

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



NEWSLETTER

STTHOMASPHILADELPHIA.ORG | PHONE: 215.342.1500 | FAX: 215.342.2700

VICAR’S MESSAGE

Nineveh Lent/Three-day Lent

This year the Three-day Lent falls on February 6,7, and 8. The Three-day Lent is mostly observed by the Oriental Orthodox community to which the Malankara Orthodox Church belongs. It is one of the most strictly observed lents because it is only for three days and people find easy to observe strictly. Many of our parishes conduct daily worship in the churches. The lent begins with evening prayer on a Sunday and ends with Holy Qurbana on Thursday close to noon time. For our parish we conduct evening prayer on all evenings till Wednesday and finish the lent with evening Holy Qurbana. Several parishes in the Malankara Church in Kerala conduct very detailed programs during this time including the great Makkamkunnu Convention. This is just to highlight the fact that our Church observes this lent seriously.

Prophet Jonah’s story dominates in the Nineveh lent time. Prophet Jonah spent three days in the belly of the large fish and thus the lent was named after that prophet. In fact the importance of those three days were highlighted by our Lord in Matthew 12:40 comparing the Lord’s entombment after death and resurrection on the third day. Therefore both New Testament and Old Testament are interconnected in this lent. However, the importance of the lent is not directly attached to the death and resurrection of the Lord. This lent is primarily a lent for repentance and rededication. It does not mean that other lents are not targeted to repentance. This particular lent takes the model of the people of Nineveh who after the preaching of prophet Jonah decided to repent on their sins and avoided God’s wrath on them. We learn two importance lessons from this.

1. God can Change the Course even When Man is Disobedient: According to the story of Jonah the Lord’s words came to him to preach repentance to the people of the great city Nineveh. Jonah disobeyed it and went the opposite way to escape the assignment given to him. But God ordained the hurricane like situation to the ocean in which Jonah was traveling. Jonah was thrown overboard from the ship. God arranged a fish devour him and vomit him

out
the



to

shores of Nineveh. Jonah had to go through some suffering and adversity but ultimately he came into the hands of God to proclaim His words to the people. When we disobey, God may sometimes ordain other situations to make us obey Him with which some negative situation may affect us. But ultimately God will help us to carry out His mission. We should always keep in mind that God is in charge and so our duty is to simply obey Him and do the job instead of taking a different course of action. When we go away, there will be adverse situation that devour us but do not be dismayed, God will bring us to the right shore for our work.

2. God’s Love for the Pagan Community: It is interesting to notice that a Jewish prophet was sent to the pagan community in Nineveh for their repentance. Jonah was hesitating to preach to them about repentance. Normally no Jew will obey such a command because any one outside the “God’s Own People” is not a mission for them. Through this story the Bible is teaching us that God owns the entire universe and all human beings. Often religious groups have self-claims that they are the selected people of God! It is true that all human beings are God’s selected people. One particular group need not make any special claim but those who make the claim should remember that HUMAN beings are the creation of God and God has no partiality. That is why seeing the repentance of the Ninevehites, God removed the punishment that was spelt on them. God wants every human being to be like God because He created them in His own image and likeness. If some community wants to claim that they are the special people of God, that is fine, but let them prove that they are the children of God and love others like God loves. That’s all. Thus all those who claim as God’s people will make the entire world a God Community than a human community. If anyone fails to live up to that caliber let them not

make any false claims in the name of God. I wished all Christian Churches/Denominations are aware of this fact! First live according to the Word of God and witness to God's love and then blame others.

I hope and pray that this three-day lent will be a great time of repentance and reflection for all of us. God Bless you. Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose.

Parish News

Office bears of 2017

The new office bears of the parish took over the responsibilities on after the Holy Qurbana on 1/1/2017.



New Born: Suma and Sunil Poovanal are blessed with a baby girl, Elina.

