



## St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church Of Los Angeles

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### Vicar's Desk



By Rev. Fr. Yohannan Panicker

#### New Year Message:

I wish everybody a Happy New Year. This is the time to evaluate what you have gained and what you have lost in the past year, and prepare a strategy. We have to look both ways at the beginning of the year for reflections and decision making. Look back on your accomplishments from the past and set goals for the future. Self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-satisfaction, self-actualization, self-sacrifice, self-discipline for giving, caring, and compassion.

Will the New Year be happier, healthier, safer, better, more peaceful, more productive, than the previous year? Do we need to change our life style? Our commitments? Do we need to follow God's road in a better way? The New Year has new hope, new courage, new purpose, new life with allegiance, direction, commitment, and sacrifice. When you answer these questions, you will witness new changes every day for the start of 2006.

**Happy New Year and May God Bless You**

### Special Topic

#### A Spot Light on Women's Conference - Year 2005

Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam annual conference for year 2005 was held on Oct 29<sup>th</sup> at St. Thomas Orthodox church, Philadelphia.

I am grateful that I got a chance to attend the meeting. The main speech was delivered by *H.G Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius*.

The **theme** of the conference was '**Women are the chosen people**'. I would like to put down a few points from the speech. Women are not given the rightful place they deserve. Let us examine a few interactions of Jesus with women:

- Jesus healed the hunch backed woman who could not stand straight for 18 years. It was a prophetic act or in a way symbolic- raising women from the clutches of Satan or slavery.

- Another example is the Samaritan woman to whom Jesus asked for water but instead of giving water to Jesus, she received water of everlasting life.



They worshipped in those mountains in truth and spirits. Here we can see the great revelation that he himself was that Messiah. He revealed it to a strange woman, with whom he had had no interaction before.

When Jesus was at Lazarus's house, he accepted the hospitality of

Martha and Maria. Another Maria anointed him with costly perfumed oil. She washed his feet with perfume and wiped it with her hair. Jesus said that it was a sacred act that she did before his death and we see that he appreciated her act.

These are a few incidents which show how Jesus accepted women in his life. There are some other incidents where we can see women are more privileged than men.

Hanna, the prophetess in the Jerusalem Temple who had been waiting to see Baby Jesus, proclaimed that the Messiah had finally arrived. It was Maria who proclaimed for the first time that Jesus had risen from the dead. It was to these women (Magdalene Maria and the other Maria) that Jesus first appeared after His Resurrection.

Epistles wrote by Paul and Peter emphasizes the role of women for the harmony of the church. In Romans chapter 16, we can see some Christian women who worked for the church. Apostle Paul called them as 'fellow workers'. Priscilla is a glowing example.

Let us examine the creation of Adam and Eve. God created them equal in all respect. They were companions to each other and were in the image of God. But because of Satan, women were cursed. God said "He shall rule over you". Thus men started to rule women and she became a slave to injustice. God also had a plan for women. Jesus was the answer. Through Jesus, the curse was removed. Women became a new creation through Jesus.

There should be a renaissance in the men-women relation in life, a change in the Christ's Church.

Because Church is the body of Christ. Men and women are an integral part of the church. Both have the same kind of spirit. How can one be a slave of the other? In the Book of Revelations, church is represented by a woman. What is Church? It is the bride of Jesus. The woman who sacrificed her life for our church. They should have an identity in the society. Through baptism, women also received the invitation to become priestesses. Women must make more efforts to keep up to that calling. If they do not take this call seriously, it is a great loss for the church. Women who have a gift of leadership should come forward. They should fight for their right in the Church. The leaders of the Church will open their ears to this. First, women should change. They should have the grace to accept the privilege that God has bestowed upon them. So wake up ladies from the slumber and move forward. Don't rest until you attain your goal.

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**By Santhamma Mathew**

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## Children's Corner

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### *The Baptism of Jesus*

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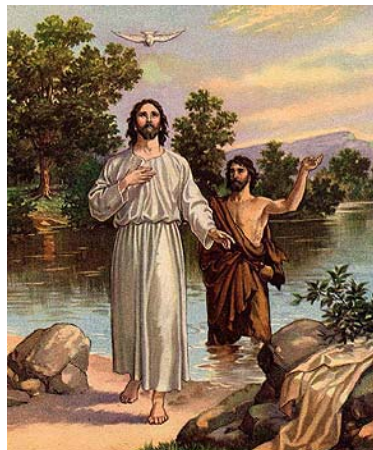
John had been baptizing in the Jordan River. One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and asked John to baptize *him*. John protested because he felt that Jesus was the one who should be baptizing him. But Jesus told him that they needed to do this to fulfill all righteousness. It was the right thing to do. So thus John baptized him in the river. Immediately after he was baptized, as he was praying, the heavens were opened and a dove came down and rested on Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit of God in the form of a bird that had come down to show who Jesus was.

Suddenly there was a voice from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". The dove and the voice of God were a sign to John that Jesus was the Messiah who had been promised.

After this, Jesus was passing by John the Baptist witnessed him saying

**"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

He told them that he had seen the Spirit of God coming down on Jesus in the form of a dove.



