

ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Vicar's Message

Preparing for the Great Lent

From February 12th the Great Lent will begin and will end on March 31st with Easter. The 40 days of fasting followed by the Holy Week makes it 50 days of fasting. The Roman Catholic Church begins the lent from Ash Wednesday. They wear the sign of cross with ashes on the forehead on that day. Of all Christian denominations the Malankara Orthodox Church is the one that observes stringently the 50-day lent time. Many other Orthodox Churches in the Oriental Orthodox family that share common faith do not observe it as per the tradition used to be. Some even reduced the days of strict observance that is normally imposed on diet restrictions. I am glad that even though our observance is strict some of our prayers need to be revised to suit our times. Following blindly any tradition that negates values of Christ should be revisited. However, our people do prepare for this lent time which is a great sign that there is an amount of spirituality left with us. And that spirituality still stays as a remnant should be like the leaven that influences not only our community but the people around us as well. If we cannot be catalysts that means we are like salt that lost its taste!

Every year Great Lent is a solemn occasion for us to enrich our life. The combination of abstinence from certain food items, regular hourly offices of prayer, attending retreats, doing confession, avoiding worldly



pleasures and do charity are the common practices. In a way the fasting season is a rest to the mind and body and a means of strengthening our spiritual fervor.

Abstaining from non-vegetarian food is good practice as most of the Christians are non-vegetarians. It helps clean up our bowel system, lower cholesterol, lose weight etc. It makes our body healthier. Our people are so much addicted to non-vegetarian food, making them sick. It helps us to have control over our mind to abstain from the things that we like most to consume. Some people even vow to abstain from chocolate because they are addicted to that. Abstinence from food is also with a purpose of sharing the excess with the needy. Some people don't see entertainment shows like movies etc. just to take time for more spiritual reading and listening. Nowadays we have so much on the media to see in videos and listen to creative

speeches. It is not easy for us to avoid the kind of negative media materials that truly distort our values.

Regular offices of prayers are a good habit to acquire some discipline in prayer life. Often our prayers are so short or some people no prayer at all. During lent time a lot of people practice prayer in an organized way. Lenten time is a practice time for us to be disciplined in our prayer life. Often, we defeat the purpose of lent immediately after the lent time. We use lent books available for our prayer which help us to restructure our disorganized prayer life.

Repentance and refinement processes are great ways to renew our life for a change in our lifestyle, behavior, etc. Often the socially acquired sins and follies make us unaware of its seriousness and we unknowingly do them thinking that 'many people do it and so why can't I do it!' Many of the social evils are ignored by the common people. The gossips, jealousy, scandalizing, hatred etc. are common in our community which we must curb. We Christians must be aware of our responsibilities to the society to change its style to make it better and good for all. Confession is a good

sacrament that we can make use of during the lent time receiving forgiveness from God and some guidance from our Father Confessor.

Doing charity is a regular practice during lent. Not only from the simple food habit we can save some money for the needy but also, we need to develop a sense of the needs of the poor, helping them out of our abundance. Our luxury in food or other items should be controlled so that we can share our resources with others. It is not only financially but also physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually that we can help others. I am so thankful that our parishioners take it seriously every year in supporting the activity of the Charity Committee of our parish. Last year we were able to build 7 houses and offer help for education and medical needs of many.

I hope and pray that all of us will utilize this opportunity of lent time to observe it in a meaningful way to enrich ourselves and others.

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
- Jobin Regi: 267.226.6366



28th Anniversary with You!

The month of February brings sweet memories of the reorganization of St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Philadelphia. It was so unexpected a move that I made on the request of His Grace Mar Barnabas of blessed memory to serve the parish while I was living in North Jersey approximately 100 miles away. My family was still attending the Sparkill St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church at that time. Mostly I had to come alone as my children were attending the Sunday School there. It was an opportunity to know the 28 families in the parish as I stayed in each house during the weekends. Later after about 5 years of weekly commuting I moved closer to Philadelphia.

The parish slowly grew even when we were worshipping in a rented chapel of the Cardinal Dougherty High School. In 2004 we acquired the present building with 76 member families. It was a marathon race for the parish to catch up with the extremely urgent repairs needed for the building complex. The amount of voluntary service along with financial contribution of the parishioners was unparalleled. More members joined our parish during the course of time, and they also joined all our activities with a very high sense of dedication. In the meantime, we got two Asst. vicars Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John and Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas and recently Rev. Dn. Predeep Chacko as the Youth Minister.

Today when I look back to 1996, I can see the amazing way of God's guidance in our church life. I can't thank God and our people enough! What a blessing it is for me to be with such a loving and blessed community!

