



GREGORIAN GAZETTE

NOVEMBER 2006

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ISSUE IX

Perunal: Meaning and significance—Fr. George Pulikkottil, D. Th.

Perunal just means *Periya-nal, Valiya-divassam*. The Kerala Christians use this word especially to denote their church festival days. For example: Parumala-Perunal, Janana-Perunal etc.

On Nov 2nd we have the feast of Saint Gregorios of Parumala, the patron saint of our parish. We celebrate it on the Sunday after Nov 2, so it's on Nov 5th this year. According to Church calendar, Nov 5 is also the first Sunday of the liturgical year, known as *Koothos-eitho*, meaning the feast of the Purification of the Church. It is followed by *Hoothos-eitho* on Nov 12, meaning the feast of the rededication of the Church. Nov 19 is remembered as the feast of the Annunciation to Zachariah about the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. On Nov 25, we remember two of our great bishops, namely Sabha-Jothis Pulikkottil Joseph Mar Dionysius V; the founder of Old Seminary Kottayam and Paulose Mar Gregorios; the former principal of the Orthodox theological seminary Kottayam and well known Christian philosopher from the last century. And Nov 26th is the great feast of the annunciation to St. Mary about the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Yes, there are lots of Perunals this month! How do we celebrate all these great days? We celebrate all our great days in Christ with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana as well as special liturgical prayers of the day recollecting the importance of the day in the history of salvation in Christ. In one word, what ever feast and festivals we have, we commemorate and celebrate our Lord. Apart from the liturgical prayers and sacraments being offered for the day, there may also be some social gatherings and entertainment programs for the welfare of the community. Social aspects of Perunal may differ from place to place according to the cultural heritage of that particular area. For example in Kunnamkulam, one of the ancient Christian centers of Kerala, elephants are used for the procession in connection

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Church Charity Project



Pictured here: George Achen presenting the first installment of the Church Charity Project to Idduki Metropolitan, H.G. Augen Mar Divanasios. Article on page four.

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Photographs in this edition of the Gazette courtesy of :
 Interview with Mar Milithios- Saju Varghese
 Church Charity Project- Saju Vaghese
 Association Meeting- Saju Varghese
 Fun Days Bowling- Jerry Panicker
 Pumpkin Carving- Julie Jokutty

Gazette Staff and Board
Fr. M. K. Thomas
Fr. George Pulikkottil
Liju Paul (Malayalam Ed.)
Liju Varghese (English Ed.)

5. Sunday — Koodhosh Eetho (Santification)**Church Perunal**

Reading — 1 Peter 2:2-12, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:15-20,
St. Matt. 16:13-23

8. Wednesday — Memorial of H.H. Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I**11. Saturday — Prayer Meeting- George and Mercy Varghese
Gurnee Community Church @ 6PM****12. Sunday — Hoodhosh Eetho****(Dedication of Church)**

Reading — Acts 7:42-53, Hebrews 9:1-14, St. John 10:22-38

17-27. Friday-Monday — Holy Land Trip**19. Sunday — Annunciation to Zachariah**

Reading — II Peter 1:1-15, Ephesians 5:21-6:4, St. Luke 1:5-25

**24. Thursday — Memorial of Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios
Metropolitan**

Memorial of Joseph Mar Dionysios II,
Pulikkottil

26. Sunday — Annunciation to St. Mary

Reading - 1 John 2:3-17, Galatians 4:1-7, St. Luke 1:26-38

Planning Ahead

December 1-25- Advent Lent

December 3– General Body - Election

December 8– Bulls Game @ 7.30PM

December 9– Ecumenical Christmas Night @ 5PM

December 23– Sunday School Family Night

Prayer Requests—Please send your prayer requests to www.1church.org/prayerteam.html. We will join you in bringing your requests before God.

Questions or prayer requests - Please contact:

Julie Polachira-815.295.2469; jpolachira26@yahoo.com

Stacy Thomas-847.722.0446; stacy_thomas79@yahoo.com

**Original articles from church members are always solicited, please
submit your articles to info@gregoriangazette.com.**

On October 14, 2006, George Achen, Saju and I had the blessing of meeting with newly-appointed Catholicose Designate, His Grace Poulouse Mar Milithios. In the middle of a busy schedule that included Holy Qurbana and a baptism that morning, a Sunday School awards program in the afternoon, and a 4-hour drive to Kottayam in the evening for another Holy Qurbana the next day, Thirumeni had a few moments which he graciously offered to spend with us. He started by talking about his current state after he was confirmed as Catholicose Designate ;only two days before (portions translated from Malayalam and printed with Thirumeni's permission).

