

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



NEWSLETTER

STTHOMASPHILADELPHIA.ORG | PHONE: 215.342.1500 | FAX: 215.342.2700

VICAR'S MESSAGE

The Post-Resurrection Challenge!

John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Now that we had a truly blessed Lenten time and resurrection experience, we are trying to nourish ourselves with the spiritual values gained during this time. It was indeed gratifying to see several people regularly attending the worship during the 50-day period and having the experience of Holy Confession and Holy Communion. I am sure it all made a difference in our life. All those who sincerely attempted to stay in touch with God must have had a positive change in their life. Others who continue in their stubbornness and never asked God to change them, would have no effect in their life at all whether it is Lenten time or not.

It is often a challenge for those who have taken new vows to change their life in a positive way, to hold on to it. For some of them the very day of Easter itself all their spirituality must have drained as they reverted back to their old life style. Many people try their best to keep up the power that descended on them. One thing I have been trying to tell our people is that Satan wants to fight hard to bring in us the negative thoughts and pull us away from God. Therefore, we should be alert at all times. As St. Peter says, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." We have to really work hard to stay on course

St. John the Apostle from his personal experience instructs us the reality of the incarnation proved the fact of 'dwelling' of God in our midst. It is the resurrected Lord that



affirmed his presence by assuring the disciples, "Lo I will be with you to the end of the world". (Mathew 28: 20). That presence is the ONLY thing that makes our life meaningful. We have millions of people looking for a meaning for their life! They have their own complaints on many things. But they never seek the presence of the Lord for the answers to their complaints and questions.

The Lord stayed amongst us and went through the human experience. And we know he resolved every issue in the human situation from birth to death. Our Fathers always assured us that his presence is enough to resolve our problems. Indeed those who sought his presence were able to surrender to him and get peace. His presence imparts glory. This glory or the bright light was part of the experience of all those who had a glimpse of the risen Lord. St. Paul, Sadhu Sundar Singh or others who had the appearance of our Lord in their life were able to witness to that brightness when Jesus appeared to them. All of them experienced unlimited peace and consolation in their life. Such people shared their experience with the Lord with others and so we have the confidence that we will have our questions answered if we meditate upon the Risen Lord. Can we take that challenge in this post-resurrection period? May the Lord bless you all! He is Risen! And He is with us: Emmanuel!

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

ASSISTANT VICAR'S MESSAGE

The Breath of God

The Gospel reading for this Sunday is taken from John 20:19-31. The disciples were in hiding. Then, in the place they were hiding, with the door closed, Jesus appeared before them. Jesus doesn't say, "hello," or "how have you been," but He says, "Peace be with you." Subsequently, Jesus shows them his wounds, both on his hands and side. The disciples, hiding from the Jews, for fear of persecution, were glad to see their teacher once again. But then, after "giving peace" a second time, and giving the directive to go and preach the Gospel, He does something that is very peculiar—He breathes the Holy Spirit on them. Compared with the account in the Acts of Apostles, where the disciples receive the Holy Spirit and being to go out and preach the Gospel, the account of Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit in John 20 seems to be contradictory. Not understanding the context, or the framework of salvation that God is working in and with, one can compare the two accounts of the Holy Spirit and see a contradiction. When read correctly, however, we see that the first breathing of the Holy Spirit is the breath of the resurrected God-Man Himself, that initiates the process of receiving the Holy Spirit, which is finally fulfilled in the descending of the Holy Spirit in the Books of Acts.

When we look back to the beginning, that is, the creation (Genesis 2:7), we see that God created through his breath. He gave life to man by breathing into his nostrils. Again, in Ezekiel 37, we see God conversing with Ezekiel. The dialogue is about the "dry bones" and could they possibly be brought back to life. God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones that he will make "breath enter into them" to give them life. And indeed they were brought back to life by the supernatural power of God that joins the tendons together and caused flesh to grow. This was accomplished through the breath of God. The same breath of creation, as well as the breath that gave life to the dry bones, is the same breath that breathed on the disciples in John 20. The breathing of the Holy Spirit by Jesus is therefore a sort of "reclaiming" the creation that is now made anew through the death (cross), burial and resurrection of the Son of God. Further, in the beginning, God's breath brought life, but Adams

disobedience brought sin (and death), but through Jesus' breathing the Holy Spirit on the disciples, they now are given charge to forgive sins. This is God's way of restoring humanity. Now, in understanding this, the Pentecost can be seen as the fulfillment of Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit on his disciples.

