

THE STREAM

May 2022

Diocese of South West America

Sunday School Special Edition



God protects baby Moses.
Exodus 2:1-10



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THE STREAM :An Online Publication of the Diocese of South-West America





MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA



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No: G-05/2022

Blessings to the Vicars, Priests of the locality, Deacons, and all the faithful, especially our dear children and parents of the Diocese of South-West America!

The Sunday School of our Church is intended to create opportunities for learning that should enhance a child's experience and their life within the Holy Church. Sunday School is also an avenue by which a child's God-given talents are cultivated and nurtured. We are pleased to know that a special Sunday School edition of the diocesan Stream newsletter is initiated by the diocesan Sunday School Association. In this edition and future editions, we all will be able to get more acquainted with the depth of our children's talent through the work of art, poetry, essays, stories and much more.



Creativity comes from our Lord because He is the Supreme Creator. Whether one has a talent for drawing, writing, singing, or something else, we all have some level of creativity since we are made in His Image. Let us encourage the children's effort to learn the faith and teachings of the Holy Church and let us celebrate the honorable ways our children use creativity to Glorify our Lord.

We appreciate the leadership of our Sunday School Administration Team. We thank all our respected achen, the dedicated service of our Sunday School teachers, and the continuous support of all parents. May the work of our children for the Stream newsletter be a blessing to the reader. Let us continue to pray for the growth of our Sunday School so that it may grow and serve its purpose in providing for the spiritual needs of our children. May the love of God the Father, grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with us forever and ever.

أخوتنا

Metropolitan Dr. Zacharias Mar Aprem

From Sreyas Aramana
Adoor, Pathanamthitta Dt., Kerala, India
Festival of St. Mary, May 15, 2022

With all Glory to God, we present this special edition of Stream as a Sunday School Ministry Special. The administration team of the Diocese Sunday School has compiled this edition to bring to you, the families in the Diocese, to showcase the talents and abilities of our children who are currently in the Sunday School program.

As you can see, our children are very talented and blessed with wonderful gifts and they excel in each area of study or activity that they chose to participate in. In compiling this edition, we have reached out across the Diocese to invite original work created by our children, including selected Centralized Written Competition 2021 entries for which we received consent from the parents. The CWC work from children include drawings, poems, essays, and short stories. Drawings by children in grades Pre-K through 2nd grade were provided the same coloring page content while grades 3 through 12 submitted free-hand drawings.

Please note that we have only included entries from the regions of Midwest (Chicago), Northwest, South (Houston) and West of the Diocese Sunday School in this issue. The other 3 regions Midwest (Detroit), Southeast, and South (Dallas) are planned to be published as another ministry special in the next newsletter publication.

As we go through this ministry special, please keep in mind that through all that we do and try to do at the Diocese Sunday School level, we are trying to provide the resources to the teachers and principals who lead this ministry at the parish level and thus provide a much needed support system. We are working along with the parish leadership to equip the teachers to teach children the faith and teachings of the Holy Church. We organize and conduct teachers' classes and training sessions, workshops and seminars; besides holding CWC competitions, Diploma and TTC exams. In our ongoing endeavor to offer all possible help to our children and parents, we also have started an Online Sunday School program this academic year. We are blessed to have a team that works together in unity and fellowship for the Glory of God.

We are blessed to have the Stream newsletter platform created by the diocese and organized by Rev. Fr. Johnson Punchakonam. We thank Achen for his support and pray for his ministry in the Lord. May this special Sunday School edition and future editions, support the spiritual growth of our children and families.

Prayerfully Presented,

DSWA Sunday School

Fr. Dr. Jacob Mathew

Basali Mathew, Secretary

Diane Mathew, Online SS Coordinator

Gladstone Mammen, 12th Grade Diploma & TTC Coordinator

Manju Varghese, 12th Grade Diploma & TTC Coordinator

Ashley Varghese Kochamma, CWC Coordinator

Nebu John, West Region Coordinator

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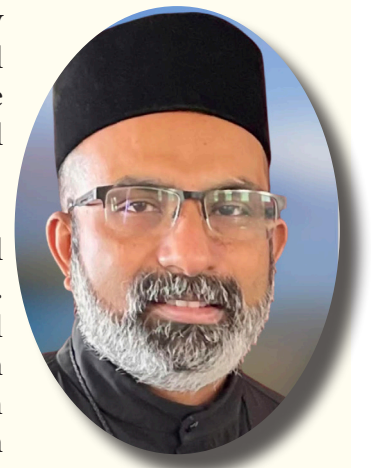
John Chacko, Midwest (Detroit) Region Coordinator

Jiji Abraham, South Region Coordinator (Dallas)

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Mathew (Liju) Koshy, South Florida Region Coordinator

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HOW DOES THE ORTHODOX CHURCH VIEW SCRIPTURE & TRADITION?

Anjana Mathew

St. Mary's Malankara Orthodox Church,
Houston, TX

Christianity originated from the ministry of Jesus Christ and was established as the Way of life once it was spread throughout the world by His disciples. We know that as time progressed, various branches of Christianity came into being created by divisions of the church. Although all these branches believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came to this world for the redemption of our sins, there are several differences in matters of faith and worship that exist. As members of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, we are taught at an early age that “Orthodox” means “right praise or glorification of God” in its most simplistic definition. According to the Collins Dictionary, the word orthodox is defined in further detail as “conforming to the usual beliefs or established doctrines...” when used as an adjective. When breaking down this definition, we see that the word “orthodox” can be broken down into two parts. “Usual beliefs” signifies tradition, or things that are passed down either within family or other close-knit groups. “Established doctrines” in Christianity references the Holy Bible, or Holy Scriptures and other traditions. In relation to the Orthodox Church, the definition implies that the faith of the church is based on both direct references to the Holy Scriptures as well as traditional beliefs and practices that have been passed down across many generations.



