

THE PARISH PULSE



Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,
2 Corinthians 1 : 3



Vicar's Message : When Toast meets the Tea

Greetings to you all in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST

We live in a world where we prefer gadgets over sonnets. The shades of companionship look faded compared to the bright colours on our screens. However, these invisible chords of acceptance and love allow us to heal. Friendships embrace us and tell us we are not alone in suffering. One time when Elijah was like, "God I am so sad! I want to die!" God spoke to him, gave him food, and asked him to nap. Hence Elijah slept, ate and decided things weren't so bad. Never underestimate the power of a nap, a snack and a friend to talk to.

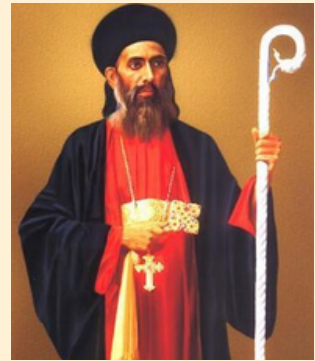


According to the Bible Elijah still lives and what God spoke to Elijah is still unknown. The Story of Elizabeth and Mary from the Bible in Luke 1 is of an ideal friendship we can relate to in our present times. Some homes feel just like our own despite cultural differences. Some friends should make us pause, ponder and smile about the importance of human connection which is essential to survive in this world.

Yours en'Christo
Fr Liju Koruthu Thomas
Vicar/President



St Thomas - Apostle of India



St Gregorios of Parumala



St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Vattasseril

Woman of Christ

A Christian woman: A woman whose religion is Christianity, or a woman born into a Christian family, or Christian by birth

A WOMAN of CHRIST: Her life is an expression of a deep & inseparable personal relationship with her Saviour & Lord Jesus Christ; her way of life speaks volumes about her spiritual walk with God & Christ. Anointed & empowered by the Holy Spirit, she fixes her eyes on Christ to have a personal encounter with the Lord everyday as she believes her spiritual growth is an ongoing, continuous walk with Christ by which He works to build a life of faith, hope, love, joy, gentleness, patience, peace, faithfulness, long suffering, self-control & holiness in her. She is an open book for others to read & and see how much her life points them to Christ & His works. She is not self-seeking & she is thoroughly equipped for every good work. The book of Proverbs Ch 31 says, "She is worth far more than rubies, she lacks nothing of value & she is bestowed with heavenly wisdom. She is clothed with strength & dignity".

The journey of faith for a woman of Christ begins through a saving relationship with Christ when she invites Him into her life to be the master & Lord, to rule over her as she surrenders her life to Christ, completely trusting Him & submitting to the works of the Holy Spirit in her, until she is called home. When we have a personal relationship with Christ, He gives us His Holy Spirit who works in us, we are transformed into His image & we begin to grow in Christ every day.

As she fixes her eyes on Christ Jesus & strives to become more like Him each day, she will be transformed into His image with increasing glory. This encounter allows Christ to be at the centre of her life & transforms her from within, inside out, as she leaves her old self behind.



When her focus is on Christ, everything in her life begins to change for the better. She becomes more like Him & her life takes on a new meaning. She is then fully aware of her sins & her sinful nature & grows to develop an unceasingly incessant & active prayer life with a heart of repentance. True repentance is a gift of God that involves seeing sin as a failure of intimacy with Him & His glory. Repentance involves both turning away from sin and turning back to the father. Repentance with prayer, anointed by the Holy Spirit & the word of God, she puts on the full armour of God to conquer her sins & her sinful nature, trample on it, overcome & gain victory over it all. God has given us the Holy Spirit so we can be victorious in Christian living, redeemed & restored, now she no longer lives for herself, but begins to live for others.

Elizabeth Mathew (Sojini) - Mo17



When we serve others, we are serving Christ. This is a great way to keep our focus on Him. Galatians 2:20 says, I have been crucified with Christ & I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God....".

Her character impacts her family, husband, her children, her community, shaping their understanding and worldview. Proverbs 31:28 says, her children rise up & call her blessed; her husband also & he praises her.

A woman of Christ always represents Christ in her daily life & strives to honour God & others in everything. She adorns herself with good deeds & the light of Christ so shines in her that others see her good deeds & glorify the father in heaven, for it is said in James 2:14-17, "What good is it, my brothers & sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes & daily food, if one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm & well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead".

Galatians 6:9-10 says, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith".

As a woman of Christ, she dedicates her life to serve the Lord in whatever capacity she is called to & is an embodiment of unnatural selflessness, always giving all glory, honour & praise to God & Christ. She serves the Lord to:

1. To seek unity in the body of Christ, instead of creating division.
2. To have the courage & power to overcome fear, anxiety & shame.
3. To be honest & believe in the transforming power of Christ's grace.

Romans 12:5, "In Christ we, though many, form one body & individually members of one another". We are different members working together to keep the body healthy. When we are baptised, remember, we are united with the resurrected body of Christ. In Philippians 2:5, Paul offers this encouragement: "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." Paul describes Christ's willingness to even experience death on a cross out of His great love for us. Only as His Spirit produces the mind of Christ in us are we set apart and enabled to sacrifice for others, reflecting the ultimate sacrifice Christ made. May we yield to the Spirit's work in us.

As a woman of Christ, she trusts that her heart is to connect everyone to the heart of Christ, unite others in the inseparable love of Christ, even if they are undeserving & whatever their circumstances maybe, who they are, or what they have been through, she believes her calling is to draw them to Christ because He is willing to do an amazing work in their lives. Doing nothing from selfishness, but with humility of mind she regards one another as more important than herself, so then we will have unity. Do not merely look out for our own selfish interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in ourselves, says Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:4.

As a woman of Christ, she obeys God's commands to love others well, her speech is edifying & always encouraging to one another, not slanderous or a gossiper (Ephesians 4:29; 1 Peter 2:1-3). She is kind, compassionate and forgiving (Ephesians 4:32), helping to bear the burdens of other believers (Galatians 6:2; Romans 12:15) & she does not needlessly argue or cause division, but rather strives to live in harmony with others, living out the light of Christ in her, not to repay evil for evil but to respond with good when evil is done. (Romans 12:16,18; Philippians 2:14).

To have the courage & power over fear, anxiety & shame Failures, anxiety, shame, sickness, loss, unmet goals, unexpected negative circumstances & fears are some of the very uncomfortable, discouraging & disappointing situations in life. Life throws many setbacks at us in the family, at work, in church, with friends & with ourselves.

Disappointment is a natural emotion that we all experience at some point in our lives. Proverbs 12:25 says, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression". Jesus Christ, the One who carried all our disappointments on the cross, brought new hope in our lives. Turn to Jesus, who faced more disappointments than any of us & like Him, never lose our passion to do God's will & please Him. The Apostle Paul wrote these words while in prison in Rome, "Rejoice in the Lord always". (Philippians 4:4-6) "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer & petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God". Our disappointments can lead us to a new appointment with Christ. A woman of Christ approaches God with a grateful heart & casts her worries on God (1 Peter 5:7). She trusts in God's ability & love & brings her worship & concerns to His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14-16). When life's storms sweep her down, she looks at the divine power of Christ, the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus which is more powerful than her fears & waits patiently for His word, trusts in His power & authority to calm the storms in her life's journey & to carry her safely through the rough waters to the other shore. If we have real faith, we will trust God instead of being so anxious. If we have real faith, we will be content instead of struggling. If we have real faith, we will give more generously instead of holding on so tightly to our possessions.

To be honest & believe in the transforming power of Christ's grace.

We will all fail at some point in our life. We often grapple with feelings of inadequacy. Failing is a learning experience so we can do better next time. The guilt of past failures & sins can haunt & inhibit us in many ways, but there is hope & encouragement to be found in Christ. Failures can draw us closer to Christ. Saul had a life-changing encounter with Christ, he was a real failure, but he was transformed to Paul by the power of God's grace.

Grace is defined as the unmerited favour or kindness that God extends to us, irrespective of whether we are deserving of it. Grace is not only a gift from God, but also a power that enables us to live according to His will. As we grow in grace, our mind is renewed, causing our behaviour and emotions to be transformed by the Holy Spirit that indwells us & we become more like Christ, who is the fullness of grace and truth.

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A woman of Christ, despite weaknesses, can exhibit strength, courage & faith. Her reliance on God & willingness to rise above challenges define her nature. Her adorning is the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle & quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious (1 Peter 3:4).

Our failures are occasions for God to use it for His glory. The first step to dealing positively with failure or disappointment is recognizing that God has allowed these situations to add eternal value to our character – that He is accomplishing a good work in us. They are used for our good in the hands of a loving God! A mature woman of Christ rests in the grace of God, is grateful for His peace & comfort in her pain & uses the failure as a backdoor to success through growth and understanding. She believes that she can do all things through Christ who strengthens her, (Philippians 4:13).

In Jeremiah 18:4, which is a metaphor for God's sovereignty & ability to shape & reshape people's lives like a potter shapes clay, it says, "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so, he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make". Remember, God works through imperfect vessels to accomplish His purposes. Mistakes are not a problem, but not taking the opportunity to learn from them is.

