

# St. Thomas Day Supplement

## “MY LORD MY GOD”

(Fr. Jobson Kottapurath)



Among the ordinary readers of the Bible, St. Thomas, one among the ‘Twelve’ may be a ‘doubting Thomas’. For the theologians and ecclesiastical dignitaries he is equal to other disciples. For those who pledged to prolong the faction fights between the Malankara and Syrian

Orthodox Churches, the personality and apostleship of St Thomas is a crucial point of argument in the court procedures. But a re-reading of the encounter of St. Thomas with the Risen Lord, in light of the Indian Philosophical concepts about ‘knowing’ affirms that St. Thomas is a ‘Man of Faith’.

The proclamation, ‘My Lord and My God’, by St. Thomas, acclaims remarkable depth of his faith in the Risen Lord. His encounter with the Lord deepened this fathomless faith. Thus he became the proclaimer of faith. But on the way to this proclamation of faith we can identify three crucial stages of developments. It is described in the post Resurrection accounts in St. John 20:24-29.

Vs.24-25 explains the inner thirst of St. Thomas to see the Risen Lord. Some readers of this account use this passage to defile the personality of the apostle by cornering him as a doubting one. But we should see the immense interest in him to see the Lord. Jesus responded to this through his next appearance to the Twelve.

Vs: 26-29: St. Thomas has the uniqueness among the Twelve because he is the only one for who Jesus appeared with a personal touch and tint. Liturgical documents say that Jesus healed his fingers too.

According to the Indian Philosophical explanations on the concept of ‘knowing’ which leads to ‘faith’; ‘Pre-Knowledge’ or ‘information’ is a pre-requisite for absolute Knowing. St. Thomas received this pre-requisite (Vs.24-25) and obtained his passport of faith. In the second stage of ‘knowing’ we should ‘see’ what we hear. Jesus the Risen Lord appeared to St. Thomas and he saw Jesus {Vs.27}. This can be explained as a mystical or physical sight. The Apostle’s faith was strengthened by the sight. Finally, faith by knowing attains its blossoms through ‘touch’. The command of our Lord to see his hands and touch his side fulfilled the faith of St Thomas and he cried out ‘My Lord and My God’(Vs.28). Thus the faith of St Thomas evolved by information and strengthened by sight was fulfilled by touch. This faith empowered him to witness Jesus by his martyrdom.

In the feast of St Thomas, to deepen our faith, read the Bible to know God. See this God through worship and touch him in regular Holy Communion. Thus let us make our lives worthy to witness Jesus. May the Prayers and Blessings of St. Thomas help us to enrich our faith.

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## Welcome to our Special Guest

### Honorable Mayor Michael Nutter

The St. Thomas parish is highly honored by the presence of Honorable Mayor Michael Nutter on the occasion of St. Thomas Day Celebrations.

#### Mayor Nutter: A Brief Profile

The honorable **Mayor**



**M**ichael A. Nutter is a lifetime Philadelphian, with an accomplished career of public service, business and financial administration. Mayor Nutter served as a City Councilman for nearly 15 years representing Philadelphia’s Fourth District-one

of the city’s largest-encompassing the communities of Wynnefield, Overbrook, Roxborough, Manayunk, East Falls, Mt. Airy, and parts of North and West Philadelphia. He has also served as Democratic Ward Leader of the 52nd Ward since 1990.

During his time in Council, the Mayor worked to lower taxes for Philadelphians. He engineered groundbreaking ethics reform legislation, and led efforts to pass a citywide smoking ban, among countless economic and legislative measures to improve the quality of life for people and businesses in the 4th District and citywide.

In July of 2006, he resigned his City Council seat to run in Philadelphia’s mayoral election. On November 6th, 2007, Mayor Nutter was overwhelmingly elected Mayor of the City of Philadelphia. He was officially sworn in as the 98th Mayor of Philadelphia on January 7th, 2008.

Mayor Nutter serves on the Board of City Trusts, managing the City’s charitable assets, supporting institutions such as Girard College and Wills Eye Hospital, as well as administering public school scholarship funds. Before pursuing his career in public service, Mayor Nutter worked as an investment manager at one of the nation’s leading minority-owned investment banking and brokerage firms. While in the private sector, he attended numerous City Council meetings. This exposure, coupled with Michael’s passion for Philadelphia led to his change in career, and commitment to public service.

