



ORTHODOX SYRIAN
SUNDAY SCHOOL
ASSOCIATION

Diocese of UK, Europe and Africa

C A T E G O R Y | I N T R O D U C T I O N



Made in His Image
GRADE 3

ORTHODOX SYRIAN
SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
OF THE EAST



**Made in His Image
Grade 3**

Category
Introduction

2024

OSSAE : DIOCESE OF UK, EUROPE & AFRICA

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON SERIES - 3

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The Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church

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First Edition : January 2024

Printed in the United Kingdom
For Private Circulation only

FOREWORD



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No. E-015/AMS/2024

11 January 2024

FOREWORD

As we embrace the dawning of a new era in the Sunday School of our Diocese, it is with profound gratitude and joy that we introduce the newly launched textbooks. This milestone is not merely a culmination of efforts but a new beginning, charting a course for faith-filled learning.

Special recognition is due to the Director and the team of dedicated authors of the Diocese of Southwest America of our Church who have tirelessly woven this tapestry of knowledge and devotion. Their commitment to creating a curriculum that speaks to the heart of our tradition is truly commendable.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos and His Grace Thomas Mar Ivanios, our Metropolitans, whose blessings and guidance have been the bedrock of this endeavor. Their spiritual leadership has been a guiding light throughout this year-long journey of preparation and transition.

Our teachers, those steadfast beacons of knowledge, deserve a resounding acknowledgment for their adaptability and perseverance, ensuring a smooth transition to this new curriculum. Their dedication to the spiritual growth of our youth is a testament to their faith and love for the church.

In line with the Apostle Paul's exhortation in Titus 1:9 (NRSV), "He must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it," we recognize the pivotal role of sound teaching in nurturing faith. This verse echoes the mission of our Sunday School to steadfastly impart the truth of the Gospel, fostering a resilient and enlightened community of faith.

To the teachers and students embarking on this sacred educational journey, may you be filled with enthusiasm and wisdom. May your hearts and minds be fertile grounds for the seeds of divine knowledge to flourish.

The significance of the Sunday School in our community cannot be overstated. It is here that the foundations of faith are laid, where the stories and teachings of our church come to life, and where the future guardians of Orthodoxy begin their spiritual journey.

A special word of gratitude is extended to Fr. Anoop M. Abraham, Vice President of the Sunday School for the Diocese. His leadership, along with the director, curriculum coordinator, secretary & joint secretary, reviewers, trainers, and all team members, has been instrumental in bringing this vision to fruition.

As we conclude, let us move forward in the spirit of Orthodox tradition, with hope and prayer that these textbooks serve not only as vessels of knowledge but also as lanterns lighting the path towards spiritual maturity and devotion.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

+ Metropolitan Abraham Stephanos

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Glory to the Triune God!

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed towards the development of this Orthodox Sunday school textbook for the new curriculum. It has been a long and challenging journey but with the help and support of many individuals and organizations, we have finally reached this milestone.

First and foremost, I would like to thank our Diocesan Metropolitan H G Abraham Mar Stephanos for His Grace's tireless effort to reform our Sunday School to meet the needs of our future generation by implementing the new curriculum and heartfelt gratitude to all the officials and key personalities of Northeast and Southwest American Diocesan Sunday Schools who are the backbone of this new curriculum and Talmido.

Great appreciation to all the curriculum development committee members of our diocese for their selfless efforts in editing a comprehensive and relevant textbook that caters to the spiritual needs of our Sunday School students. Your dedication, expertise, and commitment to the project were crucial in bringing this book to fruition. Special thanks to the clergy members of our diocese who generously shared their knowledge, wisdom, and experiences in shaping the lessons and activities in this book. Your input has helped to create a well-rounded curriculum that reflects the teachings and traditions of our Orthodox Faith.

I am also grateful to the head teachers and teachers who took the time to review and provide valuable feedback on the content and structure of the textbook. Your insights and suggestions have greatly enhanced the quality of the material and have made it more engaging and accessible to our young learners.

I would also like to acknowledge the role of Holy Episcopal Synod and OSSAE officials for their unwavering support and encouragement towards this new curriculum. It is with their guidance and vision that we were able to compile a textbook that aligns with the goals and objectives of our Holy Church and Diocesan Sunday School education.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the students who will be using this textbook. Your enthusiasm and eagerness to learn about our faith is what motivates us to continue improving and developing resources for your spiritual growth.

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has been a part of this journey and has contributed in any way towards the creation of this Orthodox Sunday school textbook. May it serve as a valuable resource for many generations to come and may it inspire and nurture the faith of our young Orthodox students. Thank you all for your support and dedication.

Fr Anoop Abraham Malayil
Vice-President OSSAE – UK Europe and Africa

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Theosis - God In Us

How can we be more like God? Let's learn more about the Holy Qurbana and how the Church helps us to grow.

Vocabulary Words

Theosis Becoming like God; this is also called "Deification".

Dptychs These are intercessory prayers, and six of them are read during the Holy Qurbana. This is also called "Thubdens".

Salvation Jesus has protected us, saved us from death by His Resurrection and given us new life with God forever



Becoming Like God

Have you ever noticed that you become like a person when you spend more time with them? Or if you watch someone on TV or in the movies a lot, do you begin to be able to talk and act like them?

How we spend our time is important because we do begin to imitate or copy what they are doing. As Christians, who should we spend the most time with?

The more we spend time with God, the more we become like God! We believe Jesus is God, so what this means is that the more we become like Jesus, the more we talk to Him, read about Him, think about Him, and spend time with His people, the more and more we become like Him.

The church teaches us about Jesus so

we can grow spiritually. All the saints of the Church had the same teaching, the same prayers, and the same examples. They are just like us, but they chose to spend a lot of time being disciples of Christ. To become like Him, all we need to do is follow the church's teachings. We obey God's commandments, go to church, and worship Him.

The Greek word "theos" means "God." "**Theosis**" means "becoming like God" (or becoming God) and is also known as **deification**. We grow by being disciples of Christ and learning how He loves others.

Becoming like Christ is the process of enjoying our **salvation**. Everyone has been saved by Christ because God loves everyone! He desires all to be with Him



The ladder of divine ascent icon

and enjoy eternal life. But to do so, we must be holy and pure, like God. This is what we constantly work for, and it is not easy. The Church helps us through the sacraments and shares with us examples of the lives of the saints.

Remember

The church reminds us and helps us live the life of Christ, through feasts, fasts and sacraments; especially Holy Qurbana



When we are young, we copy our parents. As we grow older, we start to imitate our friends, super heroes, athletes, and celebrities. We do this so that we can become like them. We become Christians through baptism, so instead of looking at other people around us, we should look to Christ as the perfect and ultimate model of how we should think, act, and behave.

The Importance of Holy Qurbana

Learning Outcome Check

Liturgy is the *joyful work of the people*. Together we prepare to join in communion with our Lord.



The Church gives us a very special gift in the Sacrament of **Holy Qurbana**. Only inside the Church can we receive

the Body and Blood of Jesus within us, which helps us grow into His holiness.

This is why the Holy Qurbana (also called the Divine Liturgy) is the "work of the people". Everyone works and prays together to make the miracle happen! We come together to join in communion with our Lord.

Think

What are some other responses you can think of?



Did you know that a prayer of the priest is not complete until the people say "Amin"? This is why it is important to respond and participate. We should not keep quiet, and even if the language of the Holy Qurbana is one we do not know, we can at least say the common responses like "Kurielieson" and "Amin".

Our Saints and Church Fathers

All saints have acquired this holiness. St. Irenaeus wrote that God the Father uses His two hands - Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit - to mould people into His image. When someone lives his or her life as an example of this transformation, he or she is called a saint.

Some saints are called "Church Fathers" because they have written and taught us about the teachings of Jesus Christ. In ancient days, women were not taught how to write, and that is why we usually call these saints "fathers".

But there were both men and women who taught us the truth, and the church kept these teachings and did not change. In the Fifth Thubden, we remember all these saints (both men and women) even though they are not named - "Let us remember all those who before them, and with them, and after them, have kept, entrusted, and delivered to us the one genuine and uncorrupted faith. May their prayers be a refuge for us!"

This particular Thubden does introduce us to some very important saints, including St. Cyril and St. Severus. There are saints of the common church in the first few hundred years after Christ ascended, like St. Ignatius and St. Athanasius, and saints who are dear to the Oriental Church, such as St. Dioscorus and St. Jacob Burdono. There are also Saints of India mentioned (St. Yeldo Mar Baselios, St. Gregorios of Parumala, and St. Divanasios of Vattasseril).

St. Paul encourages us to imitate Him just as he also imitates Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). In the same way, when we imitate any of these saints, we become more like Christ.

St. Athanasius wrote, "He became man that we might become divine." In other words, God became man through Jesus so that we may become like Him. There are so many saints whose lives are available for us to learn, such as St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, and St. Ephrem. Their lives and their teachings give us an example of how to be holy.

Learning Outcome Check

Who are some of the important fathers mentioned in the fifth Thubden (diptych) that we learn about in this lesson?

Theosis

We first read about **theosis**, when God created in the image and likeness of God (**Genesis 1:26**). This means that everyone has been blessed with the potential to become like God.

Being "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (**St. Matthew 5:48**) is a difficult thing to do. This is why we always pray, "Kurielaison" or "Lord, have mercy."

We pray to God that we should continue to grow in the process of becoming like God. The Church is always there to help us, and through it, we can receive the tools we need to help us grow into God's holiness.

Holy Qurbana is very special, as we come together as one family in the Church. The priest and those in the Holy Altar lead many of these special prayers and songs, but it is important to remember that all of us are singing and praying as if we are One Body.

Our family includes the living who are there with us physically and all the departed, including your relatives and the Saints! **Holy Qurbana** is truly the "work



Creation of Adam and Eve

of the people.” It is one of the most holy and special moments in our lives when we are together with all the saints—those who have died and those who are alive. This is a happy moment!

Together, we are the body of Christ.

Remember

Together, everyone becomes the body of Christ.



Reflection Questions

1. Look at the Fifth Thubden and find the names of one Church father who is described. How is he described?
2. How would you define **theosis**?
3. How many Thubdens are there in Holy Qurbana? Who are we praying for in each of them?

Trusting in God

Christian life is about one's relationship with God. This relationship is based on love because God first loved us. We need to TRUST our loving Heavenly Father. Through the stories of the judge and prophetess Deborah, of the paralytic and his friends, and of St. Peter, this lesson shows us why we should obey and put our faith and TRUST in God. God's plan and promises are fulfilled when we do His will.

Vocabulary Words

Sin When we do something that we know is wrong or not pleasing to God

Disunion In the Church, this means to no longer be in communion. This is due to sin and our actions to turn away from God.

Judge Ruler sent by God during the Old Testament times to help and guide the Israelites

Bible Verse

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose

Romans 8:28

Being a Christian means to love and place our trust in God. When we say that we “believe” in God, we mean that we trust Him with our lives, even when everything seems to be going wrong! Our trust is that God loves us and wants the best for us.

But sometimes it may be hard to see

or understand that because life gets hard. Our trust will be tested, and although we may not understand why, we must remain faithful to God and know that His plan for us is beyond our own understanding.

Isaiah 55: 8-9 says: “For My counsels are not as your counsels, neither are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. But as heaven is distant from the earth, so is My way distant from your ways and your thoughts from My mind”.

This verse tells us that God’s thoughts are far beyond our own. Our challenge is to trust and have faith in God, even when we don’t understand!

Remember

Our trust will be tested and although we may not understand why, we must remain faithful to God and know that His plan for us is beyond our own understanding.



What makes trusting God so hard is **sin**. Sin is when we turn away from God and try to figure things out on our own. We are no longer in union with God (**disunion**).

Sin makes us doubt God and His plan, so our trust in Him is broken and our relationship with Him is shaken. However, we have some great examples in the Bible of people trusting in God. Let's take a look at three stories in the Bible and see how trusting in God was the answer.

Learning Outcome Check

Sin is when we do something that we know is wrong or not pleasing to God.



Deborah

(Judges 4-5)

The people of Israel had turned away from God and done evil things. In order to correct them and turn Israel back to Him, God punished the Israelites by sending enemies against them. One

of the enemies was King Jabin, who was from the city of Canaan. He oppressed the Israelites and turned them into slaves.



St. Deborah

The Israelites cried out to God, and He heard their prayers for help. He called on a special woman named Deborah to save Israel. She was a **prophetess** (female prophet) who listened to God. She obeyed him and led the Israelites as a **judge**.

