



**ST. THOMAS  
INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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

**NEWSLETTER**

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## VICAR'S MESSAGE

### Holy Mother the Perfect Example

The delightful festival of Assumption of St. Mary falls on August 15th with a 15-day lent prior to that. According to the Orthodox and Roman Catholic tradition St. Mary's assumption to heaven took place after her death. Angels carried her to heaven. She was qualified for this special privilege not only because she was able to give birth to the Son of God but also because she lived up to that position. St. Mary was chosen by God because she gave the consent to take one of the toughest jobs for a woman to face the consequences of bearing a child out of marriage. The fact of the bearing the Lord gave her the name Theotokos (Theos= God; Tokos=Bearer). All who take part in the Holy Eucharist are God-bearers. This enhances our responsibility to that of St. Mary. She lived the life that is compatible with her title keeping her life clean and holy so that her Son sent the angels to bring her body to heaven. We have two lessons from St. Mary in this regard:

1. Anyone can become a God-bearer when accept the Lord in her/his life. It is a great privilege and position which comes with great joy of self-denial and suffering. St. Mary in silence took all the suffering. When Simeon told her at the time of the circumcision of the Lord at the Temple, "a sword will through your soul" it did not shake her or worry her. To the last moment of seeing her only son taking up the cross and inhumanely killed, she was not shaken. She knew the Lord well. She experienced the Son to a great extent that she had no doubt about His Truth. Indeed, a woman who became pregnant by the Word of God need no other proof that God is in charge of her life. Pain, abuse, suffering and even death are not factors that would affect such people. The Early Church lived like St. Mary lived. No one could threaten them with anything including death.

2. Everyone who accepts the Lord into his/her life must have the consistency of faith. Almost all of us have the opportunity to bear Christ in us every Sunday. But how many can be consistent and predictable in their attachment to God. Even with small matters we will deny Him! Our material mind always discourages us and we abandon the Lord when material attraction comes to us. St. Peter confessed the Lord as the "Son of God" but after a short while the Lord called him "Satan" because St. Peter did not like the suffering part of the mission of Christ. Later St. Peter even denied the Lord in front of others but later he repented and the



Lord accepted him. Material pressure is not a small thing in life. It can take us away from the Lord. At the end of his life St. Peter took the cross of the Lord to be crucified. Thus, his life mission was fulfilled. It instructs us how to be watchful to stay in the course of the Lord consistently than be shaken by external forces. Let us work hard to follow the example of the Holy Mother.

#### A World of Thanks

I am always reminded of St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:15, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift". I have to thank God, the same way, because unspeakable gift I have been receiving from the Lord. Unspeakable love I have been receiving from my parishioners as well. I cannot find enough words to express my thanks to my beloved parish that has been upholding me in prayers and supporting my mission. The 70th birthday celebration was one that I will not and cannot forget at all. I didn't want it to be a public event but a private one with my Big Family. Therefore, no one from outside was invited. That was my wish just because it is necessary to take a low profile when count the blessings from God. But at the same time our own family should have the opportunity to share its love. Fortunately, my most beloved Assistance Vicars Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John and Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas and our dear Rev. Dn. Daniel Yohannan were present. Several people who spoke on the occasion elevated my spirit and gave me great inspiration to be a better priest. I individually thanked them all for their very special words of love. The affection that was poured out to me was enormous. Many people sent greeting cards, some gave some gifts which I either gave to the needy or to the Housing Charity. Above all many of our parishioners joined in the collection for the new house that was built by my home parish Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Koliyadi, Wayanad for a homeless man. I did not have the financial strength to do that on

my own. Again, a big team of people prepared food on the occasion. Mr. John Panicker organized the entire program and Mr. Anoop George conducted it beautifully. The Choir prepared a special song to felicitate me. And goes on and on.... I just thankful to you all. Please continue to pray for God's grace on me,

my family and my ministry. Nothing more I need. May God bless you all.

Lovingly

Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

## Christian Approach to Wealth as seen in Gospel of St. Matthew

Fr. Sujit Thomas

The radical nature of the Christian message is its approach to wealth and poverty. The message of Jesus as presented in the Gospels demonstrates this radical approach of Christianity to wealth and poverty. The acts and teachings of Jesus as narrated by St. Matthew in his Gospel presents a radical approach to wealth.

Jesus said to one of his potential followers, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (St. Matt 8:20). Jesus demanded that those he commissioned also imitate his poverty. He commissions the twelve apostles saying, "You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff" (St. Matt. 10:8-10). The rich young man who approached Jesus left the presence of Jesus disappointed because Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (St. Matt. 19:21).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his listeners about how to approach wealth. St. Matthew 6:19-34 is concerned about wealth. The first part is explicitly teaching about wealth and the second is the assurance of care by God the Father. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6: 19-21). He also adds, "indeed your heavenly father knows that you need all these things [necessities of life]."