This is a reflection of our Christian journey as well. We begin our journey with the Sacrament of Baptism, but often, as we go through the seasons of life--teenage years, young adulthood, marriage, children, and mature age--our Baptism that was the grace of God given freely for the forgiveness of sins and membership into the kingdom of God, becomes forgotten, or even rejected, because of our behavior. The Sacrament of Baptism can be seen as the initial breath, but a Pentecost is needed to fulfill God's plan in our life. No Christian can claim that Baptism is enough. He must see it as the initial breath that was breathed on him to bring about a fulfillment of a Pentecost that would give him the power and strength to live a Christian life. We can recall that after the breathing of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were still afraid, and in hiding. After receiving the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, disciples were ready to fulfill God's plan in their life. So also, we as Orthodox Christians need a Pentecost, a moment in time, where God's presence is felt and experienced like never before. This can be experienced in and through, fasting, prayer, Confession and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, with a true and genuine love for Christ.

My friends, you may have had your initial breath of the Sacrament of Baptism? But, then, where is your Pentecost? If you rely on your Baptism alone, you will always be afraid and hiding from the grace of God. However, if you will be bold and ask God to give you a fulfillment of your Baptism, then He will shower upon you His grace and mercy, afresh and new. This then will become for you the "continuous baptism" that happens every day, that is, you die and rise to Christ daily.

Blessings,
Fr. Gheevarghese John

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| Ninan C.N. Jose | Apr 1 | Geno George Joseph | Apr 13 | George Eapen | Apr 20 |
| Mohan Samuel | Apr 1 | Sherry Kurian | Apr 14 | Reem Ann Bivin | Apr 21 |
| Timothy Mathew | Apr 2 | Babu Varghese | Apr 14 | Desslyn Lia Denny | Apr 21 |
| Raju C Samuel | Apr 4 | Reshma R Padiyara | Apr 14 | Aleyamma Kuncheria | Apr 21 |
| Lincy Kuncheria | Apr 4 | Daji Mathew | Apr 14 | Lincy M Reji | Apr 22 |
| Mariam Thomas | Apr 4 | Jacob Chacko | Apr 15 | Saramma Varghese | Apr 22 |
| Lajy Raju | Apr 4 | Ansamma Saju Paul | Apr 15 | Janly James | Apr 23 |
| Evelyn James | Apr 4 | Achen Varghese | Apr 15 | Thankachan P Daniel | Apr 25 |
| Nathan George Thomas | Apr 6 | Susamma George | Apr 16 | Jaisy A Thomas | Apr 25 |
| Ricky Panicker | Apr 6 | K K Varghese | Apr 16 | Alice Sathees | Apr 25 |
| Hannah Rachel Daniel | Apr 7 | Mathew Philip Varghese | Apr 17 | Leona Thomas | Apr 25 |
| Stephen Rajan | Apr 7 | Thomas Daniel | Apr 17 | Lilly Simon | Apr 26 |
| Thankachan Samuel | Apr 7 | George Varghese | Apr 17 | Alka Mirium Varghese | Apr 27 |
| Koshy Daniel | Apr 7 | Jeremy B Mukadiyil | Apr 18 | Rajani T Rajan | Apr 27 |
| Renju R Padiyara | Apr 7 | Jobin K. Abraham | Apr 18 | Isaiah Thomas Anish | Apr 27 |
| Manoj Mathew | Apr 9 | Jessy Jacob | Apr 18 | Ajila S Koshy | Apr 28 |
| Jaison George | Apr 9 | Jacob M Zachariah | Apr 18 | Thomas G Kappil | Apr 28 |
| Thomson Challiyil Korah | Apr 10 | Beena Joseph | Apr 18 | Benjamin Jacob Sam | Apr 28 |
| Joel Koshy | Apr 10 | Synu Varghese | Apr 18 | Mathew Varghese | Apr 30 |
| Leelamma Vaidian | Apr 12 | Suni Brown | Apr 19 | Ajo Raju | Apr 30 |
| Anitha Jossy | Apr 12 | Joel Sathees | Apr 19 | Sean P Thomas | Apr 30 |
| Jolly Reji | Apr 12 | Bindu Sam | Apr 19 | Benji Varghese | Apr 30 |
| Raji Abhilash | Apr 12 | Aleyamma Varghese | Apr 20 | Reuben Jacob Sam | Apr 30 |
| Ashish Abraham | Apr 13 | Binoy Varghese | Apr 20 | Rev Dn. Daniel Yohannan | Apr 30 |
| Raju T Chandy | Apr 13 | Joshua Koshy | Apr 20 | | |