According to God's command, Deborah called a man named Barak and told him that he should go and fight against Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army. Barak said to Deborah, "*If you will go with me, I will go.*" Barak and Deborah, together, set out for war.

Both Deborah and Barak met the enemy, Sisera, at Mount Tabor. After a difficult battle, the Israelites finally won against Sisera's army.

Because Deborah listened to God and trusted in Him, she was able to save all



Healing of the paralytic

the Israelites from slavery.

Jesus Heals a Paralysed Man

(St. Matthew 9:1-8; St. Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus arrived in the city of Capernaum, and many of the people who lived there were very excited to meet him. Jesus' lessons were so powerful that a great crowd followed him everywhere.

One day, Jesus was preaching to the people inside a home. The home was so full of people wanting to hear His

words that some even stood outside to hear them through the door!

Outside the home, there was a man who wanted to see Jesus but was unable to because he was paralysed. The only way that this man could move around was with the help of his four friends, who carried him on a pallet. Because the house was so full and the crowd was so large, they could not enter through the door to meet him. His friends had great faith and trust in Jesus and knew that He could heal him. Because of their strong faith, they decided to do something very

difficult...enter through the roof!

The friends carried him above the house, made an opening in the roof, and lowered him down in front of Jesus. Jesus was amazed by the great faith and trust of the paralytic man and his four friends. They proved their faith by working so hard to get close to him.

Jesus not only forgives the man's sins, but He then heals the man of his ailment. The paralysed man was able to walk again!

In this story, the paralytic had a very difficult life. It would have been very easy to be angry at God and others. We also see the great love and faith of his friends, who helped him even by breaking the roof because they knew Jesus would heal the friend. This is a wonderful story of how we can choose to trust God and be healed because of our faith.

Do not be afraid!

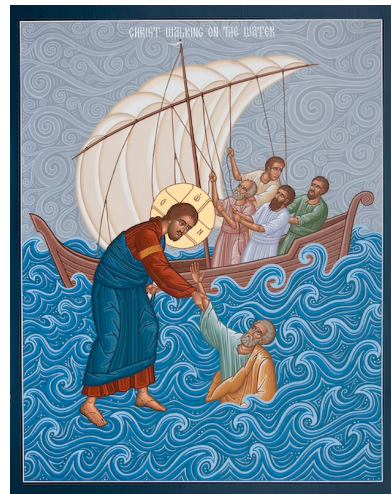
(St. Matthew 14:22-33)

After Jesus performs the miracle of feeding the 5000, Jesus goes off to pray on his own on a mountain. The disciples were on a boat in the middle of the sea, keeping watch during the night. The weather was bad and the sea was rough, so the boat kept being tossed around.

Jesus, after finishing his prayers, approached the disciples by walking on the water. The disciples didn't know who it was because it was night; they thought Jesus was a ghost!

When He called out to the disciples, Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water". When Jesus told him to come, Peter stepped out onto the water and started walking on the water as well!

Peter then turned his eyes away from Jesus and noticed how choppy the water was and how loud the wind was blowing. He became afraid, and he lost faith. Instead of keeping his eyes on Christ, he focused on the strong winds and raging waters and started to sink. He then cried out and said "Lord, save me!". Jesus then reached out, pulled him out of the water, and asked Peter why he doubted.



Jesus walks on water

This story starts with trust; Peter walks onto the water to meet Christ with trust. But because he turned away from Jesus and started noticing all the problems

around him, he forgot to trust that God was with him. His fear took control, and he fell into the water.

Remember

When life feels unfair or gets hard, instead of turning away, keep your heart, mind, and body turned towards Christ.



If he had simply kept his eyes on Christ, his faith would not have been shaken, and he wouldn't have fallen into

the water!

Trust in God is a big theme in many of the Bible stories. The Israelites turn away from God and get themselves into trouble.

Turning away from God is sin, and it is because of sin that we lose faith. The stories in this lesson show how trusting in God always brings us closer to Him and to others. Next time, when life feels unfair or gets hard, instead of turning away from Christ, keep your heart, mind, and body turned towards him. This is how we avoid sin and prove our faith and trust in Him!

Reflection Questions

1. Read Psalm 22 in the Orthodox Study Bible (Psalm 23 in other Bibles). How can thinking of God as our shepherd help us not be tempted by sin and evil?
2. How can sin hurt not only us but also our friends, family, or neighbours?
3. Write down the names of some people in your life and pray for them today. How will this help them in the way the friends of the paralytic man helped?

The World to Come

Jesus Christ will come again in great glory and judge everyone. By trusting in God, we can have a wonderful new life in His Kingdom.

Vocabulary Words

Second Coming We believe that Jesus Christ will come back in great glory and judge everyone (living and dead).

Final Judgment Jesus is the only one who will determine who has lived a life of obedience and who has not. This is not a punishment, as we have the choice and freedom to choose how we want to live. Jesus has taught us everything and given us the best example in His life of how to live according to God's commandments.

Consequence This is the result or outcome of our actions. This outcome can be good or bad, depending on whether our actions were good or bad.



Christ taught people about God's Kingdom using parables. A parable is a story that is used to teach and make things easy to understand.

Parable of the Sower

In this parable (**St. Matthew 13:3-23**), a sower went out to sow seeds in his field.

As he sowed seeds, some fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them. Some fell on the rocky ground, where there was very little soil. The plants sprang up quickly but soon withered and died because the roots were not strong. Some seeds fell among thorns, and the

thorns choked the plants as they grew. Some seeds fell on good soil, and the plants grew!

The seed is the Word of God. Those who hear the message from the Son of God, Christ, about the Kingdom of God but don't understand are like the seeds that fell on the path.

For some people, the message will not last. These people are like the seeds that fell on the rocky ground; when trouble comes, the words will be forgotten. The seeds that fell among thorns stand for those who hear the message but worry about troubles in their daily lives. These thoughts choke the message of the King-

dom of God, and it cannot bear fruit. The seeds that fell on good soil represent those who hear the message and understand it. These people bear plenty of fruit. We should try to understand the Word of God with great care; it must go deep into our hearts.



Parable of the Sower

In order to understand the Word of God, we have to remove the evil thoughts from our minds. Then, we will be able to produce good fruits like the seeds that fell in the good soil. When we do this, we can be useful to our family, our church, and the people we see throughout our lives.

What Is The Kingdom of God?

In the Nicene Creed, we proclaim that we look for "new life in the world to come". This is the life after the Second Coming of Christ, and it is one where everyone lives forever with God.

Learning Outcome Check

Christ will come again. This is known as the second coming.

The Kingdom of God is when we are with God, and we know God is with us now. So we have the Kingdom of God with us today - it is inside us as we are baptised, it is at Church when we are with God and in Holy Communion, and it is everywhere as God is everywhere.

Learning Outcome Check

Final Judgement is not a punishment but rather the consequence of our sinfulness and refusal to go back to God.

But something special happens when Christ comes, as the Kingdom of God will be for everyone forever. There is a judgement, but this is not punishment. Instead, if we choose to love God and obey His commandments, the **consequence** will be that we will be forever in joy with Him. For others who choose to

disobey and sin, the consequences will not be good.

This is difficult to understand, so Jesus taught us in parables about this as well! Jesus talked about seeds again to help us understand (**St. Matthew 13:24-30; St. Matthew 13:47-50**).

There was a man who sowed or planted good wheat seeds in his field. But one night, an enemy sowed weeds among the good seeds. The servants told the man that there were plenty of weeds in the field. But the man said to let the weeds and the wheat grow together until harvest. During the harvest, the weeds will be bundled up and burned, and the wheat will be gathered and put in the barn.

Jesus used this parable to explain that God loves everyone and wants everyone to be like the seed that fell on good soil in the first parable and like the wheat in the second. It is up to us to be the good soil or the bad, to be the wheat or the weed. It is our choice, and the consequence comes from our choice.

Learning Outcome Check

Final Judgement is for the living and the departed.

At the Second Coming, God will be here for everyone, including those who have died before! At the end of the world, God will send angels to defeat all evil, and once destroyed, only good will

shine in the Kingdom of God like the sun.

We are the children of God, and when we are baptised, we enter the Kingdom of God. Satan will always try to pull us away from God. But we must stay faithful and pray, as we know Christ will come again. Christ is Almighty, and there is no chance that Satan will overcome His strength.

Learning Outcome Check

When Christ comes again The Final Judgement occurs.

We know what will happen, and we know there will be a final judgement when the Second Coming happens, as the Kingdom of God will be eternal. This is what we mean when we say a new life in the world to come.

This separation, or the final judgement, is not a punishment but is the outcome of our choices. This is how the seed of the Kingdom of God grows in us.

Remember

Jesus wants each of us to have a place in the Kingdom of God.

If the seed grows, we will enjoy being in the Kingdom of God forever.

The Gospel reading for the Sunday of the Faithful Departed is **St. Luke 12:32-39** and begins, "Fear not, little flock, for

it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

The Second Coming and Final Judgment are scary. But with hope in the Resurrection and trusting that God is Love, we follow His commandments and grow to become like Christ so we can be with Him in Paradise.

Remember

Our God is a loving God and will never reject us, His children, for our shortcomings. He will wait for us to repent and return to Him.



Reflection Questions

1. Is the final judgement a punishment or a consequence of our actions?
2. Name two types of soil from the parable of the sower. What happened to the seed that fell there?
3. What did Christ say about the Final Judgement in **Matthew 25:31-46**?


Jonah and God's Loving Kindness

Jonah didn't listen to God and had to deal with a consequence. But the story also teaches us something special about Jesus!

Vocabulary Words

Hades Also known as Sheol. This is the place before the Resurrection, where people who died were waiting. Everyone who died in the Old Testament stories waited for Christ in Hades.

Resurrection Jesus Christ coming back to life after He died on the Cross. The Resurrection is how God defeated death!

Repentance To feel sincere sorrow or regret for committing a sin. Repentance involves seeking forgiveness from God and making efforts to correct one's actions. 

Jonah runs away from God

God asked his prophet Jonah to go and tell the people in a city called Nineveh about him. God knew that the people in Nineveh were doing bad things and sinning, and He wanted Jonah to help them change.

But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because he thought the people were really bad. So instead, he tried to run away from God by getting on a boat that was going to a different city called Tarshish.

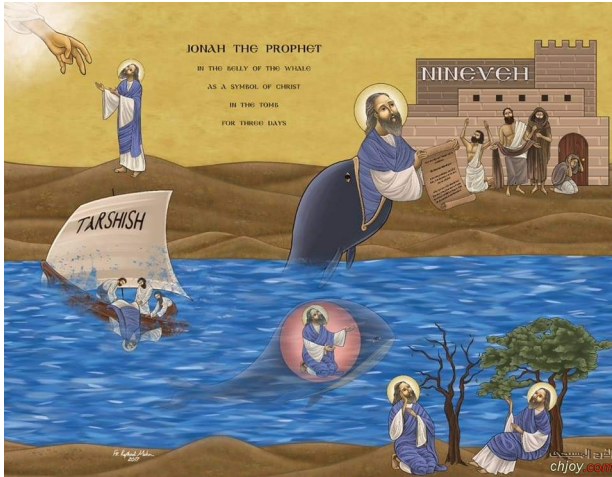
God knew Jonah did this and was sad. While Jonah was asleep on the boat, he sent a big storm with heavy rain and

strong winds that almost wrecked the boat.

The sailors on the boat got scared and started praying to their own gods for help. They even threw some things off the boat to make it lighter, but nothing worked. The storm was too strong.

The captain woke up Jonah and told him to pray to his God too, hoping that He could help them. But the storm didn't stop.

The sailors thought that maybe one of them had done something to make God angry and cause the storm. So they came up with a way to figure out who was to



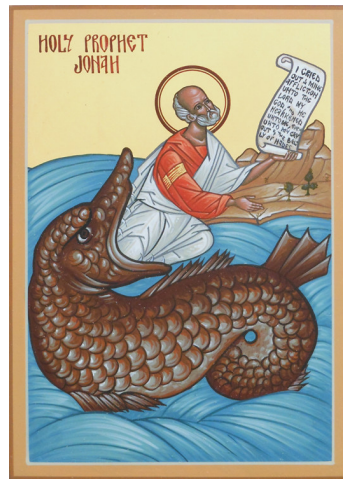
Jonah's story

blame. They shook some stones in a bag, out onto dry land, and the person the black stone landed on would be guilty.

Guess what? The black stone landed on Jonah! They asked him why this was happening, and Jonah admitted that he was running away from God because he didn't want to do what God asked.

