

ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023

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Vicar's Message

How to Prepare for Christ

We are in the Advent Season now. Just finished with the great festival of Thanksgiving and now getting ready to celebrate the miracle of Incarnation, Christmas! In fact, our greatest reason for Thanksgiving is the fact of the greatest gift that God gave to the entire humanity, His own Son! In the Holy Eucharist (this word was derived from Greek word, Eucharisto {ευχαριστώ} meaning 'thanks') we are thanking God for giving His Son through the Holy Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Qurbana. Jesus used this word thanks when instituted the Holy Eucharist, as we see in Matthew 26:27, Mark 14:23 and Luke 22:19. The priest recites this at the time of blessing the bread and wine (Baare... Kadesh..). Thus in the Holy Eucharist we remember the gift of God in a very personal way, accepting Him in true flesh and blood and therefore, Christmas is implied in every Holy Qurbana.

However, Christmas is also a historic moment that we celebrate on December 25th. The entire world is now in the celebration that has already begun. Even people who don't believe in God or in Jesus make all the ingredients to celebrate the



birth of God in Jesus through the ornaments, illumination materials or special culinary stuff. Streets, homes, offices and shops are all beautifully decorated indicating the arrival of this festival. As a spiritual community what can we do beyond all these material type celebrations to make it a real festival of receiving the Messiah?

1. **Spiritual Illumination:** While decorating our places with beautiful lights we should also be lighting up our own life. There is a lot of darkness in each one of us. Darkness hides our sight. Often, we won't see our weaknesses and frailties because of this darkness. We just assume that all is well with what we do. We are masked by satan making it impossible to see our own mistakes. Many of our habits, styles of life, approaches to others, and behaviors are all without seeing the way of Christ, or the Word of Christ. Satan has masked us very successfully to see the sins that are

hidden in us. The only solution is to have the enlightenment of Christ which will give us the light to see our inner secrets that are buried in sin and frailty. In the same we are also masked by Satan making us blind to see the needs of the poor and the destitute. We have the eyes to see our own needs and wants but not the essentials of the needy. Often we spend on our luxury than our essentials. When Jesus asked us to love our neighbor like ourselves, he was putting the light in us to see the needs of the needy. Can this Christmas open our eyes to see our own self and the needs of others?

2. **Spiritual Ornamentation:** Using various ornamentation for Christmas in and around our homes or offices, we are trying to make it look beautiful. Indeed, we want our environment looks beautiful. But are we aware of the need of decorating our own life with ornaments of good deeds and good behavior or good life style? Don't we need others to see us glowing with virtues of Christ? Our external appearance with beauty kits only makes us physically beautiful but can we make us beautiful with our character, loving others with a special love that Jesus imparted? Often the externally beautiful or handsome people are carrying a lot of darkness in their life.

But the light of Jesus can make us glow in a special way.

3. **Spiritual gifts:** Gift-giving is one of the major activities in the Christmas celebration. Again the symbolic expression that God showed us by giving His own Son to the world is expressed in our giving gifts or sharing our resources with others. Every gift is a great sign of sharing. While we give material gifts to others we should also be mindful of giving spiritual gifts to others. St. Paul teaches us the 9 spiritual gifts in Galatians 5:22 as fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control! During the Christmas season we can give these gifts to others without spending a penny. Unfortunately, today's world does not want to give this valuable gift which is the least expensive! What a tragedy! The Holy Spirit has given us all these gifts and why not we share the same with others?

May this Christmas be a special one for all of us, understanding the meaning of true Christmas!

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

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



Parish Highlights from November

F&YC 2024 Committee Visit - November 12th



The 2024 Family and Youth Conference Committee made their inaugural Parish Visit at our Church. The Conference Convener, Mr. Cherian Perumal, as well as many active Committee Members from our Parish presented the conference details and invited all to attend. They then inaugurated the conference ticket sales, raffle ticket sales, and souvenir compliment sales. The Conference will take place July 10th through 13th, 2024 at the Wyndham

Resort in Lancaster, PA under the theme of the “Ladder of Divine Ascent.”



