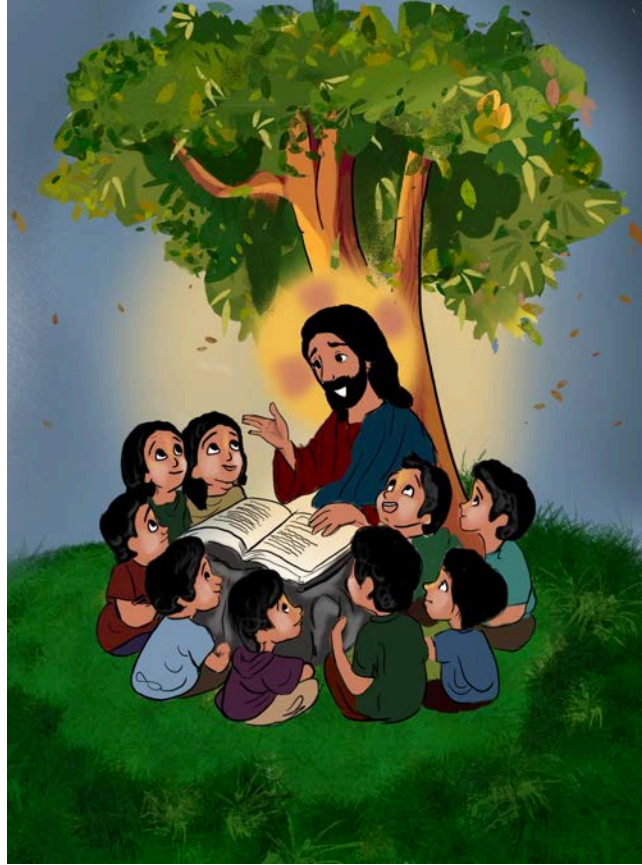




Sunday School of the American Dioceses
of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

3rd Grade

Made in His Image



3rd Grade
Made in His Image
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Supporting materials can be found at <https://talmido.org>

Lesson 1: Theosis - God In Us

*How can we be more like God? Holy Qurbana
and the Church helps us to grow.*

Vocabulary Words

- **Theosis:** Becoming like God. This is also called “Deification”.
- **Diptychs:** These are intercessory prayers and six of them are read during the Holy Qurbana. This is also called “Thubdens”.
- **Salvation:** Jesus has protected us and saved us from death by His Resurrection and given us new life with God forever

Becoming Like God

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

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

The more we spend time with God, the more we become like God! The more we talk to Him, read about Him, think about Him, spend time with His people, the more and more we become like Him.

The Church teaches us about Jesus and we grow spiritually. All the saints had the same teachings, prayers, and examples as us. They chose to spend more of their time becoming a true disciple of Christ. All we need to do to become like Him is follow the Church teachings including obeying God’s commandments, go to Church regularly, and worship Him.

The Greek word “theos” means “God.” “**Theosis**” means “becoming like God”, and is also known as **deification**. We grow by being disciples of Christ and learning how He loved others.

Becoming like Christ is the process of enjoying our **salvation**. Everyone has been saved by Christ because God loves everyone! He wants all of us to be with Him and enjoy eternal life. But to do so we must become holy and pure like God. This is what we constantly work for. It is not easy. The Church helps us through the sacraments, and the lives of the saints.

Think

In this icon, do you see
some climb and some fall?

Who is at the top
encouraging everyone?

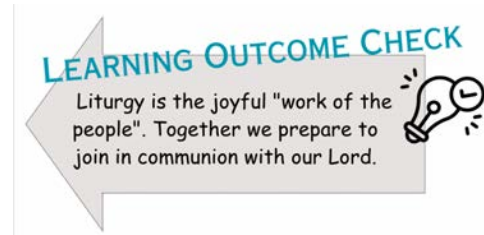


When we are young, we copy our parents. As we grow older, we start to imitate our friends, super heroes, athletes, and celebrities. We do this so that we can become like them. We become Christians through Holy baptism. So, instead of looking at other people around us, we should look to Christ as the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

The Importance of Holy Qurbana

The Church gives us a very special gift in the Sacrament of **Holy Qurbana**. Only baptized members of the Church are able to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus if they prepare. Communion helps us grow in holiness.

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



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

Our Saints and Church Fathers

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

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

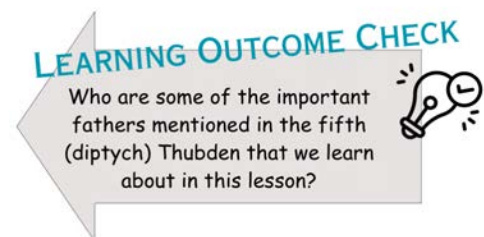
these teachings and did not change. In the Fifth Thubden, we remember all these Saints (both men and women) even though they are not named - “Let us remember all those who before them, and with them, and after them, have kept, entrusted, and delivered to us the one, genuine, and uncorrupted Faith. May their prayers be a refuge for us!”

This Thubden introduces us to some very important Saints, including St. Cyril and St. Severus. In the first few hundred years after Christ resurrected, the Saints of the common Church were St. Ignatius and St. Athanasius. Saints important in the Oriental Church are St. Dioscorus and St. Jacob Burdono. The Saints of India are also mentioned: St. Yeldo Mar Baselios, St. Gregorios of Parumala, and St. Divanasios of Vattasseril.

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

St. Athanasius wrote, “God became man that we might become divine.” In other words, God became man through Jesus that we may become like Him. We can learn a lot from the lives of many saints such as St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, and St. Ephrem. Their lives and their teachings are examples of how to be holy.

Saints are special and holy men and women who give us examples from their life on how to be like God. Some of these saints are called “Church Fathers” because they taught us important lessons about our faith. In the Fifth Thubden we name a few saints but more importantly remember all saints (men and women) because their teachings helped the Church keep the true faith. By learning about their lives and following their examples, we can become more like Christ!



The Body of Christ



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

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

We pray to God that we should continue to grow in the process of becoming like God. The Church is always there to help us and gives us the tools to grow into God’s holiness.

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

Our family includes the living who are there with us physically and all the departed including our relatives and the Saints!

Holy Qurbana is truly the “work of the people.” It is one of the most holy and special moments in our life when we are together with all the Saints, those who have died, and those who are alive. This is a happy moment!

Together, we are the Body of Christ.

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 2: Trusting in God

*Christian life is a relationship with God based on love.
God's promises are fulfilled when we obey with joy and do His will.*

Vocabulary Words

- **Sin:** Something wrong and not pleasing to God.
- **Disunion:** No longer in communion with God due to sin.
- **Judge:** An Old Testament ruler sent by God to guide the Israelites

Being a Christian means to love and place our trust in God. Believing in God means that we also trust Him even when everything seems to be going wrong! We trust God because He loves us and always wants the best for us.

When life gets hard, sometimes it may be hard to trust God. We will be tested and may not understand why. We must still remain faithful to God because His great plan for us is more than we can understand. God loves us and knows what is best for us.

Remember

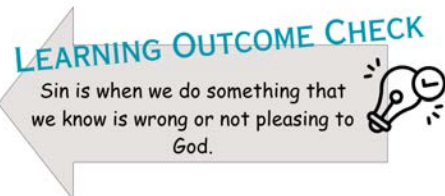
Our trust will be tested, and although we may not understand why, we must remain faithful to God and know that His plan for us is beyond our own understanding.

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

This verse tells us that God’s thoughts are far beyond our own thoughts. Our challenge is to trust and have faith in God, even when we seem to understand!

Sin is when we turn away from God. We may feel we can do things on our own without God's help. This is when we are no longer in union with God (**disunion**). Sin makes us doubt God and His plan.

Sin is doing something that is not in God's plan for us. One way to think about sin is "missing the mark".



As Christians our goal is to be like Jesus. As we read in **St. Matthew 5:48**, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect". This is the target (mark) that we are aiming for!



Our trust in Him is broken with Sin and our relationship with Him is shaken. It is important though to remember that God still loves us, and it is we who turn away. There are stories in the Bible of people who trust in God to overcome difficulties. Let's take a look at three stories in the Bible and see how trusting in God was their answer.

Deborah (Judges 4-5)

The people of Israel had turned away from God and sinned. God allowed the enemies of Israel to attack as he wanted Israel to come back to Him.

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



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

According to God's command, Deborah called on a man named Barak to fight against Sisera, the army commander of the king of Canaan. Barak said to Deborah, "*If you will go with me, I will go.*" Barak and Deborah together set out for war. After a difficult battle, the Israelites finally won against Sisera's army. Because Deborah listened to God and trusted in Him, she was able to save all the Israelites from slavery.

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man (St. Matthew. 9:1-8; St. Mark. 2:1-12)

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

One day, Jesus was preaching to the people inside a home. The home was so full of people wanting to hear His words that some even stood outside to hear through the door!



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

The friends carried him high and made an opening in the roof to lower him down in front of Jesus. Jesus was amazed by the great faith and trust of the paralytic man and his four friends. They proved their faith by working so hard to get close to Him. Jesus not only forgives the man's sins, but He heals the man of his ailment. The paralyzed man was able to walk!

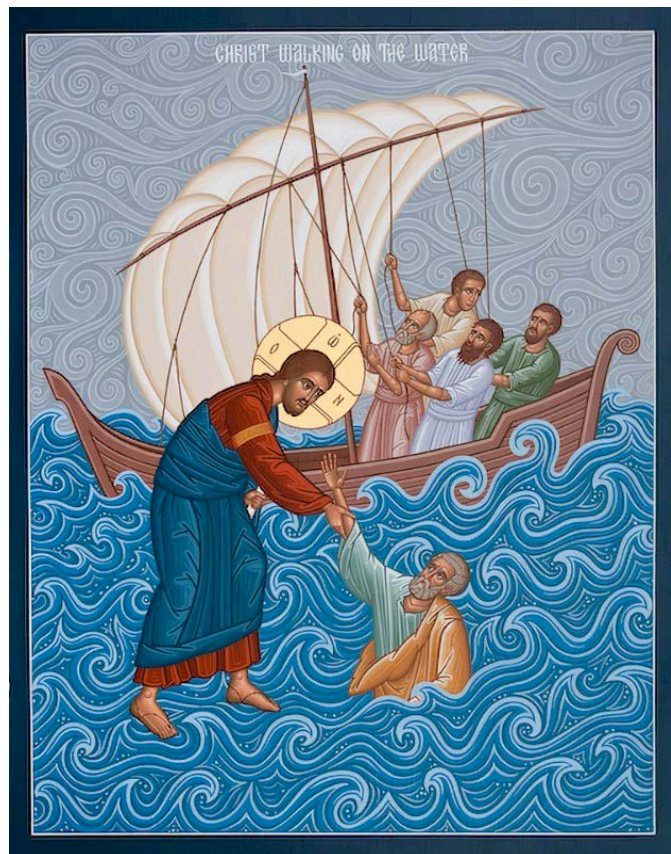
In this story, the paralytic had a very difficult life. It would have been very easy to be angry at God and others. We see the great love and faith of the paralytic's friends who helped him by breaking through the roof because they knew Jesus would heal the friend. This is a wonderful story of how we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

Do not be afraid! (St. Matthew 14:22-33)

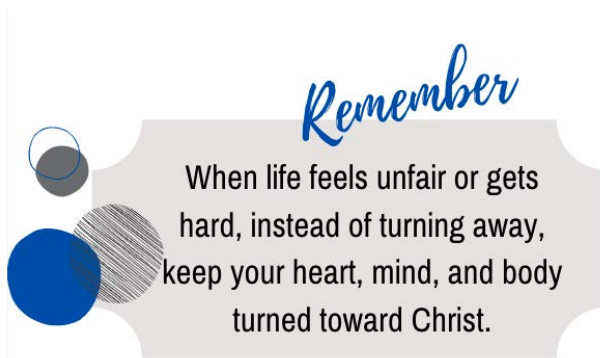
After Jesus performs the miracle of feeding the 5000, Jesus goes off to pray on His own on a mountain. The disciples were on a boat in the middle of the sea keeping watch during the night. The weather was bad and the sea was rough, so the boat kept being tossed around.

Jesus then approached the disciples by walking on the water! At first the disciples did not know who it was because it was night, but then then Jesus called out to the disciples. Peter replied, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water".

When Jesus told him to come, Peter stepped out onto the water and started walking on the water as well! But then he turned his eyes away from Jesus and noticed how choppy the water was and how loud the wind was blowing. He suddenly became afraid and he lost faith. He cried out and said "Lord save me!", and Jesus reached out to pull him out of the water. Jesus asked Peter why he doubted.



This story starts with trust when Peter walks onto the water to meet Christ. But because he turned away from Jesus and began to notice all the problems around him, he forgot that God was with him. His fear took control and he fell into the water. If he had simply kept his eyes on Christ, his faith would not have been shaken and he would not have fallen into the water!



