

PARISH NEWS

St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church of India, 3721 NE 13th Ave., Oakland Park, FL 33334 Phone: 954. 630.0887

Vicar's Message

Beloved in Christ:

Greetings in the name of our Lord. I hope everyone reads this church bulletin which is published electronically in every two month. Once again the days of purification is coming. The Great Lent is starting in February. Hope all of you observed the Nineveh Lent from February 2nd to 4th. February 08th is observed as Sunday of all departed clergy followed by Sunday of the Departed (Aneede) on February 15th. February 22nd is Kothne Sunday and on that day we will have the special service of Subukkono (Forgiveness). Before we enter the Great Lent we have to ask forgiveness to others and we have to forgive to others. Vegetarian food is good for health.

Different health surveys shows that consuming too much meat is the reason for cancer in the modern world. Why don't we start a different meal style. Don't take it as a church rule but take personal decision about observing lent. Self control and discipline is the primary lesson of lent. Basically it starts with our meals. I humbly urge your love to do special Lenten prayers at your home.

We are looking for a new church building. Make this as a special topic in your prayer. Let us pray for our families and our parish.

God bless you.

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Is this not the fast that I choose :
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the heavy burdens,
to let the oppressed go free,
and hat you break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast
out; when you see the naked, that you cover them,
And not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Isaiah 58.6-7

The Liturgical Calendar

February 2009

- Feb 02 Malyatho (Jesus' entry into the temple).
Nineveh Lent - Start of 3 day lent.
- Feb 08 Remembrance of all the departed priests
- Feb 15 Sunday of all the departed faithful
- Feb 23 Start of Great Lent,
Feast of St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Vatasseril



Upcoming Events

2/28	Prayer Meeting at Mr. Jose Mathew's residence 11951 SW 47th St., Cooper City, FL 33330 (954) 680-1984 at 7:00 PM.	4/7	Evening Prayer and Confession 6:30 PM
3/14	Prayer Meeting at Mr. Idiculla John's residence 2011 NW 104 Ave., Pembroke Pines, FL 33026 (954) 435-1506 at 7:00 PM.	4/8	Maunder Thursday Passover Service 7:00 PM
3/25	Feast of Annunciation to St. Mary	4/9	Evening Prayer and Confession 6:30 PM
4/5	Palm Sunday Morning Prayer 8:15 AM	4/10	Good Friday Service 9:30 AM
4/6	Evening Prayer and Confession 6:30 PM	4/11	Gospel Saturday Service 9:30 AM
		4/12	Easter Service 6:00 AM

** Retreat - Date to be announced soon.

Announcements

Office Bearers 2009

Rev. Fr. George Daniel	President
Mr. Anuja V. Philip	Secretary
Mr. Aju Mathai	Treasurer

Managing Committee Members

Mr. Binu Geevarghese	
Mr. Charles Mathew	
Mr. Koshy Mathew	
Mrs. Leelamma Mathews	
Mr. Idiculla John	Auditor
Mr. K. Thankachen,	Coordinator, Prayer Meeting

Marthamariam Samajam

Mrs. Lucy Reji	Secretary
Mrs. Jessy Thommy	Joint Secretary

MGOCSM Youth League

Suman Panavelil	Vice President
Reshma Daniel	Secretary
Brandon Panavelil	Treasurer
Jikky Thankachen	Event coordinator
Jacklyn Mathew	Historian
Suja John	SE Regional Secretary
Julie Mathew	SEL Council Rep
Jennifer Mathew	Unit Rep.

- ❖ His Grace Mathews Mar Epiphanius, Metropolitan of Kollam diocese entered into eternal rest at 11:15 AM on Feb 9, 2009. We would like to express our deep sorrow at the demise of our beloved His Grace Most Rev. Mathews Mar Epiphanius Thirumeni. Our heartfelt condolence to our Sabha.
- ❖ H.G. Philipose Mar Eusebius Metropolitan of Thumpamon Diocese entered into eternal rest at 11:05 PM on Jan 22nd, 2009. Thirumeni's passing away leaves a void in the lives of all who loved him and our Church. We pray to God Almighty to give him eternal rest. Let His Grace's openness and selfless life be an inspiration to all us.
- ❖ Mr. Reji Joseph and family have moved to Dallas, Texas. We wish Reji and family all the best.
- ❖ We humbly request all parents to watch our young children during the Holy Qurbana. Children should not leave the church during the service.
- ❖ The MGOCSM Youth League is conducting a clothing drive until the end of February. The youth league will take any clothes that are useable. Please bring the clothes to church on Sundays. Please contact Suman Panavelil at 954-434-6374 (Home) or 305-606-1460 (cell) for any questions regarding the clothing drive.
- ❖ We request all members to participate and offer the refreshments in church and to sign up for the prayer meeting schedule. The sign up sheets for refreshments and prayer meetings schedule is available on the church notice board.