Jonah knew that the storm was all his fault, so he told the sailors to throw him into the sea. As soon as they did, the storm immediately stopped. The sailors were amazed and started praying to Jonah's God because they saw that He was very powerful. They also thanked him for saving them from the storm.

Jonah, on the other hand, was swallowed by a big fish that God sent to save him. He stayed inside the fish for three days before God made the fish spit him



Holy prophet Jonah

Jonah's Repentance

Jonah was inside a big fish for three whole days and nights. During that time, he prayed to God and said sorry for what he had done. He promised God that he would never run away again. Jonah decided to go to Nineveh, like God had asked him to do.

After the third day, God saw that Jonah really meant what he said and wanted to change. So, God made the fish spit Jonah out onto the land.

Jonah went to Nineveh and talked to the people there. He told them that if they kept doing bad things and not listening to God, Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days. The people believed Jonah, and they all started praying and not eating for forty days. Even the animals and the king of Nineveh joined in! They asked God to forgive them and not destroy their city.

When God saw that the people of Nineveh had listened to Jonah and changed their ways, he was happy.

Jonah's Consequence

The great fish swallowing Jonah was not a punishment, but rather, it is the result of his actions, which is a consequence.

Here is an example of a consequence. When you wake up late for school and take too long to get dressed, you will be late for the school bus, and you will get a late slip. Getting the late slip is not your punishment, but it is the consequence of you being late for school.

Similarly, because Jonah had tried running away from God's commands, he later got swallowed by a big fish and stayed inside for three days and three nights. Being swallowed by the fish was the consequence of his actions, or disunion with God.

Think

What are some other examples of consequences you can think of?





The resurrection icon

Jonah and Jesus

“**Three days**” is important in the Bible, as we see it being mentioned in many places. In **St. Matthew 12:40**, Jesus says, “For just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, the Son of Man will also be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights

too.”

It happened exactly as Jesus had mentioned. We remember Jesus’ crucifixion on **Good Friday**. Because Jesus had never sinned, He overcame death on the third day, and death could not hold Him. Death only comes to those who sin. We remember Jesus’ resurrection, or coming back from the dead, on the **Sunday of**

Resurrection.

Learning Outcome Check

Jesus defeated death because He did not sin.

However, Jesus did not just disappear in those three days. On **Holy Saturday** (the day before the **Sunday of Resurrection**), Jesus went to the land of the departed people called **Hades** to preach the gospel to them and so provide a chance for repentance. This is what is often shown in the resurrection icon.

This is similar to how Jonah travelled to Nineveh to preach the Word of God to the Ninevites, giving them a chance at changing their ways.

Remember that God loves everyone,

even those who sin! All the people who had died before Christ died on the cross were defeated death. His resurrection also gave them the chance to repent when He went down to Hades.

We remember the story of Jonah and the Ninevites during the Nineveh Fast (or Three-Day Fast) right before the Great Lent. The Great Lent ends with the Holy Week and Resurrection Sunday, so the Nineveh Fast helps us prepare ourselves for that journey. It is a reminder for us to repent, turn back to God, and ask for mercy.

Learning Outcome Check

Holy Saturday is the day that Jesus went to Hades and preached to all departed.

Reflection Questions

1. Did Jesus ever sin?
2. Why do you think the Nineveh Fast is right before the Great Lent?
3. How can we repent and ask God for forgiveness?

The Light of the World

We will learn about the story of baby Jesus being presented to the Temple, how the Church celebrates this feast, and what it means to us.

Vocabulary Words

Maa'ltho The Syriac word for the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ for the first time to the temple.

Presentation Introducing someone or something to others.

Prophecy Saying what will happen before it actually happens.



Every person is a special gift from God, including you and me. When we are born, our parents are very happy and grateful to have us in their lives. They pray to God for our health, our needs, and our future. They also take us to church and introduce us to our spiritual leaders, like priests, and all the other church members. Everyone in the church cares about us and prays to thank God for us.

Jesus Christ's first visit to the Temple

Even when Jesus Christ was a baby, His parents, Mary and Joseph, were just like your parents. In their religion, it was important to bring the baby to the Temple when they were 40 days old. They would also give a special gift to God. Mary and

Joseph didn't have a lot of money, so they gave two turtle doves (**St. Luke 2:22-40, Leviticus 12:8**) as their gift.

They went to the Temple in Jerusalem because that was God's house. We also know that Jesus is God, so this story also reminds us that God loves humility. Jesus humbled Himself to be born not to people who were not rich with money but who loved God and prayed every day.

The offering was a special event because it was the first time that St. Mary came to the Temple as a mother after taking care of baby Jesus for forty days at home.

In our church, we also do something similar when families have a new baby. It's important for everyone in the community to come back to worship after they receive such a special gift from God.



Presentation of our Lord icon

Remember

According to the Jewish tradition and practices of that time, forty days after birth, every Jewish women presented her son and brought an offering to God before the priest.



Now, when baby Jesus was brought for his presentation, they met some special people at the Temple!

St. Simeon (an older man who dedicated his life to God and was waiting for someone very special) and **St. Anna** the prophetess, who never left the Temple, prophesied about Jesus to everyone at the Temple.

St. Simeon, a devout man

After Jesus was brought into the temple, there was an older man named St. Simeon who lived in Jerusalem.

Simeon was a very good and faithful person. The Holy Spirit had promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen Jesus.



St. Simeon

When Jesus was in the temple, the Holy Spirit led Simeon there. Simeon held baby Jesus in his arms and thanked God for him.

This was a very special moment for Simeon because he had been waiting to

see Jesus. He said, *“For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.”*

St. Simeon also shared a new prophecy to St. Mary, saying she will be very sad. We know this happened when Jesus died on the cross.

St. Anna, a prophetess



St. Anna

An older lady named St. Anna was more than 84 years old and loved God very much. She stayed in the temple all

the time, praying and fasting. She saw baby Jesus and his parents in the temple.

She was so happy, and she thanked God for sending Jesus to save Jerusalem. She also told everyone in the temple about Jesus and how he would bring redemption to the people.

Learning Outcome Check

Tell the story of the Presentation of the Lord into the Temple.

After this, Jesus returned with his parents to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. His mother, St. Mary, kept all these things in her heart. Jesus grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. He loved and obeyed his parents and was loved by God and men.

We read further in the Gospels that Jesus was obedient to all the authorities, respected, and followed the Jewish traditions and customs.

Learning Outcome Check

What did you learn about saints Simeon, Anna, Mary and Joseph in this lesson?

The Feast of Ma'altho

We celebrate this Feast of **Ma'altho**, the presentation of our Lord in the Temple,

every year on February 2nd. This is forty days after Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, on December 25th.

Learning Outcome Check

Ma'altho is celebrated on February 2nd because it is 40 days after the birth of Christ.

The presentation takes place in the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. This feast reminds us that Jesus is the true hope for all of us.

Jesus is the light of the world, entering the temple in Jerusalem for our **salvation**. The place where God was worshipped (the Temple of Solomon) is now complete and fulfilled, as Christ (God)

has entered.

God is inviting us to imitate all the saints - here we see St. Mary, St. Joseph, St. Simeon, and St. Anna. They all led pure and holy lives. God is inviting us to present ourselves and our most precious possessions to Him.

He is asking us to look to His Spirit so that He can shower us with His grace and show us His will. He is telling us that our lives have great value, even if we feel unimportant in the world. And He is telling us that it is never a waste to spend time in His presence, waiting for Him to show Himself to us.

Learning Outcome Check

What is meant by the Temple?

Reflection Questions

1. How many days after Jesus' birth did His parents bring Him to the Temple?
2. When is Ma'altho celebrated, and why?
3. Why was Anna important to the life of Jesus?
4. What is the temple?
5. How can we present ourselves to God?
6. Who are the four saints we learned about in this lesson?

A Story of Healing

God is with us through our sickness and suffering and loves us enough to heal us and forgive us of our sins.

Vocabulary Words

Physician Another word for a doctor

Sacrament of Holy Unction The act of anointing and blessing someone who is sick with special holy oil.

Miracle An act of God that nobody can explain



This icon shows many miracles of Jesus healing others. What are some examples you see? What are some other Bible stories you can think of where Jesus heals people?

Jesus Christ is known as the Great **Physician**. In the Bible, we read how Jesus performed many **miracles** of healing. When we are sick, we can also turn to prayer and seek God's help, trusting that He knows what is best for us.

The church provides a holy sacrament called Holy Unction. This is sometimes called the anointing of the sick. In **St. James 5:14-15**, it says that "If anyone is sick, he or she should call upon the elders of the church, let them pray over them, and anoint him or her with oil in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Did you know?

Holy Chrism is specially reserved for two occasions, Holy Chrismation and Holy Consecration of a Church.

Often, people have the misconception that we do this service only when someone is very ill and that they may soon die.

Learning Outcome Check

Holy Unction is a Sacrament we can receive whenever we are physically or spiritually unwell.

However, that is not true. We can always request Holy Unction whenever we are physically or spiritually unwell. The church uses a special oil for this service.

The priest anointed each of us with a special holy oil, called the Oil of Gladness, when we became part of the Orthodox church. Right after Holy Baptism, the sacrament of Holy Chrismation takes place. During this time, we get covered in another oil called Holy Chrism.

Holy Chrism is different from the oil used for anointing the sick. Holy oil is a part of many special services in our church, and there are different oils used for each of them. This tradition of blessing with holy oil started centuries ago!

Learning Outcome Check

What are some of the oils we use for anointing in our church?

Seeking healing through Christ is not new. Even in Scripture, we read of many people who came to Jesus when they were in need. He laid His hands upon them in order to heal them. In the Bible, we read of many stories where Jesus healed those who were sick. Let's take a look at two examples of Jesus healing the blind.

Jesus Heals the Blind

Jesus was travelling with his disciples through a town called Jericho on their way to Jerusalem when they found a blind man begging on the side of the road (**St. Mark 10:46-52**). His name was Bartimaeus, and when he heard that it was Jesus passing by, he cried out to Him,

saying, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.”

The people around him told him to be quiet, but he continued to call out to Jesus, asking for his mercy. When Jesus heard him, He asked the people to bring Bartimaeus to Him. Bartimaeus rushed to the Lord and asked for his vision. Jesus said to him “Go your way; your faith has made you well”. Bartimaeus was overjoyed when he opened his eyes and could see the people around him. During his time of need, he turned to Jesus Christ and asked for help, and Jesus told him, ”Go; your faith has healed you.”

On the last Sunday of the Great Lent, we hear about Jesus healing another man who was blind from birth (**St. John 9: 1-41**). Jesus



Healing of the blind Icon

Forgiveness of Sins

Jesus healed many more people who came to Him with faith and continues to do so today. But the greatest gift of healing that God gives us is the healing of sins.

Sin is doing something that is not God’s plan for us. One way to think about sin is “missing the mark”. As Christians, our goal is to be like Jesus. As we read in **St. Matthew 5:48**, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”. This is the mark we are aiming for!



But this is very difficult, and we do fall short. This is one way we can think about sin. Sin is doing something that is not what God wishes for His children. But God is love, and above all, he wants humility and faith. This is why, during Holy Qurbana, we pray and ask God to forgive all our sins that we have done “willingly and unwillingly, knowingly and unknowingly”. God is ready to forgive and heal us if we are humble and try not to do it again.

God did amazing miracles to heal the sick who had physical illness or disability. But His greatest gift is forgiveness of

sins.

When we are ill or someone we love is not feeling well, we can pray to God with faith in His power and seek help from

the church through Holy Unction. The healing touch of God is what forgives our sins and prepares us for all the challenges may face in life.

Reflection Questions

1. When can someone receive the Holy Anointing of the Sick?
2. Why is the Oil of Anointing important?
3. What are three Sacraments of the Church that use Holy Oil?

Fallen From Grace

God loves us even when we sin. He does not force His love upon us and has given us free will to choose.

Vocabulary Words

Freewill The gift from God for us to choose our actions.

Grace God being kind to us and blessing us even though we sin

Pride Showing self-praise and not giving credit to God



Creation of Adam and Eve

The Garden of Eden and Sin

God made us to be like Him. He put us in a special place called Eden. God wanted

us to take care of this special place.

He also wanted us to spread out, live all over the world, and take His love everywhere. God's plan was to make every

place a happy place for all living things, just like in Eden.

You can see how much God loved us by giving us these special jobs and wanting us to be with Him always. He wanted us to show his love and bring peace to everyone in the world.

