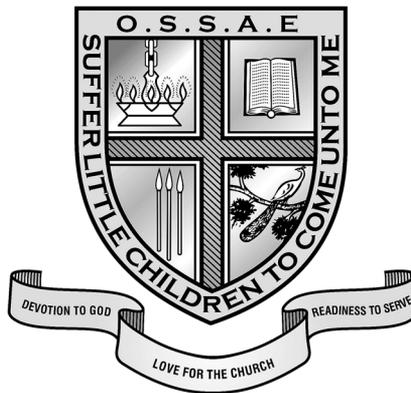


ORTHODOX SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF THE EAST



JERUSALEM DIVISION

Class X

(Part I)

(English)

Sunday School Central Office
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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

01-06-2022

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

Introduction

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

This text book for OSSAE class X comprises contents like Bible studies including both Old Testament and New Testament, Prayer, Hymns of Eucharistic devotion and biography of St. Gregorios of Parumala. The lessons are prepared after a pretty long stretch of study, discussions and corrections by a team of people who have expertise in the field of education, theology and liturgy. However, suggestions for improvement are most welcome. The contributions of those who prepared various lessons are invaluable. Being the notable teachers who paved the way for the coming generations we owe them a lot.

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

May God continue to bless you all.

Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese

Director General

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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, and books 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.

UNIT I

BIBLE STUDIES

Chapter 1

Worship of God during the Old Testament Times

Learning Objectives: Worship is human beings natural response to God – the Creator and the Protector. Not only Christians, but all people give importance to worship. Let us understand the significance of worship and the methods of worship followed in the Old Testament. Thus we shall enrich our spiritual life.

Verse to be Memorized: “Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed, O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come” (Psalm 65:1-2).

Learning Aids: The Holy Bible, the Liturgical Book of the Holy Eucharist, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

Each person expresses his faith and trust in God the Creator through worship. The consciousness and experience of God’s presence prompts a person to worship God. A person’s mind, body and tongue are involved in true worship. Jews were a community who imbibed this spirit of worship. They worshipped the One God who created sky and the earth. We too worship this One True God. God incarnated in human form as Lord Jesus Christ and continues to lead us by His Holy Spirit. Hence our worship is a continuation and improvement on the Old Testament worship. In order to understand the meaning and relevance our worship, we need to understand the worship during the Old Testament period. Let us learn about the Old Testament worship in this chapter.

The Lesson

The Jews had compiled the Holy Bible in order to use it in their worship. Some of the Old Testament books were meant to be read on certain festivals (eg. Song of Songs on the Festival of Passover). Psalms were meant to be sung with the accompaniment of musical instruments during worship. Jews used to read Scriptures in an atmosphere of prayer and worship at the Tabernacle (Temple) and renew their covenant with God.

Old Testament Worship during the Times of Tribal Leaders

The Book of Genesis doesn't mention about priests during the period of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Patriarchs used to submit their offerings directly to Yahweh (Genesis 12:7-9, 22:9-14, 28:18, 33:19-20). In the narration of creation, a particular 'time', the seventh day and not a particular 'place' was set apart for worship. But during the times of Patriarchs a particular 'place' was set apart for worship. We see that wherever a person had divine experience, that place became the place of worship. Moreover that person himself became the priest and made offerings. What we see here is a style of worship centred on 'God-experience' only and not on particular place, time or person. But the details of offerings and worship during this period are not available to us. Places like Bethel, Gilgal and Peniel are mentioned as places of worship. All these are places where the Fathers communicated with God.

During the Exodus from Egypt and after settling down in Canaan, God commanded the Israelites through Moses to build up a place of worship. Thus the Tabernacle was constructed. God gave detailed instructions regarding its construction (its length, breadth, height, and materials to be used, Exodus 25-27). The Book of Leviticus gives instructions about the sacrifices and the ritualize and offerings to be made there. They were asked to make burnt offerings, meat-offerings, sin-offerings, trespass-offerings and peace-offerings on prescribed days and at prescribed times. The priests from the house of Aaron (the Aaronites) were be anointed to make these offerings (We shall learn about it in detail in the next chapter). The Levities were appointed as assistants.

When the Israelites moved, and encamp at a place, the Tabernacle was to be raised in the middle of the camps. God who reveals his presence as cloud and fire would reside in this tabernacle amidst His people. The word *Shekinah* indicates God encamping amidst His people. The exodus of the people and their camping are described in connection with the cloud moving from the tabernacle. Here the tabernacle becomes a place of worship. It is not a fixed spot for worship, but a portable arrangement specially set apart for making offerings and prayers. The significance of places like Bethel, Gilgal and Peniel where the Patriarchs could communicate directly with God, slowly dissipated.

When the Israelites settled down in the promised land, they placed the Ark of the Lord at Shiloh. Thus Shiloh became the place of worship. In this case too the place of worship has no particular significance. The place where the Ark of the Lord which represented divine presence stood, was understood to be the place of worship.

Worship during Kingship

The mode of worship followed by the Israelites after settling down in the Promised Land were continued during the period of Judges and the initial phase of kingship. King David, the second king of Israel desired to construct a permanent

place of worship. He brought the Ark of the Lord from Shiloh to Jerusalem with great revelry. However he could not build a temple for the Lord. King Solomon who succeeded King David built the Temple of Jerusalem and placed the Ark of the Lord permanently in it. Thereafter the Temple of Jerusalem became the permanent location of divine presence. The worship of God and all offerings to God had to be made only in Jerusalem. The priests who officiated the worship at the Temple were appointed by the king and the concept of 'priesthood only for the tribe of Levi' changed. For example priest Zadok appointed by King David was not a Levite. Prophets had God's calling (eg. Isaiah 6, Amos 7:14). The king will be anointed by either the high-priest or the prophet (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kings 1:38-40). However the priest was appointed by the king. Jerusalem became the city of God and worship became centralised in the Temple of Jerusalem.

When Israel was divided into two kingdoms, one in the North and the other in the South, worship centred at Jerusalem became a challenge to the very existence of the Northern kingdom. The Jews had to come to Jerusalem at least once a year and had to make their offerings. This law became a problem for the Northern Kingdom which had its capital at Samaria. The kings of the North feared that the subjects will deviate from their fidelity to the king. This led to the revival of certain ancient mounts of worship like Bethel and Gilgal. The centralization of worship caused a shift from sanctity of the hour of worship to sanctity of the place of worship.

Worship during the Captivity

Israel fell into Babylonian captivity in BC 587. The Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed and the practice of making offerings to God came to an end. It was impossible to make offerings to God while they were taken away as captives. Under these circumstances, the Jews reviewed their life and forms of worship. During the period of captivity a new form of worship developed, i.e. worship at the synagogue. There were no sacrifices the synagogue. Instead they prayed to God, recited hymns (Psalms) and learned the interpretation of the Scriptures. Because of this new form of worship, the role of the priest declined. The Synagogue was under the charge of an elder or a precentor (cantor). There would be readings from the Scriptures. If the elder of the Synagogue was convinced that someone could preach, he would be invited to preach. Moreover there would be a *Chaburah* meal or fellowship at the dining table. If the priest was present there would also be a Final Benediction (known as the Aaronic Benediction). These were the features of the new form of worship.

Worship after the Captivity

Following the proclamation by Parsi King Cyrus in BC 538, Israelites returned from exile and rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem as well as the walls of the city. As a result, worship at the Temple sacrifices were revived (Refer to Ezra and Nehemiah). However worship at the synagogue also continued. During the life and public ministry

of Jesus Christ, both these forms of worship, that is, sacrificial worship at the Temple and prayers at the synagogue, were in existence.

Conclusion

Worship is human's natural response to God that emanates from the depths of his heart. Instead, it should be vibrant and relevant to the historical and cultural contexts in which the worshipper is placed. The Old Testament worship gives us a picture of the vibrant forms of worship. We should also note that the various forms of worship evolved without deviating from the fundamental faith.

Hymn

(Agnimayanmar aare nokki...)

The One on whom-fiery angels trembling gaze,
That One as Bread-and Wine upon-the altar see;
As angels clad-in lightning are- enflamed by Him,
So those who eat-them have their faces made as bright
The secrets of-the Son are for-the angels fire;
So witnesseth-Isaiah too-who them perceived;
Those mysteries-within God's bosom deep concealed,
For Adam's sons-dispensed upon-the table, see!

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is given in the special prayers in the Book of Common Prayer. Find out the hymn which contains the theme of this prayer)

O Lord Jesus Christ, You are full of light. Since You are the True Light that illuminates the entire creation, we see the light in Your Light. O Lord, You are the rays of God the Father. Illuminate us by the brightness of Your Light. Amen.

Resolution

We would try to lead an life of worship as instructed by the church.

Let Us Think

1. What are the prescriptions regarding burnt offerings (Leviticus 1) meat-offerings (Levi. 2) peace-offerings (Levi. 3) sin-offerings (Levi. 4) and trespass-offerings (Levi. 5:14 onwards) given in the Holy Bible?
2. What is the Hebraic word for 'God encamping amidst His people?'
3. How did the Jewish worship become centralised? At what stage did this centralisation happen?

4. How was the worship at the Synagogue different from the worship at the Temple?
5. What led to the revival of ancient mounts of Offerings?
6. Bring out the relationship between our worship and the Old Testament worship.
7. What was primary use of the Old Testament Books?
8. Give a few examples for the recital of certain Old Testament books on certain special occasions.
9. Do you think that forms of worship should be relevant and vibrant? Explain.
10. What were the two forms of worship existing during the period of Jesus Christ? What were the features of these two forms?
11. Find out the components of Old Testament worship included in the worship of our church.

Activities

1. Read the Book of Leviticus and prepare a diary entry on the offerings made at the Tabernacle of Yahweh. Also write the prescriptions regarding the manner of these offerings.
2. Refer to the Holy Bible and find out God's commandments regarding the construction of the Tabernacle.
3. Participate in church services with devotion.
4. Understand the meaning and significance of the hymns, prayers and signs used in our worship.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 2

Priesthood during the Old Testament Period

Learning Objectives: To understand the details and significance of priesthood during the Old Testament period.

Verse to be Memorized: “They teach Jacob your ordinances, and Israel your law; they place incense before you, and whole burnt offerings on your altar” (Deuteronomy 33:10).

Learning Aids: The Holy Bible, Book of Holy Eucharist, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

What are the ecclesiastical positions in our Church? We have deacons, priests, metropolitans and Catholicos/Patriarch. The first three are positions in the hierarchy of priesthood. The other two positions are specially designated administrative posts of ecclesiastical authority. The various positions of priesthood form the basis of Christianity. Such positions existed in Judaism as well and continue even today. Let us learn about priesthood during the Old Testament times.

The Lesson

The words for priest used in Malayalam are *purohitan* and *vaidikan*. Both these words originated from Sanskrit. The word *purohitan* in Sanskrit means ‘one who stands ahead of others’ or ‘one who is vested with authority.’ The word *vaidikan* means ‘one who knows the scriptures’ or ‘one who has learned the scriptures properly.’ In Hebrew the word *Kohen* is used in the sense of ‘priest.’ This word is used 740 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. This word means ‘bow before God,’ ‘worship’ or ‘submit to God.’ The Syriac equivalent of this Hebraic word is ‘Kahen.’ (the word ‘Kohne’ is derived from this root word). It means “one who brings prosperity” or “one who brings joy.” In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (The Septuagint), the word ‘Kohen’ is translated as ‘Hiyareh Yoos’ which in Greek language means ‘pure’ and ‘taintless.’ The church uses the word priest incorporating all these meanings.

It is not possible to ascertain the origin and development of Old Testament priesthood accurately. Genesis 14:18 mentions about Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, who came to greet Abraham. However there are no references to the origins or history this priest (Also refer to Ezra. 7:1-2 and Psalm 110:4). Abraham, Jacob and other Tribal Fathers made offerings directly to Yahweh (Genesis 22:9-14, 28:18 and 35:13-14). They made these offerings in their capacity as Tribal Fathers.

When Moses led the Israelites through the desert, he built an altar at the foot of Mount Sinai and delegated certain servants to make the offering (Exodus 24:4-8). Moses personally performed only the sprinkling of the blood after the sacrifice. Here too we do not find reference to a particular priest. If we examine the chronology of the Books of the Holy Bible, we can see that the earliest passage that mentions the appointment of a priest is Judges 17:5-12. Micah consecrates a Levite as priest at his house of gods. Here priesthood is only a covenant between two persons. However Leviticus 8:22-28 and Exodus 29:10-25 speaks about consecration offering. Through these rituals Aaron and his sons are set apart as priests unto God. Here Moses himself makes the offering.

Consecration or sanctifying is the ritual of submitting the offerings to the Master first and after receiving them back burning them on the altar in the sanctuary. Hereafter priesthood is inherited (Leviticus 16:32). We learn about Aaronite priesthood from a priestly document written in the Sixth century BC (Exodus 28:1). Moreover separating the Levites for priesthood is also understood from a priestly document (Numbers 8:5-26). The law commands the Levites to serve at the Tabernacle from age 25 to 50.

Since the Levites were set apart for the office of the priest, they had to maintain a degree of holiness and purity. They had to make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, 'Holy unto the Lord' (Exodus 28:36). This implies that the priest is separated from others and is as separated unto the Lord as the holy altar and the clean and unblemished offering sacrificed upon it (Numbers 8:14, Deuteronomy 10:8). Henceforth the priest stands separated from all uncleanness. So he should keep away from all that defiles him (Leviticus 21:1-6). He had to be extremely careful while entering the sanctuary of the Lord. He had to be adorned with special vestments (Exodus 28:43) had to wash his clothes (Numbers 8:7) cleanse himself (Exodus 30:17-20, 40:31-32, Leviticus 8:6) and had to keep away from intoxicating drinks (Leviticus 10:8-11). All these provide dignity and respectability to the priest. Only men could become priests and they should not be physically deformed (Leviticus 21:16-21).

We have seen that the nomadic tribal Patriarchs like Abraham and Jacob had been priests as well. When their successors settled down in Canaan, mounts of worship were raised. Priests served as guards of these mounts of worship. This practice continued till the end of the period of Judges. Finally the offices of prophet, priest and judge were vested with a single person (Eli, Samuel). Samuel was not a Levite (1 Samuel 1:1-2).

During the period of kingship the practice of King appointing the priest came into existence. The priest became the representative of the king for cultic duties at the King's Temple (2 Kings 10:11, 12:5-17, 16:10-18). King David appointed Zadok and Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar (2 Samuel 8:17) as priests. King Solomon retained only Zadok as priest (1 Kings 2:27-35). Zadok was not a Levite (Eze. 48:11) centralization of worship strengthened priesthood.

When Israelites went into captivity the priest was vested with political leadership as well (Ezra, Nehemiah). The priest became the social leader as king, priest and prophet. Kingship ceased to exist and prophesy waned. The hierarchy of High Priest and other priests developed during the post-exilic period (Haggai 1:1, 12, 14, 2:4).

Duties of Priests

1. We can believe that priesthood originated in connection with mounts of offering. The priests originally were guards of these mounts of offering. The first priests were ordinary people who took up the duty of protection (Judges 17, 1 Samuel 2:21 and 23:9). Samuel was an Ephremite and not a Levite.
2. People assembled at the mounts of offering to seek God's commandments. The priest would inform God's will to these people (Deuteronomy 33:8-10). It was Moses alone who had directly interacted with God (Exodus 18:15, 19, 33:7-11). Others used media of divine consultation like Ephod, Urim or Thummim to interact with the Lord and revealed the Lord's will to the people (Numbers 27:21, Judges 17:15, Hosea 3:4).
3. An important responsibility of the priests was to teach (Deuteronomy 33:10). Prophets have scolded the priests for neglecting this duty. They often criticized the priests who taught for hire (Micah 3:11). The priests had to keep knowledge, seek the law from the Lord's mouth and teach the people accordingly (Malachi 2:7). The priest's teachings should be centred on the Scriptures, on wisdom and on Law (Ezekiel 44:23, Haggai 2:11). The ministry of teaching was taken up by the Levites during the exilic period and the priests during the post-exilic period.
4. When the Temple was built (during the period of monarchy) and when worship became centralized, cultic duties associated with sacrifices and offerings became the sole prerogative of priests (2 Chronicles 26:18). Thus the office of priesthood became a cultic duty. Let us see the words used to describe the office of priests in Leviticus 21:17, Exodus 19:22, 28:35-43, Numbers 18:7 and 1 Samuel 2:28). Along with overseeing the sacrificial cult, the duties of priests included setting the shew bread upon the table (Leviticus 24:8), dressing the lamps (Exodus 30:7), blowing the trumpets (Numbers 10:8-10) and blessing in the name of the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:8, 21:5, 1 Chronicles 23:13). These duties made the priest a mediator between God and human. The High Priest was to be adorned with special vestments on all occasions except on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16, Exodus 28:39).

Thus the responsibilities of Old Testament priesthood developed as a result of the changing social circumstances. A priestly document that survives from the Exilic period (Sixth century BC) gives emphasis to priesthood based theology. The

history of priesthood in Israel and the functions of priests formed an essential part of Jewish Social and religious history. The office of priesthood ensured salvation and blessing to all people. The priest was a mediator between God and human. In seeking the Lord's answer and in teaching the people, the priest is the representative of God before his people. In executing cultic duties and in seeking refuge in God, the priest is the representative of the people before God.

Hymn

(This hymn is recited during the Holy Eucharist on Maundy Thursday,
Bheeshana Desathashrayamam...)

