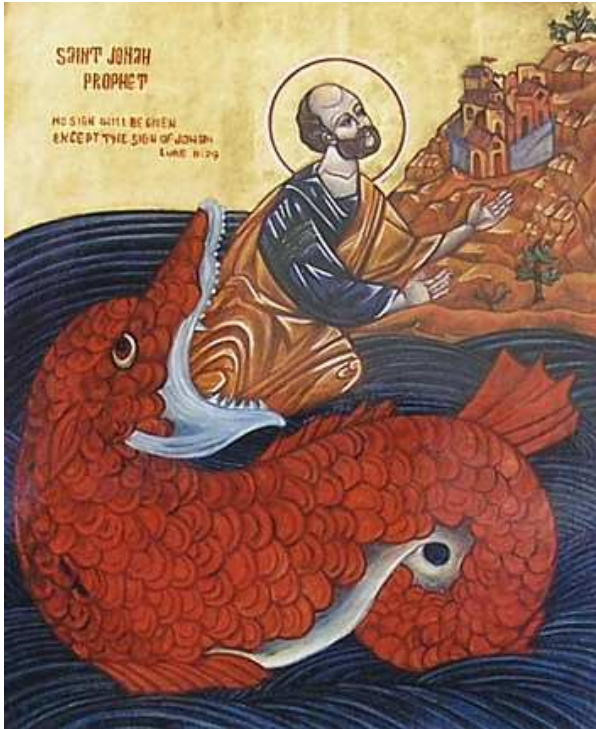




GREGORIAN GAZETTE



"The Ninevites trembled at the voice of Yonah, the son of Mattay, and took refuge in penitence by watching, fasting and prayer; and by tears and groans the sentence of judgment pronounced by Yonah concerning the destruction of Nineveh was annulled. Blessed be the Compassionate one who turned them from evil to good." (Thursday Evening Prayer from the Shimo)

Three Day Fast - January 30th to February 1st

A Seminarian Speaks - PG 2

Family Night 2011 - PG 6

Calendar - PG 3

Christmas & New Year - PG 8

HG Job Mar Philoxenos 4

News & Notes - PG 9

Managing Committee Retreat - PG 5

Kids' Korner - PG 11



The following is an article taken from the St. Vladimir's Seminary website (svots.edu) and is written by second year seminarian Teji Abraham from Dallas, TX.

Family dealings can at the same time be the most rewarding and stressful experiences of someone's life. The stress and trepidation of these experiences can be greatly amplified in situations where the family members are seemingly estranged. This is somewhat similar to what I feared would be my experience as I attended first St. Tikhon's and then St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminaries.

It is no secret that the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Indian Orthodox Church) is in the family of Oriental (Non-Chalcedonian) Orthodox Churches, and I had no idea how I would be received in either of the seminaries. I saw the relationship between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches as being similar to members of the same family who have had a strained relationship for many years. When the estranged family members meet finally after a long time, they approach each other with caution, not quite sure how one would be received by the other. But when they can see that there is still love between them, they throw open their arms and embrace each other.

In Fall 2009, I began attending St. Tikhon's Seminary with some anxiety. I was received and welcomed with open arms as a fellow brother of Orthodoxy. My interactions with my fellow seminarians were of mutual appreciation and interest. We strived to learn about each other and to focus on what united us as Orthodox Christians. After my wedding in the following summer, I transferred to St. Vladimir's Seminary in Fall 2010. I was again faced with apprehension and also some intimidation. I joined as a second year student, into a group whose members already had a year to get to know each other. How would I be received among this group?