In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul discusses the importance of the Old Testament for guidance. Romans 15:4 states “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”. As such, there are several occasions during the divine liturgy as well as daily prayers of the Orthodox Church where portions of the Old Testament are read. In the divine liturgy, select portions are read to prepare the worshippers for the Holy Qurbana. Robert Allen is a noted author and subject matter expert of the divisions or branches of Christianity. Mr. Allen wrote that the Orthodox Church doesn't “believe Scripture is open to individual interpretation”. He further states that “Orthodox Christians believe the Bible is God's word, revealed for the salvation of humanity”. This is a very powerful statement as to the importance of scripture to the Orthodox Church. In a sense, our liturgy can be viewed as a journey through the Holy Bible, beginning with portions of the Old Testament and then reaching the climax of the service in the dispensation of the Holy Communion, signifying the events of the Last Supper.

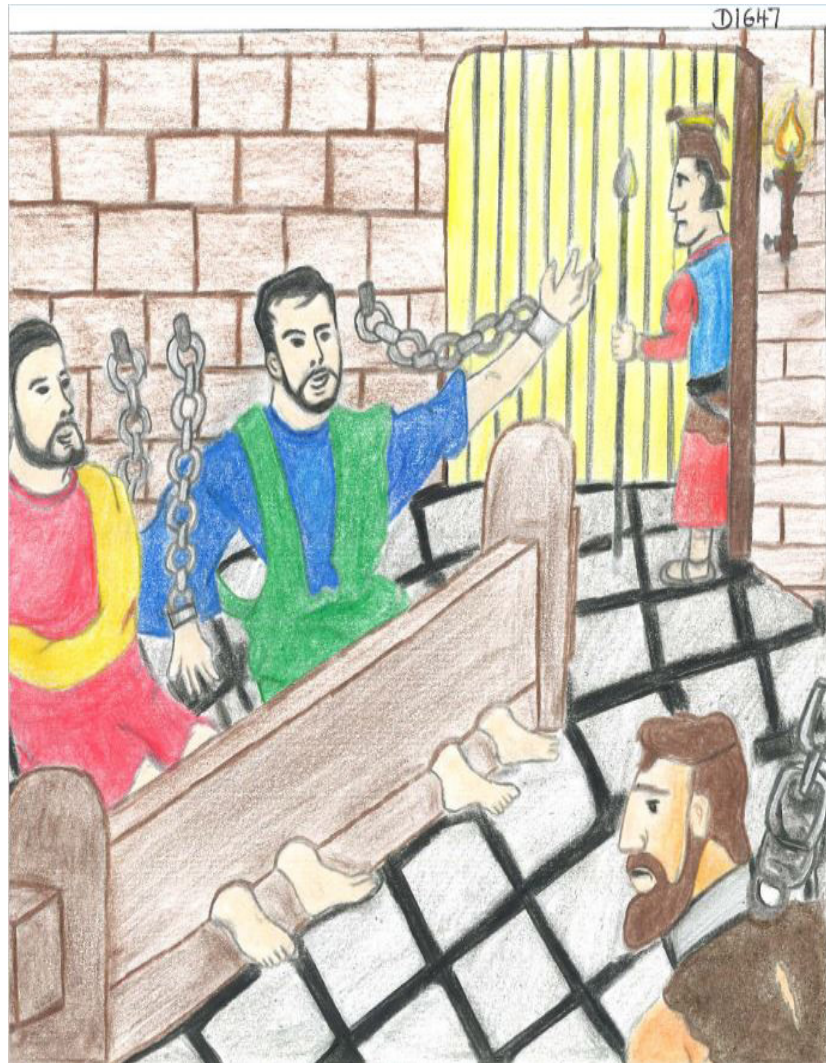
In the context of the Holy Scriptures, the word “tradition” (‘paradosis’ in Greek) means “handed down”. Both written and unwritten forms of our Holy Scripture were passed down during the experiences of our saints and forefathers. In 2 Thessalonians 2:14-15 it says, “To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”. Here, St. Paul emphasizes the importance of keeping the traditions that were passed on to us by our ancestors, through writings or by word of mouth. Many ask whether we have evidence that these ‘oral traditions’ are based on the Holy Scriptures. When we look at the life of Aaron (brother of Moses), we see that God conferred the priesthood to him and his male descendants. It is mentioned how Aaron's sons became priests following the instruction and lessons from their father. From this, we see an example of tradition being passed down to generations - the priesthood of Aaron ranks as one of the most important told in the Bible. St. John the Theologian explains that it is difficult to have a written account of every disciple's experiences. Instead, they have been preserved through “the life of the church”, passed on through the generations.

The Orthodox Church can rightfully pride itself for adhering to the true faith as taught by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our worship is strengthened by the fact that our roots are derived from the holy scriptures. The practices of our church fathers are based in Tradition, much of which we can proudly trace back to the disciples of Christ. For us as members of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, we feel great pride in the most recent consecration of HH Moran Mar Baselios Mathews III as the 9th Catholicos of the East and 22nd Malankara Metropolitan. The holy father sits on the throne of St. Thomas as the 92nd Primate, a testament to the Tradition that continues to this day.

STORY TITLE: GOD LOVES THE RIGHTEOUS

Theme: The Wise and the Unwise

The saying, “Weeds growing by any water or riverbank will be plucked out before any grass” is a very conceptual verse as found in the Bible (Wisdom of Sirach 40:16). This means that those who commit evil are more likely to fail than those who do good. Weeds thrive in stagnant water and are unwelcome in man-made environments like farm fields, gardens, lawns, and parks. When weeds invade your lawn, they compete for air, water, and nutrients with healthy, desirable grass. As a result, grass plants become weaker, exposing your lawn to diseases, pest infestations, and drought. So you see, weeds negatively impact landscapes and can do major damage by taking up important resources, such as light, nutrients, soil, space, and water, that desired plants need. Getting rid of



These weeds symbolize evil people who try to take control of faithful and good people. They plot negativity and hatred in their hearts and don't care about positivity. That is why they fail easier than others, though at some points they may seem to be succeeding. Wicked people fail more easily than people who show righteousness because their sin makes them imperfect and erroneous. This is why wicked people (weeds) fail or get “plucked out” before any other people (grass).

