

# ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2023

VOLUME XXVII ISSUE 3

### Assistant Vicar's Message

#### Cross in Great Lent and Holy Week

##### Introduction

Great Lent is a time of special focus on the cross. The death and resurrection of Jesus are symbolized in the cross. In other words, the cross is a presence of Christ and the gospel. It also represents everything that we gain through Christ: salvation, discipleship, and victory. The cross is present in all our worship including kauma, trisagion, creed, etc. During Great Lent the cross is commemorated on Mid-Lent and Good Friday.

##### 1. Mid-Lent

**Mnortho:** At the middle of Great Lent, a special object called **Mnortho** (or Golgotha) is placed in the middle of the church nave. A cross is placed on top of Mnortho. The Mnortho recalls the words of Jesus: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14). Jesus is referring back to the elevation of bronze serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:8-9). Anyone who was bitten by a venomous snake was healed when they

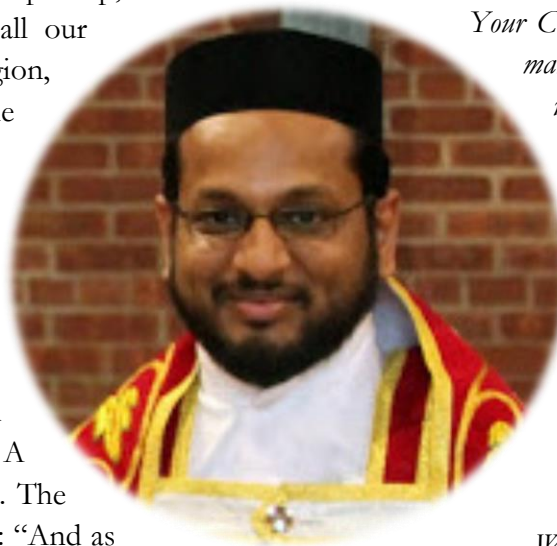
looked at the bronze serpent. In the same way we are healed from the deadly venom of sin if we look to Our Lord on the cross (see Psalm 34:5). The Mnortho journeys with us from middle of church to front of church at Holy Week, then into the altar (madhbaha) from Easter to Ascension. (Calculate how many days in a year the Mnortho is in the church.)

##### 2. Good Friday

**Veneration of Cross:** Good Friday service includes a special service of the veneration of the cross. The service of the Veneration of Cross follows the ninth hour prayers. The opening prayer (sluzo) reminds us of our responsibility to carry the cross (see Luke 9:23).

*"May we, in compliance with Your supreme command, carry Your Cross on our shoulders in a Christian-like manner, always ready to mortify our members which are on earth and live in You in the fear of God"* (Good Friday, Veneration of Cross, Sluzo; see Galatians 5:24). This service concludes with **adoration of the cross** by all the faithful. The hymn sung at the time of the adoration reminds us that Christ gave us salvation through the cross:

*"We bow before Your Cross,  
Which brought salvation for our souls,  
And we – cry out with the thief, O Christ,  
Remember us when – You – Come!"* (Luke 23:42)



### 3. Exaltation of Cross

**Exaltation of Cross:** Several of major feasts of the Lord include a special service called **exaltation of the cross**. The celebrant takes a cross and blesses four sides symbolizing the blessing of the entire universe by the cross. To exalt means to raise to a higher rank. The physical exaltation of the cross signifies the supreme importance the cross should have in our lives. In Malankara, the feasts with the exaltation service include feast of Nativity, Baptism of our Lord, Palm Sunday, Mid-Lent, Good Friday, Resurrection (Easter), Ascension. The consecration of church also includes exaltation service.

### 4. King Abgar and Mid-Lent:

At Mid-Lent we also remember the healing of King Abgar of Edessa by Christ. Edessa was an important city on the border between Roman Empire and Persian Empire. The Persian Empire was located East of Roman Empire and was governed initially by Parthian dynasty (and later by Sasanid dynasty). At various times another small kingdom known as

Kingdom of Edessa existed between Roman Empire and Persian Empire. King Abgar was the king of Edessa at the time of Jesus' ministry. According to early Christian historians including Eusebius of Caesarea, King Abgar was afflicted with leprosy, and though was isolated and far away from Jesus Christ, sought a way to find healing from Jesus. In exchange of letters between our Lord Jesus Christ and King Abgar, our Lord took a cloth and used it to wash His face and sent it with a letter to King Abgar. Christ stated that he would send one of His disciples after He ascends to complete his healing totally. When King Abgar received the letter and cloth, he placed that cloth on his face and had partial healing. After the Ascension, St. Thaddeus (Mar Addai), one of the seventy-two evangelists visited King Abgar to complete his healing from leprosy. Edessa (also known as Urha) became an important center for Syriac Christianity.