Let us commune in Christ's flesh – refuge in an alien land
And drink from the chalice of – salvation that came from high
Fire burns upon the Paten – and flames leap up from chalice
Intercessor priest offers - sacrifice of salvation
Priest the mediator stands – in between man and the God
Those who condemn priests of God - shall be condemned forever

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is take from 'Prayer of the priests' given in 'special prayers'
in the Book of common prayer')

O One True God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless all priests and High priests of your Church since they have taught us the word of God, prayed for our sake and have laboured as if they were our accountants before the Lord. Let all their words and deeds glorify Your Sacred Name. Enable them to stand upright like faithful servants on Your right and sing Your praise along with the twelve disciples. Adorn all our priests with justice, purity, efficiency, truth, heavenly blessings and graces so that the enemies of the Church like the devil and the evil people are confounded. We praise and thank You now and always. Amen.

Resolution

We have understood that our worship is intimately connected with priesthood. We would never falter in completing our worship. We would respect priests and value their divine office.

Let Us Think

1. What are the equivalent for the word 'priest' in Hebrew, Greek and Syriac?
2. What is the meaning of the word 'priest?' Conduct a discussion on the basis of Sanskrit, Greek and Hebrew words for 'priest.'

3. What was meant by 'consecration'?
4. Discuss the purity and dignity a priest had to maintain in life. What is the significance of this?
5. Conduct a discussion on the evolution of priesthood in Israel.
6. What evidences do we have regarding the existence of priesthood of Levites and the priesthood of non-Levites in Israel?
7. What was the essence of the teachings of a priest?
8. Explain the duties of a priest.
9. Compare the duties of Old Testament priests and the priests of our Church.
10. What were the functions of the positions of king, priest and prophet?
11. How did the position of the High Priest of Israel evolve? What was its historical background?
12. What duties of the priest made him a mediator between God and human?

Activities

1. Read the Bible passages in which the technical words connected with the sacrificial cult appear.
2. Conduct a discussion in the class on the duties and responsibilities of a priest.
3. Read all passages from the Holy Bible referred to in this chapter.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 3

Jewish Festivals

Learning Objectives: Let us learn about the various fasts and festivals observed by the Jews. Let us also know more about the feasts observed in our Church. Let us participate more actively in observing these feasts and receive the Lord's blessings through them.

Verse to be Memorized: To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them". Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel (Exodus 23:14,17).

Learning Aids: The Holy Bible, the Liturgical, Book of Church Feasts, the Liturgical Book of the Holy Eucharist, and the Book of Common prayer.

Introduction

All major religions of the world observe feasts. The meaning and rituals associated with each festival are different. Can you name some of the feasts of our Church? We observe Christmas, Easter, The Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacle. Can you name some more feasts? Similarly there were certain feasts observed by the Jews. Let us learn about some of their feasts in this lesson.

The Lesson

The Scriptures of Jews, and the Pentateuch refer to certain feasts of the Jews. However the other feasts observed by the Jews originated during the course of their later history. Hence we can generally divide Jewish Feasts into two.

1. Canonical Feasts and
2. Non-Canonical Feasts

The first group consists of the feasts prescribed in the Scriptures. The second refers to the feasts which developed during the later stages. The major canonical feasts were the Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 23:15), Feast of Tabernacles and the Pentecost. The important non-canonical feasts are Purim and Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah). Besides, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) also emerged as an important festival.

Canonical Feasts

Exodus 23:14-17 contains instructions for observing the three major feasts. This calendar of feasts is connected with the agricultural seasons of Israel. The feast of Unleavened Bread was observed in the month of Abib. Feast of Harvest was observed when the first fruits of an year were collected. At the end of the harvest season came

the feast of ingathering. All men were come before God on these three feasts (Exodus 23:17, 34:23).

1. Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover: This is the first one in the calendar of feasts of the Jews. The Jews had to eat unleavened bread for seven days. This feast was observed in commemoration of God liberating the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 23:15). The feast began on Abib 14, the first month according to the Jewish calendar. On the evening of that day the Jews should sacrifice an animal and should observe the Passover (Leviticus 23:5). From the fifteenth day onwards the feast of unleavened bread should be observed for seven days. There should be a convocation on the first and the seventh day (Leviticus 23:6-8). The unleavened bread was a symbol of affliction and haste (Deuteronomy 16:3).

Some scholars are of the opinion that two rituals of separate origin might have been clubbed together in this feast (Deuteronomy 16:1-8, Leviticus 23:6, Exodus 12, Numbers 28:16-17). According to this view, Passover had been a ritual of nomadic herds and feast of unleavened bread had been an agricultural festival of the Canaanites. The Israelites combined both these practices into a single feast. Originally the Passover was not a pilgrimage feast. But since King Josiah of Judah convened all his people at Jerusalem and observed the Passover (BC 622, 2 Kings 23:21-23) this became a feast to be observed at Jerusalem annually. Earlier it had been a feast observed in Jewish homes. The animal killed was according to the size of the household and feast had been eaten in haste (Exodus 12). The description that this feast would redeem the first born from death and the Angel of Death would Passover the houses of those who observe it confirms, that it had been a household feast (Exodus 12:13).

2. Feast of Weeks or the Pentecost: This is the second festival according to the Jewish calendar (Exodus 23:14-17). This feast was to be observed seven weeks after the observance of the feast of Unleavened Bread (Deuteronomy 16:9-11). This is also known as the 'Feast of First Fruits' and is observed on a single day. The Scriptures command that no one should appear empty handed before the Lord on that day (Deuteronomy 16:16-17, Leviticus 23:17-20). The Jews should make a special offering of atonement besides the meat-offering and drink-offerings on that day (Numbers 28:26-31). The word 'Pentecost' means 'fifty'.

3. Feast of Tabernacles: This is a great feast observed after the harvest is completed. Under the clear skies of spring, people build booths or tabernacles and leaving their homes would dwell in them for a week. This feast was a memorial of the Israelites living in booths or tabernacles in the desert (Leviticus 23:42-44). This feast falls on the week that succeeds the 15th day of the seventh month (Tisri) (Leviticus 23:33-36). It was to be observed when all the grain and wine are collected (Deuteronomy 16:13). In the post exilic period people celebrated this feast as a pilgrim festival

(Ezra 3:4, Zechariah 14:16, 18-19). Feast of Tabernacles was the last of the Jewish festivals according to their calendar (Exodus 23:14-17, Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16).

Other Jewish Feasts that can be included in the list of Canonical Feasts were Sabbath, Sabbatical Year and Yobel Year. Israelites understood that the periods, seven days, seven years and fifty years were specially set apart for the Lord. They were times of 'rest.' The observance of Sabbath had its origin in God's act of Creation (Exodus 20:8-11; Genesis 2:1-3) and liberation of Israelites from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12-15, Exodus 23:12). The Jews should be directed to their offerings on that day (Numbers 28:1-10).

The seventh year was observed as the Sabbatical Year. The land was laid fallow during that year. The earth is God's gift to humankind (Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 25:4). The harvest of the sixth year would be abundant enough to provide for the next three years (Leviticus 25:21). The yield from the left over crops in the seventh year shall be gleaned by orphan, the poor and the widow (Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 25:6). The slaves should be liberated during the Sabbatical Year (Exodus 21:2-6).

Yobel Year (Year of Jubilee) was the year that came after seven Sabbatical years. This is the year of deliverance. The Jews should sound the trumpets throughout the land and proclaim liberty to all inhabitants. Every man should be allowed to return to his possession. The Yobel Year should be observed in the same way as the Sabbatical Year (Leviticus 25:8-55, 27:17-24).

The tenth day of the seventh month was the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-28, 25:9). It was to be a day of fasting. It is the only day of the year in which the High priest entered the inner sanctuary with incense and blood offering. This day, known as Yom Kippur (Acts 27:9), was the day of afflicting the souls (Numbers 28:7-11, Levi. 23:26-32). There were three different cultic rituals observed on that day. A bullock is offered for the sake of the priests; a goat is offered for the sins of people and a scapegoat chosen by casting lots is abandoned in the wilderness to for iniquities and transgressions of the Jews.

Non-Canonical Feasts

Purim – Festival of Lots

The word 'Purim' means lot. This feast was observed on the of Adar 14, the twelfth month of Jewish calendar. This feast was a commemoration of the deliverance of Jews from their enemy Haman through Queen Esther (Esther 9:24 onwards, 2 Maccabees 15:36). This day is also called 'Day of Mordecai.' This was a festival of light.

Hanukkah or the Feast of Dedication

This Feast was begun in commemoration of the defeat of Antiochus IV, the propagator of Greek culture, by Judas Maccabees, the head of Hasmonean tribes.

Judas and his troops reclaimed and purified the Temple of Jerusalem, which had been defiled by the sacrifice of the profane animals and started the offerings to Yahweh once again. It was decided to observe this day of restoration as a feast (1 Maccabees 4:52-59). This feast begins on the Kislev 14, the ninth month. It was an eight day long feast. We read in St. John 10:22 that Jesus Christ went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication.

Hymn

(This hymn is recited during the celebration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday,
Rakshana paricha...)

You have granted me the shield of Salvation
Eden's Tree of Life planted
In the middle of Paradise
The example of Holy Cross
From which world earned Fruit of Life
The earth and the sky rejoice
On the day of Thy Great Feast
And celebrate this great Day
Come let us all shout aloud

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is given in the 'special prayers' in the Book of Common Prayer)

O Jesus Christ, kindly protect the Church that observes your Feasts gladly. Show mercy and efface decay, bondage, quarrel and punishments of rage from your church. Grant peace and reconciliation to Your church so that it shall praise you in one accord. Amen.

Resolution

We have learnt about various festivals observed by the Jews. We would participate in all feasts of the Church actively and would earn God's blessings.

Let Us Think

1. What are the different types of Jewish Feasts? Which are they?
2. What is the meaning of the word 'Passover'?
3. How did the Passover become a pilgrim festival?
4. Give the alternative name of the Feast of the Pentecost.
5. How did the name 'Pentecost' evolve?
6. Which was the Feast of First Fruits observed by the Jews?

7. What historical event was commemorated through the Feast of Tabernacles?
8. When was feast of Tabernacles observed?
9. What was the reason behind observing Sabbath?
10. How should a sabbatical year be observed?
11. Read Leviticus 25 and discuss the details of Yobel Year?
12. Enumerate the details of Jewish Festivals.
13. Which were the canonical feasts observed by the Jews? Describe each of them.
14. Which were the non-canonical Feasts observed by the Jews? Describe each of them.
15. Our church also observes certain feasts, which bear the name of some Jewish festivals. Which are they? Compare the Jewish festivals with those observed in the Church.
16. Write an essay on the historical back ground and characteristics of Jewish festivals.

Activities

1. Read Exodus Chapter 12 and prepare a list of the rituals observed by Jews on the feast of Passover.
2. Prepare a chart of the various feasts of Jews.
3. Read Leviticus Chapter 16 and find out the rituals which were to be observed on the Day of Atonement.
4. Read all the Biblical passages referred to in this chapter and learn more about Jewish festivals.
5. Christians observe certain Feasts, which bear the same name of Jewish Festivals (eg. Passover). Enumerate the rituals followed by the Jews and us during these festivals and prepare a chart.
6. Participate actively in various Feasts observed by the Church.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages selected to be read during this week.

Chapter 4

Inter Testament History (between the Old and the New Testaments)

Learning Objectives: The history of Incarnation is given in the gospels. However, we need more materials to get a total picture of the references made in the Gospels. There is a long period of history that remains in between the Old and the New Testaments. Let us learn this history to get a comprehensive picture of the Bible.

Verse to be Memorized: “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1).

Learning Aids: The Holy Bible containing Deutro-Canonical Books or Apocryphal books, the Malayalam translation of Peshitha Bible, the Holy Bible, the Liturgical Book of the Holy Eucharist, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

Old Testament books like Ezra and Nehemiah as well as the last of prophetic books like Haggai and Zechariah give a picture of the Jews who returned from Babylonian exile. But these descriptions end with 400 BC. The Book of Daniel written in Second century BC doesn't give a true historical account. The first book of the New Testament was written in AD 52 and the first of the gospels after AD 65. We shall try to have a glimpse of the history from BC 400 to AD 60 in this chapter.

The Lesson

In BC 538, the Parsi King Cyrus issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem. We read in Books like Haggai, Zechariah, Nehemiah and Ezra, how the Jews restored the Temple of Jerusalem in various stages. Ezra, Nehemiah, Joshua, the Priest and Zerubbabel gave leadership in the restoration of the Temple. This temple is known as the Second Temple of Jerusalem. Its construction was completed in BC 515 during the reign of king Darius (Ezra 6:15). In ancient West Asia the great powers that succeeded Israel were Assyria, Babylon, Parsis, Greeks and Romans. It was during the period of Parsi kings (BC 538-332) that the Jews in Babylonian exile returned to Jerusalem. We learn about the subsequent Jewish history from the Book of Maccabees and writings of Josephus and Philo of Alexandria (First Century AD).

The Greek Period (BC 333-63)

In BC 333 Alexander the Great of Macedonia defeated the Parsis and founded a vast empire. The period from Alexander's reign is known as the Greek period. After his

death (BC 323) his empire was ruled by the military generals Ptolemy and Seleucides. Judah and Egypt were under the Ptolemies between 305 BC -198 BC. It was during the period of the second Ptolemy Philadelphes, that the Hebrew Bible was translated by seventy two scholars into Greek (This translation is known as Septuagint).

Following the Ptolemies, the Seleucids rose to power (BC 198-BC 63). King Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemies and allowed the Jews to live according to their own scriptures. Josephus writes that he also gave financial aid towards this. However when his successor Antiochus IV (BC 175-164) came to power, the Jews were religiously persecuted. We read about this persecution in the Books of Maccabees.

Antiochus IV ascended the throne in BC 175. The high priest of Israel at that time was a pious man, Onias III. King Antiochus wanted to capture the wealth of the Temple of Jerusalem. But his initial attempts didn't succeed. Jason, the brother of Onias bribed the king and became the High Priest of Jerusalem (2 Maccabees 4:7-10). He tried to spread Greek culture in Jerusalem. Later a man named Menelaus became the High Priest. He behaved like a cruel dictator (2 Maccabees 4:24-25).

Menelaus spent the money of the Temple of Jerusalem for his personal needs. He plotted to kill Onias III. King Antiochus IV defeated Ptolemy VI in BC 170 (2 Maccabees 1:17-19). During his return from war he looted the Temple of Jerusalem and carried away all its wealth (1 Maccabees 1:21-24). Two years later he sent troops and destroyed the walls of the Temple. He converted the Temple into his fortress (1 Maccabees 1:33) and dedicated the Temple to the Greek God Zeus (2 Maccabees 6:12). He also defiled the temple by sacrificing the profane animal pig (1 Maccabees 1:54) and destroyed the Jewish scriptures (1:56).

The Jews under Priest Mattathias and his sons revolted against the desecration of the Temple and Jewish religion. The sons of Mattathias (Hasmonean tribes) under the leadership of Judas Maccabees ('the hammer') defeated the troops of Antiochus IV in BC 164. They reclaimed the Temple and rededicated it to God. This rededication of the Temple was in later Jewish history celebrated as a Feast called 'Hanukkah.'

The Hasmonean (Hasidim) dynasty after Judas Maccabees ruled in Israel till BC 63 surviving the threat of various foreign powers like Seleucids and Romans. During the reign of Simon, the brother of Jude Maccabees, (BC 142-134) the threat of foreign invasion dissipated. The first book of Maccabees end with the death of Simon and the succession of his son John Hyrcanus. We should note here that the Hasmonean rulers were priests, administrators and military generals of Israel at the same time. It was during their period that social groups like Sadducees, and Pharisees originated in the Jewish community. Between BC 76-67 Queen Salome Alexandra ruled in Israel. She is the second woman ruler of Israel after Athaliah mentioned in the Holy Bible. Her son Hyrcanus II became the High priest. However he had to compete with his brother Aristobulus II for power. Both of them sought the help of the Roman military General Pompey. Pompey helped Hyrcanus II, defeated Aristobulus II, and made him

the High Priest of Israel. As a result Israel came under the Roman rule, which lasted for a few centuries thereafter.

During the struggle for power with Aristobulus II, Hyrcanus II was helped by his friend Antipater of Idumea. Later Antipater was made the governor of Judea. He capitalized on his friendship with Hyrcanus II and made his sons Phasael and Herod governors of Jerusalem and Galilee respectively (BC 47). Later Herod fell out with the Sanhedrin Council and the Hasmonean family. He sought the help of Roman military leaders like Octavian and Mark Antony and was proclaimed king of Judea (BC 40). Three years later he conquered Jerusalem and killed all members of Hasmonean family one by one including Hyrcanus II. Thus the Hasmonean dynasty was wiped out of Israel and Israel became a client kingdom of Rome.

The greatest contribution of King Herod is the reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. The reconstruction that began in BC 20 was completed only in AD 62-64, several years after the death of King Herod (BC 4). King Herod's sons vied for power and as a result Roman emperor Augustus Caesar took over the administration of Israel directly. The Caesars of Rome appointed non-Jewish governors to rule over Israel. Seven governors ruled in Israel between AD 6 and AD 41. The most important among them was Pontius Pilate who ruled from AD 26 to AD 36. The birth, Public Ministry and Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ took place between the last period of King Herod's reign and the period of Pontius Pilate.

Hymn

(This hymn is recited after the Evangelion on the Day of Shubkhono, *Chollunnu...*)

Tells righteousness O, sinner refuse evil ways ever
Your Lord is searching everywhere for you
If He finds you He will take you in-rejoicing
And will give you His hand as he - gave to Simon Peter
And will pardon you as He pardoned Zachaeus
He will take you to His Father's Abode
O liberator of sins we
Look upon You with praise

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is taken from 'Prayer for Kings' given in the Book of Common Prayers)

O Omnipotent God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, kingship, authority, strength and dominance always belong to You. You are the one who appoints kings and officers. You help the kings and officers who fear, respect and worship You. You punish those who forget You and tread and reign in injustice. O God, bless all officers and men of authority who rule over us. Enable us

to receive mercy from them. Enable us to pray for them for the helps and goodness they do to us because of your mercy. Enable us exalt You incessantly for this, Amen

Resolution

We would never have God for material gains. We would never deviate from the path of God.

.....

Pause and Reflect

1. Refer to Haggai and Zechariah and find out the names of those who gave leadership to the restoration of the Temple of Jerusalem.
2. List the major powers of Ancient West Asia.
3. Who gave permission to construct the Second Temple of Jerusalem?
4. When was the construction of the Second Temple completed?
5. Have you read about Alexander the Great in your school classes? Discuss about him.
6. Who ruled the Greek empire after Alexander?
7. What is Septuagint? Name the ruler who inspired it.
8. Name the Seleucid king who ended the rule of Ptolemies.
9. Read 1 Maccabees 1-4 and discuss the important incidents described in them.
10. Name the persons who bribed Antiochus IV to become the high priest.
11. What is Hanukkah?
12. What is the meaning of the word 'Maccabees'?
13. What is the alternate name of Hasidim dynasty?
14. What were the posts held by Hasidim kings simultaneously?
15. Who is the only woman ruler of Hasidim dynasty?
16. Whose competition for power led to Roman intervention in Israel?
17. Name the Idumean friend of Hyrcanus II?
18. Inter history between the Old and the New Testaments is replete with the struggle for the position of High priest. Elucidate.
19. Which were the major powers during this period? How did they influence the religious life of the Jews?
20. The arguments and competitions that develop in any community during any period of history lead to foreign interventions and invasions. Do you agree? Explain in the light of the chapter you have the Jewish history.

Further Reading

Begin from this week onwards the readings from the Holy Bible as scheduled.

Chapter 5

The Holy Bible: A General Outline

Learning Objectives: To understand the general content and significance of the Holy Bible and the role it plays in our daily life. Let us also read and meditate on biblical passages regularly.

Verse to be Memorized: “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:24, 25).

Learning Aids: Interpretations of the Holy Bible, Malayalam translation of ‘Peshitho’ (Syriac) Bible, the Liturgical Book of the Holy Eucharist, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Holy Bible.

Introduction

We read the Holy Bible everyday. The Holy Bible is the Word of God. They are Scriptures written by various authors who were inspired by God’s Spirit, and the Scriptures have been handed down through generations. What do we call something that we inherit from our forefathers through several generations? We call it tradition. Hence the Holy Bible is part of the sacred tradition of the Church. Today we are going to learn the content and significance of the Holy Book.

The Lesson

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church recommends the use of ‘Peshitho’ or the Syriac Bible. We do not have an authorized translation of the whole ‘Peshitho’ Bible. The Gospels of the ‘Peshitho’ Bible were first translated into Malayalam by Ramban Philipose of Kayamkulam, Ramban Ittoop of Pulikkottil and the linguist Thinmayya Pillai jointly (AD 1811). The Peshitho has been translated verbatim into Malayalam recently by Very Rev. Kurian Cor Episcopa Kaniyamparambil. The Holy Bible widely used in Malayalam today is ‘The Holy Bible’ published by the Kerala Chapter of ‘The Bible Society of India.’ During the early stages of the translation of this Bible into Malayalam, several teachers and Syriac scholars of Malankara had been active and had translated several books from Syriac to Malayalam. However in the Holy Bible available today, the number and order of books are different from those in ‘Peshitho.’ Let us reflect on the content and significance of ‘Peshitho’ in this chapter.

We have seen that the Holy Bible is part of the tradition of the Church. Every religion has a sacred book to teach its fundamental principles of faith. The Bhagavat Gita, the Quran and the Guru Granth Sahib are considered Holy Books by Hindus,

Muslims and Sikhs respectively. Similarly the Holy Bible is the fundamental scripture of Christians.

The Holy Bible has two parts. The parts are the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament.' The Old Testament contains 39 books beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi and the New Testament comprises contains 27 books, beginning with the Gospel according to St. Matthew and ending with Revelation of St. John. The Holy Bible contains 66 books. However in the 'Peshitho' Old Testament the number and order of books are different. The Malayalam translation of the Syriac Bible is available today. Let us examine how this difference happened? What follows is not refer to the 'difference'?

The Pentateuch

The Old Testament teaches that God used to intervene regularly in the lives of Israelites. God called Abraham and asked him to come away from his homeland. Moreover God appeared at times to Abraham and gave him instructions as to how to go forward. Later, God also talked to the successors of Abraham (like Isaac, Jacob and Joseph). The book of Genesis records the events till the life of Israelites in Egypt.

'Exodus' tell about the tribulations of Israelites in Egypt, their liberation under the leadership of Moses, the covenant with God on Mount Sinai and the commandments of God in order to retain the relationship between God and His people.

People used to make offerings and sacrifices to God during the Old Testament times. Leviticus explains the various types of sacrifices and offerings they made to God. The Book of 'Numbers' speaks about the enumeration of people and 'Deuteronomy', through the farewell speech of Moses, reiterates the covenant with God and the laws to be obeyed. Thus the Pentateuch comprises five books.

Tradition teaches us that all these books were authored by prophet Moses. He was the head of prophets and liberator of Israelites from Egypt. During the Holy Eucharist we sometimes hear the deacon reciting the introduction to Readings from Old Testament "from the first book of Moses, the head of Prophets". However, the authorship of the Pentateuch is ascribed to Moses, actually it contains collection made by others. We may say that they all come in the 'tradition of Moses.'

The History of Biblical Books

The book 'Joshua' tells us the story of Israelites after the death of Moses. Joshua was the disciple and successor of Moses. He led the Israelites into Canaan, the promised Land where they settled down as a nation. After settling down, Joshua sat in judgement over Israel. The history of the period of Judges from Othniel to Eli and the events related to Samuel, the last Judge and the first kings Saul and David, are narrated in books of Judges and 1 and 2 Samuel. The Books of Kings deal with the kingship of

Solomon, division of the country into (Northern) Israel and Judah, fall of both these kingdoms and the exile. The description of these events are repeated in Chronicles 1 and 2 along with a number of genealogies. Ezra and Nehemiah contain the quest of Israelites for their cultural identity after their return from exile. Thus the books from Genesis till Nehemiah deal with the history of a people from the times of Abraham till their return from exile. This covers the period from about 2000 BC till 450 BC.

Along with these books we have beautiful historical narratives like Ruth and Esther, and compilations of hymns and songs composed for worship, kingship, pilgrimage, repentance and observance of fasts by Israelites. Psalms, Song of Songs and Lamentations are examples of such compilation.

The moral life of the people and God-human relationship were founded on the Scriptures and the Covenant. But Israel drifted away from them several times. Whenever they went astray the prophets laboured to bring them back to a moral life based on the covenant. Prophets from Isaiah till Malachi gave instructions to people to return to the path of righteousness. Apart from them the wise people among the people of God also laboured to impart Godly wisdom to the people. Such Wisdom Writings include, the book of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

Thus the Books of the Old Testament deal with events from Creation till the Fall of Human, the hope of Redemption and the divine interventions in human history. The Old Testament ends with the hope of a Saviour, the Messiah who would come to save His people. The books of the Old Testament are generally divided into three.

1. **Torah (The Pentateuch):** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
2. **Nebim (Prophetic Books):** Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea till Malachi.
3. **Kethubim (Scriptures):** Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations and Daniel. Old Testament is also known as TaNaK, an acronym for Torah, Nebim and Kethubim. The Scriptures contain hymns, history narratives, wisdom writings and apocalyptic literature.

The New Testament books are classified into four Gospels; from St. Matthew to St. John; historical books-Acts of the Apostles and Epistles-from Romans till Jude followed by Apocalyptic literature (Revelation). The Gospels contain events from the birth of Jesus Christ till his Ascension. The four Gospel writers narrate these events according to their points of view. The Acts of Apostles provide a brief description of the founding and development of the Church in Judah and Jerusalem as well in various parts of the world. It relates events that succeeded Ascension of Jesus into heaven. It contains the response of the apostles to the problems in the Church they nurtured; and span from BC 5 to AD 100.

The Holy Bible is thus a historical document that spans from BC 2000 till BC 450 and BC 5 till AD 100. However the history from BC 450 till BC 5 is not dealt with in

these books. Several books of the Peshitho Bible throw light on this 'hidden' period of history. Reading these books would enrich our life of faith. This period between the Old and New Testaments is a very important period in West Asian political history. The domination of Greeks and the invasion of Romans that succeeded it were decisive events in the life of faith of the Israelites. The book of Maccabees throw light on these events. Moreover there are also wisdom writings that belong to this period. We have to learn about them in detail.

Hymn

Your holy verse will grant us grace
Will stroke us like gentle breeze
And transform us by cleansing
All taints inside, the salvific word
Will give new birth to man
Word will show light in our path
And fills the heart with hope
Word will give us Life
This holy verse everyday
Shower coolness
And gives comfort

Let us Pray

(This prayer is recited when we read a passage from the Holy Bible)

O Lord Jesus Christ, who gave us the Holy Bible which contains living and sacred verses for our salvation and good. We shall read and meditate upon the Holy Book night and day. Kindly enable us to respect the Holy Bible, know the benefits of this book, read it regularly and understand the mysteries in it, make it beneficial to us and others and to escape from the schemes of the Evil one. We shall read it and praise You at all Hours and always live, as You commanded, according to Your Will. Amen.

(Prayer before reading the Holy Bible. Try to earn it by heart)

O merciful Lord, open our inner eyes to read and understand the Holy Bible. Bless us to know the great ideas beneficial to our lives latent in them. Enable us to live according to these principles throughout our lives. Amen.

Resolution

We would honour the Holy Bible. We would read it regularly, understand the divine message contained in it and learn to do good to ourselves and the society. We would meditate on the word of God throughout our lives and would praise the Lord.

Let Us Think

1. Name the Syraic Bible, accepted by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.
2. What is the important difference between the Hoy Bible commonly available and Peshitho Bible?
3. How are the books of the Old Testament generally classified? Which are they?
4. What is 'TaNaK'?
5. What is the significance of Peshitho Bible?
6. How are the books of the New Testament classified? Which are they?
7. Who wrote the 'Acts of the Apostles?' What is the general content of this book?

Activities

1. Learn by heart the names of books of the Holy Bible (Both Old and New Testaments) in the right order.
2. Refer to the Book of Family Worship and learn the prayers recited before and after reading the Holy Bible.
3. Prepare a list of the books in the Old and the New Testament.
4. Refer to the Peshitho bible and prepare a list of the books in them.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 6

The Epistles of St. Paul

Learning Objectives: To learn the epistles of St. Paul and to understand the significance of these epistles and read and meditate on them. Also to try to emulate the life of St. Paul.

Verse to be Memorized: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Learning Aids: The picture of St. Paul, the Holy Bible, the liturgical book of Holy Eucharist, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

Do you send letters or E-mails to others? Now a days, instead of letters, we often send messages through mobile phones and the Internet. However in olden days letters were the major form of communication. Letters were sent when a person could not interact directly with others. Can you say why these letters were sent? We sent them in order to pass on certain information urgently or to give directions or to clarify doubts or to communicate news etc. St. Paul has written several letters to the churches he had founded. The Epistles included in the Holy Bible are some of the important letters written by St. Paul. Today let us learn about these epistles.

The Lesson

In the Holy Bible there are 14 epistles authored by St. Paul. Some scholars think that the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by him. However this epistle too is traditionally ascribed to him. They are the most important books next to the gospels. We are able to understand his personality and thinking through them. His theological wisdom is discernible in all the epistles.

All the letters of St. Paul are not available with us. It is obvious that some of them are lost. In the first epistle to the Corinthians there is reference to a letter that had been sent to them earlier (1 Corinthians 5:9). We do not know further about this letter. Similarly in the Epistle to the Colossians (4:16) we are told that a letter had been sent to the Church of the Laodiceans. That epistle too is not available now. We can divide the epistles into two categories.

1. Epistles sent to churches (10)
2. Epistle sent to individuals (4)

Most of the epistles sent to individuals deal with the Church and its activities. These epistles were written between AD 49 and AD 67. One fact we should realize is that each these letters were written in a specific context. They were meant to give instructions to the church to which they were written. They deal with the particular problems and condition of those churches.

Generally, the epistles of Paul are responses to the issues and needs of various churches. The circumstances of each church were different and the apostle tries address them. What were the problems he addressed? They include in matters of faith, conclusions, internal divisions and bickering, heresies, faltering in morality, and faulty rituals. There would have been no need for St. Paul to write these letters, if he could have gone and solved these problems directly. We should remember that modern means of communication were not available in those days.

If these letters were written to local churches to solve their specific problems, how do they become relevant and useful to us? There are two answers to this question. First, the same problems encountered in those days reappear in different forms even today. Hence the message of the apostle is valid for all times. Secondly these letters are not casual compositions. They were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hence they contain a important spiritual messages. They are significant to people of all places in all times.

Paul wrote his letters in Greek. He was a great scholar and had great facility in the Greek language. However the Greek language he used in his letters is simple and ordinary. Even though he wrote in Greek, he was greatly influenced by the Jewish background. St. Paul writes his letters in the model of the letters composed in ancient times. However he makes necessary changes from the classical form of letter writing. Let us look at the structure of St. Paul's epistles.

1. All letters begin with a **greeting** or **salutation** (eg. Acts 23:26). Paul expands his greetings meaningfully and gives them a Christian perspective. He tries to include in his greetings certain points suggesting the content of the epistles (Read out the salutation of one or two epistles in the class).
2. The greeting is followed by **thanks giving** to God for the Christian experiences of the recipients of the epistles. We shall learn the passages of thanksgiving in detail.
3. The **body** of the letter presents the teachings and dogmas of faith. Since the problems confronted by each church are different, the teachings and philosophy of St. Paul are formulated according to these problems. All epistles contain moral instructions.
4. All epistles conclude with **words of blessing**. These epistles were intended to be read before the congregation of worshippers. Hence the words of conclusion are chosen accordingly.

These epistles were often taken down by scribes when the apostle dictated them. One of the scribes has mentioned his name in the epistle to the Romans ('I Tertius who wrote this epistle...', Romans 16:22). In the end the Apostle writes his personal greetings "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand" (Colossians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

These epistles were taken by loyal people to their destinations. We came across the names of such loyal people in the epistles (eg. Phoebe ;Romans 16:1, Tychicus; Ephesians 6:21). The same epistle was sometimes read in various churches (Colossians 4:16 says "when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea").

A large number of scholars are of the view that the first epistle of St. Paul is the epistle to the Galatians. The last epistle to be written by him is 2 Timothy (AD 49, 2 Timothy 4:7-8). Four of these epistles were written from prison. They are to Ephesians, to Colossians, to Philippians and to Philemon. We learn about the place of writing from these epistles themselves and hence they are called Prison Epistles. Three of the epistles are called Pastoral Epistles. There are two other epistles, one to Timothy and other to Titus. They are called Pastoral Letters because they speak about the Shepherds of the Church especially their qualifications and duties.

In all our sacraments, readings from the epistles of St. Paul are made along with readings from the gospels. This practice reveals the importance Church has accorded to the epistles of St. Paul. They are invaluable for matters of faith and practice of faith.

Hymn

Recite the hymn 'Paul the Blessed Saint, the Lord's Apostle, said...' (*Paulose Sh'eeha...*) in chorus. After the recital one of you can read the Epistle to Galatians 1:8, 9 based on which this hymn is composed.

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is recited along with the vespers on Thirteen day fast. This is given in the section special prayers in the Book of Common Prayer).

O Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the prayers of the Apostles, especially those of St. Paul, enable us to conquer the world and its pleasures. Equip us to desire for an claim pleasures of eternal life in the other world. Let Your mercy help me not to fear those who kill the body, but fear those to could throw the body and soul into hell fire. Help us to live like true Christians focusing more on spiritual purity and holiness than on the body. Amen.

Resolution

We shall read these epistles regularly and would meditate upon them. We would follow the example of St. Paul in our lives.

Let Us Think

1. How many letters of St. Paul are available to us in the Holy Bible?
2. What are the evidences to prove that St. Paul has written more letters than those available in the New Testament.
3. How can we classify these letters?
4. What are the characteristics of the epistles of St. Paul?
5. How can we classify the epistles of St. Paul?
6. What are the circumstances which prompted the writing of these epistles?
7. Why are these epistles relevant for all times?
8. Describe the structure of St. Paul's epistles.
9. Name the Prison Epistles. Why are they called so?
10. Name the Pastoral Letters. Why are they called so?
11. Bring out the importance of the epistles of St. Paul in our liturgy.

Activities

1. Make a list of the epistles of St. Paul.
2. Conduct a classroom discussion on 'Characteristics of the epistles of St. Paul.'
3. Read, discuss and meditate on the epistles of St. Paul.

Further Reading

Read and the meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 7

The Theological Vision of St. Paul

Learning Objectives: To learn the prominent themes in the stream of St. Paul's thoughts and to assimilate his theological vision and implement them in our lives.

Verse to be Memorized: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David-that is my gospel" (2 Timothy 2:8).

Learning Aids: A chart showing the important components of St. Paul's thoughts, the Holy Bible, the Liturgical Book of Holy Eucharist, and Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

How can we discern the thoughts and beliefs of a person? By listening to his talks and by reading his writings. In order to understand the stream of St. Paul's thoughts we need to analyse his epistles. Even though these epistles were written to different churches under different circumstances the theological vision of the Apostle is visible in them. They deal with all domains of Christian faith and Christian life. Today let us try to learn the important themes in St. Paul's thought.

The Lesson

St. Paul's epistles have different contexts. The focus of his exhortations related to the times and needs. We can identify four stages in his thought.

