

# HODOS

THE WAY



Department of Communications  
Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa  
Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Syrian Church

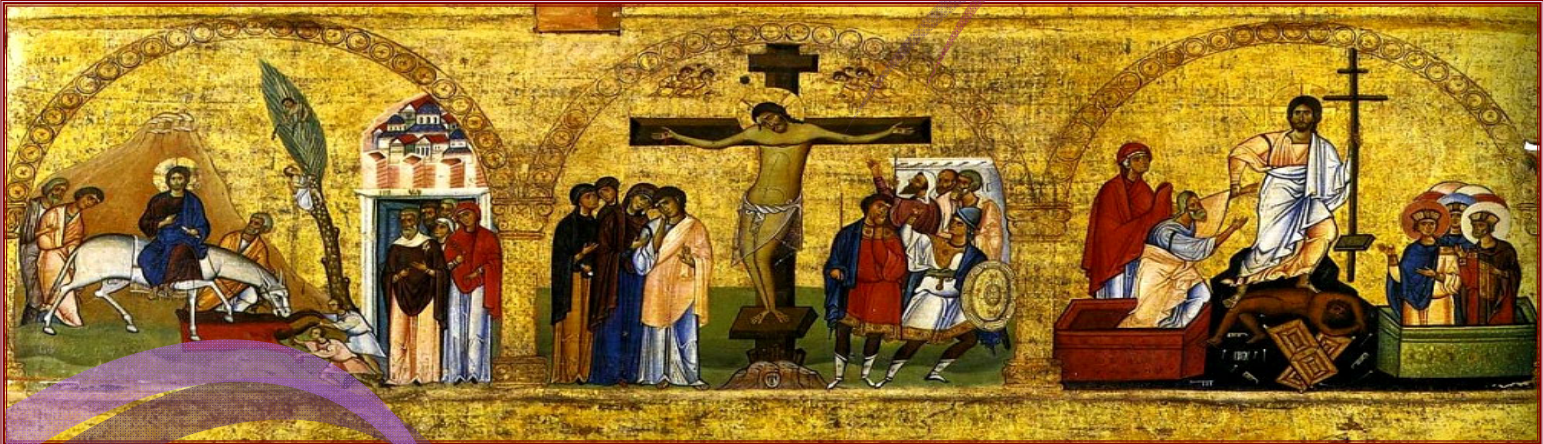


The Malankara  
ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

Monthly Newsletter of the Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa  
of the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Syrian Church

Volume 1, Issue 2

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## ***All of us are bound by the oath we take!***

- Sri. Arif Mohammen Khan, Hon. Governor of Kerala

## **MARTHOMAN HERITAGE ASSEMBLY**

*We are one, our heritage is one*

The Marthoman Heritage Assembly (*Marthoman Paithruga Samelanam*) held on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024 witnessed tens of thousands of Malankara orthodox faithful thronging at the Nehru Stadium, Kottayam, Kerala to commemorate the 1950<sup>th</sup> year of St. Thomas' martyrdom, the 90<sup>th</sup> memorial of St. Dionysius (Vattasseril) as well as the 90<sup>th</sup> year of the formulation of the historic Malankara Sabha Constitution.

Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan HH Baselios Marthoma Mathews III proclaimed that we stand steadfast in the faith proclamation "My Lord and My God", that imbibes faithfulness and the duty of Christian witnessing. We take pride in our heritage as the descendents of a great ancestry whose flame of faith was enlightened by the mission of the Apostle who touched Jesus' wound.



Hon. Governor of Kerala Sri. Arif Mohammed Khan, the chief guest, declared that our concerns are justified when we abide by the constitution. He added that it was our fundamental duty to obey and uphold the law of the land.

The grand event was graced by delegations from the Russian and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches as well as several political figures including the Hon. Governor of Goa Adv. PS Sreedharan Pillai and Ministers and MLAs. The event commenced with a grand rally from Baselios College grounds and proceeded through Kottayam town before reaching the Nehru Stadium which was attended by tens of thousands.



## **HODOS — The Way**

*"... the servants who had drawn the water knew."*

(John 2:9 NIV)

Great insights can be learnt throughout the scriptures about the Christian Way. At the event of the wedding feast at Cana, which we focused upon at the start of the Great Lent, we see Christ's interactions with the servants – not the host. The 'steward of the feast', the host, the one who welcomes everyone, who ensures that everything is arranged, who makes sure that everything is coordinated, turns out to be the one that is clueless about the events unfolding.

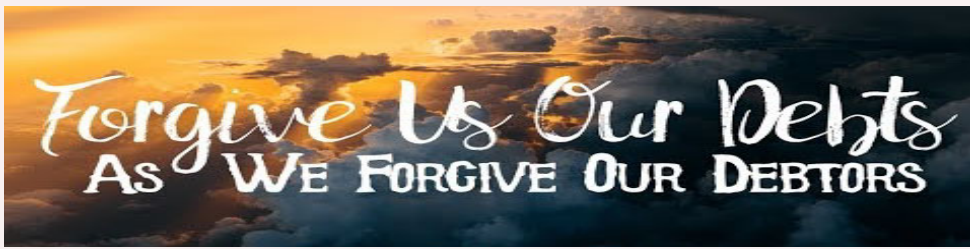
We come across several people today (mostly ourselves) in our daily lives – at work, at our social circles – all boasting to be the stewards – people with power, people with money, people with positions. Seldom do they know the real situations. We would always get a better understanding if we too were part of the hard working group of servants who saw the True Master perform the miracle. The most interesting part of the servants' actions is that when Christ tells them to fill up the jars with water, they endeavor to fill it 'up to the brim'. How wonderful would it be if we too could have filled up to the brim everything that our Almighty God asks of us. Every effort that we take should be wholeheartedly dedicated with dexterous carefulness to ensure that we give our 'all' to Christ.

