

# DEEPAM



JUNE 2005

WHERE THERE IS DARKNESS, LET THERE BE LIGHT

## A MESSAGE FROM THE VICAR

VERY REVEREND GHEEVARGHIS AROOPALA COR-EPISCOPA

### Dear Parishioners,

“The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” - James 3:17-18. I am very pleased to submit this church newsletter to this community. This is the culmination of a long-standing

desire to have a forum for sharing church news and faith-based articles within our parish. Those who have endeavored in the production of this newsletter are striving to lead the new generation of our church along an age-old path with as much continuity as possible.

This is no easy task; it requires a great deal of perseverance and support. This mission can only be success-

ful if each of you supports this newsletter by reading it, sharing it with your family, and providing constructive feedback. By working together, we can make this newsletter not only a success, but also a useful resource in teaching and preserving our faith, and contributing to the glory of God.



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## BEHOLD A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE

HIS HOLINESS BASELIOS MARTHOMA MATHEWS II  
CATHOLICOSE OF THE EAST

*Reprinted with permission from "Light of Life"*

### Dearly beloved in Christ,

I would like to deliberate here of two persons described in the Bible during the birth of Jesus Christ. The first one is Simeon. There is a very important traditional story behind this Simeon. He was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Ghost was upon him. Simeon was a Scribe. The job of Scribe is to maintain the scripture, read it, make copy of it and make it available. The Holy Scriptures were kept as rolls that time. Simeon was engaged in this job. In God's temple, there were group of industrious devout people who sit at a

holy place and would like to meditate the divine Word of God and get experienced out of it. Simeon was one among them. Once, while he was copying from the book of Isaiah, he noticed in the Isa. 7:14. "...Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This was the prophecy of Isaiah about the birth of Messiah about 700 years before His birth. These are very remarkable and noteworthy words. These are the words you and me should learn attentively, practice, believe and behave accordingly. We are bound to believe it. This word cannot be denied or defied. It cannot be forgotten.

Naturally Simeon found it difficult to conceive the words 'Son of a Virgin'. He had an apprehension about this prophecy of Isaiah. He used his imagination and changed the word 'Virgin' as 'Woman'. The very next day while referring to the text he found the word is changed back as Virgin. He thought it is done by some of his colleagues. Again Simeon changed the word as Woman. To his astonishment, he noticed the word was again changed back as Virgin. Simeon prayed to God, O Lord, reveal me the truth.. reveal me the truth. To his prayers, he received an oracle of a gracious promise from the God. And it was revealed unto him by

the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death until he could have a sight of the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed, with his own eyes.

In the Gospel according to St. Matthew, it is written that Joseph, her husband did not want to disgrace Mary and planned to send her away secretly as she was found conceived before they came together. Joseph wanted to protect his would-be wife somehow and refused to make her a public specimen. Joseph did this because he was a man of justice. In the

*Cont'd on page 3*



**From the Editorial Board...**

Although faith is not something many take lightly, it is often considered as a separate idea from our daily life; something to aspire to rather than something to have. Nothing could be further from the truth. Each of our lives is built on faith. It is this faith that enables us to know that all things work together for the greater good.

God has a purpose for us. He supplies us with all that is essential to be what He, Our Father, desires us to be. *"(We) will be like a tree planted by the water that stands out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."* (Jeremiah 17:8). Such is the favor of our church. We are blessed to have extremely intelligent, creative, and determined minds in our midst. This newsletter is a product of those minds.

This newsletter has been created for the purposes of ensuring that our religion is practiced with greater conviction, our history and culture taught with greater accuracy, and our faith passed on to the next generation with pride. We encourage each of you to read this issue and help us by providing constructive feedback which will make each successive issue more invaluable to our community and our faith.

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**CHURCH NEWS**

**St. Thomas Festival**

The St. Thomas Festival will be from July 8-10. Rev. Fr. Johns Abraham Konatt is expected to be the chief celebrant for the Perunnal. Achen is from the legendary Konatt family and is currently a Professor at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam.

