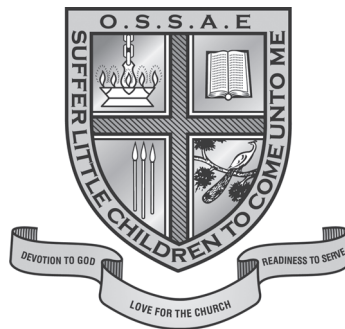


ORTHODOX SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF THE EAST



Galilee Division

Class VII
(English)

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FOREWORD

Orthodox Sunday School Association of the East could successfully publish Sunday School text books, modifying those in use comprehensively, according to needs of the hour. The effort behind this deserves appreciation from all angles. This publication was the result of concerted hard work from a fellowship of clergy and laity well experienced in the area of education under the capable leadership and guidance of the then OSSAE President and educational wizard H. G. Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios and the then Director General of OSSAE and reputed Psychologist Fr. Dr. O. Thomas. Now, it has become necessary for a re-publication of those books. Let us recall thankfully those who worked behind this: we submit them in the hands of our Almighty God.

The Word of God, Church Liturgy, family prayers, life of Church Fathers and their exhortations, faith of our Church, Church History and social issues are integrated systematically and equitably developed from BALAPADOM to VEDA PRAVEEN DIPLOMA and different topics arranged in different textbooks most sensibly and in an orderly manner. There can be further modifications and corrections. All those going through these texts may note that they have the freedom and opportunity to make suggestions for improving this further.

Let us not forget one thing. Along with the topics covered in the curriculum, children come across another open text, which is the presence of their teacher, which they experience and assimilate. In young minds, which is more influential, presence of teacher or textbooks? Both are important. However, what integrates more in a child mind is the presence of teacher, as we perceive. Facial expressions happen to enlighten a person. It is a direct perception rather than sense of hearing. Mother, father, priests, teachers, elder brothers and other elders are all masters, but the one standing on top of all is mother as the saying goes, "GURUNAM MATHA SHREYASI".

The very first open house of education is home followed by church and school. All these join to form a concept of GURUKULAM and an ongoing master – child relationship. It shall be in such a learning scenario, one has to perceive curricular and non-curricular topics with teachers and students. With this note of Foreword, the revised print of Sunday School texts are presented before Church.

Devalokam
01-12- 2019

Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios
President, OSSAE

INTRODUCTION

‘Spiritual education has been documented in the Holy Bible from the time of Moses as being of utmost importance. Through God’s spokesman, Moses, the Israelites were instructed to teach God’s commandments to their children, “Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home” (Deuteronomy 6:7). The Orthodox Syrian Sunday School Association of the East (OSSAE) is the significant movement in Malankara Orthodox Church for giving spiritual education to the children.

The ministry of being a teacher of the Sunday School is not a job or Sunday routine. It is a privilege to be chosen and used by Jesus Christ. Hence the goal of OSSAE is to give the children the firm faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Sunday School education should inspire them to have faith in the Triune God, partake in all salvific acts of our Lord Jesus Christ as a member of the Holy Church and also to work for the glory of the Kingdom of God.

Let the teacher be an encourager because the world has plenty of critics already. Let our method of teaching be ‘learner’ centred. Teacher shall inspire the children and be a facilitator for them. Help the student to know God, to experience God and to walk in His ways.

The parents also have a great evangelical role in moulding their children in Godliness. St. John Chrysostom opined that ‘Home Church is the cradle of Catechism’. Here St. John Chrysostom used the term “home Church” to mean Church at home. The parents are the most influential teachers of children. They should teach their children without fail. OSSAE prepared and uploaded video classes from Balapadam to Class XII on ossaebodhanam.org. Parents should take care to teach children using these online resources along with regular classes of Sunday School.

The value of our Sunday school children is immensely great. Their value doesn’t decrease based on someone’s inability to see their worth. What God knows about them is more important than others think. Ultimately to know the will of God is the greatest of all spiritual pursuits, to understand the will of God is the greatest spiritual discovery and using Christian education to do the will of God is the greatest of life’s achievements. Let God’s will shine on the lives of our children!

Devalokam
16-09-2021

Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese
Director General

PREFACE

The OSSAE curriculum was thoroughly revised during 2012-13. The revision was done considering child psychology and giving emphasis to student centered teaching and learning. Intensive supervision of the then OSSAE President, H. G. Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios and the leadership of the then Director General Fr. Dr. O. Thomas were the real assets in the revision process.

Prof. Dr. Sam V. Daniel, Omalloor served as the Executive Editor of the Curriculum Committee. After Fr. Dr. O. Thomas, Fr. Dr. Reji Mathew became the Director General and he worked hard day and night to complete the revision. Many distinguished persons co-operated with him to complete the lessons. Let us express the gratitude to all of them. When Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian took charge as the Director General, he initiated the correction of printing mistakes and other errors in the first edition.

The process is still going on. It is now ten years since the new curriculum had been formulated. Present Curriculum Committee, under the leadership of OSSAE President H. G. Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios and Director General Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese, is taking steps to include necessary revisions in the texts. The service of Fr. Job Sam Mathew, our Office Administrator in remodelling this book is to be mentioned with gratitude.

There are thirteen classes at present under five sections – Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee, Jerusalem and Tabore. This text is for class seven of Galilee section, Here students are of the age 11-12. This means they are entering into their teenage. So teachers and parents shall take utmost care in handling them. We together shall help them to walk along with Jesus Christ. Give first priority to mould them, not marks. Let the Holy Spirit guide us to attain our goal.

Devalokam
22-02-2022

Prof. Dr. Cherian Thomas
Publication Officer

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STRUCTURE OF THE LESSONS

(Prepared by Prof. Dr. Sam V. Daniel)

1. **Message:** The central idea that should be sensitised through each lesson is given here.
2. **Verse to be Memorized:** A biblical verse related to the central theme of the lesson is given for memorizing. The teacher should read out this verse from the Holy Bible at the end of the class and the students should say it aloud several times.
3. **Teaching Aids:** Information on pictures, books, etc. connected to the central theme are given to present lessons effectively.
4. **Introduction:** This section helps in making the presentation of the lesson attractive and enjoyable.
5. **The Lesson or Text:** This is the content of the lesson. We have tried our best to make it student-centred. The ideas should be presented by participating students. The teacher should take the Holy Bible to class and should read out the biblical passages. The descriptions made should have the quality of a narration. The students should be encouraged through interaction questions. When important ideas come let the students recite them in Chorus.
6. **Song or Hymns:** A song or hymn connected with the lesson is given here. The teacher should sing it aloud and the students should recite it in chorus.
7. **Let Us Pray:** A simple prayer connected with the theme of the lesson is given here. The teacher and the students can say this prayer in the class together. All should stand up and cross themselves before the prayer.
8. **Our Decision or Resolution:** An idea that can touch the students' mind like a decision and that can be implemented in their lives is given in this section. Make the students say aloud this concept.
9. **Let Us Think:** These are evaluation questions given to examine how far the students have grasped the ideas in the text.
10. **Activities:** Most of the tasks given in the section are for enacting, drawing, physical action or narration.
11. **Further Reading:** Various biblical passages connected with the lesson are given for reading in the evening and in the morning of all days of a week.

Unit 1

Events from the Holy Bible

Chapter 1

Judges

Theme: Like the Judges who led the people of Israel according to God's commandments, we too are called by God to do good for others and serve them.

Verse to be memorized: "Mighty soldier, the Lord is with you!" (Judges 6:12)

Learning Aids:

1. A chart containing the names of Judges
2. A picture of Samson
3. A Picture depicting the conversation between Gideon and God's angel.

Introduction

The Judges were leaders of Israel during the period between Joshua and Saul, the first King of Israel. They were local chieftans. They were called and empowered by the Lord in order to save the people from their enemies (Judges 2:16). There were altogether fifteen Judges who led Israel during this period. You have already learned about one of the Judges namely Samson.

Today we are going to get acquainted with Judges like him.

Lesson

Judges of Israel

- | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Othniel | (Judges 3:9-12) |
| 2. | Ehud | (Judges 3:15-30) |
| 3. | Shamgar | (Judges 3:31) |
| 4. | Deborah | (Judges 4:4-5:31) |
| 5. | Gideon | (Judges 6:11-8:29) |
| 6. | Abimelech | (Judges 9:1-6, 22-52) |
| 7. | Tola | (Judges 10:1-2) |
| 8. | Jair | (Judges 10:3-5) |
| 9. | Jephthah | (Judges 11:1-12:7) |

10.	Ibzan	(Judges 12:8-10)
11.	Elon	(Judges 12:11-12)
12.	Abdon	(Judges 12:13-15)
13.	Samson	(Judges 13:2-16:31)
14.	Eli	(1 Samuel 1-4)
15.	Samuel	(1 Samuel 1-25)

Mission and Responsibilities of Judges

Moses could lead thousands of people of Israel because God called and authorized him for that. The Judges succeeded Moses and Joshua as leaders of Israel. Let us see what were the responsibilities assigned to them by God. What were the basic responsibilities of Judges?

1. They led God's people as good shepherds (1 Chronicles 17:6).
2. They functioned as arbitrators to resolve disputes (1 Samuel 7:15, 8:3).
3. Saved the people from the enemies and from catastrophes (Judges 10:1-2).
4. Inspired by the Holy Spirit they protected the people when they were in trouble (Judges 6:34, 11:29, 13:25).

Today let us learn more about three Judges of Israel.

1. Deborah (Judges 4:4-5:31)

Deborah was the only woman to become a Judge of Israel. The name 'Deborah' means 'bee.' She was the wife of Lappidoth. It is interesting to note that this woman judge had a respectable place in that male-dominated society. There are two epithets attributed to her. She was known as prophetess and Judge (Judges 4:4, 5). Her tenure was quite long when compared with those of other Judges (Judges 4:5). Deborah served the people when the Canaanites were regularly attacking the Israelites.

Can you identify a few qualities of a good leader?

One notable quality of a good leader is the ability to inspire others to become good leaders. Deborah inspired Barak to become the leader and Judge of Israel at a time when the Israelites were being attacked by enemies and Israel lacked leadership, and the fear of God. She gave the message that God would intervene on behalf of those who were suffering (4:14). She taught the people to become reasonable enough to rely on God during persecutions (Judges 5:8, 4:6-9).

2. Gideon (Judges 6-8)

Gideon was another judge of Israel. Later he got the name 'Jerubbaal' (meaning 'breaker of idols'). He got this name because he destroyed the idols of Baal. The Lord called Gideon to be a judge when Israelites were suffering from the attacks of Midianites

and Amalekites (Judges 6:11, 33). The Book of Judges says that Gideon got his strength and the call to be the judge of Israel from the Lord (Judges 6:11 onwards). During a harvesting season Gideon was threshing wheat at the bottom of a grape press for fear of Midianites. Then the Angel of the Lord appeared to him (Judges 6:12). The angel appreciated his physical strength and intelligence (Judges 6:12-14). The Lord showed Gideon a sign to empower him personally (Judges 6:17-24) and another sign to strengthen his people who were afraid of the Midianites (Judges 6:36-40). Strengthened by God, Gideon saved Israelites from their enemies.

3. Jephthah (Judges 11:1-12:8)

Jephthah was the son of a prostitute. He overcame the infamy/ignominy of his birth with his strength and goodness (11:1-12:8). God spoke to Jephthah at a place called Mizpah. Here Jephthah affirmed his relationship with God, and bowed before God's presence after he was chosen to be a Judge in Israel.

When he went to war with the Ammonites, Jephthah took an oath that if he returned victorious from the war, he would sacrifice the first thing he saw, to Yahweh. But the first person who came to greet him on his victorious return was his only daughter! Still Jephthah didn't go back on his oath to God. The daughter who came to know about her father's vow, did not resist. So Jephthah could fulfil his oath by sacrificing his daughter. Do you think that sad incident teaches us something? We should never be emotional and impulsive while taking up an oath or making an offering. We should check whether it is according to God's will. But at the same time, we should fulfil the oaths we take.

Here we learned that

1. God, for the Israelites, was always a living God. God knew about their needs and difficulties better than anyone else.
2. When the Israelites were in a crisis, God chose and appointed suitable people to rescue them from their troubles. God doesn't show any discrimination between man and woman while selecting His representative. He leads them by giving blessings and strength.
3. God punishes His chosen representatives when they drift away into sin. The life of the mighty wrestler Samson is an example.

Hymn

(Nyayadhipa Nyayadhipathe)

Judge of judges above all! - at Thy judgement
Confound me not, I angered Thee in - sinfulness
Forgiveness I deserve not, - but show mercy!

Thy holy body and blood are - treasured in me
I love Thee, and adore Thy Cross+
Thy body and blood cleansed me, Lord!
Grant me remission of sins and be - reconciled!

OR

O Lord and Judge of Judges, spare my sins from
Wrath and disgrace on the day of my Last judgment
E.....ven though I don't have any claim of remission
Reckon Thy flesh, and blood in me - for - Thy mercy
I revered Thy cross for love of Thee
Thy flesh and blood have absolved me of sins
Assent O merciful Lord, and liberate me.

.....

Let Us Pray

*O omniscient and omnipotent Lord who takes care of us,
we praise You for Your blessings and protection.
Enable us to lead our lives doing as much good to others as possible.
Bless us to execute the decisions we have taken before You.
We praise and worship the Holy Trinity now and for ever. Amen.*

.....

Resolution

*We will make use of every opportunity to do good to
our brothers and sisters in this world.*

.....

Let us think

1. Read the verses Ecclesiastes 8:5 and Proverbs 31:9, 15:14 in class and discuss the qualities you find in Deborah.
2. What were the responsibilities of the Judges of Israel?
.....
3. Deborah held two responsibilities simultaneously. What were they?
4. Who were the greatest enemies of Israel during Deborah's period?
5. Gideon was also known by another name, what was it?
.....

6. Do you think Gideon felt that the people of Israel were suffering because God was not with them? What message do you get from this?

.....

7. List a few good qualities you see in Gideon.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. What is your opinion about taking oaths? Is it a means to influence God?

9. Who came to receive Jephthah when he returned victorious from war with the Ammonites?

.....

10. How many days did the virgins of Israel go annually to praise the daughter of Jephthah? (Judges 11:40).

.....

Activities

1. Prepare a chart showing the periods and succession of Judges.
2. Write a short note on the role of Judges in Israel.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Judges 3
Monday	Judges 4	Judges 5
Tuesday	Judges 6	Judges 7
Wednesday	Judges 8	Judges 9
Thursday	Judges 10	Judges 11
Friday	Judges 13	Judges 14
Saturday	Judges 15	*

Chapter 2

Samuel, the Priest and Prophet

Theme: All of us have received God's call and He has assigned responsibilities for us. We should listen to God, obey His commandments and do our duties given to us according to His will. We need to learn that neglecting such duties would cause danger to us and to others as well.

Verse to be memorized: "As Samuel grew, the Lord was with him and people listened carefully to his advice" (1 Samuel 3:19).

Learning Aids:

1. A picture of boy Samuel
2. Letters of the name 'Samuel' written on different cards so that the students can arrange them to read the name.

Introduction

Samuel is a notable person among the judges, priests and prophets of Israel. He can be considered as the pioneer in the fields of worship, ethical doctrines and instructive interventions. He is the last Judge, the first high priest outside the priestly clan of Aaron, the one who anointed the first two kings of Israel, a great defender of faith, and a great leader of Israel after Moses. We learn about this great man in this lesson.

Lesson

Birth and Childhood

Elkanah and his wife Hannah were married for long, but they had no children. They had to suffer a lot of taunts and anguish because of this. But they comforted each other and went regularly to the Tabernacle to worship the Lord. Eli the priest saw Hannah's lips trembling silently when she prayed at the Tabernacle. He thought that she had been drunk and he scolded her. But when Eli realized the truth, he blessed her saying that her prayers would be granted (1 Samuel 1:10-17). After one year Hannah gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel (meaning 'asked of God') because she said that she had asked the Lord for him. When Samuel was weaned, the parents went to the Tabernacle with the child and worshipped the Lord with the priest. Then boy Samuel was presented to the Tabernacle to be brought up there. We have already learned about Samuel's calling and vision in Class I.

Samuel and Kingship

During the period of Samuel, Israelites were at war with the Philistines. Philistines defeated Israel in the war. The Israelites brought the Ark of the Lord from Shiloh to their military camp. When they saw the Lord's Ark coming, their shout of joy was so loud that the ground shook. The Philistines heard the shout and panicked. But they fought desperately and defeated Israel. They captured the Ark of the God. Hearing this bad news, Eli the priest fell down from his seat and died. Since it was no longer safe in Shiloh, Samuel shifted to Ramah (1 Samuel 4:18, 8:4). The elders of Israel approached Samuel and asked to give them a king like all other nations had (1 Samuel 8:5). Samuel told them regarding the hardships they would face under a king. But the people refused to listen to Samuel. So on Yahweh's direction, Samuel anointed Saul from the tribe of Benjamin as King of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1). But when Saul defied God's commandments, he was removed from Kingship (1 Samuel 15:23 onwards). In the place of Saul, Samuel anointed David, son of Jesse of Bethlehem as the King of Israel (1 Samuel 16:12).

Samuel and Priesthood

Samuel was a seer, prophet and priest. He made sacrifices and offerings to the Lord for the sake of Israel, blessed their offerings and gave them admonitions. Thus he executed the priestly duties as well. The people who were afraid of the attack of the Philistines pleaded with the Lord to save them from the enemies (1 Samuel 7:8). Their prayer was heard. The Lord was pleased with Samuel's offering and helped Israel defeat the Philistines. The stone Ebenezer, meaning 'stone of help', (1 Samuel 7:12) is a memorial of the Lord's help. People used to wait for Samuel to come and bless them (1 Samuel 9:13, 22:24) Samuel used to gather the Lord's people together at a place called Mizpah to worship the Lord (1 Samuel 7:6). The theological tradition of the later ages praises Samuel's intercession (Jeremiah 15:1, Psalms 99:6). Samuel himself thought that it was a sin against the Lord to stop interceding on behalf of the people of God (1 Samuel 12:23).

What does Samuel teach us?

1. Samuel exhorted people to give up idol worship and worship of foreign gods and return to the only true God Yahweh (1 Samuel 7:3-4). Let us think how we can submit ourselves completely to the Lord.
2. Obedience to the Lord: King Saul showed laxity in obeying God. Samuel gave Saul the message that "Obedience is better than sacrifice and listening to the Lord

is better than offering the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22) NRSV. How does this message of obedience influence us today? Religious activities like making offerings, conducting religious services, pilgrimages, doing charity work, prayer and worship are so common today. All these become useless if we do not really obey God’s commandments.

3. Listen to the ‘call’ of God and always act according to this ‘call.’ While Eli, the Priest, his sons and King Saul disregarded their ‘calling’, Samuel obeyed God’s call and His commandments faithfully.

Hymn

[Tune: Thoobaic Etho (N’beeyanmarum)]

Remember we
Those prophets and apostles
Who preached the Christ to Gentiles;
Those crowned ones just and righteous;
Those martyrs and confessors;
Who bore tolements and distress;
God’s Mother, saintly heroes;
Those faithful departed ones,
Their entreaties be for us,
At all times a strong fortress.

.....

Let Us Pray

*O Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You because You hear our prayers.
Help us to listen to Your voice through the scriptures; and lead our lives as
You will. Teach us to obey our parents, elders and teachers. Amen.*

.....

Resolution

*We would obey God and elders, as Samuel did.
We would speak the truth and stand for truth in all circumstances.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. Hannah was inspired to dedicate her son to the service of the Lord.why?

.....

2. Who was the priest at the Tabernacle where Samuel lived?
.....
3. How do we know that Samuel was ‘called’ to be God’s prophet and priest?
.....
4. What is the meaning of the name, ‘Samuel’?
.....
5. Why did the Israelites bring Ark of the Lord to the battlefield?
.....
6. Name the kings anointed by Samuel.
.....
7. Do you find similarities between the ministry of Moses and of Samuel?
.....
8. What is the meaning of the word ‘Ebenezer’?
.....
9. What do you mean by ‘intercessory prayer’?
.....

