



Ma'altho



SEASON'S REFLECTION (SEE PAGE 13)

- The Sunday School Digest of the Northeast American Diocese

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VOLUME 1

ISSUE 1

JAN - MAR

GREAT LENT 2021

THEME 2021 : THE HOLY CHURCH



The Northeast American Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

2158 ROUTE 106 • MUTTONTOWN • NEW YORK 11791



By the Grace of God, Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Diocesan Metropolitan



OL No. 7/2021

March 10, 2021

Blessings to Very Reverend Chor Episcopoi, Reverend Fathers, and Reverend Deacon of the Northeast American Diocese, especially our Sunday School ministry.

Dearly beloved,

We are happy that the Sunday School Ministry of our Diocese has initiated a quarterly newsletter to communicate about the faith of the Church to our children. This newsletter is being called *Ma'altho* meaning *presentation*. It is a reminder how we must present our children to the Lord and ensure they seek Him all that they do.

It is also especially fitting the newsletter is being released in memory of Very Reverend Thomas P. Mundukuzhy Chor Episcopos of Blessed Memory. Achen was a dedicated and fervent voice for the Sunday School ministry of the Church in North America. We pray and hope all who are serving in this ministry will follow the zeal of our dear Achen. May his memory be eternal!

Often we see Sunday School as an intellectual exercise, as opposed to a spiritual experience. It is imperative that our spiritual lives align with what is being taught. Our children look to the examples of the saints, and also saintly Sunday School teachers to teach them the way of Christ. May our children see this example in our parents, our Sunday School teachers and everyone in our parish communities.

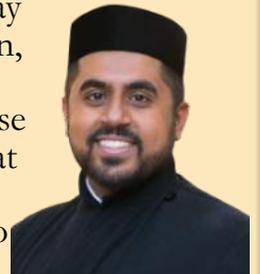
Yours in our Lord,

Zachariah Nicholovos, Metropolitan

THE HOLY BRIDE OF JESUS CHRIST

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

As Orthodox Christians, we may be confronted with the question, "What do you believe?" This question is one that should cause us to pause and consider, "What do I believe as an Orthodox Christian?" While the answer to this question can fill



Rev. Fr. Shawn Thomas
DIRECTOR

countless books, ultimately our belief is summarized in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, commonly known as the Nicene Creed. In the simplest sense, the Nicene Creed is four long sentences, affirming and confessing what we believe. We believe in **one God, Father Almighty**. We believe in **the one Lord Jesus Christ**. We believe in **the one Holy Spirit**. And we believe in **One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church**. As Christians, we have internalized the first three statements rather easily. We understand and confess the Holy Trinity as our God. However, the Creed tells us that this is not sufficient. For our faith to be complete, it requires faith in the Holy Church, the Bride of Jesus Christ. (Contd. On page 2)

OVBS 2021

Announcement

OVBS 2021 will be held virtually during summer for children from Pre-K to Grade XI. Theme for the OVBS is **"Discern the will of God"** based on 1 Thessalonians 5:18. We invite all Principals to please place your orders for text books and song books by **April 25, 2021** on the Sunday School website. Recorded songs will be available both in the printed and digital format, and shared online by the end of April 2021. Contact your Sunday School Principal for details. For more information, please feel free to contact Dr. Mini George (OVBS Director)-(516)-816-2372 OR Mrs. Chinnu Varghese (OVBS Secretary)-(914)-426-2526.

HELP THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CREATE A NEW LOGO. PARTICIPATE IN THE LOGO COMPETITION. DETAILS ON PAGE 17

Centralized Exams 2021

Announcement

Diocesan Centralized Exams will be held for Grades 5, 8, 10 and 12 on **July 11 2021**

THIS IS A PUBLICATION DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF VERY REV. THOMAS P. MUNDUKUZH Y COREPISCOPO OF BLESSED MEMORY – SUNDAY SCHOOL DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED DIOCESE IN NORTH AMERICA FOR OVER 2 DECADES. "PRESENT OUR GROWING CHILDREN BEFORE THE LORD" A DIRECT QUOTE FROM ONE OF HIS HOMILIES, WAS THE MESSAGE OF MUNDUKUZH Y ACHEN'S LIFE, REFLECTED APTLY IN THE TITLE MA'ALTHO (DEDICATION) REPRESENTING OUR COMMITMENT TO DEDICATE OUR CHILDREN BEFORE THE LORD. MAY HIS MEMORY BE ETERNAL. MAY THE NEWSLETTER BE AN EVERGREEN REMINDER OF MUNDUKUZH Y ACHEN'S MEMORY AND WHAT HE STOOD FOR, INSPIRING US TO CONTINUE DEDICATING OUR CHILDREN BEFORE THE LORD.

