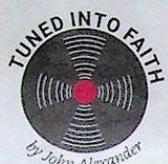


MIDDLE VILLAGE — Father Joseph Palackal, parochial vicar for St. Margaret Church since 2019, is a world-renowned musicologist and a foremost authority on liturgical music. He can even chant in multiple languages, including Aramaic, the language spoken by ordinary people in Judea at the time of Christ.

While the ancient language is seldom used in modern times, Father Palackal told *The Tablet* that it's essential — both historically and practically — to preserve it.



"If you went to another city and someone spoke to you in English, you feel good, and if they said your name correctly in English, you feel good," Father Palackal explained. "So, if you get the message in the original language, it is much better than a translation. It's truly a great privilege to use the words as Jesus did."

As a member of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, which follows the Eastern Syrian Rite liturgy, Father Palackal celebrates Mass and uses the words that Jesus used at the Last Supper. He said that he takes immense joy in using the words of Jesus at the consecration.

For example, he chants *The Lord's Prayer* in Aramaic.

"We translate the opening line as 'Our Father, who art in heaven,' which is fine, but that's not exactly what Jesus said," Father Palackal explained. "He said to pray to 'Abba,' which would translate to the warmer 'Dad.' Jesus' entire life's message was making God intimate to us in His person and in His message."

According to Father Palackal, the more formal change in the prayer occurred when the Scriptures were translated into Greek and Latin, using the word "Pater," which means "father," and ultimately into the English translation as we know it.

Before his arrival at St. Margaret, Father Palackal served for 23 years as parochial vicar for St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Maspeth. He is the senior founder of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, a monastic order that works to preserve traditions of Indian Christianity, and founder-president of the Christian Musicological Society of India.

Father Palackal is also the lead singer on more than 40 albums released in five languages, including English, Malayalam, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Syriac.

In 1979, he released his first albums, "Christian Bhajans," in Malayalam, a language native to India, and "Qambel Maran: Syriac Chants from South India," which was the first commercial CD of Syriac chants. Both albums are landmark recordings in the history of Christian music in India.

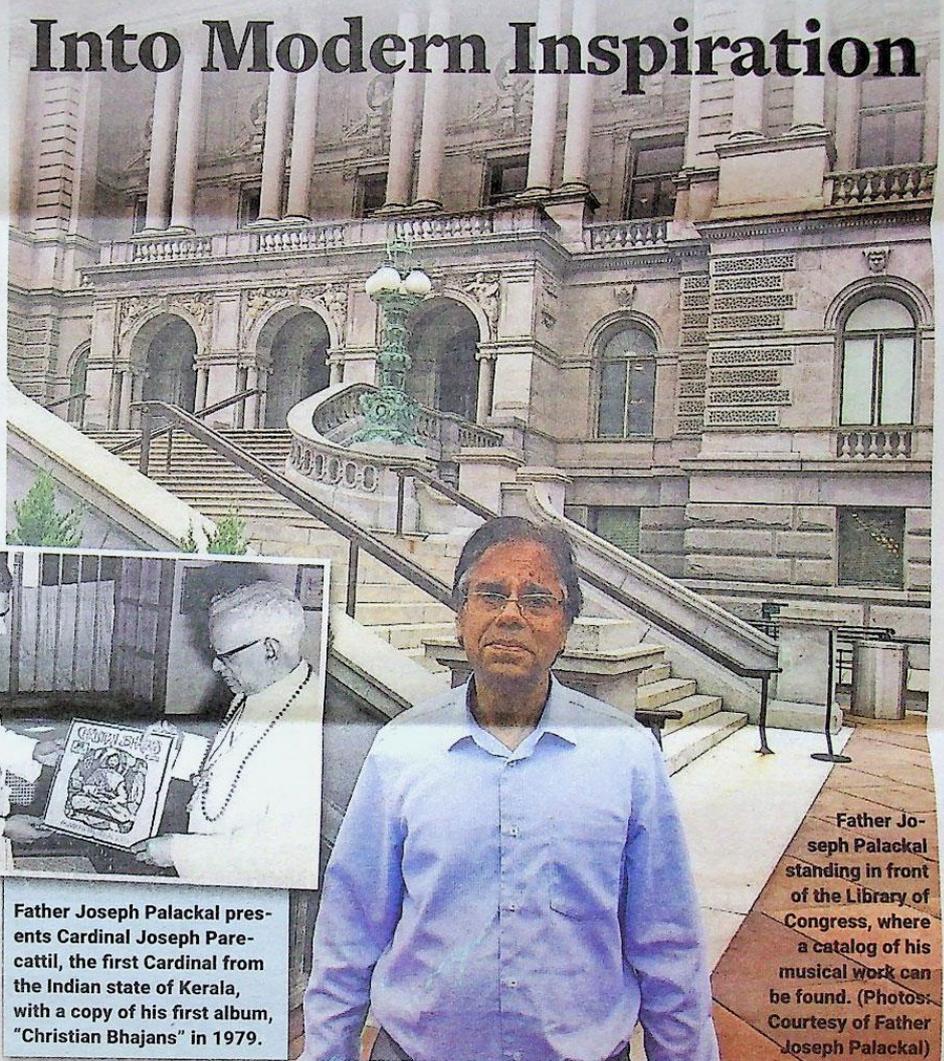
Father Palackal was known as a talented singer in his hometown in India and started singing in his local church as a young boy. The liturgy was still in Syriac at that time, and he grew up singing Aramaic chants before Vatican II.