Now John and Jesus were relatives and had grown up together. John's mother, Elizabeth, had known from the beginning, even before Jesus was born, that her kinswoman Mary was going to be the mother of the Son of God. Jesus was God in human form,

who, had come to earth. It seems that John was not aware of Jesus' true identity until this event happened while baptizing Him.

John had a mission to prepare the people for the coming of Christ, and he was fulfilling his mission. Now the Christ was revealed.

Some people came to John and told him that now the crowds were going to Jesus instead of John. They thought he would be upset, but this didn't bother John at all. He said that he had already told them that he himself was not the Christ. It was as if Christ were the bridegroom and John was just the best man, or friend of the bridegroom. He was rejoicing that people were turning to Christ. John said "He must increase but I must decrease". John 3:30

#### **What does this story mean to me?**

**Jesus told John that he wanted to be baptized to "fulfill all righteousness".**

**Boys and girls need to learn to do right because it's the right thing to do. Parents and teachers offer rewards, stars, and stickers. That's fun and that's OK, but our goal should be to do the things we are asked to do simply because it is "the right thing to do".**



**Jordan river  
near exit from  
Galilee,  
traditional site  
of baptism of  
Christ**

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**From Children's Bible Story Collection**

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## His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews II

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His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, Catholicos of the East, Malankara Metropolitan, and 89th successor to the Holy Apostolic Throne of St. Thomas, was born on January 30, 1915 at Perinad in Kollam District of Kerala. His Holiness

had his early education in a local school. After his High School education he had his training at Old Seminary Kottayam and also at Basil Dayara, Pathanamthitta. Later he joined Bishop's College, Calcutta for his B. D. Degree. He had his higher education in Theology at General Theological Seminary, New York.

He was ordained as Deacon in 1938 and as Priest in 1941. It was during his stay at St. George Dayara that Father Mathews made a mark as a devoted and an able priest of the Indian Orthodox Church. He was noted for his spiritual leadership and loving nature and could endear himself to everyone who came in contact with him. He was known as "Father Angel" at that time. The Catholicos His Holiness Baselios Geevarghese II took special interest to see that the services of Father Mathews are utilized in a still better way for the church and the community.

On May 15, 1953 he was ordained as a Bishop of Orthodox church. He was only thirty eight years at that time. The young Bishop grew in stature very soon. As Metropolitan of the Diocese of Kollam he was fully responsible for its growth and progress and the number of parishes almost doubled within a short period. Several monasteries and convents were started. A large number of educational institutions and hospitals were established.

His services in the field of education and social service are all very well known. Several Colleges, Schools, Hospitals and other service institutions are successfully established and administered under his direct control and leadership. He has traveled wide in various countries: the United States, Canada, Europe, Malaya, Singapore, Gulf countries etc. and has attended various international meetings and conferences.

It was in 1980 that he was unanimously elected by the Malankara Syrian Christian Association as successor to the throne of Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan. In recent years some of the new schemes started under his directions are found to be of much help and benefit for the

community at large. A Civil Service Academy was started at Thiruvananthapuram, to give proper training for candidates appearing for I. A. S.; I. P. S.; I. F. S. and other Central Service Examinations. With a view to provide shelter for the poor, a House Building Assistance project was started. The Community Marriage Scheme is found beneficial for the marriage of poor girls. Human Resources Development and Services Wing is also helpful for the community in general.

His leadership skills and quality has enabled him to resolve the problems of St. Thomas Center, Nilakal. He keeps in touch with Heads of other Churches constantly and is keenly interested to promote Ecumenism. He has very friendly relations with leaders of other religions as well and has fully demonstrated by his leadership. The role he played as the head of the Church is supreme in secular and social field. He encourages all activities directed towards the progress and development of the Nation and promotion of communal harmony and maintenance of peace in the country.

A good orator, an eminent scholar, a renowned theologian, an able administrator and a man of the Word of God, he has all the qualities needed for a spiritual leader and a good shepherd. With his intelligence, wisdom, love and vision and with his vast experience in various fields he has proved himself successful as a skillful ecclesiastical head of an ancient Church. With his devotion and dedication in life and sincerity of purpose, no doubt the community at large is benefited by his true



peaceful retired life.

Christian life as a servant of God in the service of mankind.

Though he retired and handed the throne over to the new Catholicose, he will be remembered by his flock forever. May God bless him with a



## Schedules

### 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

## Prayer Corner

### Prayer Group Meeting:

Martha Mariam Samajam meeting at church on Sunday Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> 2006

Please schedule prayer meeting at your residence and support the spiritual growth of our community.

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

## Sunday School:

Every Sunday After the Church:

02/05/2006: Mid Term Examination  
02/24/2006: LA Clipper Basketball Game  
(vs. Lakers)  
03/04/2006: Social Work (Help the poor & needy)



*Jesus my hope and my salvation*

*Glory to God in highest heaven,  
who unto man His Son hath given;  
while angels sing with tender mirth,  
a glad new year to all the earth.*

*By - Martin Luther*

## Church Events:

Church Annual Calendar and Lectionary is available for \$8.00 donation.

Feb 19<sup>th</sup>: Memorial of all departed Souls

Feb 27<sup>th</sup>: Great Lent Starts

**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