



GREGORIAN GAZETTE

Shubkono - by Tenny Thomas



The Church, begins Great Lent with the 'Day of Forgiveness,' and sets her journey into penitence. And so, kneeling and prostrating, her people look ahead to Kymtho, the great feast of the Light. The service of reconciliation is conducted on Monday, the first day of the Great Lent, at the end of third hour. The Service of Reconciliation or shubqono, stands at the 'threshold of Great Lent.' The service marks the actual doorway into Lent, the threshold on the other side of which stands the fullest measure of asceticism that the Church metes out to the whole of her faithful throughout the world. As we stand at the threshold of the fast, we

sing of him who stood before the gates of Eden. As we make ready to enter in to this season of preparation, we sing often: **O merciful and compassionate Lord, to You I cry aloud: I am fallen! Have mercy on me! Your grace has shown forth, O Lord, it has shone forth and given light to our souls. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the season of repentance. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, that having sailed across the great sea of the Fast, we may reach the third-day Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.**

The scene painted by the hymns of the day is one of a great and terrible sorrow. We lament the loss of so great a gift – the gift to be children of God. Our sins have forced us to be exiles from glory. We are in want. No more can we look upon the Lord our God and Maker. As Great Lent begins, we are reminded in language stronger and more direct than ever before of the gravity of our condition in sin: **'Woe is me, what have I suffered in my misery! I transgressed the commandments of the Master, and now I am deprived of every blessing.'** Then the Savior said: **'I desire not the loss of the creature which I fashioned, but that he should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth; and when he comes to me I will not cast him out.'**

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We are excited to welcome Rev Fr Christopher Mathew (Chris Achen) to Chicago and our midst. He has been appointed as the full time Youth Minister of the Chicago area. This is the fulfillment of a long cherished dream of the younger generation. Born and raised in Houston, Achen completed his theological studies and liturgical training at both St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary, PA and Orthodox Theological Seminary, Ktm. He also has completed one year of a chaplaincy residency program. For the past several years, he has been faithfully working among the youth and children of the South region. Per HG Eusebius' Kalpana, "Achen's primary responsibility will be to provide leadership and guidance for the growing generation in order to teach and mold them in the faith of Christ and His Holy Church. Many of our youth desire spiritual nourishment, counseling, and someone who they can relate to and are able to understand their needs. We believe that this appointment will help in those areas and more by giving Achen the opportunity to work with the youth at the area and parish level as well as through ministry on college campuses where many of our kids reside. Achen will be visiting each parish of the area to conduct Holy Qurbana in English and to assist the Vicars in the parish ministry. In addition to the Sunday parish visits and ministry, Achen will serve as a leader and advisor to the acolytes and spiritual organizations, mainly the Sunday School, MGOCSM, and FOCUS in consultation with the respective Vicars. He will also be regularly visiting college campuses and developing campus ministry." Achen celebrated Holy Qurbana with us last Sunday. He is expected

to be with us 2 days in a month. He also led the school morning try as well as participated in the bowl PHAT ship. He is not our parish hav-



ing visited on several occasions. He was a main resource person at NUHRO a couple of years back when he was a Deacon.

We ask that you keep Achen in your prayers, and extend him all cooperation, and support. Specially, please pray for his wife, Mary Kochamma as she is expecting. Chris Achen is the son of Rev Fr Mammen P Mathew who is currently serving as the Asst. Vicar at St. Thomas Orthodox Cathedral, Houston.

Let us pray and work with him so much fruit will come out of his ministry to the parishes in Chicago, especially the younger generation.