We see this even during Holy Qurbana and the Kiss of Peace when we sing.

Kiss of Peace Hymn

(Anyonyam shlomo.)

*Let us embrace each other
With the peace of our Lord God.
May it abide with us now,
always, and for evermore*

So how did we separate from God? God is love, and he wanted us to love him too. So, he created Adam and Eve (and us!) with the ability to choose. He didn't want to force us to love him because love can't be forced.

Remember

Freewill is the ability to choose what one wants to do.



The Garden that God made for us had everything we needed. He loved us a lot! But he told Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit from one special tree in the garden because they were not ready for it.

He said that if they ate from that tree, something bad would happen, and they would die! This was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God was not testing Adam and Eve to see if they loved him. God would have given them the fruit when they were ready. He warned them like a loving parent because he knew that something bad would happen if they didn't listen, and sadly, they did not listen.

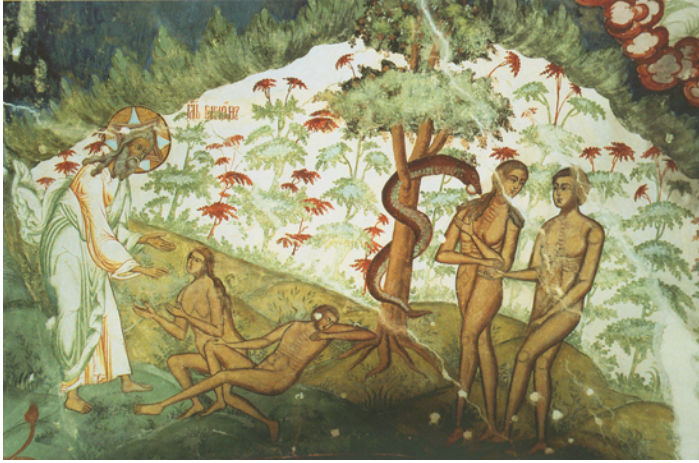
Adam and Eve sinned. They ate the fruit from the one tree that God told them not to eat from. They were tempted by Satan, and they chose to listen to him instead of obeying God's command. Because of their disobedience, sin and death became a part of everyone's lives. Sin means going against God and not following His perfect ways.

Everyone struggles with sin and makes mistakes every day. But we need to learn from Jesus. Jesus was also tempted by Satan, but he said no! He lived His entire life as a man without sinning. He set a perfect example for us to follow.

Sin and Relationships

Sin doesn't just make God sad; it also makes our relationships with others not so nice. For example, sometimes we might feel jealous of our brothers or friends because they are good at things we are not. And sometimes we disobey our parents because they didn't give us something we really wanted.

All of this happens because of sin in our lives. When we don't think about



Garden of Eden

God and only think about ourselves, we drift away from Him. We are no longer in communion with God.

tower would be so tall that they could go up to heaven. Man was again turning away from God and doing what was not good.

Learning Outcome Check

Sin causes us to be in disunion with God and our neighbour.

The Tower of Babel & Pride

The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) shows us what happens when we forget God. The people of Babylon (in Hebrew, Babel) were growing their city and building strong and large buildings. They decided to build a giant tower. This was to show how powerful they were, and this



The Tower of Babel



Icon of Resurrection

When God saw that they were trying to build the tower to rebel against Him and show that they did not need God, He knew He had to do something to stop them from going even further into greater sin. We see this when God says, “Come, let us go down there and confuse their language, so they may not understand one another's speech.” (**Genesis 11:7**).

After this point, the people could not finish building the tower, nor could they understand each other.

In both of these cases, where God forced man out of the Garden of Eden and where God caused man to speak in different languages, it could appear at

first that God was angry and He wanted to punish man for being disobedient.

God still loves us even when we are not grateful and turn our backs on God. He loves us so much that Jesus died on the cross to defeat the death Adam and Eve brought into this world!

In our lives, we may achieve many things and forget to credit God and others that God has put around us. This is an example of pride, where we believe we are great because of what we did on our own.

When we develop pride, we do not feel a need for God, nor do we admit that God has helped in any way. That is what happened in the story of the Tower of Ba-

bel. The people built the tower, thinking they did it on their own strength, but God made them realise they could not complete the work without His presence.

Our sin and pride turn us away from God. But God still loves us and wants us to come back to Him. He showers us with His **grace**. God's love may appear when He is angry, but He does that to help us. He wants His children to live the blessed life that He wants for us! God waits for us to learn from our mistakes. He wants us to get back up once we fall,

not just stay on the ground. He does not wish for us to give up.

While we may fall from grace, we are enabled to get back up. Grace is the kindness and blessing of God to us, even though we are sinners. He wants all of us to come back to him.

Remember

Even when we choose to disobey God, He still loves us!



Reflection Questions

1. How does sin affect our relationship with God?
2. Why did the people of Babylon decide to build a giant tower?
3. How does sin separate us from other people? Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who felt alone after they sinned?
4. In the Old Testament, God is mistakenly viewed as a punishing Father. How can we understand that God is loving and compassionate?

My Lord and My God

St. Thomas established Christianity in India, and we are the fruits of his mission.

Vocabulary Words

Malankara It refers to the state of Kerala in India

Ancestors Those who lived before us. They include our grandparents and everyone who lived before them.

Oath solemn affirmation or declaration, made with an appeal to God for the truth of what is affirmed

Successor a person or thing that comes after or follows another



We are very lucky to have a special church to call our own. Our church, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, or the Indian Orthodox Church, took many years and struggles for us to gather and worship. We should always be thankful for the hard work and prayers of our ancestors, who gave us this blessing that we call our church.

More than two thousand years ago, in Jerusalem, Jesus began His important work on earth. He chose twelve apostles to help Him spread His message of faith. The apostles were always with Jesus, learning from His teachings and travelled with Him.

After Jesus died on the cross and rose again, He appeared to His apostles and disciples to teach them more. The first

time Jesus appeared to all the apostles after the Resurrection, St. Thomas wasn't there. When the others told St. Thomas that they saw Jesus, he did not believe them. He said he needed to see the marks on Jesus' hands and put his finger in the holes to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. So a few days later, Thomas was with the others when Jesus appeared to them again.

Jesus told Thomas to touch his wounds and not doubt anymore. That's when Thomas realised that Jesus is not just a teacher but His Lord and God. Thomas did have his doubts and questions, but when he got the answers, he had strong faith in Jesus.



Twelve Apostles Icon

Think

Can you name the 12 Apostles of Christ?



Jesus gave His friends a job called the Great Commission (**St. Matthew 28:16–20**). He told them to go all over the world and share the gospel with everyone. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the apostles and disciples were able to teach, preach, and even perform miracles to show people God's power. St. Thomas' faith by then was so great that he travelled all the way to India!

The Apostle to India

In obedience to Christ's commission, St. Thomas travelled to India. He reached the shores of Kerala in AD 52, in Kodungallur. He started preaching the gospel to the Jewish merchant community and the native people, and he baptised the believers. He established eight churches (sometimes counted as seven and a half, as one was smaller than the others) along the coast of Kerala. These were at Palayoor, Kodungallur, Kottakkavu (Paravur), Kokkamangalam, Nilackal, Niranam, Kollam, and Thiruvithamcode (Arapally, the half church).

St. Thomas appointed priests and leaders in these churches. The map shows where these churches were built.

St. Thomas travelled more in India and went all the way to Mylapore, a city in the area next to Kerala that is today

near Chennai in Tamil Nadu. He continued teaching, preaching, and baptising a large number of people there.

But his popularity and growth in Christianity made some people angry. He was **martyred** in A.D. 72 and was first buried in India, but later his body was taken away. St. Thomas is the patron saint of Indian Orthodox church and of India.



The postal department of India brought out a stamp commemorating his mission to the country.

Learning Outcome Check

St. Thomas came to India and established 8 churches.

Coonan Cross Oath

After St. Thomas was martyred, Christianity in India was alive but faced many challenges. Many people did not want to



Churches established by St. Thomas

hear the gospel of Jesus and tried to stop it.

Remember

A missionary is a person who tries to convert people to his own faith.



India was a great source of spices and other valuables. Many traders and missionaries came from Europe, and they brought their own version of Christianity that was not Orthodox.

These missionaries were unfamiliar with Orthodoxy and tried to stop our worship. They took control of many churches. Finally, in 1599, the Roman

Catholic Church tried to take over all the churches, and a bishop was appointed as their leader. However, many St. Thomas Orthodox Christians had enough!

In 1653, a very large group of our ancestors gathered at a Church in Mat-tancherry (Cochin) in Kerala and took an **oath** that they would not subject themselves to the Latin Christians.

The **Coonan Cross Oath** (Leaning Cross Oath), was their great declaration of freedom. So many St. Thomas Christians were there! As everyone could not touch the cross, they tied a rope to the cross so they could all make a promise to never give up the faith. So many people held the rope that the cross bent over, giving it its name.



The Coonan Cross Oath (Leaning Cross Oath)

Learning Outcome Check

What was the Coonan Cross Oath?



A depiction of the Oath at St. George Orthodox Church, Mattanchery (Cochin)

Our Catholicos

We believe that St. Thomas was the first Catholicos of India. Catholicos means

“universal head or universal bishop”.

His Holiness the Catholicos, also known as Bava Thirumeni, is **successor** of St. Thomas the **Apostle**. The current Catholicos, His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, is the 92nd Catholicos.

The Church that was found in India by Jesus Christ through His **Apostle** St. Thomas has stood the test of time and continues to be a witness to our Lord and our God in and outside of Kerala.

Let us keep the church, all its spiritual organisations, and its leaders constantly in our daily prayers.

Learning Outcome Check

His Holiness the Catholicos (Bava Thirumeni), is successor of St. Thomas the Apostle

Reflection Questions

1. When did St. Thomas come to India?
2. What is the Coonan Cross Oath?
3. What is the name of our current Catholicos?

Abode of the Saints

Saints teach us how to lead a life pleasing to God. We remember them during the Holy Qurbana.

Vocabulary Words

Abode Home. When we say “Abode of the Saints,” we mean that all our Holy Saints are together with God.

Intercede To ask to pray to God for oneself or a loved one

Monastery a place where monks live as a community

Seminary a school where people learn theology and get trained to become Achaemen

We hear so many names of a number of Saints during the Thubdens during Holy Qurbana! Have you ever wondered who these Saints are?

We remember Saints and study their lives because they can teach us to be like Christ. The Saints are holy because they chose to live in a way that was pleasing and obedient to God. The Saints can teach us how we can become closer to God. In this lesson, we look at the lives of six different Saints.

Saints from the Malankara Orthodox Church

The first three Saints that we will learn about are saints from the Malankara Orthodox Church. Two of them were born

and grew up in Kerala. One of them came to Kerala from Iraq.

There are many churches established all around the world in their names, and a number of people consider them their patron saint and **intercede** in their name.

Remember

Saints from the Malankara Orthodox Church include St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala, St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Vattasseril and St. Yeldo Mar Baselios.



St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala



St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala, also known as Parumala Thirumeni, is the first declared saint of the Malankara Orthodox Church. He was born on June 15, 1848, to a priestly family at Mulanthuruthy, near Kochi.

Thirumeni's mother passed away when he was a young boy. Since then, he has been brought up in loving care by his older sister. From a young age, Parumala Thirumeni led a life full of prayer and fasting. He had a deep interest in the Syriac language and could sing Syriac hymns beautifully. At the age of 10, he became a deacon, and when he was just 18 years old, he became a priest!

At age 28, he became a Thirumeni. He was lovingly known as "Kochu

Thirumeni" because he became a Thirumeni at such a young age. He lived a prayerful life, believing that "prayer brings truth, religious faith, honesty, and respect among the people." Every day, he would wake up at four in the morning for prayers and strictly follow the church practise of praying seven times a day. Since his childhood, Thirumeni has observed all the fasts of the church and fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays. Thirumeni is well known for being a kind human being to all types of people. No matter what caste or community, or whether someone was rich or poor, he always showed kindness and love. Thirumeni shared the gospel with many people who had never heard of Jesus, and many became Christians because of him.

Thirumeni brought joy to the people who met him and touched the lives of many who were in need. He showed love and prayed for the sick, the poor, and the needy, regardless of their religion. Because of his service to the community, he gained respect not only from Christians but also from people of other religions.

Parumala Thirumeni passed away after being very ill on November 2, 1902, at the age of fifty-four. While many were praying for him, Thirumeni said, "My Lord," and closed his eyes forever.