Activities

1. Identify the differences in the ministry of Samuel, and the ministry of Eli and his sons.
2. Write down one to two statements made by Samuel, which you like most, on a chart.
3. Conduct a self examination to find out if you have the sins mentioned in the Book of Samuel (Eg: Disobedience).
4. Enact an episode from Samuel’s life in the form of a play.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	1 Samuel 1:1-28
Monday	1 Samuel 2:15-26	1 Samuel 3:1-21, 4:1
Tuesday	1 Samuel 8:21	1 Samuel 9:1-27
Wednesday	1 Samuel 10:1-25	1 Samuel 11:1-15
Thursday	1 Samuel 12:1-25	1 Samuel 13:1-15
Friday	1 Samuel 14:1-25	1 Samuel 14:26-52
Saturday	1 Samuel 15:1-35	*

Chapter 3

A King for Israel

Theme: Those who are assigned positions of responsibility should faithfully discharge them. God who examines our lives shall bless us with appropriate rewards.

Verse to be memorized: “Obedience is far better than sacrifice. He is much more interested in your listening to Him than in your offering the fat of rams to Him” (1 Samuel 15:22) NRSV.

Learning Aids: A picture of Samuel anointing Saul as King.

Introduction

In the previous lesson we learned about the Prophet-Priest Samuel. He anointed the first two kings of Israel. When Israel adopted Kingship, the first king to be selected by God, and anointed by Samuel upon God’s commandment, was Saul. Even though God chose Saul as king of Israel, He later rejected Saul who disobeyed Him. Let us learn about king Saul and his tragic end.

Lesson

Saul was born as the son of Kish, a rich, influential man from the tribe of Benjamin. He was born when Israel was facing several enemies and very hard situations. There was lack of strong leadership to protect the people from enemies. Samuel who was the Judge of Israel had grown quite old. His sons who too were judges were greedy and corrupt. The nations around Israel like the Ammonites and Philistines had grown strong. Saul was handsome, strong and agile (1 Samuel 9:2).

Saul anointed King

Saul was anointed king when the people of Israel started asking for a king. There are three descriptions about this in the Book of Prophet Samuel. People were clamouring for a king for themselves. This demand was not liked by God and Samuel; for God Himself was their king (1 Samuel 12:12-16).

The first description (1 Samuel 9:1-10:16): When Saul went in search of the lost donkeys of his father (1 Samuel 9:3 onwards) he went to Ramah and visited Prophet Samuel in order to seek his advice. At that time Samuel received God’s commandments regarding Saul. The prophet anointed Saul as the King of Israel (1

Samuel 10:1). The practice of assigning a person to a particular position by pouring blessed olive oil on his head was prevalent in those days. This was done secretly. A public function was to follow.

The second description is given in 1 Samuel 10:17-24. As directed by God, Samuel drew lots and selected Saul, son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin.

The third description (1 Samuel 11:1-13) gives an account of the formal installation of Saul as King. Meanwhile Saul had saved Israel from Ammonites; and people were convinced about his God-given power and authority.

Saul is rejected as King

Saul disobeyed God and acted against His will. He did not pay heed to the prophet. Saul's reluctance to listen to Prophet Samuel, disobedience and jealousy estranged him from Prophet Samuel and his successor David. 1 Samuel 13 describes his faults in making burnt offerings to the Lord during the two years he reigned as King. He disobeyed God's commandments and committed follies which led to he being rejected from kingship (1 Samuel 13:8-14). He disobeyed the Lord by not fulfilling the vows; so he was rejected as King (1 Samuel 15:1-23).

Saul and David

One great challenge during Saul's reign was the Philistines. David killed Goliath, the Philistine giant (1 Samuel 17) NRSV.

People of Israel praised David on his victory. They sang "Saul has slain thousands and David ten thousands!" (1 Samuel 18:7). Thus Saul became jealous of David. God had decided to take away kingship from Saul and raise David as the king. He hated David, who had saved him and the people from the Philistines and tried to kill him. On the other hand, David remained loyal to Saul, God's anointed king. Saul and his soldiers chased David to capture him from his hideout. Twice, David had the opportunity to kill Saul, But he did not harm the king.

The life of Saul and David teaches us the following:

1. One has to act and behave according to one's 'call'. God selected Saul and elevated him as king. But he pursued his own interests and estranged himself from the will of God. This caused his downfall.
2. God may elevate or reject a person according to the conduct of that person. However great a person is, he is subject to God's decisions. What we have acquired is not due to our merit but by the grace of God. In adversities we should seek refuge in the Lord.

3. We should live in fellowship with the people. David was Saul's son-in-law. He used to play the harp to soothe the evil spirit that tormented Saul. He spared Saul's life despite having opportunities to harm and kill him. Yet Saul tried to destroy David several times. Saul could not digest women praising and cheering David for his spoils in the war. He became jealous of David. It is useless to rise up against those who are blessed by the Lord.

Hymn

(From Compline of Tuesday in Canonical Offices or Shihmo prayer)

Oh.... Lord, who by His Death
Killed death
And the, Evil One who killed Adam....
Kindly, kill the sin that oppress me
O Good Shepherd who...
Went in, search of the lost sheep
Search for, my doom like for the
Lost gold, coin of the maid
You are, the One who seeks the cursed
Kindly protect me as You.....
defended David
Halleluiah - from King Saul.

.....

Let us Pray

O loving God, You have given us the good fortune to lead our lives in your presence. Help us to realize Your blessings and lead a virtuous life. Forbid us from taking evil ways. We praise and worship God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

.....

Resolution

We won't become proud and arrogant like Saul who forgot God's blessings in his life. We would lead our lives by understanding God's will through prayer, fasting and humility. We would behave with love and care towards all people who are God's creation.

Let Us Think

1. What was the tribe that Saul belonged to?
.....
2. Name Saul's father.
.....
3. What difference do you see between Samuel and his sons, as judges?
.....
4. Describe the selection and coronation accounts of King Saul.
.....
.....
5. God did not like the people's demand for a king, Why?
.....
.....
.....
6. Where did Saul make his offering?
.....
7. What was Saul's justification for making the offering himself?
.....
8. Why was Saul jealous of and angry with David?
.....
.....
9. Identify the reasons for Saul's downfall and discuss them in the class.
.....
.....
10. What was David's attitude to Saul?
.....

Activities

1. Prepare a chart showing the virtuous and evil deeds of King Saul in adjacent columns.
2. Enact a short play based on an incident in Saul's life.
3. Compare the virtues and vices of Saul's life with those of your life and make an evaluation.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	1 Samuel 18
Monday	1 Samuel 9	1 Samuel 10
Tuesday	1 Samuel 11, 13	1 Samuel 14
Wednesday	1 Samuel 15, 16	1 Samuel 17
Thursday	1 Samuel 18	1 Samuel 19
Friday	1 Samuel 21	1 Samuel 22
Saturday	1 Samuel 24	*

Chapter 4

David, the King and Mellifluous Singer of Israel

Theme: Those who are chosen by God for His purposes need not be 'great' people. They may be poor, or may have shortcomings. They should realize this and become humble and penitent before the Lord. The Lord will uplift such persons.

Verse to be memorized: "As for God, his way is perfect; The word of the Lord is true. He shields all who hide behind him" (2 Samuel 22:31) NRSV

Learning Aids: Five cobbles (cobbles used in war), The Holy Bible

Introduction

King David who was a mellifluous singer succeeded Saul as king. David's family looked upon him as a stupid shepherd. But he was chosen by God to be king and he reigned successfully for forty eventful years over Israel. Let us learn about this great king today.

Lesson

The Bible first presents David as a young shepherd looking after the sheep of his father, Jesse (1 Samuel 16:11). The Lord had decided to reject Saul from Kingship (1 Samuel 16:1). The Lord commanded Prophet Samuel to invite Jesse and his sons from Bethlehem for a sacrifice and a personal meeting. Prophet Samuel did so (1 Samuel 16:5). He then anointed Jesse's youngest son David as the King of Israel (1 Samuel 16:12). Later David was appointed the harp player at the palace (1 Samuel 16:18).

King Saul liked David very much. David stayed in the royal palace. When an evil spirit tormented Saul, David would play the harp, and Saul would get relief and comfort (1 Samuel 16:23). Samuel had anointed David king of Israel without the knowledge of the reigning king and the people.

It was his matchless victory over Goliath make him a popular leader (1 Samuel 17). The Philistines used to attack Israel. But David relying on God defeated their giant leader Goliath using his sling and stones.

David flees from Saul

David achieved greater victories in war than King Saul. He earned the love and affection of Jonathan and others. Saul's life and reign were much turbulent. Saul out of jealousy turned against David, but Saul's son Jonathan came to his aid (1 Samuel 20:17). David had to flee from the palace (1 Samuel 20:24). David lived in caves and the desert for fear of Saul.

David and Absalom

After becoming King, David had to suffer a lot due to the rebellion of his son Absalom. Absalom destroyed the grain fields of general Joab who was the faithful aide of his father and King, David (2 Samuel 14:30). He also stole the hearts of those who came for judgement before the King and made them prejudiced against the King (2 Samuel 15:1-6). Moreover he also directly tried to attack and kill the King (2 Samuel 15:14). David went into hiding for fear of the prince and often faced poverty and misery (2 Samuel 15:30). He suffered taunts and humiliation (16:4-14) and had to pass through a period of distress (16:22). We should look upon the period of adversity in life as a period which teaches us how to encounter it (Compare John 16:33, Hebrews 11:29-39, 1 Peter 3:14).

Psalm 51: The Song of Penitence of David

Yet David had his own shortcomings and faults. 2 Samuel Chapters 10-12 tells us about David's selfishness and sensuality. The murder of Uriah, the strong warrior was accomplished by David, only for the sake of taking Uriah's wife for himself. This led to his downfall. However, David repented and returned to God in tears. Psalm 51, which is a psalm of penitence, is the expression of David's repentance and cry before the Lord. David was the author of Psalms which have greatly influenced the spiritual life of a great many people.

The Lord's Promise

David had earned the promise of succession to kingship from God through Prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 7:8-17). The fulfilment of this covenant is in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 11:1-16, St. Mathew 1:1). Martyr St. Stephen, in his long discourse, says that God blessed David greatly (Acts 7:46).

The Greatness of David

David was a neglected person among his brothers. But the Lord anointed him as the second King of Israel. His reign for forty years was a golden age for Israel. He

became the King of a vast empire which stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River. He made Jerusalem the royal capital. He brought the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. Jesus Christ was called 'Son of David' because of the greatness of David's Kingship.

Lessons to be learnt from the life of David

1. The Lord might choose for his own purpose even those who are neglected by people.
2. The Lord accepts true penitence (ps. 51, St. Luke 15)

David committed a very heinous crime. But God forgave and accepted him when he truly repented. The Lord loves both the just and the sinners.

3. The Lord is faithful in His promises.

Jesus Christ was born in the irrevocable royal lineage of David and was called 'Son of David' due to the great promises which the Lord had given David. The birth of Jesus was the fulfilment of all promises that were scheduled to spring up through David, including the promise that the leader of God's chosen people will be born in Bethlehem. We should remember all the promises that the Lord has given us through the Holy Bible.

Hymn

(This is part of the prefatory hymn beginning
'O Blessed Mother...' sung before the public celebration of the
Holy Eucharist and given in the Matins for Tuesday in
Sheema Prayer)

When it dawned in East, full of rejoice...
David went to pray, at the Lord's Temple
O Lord who redeems, this world full of sins
Accept Thou my verse, prayers and tears
Halleluiah-vu-Halleluiah
O grant in kindness, pardon for my sins.

Let Us Pray

*O Jesus Christ, Son of David, have mercy on us.
Help us to be grateful for Your blessings.
Teach us to use our talents and possessions for the good of others.
Enable us to glorify Your Name through our deeds.
We shall praise You, Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

.....

Resolution

*We will believe in and rely on God in our lives.
We would do good even to those who do us harm.
We would faithfully execute the duties which the Lord gives us.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. Name David's father.
.....
2. Name the musical instrument used by David.
.....
3. What was David doing, when he was 'called' by God to be the leader of Israel?
.....
4. Name Saul's son who was the best friend of David.
.....
5. Whose grain fields did Absalom destroy?
.....
6. Who was Absalom who tried to kill David?
.....
7. The capital of King David.
.....

8. The soldier killed treacherously by David.

.....

9. How long did David reign as King?

.....

Activities

1. Write a script of the battle between David and Goliath and enact it in the class.
2. Write a note on the administrative achievements of David and present it in the class.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	1 Samuel 16
Monday	2 Samuel 5	2 Samuel 1
Tuesday	2 Samuel 9	2 Samuel 11
Wednesday	2 Samuel 12	2 Samuel 15
Thursday	2 Samuel 18	2 Samuel 19
Friday	2 Samuel 24	1 Kings 1
Saturday	1 Kings 2	*

Chapter 5

Solomon, the Wisest of Kings

Theme: Wisdom is a gift of the Lord. God fearing people attain it. Human being should not eschew justice and righteousness whatever his earthly stature might be.

Verse to be memorized: “A wise teacher makes learning a joy; a rebellious teacher spouts foolishness” (Proverbs 15:2) NRSV.

Learning Aids: 1. A picture of the incident which reveals Solomon’s wisdom.
2. Picture of the Jerusalem Temple.

Introduction

Solomon was the third king of Israel. He was the son of David and Bathsheba. The name means ‘One who is peaceful.’ Solomon was also called Jedidiah which meant ‘Beloved of Yahweh’ (2 Samuel 12:24). Today let us learn about king Solomon, the wisest of all kings.

Lesson

Birth and Childhood

Solomon was born to King David while the latter was ruling over Israel with Jerusalem as his capital. The Lord loved Solomon. He grew up under the care of Prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12:25). Absalom was David’s favourite for the throne. But Absalom’s rebellion and death improved Solomon’s chance of succession. Bathsheba had obtained a promise from King David that her son Solomon would be made the successor to the throne of Israel (1 Kings 1:3).

The Wise Administrator

The young prince who was anointed as King of Israel was not satisfied with his administrative heritage. He longed for true wisdom (1 Kings 3:9). He believed that ‘Fear of the Lord is true wisdom’ (Job 28:28) and prayed to the Lord only for wisdom rather than for material possessions, honour, massacre of enemies or health and longevity. “Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern Your people well and know the difference between what is right and what is wrong” (1 Kings 3:9) NRSV. The Lord was pleased with Solomon and gave him not only wisdom but also riches and honour in plenty (1 Kings 3:12-13). Solomon’s wisdom became well known in and around the country. He was an able administrator, and kings, queens and wise men from far away places (1 Kings 4:34 and 1 Kings 10:1) came to him to listen to his words of wisdom.

Solomon's Ascendancy to Kingship

David's promise to Bathsheba and the interventions of Prophet Nathan made Solomon king. The reasons for Solomon's ascendancy were:

1. Solomon feared the Lord and worshipped him.
2. He built the Lord's temple (1 Chronicles 28:9, 10). During Absalom's plotting, David was in exile. So Solomon too might have grown up in the hardships of his father's exile (2 Samuel 15:16). Later Adonijah, another son of David, tried to usurp the throne. Then king David and prophet Nathan sent Solomon to Gihon, and Priest Zadok anointed him as king of Israel (1 Kings 1:13-34).

A Wise and Judicious King

Real leaders should have the ability to discriminate between good and evil. The incident of two women approaching Solomon with a child for justice is described in 1 Kings Chapter 3. Solomon was wise enough to sit in judgment and administer justice (Verse 28). Solomon's wisdom was well known (4:29). The arrangements for food in the royal palace, the construction of the Lord's temple (5:1-6:38) and the royal palace with its adjoining living quarters (7:1-12), description of gifts received from neighbouring countries (7:13 onwards), dedication of the Lord's temple (8:1 onwards), the prayer and preaching of Solomon (8:14 onwards) and the description of Queen Sheba's visit (10:1 onwards) reveal Solomon's greatness as the wisest king in history.

Spirituality and Righteousness

Solomon, the beloved of the Lord, constructed and dedicated the Lord's temple. He could lead his people in the path of righteousness. Solomon also received the promise of the Lord's companionship and succession to the royal throne from the Lord. Solomon's righteous life enabled him to excel in the administration of his land. His books of wisdom describes the righteous way of life.

The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiastes which uphold the values of daily life and the Song of Songs which describe the relationship between the Lord's people and God reveal Solomon's wisdom to us. But there were weaknesses too!

Idol worship

In later times, Solomon transgressed from the path of the Lord and sinned. He compromised in matters of faith and ethics, worshipped idols like Ashtoreth and Milcom (1 Kings 11:5) and adopted ritualistic practices of idolatry. These were the result of his association with the infidels. As an administrator, he expanded his territory and brought riches to his nation. Yet his excessive fondness for Jerusalem

and Judea and his neglect of Northern Israel are dark chapters of his reign (1 Kings 5:13-16, 2 Chronicles 2:17-18). By the end of Solomon's rule, the kingdom was divided into two - Israel and Judea.

Hymn

(From the sacrament of Holy Matrimony)
(Upamakalal Shlemon)

Through similes, said King Solomon....
Your master would ever....
Love your ravishing beauty
My Master; ideal than ten thousand ones...
Israel is His orchard.
He resides God - like in the...
Tender sprouts of Jacob pure....
In the fragrant red - oil and
Cedars soft - of Lebanon
We all should praise Him who is renowned.

.....

Let us Pray

*O Lord, give us the wisdom to discriminate between good
and evil and to choose the good.
Don't let our heart lean towards idolatry of any kind and destroy our faith.
We praise and worship to Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

.....

Resolution

*We will attend church services regularly
and remain steadfast in the true faith of the Orthodox Church.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. Who was the mentor of Solomon ?
.....
2. Solomon became king of Israel because of the death of David's favourite son.
Who was this son?
.....

3. Describe an incident which reveals Solomon's wisdom.
.....
4. Name the queen who came to test Solomon's wisdom.
.....
5. How did Solomon find out the real mother of the living child when two women came to him for justice?
.....
6. Who anointed Solomon as King? Where?
.....
7. Who built the first temple of the Lord?
.....
8. Which are the wisdom writings of Solomon?
.....
9. Name the book which reveals the relationship between God and His people.
.....
10. What were the evil effects of the 'transgression of Solomon?'
.....

Activities

1. Write and enact the script of the incident which reveals Solomon's wisdom.
2. Read 1 Kings 8 and list the directions given by Yahweh in building the Temple.
3. Read the wisdom writings of Solomon and identify the verses that appeal to you most.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	1 Kings 2
Monday	1 Kings 3	1 Kings 4
Tuesday	1 Kings 5	1 Kings 6
Wednesday	1 Kings 7	1 Kings 8
Thursday	1 Kings 9	1 Kings 10
Friday	1 Kings 11	Ecclesiastus 1
Saturday	1 Kings 12	*

Chapter 6

Resurrected Jesus Christ and Disciples

Theme: Our Lord Jesus Christ got resurrected from the dead. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christian faith. His Resurrection forebodes the resurrection of all people.

Verse to be memorized: So Jesus said to them again. “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (St. John 20:21) NRSV.

Learning Aids:

1. The picture of Resurrected Jesus Christ and the disciples who witness his Resurrection.
2. A plain cross and a cross with the figure of crucified Christ.

Introduction

Jesus Christ coming back to life was a great miracle. Jesus Christ broke himself free from the shackles of death and resurrected. This is a historical truth. Today let us learn about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and its impact on the disciples.

Lesson

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ made his disciples fearful, panicky and insecure. They hid themselves from the public and assembled together at a secret place. Jesus came into their midst and greeted them “Peace be with you.” Then He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples became glad when they saw the Lord again. Then Jesus said to them again “Peace to You! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Following this, Jesus Christ breathed on them and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven to them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (St. John 20:23). What is recorded here is the first instance when the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples.

Those who were disappointed, sad and forlorn could experience the healing touch of Jesus Christ. The lack of faith, withdrawal and distress of His disciples slowly dissipated. Jesus breathed on the disciples who had lost their self confidence in the wake of fear and failure. Then he authorized them to forgive the sins of people and carry on the ministry of God the Father. Jesus was magnanimous enough to trust those who had disappointed him earlier. But the disciples could feel the Lord’s strengthening presence even in their uncertainties.