In 1965, Father Palackal entered the seminary and still occasionally sang in Aramaic before it faded away. He then studied Raga, a style of Indian classical singing, which evolved into his first album. He called it "a very choral, audacious movement for the 70s." After completing his studies in classical music in India, he came to New York to pursue graduate degrees.

This led Father Palackal to return to India and conduct fieldwork collecting melodies from older priests from his congregation that would ultimately become the basis for his second album, "Qambel Maran."

"We chose 29 melodies for the CD, which is a precious goldmine of gems with some of those melodies existing only on

Queens Parochial Vicar Turns Older Melodies Into Modern Inspiration



Father Joseph Palackal standing in front of the Library of Congress, where a catalog of his musical work can be found. (Photos: Courtesy of Father Joseph Palackal)



Father Joseph Palackal presents Cardinal Joseph Parecattil, the first Cardinal from the Indian state of Kerala, with a copy of his first album, "Christian Bhajans" in 1979.

that album, and they are so unique, and you might say precursors to Gregorian chants," explained Father Palackal.

The album was released in the Netherlands and brought him world acclaim, leading to a library of rare recordings, "opening the world's eyes to the fact that India is also a Christian country with an ancient Christian heritage."

Today, Father Palackal's works can be found in the Library of Congress, Harvard University Library, the British Library, and the New York City Public Library for the Performing Arts. And he is currently completing his new book, "Syriac Chants in South India: Toward Remapping the Musical Geography of a Country."

To preserve those melodies, he embarked on what he called the "Aramaic Project," in which he began compiling a digital library to document anything related to Aramaic chants in India, a project that continues today. He still maintains an of-

fice in India, which he visits in the summer and writes articles about the chants.

At St. Margaret, he has introduced the children to Maranatha, an Aramaic phrase meaning "Our Lord has come" or "Come Lord Jesus," by creating a simple melody for it. He also incorporated a chant for the creed in Aramaic to help keep the language alive.

He admits that his goal is to pique people's curiosity about the language of Jesus.

"I wish to keep the mother tongue of Jesus alive to enrich their prayer life," added Father Palackal. "St. John Paul II very accurately said that 'the Church has to breathe with three lungs, not just Greek and Latin but also Aramaic,' because there is something special about that.

"My hope is to instill in people a curiosity for tradition and to not let the language of Jesus die."



Up Front & Personal

The Holiday 'Darty' Starts New Tradition

by *Brendan Mullen*

For many college students, returning home for winter break can feel disorienting, caught between the routines of college life and the familiarity of their hometowns.

This Christmas season, St. Francis de Sales Parish offered something different, a way for college-aged parishioners to reconnect not only with one another, but with their faith and parish community.

