

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



# NEWSLETTER

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## VICAR'S MESSAGE

### The Apostles' Month

The month of June is the "Apostles' Month". From 16th to 29th all the Apostles are remembered and honored with a lent time and June 29th the lent ends with the festival of the sacred memory of Sts. Peter and Paul. The Apostles are a great attraction and inspiration to all at all times because they could follow truthfully the 'way of Christ'. They were not well educated, financially rich or politically influential persons. Neither were they people of any special caliber or talent except that they were good fishermen and maybe St. Mathew being a tax collector was good at math! According to the Gospels Judas Iscariot was in charge of the "purse" and may not have had much money to operate like modern humanitarian workers or evangelists! Therefore, generally the Apostles are just ordinary folks who blindly followed the Lord. Under their leadership and witness the Church grew. The Bible witnesses, (Act 4)<sup>32</sup> All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.<sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all<sup>34</sup> that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need." There were no psychologists to counsel them, no economist to advise them, no rich man to feed them, no large company that employed them ....

It was not just co-incidental that the Lord selected these inefficient followers but it was the Lord's careful plan. In God there are no accidents or unexpected happenings. Everything is in the plan of God. The Lord found that the inefficient people in the eyes of the world are the best whom He can train because they were obedient disciples. The only one person who had some developmental, humanitarian or managerial vision was Judas Iscariot but his plans did not work. He proved that human plans outside the will of God are futile. The Lord could not train Judas that much as his eyes were pointed to material gain for the Lord. Many



times Jesus made it clear to them all but still Judas hoped that Jesus the true Son of God will succeed in overcoming all worldly powers. He knew well how Jesus overcame temptations. Also he knew how Jesus could control every human situation and the nature, no matter what it was: sickness in body or mind, death, natural calamity, hunger, thirst and so on. Therefore Judas' dreams for Jesus was purely worldly. None of his expectations worked out as Jesus' was purely from the point of view of the Kingdom of God. At the same all other Apostle made the difference in their obedience to the Lord.

In the Kingdom of God the ordinary people are more efficient because they were willing to be trained for the Kingdom of God. We know how afraid were the Apostles the moment Jesus died on the cross. Even after resurrection they did not regain their courage in spite of continuous appearances of the Lord. The sporadic absence of Jesus made them weak. When Jesus was always with them, they did not worry. But when the Holy Spirit came on them, they felt the continuous presence of the Lord with them and they became courageous. And they became the most dedicated workers of the Lord's vineyard.

It is interesting to notice that when the Lord selected the Apostles, they were given specific duties. Matthew 10:5 onwards we read, "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,[a] drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." We can itemize all those duties:

1. Go to the people of Israel (to preach to their own community)

2. Proclaim the message of the Kingdom of Heaven (the concept of heaven is over against the kingdom of this world, which means it was not a quantitative kingdom but a qualitative one where there is only love, joy and peace as the goals in life)
3. Heal the sick (both in mind and body; somehow the hospitals took over this job these days!)
4. Raise the dead (The Apostles did it after Christ)
5. Cleanse the lepers (socially outcast people to be brought back to the society)
6. Drive out demons (heal those who are mentally ill or spiritually sick. People who are under the influence of Satan to be cleansed)

Which of the above duties need money, power, authority, influence or any material resource? None.

Simply dedication, commitment, obedience of the Word of God, prayer and trust in God and so on are needed to carry the mission that Christ gave us. Today's Church is seeking all kind of material resources and there is a lot of material resource but where is the wellbeing of our people? Can we see the Kingdom of God among us? The apostles experienced the kingdom of heaven where God is the real experience. The apostolic time challenges us today. Who will accept this challenge?

In this month of the Apostles, let us ponder the Apostolic Church that lived in fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

## Parish News

### Guest Clergy

HG Dr. Mathews Mar Severios, Metropolitan of Kandanad West Diocese conducted Holy Mass and Pentecost Service on May 15th, Sunday.

May 1st- Rev Fr Johnson Cor Episcopa, Vicar of St Mary's Church (Orthodox Street) conducted Holy Mass

May 8th – Rev Dr. T. I. Varghese, Professor of Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam conducted Holy Mass

May 22nd- Rev Fr George Panackammatton, Priest from Niranam Diocese, conducted Holy Mass.

New Born – Rinu Rajan and Rajani Rajan blessed are with a baby boy – Riohn V. John

Church Directory – Updating the Directory with new members and with new information from the existing families. A folder is kept outside the office for your correction and once done, please initial the page. If you need to be photographed please contact Santhosh Baby or Jiju Mathew. Please note that June 19th is final date for correction and photograph. This an opportunity for all to see the pictures of our members who we are not familiar with. Please cooperate.

ACH Facility – Please make use of it. Auto deduction from your Bank account for church dues. Contact the Treasurer with a Void Check.