Again I was happy to be quite warmly received by everyone at the seminary. It is not important that people simply be courteous, but they need to be accepting. I felt that the communities of both seminaries were quite

CONTD PG 12

Fr. Ninan George
Liju Paul
Liju Varghese
Elizabeth Varghese
Gladstone Mammen

George Panicker
Joe Varghese
Peter Varghese
George Varghese (Publisher)

EDITORIAL BOARD

15. Sunday - First Sunday after Feast of Epiphany

Managing Committee Meeting

Sunday School Midterm Exams

Acts 2:37-47, Ephesians 1:3-14, St. Matthew 4:12-22

18. Wednesday - Memorial of Saints Samuel and Antony**22. Sunday - Second Sunday after Feast of Epiphany**

Senior Fellowship Meeting after Holy Qurbana

1 Peter 3:7-15, Hebrews 1:1;2-4, St. John 3:1-12

26. Thursday - Memorial of His Holiness Marthoma Mathews II**28. Saturday - MOMS Area Meeting 10AM-1PM**

PHAT/WOW Fellowship

29. Sunday - Third Sunday after Feast of Epiphany

General Body Meeting after Holy Qurbana

Acts 17:16-34, 1 Corinthians 3:16-4:5, St. John 3:1-12

30. Monday to 1. February, Wednesday - Nineveh Fast**PLANNING AHEAD**

5. February - MC Meeting; Sunday School Teachers Meeting

12. February - SS Parent/Teacher Conference

19. February - Kothine Sunday

20. February - Great Lent starts

26. February - MOMS Fundraiser

THE NINEVEH FAST: "The three day fast of Nineveh commemorates the three days that Prophet Jonah spent inside the fish (for the story, see the Book of Jonah in the Old Testament). This fast is unique to the Orthodox Church which it passed to other Oriental Churches such as Coptic and Armenian. It is observed for three days from the tenth Monday before Easter Sunday.

Historically, this fast is one of the most rigorously observed fasts in the Orthodox Church. The faithful traditionally refrain from food and drink for three consecutive days, from Monday till Wednesday! Some observe the fast by refraining from food (and drink if they so wish) from morning till sunset during the three days. The church enjoins you to at least refrain from meat, fish and dairy products during the period of fasting.

The faithful are urged to go to church after this fast (or the following Sunday) and receive the Holy Eucharist."

Guidelines For Pious Living By His Grace Job Mar Philoxenos—Part II

(Part I was published in the December issue)

7. **Before going to sleep, examine your conscience, pray to be given light to recognize your sins;** think of them, beg for forgiveness and promise to reform. Then give yourself up to God, as though tonight you will have to appear before Him. Entrust yourself to the Mother of God, your guardian angel, the saint whose name you bear. Picture your bed as your coffin and your blanket as your shroud. Cross yourself and kissing the cross you wear, fall asleep under the protection of Jesus Christ!
8. **During an illness, first of all, entrust yourself to God in order to strengthen your spirit in the midst** of your misery, often remember and think of the suffering and the death of Jesus Christ. Ceaselessly say all the prayers you know and can. Beg God to forgive you your sins and to give you patience while ill. In all ways possible, abstain from complaining an irritation that is common when ill. Our Lord Jesus Christ underwent, for the sake of our salvation, the most painful stress and suffering and what is that in comparison that we have done or suffered for the sake of our salvation?
9. **Go to the services in church as often as possible.** Try especially to be present often at the Holy Liturgy. Go to confession and receive the holy sacraments as often as possible. Receive Holy Communion always with sincere hunger and real thirst of your soul, with a contrite heart, with reverence, humbleness, faith, trust and love. Think of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ as often as possible, begging Him to veil your sins and receive you into His kingdom. May the name of Jesus always be on your lips, in your soul and in your heart. As often as possible, meditate on God's great love to you. Glorify and worship the Holy Trinity so that you yourself may love Him with all your heart, all your soul and with all your thoughts. Doing so you will enable you to lead a peaceful life on earth and a blessed one in Heaven forever.

May God bless. – HG Late Job Mar Philoxenos, Metropolitan of the Diocese of Delhi

Synopsis of the 2012 Managing Committee Retreat held on Friday, December 30th, 2011 at 7PM

The retreat started with evening prayer.

