



# St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church

## Los Angeles

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Editor: Gigi Kurian Volume No.: 0507 Issue No.: 05 Edition: July - Aug 2005

### Vicar's Desk



By Rev. Fr. Yohannan Panicker

#### Why is the 30th and 40th day after death observed?

Deut. 34:8; After the death of Moses, people mourned for 30 days. People observed fasting with special purposes for comfort and peace of mind. Moses and Elijah observed the fast for 40 days. Ex. 34:28, 1 Kings 19:8. Jesus Christ observed the fast for 40 days. Mt. 4:2 Self rules of spiritual abstinence are observed based upon biblical insight. We see 21 days of fasting by Daniel (Dan. 10:2-3), 14 days fasting in Acts (Acts 27:33,35), 7 days fasting by David (2 Sam. 12:16,22; 1 Sam. 31:13), 3 day fasting by Esther (Es. 3:13, 4:16, Acts 9:9 )

To survive the grief, the believers are free to select their own method of spiritual abstinence on the eve of the departure of their beloved ones.

### Special Topic

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#### Saint Stephen (martyred AD 33)

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Saint Stephen was the first martyr of the Christian Church. Accounts about

St. Stephen are found in chapters 6 and 7 of the Book of Acts. The early Christian congregations, like the Jewish synagogues, had a program of assistance for needy widows, and some of the Greek-speaking Jews in the Jerusalem congregation complained that their widows were being neglected. The 12 apostles could not abandon their evangelical duties and therefore exhorted the congregation to choose "7 men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, which we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). The apostles laid their hands on these 7 men who became the first deacons of the Christian Church and St. Stephen was the most famous among them. St. Stephen was probably a Hellenist (foreign born, Greek speaking) Jew as his name is derived from the Greek name Stephanos. The name Stephanos is a Greek equivalent for the Aramaic *Kelil* (Syriac *Kelila*, meaning crown) which is the name inscribed on a slab found in his tomb

St. Stephen was an eloquent and fiery speaker, and a provocative one. "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8). He evangelized among the Hellenist Jews. His blunt declarations that the Temple service was no longer the means by which penitent sinners should seek reconciliation with God enraged the Temple leaders. He

was brought before the Sanhedrin (council of Jewish religious leaders) on charges of blasphemy against Moses and God. His enemies had assembled false witnesses who would twist his words and testify that he blasphemed. St. Stephen was unperturbed. *“And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”* (Acts 6:15).

St. Stephen's answer (Acts 7:1-53) was a long recital of the mercies of God towards Israel during its long history and of the ungratefulness by which, Israel repaid these mercies. This discourse contained many things unpleasant to Jewish ears; but the concluding indictment for having betrayed and murdered the *Just One* whose coming the Prophets had foretold, provoked the rage of the Sanhedrin and the audience. St. Stephen *“being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”* (Acts 7:55-56). They ran violently upon him and cast him out of the city to stone him to death. St. Stephen's stoning does not appear in the narrative of the Acts as a deed of mob violence; it must have been looked upon by those who took part in it as the carrying out of the law. *“And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”* (Acts 7:60). Saul of Tarsus, later to become St. Paul was part of the group that stoned St. Stephen to death (Acts 8:1). St. Stephen was martyred in A.D 33, within a year of Jesus' Crucifixion. St. Stephen's Day is celebrated by the

Eastern Orthodox Church on December 27.

Devout Christians mourned St. Stephen and buried him. For centuries the location of St. Stephen's tomb was lost sight of, until in A.D 415, a certain priest named Lucian learned by revelation that the sacred body was in Caphar Gamala, some distance to the north of Jerusalem. His relics were then exhumed and carried first to the church of Mount Sion, then, in A.D 460, to the basilica erected by Eudocia outside the Damascus Gate, on the spot where, according to tradition, St. Stephen's stoning had taken place.

What are the lessons we can learn from St. Stephen's life?

1. As Christians, we should strive to be full of faith and power like St. Stephen so that we can live a life of service to God and man
2. When we try to do God's work, impediments will be thrown in our path by other people. We should pray for God's grace to surmount these obstacles. God will give us the determination and strength to overcome the obstacles.
3. We as Christians need to be aware that Law and Morality (Ethics) are two different concepts. Christian morality certainly dictates a much stricter standard than the law does. The people stoning St. Stephen thought that they were carrying out the law. Their act certainly was immoral.
4. Like St. Stephen, we should pray for the salvation of our enemies.
5. God transformed Saul of Tarsus, who was an accomplice in the stoning of St. Stephen, to St. Paul. This tells us

that salvation is available to everyone regardless of how great a sinner one is, as long as you seek and follow Christ. Once you make the decision to follow Christ, He will lift you up to do great works just as He lifted up St. Paul.

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**By Thomas Joseph**

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## Children's Corner

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### Social Injustice

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Have you ever felt that someone treated you differently than others? Well, this is known as personal injustice. Or, have you ever felt that one group treats your group unfairly. This is social injustice.

We are all made equally, so we should not treat each other with higher or lower respect. The reasons why we have social injustice is because of jealousy, hatred, selfishness, etc., but we are equally created. Therefore, no one is higher or lower than anyone else.