- The Editor



## Storehouse of Treasures and Storehouse of Debts

+ Abraham Mar Stephanos



St. Ephrem the Syrian, in his *Nisibine Hymn* says, "It was unto Thee a storehouse of treasures but I have been a storehouse of debts." (1:3). In our normal conventional prayers as petitions, we take it for granted that God is the treasure house of blessings. God cannot be inexhaustible. All the same, we should not consider God as the manager of material provisions who would provide us all with all our demands and desires as and when we make our petitions for it.

Our God is indeed the infinite resource of love, mercy and all the virtues. After teaching his disciples what we today call the 'Lord's prayer', our Lord said "if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (St. Luke 11:13).

It is highly likely that on a peripheral reading, we are used to brushing aside the fact that we are 'debtors'. We seldom consider ourselves as debtors, until and unless we owe a material debt to someone. We need to be able to patiently reevaluate our lives, if possible at least at the end of each day, to assess how hugely we end up becoming debtors in our normal daily

lives. This could be even the smallest and silliest things, such as our forgetfulness to be thankful in our hearts for all that we received. With a prayerful heart, with due patience, we could bring out the debtors within us. For all the ignorance we bear within us on how hugely we owe for our daily lives to our creator and to the creation, we are debtors.

Our eternal God is the storehouse and in him we see forgiveness in store. St. Paul teaches us that, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace". (Eph. 1:7). Survival is not possible for us without his forgiveness. Particularly, during the days of the Great Lent, may we be able to weigh ourselves in knowing how hugely we have become debtors in this life and let us seek His forgiveness.

The *Nisibine Hymn* is making our recital of the Lord's Prayer more meaningful.

*God, forgive us our debts and sins as we also have forgiven our debtors. Amen.*

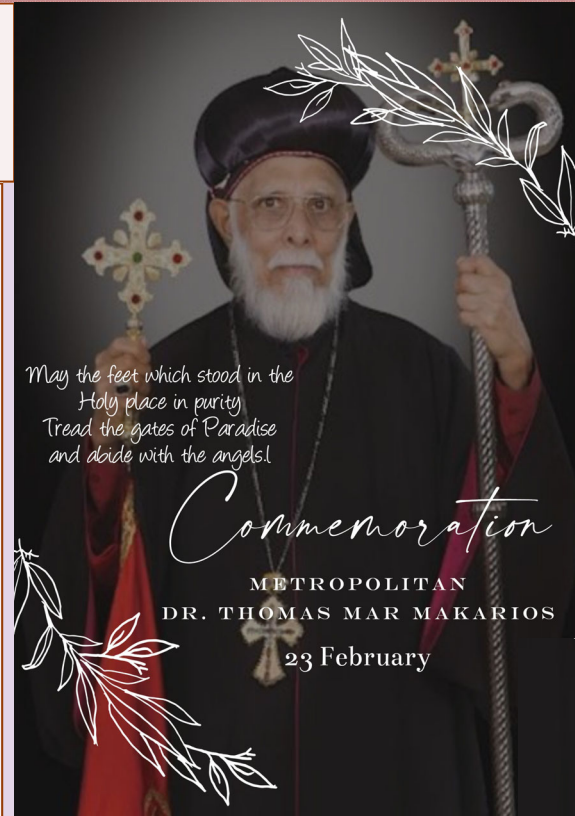
+ Metropolitan Abraham Stephanos

[Click HERE to access the Nisibine Hymns \(Ephrem\)](#)

To forgive someone who has wronged you is to seek forgiveness from God for your own sins. Do not consider it a loss for you, but a gain, for you receive more from God than what you forgive in another.

Therefore, if you wish to receive mercy, show mercy to your neighbour.

- St. John Chrysostom



May the feet which stood in the Holy place in purity  
Tread the gates of Paradise  
and abide with the angels!

*Commemoration*

METROPOLITAN  
DR. THOMAS MAR MAKARIOS

23 February

## Prayer Corner

I regret that I am Yours by name alone, and by deeds and by faults, I am away from you. I desire to be a penitent, but my insolent will does not allow me to be so. I teach others, but I do not learn. I have made others to drink, but I am still thirsty. May the spring which was opened by the spear quench my thirst. May I drink and rejoice.

- From the Qolo of the Wednesday Morning Prayers of the Great Lent.

O the one who fasts, call the poor and give him bread. Not when he comes to you, but go after him and fill his stomach... When the poor knocks at your door, do not tell him that the Lord will provide. This word is vain and it brings no reward to him who says it. Grant him gift and say. Then the word is not faulty. For he knows better than you that the Lord provides for him.

