

ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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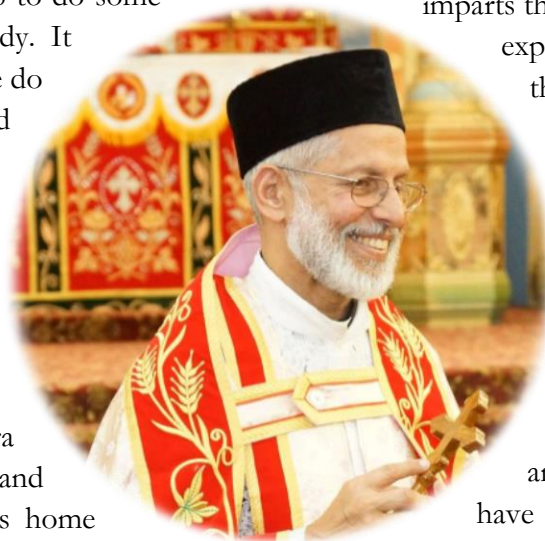
Vicar's Message

Lenten Season and the Culmination in the Resurrection of our Lord

A great season for spiritual uplift will be over by March 31st. Those who have used this very important season for their spiritual growth will definitely be benefited by that. Quite a number of people must have observed seriously these days with restriction on diet, behavior, and increased time for prayer and Bible reading. Indeed, some did take an extra step to do some humanitarian acts helping the needy. It gives a great pleasure to us when we do the above without compulsion. And the lent becomes a fruitful time of edification and enrichment. It helps the growth of our mind body and spirit. I hope it will make some permanent changes in our life.

During the Holy Week we make extra effort for longer hours of prayer and meditation. The Holy Week brings home our memories of the Lord's suffering for humanity. Even though the Cross was a humiliating symbol during the first century because the Romans used it as

the cruelest way of punishing the most serious criminals, Jesus converted that into a symbol of ultimate love and sacrifice. Christians, at least from the 4th century took the Cross as their symbol. In the first century itself the Biblical authors, especially St. Paul, highlighted the Cross as a symbol of ultimate sacrifice and means of salvation for the entire world. It was not simply as a sign, but as a serious concept of depicting Love in its perfect sense. In the book to the Galatians St. Paul asked, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified for you?" (3:1) He further states in 6:14, "but God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the Lord". This message imparts the divine knowledge that when we are experiencing this Cross in our life taking the suffering of others, we are identifying ourselves with the Lord.



In Philippians 2:8 St. Paul again highlights the humility of the Lord to accept the ultimate sacrifice even to the death on the Cross which made him the greatest among all humans. Even today we have not seen another person who has emptied himself like our Lord making it possible for us to acquire salvation by identifying ourselves with Him. Indeed, there were people who suffered like

Christ or more that what Christ suffered, such as the genocides by Roman Emperors, Hitler or other religiously intolerant fanatics, Jesus stands as a model for all of them showing perfect love even on the culmination of suffering on the Cross. This is the best lesson for us to learn from Jesus that we bring glory to His name by taking up the Cross on a daily basis. Christians of the present time are shying away from this part of the Cross even though they are happy to wear a pricy metallic Cross on their neck!

Indeed, it was the Cross that led to the ultimate glory of Christ who could overcome death through His resurrection giving us the promise that death is not the end of everything. Any suffering has a resurrection. This is our hope as Christians. The early Christians survived as a live community simply on this faith of

eternal life. They were willing to give life for the sake of Christ because of this hope. Unimaginable persecution from the Jewish community and Roman emperors could not deter the spirit of Christians to waver in their faith. They accepted death happily. This is our challenge today. Many Christians are not even willing to give some time for Christ, let alone to die for Christ. The Early Christians gives us the inspiration to live and die for Christ.

I hope and pray that our 50-day lent was a great experience and fruitful for all of us.

Happy Easter!

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



Parish Highlights from February

- **February 1st-** the Blessed Feast of the Entry of Our Lord into the Temple.
- **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. First General Body of the year was held, discussing the accounts for the previous year.
- **February 18th-** 28th Anniversary of the Reorganization of our Church. The Yacharam Collection was held for donations for the support of the Leprosy Ministry of our church.
- **February 25th-** St. Thomas Heritage Assembly Day. In remembrance of three events: 1,950th anniversary of the Martyrdom of our Patron Saint and Apostle of India- St. Thomas, 90th memorial of St. Dynasious, and 90th anniversary of the establishment of the Church Constitution.

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.

March Events and General Announcements

- Please see the Holy Week flier for details of dates and times for our Holy Week services.
- MGOCSM Area Lenten Retreat was held March 8th. It was led by our Rev. Dn. Pradeep Chacko. It was attended by approximately 50 participants.
- G.R.O.W. Women's One Day Conference was held on March 9, 2024 at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.
- Mango Pickle was made with the support of our parishioners for use during Holy Week.
- MMVS is selling Raffle Tickets, \$25 per ticket. Please support our MMVS.
- Parish Lenten Retreat was held on March 16th- Rev. Fr. Tojo Baby led the Malayalam portion and Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John led the English portion.
- MOCF is collecting nonperishable food for their Food Drive.