Holiday Craft Fair - November 18th

Our Sunday School students enjoyed our Annual Craft Fair presented by our many dedicated volunteers. The kids partook in Christmas crafts, story time, snacks, and fellowship. Santa and Mrs. Claus also made a surprise visit!



MOCF Thanksgiving & Memorial of Very Rev. Fr. K. Mathai Cor Episcopa - November 23rd

The Area celebrated our Annual Thanksgiving Holy Qurbana at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church in Bensalem. The occasion was also a time to remember our dear Very Rev. Fr. K. Mathai Cor Episcopa on the 41st Day after his Demise. The Services ended with traditional Thanksgiving Dinner followed by Cemetery Prayers.

MGOCSM One Day Conference- November 25th

The Annual MGOCSM Diocesan One Day Conference was conducted at our Church. The conference explored Our Identity in Christ as was led by Rev. Dn. Sampson Nash.

Deacon Nash is both a Medical Doctor and Bioethicist who spoke on the issues of health, gender, and sexuality.

Metropolitan's Visit - November 26th

Our Metropolitan, Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, conducted his annual visit of our Parish

along with guests

Rev. Fr. K.K.

John and Rev. Sub-

Deacon

Shojil Abraham, the Diocesan Youth Minister.



December Events and General Announcements

Church Reminders

General Body Meeting – 12/3 following Holy Qurbana:

Agenda will be the election of office bearers for 2024 as well as review of the Budget for 2024.

Cradles to Crayons:

The MGOCSM is collecting donations of lightly used warm winter clothes and outerwear for the less fortunate. A collection box will be set up in the Church.



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

Ecumenical Christmas Program - December 2nd

At George Washington High School beginning at 2:30pm; Our Sunday School students will be performing in multiple programs so please plan to support them with your attendance. **See flyer attached.**

Karuna Blood Drive - December 10th

See flyer attached.

Christmas Caroling - December 9th and 16th

Over 50 families have signed up to host Christmas Caroling this year. The Caroling team will be spreading Christmas cheer over the course of two

nights. Please plan to support them with your offerings and your prayers.

MGOCSM Winter Summit- December 20 to 23 at the Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center

Our parish will cover half the registration costs for students interested in attending. See flyer attached.

Parish Christmas Program - December 30th

We will have our Annual Christmas Talent Program on the evening of Saturday, December 30th, beginning at 3pm. Those who are interested in performing should reach out to the Program Coordinator, Mr. Binu Mathew, to sign up. The Program will end with Evening Prayer in preparation for Holy Qurbana the next day.

Member Announcements

Memorials

- ❖ November 5th - **Mrs. Mary Joseph**, Mother of Saly Joseph (#1076) passed away on November 5th in India.

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 loves 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 (25th, 50th etc.) or a birthday (50th, 60th, 70th, 80th 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.

Births

Luke Tristan George was born to Georgie and Jen George in San Diego on November 15th. Congrats to the parents and the grandfather, our member Mr. A.T. George (#215).

Weddings

Mr. Christin Varghese, son of our members Mr. Thomaskutty Varghese and Nirmala Thomaskutty, wed **Ms. Manju Jose**, daughter of Mr. Jose Vareed and late Bessy Jose, on November 25th at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia.

Congratulations to Christin and Manju!

DECEMBER WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Roy Philip Chacko	Dec 7	Mr. & Mrs. John Panicker	Dec 27
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas P Oommen	Dec 8	Mr. & Mrs. Regi Mathai	Dec 27
Mr. & Mrs. Shibu M Baby	Dec 11	Mr. & Mrs. Biju Mathews	Dec 28
Mr. & Mrs. Saji George	Dec 12	Mr. & Mrs. Paul John	Dec 29
Mr. & Mrs. Philip T Varghese	Dec 25	Mr. & Mrs. Ashok Paulose	Dec 30
Mr. & Mrs. Sajan Thomas	Dec 26	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Daniel	Dec 31