- From the Qolo of the Thursday Ninth Hour Prayers of the Great Lent.



## THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN MARY



Undeniably, the fundamental foundation of Christian faith is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:17). In the context of Christian history, however, we can consider the Feast of Annunciation as the milestone which marks the beginning of the Incarnation. This feast celebrated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, nine months before Christmas, celebrates Archangel Gabriel's announcement to the Virgin Mary about her miraculous conception and birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This event, which is a remarkable testimony of Mary's exemplary obedience and faith in the divine plan, is narrated in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke (1:26-39).

The term Annunciation is derived from the Latin word *annuntiationem*, which is rooted in "*annuntiare*" meaning to announce. In Greek, it is called *Ο Ευαγγελισμός της Θεοτόκου* or *the Annunciation to the Virgin*. In earlier times, this Feast was also referred to as the 'Feast of the Incarnation' or '*Conceptio Christi*' (Christ's Conception)<sup>1</sup>. The terminology used in the Syrian tradition is *Suboro/Sooboro*, meaning declaration or announcement. In the Malayalam vernacular, it is known as *Vachanippu*.

In the Orthodox tradition, the Feast of the Annunciation is celebrated as one of the Great Feasts of the liturgical year and is counted among the feasts of the Lord (*Moronooyo*), necessitating the celebration of Holy Qurbana even if it falls on the Friday of the Holy Week.

The historical origins of the Feast of Annunciation have been a subject of scholarly debate for a long time. It is believed that the Feast was introduced in the early days of Christianity, as mentioned in the works of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (d.273) and St. John Chrysostom in the fourth century CE. Some scholars suggest that the Feast originated around the Council of Ephesus (CE 431). The Sacramentarium of Pope Gelasius and the Sacramentarium of St. Gregory provide a more precise time frame for the Feast of Annunciation, as they explicitly mention the day of the Annunciation. These manuscripts serve as vital historical records for the precise day of the celebration of this feast. Although there is some ambiguity, Proclus, the Bishop of Constantinople (CE 446), also mentions "the Feast of the coming of Our Lord and Saviour, when He vested Himself with the nature of man" in one of his homilies. It is however possible that he may have referred to the Feast of Nativity.

The first authentic references to the Feast are found in the acts of the Council of Toledo in CE 656 and the Trullan Council in CE 692. A separate Feast of the Annunciation in March was first celebrated in Constantinople during the reign of Justinian I (CE 527-565) in the 6th century<sup>2</sup>. This new spring festival was dedicated to the Mother of God. According to Ephraim, the Syrian, the conception of Jesus Christ (Annunciation) occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan in the Jewish calendar. This day was significant as it was the same day the Passover lamb was chosen, as described in Exodus Chapter 12.

The Orthodox Church regards the Annunciation as a crucial event in human history marking the onset of the Incarnation of Christ. It highlights the synergy between humanity and

divinity in the person of Christ. A traditional hymn of the feast of nativity by Athanasius of Alexandria expresses the same idea: "Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the eternal mystery! The Son of God becomes the son of the Virgin, as Gabriel announces the coming of grace"<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, Gregory Thaumaturgus in his first homily 'On The Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary' says; "Today are strains of praise sung joyfully by the choir of angels, and the light of the advent of Christ shines brightly upon the faithful. Today is the glad spring-time to us, and Christ the sun of righteousness has beamed with clear light around us, and has illumined the minds of the faithful. Today is Adam made anew, and moves in the choir of angels, having winged his way to heaven. Today is the whole circle of the earth filled with joy, since the sojourn of the Holy Spirit has been realized to men. Today the grace of god and the hope of the unseen shine through all wonders transcending imagination, and make the mystery that was kept hid from eternity plainly discernible to us"<sup>4</sup>.

The Annunciation is not only a celebration of the conception of Jesus, but also marks the intersection of divine and human will. Therefore, the Orthodox Church believes the Virgin Mary's acceptance of the divine plan with humility and unconditional surrender was crucial. Mary's response, "Let it be done to me according to your word," epitomizes her surrender to God's will, setting an example of profound humility and trust. Moreover, the Annunciation was the call for the Virgin to become the second Eve and, in general, the call for the whole of humanity to partake in the salvific act of God. "Behold, I, the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word", is an expression of submission rather than a response. To the Virgin, it was the beginning of the pilgrimage, which finds its culmination at the foot of the Cross and way more. Through Mary's consent, God's plan for the redemption of humanity unfolds, emphasizing the importance of human cooperation in divine will embedded with divine grace.

The Annunciation is a historical event, holding a timeless message of hope and redemption. It presents Mary as an exemplary model of obedience and openness to God's will, calling on us to embrace the mystery of faith with humility and trust. This event highlights the significance of humility and surrendering to God's will, cooperating with divine grace, persevering in faith, and having hope in redemption through Christ. Believers must actively participate in God's work, embrace their spiritual journey, and trust God's plan. Mary's trust and obedience offer an inspiration for us to follow.

