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The

# Stream

Newsletter

The



An Online Publication of the Diocese of South-West America  
Sunday School Edition



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## The Virtual Wall

The walls of a public school classroom are clad with children's delightful artwork, charming stories, and multiple representations of math problems. What makes it beautiful are not teacher-made or store-bought pieces, rather the labor of thick crayon strokes, magically written tales and carefully calculated numbers.

Now, how can we display the work of our children in the diocese when they are not in the same classroom with four walls? Put it in a newsletter! *And so we have arrived.*

A year and a half ago, being able to appreciate the work that children create from the Centralized Written Events (CWE, former CWC) had not become reality. Today, the Sunday School edition of *The Stream* has made it possible to create spaces on the *virtual wall* to admire and value the work of our kids.

The June 2023 issue highlights the CWE work of children from the Northwest Region (Canada and Washington). The newsletter is not limited to CWE as you will also read essays or stories from children all over the diocese and get the scoop about various Sunday School events.

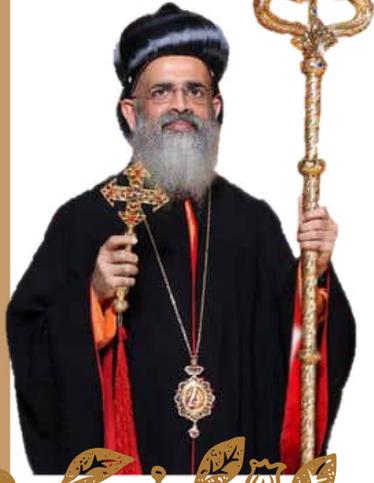
Let's take a moment to appreciate the "wall" which is dazzled with our children's work.

*Happy Reading!*

Preethy Eapen  
Regional Coordinator, South Region (Houston)



# Holy Pentecost – The Feast of Love



## Metropolitan Dr. Thomas Mar Ivanios

Holy Pentecost is the feast where Christ invites every nation to participate in His love. Therefore, how much more intensely should we, the Church, His beloved Bride, experience this invitation to participate in His love? How shall we respond to this noble invitation from our God, Jesus Christ? Will we be drunk with pride, arrogance, self-justification, and hatred and thus become blind to the great invocation to join in the love of God? Shall we continue building an inner tower of Babel? Or are we willing to offer ourselves in humility and let our pride and darkness drown in the life-giving experience of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

For a world constantly in a rush to acquire fleeting and temporary happiness, the words of Christ to wait in the upper room, the Holy Church, will seem challenging, unachievable, and primarily dull. We have lost the art of patience and waiting, which has caused us so many miseries. Wanting and waiting for God's presence is essential to see and experiencing Christ, even in the holy chalice.

We are so busy building up a tower of Babel that we have become confused regarding our priorities in life. Our ambitions hardly outgrow the earthly realm; hence, heaven seems to have become a fiction for many people.

Since we have become so focused on constructing the inner Babel, we need help understanding the language of love, mercy, compassion, and prayer. This loss and lack of understanding, the cry for love and compassion, has transformed us into a generation of idolatry, and we have become like the idols we have formed with our thoughts, words, and actions. As the Psalmist reminds us, "The idols of the nations are silver and gold made by human hands. They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see. They have ears but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them." *Psalms 135: 15-18.*

My beloved children! We desperately need the Spirit of God to renew us from our brokenness and darkness. God is willing to lift us up beyond our brokenness and arrogance. But are we willing to look beyond our pride, self-justifications, and excuses for not being in the upper room, which is life in the Holy Church? We, the beloved of Christ, will not be left orphaned, for this is the promise our Lord Himself gives us. As long as we can overcome our excuses and submit ourselves to the love of our God, we shall genuinely experience the tongues of fire within us as the Holy Apostles experienced it on the day of Pentecost. Let us end the construction of the inner tower of Babel, and let us begin preparing the Upper Room within us - where we can wait with an ardent desire for the Holy Spirit to come and fill us and everything about us. May the Holy Spirit, the life-giving Lord of all, abide in us, teach us, and remind us that we do not belong to this world but to Christ, our Bridegroom. Let us find our hope, strength, and our vision for life in the words of Christ our Lord – "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (*St. John 14:27*). Let us be filled with the love of Christ, become peacemakers, and the rays of light of the Kingdom of God in this world of brokenness and despair.

I wish all of you a very blessed feast of Holy Pentecost!

# Profile of a Priest

**FR. BINNY M. KURUVILLA**  
**VICE DIRECTOR, NORTHWEST REGION**

I am Fr. Binny M Kuruvilla, recently appointed as the vice director of the North-West (NW) region in the South-West American Diocese. I graduated from the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam in 1993 and then served as the acting coordinator of Karunya Guidance Centre in Ulloor, Trivandrum. I was ordained as a priest by the Late Lamented HH Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews II and served as a vicar in various parishes within the Niranam Diocese, as well as a short period in the Orthodox Congregation in Rustaq, Oman. Later, I worked as an instructor at St. Gregorios College in Pulikkeezhu, Kerala. I hold Bachelors degrees in Law, Theology and Education, as well as a masters degree in History. In August 2010, I joined the South-West American Diocese and served at St. Mary's Malankara Orthodox Church in Calgary until 2019. Since 2019, I have been serving as the vicar of St. Gregorios Church in Edmonton. My wife, Letha Binny, is a teacher, and we have two sons. Cyril Binny is a mechanical engineer, while Cephen Binny is currently a final year BDS student.

The NW region, although expansive, consists of only a few churches, namely St. Gregorios Church in Edmonton, St. Mary's Church in Calgary, St. Gregorios Church in Vancouver, St. Thomas Church in Seattle, and St. Gregorios Church in Spokane. Additionally, two new congregations, St. Mary's Church Chilliwack in Vancouver and St. Mary's Church in Saskatoon, have recently been established by our Metropolitan. The closest parish to us is Calgary Church, which is located 300 km away. One challenge we face is the physical isolation, unlike churches in Texas or other regions in the USA, where our children often engage in sports and activities with neighboring parishes within the city. This year, our members initiated weekly badminton sessions on Saturdays before evening prayers, providing an opportunity for our children to interact more with others from our own parish. Additionally, we organize annual picnics and similar events exclusively for Sunday School kids. Every year we allow our kids to organize bake sales and take the lead in celebrating Father's Day and Mother's Day.

Other spiritual organizations also give opportunities of volunteering in their parish activities. Through such initiatives, our goal is to foster a sense of community among our children, with the Church at the center of their lives. I am also proud to mention that nine of our Sunday School boys have been ordained to the Holy altar and our girls who have grown up in Canada have participated in the Morth Mariam Regional competition. Both girls and boys lead the English choir and present the Old Testament readings every Sunday. Last year, our Sunday School successfully published a yearbook, marking a memorable event in our Sunday School history. Our children actively participate in creative writing competitions conducted by the Diocese. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, our region organized talent competitions every two years. Our vision is that through our Sunday School education, our children will continue to remain steadfast in their faith and remain loyal to the Holy Church even after graduation.



# Apostles Fast

Fr. Jithin J. Zachariah  
Vice Director, Midwest Region (Chicago)



## *Apostles' Fast: From Ordinary to Extraordinary!*

None of us can tell the story of our lives without pointing to particular persons we have known and who have shaped us. In our families and friendships, people are not interchangeable, for we are all unique in our relationships with one another and with God. We play particular roles that are colored by our character, personal history, and distinctive blend of strengths and weaknesses. That is also how it is in the life of the Church. Particular people matter.

From June 16th to June 29th we are participating in the Apostles Fast. During this Fast we remember those 13 men: the 12 Apostles, and then St. Paul, who moved away from the satisfaction and comfort of this world. As we know, most of these Apostles were fishermen and some were tax collectors. All of them had certain comforts in the world. Many of them left their families; for example, St. Peter had a wife and children. The comforts, the things that they held onto, they left it all and followed Jesus Christ. After Pentecost, these Apostles went out into the world for Christ's sake, they were all fulfilled through His Body and Blood, through His Death and Resurrection, and they brought the Good News of His Death and Resurrection to the world. And that's why the Church gives us this Fast. It's a time for us to remove ourselves from the temporary pleasures, the temporary comforts of this life, and move toward that eternal satisfaction of Christ, just like the Apostles did.