The Gospels were written in the second half of the first century when the early Christians were going through tough times. But Christians were certain about

Resurrection. Even though we are witnesses to Christ's Resurrection, we cannot do away with the cross. Jesus Christ invites us to experience Resurrection passing through the experience of the cross. Our Lord encourages us to rely on Him and live with the hope of eternal life.

Let us sum up what we have learnt

1. If Jesus Christ had not resurrected from the dead, then we would have no hope of our Resurrection and life after life.
2. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ wiped out the power of death and Satan.
3. The basis of Christian life is the hope given by Christ's Resurrection.
4. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for the sake of all.
5. Jesus Christ passed through death and came back to life, that is the Good News after death.
6. The real message of Resurrection is the redemption of creation in Jesus Christ.

Hymn

Re-joice O Holy Church that our Lord Jesus
Arose alive on the third day from His tomb
Killed all sin and death by His death on the Cross
Removed the spear of angels by His Wound of Spear
By His tomb – wiped the tomb's rot off,
Through Resurrection – gave us all, our lives
Redeemed all our waywardness as He bore them up

.....

Let us Pray

*O Lord Jesus Christ who has resurrected for our sake,
keep us steadfast in Your love. Increase our devotion for You.
By virtue of our good deeds, let people come to believe in
Your Resurrection and confess it. We would ever praise and worship
You and Your Father and Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

.....

Resolution

*We believe that Jesus Christ has resurrected and is seated
at the right of God the Father in heaven.
So, we would ever remember the selfless love of Lord Jesus for us all.
Also, would attend the liturgy of Resurrection
at the Easter Sunday Service.*

Let Us Think

1. What was the response of the disciples after the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ?
.....
2. What was the first message given by the resurrected Jesus Christ?
.....
3. What was the initial reaction of the disciples when they saw the resurrected Jesus Christ?
.....
4. How did Jesus Christ give the Holy Spirit to His disciples?
.....
5. What agency represents the continuation of the mission of the resurrected Jesus Christ.
.....
6. St. Paul asserts that faith and teachings do not make sense without Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Explain this statement.
.....

Activities

1. Let the children say to each other 'He is risen' and 'Indeed He has risen' as words of greeting and response.
2. Learn the proclamation of Resurrection and its response made during the liturgy on Easter.
3. Say "Jesus Christ died, but got resurrected and is alive" to your friends.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	St. John 28:1-20
Monday	St. John 15:11-19	St. John 16:1-8
Tuesday	St. Luke 24:21-12	St. John 20:1-8
Wednesday	1 Peter 5:5-14	Romans 16:1-16
Thursday	Acts 2:22-36	1 Corinthians 15:1-19
Friday	St. Luke 24:13-35	St. John 2:18-25
Saturday	St. Mark 15:37-47	*

Chapter 7

Journey to Emmaus

(St. Luke 24:13-35)

Theme: Lord Jesus Christ is always our fellow traveller. He is near to those who are broken hearted and in pain.

Verse to be memorized: “I am with you always even to the end of the age” (St. Matthew 28:20) NRSV

Learning Aids: 1. A map of Palestine (with Emmaus marked)
2. A picture of Jerusalem and its suburbs

Introduction

Imagine someone quite close to you dies unexpectedly. How will you react?

Tragic situations generate sorrow and pain, disappointment and lack of security. Don't they? What if any dead person comes back to life? Can you imagine the jubilation such an incident would bring? The crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ generated sorrow, fear and disappointment among the disciples. However Jesus Christ rose from the dead and appeared to them. Gradually, their fear left them.

Lesson

The incident which we learn today took place three days after the death of Jesus Christ. Several stories about Christ's Resurrection had spread by then. The women who came with incense to apply on Christ's body were the first to know about Christ's Resurrection. When the disciples heard this news they were all the more frightened. On the same day two of the disciples travelled from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Emmaus was a village seven miles from Jerusalem. One of the two disciples was Cleopas. Actually, they were “running away” from Jerusalem, dejected, hopeless and fearful. They conversed and argued as they were walking. Jesus drew Himself near and walked with them. But their eyes were restrained so that they did not know Him (St. Luke 24:16). Jesus Christ enquired what the cause of their grief was? They told Him about Jesus. Cleopas said that Jesus Christ had been a Prophet mighty in his deed and word. However the chief priests and rulers condemned him to death and crucified Him. Cleopas also said that certain women of their company who had visited the tomb surprised them saying that they learnt from the angels that Jesus was alive.

Return to Jerusalem

When the disciples talked to Jesus Christ, He scolded them for their ignorance and hard-heartedness. He expounded to them from the Scriptures about His Passion and Resurrection. However they did not realize that it was Jesus. In the evening they requested Him to abide with them.

Jesus went with them. When they sat at the table for dinner, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were 'opened' and they recognized Him. But Jesus vanished from their sight. They remembered how their heart 'burned' when Jesus had expounded the Scriptures to them while they were walking. They forgot where they had been heading to. They got up and returned to Jerusalem immediately. Now they had a different understanding about the Lord.

Our lives will be transformed if we discover and listen to Christ in life. Those who discover Christ should live in virtue, goodness and say 'No' to sin. He walks along with us and protects us even if we don't recognize him in our life situations. He knows what we need and is pleased to bless us with good things. Our Lord Jesus Christ won't forsake us in adversities and failures of life. Holy Qurbana shall enable us to see and receive Christ. We should learn and meditate on the scriptures every day. We become true disciples of Christ only when we share what we have, with others.

Hymn

(The tune is same as that of 'Blessed are those servants good...')

When two disciples through Jeru-salem travelled
Jesus stood in their midst and asked – the question
“How your teacher – lost His life and died”
They replied that – He has Resurrected
At the end of the trip He blessed, and broke bread
For their sake – and they knew who He – really was
Halleluiah – Halleluiah

.....

Let us Pray

*O Loving God, we adore You. You have revealed Yourself to us,
lived with us and provided us with all we need in life. Even when we forget You,
You continue to love us. Enable us to live in Your love,
doing Your will and witnessing You before the world. Amen.*

.....

Resolution

*So, we will seek God in situations of joys and sorrows in our lives.
We truly believe that Jesus comes into us every time we partake in the
Holy Body and Bread of Jesus Christ.*

Let Us Think

1. Do you think the two disciples were fleeing from Jerusalem? If yes, why did they flee?
.....
2. How far is Emmaus from Jerusalem?
.....
3. What was the two disciples talking and arguing about, as they were travelling?
.....
4. Why did they not recognize Jesus?
.....
5. What did Jesus teach them to remove their confusion and doubts?
.....
6. What did Jesus do before giving bread to the disciples?
.....
7. According to you what did this blessed bread signify?
.....
8. What did the disciples do when they recognized Jesus Christ that evening?
.....

Activities

1. Present a skit on the “Journey to Emmaus.”
2. Share your experiences in life, like the one that happened to the disciples on their journey.
3. Write in a note on what Jesus Christ did during his encounter with the two disciples. (Eg. He walked along with the disciples.)

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	St. Luke 24:13-35
Monday	St. Luke 5:27-39	St. John 6:47-58
Tuesday	1 John 5:13-21	Hebrews 11:1-6
Wednesday	St. Luke 24:36-53	Ephesians 4:1-16
Thursday	Acts 1:1-11	St. Mark 16:1-20
Friday	St. Mark 10:13-31	Acts 21:1-16
Saturday	St. Matthew 10:17-22	*

Chapter 8

My Lord and My God

(St. John 20:24-29)

Theme: To understand the significance of the confession of faith by Apostle Thomas.

Verse to be Memorized: Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (St. John 14:16) NRSV.

Learning Aids:

1. A chart showing the names of apostles.
2. A picture of St. Thomas (placing his hand on the side of Jesus Christ)
3. Another chart containing 3 famous statements of St. Thomas

Introduction

Have you heard people talking about ‘doubting Thomas’? Science always demands proof for any phenomenon. But scientific convictions are liable to be revised. There is a fundamental difference between science and faith. Faith is based on one’s own convictions, which are strengthened by the spirit of God. In that way, scientific affirmations do not have a finality.

Lesson

Apostle Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus Christ appeared to them after His Resurrection (John 20:19-24). When the other disciples told Thomas about it, he said that he would not believe unless he could touch and feel the wounds of Jesus Christ (John 20:25). Unlike other disciples he wanted not only to see Christ but also to touch His wounds. This desire was caused by the intimacy he developed with Jesus Christ. Jesus appeared again to the disciples after eight days and fulfilled the special desire of his dear disciple Thomas.

Since Resurrection of the dead was incomprehensible to ordinary intellect, the disciples needed to be convinced about it. Apostle Thomas was an ordinary person. Jesus showed His wounds to Thomas and confirmed his faith.

St. Thomas is seen as a disciple with a difference. He had been ready to die along with Jesus Christ (St. John 11:16). He was also in the habit of raising his doubts openly (St. John 14:5). The curiosity shown by St. Thomas is a mark of his mature personality. Hence Jesus Christ allowed him to touch the wounds on His hands and side. The sincerity of Thomas endeared him to Jesus Christ. His touch on the Holy

One gave him a new vision of faith and led him to proclaim: "My Lord and my God." It seems Thomas had a mystical experience. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. His declaration is acknowledged as an important dogma of faith of the Church. This proclamation states that Jesus was human and God at the same time. This was the defining moment in the life of Thomas. Earlier, Peter had declared that Jesus was Christ, the Son of the Most High. The proclamation of St. Thomas is inscribed on the emblem of the Malankara Orthodox Church. Finally Jesus calmly told Thomas that he believed because he saw the Master. But blessed are those who believe in Him, without ever having seen Him. He also advised Thomas to be a believer, and not an unbeliever.

Hymn

*(This hymn is sung on the Sunday that comes after Easter.
It's sung after the Readings from the Gospels during the
Holy Eucharist)*

Since he doubted, St. Thomas... dispelled all... doubts.
Let his memory, ever be...cele-brated.
Kneeling down he – confessed openly
"You are doubtless – the Only... Son
You are my God and my Lord, I confess"
See that his memory is – observed in the church
Halleluiah – Let his prayer guard us.

.....

Let Us Pray

*Lord Jesus Christ, bless us to touch Your wounds
in faith as our Father St. Thomas did. Give us the wisdom to accept
You as our God and our Lord. Amen.*

.....

Resolution

*Jesus Christ is our God and the Lord of our life.
We believe in God, even though we don't see Him with our physical eyes;
but we do really feel His presence with us.
We would live as the children of St. Thomas and the witnesses of God.*

Let Us Think

1. St. Thomas is the apostle of India.
2. The Christian Church was founded in India by St. Thomas
3. Jesus Christ respects our own desires provided they are sincere and legitimate.
4. We could be filled with the Spirit of God and speak about the mysteries of God.
5. The life of witness led by St. Thomas should be continued by us today.
6. St. Thomas is not an unbeliever but one whose love for his Master was great and tremendous.
7. Thomas was not present with the other ten disciples when the Resurrected Jesus first appeared. What do you think about his absence? Why did he go out? What do you think about the personality of Thomas?

.....
.....

8. What is the alternate name of St. Thomas? What does the name mean?

.....
.....

9. Explain the meaning of Thomas' declaration in your own words.

.....

Activities

1. St. Thomas declared that Jesus was human – God; ie. God incarnate. What could happen if God comes in His great glory?
3. Explain the meaning of Jesus' statement. "Blessed are those who have believed, without having seen Him."
4. Here are two categories: those who saw and believe, and others who never saw, yet believe. To which category do you belong.
5. Jesus wants us all to be believers, and not unbelievers. Why? How do we relate your answer with the mission of the church.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	John 11:5-16
Monday	John 14:1-11	John 20:1-23
Tuesday	John 20:23-31	Acts 1:1-14
Wednesday	John 12:28-13:10	Matthew 9:36-10:10
Thursday	Matthew 19:16-30	Luke 6:12-23
Friday	John 4:31-38	Hebrews 10:12-39
Saturday	1 Peter 2:19-25	*

Chapter 9

Jesus Appears to St. Peter

(St. John 21: 15-23)

Theme: A true disciple is one who follows and bears witness to Jesus Christ with his life and activities.

Verse to be memorized: “Not everyone who says to Me “Lord, Lord” shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (St. Matthew 7:21) NRSV.

Learning Aids:

1. A chart listing the instructions given to Peter by Jesus.
2. A picture of Jesus Christ talking to Peter.
3. A Picture of a shepherd tending his flock.

Introduction

Lack of steadiness is a weakness in one’s personality. Inability to reconcile words and actions is rather a serious defect in leaders. Steadfastness, hardwork, faithfulness as well as deep reliance on God are the usual characteristics of a mature personality.

Lesson

Jesus Christ had selected a fisherman named Simon of Galilee as one of his disciples. Simon was the brother of Andrew. Simon Peter tried to assert himself wherever he could. But he was a weak and unreliable man, while confronting critical situations (Mathew 16).

Though Peter was the eldest among the twelve disciples, he had a vacillating nature. He had vowed that he would not deny his Master even if he were to die. However, he denied Christ three times at the most critical moment. Once he tried to dissuade Christ from taking the way of the Cross, (Matthew 16:22) and Jesus called him ‘Satan.’ After denying his Master, he realized his folly and cried bitterly (Matthew 26:75). However the resurrected Christ came in search of Peter! Here we have a moving description of Peter’s grief and repentance.

After denying Jesus Christ Peter thought that he was “far away” from God. So he decided to return to his former profession of fishing. He encouraged the other disciples to join him, and they went to Lake Tiberias. They worked hard all night but could not catch even a single fish. At the break of dawn, Jesus was standing

on the seashore. But they did not recognize him. He asked them if they had got anything. But they said that they had caught no fish at all. Then Jesus asked them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, and lo! the net was full of fish! They could not even draw the net because of their big catch. John was the first to recognize Jesus (John 21:1-11). There were 153 big fishes in their net.

When they reached the shore with their catch and the unbroken net, they saw their breakfast ready. They were too amazed to say anything. After they had eaten, Jesus asked Simon Peter “ Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” Peter replied “Yes Lord, You know that I love You.” Then Jesus told him to feed His lambs. After that, Jesus asked, “Peter, son of Jonah, do you love me?” and Peter gave the same reply. Then Jesus told him to tend His sheep. Jesus asked the same question for a third time and Peter was grieved and was in tears. He replied “Lord, you know all things, You know that I love You”. Then Jesus told him to feed his sheep. Thus Jesus reinstated Peter who had denied him thrice. Jesus readmitted him to the fold of apostles and restored to him the assigned work. Jesus asked Peter thrice whether he loved Him. It is obvious here that “love is the measure”. The resurrected Christ is always ready to touch our hearts and minds with His love and reclaim us from withdrawals and sins.

Hymn

(Vespers of Thursday - Canonical Offices)

(Kripathan arayil)

O Lord promote us like / the thief into Thy chamber of Mercy
Accept our penitence,/ like that of the;/ tax collector/ and the sinner woman.
Redeem sins as You/ forgave Simon who/had rejected thee.
O merciful Christ / who pleases in the / contrite who comes with/
repentance to You.

.....

Let Us Pray

*O loving God, we praise You, as You have called and elected us
to be part of Your Holy Church. Enable us to love You above everything
and fulfil the responsibilities You have entrusted us with.
Enable us to live as the faithful witness to Your love.
We praise and thank You, Father and Holy Spirit. Amen*

Resolution

*We would never reject the love of God.
We would be faithful in executing the responsibilities
God has entrusted us with.
If we go wrong we would repent and beg forgiveness from God.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. God's love doesn't deny us eventhough we deny Him.
2. God in His love will bring us back even if we drift into sin and selfishness.
3. God wants us to repent and return to Him.
4. God knows us, our needs and our desires completely.
5. Lord Jesus Christ provides for us even without our asking for it.
6. We are valuable in the eyes of God. That is why He has saved us.
7. God has sent us to this earth with a mission similar to the one He had given to Peter. We should try to discover what this mission is.
8. We have become members of God's church through the sacrament of Holy Baptism and hence we cannot withdraw from this honourable condition.
9. Where did Peter come from?
.....
10. Simon was given the name Peter, by Jesus. Do you see a 'message to Peter' in this?
.....
11. Who brought Simon to Jesus?
.....
12. Name Peter's Father.
.....

13. Jesus asked the same question thrice. What do you think was the reason behind it?

.....

3. What did Jesus command Peter when he declared his love for Jesus the second time?

.....

Activities

1. Reflect about the mission God has entrusted you with and write a note on it.
2. Prepare a skit based on the incident described in this lesson.
3. Write a chart of evidences of God's love for you and your love for God.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	John 21:15-25
Monday	John 9:1-16	John 15:1-19
Tuesday	Luke 13:1-17	Matthew 16:1-20
Wednesday	Matthew 20:1-16	Acts 1:1-14
Thursday	Matthew 9:36-10:10	Luke 10:1-16
Friday	1 Peter 1:1-25	1 Peter 5:1-14
Saturday	2 Peter 3:1-18	*

Chapter 10

Ascension of Jesus

(Luke 24:44-53, Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:19-20, Acts 1:1-11)

Theme: Ascension marks the end of the period when Jesus Christ was physically present with His disciples before entering into heavenly glory. Hence Christ's disciples and the Church was to live in expectation of His Second Coming.

Verse to be memorized: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11) NRSV.

Learning Aids: 1. A picture of Israel with the mountain of Olive marked on it.
2. A Picture of Ascension of Jesus

Introduction

The resurrected Christ remained (seen and unseen) with the disciples for forty days. He appeared to them several times, dispelled their doubts and reclaimed the truants back to their mission. Jesus readmitted Peter who had denied Him and made confess his love for the Master. He let Thomas touch his wounds thereby confirming him in faith and mission. Thus the disciples were confirmed in their mission. They were freed from fear and disappointment and got strengthened in faith. Let us learn about Jesus' ascension to His Father in heaven after promising to send the Holy Spirit on his disciples.

Lesson

Jesus Christ gathered his disciples on Mount Olivet which was a day's journey away from Jerusalem. He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father and that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. After receiving the power of the Holy Spirit they were to bear witness of Christ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. As the disciples were looking on, Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and a cloud made Him out of sight for the disciples.

While the disciples were looking up towards heaven as Jesus ascended, two men (angels) in white apparel came and stood beside them. They promised that Jesus who ascended to heaven would come again in glory. Thereafter the apostles returned to Jerusalem with great joy (Acts 1:6-12).

Jesus Christ who ascended to heaven commands us to wait for getting

strengthened with power from God. The Holy Spirit empowers us. This strength which gives us fullness in virtues is provided in the Holy Church through anointment with Holy Chrism.

While Jesus blessed His disciples, He departed from them (Luke 24:51). By blessing the disciples, Jesus was fulfilling a priestly function. Jesus Christ directed his disciples to wait for getting strengthened by the Spirit of God. He also promised them that He would be with them everyday till the end of the world.

The Ascension of Jesus Christ did not disappoint the disciples. Instead, they returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promise of Jesus. The appearance and presence of Christ who had blessed them at the time of ascension strengthened the disciples to witness Christ; they were even joyful to suffer for the sake of the Master.

Hymn

(Galilee thannil melichu...)
Gathered up in Galilee...
Disciples... all eleven
They saw the Resurrected Groom
At- that- place...
Climbing up Mount of Olives, Christ
Blessed and ascended to skies
And, send them the Holy Ghost
For- their- aid.

.....

Let Us Pray

O loving God, we praise You. You died on the cross, resurrected, ascended to heaven and lives eternally. You have given us the Holy Spirit as You had promised. Give us the strength to live filled with the Holy Spirit. Give us the wisdom to fulfil the responsibilities You have entrusted us with. We await your Second Coming. Amen

.....

Resolution

We would execute the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ. We would participate in church services on the great day of the Feast of Ascension and live by the renewal of the Holy Spirit received through Holy Baptism.