1. Lessons for Holy Days," The Prayer Book Society of Canada, accessed March 27, 2014, <http://www.prayerbook.ca>, archived October 9, 2020.
2. P. F. Bradshaw and M. E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts, and Seasons in Early Christianity* (Collegeville, MN : Liturgical Press, 2011), 205-6.
3. *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations* by John Chrysostom, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew 2010, 85.
4. CHURCH FATHERS: Four Homilies (St. Gregory Thaumaturgus)." Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/06094.htm>.

- @ave



## LENT - A REFLECTION ON NATURE

From a Christian perspective, nature is God's gift to humanity. As a vast and voluminous book open before us to learn a lot from, we are often baffled at certain natural phenomena when they are seen happening before our naked eyes. If we were to evaluate the four seasons of the year, we realize that at autumn, trees shed their leaves remaining bare. Although the woods look dead externally, they stay alive internally. After the cold winter which covers the land with snow, spring comes with trees blooming and sprouting fresh leaves afresh. Finally at summer, the Sun shines and trees bear fruits. The generation, degeneration and regeneration of life thus happen in the circle of time.

The spiritual seasons of the liturgical calendar of the Orthodox Church, which are similar to the seasons of nature, are a dramatic commemoration of the life and works of Christ on earth, whereby we fetch to our lives its spiritual benefits. It is quite interesting that the Church fathers meticulously designed the liturgical calendar in line with that of the natural seasons.

The beginning of the liturgical calendar by early November coincides with the start of winter. Further on, it is noteworthy that the Lenten period which is a Christian practice of spiritual cleansing coincides with the customary spring cleaning. The spring equinox which falls on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March is the day when the duration of day and night are equal. Astonishingly, the Feast of Annunciation, which falls on 25<sup>th</sup> of March comes close to the spring equinox – the day that spring begins. In a liturgical understanding, this feast marks the beginning of a new era or the sprouting of new life. 'Lent', derived from the old English 'lencten' or 'lengthen', which literally means 'lengthening of hours of day light', or in other words 'spring', proves that Christian life is correlated with the life cycle of Nature.

Whilst autumn and winter denote the fall of man by sin and his death respectively, spring and summer indicate the sprouting of new life by baptism and glowing in glory by the resurrection of Christ. Summer is when the Sun is prominent and shines in all its glory and vegetation thrives and yields. The Day of the great Feast of Easter, which follows the Great Lent, is when the risen Christ or the Sun of righteousness comes with wings of healing in all His glory, thus opening the age of grace by which the whole of creation becomes fruitful. Lent, which is one's wilful and voluntary sacrifice in the presence of God, is thus a period of transition from a state of death (winter) to a state of life (summer), at which time the faithful are encouraged to do works of charity out of their love for the glory of God.



Although the time of the Great Lent was initially formulated as a preparatory period for those preparing for baptism at Easter, it was gradually realized that by the careful keeping of these days, all Christians might take to heart the call to repentance, thus being eligible for the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel. Lent, as a period for self-examination, repentance, fasting and self denial facilitates one to become stronger in faith, hope and love and thus to grow to the perfection of God's holiness and goodness. It creates an atmosphere for one to practice the fruit of self-control (Gal 5:23). It takes on the role of a bridle or whip that tames a wild horse. Along with the essential disciplines of worship and meditation, Lent equips us to sprint along the journey of spiritual growth. When our goal is set upon the glorification of the Kingdom of God, our denial would be trivial compared to the eternal, imperishable reward that is promised to us.

St. Paul asserts that spiritual discipline such as fasting prepares a Christian to exercise faith and enter the kingdom of God. We control our physical passions not because the material world is evil, but because we are corrupt and tend to sin. It must be remembered that wilful disobedience, unthankful disposition, and uncontrolled desires are what put us astray from the path of salvation. The Holy Church however believes that the earth and everything in it are God's (Psalm 24:1). We will only be able to create a sense of the presence of God in us if we build our perspective based on need rather than greed.

Although the caterpillar and the butterfly share the same life, there is a world of difference between the two in both physical as well as functional features and characters. While the caterpillars may cause harm by destroying crops, butterflies promote life through their involuntary act of facilitating pollination.

The Christian life is and must be like the life of a butterfly. The Lenten period is something similar to the stage of pupa where each individual undergoes a spiritual transformation internally. Like the Pupa, we need to avoid food and to withdraw ourselves from worldly affairs, spending time in a pensive and meditative mood. One has to girdle around oneself with a sheath of prayer. Lent is, in fact, a cocooning with God, far from the madding crowd. A sincere observance of lent facilitates a drastic change in our lives which will make us benign like the butterfly. It would provide us with wings of divinity in flying up to far off places to imbibe the heavenly food. It will make us useful human beings enabling us to go about doing good to the world as our Lord Jesus Christ did while on earth.

- Fr. T. George, Ireland





# STRAYING MAN TURNS IRRATIONAL



Cappadocian Father St. Gregory of Nyssa, one of the major exponents of Orthodoxy, teaches in his book that God created Man with a 'Rational Soul' because God wanted His Spirit to be with a soul which could discern the Glory and Divinity of the 'Image and Likeness' of God. Man's entity remains ultimately in the 'Image and Likeness of God' installed within at the time of creation. Straying may be explained as losing that Image and Likeness, or in simple terms, as going away from God and His commandments. Man being a rational soul has the discernment to respond competently to his surroundings. Rationality aids the human ability to contemplate on what is good and evil. St Gregory further states that animals have been created with irrational souls and that means rationality makes the human nature positively distinct from that of an animal. However, if man loses his rationality, that distinction disappears and therefore, the Psalmist rightly says in Psalm 49:20 that "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish".

