



*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

THE  
— STREAM —

*Newsletter*

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Sunday School Edition

# Explore this Issue



## **Thirumeni's Message**

His Grace Thomas Mar Ivanios



## **Happy New Year!?**

Fr. Abey Abraham,  
Vice Director of Southeast Region



## **Meet Stephen!**

Stephen Mathew James  
DS-WA Sunday School Treasurer



## **CWE**

Children's work from West Region



## **The Sunday School Scene**

Sunday School events around the diocese



## **Upcoming Events**

What's next?



# LITURGICAL Seasons

His Grace Dr. Thomas Mar Ivanios



*My Beloved Children,*

As we approach the end of this liturgical year and move towards the new liturgical year this November, let us thank God for the blessings He has provided for us in our spiritual life. In the Indian Orthodox Church, the liturgical calendar holds utmost importance. This serves as a guide for the church's worship and spiritual life, providing a structured framework for the celebration of the feasts, fasts, and seasons throughout the year.

We will begin the liturgical new year by sanctifying and dedicating ourselves through the feasts of Koodosh Etho and Hoodosh Etho. To explain further, the liturgical period is divided into seven seasons:

1. Season of Annunciation - From Koodosh Etho to Yeldho (Christmas/Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ)
2. Season of Epiphany - From Yeldho to the beginning of the Great Lent
3. Season of Great Lent - 50 days of the Great Lent
4. Season of Resurrection - Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to Feast of Pentecost
5. Season of Pentecost - Feast of Pentecost to the Feast of Transfiguration
6. Season of Transfiguration - From the Feast of Transfiguration to the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
7. Season of Holy Cross - From Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross to Koodosh Etho

Following the feast days and fasting days of the Church holds great significance in our lives. These observances serve as a means to deepen our faith, foster a sense of community, and embrace a disciplined lifestyle. Feast days commemorate the lives of revered saints, biblical events, and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. They provide an opportunity for all of us to reflect on these sacred moments, seek divine blessings, and draw inspiration from the spiritual legacies left behind. Fasting days, on the other hand, are periods of self-denial and purification, where we abstain from certain foods and engage in intensified prayer and introspection. By observing these fasts, we aim to cultivate self-control, humility, and a closer connection with God. Moreover, participating in these communal practices strengthens the bond among one another, fostering unity and a shared sense of identity. Overall, the observance of feast days and fasting days in the Church nurtures spirituality, promotes religious devotion, and enriches our lives as a whole.

The liturgical calendar plays a vital role in nurturing the spiritual growth of the faithful. As followers of Jesus Christ, we need discipline in our spiritual life. This provides a rhythm and structure to the church's worship, allowing us to participate in the various liturgical cycles and experience the spiritual significance of each season. Through the calendar, we can engage in prayer, fasting, and reflection, drawing closer to God and our identity in Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the liturgical calendar fosters unity among the members of the Indian Orthodox Church. By observing the same set of feasts and seasons, even believers across different regions and parishes all over the world share a common spiritual journey. This shared experience strengthens the sense of community and solidarity within the Church, emphasizing the interconnectedness of its members.

My prayer for this new liturgical year is that we all can be stronger mentally, physically, and spiritually in our journey to becoming more like Christ. Now and always, and unto the ages of ages, Amen.

# HAPPY New Year!



Koodosh Eetho and Hoodosh Eetho  
**Fr. Abey Abraham**

Do you know why I wished you all a happy new year in the month of October? According to the liturgical calendar of our Church, our liturgical year starts with Koodosh Eetho. Koodosh Eetho is the first Sunday and Hoodosh Eetho is the second Sunday of the year. Koodosh Eetho is the eighth Sunday before Christmas or the Sunday after October 29. Do you know that we have seven major seasons? Nativity, Epiphany, The Great Lent, Resurrection, Pentecost, Transfiguration and The Holy Cross?

Koodosh Eetho means "the sanctification of the Church" and Hoodosh Eetho means "the dedication of the Church". The term sanctify means "to set apart and to make holy". So, the Koodosh Eetho reminds us about the sanctification of the Church, including us. Koodosh Eetho ensures the physical and spiritual sanctification of the faithful. The faithful purify themselves and the parishes for the worship. It is an annual renewal. Since it is a new year we should make ourselves prepared to step into it. We all are called to be holy and sanctified. But as earthly men, we continue to sin because of our fallen nature, and we have lost the image and likeness of God. So we require sanctification. By taking the divine properties of God, one can become holy. Then only can we restore the image of God.

The second Sunday is Hoodosh Eetho Sunday which means, "the dedication of the Church". The temple of Jerusalem, built by King Solomon, was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar. After its destruction, it was rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah. But again, the temple was destroyed, and King Herod rebuilt it again.

In BC 170, the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanous waged a war and invaded the city of Jerusalem. Many were massacred and many were made captives. The worship in the temple was obstructed. He defiled the holy altar by sacrificing a female swine on it. In 164 BC, Jews retrieved the temple from the Greeks and they renovated the temple. They rededicated and made the rededication a great celebration as their mark of joy of freedom. They illuminated the temple and their houses with light and the feast came to be known as the "festival of lights". We can read it in the book of Maccabees.

By celebrating the Hoodosh Eetho every year, we renew and dedicate ourselves as the light of the world. We use different words for this in different situations. Home = Housewarming (sanctifying), Person = Baptism, and Church = Consecration.

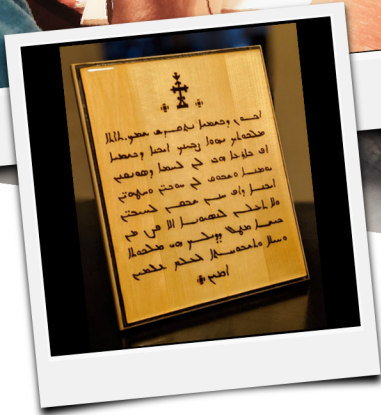
So, we must ask ourselves the question, "Are we living a life according to the call or not?". We must realize our call. Both the days of Koodosh Eetho and Hoodosh Eetho remind us of the importance of sanctification and dedication. May the Holy Spirit guide us. May God Almighty bless us all.



Holy



HAND CRAFTED BY  
Stephen James  
9 AUG 2023



# MEET Stephen!



I'm Stephen Mathew James, the current Treasurer of the Sunday School Admin Team. I have been in this role since January 2020. My responsibility as the treasurer is to have a general financial oversight of the Sunday School account. We receive contributions from Churches and individuals as well as incur expenses for various diocesan Sunday School activities. So I have to ensure proper record-keeping by reviewing account transactions and coordinating with the Diocesan Finance Coordinator.

I am a member of St. Mary's Malankara Orthodox Church, Houston where I have taught Sunday School for about 10 years in various grades, mostly middle and high school levels. I have enjoyed teaching grades in which history is taught. I used to dislike history when I was in school. But over time, I have been fascinated by historical topics and enjoy sharing them with Sunday School children.

I have also been the principal of St. Mary's Malankara Orthodox Church, Houston for five years (2018-2023 academic years). I was also the principal of St. Mary's Indian Orthodox Church San Antonio for a short duration (2011).

I live in Pearland, Houston with my wife - Treasurin - and two daughters - Evangeline and Eleanor. I am a Mechanical Engineer by profession and I work in the energy industry. I have always been intrigued by the way the world works and engineering as a career has been very fulfilling to me in that respect. I enjoy sharing knowledge with the younger generation and have participated in several science fairs and camps. I love DIY and anything that puts me in front of a machine or tool. I spend time working on several home projects. My most ambitious project has been replacing my home attic AC blower unit simply because ... why not?! I wanted to give it a shot. A professional service would have cost me \$2,000. I went DIY and got it done, spending only \$185.

Aside from engineering, I am also a musician at heart. I'm mostly a self-taught pianist. I play the piano at St. Mary's choir. I also actively participate in wedding choirs, music shows, and private gigs. There's no limit to the genre - you'll find me enjoying anything from Beethoven's *Für Elise* to Metallica's *Nothing Else Matters*.

There's a host of hobbies that I have but one that I try my hand at the most is pyrography - wood-burning art. Here's some of the work I've done - <https://photos.app.goo.gl/YPDpsYFBGJYm4UXX8>. Always learning to be better at it.

I hope and pray that our Sunday School children grow up to be role models of Christ in this world. In an ever-changing world landscape, we're often challenged with peer pressure and subjugation to norms outside of our comfort zone. Always ask yourself the question "Is this pleasing to the Lord?" and let your conscience guide you. I never tell any of my Sunday School children to be THE BEST but they must always strive to be THE BEST VERSION OF THEMSELVES. Put in the hard work, be sincere, and be kind... everything else will fall in place. Learning never stops. I recently performed a show at a 100th birthday and it was amazing to know that the birthday "boy" decided to learn Spanish when he turned 98! So keep challenging yourselves.

# God's Great Work

An insurmountable task stands in my way,  
An obstacle, rendering my mind in knots.  
And overwhelmed with troubling thoughts,  
I step back from its dismay.

My heart vexed upon this challenge,  
Through my body, my troubles overflow.  
My confidence flailing with every blow.  
My once firm resolution crumbling with this challenge.

But all is not lost, my dear friends, as it may,  
For out of the helpless blue, shines a radiant light,  
A luminous ray to save me from my plight.  
Of my Lord, the Saviour of the day.

My God trains my hand for battle,  
My fingers for war.  
My God fills my mouth with truth,  
My words with sincerity.  
My God pushes my feet toward good,  
My steps towards generosity.  
My God shields my eyes from sin,  
My vision from evil.

This is the work of my Lord God,  
And blessed is He of His grace forever!