(Adapted from Lesson Submitted for Sunday School Grade 12 Curriculum)

Lovingly, Fr. Sujit Thomas, Asst. Vicar

### COVID-19 and Support System

#### Financial Assistance to Members

If any of our members need any assistance with food, medicine, transportation, shopping, or any other needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they may contact our Achens or the Secretary. They will coordinate help. Our MC members, along with other volunteers will be available to provide any possible help.

*We are all in this together.*

#### Contact:

- Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose: 201.681.1078
- Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas: 516.754.0743
- Steven Kurian: 267.450.6815



# Parish Highlights from February

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## FYC Committee Parish Visit

February 5<sup>th</sup> – FYC Committee Parish visit to our Church. Mr. Joby John, former FYC Convener, as well as our own members, Oommen Kappil, Susan John Varghese, and Bishel Baby presided over a presentation and collected the souvenir contributions from our parish.

## MMVS Bake Sale

February 12<sup>th</sup> – MMVS conducted achappam and banana chip sale.

## CAYA

February 18<sup>th</sup> – CAYA conducted monthly meeting (Grades 5-8) via Zoom.

## FOCUS

February 24<sup>th</sup> – FOCUS Meeting held at our Church after Lenten Evening Prayer

## Holy Qurbana Study Series

Lessons 3 through 5 were conducted in February and we attended both in person and online.

## Housing Charity

Our Parish Housing Charity was inaugurated on February 19<sup>th</sup> by our Charity Coordinator Mr. John Panicker. Our goal is to build 5 homes in India for the less fortunate in need of housing. Please continue to submit your donations to the Parish Trustee.

## First Response and Medical Committee

Our Parish kicked off a new committee with the mission to make recommendations and outline procedures for emergency and medical issues occurring at our Parish.



FYC COMMITTEE PARISH VISIT

# March Events and General Announcements

## Parish and Area Events

March 5<sup>th</sup>:

3/5 @ 9am- Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian Churches of Philadelphia (EFICP) is conducting the **Annual World Day of Prayer** at our Church. The lead speaker is Mrs. Ceena Mathew (St. Vladimir's Seminary).

3/5 @ 3pm – **MGOCSM Area Lenten Retreat** conducted via Zoom.

**March 14<sup>th</sup>: Mid Lent** Evening Prayer and Holy Qurbana- 6:30pm

**March 18<sup>th</sup>: Parish Lent Retreat** – 9:30am; Rev. Fr. Saji Thomas will lead the Malayalam sessions and Rev. Dn. Roby Anthony will lead the English Sessions

**March 24<sup>th</sup>: Feast of the Annunciation to St. Mary**, Evening Prayer and Holy Qurbana beginning at 6:30pm

**March 31<sup>st</sup>: 40<sup>th</sup> Day of Lent** Evening Prayer and Holy Qurbana beginning at 6:30pm

**Evening Prayer will be held each day at 7pm.**

**Holy Confession will be available prior to Evening Prayer each day or by appointment. Please confess prior to the 40<sup>th</sup> Day of Lent.**

## Men's Forum

Men's Forum has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.

## MMVS

MMVS has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.

**Great Lent and Holy Week Flyer is published and is available in the Church Atrium**

## Holy Week at HTRC

According to Kalpana "CK No. 5/2023" from our Diocesan Metropolitan, H.G. Zachariah Mar Nicholovos:

"Our Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center continues to be a place for retreat, prayer and peace for both young and old alike. This year, our Diocese will be offering a unique opportunity from the Chapel of the Retreat Center itself. We will observe all the hours of prayer, and all the sacred services of Holy Week while living on campus, praying, fasting, and immersing ourselves in the prayers of the Church together.

All services will be held under the leadership of our weak self, along with the Reverend Father Jerry Varghese, all of our Deacons and Seminarians of our Diocese. We will be observing all the hourly prayers, at the appropriate hours, and listening to the devotional messages throughout the week. Our faithful are encouraged to participate in these sacred services for either a day, or multiple services throughout the week. Since lodging and meals will be provided, faithful are requested to sign up using the link provided."