The following story depicts the Bible verse, “Weeds growing by any water or riverbank will be plucked out before any grass.”

There were once two boys named Luke and James who knew each other well and lived in the same conditions and same town. Luke was a bright boy, always thinking of positivity, and was respectful to others. James, however, was different because he was a bad boy and didn't like to go by the rules. James took his parents for granted and liked to blame innocent people for getting into trouble. One day, when Luke and James were going to school, James decided to push Luke into a pond nearby as they were going to school. Their school prohibited any wet clothes and was strict about their rules. James knew that this was an opportunity to get Luke in trouble, and he snuck up behind him, fast but very quiet. However, when he was about to push Luke into the pond to his left, there was a big red ant pile below him. James noticed it before his second leg was able to hit the ground, but before he could take out his leg, the shoe stepped on the red ant's pile.

The ants started crawling on James, into his shoes, and there were so many of them, biting and crawling, on his leg that James started walking backward into the angle of the pond. With his leg slipping off balance, he fell into the pond himself. James, disappointed as ever, had no choice but to go to school in wet clothes. Unfortunately, Luke had almost reached school, and the elders were nearby, so pushing him wasn't an option for James. And, even with the summer sun shining on him, the water and mud on him didn't dry. When he walked past the front office of his school, the principal stopped him and gave him a detention slip for after school. He was also late and got a tardy slip from the principal. However, when the principal was talking to him about how he should never come to the school with dirty and muddy clothes ever again, a red ant climbed on top of her leg, and unfortunately, as she finally glanced at it, she saw the biggest swollen bump on her leg that she has ever seen in her life. The principal made a slight shriek and glared at James, who was trying to look innocent. The principal ordered James to go to the nurse's office to get changed into new clothes and guaranteed him two weeks of detention instead of one day.

That same day, with new clothes on, James entered his math class and was ordered to sit next to the student who got the "Outstanding Student of the Month" award in the class: Luke. Luke noticed that James wasn't wearing the clothes that he wore in the morning on the way to school when he was walking behind him. However, Luke knew better than to ask him and didn't dare say a word to James. James, however, had enough disappointment for the day, and he was plotting to take revenge on innocent Luke either after school, on the walk home, or in math class itself. James decided that he could avenge himself after school on the walk home because there, teachers wouldn't be watching their every move to find any guilt. In the meantime, however, James decided that he should make the most of it by sitting next to Luke, and he agreed to himself that he could copy off of Luke's answers, for there was a major test that day. When the teacher gave out the test sheet, Luke started calculating immediately, while James, pretending that he was thinking, glanced at Luke's paper every ten seconds. James planned to copy Luke every time he circled an option for the multiple-choice section, and then write in fake numbers and calculations for the section where you have to show your work. He also made sure to make it look realistic and added the answer number as the circled answer in his work.

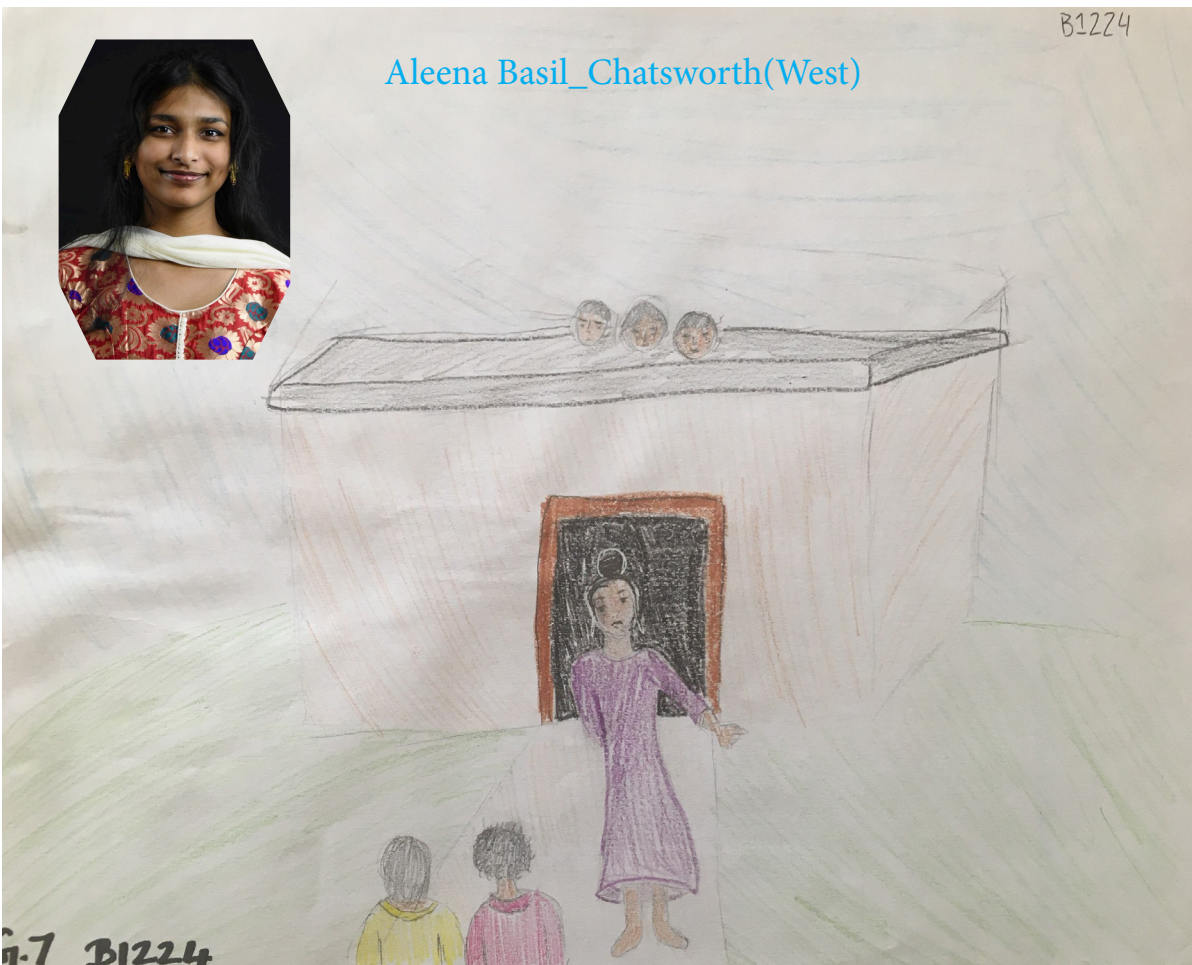
From this story, we can learn how those who do bad things (weeds) will fail and get "plucked out" before any good and obedient people. This is because when bad people make their mistakes, they are getting one step closer to trouble, demonstrating that, even if these bad people appear to be successful at times, God will always care for those who listen to and obey his word by not engaging in any bad deeds or sin, leading them to success and away from failure. David stated in Psalms 57:6, "they have dug a pit before me, into the midst, whereof they have fallen themselves." This relates to how James fell into the muddy pond himself, though he had initially planned on pushing Luke into the pond, and it shows that God will never purposely allow his good people to fall into despair and embarrassment and that he will always care for them. This makes the evil people more likely to fail or be "plucked out" before anyone who does good.

The school was very strict about cheating and stated that "any child or student caught cheating will face consequences such as in-school suspension, expulsion, or getting a zero on their test." James, however, as said before, didn't like to play by the rules, and wasn't obedient to the framework of the rules and regulations. Question by question, James copied Luke until, at question 18, came the free-response questions. James thought that Luke had good enough handwriting to be known as an "outstanding student." However, as good as his handwriting is, Luke wrote in very small font, so small that only someone who is directly reading the explanation will be able to understand what he wrote. In total, there were 28 questions on the test, 11 of which were free-response questions. James, who was confident enough in Luke for him to get the correct answers for the already answered 17 questions, knew that if he wasn't able to answer any of the free-response questions, he would get a failing grade. Fortunately for James, the teacher received a phone call right at that moment and started talking, facing the window behind her desk. James, who sat right behind the teacher, was able to find out that the teacher wouldn't be able to see if James was peeking or glancing at Luke's responses, so James's head carefully started to move closer and closer to Luke's paper until he was so close that Luke was able to feel his breath. However, Luke, who was so concentrated on his work, thought that the breeze was from the air conditioner and didn't suspect James' breathing.

James, with the opportunity he could get, started writing the same answers that Luke had written, exactly how it was. Confident with Luke's answers, James was so happy that he was going to get his first score of 100 of the year that he didn't notice the teacher ending the phone call, inspecting the students, and seeing James copying off Luke. The teacher immediately came over to James, but James was so concentrated on copying Luke's answers that he didn't notice the teacher near him! It was only after the teacher's breath touched his face that he was able to realize what was going on. A flicker of fear went through his blood as he turned around to find the teacher close to him, glaring.

The next day, when Luke walked to school, he was aware of his surroundings, and he noticed that James wasn't with him on the walk to school. Luke made wise decisions in class and followed the rules and stayed

out of trouble, unlike James. That day, when he returned home, wondering what might have happened to James, his mother came to him and told him that James was expelled from school forever. The news was all over the school's Twitter page, stating that "the school is now safe from 'inconveniences.'" Seeing all this, James realized his mistake and sat in his room, ashamed.



Oblivious Jealousy (Story)

Aleena Basil_Chatsworth(West)

There once was a king; he was benevolent and fair to everyone on his lands. He had two daughters; they were twins and only one could inherit the throne. One was a wonderful person who helped all those in need and loved being part of the community. The other was a smart and logical woman who always planned on how to run the kingdom. The king saw both of them were fit to run the kingdom, but when he was speaking to the advisor, the first daughter heard about the second daughter inheriting the throne. She was consumed by rage because she worked so hard for the kingdom to love her, so when she took the throne there would be no objections. Her once loving heart was now filled with jealousy. She began plotting her sister's downfall. Little by little, she built a plan, and she picked her most trusted servants

to carry it out. She tried to poison her sister by putting poison in her tea that she always drank. But with this plan she became oblivious of what was around her. Soon enough she was found out and was imprisoned. Her father and sister felt so betrayed and refused to see her and when they eventually did all came to light. The first daughter only heard part of the conversation of what her father was saying. The truth was he was saying both were fit, but to decide they will let the citizens vote. The first daughter was winning, but once word got out that she tried to poison her sister, they all turned against her. They saw that she was unfit to rule if she was capable of trying to kill her own sister to get what she wanted. The first daughter was so consumed with unwarranted rage and revenge that she lost everything and was stuck in a forgotten cell in the deep depths of the castle. The second daughter ruled and brought prosperity to the kingdom, with all the love of

Wisdom's Glory

Abel Alexander SanLorenzo(West)

Wisdom is a gift from the Lord above,

One given to us by his love.

Those who leave the true Way,

From God's love, He walks astray.

The Lord looks at arrogance with disdain,

For it's his people's greatest bane.

Like Babel, fell due to its pride,

Peter in his vanity, sank into the tide.

The tongue of the wise know good things,

The mouth of the arrogant brings vile things.

The house of hubris will be shattered

The tents of the modest shall be sheltered.

One who is crooked in his ways will be dishonored,

One who humbles himself will be honored.

We are all equal in God's eyes,

But the righteous will receive the divine prize

“

**And I am sure of this,
that he who began
a good work in you
will bring it to
completion at the day
of Jesus Christ.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Slow Down, For Wisdom!!!

Abel Alexander SanLorenzo(West)



It was a chilly Thursday afternoon in the middle of March, in the windy city of Chicago. The trees which previously had no leaves started to sprout and it was marvelous all around.

