

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



**NEWSLETTER**

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## VICAR'S MESSAGE

### The Great Lent: God Offers Another Chance

In the Orthodox spirituality lent plays a huge role in replenishing the believers both physically and spiritually. I consider the Lenten season as opportunity offered by God for re-energizing and re-strengthening our life in general. Often Lent is considered as a time for spiritual wellbeing and enrichment. The modern researchers every day brings some news or the other on the advantage of food restrictions for human health. Once upon a time the Lenten time was just a time for food restriction, more prayer, confession and spiritual enrichment. Our Fathers did not do any research but they knew the advantage of control of food in maintaining of human health. Along with that they also added spiritual components which enriched the humans holistically. Therefore, lent is a great attraction even in the secular world. Last year my blood work proved increase in the bad cholesterol and a blood test after Lenten season proved that all readings including cholesterol were normal.

In addition to the physical conditioning it is highly essential for humans to have the spiritual conditioning as well. Often we rarely think of the bad effects of evils in our life. Lenten season offers us a time to overcome our evils to a great extent and that brings spiritual health in our personal life. Spiritual health also contributes to physical health as our spirituality

can



guide our bodies to do the right thing. Evil thoughts, evil associations and evil activities can destroy a person, a family or a society. These days we are overwhelmed with senseless violence, evil activities etc. all around us. Our security is in jeopardy in many respects. Even though the world is improving comfort in life, humans cannot have comfort as their ability to trust people, and live without fear is in question. Only a good spiritual education can change the situation. Everybody wants peace, comfort, joy and love but who will give these to others? All are selfish. Our mentality to “receive” is on the rise than to “give”. Lent trains us to give than to receive. Almsgiving, serving others, caring for others etc. are the themes of the Lenten season sermons. Will that impact anyone? It should. Thus a good lent observance will bring us both physical and spiritual health. Every lent is another opportunity that God gives us to improve our life.

I hope and pray that this year's Great Lent will help us all enrich us in our body, mind and spirit.

Lovingly,  
Fr. M. K. Kuriakose

## Parish News

**Study Classes about Holy Qurbana:** Spiritual Enrichment Committee decided to conduct a series of classes about the importance and significance of the Holy Qurbana. The first lesson was about Thooyobo (preparatory prayers) and was on February 19th. The class was conducted by Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John. A lot of members attended the study session and learned about Thooyobo.

**Meeting of the Malankara Association Representatives:** The meeting of the Malankara Association representatives of Northeast American Diocese was conducted in our church on February 11th. The representatives nominated Rev. Fr. Laby George Panakkamattam, Mr. George Thumpayil and Mr. Roy Ennacheril to the Managing Committee.

**Nineveh lent:** We observed the Three-day Lent from February 5th evening to February 8th evening. A lot of members participated in the evening prayer and Holy Qurbana and received the blessings.

**Great Lent and Holy Week Programs:** As usual, there will be evening prayer on all days of the Lent, Holy Qurbana on Mid-lent (Wednesday, March 22nd evening), on the day of annunciation to St. Mary (Friday, March 24th evening) and 40th Friday and Lazarus Saturday (April 7th Friday at 6:30 PM).

**Holy Week Services:** His Grace Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios of Delhi Diocese will lead the Holy Week Services including the morning, noon and evening prayers. For details, please refer the Holy Week flyer. His Grace will lead the Feet Washing ceremony on April 13th at 5:00 p.m.

**Parish Lenten Retreat:** Parish retreat will be on Saturday, March 25th from 9:30 a.m. Rev. Fr. Philip C. Abraham, (Vicar, St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Yonkers) will lead the retreat. This offers us a time to listen to the powerful Word of God, to repent and empower our spiritual life. After the retreat, there will be opportunity for Holy Confession.

**MOCF Retreat:** MOCF retreat will be on Saturday, March 18th from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM at St Mary's Cathedral, 1424 Orthodox St, Philadelphia, PA 19124. Rev. Fr. Paulose Peter, Vicar, St Mary's Church, White Plains, NY will lead the retreat. All members are requested to participate in the retreat.

**MGOCSM Retreat:** The Lenten retreat of MGOCSM of Philadelphia & DC/Maryland/Virginia/North Carolina Areas was held on Saturday, February 25th, 2017 at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Washington D. C. Rev. Fr. Anoop Thomas Will be the speaker. A few members of our parish attended the same.

**Reorganization Anniversary:** Our parish, which was formed in 1976 and scattered in 1995, was re-congregated and started worship in the Chapel of Cardinal Dougherty High School on February 18, 1996 under the leadership of Rev. Fr. M.K. Kuriakose. The reorganization anniversary was celebrated on 2/19/17. The Vicar and the Secretary recollected the sweet memories of the reorganization.

**Church Directory:** Church directory was distributed to the members. Those who did not receive the directory, please collect it from the office.

The wedding of Manju Jacob (daughter of Jacob M. Zachariah and Annamma Jacob) with Jephine Abraham was solemnized in India on 28th January.

The engagement of Betsy George (daughter of George Eapen and Rosamma George) and Alwin Kuruvilla was held on 2/18/2017.