"Kochu Thirumeni" is an inspiration, and many people look up to him for guidance in their struggles and suffering. May Thirumeni's life be an example to us to always make time for prayer in our lives and show kindness to others. Just as Thirumeni did, there is a responsibil-

ity in all of us to do God's will and love everyone regardless of who they are and where they are from.

St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Vattasseril

St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Vattasseril is the second declared saint of the Malankara Orthodox Church. He is known as the Great Luminary, which means 'bright light.' He has this name because he stood strong for the faith and freedom of our Church and protected the Church during a difficult time in history.



Mar Dionysius was born in Mallappally, in the District of Pathanamthitta, on October 31st, 1858. His parents were Joseph and Eliamma.

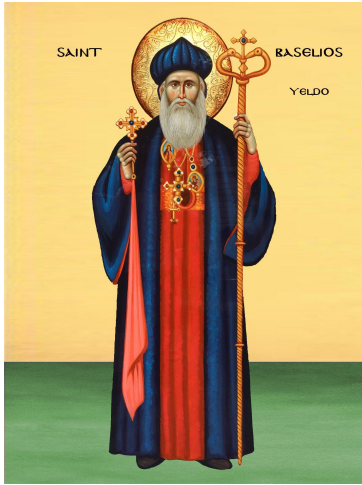
Dn. Geevarghese studied at the Orthodox Theological **Seminary**, which is otherwise called the Pazhaya **Seminary**,

Kottayam. Dn. Geevarghese demonstrated his excellence in the Syriac language and became the beloved disciple of Parumala Thirumeni, who ordained him as a full deacon in 1879 and as Achen in 1880.

Fr. Geevarghese eventually became the authority in Syriac language, church history, Orthodox faith, theology, and doctrine, so that he was recognised as Malankara Malpan, or the teacher of Malankara. He wrote a book called "Doctrines of the Church". Fr. Geevarghese was elevated as a Ramban in 1903 and was consecrated as a bishop in 1908, titled HG Geevarghese Mar Dionysius. It was Vattasseril Thirumeni who became instrumental in getting a number of prayers translated to Malayalam, which were only available in Syriac, so that the common man could understand them. He passed away in 1934 and was entombed in the Pazhaya **Seminary**.

The reason why Thirumeni was able to face all challenges in life was because he had a strong faith and spiritual discipline. He spent a lot of his time in private prayer, fasting, and studying the Bible. Thirumeni was also a great scholar of the Church because he translated many texts from Syriac into Malayalam. May Thirumeni's life be an example for us to be strong in whatever challenges we may face.

St. Yeldo Mar Baselios



St. Yeldo Mar Baselios was born in A.D. 1593 in a village called Kooded. Now this village is called Karakosh and is located near Mosul in Iraq! At a young age, he decided to join a **monastery** to become a monk.

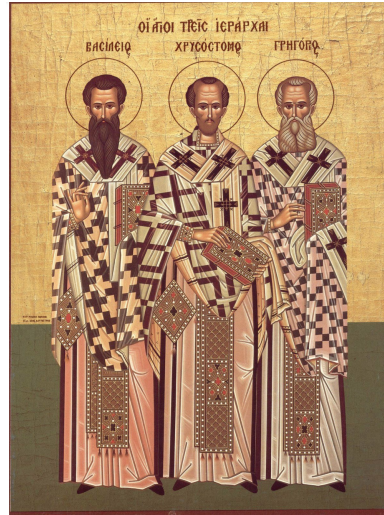
The great saint went to India at the age of 92 to help us stay close to the faith, even during difficult times.

This was a very hard mission because if the Portuguese found out what St. Yeldo Mar Baselios was going to do, they would have hurt or even killed him.

However, St. Baselios was not scared and came to India to take care of his sheep. St. Baselios guided and helped to protect the Church during a difficult time. The great saint died in India and is buried in Mar Thoma Cheriyaapally in Kothamangalam, Kerala, India. May this Holy Father's life be a reminder to us to

always be an example for others by being strong in our faith.

The Three Hierarchs



The next three saints we will learn about are called The Three Holy Hierarchs: St. John Chrysostom (middle), St. Basil the Great (left), and St. Gregory the Theologian (right).

They were bishops of the church who played big roles in Christianity of their times.

St. John Chrysostom

St. John was born in 347 AD at Antioch in present-day Turkey. His father served in the military and died soon after his birth. He lived with his mother in a wealthy family during his childhood.

His mother had wanted him to go to a famous university and become a lawyer. But John was more interested in becoming a monk and learning more about God. So he went to live in the desert alone for 8 long years, until the bishop of Antioch told him to come back and serve as a priest in Antioch.

He became a deacon in 381 AD and was ordained as a priest in 386 AD. He was a gifted speaker, and everyone loved his Bible and faith teachings. John was very good at comforting and helping people feel safe. As John began preaching sermons to others in the church, there was a woman who called him "Golden Mouthed Chrysostom." John worked as a priest in Antioch for 18 years. In 397 AD, he was made the bishop of Constantinople, which is known today as Istanbul.

Constantinople was the capital of ancient Byzantium, which was the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. Here, St. John helped the poor. He went to prison cells and the worst city slums to help, comfort, and teach the people.

The Emperor also lived in the same city where St. John used to do his ministry. John preached against the thoughtless spending and lavishness of the Emperor and the Empress. The Empress was an arrogant woman, and they were both angered by his speeches. He was exiled and sent to a distant country. For three years, John remained in that little town (or distant country?) surrounded by the love and respect of all the people. "We would rather see the sun hidden than

have your golden mouth silenced," they said. When the Emperor saw that the people there loved him, he decided to send John further away to the shores of the Black Sea. He ordered his soldiers to treat him without mercy.

One day, John couldn't go any further and stopped at the little chapel of a martyred saint. The saint appeared to John and asked him to receive holy communion from a priest. After receiving Holy Qurbana, he is to have quietly said, "Glory be to God for all things." And the golden mouth was still there. They buried him in the tomb of the martyr.

There is an order of Divine Liturgy called "The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom", which we use in celebrating Holy Qurbana in our Church.

Remember

We remember Saints and study their lives because their lives are an example to us. They lived lives dedicated to God and have taught us that we should seek God in all that we do.



St. Basil The Great

St. Basil was the father who taught about the Holy Trinity the most. We remember him therefore as a saint, the great teacher, and defender of our faith. St. Basil was born in Caesarea in 330 AD into a pious family. His father was a

bishop, and his mother was very God-fearing.

After his basic studies, young Basil arrived in Athens for higher education. While in school in Athens, he felt that he had acquired all that the school could offer him. He went to Egypt. There he visited the hermits who had begun to settle in the desert, devoting their time to prayer and spiritual life. Though his health was very poor during his time in Egypt, he had boundless energy and enthusiasm for spiritual life.



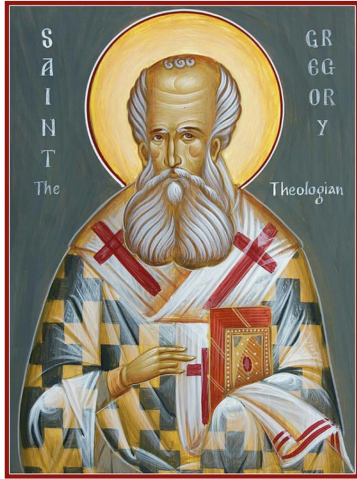
Basil did not stay in Egypt for very long. He had to go back to Caesarea to assist the bishop. Then he left again for his beloved desert, to an isolated spot called Pontus, not far from his home country. He did not remain there by himself, as other men (or monks?) also joined him.

Basil established a monastery—a place where the monks lived. After a few years, the bishop wrote to Basil, begging him to return to Caesarea to serve in the defence of the Church. He left his beloved **monastery** and came back to serve the aged bishop until his death. A new field of work opened before Basil. No other bishop before him gave so much attention and thought to the Church's work for the poor. He started hospitals, orphanages, and schools for the sick, helpless, and the poor. Help was given to all those who needed it. A tradition was thus established that the Church was to be responsible for helping those in distress.

On January 1st, 379 AD, he was called to eternal rest and departed peacefully. St. Basil, his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus are together called the Cappadocian Fathers, and they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to define the faith of the Holy Trinity the most.

St. Gregory the Theologian of Nazianzus

St. Gregory was born in 329 AD into a Christian family and raised by his devout parents. St. Gregory went to Athens to finish his studies, where he also studied with St. Basil the Great. After returning to Nazianzus, he was baptised and later ordained to Priesthood by his father against his will.



When his father told him of his wishes for St. Gregory to become a bishop, St. Gregory left his home and accepted St. Basil's invitation to join him at his **monastery** in Pontus.

St. Gregory returned to his home region and continued to fight against the

heretics and encourage and strengthen the believers. St. Basil consecrated him as bishop, and in 379 AD, he became the bishop of Constantinople. St. Gregory died in 391 AD.

As we have learned about these 6 saints, we have learned about the different qualities they had: love and kindness towards others, courage, and strength.

Their strong prayer life and faith in God allowed them to use their lives to follow His will. Let's take some time and reflect on the unique gifts God has given each one of us and how we can use our gifts to honour God and do His will?

Learning Outcome Check

Who are the saints of our Church?
Pick one saint and tell their story to a partner.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important that we learn about the lives of our Saints?
2. How can you use the examples of the Saints to lead a life pleasing to God?
3. From the Saints we learned about, which Saint stood out to you the most? Why?
4. Name two saints who we remember in the Holy Qurbana.

The New Passover

Our Holy Qurbana has a beautiful structure and order that we will see when we participate with attention and humility.

Vocabulary Words

Passover A special celebration for Jewish people, remembering how God saved them from being slaves in Egypt. They also remember how the angel of death passed over their houses and protected their firstborn children.

Exodus When a group of people leave a place together. In the Bible, the Exodus refers to the Israelites leaving Egypt with the help of their leader, Moses. They were slaves in Egypt, but Moses helped them become free.



The Passover

Jewish families celebrate Passover because it reminds them of God's love and how He saved their ancestors from being slaves in Egypt a long time ago.

Moses had asked the Pharaoh to set God's people free, but he did not listen. So God told the people of Israel to take the blood of a lamb and put it on the doors and windows of their houses.

This special blood from a lamb would act like a shield to keep the people safe from something bad that was going to happen to the Egyptians because their leader, Pharaoh, didn't listen to God. That night, a very sad thing happened: the firstborn child of every Egyptian and the firstborn animal that didn't have the special blood died that night.

The people of Israel were then freed! With Moses as their leader, they left Egypt and went to a new land that God promised them, called Canaan. This big



Crossing of the Red Sea

journey is called the Exodus. God saved them from Pharaoh's army by making the Red Sea split in half, so they could walk through it without getting wet.

Once they were safe, God gave them some very important rules to follow, called the Ten Commandments. And from then on, they had a special feast every year called Passover. During the feast, they ate a special lamb that was roasted, and they made sure the bread they ate didn't have yeast. They also ate bitter herbs. God told them they should always celebrate Passover every year, and in our lesson, Jesus does the same.

The New Passover

Jesus sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to get everything ready for the Passover. Jesus and His Apostles were Jews and followed all the Jewish tradi-

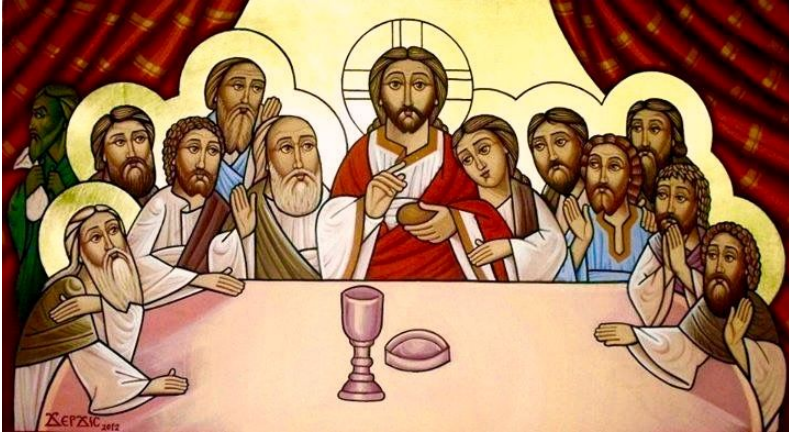
tions. They set up everything in the upper room.

Later that evening, Jesus sat down at a table with his followers. While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, said a special prayer, and then broke it into pieces. He gave the bread to his disciples and told them to eat. He said this was His Body. Later, Jesus took a cup of wine, prayed, and gave it to his disciples to drink. He said this was His Blood.