**New Carpet For Church Hall**

New carpet will be installed in the Church Hall to improve the appearance. Mr. Mathew George and Mr. M.P. Varghese are leading this effort.

**The Southern Region Family and Youth Conference**

**Chief Guest: Rev. Fr. T.J. Joshua**—Director-General, Sunday School Association and Professor, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam

**Where:** Lake Tomahawk Baptist Encampment in Livingston, TX

**When:** August 4 - 7, 2005

**Contact:** Joshua George 281-773-7988 or Darlene Mathai 281-658-1081

for more information or visit our website at :

**www.stthomashoustonmgocsm.org\SRC2005**

**New Church Laptop And Printer**

The church has purchased a new laptop and printer. Member information will be stored electronically. Members will be approached in the upcoming months for information.

**Sprinkler System Plans**

The plans to install a sprinkler system are being prepared, and quotes being obtained, prior to review and approval by the Church committee and general body. Mr. Mathew George and Mr. M.P. Varghese are leading this effort.

**New Recreation Center: Plans In Progress**

A new recreation center which will include basketball courts, badminton courts and office space are in the plans. The committee has authorized a feasibility study for the recreation center to be prepared by Mr. S.K. Cherian and Mr. Manoj Thomas.

**Continued from page 1**

night, the Angel of God appeared to him and told, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." This is the mystery of the birth of the Son of God. If this part was not there in the scripture we would not have praised God as we do it today. It is the biggest astonishment among the worldly scholars. However, there are many human organs which believe that Jesus is born by a natural marital relationship.

The Book of Genesis, which is written many many years ago, refers to this point. It is mentioned there that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, when it was said that he should be the seed of the woman; so the seed of the woman as not to be the seed of any man. The sign given in the prophecy of Isaiah was also that the Messiah shall be born of a virgin. Bible contains many mysteries and secrets. Bible is the most mysterious holy book in the world. There is no other book in the world which contains such big treasure of the mystery of godliness unfolded.

Just then, when Joseph and Mary brought in the Child, to be registered as it were in the church-book, among the first-born after the custom of the law, Simeon came, by direction of the Spirit, into the temple. The Spirit of God whispered in his ear, "Go to the temple now, and you shall see what you have longed to see." He immediately rushed to the Temple and with abundant satisfaction he welcomed this sight: He took the Child up in his arms, he embraced Him with the greatest affection imaginable and with full of joy as it could hold. He proclaimed that he could see the salvation of God with his own eyes. The solemn declaration he made here upon: he blessed God, and said, Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. It was a most honorable testimony borne to the Child by Simeon that this is the Child he and the whole Israel was waiting for. How big a mystery is contained in this incident? This mystery is beyond our imagination. It is divine. It is out of the extents of the human brain. It is the mystery man cannot think of. St. Augustine said; "Spiritual truths are beyond human reasoning." This is for you and me to believe without any reservations.

The second person I would like to depict here is Anna. Anna was a prophetess. She was of a great age, and had been a widow of about eighty-four years. She had lived with her husband only for seven years after marriage, yet she never married again, but continued to be a widow to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise. She was a resident in the temple abounded in devotions, for she served God with fasting and prayers night and day, always lived a mortified life, and spent that time in reli-

gious exercises. Like others, she was also looking for the redemption of Israel. She too came in at that instant when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning Him.

Here it favors us with the testimony of two special witnesses regarding the birth of the long promised Messiah, one a woman and the other a man. These both show us for what reason we had to rejoice. What is the biggest comfort you can enjoy in this world? Like this Simeon and Anna, to be in communion with God and to keep intimate fellowship with God, with out any breakage of sliding away or any recession, is the biggest fortune in our life. I witness and confess very clearly and specifically this truth to you. Our life will be gratified if we can safeguard our life in the presence of God like that of Simeon and Anna each of a different gender. If this communion is lost, we lost everything. If we fail in it, we fail in everything.