**Lian Elsa Linto**

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church  
San Francisco, CA

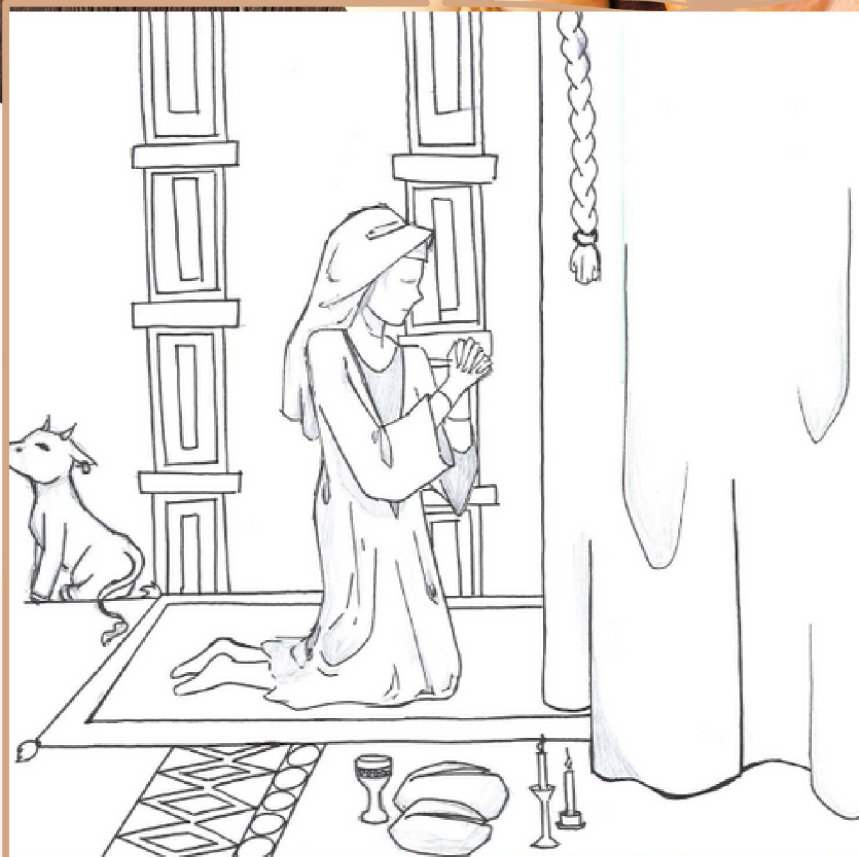
## HANNAH'S

*Faith*

*Courage*

**Faith George**

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church  
San Francisco, CA



## ENVY DESTROYS

### Abigail Bineesh

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church

San Francisco, CA

*"As a moth gnaws a garment, so doth envy consumes a man,"*

*St. John Chrysostom*



Envy is an emotion that destroys an individual. When someone possesses this emotion, they are not aware of the consequences. Saint John Chrysostom once said, "As a moth gnaws a garment, so doth envy consumes a man." In this saying, the two comparisons are being stated. A moth is a fairly tiny creature that is incapable of devouring something quickly. Rather, they slowly feed and consume. Similarly, so does envy for a man. It is a gradual consumption. Envy consumes a person over time and is a toxic emotion to be the owner of.

In the Bible, envy is one of the seven deadly sins. In Genesis, we are told of the story of Cain killing his brother, Abel, because he was envious of Abel's sacrifice to God. From this example, we can see that envy drives a person to do things someone wouldn't even consider doing. In James 3:16, it says, "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." Envy consuming a person is a gradual process. Just like a moth slowly gnaws a cloth, envy consumes a man with sinful intentions over time. When we choose to follow this emotion, we are choosing and turning away from God.

As you can tell, envy has its own consequences. Therefore, it is important to stay strong in faith and prayer to overcome the feeling of envy and jealousy. In Peter 2:1, we read, "Laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil-speaking, as newborn babies desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." As faithful Christians, we should crave for the scripture teachings and the Word of God as we depend on them so much. Additionally, Proverbs 23:17 states, "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be in fear of the Lord the whole day long." The Bible teaches us to stay fearful of the Lord's judgment against us.

In summary, envy is a poison that gradually destroys a person and their energy. Envy and jealousy form and start with someone having certain negative opinions about someone or something. These thoughts grow and slowly drive a person's actions through a sinful path as a response to these thoughts. Letting this process to go forward is like letting evil take over. It is important to recognize these emotions and prevent them from growing. For this, wisdom is required which can be obtained from the Bible and teachings of the Lord. Staying strong and true in our Christian faith will help us to not follow these sins and have such evil emotions toward others.

# The Journey



## Seth Vivek

St. Thomas Orthodox Church  
Los Angeles, CA

**Theme:** Self Control

“Do not walk after your own desires but restrain your appetites.”  
(Wisdom of Sirach 18:29)

Sparley was nervous. He had a long journey ahead of him. Sparley is a new Christian and was given a job to go deliver some documents. He would have to travel through a blazing hot desert, a humid, foggy forest, and an evil city. So Sparley gathers up his documents, summons up his courage, and gets on his way.

Heat. Torrid heat. That was the first thing Sparley felt as he began his journey across the desert. The second thing he felt was water. Sparley sees a sign that tells him he still has seven kilometers left. He groans. Sparley is almost out of water and still has so much land to travel. As he is walking he sees a figure in the distance. As he gets closer he realizes that the figure is wearing a turban and a large backpack. He has a big smile on his face. “Hello”, says the stranger. “What are you doing out here in the middle of the desert? By the way, my name is Deceit.”

“Hello, Deceit”, Sparley replies. “I’m Sparley and I have to deliver some documents.” Deceit’s eyes light up as he mentions the documents. “You’re looking a little thirsty. If you give me a look at the documents, I’ll give you all the water you could want.” Sparley is so thirsty and he really wants to take the water but he doesn’t. He replies, “I will not take pleasure in the flesh but I will control myself and be on my way. Goodbye!”

“You will be back”, he replies. Sparley doesn’t even flinch as he continues on his way. Sparley finally crosses the desert, reaches the end of the desert, and walks into the start of the forest. When he reaches, he finds a lake, thanking God before he drinks from it. Sparley continues into the forest and hears a thumping of hooves and sees a man with a large backpack with expensive jewelry all around it. “Hello, my name is Greed”, says the man. “What are you doing in the middle of the forest?”

