Issue April & May 2025
Diocesan Youth Apostolate

DYA monthly

know.
love.
serve.

Featuring

Holy Week & Easter
Habemus Papam
Nazrani Voice
Eucharistic Congress
Regional highlights



Photo Courtesy: People Magazine



Every Lent, I prepare myself for Easter by following the traditional but challenging practices: abstaining from meat and fish, attending a Lenten retreat, and joining the Stations of the Cross. However, this year was different. Father Johnsty Thachara invited me, along with a group of fellow parishioners, to participate in something truly special—a **"Meditative Theater" experience**. This unique initiative blended a light-and-sound presentation with prayerful reflection. We hoped to bring to life the Passion and death of our Lord in front of our parish community on Good Friday night after the service.

I was blessed to be involved from the very beginning. I remember Achan telling us that we were not doing this for praise or applause. **This was a form of evangelization—an opportunity to bring believers closer to Jesus and help them truly grasp the suffering He endured for us.**

From that day until the eve of Holy Thursday, our group met every evening at the Parish Hall to rehearse. We sacrificed time with our families, missed birthdays and anniversaries, and gave up any personal downtime.

At times, it was exhausting and frustrating, but we **offered it all up as our Lenten sacrifice to the Lord.**

After nearly a month of preparation, Good Friday finally arrived. We presented each Station of the Cross live on stage, pausing between stations for four minutes while Father Johnsty offered meditative reflections to the congregation. When we concluded the final station, the silence in the church said everything. I knew in my heart that our efforts had touched the community—that they had encountered, in a deeper way, the agony and love of our Lord.

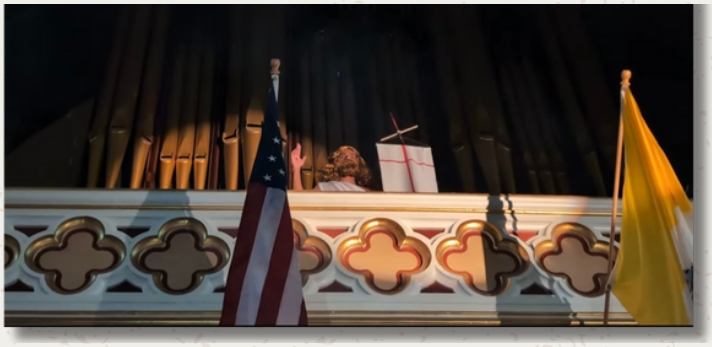
This experience was life-changing for me. I've often wondered how I could use my talent for acting in the service of evangelization. Father Johnsty helped me realize that to evangelize, I don't need to preach from a pulpit or hold a Bible in front of a crowd. **Evangelization can take many forms. We each have God-given gifts that can be used to bring others closer to Him.**



Shan Shaji
St. Mary's Syro Malabar
Catholic Church, NY



The St. Mary's Syro Malabar Mission held its annual recreation of the Lord's Resurrection during this Easter Mass. The most notable thing about all of this was not the smoke machines, lighting, or the sound effects. It was Nathan Manoj (18), who wonderfully displayed the rising of Jesus from his death. Nathan, a very active CCD student and altar server, took on the role of our risen Lord selflessly and executed this masterpiece beautifully. This eye-catching performance that takes place every Easter mass at the St. Mary's Mission was made even more special by Nathan's flawless performance.



Along with this, the youth participated in a mini-egg hunt. All of the youth members participated very energetically. Many of the youth members, notably the female youth, displayed a great deal of teamwork and sportsmanship from sharing their treats with each other to making a plan on how to gather their eggs. A huge part of the success of this egg hunt is thanks to Juana Deepu (15) who took the time to fill up all of the eggs needed for the hunt. Thanks to all of the youth, Easter was a huge success. This was a great end to the Lenten season and beginning to the Easter season.