Let Us Think

1. How far is the mount of Olivet from Jerusalem?
.....
2. What kind of 'baptism' did God the Father promise?
.....
3. How did the angels address the disciples?
.....
4. How many days after the Resurrection was Christ's Ascension?
.....
5. What did the resurrected Christ command His disciples to do?
.....
6. We have received the anointment of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Baptism.
7. We shall always be aware of the mission Jesus Christ has entrusted to us.
8. We shall endeavour to live as Christ's witnesses. We all wait for the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
9. Note that cross placed at the left side of the altar on Easter is removed on this day.
10. Ascension of Jesus Christ is one of the "Moronaya" festivals of the church

Activities

1. Find out what heavenly gifts are prayed for in the liturgy of Ascension.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Luke 24:36-53
Monday	St. Matthew 28:1-20	Mark 16:1-20
Tuesday	Acts 1:1-12	Ephesians 4:1-16
Wednesday	Galatians 5:1-26	1 Corinthians 12:1-27
Thursday	1 Corinthians 14:1-25	Acts 19:1-20
Friday	Philippians 2:1-18	Colossians 2:1-15
Saturday	Philemon 1:1-25	*

Unit 2

Prayer

Chapter 11

Mar Ephrem's Teachings (Memra)

(This is the memra used in the Prayers of Compline)

Theme: Understand the meaning and significance of the hymn “Lord Thy mercy on us cast.” Recite this song regularly in the evening prayer.

Verse to memorize: “I will both lie down in peace and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8) NRSV.

Learning Aid: Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

Do you say your prayers every evening and morning? Do you recite the hymn “Lord Thy mercy on us cast” in your evening prayer?

Let us learn this hymn by understanding its meaning.

1. **Lord, Thy mercy on us cast,
Use our service, ev'ry piece
Grant us from Thy treasure vast
Mercy, blessing and release.**

(O, Jesus Christ! Accept our service and prayer and shower Your mercy on us. Forgive us our sins. Give us mercy and blessing from Your great treasury of blessings)

2. **Let me, Lord, before Thee stand,
Wakefully my watch I'd keep
Should I fall to slumber's hand,
Guard Thou me from sinful sleep.**

(O, Jesus Christ, enable me to shed my sleep and stand in prayer before You. If I fall asleep again, don't let sins touch me during my sleep.)

- 3. Waking, if to wrong I take,
Mercif'ly absolve Thou me,
Sleeping, if a sin I make
Pardon grant in clemency**

(If I have done anything wrong during my wakeful hours, kindly pardon me out of Your mercy. Similarly pardon my sins, if any, committed during my sleep as well.)

- 4. By the Cross of Thy disgrace
Grant me, Lord, a restful sleep,
Evil dreams do Thou efface
Wicked thoughts far from me keep.**

(The Holy Cross is a sign of Your condescension. Let Your cross give me a good sleep. Prevent me from having evil dreams and wicked thoughts.)

- 5. Through the night conduct me, Lord,
Peaceful sleep give Thou to me
Lest foul thoughts in me find hoard,
Phantoms lest a terror be.**

(O Jesus Christ, let my period of sleep be a peaceful and comfortable one at night. Don't let evil thoughts and evil spirits conquer me at night.)

- 6. Grant Thy angels' watchful view
Guard my limbs without abate,
Hateful lusts in me subdue,
By Thy living flesh I ate.**

(O Jesus Christ, send Your angel of light to protect my body at night. Prevent all evil desires in me by virtue of my communion in Your flesh and blood.)

- 7. While I lie and sleep in calm,
May Thy blood my keeper be.
Let my soul dwell free from qualm
In Thine image mad'st Thou me.**

(O Jesus Christ, let Your blood guard me while I sleep peacefully. I was created in Your image. So kindly give me the freedom that You please.)

**8. Overshadow with Thy hand,
Me a handicraft of Thine,
Let me in thy fortress stand,
Mercy shielding round be mine.**

(O Lord, You have created me in Your image and likeness. Cover me with Your right hand. Your mercy is like a fortress and let it guard me like a shield.)

**9. While my body silent lies,
May Thy pow'r its vigil keep,
Let my breath like incense rise,
T'ward Thy greatness in my sleep.**

(While I am asleep O Lord, I am guarded by Your strength. Let my sleep be like sweet incense rising up towards You.)

**10. Let not evil touch my bed
By thy mother's pleas for me,
By thy blood atoning shed,
Satan's harm removed be**

(O Jesus Christ, accept the intercession of Mother Mary for my sake and prevent the Evil One from approaching the bed I am sleeping in. Let Your Crucifixion prevent Satan from causing me harm in any way.)

**11. Since Thy word abides the same,
Guarded by Thy cross I'd be;
Waking, I shall praise Thy Name,
Who did'st love e'en feeble me.**

(O Jesus Christ, fulfill Your covenant with me. Let Your Cross protect my life. Your mercy support me in my frailty. Enable me to praise You when I wake up from sleep.)

**12. Grant O Lord, a list'ning ear,
With desire to do Thy will ;
Let Thy peace at eve be near,
Night thy righteousness fulfil.**

(O Jesus Christ, I want to listen to You and execute Your Will tonight. For that, provide me with a good evening and a righteous night.)

**13. Saviour Christ, our hearts inspire
Thee to see effulgent bright-
Thee whose honour shines as fire,
Worshipped by all sons of light.**

(O Jesus Christ, You are the light of this world and its Saviour. You live in the mansions of light. We are the children of Your light. Hence we honour and worship You.)

**14. Jesus, Saviour of the world,
Thou who dwellest in the light,
Praise we Thee for love unfurled-
Mercy, now with future bright.**

(O Jesus Christ, You are the Saviour of this world. You live in the world of light. Hence we thank and praise You. Let Your mercy be upon us in this world and in the other world.)

**15. Lord, our God, we give Thee praise.
Praise a thousand thousand fold
Tens of Thousands praises raise,
Mercy now, till time untold.**

(O Jesus Christ, we submit thousands and thousands of praises before You. Our praises are countless. Accept them and show mercy on us forever.)

**16. Praise to Thee, to Thee be praise,
Angels serve Thee and adore;
Lord of Angels, we too raise
Pray and worship all the more.**

(O Jesus Christ, the angels in heaven serve You and the watchful angels bow to You. You are the Lord of all angels. We thank You Lord. Kindly accept our prayers.)

**17. Praise to Thee, who art our boast,
One true God, and one alone
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
One in Three, and Three in One**

(We praise You Triune God. You exist simultaneously as one God and the three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You are the only true God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit co-exist as one single God.)

**18. Praise the Lord, who always hears
Prayers of feeble folk like us,
Who regards repentant tears,
As first-fruits, gifts offered thus.**

(Jesus Christ, You listen to the prayers of weak creatures like human beings. You consider the repentant tears of humans as an offering of first fruits. Hence we should praise You.)

**19. Earthly ones to Thee give praise,
Countless as the leaves of trees,
Thee, whose glory angels raise
Serving Thee as Thou dost please.**

(We praise You Lord countless times. Our praises are as countless as the leaves of trees. The angels of heaven glorify You. They try to please You through their service.)

**20. Setting minds above the sod.
Thank we God, exalt him most,
Who exists as one true God,
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

(Our thoughts rise up to the heavens. We thank and exalt the Triune God who exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.)

**21. Thou who hearest pray'rs to Thee
Supplications who dost heed,
Hear us; reconcil-ed be,
Mercy show and grant our need.**

(O, Jesus Christ! who listens to all our prayers and grant us our requests, kindly listen to this prayer made by us. Grant us pardon and show Your mercy by allowing us the requests we make.)

Sing this hymn every evening during your evening prayers and praise the Lord. Thus you can learn this hymn by-heart.

Activities

1. Learn the 'Memra' of Mar Ephrem by-heart and sing it in the class.
2. Sing this hymn regularly during your evening prayers.
3. Let one student sing a stanza of this hymn in the class. Let another student explain its meaning. All the stanzas can thus be recited and explained by turns

in the class. The teacher can intervene at intervals and sing a stanza before the students. The students then can explain the meaning.

4. Collect biographical details of Mar Ephrem and present it in the class.
5. Find out other hymns written by Mar Ephrem from the book of liturgy and prepare a list of such hymns.

Let Us Sing

Sing the hymn “Lord, thy mercy on us cast” in a different liturgical tune in the class.

Let Us Pray

O Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You as You have enabled us to learn this beautiful hymn. We also remember Your servant and our father Mar Ephrem who composed this hymn. O Lord, grant good remembrance of that saintly father who is acclaimed as “the Lyre of the Holy Spirit”, who composed several hymns and enriched the liturgy of the Holy Church. Enable us to exalt and praise the One True Triune God comprising of Father, Son and Holy Spirit ever and ever. Amen

.....

Resolution

*We would pray regularly in the evenings at our homes.
We would also sing this prayer comprehending its meaning fully.*

.....

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Psalm 3
Monday	Psalm 4	Psalm 13
Tuesday	Psalm 16	Psalm 19
Wednesday	Psalm 42	Psalm 63
Thursday	Psalm 69: 29-36	Psalm 91
Friday	Psalm 92	Psalm 101
Saturday	Psalm 116	*

Chapter 12

The prayer

‘O our Father, who art in Heaven....’ used in the prayers of the Canonical Hour of Terce (Third hour)

Theme: Comprehend the meaning of the prayer beginning “O Our Father, who art in Heaven...” used in the prayers of the Canonical Hour of Terce and recite this prayer regularly.

Verse to be memorized: “So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you: seek, and you will find, knock, and it will be opened to you” (Luke.11:9) NRSV.

Learning Aid: Book of Common Prayer (Give a copy of ‘Book of Common Prayer’ to each student in the class).

Introduction

Don’t you know that there are seven canonical hours and the system of seven canonical prayers in our Orthodox Liturgical tradition? Psalms 119 verse 164 says: “Seven times a day I praise You because of Your righteous judgements”. Prayers for the Canonical Hour of Terce are said at 9 O’ Clock in the morning as per the tradition of the Malankara Orthodox Church. In certain circumstances these prayers are said along with the Morning Prayer. Usually hymns and prayers of penitence are used in the liturgy of Terce except on Sundays. Today we are learning a prayer included in the prayers for Terce in our Book of Common Prayer. Everyone should learn and say this prayer properly.

Lesson

Let us learn the prayer and its meaning

O our Father, who art in Heaven, answer us those who beseech Thee.

This prayer begins by addressing God as ‘Father’. According to the Christian perspective we all are the children of God (Romans 8: 17). God has granted us the right to approach Him freely, as His children. What God expects is an intimate relationship with His children. The relationship between God and

human beings becomes deeper when we address God as 'Father'. The word 'heaven' implies a mysterious area of God's presence. When we say 'O our Father, who art in Heaven' we refer to God who exists beyond intellect and cognition, yet remains very affectionate towards us.

Nevertheless we lack another Father who could help us.

This speaks about our complete reliance on God. The help for the goodness and prosperity of human life comes from the Lord. We can't exist if the divine help is lost. The psalms repeatedly state "O Lord come to my aid soon."

Thou hast created us from nothingness out of Thy Will. Don't let Thy rage destroy us, Thy created beings.

God created us from nothingness out of his own will (Genesis 1:27, John 1:3). The Holy Bible teaches that human injustice, falsehood and waywardness shall invite God's wrath. However God's anger will be mitigated through His clemency and our penitence.

God's commandments are the expression of His Divine Will. These commandments teach us how to interact with God and fellow creatures. The Ten Commandments which God gave us through Moses are of supreme importance. Moreover the teachings of Jesus Christ through the Gospels are also God's commandments. We require God's grace to obey His commandments completely. If we want to understand the essence of God's commandments, the Spirit of the Lord should guide us (John 16:13).

We shalt become Thy minions by virtue of our good and virtuous deeds. O Lord have compassion and mercy upon us.

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). God wills us to attain perfection of virtues through our work. The gift that pleases God most are virtuous actions. God loves those who do virtuous actions. Those who love God shall always be virtuous in their life and actions.

O Lord Jesus Christ, come to our aid. Hearken to our supplication and have mercy on our souls.

The prayer concludes by pleading again for God's help and by requesting for mercy for the sake of our souls

Hymn

(In the tune of “My Lord Your mercy brought You”)

O Lord grant me in kindness
A heart free from taints of sin.
It has gone worse as I have
Drifted to the ways of sin

By my prayers O my Lord
Renew Thy sus-tainable and
Holy Spirit well in me....,
So that I from all sins free.

.....

Let Us Pray

*Recite this prayer in a beautiful manner in the class.
All should stand up, cross themselves and pray.*

.....

Resolution

*We would say the prayer of Terce beginning
“O our Father, who art in Heaven.....”
regularly every morning and meditate on it.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. Explain the significance of addressing God as ‘Father?’

.....
.....
.....

2. Try to connect the prayer ‘Nevertheless we lack another Father who could help us’ with our lives?

.....
.....

3. Identify the prayers for the seven canonical hours of the Orthodox Church?

.....
.....

4. "O Lord teach to observe Thy commandments." What are the commandments referred to here?

.....
.....

5. Therefore You shall be.....,just as your Father in heaven is..... (Matthew 5:48).

(Read the Holy Bible and find out the missing words from the relevant passage).

Activities

1. Find out the biblical passages which state that we are all God's children and prepare a list of those passages.
2. Say the prayer "O our Father, who art in Heaven" included in the prayers for Terce in our Book of Common Prayer, regularly along with your morning prayers.
3. Learn this prayer by heart.
4. Share with your friends the significance of this prayer.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Luke 11:9
Monday	Romans 8: 17	Genesis 1:27
Tuesday	John 1:3	John 16:13
Wednesday	Mathew 5:48	Mark 10:1-16
Thursday	Mathew 11:11-19	Genesis 21:1-21
Friday	Exodus 2:1-10	Psalms 127
Saturday	Isaiah 62:1-12	*

Chapter 13

To learn to recite and understand the meaning of the prayer beginning

“O Lord, who sittest in the secret place of the Most High...” used in the Prayers for Compline

Theme: Learn the meaning of the prayer “O Lord, who sittest in the secret place of the Most High....” Say this prayer consciously along with the prayers for Compline everyday.

Verse to be memorized: “I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings” (Psalms 61:4) NRSV.

Learning Aids: Book of common prayer and Qurbanakramam

Introduction

‘Lord Thy mercy on us cast’ and the prayer of Mar Severios beginning “O Lord who sittest in the secret place of the Most High....” are recited during..... It is a derivative prayer of Psalm 91 composed in the background of the faith of the Church. This prayer is said after reciting Psalm 91 in the prayers for Compline. Let us learn the meaning of this prayer.

Lesson

(The teacher makes the students read each line of this prayer by turn. All others recite the line in chorus. The teacher then explains its meaning.)

“O Lord, who sittest in the secret place of the Most High, shelter us beneath the shadow of the wings of Thy mercy, and have compassion upon us.”

The word ‘Most High’ has traditionally been used to address God. What the words “O Lord, who sittest in the secret place of the Most High” refer to is God whose abode is in a secret place beyond human comprehension. We here pray that we should be sheltered by the wings of God’s mercy just like the chicks are protected by the wings of the mother bird.

Thou, who hearest all things, in Thy loving kindness, hearken to the supplication of Thy servants.

God doesn’t turn a deaf ear to even a whisper of prayer rising from human

hearts. God would listen to even our silent prayers of the soul. God is one who sees and listens to everything.

Grant us, O Messiah; our Saviour; a peaceful evening and a sinless night, for, Thou art a glorious king.

A peaceful evening and sinless, holy night are essential for our physical and mental health. A peaceful night ensures an energetic day. Both are God's gifts. Hence we pray to God to grant them. God is addressed as "Glorious King" who always cares for the well being of His subjects.

Unto Thee our eyes are lifted up. Forgive our debts and our sins; have mercy upon us, both in this world and in that to come.

The line 'Unto Thee our eyes are lifted up' means that we continue to rely on God always for all our needs. Created beings should always look up to God, the creator. We need to live and work always looking up to God. Hence we pray that all our debts and our sins be forgiven and mercy be shown to us both in this world and the world to come.

May Thy loving kindness shelter us O Lord, and Thy grace be upon our faces. May Thy cross protect us from the evil one and his hosts.

God's mercy and grace are the bases of human existence. We here pray that we shall be covered up by the mercy of the Lord and our faces shall be illuminated by the God's grace. The Holy Cross is sign of salvation. The sign of Holy Cross will protect us from all evil forces. We cannot exist without God's grace.

Let Thy right hand overshadow us all the days of our lives.

Psalms 63: 8 says "My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me", The epithet 'God's right hand' indicates God's wonderful work and His protection. " Let God's right hand be upon us throughout our lives."

Let Thy peace reign among us and Thou give hope and salvation to the souls that pray to Thee.

Here we pray for divine peace. God's peace is eternal. It is "not as the world gives" (John 14: 27). God gives hope and salvation to the souls that appeal to Him.

By the prayers of St. Mary, Thy mother and of all Thy saints, O God, forgive us our debts and have mercy upon us.

The prayer ends with a plea for the intercession of St. Mary and all the saints. Also we pray to the Lord to forgive us our debts and have mercy upon us.

Debt means that we owe many things to God.

Hymn

(This hymn is given in the Compline of Sreeba Prayer.
This is the versified rendering of the prayer 'O Lord who sittest...')

**O Lord who sits in the Sanctuary of - Most High...
Shelter us under Thy mercy
Who mercifully - hearkens in loving kindness**

.....

Let Us Pray

*O Lord Jesus Christ, the Most High, who condescended and incarnated
for our sake and suffered tribulations and crucifixion for our salvation,
accept our prayers and grant us our supplications. Enlighten the eyes of our soul
with the light of Your glories. Strengthen us all to observe
Your life - giving commandments. Enable us to praise and glorify You,
Your Father and the Holy Spirit now and ever. Amen*

.....

Resolution

*We will say the prayer 'O Lord, who sittest in the secret place.....'
regularly with our evening prayer and meditate on it.*

.....

Pause and Reflect

1. Which Psalm is the prayer 'O Lord, who sittest in the secret place of the Most High...' related to?
.....
2. Who composed this prayer?
.....
3. Find out and write the biblical passages in which the concepts used in this prayer can be identified.
.....
4. My follows close behind You; Your
upholds me (Psalm 63:8). Find out the missing words from the Holy Bible.

Let Us Think

1. Our God exists in a secret place which is beyond human comprehension.
2. God gives us all we need in life and guides us without us being conscious about it.
3. We require the mercy of omnipotent God in this world and in the world to come.
4. Jesus Christ protects us always in the shadow of the wings of His mercy.
5. The Holy Cross is the great weapon against the enemy and the sign of salvation.

Activities

1. Say the prayer “O Lord, who sittest in the secret place of the Most High...” regularly with your evening prayers.
2. Explain the meaning of each line of this prayer in the class.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Psalm 91
Monday	Psalm 63	Psalm 6
Tuesday	Psalm 32	Psalm 32:1-20
Wednesday	Psalm 37:21-40	Psalm 51
Thursday	Psalm 102:1-14	Psalm 102:14-28
Friday	Psalm 140	Psalm 125
Saturday	Psalm 103	*

Unit 3

Hymns of Eucharistic Devotion

Chapter 14

Intercessory Hymns to Mother Mary (‘Kukiliyon’ of Mother of God)

Theme: Learn intercessory hymns to St. Mary in detail. Learn their meanings and recite them with proper understanding.

Verse to be memorized: “Kings’ daughters are among Your honorable women; at Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Listen O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also and your father’s house. So the king will greatly desire your beauty” (Psalm 45:9-10) NRSV.

Learning Aids: Liturgical Book of the Holy Eucharist.

Introduction

Do you remember what we have learned about ‘Kukiliyon’ in Class VI? It is a cycle of prayers. The cycle of prayers beginning with “See the royal daughter stand...” commemorates Mother of God. You know that commemorating St. Mary and other saints are an integral part of Orthodox worship.