Jesus wants us to set our hearts on him and not on material possessions. Money however is a reality that we have to deal with in this world. We can use money in two alternate and opposite ways. Either we can use it as a tool to show our love for God and neighbor or we can use it out of self-interest.

The teaching of Jesus presented in Matthew is relevant for the modern world. In the present



world even Christians find themselves storing up treasures on earth. One only has to watch the hysteria surrounding shopping festivals such as "black Friday." In fact consumerism has taken on shape of religion. Shopping malls have become the cathedrals of the modern world. The grandeur of shopping mall evokes in the consumer a feeling of awe and wonder. In such a setting the Christian has to follow Jesus in a spirit of poverty and use one's own wealth in a manner that is righteous. Christians have to set their minds on the heavenly capital and not on earthly capital.

## August Birthdays

Zeena Jacob	Jibin Verghese Jacob	Flamy Philip
Joel Jacob	Sneha Reynold	Aben G Panicker
Chinnamma M Varghese	Joel G Panicker	Varghese Varghese
Cherian Philipose	Augustin Babu	Isabel J Mathew
Jijo George Varghese	Johan Anto Panicker	Bindu Job
Dony Davy	Alexandra Geevarghese	Sajan Thomas
Saya Alina Thomas	Liana John	Anooj Thomas
Jaison Daniel	Jojoy Varghese	Kochupurackal Thomas
Jonathan Matthew Cherian	Achamma Cherian	Jonah Thomas
Abraham John	Nadukemuriyil V Thomas	Shawn Stephen
Vinitha Varghese	Rachel A Varghese	Riny Saju Mathew
Tibin John Prince	Tincy Raju	Philip Raju Markos
Aleyamma George	Reena Rose Antony	Annamma Mathew
Lambert Thomas	Shelby Alisha Thomas	Agin G. Thomas
Leelamma O Panicker	Christina S Thomas	Nallumalayil Joseph George
Mathews T Varghese	George Abraham	George Varghese
Josh Job	Thomas Abraham	Judy Philip
Rebecca Susan Philipose	Hannah Mary Thomas	Molly Prince
Crisia Maria Shibu	Ninan Mathai	Sharon Jacob
Varghese Mammen	Paul P Mavelly	Cijo Joseph
Blessy George	Stephan Kalthil	Anugraha Thankam John
Sheena Jose	Sherin Sara Anish	Betsy George
Ashok Paulose	Amelia E George	Bibin George
Eliza Leela Panicker	Aaron George	

## August Wedding Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Rajan	Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Kuruvilla
Mr. & Mrs. Diboo A Daniel	Mr. & Mrs. Nadukemuriyil V Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Abraham Koodathinalil Varughese	Mr. & Mrs. David Philip
Mr. & Mrs. Mathew P Cherian	Mr. & Mrs. Ajo Raju
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Baby	Mr. & Mrs. Shibu Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Jiji Mathew	Mr. & Mrs. Anoop Joseph George
Mr. & Mrs. Renji Varghese	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Vakkayil
Mr. & Mrs. Georgeyo Oommen	Mr. & Mrs. Vinod Jacob
Mr. & Mrs. Ashok Mathew Koshy	Mr. & Mrs. Jiju Mathew
Mr. & Mrs. Rajan Koshy	Mr. & Mrs. Kochupurackal Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Mathew	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas C Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Gibson Thomas George	Mr. & Mrs. Alex P Symon
Mr. & Mrs. Cibu Joseph	Mr. & Mrs. Suresh Cherian
Mr. & Mrs. Manoj Thomas	

## Parish News

**Parish Perunnal:** We celebrated the Feast of St. Thomas, the patron Saint of our parish on June 30th to July 2nd. His Grace Youhanon Mar Meletius, the Metropolitan of Thrissur Diocese was the chief celebrant of the perunnal.

On June 30th, after evening prayer, there was a Christian Musical concert by well-known playback singer Biju Narayanan and his troop. Thanks to everyone who helped to celebrate the perunnal so successfully.

**Priest Visits:** Very Rev. Samuel Remban, Very Rev Paul Ramban, Very Rev N S Varghese Corepiscopa and Rev. Fr. Shinoj Thomas celebrated Holy Qurbana in our parish in July.

**Sapthathy (70th Birthday ) of the Vicar:** Kuriakose Achen's Sapthathy Celebration: Achen's sapthathy(70th Birth Day) was celebrated on July 16, 2017. There was a short meeting after Holy Qurbana. The representatives of the spiritual organizations felicitated Achen. The representatives of the septuagenarians and octogenarians of parish welcomed Achen to their club by presenting a 'ponnada' (golden vest).