Fr. Ninan George
Liju Paul
Liju Varghese
Elizabeth Varghese

Gladstone Mammen
George Panicker
Joe Varghese
Peter Varghese

George Varghese (Publisher)

EDITORIAL BOARD

12. Sunday - Departed Faithful

Parents Teachers Conference
DB - POCE

St. James 3:1-12, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

17. Friday - MGOCSM Friday Night Sing**18. Saturday - SS Day Competition (9AM)****19. Sunday - Kothinay Sunday/ Shubkono/Miracle at Cana**

DB - DOCE
MMVS Meeting

Revelation 2:1-7, Colossians 3:1-17, St. John 2:1-11

20. Monday - Great Lent Begins**23. Thursday - Memorial of St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius (Vattaseril) & HG Thomas Mar Makarios****25. Saturday - Ward 9 Prayer (Peter and Sally Samuel's residence)**

PHAT/WOW Ministry

26. Sunday - Healing the Leper

MMVS Fundraiser
MGSF

Acts 9:22-31, Romans 3:27-4:5, St. Luke 5:12-16, 4:40-41

PLANNING AHEAD

10 March - KFC

14 March - Middle of Great Lent

24 March - Common Prayer

25 March - Annunciation to St. Mary

Catholicate Day

General Body Meeting

SS Parent/Teacher Conference

1-8 April - Holy Week



For Holy Week this year, we will be blessed with the presence of Dn. Philip Mathew Semassen is a familiar face to us, as he has come to our parish on many different occasions.

Please keep Semassen and his family in your prayers, especially as he prepares to embark with us on the journey to the cross this Great Lent.

The Metropolitan, Vattasseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysius was the beacon of Malankara Church. He had held up freedom as his birthright. His life story enrolls before us the saga of his sacrifices and long-standing devotion to Christianity. He has achieved immortality through the establishment of the Catholicos. Geevarghese was born on 1858 October 31st in the Vattasseril family in Puvathikunnel, Mallappally as the son of Joseph and Aleyamma. He learnt the basic lessons from Kottuvalanji Chacko Asan. After completing his studies at the C.M.S. High School, Kottayam, he joined the Vettical Dayara. He had been impressed by the magnetic personality and enlightening speech of Parumala Thirumeni. Geevarghese achieved proficiency in Syriac and Church history. He became Dean in 1879 and Priest in January 18th, 1880. He received the title of Ramban on 2nd November 1903 from Pulikkottil Joseph Mar Dionysius Metropolitan. Vattasseril Thirumeni performed mentions service to the church as the Malpan of the Old Seminary, as the principles of M.D. Seminary and as the Manager of Parumala Seminary. His monumental work "Mathopadesa Sarangal" (The Essence of Religious Advice) is the collection of the brief notes that he had prepared for teaching his students at these seminaries. It is an authoritative work in which the faith and customs of the Malankara Church are explained on the basis of the Bible. It is a very clear proof the Metropolitan mastery of the Syriac. Church history and Canonical ideas. The intensity of faith that the Metropolitan had intended from his Guru and had purified through meditation always stood in good stead. In moments of crisis this deep faith in the Almighty defended the church. He had also written the work, 'The Suriani Text Book'. The Vattasseril Ramban was ordained as Metropolitan on 3rd May 1908 at Jerusalem. On his return to Kerala he engaged himself in Church affairs and acted as the assistant of Joseph Mar Dionysius. On His demise Vattasseril became the Metropolitan of the Malankara Sabha in 1909. 1910 was a problematic year in the history of the Malankara Church. Vattasseril was isolated in the midst of the other Metropolitans who were willing to abandon their faith for the sake of power. He did not fall a prey to the persuasions of the Patriarch Abdulla but stood firmly for the freedom of the church. In 1911 the Patriarch tried to silence the Vattasseril Thirumeni by suspending him. But the church could not accept the suspensions as it was not canonical. In 1912 Ahathulla Bava came here from Antioch and removed the suspension. With this Catholicos came into effect in Malankara. This was the golden dawn of freedom for the true believers of this country. Till then they had been disturbed by the indolence of native church officials and the implementation of power by foreigners. Many Movements have taken shape from the foresight of Vattasseril Thirumeni. The Students Movement and the

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The General Body held on Sunday, January 29th passed the 2012 Church Budget. The general body also gave approval to the Managing Committee and the Vision committee to work together to explore the feasibility on a Church available for sale along with financing options and present their recommendations to the general body.

