

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



NEWSLETTER

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VICAR'S MESSAGE

My Lord and My God!

The famous confession of St. Thomas is as popular as the adjective used for St. Thomas: 'doubting Thomas'. People may often wonder why St. Thomas did not believe the other disciples! Of all the disciples of Christ St. Thomas was the only one to say, "let us go and die with Him" (John 11:16). St. Thomas' love for Christ is very clear in this statement. But as a human being he wanted to verify what others say about his own Lord and God. It was therefore not unbelief but disbelief. Later Jesus did say to St. Thomas, "blessed are those who have not seen yet believed" (John 20:24). This was the statement relevant for the future generation who must believe without seeing the Lord. Once St. Thomas saw the resurrected Lord his confession was complete. Naturally all his doubts were removed and faith was affirmed. It was a natural expression from St. Thomas to call his master "Lord and God". If we look into these two words 'Lord' and 'God' we will grasp how much St. Thomas loved the Lord.

Lord is a word that was used in the Roman empire almost equivalent to a cabinet rank officer or a person who was in charge of a province. Later we see in the British history Lord was a common senior administrative position. Many of us Indians are familiar with many of such people who served in the British army in India. People would address such senior officers as "my lord". In the Judiciary the Judge is addressed as "Your Lord or Your Honor". In the Orthodox ecclesiastical administrative setup, each bishop is called, 'Mor' or 'Mar' which in Syriac language means 'my lord'. Simple connotation of this is that a person whom we address 'lord' is someone whom we are bound to obey and serve. Therefore, St. Thomas' statement is a clear subjugation of himself to his master Jesus Christ. St.



Thomas is willing to obey Him and be under His command.

Another story that is prevalent in apocryphal literature namely 'Acts of Holy Apostle St. Thomas' about trip his to India is like this: King Gondaphorus sent Abbanese the merchant to get a carpenter to build a palace for him from Jerusalem. It was at that time that the apostles cast lot for each one to go for preaching the Gospel in different countries and the lot fell for St. Thomas was for India. St. Thomas was reluctant to go as that was place where no Hebrews were available (Jews were available in India but very few which St. Thomas did not know) it will be difficult to preach without language skill. Jesus appeared to him and said, "fear not Thomas.... My grace will be with you". But St. Thomas was still unwilling to go. Now Abbanese was walking through the market, Jesus approached him and asked what he is looking for. Abbanese said, " a carpenter". Jesus introduced Himself that He is son of a carpenter Joseph and he has a slave carpenter whom he will sell for thee pounds of silver. After agreeing for the deal Jesus took Abbanese to St. Thomas. Abbanese asked St. Thomas, "is this your master"? St. Thomas said, yes He is my Lord". Then Abbanese told him that he sold you to me and I am going to take you to my country. St. Thomas prayed overnight and committed himself to the Lord saying, "I will go wherever you will O Lord Jesus; Thy will be done." Thus we

know how St. Thomas's statement "My Lord" was a true commitment to his master. That is how we were blessed by his ministry in India.

The statement, "My God" is even more serious. God is the creator, sustainer, controller and the overall owner of everything. There is no other power or entity greater than God. St. Thomas confesses Jesus as his God which is our confession as well. This is the true confession that our Lord is expecting from each of His followers. When St. Peter made the confession, "You are the Son of the Living God", Jesus acclaimed that statement and said it is the revelation from the Father. In fact, when a person is ready to confess Jesus as his/her God that person becomes a Christian. Such a statement is not a philosophical or political statement but it is a statement that reflects a person's total life and its connectivity with God. Such a life will be perfect. We know how much we struggle to confess Jesus as our God in our life. For St. Thomas that confession was a thorough surrender to the Lord. Only those who can surrender to God fully can make such a statement.

I hope and pray that St. Thomas' confession will become ours also!

IN GRATITUDE!

70 years on earth, 42 years at the holy Altar, 28 years in the USA and 21 years at St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Philadelphia! I have nothing but gratitude to God Almighty for what I received from the Lord through the hands of the beloved Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church. To

me the most rewarding service is that of a priest. I have taken very senior administrative jobs in the secular world but it was not able to give me the satisfaction that my ministry gave. I owe to my people for the blessings I got from the Lord. I have no words to express that. In my prayer every day I remember all my parishes specially my current parish and all its members. I feel connected with each one so specially that everyone is so important to me. Words cannot express that joy of loving my people. I know there are many who pray for me on a daily basis including some children whom the parents taught to pray for me. Even those little children who are not even two years old, have such love for me that they ask their parents to take them to me after Holy Qurbana every Sunday simply to say bye and get a hug from me. The love of my people is amazing. Thank you all for your continued prayers for me. I always request the people to pray for "God's grace for me". Without that life is meaningless.