In order to celebrate the feast day of the Apostles, we are called to go beyond praising them with our words. We are to participate personally in the holiness so evident in them. In other words, we are to become like Him in a way appropriate to our particular calling and location. For just as God used people like fishermen and tax collectors with given sets of strengths and weaknesses to His glory, He intends to do likewise with each of us.

We may think, however, that we are simply too sinful to achieve such spiritual heights. We know that we fall short and may be ashamed even to think of becoming like the Apostles. Think about it. Peter denied Jesus Christ three times at His arrest and Paul persecuted Christians to the point of death. If they can repent, follow Jesus Christ faithfully, and have such exalted roles in the life of the Church, who are we to excuse ourselves from whatever God wants of us in our families, our parish, our work, or whatever it might be? In all likelihood, we will live and serve in obscurity and face obstacles much smaller than the brutal persecution these our Apostles endured.

Our moments of weakness are probably less dramatic, but they are no less real. We find it hard to do the basics of the Christian life: forgive our enemies; pray each day and fast regularly; attend the Divine Liturgy and other services of the Church whenever possible; participate in the sacrament of Holy Confession on a regular basis and especially when we have a guilty conscience about a grave sin; give generously to the poor; visit the sick and lonely; and guard our hearts and minds from the moral decay that infiltrates our culture. When we are aware of our weaknesses, we are in the perfect place to follow in the way of the Apostles who in humble repentance found a strength that makes up for what is lacking, heals infirmities, and even conquers sin and death. I pray that we do not use a false sense of humility to excuse ourselves from true discipleship as we remember the Apostles. Instead, we are called to follow their examples as the unique people we are, with all our strengths, failings, and peculiarities. May the intercessions of the Holy Apostles be a strong fortress for us all! Amen!



# Meet Della Gejo

## Northwest Regional Coordinator

My name is Della Gejo, and I am honored to serve as the Regional Coordinator for the Northwest Region. I am a member of St. Gregorios Orthodox Church in Edmonton, Canada. My previous experience as a teacher, coupled with my understanding of our faith, has enabled me to serve as a Sunday School teacher.

Over the past 15 years, I have had the privilege of teaching high school classes in our church's Sunday school, and for nearly a decade, I have taught grade 12 classes. Additionally, I have served as the Principal of our Sunday School for two separate tenures, totaling five years. Currently I live in Edmonton, Canada with my husband and two kids. I enjoy a variety of hobbies, including traveling, cooking, listening to music, and engaging in various crafts.

The Sunday School program aims to provide children with a strong foundation in their Orthodox faith. As the Regional Coordinator, my goal is to collaborate with all Sunday Schools in our region to ensure that every child receives the best possible spiritual experience. Together, we can build a stronger community of believers and help children develop a greater understanding of our faith and thus a lifelong relationship with God. I am excited to serve in this role and look forward to achieving our shared goals. Thank you for this opportunity.





# Envy

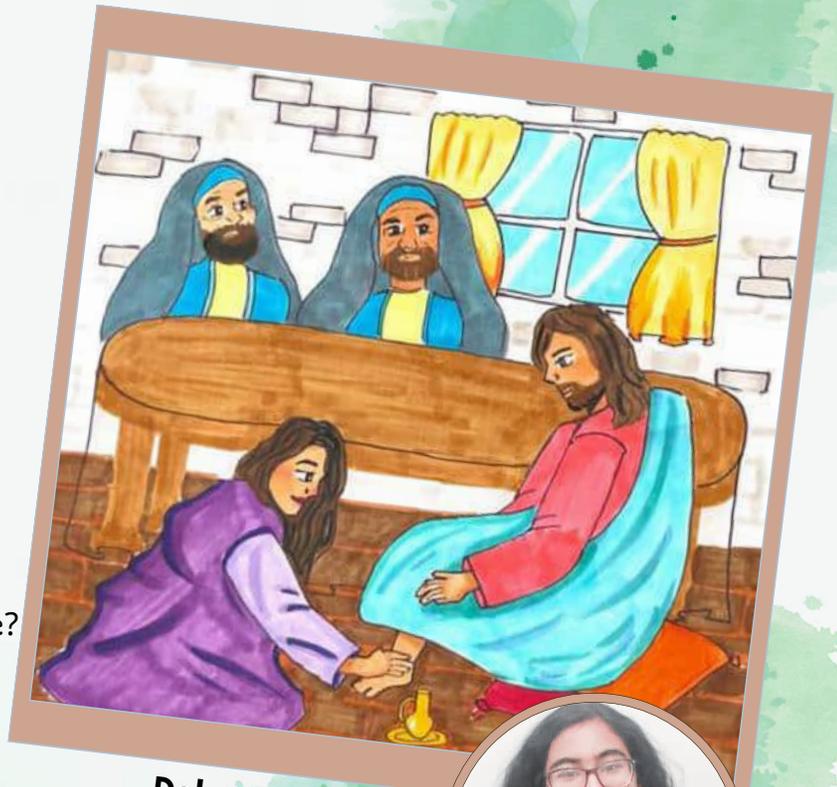
**Gabriel Gregory Johnson**

St. Mary's  
Calgary, AB



**Evelyn Leeza Denhis**

St Gregorios  
Edmonton, AB



**Delna Ebby David**

St. Mary's  
Calgary, AB



Do not be boastful, challenging of envious of one another

Put aside, jealousy, anger, malice, deceit, and slander

Do not be envious of evil doers,

Do not be jealous of lawless workers.

Do not let your heart envy worldly sinners

Fearing the Lord breeds Heavenly winners

Do not be envious of evil doers,

Do not be jealous of lawless workers.

Do not let your mind covet this world's evil men

Nor desire to have anything to do with them

Do not be envious of evil doers,

Do not be jealous of lawless workers.

Do not fret because of the wicked

Wish not to be with the evil spirited

Do not be envious of evil doers,

Do not be jealous of lawless workers.

Do not follow men of violence

Choose not to be in their presence

Do not be envious of evil doers,

Do not be jealous of lawless workers.

Envy rots the bones of man

Jealousy kills the simple man

Like the grass they will quickly wither away

Like the herbs they will quickly fade away

Do not be envious of evil doers,

Do not be jealous of lawless workers.

Why do you look with envy, O mountains with many a node?

At the mountain which God has set for His abode

surely He will dwell there with his people forever!

surely He will do away the evil and wicked altogether!

So do not be envious of evil doers,

And do not be jealous of lawless workers!



**Julia Gejo**  
St. Gregorios  
Edmonton, AB

# Unbreakable

Where is she?" asked Leah.

"I don't know, do you think she forgot?" replied Eve.

"Hey guys! Sorry I was a little late!" says Sarah.

"That's fine!" We thought you forgot about our secret spot!" Eve said with a dramatic voice. The three were inseparable. As they strolled through their local park enjoying their favorite ice cream, Sarah talked about the girls that were always up to trouble at school, Stephanie and her gang, and how she thought that they were pretty cool. Eve and Leah got a little worried, but eventually they brushed it off and discussed other topics.

The next day at school, Sarah met Stephanie and her friends. It was normal for a while, but it eventually got to the point where Sarah started to ignore Eve and Leah, her previous best friends. Eve and Leah didn't think too much about it for a while, but one day, they went up to Sarah. "Listen, it's okay that your friends with Stephanie or whatever, but those girls are seriously up to no good. We heard them say your name a few times on the way to the washroom too, so just be aware, and stay away from them okay?" said Eve.

"No! You guys are just jealous that I'm finally making friends with popular kids! Just leave me alone, okay!" Sarah said angrily. Eve and Leah were upset to hear that Sarah didn't trust them, but they let her be.