God can reveal His power, glory & love when He works through our fragile & cracked vessels of our lives. He can transform us through the power of His Holy Spirit. God is always near & if you fall, He'll pick you up & dust you off.

A woman of Christ is a work in progress, a masterpiece of God's, saved by His grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10) & becoming more like Jesus as she seeks to know & obey Him. She does not conform to the patterns of this world, but she is transformed by the renewing of her mind to know the perfect will of Christ. Many women have done well, but a woman of Christ surpass them all!! A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Amen!! Praise the Lord!!!

Hope & Faith

I remember doing a study on this topic a few years back for a Bible study at the Bible college Singapore. It was such an eye-opening class, but I feel like I only received the message in my heart years later.

Many Christians ask about faith - how to have it, grow it, maintain it but not many of them ask about hope. I think it is important for us to know about both faith and hope because much to our surprise many of us get them mixed up.

Faith:

Faith is confidence or trust in something, or someone not based on proof. Faith is our teacher and judge. Faith fights against errors heresies and it judges spirits and doctrines. Faith includes everything that we say biblically about hope, but it is more. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:6-7, "So, we are always confident, knowing that while we are home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith not by sight". Hence one dimension or element of faith is that it embraces real things you can't see like our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says we are away from the Lord while He is in heaven; we are on earth. We can't see him. We trust him and we walk by faith not by sight.

Hope:

Hope is an optimistic attitude based on expectation or desire. Hope is a word of comfort when you are in distress, knowing God and resting in his love. When people are purged of sin, there is a great relief and hope.

No matter how difficult our experience, now we can look forward to the day of celebration when God will completely restore us. It will truly be our day of cheer. Hope is always confidence concerning the future. *Romans 5:5 says "Now Hope does not disappoint because the Love of God has been poured out..." (OSB).* Hope is surely rock solid, and it is always future oriented

Hope consists in a firm confidence in what we are hoping for - not just a wish. *Romans 8: 24-25 says, "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."*



I have leaned on this verse *Psalms 42:6 "Hope in God"* during my discouragement many times. What the Psalm is calling me to do of hoping in God amid my trouble is hardly distinguishable from trusting God. Hope in this Psalm is I would say virtually identical to faith in God as it relates to the future.

Faith and Hope:

We need them both. But what exactly is the difference between them?

1 Peter 1:21 says "...rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ".

Ruth John -Poo6



The word tells us to hope in the Lord, the word tells us God has plans to give us hope and a future. But nowhere in the Bible, says that hope brings us a miracle from the Lord. It wasn't hope that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead; it wasn't with hope that Jesus fed the multitude and so on. All those acts were done by faith. In the Garden of Gethsemane and even on the Cross, Jesus was sustained, endured -by tasting already the substance of that thing hoped for. He tasted something of that future of joy that was set before him. Hebrews 11:1 calls this experience faith. I would say that it is virtually impossible to completely distinguish faith and hope. One is part of other.

In summary hope is faith in the future tense. Faith is more than hope because it involves trust in a person which may have a backward dimension as well as a forward dimension. "Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6 NIV) Have hope in the Lord and have faith that He will answer. Our words have power. Speak faith into our life and over our situation, we choose to stand on the promises He made us. We may not have our desired outcome from faith now, but with faith, we know that what we desire will eventually materialize.

Embracing Vulnerability and Authenticity: Nurturing Intimacy in Christian Relationships

Nedheya Baby - Ao63



In the hustle and bustle of modern life, amidst the incessant chatter of social media and the constant demands of work and family, it's easy to lose sight of what truly matters in our relationships. Yet, deep within the human heart lies a longing for connection—for the kind of intimacy that transcends surface-level interactions and touches the very core of our being. In the quiet moments of our lives, away from the noise of the world, there's a special place where love grows deepest, and bonds become unbreakable. It's a place where we're not afraid to be ourselves, where we share our hopes and fears, and where God's love shines brightest. This is the space of vulnerability and authenticity—a place where true intimacy blossoms.

This kind of openness builds trust and brings us closer together. It allows us to truly understand and support one another, creating bonds that withstand the test of time.



Speaking Truth in Love:

Good communication is essential for healthy relationships. Ephesians 4:15 encourages us to speak honestly with each other, but always with kindness and love. When we communicate well, we show respect and understanding, which strengthens our bonds with one another. We're able to share our thoughts and feelings openly, knowing that we'll be heard and valued. This kind of communication fosters deep intimacy and connection, allowing us to grow closer to God and to each other.

Embracing Imperfection, Extending Grace:

We all have flaws, but God's grace covers them all (2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 2:8-9). When we accept our own imperfections and extend grace to others, we create an atmosphere of love and forgiveness. This allows our relationships to thrive, even when things aren't perfect.

We're able to forgive each other's mistakes and shortcomings, knowing that we're all works in progress. This kind of grace-filled attitude fosters deep trust and mutual respect, paving the way for lasting intimacy and connection.

Rooted in God's Unfailing Love:

The foundation of every healthy relationship is God's love. Romans 8:38-39 reminds us that nothing can separate us from His love. When we build our relationships on this love, we find strength, security, and lasting happiness. We're able to weather life's storms together, knowing that God's love will sustain us through every trial and tribulation. This kind of deep, abiding love is the bedrock of true intimacy, binding us together in a bond that can never be broken.

In times of prayer and reflection, let's have the courage to be vulnerable and authentic in our relationships. Let's trust in God's love to guide us, knowing that it's in these moments of openness that our hearts come together, and we find true peace in the warmth of God's eternal love.

The Beauty of Being Real:

In a world that often tells us we need to be perfect; it's refreshing to know that God loves us just as we are. He made each of us unique and special (Psalm 139:14), and His love for us is unconditional (Romans 5:8). When we're real with God and with each other, we create space for deep connections to form. We're able to let down our guard and show our true selves, knowing that we're accepted and loved just as we are.

Opening Hearts, Building Bridges:

Being vulnerable isn't easy, but it's the key to forming strong relationships. When we share our joys and struggles with others, we let them into our lives in a meaningful way. Galatians 6:2 reminds us that we're meant to help each other through life's ups and downs.

Navigating through Dark times

Elizabeth Jacob - So62

In the journey of life, we all have those moments when we are pushed to rock bottom; a phase where we feel we have lost everything, and life is not worth living. In such circumstances, it is inevitable for us to develop a negative outlook towards life.

So the big question is can we encourage ourselves to look at life from a positive perspective rather than a negative one - in an optimistic way and not a pessimistic way?

The book of Proverbs chapter 4 speaks about wisdom. *"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."*

But why is wisdom so important?

Without wisdom, we can't appreciate the importance of joy and experience it especially when life's circumstances are unpleasant and uneasy.

Without wisdom, we won't know how to be thankful, especially when life gets difficult.

Wisdom is the building block for all other virtues. Wisdom is not something we are born with; nor is it something we get automatically. It is something we need to pursue and obtain.

So how do we obtain this wisdom? The secret to obtaining wisdom is humility. So what does it mean to humble ourselves? Joel 2:28 states that at the end of time, God will pour out His spirit on all people.

For God to pour out His spirit on us and to dwell in us, we have to view God to be above us, which means we have to lower ourselves before Him. Humble ourselves before the Lord. So to gain wisdom, we need to gain humility.

So how do we humble ourselves? To be humble we need to get broken up. How and when do we get broken up? When we are faced with difficult and unpleasant experiences in life the road seems difficult. We have tried everything, but nothing seems to work. We feel we have reached the dead end of a tunnel. No hopes No ray of light. We are surrounded by dark clouds. Life becomes meaningless and burdensome. We are in the darkest phase.



We should not be discouraged and feel let down, coz Psalms 18:10-11 states *"And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place; His canopy around Him was dark waters And thick clouds of the skies."* Here we see God has made darkness His secret place.

So when we are at our darkest phase, our Lord is the most with us coz He has made our darkest place his secret dwelling place.

So let us look at it differently: dark times broke me up, I was humbled, and my self-pride and arrogance were lowered. Out of that darkness I received the most precious gift, I received Christ.

The seven decisions that can help us navigate through dark times.

1. Decide to Dream a new dream. We should stop living in the past. We should stop looking at the negative and focus on the positives. Instead of cribbing and whining about our problems. Say to oneself, "I can fight and overcome this situation". We all know what's holding us back, is it situations or people? Whatever it is let it out; move away from it; start to dream a new dream- a new beginning. Believe that this is possible through Jesus. God gave us the tools to change, and He gives us opportunities, but it depends on us whether we want to grab it, He will knock at our door, it is on us whether we want to open it for him. Revelation 3:20 *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me."*

2. Decide to stay Thankful.

To come out of dark times decide to be the thankful person all the time. Thank God in every situation. Thanking God in all situations is essential, coz failures or setbacks in life are as good as success. Failures humble us and humility leads us to God who is the ultimate seat of wisdom

3. Decide to sow the seed of honour into our environment.

Show respect to everyone doesn't matter if they are small or big, rich or poor, young or old. The Bible clearly says we are to honour everyone (1 Peter 2:17) and not just those we "feel" deserve to be honoured. Honour with respect, and kindness, and bless them.

