



# Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Inc.

1009 Unruh Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19111

Tel. 215-342-1500, Fax 215-342-2700

[www.stthomasphiladelphia.org](http://www.stthomasphiladelphia.org)

January 2008

NEWSLETTER

Vol. XII

No. 01



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

### **Into the New Year**

Praise be to the Lord who let us into another year. The New Year has just set in. Our parish is in the process of the administrative transition. The new Managing Committee has taken over. The new officers have started their debut. On the New Year Day the community accepted the call for unity and energized activities for 2008. One thing is true, that some of our members are going to be right in front to carry our mission as a parish. I have been seeing that team spirit for the last 12 years. Their dedication did not change in doing things or giving to the parish. When many new families joined us we got more such dedicated workers. I am confident that God is pleased with those who work up front to make the parish run smoothly. All those who worked for the parish are being rewarded some way or the other. Each year God provides a new set of dedicated persons. Thanks be to God!

What does the future entail?

We will know what do, if we know what our mission is! Very few people ponder upon the question, "what is the mission of a parish". Let me try to answer that briefly. This is my own personal reflection on the mission of a parish.

The mission of a parish should not be different from the mission of the Church. The mission of the Church is nothing but to continue the purpose or the goal of incarnation. The Church that is the extended Body of Christ should continue the mission of the Lord which He inaugurated for us. The Lord wants everyone of us to grow to that stature. In Ephesians 4:15 we read St. Paul's words, "speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ." The Church will not be fully grown till the time of the His Second Coming. This growth is a process that we all are trying to be part of. From ages unto ages this

attempt would continue. Our human frailties impede the growth from time to time. Different persons coming into leadership of the Church understand this mission differently and therefore, there will be a lot of variety of items we face from time to time. Depending on the perception ability of human, the Holy Spirit will guide to the Truth. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). Therefore Jesus makes it clear that the coming generation may do even greater things. The greatest is yet to come.

What is this growth called? This is the Orthodox dictum of "deification" or "theosis" or divinization". Like St. Athanasius said, "Son of man became Son of God so that sons men may become Sons of God." In Matthew 5:28 our Lord said, "be ye perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect". Christ goal is nothing less than that. That is why our life in this world is a tough one. To grow to the stature of Christ is a hard prospect.

Many people fumble on these words. Often people think it is not humanly possible and therefore, most of them retreat from the attempt to grow into the fullness of Christ. We as a parish should understand this as our fundamental goal in life. In order to fulfill this goal we should work together in mutual consideration, care and love. Our activities should be geared towards this goal. Jesus said, (Matthew 6:33) "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." There is the promise from our Lord, "that which is impossible for humans is possible for God" and "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." We have nothing to be afraid. Let us make the year 2008 a meaningful one.

Wish you all a Happy, Peaceful, Rewarding and Prosperous NEW YEAR!!!

Fr. M. K. Kuriakose

## Highlights from Activities in December

### **Christmas Caroling**

From December 1 until December 23, 2007, our caroling team visited the houses of our members and spread the Christmas message. It was a joyous and blessed experience for all the participants. We thank all the families that welcomed the carolers with their warm spirits and refreshments. Thanks go to Binu Mathew, Vice President of OCYM for his leadership and all the drivers who drove the vans.

### **Christmas-Eve Program**

December 24<sup>th</sup>, for about three hours, our children and adults presented a variety of programs to enlighten and entertain the audience. The highlights include nativity show and short plays by Sunday School students, social drama by OCYM, biblical drama by Martha Mariam Samajam, dance by MGOCSM etc. Jose K. John served as the event Coordinator.