“I’m here to deliver some documents,” Sparley replies. Greed’s eyes light up just like deceiver. “I could give you all the gold you want,” Deceit says after he pulls gold bar after gold bar out of his backpack, “All I need is one look at the documents.” Sparley eyes the gold. It’s enough to be set for life. You could be one of the richest of the time. But Sparley gathers his senses and replies, “I will not take your money, and I will not lose my job integrity. I will be on my way, goodbye.” Greed’s grin has now turned into a scowl. “You’ll be back!” He yells. Sparley doesn’t look back, but just keeps walking.

Sparley eventually cleared the forest and headed on his way to the evil city. As he enters, he gets the pungent smell of alcohol. He gets stares from everyone as he enters the city. Then he sees a man with a friendly smile. “Hello, I’m Indulgence, sorry about all of the stares, we’re not used to seeing visitors.”

“Hello”, Sparley replies. “I’m going through here to deliver some documents.” “I could take those documents off your hands,” Indulgence says. “All I need are those documents and you could get whatever you want - fame, money, parties, and more!” Sparley wants to take it, he really does. But he remembers that he was given a job.

“No,” he says, “I will not give in to the things of this world, but I will focus on God! I am on my way, goodbye!” Indulgence’s face turns into anger, but he doesn’t say anything. Sparley never looks back.

“Here you go!” Sparley replies, “These are the documents from some man named Paul. I don’t know who he is, but he wanted you to have them. “Thank you!” The people of Ephesus replied.



# Messages

**Shania Wilson**

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church  
San Francisco, CA



There are messages of many kinds.  
Some are understood immediately, others take time.  
Messages can come from anyone.  
They can be as hidden as air or as obvious as the Sun.  
Unimportant or big, harsh or gently,  
Messages could be either ruthless or sentimental.  
Messages from the Lord are all meant to show the path.  
They show us how to act from beginning to last.  
God wants to share eternal life with us all.  
In order for that to happen, we must answer his call.  
Many people wait and wait for decades  
For God's plan for them to be suddenly displayed.  
However, we have a simple way to understand God's will.  
The Bible can teach us the lifestyle to build.  
People before us could have had the doubts as us.  
That is why we have their personal accounts to trust.  
He shall always watch over us and our lives  
Like a calm person watching over the tides.  
The Bible is our Church's base,  
The ability to obey a message is all it takes.



Christ's Birth Announced to St. Mary



**Irene Susan Renjith**

St. Thomas  
Los Angeles, CA

# Rita, Mira & the Beauty of Friendship

**Theme:** Choosing Companions

"Every friend will say, "I too am your friend," but sometimes a friend is a friend in name only." (Wisdom of Sirach 37:1)

"Class today we will be doing a lesson on friendship," I announced. "But we already know how to make friends," one of my students whined. "Yes, but today you are going to be learning what a true friend looks like." Hands shot up. "No questions right now! Maybe my story will answer questions." I sat down on my chair and got comfortable. "I had a friend named Mira. I considered Mira my best, BEST friend. We lived in the same neighborhood, went to the same school, and shared a lot of the same hobbies." I paused and looked around. I saw students absorbed in my story. I then continued on.

"One day our teacher split us into groups. None of us knew why. Then our teacher told us that we had been split up into groups because there was a competition. We would have to research California's history and create a presentation. Mira wasn't in my group though. However, she said that it would give us a new opportunity to work with new people. Mira was quite intelligent. She told me about a book that had a lot of valuable information. As soon as school was over, my group and I ran over to the library and checked out the book.

Soon, Mira's group came. Mira wasn't surprised to see me. She calmly asked me to share the book once I was done. Do you know what I said? I said "No". I once again paused and saw the surprised faces of my students. "Mira's team was pretty angry, but Mira led them away to find other resources. They found some pretty quickly. Soon, one of my teammates told me to share the book. She felt sorry and she thought we could share our resources and they would share theirs. I agreed. So both our groups traded.

On the day my teacher announced the winners, I was so surprised! Mira's and my team won! However, I didn't feel good. I hadn't shared with Mira at first, but she helped me right away.

I went and apologized. She said that it was okay and that everybody makes mistakes. What a rotten friend I was! I learned my lesson that same day." I finished and looked around. I saw one hand in the air. "Yes, John?" "Are you still friends with Mira, Ms. Rita?"

I smiled. "Yes. In fact, she's the one teaching our friendship unit." As if on cue, the door swung open. "Hello everybody!"



**Naomi Mariam**

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church  
San Lorenzo, CA





Pumpkin Carving



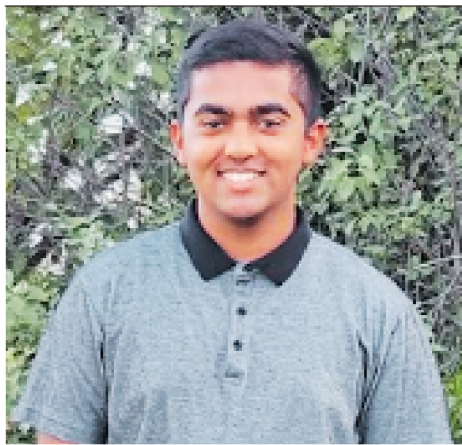
St. Mary of Bethany



Esther is Chosen Queen



**Chelsa Jones**  
St. Mary  
Houston, TX



**Jerin Midhun John**  
St. Thomas  
Los Angeles, CA



**Ian Mamman Thomas**  
St. Thomas  
Seattle, WA



# KELLY'S DANCE REVOLUTION



**Emma Thomas**  
St. Thomas Orthodox Church  
Phoenix, AZ

There was once a girl named Kelly.