APRIL WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|--------|
| Mr. & Mrs. Raju C Samuel | Apr 3 | Mr. & Mrs. Robin P. Montharayil | Apr 28 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Philip George | Apr 7 | Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie Cherian | Apr 28 |
| Mr. & Mrs. John P Eapen | Apr 11 | Mr. & Mrs. Jacob George | Apr 29 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Thomas T Varghese | Apr 11 | Mr. & Mrs. Biju P. Varghese | Apr 29 |
| Mr. & Mrs. George Thadathil | Apr 17 | Mr. & Mrs. Jose V Abraham | Apr 30 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Thomson Challiyil Korah | Apr 23 | Mr. & Mrs. George Abraham | Apr 30 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Mathew George | Apr 24 | | |

Sunday School News

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

Event Report: Easter Egg-Hunt on March 27, Sunday

Thank you to everyone for participating in the annual Easter egg-hunt for our Sunday School children. For this event, the youth of our church spent hours preparing the eggs, and shopping for the materials needed so that every child would be able to experience the joy of an egg-hunt. Children from lower pre-k to fourth grade were able to experience this festive activity. There were four separate hunts (based on age group) that took place simultaneously: two in the library, and two in the sanctuary. Each group had two winners who received either first or second place prize baskets that were filled with small toys and treats. Also every child walked away with Easter eggs filled with candy, as well as a chocolate bunny for participating. This year we also had the Easter bunny make a special appearance. A huge thank you to Jiju Mathew for providing a photo shoot for the children to take pictures with the Easter bunny. In addition, thank you to all the parents for bringing the children to take part in such a joyous event. The happiness of our children is what drives events like these. Once again thank you to all that participated, helped, and supported to make this Easter egg-hunt such a success!

- Betsy George, Program

Coordinator

Upcoming Events

Training for Essay Writing and Drawing (Assigned Competition): April 3rd, 12:45 pm

All children please come to the training. Parents please join your children, especially younger children. The training session is conducted to provide you with the necessary instructions and materials for Drawing and Essay writing. Please join the training even if you are not sure if you would like to compete.

Training for Drawing groups 1,2,3 will be held in the Sunday school hall.

The Assigned competition will be held on Sunday May 1st. If anyone needs extra help please let either Oommen Kappil (Sunday School Principal) or myself know and the help will be provided.

-Submitted by Liz Pothen, Assigned Competition Coordinator

Teachers Training Course and Work shop – April 16

Under the auspices of our Area Sunday Schools, a workshop is being organized for Teachers Training and Holy Qurbana.

Venue: St. Gregorios Church, Bensalem, PA, 4136 Hulmeville Rd, Bensalem, PA

Date: Saturday, April 16, starting at 1.30 pm.

Agenda

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM - TTC lessons

- Grade 8 – Molsey Thomas, St. Gregorios, Bensalem
- Grade 9 – Tom Chacko, St. Johns Church
- Grade 10 – Marina Mathew, St. Mary's, Devereaux
- Grade 11 – Benji Mammen, St George Church
- Grade 12 – Glee Joseph Abraham, St. Johns

4:30 PM – 6:30 PM – Workshop

- Unraveling the Mysteries of Holy Qurbana - Rev Fr. Shibu Venad Mathai and Rev Fr. Vijay Thomas
- Middle School and higher students, and all teachers are encouraged to attend.

6:30 PM- 7:00PM – Evening Prayer

TTC Refresher is primarily for those who are appearing for TTC exam. Current Teachers and 12th

Grade students can take TTC exam. All Teachers are encouraged to attend, as this is meant as a continuing education course.