## Family and Youth Conference

Dates: July 12-15.

Location: Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center

Housing available at local hotel in Clarkstown, PA. Souvenir chief editor is our member Mrs. Susan John Varghese. Our Area has been asked to lead choir. **Those who are joining the choir are asked to register for the conference ASAP as slots are filling up fast.**

## Fasts & Feasts

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
3/15	Mid-Lent
3/31	40 <sup>th</sup> Friday
4/9	Easter

**Holy Confession:** We have a practice of going through the Sacrament of Confession at least once a year. There will be ample opportunity to confess with Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas and Rev. Fr. Tojo Baby during the Lenten season. Please plan to go to confession before 40<sup>th</sup> Friday.

## Diocesan Calendar

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
March 11	Clergy Retreat
April 22	MGOCSM Delegates meeting
May 4-5	Diocesan Leaders Retreat
May 18-20	MMVS Annual Retreat at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center
May 20	MMVS Delegates meeting
June 17	Diocesan Assembly
TBD	GROW One Day Conference
July 12-15	Family & Youth Conference
July 26-29	Talmeedo Men's Retreat
August 16-19	MGOCSM College Camp at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center
September 27-28	Clergy Conference
October 14	MMVS Annual One-Day Conference
November 25	MGOCSM One-Day Conference

### Life Events Announcements

Do you have a special day that you would like to announce, like a milestone wedding anniversary (25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> etc.) or a birthday (50<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup>, 80<sup>th</sup> etc.)? If you would like to, please inform the Secretary in advance. Please remember that even though our parish database includes birthday and wedding day, it doesn't include the year of birth or marriage. Unless you notify the Secretary or Clergy, they wouldn't know milestone events.



## Member Announcements

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### Memorials

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- ❖ **Mr. C.I Johnny (72)**, younger brother of Mr. Simon Ittikuru (# 318) passed away on February 1<sup>st</sup> in Kunnankulam. Funeral took place on Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> at St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral, Arthat.
- ❖ **Mrs. Saramma Abraham (88)**, mother of Mrs. Mini Koshy (# 104) passed away on February 3<sup>rd</sup> in Kerala. Funeral was held Saturday at St. Stephen's Jacobite Church, Chorakuzki, Koothattukullam.
- ❖ **Mr. Alias M.P.**, brother of Mary Varghese (# 273) passed away on February 10<sup>th</sup>. Funeral was held at St. Mary's Syrian Church, Thuruthiply, Perumbavoor, Kerala.

*On behalf of the parish, we express our deepest condolences to the bereaving families. Let us pray for the departed souls and for the bereaving families. May our heavenly Father grant peace and comfort that surpasses human wisdom and understanding.*

#### Memorial Prayer List

As you know, members can submit names of departed loved ones that needs to be included on the Memorial Prayer List. You probably have given the names of your departed ones in the past. However, please note that our church doesn't have a system to save such names with dates or automatically track and decide on which Sunday the name should be included on the prayer list. You need to enter the name on the Memorial Prayer list kept in the church office. Note: We do have a master list of departed faithful that we keep for remembering them on the Sunday of the departed faithful, which is a week before the Holy Lent begins. This list has names only no dates.

### Birth Announcements

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- **Ashton Mathew Joel** was born to Joel and Soushya Varghese. Joel is the son of our members George and Susan Varghese (# 257)
- **Nathan John** was born to Sherwin and Geena John. Geena is the daughter of our members Roy P. Chacko and Annamma Chacko (# 125)

**Congratulations to the proud parents and grandparents!**

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## MARCH WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Jose K. John Feb 29

