

ΕΠΙΣΤΛΕ ΕΧΩΔΕΣ

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF OCYM , ABERDEEN

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First Issue of Newsletter

The first issue of this quarterly Newsletter was released on 29th April after the Easter Service by Rev. Fr. John Mathews. A big thank you to all who helped us achieve this milestone.

- OCYM Aberdeen



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Donations by OCYM



OCYM Secretary, Jewel Jacob, had the pleasure of handing over the donations of few people who contributed to Barnardo's Charity. Barnardo's is one of the leading children's charities in the UK. Every year, they provide ongoing support for over 370,000 children, young people, parents and carers, through their services and partnerships. We have a lot of choices when it comes to donating, and we are so grateful that some of our members chose to help OCYM donate to a good cause.

OCYM is still collecting donations, and if you would like to help us, please get in touch with Jewel Jacob. Every donation helps, so if you have clothing, shoes, bags, books, homewares etc. in usable state please donate.

Give, and it will be given to you Luke 6:38



HG Geevarghese Mar Ivanios

On April 12th we observed Dukrono of HG Geevarghese Mar Ivanios. Thirumeni is entombed at Mar Baselios Dayara (monastery) near Kottayam, Kerala.

God chose Thirumeni to lead Kottayam diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Church, which was previously led by holy fathers Pampady Thirumeni and Paret Mathews Mar Ivanios. Just as his saintly predecessors, Thirumeni had great compassion for anyone who approached him.

Thirumeni was a man of unceasing prayer and believed in the power of mediatory prayers. He had personal encounter with the saints of the Church including Parumala St. Gregorios and Pampady Kuriakose Mar Gregorios. His Grace was on his death bed in 1978 almost succumbing to cancer. Doctors had given Him hours to live, but he was miraculously cured. This is how Thirumeni describes those moments in his own words "Suddenly, I had a vision or an Epiphany. Four saints were standing beside me. One of them asked me. "Why are you lying down? Get up". He lifted me up and suddenly all four of them disappeared. I found myself sitting up on the bed. I was fully conscious. There was a shocked surprise on every face around me. They looked at me as though I had resurrected from death. I was cured of that fatal illness."

It was after this illness His Grace was raised to Ramban in March 1979. In 1985, Thirumeni was appointed as Metropolitan. Thirumeni was diagnosed with cancer while He was in the service of the Chapel of Pampady Thirumeni and He always believed that Pampady Thirumeni had been praying for him. And always exclaimed that it is only because of Pampady Thirumeni's blessings that he was fortunate to become his successor as the Metropolitan of Kottayam Diocese.

HG Geevarghese Mar Ivanios was born on November 14, 1940 in Madurai, in the Keeyath family, Othara, as third son of K George and Annamma. His father, a railway employee, belonged to Marthoma Church. He spent his early childhood in Madurai until he was four years old and then shifted to Kollam, as result of his father transfer of residence. After schooling there, he did his BSc from Fathima Matha National College,

Kollam. He used to attend the Church service and studied Sunday School in a CSI Church, close to his house.

Although Thirumeni was born into a Marthoma family, He was always fascinated by the prayers and worship styles of Orthodox faith and was attracted to fasts and lent which he imbibed from his sister's Orthodox family. Also, He had a few friends from the orthodox faith, staying in Kollam Aramana. He started to attend the Evening Prayers of the Orthodox Church, there. There He met and developed a close-knit relation with HG Mathews Mar Coorilos and finally became a member of the Orthodox Church and began to partake Holy Qurbana. He also, started to serve as an Altar Server and even as a Sunday School teacher. His father wished, he would join engineering after his graduation in Physics, but young George had already decided to join seminary.

His Grace has authored number of books, 'Hridaya Sudhikaranam' (Purification of Heart), 'Nirlepam' and 'Mounathinte Lavanyam'.



"Son of God, forget them not
Priests of Thine who served Thee right
Grant them pleasantness of face
On Thy advent day sublime"

- Shinoj Cheruvathoor

A delve into our heritage - Niranam Valiyapally

Niranam Church has a rich history of being the symbol of Christian faith in Kerala and a citadel of Orthodox Christianity since its inception in AD 54 by St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. St Thomas reached Kerala in AD 52 and started preaching the gospel. He founded 8 churches, which are called 'Ezhara Pallikal', meaning seven and half churches. These were at Kodungallur, Kollam, Niranam, Nilackal (Chayal), Kokkamangalam, Kottakkayal (Paravoor), Palayoor (Chattukulangara) and Thiruvithamkode (the half church). St. Thomas who had great respect for the Holy Virgin, named all these churches after St. Mary. At Niranam, St. Thomas baptised



many people and ordained people with social eminence as priests, to administer the church. The church founded by St Thomas at Niranam was adjacent to Sri Thrikpaleswara Hindu Temple of Lord Shiva. Some adversaries of the new faith later took out the cross, founded by the Apostle and threw it into the neighboring river. When St Thomas returned to Niranam after two years (AD 54) he heard about this and went in search of the cross. He found it at a place in the down stream and again

founded the church at that place, which is believed to be the present location of the church. According to the available records, the present building is the fourth, which was built in 1912. The third building was built in 1259.