Trusting God is a big theme in many of the Bible stories. The Israelites turned away from God and got themselves into trouble. Turning away from God is sin, and it is because of sin that we lose faith.

The stories in this lesson shows how trusting in God always brings us closer to Him and to others. Next time when life feels unfair or gets hard, instead of turning away from Christ, keep your heart, mind, and body turned towards Him. We can avoid sin by trusting in Him!

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 3: The World to Come

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

Vocabulary Words

- **Second Coming:** We believe that Jesus Christ will come back in great glory and judge everyone (the living and the dead).
- **Final Judgment:** Jesus is the only one who will determine who has lived a life in obedience and who has not. This is not a punishment. We have the choice and freedom on how we want to live. Jesus has taught us everything and given us the best example by His life on how to live in this world according to God's commandments.
- **Consequence:** This is the result or outcome of our actions which can be good or bad depending on how our actions were.

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

Parable of the Sower

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

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



The seed is the Word of God. Those who hear the message from the Christ but do not understand it are like the seeds that fell on the path with the birds eating them.

In some people, the message will not last. These people are like the seeds that fell on the rocky ground; when trouble comes, the words will be forgotten.

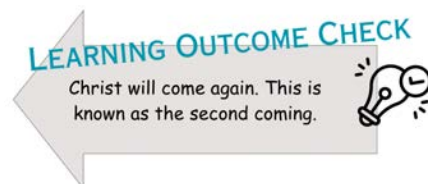
The seeds that fell among thorns are those who hear the message but worry about troubles in their daily lives. These thoughts choke out the message of the Kingdom of God and they do not bear fruit.

The seeds that fell on good soil represent those who hear the message and understand it. These people bear plenty of fruits. We should try to understand the Word of God with great care; it must go deep into our heart.

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

What Is The Kingdom of God?

In the Nicene Creed, we believe in the “new life in the world to come”. This is the life after the Second Coming of Christ, and it is one where everyone lives forever with God.

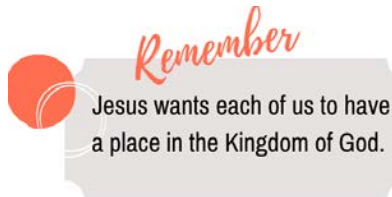


The Kingdom of God is when we are with God. We know God is with us now. So, we have the Kingdom of God with us today - it is inside us since Baptism. When we are at Church, we are with God. The Kingdom of God is everywhere as God is everywhere.

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

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



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

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

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

At the Second Coming, God will be here for everyone including those who have died. Satan will always try to pull us away but we must stay faithful as we know Christ Almighty will come.

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

Final Judgment is for the living and the departed.



The final judgment is at the Second Coming and the Kingdom of God will be eternal. This is what we mean when we say a new life in the world to come. There is no chance that Satan will overcome the strength of God, therefore we know what will happen with those who reject the love of God.



Final judgment is not a punishment but the outcome of our choices. This is how the seed of the Kingdom of God grows in us. If the seed grows, we will enjoy being in the Kingdom of God forever.

Thinking about the Second Coming and Final Judgment is scary. The Gospel reading for the Sunday of the Faithful Departed is **St. Luke 12:32-39** and begins, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Is it with hope in the Resurrection and trusting that God is Love, we follow His commandments and grow to become like Christ so we can be with Him in Paradise.

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 4: Jonah and God's Loving Kindness

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

Vocabulary Words

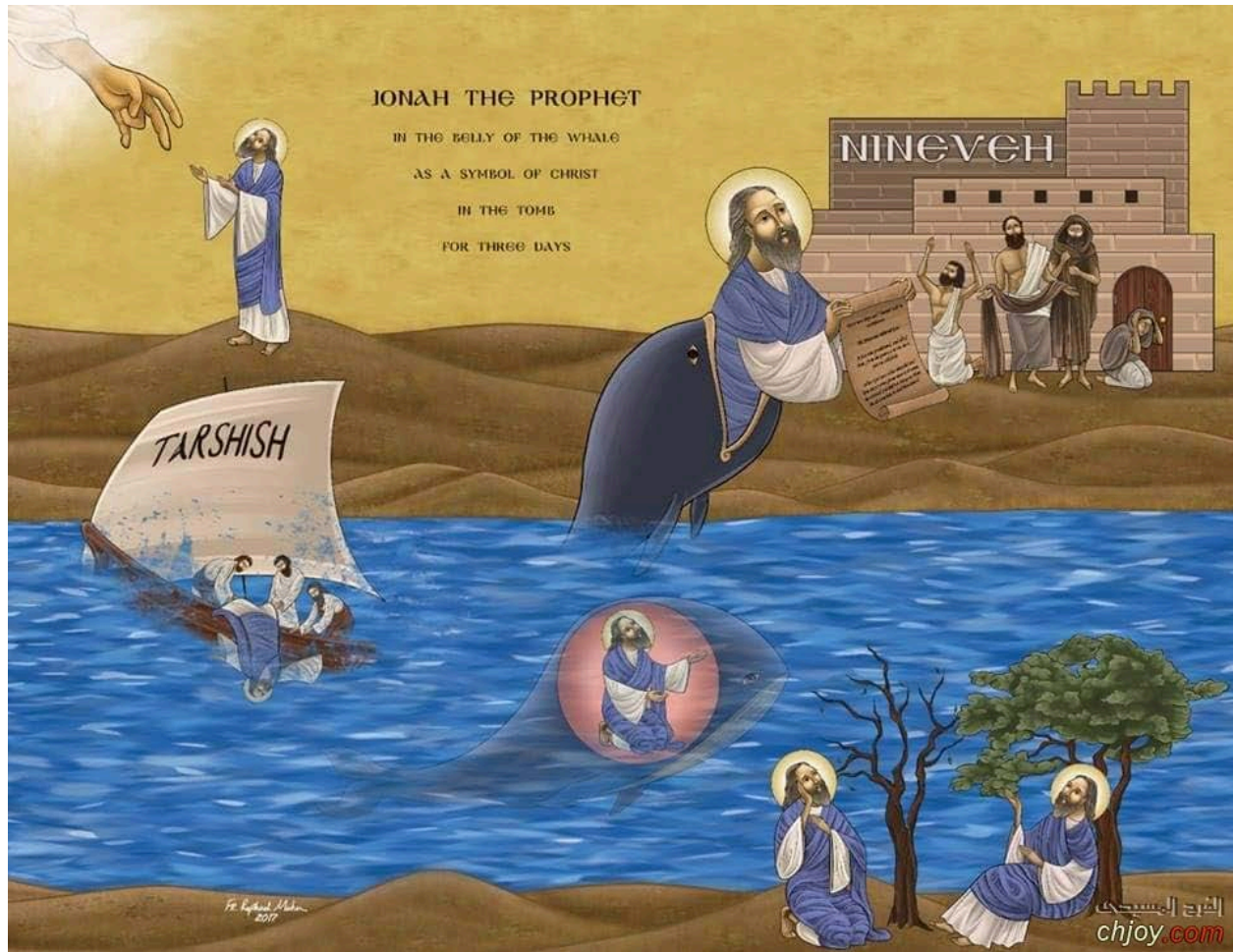
- **Hades:** Also known as Sheol. This is the place before the Resurrection where people who died were waiting. Everyone who died in the Old Testament stories waited for Christ in Hades.
- **Resurrection:** Jesus Christ coming back to life after He died on the Cross. The Resurrection is how God defeated death!
- **Repentance:** To feel sincere sorrow or regret for committing a sin. Repentance involves seeking forgiveness from God and making efforts to correct one's actions.

Jonah runs away from God

God asked His prophet Jonah to go and tell the people of Nineveh about Him. God knew that the people in Nineveh were doing bad things and sinning. He wanted Jonah to help them change.

But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because he knew God to be merciful.. So instead, he tried to run away from God by getting on a boat that was going to a different city called Tarshish.

God knew Jonah did this and was sad. While Jonah was asleep on the boat, He sent a big storm with heavy rain and strong winds that almost wrecked the boat.



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

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

The sailors thought that maybe one of them had done something to make God angry and cause the storm. So they came up with a way to figure out who was to blame. They decided to cast lots to find who was guilty, and it fell upon Jonah! They asked him why this was happening. Jonah admitted that he was running away from God because he did not want to do what God asked.



Jonah knew that the storm was his fault, so he told the sailors to throw him into the sea.

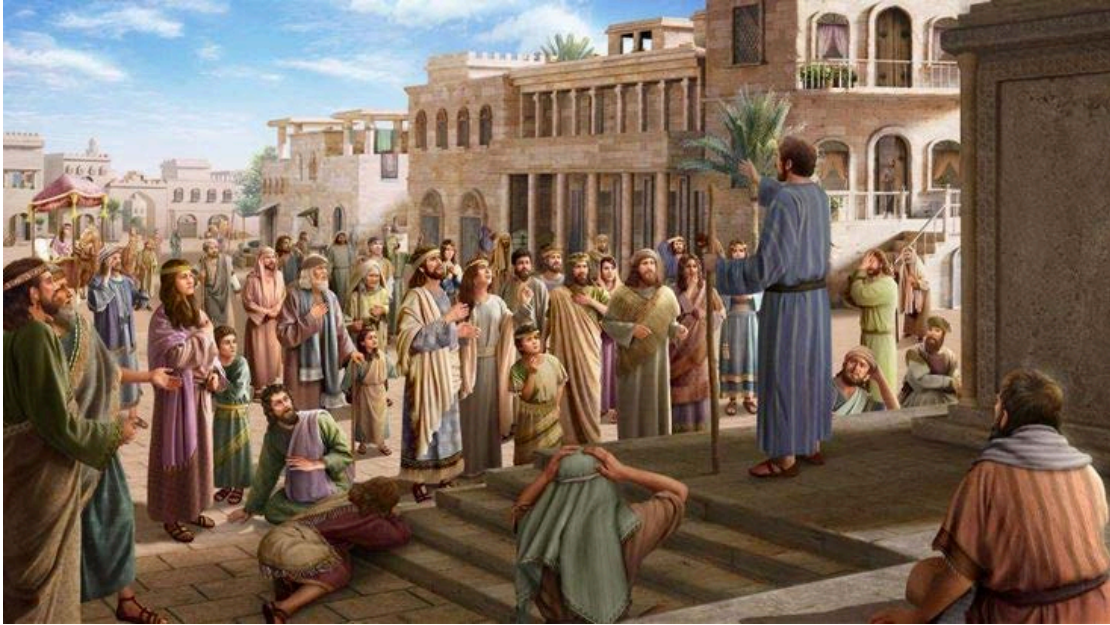
As soon as they did, the storm stopped. The sailors were amazed and started praying to Jonah's God because they saw He was very powerful. They thanked God for saving them from the storm.

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

Jonah's Repentance

Jonah was inside a big fish for three days and nights. Jonah prayed to God and said sorry for what he had done. He promised God that he would not run away again. He would do what God asked. After the third day, God saw that Jonah really meant what he said and wanted to change. So, God made the fish spit Jonah out onto the land.

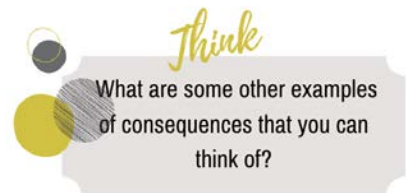
Jonah went to Nineveh and talked to the people there. He told them that if they kept doing bad things and not listening to God, Nineveh would be destroyed. The people believed Jonah and started praying and not eating for forty days. Even the animals and the king of Nineveh joined in! They asked God to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



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

Jonah's Consequence

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



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

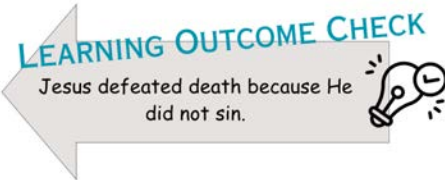
Similarly, Jonah had tried to run away from God's commands. Later, Jonah got swallowed by a big fish and stayed inside the fish for three days and three nights. Being swallowed by the fish was the consequence of his actions, or disunion with God.

