

# ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2023

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### Vicar's Message

#### Saint Gregorios of Parumala

We observe the sacred memory of St. Gregorios of Parumala (popularly known as Parumala Thirumeni) on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Born on June 15, 1848 and passed away on November 2, 1902, Saint Gregorios is the first person of Indian origin to be canonized as saint in 1947 by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The blessed tomb of the saint is at St. Peter's and St. Paul's Orthodox Church, Parumala, Kerala, visited by millions of Orthodox and non-Orthodox people, including non-Christians. In fact St. Eldo Mar Baselios, a Maphriano (Catholicose) who passed away in 1685 (died after a few days of reaching Kerala, remembered on October 2 and 3), was also declared a saint by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church at the same time. We remember



these two saints in the 5<sup>th</sup> Thubden (diptych) of the Holy Eucharist.

Thousands of believers throng the Parumala Church especially with the pilgrimage on foot from several Orthodox parishes during the last week of October culminating on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the day of the demise of the saint. All parishes of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and the Jacobite Syrian Church observe the sacred memory of St. Gregorios.

St. Gregorios grew as a strict ascetic with stringent life discipline. With ardent

fasting and prayer, the saint became bodily weak but spiritually strong. Tens of thousands of people take refuge in his intercession all over the world. The saint became a source of blessing even before his death, and his tomb became a source of blessings to many. Thousands of miracles were reported and the number of miracles is continuing to grow. Often we forget to follow the footsteps of saints while we seek blessings from them. That does not make any sense. When we seek mediation of a saint we must learn from their life as well. Because they succeeded in their spiritual life we will have many things to learn from their sacred life.

Two important lessons we need to learn from Saint Gregorios are:

1. Prayer-guided Life of Discipline:

The saint was not a charismatic who dramatically brought exhibitionist miracles. He was just an ordinary bishop with an ordinary human life style. His prayer life was simple, truthful, and saintly. Nothing more than the liturgical system and prayer schedule that he followed. It is proof that our Church's prayer system is good enough to make a person a saint. All that we need is

to follow that system sincerely and diligently. Our prayers are powerful enough to change the life of a person. Parumala Thirumeni is our model to stay in the Church with its own liturgical and sacramental observances so that one can be in touch with God Almighty. Such disciplined people will become a source of divine power, helping many others to grow in that system. In the modern age our prayer life is becoming weaker and weaker as we have less time to pray. The young generation is loaded with a lot of burden with job or education, losing their experience with God. And thus the number of misguided youth is increasing. Therefore, we must reset our prayer life.

2. Sensitivity to Human Situation:

Parumala Thirumeni's prayer life transformed him to practice it in life, being sensitive to the needs of other human beings. First of all, St. Gregorios wanted to lead a simple life without any pomp and glory because he did not want that which is not available for an ordinary man. He was able to understand the pains and pangs of

the common man. This led to many humanitarian initiatives. He established schools with a purpose of imparting education to the downtrodden; not to make money from those institutions. Christian institutions of today are all pure business and not with any goal of societal upliftment. Simplicity in life was his mark. Simplicity against luxury was the witness of Christians once upon a time. Now we have nominal Christians who forget the needy, unwilling to share. Because of lack of reading the scripture and finding guidance from the Word of God, we formulate our own ideology/philosophy of survival, ignoring the needy. The needy are not only financially impoverished

but also neglected by others. Sharing our love, care, time, energy, and resources will make us special people. That made St. Gregorios a saint. And we should follow his footsteps while we seek his mediation.

Even though the Saint lived only 54 years, the entire life was dedicated to Christ. Relinquishing all worldly desires, the saint concentrated on his mission to the people. Today we seek his intercession so much but rarely want to follow his footsteps. We must take a serious look at this saint's life and make all attempts to follow his ideals. May the saint's prayers be a strong fortress for us.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, 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



## Assistant Vicar's Message

### How to Pray?

Today we will consider some practical lessons about prayer. Like any skill or practice there are some methods or techniques that can help us to grow in our life of prayer.

1. "When you pray, go into your room" (Matthew 6:6). In order for us to pray without ceasing, it is important to have regular times of prayer daily in a suitable place. Just like St Peter "went on the housetop to pray, at about the sixth hour" (Acts 10:9), we should also have appropriate places of prayer. Families should have a prayer corner with images that help us to focus our attention on God.