THE HOLY BRIDE OF JESUS CHRIST

(Contd from Page 1..)

When we are baptized in the Orthodox Church, we are baptized into the Body of Christ. And by being baptized into the Body of Christ, we become a member of the Bride of Jesus Christ. The imagery that the Church provides us of Christ being the Bridegroom and the Church as the Bride is important because it helps us to understand our relationship to Him. Once a man and woman are joined in Holy Matrimony, they are physically, emotionally, and spiritually connected. This connection cannot be broken by anyone, for “what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (St. Mark 10:9). The success of a marriage is dependent on the strength of the relationship between the man and the woman. As soon as the husband or wife distances himself or herself from the other in any way, the marriage begins to falter and problems arise. We know that the Holy Church remains steadfast in her devotion to Jesus Christ, Her Bridegroom. Thus, when we move away from the Holy Church, we, in fact, move away from our Savior.



Illustration by Sarah Daniel

This is why the Apostles and Saints clearly remind us constantly to cleave ourselves to the Holy Church, for without the Church, our salvation is in jeopardy.

For the rest of this year, Ma'altho hopes to focus on this theme: The Holy Church. With each issue, we hope to delve deeper into the different aspects of the Holy Church and its implications for us. However, we must begin with the basic fact stated above. Our faith is incomplete without faith in the Church. For it is the Church that presents Christ to us as Body and Blood every Divine Liturgy. It is the Church that gives us the doctrines on the Holy Trinity. It is the Church that reveals the mysteries of God to us. Without her, we are lost, and, thus, the fathers understood that our faith is dependent on an eternal relationship with the Bride of Christ Herself. Therefore, the next time you are met with the thought “What do I, as an Orthodox Christian, believe?”, be sure to answer it by responding with conviction, “I believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *and in the Holy Church.*”

SUNDAY SCHOOL DAY IN HARTFORD

News

St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Hartford, Connecticut celebrated Sunday School Day on **Feb 7th** Sunday evening (in a virtual manner due to the pandemic). The vicar Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Alex Abraham began the program with prayer and a message for the kids. The kids made presentations on different topics including prayer rules, spiritual warfare, prophets, Creed, Jesus Prayer. In the spirit of the online session, there was also a kahoot for everyone to participate. Little ones from Pre-K all the way till the 10th Graders participated. It became an opportunity for everyone in the parish to come together to celebrate and enjoy with the children.

ISSUE 2 DEADLINE APRIL 25

Thank you for the overwhelming support for Issue 1. Issue 2 is planned for May 2021.

Children, teachers and officials, please send in writings, drawings, poems by the deadline of **April 25 Sunday**. The theme chosen for the year is the Holy Church but your topics may vary based on what you want to speak about - however you are encouraged to send in materials relevant to Sunday School and the Church generally. Please send your picture in image format with the submission along with full name, grade\title and parish information. Please send all submissions to neadssnewsletter@gmail.com

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH MEAN?



Alex Jacob Grade 7

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Boston, MA

The church isn't just a place to pray, the Church is much more than that.

When we come to Church every Sunday, we come for 3

reasons:

1. To pray
2. To listen to the Word of God
3. Socialize with our fellow Christians

Well, now we can't really socialize, like we used to be able to, but here we are, still being able to pray and to listen to the Word of God. So that made me start to wonder, “What really is the Church?” I think the definition of the church is holy. Let's define the Church using the word holy.

H - Heartfelt. The Orthodox Church has gone out of their way to spread the Word of God to the public, whether it be now or in the past.

O - Orthodox. We are known as the Northeast American Indian Orthodox Diocese. Our Church is with the belief noted in the Creeds.

L - Love. Jesus Christ teaches us to love all people, even those we don't like.

Y - Youth. The youth of this Church is what is the future. Through ‘GROW’, ‘MGOCSM’, and Sunday School, we can make positive strides for a better future!

As you can see, the church for me, can be defined using the acronym HOLY. We, as a diocese, are striving towards a better Christian community.