### **Office bearers for 2008**

The Annual General Body Meeting held on Sunday, December 16, 2007 elected the following members unanimously:

Secretary: Mathew Samuel

Treasurer: Brown Varghese

Board of Trustees: Sam Jacob Kurisinmoottil  
(2008-2010)

Managing Committee Members:

Roy Chacko

Chacko P. Chacko

Regi Mathai

Thomas George

Varghese P. Abraham

Koshy Daniel

Robin Raju

Oommen Kappil

Joseph Vakkayil

Binu Mathew

Vattethu George

Geevarghese K. John

N. V. Thomas

Auditor: Alex Daniel

Prayer Meeting Coordinator: Jose K. John

Currently serving Board of Trustees:

Mohan Samuel (2006-2008)

Idiculla Thomas (2007-2009)

## Clergy Visits

Rev. Fr. Laby P. George, December 2, 2007

Rev. Fr. N.S. Varghese, December 9, 2007

We thank the reverend clergy for their friendly visit.

### **Charity Contributions**

The Managing Committee recently evaluated the applications for financial aid from several applicants.

Considering the financial hardships, we gave a total of \$ 2500.00 as educational and/or sick aid to four individuals in India.

In addition, we considered the requests from two churches in Sulthan Bathery and Idukki dioceses which are financially very poor. We donated \$ 2500 to St. Johns Church in Moolankavu, Sultan Battery, and \$2500 to Mar Gregorios Church in Chettukuzhy, Idukki. The Chettukuzhy Church, which comprised mostly of farmers, couldn't afford to replace a badly needed roof. When the plight of this church and many other churches in the Idukki Diocese was recently reported in ICON (Indian Christian Orthodox Network), one of its members offered to donate a matching contribution of \$ 0.50 for every dollar donated to this cause. When this person was informed of our parish's decision to help the Chettukuzhy Church, he sent us a matching contribution of \$ 1250 as he promised to ICON. So a total of \$ 3750 was donated to the Idukki Church. The member who donated \$1250 happens to be a former member of our own parish, who doesn't want to disclose his name. We thank him for his generosity. With our sponsorship, the Chettukuzhy church could replace its roof. Our donation will serve as a Christmas gift for that parish. The St. Johns Orthodox Church, Moolankavu, in Wayanad is a poor parish of very few members. Soon after a the Patriarch faction moved out a major portion of the membership left and the left over people held on to their commitment to the Orthodox Church. Their old church collapsed and it was a huge challenge to that parish with very few members to erect a church for them. Now it will be possible for them to complete the construction. May God bless all those who contributed generously to the Charity Fund.

*Note: Visit [www.icon.net.in](http://www.icon.net.in) to read more about ICON Charities.*

**Our Parish Responds to  
Rev. Fr. T. J. Joshua's Request**

Recently, Dr. Mrs. Mariamma Joshua, wife of respected Joshua achen, and the driver of her car passed away in a tragic accident in India. They were on their way to the airport to pick up Achen. The driver belonged to a very needy family. His first child was born just days after his death. After Achen's request was read in our parish, many members volunteered to help the driver's widow. Thanks to everyone's generosity, a total of \$ 2400.00 was donated to this family.



**Birthdays in  
January**

Name	Birthday
Abraham Thomas	1/2
Soumya Mariam Thomas	1/2
Roy Philip Chacko	1/4
Ron Philip	1/5
Taina I Daniel	1/5
Aleena Elizabeth Peediyekkal	1/5
Renju Joy	1/5
Diya Sara Thomas	1/6
Deepthi Cherian	1/6
Anila Thomas	1/8
Mathew Varghese	1/8
Mini Ninan	1/9
Eapen George	1/10
Divya Sajjan Thomas	1/12
Jennie Philip	1/12
Joshua M George	1/13
Carolyn Thomas	1/13
Jenisa Jacob	1/13
Shelby K Renji	1/14
Ramany George	1/15
Allen Abraham	1/16
Lijy Raju	1/16
Binsy E Mathew	1/17
Mammen M Philip	1/18
Sanju John	1/19
Deepthy Panicker	1/19
Mary Mathew	1/21
Shaun M Sydney	1/21
Ann Skaria	1/22
Anu Mathew	1/23
Shannon Ann George	1/23
Sunil Thomas	1/23
Alwin T Raju	1/23

Betsy Koshy	1/26
Saramma Thomas	1/27
Susan Mathew	1/28
Mathew Thankachan	1/28
John Polayil Abraham	1/30

*We wish them all a Very Happy Birthday!*

**New baby**

Aju Jacob and Anu are the proud parents of a baby girl named Sophia.

