

# ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### Assistant Vicar's Message

#### Feast of Ascension

Forty days after the feast of the Resurrection we celebrate the feast of Ascension. The feast of Ascension commemorates the Risen Christ's ascension to heaven where sits at the right hand of God the Father. We can understand the importance of this day through several homilies of the fathers on this feast.

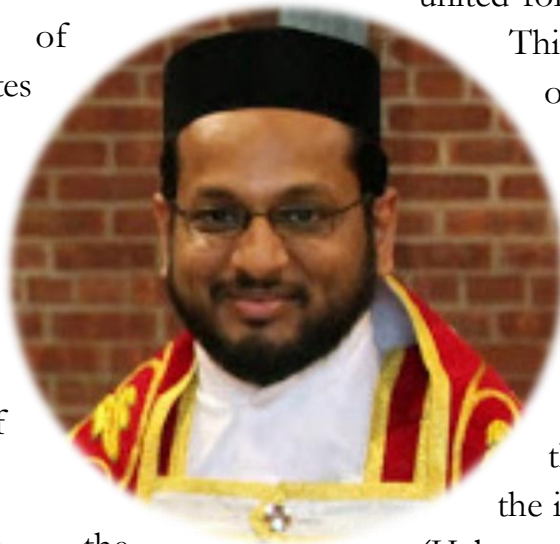
Firstly, through the ascension all of humanity was raised to heaven with Christ the New Adam. According to Gregory the Great, "If by the birth of the Lord, the deity seemed lowered, by his Ascension, humanity was glorified" (Homily 29). In the same homily Gregory adds, "For the same nature to which it was said: 'You are earth, and

in the earth you will go' (Gen 3: 19), has today gone to heaven." Through the ascended Christ, our human nature ascends into heaven. Through this we remember the change that Christ has brought to our nature. As Gregory Palamas states, "As we lift up our hearts to Him we shall behold the great spectacle of our nature united for ever with the fire of the divinity." In the ascended Christ our nature is united for ever with the fire of the divinity.

This is the experience of divinization or theosis.

Secondly, even though we are physically on earth, we are able to elevate ourselves to heaven and to place our hope there. As the author of Hebrews says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain" (Hebrews 6:19). Our hope is in heaven.

Thirdly, through the ascension Christ joins heaven and earth together in a union. The entire purpose of the incarnation for this union. The incarnation is the fulfilment of the prophetic call to "rend the heavens and come down" (Isaiah 64:1). That began with the



annunciation and comes to a real culmination in the ascension. This union will be completed in the second coming with the holy city of new Jerusalem coming down to the new earth (Rev 21). As Gregory Palamas states, “The disciples worshipped the most high Lord who had come down from heaven, made the earth into heaven and gone up again when He came, having united things below with things above and formed one Church, at the same time heavenly and earthly, to the glory of His love for mankind.”

Finally, in the feast of the ascension we look forward to the second coming. According to Augustine, the feasts of resurrection and ascension are part of the glorifications of Christ

that will be completed in the second coming. Augustine states, “Christ has been twice glorified with respect to the form of man he took to himself; first, by rising from the dead on the third day; next, by ascending into heaven before the eyes of his disciples. There are these two glorifications of his, to which our attention is being drawn, which have already taken place. There remains one more to come, it too in the sight of men, when he presents himself in judgment.” According to Gregory Palamas Christians should “have their eyes lifted up to the Master above the heavens, praising and blessing Him with irreproachable conduct, and waiting for His mystical coming.”

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
- Jobin Regi: 267.226.6366



## Parish Highlights from March

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**March 3<sup>rd</sup>** - Holy Qurbana was celebrated with the presence of visiting clergy: Rev Fr. Babu George from Kerala and Rev. Fr. K. P. Varghese from the DMV region

**March 5<sup>th</sup>** - Mid Lent Holy Qurbana was celebrated

**March 9<sup>th</sup>** - Parish members volunteered to help Mango Pickle for the Lenten Season

**March 16<sup>th</sup>** - Parish Lenten Retreat - Rev. Fr. Tojo Baby led the Malayalam portion and Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John led the English portion

**March 22<sup>nd</sup>**- 40th Friday was celebrated with Holy Qurbana

**March 24<sup>th</sup>** - Palm Sunday

**March 25<sup>th</sup>**- Annunciation to St. Mary was celebrated with Holy Qurbana

**March 27<sup>th</sup>**- Pesaha Service followed by Pesaha Appam

**March 29<sup>th</sup>**- Good Friday services followed by Night Vigil

**March 30<sup>th</sup>**- Holy Saturday Qurbana

**March 31<sup>st</sup>** - Holy Easter Service followed by lunch for all

## Organizational Updates

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### Sunday School

- Held an Easter Egg Hunt for all children grades PreK to Grade 5. It was a fun and special experience for all who could attend and participate.
- Bible Quiz Team is being assembled for the topic of the Gospel of Saint Matthew. The team is being trained by Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas and Deepa Thomas Kochamma.
- Assigned Competition will be held in the month of May. All students grade 1-12 are encouraged to participate. Categories include : Drawing for all grades, Poetry for grades 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, Story Writing grades 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, Essay Writing grades 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

**Men's Form**

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

**MMVS**

- MMVS has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.
- MMVS has been conducting a raffle ticket sale, tickets are being sold for \$25 apiece.