Sarah also knew Stephanie from her ballet group, but Sarah had always been the best dancer there. A few weeks later, Sarah and Stephanie had an important dance competition, competing for first place. When it was Sarah's turn to perform, she had barely started her performance when there was a loud thud. Everyone came to see what happened when they saw Sarah lying on the stage floor, grabbing her ankle, and trying to stand up. Sarah was immediately brought to the hospital. It was later declared that Stephanie won that competition.

The next day, Eve and Leah went to visit Sarah. "We were so worried about you! What happened?" asked Leah. "It's just an ankle fracture, but I won't be able to dance for a while," said Sarah. "Someone messed with my pointe shoes." Eve and Leah shared a knowing glance. "Um, do you by chance know who won that competition?" asked Leah. "Probably Steph," she paused. "Wait a second." "Do you think it could've been her?" asked Eve. "Listen, you get the benefit of the doubt, but Steph's my friend, and she would never do anything to hurt me," replied Sarah. "So, tell me, has she come to see you yet? Ask what happened?" Sarah says no, but still tells them to leave her alone.

The next day Eve and Leah go to visit Sarah again, but before any of them say anything, Eve plays a video of Stephanie talking. The video was Stephanie saying how she messed with Sarah's pointe shoes and how it all worked according to plan. Sarah's eyes filled with tears, and Leah and Eve rushed to hug her. The three share a hug. Sarah, filled with guilt says a heartfelt sorry.

A few weeks later, Sarah, Eve, and Leah walked through the halls for the first time in what felt like forever. The unbreakable trio was back, now stronger than ever.



*It's easy*

to want other's looks or money.

All material things, as sweet as honey.

But how easy is it to wish that your rival; your enemy,  
Finds peace, or happiness, and ends up healthy?

A life that may seem extravagant or lavish,  
Is nothing from a liar, a cheat, or someone thievish.  
Don't wish to acquire in a way that's dishonest,  
Keep what you earn, even if it is modest.

Lawlessness, evil, immorality and sin,  
Of something to be jealous, these are not akin.  
Keep your heart righteous and as pure as a dove.  
Life may be cruel, tormenting, or tough,  
At times it seems like there's no one willing to help;  
To show compassion or love.

Even so, your heart would be unwise to long to be those,  
Who are rich and privileged, but have no devotion in their souls.

No consideration for others, nor kindness in sight,  
Those who are only concerned about themselves and their own  
might.

Lest you become friends with, or envy people like these,  
Like a spider's prey, you'll be trapped with ease.  
Listening to lies and blasphemy brew,  
Don't let it diminish your faith, or disparage you.

Have faith in the one that got you this far.  
Have trust in his plans, though you don't know what they are.  
For Christ is whose example we should follow,  
Not that of the evil, the lawless or the shallow.



**Delna Ebby David**

St. Mary's  
Calgary, AB



# THE DEBATE

**Maria Suzan Raj**

St. Gregorios  
Edmonton, AB



Eyes hyperfocus on the enchanting white poster like an arrow aiming for a bulls-eye. Bolded text proposes a scenario, poking the dead bear of morals and ethics.

**"A RICH MAN AND A POOR MAN COMMIT THE SAME CRIME. THE RICH MAN RECEIVES A FINE OF \$10,000 WHILE THE POOR MAN GETS A PRISON SENTENCE OF ONE YEAR. IS THIS FAIR?"**

Feet scramble, tripping over one another to divide themselves in the amphitheater. Once the shuffling quiets down, a boom replaces it. "Well, what are you all waiting for? Proceed!" The echo prompts the first scoff heard in the crowd. "Isn't the answer..." they begin, "obvious? Do not commit a crime if you can't bear the consequence."

Eager mutterings proceed the statement, each one of them gearing up for battle. Yes, of course. Action such as these have apparent consequences." The opposing side continues, "however, every person should receive the same punishment regardless of status. An eye for an eye."

Agreement resounds on the right while the original speaker on the left picks up the argument again. "An eye for an eye, eh?" They drawl. "In this scenario, what if I accidentally run over your cat? Does that mean you should run over my cat too?"

Confusion took over both sides but before long, a different voice spoke up on the right side. "Uh, I am not sure why we are bringing up animals into this," they expressed. "We are talking about human discrimination based on wealth are we not? Anyway, my point was going to be that the punishment is not really a punishment for the rich man. Especially if he is hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars rich. He will barely feel the punishing blow."

Bubbling anger seemed to enflame the original speaker from the left side. Not allowing the chance for support from their own side, the voice rebukes their companion. "Oh, you're probably one of those folks out for our blood." Ignorant of their own lies, they ramble on. "So, if we have the money to buy ourselves out of jail, why can't we use it? I mean, we are paying for everything you poor people want anyway. Shall we not pay for ourselves too?"

Silence reigned in the amphitheater. A space that carried powerful voices, refused to do so any longer. A quiet whisper spoke, entrapping attention once again. "I've learned this story the hard way. In ancient times, Socrates questioned who was the wisest. The oracle assured him that he was, much to his denial. He claimed the knowledge he possessed was nothing in the grand scheme of the universe. Smiling, the oracle once again stated that that made him the wisest."

With a momentary pause, the lesson was engraved the minds and walls at the amphitheater. "You, my friend, should realize that you do not know everything. Do not make judgements on the innocent based on your lies. Also, know that you are not the only one in the room. Allow the others to speak and find the truth too. After all, aren't uncertainties the path to discoveries of oneself?"

With that, whispers abandoned the amphitheater.





# \$1200

by

**Delna Ebby David**

St. Mary's  
Calgary, AB



For Bethany's 15th birthday, one week before she goes into high school, her parents gifted her \$1200! It was to buy a new laptop and for any other school supplies she needed.

Two weeks into the school year, she hadn't bought a laptop because she was still deciding on the perfect one. However, she had befriended Tennessee, who was Bethany's gateway into the world of popular girls who wear matching outfits and gossip about gossip! She was still an outsider to the group though. She was physically standing outside their talking circles! When the opportunity came, to go to the mall with them, she knew this was her chance to cement herself as part of the group. So, she offered to take everyone to the movies, as a late celebration of her birthday.

Movie tickets, food and drinks for Beth, Tennessee and four other friends, totaled \$154.45. Bethany had told her parents about going to the movies, but not about paying for everything for friends she only recently gained. Swallowing the lump in her throat, she taped her debit card to the machine.

The movie was actually really good! When everyone was getting ready to leave, Ruby spoke up.

"Hey, we all went shopping before the movie. Beth's the only one that didn't get anything! Since this is in honor of her. I say we go to one last store to pick an outfit for her!"

"That's a great idea!" Liliana said.

Before Beth could protest, she was being dragged away to the nearest still open store. She had to say, they were great at picking outfits. The pieces were gorgeous, but also really expensive. Beth really didn't want to spend anymore money, but the girls were so excited for her to choose. She ended up mixing and matching what she liked from each outfit, buying a chiffon blouse, leather jacket, and strappy sandals, coming to a total of \$135. She really did like the clothes, but that day left a wrench in her heart. She had already eaten into nearly \$300 of the \$1200 her parents gave her. Beth tried to think that it would be okay, and that she would just have to reduce her laptop budget.

After that, things had been going really well. She felt like she was really a part of her friend group, until she overheard a conversation in the washrooms.

"Hey, did you see that new girl Tennessee let into her friend group?"

"That Asian nerd? Have you seen her clothes? She look like she still goes to middle school!"

"Her hair is always tied up too. Leaving it down and wearing some makeup would do her wonders."

"Nothing can cover up all that acne though!"

The two girls laughed and walked out of the bathroom. Bethany came out from her stall, disheartened. She wanted to belong with her new friend group!



# \$1200

*Continued...*



The following weekend, Bethany decided to give herself a make-over. Her parents wanted her to use the money for school purposes, but she was already doing great in school. Besides, she didn't need a laptop right away. So, it would be okay, right? She started with her hair. She got a layered cut and purple highlights. Then she got her nails done. That cost a total of \$131. Bethany called her girlfriends to go thrifting for the biggest task of all. Wardrobe upgrade! She bought seven items from Value Village, totaling \$140.

