

CHURCH HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

Published by: Thomas John Philip Nalloor

April-May, 1929: Boys Camp starts at Vadasserikkara. The first Mar Thoma boys' camp was held in Vadasserikkara, in 1929. Boys' camp is a four-day programme during which the children are taught about the Bible, Church History, Faith and Practices, etc. Camps were usually held in boarding schools during the summer vacation. Children from standard 7 to 10 were allowed to participate in the camp. A separate camp for girls was conducted from 1977 onwards. Both the camps are held under the leadership of the Mar Thoma Teachers Association.

May, 1983: Publication of the Malayalam Bible (Hosanna Bible). A new Malayalam translation (version) based on the "Revised Standard Version" was published in 1983. In addition to Old and New Testaments, 12 Deuterocanonical /Apocrypha books are also included in this Bible. The cost (Rs. 1.1 Million in 1983) for the publication of this Bible was donated by an anonymous donor from Holland.

1 May, 1855: Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan, Puthuppally, passes away. Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan was born in 1788. He became a teacher of the Kottayam Theological Seminary in 1813. Along with Abraham Malpan, he gave able leadership for the reformation of the church. The first Malayalam Holy Communion service was conducted by him in the Kollad church on 1 September 1836. Abraham Malpan followed his example and conducted services in Malayalam in the Maramon Parish.

1 May, 1873: Death of David Livingstone. Missionary and explorer, David Livingstone who was responsible for "opening up" central Africa and popularizing missions to that continent, died on 1 May, 1873. He is widely considered as one of Christianity's missionary heroes.

2 May, 373: Church father Athanasius, "the father of Orthodoxy," dies. He attended the Council of Nicea. He was the first to list the New Testament canonical books as we know them today.

2 May, 1995: Rev. C. V. Abraham (b.10 Aug 1910) Tiruvalla passes away. He was a member of the Palamoottil Family of Mallappally, became deacon on 20 July, 1946 and priest on 16 July, 1947. He served more than 26 parishes and was also a teacher of Palghat Ashram School. He used to write Bible Reading notes in church publications and used to train Theological students.

3 May, 1675: Warning to all who leave church before the end of the service! A Massachusetts law goes into effect requiring church doors to be locked during services. Officials enacted the law because too many people were leaving the church before sermons were over.

May 5, 1816: The American Bible Society (ABS) organizes in New York to distribute the Bible throughout the world. The organization has distributed hundreds of millions of Bibles in thousands of languages worldwide.

May 6, 1945: Consecration of Bishop C. K. Jacob. Rev C. K. Jacob was consecrated as the first Indian Bishop of the Travancore - Cochin diocese of the Anglican Church on 6 May, 1945, in the St. George Cathedral in Madras. He was the chief celebrant of the inauguration ceremony of the Church of South India, held in Madras on 27th September, 1947.

May 7, 1839: Hymn writer and pastor Elisha A. Hoffman is born in Pennsylvania. His songs include "I Must Tell Jesus," "Down at the Cross," "Are You Washed in the Blood?" and "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms."

8 May, 1916: Birth of Late Rev. P. John Thomas of Ankola. Born in Karunagapally, Kerala, he became a priest in 1951. He was one among the early members of our Ankola Ashram in North Karnataka. He gave leadership for the formation of our Mangalore, Manipal, Sirsi and Goa parishes. For 28 years he taught in Honavar St. Thomas High school and was called to eternal rest on 5 October, 1990.

8 May, 1828: Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross and the Young Men's Christian Association, is born in Geneva. He won the first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901.

8 May, 1916: First CMS (Church Missionary Society) missionary of Travancore arrives at Cochin. Rev. Thomas Norton and his wife arrived in Cochin Port along with their 2 year old son on 8 May, 1816. He started his mission work in Travancore from the port city of Alleppey (Alappuzha).

8 May, 1765: Mar Thoma V (1728-1765) passes away. Mar Thoma V was ordained during the time of Marthandavarma Maharaja of Venadu (A kingdom existed in Central Kerala). During his time many foreign bishops tried to interfere with the administration of the Church. In 1754, an agreement was signed with the foreign bishops restricting them from ordaining any person without the permission of the Mar Thoma Metropolitan. He was called home on 8 May, 1765 and buried at the Niranam Church.

10 May, 1886: Karl Barth, the most important theologian of the twentieth century and opponent of theological liberalism and political fascism (especially under Hitler), is born in Basel, Switzerland. When asked in 1962 (on his one visit to

America) how he would summarize the essence of the millions of words he had published, he replied, "Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so".

12 May 1820: Birth of Florence Nightingale. Florence Nightingale was named after Florence, Italy, where she was born on 12 May, 1820, in a very wealthy family. She was the founder of the nursing profession. At the age of 16, Florence heard the voice of God telling her that she had a special mission in life. She helped the British Army in the Crimean war. Based on her studies, a Sanitary Department was established in India in 1868. She was called home on 13 August 1910.

13 May, 1917: Three shepherd children report that the Virgin Mary appeared to them in Fatima, Portugal.

13 May, 1925: Florida's House of Representatives passes a bill requiring schools to conduct daily Bible readings.

15 May, 1857: Birth of Rev. T. Koshy, author of Hymn "*Ennullil ennum vasichchiduvan*". Born as a member of the Mukkadavu family of Kallada, he became a priest in 1896. He was a gifted artist, hymn writer and publisher. He was a speaker of the Maramon convention for many years. Hymn Nos. 10(9), 37(35), 190(179), 216(201), 220(205), 221(206), 246(224), 297(283), 316(311), 344, and 352 are written by him.

16 May 1805: Arrival of Henry Martin in India. Henry Martin, a well-educated Englishman, arrives in India to aid William Carey with the translation work of the Bible.

