



## St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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### ***Vicar's Message:***

#### **THE GREAT LENT**

We are all now mentally ready to begin our normal Lenten season. Lenten season is very special for the Orthodox Christians. In these days most of the non-Orthodox Churches do not have such stringent observance of the Lent like the

Orthodox do. Lent has become a symbol of Orthodoxy. Presumably stringent lent observance is the gift of the monastic community. Nowadays even the common believer has absorbed this culture because they found it a very beneficial practice.

Observance of lent contributes to healthy living. Eating habit is regulated with certain restrictions. Those who take healthy living seriously, will take lent seriously. It has been already proved through scientific studies that eating habit can contribute to physical health and consequently to mental and spiritual health. It is mutually complementary that both physical and spiritual health comes with discipline at heart. There was a time when non-Orthodox people used to ridicule lent observance but not anymore. Especially people who are exposed to the western food habits are now convinced that the old system of lent observance has not only physical advantage but also spiritual benefits. Hope this lent will help for a healthy living.

Lenten time is also a time for increased spiritual activities such as Bible studies, retreats, confession, different office of prayers etc. We can do this at home or at our fellowships. Most of the Orthodox believers enhance their prayer life during Lenten season. In fact lent is a great solace for all of us.

In addition, Lenten time is also a time for increased humanitarian activity. The very purpose of regulating food is not to save money for us but to help the poor. A kind heart is not an automatic habit. We have to cultivate it. Lenten time helps us ponder upon the needs of other have-nots and share that which God has given us.

With all food restrictions, spiritual and humanitarian activities etc. one should be able to acquire a great sense of repentance. Change at heart is absolutely essential to make the rest of the activities acceptable to God. We should be able to change our evil habits, hard

heartedness, filthy life style, disrespect for others, dirty talks, unkind behavior etc. Only then the lent will yield any good in our life. Hope we will all benefit from this Great Lent.

#### **His Grace Pathrose Mar Osthathios**

The sacred memory of the late H.G. Mar Osthathios was on February 2<sup>nd</sup> the day of the Temple Entry of our Lord. The saintly Mar Osthathios stands out as the only bishop of the Indian Orthodox Church who created history for the Indian Orthodox Church by giving dignity and status to the outcaste. HG's missionary work among the destitute is unparalleled. Bishop is the physical presence of Jesus Christ in the world according to Orthodox teaching. His Grace proved that he is the physical presence of Christ among the needy. In these times HG is a challenge to many believers as well because we hardly see people wanting to follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ. May his memory inspire us!

Fr. M. K. Kuriakose.

### **For the Anniversary of Our Parish Reorganization**

Regi Mathai

February 18<sup>th</sup> is indeed an anniversary of our parish to be celebrated and cherished. February 18<sup>th</sup> symbolizes the rebirth of our parish, which to this day is still continuing to grow and develop. In 1996, a small group of people came together in the small chapel of Cardinal Dougherty High School, a place which we would call home for the next eight years. In about eight months, we are able to conduct and attend worship because we were able to forgive and forget the past and trust the new priest, who was sent to our midst by the grace of God. We looked forward to the future of our parish with new eyes and hopefully awaiting His mercies. At the early meetings of our parish, a decision was made that our congregation would be open to all who are faithful in God, with no regard to nationality; our goal was to welcome everyone just as the United States welcomed our community. We also made a decision to co-exist in concord with other Orthodox parishes and churches of other denominations.

We are much grateful to Cardinal Dougherty High School authorities especially Rev. Fr. Paul Kennedy for their kindness.

While we conducted service at Cardinal Dougherty we struggled in many areas but we never came short or wanted for anything. Soon after conducting service, we decided to look for our own facility. The desire to have our own facility grew and became a dream we hoped to see happen in this lifetime. The membership grew and those who became a part of our parish did so harmoniously and prayerfully. As our members grew successful in his grace, they prayerfully donated what they had or could afford with a competitive mindset. We fundraised through various means and our community contributed graciously.

