

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



NEWSLETTER

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Jinu Mathew 2012

VICAR'S MESSAGE

PREPARING FOR THE PENTECOST

The greatest dynamic move in the Church that helped the Church spread to the rest of the world from Jerusalem was the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In addition to blowing Holy Spirit on the Apostles, during His post-resurrection appearance, the Holy Spirit to come upon the Apostles and the small group of followers of Jesus Christ as promised during His ministry. They were all waiting for the Holy Spirit. The fearful, disappointed and aimless followers of the Lord suddenly became equipped with great power and courage to preach the Good News to the rest of the world. Every year the Church observes the day of Pentecost with a view to energizing the Church with those memories. During this time two factors need to be highlighted:

1. Waiting as a Group: Power of a group is always known to all. The simple story prevalent in Kerala which school teachers used to tell their students was asking a student to break a single twig and then to break a bunch of twigs tied together. The lesson was Aikamathyam (unity) mahabalam (great strength)! It has been proved in our life every day that when we are all united we could move mountains! It is true in our financial, physical and in spiritual areas of activity. All our achievements as a parish is the result of our unity. In spite of our diversity in our background and opinions for each one of us, the uniting power of the Holy Spirit has worked well with us. We conceded each other, agreed to put away our differences and worked for the will of God than our own will.

It is like a team working together or playing together. Each person's output is important but it should be in consonance with others' output. In soccer I had experienced it well. One player cannot score a goal oneself. Several teammates must help to reach the goal. Thus, the group working together can win. It is true of almost all group games or projects. When the small group of 120 people prayed together in the Upper Room the Holy Spirit came and filled



them with power. Till today we are driven by that Spirit who continues to guide the Church.

2. Waiting for the Right Guidance:

Sometimes we forget that we need to wait for the guidance from the Spirit. Quick decision may not work all the time. All great events in history had taken place with much pondering and waiting. We need to have patience with God to wait for His will. When we become impatient we can lose our attention and may do wrong things. But if we trust in the Lord and wait for His guidance through prayer, like the Early Church did, we will find the right guidance from God.

Often people trust upon their materially minded judgement for many things. That is why we have so much feuds and fights in the Church itself. It does not make any sense for us to fight each other for any good things. We should let God work with us. Once we seek His will, He will put the right thoughts in our minds. Then it is easy to act upon that. Prayerfully waiting is the art of Christian life. There are no demands nor any complaints. However, we are so much tempted to work the other way as the world around us is giving us the impetus to do so.

May the Holy Spirit guide us all as we work together as once family.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

May Birthdays

Anu S Thomas
 Mini Renji
 Karina Vattasseril
 Angel A Ninan
 Priya Asish
 Mathukutty M. George
 Mammen Varghese
 Aneeta Sara Sam
 Sharath M Ninan
 Annamma Jacob
 Anu Susan Koshy
 Anila Jose
 Mony Babu
 Mathew V Thomas
 Geo Vaidian
 Rachel Curian Koshy
 Anoop T George
 Aview Varghese
 Ashley E Philip
 Jasmin Ann Philip
 Mini Jose
 Jane Sara Oommen
 Jessy R Padiyara
 Sibi Varghese
 Aiden Varghese
 Jaison Thomas
 Jino Jacob
 Joel Chacko
 Riohn John
 Riohn V John
 Ancy Jins
 John Abraham
 Rajan Koshy
 Renji Varghese
 Gigi Thomas
 Libin J. Jacob
 Mathew Koshy
 Nirmala Thomas
 Chandini P. George
 Diya Daji
 Annamma Mathew
 Anil George Panicker
 Jose V Abraham
 Shane Varughese Thomas
 Usha Jacob
 David Philip
 Saji George
 Dhanya Anto Panicker
 Jeremiah Jerin
 Jordan Mathew Philip