2. Face East. Orthodox Christians face east when we pray. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ promised that "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matthew 24:27) We also look to the east because it expresses our longing to be back in Eden with God. St Basil the great says, "Therefore we all look to the east during prayer, but few know that we are in search for our original home, Paradise, which God planted in the Garden of Eden to the east." (On the Holy Spirit, 27.66) Additionally, turning to East recalls our baptismal promise

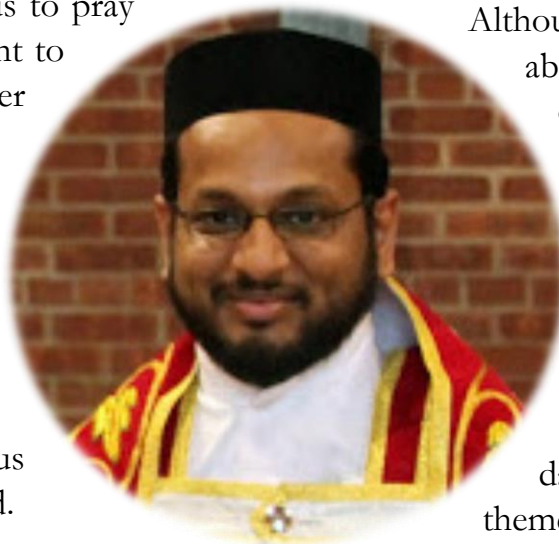
to reject Satan and to orient ourselves by turning to the Lord.

3. "Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments." (Psalm 119:164) Following the Jewish practice of different hours of prayer, we set apart seven different times of day for prayer.

Although these prayers have been abridged to two times for convenient use by modern families, the seven hours of prayer remind us to sanctify the entire day with prayer. Let us pray regularly in the morning and evening. The regular interval of prayer is present not just daily. Each day of the week has a separate theme of prayer. For example, on

Fridays we remember the Cross and our Lord's passion and on Sundays we remember the Lord's resurrection. Similarly, weeks are grouped together into different seasons. For example, Great Lent is a season of seven weeks which is followed by another season of seven week commemorating the resurrection and preparing for Pentecost.

4. Use the body in prayer. Kauma is the prayer said standing up. We remain standing in prayer for most of the Holy Qurbana. We lift up our hands at the time of the Lord's prayer. We also prostrate ourselves before





God. Prostrations are a regular part of our prayer life; not just holy week or Good Friday.

5. Pray with others. Christians are part of a community of believers. We are supposed to gather regularly for prayer (Acts 2:46). When we come together for prayer, we are gathered not just with those who are physically present. The great Communion of Saints is also present with us in the heavenly worship. Therefore, “Let us not neglect meeting together.” (Hebrews 10:25)

6. Pray in silence. Communal prayer needs to be balanced with praying alone. Prayer is an inner journey of the soul to God. True prayer is the stopping of all noise including our thoughts. In order to achieve this inner stillness, we can use short “arrow” prayers like “Kurielaison”, “Lord have mercy” or the Jesus Prayer. The Jesus prayer is “O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” (see Luke 18:13)

