

**Dearly Beloved,**

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

**April 26, 2026, Third Sunday after Easter**

**Scriptural Readings:**

- OT: Exodus 40:1-16, Joshua 2:1-6, Hosea 8:1-8, Isaiah 65:1-7
- NT: Acts 4:8-21, Hebrews 3:1-13, Holy Gospel St Mark 2:13-22

**Holy Gospel: St Mark 2:13-22**

<sup>13</sup>He went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about him, and he taught them. <sup>14</sup>And as he passed on, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

<sup>15</sup>And as he sat at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were sitting with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. <sup>16</sup>And the scribes of<sup>[a]</sup> the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat<sup>[b]</sup> with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>17</sup>And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

**The Question about Fasting**

<sup>18</sup>Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" <sup>19</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. <sup>20</sup>The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. <sup>21</sup>No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. <sup>22</sup>And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh skins."<sup>[c]</sup>

**Reflections:**

On the third Sunday after Easter, we have the Gospel reading that narrates Jesus calling Levi who was working at the tax office. Soon after this calling, the gospel moves to the scene of Jesus dining with tax collectors at the new disciple (Levi)'s house. There were comments and criticisms about Jesus sharing food with people who work against their religious law (tax office), and thus who were considered as sinners. Jesus and His disciples were then blamed for not committing to a mandatory fasting which John the Baptist, his disciples and the Pharisees were strictly practicing. Jesus responded to their criticism by sharing a new insight on spirituality and practices pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

Here we consider two things as essential for the faithful to follow:

First, the post-resurrection season's gospel readings assure the experience of Christ through the Lord's appearance in the Eucharistic gathering. We come to the Holy Qurbana to feel the Lord. However, it does not end there. The faithful are meant to take the Christ experience upon themselves with the hope of the risen Christ. Last Sunday, it was the appearance of Christ to the disciples who were busy fishing with probably lesser interest in the mission they were entrusted with. They were toiling much without avail. Christ came to help them and towards the end He asked

Peter to tend to His sheep and flock. That was the intent of the appearance, to re-initiate them to the gospel ministry. This points to the fact that for the faithful, if we keep aside the Lord's ministry for anything we plan for our fortune and prosperity, it will never bring good results.

Without Christ if we toil and earn, it may not do much good. But with Christ at the core of our life, He will give us more than we can fathom. The fishing net likens to the web of our life. More earnings and blessings can sometimes cause our life to break. It is not the absence of material gains that breaks our life, it would be the lack of His grace. Scarcities may trouble, but they will not cause us to fall. Abundance or surplus cannot assure wellbeing. We have moved to places away from our homeland in search of a better life, peaceful and prosperous. In the initial phase of our move, we held fast to our faith and absolute reliance in God believing that we had God with us. After moving in, after settling in fully, do we look for Him as before? We might be church goers, turned into administrators, decision makers, and very active members. With such an 'active member status, what has this to do with the Lord and His ministry entrusted to us? We earn money and wealth, but have we grown rich in God? As the Lord said, if we earn the whole world, and not our souls, what benefits us?

When the Lord gives His Graces in abundance, our nets won't break. God is not against our hard work for earning a life, rather He wants us to enjoy life, but not by neglecting the Gospel ministry. It is not about reading the Holy Scripture regularly, rather it is about taking every effort to reflect Christ in everything we think, speak and do. It is to bring the divine light to everyone we come across. It is about letting our ego die in us so that the Lord can be risen in us.

Secondly, Christ wants His faithful to be genuine and never to pretend. Feel His presence, live in His presence, and observe what He commands us to. It is not to tick a box that we go to church, join for prayer, observe Lents and fasting, but it is for a joyful living in Him. It is for mutual abiding. The outcome should be the expressions of the Holy Spirit. Jesus fasted for a reason and He won. If we fast for filling some blanks, it will never bring any good.

Christ is the transforming presence. Without transformation, all religious practices would die in themselves. We have only one life and only one calling, His ministry. Nothing else matters more. If we can't do it, we will die in spirit though we look alive. Christ is risen for us to have a new life in Spirit. Let us be alive!!! Indeed, He is Risen!!!

#### **FEASTS AND REMEMBRANCES:**

- **April 21**, HG Yuhanon Mar Ivanios Episcopa, 232<sup>nd</sup> anniversary, entombed at Pazhaya Suriyanippally, Chengannur.
- **April 22**, Marthoma III, 338<sup>th</sup> anniversary, entombed at St Thomas Cathedral, Kadampanad, Adoor
- **April 23, 24, May 05, 06**, Feast of St George observed in various parishes. ***Our parish will be celebrating the feast on Sat May 09 & Sun May 10.***

#### **Condolences**

We express our deepest condolences on the passing away of Pradeesh Alexander, 44 years Chundamannil, Muthukulam, beloved cousin of Dennis Jacob John (D 06), on April 13, 2026 in Belfast. The funeral service was conducted on April 22, Wednesday at St Mary's Orthodox Church, Muthukulam. Dennis managed to travel to India to attend the funeral service. We pray for the

departed soul and for the family. May the Lord be with them and strengthen everyone.

#### **Thanks to Rev. Fr. Adv. Johnkutty K**

We thank Rev. Fr. Adv. Johnkutty for visiting us and offering the Holy Liturgy on April 19 Sunday. His sermon was illuminating. Achen was on visit to Canada for leading the Holy Week service. We keep Achen and his ministry in prayer.

#### **OCYM Food Sale**

OCYM food sale on Sunday April 19 was a grand success. It was the result of wonderful teamwork and coordination with exemplary support from our parish members and the blessing of the Lord. We appreciate the OCYM team for their initiative and we thank everyone for the various kinds of support given.