One does not need to be an atheist, agnostic or anti-theist to go astray from God. One can stray from the True Living God while being a Christian, because knowingly or unknowingly leading a life which God detests is straying. Satan's interventions in our life are not easily identifiable due to his deceiving mode of operation. Many of the repugnant ways of life of the past have now been turned acceptable by the forces and agents of Satan and therefore, we fail to realize that Satan who is the arch enemy of God and God's creations, especially man - the crown of all creation, is behind our spiritual failures. Many of the norms of moral life of the past have now been made neutral and obsolete due to the overpowering influence of darkness. The mankind with closed inner (Spiritual) eyes and widely opened external (worldly) eyes will stumble in darkness naturally. Only an enlightened inner eye can see the wolf underneath the goat's skin.

Satan, being the fallen angel with full of knowledge, found that the 'faculty of rationality' bestows the human soul with the ability to doubt, debate and dispute. He also knew that whatever faculties God had installed in the human body and Soul would grow and multiply as commanded by God (Genesis 1 : 28). He could not introduce something new in man's body or soul and therefore, he used man's God-given ability to be a rational thinker so as to think and pose questions about what God commanded. This can be well illustrated with the example of Eve. Satan turned the clear conscience of Eve into a doubting one. He knew, once aroused, the suspicion will grow stronger leading to disown God at some point, which would ultimately alienate man from

God completely. He presented himself before Eve as a well-wisher who would like to see Her become God-like and was successful in making her succumb to his deception.

Eve, being short-sighted, did not comprehend that:

1. The one in front was not a well-wisher but rather the destroyer in disguise.
2. She was a 'prototype' of what God wanted man to be at the appointed time.
3. She did not have the capability of bringing the desires of her body under control, which would be set free once the Fruit of Knowledge was tasted.

It is at this point that the entire humankind became susceptible to straying. The original sin mutated innumerable ways, deepened in its gravity over time and became an unbeatable enemy for human beings. We fail to understand the roles played by Satan in our lives in ways unfathomable for a normal human spirit. We need to have the discerning power through wisdom to recognize Satan's unidentifiable tricks which befall us. Man's discernment nullifies his inability to identify Satan.

*Satan's intervention in our life is not easily identifiable due to its deceiving mode of operation.*

Abstaining from the opportunity to worship God and from the Holy Communion is straying which is very common among Christians today. Receiving the Holy Body and Blood of Christ after an intoxicated Saturday Evening is deadly for many reasons. But, does Satan allow us to realize it? The first step to realize

the ways and means of Satan is to get back the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our life for which Prayer, Lent and Fasting are inevitable.

As we go through the days of the Great Lent once again, we must utilize the opportunity to regain the wisdom we lost and the discernment we miss. The Lent is like Noah's Ark which protected Noah, his family and the creatures within from sinking in the rising water of the deluge. A small perforation on the wall of the Ark would cause the water to ooze in thus filling the ark with water and eventually making the ark to submerge in the flood. Let us come back to our Lord during this Great Lent and utilize this opportunity to fortify the walls of our Spiritual life through Prayer, Fasting and Alms-giving which are the three arms of Lent.

Prayer strengthens and enlightens our spirit and reconnects it to God, Fasting disciplines our body and brings it under control of the Spirit and alms-giving humbles our soul and makes it surrender before God. In order to get our life in God back, we need to purify our body, soul and spirit because man's body, soul and spirit lost its harmony and purity by sinning and falling prey to Satan. The body, soul and Spirit must act as one in harmony to meaningfully worship God. Lent is the golden opportunity to bring the unfallen style of life in the Garden of Eden back to our day-to-day life. Let us try for it and may God's Holy Spirit guide and strengthen us to achieve it.

- Jacob Muringayil, London



## HOLY WEEK for the foodie

Abstinence is undoubtedly the key word of focus during the Lenten season, particularly the Holy Week. The Church Fathers teach us that a holistic Lenten experience can only be achieved through abstinence (self-denial) or at least moderation in all our indulgences—physical, social and psychological. That being said, our forefathers introduced several meaningful food items into the traditions and customs of our Holy Church to go along with the spiritual prayers of the Holy Week.

**KOZHUKATTA SHENI** — On the Saturday in between the 40th Friday and Hosanna, which is commemorated as Lazarus Day, recalling Jesus bring Lazarus back to life (Jn 11:38-44). The *kozhukatta* (steamed rice balls with coconut and jiggery filling) is symbolic of



the tomb from which the stone was removed and the sweetness of life was seen from within.