Those who would like to attend are requested to contact Binny Cherian (cbinny@gmail.cpm) to register.

Those who haven't yet contacted Binny regarding TTC Exam registration are requested to contact him by this Sunday, April 3rd. (The TTC Exam is on June 26th.)

Sunday School students to visit Adult Home-Care facility: April 24th

On Sunday, April 24th, our Sunday School students will be visiting the Holy Redeemer St. Joseph Manor Care long-term care facility, from 1:30-2:30 pm. Our students will prepare action songs, group songs, as well as Bollywood dances to perform in front of the 60 residents plus the staff. In addition, the children will be making cards for the elderly. In the children's efforts, we hope to bring joy to the lives of the elderly residing there. Giving back to our community and making others happy is an important lesson for our children to always uphold. We hope to have a successful event, and leave the facility knowing that we have made a positive impact. Parents and students will be given times of upcoming practices for this event. Please contact Kappil Uncle or myself for further details. Thank you!

-Submitted by Betsy George, Program Coordinator

Assigned Competitions -2016

| Group | Grades | Event | Topics |
|-------|------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Pre-K & KG | Drawing | Moses at the burning bush |
| 2 | 1 & 2 | Drawing with a short sentence | Priest baptizing a baby |
| 3 | 3 & 4 | Drawing with a short paragraph | Jesus feeds the 5000 |
| 4 | 5 & 6 | Essay | The power of a prayerful life |
| 5 | 7 & 8 | Essay | 1Corinthians 13:4 "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful." |
| 6 | 9 & 10 | Essay | Mathew 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." How can we seek His kingdom? |
| 7 | 11 & 12 | Essay | Ecclesiastes 3:7 "A time to keep silence and a time to speak." What is the value of silence and quiet in a time when we are always "plugged in"? |

Talent Competitions -2016

Elocution Topics

| Group | Grades | Topics |
|-------|---------|---|
| 4 | 5 & 6 | James 4:10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you." |
| 5 | 7 & 8 | Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart." |
| 6 | 9 & 10 | Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." |
| 7 | 11 & 12 | Proverbs 19:21 "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established." |

Note: All Grades are based on Secular School Grades as of Jan. 1, 2016

Bible Quiz-Books
Judges

1 Corinthians
Revised Standard Version (RSV) only

2016 Sunday School Calendar

| Event | Date | Venue | Coordinator |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Adult Home Care Facility Visit | Sunday, April 24 | St. Joseph's Manor | Betsy George |
| Assigned Competition-parish level | Sunday, May 1 | Our parish | Liz Pothen |
| Assigned Competition-Area level | Sunday, May 22 | St. George Church | Liz Pothen |
| Bible Quiz-parish level | Sunday, May 29 | Our parish | Bishel Baby |
| Centralized Exam-Grade 12 | Sunday, June 5 | St. Thomas, Mascher St. | Santhosh Baby |
| Centralized Exam-Grade 5, 8, 10, TTC | Sunday, June 26 | St. Mary's Cathedral | Santhosh Baby |
| OVBS | Thu-Sat, Jul 28-30 | Our parish | TBA |
| Talent Competition-Parish level | Sunday, Sep. 18 | Our parish | Bishel Baby |
| Talent Competition-Area level | Saturday, Oct 8 | St. Johns Church | Bishel Baby |
| Talent Show/Competition-Diocesan level | Saturday, Oct 29 | TBA | Betsy George/ Bishel Baby |

Parish News

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH 2016

Holy Week and Easter – The Parish observed the Holy Week from 40th day (Friday) with Holy Eucharist in the evening. Special events like Palm Sunday, Pesaha, Annunciation to St Mary on Thursday evening, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter were all observed in a very serene manner. Since His Holiness allowed us to have Holy Eucharist on Thursday evening it was very convenient for us to have the full Good Friday service in the normal course. We had hundreds of people attending each of those events. We have hundreds of people to take Holy Communion during this season. Many people used the opportunity for Holy confession as well. It was really enriching to see that several children and youth observed the Lent and used the opportunity for Holy Confession.