Aleena Shaji Grade 4

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

TEACHERS SPEAK - FROM PG 16

A CHILD'S VISION FOR THE CHURCH

A child's vision of the Church is unique as they themselves are unique individuals, with their own thoughts and expectations. Some children have a sincere desire to learn about Christian teachings, while others look forward to kinship and a sense of community. For children, the Church must, first and foremost, be a place where they actually want to be. They must experience the extraordinary, magnificent love of God, while at the same time, enjoy the fellowship with their peers. The time children spend in Church should be relevant for their current lives, while also being a solid foundation for their futures. It should condition them, preparing them to make a natural transition into adulthood and into the role they will play in maintaining the faith and traditions of the Church.



Elana Thomas
Grade 12

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

For this to happen, the Church must be a place where, in communion with others, they feel safe and valued, and can discover the person God made them to be. Their gifts and talents must be encouraged. They must be given opportunities for personal growth, through the examples they see and experience in how the Church follows Christ's teachings in serving others. Through worship, prayer, and Bible teaching, children

must enjoy the awesome presence of God and 'taste, see' that He is good, developing an appetite for more. Parents are primarily responsible for their children's spiritual growth and we want the children's relationship with their parents to be a close and supportive one. As Fredrick Douglass once said, "it is better to build strong children than repair broken men." As such, we want children's visions of the Church to be a place where 'building' and 'growing' takes place.



Illustration by Sarah Daniel must enjoy the awesome presence of God and 'taste, see' that He is good, developing an appetite for more.

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Gabriella Mathew
Grade 4

St. George Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

VISION OF THE CHURCH

THE CHURCH'S VOICE IN THE FUTURE

"We close the divide because we know, to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside. We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another", *The Hill We Climb*, Amanda Gorman.



Abigail Koshy
Grade 8

Malankara Orthodox Church, from its humble beginnings, is now throughout the globe. Even though our church has been in existence for centuries, our way of worship is alien to the masses. The church has started reforms; however more must be done to stay relevant in the future. The church plays a major role in guiding its members on the right path. Although spiritual education is vital, I feel that there are other topics that the church must do a better job for the current generation. Church leaders must consider discussing current controversial topics, such as Black Lives Matter, gay marriage, LGBTQ+, etc to the adults. This will help the parents to have an open conversation with their children. The church should continue to navigate and guide the youth with proper education. The church has to re-interpret the practices of the church with relation to the context in which the church exists. The church must also have a positive relationship with other churches, especially the Jacobite church. We as a church must put our differences aside to contribute to a better society. The present day issues going on around us cannot be simply ignored. We should not simply leave the teachings in the church; rather we should bring it to a broader audience. "A church without youth is a church without a future. Moreover, youth without a church is youth without a future." - Pope Shenouda III, Pope & Patriarch of Alexandria.

St. George Orthodox Church, Portchester, NY

VISION OF THE CHURCH

When a girl the age of twelve is asked
She will convey what is lacked
And she will speak these words with zeal
With hope that her vision is real



Sarah Mathew
Grade 7

St. George Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

In the Word "Churches" there is an us
Built upon a steady foundation of Trust
To love one another is not a simple task
For in the light, those who belong shall bask

For there is a dearth of hope
True hope is like a cantaloupe
Light is the hue of lively tangerine's true oath
It's plentiful seeds depict flourishing growth

Peace is a gift that many people fail to receive
The afterglow of conflict is not simple to relieve
To control oneself does not come easily
Peace on Earth is not a choice, but a necessity

Christianity is not a word, but an essentiality
Not created to show a good image for those who act atrociously
When questioned, what your vision of the church shall be
Tell me, what do you see?

"Mundukuzhy achen was a visionary who saw the children as the future of our Church, and he dedicated his time and energy to inform, inspire and influence children." ~Oommen Kappil, Sunday School teacher, was a long term associate of Mundukuzhy achen

MY VISION FOR THE CHURCH

A place of tranquility, grace, and divinity- that is what my vision entails for my Church! Worship at our Orthodox Church should be celebrated with the encouragement and support from all congregational members along with due importance to the place of worship and our Faith. It is imperative that we can collaborate and work together to provide a better space and make room for spiritual growth amidst the lives we lead.