Ninan Achen stated that this is a calling from God. We are accountable to God. We are coworkers with God. As a servant of God, our reward may be a crown of thorns- concept of suffering servant. We are to be imitators of God, striving for perfection. We have to realize that God performs wonders in mysterious ways- not understandable to us. We are a spiritual body as we make decisions being the representative of God and the congregation keeping the Orthodox faith and constitution in mind. Episcopacy and democracy are balanced in our Church hierarchy and structure.

Bible study was based on 1 Timothy 4:12 "Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity"

1. Word – we have to say things carefully, merging our difference of opinions so that we do not hurt others. Our word should be in unity and oneness.
2. Conduct denotes character. We have to remove our weaknesses and develop an affinity towards a life of worship and prayer. Let us try to have Holy Communion every first Sunday of the month.
3. Faith – Church is the body of Christ with Jesus Christ as the head. We have to walk in the Orthodox faith living a sacramental life.
4. Love – Jesus Christ's public ministry of three and a half years was one of LOVE. His incarnation; the entire gospel- the essence is Love. We have to propagate that.
5. Purity – We have to be Holy as our Heavenly Father. Only the pure in heart will see God. We have to grow in Holiness.
6. Spirit – We have to be spiritual (Christian) in our approach and thinking and emulate that through our actions and behavior.

We concluded that we have to maintain unity and bring about healing and reconciliation if there are any concerns or issues while growing in perfection and striving to be holy. The aspect of servant hood is to be emphasized in our walk as committee members of 2012. Our mission is spiritual. We have to pray as a group in tears and on our knees.

The retreat closed in prayer.

Parish Christmas Family night was celebrated on December 24. The celebration started with evening prayer at 5.30 pm followed by delicious dinner consisting of fried rice and sweets provided by our mothers. All the Sunday school classes presented programs by ways of skits and songs. Many of the children and some of the adults presented dance sequences and songs. Many of our parishioners came and enjoyed the festivities and fellowship. We appreciate the efforts of Jimmy Panicker for coordinating the event and the programs. We also thank Meena Chacko and Susan George for taking care of the decoration and coordinating the sumptuous supper with active participation of our families. We also appreciate all the children, Sunday school teachers, the parents and all the families who helped out, participated and presented the programs, the mothers who provided the food and the MC's who coordinated the stage arrangements as well as the audio and video team for the technical direction and assistance. May God bless!



Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam (MMVS) 2012

“ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free , male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” Galatians 3: 8

Warm greetings to all from MMVS! As the very first MMVs article in the Gazette, lets us take a moment to trace our origins and remember the people who worked behind this successful women’s organization of the Orthodox Church.

Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam (MMVS) was formally founded in our Church in India in 1920, under the visionary leadership of K.M Annamma (Kandathil) and the patronage of Late Rev. M.C. Kuriakose Ramban. Mrs. K.M Annamma (Kandathil) served as the first secretary of the organization and helped it grow and reach great heights.

The Motto of the Samajam is Pray, Act and Shine.

Reviewing the Objectives:

Preparing women to have Biblical knowledge by attending various courses, trainings and seminars.

Encouraging women to participate in the church choir to improve the liturgical music in line with the Sruthi School of Liturgical Music, Kottayam, India.

Training women to have awareness of social problems and help with right decision making at every level.

Nurture and develop women’s potentials to a greater extent to promote leadership qualities.

Preparing to solve the problems of working women.

Seek solidarity with women’s action groups on local, national, and international levels encouraging more participation in ecumenical gatherings.

Enhance spirituality by observing Canonical Lents, engaging in charity work and practicing family prayers.

Encourage women to actively participate in the OVBS/Sunday School Program of each parish in bringing up children in the Orthodox faith.