Holy Week schedule was strictly maintained to have three times worship every day: one at 8:00 am, one at 12 noon and one at 7:00 p.m. We were blessed to have the presence of Rev. Dr. P.C. Thomas, Rev. Dn. Eby Poulouse, Rev. Dn. Daniel Yohannan and our own Vicar and Asst. Vicar to lead the worship. Continuing from our tradition of evening prayer on all the 50 days at our church premises, the Holy Week was a special season of blessing.

During Holy Week all those attended worship were given Kanji with generous help from a large team of people under the able leadership of Samukutty John and Jacob Zachariah. It was also a matter of encouragement that several people pitched in to prepare food each day.

The parish is much thankful to all those who helped in making the Holy Week a smooth running season not only arranging food but also arranging the hall, PA system (Anooj), cleaning the altar and sanctuary, preparing ingredients for the Good Friday service (Rajan Padiyara and Daniel Varghese). Enormous help

was provided by many but special mention should be made for the help of Santhosh Baby and family, Rajan Padiyara and family, Daniel Varghese and family, Chacko P. Chacko and family, Philip M. M. and family, GM Panicker and family and so on. In addition our MC members and office-bearers also worked hard to make everything running smooth.

Many thanks to all people who donated to the Holy Week fund, flowers for Palm Sunday and helped in various activities.

NEW BORN – Sanju and Anju John blessed with a Baby Boy
Rebu Roy and Mabel Roy blessed with a baby girl.

DEATH - Father of Mrs Jacob M Zachariah (Kunjumol) passed away in Puramattom, Kerala. On behalf of our church, the secretary offered the condolences to the family and laid wreath.

PRAYER MEETING

1. On 3/12/2016 at the residence of Elias Issac
2. On 3/13/2016 –At the residence Saju Mathew
3. On 3/19/2016 – At Chapel – Hosted by Philip Thomas and family from New Jersey.

SICK LIST - A folder kept outside the office. Please write the names of the sick with relation.

FAMILY WELFARE FUND- Our Family Welfare fund is now depleted as we helped our families in need. Please donate to this fund so that we can help more of needy families.

Sacred Memory of Pampady Thirumeni: We will be celebrating the sacred memory of His Grace Kuriakose Mar Gregorios known popularly as Pampadi Thirumeni. This is the 50th year after the demise of His Grace. Kottayam Diocese is building 50 homes for the homeless. We were able donate to build one house for a needy person in Kerala in the name of His Grace. This project was initiated by the Kottayam Diocese and Pampady Mar Kuriakose Dayara. I would like to thank all those who helped to donate to this fund.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Table Tennis Tournament – on April 16th. Please contact the Sports Coordinator Mr David Philip.
Diocesan Bishop Visit – April 17 th Sunday

Memory of H.G. PAMPADI KURIAKOSE MAR GREGORIOS
By EDITOR DR. RAJAN MATHEW, PHILADELPHIA

Pampadi Kuriakose Mar Gregorios was effectively an uncanonized saint of Malankara Church who had been a simple and humble priest of the Most High Lord of Heaven and a man of great faith who possessed the spiritual gift of love. He shared his spiritual gifts of love and kindness to countless numbers of people around him from all religious and social sects. Though he was not attributed or claimed for building big churches, instituting any significant organizations, acquiring great worldly knowledge and academic distinctions or for exposition of great administrative excellence, his life was a true testament of his faith, humility and charity. Beyond the Church administration, he was a bishop concentrated more in celibacy, holy life and compassion to poor. He was a man revered by not only his community people but also by all with out any caste or class for which a befitting evidence is that the land for the Tabor Dayara was offered him by a Hindu leader. His blameless life, ascetic vigor and compassion to poor had attracted people of all religion.



Very explicitly, the power of prayer is needed for the Church above all her excellences in its organization and governance in order to lay all the plans before God and to seek for a proper guidance and choices especially in the period of crisis as the prophet Samuel did behind the Kingdom of Israel. The tearful prayers of this saint, while sitting at a corner of the Pothenpara Dayara off Pampadi Town, was a great source of inspiration, courage and for providences from God for the Church and to all its layers of administration and leadership. He was a minister who considered hardship and suffering of this world as blessings from God. He had the vision of spirituality not to alleviate the hardships but to glitter in the hardships by Grace of God.