Shibu Thomas and Susan are the proud parents of a baby boy named Josiah.

Binny Cherian and Mercy are the proud parents of a baby boy named Noel.

Mathew Jacob and Sophy are the proud parents of a baby boy named Noel.

*We congratulate the new parents*



**Wedding  
Anniversaries  
in January**

Name	Anniversary date
Mrs. & Mr. Mathew Varghese	1/13
Mrs. & Mr. Mathew Thankachan	1/6
Mrs. & Mr. Robin Varughese	1/1
Mrs. & Mr. Mathew V Thomas	1/6
Mrs. & Mr. Philip Varghese	1/18
Mrs. & Mr. George G Mampallil	1/14
Mrs. & Mr. Geevarghese K John	1/9
Mrs. & Mr. Thomas Abraham	1/22
Mrs. & Mr. Ninan Mathai	1/9
Mrs. & Mr. Jacob P Abraham	1/17
Mrs. & Mr. Varghese Jacob	1/5
Mrs. & Mr. Mathew Samuel	1/5
Mrs. & Mr. Thomas George	1/14
Mrs. & Mr. Oommen George	1/11
Mrs. & Mr. Rajan T Samuel	1/1
Mrs. & Mr. Sam Jacob Kurisinmoottil	1/4

*We wish them all a Very Happy Anniversary.*

**Prayer meeting**

Prayer meeting was held at the residence of Thomas Abraham, on Friday, Dec. 14, 2007. It was the first

death anniversary of Mrs. Thomas Abraham who was one of the most active members of our parish. Let's hope that her soul is with the angels in paradise.

Please contact **Jose K. John**, Prayer meeting Coordinator (Tel.: 610-543-1937) to schedule Prayer Meeting in your home.

### **Welcome New Members!**

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

1. Prince John Puliprath, wife Molly, children Teena and Tibin, previously from Sharjah parish.
2. Varghese Panicker, wife Synu and son Aben, previously from Kundara St. Thomas.
3. Jiju Alex, wife Bindhu, children Justin and Jibin, previously from St. Gregorios, Kizhakketheruvu, Kottarakkara.

We congratulate them on their decision to become a part of this blessed parish.

### **Parish Directory**

On Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, our Parish Directory was released by our Achen, giving a copy to Rajan Padiyara, Office Manager. The names of all the members in each family were included in this Directory. During the process, our Parish database also got updated with accurate information. Several members of our parish including Brown Varghese, Alex Daniel, Sam Jacob Kurisinmoottil, Jacob M. Zachariah and Abraham T. George helped with inserting advertisements. Thanks to their support, the Directory was printed at no cost to our Parish. Paul John, Assistant Secretary of our Parish did a commendable job in updating the database and printing the Directory. Thanks go to everyone who cooperated with this endeavor.

### **News from Spiritual Organizations**

#### **Couples' Forum**

Please contact Binny Cherian (Tel: 914.239.3279) to find out about the current activities of the forum.

#### **Sunday School**

In a brief ceremony held in our Church on December 23, 2007, Rev. Dn. Daniel Yohannan formally assumed the responsibilities as the Headmaster. Former Headmaster, Mr. Ninan Mathai also was present at the ceremony.

### **Martha Mariam Samajam (MMS)**

MMS meets every other Sunday after Holy Communion for prayer, Bible Study, learning songs and more. Please contact Mariamma Joseph, Secretary (Tel.: 215.744.3457) for details.

### **MGOCSM**

**Annual Election** of the Office bearers will be held on Sunday, January 6, 2008. All eligible members are requested to attend.

