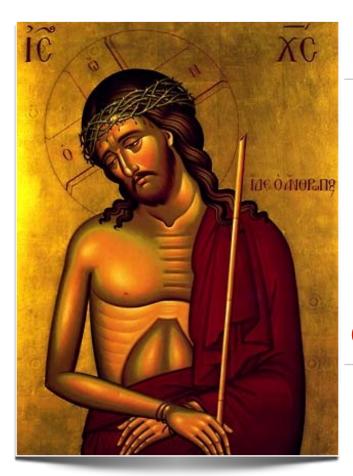
ST. THOMAS

INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

1009 UNRUH AVE. PHILADELPHIA. PA 19111



HERE IS THE
LAMB OF GOD
WHO TAKES
AWAY THE SIN
OF THE WORLD!

JOHN 1: 29

NEWSLETTER

STTHOMASPHILADELPHIA.ORG | PHONE: 215.342.1500 | FAX: 215.342.2700

VICAR'S MESSAGE

The Resurrected Lord

In a few weeks we will reach the greatest day for Christians experiencing the joy of celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord. St. Paul said, "If the Lord has not resurrected our preaching is useless and your faith is useless". St. Paul could say that authentically because he had the personal encounter with the resurrected Lord at the gate of the city of Damascus. St. Paul's life afterwards was completely dedicated to the preaching of Christ. There is no one in the history of the Church to compare



with St. Paul who took all risks and sufferings to carry the Good News to the pagan world. The world in which Jesus Christ was never heard, the world where so many gods and deities have established their own material kingdoms, and the world where established religious norms, rules, ideologies etc. were strongly controlling the crowds, it will not be easy to bring in a new spiritual message. But St. Paul's conviction was so strong to take any risk to take that message to the pagan world. St. Paul's personal experience became the simple reason to proclaim Christ. Such a powerful event is the resurrection of our Lord.

In the Orthodox tradition we greet each other saying, "the Lord is risen" and respond, "indeed He is Risen". This affirmation is a continuous process in our life, not simply part of our Creed or the liturgical life. Holding that faith in the risen Lord is the foundation of Christian faith and life. But is it part of our conviction and consequent life style? Looking at the present Church no one will say that. Our faith is in the books, in the words and in the worship. There is a saying, "the cow in the books will not eat the grass". It is true. Faith in books will not help us to be practical Christians. There the question arises how far is the resurrected Lord a part of our life? If we truly believe in the resurrected Lord we will exhibit the following:

- **I.** Witnessing Christ will be the Priority: The Apostles and the evangelists went all over the world witnessing Jesus. They had the power, the conviction and readiness to face consequences to witness Christ. In fact their witness did not help them personally to increase their material prosperity. Most of them became martyrs. The true meaning of the word martureo in Greek is to witness. That is how the word martyr came into English language. Witnessing means to die for the concept or the person. How many will become a martyr for Christ today?
- 2. Words of Christ will be our Guide: In a world where so much ideologies and philosophies in addition to personal convictions are overpowering our mind, it is nearly impossible to decipher the words of Christ. Accepting the norms and ideals of Christ is not a fashion today because the ideals of Christ clash with the ideals of the present world. All kinds of atrocities, lies, mistrust, unholy relationships, etc. that are being used as survival kit in the present world; there is no place for love, affection, humility, unity, cooperation, care for others and so on. Everything is materially defined including parent children relationship. Who is our guide?
- 3. Church of Christ will be our Target: We now live in a world where almost all Churches and Christian denominations are trying to establish their own individuality and identity. As a result, each one has to criticize, scandalize, demean, and mock at others as imperfect. Maybe Jesus' words, "why do you try to remove the speck in the eyes of your brother while you have a log sitting in your own eyes" is relevant today. Unless we join hands with the rest of the Christian world, a particular denomination or Church will not have any clout. Thus we become divided. The divided house is weak and will fall. The world around us Christians know now that we are a bunch of people with false claims of our faith. Can we have Jesus as our only target?

Therefore, shall we have a new approach in our life to understand the resurrected and living Lord who is the master of all who believe Him? Jesus says, "I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:23.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose

Parish News

Relevant MC decisions

- An emergency Managing Committee was called to order in office to discuss next steps in light of the news that the ICHS board will not be pursuing to occupy our facility. The Managing Committee has decided to find a tenant on our own efforts (by placing an ad in craigslist/local newspaper and placing a banner advertising the availably of the space). During this time frame we as a parish needs to run through the scenarios of not having access to the school side to understand the implications of a potential tenant needing access to the space all the time. More details on this will be announced later. If we are unable to find a tenant on our own during the Month of April, we will be engaging with a realtor to find one.
- We will not be having a Managing Committee Meeting in April and our next one will be on May 10, 2014.