She always wanted to be a ballet dancer, so when she got older and had enough courage, she decided to try out for the lead role in a ballet dance. She went to a costume store and bought a leotard for her ballet tryout.

When she got to the place where tryouts were being held with her aunt, she went inside. When the other girls saw her they started laughing. Kelly was really overweight for her age. She is about 16 years old. Anyway, she didn't care and did the ballet routine. But she was being judged by the best dancer in the class, Denise. Denise said, "Why are you doing ballet?" Kelly said, "Oh, well I always wanted to be a ballet dancer and-" Denise cut her off and said, "No, that's not what I meant, why are you doing ballet if you're so fat?"

Kelly heard this but decided not to give up, she loved ballet. But things didn't go as planned. Kelly was doing a routine when she fell. Everybody started laughing and Denise called her out. She said, "She probably can't continue teacher, she's so fat that she'll get tired." Denise continued laughing.

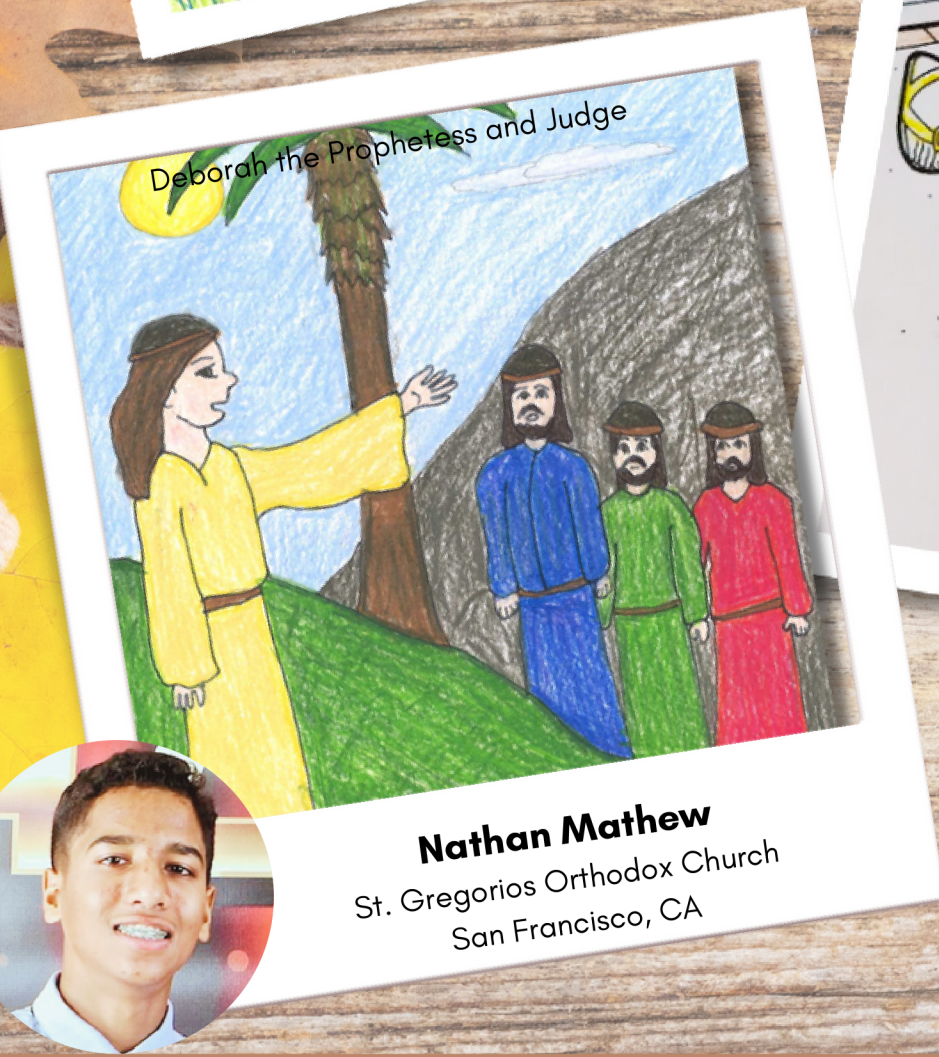
Kelly ran out and went to the car where her aunt was waiting for her. Her aunt, Lena, asked what was wrong and why Kelly was crying. But Kelly didn't respond. They went home. Kelly was so upset so she locked herself inside her bedroom. Lena tried to help by talking to her but it wasn't working. So she decided to post a video of the things Kelly had been through to be here.

Kelly's dad walked out on her and her mom when she was only a few months old. So her mom had to take care of her. But her mom died in a fatal car crash when Kelly was only five. So Kelly had to live with her aunt. Then at a doctors appointment, the doctor said Kelly has a medical condition called Pseudotumor Cerebri. The only medicine to treat it made her gain weight. So you never know what a person has been through just to survive. Just to wake up and live to see another day. After Kelly's aunt posts the video, it goes viral. Soon Kelly tries to go back to ballet. Kelly does and Denise laughs but Kelly ignores her. Kelly tries out and she gets the lead part. Someone was taking a video and it went viral again. Soon Kelly is famous. She started out with nothing and became the most adored person on Earth.