Jonah and Jesus

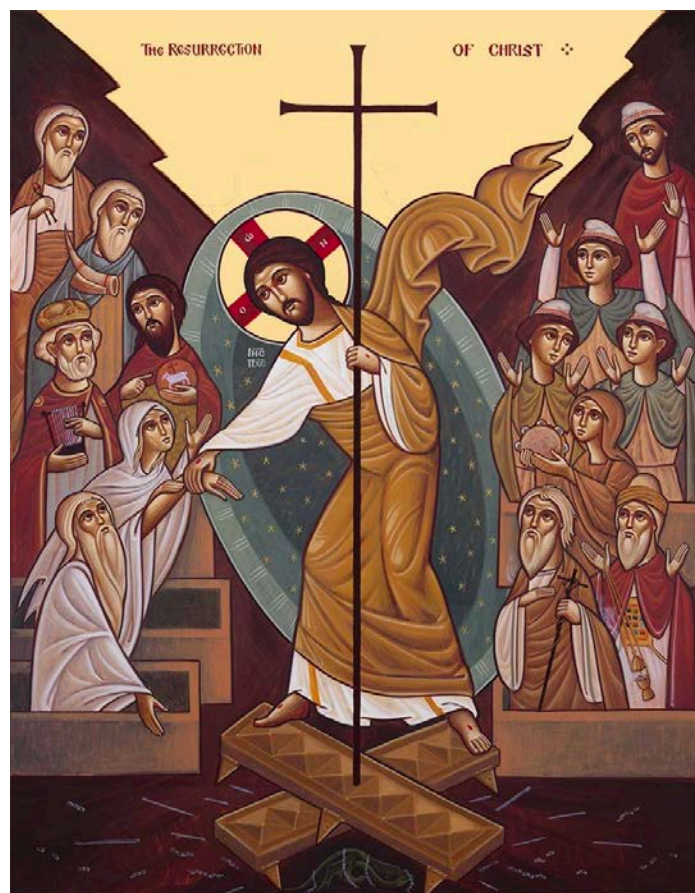
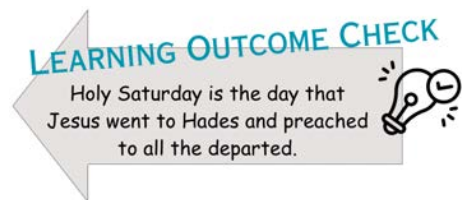
“Three days” is important in the Bible as we see it being mentioned in many places. In **St. Matthew 12:40**, Jesus says, “For just as Jonah was in the

belly of the fish for three days and three nights, the Son of Man will also be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights too.”

It happened exactly how Jesus had mentioned. We remember Jesus’ crucifixion on **Great Friday**. As Jesus had never sinned, death could not hold the Son of God and He destroyed it. Death came to this fallen world from sin, and His defeat of death is the **Sunday of Resurrection**.



However, Jesus did not just disappear for those three days between Friday and Sunday. On **Holy Saturday**, Jesus went to the land of the departed people called **Hades** to preach the Gospel to them and so provide a chance for repentance. This icon is often shown on Resurrection Sunday.



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

Remember that God loves everyone, even those who sin! Christ visited all the people who had died before His death on the Cross. He defeated death by His Resurrection. There is a greater chance to repent when Christ went down to Hades.

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

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 5: The Light of the World

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

Vocabulary Words

- **Maa'ltho:** The Syriac word for the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ for the first time to the temple.
- **Presentation:** Introducing someone or something to others.
- **Prophecy:** Saying what will happen before it actually happens.

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

Jesus Christ's first visit to the Temple

St. Mary and St. Joseph was also like our parents when it came to Jesus. In the Jewish religion, it was important to bring the baby to the Temple when he or she was 40 days old. The parents would give a special gift to God. Since Mary and Joseph did not have a lot of money, they gave two turtle doves (**St. Luke 2:22-40, Leviticus 12:8**) as their gift.

The Temple in Jerusalem was God's House. Jesus is God, so this story also reminds us that God humbled Himself to be born to parents who were not rich, but instead loved God and prayed every day.



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

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

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

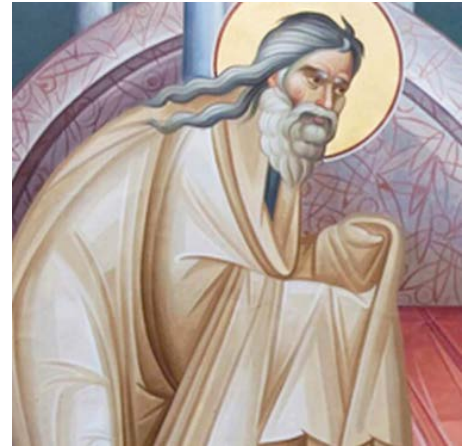
St. Simeon (an older man who dedicated his life to God and was waiting for someone very special) and **St. Anna** the prophetess who never left the Temple and prophesied about Jesus to everyone at the Temple.



St. Simeon, a devout man

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

Baby Jesus was brought to the Jerusalem temple. The Holy Spirit led Simeon to see and cradle Jesus in his arms. He thanked God. This was a very special moment for Simeon because he had been waiting to see Jesus. He said, *“For my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.”* (Luke 2:31,32)



St. Simeon shared a new prophecy to St. Mary, that one day, she will be very sad. He was foretelling the sad news that Jesus would die on the Cross.

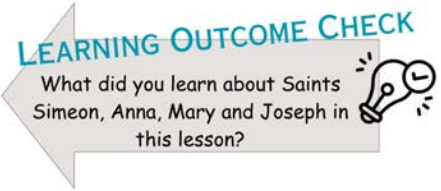
St. Anna, a prophetess

St. Anna was over 84 years old, and loved God very much. She stayed in the temple all the time, praying and fasting. When St. Anna saw baby Jesus and His parents in the temple, she was so happy. She thanked God for sending His Son. She told everyone in the temple about Jesus and how one day He would save the people.

Jesus returned with His parents to Nazareth. St. Mary kept all these things in her heart. Jesus grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. He loved and obeyed His parents and was loved by God and men.

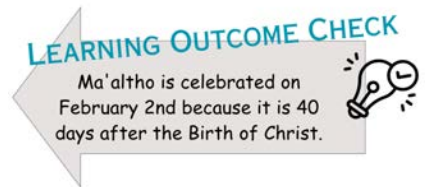


In the Gospels, we read that Jesus was obedient to all the authorities, respected and followed the Jewish traditions and customs.

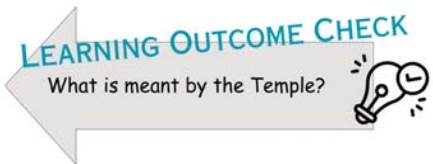


The Feast of Ma'altho

On February 2nd, we celebrate the Feast of the presentation of our Lord in the Temple (Ma'altho in Syriac). This is forty days after Nativity of Christ, and reminds us that Jesus is our true hope.



The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem was the holy place where God was worshiped. With the entry of Christ, the Temple was now complete and fulfilled as God (Christ) has entered.



God invites us to imitate all the saints - St. Mary, St. Joseph, St. Simeon, and St. Anna. They each led a pure and holy life. God is inviting us to present ourselves and our most precious possessions to Him.

We need to turn to God because He will shower us with His grace and show us His will. God reminds us that, even if we feel unimportant in the world, our lives have great value. He tells us that it is never a waste to spend time in His presence, waiting for Him to guide us.

Reflection Questions

1. When is Ma'altho celebrated and why?
2. In the icon, can you identify St. Mary, St. Joseph, St. Simeon, and St. Anna?
3. Who was St. Simeon and St. Anna waiting for?

Lesson 6: A Story of Healing

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

Vocabulary Words

- **Physician:** Another word for a doctor
- **Miracle:** An act of God that nobody can explain
- **Sacrament of Holy Unction:** The act of anointing and blessing someone who is sick with special holy oil.

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

Think

What examples of Jesus healing do you see in this icon?



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

Often, people incorrectly think that we do this service only when someone is very ill and may soon die. We can request Holy Unction whenever we are physically or spiritually unwell. The Church uses a special oil for this service.

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



As part of the Holy Baptism, the priest anointed each of us with a special oil called the Oil of Gladness. Then right after the Holy Baptism the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation takes place. Here the priest applies Holy Chrism (another special oil) all over the body.

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



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



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

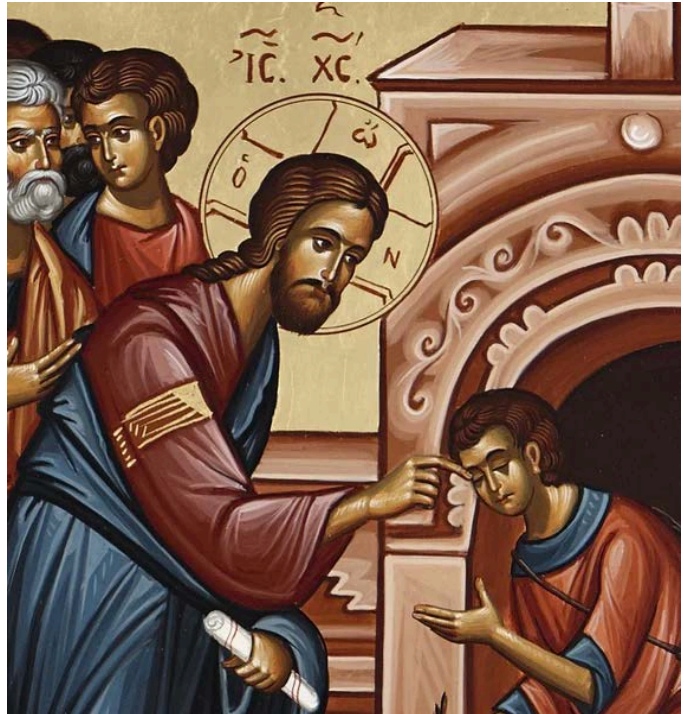
Seeking healing through Christ is not new. Even in Scripture we read many people who came to Jesus when they were in need. He laid His hands upon them to heal them.

In the Bible, we read of many stories where Jesus healed the sick. Let's take a look at two examples of Jesus healing the blind.

Jesus Heals the Blind

While on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples found a blind man begging on the side of the road in Jericho. (**St. Mark 10:46-52**).

His name was Bartimaeus and when he heard that it was Jesus passing by, he cried out to Him saying “Jesus, **Son of David, have mercy on me.**” The people around him told him to be quiet but he continued to call out to Jesus asking for His mercy.



When Jesus heard him, He asked the people to bring Bartimaeus to Him. Bartimaeus rushed to the Lord and asked for his vision. Jesus said to him “Go your way; your faith has made you well”.

Bartimaeus was overjoyed when he opened his eyes and could see the people around him. During his time of need, he turned to Jesus Christ and asked for help and Jesus told him, “Go, your faith has healed you.”

On the last Sunday of the Great Lent, we hear about Jesus healing another man who was blind from birth (**St. John 9: 1-41**). In both miracles, the glory of God was seen by many!



Forgiveness of Sins

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

Being perfect like Jesus is very difficult. We often fail because of sin. Sin is doing something that is not what God wishes for His children. God is love and above all wants us to be humble and faithful. This is why during Holy Qurbana, we pray and ask God to forgive all our sins that we have done “willingly and unwillingly, knowingly and unknowingly”. God is ready to forgive and heal us if we are humble and try not to do it again.

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

When we are ill or someone we love is not feeling well, we can pray to God with faith in His power and seek help from the Church through Holy Unction. The healing touch of God is what forgives our sins and prepares us for whatever challenges may face us as we know God will be with us.

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 7: Fallen From Grace

God loves us so much that He has given us the free will to choose our actions. God loves us even when we sin.

Vocabulary Words

- **Freewill:** The gift from God for us to choose our actions.
- **Grace:** God being kind to us and blessing us even though we sin
- **Pride:** Showing self-praise and not giving credit to God

The Garden of Eden & Sin

God loved us so much that He created us in His image. Adam and Eve (the first man and woman) were placed in the Garden of Eden to care for this special place.