The emergency General Body held on Sunday February 5 considered the proposal for the purchase of a Church at Elmhurst and gave approval to the Managing Committee and the Vision Committee to jointly start the bidding process. For further details, please contact your ward member. Let us all pray to God so that the will of God may be done through all our endeavors.

2012 Functional Responsibilities in the Parish

Purchases and Supplies - Abraham Mathew & George Varghese

Church Maintenance (Church and Parsonage) - Abraham Panicker

Maintain Inventory and Assets - Abraham Panicker

Sunday Coffee and Refreshments - Issac Mathew & Chacko Abraham

Upkeep of Church Premises (Inside/Outside) - Rajan Panicker & Joy Mathai

Program Coordinator - Rajan Panicker

Offertory Count - Joy Mathai & Chacko Abraham

Elgin Property Care Taking - Anthony Varghese

Youth Activities - Alex Oommen & Melvin Thomas

Technology & System Maintenance - Justin Joy

Maintain Church Books, Shelving, Rearrange Book etc. - George Varghese

Mailing of Card (Birthdays and Anniversaries) - Betty Gladstone

Guest Book and Visitor Welcome - Gladstone Mammen with Peter Varghese
and Josen Jacob

Ward Prayer Meeting Coordination - Thankamma Pothen

FROM PG 4 Vanitha Samajam are examples of this. Through the Students Movement he encouraged the personality development of students which would enable them to take up responsibilities in life. He could mould the character and workmanship of young men and women. He advised them to retain this principles and philosophy of life at all odds. The aim of the Vanitha Samajam was to bring women from the backyards of then homes to the mainstream of society. The Metropolitan reminded the people that woman in the centre of the family. Every family can attain education and purity mainly through women. He tried to uplift the backward classes through the activities of the 'Sleeba Dasa Samooham'. The Metropolitan passed away on February 23, 1934 and was entombed in the Old Seminary Chapel at Kottayam.

FROM COVER PG By the transgression of the will of God we threw aside the gift of grace and blessings. However, we have a God who loves us and is abundant in His mercy.

'I will not cast him out.' God's words in this are already the words of salvation. They are words of calling, of beckoning, of reconciliation. But they are also words of directive: 'when he comes to me....' God does not take fallen man and, with a divine fiat that would mean little to the long-term well being of humankind, magically place him back into glory from which we ourselves have exiled. God knows that it is our heart that most desperately needs to be healed, needs to be turned away from the desire for its own ends and back to a desire for the heart of God Himself. And so the Savior whispers to us, 'When you come back to me, I will not cast you out'. Our prayer must be: **Come, my wretched soul, and weep today over your acts, remembering how once you were stripped naked in Eden and cast out from delight and unending joy.** Lent is beginning, and as the personal tone of the hymns professes, this is to be my Fast, my exile, my return. I cannot of myself escape from Adam's condition. But through the Church, I need not suffer alone the whole torment of Adam. 'Let us love abstinence, that we may not weep as he did outside Paradise, but may enter through the gate.' Great Lent is also a harbor, a safe port wherein we may suffer our repentance in the surety of divine grace and tender compassion. Thus do we petition the Lord: **O God of all, Lord of mercy, look down compassionately upon my lowliness and do not send me far away from Eden; but may I perceive the glory from which I have fallen, and hasten with lamentations to regain what I have lost.** We are called to amend and to change our ways of living, thinking and acting from within the full scope of our lives in Christ. During Lent we are thrust into a forum for change, wherein our greatest aid is the incarnate and resurrected Son of God Himself. **The arena of the virtues has been opened. Let all who wish to struggle for the prize now enter, girding themselves for the noble contest of the Fast; for those that strive lawfully are justly crowned. Taking up the armor of the Cross, let us make war against the enemy. Let us have as our invisible rampart the Faith, prayer as our breastplate, and as our helmet almsgiving; and as our sword let us use fasting that cuts away all evil from our heart. If we do this, we shall receive the true crown from Christ the King of all at the Day of Judgment.** '