We are Christians and as Christians we must accept injustice personally. If a Christian sees someone else receiving injustice, such as the poor, needy, or the weak, we must stand up for them. We have to fight the injustice and bring justice for these types of people.

In this life, we have to come closer to God and become more like Him. That is why we have life as our practice, so begin by treating people equally, not unfairly. Fight the injustice and bring back justice.

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**By Stephanie Mathew**

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### Prayers for the Faithful Departed

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The Church believes that the faithful departed are present in the Holy Mass along with the living faithful. St. Peter ascertains that the judgment is for both the living and the dead. Therefore, Jesus Christ preached the Gospel to the departed. "That is why the Good News was preached also to the dead" (1 Peter 4:6). Thus the congregation intercedes for the remission of sins of the faithful departed, so that the Lord may make them worthy of inheriting the heavenly kingdom.

### Bible Trivia

1. Name the persons who did not experience the "process of being born".
2. Name the persons who did not experience death.
3. Name the 2 women who authored a book of the Bible.
4. Name the man who died of a heart attack in the Bible?
5. Name the person who is also known as Israel?

*Answers in next edition*

#### Answers From Last Month Trivia:

1. Methuselah
2. Noah
3. Ar-pha-xad
4. Mel- chiz e-dek
5. Phrath.

**By Lalu Kurian**

## Schedules

### Daily Bible Reading:

JULY 2005

**31 – Sunday – Pentecost XI** 1 Corinthians 14: 34 – 39, St. Mark 6: 7-13

AUGUST 2005

1–Mon - Matthew 10:16-2;2 Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2  
2–Tue - Matthew 21:33-42; Acts 6:8-15;7:1-5  
3–Wed - Matthew 14:35-36;15:1-11; 1 Cor. 7:12-24  
4–Thu - Matthew 15:12-21; 1 Corinthians 7:24-35  
5–Fri - Matthew 15:29-31; 1 Peter 1:1-25; 2:1-10  
**6–Sat–Feast of the Transfiguration** Romans 11: 25-36,Luke9:27-36  
**7–Sun Transfiguration I** 1 Corinthians 14: 34 – 39, Mark6:7-13  
8–Mon-Philippians 4: 8-20, Matthew 21: 28-32  
9–Tue-Matthew 16:6-1;2 Acts 1:12-17, 23-26  
10-Wed- Matthew 16:20-24; 1 Corinthians 10:12-22  
11–Thu - Matthew 16:24-28; 1 Corinthians 10:28-33;11:1-8  
12–Fri - Matthew 17:10-18; 1 Corinthians 11:8-23  
13- Sat - Matthew 12:30-37; Romans 13:1-10  
**14- Sun Transfiguration II** 1 Corinthians 10: 1 –13, Luke 12: 13 - 21, 35 - 44  
**15- Mon Falling Asleep of the Mother of God [Dormition]** Hebrews 9: 3-12, John 19: 25-27  
16 –Tue Luke 9:51-57; 1 Timothy 3:13-16;4:1-5  
17 – Wed - Matthew 20:1-16; 1 Corinthians 13:4-13  
18 – Thu - Matthew 20:17-28; 1 Corinthians 14:1-19  
19 – Fri - Matthew 21:12-20; 1 Corinthians 14:26-40  
20 – Sat - Matthew 15:32-39; Romans 14:6-9  
**21 – Sun Dormition I** - Ephesians 6:10-17, Luke 6:39-45  
22 – Mon - Matthew 21:18-22; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20  
23 – Tue - Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28; Philippians 2:5-11  
24 – Wed - Matthew 21:28-32; 1 Corinthians 16:4-12  
25 – Thu - Matthew 5:14-19; 1 Corinthians 16: 13- 24  
26 – Fri - Matthew 22:23-33; Hebrews 10:32-38  
27 – Sat - Matthew 17:24-27; 18:1-4; Romans 15:30-33  
**28 – Sun-DormitionII** 2 Thessalonians 5: 1- 11, St. Luke 11: 9 -20  
29 – Mon - Mark 6:14-30; Acts 13:25-33  
30 – Tue - Matthew 23:23-28; 2 Cor. 2:14-17; 3:1-3  
31 – Wed - Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28; Hebrews 9:1-7

#### Sunday Service:

Namaskaram : 9.00 am – 9.45 am  
Holy Qurbana : 9.45 am onwards  
English : 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday  
Malayalam : 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday

### Sunday School:

Every Sunday After the Church:

**8/5 – 8/7/05:**

OVBS 2005 (Fri., Sat., & Sunday)

**8/27/05:**

Visit the Sick

**9/4/05:**

Sunday School New Year Starts, 2005 – 06

### Church Events:

**Annual Picnic:** Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup>

Time: 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Location: Cerritos Regional Park, 19800 Bloomfield Ave, Cerritos, CA 90703



### Prayer Corner

### Prayer Group Meeting:

Annual Retreat: Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup> 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM at our church.

Stay tuned every Sunday after Church announcement for prayer meeting schedules.

**Have any Questions?**

**OR**

**Your Comments may be directed  
Editorial Board**

Rev. Fr. Yohannan Panicker  
Mr. Gigi Kurian, Mr. Mathew Varughese  
And Mr. John P. Varughese