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Santhamma Mathew	Dec 1	Jacob T. Mathai	Dec 14	Samantha Philip	Dec 22
Noel Cherian	Dec 1	Matt P. Geevarghese	Dec 14	Hannah Varghese	Dec 22
Annamma Jacob	Dec 1	N K Thomas	Dec 15	Aleyamma Chacko	Dec 23
Ann Raj Jacob	Dec 1	Jovan P Shinu	Dec 16	Litty John	Dec 23
Simy Lynnsn	Dec 2	Hannah Mary Varghese	Dec 16	Joel Jins	Dec 24
Ruby Geroge	Dec 2	Lins John	Dec 17	Shiji Daji	Dec 25
Evana Susan Joseph	Dec 3	Geena Regi Jacob	Dec 17	Allie Samuel	Dec 25
Josiah Thomas	Dec 4	Shaji Abraham	Dec 19	Annamma Samuel	Dec 26
Diya Mariam Saji	Dec 5	Jolly Varughese	Dec 19	Deanah Jubee	Dec 27
Praveen P. Geevarghese	Dec 6	Noel Mathew	Dec 19	Lesley T Reji	Dec 27
Saramma Jacob	Dec 7			Neha Ann Koshy	Dec 27
Samaira Binoy	Dec 7			Jose K John	Dec 28
Philip T Varghese	Dec 8	Abram Alexander	Dec 19	Noah Philip Cherian	Dec 28
Mini Philip	Dec 8	Joanna Ajish	Dec 19	Hannah Anto Panicker	Dec 29
Thomas Zachariah	Dec 8	Susan Chacko	Dec 20	Mathew Jacob	Dec 30
Santhra Eliza Suresh	Dec 9	Merin Rajan	Dec 20	Anaya Anna Bivin	Dec 30
Susan Paulose	Dec 10	Saly Joseph	Dec 20	Sam Jacob Kurisinmoottil	Dec 31
Elizabeth Chacko	Dec 10	Joe Zachariah	Dec 20	Jobin Regi	Dec 31
Sosamma Cherian	Dec 11	Omana Varghese	Dec 20	Rajesh Geevarghese	Dec 31
Sheeba P Anooj	Dec 12	Merlin Rajan	Dec 21	Luke Matthew Cherian	Dec 31
Saju Paul	Dec 12	Riya Dony	Dec 22		
Rosamma George	Dec 14	Thomas Varghese	Dec 22		

Sunday School News

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

One Year Bible Reading Schedule - December

<i>Date</i>	I	II	III
<i>December 1</i>	Esther 9-10	Jonah 1	Hebrews 6-7
<i>December 2</i>	Job 1-2	Jonah 2-3	Hebrews 8-9
<i>December 3</i>	Job 3-4	Jonah 4	Hebrews 10
<i>December 4</i>	Job 5	Micah 1	Hebrews 11
<i>December 5</i>	Job 6-7	Micah 2	Hebrews 12
<i>December 6</i>	Job 8	Micah 3-4	Hebrews 13
<i>December 7</i>	Job 9	Micah 5	James 1
<i>December 8</i>	Job 10	Micah 6	James 2
<i>December 9</i>	Job 11	Micah 7	James 3-4
<i>December 10</i>	Job 12	Nahum 1-2	James 5
<i>December 11</i>	Job 13	Nahum 3	1 Peter 1
<i>December 12</i>	Job 14	Hab. 1	1 Peter 2
<i>December 13</i>	Job 15	Hab. 2	1 Peter 3-5
<i>December 14</i>	Job 16-17	Hab. 3	2 Peter 1-2
<i>December 15</i>	Job 18-19	Zeph. 1	2 Peter 3
<i>December 16</i>	Job 20	Zeph. 2	1 John 1-2
<i>December 17</i>	Job 21	Zeph. 3	1 John 3-4
<i>December 18</i>	Job 22	Haggai 1-2	1 John 5
<i>December 19</i>	Job 23-24	Zeph. 1	2 John-3 John
<i>December 20</i>	Job 25-27	Zeph. 2-3	Jude
<i>December 21</i>	Job 28	Zeph. 4-5	Rev. 1-2
<i>December 22</i>	Job 29-30	Zeph. 6-7	Rev. 3-4
<i>December 23</i>	Job 31-32	Zeph. 8	Rev. 5-6
<i>December 24</i>	Job 33	Zeph. 9	Rev. 7-9
<i>December 25</i>	Job 34	Zeph. 10	Rev. 10-11
<i>December 26</i>	Job 35-36	Zeph. 11	Rev. 12-13
<i>December 27</i>	Job 37	Zeph. 12	Rev. 14
<i>December 28</i>	Job 38	Zeph. 13	Rev. 15-16
<i>December 29</i>	Job 39	Mal. 1	Rev. 17-18
<i>December 30</i>	Job 40	Mal. 2	Rev. 19-20
<i>December 31</i>	Job 41-42	Mal. 3-4	Rev. 21-22