Liturgical Calendar April 5: Memory of Pampady Thirumeni **April 6: Sixth Sunday of Great** Lent(Blind Man), Catholicate Day April II: 40th Day of Lent April 12: Saturday of Lazarus April 13: Hosanna (Palm Sunday) April 17: Pesaha(Maundy Thursday) April 18 : Good Friday April 19: Holy Saturday April 20: Kyamto (Easter) April 23: Memory of St. George April 27: New Sunday May 4: Second Sunday After Easter

On April 27, Mr. Jared Solomon, the Contestant for Pennsylvania State House of Representative will meet the people at 12:00 noon. This is an opportunity for us to meet the politician from our Oxford Community Area.



St. Thomas Parish Welcomes Rev. Fr. Dr. Bijesh Philip

Rev. Fr. Dr. Bijesh Philip, the Principal of St. Thomas Orthodox Seminary, Nagpur, will be visiting and conducting Holy Qurbana at our parish on Sunday, April 6. Bijesh Achen passed out of the Orthodox Theological Seminary with B.D. and GST in 1991 with flying colors. In 1993 he joined the St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, New York for M.Th. studies, which he passed in 1995. St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary is one of the prestigious Orthodox Seminaries in the United States and is highly rated among the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for United States and Canada. Fr. Bijesh Philip is the only faculty member in the seminaries of Malankara Orthodox Church with M.Th. Degree from an Orthodox theological institution.

In 1996 Fr. Bijesh joined the faculty of St. Thomas Orthodox Theological Seminary, Nagpur in the Department of Theology and Patristics and is a well renowned theologian and academician of the Malankara Church. He joined the Dharmaraam Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore for doctoral studies. His Dissertation was on 'Christian Commitment to Global Peace in the Theology of Paulos Mar Gregorios and Hans Kueng; A Comparative Study.' He was declared as Doctor of Theology by Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram in 2009. He belongs to Mar Gregarious Orthodox Church, Njaliyakuzhi, Kottayam. Mrs. Seenu Bijesh is his wife and he has two sons, Abhishek and Asher. He published three books in English, namely, Theosis and Mission, Christian Faith and Global Peace and A Sojourn with the Saviour. He has also written books in Malayalam for OVBS and Sunday School.

Sunday School News

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

Sunday School Students Visit the Elderly at Philadelphia Protestant Home (PPH) - A Service Project by Sunday School Students



Leviticus 19:32: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD."

Our students along with Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John and Teachers visited the residents of PPH on Sunday, March 30th. The program started with opening prayer and introduction by Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John. About 35 students and parents attended this service project. Most of the residents of PPH were waiting for us. Our Sunday School children lifted the spirits of the residents with group dances, group songs and action songs. It was a proud and blessed event for our Sunday School. We spent some time with the elderly, and they were very eager and excited to know our culture. Our Children and teachers served some cookies and sweets. Our children did an excellent service especially during this Lenten season. "I will be your God throughout your lifetime--until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you". Isaiah 46:4. May God bless all of them.

A day after the visit, Ms. Kathy Nucero of PPH wrote, "The residents have not stopped talking about the children and their performance. It was a wonderful experience. We look forward to your return."

Thanks to all especially Oommen Kappil, Santhosh Baby and Susan Mathews for helping students and teachers to make this project a successful one.

-Submitted by Milly Philip (Program Coordinator)

Talent Competitions

Self-confidence is extremely important in almost every aspect of our lives. Our level of self-confidence can show in many ways: our behavior, how we speak, how we present ourselves, and so on. And what if our children can achieve this vital aspect while glorifying our savior Jesus Christ? Why don't we take the opportunity of our Sunday school competition as the first stepping stone for our children to be on stage, yes, "a little competition is good for the soul." as long as it is a healthy one. Make talent competition the opportunity to teach our children strategies like the way to treat everyone with kindness and respect no matter whether you win or lose. Moreover, we all know small disappointments help children become strong and motivate them to do their best in the future.

