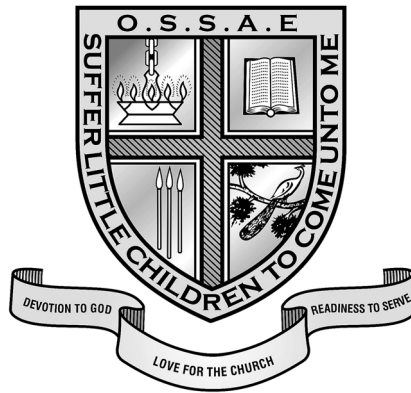


ORTHODOX SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF THE EAST



Tabore Division Class XII English

Sunday School Central Office
Devalokom, Kottayam-686004
ossaebodhanam.org, ossae.org

AN OSSAE PUBLICATION

Sunday School Padavali-XII

First Edition: December 2013

Second Edition: January 2023

Copies 3,000

Price ₹ 80.00

Printed at Alois Graphics, Kottayam

www.aloisgraphics.com

Foreword

Biblical education has been considered to be of utmost importance in the spiritual and liturgical practices of our church. Our Lord in His words “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these” expresses His great tender care for children and recognizes their value. Growing up by knowing God from childhood is a blessed privilege of the Christian life. We should develop a lifestyle in which the basics of spiritual life are practiced and reinforced, because a strong spiritual foundation is necessary to make our life meaningful. Training our children in Christian witness is a mission and a big responsibility before God. Sunday School education is a sacred service where we impart the knowledge of the Scripture to the children to help them to experience God. It helps them to experience the life of the saints who understood the beauty of that experience, the glory of worship which is a grateful response to the divine experience, and the social responsibility which is to be carried out in the fullness of that experience and identity. The greatest gift that we have to offer our children is the strong Orthodox faith that has been handed down to us through generations.

Sunday School education should not be evaluated in terms of secular education. It is a quest for the divine in which the teachers and students partake together making it a life-long learning experience. Sunday school education becomes perfect only with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The aim of this learning system is to recognize the value of the divine revelations that happened before ages and to interpret it according to the needs of the present age. This must be fulfilled in the model we see in the Holy Scripture. God has raised prophets and visionaries in different ages to reveal the divine will to His own people. The Sunday School teachers fulfill this great responsibility.

Sunday School education becomes meaningful only when the parents involve in the teaching and learning process. Values instilled from the Sunday School should be further reinforced and practiced at homes to make them part of their personality. Moses told the Israelites to teach their children the commandments of God “recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

We should train the new generation to respond with a Christian conviction to the changes in the society. Our young generation should be able to share the models of love and forgiveness in this troubled society. Only then our new generation will inherit the blessings of those children who are blessed by our Lord. This is the universal responsibility that the Church has to carry out for the transformation of our society to goodness, and its growth to the Kingdom of God.

Our Sunday School curriculum has been developed effectively to teach the Scriptures and the spiritual practices of our church. This is visible in the content and teaching modules. Also, the online resources have been very valuable in the learning process. Let our Sunday School teachers and students make use of the available resources and opportunities to make the Sunday School learning a joyful experience which will enhance the moral and spiritual values of our younger generation.

01-06-2022

Alexios Mar Eusebius Metropolitan
President
O.S.S.A.E

Introduction

Reading is necessary for all to achieve their goal in life. Today a reader, tomorrow a leader is quietly trusting maxim in human life. Really a book opens a door of infinite possibilities and probabilities in life; new persons, new ideas and ideals which may transform the whole life. It is interesting that no entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting. For learning and success, books have an unavoidable part in human life. As Patrick Rothfuss says, "I always read. You know how sharks have to keep swimming or they die? I'm like that. If I stop reading, I die".

This text book for OSSAE class IX comprises contents like bible studies including both Old Testament and New Testament, Prayer, liturgical hymns, ecclesiology, liturgy, dogmas and biographies of great men of God. Also the text includes current affairs like ecology, media and psychological issues faced by teenagers. The lessons are prepared after a pretty long stretch of study, discussions and corrections by a team of people who have expertise in the field of education, theology and liturgy. However, suggestions for improvement are most welcome. The contributions of those who prepared various lessons are invaluable. Being the notable teachers who paved the way for the coming generations we owe them a lot.

A book communicates knowledge, and not only knowledge but wisdom of all kinds. The lessons you study from this text may become best friends who will never walk away from you. They will help you to build a life which is centered in Christ. May it help you to have knowledge about our Lord Jesus Christ, great men of God and the way of spiritual life. Thus you can improve yourself in order to take better decisions in the future. The aim of Sunday School education has been based on Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God. It is the continuation of Jesus' teaching ministry in order to equip the people to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence our ultimate purpose is the achievement of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

May God continue to bless you all.

Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese
Director General

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ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR VEDA PRAVEEN DIPLOMA

In addition to a pass in class XI and XII taken together, the following are the prerequisite criteria for the award of Veda Praveen Diploma.

1. Three hours of teaching in any Sunday School class under the supervision of the Head Master/Head Mistress.
 2. Submit a report of the Orientation course attended as approved by the director.
 3. A certified project report in the given format.
-

FORMAT OF THE PROJECT REPORT

1. Front Page with all details.
2. Project Title.
3. Introduction.
4. Significance and the Relevance of the Study.
5. Methodology.
6. Analysis of the Data Collected.
7. Findings/Inference.
8. Conclusions
9. Reference.

Unit 1

Missionary Movement and Monasticism

Chapter 1

The Concept of Mission in the Holy Bible

We are quite familiar with the words mission and missionary. We got acquainted with such European jargons and cultural traits only after the advent of the Portugese, who came as Roman Catholic colonial rulers. The word 'mission' mainly denotes evangelism. Ever since Christ's disciple St. Thomas spread Gospel in India, there had been a small Apostolic Christian Church functioning in Kerala. However those who came from Europe tried to convert the age-old Oriental Christians of India to the Roman Catholic and Protestant folds forcefully. They disregarded the indigenous tradition and used gospel for this forceful conversion. As a result the word 'mission' is looked upon with caution and fear within our Church. We have to overcome this fear deep rooted in our Church history.

Biblical Concept of Mission

1. Jesus Christ who Incarnated "for us and our salvation," selected twelve disciples. They lived with Jesus for over three years and received spiritual training from Him. Jesus Christ delegated them to various places to announce the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. St. Thomas was delegated to the Indian subcontinent. The disciple who was sent for Christ's mission was called 'Sleeha' or apostle, which means 'the delegated person.' The word 'Sleeha' or 'Sleeho' is a Syriac word. Syriac is a variant of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus Christ. The Greek equivalent of 'Sleeha' is 'Apostolos' and its Latin equivalent is 'missionary.' The task or delegation for 'evangelism' given to the disciples got transformed into the missionary movement.

2. It is mission of the Christian Church to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all human beings. The concept of announcing Jesus Christ was often exercised in the limited sense of public speech and hence came the concept of 'Gospel preaching.' However lengthy preaching at convention centres and street corners alone won't constitute announcing the gospel. The only basis that we have here is the model of Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus Christ declared that He was fulfilling during his Incarnation the mission entrusted on Him by God the Father.

“If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me” (St. John 8:42). “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day” (St. John 9:4). When Jesus began His public ministry, he goes to the Synagogue of Nazareth, the village where He had been brought up and reads the Holy Scriptures. He reads from the book of prophet Isaiah. This event is recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke thus: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (St. Luke 4:18, Isaiah 61:1-2). This is Christ’s proclamation of the gospel (*Korusoso*).

Evangelism includes all these aspects. Hence when our Lord sent His disciples He said: “Proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God and heal the sick”. It is a delegation to cure not only the externally visible diseases but also to heal all diseases of sin. People getting the healing of soul, body and mind is a characteristic feature of Kingdom of God. There were Jews and gentiles, men and women, lepers, blind, deaf as well as those who had psychic ailments (the possessed) and the sinful among those who came to Christ for healing. Some of them interceded for the healing of their children and servants. Jesus gave healing to all those who prayed to him in faith. This was the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus strongly objected to the hypocrisies of the High priests, the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus Christ openly deplored the religious leaders who exploit ordinary people in the name of God and who deprive them of their God given freedom. This was for a social transformation.

Freedom, equality and brotherhood are values of the Kingdom of God. All philanthropic acts shown by Jesus Christ were part of His mission as Messiah or Saviour. This should be the model for missionary activities. Mission work is not mere preaching. Christ was prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of things he taught and worked upon. This is the true missionary model.

In the first three Gospels there are several descriptions of Jesus Christ sending his disciples on missions. We see Him sending twelve disciples and seventy other followers. Chapter 10 of the gospel according to St. Matthew contains the description of Jesus Christ preparing and sending His twelve disciples to announce the gospel. The descriptions seen in St. Mark and St. Luke are a summarized form of this description (St. Matthew 10:1, 5-11, St. Mark 6:7-12, St. Luke 9:1-12). In the Gospel according to St. Luke, we see the Lord sending seventy preachers (Another tradition says that it was seventy two, St. Luke 10:1-12).

The mission assigned to both the disciples and the preachers is the same. Jesus Christ asked them not to carry money bag, knapsack or extra clothes and announce

the good news of the Kingdom of God and heal the sick with simplicity and peace. St. Matthew records that Christ delegated them to “go to the towns of the lost sheep of the house of Israel first” (St. Matthew 10:5). They should not go into the way of the Gentiles. Instead they should go to the house of the Israelites. This should be understood in the Jewish context. The Jews had been awaiting the arrival of a Messiah who would bring about liberation, salvation and healing. St. Matthew wants to clarify that Jesus of Nazareth is that prophesied Messiah. Hence he records that the disciples were sent to preach the gospel among Israelites and not among the gentiles.

However Jesus Christ never thought that His gospel should be limited within the Jewish community. Several gentiles requested healing from our Lord and He had obliged their requests. Besides, He even stated in public that their faith is deeper and greater than that of the Israelites.

The mission seen in the Gospel passages listed above was begun by Jesus Christ during His ministry. Western theologians describe it as domestic mission because it took place mainly among the Jewish people. In the first three gospels we read that Jesus Christ delegates His eleven disciples (except Judas) to evangelise the entire world after His crucifixion and Resurrection (St. Matthews 28: 16-20, St. Mark 16:16-18, St. Luke 24: 46-49). They should follow this model of mission and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And He said to them “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (St. Mark 16:15-16). “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (St. Luke 24:47).

Some scholars are of the opinion that these three Gospel passages are added later. The supporters of western mission argued that the Universal mission model put forward here is different from the model of domestic mission described earlier. The colonial missionary movement began by the European churches from the sixteenth century onwards neglected the first model. They had the mistaken belief that Christ’s mission was to bring all people under the western ecclesiastical hierarchy and worked accordingly. That was why they started “missionary activities” even in our age old Church in India. As a result they caused divisions among the undivided Church and laid the seeds of schisms that remain even today. The Roman Catholic and other churches of Europe follow this style of mission work in Africa, Latin America and Asia even today. As a result staunch opposition against the western missionary model arose in all these countries.

According to the Orthodox tradition, it is not right to demarcate the evangelical mission into two different models. Most of the good qualities seen in the first model should be seen in the second model also. That is, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the

Gospel of peace. It should not be enforced on anyone using violence and other undesirable means. Those who bear the evangelical mission should not be materialistic or megalomaniac. They should lead a simple life and should have the right attitude of sacrifice. They should stand for truth and justice. In short, Orthodox tradition teaches that the Christian Church too should follow the model of Jesus Christ's life and mission during His Incarnation.

We should never forget that among the western missionaries, there were some who committed themselves fully to the service of people and confessed Jesus Christ in an ideal manner.

Activities

1. Examine how far the preaching of the gospel is possible in your lives.
2. Read the Gospel according to St. Matthew chapter 10 and find out the main ideas connected with evangelical mission.

Chapter 2

The Orthodox Church and the Missionary Movement

Some people say that Orthodox Church is not generally a missionary church. This is because we do not follow the missionary model of the Western Roman Catholic Church or of the Reformist Churches. We do not believe that missionary work involves converting others to our faith by hook or crook. However we have the duty to announce the good news of the Kingdom of God before the world and work with commitment for human good and social transformation in the model shown by Jesus Christ. There have been plenty of missionary initiatives in the history of Oriental Churches. The Persian Church or the Church of the East with its headquarters at Mesopotamia, Iraq had spread out up to China in the ninth century AD through evangelism.

The Church founded by St. Thomas in India too was once part of this movement. However the East Syriac Church has almost dissipated. The Greek Orthodox missionaries Methodius and Cyril evangelized the Slavs of Russia and Bulgaria in the ninth century. They made a script for the Slavonic language and translated the Holy Bible and the liturgical books into that language. In both these cases we can see that neither coercion nor colonial political hegemony was made use of. It is about five hundred years later that the Western Churches began their missionary work. This work was done mainly with the support of the political, economic and cultural suzerainty of colonialism. However we should not forget the fact that even among these colonial missionaries there were selfless souls who worked hard and sacrificing laid their lives for the education and welfare of the people.

Generally Orthodox Churches are too ritualistic. They have very attractive and heart rending forms of worship. They focus on the peck less observance of their most beautiful and elaborate Holy Eucharist and other prayers. Their interest is in attaining the experience of the Kingdom of God through the extra sensory experience of worship. Hence some critics allege that the sorrows, hunger and injustice suffered by people are somewhat neglected. The concept of 'Liturgy after the Liturgy' has developed in Orthodox missionary parlance in recent times. The word 'Liturgy' in Greek means 'service' and 'nursing'. As per the literal meaning of this word, our service can be either service to God or service to human beings. Generally Orthodox worship gives prominence to service of God. Hence the first liturgy is service to God and the second is service to human beings. True worship gets completed only when both are co-joined. Hence what Orthodox tradition means by this word is that both these aspects-service of God and service of human beings-should be undertaken

simultaneously. In short worship and mission stand together. One is inseparably related to the other. Hence it cannot be alleged that Orthodox Church gives prominence to only one of these aspects.

The Church by its very nature is oriented towards the world. St. John in his gospel records that “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son” (St. John 3:16). The Church teaches that the inspiring force behind God’s creation of the world is love. We also should love all the creatures created out of God’s love. The word ‘world’ might create confusion. Loving the world which has injustice and immorality means to love it in order to transform it into one of good news and justice. It is said that ‘God hates sin but loves sinners’. Similarly in this world we should resist and correct worldliness which is the creation of human being. At the same time we should accept this world which in the creation of God with sympathy and love. Hence it is the mission of the Church to pray for this world and submit it with all its problems, before God. We are doing it very well in our worship. We should maintain this attitude to the world in the daily chores as well as in the socioeconomic and political domains of human life. The mission activities of Orthodox Church should originate from God’s love and concern for His creation.

Our Church gladly welcomes all who are desirous of joining it out of love for Christ and His gospel. But we totally denounce the practice of enlisting members of the Church through coercion or political pressure or offer of money and job. It is unfortunate that some churches follow this practice in the guise of mission work. Orthodox Church doesn’t recognize any mission work which pays no respect to the Christian principles like human love, freedom and social justice.

Orthodox teachers teach us that mission is a fundamental character of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity which includes Father, Son and Holy Spirit exists as one and three persons simultaneously because of eternal mutual love. It respects the individuality of the three persons and in variably observes the essence of Oneness. What we see in creation and the rhythms of the universe is the eternal flow of God’s love. The Orthodox Church takes from its vision of the Holy Trinity an order of existence that bears witness to divine truth and human good through mutual respect, cooperation and equitable coexistence.

The essence of the mission work of the Orthodox Church is emancipation of the most depressed classes of the society, equitable utilization of wealth, and social service steeped in love of God. The ultimate goal of Orthodox missionary thought is that, like Jesus Christ all humans and all creation of God should attain transformation and part take in divine nature.

Activities

1. Explain the meaning of the phrase ‘Liturgy after the Liturgy’.
2. Examine how our present form of worship involves the concept of ‘mission through worship’.

Chapter 3

Malankara Orthodox Church and Mission Activities

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church originated as a result of the sacrificial missionary activity of St. Thomas, the apostle of Jesus Christ. Hence the spirit of evangelism should be in built in the very nature of Malankara Church. Some people allege that Malankara Church lost some of its evangelical passion because it coexisted peacefully as a small community with the caste system of the Indian society. It is true that the Church in India could not correct the caste system which is contrary to God's will and create an alternative social system based on equality. Our Church Fathers like St. Gregorios of Parumala in the later half of nineteenth century, Pathrose Mar Osthathios of Mookkancherry in the first half of twentieth century and Dr. Geevarghese mar Osthathios and Stephanos Mar Theodosios later, realized this truth. They taught and worked focusing on the missionary activities of the Church. Several priests like K. I. Philip Ramban and the laymen who worked with them gave good witness to the gospel in the Church.

St. Gregorios of Parumala and later Pathrose Mar Osthathios became worried about the pitiable socio-economic conditions of the Dalits and tried to improve their lot in the light of the gospels. St. Gregorios envisioned the sense of equality and thoughts of justice that could be developed through education and acted accordingly. The 'Servants of the Cross' society (*Sleebadasa Samooham*) inspired many people. In the turbulent atmosphere of court cases in the community, it gave new light and hope to the people. Pathrose Mar Osthathios was well educated. Yet he neither wore costly robes nor used luxurious vehicles. Instead he empathized with the lives of the lowly and the infirm in the model of Jesus Christ. He went on strike for the rights of Pulayas, Parayas and other downtrodden sections of the society to walk through public roads. Our society is yet to understand his contributions in this field fully.

Geevarghese Mar Osthathios struggled for social justice and inclusive care of the poor. He always taught that true Christianity is a religion of love. Similarly Stephanos Mar Theodosios was a great soul who worked hard as the missionary of the Malankara Church in North India. Utmost humility, sacrificial attitude and selflessness were his hallmarks. All these ascetics and teachers submitted their lives completely for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their witness is strong enough to lead the Malankara Church in the path of evangelism.

What is described above is one important aspect of the Christian mission of the Church. The mission of the Church has several other important aspects as well. For

example dialogues with the surrounding religious and secular culture from the standpoint of Christian gospel is a very important mission of the Church. Eminent Church Fathers and teachers like the Cappadocian Fathers had taken up this mission quite seriously. When Christians exist as a minority in India, the majority believe in other religious and ideologies. The philosophy and psychology, grammar and linguistics, literature, art and logic of India were once world class. The Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions bear their indelible imprints even today. All these together have created a great cultural ambience around us. Similarly, modern science and technology, and ideologies for socio-economic transformation are lively enough to influence our vision of life today. To interact with them and respond to them steeped in the standpoint of Christ's love and Christian wisdom, is a great mission which many fail to undertake.

In the twentieth century Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios became a great missionary of the Church in this aspect. He acquired a large following among several people. His thoughts and visions were led by the values of the Kingdom of God. Fr. Dr. V. C. Samuel was a great scholar who bore good witness in the relationship with other Churches and religions. Priests like Fr. Dr. T. J. Joshua who explain Christ's gospel in a simple fashion through various publications and media and spiritually inspire people are good models of bearing witness to the gospel in recent times. Besides these, we have several priests and non-priestly missionaries who are renowned. Many people who uphold their Orthodox Christian witness while executing their professional duties in various fields in various parts of the world, are unknown to the pages of Church history. Yet they continue to give inspiration to several people. They are good missionaries of the Church.

We can hope for a full time missionary bishop and missionary dioceses in the Church. At present the missionary activities of the Church are coordinated by the Mission Board presided over by His Holiness the Catholicos. All our spiritual movements focus on action plans beneficial to the members of the Church only. But the gospel work will become complete only if we develop the perspective to gain those within and outside the Church alike.

Brahmavar Mission

Brahmavar mission is a significant one in the evangelical mission of the Malankara Orthodox Church. Brahmavar mission was founded by a priest named Antonio Francis Xavier Alvariz who was attracted to the Orthodox faith after his alienation from the Roman Catholic church. Another Catholic priest named Norono was his assistant in this endeavour. The place Brahmavar is near to Uduppi. About 1000 families in this region seceded from the Roman Catholic Church and joined the

Orthodox church under the leadership of these priests. A gospel community called Brahmavar mission was founded. Reverend Antonio Francis was consecrated metropolitan under the name Alvares Mar Julius on July 29, 1889 at Old Seminary. Joseph Mar Dionysius, St. Gregorios of Parumala, Paulose Mar Ivanios and Paulose Mar Athanasios of Kadavil officiated the consecration ceremony. Since he seceded from the Roman Catholic church, Mar Julius had to suffer a lot of hardships from them. This saintly bishop passed away on September 23, 1923. Today Orthodox Church has a diocese with Brahmavar as its headquarters.

Activities

1. Make a study of the missionary work of St. Gregorios of Parumala.
2. Prepare a list of the mission activities founded by Dr. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios.
3. Prepare a report of the activities of Brahmavar mission.

Chapter 4

Monastic Movement and Missionary Work

The monastic movement of the Church helped a lot in providing a powerful leadership and sense of direction to the Christian church. In the third century AD several ascetics arose in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. They devoted their entire time for prayer and ascetic rigors in deserts. In the earliest times most ascetics led a lonely life. St. Antony was a famous ascetic. Later St. Pachomius founded cenobitic (community) monasticism. He insisted that the ascetics should live together following common rules and should observe their ascetic rigors and worship as a community. As a result monasteries (Dayaras) and monastic orders came into being. Later in the fourth century AD St. Basil of Caesarea formulated the rules of monasticism. In the sixth century AD St. Benedict of Nursia founded monastic orders for the first time in the western countries and formulated rules for ascetics. The Irish missionaries traveled far and wide and spread the light of the gospel.

The monastic movement made great strides in the organizational structure of the western Church. The monastic orders founded by St. Francis Assisi, St. Dominic, and Ignatius Loyola in the middle ages became the major monastic orders of the Roman Catholic Church. Their style of work had both good and bad aspects. For example the Portuguese established power in Kerala by the end of the 15th century. The Jesuit missionaries who came along with these colonial powers used derogatory means of religious conversion to bring the apostolic and indigenous Malankara Church to Roman Catholic faith and under the Pope's See. Conversions, of a similar manner, were carried out not only in India but also in South America and the other parts of the world. This helped the Church of Rome which had been a regional church of West Europe to spread out into different parts of the world.

