

St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church,
Greater Washington



*St. Thomas
Mirror*

EDITION : 14

APRIL 2015

Christ is risen!!!... Indeed He is risen!!!...



Vicar's Message

Dearly Beloved ones in Christ,

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! (St.Luke 24: 5-6). Easter Sunday is about the resurrection of Jesus, which brings hope, a hope beyond the grave. The hope is valid only when it's a 'True Hope'. What is this true hope? Because Jesus is raised as both Savior and Judge, we shall be raised, either to eternal life or to eternal judgment for sure. “An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth” (John 5:28-29).Easter is promising that every person will have a bodily resurrection, none will be missing at this great roll call. Easter is promising us that Jesus will one day speak and all the dead will be raised from the tombs, there is life and hope beyond the grave for every person. This future resurrection is going to put humans into two categories, the good and the evil. John 3:19 -21 says, “Now this is the basis for judging: that the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil deeds hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed. But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God”.

Good deeds come from God alone. In order for our deeds to be counted as good, it has to come from a heart that is purified by faith in Jesus Christ. The good tree bears good fruit in this life; the bad tree bears bad fruit. Our personal destiny completely depends on how we respond to Jesus Christ today. We have to seek Him to obtain that eternal Kingdom. Jesus said, “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal” (John 6:27). Let this Easter day mark a beginning of a new era in our hearts, to live not just for this earthly life, rather to live for the eternal life which is promised for those who believe and seek Him.

Along with Easter, our parish is also celebrating our perunal on New Sunday which is April 12th of this year. I encourage all the faithful to attend with prayers to receive the blessings through the intercession of St. Thomas our patron saint.

God bless you all!

Yours in Christ,

Johnson Achan

Dates to remember

04/02/2015 - Pesaho (Maundy Thursday)

04/03/2015 - Good Friday

04/04/2015 - Gospel Saturday (Saturday of Good Tidings)

04/05/2015 - Easter Sunday

04/12/2015 - New Sunday (Sunday after Easter - The Sunday of the Youth)

04/19/2015 - First Sunday after New Sunday

04/26/2015 - Second Sunday after New Sunday



Members celebrating birthday

Biju Mathew	- 4/1
Deepak George	- 4/2
Nikitha Thomas	- 4/2
Davis Varghese	- 4/3
George Daniel	- 4/9
Benjamin Thomas	- 4/14
Leelamma Yohannan	- 4/15
Arvin Jacob	- 4/18
Kochumol Suresh	- 4/20
Steve Jomon	- 4/20
Mary Thomas	- 4/21
Armaan Koshy	- 4/24
Meryl Abraham	- 4/26
Alen Jomon	- 4/27
Mercy Thomas	- 4/29
Joji Thomas	- 4/30



Members celebrating wedding anniversary

T.P Abraham and Chinnakutty Abraham	- 4/20
Thomas Palathra and Reena Palathra	- 4/22
Shibu Varghese and Sinobiya Cheriyan	- 4/26

**** If any of your family member's anniversary/birthday falls on this month and doesn't see under birthday/anniversary column; please login to our church website and update ****

Worship Schedules

SERVICE

04/01/2015 – Maundy Thursday - Malayalam
Service start at 7:00 pm.

04/03/2015 – Good Friday - Malayalam
Service start at 8:00 am.

04/04/2015 – Holy Saturday - Malayalam
Morning Prayer 8:30 am - 9:30 am.
O.T. Bible Reading
[Genesis 8:1-12, Jeremiah 38:2-13, Micah 7:8-13]
Epistle Reading
[I Peter 3:13-22, Romans 6:1-14]

04/05/2015 – Easter Sunday - Malayalam
Morning Prayer 8:30 am - 9:30 am.
O.T. Bible Reading
[Leviticus 23:26-32, Isaiah 60:1-7, Isaiah 60:11-16]
Epistle Reading
[Acts 2:22-36, I Corinthians 15:1-19]

04/12/2015 – New Sunday - English
Morning Prayer 8:30 am - 9:30 am.
O.T. Bible Reading : Neethu George, Nidhi Mathew, Renu Thomas
[Genesis 41:41-46, Ecclesiastes 12:1-8, Jeremiah 1:4-12]
Epistle Reading
[I Peter 2:19-25, II Timothy 2:1-13]