Spiritual Organization Updates

Sunday School

- Sunday School began its Book Drive; collecting gently used Children and Young Adult Books for donation to the Philadelphia community.

Men's Form

- Men's Forum has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.
- Men's Forum Lenten Retreat was held on February 24th at church, led by our Clergy.

MMVS

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

Family and Youth Conference

- Registration has started for this year's conference.

CAYA

- February 3rd - monthly meeting held at church.

OCYM

- Sight and Sound Theater show, Daniel, October 19th.
- Open house meeting was held on February 2nd to discuss initiatives for the upcoming year.

FOCUS

- Monthly Meeting was held on February 23rd at the residence of Rajesh and Jenny Geevarghese.

MGOCSM

- MGOCSM meets monthly.

Women’s Winter Coat Collection

- Collecting for the Philadelphia Homeless Shelter, in conjunction with Drexel Medicine Charities.

Save the Dates

- **FOCUS and MGOCSM** are hosting a Young Parents Date Night, on Friday, April 5th from 6pm-9pm. We will be offering babysitting for children ages 5-13, to offer Young Parents a few hours to spend time together. We will have some activities and dinner for the kids during this time at the church. Please fill out the sign-up sheet, which will be shared on the church’s WhatsApp group, if you are interested.
- **Family Night** - June 1st from 3PM-7PM. Please contact our Program Coordinator, Sujith Thomas, for additional information.
- **OCYM** is planning a trip to Sight and Sound Theater to see the show, Daniel, on Saturday, October 19th.

Fasts & Feasts

| Date | Event |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| 3/24 | Palm Sunday |
| 3/25 | Feast of Annunciation (Holy Qurbana) |
| 3/27 | Pesaha |
| 3/29 | Good Friday |
| 3/30 | Holy Saturday |
| 3/31 | Easter |

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.

Member Announcements

Memorials

- ❖ P.M. George uncle of Mathew M George, Joyes M George and Suja Thomas
- ❖ Anil Abraham, cousin of Anitha Jossy
- ❖ Manju, cousin of Bivin Pulivelil
- ❖ Kunjunjamma Thomas, mother of Mary Rajan

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 may know, members can submit names of departed loved ones that need 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

February 2nd - Levi Jace Thomas was born to parents Jaison and Blessy Vakayil

Congratulations to the proud parents and grandparents!

March Wedding Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Zachariah Mar 4

Mr. & Mrs. Jenu Peter Alexander Mar 15

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 | |
| Kunjappy Koshy | Mar 3 | Pramod | | Alexander | Mar 25 |
| Abel G Panicker | Mar 3 | Sam Kurisinmoottil | Mar 17 | Susan Mathews | Mar 25 |
| Stacy M George | Mar 4 | Philip George | Mar 17 | Mathew Varghese | Mar 25 |
| Aswathi Eliz Jacob | Mar 4 | Nikhil M Philip | Mar 17 | Lucas Philip | Mar 26 |
| James C Peter | Mar 5 | Thejus Mathew | Mar 18 | Ashin Saju | Mar 26 |
| Elizabeth Kurian | Mar 5 | Varughese M M. | Mar 18 | Alvin V Jose | Mar 27 |
| Podiamma | | Soushya Varghese | Mar 18 | Daniel Yohannan | Mar 27 |
| 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 | | | Jacob Varghese | Mar 28 |
| Saji Abraham | Mar 8 | Josna Koshy | Mar 19 | Alen Saju | Mar 29 |
| Simon Cheeran Ittikuru | Mar 8 | Cherian V V. | Mar 19 | Raji K John | Mar 29 |
| Nissi Elizabeth Zachariah | Mar 8 | Nitha L Alex | Mar 20 | Arielle Geevarghese | Mar 29 |
| Nelson O Panicker | Mar 10 | Anita George | Mar 21 | Ammukutty Geevarghese | Mar 30 |
| Merlin Philip | Mar 12 | Mariakutty Thomas | Mar 21 | Lovina Maria Aji | Mar 30 |
| Binu K. Mathew | Mar 13 | Toby Johnes Fen | Mar 22 | Annamma Cherian | Mar 30 |
| Biju P. Varghese | Mar 13 | Rohan Philip Robin | Mar 22 | Paul Jacob | Mar 30 |
| Vincent Jacob | Mar 14 | Mary Kuriakose | Mar 23 | Daniel Thomas | Mar 30 |
| Shibin Mathew Koshy | Mar 15 | Elijah Binu | Mar 23 | Izabella Ann Philip | Mar 31 |
| Suresh Cherian | Mar 15 | Alex Pothen | Mar 23 | Raji George | Mar 31 |
| Bibin P. Baby | Mar 16 | Rajan C Padiyara | Mar 23 | | |



Sunday School News

Submitted by Steven Kurian, Principal

(Tel.: 267.450.6815, Email: stevekurian@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.