What you see today in our parish, is solely because of the grace of God. The credit goes to all the members of our parish, including those from the very beginning and those who have joined along the way. Our accomplishments are a result of the continuous prayers of our members and the incessant mercies of God. As for me, I am glad to be a part of this parish and a tool in God's hand. I am confident that God will continue to bless our parish with success in spreading His glory. Let us continue growing with prayer and devotion for our parish.

### Parish News

New Members: We are glad to welcome the newest additions to our parish family:

1. Saju Paul, wife Anamma, children Alen and Ashin.
2. Finney Philip, wife Rekha.

Obituary: Mrs. Thankamma Abraham mother of Mr. Thomas Abraham passed away in India on January 21<sup>st</sup>. Prayer was held at his residence.

Engagement: Lajy Raju s/o Raju Samuel and Saramma Raju, and Anu Mathew d/o of late Mathew Ponnachan and Saramma Ponnachan were engaged on January 19<sup>th</sup> at the ceremony held at our parish auditorium. Congratulations to Lajy and Anu.

Finny Philip, a member of our church, left to Afghanistan to serve the U. S Air force. The parish is proud of him. Keep him in our prayers.

Donations: John Mathai (Sam) has donated a chandelier for our Chapel. Thank you for the beautiful gift.

### Prayer meetings

Evening prayers will be held on **all days** at church during the Great Lent. During the lent season, Saturday evening prayers will be also at church except in cases of emergency.

Please contact **Jose K. John**, Prayer meeting Coordinator (Tel: 484.744.5541), to schedule Prayer Meeting in your home.

### Library News

Our Library is now fully operational. Software has been installed recently to automate the smooth check-out and return of books. The library hours are from 12PM to 1PM on Sundays. Members please return the books within two weeks. You must renew your books if you need more than two weeks.

## Birthdays in February



### **Name Birthday**

Saramma Thomas	
Sajan Benny	2/1
Jessly Alex	2/1
Manju Ansey Jacob	2/1
Bessie Mathew	2/5
Joelyne Jacob	2/5
Sheena Vaidian	2/7
Jaime M George	2/9
Thomas Thomas	2/10
Melissa Alice Abraham	2/10
Aleyamma Varghese	2/10
Gibson Thomas George	2/10
Paul C John	2/13
Alex P Symon	2/13
Shibu Thomas	2/14
Jiju Alex	2/14
Justin K Jiji	2/14
Jibin K Jiji	2/14
Ammini Rajan	2/14
Saramma Varghese	2/14
Sam Suman Nuthalapaty	2/15
Mary Daniel	2/17
Jincy Mathew	2/17
Milly Philip	2/17
Teena Prince	2/18
Maya Kappil	2/18
Jacob P Chacko	2/21
Sophy Varkey	2/21
Mariamamma Cherian	2/21
Leelamma Rajan	2/22
Subi Mathew	2/22
Jeffy Rajan	2/22
Sheela Mathew Vaidyan	2/23
Binny Cherian	2/25
Cherian Varghese	2/26
Joby George	2/27
Rinju Jacob	2/28
Rinu J Gollapudi	2/28
Susan Abraham George	2/28

*We wish them all a Very Happy Birthday!*



## Wedding Anniversaries in February

<u>Name</u>	<u>Anniversary date</u>
Mrs. & Mr. Paul C. John	2/1
Mrs. & Mr. Koshy Daniel	2/1
Mrs. & Mr. Rajan Padiyara	2/3
Mrs. & Mr. Jacob M Zachariah	2/4
Mrs. & Mr. George Varghese	2/5
Mrs. & Mr. V. V. Cherian	2/7
Mrs. & Mr. Ron Philip	2/8
Mrs. & Mr. Jiju Alex	2/12
Mrs. & Mr. Mathew A.P George	2/15
Mrs. & Mr. Mathew N K.	2/16
Mrs. & Mr. Mammen M Philip	2/19
Mrs. & Mr. Jacob Cherian	2/21
Mrs. & Mr. Abraham Varghese	2/22
Mrs. & Mr. George Joseph	2/25
Mrs. & Mr. Jose K John	2/29

*We wish them all a Very Happy Anniversary!*

### News from Spiritual Organizations

#### Sunday School News

**Mid term exams** for Sunday school is on **February 17th**. Parents please take the initiative to prepare your children for their exams.