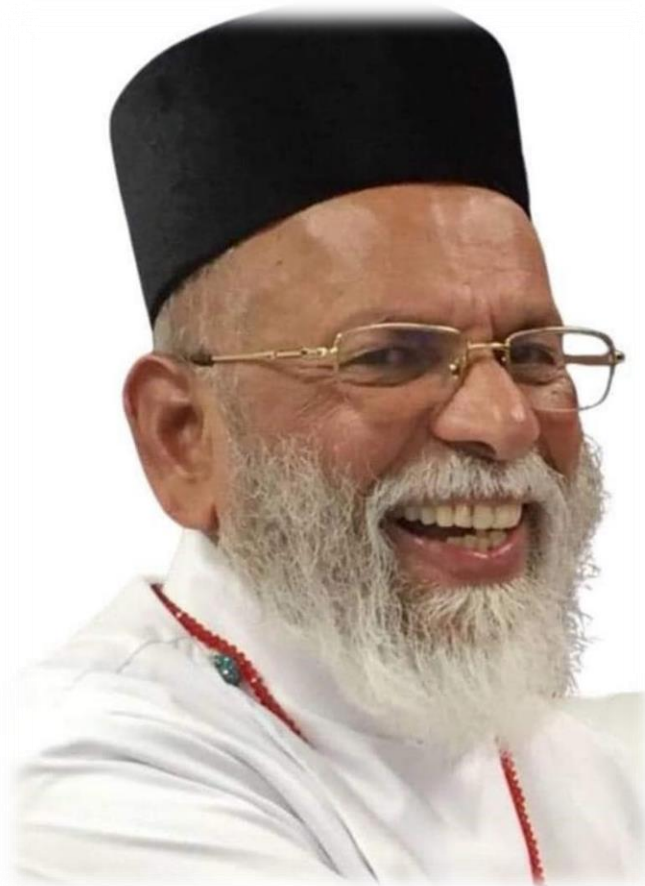
Lovingly, Fr. Sujit Thomas, Asst. Vicar

Ref: See “Abba Father” by Rev Fr Baby Varghese, Unit I, Lesson 3 “Elements of Worship”

## Demise of Very Rev. Fr. K. Mathai Cor Episcopa

**Very Reverend Father K. Mathai Cor Episcopa**, passed away on October 12<sup>th</sup> at his home. Mathai Achen was our first Vicar and a pioneer of the Indian Christian community in Philadelphia. Achen is also father of our member Justin Mathai (#382). Funeral services were conducted from

October 15<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> with final services lead by His Holiness Catholicos Basellos Mar Thomas Mathews III as well as our Diocesan Metropolitan and other Metropolitans of our Church. Our parish expresses our deepest condolences to the grieving family.



## Parish Highlights from October

### Harvest Festival

Our parish hosted our annual Harvest Festival on October 7<sup>th</sup>. This year we had several food items for sale as made by our refreshment committee including pothi chor, kappa biriyani, fish fry, porotta and beef curry, as well as falooda for drink. In addition, we offered a moon bounce and games for the children, our traditional auctions, as well as

entertainment as performed by many members of our community. The event was a stellar success and our sincerest gratitude to the Program planning team.



### MMVS Annual Conference

Our Diocese hosted the annual Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam conference at our parish. The conference theme was the verse "Be of good courage. Stand still and see the Lord's salvation which He will accomplish for

you today." (Exodus 14:13) The Keynote Speaker was Mrs. Ceena Varghese, the Associate Minister of the St. Gregorios Orthodox Church in Bensalem.





## Diocesan Sunday School Talent Fest

Our Diocese also hosted the annual Sunday School Talent Fest at our parish. In the morning, our Assistant Vicar, Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas led the seminar for the teachers in attendance. Rev. Fr. Tenny Thomas, the

coordinated by our early grade Sunday School teachers. In addition, our choir earned the Silver Award for the group song competition. Our Bible Quiz team, consisting of Delwin Thomas, Trena Jossy and Anushka Abraham also



GROUP SONG TEAM

Diocesan Sunday School Director was also in attendance and opened the Talent Show with prayer in the afternoon. Our Parish put together a wonderful Nativity Play as

won Gold Standard. Congratulations are in order for those who planned the event and all the winners from our Parish.



BIBLE QUIZ TEAM

# November Events and General Announcements

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## Church Reminders

**General Body Meeting** with our Metropolitan will be held on November 26<sup>th</sup> following Holy Qurbana.

**General Body Meeting** for Elections/ Review of Accounts - December 3<sup>rd</sup> following Holy Qurbana.

**Christmas Caroling** will be held on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup>. Please sign up at the office so the Caroling Team may plan their schedule.

**Charity:** Please continue to bring in donations for the Parish Housing Charity. This Charity intends to build 5 homes in India for those less fortunate. Please also consider supporting our General Charity Initiatives as well.

**Dip Jar:** Those who are interested in submitting their offertory or any other small donation may do so in the Church dip jar located by the Meditation Room.