Julie Jilson
St Mary's Syro-Malabar Mission, OH

St. Joseph Syro Malabar Catholic Church recently hosted a dynamic youth event titled Beaded in Christ!—a creative fundraiser designed to support the youth ministry. The event brought together children, parents, and Sunday School teachers in a spirited game of rock-paper-scissors with a meaningful twist. Each participant wore a beaded necklace, and with every win, players would collect necklaces from their opponents. The one with the most necklaces by the end won a special gift basket. To incorporate Scripture, participants who challenged teachers had to recite a Bible verse from one of the Four Gospels, as chosen by the teacher. If they succeeded, they earned the teacher's necklace—worth two points. The blend of fun, friendly competition, and faith made it a memorable experience for all involved.

Younger children enjoyed a joyful Easter egg hunt filled with laughter and excitement.



Holy Week at SJSMCC was deeply meaningful this year, as new families and youth joined the parish in experiencing its sacred traditions for the first time. Many young people took their Lenten commitments seriously, showing remarkable discipline and dedication throughout the season. The full recap of Beaded in Christ! is now available on our youth ministry page, celebrating a beautiful day of faith, fellowship, and community spirit.

Aleena Tenson
St. Joseph's Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, FL





Habemus Papam

As we know, the passing of Pope Francis left the chair of Peter empty. A conclave was gathered to pick the successor of Pope Francis on May 7th. The next day on the 8th, on the fourth ballot, the 267th pope was elected. Pope Leo XIV, is the first American pope! He was born as Robert Francis Prevost in Chicago in 1955. He is the youngest of 3 sons. His mother, Mildred, was a librarian and his father, Louis, was a teacher. He earned a mathematics degree from Villanova University prior to entering the Augustinian Order. He was sent by his order to Peru to complete missionary activities. In September of 2015, he was elected by Pope Francis as the Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru. He became a Cardinal in September of 2023 under Pope Francis.

Pope Leo XIV started his papacy with the simple message of peace entering the hearts of the faithful. His simple message gave Catholics worldwide an overwhelming sense of unity and strength. Pope Leo has been pretty active on social media, especially on X, even prior to his papal election. He has openly shared criticisms of public figures and historical events that have taken place that have acted against the faith or the teachings of the Church. He has spoken out against the wars and civil unrest taking place in the Middle East. He is committed to unity among all Catholics worldwide, humility, service, and most importantly, love for all people.

Let us take some time today to pray for the gift of Pope Leo XIV. May God grant him the strength and grace to lead the one true, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.

A JOYFUL CELEBRATION OF DIVINE MERCY

"Each year, the week after Easter brings a special joy to our parish as we celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy. It's a powerful reminder of Christ's infinite mercy and love for us. No matter what struggles we face, God's mercy is always greater. During this special time, our church community truly comes alive to honor the feast. For me, the most meaningful part is seeing how joyfully everyone comes together, reminding us that mercy is also about building one another up in faith and fellowship. Our parish marks the Perunnal weekend with passionate skits, delicious shared meals, uplifting music, and a beautiful Qurbana and adoration. It's always inspiring to see members of our church, young and old, working side by side to make the celebration meaningful and welcoming for all. Moments like these remind me that church is more than a building; it's a living, vibrant community. I'm grateful to be able to celebrate our feast day with such a wonderful parish and look forward to many more to come!"



Angel Jose
Divine Mercy Syro Malabar Catholic Church, TX





DID YOU KNOW?

- Divine Mercy Sunday was **instituted by Pope John Paul II** in 2000 and is celebrated on the Sunday after Easter.
- In the Divine Mercy image, Jesus is portrayed with one hand outstretched, **blessing the world**, while his other hand **rests on the side wounded by the soldier's spear**.
- It emphasizes **God's mercy** and offers special graces to those who participate in the sacraments.

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY 2025

Nazrani Voice

Hey George, thanks for joining me here. The Nazrani Voice, DYA's podcast is just starting, can you first just introduce us to the team and all those in the background who helped produce the first 2 episodes?

"So a lot of us serve different roles for podcast, but the team consists of Myself, Aljo Abraham, Abhijith Jose, Cristo Gigi, Davis Varghese, Maria Kangapadan, and Melvin Achan; of course. For now though, I should thank Cristo specifically who has been vital in helping with both filming and editing so far, really allowing us to have a quick turn-around."

Of the 2 episodes released so far, topics have varied from a bit of DYA past, as well as the future of the Church. In your discussion with Dr. Jaisy Joseph, Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies Department at Villanova, where our new pope graduated from in 1977. Can you share what it was like taking that interview?

"Yes, we have God to thank for the timing of it all; believe it or not Pope Leo was announced the day before our interview had been planned for! So it meant we adjusted the questions we asked; but I think it gave the interview a far more conversational tone. But Dr. Jaisy was so knowledgeable which really made any adjustments we made in the interview quite easy, she was a joy to have join us for an episode.

Can I ask, given your experience as an NT for now your 2nd term, which is not considering the time served as an RT. Can you speak to what brought you to join the DYA, or even a memory that sticks with you all throughout the years?

So I'm now in my final term, I believe I started as an RT around senior year of high school going into college... That being said, what I remember about being an RT was meeting so many new people, especially people from across the Region and the East Coast, and gaining ideas and seeing if I could bring that back to my Parish in San Francisco... It's amazing that the work we do is so specific... involving ourselves in youth ministry for an Eastern Catholic Church, especially in a country that's generally unfamiliar with it. There is just something really powerful about that. I was just reminded of this at the recent Eucharistic Congress and being able to introduce people I know to people across the nation. And one of the reasons I really wanted to continue serving DYA was getting to see those kids from my church, the same kids I taught CCD to; for them to be able to see the church that I got to grow up in, that was really important to me."



The Future w/Abin Kuriakose



Habemus Papam w/ Dr. Jaisy Joseph

Can you speak to any noticeable shift within the DYA, especially as more and more people are able to access and experience Holy Qurbana?

"This question reminds me of this moment at my first Summit around 2018, if I remember correctly. Someone had made this point: that the new generation of Syro-Malabar Catholics now born and raised here in the US, they are literally a new phenomenon. Which maybe is obvious to us but in a way is kind of unique, so this faith—now being fostered in the youth—which might not fit the original language or culture still breathes through this beautiful older tradition. And as time has passed, the reach of DYA has only really grown, and for the youth we serve, there are more and more youth eager to really reach out to others, to get in touch with the country overall, and to be heard."

For the DYA Newsletter insiders, can you share any hints at what the next upcoming episode will concern, or at least where you would like to steer the focus of the podcast in the long term?

"Unfortunately, I'm not going to spill anything about the topic of the next episode, depending on when the newsletter comes out, but I can share that there are 2-3 episodes that have been filmed, which I'm really excited for when they come out."

I'll leave you with one fun one, given you can't spoil the next episode. If you had a wish to interview any one person, whether dead or alive, who would you choose to talk to?

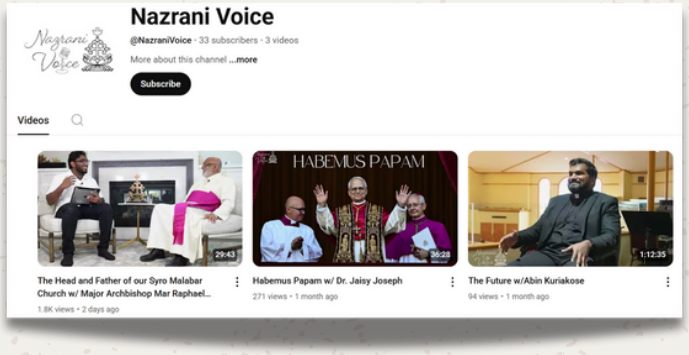
"Okay, so this is a tough choice, but if it had to be someone from the past, I'd choose St. Ignatius of Loyola, who was the founder of the Jesuit Order. But if I could choose someone alive... honestly, it'd be so cool to be able to talk to Pope Leo the 14th."

George Ajit
St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, CA





Daniel Vayalil
Holy Family Syro-Malabar Catholic Mission, WA



Available on YouTube & Spotify

QURBANA

ON CAMPUS
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

We were blessed with the presence of Bishop Mar Joy Alappatt and Bishop Edward J. Burns as celebrants of the qurbana on April 30th.















FIRST HOLY COMMUNION & CONFIRMATION

The month of May is very special to several young people in our diocese as they receive important sacraments - Holy Communion and Confirmation.
















Photo Courtesy: Mid-Atlantic Region

ST. THOMAS SYRO-MALABAR
DIOCESE OF CHICAGO

EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

SYRO-MALABAR EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL

A JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF OUR FAITH

"Having never attended a Eucharistic Congress before, I truly didn't know what to expect. I was deeply blessed when Melvin Achan invited me to serve on the core team for the English track. This Congress, a key part of the ongoing Eucharistic Revival, called us back to the very heart of our faith: Jesus Christ, truly present—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—in the Blessed Sacrament.



We were a team of seven young adults, entrusted with planning speaker sessions and coordinating the "Reflect, Review, Respond" (RRR) sessions for the English track. It was a privilege to work with dedicated Achans and young adults from our diocese who brought their personal stories to the forefront, fostering deeper connections among youth and adults alike. These sessions blended group reflection, shared prayer, and fellowship, cultivating a rich spiritual atmosphere.



One of the most memorable moments was the **fireside chat with Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil** alongside some adults from our diocese . He addressed many of the challenges we face as American Syro-Malabar Catholics, emphasizing that the essence of our identity is not rooted in cultural expressions like traditional dress or customs, but in remaining Christ-centered in everything we do. His message served as a profound reminder that whether we're celebrating religious obligations or cultural holidays, our focus must always remain on Christ.

We were also blessed with a lineup of dynamic speakers, including **Dr. Scott Hahn, Dr. Lawrence Feingold, Paul J Kim and Alex Gotay**. Dr. Hahn and Dr. Feingold offered powerful theological and Scriptural insights into the mystery and majesty of the Holy Eucharist, deepening our understanding and love for this great gift. Mr. Kim and Mr. Gotay used creative tools including beatboxing and sharing personal insights from their own faith journeys. Their authenticity and energy deeply resonated with the youth and left a lasting impact.

Another beautiful highlight was the **Eucharistic Exhibition**, where parishes from across our diocese were each assigned a faith formation classroom. They decorated these spaces to creatively and prayerfully reflect the beauty and significance of the Eucharist. This initiative not only involved more parishes but also showcased their creativity, talents, and deep reverence for the Sacrament.

We also had a vibrant vendor area where Suzette, one of our own, managed a booth with beautiful Christian merchandise. Among the many treasures of the Congress was a renewed appreciation for our liturgy. We reflected together on the sacred words, “Lord, graciously receive this Qurbana,” and the need to prepare our hearts to receive Jesus in the Eucharist with reverence and awe.

Perhaps most encouraging were the voices of the youth, many of whom shared that they “will never forget this experience.” Witnessing the fruit of our collective efforts was both humbling and exhilarating.

Though the planning process was demanding, it was a truly rewarding journey of growth and faith. Participating actively in our Church’s mission is not only a privilege—it is our Christian duty. May we continue to keep Christ alive in our hearts, our homes, and our communities.












Brittany Perumpail
St. Thomas Syro-Malabar
Catholic Forane Church, NJ

Mama Mary

In the last two years of my walk with God, some of the most beautiful truths I discovered were about Mama Mary. I wanted to share some insights and reflections I learned, especially from my Marian consecration.

Mary **SPECIALIZES** in forming the body of Christ. For nine months, she carried the God-child in her womb. Flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood. And then through the rest of Jesus's childhood, she was there by His side. He grew in wisdom and stature, right alongside our Blessed Mother. To love Mary is to imitate Christ. To beseech Mother Mary is to grow closer to her Son. Explain to me how the **GREATEST** lovers of Mary are saints. By devoting our lives to our Mother, she will only help us to FURTHER be like her most beloved Son. The "Yes" that Mary said two millennia ago echoes through time, through every single instance of our human lives. She is constantly praying, interceding for her children. The very children her Son Jesus died for.

There is not one human being who knows Jesus better than Mary. There is not one human who loved Jesus so perfectly as Mary. There is not one person who followed Jesus more closely than Mary. There is not one person who knew our God incarnate more than Mary. I say all this, why? There is no sweeter and no easier way to Christ than through his own Mother. Through Her intercession and through her Motherly love. Mother Mary's Maternal mission is to gradually reach you to think, feel, will and act like Christ. It took 12 apostles to spread Christ to the world. It only took 1 Mary to bring Christ **INTO** the world.



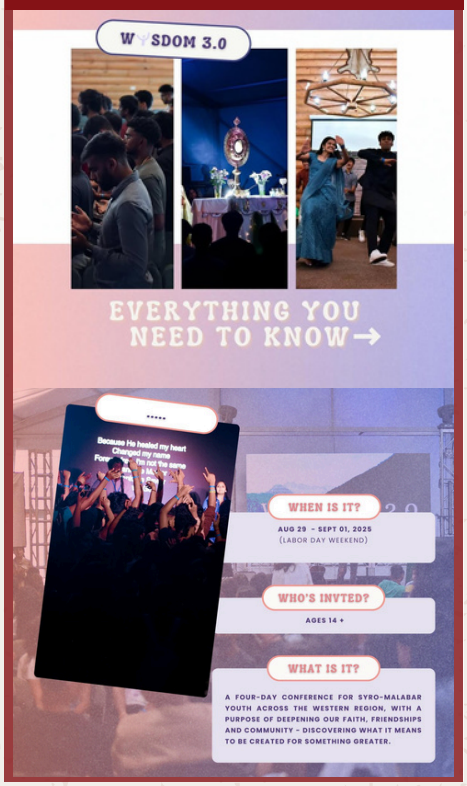
The Rosary. Through this amazing tool, ask for grace with confidence. Our Lady gave us the most powerful weapon not just so that it can sit on the prayer counter or hang on the rearview mirror, but that we may pray it. That we may sweetly and strongly cling to Jesus through the heart of his own Mother. I do not deny that the Rosary is difficult sometimes—even St. Terese of Lisieux felt that way! But there are so many low-hanging fruits of grace that we can attain by simply persevering and doing our humble best. There is no such thing as a bad rosary. Let your Mother teach you how to pray. Be kind to yourself! The Rosary is so incredibly powerful. Marian intercession is like water on a hot fire. Our Lady crushes the head of the serpent—and with every "Hail, Mary" that we utter, the evil one writhes. Go grab your rosary. Read up on our Blessed Mother. As the beloved children we are, we have SO much to learn and an overflowing pool of grace to jump around in. My thoughts are a little scattered, but I hope that maybe one sentence will inspire you to pick up a rosary or go watch a cool video about Mama on YouTube **(GabiAfterHours is a GREAT channel)**. God bless and peace out.

Blessed Mother, help me to see Jesus as you did.



Noah Gerard
St. Mary's Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, FL

UPCOMING



Get connected!

stthomasdya.org

@SyroMalabarUSA

Info@stthomasdya.org

Published by Fr. Melvin Paul (Director of DYA), the Diocesan Youth Apostolate National Team 7, and the DYA Newsletter Team

St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago