

THE HORIZON

ST MARY'S SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Embracing the Light of Christmas: A Timeless Call to Positivity

My dear friends in Christ,

As we approach the festive and Lenten season, adorned with twinkling lights and resonant carols, it is crucial to reflect on the profound message that Christmas carries. Beyond the presents and festive feasts, Christmas is a call to light and positivity—a timeless reminder that transcends both biblical teachings and resonates in modern sayings.

In the sacred pages of the Bible, the Gospel of Matthew 4: 16 declares, “The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.” This radiant proclamation encapsulates the essence of Christmas—a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the embodiment of divine light entering a world in need of hope and positivity.

The Biblical narrative intertwines the concept of light with the life-altering significance of Christ’s arrival. The Gospel of John 1:4 beautifully articulates, “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.” This underscores the transformative power of embracing the positive energy symbolized by the light of Christmas. In today’s fast-paced world, where cynicism can sometimes overshadow optimism, Christmas stands as a beacon, inviting us to rekindle the spirit of goodwill and kindness. It’s a season where the sentiment of “peace on earth, goodwill to men” becomes a collective aspiration, transcending cultural and religious boundaries.

In the modern vernacular, phrases like “spreading holiday cheer” and “being the light in someone’s life” echo the enduring call to positivity during Christmas. These expressions emphasize the power of small acts of kindness, the warmth of shared moments, and the joy derived from giving without expecting anything in return. It beckons us to be the light, not just for ourselves but for others—illuminating the path of hope, compassion, and understanding. In a world often marred by challenges, the spirit of Christmas challenges us to rise above, choosing light over darkness, and positivity over pessimism.

So, as we exchange gifts, share meals, and gather with loved ones this Christmas, let us not forget the profound call to light and positivity that defines this season. May the timeless message inspire us to carry the spirit of Christmas throughout the year, fostering a world where the glow of positivity dispels the shadows of doubt and despair. As our beloved Servant of God, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, showed us through his life, let us be the voice of truth, love, light, and positivity. Let us welcome Baby Jesus with prayer and gratitude into our families, especially into our individual lives. I wish everyone a warm Christmas that brings you the presence and love of Baby Jesus, reminding you of his everlasting grace.”



Fr Philip Mathew Vettikatt

Chaplain, Malankara Catholic Community, Melbourne

PRAYERFUL WISHES & GREETINGS

**Apostolic Visitor
Oceania.**



**His Excellency Most Rev.
Dr. Antony Mar Sylvanos**

Coordinator, Australia.



**Very Rev. Fr. Premkumar
Cor-episcopo**

**Vicar General
Mavelikkara Diocese.**



**Very Rev. Dr. Stephen
Kulathumkarott**

FIRST HOLY MASS CELEBRATION IN ENGLISH

After much waiting and preparation, finally we celebrated the very first English Holy Mass following Syro Malankara Catholic Liturgy in Melbourne on 27th August 2023. A new batch of Altar servers were anointed in preparation for the same and now we have them assisting in our Holy Masses under the guidance of elderly.



We also now have Old Testament readings consistently precluding the Holy Mass, to make our celebrations much more in line with our liturgy and traditions. Our choir continues to get infused with fresh talent and is getting revamped day by day.

While it has been a wholistic team work, would like to mention focused efforts from Shibin P. Varghese and Rajju Panicker under the steadfast Leadership of vicar Rev. Fr. Philip Vettikatt for making it happen. The community very well understand this is the paving path of this community into the future and hence its an absolute milestone in our history.



It's been a great success and it is decided that community would be celebrating English Mass every 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.



RE-ELECTION AND REVAMP OF MCYM



On July 3rd, we also marked the official inauguration and commencement of the revamped MCYM (Malankara Catholic Youth Movement) cohort in our community. All the youth in our church took joint oath and sprung into action immediately and they continue to contribute in every activities in the church. Congratulations team...!!

We really look forward to your energy, enthusiasm and drive to changing us into a thriving community.

FEAST OF NATIVITY OF MOTHER MARY & FESTAL CELEBRATIONS

Community celebrated the Feast of Nativity of Mother Mary on 10th of September 2023 at Holy Saviour Church Premises.