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Regular Sunday Service: ◇ 8.30 am Morning Prayers ◇ 9.30 am Holy Qurbana ◇ E-Mail: Bennyachen@yahoo.com ◇

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Sunday School Quiz

1. At which place Paul shaved his head as per a vow?
2. What was the name of father of prophet Ezekiel?
3. After how many days from the Animals and fowls entered the Ark, the flood came on earth?
4. At what age of Abraham God appeared to him?
5. At which place God appeared to Issac, son of Abraham?
6. At which place Adonijah declared himself as the King when David became old and sick?
7. From which King Solomon hired a skilled designer for building Temple?
8. To which city of Judeah Apostle Philip belonged to?
9. During which feast Jesus drove away merchants of oxen, sheep and doves and money changers with a scourge from temple of Jerusalem?

10. As per St. Paul, which Apostles were known as pillar of the Church?

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St. Mary's Feast Day: March 25th



Birthdays and Anniversaries

BIRTHDAYS

John Varughese	1-Jan
Biji Anchery	4-Jan
Ginu Geevarghese	4-Jan
Kelvin Panavelil 1	4-Jan
Cherish Mathews	15-Jan
Mary George	15-Jan
George Anchery	16-Jan
Joseph Muppathiyil	16-Jan
Archana Mathew	18-Jan
Koshy Abraham	23-Jan
Vinod Varki	24-Jan
Mariamamma Ouseph	26-Jan
Betty Cherian John	28-Jan
Michael Samuel	29-Jan
Justin Mathew	29-Jan
Julie Mathew	4-Feb
Elizabeth Alexander	7-Feb
Reshma Daniel	8-Feb
Albin Mathew	12-Feb
Susan G.Samuel	12-Feb
Jolly Varki	14-Feb
Mani M.Thomas	14-Feb
Anil Varughese	24-Feb
Sarah Mathews	24-Feb
Anuja V.Philip	28-Feb

ANNIVERSARIES

Biju Raju & Sherly	1-Jan
Joseph C.Varughese & Mini	1-Jan
Korah Varughese & Annamma	9-Jan
Cherian P.John& Mariamma	12-Jan
Alexander Philip& Elizabeth	18-Jan
Jacob Paul & Shiby	18-Jan
P.K.Thomas & Aleyamma	21-Jan
Aju Mathai & Ligi	27-Jan
Charles V.Mathews & Sarah	29-Jan
P.E.Eapen & Susan	3-Feb
Jacob Varughese & Rachel	7- Feb
Reji Mathew & Lusy	11- Feb
Thomas C Thomas & Mariamma	14- Feb

Please note: If we have missed your birthday/wedding anniversary in the church bulletin please inform Achen and Anuja Philip (Secretary) as soon as possible. Thank you.

Lent; A Stone Jar for Our Renewal and Growth

By Fr. Brijesh Philip, Vice Principal, St. Thomas Orthodox Seminary, Nagpur

The church is helping us to progress in our spiritual life in the rhythm of its fasts and feasts. All important feasts in the church are preceded by short or long fasting. Thus the mystery of true happiness is revealed. But the secular world is attempting to draw our attention just to matters of fun only without ample preparation for having lasting joy. That is why after the excitement of material achievements, boredom and frustration dance in human minds. But Lenten preparation for the feasts is a preparation for the heavenly joy which is growing and lasting. Through the Great Lent we are progressing towards the festival of the resurrection of Christ, the feast of feasts.

In the ancient Christian community great Lent started as a preparation for the baptism of the aspirants of Christianity on Easter day. These catechumens were trained during the great Lent by the spiritual instruction of bishop, and their own fasting. Gradually all believers in the church participated in this Lent and renewed their baptismal grace. Today we commemorate Christ's fasting before his public ministry and his blessed passion during this Lent and make use of it for fifty days for our complete spiritual renewal.