Analysis of soil says that during the first century, Niranam and the surrounding places were costal region. Probably, it was a place where the river joined the sea. Some historians are of the opinion that the name Niranam derived from an old name 'NeerMannu', which meant land with water. Presence of water bodies enabled travel through water and it is believed that the Apostle reached Niranam in a ship (it might be a big boat). During the 14 th century, there was a great flood and the geography of the area changed a lot because the sea retreated exposing a lot of land.

Even today, there is a place at Niranam, near Kolarayar - a tributary of River Pampa - named 'Thomathukadavu', which is supposed to be the spot where St. Thomas got down from the ship. The word 'Thomathukadavu' might have emerged from 'Thoma Vanna Kadavu', which means the jetty where Thomas came.

Niranam Church was the southern headquarters of the Orthodox Church in Kerala for centuries. Many of the Malankara Metropolitans (the chief bishops) ruled the church by staying here. The church is famous for its historical importance, loyalty to the Indian Orthodox Church, architectural beauty and some of its antiques. Almost all of the old churches in southern Kerala - whether belonging to Orthodox, Marthoma or Roman Catholic churches - were separated from this mother parish, during course of time. Niranam Church witnessed a number of historical events in the church history including the establishment of a Catholicate in the Indian Orthodox Church in 1912. The first Catholicose and second Catholicose of the church were ordained at Niranam Church (in 1912 and 1925). Four of the Malankara Metropolitans of the church passed away while staying here and two (Mar Thoma II and Mar Thoma V) were buried here.

- extract from mosc.in



Mar Thoma II (1670-1686)

Mar Thoma II was the second Metropolitan of the Malankara Syrian Church from 1670 to 1686. By the time of Mar Thoma II became the Metropolitan of Malankara in 1670, many of the Syriac practices were already reintroduced into Malankara Church. The use of western calendar, baptismal fonts and having pulpits are some of them. During his time priests were encouraged to marry. He preserved the faith and gave leadership to its activities.



Mar Thoma IV (1688-1728)

Mar Thoma IV was the 4th Malankara Metropolitan of the Malankara Church in India, serving from 1688-1728. During his tenure, the church was subject to a number of persecutions. Mar Thoma III died suddenly on 21 April 1688 and was laid to rest at Kadampanad church. The leaders of the Malankara Church selected Mar Thoma IV as his successor. At that time Mar Ivanios Hidayuttulla from Antioch who arrived in Kerala in 1685 was the only bishop in Malankara. So Mar Ivanios consecrated Mar Thoma IV in 1688. There is nothing much known about his earlier days except that he was also from Pakalomattom family, just like his predecessors.

Parumala Thirumeni: Mysteries, Miracles and Divine Presence

Miracle Events

Mar Gregorios was being brought to Mazhuvannur Church from Karin-gachira Church on a palanquin by the people. They were passing through Njariyamkuzhy, a paddy field on the northern side of Kolencherry Church. Paddy was almost ripe and getting ready for reaping. Thirumeni, who was interested in agriculture asked: "how is the crop my, children?" They told Thirumeni that this year the crop was very bad because of the weeds and locusts. Thirumeni said that it was because they did not ask God. A sample paddy crop was brought to Thirumeni, and it was seen that there was no grain inside it. Thirumeni got down from the palanquine, and holding the cross in his hands prayed with tears in his eyes. He told those people to undertake fasting and prayer for three days and then to come to the Church. "Let us pray, the weeds and locusts will disappear" he said. Everyone did as Thirumeni commanded. Thirumeni celebrated the Eucharist and prayed to God. Surprisingly when the harvest came, the crop was plentiful!

Many people from Thumpamon area died of smallpox after 1886. When the saint heard about this, he rushed to the place and visited the homes of the patients one after another irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Thirumeni's visit was a soothing relief from the fear, due to his prayers and possible services, which were rendered during the visits. The saint had asked his followers to do the same for the frightened people. The patients got relief slowly but steadily. Until the killer disease had completely disappeared from that place, Thirumeni stayed at the church.