4. Decide to excel in obedience.

Obedience demonstrates our faith and trust in God. Even in Calvary, we can see that Jesus showed total obedience to His Father in Heaven through his crucifixion. The more we walk in obedience to God, the more powerful God's work is in our lives. However, when we begin to walk in disobedience, the power of the Holy Spirit is lessened within us. He doesn't leave us; He goes quiet.

5. Decide to avoid unnecessary battles.

Choose your battles wisely. Develop the ability to recognize when to confront an issue and when to step back. This also means stop trying to change anyone, give them the information, and let them do the changing. So stop investing time and effort in bringing that change. Remember that 90 percent of life's pain comes from putting our trust and efforts in the wrong place and people.

6. Decide to study the character of all friendships.

Before we put our trust in a person, we must study that person's characteristics. When a seed that is planted grows into a fruit-bearing tree, it clearly shows the fertility of the soil. Similarly investing our efforts, time, and hard work on someone who pulls us down should be avoided. Just as we see in Genesis, God created Adam; and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work and take care of it. Here God made him a ruler, instead, Adam lost the opportunity and was driven out of the garden and cursed to die and return to the earth from which he was formed

7. Decide to master the Art of learning.

No matter how qualified you are. It doesn't matter what positions you hold in office or society. Always be humble and tell yourself that there is room for knowledge. Prepare to learn even from a small kid always remember if we are to fulfill our God-given potential, we must be constantly growing and learning. When we adopt a growth mindset, we develop a love for learning and the willingness to embrace challenges and persevere through setbacks

The Ladder of Divine Ascent – 30 Steps - Pathway to Eternal Life

Don Fernandez - Doo8

Our venerable and God-bearing Father John Climacus (ca. 579 - 649), also known as John of the Ladder, John Scholasticus, and John Sinaites, was a seventh century monk at St. Catherine's monastery at the base of Mount Sinai.

The most famous book is The Ladder of Divine Ascent. (It is because of this book that John is known as "Climacus," which means "of the ladder".). It describes how to raise one's soul to God, as if on a ladder.

The Ladder of Divine Ascent is an ascetical (characterized by severe self-discipline and abstention from all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.) treatise on avoiding vice and practicing virtue so that at the end, salvation can be obtained.

Climacus uses the analogy of Jacob's Ladder as the framework for his spiritual teaching. Each chapter is referred to as a "STEP", and deals with a separate spiritual subject.

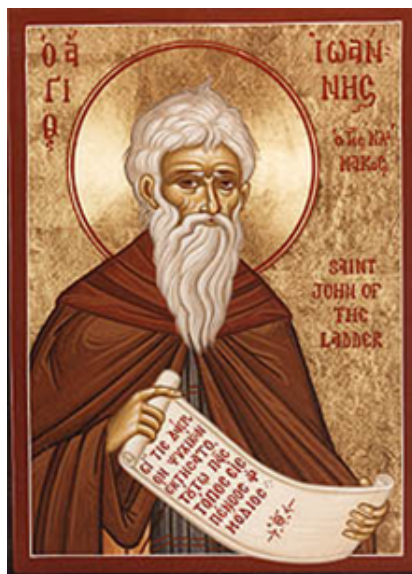
There are **30 steps** of the ladder, which correspond to the age of Jesus at his baptism and the beginning of his earthly ministry.

The **First 7 Steps** concern general virtues necessary for the ascetic life.

The **Next 19 (Steps 8–26)** give instruction on overcoming 8 vices and building their corresponding virtues.

The **Final 4 Steps** concern the higher virtues toward which the ascetic life aims.

The **Final Rung** of the ladder—beyond prayer, stillness, and even dispassion—is love, linking together of the supreme trinity among the virtues: **It is the Vision of Gods Glory - Theosis**



Fr. Spyridon says, in order to see more of God, we need to be elevated above and from the darkness and the sin of our ordinary lives, elevated to meet God, through faith and through obedience. As how the apostles see a vision of the divine light during the transfiguration.

St. Gregory of Palamas reminds us that, at this moment Christ did not change, the divine light that they witnessed did not at that moment come into being it was, it is, and always will be. This was the condition of Christ always.

But in that moment St. John Chrysostom says, that they were granted a small glimpse of his divinity, they went from the flesh to the spirit. They saw him as he truly is. They saw him illuminated in every way even his flesh and clothes were illuminated.

A reminder to us that Christ is fully man and fully God. His humanity and divinity cannot be separated, though they are confused, we cannot know Christ in one without the other. Similarly, we find our salvation in the flesh we will be resurrected in the flesh, and Christ prays, and they have their vision, not the Christ needs to pray in order for them to see him in this very moment.



But Christ in order to demonstrate to us that the vision of God draw stronger to us when we pray, when we seek to unite ourselves closer to God, unite ourselves to the Will of God more closely.

Jesus says to us the Kingdom of God is within you, this is the light the apostles witnessed the kingdom of God, the divinity of God shining through into this world.

Right now, Christ reaches out to you and me, he calls us in humility and gentleness, he calls us in the meekness of the manger of Bethlehem, he calls us to repent, to turn to him.

But when he returns, we can only imagine the glory of God and its fullness. How overcome and how shocking it will be, when Christ reaches out to us in his meekness, and says to us to prepare ourselves. So let us all begin to act and live in faith, trust in him, be obedient to him, repent our sins, for the day is coming, when instead of Gentleness it will be the glory of God which we face in judgement.



- Reference Philokalia Vol 1,- St. John Cassian; *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* – St John Climacus

Interview with Sophiamma Aunty and T.V. George Uncle

Family Code - Goos

Please Introduce yourself

- We are one of the oldest couples in our Church.
- We got married 65 years back and have been together since then, in Singapore.
- We got married on April 20, 1959 at Kumbanad in Kerala
- We are blessed with three girls and one boy

What is your approach to the Sacrament of Marriage?

- We both are Orthodox Christians; we both trust in the Sacrament of Marriage.
- Even when we witness the sacrament of marriage, we feel blessed and happy.

Have you ever learned about marriage or been taught about marriage before your own marriage?

- No

Aunty, did you have any anxiety while coming a new place?

- Since my brother and family were in Singapore, I had no anxiety at all. I was eager to take care of my brother's 8-month-old child.
- I learned all my cooking from my sister-in-law, and now I can cook all types of dishes.
- I came to Singapore with Rev. Fr. M.V. George. (Later HG Geevarghese Mar Osthathios)

How do you assess the oneness of two families in marriage?

- We think that since we are both Orthodox Christians, it also helped to some extent to maintain unity between the two families.

Can you tell us how the new generation can overcome the differences between husband and wife in family life?

- The policy is to never go to bed angry and to always maintain good communication with each other.

Who plays an important part in upbringing the children, the father or mother?

- Both should play an equal part in the child's upbringing; that's very important.



What is the secret of a loving married life?

- God's grace
- Always keep God first.

How do you keep God first?

- Always ask God before everything.

From where do you get the faith in Jesus?

- From Parents (family prayers), Sunday school and Church.

"Marriage happens in heaven", do you agree?

- We believe it's God's plan to find us a suitable partner.

How did you remain faithful after living far away from your family?

- I made sure I am in touch with Church congregation after coming in Singapore.
- I was a Sunday school teacher.
- Before my marriage also I was in touch with Church.
- We had congregation in Singapore, there was Singapore and Malaysia council, I was a counsellor.
- Wherever we go, the Church and the priest are very important.

What is your opinion on 'anger' in the family?

- Anger is very detrimental. If you get angry, take time later to understand the reasons behind it. Avoid anger whenever possible.

Do you think the new generation is different and difficult to cope with compared to the old generation?

- We never think that way.
- New generation is good, and they follow what you do.
- Actions speak louder than words.
- As a grandmother, I wrote prayers for my grandchildren.

What's your thought on giving back to society from our God given blessings.

- Bring happiness to your parents through your blessings.
- Never let your parents suffer.
- What we do, our children learn; that's a reflection of our upbringing.

What is your opinion on discipline in the family?

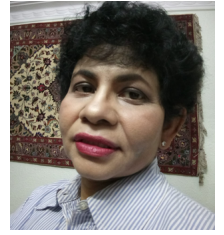
- Excessive strictness is never good for a family.
- We have to give instructions while ensuring children feel comfortable at the same time.

What's the message to new generation couples for a blessed married life?

- Depending on God's grace is the only technique.
 - Our Church, Priest and prayers of our parents are the only source for our blessed married life.
-

The Last Supper Uncovered

Mary Olympia Chacko - To23



Who is who?

Jesus is portrayed with a serene composure, his head and eyes lowered, in contrast to an agitated group of Apostles in varying postures and organised in three groups.

Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper is an artwork which takes pride of place in the homes of Christians far and wide. A reminder of the last meal the disciples had with Christ before his crucifixion, the event is notable for the following when Jesus Christ:

- Revealed that one among the disciples would betray him
- Peter would disown him three times before the cock crowed that night
- Instituted the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion or Eucharist.