Afterwards, they went into the mall to eat at the food court. It was there that she saw it. A Kanken backpack, the crème de la crème of student luxuries. She had already planned on getting a new backpack, but did she really need a \$100 one? The spending mood overtook her. Now all she had money for was a Chromebook. Scratch that. She hadn't bought a graphing calculator for math class, and those cost over \$100! Bethany's laptop budget went from less to nothing. All this did get her something. Popularity. Although, the popular version of herself only had about \$335 of the money her parents gave her.

One day, nearing half the school year, Bethany came home to unexpected news.

"Hey sweetie. The old Dell finally ran out of juice. That laptop's a goner now."

"What? That thing's older than me and it's been fine until now!" Beth exclaimed.

"Well, we knew this would happen eventually," her mom said. "That's why we gave you the money to buy yourself one."

Seeing the look on Bethany's face, her parents asked what was wrong.

"I... I... can't buy a new laptop. I already spent 2/3 of the money you guys gave me," Beth admitted.

"WHAT?!" her dad bellowed.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry. I know I screwed up big time. But I spent some money on my friends because I wanted them to like me and then I spent too much on myself because I didn't want to be seen as a nerd! Before I knew it, my spending had spiraled out of control!"

"Bethany, we are very, VERY disappointed in you. You were extremely irresponsible with your finances, and you lost our trust," her dad said.

Her mom continued, "There's nothing that can be done now about the money that you wasted, except for you to get a part time job and earn it back."

Bethany looked up from her crying.

"I'm so sorry," she sobbed, for she knew she had wronged her parents. "I'll do better, I promise!"

During winter break, Bethany applied for many part time jobs. She also got to work on reselling things she didn't actually need, like her Kanken backpack. One day at the public library, she checked her email. She had gotten a response! With her new job, she could make back the money in about 1 ½ months! The best part? When she went back to school without all the razzle dazzle, her friends didn't treat her any different.

Bethany learned two important things that year. 1) Good friends don't care how rich you are or what you look like. 2) You need to have some self-restraint, so as to not delude yourself into thinking you need anything other than God and those who love you.

## Whom Shall

*I* fear during trials on our way  
Even when everything is hard to face  
Jesus hold us and never lets our faith go away  
God's love will guide us to win the race

Whom shall I fear during endless tears and pain  
Even when we cannot imagine another plan  
Jesus leads us and never lets the devil gain  
God's mercy will shower blessings He can

Whom shall I fear during my distress  
Even when we cannot face another day  
Jesus guides us and never adds any stress  
God's peace and righteousness will forever stay

Whom shall I fear during my darkness  
Even when all our hope is gone  
Jesus saves us and never hides the brightness  
God's joy is waiting to be revealed as trail pass on

Whom shall I fear whom shall I fear  
The Lord is my light and my saviour.

## Outward Appearances

One day, there was a woman who went on a train so she could get to work. That day in particular, was very busy so there were almost no unoccupied seats for her to sit on. Finally, she found two unoccupied seats. One was across from the other. Beside one of the seats was a man with tattoos running up and down his arms and neck. He has a scruffy beard and a chain hanging from his neck.

The man smiled kindly at the woman and gestured to the seat, letting her know that she could sit down. In return, the woman shot the man a dirty look, and looked to the other empty seat. Beside it was a man with a light blue button-down shirt that was tucked into a pair of khaki pants. "He looks nicer," the woman thought. "After all, anyone is better than sitting next to that other guy. He would have probably tried to hurt me or take my purse."

The woman then seated herself next to the man with the button-down shirt, and placed her purse on the ground next to her feet. She then looked across from the to the first man. She noticed that he was looking rather upset. "Why do I care?" she thought, "I probably dodged a bullet."

Suddenly, the doors of the train opened and the man who was sitting beside the woman stood up. She noticed that he had something familiar. "Mu purse!" yelled the woman. "Come back with my purse!" She stood up to chase the man, but someone shot right past her. The next thing she knew, she was being handed back her purse by the man with tattoos. "Oh, my goodness, thank you." She said. "I'm so sorry that I judged you before, just based on your looks."

"That's okay," said the man. "I know that it's hard to trust a man that looks like me. Just remember, God never judges you based on your outward looks, but on your heart on the inside." The woman then replied, "I will. Thank you."

## Julia Gejo

St. Gregorios  
Edmonton, AB



## Hannah Ann Alex

St Mary's  
Calgary, AB



**Abigail Susan Stephen**

St. George  
Vancouver, CANADA



**Anoushka George**

St. Mary's  
Calgary, CANADA

**PRAYER IS...** spiritual communion with God. It can be thanksgiving, adoration or confession. Prayer binds us with God and brings us closer to Him. It gives us strength and courage to face life's problems. It gives us peace of mind and consolation. That is why the golden-mouthed St. John Chrysostom said, "Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness."

The Bible has several references about how important prayer is in our life. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 states, "pray without ceasing." Mark 11:24 states, "whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them." This shows the ultimate power of prayer. Jesus' prayer of submission in the Garden of Gethsemane is one of the most revealing prayers of all.

Orthodox Christianity reminds us to pray seven times a day facing the East. It emphasizes participation in the Divine Liturgy and encourages a regular prayer discipline. Orthodox Christians believe in the Triune God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. St. Gregorios of Parumala said that "prayer is an inspiration of childhood, the refuge of youth and peace during old age." The good habit of prayer will help children in their later journey of faith.

## Envy Consumes

*In the phrase, "as a moth gnaws a garment, so doth envy consumes a man", we can conclude that envy eats up a person over time. Envy is wishing that you could have what others have and disregard what plentiful things you already have. God has supplied man with everything that is needed to live in this world. So, wishing that you could have more than what you have is unnecessary.*

*Envy changes people's way of life and thoughts and takes us further from God. Theosis is the act of becoming closer to God, becoming like God. Sin and negative emotions take us farther from God and can even take us away from the path to heaven. One should be content with what they have, especially keeping in mind that some can't even afford daily necessities.*

*Some ways you can avoid envy include, praying to God and thanking Him for everything He has given you, reading the Bible so we can relate to others, and donating to people who are less fortunate than us. Everyone has had some sort of jealousy, be it for items, friendships, or families. Once the envy grows bigger and bigger, it starts to envelope us in a continuous cycle. Sin tries to tempt us over and over again in different forms of envy but if God is near us, we will be safe being at the right hand of the Lord. God loves us dearly and wants us to stay close to Him and stay away from envy.*

*Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness.* ~St. John Chrysostom

# CHRIST IN THE CHALICE



**Alan Kurian Vaidyan**

St. Gregorios  
Edmonton, AB

St. John Chrysostom was an incredibly important figure in early Christianity. He was instrumental in shaping Orthodox Christianity into its current form.

Consecrated as the Archbishop of Constantinople, Chrysostom delivered many sermons and wrote many theological articles. He is famously attributed for the quote, "if you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the Church door, you will not find him in the chalice".