Obituary:

- Mr. C J George, father of Mrs. Alice Sathesh, was called to eternal life. Alice left to India to attend the funeral.
- Mr. John Mathew, Nephew of Mr. Thankachen K. Mathai, Kunjamma Thomas and Podiyamma Cherian passed away in India.
- Annie P. Chandy, sister of Mr. George Varghese (Membership # 257) passed away in India.

Please pray for the departed souls and bereaving families.

GROW Conference: God Renewing Orthodox Women (GROW) is a ministry of the Northeast American Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. GROW conference was held at our parish on Saturday, January 27, 2017. The conference was led by Rev. Fr. Timothy (Tenny) Thomas. About 50 women from various parishes in the diocese attended this conference.

Prayer Meeting: Prayer Calendar is placed in the notice board for your convenience. Those who wish to conduct the prayer at your home or at church, please write your name and phone number.

Church Directory: The Church Directory was distributed on 1/22/2017. Those who did not receive your copy, please contact the office.

Vicar's Vacation: Our Vicar Rev Fr, M K Kuriakose left to India on January 25th for a short vacation. Achen and Kochamma reached their hometown safely. Please pray for his safe return. Please contact the Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Geecarghese John if in need of any Pastoral care.

Priest's Visit: Rev. K. Mathai Cor-Episcopa was the chief celebrant of Holy Qurbana on January 1st and January 29th.

Officials of the Spiritual Organizations:

MMS - Secretary : Mrs. Beena Sam, Treasurer : Mrs. Lilly Ealias, Asst. Secretary: Mrs. Bindu Sam

MGOCSM - Secretary: Ms. Messina Abraham, Treasurer: Tony Biju, P R Representative: Ruben Sam, Community Service representative: Nissi Zachariah.

OCYM - Vice President: Binu Mathew, Secretary: Sandeep Thompson and Treasurer: Charly Mathai.

Men's Forum - Secretary: Thomaskutty Varghese Treasurer: N V Thomas .

Sick List: From February 5th Sunday onwards, new sick list will be used to pray during the Holy Qurbana. Please write the names of the sick people in the register kept in the office.

Bible Reading Program: Complete Bible reading within a year program is started. In this there are two Sections. One section is for Sunday School grade 1 to 4 students. They need to read complete 4 Gospels only within a year. Second section is for others. They have to complete all 66 Books.

Rev.Fr. M.K. Kuriakose distributed Prize for those who read the entire Bible in 2016 in the Library Hall on 1/8/2017. The winners are Mrs. Saramma George (mother of Mrs.Leni Mampallil) and Mrs.Mercy Panicker. Congratulations and God bless you.

Autopay of Monthly Subscription: Members can pay their subscription every month automatically from their Bank account. The ACH provides a mechanism for the church to directly deduct monthly subscription from their bank account. A member wishing to use the ACH service provides the Treasurer with a voided check and signs a form authorizing the church to debit their bank account. Instead of a voided check, the member can also provide their bank name, routing number and account number. Once this information is provided, the church can start debiting the members account for subscription of a particular date (of member's choice) of every month. The automatic debit for 2017 subscription is set-up as \$85 per month for 11 months and \$65 in December (total \$1,000).

Receipt: If you did not collect the yearend receipt of your contribution of 2016 from the Treasurer on last Sunday, you would have received it by mail. If you did not receive it or you have any question, please contact the Treasurer.

Priest's Refreshment: The refreshment calendar is posted in the notice board in front of the office. Members are requested to fill the vacant dates.

Family and Youth Conference: This year the Family and Youth Conference of Northeast American Diocese at Kalahari Resorts and Conventions, Pokono Manor, PA 18349 from July 12 to July 15. The registration Kick off was conducted at our church on 1/22/2017. Please register on line [WWW. Fyconf.org\registration](http://WWW.Fyconf.org/registration). For more information please contact Mr. Rajan Padiyara or Mrs. Reena Susan Mathew.

Upcomming Events: Three days Lent February 6 to 9. There will be evening prayer at our Chapel from February 5th Sunday to Feb: 7th Tuesday and Holy Qurbana on Wedensday evening.