**Theme:** Outward  
Appearances

"Do not praise a man for his good looks, and do not detest one because of his appearance."  
(Wisdom of Sirach 11:2)

**Neorah Susan Nohin**  
St. Gregorios Orthodox Church  
San Francisco, CA



**Nathan Mathew**  
St. Gregorios Orthodox Church  
San Francisco, CA



**Seira Siby**  
St. Mary's  
Dallas, TX  
CWE 2021 Drawing



# CHRIST IN THE Beggar



Has there ever been a time where you have seen a poor man on the side of the road and thought to yourself, "Whoa, glad that's not me", and drive off to your comfortable house without even another glance at that poor man? Well that poor man could have been Jesus. He was not Jesus physically but because the Holy Spirit is in everyone who believes. Therefore there is God in everyone. This can be seen when St. John Chrysostom says, "if you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will not find him in the chalice." This means that we should treat everyone with love and care as God has given us love and care. If you do not embody the will of Christ in your actions then it is useless to hope that He will listen to you or hope that getting Holy Qurbana is enough to be saved. This can be seen in the stories of the Good Samaritan the poor man and Lazarus, and the Judgment Day.

**Helen Philip**  
St. Thomas  
Phoenix, AZ



In the story of the Good Samaritan, a wounded man lies on the side of the road after robbers have taken everything from him. He was hoping someone would help him but as people passed by, such as a priest, no one stopped to help him. In the end it was the Good Samaritan who showed the wounded man love and care. People always say that we should be like the Good Samaritan but what does that mean? It means that if we ever see a person who is in need or doesn't have as many of the great blessings we have received, we should always help them. In doing so, we are embodying Christ's will. He wants us to love our neighbor. Isn't the poor man standing on the side of the road our neighbor? How do we show him love? By ignoring him? We should see in every person that we come across, the image of God. After all, did Christ not sacrifice Himself so that we could all be saved? We must embody His Will so that we can rightfully partake in the Holy Qurbana and remember Him and all that He has done for us.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus we see a similar aspect of God's love for the poor. The rich man would always pass by Lazarus and never help him. When Judgment Day came the person who got to sit at the right hand of God was Lazarus and not the rich man, who ignored him. Like this, if we want to be saved, our faith must show actions - help others and help the poor and needy. God loves us all and He spent His life helping the poor and needy, healing illnesses, and casting out demons from them. Isn't our goal theosis? To be like God? How can we be like God if we don't care for those who are suffering or for those who don't have very much money?

In St. Matthew 25, there is a description of what will happen on Judgment Day. God will tell the people on his right side, "when I was in need you helped me, when I was hungry you fed me, etc..." The people who are righteous will be humble. The people on the left however, God will tell them, "when I was hungry you did not feed me, when I was in need you did not help me." The people on the left will answer, "but we did not see you hungry or in need." The righteous people are the people who see God and embody his will. They see people in need and will help them. However the unrighteous people will not see God. They will not see God in the beggar in front of the church doors.

Most people think that to be a good Christian we only have to go to church and partake in the Holy Qurbana but our duty does not end there. We must work towards holiness doing good and try to embody the will of God. We must be like the Good Samaritan and the righteous people. We cannot be like the rich man who ignored the beggar. We must see God and everything we do and only then God will listen to us. You will not find God in the chalice if you do not help others and be kind to everyone. God is love so we must do everything out of love and in love, including helping the poor.



**Tina Elizabeth Koshy**  
St. Thomas  
Los Angeles, CA

## *Rebekah at the Well*



**Angel Abraham**  
St. Thomas  
Phoenix, AZ

## *The Lord* is my Light and Savior

The lord is my light and savior.  
Whom shall, I fear?  
If the lord is with me  
No evil will come near.

The lord is my companion.  
He helps me in tough times.  
The lord is great.  
And surely divine  
The lord is there  
Always beside me  
For when I fall  
He picks up thee.

The lord is my light and savior.  
He shows me the right path.  
There's no one I'd rather favor.  
You don't want to face his wrath.

# GODLY BROTHER

**Helen Philip**

St. Thomas  
Phoenix, AZ



Do you know what it is like to lose a brother? Well, I do.

This is the story of Michah Wilson and myself, Luke Wilson. I remember my brother very fondly. He was always kind and generous. Never asking for more than anyone could provide, always willing to help those in need. Now, if only my younger self would know how great of a person my brother was.

When I was about eight years old, I hated my brother. Father always gave him everything. Father always looked at him with love. Father never said no to him. He had our Father's love but me? I had nothing. Father would never smile at me, never said a nice word to me, never treated me with any kindness. For this I hated my brother. What was so special about him? Sure he helps everyone who could possibly ever need help, like that one time Mrs. Marley had dropped her grocery bag when coming out of the local grocery store, he was the first person to run to her and help her. Sure he was really smart and was the top of his class. Sure even his kindness reached home. He would help me whenever I needed help on homework or needed some extra support before my soccer games. Not a single word he ever said to me had any kind of malice or hate. So, why did I find myself loathing his entire existence? Why couldn't that be me?

I remember an incident with very much regret. This had happened when we were leaving church on a Sunday after Qurbana. My friends and I were laughing and making jokes when we saw my brother come outside.

"Hey isn't that your brother?" asked one of my friends as he approached us. "He's so quiet," said another one of my friends. "I bet he doesn't know how to speak!" said Milo, my best friend, making fun of him.

"Yeah! He's like a mute!" I chimed in.

I regretted it as soon as I saw my parents' faces.

"Luke!" screamed my parents. They were horrified by my mean comment. They dragged both me and my brother to the corner of the church and scolded me heavily.