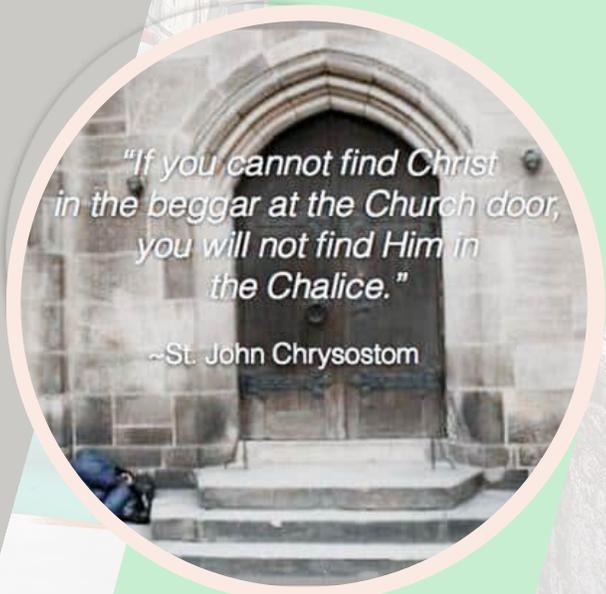
What did Chrysostom mean by this quote? Breaking down the metaphors and symbolism used, the meaning becomes much clearer. Chrysostom refers to how one must help the poor and the dejected, to truly find God. One must not just go to Holy Qurbana mindlessly and partake in the Holy Eucharist with their minds thinking of places they would rather be at that moment. Chrysostom chastises those that assume they will enter into God's Kingdom by merely attending church every Sunday, as evidenced by "you will not find him in the chalice". Instead, God's Kingdom is found in every single one of us. By helping our fellow brother, which includes the poor, hungry, dejected and disabled, we are helping those created in God's own image. This way, we are aligning our will to God's will and doing His work in this world and in the Kingdom of God.

Chrysostom's writings were mostly aimed at the elite clergy who preached God's Word but did not follow them. This included Pharisees in Jesus' time and the priests and bishops of the fourth and fifth century. Although professing to help and comfort the poor, they would reject the needy from their midst without a second thought.

We are reminded of the famous parable of Christ, that of the Good Samaritan. When the man was robbed by thieves and left to die on the side of the road, it was only the Samaritan man who had helped him. Not even the priest and Levite, who had passed by earlier, gave help to the man. They were basically going against their own teachings. How could they have preached in the temple every day but failed to help their fellow neighbor? Chrysostom teaches us that we must be like the Good Samaritan: we must first help our brethren before receiving Holy Qurbana and attending church. Jesus' own miracles prove Chrysostom's writings when Christ healed people even during the Sabbath. We must prioritize charity and helping the poor before we prioritize Church rules.

How can we apply Chrysostom's teachings in our daily lives? We must follow Jesus' example by volunteering in shelters and soup kitchens. We must meet our own responsibility of helping the poor. We as Orthodox Christians have a duty to give back to the community. If not, it would be incredibly hypocritical to attend church every Sunday and listen to sermons about helping the needy while ignoring the needy around us.

In conclusion, finding Christ in the beggar is an important first step before finding Him in the chalice. The Church teaches us that fasting is crucial before receiving the Holy Eucharist, which includes almsgiving. Helping our neighbors as one of Jesus' commandments must always be among our first priority. When we help those created in God's image, we are helping God Himself.



*"If you cannot find Christ  
in the beggar at the Church door,  
you will not find Him in  
the Chalice."*

~St. John Chrysostom



**Maria, Suzan Raj**  
St. Gregorios  
Edmonton, AB

*Forever*

blessed be the Lord,  
The Saviour and the shield.  
He sends His Spirit with His Word,  
To arm you for the field.

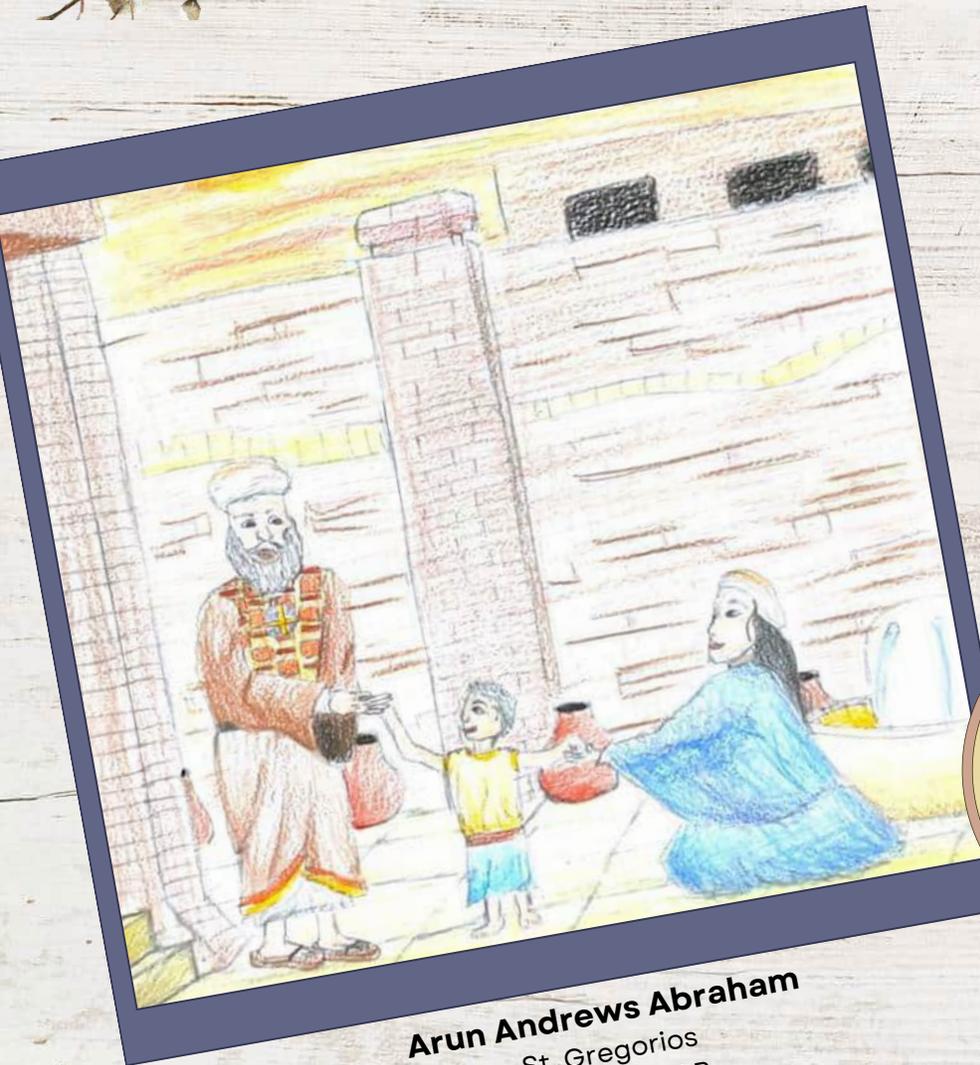
When sin and hell their force unite,  
He makes your soul His care.  
Instructs you to heavenly fight,  
Guards you through war's drear.

Do not dismay nor stray,  
Temptation shall not ensnare you.  
The battle is the Lord's today,  
His perfect will to pursue.

A friend and helper so divine,  
Lights the weak courage ablaze.  
Promises the victory as thine,  
And His shall be the praise.

Laying still in His arm's embrace,  
Struggles, burdens He relieves.  
Upon the lyre, sing for joy and grace!  
Paradise yours to deceive.

Child, rest now your hands and fingers.