From The Secretary’s Desk

Fire Alarm and Fire Safety

On Sunday, 1/8/2017, at about 12:30 PM our fire alarm sounded. The majority of our members were sitting in the parish hall and disregarded the alarm.

Please note the when you hear the fire alarm, never assume that it is a false alarm or the system is being tested. Even if your area is clear of smoke or odor, do not disregard the alarm. You must leave the building immediately unless you are informed otherwise by the responsible officials.

Our church building is equipped with more than 20 fire extinguishers kept in various parts of the building. When the company technicians came for a periodical inspection, they found that the regulator of one of the fire extinguishers in the gym area was broken and the pin of another fire extinguisher near the sanctuary was pulled.

Please do not tamper with our safety equipment.

John Panicker

February Birthdays

Jessly Alex Feb
 Manju Ansey Jacob Feb
 Saramma Thomas Feb
 Sajan Benny Feb
 Varghese Baby Feb
 Binu Thankachan Feb
 Manu Varghese Feb
 Edwin Saji Feb
 Simmy Aneena Jacob Feb
 Reeja George Feb
 Joelyne Jacob Feb
 Jeena Jacob Feb
 Sunil Raj Poovannal Feb

Sheena Vaidian Feb
 Reni Nelson Feb
 Steffin Manoj Feb
 Noel Stephen Feb
 Vinod Jacob Feb
 Grace John Feb
 Jaime M George Feb
 Melissa Alice Abraham Feb
 Gibson Thomas GeorgeFeb
 Cristia Susan Shibu Feb
 Evana V John Feb
 Aleyamma Varghese Feb
 Tiby Raju Feb

Rachel J. Jacob Feb
 Paul C John Feb
 Alex P Symon Feb
 Alexander Mathai Feb
 Jibin K Alex Feb
 Saramma Varghese Feb
 Shibu Thomas Feb
 Jiju Alex Feb
 Justin K Alex Feb
 Bessie Mathew Feb
 Raji Aji Feb
 Ezekiel Raju Feb
 Jimmy Thomas Feb

David Roy	Feb	Nathania Susan George	Feb	Zarah Kurian	Feb
George Varughese	Feb	Philip Melavila	Feb	Binny Cherian	Feb
Mary Daniel	Feb	Jenny Raj	Feb	Chinnamma Philip	Feb
Abraham John	Feb	Robin P. Montharayil	Feb	Cherian Varghese	Feb
Milly Philip	Feb	Jacob P Chacko	Feb	Joby George	Feb
Teena Aliza Prince	Feb	Sophy Mathew	Feb	Jaisy John	Feb
Maya Kappil	Feb	Mariamamma Cherian	Feb	Sally Thomas	Feb
Alia Ann Bivin	Feb	Leelamma Rajan	Feb	Leon Lynnson	Feb
Jayden Mathew	Feb	Subi Mathew	Feb	Susan Abraham George	Feb
Norah Mary Daniel	Feb	Ashok Mathew Koshy	Feb	Silpa M. Thomas	Feb

February Wedding Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. Paul C John	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Ron Philip	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. Thankachan P Daniel	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Robin Philip	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. Koshy Daniel	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Oommen G. Panicker	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. Rajan C Padiyara	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Jiju Alex	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. Nelson O Panicker	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Anil George Panicker	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob M Zachariah	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Aji P Abraham	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. George Varghese	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew A.P George	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. Anto G Panicker	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew N K.	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. N K Thomas	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Simon Cheeran Ittikuru	Feb
Mr. & Mrs. Cherian V V.	Feb	Mr. & Mrs. Maliyil M Philip	Feb
		Mr. & Mrs. Abraham Varghese	Feb
		Mr. & Mrs. Bivin Varghese Pulivelil	Feb
		Mr. & Mrs. George Joseph	Feb
		Mr. & Mrs. Jose K. John	Feb



Books to Read

Living in the midst of multiple sophisticated technologies at our fingertips, a major impact has happened on our reading habits. Readings has been minimized to social media and minimal news. In this section, you can share books that inspired you that you would like to share with others. Reading has indeed changed from paper to screens, and many of the titles are available at our fingertips.