1. In the first stage his important themes are **End of the Age and the Second Coming of Christ**. This theme is elaborated in the first and second epistle to the Thessalonians. The End of Ages is described as the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Thessalonians 1:10). On that day, Jesus Christ would reappear for the last Judgement of both the living and the dead. Jesus Christ is now seated in His great glory on the right hand side of the Father. Now Christ has not revealed His kingdom and authority before the world they will be revealed only at His Second Coming. Then every knee would bow at the name of Jesus and every tongue would confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11).

Before the Second coming the force of Evil (Satan) will strive against God with all its might. Jesus Christ would come only after this event. On His arrival, the dead would resurrect from their tombs and the living would be transformed. The day of Lord's Second Coming would witness the Last Judgement. After that all would join together in Christ. The life and integration of human lost through sin shall be regained. The transformed will inherit the 'New Sky and New Earth'.

2. The second stage focuses on **Christology and thoughts on the Holy Spirit**. Christ's Incarnation Death and Resurrection as well as the experience of Salvation are explained in detail. Paul clarifies in several epistles that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He is equal to and one with the Father and is the manifestation of Father. Everything in heaven and Earth was created through the Son. However, the Son willed to condescend from his Equality with Father, took the form of servant and became human.

This condescension was in order to become and offering for the salvation of the world. Paul says that Jesus Christ is the 'Lamb of the Passover sacrificed for the remission of humankind' (1 Corinthians 5:7). The sacrifice of Christ is the means for wiping off the sins of humankind. This great salvific act of Jesus Christ can be assimilated by humankind through faith. Faith is the experience of submitting oneself to the divine love and mercy, revealed in Jesus Christ.

The thoughts on Holy Spirit goes hand in hand with Christology. Life in Christ is described as Life in the Holy Spirit. St. Paul reveals that the Holy Spirit is not merely an Energy but a person of God. The Holy Spirit resides in the Church and apportions various graces for the building up of the Church. The greatest of these graces is love. The Holy Spirit lends strength and discrimination and along with it leads to fellowship and unity. The Holy Spirit enables and affirms the fellowship of the Church.

3. In the third stage, St. Paul elaborates his vision of the **Christian Church**. The Christian Church spread to all the important cities in the East and West of the Roman Empire. We come across thoughts of the Church in the early epistles also. However it is in the later period when Paul is imprisoned in Rome, that he thinks in detail about the Church and its Catholic nature. He thinks about the structure of the Roman Empire and its administrative mechanism. This prompts him to think about the Christian Church spread throughout the world and Jesus Christ who empowers and leads it. He uses three symbols to talk about the Church.

i. It is the **Holy Temple of the kingdom of God** (1 Corinthians 3:9, Ephesians 2:21).

The Church is looked upon as a 'Temple of God.' This idea is founded upon his concept of the temple of God. The believers are the stones that build up this temple and the Holy Spirit is the architect of the temple. The Lord gives various kinds of graces to each believer in order in the building up of this temple.

ii. It is the **Bride of Christ** (Ephesians 5:25, 2 Corinthians 11:2)

The intimate relationship between Christ and the Church is mentioned using the symbols of husband and bride. Christ's love for the Church involves caring and self-sacrifice. On the other hand, the Church is united with Christ in fidelity and submission.

iii. It is the **Body of Christ** (Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18)

This statement shows the inseparable relationship between the Church and Christ. The head of the Church is Lord Jesus Christ. Body cannot exist without its head. Similarly the Church cannot remain divided if it is to be the body of Christ. Hence the apostle asks the churches to remain united as a single body. The relationship among believers should be like the relationship between the various organs of the body. Hence the believers should help and cooperate with one another. Moreover the Church should always be under the control and the guidance of its head, Lord Jesus Christ.

4. As the fourth stage Paul presents the issues of church administration, ecclesiastical authorities, and their qualifications, and duties.

The Church spread to various regions and its administrative mechanism came to be ordered in a systematic fashion. The ecclesiastical administrators could better be termed human servers. There were three positions of ecclesiastical ministry in the early church. They are (Episcopos, Kashisha/Presbyter and Deacon). People were delegated to all these positions in every church. They were ordained by the apostles by laying hands on them. They were to be righteous, learned in Scriptures and enthusiastic in spiritual instruction. Their main responsibilities were to lead corporate worship teach the true faith, resist heresies and help in the spiritual growth of the believers.

Apostle Paul clarifies these duties in the epistles written to Timothy and Titus, the two important leaders of the Church in those days. The last epistle written by Paul is the second epistle to Timothy. In this epistle St. Paul says “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all of them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7, 8).

Paul catches our attention because he has given us important instructions through his epistles. We have seen that he has really interpreted the Christian faith to us. The apostle tells us about duties of Christian life.

Hymn

(This hymn is recited after the Evangelion during the Holy Eucharist
on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul)

St. Paul during his mission trips
Reached gentiles and spread Christ's gospels
Without any rest-and full of zest
He tread all paths
And reached all lands

Let Us Pray

(This is a prayer said along with morning worship on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (June 29). This is given along with special prayers in the Book of Common Prayer.

O Jesus Christ, enable us to tread wisely through the narrow paths shown by Apostles, especially St. Paul. By virtue of their prayers let the diseased become healed the sad become consoled, the poor attain prosperity and the rich become righteous. Let us also be confirmed in apostolic teachings and have our haunches girded with gospelic practices. Let us also win all wars against adversaries. Amen.

Resolution

Like St. Paul, we would also work for the development and building up of the church. We would do our best to preserve the faith of the church.

.....

Let Us Think

1. What are the four aspects in the stream of St. Paul's thought? Describe each of them.
2. What truths regarding Lord the Son are explicated by St. Paul?
3. What is St. Paul's vision regarding the Christian Church?
4. What are St. Paul's teachings on the Holy Spirit?
5. Describe St. Paul's ideas regarding the qualifications and duties of the administrators of the church.
6. What is the position accorded by the Church to St. Paul?

Activities

1. Make a chart of the four stages in St. Paul's thoughts.
2. Find out the occasions in our church services and sacraments in which we remember St. Paul.
3. Collect various pictures of St. Paul.
4. Prepare a project report of 'The theological visions of St. Paul' and present it in the class.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 8

The General Epistles

Learning Objectives: To learn generally about the General Epistles and try understand their content.

Verse to be Memorized: “Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name” (1 Peter 4:16).

Learning Aids: A chart containing the names of General Epistles, the Book of Holy Eucharist, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

We all participate regularly in the Holy Eucharist, don't we? Have you noticed the Biblical lesson read on the Northern side of the chancel-step? These lessons are either from the Acts of the Apostles or from the General Epistles. Why do we select the lessons only from these books? They indicate the mission of the Church among the gentiles. The lesson read at the southern side of the chancel-step will always be from the Epistles of St. Paul. This indicates the domestic mission of the Church. All epistles except those by Paul are called General Epistles. They are called so because they are not addressed to any church in particular. For example see the first epistle of St. Peter. This was written to the believers scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Today we learn about these General Epistles.

The Lesson

There are seven General Epistles in the New Testament. Peter has written two epistles John has three, whereas James and Jude have written on each. These epistles were written under two different circumstances.

Persecution of Christians

Christians had to undergo severe persecution on account of their faith in Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these epistles were written to provide courage to the persecuted Christians. They exhort Christians to remain steadfast in faith despite the persecution.

The Spread of Heresies

Several heresies crept into the Church through the influence of other religions and philosophies in those days. The epistles expound the fundamental principles of faith and exhort the believers to abide by these principles.

i. The First Epistle of Peter: The first epistle of Peter is written at the time persecution. This epistle is often described as ‘Epistle of hope’ and ‘Epistle of

encouragement.' It imparts courage to the persecuted Christians and admonishes them to stand undaunted (1:6-7, 2:12, 4:12-16, 5:10). It is believed that emperor Nero (AD 64-65) is the tormenter referred to in this epistle. It was during this persecution that St. Paul and St. Peter became martyrs in AD 67. The first part of the epistle (1:3-4:11) deals with the spiritual and moral principles the believers have to follow. The second part (4:12-5:13) contains more references to the persecution. The admonitions given to the believers in Asia Minor at the time of their baptism are reiterated. Since the Christians are being persecuted, they are given specific instructions as to how to confront them.

ii. The Second Epistle of Peter: This is written in the background of heresies. This epistle shall be read along with the epistle of Jude. Both display similarities. The two epistles of Peter could have been written based on the epistle of Jude. The heresy that crept into the church in those days was a variant of Gnosticism, which became popular by the end of First century AD.

What does this epistle say about apostate teachers?

1. They privily bring in damnable heresies.
2. They even deny Lord Jesus Christ.
3. They bring swift destruction upon themselves.
4. They follow their pernicious ways.
5. They utter feigned words out of covetousness.

iii. The Epistle of Jude: This is written with the same background as the second epistle of Peter. At the beginning of the Epistle the author describes himself as "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." It is not Jude, the disciple of Christ but Jude, one of the "brothers of Jesus," (St. Mark 6:3) who wrote this epistle. He was the brother of James, the Episcopa of Jerusalem. Jude exposes the heresy of Gnosticism.

iv. The Epistles of St. John: The Holy Bible contains three epistles written by St. John. Besides, there we have two books by St. John – The gospel according to St. John and Revelation.

The First Epistle of St. John: There is intimate thematic relationship between the first Epistle of John and the Gospel according to St. John. It is believed that this epistle was written commonly to various churches in Asia Minor. Hence it doesn't contain any reference to individuals or persecution. The problem encountered by the Church was apostate teachings and the confusions created by them. True faith was in peril and needed to be defended.

What was the heresy faced by the church in those days? It was called Docetism which was a variant of Gnosticism. This teaching questioned the true human nature of Christ and denied that Christ was Son of God. These teachings challenged the

fundamental faith regarding Lord Jesus Christ. These heretics taught that the means of 'salvation' was acquisition of 'knowledge.' The apostle opposed this argument. The basis of salvation is the faith that redemption was brought by the death of Jesus Christ. The apostle elaborates on love, the hallmark of Christian life, in this epistle.

The Second and Third Epistles of St. John: These are minor writings containing one chapter each. In the second epistle the apostate teachers are described as "deceivers who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." The heretics spread dangerous teachings. Hence the believers should not keep any relationship with them. The third epistle is addressed to Gaius. The content of this epistle is the difference of opinion of Diotrephes, the head of a church with the apostle. This epistle does not mention anything about declension and apostasy.

v. The Epistle of James: James the author of this Epistle, is not the Apostle of Christ, but one of the 'brothers' of Jesus Christ (St. Matthew 13:58, Mark 6:3). He was the Episcopa of the church in Jerusalem and was one of the three 'pillars of the church' (Galatians 2:9). He presided over the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21). After Resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared exclusively to James (1 Corinthians 15:7). The background of this epistle is neither persecution nor heresy. The theme of this epistle is outward religious service as the expression and proof of faith. There had been too much insistence on 'faith' in Christian teachings, as a result of misinterpreting the doctrines of St. Paul. St. James upholds four ideas in his epistle.

1. Faith and work: Our faith should prompt us to do works of love. The true expression of faith is works. Faith without works is dead.

2. Christian equality and brotherly love: There is an exhortation for social justice in this epistle. Wealth is ephemeral. The rich are asked to take good care of their labourers.

3. Control the tongue: Controlling the tongue is essential for spiritual sustenance. The epistle instructs refrain from excessive and vain talk.

4. Prayer: Christian life shall be one of praise and prayer. People shall pray intensely during times of affliction. The elders of the church shall anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord.

Thus this epistle contains lot of instructions for practical Christian life.

Hymn

(Shemavonum Yohannanum...)

Simon Peter and St. John went to the - Temple
At the hour of Terce and said - to the - lame beggar
We don't have any - silver - or - Gold

But we give you - what the Lord gave us
In the name of Jesus Christ - you rise up and walk
Sing aloud the praises of - the One who has healed you
Haleluiah vu Haleluiah

Let Us Pray

O Jesus Christ, create interest in us to go like, Your disciples Simon Peter and St. John to the hurch in order to say our prayers. Grant us a heart with preparedness to show kindness to the weak and the diseased and help them. Help us to become true Christians in both thoughts and deeds. Moriyō...

Resolution

We have understood about the General Epistles. We would read them regularly.

Let Us Think

1. Which are the General Epistles? Who wrote them?
2. Name the books other than the epistles of by St. John.
3. Bring out the characteristics of the epistles of John and Jude.
4. Explain the background of the General Epistles.
5. What are the epithets used to describe the first epistle of Peter? Why are they described so?
6. Find the similarities between the second epistle of St. Peter and the Epistle of Jude.
7. What is the theme of St. Jude's epistle?
8. Explain the thematic relationship between the first epistle of St. John and the Gospel according to St. John.
9. List the main teachings in the epistle of St. James.
10. From the epistle of St. James quote bible verses, which justify anointing the sick with oil.

Activities

1. Read the first epistle of St. Peter. Write the verses that attract you most in your diary.
2. Write a not on the authors of General Epistles.
3. Read the epistles you learned today and meditate on the messages they contain.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 9

The Book of Revelation

Learning Objectives: To understand the content and characteristics of the Book of Revelation. Also to read this book and meditation it.

Verse to be Memorized: “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near” (Revelation 1:3).

Learning Aids: Pictures of certain symbols in the Book of Revelation, the Holy Bible, the book of Holy Eucharist and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

Name the first book in the Holy Bible. Genesis. Which in the last book in the Holy Bible? Book of Revelation. This book is known as ‘the prophetic book of the New Testament’ (Revelation 1:3, 22:19). It is written by apostle St. John. The book contains a vision by St. John while he was living in exile in the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). That is why it is called a ‘prophetic book.’ Today we learn the important ideas contained in this book.

The Lesson

The book of Revelation is radically different from other books in its theme and presentation. It contains a lot of visions and uncommon illustrations. The symbols and images used in it create confusion. Hence this book is not read during the public worship of the church.

This book is a Product of Times of Persecution

Apocalyptic writing flourished in Jewish society during the times of persecution. Book of Revelation by St. John falls in this category. What are apocalyptic writings? The Greek word ‘Apocalypse’ means unveiling, or revelation. It means revealing future happenings known only to God. A People undergoing trials and persecution will have great curiosity and anxiety about the future. The first apocalyptic book was written in Second century BC when the Jews were in exile. This is the book of Daniel. Later several such works were written both in the Jewish community and in the Christian Church.

Differences between Prophetic Books and Apocalyptic Writings

- a. Prophetic books are mainly teachings based on the spiritual and moral issues of contemporary times. Apocalyptic writings present God's judgment of the world in future. They present the happenings at the end of the world.
- b. The prophets were primarily speakers. Their message was recorded only in later times. Apocalyptic writers are not speakers, but writers.
- c. The prophets often scolded the people and exhorted them to turn to God. Apocalyptic writers imparted courage to people and encouraged them to stand steadfast in faith.
- d. The prophets spoke about divine interventions in a clear language. The Apocalyptic writers imparted their message covertly using symbols and images.

Features of Apocalyptic Writings

1. These writings lack clarity of expression. Instead, the themes are presented in figurative and symbolic language. Images of strange creatures, animals, and numerology are employed to convey the ideas. People in those days could understand this figurative language. Simplicity and clarity were avoided and figurative language was used because it was times of persecutions.
2. They depict the conflict between good and evil; ie. between God and Satan. People of God are persecuted because of Satan's schemes. However God intervenes eventually, defeats Satan and establishes His omnipotence.
3. God reveals His message through dreams and visions. On most occasions the message is imparted through angels.

Revelation of St. John

Usually apocalyptic writers don't reveal their real name in the works. The book are often published in the name of well known personalities of those days. Such a practice was followed because those were times of persecution. However St. John has disclosed his name in the Book of Revelation (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). At the same time he hasn't recorded his name in other works like the Gospel or the epistles he authored. Besides, the ideas, language and technique of expression in 'Revelation' are radically different from those of other works. Church Fathers like Justin Martin and Ireneus who lived in Second century AD have testified that this book was written by St. John himself. The tradition of subsequent times also uphold his authorship.

The Book of Revelation was written at a time when Christians were being persecuted (Refer 2:9; 3:9; 13:1, 2; 18:16; 17:20). The persecution was unleashed by

Roman rulers. The reason for persecution was that Christians declined the emperor's decree to worship his idol. St. John was exiled to Patmos (1:10). The churches in Asia Minor were undergoing terrible persecution. It was in these circumstances that St. John had a vision of heaven while living in Patmos island and wrote the Book of Revelation.

The persecution referred to here is the persecution by emperor Domician of Rome who reigned from AD 81 to AD 96. He propagated worship of the emperor and demanded that his subjects should address him as 'Lord and God.' The Christians could address only one person-Lord Jesus Christ, the saviour and preserver.

The Central Message of the Book

- a. This book contains a great message of hope and victory. Ultimately it is not evil but good that wins. Even though Satan and his hosts may have their domination for a period, ultimately Jesus Christ would vanquish them.
- b. The future is controlled by God. Evil and persecutions happen to human not only as punishment but also for the renewal of life. The future of humankind is related to Lord Jesus Christ.
- c. The Christian Church has encountered trials and persecutions. Satan and the opposing forces of the world and false teachings, create problems to the Church. But Jesus Christ will attain victory over everything. A new heaven and new earth will be born. The Kingdom of God will be founded everywhere.

Hymn

(Ente Daivam Mahatwathil...)