I am writing the above special note on the occasion of the 70th birthday. Several of you have shared in the effort of building a small home for a poor man in my home village. On my last visit I met with that family. I did not know how I would help them. By the great providence of God, you all pitched in well to help that poor family to have a small home. I once again thank you all for your kindness to me. Let us pray for each other.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

July Birthdays

Mohan Samuel
 Meenu Ann Mathews
 Rachel Nebu
 Joy Jacob
 Isabella Anjali George
 Reesa M Antony
 Diboo A Daniel
 Sosa Philip
 Geevarghese K John
 Joel George Varghese
 Hannah Marie Jacob
 Suvarna Varghese
 Mathew P Cherian
 Jiji Mathew
 Jancy Joy
 Beena R John
 Manoj Thomas
 Saramma Thomas
 Abigail M Alexander
 Sylvia S Renji
 Annamma Chacko

Mathew N K.
 Sabu Abraham
 Leah Mariam Thomas
 Felix Ronnie
 Reji Joshua Varughese
 Thomas Koshy
 Regi Mathai
 Messina Ann Abraham
 Achamma Thomas
 Jacob George
 Rev. Fr M K Kuriakose
 Prasad George
 Emil John Sam
 George Joseph
 Anupama Jacob
 Reeya A Antony
 Beena Thomas
 Joseph M C.
 Dana Job
 Josslyn Susan Johnes
 Kuncheriah P V.

Charly Mathai
 Aleyamma Rajan
 Sujith Mathew Thomas
 Angela S Panicker
 Cynthia Vattasseril
 Remya Brown
 Reshma Brown
 Reeja Saji
 Mariamma Joseph
 Thankachan K Mathai
 Chinnu Reba Mathews
 Sobin Benny
 Thomaskutty Varghese
 Alwin Panicker
 Jaxen Daniel Jacob
 Amelia Annie Paul
 Thomas Vaidian
 Suja Elizabeth George
 Thomas George

July Wedding Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. Mohan Samuel
 Mr. & Mrs. Manoj Mathew
 Mr. & Mrs. Alexander Mathew
 Mr. & Mrs. Renji Vattasseril
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Vaidian
 Mr. & Mrs. Isac P. George
 Mr. & Mrs. Cherian Varghese
 Mr. & Mrs. Rev. Fr. Geevarghese John
 Mr. & Mrs. Kochukoshy P Oommen
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas George
 Mr. & Mrs. John Varghese
 Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Mathew
 Mr. & Mrs. Oommen V Kappil
 Mr. & Mrs. Raju T Chandy
 Mr. & Mrs. John P Mathai
 Mr. & Mrs. Philip K Thomas
 Mr. & Mrs. Reynold Educuala
 Mr. & Mrs. Sathees Easow

Mr. & Mrs. Alex Pothen
 Mr. & Mrs. Oommen Geevarghese
 Mr. & Mrs. Binu K. Mathew
 Mr. & Mrs. Rajan Varughese
 Mr. & Mrs. Jacob P Sam
 Mr. & Mrs. Nebu Daniel
 Mr. & Mrs. Samkutty John
 Mr. & Mrs. Lajy Raju
 Mr. & Mrs. Sajan Varughese
 Mr. & Mrs. Shaji Thomas
 Mr. & Mrs. Anu. Pulickal Varughese
 Mr. & Mrs. Sanju John
 Mr. & Mrs. Anish Mathew
 Mr. & Mrs. Varughese M M.
 Mr. & Mrs. Joby George
 Mr. & Mrs. Reji Joshua Varughese
 Mr. & Mrs. Chacko P Chacko
 Mr. & Mrs. Benny Mathew

Parish News

Parish Perunnal: We are celebrating the Feast of St. Thomas, the patron Saint of our parish from June 30 to July 2nd.

Flag Hoisting: The Perunnal flag was hoisted on Sunday, June 25th after Holy Qurbana.

Perunnal Decorations: Thanks to each and everyone who participated in decorating the outside and inside of the church for Perunnal. Special thanks to MGOCSM decorated inside the church so attractively.

Bishop Visits: Diocesan Bishop His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos was the chief celebrant for the Pentecost Service on June 4th. His Grace Mathews Mar Athanasius of Kandanadu East Diocese celebrated the Holy Qurbana on Wednesday, June 14th .

New Diocesan Council:

Diocesan Secretary: Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas
 Diocesan Council Members: Rev. Fr. Babu K. Mathew, Rev. Fr. Mathew Thomas, Mr. Philip George, Mr. Sajan Mathew, Mr. Saji M. Pothan, and Mr. Santhosh Mathai
 Diocesan Auditor: Thampy Ninan

Congratulations to our Assistant Vicar Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas for getting elected as the Diocesan Secretary. We pray God Almighty for Achen's successful service.