As a part of the sapthathy celebration, the parish decided to construct a residence for Mr. Shaju Yohannan and family of St. Peter's and St. Paul's Orthodox Church, Koliyadi, Wayanad District. The construction is managed by the Vicar and the Managing Committee of that parish and it is in the final stage.

Our members generously contributed to the project. So far, the collection is more than \$8000.00. The fund collection will be closed on July 30th.

Thank you for your support for the success of the Sapthathy project and celebration.

**Family and Youth Conference of 2017:** Family Conference of Northeast American Diocese was held at Kalahari resorts and Conventions, Pocono Manor from July 12 to 15. 26 members attended the conference.

**Honoring the Graduates:** The parish recognized the hard work of the students and

their parents by felicitating those had graduated from Grade school, high School, colleges and professional courses since July 2016. The function was conducted on July 9th. Miss. Betsy Kappil was the MC of that program. The graduates had the privilege of 'Lunch with the Vicar' on that day.

**Church Picnic:** The annual picnic is on Saturday 19th. It will be at Princeton County Club Picnic Area, Princeton, NJ 08540. It is a new picnic venue for us. The ticket sale inaugurated on July 9th. As in previous years, the ticket price for the family is \$40.00 and single is \$10.00. For better planning, advance registration is required. All members are requested to join in this social activity.

Transportation will be arranged from church and back. Those who need transportation, please contact the Picnic Coordinator Mr. Jiju Alex. Transportation charge will be \$ 10.00 per head.

**Inauguration of Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center:** On July 15, His Holiness Mar Basalios Poulos Catholicos of the East dedicated and inaugurated the Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center. Our parish chartered a bus for our members to attend the inauguration. Many members utilized that opportunity to visit the center. Thanks to Geevarghese M. Panicker for coordinating the trip.

**New Service Book:** In the near future, we will be using a new service book for Holy Qurbana. The book will be published jointly by the Southwest and Northeast American dioceses. It contains Malayalam, English and Manglish versions. The parish ordered 500 copies. For those who had signed up, 155 copies were ordered for their personal use at the pre-publication rate of \$ 15.00 per copy.

**Magnetic Lock System of the front door:** We started using the magnetic lock system of the front door and it is working perfectly as expected. On Sundays, at 10 AM the magnetic lock of the main glass door will be switched on.

From August 6th onwards, the outside wooden doors in front of the sanctuary would be locked at 10 AM on Sundays. So after 10 Am, please use main glass door to enter in to the church building. Please remember that the number lock system of that door would be on at 10AM.

The members who would not remember the number combination and the nonmembers and guests are requested to use the bell switch near the number keypad; someone will open the door for you.

**One-day trip to New York:** Men's Forum organized one-day trip to New York on Saturday, July 29th.

**Prayer Meetings:** There were prayer meetings at the residences of Shibu M. Baby and Oommen Geevarghese in July.

**New Member:** Welcome to the new member of our parish, Mr. Niju Mathew Cherian and family.

#### **Obituary:**

- Mrs. Elsamma Mathew, mother of Suvarna Varghese was called to heavenly abode. Suvarna went to India to attend the funeral.
- Mr. P. Philip, father of Finny Philip was called to eternity. Finny left to India to attend the funeral.
- Mr. Thomas Kochukutty, father of Mrs. Rachel Varghese demised in India. Family is planning to attend the funeral.

- Mr. Kurian T. Skariah, brother -in-law of Mr. Jacob K. Thekkekkuttu and a member of St. George Orthodox Church, Fairless Hill passed away.
- Mr. Baby John, brother-in -law of Lilly Elias, and Mr. T.M. Varghese, brother-in-law of John Panicker were deceased in India.
- Mrs. Saramma Skariah, elder sister of Chinnamma Varghese, passed away in India. Chinnamma Varghese was at the bedside at the time of demise.

The parish expresses its condolence to the bereaving families and pray for the departed souls.

**Holy Matrimony:** Congratulations to newlywed couple Justin Abraham and Rinju Jacob.

**Feast of the Assumption of St. Mary:** The feast of the Assumption of St. Mary will be celebrated in the evening of Monday, August 14th. Evening prayer will start at 6:30 PM. Please note that we will not have Holy Qurbana on Wednesday, August 16th.

#### **Upcoming Events:**

Shonoyo (15 day)-Lent: August 1 to 15

OVBS: August 3 to 5

Church Picnic: August 19

8 Days Lent: September 1 to 8

Back to School Conference at St. Thomas Unruh:

September 2

Harvest Festival: September 30

MOCF Convention: September 9 and 10

## **Sunday School News**

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

**Text book Return:** All the students are requested to drop off their text books at the Sunday school office.

**Summer Activity:** There will be ongoing sessions each Sunday after the Holy Qurbana explaining the relevance and importance of the following Books in the Bible (Ruth, Nehemiah and 2nd Corinthians). This will be held in the Chapel and led by Rev. Sujith Thomas starting on 7/30. These classes are intended not only for the Sunday school students but also include rest of the congregation. All are requested to join.