Components of a ‘Kukiliyon’

A ‘Kukiliyon’ begins with the recital of a passage from the Psalms. This is followed by a hymn, ‘Ekbo’ and ‘Promeyon’ and ‘Sedras’. After this, a cycle of hymns called ‘Kolos’ are sung. There will be praise of the Holy Trinity between two Kolos (beginning Shubaho....). A supplication in verse called ‘Bovooso’ succeeds the kolos. A Kukiliyon concludes with this supplication. When ‘Kukiliyons’ are recited in the Holy Eucharist, the first to be recited is the one devoted to Mother of God.

Lesson

St. Mary is revered above all saints and angels in the tradition of the Church. That is why the intercessory hymns to Mother of God are recited first when we recite ‘Kukiliyons.’ We recite the ‘Kukiliyon’ of Mother of God in the middle of the

Holy Eucharist and at the end of all sacraments as well as in the prayers of all canonical hours.

Passage from the Psalms

**See the royal daughter stand- Halleluiah-Halleluiah
Glorious Queen at - Thy right hand.
Thy Father's folk and home leave Thou. Halleluiah... Halleluiah.
The King desires thy beauty now. Barekumor**

This passage from the Psalms is the first part of the Kukiliyon to the Mother of God. This hymn is taken from Psalm 45:9-11 (Refer to the verse to be memorized).

Let us discuss the meaning of this hymn. "The royal daughter stood before the king with praise and respect. The queen was standing at your right. Your beauty will now attract the king. So you might forget your paternal home and your people." Psalm 45 is a Psalm in praise of the royalty. The person referred to in this hymn is the queen who is raised from her low status and is entitled to stand to the right of the king. This passage from the Psalm is an ideal description of Mother of God.

The passage from the Psalm end with a praise of the Holy Trinity. The priest would say 'Shubaho.... meaning "Praise to Father, Son and the Holy Spirit". The laity respond by saying "Men Olam Vaada Mol Olam Olmeen, Amen" meaning "From the beginnings and for ever and ever." Our tradition teaches us to make the sign of the Cross when the praise of the Holy Trinity is recited.

Ekbo

The second part of the Kukiliyon is the hymn called 'Ekbo' (meaning 'step' or 'stair')

**Thou whose praise the Church doth sing
Intercession for us bring
Unto Him, Thine only Son
That He may not mercy shun.**

This is a prayer of the intercession of St. Mary. She is the object of praise of the devotees. She has begotten the only Son of God. We entreat to St. Mary that she should plead on our behalf so that her Only Son would show mercy towards us.

At the end of this hymn 'Sthaumen Kalos Kuriyelaison' is said. It means "We should stand upright." This exhortation is given because the 'Promeyon' can be

read at this juncture, if necessary. In case the 'Promeyon' is not read on the occasion, 'Sthaumen kalos...' is recited in the same tune of the preceding hymn. The laity say 'Kuriyelaison' as the word of response. It means 'Lord, have mercy upon us.' Then they would stand upright.

Kolos (Prayer hymns)

The word 'Kolo' means 'sound'. This word is often used to refer to songs or hymns. Usually Kolos include a compilation of various stanzas of songs. In the 'Kolo' that follows two hymns connected by the praise of the Holy Trinity in between are given.

A 'Kukiliyon' contains several alternative 'Kolos.' Any are of them can be chosen for recital on a particular day. Such wide range of choices help us to avoid repetition and monotony. Moreover the alternative Kolos are of varying lengths and the length of the church service can be regulated by choosing a longer or a shorter 'Kolo' as required. The 'Kolos' end with the recital of 'Moriyo Rahem melain u Aadarain' which means 'Lord help us by having mercy upon us.'

1. Peace the bright archangel brought

**Hailing Mary fair,
Favoured is thy blessed lot
Thou the Lord shall bear.**

Barekmor

Shubaho.....

**Like a ship did Mary bear-
Laud and honour be-
Him, the captain and the Lord,
God of all the world. *Moriyo Rahem...***

The archangel Gabriel appeared before St. Mary and gave her greeting of peace. "My Lord is with you. He will arise from you." The incident referred to here is the Holy Annunciation of archangel Gabriel to St. Mary described in Luke 1:28-32.

The second part of the 'Kolo' succeeding the Praise of the Holy Trinity.

Here St. Mary who carried Lord Jesus Christ in her womb is compared to a large and spacious ship. Jesus Christ is the Lord of all the world. Since St. Mary lauded and honoured Him, she became a large and spacious ship captained by Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Mary's memory

Blessing for us be

**May her pray'rs for us
Be a fortress thus.
Barekmor
Shubaho.....**

**Fragrance sweet of smell
Through the air doth swell-
For Virgin Mary
God's Mother holy.**

Let the commemoration of St. Mary be a blessing for us. Let her prayers be a fortress for our souls. (Let it be a refuge for us).

Sweet smelling incense will rise up continuously in the air for St. Mary, Mother of God.

- 3. O Virgin Mary - acclaimed by all as the
God's holy Mother who - removed the curse on earth
Pray to Lord Jesus - that peace and welfare
In the Holy church - Reign ever everywhere**

Barekmor

O virgin Mother, who attained the recognition as Mother of God and who removed the curse of this world, pray to your Only Son (Jesus Christ) so that peace and prosperity will grow in the Church and everywhere. O Lord Jesus Christ who condescended from the court of heavenly hosts like Cherubims and Seraphims and dwelt in the womb of Virgin Mary, we praise You. O Heroic Lord, who incarnated for saving the sons of Adam from Satan and death, we praise you.

The first stanza here is an intercessory prayer to Mother Mary and the second stanza is a hymn to Lord Jesus Christ.

Bovootho

The word 'bovootho' means 'supplication'. This is the concluding hymn of a 'Kukiliyon.' This hymn is also known as the 'concluding hymn of the kukiliyon' or Hoothomo. In the 'Kukiliyon' of St Mary, normally two 'bovoothos' are used alternatively. They are 'By thy Cross, O Jesus Lord' and 'Cease not, thou of grace of fount.' Let us learn them in detail.

**By Thy Cross, O Jesus Lord
By Thy Mother's - praying word
Take from us and from our path
Punishment and rods of wrath.**

This is a supplication addressed to Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that the punishments and rods of anger due to us be removed by virtue of Christ's Cross and St. Mary's intercession.

**Cease not, thou of grace of fount
From thy pray'rs on our account
Unto Him Thine Only son
That He may not mercy shun.**

O Sainly Mother (St. Mary), kindly continue your prayers for our sake. Don't stop them. Pray to your Only Son so that He will show mercy to us.

Note that all these hymns request only the intercession of St. Mary. We always ask St. Mary to pray on our behalf to the Only Son Lord Jesus Christ. We never accord equal status to Jesus Christ and St. Mary. The Church hasn't given the status of Christ to St. Mary or any other saint.

Let Us Pray

(This is from the add-on prayer used along with the Vespers of Wednesday)

O Virgin Mary, Mother of God, we are incapable of describing your glories.

O Virgin mother of the Lord of all the world, your biography is indescribable.

Let your intercession be an aid for us ever. Barekmor

.....

Resolution

We would believe and proclaim that St. Mary is the Mother of God.

We would always pay homage to St. Mary, Mother of God and seek refuge in her intercession.

.....

Let Us Think

St. Mary had the good fortune to become the Virgin Mother of God. The Church accords the greatest status after God to St. Mary. That is why the 'Kukiliyon' of St. Mary is the first Kukiliyon. The intercession of St. Mary is always commendable.

(A) Match the following

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Hail | Bless us, O Lord |
| 2. Archangel | Jesus Christ |
| 3. Ship | Peace |
| 4. Lord of the world | Gabriel |
| 5. Barekmor | St. Mary |

(B) Write the meaning of the following statements in Syriac.

1. Shubaho Labo Labro Val Rooho Kadeesho
.....
2. MenOlam Vadamol Olam Olmeen. Amen.
.....
3. Moriyo Rahem elain U Aadarain
.....

Activities

1. Find out other hymns used in the Kukiliyon commemorating St. Mary.
2. Write a different translation of the same theme of “See the royal daughter stand, Glorious Queen at - Thy right hand” (Hint: It is used in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony).
3. Find out the epithets used in these hymns to refer to St. Mary.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Matthew 1:18-25
Monday	Matthew 2:1-14	Mathew 2:15-23
Tuesday	Luke 1:26-38	Luke1:38-45
Wednesday	Luke 1:46-56	Luke 2:1-7
Thursday	Luke 2:8-19	Luke 2:20-35
Friday	Luke 2:36-40	Luke 2:41-52
Saturday	John 2:1-11	*

Chapter 15

Intercessory Hymns to Saints (‘Kukiliyon’ of Saints)

Theme: Understand the meaning of the intercessory hymns to saints. Learn and recite them and seek refuge in the intercession of saints.

Verse to be memorized: “The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” (Psalm 92:12-14) NRSV

Learning Aid: Liturgical Book of the Holy Eucharist.

Introduction

We have learned the ‘Kukiliyon’ of Mother of God in the previous lesson. The Kukiliyon of saints also have the same structure. Today we are learning the Kukiliyon of saints. Don’t you remember the components of a Kukiliyon? It contains Psalm, Ekbo, kolos and Bovootho. What should we do when we recite the Kukiliyon of saints? We seek refuge in their intercession and dedicate ourselves to live in love of God imitating their lives.

Lesson

Passage from Psalms

**The righteous shall prosper like palm trees, Halleluiah.
And thrive like the cedars of Lebanon.
In age they shall thrive and be flourishing, Halleluiah
Yea growing both fattened and pleasing. Barekmor**

Verses 12 to 14 of Psalms 92 are versified in this hymn. (Righteous people shall sprout profusely like date palms. They will grow in girth like the cedar trees of Lebanon. They will grow abundantly even in old age. They will fatten and flourish and will thus prosper.) This is the gist of the above hymn. Date palm is a xerophytic plant which grows well in the hot deserts. The image of a date palm is best suited to describe a righteous person who grows in God’s grace undaunted by the adversities in this world. Sainly people are like that. They will defend their faith undaunted by whatever adversities they face. They will even sacrifice their lives for this end. Through this ‘Kukiliyon’ we commemorate such saints who have undertaken sacrifices for the sake of the Church. We begin the ‘Kukiliyon’ of the saints with the passage from the psalm which upholds this distinctive stature of the saints.

Ekbo

**(O St. Thomas), as in heav'n
Keep we here thy memory
Hear us as we honour thee
Thy entreaties be our aid.**

The hymn says -

O, St. Thomas, the memories about you are alive here on earth and high in heaven alike. Let your prayers be a help to all those who honour your memory.

Instead of the name of St. Thomas (given in brackets) we can add the name of a particular saint commemorated on that day or the name of the patron saint of the particular parish.

This hymn begins by addressing the saint whose intercession we are seeking.

Kolos

**Behold the time of prayer, (O Mar Thoma)
Lead thou thy flock as always thou did'st lead it.
Stretch forth thy hand like Moses - grant thy blessings.
Behold, they hearken humbly to thy praises, Barekmor.**

Shubaho...

**Praise we the Father - who chose thee Mor Gregorios.
And praise the Son, who gave thee honoured mem'ry.
Praise we the Holy Spirit, who did'st crown thee
Let mercy be ours always by thy pleading. Moriyo.....**

O, St. Thomas this is the time of prayer. Remain as our leader in prayer as you had always done. We are your flock who listen to your beautiful song. Bless us as Moses had blessed his people (Deuteronomy 33). O, St. Thomas we praise God the Father who chose you and God the Son who made your memory great and God the Holy Spirit who crowned you. Let your prayer earn us blessings from God.

This is an intercessory prayer to St. Thomas. We here pray that St. Thomas should lead us in our prayer and bless us through his intercession. The second part of this hymn is the praise of the Holy Trinity. In this hymn also we can substitute the name of St. Thomas with the name of any other saint.

Other Kolos

Several 'Kolos' to be recited in the 'Kukiliyon of saints' are given in the liturgical book of the Holy Eucharist. Let us learn some of them.

**1. Bliss to the Prophets
And the Apostles
And to the martyrs
At resurrection. Barekmor
Shub'ho labo...**

**Those martyr's who longed
For seeing the Christ
By their death took wings
And fluttered to Heights.
Moriyo Rahemelain.....**

Meaning of this hymn

Let prophets, apostles and martyrs who died for the sake of Christ attain bliss at the Christ's second coming (on the day of resurrection). The martyrs had a longing to see Christ. So when they were killed they flew up to heaven. Martyrdom gave them wings to fly up to high heavens.

“Developing wings through martyrdom” is a figurative expression. The swords and weapons of murderers didn't frighten the martyrs. Instead they looked upon them as wings which would help them to fly up to heavens.

**2. O saintly Prophets, Heaven's princes Apostles,
Pray for this world, and its prosperity
Let all wars and the - quarrels dissolve so that the
Church and children, praise Jesus ever
Barekmor
Shubaho.....**

**O taintless Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs... your
Crowns in heaven - devotees on earth.
Christ who respects your - commemoration for your
Strengthening of His - Church is ever praised
Moriyo.....**

Meaning of this hymn

O saintly prophets and apostles who are the sons of the kingdom of heaven, pray for the prosperity of this world. Let all wars dissolve. Let all quarrels turn to peace. Let the Church and its children praise Lord Jesus Christ.

Prophets, Apostles and martyrs are blessed by God. Their crowns are kept in heaven. Their devotees are people who live on this earth and praise them from earth. Lord Jesus Christ honours your memory because you

have strengthened Christ's Church in this world. That Lord Jesus is praised and worshipped everywhere on this earth.

Apart from the 'Kolos' we studied, some other 'Kolos' are also given in the liturgical book of the Holy Eucharist. Let us try to understand their meaning also.

Bovootho

The prayer called 'Bovootho' is the concluding hymn of a Kukiliyon. Usually a hymn containing four lines is used as the 'bovootho.' First of all let us learn a commonly used 'bovootho.'

**Plead for us, ye holy Saints
Pray to Him whose will ye did
That from anger we be spared.
That from scourges we be hid.**

O saints, our sins have angered Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's anger and punishments are about to fall upon us. O saints, pray for our sake so that the anger and punishments are removed.

The anger and scourges mentioned in this hymn refer to the anger and punishments that Lord Jesus Christ has kept in store for us. The saints are requested to pray on our behalf to Lord Jesus Christ so that the Lord's anger towards us will melt away.

Another Bovootho

This Bovootho is used on the special occasion of the commemoration of a particular saint. Let us learn this hymn.

**St. Thomas.... O... Treasure of virtues
Let Lord's peace and tranquility
Reign ever in the church that keeps
Your sacred me-mo-ry...**

O, St. Thomas! You are the store house of divine qualities. Let the peace and tranquility of Lord Jesus flourish in the Church which honours your memory.

The missionary work of St. Thomas resulted in the founding of the church in India. Here the name of St. Thomas can be substituted with the name of the saint who we commemorate on that day.

Let Us Sing

Substitute 'St. Thomas' in the 'Kolos' with 'Mar Gregorios' and 'Mar Dionysius' and recite the hymns.

Let us Pray

*O Saints, your memory is honoured in heaven and earth.
Let those who honour your memory attain God's help by virtue of your prayers.
Plead for our sake so that we too, like you, become God's beloved ones.
Enable us to imitate your virtuous life. Let your intercession guard us ever.*

.....

Resolution

We would recite the 'Kukiliyon of saints' with faith and devotion. We would imitate the virtues of saints in our lives. We would seek the intercession of saints for ever. We would never condemn or reject saints and martyrs.

.....

Let Us Think

1. Intercession of the saints is a dogma of the Church.
2. The faith, prayers, and blood of saints and martyrs have nourished the growth of the Church.
3. As the faithful, we have the duty to follow the righteous footsteps of our saints.
4. The Orthodox Church has NOT equated any saint with God.
5. We request the saints only to plead to God for our sake.
6. Those who are devotees of saints and their intercession will receive the same divine reward due to those saints.

Activities

1. Find out the other Kolos used in the Kukiliyon of saints and comprehend their meaning.
2. Substitute the names of various saints in place of 'St. Thomas' in the Ekbo and Kolos we learned above, and recite them.
3. Write the hymns of 'Kukiliyon of saints' and their meanings in your diary.
4. Learn the tune and pitch of reciting the 'Kukiliyon of saints.'

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Mark 2: 1-12
Monday	Acts 3:1-10	Acts 3: 11-20
Tuesday	Acts 4:1-12	Acts 4: 12-31
Wednesday	Acts 5: 12-21	Acts 7
Thursday	Genesis 12:1-20	Matthew 8: 5-14
Friday	Matthew 9: 1-20	Luke 8: 49-56
Saturday	Luke 16: 19-31	*

Unit 4

My Church

Chapter 16

Marthoman Heritage: The Oral Tradition

Theme: Learn about the literary forms which are the strong evidences of our Marthoman heritage.

Verse to be memorized: And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28) NRSV.

Introduction

Today ‘Maargam Kali’ is an important choral dance competition held in the School Arts festival. This Christian art form is an evidence of the Marthoman heritage of our Church. In this lesson let us learn about such art forms and the songs of the oral tradition.

Reading Passage

The arrival of Apostle St. Thomas in India and his evangelical activities had been in currency in Malankara Church since ancient times through various oral traditions. These oral traditions include Ramban song (Thoma Parvam), Maargam Kali song and Veeradiyan song (Paanan’s song).

Maargam Kali

“Maargam Kali” is an art form which reveals the heritage of St. Thomas Christians. This is a choral dance performance in which the dancers move around a wick floor lamp (‘Nilavilakku’) with synchronised stamping of feet and clapping of hands. Maargam Kali was performed in Christian homes on the occasion of weddings and other important events. The lyrics used for this performance throw light on the ancient history of the Malankara Church. This song consists of 14 lyrics having 360 lines altogether. In this song, St. Thomas requests Lord Jesus Christ not to send him to Malankara and describes the hardships of the journey to Malankara. The song also mentions that the king ‘Cheran Perumal’ delegated a descendant of the architects who built King Solomon’s palace for the construction of his own palace. Maargam Kali songs also talk about the seven churches founded by St. Thomas.

‘Ramban song’ (“Thoma Parvam”)

This is an age old song composed by a priest named ‘Thoma’ of Malikayil (Maliyekkal) of Niranam. This hymn contains 448 lines. The modernised version of this hymn was composed in 1601. Another priest of the 48th generation of this family, Thoma Ramban, re-rendered this song in its modern form. This hymn gives a description of the arrival of St. Thomas to India, his evangelical activities, an account of those who accepted Christianity, healing of the sick, the establishment of churches, appointment of priests and the martyrdom of St. Thomas.

Veeradiyan Song (Paanan’s Song)

These are songs sung in Christian homes by people belonging to the “Paanan” caste. These songs were composed on the basis of Christian history. Important among them are songs based on the evangelical activity of St. Thomas, the arrival of Thomas of Cana and the gifts received from Cheraman Perumal.

Let us pray

(This prayer is taken from the Vespers of ‘Fast in the name of Apostles.’ See the liturgical book of daily prayer.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, your disciples, though illiterate were transformed as they came into contact with You, and were filled with heavenly wisdom. Similarly, help us to become Your children, through disciplined life and service to others. Amen.

.....

Resolution

We would preserve our Apostolic tradition handed down through generations.

.....

Let Us Think

1. Which are the important oral traditions that throw light on the “Marthoman” heritage of the Malankara Church?

.....

2. How does Ramban song reveal the heritage of St. Thomas?

.....

3. Describe the features of 'Maargam Kali'.

.....

4. What is meant by 'Veeradiyan song'?

.....

5. Compare the important oral traditions of St. Thomas Christianity.

.....

Activities

1. Observe a 'Maargam Kali' performance and understand its features.
2. Sing 'Maargam Kali' song in tune.
3. Find out other oral records which show Marthoman heritage.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Luke 12:13-21
Monday	Luke 12: 48-59	Exodus 12:43-51
Tuesday	Job 23:1-7	Isaiah 51:1-15
Wednesday	1 Peter 2	1 Corinthians 6
Thursday	John 5:21-26	Daniel 1:8-21
Friday	Isaiah 43:1-7	Acts 1:1-14
Saturday	Matthew 20:1-16	*

Chapter 17

Stories Connected with St. Thomas

Theme: Understand more about the evangelical activities of St. Thomas through the stories connected with his life.

Learning Aids: 1. Indian Church History Books.
2. Encyclopaedia of Malankara Church.

Introduction

We have already learned about the evidences of and the literary forms connected with the evangelical activities of Apostle St. Thomas. Several stories and legends connected with St. Thomas had been in currency since ancient times. Let us learn some of these stories in this lesson. There are several legends handed down through generations by St. Thomas Christians. Let us see some important stories related to the two extant traditions based on the arrival of St. Thomas in India.

Construction of the Palace

This story is described in the apocryphal book: “The Activities of St. Thomas” (Acta Thoma) which has become the basis of the North Indian tradition. The Indian ruler Gondaphores had been searching for an architect to build his palace. At that time a trader named Habaan came to the palace along with Apostle St. Thomas. The king entrusted the money for building the palace with them and went to a far away place. When the king returned he found that the people whom he had entrusted the money with hadn’t constructed the palace. Instead they had given the funds to poor people and had spent the money on evangelical activities. The king put both of them in prison and ordered them to be flayed alive the next day. However the king’s brother Gad died that day itself. But when the funeral of Gad was going on, his soul miraculously came back to the corpse and he became alive. Gad told his brother about the palace that St. Thomas had built for the king in heaven. Hearing this the king repented. St. Thomas and Habaan were released from prison immediately. The king was converted to Christianity.

A Young Man and the Snake

Once during his travels St. Thomas came across the corpse of a young man. The apostle became very sad and started praying for that young man. After some

time a snake came out from a hole. The apostle entered into an argument with the snake for a long time. At last the snake took its poison back from the Youngman's body. Thus the apostle saved that young man.

Water in the Air

St. Thomas saw some people worshipping sun-god at Palayur one morning. They were standing in a river and were throwing water upwards for worshipping the sun-god. St. Thomas told them that his God was capable of retaining the water thus thrown up in the mid-air. Then the apostle stepped down into the river and threw up handful of water into the air. The water droplets glistened like beads in the atmosphere. The people who had been worshipping the sun-god were wonder struck and they ran away from the place.

Festival at the Temple

Once St. Thomas was travelling through Paravur. He came across a procession which was part of the local temple festival. Suddenly a lightening occurred and several elephants and people fell down dead. Immediately St. Thomas sprinkled water on them in the name of the Holy Spirit and they resurrected.

Hymn

(This is a traditional legend connected with St. Thomas)

(Indiyil ninnengane Jerusalem)

Apostle - St Thomas told me - how he reached
Jerusalem - haste post haste from Indian soil
While he - was praying-the Holy Spirit
told him "Go; the funeral of your Lord's Mother is going on."
Whirled in a cloud and to-ok...me
I saw the body of - the Virgin taken up in air by heaven's hosts.
Quoth I,O my Mother - tarry a bit
Let me - take blessings from Thy Immaculate body.
The chores of Cheru-bim stood trembling
I went - bowed to her and took blessings in Rejoice

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is taken from the Vespers of Post-Easter Sunday.
See the book of daily prayer.)

O St. Thomas, you are fortunate enough to have touched the stigmata of Lord Jesus Christ. You have received the great treasure of heavenly virtues from the Lord's wound on the chest created by audacious people with spear. You have taught the Holy Church true faith. O Jesus Christ, bless us to remain steadfast in faith. Amen.

.....

Resolution

*We would follow the path of St. Thomas
and would bear good witness of Jesus Christ in life.*

Let Us Think

1. How did Gad, the brother of king Gondaphoros save St. Thomas from death?
.....
2. How did St. Thomas spread Christianity in Palayur?
.....
3. What miracle in the name of the Holy Spirit happened in Paravur?
.....
4. What did you understand from the stories connected with St. Thomas?
.....

Activities

1. Perform one of the above stories in the form of a skit in the class.
2. Find out more stories connected with St. Thomas.
3. Find out the incidents connected with St. Thomas from the Holy Bible.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Genesis 19:15-21
Monday	Job 1:12-22	Isaiah 38: 1-8
Tuesday	Acts 27:9-26	Hebrews 10:33-11:7
Wednesday	Genesis 24:15-24	Ecclesiastes
Thursday	Isaiah 56:1-10	Acts 28
Friday	Romans 16:1-16	Romans 3:19-26
Saturday	Acts 12: 1-17	*

Unit 5

The Holy Eucharist - A study

Chapter 18

The Promeyon and Sedras used in the Holy Eucharist

Theme: Comprehend the importance of the Promeyons and Sedras used in the Holy Eucharist and other liturgical services. To enable children to participate devoutly and meaning fully in the Holy Eucharist.

Verse to be memorized: “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Psalms 119:18).

Learning Aids: The liturgical book of Holy Eucharist for the laity, the liturgical book of Holy Eucharist for the priests, various Promeyons and Sedras used in the Holy Eucharist.

Introduction

Don't you participate regularly in the Holy Eucharist? It contains a lot of devout and touching prayers and songs. Which prayers of the Holy Eucharist have attracted you most? Haven't you heard the deacon announcing 'Sthaumen Kalos...' before the recital of certain important prayers? It means that we should stand well and listen to the prayers diligently. Promeyon and Sedra prayers are such prayers. We shall learn about Promeyons and Sedras in this lesson.

Lesson

Promeyon and Sedras are an important part of our church services. They are attached to the prayers of canonical hours, the Holy Sacraments and the Queen of Sacraments namely, the Holy Eucharist. The devotees are to listen to them with devotion and meditate on them. What does the deacon announce before the recital of the Promeyon?

'Sthaumen Kalos'

What prayer does the devotees say at that time?

'Kuriyelaison'

Both these words are of Greek origin.

'Sthaumen' means 'we stand' or 'we should stand.' 'Kalos' means 'well' or 'in a good manner.'

The deacon announces 'Sthaumen Kalos' in order to invite the attention of the devotees. Haven't you heard the commander shouting 'Attention' during an NCC parade? Similarly this is an exhortation to 'stand upright.' The laity respond to this exhortation by a brief and beautiful prayer, 'Kuriyelaison.' It means 'Lord! Have mercy upon us.' We seek God's mercy to stand well prepared and participate in the prayer.

The first part of the Holy Eucharist is the Liturgy of the Word or Liturgy of the Catechumens. 'Promeyon' and 'Sedra' are read at the end of this prefatory part of the Holy Eucharist. The laity who have completed their canonical prayers and who participate in the Holy Eucharist well prepared listen to the prayers called 'Promeyon' and 'Sedra' after listening to the readings from the Holy Bible. The following are the reasons for it.

1. This is an hour for meditation. After listening to the readings from the Holy Bible, the laity stand meditatively for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.
2. This is an hour for dedicating oneself. Normally we don't have the ability and eligibility to receive the flesh and blood of Lord Jesus Christ. We are living in a sinful world. Hence this is an occasion for us to dedicate ourselves before the Lord.
3. This is an hour of reconciliation and remission of sins. We should repent for our own sins. We should also forget and forgive the sins of others and get reconciled to them.

1. Promeyon

The word 'Promeyon' means 'preface'. You might have listened to an exhortation from the priest before the beginning of the 'Promeyon'. What is it? "We all should pray and seek blessings and mercy from lord Jesus Christ." What reply do we give for this exhortation? "O Lord Jesus who blesses us! Help us by having mercy upon us." Here we pray for God's mercy and help. Now let us understand the contents of the Promeyon in general.

Usually 'Promeyons' are composed according to the occasion on which they are recited. The significance of a particular day and a particular service are presented through them. We are to praise and worship God at all hours everyday. Hence we pray "We submit all praise, honour and worship to You on all days of feast; at all hours, times and throughout our lives." We should prepare our body and mind and stand in a disciplined manner for worship.

The deacon reminds us the four features of the place where we stand during the hour of worship.

1. Before Lord Jesus Christ who blesses.
2. Before the Holy Altar which gives remission of sins.
3. Before the sacred and heavenly mysteries.
4. In presence of adorable priesthood.

2. Hoosoyo

The word 'Hoosoyo' means 'Prayer for remission of sins.'

This prayer is recited between Promeyon and Sedra. However it is not recited during the prayers of Canonical Hours. It is to be read in the Holy Eucharist. This is because the Holy Eucharist is a sacrament which gives remission of sins. The priest who officiates the Holy Eucharist prays that his own and the congregation's sins be absolved. He also prays for the departed. The prayer entreats: "Kindly give relief to the souls, bodies and spirits of the departed."

Prayers are also said for removing severe punishments and granting an ideal 'end.' The 'end' here refers not only to death and funeral but also to the claim for the Kingdom of Heaven at Christ's Second Coming. This prayer has to be recited with humility and devotion.

3. Sedra

Mar Yuhanon I (+649), the Patriarch of Antioch is believed to be the first composer of the prayer called 'Sedra.' The word 'Sedra' means 'order', 'series' or 'row.' It refers to a series of prayers.

The prefatory prayer introduced through the 'Promeyon' is further elaborated through the 'Sedra.' Here the salvific mission of God through Jesus Christ is briefly described. The important incidents of the Old Testament and the New Testament are commemorated. Then the holiness and mercy of God are glorified and the supplications of the devotees are submitted.

The supplications are for both material and spiritual well being. Prayers for the upkeep, peace and welfare of the entire world are said. God's mercy to fill up the entire universe for the cessation of wars, to remove famine and drought, for God's will to prevail and succour and consolation for the departed are asked for. This prayer ends with the submission of praise and worship to the Holy Trinity. The heavenly angels praise God with fear and devotion. We humans too join them in praising God.

In the concluding part of the Promeyon - Sedra prayers the priest blesses the laity who are listening to the prayers, saying "May we acquire remission of debts and absolution of sins from God in this and the other world."

Hymn

(Ente kadangal ashesham...)

Clear, O Lord, my ev'ry debt

By Thy mercy's sponge, I pray

All the sins I did to Thee

By Thy kindness me absolve

Christ, life-giving king who art

Since I served Thy sacraments

Make me equal with the just
And the righteous whom Thee Love.
May I serve Thee ever, Lord.
Grace to You upon that day;
Mercy from the righteous Judge
Be to sinful, humble me
Mercy show, Lord, mercy show
Show me mercy who am dull-
For this priest and deacon too
Who've raised this Qurban to Thee.

.....
Let us pray

*O merciful Lord, accept our offices and gifts in Your mercy.
Enable us to praise You everyday and to do Your will. Efface from us,
evil thoughts. Give us the strength always to do your will.
We shall praise You, Father and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.*

.....
Resolution

*We would stand well and upright at the time of
Promeyon - Sedra prayers during the Holy Eucharist
and on other occasions and meditate upon them.*

.....
Let Us Think

1. What do the words 'Promeyon' and 'Sedra' mean?
.....
2. What does the deacon announce just before the recital of the 'Promeyon'? What does that statement mean?
.....
3. Why is it said that we should stand well at the time of Promeyon- Sedra prayers?
.....
Now let us learn more about the prayers included in the Promeyon- Sedra. it contains three prayers.
4. What is the content of the 'Promeyon', generally?
.....
5. What is the significance of the place where we stand at the time of church services?
.....

6. What is the meaning of 'Hoosoyo'?
.....
7. What does the word "Sthaumen Kalos" mean?
.....
8. During the time of worship the deacon announces the four features of the place where we stand and pray. Which are they?
.....
9. What is the significance of Promeyon - Sedra prayers in Orthodox worship?
.....
10. What is the meaning of the word 'Hoosoyo'?
.....
11. What is the relevance of reciting Hoosoyo prayer in between the 'Promeyon-Sedra' prayers?
.....
12. Why should we stand well during the recital of Promeyon- Sedra Prayers? List the reasons.
.....
13. What does the priest say at the concluding part of the Promeyon - Sedra prayers?
.....

Activities

1. Participate devoutly in the Holy Eucharist regularly.
2. Stand well prepared while participating in the Holy Eucharist. Listen carefully and meditate upon the Promeyon - Sedra prayers are recited, and respond to these prayers by saying 'Amen.'
3. Read any one Promeyon - Sedra completely.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Luke 11:1-13
Monday	Romans 8: 26-29	Acts 2:42-47
Tuesday	Luke 9:28-36	Matthew 6:5-15
Wednesday	1 Timothy 2: 1-15	Luke 1: 46-56
Thursday	1Thessolonians 5:12-28	Acts 16: 16-34
Friday	1 Kings 8:22-34	Exodus 12:21-27
Saturday	Isaiah 38:1-8	*

Chapter 19

Blessing of the Censor during the Holy Eucharist

Theme: Understand the meaning and significance of submitting incense burned in a censor during church services. Note the importance of blessing of the censor during the Holy Eucharist.

Verse to be memorized: “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:15) NRSV.

Learning Aids: The liturgical book the Holy Eucharist, Censor, charcoal for burning the incense, and frankincense.

Introduction

Don't you remember having learned about the censor in the lower class? Can you say what various parts of the censor stand for? Offering incense has great importance in Orthodox worship. Do you know the occasions in which incense is offered in our church services? Let us learn about the meaning and significance of prayer with incense in detail.

Lesson

The use of symbols is an important feature of the worship in Orthodox Church. When the salvific history of kind gets presented in the Holy Eucharist, the devotees often comprehend this reality through their sense organs. The relevance of submitting incense should be understood on the basis of this. When the devotees submit frankincense during the service of bonfire on Christmas day or when they honour the Holy Cross while incenses are burned on Good Friday they remember Christ's sacrifice for the sake of human beings. Aromatic fragrance is as sweet to the nostrils as melodious song is for the ears. The practice of offering incense during worship was prevalent even among the Jews.

Offering Incense During Worship

Prayer with incense was prevalent in the Old Testament times. We first read about the 'incense altar' in the book of Exodus (30:9-10, 37:25-28). The description of the Incense Altar is given along with the description of Yahweh's tabernacle. The Incense Altar was made of acacia wood in the same way as the Ark of Covenant was made. Yahweh commanded Aaron to burn incense every morning and evening at the Incense Table. Yahweh also commanded that this practice be continued for

generations. The Incense Table and the Ark and the Tabernacle symbolized the Lord. The sweet smell indicated presence of the holy and consoling presence of the Lord. We read in Luke 1:8-23 how Zacharias who was chosen to burn incense in the Temple of Jerusalem according to the custom of priesthood, received a vision of the God. We commemorate this event in our Holy Eucharist through the following hymn. Let us sing it together.

Hymn

(Parishudhalayamathil)

O Jesus... - dear Lord who
Accepted - Zacharia's
Incense at - Your temple.
Consider us - Your servants;
Accept this - incense we
Submit to - You this day
Halleluiah Vu Halleluiah
Re-concile... with this folk.

We read about offering of incense in the Book of Numbers (Numbers 16:45-48). When people like Korah, Dathan, Abiram, rebelled against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, Yahweh was angry with them. 14,700 people died because of the Lord's anger and the people of Israel were sore afraid of God. Immediately Moses commanded Aaron to stand between the living and the dead. As a result the plague was stopped. From this incident we can understand that submission of incense is done for the atonement of sin.

Psalms 141:2 and Revelation 5:8 tell us that offering incense was as an accompaniment to prayer. Revelation 8:4 says that the smoke of incense along with the prayers of the saints, ascends before God from the angel's hand. In church worship, the priest burns incense in the censor immediately after the reading of the Promeyon, and the deacon swings the censor throughout the time of the Sedra. Why? Because the prayers submitted at that hour rise up to heaven like sweet smell of incense from the censor.

In the prefatory part of the Holy Eucharist the officiating priest goes round the altar carrying the censor in his hand. This is to give worship to Jesus Christ who incarnated for the salvation of the world. This also commemorates the coming of the wise men with gold, myrrh and frankincense to see Child Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12). The priest after honouring Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity offers incense to the congregation. By doing so he is announcing the gospel of salvation to the entire world. The congregation accepts this gospel by bowing down and making the sign of the Cross.

Parts of the Censor

Have you observed the different parts of the censor? Let us explain its various parts and what each part stands for. There is a base bowl for burning charcoal. The upper bowl is a lid over the bowl for charcoal. Both these bowls together stand for the whole universe, which is the creation of God. The lower bowl filled with charcoal indicates this sinful world. The upper bowl stands for heaven. The burning charcoal indicates mankind purified by fire, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The chains of the censor indicate the Holy Trinity. The first chain symbolizes God the Father and the fourth one symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The second and third chains are symbols of Jesus Christ who is human and God at the same time. There are 12 small bells altogether on the four chains. They indicate the twelve apostles. There are seventy two links in the four chains. They stand for the seventy two messengers sent by Lord Jesus Christ. In short, the censor represents the mission of salvation of Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessing of the Censor during the Holy Eucharist

In the previous lesson we learned about the significance of reading Promeyon and Sedra. We also learned that it is the occasion in which the devotees who had listened to the Scriptures repent for their sins and submit themselves before God for receiving the holy body and blood of Jesus Christ. The blessing of the censor that follows indicates the manner in which our sins are remitted. We earn remission of sins from Lord Jesus Christ who said that even if our sins are as red as the red sky, he would turn them as white as snow.

The blessing of the censor is also a worship of the Holy Trinity. We adore the Holy Trinity throughout the Holy Eucharist (eg: The Trisagion, the three benedictions given by the priest etc). The priest while blessing the censor holds the first chain and announces "Holy God the Father is Holy." Then he holds the second and third chains together and declares 'Holy God the Son is Holy.' Finally he holds the fourth chain and declares 'Holy Spirit is Holy.' Then the priest prays "The Lord purifies the incense submitted by His sinful servant by showing tender mercy upon our souls and the souls of our Fathers, Brothers and sisters, teachers, leaders and our departed... in both the worlds." Then he shows incense by swinging the censor towards the laity. This is followed by the laity who received the incense fumes declaring their faith in the Holy Trinity. The three proclamations made by the priest holding the chains of the censor at the time of blessing the censor, is a declaration of the fundamental faith of the church.

Eventhough the incense is burned indicates the presence of God and atonement for our sins, the blessing of the censor in the Holy Eucharist teaches us more. Jesus Christ who is the second Person of the Holy Trinity became the sacrifice for the salvation of kind. Thus He bestowed. He is mercy in both the worlds, to us who are sinners so that our sins are absolved. This is the meaning of the gospel. When we realize this truth we too should confess like Apostle Paul:

“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:15) NRSV.

Hymn

(Karthave prarthana kettarul)

Hear and answer our cries O Christ, Halleluiah
Let this burning incense please Your - Sacred - Name
And cause mercy for us in Your heart - on this day
Reconcile with us - O Lord
In your peerless - mercy... for us
Praise ever for Your mercy O merci-ful saviour
How great are Your gifts we see filled up... all around
You have withdrawn - on-wailings
Your wrath upon the - Nine-vehns
Like the incense burned by Aaron and Za-charias
And the prayers of Phinahas, who war-ded off death
Accept O merciful - Lord
The incense we servants - submit.

.....

Let Us Pray

O loving God! You accepted the sweet incense submitted to You by our fore fathers and blessed them. Similarly accept our prayers and incense too. After accepting our prayers and incense, reconcile with us, absolve our sins and grant us our supplications. Help us to submit ourselves as sweet incense before you. Amen.

.....

Resolution

We would make the sign of the cross and bow for blessings at the time of prayer with incense. We would try to learn the symbolic meaning of the elements of Orthodox worship.

.....

Let Us Think

1. What description of the Incense Altar is given in the Book of Exodus?

.....

2. Whose presence does the sweet incense indicate?

.....

.....

3. What is the significance of offering incense described in the book of Numbers?
.....
4. Describe an incident in which submission of incense was done for atonement of sin.
.....
5. What is the significance of the priest going round the altar with the censor in his hands at the beginning of the Holy Eucharist?
.....
6. How can we compare the censor with the salvific mission of Lord Jesus Christ?
.....
7. What message do we get from the blessing of the censor?
.....
8. What is the real significance of prayer with incense?
.....
.....
9. The symbolic representation of eternal truths in the different parts of the censor.
.....
.....
10. The censor is a representation of the mission of salvation of Lord Jesus Christ. Explain.
.....
11. Why do we offer incense before God?
.....