When my Lord in great glory
Reigns in heaven mercifully
My heart tells me, there is no rea-son why
I should suffer trails of this - sinful - world
The bosom friends I keep are the
Chores of angels up in heaven
Though they are now engaged in the Lord's service
Will come down to me in order to guard and nurse
I won't fear even though I
Live alone in isle of Patmos
My Beloved will open skies and come
And I will be ec-static - at His sight

Let Us Pray

O Lord, let Your spirit help us to proclaim Your living words boldly like St. John. Make us Your holy temple so that Your Holy spirit will reside in us. Let Your graces and gifts lead us, Your devotees, to all virtues. Transform us into holy vessels useful to you. Let Your gospels be preached throughout the world and Your sacred name be glorified. Amen.

Resolution

We shall read the Book of Revelation regularly; we are ready to suffer for the sake of Lord Jesus Christ.

.....

Let Us Think

1. Who wrote the Book of Revelation? Name the other works of this author.
2. Why don't many people prefer to read the Book of Revelation?
3. Bring out the important differences between prophetic works and Apocalyptic writings.
4. Why don't we have readings from the Book of Revelation during Church services?
5. What is Apocalyptic literature? Explain.
6. What are the differences between prophetic books and apocalyptic writings?
7. List the common features of apocalyptic writings.
8. What are the circumstances under which St. John wrote Book of Revelation?
9. What is the central message of the Book of Revelation?

Activities

1. Write in your diary the names of symbols and images seen in the Book of Revelation.
2. Read carefully the Book of Revelation and write the meanings of the symbols used in your diary.
3. Read and meditate on this book.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the Bible passages prescribed for this week.

Chapter 10

Canon of the Holy Bible

Learning Objectives: To understand how the Holy Bible was compiled and read the Holy Bible regularly and meditate on it.

Verse to be Memorized: “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Learning Aids: The Holy Bible, the interpretation of the Holy Bible, the Book of Holy Eucharist, and the Book of common prayer.

Introduction

The Holy Bible is the authoritative Scripture of the Christian Church. Christians read and meditate on Bible passages regularly and listen to readings from Holy Bible during church services. The Holy book illuminates their path of life. Who is the author of the Holy Bible? It is a compilation of various books written by different authors in different periods of history. How were these books compiled? Who compiled them? Who decided this as the Holy Book? Let us learn these details and learn more about the Holy Bible today.

The Lesson

The word ‘canon’ is a Greek word. It literally means ‘measuring rod’ and when used technically means ‘Rules or Criteria.’ The canon of the Holy Bible refers to, principle by which the books are included in it. The canonical books of the Holy Bible were not arbitrary compiled and declared as the Holy book. The process of selecting and compiling the canon of the Bible has a long history. The canon of the Bible was evolved and established through a long period of time. Several books were progressively added to the Holy Bible before the canon of Bible as we see it today was finally established and confirmed. Several criteria were employed to include a book in the canon. It was the Church that made the selection of the books based on these criteria.

1. First of all the author should be an accepted ‘Man/woman of God’.
2. The content of the book should be beneficial to the faith and order of one’s life. It should be congruous with similar books.
3. It should have been used in worship and should have general acceptance.
4. It should generate thoughts of God in the believers, and may lead them to God.

Old Testament Canon

The word 'canon' was not used during the Old Testament period. There had been no official decision regarding the books included in the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible followed by the Jews in Palestine contained only the 39 books we use today (The Hebrew Bible has integrated some of these books and contains only 20 books).

But before Third century BC, a large number of Jews migrated to Alexandria, which had been a famous town in those days. The local language of Alexandria was Greek. The later generations of the migrant Jews didn't know Hebrew and hence the Holy book was translated into Greek. This translation was done jointly by seventy scholars and hence it came to be known as Septuagint (LXX). The translation was completed by the end of Third century BC and Second century AD. This Greek Bible contained seven books more than the Hebrew Bible which was in use in Palestine. It included also the histories, events and thoughts after the composition of the 39 Books of the Holy Bible.

Thus there were two canons of the Bible in the Jewish community. The first was the Bible canon used in Palestine and the other was the canon used in Alexandria. The Christian Church from its beginning used the Greek Bible. There were 46 books (39+7=46) in the Greek Bible.

Council at Jamnia

The Rabbis and scholars of Judaism who wanted to prevent the spread of Christianity assembled at Jamnia in AD 90. The council at Jamnia took several important decisions. One was the rejection of the Alexandrian canon of Bible used by the Christian Church. The number of books of the bible was fixed at 39. This was the first official decision regarding books of the Old Testament. The additional books in the Greek translation were collectively called 'Deutero-Canonical' books.

However the Old Testament adopted by the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches contain all the forty six books of the Greek translation. But the Protestant churches recognise only the 39 books of the Palestine Canon. Since the Holy Bible we commonly used in India is one today published by a Ecumenical organ called 'The Bible Society of India' which contains only 39 books.

The New Testament Canon-Its Significance.

The New Testament recognized by all Christian churches contain 27 books. The canon of the New testament was also established through progressive recognition. The books read during the worship of the Church came to be recognized as the official books. Books likes epistles of St. Paul, the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, General Epistles and Revelation were written by the end of First century AD. However they

were not included in the New Testament as we see it today. It was only in the later ages that they came to be recognized as the authoritative part of scriptures.

The Circumstances of Establishing the Canon

By the Second century AD several books other than the New Testament books as we have it today came into currency in the society. Most of them were authored by heretics to propagate their theories. Thus there were two sets of books popular in the society-the works inspired by the Holy Spirit containing true teachings and those created by heretics. The two sets of books created confusion among believers and hence the establishment of a New Testament Canon became a necessity. The Church wanted to keep off the teachings of heretics. The example of compiling the Old Testament books influenced the Church. Christians thought that, like Jews, they too needed authoritative texts and a canon to follow (Remember the criteria used to select a book to be included in the official list of Scriptures).

Based on these criteria the first books to be recognized were the four gospels, Acts of Apostles, and the thirteen epistles attributed to St. Paul. The other New Testament books were subsequently and progressively admitted to the list of canonical books. Nine books that were subsequently admitted were epistle to Hebrews, James, Jude, Revelation, 1 and 2 Peter and 1, 2 and 3 John.

The first person to prepare a list of the New Testament books was a heretic named Marcion. This was prepared during the middle of Second century AD. His list contained only the Gospel of St. Luke and ten epistles of St. Paul. Moreover he edited these texts in order to establish his teachings. By AD 180, the Church of Rome published an official list, perhaps to counter the move of Marcion. A copy of this list was rediscovered in 1740 by a scholar named Muratory at Rome.

The early church fathers have listed the New Testament books in their writings. The Canon given by Church Fathers like Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius of Alexandria and Jerome and quite notable. St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria described the New Testament canon in a Pastoral letter issued in AD 365. The list contained all the 27 books we have today. However in the list of St. Cyril of Jerusalem the Book of Revelation is excluded. The Great Ecumenical Councils didn't take any decision regarding the canon of the Holy Bible. However, canon of the Bible is defined in certain local councils.

It is important to keep in mind that it is the Holy Church that has given us the Holy Bible. It is the Church that has weighed the authority of a particular book and has declared it to be part of the canon. At the same time, the role of the Holy Bible in regulating the faith of the Church and the life of the believers is unique and primary. What is notable here is that the Church existed long before the Holy Bible came into existence.

Hymn

(Yeshuvin Thiruppadathil...)

Seated at the feet of Jesus
Let us all listen
To His Holy verses which are
The breath of our Lives
Gospel of Jesus Christ
Are sacred counsels for us
We shall listen, preserve we shall, The verses of Life.

Let Us Pray

(This Prayer is recited before reading from the Holy Bible. It is given in the section for special prayers in the Book of Common Prayer)

O merciful Lord Jesus, who gave us the Holy Bible to read and meditate upon night and day. Enable us to rever the Holy Bible befittingly, to know its benefits, to understand its mysteries by reading it day and night, to make it useful to us and others and to escape from the schemes of the treacherous Evil one. The Holy Bible contains living and holy verses for our salvation and benefit. Enable us to read and meditate upon it at all Hours and praise You. Also help us to live our lives according to Your commandments given through this Holy Book. Amen.

Resolution

We pledge to read the Holy Bible regularly and meditate and accept the primacy and importance of the Church.

.....

Let Us Think

1. What is the meaning of the word 'canon'?
2. What is Septuagint?
3. How many books did the Greek Bible contain?
4. Explain the circumstances in which the Holy Bible was compiled.
5. Explain the meaning of the term 'Canon of the Bible.'
6. What were the criteria used by the church to accept a book in the canon?
7. Why did two different canons came into existence in the Jewish community? Which are those canons?
8. What is the council of Jamnia? What was the goal of that council?
9. Explain the circumstances under which the New Testament canon was established?

10. “It is the holy church that provided us with the Holy Bible. Hence both should be given due importance. Explain this idea and bring out the respective significance of the Holy Church and the Holy Bible.

Activities

1. Conduct a classroom discussion on whether we should give more importance to the Holy Bible than the holy church.
2. Prepare a project report on the circumstances in which the Holy Bible was formulated.
3. Discuss the significance of the Holy Church and the Holy Bible.
4. Read the Holy Bible regularly and meditate.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

UNIT 2

PRAYER

Chapter 11

The Kauma Prayers of Passion Week

Learning Objectives: To learn the Kauma prayers said during Passion week, comprehending their meaning.

Verse to be Memorized: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

Learning Aids: Book of family worship for the Lenten Season, Book of prayer for Passion Week, Handbook of Church Services, and the Holy Bible

Introduction

We have already learned about ‘Kauma’ prayer. All our canonical prayers begin with ‘Kauma’ and end with ‘Kauma’ prayer. What does the word ‘Kauma’ mean? It means “standing upright, standing still, staying, or remaining.” We have the custom of standing up while saying our prayers. The prayers at the beginning and the end are specifically name to mean ‘standing upright’ because we are expected to stand throughout our prayers. ‘Kauma’ is a solemn prayer used either independently or along with other prayers. The fact that Lord’s Prayer is included in it adds to its greatness. The Passion Week commemorates the sufferings of Lord Jesus Christ. The ‘Kauma’ prayers recited during the Passion Week are different from ordinary ‘Kauma’ Prayers. Today let us learn about the ‘Kauma’ prayers of the Passion Week.

The Lesson

What are the components of ‘Kauma’ prayer? A Kauma in its complete version begins with praise of the Holy Trinity. But when we recite the prayers of several canonical hours together we do not repeat the praise of Holy Trinity. The praise of Holy Trinity is followed by praise of the Cherubim testified to by prophet Isaiah. It begins with the verse ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty...’ The second part of this praise ‘blessed is He...’ is the announcement made by children on Palm Sunday. This is followed by Trisagion beginning ‘Holy art Thou, O God...’ we recite it and make prostrations. The word ‘Kauma’ normally refers to the prayers beginning with Trisagion. In Passion Week this part of the ‘Kauma’ is substituted with other prayers. Let us learn about these prayers in detail.

The Church us to with share in the Passion of Christ. During the passion week, different 'Kauma' are recited. On all days except the Good Friday during the Holy Week, one 'Kauma' in used for each day. On Good Friday, a different Kauma is recited for each of the canonical hours. On ordinary days the prostrations are followed by the prayer 'Lord have mercy upon us.' But during Passion week this is substituted with the hymn 'Lord thy Praise...' or its prose version. The Kauma ends with Lord's prayer. The prayer 'Hail Mary' (Peace be with you Mary...) is not recited during the passion week, because the emphasis of the Holy Week prayers is on the Cross and the sufferings of Christ.

Kaumas for Different Days of the Passion Week

Monday: O! Messiah, who by virtue of your passion, saved us from waywardness. Accept our offices and show mercy up us.

Tuesday: O Saviour, let the Church that grieved at your passion rejoice at your Resurrection. Let its children earn remission of sins on that day.

Wednesday: Let the people who thronged to crucify you be condemned on the Day of Last Judgment. Let the gentiles who confessed you and your passion enter your kingdom of glory.

Thursday: O Messiah, who by your Passover removed the lamb of the Passover. Let your Passover make us rejoice. Show mercy upon us.

We have already said that different Kaumas are recited for different canonical hours on Good Friday. Refer to the prayer book for Good Friday and learn those Kaumas.

Hymn

(Nadha te sthudyum...)

O Lord, Praise to You, respect - to Father
Glory and oblations to - the Holy Ghost
Have mercy in Your heart upon - us sinners
Let this - prayer reach up - to Thy throne
Within - the doors of Jeru-salem high
O Saviour praise, O Christ praise and
Eternal reliance praise unto You - Barekmor.

Let Us Pray

O Lord Jesus Christ, let there be Praise unto You, respect to Father, and reverence and Exaltation to the Holy Spirit. Shower mercy and kindness upon us sinners. Let the doors of Heavenly Jerusalem open up and let in our prayers before the throne of the Saviour. Praise unto You, our Lord, Praise unto You our Lord, Praise unto You our Eternal Reliance. Barekmor.

Resolution

We would say the prayers of the passion week according to the teachings of the Church. We would observe abstinence and devoutly participate in all canonical prayers of the Passion Week.

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Let Us Think

1. Examine the number of Kauma prayers assigned for Good Friday.
2. Reflect whether you have ever recited the Kaumas of Nocturne on Good Friday.
3. Find out from the Holy Bible reference to the praise of cherubim and the praise of children on Palm Sunday.

Activities

Refer to the Book of Prayers for passion Week and learn the verse rendering of various Kaumas. Recite the prose and verse versions of the Kaumas in the class. Also try to memorize the verse renderings.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 12

Observing the Passion Week

Learning Objectives: To understand the order of prayers for the Passion Week and follow them with true devotion; and experience the spirituality of the various prayers and hymns of the Passion Week.

Verse to be Memorized: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done” (St. Luke 22:42).

Learning Aids: The Prayer book of Passion Week, Book of Common prayer and the Holy Bible.

Introduction

The crux of prayers of in an year is the prayers of the Passion week. These prayers contain lengthy supplication and meditation. Each prayer is composed in such a manner that the believers would experience the suffering and Crucifixion of Jesus directly. Since the prayers are lengthy, they are recited at the specified canonical Hours. At the most there are clubbed together as three hours of worship as followed during lent. In homes, usually prayers are said at three hours of worship-morning, noon and evening. In the church services of the Passion Week *Promeyon* and *Sedra* prayers are stipulated for each canonical hour. Moreover the Evangelion is read during all canonical hours except compline. The Kauma recited during the Passion Week are also special Kaumas. Let us learn about these prayers in detail.

The Lesson

The prayers of the Passion Week begin with vespers on the evening of Palm (Hosannah) Sunday. The prayers of the Passion Week are to be followed from the evening worship of Monday. As we know in the Orthodox tradition, a prayer day begins on the evening of the previous calendar day. Even if we pray at home, we should follow the prayer book for Passion Week. We should recite the Kauma for each day and make prostrations. The Trisagion prayer ‘Holy art thou, O God’ should be substituted with the Kauma specified for that particular day. Similarly instead of the prayer ‘Lord have mercy upon us’ we should recite the hymn ‘Lord Thy Praise...’ or its prose equivalent. This should be followed by Lord’s Prayer.

We don’t recite ‘Hail Mary’ during the Passion week. Since everything and everybody concentrates on the Passion and Cross of Christ, other usual themes like intercession are avoided during the Holy Week. The Book of family worship for the Passion Week contains, after Kauma prayers that meditate on the passion of Lord Jesus Christ. But the public worship in the church contains prayers like Psalms, *Promeyon*’ *Sedra*, *Eniono*, *Kolos*, ‘Ethro’, ‘Bothed Hasho’ and ‘Bovootho.’

Can you say the meaning of these words?

Do you remember the meaning of the terms 'Promeyon' and 'Sedra' which we studied in previous class? Promeyon means 'Preface'. 'Sedra' means order or series. Promeyon is the prefatory prayer said before the comparatively longer 'Sedra' prayer. Incense is offered while reciting the sedra. 'Eniono' means praise or prayer of response. These are special prayers said during the worship. 'Kolo' means hymn. Usually the hymns that follow Promeyon and Ethro will be Kolos. 'Ethro' means 'prayer with incense'. 'Bothed Hasho' means 'pauses of Passion Week Prayers.' They are hymns of meditation included in the prayers for Passion Week. Bovootho means 'supplication.'

We have already mentioned that the prayer 'Hail Mary' is not recited during the Passion week. Normally the chancel of the Holy of Holies remains veiled. The chancel is unveiled only during the Holy Eucharist on Maundy Thursday at the time of the Adoration of the Holy Cross (*Sleeba vandanav*) on Good Friday. On all other occasions the offices are performed on the table of prayer in the Alb with the Golgotha erected at its front. The Kukiliyons are not recited during the Passion Week. Similarly there will be no Benediction, Kiss of Peace either. The proclamations before Evangelion will be brief and plain. The bell and fan are not used during Church services. All healthy people should observe prostrations at the specified occasions. Similarly prostrations should be made meditatively while reading the Sedra prayers.

On Good Friday, we have the tradition of everyone participating in public worship in the church. We reach the church early in order to meditate on the various stages of Christ's passion and pray at the respective canonical hours. Those who reach the church at the Hour of prime should not forget to say the Nocturn prayers at home. In the liturgy of Good Friday certain hymns called 'Sugeeso' and 'Madroso' are included. The word 'Sugeeso' means additional. These hymns are added to regulate the length of service and add to the beauty of the service. They contain descriptions, instructions, and praises. Most of Sugeesos are written in the form of conversation.

The Processions on Good Friday

Two solemn processions are conducted on Good Friday. The first procession is done after the prayers of Terce. Contrary to ordinary processions, the first procession on Good Friday the church gives out through the doors to the Southern side, encircles the church once in clockwise direction and reenters through the door to the Northern side. This solemn procession reminds us of Jesus Christ's journey to Golgotha carrying the cross. The second procession is done within the church after the prostrations in front of the Holy Cross. It commemorates Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus carrying Christ's dead body from the Cross His tomb. The Procession is done twice in the clockwise direction and then once in the anti-clockwise direction inside the church.