This great sage of Tabor was born in the traditional Karingamattom family in Pezhamattam near Pampadi to Chacko of Moolakkara house and Iliche of Velloor Vellikotttil house. The child was baptized and given the baptismal name as Kuriakose. He grew up in a very pious family, which had to undergo a lot of financial hardships. The family atmosphere and special prayer and worshipping practices at home had greatly strengthened young Kuriakose in his faith. As a child, Kuriakose was the apple of the eye to all in his village.

At the age of five, as per the custom of that time, Kuriakose started his alphabetic education under the discipleship of Madathil Asan. That was an age in which it prevailed racial and occupational untouchability. Young Kuriakose was very compassionate with low caste people and he made very thick friendship with low caste and downtrodden co-students. It was his great fervency to carry coconut, sugar-candy, molasses etc. to the school and distribute it among his untouchable friends.

Though his father desired Kuriakose to be a priest, he had great doubts whether he could afford even the dress-code and a decent living for his son as a priest. Nevertheless, Kuriakose humbled himself, accepting the call from God and obliged to the desire of Mar Dionysius, to get ordained to the order of a priest. At the age of fourteen, Kuriakose was ordained to the first order of deaconate in February 1989 at Pampadi Church. Subsequently Dn. Kuriakose joined Old Seminary, Kottayam, for theological studies under the discipleship of Vattasseril Geevarghese Malpan and Madathil Alexander Malpan. He had learned Syriac language, preliminary theological lessons and sacramental procedures from this Seminary. As per the instruction of Malankara Metropolitan, the deacon had proceeded to Parumala Seminary for further theological studies. During that time, his father expired and the family plunged into an aggravated financial crisis.

On July 8, 1906 Dn. Kuriakose was ordained as priest and on the very next day as a Ramban by Murimattom Paulose Mar Gregorios [Later raised as the First Catholicos] and consecrated the first holy Qurbana at Pampadi Church. Kuriakose Ramban started living at the Pampadi Church. During this time he initiated to renovate the Church building and annexed a small room to it. His modus of operandi for the construction work was that he first announces his desire and civil plan of construction after Sunday Parish service. On the very next day onward, a battalion of volunteers come to the site and starts collectively to do the work. Ramban will provide sufficient food to all for the full day. He was getting a lot of food item from the villagers as gift and all the food was distributed to them. His primary teacher Madathil Asan conducted a preliminary elementary school in the annexed room of the Church building. Ramban had great pleasure to provide sweets and noon food to all the children studied in that school.

Further, Ramban Kuriakose was appointed by Mar Dionysius to assist the Manager Kallasseril Punnose Ramban [later consecrated as the Third Catholicos] at Parumala Seminary. His stay at Parumala with St. Gregorios had a great influence in his life to follow the footsteps of this saint to mature in his ascetic and prayerful life. Ramban was assigned also to teach Syriac to the Deacons in the Seminary. In addition, he was engaged for drafting reply letters on behalf of Malankara Metropolitan. Ramban Kuriakose was blessed with a neat and beautiful curved italic handwriting in Syriac and Malayalam. He always used to write with a special feather pen dipping in ink. As a personal quality of Ramban, he was very prompt in writing his daily diary, which exposed his grandeur and discipline of his life.

Ramban Kuriakose had the rare opportunity to consecrate holy Qurbana in Syriac as per the instruction of Mar Abdulla Patriarch and in his presence while the Patriarch was living in Old Seminary at Kottayam on a visit to Malankara. Also Ramban had the fortune to minister the ailing Catholicos Mar Basalios Paulose during his last days.

As the Ramban wanted to detach himself from any worldly desire and wished to submit himself to God's will through prayer and contemplation, it was his great desire to build a small Dayara to seclude himself from the worldly personal attachments and to live a prayerful ascetic life of humility and devotion in the continuous presence of the Lord. However, finance was a great hindrance for fulfilling his dream. Understanding the desire of his disciple, his teacher Madathil Asan offered him a piece of land at the Pothenpara forest which was abode of even wild animals that time. With this offered land and with support of Cheriyaamadthil Jacob Kathanar, with a great dedication in Lord, Ramban dug a well and constructed a small thatched cottage at this place as a Dayara. During the dawn, Ramban started the day's work without any money in his hand for paying the workers except his great confidence in Lord that there will be some way God will show before the day end. Very astonishingly on every day, some how or the other, Ramban received sufficient money to pay the workers for the day, out of the magnanimity of villagers who loved him and he loved them. Before moving to Dayara, Ramban took three days fasting prayer. He himself consecrated Dayara with the help of Cheriyaamadthil Jacob Kathanar. He moved to this unprovided and unfurnished Pothenpara Dayara and started living there.