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Zachariah Mar 4

Mr. & Mrs. Achen Varghese Mar 21

Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Chacko Mar 30



## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Silpa Thomas	Feb 29	Aradhana Rose John	Mar 16	Liya Thomas	Mar 24
Christian John	Mar 1	Asriel Ann Vaidian	Mar 16	Ivannah Ann Alexander	Mar 25
Kunjappy Koshy	Mar 3	Pramod Sam Kurisinmoottil	Mar 17	Susan Mathews	Mar 25
Abel G Panicker	Mar 3	Philip George	Mar 17	Mathew Varghese	Mar 25
Stacy M George	Mar 4	Nikhil M Philip	Mar 17	Lucas Philip	Mar 26
Aswathi Eliz Jacob	Mar 4	Thejus Mathew	Mar 18	Ashin Saju	Mar 26
James C Peter	Mar 5	Varughese M M.	Mar 18	Alvin V Jose	Mar 27
Elizabeth Kurian	Mar 5	Soushya Varghese	Mar 18	Daniel Yohannan	Mar 27
Podamma Thankachan	Mar 5	Daniel P. George	Mar 18	Susan Panicker	Mar 27
Susan Philip	Mar 6	Sarah Roy	Mar 19	Megha S Varghese	Mar 28
Akash Anu	Mar 6			Rachel Melavila	Mar 28
Justin Ronnie	Mar 7			Cicily George Cherian	Mar 28
Joshua Jacob Jose	Mar 7	Josna Koshy	Mar 19	Jacob Varghese	Mar 28
Saji Abraham	Mar 8	Cherian V V.	Mar 19	Alen Saju	Mar 29
Simon Cheeran Ittikuru	Mar 8	Nitha L Alex	Mar 20	Raji K John	Mar 29
Nissi Elizabeth Zachariah	Mar 8	Anita George	Mar 21	Arielle Geevarghese	Mar 29
Nelson O Panicker	Mar 10	Mariakutty Thomas	Mar 21	Ammukutty Geevarghese	Mar 30
Merlin Philip	Mar 12	Toby Johnes Fen	Mar 22	Lovina Maria Aji	Mar 30
Binu K. Mathew	Mar 13	Rohan Philip Robin	Mar 22	Annamma Cherian	Mar 30
Biju P. Varghese	Mar 13	Mary Kuriakose	Mar 23	Paul Jacob	Mar 30
Vincent Jacob	Mar 14	Elijah Binu	Mar 23	Daniel Thomas	Mar 30
Shibin Mathew Koshy	Mar 15	Alex Pothen	Mar 23	Izabella Ann Philip	Mar 31
Suresh Cherian	Mar 15	Rajan C Padiyara	Mar 23	Raji George	Mar 31
Bibin P. Baby	Mar 16				



# Sunday School News

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

## One Year Bible Reading Schedule - March

Date	I	II	III
March 1	Lev. 5-6	Psalms 105	1 Cor. 14
March 2	Lev. 7	Psalms 106	1 Cor. 15
March 3	Lev. 8	Psalms 107	1 Cor. 16
March 4	Lev. 9-10	Psalms 108-109	2 Cor. 1-2
March 5	Lev. 11	Psalms 110-112	2 Cor. 3-4
March 6	Lev. 12-13	Psalms 113-114	2 Cor. 5-7
March 7	Lev. 14	Psalms 115-116	2 Cor. 8-9
March 8	Lev. 15	Psalms 117-118	2 Cor. 10-11
March 9	Lev. 16-16	Psalms 119 v 1-40	2 Cor. 12-13
March 10	Lev. 17-18	Psalms 119 v 41-80	Luke 1
March 11	Lev. 19-19	Psalms 119 v 81-128	Luke 2
March 12	Lev. 20-20	Psalms 119 v 129-176	Luke 3
March 13	Lev. 21	Psalms 120-124	Luke 4
March 14	Lev. 22	Psalms 125-127	Luke 5
March 15	Lev. 23	Psalms 128-130	Luke 6
March 16	Lev. 24	Psalms 131-134	Luke 7
March 17	Lev. 25	Psalms 135-136	Luke 8
March 18	Lev. 26	Psalms 137-139	Luke 9
March 19	Lev. 27	Psalms 140-142	Luke 10
March 20	Numbers 1	Psalms 143-144	Luke 11
March 21	Numbers 2	Psalms 145-147	Luke 12
March 22	Numbers 3	Psalms 148-150	Luke 13-14
March 23	Numbers 4	Proverbs 1	Luke 15
March 24	Numbers 5	Proverbs 2	Luke 16
March 25	Numbers 6	Proverbs 3	Luke 17
March 26	Numbers 7	Proverbs 4	Luke 18
March 27	Numbers 8-9	Proverbs 5	Luke 19
March 28	Numbers 10	Proverbs 6	Luke 20
March 29	Numbers 11	Proverbs 7	Luke 21
March 30	Numbers 12-13	Proverbs 8-9	Luke 22
March 31	Numbers 14	Proverbs 10	Luke 23