I drove right into the driveway; my parents along with my little sister, Olivia came, out of the house. After I parked, Wes and his family started to get out of the car. The pain and suffering they experienced over the years were evident on their faces. During the drive, we didn't talk much, his mom and dad said they were very thankful for what we were doing, but Wes didn't talk at all. I guess a few years of jail can do that to someone. Needless to say that they were very thankful for taking them in and giving them a place to stay. It's incredible to think how much we've changed over the years.

I saw Wes walk outside and look at what was once his house. When I saw him look over there I remember all the things that happened..... About five or six years ago, my family and I just moved into the neighbourhood. Wes and his family had been there since he was born. They were good neighbors to us and they were also great friends. It turns out Wes went to the same high school that I decided to go to. Wes's full name is Weston William Parker. He was the first friend I made here. It was great because we talked about all of our common interests. After a few days, he and I did practically everything together. Our friendship brought our parents and family together as well. It turns out our families could also be really good friends, going to church together, on vacations, and doing all sorts of stuff together.

After we graduated high school, we both went to the same college. When we were deciding what majors we were going to pursue he said he wanted to be an entrepreneur, and I said I wanted to go into the medical field and become a doctor. While this caused some division between us, it wasn't enough to change anything about our friendship,

until one day....Wes's dad was a pretty successful executive in the company he worked at, and he got a promotion which changed their lifestyle. The sudden burst of income and more money to spend caused Wes, who was already pretty lavish and laid-back to embrace these bad qualities of his. "Wes, I'm telling you shouldn't spend this way. You're wasting it." Wes responded, "Luzio, I'm the economics major, not you, and I know how to spend my money, so you better stay out of my business." Exchanges like this occurred more and more frequently. After a while I just stopped seeing Wes, in general. I also noticed didn't even come to church, not just him but no one from his family did. I realized Wes, my best friend, had ghosted me.

I was angry, so he decided he didn't need my friendship just because he didn't know how to spend money and because I told him that. After a while, I heard my parents talking about how being rich caused Wes's family to be very prominent in the church's affairs which was pretty biased because they rarely even came to church.

During this time I really started focusing on my studies while I heard that Wes was not performing so well. Usually, I would have helped him but I was fed up with his arrogance. One day asked my father why was life so unfair and how rich Wes and his family had become. We were still barely scraping along and he said "Son, I want you to remember these Bible verses; Cut the rich man in his humiliation because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen.....(St. James 1:10-11), Wherever arrogance enters, there is also dishonor, But the mouth of the humble mediates on wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2), and the last one struck me the most, of course, I wouldn't understand it until much later. "Weeds growing by any water or riverbank will be plucked out before any grass."(Wisdom of Sirach 40:16)

I thought that some hardships would make him realize how much of a good friend that I was. It turns out I was wrong. I wish I helped him earlier because Wes was very misguided with no one to tell him what was wrong. He started to drink a lot and one day he was driving while being drunk, crashing into a store. A lot of people got hurt. Not only was Wes a drunk driver, but he also endangered people's lives.

His dad had to take a few weeks of leave to deal with the legal ramifications. He also paid for the hospital fees of all the people injured. In order to pay for all the damage that was inflicted on the store, he asked all his friends and colleagues but they said they couldn't help. Wes's dad in desperation sold their house. I only learned this until later because at the time I was away for my medical internship.

When I returned, Wes's sentence was nearing its end. My dad and I convinced mom and Olivia to take his family in for a few weeks and help them get up on their feet. "Hey, Luzio" I snapped out of my flashback and saw my dad standing beside me at the doorway. After years of separation, our two families talked with each other a lot, prayed, and ate dinner together. Wes's mom praised my mom for her cooking skills and said, "this is some of the best food I have ever tasted." We

tried our best to make them feel comfortable at our house.

After a few months, the Parker family was starting to put themselves back together. Mr Parker and Mrs Parker started going to work again and Wes put his unwise tendencies behind him and became a very responsible student and continued his college career which had been interrupted by the accident.

Now, do you understand what I meant earlier about not understanding my dad's wise words until later on? You should never be jealous of those who gain success quickly because they could lose it just as fast... "My brethren, count it all joy when you face various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." (St. James 1:2) To paraphrase, only success built upon patience and effort will last.

THE VISIBLE MEANS OF INVISIBLE GRACE

Abel Alexander

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church
San Lorenzo, CA

As Orthodox Christians, two essential tools of our faith are sacraments and scriptures. To achieve our ultimate goal of entering the heavenly kingdom, we must first take part in the sacrament and meditate on the scriptures. When we do this, we reach Theosis and become more like God. What makes Orthodoxy unique compared to other denominations of Christianity is that we have a much more traditional belief system. Sacraments are based on Scriptures. The Scriptures combine wisdom and knowledge of both the Old Testament and New Testament. Another thing that sets us apart from other denominations of Christianity is that we see and believe the Bible to be the given form of God's word. The Holy Scriptures is a collection of books written over multiple centuries, by those inspired by God to do so. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (St. John 1:1). We, Orthodox Christians, believe the Word of God to be Jesus and it was affirmed by St. John at the beginning of his gospel as well as in his first letter in St. John 1:1-4. Scriptures are our guide and book of laws and rules on how to live as good Christians. In fact, there is even a section of books in the old testament called the Books of the Law. "Receive utterance from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return and humble yourself before the Lord, you have caused

"Receive utterance from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return and humble yourself before the Lord, you have caused wrongdoing to be far from your dwelling. Then you will lay up treasure for yourself" (Job 22:22-24).

wrongdoing to be far from your dwelling. Then you will lay up treasure for yourself" (Job 22:22-24). For further understanding on why this is important, we must look at what St. James says in St. James 2:17: Faith without actions or work is equivalent to death and is meaningless. The sacraments of the Orthodox Church are composed of prayers, hymns, scripture lessons, gestures, and processions. Many parts of the services date back to the time of the Apostles. Baptism is the first of sacraments that we receive. It builds a foundation for our spiritual growth and helps us start to build connection with God. The one sacrament that is most connected to Holy Baptism is Holy Chrismation. In it, we are anointed by the Holy Chrism Oil. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). The most important sacrament among them all is Holy Qurbana which is also known as the Sacrament of Sacraments. Holy Qurbana is the sacrament we participate in the most often. Holy Confession erases our sins because we are able to repent and admit them as our mistakes. Holy Matrimony is a threshold we cross in our spiritual life; it makes the family into a miniature church. Holy Unction is a mystery in which someone who is sick physically, spiritually, or emotionally is anointed and healing grace is imparted. Holy Ordination is when the specially chosen ones embark on a divine path to be

emissaries of God. All of these sacred practices give us the qualifications to enter the heavenly kingdom.