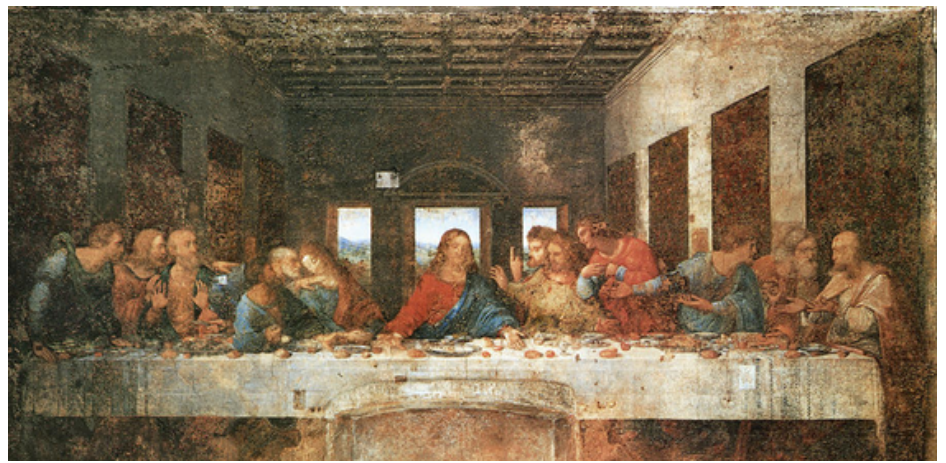
Check out how much you know of the artist and his work and if you can answer the following questions ...

- Where is the location of Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper?
- What materials were used for this artwork?
- Who is the character holding a knife in the painting?
- Can you spot an irregularity in the painting which is inconsistent with the narration in the Synoptic gospels?

The origins

Leonardo da Vinci was commissioned by Ludovico Sforza, the duke of Milan, to paint The Last Supper for the Dominican monastery Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. Ludovico Sforza was Leonardo's patron during his first extended stay in the city.

While work on the wall painting was done between 1495 and 1498, Leonardo was not the only artist who painted on this theme: the subject of the Last Supper was a popular choice for refectory walls in monasteries and convents in 15th-century Italy, where nuns and monks could have their meals in the presence of Jesus' final repast. The wall painting is huge: about 15 feet by 29 feet (4.6 x 8.8 meters).



Context

Leonardo's Last Supper is visual interpretation of an event chronicled in all four of the Gospels. It is the evening before Christ was betrayed by one of his disciples, where he has gathered them together to eat, to tell them he knew what was coming and to wash their feet (a gesture symbolising that all were equal in the eyes of the Lord). In this communal setting, Christ gave the disciples explicit instructions how to eat and drink in the future, in remembrance of him - the first celebration of the Eucharist, a tradition which continues today. Specifically, The Last Supper captures the emotion-charged scene when Christ declares that one among the disciples would betray him before sunrise. All twelve react to the news with varying degrees of horror, anger, and shock.

James the Greater, to Christ's left, throws his arms out angrily while the disbelieving Thomas, crouched behind James, points upward and seems to ask, "Is this God's plan?"

His gesture anticipates his later reunion with the resurrected Christ, where Thomas is reported to use his fingers to touch Christ's wounds from the crucifixion to quell his doubts. Peter, identified by the knife in his hand that he will later use to sever the ear of a soldier attempting to arrest Jesus, moves toward the mild-tempered John, sitting to Jesus' right and appears to swoon. Judas, grips the purse containing his reward for identifying Jesus, and recoils from Peter, seemingly alarmed at the other Apostle's quick action. The rest of the Apostles appear to whisper, grieve, and debate among themselves.

Leonardo believed that posture, gesture, and expression should manifest the “notions of the mind”: each of the 12 disciples have been depicted in a manner reflecting their personality as interpreted by Leonardo.

Some little-known facts...

The failed experiment.

Leonardo was inexperienced working on such a large painting or the mural medium of fresco. He was likely to have started working on the wall painting in 1495, working slowly with long pauses between sessions, and completing the work only in 1498 as he was known for his notorious perfectionism. The painting was made using experimental pigments directly on the dry plaster wall and unlike frescos, where the pigments are mixed with the wet plaster, it has not stood the test of time well. Leonardo, however, tried an experimental technique using tempera or oil paint on two layers of dry preparatory ground. His compromised process meant the pigments were not permanently attached to the wall. The painting began to flake within a few years, continuing to deteriorate from the steam and smoke of the monastery's kitchen, soot from the refectory's candles, and the dampness of the location.

No halo.

Unlike many celebrated artists before and after him who rendered their interpretation of The Last Supper, Leonardo work does not have a halo on Jesus Christ. Many art historians believe that Leonardo believed in nature, not in God. To Leonardo, nature is God, hence he treated every character in the fresco as common people.

Damage

Besides the compromised painting technique, the wall painting was subjected to sustained damage over the years:

- In 1652, a door was cut into the north wall, removing Jesus' feet and loosening the paint and plaster. The several restorations that followed involved heavy-handed retouches and the application of varnish, glue, solvents, and the like.
- During the French Revolution, Napoleon's invading troops used the refectory as a stable and the refectory wall for target practice. After a flood in the early 19th century, mold damaged the painting further.
- In 1943 during World War II, an Allied bomb caused the roof and a wall of the refectory to collapse, leaving the painting exposed to the elements for several years before the space was rebuilt.

Restored but little left of the original.

After sustained damage over the centuries, The Last Supper underwent an extensive and controversial 20-year restoration, completed in 1999. Restorers worked in small sections, removing previous re-touches, layers of grime, and coats of varnish while adding beige water colour to parts that could not be recovered. When the restored painting was revealed, many critics argued that the restorers had removed so much of the painting that very little was left of Leonardo's original work.

Others, however, commended the recovery of such details as the Apostles' expressions and the food on the table. (To view images of the painting before and after restoration, see <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Last-Supper-fresco-by-Leonardo-da-Vinci>)

Three early copies of the original exist.

Three of Leonardo's students, including Giampietrino, made copies of his painting early in the 16th century. Giampietrino did a full-scale copy that is now in London's Royal Academy of Arts. This oil painting on canvas was the primary resource for the latest restoration works. The second copy by Andrea Solari is in the Leonardo da Vinci Museum in Belgium while the third copy by Cesare da Sesto is in the Church of Saint Ambrogio in Switzerland.

'Reclining at the table?'

All three gospels (Matthew 26:17–29; Mark 14:12–25; Luke 22:7–38; mention that Jesus and the disciples were “reclining” at the table. To hold this position, it is unlikely that they were seated on benches or stools as portrayed. Reclining while eating was a Greek practice that Romans eventually adopted around the third century BC, so Jesus and the twelve would have followed suit. _

Sources:

<https://earlychurchhistory.org/>

<https://www.britannica.com/>

A Journey of Faith and Service

David Varghese Isaac - Do15

"I myself have chosen your fellow Levites from among the Israelites to be your special assistants. They are a gift to you, dedicated to the Lord for service in the Tabernacle." – Numbers 18:6-7



Just as the Levites were chosen for their special role in service to the Lord, I too felt a calling to serve in the Altar, a duty I embraced with reverence and gratitude.

He would be the first to reach and open the church. I would sit on the steps in the side room leading into the Altar, and watch everything he did. The way he got everything organised, the way he cleaned and got everything in the Altar ready, with utmost reverence. He got me ready and prepared for my decision.

On the 5th of April 1998, a date that remains etched in my memory, I embarked on a journey that has shaped me into the person I am today. It has been 26 years since that fateful day when I made a decision that would significantly impact my life and lead me along a path for which I am forever grateful.

I was in Primary 5, when the then Vicar of the St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral, Fr. Abraham Oommen (HG Abraham Mar Epiphanius), asked me if I would like to serve in the Altar, as he wanted to. Without any hesitation or even consulting my parents, I said Yes. The reason being My Grandfather. He had been serving in the Altar since he was 8 years old, and it was the 2nd Canonized saint of our church (Vattaserill Thirumeni) who had brought him into the Altar and introduced him to this sacred duty. His unconditional love, faith in God, and unwavering dedication that inspired me to join him and serve.

Since I can remember, I have always followed him to church every Saturday evening and Sunday morning.



April 5th 1998, the feast of the Entry of our Lord into Jerusalem or Palm Sunday was the day chosen for me to serve.

These past 26 years have been a rollercoaster with many ups and many downs. With many emotions, trials and tribulations. It took some time, but soon realised my calling was more towards the Liturgy, and its beautification. Hence my love for Liturgical Music.

5 people, who's lives and words have really inspired me, and played a major role in my life.

1. The late Lamented H.H Moran Mar Baselious Marthoma Mathews II
2. The late Lamented H.H Moran Mar Baselious Marthoma Didymos I
3. H.G Yakob Mar Irenios
4. H.G Abraham Mar Epiphanius
5. V.Rev Fr. Philip Thomas Cor-Episcopa



With his blessings, I had many opportunities to stay with them, learn from them, travel with them and have them as my guide.

Through all these years, I have had many opportunities to serve in many churches across the world. And also train many of our young acolytes in Singapore, Malaysia and even in Chennai.

Because of the guidance I have had, and the knowledge imparted to me, I can proudly call them My Boys. And they in turn, are training newer Acolytes and imparting their knowledge to them. They still call me to this very day, if they have any doubts or questions. And I'm truly grateful to God for enabling me to teach others and impart that very same knowledge and love that was shown to me.