**Coin collections:** The Sunday school has reactivated coin collections during the general session on Sundays. Parents, please encourage your children by sending in coins with your children. This will teach their awareness to give for the needy and poor.

#### Couples' Forum

"The family that prays together stays together." The Couples Forum is going strong with 50 to 60 members meeting every other Sunday after refreshments. The current topic the forum is discussing is the importance of family prayer. Mrs. Susan Mathew presented the theme and a discussion followed. At the next meeting on February 10, Santhosh Mathew will be presenting this topic and the forum will discuss this matter further. Please contact Thomas George (Tel: 215.518.4298) to find out about the current activities of the forum. It was decided to purchase copies of "Book of Common Prayer".

#### Men's Forum

Please contact N. V. Thomas (Tel: 215-552-9989) to find out about the current activities of the forum. The meetings are held on every Sunday after the Holy Qurbana in the church auditorium. Main activities include the *Divyabodhanam Study Series*.

#### Martha Mariam Samajam (MMS)

MMS meets alternate Sundays at the church auditorium after Holy Communion for prayer, Bible Study, learning songs and more. The office bearers are Secretary: Achamma Kurian, Treasurer: Annamma Geevarghese, Asst Secretary: Remani George, Asst Treasurer: Jessy Jacob.

#### MGOCSM

MGOCSM organized an amazing Mega Talent show at our church. The Christmas and New Year Celebrations of the MGOCSM Northeast Region of the diocese was held at our church under the leadership of the Philadelphia Region MGOCSM units. About 400 youths from various churches were present. Their performance was Phenomenal. Our children conducted the show very efficiently. Many of our church members helped them in various areas.

MGOCSM will be having a Bible study every other Friday at our Church. Regular activities include Fellowship meetings on Sundays, and Bible Study. The office bearers are Vice President: Robin Raju, Secretary: Divya Panicker, Treasurer: Georgie George, Assistant Secretary: Blessy George, Assistant Treasurer: Susan Chacko.

#### OCYM

OCYM conducted a membership drive in January, and more than 40 members joined. This is a great encouragement for the office bearers. The organization is planning a variety of activities. In February, we are conducting a series of Faith Study sessions at church. OCYM meets on alternate Sundays after Holy Communion. The office bearers are Vice President: Alex Symon, Secretary: Jerin Juby, Treasurer: Anoop George, Jnt Secretary: Anish Thomas, Asst Treasurer: Abraham Thomas, Program Coordinator: Jose K. John.

#### Upcoming Events

##### Bake Sale

MGOCSM is organizing a Bake Sale on February 3rd. Homely food will be served fresh! The proceeds will be used for their activities.

##### Faith Study Series

The OCYM is organizing a Faith Study Series during the Saturdays on the lent season after the Evening Prayer. There will be 6 sessions from Feb 9<sup>th</sup> to Mar 15<sup>th</sup>. Our

Achen will be taking classes on various topics related to our faith. Check the flyer for more details.

***MGOCSM Lenten Retreat***

The MGOCSM Philadelphia and Maryland Region are organizing a **Lenten Retreat** at St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church, Mascher Street, on Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> from 8:30AM to 2PM. This Year's Retreat will be led by the renowned Mr. Tenny Thomas M. Phil, Oxford University. The theme is "Way to the Cross".