Don't think twice! Parents and children of K-Grade 12, come join us for the information session conducted by experienced teachers and parents in June (TBA). For more information, stay tuned with the Sunday school office or contact the Talent Competition Coordinator, Reena Susan Mathews.

Note: Please see the parish bulletin board for the topics for Bible Quiz and Elocution. Detailed guidelines will follow.

-Submitted by Reena Susan Mathews, Coordinator of Talent Competitions

Assigned Competitions

The topics for Essay and Drawing competitions have been announced. See the parish bulletin board. Training Session will be held on Sunday, April 27th at 12.45 pm. Both parents and children should attend. Parish-level Assigned Competition will be held on Sunday, May 18th at 12.30 pm. If this date is inconvenient for anyone, please contact Liz Pothen or Oommen Kappil. Alternate date (May 11th) may be possible. Our Area-level Competition will be held on June 8th.

-For details, please contact Liz Pothen, Coordinator of Assigned Competitions.

Teachers' Training Certificate (TTC) Refresher Course

Area-Level Teachers' meeting and TTC Refresher course is being held on April 26th at St. George Malankara Orthodox Church in Fairless Hills, PA. This is a great opportunity for Teachers who intend to take the TTC exam this year. 12th Graders also are encouraged to attend this Refresher Course.

Teachers' Fellowship and Training

Learning is a continuing process. 'Sharpening the tools' is important in every profession, and we take that seriously. A Fellowship and Training session is scheduled for 10 am to 1 pm on Saturday, May 3rd at the residence of Bishel & Santhosh Baby. The training may include the following topics:

- Behavior Management & Student Engagement
- Lesson planning
- Orthodox Faith
- Church history
- Role of Holy Bible

All teachers are expected to attend this event.

-Submitted by Jessie Jacob, Coordinator of Teachers' Training.

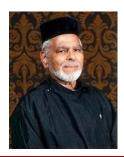
OVBS 2014

For the year 2014, our OVBS theme verse is "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness; The world and those who dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1). As we do every year, we are looking for help from our very talented volunteers from around our parish for both OVBS song and drawing submissions. As in previous years, we are providing individual parishes with an opportunity to submit songs to be shared with our entire Diocese for use during the summer OVBS season. We hope that every parish will make use of the opportunity to showcase the singing talents of their students. Each parish is allowed to submit two songs, one of which must be an original composition. We are especially interested in English songs which all of our OVBS participants can enjoy.

In addition to the songs, we are asking our children for their drawing submissions related to the theme. Drawings must be hand-drawn and of publishing quality. Submissions must be made electronically to the OVBS director. The Sunday School core committee will be awarding the first and second best submissions for both songs and drawings at the end of the summer. We look forward to seeing all of your talents at work.

For the full set of rules, please be in touch with the OVBS director, Steve Kurian, at ovbs.america@gmail.com

Philadelphia Bids Solemn Farewell to Rev. Fr. Dr. Paul Varki



Rev. Fr. Dr. Paul Varki was called to his eternal home on March 26, 2014, at the age of 83. Achen was one of the early Indian immigrants who settled in Philadelphia. Varki Achen was a devoted member of St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Church in Bensalem, PA. During his 57 years of service to the church, he provided leadership, support and pastoral care to the Indian community throughout the Northeastern United States. Our Vicars and many members attended the viewing and funeral services, and paid homage to this faithful spiritual father. May his soul find rest in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

APRIL WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES Mr. & Mrs. Raju C Samuel 3-Apr Mr. & Mrs. Philip George 7-Apr Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Abraham 10-Apr Mr. & Mrs. Thomas T Varghese 11-Apr Mr. & Mrs. John P Eapen 11-Apr Mr. & Mrs. George Thadathil 17-Apr Mr. & Mrs. Thomason Challiyil Korah 23-Apr Mr. & Mrs. Biju Varghese 24-Apr	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew George Mr. & Mrs. Jacob George Mr. & Mrs. Robin P. Montharayil Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie Cherian Mr. & Mrs. Biju P. Varghese Mr. & Mrs. Jose V Abraham Mr. & Mrs. George Abraham	24-Apr 26-Apr 28-Apr 28-Apr 29-Apr 30-Apr 30-Apr
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Annual G.R.O.W. Young Women's Conference

(Report by Mrs. Bessie Mathew)

G.R.O.W. Ministries held its annual One-Day Young Women's Conference at St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Unruh Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. on Saturday, March 29th, 2014. This was the third annual diocesan conference hosted by GROW Ministries. Women from Virginia to Boston attended the conference.