The guidance and wisdom I received, has enabled me to impart knowledge to others, creating a ripple effect of service and devotion. I am humbled by the opportunity to follow Jesus' example, as stated in *John 13:14, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."*



The mysteries of God never fail to wonder me. A simple Thank You would never be enough to show my gratitude for all he has done for me. I am humbled by the opportunities and experiences that serving in the Altar has bestowed upon me. This journey has not only deepened my connection to my faith but has also enriched my life in ways beyond measure.

WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

Hey there!!!

Here's a true story from a few months ago, that I came across in an article, that completely changed my perspective. I'm hoping it might help you see things differently, too.

One evening I had to run a couple of errands. My daughter wasn't doing much, just hanging around the house—so I suggested she come with me.

"Ah, do I have to?" she asked. "I just want to chill."

I was silent. But suddenly, I had an epiphany.

"Yeah, you have to," I said. "Come on, let's go."

My daughter's about to become a teenager, so you can imagine her mood when I forced her to come. But that mood would soon change.

"Hey," I said to my daughter. "You know why I didn't let you stay at home?"

"No," she replied. "Why?"

"Because of this number," I replied.

I showed her the calculator on my phone, which showed a seemingly random number:

"109"

"Do you know what that number means?" I asked my daughter.

"Well, it's one short of 110 and over a century for sure," she replied.

"Yeah, but that's not what I was thinking of," I said. I paused for a minute.

"That's very possibly the number of weeks your mother and I have left with you."

"You're about to be a teenager," I continued. "Which means you've probably lived with us longer than you'll still live with us.

"I mean, who knows, maybe you'll stay longer. But if you leave home around the time that everybody does for their higher studies, that's about what we've got left with you.

So, I want to spend as much time with you as I can. Because there's nothing, I enjoy more than spending time with you and your sister."

My daughter smiled.

At first, she smiled because she thought I was being cheesy.

But the smile stayed for the rest of the evening.

And we had a great time together.

So, what's this story got to do with you?

What's your number?

Regardless of your circumstances, there's one thing that's for sure for all of us:

We often underestimate the amount of time that we have.

It could be time with your kids. Or time with your parents or siblings.

It could be time with your spouse. Or time with your friends.

It could be time you want to spend learning a goal: like reading, or playing an instrument, or a sport...

Basically, it could be time for anything.

Often, when we need to make short-term (or even long-term) decisions, like whether to bring our children along, or what we want to do this morning or afternoon or evening or weekend, we forget about the things we really want to do, the things that are more important to us.

George Mathew - Mo45



And we waste time.

Or we might think about those things...and then we say to ourselves:

"Ah, I'll have time for it later."

But time is a funny thing.

It disappears quickly.

It escapes us.

Eventually, we realize we didn't have as much of it as we thought.

But emotional intelligence can help you to place a higher value on time.

To realize that, once time is gone, it's gone.

That you're never going to get it back.

Emotional intelligence allows you to use a psychological trick called "reframing." To reframe is to intentionally change the way you view a situation.

That's what I did with myself, and with my daughter: I reframed the way we saw those few hours.

It wasn't just another typical evening. It was one evening out of "109" weeks, give or take, that I had left with my daughter. 109 weeks that I'll never get back.

It was an opportunity to do what I love: to spend time with my daughter.

So, I encourage you to ask yourself:

- What's important to you?
- What do you want to spend your time on most?
- And how much time do you think you have to do it?

Use your answers to those questions to guide you to reframe.

To use your mind, and your emotions, to help you make better decisions.

You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.

From a Sunday School kid (1950) to a Pioneer (2024)

Susie Frederick - Foo1

My first memories of the St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Singapore, is from 1950, when I was a nine-year-old child. In Singapore, migrants from Kerala, happy to speak Malayalam, and clinging to Malankara faith were concerned about maintaining their links with their mother church back home. My parents had chosen to make Singapore their home and I believe I am one of the first Sunday School kids.

Sunday School Kid in 1950

I did home learning as we had no church. My first lessons were from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christian's booklet received by post and this booklet had about a hundred question-answer lessons. It also included the Kauma, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Nicene Creed." I clearly remember learning how to make the sign of the cross and what it implied. Sunday school lessons progressed to Bible stories but these were more familiar to me as I studied them at school.

In my Christian school, our teachers were missionaries from UK, who developed my faith in God. My teachers were Godly mentors in my early life and they sowed the seeds that bore the Fruit of the Spirit. Orthodox Christianity was however unheard of and I could not relate to that in school. They would not even record that as my religion in the school register

As an Orthodox Christian family, we gathered daily for evening prayers and my father led us in Malayalam for the session. He even took passages from the Bible and preached to us.

His knowledge was amazing and I subconsciously memorized the prayers he repeated daily.



Me as a 9 year old

Sunday was also always special for another reason. This was when families built and maintained positive relationships. We went to friends' homes for lunch, tea and dinner or they came to ours. At that time, I sensed the enthusiasm of the adults to establish a parish, led by a priest, for that was their only way of being a Christian of the early church.

I lived in Katong, in a large wooden, kampong house. The sprawling compound had coconut trees, guava, rambutan, custard apple and even clusters of sugar cane which I loved tearing and chewing hard to extract the juice. My mother reared chicken and I remember collecting eggs as soon as they were laid in the coop.



We had no electricity in those days and instead many large oil lamps called 'petromax' lit up the house every evening. There were no fridges, telephones or televisions. There was a precious radio which my father controlled but I survived happily because of the jukebox from the nearby coffee shop blasting the latest hits. There was always enough food for anyone who dropped in. The kitchen was a large hall and I remember the dining table distinctly as being large enough to seat the Malayalees my father met on his daily walks and would bring home for a meal. When I think back on the sacrifices made by even giving temporary accommodation and food to several, I now appreciate the efforts of my parents' work of charity toward their countrymen. I believe that I am enjoying the blessings of my parents' deeds, in my life now.

I went to school in a three-wheeled cycle rickshaw which a one-eyed "mama" paddled hard. Pocket money was 10 cents a day and half of that was carefully reserved for an ice ball treat after school. This vendor was always outside the school gate to create that colourful ball of ice with sweet beans and palm fruit inside and the ball poured over with condensed milk. Sometimes he would cut it into two for my sister and me to share.

By the time I reached home, my white school uniform top had streaks of red, brown and green syrup from the melting ice ball in my hand but, my mother was a patient angelic woman who never used harsh words on her four children.

Personally, I had never seen an Orthodox priest and I noticed the immense reverence my parents had for him when he first visited us. This priest had to visit homes from Penang to Singapore and that was no easy task as he had to travel by train, bus, taxi and on foot. Church service was only when the priest was in town and the unfamiliar vestments, incense and chanting somehow made the service more spiritual for me. When I attended the first Eucharist service, I understood nothing of the Syriac language used, but I thought I was in a heavenly worship and that conviction engulfed me. I definitely enjoy the mystical and exotic nature of Orthodox Christianity.

From 1950 onwards, whenever an Achen came to Singapore, we were fortunate to have this service. Initially, I remember it happening for a period in a school classroom. I remember the enthusiasm, the preparations and waking up early to get there on time. Later, we moved from the school to Christ Church. There we could only start Qurbana at 11am after their own Eucharist service but it was better there as the ambience was good, the altar appealing and there was enough space for our slowly growing community. However, the problem that we had no church building of our own had to be overcome.

I observed there was a very keen desire in the then young community to build a church. Passionate leaders took initiative. Many meetings and much planning took place. Building fund collection started. Every household had to save money. In spite of hardships, priority was for a church and everyone gave as much or more than they were able to, in spite of meagre salaries earned. .



First Parish - 1952

Total sacrifices were made. From coins collected to whole salaries promised made that effort possible. Members helped organise sales of hand-made things and I made dolls from scraps of cloth, an activity I learned in school. Money was also collected using building cards whereby 'bricks', 'windows', 'doors' and other items illustrated on them were sold to friends from other communities. Christmas play to collect money was the December focus and lots of effort was put in to put up a stage, get the props and stitch the costumes. Every big and small contribution of that generation has given them better yields and has made the desire of establishing a church building come true for them and the future. We owe the success of establishing a parish to the fulfilment of prayer, the determination and the unwavering faith of the less than a hundred families who identified themselves as Orthodox Christians of Singapore

We bought land at Topaz Road and the foundation stone was laid. We soon registered our Church and we became a registered society with a name, and address. A beautiful two-level church building with stained glass windows and a tall steeple, looked impressive. Achens came on contract. By 1960, we progressed to have service every Sunday.

Next came the need for a parsonage to house the Achen instead of him having to stay with members. Again, funding projects started and all members worked hard to buy the then available land opposite the church building. Within that decade, a double storey building with enough facilities for all our needs was built at Topaz Road. Topaz Road church and the parsonage buildings were our pride.



First Church at Topaz Road

I remember witnessing many infant baptisms in the morning, before the Eucharist service. The number of children had increased and Sunday School classes started at church after the Qurbana service. Weddings hardly happened as many individuals returned to Kerala to find partners. However, as the community started growing, some of us found partners locally.