Table Tennis Tournament held on 16th. Here are the Winners.

Doubles category

Winner :- Paul Mavelly and Mathew Thomas; Runnerup :- Philip John (Wilson) and Robin Montharayil  
Philip

Singles Category

Winner :- Mathew Samuel (Suresh); Runnerup :- Paul Mavelly

Congratulations to the winners!

Aid For Friends - Mr. Steve Schiavone, Executive Director visited our Parish on 1st May and gave a brief description about his organization whom we give the canned food collected through MOCF.

Memorial Prayer List – Please update every week with names of the deceased to remember during the Holy Mass. Please make sure that the list is updated before 8 AM on the Remembrance Day.

New Member – Ms. Voity George took the membership in our Parish.

**Forthcoming Events**

June 11: Parents and Couples Conference will be held at St. George Orthodox Church, Staten Island.

July 2nd and 3rd – Church Perunnal

July 8-11th. Hadootho will be held at Villanova University.

July 28th to 30th OVBS at our Church

August – 27th – Church Picnic.

**JUNE BIRTHDAYS**

Abraham T George	Jun 1	Anna G Thomas	Jun 9	Suma Philip	Jun 22
Jins Thomas	Jun 1	Micah Simon	Jun 10	Rohan Z Paulose	Jun 22
Anushka Sara Abraham	Jun 1	Rachel Mathew	Jun 11	Abraham Varghese	Jun 22
Mini Koshy	Jun 1	Anooj K Thomas	Jun 13	Minu Susan Philip	Jun 22
Podiyamma Cherian	Jun 2	Jessy Jacob	Jun 13	Ronnie Cherian	Jun 23
Mary Varghese	Jun 2	Mathew E Thomas	Jun 13	Aidan Robin	Jun 23
Jancy Manoj	Jun 2	Emily Vattasseril	Jun 14	Marina Philip	Jun 23
Oommen G. Panicker	Jun 2	Elizabeth George	Jun 15	Shishira Philip	Jun 23
Juby George	Jun 3	Tibin Koshy	Jun 17	Sosamma Raju	Jun 24
Jiju Mathew	Jun 4	Aleyamma Mathew	Jun 17	Gerin K. Abraham	Jun 24
Johnkutty V. K.	Jun 4	Sheen Marie Thomas	Jun 17	Melisa E. Thomas	Jun 24
Nathen Samuel	Jun 4	Treena Jossy	Jun 17	Mariyamma Daniel	Jun 27
Aleyamma Thomas	Jun 5	Varghese Mathew	Jun 18	Anoop John	Jun 28
Andrew Varghese	Jun 6	Mathew George	Jun 18	Ashley Ann Abraham	Jun 29
Mabel Thomas	Jun 6	Teena S Anu	Jun 18	Leah Sara Thomas	Jun 29
Rachel Varghese	Jun 6	Prisa M. Zachariah	Jun 19	Misha P Mathai	Jun 29
Sunitha Anish	Jun 7	Joshua Jose	Jun 19	Joseph Antony	Jun 29
Sneha Mathew	Jun 7	Elna Mariam Thomas	Jun 20	Justin Vaidian	Jun 29
Lynnson M. Rajan	Jun 9	Jissy Abraham	Jun 20	Renjy Vattasseril	Jun 29
Angel Maria Sabu	Jun 9	Gina Abraham George	Jun 21	Sonia Kalathil	Jun 30
Steven Kurian	Jun 9	Timothy P. Biju	Jun 21	Diviya Mariyam Babu	Jun 30

**JUNE WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES**

Mr. & Mrs. Julice John Raju	Jun 1	Mr. & Mrs. Ninan Chacko	Jun 9
Mr. & Mrs. Mathew Koshy	Jun 1	Mr. & Mrs. Sabu Abraham	Jun 9
Mr. & Mrs. Sunil Thomas	Jun 3	Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Daniel	Jun 10
Mr. & Mrs. Anooj K Thomas	Jun 3	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew Varghese	Jun 10
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob P Chacko	Jun 3	Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Antony	Jun 11
Mr. & Mrs. Marshel Varghese	Jun 3	Mr. & Mrs. Jins Thomas	Jun 12
Mr. & Mrs. Biji Joseph	Jun 5	Mr. & Mrs. N J George	Jun 12
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese V Pulivelil	Jun 6	Mr. & Mrs. Rijon C Simon	Jun 12
Mr. & Mrs. Tiji David Thomas	Jun 6	Mr. & Mrs. Brown Varghese	Jun 21
Mr. & Mrs. Shaju Varghese	Jun 7	Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Varghese	Jun 25
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Mammen	Jun 8	Mr. & Mrs. Joe Philip	Jun 26
Mr. & Mrs. Thankachan Samuel	Jun 8	Mr. & Mrs. Ninan C.N. Jose	Jun 30
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Varghese	Jun 9		



## Gorilla, Cow and Man!

*Submitted by Jerin Juby, Newsletter Editor*

One of the most recent events that gained national attention in US was the 4 year old falling in to a cage where Gorillas were kept, in Cincinnati Zoo. The encounter resulted in the gorilla that belonged to an endangered species being killed in order to save the child. Discussions are happening in news channels and social media about this case, with many arguing against the killing of the gorilla, named Harambe, which belonged to an endangered species. A facebook page named 'Justice for Harambe' has more than 150,000 likes as of June 3, 2016.