For the rest of this article, please visit

<http://www.neamericandiocese.org/feasts-memorials.10/shubkono.aspx>

It is with great joy that we inform you of the establishment of a mission parish by our Coptic brothers and sisters: Saint Paul Coptic Orthodox Mission of Chicago. With the blessing and support of His Holiness Pope Shenouda and the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the parish was formed in November of 2011. The members of the mission are "eager to start liturgies dedicated to outreach" - reaching out to those in need right here in Chicago. The mission is currently under the guidance of Fr. Yohanna Nassif, priest at St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church in Chicago, who - by God's grace - manages to balance his own parish responsibilities while doing what he can to help at the mission. The inaugural Divine Liturgy was held on Saturday, January 28th at the chapel of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church. The service was graced with the presence of priests from Coptic mission churches across North America and was followed by a session on evangelism by Fr. Anthony Messeh. For those people from the Indian community that were able to go and partake of the Eucharist and the fellowship, it was an IMMENSE blessing to be able to worship with our Coptic brothers and sisters. Not only were we ecstatic to be there, but we received a very warm welcome from everyone at Saint Paul. **Everyone is encouraged to visit the church, even if its just once, to see and experience that despite the few cultural differences, there are no barriers in faith with our Coptic brethren. Particularly in the Indian community, we tend to stick to ourselves, afraid to venture out of our cultural comfort zone. God has graciously provided us this opportunity to break that mold and experience Christ through worship and fellowship with our Coptic brothers and sisters.**

Let us continue to remember this mission church, the Coptic community in Chicago as well as the entire Orthodox Church in our valuable prayers - seeking God's graces as we work towards furthering His kingdom on this earth. There will be weekly Divine Liturgy on Saturday mornings at 9am at St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church (5649 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago) followed by fellowship at 11.15am. For more information please visit <https://stpaulchicago.com/>.



Abi Achen with the Coptic clergy from Chicago and throughout North America after the inaugural Divine Liturgy at Saint Paul Coptic Orthodox Mission of Chicago

Bible Study: We have 2 ongoing Bible study programs 1) at Skokie at the residence of Alice and P V Varghese 2) at Willow brook at the residence of Betty and Koshy Vaidyan. The first Bible study at Skokie was held on Friday January 27. The first Bible study at Willow brook is expected to be held on Wed April 18.

Prayer Meetings: Prayer Meetings are organized ward wise and area wise. We try to schedule monthly prayer meetings ward wise and quarterly prayer meetings area wise. Our prayer meeting efforts are coordinated by Thankamma Pothan. This year, the first Ward prayer meeting was held at the residence of Mercy and George Varghese in Gurnee – Ward 9 on Sat Jan 28. Our plan is to use the monthly write ups of the Saints as given in the Parish Calendar of 2012 for exhortation and devotional messages in the prayer meetings. Please visit <http://stgregorioschicago.org/calendar.html> . This year we also plan to have Prayer tele- conference on alternate Tuesdays starting from Feb 14 Tue at 7.30 pm. The duration of the prayer conference will be an hour. The conference call Dial-in # (605) 475-4800 and Access Code: 784355#.

Mar Gregorios Senior Fellowship: Our Senior friends gather together once a month after Holy Qurbana. Our Achen delivers a devotional message and they enjoy the fellowship and lunch. This year the first fellowship meeting of the Seniors was held on Sunday January 22 after Holy Qurbana in the parsonage basement. Mr. Vazhayil Thomas is the Secretary of the Senior Fellowship coordinating all the activities.

MMVS: Congratulations to the winners of the annual exams held in November 2011!

Aleyamma Varghese

Beena Poozhikunnel

Jainamma Alexander Palavilayil

Mary Varghese

Sally Korah

Sheeba Eettickal

Susamma Kuriakose

We appreciate the dedicated efforts of the above members.