In the Oriental Churches also famous monasteries (Dayaras) and famous monks originated. Along with them there developed several books regarding monastic life and guides for fulfilling spiritual rigors. It was the monks like Mar Aprem who tried to enrich the liturgical literature of the Church. They renounced the world and its desires and followed very simple style of living. They sat in lowly spots with constant prayer, study of the Holy Bible, meditation and writing interpretations thereby creating a great Christian heritage. Several books of this kind have become great instruments of the Church in its missionary work. For example the compilation of Orthodox spiritual books known as 'Philokalia' was translated and published in five volumes in Malayalam. A member of the church devoted his time and wealth for this endeavour

and as a result a new interest and enthusiasm has developed among the monastic orders of Kerala. The word 'Philokalia' can be translated as 'love of goodness' or 'love of beauty'. Goodness and beauty refer to the eternal goodness and eternal beauty of God.

Mount Athos is a peninsula of Greece lying on the Mediterranean coast. This place is exclusively inhabited by ascetics and has several hermitages. Several ascetics of the Orthodox Church reside there execute their spiritual rigors. Philokalia is a compilation of the deeply spiritual teachings and admonitions and instructions for monastic and ascetic life, of Church fathers since fourth century AD. This book has helped a lot in the spiritual awakening of the Russian Church, which in the most populous of Oriental Orthodox Churches, time and again. In the Orthodox tradition, the major support to the missionary movement is provided by sanctity of life, good spiritual literature and rigors of worship. Unlike that of the Western Church, we do not have the practice of monks going out to convert people. However in modern times some Orthodox Churches have started preaching gospel in different parts of the world and receiving new believers to their fold. The Greek and Russian Churches have gained new followers as a result of their missionary activity in Asian and African countries.

The Coptic Church of Egypt which has communion with our Church in the Holy Eucharist, has widened its witness in Africa and Europe through its missionary work. Several people in the western countries have come forward to accept the Orthodox faith. Such people come forward to the orthodox fold because of their differences with certain practices of the Reformist churches (eg: homosexual marriages) and their eagerness to experience the spirituality of Orthodox . In places where the Orthodox Churches give good witness, many people will naturally be attracted to the Orthodox fold. This is because only the Orthodox tradition upholds the faith, traditions and worship of the ancient church in an unbroken manner. The Orthodox Churches should realize their potential in this regard. It should willfully give more importance to its missionary movement founded on love for human beings and faithfulness to Christ.

The organized monastic movement began in the Malankara Orthodox Church only hundred years back. We are still unable to put into practice the deep rooted relationship between monasticism and mission work. However saintly ascetics like St. Gregorios of Pampady converted their hermitages to Dayaras and bore Christ's witness in the midst of people belonging to different communities in an elaborate and effective manner. Our community carries the memories of several Rambans who converted their asceticism in a similar fashion into good witness of the gospel.

If we examine the ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church we can see that the liturgical literature, missionary activity and social service of the Church will become

effective only if there are plenty of people who lead a lively and complete ascetic life. We can also learn from history that if people who don't have the required call of the Lord to steep themselves in prayer, fasting and spiritual studies and to observe celibacy and those who look upon asceticism as a stepping stone to various positions, take to monasticism it will be a negative witness.

The Mission Board founded by Dr. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios gives leadership to the mission activities the Church today. If the Malankara Church studies about its missionary tasks prayerfully, if it takes strong decisions and executes them and if it finds good missionary movements, we have plenty of possibilities before us.

Activities

1. Make a study of the role played by 'Dayaras' of our Church in evangelism.
2. What can our Church do in the domain of evangelism? List your suggestions.

Unit 2

Orthodox Faith

Chapter 1

Fundamentals of our Faith

Introduction

The fundamental principle of Orthodoxy is belief in the Holy Trinity and the belief that Jesus Christ is the Incarnated God. The belief in Holy Trinity should be upheld like life breath and it should become the guiding model in all domains of our life.

The Holy Trinity

In the writings of the Old Testament, the Holy Trinity is either concealed or only partly revealed. Theologians justify it by pointing out the reference to the veil made by St. Paul. "For until this day the same veil remains inflated in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart" (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). What becomes evident from this is that the truth was only partly revealed during the Old Testament times. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that God spoke to His prophets and the fathers only partly in olden days (Hebrews 1:1). The passages of the Old Testament given below prove the presence of the Holy Trinity.

1. The word for God given in Genesis 1:1 of the Hebrew Bible is 'Elohim'. Grammatically this is a plural word in Hebrew language.
2. Genesis 1:26 says "Then God said, Let **us** make a man-Someone like ourselves". Note that here also the plural word is used.
3. Plural form is used in Genesis 3:22, "Now that the man has become as we are.."
4. The plural form is used in the scattering of human language at the tower of Babel. "Come let us go down and give them different languages " (Genesis 11:6-7).
5. In Genesis chapter 18 the lord reveals himself to Abraham in the oak grove at Mamre as three persons. But Abraham addresses them in the singular form as "Master." The Church Fathers have interpreted it as the revelation of the Holy Trinity.
6. The blessings of the Lord are revealed in three different ways (Numbers 6:24-26). The Church Fathers interpret this also as an indication of the Trinity.
7. The Seraphim in Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6:1-6) praise the Lord as "Holy, Holy, Holy". The Church Fathers interpret this also as the presence of the Holy Trinity.
8. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath (*Rooha*) of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6). Here the Lord is manifested in three different ways as Jehovah, His Word and His breath.

Besides these, there are verses which suggest the presence of the Son or the Holy Spirit. For example Psalm 2:7 says “You are My Son, today I have begotten You”. (Similarly the concept of ‘Spirit’ is revealed in Psalm 143:10 and Isaiah 48:16). In the New Testament, the presence of the Holy Trinity is more explicitly revealed through the descriptions of the Incarnation of God, the Son and the promise and revelation of the Holy Spirit. The voice from heaven and the descend of the dove at the time of Christ’s Baptism are also understood as the revelation of the Holy Trinity.

St. Matthew 28:19 specifically states “in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit”. Even though three persons are described here the singular form “name” is used along with them. From this we understand that even though the Lord reveals Himself in three different ways, He is One. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, the blessings are given in the name of Holy Trinity. Besides, the presence of Holy Trinity is evident when the promise of the Holy spirit is made in St. John 15:26. In the epistles of St. Paul there are served lengthy references to the three persons of the Holy Trinity, especially in the epistle to the Ephesians Chapter 1-3.

The Holy Trinity in the Teaching of Church Fathers

The explanation regarding the Holy Trinity gained a lot of currency in the fourth century AD through the creed of the Church, which became its fundamental doctrine, and other missionary writings. However belief in Holy Trinity was explained at length by the New Testament Church, the Apostolic Fathers and the writings of the Apologists. St. Irenaeus of Lyons in the book, ‘Against the Heresies’ (1:10) says: “Even though the Church has spread worldwide, the faith that are have received in regarding the Only Omnipotent Father, the only Son who incarnated for our salvation and the Only Holy Spirit who announced the business of salvation through prophets and other men of God. The Church which has received this missionary teaching is One in Faith as if belonging to One Family, even though it has spread out across the world.”

St. Basil the Great says that praises like “Praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” “Let there be praise and worship of God the Father and the Holy Spirit along with that of the Son for ever” existed in the Church ever since the period of the Apostles. The three Persons in the Holy Trinity are equal in power and the glory. There is no difference among them. The Fathers of the Early Church teach us that there is no chronological difference among them either. Even though the three persons are different in their manifestation, they are One in their origin. They are eternal in their existence. The Church Fathers has to suffer a lot of hardships in order to affirm the members of the Church in their fundamental faith.

The Church Fathers before the fourth century AD have tried to explain the oneness of the Holy Trinity and the differences among the three persons of the Holy Trinity. The examples they used are: Sun, sunray and light; the root, bunk and fruit of the same tree; spring, pool and stream of water and consciousness, wisdom and

longing. In each of these examples, the origins of all elements are the same. Yet all of them have different forms and expression. However there are more examples. They can't explain the concept of the Holy Trinity fully. St. Gregory Nazianzus, a Church Father of the fourth century AD teaches us that we are unable to comprehend God by comparing Him with any system existing on this Earth.

The Worship of the Holy Trinity

The prayer 'Praise to Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (*Shubaho labo....*) is a very important prayer in our liturgy. We worship the Lord as the Holy Trinity in all forms of our worship including the Holy Eucharist and all other sacraments and rituals. We begin all rituals and end all prayers with the worship of the Holy Trinity.

In the Holy Eucharist, we explicitly celebrate the Holy Trinity during the liturgy of blessing the Censer and when the Holy Mysteries (in Chalice and Paten) are celebrated. When the Holy Mysteries are celebrated during the Holy Eucharist, the expressions of the persons of the Holy Trinity are explicitly stated. God the Father who created everything, God the Son who sustains everything and the Holy Spirit who fulfils everything. The Holy Trinity is explicitly expressed in our Holy Eucharist in this manner. In the sacrament of Baptism, the baptized person is repeatedly marked in the name of the Holy Trinity. In the sacrament of marriage the Holy Trinity becomes the model of love and unity for the couple entering into family life. The wedded couple enter family life with the Holy Altar which is the abode of Father, son and Holy Spirit as their witness. Even in the liturgy of consecrating houses what is most notable, is the presentation of the Holy Trinity. It describes hospitality founded on Holy Trinity as the basis of Christian life by describing the incident of three men of God visiting Abraham. Moreover the benediction that "Let the Holy Trinity reign here" is given to the consecrated home. Thus we can understand that the worship of the Church is the worship of the Holy Trinity.

Incarnation

God the Son incarnated as a human being. He lived as one among us, suffered, died and resurrected. The Church holds to this belief and gives it the same importance given to the belief in the Holy Trinity. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory' (1 Timothy 3:16). This was a hymn of faith in the early Christian Church. This verse describes fully what the Church means by the word 'Incarnation of God'.

Activities

1. Describe the biblical basis of the belief in Holy Trinity.
2. Explain with examples how the Holy Trinity is described in various liturgies.

Chapter 2

The Sacred Tradition

The word tradition comes from the Latin word 'Traditio'. Its root word in Greek is 'Paradosis.' The literal meaning of this word is "something that is transferred through generations." What we mean by tradition is the belief in Holy Trinity and the life based on it revealed in Jesus Christ, and the eternal witness to it given through the Church by the Holy Spirit. Tradition is biblically based and apostolic. St. John explains it accurately. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life. The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the father and was manifested to us..." (1 John 1:1-3).

What the Church looks upon as the holy tradition are the truths of faith handed down from the apostles through the Apostolic and Church Fathers to the present day Church. These truths of faith had first been seen and experienced by the Apostles. They sustained them in the New Testament Church and passed them over to the succeeding generations of the Church through the heads of Church appointed by them. The truths of faith that are thus handed down, sustained and upheld by the Church of today constitute the holy tradition. Most important among them are faith in the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. Whenever teachings contrary to these fundamental beliefs arose, the Church Fathers tried to preserve the greatness of this tradition.

The words of St. Athanasius of Alexandria regarding the Holy faith are notable. "Tradition refers to that faith given by Logos in the beginning and preached by Apostles, preserved by Church Fathers and reared by the Holy Church which is founded on it" (*Epistle to Seraphion*, 28).

Tradition doesn't mean blindly preserving what belongs to the preceding generation without any change. We should view it as a continuum of precedent truths sustained by the Holy Spirit. Tradition is an extension and continuation of the life of the Church in Holy Spirit. St. Basil the great says: 'Our reentry into the paradise is made possible through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, our return through God the Son, our freedom to call the Lord Father our share in eternal glory and our entry into the state of total bliss (*On Holy Spirit XV*). We should look upon the sacred tradition of the Church in the light of this continuing experience made possible by the Holy Spirit.

Fellowship with Heavenly Saints

Our fellowship with saints is a belief that exists in the Church appended to the belief in the Holy Trinity and it is a part of the sacred tradition. It is not meant as a short cut to prayers for personal gains.

The belief that death is not an end and death enables the continuity of eternal life, is a part of the fundamental Christian faith. Those who coexist in this world ask for mutual prayer. This is not looked upon as a short cut. Instead it aims at our unity in prayer. St. Paul reminds us that “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). If so, our fellowship with saints is as important as or more important than our mutual prayers when we live in this world. Jesus Christ reminds us that “who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet reward and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” As far as we are concerned, mutual prayers are also an indicator of the relationship required between members of the Church. A person doesn’t cease to be part of Christ’s body through his death. Hence becoming just and praying are very important part of the sacred tradition of religious life in the Church.

In our fellowship with saints, we give a prominent position to Mother of God. The Church accords great diligence and sanctity to the role of St. Mary in the act of Incarnation. The praise of St. Mary said by Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist (St. Luke 1:41-45) is accepted by the Holy Church as the basis of its continuous fellowship with St. Mary.

Church Fathers since second century AD have repeatedly recorded about fellowship with the saints, especially the fellowship with St. Mary. In the description of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius of Antioch written in the beginning of second century AD, there is the confession of a vision in which the saint was seen to be praying for them in the other world. The holy Church is seen in its fullness through the totality of its visible and invisible levels.

Fellowship with the Departed

Fellowship with the departed is a sacred tradition of the Church which holds equal status with ‘fellowship with the saints.’ This is a great tradition existing in the New Testament Church. While teaching about resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:29 St. Paul asks “What will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?”. What we understand from this is that in the New Testament Church one also remembered one’s preceding generations when he received baptism.

God is eternal. So his love and mercy are eternal. Hence we cannot think that God’s love cease to act upon a person after his death. St. Paul while remembering his fellow preacher Onesiphorus in 2 Timothy 1:18 prays. “The Lord grant to him that

he may find mercy from the Lord in that day.” The Church remembers its departed in the same prayerful vein. The icons used in worship, and the relics of saints are part of the Church tradition which help to affirm ourselves in the fundamentals of our faith.

Activities

1. Explain the biblical basis of the sacred Church tradition based on Ephesians 2:13-14, Galatians 2:8-9, 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15.
2. All our traditions should help us in the development of our faith in Christ. Analyze this statement on the basis of this lesson.

Chapter 3

Church Fathers

The Orthodox Church doesn't give any precise definition regarding who and what are Church Fathers. We do not proclaim a pantheon of Church fathers using certain criteria. However prelates of the Oriental Church were called 'Fathers' ever since the first century AD. All bishops were called 'Pope' which meant 'father'. The equivalent term used in Arabic language was 'Baba' and in Syriac 'Bava'. Later heads of monasteries (or Abbeys) were called 'Abbots' which also meant 'father'.

From the fourth century onwards those who opposed through writings the heresies arising in the Church, and those who defended the true faith came to be called as 'fathers'. Their times and contributions are intimately connected with the defence of eternal faith. Hence Church fathers have a very important role in the Church. In the Oriental Church, the period of Church fathers is approximately upto eighth century AD. Among the Church fathers we remember in the fifth 'Thubden' of the Holy Eucharist, Mar Issac of Nineveh and St. James of Edessa lived upto AD 700 and AD 708 respectively.

The Church Fathers can mainly be divided into four categories.

1. The Church Fathers before the Great Council of Nicaea including the Apostolic Fathers.
2. The Fathers of the Great Councils.
3. The Fathers after the Great Councils.
4. The Monastic Fathers.

From Apostolic Fathers upto the Great Council of Nicaea

The Apostolic Fathers were the contemporaries of Christ and the disciples of the Apostles, who received the teaching directly from Christ's disciples. The three important Apostolic Fathers known for their lives and writings are St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, and St. Polycarp of Smyrna.

The writings of these three Church Fathers are similar to the New Testament Epistles. Their writings remind us that each of the apostles taught faith elaborately along with their letters and these teachings enjoyed great popularity in the early Church. These writings also prove that the biblical writings do not contain the teachings of the Apostles fully. St. Clement of Rome wrote an 'Epistle to the Corinthians' in about AD 96. In chapter 40 of this epistle, he says that the Holy Eucharist should be celebrated at the appointed time, in the stipulated manner. It

should not be altered according to our liking and should be conducted with extreme sanctity.

St. Ignatius of Antioch has seven extant writings to his credit. They are written when he was being taken from Antioch of Rome for persecution. These writings elaborately describe the answer to the question 'who is Christ?' (Christology). These epistles also reveal the roles of 'Episcopa', 'Kashisha' (priest) and 'deacon' in the Church. St. Polycarp of Smyrna opposed the heresy of Doecetism which argued that the sufferings of Jesus Christ in flesh are only illusory.

The writing titled 'Didache' or 'The Teachings of the Twelve Disciples of our Lord' became popular in the Church ever since the first century AD. This work is considered as old as the New Testament writings. In Chapter 14 and 15 of 'Didache', the method of celebrating the Holy Eucharist is described in detail.

During the period between the Apostolic Fathers and the Synod of Nicaea, a lot of in depth theological writings originated in Greek and Latin languages. These writings originated mainly in Asia Minor (present titled Turkey), Antioch and Alexandria. The five volume work of St. Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 155) titled 'Against the Heretics' give a detailed account of the tradition of the early Church. This work also describes the need for right apostolic succession.

St. Clement and Origen of Alexandria are two notable Church Fathers. The writings of St. Clement analyses the Greek and Hebrew-Judaic philosophies in parallel and gave explanations conducive to the acceptance of the goodness of Greek philosophy. Even though the later writing of Origen deviated from the general beliefs of the Church, his biblical interpretations and lengthy visionary writing regarding the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation are significant ones in the Church tradition.

In the three centuries into the Synod of Nicaea, the Church fathers laid a strong foundation from the conservation of true Christian faith based on the demands and circumstances of those times.

The Fathers of the Great General Councils

This period is considered as a golden age in the tradition of Christian writings. During this period there were numerous stalwarts in this field including St. Athanasius of Alexandria, the Cappadocean fathers, St. John Chrysostom (the Golden tongued) and St. Cyril of Jerusalem in Greek language; St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Ambrose of Milan in Latin; and St. Aprem and St. Aphrahath in Syriac.

These Church fathers wrote at length regarding the Incarnation, Logos or God the Son, Holy Trinity and these differences between the three persons constituting the Holy Trinity and their unity of being. During the period of these fathers, Christian faith developed a strong philosophical foundation based on a variety of concepts. Their philosophical writings, speeches, interpretations of the Holy Bible, lengthy

poems, epistles, obituaries, biographies and monastic writings laid this foundation. Their role in formulating the canons of true faith and the Creed of the Church during the three Great Councils is unparalleled. All of them had received world class education available during that time. Their writings are discussed at length and subjected to much research even today.

The writings of Greek and Syrian Fathers of this period lays the foundation of the belief in Holy Trinity of the Oriental tradition. Moreover the writings of people like St. Basil the great provided the general rules and explanation for the conduct of monastic life. Many of the philosophical writings of St. Gregory Nazianzus are the sources of prayers like 'Prumeon' and 'Sedro' used in our liturgy.

Church Fathers after the Great Councils

The theological controversies and the changed political circumstance which arose in and around towns like Alexandria and Constantinople after the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 caused great schisms and divisions in the Church. This developed into an unbridgeable divide as the Oriental Churches with Alexandria as its centre refused to acknowledge the Synod of Chalcedon in AD 451. In the periods that followed the writings of Church Fathers were mainly lengthy interpretations of various philosophical perspectives. The main writers of this period are St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch and St. Philoxenos of Mabbug. They have several theological interpretations as well as biblical interpretations to their credit.

Monastic Fathers

Monasticism came into existence in the Christian Church since the third century AD. It existed as individual monasticism (eremitic or hermit) and community monasticism. The first solitary marks recorded in history are St. Paul and St. Antony of Thebes who lived around AD 250 in the Egyptian desert. Later several people followed this model of asceticism. When the Christian Church received official state recognition in the beginning fourth century AD, a lot of worldliness crept into it. Monasticism is said to have originated as a protest against this worldliness. The monastics wanted to stay away from worldliness and conserve divine nature. Since it was impossible to comply with Christ's love through martyrdom, many took to monasticism as an alternative. They thought that they could attain something equivalent to martyrdom by rejecting the world.

Cenobitic or community monasticism became popular by the end of third century AD and the beginning of fourth century AD. Under the leadership of St. Pachomios, several separate abbeys and convents for monks and nuns were established in different parts of Egypt. He published monastic spiritual texts and rules of monasticism. Later a monastic community was founded in Pontus, Asia Minor by

St. Basil. He also wrote spiritual exercises and rules of life for monks. (The oriental monastic texts of St. Basil were translated into Latin about a century later. It became the fundamental doctrine of Benedictine monastic order of the Roman Catholic Church).

We should look upon the life of Monastic Fathers not as a way of life. Confined to only one period to history. They gave a variety of contributions to the Church through their spiritual guidances, liturgical compositions and spiritual biographies. ‘The Life of St. Antony written by St. Athanasius, ‘The History of Lausiac’ by Palladius, ‘The Life of St. Matrina’ by St. Gregory of Nyssa are some of such writings. The Monastic Fathers kept themselves away from public life and the din and bustle of daily life. Yet they boldly resisted the social evils and practised the purity of the Kingdom of God in their religious lines. Their contributions to the Church are invaluable.

Activities

1. Make a collection of the biographical sketches of Church Fathers commemorated in the fifth diptych (‘Thubden’).
2. Prepare a project report of the contributions of Church Fathers.

Chapter 4

Orthodox Churches Today

Introduction

Today the Orthodox Churches which belong to two families, namely the Oriental Orthodox and the Byzantine Orthodox Churches, have spread out across the world. The radical changes in international boundaries, changes in political circumstances, individual and mass migrations due to a variety of reasons like work, industry or war have caused the spread of churches in various countries. Some Orthodox Churches have started new missionary initiatives in many countries, even though on a minor side.

Oriental Orthodox Churches

There are six churches in this family which have communion in the Holy Eucharist, yet independent.

1. Armenian Apostolic Church: The Armenian church claims the apostolic succession of apostles Bartholomew and Judas. Today it exists worldwide as two Catholicates and two Patriarchates. The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin is given a preeminent position among them. The ancient and famous cathedral church, museum and monasteries are very famous. The majority of the believers are under this Catholicate in Armenia, North America and Europe. The Catholicate of Antelias, Lebanon (Great House of Cicilia) comes next. Even though the Catholicate of Etchmiadzin is given the status of 'first among equal', the one in Lebanon remains independent administratively. Armenian Orthodox Church also has two Patriarchates in Jerusalem and Constantinople. Even though they do not have much following, they are historically very significant.

2. Coptic Orthodox Church: This is an ancient Church founded in AD 42 by St. Mark, the author of Christ's Gospel. It has given very important contributions to Orthodox faith. In olden days the head quarters of this Church was Alexandria, an ancient centre of Christian scholarship. However in the changed political circumstances today, the head quarters has been shifted to Cairo, the capital city. This Church exists today as the largest Christian community in the Africa. The Coptic Church has a long standing monastic tradition. It has several monasteries in Egypt and other countries even today. However at several places in Egypt the members of Coptic Church suffer a lot of hardships from Islamic fundamentalists.

