

Issue March 2025
Diocesan Youth Apostolate



DYA monthly

**know.
love.
serve.**

Featuring
Lenten Reflections
Qurbana on Campus
RT Gatherings



into the wilderness, toward the *CROSS*

As we complete the sacred season of Lent and enter the profound mysteries of Holy Week, it is crucial to prepare our hearts and minds for the Holy Week and Easter celebration ahead. Too often, we see Lent as a mere tradition of fasting or a yearly obligation. But in reality, it's an invitation—an opportunity to enter into the spiritual wilderness just as Jesus did and just as our Church Fathers who went before to embrace with profound devotion.

Our liturgy is filled with prayers composed by these holy men, who immersed themselves in Scripture and practiced extreme self-denial to purify their souls. They understood that Lent was not about empty gestures, but about radical conversion—a time to turn fully toward God. Their example has called us throughout this Lenten season, not just with a routine “nombu” fast but with a deep, intentional surrender to God’s will.

Our tradition teaches that fasting is more than abstaining from food—it is a discipline of body, mind, and soul. Many of us today struggle with the idea of giving up comforts, yet our Church Fathers willingly endured extreme penances and immersed in the scriptures, withdrawing from worldly distractions to sanctify themselves. As we conclude our Lenten journey, we can reflect on how we have engaged with multiple disciplines simultaneously:

- Physical fasting – Abstain from food, social media, unnecessary entertainment. Has your fasting prepared you for the sacred celebration ahead?
- Spiritual feasting – How has your immersion in Scripture and prayer deepened your readiness to enter into Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection?
- Acts of self-denial – In what ways have you set aside comfort for the sake of holiness?

into the wilderness, toward the *CROSS*

Yet, while the fast has been difficult, while the temptation to quit has crept in, remember Jesus' words:

"What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent?" (Luke 11:11)

God has not left us alone in our sacrifices. He has sustained us. He has strengthened us. When we have felt weak, we have turned to Him in trust, knowing that He gives us only what we are capable of handling by His grace.

Beyond fasting, penance has always been a vital part of the Great Fast. Penance can often be reduced to receiving some reparation for our sins confession after the Sacrament of Reconciliation but there's more. In the early Church, believers would take on intense acts of penance to purify their hearts—kneeling for hours in prayer, wearing sackcloth, confessing their sins publicly. Though our outward expressions may look different today, the need for inner purification remains the same. As we stand during this Holy Week, it is a time to recognize our need for God's mercy and to embrace penance as a path to sanctity.

As we walk through this Holy Week, entering into Christ's Passion and anticipating the glory of his Resurrection, let us not take it lightly. Let us not settle for minimal sacrifices. Instead, let us follow the example of the saints and Church Fathers before us—immersing ourselves in prayer, embracing self-denial, and offering true penance for our sins. Only then will we experience the true transformation that these sacred days are meant to bring.

May this Easter be a time of deep renewal for us all.