Ecumenical Council: Our very own Fr. Ninan V. George has unani- mously been elected as the president of this year's ecumenical council as of an election held on January 24th, 2012. Congratulations Achen and may God be with you! Please continue to keep Achen in your prayers.

PHAT: The PHAT men of Oak Park gathered at the home of Leju and Jenny Yohannan to watch the super bowl game. The afternoon was filled with football fun and fellowship and was a great time for all who were able to attend. We were also blessed to have Chris Achen



with us, as this was his first opportunity to meet and get to know the men of our church. Thank you to all the guys who were able to come out as well as to Leju and Jenny for opening up your home to us.

There will be a PHAT meeting on Saturday, February 25th with details to be determined. Please keep an eye on your emails for further information.

Please continue to keep the PHAT men's ministry as well as its leaders in your continuous prayers, that we may grow to be strong men of God.



The next Women of Worship (WOW) meeting will be held on Saturday, February 26, 2012 starting at 2pm at the residence of Jenny Yohannan. We are excited to be kicking off another year of WOW! For 2012, WOW will be hosting a variety of events including charity drives, fellowships, and finishing up our bible study on Ruth. We will also be starting a new project called the World Awareness Prayer Project, where we will be researching a cause outside of our community to continually pray for together as a group throughout the year and bring awareness to the issue to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. For rides or more information about this month's or any future events, please contact either Julie Polachira or Sherene Thomas.

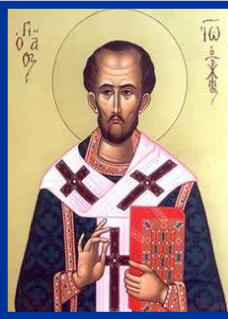
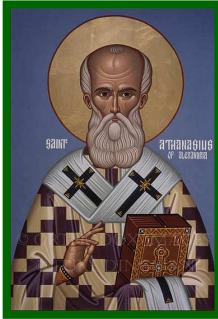


FNS: The February Friday Night Sing will be held on Friday, February 17th at St. Thomas Church at 7pm. We will have our new Chicago youth ministry, Chris Achen, lead us in prayer and with the devotional message. MGOCSM encourages all high school and college aged youth to come out for a great time of fellowship and growth in God's Word. If you need a ride or would like more information, please send an email to mgocsm.chicago@gmail.com.

Weekly Devotionals: Every week, MGOCSM e-mails out a devotional message, focusing on a particular passage and providing questions for reflection at the end. If you or someone you know is interested in receiving these e-mails, please contact mgocsm.chicago@gmail.com so you can be added to the mailing list. Please continue to keep the entire MGOCSM ministry all over the world in your daily prayers—that God may continue to guide this ministry and transform the lives of all those involved.



Our Church introduced the House System this Academic year, modeled on the House System that's very popular in schools in India. There are four houses named after four important Saints in our Church (*see below*) – St. Athanasius (green house), St. Ephrem (yellow house), St. John Chrysostom (blue house) and St. Ignatius (red house). This was introduced in order to encourage fellowship between the students and have less emphasis on individual prizes. This also allows us to have more events, both in Sports as well as Arts. As an example, the Youth Competition will be held on Saturday, February 18th and competitions will be held in music, art, writing, speech and song. Please do support the organizers, teachers and youth leaders as we make this program a success, all for His Glory.



Divyabodhanam: We have started the new [batch](#) of Divyabodhanam classes [POCE \(first Level\)](#) on January 8th. Ninan Achen started the class with the book “Prakashathilekku” by Rev Fr T J Joshua. Those who want to join the new batch, please contact Sally Korah. Next DB POCE class is on Sunday, 12th February. POCE classes are scheduled to meet after Holy Qurbana every second Sunday on a monthly basis.

We have also started the Divyabodhanam classes for the DOCE group (Second level) on January 22nd. These are students who graduated from the POCE batch and are now studying in this advanced class. We are learning about St. Paul and his activities. We have started with the book “Apostola Prabodhanangal” (New Testament Epistles – a study) by Rev. Fr. T.J Joshua. Next DOCE class is on February 19th Sunday.