Ava Mathew
Grade 8

St. Thomas
Orthodox Church,
Hartford, CT

We should also normalize the action of accepting all diversities of life, no matter their situation with respect to our faith and beliefs that Jesus taught us. It is necessary to vitalize such an intricate subject and realize that no one should be frowned upon. Sometimes it is even better to ask, “Who are we to judge?” We can look at this bible verse, “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself” (Roman 2:1). We as empathetic Christians, shouldn't judge anyone, but welcome everyone to our parish and worship with them, not exclude them!

I look forward to more inclusion...why can't women enter the altar? In the 4th century, a law was issued in one of the Councils restricting women from entering into this sacred area. Before this law, there were deaconesses who existed in church, but now there isn't any mention. If those who enter the church have repenting hearts and good intentions, why must there be an issue? There should be no division between men and women, and we should come together to celebrate Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

I hope that the perspicacity of the Church Fathers and our Apostolic faith may align with what I have envisioned for this Church including spiritual growth and collaboration in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The church is where we come in union with God and ask for forgiveness. These are some of my visions for the future of our church. I would like to see the church become more popular with the youngsters. In order to expand our church, we need to spread the message and the word of God. I am looking forward to attending the Holy Eucharists more often and participating in the Saturday evening prayers. I hope to attend the Holy Week in person. It would also be amazing if everyone had the opportunity to attend Holy Qurbana and take part in organizations of the church. I am also eager to attend church meetings, whether it is online or in person, where we can discuss the faith in which we believe and expand our vocabulary in our Christian faith. Another thing I am amazed to see is the growth of our church and its youth. I feel they should add more events where other churches come together and pray and discuss our faith like Agni.



Michael George
Grade 7

St. Thomas
Orthodox Church,
Yonkers, NY

Our Church should be a safe place in which we worship, praise, and learn about God. Churches around the world are starting to move away from God and defeating the purpose of a worship community. Unfortunately, today that is the case due to our inner competitive nature and lack of acceptance. From adults to children, biblical exams and competitions are getting the best of us. If a person in the church was asked why they study for an exam, the answer would most likely be because they wanted to exceed someone else or get a higher rank. Some of these things can pressure the person to overwork themselves for no reason. Biblical exams and competitions increase stress along with our daily tasks. I think that there can be some stress-less ways to learn more about God.



Elisha Susan George
Grade 7

St. Thomas
Orthodox Church,
Yonkers, NY

It is not too late to change the competition perspective of our church. Instead of doing set exams, there should be a different method to see the person's progress for example, by a discussion or activity. Some competitions like the bible quiz, essay writing, drawing etc. are optional so the competitive action is expected. Ranks and top scores are great to mention but should not be something that stops a student from trying. There should not be a separation based on how well you perform in a task because you can always improve for the better. One quote from the bible that exemplifies this is as follows, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3). One great attribute of our church is how they give a simple gesture of acknowledgment on how they appreciate our participation which can have a great impact on the participant. In conclusion, my vision of the church is a place where everyone is accepted and can worship God.



Mundukuzhy Achen
was a giant leader of
the Sunday school
movement in America
for three decades

George Samuel, Sunday School Board Advisor, and long term associate of Mundukuzhy achen

EDITORIAL VOLUNTEERS



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Please send comments and feedback for improvements to needssnewsletter@gmail.com



George Abraham
Grade 2
St. Thomas
Orthodox Church,
Hartford, CT

JESUS CHRIST

FUN WITH WORDS - SEE PG 5

THE CHILD SPEAKS

"WITH A SOUNDLESS VOICE THE ICONS TEACH THOSE WHO BEHOLD THEM." ST. BASIL THE GREAT

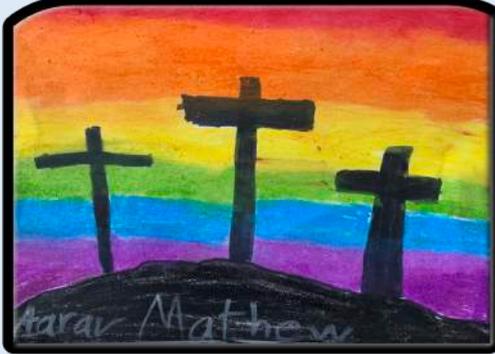


Samuel Cheriyon
 A Child praying



Samuel Cheriyon
 Grade 2

St. George Orthodox Church, Port Chester, NY



THREE CROSSES



Aarav Mathew Grade 3

St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Hartford, CT



CROSS HOLDER



Milin Thomas Grade 1

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

FUN WITH WORDS

Syriac Words Word Search

A K N O S I A L E I R U K S O
 L O O N I A H S S B Q A V Z R
 O H C C I J G W R K D Q F G O
 H A M K Y W S O M S H I H O O
 O N X O D O H T R O A X U N M
 N O I A B E E B A H L H Q J Z
 S I B R M E S V U E T M S E A
 E S B I G O D O U X T J X A M
 D T H Y N S J N E A B O O N H
 R C Z O O Y A I F J P G D W Y
 A W R Y N M K A U M A I E X E
 C H L A M P E N T E C O S T S
 T X R I T U O O L V W W O M H
 Y O Z R G B L C Y E L D O S U
 M A S B A B D O K Q P U O I K