I have been a part of the St. Francis de Sales community for more than a decade. I'm a 2020 graduate of St. Francis de Sales Catholic Academy and have been a sacristan at St. Francis de Sales Parish since 2021.

Even while away at college, I return during summer and winter breaks to serve the parish, reflecting both a long-standing connection and commitment to remain actively involved when I am home. While sacristan duties are an official role, the deeper reward has always been the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to parish life.

This year, that connection took on new significance when Father Jim Cunningham approached me with a question: How could the parish create an event specifically for college students home for the holidays centered around Mass?

The timing felt ideal. College students were home, Christmas naturally draws people together, and the Church has repeatedly emphasized the importance of engaging young people early and intentionally.

When Father Cunningham asked for ideas, I suggested something familiar to college culture — a “darty,” short for “day party.” In college settings, darties are daytime gatherings centered on community, celebration, and shared tradition, often before large athletic events or adding nuance to the typical nightlife.

The concept offered a way to incorporate that sense of belonging into a parish context. From there, the 2026 Holiday Darty was born. The Mass itself was a powerful testament to collaboration and care. It was celebrated by Father Cunningham and concelebrated by Father Bill Sweeney, Father Sean Suckiel, and Father James Kuroly, which was a visible sign of the clergy's shared investment in the parish's young people.

Father Suckiel's homily addressed the challenges of maintaining faith in college environments, where social and academic pressures can make regular practice difficult. He emphasized that these formative years shape who we become, and that faith can provide

Continued on page 30



FAITH IN FOCUS

Indiana quarterback and 2025 Heisman Trophy winner **Fernando Mendoza**, who attended Christopher Columbus High School in Miami, a private Catholic college-preparatory high school run by the Marist Brothers, greets his mother, **Elsa Mendoza**, who has Multiple Sclerosis, after the Hoosiers defeated the Hurricanes in the national title game. (Photo: OSV News/Sam Navarro-Imagn Images via Reuters)

INSIDE

As The Tablet Sees It	14
Letters	15
Columnists	23-25
Sports	31
Crossword Puzzle	B2

January

Papal prayer intentions

For prayer with the Word of God

Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

REPORT ABUSE

To report an incident of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy, call the confidential diocesan phone number **888-634-4499**.

To report an incident of sexual abuse by a bishop, call the national reporting number **800-276-1562** or visit ReportBishopAbuse.org.

Published by and in the interest of The Diocese of Brooklyn

- Publisher** Bishop Robert J. Brennan
- News Director** Michelle Powers
- Editor** Michael Gray
- Managing Editor** John Lavenburg
- Managing Editor, News Content Operations** Raquel DeLuca
- Marketing & Circulation Manager** John Alexander
- Senior Reporters** Paula Katinas, Bill Miller
- Staff Reporter** Alexandra Moyan, Jessica Meditz
- Lead Designer** Faby Rodriguez
- Director of Advertising** JoAnn DiNapoli
- Manager, Digital Content Production** Wendy Ortiz
- Editor Emeritus** Ed Wilkinson



January 24,
2026
Vol. 117 | N° 44

The Tablet
860 Pacific Street, Brooklyn, NY 11238
718-499-9705 | Fax: 646-665-4642
www.thetablet.org

Story Ideas & Tips: 718-517-3122 or newstips@desalesmedia.org

Send Your Pictures and Videos: thetablet.org/sendus

Subscriptions/Change of Address: 877-883-8356 or tablet@emailpsa.com

Parish Delivery Inquiries: 347-731-5623 or jalexander@desalesmedia.org

General Inquiries: thetablet@desalesmedia.org

Advertising Inquiries: advertising@desalesmedia.org

The Tablet (USPS 53-2320) (ISSN 0039-8845) is published every Saturday, except for one week in January and one week in July, by DeSales Media Group, Inc. — 7200 Douglaston Pkwy, Douglaston, NY 11362. Periodicals postage is paid at Flushing, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to: The Tablet, P.O. Box 1042, Williamsport, PA 17703. Subscription prices in U.S.A. \$28 per year in advance. Canada and foreign countries \$43 per year. Subscriptions are non-refundable. Advertising rates upon request.