There are many spiritual exercises which help us to grow in Christ. Holy sacraments like baptism, confession, Qurbana, etc, fasting and Lents, prayers, meditations, teaching and preaching in the church etc are preparing a ground for receiving grace from God for this growth. These spiritual exercises and especially Lents can be compared to the stone jars into which water was poured according to the instruction of our Lord at the wedding in Cana (St. John 2:7). By being in those stone jars, water could meet its creator and He could transform it to tasty wine. Stone jar prepared a ground for the transformation. But the source of that change was God only. Likewise we are supposed to be poured into Lent for being transformed by God.

Lent is training for simple life. During Lents we avoid certain times of meal and certain types of meal. Ancient Christian practice was to have just one time of meal which is purely a vegetarian supper during the great Lent. Fasting and vegetarianism during the Lent are invitation to overcome the enslaving power of consumerist culture which is based on greed. Al Gore's famous documentary film An Inconvenient Truth exposes the tragic result of such an uncontrollable life and also the waiting environmental destruction if no remedial measures and restrictions are adopted. In the midst of prosperity and over consumption we are trained to enjoy the beauty of a simple life based on need. So during the Lent we limit our life to extremely necessary things and minimum needs with regard to food, media like T.V., internet, and the use of technology in general. Along with many useful advantages, our scientific technological paradise sometimes makes us slaves of materialism. It is noticeable that two questions repeated continuously in America are about how to lose weight and where to park car. Lent gives us a wonderful experience of simple life. This freedom from the grip of over luxurious life and enslaving consumerist culture make us sensitive to the basic needs of the poor and the suffering and share with them our resources. In the book of Isaiah there is an enlightening description about the Lent which is pleasing to God: "Is it not this, the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58: 6-7).

Lent is a powerful weapon for our unseen spiritual

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warfare. It is the human tendency to fight always. But its proper orientation is not against other people but against evil within us and evil in the society. God is helping us to conquer passions like hatred, avarice, jealousy, greed, lust etc through Lent. Jesus Christ went through a long fasting and immediately after that we see him saying a bold NO to the evil force who brought temptations. Till the last breath there will be temptations and spiritual warfare in the lives of all and those who make use of Lent as a spiritual weapon will be victorious. The prayers of the great Lent highlight Moses, Elijah and Jesus as the great champions of fasting. According to the scripture they observed fasting for forty days and it was these three who are seen in unusually bright light on the transfiguration mount. When the Jews under captivity in Babylon were released and were about to go back to Jerusalem around two and half millennia ago, they declared a fasting to ensure God's protection in their journey. (Ezra 8: 21&22) It is recorded in the book of Ezra that they did not ask the King to send soldiers to ensure their security so that the gentiles could not laugh at the shallow nature of their faith. In our transient journey in this planet to eternity our ultimate trust and security is to be in God who strengthens us to conquer all kinds of evil and to progress. In short, through fasting we humble ourselves and surrender fully to God who empowers us to face all challenges and sinful tendencies.

Lent is a time when we cooperate with God for the nourishment of our inner being. It is natural to be preoccupied with physical and mental pleasures and nourishment. But the abstinences during Lent indicate the shift of focus and we give extra care to the nourishment of our spirit, the inner spiritual icon which

is like an internet explorer in a computer to get connected to a magnificent transcendent world. During Lent we give more time for Bible reading, meditation and Prayer so that our spirit is purified and enriched by God, the life giving food of our inner life. Then the Holy Spirit who resides in our spirit can smoothly guide us. Good deeds and words will flow from the inner springboard which is purified and strengthened by Christ. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' (Mt. 5:8)

European missionaries were astonished to see the rigorous Lenten practices of the St. Thomas Christian community of Kerala in 16th century. The letters sent by these missionaries from Kerala to their mother congregations in Europe reveal many things about the Lent in those days. St. Thomas Christians used to have fasting till evening and they used to go to their churches for daily prayers during the great Lent. Most of them even avoided coffee and chewing Vettilla during this time. Dr. James Aerthayil CMI has done a good study about these documents in his book The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians. According to this study St. Thomas Christians used to have almost 225 days of fasting an year. In spite of the fact that they were leading a simple agrarian life, our forefathers and mothers took Lents and thus their spiritual growth seriously. This may open our eyes to see the greater need of Lent today in our more complex and challenging situation. May the Holy Spirit help us to use this stone jar as cocoon for our holistic rejuvenation.

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