**PESAHA APPAM** — It is an offering that the faithful bring as *nercha* on the eve of Passover (Pesaha). Two traditions exist, one being the *Pesaha Vattayappam* (soft and fluffy steamed

rice cake) commonly seen in parts south of Central Travancore, and *Pesaha Inriappam* (a firm steamed rice cake made with unfermented rice batter). The name is derived from the board placed atop the cross at Jesus' crucifixion which read *INRI* (*Iesus nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum* — latin for Jesus of Nazereth, King of Jews). The brown *paal-kurukku* (milk condensed) is made using jaggery and coconut milk. This is commonly seen in parts north of Central Travancore.

**CHORKA** — A decoction made of bitter gourd juice, vinegar and *chenninayakam* (dried aloe vera gum) diluted with water used to wash rice (*kaadi vellam*). The faithful breaks their fast on Good Friday by drinking *chorka*, representing the sour wine-vinegar offered to Jesus on the Cross, thus symbolizing the faithful's participation in the suffering of Jesus Christ.

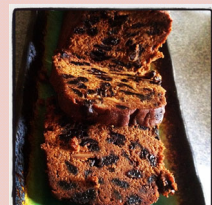
**KANJI and PAYYAR** — With complete fasting, the faithful participate in exceptionally long services on Good Friday. *Kanji* (a semi-solid rice gruel) along with *Payyar* (green gram stir fried with grated coconut) along with pickle and pappadam constitute the perfect, yet humble lunch. Certain local variations and additions such as *Aval Villayichathu* (dampened rice flakes) also exist.



While these are only some of the more popular traditions, there are several more such as *Kappa Puzhukku* (boiled tapioca) and *mullagudachadhu* (crushed chilly with onion) as a humble meal on Gospel Saturday, Cake, Appam and Chicken Stew on Easter, etc..

Whilst the primary focus of the season is certainly a holistic spiritual growth, these traditions helped to further build the bond of the community through sharing, thus furthering a Christian growth.

- Bernice James, South Africa





## HOLY EPISCOPAL SYNOD 19—23 February 2024

The Holy Episcopal Synod, the apex administrative body of the Malankara orthodox Syrian church constituting of all bishops and chaired by the Malankara Metropolitan convened from 19 to 23 February 2024. It was participated by all Metropolitans. The key decisions taken include:

1. Recommendations of the Managing Committee towards formulating two new dioceses based around Australia and Canada was accepted. Studies into the logistics and practicalities of it would be carried out.
2. The Rule Committee would be entrusted to study into the required Constitutional amendments so as to foster better participation of women in the administrative affairs of the Church including Malankara Association and Managing Committee
3. New programs to be formulated to ensure better participation of youth and children. New Spiritual Organizations to be commenced, namely, St. Dionysius Forum catering to people between the ages 40 and 60, and St. Joseph's Elders Forum for people above the age of 60.
4. Initiative to translate writings of early Fathers into Malayalam.
5. Centre of Mentally Challenged, Neuro Rehabilitation centre as well as Satellite Health Care Centres to be initiated through the Parumala Hospital.
6. Directives to clergy to refrain from proactive participation with Political Parties.



HOLY EPISCOPAL SYNOD — FEBRUARY 2024



The Diocese wishes heart congratulations to Rev. Fr. Dr. Shajan Varghese, who was awarded PhD in Oriental Patristics from Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome for his doctoral research under the guidance of Prof. Emidio Vergani on the topic "*Fasting in the Understanding of Jacob of Serugh and his tradition, with a special emphasis on Mimro 133*". He is the first person to be awarded a doctorate for research related to philological and

theological analysis of manuscripts of homilies from the Mingana Collections.

Fr. Dr. Shajan Varghese has also previously earned a MA degree in Syriac from MG University, Kottayam and an MTh in Christian Theology from Senate of Serampore. He earlier also served as Personal Secretary to Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios of blessed memory.



Marth Mariam Vanitha Samajam  
UK, Europe & Africa Diocese

### Continuous Bible Reading

LED BY MMVS

MMVS members from UK, Europe & Africa Diocese are actively reading the Holy Bible continuously as a spiritual exercise during this Lenten journey.

"Lord have Mercy on all the ministries of the Diocese"



Prayerfully invites everyone to join the group by scanning the above QR code  
MMVS Executive Committee





## MARTHOMAN HERITAGE SEMINAR

### “Cultural Expressions of St. Thomas Tradition”



In solidarity with the Marthoman Heritage Assembly held in Kottayam, India on Sunday 25 February 2024, the Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa organized a webinar on Saturday 17 February 2024 at 4pm GMT. The Marthoman Heritage Seminar was organized by the Malankara Association Managing Committee members of the Diocese along with the Department of Communications.

The webinar was led by Rev. Fr. Job Sam Mathew, who currently serves as lecturer at the Orthodox Theological Seminary Kottayam. He also serves as a the South India regional Executive of the Church History Association of India (CHAI).

Fr. Job Sam Mathew delivered a very enlightening talk on the topic “The Cultural Expressions of St. Thomas Tradition”, in which he talked about the historical development through the socio-cultural environments of the centuries.

The webinar was moderated by Dr. Sen Kallumpuram. Diocesan Metropolitan HE Abraham Mar Stephanos added his remarks, while Fr. T. George and Mr. Soji Mathew spoke. The webinar was followed by an opportunity for participants to ask questions. Fr. Varghese T. Mathew concluded with the Vote of Thanks.