"My life has changed considerably; I no longer have control of what I do. I can tell other people to go somewhere and do something, but no longer can I plan my own programs. I am led around like a madman or something. I have a wider group of people who I need to minister to now. Not like before though, now people with no concern for me previously are trying to meet me to gain some advantage of their own. I understand that and appreciate my new responsibilities and am ok with being led around, but that control changes when it comes to church or diocese decisions, then I still have control. My life is more packed. So many programs come up, but a lot, like the one I have tomorrow, are for people who I don't know, but for a big church I should visit nonetheless. At the same time, there are small churches, like some here in Kunnamkolam, who have been with me for the last 21 years. They might not have big programs for me, but even little visits are a big deal for them. I won't forget them, so I have to balance more on my schedule now.

I have been getting so many phone calls. Every time I look at my phone, I have 37 missed calls. It's not for lack of love that I don't return these calls, I just can't do it. Sometimes I just have to hit delete. Why can't I respond to it all? We have no system for that. You might ask why that is the case since I've been here for 20 years. Well, we don't have the people for it. Here I am the cook, the deacon, the priest, the secretary...and the metropolitan."

George Achen, then, not one to be bashful, introduced Saju and I as representatives of the American Diocese. George Achen asked, in our name (his own question, however), "Why, since you've been a metropolitan for 21 years, have you never visited the U.S.? Don't you care about the youth in America?" As this was a relatively awkward question to ask in the middle of a hallway with other people standing around who had business to discuss with him, I was prepared if Thirumeni were to just laugh it off and continue with what he was doing. I was surprised to hear Thirumeni's response though...

"No problem, I have an answer for that. Actually, three points. First, since I became metropolitan of the Kunnamkolam diocese, this diocese has been my priority. My responsibility is to this diocese. If a Sunday School program comes up here and I am invited for a program in the U.S. at the same time, my preference is to be here with my kids. If I have to choose between the two, I will choose the Sunday School meeting because this is my diocese and I have to take care of them. That doesn't mean I have anything against the U.S., just that nothing I have ever been asked to do **CONTD PG 5**

FROM PG 4 there has been of priority enough for me to leave here. It's not just there; I don't even spend many nights in Kottayam. Before just recently, if I went to Devalokam, I'd go for my purpose and come back. I never get involved in the other things going on there, it wasn't my business.

The second reason I never came to the U.S. is that there is no shortage of Thirumenis there. Maybe individual Thirumenis have less exposure there than others, but overall Thirumeni exposure is high. People are getting tired of them. I have never heard anyone complain that there are children growing up in the U.S. that have never seen a Thirumeni. That is the case in some places here though. I would rather go visit those places.

Thirdly, let me tell you a story that illustrates why I haven't been to the U.S. One day at Devalokam, an Achen from the U.S. was sitting next to me as we ate, but neither of us was saying a word. It wasn't right to sit and not say anything, so I asked him, 'So, where are you from in the U.S.?' He responded, 'Do you want to come to the States?' I was hurt he responded to a question like that! I said, 'Sir, I have no interest to come to the U.S. I just felt we were sitting here quietly and wanted to be friendly. I have no such agenda of some priests particularly close to me. It's all about priorities. My children, I have no interest in money. God provides. When I go somewhere and people don't give me money, it is a relief. It makes me happy to go somewhere and not receive something in return. My driver, on the other hand, gets a little upset. I can tell when I get into the car if he received something from there or not. If he looks off into space and sighs occasionally, I know he didn't get anything from that place. I say to him, 'Doesn't God provide? Do you have need of anything? There is no use to sighing.' Also, it's not that I have never had a desire to come to the U.S., either. Actually, a long time ago, I asked once and was told not to come; I've just never asked since. Let me explain. 20 years or so ago, when I was a young Thirumeni just starting here, I asked Barnabas Thirumeni if I could visit the U.S. He was a mentor of mine for a long time, so I just asked him; I've never been one to work through groups. He suggested that it wouldn't be right for me to visit at that time and I haven't asked since. I have gained a lot of experience since then. It's not like I haven't traveled before. When George Achen was in Germany, he asked me to visit during his 4th year. I agreed.