Nestled amidst the serene landscapes of Kerala, Parumala Thirumeni stands as a testament to faith, miracles, and spiritual enlightenment. Born in 1848 in the village of Mulanthuruthy, Geevarghese Gregorios embarked on a journey from humble beginnings to becoming a revered saint in the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. His story is one of divine grace and profound devotion.

Early Upbringing: A Divine Calling

Geevarghese Gregorios, from his early years, displayed an innate inclination towards spirituality and service. Raised in a devout Orthodox Christian family, he immersed himself in the teachings of the church and showed remarkable intellect and wisdom beyond his years. His upbringing laid the foundation for a life dedicated to serving humanity and spreading the message of love and compassion.

Ordination and Spiritual Ascendancy

In 1876, Geevarghese Gregorios was ordained as a priest and assumed the revered title of Parumala Thirumeni. His ordination marked the beginning of a spiritual odyssey filled with divine interventions and miraculous occurrences. Parumala Thirumeni's sermons, infused with profound insights into scripture and practical wisdom, captivated the hearts and minds of his followers, drawing them closer to the divine.

Miraculous Acts: Healing Touch and Divine Grace

Parumala Thirumeni's life was punctuated by numerous miracles, which became the cornerstone of his spiritual legacy. Stories abound of his healing touch, restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and health to the ailing. From calming storms to multiplying provisions, his miraculous deeds were a testament to the boundless power of faith and the divine grace that flowed through him.

Flourishing Christian Community: A Testament to Leadership

Under the leadership of Parumala Thirumeni, the Christian community flourished, both spiritually and materially. His unwavering commitment to serving the marginalized and uplifting the downtrodden endeared him to his followers, who looked up to him as a fatherly figure and spiritual guide. Parumala Thirumeni established educational institutions, orphanages, and charitable initiatives, providing opportunities for the underprivileged to thrive and succeed.

A Pilgrimage of Faith: Drawing Millions to Parumala Church

Today, Parumala Church stands as a sacred pilgrimage site for millions of Orthodox Christians around the world. Pilgrims from far and wide journey to this hallowed sanctuary, seeking solace, healing, and spiritual renewal. The air is thick with devotion as believers offer prayers and supplications at the saint's tomb, believing in the interces-



Original Photo Taken By D'cruz

sion of Parumala Thirumeni for their needs and aspirations.

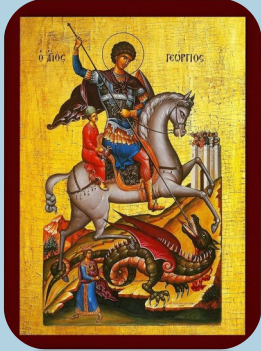
Conclusion: A Beacon of Light and Hope

Parumala Thirumeni's life continues to inspire and uplift millions, transcending the boundaries of time and space. His miraculous acts and unwavering faith serve as a guiding light for all who seek spiritual enlightenment and divine intervention. As pilgrims gather at Parumala Church, they are reminded of the enduring legacy of a saint whose life was dedicated to spreading love, compassion, and the message of Christ to all corners of the earth.

- Melwin Sudeeb

St. George Feast

The annual feast of St. George was celebrated on Sunday 28th April. Church was blessed with both Dr. Rev. Fr. John Mathew & our Vicar Rev. Fr. Varghese dedicating the Qurbana. Perunal started with evening prayers on previous day. After the Qurbana the traditional 'Paachoru Nercha' was handed over to everyone and classes for MMVS by Fr. John Mathew was unexpected and very insightful.



St. George, also known as Geevarghese Sahdha holds the esteemed title of patron saint within the Indian Orthodox community, where he is fervently invoked for protection, particularly in times of peril. According to tradition, St. George served as a soldier in the Roman emperor Diocletion's army. He faced persecution for his Christian faith and was ultimately martyred in AD 303 on April 23rd. One of the most renowned tales surrounding St. George is his valiant slaying of a snake-dragon to rescue a young girl, the king's daughter, from being sacrificed. This heroic act is a central theme in depictions of the saint.

St. George is honored as a military saint and is also recognized as the patron saint of several countries, including England, Georgia, Malta, and Ethiopia. The sermon by Fr. John Mathew touched upon the story behind St. George being Saint of Hospitality and how this maybe related to the 'Appam & Kozhi Curry' tradition of Puthupally Perunal back home in Kerala.