Ramban had many visitors to this remote Dayara. It was a practice of Ramban that he will not sent anybody from the Dayara without giving sufficient food irrespective of cast or creed of the visitor. Vattasseril Mar Dionysius visited the Dayara and he was the one who suggested the name of Dayara as Tabor.

Ramban's faithful servant and steward was a deaf man who lived with him and attended him for more than 65 years. He was of extraordinary grasping power and of great devotion to his master. He was very normal except his deafness. This incapability was never a hindrance for communication as they fluently convened each other through sign language and gesture. This deaf man loved his master so much and considered the Dayara and its promises as his own. He had a great contribution for the horticultural uplifting of the Dayara premises, gardening and planting coconut trees and mango trees. He brought water from a distant pond for irrigating the trees. He was very bold to express his innocent views to his master and reciprocally Thirumeni was so affectionate to this deaf and granted him the full freedom in the Dayara. With the contact of this

prayerful ascetic sage the deaf also was very pious with prayer, fasting and other sacred observances. Also this faithful servant had self-assumed faithfully and honestly the stewardship of the Dayara, especially to feed and satisfy all class and creed visitors, which was habit of Ramban from childhood.

1929 Feb 16, Kuriakose Ramban was consecrated as a Bishop with title of Gregorios by Basalios Geevarghese II. He was the first Bishop consecrated by the third Catholicos as he himself was consecrated as the Catholicos only one day before this. It is noteworthy that the Amshavadi given to Kuriakose Mar Gregorios during the consecration was that which belonged to Parumala Mar Gregorios, the first saint of Malankara. As the life of Pampadi Mar Gregorios was also mostly in the same footsteps of the Great saint at Parumala, this heredity of the Amshavadi is to be considered as shawl inherited by Elisha from his master Elijah.

The newly consecrated Metropolitan was given the charge of Kottayam Diocese. Also he was designated as the Guidance Consultant for the general activity of the Church, being the Trustee of the Catholicate Trust initiated in 1934. Church administration was not a big concern for this Yogi. However to administer he did not have any hesitation even. All were alike to him without any partiality and he did not bother to achieve any worldly qualifications, as his wisdom was the faith in God.

Pampadi Thirumeni was very particular to observe the traditional sequences and to use lyrical wordings of all worshipping services. If anything went wrong any time, he grieved about it and corrected it. He was very strict in his tri-hour prayers, lent and fasting. All those who came in contact with him, had the great experience of their burdens of worldly life fanned off by the wind of the presence of this Godly man. It was a very special experience for each who came in contact with Thirumeni as he shared everybody's concerns and worries; helping, praying and inspiring them. He put the needs of all whom he meets before his own. He had setup a model for the compassion to all his co-beings. He shined as the champion of the poor. He considered the compassion to the poor as equal and most required as the prayer. He was a man who had done all his charity work hidden from the mass. However many who experienced of his warmth and compassion had reported many experiences with Thirumeni.

Though he had gone through utter poverty in his childhood and faced with day-to-day hardships for the maintenance of the Dayara, Thirumeni had a strong faith in the providence from God for 'daily bread'. He never bothered to store anything for the next day, as he believed in true sense of the essence of Lord's Prayer 'give us our daily bread.' One day a poor harijan old lady approached in the Dayara and requested him some help for her one-day meal. However there was nothing available in the Dayara to give her, money or material, except the rice for the dinner. Thirumeni ordered his deaf servant to give the remaining rice to the old lady. The deaf being very practical and innocent and concerned about Thirumeni was defiant and informed Thirumeni that the rice available will only be sufficient for the day's dinner and that cannot be shared with the visitor. The servant vehemently opposed Thirumeni and kept adamant to his views. Eventually he was forced to oblige to his master and the full rice was given to the poor visitor. No sooner the poor lady left the Gate of Dayara, few people entered the gate with rice, vegetables, coconuts etc. enough for more than a week, as a share of some function in the house of a rich man of the village and send same to Thirumeni. This was a great witness even to his deaf steward about the assurance of the confidence and dependency on Lord.

