



## St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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### *Vicar's Message:*

#### **His Grace Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios**

After a few weeks' struggle with life, His Grace passed on to be with the Lord. To die in harness is a blessing. Often workers who die on the

line of duty are considered very special. His Grace in his eighties was still on the run to fulfill his duties in Europe. His Grace had seldom time for rest like most of the priests in the USA. His Grace was teaching at Alma College and all weekends were busy visiting parishes and parishioners all over the world. His Grace was a bishop on the wings. It is amazing that His Grace had so much energy powered by the Lord. His Grace was just one of the kind. A rare personality! Mar Makarios is Mar Makarios. There is no one else to compare him with. If one wants to compare, we have to use many personalities. It is best to say that Mar Makarios was unique.

As the founder of the American Diocese and Canada, U.K. and Europe Diocese, His grace has a special place in the Indian Orthodox Church as the bishop for the West. Having learned both Western and Eastern spirituality to a great extent, His Grace was able to express it on any stage. In most of the meetings that Indians organize to which non-Indians are invited, His Grace made sure that the message of India is passed on to them. That too His Grace had the caliber to use the right kind of humor to relieve the boredom.

Being a courageous bishop, His Grace did many things with determination. No one could change his mind if he is convinced of certain things. In the matter of the freedom of the Indian Church from the Syrian yoke, the mission of the Indian Orthodox Church to American people (black or white), the plight of the youth in America, and many such significant factors, His Grace maintained distinct but clear opinion. His Grace had the courage

to hold on to his convictions. Most of our people believe that our mission in America is simply to the Malayalee Orthodox and we have nothing to do with the rest of the world. Mar Makarios opened up the Indian Orthodox doors to the Americans by starting the Spokane Mission. No true Church can hide its mission in the name of nationality, color, caste, or language. Apropos to Your Grace!

The American Diocese owes His Grace quite a lot. Not simply being in America but being the person instrumental in acquiring the concept of "American Diocese". There is no other Indian Orthodox Bishop who had suffered in the hands of own people while catering to the needs of its subjects than Mar Makarios. Indian Orthodox people in America are special. It is tough to live in this culture as a spiritual leader. Once His Grace expressed rather painfully that the marks on his two cheeks are the channels created by tears that he had to shed in this country. There are many people who love him and support him but at the same time there were many who did not pass the opportunity to denounce him. But at the point of his departure, everyone has come together to pray for him and express their respect. It is a matter of surety that His Grace will be remembered for many decades and the one and only person with very distinct caliber and character. The Indian Orthodox Church has lost one of its special bishop.

The St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Philadelphia owes much to His Grace as a good friend and loving father. His Grace was part of the consecration of our church building. The words of appreciation poured out for us was unparalleled. In addition, the messages and words of encouragement given to us were unique. His Grace knew what to say in complimenting a priest and his parish. May our Lord reward Your Grace for what Your Grace meant to our parish. We bow down before His Grace's towering personality with our humble prayers.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose

**H.G. Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios Metropolitan**  
**Passes into Eternal Rest**



H. G. Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios (82), Metropolitan of the Canada, U. K and Europe diocese of the Holy Church, passed into eternal rest on Saturday, Feb 23rd. His Grace had been hospitalized for the last seven weeks at New Castle General Hospital outside of London following a tragic car accident. The accident took place in New Castle while His Grace was going to the Newcastle Airport on Saturday,

January 5, 2008 to return to London. Another vehicle hit the passenger side where His Grace was seated. His Grace had just declared a new parish in Sunderland during his annual pastoral visit to the UK and Ireland.

His Grace's mortal remains will be brought to Nedumbasserry International Airport on Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Body will be taken to His Grace's native place, Ayroor. After prayers in Ayroor, the body will be transferred to a decorated vehicle and begin the procession to the Orthodox Theological Seminary (Pazhaya Seminary), Kottayam. An all night vigil service will be held at the seminary. By 7:30am on the morning of Monday, March 3, 2008, the Nagarikanikkal will start from Old Seminary to Devalokam Aramana and the funeral service will start at 9:00 AM.