Something happened and George Achen said it wouldn't be a good time for me to come. Better for me, so I stayed. The next year, he asked again and said that he wouldn't have the freedom like this again so I should come, so I did. From there I made a trip to London to visit Abraham Thomas Achen (Aby Achen) who was here with me in Kunnamkulam, without invitation. Those trips I made because some priests are particularly close to me. Its all about priorities.

With my new responsibilities, however, I will be traveling more. I will probably come to the U.S. soon. I have been receiving invitations from all over. But when I come, I don't want to tour all around and visit the whole place like some. I want to come somewhere for two weeks, then I'm out.

All this said, right now my main priority is to assist Bava Thirumeni, support him, share his responsibilities...make his life easier. That's what I want to do." -Liju Varghese

On October 30, 2006, George Achen, Youth Managing Committee Member, Liju Varghese, and seminarian, Saju Varghese visited the Idukki Diocese and H.G. Augen Mar Divanasios. He directed them to the Pampadumpara area and the site for the church our church is helping to build. Although Divanasios Thirumeni was unable to join them on the visit, he sent with them aramana manager, Fr. Bejoy Varghese; local parish priest, Fr. Saji Mathew; and Pampadumpara resident, Mr. Babu. We have over sixty families in the area, but currently there is no church in that place which they can attend. The nearest church is one hour away via two buses and is prohibitively expensive for this community of agricultural workers. The cost for a family of five to attend one Holy Qurbana would be Rs.150 (Rs. 15 per person, one way). As a result many families cannot attend church regularly. Even when they do, it is usually not more than once a month and not more than one member per family. Despite these hardships, as well as the local presence of Catholic churches they could attend instead, our families desire to remain in the Church.

On the visit, George Achen and the team were able to see the site and the work that had been done in the past years. The church's foundation had been built over five years ago, yet lack of funding interrupted the project. Since then the wood that had been originally acquired rotted and is now useless, while the site itself was overrun with weeds. The foundation is still usable, though, keeping the cost needed to build the modest church within our charity goals, despite the high cost of transporting materials and workers to areas such as Idukki. In this case, our assistance for building the church is of utmost use and a necessity for this community.

H.G. Augen Mar Divanasios was able to spend time with us that evening after the visit. As a result of our successful fundraising projects, especially the previous weekend's October Fest and the Youth contribution from this year's Walk-a-Thon, George Achen was able to present Thirumeni with the first installment of \$2,000 on behalf of our Church, St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Oak Park. Thirumeni, from his heart and on behalf of the people in his diocese, thanked us all for our love and concern for those less fortunate than ourselves. Hopefully, this experience of giving will inspire us to continue to make a difference in our community, both in the U.S. and in India, be an example for other Churches in our diocese, and be a blessing for us all.

10-12-2006: The Association of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (MOSC) was held at Parumala on Thursday, October 12, 2006. It served as the conclusion to a story that began early in 2006 when the Constitutional Committees of the MOSC suggested that a successor be named to His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Didymus I. Acting on that advice, Bava Thirumeni called an Association meeting for Thursday, September 21, 2006. As has frequently been the case in the history of the Church when positive steps like these are being taken, negative forces tried to impede that progress. Employing the tool used most against our Church in recent history, the courts, a case was brought challenging His Holiness' authority to lead the Church and convene the Malankara Syrian Christian Association (MSCA). During this time, His Holiness was in Chicago as part of his first apostolic visit to the United States. When word came from India that these issues had arisen, Bava Thirumeni decided to cut short his visit and return immediately to India to provide comfort and spiritual leadership to the people amid the growing uneasiness within the Church. The Catholicos's return to India was the first step in easing the mounting tension as well as uniting the various interests and groups within the Church.

As the date of the scheduled Association meeting approached, there was confusion in Devalokam. The Holy Synod was not allowed to meet as a result of the pending court proceedings, and, consequently, the Managing Committee could not meet either. As a result, the preparations needed to discuss a full agenda could not be made as of the morning of Wednesday, September 20, 2006. At noon that day, however, the Kottayam District Court announced their decision...in favor of the MOSC! The court upheld the legal authority and standing of His Holiness Didymus I to lead the MOSC. With all the final legal obstacles out of the way, the Church proceeded with celebration and unity to holding the MSCA the next day.