Yours in Christ,
Melvin Achan

Lenten Reflections

MIDATLANTIC

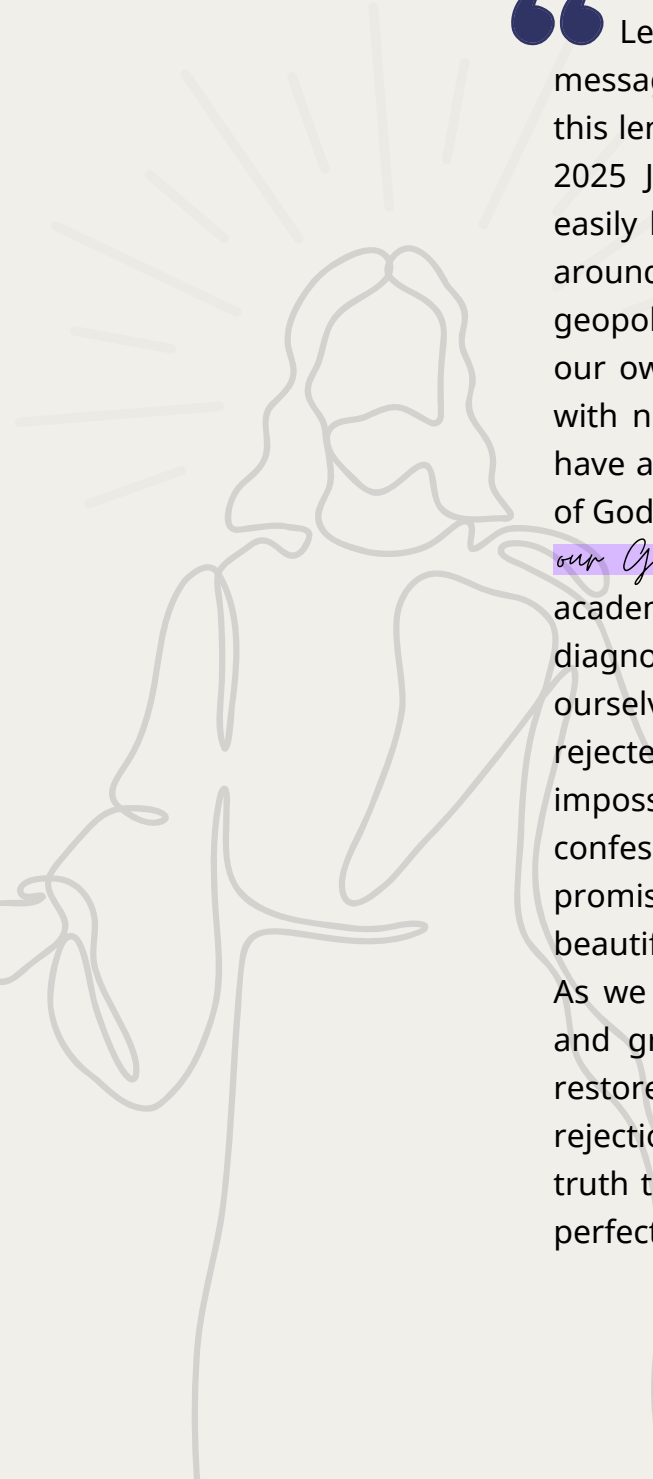
“ Without fail, every Lent, I’d find myself at some retreat, at some parish. I never knew why, but I always left feeling the same. However, our Lenten retreat was one that allowed me to truly feel like a *child of God*, and know my worth in his eyes. On Saturday, we began with a fun icebreaker which created some friendly competition. Then, we went into a talk with Danielle about our relationships with God. We were then led by Amaris who shared his beautiful testimony as proof about how in God’s eyes, we are seen as his *own children who he loves unconditionally*. Later, Joby Achan led us into the topic of how “the Holy Eucharist is the *source and summit* of Christian life” and how it’s an ineffable gift from God. We had a lot of time to reflect before confession and adoration, and ended our retreat on Sunday with a Lectio Divina led by Dhivya Chechy. If there was anything I took away from this retreat, it’s that no matter what we do as humans, we are all still *loved unconditionally* by the Father. All the speakers gave us a beautiful reminder of how even if we feel far from God in life, he will never move, and is always waiting for us to come back with open arms. Overall, I’m grateful I got to experience this Lenten retreat with my church friends, as it gave us the chance to grow in God’s love together during the Lenten season.”

Alena Chacko

St. Thomas Syro-Malabar
Forane Catholic Church, PA

Lenten Reflections

MIDWEST



“Let us journey together in hope.” This is one of the messages Pope Francis has for Catholics worldwide this lent which is in congruence with the theme for the 2025 Jubilee Year, “Pilgrims of Hope.” Hope can be easily lost when we feel as if the world is falling apart around us. From the stressors of our daily lives to geopolitical conflicts, we may be frequently sinking in our own worries. We may find ourselves in situations with no visible way out or have prayers that we may have abandoned due to their “impossibility.” The Word of God reminds us there is truly *nothing impossible for our God*. Whether it be getting into a competitive academic program, navigating a difficult medical diagnosis, or waiting to land a job, let us remind ourselves of who our God is. He is the advocate for the rejected, the ultimate healer, and the waymaker for the impossible. Hebrews 10:23 says, “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” This Lenten season opens up a beautiful opportunity for us to *renew our hope in Christ*. As we go about this Lenten season making sacrifices and growing in prayer, let us ask the Holy Spirit to restore and transform our hope once again. With each rejection or setback, may we hold fast to hope and the truth that the Lord will provide all that we need in His perfect timing.”

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

Lenten Reflections

SOUTH

“ On March 29th and 30th, I spent most of my day at St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Church, when typically I would have been in bed. Why? Well because I got the opportunity to attend their Lenten Retreat. With this given privilege it provided me with structured time for *spiritual reflection and renewal*, allowing me and the rest of my peers to deepen their faith in preparation for the celebration of Easter!

I greatly appreciated the interactive and welcoming speakers that came out of their way to deepen our faith. They all kept openly including us, keeping the sessions entertaining instead of one person consecutively speaking. One session I specifically enjoyed was when we had a split between the high school and middle school, in which high school was given the opportunity for the girls and guys to write questions anonymously regarding either the opposite gender or for their own that had got answered later on in the session. Being presented with this activity promoted understanding between each of our perspectives and *developed empathy* by hearing authentic questions and answers from peers.

Ultimately, both days ended with adoration and one thing I especially remember was that we talked thoroughly about examining our conscience before entering the presence of the Eucharist. With this representation, I entered adoration with the right mindset that allowed me to recognize faults, seek forgiveness, and clear away any distractions. I am blessed to have spent my weekend *strengthening my faith* especially during this Lenten season!”