Priest Visits: Rev. Fr. Shinoj Thomas and Eby Poulose celebrated Holy Qurbana in our church in June.

Kuriakosachen's Saphthathy Celebration:

Achen's saphthathy (70th Birth Day) will be celebrated on July 16, 2017. As a part of the saphthathy celebration, the parish will construct a residence for Mr. Shaju Yohannan and family. He is a member of Kuriakose Achen's mother parish, St. Peter's and St. Paul's Orthodox Church, Koliyadi, Wayanad District, Kerala. The construction will be managed by the Vicar and the Managing Committee of that parish. Many members contributed for that project. If you can afford a small amount for that

humanitarian cause, please contribute. Please make the check payable to our parish and mention that it is for the Saphthathy Project. There is no compulsion. Your prayer is the most valuable contribution.

Send off to Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese K. John:

The parish gave a fitting send off to the former assistant Vicar Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John on 6/25/2017. Several people spoke on the occasion thanking Achen for his kind services for the past several years in our parish. A plaque was given along with a gift as our appreciation.

Fathers' Day Celebration:

MGOCSM conducted the Father's Day badminton tournament. The winners of the Badminton Tournament are Mr. Renji Varughese and Mr. Alex Pothan. It was a fun filled program with a lot of food. Jeremy Mukadiyil and Shaine Thomas gave the fathers' day message. MGOCSM gave fathers' day gift to the loving and caring fathers of the parish. Thank you MGOCSM for giving a wonderful treat to the fathers

Magnetic Lock System of the front door:

Safety and security of the worshipers is a worldwide concern. We started using the magnetic lock system of the front door and it is working as expected. On Sundays, after 10 AM, to enter inside the church through the main glass door, you should know the number code. For next few weeks, the first (from Algon side) wooden door of the sanctuary will be kept unlocked. Eventually that door also will be locked at 10 AM.

Inauguration of Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center:

His Holiness Mar Basalius Poulose II Catholicos of the East will bless and inaugurate the retreat center on July 15th . It is a good opportunity to visit the center which has more than 300 acres of land including a lake and accommodation for about 200 persons. Those who like to attend the function, please contact the office. A nominal amount of \$10 per head will be collected towards the transportation expenses. The balance amount of the

transportation expenses will be met by the parish. We plan to leave the church by 9 AM on July 15 and will return before 10 PM.

New Service Book: In the near future, we will use the new service book for Holy Qurbana. The book will be published jointly by Southwest and Northeast dioceses. It contains Malayalam, English and Manglish versions. Those who like to have personal copies, this is a good opportunity to get at the pre-publication price of \$ 15 per copy. There is a sign-up sheet on the notice board. We have good response from the members. July 9th will be the last day to order through our church at the prepublication price.

Parish Trips: Two-day trip to Ocean City, Maryland is planned for Friday and Saturday, July 28th and 29th. For more information, please contact the Program Coordinator Mr. Philip John (Wilson).

One day trip to New York: Men's Forum is organizing one day trip to New York on Saturday, July 29th. For more information, please contact Men's Forum officials, Thomaskutty Varghese or N V Thomas.

Prayer Meetings: There were prayer meetings at the residences of Dr. Philip George, Mr. Joseph Antony and Mr. Daniel Yohannan.

New Member: Welcome to the new member of our parish, Mr. John Thomas and family. Mr. John Thomas is the brother of Sajan Thomas. If any family, who attends the Holy Service regularly in our church, like to get the membership, please contact the office.

Obituary: Mr. Skariah Antony, father of Shirley Chacko, and Mr. Poulouse Plackel Varkey, father of Mrs. Smitha Mathew, were called to eternal abode. The parish expresses condolence to both families.

Holy Matrimony: Congratulations to newlywed couples Sonia and Robert, and Jibin and Tascilin. Wish all the best to them.

Upcoming Events:

Church Perunnal:	July 1st and 2nd
Family Conference:	July 12th to 15th
Inauguration of the Holy Transfiguration Centre	July 15
Kuriakosachen's Saphathy:	July 16th
15 days' Lent	August 1st to 15th
OVBS:	August 3rd to 5th
Church Picnic:	August 19th

Sunday School News

*Submitted by Binny Cherian, Principal
(Tel.: 914.708.7981, email: cbinny@gmail.com)*

Principal's Message

We have recently remembered fondly, lives of the apostles of our savior Jesus Christ and honored their memory by observing the 13 day fast, hence this seems to be a good time to study briefly the qualities they had emulated through their lives. Our lord did not choose his disciples who were similar in thought or frame of mind. Each of them was unique in his own way and their contribution to the growth of Christian faith is a proof that today in spite of the trials and persecutions around the world, their contemporaries thrive in spreading the word of God. If there was a courageous and impulsive person like St. Peter, his brother St. Andrew was the one who led his brother and the child with the few fish and bread to Jesus, or St. James and St. John who were nicknamed, Sons of Thunder, St. Philip who shared the greatness of the lord with his friend St. Bartholomew, our patron saint, St. Thomas who said, let us die with the Lord, but needed re-affirmation on the resurrection, St. Mathew who was considered as the lowest since he was working for the Romans, and St. James, St. Thaddeus, St. Simon, St. Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot who did not truly understand the savior, and last but not the least, St. Paul who had authored more than half of the new testament.

Similarly, though we are diverse in our thought processes and natures, if we have been chosen by our Lord to be his disciples, he definitely has a purpose for each of us and will guide us to it, if we heed to his call and open our ears and heart to him. Let us learn to accept our brothers and sisters as they are, since we are all workers for his kingdom.

We have other events for our kids during the summer, please see the details below.

Wishing all the teachers, staff and kids, a safe and enjoyable summer break!!!

Text book Return:

All the students are requested to drop off their text books after the final exam in the Sunday school office.

OVBS:

This year, the Area level OVBS will be held during the dates, 8/3 to 8/5, at our parish church. Parents of all the Sunday school students aged 5 and up are encouraged to register their children. The subsidized registration fee is \$10 per student. (Students, aged 4 are allowed to register, however one of the parents (parent fee \$10) has to be with the child in the classroom, at all times. Registration is in currently progress, kindly register at the earliest and contact Mrs. Suja Abraham for more information. We need volunteers for activities, class teachers and other services, if you are available and can help, please reach out to the OVBS coordinator or the Sunday school principal.

New Graduates Felicitation:

As we have done in the past, every year we felicitate our graduates from 8th, 12th, College, Doctoral or other professional certificates. This year the new graduates felicitation will be held on 7/9 after the Holy Qurbana wherein the graduates will be honored with a gift (Bible) followed by lunch with our Vicars. If you are a new graduate please reach out to the Church secretary, Mr. John Panicker / Binny Cherian and submit the new graduate felicitation form, available in the church office.

Sunday school bible quiz (Interim, Church Level):

In order to encourage our children to learn more about the bible, this year, based on the suggestion of our teachers we increased the number of winners at the church level interim competition. The list of winners at the church level is displayed on the Sunday school notice board. The selected students will be trained by the teachers for the church level, final quiz competition and three winners among them will represent our church at the Area level competition.

Middle School Fellowship (CAYA):

The last middle school fellowship meeting before the summer break was held on 6/17, and the theme was Father's Day. There was food and fun activities including a drawing workshop led by Rachel David. It was a good time for the children and their respective dad to bond and be honored by their children. The event was organized and executed well. Kudos to the its leaders, Susan Mathews, Flamy Philip, Merlin Rajan and Carolyn Cherian.

2017 Sunday School Calendar:

Event	Date	Venue	Coordinator
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	Saunders High School, Yonkers, NY	Mathew George
Area Teachers' Fellowship	November	TBD	Philadelphia Area SS

Welcome to H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Meletius Metropolitan



His Grace was born at Elakkaranadu, a typical village in the Ernakulam District of Kerala, to a social worker Mr Markose and Mrs Saramma, Murimakkil. He had his primary education from the Government School at Maneed. After his schooling, His Grace studied at St Peter's College, Kolencherry, and passed out with his bachelors in Malayalam.

Coming to the theological studies, he did his BD and MTh degrees from the United Theological College, Bangalore. Thereupon, he took ThM and PhD qualify (old testament theology) from Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago. His

Grace has submitted his PhD paper to Dharmaram Vidyashetram, Bangalore. Meanwhile, he studied syriac at St Aphrem's Seminary, Damascus.

Mar Meletius got into the services of Our Lord being ordained a deacon in 1973 by His Grace Paulose Mar Phelexinos, the then metropolitan of Kandanad Diocese. He was ordained a priest in 1986 by His Beatitude Catholicos Baselios Paulose II. HH Patriarc Ignatius Zakka I, ordained him as Ramban on 22 December 1990 and as Bishop on 23 December 1990 in Damascus. Since then, he is serving the Trissur Diocese as its Metropolitan.

As a priest, he was teaching at MSOT Seminary, Udaigiri. He was also serving as the vicar of St Mary's Church, Valampur, for about four years. His Grace is also served as the president of Orthodox Christian Youth Movement.

A scholar, His Grace is a visiting professor to the Orthodox seminaries at Nagpur and Kottayam. An accomplished writer, Mar Meletius has few books—Verukal Thedi, Manavikathayude Kazhchapadukal, Swatantravum Swayam Paryapthathayum—to his credit.

This widely travelled Bishop has also published numerous articles in different publications. Visit the new website of H.G. Mar Meletius Metropolitan: www.yuhanonmeletius.org