

SOPANĀ ORTHODOX ĀCĀDEMY

FOR STUDIES IN THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

Mar Baselios Dayara, Njاليakuzhy, Kottayam, Kerala, India

BULLETIN

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Sopana Logo

The Sopana Logo includes the following symbolic elements:

The Tree: The biblical Tree of Life in the form of an Indian Bodhi tree, symbol of enlightenment. Stands for the ecological wellbeing of the planet earth, and points to the kingdom of God in the parable of Jesus.

The Rising Sun: Indicates our orientation to the East, the biblical Paradise, Christ the Sun of justice, source of light and life.

The Fish and the Double Helix: The fish (*Ichthus* in Greek), ancient Christian code for "Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour". Double Helix is the scientific representation of the DNA structure deep within our life-form. They form a spiral ladder.

The Steps: The stepping stones leading to the Tree of Life constitute the Sopanam, the ladder of ascent in Eastern Christian spirituality as well as the steps leading to the holy sanctuary in the Indian tradition of sacred architecture.

Sopana in Sanskrit and modern Indian languages means stepping stone. In the Indian religious context it refers to the stepping stones leading to the sanctuary. In the Orthodox spiritual tradition the ladder of ascent to the divine presence and spiritual perfection symbolizes an unending journey guided by the Holy Spirit. The Sopana thus represents our loving commitment to God's creation, our earthly existence and its struggles, and our search for truth, freedom and justice.



**Sign the cross
Wear the cross
Bear the cross**

Metropolitan Geevarghese
Mar Ivanios + 2013

Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

The Sopana Academy is happy to bring out its third News Bulletin. We have been organizing various events over the last few months though we have not yet formally inaugurated the Academy. Our contacts have been mainly through emails and social media. The responses so far from our friends and other contacts have been very encouraging.

The building assigned to Sopana Academy, namely Mar Ivanios Chaithanya Nilayam, is still under renovation. The library and the dome over the entrance are still under construction.

We have started the short term research project. Mr. Thomas Varghese, a former graduate of St. Stephens College, Delhi, is now working on "Religion and Spirituality: Towards a Holistic Development Paradigm" We hope to register two more research candidates soon.

Within a short span of it functioning the Sopana Academy has already published three books (details overleaf).

Since we wish to promote theological research with a

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H.H. Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Paulose II of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church along with the Heads of Oriental Orthodox Churches: H.H. Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia., H.H. Pope Tawadros of the Coptic Churches of Alexandria, H. H. Karekin II Supreme Catholicos of All Armenian, H.H. Patriarch Aphrem II of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch on the occasion of the 100th year commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey.





Fr. K. M. George
Director

pastoral edge we invited Fr. Jogy George and Fr. John Thomas Karingattil who successfully defended their doctoral dissertations in Rome and Bangalore respectively, to speak to an invited group of enlightened lay people who responded to the presentations. It so often happens that theological dissertations in specialized areas either remain in library shelves or published in styles inaccessible to intelligent lay readers. It is our conviction that theological research should relate directly or indirectly to the pastoral needs of the people and add to the shared knowledge of the community while retaining respectable academic standards.

Sopana Academy envisages two national conferences, one in the field of Orthodox Theology, and the other in History of Christianity in India with the historical-theological legacy of St. Thomas Christians as the backdrop. We will give out necessary information in due course.

We are grateful for the positive responses from the friends of Sopana to our modest attempts to create a community of scholars at the postgraduate level, promote spiritual encounters and to relate theology and culture at large.



H.H. Patriarch Aphrem II of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch with H.H. Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Paulose II of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India. Also seen Fr. Dr. K. M. George, Director of Sopana Academy, Mr. Jacob Matthew (Managing Committee member, MOSC), Deacon Santhosh Babu.



Two Day Sopana workshop on "**Orthodox Spirituality**" addressed to the Monastics, led by **Father Stephen Headley** (France) (organized in collaboration with Akhila Malankara Sanyasi Samooaham) on 2015, February 11,12. **H.H. the Catholicos** opened the first session. Very Rev. Ramban M.S. Yuhanon, Fr. K.M. George, Fr. George Philip (Superior Mar Baselios Dayara), Fr. M.C Kuriakose (Secretary of the Monastics Fellowship), Fr. Zachariah Ninan, Sr. Deena of Kizhakambalam St. Mary's Convent, Prof. Mary Mathew (General Secretary of Orthodox Martha-Mariam Samajam), Dr. Saramma Varghese (President of All India Council for Christian Women), were resource persons. The meeting felicitated **Dr. Saramma Varghese** on her being elected as the president of AICCW. Prof. Mary Mathew decorated her with the Ponnada.



SOPANA YOUTH SATSANG: Twenty youth and students were gathered for a two-day extended Satsang session at Sopana Academy. **Sacramental theology** was introduced to them through sessions in nature like in the monastery garden and the lawn under the trees in the premises of the Mar Baselios dayara. Two Ethiopian Orthodox students - **Goytom and Getnet** studying in Hyderabad also participated and they explained to the group the Ethiopian Orthodox cultural traditions like the liturgical dance. Fr K. M. George and Fr. Zachariah Ninan animated the sessions.