The head of Coptic Church is officially known as 'Pope of Alexandria and whole of Africa'. Pope Shenouda who headed this See till his demise on March 17, 2012 was noted for his traditional Monastic rigour and spiritual vision. His contributions to

Orthodox Church include several notable spiritual texts. The head of Coptic Church is elected through an elaborate and transparent electoral process. The right to elect the head of Coptic Church is vested not only with the bishops but also with priests, laity and the monks. Historically the Orthodox Churches of Ethiopia and Eritrea are considered daughters of the Coptic Church. Both these churches honour the Coptic Pope by giving him the status 'first among equals'. Today Coptic Church is also a missionary church. In the twentieth century two daughter churches namely British Orthodox Church and French Orthodox Church developed as the mission churches of Coptic Orthodox Church.

3. Syriac Orthodox Church: This is a church founded in Antioch, Southern Turkey by St. Peter. Just like Alexandria, Antioch too has an age old Christian tradition. This Church is enriched by a long standing monastic tradition, of liturgical literature and tradition of theologians. The liturgical language is Syriac. However Arabic is also used everywhere now a days. Due to torture and changes in political circumstances this church has few thousand members in Syria at present. The head of Syriac Orthodox Church is known as Patriarch. The relationship between Malankara Church and the Syrian Church began with the coming of St. Gregorios Abdul Jaleel to India in 1665. This relationship became strong by the 19th Century. However estrangements have crept into this relationship in the twentieth century due to various reasons.

4. Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church: Teacher shall give a project on this (Prepare a project report titled 'Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church')

5. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: 'Tewahedo' means being made one. Even though there had been Christian presence in Ethiopia since the first century AD, the Christian Church became the official religion only during the Axumite dynasty in the fourth century AD. It spread out after the efforts of St. Frumentius (known as Aba Salama in Ethiopian language) who reached the shores of Ethiopia following a shipwreck in the fourth century AD. St. Athanasius of Alexandria appointed Frumentius as the bishop of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church existed as a part of the Coptic Orthodox Church till 1948. It became an autonomous church since 1949. In 1959 Pope Cyril VI of the Coptic Church crowned Abuna Basilios as the first patriarch of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Patriarch Abuna Paulose (the fifth Patriarch of the Church) had been the president of World Council of Churches. This church has an age old monastic tradition. It has several active monasteries even today. It is believed that the Ark of the Covenant of Jews is kept in Our lady Mary of Zion' Church in Axum province of Ethiopia. Only one monk in the monastery attached to this church has permission to enter the place where the Ark of the Covenant is kept. A lot of pilgrims visit this church.

6. Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church: This Church became self entitled in 1993. Eritrea which had remained as a confederate country of Ethiopia declared independent in 1991 and became a recognized sovereign country in 1993. Following this the Orthodox Church also became free. In 1998 Abuna Shenouda, the Coptic Pope anointed Abuna Philipose as the first patriarch of Eritrean Orthodox Church. Unstable political conditions and wars with neighboring countries seriously affect the general peace of Church as well. In 2004 Abuna Antonios (3rd patriarch of the Eritrean church) was anointed by Coptic Pope Shenouda in the capital city of Asmara. He was the head of Eritrean church recognized by the Oriental Orthodox Churches. In 2007, the Eritrean government put him under house arrest and confiscated his official symbols. He was denied permission and circumstances to communicate with the external world. No one was permitted to visit him either. He died on February 9,2022. The affairs of the church is today managed by Abuna Dioscorus who is not recognized by the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Byzantine Orthodox Churches

If we consider the Byzantine Orthodox Churches as a single unit, it is the second largest Christian community in the world.

1. Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: This patriarchate is considered the most important one among the fourteen Byzantine Churches which have communion in the Holy Eucharist and yet independent. Even though this patriarchate has only very few followers when compared with the Russian Orthodox Church, it has much prominence because of the historical importance of Constantinople. The Patriarch is given the position of 'first among equals' by the other Byzantine Orthodox Churches. Hence the Patriarch of Constantinople is also known under the title of Ecumenical Patriarch' (Constantinople is today known as Istanbul, the capital of Turkey. Hence the headquarters of this church is in Istanbul). Some of the self-entitled orthodox churches are the Finnish Orthodox Church of Finland, Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, The Patriarchal Exarchate of Russian Church in West Europe, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, and Korean Orthodox Church are considered independent Archdioceses of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Among them the Korean Orthodox Church is a missionary church of the Russian Orthodox Church.

2. Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria: Like the Coptic Orthodox Church, this church also has the succession of St. Mark the evangelist. The liturgical books of this Church have been translated into the languages of its believers and this Church is in the forefront of Orthodox missionary activities.

3. Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch: This church is headed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch. The headquarters of the church is Damascus of Syria.

It gives a lot of importance to missionary activities and is quite active in Western Europe and America. It is also in the forefront of publishing Orthodox literature.

4. Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem: This Church was established in the fifth century. The ancient St. Catherine Monastery in Mount Sinai is under this Patriarchate.

5. Russian Orthodox Church: Russian Orthodox Church is the largest Christian community among the Orthodox Churches. The headquarters of the Church is the Danilov monastery in Moscow. The liturgical language of the Church is Slavonic. The self entitled rites of Russian Orthodox Church include Latvian Orthodox Church, Moldovan Church belonging to the Estonian group of Churches and Japanese and Chinese Orthodox Churches belonging to the Ukrainian group. The Russian Church enriches the orthodox tradition by its iconography and by its ancient and modern architectural styles.

6. Serbian Orthodox Church: The Serbian Orthodox Church spans in countries like Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia. Besides it has a following in America, Australia and European Union. As a result of the Kosovo war in 1999 several churches and monasteries which were considered sacred by the Church became abandoned. The theological writings of Fr. Dr. K. M. George, which were translated into Serbian language has gained popularity in this Church.

7. Romanian Orthodox Church: Romanian Orthodox church members in Romania and Moldova. It also has several parishes in Western Europe and America. The Church met with a lot of sufferings under the communist rules of Romania. From 1987 onwards the Church was given permission to function and its growth accelerated thereafter. The Church's contribution to theological literature is quite significant.

8. Bulgarian Orthodox Church: This Church is the largest Christian presence in the Balkan region. The Christian church was established in the Balkan region as a result of the evangelical activity of Christ's disciple St. Andrew in the first century. It seceded from Constantinople Patriarchate in AD 870 and became a self entitled Church.

9. Georgian Orthodox Church: Christianity reached Georgia in the fourth century AD after Iberia accepted Christianity in the fourth century AD. The headquarters of this church is Tbilisi in Georgia. In 1990 the Patriarchate of Georgia seceded from the Patriarchate of Constantinople and became a self-entitled church. The Church got official documents of recognition from the government since 2002.

10. American Orthodox Church: This Church is composed mainly of Russian and members of other Byzantine Orthodox Churches. The self entitlement of this Church was recognized by the Russian-Bulgarian, Georgian, Polish and Czech-Slovak Orthodox Churches by 1970. Even though this Church has only less members, it gives a lot of contributions to the young generation of the Orthodox Churches across the world in general and to the young generation of America in particular.

The other Orthodox Churches in the world are:

1. Cyprus Orthodox Church believed to be established by St. Barnabas.
2. Greek Orthodox Church which became independent from the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1833.
3. Polish Orthodox Church which became independent from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1948.
4. Albanian Orthodox Church which became independent from Constantinople in 1937.
5. Church and Slovakia Orthodox Church which became independent from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1951.

Activities

1. Make an approximate estimate of the total number of believers under various Orthodox Churches of the world.
2. Find out the Churches which have the tradition of apostolic succession.
3. Find out the circumstances which led to the strained relationship between Syriac Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Church.
4. What is meant by Oriental Orthodox Churches?

Unit 3

Orthodox Worship

Chapter 1

Spirituality: An Orthodox Perspective

Spirituality is not an added phenomenon to human nature rather it is an essential part, or the crux of it. That is the reason why manifestations of spirituality are plenty in human nature and behavior. Human being is not only a physical body; but is a compact whole containing body, mind and spirit. Since human beings are created by God and was found good, spirituality comes natural to humans. It is the rule and influence of the Holy Spirit that the physical body and the unseen mind are governed by the spirit.

Humans are created in the image and likeness of God, so says the Holy Bible, which means there are areas of similarity between God and the created human beings. human beings have the native capacity and potential to love, forgive, serve, and make sacrifices like God. The 'Fall' of human beings, when they disobeyed God and assumed that they could exist by themselves without depending on anyone outside them self, including God, effected an enormous transformation on them. After the Fall, they were condemned to die and disappear into 'the absence of God.' The genre of human's life is from God; and it is self deception to assume that human beings became like what they are either by their own will or by some physical or scientific phenomena.

Spirituality is at the heart of every great religion. Ancient religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism all share in this. There seem to have a complementarity of religion in the basic idea of the fundamental spirituality of human beings. Spirituality in the Orthodox faith and tradition is a state in which there is a constant attempt on the part of human beings to free from the shackles of materialism and sin, and regain the blessed state of being the image and likeness of God in its fullness.

Strictly speaking, spirituality deals with the operations of the Holy Spirit in us. Spiritual progress is not measured by our constant effort alone. Ultimately it is the grace of God that makes us to 'will' towards purity and perfection. Thus it is not wrong to assume that spiritual progress is a gift of God, but at the same time, it demands to constant and sincere preparation and effort on our part to climb up the ladder that elevates us step by step in to heights of spirituality, where we are transformed and translated into the holiness and perfection of the Lord.

We find some very strong examples and images in the Holy Bible which speaks a lot about spiritual progress of humans. Genesis accounts give us the story of Jacob,

son of Isaac, who is shown a ladder that reaches up to heaven, in a dream. The image of the 'ladder of ascent' is a powerful image, simply because Jacob is at the bottom of the ladder, and he finds God standing at the top of the ladder and talking to him endearingly. Gospel accounts record a teaching of Lord Jesus that 'if anyone wants to follow Him, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Him'. Actually it was for the 'following', ie. to follow faithfully the footsteps of the Lord, that He 'called' His disciples. St. Paul claims that he was taken up to the heights of heaven in a trance (2 Cor. 12-2-3).

Another significant factor is the emphasis on 'transformation.' On Mount Tabore, on top of which Jesus was transfigured, teaches that the ultimate destiny for us is not just to have a vision of the glory of God; but to get transformed in ourselves and share in divine nature and glory. Moses went up mount Sinai as commanded by God. As he was descending the mountain, his face shone brightly that Israelites could not look at his face. Spirituality talks about the transformation of the individual through continuous dissociation with sin and evil, and attempt at association with God and His grace.

It is wrong to assume that only a select few—the saints—who can advance in spirituality. In fact, every human being is called to their unceasing process of transformation and spiritual ascent. However it is not achieved in a day; there is the demand for strenuous preparation, humility, self sacrifice and unconditional love for all.

The Desert 'Fathers' and 'Mothers', who present before us eternal models of spiritual transformation, exhort us to completely obey and put into practice the twin commandments of 'love of God' and 'love of human beings'. They bear witness to the fact that spiritual transformation and progress calls for enormous and continuous struggle, in which one needs to be steadfast and long suffering. Yet it must never for a moment forgotten that spiritual ascent and growth is not achieved without the flowering of the grace of God in us.

The monks of the Desert tradition adopted 'flight from the world' as a primary condition for their spiritual warfare and progress. The cardinal principle was that attachment to the 'world' and 'flesh' were the real impediments to spiritual advancement. The two words, 'world' and 'flesh' signified for them passions and tendencies in humans which work against the dominance of all things which are Godly and rights. They practised 'renunciation' of the world, not just for individual salvation, but to defeat the devil, the enemy of all good things, who tempt human beings to renounce God and the goods. They always warn that the ways of the demons are subtle and stealthily accomplished.

The two genuine models for Orthodox spirituality are the martyrs and the monasteries. They provide perennial examples as to how to struggle against the forces

of evil, which always attempt to defeat us in the subtle manner possible. Sometimes they appear like angels of light. The enemy had dared to tempt even Jesus Christ when he was hungry, after the forty days fast in the wilderness. So one needs to be constantly vigilant to identify and defend against the designs of demons. Fighting the demons is only one part of the schedule of spiritual growth. Humility was the cardinal virtue which they valued. At the same time they spared no toil, in nurturing and developing virtues in them.

The life, and teachings of these spiritual stalwarts inspire us to raise and answer issues like

- What is the goal of spiritual life?
- What are the means to reach the goal?
- What factors help us to reach the goal?
- What factors hinder spiritual development?
- How to measure spiritual growth?
- What are the fruits of the spirit?

Anyone who would wish to take to the path of spirituality and spiritual progress may have to ponder on these questions and seek for answers in themselves. As pointed out earlier, it is the conviction of the Orthodox Church, that the way of spirituality is open to all, and not just to a chosen few. Unless there is spiritual progress, Christian life runs dry, and slowly opens the door for the enemy to enter and work. The Western view of spirituality says that the ultimate destiny of the spiritual person is 'vision' of God.

However the Eastern Orthodox Churches hold a different view. They affirm that spiritual progress is an 'unending growth.' The idea is that the spiritual person is not satiated at any point in his life about the progress he has attained. He always, moves forward with further spiritual exercises with a kind of 'divine discontent. St. Gregorios of Nyssa is the great exponent of this idea. While the unending process of transformation and transfiguration is reckoned as the destiny of the person, the path to this goal is identified as 'asceticism' or life of spiritual discipline. 'Flight' from the world of passions, silence, fasting, vigils, spiritual reading, manual work, meditation, and self sacrifice are considered as the means or 'spiritual exercises' to reach the goal of spirituality. These exercises are to be constantly resorted to by the seeker.

The exhortation of St. Paul 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thess 5:16) was taken seriously by the Eastern Orthodox monks, mystics and spiritualists. One way to realize their goal, according to them, was to repeat the 'Jesus Prayer' or 'Prayer of the heart' constantly at heart. This was to be done linking the one sentence prayer to breathing and every heart beat. This is the prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

have mercy on me, a sinner'. This became a kind of 'mantra' for the Eastern monks and mystics.

The ultimate aim of spiritual progress, in the Eastern Orthodox view is described as 'Theosis' or 'Divinization'. This goal certainly contain the essential idea of transformation of individuals and communities and the grace granted to humans in partaking in the 'nature of God.' We are created in the 'image and likeness' of God, and God has blessed us with the will and wisdom to freely choose the good and be on the road to being like God. This exactly is the route leading of 'Theosis' or 'Divinization.' We need to discern that the Orthodox concept of 'Theosis' transcends the idea of 'imitation' and 'vision of God' stipulated by Western Churches, as the goal of spirituality.

In fact we are created as spiritual beings, and as St. Augustine of Hippo said we never find real rest until we rest in God. Speaking in practical terms, we as Orthodox Christian, fasting, vigil, reading and meditating on the Scriptures and serve the poor and needy. Although these are "obligatory" on our part, it is the benign grace of God that transforms us steadily from the level of worldliness to the blessed state of Theosis. However much we practice self-disciplining we never qualify for God's grace. But God is loving, kind and gracious enough to grant us the opportunity by to regain 'the image and likeness' of God.

The soul of the 'process of unending growth' prescribed for spiritual growth, is always anchored on the substance of all commandments—of loving God and human beings. The twin commandments contain the soul of all spiritual endeavours.

Chapter 2

Features of Orthodox Worship

The word 'Orthodox' means 'right faith' or 'right worship'. In early periods this word was translated as 'having corrected faith.' The Oriental Orthodox Churches assumed the name 'Orthodox' in the sense that they follow right faith and right worship in contrast to the heretics. The perception of Orthodox Fathers is that right faith is the basis of right worship or in other words, right faith gets expressed through right worship. Therefore there are several features that distinguish Orthodox worship from the worship of other churches. Marthoma Church which splitted away from Malankara Orthodox Church in 1889 and Syro Malankara Catholic Rite (part of Roman Catholic Church) which splitted away in 1930 basically follow the Orthodox liturgy.

Worship is an enlivening experience in which the heaven and the earth merge. The entire creation is raised in Spirit towards the Creator and the heavenly experiences through worship. Simultaneously God in heaven establishes His tabernacle on earth with us and other mundane objects, dwells in it and communes with us. "Behold the tabernacle of God, is with men." This statement in the Book of Revelation is quite meaningful with regard to Orthodox worship (Revelation 21:3).

Local Language

One feature of Orthodox worship is the active participation of people. The Orthodox churches use local language for worship in order to ensure this participation. During the time of the apostles, the language used in Palestine was Aramaic. Even though the worship in towns like Jerusalem and Antioch were in Greek, the prayers were translated into Aramaic for the benefit of people coming from rural areas. Even though Greek was the liturgical language of Antioch in the early period, it was later replaced by Syriac as the importance of Greek dwindled. Malankara which accepted the Oriental liturgy used Syriac during the early period. However, all these services were later translated into Malayalam. As the Church spread to other states, all services including the Holy Eucharist are getting translated into other languages. The translation of Holy Eucharist into Tamil, Kannada, Konkani, Hindi, English, and German have taken place in the twentieth century. Yet, as Oriental Christians we retain certain Syriac words in our liturgy even today.

Participation of the Laity

The tradition of Orthodox Church insists that if the Holy Eucharist is to be said, there should be at least the deacon and one layman representing the faithful, present

in the church. Throughout the liturgy, there are arrangements for all those who participate in public worship, to worship God using all the five senses. Our liturgy provides opportunities to see (the decorations of Madbaha, Holy of Holies and vestments), hear (music), smell (incense), touch (exchange of peace) and taste (Holy Communion). With the advent of the choir, the believers are sometimes relegated to the position of mere spectators today. This is a wrong trend. The aim of choir should be only to lead the believers in worship. More number of melodious prayers are included in the worship in order to ensure the collective participation of the believers. But in order to understand the meaning of the songs used in worship, the people and the priests who lead them should act in tandem. Only then will a heart rending worship become possible.

Worship is not Individual Centered

The community rather than the individual is more important in Orthodox worship. The Church worships God as one community. We have modelled our prayers on Lord Father in heaven. Usages like 'I, my and mine' are very rare in Orthodox worship. However Orthodox worship may seem distasteful for communities which like to pray, 'Give me my daily bread' instead of 'Give us our daily bread'. Only such selfish people can leave this 'right worship' and migrate to other fellowships.

Instruction of Faith through Worship

Orthodox fathers perceive worship as the most important medium of instructing the right faith. This is because theology is something that should not be learned through intellectual and logics thinking. Faith should be learned through worship with the help of Holy Spirit. We can understand that 'Sedra', 'Prumeyon' and songs contain studies in faith. The song 'The tree that bore the wonderful fruit' is a fine example. How sharply does this song react against those heretics who spoke against St. Mary! The 'Sedras' used in Services on the Pentecost and Deneha are in depth studies and expressions of our faith in the Holy Trinity.

Rich in Biblical Passages

The Orthodox liturgy is rich in biblical passages. We will understand this only if we part take in worship with diligence and concentration. Just like in learning faith, the Church has grounded meditation of the Holy Bible also, on the liturgy. Readings from Old and New Testaments and from the Gospels are part of our liturgy. Plenty of Psalms are included in each hourly prayer. Besides biblical passages are included in several songs and prayers. The prayer cycle called 'Kukiliyon' which is very important in Orthodox liturgy always begins with the singing of a Psalm. Those who attend the worship meditatively will undoubtedly be surprised at the biblical scholarship of our Church Fathers.

Intercessory Prayers

Just as we don't focus on personal and selfish needs in our prayer, another aspect in which we take special care is in praying for others. There are two types of intercessory prayers in our liturgy—we pray for others, we seek refuge in the intercession of Saints. Our liturgy has plenty of prayers for the living as well as the departed. The intercessory prayers known as 'Thubden' are examples. The songs known as 'Hymns of Eucharistic Devotion' are also intercessory prayers. Here we seek refuge in the intercession of St. Mary and other saints and remember them and the departed as well in God. One prayer in the preparatory prayers for the Holy Eucharist is notable. 'By virtue of this Eucharist of Thanksgiving placed before us, we verily remember Adam, Our Father, Eve, our mother, St. Mary, Mother of God, prophets and apostles'. The incorrect school of thought that prayer is seeking favours from God for personal needs existed since ancient times. Orthodox liturgy is a correction of this notion altogether.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Prayer to the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life to all is an important component of Orthodox liturgy. Orthodox theology states that the Holy Spirit is the Giver of Life to everything and the one who fulfils everything. That is why prayers to the Holy Spirit are given so much importance. In sacraments like Holy Eucharist, Baptism, Ordination and consecration of the Mooron, there are special prayers invoking the Holy Spirit (*Kroithod Rooho* or the invoking of the Holy Spirit). In all such occasions the deacon would proclaim the importance of the occasion to the people ("My Beloved, the living Holy Spirit condescends from the heights of Heaven above and broods..."). The duty of we believers on such occasions is to pray for the advent of the Holy Spirit in us in order to guide us, just as He had condescended on the Sacrament.

Use of the Icons

Orthodox Church decorates the places of worship with pictures of saints to suggest that saints and departed believers are with us in worship. Icons which reveal theological truths are more meaningful than mere pictures. It is in the 12th and 13th centuries that icons gained an important place in Orthodox worship. Icon drawing requires the total disciplining of fasting and prayers and hence most of the iconographers are monks. Icons are drawn by controlling artistic techniques through in depth mental and spiritual disciplining. The Church has accorded the same importance of the Word of God to the icons. Some of our churches and 'Dayaras' (monasteries) give much importance to icons. Icons have been gaining currency in the Church. While in many places ordinary pictures are used instead.

Worship that Provides an Ecological Consciousness

There are plenty of songs, 'Sedras' and portions from Psalms in Orthodox worship which help in providing ecological consciousness to people. Today, all churches discuss about the environment and take steps for environmental conservation. But our Church Fathers had, right from the beginning, tried to develop an ecological aptitude through the atmosphere of the liturgy itself. We can see references to earth, sky, air, water, trees and plants at several places in our liturgy. For example look at the song "There rose light in darkness to the righteous..." given in the Sleeba Namaskaram morning prayer.

Importance of Music in Orthodox Worship

Our liturgy was originally composed in Syriac. Before the relationship with Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (from 17th century), the liturgy was in Chaldean Syriac. The Syriac language is generally musical. Orthodox liturgy reflects this feature of the language. As there are a lot of poetical passages included, the believers enjoy greater participation and spiritual pleasure. Moreover it pacifies the hearts of the listeners. Many Syriac musical notes are timeless. Songs composed in Syriac musical notes make our worship different from other types of Christian worship. Most of the songs used in our worship can be sung in eight different notes. Our Fathers have made this arrangement to avoid the monotony of listening to the same musical note everyday. The book containing the basic principles of this musical arrangement is called 'Eckhara'. The word Eckhara means 'basis'.

Activities

1. Find out the psalms in the 'Kukiliyons' used in the Holy Eucharist.
2. Compare the song "Give Good word Oh mind..." (*Nalkuka nanmozhi manasame*) sung in the sacrament of blessing the rings, with verses 1-3 of Psalms 45.
3. Discuss the lacunas in our worship habits that need to be rectified.
4. State the importance of intercessory prayer in Orthodox liturgy.
5. Find out prayers to the Holy Spirit used in the Holy Eucharist.

For Further Reading

1. Fr. Dr. B. Varghese, In Spirit and Truth.
2. Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios, Light of Freedom
3. Bishop H. Pecken Ham Walsh, Holy Eucharist: A Meditative Study
4. Mathews Mar Barnabas, A Meditative Study of Holy Eucharist

Chapter 3

Orthodox Liturgy

Worship was in existence since the beginning of humankind. Sacrifice, which is the epitome of worship, also existed since the beginnings. However there weren't well organized liturgies in the beginning. Worship was conducted in the manner suggested by tribal heads. But by the time of Moses, special priestly class and definite forms of worship emerged according to God's commandments. During Solomon's period God's temple and spectacular systems of worship developed. It is quite natural that practices of Jewish worship influenced Christian worship when Christian Church originated. Liturgies, in their infancy, took shape in Jerusalem, which was the mother of all Christian Churches. As the Church spread across the world, Church life and liturgy developed, assimilating the culture and traditions of the respective places.

Liturgy of Malankara Orthodox Church

There are scanty proofs regarding the liturgy that existed in Malankara before the advent of the Portuguese. It is a historical truth that all the liturgical books of the native Church were destroyed in connection with the Synod of Udayamperor. After the Oath of Koonan Cross in 1653, members of Malankara Church who stood away from the Portuguese independently, sought ecclesiastical help from various foreign churches. Finally they established relationship with Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and Western Syrian liturgy became widespread in Malankara. Today most part of this liturgy have got translated into Malayalam and English. Yet the form and content of our liturgy is the same as that of Western Syrian liturgy. Hence certain technical words of Syriac are still retained in our Holy Eucharist.

Prayers of Canonical Hours

In Orthodox liturgy, the Holy Eucharist is the epitome of worship. However, the believers are compulsorily obliged to say Hourly prayers at the designated Hours of the day. Even though prayers can be said at any time, it is mandatory for an Orthodox believer to say prayers seven times (at seven specified hours) a day. The Church has permitted the believers to say prayers of these seven canonical Hours at two times a day. In the Oriental tradition, a day begins with vespers. The seven canonical hours are Evening (Sandhya), Late Evening (Soothara), Midnight (Rathri), Morning (Prabhatham), Third watch, Sixth watch (Noon) and Ninth watch. The Church has permitted to conduct the prayers of Ninth watch, Evening and Late evening together as evening prayer and the rest in the morning.

The seven canonical hours are often correlated with the seven stages of Christ's Passion. However we can understand from the Psalms that the practice of praying seven times existed since the Old Testament period. King David says "Seven times a day I Praise you because of Your righteous judgements" (Psalms 119:164). During the lent and the Three Day's Fast, we have the practice of saying the prayers of the seven specified Hours as three times. On Saturdays and Sundays of the lent, the prayers of ordinary days have to be followed.

Actions or Gestures that Accompany Prayers

In prayers, the body, soul and mind participate together. "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). Prayer is the time when the mind communes with God with concentration. But in the Oriental tradition, our body also becomes a participant in worship. All our prayers begin with the recital of 'Kauma'. The word 'Kauma' means 'standing up'. It is called Kauma because such prayers are said by standing up. The Orthodox practice is to stand up in God's presence while saying the prayers.

Crossing oneself and genuflecting are important components of Orthodox worship (Exodus 4:31, 12:27). The Church insists on genuflecting at the specified hours of prayer except on Sundays, 'Moranaya' festivals and days from the Resurrection to the Pentecost. The liturgies of Three days Fast and the Lent are arranged in such a manner that there are forty genuflections after the prayers at noon. Ten of them are made by reciting 'Kuriyelaison', another ten by reciting 'O Lord, have mercy up on us,' yet another ten by reciting 'O Lord, Benevolently have mercy up on us' and the last ten by reciting "O Lord Answer us by having mercy upon us'. In the days of Communion, we do not genuflect till evening.

The Components that make up worship

All Hourly prayers in Orthodox church begin with praising the Holy Trinity. If the Priest is present, the Hourly prayers usually begin with the Syriac verse 'Shubaho Labo Ulabbrowala Rooho Kadisho' which means "Glory to Father, Son and the Holy Spirit". Similarly all Hourly prayers begin and end by reciting the 'Kauma'. The 'Kauma' and the Creed of the Church are the pillars of worship and the Orthodox Church never eschew them in worship. Similarly reading of the Scriptures is also part of all services. The reading of six passages from the Holy Bible, including three readings from the Old Testament books is a unique feature of Orthodox liturgy.

The components of Orthodox liturgy include 'Slooso' or the preliminary prayer used in Canonical Hourly prayers and services, 'Prumeyon' or Introductory prayer, 'Sedra' or chain of prayers, 'Hoosoyo' or prayer of Absolution, 'Ethro' or Prayers using

incense, and 'Hoothomo' or concluding prayer. Among these 'Hoothomo' alone are sometimes recited as songs.

Kukiliyon (Intercessory Recitals)

Kukiliyons are a kind of worship that have influenced the Orthodox liturgy very much. This word means 'cycle of prayers'. All Kukiliyons begin with a passage from the Psalms. At the end of it, we will have a praise of the Holy Trinity ('Shubaho.. MenaO'lam' meaning 'Praise to Father, Son and Spirit, right from the beginnings and forever). The succeeding passage is called 'Ekbo' (This word means 'step' or 'stair'). 'Ekbos' end by saying 'Sthaumen kalos' meaning "we should stand befittingly upright." This is followed by songs called 'Kolos'. They are a cluster of two or more songs composed in the same musical note. There will be praise of the Holy Trinity in between. 'Kolos' end with the recital of 'Moriyo Rahem Melainu Adarein' (meaning 'Lord, help us by having mercy upon us'). This is the time of praying with incense. There are a lot number of worships arranged in this fashion in the Church. The Kukiliyons generally used in the Holy Eucharist are titled Mother of God, Saints, the departed priests, the departed and the Cross. We can see the presence of 'Kukiliyons' in the liturgies of Baptism, Marriage, and Blessing of houses.

Canonical Offices (Sheema Prayer)

Orthodox Church insists that all members of a family should say morning prayers and vespers together at home everyday. For this the synod has recognized and published a book 'Book of Family worship.' The Canonical Hourly prayers of Ninth watch, evening and late evening are meant to be said in the evening and those of Night, Morning, Third watch and midday are meant to be said in the morning. However the book of prayer followed in seminaries and 'Dayaras' (monasteries) are Canonical Offices (Sheema prayer). Here the topic of prayer for each day will be different according to the importance of that day. Sunday is the day of commemorating Christ's 'Kyamtha' (Resurrection). Monday and Tuesday are days of repentance. Wednesday is the day commemorating Mother Mary (It is the prayers for Wednesday in the Canonical Offices that we use as 'Sleeba' prayer on Sundays). Thursday is the day commemorating the Apostles, Malpans and Episcopas. Friday commemorates the passion of Jesus Christ. Saturday commemorates all the departed. The Hourly prayers said during the Lent, Three Day Fast and the Passion Week are different from Ordinary prayers.

Prayer of Incense

Submission of incense is an integral part of Orthodox liturgy. There is an important place for incense burning in Hourly prayers, Holy Eucharist and other sacramental practices. Burning of incense had great importance in the worship during

the Old Testament period. There was a separate table for burning incense in the tabernacle of Jehovah (Exodus 30:1-10). There are several suggestions in the Book of Revelation regarding the burning of incense. St. John here says that the prayer of the Church which is the New Israel is like the golden bowl full of incense submitted in God's presence (Revelation 5:8). Burning of incense is a symbol of total submission before God. Burning of incense has a symbolic meaning too. Just as fragrance of incense fills the House of God, the life of the believers too should be filled with love and goodness. Incense removes the foul smell and the wastes in the atmosphere. Burning of the incense is also a symbol of the cleaning of time and space through worship of the Church.

Activities

1. Conduct a sample survey among Sunday school students and find out the percentage of homes saying family prayer both in the morning and in the evening.
2. Analyse and study the significance of various parts of the bowl of incense.
3. Find out the passages from psalms used in the 'Kukiliyon' of funeral services.
4. Write a brief account of the prayers to be said in homes during morning and evening.
5. Describe the seven specific times of worship and their characteristics.

For Further Reading

1. Yuhanon Mar Severios, The System of Church Services (*Sushrusha samvidhana sahayi*)
2. Joseph Mar Pachomios, Worship and Rituals of the Orthodox Church
3. Rev. Fr. Dr. B. Varghese, Abba Father
4. Mathews Mar Barnabas, Holy Eucharist: A Meditative Study

Chapter 4

Feasts of the Orthodox Church

Orthodox Church gives great importance to community worship along with worshipping God as individuals and families. Our Church Fathers thought that the more the members of the Church could assemble in one accord for community worship of God, the more will be the benediction. This led to the increased importance of feasts in the church. During the Old Testament period, the Jews observed a number of feasts as per God's commandment. During the major feasts like the Passover, and the Pentecost Jews assembled in the temple of Jerusalem and prayed.

The word feast means 'Great day'. Therefore all feasts of the Church are connected in one way or other with Jesus Christ. Feasts are conducted to commemorate the important events in the life of Jesus Christ or in the Church founded by Him (Eg: feast of the Cross) and also to observe the memory of Apostles, Church Fathers and Saints. As far as a parish is concerned, feasts are observed on the day of laying its foundation stone or on the day of commemoration of the patron saint of that parish.

Moranaya Feasts

The word 'moran' means 'of our Lord'. All Sundays are moranaya days, the feast commemorating Christ's Resurrection. Besides, the days commemorating the important events in Christ's life are also Moranaya feasts. Annunciation of Mother Mary, Christmas, Christ's temple entry, Baptism, Transfiguration, Resurrection and the Pentecost belong to the category of Moranaya feasts (among them Resurrection and the Pentecost fall on Sundays and hence are not accounted in the list of Moranaya feasts). Besides these, the days of commemorating people connected with Christ's incarnation are also observed as Moranaya feasts. Important among them are feasts connected with Mother of God (Shoonoyo or Dormition of Mother Mary). The Church has also commanded the observance of some feasts in the same status as Moranaya feasts. The commemoration of Apostles of Jesus Christ and Martyrs who suffered and died for Christ belong to this category. The commemoration of St. Peter and St. Paul on June 29 and St. Thomas Day on July 3 (or December 21) are Moranaya feasts in Malankara Orthodox Church.

How should Sundays be observed?

On this day we should keep away from worldly work and undertake spiritual works like partaking in the Holy Eucharist, reading of the Holy Bible, Prayer and singing Hymns. We shouldn't idle away our time indolently ('Principles of Religious Instruction'). The Church doesn't permit genuflection or fasting on that day (read Isaiah 58: 13, 14). Even though Moranaya feasts are to be observed in a similar manner,

the Church doesn't place a compulsory insistence on them due to the limitations of living conditions in the contemporary age.

The Utility and Usefulness of Observing Feasts

By commemorating the important events of Jesus Christ's incarnated life at different times of the year, we experience a contemporarily with Him. When we observe the memory of Saints, we can imitate their exemplary life, steadfastness of faith and love for Jesus Christ in our lives. We would get God's grace and blessings through their intercession. Moreover the feasts are occasions to praise God for the benefits showered on the Church and the world, through the saints.

The Greatest Feast

The greatest feast for a Christian is Easter. Jesus Christ who died on the cross got resurrected. This historical truth distinguishes Christian religion from all other religions of the world. That event which enabled our salvation gladdens us most. That is why we celebrate all Sundays as feasts. However unfortunately, believers attending Easter services are reducing in number and this tendency should be corrected.

Special Rituals associated with Feasts

We shall note that the rituals associated with the observance of feasts are suitable to the nature and content of such feasts. The ritual of bonfire in Christmas service, is symbolic of the glorious light seen by shepherds on the night of Jesus Christ's birth and the light that rose over the world which was in darkness. We put frankincense in the bonfire commemorating the shepherds who came to submit their gifts to child Jesus and the wise men who presented gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense to Him. When we do so, we can meditate on our own submission before God. This ritual is conducted at the end of midnight prayer before the Praise of the Angels.

On 'Danaha', or Christ's baptism the ritual of consecrating water commemorating Jesus Christ's baptism is done. When the Holy Trinity arose in River Jordan, St. John the Baptist, revealed the One who baptizes in fire and soul to the world. Hence this feast is called feast of arising or 'Denaha'. The important section in the feast of Resurrection is the proclamation of Resurrection. The priest declares "Our Lord Jesus Christ has resurrected from the Dead and has defeated His enemies". The believers reply that "We believe and verily confess that He has truly risen from the dead".

The present services on the feast of the Pentecost are quite lengthy. The service of the Pentecost has three parts—those addressing the Father, those addressing the Son and those addressing the Holy Spirit. The consecrated water is sprinkled over the faithful after each of these services. The believers who got baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, get a renewal of their baptism through the service of the Pentecost.

‘Hawd Maalakhe’

The celebration of the Holy Cross known as ‘Hawd Maalakhe’ is a pattern of worship included in all special services of the Orthodox Church except in the service of the Pentecost. This is the practice of reciting a ‘Kauma’ elaborately with ceremony and revelry. Normally the words of response are ‘O!, the One who got Crucified for us...’ But in feasts the words of response are changed according to the occasion. It is a heavenly worship in which the Church praises God jointly with the nine choirs of angels in heaven and with all living creatures above, below and in between. The celebration of the Holy Cross is done on Christmas, mid Lent, Good Friday, Easter and Ascension and on occasions of consecrating the church, and chapels. ‘Hawd Madakhe’ is celebrated on the feast of Danaha along with consecrated water, on Palm Sunday along with consecrated palm and in consecration of ‘Mooron’ along with ‘Mooron’.

The Unnecessary Luxuries in Feasts

The feasts of saints who lived and died for Jesus Christ have today become occasions for unnecessary luxuries. We celebrate the feast of a saint to glorify the name of Jesus Christ and to imitate his path of sanctity in our lives. Instead many feasts have today dwindled into luxuries and commotions. Our upcoming generations should raise their voice against such practices. When we celebrate feasts of martyrs (like St. George, St. Thomas, St. Peter and St. Paul) we should think and meditate over why they embraced death eschewing the world. We should avoid celebrations which do not have any connection with their lives. When we celebrate the feasts of the saints of Malankara like St. Gregorios of Parumala, and St. Dionysius we should meditate on their practices in life and try to imitate their lives. These festivals should help us in praising God who gifted them to the Church.

Activities

1. Prepare a list of the festivals of the Jews.
2. What are Moranaya feasts? Find out their dates.
3. Discuss the non-Christian practices associated with feasts conducted in various churches. Attempt a study of the unnecessary luxuries and spendthriftiness in connection with feasts.

For Further Reading

1. Joseph Mar Pachomios, The Worship and Ritualistic Practices of Orthodox Church
2. Geevarghese Mar Ivanios, ‘Nirlepam’
3. Fr. Dr. B. Varghese, In Spirit and Truth

Unit 4

Learning and Teaching in Sunday School

Teaching and learning are interrelated like two sides of a coin. Teachers should always focus on preparing the students for effective learning through their teaching process. This is a painstaking task. This service of God should be taken up powerfully and executed with proper preparation.

The four chapters of this unit aim at providing an overall concept regarding learning and teaching in Sunday school. The first chapter details with the goals and basic components of learning and teaching. The second chapter explains various teaching methods and how they can be utilized in the Sunday school classes. The third chapter describes various learning aids and their uses. The fourth chapter describes the talents and preparations necessary for a Sunday School Teacher. The activities given at the end of each chapter should be worked out. Further information regarding this can be collected from your teachers.

Chapter 1

Learning and Teaching in Sunday School

Introduction

Teaching can be made effective only if we understand what is learning and teaching. Teaching has certain specific goals. If the teacher doesn't understand them properly, he/she will not be able to make his/her teaching effective. This chapter offers a simple explanation regarding all these things.

What is Learning?

Learning is a permanent change brought about in an individual by the experiences and insights gathered from his/her external circumstances. Learning effects changes in the individual's character and cognitive structure. Two important perspectives regarding learning are.

- 1) Learning effects changes in the character and behaviour of a person (Behaviorism)
- 2) Learning results in changes in the cognitive structure of an individual. This means that the horizon of knowledge enlarges and new knowledge is acquired (Cognitivism)

It is generally agreed that learning effects changes in an individual. This change can happen as a result of external stimuli as well. We can divide the circumstances experienced by an individual into two: (1) natural environment (2) artificial environment. The natural environment is got naturally. It is not created artificially by anyone. But artificial environment is created specifically by us. Hence it is formal too. eg: Sunday School, School, and Training Centres. Both these environments influence the students. Learning can take place only if the environment is conducive.

Psychology of Learning

Let us think about certain basic components of learning in this section. The most important components are (1) Genuine interest (2) Right attitude (3) Readiness to learn (4) Aptitudes (5) Motivation. A genuine teacher has the duty to develop these qualities in a student. Some students do not have interest in studies. This may be due to several reasons like faulty teaching practices, wrong attitude of the teacher to the students, apathetic methods of punishment, lack of suitable learning activities, and problematic home environment. An ideal teacher should be able to kindle interest in learning among students. Only then will effective learning become possible. Learning becomes possible only if the skills and abilities mentioned above are practised.

What is Teaching? There are several definitions for teaching. All of them point out one important principle. Teaching is a process that enables right learning. Teaching is a systematic work done by teachers to instill right learning among the students. The basic components of teaching are (1) teacher (2) student (3) subject and (4) environment or circumstances. Teaching will become successful only when these four components act together appropriately.

Goals of Teaching: The goal of teaching is all round development of the student. It aims at physical, cognitive, mental, moral and spiritual development. Mahatma Gandhi, the father our nation has pointed out that one goal of teaching is spiritual development. He says “By education, I mean an all rounded drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit”.

The goals of Sunday School teaching can be divided into three.

- (1) Ultimate goal
- (2) Long term goal
- (3) Short term and immediate goal

Ultimate Goal: The ultimate goal of Sunday School teaching is to enable the students become God’s Children and inherit eternal life or the Kingdom of Heaven. All the rituals and sacraments of our Church have the same goal. Hence the teacher should always keep this ultimate goal in mind.

Long Term Goals: The long term goals given below help in attaining the ultimate goal mentioned above.

1. Confirm your Orthodox faith and lead an ideal Christian life.
2. Lead a collaborative life in the society as people with good character.
3. Generate the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) which are ideal values.
4. Develop good thoughts and good action.
5. Function charitably in the Church and the society.
6. Sustain yourself in true faith and true worship.
7. Take pride in Orthodox faith, and the apostolic foundation and traditions of the Church.

Short Term Goals

Short term goals or learning objectives are those that can be attained within a short period. The Sunday School teachers should try their best to realize these goals in each of their classes. The main short term goals are given below.

1. Learn and assimilate the biblical truths.
2. Read and meditate on the Holy Bible regularly. The canonical prayers should be said regularly (at least as two times).

3. Learn the prayers and hymns of the Church and practice them in daily life.
4. Understand the sacraments, fasts and liturgies of the Church clearly and observe them in life.
5. Learn the biographies of Church Fathers and imitate their good models.
6. Learn the history of the Church especially the history of the Catholicate. Increase the awareness regarding the practices and social service activities of the Church and observe them in life.
7. Understand the good habits to be followed and implement them in their life.

Our new curriculum is designed based on the objectives stated above. The teachers should understand that our goal is neither to prepare the students for the examination nor to develop a spirit of competition among them. Teachers should try to provide learning experiences conducive to attaining the various goals mentioned above. In short all the curricular and extra curricular activities of the teacher should be oriented to the various goals.

Learning and Teaching

Learning and teaching are interrelated and complementary. Teaching will become in effective if true learning doesn't take place. Genuine teaching is an art as well as a skill. An ideal teacher is one who fulfils these parameters of teaching.

Conclusion

We have understood what learning and teaching are; how effective learning can be made possible and what are the basic components of learning. We have also understood what are the goals of Sunday School teaching. Ideal teachers are those who create the most appropriate learning experiences using their skills and abilities in order to ensure that the students are provided with right learning.

Activities

1. Compare learning and teaching.
2. Prepare a chart containing the various goals of teaching. Collect and add more goals.
3. Conduct a discussion in the class on how we can generate interest in learning in the student Present the findings in the class.

Reference Books

1. Aggarwal J.C., 'Principal Methods and Techniques of Teaching'.
2. Kochhar S.K., 'Methods and Techniques of Teaching'.
3. Sharma R.A., 'Technological Foundation of Education'.
5. OSSAE Publication, 'At the Teacher's Feet'.

Chapter 2

Teaching Methods

Introduction

Teaching is a systematic set of activities undertaken by teachers in order to achieve specifically pre-decided learning objectives. Hence 'How to teach?' is as important for a teacher as 'What to teach?'. Different teachers might present the same concept differently. Let us take the example of the parable of Good Samaritan. Some teachers might present it like a story. Others might present it as a description. Yet some others might adopt question-answer method or discussion method. An ideal teacher would select the most appropriate method among them taking into consideration the nature of the learning material and also the interest, abilities and environment of the learners. The method thus selected by the teacher is known as method of instruction or method of teaching. In this chapter we learn what are teaching method, what are the various methods of teaching and what are their features.

What is meant by Methods of Teaching?

The goal of teaching is to bring about desirable changes in abilities of students. The teachers create desirable learning experiences for this purpose. Various ways of providing learning experiences in this manner are known as methods of teaching. Effective learning takes place only when the lesson is presented using the most appropriate teaching methods. Hence the teacher should take into consideration the previous knowledge of students, nature of the lesson, learning objectives, learning aids, time available, abilities and interests of students while selecting teaching method. Using only one method throughout a lesson is not desirable. Various methods of teaching should be integrated so that the teacher's presentation becomes attractive. This approach is known as Multi Methodology Approach. For example one concept can be presented in the form of a lecture and then a discussion can be conducted for consolidating it. Thus whatever methods of teaching possible in a class should be utilized and an accurate and systematic presentation should be made. We shall look at the various methods of teaching.