Not only do the sacraments and scriptures disclose and reveal God to us, but they also serve to make us receptive to God's wisdom and virtue. This is theosis and Christianity in general. They both also affect our personal relationship with God and with one another. The Holy Spirit works through the sacraments and scriptures in order to connect with mankind and broaden our understanding of faith and union with The Lord. Both the scriptures as well as the sacraments either directly reenact or demonstrate what Jesus Christ did or preached about. In truth, both Sacraments and Scriptures connect us to Jesus Christ himself.

The Scriptures and Sacraments are immensely important tools of our faith and allow us to be true Christians and followers of God. They are so quintessential to our faith that it is hard to believe what our faith and holy days and processions would look like without them. Having faith and being truly devoted to that faith is great but as St. James wrote in his letter, faith without works or action is dead. I have chosen to believe that this death is not the physical or mortal way of death, but spiritual and divine death in which one loses their connection to God to such a point it may seem unrepairable. But remember this, our God is a gracious and compassionate God who will always leave a way for us to return to Him. The way Jesus and His disciples left us behind is the Church. It is similar to the ladder we see in Jacob's vision in Genesis 28:12 because it serves as a connection to God. While the ladder is something illusory and inaccessible, the scriptures and sacraments through and in the Church are very real and accessible making them the best way to become one and communicate with our Lord.

Story

Oblivious Jealousy

Aleena Basil_Chatsworth(West)



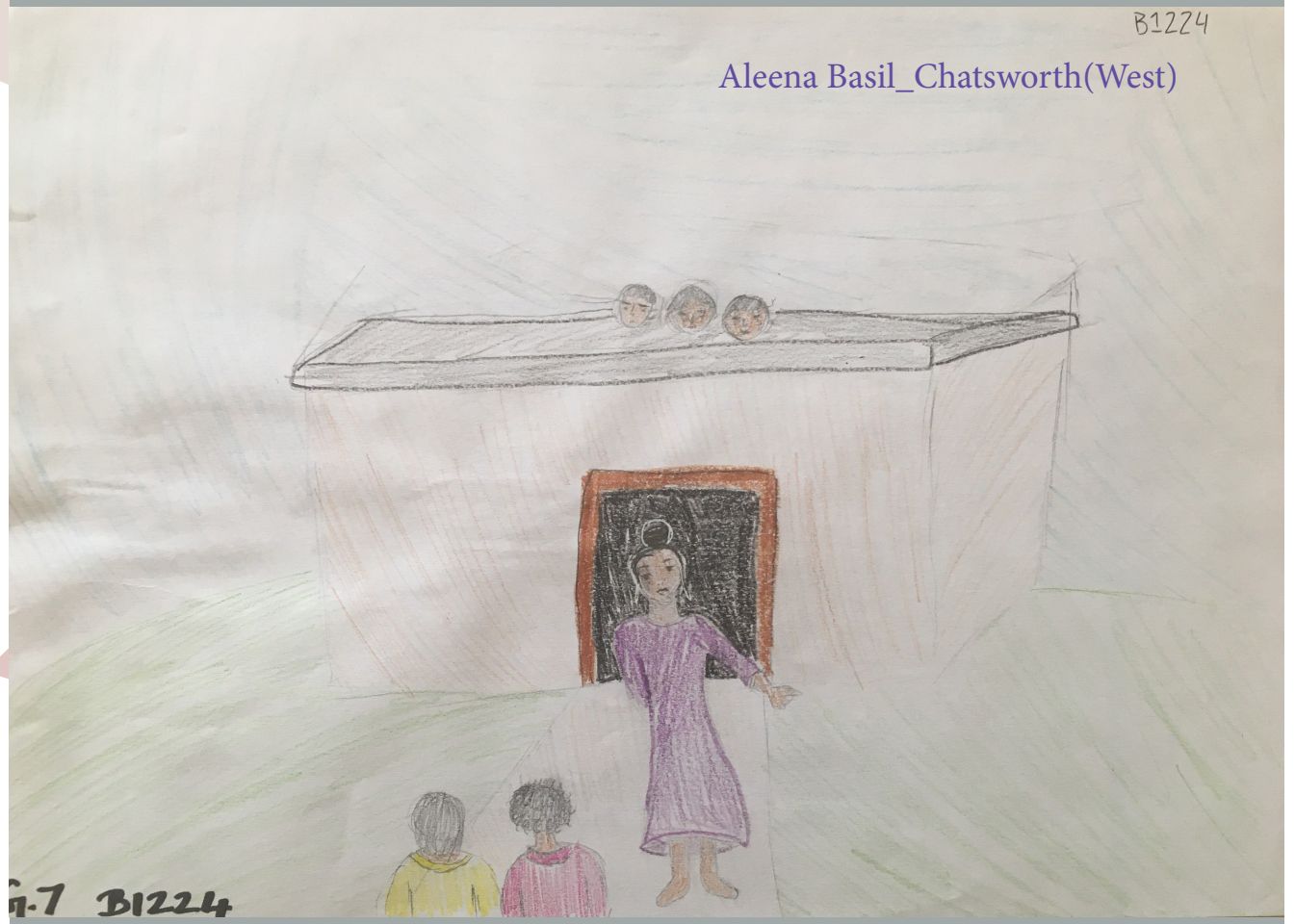
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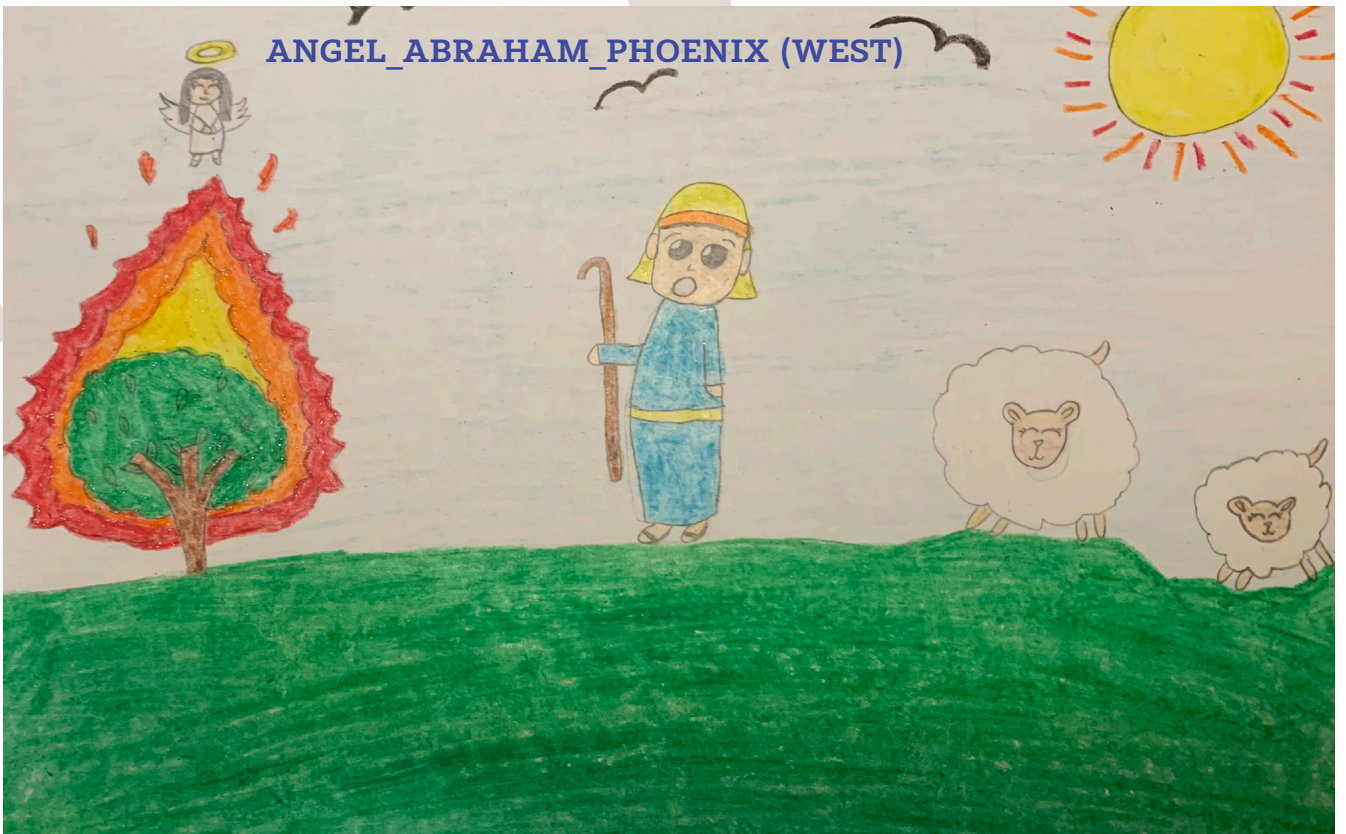
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Aleena Basil_Chatsworth(West)