"That's not a nice thing to say Luke, Apologize!" said my mom.

"Mom, it's okay. I know he didn't mean it," said my brother, and I helplessly watched as they cooed at him and fussed over his well-being. What about me? When have they ever cared about me? I thought angrily.

"I won't do it again mom," I said to appease her. But, the teasing never really went away. I couldn't seem to stop the mean words that would flow out whenever my brother was near.



## CONTINUED...





A separate occasion that I remember with regret happened during the time when I was shifting between being a teenager and an adult. My friends had needed money so we could go to the Kanye West concert that all the cool kids were going to. I needed money and fast. I decided to snoop through the house until I found a 100 dollar bill lying in the coat of my dad's jacket. I would pay him back later, I thought. I swiftly took it and made my escape.

"Luke!", I heard my brother yelling. "Where did you get that money?", he said.

"I found it lying on the road," I lied.

"I know you stole that from dad!" he exclaimed.

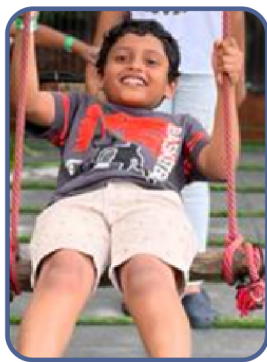
Sighing, he pulled out a 100 dollars from his wallet and said, "Here take this, next time don't steal, just ask," he said.

I was humiliated. How dare he think he was better than me. I thought all of this in the moment's anger. I didn't know what came over me. Later, at the concert, I would think about how my brother worked so hard to get money, pulling work from part time jobs and mowing our neighbours lawn. Yet, without hesitation he had pulled it out. Some of his hard earned money for me. Yet somehow, I could not stop myself from sneaking a couple of dollars out of my dad's purse everytime he went to work. Afterall, who was gonna find out? My brother would not tell anyone.

The last incident I remember with the most regret. Our family was walking home from having dinner and we were walking down the side of the road. My friends were with us and we were laughing and joking around. However, as we were crossing the road, a truck had lost control over their brake and was speeding fast toward us. "Luke!", yelled my brother. He swiftly pushed me away and I watched in horror as the truck barreled into the side of my brother. He who was so kind. He who was so helpful. He who was always silent and observing, why did it have to be him?

"Brother, God has called me back to my place," he said as he watched me as sobs racked through my body clutching him. At that moment I remembered, "The talk of a Godly man is wise, but the fool changes like the moon!"

## *Reflections of Speed: A Driver's Perspective*



Drawing by **Steve John**

Age 8

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church of India  
San Leandro, CA





# The Lord's Ways & Paths

*The Lord's ways are mysterious,  
And his paths for us are marvellous.*

*We will not know his ways,  
Neither will we understand them until  
We have accomplished them.*

*Reveal to me your ways, O Lord,  
And teach me your plans for me.  
Lead me through the road of salvation,  
And deliver me not into the bottomless pit.*

*Your ways are incomprehensible,  
And your paths are unexplainable.  
O Lord, guide me in my path,  
For I am your child forever.*



**Richard Thomas Renji**

St. Gregorios  
San Lorenzo, CA

# When

dark clouds of unknown loom across my heart,  
When sorrows like the sea roars,  
And fears like untamed fires blaze,  
In my hour of need, I lean on the light,  
On the glorious, golden rays of God's love,  
Which floods my soul.

Dispels the darkness within,  
Consoles my sorrows and calms my fears,  
Just as David slayed the lion and the giant,  
Nothing could extinguish his trust in the Lord.

For I joyfully acknowledge,  
"The Lord is my Light"

The everlasting & eternal light of my life,  
In all my moments of strife,  
"The Lord is my Saviour"

In Him, is my security and salvation,  
By Him, sin & death have been conquered,  
Through Him, I seek the face of God,

Nothing in heaven or earth,  
Evildoers or enemies or storms,  
Can cause fear within me,

He is the rock which I stand upon,  
The very stronghold of my life,

So I fear neither man or dread the unknown.



**Sarah Chandapillai**

St Gregorios  
San Francisco, CA

# Prayer

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

This is an important part of a Christian's life. Prayer is when one or more multiple individuals present themselves to God. St. John Chrysostom, the Patriarch of Constantinople, also known as the "Golden Tongue" once said, "Prayer is a refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, and a protection against sadness."

What does this mean? Quotes are often hard to understand but in this essay, you will fully understand the meaning of this quote.

The first part of this quote says that prayer is a refuge for worry. I'm sure we all have had worries. That's okay! Even great figures in the Bible have had worries. They all overcame it by prayer. For example, when God told Moses to free the Israelites from the Pharaoh, he was worried. He didn't know how he was going to free multitudes and take them to the promised land. Also, many people came and presented their worries to Jesus when he was on Earth.

One example of this is Jairus, the synagogue leader. When his daughter was at the point of death, he pleaded with Jesus to save her. When we are worried we should also ask God to help us overcome it.

The second part says that prayer is a foundation for cheerfulness. Cheerfulness means that you are noticeably happy and optimistic. The prophets, disciples, and some early Church Fathers were all persecuted for their belief in God. However, they remained cheerful. Why? They knew that they had lived a prayerful life so their reward would be granted in heaven. Psalm 34:17 says, "When the righteous cry for help, the Lord delivers them from their troubles." For example, St. Stephen, the first martyr, remained cheerful when he was being stoned to death. He saw the kingdom of God open up and Jesus sitting on His heavenly throne. We pray that we can also remain cheerful in our hard times.