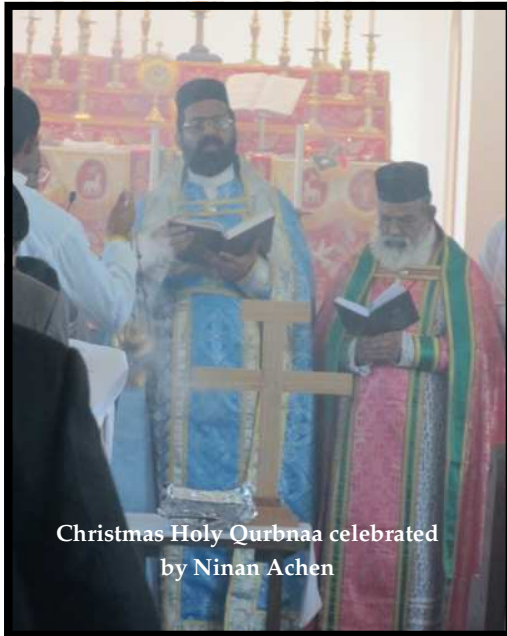
CONTD PG 10

NEW YEAR'S DAY CELEBRATED WITH HOLY QURBANA

Our Beloved M.K Thomas Achen was the Chief Celebrant on New Year's Day as we celebrated Holy Qurbana. Thomas Achen in his message inspired us with the following words: We as a parish have to come together and pray so that we can understand the will of God and thus move forward in that direction. He also asked us to pray for the person who broke into our Church so that through our prayers and actions, we may touch him and transform him.

Immediately after Holy Qurbana, the installation and dedication of the 2012 Managing Committee was done. The new committee was sworn in with the following pledge "I pledge in the name of God that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Malankara Orthodox Church and its constitution and the Catholicose and Malankara Metropolitan, HH Baselios Paulose II seated on the Apostolic throne of St. Thomas, the Holy Synod and the Diocesan Metropolitan, HG Alexios Mar Eusebius and that I will faithfully discharge the duties for the progress of the Church and serve as a witness of Christ".

We welcome the new committee and keep them in prayers. We also appreciate the dedicated works and tireless efforts of the 2011 committee in leading the parish and coordinating all the functions in the parish in a smooth and efficient manner so that we can all come together and worship in the house of God!



Christmas Holy Qurbana celebrated
by Ninan Achen

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Effective January 1, 2012, we are pleased to inform that Joe Varghese will be the Acting Principal. The Sunday school is scheduled to hold the Mid Term Exams on Sunday January 15. A Teachers meeting is also planned for Sunday February 5th Sunday after Holy Qurbana. The *Parent-Teacher Conference* originally scheduled for Sunday January 29th is being moved to *Sunday, February 12th*. The Sunday school Competitions that we had planned for Saturday, January 21st is being moved to Saturday, February 18th, beginning at 9AM. Please watch out for further details as the House Leaders (Head Boy/ Head Girl) organize the exciting and for the first time ever "YOUTH COMPETITIONS". We appreciate the hard work and dedicated efforts of Reena Cherian for coordinating along with Susan George (Gurnee) our Sunday school program at the ECUMENICAL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION in December, 2011. We also thank all the children for coming together, practicing and presenting a good program as well as the parents for their support and encouragement.



MGOCSM: MGOCSM Chicago held its annual Winter 2Day Conference from Friday, January 13th to Saturday January 14th at St. Gregorios Church, Oak Park. Tenny Thomas graced the conference with his presence and spoke about MGOCSM's 2012 theme of "Walking in the Light", taken from 1 John 1:5-7. Tenny talked about what it means to walk in the light of Christ and how by walking in that light, we are to bring glory and praise to God the Father. He emphasized that no matter where we are in life or what responsibilities have been entrusted to us, we must live for Christ today, seeking God's grace and the Spirit's guidance to fully surrender our life to Him. On behalf of MGOCSM, thank you to all the parents for sending your kids out and to all the leaders that helped put the conference together. Please continue to keep not only MGOCSM Chicago and its leaders, but all the MGOCSM members across the world in your daily prayers, that God may strengthen and guide this ministry according to perfect will.