04/19/2015 – Malayalam
Morning Prayer 8:30 am - 9:30 am.
O.T. Bible Reading Family: Binu Abraham Family
[Exodus 14:26-31, Joshua 6:9-21, GreatWisdom 1:1-8]
Epistle Reading
[Acts 13:26-39, Ephesians 6:10-20]

04/26/2015 – English
Morning Prayer 8:30 am - 9:30 am.
O.T. Bible Reading : Roshni Thomas, Shalet James, Sharena Daniel
[Exodus 40:1-16, Joshua 2:1-6, Isaiah 49:13-21]
Epistle Reading
[Acts 4:8-21, Hebrews 3:1-13]

Men's Forum & Martha Mariyam Samajam Announcements

04/05/2015 - Easter Sunday - No Class
04/12/2015 - New Sunday - No Class
04/19/2015 - Men's Forum & MMVS Group Class – Fr Johnson
04/26/2015 - Bible Class

Easter

We recently celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is, Kymtha or Easter. We sang, we chanted, we rejoiced together as a congregation! It goes without saying that the spirit of Easter is not limited to just one day that comes and goes as if on a yearly cycle. The spirit of Easter exists today, tomorrow, and all the days after. Jesus has not gone back into the "heart of the earth." He is risen and remains risen. Through him, we are freed from the powers of pessimism and death; through him, we are reborn in goodness and stand unshaken with gladness in our hearts. We do not believe the resurrection of Christ to be an event of the past, for we do not say "Christ was risen." Rather, we chant with fervor: "Christ is risen!" and "Indeed He is risen!"

It always amazes me that at the very heart of the Easter message, when the blaring trumpets of Easter have exploded in celebration, when the mightiest act of God is occurring, when millennia worth of prophecies are being fulfilled, when Jesus has just been raised from the dead by the power of God, that there is doubt. How can a meek emotion such as doubt linger in such a magnificent occasion? On such a grand occasion as Easter morning, wouldn't we expect the chosen disciples to have been filled with awe and adoration? The Bible tells another story:

One of the very first occurrences of doubt happened early on Easter morning, while the morning darkness still dawdled about. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb of Jesus but was notified of his absence by a divine messenger. We then see Jesus, himself, having a short conversation with Mary. It wasn't long before the excited Mary ran back to the disciples to share the good news. Unfortunately, we do not see the same excitement among the disciples, initially at least. Rather, the disciples were skeptical and doubtful. They may dismissed Mary to be easily excited or hallucinating. The doubt doesn't end there. Later that night, we see the resurrected Jesus appearing before his own disciples, those he had called out, those he had chosen to "lead his flock," those he had already revealed to the very series of events unfolding before them. Yet, we see a scared crowd, huddled together with doors shut, drapes drawn, and windows closed. Did they fall down on their knees in adoration and praise? Did they hit each other on the shoulder and say, "Hey, we knew he would come back. We knew he would come again!" No, the disciples were startled. They were afraid. They thought they were seeing a ghost or an illusion. Jesus asked them, "Why are you having all these doubts? Why are all these questions in your mind?" Perhaps the next example of doubt is the most famous of them all: the story of doubting Thomas. Thomas wasn't there in the upper room with the other disciples that night. When he did arrive among his fellow companions, he was received with an overwhelming set of news. "Jesus came back to us and he was alive!" or "You missed it!" And what was Thomas' reaction? "I don't believe it. I don't believe it. Until I see the holes in his hands and wrists and side, I won't believe." He didn't go along with the crowd. He didn't vote with the ten disciples. He stood alone against the crowd and expressed his doubts and incredulities. So once again, we see doubt on Easter. Finally, we come to the ascension of Jesus. We come to the very last appearance of Jesus before his beloved disciples. He was ready to leave this earthly existence. He had just told his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all people. This was their last great moment together. This was their last time together. This was their last goodbye to each other. Yet, we read in the Gospel according to St. Matthew 28:17, "And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted." And so ends of the Gospel of Matthew on that old sweet song of doubt. On the one hand, we experience the grandest event in human history when God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead; and within that story, we see the lurking of doubt in the shadows.