**Memorial Service for**

**His Grace Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios**

Under the auspices of the Joint Orthodox Fellowship of Philadelphia, a Memorial Service was held at 6 pm on Saturday, February 23, 2008 at our Church. Following the prayer service, a condolence meeting was held. The speakers included representatives from various Orthodox Parishes, spiritual organizations and Ecumenical Fellowship. People from all walks of life attended. Several of the speakers in their speeches remembered Thirumeni for touching their lives in a profound way. Thirumeni have touched the life of many people's life throughout the years of his life in many different ways. Many spoke about HG's leadership, vision and services for the American Diocese and the Church in general. The speakers were Very Rev. Johnson Corepiscopa, Very Rev. K. Mathai Corepiscopa, Rev. M. P. Philip (CSI Church), Rev. Susiel Varghese (Mar Thoma Church), Rev. Fr. Shebaly, Rev. Thomas Ninan (CSI Church), Rev. Fr. Chacko Punnoose (Knanaya Church), Rev. Dn. Daniel

Yohannan, Mr. Mathew Samuel (Area Inspector, Sunday School), Mr. Sony Thomas, MGOCSM Council Member), Ms. Susan Sabu, Dr. Kurian Mathai, Rev. Fr. K. K. John and Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose.

Rev. Dn. Daniel Yohannan from our church attended the viewing and the first part of the funeral service for our beloved Thirumeni's departed soul at London on Friday, February 29th. H.G. Geevarghese Mar Coorilose led the service in London and afterward the mortal remains of Thirumeni were taken to Kottayam for his final journey.

**Parish News**

**General Body Meeting:** The Annual General Body meeting of the parish was held on February 10th after the Holy Qurbana. The Accounts from 2007 and Budget for 2008 were passed unanimously.

**Annual Retreat:** The Annual Retreat was held on Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Rev. Fr. Paul T. Peter was the main speaker. Those who attended were renewed by the powerful Word of God through His gifted servant. The Media Cell of OCYM recorded the whole program and will be available on our parish website soon.

**Newborn Baby:** Mrs. Manju and Mr. Shibu M. Baby are the proud parents of a baby girl named Christia. Congratulations to the parents.

**Temple Entry:** Sofia, daughter of Aju and Anu Jacob Noel, son of Mathew Jacob and Sophy Mathew

**Obituary:**

Mr. Thomas, father of Thomas C. Thomas passed away in India.

Mr. George Peedikayil, uncle of Aju Jacob passed away in India.

Mr. Thomas K. Varghese, uncle of Santhosh Mathew passed away in India.

Mr. P.V. Varghese, father of Sajan Varghese passed away in India.

Prayers were conducted in the church. Hearty condolence and prayers for the bereaving families.

**Late Rev. Fr. C.P. Wilson Fund:** We were able to raise around \$ 1700 for this fund. We sent this amount to Kochamma who is currently in India. Thanks to all who participated in this effort.

**Donations:** A member donated the newly published Orthodox Study Bible for our Library.

Mrs. Shalini Joseph has donated her first paycheck to the church building fund.

**Tel # Update:** The Telephone number of Ninan Mathai, listed in the Parish. Directory was incorrect. The correct # is 304-375-6361. Please make a note of it.

## H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Milithios Metropolitan

### Visiting Our Parish

*H. G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Milithios, Metropolitan of Thrissur Diocese and President of OCYM will be visiting our parish on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Thirumeni will lead the Evening Prayer and the Faith Study Series on the topic "Kurishinte Samskarika Bhavangal", the OCYM theme for the year 2008. All members should attend this very important class by one of the most brilliant scholars of our Church.*

### News from Afghanistan

Finney Philip, one of our members is proudly serving in the US military. He is currently posted in Afghanistan. He wrote to us recently. Excerpts are given below: "We at the border of Afghan and Kyrgyzstan. It gets really cold here some times it goes minus 20 and down. Lot of people is getting sick dealing with the extreme weather. I am proud to represent our community here during these times and to answer our nations call. This email I got from you meant a lot to me and I really appreciate your concern. I do have a prayer request for the troops who stationed here with me. Please pray for us to dear Lord so He can give us strength and support. Convey my regards to Achen and all the other members in our church, tell them "I thank each and every one of them for their support and prayers.""