Mary Joseph
 Kristin Ann Julice
 Christy Joy
 George Mathew
 Lincy Ann Philip
 Prenin P. George
 Liz Pothan
 Rekha M Philip
 Aleyamma Daniel
 Jibu Vergis
 Thomas Skariah
 Gregory George Abraham
 Tinju S Jose
 Reni Philip
 Reena Mathai
 John P Mathai
 Sunil George
 Abraham K. Varughese
 Liziamma Geevarghese
 Sosamma Benny
 Ann Yohan George
 Annamma Mathew
 Laly James
 Jayce J Philip
 Prince John Puliprath
 Sathees Easow
 Daisymol Babu
 Molly Mathai
 Anish Thomas
 Suja Thomas
 Renjusha Rajan
 Shawn Jacob
 Susamma Mathew
 Mary Rajan
 Ninan Chacko
 Baby Varghese
 Linda Varghese
 Rajan Varughese
 Rev Fr Kunjukunju John
 David Thomas
 Joji Thomas
 Annamma Thomson
 Rinu John
 Bindhu Alex
 Susamma Thomas
 Philip Varghese
 Shibu Varghese
 Santhosh M Baby
 Varughese P. Chacko
 Anto G Panicker

Saramma Thankachan
 Manju Shibu
 Sobha P. Biju
 Daniel Varghese
 Job John
 Jobin Jacob
 Jeena Elsa Abraham
 Lizy Sam Kurisinmoottil
 Nisha Alexander
 Joshua Ajo Raju
 Anna Varghese
 Robin Philip
 Paul John
 Micah V Panicker
 Sara Daniel
 Sanju Varghese John
 George Thadathil
 Bobby George
 Chacko P Chacko
 Varghese Philip
 Babu M Kunjandy
 Rini P Joseph
 Thomas Vakkayil
 Beena Sabu
 Ajan Achamma Thomas
 Annamma Vaidian
 Rachel Varghese
 George G Mampallil
 Alan T Ninan
 Isac P. George
 Nathan Philip
 Aiden George
 Biji Joseph
 Sheena Vaidian
 Kunjumole Thankachan
 Jessy Saji
 Ponnamma Baby
 Mariamma Skaria
 Aleyamma Thomas
 Jonathan Jerin
 Philip John
 Suja Koshy
 Shibu M Baby
 Liza Oommen
 Susan John
 Bini Thankachan
 Sijo P Mathai
 Reny Varughese

May Wedding Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. George Varughese	May 4
Mr. & Mrs. George T Charia	May 4
Mr. & Mrs. Rev. Fr M K Kuriakose	May 5
Mr. & Mrs. Rev Dn. Daniel Yohannan	May 5
Mr. & Mrs. Johnkutty Kunjandy	May 5
Mr. & Mrs. David Thomas	May 6
Mr. & Mrs. Dony Davy	May 12
Mr. & Mrs. Philip Raju Markos	May 14
Mr. & Mrs. Kunjappu Koshy	May 14
Mr. & Mrs. Oommen Mathai	May 14
Mr. & Mrs. Mathew Jacob	May 15
Mr. & Mrs. Jerin G Juby	May 16
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Varghese	May 16

Mr. & Mrs. Jeff George	May 16
Mr. & Mrs. Kuncheriah P V.	May 19
Mr. & Mrs. Aju Jacob	May 20
Mr. & Mrs. Joy G. Vaidian	May 21
Mr. & Mrs. Geo Vaidian	May 23
Mr. & Mrs. Wilson Panicker	May 24
Mr. & Mrs. Saji Abraham	May 25
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph M C.	May 26
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Philip	May 26
Mr. & Mrs. Jobin Varghese	May 27
Mr. & Mrs. Saji V Mathew	May 27
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Skariah	May 28

Parish News

Great Lent and Holy Week:

By the Grace of Almighty, we were able to observe one more Great Lent and Holy week. More believers participated in the evening prayer during Lenten period and for the Holy Qurbana on mid-lent and Lazarus Saturday than the previous years.

The presence of H G Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios in the Holy Week was a blessing. Record number of people participated in the celebration of Holy Services during the Holy week. His Grace was an officiating Vicar of our parish in nineteen eighties and Thirumeni's name was Rev. Fr. John Mathews (Ravi Achen) at that time. It was a matter of pride to have former vicar with us to lead the Holy Week services.

Kuriakosachen led almost all Lenten services and spent his day time in the church during Lenten period and Holy week. I would like to express the gratitude of the parish to Kuriakosachen and Kochachen for their dedication and commitment to this parish and consideration of the members.