Entire Contents © Copyright 2023 DeSales Media Group, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- @tabletnewspaper
- @catholicnewsupdates
- /thetablet

MIDDLE VILLAGE — Father Joseph Palackal, parochial vicar for St. Margaret Church since 2019, is a world-renowned musicologist and a foremost authority on liturgical music. He can even chant in multiple languages, including Aramaic, the language spoken by ordinary people in Judea at the time of Christ.

While the ancient language is seldom used in modern times, Father Palackal told *The Tablet* that it's essential — both historically and practically — to preserve it.



"If you went to another city and someone spoke to you in English, you feel good, and if they said your name correctly in English, you feel good," Father Palackal explained. "So, if you get the message in the original language, it is much better than a translation. It's truly a great privilege to use the words as Jesus did."

As a member of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, which follows the Eastern Syrian Rite liturgy, Father Palackal celebrates Mass and uses the words that Jesus used at the Last Supper. He said that he takes immense joy in using the words of Jesus at the consecration.

For example, he chants The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic.

"We translate the opening line as 'Our Father, who art in heaven,' which is fine, but that's not exactly what Jesus said," Father Palackal explained. "He said to pray to 'Abba,' which would translate to the warmer 'Dad.' Jesus' entire life's message was making God intimate to us in His person and in His message."

According to Father Palackal, the more formal change in the prayer occurred when the Scriptures were translated into Greek and Latin, using the word "Pater," which means "father," and ultimately into the English translation as we know it.

Before his arrival at St. Margaret, Father Palackal served for 23 years as parochial vicar for St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Maspeth. He is the senior founder of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, a monastic order that works to preserve traditions of Indian Christianity, and founder-president of the Christian Musicological Society of India.

Father Palackal is also the lead singer on more than 40 albums released in five languages, including English, Malayalam, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Syriac.

In 1979, he released his first albums, "Christian Bhajans," in Malayalam, a language native to India, and "Qambel Maran: Syriac Chants from South India," which was the first commercial CD of Syriac chants. Both albums are landmark recordings in the history of Christian music in India.

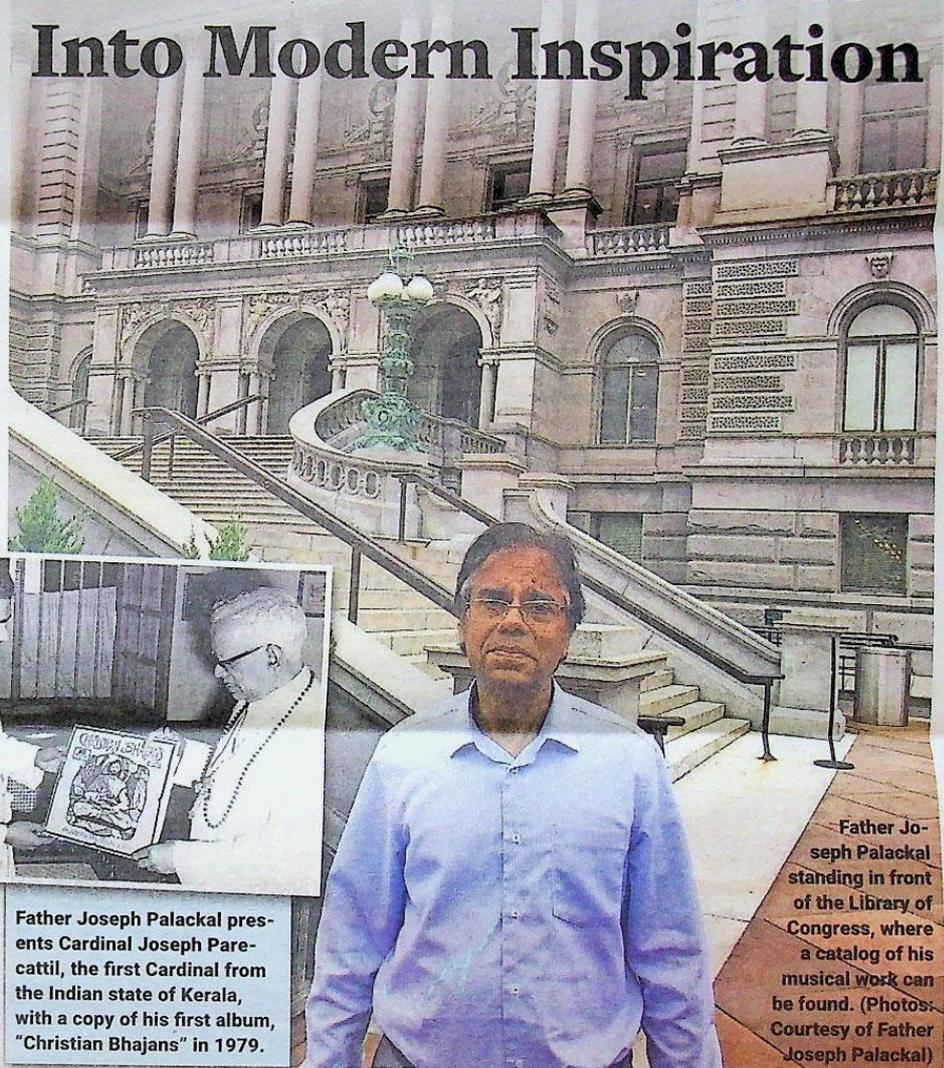
Father Palackal was known as a talented singer in his hometown in India and started singing in his local church as a young boy. The liturgy was still in Syriac at that time, and he grew up singing Aramaic chants before Vatican II.