It is saddening to see the outrageous comments and support to an animal over the life of a 4 year old, who accidentally fell in to the cage. Those who are against the killing are focused on two aspects. First, the gorilla should have been tranquilized only. Second, the mother or parents must have been more vigilant, and must be charged for negligence.

To address the first concern, tranquilizing the 400lb gorilla might turn out to be catastrophic to the child because it may take up to 10 minutes for the tranquilizer to become fully effective. The child might get killed! The second concern against parents is based on the assumption that the parents were negligent. Even when the parents are vigilant, toddlers can do some dangerous things. After all, this could have been an accident. While all life is worthy, a child's life must gain priority over a gorilla. How would this case be treated if it were our own child? Unfortunately, we live in a world where animals are worthier than humans. There are thousands of livestock killed daily for human consumption. What about justice for them?

While US is discussing the death of Harambe, another incident involving cows and humans occurred in Northern India. A man transporting cows was stopped, stripped and beaten brutally by a group of Hindu extremists. Cow is 'mother' to many! These outrageous actions occur only when

men from other religions are involved. Another Muslim man was killed a couple months back for eating beef. In this case, it is not the compassion to a dead animal that brought extreme reactions against humans. Rather, the ideology (mythology) and extremism that valued an animal more than humans.

A common factor in these two scenarios is the devaluing of human life for concepts, philosophies, theologies, etc. It is an explosion of self-righteousness and selfishness that has become the trademark of the 21st century human society. It is unfortunate that a human being cannot see the value of another human being. What if the blamer assumed to be the victim? Will their perspective change?

As Orthodox Christians, we should be fighting against such segregation and injustices. But sadly, our actions and thoughts are similar in many aspects. We may not beat or kill people physically, but many are wounded and killed psychologically and emotionally. Inequalities based on class, status, and resources are not unheard of in our community. A senior priest once compared Syrian Orthodox Christians to Brahmins, claiming an entitlement to hold a special status in the community. Many believers hold the same ideology. We are experts in segregating people based on different criteria including but not limited to education, marital status, etc.

All these fall under the aspect of devaluing of the human being. If there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28) as St. Paul states, isn't it embarrassing for us to hold multiple claims we have for being peculiar? Or we should accept that we are really not in Christ! Incidents like these should become eye-openers to us, to value every person as the 'Image of God' and to love them regardless of their status. Let us not reduce the worth of any human being!

## Sunday School News

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

### Principal's Message

As we approach the end of the current school year, let us thank God Almighty for the blessings He has showered upon our children and our Sunday School ministry in general during the course of the school year. Our children are preparing for the finals in Sunday School as well as secular schools. Let's continue to uphold them in our prayers so that God bless them to do well in their exams, and also let them use their knowledge and wisdom to become better individuals.

End of June would mean end of regular classes, but Sunday School will be functioning during the summer also. Events planned for the summer include OVBS, Summer Study Series, etc. We will share more information in the coming weeks. On behalf of the staff members, we thank all our parish family members for their prayerful support and cooperation.  
-Oommen Kappil

### Return and re-use Textbooks

Reusing the textbooks means more money for other activities. Students are encouraged to return their gently used textbooks to the Sunday School office as soon as their exams are over,

### 'Feastology': Newsletter Supplement on Feasts and Fasts

Sunday School published two editions of its newsletter supplement on April 10, 2016. The purpose is to provide information to our children and adults on Holy Fathers, Fasts and Feasts of our church. A few people participated in the naming contest for the newsletter. Special thanks to Aleena Robin, Aneena Daniel and Hannah Daniel for their participation. The chosen name is 'Feastology'. Please contact Mrs. Anu Jacob, Editor with your comments and suggestions.

### Event Reports

#### Area-Level Trip to Washington, DC. Saturday, May 14th.

A few of our families took part in the field trip. They got a wonderful opportunity to join with other children and parents in the Philadelphia Area, and enjoy a trip to the popular destinations in Washington, DC. This trip to the nation's capital included stops at the White House, and other popular destinations including Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land.

#### Field Trip to Camden Aquarium, Saturday, May 28th.

The proposed field trip was canceled since very few people signed-up.

