# ST. MARY'S INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH <br> (PILGRIM CENTRE) 

RAS-AL-KHAIMA, UAE

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## A Message from Vicar



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As the coronavirus convulses a planet without immunity, people are locked down, dreams are shattered, plans and projects are exhausted, markets and social lives are disrupted, public worship and community gatherings are restricted, and everything has become miserable. We are all so full of fear and anxiety that we seem to have lost the love, joy and graciousness of life. Hardly anyone smiles now as we walk past them. Heads are bowed, as eyes flit about, alarmingly vigilant but spaced out. The body language signals, "Stay away from me". This is easily understandable as we face a dangerous, invisible enemy and we do not know who will fall by its sword before the pandemic ends. Thousands of lives and livelihoods are being lost or impaired. Although we all know that social distancing and self-isolation are necessary shields, we all suffer its effects - some catastrophically.

Everyone has been affected, especially the dedicated frontline health workers, who heroically continue their care despite the risks. Sadness over the loss of loved ones, for any cause, becomes overwhelming when mourners are unable to receive the comfort of friends and family. My heart breaks for them as I pray for the souls of the dead and for comfort for their families. Government and health authorities are doing everything they can to enforce what they believe to be the best measures to control and prevent it. Many of them compare it to warfare. And indeed, there are casualties. Every nation is at its knees.

However, this viral villain, sowing seeds of death, giving us an opportunity to reflect on the vulnerability of our very being and our need to turn towards the Lord to build up solidarity between all of us. It is time to reset our goals to live a better life in the expectation of a glorious future. If we are prudent, we will confront ourselves to put all our trust in the Lord and reflect on our limitations.
The disciples were traumatized by the arrest and crucifixion of their master. They were startled and bewildered by His appearances after the Resurrection and his command to prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit. In lockdown, to protect them from arrest, they prayed for the power to face the challenge Christ had given them - to go and make disciples of all nations. The frightened apostles were transformed into fiery preachers and evangelizes when they were anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this time of distress and difficulty, let us ask the Holy Spirit to transform us. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we can also change the face of the earth by going out to make disciples of all nations, starting right now with our self and the people in our home.

When Alfred Nobel invented a powerful but stable explosive, he asked a friend to help him name it. This Greek scholar directed him to this Bible passage. "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1: 8) The Greek word for power is dunamis, so he named it dynamite.
We could say: "I shall receive explosive power, like dynamite when, the Holy Spirit comes upon me." When we feel empty and sad, let's spend our time in prayer and fasting. The Holy Spirit we received at our Baptism, it's like a sleeping giant within us. In the Old Testament, only a few people were chosen to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. But the prophet Joel received this message from the Lord: "Afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28) predicting that the gift of the Holy Spirit would be available to everyone. Do not bury this valuable gift.
The Spirit of the Lord is much more contagious than any virus in the created world. Humanity across the globe is locked down, but not without purpose. We need to permit God to take control of our life.
So, let us be hopeful and pray that He may actively re-create the world, so that He may prevail in our thoughts, imaginations and philosophies throughout our daily lives.


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Mr．Aniyankunju Mathai（62）father in Law of Mr．Kevin George Varghese（Reg．20，K－09）


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The fast of the Holy Apostles is a thirteen-day lent recognized by the Orthodox Church, which begins Monday, June 16th and lasts until Saturday June 28th.
Having rejoiced for fifty days following Pascha, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Apostles began to prepare for their departure from Jerusalem to spread Christ's message throughout the world. According to Sacred Tradition, as part of their preparation, they began a fast with prayer to ask God to strengthen their resolve and to be with them during their missionary efforts as they spread the Gospel.
The Biblical foundation for the Fast is found in the Synoptic Gospels, when the Pharisees criticized the Apostles for not fasting, Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." Our Lord, in this passage, was referring to his being taken to be crucified; but in the larger sense these words of the Lord are understood in terms of his Ascension into heaven, and his command to preach the Gospel, which can only be accomplished with prayer and fasting. The New Testament mentions the practice of fasting many times.

During this fast, we remember the struggles of the holy apostles to preach the gospel to the world after Pentecost. In addition, on Sunday June 29th, the Holy Church also commemorates the memory of two important saints, Saint Peter and Saint Paul. As with all other fasts/lents of the Holy Church, the fast of the Holy Apostles is observed by refraining from the intake of all dairy and meat products. Let's all seek the powerful intersession of the holy apostles during this fast!



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