It was noted and announced at my father's (K.M. Daniel's) funeral that he held a proud record of all his four girls finding marriage partners of Orthodox faith and being in the Singapore church community.

All was going well but Topaz Road church had to make way for the nation's Pan Island Expressway plan. Our comfort zone was at risk and we had to face the sad reality.

Compensation was offered and the church leaders frantically searched for a new location. Church building in Topaz Road was demolished in 1980. We temporarily functioned in the parsonage building but the parsonage was facing the same predicament. I still remember the emotions my husband and I felt one evening on seeing many fittings and all the benches discarded on Topaz Road. We acted quickly and the solid benches we have in the church today were saved only because my sister and her husband offered to store them in the basement of their house. I record here the gratitude I have towards them as they accepted our request, covered and cared for the many benches during the years that took for the new church to be ready. While waiting for the new church, we were fortunate to have the beautiful Armenian Church for our services.

The land found was a disused flower garden, way below the road level at 650 Yio Chu Kang Road. What especially appealed to my emotions when I stepped in there was a built-up well for drawing water. It resembled the one I had seen in pictures of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman. I was very saddened when the ground was filled with soil to raise it to road level and I believe that the well is still there under that soil.



The Daniel Family

Very deep piling work started immediately for the project. More money was needed. Sadly, part of the land bought had to be sold to raise funds. Members again pledged months of their earnings and with every donation received, their determination and desire again materialized. The foundation stone for the new church was laid and the church was consecrated on 18 December 1983 by the late H.G. Zachariah Mar Dionysius.

I would like to share with you a **miracle** I witnessed that evening. This happened when the dinner items, which had taken days to prepare in homes, were all laid out for dignitaries, guests and members. All of a sudden, very dark threatening clouds loomed in the west and we panicked because we realized that the tent coverage was minimum and insufficient.

In desperation, we poured out our hearts to God to save the food on the table. Our prayer was answered immediately in a dramatic way. A powerful, howling wind suddenly came up, lifting the hanging portion of the plastic tablecloth and blowing it over the food in such a way that the food was covered perfectly. Then the rain poured but it stopped as fast as it came. All food was saved and the celebration dinner programme was a success. God was revealing himself, for only divine power could do that. We understood this as the pouring of Blessings on our new church, as a place of worship.

Following this endeavour, came the need for a parsonage. Again, fundraising resumed. Helped by generous donations and pledges, we have a three-storey building with two multi-purpose halls and a parsonage on the third floor - a daunting task and a miraculous feat by many who have passed away now. We pay tribute and respect them for the sacrifices and the efforts they put in to establish the St. Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral. It is amazing how a small number of Singapore members from humble beginnings could achieve so much.



Angela Mathew & Me at ROS

Constitution Amended

The church Constitution was amended in September 2013 allowing women to be electoral roll members and they now attend General Body meetings and take leadership roles. It is now up to the present and future generations to plan for greater heights. There is still a small triangular plot of adjoining land to be used to expand the church. The Singapore church, under the Registry of Societies Act of Singapore (ROS) is managed by a board of Trustees, the Managing Committee, and other sub-committees needed, with a registered Constitution in force.

For religious leadership, we have in "apostolic succession" the Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan (H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathew's III) and the bishop appointed by His Holiness, the Metropolitan of the Chennai Diocese (H.G. Geevarghese Mar Philoxenos). A priest from the mother church, is appointed and employed on three-year terms as Vicar to the Singapore Cathedral, to reside and carry out all religious needs of the church. The faithful are dependent on him for worship, baptisms, marriages, funerals and guidance to being good Orthodox Christians.

Today, there are about 250 registered family members with Fr. Liju Koruthu Thomas as Vicar. We have services on all Sundays and other Holy days. The St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral membership has now increased with the influx of migrants of the same faith, some of whom are choosing to become citizens of Singapore

The St. Mary's League members meet weekly with focus on Bible study, fundraising and charity work. Infant baptisms happen regularly and sometimes, adults are baptised to join the church too.

The Sunday School teaching is based on a syllabus and classes for all age levels are in capable hands of enthusiastic teachers. The Youth wing has yearlong activities ending with a well-planned youth camp and venues alternate between Malaysia and Singapore, whereby unforgettable bonds are made. The 50th anniversary celebration of the camps will be in December 2024 and the youth are planning and preparing for it to be a 'big' one in Singapore.

Sad to say that, unlike in Malaysia where they have the very Rev. Philip Thomas Cor Episcopa, no Singapore boy/man has had a calling to be a resident priest to serve in the church here.

My late husband, Frederick Thomas, had been a faithful and active member of this church and I take this opportunity to honour his many contributions.

As a pioneer member of the church myself, who has come a long way from the third world to the first world status of Singapore, and having witnessed the history of the church from the first bricks laid to achieving Cathedral status, I thought it necessary to have my memories recorded in print for the present and future members to realise the very difficult journey we have been through and to further continue the efforts in good hands.

I definitely thank God Almighty for providing us a house for us to worship Him along with millions of adherents and be part of the second largest Christian denomination in the world, rooted in the person of Jesus Christ and in the experience of the first generation of Christians of the early Apostolic church

Praise be to God. Barekmor.



Me and My Late Husband

Six Decades of Youth Fellowship at STOSC

Sumi Baby Thomas - Boo8

You have to live today meaningfully looking into the future, of course, not ignoring the past. The past provides us meaning and content for today and that should inspire us for tomorrow.

~ Fr Philipos Thomas, M. Th., Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1981.



Youths are perceived to be the energized and vibrant lot of a community. Yes, we are. Youths are considered the backbone and the future of the church. Yes, we are those too. We are a spiritual organisation of STOSC from at least the mid-1960s. What brought structure and significance to us as an organisation in this church were thanks to the vision of the pioneer youth committee.

Mr P K Koshy (Mani Uncle) was the first youth convenor, a position he held responsibly and diligently for a few years with a vision along with his committee. Mrs Susan Isaac recalls picnics to Botanic Gardens and other programmes organised for the youths in the late 1960s, including a drama production written and directed by Mr K A Abraham (Rajan Uncle).

The next decade was a momentous one. The first Annual Orthodox Youth Camp was held in 1971 in Singapore. 70 youths from Singapore and our sister parish in Malaysia attended this camp. Since then, the camp has been held annually except for a few years when it was difficult to find a common vacation time in both countries due to changes in academic years

The 1970s was significant also because many parish members migrated in that decade. British forces pulled out of Singapore, so many chose to return to India or migrate to other countries such as the United Kingdom (UK).

Year	Name of Dean	Camp Theme	Venue
1971	His Grace Mathews Mar Alhanasius		Singapore
1972	Rev. Fr. M.V. George	Cosmic Christ	Kuala Lumpur
1973	Rev. Fr. T.J. Joshua		Singapore
1974	Rev. Fr. P.C. Eapen	Prayer and Meditation	Kuala Lumpur
1975	Rev. Brother Emmanuel	The Ideal Christian	Singapore
1976	Rev. Fr. T.J. Joshua	Study of Old Testament, Ten Commandments and Teaching of Orthodox Church	Kuala Lumpur
1977	H.G. Gheevarghese Mar Osthathios	Study of Christian Faith and the Holy Word	Singapore
1978	Rev. Fr. Philipose Thomas	Jesus Saves	Kuala Lumpur
1979	H.G. Mathews Mar Barnabas	Living Faith	Singapore
1980	H.G. Zachariah Mar Dionysius	Thy Kingdom Come	Kuala Lumpur

From Silver Jubilee, souvenir magazine of St Mary's Orthodox Syrian Church (KL), 1981

When His Grace Abraham Mar Stephanos, Metropolitan of the Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa, visited our church in February 2024, His Grace fondly mentioned the descendants of our pioneer parish members who had migrated to the UK in that decade.

The dwindling numbers of campers were revived from the 1990s by the second generation whose parents had chosen to make Singapore their homeland and by the children from families who migrated given the liberal immigration policies that attracted foreign talents. A few of our regular church members today organised those camps at the turn of the century. That was also the time we started getting camp t-shirts.

Camps in 2010s were organised by several of our current senior youths. Besides another break during the COVID-19 pandemic, the AOYC has remained instrumental in bringing youths of both parishes together, in their spiritual enrichment, and in celebrating our shared heritage.

All ex-campers and camp organizers have a lot of interesting stories to share. You should strike up a conversation with them. Mrs. Susie Frederick remembers supporting and helping her late husband who organized two camps where parish members came together to cook at the campsite. There was cohesion among them evidently. It is a foundation and legacy left for STOSC youths of today to carry on and build on. No foundation or legacy stays a legacy without efforts to uphold and commemorate it.

The youth committees over the almost six decades have organised a range of youth programmes for spiritual enrichment against the background of the contemporary issues, to demonstrate the various talents of the young blood and to foster community spirit within and outside of church. This year, we have our 50th AOYC to look forward to and celebrate – with your prayers and support.

Camp sort of revives our spirit and faith in God which tends to dwindle as the year drags on. ... It provides the much-needed opportunity to learn of our faith, about God and to meet other youths of our Church, to share ideas and just be friends.

~ Anisha, in Silver Jubilee, 1981.