Activities

1. With the permission of the vicar and the help of a deacon, examine a censor at close quarters and understand its various parts.
2. Prepare a chart of the biblical passages which talk about the offering of incense and its significance.
3. Conduct a discussion in the class on the importance of offering incense.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Genesis 4:1-7
Monday	Exodus 30:1-10, 37:25-29	Luke 1:8-23
Tuesday	Numbers 16:1-11	Numbers 16:12-25
Wednesday	Numbers 16:26-40	Numbers 16:41-50
Thursday	Psalm 141:1-10	2 Corinthians 2:12-17
Friday	2 Chronicles 7:1-10	Leviticus 16:1-15
Saturday	Leviticus 17:1-7	*

Unit 6

Dogmas of our Faith

Chapter 20

Fasts and Fasting

Theme: Understand the significance of Fasts and fasting. Learn about the Canonical Fasts of the Church and observe them faithfully.

Verse to be memorized: “No, the kind of fast I want is that you stop oppressing those who work for you and treat them fairly and give them what they earn” (Isaiah 58:6) NRSV.

Learning Aids: A chart containing the five Canonical Fasts of the Church and a brief description of each of them.

Introduction

Do you observe fasts regularly? Name the fasts you observe regularly. The Orthodox Church accords great importance to Fasts and fasting. Today we learn about the various Canonical Fasts of the Church and learn how to observe them faithfully.

Lesson

Religious beliefs differ; but there exists a lot of similarities in their details. Fasts and fasting are such elements. All religious practices accord a prominent place to Fasts and fasting. The Post - Reformation Western Church did not give much importance to Fasts and fasting. However several people, at a personal level, show interest in observing Fasts. The importance of Fasts and fasting is retained in all Orthodox Churches. What do we mean by fasting?

Avoiding certain food and drinks during certain special periods of the year is known as abstinence. But fasting means spending a day in fellowship with God along with abstinence. Some people follow the practice of fasting till 6’O clock in the evening. This is the norm. What the Church means by fasting is giving up food at least till 3 PM (or till noon)

The Benefits of Fasts and Fasting

Humans possess three things - body, mind and soul. Growth becomes complete only when all the three gets nourished. Abstinence and fasting develop the soul. When we live in this world, we are likely to fall a prey to sensual pleasures offered

by our five sense organs namely eye, tongue, nose, ear and skin. Food, though tasty consumed, excess harms our own body. Hence controlling the desires of our senses is essential for spiritual growth. The strong and natural impulse of humans is for food. If we can control it, we will get enough strength to control several other impulses. Those who have undertaken abstinence and fasting regularly do experience this.

There are two ways in which abstinence can be observed. We can keep away from food items we like for a certain period of time. Through fasting we can also keep away from any kind of food for some time. Fasting also means “living together.” There we abstain from food and give more time for prayer, reading of the Holy Bible, meditation and doing good deeds. Then we become free from the evil thoughts and emotions that attack us continuously. The upper classes of the society today suffer from a lot of life style diseases mostly caused by lack of exercise and excessive food intake. Fast and fasting help them to regain their physical and spiritual health. In short, spiritual growth includes purification of the heart and regaining of physical and mental health which we attain through fasting.

We read in the Holy Bible that Jesus Christ defeated the temptations of Satan through his forty days of fasting (Matthew 4:1-16; Luke 4:1-13) (Since Jesus went on fasting for the whole period, it is abstinence.)

Jesus Christ also taught us that it is impossible to defeat Satan without prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21). The temptations of sin can be both internal and external. Fasting helps us to attain victory over both of them. Jesus Christ condemned the style of fasting of hypocrites who wanted to show off their devotion (Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:12). The Church too doesn't encourage such 'exhibitions.' Moreover it has given concessions to the weak and the infirm from the rigours of fasting.

Children, pregnant woman, feeding mothers, patients and people in their old age are given such concessions as fasts and fasting affect their physical-health. From this it is evident that fasting is helpful for improving one's health physical and spiritual.

Fasting in the Holy Bible

Church Fathers teach us that the principle of fasting is involved in the regulations of food given to Adam. Moses observed fasting before he received the Commandments and by Elijah before he ascended to heaven (1 Kings 19:8). Jews observed fasting during the time of mishaps and sorrow (1 Samuel 7:6, Judges 20:26, 2 Chronicles 20:3). We have seen earlier how Jesus Christ undertook fasting. There are also records of fasting of the Apostles (Acts 13:2, 14:23).

Fasting in the Early Church

In the book, 'Didache' or 'The Admonitions of the Apostles' written at the beginning of second century AD, there are clear references to fasting. The book

suggests that apart from weekly fasting days - ie. Wednesday and Friday - fasting should be observed by all people who are preparing for baptism. Those were times when grown up people were baptized.

The tradition of forty days' Fast started in the Church about sixth century AD. There are evidences for the observance of 40 day Fast in the Church since the fourth century AD. Later, Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection were clubbed with this Fast and it was extended to 50 days. This is the Lent that we observe today (in a few Orthodox churches, this period is longer).

The Fasts which the Church insists on observing are known as Canonical Fasts. The Canonical Fasts including the Great Lent are five.

Normally, the Great Lent falls in the months from February to April. There will be variations in the specific dates of the Lent from year to year.

The Great lent is followed by Fast in the name of Apostles (13 days). This Fast is from June 16 to June 29, and it is the commemoration of the Twelve Apostles. This Fast ends with the commemoration of St. Peter and St. Paul. June 29 is observed as a Moronaya feast as well.

'Shoonoyo' or the 'Feast of Annunciation' falls on August 15. The Fast in the name of Mother of God begins on August 1 and ends with the Feast of Annunciation on August 15.

The dates of 'Fast of Yeldho' are also fixed. It commemorates Jesus Christ's Incarnation for the sake of our salvation. It begins on December 1 and ends on December 25, the Christmas day.

The three days' Fast is observed exactly 18 days before the Great Lent. It commemorates the great repentance of the people of Nineveh, and the mission of Jonah.

Apart from these, all Wednesdays and Fridays are fasting days. However the Church instructs us not to observe this Fast during the gap of 18 days between Three day Fast and the Great Lent, and the period of 50 days after Easter (till the day of the Pentecost). The Church doesn't insist on fasting too during these days. But the Church commands us to observe fasting on all days of Fast. The Church insists that all healthy people should compulsorily observe fasting during the Great Lent (in commemoration of Christ' fasting and His Crucifixion and Resurrection).

We have seen earlier that Fasts aim at liberation from sin. Hence repentance and confession should meaningfully be done during the days of Fasts. It is the time to get reconciled to our brothers and proactively help those who suffer from sorrows and pain in the society. The ecclesiastical writings clarify that the fasting of those who don't share their bread with the destitutes are meaningless. Let us see what prophet Isaiah said about fasting (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Let Us Think

1. What is meant by Fast or abstinence ?
.....
2. What is 'fasting'?
.....
3. How are we to observe 'fasts'?
.....
4. What are the benefits of fasting?
.....
5. How many Canonical Fasts does the Church have?
.....
6. Which are the Fasts with fixed dates observed by the Church?
.....
7. Which are the days on which fasting is not compulsory?
.....
8. Our Jesus Christ has observed Fast and has taught us to observe it.
9. Fast helps to vanquish Satan and bring us near to God.
10. Fasts awaken and encourage a person spiritually and materially.
11. Living without observing the fasts prescribed by the Church is a sin.
12. Fasts are meaningless if those who observe them don't reconcile with their brothers and sisters.
13. Fast doesn't merely mean abstinence. Those who undertake them should remain in prayer and charity.

.....

Hymn

(This hymn is an extract from the song 'Lord of Angels of Heaven'
given in the prayer for Compline during the Great Lent)

(Nalpathu nal upavasikka)
Take to Fast for forty days
Feed the famished as you can
Say your prayers seven times
Every day - as David did
Moses and Eliah
Took to Fast for forty days

Jesus also had His Fast
And defeated the Evil One.

.....

Let us pray

(This is an extract from the prayer “The human race that became sinful in Eden by disobeying the commandment” given in the Matins for the Great Lent)

O Christ bless us all through Your Fast, O Lord of the Most High who became human and who observed Fast just as Moses and Eliah had done, enable us to attain the semblance of angels and through Your tastes refuse the worldly tastes. O Christ the Saviour who observed fasting for our sake, we praise You, Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

.....

Resolution

We will observe all Fasts faithfully and with devotion.

.....

Activities

1. Discuss with your friends about observing Fasts with sincerity and devotion.
2. Write an essay on the references to fasting given in the Holy Bible.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Isaiah 5:8
Monday	Mathew 4:1-13	Matthew 6:5-18
Tuesday	1 Kings 19:1-14	Exodus 19:1-25
Wednesday	Luke 4:1-13	1 Samuel 7
Thursday	Judges 20	2 Deuteronomy 20
Friday	Luke 18:1-14	Acts 13:2, 14:23
Saturday	Jonah 2:1-10	*

Chapter 21

Ascetic Life

Theme: To help children understand the distinctive features of ascetic life and the relationship between family life and monastic life and learn about the origin and development of monasticism in the Church.

Verse to be memorized: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38) NRSV.

Learning Aids: Pictures of Monastic Fathers, a Chart on which the three vows of monasticism are written, The Liturgical Book of the Holy Eucharist.

Introduction

Have you seen hermits or ascetics? What are the distinctive features of ascetics? When you think about ascetics, you might be thinking about Hindu hermits. Have you heard about the hermits of our Church? We have several Monastic Fathers who dedicated their lives for the growth of our Church (The word ascetic suggests one who brings one’s body, mind and soul under complete control). Today let us learn about the monastic movement in our Church and the Monastic Fathers.

Lesson

In India there is a school of thought which holds that all people will become *Sanyasins* (hermits) eventually. Accordingly life is divided into four stages. The first stage is ‘brahmacharya’ or pursuit of knowledge during which a person lives with his teacher and acquires knowledge. The second stage is ‘garhasthya’ or family life led with wife and children. The next stage is ‘vanaprastha’ or severing of worldly relationship during which a person estranges himself from his home and lives as a pilgrim. The fourth stage (Sanyasa) is the stage of asceticism during which a person liberates himself from all bonds. An ‘ascetic’ means a person who has freed himself from all worldly bondages. Asceticism is given a prominent place in religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity.

What is the relationship between family life and asceticism? An ascetic too is born into a family. Hence family and asceticism cannot be separated completely. “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48) NRSV.

This exhortation of Jesus Christ is valid for ascetics and married who lead family life alike. There are two ways in which one can attain perfection. The first one is attaining spiritual growth within and through family life. Another one is giving up family life and living in fellowship with other ascetics. The place where monks live is called a monastery/convent. All ancient Churches have monasteries and convents. In the Orthodox Churches there is no dispute whether asceticism or family life is greater. All believers who received baptism have only one goal in life, 'Enter into Godliness through self purification.' Each person has freedom to choose the path suitable for him. The choice of family life or asceticism should not be imposed by others. It should be out of one's free will. Whatever be one's choice, one should live completely faithful to it. The Church commands us not to withdraw once the vows of asceticism are taken. The vows of asceticism should be considered analogous to the command given to a couple who opt for family life which says "Man should not separate what God has joined together."

The Beginning of Asceticism

It is understood from the Dead Sea Scrolls that in the second century BC ascetics of Judaism named 'Essenes' lived in hermitages on the shores of the Dead Sea. They were suffering from the Roman domination and the internal decay within Judaism. Hence they drifted into loneliness and spent their time in prayer, learning and interpretation of the scriptures.

There were both married and unmarried people among Christ's disciples. In the later ages also we find both married and unmarried people giving leadership to the Church. St. Paul carried out his evangelical work as a bachelor. He says "I wish that all men were even as I myself" (1 Corinthians 7:7) NRSV. But he also clarifies that marriage is not a barrier to ministry in the Church when he says in his epistles that a bishop should be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6).

A person with a family naturally has duties towards his family to attend to. Hence there had been believers from the ancient times who kept away from married life for the sake of devoting more time to the service of the Lord. The early church also had believers who gave up family life on the expectation that Christ's Second Coming would happen soon.

The Beginning of Monasticism

We have seen that there had been the practice of individual believers giving up family life for service in the Church. Later this ascetic spirit developed into an institution. St. Antony (251-356) is known as the "Father of Monasticism." He had

lived in seclusion for long in the Egyptian desert. St. Pachomios and St. Basil of Cappadocia who came later realized that it was better for ascetics to live together as a community and started founding monasteries. Along with prayer and study of the Holy Bible, they gave importance to physical labour as well.

After the Milan Proclamation of AD 313 made by Emperor Constantine, the Church received a lot of royal patronage. On the positive side, it ended persecution of Christians where as on the negative side it brought in worldliness into the Church. The believers who were pained by these worldliness kept away from worldly desires and spent their time completely for secluded meditation, study of the Holy Bible and service. The important liturgies, prayers and interpretations of the Holy Bible used in the Church originated from such secluded hermitages, The inmates of these hermitages had no personal interests of their own and they led a life of intercession for the sake of others. Saints like Mar Gregorios of Parumala and Kuriakose Mar Gregorios of Pampady are examples for this in our Church. Most of these ascetics didn't even aspire for any position in the Church. But the community of believers, on observing their life of purity, wanted to raise them to Episcopal positions. Thus the tradition of selecting bishops only from ascetic priests originated in the Church.

The Three Vows

As the Monastic Movement evolved, three vows were accepted as the fundamental principles of monasticism. They are obedience, poverty and celibacy. The spiritual training for asceticism was to be acquired from a Master. The maturity of self discipline should be acquired through obeying the Master. The vow of poverty involves willful rejection of worldly desires. An important element in celibacy is opting for unmarried life. It also refers to the condition of liberating oneself mentally from all sensuous pleasures. The Church Fathers who led a saintly life testify that a true ascetic can keep all these vows without fail by virtue of his deep relationship with God.

Common people are susceptible to selfishness, pride, desire for wealth and position and love of sensuous pleasures. Spiritual development happens when one liberates oneself from all these. Hence even married people can imbibe the spirit of asceticism. However ascetics who could devote their entire time to the service of God are essential for the growth and prosperity of the Church. Ascetics would find more time to intercede for the sake of the whole world, compose liturgies and prayers, and do evangelical and charitable works. Hence it is imperative for the Church to have ideal ascetics even in this age.

Hymn

(This hymn is recited during the Holy Eucharist
on the day of commemorating Church Fathers and teachers)

Universal Church, holy and apostolic
Teaches and preaches ever, the only True Faith given by,
Saintly Early Church Fathers, Great Ascetics of Our Faith
Mar Ignatius, Mar Basil, Mar Gregory and Mar Cyril
Crown of Church Mar Severius, Mar Ephrem and Mar Jacob.

.....

Let us Pray

(This prayer is said in the Vespers on the day of commemorating
Church Fathers and teachers)

*O Jesus Christ, enable us to remain steadfast in the teachings of our
Fathers and mentors who taught us true faith and fed us on good pastures.
Enable us to walk through the paths shown by them... Let peace and reconciliation
increase in the Church by virtue of their intercession. Barekmor.*

.....

Our Decision

*We respectfully remember the Monastic fathers who
dedicated their lives for the Church.
We would keep the model shown by them
as the guiding light of our lives.
We would serve God as God wills.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. Ascetic life is a fellowship with God.
 2. It is meant for greater adoration of God and greater service.
 3. Ascetics could spend more time in writing liturgical literature and interpretations.
 4. Orthodox Church never says ascetic life is better than married life or vice versa.
 5. What are the four stages of life according to the Indian thought?
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6. What are the similarities and differences between family life and asceticism?
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7. What do you call the place where monks live?
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8. What do you call the place where female ascetics live?
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9. What were the reasons for some people to give up family life and lead a life of
celibacy?
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.....
10. Who is the “Father of Monasticism”?
.....
11. Name the emperor who made the “Milan Proclamation”.
.....
12. Which are the important responsibilities of ascetics?
.....

Activities

1. Conduct a discussion based on the topic ‘Monasticism in the Orthodox Church’.
2. Find out the role of asceticism in the model of living promulgated by the Church Fathers of Malankara Church.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	2 Corinthians 5, 6
Monday	1 Timothy 3	2 Corinthians 8, 9
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 7	2 Corinthians 10, 11
Wednesday	Titus 1	2 Corinthians 12, 13
Thursday	Galatians 1	Galatians 2, 3
Friday	Galatians 4	Galatians 5
Saturday	Galatians 6	*

Unit 7

Great Men of God

Chapter 22

St. Basil the Great

Theme: The faith of the Orthodox Church is founded on the Holy Bible, holy Liturgy and the teachings of the Church Fathers. Let us learn about a few Church Fathers and Doctors.

Verse to be memorized: “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” (Hebrews 13:7) NRSV

Learning Aids: Malankara Church Encyclopaedia.
Malankara Church Fathers’ by Dr. Samuel Chandanappally.
The liturgical book of the Holy Eucharist, and Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

Orthodox churches accord a great importance to the teachings of Church Fathers. The study of the teachings of Church Fathers is known as Patristics. Two important reasons can be pointed out for the relevance of Patristics. First of all the Church grew up and existed in the midst of adversities. Many Church Fathers suffered a lot of trials and tribulations. Some others became martyrs. Secondly they stood up against heresy and blasphemy and authored a lot of books to teach the right faith. These books still remain as authoritative texts for teaching true faith.

The basic information about them are available in the Church Encyclopedia. For further information, we should read the texts authored by them and their biographies written by others.

Reading Passage

Have you heard the name ‘Baselius’?

What is the official name of His Holiness, our *Bava Thirumeni*?

What is the importance of that name?

Baselius is the official name taken by the Catholicos of the East. For example our present Catholicos is known as H. H. Baselius Marthoma Mathews III.

There are three saints who are known as Cappadocian Fathers. They are St. Basil the Great, his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa and their friend St. Gregory Nazianzen. All the three were great theologians and saints. Heretics are those who go against the Orthodox faith of the Church. Heretics in the early Church were scholars and some of them were even leaders of the Church. Heresies could be confronted by scholarly people, in the Church. All the three Cappadocian Fathers were saints, who led lives of renunciation, and they laid the foundation of Orthodox Faith.* Eventhough he learned about various religious thoughts and beliefs, he never moved away from the Holy Orthodox faith.

St. Basil the Great

St. Basil was born at Pontus in Caesarea in AD 329. He came from a rich and distinguished family. His forefathers had to suffer a lot of tribulations during the persecution by Emperor Diocletian. He completed his primary education in his own country and proceeded for further studies in Caesarea. He had his higher education first at Constantinople and later in Athens. Thus he acquired the highest education of those times, but he was equally critical of classical wisdom. However his association with scholars was useful to him in various ways in later life. His education at the best centres of learning of those days enabled him to present the Orthodox faith of the Christian Church in a manner intelligible to the learned. The contributions of these Fathers to monasticism are very important.

One of the controversies that arose in the early Church was regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Godhead of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil wrote scholarly defenses thus affirming the faith of the Church in these matters. The most notable among his writings are those regarding the Holy Spirit.

St. Basil took to monastic life at the age of 26. His grandmother and elder sister inspired him to take to asceticism as his way of life. Both of them had the name 'Macrina.' In order to distinguish between them they are often described as Macrina the Elder and Makrina the Younger.

Monastic Community

Basil collected solitary ascetics and organized them as a community. He realized that such ascetic communities were better for spreading the gospels and protecting

the destitutes. He established special accommodation facilities for orphans, destitutes and the sick along with the monasteries. History records that it was St. Basil who started hospitals which gave medical care to patients by providing them with accommodation facilities. He composed directions for the use of the monks instructing them to lead a simple life.

At the age of 41 he was ordained Bishop of Caesarea as the successor of Eusebius. He died in AD 379 at the age of 50. The Oriental Churches observe his commemoration on January 1st.

Let Us Think

Pause and Reflect

1. Who are Cappadocian Fathers? What are their specialties?

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.....
.....

2. What do you know about the family background of St. Basil?

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.....

3. Write a brief note on the teachings of St. Basil.

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.....

4. What were the significant contributions of St. Basil to monasticism?

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.....