## ENCHRISTO FEBRUARY 2024

### “Pampakuda Pengitho—A General Introduction”

The February Edition of the **EnChristo** Online Series, hosted by the Department of Communication was held on Sunday 18 February 2024 on ZOOM.

The class was led by Rev. Fr. Dr. Johns Abraham Konat, former Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary Kottayam. Fr. Konat delivered a very interesting class on a general introduction to the Pampakuda Pengitho. He talked about its origins, the historical developments as well as its usage in the Malankara Church from the previous centuries.

Diocesan Metropolitan HE Abraham Mar Stephanos added his comments. The session, which was moderated by Fr. Dr. Saji C Zachariah concluded with queries from the participants.

The Holy Synod which convened in February 2024 has conferred the title ‘**Malankara Malpan**’ to Rev. Fr. Dr. Johns Abraham Konat. Fr. Konat, a renowned Syriac expert has previously served as Malankara Sabha priest Trustee, Principal of the Orthodox theological Seminary Kottayam. He is the owner of the historic Pampakuda Collections.



The March edition of EnChristo will be held on  
**Sunday 17 March 2024 at 5pm GMT on ZOOM.**  
**Meeting ID : 5969306430      Passcode: enchristo**



## New Chapter Commences for WCC FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION



The newly-appointed WCC Faith and Order Commission met face-to-face for the first time to plan its next eight years of work. The Commission convened in Tondano, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, marking its inaugural in-person meeting to plan strategies for the upcoming years. Theologians from all continents gathered in Indonesia, hosted by the Indonesian Communion of Churches. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was represented by Metropolitan HE Abraham Mar Stephanos, who also serves as the Vice President of the Department for Ecumenical Relations.

The Faith and Order Commission is a unique body, bringing together theologians and church leaders from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions – women and men, lay and ordained – with several places reserved for younger theologians. The commission considered plans for the 2025 world conference commemorating the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Commissioners also formed study groups to work on ecumenical perspectives on topics such as “the church in and for the world,” focusing on questions of peace, violence and reconciliation, “being human: discerning humanity in the image of God”, focusing on moral discernment and on theological anthropology.

## KOINONIA The Youth Fellowship



The Student Hospitality Platform (OASSIS) of the Orthodox Christian Youth Movement (OCYM) of the Diocese organized KOINONIA 2024, a youth fellowship on 10 February 2024 at the London Brockley St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church. 64 students and working professionals from across the country attended the event.

It was a great opportunity for youngsters from around the country to unite in the name of Christ so as to spend time bonding with one another building a fellowship. The theme of the event was based on Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine forth before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

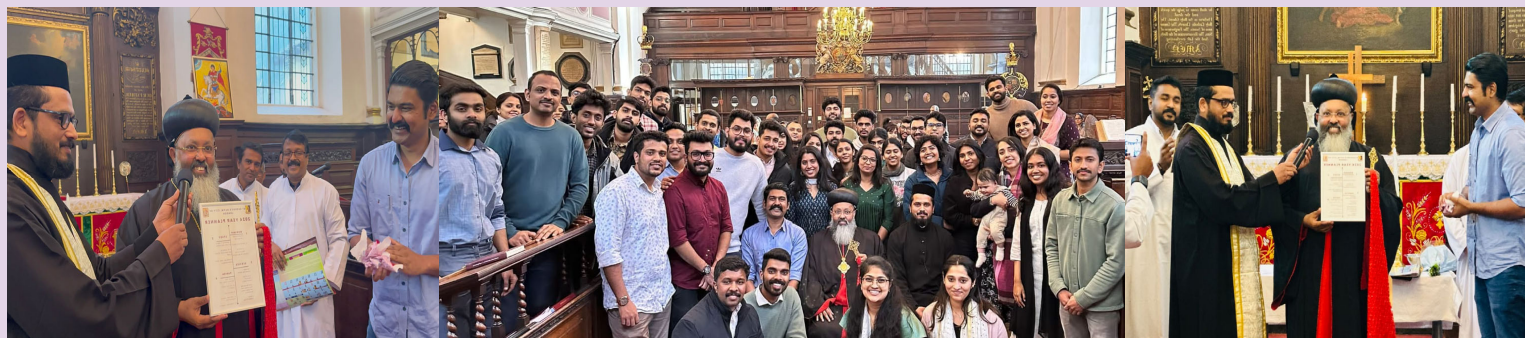
The event commenced with the blessings of Diocese Metropolitan HE Abraham Mar Stephanos. Mr. Ephrem Sam, co-ordinator of the event delivered the welcome speech. Rev. Fr. Nithin Prasad Koshy, Diocesan Vice-President of OCYM inaugurated the event. OCYM Diocese General Coordinator Mr. Royce Raju presided over the event. Malankara Association Managing Committee member Dr. Sen

Kallumpuram, OCYM Diocesan Secretary Ms. Abina Philip, London Brockley St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church Trustee Mr. Sisan Chacko, Secretary Mr. Biju Kochunni, OCYM Unit Secretary Mr. Noby Roys and Student Representative Mr. Bibin Bobachan delivered felicitations. The Vote of thanks was given by Mr. Abin Raju.