The parish wishes all the best to both young couples and pray for them.

**First Paycheck Donation:** Joshua Koshy donated his first Pay check to the Church Parking Lot Fund. Thank you Joshua for your generosity.

**CAYA Fellowship:**

The bible verse for CAYA for the month of February was - “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16). Corresponding with the verse, the the integral theme of this month was God’s love. Throughout the month of February, we talked about how we can stay connected in God’s love and express our love to God. In addition, we incorporated the subtheme of time management and how to balance school, personal life and spiritual life and various methods to stay on task and improve time management skills. The core of this month was our February monthly meeting on February 11, 2017. We had numerous discussions, did activities, skits and crafts all pertaining to managing time, a skill a lot of kids and adults struggle with. If you would like to join CAYA, a 5th to 8th grade ministry, please contact Reena Susan Mathews or Flamy Philip.

**From Secretary’s Desk**

**St. Thomas Volunteer Group:** In the early years of the acquirement of our church, almost all of the members of our parish volunteered their time and energy for the upkeep of our church building and compound. On Saturdays and holidays, families came to do physical labor for the parish. This was a time of fun and enjoyment for our members. It increased the affinity towards the church and the relationship between families. This kind of cooperation has slowly diminished over the recent years. However, recently, more than twenty youngsters came to change electric bulbs in the sanctuary and we are excited about it. We would like to revitalize this kind of volunteerism.

We would like to start a WhatsApp group. Those of you who would like to spare some free time for the church, are encouraged to join the group. When we plan any cleaning or maintenance work, we will send a message on WhatsApp. We urge everyone to join the St. Thomas Volunteer Group

John Panicker  
Parish Secretary

**March Birthdays**

Christian John  
Kunjappy Koshy  
Abel G Panicker  
Aswathi Eliz Jacob  
Julice John Raju  
Stacy M George  
James C Peter  
Elizabeth Kurian  
Rebekah Mathew  
Podiamma Thankachan  
Philip George  
Joshua Jacob Jose  
Justin Ronnie  
Simon Cheeran Ittikuru  
Nissi E. Zachariah  
Saji Abraham  
Susan Daniel  
Nelson O Panicker  
Previn G Joseph  
Annamma Samuel  
Merlin Philip  
Biju P. Varghese  
Jerin G Juby  
Binu K. Mathew

Aneena Mariam Daniel  
Vincet Jacob  
Suresh Cherian  
Sosamma Jacob  
Shibin Mathew Koshy  
Aradhana Rose John  
Reena Raju  
Bibin P. Baby  
Asriel Ann Vaidian  
Nikhil M Philip  
Pramod S. Kurisinmoottil  
Varughese M M.  
Thejus Mathew  
Daniel P. George  
Sarah Roy  
Abhilash John  
Cherian V V.  
Josna  
Aju Jacob  
Mariakutty Thomas  
Toby Johnes Fen  
Rohan Philip Robin  
Mary Kuriakose  
Tiji David Thomas

Alex Pothen  
Rajan C Padiyara  
Susan Mathews  
Mathew Varghese  
Lucas Philip  
Ashin Saju  
Daniel Yohannan  
Alvin V Jose  
Blesson Daniel Thomas  
Susan Panicker  
Rachel Melavila  
Jacob Varghese  
Megha S Varghese  
Cicily George Cherian  
Raji K John  
Alen Saju  
Lovina Maria Aji  
Annamma Cherian  
Paul Jacob  
Ammukutty Geevarghese  
Daniel Thomas  
Raji George  
Izabella Ann Philip

## March Wedding Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. Achen Varghese     Mar 21  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Chacko     Mar 30

## Memory of St. Gheevarghese Mar Dionysius and H. G. Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios on February 23



Vattasseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysius is popularly known as Malankara Sabha Bhasuran (The Great Luminary of Malankara Orthodox Church) which our Church has bestowed on him in recognition of his rich contribution to Malankara Orthodox Church. Vattasseril Thirumeni was a man of prayer, determination and dynamism. He was a saint who never stooped before falsehood.

He bravely fought for the establishment of Catholicate to be the symbol of self-identity and independence of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The unique and historic contribution of Mar Dionysius is the establishment of Catholicate in Malankara in 1912 at Kottayam. He can be called as the architect of the Indian Orthodox Church and thus endeared himself as one of the greatest fathers of the Indian Orthodox Church.



Metropolitan His Grace Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios, a native of Kerala, India, was born on May 26, 1926 to Mr. Chacko & Mrs. Mariamma Kuttikandathil. In 1952, he was ordained as a Priest by His Holiness Catholicos Geevarghese Baselios I. In 1979, His Grace Mar Makarios was enthroned as the first Metropolitan of the American Diocese of the Indian Orthodox Church. Since 1985, Metropolitan has been teaching religion classes at Alma College in Michigan. In 1990, Alma College conferred Metropolitan with the degree of Doctor of Divinity Honorees Causa

In 1994, His Grace Mar Makarios was appointed as the first Metropolitan of the newly created Canada & Europe Diocese. His Grace Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios passed away on February 23, 2008 as a result of a tragic car accident in early January 2008 during his archpastoral visit to his diocese in the United Kingdom.

