



**ST. THOMAS  
INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111**

**NEWSLETTER**

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## VICAR'S MESSAGE

### BACK TO SCHOOL

In America "schooling" is a concept than a level of education which means educational efforts. Therefore, starting different levels of schools and college education is called 'back to school". One of the most exciting seasons for me was always school re-opening time. One of the reasons is that we get new dress only when the school re-opens. I know many others used to get new dress during Onam or Christmas time but we never got at that time. Also new pen, pencil, textbooks, notebooks and so on are all exciting. In addition for me the school atmosphere was an opportunity for learning new things and indeed a lot of time for me to play soccer!

In spite of all the advantages of the schooling there were so many aborigines of my village who never wanted to come to school. I remember bringing some boys and girls of the aborigines to school who will run away from the school while the class was going on. Then the school teacher and others will run after them to catch them and bring back to school. Those times are all gone. People have now learned how important it is to get education and transform one's life.

#### What Can Education Do for Us?

1. Schooling brings literacy. Literacy is the means of gaining knowledge in various areas. Not only languages but also different disciplines of education like science, social studies, arts, sports, math, and so on. There is no limit for education these days. From rocket science to farming we need proper education.
2. Education helps us acquire a higher culture. Sometimes it is the global culture that can only be available with education. It helps us know how people of other cultures and nations live. There is a lot of inter-penetration of cultures that help each



person to respect and share the technology and values.

3. Education gives the greatest possibility of acquiring the right character which helps a person to be decent, well-behaved and helpful. We learn about social and family values when we learn about other people's life. Mahatma Gandhi said, "education without character is of no value." What Mahatma meant is that the people who have learned a lot and became great scholars need not be most well-behaved people. It is the learning of values that makes a person different in his/her approach to others.

4. Education in the Sunday School is another branch of learning where people have much higher learning time. There our children learn how to be a Christian. Once the children learn the values of a Christian, it is the ultimate knowledge whereby that person becomes the most useful one in the community. The Sunday School education permeates into the secular education as well. They can do much better in the school because they will not have much worldly attractions. They can spend all their time for studies and empowerment. We do see a lot of anti-social elements in the community and most of them are lacking proper spiritual education. Therefore, Sunday school is the greatest arena of human education.

Let us hope and pray that the new school year will bring fruitful time for our children. Let us pray for them and train them in the right way so that our families and the parish are benefited.

Lovingly,  
Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

## Parish News

**MGOCSM:** From July 10 through August 21, MGOCSM was able to conduct Topic Sundays, with the help of Gheevarghese John achen. During these Sundays, achen talked about different topics, which benefited our youngsters. On August 19th, MGOCSM held a potluck which allowed the youth of our church to come together and have fun before schools and colleges began. The event was a great success, many came out and enjoyed a night full of games, socialization, and food.

**Cancer Awareness Fund Raising:** Under the auspices of our parish a fundraising program was conducted in our social hall on August 13th. The youngsters were able to bring several groups of dancers and performers from the public for this program which was successful in raising approximately \$6000.00. Our elders joined hands in preparing fresh snacks to be sold at the program. Many thanks to all who cooperated with this effort. The money collected was sent to St. Jude Children's Cancer Research Institute in Tennessee.

**Church Picnic:** Our parish picnic was held at the Tamanend Park, Southampton on Saturday, August 26th. More than 300 people attended the event. Traditional barbeque cooking and games took place. It was a great time of friendship and fellowship for the parishioners. A large team of volunteers helped in organizing the events under the leadership of Sathees Easow the Picnic coordinator and David Philip the games and sports coordinator. The ladies helped in preparing the vegetable salad while the men helped in making dosa, and barbecuing different items. Many thanks to the coordinators, the PA system (Anooj) operators, game-conductors, and very specially to the team of hard working young men and women who helped preparing all food items in the church the previous days and to those who helped in shopping.

**HH Catholicos' Visit:** His Holiness visited two of our parishes in Philadelphia area. On Saturday, August 26th His Holiness was welcomed at the St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Bensalem where HH inaugurated the ministry Center that they acquired recently and addressed the gathering after the evening prayer. His Grace Mar Nicholovos the Diocesan Metropolitan was also present. Several members of our parish attended.

On Sunday, August 27, 2016 the Holy Qurbana was conducted under the leadership of HH and Catholicate Day Collection for Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Washington DC and other areas was taken. His Grace Yuhanon Mar Chrisostomos the Director of Finance of our Church was also present. This was the second event of Catholicate Day Collection in our Diocese. The first one was at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Floral Park, NY on Saturday, August 26th.

**Demise of Mrs. Amminikutty John Kochamma (64):** Mrs. Amminikutty Kochamma, wife of Rev. Fr. K. K. John and mother of our Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John entered the eternal abode on August 4, 2016. Kochamma was under treatment after a brain surgery and bed ridden for several months. Kochamma was a noble soul of character, friendliness and faith. She leaves behind her contagious pleasant smile that no one can forget. Her passing is a little untimely but we have to take the will of God for granted. May the departed Soul find solace with the Lord and her memory be made eternal. The Lord bless the both the Achens and the other family members!

Our parish took serious responsibility in sharing the grief with that family and helped preparing for the funeral in cooperation with St. Thomas (Mascher Street) parish where Rev. Fr. KK John is the Vicar. The viewing took place in our Church on Sunday, August 7th from 4:00 p.m. Thousands of people came to pay their homage. The interment took place in the cemetery owned by parish. Several members of our parish helped in various aspects of the funeral preparation especially ordering and serving food on the occasion of the viewing and funeral. Our Vicar Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose have leadership to all the events related to the wake and funeral.