First Youth Fellowship Committee, 1966.
Photo courtesy of Thomas Koshy.

Seated (left to right): Gracy Thomas, Daisy Rachel John, Jessy Mathews, Rev. Fr Gheevarghese Thykkadavil, Rev. Fr M A Varghese Panicker, Rev. Fr P M Thomas, Elsie Verghis, Joyce Daniel, Ivy Mary John.

Standing (left to right): Mohan Thomas George, P K Koshy

Seated (left to right): Thomas John (Sherry), Thomas Koshy (Tom), His Grace Abraham Mar Epiphanius (Vinayan Achen, vicar), Very Rev. Philip Thomas Cor Episcopa (Philip Achen), His Grace Dr Youhanon Mar Demetrios (Ravi Achen), George Thomas (Sunil), Annie George.

Standing (left to right): Joe Samuel, Verghese George (Gibu), Roy Abraham Varghese, Susheela Varghese, Renee George, Mariam George, Abraham Joseph M (Nebu), Roy Koshy.



The youth committee of 1977 during the 26th Annual Combined Youth Camp.
Photo courtesy of Thomas Koshy.

കുരിശിന്റെ വഴിയേ



ഗാഗുൽത്തായിലെ മരകുരിശിൽ
 ആണിമേൽ തൂക്കപ്പെട്ടൊരൻപേ
 നോവാൽ പിടഞ്ഞിട്ടും മാനവർക്കായി
 പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചതാമൊരു കാര്യങ്ങൾക്കു
 അനന്തമാം സ്നേഹത്താൽ രക്ഷിക്കാൻ വന്നിട്ടും
 നിന്ദയായി ശിക്ഷിച്ചു ക്രൂശിലേറ്റം
 ഉള്ളം കൈയിലോ പേരെഴുതി കരുതീട്ടും
 നിൻതിരു പാണിയിൽ ഞാൻ ആണിപ്പാടേകി
 മെയ്രക്തങ്ങൾ ദാനമായി പകർന്ന നിൻ
 ദാഹശാന്തിക്കോ ഞാൻ കയ്പ് നൽകി
 അന്നം തന്നെന്ന പോറ്റുന്ന ദയതൻ
 തിരുനെഞ്ചിൽ ഞാൻ മുറിപ്പാടേകി
 സ്നേഹത്തിൽ തുവലാൽ പൊതിയും വൻ കൃപ തൻ
 അങ്കിക്കായി ഞാൻ കുറിയിട്ടു
 പതറാതെന്ന കരുതുന്ന സ്നേഹത്തിൻ
 അസ്ഥിയോ ഞാൻ തകർക്കാനാഞ്ഞു

കണ്ണണിപ്പോലെനെ കാത്തിട്ടും നാമാ
 നിന്നെ ഞാൻ നോവിച്ചു പാപങ്ങളാൽ
 ജീവജാലത്തിന് ഉറവകൾ നൽകീട്ടും
 പൊട്ടുകിണറുകൾ തേടി ഞാൻ നടന്നു
 പൊറുക്കണേ നാമാ എൻ അപരാധങ്ങൾ,
 സൗഖ്യം നൽകണേ നിൻ മുറിപ്പാടുകളാൽ

The Church-goers

Sumi Baby Thomas - Boo8

Coloured saints sing and praise
The one God they love much.
Embrace, they, one another
With smiles and adoration.



What an elegant altar,
What heavenly atmosphere,
Such angelic voices in sync,
All would compliment.



Away from their ill touch,
Their spirits pray in church
To grant their preys wisdom.
“Also freedom, I grant,” God reminds.

The children watch.
The youths disappear!
But they – ignorant.
The altar grieves.

God proposes, man disposes.
Love, peace and joy
But only for their own gains.
Man's blind, God sighs.

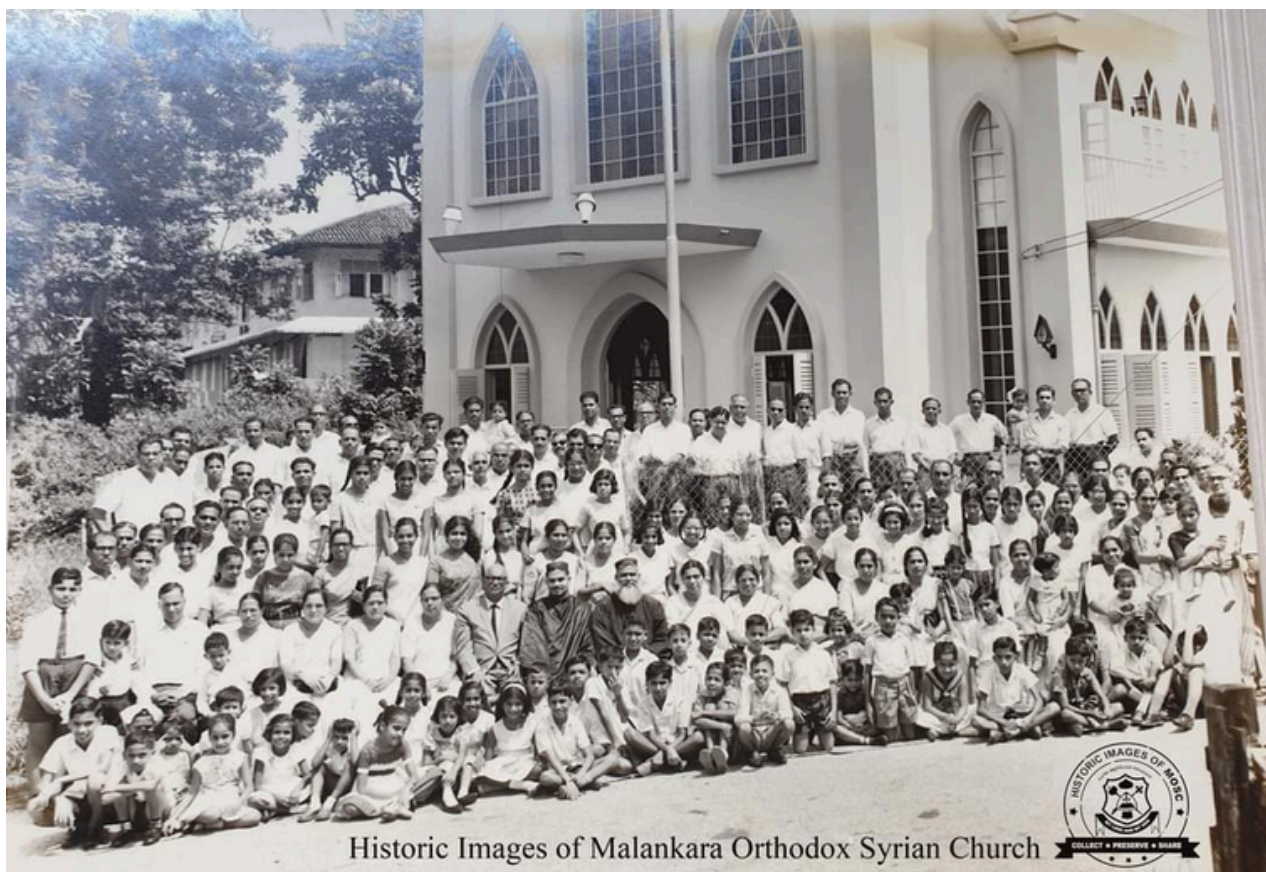
“Search your hearts,” the priest advises.
Would stubborn hearts bother to?
Not to forget their selfish minds.
A whip of cords awaits.

Go in peace, glad and rejoice,
They are blessed in the end.
Alas! Their spirits stay put
While their bodies walk out.

Fearing their vice tongues,
Dreading their pointy noses,
Evading their predator eyes,
Cursing their devilish ears.

Iris Esther Reuben - Ro15





Historic Images of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Parishoners with Fr. P. Joshua (Senior vicar) and Fr. K. K. Punnose, co-vicar (later Stephanos Mar Theodosius). The Singapore church seen behind was later demolished by the govt to build a fly over on that spot. This photo was taken in 1962.



Our Sunday school pioneer teachers and students!

Little Disciples

Ente Palli

Susanna Varghese - Vo18

I wake up on a Sunday morning and start my day by taking a nice warm bath. Then I wear my Sunday best and leave to go to church. I will be greeted by all the kind uncle's and Aunty's in the church.

Then we start with our usual service in the morning. Our services usually start at 8:00am and end at 10:30am. After church we have a time where our priest announces all the announcements and all the Birthday and wedding anniversaries.