Sessions included “Christian Discipleship and Mission” led by Rev. Fr. Jeelson P. Wilson as well as “The change Needed for the Changing UK2024” led by Criminal Defence Duty Solicitor Mr. Baiju Thittala. Mr. Sino George led the discussions and reflections.



# EVENTS AND CELEBRATION IN THE DIOCESE



**Inauguration of OCYM Projects for 2024-25 at City of London St. George IOC**



**Elevation as Parish  
Preston St. George IOC**

**Felicitation of MMVS Exam Winners  
London Brockley St. Gregorios IOC**



**Youth Fellowship Meeting at  
Dublin Preston St. George IOC**



**Ecumenical Fellowship at  
Liverpool St. Thomas IOC**



**Dedication of New Cross Shrine at  
South Africa St. Thomas IOC**



**Sunday School Inauguration at  
Crawley Holy Trinity IOC**



# EVENTS AND CELEBRATION IN THE DIOCESE



**Julianstown (Meath)**

**Limerick**

**Waterford**

**Mulingar**



**Drogheda**

**Cork**

**Galway**

**Lucan**

**Manchester**

## MALANKARA ORTHODOX SANGAMAM Registration Inauguration



## Holy Qurbana and Sunday School Inauguration at Vienna (Austria) St. Thomas IOC



**Sunday School Inauguration at  
Sunderland St. Mary's IOC**

**Sunday School Inauguration at  
Southend-on-Sea St. Gregorios IOC**



## EVENTS AND CELEBRATION IN THE DIOCESE



Charity Fund Raiser Events—OCYM London Brockley St. Gregorios IOC



Feast of St. Dionysius (Vattasseril) - Palli Perunal - Northampton St. Dionysius IOC

### OFFICIAL LOGO RELEASED FOR MALANKARA ORTHODOX SANGAMAM

Following a competition held in which several entries were received from all over the Diocese, the Diocesan Council on the recommendation of the Malankara Orthodox Sangamam Publicity Committee selected the LOGO that would be used as the Official Logo of the Sangamam.

The winning entry was created by Ms. Ashna Abraham (Southend-on-Sea St. Gregorios IOC). The official Logo was released by Diocesan Metropolitan HE Abraham Mar Stephanos at EnChristo held on Sunday 18 February 2024.





# MARTHOMAN PAITHRUGA SAMELANAM

## Sunday 25 February 2024—Kottayam



# FEAST OF ST. DIONYSIUS (Vattasseril)

## 25 February 2024—Kottayam





## DATES TO NOTE — MARCH 2024

02 (Saturday) -	Premarital Counselling
03 (Sunday) -	Fourth Sunday of Great Lent ( <i>K'nanaytho</i> — Canaanite)
06 (Wednesday) -	Mid-Lent ( <i>Paathi Nombu</i> )
10 (Sunday) -	Fifth Sunday of Great Lent ( <i>K'fiftho</i> — Bent Woman)
17 (Sunday) -	Sixth Sunday of Great Lent ( <i>Samiyo</i> — Blind Man) Catholicate Day
	<b>EnChristo Online Series (on ZOOM — 5pm GMT)</b>
22 (Friday) -	40th (Friday) Day of Great Lent
23 (Saturday) -	Lazarus Saturday
24 (Sunday) -	Palm Sunday (Sunday of Hosannas)
25 (Monday) -	Annunciation to St. Mary ( <i>Suboro</i> — Vachanippu Perunaal)
28 (Thursday) -	Thursday of the Holy Mysteries (Pesaha)
29 (Friday) -	Good Friday (Dukha Velli)
30 (Saturday) -	Gospel Saturday ( <i>Shabtho d'Suboro</i> — Arriyipinde Shen)
31 (Sunday) -	Feast of Resurrection / Easter ( <i>Qyomtho</i> —Uyarppu)

**MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH**  
**DIOCESE OF UK-EUROPE AND AFRICA**

**Pre-Marital Counselling**

**SATURDAY 02 MARCH 2024**

For Registration

WhatsApp Fr. Saji C. John : +44 75 8735 14 23

**GREAT LENT**  
**EVENING PRAYERS**  
Every Week Sunday to Thursday

**IN MALAYALAM**

led by priests of the Diocese  
1800hrs GMT / 1900hrs CET / 2000hrs SAST

ZOOM Meeting ID : 84106003472  
Passcode : 123456

**IN ENGLISH**

led by OCYM  
2030hrs GMT / 2130hrs CET / 2230hrs SAST

ZOOM Meeting ID : 84451279158  
Passcode : 123456

**MALANKARA**  
**ORTHODOX** 2024  
**SANGAMAM**

**REGISTRATION**  
**STARTED**  
**AT YOUR NEAREST**  
**PARISH**

**United Kingdom**

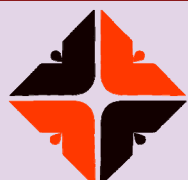
25th May 2024  
Leamington Rd, Ryton-on-Dunsmore,  
Coventry CV8 3FL

**Ireland**

2nd June 2024  
St Patrick's College, Maynooth  
Co.Kildare, W23 NX63

... in search of  
what cannot  
be seen

2 COR 4:18



Department of Communications  
Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa  
Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church

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