### Assigned Competitions -2016

#### Parish Level Winners

Group	Grades	Event	Winners
1	Pre-K & KG	Drawing	Aradhana Rose John-1st Tania Jossy-2nd
2	1 & 2	Drawing with a short sentence	Grace Suja John-1st Noel Mathew-2nd
3	3 & 4	Drawing with a short paragraph	Anugraha John-1st Eleena John-2nd

4	5 & 6	Essay	Joshua Mathew-1st Carolyn Thomas-2nd
5	7 & 8	Essay	Merin Rajan-1st Ashley Philip-2nd
6	9 & 10	Essay	Christina George-1st Sheen Thomas -2nd
7	11 & 12	Essay	Jasmine Philip-1st Marilyn Cherian-2nd

**Bible Quiz-Books-Parish Level Winners**

Misha Mathai, Merilyn Cherian and Leona Thomas

**Assigned Competition (Area-Level) Winners List**

Group	Grades	Event	Winners
1	Pre-K & KG	Drawing	Aradhana Rose John-1st Tania Jossy-2nd
2	1 & 2	Drawing with a short sentence	Noel Mathew-2nd
3	3 & 4	Drawing with a short paragraph	Eleena John-1st
4	5 & 6	Essay	Joshua Mathew-2nd
5	7 & 8	Essay	Merin Rajan-1st
7	11 & 12	Essay	Jasmine Philip-1st Marilyn Cherian-2nd

*Sunday School congratulates all the participants and winners on their successful performances.*

<p><b>Upcoming Events</b> <b>Felicitation of Graduates</b></p> <p>It's that time again to recognize and honor our graduates who worked hard and are moving on to new heights. The graduates from Middle School, High School, college, and those who earned professional licenses or awards will be honored. As a token of appreciation, our parish will felicitate graduates on Sunday, July 10th after the Holy Qurbana. Later, they will be treated with a special lunch with our Vicars. If you or someone in your family is a graduate, please fill out the prescribed form available in the parish office and submit it to the parish office by Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.</p>
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**Orthodox Vacation Bible School (OVBS) Registration**

Area level OVBS will be held from Thursday July 28 through Saturday, July 30, 2016 in our parish. Ours is the largest OVBS program in the diocese with a lot of fun and educational activities. Last year there were a total of 250 students from 7 Area parishes. The registration is in progress. Parents of all Sunday school students aged 5 and up are encouraged to register their students. (Students age 4 to 5 may register as long as

the parent stays in the classroom along with the child.) Subsidized registration fee is \$10 per student. Please see Ms. Anu Jacob for more information. **Deadline to register is June 26th.**

**Volunteers Needed:** OVBS is looking for Teachers and Volunteers. Please contact Mrs. Anu Jacob if you are interested. (email: [anukuriakose@gmail.com](mailto:anukuriakose@gmail.com))

**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*

**2016 Sunday School Calendar**

Event	Date	Venue	Coordinator
Centralized Exam-Grade 12	Sunday, June 5	St. Thomas, Mascher St.	Santhosh Baby
Class Examination (non Centralized exam Grades)	Sunday, June 5	Our parish	Santhosh Baby
Centralized Exam-Grade 5, 8, 10, TTC	Sunday, June 26	St. Mary's Cathedral	Santhosh Baby
Final Day of class	Sunday, June 26	Our parish	Santhosh Baby
Felicitation of Graduates	Sunday, July 10	Our parish	Oommen Kappil
OVBS	Thu-Sat, Jul 28-30	Our parish	Anu Jacob
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	Our parish	Betsy George/ Bishel Baby



### Parish Member Directory Update

We are in the process of updating our member database, and printing a Member Directory. A binder with member information is kept outside the parish office. Please check your name(s), address and phone number and make corrections if necessary. If you would like to include e-mail id, please add that information also. You can list up to two telephone numbers and two email id's per family. If there is no change in your family information, please initial the page, and indicate that no change is required. Parish database will be modified with this corrected information and this will be used in the photo directory also.

#### **Submitting Pictures:**

When you submit Family Pictures, please include Member id, and the names of people who are in the picture, from left to right. You can submit the picture to the Secretary in the parish office, or send electronically via email to Oommen Kappil (email id: [kappil@yahoo.com](mailto:kappil@yahoo.com)). In the email, Subject line should be, "Family Picture Member ID xxx"

**Deadline to update member info in the binder, and to submit your pictures: June 26, 2016**



**St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church**

**ANNUAL PICNIC**

Location  
**1255 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Pike, Southampton, PA 18966**

Date  
**Saturday, August 27, 2016**

Time  
**9am – 4pm**

**Contact Info:**  
Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose: 201 681 1078  
Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John: 914 720 0136  
Sam Kurishinmoottil: 610 220 9366  
Satheesh Easow 267 357 4940