Please continue to pray for God's continued blessing on us.

Lovingly, MK Kuriakosachan.

Parish Highlights from January

- January 6th - New member orientation was held with clergy, new members as well as managing committees of 2023 and 2024.
- January 20th- MGOCSM held their Area New Year's Conference held at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church Bensalem. Main speaker was Rev. Fr. Vijay Thomas.
- January 28th - Sunday of the Departed Clergy. Sunday School kicked off their Children's and Young Adult Book Drive.

February Events and General Announcements

Church Reminders

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.

Women's Winter Coat Collection-collecting for the Philadelphia Homeless Shelter, in conjunction with Drexel Medicine Charities.

Events

February 2nd - the Blessed Feast of the Entry of Our Lord into the Temple, Mayalho.

February 3rd - Talmeedo Men's Ministry- One Day Conference held at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Main speaker was Rev. Dn. Pradeep Hatcher.

February 4th - Sunday of the Faithful Departed

February 11th - First Sunday of the Great Lent. Housing Charity was inaugurated.

Spiritual Organization Updates

Men's Forum

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

MMVS

- Sunday February 18th - Pickle Sale
- MMVS has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.

OCYM

- Open house meeting February 2nd to discuss initiatives for the upcoming year.
- OCYM is planning a trip to Sight and Sound Theater on October 19th, 2024.

FOCUS

- Monthly Meeting will be held on February 23rd at the residence of Rajesh and Jenny Geevarghese at 6:30PM.

Save the Dates

GROW Annual Conference- March 9th



Theosis
The Journey

G.R.O.W. ANNUAL ONE-DAY CONFERENCE

Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary | 575 Scarsdale Rd, Yonkers, NY 10707
SATURDAY | MARCH 09, 2024 | 10 AM - 4 PM

"And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit."
 -2 Corinthians 3:18 (OSB)

Register today at www.thegrowministry.com
 Registration: \$15 (now- Jan 31); \$25 (Feb 1- Mar 5); same day \$30

✉ GROWMINISTRIES2012@gmail.com 🌱 growministry 📷 @grow.ministries 📺 grow ministries

Sight and Sound Theater Show, "Daniel"- October 19th



Member Announcements

Memorials

- ❖ January 4th - **Mr. M. George**, father of Mr. Mathew A.P. George (#242) passed away in Adoor, Kerela. Funeral was held on January 8, 2024.
- ❖ January 5th- **Mr. Thomas Mathew**, brother of Mrs. Aleyamma Varghese (#143) passed away in Warrington, PA.
- ❖ January 15th- **Mr. Thomas Koruthu**, father of Milly Philip (#182) passed away in 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.

Births

- ❖ January 11th - **Neveah and Celeste Thomas** were born to parents Christina and Dhan Thomas
- ❖ January 12th - **Johan Ajish** was born to parents Mr. Ajish Kutty and Reeja Ajish
- ❖ January 16th - **Amryn James** was born to parents Jimmy and Susmitha James

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.

FEBRUARY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Paul C John	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Oommen	
Mr. & Mrs. Koshy Daniel	Feb 1	Geevarghese Panicker	Feb 12
Mr. & Mrs. Thankachan P Daniel	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Anil George Panicker	Feb 12
Mr. & Mrs. Philip Mathai	Feb 2	Mr. & Mrs. Jiju Alex	Feb 12
Mr. & Mrs. Nelson O Panicker	Feb 3	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew A.P George	Feb 15
Mr. & Mrs. Rajan C Padiyara	Feb 3	Mr. & Mrs. Aji P Abraham	Feb 15
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob M Zachariah	Feb 4	Mr. & Mrs. Simon Cheeran Ittikuru	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Anto G Panicker	Feb 5	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew N K.	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. George Varghese	Feb 5	Mr. & Mrs. Maliyil M Philip	Feb 19
Mr. & Mrs. N K Thomas	Feb 6	Mr. & Mrs. Bivin Varghese Pulivelil	Feb 22
Mr. & Mrs. Cherian V V	Feb 7	Mr. & Mrs. Abraham Varghese	Feb 22
Mr. & Mrs. Ron Philip	Feb 8	Mr. & Mrs. George Joseph	Feb 25
Mr. & Mrs. Joel Philip	Feb 10	Mr. and Mrs. Jose K John	Feb 29
Mr. & Mrs. Robin Philip	Feb 11		