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ANGEL_ABRAHAM_PHOENIX (WEST)



The WRONG JUDGEMENT

Theme: Slow Down!



was thinking about how Jessica was bossy and didn't listen to his idea. Therefore, he knew that they would not win the service project competition. But he didn't say a word and they continued working on the project. When they were done, Jessica was so proud. She was overconfident and knew that they would win. Mark, however, was only happy that their project was finally done.

The results had finally come about who had won the service project competition in Ms. Brown's class. "Hello students! It is a pleasure for me to finally announce the winners for this year's service project competition!" Ms. Brown exclaimed. The class cheered. "The team that received 3rd place is... Dalia and Lila! You did an amazing job raising money for animal awareness! Congratulations!" Ms. Brown said. Dalia and Lila took a bow. "The team that received 2nd place is... Matt and Tom! It was a brilliant idea to help your community by giving free meals to the elderly! Congratulations!" Ms. Brown said. Matt and Tom high-fived each other. Jessica just knew that her team would receive 1st place.

"Okay. The moment you have all been waiting for. The team that received 1st place is... John and Daisy! It was a superb idea to donate old clothes and toys to poor children! But what makes this project better than any in this class is that it went beyond expectations and was a country wide project! Congratulations John and Daisy!" Ms. Brown said. John and Daisy were so proud of themselves. They were practically shining with pride. Jessica was so disappointed. Mark had the same idea, and if she had listened to him, they could have donated even more toys than John and Daisy, and they would have gotten 1st place! She realized that she wasn't open minded, and she felt defeated as she walked home alone after school.

It was an ordinary day at West Parkway Middle School when Jessica was walking back to her house when she saw Mark. He was her service project partner in class, and they were the only team that hadn't found an idea for their project. Jessica frowned at him as she continued walking home. As she opened the door to her home, she heard a voice saying, "Hi sweetheart. How was your day at school?" It was her mother, and she expected a reply from Jessica, but Jessica ran up the stairs and slammed the door to her room. She kept thinking about what her topic should be...

The next day, Jessica decided to discuss the service project with Mark during lunch at school. When it was lunch time at school, Jessica sat at a table with Mark. "Hi Mark! So, I was thinking about our service project... have you come up with any ideas?" Jessica asked. Mark shook his head; none of them had an idea yet! "Maybe we can do something to help a pet shelter! Or raise money for food to give to cats and dogs! Are those good ideas?" Jessica said. Before Mark could reply, the bell rang, and it was time for class...

Jessica invited Mark over to discuss the project at her house after school. When they got to Jessica's room, Mark said, "We could do a donation for old clothes and toys and give them to poor children around the USA! That would not only meet the requirements for our project, which said we at least have to make it city wide, our project would go country wide!" Jessica, however, was not open minded and insisted her idea would be better. Mark tried to talk, but Jessica would not let Mark finish any of his sentences. So, he was forced to go with Jessica's idea about the pet shelter. Mark sighed and hoped for the best.

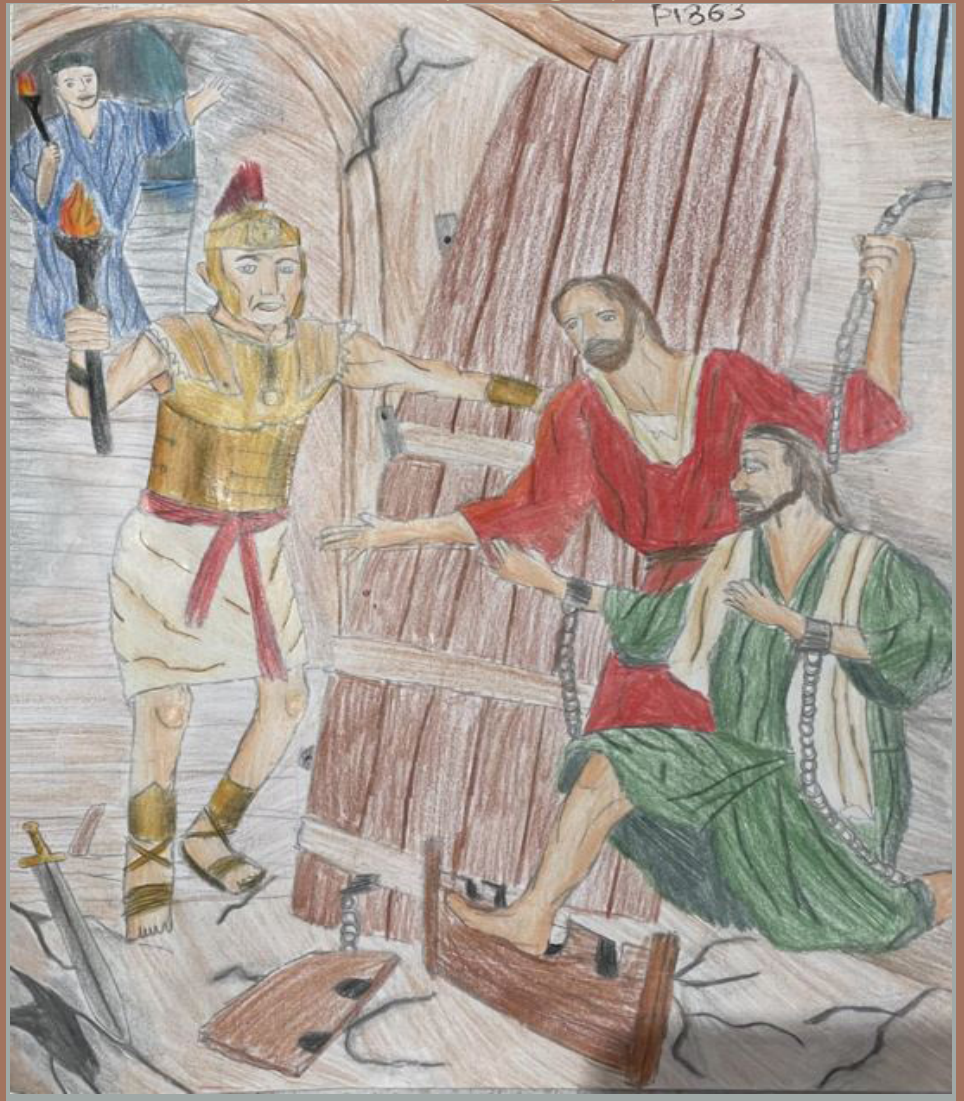
The next day at school, Jessica told her teacher, Ms. Brown, her idea, and Ms. Brown told the class that now that everyone had an idea, they could start their projects and their deadline was next week. Jessica and Mark worked on their project for the next couple of days. Jessica kept thinking her idea would make them win 1st place. But Mark

MORAL

Do not find
fault before you
examine a situation. First,
understand it, and then make
your judgment.

(Wisdom of Sirach 11:7 OSB)

Bryan Presily Calgary (NW)



Christina Mathew Varghese
Calgary(NW)

Online Sunday School

The Online Sunday School is a regular Sunday School using the Zoom platform initiated by The Diocese of South-West of America. The team is presided by Fr. Dr. Jacob Mathew (Director of Sunday school), led by Diane Mathew (Coordinator) and an awesome team of teachers from several parishes in the Diocese. We have 13 functional classes, from KG to Grade 12, meeting every Sunday of the academic year at 6pm EST.

If your Sunday school has 25 or less children, please visit us or contact us for more details. The Online Sunday school ensures that our children are learning grade level faith, they establish a strong foundation and progress gradually to graduation.

Our next registration begins soon. Please email us at

onlinesundayschool.dswa@gmail.com



DIOCESE OF SOUTHWEST AMERICA
Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

ONLINE SUNDAY SCHOOL
(An initiative by the Diocesan Sunday School Administration)

'LET LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME'
Matthew 19:14

ACADEMIC YEAR 2022 - '23

Starting September 11, 2022
Every Sunday 6 PM EST - 7 PM EST

TO REGISTER YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL, PLEASE CONTACT:
Sunday School Director : Rev. Fr. Jacob Mathew +1 (407) 970-9090
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Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.

Winston Churchill