Let Us Think

1. Name the Moranaya Festival likely to fall during the Passion Week.

2. If a Moranaya festival falls during the Passion Week, then ordinary Prayers are followed on that day. Why?
3. In which year in immediate future will a Moranaya festival fall during passion week? (Find out from the 'Pampakkuda' Book of Prayer or any other book containing the Church calendar.)
4. Find out the differences between the Bovoorthos of Mar Jacob, Mar Aphrem and Mar Balai from our liturgical books.

Activities

1. Find out the 'Sugeesos' used in the liturgy of Good Friday.
2. Understand the announcements made before the 'Evangelion' during the Passion Week.
3. Conduct a discussion on the relationship between canonical Hours and the various stages of Christ's Passion (You have already studied it in Class IX).
4. Write an essay on the solemn processions of Good Friday.
5. List out the precautions that the altar boys shall observe on Holy Week.

Hymn

(Atmakkale rekshichoru...)

We bow to the Holy Cross that - has saved our souls
 And says along with the thief
 O Saviour remember us when You come.

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is recited along with the morning worship on Good Friday.
 Refer to the Book of Common Prayer)

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our salvation was led to the court of trial like a convict, who was slapped in the face by His servant, who liberated the slaves of sin and who gave us life through His Crucifixion. We praise You for Your Great mercies. Enable us to come to Your Cross and bow, kiss Your feet and attain remission of sins through pure thoughts and good deeds. Enable us to rely upon You with out faltering and depart from this world in peace. Barekmor.

Resolution

We would observe. Lent and fasting without fail. We would participate in public worship with devotion.

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Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 13

Special characteristics of the Holy Eucharist on Maundy, Thursday and Holy Saturday

Learning Objectives: To recognize the special the characteristics of the Holy Eucharist on Maundy, Thursday and Holy Saturday. Let us participate in them devoutly and recite hymns and prayers comprehending their meaning.

Verse to be Memorized: “For this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does” (1 Peter 4:6).

Learning Aids: The Offices of Feasts, the prayer book of Passion Week, the Holy Bible, and the Book of Common Prayer

Introduction

We have learned in the previous chapters that the canonical prayers of Passion Week are different from ordinary prayers. What are the important differences? We recite special ‘Kaumas.’ We don’t recite “Hail Mary” and Kukiliyons. The prefatory announcements of Evangelion are plain. Besides the chancel of the Holy of Holies remain veiled. However Holy Eucharist is celebrated on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Let us learn the characteristic features of the Holy Eucharist on these days.

The Lesson

When do the liturgical services of Maunday Thursday begin in your church? The prayers begin in such a manner that the Holy Eucharist will be completed at dawn. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist begins after saying the prayers of Nocturn, Prime and Terce. The chancel is unveiled and candle is lighted on the altar only when the priest enters the Holy of Holies for preparatory offices before the Holy Eucharist. Even though the public celebration of the Holy Eucharist begins in the ordinary fashion, the Trisagion prayer ‘Holy art Thou, O God’ is substituted with the Kauma of Maundy Thursday.

The New Testament Lessons are read after saying ‘Lord have mercy.’ The prefatory announcement of Evangelion will be plain following the custom of the Passion Week. The censor is blessed with a different set of accompanying prayers. Instead of reciting ‘Holy is the Father’, the ‘Kauma’ of Maundy Thursday is used to bless the censor. Then the hymn “Lord your praise...” (*Lokmor theshbuhatho...*) is recited and the congregation is censed.

Have you observed that there is no kiss of Peace on Maundy Thursday? Since there is no Kiss of Peace, the deacon will not make the exhortation to ‘give peace to

one another.' Instead the deacon will make the exhortation for the first inclination by saying "Let us now bow our heads before the merciful Lord." Even though the priest opens out his hands and asks leave of the congregation (*Shub'kono*) he will not exchange hands of peace with other priests if they are present in the Holy of Holies. Similarly the priest will not give the blessing of peace ("Peace be to you all") to the congregation.

When the chancel is veiled at the time of liturgy of Eucharistic Fraction either the hymn specified for the day or the 'Kauma' of Maundy Thursday will be recited. As 'Kukilyons' are not recited, the Hymns of Eucharistic Devotion are substituted with 'Kauma' of Maundy Thursday and the hymn "Lord your praise..." (*Lokmor Theshbuhatho*). The incense is offered while reciting them.

Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday is also known as 'Saturday of preaching unto the spirits of the departed' and 'Saturday of evangelism.' These names are given because Jesus Christ, after His Death on the Cross descended to hades and preached unto the spirits (1 Peter 3:19, 4:6). This is the day on which all believers should commemorate the dear departed in the Holy Eucharist. Haven't you participated in the Holy Eucharist of the Holy Saturday? Where is the Holy Eucharist celebrated on that day? Holy Eucharist is prohibited on the altar upon which the Holy Cross is laid. Hence the Holy Eucharist is celebrated on another altar. The chancel of the Holy of Holies where the Holy Cross is interred is not be unveiled. No one should stand or walk in the Holy of Holies carelessly. The Holy Eucharist begins by noon after completing the canonical prayers till None and after the readings from the Old Testament. The order of this Holy Eucharist too is same as the one on Maundy Thursday. Like on Maundy Thursday, there will be no kiss of peace or kissing the hand of the priest. The believers disperse after making their offering. Since it is the day of remembering all the faithful dead, there is the practice of the congregation going to the cemetery to pray and the priest censuring the cemetery.

Let Us Think

1. List the differences between the Holy Eucharist on ordinary days and the Holy Eucharist on Maundy Thursday.
2. Recite the hymn sung during the communion of the Holy Mysteries on Maundy Thursday. Write the first line of that hymn below.
3. Which are the two canonical prayers which are not said on Maundy Thursday after the Holy Eucharist?
4. Do we make prostrations after the Holy Qurbana on Maundy Thursday? Why?
5. Find the important ceremony conducted during the afternoon of Maundy Thursday.

Activities

1. We have learned that the order of the Holy Eucharist celebrated on Maundy Thursday and Holy Saturday are alike. Discuss the differences between these and the Holy Eucharist on other days.
2. Find the Bible passages on the descend of God to Hades and preach the dead.
3. Recite the Kaumas of Maundy Thursday and Holy Saturday in the class.
4. Discuss the factors which the deacons serving in the Holy of Holies should take care of during the Holy Week.

Hymn (Syriac)

Messiho dabupesahosho royle
Moru – pesahob-peshaho
Op – sahalan Veharahammelain (3)

Lokmor Theshubuhatho labook-ukoro
Vala rooho dukhudisho segutho Rumo romo
Valain hathoye rehamae vahnono
Nespaa. segun thara eye Urish alem dal-el-
Nelon slavosandum heem damshiho
Shubaho lokmoran shubaho lokmoran
Shubaho lok sabaran – lolam Barekmor

Let Us Pray

(Special prayer recited on Vespers on Maundy Thursday.
Refer the Book of Common Prayer)

O God, who during His Incarnated Life gave his own flesh and blood to the disciples in order to eat and drink and commanded them to consume them for remission of sins. Protect us from unworthy communion in Your flesh and blood. Barekmor.

Resolution

We would participate in these Holy Week liturgies devoutly; and meditate on the sacrifice of Jesus.

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Further Reading

Read and meditate on the biblical passages scheduled for this week.

UNIT 3

HYMNS OF EUCHARISTIC DEVOTION

Chapter 14

The Evening of Sleeba (Season of the Holy Cross)

Learning Objectives: To understand the meaning and significance of certain select hymns of vespers during Sleeba (Holy Cross) season worship and to recite them with discernment.

Verse to be Memorized: “My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe” (Psalm 45:1).

Learning Aids: The Book of Holy Eucharist and the Holy Bible.

Introduction

We already studied that the canonical prayers given in the Book of Holy Eucharist are divided into two seasons-Holy Cross (Sleeba) season and Kyamtha (Easter) season. We studied certain hymns of morning worship in class IX. Have you learned the meaning of all hymns used in the morning worship? This year we are going to learn certain hymns of evening worship. The evening worship held in the church on Saturday evening is also divided into Sleeba and Kyemtha seasons. The Sleeba season begins after the Feast of the Holy Cross celebrated on September 14. When do we shift to Kyamtha season worship? After Easter. Today let us learn certain selected hymns of vespers and compline used during the evening worship of Holy Cross season.

The Lesson

1. (*Yaa Chikkunnu njangalodopum...*)

We beseech thee
Holy Mother! Pray with us, and for our sake
Before the - king
By thy prayer, peace and calm
Reign on – this earth
Let them in – His mercy
Remove from – every where
Punishments –of wrath

This hymn is an intercessory prayer to the Mother of God. We have already learned that the main theme of Sreeba season worship is Mother of God. "O Holy Mother, we plead for your prayers. You shall pray along with us for our sake to Jesus, the king. By virtue of your prayers let there be peace and calm everywhere on earth; and may God kindly remove punishments of wrath from every where." This hymn pleads for intercession of the mother of God for the whole of humankind. Jews believed that diseases and mishaps happened as a result of God's wrath. That in why mishaps are described as 'rods of wrath' in the poem.

2. (*Vazhverum Nirmalakanyaka...*)

Glory to Thee – Son of God! Who came forth from
Womb of holy, blessed virgin, by divine will
She received and bore Him, through ear, in her womb
Virgin seal was safe even after – He was born
Mystery – confounds infidels
Praise to Him – who became so low
Church extols Him, who became man and – redeemed her.

"We glorify you son of God! You were born by your own will in the womb of blessed Mary. Mary received Him through her ear at the time of Annunciation and carried Him her womb. He was born without any harm to the virgin seal of the womb. The mystery of this birth make the infidels ashamed. We praise You Lord since you condescended so low, the Church praises the savior of humankind."

4. (*Krooshimmel Thala Chayaichon...*)

He who died on the cross, at the right hand
Of His Father, making crowns,
Martyrs!, - when you saw
Daring all manner of persecutions
Cleansed your limbs with blood
Flowing from Thy – throat all sliced.
Blest art you – you did love the Christ
And cared not – for persecutions
Glorious is thy mem'ry in heaven and on earth.

This hymn praises the martyrs who suffered tribulations for the sake of Lord Jesus Christ. "O Martyrs when you saw Lord Jesus Christ (one who died on cross) sitting on the right hand of His father making crowns for martyrs, you decided to suffer for His sake. You did not care about the persecutions you faced. You died for the sake of Christ and cleansed your body with the blood flowing out of your slit throat.

You are blessed because you didn't care for persecutions and loved Lord Jesus Christ. Let your memory be glorious in heaven and on earth." This hymn contains a poetic description of the martyrs' life. The first two lines give the assurance that those who suffer for the sake of Lord Jesus Christ will earn the crown of life. The martyrs are said to have cleansed their bodies by the blood they shed for the sake of Christ. They were not afraid of presentations, and their memory is glorious in heaven and on earth.

4.(*Njan anchunnen papathal...*)

Afraid am I for my sins
Garden joyous – that is kept for saints
Let my – sins be no hurdle
For me – to enter there in
Lift me from hell and save me,
Let me dwell in –mansions at Your will. Barekmor.
Praise to Thee, Messiah, King
Who opens doors – to those who repent
Sinner – that I plead with Thee
Thou dispenseth Thy graces
Gladden my heart – by Thy grace
Transform me Lord – to be Thine lyre
This is a hymn of penitence included in the compline

"I grieve over my sins of which I am really afraid. My Lord, let not these sins prevent me like a fence from entering into your joyous garden (paradise). Kindly save me from hell and put me in a place which you like (in heaven). Praise to You Lord the savior who opens the doors to the penitent. I am a sinner pleading with You. You are the One who showers blessings. Grant me your grace and make me happy. Let me be transformed into a musical instrument that sings your praise." This hymn contains, along with repentance of sins, supplication for grace to live without sin and reach the kingdom of heaven. We also pray for blessings for singing and praising God incessantly.

Hymn

Let us sing all the hymns of Evening worship of Holy Cross season together in the class. We shall also learn all other hymns of Holy Cross season worship at home. Learn the hymns like. 'Righteous ones! ye bless the Lord...' 'On high and Eden on Earth...'; Kukiliyon, 'Make us partake, in mem'ry of Mother...' and 'Holy art Thou, O God' by heart. Those who participate regularly in evening worship can sing these hymns very well and be inspired and blessed by them.

Let Us Pray

(Recite Psalm 141 from the Book of Holy Eucharist)

I call to You, Lord; help me now! Listen to me when I call to You...

Protect me from the traps they have set for me, from the snares of those evil doors. May the wicked fall into their own traps, while I go by unharmed...

Resolution

*We would participate regularly in evening worship in the church.
We would sing all hymns and reciprocal prayers with devotion
comprehending their meaning.*

.....

Let Us Think

1. Find out from the words in the hymns which mean.
Plead, govern, anger, unexpected, non-believer, praise, braving, torture.
2. What was the Annunciation heard by Mary?
3. Discuss the meaning of the hymns.

Activities

1. Find out the meaning of all hymns used in the evening worship of Holy Cross season and write them in the diary.
2. What is the musical instrument mentioned in the above hymns? What is the significance of comparing a human being to a 'lyre'?
3. Participate regularly in the Evening worship in the church.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the Bible passages scheduled for this week.

Chapter 15

The Kukileyon Adoring the Holy Cross

Learning Objectives: To study in detail the Kukileyon adoring the Holy Cross; its meaning and significance. To adore the Holy Cross which is the sign of salvation.

Verse to be Memorized: “Through you we push down our foes; through your name we tread down our assailants” (Psalms 44:5).

Learning Aids: The Book of Holy Eucharist, the Holy Bible, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Introduction

We have learned in the previous classes that the intercessory hymns called Kukileyon have an important role in Orthodox worship. We learned four Kukileyons which are commonly used. The Kukileyon of Holy Cross is recited on days of commemorating the Holy Cross, especially during the evening worship on Fridays. This Kukileyon too has the same pattern as the other Kukileyons. It begins with a passage from the Psalms and is followed by Ekbo, Kolos and Bovootho in order. Today let us learn the hymns used in this Kukileyon.

The Lesson

By Thee strike we all our foes, - Halleluiaiah
By Thy name we tread on those – who hate us
Thou did save us from our foes – Halleluiaiah
All our enemies were put – thou to shame Barekmor

The prefatory hymn of this Kukilyon is based on Psalm 44:5 and 7. “We will defeat our enemies using You. We would trample upon our adversaries using Your name. You saved us from our enemies. You have brought all our enemies to shame”. Satan and satanic forces are referred to as enemies in the hymn.

Ekbo

Lo, the cross hath won, shall win
Lo, the cross hath smote the foe
And the cross shall be a fort
For confessors of the cross.

“The Holy Cross has won and keeps on winning. The Holy Cross has defeated the enemy and stands victorious. The Holy Cross will guard all those who confess it. The enemy referred to here is Satan. Satan was defeated with the crucifixion of Lord Jesus Christ. Similarly the Holy Cross will be a fortress to all those who confess the crucifixion of Christ. When we say that the Holy Cross will be a fort, we envision

the crucified Christ with our spiritual eyes and confessing Lord Jesus Christ. What is mentioned here is the victory attained by Jesus Christ with his crucifixion over evil, death and Satan. When we partake of Christ's sacrifice, we too till become victorious.

Kolos

(Sleebaya Vandippanai...)

To rever the Holy Cross – Queen Mother Helen
Left emperor's capital – Rome for Jerusalem
There she gathered – the Jews and asked them
“Show me the place – where the cross is kept.”
Replied Jews in one accord – “we have an elder”
If you ask him he will show –the secret spot where the
Halleluiah – holy cross is kept. Barekmor.

Do you know the emperor who saw a sign of the cross in the sky and heard that he would win the war with that? Emperor Constantine. After this incident king became a Christian. Following his conversion his mother Queen Helen set out to find out the Cross of Lord Jesus. This incident is described through this hymn. “Queen Helen, mother of Emperor Constantine reached Jerusalem from the capital city of Rome. She called the Jews together and enquired where the cross of Lord Jesus was laid. She wanted to revere the cross. The Jews replied that they had an old man. If she asked him where the cross was, he would show the place. There is a legend that it was an old man of Jerusalem who showed the spot where Christ's cross was hidden in the earth.” This legend forms the theme of this hymn.

(Ammanuel Deveshan...)

Emmanuel Lord Jesus –was Crucified
Son of Omnipotent God-hung His head and died.
Gave up only – His soul on the Cross
Tarried His Essence – within the Body
What departed was human-life immaterial.
Let the Jews who crucified – the Exalted one mourn
Halleluiah – curse be upon them.

“Lord Jesus Christ who is called ‘God be with us’ (Emmanuel) was crucified on a wooden cross. The heroic Son of omnipotent God hung His head and died on the cross. What He gave up on the cross was only the soul. However he retained the essence of God within His body. The human life that He gave up is immaterial when compared to the essence of God He retained.” The next two lines condemn the people who crucified the Great One. The hymn ends by condemning the crucifers. Such words of condemnation are usual in Syriac liturgical tradition. Some of them are edited in the liturgy we use today (refer the offices of Good Friday).

Boovootho

(Yerushalem Golgothyil...)

Praise to Jesus crucified
On Calvary in Zion
Cried He loud and rocks were rents
Dead ones arose and praised Him.

This is the Bovootho at the end of the Kukileyon adoring the Holy Cross. “We praise Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for our sake on Calvary in Jerusalem. The voice of the Lord caused the rocks to break. The dead people resurrected and praised Him.”

Other Kolos

Fear not we the evil one
For the Lord abides with us
With His armour we are clad,
And in it we all take pride.
The cross upon His shoulder
Departed He from Zion
Let drop His dew of mercy
On the bones of departed

“We will not fear Satan, for Jesus is with us. We wear his sacred weapon. The Holy Cross is the sacred weapon. This weapon was used by Christ to crush Satan’s head. Let Lord Jesus Christ who carried the cross on his shoulders form Zion (to Calvary) Sprinkle the dew of mercy up on the bones of the dead.” Zion indicates Jerusalem. Zion is a sacred mount (The city of the great king). The prayer here is that let Lord Jesus who suffered crucifixion for humankind show mercy to the departed and resurrect them from the dead.

Hymn

(This hymn is recited during the Holy Eucharist on feast of the Holy Cross,
September 14)

Emperor Constantine on seeing the Cross
Bowed his head and said aloud - paying homage
Let me sing praise to the Lord who has given
The Holy Cross that can conquer the schemes of Satan
Let the Cross - defend - Thy children
By Holy Cross - the church was protected
Let us constantly be saved - by Your - Cross

Let Us Pray

(This prayer is recited along with morning worship on the feast of the Holy Cross. Say the other prayers of the feast of Holy Cross at home)

O Lord Jesus, enable us to greet and welcome You and revere the life giving Holy Cross on the day of Your second coming. Enable us to take refuge under Your Holy Cross, we were it as our armour and defeat the temptations of sins. Barekmor

Resolution

We would reverse the Holy Cross which earned salvation for our souls. We would make the sign of the cross whenever the word 'Holy Cross' is pronounced. The Holy Cross will always be our guard and fortress.

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Let Us Think

1. Which is the Moranaya festival that commemorates the incident described in this hymn? Can you give the date of that festival?
2. Name the season of worship followed from that festival till Easter.
3. There is a legend about how Queen Helen identified Christ's Cross from the three crosses she discovered. Ask your teacher about this legend.
4. Let the cross reign in heaven
Let the cross reign upon earth
Let the cross be a fortress
To all Dayaras and churches. Discuss the meaning of this hymn in the class
5. What is meant by saying that the holy cross is a fort.
6. Learn more about the holy cross from the hymns you learned in this chapter and write an essay.
7. Explain that worship of the Holy Cross is not idolatry.

Activities

1. Find out other hymns about the Holy Cross and write them down in your book.
2. Collect various pictures of the Holy Cross.
3. Conduct a discussion in the class on 'Adoration of Holy cross is worship of God.'
4. Prepare a project on the topic: 'The position of the Holy Cross in the faith and liturgy of the Orthodox Church.' Write the project report after collecting required information through interview and library reference.

Further Reading

Read and meditate on the Bible passages as per the schedule given.

Saint Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala

Introduction

Roman Catholic Church frequently declares saints, which we know through media. Orthodox Church do not have such a tradition. Beginning from the apostles martyrs, teachers who defended Orthodox (true) faith, monastic fathers and saintly leaders are considered as saints in the Orthodox Churches. Regarding the history of the Malankara Orthodox Church it is different from that of other apostolic churches. Until the Westerners came here, this Church had minimal connection with any foreign churches. Therefore no canonisation of any saints occurred in this Church like other early churches. This has been changed when Geevarghese Mar Gregorios Metropolitan otherwise called *Parumala Kochuthirumeni* was declared as a saint along with Maphrian Yeldho Mar Baselios by the then catholicos His Holiness Baselios Geevarghese II. Parumala Thirumeni had already got a fame as saintly when he lived and after his death hundreds of people began to come over his tomb for his intercession. Pilgrims had been increasing year by year. Since believers of all churches as well as many non-Christians also believed in this saint's intercession and finally Church gave an approval to the people's faith and the declaration came out in that way. In this non-detailed we are going to study about that saint. Church had declared Vattasseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysius who is qualified as *Malankara Sabha Bhasuran* as a saint in 2003 about whom we have another book also to be studied.

One more word we have to know about holiness. We call God as Holy. The same word Holiness is attributed to saints also. It does not mean that saints are equal to God. We receive light from sun and moon. But we know that sun is self-illuminating and then moon reflect the light received from the sun. Saints are also like this. They receive Holiness from Jesus Christ our Lord and reflect God's glory to the whole creation. For the saints no discrimination is there between Christians and non-Christians; they intercede for all creation; since they participate in the divine nature of God. We also qualify our Catholicos with the word 'Holiness' which means he is the Supreme head of the Church and our reverence to that position is expressed in that title and we do not mean to measure the personal holiness of our supreme head. In brief Saintliness or Holiness is having different meaning in different context.

1. Childhood and Education

After his mother's death 'Kochaipora' grew up under the loving care of his father and his sister Mariam. Even during childhood, certain distinguishing characteristics made him different from other children. He had no craze for costly clothes and ornaments; but preferred simple dress. He was not much interested in games, as is usual with children of his age. Instead he was deeply attracted towards prayer, Bible reading, and listening to the life of saints. He very carefully observed 'fasting' even from his young days. He began his formal education in the traditional village school. The teacher was 'Onakkavil Ayya'. The boy was very studious and he completed his early education under another local teacher named 'Mani.' He was a model for his friends in showing respect to his teachers, humility, obedience and love. He never wasted his time, was very intelligent and hardworking and enjoyed doing good to others.

Respect to Teachers

Whenever Mar Gregorios visited his native village (after becoming a church dignitary) he would send for his 'guru' (teacher) and offer gifts to him. He used to respect his guru to the extent that he would not even sit in the presence of the teacher. Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Malpan of the Chathuruthy family was Geevarghese's uncle (father's brother). The Malpan was an authority in Syriac language, and as he recognized the outstanding and divine qualities of Kochaipora, decided to teach the boy the Syriac language. Since the boy could sing very well, it was an advantage in learning Syriac. Geevarghese Malpan saw in the young Kochaipora, his successor (as a Malpan). So he started teaching the boy the Syriac language, and Kochaipora very soon picked up the language and its music scheme.

2. Ordination

Kochaipora who grew up under the care of Geevarghese Malpan could attract everybody towards him by his exemplary qualities. His interest in spiritual matters, sincere devotion, great humility unquestioning obedience, and above all his ability to sing Syriac devotional songs sweetly were greatly appreciated by Geevarghese Malpan; and it was his desire to raise his illustrious disciple to priesthood. He revealed this desire to Mathews Mar Athanasius of Palakkunnathu, the Malankara Metropolitan of that time. He also ensured the willingness of the family members of Kochaipora, for this purpose. Accordingly the boy Geevarghese was initiated into priesthood, being ordained as *Korooyo* at Karingachira church on September 14, 1858.

Student of Theology

In those days theological education was not organized as it is now. Students used to stay with Malpans and undergo theological training. Deacon Geevarghese

following this tradition stayed with Geevarghese Malpan, along with other students and continued his education. Printed books were few, and students used to copy from books and learn. Deacon Geevarghese was in the forefront in learning and devotion. As a disciple of the Malpan, the young deacon completed his priestly education. But this exemplary teacher-disciple relationship was destined to be short lived.

Small-pox was spreading at different parts of the country at that time. Geevarghese Malpan also contracted the dreaded disease in 1865. When the disease was confirmed, all the students were sent home, except deacon Geevarghese, who decided to stay on and nurse his teacher. All treatments failed and the Malpan soon breathed his last. Within a few days deacon Geevarghese, who nursed the Malpan, also contracted the epidemic. And it is said that the small pox which he contracted was a rare and dangerous variety called *Kanakakalloori*. Having learnt about the deacon's disease, his mother's sister, Mariam, came to nurse him; and it was a great relief to him. However the deacon was praying all the time. When he was very ill and extremely weak, he had a vision of St. Mary. He saw her standing near him. She assured him that he would soon be well, and advised him to dedicate his life for God. Surprisingly enough, the deacon become well very soon and did as St. Mary directed him to do.

3. Elevation to full monastic vow (Ramban)

Monastic movement was not powerful at that time in Malankara Syrian Church. It was this time when Malankara Metropolitan Pulikottil Mar Dionysius V giving charismatic leadership to the Malankara Church with new vision and mission. He wanted that Church should have pious and noble monks to give new life in Church. He enquired about such people and this enquiry reached to Vettikkal Dayara where Very Rev. Geevarghese Cor Episcopa Ramban led a pure monastic life. In April 7, 1872, Pulikkottil Thirumeni made Geevarghese Cor Episcopa, a Ramban, which is the fullness of monastic vow. At that time this young priest had 24 years only.

Disciple of Mar Coorilose

There were allegations at that time that Mathews Mar Athanasius, then the Malankara Metropolitan was spreading Protestant teachings in the Church. About this time one Bishop Mar Coorilose from Syria visited Travancore. He was deadly against the Protestant teachings of Mar Athanasius. Meanwhile, deacon Geevarghese got acquainted with Mar Coorilose, who was very much impressed by the deacon's scholarship in the Syriac language, wisdom and devotion. The deacon travelled with Mar Coorilose as his translator and guide. Mar Coorilose ordained deacon Geevarghese as full deacon. The deacon came into contact with many people in the church and also increased his knowledge in Syriac, Bible and theology.

Mar Coorilose who was well pleased with the deacon ordained him as a priest and also as Cor Episcopa. Father Geevarghese learnt about the great monks of the Eastern Christianity, from Mar Coorilose. And naturally he was much attracted

towards them and it helped him in his resolve to follow the vocation of a monk in his life. Though his fame has reached to all people, he did not want either popularity or praise from the people. That is the real sign of a good monk. Even people of other faith had great faith in his ascetic life.

4. Consecration as Metropolitan

The Coming of Patriarch Peter III and Consecration

This visit of Patriarch Peter III was a great historical event in the history of Malankara Church. He reached here in 1875. He wanted somebody to translate his sermons from Syriac to Vernacular (Malayalam). It was Geevarghese Ramban who translated the Syriac sermon of Patriarch into Malayalam beautifully. Attracted by the pious, humble, devotional and learned Ramban, Patriarch wanted to ordain him bishop. Ramban wanted to lead a full time ascetic life and he first refused to accept this offer. He was not that much interested in administration matters which are essential for a bishop for fear that this will hinder his ascetic practices. However he was ready to submit to the will of God expressed through Patriarch and finally he became a bishop.

Monk of Parumala

Parumala was an island at that time. There were many superstitions about that island. Korula Mathen of Arikupuram family had given a plot to Pulikkottil II Thirumeni to build a parish church in Parumala. A small house called *Azhippura* was constructed there for teaching the deacons (we see that old building in the premises of Parumala even now). The place where priest are trained are normally called seminary. Gregorious Thirumeni who took charge of Niranam diocese decided to live in this place and to serve the diocesan matters. Simultaneously along with diocesan administration Thirumeni found time to teach the deacons. All great people have one thing in common i.e. discipline. When we watch closely the life of Thirumeni, we will come to know this factors.

A Typical Day of Mar Gregorios

Kochu Thirumeni will be awake by 4 in the early morning. The inmates at the Seminary also are to get up by then. Till 5 A. M. it is public prayer. He teaches the deacons from 5-7 A.M. which is followed by private prayers. If it is not a fasting day breakfast will be served at 8.30. At 9 A.M. it is time for Terce, after which classes for the deacons continue till 11 A.M. From 11 A.M. to 12, Thirumeni looks after the administrative matters of the diocese. Lunch is served at 12 noon; after which it is time for rest till 1.30 P.M. From 1.30-4 P.M., again Thirumeni engage classes for the deacons, and the prayer of the Ninth hour is said during this time. From 4-5.30 P.M. again Thirumeni looks after Diocesan matters. This is followed by evening prayer, bath and supper. After these again he teaches the deacons Syriac liturgical songs. 9 P.M. is the time for Compline. During the night, Thirumeni gets up many times for private prayers and devotions. Fasting and devotions were regular parts of this routine.

No 'Worry' about Tomorrow

In those days, Parumala Seminary had no specific income of its own. The nearby parishes used to send rice, coconut and food crops to the seminary. There were also occasional contributions. The expenditure of the seminary was being met by these. And there were days when nothing was left for the next day. But on such occasions Kochu thirumeni was not worried as he entrusted everything to God. And the results were amazing. One day nothing was left in the seminary for the next day's expenses except 9 *chakras* (32 paise). There was no food, nothing. Thirumeni was informed about the critical situation. But thirumeni was calm and unmoved, and said that the Word of God says that we need not worry about tomorrow. The next morning, before the prayers were over, a few people reached the seminary with bundles of rice, fruits, sweets and many other things. A feast was being conducted in their house and they had brought a portion of it to the seminary. The incident was powerful enough to confirm the seminary inmates in faith and dependence on God. Instances like this were numerous.

Parumala Church

A thatched shed owned by Arikupuram family was being used, as a Chapel. This shed was near *Azhippura*, where Parumala Thirumeni was staying. Thirumeni decided to construct a church and a seminary at Parumala. The Arikupuram family agreed to give enough land to Parumala Thirumeni for this purpose. Thirumeni got the land registered not in his name, but in the name of the Malankara Metropolitan. Money was collected from the people and Thirumeni constructed a beautiful church and seminary building using more than 20,000 rupees which he collected for this purpose. On the feast of St. Mary in 1895, Mar Gregorios consecrated the new church in the presence of Joseph Mar Dionysius II of Pulikkottil, and celebrated the Holy Qurbana. The church is dedicated in the name of St. Peter and St. Paul. The church had two more altars one dedicated to St. Mary and the other to St. Thomas, the Apostle. It was by his unyielding faith and total dependence on God that Mar Gregorios could successfully accomplish these projects.

Parumala Church was built by the will and pleasure of Parumala Thirumeni upto that time worship was conducted in a small shed near *Azhippura*. Along with the church, he constructed this seminary building also. Consecration of the church was conducted under the leadership of Pulikkottil Mar Dionysius V. Thirumeni's presence and worship in newly consecrated parish church was attracted by several people. Crowd was growing day by day to worship there as well as to seek blessings from Thirumeni directly. This old church had been renewed and the new one was consecrated on July 28, 2000. His Holiness Catholicos Baselius Mathews II gave leadership to the consecration. The old church building was later erected at the present Parumala Seminary hospital premise.

5. Major events in Thirumeni's life

Three Dioceses at a Time

Thirumeni was in charge of Niranam Diocese. Later he had to take care of the dioceses of Thumpamon and Kollam also. It paved the way for contact with more people, which eventually influenced the lives of the believers. For instance, when there was wide spread illness of small pox, a deadly disease in Thumpamon, Thirumeni went and stayed there. Because of his ardent prayer many were miraculously cured. The prayer of the righteous is great and that was fulfilled in this event.

Church Expansion

Though this Malankara Orthodox Church was very ancient it remained as a small community in the south west corner of India. Its boundaries had been expanded at Thirumeni's time. It was unlikely that other people coming to our Church. But at the reign of Thirumeni, thousands of people from the powerful Roman Catholic Church and its leaders joined to the Orthodox Church. It was merely because of their attraction towards Orthodox faith and worship. Chief among them who joined to the Orthodox Church was bishop Alwarees Mar Yulios Metropolitan. He was a priest when he joined to the Church along with his thousands of followers. His name was Fr. Alwaris. Thirumeni made him a Ramban. In July 29, 1889, Thirumeni consecrated him as bishop at Pazhaya (Old) Seminary and installed as the first Metropolitan of outside Kerala Diocese. Today's Brahmavar mission and diocese is the continuation of the work of saintly Alwarees Mar Yulios Metropolitan.

Journey to Colombo (Ceylon)

There were people in America who were fascinated to Orthodox faith. One priest was there from among those people and he was Fr. Rene Vilatte. He was consecrated as bishop in Colombo (capital of Sri Lanka) on May 21, 892. In this consecration ceremony along with Parumala Kochu Thirumeni, Kadavil Paulose Mar Athanasius Metropolitan of Angamaly Diocese and the aforesaid Alwarees Mar Yulios Metropolitan also participated. Mar Yulios had great influence in Colombo at that time and therefore a great reception was given to all metropolitans in Ceylon. When we look back we have to self-examine the fact that the missionary zeal which was prevalent at that time is considerably lost at this age.

Famous Jerusalem Pilgrim

Thirumeni made the Jerusalem pilgrim at a time the journey was very difficult. There were no facilities available as we enjoy today for journey, stay and so on. Besides the shortage of money was also there. Thirumeni moved around the parishes to collect money for this purpose. For travel he had to depend car, bus, train, ship, and boat and it took several weeks to finish the trip. Actually it was not a pilgrim cum trip and he was not at all fascinated in sight seeing, all he wanted to have a deep

Christ experience. This journey resulted in writing a very good travelogue named *Oorslem Yatra Vivaranam*. This book was well received in the literary field of Kerala and once it was a text book in school. The literary style and language of this book was appreciated by all learned people. All Sunday school students must read this book.

He expressed his deep spiritual experiences in the following words. “True worship is always in spirit and truth. Therefore Christian can worship God anywhere. However, while we acknowledge the sinful nature, we can grasp more spiritual things through our sights to this sacred places where our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ lived, worked, died, buried and resurrected. Whenever we prayed at all these sacred places, we had some spiritual ecstasy which we never experienced anywhere. Certain times we felt that our mind became one with Lord and felt that not to get away from that place. I thought of lying there and pray unceasingly” (from the sermon preached at Parumala after his coming back).

Missionary Zeal

Thirumeni came back from Jerusalem after tremendous change in vision and mission. He had got great insight in mission and social service. Listen to his words again, “shall we think about what Christian can do for the society. There are so many people in this land commit lot of sin due to illiteracy and poverty. There are socially untouchables who were discriminated in many ways even they were forbidden to travel through the public roads. Christians have to work for their upliftment. We have to eradicate their poverty and hardships. They should be allowed to join in our church and if needed separate parishes shall be constructed for them in the beginning. When there status is changed they shall be given full membership within the church without any discrimination. We have many more things to do for them. We have to preach Gospel among them” (From the sermon given at Parumala after his journey to Oorslem, named *Bhakta Vachanam*).