Youngsters Observing the Lent:

We are delighted to notice that our younger generation is very zealous in observing the Lent.

Holy Confession:

More 100 members take Holy confession during the Lenten period.

Feet-Washing Ceremony:

The Feet-washing ceremony was held in our church with His Grace Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios. Several priests from our neighboring Orthodox parishes took part in it. A good number of people were in attendance.

Donation for the Holy week expenses.

Lot of members donated to the Holy week fund to meet the Holy week expenses. Our members donated more than \$5000. Thanks to Ommen Geevarghese and family for donating the flowers for Palm Sunday Service.

Church Day (Catholicate Day):

We observed Church Day on 36th Sunday of the Great Lent. The Vicar hoisted the Catholicate flag and spoke about Church Day and prayed for the Church. The members affirmed the Church day pledge.

A Word of Appreciation:

It was the collective effort of the our members that made the Lenten and Holy programs so successful. Thanks everyone for your hard work. I am sure that the time and energy you had spent for the church would be rewarded by the Lord.

Special thanks to the refreshment committee cooking food during the Lenten period and Holy week. Feeding 800 people is not an easy task. This year, we had Aviyal also on Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Thanks you all especially the ladies who helped to make dishes and those who brought food for Thirumeni during the Holy week. Our special gratitude to Mr. Samkutty John and Paul Maveli with a team of volunteers who helped with all cooking during the 50-day lent.

The donation of 150 pounds of rice by Kashmir Garden during the Holy Week should be appreciated.

Broadcast of our Holy Week Services:

Asianet televised our Palm Sunday Service and Feet Washing Ceremony in their most popular news program "US weekly round up". The Easter message by H G Demetrios Thirumeni was also telecasted by Asianet. Thanks to Mr. Vincent Immanuel and the cameraman Arun for their help. Jino Jacob captured the Palm Sunday Service for Flowers and Pravasi Channels. It was telecasted on Good Friday. Thank you, Jino.

The news about our Holy Week services were published in Malayala Manorama and Deepika. It was also published in many Malayalam Newspapers publishing from USA and in many online newspapers. We express our gratitude to all who gave publicity to our programs.

Yacharam Collection:

Members who pledged to the yacharam fund are requested to handover your contribution to the Treasurer. We like to send our collection in May. The members who did not get the opportunity to pledge are also requested to participate in the collection.

Housing Charity:

Kuriakoseachen had advised us to use the Lenten Period as an opportunity to donate to the Housing project charity. Many members obeyed Achen's advise. Our collection so far is only little over \$10,000.00 and it is below the target. Every family is expected to donate at least \$100. Those who did not contribute yet are also requested to join in this humanitarian project.

MOCF Food Donation:

MOCF donated 450 pounds of non-perishable food items collected from the Indian Orthodox Parishes of Greater Philadelphia to the Charitable Organization named Aids for Friends, It was the collection from five parishes. Our parish was the major donor as usual. Thanks to everyone who brought the food items for donation. Last year MOCF donated more than 1000 pounds of non-perishable food items to the same organization.

Many of our members has visited that facility. It is a good opportunity to understand the volunteer work to help the less-fortunate of our society. Members are requested to visit the facility.

First Temple Entry:

Eleena Susan daughter of Sunil and Suma Poovanal. Ezra, son of Jiji Mathew and Bessy Mathew. We pray for the younger members and their parents.

1st Pay Cheque Donation:

Abel Ninan donated his 1st pay check to the parish.

Library News:

On Holy Saturday H G Demetrios Thirumeni visited the Library and spoke about the benefits of book reading. On 4/12/17 after the Holy Qurbana, Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese spoke about Holy Spirit at the Library hall. Many members attended the meeting.

Church Website:

All important dates of our parish of this year are marked in the calendar of our Website. Members are requested visit our website www.stthomasphiladelphia.org.

Parish Facebook Group:

The name of our facebook group is *St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Philadelphia*. Please note that only Achen, Parish Secretary, Sunday school Principal and the group admin Mr. Steve Kurian can post articles and pictures in the parish facebook group. Only the articles and pictures related to the Church and our parish will be posted. If you have pictures of church programs, please contact one of them to post.