Sopana Satsang held under the night sky at the Monastics workshop



Guest Lecture: **Prof. M. N. Karassery**, writer and Social critic, delivered a lecture at the Sopana Academy on "**Cultural Transition: Current trends in Kerala**" on November 12, 2014.

A Lenten Pilgrimage 2015

Forty Lenten Meditations by Fr. Dr. K. M. George

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sopanaacademy/1446498958938096?ref=hl>

Sopana Programmes



Fr. Jogy George presenting the summary of his doctoral dissertation defended in Rome at *"The Metaphor of the Shepherd in St. Mark's Gospel"* at Sopana PG Fellowship meeting held on Wednesday 18th March 2015.

Synopsis of the dissertation by Fr. Jogy George

This study expounds the theme of shepherd in the entirety of the Markan Gospel and its interconnectedness with the different motifs in the narrative such as «way», «nourishment», «gathering», etc. Mark introduces the metaphor at a stage when the crowd is desperately in need of a shepherd to guide and lead them ('sheep without a shepherd', 6,34). Though the narrator does not make any direct reference to Jesus as the Shepherd in 6,30-44, Jesus' «seeing» the condition of the crowd, his «teaching» and «nourishing» the crowd in the «wilderness», allude to the shepherding activities of YHWH in the OT (Ezek 34; Ps 23 etc). The motif of «nourishment» continues, when Jesus extends his care to the Gentile woman (7,24-30), although maintaining the priority of Israel (7,27), and later to a crowd (8,1-9) in a Gentile region. Markan Jesus gathers the shepherd-less Israel (6,30-44; cf. Ezek 34; Ps 23), while the Gentile sheep also finds their place in this inclusive sheepfold (7,24-30; 8,1-8; cf. 11,17; 13,10). Markan narrative attempts to avoid the «exclusive» nature of the sheep (7,27) and to portray the «inclusive» character of the messianic Shepherd and his mission (6,30-44; 7,24-30; 8,1-9; 16,7). It is to this universal mission that Jesus invites the disciples, in which he is leading as «the model» (16,7).



Fr. Dr. John Thomas Karingattil presented the summary of his doctoral dissertation defended at Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam on *"Globalization of Media and Cultural Hegemony in the Indian Media"* at Sopana PG Fellowship Meeting on Saturday 16th May 2015. Metropolitan Yuhanon Mar Policarpus of Angamaly inaugurating the session. Dr. Paul Manalil chaired the meeting.

SOPANA PG FELLOWSHIP PLENARY MEETING

Sopana PG Fellowship Plenary Meeting was organized on Tuesday 30th December, 2014 at Sopana Academy Hall, Mar Baselios Dayara, Njاليyakuzhy. Plenary meeting had three sessions. The first session by **Fr. Dr. Koshy Vaidyan** titled: Rt. Rev. Hebert Pakenham-Walsh (Founder of Thadagam Ashram): An Ecumenical Bridge between Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and Church of Ireland. The paper invited serious discussion on the contribution of this great missionary and his attempt to find the genuine Indian identity of Orthodox Church. Second session by **Dr. Siby Tharakan**: The Church's Response to the Emotionally Challenged Persons, focused on the challenges faced by the Church to effectively intervene and help those who are emotionally challenged. Dr. Tharakan has direct involvement in Suicide prevention cell of the Church. In the concluding session Fr. K.M. George introduced the Sopana Research and Exposure Programme. The plenary session ended with an informal Christmas-New Year lunch at 1:30 pm.

SOPANA PUBLICATIONS - 2015



കുറിശ്ശി ബാവായുടെ മൂന്നു പരദേശയാത്രകൾ ഡോ. എം. കുര്യൻ തോമസ്

നാലു ദശാബ്ദത്തോളം മലങ്കരയുടെ അത്യുന്നത മഹാപുരോഹിതനായിരുന്ന പ. ബസേലിയോസ് ഗീവർഗീസ് ദ്വിതീയൻ കാതോലിക്കായുടെ മൂന്ന് വിദേശസന്ദർശനങ്ങളെയും മലങ്കര സഭയ്ക്ക് അദ്ദേഹം വികസിപ്പിച്ചെടുത്ത അന്തർസഭാ ബന്ധങ്ങളെയും പറ്റിയുള്ള സമഗ്രപഠനവും, അതിന് അടിസ്ഥാനമായ യറുശ്ശേം കത്തുകൾ(1908), യെറുശലേം യാത്ര(1935), എഡിൻബറോ യാത്ര(1937) എന്നീ യാത്രാവിവരണങ്ങളും. വില: 200 രൂപ. എം. ഓ. സി പബ്ലിക്കേഷൻ.