On the September 21st, Association members gathered at Parumala and the meeting began by 1PM. At this meeting, the Association officially recognized His Holiness, Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Didymus I as the Malankara Metropolitan, President of the MSCA, and rightful head of the MOSC. They also decided to continue the meeting on Thursday, October 12, 2006 to allow time to properly prepare for the rest of the agenda, including the selection of the Catholicos Designate. The Holy Episcopal Synod, composed of the bishops of the MOSC, gathered at the Orthodox Theological Seminary (OTS), Kottayam (Pazhaya Seminary) on Monday, September 25th with the aim of selecting the Holy Synod's candidate for Catholicos Designate. The Holy Episcopal Synod **CONTD PG 8**

FROM PG 7 overwhelmingly agreed upon H.G. Paulos Mar Milithios Metropolitan (Kunnamkulam Diocese) as their candidate.

The following day, Tuesday, September 26th, the MOSC's Managing Committee gathered at the OTS to discuss the agenda and the candidates for Catholicos Designate. The Managing Committee concurred with the Holy Synod and proposed Milithios Thirumeni to stand as the only candidate before the Association to become Catholicos Designate.

On October 12th, a large temporary tent was erected behind the Parumala Church, able to accommodate over 4,000 people with a stage in the front for the bishops, the clergy and lay trustees. The Association began with the bishops' procession from the Parumala Church into the tent. His Holiness led the Association in prayer followed by an official welcome from the lay secretary, Dr. Alexander Karackal. His Holiness Didymus I, the President of the MSCA, wearing the traditional vestments of the Malankara Metropolitan, delivered his presidential address. This address was followed by Fr. T.J. Joshua, who read a portion from the Bible and led the Association in a devotional.

Finally, the climax of the story which began almost half a year earlier was reached when H.G. Paulos Mar Milithios was announced as the uncontested Catholicos Designate of the MOSC. The Association members rose to their feet in thunderous applause, a multitude of chants of "Jai jai, Catholicos!" began, and various pockets of celebration erupted amongst the thousands who had assembled, accompanied by a barrage of fireworks outside the tent. Milithios Thirumeni prostrated himself before His Holiness, who placed the official medallion of the Catholicos Designate around his neck. The selection and official ratification of H.G. Paulos Mar Milithios as the Catholicos Designate was greeted with celebration, excitement, and hope for the future of the Church.

Immediately after the official part of the Association meeting concluded, there was a felicitation meeting for the newly-designated successor to the holy throne of St. Thomas, chaired by the senior most metropolitan of the MOSC, His Grace Dr. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios. This program was inaugurated by the head of the Mar Thoma Church, Metropolitan Chrysostam, and followed by felicitations from many dignitaries representing different churches and religious organizations. In one poignant felicitation, Fr. O. Thomas, Clergy Trustee of the MOSC, recalled that in seminary Mar Milithios, then K. I. Paul, received the nickname "Pearl" as some of the other students teased him because of the way he said his name "Paul" with a Kunnamkulam accent. But, what was then a joke, today seems almost prophetic, as Fr. O. Thomas then pointed out, "Now, he has become the pearl of the Church."

At the end of this program, Milithios Thirumeni delivered a humble speech in response to the outpouring of love shown to him since he received his new designation. He summed up his emotions quoting from the Gospel according to St. Luke, "Now my mind is filled with the glorious image of Mary the Mother of God, who said in response to the Great Annunciation, 'Behold, I am a servant of the Lord, let His Will be done in me.'" As we move forward from this successful Association meeting, let this be our prayer as well for Thirumeni and the entire Church.