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Prayer Corner

"O Merciful God, the voice of our prayer knocks at Thy door; prevent not from Thy devotees the petitions of their needs. We call upon Thee, O God, to assist us in our infirmities. O Good one, hearken to the voice of our supplication, and grant our petitions in Thy mercy."

Elders' Wisdom: Are We Overlooking Our Greatest Teachers?

In our Christian journey, we are called to embody love and compassion, especially towards those who have traversed longer paths and garnered wisdom along the way. As the ancient Central-African proverb of the Ntomba people wisely states, *"a youth that does not cultivate friendship with the elderly is like a tree without roots."* This sentiment resonates deeply, echoing the biblical emphasis on respecting our elders, urging us to treat them with kindness, reverence, and understanding.

Leviticus 19:32 reminds us, **"You shall stand up before the gray head and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord."** Here, we are urged to acknowledge the years of experience encapsulated in ageing and to revere the divine presence within each elderly individual. Similarly, **1 Timothy 5:1-2** provides clear instructions on the manner in which we should interact with our elders: **"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."** This guidance underscores the familial bond we share with our elders, urging us to extend the same care and respect we would offer our own kin.

Proverbs 16:31 eloquently depicts the honour associated with ageing: **"Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness."** This verse celebrates the dignity and wisdom that come with old age, urging us to value and respect the experiences of our elders. When God instructs us to respect our elders, He calls upon us to treat them with kindness, compassion, and dignity. But, who are included within the category of elders? They encompass not only grandparents, but also parents, older siblings, teachers, elderly people in our community, seniors at work and spiritual mentors, carrying with them a wealth of wisdom, experience, and insight deserving of our honour and reverence.

Respecting our elders transcends mere words; it should manifest in our actions and attitudes. It entails listening attentively to their stories, seeking their counsel, and valuing their perspectives. Simple gestures of kindness, such as holding the door open or offering assistance with tasks, demonstrate our respect. Yet, respecting our elders goes beyond surface-level politeness. It requires us to cultivate genuine empathy and understanding, recognizing the challenges they may face in a rapidly changing world. Patience and forbearance, especially in moments of disagreement or

misunderstanding, become essential.

Acknowledging that respecting our elders may present challenges, especially in difficult situations such as differences in opinion, we must rely on God's help and guidance to respond with respect. By treating our elders with kindness and compassion, we honour God's commandments and contribute to a more loving and respectful community. It's crucial to acknowledge that respecting our elders does not equate to enduring abuse or mistreatment. God calls us to love and respect one another, but He does not condone harmful behaviour. Setting boundaries and seeking support are essential if we find ourselves in situations of abuse or harassment.



In our efforts to honour our elders, we are not alone. Drawing strength and guidance from God, we trust in His wisdom and grace. Through prayer and reflection, we can cultivate hearts filled with compassion and humility, enabling us to embody Christ's love in all our interactions. Let us embrace the wisdom of age with open hearts and minds, cherishing the invaluable lessons our elders have to offer and recognizing their contributions to our lives and communities. Above all, let us commit ourselves to respecting and honouring our elders as an expression of our reverence for God and His commandments.

- Bibin Babu



QUIZ

- 1) What did Jacob give Joseph that sparked jealousy from his siblings?
- 2) What is the shortest verse in the Bible?
- 3) In what city were Jesus' followers first called "Christians"?
- 4) Where can you find the 10 commandments in the Bible?
- 5) Who was the first king of Israel?

Announcements

- a. 5th SCOTLAND INDIAN ORTHODOX SANGAMAM, **SIOS 2024** will be held on 08th & 9th June at Holburn West Parish Church. This year SIOS is led by Aberdeen congregation.
- b. Youth away day is confirmed, this will be on 16th & 17th August at **Cairngorms Christian Centre**, Inverness. 12 of our youth members will make it to the away day. Please get in touch with Ansu Saji for any details.
- c. Third issue of this newsletter will be released on 30th September, members are encouraged to contribute any pictures, articles and reflections for future newsletters.
- d. Our Choir has been doing an excellent job and will be performing in our upcoming SIOS 2024. We organise choir practices every week, please join the choir WhatsApp group if you like to be part of the choir. Contact person for Choir is Bibin Babu.
- e. This year **OVBS** will be for three days starting on 20th September and finishes with Qurbana on 22nd September. All young members are encouraged to register and participate; please get in touch with Trustee or Secretary for details.
- f. **Annual Europe & Africa Orthodox Youth Camp** will be held for three days between 11th and 13th October. For registration details please get in touch with Ansu Saji.

Memories