I do not know where I will be during this time next year. Therefore I enjoy the happiness to be with you all. I consider you all as my own children. The divine experience Simeon and Anna enjoyed in the presence of God, their aspiration to see the Lord face to face and their courage to look to heaven are the most enjoyable moments in our life. We are bound to hold the Cross of Christ. While we encounter with the Cross of Christ, we should not sever our relation with Him. St. Paul told whether he is with the body or without the body, he did not want to please anybody except God. He thought it is good to be with the body for the sake of his people. We should read and study the Bible very carefully. We should meditate the Word of God. O' my brethren, you should not loose this. There will be hardships and hindrances in our life. But we should not fail. We should not loose. We have to bear many deserving and undeserving crosses in our life. But we should prepare ourselves to any type of cross God gives to us. Our prayers should be to attain the courage to bear all the crosses very happily. When we leave this world we should get the fortune to be in the footsteps of our savior.

What I want to exhort you, out of my cherished love and affection to you, is that you should safeguard your communion with God and uphold your intimate relationship with Him. Preserve that affection which is showered upon you with out any dimness or damage. He sees you, He watches you! God had granted the aged Simeon and the aged Anna a chance to see and enjoy face of God. In the same way let us also get the great fortune to live in the joy and happiness in Him and to conclude our life to join our forefathers in the presence of God with holiness.

God bless you all.



# Spiritual

## YOUTH MOVEMENT

The Youth Movement is an organization established by the church to promote **worship, study, and service**. The organization is open to everyone between the ages of 21-45.

The Youth Movement at St. Thomas Church has registered 109 members with the OCYM (Orthodox Christian Youth Movement). Three family prayer meetings have been held monthly thus far this year. All three meetings have been blessed fellowships. In addition to the children's bible study and adult bible study at each meeting, Aroopala Achen has also been conducting his study series on the Holy Qurbana. This has been a highly educational and inspiring series. Anyone wishing to host the monthly meeting at their house or in the church auditorium should contact Manoj Thomas.

This summer, the Youth Movement has started the Malayalam Learning Program at St. Thomas. The objective is to learn to read and speak Malayalam. We have five separate age-based classes for students of all ages, including adults. We have seven volunteer teachers in this program and over 50 students. Classes are held every Friday evening from 7:30-9:00 in the hall. Participation is encouraged.

Later this year, the Youth Movement is planning to conduct a weekend retreat at St. Thomas Church with His Grace Yoohanon Mar Milithios, Metropolitan of Trichur. Dates and times are to be announced.

Please continue to pray and support the activities of the Youth Movement so that we can truly be effective in utilizing our blessings and talents for His greater glory.

## **THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH**

Take part in the Divine Liturgy (Holy Eucharist) on Sundays and important Festival and Feast Days. Keep holy the day of Resurrection (Easter).

Observe the Fasts and Feasts prescribed by the Church.

Refrain from restricted food and wed-locks on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Refrain from wed-locks during Fast and Festival days.

Confess before priests appointed by the Church for the forgiveness of sins.

Receive Holy Eucharist on a regular basis. Lead a sacramental life ... and receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion at least once a year.

Give tithes, offerings, dues, and alms to the Church

[www.indian-orthodox.co.uk](http://www.indian-orthodox.co.uk)

### **BalikaBala Samajam**

Two age groups are available in this organization: Juniors: KG-5th grade

Seniors: 6th-9th grade

Meetings are held on Sundays at the front of the auditorium following Qurbana

### **UPON ENTERING THE CHURCH...**

+ In Reverence Will I Enter Thy House And Offer My Vows To Thee

### **Martha Mariam Samajam**

Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam (St. Mary's Women's Association) is the women's organization of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India. The Samajam has its humble origins as prayer groups in the various parishes scattered all over the Malankara Church in India. Several years ago, Mrs. K.M. Anamma (Kandathil), the visionary lady behind the Samajam, and the Rev. Ramban Barskeepa brought the entire parish based women's prayer groups under one umbrella, The Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam. The motto of the Samajam: Pray, Act, and Shine. As the Malankara Orthodox parishes began to mushroom in America, the Martha Mariam Samajam found its rightful place in most of the parishes and it became a formal part of the American Diocese of the Church in 1982. Metropolitan Mathews Mar Barnabas serves as the President of the Samajam for the American Diocese.