17 May 1889: Birth of Scout Achen, Rev. T. M. Mathai – Punnathundiyl - Kuriannoor. Rev. T. M. Mathai, born as a member of the Punnathundiyl family of Kuriannoor, became a priest in 1913. He was our first missionary priest in Karwar in Utter Karnataka. He may be the only Mar Thoma Priest who served as a British Military Chaplain. He was the District Commissioner of the Scout movement. He stayed in Charalkunnu for many years, before the establishment of the Sunday School Samajam Camp Center.

18 May, 1931: Mar Thoma Church starts Ashramam High School in Perumbavoor. On 18th May, 1931, Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan laid the foundation stone for the Ashramam High School. Rev C. T. Matthew (Mathews Thirumeni) was the first headmaster. This school is one of the best boarding schools functioning under the corporate management. "By love, serve one another" is the motto of the School.

20 May, 325: Emperor Constantine convenes the first Ecumenical Council in Nicea (now Iznik), Bithynia, to discuss Arianism, a heresy arguing Jesus was not divine. "I entreat you," Constantine said at the opening of the Council of Nicea,

"to remove the causes of dissension among you and to establish peace." The council attempted to resolve the bitter conflict by anathematizing Arius (Arianism's founder) and ordering the burning of all his books, but the conflict continued to rage for decades.

20 May, 1506: Christopher Columbus, who saw himself as a missionary, and not just as an explorer, dies impoverished in Spain at age 55. "I hope in our Lord that it will be the greatest honor to Christianity that, unexpectedly, has ever come about," he concluded in the log of his first voyage to the Americas.

20 May, 1277: Pope John XXI dies when his castle ceiling collapses on him. The name was a mistake—there was never a John XX.

May 20, 1952: Birth of Hymn writer Wilson Chennanattil. Born as the son of an evangelist, he has written more than 50 hymns, many of which are included in our Maramon Convention Song Books, "Nin daanam njaan anubhavichu - Nin sneham njaan ruchicharrinju" (Song No. 47, Maramon convention 2000), "Ellaam nanmaykkaayi swargga thaathan cheythidunnu" (Song No. 35, MC 2001) are written by him.

May 21, 1382: The "Earthquake Synod" in London (so named because a temblor interrupted the proceedings), led by Archbishop Courtenay, condemns as heretical 24 theses from the writings of John Wycliffe. Wycliffe later claimed that God sent the earthquake "because the friars had put heresy upon Christ. The earth trembled as it did when Christ was damned to bodily death" .

21 May , 1864: Missionary-priest Joseph de Veuster (better known as Father Damien) is ordained a priest in Honolulu. In 1873, at his own request, he was sent to a settlement of lepers on the island of Molokai, where he later contracted the disease and died.

21 May, 1921: V. Nagel, author of "Samayamaam radhaththil" passes away. Born in Germany on 3 November, 1867, he came to India in 1893, as a missionary. Along with his wife Harriet, he worked in Kunnankulam, North Paravur, Trichur and Kumbanadu. He has written more than 100 hymns in Malayalam. Hymn Nos. 57, 144(135), 153(143), 155(145), 203(392), 214(199), 223(208), 238(216), 239(217), 242(220), 244(222), 287, 294(280), 298(284), 300, 301, 325(319), 374(257), 380(260), 382(262), 390(269), 402(294) ,405(353) and 411(354) in our Hymn Book are written by him.

21 May, 1780: English Quaker and social reformer Elizabeth Fry is born in Norwich, England. Though involved in reforms from education to poverty, her greatest burden was to improve prison life.

23 May 1984: Very Rev. K. E. Oommen, Kalamannil, Kumbanadu passes away at Vellore. Very. Rev. K. E. Oommen (born in 1881) was ordained in 1921 and

was one of the division Secretaries up to 1939. With his evangelistic zeal and wise counsel he gave great support to Abraham Mar Thoma and later Metropolitans. Our Metropolitan Philipose Mar Chrysostom is his son.

25 May, 1865: Birth of Evangelist John R. Mott. Evangelist and ecumenist, Mott is born in New York. He served 40 years with the Y. M. C. A, chaired the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference and was named honorary president of the World Council of Churches at its inaugural session.

26 May, 1914: Birth of Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius. Thirumeni was born to the Panampunnayil family at Kottayam. He was ordained as a Deacon of the Church in 1944 and as Kassessa in 1946. On 20 May, 1953, he was consecrated as Bishop. He was designated as Suffragan Metropolitan in May 1978 together with Philipose Mar Chrysostom. He guided the evangelistic activities of the whole Church for many years. The college for women at Perumbavoor was established under his inspiring leadership. Thirumeni was called to eternal rest on 27th November, 1984.

26 May, 1889: Birth of Mandapathil Achen (Rev. P. I. Jacob, Mandapathil, Puthencavu, Chengannur). He became a priest on 17 Sept, 1916, and was Secretary of Central Travancore Mission for 34 years. He was keen in the upliftment of the backward community and more than 100 congregations were formed during his time. He was an expert in Homeo medicine and gave free treatment. For many years he published a magazine "Almaprakashini" from his personal printing press. He was called to rest on 2 July, 1987, and was buried at the Puthencav Church Cemetery.

31 May, 1931: Anglican Church ordains first priest from Pulaya Community. Due to the work of CMS missionaries many people from the backward classes were converted to Christianity. But Syrian Christians were not willing to worship with them or accommodate them in their churches or society. Special churches were made to for them and they were still treated as untouchables by the high Class Syrian Christians. On 31st May, 1931, Mr. P. J. Thomas a member of the Pulaya community was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Moore in an effort to eradicate this social evil.