Aleena Binu

St. Thomas Syro-Malabar
Forane Catholic Church, TX



Lenten Reflections

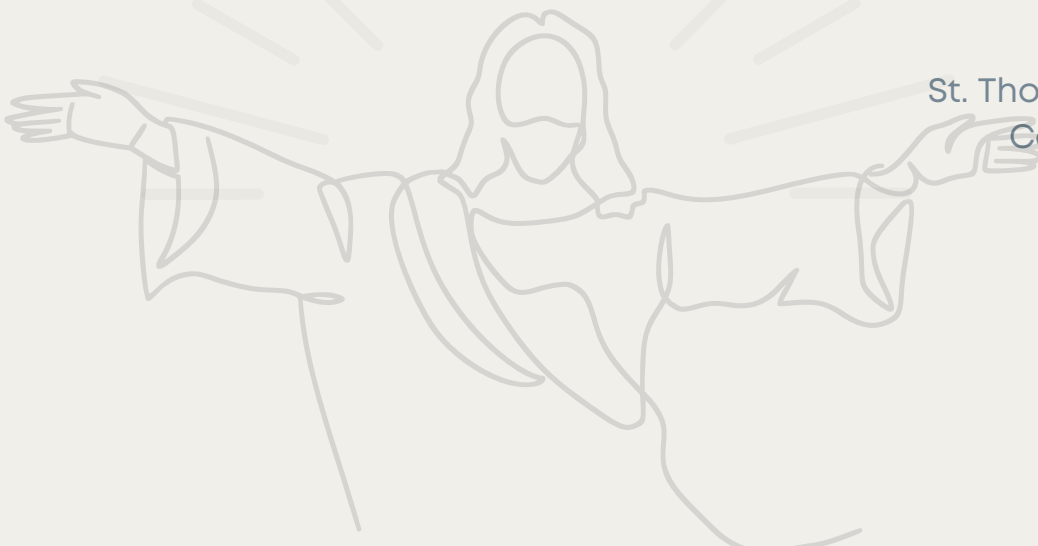
NORTHEAST

“Going into our parish’s Lenten retreat, I honestly didn’t know what to expect. We hadn’t done an offsite retreat in years, and never during my time in high school, so I was a little skeptical about how it would turn out. As a senior who’s been feeling overwhelmed by college applications, I realized how much I needed this time away. It ended up being such a grounding experience—one that felt very full circle. It gave me a moment to *slow down, reflect, and reconnect* with my faith.

The theme of our retreat was “Beloved,” and we spent a lot of time talking about what it means to be a child of God—how each of us is *seen, known, and deeply loved* by Him. That message really stuck with me. In this period of time where I’ve been questioning what comes next, it helped remind me that my identity is rooted in something greater. Some of the highlights of the retreat were the adoration, where I felt truly present with Jesus, and the sisterhood talk that left me feeling encouraged and supported. Even the games and activities helped bring our youth closer together. Attending the retreat right before Lent helped me enter the season with more intention and a new perspective. Instead of just focusing on what I’m giving up, I’ve been thinking more about *how God is calling me* to draw closer to Him. The retreat reminded me that Lent is really about transformation—remembering the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made, reflecting on His love, and claiming who we are as beloved children of God. This retreat impacted me more than I ever expected and it came at the perfect time. I’m so happy that I got to be a part of it!”

Sneha Saju

St. Thomas Syro-Malabar
Catholic Church, MA



QUIRANA

ON CAMPUS



MARCH

QURBANA

ON CAMPUS

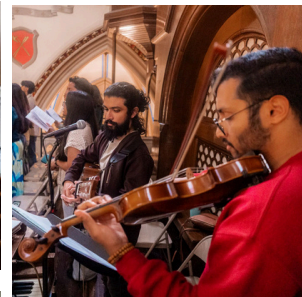
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS



DREXEL/PENN



UTD



TEXAS A&M



RT *Gathering* MID ATLANTIC



road mapping session for the year!

& exploring Philly!

**stay tuned—there are some exciting
events and surprises coming your way!**

RT *Gathering* NORTHEAST



*adventures, bonding, road
mapping & yapping!*
**stay tuned for exciting
events & announcements!**

RT *Gathering* SOUTHEAST



vision planning for 2025-2027!

**stay tuned—exciting events coming for
college & high school!**

UPCOMING



Renew

Amidst the chaos of daily life, it is important for couples to take time for themselves to grow and strengthen their relationship. Join us in our first eparchial marriage enrichment conference as we hear inspiring lectures and share our experiences in breakout sessions on the adventures, challenges, and importance of married life!





ART & LARAINE BENNETT JILU CHENGAT FR. MELVIN PAUL

MAY | 10th | 2025

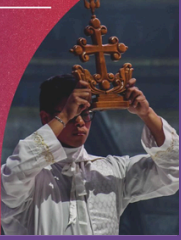
St. Mary's SyroMalabar Catholic Church
926 Round Swamp Road
Old Bethpage, NY 11804
9:00 am - 4:30 pm

 **\$75 PER COUPLE** 

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Syro-Malabar Diocesan Eucharistic Congress
MAY 23-25, 2025 | SOMERSET, NJ

TRACKS FOR:
High school, College,
& Young Adults

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.smeucharisticcongress.us



Get connected!



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Info@stthomasdya.org

Easter wishes and blessings from our beloved bishop and clergy!

He is not here
FOR HE IS RISEN



MATTHEW 28:6

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St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago