may register as long as the parent stays in the classroom along with the child.) Subsidized registration fee is \$10 per student. Please see Ms. Anu Jacob for more information.

The registration deadline has been extended to July 10th.

OVBS T-Shirt: Students who register by July 10th will get an OVBS T-Shirt. Volunteers and parents are encouraged to sign-up to purchase T-shirts for \$5 each. Youth and Adult sizes are offered, and sample T-shirts will be available for you to decide the size. Students who registered

already have to pick the size you need. Those who register after July 10th won't get a T-Shirt due to time constraints.

Please contact the Sunday School office to pick your size on or before July 10th.

Volunteers Needed: OVBS is looking for Teachers and Volunteers. Please contact Mrs. Anu Jacob if you are interested. (email: anukuriakose@gmail.com)

Talent Competitions -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."

Note: All Grades are based on Secular School Grades as of Jan. 1, 2016

2016 Sunday School Calendar

Event	Date	Venue	Coordinator
Felicitation of Graduates	Sunday, July 10	Our parish	Oommen Kappil
OVBS	Thu-Sat, Jul 28-30	Our parish	Anu Jacob
Talent Competition-Parish level	Sunday, Sep. 18	Our parish	Bishel Baby
Talent Competition-Area level	Saturday, Oct 8	St. Johns Church	Bishel Baby
Talent Show/Competition-Diocesan level	Saturday, Oct 29	Our parish	Betsy George/ Bishel Baby