**Arun Andrews Abraham**  
St. Gregorios  
Edmonton, AB



# Happiness

**Joel Mani Joy**

St. Mary's  
Calgary, AB



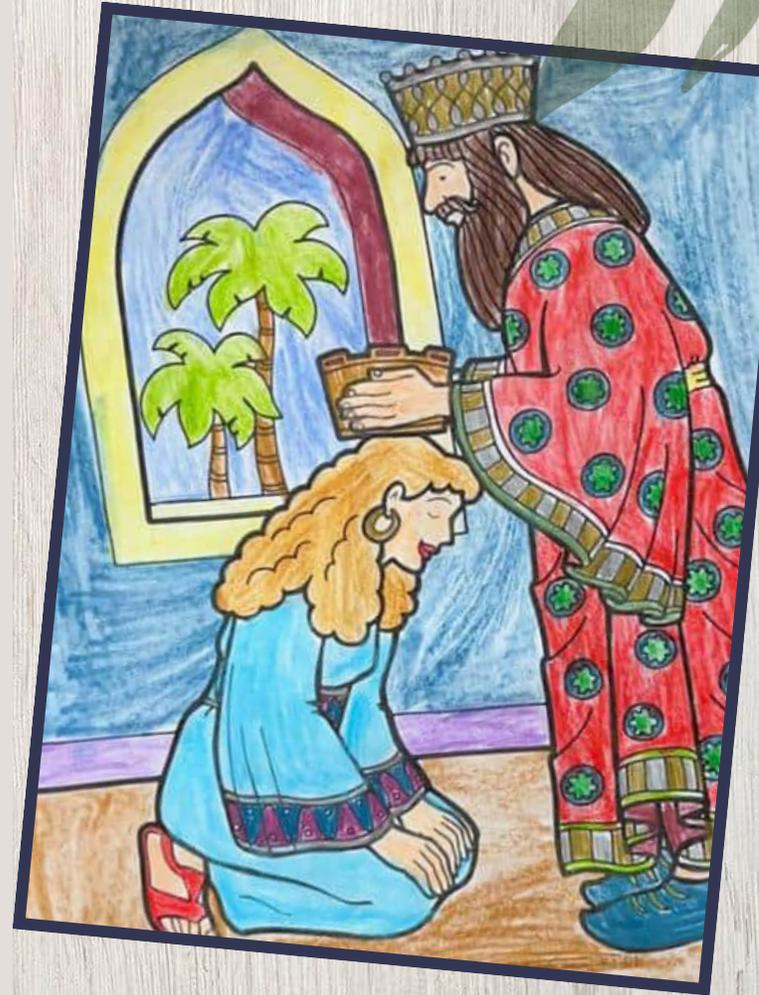
Are we truly happy? Yes, some of us have felt happy but is that true happiness? The concept of technology has given us happiness at the touch of a button. But happiness comes from the heart – our inner self. Technology is one of the many things that can ruin your chances of gaining true happiness. With the coming of social media, we have found many imperfections in our body. We think of ourselves as not good or bad. If you take any of this to heart, then don't worry. God says in the Bible that we were created in His image. We are called to be perfect because God created us. Bible teaches us to work on ourselves, more on what is inside of us.

God would be pleased if His children were kindhearted, loving, and able to show this to others. Jesus said you should focus on loving others as the number one commandment. This way, the world will be easier to look at.

Enjoying the world is important too. Enjoying the world God has given us helps us to show our gratitude. If you are someone who thinks that there is nothing good in life, then Genesis 1:31 will prove you wrong. "God saw all that He had created, and indeed it was very good." If God saw it as good, then there must be something that life can offer which you will like. But not only that, you should be able to take any hardships God allows in your life. We may be like Job when he tells God about the hardships but then he praises God also. So like Job, let us praise God. This allows us to see a wonderful world and who do we have to thank for that? God! So we should turn to God to praise him about this world.

Greed is an emotion we all have and a strong one at that. Greed is when you feel the intense desire to gain something for yourself. Jesus tells us to beware of greed because it is an emotion that can ruin our treasure in heaven. Greed can prove to be difficult to get rid of. But if you thank God for what you already have, then greed can be weakened. You are a fool if you store earthly treasures instead of working on your relationship with God. So, turn greed into gratitude and praise the Lord for what you have.

Again, I ask, are we truly happy? If you are happy without God, then you are not fully happy. To achieve happiness, search inside yourself and accept yourself as it is. Then begin to enjoy everything God has to offer and praise God even when hardships come to us. Finally, turn your greed into gratitude so that you may have God instead.



**Rahel Verghese**

St. George  
Vancouver, BC



*"Do not walk after your own desires but restrain your appetites"*

*Wisdom of Sirach 18:29*

# the KING'S APPETITE

Once upon a time, there was a rich king named Dion. He was a wise King that ruled over a vast and luxurious land. King Dion had abundant wealth. Gold, gems, diamonds, and all precious stones have become his. The land of his power, extending as far as the eye can see. Dozens of palaces and hundreds of soldiers and servants ready to be his slave. He saw his people as equals and treated them with kindness. The people also loved their king. The king saw friendship in other small kingdoms, wanting their allyship to create a peaceful world. Though, as time went on the King started seeing the other kingdoms as inferior and was not happy and content with his wealth and accomplishments. His military was bigger, he had more wealth and riches, he had more people and power. He started taking what was not his taking from other kingdoms, keeping gifts all to himself and not sharing with his people.

He put all of these riches under this throne making his pedestal grow taller and taller, sitting on pounds of gold and glory, fame and fortune, crowns, and crests. He sat on his high throne of greed and laughed for he was now better than everyone else. The kingdom was plagued with death and disease, but the king couldn't see the damage he caused, for his head was too high up in the sky, where all he could see was his riches and wealth.

One day, a young boy was let into the throne of the king by the guard. He was small and lean, and wearing loose pieces of cloth sewn together with rags. He stared up at the King, who sat high on his throne. The boy watched as the king sat eating rich pastries, chin resting on his hand.

**Aimy Varughese**

St. Gregorios  
Atlanta, GA



"Oh, Boy! Have you come to sing praises to your King? Go on then!" the king exclaimed. The young boy reached into his pocket and took out a stone rock. He recoiled his arm back, and threw the rock at the King. The stone hit the king straight in the chest, causing him to fall off his throne. Down the pedestal he fell down, down past all his chests of gold and silver stolen crowns and jewels. He landed on the cold hard ground and glared at the boy. "You insolent boy! I'll have you killed!" The king screamed. The boy walked over to him and pointed to king Dion's kingdom. The king followed the boy's finger and saw, through his expensive gold framed window, for the first time the damage caused to the kingdom. He saw death and plague, war and famine. "What, what are you trying to show me?" the king asked. "Your kingdom, your greed and lack of self-control has caused this, your highness." The fearless young boy looked at the king and saw how much pain had flooded into his heart through this realization; and thus, he left, deciding that his work there was finished.

He trusted that the King would change for the better. After a few moments, King Dion stood and walked over to his pedestal of riches. He pushed it over and watched as it crashed to the ground. He ordered his maids and butlers to help return everything he had taken and stolen and told them to aid his kingdom with all the food and resources stored and hogged in the castle; he rewarded his staff generously as well, sympathizing with them for everything they'd been put through.

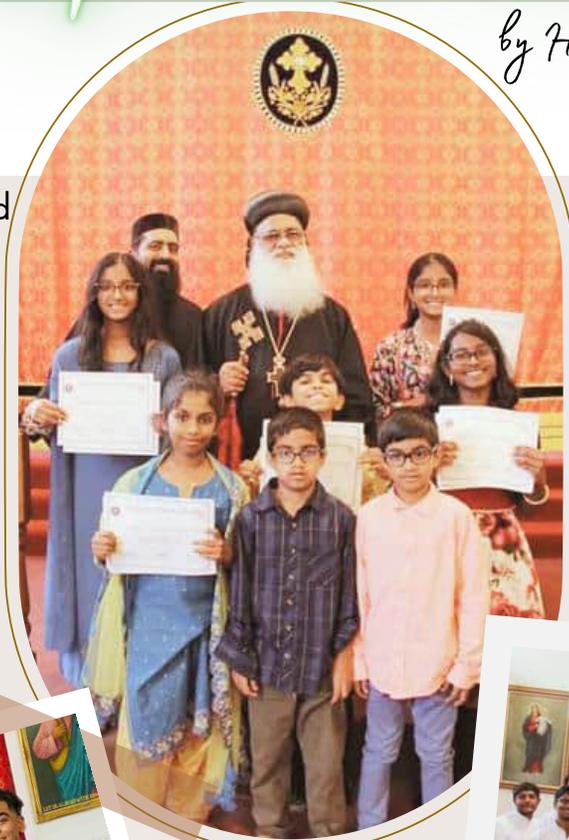
As time went on, the king took heed to the young boy's words. He learned to control his greed and once again began to share with his kingdom and allies. He fixed the broken relationships and his broken kingdom. He learned to not walk after his own selfish desires and control his appetite of greed.