Methods of Teaching

There are several methods of learning. This is because no single method of teaching is complete or perfect. Hence different methods are to be used according to the nature of learning. Teaching methods can generally be divided into two types:

- (a) Teacher Centered Methods
- (b) Learner Centered Methods

a) Teacher Centered methods

These are traditional methods of teaching. Here the focus is given to the teacher and his/her abilities. The students become merely listeners. The teacher adopting this method will not be able to give due consideration to the abilities of students. The important methods of teaching included in this group are:

- Lecture Method
- Story Telling Method
- Demonstration Method
- Narration Method and
- Textbook Method

Our Sunday School teachers mainly resort to these methods. We do not mean to say that they are bad. These methods can be made attractive by adding a proper introduction or conclusion or by asking questions in between or by adding jokes etc. judiciously. However these methods provide very little scope for encouraging independent thinking and active participation improving enquiry skill among the learners. They don't help in making learning natural and effective. Hence if these methods are adopted, the children might find learning as a difficult task. Learner centered teaching methods are later developments to meet the defects of teacher centered methods.

(b) Learner Centered Methods

Here the students themselves take up the learning process under the teachers guidance and learn by themselves through various activities. Students need total interest and readiness if true learning is to take place. Here the teacher doesn't teach directly. Instead the teacher prepares the students for their learning and provides arrangements, encouragements and suggestions for learning smoothly. If these methods are adopted, children do not acquire knowledge mechanically instead they develop the ability to acquire knowledge effortlessly and apply them in various situations in life.

The various methods belonging to this group are Discussion method, Cooperative learning, Inquiry method, Project method, Problem Solving method, Observation method and Dramatization method. These methods are rarely made use of in our Sunday Schools. However as the present revision of the curriculum is learner centred, the teachers should become equipped to make use of the above methods to an extend. Special training programme should be arranged for the teachers with this goal. Let us look at the teaching methods in detail.

Method of Sunday School Teaching

Here various traditional and modern methods for Sunday school teaching are described briefly. It is not correct to use only one method for teaching throughout.

Various method should be blended judiciously and the presentation should be done in a natural manner. This kind of approach is called Multi Methodology Approach and it is explained earlier. Teachers should practise how to design their lesson in this method.

1) Lecture Method

This method is the most popular one among teachers. Here the teacher presents the lesson in the form of a speech. A speech done with proper preparation will be attractive. This method can be used for explaining concepts, linking ideas, giving instructions and suggesting ideas outside the text. A good framework should be prepared before hand and the presentation should be simple and attractive. This method should sparsely be used in the lower classes.

2) Story Telling Method

This is a method that can be effectively used in any class especially in the lower classes. The lesson should be prepared like a story and should be presented attractively. While the story is narrated, the teacher should pose questions in between and should sustain the attention of students. Pictures can be shown in between as well.

3) Discussion Method

This method can be adopted from class 5 onwards. The lesson should be divided into different topics and hints for discussion of each topic should be written on card. The students can be divided into different groups and each group should be given this card. The students should discuss their topic in the group, find out various ideas and record them and the group leader should present them in the class. This can be followed by a general discussion of the topic involving the entire class.

4) Cooperative Learning

This method promote self learning among students. Learning pairs and learning groups are formal for this purpose. They are assigned learning tasks by providing them with the topic for learning and hints. They can make use of not only the time during the class but also the time after the class for this purpose. They learn by reading books, and collecting knowledge from others record their findings in a diary and present them in the class.

5) Project Method

Project is a learning activity undertaken in a natural manner voluntarily. This is a method of acquiring knowledge through various projects. The projects given should be simple enough for the learning level of the child. It should be enjoyable as well. This kind of learning generally takes place outside the class. Data should be collected and the analysis and findings should be prepared in the model of a project and should be submitted to the teacher.

6) Observation Method

This is the method of directly observing the learning sources, collecting information and recording them. An observation diary can be kept for this purpose. For example in order to study the various parts of a church building, the teacher should first point them out to students. The students will observe these parts and write down the details. These details are later discussed in the class and inferences are drawn.

7) Dramatization Method

This is the method of role playing the contents of a lesson in the form of a short play. This method includes forms of stage presentation like skit, mime, short play, mono act, and role play. Such performances require good preparation and rehearsal. The teacher should equip the students for the performance. For example the parable of Good Samaritan can be enacted using various methods. After the performance, discussions are held to share the various concepts.

8) Thinking Skills Development Method

This method prompts the students to think on their own and formulate various concepts while studying the lessons. For example, think that you are teaching the lesson 'Prayer for the Departed'. After teaching the concepts give the students a situation to apply their acquired concepts and biblical passages. This can be writing a letter to a Protestant friend who oppose prayer for the departed. In the letter the student can justify prayer for the departed based on the Holy Bible. Here the student is not attempting a mechanical repetition of the learned concepts. Instead he is applying it in a specific situation. This requires in depth thinking. Similarly writing stories, plays, and poems based on the concepts learned can also be attempted.

Many of these methods listed above can be undertaken by teachers in their Sunday school classes. The book 'At the Teacher's Feet' (*Gurupadantike*) can be made use of for this purpose. It is the responsibility of an ideal teacher to design the nature and methods of teaching considering the conditions, viability, abilities and the topic of study.

Conclusion

We have learned the characteristics and use of various methods of Sunday School teaching in this chapter. Teaching is an art as well as a skill. When the lessons are presented with good commitment, preparation and prayer, the classes will become most attractive. The teachers should select appropriate methods and should prepare a blue print suitable to each class as part of their Sunday School teaching.

Activities

1. Making use of the various methods of teaching given in this lesson, attempt teaching practice in your class. You may make use of small portions of your syllabus for this purpose.
2. Select various lessons and discuss the most appropriate teaching methods for them in your class.
3. Find out the teaching methods used by your teachers in each class for transacting the syllabus.
4. Attempt a comparison between Teacher centered methods and learner centred methods.
5. List the teaching methods discussed in this lesson as well as other teaching methods. Collect details of other teaching methods from your teachers.

7. Reference books

1. Aggarwal J.G., Principles, Methods and Techniques of Teaching.
2. Kochhar S.K., 'Methods and Teaching Techniques of Teaching'.
3. OSSAE, 'At the Teacher's Feet'.

Chapter 3

Learning Aids

Introduction

Our senses are the doors of learning. The experiences which are enjoyable to our senses become our learning. What we hear, see and smell are our experiences. When we hear, see and touch the same object we get different sensory experiences (Multi sensory experiences). By virtue of these experiences, learning becomes easy and natural. The well known scholar Joseph Weber says that 40% of our learning take place through visual experiences, 25% through auditory experiences and the rest 35% through all other sensory experiences combined.

From this we can understand that what we see rather than what we hear have greater influence in learning. Learning aids or Audio Visual Aids tools made use of by the teacher for providing various experiences of this kind. What we study in this chapter are Learning aids and their characteristics various types of Learning aids and the various learning Aids which we can make use in Sunday School teaching.

What are Learning Aids?

Learning Aids are those audio visual aids which promote learning and which make learning easier by reducing its complexity. Because of its use, the quality of learning increases and learning becomes easier. Learning aids are the means for making the learning experiences transparent and comprehensible. Thinker Eric Ashby points out four revolutions which have happened in the field of education.

- 1) Transfer of education from home to school.
- 2) Use of written documents for learning
- 3) Invention of printing and use of printed books.
- 4) Use of electronic medium.

Among them the fourth change helped in increasing the efficiency of education and making it more attractive. Such equipment are used for making learning attractive and efficient are known as Learning Aids.

Characteristics of Learning Aids

By using learning aids, learning becomes enjoyable and attractive. Let us look at the other characteristics of Learning Aids as well.

- 1) They prompt learning. They can inspire the students to learn.
- 2) They can provide multisensory experience. They provide experiences for hearing, seeing, reading, writing and doing.

- 3) When we use the images of real objects as learning aids, students will get the experience of seeing those objects directly.
- 4) They can provide variety to the class. For example when a picture is shown during the process of teaching, the students will become more interested.
- 5) Learning aids help in saving time and energy. There is a saying that a good picture is better than one thousand words. It makes learning much easier.
- 6) Learning aids help in avoiding the boredom of the class. Films and documentaries can be made part of teaching. Then the class will become very attractive.

It is said “I hear, I forget; I see, I remember and I do, I understand”. Good teaching provides opportunities to students not only to hear, but also to see, read, write and do. Learning aids should be properly used to meet this end.

Various Types of Learning Aids

Learning aids are mainly divided into four categories.

- 1) Printed Aids like Textbooks, Work book, Handbook, Magazines, Journals, and Newspaper.
- 2) Audio materials like Radio, Tape Recorder, and Language Labs.
- 3) Visual Materials like Chalk, board, charts, pictures, maps, models, projects, Over Head Projector, flash cards, and activity cards.
- 4) Audio-Visual Materials like Television, Films, Documentaries, Video CDs, and Computer.

Learning Aids and their Uses

The question whether learning aids have a role in learning doesn't arise at all. Their role have been discovered by scholars several years back. The first person who suggested that learning aids could be used for the learning of students was the Dutch theologian and writer Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). Later philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) supported this argument and made their own contributions. Today our problem is how we can effectively make use of learning aids in education. When efficient teachers take classes with the help of the most attractive aids, the impact on students will be unique.

Points to be remembered while using Learning Aids

- 1) The learning aids selected should be the most suitable one.
- 2) They should be related to the subject of learning.
- 3) They should be similar to real objects.
- 4) They should be sufficient to attain the learning objectives.
- 5) They should have the required size and clarity.
- 6) The teacher should know how to manage them.

- 7) They should be made use of at the most appropriate time.
- 8) They should ensure the participation of maximum number of people.
- 9) They should be handled with care.
- 10) The teacher should construct charts pictures and tables and prompt student to use.
- 11) Since audio visual aids have great influence, they should be given more focus.

Learning Aids for Sunday School Classes

Today we rarely use learning aids in our Sunday School. But if the teacher is willing, we can make use of several aids in the Sunday School classes.

- 1) Display boards: Blackboard, white board, bulletin board, roller board and the modern interactive board are available today.
- 2) Various Type of Charts: Ideas can be represented in various ways on a chart paper. There are various types of charts like concept based charts, tabular chart, chain chart, flow chart, and picture chart. They can be made attractive by giving them various colours.
- 3) Maps and Globe: Sunday School publishes maps of biblical places. Along with them ordinary maps and globe can be used.
- 4) Models: Models are small three dimensional representations of real objects. eg. model of bird, and model of Tabore hill. Models can exert grater influence than pictures.
- 5) Pictures, and Icons: Pictures are two dimensional forms of real objects. Models are not readily available always., Hence picture become quite handy learning aids. The picture should be large enough and multicolored. Icons are more real and meaningful than pictures. We can make use of them also in the class.
- 6) Reference books, magazines and other publications: It would be very good if the Sunday school have a good library. If not, teachers should take interest and collect books for the library. Various reference books like Books for 'Divyabodhanam course, 'Thiruvachana Bhashyam' (Interpretation of the Holy Bible) Biblical dictionary, Encyclopedia of Malankara Church, and Malankara Church Fathers should be collected and used. The Malankara Church magazine can be subscribed to.
- 7) Computer, Laptop, LCD Projector, and Screen: These learning aids are quite useful for the Sunday School classes. Today Video CDs on various topics including Church history are available. They can be shown in the general class and in specific classes as well. If there is internet facility, information from various sites including those of the Church could be downloaded and displayed using LCD.

Learning Aids and the Teacher

A learning aid, how much effective it is, not a substitute for an efficient teacher. The Sunday school teacher should have the interest and ability to use any kind of learning aid. Only then will teaching become effective. Moreover learning aids should be used at the appropriate time. Our Sunday schools suffer from lack of time and resources. Teachers should utilize maximum number of learning aids possible within their limitations.

Conclusion

We learned about various learning aids, their features and use as well as the various learning aids that can be employed in the classroom. We also learned that they are equipment which help in the process of learning and they inspire the students to learn.

Activities

- 1) Prepare a table of various types of learning aids.
- 2) Conduct a discussion in the class regarding the possibilities of learning aids in Sunday school classes.
- 3) Prepare a few learning aids that can be used in Sunday school classes.
- 4) Utilize the learning aids prepared in your teaching practice classes.
- 5) How far can media like newspapers, television and cinema influence Sunday school teaching? Discuss with your friends.

References

- 1) Dale Edgar, Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching
- 2) Kochhar S.K., Methods and Techniques of Teaching
- 3) Rather A.R., Essentials of Information Technology

Chapter 4

Sunday School Teacher – Talents and Preparations

Introduction

In the process of education, the role of teacher is very crucial. Even in the present era of advanced technology, a good teacher stands out unique. A good teacher always succeeds in transforming the learning materials as a lively and joyful experience to the students. More than conveying knowledge, a teacher makes students think and act, leads them and relates to them as a good friend and counselor. This lesson explains the qualities and talents as well as responsibilities of a good teacher.

Who is a good teacher?

This is a highly relevant question in education. A good teacher is one who transforms students, nurturing them with adequate and fruitful teaching methods and experiences. A teacher is a master craftsman who moulds intelligent citizens who would be useful to the community. H.G. Wells said, “The teacher is the real maker of History”. In schools, teacher takes up a multiple role as father, mother, brother, sister, friend and counselor of students. Teacher is the catalyst in the process of education and ‘gardener’. Students are the budding plants in the garden. The teacher takes care of them so that they would grow up and spread fragrance in the whole community.

Role of Teacher in the Process of Education

There are three aspects in the learning process: teacher, student and learning material. The needs of the students as well as their characteristics should be known to the teacher. The teacher should come to know about the life situations of students as also their family background. The role of the teacher in learning process is really great. May be one can compare the teacher’s role with that of the director of a stage play. The director may not act and never for once comes to the stage. But he is very much there behind the curtain in full control of everything. He takes up full responsibility to present the play effectively on the stage. Similarly, a teacher equips students to learn, extending all possible help. Thus the teacher becomes the facilitator, the preserver of our culture as well as its custodian. The teacher is a mediator between the student and the learning material. A good teacher controls the life of a student as well in a way. Thus teachers are often called mentors. A student undergoes the experience of assimilating the learning material through the effective presentation of the lesson by teacher. Now let us have a look at the qualities and capabilities of an effective teacher.

Qualities and Skills of a Teacher

We can view the capabilities of a good teacher classifying them as three groups.

(1) Teacher qualities, (2) Leadership qualities, (3) Personal qualities

Teacher qualities. A teacher should possess good knowledge of the subject. The present day students can acquire various inputs with the help of easily accessible media sources. Therefore, the teacher should be knowledgeable enough and well equipped to convey latest developments in different areas of knowledge to students. The teacher should be one who is really interested to teach. So, he/she should develop a habit of reading good books and shall be very continuously scanning different reference resources. More important, a good teacher must orient to work for the good of the community.

A good teacher must be familiar with different teaching methods and should be able to implement many of them before students looking for the practical utility. Proficiency in presentation skills are always accepted as an effective criterion to assess a teacher. Similarly, communication, interaction, presentation, voice modulation, effective use of teaching aids, evaluation methods are skills associated with good teaching. Utilizing the most suitable teaching methods and making learning process effective is considered as the stamp of a good teacher.

A teacher shall be good enough to understand students and identify their interests, potentials and talents as well as their limitations in order to effectively help them in the learning process.

Leadership qualities. A teacher shall always be an ideal leader. Students shall find their teacher as a role model worthy enough to emulate. The leadership qualities shall always be democratic in nature. Students should have enough freedom but they should also be controlled properly. The teacher shall also be a good shepherd. Thus, Jesus Christ happens to be the model teacher whom we can emulate. Only truly capable teachers can lead the students in the right way.

Personal qualities. The teacher shall be one who possesses a personality that carries good traits. Teacher shall practice good life values such as love, patience, humility, kindness, self control, faithfulness and goodness. He/She shall always shows off a pleasant face. Teacher shall be reliable, possessing a good sense of humor, but shall use humor judiciously. And a teacher shall be well experienced with the realities of life.

Responsibilities of Sunday School Teacher

Just like any teacher, a Sunday school teachers has a lot of responsibilities. They shall be aware of these responsibilities and shall be a role model to students. Others should feel like emulating traits. Teacher shall be a strong believer in God and shall be one leading a good prayer life, taking part regularly in worship at church as well as participating actively in all spiritual activities of the parish.

Teachers shall have a thirst to learn more. They shall undertake 'Divyabodhanam' Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses conducted by our Theological Seminaries. Having a basic knowledge in computer, LCD projector and the like is beneficial. All round development of students shall be their target. They shall encourage and guide his students with this in mind. Organizing study tours, pilgrimages, camps shall come up as a priority and they shall cooperate with the Head Master in accomplishing the same. They shall participate in various conferences and meetings as well as training programs conducted at District, Diocese and Central levels. They shall be active in all spiritual, philanthropic activities of the Church. They shall have absolute loyalty to the Church. They shall work actively for the welfare of the community and shall be selfless in their approach, shall read a lot and shall acquire general education to a reasonable level. Undergoing teacher training courses like T.T.C. or B.Ed is also good. These are various means of enhancing teaching skills.

Consolidation

We have just an overview as to who is a good teacher and what shall be his/her role. Further, we also tried to analyze the skills and qualifications of a teacher. We also came across the responsibilities as well as the tasks of a Sunday School teacher briefly. May be now, you can answer a question: do you feel like becoming a Sunday School teacher? If your answer is "yes", then get ready; pray for it and prepare yourself for that "call".

Activities

1. What are the qualifications for a good teacher?
2. Make suggestions for developing the teaching skills of a Sunday School teacher.
3. If Sunday School system has to be successful, we must have a group of teachers who are talented as well as committed. Do you agree to this? Explain.
4. Organize a discussion in your class on the topic, 'Qualifications, skills and responsibilities of a Sunday School Teacher'.
5. From your experience, what are the qualities you would identify in a good teacher?

Reference Books

1. Green, Thomas F, The Activities of Teaching.
2. Sharma R.A., Technological Foundation of Education.
3. Weigand, James E, Developing Teacher Competency.
4. Mursell, James I, Successful Teaching.
5. Fanders, Ned A, Analysing Teacher Behavior.

Unit 5

Christian Education

Chapter 1

Christian Education

Introduction

In its 'soul' and general context, essentially, 'education' is one and the same in different contexts the world over. To be exact, it is rather impossible to categorize education in terms of religious beliefs. However, it remains a fact that religious and political movements have developed their own exclusive systems of education, in order to realize their specific aims. It is in this context that we need to understand and appreciate the Church's endeavour to spread its faith and ordained principles of life. Thus, it becomes obvious that education has a philosophical foundation. Along with this, in modern times, since the need to transform education has gained wide acceptance, psychology too has found a place in education. This major shift in focus was necessitated by the acknowledged need to develop proper character and behavioural patterns in the students; and also the adoption of new learning techniques.

During earlier times, education was generally reckoned as a means to obtain knowledge. But in modern times, 'education' has got an extensive meaning and wider objectives than mere acquisition of knowledge. Rather, the modern understanding is that education involves acquisition of various skills and abilities; concept-formation; acquisition of the real meaning of 'freedom and human rights'.

The long – cherished idea that the teacher placed on the high academic pedestal, 'gives' certain pieces of knowledge to the learner has been largely dismantled. The emphasis in modern times, on the other hand, is on the creation of conducive learning - environment; enabling the learner to analyze things in their own ways, using their abilities; help them develop learning – facilitating skills; meaningfully guide their personality development, and the like. In short, these elements are to be developed in the learner. In this 'revised' understanding of learning, it has to be accepted that in the educational process, both the teacher and the students are subject to the process of learning.

Meaning and Relevance of Christian Education

The notion that knowledge and wisdom are indispensable for growth in virtues is pretty ancient. According to Plato, the philosopher, education is an exercise in which

the latent goodness in a child is developed to a permanent stature. The Biblical wisdom which says, "Devotion to the Lord is the beginning of wisdom", (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10) becomes more meaningful to us here. Thus Christian Education is considered as an inalienable element in Christian ministry. In this there is an overt and deliberate attempt to provide guidance and practical knowledge in divine truths, spiritual mode of life, relationship with God, practice and appreciation of the divine sacraments in the Church, unblemished life, and covenantal life-style. There is no denying the fact that Christian Education never shies away from adopting certain 'techniques' of education from the secular world, which are found useful and beneficial. However, it needs to be noted that Christian Education has its unique aims and techniques in teaching and learning. The ultimate aim of Christian life and education is deemed to be *Divinization* or *Theosis*. It means growing into the image and likeness of God, all the while focussing on the life and character of Jesus Christ, through a life of spiritual discipline.

This is not to deny the presence of traces of moral teachings in the general and secular education. At the same time, it shall be reemphasized that Christian education is indispensable to help the individual grow as a real Christian into the stature of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church. This is all the more essential due to the constant changes in life situations, the effects of the growth of science and technology and the general decadence in moral standards in social life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught that all the commandments given by God for the good of humankind could be summarized into two: Love God in an unselfish manner, and Love fellow beings as we love ourselves. These are the means to lead us to the freedom which is the glory of the children of God, and to holiness (Romans 8:20). The commands of Jesus Christ, "Let children come to me and do not stop them" (Matthew 19:14), "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15), clearly points to the basic need to give instruction and education.

If we think carefully it could be discerned that Christian Education is not something that the Church "gives" to her kids and young ones. Instead, it is a process that takes place in children, as they interact with the spiritual experiences available in the Church. Such spiritual experiences include Orthodox faith, life in the family, and growth and development of children. The growth of a Christian is a continuing process. Learning is always tied to the environment and is developmental. This development shall depend on knowledge, growth into emotional maturity, lots of experiences and the background of general maturity and the apperceptive mass (latent background knowledge gathered through the years).

Educational psychologists usually give the warning that children should never be taught as if they were grown-ups. Amazingly this aspect of teaching had been

pointed out by St. Gregory of Nyssa, the Cappadocian theologian who lived in the fourth century. In this way, education is interpreted as a life-long process. We are actually teaching the community and generations by giving suitable education to our children. The real intent of Christian Education is to prepare children for growth in real life. This growth is made possible in the community of the faithful. The members of the Church are enjoined to the body of the Church with the help of worship, symbols, history, and teachings of the Fathers which are present in the Church community. Significantly, Jesus taught his disciples and the people at large.

Chapter 2

Christian Education-Historical Background

Introduction

It could be said that Christianity is a continuation of the Jewish religion. A study of the history of Christian Education must start from the background of Jewish educational tradition. Our Lord was born into a Jewish family and grew up in that tradition.