You can reach Finney by e-mail at [finney000@yahoo.com](mailto:finney000@yahoo.com). Please pray for Finney, and all the men and women serving for our country in various places of the world.

### Prayer Meetings

Prayer meeting was held at Daniel Varghese's house on Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup>.

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.

### Health Talk

The Philadelphia Indian American Nurses Association (PIANO) conducted a seminar on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2008 at 12PM at our church auditorium. Dr. Babu Rao Jasti MD, Asst. Prof., Cardiology, Thomas Jefferson University, spoke on Cardiac Emergencies and its Management and Dr. Blessy Methikkalam MD, Pediatrician, spoke on Common Pediatric Illness and its Management. The seminar was very informative

### Orthodox Study Bible

The long awaited complete Orthodox Study Bible is available in stores now. This includes all the canonical books of the Orthodox Church. Our library has a copy.

More information is available at [www.orthodoxstudybible.com](http://www.orthodoxstudybible.com).

### Website Information

We are planning for a dynamic website to be realized in this year. There is a group of volunteers including non members helping and currently it is in the inception stage. To name a few, Ashok, Alex, Byju, Sydney, Wilson, Binu, Jerin, Anooj, Oommen Kappil and Suresh. Sunday announcements and Achen's sermon are added on our website on a weekly basis. We are also planning for a member login feature where they can see the dues, see the current information provided to the church etc. Our website address is [www.stthomasphiladelphia.org](http://www.stthomasphiladelphia.org).

### Holy Week Programs

The year of 2008 is blessed for the parish to have our diocesan metropolitan **H. G. Mathews Mar Barnabas** to lead the services during the Holy Week from Palm Sunday to Easter. **Prayers, intercessory prayers, Bible studies, devotional addresses and meditations will be held during the Holy Week from 8.00 A.M to 8.30 P.M.** Please check the flyer for the detailed schedule and timing.

### Pesaha

Pesaha service, commemorating the Last Supper of our Lord, is on Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup> starting with Evening Prayer at 6.30PM, followed by Holy Qurbana and devotional address. All members are expected to take communion on Pesaha. Passover Bread will be served after the service.

### Feet Washing Ceremony

Feet Washing Ceremony will be conducted on Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, from 5.30 PM at our church by H. G. Mathews Mar Barnabas Metropolitan.

### Good Friday

Good Friday service starts at 8.30 AM. Please bring your plastic prayer-mats to use on Good Friday in the auditorium.

### Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday service starts at 10.00 AM with the Morning Prayer. All the departed faithful will be remembered during the Qurbana. Please add the names to the list in the office. (the 30<sup>th</sup> day of demise of Mar Makarios is being planned for Holy Saturday. The venue will be announced later)

### Easter

Easter service starts at 8.30 AM with the Morning Prayer, followed by Easter Service and Holy Qurbana at 9.30 AM.



## Birthdays in March

Name	Birthday
Jeebu P Kurian	3/3
Kunjappy Koshy	3/3
Aswathi Eliz Jacob	3/4
Sunny Thomas	3/4
Stacy M George	3/4
Podiamma Thankachan	3/5
Joshua Jacob Jose	3/7
Prakash George	3/7
Nissi Elizabeth Zachariah	3/8
Susan Daniel	3/10
Annamma Samuel	3/10
Previn G Joseph	3/10
Seena Varghese	3/10
Jerin G Juby	3/13
Binu Mathew	3/13
Suresh Cherian	3/15
Shibin Koshy	3/15
Dr. Philip George	3/17
Pramod Sam Jacob	3/17
Varughese M M.	3/18
Praveen Gollapudi	3/19
Cherian V V.	3/19
Emily Susan Vaidyan	3/20
Aju Jacob	3/21
Shibu Kuncheriah	3/21
Biju John	3/21
Mary Kuriakose	3/23
Renjush Rajan	3/23
Mathew Varghese	3/25
Ashin Saju	3/26
Lucas Philip	3/26
Daniel Yohannan	3/27
Alvin V Jose	3/27
Megha S Varghese	3/28
Raji K John	3/29
Alen Saju	3/29
Paul Jacob	3/30
Daniel Thomas	3/30
George Varughese	3/31
Joseph K Varghese	3/31

*We wish them all a Very Happy Birthday!*



## Wedding Anniversaries in March

Name	Anniversary date
Mrs & Mr. Achen Varghese	3/21
Mrs & Mr. Jacob Chacko	3/30

*We wish them all a Very Happy Anniversary!*

### News from Spiritual Organizations

#### Sunday School News

**Midterm Exams:** Sunday school mid term exam was held on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to the teachers and parents for all their efforts in preparing the students for their exams.