God wanted His people to go everywhere and share His Love. God's plan was to make every place like the Garden of Eden. He wanted us to show His love and bring peace to everyone in the world. We see this during Holy Qurbana and the Kiss of Peace when we sing,

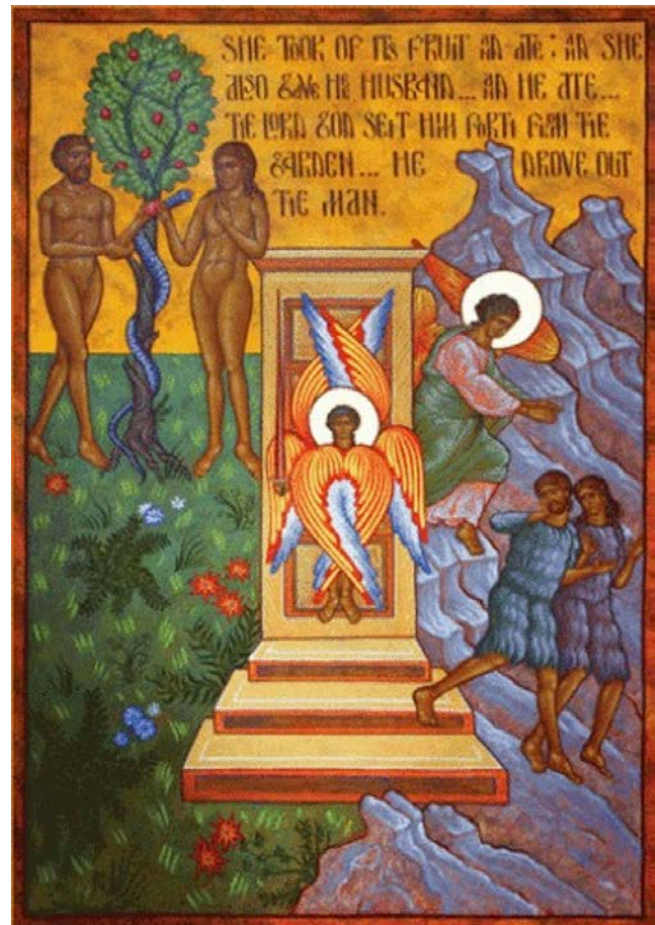
*"Let us embrace each other
With the peace of our Lord God.
May it abide with us now,
always, and forevermore".*

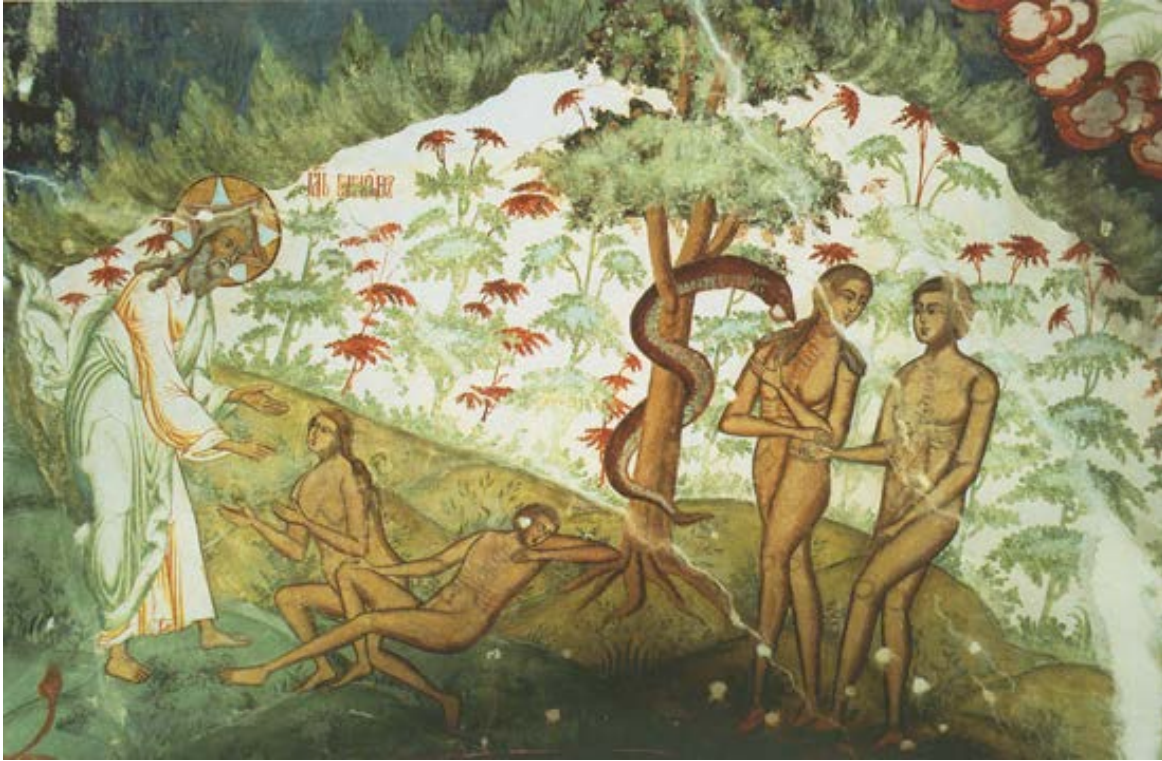
How did we separate from God? God is full of love and wants us to love Him back too. He created Adam, Eve and all of us with the ability to choose (free-will). He did not want to force us to love because love cannot be forced.

The Garden had everything we ever needed. But, Adam and Eve were not to eat the fruit from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as God knew they were not yet ready for it. He told them if they ate from that tree, something bad would happen and they would die!

This was not a test from God to see if they loved Him. God planned to give the fruit when they were ready. God was warning them like a loving parent because he knew that something bad would happen if they did not listen.

And, sadly they did not listen.





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

Each day, everyone struggles with sin and makes mistakes. But we need to learn from Jesus. He, too, was tempted by Satan, but said no! He lived His entire life without sin. He set a perfect example for us to follow.

Sin and Relationships

Sin makes God sad and hurts our relationships with others. For example, sometimes we might feel jealous of our brothers or friends because they are good at things that we are not. And sometimes we might not listen to our parents because they did not give us something we really wanted

All of this happens because of sin in our lives. When we think all about ourselves, we do not think about God and drift away from Him. We are no longer in communion with God.

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



The Tower of Babel & Pride



The Tower of Babel (**Genesis 11:1-9**) shows us what happens when we forget God. The people of Babylon (Babel in Hebrew) were not humble and did not honor God. Sadly, they were the big show-off types who were selfish and full of pride. They were busy building large, strong buildings in their growing city because they wanted to brag a lot about it to others.

They decided to build a giant tower. This was to show how powerful they were and this tower would be so tall that they could go up to heaven. Man was again turning away from God and doing what was not good.

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

After this point, the people could not finish building the tower, nor could they understand each other. In both these cases where God forced man out of the Garden of Eden and where God caused man to speak in different languages, God was not angry and did not want to punish man for being disobedient.

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



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

When we develop pride, we do not feel a need for God nor do we admit that God helped us in any way. That is what happened in the story of the Tower of Babel. The people built the tower, thinking they did it on their own strength, but God made them realise they cannot complete the work without His presence.

Our sin and pride turn us away from God. But God still loves us and wants us to come back to Him. He showers us with His **grace**. God may appear as if He is angry with us, but He does that to help us. He wants His children to live the blessed life that He wants for us! God waits for us to learn from our mistakes. He wants us to get back up once we have fallen down. He does not wish for us to give up.

When we fall from grace, we are still able to get back up. Grace is the kindness and blessings of God on us, even though we are sinners. He wants all of us to come back to Him.

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 8: My Lord and My God

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

Vocabulary Words

- **Malankara:** It refers to the state of Kerala in India
- **Ancestors:** Those who lived before us. They include our grandparents and everyone who lived before them.
- **Oath:** solemn and truthful declaration to God of what is affirmed
- **Successor:** a person or thing that comes after or follows another

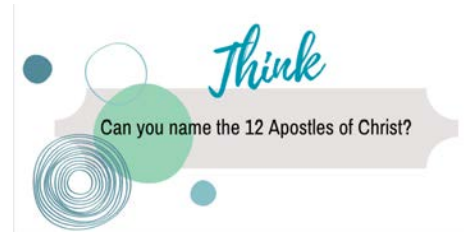
We are very lucky to have a special Church to call our own. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church or the Indian Orthodox Church, took many years and struggles for us to gather and worship. We should always be thankful for the hard work and prayers of our **ancestors** who gave us this blessing, that we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

More than two thousand years ago in Jerusalem, Jesus began His important work on earth. He chose twelve Apostles to help Him spread His message of faith.



The Apostles were always with Jesus, learning from His teachings and traveling with Him.

After Jesus died on the Cross and rose again, He appeared to His Apostles and disciples but St. Thomas was not there. When the others told Thomas that they had seen Jesus, he did not believe them. He said that he needed to see the marks on Jesus' hands and put his finger in the holes to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.



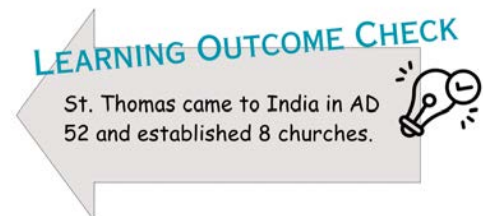
A few days later, Thomas was with the others when Jesus appeared to them again. Jesus told Thomas to touch His wounds and not doubt anymore. That's when Thomas realized that Jesus is not just a teacher, but His Lord and God. Thomas did have his doubts and questions, but when he got the answers he had strong faith in Jesus.

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

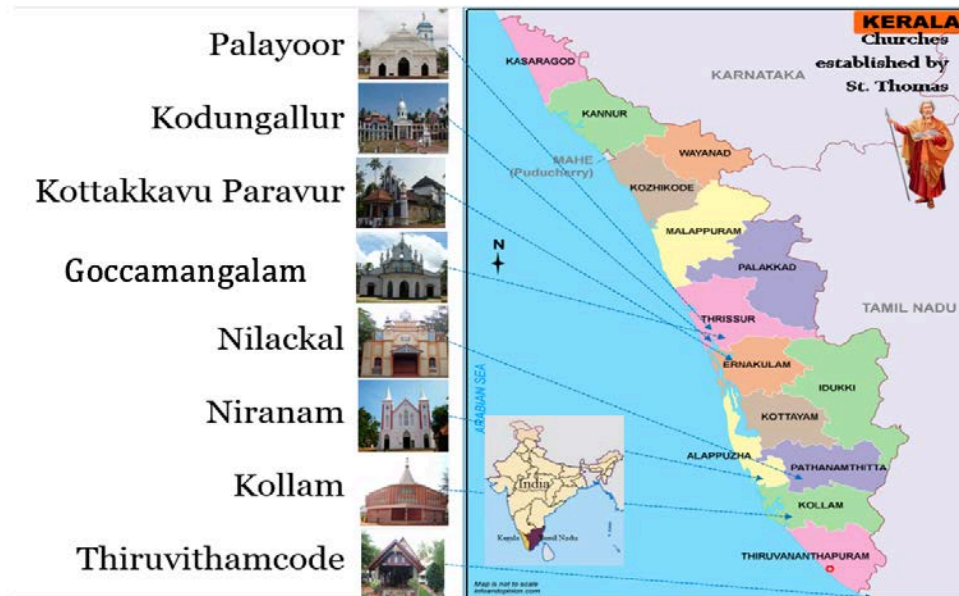
The Apostle to India

In obedience to Christ's commission, St. Thomas traveled to India.

He reached the shores of Kerala in AD 52, in Kodungallur. He preached the Gospel to the Jewish merchant community and to others, and baptized new believers. He established eight Churches (sometimes counted as seven and a half) along the coast of Kerala.



These were at Palayoor, Kodungallur, Kottakkavu (Paravur), Goccamangalam, Nilackal, Niranam, Kollam, and Thiruvithamcode (Arapally - the half church). St. Thomas appointed priests and leaders in these Churches. The map shows where these Churches were built.



St. Thomas traveled to other places in India and went to the city of Mylapore in the neighboring area called Chennai in Tamil Nadu. He continued teaching and baptizing a large number of people there.

Thomas's popularity and the growth of Christianity made some people angry. He was **martyred** in A.D. 72 and was first buried in India but later his body was taken away.

St. Thomas is the Patron Saint of our Church and also of India.

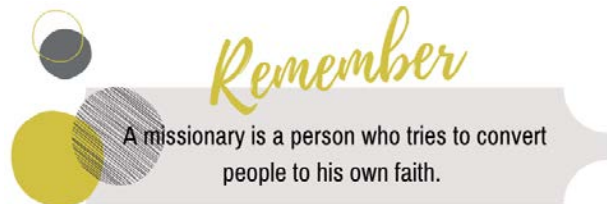


The Postal Department of India brought out a stamp commemorating his mission to the country.

Coonan Cross Oath

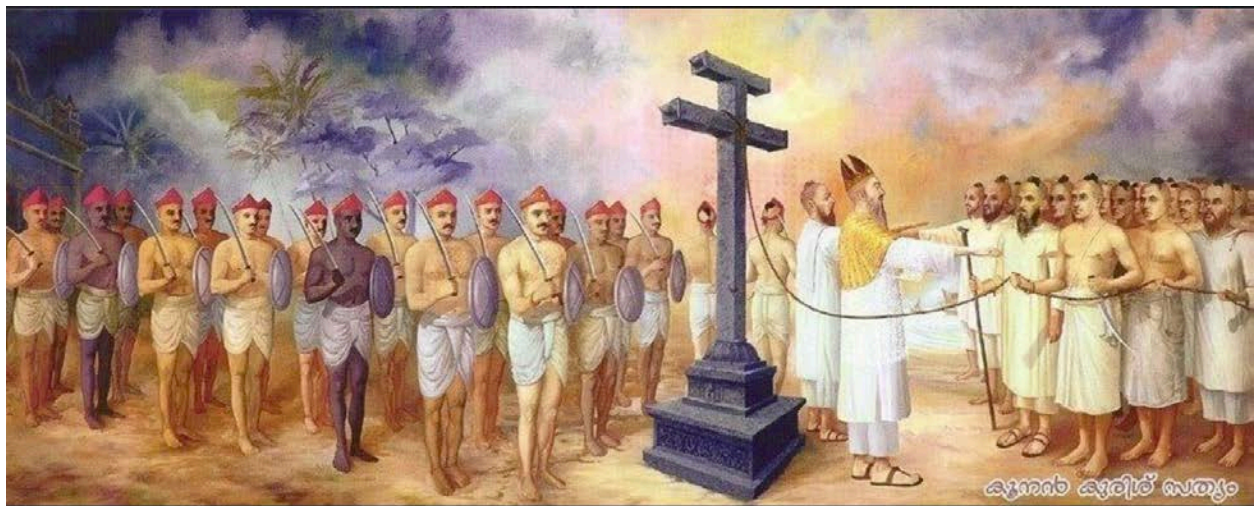
After St. Thomas was martyred, Christianity in India was alive but faced many challenges. Many people did not want to hear the Gospel of Jesus and tried to stop it.

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

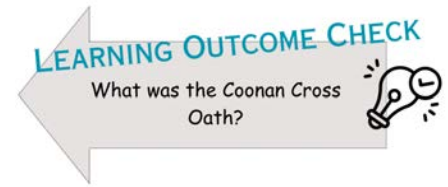


These missionaries were unfamiliar with Orthodoxy and tried to stop our worship. They took control of many Churches. Finally in 1599, the Roman Catholic Church tried to take over all the Churches and a Bishop was appointed as their leader. However, many St. Thomas Orthodox Christians had had enough!

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



This is the **Coonan Cross Oath** (Leaning Cross Oath), which was their great declaration of freedom. So many St. Thomas Christians were there!

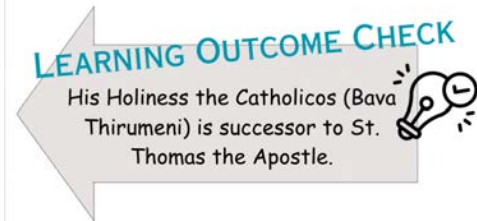


As everyone could not touch the Cross they tied a rope to the Cross so they could all make a promise to never give up the Faith. So many people held the rope that the Cross bent over giving the name.

Our Catholicos

We believe that St. Thomas is the first Catholicos of India. Catholicos means "Universal Head or Universal bishop".

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



The Church that was found in India by Jesus Christ through His **Apostle** St. Thomas, stood the test of time and continues to be a witness of our Lord and our God in and outside of Kerala. Let us keep the Church, all its spiritual organizations and leaders constantly in our daily prayers.

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 9: Abode of the Saints

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

Vocabulary Words

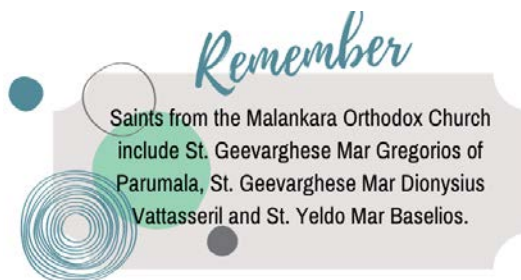
- **Abode:** Home. When we say “Abode of the Saints” we mean that all our Holy Saints are together with God.
- **Intercede:** To ask, to pray to God for oneself or a loved one
- **Monastery:** a place where monks live as a community
- **Seminary:** a school where people learn theology and get trained to become priests (Achens)

We hear so many Saints' names read during the Thubdens part of the Holy Qurbana! Have you ever wondered who all those Saints are?

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

Saints from the Malankara Orthodox Church

The first three Saints that we will learn about are saints from the Malankara Orthodox Church. Two of them were born and grew up in Kerala. One of them came to Kerala from Iraq.



There are many churches established around the world in their names. Many people consider them as their patron saint and **intercede** in their name.

St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala



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

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

At age 28, he became a Thirumeni. He was lovingly known as “Kochu Thirumeni” because he became a Thirumeni at such a young age. He lived a prayerful life, believing that “prayer brings truth, religious faith, honesty, and respect among the people.” Every day, he would wake up at four in the morning for prayers and strictly followed the church practices of praying seven times a day. Since his childhood, Thirumeni observed all the fasts of the church and fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays. Thirumeni is well known for being a kind human being to all types of people. No matter what caste or community, rich or poor, he always showed kindness and love. Thirumeni shared the Gospel to many people who had never heard of Jesus. Many became Christian because of him.

Thirumeni brought joy to the people who met him and touched the lives of many who were in need. He showed love and prayed for the sick, the poor, and the needy, regardless of their religion. Because of his service to the community, he gained respect even from people of other religions.

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

“Kochu Thirumeni” is an inspiration and many people look up to him for guidance in their struggles and suffering. May Thirumeni’s life be an example to us to always make time for prayer in our life and show kindness to others. Just as Thirumeni did, there is a responsibility in all of us to do God’s will and love everyone regardless of who they are and where they are from.

St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Vattasseril

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

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

Dn. Geevarghese studied at the Orthodox Theological **Seminary**, also known as the Pazhaya **Seminary**, Kottayam. Dn. Geevarghese demonstrated his excellence in Syriac language and became the beloved disciple of Parumala Thirumeni, who ordained him as a full deacon in 1879 and as a priest in 1880. Named Fr. Geevarghese, he eventually became the Church's authority in Syriac language, church history, Orthodox faith, theology and doctrine.



He was recognized as the Malankara Malpan or the teacher of Malankara. He wrote a book called "Doctrines of the Church". Fr. Geevarghese was elevated as Ramban in 1903 and was consecrated as a bishop in 1908, with the name His Grace Geevarghese Mar Dionysius. Thirumeni was instrumental in getting a number of prayers finally translated from Syriac to Malayalam, because the common man needed to understand them. He passed away in 1934 and is entombed in the Pazhaya **Seminary**.

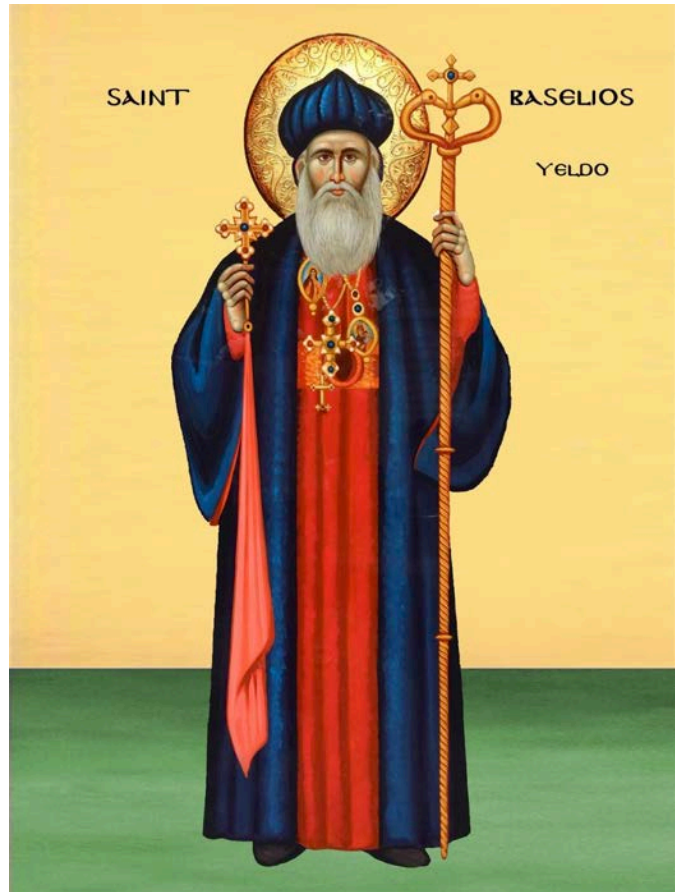
Thirumeni was able to face all his life challenges because he had strong faith and spiritual discipline. He spent a lot of time in private prayer, fasting, and studying the Bible. Thirumeni was also a great scholar of the Church because he translated many texts from Syriac into Malayalam. May Thirumeni's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

St. Yeldo Mar Baselios

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

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

This was a difficult mission because he knew that the Portuguese would have hurt or even kill him if they found him.



However, St. Baselios was not scared and came to India to take care of his sheep. He guided and helped to protect the Church during a difficult time. The great saint died in India and is buried in Mar Thoma Cheriapally in Kothamangalam, Kerala, India. May this Holy Father's life be a reminder to us to always be an example for others by being strong in our faith.

The Three Hierarchs

The next three saints that we will learn about are called The Three Holy Hierarchs - St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, and St. Gregory the Theologian.

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

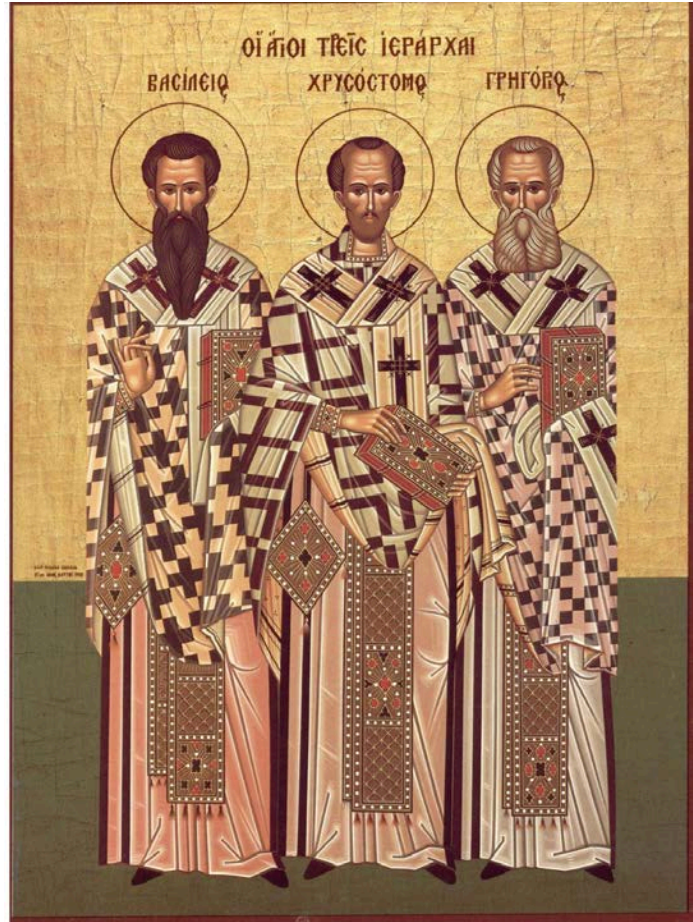
St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom was born in the year 347 AD in Antioch, a city in present-day Turkey. His father was in the military and passed away when John was very young. While his mother wanted him to study law at a famous university, John preferred a different path. He wanted to become a monk and learn about God, so he spent eight years living in the desert, praying and studying.

After his time in the desert, John returned to Antioch to serve as a priest. He became very popular for his amazing speeches and Bible teachings.

People loved how he helped them feel safe and cared for. Because of his great speaking skills, many called him “Golden-Mouthed.” John spent 18 years as a priest and then became the bishop of Constantinople in 397 AD, where he continued to help the poor and teach about God.

However, not everyone appreciated John’s words. The Emperor and Empress didn’t like how he spoke against their wasteful ways. Because of this, they exiled him. Even when he was sent far away, people still loved and respected him. Before he passed away, John visited a small chapel and received Holy Communion. He quietly said, “Glory be to God for all things,” and then he died. Today, we celebrate the “Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom” in our church to honor his teachings and life.



St. Basil The Great

St. Basil was a special saint who taught a lot about the Holy Trinity. He was born in 330 AD in a city called Caesarea. Basil came from a very religious family; his father was a bishop and his mother was a believer in God. When he grew up, Basil went to Athens to study, but he wanted to learn even more. So, he traveled to Egypt to meet the hermits, who were people living in the desert and spending time in prayer.

While in the desert, Basil felt very inspired. Although his health wasn't great, he worked hard to grow in his faith. After spending some time there, he returned to help the bishop in Caesarea but soon headed back to the desert to start a monastery. A monastery is a special place where monks live together to pray and support each other. Basil was not alone for long because others joined him to live the monastic life.

Later, the bishop asked Basil to come back to serve the Church. Basil agreed and began doing important work for the community by helping the poor and those in need. He started hospitals, orphanages, and schools, which showed that the Church cared for everyone. St. Basil passed away peacefully on January 1st, 379 AD. He is remembered along with his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, as the Cappadocian Fathers who helped shape our understanding of the Holy Trinity.



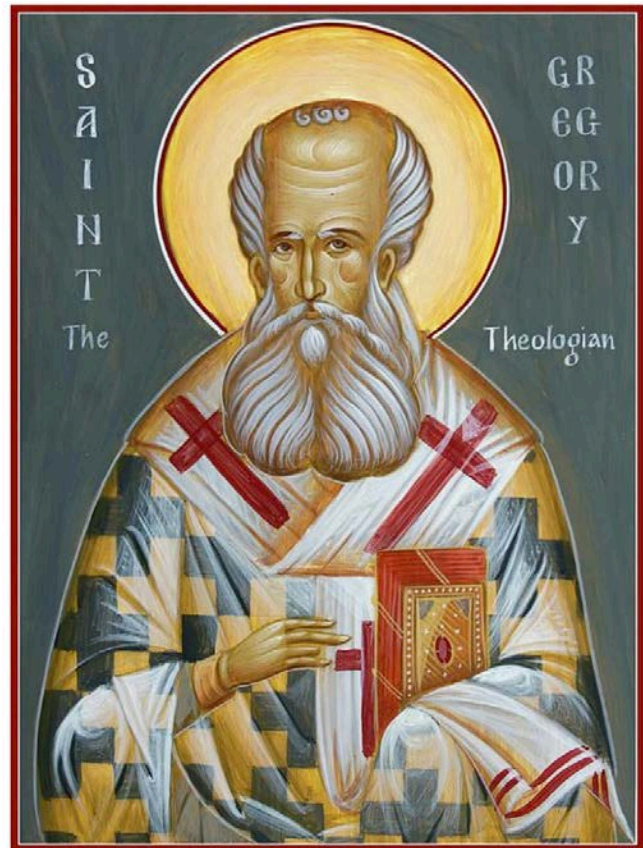
St. Gregory the Theologian of Naziansus

St. Gregory was born a long time ago in 329 AD in a Christian family. His parents loved God very much and taught him to love God too. St. Gregory went to Athens to go to school and studied there with another great person named St. Basil the Great.

After finishing school, he went back to his home in Nazianzus, where he was baptized and his father, who was a priest, made him a priest too, even though St. Gregory didn't want to be one at first.

Later, St. Gregory's father wished for him to become a bishop, but St. Gregory wanted to follow his own path. So, he left home and went to stay with St. Basil in a monastery in Pontus, where they could pray and learn together. After some time, St. Gregory returned to his home area, where he worked hard to help people believe in God. He stood strong against those who did not believe and helped others grow in their faith.

In 379 AD, St. Basil made St. Gregory a bishop, and he became the bishop of Constantinople, a very important city. St. Gregory worked as a bishop for many years, helping and teaching people about God. He passed away in 391 AD, leaving behind a legacy of faith and devotion that inspires many Christians today.



Summary

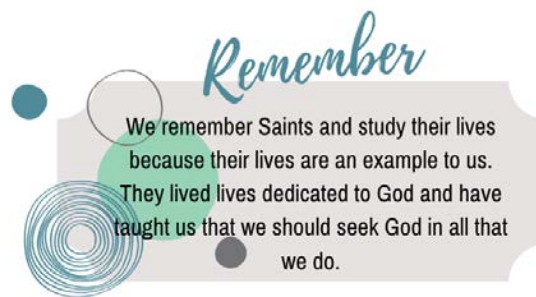
As we have learned about these 6 saints, we have learned about the different qualities they had: love, kindness towards others, courage, and strength.

Their strong prayer life and deep faith in God allowed them to use their life to follow His will.

Let's take some time and reflect on the unique gifts that God has given to each one of us and how we can use our gifts to honor God and do His will.

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 10: The Departed

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

Vocabulary Words

- **Departed:** Anyone who has died. The “faithful departed” are those who have died and were Christian before they died.
- **Resurrection:** To bring someone back to life from the dead. Usually when we say “Resurrection” we mean Jesus coming back to life after dying on the Cross. However, in the Nicene Creed we do say “resurrection of the dead” which means us!
- **Tomb:** A special place where a person's body is buried after they die. Today most people are buried under the ground or in special structures but in ancient days caves were often used as tombs.

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

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

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

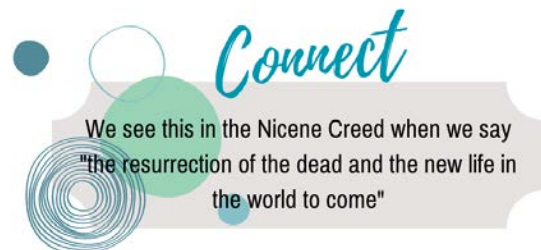
Raising of Lazarus

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



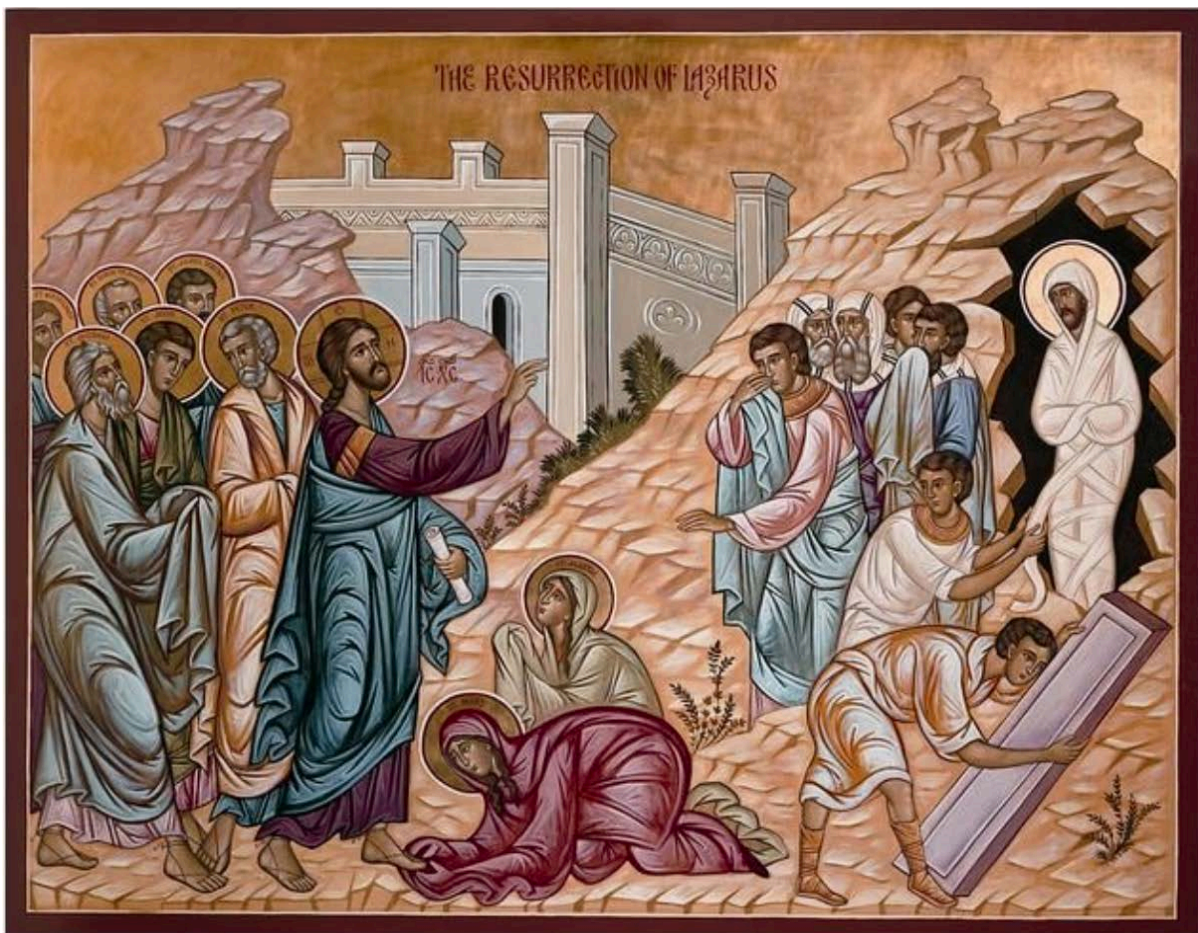
One day, Lazarus got very sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, asked Jesus to come to help him in Bethany. Jesus was far away and took a little longer to come. He knew something amazing was about to happen. He told His disciples, "Even though Lazarus is sick, it's not going to end in his death. Instead, it will show how great God is and make people believe in Me."

When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, He heard that Lazarus had been in his tomb for four whole days. Martha, one of Lazarus' sisters, ran to meet Jesus and was very sad. She said to Jesus, "If you were here earlier, my brother wouldn't have died."



Jesus told her that her brother would come back to life. Martha thought He meant later in the future, in the final resurrection, as she believed Jesus was God.

Then, Jesus did something amazing. He said, "I am the one who gives life and makes people come back to life. If you believe in Me, even if you die, you will live again." Jesus was feeling very sad too, and started crying. Even though He was about to do a great miracle, it was never God's plan for people to die. Death makes God sad too.



Jesus went to the tomb where they had put Lazarus and many people followed Him.

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

Everyone who saw this was amazed, started believing in Jesus and praising God. Jesus showed that He had power over death. He is the Son of God.

The Empty Tomb



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

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

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

Jesus came to make sure we can have eternal life and not perish. Just like the tomb of Jesus was empty after the Resurrection, one day everyone will be alive and the tombs will be empty!

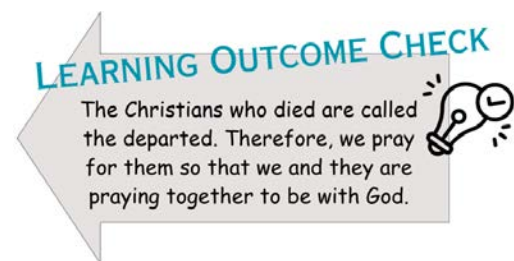
Because of Jesus' death, our death is not forever anymore. When we die, our spirit goes to be with God. And when Jesus comes again, we will be resurrected too. That means we will come back to life, just like when Jesus brought Lazarus back to life. It's so exciting! We believe in the resurrection of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

The Faithful Departed

Anyone who has died is called **departed** as they are no longer with us in body and spirit.

Christians who have died are called the **faithful departed**. We pray for all the departed because we believe they are alive with God.

We believe the faithful departed are also praying for us! This is all because of the **Resurrection** of Christ.





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

When our priests and deacons offer incense during prayer and Holy Qurbana, they always cense the middle first, then the people on the right and lastly the left.

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

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



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

The departed are alive and with us because of Jesus and His **Resurrection!**

That is why we say this wonderful prayer for the departed:

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

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 11: Triumphant Entry

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

Vocabulary Words

- **Triumphant:** Having won and celebrating the victory.
- **Hosanna:** In Syriac this word is “Ooshaino” and means “Save, I pray” or “Save, now”
- **Commemorate:** To honor and remember someone or something in a special way.

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



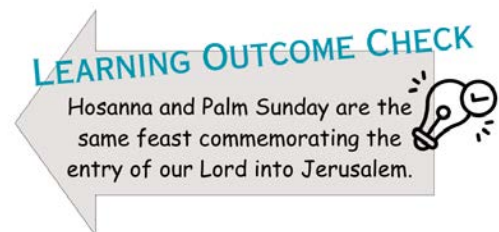
Everyone was talking about Jesus after he brought His friend Lazarus back to life (**St. John 11:1–44**). When Jesus went to Jerusalem, the people welcomed Him like a king.

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



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

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



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



The branches of the palm trees symbolize Christ's victory over the devil and death. The word **Hosanna**, also known as Ooshaino, means "Save, I pray," or "Save, now." Everyone is happy to walk, sing, and worship God. As a Church, we show that we love and believe in Jesus as the King.

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



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

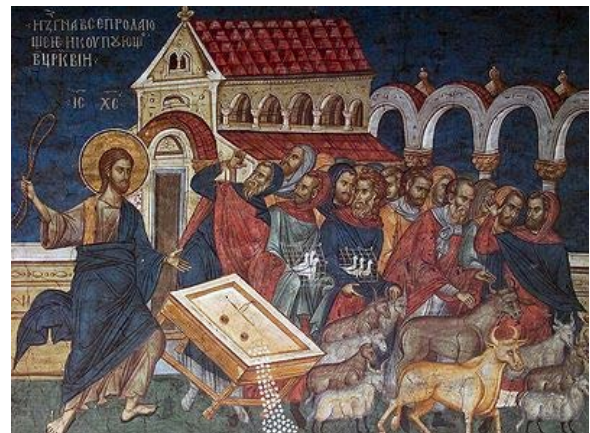
LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



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

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



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

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

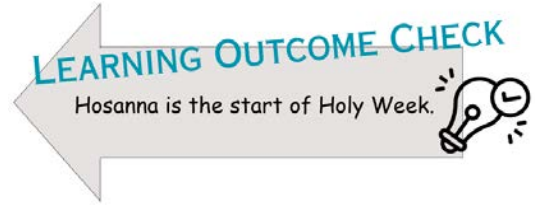
Jesus told them that God made this place for prayer. This made the leaders even more jealous and mad at Jesus. During the week, they decided to kill Jesus.

Jesus in Prayer



Jesus knew what was coming ahead. During this week, He performed miracles and helped people. But He also taught His Apostles about what was going to happen after He died. They did not understand at that time, but Jesus never stopped teaching and loving. Jesus prayed for His followers and also, for Himself. His very painful death on the Cross would happen on the Great Friday.

But He knew God's will would be done through His Death and Resurrection, because He would save the world from death. Palm Sunday is the beginning of what we celebrate as Holy Week. This is the week before the Sunday of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Easter)!



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

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 12: The New Passover

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

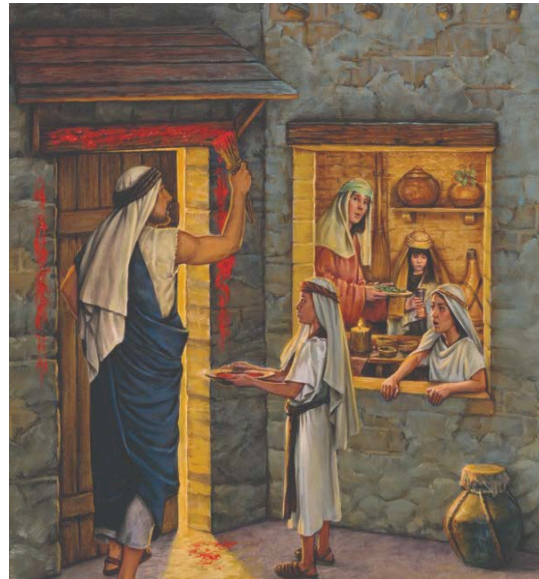
Vocabulary Words

- **Passover:** A special celebration for Jewish people remembering how God saved them from being slaves in Egypt. They also remember how the angel of death passed over their houses and protected their firstborn children.
- **Exodus:** When a group of people leave a place together. In the Bible, the Exodus refers to the Israelites leaving Egypt with the help of their leader Moses. They were slaves in Egypt, but Moses by God's grace helped them become free.

The Passover

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

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



This special blood from a lamb would act like a shield to keep the people safe from something bad that was going to happen to only the Egyptians because their leader, Pharaoh, did not listen to God. That night, a very sad thing happened in every home in Egypt that did not have the special blood on it. The firstborn child of every Egyptian and the firstborn of animals, all died that night.

The people of Israel were then freed! With Moses as their leader, they left Egypt and went to Canaan, a new land that God had promised them. This big journey is called the Exodus. God saved them from Pharaoh's army by making the Red Sea split in half, so that they could safely walk across without even getting wet.



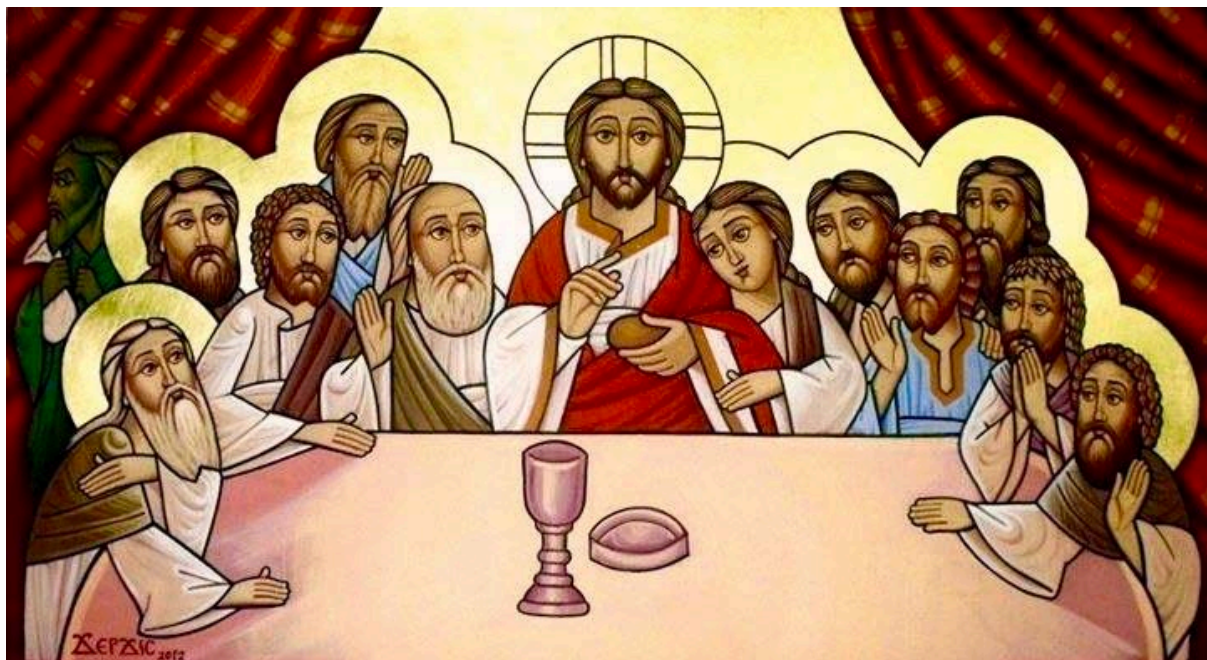
Once they were safe, God gave them some very important rules to follow, called the Ten Commandments. From then on, they celebrated a special feast every year called Passover. During the feast, they ate special roasted lamb, bitter herbs and bread without yeast. God had told them to celebrate Passover every year, and in our lesson, Jesus does the same.

The New Passover

Jesus sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to get everything ready for the Passover meal. Jesus and His Apostles were Jews and followed all the Jewish traditions. They set up everything in the Upper room.

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

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



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

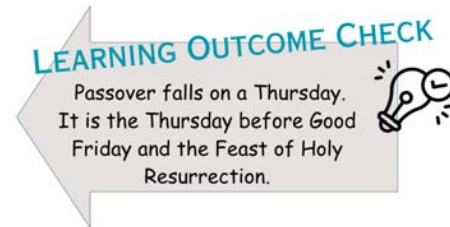
LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



This new Passover was on the night before (Thursday evening) Jesus was arrested and put to death. Remember that many parishes celebrate this Feast of Pesaha or Passover on the Wednesday evening because the start of the liturgical day is the evening before.

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



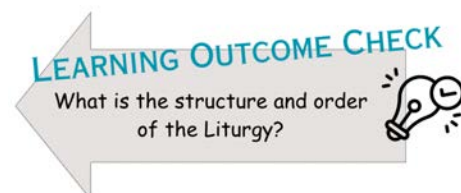
The Living Sacrifice

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

Holy Qurbana is an essential part of our worship and is a way for us to be close to Jesus and become one with Him. When we participate in Holy Qurbana, we are united with Jesus and with each other. It helps us to remember that Jesus came to bring us closer to God and to make us part of God's family.

We also have other things in our church, like baptism, prayers, and reading the Bible, that help us to stay connected to Jesus and grow in our faith. But when we participate in the Divine Liturgy, we are able to receive Jesus Christ, who offers Himself as His real Body and Blood.

Holy Qurbana (Divine Liturgy) has an ancient structure and a specific order that trace back to the revelation to Moses and the illumination by Christ on true worship.



Structure of the Divine Liturgy

1. Preparation (Tuyobo)

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



The priest holds it in the form of a cross, and remembers the names of the faithful, the sick, and the departed. Then he places the **paten** and the **chalice** on the **Tablet** upon the Holy Altar and covers them with the **veil** or **sosappa**. This tablet (or tablitha) is a small wooden tablet, specially consecrated.



We cannot celebrate Holy Qurbana without the Tablitha. The veil or (shoshappa) is a square white cloth with decorative works of wheat corn and grapefruits.

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

2. Liturgy of the Word

a. Entrance Procession

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

b. The Epistle Readings

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

c. The Gospel Reading

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

d. The Sermon

After the Gospel is read, the priest gives a short sermon and tells us how we can be good children in the Kingdom of God by following the Word of God. He may explain the meaning and importance of the Gospel that was read. (For convenience, the sermon may be moved to the end of Holy Qurbana.)

e. The Nicene Creed

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

3. Liturgy of the Eucharist

a. The Kiss of Peace

This is the sign of reconciliation. We should first reconcile with our brothers and sisters and with God. We should have a clear conscience and be at peace with everyone when we come to offer our gifts before God. (**St. Matthew 5:23, 24**)

b. Words of Institution

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

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

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

d. Intercessions (Thubdens):

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

e. Fraction

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

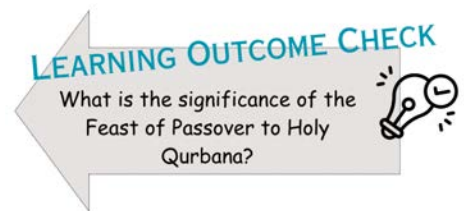
f. **Holy Communion**

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

g. **Post-Communion**

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

The new **Passover**, which is the **Holy Qurbana**, is the commemoration of our salvation through the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



In the new **Passover**, Jesus is the **Passover** lamb who is crucified for us to deliver us from all evil. Through the **Holy Qurbana**, we truly eat His Body and drink His Blood. Our participation in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ enables us to live and grow in the grace of God. As we participate in these heavenly gifts, God comes and dwells in us, giving us forgiveness for our sins and eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Gestures of our Liturgy

Orthodox worship involves our whole participation. We use all our senses; sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste in our worship. We see the candles, icons, and vestments worn by the Achen; we hear the sounds of the bells, maravasa (round shakers symbolize angels), people singing, reading,

and at times our own voices; we smell the sweet fragrance of the incense, and we taste the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Our whole self is involved in worship, not just our thoughts or voices. Humility is seen in our movements, postures, and gestures.

The Gestures of the Liturgy are important to learn.

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

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

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



Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 13: The Death of our Lord

The Great Friday service follows what happens to Christ.

This helps us remember His Love for us.

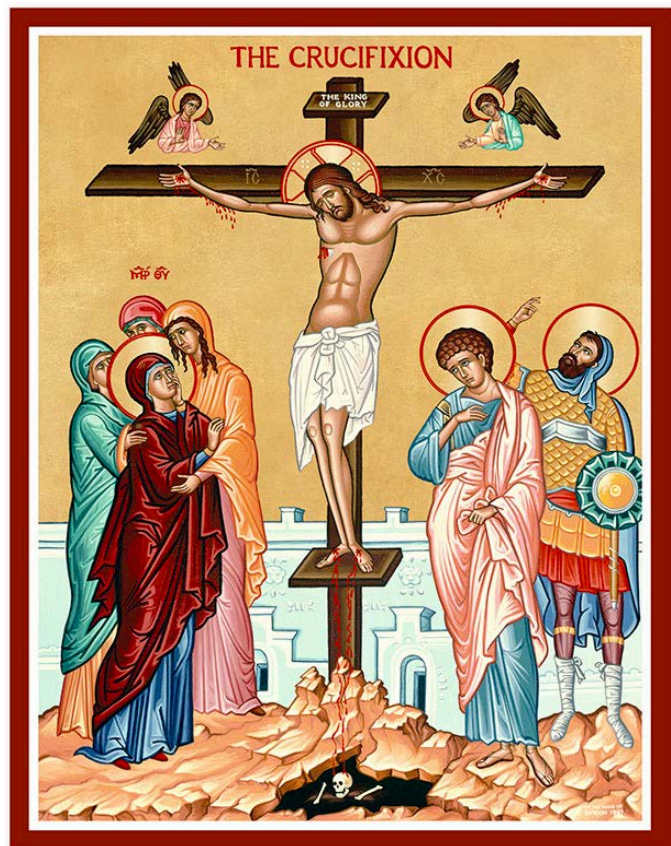
Vocabulary Words

- **Crucifixion:** The death of a person on a cross
- **Sabbath:** A religious day remembered by Jews where no work is done. This is understood as the seventh day of the week.
- **Prostration:** Bending down and touching the ground with our head when we pray. We do this because we love God!

The Friday of Holy Week is called Great Friday or Good Friday.

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

In Church, we pray all the hours of that sad day, so we may live with Christ and understand how much He loved us. But, why is this sad day called “great”?



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

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

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

*Holy art Thou, O God!
Holy art Thou, Almighty!
Holy art Thou, Immortal!*

*Crucified for us,
Have mercy on us!*

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

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

The soldiers made fun of Jesus by putting a red robe and a crown of thorns on His head. They took Him outside the city to a place called Golgotha

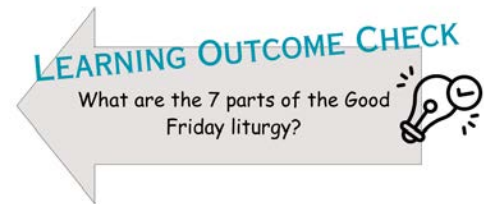
and nailed Him to a Cross. Jesus was in a lot of pain for three hours. There were two other people on crosses next to Jesus. When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple broke in half, the earth shook, and even dead people came back to life!