Best wishes to the St. Luke Mission Parish:

The new initiative that the Diocese took for the second generation families in our Diocese who predominantly use English language for worship has resulted in the formation of a Mission parish for Philadelphia area.

The mission aims at evangelizing to non-orthodox and non-christians also, along with bringing the second generation together. Similar attempts had already taken place in Washington DC and New York cities.

The Metropolitan appointed Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John as the vicar for this mission parish which had the first Holy Qurbana on New Sunday. Services are held at Our Lady of Fatima Church, 2913 Street Road, Bensalem, PA 19020. For more information, visit <https://stlukemission.org/>

Transfer of Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John:

The diocesan Metropolitan transferred our Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John as the Vicar of St. Luke Orthodox Mission Parish, Bensalem. We the members of St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church remember his service to the parish and express the gratitude. We wish all the best to his personal and spiritual life and leadership.

**New Assistant Vicar:**

We warmly welcome the new interim Assistant Vicar, **Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas**. Fr. Sujit has been serving the Albany St. Pauls' Orthodox Church. Achen lives in Drexel Hill area with his family. Having trained at the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Achen is a great promise among the young priests of our Diocese. Let us welcome him warmly into our midst and work with him to best of our ability.

**Vicar on Spain/Portugal Trip:**

Fr. M. K. Kuriakose our Vicar will be on a 13-day trip to Europe from May 1-13. In his absence, Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas will be officiating as Vicar. Please note his telephone number: 516-754-0743.

Sunday School News

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

Principal's Message

After a blessed Holy Lenten season, we are on to a busy period as we approach the final two months of the school year. In spite of the much anticipated summer break, Sunday School will have a few activities during summer, but at a relaxed pace. Orthodox Vacation Bible School (OVBS) of course is the major activity among them. The registration has begun. Please submit your duly filled out registration forms to Suja Abraham as soon as possible. As always, we are looking for volunteers for teaching and other activities.

Slowly, but surely, we are increasing our efforts to have our children learn the word of God by using the Bible more effectively. You will notice a new approach in the preparations for Bible Quiz. This month, our Middle School Fellowship (CAYA) is focusing on how to pray and read the Bible more effectively and to be a follower of Christ outside of school.

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." *Deuteronomy 6:6-7*. Let's continue to support our children by inspiring them and enlightening them as per our Lord's commandment. Let His name be glorified in everything we do.

Assigned Competitions

The Parish-level assigned competitions (drawing and Essay) were held on April 23rd. Around 50 students participated. Congratulations to all participants and outstanding performers. Grateful to all who volunteered to help. Special thanks to Liz Pothen who did an outstanding job as the Coordinator.

Parish Level Winners-Assigned Competitions

Group	Grades	Event	Winners
1	Pre-K & KG	Drawing	Lydia Jaison-1st Aaron Yohan George-2nd
2	1 & 2	Drawing with a short sentence	Aradhana Rose John-1st Hannah Mary Varghese-2nd
3	3 & 4	Drawing with a short paragraph	Anugraha Thankam John-1st Grace Suja John-2nd
4	5 & 6	Essay	Eleena John-1st Aleena Robin-2nd
5	7 & 8	Essay	Ashley Philip-1st Jeremy Mukadiyil-2nd
6	9 & 10	Essay	Merlin Rajan-1st Steffin Manoj-2nd
7	11 & 12	Essay	Shanya Alex-1st Christina George-2nd

CAYA (COME AS YOU ARE)

Submitted by Merlin Rajan

April was the month of learning how to develop good relationships with friends, and also combating serious problems like bullying and peer pressure. The themes were derived from Proverbs 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." During the Sunday sessions, the students discussed ways on how to say "no" to peer pressure and what to do when experiencing or seeing bullying towards others. In addition, some kids were able to go in front of their peers and come up with an instant solution to a scenario that they were given. The central theme for the month of May is- being a disciple of Christ, taken from Colossians 4:5 "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity." CAYA students will learn how to pray and read the Bible more effectively and to be a follower of Christ outside of school.