ഗുരു ഗ്രിഗോറിയോസ്

ഫാ. ഡോ. കെ. എം. ജോർജ്ജ്

പൗലോസ് മാർ ഗ്രിഗോറിയോസ് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ ജീവിതവും പ്രവർത്തനവും മിക്കവാറും അന്തർരാഷ്ട്രതലങ്ങളിലായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ അതുകൊണ്ടല്ല അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ ദർശനത്തെ വിശ്വമാനവദർശനം എന്ന് നാം വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. മനുഷ്യസ്വഭാവത്തിന്റെ ആഴവും പരപ്പും അന്തസ്സും ആത്യന്തിക ഭാഗ്യേയവും എന്താണെന്ന് അദ്ദേഹം ഗൗരവമായി അന്വേഷിച്ചു ചില നിഗമനങ്ങളിൽ എത്തി. മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ ദർശനത്തിന്റെ വിവിധ തലങ്ങൾ ഈ ഗ്രന്ഥത്തിൽ അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ ശിഷ്യനായ ഫാ. സോ. കെ. എം. ജോർജ്ജ് വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നു. വില: 125 രൂപ.



സ്വർഗ്ഗീയമാലാഖമാർ സ്മൃതിക്കുന്നതുപോലെ ഡി. ജോൺ കുന്തത്ത്

ഓർത്തഡോക്സ് സഭയുടെ ആരാധന അനുഭവിച്ചറിയാൻ സഹായിക്കുന്നവിധം അതിന്റെ സമ്പന്നമായ വേദാർത്ഥങ്ങളും അലങ്കാരപ്രയോഗങ്ങളും പ്രതീകങ്ങളും മറ്റും വ്യക്തമാക്കാനാണ് ഗ്രന്ഥകാരൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത്. വില: 100 രൂപ

UPCOMING EVENTS

I. Indian Orthodox Theology Meet 2015

Theme: Orthodox Witness and Service beyond the Borders

Venue: Sopana Orthodox Academy, Mar Baselios Dayara, Njaliakuzhy

Dates: 10-11 November 2015.

Rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as announced by his Apostle Thomas, and enriched by both the spiritual culture of India and the Syriac liturgical-patristic heritage, the Malankara Orthodox Church is well placed in the family of Orthodox churches. It is generally recognised that there are some remarkable theological contributions from the Malankara church to the Christian world and to society at large particularly in the 20th century.

The proposed Orthodox theology Meet is to find a focus for the broad spectrum of the Church's ongoing theological reflections and practice and seek a common direction for its mission, witness and service in the 21st century.

The conference sessions will be organised around sub themes like, for example,

- Identity and Unity
- Mission and Witness
- Contemporary Theological-Ethical challenges
- Nurturing the new generation
- Looking ahead as the Church of Christ
- Theological Education

Registration for participants will open in August.

Enquiries from mid August onwards: +91 9447598671, +91 481 2462099

II. The Coonen Cross Revolt AD 1653: The Radical Self-Awareness of Indian Christianity and the Declaration of Freedom from Alien Powers- An Ecumenical Enquiry.

Date and Venue: January 2016 at Sopana Orthodox Academy (Details will be announced later).

III. Monthly Satsangs and other PG Fellowship Meetings



Felicitation

The Sopana PG Fellowship cordially felicitates **Fr. Dr. Filix Yohannan Thattasseril** who successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on 10th June at the Angelicum University in Rome. The title of his Dissertation is:

Hide and Seek in the Lord's Shelter: An Exegetico-Theological Analysis of Psalm 27.

An associate of the Sopana Academy he belongs to Bethel Mar Gregorios Aramana Church, Chengannur.

Adieu to Fr. Varghese Joshua



Nominated by Mar Baselios Dayara, **Fr. Varghese Joshua** (Santhosh Achen) rendered service to the Sopana Academy as its first Secretary during the past few months while he was still working on his doctoral dissertation in Bangalore. The date for the defence of his thesis is set for the third week of July. His title: *The Church as the Bride of Christ: A*

Unique Divine- Human Relationship Model based on the Select Homilies of Jacob of Serugh. As Fr Santosh completes his term with Sopana we thank him heartily for all his service and commitment, and we wish him all success in his forthcoming defence of the dissertation.

ICON JOINS RELIEF WORK IN NEPAL

ICON Charities Inc. extends emergency relief to the victims of Nepal earthquakes. His Holiness the Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Paulose II has authorized the Indian Christian Orthodox Network to co-operate with the relief work in Nepal. They have already sent US \$ 15,000/- towards rebuilding a village in Nepal. ICON educational wing is a benefactor of the Sopana Research Programme.

Link: <http://www.icon.org.in/>



Current Research

Mr. Thomas Varghese, alumnus of St. Stephen's College, Delhi and formerly a part time UN consultant is currently doing research "**Religion and Spirituality: Towards a Holistic Development Paradigm**" under the banner of Sopana Research Project.

Scholars who need accommodation during programmes may contact :

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