CAROLING: We thank and appreciate the hard work and sincere efforts of the Christmas caroling team led by George Mathai and Koshy Oommen. They visited almost all our parishioners' homes renewing the message of hope and peace through the birth of Jesus Christ. The caroling team started visiting the parishioners' homes the Thanksgiving weekend in November and continued through every weekend till December 18 when our children and youth joined together in Skokie and surrounding neighborhoods to bring the caroling festivities to its end for 2011. We praise and glorify God for this wonderful fellowship and brotherhood that this team has done in spreading joy and cheer amongst our community.

Divyabodhanam 2012: We have started the new batch of Divyabodhanam POCE (First level) classes. Those who wish to join the new batch may please contact Ms. Sally Korah. The classes are planned to be held generally once in a month after Holy Qurbana on Sundays. The active participation in these classes helps us to understand the faith and life of the Church and thus grow as the Body of Christ. We encourage the parishioners to sign up for these classes and come together in spiritual fellowship.

Our Divyabodhanam DOCE (Second level) classes are starting on January 22nd. Those who have graduated the first level POCE course will be studying in these classes.

FROM PG 7 Encourage women to take an active role in the administration of the church and other committees at regional and diocesan level. MMVS 2012 would like to commend the tireless efforts of last year's team under the leadership of Mrs. Beena Poozhikunnel, Mrs. Geetha Panicker, and the committee. We commend the successful hosting of the Diocese level conference for the first **time** at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Oak Park.

We cordially invite all the women of our church to come forward and participate in MMVS activities and serve our Lord thus assisting in making our MMVS and Church a vibrant and living one. Let us be a beacon of light, expelling darkness and bringing hope and peace into our families and parish.

Kids - Korner

KRIPA WINS KALA THILAKAM TITLE : Kripa Mariam

Poozhikunnel won the Kala Thilakam title in the IMA(Illinois Malayalee Association) Youth festival 2011.

She participated in 6 events and won the following prizes in these events:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Bharata Natyam - 3rd | 2. Classical Music - 2nd |
| 3. Malayalam Film song - 1st | 4. English song - 1st |
| 5. Instrumental Music - 1st | 6. Indian National Anthem - 1st |



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

02 Poozhikunnel, Kripa-Mariam 31 Panicker, Sheena

02 George, Joshua

31 Alex, Preethu Susan

06 Easo, Nirali S

07 John, Justin

11 Mathew, Sharon

27 Kuruvilla, Nathan C

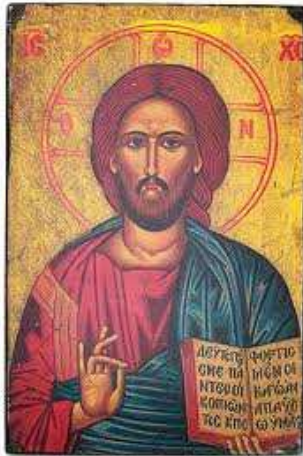
28 Panicker, Kevin Abraham

Happy Birthday

To You!

FROM PG 2 accepting of us. The seminaries went above and beyond expectations to meet the spiritual, academic, pastoral, and formational needs of the Indian students. We were allowed to have space to conduct daily chapel services according to our tradition, and we were given the freedom and opportunity to study the history, liturgy, and music of the Indian Church. Yet we were not simply cast aside as a subclass group in the seminary, we were included and welcomed in all aspects of life in the seminary communities. We felt as though we really were members of the seminary family, whether we were attending classes, socializing, or performing our community service responsibilities. We weren't odd curiosities to be explored and studied; rather we were seen as fellow Orthodox seminarians learning the Orthodox faith and striving to serve God through the Orthodox Church.

Feeling the welcome and acceptance from the seminaries really added to the seminary experience; it really is like feeling the warm embrace of family. I truly feel that being able to attend these seminaries has been an unmatched privilege. Our wholehearted gratitude to the Orthodox Church in America and to St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminaries can never be truly expressed. The appreciation we feel for being blessed with the opportunity to study in these seminaries is a feeling we will carry with us all our life.



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