***Parish Retreat***

The Annual Parish Retreat is scheduled on March 1<sup>st</sup>, Saturday. Please be available on this day to renew yourself during the lent season with the word of God. Rev. Fr. Daniel Thomas, Virginia, is leading the retreat. Check the flyer for more details.

***Women's World Day of Prayer***

Women's World Day of Prayer will be held on Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup> in our church at 10:00 AM. All women are encouraged to attend.

***Basketball Tournament***

Our Church girls Basket ball team will be participating in a girls Basket ball Tournament to be held at Downingtown on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Following are selected to the team: Susan Mathew, Blessy George, Betsy George, Susan Chacko, Sherin Koshy, Christina Thomas, Melissa Thomas, Anu Thomas, Teena Prince. Rajesh Geevarghese will be the coach and Robin Raju and Jacob Chacko will assist Rajesh. All are encouraged to go and support our team. For directions

<http://www.ascensionmtc.org/allstars/details.htm>

***Family and Youth Conference***

The kick off for the 2008 Family & Youth Conference registration was held at our church on Jan 5th. Our Metropolitans His Grace Mar Barnabas and Mar Nicolovas were present for this event. The Family & Youth Conference is from Wednesday July 16th through Sunday July 19th at the **Clarion Hotel & Convention Center** in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey. The Theme for this year is "Do not repay evil for evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:15). The Key note speaker is Rev. Dr. Sabu Kuriakose (Professor, Orthodox Theological seminary & Principal Secretary of His Holiness, the Catholicos). Family Conference Secretary, Mrs. Lovely Varghese visited our church on Sunday January 27<sup>th</sup> and provided detailed information of the Conference and invited each and every one to the Conference. Please contact Rev Dn. Daniel Yohannan for forms and other details.

**Calendar of Events**

Feb 3rd	MGOCSM Bake Sale
Feb. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Great lent Begins
Feb 7	FOCUS Fellowship at church
Feb. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Faith Study Series 1 <sup>st</sup> Session
Feb. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Faith Study Series 2 <sup>nd</sup> Session
Feb. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday School Mid-Term Exams
Feb. 23rd	Faith Study Series 3 <sup>rd</sup> Session
Feb. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Mid Lent: Holy Qurbana, 6:30 p.m.
Mar. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Annual Parish Retreat 9:30 a.m. Faith Study Series 4 <sup>th</sup> Session 7:00 pm

**Important Liturgical Days**

Feb. 2nd	Mayaltho(Our Lord's Temple Entry) H.G. Pathrose Mar Osthathios
Feb. 3rd	Pethurtha of the Great Lent. Miracle at Cana
Feb. 4th	Great Lent Begins
Feb. 10th	Second Sunday (Lepers' Sunday)
Feb. 17th	Third Sunday (Pralytic Sunday)
Feb. 24th	Fourth Sunday (Canaanite Woman)
Feb. 27th	Fourth Wednesday (Mid-Lent) Holy Qurbana 6:30 p.m.

**Do you have an Announcement?**

Please submit your announcements or articles to the Editor Jerin Juby (e-mail: [jerinjuby@gmail.com](mailto:jerinjuby@gmail.com)) or to the Secretary Mathew Samuel (e-mail: [msamue2000@yahoo.com](mailto:msamue2000@yahoo.com)) on or before Sunday, February 24, 2008.

**From the Desk of the Secretary**

Dear Believers in Christ,

January started as a strong month for our church. The external evidence is strongly confirmed by members showing the enthusiasm to attend church and various spiritual organizations. The internal evidence is that our church has set to seek first the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Great Lent begins on February 4th. I encourage all our members to be the part of this. It is time to prepare our self by renewing our mind, heart and deeds in conformity with Christ and His teachings. More over, this is the time for us to return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

This Divine derived energy keeps us going. Let us continue our race together to reach our destination. May God bless us.

Yours in Christ, Mathew Samuel, Secretary  
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