Characteristics of Jewish Education

Content

At the beginnings, Jewish religious education was totally informal. The Commandments of God obtained through Moses became the basis of Jewish education. Thus the reading and recitation, and the study of the “Law” were most important. Topics like God- human relationship, human life, personal relationships, religious and social obligations, moral principles, and rules regarding worship of God were part of the “Law”. The real Jew was one who lived perfectly observing the Law. Such a person was one, who found favour in the sight of the Lord, was righteous and blameless (Genesis 6:8, 9).

Learning Environment

The first scene of this informal religious education was the family; and parents were the first teachers. Children obtained the initial lessons in religious education from the mother. Later, the father took over this responsibility. The major responsibility of the religious education of children was vested with the father of the household. Instruction was by word of mouth, and the father used to recite to them details about the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, Booths, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and the diverse kinds of sacrifices. Children were told how Yahweh treated their ancestors, and also about the covenant that Yahweh made with their forefathers. An important segment of this informal and ‘homely’ education was for children to learn the Torah (Law) by heart. When the child attained age four, he was taught the Creed. It was a prayer known as “Shema”, consisting of Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, which read:

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and

when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Thus an environment was prepared so that children would grow up, understanding the meaning of social life. Family worship, discussions and scriptural interpretations in relation to the Mosaic Law were common. This informal mode of education attempted to impress upon children the fundamental religious and spiritual nature of human life; as well as the great event of the “Exodus”, marking the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, in which there was direct intervention of God in Jewish history, and its essential influence in the life of a Jew.

Formal Education

The Jews had worshipped in Tents of Meeting during their sojourn in tabernacles, then temple of Jerusalem, and in Synagogues even later. These were regional worship places as well as centres of religious education. Grown ups gathered there to listen to the recital of the Torah and receive instructions in practical life. Children learned reading, writing and basic Mathematics, and subsequently tried to learn the Jewish Law by heart. It was only later that formal schools were started. Between 75 B. C. and 64 A.D. “Beth Hazepher” (House of Books) and “Beth Hamidrash” (House of Learning) were founded. Six- year old-children were taught here by teachers appointed by the Chief Priest. In Beth Hazepher (age 6-10) the study of religious books took place, while in Beth Ha Midrash the oral learning of “Mishna” took place (age 10-15). There were arrangements for higher studies in the “Law and the Prophets” for those interested.

Teachers

a. Priests: The priests, who were in charge of conducting prayers and sacrifices, were given the responsibility to teach children regarding rituals like sacrifices, festivals and other religious observances. It was obligatory for priests to recite to the people the entire Mosaic Law, once in seven years (Deuteronomy 31:10-13). They used to write down their teachings and answers to questions along with historical events. Later, these scripts were considered as official documents in Jewish society.

b. Prophets: The real job of the prophets consisted of conveying God’s messages to the people; calling the people to remove the sins and evil in their character and activities; highlighting God’s righteousness, holiness and the covenants with the people; counselling the people and their rulers to lead a moral life; chastising evildoers and the like. The prophets were thus ‘teachers’.

Religious Education in New Testament Times

Jesus Christ was widely acknowledged as a “Rabbi” (teacher). He used to teach people with short, yet meaningful parables with power and authenticity. He taught

his disciples too. His teachings were centered on God's point of view. Essentials of theology, God's abiding love for humanity, need for repentance, Love of God and Love of human beings, human accountability before God, moral and righteous life style and nature-friendly life formed a major share of the 'content' of his teachings.

Apostolic Times

The Christian Church was a "teaching" Church from the very beginning. Three thousand people joined the Church following an extraordinary event and a powerful oration (Acts 2:41). It may even be said that the formulation of the Gospels was part of this "teaching ministry". This teaching went along by introducing Jesus Christ as the real Messiah, in the Greco-Hebrew cultural context. Also, it is obvious that the apostles had introduced unique forms of teaching even before the gospels were written. The New Testament provides points to show that there was the custom of explaining the meaning and significance of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:23 +)

Apostolic instructions indicate that parents have the responsibility to educate and nurture their children: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline And instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

The early Church, it sees, had a firm conviction regarding the importance of religious education. Because of this catechumens were allowed to take part in a part of church worship. These people, who were being prepared for receiving baptism, were barred from the important part of worship (please refer to the two parts of the Holy Qurbana). Along with religious education, moral training for life and the possibility of interaction with other Christians were also involved in this programme.

Chapter 3

Christian Education and the Sunday School

Introduction

The bases of Christian Education were the teachings of Jesus and the apostolic tradition. It must be noted that religious education was an inseparable part of worship. The “charter” of Sunday School education is the command of our Lord: “Let children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14).

The call by Jesus Christ was to make disciples of all nations. The means prescribed for ‘making disciples’ were baptism and instruction. There is also the assurance that the Lord shall always be with those who teach: “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you;” (Matthew 28: 19-20). This instruction is elucidated in the general epistle of St. Jude: “Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to content for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Thus it becomes clear that Sunday school learning is an inalienable part of Christian worship and Christian Education.

The History of the Sunday School Movement

The evolution of the Sunday school in the western Church could be seen as one of the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. It was actually Robert Raikes (1735-1811), a journalist, who made a beginning for the Sunday school movement in England. The Industrial revolution had made great changes in society. Those who were engaged in agricultural activities moved to the industrial domain. Children, along with adults, got engaged in hard labour. They were not much educated. Lack of fixed hours of work and low wages were only too prevalent those days. These children were free during weekends. This kind of life – work schedule made many of them, especially children, hard hearted, criminal-minded and drug addicts. Robert Raikes turned his attention on these children. The children were turning to criminal activities during weekends when they were free after six days of hard labour; and had nothing else to do. Rakes decided to try a hand at reforming these children.

In 1780, he gathered those children loitering on the streets, by giving them sweets and welcome words. They were taught reading and writing; and also the Bible and prayers. The grown ups were taught first so that they could be used to teach young people. When Raikes died in 1811, there were 5000 children in England studying in Sunday schools. It was Raikes thinking that the Church should take over this

responsibility. At that time, the Church was not quite happy about “teaching” on Sundays. And obviously, the industrialists who thought the phenomenon of children learning, would be a hindrance to their exploitation also did not support this programme.

But later on the Church recognized this movement, which was growing fast, and supported and encouraged it. In these Sunday schools, it was not only religious instruction that took place. However, this gathering was only on Sundays, it was called “Sunday school”.

Christian Education and Sunday School

We have already seen that the programme of Christian Education is a systematic ministry of the Church. This endeavour to teach people regarding the holy sacraments, holy traditions, history of the Church, and application of Christian principles in practical situations has to be accomplished prayerfully and enthusiastically. People may go astray is not properly educated, especially in the present society where heterodox teachings and wrong modes of spirituality are gaining ground. The Church is called to fulfil this responsibility with great enthusiasm, for which, suitable programmes and resources are to be developed. It must be acknowledged that a kind of “Faith education” campaign is necessary for all, at different age levels. The firm foundation for the growth, personality, character formation, basic concepts, moral foundations, learning to give and receive love and the like are laid during infancy and adolescence. Precisely because of this, in a larger sense, all educational programmes, including Christian education must start during these “impressionable” years.

This idea points to the significance and indispensable nature of Christian education. Since, the strong foundations for a person’s growth are to be laid during childhood, the importance Sunday school education has doubly increased. Impressions and concepts which are true and good need to get implanted in young minds at the early stage of their development. Such impressions germinate in young minds in a congenial atmosphere. Therefore, the lessons in initiation to ‘experiencing God’ must be made available at this stage in life. This, exactly, is the aim of the Sunday school.

Sunday School Movement in India

In 1800, three protestant missionaries - William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward – started a school at Kolkata; but it did not continue for long. This project was renewed after a couple of years. Closely following this, the Sunday School in India started in 1903. Other missionaries started Sunday Schools in other parts of the country. The Baptist Church established their Sunday school Association in 1809. By 1870, several Sunday school Associations were functioning in many places in India. In 1876, seventy seven representatives of different Sunday school Associations came

together and established the India Sunday school Union (ISSU), with headquarters at Jabalpur. It was moved to Coonoor in 1927. ISSU published Sunday school books in 20 regional languages. The first India to head the ISSU was Mr. Rallaram. ISSU started conducting annual exams from 1896 onwards.

Before long, Evangelical Fellowship of India and All India Sunday School Union started their work in this area. The Orthodox Sunday School Association is collaborating AISSA (All India Sunday School Association) from 2007, which takes special interest in training Sunday school teachers.

Sunday School Movement in the Malankara Orthodox Church

Mar Thoma VI, the then Malankara Metropolitan, renowned as Mar Dionysius the Great (1765-1808), a programme of religious education was started in the Malankara Church, specifically to teach prayers and sacraments; later this got transformed as the Sunday School. Another motive for starting this programme was to ward off the “reformist” teachings of the western missionaries. In fact, one of the major decisions of the assembly of parish representatives at Kandanad church in 1809 was to “teach children canonical prayers and about the sacraments”. Pulikkottil Joseph Mar Dionysius I showed much enthusiasm in implementing this decision. The founding of the first ‘Paditha Veedu’ (House of Learning), that is, the Old Seminary at Kottayam in 1815, has to be seen in this context. Pulikkottil Joseph Mar Dionysius II, the founder of M. D. Seminary, Kottayam, made arrangements for conducting religious instruction in parish churches on Sundays. The entire Bible was available in Malayalam language by the middle of 19th century. Subsequently, along with topics of faith, sacraments and worship, Bible portions also formed part of Sunday school education.

During the regime of Sabha Bhasuran St. Dionysius Vattasseril, the Orthodox Sunday School movement obtained a systematic organizational stature. Fr. K. David was appointed as the secretary of the Malankara Sunday School Samajam. To begin with seven classes were arranged; later on two more were added. The lessons were arranged in such a way that before children reached class V, they would learn usual prayers by heart.

In 1930, Puthenkavil Geevarghese Mar Philoxenos, the “nightingale” of the Church, was appointed as the president of the Samajam. In the draft document of the Church constitution, prepared by a committee constituted by St. Dionysius Vattasseril Thirumeni, with Rao Sahib O. M. Cherian as convenor, made the following proposals, pertaining to the Sunday school:

Clause 138. Every parish shall have Sunday schools, one or more.

Clause 139. The Sunday Schools shall function under the supervision of the vicar and assistant vicars, if any.

Clause 140. For the proper functioning of the Sunday schools, every diocese shall have a secretary; and for the whole Church, a General Secretary elected by the Church Managing Committee. The secretary for the Diocesan Sunday schools shall be appointed by the Diocesan Metropolitan.

It is pertinent to note that “Basic Doctrines of the Church”, a book authored by St. Dionysius, while he was teaching in the Orthodox Seminary, documenting the quintessence of Church teachings, was an essential part of the Sunday school curriculum.

Those who had turned against Vattaseril Thirumeni, called for a meeting at Karingachira church, and organized what came to be known as ‘Malankara Syrian Sunday School Association’ (MSSA). However, after the Indian Supreme court judgment in favour of the Orthodox Church, efforts were under way to amalgamate there two Sunday school movements. Accordingly, in 1964, a joint meeting was held under the presidentship of H.H. Catholicos Augen I, at M.D. Seminary, Kottayam, and made new arrangements towards amalgamation. Two committees – Constitution Committee with Kaniyamparampil Kurian Cor Episcopa as convenor, and a Syllabus Revision Committee, with Fr. K. David as convenor – were elected and authorized. The report of the committees was ratified by the Episcopal Synod on January 20, 1964.

The Orthodox Syrian Sunday School Association of the East (OSSAE) was reorganized with Vayaliparambil Geevarghese Mar Gregorios as President, Kaniyamparambil Kurian Cor Episcopa as Director General and Fr. K. David as Publication Officer. At that time, there were 1010 Sunday schools, 92777 students and 7251 teachers throughout the Church. In 1966, Paulose Mar Philoxenos replaced Mar Gregorios as president. However, fresh schisms in the Church saw Mar Philoxenos and Kaniyamparambil Cor episcopa resigning from their respective positions and organizing a separate Sunday school movement under the aegis of a divisive pro-Patriarch movement they organized – the Antiochene Movement. A parallel Sunday school movement was thus born with the name ‘The Malankara Jacobite Sunday School Association’.

In 1974, Mathews Mar Coorilos was appointed President. Along with him, Fr. K. David Cor Episcopa was appointed Director General and Fr. T. G. Zachariah as Publication Officer. Following the death of K. David Cor episcopa in 1974, C. V. George Cor Episcopa was posted as Director General.

It was at this time that moves were afoot to devise a common curriculum for all the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The moving spirit behind this novel idea was Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios, the renowned theologian and philosopher. The common curriculum prepared by a committee under the leadership of Mar Gregorios came to be implemented in all the Oriental Churches. Fr. Dr. T. J. Joshua was appointed as

Director General when C. V. George Cor Episcopa relinquished his post. Along with Fr. Joshua, Sri T.T. Chacko assumed responsibility as publication Officer. Sri Chacko passed away in 1997, and Fr. K. V Thomas got posted as Publication Officer. Sri C. U Mathew was appointed as Office Manager. It was during this period that a new curriculum, students' Charity Offering, endowments, preparation and maintenance of correct data, a new column in the "Malankara Sabha" monthly as a channel of information to the Church at large, regular letters to vicars of parishes to keep them in touch with the Sunday school movement, and the central office work starting with a common prayer every day were introduced during this period.

In 2001, the representatives of the Sunday schools outside the state of Kerala, in India, came together at the St. Thomas Orthodox Seminary, Nagpur; and passed certain resolutions and made recommendations regarding the revamping the Sunday school activities in their region taking care of the linguistic, cultural and other social factors there. These recommendations were accepted by the OSSAE, and was later ratified and implemented by the Holy Episcopal Synod. Accordingly, Fr. Dr. Reji Mathew, Principal of the Nagpur Seminary was appointed as the first Director of OSSAE-OKR. Mathews Mar Epiphanius served as President of OSSAE During 1991-2002; and Paulose Mar Milithios in the next five years.

In 2007, Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios was appointed President. Fr. T.J Joshua retired from the position of Director General in 2009; and Fr. Dr. O. Thomas was appointed as Director General. It was decided in 2010 that the entire syllabus of OSSAE shall be revised, and a committee consisting of experts in the field. The committee has been fully into it, and new teaching materials are being made available. From 2015 Fr. Dr. Reji Mathew and then Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian served as Director General. Computerization of the office, OSSAE website, publishing of examination results in the website, grading system, educational scholarship and OKR online education system are features of this period. The new curriculum is in force from 2015. Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese was appointed as Director General in 2019.

The Sunday school is an indispensable part of the ministry of Christian education. The OSSAE is conducting the ministry of training and educating children to grow as Godly citizens, thus implementing the testament of Jesus Christ. Let us pray that the lord of the Church shall bless this ministry and make it useful for our young people.

Chapter 4

Christian Continuing Education

The principle that education is a process that runs throughout life has been widely accepted. Sunday School children are to grow, firmly rooted on the firm religious and moral foundation which they gained through Sunday school education. For attaining this end, continuous religious education and moral training are a must. The various spiritual organizations in the Church help individuals to hold fast to the Orthodox faith, true worship, moral life, and social service. OVBS, Orthodox Youth Movement, MGOCSM, Prayer Groups, Martha Mariam Samajam and the Divya Bodhanam project function in the Church with this end in view.

1. Orthodox Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School made its debut in India in the 1950s. It aimed at implanting Christian virtues in children during the summer holidays. Vacation Bible schools have functioned in different parishes from 1959 onwards. Usually this programme ran for ten days in which children spent time in storytelling, singing, and games: at the same time learning Bible lessons, stories of saintly persons, Christian values and prayer life. In the beginning the books published from Bangalore by the VBS Ministries were being used. Among the leaders of this movement in the Orthodox Church were, Fr. K. O. Thomas, Fr. M. V. Paulose and Fr. J. Varghese Kayamkulam. In 1977, it was decided by the Holy Synod to change the title of the programme as Orthodox Vacation Bible School, and make it a wing of the OSSAE. Fr. J. Varghese Kayamkulam was appointed as its first Director, and Deacon Raju Varghese as the secretary. Soon a new curriculum was made for the OVBS and units were started in almost all parishes.

A special feature of this programme is that even those children who rarely come for Sunday School classes, do attend the OVBS activities. In this way, OVBS serves as a continuing education programme of the OSSAE. The OVBS classes are divided into six units. Every year, a general theme is decided for that particular year's classes, and the lessons are prepared on its basis. Obviously it is a welcome feature that OVBS is happily welcomed by all children across the parishes.

Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement (MGOCSM)

The MGOCSM was started in 1908 in the name of St. Gregorios of Parumala. The origins of this movement could be traced back to the regular fellowship meetings of Orthodox students studying in various colleges in Madras city, in the early part of the 20th century.

Initially, the MGOCSM units functioned in educational institutions. This movement had the objective of prepare an environment for students (who have finished their Sunday school age) to lead a life rooted in Christian principles, and giving importance to *worship, study and service*. In this way it serves as a continuing religious education programme for students. It has encouraged and inspired students to come together once a week in colleges and get engaged in Bible study, prayer and service activities. It also helps in maintaining their relationship with the Church on a strong footing. A significant activity of the Movement is the Annual Conference held every year on different locations.

Earlier, the movement was confined to colleges; subsequently it was extended to schools as well. Further, several other branches like Medical Auxiliary, Technical Auxiliary have grown out of this. This Movement has a constitution of its own. During the time Dr. Philipose Mar Theophilos, its long serving present, Students' Centres were established at Trivandrum, Kottayam and Alwaye. These Centres have served as milestones in the growth of the MGOCSM. Its head office is at the Kottayam Students' Centre. Student Chaplains have been posted in major cities in India. Though units were established in educational institutions earlier, now, due to the changes in the educational sphere, units are being organized in parishes.

Orthodox Christian Youth Movement (OCYM)

Orthodox youth associations used to function in several parishes from the second part of the 19th century. These fellowships were aimed at defending the Church against the heterodox onslaughts of the Protestant groups. There fellowship groups were organized systematically in 1933; and thus the "Syrian Yuvajana Sangham" (Youth association) was born with the objectives of worship, study and service. The first President was Puthenkavil Geevarghese Mar Philoxenos; and Fr. P.E. Daniel (later Daniel Mar Philoxenos) served as the secretary. The name *Orthodox Christian Youth Movement* was accepted at the Annual Conference at Puthuppally in 1958. A monthly titled *Orthodox Youth* was being published by this organization. Fr. K. V. Samuel served as its editor for long. In our times the publication has been rechristened as *Orthodox Yuvajanam*.

OCYM has the pronounced ministry of sustaining the youth of the Church who have passed the Sunday school studies, in the worship and sacramental life of the Church, and make their moral and religious moorings strong. Through Bible study programmes, arts and sports competitions, service activities and Annual Conferences, the Movement is trying to channelize youth energy and enthusiasm for the good of the Church and society; and their latent talents are brought out and encouraged.

Prayer Groups

The prayer fellowships, also known as "Vayana Yogangal" (Bible Reading Fellowships) and "Family Units" do not have a long history in the Malankara Church. However, prayer fellowships presided over by priests, have been there in different

places. This movement aims at encouraging Bible study, active participation in the life of the Church, helping the poor and Christian fellowship. This form of “continuing education” also emphasizes Christian family life and its values, understanding the eternal truths in the Bible and the issue of confronting social problems affecting individuals and families. The participants in this family prayer fellowship are mostly adults.

Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam (Women’s Fellowship/St. Mary’s Guild)

The Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam was founded in 1928, under the patronage of M. C. Kuriakose Ramban and with the leadership of K. M. Annamma. The pronounced motto of the Martha Mariam Samajam are: pray, work and shine. The Samajam moves on with programmes like Bible study; sharing in the life of the Church; taking care of the poor, the sick and the suffering and Christian fellowship. Since this organization is exclusively for women, it helps them to organize appropriate programmes aimed at their spiritual sustenance and growth. Basically, the Samajam is a centre for study and spiritual instruction. The 80th anniversary of this Movement was celebrated in 2012.

In the parishes, after the Holy Qurbana, women come together for study, and for analyzing issues of Christian family life, the sacraments, and Church history etc. The Samajam serves an important link between the women folk in the Church, (who form more than half of the Church population), with the sacramental life in the Church. Women are encouraged to engage in religious studies, and annual exams are conducted for them. Recently a new project of the Samajam (Navajyothi moms) has been launched: ensuring the cooperation of ladies, a few “cottage industries” have been started for the benefit of the Samajam; and at the same time training them in cooperative endeavours, and lessons in self help projects. Every year the annual meet of the Samajam members is conducted in an elaborate way. In this context, the Samajam activities could be reckoned as a continuing education programme.

Divya Bodhanam (Sacred Teaching)

This programme has been devised as a continuing education programme for adults. It is based on the conviction that basic theological and biblical studies are necessary, not just for the clergy only, but for all lay people – men and women, at least in a limited way. An increased awareness of this conviction gave birth to this programme in the closing decades of the 20th century. Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios, who was the renowned principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, gave a lot of encouragement to this endeavour; and organized the seminary staff to prepare the learning materials for this. Like in other courses of study, Divya Bodhanam programme also conducts Certificate courses, Diploma courses and Degree courses as part of this project. It could be said without any doubt that this programme has enabled a large population in the Church to get basic understanding in theology.

Unit 6

Environment, Science and Health

The very existence of life is being threatened today because of the unlimited and thoughtless exploitation of nature. We are responsible for this environmental crisis. All resources and facilities needed for our survival is provided abundantly in nature by God who created it. But our greed has reached such levels that our profit motives and selfishness endanger the balance of nature with the result that other beings too find it difficult to lead a peaceful life. Such exploitation is a clear violation of the will of God who created the universe and everything in it. God wants His creations to protect this universe and take care of it so that everybody shall enjoy its goodness and live in a spirit of coexistence. But we find today that this Godly arrangement is spoilt by us by our extreme selfishness. This exactly is the real threat faced by this planet earth.

The first lesson explains what is meant by eco-spirituality and its relevance and also the need of studying the environment and environmental issues. Also, the Christian approach towards environmental issues is briefly dealt with. The varying ideas like biblical basis of eco-spirituality, Church Fathers' teachings about stewardship in our universe, Eastern eco-spirituality, completeness of creation, and its inter dependence are explained in this lesson. Chapters two and three deals with the advantages and disadvantages of the scientific advancement. The fourth chapter discusses the necessity of healthy body and mind.