## 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.*



### Is It All In Your Head?

Is It All In Your Head? By Dr. Sullivan is a collection of experiences. During her career as a neurologist, Dr. Sullivan addresses various types of patients with different types of neurology related issue. She also found that all of those issues were not neurological, but psychological also. She shares a bunch of different experiences with patients, their dilemmas, struggles and sometimes their eventual healing.

The book is available at different online bookstores.

## Sunday School News

*Submitted by Oommen Kappil, Principal  
(Tel.: 267.902.8500, email: [kappil@yahoo.com](mailto:kappil@yahoo.com))*

### Upcoming Events

#### Senior Care Facility Visit

(Submitted by Milly Philip)

“I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.”— William Penn

When I was teaching my 5<sup>th</sup> Grade of Sunday school, I was talking to my students about “Respect elders and how should we take care of our grandparents”. When we were discussing one young boy was sharing his thoughts. I was amazed when he explained how he is treating his grandparents. When his parents ask for any help, he waits to finish his homework or chores he is doing. But when his grandparents ask for any help, he said never procrastinate, the moment they ask, he helps them because grandparents are weak now and not easily move around, they need our care and support.

Our church and Sunday school always respect, care and treasure the elderly people in our community. We used to visit Nursing homes for elders and our Sunday school children entertain them and spend some time with them. This year also we are planning to do same by end of April. Date and Venue to be announced later.

Let’s do something good and spread it, so that people may imitate it. Let us teach our younger generation to respect and listen to elders and spread the message to everyone not to ignore or neglect parents. They deserve much more love and respect .Remember nobody can do everything but everyone can do something.

Thanks to our respected Achens and members for all your prayers and support.

Wrapping up with 3 thoughts we try to practice in life:

1. Happiness is a state of mind
2. People don't need gift or money, they need your time. Try to spend some time with your older parents/grandparents
3. Love your parents .They are getting old while we are busy growing. They spend their most precious life, time, health for us. They were available for us through our thick and thin. Love them for the fact they have devoted their prime lives for us unconditionally. To care for those who once cared for us is one of the highest privileges.

#### **Prison Visit**

"I was in prison and you came to visit me ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Mathew Chapter 25.

These are powerful words of Jesus that reminds us of the need to visit those who are suffering regardless of the reasons. We are looking into the possibility to take our High School students for a visit to the House of Corrections in Philadelphia.

We hope the visit would help us to value freedom, remind ourselves that there are consequences for our actions, pray for those who are suffering while in prison, pray for the victims of crime, pray for the criminals for their change of heart, and pray for the innocent people who are suffering (children and family members of the prisoners). More information will be provided as it becomes available.

#### **Area-Level Events**

##### **Teachers Training/Workshop on Holy Baptism.**

Please plan on attending a workshop on Holy Baptism, followed by Teachers Training refresher for those who are planning to take the Teachers' Training Certificate Exam (TTC). This will be held on Saturday, March 18th at St. Mary's Church, Devereaux St.

#### **Diocesan News**

##### **Opinion Poll/Survey**

The Diocesan Sunday School conducted an opinion survey recently. Though the participation in general was low, it was encouraging that the highest number of participants were from our parish. Two questions in the poll were about solo song and group song competitions. The majority of the respondents opted for giving the contestants the option to select their own songs rather than having the diocese preselect the songs. The formal announcement of the results will follow.

#### **Assigned Competitions**

The Diocese is expected to announce the topics for the Assigned Competitions soon. Training sessions will be conducted in our parish for Essay and Drawing as in the past. Liz Pothen is the Coordinator.

**2017 Sunday School Calendar**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
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

**HOLY WEEK PROGRAM 2017****40<sup>th</sup> Friday, April 7**

6:30 p.m. Evening Prayer &amp; Holy Qurbana

**Lazarus Saturday, April 8**

7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer &amp; Devotional Address

**Palm Sunday, April 9**8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer  
9:30 a.m. Blessing the Palms & Holy Qurbana  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional Address**Monday, April 10**8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer  
12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional Address**Tuesday, April 11**8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer  
Meditation  
12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional Address



**Wednesday, April 12 (PESAHA)**

8:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer Meditation
12:00 p.m.	Noon Prayer
6:00 p.m.	Evening Prayer Holy Qurbana & Devotional Address
8:30 p.m.	Pesaha Appam

**Maundy Thursday, April 13**

8:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer Meditation
12:00 p.m.	Noon Prayer
5:00 p.m.	<b>FEET WASHING CEREMONY: HIS GRACE MAR DEMETRIOS</b> Followed by evening prayer

**Good Friday, April 14**

8:30 a.m.	Good Friday Service
3:30 p.m.	Kanji
7:00 p.m.	Evening Prayer & Devotional Address
9:30 p.m.	Night Vigil

**Holy Saturday, April 15**

9:30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
11:00 a.m.	Holy Qurbana
7:00 p.m.	Evening Prayer & Devotional Address

**Easter Sunday, April 16**

8:30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
9:30 a.m.	Holy Easter Service & Holy Qurbana Lunch