**OVBS Song recording:** OVBS song recording for juniors and seniors are being done very diligently. These songs will be submitted to the American Diocese OVBS Committee for selection for this year's OVBS Album. Special thanks to all the teachers for taking time out for this project.

**American Diocese Text book project:** Mrs. Jessie Jacob one of our Sunday school teachers has taken up the job to revise and update the 4th grade text books for the American Diocese. She has finished this project ahead of its deadline. After the approval of the American Diocese Sunday school association, this textbook will be ready for printing. Congratulations to Jessie for such a wonderful job. Her work will now benefit the Sunday school children of the American Diocese.

#### Couples' Forum

Couples fellowship this month was attended by more than 75 people. The topic for presentation and discussion was about family prayer. Santhosh Mathew, the speaker, gave us four main points of the family prayer (how to pray) was derived from our Lords Prayer; Pray with humbleness, Confession, Forgiveness, Thanksgiving, and Pray for your and others needs. Suggestions was given on; When to pray, Frequency of Prayer and how to pray. During this meeting a common prayer book for the families to follow at home was distributed.

The topic for the next series will be **Home Management**. Milly Philip will be presenting this topic in the next meeting. For more information please contact coordinator Thomas George.

### Men's Forum

Men's forum fellowship is going very strongly in our church. Currently they are following the *Divya Bhodhanam Series* by Rev. Joshua Achen. Ninan Jose and N.K. Mathew led the session this month. The format of this session includes prayer, songs, bible reading, teaching followed by discussions. For more information please contact N.V. Thomas.

### Martha Mariam Samajam (MMS)

MMS meets alternate Sundays at the church auditorium after Holy Communion for prayer, Bible Study, learning songs and more. St. Matthew's Gospel is studies now. For more details of their activities please contact Mrs. Achamma Kurian.

### MGOCSM

The MGOCSM had a successful bake sale on Feb 3rd. The members of MGOCSM diligently worked hard to arrange everything within a short time. Thanks to all our parents who helped in the cooking at the church as well as at home. The proceedings will be used for planned activities of MGOCSM.

The MGOCSM retreat for the Philadelphia area was held at St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church, Mascher Street on Saturday, February 22. Mr. Tenny Thomas was the leader. Many of our members and Vicar attended.

MGOCSM started a faith study series on February 24th. The topic of the series is "*Unveiling the Holy Mystery.*" Diyu Sarah, who is currently a student in St. Tikhon's Seminary led the series and provided a deep spiritual insight. This study series is open to all. The next study is scheduled for March 2nd and March 30th. Contact secretary Divya Panicker for more details.

### OCYM

OCYM is conducting a series of Faith Study Sessions at church. Study sessions are held on all Saturday evenings after the evening prayer. 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.

### Library News

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. Our library has the newly published Orthodox Study Bible. Please take your time to check it out.

### Upcoming Events

#### *Faith Study Series*

Faith Study Series organized by the OCYM has conducted a couple of study sessions. **The next session is lead by OCYM President H. G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Milithios Metropolitan on Saturday, March 8 at 6:00 p.m.** Notes are prepared and soft copies are available. Please email OCYM to get your copy and to add to our mailing list. Email address: [youthleague@gmail.com](mailto:youthleague@gmail.com) or [stthomasocym@gmail.com](mailto:stthomasocym@gmail.com).

#### **FOCUS**

FOCUS, Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in the United States is an organization intended for young adults, married and single, post-graduate students and professionals, from the ages of 23 and up. FOCUS meets at 7 pm on the First Thursday of every month at our church. The next meeting is on March 6<sup>th</sup>. The topic for discussion is 'The Resurrection'. Please contact the co-coordinators, Dn. G. John (914.720.0136) and Mr. Aju Jacob (813.857.3507), for more info.