Chapter 1

Eco-Spirituality: Meaning and Significance

Introduction

This universe and everything in it are created by God. The existence of all living beings is based on mutual dependence. We being selfish exploits and destroys nature and other living beings in order to enhance our comfort level. People now realize that developmental action plans with emphasis on techno-economic growth endangers the very existence of human beings. In this context, various governments and social organizations are trying to evaluate ecological problems which threaten the healthy existence of human beings and other living organisms. These days, discussions and studies are going on across the world to understand how human interference affects the nature and the environment and also how such imbalances could be removed. The world is now getting convinced that this issue can hardly be solved by sciences or by governmental initiatives alone. Just like any other social issue, creation of spiritual as well as social awareness coupled with initiation of certain concrete steps towards containing the problem are absolutely necessary to address ecological problems. In this chapter, we are going to discuss ecological issues in the context of theological perspectives of Orthodox Churches.

Ecology

The branch of science studying the relationship between humans and nature is called ecology or study of environment. By the term 'environment', we mean all the animate and inanimate organisms which constitute life system and all such factors influencing their existence as well as their mutual relationship. Human interference in environmental issues is always very critical in its nature. Once we ignore nature and law of nature that sustain it, the existence of all living organisms including human beings will be in danger. It shall be remembered that sustenance of life is based on a coordinated functioning of a complicated bio system. Any disturbance to a bio process will affect all those that are part of that bio chain. For example, consider a situation where waste materials are dumped in large quantities into a beautiful pond of water lilies. Now, to dissolve these wastes, more oxygen is needed by the molecules. But, the presence of waste materials in large quantity will create shortage of oxygen within the pond, and slowly, the level of oxygen will be drastically reduced and all those molecules will perish. The bio structure of the pond will be totally destroyed. The wastes will remain there and the pond itself will disappear within a short time. Thus, the behavior of one bio factor in an environmental chain will affect the entire bio factors of that chain. In fact, the changes which may occur in an environment may

not be at the originating point of the damage. The impact can be at a far off location. Climatic variations and global warming are effects of such strokes to environment.

Environmental Crisis

In the modern world, seasonal variations are not truly visible and identifiable. For instance, the rainy season may be overtaken by summer, thus dislocating the order of seasons. Accumulated waste polluted emissions from vehicles as well as the smoke and carbon coming from the burning of fuels and the waste products from industrial houses all put together make our atmosphere totally polluted and dirty. And this is the situation that we experience on earth, our dwelling place, where life has to be sustained in a God given environment. Maintaining a healthy environment is based on the mutual relationship among the different living organisms. But our social and economic developmental activities lead to environmental imbalances. Environmental balancing goes off the track because of the defective planning of industrialization and the consequent defilement of environment. Development for the sake of development is becoming awfully costly when we consider the damages inflicted on environment. This indirectly causes huge expenditure to be incurred in the public health sector to take care of the health conditions of human beings and other living beings. The most common environmental problems are ozone depletion, global warming, acid rain, depletion of ground water, deforestation, disappearance of certain species of living organisms and such other complex issues. These environmental issues may ultimately lead to the annihilation of life from earth. In short, science has identified that the root cause of environmental problems are the unjustified exploitation of nature. In this context, it is highly relevant to explore how religion and morality can help to orient humans not to destroy nature, but use and nourish it.

A Christian Approach to Environmental Issues

God has created human beings as the crown of all creations. ‘The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it’ (Genesis 2:15). Thus, it is our duty to guard earth and nature and work for our sustenance. God gave authority to man ‘to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground’ (Genesis 1:28). Different types of vegetation and fruit bearing plants were provided for us as food. The violation of this basic command has given rise to environmental issues across the earth and also its atmosphere. In this backdrop, we can understand that there is a moral and spiritual dimension to the issue of ecology.

God created us in His own image and likeness. We have to love and look after other beings as God would. The depletion of natural resources, exploitation of nature, distribution of vegetation, irregularity of ‘seasons’ are all caused by the greed of

humans, forgetting the God given responsibility to protect the earth. Thus it assumes the dimensions of a moral problem, for the moral degradation has resulted in the undue exploitation of nature. The Holy Bible and teachings of Church Fathers provide spiritual insights of Eastern Churches on the importance of human beings and creation. In an eco-friendly spirituality, many of these problems could be effectively tackled.

Biblical Basis of 'Eco-Spirituality'

The Holy Bible transmits a message to us to take care and protect all the creations. However, the relation of human beings towards nature is not illustrated fully in the Bible, since the Bible is not a social science text book! But, the Bible provides a basis for our understanding on environment which is useful in trying to solve our basic environmental problems. The universe and its origin as recorded in chapters 1 and 2 of the Book of Genesis provides the basic texts of Christian eco-spirituality. Particularly, Genesis 1:1-11 contain specific illustrations about the universe and the place of human being within that (The passage is read out from Bible and students give / seek explanations). Here, we see that God is the origin of all creation and that has found every creation good. Also, we read that Adam was created out of the soil from earth (Genesis 2:7). The word Adam means, 'taken from earth'. Here is a pointer to the relation between humans and nature.

How can the relation between human beings and the earth be explained?

The great flood during the time of Noah and the entry of all types of living beings into the Ark and finally the sign of rainbow are all indications that God takes care of not only man, but also all creations (Genesis chapters 7, 8, 9). The bow shaped rainbow and the curvature of the door of Holy Madbaha indicate God's grace and mercy (Note that this is not Gothic style). The blessing from God, 'be fruitful and increase in number' is for the entire living beings (Genesis 1:22; 8:17). In short, the story of creation summarizes the following: all sorts of life originate from God; all creations are great; we have been created by God in connection with the earth; God cares for all His creations. This means that we should respect and value the earth and all forms of life on it.

However, Genesis 1:28 and 2:15 give rise to certain misconceptions. The commands of God 'subdue it' (1:28) and '...to work it and take care of it' (2:15) have been misinterpreted as a right to rule and exploit all creations and utilize universe for the satisfaction selfish motives thereby even destroying it beyond repair. Particularly, this sort of misinterpretations are practiced in western thinking that for the sole comfort of human beings, all organisms of nature can be utilized without any discretion and to any limit as we read from the writings of experts. In fact, these Biblical verses are reminding us our responsibility and call to sustain and protect

earth and all beings those inhabit earth. The word rule in Genesis 1: 28 indicative of a governance filled with mercy and human concern. This is to be accepted as a responsibility that brings up abundance and peace, and not as one as a destroyer exploiting nature for selfish gains.

Similarly, Leviticus chapter 25 is a fine example of providential care for nature and our participation in such care. Psalms 8, 104, 148 etc illustrate the goodness of creation and the relation between human beings and nature. The entire creation witness God's greatness. There are certain books in Holy Bible where nature is pictured as a medium of God's revelation to us. For example, in the Book of Job, God speaks from a natural medium like a storm (Job 38 and 39). Thus, we have to learn a lot from nature and as such, our duty bound to respect and protect them. Again, due to our denial of God's command, the whole creation was subjected to deterioration and in the Old Testament books, there are thoughts of salvation of the entire creation (Micah 4, Ezekiel 47, Isaiah 2, 11, 35).

In the New Testament, it can be seen that Jesus Christ's salvation is not for human beings alone, but for realigning the whole creation (Romans 8:18-25, Colossians 1:15-23, 1 Corinthians 15: 20-28, 2 Corinthians 5:17). In Romans 8: 18-25, St Paul teaches that the liberation of us and the whole creation is made possible by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In Colossians 1:15-23, we find Christ reconciling all creation with God. In short, the above verses from New Testament reveal God's providential care is available for the whole creation. This also explains God's plan for the universe He created: the relationship between God and His creations as well as the mutual relationship between different forms of creation among themselves. The Bible witnesses that with the Fall of human beings, this mutuality broke down, but still, God's care follows all creations.

Taking Care of Universe – Teachings of Church Fathers

St. Basil the Great, St. Gregorioso of Nyssa, St. Gregorioso of Nazianzus, St. John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor were some of those fathers who defined creation and its greatness. These fathers treat the universe and the existence of world as explained in the Bible. Mostly, they base their teachings on St. John 1: 1-18, Colossians 1: 15-20 and Hebrews 11:3. While discussing the order of creation, they took care to underline Holy Trinity as the Creator. Accordingly, St. Basil the Great teaches that the whole creation is in their journey to wholeness. In that sense, the deterioration we see in nature cannot be accepted as a natural transformation in this journey.

Church Fathers used to take care to present God as Omnipresent and Omnipotent. Further, the process of salvation is seen as an activity of the Creator based on His love. Moreover, in the backdrop of Greek philosophy about creation of world, the interpretations were based on the medium Logos for illustrating universal salvation. Thus, Christ's sacrifice on the cross was related to the liberation of the whole creation.

But the western church stressed on individual salvation, whereas St. Athanasius and other Eastern Fathers saw salvation far beyond individual needs, but involving the emancipation of the entire creation in its totality. St. Gregoriose of Nazianzus presented Christ beyond all doubts as one who is the Redeemer of the whole universe and the leader of the whole world. He taught Christ's birth as a human being related to the entire universe. According to Gregoriose of Nyssa, creation is through the Logos and salvation is related to the Logos. Church Fathers, in general, present the action of Holy Spirit at creation and the power of God which moves forward consolidating the entire creation.

'Eco-Spirituality': An Eastern Orthodox Point of View

The teachings of Orthodox Church about environment are in the context of spirituality and theology. We react to environmental issues as powers that disturb the 'wholeness' of creation. The Orthodox shall confront with such issues understanding the impact of industrialization causing damages to creation. We are going to discuss below, three important elements of eastern eco-spirituality regarding the uniqueness of all creation of God.

- Creation centered Eastern theological outlook.
- Universal Redemption by Christ.
- Holy Spirit driven interference of human beings.

The basis of Orthodox environmental understanding in its essence is based on the Biblical teachings about creation and interpretations given by the Church Fathers and also the significant elements in Orthodox Church worship.

Fullness of Creation

The luxury and comfort of human beings are valued more in a human centered world order. There is a philosophy that the whole created universe is meant for the consumption and exploitation of human beings for their pleasure and no other creature possesses and reflects the Glory of God. But according to Eastern Fathers, human beings are just one of those creations of God among many. All the objects in this universe are the symbols of God's will, care and purity of intention. We have been created in God's own image and likeness because He wants us to realize our God-given vocation to reveal the purpose behind the creation of us. But the selfish human beings takes a stand that they have been placed as the crown of all creations so that they can exploit all other creations and use them for their selfish motives. But God has placed us as a mediator, in a priestly position and as a cosmic divinizer among all other creations.

The main responsibility of human beings is to stand as an icon of self sacrifice and goodness just as much as Jesus Christ is. To make all creations grow to their fullness, a constructive interaction from our part is essential. In short, the dualism

that separates creations into human and nonhuman is alien to the Eastern thought process. Here, creation is a medium of divine Revelation. Care and love are associated with the presence of God. Thus human beings are to reflect the faithfulness, kindness, justice and redemptive love of God. For example, those truths of God and His nature which we find difficult to comprehend are revealed through His handiwork i.e. creation. The vastness and depth of the sky and the physiology and anatomy of human beings and other living organisms are all illustrations revealing the inimitability and nature of God who created them.

Thus God reveals Himself through His Creation. In that sense, the order of this world itself is understood by Eastern spirituality as a sacramental principle. This is nothing but divine in what we see around us as good or transforming. Everything around us is understood as Logos or the Word of God and not as simple factors those do not have any individuality or freedom or power of discrimination. As such, though God alone is Holy, the universe too has to be kept holy because God dwells in it. Since, just like human beings, non human universe too has been given personality and individuality and freedom by God. The supreme dignity given to them by God is revealed likewise. Universe is not a consumer product for human beings to exploit. Human beings should approach the universe with respect. If this universe is deemed a as sacrament, then human beings are the priests between God and universe and this is the way eastern ecological knowledge understands environment and human beings.

Consolidation

In this lesson, we learnt in detail about the eco-spirituality, as to how man has to look after universe, the place of environment in Eastern spirituality and what is meant by fullness of creation. These learning points can be summed up as under:

- Since God alone is Holy, the universe where God dwells too shall be kept holy and in order.
- Universe is not a consumer object for human beings to exploit.
- God has chosen human beings as priests for all living organisms in the role of an interceder.
- To grow all creations to their fullness, the care and help of human beings is essential.
- We come to know about the love and inimitability of God, the protector of all creations, through the fascinating beauty of creations.

Activities

1. Conduct a debate in your class on the topic, 'Biblical Basis of Eco – Spirituality'.
2. Make a study on the topic, 'Care for the Universe in the Teachings of the Eastern Church Fathers' and submit a report.

3. Write an essay on, 'Fullness of Creation'.
4. Prepare a list of those factors essential for the normal survival of living organisms.
5. Explain your stand on the fact that one segment of people has occupied and is ruling over the resources which God has created for all living beings. This is highly immoral and leads to a large segment of human beings as well as other living organisms being left in abject poverty.
6. Mention the damages caused to nature due to our greed senseless actions?
7. Ascertain the environmental problems in and around your place and suggest solutions.
8. Conduct a discussion in your class on the topic 'Christian Approach to Environmental Problems'. Work out a report based on this discussion and present it in the class.
9. What is the real meaning of the word, 'rule'?
10. Observe World Environment Day (June 5). Organize different orientation programs in Sunday School.
11. Make your Sunday School premises clean and beautiful with plants and trees.

Chapter 2

Information Technology: Problems and Prospects

Information Technology, popularly referred to as IT is a branch of science that has revolutionized the life pattern of human beings which has led them to a very vast world of knowledge at an amazingly fast pace. Today, the world of IT is expanding exponentially. Information Technology has become very influential and also useful. It is not too much to say that modern life has already turned out to be IT based.

What is Information Technology?

Information Technology can be understood as collection of data with the help of computers and storing it to be processed and used as and when needed. Today, under the broad banner of IT, computer (hard ware, soft ware, and operating systems), web based information systems, communication products, video – multimedia products, information kiosks, office products (photo copier, fax machine) are all included.

Possibilities of IT

The entire world has got transformed into a global village interconnected by a computer chain so that people, wherever they live, can be in close proximity with others, seeing them, talking to them and exchanging ideas with them. IT happens to be a reflection of human freedom as well as that of the concept of a world community. We knowingly or unknowingly uses the possibilities of IT to a great extend in our daily lives. IT opens before us a wide vista of opportunities and possibilities. Let us look into some of these.

Communication: This branch of science has progressed a great deal and has greatly influenced people in the field of communication. Till quite recently, one had to wait for years for getting a telephone connection whereas it takes just few minutes for ten connections now. One can exchange information within seconds to any nook and corner of this world using internet. The human beings at the other end on a computer screen could be seen and talked to face to face. Indeed, the world has become rather small through IT.

Travel and Tourism: Journey tickets can be booked for train, airplane or bus, advance booking of rooms in hotels and lodges can be done and details of different tourist locations or heritage sites could be collected with the help of internet facilities. Now, we do not require hard copy of tickets for travelling. A proper message received in the cell phone will suffice. As such, everyday, a large quantity of paper is saved. For doing railway reservations, one can use SMS facility through cell phones.

Banking: Services in the banking sector can be accessed through internet, and people are increasingly resorting to this. It is not necessary for one to go to bank for transacting money dealings. People are quite familiarized with ATM facilities as well as internet banking which are widely utilized.

Other services: In this world, people are having busy schedule of life with the result that there is no time sufficient to carry out mundane tasks. Now, one doesn't have to go to the respective offices for payments of telephone or electricity bills and also for booking a refill for LPG connection.

Collection of information/ education: Using different search engines through internet, one can gather information on various places of importance, historical events, personalities, institutions and the like. Internet is a media which provides any sort of data. Through internet or IT, one can avail the services of online libraries; further, it is possible to trace good educational institutions of other countries, obtain detailed information about various courses, online registrations, examinations and so on.

The use of IT is really extensive in areas like health care, trade and international communication. In these sectors, services of experts can be accessed as and when needed and decisions can be arrived at through video conferences. Status of different activities could be ascertained on line with the help of IT, such as movement of cargo, timely decisions and so on. By using customized software programmes, lots of time can be saved. Public relations could be maintained effectively with help of a well designed website. Also, communication between establishments can be carried out online very easily. Through this system, the Bible references can be accessed very quickly and correctly.

Advertisement media: Many are using these media quite effectively to raise funds for charity activities. IT sector is very influential in marketing and business. Today, opportunities are tapped through IT for advertisement media that are more and more influencing the young generation, and this tendency is expanding pretty well. Through this, the culture of online marketing of various consumer products is spreading very fast.

Also, IT is an extra source for earning more income. The present day world is an 'information society'. We have many enterprising people among us who earn big money by designing web sites as well as by engaging in sharing of data. There are IT products which can be effectively implemented for safety and security of individuals, residential houses as well as institutions. This can also help in nabbing criminals. IT sector has started playing an effective role at government levels too. One good example is the already implemented system of e governance.

The growth of the world through information technology is only too obvious. These opportunities can be utilized by us for the welfare of all.

Misuse of IT

Though IT is something really useful for humankind, very often, this turns out to be a new medium for criminal activities. Let us look into certain areas related to this. IT sector involves activities based on computer. A big challenge here is the infiltration of virus which damages the normal functioning of a computer totally. Banking services implemented through computer network are misused by unscrupulous elements of our society. One has to be very vigilant of the frauds committed after hacking the passwords of bank clients.

Another example of systematic cheating is the false e-mails which reach mail addressees carrying intimation of winning of international lotteries or awards, mostly from fake overseas sources. Many have got trapped by responding to such mail which ultimately ends up with financial loss and of course, loss of face! There are websites spreading obscenity which tempt young generation to look at sex with a vulgar eye, ultimately leading to undesirable and criminal activities. The wrong misuse of the internet is leading youngsters to sexual anarchy through obscene web sites.

By creating false websites, cheating takes place in tourism, travel and hotel room booking and the like. People are blackmailed and insulted by creating false profiles through internet. Unauthorized copies of movie prints are taken and circulated through internet whereby producers of movies are put to big monetary problems. For spreading scandals against individuals, internet is used by anti-social elements. There have been incidents of suicides because of the circulation of photos those are made nude by morphing.

False messages and SMS circulated by communal and hate campaign groups create communal clashes and loss of life. These types of activities affect even the national security of many countries. Relationships which blossom exclusively through social networks are alienating people from the mainstream of society.

Generally, the elder generation in our community is not much aware of the good and bad of IT. Today, we have a large group of youngsters who are quite familiarized with various aspects of IT, and spend their precious time exclusively in sites such as those providing entertainment, online games as well as social networks like face book, twitter etc, ignoring the better and positive side of this medium; obviously, this proves disastrous in the life of youngsters. Misuse or overuse of the computer and internet is found to be the main reason for many a good student lagging behind in their academics.

Many people, in their prime age of life, work hard day in day out in IT companies and make good money. But when they are past their optimum stage of life, they become unwanted and are systematically pushed out; and this phenomenon raises doubts as to how secure is an IT job, despite the fact that the biggest source of employment generation. Indeed, this is a big challenge brought in IT sector.

In short, technology of knowledge is useful to the community to a very large extent, but it has its own negative characteristics too. The government must initiate formulation of adequate legal measures to ensure that IT sector is not misused and those who work as detrimental to the welfare of the community get punished. Schemes should be designed to use IT for the welfare of people as well as for developing various areas for the betterment of the community.

We have been discussing very briefly some of the good possibilities of IT and also the tendency to misuse IT. We should be capable to use the positives of IT wherever possible. We are subject to the influence of negative forces every day in one form or another. We may do wrong on our own or we may become victims to the designs of others. We have to be very careful in our day to day life. We cannot survive ignoring this. Let us try our best to utilize the better possibilities of information technology in our individual life as well as in our social life.

Activities

1. Find out how we can use information technology in the area of social service.
2. In what ways can our Church make use of the possibilities of IT in this century?
3. Joining together with the Orthodox Youth Movement and MGOCSM of your parish, organize a seminar on the subject 'Information Technology: Use and Misuse'.

Chapter 3

Science and Technology

Science and technology have been a great influence in all walks of life. They have grown by leaps and bounds during the last two centuries. They are growing so fast that the entire body politic is overcome by them. Human beings are working out ways and means to take total control of not only one's individual life and community, but also the entire universe, using science and technology.

There is no place in this world today which is not benefitted by the advantages of science and technology. New inventions have given more leisure in human life. Most of the works man used to carry out physically has now become quite easy with the help of technology. Moreover, it is also apparent that those inventions which are not really useful to man will not survive long.

Utilities of Science and Technology

In the household: The achievements of science and technology have been most useful in every household. In an ordinary family, machines have taken over routine works such as grinding, grounding, washing of clothes, cooking and the like. The shift from joint family system to nuclear family system has found these inventions very useful. All the entertainment within a family is now based on technological gadgets.

In communication: This is one area which has been revolutionized by the expansion of technical knowhow. The development of digital technology and its phenomenal growth has not only modernized communication systems, but has totally revolutionized it. Fast and cost-effective methodologies have made communication through internet and telephone system very popular. The young generation relies on telephone, internet, SMS, e-mail, and social networking sites for communication. In India, the use of mobile phones and internet has become widespread within a very short time.

The world of knowledge: The astounding growth of technical knowhow resulted in the unlimited expansion of the world of knowledge. The world of knowledge happens to be on our finger tips. Using computers, any information available anywhere in the world can be accessed by anyone. Thus, the whole world is transformed as a small village through computer networking.

The growth of technology has modernized the field of education too. Education has drastically changed with the introduction of digital library, facilities to make online references to libraries located at far off centers, and formulation of smart class rooms. May be within a few years from now, going to a school or college holding a bag carrying text books and note books would be turning out to be a thing of the past.

Several world nations have made phenomenal gains through space technology. Not only did human beings conquer the moon physically, but has advanced very far in exploring other planets. Today, we are dreaming of acquiring land not in this earth alone, but on the moon or the mars too. As a tourist, we can travel to other countries, and even travel across the space in a space shuttle. Similarly, the use of modern technical knowhow is quite common in areas such as diagnosis and treatment, office work, banking, travel and tourism, development of basic infrastructure, automobile industry, media, agriculture, and means of entertainment.

Importance of Technical Knowhow

Today, if various machines get damaged, the world would come to a standstill. We totally rely on machines to get our works done. Even for simple arithmetical calculations, we resort to calculators. Hard work of many laborers were necessary for the construction of new roads, railway lines, bridges, canals, and buildings, but such activities are now possible with machines reducing the need of manpower substantially. There used to be agitations earlier against the introduction of computers for fear of unemployment, but time has proved otherwise that the use of machines becomes a blessing to make up the shortage of manpower. The present scenario is such that human beings find difficult live without machines.