**Digital Payment:** All donations may be made by Apple Pay / GPay / Venmo - members can scan QR codes affixed on the glass wall outside the Church office

**Lost and Found:** Many small items such as jewelry and watches have been submitted to the office "Lost and Found". Please see the Secretary if you believe you may be missing one of these items.

## Spiritual Organization Updates

**OCYM, MMVS, and Men's Forum Meetings** will be held weekly after Refreshments.

## Save the Dates

**November 11<sup>th</sup> – Diocesan One Day Conference for I.T. Professionals**  
(Flyer Attached)

All Sunday School children from lower Pre-K to 7th grade are welcome to attend.

**November 18<sup>th</sup> – Holiday Craft Fair**

**November 19<sup>th</sup> – Parish Thanksgiving Celebration**





## Fasts & Feasts

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
	None for this month.

## Parish & Diocesan Calendar

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
November 11	Diocesan One Day Conference
November 18	Sunday School Holiday Craft Fair
November 19	Parish Thanksgiving Celebration
November 25	MGOCSM One-Day Conference

## Member Announcements

### Memorials

- ❖ October 9<sup>th</sup> - **Joseph Varughese**, uncle of Susan David Melavila (#322)
- ❖ October 15<sup>th</sup> - **John Varghese Moletu**, father of Samkuttu John (#305), Abraham John (#323), and Sheeja Mammen (#324)
- ❖ October 16<sup>th</sup> - **Davy P. John**, father of Dony Davy (#292)
- ❖ October 17<sup>th</sup> - **Aaron Anil Alex**, nephew of Anitha Jossy (#332)
- ❖ October 21<sup>st</sup> - **Rajan T. Abraham**, brother of Susan Thomas Vakkayil
- ❖ October 27<sup>th</sup> - **Thalachirackal Abraham Poulouse**, grandfather of Merley Goldy (#372)

*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.

#### 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.

### Weddings

Mr. Renju Padiyara, son of our members Mr. and Mrs. Rajan and Jessy Padiyara wed Miss Sony Thomas (St. James Mar Thoma Church, New York) on October 16<sup>th</sup> in Kerala. The parish wishes Renju and Sony a happy and blessed married life. Congratulations to the newlyweds!


## NOVEMBER WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Santhosh M Baby	3-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Toby Johnes Fen	21-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Panickal Y Mathaikutty	7-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Philip John	24-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Alex T Raju	8-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Vakkayil V. Joseph	24-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Saju John	8-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Abraham John	28-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Bibin P. Baby	8-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Anish Thomas	28-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Jibu Vergis	9-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Kondoor E. Chacko	28-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. John Polayil Abraham	11-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Abraham K. George	29-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Yohannan	18-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Paulson Avarachan	29-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Charly Mathai	20-Nov	Mr. & Mrs. Philip Skaria	29-Nov
Mr. & Mrs. Jubee P Mathai	20-Nov		





## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Rebu Roy	1-Nov	C C John	15-Nov	Haya Saly Mathew	23-Nov
Saju Mathew	2-Nov	Raphael Reynold	15-Nov	Aji P Abraham	23-Nov
Jacob P Oommen	3-Nov	Abel V Mathew	15-Nov	Jenu Peter Alexander	24-Nov
Deepa Thomas	4-Nov	Sheela K. Abraham	16-Nov	Aleyamma Joy	24-Nov
Saramma Varghese	5-Nov	Beena Jacob Sam	16-Nov	Jubee P Mathai	25-Nov
Saiju Jubee	5-Nov	Jonah Stephen	16-Nov	Annamma Regi	25-Nov
Marygrace Pothen	6-Nov	Yohannan Mathew	16-Nov	Rajan T Samuel	25-Nov
Linu John	6-Nov	Aleena Mariam	16-Nov	Daniel P Bivin	25-Nov
Leelamma Vergis	8-Nov	Omana Mathew	18-Nov	Mathew A.P George	25-Nov
Susy Jacob	8-Nov	Leni S Mampallil	18-Nov	Thomas P Oommen	25-Nov
Amos Geo Vaidian	8-Nov	Joshua Mathew	18-Nov	Abraham Geevarghese	26-Nov
Joanna K Alex	8-Nov	Liju Alex	19-Nov	Philip K Thomas	26-Nov
Georgeyo Oommen	9-Nov	Issac Mathew	19-Nov	Annamma Mathai	26-Nov
Sony Thomas Padiyara	9-Nov			Bethenny John	27-Nov
Lilly Elias	10-Nov			Noah K Alex	27-Nov
John P Eapen	10-Nov			Bivin Varghese Pulivelil	27-Nov
Elsamma Koshy	10-Nov	Eapen V Kalathil	19-Nov	Susan George	27-Nov
Asish Mathew	11-Nov	Kochukoshy P Oommen	19-Nov	Elizabeth Jacob	27-Nov
Evelyn Panicker	12-Nov	Salamma Varghese	20-Nov	Christina Elizabeth George	27-Nov
Benny Mathew	13-Nov	Neena A George	20-Nov	Mercy Panicker	28-Nov
Suja Mathew	13-Nov	Abraham K. George	20-Nov	Georgy Thomas	28-Nov
Anu Vergis	13-Nov	Libi Thomas	20-Nov	Elias K Issac	29-Nov
Johanna M. Mukadiyil	13-Nov	Tony P. Biju	20-Nov	John Panicker	29-Nov
Anie Mathew	13-Nov	Predeep Chacko	20-Nov	Saju John	29-Nov
Anju John	14-Nov	Abhay Joseph Tojo	21-Nov	Annamma George	29-Nov
<b>Rev. Fr. Geevarghese John</b>	14-Nov	Manju Eldho	21-Nov	Vakkayil Varghese Joseph	30-Nov
Varghese Varghese	14-Nov	Bobin Mathew Thomas	23-Nov		

# Sunday School News

*Submitted by Binny Cherian, Principal  
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## One Year Bible Reading Schedule - November

<i>Date</i>	<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>
<i>November 1</i>	2 Chron. 30	Daniel 10	Acts 10
<i>November 2</i>	2 Chron. 31	Daniel 11	Acts 11-12
<i>November 3</i>	2 Chron. 32	Daniel 12	Acts 13
<i>November 4</i>	2 Chron. 33	Hosea 1	Acts 14-15
<i>November 5</i>	2 Chron. 34	Hosea 2	Acts 16-17
<i>November 6</i>	2 Chron. 35	Hosea 3	Acts 18-19
<i>November 7</i>	2 Chron. 36	Hosea 4	Acts 20
<i>November 8</i>	Ezra 1-2	Hosea 5	Acts 21-22
<i>November 9</i>	Ezra 3-4	Hosea 6	Acts 23-24
<i>November 10</i>	Ezra 5-6	Hosea 7	Acts 25-26
<i>November 11</i>	Ezra 7	Hosea 8	Acts 27
<i>November 12</i>	Ezra 8	Hosea 9	Acts 28
<i>November 13</i>	Ezra 9	Hosea 10	Col. 1
<i>November 14</i>	Ezra 10	Hosea 11	Col. 2
<i>November 15</i>	Neh. 1-2	Hosea 12	Col. 3-4
<i>November 16</i>	Neh. 3	Hosea 13	1 Thess. 1-2
<i>November 17</i>	Neh. 4	Hosea 14	1 Thess. 3-4
<i>November 18</i>	Neh. 5-6	Joel 1	1 Thess. 5
<i>November 19</i>	Neh. 7	Joel 2	2 Thess. 1-2
<i>November 20</i>	Neh. 8	Joel 3	2 Thess. 3
<i>November 21</i>	Neh. 9	Amos 1	1 Timothy 1-3
<i>November 22</i>	Neh. 10	Amos 2	1 Timothy 4-5
<i>November 23</i>	Neh. 11	Amos 3	1 Timothy 6
<i>November 24</i>	Neh. 12	Amos 4	2 Timothy 1
<i>November 25</i>	Neh. 13	Amos 5	2 Timothy 2
<i>November 26</i>	Esther 1	Amos 6	2 Timothy 3-4
<i>November 27</i>	Esther 2	Amos 7	Titus 1-3
<i>November 28</i>	Esther 3-4	Amos 8	Philemon
<i>November 29</i>	Esther 5-6	Amos 9	Hebrews 1-2
<i>November 30</i>	Esther 7-8	Obadiah	Hebrews 3-5

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