Activities

1. Prepare a chart of Malankara Church Fathers who have taken the name of Baselius.
2. Prepare a time - chart of various incidents in the life of St. Basil the Great. Refer to 'Church Encyclopedia' and 'Fathers of the Malankara Church'.

Hymn

Mar BaseliosJesus will protect.
The holy fold that haveremember'd Your Name.
Behold the folk of... your devotees who
Pay you all respect...and praise Lord Jesus.
Halleluiah... Halleluiah
Your intercessionis our protection.

.....

Our Decision

*We would follow the model of St. Basil the Great in living a disciplined life.
Thus we would lead our lives upholding the faith daringly
for the sake of our church.*

.....

Let us pray

(This is the prayer said in the Vespers of the Feast of Saints)

*O Sainly Father, Mar Basil the Great, pray for God's mercy upon
all who commemorated you and celebrated your feast. By virtue of your prayers,
let God give us peace and reconciliation, prosperous years and month of jubilation.
O Lord help us by having mercy upon us.*

.....

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Hebrews 13:1-17
Monday	Hebrews 11: 1-12	Hebrews 11:13-40
Tuesday	Hebrews 12:1-13	Proverbs 1:1-10
Wednesday	Proverbs 1:11-20	Proverbs 2:1-20
Thursday	Proverbs 3:1-10	Proverbs 3:11-23
Friday	Proverbs 4:1-10	Proverbs 13:1-10
Saturday	Proverbs 13:11-25	*

Chapter 23

St. Gregory of Nyssa

Theme: Learn about St. Gregory of Nyssa, the younger brother of St. Basil the Great and understand his contributions to the Orthodox theology.

Verse to be memorized: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21) NRSV.

Learning Aids:

1. Malankara Church Encyclopedia.
2. ‘Fathers of the Malankara Church’ by Samuel Chandanapally.
3. The liturgical book of Holy Eucharist, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

We have learned about ‘Patristics’ in the previous lesson. We have several Church Fathers who could be coming in this line. Today we are going to learn about a leading Church Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa.

Lesson

We can collect primary information about St. George of Nyssa from the Church Encyclopedia. H.G. Paulose Mar Gregorios in his writings has written at length about St. Gregory of Nyssa extolling him as a great scholar of our Church. The philosophical basis of Mar Gregorios’s thoughts comes from St. Gregory of Nyssa.

Have you heard the name Gregorios? Who among the bearers of that name is most notable in the Malankara Church?

St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala and Pampady Kuriakose Mar Gregorios.

The real name of St. Gregorios of Parumala was Geevarghese Mar Gregorios. The word Gregorios (Gregory) means “one who is awake.”

St. Gregory of Nyssa was the younger brother of St. Basil the Great and was born in AD 355. Apart from the devotional life of his father St. Basil the Elder and mother Emmelia, what prompted him for monastic life was the influence of his elder brother. After the primary education at Caesarea he went for higher studies at Athens. Initially he was not much interested in theological subjects. Instead he mastered world literature, philosophy and medicine and worked as a language teacher for some time. He married Theosobia. It is said that she had been a deaconess.

St. Basil the Great had founded a monastery on the banks of the Iris River. St. Gregory went and lived there. This monastic life brought about a sea change in his thoughts. His scholarly and visionary leanings developed into mysticism. In those days there was a practice of withdrawing from married life on mutual agreement for undertaking spiritual work. It is quite possible that he too have turned in that direction. He became an inmate of the monastery and continued his studies and writing vigorously. Though a married man, his scholarly praise of virginity in his later writings, has surprised the scholastic world.

After becoming a member of the monastery he was appointed as the bishop of Nyssa in AD 371. He was not a great administrator. He fought the heresy of Arianism and his writings angered the Roman emperor Valens who had been a follower of Arius. The emperor exiled St. Gregory. Gregory lived in exile for a while and returned only after the emperor's death.

The writings of St. Gregory are marked by literary beauty and spiritual wisdom.

St. Gregory of Nyssa played a pivotal role in compiling the Creed of the Church in the Second Great general Council of Constantinople in AD 381. He was a good orator and theologian. He worked very hard to uphold the true faith. He taught authoritatively about the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of Christ, Salvation, the Holy sacraments and the procession of the Holy Spirit. In the social realm, he argued that slavery was a sin. He passed away in AD 394. He is often referred to as 'The Star of Nyssa'. His Grace Paulose Mar Gregorios has told us that St. Gregory held that sin in not an essential part of human nature.

.....

Hymn

(This song is sung during the Holy Eucharist
on the Sunday for commemoration of Priests)

(Nadha savidhe ulprakare)

O Lord, lodge in, great rejoice.
The high priest who is commemorated....
In Thy holy inner sanctuary....
In Thy Son's abode full of divine grace.

Let Us Pray

(This is an extract from the Vespers on the feast of Saints)

O Holy Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa, you are blessed for you have kept away from the traps of the evil world and have lived whole heartedly according to God's Will. You have kept away from worldly desires and evil. You haven't loved your mortal flesh. Instead, you desired only for salvation. Let your commemoration be a blessing for us... Barekmor.

.....

Resolution

We have learned about the distinctive qualities of our Church Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa. We would try to imitate the good models of his life and we will not compromise with heretics.

.....

Let Us Think

1. St. Gregory was a person who ordered his life in a way suitable to the faith of the Church.
2. He was a Church Father who lived ungrudgingly, with total reliance on God.
3. He believed that no worldly object is equal to God and proved this principle through his life.
4. His family atmosphere and upbringing reveals that it is a blessing that brothers could live as model to each other.
5. What were the formative factors which shaped the life of St. Gregory of Nyssa?

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6. Identify the Church Fathers you know who bear the name of Gregorios (Gregory).

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.....

7. What are the distinguishing qualities in the life of St. Gregory of Nyssa?

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8. What is the contribution of St. Gregory in the Council of Constantinople?

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.....

9. Name the Church Father who is described as the 'Star of Nyssa'.

.....

10. What is the theory of Universal Salvation?

.....

Pause and Reflect

11. What is the meaning of the name 'Gregory'?

.....

12. Name the elder brother of St. Gregory.

.....

13. What were his areas of interest during his early life?

.....
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Activities

1. Collect pictures of Church Fathers and prepare an album.
4. Prepare a time-chart of various incidents in the life of St. Gregory of Nyssa.
5. Attempt a study of the book 'Cosmic Man' by H.G. Paulose Mar Gregorios.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	1 Timothy 1:1-10
Monday	1 Timothy 1:11-20	1 Timothy 2:1-15
Tuesday	1 Timothy 3:1-16	1 Timothy 4:1-16
Wednesday	1 Timothy 5:1-11	1 Timothy 5:12-25
Thursday	1 Timothy 6:1-10	1 Timothy 6:11-22
Friday	1 Timothy 1:1-18	2 Timothy 2:1-13
Saturday	2 Timothy 2:14-26	*

Chapter 24

Holistic Health Care

Theme: The human body is created in the image and likeness of God. We should know what we have to do in order to keep it healthy.

Verse to be memorized: “The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy” (Proverbs 15:30) NRSV.

Learning aids:

1. A charts with a list of good habits.
2. A chart containing pictures of physical exercises.
3. A time table chart of balanced diet.

Introduction

Several people suffer from physical ailments. Diseases affect the physical and mental well-being of individual. In our society, there are several individuals and families suffering from serious diseases. Let us learn how we can control our mind for physical health and how we can strive for holistic health through our life style, living conditions and hygiene.

Lesson

Everyone likes to have good health. However we cannot buy health from hospitals, medical stores, or super markets. The first step in health care is knowledge of health. What is needed is a determination to protect health; and a consistent effort to conserve it. Most people think that health is a condition of lack of diseases. However one cannot be a healthy person just because he doesn't have physical ailments.

The term 'health' often brings to the mind thoughts of illness and medical treatment. The World Health Organization defines health as physical, mental and spiritual equilibrium. We should become aware of the real meaning of health.

What is Health Awareness?

We get our health as made up of the food we eat, the air we breathe, along with our favourable thoughts, traditions and surroundings. If we concentrate only on any one of these things, it will not improve our full health, but would rather lead to decline of health. We should categorise things as those you need and those you don't need.

If we want to have health awareness we should learn healthy habits and exercise them. What are the healthy habits?

1. Taking shower,
2. Play activities,
3. Learning,
4. Prayer,
5. Eating good food,
6. Observe fasting,
7. Cleanliness

Real health is a state of Holistic comfort at the physical, mental, social and spiritual levels. There are four important factors contributing to ill-health

1. Lack of exercise and tension in life.
2. Diseases caused by changes in food habits and food materials.
3. Pollution of atmosphere and environment.
4. Lack of awareness about health preservation.

What should we do to keep good health?

Physical exercise is essential for keeping good health. Till a few decades ago, manual labor had been a part of daily life. Agricultural activities, and the need to walk due to lack of transportation facilities gave good physical exercise to people. Better living conditions have changed this scene, hence the need for proper physical exercise. Exercise refers to any activity that involves the body and which can be practiced in any situation. The regular exercise is extremely helpful in maintaining physical fitness.

Health and Stages of Life

There are gender differences in physical labour or physical exercise. Also the type of physical labour may change with the stage of life. Here are certain common assumptions:

1. Childhood/adolescence is the period of physical and mental development.
2. Youthhood is the period of physical maturity and mental freedom.
3. Middle age is the period for building up the next generation.
4. Old age is the period of evaluating one's life and preparing for the end of life.

Health and Food Habits

Good food is needed for health. Childhood and adolescence need good nutritious food for growth and development. There are several causes for ill health. Environmental pollution, contamination of food etc. can cause diseases. A disciplined life, proper bodily exercise, a balanced diet and peace of mind contribute to better health conditions.

Food and Physical Exercise

Changes in our food habits have brought about changes in our life style. Hence there are life-style diseases as well. We eat fatty food with high calorie content with very little bodily exercise. This condition results ill health and diseases. The Church encourages us for a change of diet during the fasting seasons. Water is essential for sustenance of our body. So one should drink at least eight glasses of water every day physical exercise and breathing exercise are also recommended. Sunbathing is good for the body, especially joints and muscles.

Prostrations in Prayer

Prostration is a distinctive part of Orthodox worship. This spiritual exercise provides health to body, mind and soul. It also denotes complete submission to God in humility. Along with the mind and spirit our body too participate in our prayer. When one prostrate in prayer, his face goes' down to the touch the earth, we realize that in faith we touch the feet of our Lord. It also gives good exercise to the body. Hence we should practice prostration during our prayers.

Good Thoughts for Mental Health

Mental hygiene too is essential for health. How can we keep our mind pure? We should fill our mind with positive thoughts. The Psalmist says "My heart is overflowing with a good theme" (Psalms 45:1) NRSV. Whereas evil thoughts contaminate mind and body. So our thoughts are to be controlled. Let us strive for total health of body, mind and spirit through hygienic life, health care, sincere devotions and positive thoughts.

Hymn

(Recite the 'memra of penitence' daily at home)

(Ennundayone nee enne)

Oh Lord kindly conserve me
As the apple of Your eyes
Hide me in Your wings of care
And protect from all tribulations.

Guard O Lord from stealthy peep
My eyes twain and gift of sight
Also guard my ears from
Treacherous and sinful speech

O Lord be the Sentinal
Of my lips lest they should sin
Ward off all the evil thoughts
And keep my heart free from sin

Kindly O Lord have mercy
To submit myself to You in faith
As Your offering today.....
And the incense that please You.

My Lord let me burn my mind
Body and soul before You....
As lamps bright with full of light
Illuminating Thy Abode.

.....

Let Us Pray

O Lord Jesus Christ, you have created us and made us live on this earth. You have made our body the abode of your Spirit. Give us the strength and wisdom to take care of our body carefully and to do good to others. Help us to keep away from bad habits. We praise and thank the Holy Trinity. Amen.

.....

Resolution

*We would keep our body and mind in an appropriate manner.
We would never misuse our body, mind and spirit.
We would follow good life habits and would kneel and worship God every day.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. Our body is are gifts from God.
2. It is our duty to keep it pure and healthy.
3. Along with food, we also require proper exercise.
4. Over eating causes ill-health.
5. Spiritual exercises provides holistic health and peace of mind.
6. What do you mean by health?

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7. What are the good health habits we need to cultivate?

.....

8. What are the general reasons for ill-health?

.....

9. What should we do to protect our health?

.....

.....

10. Is there any form of spiritual exercise in the Orthodox Church that gives health to the body, mind and spirit?

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11. What type of food should we avoid?

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Activities

1. Write an essay on health care.
2. Conduct a discussion on modern food habits. Identity their merits and demerits.
3. Create health care awareness among friends and classmates.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Matthew 9:36-10:10
Monday	Ephesians 6:10-20	Acts 9
Tuesday	Matthew 15:21-31	2 Corinthians 12
Wednesday	Romans 13:1-14	2 Kings 5:1-14
Thursday	2 Kings 20:1-11	St. James 5
Friday	1 Peter 1	Genesis 12
Saturday	Proverbs 1	*

Chapter 25

Love of Nature

Theme: God created the world and provided everything for the well being and sustenance of humans. Let us be conscious of our duty towards nature. Nature created by God has to be protected and maintained for the good of all creatures.

Verse to be memorized: “Heaven belongs to the Lord, but he gave the earth to man” (Psalm 115:16) NRSV.

Learning Aids:

1. A chart containing scenes of nature.
2. A chart containing at least 10 biblical verses which show the relationship between nature and man (eg: Genesis 2:10)
3. Any product made up of natural materials (eg: A cloth bag)

Introduction

All of us need to know that the resources of nature are limited. It is impossible for humans to exist without nature. The greatest threat for the world today is excessive use and misuse of natural resources. Humans are misusing natural resources for their selfish interests. We have the duty to conserve natural resources. Let us see what those duties are.

Lesson

The opening part of the Holy Bible describe the creation of the world. God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. The earth was a shapeless and chaotic mass. These verses from the Genesis point out that before the creation of human beings God created an orderly nature. God created the world and everything in it (Psalm 136:8,9, Genesis 1:11,1:20-25). God was pleased with what He had created. God created humans only after creating and ordering the rest of the universe.

Human beings are part of Nature

God created us from clay (Genesis 2:7). God breathed the breath of life into the creature and thus they became living beings. Hence we can understand that we are made up of materials of nature like soil, water, air etc. God blessed us who are the crown of creation and gave us a beautiful earth to live. We are given a status just below God and were given the Garden of Eden to live in. We are to protect nature and live in harmony with it. But under the influence of Satan, man became selfish, proud, arrogant and disobedient. We fell from our blessed state because we disobeyed

God. But Lord Jesus Christ redeemed the whole creation. We are also part of this scheme of redemption and should try to bring the creation back to God. But we have ever since been exploiting the nature for our selfish needs.

God takes Care of Nature

During the time of the Great flood God saved not only Noah and his family but also all living things. He conserved them in pairs and blessed them (Genesis 7:15). God takes care of his creations. Lord Jesus Christ says “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap....and God feeds them” (Luke 12:24). Jesus again says “Consider the lilies how they grow: they neither toil nor spin.... God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the open” (Luke 12:27,28). “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God” (Luke 12:6) NRSV. Many of the parables of Jesus Christ were taken from agriculture and rustic life. Jesus Christ lived in perfect harmony with nature. He was born in a manger amidst animals, haystack and grass. Christ observed fast in the desert. He was baptized in River Jordan and He delivered his sermons in natural settings. People sang ‘Hosanna’ to Christ holding the branches of Olives and date palms. Special prayers for all trees and plants are said on the day of feast of Hosanna. On the day of the Pentecost water is blessed and sprinkled over the laity thrice in order to purify them. Thus we can understand that the bond between nature and us ordained by God.

Our Commitment

Modern man exploits nature to such an extent that the earth may soon become unlivable. What should be our commitment towards nature?

God loves nature and nature obeys and respects God. So it is our duty to protect and preserve nature, since we are endowed with intellect and reasoning. Let us think how we can do this.

1. We should protect natural resources. We should protect nature which help us to sustain our life and existence.
2. We should not alter the natural order. God has put a system and order in the universe. The hostile and consumerist bent of modern man is destroying nature.
3. Check the use of materials harmful to nature. Materials like plastic, are harmful to nature. Along with these the gases used in deep freezers, carbon emitted from motor vehicles, chlorofluro carbons (CFS) and substances used for making plastic pollute nature.
4. Keep the surroundings clean. Keeping the home and surroundings clean is equal to loving nature.

5. Dispose wastes properly. We are not to throw waste materials around. They are to be collected and kept at assigned places. They shall be processed as manure properly. Compost is better than chemical fertilizers for agriculture.
6. Plant herbs, shrubs and trees. This will prevent pollution of the atmospheric air.
7. Tube wells will lead to water scarcity. They are hundreds of meters deep and extract water even from deep earth aquifers. These will deplete soil moisture and will adversely affect soil fertility. Moreover it will lead to increased water scarcity. Water scarcity can be tackled only through rain water harvesting.
8. Ensure equity in the use of natural resources. Selfish over exploitation of natural resources is not a good practice. Earth's resources are finite. Hence misuse and over use of natural resources should be stopped.
9. Return to nature. It is high time for us to return to nature. The use of medicinal herbs shall be encouraged. We can plant medicinal plants like neem, basil plant and turmeric in our courtyard. Walking around the farm land is a very pleasing experience. Our diet shall include a lot of leafy vegetables and vegetables. We shall try to grow the vegetables we need. We shall avoid harmful and artificial soft drinks and should drink only natural drinks like pure water, coconut sap and fruit juice.
10. The equilibrium of nature shall be preserved. Nature has a rhythm and an equilibrium. We should not tamper with it. Leveling of hills by excavating earth, filling up paddy fields, quarrying on a large scale and sand mining from rivers alter the equilibrium of the earth. These result in environmental changes and will destroy nature. God has given specific functions to all life forms of nature. If we violate them, the equilibrium of nature will be in danger.

We shall utilize natural resources for the benefit of]lmankind in a controlled manner. We should control our rate of consumption to maintain intergenerational balance of resources. God was satisfied with His creation after the creation of nature. Our care will conserve this earth and will help us to see and experience the order in nature and its uses.

Hymn

(Rijumathikalkku irulil)

Light - dawned - for the wise, in darkness
 O Christ who.... arose up in brightness
 When the veil of darkness fades
 Bow to You, firma-ment and earth
 Twin sisters made haste post haste

One is sky above waters
Other is the base of waters
Soon arose the at-mosphere -
A bridal chamber - in between;
Creation is wonderful!

.....

Let us pray

*Loving God, we praise You for the beautiful nature You created.
We are powerless to describe its glory and magnificance.
Enable us to praise Your mercy and take care of Nature.
We praise and thank You Lord for your mercy, Amen.*

.....

Our Decision

***We will not try to disturb the order in nature and destroy it.
We will work for conserving nature and promoting agriculture.
We will participate in nature conservation activities.***

.....

Let Us Think

1. There is an inseparable relationship between man and Nature.
2. We are created from Nature.
3. We have existence only as long as he cares for Nature.
4. God gave an order to nature. When we interfere with that the equilibrium of nature will be lost.
5. Man's duty is to protect nature, not to exploit it.
6. What did God create before creating human beings?

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7. How do we know that God takes care of nature?

.....

.....

8. What were the materials used for the creation of human beings?

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.....

9. Say five ways of fulfilling our duties towards nature.

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.....

10. What can we do to prevent water scarcity in future?

.....
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11. Name the harmful drinks we should avoid.

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Activities

1. Plant tree saplings
2. Recycle waste materials
3. Work against environmental degradation
4. Compose a poster for the conservation of Nature.

Further Reading

Day	Morning	Evening
Sunday	*	Genesis 1:1-13
Monday	Genesis 1:14-19	Genesis 1:20-31
Tuesday	Genesis 2:1-7	Genesis 2:8-17
Wednesday	Genesis 2:18-25	Genesis 3:1-9
Thursday	Genesis 3:10-24	Psalms 19
Friday	Isaiah 51:1-11	Zachariah 9:1-12
Saturday	Micah 4	*