Great Friday Service

In our Great Friday Service, we remember the events of what happened on the day Jesus died on the Cross. We take part in the worship with fasting, prayer, and many people wear black or gray. We remember how much pain and suffering Jesus experienced because He loved us so much! The Great Friday service is very long. However when we feel tired or distracted, we should look at the Cross, using the songs and prayers to remember what Jesus was going through at that hour.

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

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

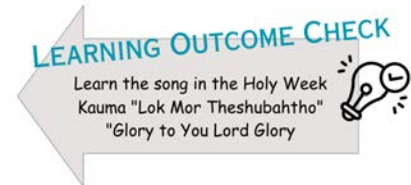


- **Midnight Prayers:** Jesus is arrested at the Garden of Gethsemane and taken to the High Priest for trial
- **Morning Prayers:** Jesus is tried by the High Priest. He is later sent to Pilate for trial.
- **Third Hour Prayers:** Pilate releases Jesus to be crucified
- **Noon Hour (Sixth hour) Prayers:** Jesus is crucified
- **Ninth Hour Prayers:** Jesus dies on the cross
- **Funeral service Prayers:** We bury Jesus' body

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



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



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

Our Devotion to the Cross

There are two special processions around the Church on Great Friday. One is to remember when Jesus carried His Cross to a place called Golgotha where He would die. The other is when his body was taken down from the Cross to be buried.

Throughout the Great Friday service, we do prostrations. This is never done at Church on Sundays, because then we celebrate the Resurrection. But Holy Week and Great Friday are days we show our love for Christ more. We prostrate more and ask our Lord for mercy.

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

God's people and do not belong to this world. We should also carry the Cross to honor and be like Christ.

One of the special songs during the Great Friday Service is the "Song of the Two Thieves" and reminds us that our prayer should be like the Good Thief at the right of Jesus.

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

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

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



Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 14: Indeed He is Risen!

Only Jesus could save us from death!

Vocabulary Words

- **Virgin:** To be pure and holy
- **Witness:** Someone who sees something happen and can tell others about it
- **Gospel:** Means “good news” and is the story of Jesus, who came to save us and show us how much God loves us

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



The Virgin Womb
to
The Empty Tomb



The wrapping used on the dead body is the one used in the icons of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But do you see there is no body in the Icon of the Empty Tomb which is used for Resurrection Sunday? There is no body because He is risen!

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

Jesus is God and could have saved Himself. But He chose to die for us because He loved us so much. Jesus died on the Cross to save us from death. It is sin that leads to death but Jesus did not sin. Therefore, when He died on the Cross, even death could not hold Him. This is something we do not fully understand as it is a mystery. But we know it's true because Jesus rose again!

His Apostles, disciples and so many others in the Bible saw Him. Their shared stories are kept alive in our Church and **witness** to this truth.

Everlasting Life

Without the Resurrection, there is no **Gospel**. The good news is that there is no more death and now everyone has hope. Jesus promises us that if we believe in Him, we will also live forever. When we celebrate Easter, we are saying that we truly believe that Jesus rose from the dead. This is why we greet each other on Easter by saying, "Christ is risen!" And the reply to this is, "Indeed, He is risen!"

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

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



LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

Jesus defeated death by His death and Resurrection.



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

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

LEARNING OUTCOME CHECK

Understand the parts of this Icon used on Resurrection Sunday



There are some important things to study in this icon:

- Christ is dressed in a white heavenly robe that is flowing upward, symbolizing how he rushed to **Hades** to save all who died!

- The bluish oval around Christ (called a **mandorla**) shows this cannot be seen by human eyes. This is what we believe is true because we are Christian.
- Christ is pulling Adam and Eve out of their tombs! This shows how much He loves all men and women.
- There are many holy people to the left and right of Jesus. These are people who died before the Resurrection and were waiting for Jesus. To the left, are King David, King Solomon and St John the Baptist. And to the right are Abel (holding a shepherd's staff), Moses, and Isaiah.
- The golden bars under Jesus' feet are the gates of Hades, which Jesus destroyed! From the time of His Resurrection onwards, all who died are with God. As Jesus said to the Good Thief on the right Cross, "today you will be with me in Paradise!"
- The keys and bones in the darkness are now all broken. The darkness of the icon itself is small compared to the bright glory of God!



Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 15: Sacred, Holy, and Ecumenical

The Jerusalem council and the three Ecumenical councils were helpful in the Church to face the difficulties that arose due to heresies.

Vocabulary Words

- **Council:** When a group of Church leaders come together to discuss and agree on something very important.
- **Heresy:** Something that many people believe but is not true.
- **Ecumenical:** When all Christians come together.

In our families, we may not always agree with what our brother, sister, or parents say. Sometimes, we may even get into a fight where our parents or elders step in to help us solve the problem and make peace.

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

But there is one thing we never have an opinion on and that is Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is God, and God Himself became a man who taught the Apostles. This is why we are an **Apostolic** Church. St. Thomas is the Apostle to India who brought the Gospel to our ancestors. We believe with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Faith Jesus taught is still the same faith that we now learn in Sunday School!

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

What is a Council?

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

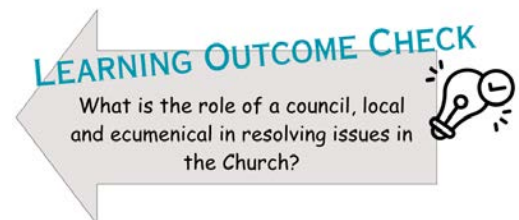


When Christianity first started to spread, the Holy Spirit helped the Apostles and other Church leaders teach people about God and His work. The Church grew and spread all over the world. But some leaders started teaching things that were different from what Jesus and the Church taught. These wrong teachings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

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

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

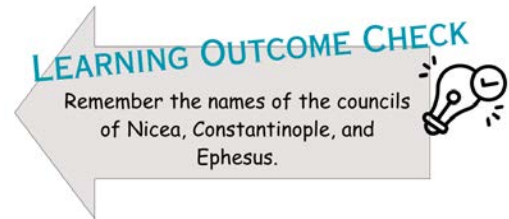
A local council handled matters in an area. But when the heresy was large, there needed to be a bigger council. One example is described in the Bible (**Acts of Apostles**) called the Council in Jerusalem.



The Council in Jerusalem

In the Acts of the Apostles (Chapter 15), we read about a council that was in Jerusalem. This was led by St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem. The Apostles had a disagreement so they got together to talk. They wanted to protect and support the true beliefs of the Church and an important decision was made about how the Church can grow.

There were also three very important councils that we call sacred, holy, and **ecumenical**. These were the councils of Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus.



The Council of Nicea (325 AD)

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

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

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

The Council of Constantinople (381 AD)

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

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

At this Council, more was added to the Nicene Creed to teach the Truth about the Holy Spirit. This is why sometimes the Creed is called the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. Our Creed now says that the Holy Spirit is God and always existed like the Father and the Son. They affirmed that it was the Holy Spirit that spoke to the prophets and apostles.

This sentence was, also, added to the Creed that “we are One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.” The Creed was now complete and was what the entire Church believes!

The Council of Ephesus (431)

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

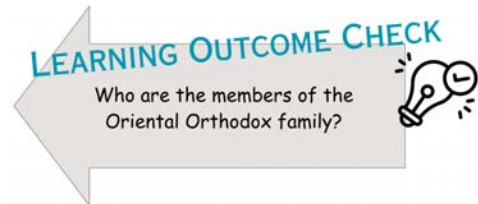
Around 200 important church leaders met together in Ephesus and decided that Nestorius was wrong. They affirmed that Jesus is fully man and fully God. Since Jesus was born from St. Mary, she was to be called “Theotokos” which is the Bearer or Mother of God.

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

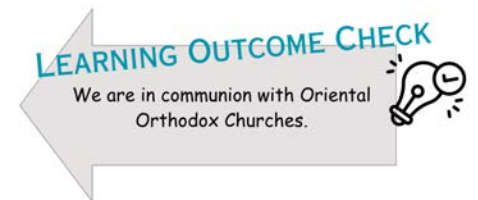
The Oriental Orthodox Church

Our Church is the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church which is sometimes called the Indian Orthodox Church. We are members of the Oriental Orthodox Church.

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



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



The Nicene Creed summarizes the Faith of our Church, and keeps the Christian faith according to the scripture, teachings of the Apostles and Church Fathers. Our Churches may celebrate and worship in different languages, our priests and bishops may wear different clothing, but that is because of the country where they started from. We are the same One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church..

Reflection Questions

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

Lesson 16: I Am the Resurrection and Life

Our life with Christ continues even after death.

Vocabulary Words

- **Renew:** To give fresh life or revive.
- **Righteous:** Acting according to the will of God.
- **Forefather:** Our ancestors. In the Church, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. So this means anyone who was a member of the Church before we were alive.

We say a very special prayer when we remember our departed:

*O Merciful Lord, **renew your creation at the Resurrection.***

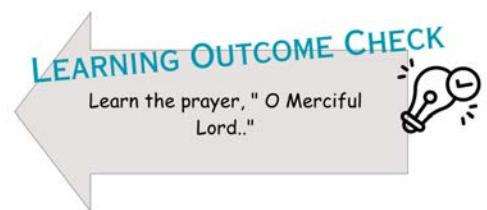
***Comfort and absolve our departed ones** who died with hope in You and await Your coming.*

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

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

Renew us at the Resurrection

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



Adam and Eve did not listen to God and ate the fruit that they were not supposed to eat. This made God sad, as it separated us from Him. This is called the Fall of Man and is related in Genesis 3 in the Bible.

The consequences for this sin was death. Death means not just our bodies stop working, but also being apart from God. But the Resurrection changed everything! God saved us from death, and through Baptism we can grow in the Church to be like God. All our departed are alive with God, and everyone is waiting for the Second Coming, for our resurrection and renewal.



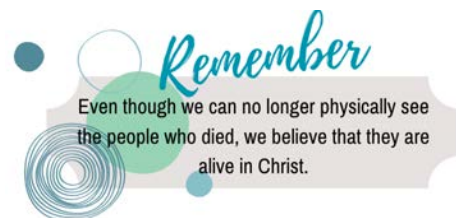
With Jesus, we have eternal life. When people die in the hope of Jesus, they go to God and we pray they are at peace. The end of the prayer reminds us that all of us will be together, all the living as well as all the departed.

Praying for Forgiveness

In the prayer when we say “Comfort and absolve our departed ones”, we who are alive are praying for those who died.

While the “Fall of Man” has occurred due to the sin of Adam and Eve, we continue to fall to our own sins. God is present throughout our lives and gives us choices every day. Individual sins still happen. Through this prayer, we pray for pardon of those individual sins, as well of our beloved departed.

Even though we can no longer physically see the people who died, we believe that they are alive in Christ, praying for mercy with us. This is why the center aisle is kept open in our



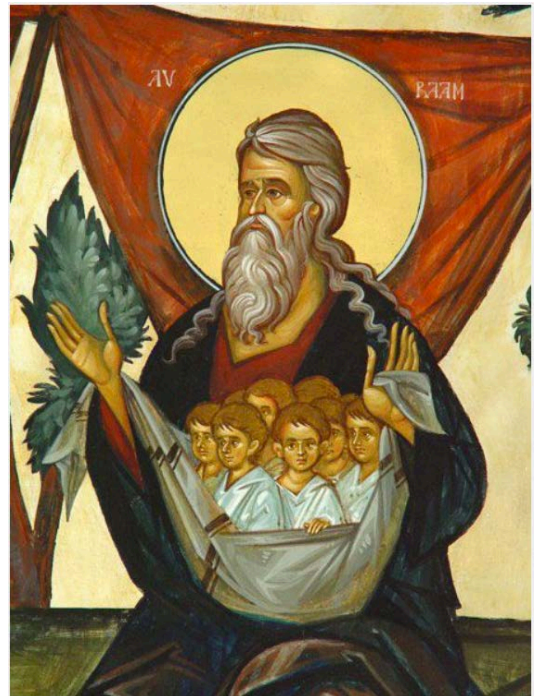
Churches. This is to help us remember that the departed faithful are with us in the house of God.

We are Israel

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

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

God loved Abraham because he was a righteous man. He told Abraham that this promise would also be to his son Isaac and Isaac’s son Jacob. Through faith, Abraham trusted the Lord’s promise and followed His will.



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

Those who have passed away are waiting with us for the Second Coming. In the Nicene Creed we say that the Lord “...shall come again in His great glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end.”

This is one of the pillars of our faith that gives us hope. It is difficult to think about life after death but we believe that our loved ones who confessed Christ are in His presence. Therefore, we pray for the forgiveness of their sins so that when the Lord comes again and raises all up from death that we will be united in Him.

This is the ending of this beautiful prayer - that the living and departed will be together to praise God!

Reflection Questions

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