Kids - Korner

The Parable of the Pencil

The Pencil Maker took the pencil aside, just before putting him into the box. "There are 5 things you need to know," he told the pencil, "before I send you out into the world. Always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best pencil you can be. **One:** You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in God's hand. And allow other human beings to access you for the many gifts you possess. **Two:** You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, by going through various problems in life, but you'll need it to become a stronger person. **Three:** You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make. **Four:** The most important part of you will always be what's on the inside. **And Five:** On every surface you walk through, you must leave your mark. No matter what the situation, you must continue to do your duties." Allow this parable on the pencil to encourage you to know that you are a special person and only you can fulfill the purpose to which you were born to accomplish. Never allow yourself to get discouraged and think that your life is insignificant and cannot make a change.

"Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!" Psalm 27:14

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

02/01 Abraham, Ina	02/12 Thomas, Rachel Ann
02/01 George, Geoffery	02/13 Mathew, Reena L
02/03 Mathew, Basali	02/13 Benedict, Matthew
02/03 Abraham, Rachel Susan	02/14 Mathai, Georgeena Elizabeth
02/04 Thomas, Reena Susan	02/15 Paul, Merin
02/05 Abraham, Rijo T	02/15 Ninan, Thomas
02/06 Poozhikunnel, Ashok-Mathew	02/15 Varghese, Joel G
02/09 Varghese, Joseph Binu	02/17 Abraham, Rhea Anna
02/11 Varghese, Joel J	02/19 Geevarghese III Mathew
	02/27 Kuruvilla, Joshua

Happy Birthday

To You!

An icon of the Theotokos, St. Mary the Mother of God, is often placed behind the altar of an Orthodox Church. This is usually St. Mary sitting on a Seat with the infant Christ on her lap, or that of St. Mary with arms extended upwards in prayer with Christ within her. Either icon is proper, and is to remind us that the Covenant is now fulfilled through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was eternal but became man (i.e., Incarnate) through St. Mary. Images are very often used (both in icons as well as in hymns) to help us understand the importance of St. Mary in our Salvation. One image that is used is the Ark, for the Glory of God had settled on her just as the Glory of God descended on the Mercy Seat of the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant. In the Old Covenant the Mercy Seat was empty (Exodus 25:10-22). It was at that Mercy Seat where God spoke with Moses and Aaron. But, in the New Testament, we have witnessed the Sign (as promised in Isaiah 7:14) and know that Jesus Christ, the Word of God and eternal and ancient Wisdom, became flesh through St. Mary. Therefore the Mercy Seat is no longer empty as God is now visible through Immanuel (God with us).

As an Orthodox Christian, we must understand that God speaks to us now through His son Jesus Christ. We are blessed during every Holy Qurbana to experience God through all our senses - interacting with Him through **prayer, fellowship** (Matthew 18:20 i.e., "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them"), through **Scripture** and the **Body and Blood** (John 6). We cannot look at anything in the same manner, for in Christ all things are made new (Revelations 21:5). Therefore, on the Christian altar today is found the **Gospel**, the **Body and Blood** (Holy Qurbana), the **Cross** and **candles** replacing the tablets of the covenant, the **manna**, **Aaron's rod** and the **lamp-stand** that had

been placed over the tament altar. placed the St Mary. The is that of the - St. Mary, for Wisdom Jesus Christ). nacle in dwells, as the



on the Old Tes- This is also why Christian altar is Holy Icon of the one shown here new Mercy Seat who is the seat (i.e., our Lord She is the taber- which Christ living Ark.

And, just as God had commanded, two cherubs are written on each side of the Icon of the Mercy Seat, which we often we see in Indian Orthodox Churches as images on the marabhasa.

Published By Rev. Dr. M. K. Thomas Library,
 St. Gregorios Orthodox Church,
 1125 N. Humphrey Ave, Oak Park, IL 60302
 Tel: (708) 848.4120 Web: www.sgoc.org
 For Private Circulation Only