In 1965, Father Palackal entered the seminary and still occasionally sang in Aramaic before it faded away. He then studied Raga, a style of Indian classical singing, which evolved into his first album. He called it "a very choral, audacious movement for the 70s." After completing his studies in classical music in India, he came to New York to pursue graduate degrees.

This led Father Palackal to return to India and conduct fieldwork collecting melodies from older priests from his congregation that would ultimately become the basis for his second album, "Qambel Maran."

"We chose 29 melodies for the CD, which is a precious goldmine of gems with some of those melodies existing only on

Queens Parochial Vicar Turns Older Melodies Into Modern Inspiration



Father Joseph Palackal standing in front of the Library of Congress, where a catalog of his musical work can be found. (Photos: Courtesy of Father Joseph Palackal)

Father Joseph Palackal presents Cardinal Joseph Parecattil, the first Cardinal from the Indian state of Kerala, with a copy of his first album, "Christian Bhajans" in 1979.

that album, and they are so unique, and you might say precursors to Gregorian chants," explained Father Palackal.

The album was released in the Netherlands and brought him world acclaim, leading to a library of rare recordings, "opening the world's eyes to the fact that India is also a Christian country with an ancient Christian heritage."

Today, Father Palackal's works can be found in the Library of Congress, Harvard University Library, the British Library, and the New York City Public Library for the Performing Arts. And he is currently completing his new book, "Syriac Chants in South India: Toward Remapping the Musical Geography of a Country."

To preserve those melodies, he embarked on what he called the "Aramaic Project," in which he began compiling a digital library to document anything related to Aramaic chants in India, a project that continues today. He still maintains an of-

fice in India, which he visits in the summer and writes articles about the chants.

At St. Margaret, he has introduced the children to Maranatha, an Aramaic phrase meaning "Our Lord has come" or "Come Lord Jesus," by creating a simple melody for it. He also incorporated a chant for the creed in Aramaic to help keep the language alive.

He admits that his goal is to pique people's curiosity about the language of Jesus.

"I wish to keep the mother tongue of Jesus alive to enrich their prayer life," added Father Palackal. "St. John Paul II very accurately said that 'the Church has to breathe with three lungs, not just Greek and Latin but also Aramaic,' because there is something special about that."

"My hope is to instill in people a curiosity for tradition and to not let the language of Jesus die."

 MARCH for LIFE

Vance to Address March for Life Rally In Person, Trump To Speak Via Video

(OSV) — Vice President JD Vance is expected to address the 53rd annual March for Life in Washington on Jan. 23, organizers of the event said on Jan. 16.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Vice President Vance back to the March for Life this year,” Jennie Bradley Lichter, president of the March for Life, said in a statement. “We are honored that he will join us in standing up for the unborn alongside our marchers from all over the country.”