Mayor Nutter grew up in West Philadelphia, at 55th and Larchwood Avenue, where he lived with his parents, sister and grandmother. Michael is grateful to his family for instilling in him a strong belief in the value of education and community service. He received an academic scholarship to St. Joseph's Preparatory High School, where he graduated in 1975. He was enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania,

and graduated from the Wharton School of Business in 1979.

He resides in Wynnefield with his wife, Lisa, and daughter, Olivia, who attends a Philadelphia Public School. His son, Christian, lives and works in New Jersey. Michael is a member of the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in West Philadelphia.

Source: <http://www.nutter2007.com/index.php?/about/>

### **A Brief History of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Indian Orthodox Church)**

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was founded by St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, who came to India in A.D. 52. At least from the fourth century the Indian Church entered into a close relationship with the Persian or East Syrian Church. From the Persians, the Indians inherited East Syrian language and liturgies and gradually came to be known as Syrian Christians.

In the sixteenth century Roman Catholic missionaries came to Kerala. They tried to unite the Syrian Christians to the Roman Catholic Church and this led to a split in the community. Those who accepted Catholicism are the present Syro-Malabar Catholics. Later Western Protestant missionaries came to Kerala and worked among Syrian Christians; that also created certain splits in the community. In the seventeenth century the Church came to a relationship with the Antiochene Church which again caused splits. As a result of this relationship the Church received West Syrian liturgies and practices. The Church entered into a new phase of its history by the establishment of the Catholicate in 1912.

At present the Church is using the West Syrian liturgy. The faith of the Church is that which was established by the three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (A.D. 325), Constantinople (A.D. 381) and Ephesus (A.D.431).

The Church is in communion with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches namely, Antiochene, Alexandrian, Armenian and Ethiopian/Eritrean Orthodox Churches. The Church is in good ecumenical relationship with the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. The Church is a member of the world Council of Churches from its inception. At present the Church is having a population over 2 millions with 24 dioceses all over the world.

The American Diocese was formed in 1979. At present there are more than 80 parishes under the bishop of the American Diocese whose headquarters is in New York. The present Metropolitan is His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas and the Assistant Metropolitan is His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos.

### **Who are the Indian Orthodox?**

*(H. G. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios)*

First, both Roman Catholics and Protestants are Western Christian groups. The Orthodox Church is not Western Christianity. Eastern in origin, it was from the beginning open to influences from all cultures. In the first century, Christianity was primarily an Asian-African religion. Only by the 4th century did the Roman Empire become increasingly Christian. The Strength of Christianity in the early period was in Palestine, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Libya.

Only 2 out of 37 Apostolic Churches are strictly Western. If Western Greece and Cyprus are also regarded as Europe, then nine Churches are in Europe, while 28 are in Asia and Africa. The Orthodox Church claims to be the true successor of all these Apostolic Churches, including the Italian Churches, which used Greek as their language of worship in that century. So the Orthodox Church is neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant. It regards itself as the true and faithful successor of the ancient Apostolic Church, and regards the Western or Roman Catholic Church as a group that broke off and went astray from the true tradition of the Christian Church. The Protestant

Churches broke off much later (in the 16th century and after) from the Roman Catholic. The Orthodox are today in two families -- the Oriental Orthodox family, to which the Indian Orthodox Church belongs, and the Byzantine Orthodox family, which is four times as large. The Oriental Orthodox family has five Churches -- India, Armenia, Syria, Egypt and Ethiopia - three in Asia and two in Africa. Total membership is over 25 millions.

The Byzantine Orthodox family has over 100 million members -- in Greece, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Western Europe, America, Australia and so on. Their members are mostly Slavic, Greek or Roman in origin. But they are also regarded as Eastern, though they are a bit less Asian-African. Thus the Indian Orthodox Church is a strictly Asian-African Church, an Apostolic Church in continuity with the ancient West Asian Apostolic Church. This Church was established in India in the very first century by the Apostle St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. It is one of the 40 or so ancient Apostolic Churches of the world.