**Please remember to pray for the Sunday school Children and Staff in your daily prayer.**



ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

# GREAT LENT & HOLY WEEK PROGRAM 2023

## ANNUAL RETREAT

Saturday, March 18, 2023

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

### Retreat Leaders

Rev. Fr. Saji Thomas (Malayalam)

Rev. Dn. Roby Anthony (English)

This offers us a time to listen to the powerful Word of God, to repent and recapture our life through the sacrament of Holy Confession. Please bring your Bible and Prayer Books

## EVENING PRAYER & MEDITATION

Daily at 7:00 p.m.



## HOLY WEEK

Everyday

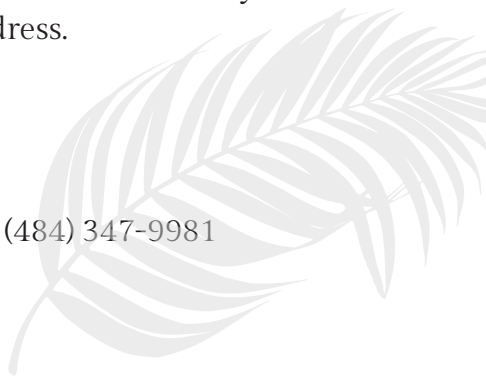
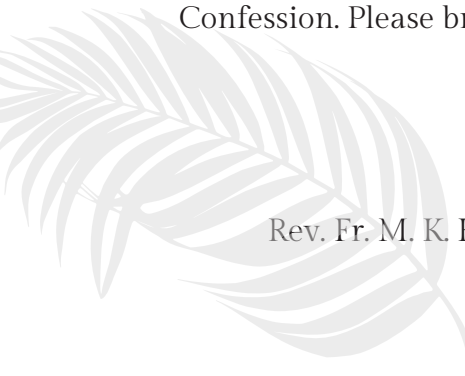
8:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Regular offices of prayers, meditation, bible study and devotional address.

1009 Unruh Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19111; Tel. 215-342-1500 Fax. 215-342-2700

Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose (201) 681-1078 Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas (516) 754-0743, Rev. Fr. Tojo Baby (484) 347-9981

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# GREAT LENT & HOLY WEEK PROGRAM 2023

## DETAILED SCHEDULE

### **Mid- Lent, Tuesday, March 14**

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

### **Annunciation to St. Mary, Friday, March 24**

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

### **40th Friday, March 31**

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

### **Lazarus Saturday, April 1**

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

### **Palm Sunday, April 2**

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer  
9:00 a.m. Blessing the Palms & Holy Qurbana  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional  
Address

### **Monday, April 3**

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer  
12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional  
Address

### **Tuesday, April 4**

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer  
12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional  
Address

### **Wednesday, April 5 (PESAHA)**

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer  
12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer  
6:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Holy Qurbana  
8:30 p.m. Pesaha Appam

### **Maundy Thursday, April 6**

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer  
12:00 p.m. Noon Prayer  
**6:00 p.m. Feet Washing Service**  
At St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox  
Church, 4136 Hulmeville Rd, Bensalem, PA  
19020

### **Good Friday, April 7**

8:30 a.m. Good Friday Service  
3:30 p.m. Kanji  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional  
Address  
9:30 p.m. Night Vigil

### **Holy Saturday, April 8**

9:30 a.m. Morning Prayer  
11:00 a.m. Holy Qurbana  
7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Devotional  
Address

### **Easter Sunday, April 9**

7:30 a.m. Midnight Prayer  
9:30 a.m. Holy Easter Service & Holy  
Qurbana  
12:00 p.m. Lunch



### **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- All members are expected to take Holy Communion on Pesaha observed on Wednesday evening commemorating the Last Supper of our Lord.
  - Holy Confession will be available until 40th Friday (March 31st). Holy Confession is available before and after evening prayer during the first 40 days by appointment
  - All who are partaking of the Holy Communion on Wednesday evening should not have food after 2:00 p.m.
  - Please bring Pesaha Appam to church on Wednesday evening.
  - Please bring your Bible, worship books and song books to all services and the Retreat.
  - Please bring your plastic prayer-mats to use on Good Friday in the auditorium.
  - All Holy Week offerings may be given to the Treasurer.
- 