**Engagement:** Varghese Jacob (Jibin) was engaged on August 6th

**Divyabodhanam:** Our ladies took part in the Divyabodhanam class took place at St. Gregorios Church on August 13<sup>th</sup>

**St. Mary's Assumption Festival:** The sacred memory of the Assumption of St. Mary was observed in our parish on Sunday, August 14th with special intercessory prayers.

**Ecumenical Game Day:** August 20th was the Ecumenical Game Day. Our parish teams took part in Basketball and Volleyball events. Hundreds of youth attended this event including several youth from our parish.

### **Forthcoming Events**

**Harvest Festival:** This year our Harvest Festival will be on Saturday, October 1, commemorating the anniversary of the consecration of our present Sanctuary in 2005. There will be several food, clothing, and other items for sale, games for all ages and American auction of gold coin. All are earnestly requested to attend this event.

**MMS Conference:** The MMVS Annual Meeting at Diocesan level will be hosted at our parish on Saturday, October 15, 2016. We are expecting more than 500 delegates from other parishes in the Diocese to attend the function. Help will be needed from many people to organize this function.

**Ettunompu:** From September 1 through 8 there will be evening prayer at 7:00 p.m. in our parish. All our members are requested to attend the prayers.

**5K Run/1K Walk for Homeless:** Under the aegis of the Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian churches there will be a 5K run/1K walk at Bensalem Park. This is with a view to raising funds to help the homeless in the City of Philadelphia. All our members are invited to take part in it. Many of our members already got registered to run.

**MOCF Convention:** The Malankara Orthodox Christian Fellowship of Pennsylvania Annual Convention will be held at the St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Bensalem on Saturday, September 10th and Sunday, September 11th. All our members are encouraged to attend the preaching. Rev. Fr. Zacharia Ninan a famous convention speaker from Kerala will be the main speaker.

**Feast of the Cross:** In honor of the Cross of our Lord that was found by the Queen Helene in the 4th century AD there will be Holy Qurbana at our church on September 14th from 6:00 pm.

**40th Day of Mrs. Amminikkutty John Kochamma:** This will be observed on Wednesday September 14th from 6:00 p.m. under joint auspices of both St. Thomas, Mascher Street and our parish. All the faithful are invited to the divine service and dinner followed by it.

**Ecumenical Convention:** Ecumenical Convention will be held at our church this year on Sunday, October 16, 2016. More details will be announced later.

## Sunday School News

*Submitted by Oommen Kappil, Principal  
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### Sunday School Opening

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.

### General Session

**Juniors:** Beena John and Mercy Cherian will lead the General Session for Juniors (Grade 4 and under).

**Middle School:** The leaders for the Middle School Session are Merlin Rajan and Carolyn Cherian. They will meet in the Sunday School Hall.

**Seniors:** The leaders for Senior Session (High School students) are Aswathi Jacob and Melissa Thomas. They will meet in Room 10/11.

### Centralized Exam Results-2015

The results of the Centralized Examinations including Teachers Training Certificate (TTC) examination held in June have been published. A summary of the top ranks from our parish is given below.

Congratulations to all the top rank holders. Special thanks to the teachers and parents for training and supporting the children. It's noteworthy that Mrs. Susan John, one of our teachers earned third rank in the Diocese for TTC Examination.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Student Name</u>
5	2nd	Aleena Robin
5	5th	Eleena John
5	8th	Carrolyn Thomas
8	2nd	Misha Mathai
10	3rd	Chinnu Mathews
10	9th	Shanya Alex
12	9 <sup>th</sup>	Paul Jacob

12	10th	Christeena Saji
TTC	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Susan Varghese

### Event Reports

#### Summer Study Series

We had a successful summer with three concurrent sessions for students. 'Topic Sundays' led by Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John, Sing Along Songs led by Suja Abraham, and Malayalam Class led by Ajin Abraham. We thank these leaders for their sincere service to the children.

### Current Activities

#### School Supplies for under-privileged students

Sunday School is collecting school supplies for financially struggling students in our neighborhood schools. We request parents to buy extra school supplies when you do shopping for your own children, and bring them to Church by Sept 4th. We are collecting cash donations also. \$5 to \$25 is acceptable. Please contact Jessly Alex or Jessie Jacob for more information.

#### First Alphabet writing

Parents who wish to start the schooling of their children with First Alphabet writing are encouraged to bring their children to the library on Sunday, Sep. 4th after Holy Qurbana. Our Achens will pray for them and start the formal education at the time.

### Upcoming Events

#### Talent Competitions -2016

##### Talent Competitions (Sunday September 18<sup>th</sup>)

The registration for the Talent competition is almost complete.

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**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
First Alphabet writing	Sunday, Sep. 4	Library	Susan Mathew
Sunday School Opening Day	Sunday, Sept.4	Our Church	NA
Prize distribution-Assigned competition	Sunday, Sept. 11	Our Church	Liz Pothen
Talent Competition-Parish Level	Sunday, Sept 18	Our Church	Santhosh Baby
Class Exam Trophy distribution	Sunday, Sept 25	Our Church	Santhosh Baby
Talent Competition-Area level	Saturday, Oct 8	St. Johns Church	Bishel Baby
Talent Show/Competition-Diocesan level	Saturday, Oct 29	Our Church	Milly Philip/ Bishel Baby