Does this remind you of something we do even today? This was the first Holy Qurbana!

Learning Outcome Check

Understand the story of Passover and how Jesus instituted the new Passover.



Institution of Holy Qurbana

Jesus made this the new **Passover**, where the lamb is Jesus Christ Himself. He asked those who believe in Him to do this “in remembrance of me.”

This new Passover was on the Thursday evening before he was arrested and put to death. Remember that many parishes celebrate the Feast of Pesaha or Passover on Wednesday evening, as the start of the liturgical day is in the evening.

We celebrate this as Holy Thursday, or Pesaha, which is the day before Great Friday and before the glorious Feast of Resurrection Sunday.

Learning Outcome Check

Passover falls on a Thursday. It is the Thursday before Good Friday and the Feast of Holy Resurrection.

The Living Sacrifice

Holy Qurbana is a special moment when we come together as a church family to remember Jesus. During the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples to eat His Body and drink His Blood in remembrance of him. We can do this if we are prepared during Holy Qurbana.

Holy Qurbana is an essential part of our worship and is a way for us to be close to Jesus and become one with him.

When we participate in Holy Qurbana, we are united with Jesus and with each other. It helps us to remember that Jesus came to bring us closer to God and to make us part of God's family. We also have other things in our church, like baptism, prayers, and reading the Bible, that help us to stay connected to Jesus and grow in our faith. But when we participate in the Divine Liturgy, we are able to receive Jesus Christ, offering Himself as His real Body and Blood.

The priest holds it in the form of a Cross and remembers the names of the faithful, the sick, and the departed. Then he places the **paten** and the **chalice** on the **Tablet** upon the Holy Altar and covers them with the **veil**, or **sosappa**. This tablet (or tablitha) is a small wooden tablet, specially consecrated. We cannot celebrate Holy Qurbana without the Tablitha. The veil, or shoshappa, is a square white cloth with decorative works of wheat-corn and grape vine and fruits.

Structure of the Divine Liturgy

1. Preparation (Tuyobo)

The priest prepares the bread and wine on the altar, which happens with the curtains closed. The priest places the bread in the **paten** and pours the wine into the **chalice**. The paten (or Peelassa) is a small flat dish on which the bread is placed during Holy Qurbana. The chalice (or Kaasa) is the cup in which the wine and water are placed during Holy Qurbana.



The Old Testament Reading

The lessons from the Old Testament are read while the priest is in the sanctuary, performing the preparatory service of the Holy Eucharist. It tells us the story of God's work for the people of Israel during the Times of Old Testament.

2. Liturgy of the Word

a. Entrance Procession

This begins with a procession around the altar. During the procession, the people sing the hymn "By thy mother's earnest prayers". After the procession, the priest begins the Trisagion: "Holy art Thou O' God..."

b. The Epistle Readings

At this time, the deacon (or acolyte) does two readings standing on two sides of the Madbaha steps. The first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles or a letter not written by St. Paul. The second reading is always a letter from St. Paul.

c. The Gospel Reading

The priest comes to the gate of the sanctuary as a procession and reads from the Gospel.

d. The Sermon

After the Gospel is read, the priest gives a short sermon and tells us how we can be good children in the kingdom of God by following the Word of God. It explains the meaning and importance of the Gospel that was read. For convenience, the sermon is usually moved to the end of Holy Qurbana.

e. The Nicene Creed

The Creed is the confession of our faith in the Holy Trinity, the Church, one baptism, the Kingdom of God, and the final resurrection of the dead. It is the summary of the faith of the church since apostolic times.

3. Liturgy of the Eucharist

a. The Kiss of Peace

This is the sign of reconciliation. We should first reconcile with our brothers and sisters and with God, and we should have a clear conscience when we come to

offer our gifts before God. (St. Matthew 5:23, 24)

b. Words of Institution

In the Liturgy of Holy Qurbana, the priest recites what Jesus prayed at the Last Supper. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my Body which is given for you." Likewise, he took the cup, saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant in my blood." (St. Matthew 26:27–28)

c. Calling of the Holy Spirit (Invocation/Epiclesis)

The priest prays, "Answer me, O God," three times and asks God the Father to "send the Holy Spirit upon the Eucharist placed on the altar and upon us." The Holy Spirit descends, and the bread and the wine becomes the precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

d. Intercessions (Thubdens)

This includes six sets of prayers. The first three prayers remember the living, and the last three remember the departed.

e. Fraction

The priest breaks the bread into pieces. This reminds us of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, the living bread who was "broken" on the Cross for our salvation.

f. Holy Communion

The priest first receives the Body and Blood, followed by all those who are in the Holy Altar room. Then, the priest goes to the faithful and gives the Holy Body and Blood to those who have prepared themselves to receive it. After the **Holy Qurbana** is given to everyone, the priest gives thanks to God and asks to make us worthy to take part in His heavenly Qurbana. The priest ends with a prayer for dismissal.

g. Post-Communion

After the above prayers, the curtain is closed, and Psalms 22 of the Orthodox Bible (Psalm 23 in some versions of the Bible) is read. The priest continues prayers, consumes the remaining Body and Blood and cleans the **paten** and **chalice**.

Learning Outcome Check

What is the structure and order of the Liturgy?

The new **Passover**, which is the **Holy Qurbana**, is the commemoration of our salvation through the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the new **Passover**, Jesus is the **Passover** lamb who is crucified for us to deliver us from all evil. Through the **Holy Qurbana**, we truly eat His Body and drink His Blood. Our participation in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ enables us to live and

grow in the grace of God. As we participate in these heavenly gifts, God comes and dwells in us, giving us forgiveness for our sins and eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Learning Outcome Check

What is the significance of the Feast of Passover to Holy Qurbana?

Gestures of our Liturgy

Orthodox worship involves our whole participation. We use our senses of sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste in our worship. We see the candles, icons, and vestments worn by the Achen; we hear the sounds of the bells, maravasa (explain what it is), people singing, reading, and, at times, our own voices; we smell the sweet fragrance of the incense; and we taste the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

The entire person is involved in worship, not just our thoughts or voices. Therefore, the actions and posture of our body play a role in our worship. Humility is reflected in our movements, postures, and gestures.

When we are in Church let us be mindful of our gestures and use our whole body to worship God with humility. Let us worship God with our whole body, our whole mind, and our whole soul.

Learning Outcome Check

Can you show your teacher how to stand during Holy Qurbana, prostrate, make the Sign of Cross, and give the Kiss of Peace?



Attention

The Gestures of the Liturgy are important to learn.

Do you know how we can stand, prostrate, make the Sign of the Cross, be reverent, receive incense, kneel, and hold our hands?



Reflection Questions

1. How are the Passover story, the Lord's Supper, and the Holy Qurbana related?
2. Do we believe the Body and Blood of Christ are real or symbolic?
3. Did Jesus cancel the Passover, or did He fulfil it and make it new?

Triumphant Entry

Jesus was welcomed to Jerusalem with great celebration. Today, we remember this at the beginning of Holy Week.

Vocabulary Words

Triumphant Having won and celebrating the victory.

Hosanna In Syriac, this word is “Ooshaino” and means “Save, I pray” or “Save, now.”

Commemorate To honour and remember someone or something special in a special way.



Entry into Jerusalem

Sometimes we might have a chance to meet someone very special - a popular football player, a famous actor, or an incredible singer. If you ever had the chance to meet someone like that, what would you do?

Everyone was talking about Jesus after he brought his friend Lazarus back to life (St. John 11:1-44). When Jesus went to Jerusalem, the people welcomed Him like a king.

But even then, Jesus stayed humble, as He always does, to teach us humility. Jesus' friends brought him a donkey, and they put their clothes on the donkey to make a soft seat for Jesus. Jesus rode on the donkey and went towards Jerusalem.

Learning Outcome Check

Christ displayed his humility when He rode on a donkey.

When the people saw Jesus, they were so happy and excited. Some of them put their clothes on the ground for Jesus to walk on. Others took branches from trees and put them on the ground. Even the little kids had branches in their hands, and they shouted with joy. They said, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

This **triumphant** entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem (St. Matthew 21:1-16) is also known as Palm Sunday. The Syriac word for this Feast is "Ooshano", which means "**Hosanna**".

On this day, Jesus entered into Jerusalem and was received as a great King.

Learning Outcome Check

Hosanna and Palm Sunday are the same feast commemorating the entry of our Lord into Jerusalem.

Do you remember on Palm Sunday how we also hold palm leaves, throw flowers, and shout "Hosanna"? This is to **commemorate** this special day!



Learning Outcome Check

Hosanna, also known as Ooshaino, means "Save, I pray," or "Save, now."

The branches of the palm trees symbolise Christ's victory over the devil and death. The word **Hosanna**, also known as Ooshaino, means "Save, I pray," or "Save, now."

Everyone is happy to walk, sing, and worship God. As a Church, we show that we love and believe in Jesus as the King.



Icon of Jesus Christ cleansing the Temple

We carry palm leaves and throw flowers as a symbol of victory. We want to welcome Jesus the King with lots of happiness and joy.

Learning Outcome Check

We carry palm leaves and throw flowers as a symbol of victory.

Some of the Jewish leaders who did not believe Jesus was God did not like this. They were jealous and angry and wanted Jesus to go away and be quiet.

But Jesus was on a journey to the Cross. As we read in **St. Luke 9:51**, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem". Jesus had a purpose to save us, and nothing could stop Him as He loved us so much!

When Jesus went to the temple, He became very angry, as they were treating the temple like a store instead of a holy place. He didn't like that they were making God's house unclean.

So, He kicked them out and even flipped over their tables!

Jesus told them that God made this place for prayer, and this made the leaders even more jealous and mad at Jesus. During the week, they decided to kill Jesus.

Jesus in Prayer

Jesus knew what was coming ahead. During this week, He performed miracles and helped people. But He also taught His Apostles what was to come after He died. They did not understand at that time, but Jesus never stopped teach-



Christ on the Mount of Olives

ing and loving. Jesus was also in prayer, both for all the people who followed Him and for Himself. What happened after Palm Sunday would be His very painful death on the Cross on Great Friday.

But He knew God's will, as through His Death and Resurrection, He would save the world from death. Palm Sunday is the beginning of what we celebrate as Holy Week. This is the week before the Sunday of the Resurrection of our Lord

and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

Every Sunday, we have the chance to show how great our love is for him. And, especially on the Feast of Palm Sunday, we can celebrate the triumph of our King!

Learning Outcome Check

Hosanna is the start of the Holy Week.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do we bring flowers to Church on Palm Sunday?
2. Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem knowing He would be killed?
3. Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem on a donkey?

Lazarus Saturday

Lazarus was a good friend of Jesus. When Lazarus passed away, Jesus felt really sad. But because Jesus is God, He made Lazarus alive again. God loves each one of us and promises to do the same for us too!

Vocabulary Words

Departed Anyone who has died. The “faithful departed” are those who have died and were Christians before they died.

Resurrection To bring someone back to life from the dead. Usually, when we say “Resurrection,” we mean Jesus coming back to life after dying on the Cross. However, in the Nicene Creed, we do say “resurrection of the dead,” which means us!

Tomb A special place where a person’s body is buried after they die. Today, most people are buried under the ground or in special structures, but in ancient days, caves were often used as tombs.



Everyone knows people who have passed away. We may feel sad when we think about them, which is normal. Sometimes we may worry about what will happen to them.

When we feel sad, we can pray for them. Because we are Christians, we know that our God is Love and that the departed are with God. In the Orthodox Church, we use the term “at rest” when we talk about those who have died because we believe they are with God. We know that no matter what happens to them, Jesus is more powerful than sickness and death.

We can understand more about life after death from the raising of Lazarus and the empty tomb on Resurrection Sunday.

Raising of Lazarus

Two sisters (Martha and Mary) and their only brother, Lazarus, lived in Bethany and were friends with Jesus. They were a happy family. Jesus used to visit them often, and he loved this family very much.

One day, Lazarus got very sick, and his sisters, Mary and Martha, asked Jesus to come to help him. They were in Bethany, but Jesus was far away. So He took a little longer to come, but Jesus knew some-



Martha and Mary with Jesus Christ

thing amazing was going to happen. He told His disciples, "Even though Lazarus is sick, it's not going to end in his death. Instead, it will show how great God is and make people believe in me."