**Regular activities** include Fellowship meetings on Sundays, and Bible Study. Please contact Jacob Chacko, Secretary (Tel.: 215.869.8631) for more information.

### **Orthodox Christian Youth Movement (OCYM)**

**Annual Election** of the Office bearers was held on Sunday, December 16, 2007. The new office bearers are:

Alex Symon : Vice-President  
Jerin Juby : Secretary  
Anoop George: Treasurer  
Jose K. John : Program Coordinator

OCYM meets regularly after Holy Communion on Sundays. Please contact Jerin Juby, Secretary (Tel.: 215.478.1090) or Alex Symon, Vice-President (Tel.: 215.947.1485) to know more about its activities.

#### **New Member Orientation**

Fourteen new families joined our parish family during the year 2007 taking membership. A formal ceremony was held on Friday, January 4, 2007 to welcome and honor the new members. The hosts included Managing Committee members (2007 and 2008), members of the Board of Trustees and representatives of the spiritual organizations of our parish. Several members shared their experiences and blessings while the new members spoke of their expectations.

#### **Do you have an Announcement?**

Please submit your announcements or articles to the Secretary Mathew Samuel (e-mail: [msamuel2000@yahoo.com](mailto:msamuel2000@yahoo.com)) before Sunday, January 27, 2008.

### Calendar of Events

01/04/08	New Members' Orientation
01/05/08	MGOCSM Talent Show

### Important Liturgical Days

01/01/08	New Year Day Circumcision of the Lord Memory of St. Basil & St. Gregory
01/06/08	Baptism of the Lord (Epiphany)
01/13/08	First Sunday after Epiphany All Departed Church Fathers
01/14-17/08	Three-day Lent
01/20/08	Memory of All Departed Clergy
01/27/08	All Departed Souls
02/02/08	Temple Entry of the Lord
02/03/08	Great Lent Begins: Cana Sunday

### From the Desk of the Secretary 2007

Dear Friends,

It's been indeed an honor to serve as the Secretary of our blessed parish for the year 2007. God doesn't necessarily choose the most qualified one, but He qualifies the chosen one. I thank God Almighty for guiding me and blessing me to carry out my responsibilities. Thanks to His blessings, and the wholehearted cooperation of each one of you, we had a very successful year. I thank Achen for his dynamic, positive and visionary leadership which has been a source of inspiration and strength. I gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and support of the Board of Trustees, the Managing Committee members, Sub-committee members and the office bearers of the spiritual organizations.

Due to the selfless hard work and cooperation of all the members, we have made tremendous progress during the past years. We still have more work to do. I'm sure that the new team of office bearers under the able leadership of Mathew Samuel and Brown

Varghese could lead our Church to a better tomorrow.

I thank Aju Jacob and Anuj Thomas for working behind the scenes to publish the newsletters on time. On behalf of Roy Chacko, the Treasurer, the Board of Trustees and the Managing Committee members, I thank each and every one of you for your involvement and support. May God bless each one of us. Let His name be glorified.

Wishing you all peace, good health and happiness in the New Year,

Yours In Christ,

Oommen Kappil  
215.337.8125 (Home)  
267.902.8500 (Cell)  
[okappil@yahoo.com](mailto:okappil@yahoo.com)

### From the Desk of the Secretary 2008

Dear believers,

I take this opportunity to thank the Lord God Almighty and each one of you for electing me as the secretary for 2008. God has been directing our church all these years, and I believe that He will continue to lead us in the right path. I earnestly desire to do my best for our church, that God may be glorified.

In 2008, I firmly believe that God is intimately involved in all that is happening in our church, His covenant people. He is a mighty God worthy of undivided loyalty, for we would have been nothing apart from His divine mercies. Let us constantly pray as the hand of the Lord is with us, and in the coming year the Gift of the Holy Spirit will be upon our church, turning many to the Lord.

Mathew Samuel  
Parish secretary 2008