Ignite-Steve Thomas

Ignite Bible Study had its last meeting on Saturday, October 7th to discuss the Parable of the Sower. This parable told by Jesus is found in the Gospel of St. Luke chapter 8. As we read through the passage there were a few points that we came across of great importance. As it is written, the sower scattered his seeds on 4 different types of soil. The first soil was the wayside path, the second soil was comprised of rocks, the third soil was filled with thorns, and the fourth and final soil was the good soil. We realized that the seeds represented God's Word and the soil was symbolic of our hearts. We analyzed our own hearts to see if it was a place where God's Word could grow, flourish and bear fruit or if it was a place where it would be held down by the temptations of this world. We understood that our hearts, just like the good soil, need to persevere in our times of weakness and that we need to fully rely on God. All those who attended the Bible study were truly blessed and we encourage all our guys to come out to our next study. For more information on this Bible study, Ignite, or if you have any questions or comments, please contact Steve Thomas or e-mail

Bowling It Out!-Alwin Joy

On October 14, 2006 our youngsters and older youth enjoyed a wonderful day in the bowling lanes of Arlington Lanes in Arlington Heights. Almost 30 people came out for the event hosted by Fun Days Ministry. Everyone enjoyed a great afternoon playing two games of cosmic bowling (bowling in the dark). As six lanes were filled, it was obvious that some people showed sighs of rustiness while others proved they can bowl well putting up scores in the mid 100s. Overall, it was a great opportunity to unite the youth of all ages and have a great time of fellowship. Some of the kids even decided to have their pizza party as well after the game! Continue to stay tuned for our next Fun Days event!

Pumpkin Carving-Julie Jokutty

There was a pumpkin carving workshop held in the basement of the church after Holy Qurbana on 10/29/2006. There were about ten youth who participated and carved eight pumpkins. The stencils used were different Christian symbols that included the Cross, dove, and fish. The top of the pumpkins were first cut, the seeds were removed and then using small knives the shapes were artfully cut out. Overall the event was a lot of fun and no fingers were lost thanks to the adult supervision!

FROM FRONT PG likewise in the case of in a Hindu temple festival! Since I am from Kunnankulam, let me explain why we have this custom. As a reward to the service that was given by the then Christians to the country, they have received many special privileges from the then rulers of the land. These include that Christians may use elephants, drums and other facilities for their cultural processions as in the case of the royal processions of kings. The Church leaders of that time wisely decided to use this facility for the veneration of saints; and made use of it for festivals. So for the feast of Mary the mother of God on 26th Dec or 8th of Sep or for the feast of Saint Gregorios of Parumala and other saints, we used to have a cultural procession after the evening prayer to each and every villages and corners of the area. This will be repeated during the day after the Holy Qurbana as well. These processions will be having all the possible drums and other musical instruments and behind all these things there will be an elephant on the top of which there will be hosted a picture of the Saint of the particular feast in a highly venerated form.

The parish-members and other well wishers collect a reasonably good amount of money through a nice local banking system for the financial needs of this Perunal procession. This money will reach to the common and comparatively poor people like drum and musical instruments players, etc. as a reward to their efforts and participation in this program. So we are actually respecting their traditional jobs and supporting them through this meaningful activity. Many of them are not Christians at all. After the procession during the day all the participants, irrespective of religion and faith, will bow down in front of the Church and pray. Even the elephants will salute the Church at the end of the procession! There will be a great dinner for all the believers, participants and well-wishers at the completion of the procession and Apostolic blessings offered by the chief celebrant.

Likewise there are many other social forms of celebrating our Perunal in different areas of the Church. However, the purpose of each and every such occasion must be for the glory of Lord.

THIS ISSUE SPONSORED BY PETER VARGHESE FAMILY

In Loving Memory of Mr. C. M. Pathrose (1923-1995) and Maj. P. V. Samuel (1916-2002).

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Parumela Thirumeni Trivia

- 1) What year was Parumela Thirumeni born and where?
- 2) Who were Thirumeni's parents
- 3) At what age was he ordained as a deacon?
- 4) At what age was he ordained as a priest?
- 5) At what age was he ordained as a bishop?
- 6) What was Thirumeni's nickname?
- 7) In what year did Thirumeni leave his earthly abode?
- 8) Where was Thirumeni laid to rest?
- 9) When did the Holy Episcopal Synod canonize Thirumeni as a Saint of the Church?
- 10) On what day do thousands of people make a pilgrimage to Parumela Pally?

Contest is open to Sunday School students only. If multiple submissions have the same number of correct answers, the prize winner will be selected at random. Please submit the entries with your name in the Gregorian Gazette Submissions box in the library.

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

3. Janice Varghese

6. Sara Mathew

5. Stefan Jacob

6. Alex Geevarghese

9. Priya Dileep

11. Sheeba Philip

11. Mark Molayil