**OVBS:** Philadelphia area OVBS was conducted in our church from August 3rd to 5th. 296 children from eight parishes enrolled in the Vacation Bible School. There were more than fifty teachers and volunteers

worked very hard for the success of that program. As usual, majority of the volunteers were from our parish. Thank you all, especially the Office Manager and the Refreshment Committee Coordinator and his team, for your unselfish dedication.

**Bible Quiz (Parish Level):** The winners from the interim, Parish level bible quiz competition have been identified and are currently being trained on all the three books (Ruth, Nehemiah, and 2nd Corinthians) for the final Parish level quiz competition to be held on September 17. The first three winners will be selected to represent our church at the Area level competition to be held on October 7. Questions and answers will be graded based on the RSV version.

**Talent Competition (Parish Level):** The Parish Level Talent Competition for 2017 is scheduled to be held on September 17th, 2017 at our church. Please find below, guidelines for the same. This information is also available on the Sunday school bulletin board.

### **Talent Competition Groups & Rules and Guidelines:**

Group 1 (Nursery / KG), Group 2 (Grades 1 / 2), Group 3 (Grades 3 / 4), Group 4 (Grades 5 / 6), Group 5 (Grades 7 / 8), Group 6 (Grades 9 / 10), Group 7 (Grades 11 / 12)

**Solo Song** - Specific songs are NOT assigned. All groups can participate.

1. Can participate in either Malayalam OR English (not both) as per participant's choice at the time of registration by the Principal of the participant's parish.
2. Only Christian songs of appreciable quality in Malayalam OR English.
3. Song sheets are permitted.
4. Time limit: 3 Minutes. No warning will be given in the event of exceeding the time limit and FIVE points will be deducted from the combined score from all the judges.
5. No karaoke or musical support or audio support is permitted.
6. No costumes or song theme related articles shall be used by the participants.
7. An introduction of the solo song or the title of the solo song does not have to be presented by the participant. If it is presented, the time for the participant starts with this introduction/title. It will be included as part of the three-minute time limit for the participant.

### **Bible Storytelling - Groups 1, 2 & 3**

1. Can participate in either Malayalam OR English (not both) as per participant's choice at the time of registration by the Principal of the participant's parish.
2. Only Biblical event can be narrated.
3. No costumes or story theme-related articles to be used.
4. No written aids or notes will be permitted
5. Time limit: 3 Minutes. No warning will be given in the event of a participant exceeding the three-minute time limit and FIVE points will be deducted from the combined score from all the judges.

### **Elocution - Groups 4, 5, 6 & 7**

1. Can participate in either Malayalam OR English (not both) as per participant's choice at the time of registration by the Principal of the participant's parish.
2. There is only one topic per group for the 2017 Talent Competition.
3. Presentation must be on the topic published by the Northeast American Diocesan Sunday School for 2017 available at [www.nesundayschool.org](http://www.nesundayschool.org)

4. If the participant chooses to speak based on any topic other than the prescribed topic, the participant will be disqualified.

5. No written aids or notes will be permitted.

6. Time limit: 5 Minutes. No warning will be given in the event of a participant exceeding the five-minute time limit and FIVE points will be deducted from the combined score of all the judges.

### ***Elocution Topics – 2017***

GROUP 4 (grades 5 & 6 as of 01/01/2017): Matthew 5:24 - first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

GROUP 5 (grades 7 & 8 as of 01/01/2017): 1 Timothy 4:12 - Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

GROUP 6 (grades 9 & 10 as of 01/01/2017): Proverbs 22:1 - A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

GROUP 7 (grades 11 & 12 as of 01/01/2017): 1 Corinthians 16:13 Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.

### ***Group Song – 2017***

Parish level team selected from Grades 7 and above.

Please reach out to the Sunday School Office with any questions. Registrations will begin on Sunday July 30th, 2017.

### **2017 Sunday School Calendar**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
OVBS	Thu-Sat, Aug 3-5	Our Church	Suja Abraham
Talent Competition-Parish level (incl. Bible quiz)	Sunday, Sept 17	Our Church	Bishel Baby
Talent Competition-Area level (incl. Bible quiz)	Saturday, Oct. 7	St. Johns Church	Annie Varghese
Talent Competition-Diocesan level	Saturday, Oct. 21	Saunders High School, Yonkers, NY	Mathew George
Area Teachers' Fellowship	November	TBD	Philadelphia Area SS