When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, he heard that Lazarus had been in his tomb for four whole days. Martha, one of Lazarus' sisters, ran to meet Jesus, and she was very sad. She said to Jesus, "If you were here earlier, my brother wouldn't have died." Jesus told her that her brother would come back to life. Martha thought he meant later in the future, as she believed Jesus was God and there would be a final resurrection in the future.

Then, Jesus did something amazing. He said, "I am the one who gives life and makes people come back to life. If you believe in me, even if you die, you will live again." Jesus was feeling very sad too,

so he started crying. Even though He was going to do a great miracle, it was never God's plan for anyone to die.

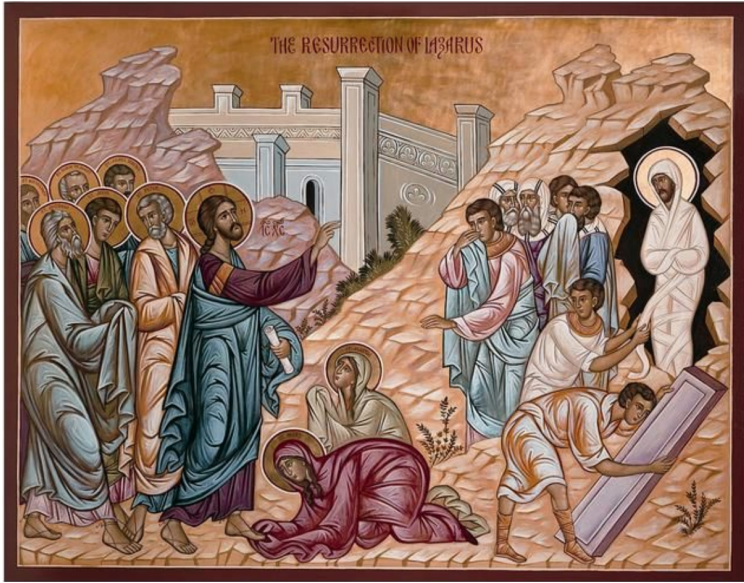
Connect

We see this in the Nicene Creed when we say "the resurrection of the dead and the new life in the world to come"

Death makes God sad. Jesus went to the tomb where they had put Lazarus, and many people followed him.

Jesus asked them to open the tomb, and then he looked up to the sky, prayed to God, and said with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" And guess what? Lazarus, who had been dead and in the tomb, came out alive! It was a miracle!

Everyone who saw this was amazed and started believing in Jesus and prais-



Resurrection of Lazarus



The empty tomb

ing God. Jesus showed that he had power over death. He is the Son of God.

The Empty Tomb

The Orthodox Church celebrates this day as “Lazarus Saturday”, and it is always celebrated the day before Palm Sunday. This reminds us of when Jesus brought Lazarus back to life and is a preview of the Great Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. God loves all people and fights against death for us.

When Lazarus died, Jesus felt really sad. But because He loved Lazarus so much, He saved him from staying dead.

This is the same for us. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God long ago, they brought death into the world. God was really sad about that too, but because He loves all of us, He saved us from death. God is amazing like that! That's why St. John said, “God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to save us.”

Jesus came down to this world so that we could have eternal life and not perish. Just like the tomb of Jesus was empty after the Resurrection, so too will everyone be alive and the tombs empty!

Connect

Remember the thief on the right during Jesus's crucifixion? Jesus told him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Because of Jesus' death, our death doesn't last forever any more. When we die now, our spirit goes to be with God. And when Jesus comes again, we will be resurrected too. That means we will come back to life, just like when Jesus brought Lazarus back to life. It's so exciting! We believe in the resurrection of the dead and a new life in the world to come.

The Faithful Departed

Anyone who has died is called **departed**, as they are no longer with us in body and spirit. Christians who have died are known as the **faithful departed**.

Learning Outcome Check

The Christians who dies are called the departed. Therefore, we pray for them so that we and they are praying together to be with God.

We pray for all the departed because we believe they are alive with God. We believe the faithful departed are also praying for us! This is all because of the **Resurrection** of Christ.

Have you noticed that every Orthodox Church has a red carpet in the middle of the sanctuary? Nobody stands in that middle part to help us remember that the **departed** are alive and praying with us!

When our priests and deacons offer incense during prayer and Holy Qurbana, they always cense the middle first and



then the people who are in Church on the right and left of the middle.

Holy Saturday is a special day during Holy Week. We believe that after Jesus died on the Cross, He went to Sheol, which is where all who had departed before Christ's Resurrection were waiting. On the first Holy Saturday, Jesus preached the Gospel to everyone and gave new life to all those who died.

Remember

Holy Saturday is the day after Good Friday and before the resurrection.



This means that everyone we read about in the Old Testament who had died was able to receive life!



Icon depicting descent of Christ into Hades.

This is why today we celebrate a special Divine Liturgy on Holy Saturday. A special Altar is made before the curtain, and during the Holy Qurbana, the priest remembers the names of all the departed whose names have been given. This is a very special Liturgy when we remember

our departed and those of our brothers and sisters in the Church.

Learning Outcome Check

Holy Saturday is a day when all the departed are remembered in the Church. Holy Qurbana is celebrated on Holy Saturday.

Learning Outcome Check

Even after death the departed live because they have faith and so do we.

The departed are alive and with us because of Jesus and His **Resurrection!** That is why we say this wonderful prayer (*Anugrahagal Niranjirikunnavane...*):

O Thou, full of mercy, renew Thy creation at the resurrection. O Lord, comfort and absolve our departed ones, who died with hope in Thee, and await Thy coming. O Lord, make them dwell in the bosom of Abraham, and of Isaac and of Jacob. May the living and the departed together cry out, 'Blessed is He, who has come, and is to come, and give life to the dead.' Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. Where do we go to when we die?
2. Find in the Holy Qurbana book where we remember and pray for our departed
3. When we enter the Church, what reminds us that the departed are alive with God and will be praying with us during Holy Qurbana?

The Death of our Lord

The Great Friday service follows what happens in the Bible! This also helps us pray for our beloved departed on Holy Saturday.

Vocabulary Words

Crucifixion The death of a person on a cross

Sabbath A religious day observed by Jews where no work is done. This is understood as the seventh day of the week.

Prostration Bending down and with your head touching the ground when we pray. We do this because we love God!



The Friday of Holy Week is called Great Friday, and often we hear it called Good Friday.

This is the day our Lord Jesus Christ was put to death on the Cross. It was a very painful and long death, which is one reason why our Great Friday service is so long.

In our Church today, we pray all the hours of that sad day so we can live with

Christ and understand how much He loved us.

But why is this sad day called “great”?

Great Friday is a special day because it is when Jesus died on the cross to save us from death. He did this because He loved us! We sing this every time we celebrate the Holy Qurbana during the Ma'nitho of Mor Severus:

*He became man without change
And was crucified for us,
Christ, who is our Lord and God;
He trampled death by His death
And destroyed our death*



The Icon of Crucifixion

The Crucifixion is such a sacred and special event that Christians embraced the Cross as a symbol. Every time we make the Sign of the Cross, we are thanking God for His Great Love. We remember the Crucifixion in many prayers and songs, including the Trisagion that we say very often.

*Holy art Thou, O God!
Holy art Thou, Almighty!
Holy art Thou, Immortal!
Crucified for us,
Have mercy on us!*

This special day is called Great Friday because it was the reason why Christ was born as a man to St. Mary. Jesus was born to die on the Cross, so that He could defeat death with His Resurrection!

On Great Friday, Jesus was taken to a leader named Pontius Pilate, who didn't find any reason to punish Him. But the people didn't want Jesus to go free, so Pilate had to allow them to crucify Him.

The soldiers made fun of Jesus by putting a red robe and a crown of thorns on His head. They took Him outside the city to a place called Golgotha and nailed Him to a cross. Jesus was in a lot of pain for three hours. There were two other people on crosses next to Jesus. When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple broke in half, the earth shook, and

even dead people came back to life!

Great Friday Service

We remember the events of what happened on that day Jesus died on the Cross in our Great Friday Service. We take part in the worship on that day with fasting and prayer, and many people come to Church wearing black or grey. It is a time for us to remember how much pain and suffering Jesus underwent because He loved us so much! The Great Friday service is very long, but when we feel tired or distracted, we should look at the Cross and use the songs and prayers to remember what Jesus was going through at that time.

At church on Great Friday, you will notice that the cloth covering the altar is black. All the colourful things in church are gone.

The Great Friday service is divided into seven parts. This is based on what happened to Jesus on Great Friday, as stated in the Gospels.

- **Midnight Prayers:** Jesus is arrested at the Garden of Gethsemane and taken to High Priest for trial
- **Morning Prayers:** Jesus is tried by the High Priest. He was later sent to Pilate for trial.
- **Third Hour Prayers:** Pilate releases Jesus to be crucified
- **Noon Hour (Sixth hour) Prayers:** Jesus was crucified

- **Ninth Hour Prayers:** Jesus dies on the cross
- **Funeral service Prayers:** We bury Jesus' body

Learning Outcome Check

What are the 7 parts of the Good Friday liturgy?

The songs of Great Friday are so beautiful and meaningful. It is important for us to learn the songs and listen to the prayers.

During the Great Friday service and throughout Holy Week, we sing the following song several times during the day.

*Praise be - to You, Lord, honor - be to your Father;
And worship be to - Your spirit!
Open - Zion's gates above
And let our pray'r rise - and enter before - Your high throne
Have mercy on us sinners, - As we cry,
"Glory - to You, Lord; Glory - to You, Lord,
Glory - Our Hope forever. Barekmor*

Learning Outcome Check

Learn the song in the Holy Week Kauma, "Lok Mor - TheshuBahtho" - "Glory - to You, Lord Glory"

die, and when his body was taken down from the Cross to be buried.

Throughout the Great Friday service, we do prostrations. This is never done at Church on Sundays as we celebrate the Resurrection. But Holy Week and Great Friday are days we show our love through prostrating and asking our Lord for mercy.

Our Devotion to the Cross

There are two special processions around the Church on Great Friday. This is to remember when Jesus carried His Cross to a place called Golgotha, where He would

At the end of the Great Friday Service, there is a special moment where everyone bows down and kisses the Cross. This is a way to thank God for what He did for us. When we bow down to the

Cross, we are also saying that we are God's people and do not belong to this world. We should also carry the Cross to honour and be like Christ.

One of the special songs during the

Great Friday Service is the "Song of the Two Thieves," which reminds us that our prayer should be like the Good Thief on the right of Jesus.

From the Song of Two Thieves

*Remember me, O my Lord,
When you come to Your kingdom!
Let me behold Your mercy
And your boundless compassion!*

*He is the King of all worlds!
His pow'r extends everywhere.
And I beg Him for mercy,
In His Kingdom without end!*

We ask Jesus to remember us when He comes again, just like the criminal who was next to him on the cross. We bow down before the cross. The priests, deacons, and Altar Assistants, will also show their respect by offering special smoke and paying their respects. We thank Jesus and remember how much God loves us!

Learning Outcome Check

Express our submission and devotion by bowing before God and before the Holy Cross.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do we call the sad day when Jesus died "Great Friday"?
2. Do we prostrate during Holy Qurbana on Sunday?
3. Why do we bow down before God and the Holy Cross during the Great Friday service?

Indeed He is Risen!

Only Jesus could save us from death!

Vocabulary Words

Virgin To be pure and holy.

Witness A person who sees an event and is able to report it to others.

Gospel Means “good news” and is the story of Jesus, who came to save us and show us how much God loves us



The Virgin Womb
to
The Empty Tomb



(a) Nativity of our Lord (b) The holy angel announces the resurrection of Christ

In the Nicene Creed, we are talking about Jesus and the Resurrection when we say, "On the third day, He rose again." The Resurrection is so important that we remember it every Sunday! But the Resurrection could only happen because Jesus died on the Cross for us. The icons help us remember that God became a man to die on the Cross.

The wrapping used on the dead body is the one used in the icons of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. But do you see there is no body in the Icon of the empty Tomb which is used for Resurrection Sunday? There is no body because He is risen!

Learning Outcome Check

The cloth used to wrap baby Jesus during Incarnation (Christmas) is the same one used to wrap His dead body.

The feast of Resurrection is so important in our Church because that is how Jesus defeated death. It is known as the Feast of **Resurrection**, Easter, or Qyamtha in Syriac. We sing and pray about God's defeat of death, sin, and Satan all the time. This was a wonderful victory over everything!