# A Special Visit

by H..G. Geevarghese Mar Coorilos

Church School children of  
**St. Stephen Orthodox Church,**  
**Houston, Texas**

receiving certificates for Centralized  
Written Competition (CWC)  
Diocesan Level from  
**H.G. Geevarghese Mar Coorilos**  
**Metropolitan**  
Diocese of Bombay  
during his visit to the church.



**from left to right:**

- Fr. Jacob Kurian
- Sophia Chacko
- Naomi Vinod
- Zachariah Mathews
- Philip Mathews
- Rachel Thamaravelil
- Sameera Chacko
- Nathan Vinod (center)

*Congratulations  
Class of 2023!*



Pictured from l to r:  
Allen Basil, Nathaniel Binny, Jenisa Jacob, Jake Achen,  
Rohan Philip, Ansen Basil & Noah Mathew



*12th Grade Graduates  
with Thirumeni*

*Acolytes*





## Mid-West Chicago Region Teachers Training Event

We had our first Midwest regional SS teachers meeting on May 20th at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst. We were blessed with the presence of all the Chicago area Achen especially Rev. Fr. Ham Joseph, Rev. Fr. Abi Chacko, Rev. Fr. George David and Rev. Fr. Immanuel Punnoose.

Our Midwest director, Fr. Jacob Mathew, flew in from Florida and gave a very informative session on, "Drawing Inspiration Everyday to be a Successful Sunday School Teacher". Achen spoke about servant leadership and how as teachers we are called to be present for our children and be servant leaders to influence their faith in Christ.

Our Vice Director, Fr. Jithin Zachariah, flew in from Kansas City and was the main speaker who led the devotional message on our theme, "God is using you". Achen talked about that teachers are vessels of God and are called to plant the seed of faith in our children.

Beena Korah, Sunday School Principal from Bellwood, led a very interesting presentation on 3 teaching techniques that could be used to keep our children engaged, thinking and contributing during the class. The three techniques are: 1) Lesson in a bag, 2) Photo journal, and 3) Party Planning. Teachers were given an opportunity to apply these techniques for their current grade and experiment on how to use it for different grade levels.

We had a group discussion session at Introductory, Development and Mastery grade level, led by Rev. Fr. George David, Rev. Fr. Abi Chacko and Rev. Fr. Immanuel punnoose. It was an opportunity to connect with teachers from different parishes and hear about the challenges and techniques they use to teach the new curriculum.

Shebin Thomas, our TTC coordinator, gave a brief presentation on the TTC certification and encouraged teachers to use the opportunity to learn about our faith and become certified.

We also felicitated Dr. John Simon, outgoing Sunday School Regional Coordinator for Mid-West Chicago Region, for his 11 years of service. Fr. Jacob Mathew gifted him with a plaque and a beautiful icon as a token of appreciation from the South-West Diocese of America.

We ended with a vote of thanks by Mr. Gladstone Mammen, TTC Coordinator. Breakfast, Lunch and snacks were served and overall it was a very blessed meeting and one of many meetings to happen in the upcoming months.



Fr. Jacob Mathew, Mr. John Simon



Sheeba Mathew, Fr. Jacob Mathew, John Simon, Fr. Jithin Zachariah, Gladstone Mammen



Fr. Immanuel Punnoose, Fr. Jacob Mathew, Fr. Jithin Zachariah, Fr. George David, Fr. Abi Chacko

## OVBS 2022

OVBS



## Written Cometiitions 2022-23

GWG



## All Saints Day



All Saints Day

## Church Construction Fundraiser



Fundraiser

## Common Class



Common Class

# Kids for Christ

St. Thomas Orthodox Cathedral  
Houston, Texas

St. Thomas Orthodox Cathedral Sunday school ministry introduced a new program exciting new program that aims to nurture the spiritual growth and development of children called KFC or Kids for Christ . The program recently kicked off on Saturday, May 20, 2023 attracting a wonderful turnout of 85 enthusiastic kids.

The event began with a prayer, followed by a thought-provoking spiritual message aiming to inspire and guide the young participants in their faith journey. The day concluded with a series of engaging team-building games and activities, fostering camaraderie and a sense of community among the children.

One of the unique aspects of KFC is its team-oriented structure. The participating kids are divided into eight teams, with each team being named after a saint. These team names serve as a reminder of the Christian values and virtues embodied by these revered figures. To encourage active participation and growth, KFC implements a point system. Each team will have the opportunity to earn points based on specific criteria throughout the year. This incentivizes engagement in various spiritual and community-oriented activities, including volunteering, attending Holy Qurbana, participating in Bible study, and living out the teachings of Christ.

KFC is not only a program but a vibrant community where children can explore their faith, develop meaningful relationships, and learn from the examples of saints. By providing a nurturing and engaging environment, KFC seeks to instill a deep love for Christ and a commitment to Christian values in the hearts of participating children, empowering them to be positive influences in their schools, families, and communities.



*Building  
Community*



*Faith Study*



*Team -  
Oriented  
Structure*

# THE IMPORTANCE OF GREAT LENT

St Paul Orthodox Church  
of Greater Orlando

## What is the purpose of the Great Lent?

The Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of Christ's Resurrection as Christians. It is a 50-day season of preparation that comes before Easter. The Resurrection of Jesus is the only base for our Christian life and hope. During our life of spirituality, many wander and get lost along the way which is why Lent is important, as it prepares us for the feast. Lent is often seen as negative, but it is a time of joy. During lent, the church teaches us to pray and fast. Fasting is to remind us of the teaching, "Man does not live by bread alone." (Matthew 4:4) It teaches us that the needs of our soul are more important than the needs of our body. Fasting also helps us learn to feel compassion for the poor and hungry. Lent is not just about fasting; it is also about prayer and meditation. Since the purpose of lent is to be closer to God, prayer is very important because it creates a better relationship with God. Without the Great Lent the celebration of Easter will be meaningless.

## How can we participate in the Great lent?

Hunger is the state which helps us realize our dependency on something else. Fasting is our participation into the experience that Christ frees us from total dependence on food, matter, and the world. Fasting from things that we feel like "we cannot live without" builds self-control, turns our negative state of desire and temptation into Christ's positive Presence through prayer, and we achieve patience as we cast out evil to make our bodies temples of the Lord. This shows that with God, our wants are not as important as we think they are, that we do not need to depend on them, and that we can sacrifice the things we love for him. As we fast, we feel a stronger connection with the Lord as his presence is stronger. Fasting also calls on the Holy Spirit which refreshes our soul which brings us the joy from the Lent. We can fast of many things during the Great Lent including your favorite foods, technology, and certain activities you love.



Presentation by the 8th grade  
class of  
St Paul Orthodox Church  
of Greater Orlando

*from left to right: Anson Biju,  
Ansu Biju, Jordin Jagan,  
Hannah Abey, and Aby Chacko*

## What does each service during the Great Lent represent?

The Great Lent started on February 20th and ends on April 9th.

- 1st Sunday: Wedding at Cana (Jesus turns water into wine)
  - 1st Monday: Forgiveness Service (Shubhkono)
  - 2nd Sunday: Healing of the Leper
  - 3rd Sunday: Healing of Paralytic
  - 4th Sunday: Healing of Canaanite Woman
    - Mid-Lent: Exaltation of the Cross
  - 5th Sunday: Crippled Woman & Good Samaritan
  - 6th Sunday: Healing of the Blind Man
- 40th Day (Friday): Christ's triumph over Satan Holy (Passion) Week:
- 7th Sunday: Palm Sunday (The triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem)
  - Passover (Thursday)
  - Good Friday
- Saturday of Good Tidings
- 8th Sunday: Easter



# 50 Random Acts of Kindness

The Sunday School children of **St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Calgary Alberta, Canada**

happily completed their Lenten Activity for 2023 which showcased a poster filled with

**50 Random Acts of Kindness**

throughout the 50 days of Lent.

Their Lenten journey ended by wishing everyone a very blessed **HAPPY EASTER!**



# St. Gregorios

Edmonton, AB  
Canada



Ivanios Thirumeni visited Edmonton parish on April 29-30, 2023. Sunday School year book, **The Tabernacle**, was released by Thirumeni on April 29, 2023 and the Sunday School leadership presented a thank you card signed by all students and teachers.

**Mother's Day celebration** on Sunday, May 14, 2023. Our Sunday school children paid their respect and gratitude to all mother's by singing a song, "When God made You My Mother", by Riley Roth. Jace Shaji, 8th grader, gave a message on the importance of mother's in our lives and all mothers were presented with a floral bouquet.

# St. Mary's

San Fernando Valley, CA



Children visiting Rescue Mission with canned food



Sunday School celebrated Mother's Day

# St. Gregorios Minnesota



## Acts of Virtue

St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Church  
Chanhassen, Minnesota

Sunday School conducted a lenten service project in support of  
**"Feed My Starving Children"**

Sunday School kids, teachers and parents volunteered in packing and shipping dried veggies, vitamins and minerals for malnourished children around the world.

# Online Sunday School

## ONLINE SUNDAY SCHOOL



A big shoutout to the Parents and children of the Online Sunday School!!

As part of the Lenten activity the children were encouraged to do the Kindness Bingo and the children and parents have taken the effort to complete the task in hand.

The Academic year ends on June 4 2023 and we re-open on Sept 10 2023



**IF YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL IS SMALLER THAN 25 CHILDREN PLEASE JOIN OUR ONLINE SUNDAY SCHOOL. CONTACT US AT: [ONLINESUNDAYSCHOOL.DSWA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ONLINESUNDAYSCHOOL.DSWA@GMAIL.COM)**



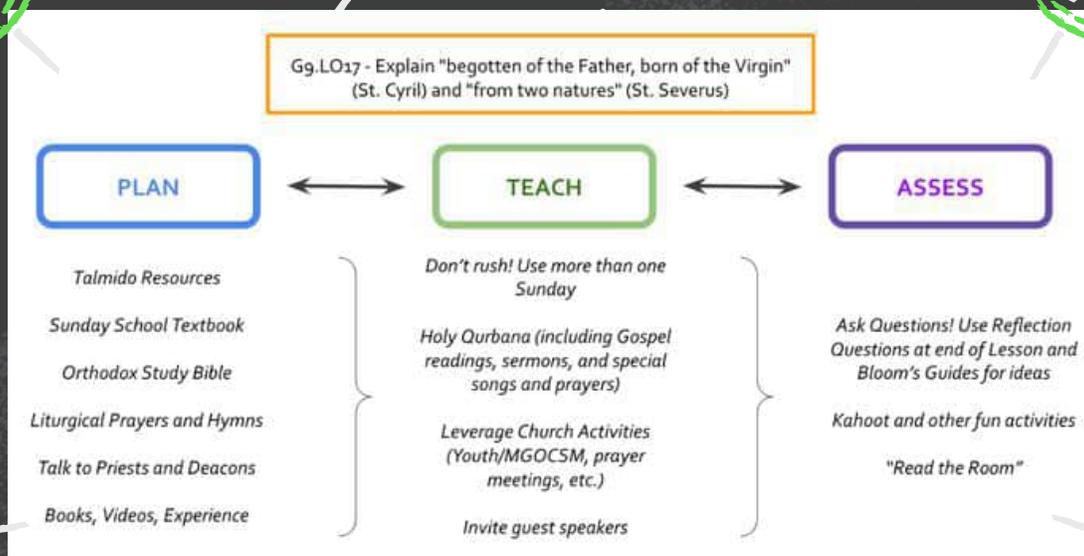
# Curriculum Corner

## Planning using Bloom's Taxonomy Verbs

As teachers, what we share with our Sunday school children in a lesson is intended to work together and align with what is taught and what will be taught throughout the curriculum. However, consistency across the program occurs not by the textbook lesson but rather whether the child has understood the Learning Outcomes attached to that lesson.

Different teaching strategies and use of additional materials are encouraged as this helps the children understand and relate to the Learning Outcome. Time should also be planned for assessment.

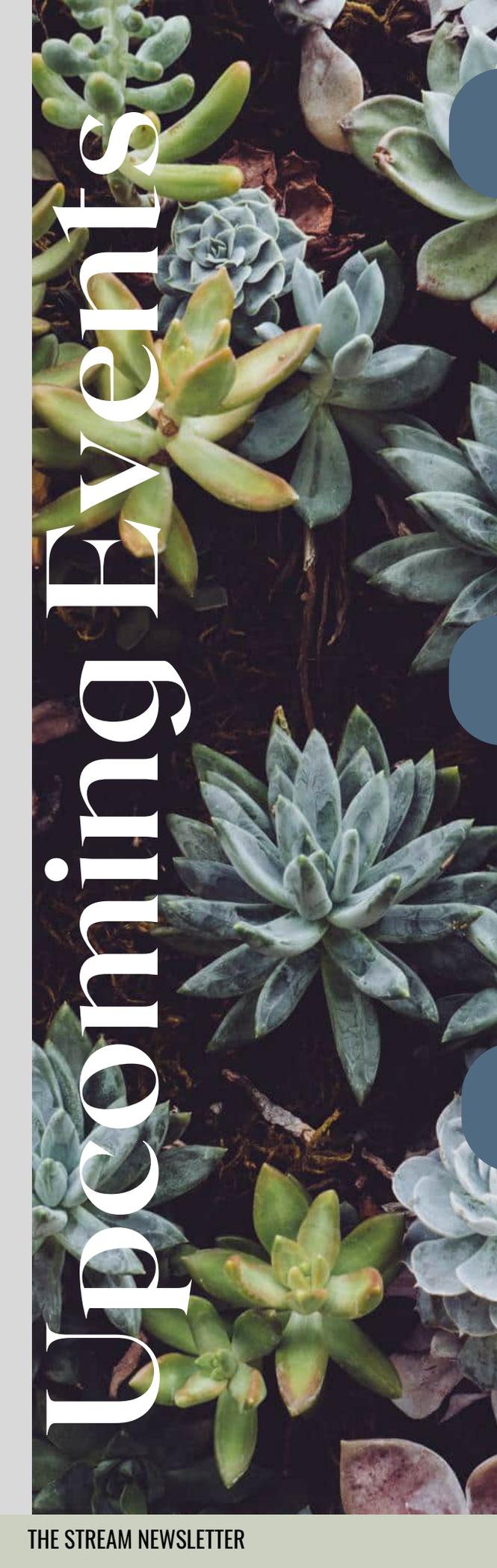
For example, using the following 9th Grade Learning Outcome, the teacher can plan their lesson with the assumption that the "what" and "how" have been taught. It is good to refresh children on the basics but more time should be spent on the "why". As shown, teaching the lesson can be done with a variety of materials .. not just the textbook! And then assessment should be done before moving forward.



This approach may be automatic for some teachers but for those who are new to this it may be helpful to ask three main questions: "what do I need to teach?", "how will I deliver it?", and "what and how will it be assessed?"

More training will be made available on Talmido (<https://talmido.org>) as well as through Diocesan training sessions to help teachers come up with new ideas and creative ways to engage with children to introduce, develop, or master the various topics.

Once teachers begin to understand the essence of the learning outcomes, our children will become more engaged and fall in love with our Church theology which is the ultimate goal of our Sunday School curriculum.



# Upcoming Events

## JUNE

- 10** **12th Grade Diploma Zoom Orientation**  
For senior grade, teachers, and parents for the 12th grade diploma exam
- 19** **12th Grade Diploma Exam**  
The exam will be emailed to 12th graders who registered.
- 24** **Parent Meeting**  
Principles of Christian Parenting" with Fr. James Soliman of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles

## JULY

- 17** **12th Grade Diploma Exam Due**  
Participants will submit their exam by email.
- 29** **College Session**  
"Continuing with Christ in College"  
(*facing the world, staying in the Church*)

## AUGUST

- 5** **Back to School Session: Teachers and Principals**
- 12** **Back to School Retreat for Children**
- 15** **TTC Exam Registration Deadline**