Two Disciples Ordained

Thirumeni was a great guru (teacher) in all sense. Among the many deacons, he taught, there were special attentions towards two deacons. One was deacon Punnoose from Kurichy and the other was deacon Paulose from Kuttikattil family, Angamaly. Deacon Punnoose, later became Catholicos His Holiness Baselios Geevarghese II. He only made the declaration of Parumala Thirumeni as Saint, later in 1947. Deacon Paulose became Metropolitan Paulose Mar Athanasius of Angamaly and entombed in Thrikkunnethu Seminary, Aluva. When there was two fractions, both bishops mained in opposition; however both were very good in keeping the noble things inherited from their great guru.

Cemetery of Arthattupally and Schools

He lived for some time in Arthattu church, Kunnamkulam after his coming back from Jerusalem. They have a huge cemetery in 4.5 acres and it had no boundary

walls. Thirumeni was very particular about the cemeteries to be kept beautifully where the forefathers were buried. According to the desire of Thirumeni, they built the compound wall and made it clean and tidy. In order to raise the standard of the lower caste people who faced inhumane untouchability Thirumeni was very much aware of the needed education to that section. With that purpose he started schools in Mulanthuruthy, Kunnamkulam and Thiruvalla. Kunnamkulam School was later handed over to the Government and it was known as Metran's school even now. After the demise of Thirumeni, Thiruvalla School was named as Mar Gregorious Memorial High School, one of the leading schools of Malankara Orthodox Church.

Golden Jubilee of Pulikkottil Thirumeni's Priestly Ordination

As we have seen early Pulikkottil Mar Dionysius V was the Malankara Metropolitan during this period. Being the Malankara Metropolitan he had to face many hardships including litigations in court. Therefore Church wanted to honour him and looked for an auspicious occasion. It was decided to celebrate the Fifth anniversary of his priesthood at Kottayam in 1901. Climate was very adverse due to continuous rain and organizers were very uncomfortable about it. On the previous day Parumala Thirumeni, through his divine intuition proclaimed that climate will be nice on next day. This meeting was very successful in its conduct and the people who gathered there believed that the climate change was a miracle done by Kochu Thirumeni. There are lot of events like this by which people accepted the saintliness of Thirumeni, even when he was alive.

6. Thirumeni Passes Away

Thirumeni's illness took a turn for the worse in September 1902. One of the trusted disciples, Fr. Kochukoshy was in the seminary. One day when he casually had come to the Seminary, Thirumeni told him that he was not feeling well, and he should stay there; and Kochukoshy Kathanar stayed with Thirumeni and nursed him. Vattasseril Geevarghese Kathanar, the prominent disciple of Thirumeni also came to the seminary and stayed there looking after the well-being of Thirumeni. Every possible indigenous medical treatment was tried, but Thirumeni was getting weaker day by day. Thirumeni had foreknowledge of his death and told about it to those around him. Pulikkottil Thirumeni, when he came to know about Kochu Thirumeni's illness reached the Seminary from Trivandrum. Pulikkottil Thirumeni, who had filial love for Kochu Thirumeni cried aloud with grief, when he saw Kochu Thirumeni writhing in pain. Kochu Thirumeni had complaint of ulcer even earlier. It aggravated and took a bad turn due to the severity of his fasting and abstinence, and the result was severe pain.

The news of Parumala Thirumeni's illness spread like wild fire, and people from all the places in the north and south were virtually flowing in to Parumala. Thirumeni was very particular that whoever came to the seminary must be served food. People living nearby brought the food articles for this purpose to the seminary. Food contributions

were coming in such big quantities that twice daily a large number of people were served food at the seminary. Thirumeni's body was slowly becoming weak and numb. Thirumeni called Vattasseril Geevarghese Kathanar to his side and entrusted to him the crosier and other insignia and the keys. After this Thirumeni was lying still and silent for three days. On the third day, Thirumeni asked what date was it. He was told that the date was 18th (Malayama era), Thirumeni said: "O My Lord, I must suffer this pain for two more days." This showed that Thirumeni knew that his end would come on the 20th. On the morning of the 20th, *Kantheela* (the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick) was conducted for Thirumeni and he received the Holy Qurbana. By about midnight on the 20th, Thirumeni was lying motionless, and in a feeble voice he said "My Lord!". Punnoose Ramban (Later Catholicos Baselios Geevarghese II) who was standing near uttered the Nicene Creed. The priests who were standing around the bed followed: - "In the One True God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." This was said thrice. By this time the Holy Father breathed his last. The Spirit of the saintly one was committed into the hands of the Heavenly Father. The bells of the Parumala Seminary sang the wailing tune and carried the message across River Pampa to the people of the country.

When Abraham Lincoln was assassinated one of his admirers said till yesterday Lincoln belonged to the United States, today he belongs to the whole world. He will be remembered for the generations to come." Parumala Kochu Thirumeni, who was considered as belonging to Malankara Church, is today the saint par excellence of all people belonging to all religions; and his blessed memory will live for ever.

The news of the passing away of Kochu Thirumeni was spreading fast and for the people, all roads were leading to Parumala. People of all religions, rich and poor, priests and laity were moving to Parumala to have a look at the mortal remains of the Holy Father. They were moving all available means of transport; motor vehicles, country boats and carts and also by foot. The demise of Kochu Thirumeni was unbearable to Pulikkottil Thirumeni, who was staying in the seminary and nursing Kochu Thirumeni. It was as though Pulikkottil Thirumeni had lost his 'refuge'. He firmly believed that Kochu Thirumeni's prayer was helping him, while he was leading the Church through the stormy days of litigation. Every time a difficult situation arose, Pulikkottil Thirumeni would reach to Parumala and pray with Kochu Thirumeni, and would request him "please, continue to pray for me." He felt as though his only solace was there no more, and hence his grief. He used to come to Parumala as a pilgrim till he passed away in 1909. The body of the deceased Holy Father was adorned with all vestments and insignia and was seated on a throne inside the church, following the ancient custom in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Internment (Burial)

The burial services started on Monday itself. Paulose Mar Ivanios Metropolitan led the service, which was completed on Tuesday. Pulikkottil Thirumeni, could not

lead the services, since he could not bear the sight of the motionless body of the saint. The funeral procession (*nagari kanikkal*) followed in the presence of a large multitude of people. Everywhere it was people wailing and crying, sighing and beating their breasts. Before the entombment, it took about three hours for the people to kiss the hand of Kochu Thirumeni. The location of the tomb was earlier pointed out by the saint himself, on divine inspiration. The body was lowered into the tomb and was filled up to the head with frankincense, which was offered by the faithful. New clothes were distributed to the poor who attended the funeral. The 30th day of demise was observed on a grand scale, with the cooperation of the parishes in Malankara. 600 bushels of rice and 1300 rupees were spent for the feast on that day.

On that same day the representatives of parish churches met at Parumala, with Mar Dionysius in the chair. The assembly elected Kochuparampil Paulose Ramban and Vattasserril Geevargheese Kathanar to be bishops. Another meeting within a few days decided to name the new school at Thiruvalla as Mar Gregorios Memorial High School (M.G.M.) The Metropolitan of Jerusalem sent a condolence message on the passing away of Mar Gregorios which said, “really the lamp of our church is out.” Yes, this great saintly person was the light house and Morning Star of the Church! As the book of Daniel reads (12:3): “The wise leaders will shine with all the brightness of the sky, and those who have taught many people to do what is right will shine like the stars for ever.”

Canonization

On the 45th Anniversary of his demise; on November 2, 1947, Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala was officially canonized as a saint along with Maphrian Yeldho Mar Baselios by the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Malankara Orthodox Church, Presided over by His Holiness Baselios Geevarghese II, Catholicos of the East. From then on many churches and altars have been dedicated in the name of Parumala Mar Gregorios.

7. Contributions of Parumala Thirumeni

The history of today’s Church is closely related to Parumala and Thirumeni. Now Parumala is a pilgrim center for thousands of people of all denominations and religions who experience great consolation to their problems. This is only one side of Thirumeni’s life. There are many more contributions of Thirumeni to Church and society. We may list a few in the following lines.

1. A Pure Model of Eastern Spirituality: There are certain special attributes to Orthodox spirituality. Chief among it is *Theosis* or Deification, “Son of God has become son of man in order to make sons of men into sons of God.” It was St. Athanasius of Alexandria who gave this axiom and this is the core of Eastern spirituality. Human Seek God not only for material comforts, but ultimate aim is to participate in the divine nature of God (2 Peter 1:4). “Seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and everything will be added to it” (St. Matthew 6:33). This

denotes an experience to be united with God. This is what Thirumeni stated about the blissful experience in Jerusalem about which we had seen early.

2. Unseeing Prayer and Strict Ascetic Practices: Sin separates human away from God. It is Satan who always tempts human to commit sin. In order to overcome satanic temptation we need the grace of God which we receive from prayer, lent and fasting. Thirumeni was not satisfied with mere ritual observations. Communion with God and purity of heart were his main objectives behind his ascetic practices. He taught “Those who pray daily will not become untruthful, unrighteous, unbelievable, unpius, unloving and ungodly. Prayer is joy for childhood, consolation for youth and happiness in old age” (*Bhakta Vachanam*).

3. He Nurtured the Church: Thirumeni lived at a time of the aggressive Western missionaries. People who always look for novelty were attracted by reformed faith and a few left the church also. To their arguments, Thirumeni gave reply not by words but by actions. He proved the credibility of Orthodox faith through his life. He believed that the Church is built by the people who are growing in purity of heart. His witness helped thousands of believers to be firm in Orthodox faith then and now.

4. Anthonios (Antony) of Malankara Orthodox Church: St. Antony is the father of monasticism who lived in third century. Many monks lived in deserts and forests. Vettikkal and Parumala islands were deserted places before one and half century. These places were very suitable to develop an ascetic mind in Thirumeni. He did not submit to any worldly pleasures. He did not even like to become a Metropolitan which he found a hindrance to his ascetic life. However following the path of some of the early Church fathers, for the sake of the Church he finally gave consent to the consecration. While we consider his strict monastic rules, undoubtedly he could be considered as the St. Antony of Malankara Orthodox Church.

5. Social Reformer: Holy people will not go always in seclusion. After discerning the will of God, they try to reform the society in better ways. In the caste-ridden society, the backward people like Pulaya, Paraya and several other dalits had lot of hardships at that time due to social discrimination. Thirumeni had got compassionate affection towards them. He wrote, “The low caste people had no access to the public roads and they are deprived of human relationships. It is our duty to give them education, to eradicate their hardships and to deepen their faith in God so that they may also lead a better life.” He believed that God is always with the poor people and therefore those who love God should also love the poor people.

6. Emphasis given to English Education: He was not only a social reformer but also had radical ideas. Best example is his special concern for English education. Though Thirumeni opposed the Protestant Reformed faith of the Western missionaries, he felt the need of English education which English people brought here. He believed that English education will help the backward classes to come up to the main stream of

the society. In that perspective he was very progressive minded. That is why he started English Schools in many places. In that venture neither profit motive nor communal interest was his intention. His only intention was to uplift the conditions of the poor who were systematically marginalized.

7. Gospel to the non-Christians: Jerusalem pilgrim changed a lot in Thirumeni's outlook and vision. He became more aware of the need to bring the Gospel to the non-Christians. He did radical things like converting other caste people to our church. The traditional Syrian Christians who uphold the Brahmanic racial continuity (which is not true according to many historians) did not like it. But Thirumeni did not favour the mentality of Syrian Christians. Numerical growth was not the intention which Thirumeni aimed. He believed that if the lower caste people accept the faith of Christian Church, it will indirectly help them to improve their social status also in the caste-ridden society. Besides Christian faith will induce them to learn and imitate the higher values of the kingdom of God whereby they will change their life style accordingly. It was Parumala Thirumeni who took initiative to convert people to our Church which was later continued by late Pathros Mar Osthathios Thirumeni with strong vigour and commitment. Unfortunately this interest in slowly lost is our church and we need to go back to the paths cleared before us by these venerable fathers.

8. Good Shepherd: He began in Niranam Diocese as the good shepherd which later expanded to Thumpamon and Kollam dioceses. He travelled a lot to meet the sheep erp the lost one. His pastoral interest was to make all believers to become closer to Jesus Christ as well as to inculcate the value of the kingdom of God in them. He tried to solve the problems in parishes not by authority but through love and fellowship. In all these aspects he did not depend on his own abilities but on the grace of God. At the same time he was not reluctant to scold whenever it is needed. He did not expect any flattery from the people. But on the other hand always sought the will of God. He laboured all day and night to lead the flock into more divinity. Deification was his ultimate aim in his pastoral ministry.

9. Great Teacher (Guru): Thirumeni moved from Vettikkal to Parumala to teach deacons. There is a saying that some people got knowledge not spiritual experience. And some have got experience but not knowledge. But Thirumeni was a great teacher with knowledge and experience. All his disciples have got his qualities in different measurements.

10. Writer and Orator: He was a great writes and orator. The famous travelogue on *Oorslem Yathra Vivaranam* itself is a remarkable evidence for his writing skills. When we go through his available writings we could see his orating ability also. When people believed him as a miracle does all other qualities were not given careful attention.

11. Great Intercessor: In his life turns itself people believed in his spiritual power through which he had done great things and miraculous healing. It was not publicity

sake as it is being done now a days. Like our Lord and master Jesus Christ he did everything in privacy. His life is an example in the sense God works in this world through the saints even after this earthly lives.

Many churches were built in and outside Kerala and India in the name of Mar Gregorios. Many saints who remember in our liturgies are not born and brought up in our country. Being a saint from our own lace, people of different denominations and religions have great faith in his intercession. A lot of schools, colleges, orphanages and similar institutions have been started in his name. There is a hospital in Parumala and another specialized hospital for cancer care is coming up in Parumala. The feast days are first and second of November every year in Parumala. But other churches and congregations are also celebrating feast during that week. In spirit, this saint likes the devotees to grown in spirituality with unceasing prayer, but, fasting worship purity of life and concern for the needy and poor in society irrespective of caste or creed. Imitate his saintly life as he imitated the life of Jesus Christ.

Appendix

SAYINGS FROM PARUMALA THIRUMENI

1. Prayer is the inspiration of childhood, the refuge of youth and peace during old age.
2. Prayer helps education to cultivate truth, morality, faith, devotion and mutual respect among people.
3. He who prays to God everyday would never be without truth, morality, faith and devotion, and would never turn against his master or society.
4. When we pray with a heart full of devotion, God accepts it and we receive blessings in return.
5. If man does not raise his hands in prayer for himself and for the sake of his people, even after knowing God, how can we say man is better than animals which are not wise and cannot think about their future?
6. Prayer is, in many ways, the golden chain that binds this world to the feet of God.
7. Pray earnestly to God during day and night. Such prayer is the best way to remove the darkness and fatigue in us; and also the means to attain salvation and the Kingdom of Heaven. Put your faith in God and pray to him.
8. God is on the side of the poor. Remember God in whatever you do; then everything will turn out for good.
9. Whatever is due to the Church must be given forthwith. If your mind is pure in that matter, your house will also be pure. If in such thing you think of any gain or revenue, then you will lose that ten-fold. Therefore all of you be pure in depending on God, in brotherly love and in loving your neighbours.
10. Don't try to be smart, nor be foolish. Never love body more than spirit and money more than God.

11. Forgiveness is strength. It gives a person good name. It is the distinguishing feature of righteous people.
12. Love your enemies. Never make enemies of friends.
13. Consult God in everything; consult your father too. If your father abandons you, God will also abandon you. Don't be adamant in silly things, which will bring in dislike-of both God and men.
14. Never be proud. Let God save you from every grave danger. Hold on to God in everything. He will bless you abundantly.
15. Avoid arrogance, quarrel, and pride while dealing in Church matters; instead, let your humility shine before others. Those who place their trust in God, and satisfy the people are blessed. May God bless them?
16. Remember God in everything. Let no one grieve because of you. Never let go an opportunity to do something good. Only those things will remain with you till the end.
17. As far as possible never do evil to anyone; or it will ruin you, your children and your house. Hold on steadfastly to prayer, fasting and works of charity. Do them with faith and devotion.
18. If you are lazy, your learning cannot progress. Hold on to God tight. Humility should be the best ornament for you.
19. Death is at everybody's door. Keep that in mind.
20. You must regularly read the Holy Bible. You must obey your spiritual fathers and increase their good name and honour before God and men by your exemplary life.
21. Those who disobey their parents and join their enemies, are liable to be cursed by them. They will not inherit the legacy of their parents and will be disqualified for this world as well as the other.
22. Never be proud. Pride is followed by fall. Humility is followed by greatness.
23. If there is quarrel in the family, keep away from it. A quarrelsome house is the haven of the devil; and God is no where near it.
24. Be rich in the love of man and love of God. Brothers should never cheat each other. When you move away from unity you are sure to move away from God.
25. It is not spiritual wisdom to try to conquer the enemy with evil than with virtue. If you depend on the God of Truth and go out with a truthful heart, God will accomplish things for you.
26. Loss and difficulties come when God moves away. On such occasions, never look for one reason or the other. Instead, know that God has kept away because of your sins; then cling to God, he will show mercy upon you.
27. Be obedient in all your dealings. Identify the good and love it, throw away laziness; be enthusiastic to do good things, day and night. St. Vattasseril Mar Dionysius H. H. Baselios Geevarghese II Catholicos, Paulose Mar Athanasius (Aluva) are some of his great disciples.