Growth of Technical Knowhow: The Negatives

Technology has proved very useful to humankind, but there are some danger signals too. Let us examine some of them.

1. Community turns a consumer society. The regularly changing technical knowhow, consequent varieties of consumer products, their advertisements are all transforming community into a consumer society. The stiff competition between manufacturers and their strategies to capture the market give rise to many attractive advertisements to allure people, placing the human beings in a situation making it very tough to make a choice.

2. 'Use and throw' culture. This is a culture fast spreading to our daily life situations. Plastic ware and materials are to be treated as 'use and throw' items, but now many types of equipment particularly house hold articles too fall into this category. The developing technology makes fashionable products which are not very cheap. This can even give rise to financial problems in families which are not so rich.

3. Simple life style gives way. Growth of technology has caused deterioration of traditional culture as well as erosion of moral values. Simple life style gives way to luxury. The feel of the new generation is to go for the latest technological gadgets. This affects spiritual life too. Families which used to give importance to family prayers do not find enough time left for prayers! When people spend more time before

television and the computer, spiritual life gets depleted. In short, a simple life style where spirituality has a pivotal role is gradually getting displaced.

4. Gift of intelligence gets under utilized. Over reliance of technology results in one's natural talents going unused or under utilized. Before the popularization of mobile phones, people used to memorize lots of phone numbers, but today even one's own phone number has to be retrieved from the mobile phone. In case the mobile phone is lost, all numbers are lost. Lesser dependence on one's own memory and intelligence results in deterioration of memory power. The new generation asks calculators for working out even very simple arithmetical calculations. Here too, we do not use our natural talents. Even the ability to read and write in good language is slowly disappearing from our youngsters. In new generation vehicles, there are computer programs providing route maps and traffic guidance. Before long, one may be resorting to machines to find out the way to one's own house!

5. Physical exercises get reduced. Earlier people used to have physical exercise through small house hold chores, walking and also agricultural activities. Now, most of the household activities have been taken over by machines. Agricultural activities are very little. Today, people get little physical exercise from walking or hard labor. This type of life style opens the door to different types of diseases.

6. Social relations get affected. Due to technological advances, the new generation people confine themselves to keeping relationships only with those who are part of their limited circle. Consequently, social relations are declining and the new generation grows up without any exposure to common social experiences. Ultimately, they end up having little or no relationship to the environment.

7. Faith in God on the decline. Today, the human beings relies more on science and himself than on God's guidance. Here, faith declines and there is no scope of spiritual growth. Technology is useful in many ways, but it can never replace the need for and the faith in God. Science and technology have their limitations. As a creation of God, there are certain purposes for human life. Once we live our lives to realize this purpose relying on God's providence, we can see God as the Creator and Sustainer of everything in this universe. Then we could live selflessly for the welfare of the community and utilize science for creation of a society that is rich in love and goodness.

Activities

1. Discuss the use of science and technology in segments such as medical science, travel, tourism, and banking.
2. Discuss ways and means for implementing the positives of science and technology in the field of spreading gospel.
3. Organize a seminar on the subject, how to utilize modern technical knowhow in Sunday School education.

Chapter 4

Drug Abuse and the Threat to Healthy Living

The simple explanation of health is a 'healthy mind and a healthy body'. The different aspects of health can be physical health, mental health, community health and spiritual health. It means that a person who is 'healthy' should be healthy on all these aspects.

Social evils which adversely affect one's health are smoking, drinking and drug abuse. It is during adolescence that many people usually get into these habits. Unhealthy friendships and the undue influence of the media are the culprits at this stage. Youngsters may be drawn to evil habits out of curiosity, and slowly, they become addicts. The most disturbing problems affecting the youth are alcohol and drug abuse.

There are instances of death by poisoned drinks and drugs which are too many that people take them in their stride. Those who really suffer are the kith and kin of deceased persons. Usually, it all starts with smoking and then gets into drinking and ultimately land up in drugs. The pattern is to start with small dosage and then gradually increase the quantity reaching a level of no return to a situation that without this, life will not move forward. Drugs are easily available in different form. Though, there is a ban to these imposed by the government, there is collective failure in its implementation and as a result, these are secretly available even in school/college premises.

Once started, it is very difficult to come out of this vicious habit. Not only that, such people will try to attract more youngsters into this. The marketing of drugs is controlled by underworld gangs internationally. Many get into this racket with an intention to make quick money. But once trapped here, an escape is virtually impossible. Even, one's life itself would be under constant threat.

Causes of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

There are several reasons behind the use of drinks or drugs. Usually, situational causes take the lead.

1. During adolescence, there is an urge to give an impression to others that one is almost an adult and many turn to smoking which can gradually lead to drinks and drugs. Once this starts, an affinity is developed towards them and continued use of them becomes a habit and soon, turns out to be a slave of that substance. In no time, the very same substance becomes the singular ingredient of happiness and soon a situation develops where the abuser cannot live without it.

2. There are youngsters who resort to smoking as well as drug just a fashion. This is considered as a means to catch the eyes of others.
3. There is another group who see drugs or drinks as a means to run away from their personal problems. Their problems can be marital, issues between brothers and sisters or between parents and children, financial setbacks and so on. These issues are common these days, but instead of facing them boldly and arriving at solutions realistically, they think drinking can make them forget all these and thus achieve peace of mind. In a very similar manner, some senior students take to drinking and drug use as a solution to deal with their problems with studies. Some others take to these evil habits to escape from their official problems at their workplace.
4. There prevails a notion that consumption of drinks and drugs provide a kick and thrill in life. But such feelings of comfort are nothing but distortion of human beings' normal activities which are properly oriented through one's own creativity.
5. A very important reason behind one resorting to habits of smoking, drinking or using drugs is the compelling influence of friends. Not to get alienated from this company of friends and to avoid looking 'small' before them, they succumb to the persuasion of a puff or a smoke and thus it starts right during the adolescence itself.
6. There are people who take up drinking just to escape from the sorrow due to the demise of a dear ones.
7. Again, there is another group who holds a misconception that daily drinking provide them strength to take up physically hard tasks.
8. Many consider drinks indispensable for evening social get-togethers or parties. Many of those who celebrate success in business or quick profits or to enhance social status arrange dinner meetings where drinking is essential.
9. The new generation even thinks that drinks are part of celebrations connected with special occasions, festivals and even religious gatherings.

Health Care and Consumption of Drinks/Use of Drugs

Use of drinks and drugs give rise to various problems in life. It affects health, paves way for liver-related diseases, and causes cancer. Once a person becomes a slave to drinks, he/she is placed in a situation where he/she cannot live his/her life without consuming drinks. He/her starts drinking right from the morning. Consequently, he /her cannot concentrate in his/her work as he/her should. Once the tag 'drunkard' is attached to him/her, he/she becomes a laughing stock in community.

Once you are a slave to drinks and drugs, you tend to do anything to make money. Youngsters may resort to stealing and small crimes. Elders will gradually sell off

everything they possess to raise money for this. After selling off everything, they may even start borrowing and end up as a pauper. Those who are employed will start accepting bribes and start making money through unjust means. Drug abuse and alcoholism happen to be one of the main reasons for disturbed family life. Many families are financially broken just because of the habit of drinking. Usual consequences of drinking are daily quarrel between husband and wife, quarrel with children, destroying household articles and the like.

Personal life gets disturbed: The sense of purpose in life is lost and inherent talents cannot be properly used, and it becomes impossible to learn anything fresh. They turn out to be a liability to family and community. Very often, this leads to suicide too.

Prayer life and faith in God vanishes: Those who submit to drinks and drugs fail to attach any serious importance to God or faith. If at all they attend worship services, that would be for just name's sake.

Sexual anarchy: Quite often, sexual anarchy develops as a side effect of drinking. Those who are addicted to drugs share the same syringe for administering drugs resulting in the spread of HIV/AIDS among themselves.

If students happen to take on drugs, they are seen to go behind in studies, stay away from schools, fail to cope up with studies resulting in backing out, develop unhealthy friendship with elders, get associated with anti social elements of the community, take part in criminal movements and engage in undesirable activities.

How to confront the habit of drinking and drug abuse?

Those who are habituated to drinking and using drugs create lot of problems at different levels - individual, family and society. Beyond a certain limit, this has to be considered as a state of illness. It is necessary to take proper treatment here. As part of such treatment, the availability of drinks and drugs should be controlled. The negative impact of drinks and drugs should be widely publicized. They should be subjected to correct treatment at de-addiction centers. Further, they should be made to participate regularly in the meetings of Alcoholic Anonymous Groups. Also, they should be made to engage in activities against alcoholism. There are many people among us who have freed themselves from alcoholism and are leading a perfectly normal life. But to come to this level, one has to decide for himself and stick to his decision, which cannot be achieved by simple persuasion from others. It must be made obvious that it is one's own responsibility to take care of one's health.

It is next to impossible to escape from the clutches of octopus. Drinks and drugs are similar to this phenomenon. Famous Malayalam poetess Sugathakumari once said, "They will make you a slave like a cruel devil. You turn mad once the poison enters you as drinks, smoke or injections. You will do anything for getting it. You will

steal, you will kill and you will do any criminal offence. Laws and good manners and ideologies will be thrown out. The slave of drugs will get drowned in an underworld exclusively of his own making”.

Mostly, drugs are traded centered around schools, colleges, hostels, and labor centers. Since this is against the law of the land, anyone who happens to see this should inform the Police.

Things to be taken care of:

1. Care should be taken in choosing friends. Undesirable friendships and gangs should be avoided.
2. It is accepted that prevention is always better than cure. As such, it is better to make sure individually that one stays away from smoking, drinking and drugs.
3. One should decide himself that leisure hours, entertainment and time spent with friends are tackled as best as possible. Any influence from others to deviate should be resisted strongly and with determination. We should re-examine our friendships with those who don't respect our concern for our wellbeing health wise or otherwise. We may have to discard such friendships.
4. Wherever seniors or friends try to influence children to take drinks or drugs, such incidents must be immediately brought to the attention of parents and teachers.

We must accept the fact that we are surrounded by people with a 'business eye'. The present life style of our youngsters is mostly emulating others. We are eager to follow whatever is seen in advertisements or television or movies. But we must view things discriminating between what is good and what is evil; and consciously choose the good.

The Holy Bible very clearly elucidates the dangers caused by drinking and intoxication in family and society. Genesis 9: 21-23 explains the incidents subsequent to Noah getting intoxicated and the consequences thereof. The apostolic warning that a drunkard will not get into Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10) should serve as a warning for all.

Activities:

1. Along with the Youth Movement of your parish, organize programmes to make special days free from drinks.
2. Study how do drinks and drugs affect health detrimentally and arrange a discussion in your class.

Unit 7

Prayers and Hymns

Chapter 1

Common Prayers

We have different forms of prayers such as common prayers, communal prayers and private meditative prayers. Communal prayers mean to pray with congregation. This can take place during church services, or it could be a structured meeting of Christians who have arranged to pray together. In communal prayers, chief celebrant leads the prayers and the faithful participate in the prayers by saying responses and also singing the hymns arranged in the prayers. Prayers in low voice and in loud voice are arranged commonly in Syriac tradition in communal prayers. Private meditative prayers are intended to individual's meditation for his/her personal spiritual edification. The prayer book *Pampakkuda Namaskaram* includes number of private meditative prayers. Common prayers are used both in public and private worships and are mainly intended to be officiated in families and in monastic communities. Traditionally, in Syriac Churches these prayers are known as *Sh'himo* (common) prayers.

The prayer book *Sh'himo Namaskaram* or the Book of Common Prayer of the Syriac Orthodox Church, contains the daily prayers of the Church. The Syriac Orthodox liturgical tradition observes seven offices of prayer for each of the seven days of the week. According to the Scriptures, the new day begins in the evening and is identified by its number. Thus, the days are recognized as the first day, second day, and so on. This is reflected in Genesis 1:5, "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." The offices of prayer are also referred to as the "Hours". The importance of seven offices is alluded to in Psalm 119:164, "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws."

The Hours are in the following order:

1. Ramsho (Vespers, or Evening), which is observed at 6 p.m.
2. Soutoro (Compline, or Night Protection) at 9 p.m.
3. Lilio (Night Vigil), which is observed ideally in the middle of the night, but often directly preceding the Morning.
4. Sap'ro (Matins, or Morning) at 6 am.
5. 3rd Hour at 9 am.

6. 6th Hour at 12pm.

7. 9th Hour at 3pm.

This lesson includes the following prayers included in the common prayers:

1. Prayer of Mar Severios (Uyarapettavante Maravil irickunnavan...)
2. Praise of the Cherubim (Ennekum thante idathil ninnum...)
3. Prayer to the Holy Trinity (Parishudha pithave, ninte parishudha thirunamathal....)
4. Angelic Hymn (Melulla Uyarangalil....)
5. Maneesa of Mar Severios (Nin mathav vishudhanmar...)
6. The Creed.

Students are recommended to study in detail the above mentioned prayers. For detailed study of these prayers, make reference to Sunday School textbooks of classes 3,4,7,8,9,10 respectively.

Chapter 2

Trinitarian Prayers in the Holy Qurbana

We studied in Unit 2 about our faith in Holy Trinity and about the person and life of Jesus Christ, the Incarnated God, which are the fundamental principles of Orthodoxy. Most of the prayers of the Holy Qurbana are addressed to Holy Trinity. All the prayers end with Trinitarian doxology. The Trinitarian doxology, “Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” or “shubholabo” is an important feature of Orthodox liturgy. Some of the prayers chanted by the believers during worship are also the proclamation of this belief. Some of these prayers are discussed in this chapter. Memorizing these prayers is necessary to all Orthodox Christians.

During the Elevation of Mysteries

The priest elevates the Paten and says, “Holy things to the holy and pure”. The response is a Trinitarian doxology, “The One Holy Father, the One Holy Son and the One Holy Spirit alone is holy. Amen”. Then the priest elevates the chalice. The response of the believers on this is “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the living Holy Spirit, One God forever and ever, Amen.” This is an acknowledgement from the faithful that they offer glory and worship to the Holy and sanctified Holy Trinity alone. They also adore the Holy Trinity for allowing them to partake in the divine mysteries.

The proclamation of the priest that the “Holy things to the holy and pure”, is also an important aspect in the worship. Those who are participating in the Holy Qurbana confess that they are not holy. Only the sanctified and pure are eligible for partaking in the divine mysteries.

Before the priest begins the most important part of Holy Qurbana (the Anaphora) by standing upon the step (dargo) the sacristan also ensures that all believers inside the church are truly faithful and sanctified. He holds all chains of the censer together in his hand and give the proclamation “sthoumenkalos” symbolises that all who are in the church are true believers. In early period, during this time all the unbelievers (catechumens) would go out of the Church. The rest of the liturgy is supposed to be only for the faithful.

Then the priest proclaims that the Holy Trinity is with the believers. This is giving glory to the Holy Trinity and acknowledging that by partaking in the divine mysteries, the believers are eligible for fellowship with the Holy Trinity.

Before the Procession of the Holy Mysteries to the People

When the reader proclaims, “cry we aloud and say”, the congregation prays as follows. “Praised and adored, are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To Him be praise from the beginning, for generation and generation. Halleluiah”. This is also an example for another Trinitarian doxology. See the expression; “to Him”, which is singular indicates the oneness of the Triune God. Here the congregation is proclaiming the “Trinitarian God” and praising without any limits.

Chapter 3

Liturgical Hymns

Kyamtha Evening Prayer

Two orders of common prayers are included in the currently available Qurbana Kramam. They are Sleeba Namaskaram and Kyamtha Namaskaram. We use Sleeba Namaskaram from the feast of the Holy Cross (Sleeba Perunnal) and Kyamtha Namaskaram from the feast of the Resurrection (Easter) of our Lord. We already learned some songs of Sleeba Namaskaram in class Nine. Some of the songs from Kymtha evening prayer are going to discuss in this chapter.

The main theme of hymns in Kyamtha Namaskaram is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The meanings of some of the hymns are given below:

1. Adam-The head of our race will rejoice at the Resurrection

O Lord have mercy- upon us all. (Ee ninn udhanathin naal...)

We remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ on all Sundays. So, we sing that Adam, the head of all humankind is rejoicing in the feast of resurrection. "Almighty God, have mercy upon us" is our prayer. Due to disobedience Adam was expelled from Eden. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Adam was restored to Paradise.

2. By Your grace, You were inclined

To descend to us sinners

By Your grace, pity Your Church

Which clings to the wings of Your Cross. (En nadhanin krupa nine...)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; "My Lord, Your grace makes you to reach us, the sinners. Have mercy upon the church which trusts on your cross." This hymn confesses that we humans are sinners. The incarnation happened due to the grace of God. Cross becomes the sign of our salvation. St. Gregory the Theologian (or Gregory of Naziansus, 4th Century, AD) writes, "Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God's for His sake, since He for ours became human. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better...."

3. In the house of death, our Lord consoled Adam:

"Do not grieve that you had transgressed the commandment

For the sins and offenses, you committed

I was beaten in order to save you from death

Fruit of Eden you ate and I took-bitter drink

You wore leaves – for you were naked
Naked they – hung me on the tree
And the Father was pleased by the blood which I shed”
 (“Naadan mrudaridayilurappichadathe...”).

Lord went down among the dead and consoled Adam. “Don’t weep over your sins anymore. I received blows because you committed transgressions (Matthew 27:30). I drank sour wine because you ate the forbidden fruit of Eden (Matthew 27:34). You wore leaves when felt naked and for that put me on the cross naked (Matthew 27:35). The anger of the Father is gone when I shed my blood” (read Hebrews 9:22-25). Christ pleased the Father by offering Himself sacrificially out of love for humanity.

The sacrifice in Israel was offered to God for the expiation of the sins of Israel. Animal sacrifice was a type of the perfect sacrifice realized in Christ and true atonement. However, the complete expiation of sin from humanity was accomplished by Christ, the true paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Hence, here we sing the theology of salvation (soteriology). We please God when we offer ourselves to Him without blemish or stain.

4. The Scent of Chrism, O Lord, rises from Your wounds

Your lips are like the threads of the finest scarlet
I sought You and – guards surrounded me
From them I ran – unto Golgotha
There I saw Your side pierced and Your blood flowing out
Astonished, I cried, “Glory – to You for You have
Halleluiah – saved us by Your Cross”
 (“Nin murivukalinetten mooron...”)

This hymn is composed from the perspective of the Holy Church, the true Bride of Christ, who is effusive in her love for her True Bridegroom, Christ. In the Old Testament, the relationship of God and Israel is understood in the context of the marriage of husband and wife. In the New Testament, we see that this relationship is perfected and fully realized in the relationship of Christ and His Church (Eph 5:32). Jewish tradition also presents the metaphor of husband and wife relation for explaining the relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Jeremiah 31:32). “Instead, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, so you have been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 3:20, Isaiah 54:7-14). From the book of Genesis itself, there is a narrative of nuptial relationship of Yahweh and Israel. There are several examples in the Bible: (Deuteronomy 7:6-11, Jeremiah 2:2, 3:1-4, Ezekiel 16:8, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:22-24). The Syriac liturgical tradition presents Jesus Christ as heavenly bridegroom and Church as the bride chosen by Jesus Christ from the gentiles.

Church fathers allegorically interpreted the Song of Songs to describe the love relationship between heavenly Bridegroom Son of God and His Church. The homilies of Gregory of Nyssa on the Song of Songs are a great resource for understanding this. Origen of Alexandria also used this metaphor to explain the divine love to humanity. The bride Church seeks the Bridegroom Jesus Christ. At last, the bride finds her bridegroom on the Cross sacrificing His life for her. The Syriac liturgical tradition describes that Crucifixion was the perfection of this holy marriage. Jesus Christ gave the Church His body and blood as the sign of His relationship.

The song “Nin murivukalee...” is a poetic presentation of completing the search of Church, the earthly bride to her heavenly Bridegroom Jesus Christ on the cross in Golgotha. So, the meaning of this hymn is as follows: “The fragrance from Your wounds is good as the fragrance of Myron. Your lips are tender like silk thread. I was surrounded by soldiers when I came to see You. I left them and ran to Golgotha. I found Your heart opened and blood began to pour. Praise to the Lord who saved us by His cross”. “Your lips are like a thread of scarlet” – This image is taken from the Song of Solomon 4:3. The Song of Solomon contains the illustrations of the love between the True Bridegroom, Christ and His Bride, the holy Church. This ballad of love provides the Church poetry and imagery to describe her love and pure longing for Christ and His longing for her.

The meanings of the first stanza of some of the songs are dealt here in this chapter. Students are recommended to memorize all the hymns and understand the meaning.

Chapter 4

Post Communion Hymns

The celebrant begins the Post-communion service after the final benediction. During this service, the Madbaha is veiled. When the priest conducts the post-communion service, the believers participate in it by singing hymns. In this chapter, we discuss hymns sung during this time.

1. Wipe away, Lord, all my debts

With the sponge of Your mercy
And by Your compassion, Lord
Do not remember my sins.
(Ente kadangallashesham nin....)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; “O Lord, obliterate my sins by your sponge of mercy. All our sins may be removed by your grace.” In Malayalam hymn, the Syriac word espoogo is used for “sponge”.

Students are expected to learn the remaining stanzas also.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ

Let not – Your Body and Blood we have received
Be for judgment nor condemnation
But rather for the pardon of sins
And for the resurrection
Halleluiah – with clear faces.
(Moran Yeshu Mashiha, Ulkondoree nin meyyum....)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; “O Lord, it should not be for the punishment and retribution to those who receive your holy Body and Blood. But it should be for the remedy of their faults. Moreover, they may stand on your right side with courage.”

3. If Moses gave life to sinful Reuben

by the blood of beasts
Much more- shall the faithful dead receive
For whom this living - sacrifice - was raised
(Pathakanam roobelinu-jeevan mosha....)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; “If Moses gave life to the sinner Ruben by the sacrifice of animals, how much more blessings will the faithful departed receive by the living sacrifice of the Lord.”

Genesis 35:22 narrates the sin committed by Reuben. When Jacob blessed his sons, he pronounced a curse upon his elder son Reuben. “You shall no longer excel” (Genesis 49:4). After instituting animal sacrifice under the instruction of Yahweh, Moses blessed Israelites (Deut. 33:6). Here he reversed the curse of Reuben, saying “Let Reuben live and not die, nor let his men be few.” If the animal sacrifice in the Old Testament period was capable of absolving sins, then how much more efficient will be the living sacrifice of Lord Jesus Christ. The post- communion service ends with this hope.

