**SPEECH**

**FOR**

**TONY AMBALATHINGAL**

Hello everyone!!! All of us here at St. Thomas Church are thrilled to be with all of you, as one entity… one family… united in giving thanks and celebrating the importance of faith and the joy that is felt in gathering and consecrating our beautiful new church. As you can imagine, today is a great, wonderful milestone for our congregation and the importance of vision, perseverance, working together, and strengthening our community has never been more evident than it is as we come together here, in this incredible, beautiful, new sanctuary.

As well as Saint Thomas himself cherished his beliefs and worked diligently to carry the word of God to all he might be able to reach, so has our congregation recognized the importance of providing a true sanctuary and structure to all who feel the calling to be embraced by faith. This parish was established back in 2009 with the singular mission to unite our community and here we are in 2023, continuing to share that faith, witness our expansion, and find peace and solace in the words and deeds of our patron saint, Thomas.

In all we do, we are guided by many spiritual inspirations and examples. Saint Thomas himself taught us, “Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do.” Today’s gathering and consecration beautifully exemplify and bring to life the words of this great man. We come together to study, express, and inspire with our beliefs, we join forces to expand our joy and share our revelations, and today, we come together as proof and acknowledgement that we knew what was needed and wanted…. how to honor, include, and expand our very special community.

As I have been going through the moments and processes that brought us to this wonderful celebration, and as I marvel at the heart, soul, time, and encouragement that we’ve all shared to build this very special expression of our faith and connection, I am filled with gratitude for all who have contributed their time, strength, wisdom, and heart into the building of our new home. As I look around, I am inspired by every brick, every nail, every piece of wood, that has gone into the building of this church, and I cannot help but think that each component represents a piece of **YOU**. There are so many people to thank and so many essential and critical parts of this congregation, that I am reminded of the layers of intricacy and care it took to put this together. While a simple nail is just that, when it is joined by other materials and mixed with just the right amount of muscle, strength, and know how…. a beautiful, communal expression of faith emerges…. And just as I wish I could thank every piece of masonry that went into creating this structure, it was all the people…. the clergy, the bishops, the community, the Mayor, the city officials, the workers, the volunteers, the children…. **ALL** of you are responsible for building this congregation and church. **ALL** of you have my most sincere appreciation and thanks for your support in having our dream… our vision… come true.

Saint Thomas also said, “Happiness is secured through virtue; it is a good attained by man’s own will.” I can think of no better person to exemplify this than our Vicar, FR. Ligory P. Kattiakaran. Father, thank you for guiding us through the steps we all took to arrive at today’s great moment. Because we were all able to come together to create and construct this, our new home of worship, we have increased our ability to learn, to inspire, and to spread the word and faith that has brought us so much comfort and solace.

I am proud to be a trustee of this wonderful congregation and have been for two years, but as most of you know, I have been a part of this congregation since the beginning. I have observed the growth…. as well as some growing pains…. that have contributed to where we are today. I remember starting this congregation with a few families, then a few dozen, the a few hundred…. and as we look toward the future, and as I see what our collective strength has inspired and built, I **KNOW** that our mission will be secure for future generations. I mentioned the children earlier. I want to acknowledge their presence here today, and the joy and wonder they allow us to experience through their eyes. We build… we expand… we plan for the future for **THEM**. We do it as our expression of commitment to the quality of their lives and to inspire them to build and share their own faith.

When I think of the children, I think of my own family and what it was like back in 2009 when this all started. I have many memories of those early days, but most importantly, I remember \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**fill in a memory of yours).** I remember how it felt being a part of creating and growing something bigger than myself, something that inspires me… and others… to find strength in community and hope in faith, and I look around in awe at what we have accomplished. Then I remind myself that this…. just as it was back in 2009, is only the beginning. Life is a never ending cycle of beginnings and today, this is truly an incredible one.

Thank you all!!