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



**American
Red Cross**

GIVE SOMETHING THAT
Means Something
GIVE BLOOD

Blood Drive
**St. Thomas Indian Orthodox
Church**

**Sunday School Hall
1009 Unruh Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19111**

**Sunday, December 10, 2023
10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church to schedule an appointment.

Maximize your blood donation. Help more patients.

If you are an eligible type O, B - or A - donor, consider making a Power Red donation.
Red blood cells are the most commonly transfused blood component.

Streamline your donation experience and save up to 15 minutes by visiting RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass to complete your pre-donation reading and health history questions on the day of your appointment.

**Our gift to you: Come give Dec. 1 to 17 for a \$10
Amazon.com Gift Card by email. rcblood.org/Amazon**

Schedule your blood donation appointment today!

1-800-RED CROSS | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App



ECUMENICAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIAN CHURCHES IN PENNSYLVANIA [EFICP]

37th

ECUMENICAL

Christmas Day

2023

DEC

2

SATURDAY

@ 2.00 pm



GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

10175 Bustleton Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19116



His Eminence

CHIEF GUEST

Mar Titus Yeldho

Archbishop & Patriarchal Vicar
of the Malankara Arch diocese of the Syrian
Orthodox Church in North America

PROCESSION WITH NATIVITY SHOW

AUTHENTIC CHENDA MELAM & CAROL TEAM

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

PUBLIC MEETING

CAROLS BY ECUMENICAL CHOIR

CHARITY FUND DISTRIBUTION

RAFFLE PRIZE DISTRIBUTION

SOUVENIR RELEASE

VARIETY OF ENTERTAINMENTS BY MEMBER PARISHES

Procession Starts at 2.30pm

Cultural Programs Starts at 3.00 pm



REV. FR. K. P. ELDOSE
Chairman



REV. FR. M. K. KURIAKOSE
Co-Chair



SHALU MATHEW PUNNOOSE
Secretary



JOHN SAMUEL
Joint Secretary



ROJISH SAMUEL
Treasurer



Rev. Fr. JACOB JOHN



SWAPNA SAJI SEBASTIAN
Joint Treasurer:



ROSHEN FLAMOOTTIL
Program Co-ordinator:

THE MGOCSM OF THE NORTHEAST AMERICAN DIOCESE PRESENTS



BENT NOT BROKEN

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing"
2 Corinthians 4:8

MAIN SPEAKER
**DN. JOSHUA
VARUGHESE**



REGISTRATION

Early (Oct 1 - Nov 5): \$175

Regular (Nov 6 - Nov 30): \$200

Late (Dec 1 - Dec 12): \$225

DECEMBER 20-23, 2023

AT HOLY TRANSFIGURATION RETREAT CENTER

bit.ly/winsum2023

✉ COLLEGEKAMP@MGOCSMNE.ORG

📱 [@MGOCSMNE](https://www.facebook.com/MGOCSMNE)