It started with Solemn Holy Qurbano celebrated by our beloved Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Philip Mathew Vettikatt & Intercessory prayers and that was followed by Cultural programs by our Sunday School students & teachers. It was a programme where we reflected our community's devotion to Mother Mary. It was so refreshing to see children actively part taking in programmes during this event.



8 NOMBU & INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

The Melbourne Malankara Catholic Community celebrated the feast of Nativity of Mother Mary from 1st - 8th of Sept 2023.

Members of the mathrusamajham organized Marian reflections during this time under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Philip Vettikkat.. They shared their personal experiences and perspectives on Mother Mary during these 8 days in form of videos with the entire community. Online Holy Rosary was also conducted for the 8 days.



HOLY WEEK SERVICES 2023 AND FAREWELL FOR REV.DR. STEPHEN KULATHUMKAROTT

Our Holy week services were held at Holy Saviour Church premises, Vermont South under the spiritual leadership of Rev. Dr. Stephen Kulathumkarott.

The **Palm Sunday** services were held on 2nd April 2023 and Catechism students brought flowers to commemorate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem by singing Hosanna. **Maundy Thursday** services were on 6th April 2023. All our families brought in offerings from home which was blessed and shared among the faithful after the services. We started the **Good Friday** services at 8:00 AM on 7th April and concluded around 2:30 PM. Following our tradition, kanji was served after the Good Friday services.



Easter services started on 8th April 2023, Saturday evening at 5:00 PM and concluded at 9:00 PM.

Community had received the news of the transfer of Stephanachan back to India around May, also arranged a grant farewell ceremony for Achan where community recalled, acknowledged & thanked all contributions he made for the success of the community. The event was well laced with cultural programs as well which kept up the vibe in tune with Easter. Around 100 members attended the celebrations and Farewell meeting and we concluded with a grand dinner.



WAY OF THE CROSS AT BACCHUS MARSH



During the 2023 Lenten season, we as a community commemorated the passion of Jesus by observing station of cross in at Lady Ta` Pinu Shrine Bacchus Marsh on 12th March 2023. Prayers were led by our sunday school students. This was followed by Holy Mass celebration in the church at the same place.

We also shared a quick lunch at the same spot before winding up for the day.

LENTEN RETREAT LED BY FR. ROGEN GEORGE VC

As part of preparing ourselves into the Holy week this year, Fr. Philip Vettikkatt and committee organized a Lenten retreat led by renowned preacher **Fr. Rogen George VC** from Vincentian Retreat Centre Melbourne. In parallel, we also had an separate session dedicated for children which was run by Divine Kids Ministry. It was a wonderful time where all our community members got a chance to retrospect our inner self and and to get acquainted further with the guidance of Lord Jesus Christ.



ROSARY MONTH

Catholics traditionally observe October as the Holy Rosary Month. And it has become almost a tradition in our community that the month of October is revered as a period of respecting Holy Rosary and Mother Mary. In the month of October 2023, members from Mathrusamajam & Sunday school students joined force and ensured every day we got together online and prayed Holy Rosary as one single community. Fr. Philip Vettikkat's special guidance and leadership made the initiative a great success.

ST THOMAS DAY CELEBRATION & ADORATION FOR MANIPUR



On July 3rd, we celebrated Dukhrano Thirunal where we commemorate the martyrdom of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India. As we all know , Manipur , the north eastern state of India, went through a lot of unrest over previous couple of months. On the same day, we also conducted a Eucharistic Sacrament adoration as a mark of our solidarity to the affected community.

MAR IVANIOS DAY CELEBRATIONS

The community celebrated **70th Mar Ivanios Day** on 23rd July 2023 . We followed that with customary Padayatra to mark our respects and solidarity to Mar Ivanios walk of his life which started 93 years back. It was another blessed day for the community in true spirit and shared a wonderful meal before parting in the evening for the week.



ELECTION & SWEARING IN OF NEW COMMITTEE

On 9th July 2023, Pothuyogam elected a new 7 member committee for the new fiscal year.

Dr. Jojy Thomas was elected as the trustee and Jyju Jossey as the Secretary and they sworn into the office on 23rd July 2023.

Congratulations to the new team and all the best...!!



CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2022

Our advent season celebrations are integral part of our faith life and we follow that in its whole affluence and it was not any different last year. On the eve of christmas we concluded the season with solemn Holy Mass which was rich in traditions and rituals including "Thee uzhalippu services" symbolizing birth of Jesus Christ. We finished the evening with singing carols.

We also had Christmas carols visiting all our families across Melbourne.



ONAM FEST 2023

The Melbourne Malankara Onam Fest 2023 was celebrated on 10th September 2023 at Holy Saviour Catholic Church premises ,Vermont-Glen Waverley.

The day started with the Holy Qurbana celebrated by our beloved Rev.Fr.Philip Mathew Vettikatt. After mass, we had a full fledged Onam Sadya which the entire crowd enjoyed. As we have every year, , we had attapookalam arrangement which was beautifully laid out by the mathrusamajam members. The Onam committee, headed by Mr. Jessil Simon , organised cultural events and other celebrations. Emiliya Jessil was the event's emcee and we had back to back cultural programs and games for young and elderly until the end of the day. Notably, we had attendees from neighbouring church joining us as Fr.Philip's guest. It was a day of complete joy , celebration and great food for everyone.





VISIT OF FR. BENNY NARAKATHINAL & FR. JOHN VILAYIL

Fr. Benny Narakathinal, one of the pioneer and renowned preacher from Malankara Catholic Church, along with **Fr. John Vilayil** joined us on November 8th and 9th, 2023 in Melbourne. We organized a prayer service at Shaji Varghese' residence at South Morang. It was a blessed event and was attended by many families.



SOME INTERESTING & NOTEWORTHY CHANGES

Holy Mass every week: From last year we used to have Holy Qurbano's every week except the third week of the month. From November 2023 onwards, we will have Holy Mass on the Saturday of third week as well. This is a great milestone where Malankarites now have an opportunity to attend Holy Mass in Melbourne every week. Congratulations to everyone who was involved in that decision.

Monthly Holy Eucharist Adoration: It was also decided that we will have Holy Eucharistic Adoration every first Sunday of the month. It is in effect from August 2023.

Change in Monthly Prayer meeting: Our Monthly prayer meeting Schedule have now changed. Instead every third Saturday, going forward it will be every 4th Saturday. This will help Philipachan also to join the prayer session.

Fr. Philip Mathew Vettikatt
(Chaplain)

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Sad Demise

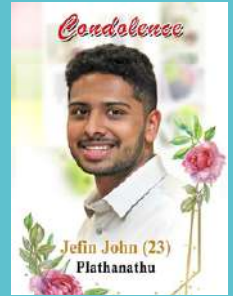
Jefin John

Plathanam Family, Adelaide

Born : 6/11 /1999

Died : 6/8/2023

Rest in Peace



**Appointment of First Apostolic Nuncio
From Syro Malankara Catholic Church**

On June 16 2023 , Moron Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis , the Major Archbishop - Catholicos of Syro Malankara Catholic Church announced the decision of Pope Francis to appoint Monsignor Dr George Panamthundil, a member of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Major Archdiocese, as the Apostolic Nuncio (Vatican ambassador) to Kazakhstan and as Titular Archbishop of Floriana. He is the first priest from the Malankara Catholic Church to be appointed a Nuncio. He was working with the Vatican nunciature in Cyprus when the new appointment was announced.

His episcopal ordination was held on September 9 at St. Peter's Basilica Vatican.



**Congratulations Ann Sicilia Anoop
On Her First Holy Communion reception on
7/10/2023**

May Lord Bless ...!!



Upcoming Events:

1. RECONNECT: Under the guidance of Fr. Philip Vettikatt, we started a new family get-together online program. The first episode was conducted on 1st Dec 2023 and the Guest Speaker was Fr. Shaji Thumpechirayil from Alappuzha. The event was attended by more than 55 families across Australia. The next episode is announced and it is going to be on 2nd March 2024, Saturday. Looking forward to see you all there.

2. Christmas Carols: We look forward to visiting each and every family at their residence and sing carols for them. Carols services as always brings peace, hope and Joy of Jesus Birth to every families.

3. LA SANTA NOTTE : It Means Holy Night. and that's the name given for our Christmas celebrations this year. The program will be held after the Christmas services and Holy Mass this year.