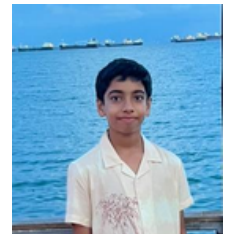
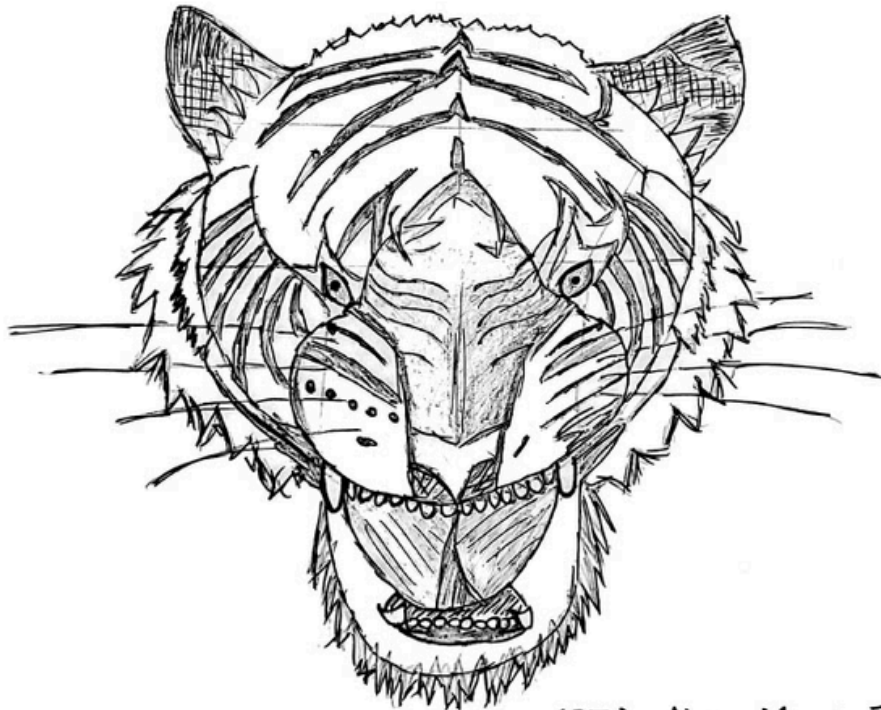
Then all the students who have Sunday school go and eat first. The food which is being served at church is really mouth-watering and delicious. After wearing our shoes and taking our belongings, we will go and queue to get our food. After eating our food, we will assemble at the Sunday school hall and sing many variety of Christian songs and then we have a small prayer and leave for our classes in Sunday school. We learn lots of new things in Sunday school. This helps us get closer to Jesus and understand more about him.



But at the same time our church always come up with new activities and games we all can enjoy. We had our church carnival, games day, Youth Night, and church picnic. During the church picnic we went to Malaysia, and we were separated in groups, and we enjoyed playing all the different games and in the end, we went swimming and had lots of fun.

In my church we have lots of fun and we can be better connected to God

Alex Mani Thomas - To42



(P5) Alex Mani Thomas

18/5/24

Alex

Little Disciples

The story of Apollo13: Best of engineering and thinking on one's feet

Irene Maria Thomas- To42



April 11th 1970, was the day the rocket for NASA's mission to land astronauts in the Fra Mauro area of the moon, a geologically difficult site to land in, launched. The mission involved a spacecraft divided into three parts: the command module, where the crew spent most of their journey; the lunar module, designed for moon descent; and the service module, housing engines and oxygen tanks.

The crew, led by mission commander James Lovell, also included a last-minute command module pilot and rookie lunar module pilot Fred Haise. Initially smooth, the mission faced a critical moment when an explosion occurred in tank 2 due to cracked wires, triggering alarms and electrical failures. Mission control scrambled to assess the damage and plan for survival.

The crew's focus shifted from landing on the moon to simply reaching back on Earth. They decided to use the lunar module as a lifeboat. Throughout, they faced challenges such as managing oxygen, power, and water, all of whose supplies were quickly dwindling. As the world watched, the crew navigated numerous obstacles with ingenuity and resilience.

During re-entry, despite all the odds that was against them, they successfully powered up the frozen command module and executed a precise descent into Earth's atmosphere, emerging as heroes upon splashdown in the Pacific Ocean. Despite technical failures, the mission stands as a testament to human perseverance and the spirit of exploration.

A/N: The real full story, with all its gritty details, is really an interesting read and I would highly recommend everyone into looking into it more! Hope you enjoyed reading:)

Recipe Corner : Pindi Achar

Annamma George - Gooz



Ingredients

1. Pindi -small cube sized 1 kg
2. Red chili powder -4Tbsp
3. Garlic (finely chopped)-1/2 kg
4. Ginger (finely chopped) - 1/4 kg
5. Curry leaves
6. Asafoetida 1 1/2 Tsp
7. Fenugreek powder 1 Tsp
8. Turmeric 1 Tsp
9. Sesame Oil 1/2 litre
10. Mustard seeds
11. Vinegar 3Tbsp



Heat the oil and add mustard seeds, curry leaves, garlic, ginger, red chili powder, asafoetida, fenugreek, salt, and turmeric. Cook on a low flame until the aroma develops. Add the Pindi and keep it covered for 2 minutes. Open the lid, add vinegar, and heat until the water in the mixture evaporates

Orappam Recipe

Sarah Thomas - To44



Orappam is a lesser-known cousin of our popular Vattayappam! It is a traditional sweet snack from Kerala. It was baked in charcoal traditionally. It is a healthy snack as jaggery is used instead of sugar. And it is Gluten free too. So definitely try it out and let me know if you liked it !!

Ingredients

1. Rice flour(Appam Podi preferably) - 1 cup
2. Kara coconut milk – 200 ml pack
3. Jaggery powder- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup for less sweet)
4. Egg – 1
5. Water – 100 ml
6. Cardamom powder – a small pinch
7. Jeera powder - a small pinch(optional)
8. Dry ginger powder- a small pinch(optional)
9. Cashew, Raisins - 1-2 Table spoon
10. Ghee – 2 Table spoon
11. Baking tray- 8 x 8 inch square or equivalent round.



Method

1. Blend coconut milk, egg and jaggery well using a blender or whisk. Add water to it and mix. To this add rice flour little by little and blend well again. This will be a watery mix.
2. Keep this watery mix on medium flame and cook till it thickens. Keep stirring/whisking so that lumps are not formed. In case lumps are formed, run it in a blender for 10 seconds after cooling down fully.
3. Add the powders to this thickened mix.
4. In 1 table spoon ghee fry the cashew and raisins and add to rice flour mix. Mix the cashews, raisins and powders very well.
5. Preheat the oven to 180 degree centigrade. Grease the baking tray with ghee. Pour the mix into the tray and level it using the back of a greased spoon.
6. Bake in 180 degree Centigrade for 30 mins or till the top is slightly crusty.
7. Cool this down well and cut into slices and serve.

For a purely vegetarian version try this without egg - that tastes good too!

Recipe Corner : Banana Flower Chutney

Reena George - Mo45



I am sure you must have tasted different types of chutney "chammanthi" in your lifetime. My sweetest memories of chutney were of my mother serving me, the red and white coconut chutney, the mango coconut chutney and even the dry prawns chutney.

Of course, chutney holds special nostalgic feelings for most of us, right from our school days – 'podichoru in traditional banana leaf'.

I just love chutneys!!

My fondness of chutneys drove me to explore Tulu cuisines. Did you know that Tulu cuisine has some great tongue twisters, when it comes to chutney?

This Banana Flower chutney adapts with almost anything and tastes truly amazing. Only two simple rules before we start - "Don't go crazy on the spices & Don't burn it".



As the first step to starting, take some banana flower petals or 'vazhakoombu' (4 to 5 pcs) cut to medium size and cook slowly in water for 10 to 15 mins, until the petals are fully cooked. Allow this mixture to cool down. Pour one tablespoon oil to a hot pan. When oil become hot, reduce the heat to low. Add one tablespoon of urudu dal and one table spoon of channa dal.

As the seeds begin to sizzle, add 4 to 5 dried red chilies and fry until crisp. Add the cooked banana flower petal with the roasted mixture, and add half a cup of grated coconut, 1 table spoon of jaggery, 1/4 spoon salt and tamarind (1 small piece) to a grinder and blend to a smooth chutney without adding any water. Add salt as required for your taste. The chutney is ready, to be served with your main course.

Note: Banana flower is rich in nutrients & Vitamin C, including fiber, antioxidants and minerals, which are very vital for good health.

Recipe Corner : Kuzhalappam

Annamma George - Gooz



Ingredients

1. Roasted Rice Flour 1 kg
2. Black sesame
3. Garlic - 3 bulbs
4. Shallot - 15 Nos
5. Cumin seed - 1Tbsp
6. Grated Coconut 3,4 Tbsp



Method

1. Grind ingredients 3 to 6 and boil in water.
 2. Add salt, rice flour, and sesame seeds to the mixture, and make a dough similar to chapati dough. (add boiled water as required).
 3. Make balls the size of gooseberries from the dough. Flatten each ball in a chapati presser, then shape them into finger-sized pieces (you can use a finger-sized mold).
 4. Deep fry the shaped pieces until golden brown.
-

Rebecca Rajan George- Roo6



5	3			7				
6			1	9	5			
	9	8					6	
8				6				3
4			8		3			1
7				2				6
	6					2	8	
			4	1	9			5
				8			7	9

Upcoming - St Mary's League Events

Note

Requesting Content for
December Newsletter.

Please contact St Mary's League
Committee Members for
suggestions and feedback.



Bake Sale
Sunday - August 18, 2024



Ladies Ecumenical
Saturday - August 24, 2024

- November 9, 2024 - MNVS East Asia Quiz
- November 17, 2024 - MMVS Examination