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KERALA

## Mass in East Syriac a throwback to days of yore

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A rare Mass in East Syriac in progress at the old St. George's Church at Edappally on Thursday.

### Father Cyril Thayil, a young language enthusiast, takes the lead

The drum resounds through St. George's Church, Edappally, as those attending the day's Mass at the old church gather in silence. The sanctuary, holy of holies, is all lit up and the windows bring in the low morning light on an overcast day. Father Cyril Thayil looks eager as he gets ready to offer the rare Mass in East Syriac at the church, which is into the annual feast of St. George.

The music and the liturgy appear right out of West Asia. The triangle (thiriyankol), drum (dammanam made of animal hide), and the fiddle add to the solemnity of the occasion as the priest reaches the altar.



The whole rubric is followed in East Syriac, a dialect that developed out of Aramaic with little influence from other neighbouring languages in West Asia, says Father Thayil, a young language enthusiast, who wants to see at least parts of the old traditions live into the future.

Just as Latin and Greek masses have faded into history in most parts of India, the East Syriac Mass too has given way to new traditions and practices, says Father Thayil, who learnt the language out of his love for the tradition.

Church historians generally agree that St. Thomas Christians in **Kerala**, who claim the lineage of St. Thomas the Apostle, had been following the East Syriac liturgy in their churches till the Synod of Diamper in 1599. Many believe that the Mass had been celebrated here in the East Syriac dialect in those days. But all that changed with the arrival of the Portuguese. However, it could be reintroduced here after the second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

A young Catholic said the Mass in East Syriac had following in some of the Syrian Catholic dioceses in Kerala. The Mass on Wednesday was a great experience, he added.

Joseph Karukappally said it was a good experience to attend the Mass in East Syriac, which is said only occasionally. The Mass was part of the celebration of the St. George's feast at the church, under the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Father Thayil said the Mass reflected a time when a lot of people from different backgrounds joined the Church. The Mass was participatory rather than celebrant-centric, he added

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/mass-in-east-syriac-a-throwback-to-days-of-yore/article27016412.ece>