Let us take a closer look at the doubting personality of doubting Thomas. Thomas has a certain appeal to all of us, not just because he is the patron saint of our church, but rather, he is an honest person and honesty is attractive. Thomas did not believe just to believe. Thomas questions, doubts, thinks, and ponders. Thomas is mentioned twice in the gospels and on both occasions, we see him asking questions. The first: Jesus was teaching about going to prepare a place for [the disciples], a heavenly mansion. It was Thomas who scratched his thoughtful head and asked, "Jesus, we don't know where you are going and we don't know the way." Thomas did not understand what Jesus was saying and so he asked Jesus the questions. None of the other disciples raised their hands and expressed their curiosity, but Thomas did. It takes a certain level of honesty to express curiosity.

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The second we have already seen previously: the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to his disciples. When the disciples expressed wonder and amazement that the resurrected Christ had revealed himself to them, Thomas didn't go along with the crowd and say, "OK, that must be true because everyone says so." Instead, Thomas expressed his reservation and doubt: "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." As a more relatable example, St. Thomas was not the kind of person who would unknowingly chant away the Nicene Creed without thinking hardy about what he was uttering. Like us, he wouldn't effortlessly ramble, "...begotten of the Father, before all worlds. Light of Light. Very God of Very God..."

We are like Thomas. We, too, have doubts and like to express those doubts. We have big questions such as, "Is there no validity to the other world religions?" or "How do we know the Bible is true?" or "Why is there so much evil in the world?" Or we often have personal questions such as "Why did I get this heart attack? Why cancer? Why did the child die so young? Why am I and my family having all these troubles?" We must not be ashamed to express our curiosity. Asking questions and clearing doubts is the only way to fully understand what we say we believe in. That is the way that God wired us: to ask questions, to inquire, to think, to sort out. It is only a misconception if one thinks claiming Christianity automatically clears all doubts and questions. It is far from true. It is also crucial to understand the difference between a doubter and an unbeliever. Henry Drummond, a renowned theologian, once made a vivid distinction between a doubter and an unbeliever. He teaches: A doubter is a person who searches for God and the godly life, but not an unbeliever. An unbeliever isn't searching for God, but for the pleasures of this world. An unbeliever is not searching for God or the god question or the love of God but for situations in life which will bring happiness. A doubter is a person who has a thousand questions for God; questions about life, love, God's existence, purpose, the divinity of Christ and many other questions, but not the unbeliever. An unbeliever isn't asking any questions. The unbeliever is apathetic to God and the God question does not really come up in his or her daily life. A doubter struggles with God and struggles to live a godly life and struggles to find the purpose of life, but not an unbeliever. An unbeliever simply struggles to pay the bills, find a spouse, find a job, and find a house. That is all.

St. Thomas was enormously skeptical of the news he heard about the resurrected Christ and he voiced his skepticism. As Jesus teaches in Matthew 7:7, "'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.'" Thomas asked, and he was addressed. As a recovered skeptic, we see Thomas falling on his knees and uttering the heartfelt, "My Lord and my God!"

At the same time, we must be aware that there is great power in believing as Jesus wanted to believe. There is a power to belief that is not weighed down and slowed down by doubts and questions. Throughout his ministry, we see Jesus commending, "Great is your faith." He must have said that a hundred times in the Bible. However, never have we seen Jesus saying, "I commend you for your great questioning." Even in the instance of the honest St. Thomas, Jesus reminds us: "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). There is power to faith, power to move mountains and carry momentous burdens. "If you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done" (Matthew 21:21).

Blessed are those among us who hold true to their faith without doubt. However, in this secular society, where even the air we breathe can cause us to divert from our Christian goals, a little answering of questions may be needed to strengthen our faith. If you are like me, questions need to be answered for us to truly understand what we aim to believe in. If asking questions and expressing doubt has the means to draw us closer to our God, to our Jesus, why stop ourselves?

Let us rejoice today along with the angels above for our Lord's glorious resurrection. Let us hope for another Lenten period, so that we can, once again, partake in our Lord's passion. And let us strengthen our beliefs with a healthy curiosity, so that we ourselves can become the pillars of faith Christ wants us to be. May God bless us all.

-By Alex Johnson