Another incident of his compassion is revealed through an incident reported. A beggar who used to beg around Pampadi Township collapsed on the road. Somebody had informed Thirumeni about this incident. Immediately, Thirumeni rushed to the Pampadi town and had seen the fainted man in the shed near the road and made arrangement to treat him and give all the help. However, the man died after few days. Thirumeni took hold of the corpse and brought the dead body to the Pampadi Valiya Church and buried there with full honour as his own churchman.

He was helping many poor students for the studies with out informing anybody. His charity pattern was without trumpeting it in any way. Once a college student of Tiruvalla wrote Thirumeni about his difficulty

for paying his fees. Thirumeni replied the boy that he will help him to pay the fees. Somehow Thirumeni forgot to arrange the fees till the last date. On the last date he suddenly remembered about his promise to the boy and sent a man personally to Tiruvalla to pay the fees in time.

Once a beggar inflicted with leprosy came to Dayara for begging and stood under a tree near the gate. While seeing the beggar standing off, Thirumeni beckoned him to come into the Dayara. The leper was afraid to move forward. As he was hesitant to come near, Thirumeni went to the gate and caught hold of his hand and brought him inside the Dayara, seated him, gave food and followed him to bid him at the gate.

Once a young man approached Thirumeni for some job or some help to maintain his family as he lost his job. Thirumeni had nothing with him to offer that man. Thirumeni searched around and as he could find anything to help that man, he told him to take the milking cow in the Dayara. But the man hesitated to take the cow, as it was the source of milk for the Dayara inmates. Then Thirumeni ordered his deaf servant to untie and give the cow to the man. Even then, the man was not ready to accept the cow. Eventually Thirumeni himself untied the cow and gave it to the man. Very reluctantly the man was forced to carry away the cow and the family was maintained by selling the milk of that cow.

Once there was an epidemic plague in the Kunnamkulam area. He had rushed to Kunnamkulam and started serving the affected people and desired to live with them and extended all possible services and shown his willingness even to die with them. He visited house by house, prayed and extended all the helps to them. Many people prevented Thirumeni to go to the epidemic area. But nobody could prevent this human lover as he ventured and continued his services saying, 'Let me die if God will so'.

Sermons given by Pampadi Thirumeni were awe inspiring and simple in nature. His main theme was to utilize with all materialistic blessings and abilities to love each other with out any boundaries or limit to all human. His preaching was well manifested by his own life pattern. He always reminded the people to be aware and conscious of four things: death, judgment, salvation and hell.

Through his Kalpana and sermons he strongly condemned liquor addiction and desired to relieve the families from this social evil. Through his ecclesiastical letters and through Parish administrations, he identified all infected with mortal diseases or insanity, orphans, handicapped, poor widows etc. in the whole diocese and extended personalized services to each. He gave special instructions to all parish priest to visit the families and inform him of the about the needy ones.

Once the Aprem Patriarch enquired about Pampadi Mar Gregorios to the Third Catholicos Mar Basalios Geevarghese II. The Catholicos, with out any hesitation, opinioned about Pampadi Thirumeni and told to the Patriarch that Mar Gregorios is the second in holiness at Malankara after Parumala Mar Gregorios. The spiritual strength gained by prayer, fasting and charity was the sole investment of Pampadi Thirumeni. During the service of Holy Unction given to Pampadi Thirumeny, Augen Mar Timoteos talked about him as a man fully lived heavenward while he lived physically in this world. He lived a life totally unaware about this world, and virtually he was travelling to heaven throughout his life time.

He exposed same personality to poor, wealthy, low class, high class and all type of people and all kind. He did not have any type of discrimination to anybody. This was the very approach of his personality. Thirumeni had many poor visitors both Christians, non-Christians and that too, young and old. If any habitual visitor is missed to meet him for a day, he was keen to personally enquire about him.

Due to severe fasting and night prayers, Thirumeni became sick before ageing. 1965 March he became sick and bedridden and hospitalized. Augen Mar Themotheos gave Holy Unction to Thirumeni. April 5, 1965 this great sage of Tabor breathed his last and his tomb is at Tabor Dayara.