#### **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>. All are encouraged to go and support our team. For directions

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

### Calendar of Events

Mar. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	MGOCSM Faith Study Series – 1PM
Mar. 6 <sup>th</sup>	FOCUS Fellowship – 7PM
Mar. 8 <sup>th</sup>	World Day of Prayer – 10AM
Mar. 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Faith Study Series lead by H. G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Milithios – 6PM</b>
Mar. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting – 9.30AM
Mar. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Girls Basket Ball Tournament
Mar. 30 <sup>th</sup>	MGOCSM Faith Study Series – 1PM

### Important Liturgical Days

Mar. 2nd	Fifth Sunday of the Great Lent (Crippled Women)
Mar. 9th	Sixth Sunday of the Great Lent (Healing the Blind, Catholocate Day)
Mar. 14 <sup>th</sup>	40 <sup>th</sup> Friday Holy Qurbana at 6:30 p.m
Mar. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Lazarus' Saturday
Mar. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Palm Sunday 8:30
Mar. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Maundy Thursday, Feet Washing Ceremony at 5:30 p.m.
Mar. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Good Friday 8:30 a.m.
Mar. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Holy Saturday
Mar. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Easter 8:30 a.m.
Mar. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Annunciation to St. Mary
Mar. 30 <sup>th</sup>	New Sunday

### Address Correction

If your family members' status, Tel # or mailing address has changed during the past year, please inform the Church office. We will have that information updated in our records accordingly.

### 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, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

### Editor's Views

#### *Cultural Confusions ( Jerin Juby)*

Culture and traditions are inevitable parts of a human's lifestyle. Every single person in the world is directly or indirectly affected and carved by the particular cultural backgrounds experienced during the emergence and evolution of his very being. The Church also has cultural and traditional aspects, varying from region to region, many of them being closely connected to the regional aspects and traditions, and not of faith. Along with them, the Apostolic Churches are peculiar in continuing and following the Faith Tradition which is passed on from Christ, through the Apostles, the Church Fathers and to the current generation. Certain factors and confusions about the cultural traditions and faith traditions of the US population of the Indian Orthodox Church are given below.

While trying to preserve the traditions of our Faith, often many are misguided by the same with confusion between the cultural traditions and Faith Traditions. For e.g., the language Malayalam is part of our culture and not of faith. Faith is beyond culture, language and regional practices, and it is this faith which should be given the primary importance. Orthodox churches have the peculiarity of adapting the culture and traditions of the particular place or region in which the church is planted. Consider the Ethiopian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, etc., all which comes under the same Oriental Orthodox Family as ours, yet with different cultural practices, but with the same faith tradition. The cultural tradition is subject to change, but the faith tradition is not.

This understanding of distinguishing between the cultural and faith traditions should open our eyes in

accepting the need of English services in our church. The new generation, who is responsible for carrying the true faith to the next generations, should be able to understand the faith in a language understandable. The worship should be presented in a language the new generation can easily read, write and understand. Just imagine if our liturgy was still conducted in Syriac, instead of Malayalam. The Malayalam speaking community itself does not understand all the complex words we hear during the Holy Liturgy; then how do we expect those who do not even read or write to attend the church, and understand and enjoy the same? Our focus while attending the Holy Qurbana should not be on the emotional happiness based on the tone and language, but on the devotional happiness by offering ourselves to our Lord and our God.

Either side, if pressed too hard will not give good results. It is our need to preserve our cultural traditions and the peculiar Malayalam style, and to keep it alive in the new generation. It is also needed to extent our forms of worship to the newer generation in a form understandable to them too. Both sides should learn to accept and appreciate both the Malayalam and English, and should work together in making both services heavenly.

### From the Desk of the Secretary

Dear Believers in Christ,

Let us together glorify God for this abundant fellowship that He has given us. The promise that He will not leave us as orphans and the gift of the Holy Spirit has already been granted to our church. Condemnation and rejection is of the world, but when we come to Jesus Christ, He miraculously transforms it to blessings.

During this season of lent, let us hold fast to the truth that **Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus.** Let us understand and humble our self knowing that it is only by His abundant grace that we are what we are.

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