Nilathezhuthu

This book is a collection of writings by Fr. Bobby Jose Capuchin in Malayalam. Reflecting on scripture verses and stories, Fr. Bobby dives in to the depth of the hearts by touching various aspects of human life.

The book is available at different bookstores in India and a few online sellers.

Sunday School News

*Submitted by Oommen Kappil, Principal
(Tel.: 267.902.8500, email: kappil1@yahoo.com)*

Principal's Message

The New Year is always a time to start preparing for the year. We started with a Staff Meeting on Jan. 15th. An Area-level Teachers' Meeting was held on Jan. 22nd. Mid-term exam was held for all Grades. Please watch the Sunday School Calendar given at the end to know more about various events scheduled for the year.

Opinion Poll/Survey

The Diocesan Sunday School is seeking your opinion on how to improve Talent Competition and other activities. Please watch out for Sunday School emails or Facebook announcements about the same. Parents, Teachers and students are requested to participate, submit comments and suggestions. Please fill out the survey before the posted deadline. Let's all work together to ensure that the children we are entrusted with are benefitted from all our activities.

CAYA Fellowship

(Submitted by Carolyn Cherian)

CAYA is a fellowship (**for Grades 5-8**) in which children learn how to deal with everyday life struggles and how to incorporate God in their daily lives no matter the circumstances. The acronym CAYA stands for "Come As You Are". In this fellowship, the children understand that no matter what hardships one may be in, God will always be there for them. The overall theme for the month of January was our relationships with people around us, whether it be family, friends, or peers. Each week during general session, we discussed our relationships with others and God. We spoke about new beginnings, Godly versus ungodly relationships, what a good relationship should look like, and we had Mr. Binny Cherian come in as a guest speaker of the month. In the month of February, the overall theme is God's Unconditional Love for all of us. The theme verse for this month is taken from 1 John 4:8 which states, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." The weekly topics we will talk about will connect to the subtheme of managing time for school and God. The main point we will emphasize is that time must be made for God not found. To be closer to God we have to make the initiative to spend time with Him. There will also be a monthly meeting on **Saturday, February 11th, 2017**. This meeting will take place from **3:00 PM-5:00 PM**. This meeting will help the children learn more about God and how to deal with different things at school. We will also have a guest speaker come in and talk to the children about God's Love. It will take place in the **Sunday School Hall**. This is open to any child in the junior group during General Session (Grades 5-8). No matter how old you are, if you put yourself in God's loving hands, He is ready to accept you because He is our Heavenly Father.

2017 Sunday School Calendar

Event	Date	Venue	Coordinator
Teachers' Fellowship	Saturday, Feb. 25	Residence of Jessly & Alex Symon	Bishel Baby
Workshop on Holy Baptism & Confirmation	Saturday, March 18	St. Mary's Church, Devereaux St.	Phila. Area SS
TTC Refresher Course	Saturday, March 18	St. Mary's Church, Devereaux St.	Phila. Area SS
Assigned Competition-Parish Level	Sunday, April 23	Our Church	Liz Pothen
Assigned Competition-Area Level	Sunday, May 14	St. Gregorios Church, Bensalem	Reni Biju
Area Teachers' Fellowship	Saturday, June 3, 3-6 pm	TBA	Phila. Area SS
Centralized Exam-Grade 12	Sunday, June 5	St. Thomas Church, Mascher St.	Santhosh Baby
Centralized Exam-Grade 5, 8, 10, TTC	Sunday, June 26	St. George Church, Fairless Hills	Santhosh Baby
OVBS	Thu-Sat, Aug 3-5	Our Church	Suja Sabu/Anu Kuriakose
Talent Competition-Parish level	Sunday, Sept 17	Our Church	Bishel Baby
Talent Competition-Area level	Saturday, Oct. 7	St. Johns Church	Annie Varghese
Talent Competition-Diocesan level	Saturday, Oct. 28	TBA	Mathew George