The theme of the conference was "Who Am I," taken from Isaiah 43:IC, "I have called you by name, you are mine." This year, the ministry was extremely blessed to have the Diocesan Metropolitan, His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, who formally established the ministry, as the main speaker. His Grace spoke about the multiplicity of identities that we all possess. Thirumeni was inspirational, motivating and also illustrated the notion of self perception. His Grace was quoted as saying, "When you acknowledge the image of God in others, you are also reflecting the image of God in you."

In addition to His Grace, two workshops were conducted in the morning and in the afternoon, and it was led by women lay leaders. The first workshop was "Who do I think I am?" and the second workshop was "Who does the world think I am?" The workshops were led by Dr. Ammukutty Paulose (mothers group), Mrs. Bincy Thomas (college), Mrs. Sunitha Zacharia (single and working professionals), Mrs. Susan Mathew (married) and Mrs. Anu Jacob Gheevarghese (high school.)

Several highlights of the conference included a welcome presentation by the committee to the song "Who Am I," a mime presentation to the song "Who Am I" by St. Thomas Greater Washington during lunch, and the assembling of flower rings and metal cross necklaces. In addition, women were able to meet their fellow sisters in Christ from various areas in the diocese during the coffee break and fellowship time. His Grace and members of the clergy also joined in this relaxing session. An open forum was also organized, in which His Grace, the clergy and seminarians answered questions on various topics.

The conference came to a close as the women spent time in spiritual meditation. During the meditation time, the priests prayed for all the participants at the altar, and thereafter, each woman individually received blessings. Each woman was given a Bible verse reflecting a promise made by God, a prayer card, and a booklet titled, "Letters from the Heart for the Growing Soul." The booklet is a compilation of letters by women who experienced a challenge and overcame it. The experiences are a reminder of the mysterious ways God is glorified in our lives. Through these personal experiences, the hope is that God will heal and uplift other sisters who may have similar situations.

Through the support of the clergy present, the members and volunteers of St. Thomas, Unruh, and all the prayerful support from the various spiritual organizations and friends, the conference was fruitful and uplifting.

The mission of G.R.O.W. Ministry is to help women be active in their Orthodox faith and to deepen their relationship with our Lord, Savior and King, Jesus Christ, despite the challenges they face in their daily lives. Please remember the ministry in your daily prayers.

MMS News:

There were three meetings held during the month of March. Every meeting had bible classes led by Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose and a devotional speech by one of the MMS member. On March 30, Mrs. Ceena Varghese who completed her Masters in Theology degree at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, New York made a speech about the importance of every Sunday during the Lenten season. She teaches at St. Vladimir's Seminary and is involved in various ministries of the diocese.

Parish Calendar

April 6 – CPR class and Certification for June 6-8 - Philadelphia Renewal

Bystanders by OCYM (12.30PM-2PM) Convention

April 13 - Palm Sunday

April 18 - Good Friday

June 8 - Pentecost
July 6 - Perunnal

pril 18 - Good Friday July 6 - Perunna

April 20 - Easter July 16-19 - Family and Youth Conference

April 27 - Parish Family Fellowship

(12.30pm-2pm)

August 16 - Picnic
October 4 - Harve

October 4 - Harvest Festival, OCYM Blood

Drive

Holy Qurbana in Pittsburgh

Three of our college students attend the University of Pittsburgh. One of our parish members, Mr. Renny Varghese & Family lives in Pittsburgh area. There are a few other Orthodox families who do not attend any parish regularly due as there are no Orthodox parishes in the area. The nearest one is in Cleveland, OH, which is at a two hr distance from Pittsburgh. In order to cater to the needs of the faithful in the area, our parish is celebrating Holy Qurbana in Pittsburgh on Saturday, April 12. Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John will be the chief celebrant.

Venue: 2384 Mt. Vernon Ave., Murrysville, PA 15632 (Host: Mr. Renny Varghese & Family)

We welcome college students (from the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University and other educational institutions) and Christian families from Pittsburgh and nearby area.