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Saramma Thomas	Feb 1	Evana V John	Feb 10	Maya Kappil	Feb 18
Anil T. Babu	Feb 1	Rachel J. Jacob	Feb 12	Jayden Mathew	Feb 19
Sajan Benny	Feb 1	Tiby Raju	Feb 12	Nathania Susan	
Jessly Alex	Feb 1	Paul C John	Feb 13	George	Feb 20
Varghese Baby	Feb 2	Alex P Symon	Feb 13	Norah Mary Daniel	Feb 20
Roy Philip	Feb 2	Isabel A Anish	Feb 13	Philip Melavila	Feb 20
Binu Thankachan	Feb 2	Alexander Mathew	Feb 13	Jenny Raj	Feb 20
Edwin Saji	Feb 3	Aarianna John	Feb 13	Robin P. Montharayil	Feb 20
Manu Varghese	Feb 3	Justin K Alex	Feb 14	Mariamamma Cherian	Feb 21
Reeja George	Feb 4	Saramma Varghese	Feb 14	Sophy Mathew	Feb 21
Simmy Aneena Jacob	Feb 4	Shibu Thomas	Feb 14	Jacob P Chacko	Feb 21
Joelyne Jacob	Feb 5			Subi Mathew	Feb 22
Jeena Jacob	Feb 5			Leelamma Rajan	Feb 22
Sunil Raj Poovannal	Feb 6			Zarah Kurian	Feb 24
Steffin Manoj	Feb 7	Jiju Alex	Feb 14	Ashok Mathew Koshy	Feb 24
Reni Nelson	Feb 7	Jibin K Alex	Feb 14	Chinnamma Philip	Feb 25
Sheena Vaidian	Feb 7	Raji Aji	Feb 15	Binny Cherian	Feb 25
Vinod Jacob	Feb 8	Ezekiel Raju	Feb 15	Joel Philip	Feb 26
Noel Stephen	Feb 8	Jimmy Thomas	Feb 16	Cherian Varghese	Feb 26
Jaime M George	Feb 9	David Roy	Feb 16	Jaisy John	Feb 27
Grace John	Feb 9	Mary Daniel	Feb 17	Leon Lynnson	Feb 27
Aleyamma Varghese	Feb 10	Abraham John	Feb 17	Sally Thomas	Feb 27
Melissa Alice Abraham	Feb 10	Omana Abraham	Feb 17	Joby George	Feb 27
Gibson Thomas		Milly Philip	Feb 17	Susan Abraham George	Feb 28
George	Feb 10	George Varughese	Feb 17	Silpa M Thomas	Feb 29
Cristia Susan Shibu	Feb 10	Alia Ann Bivin	Feb 18		

Sunday School News

Submitted by Steven Kurian, Principal
 (Tel.: 267.450.685, Email: stevekurian@gmail.com)

One Year Bible Reading Schedule - February

Date	I	II	III
February 1	Exodus 5-6	Psalms 58-59	Romans 10-11
February 2	Exodus 7-8	Psalms 60-61	Romans 12
February 3	Exodus 9	Psalms 62-63	Romans 13-14
February 4	Exodus 10	Psalms 64-65	Romans 15-16
February 5	Exodus 11-12	Psalms 66-67	Mark 1
February 6	Exodus 13-14	Psalms 68	Mark 2
February 7	Exodus 15	Psalms 69	Mark 3
February 8	Exodus 16	Psalms 70-71	Mark 4
February 9	Exodus 17-18	Psalms 72	Mark 5
February 10	Exodus 19-20	Psalms 73	Mark 6
February 11	Exodus 21	Psalms 74	Mark 7
February 12	Exodus 22	Psalms 75-76	Mark 8
February 13	Exodus 23	Psalms 77	Mark 9
February 14	Exodus 24-25	Psalms 78	Mark 10
February 15	Exodus 26	Psalms 79-80	Mark 11
February 16	Exodus 27	Psalms 81-82	Mark 12
February 17	Exodus 28	Psalms 83-84	Mark 13
February 18	Exodus 29	Psalms 85-86	Mark 14
February 19	Exodus 30	Psalms 87-88	Mark 15-16
February 20	Exodus 31-32	Psalms 89	1 Cor. 1-2
February 21	Exodus 33-34	Psalms 90-91	1 Cor. 3
February 22	Exodus 35	Psalms 92-93	1 Cor. 4-5
February 23	Exodus 36	Psalms 94-95	1 Cor. 6
February 24	Exodus 37	Psalms 96-99	1 Cor. 7
February 25	Exodus 38	Psalms 100-101	1 Cor. 8-9
February 26	Exodus 39-40	Psalms 102	1 Cor. 10
February 27	Leviticus 1-2	Psalms 103	1 Cor. 11
February 28	Leviticus 3-4	Psalms 104	1 Cor. 12-13

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

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