**CAYA- Middle School Fellowship**

- Meets monthly - next monthly meeting will be Saturday, April 27th, at our church from 2pm-4pm. All students from grades 5-7 are encouraged to attend.

**OCYM**

- OCYM annual Bake Sale will be held Sunday, April 14th.
- Sight and Sound Theater show, Daniel, October 19th.
- OCYM has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.

**FOCUS**

- FOCUS in conjunction with MGOCSM will hold a Young Parents Date Night on Friday April 5<sup>th</sup>. This allowed young parents some time together as babysitting is provided at

the church with the presence of Sujit Achen as well as MGOCSM members.

**MGOCSM**

- MGOCSM meets on a monthly basis.
- The March Meeting was held Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Karuna**

- Karuna Charity issued financial support for 3 cancer patients in India. These patients demonstrated a need for financial support with written documentation from their parish priests.

**GROW**

- GROW held their one-day conference Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. It was well attended; close to 30 members from our parish attended.
- GROW is holding a special Wednesday night Zoom series for the Holy 50 Days. Diving into St. John Chrysostom's Homily of Fasting. This is held on Wednesday nights starting at 8:45 PM.

## General Announcements and Save the Dates

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### Housing Charity:

Please continue to support our housing charity as our goal is to achieve \$40,000 to build 5 houses in Kerala for those who are needy.

### Family and Youth Conference

Registration has started for this year's conference and will close on April 15<sup>th</sup>. The conference will be **July 10<sup>th</sup> - July 13<sup>th</sup>**.

### Karuna Blood Drive

Karuna is hosting a Biannual American Red Cross Blood Drive on Sunday, **May 19<sup>th</sup> from 9AM-2PM**. Registration has begun, please see the link shared in the church's WhatsApp group for more information.

### Family Night

Our first ever Family Night will be held June 1st from 3PM-7PM at church. More details and to sign up to perform, please contact our Program Coordinator, Sujith Thomas.

### Annual Church Picnic

This year's Church Picnic will be held on Saturday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at Wilson Farm Park, the same location as last year. More information to follow. Any questions, please contact our Sports and Picnic Coordinator, Jestin Abraham.

### Sight and Sound

OCYM is planning a trip to Sight and Sound Theater to see the show, Daniel, on Saturday, October 19th. Please sign up as seats are limited.

## Member Announcements

### Memorials

- ❖ **P.D. Thomas, brother of Lily Wilson**
- ❖ **K. M. Zachariah, brother of Annamma Samuel**
- ❖ **Mariamamma Eapen, sister of Joseph Vakkayil and Thomas Vakkayil**

*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.

## APRIL WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Raju C Samuel	Apr 3	Mr. & Mrs. Thomson Korah	Apr 23
Mr. & Mrs. Saji Varghese	Apr 5	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew George	Apr 24
Mr. & Mrs. Philip George	Apr 7	Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie Cherian	Apr 28
Mr. & Mrs. John P Eapen	Apr 11	Mr. & Mrs. Robin P. Montharayil	Apr 28
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas T Varghese	Apr 11	Mr. & Mrs. Jacob George	Apr 29
Mr. & Mrs. Joyes M George	Apr 13	Mr. & Mrs. Biju P. Varghese	Apr 29
Mr. & Mrs. Samuel George	Apr 15	Mr. & Mrs. George Abraham	Apr 30
Mr. & Mrs. George Thadathil	Apr 17	Mr. & Mrs. Jose V Abraham	Apr 30
Mr. & Mrs. Prince Sam Jacob	Apr 22		





## APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Mathew Vaidyan Lukose	Apr 1	Jolly Reji	Apr 12	Joel Sathees	Apr 19
Jose Ninan	Apr 1	Ashish Abraham	Apr 13	George Eapen	Apr 20
Thankkamma Simon	Apr 2	Raju T Chandy	Apr 13	Aleyamma Varghese	Apr 20
Timothy Mathew	Apr 2	Sean George	Apr 13	Goldy Mathew	Apr 20
Sajini Babu	Apr 2	Tigy Elza Cherian	Apr 13	Joshua Koshy	Apr 20
Evelyn Ann Johnes	Apr 4	Babu Varghese	Apr 14	Reem Ann Bivin	Apr 21
Raju C Samuel	Apr 4	Daji Mathew	Apr 14	Keziah Sarah Lajy	Apr 21
Oshin Shinu	Apr 4	Reshma R Padiyara	Apr 14	Aleyamma Kuncheriah	Apr 21
Shibu Mathew	Apr 5	Sherry Kurian	Apr 14	Emilia Rachel Panicker	Apr 22
Kevin Reji Ninan	Apr 6	Ansamma Saju Paul	Apr 15	Lincy M Reji	Apr 22
Ricky Panicker	Apr 6	Jacob Chacko	Apr 15	Saramma Varghese	Apr 22
Atlin Alex	Apr 6			Simi Mary Mathew	Apr 23
Samuel Joseph	Apr 6			Janly James	Apr 23
Thankachan Samuel	Apr 7			Philip John	Apr 24
Stephen Rajan	Apr 7			Alice Sathees	Apr 25
Renju R Padiyara	Apr 7	Achen Varghese	Apr 15	Leona Thomas	Apr 25
Koshy Daniel	Apr 7	K K Varghese	Apr 16	Thankachan P Daniel	Apr 25
Rev. Fr. Tojo Baby	Apr 7	Susamma George	Apr 16	Adith John Tojo	Apr 25
Jaison George	Apr 9	George Varghese	Apr 17	Jaisy A Thomas	Apr 25
Manoj Mathew	Apr 9	Mathew Philip Varghese	Apr 17	Princy Mathai	Apr 26
Priya Jerin	Apr 9	Thomas Daniel	Apr 17	Philip Skaria	Apr 26
Greeshma M.		Lukose Vaidyan Mathew	Apr 17	Lilly Simon	Apr 26
Geevarghese	Apr 9	Jobin K. Abraham	Apr 18	Austin Mathew	Apr 27
Leahana Mariam		Synu Varghese	Apr 18	Isaiah Thomas Anish	Apr 27
Alexander	Apr 9	Beena Joseph	Apr 18	Alka Mirium Varghese	Apr 27
Thomson Korah	Apr 10	Jeremy B Mukadiyil	Apr 18	Rajani T Rajan	Apr 27
Annie Thomas	Apr 10	Jacob M Zachariah	Apr 18	AnnMaria Anooj	Apr 27
Joel Koshy	Apr 10	Ajish Kutty	Apr 18	Benjamin Jacob Sam	Apr 28
Leelamma Vaidian	Apr 12	Jessy Jacob	Apr 18	Thomas G Kappil	Apr 28
Anitha Jossy	Apr 12	Suni Brown	Apr 19	Benji Varghese	Apr 30
		Bindu Sam	Apr 19		





Mathew Varghese	Apr 30	Ajo Raju	Apr 30
Sean P Thomas	Apr 30	Reuben Jacob Sam	Apr 30

# Sunday School News

*Submitted by Steven Kurian, Principal  
(Tel.: 267.450.6815, Email: [stevekurian@gmail.com](mailto:stevekurian@gmail.com))*

## One Year Bible Reading Schedule - April

Date	I	II	III
April 1	Numbers 15	Proverbs 11	Luke 24
April 2	Numbers 16	Proverbs 12	Galatians 1-2
April 3	Numbers 17-18	Proverbs 13	Galatians 3-4
April 4	Numbers 19	Proverbs 14	Galatians 5-6
April 5	Numbers 20-21	Proverbs 15	Ephesians 1-2
April 6	Numbers 22-23	Proverbs 16	Ephesians 3-4
April 7	Numbers 24-25	Proverbs 17	Ephesians 5-6
April 8	Numbers 26	Proverbs 18	Phil. 1-2
April 9	Numbers 27	Proverbs 19	Phil. 3-4
April 10	Numbers 28	Proverbs 20	John 1
April 11	Numbers 29-30	Proverbs 21	John 2-3
April 12	Numbers 31	Proverbs 22	John 4
April 13	Numbers 32	Proverbs 23	John 5
April 14	Numbers 33	Proverbs 24	John 6
April 15	Numbers 34	Proverbs 25	John 7
April 16	Numbers 35	Proverbs 26	John 8
April 17	Numbers 36	Proverbs 27	John 9-10
April 18	Deut. 1	Proverbs 28	John 11
April 19	Deut. 2	Proverbs 29	John 12
April 20	Deut. 3	Proverbs 30	John 13-14
April 21	Deut. 4	Proverbs 31	John 15-16
April 22	Deut. 5	Ecc. 1	John 17-18
April 23	Deut. 6-7	Ecc. 2	John 19
April 24	Deut. 8-9	Ecc. 3	John 20-21
April 25	Deut. 10-11	Ecc. 4	Acts 1
April 26	Deut. 12	Ecc. 5	Acts 2
April 27	Deut. 13-14	Ecc. 6	Acts 3-4
April 28	Deut. 15	Ecc. 7	Acts 5-6
April 29	Deut. 16	Ecc. 8	Acts 7
April 30	Deut. 17	Ecc. 9	Acts 8

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