**Naomi Mariam**

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church  
San Lorenzo, CA

Prayer is also a constant source of happiness. In the Bible, Psalm 27: 4 says, "Seek your happiness in the Lord and He will give you your heart's desire." Our constant source of happiness is God. We were all created in the Image of God, so we have a great amount of happiness in us. However, sometimes our happiness gets covered up because of the hate and anger of this world. We pray to God to lead us away from the hate and anger so that we can be loving and forgiving Christians.

Lastly, the quote says that prayer is protection against sadness. We are human, so we will have some bad days in our lives. Sometimes our sadness can get extreme. In some people, extreme sadness can cause depression which can have a negative impact on your life.

Psalm 30:2 says, "O Lord my God, I have cried unto you and you have healed me." Jesus, on Gethsemane, prayed to His Father because he knew that he was going to go through His Passion. Praying at that time comforted Him. We should do this too! When we are going through sad and troubling days, we should pray to get comfort.

In conclusion, prayer is an important aspect of our lives. Even Jesus prayed during his earthly life. He prayed before performing miracles, in the morning, and even on the Cross! Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, pray and petition, with thanksgiving, and present your requests to the Lord." We should always set aside time to pray, even if we are tired. Leading a prayerful life can lead you to the Kingdom of God.

# Eerily

## Ruth Vinu

St. Thomas Orthodox Church  
Seattle, WA



*I sat in the corner and watched everyone surround him  
His eyes crinkle when he smiles  
His hair perfectly falls into place,  
Like the way a game of dominoes does.  
Everyone yearned to get a glimpse of him,  
While she leaned at him.  
It's hard to watch someone effortlessly fit in.  
She tried to be a jewel,  
The shine that reflects on people.  
She broke herself into countless pieces,  
Only for everyone to tell her that she'd never belong.*

*She saw the way he smirked after every "coincidenta" rescue.  
Everyone put him on a pedestal,  
While she was waiting for the skeleton in his closet to be let out.  
She saw the darkness spiral out of him,  
His secretive malign towards her proved it.  
When you're young everyone assumes you're immature,  
So she continued leering at him in silence,  
Hoping and praying that the villains don't win in the end.*

*She saw herself in the mirror and smiled.  
Thirteen years passed,  
But she still felt her inner child healing day by day.  
He had marked her self-esteem like a bloodstain.  
She had no option but to run away far from him,  
Sometimes to run is the brave thing.*

*She had heard the news,  
His reputation that was founded by lies had perished away,  
While she found people who love all of her true pieces.  
She didn't have to shine for people anymore.  
Because she had found her golden light in the shape of God.  
The one who does evil,  
Always withers and fades away with time.*



# California Vibes

A memento was awarded to Ms. Elizabeth Mathew, the outgoing principal of St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, San Francisco, in recognition of her outstanding service, presented by our Diocesan Metropolitan, HG Thomas Mar Ivanios.



San Francisco



West Region Teachers Summit | September 2023

Los Angeles



# St. Thomas

Seattle, WA



OVBS 2023

St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Seattle held our OVBS from August 25-27, 2023. It was a blessed weekend filled with a lot of learning and fun for our children. Our main speaker was our very own Achen, Fr. George Ninan who also serves as the OVBS Director for the Diocese.



# St. Thomas

ORTHODOX CHURCH



OVB'S  
2023



PHOENIX, AZ





St. Mary  
San Fernando Valley, CA



OVBS 2023







# OPENING DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

## ST. MARY'S MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH, HOUSTON

### A welcome message to the children for the new academic year in Sunday School

St. Marys Malankara Orthodox Church, Houston, TX

"Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."- Psalm 34:11

#### Greetings in the precious name of the Lord!

We thank our heavenly Father for allowing us to be part of this Sunday School Ministry. We are excited to embark on a journey of learning, fun, and spiritual growth together. As we begin this academic year let us pray that the will of God will be manifested. We want to ask our loving Lord to fill us with the knowledge of truth, give us the spirit of understanding, and shower us with his wisdom so that what we learn will be applied in our lives.

Let us also remember that Sunday School is not just a place to gain knowledge; it is a community where we come together to explore our faith, strengthen our relationship with God, and support one another. It's also about building friendships, sharing joy, and growing as individuals. We will have opportunities to play, laugh, and create beautiful memories together, learn more about God's love, and discover the beauty of living a life rooted in kindness and compassion.

Ourselves and the teachers are here to support you, guide you, and make our time together enjoyable and meaningful. Whether we are singing songs, listening to stories, or engaging in creative activities, we will do our best to create a warm and nurturing environment where everyone can feel comfortable and excited to learn. We are excited about the year ahead and the opportunities it holds for all of us. Let's make the most of this journey and create lasting memories. Once again, welcome to a new academic year in Sunday School!

With love,  
**Lovis Biju and Aleena Anil**



**MS. LOVIS BIJU**



**ALEENA ANIL**

# St. Thomas

MALANKARA  
ORTHODOX CHURCH

Oklahoma City, OK



## Sunday School Classes





# Upcoming Events

## NOVEMBER 18

### **Teacher and Parent meeting**

A session on the Orthodox Liturgical seasons given by Fr. Jithin Zachariah for teachers and parents

[Link to flyer](#)

## DECEMBER 10

### **Sunday School Day**

Please support the diocese Sunday School activities with your donation amount of \$10 per child