Sunday School Calendar

Event	Date	Venue	Coordinator
TTC/Area Teachers Conference	Saturday, April 26, 9am -4pm	St. George Church, Fairless Hills	Sheeba Mathew
Teachers' Fellowship/ Training	Saturday, May 3	Residence of Bishel & Santhosh Baby	Bishel Baby/Jessie Jacob
Assigned Competition- Parish level	Sunday, May 18	Our Church-Area level	Liz Pothen
Centralized Exam. Grade 12	Sunday, June 1, 12.30 pm	St. Mary's Cathedral	Binoj Chacko
Area level Picnic	Saturday, June 7	To be announced	Benjamin Mathew
Assigned Competition-Area level	Sunday, June 8	St Mary's Church, Devereaux Street	Liz Pothen
Centralized Exam. Grades 5, 8 and 10	Sunday, June 29, 12.30 pm	St Gregorios Church	Sunitha Zacharia
OVBS (Area-level)	July 24, 25 & 26	St Thomas Church, Unruh Ave.	Shaji Abraham
Talent Competition-Parish Level	Saturday, September 13	St Thomas Church, Unruh Ave.	Reena Susan Mathews
Talent Competition-Area Level	Saturday, September 27	St John's Church, Delaware Valley	Sunitha Zacharia and Shaji Abraham



His Holiness Patriarch of Antioch and All East Ignatius Zakka I Iwas entered eternal rest in God

The Patriarch passed away in Germany on 21st March 2014 at twelve noon. A massive heart attack was the reason for the demise reports several official sources. The Patriarch was under medication for long time due to fragile health conditions. Patriarch has been residing in Lebanon since the beginning of civil war in Syria.

Patriarch Ignatius Zakka was ordained as the Metropolitan of Mosul in November 1963 by Patriarch Ya`qub III . Patriarch Zakka is the 122nd successor to St. Peter in the Apostolic See of Antioch.



Archbishop Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim has been elected as the new Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch and All East.

The Holy Synod of the Syriac Orthodox Church which was held in Damascus on 31st March 2014, elected the 123rd successor of St.Peter in the Apostolic See of Antioch who is the Supreme Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church. He will be the 123rd Patriarch in the Apostolic Lineage of St Peter. He was born in Kamishly, Syria on May 3, 1965, as the youngest son of Mr. & Mrs. Issa Karim. On Sunday, January 28, 1996, he was consecrated as Metropolitan and Patriarchal Vicar to the Archdiocese of the

Syriac Orthodox Church for the Eastern United States, by His Holiness Patriarch Zakka I Iwas. Mor Cyril is currently serving as the Archbishop and Patriarchal Vicar of the Diocese of the Eastern United States of America.

Parish Announcements

Please send news, articles and information for May 2014 Newsletter by <u>Sunday, April 20</u> to the parish secretary or newsletter editor: <u>stthomasiocsecretary@gmail.com</u>, <u>stioc.newsletter@gmail.com</u>, <u>kappili@yahoo.com</u>.

- ▶ Please contact the parish office for any updates in contact information, addition in the family etc. to be added to the database.
- ▶ Please update your telephone numbers for Message Broadcast.
- ▶ Please visit our Web Site for information on upcoming events: stthomasphiladelphia.org

Prayer Meetings: Please contact Prayer Meeting Coordinator, Mr. Achen Varghese, to schedule a prayer meeting. Prayer meetings may be hosted in your home or in Church.

Please provide the names of the family members who are at least 70 years or will be 70 this summer. A log sheet is available in the office.

Secretary's Corner:

Lent is a special time of prayer, penance, sacrifice and good works in preparation of the celebration of Easter. I am sure we all are almost ready for the arrival of Holy Week – which is the pinnacle of our Christian faith. Let us prayerfully prepare for the Holy Week and Easter.

Thank you all for the great generosity that shown towards the Yacharam initiative. Our next collection will be towards the Catholicate day special collection which is schedule to happen on April 5, 2014.

With love and prayers, Paul John, Parish Secretary pjohn_19446@yahoo.com; 215.390.7083 (cell)

Holy Week Schedule

Evening Prayer

Every Day 7:00p.m.-8:00p.m.

40th Friday, April 11

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

Lazarus Saturday, April 12

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

Palm Sunday, April 13

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 14

8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer, Meditation

12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer

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

Tuesday, April 15

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer, Meditation

12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer

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

Wednesday, April 16 (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 17

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer, Meditation

12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer

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

Good Friday, April 18

8:30 a.m. Good Friday Service

7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer

9:30 -11:30 p.m. Night Vigil

Holy Saturday, April 19

9:30 a.m. Morning Prayer

11:00 a.m. Holy Qurbana

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

Easter Sunday, April 20

8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer

9:30 a.m. Easter Service & Holy Qurbana

Lunch