Jesus was God and could have saved himself. But He chose to die for us because He loved us so much. Jesus died on the cross to save us from death. It is sin that leads to death, but Jesus did not sin. Therefore, when He died on the Cross

but death could not hold Him. This is something we do not fully understand, as it is a mystery. But we know it's true because Jesus rose again! His Apostles and disciples saw Him, as did so many others in the Bible and through the stories we keep alive in our Church as **witnesses** to this truth.

Learning Outcome Check

Jesus defeated death by His death and Resurrection.

Everlasting Life

Without the Resurrection, there is no **Gospel**. The good news is that there is no more death, and now everyone has hope. Jesus promised us that if we believe in Him, we will also live forever.

When we celebrate Easter, we are saying that we believe and know for sure that Jesus really did rise from the dead. This is why we greet each other on Easter by saying, "Christ is risen!" And the reply to this is, "Indeed, He is risen!"

Because the Resurrection is on Sunday, we remember the Resurrection every Sunday. It is really that special and amazing!

There are many icons that we can use for the Resurrection. This one is special as it shows Christ going to Hades, which is the place where everyone who died before Jesus died and rose again was waiting.



(c) The Icon of Resurrection

There are some important things to study in this icon:

- Christ is dressed in a white heavenly robe that is flowing upward, symbolising how he rushed to **Hades** to save all who died!
- The Bluish oval around Christ (called a **mandorla**) shows this cannot be seen by human eyes.

This is what we believe is true because we are Christians.

- Christ is pulling Adam and Eve out of their tombs! This shows how much He loves all men and women.
- There are many holy people to the left and right of Jesus. These are people who died before the Resurrection and were waiting for Jesus.

To the left are King David, King Solomon, and St. John the Baptist. And to the right are Abel (holding a shepherd's staff), Moses, and Isaiah.

Look

Can you see St. John the Baptist pointing to Christ?

- The golden bars under Jesus' feet are the gates of Hades, which Jesus destroyed! From the moment

of the Resurrection, all who died are with God. As Jesus said to the Good Thief on the right cross, "Today you will be with me in Paradise!"

- The keys and bones in the darkness are now all broken. The darkness of the icon itself is small compared to the bright glory of God!

Learning Outcome Check

What are some of the parts of the Icon of Resurrection

Reflection Questions

1. How did Jesus Christ defeat death?
2. What is one important connection between the Icon of Christmas and the Empty Tomb icon used at Easter?
3. Do we celebrate the Resurrection every Sunday?

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Sacred, Holy, and Ecumenical

Define how the councils helped in facing heresies raised against the Church, focusing on the Jerusalem council and the three ecumenical councils

Vocabulary Words

Council When a group of Church leaders come together to discuss and agree on something very important.

Heresy Something that many people believe but is not true.

Ecumenical When all Christians come together.



Sometimes in our family, we may not agree with what our brother, sister, or parent says. At times, we may even get into a fight, and our parents or elders step in to help us solve the problem and make peace.

This happens in the Church family as well! When people work together, they may have different ideas or opinions, and the Church leaders, like the Priests, are there to help them solve their problems and get along.

But there is one thing we never have an opinion on, and that is Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is God, and God Himself became a man and taught the Apostles. This is why we are an **Apostolic** Church. St. Thomas is the Apostle

to India who brought the Gospel to our ancestors, and we believe with the power of the Holy Spirit that the Faith taught to us by Jesus is the same that we learn in Sunday School!

But there were disagreements in our Church history where people questioned the teaching given to us by God. When there is a bad or wrong teaching, it is called a **heresy**. But if many people believe the heresy, the Church needs to come together to discuss it. This is called a council.

Learning Outcome Check

How do we resolve disagreements in the church?

What is a Council?

A council is like a big meeting where important Church leaders get together to talk and make important decisions. They talk about things like what we believe in and how we should live our lives as Christians. The Holy Spirit guides them and helps give them the right answers.

When Christianity first started to spread, the Holy Spirit helped the Apostles and other Church leaders teach people about God and His work. The Church grew and spread all over the world. But some leaders started teaching things that were different from what Jesus and the Church taught. These wrong teachings are called heresies.

The problem was that when these heresies spread to other places, people started believing them. This was not good for the church because it made people believe the wrong things and affected their faith.

Remember that councils are not the same as regular meetings at our Church. They are not meant to talk about everyday things or plans for the Church. They are specifically for discussing important matters of faith.

Learning Outcome Check

What is the role of a council, local and ecumenical in resolving issues in the Church?

A local council handled matters in

an area. But when the heresy was large, there needed to be a bigger council. There was an important council described in the Bible called the Council in Jerusalem. There were also three very important councils that we call sacred, holy, and **ecumenical**. These were the councils of Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus.

Learning Outcome Check

Remember the names of the councils of Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus.

The Council in Jerusalem

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read about a council that was in Jerusalem. This was by St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem. The Apostles had a disagreement, so they got together to talk. They wanted to protect and support the true beliefs of the Church and an important decision was made about how the Church can grow.

The Council of Nicea (325 AD)

The Council of Nicea is the first Great Ecumenical Council. A priest named Arius, who lived in Alexandria (Egypt), began teaching the heresy that Jesus was not God. He said that Jesus was created by God the Father and did not always exist.

Arius was smart and good at convincing people; many believed what he was saying. This was a big heresy and needed to be stopped. The Council of Nicea was held, and many important Church leaders and Saints came to the meeting. St. Athanasius was really brave and spoke out against Arius. He defended the Truth!

This is where the Nicene Creed was first written. This was done so that other Christians would not be tricked by people like Arius. The Nicene Creed affirms that God made everything and that Jesus is God and the Son of God.

The Council of Constantinople (381 AD)

The second Great Ecumenical Council was held in Constantinople. This time, a Bishop named Macedonius was teaching heresy about the Holy Spirit.

He said that the Holy Spirit was created, not like God the Father and God the Son. At the Great Council, many important church leaders got together, prayed, studied, and talked. They said that Macedonius was wrong, and they defended the true beliefs of the church. Two other important people, St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Gregory of Nyssa, were very important in defeating this heresy.

At this Council, more was added to the Nicene Creed to teach the Truth about the Holy Spirit. This is why sometimes the Creed is called the Nicene-Constantinople Creed.

Our Creed now says that the Holy Spirit is God and has always existed, like the Father and the Son. They affirmed that it was the Holy Spirit that spoke to the prophets and apostles.

It was also added to the Creed that we are One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Creed was completed at this important council, and it is what the entire Church believes!

The Council of Ephesus (431)

The third and final Great Ecumenical Council was held at Ephesus in 431 AD. Another bishop, Nestorius, began to teach that Jesus was born like a regular man and was not God. He taught that Jesus became God when He was growing up.

This was an terrible heresy!

Around 200 important church leaders got together in Ephesus and decided that Nestorius was wrong. They affirmed that Jesus is fully man and fully God. Because Jesus was born from St. Mary, she was to be called "Theotokos," which is the Bearer or Mother of God.

So now, we know that Jesus is both God and a human, and Mary is called the Mother of God because she gave birth to Jesus.

The Oriental Orthodox Church

Our Church is the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, which is sometimes called the Indian Orthodox Church. We

are members of the Oriental Orthodox Church.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches recognise only these three Ecumenical Councils, the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus. The Oriental Orthodox family comprises the Ethiopian, Coptic, Armenian, Syrian, Indian (Malankara), and Eritrean Orthodox Churches.

Learning Outcome Check

Who are the members of the Oriental Orthodox family?

What is special about the Oriental Orthodox Churches is that we are in full communion with each other. The

Nicene Creed summarises the Faith of our Church, and preserves the Christian faith according to the scripture and teachings of the Apostles and Fathers of the Church. Our Churches may celebrate and worship in different languages, and our priests and bishops may wear different clothing, but that is because of where they started.

Remember how Jesus sent His Apostles and disciples to all the corners of the world? That is how these Churches began! St. Thomas is the Apostle of India because he brought the One True and Genuine Faith to our ancestors in India!

Learning Outcome Check

We are in communion with Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Reflection Questions

1. Can you find in the Nicene Creed where the teachings of the Great Councils can be found?
2. What Churches belong to the Oriental Orthodox Church Family?
3. If anyone comes to you with a different teaching of the Faith, what can you do?


I Am the Resurrection and Life

Our life with Christ continues even after death.

Vocabulary Words

Renew To give fresh life or revive.

Righteous Acting according to the will of God.

Forefather Our ancestors. In the Church, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, so this means anyone who was a member of the Church before we were alive. 

We say a very special prayer when we remember our departed (*Anugrahagal Niranjirikkunnava...*):

O Merciful Lord, renew your creation at the Resurrection.

Comfort and absolve our departed ones who died with hope in You and await Your coming.

O Lord, make them dwell in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

May the living and the departed together cry out, "Blessed is He who has come and is to come and will raise the dead." Amin.

Renew us at the Resurrection

We know we are made in God's Image and Likeness. We are all God's creations, made to be like Him. God created us to fill the whole universe and bring God's love everywhere.

Adam and Eve did not listen to God

and ate fruit they weren't supposed to eat. This made God sad, as it separated us from Him. This is called the Fall of Man and is in **Genesis Chapter 3** in the Bible.

The consequence of this sin was death.

Death means not just that our bod-

ies stop working but also that we are apart from God. But the Resurrection changed everything! God saved us from death, and through baptism, we can grow in the Church to be like God. All our departed are alive with God, and everyone is waiting for the Second Coming for our resurrection and renewal.

Learning Outcome Check

Death is our separation from this life and we continue to be alive with God.

With Jesus, we have eternal life. When people die in the hope of Jesus, they go to God, and we pray they are at peace. And the end of the prayer reminds us that all of us will be together, all the living as well as all the departed.

Learning Outcome Check

Learn the prayer, *O Merciful Lord..*

Praying for Forgiveness

In the prayer, when we say, “Comfort and absolve our departed ones who died with hope in You and await Your coming”, we who are alive are praying for those who died.

While the “Fall of Man” has occurred due to the sins of Adam and Eve, we continue to fall into our own sins. God is

present throughout our lives and gives us choices every day. Individual sins happen. Through this prayer, we pray for pardon for those individual sins as well as for those of our beloved departed.

Remember

Even though we can no longer physically see the people who died, we believe that they are alive in Christ.



Even though we can no longer physically see the people who died, we believe that they are alive in Christ, praying for mercy with us. This is why the centre aisle is kept open in our Churches. This is to help us remember that the departed faithful are with us in the house of God.

We are Israel

Our forefathers are those who lived before us. But this beautiful prayer enables us to remember that our forefathers include great Saints like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

As Christians, we are Israel. Through baptism, we become united as the children of God. God made a promise to Abraham that He would “make [him] a great nation... and in [him] all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3).

God loved Abraham because he was a righteous man, and he told Abraham that this promise would also be to his son Isaac and Isaac’s son Ja-



Icon of the bosom of Abraham

cob. Through faith, Abraham trusted the Lord's promise and followed His will.

We remember our forefathers in prayers who rest in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It means that our beloved departed also share the favour and promise that Abraham received from God, and they rest near God in heaven.

Those who have passed away are waiting with us for the Second Coming. In the Nicene Creed, we say that the Lord

“...shall come again in His great glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end.”

This is one of the pillars of our faith that gives us hope. Although it is difficult to think about life after death, we believe that our loved ones who confessed Christ are in His presence. Therefore, we pray for the forgiveness of their sins so that when the Lord comes again, He will raise them up from death.

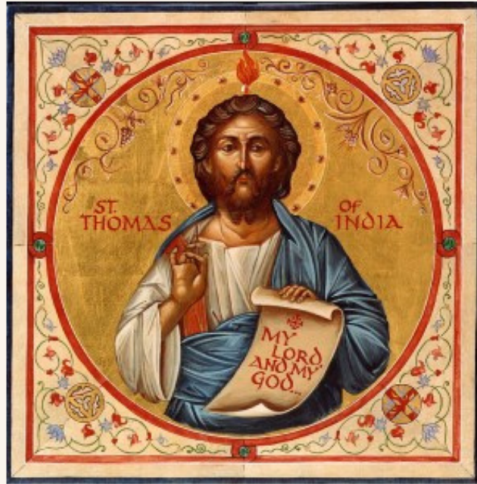
Reflection Questions

1. When do we say this prayer ‘Oh Merciful Lord’?
2. Are the departed alive?
3. What happens at the Second Coming to all those who have died?

Gratitude

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**ST. THOMAS, THE APOSTLE OF INDIA
PRAY FOR US**



O S S A E
Diocese of UK, Europe and Africa

**FIRST EDITION
2024**