#### **KCEF AGBM**

KCEF AGBM was held at SGOCT on April 14 Tuesday. Rev. Fr. Dr. Thomas George was elected to the presidency and Shibu Cherian from our parish was re-elected for one more year as the IT Coordinator. Hearty congrats to them!

#### **MMVS Blood Donation**

MMVS initiated blood donation went well with eighteen members from our unit giving blood. This drive will continue throughout the year for which we encourage all our members to donate blood.

#### **Food & Clothe Donation Drive**

This year our church would be joining hands with the Coptic Orthodox Church for reaching out to the needy. We keep the drive open for the month of May. We may be able to visit our brethren in Toronto on the first Saturday of June. Details shall be announced soon. We request all our members to support this initiative by bringing clothes that are gently used/looking good, nonperishable food items and to be ready to go to the drop off venue. All are welcome. Please keep the drive in prayer.

#### **Global Clergy Conference at Parumala: May 19-21**

The Global Clergy Conference of the Malankara Orthodox Church will be held at Parumala from May 19-21. HH Baselios Marthoma Mathews III will inaugurate the meeting. The theme will be '**Guardians of the Apostolic Flame- Priestly Witnessing in a Changing World**'. About thousand clergies from 32 dioceses across the world will be participating in the conference. We keep the meeting in prayer.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Diocesan Family & Youth Conference of Canada: Thursday July 02-Saturday July 04**

The first Diocesan Family & Youth Conference of Canada will be held at Georgian College, Barrie from July 02-04, 2026. Registration is open, the link has been sent to our members. H.G. Zachariah Mar Nicholovos Metropolitan, Rev. Fr. Dr. Timothy (Tenny) Thomas and Rev. Fr. Dr. Abraham (Abey) George will be the main resource persons. The 'Ticket Sale Kickoff Ceremony' will be held at St Thomas Orthodox Church Toronto, Etobicoke on Sunday April 26 at 12:00 pm. H.G. Zachariah Mar Nicholovos Metropolitan will be inaugurating the launch of registrations. Our members who find it convenient, please join the ceremony. We keep the family conference in our daily prayers, and our families please assure full time participation in the event. Please reach out to Manu Abraham and

Vivin Thomas Vettiyil (Diocesan Council Members) for any enquiries.

**Pray for Peace in the Middle East and Gulf.**

We continue praying for re-establishing peace and concord in the war affected lands and regions. Our prayers may work miracles through the Holy Spirit. May the governments and leaders join hands to reconcile and to bring an end to the war.

**UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS: Please note in your calendar**

1. **April 26, Sunday- SDOF Toronto's Grill-N-Chill BBQ Event.** Please support. Please be aware that there will not be other food than BBQ. Please be ready to buy food on that day.
2. **May 09-Sat, 10-Sun: The Feast of St George**  
Saturday- 06:30 pm Evening Prayer, Devotional Talk, Raza, Benediction,  
Nerchavilampu Sunday- 09:00 am Morning Prayer, 10:00 am Holy Qurbana, Intercession of  
St George, Benediction, Nerchavilampu
3. **May 14, Thursday:** Feast of Ascension, Holy Qurbana on May 13, Wednesday starting with  
Evening Prayer at 06:30 pm, HQ at 07:30 pm
4. **May 14-May 24:** Days of Waiting
5. **May 24, Sunday:** The Feast of Pentecost

**Attention Please:**

- **Parking:** Please be considerate while parking our vehicles, only park at designated space. Leave reserved lots for the intended and kindly park within lines and markings leaving enough space for others to open their doors without scratching or hitting nearby parked vehicles.

**AREA PRAYER MEETINGS:** Upcoming Prayer meeting schedules shall be updated soon.

**FOR OUR ATTENTION & TO NOTE:**

**Children, please occupy front benches during our Liturgical Services**

**Kindly avoid crowding at the back of the church. A few concerns.**

- Due to safety concerns and for assuring an undistracted worship space, we request all our members to proceed to the front rows except those that are reserved for children when we enter the temple. It would be a bit difficult for our volunteers to suggest moving to the front during the service as it would cause distraction and noise. We need to avoid crowding at the entrance and stair areas as this has raised safety concerns.
- Please be considerate to our senior members to help them find seats or while they try to access the washroom. A slip or a hit should be avoided in any circumstance.
- Please be watchful at the shoe rack area which is also the entrance to both washrooms.
- We request our parents to attend our children not to pull the alarm lever at the back wall.

### **Hand Waving Machine & Common Absolution Prayer for all communicants**

The hand waving machine has been installed at the church entrance for taking count of the communicants. Whoever wishes to take Holy Communion, upon entering the temple, please wave your hand once at the machine. Please be aware that after the Nicene Creed, the machine shall be disabled. Absolution shall be done during the morning prayer.

### **WEEKLY IN-PERSON MEETINGS:**

- **April 25, Saturday**, Parish Choir session with Rev. Fr. John Samuel, 04:00 pm-06:30pm at church. All choir members are expected to join on time.
- **April 26, Sunday – in-person meetings**
- SDOF BBQ
- Sunday School
- MGOCSM monthly meeting after refreshments

**LIVE streaming has been reactivated:** All services' Live Streaming is now available.

### **Holy Liturgical Text for this Sunday**

We will be using the English Taksal of Holy Fathers this Sunday.

May the Gracious Lord keep us from all evil and heal the entire world.

### **Next Week**

**May 03**, Third Sunday after the New Sunday

Scriptural Readings:

- OT: Exodus 34:4-12, 1 Kings 20:28-30, Micah 4:1-7, Zachariah 8:4-9, Isaiah 37:8-17
- NT: 1 John 4:19-5:15, Hebrews 11:3-6, Holy Gospel St John 4:31-3

Yours in Christ

Thomas John Achen

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