President Donald Trump told reporters at the White House on Jan. 16 that he recorded a video message for the event.

“I just taped a beautiful piece for them, and they’re going to play it,” Trump said.

Just days after taking the oath of office last January, Vance spoke at the 2025 March for Life rally. In his remarks, Vance said, “The task of our movement is to protect innocent life. It’s to defend the unborn, and it’s also to be pro-family and pro-life in the fullest sense of that word possible.”

“I want more babies in the United States

of America,” Vance added. He argued that addressing cost-of-living concerns would be part of this approach.

“We need a culture that celebrates life at all stages, one that recognizes and truly believes that the benchmark of national success is not our GDP number or our stock market, but whether people feel that they can raise thriving and healthy families in our country,” Vance said at the time.

The 2026 event comes shortly after Trump told House Republicans in a Jan. 6 speech to be “flexible” on the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits public funding of elective abortions, in negotiations on health care subsidies — to the disappointment of pro-life groups that support that policy.

The annual March for Life, which calls itself the “largest annual human rights demonstration in the world,” takes place on or around the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which previously legalized abortion nationwide. This year’s event marks the fourth march since the high court overturned *Roe* and related abortion precedent in its 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., and Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., are also among those scheduled to speak at the rally.

Holiday ‘Darty’ Starts a New Holiday Tradition

Continued from page 2

grounding and direction among that pressure.

The Mass concluded with a Eucharistic procession, inviting students to bring their intentions and struggles to Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament.

For many of us, it was a moment of stillness and clarity, something rare in the often hectic rhythm of college life.

As a sacristan, I had the privilege of helping with the liturgy, made especially meaningful by seeing nearly 100 attendees under 25 fill the church.

In my years of service, I am more accustomed to older congregations.

That evening, the youthful energy was unmistakable.

Following the Mass, the parish hospitality team hosted the Holiday Darty reception.

Food, drinks, conversation, and laughter filled the space as friends reconnected and new conversations began.

Living in a town where your parish brings people together, where you can run into friends you haven’t seen in

months, and still center the night on Mass and faith is something truly special.

Having a place where faith, friendship, and belonging intersect so naturally is something many young Catholics long for.

The success of the Holiday Darty demonstrated what is possible when parishes meet young adults where they are, without compromising the centrality of the Eucharist.

It was not only an event, but a model, one that shows how intentional outreach can remind young people that the Church is not something they outgrow, but a community that begins with them and grows alongside them.

This is something worth continuing, expanding, and celebrating, not only at St. Francis de Sales but throughout the wider Church.

With gratitude to the parish and all who helped make the Holiday Darty possible, we already look forward to the second annual one in 2027.

Brendan Mullen is a sophomore at the Catholic University of America.

HOME EQUITY CONVERSION MORTGAGE

If you are age 62+, a reverse mortgage loan can help you convert a portion of your home equity into cash!

Contact me for a FREE, no-obligation, & honest in home consultation!



Hank McManus

HECM Vice President,
NMLS# 148143
St. Francis Xavier Parishioner
Phone: 917-539-1623
Email: hmcmanus@thefederalsavingsbank.com

THE FEDERAL SAVINGS BANK



Copyright 2020 © The Federal Savings Bank | Co. NMLS# 411500
All Rights Reserved | TheFederalSavingsBank.com



**A digital archive of Christian Art, Books,
Manuscripts & Manuals, Imagery Literature and Music.**

Support Our Ongoing Projects

- Marggam Digital Library of Christianity in India.
- Aramaic Project - Reclaim Syriac to Reaffirm Identity.
 - Encyclopedia of Syriac Chants.
 - Resources for Researchers.
 - Directory of Christian Songs.
- Christian Arts / Music Iconography.



**C H R I S T I A N
MUSICOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF INDIA**

www.TheCMSIndia.org

An international forum for interdisciplinary discussion, and dissemination of
knowledge, on Art, Literature and Music of about
thirty million Christians in India