All ladies of the parish are invited to join. Our ladies group meets frequently to engage in Bible study, fundraisers, and various church events

For more information contact Omana Thomas or Mary Zacharia

# Organizations



## MGOCMSM

The Mar Gregorios Orthodox Church Student Movement started out as the Syrian Student Conference in 1907. Church leaders felt that students needed a way to deepen their spirituality and loyalty to the Orthodox faith. Saint Gregorios of Parumala was selected as the patron saint for the group, and the name was officially changed to MGOCMSM in 1960.

The MGOCMSM of St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Houston meets weekly (Sundays after Holy Qurbana) and monthly. Our meetings involve praise and worship, Bible studies, activities and discussions. We participate in various community service projects and fellowship activities with our sister churches in the Houston area.

## Sunday School

- † All 3 churches participated at the Spring Fest luau hosted on March 12 at our church. The kids really enjoyed the fellowship, activities and food!
- † The annual competition was held on April 2. A large majority of our kids participated. Good job to all!!
- † OVBS will be starting soon! Dates are June 30-July 2. St. Thomas will be the hosting location this year. Sponsorship is encouraged and appreciated.

## ***If You Want Something You've Never Had, Do Something You've Never Done***

*Follow the treasure map to your dreams, follow it, and soon you will be at the treasure chest that God has already opened glowing and overflowing with abundance. –Eby Thomas*

Have you a dream in your heart that seems to always surface to the top in both the good and challenging moments of your life?

Where does it come from? Who put it there? What is a dream? Is a dream "God's forgotten language" that we have been viewing as junk or spam mail? Is your dream your purpose?

The Amplified Bible says in Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew and approved of you as My chosen instrument..."

The dreams in your heart are a personal gift from God, who knew you before you were even born. You may have dreams that no one around understands, but no matter how ridiculous it may seem to others, remember God put it in your heart.

Your dream may be to have your own business, play professional sports, serve humanity, or love God with all your heart and all your mind.

Use the Holy Spirit to guide you, which is the map to the treasure within.

The dreams that God puts into your heart never fade away, they look forward to being uncovered.

God will hand you many dreams along the way, because he wishes to take you from Glory to Glory, but you must take the first step in revealing your purpose to the world, and that is realizing God loves you, and wishes you to have all your heart desires.

Proverbs 23:7 tells us, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

God loves you, live the dream that God calls your purpose.

Join us each Tuesday from 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Church for the MGOCMSM Bible Study

The head of the Indian Orthodox Church is the Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan H.H. Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II whose seat is at Kottayam, Kerala, India.

The Church has dioceses and churches in most parts of India as well as in the US, Canada, United Kingdom, Western Europe, Persian Gulf nations, Australia and New Zealand.

The official title of the head of the Church is "the Catholicos of the East, Catholicos of the Apostolic throne of St. Thomas and the Malankara Metropolitan".

The Church has two Theological Seminaries—one at Kottayam, Kerala, and one in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

This entry is from [Wikipedia article "Indian Orthodox Church"](#). This article is licensed under the [GNU Free Documentation License](#).

**DID YOU KNOW?**

# KID'S

**WORD SCRAMBLE:** *Unscramble this verse that tells us that God is the Creator.*

NI HET EBNGINIGN ODG ECARTDE TEH AHEVNE NDA ETH RAEHT

**Jokes & Riddles:**

- Q. At what time of day was Adam created?
- A. A little before Eve.
- Q. When was the first meat mentioned in the Bible?
- A. When Noah took Ham into the ark.
- Q: Who is the greatest babysitter mentioned in the Bible?
- A: David - he rocked Goliath to sleep

**But Whom Do You Say That I AM?**

ETACOVDAEWH
RURETSAMFOG
AVRSUSEJLNO
WRETMWAYICL
VINYDAAKDDO
RATSGNINROM
DAYSTARCPTSALDNATSRIFORERUNNER
EVGFNOPHHOTUJGROLESNUOCHCNARBO
NMPEIAGONOFUORHADUJFONOILIFEIT
EEMVMIMOSRSFKHORN OFSALVATIONSA
RSAAHOFFETKEENDOGYTHGIMLAMENHI
ASSQNGDDOILANINOSNETTOGEBYLNOD
ZITJOUNNNNDECAEPFOECNIRPHYPLPE
AAEDYOEGACORSTNENIVDIVADFONOSM
NHRZWHSLQARSDPQJTLAMBOFGODBVF
RHORA TOUCIR
PHPOCSNDEGE
ELRLDRSGRHD
NDOFAEOERTE
TRPOINLVUHE
EEHDDRAESBM
RVEREOTRESE
EOTOLCILRHR
VSNLIKOAVET
ISGRVVNSAPS
GADAERBTNHI
WPSDRVSITER
AGSGEVONORH
LOWORDHGSDC
NOITADNUO FY

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Advocate<br>Almighty<br>Alpha and Omega<br>Amen<br>Apostle<br>Beloved Son<br>Bishop<br>Branch<br>Bread<br>Captain<br>Carpenter<br>Chosen<br>Christ<br>Consolation<br>Cornerstone<br>Counselor<br>Day Star<br>Deliverer | Door<br>Emmanuel<br>Everlasting<br>Faithful and True<br>First and Last<br>Forerunner<br>Foundation<br>Governor<br>Head<br>High Priest<br>Holy and Just One<br>Horn of Salvation<br>I AM<br>Jesus<br>Judge<br>King<br>King of Kings<br>Lamb of God | Lawgiver<br>Life<br>Light<br>Lion of Judah<br>Lord<br>Lord of Lords<br>Master<br>Master<br>Mediator<br>Messiah<br>Mighty God<br>Morning Star<br>Nazarene<br>Only Begotten Son<br>Passover<br>Priest<br>Prince of Peace<br>Prophet | Redeemer<br>Resurrection<br>Rock<br>Savior<br>Servant<br>Son of David<br>Son of God<br>Son of Man<br>Vine<br>Way<br>Wonderful<br>Word |
|--|---|---|---|

Oh Be Careful Little Ears... (Song)

Oh, be careful little ears, what you hear (repeat)  
 For the Father Up above, Is looking down in love,  
 So be careful little ears what you hear.

Oh, be careful little eyes, what you see, (repeat)  
 For the Father up above, is looking down in love,  
 So be careful little eyes What you hear.

Oh, be careful little mouth, what you say, (repeat),  
 For the Father up above, Is looking down in love,  
 So be careful little mouth what you say.

Oh, be careful little hands, what you do (repeat),  
 For the Father up above, Is looking down in love,  
 So be careful little hands What you do

Oh, be careful little feet where you go (repeat)  
 For the Father up above, Is looking down in love,  
 So be careful little feet, Where you go.

Oh, be careful little mind what you think (repeat)  
 For the Father up above, Is looking down in love,  
 So be careful little mind, What you think.

Oh, be careful little heart what you love (repeat)  
 For the Father up above, Is looking down in love,  
 So be careful little heart, What you love.

**Actions:**

- "ears" - point to ears
- "eyes" - point to eyes
- "Father" - point up
- "looking down" - shade eyes
- "love" - give self a hug
- "hands" - hold out hands
- "feet" - march in place
- "mouth" - point to mouth
- "mind" - point to forehead
- "heart" - point to chest

# KORNER

Maze Activity:

Can you find your way through this maze of prayer? Begin on the left & have fun!

The maze activity features a large square maze with a complex path. At the top of the maze, there is an illustration of a church building with a steeple. On the left side of the maze, there is an illustration of a woman in a long dress kneeling and praying, with the text "Teach us to Pray!" below it. In the center of the maze, there is an illustration of a woman kneeling and praying. On the right side of the maze, there is an illustration of a man kneeling and praying, with the text "Let us Pray!" below it. At the bottom left of the maze, there is an illustration of a man kneeling and praying. At the bottom right of the maze, there is an illustration of a woman in a long dress kneeling and praying.

**Bible Verse For Memorization:** *“The Lord is my Light and my Salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 28:1*



**Orthodox Facts & History**  
**KOONAN KURISSU PLEDGE (1653)**

The Koonan Kurisu Sathyam was the proclamation of the inherent independence of the Malankara Orthodox Church and is considered the starting point of the recent history of the Malankara Orthodox Church.

The Christians of Malankara were under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. The Malankara Christians who had faithfully followed the teachings and traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church were extremely distressed by the beliefs and worship of the Roman Catholic Church of the West. In a sign of defiance against the Portuguese, the gathered St. Thomas Christians tied a huge rope around the ancient Stone Cross in the Churchyard at Mattancherry (Cochin) and everyone of the large gathering held on to it. They repeated a pledge

proclaiming that "We and our children and their children to all generations to come will have nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church nor the Pope of Rome from now on." It is believed that this incident took place on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1653. The stone cross that everyone was touching during the pledge was slightly bent and therefore this historic oath came to be known as the 'koonan kurushu sathyam' The "pledge before the leaning cross" . Those assembled decided to ordain Thoma Archdeacon of the Pakalomattom family as bishop. Thoma Archdeacon assumed the name of Marthoma I and was raised to the position of Malankara Metropolitan by Mar Gregorios, the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

**To be continued...**  
Manoj Thomas

**SUNDAYS READINGS**

JULY	CATHOLIC EPISTLE	ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE	GOSPEL READING
July 3	Acts 4:32-37	Ephesians 2:11-22	Mark 3:20-30
July 10	1 Peter 2:15-17	1 Corinthians 6:9-11	Matthew 5:21-26
July 17	Acts 28:11-22	1 Corinthians 6:1-11	Luke 14:7-11
July 24	Acts 28:23-30	Romans 10:5-21	Matthew 18:1-11
July 31	James 2:14-26	1 Corinthians 14:34-39	Mark 6:7-13

**COMING NEXT ISSUE ...**

**Add Personal Announcements:** Birthdays, Anniversaries, Weddings,  
**Contact:** Manoj Thomas or Diana Mathai for Rates.

AUGUST	CATHOLIC EPISTLE	ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE	GOSPEL READING
August 7	James 4:7-5:6	Philippians 4:8-20	Matthew 21:28-32
August 14	Acts 1:12-14, 7:44-53	Galatians 4:1-7	Luke 11:22-28
August 21	1 John 2:22-29	Ephesians 6:10-17	Luke 6:39-45
August 28	2 Peter 3:8-14	2 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Luke 11:9-20

**IMPORTANT CHURCH DATES**

JULY 8-10	St. Thomas Festival, Perunnal
JULY 17	H.G. Thomas Mar Makarios leading Holy Qurbana
AUGUST 1	Soonoyo Lent Begins 15 Days
AUGUST 5	6:30pm Holy Qurbana—Transfiguration Of Our Lord
AUGUST 14	Soonoyo/Assumption—Dormition Of St. Mary, Lent Ends

**SUNDAY SERVICE**

**Morning Worship**  
**8am-9am**

**Holy Qurbana**  
**9am-11am**

**Sunday School**  
**8am-9am**



**St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Houston**