Lenten Service Project by 8th Grade Students
Submitted by Reena and Pushpa

Greetings to all in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ!
 Lenten season is a time for fasting, prayer, and donating for a right cause. During the Lenten Season, our 8th grade Sunday School students conducted a Service Project. Each student collected at least \$0.10 each day which helped to raise \$100. On April 23, the money was given to Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose during Sunday School for our Church Housing Project. Our principal, Mr. Oommen Kappil, and Assistant principal, Mr. Santhosh Baby, were also present, to partake in this memorable moment. Each 8th grader gave his/her input on how this Lenten Season helped them to stay away from worldly things such as TV and social media. They also mentioned how they got closer to God, and got to help the community in a simple and meaningful way.

2017 Sunday School Calendar

Event	Date	Venue	Coordinator
Assigned Competition-Area Level	Sunday, May 14	St. Gregorios Church, Bensalem	Liz Pothen
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
Bible Quiz-Parish level	Sunday, June 11	Our Church	Bishel Baby
Final Exams	Sunday, June 18	Our Church	Santhosh Baby
Centralized Exam-Grade 5, 8, 10, TTC	Sunday, June 25	St. George Church, Fairless Hills	Santhosh Baby
OVBS	Thu-Sat, Aug 3-5	Our Church	Suja Abraham
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	Yonkers, NY	Mathew George

Number lock system of the Main Door **Information Sheet**

When we are attending Holy service or meetings inside the church and expecting more members to come, we will leave the front door unlocked. This year, there were at least four incidences of outsiders walked in to our church. To avoid unauthorized entry by strangers to our church and at the same to enable our members to get in to a new number lock system is installed to the Main door.

It does not replace the existing Key lock. But it is an additional lock system of the main glass door. The number lock keypad is linked to a Mago (Magnetic) Lock system. **Please remember that the door can be opened with the keypad only if the primary lock of the door is kept unlocked using the key.**

All parish members are eligible to get the number combination to open the Mago Lock. All parish members are requested to obtain the code to open the door with the keypad.

How the Number Lock system works? When push five preset buttons (four digit number and a sign) of the keypad and pull the right door handle, the door will open (Only if the primary lock of the door had been unlocked with the key). The Mago Lock system will turn on only during the second half of the Holy Services on Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday.

Frequently Asking Questions

➤ **How I know that I pushed the correct number combination?**

If you push the wrong combination, after pushing the fifth key, you will hear a double beep.

➤ **If cannot open the door even after using the correct combination, what is the next step?**

Maybe because the door was not unlocked with the key. Please ring the bell next to the key pad to check anyone is inside the building. The bell is loud enough to hear almost everywhere inside the building.

➤ **If no response to the bell, what is the next step?**

Please call the person whom you are expecting inside the building or any of the parish officials whose number is posted on the door.

➤ **Will the Mago Lock be on all the time?**

No. There is an 'On and Off' switch in the office. It will be kept off during the first half of the Holy Service on Sundays and other days. So if you are coming for regular services in time, you need not use the keypad to open the door.

➤ **Who are authorized to use the key pad system?**

Only the members of our parish who know the number combination.

➤ **Who will get the number combination?**

All members of our parish.

➤ **What is the number combination?**

It is a combination of numbers very significant to our parish. So it is easy to remember. It will be informed verbally.

➤ **Who will inform the number combination of the Mago Lock ?**

Please contact the parish officials for number combination.

➤ **Why can't it be announced in Church or mail to the members?**

There may be nonmembers in church. There is a slight chance that the mail may be delivered to a wrong person.

➤ **Can I inform the number combination to one of my friends who would like to attend the Holy Mass?**

No. Only the parish members are the authorized users of the Mago Lock system. If your friend comes to church after the door is locked, he should ring the bell or call someone to open the door.

➤ **What is the consequence of unauthorized usage of the Number Lock system?**

Unauthorized usage of the number lock system is considered to be the same type of offence as breaking any other lock. We have a 24hour camera recording system. If unauthorized usage is detected, it will be reported to the police.

➤ **If unauthorized usage is detected, is it possible to change the number combination?**

Yes. The admin (Vicar) can change the combination at any time. The combination code change will be informed the parish members.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Secretary for any other question or suggestion