George Mathew

George Mathew
 Grade 1

St. George Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY



- | | | |
|-------------|----------|----------|
| Abo | Aboon | Aloho |
| Bro | Habeebai | Hasha |
| Immanuel | Kauma | Kohano |
| Kurielaison | Mazmooro | Moran |
| Mshiho | Nibyo | Orthodox |
| Pentecost | Sedra | Shaino |
| Thronos | Yeldo | Yesu |



CRUCIFIXION



Saira Ann Koshy KG

St. George Orthodox Church, Ridgefield Park, NJ



EASTER BUNNY

JEETHAN
 1st Grade



Jeethan Jenish Mathew
 Grade 1

St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Hartford, CT

"Our Sunday School is successful when our children are good Orthodox children. The progress of Sunday School Association in the American Diocese is remarkable. The excellent service and dedication of Very Rev. Thomas P. Mundukuzhy will always be remembered"

~Thankamma Thomas, Principal, Sunday School Teacher and close associate of Mundukuzhy achen.



ADAM & EVE



Nathan Varghese Grade 4

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY



CROSS WITH STARS



Madden Thomas KG

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

My Lord



Juan Jenish Mathew
Grade 3
St. Thomas Orthodox
Church, Hartford, CT

I love my Lord,
He lights my way,
He keeps devils away,
He makes my heart bright,
He loves me forever,
He rings me when I am in trouble,
He brings me happiness,
He is the truth,
He saves me from wrath,
He is the shepherd,
He guards me from evil,
Thank You Lord for loving me!

Suffering

The feeling of suffering is hard to master
So many germs filled with the intent
To make one suffer



The question arises: What did we do?
What have we done so
To deserve such suffering

Is God responsible for this?
No, we brought this on ourselves
We created our own suffering

Why does the Father not help?
To let us flourish
Through suffering we become stronger

Illustration by Sarah Daniel

The feeling of suffering is hard to master
So many germs filled with the intent of suffering
With God's help we shall survive this pandemic



Rebecca George
Grade 10
St. Stephen's
Orthodox Church,
Midland Park, NJ

**THE
LORD'S
PRAYER -
PG 12**

Hope amidst Despair



Emil George Sony
Grade 6
St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Yonkers, NY

Oh Church, Oh Holy Church!

A place of Holiness where evil can not enter,
Where we mere mortals heed God for mercy and healing,
A chance to be purified with a sense of renewal,
An opportunity for birth anew from the brink of sinful death,
Discarding false beliefs ruining our faith,
Oh beautiful Church! where we learn to be our best selves.

But, why I ask, am I not righteous? Is it Satan charming, with many a temptation?
Disguised as earthly joys, tripping in worldly ways,
Tripping and throwing us off the right path,
How do I keep from straying astray?
Oh faith, my Orthodox faith, comes in to keep my paths so straight,
And lo, by the Grace of God I grow,
Strong and righteous in Thy bright light.

Oh disease, are you going to break our faith?
Poverty, will you take away our strong belief in God?
Or pride, will you cause our fall from His Grace?
Yes! Nevertheless we shall overcome, with the Body of Christ and His life giving Words,
Never shall we fail, if we believe in God the Father,
Or fall experiencing the redemptive power of His Son,
Living the fruits of the wise Counsel of the Holy Spirit.

Oh Messiah, is your second coming near?
To judge us to hell, or raise us for new life in the kingdom of God,
Will our Holy Baptism into Thy Kingdom guarantee us a place in eternity?
Or, will the anger or hate that sometimes rule our minds make us outcasts?
Only the Church, the Body of Christ, can nourish love,
Partaking in His death and resurrection,
Inheriting the gift of Christ's righteousness to secure our salvation.

Announcement

ASSIGNED COMPETITIONS 2021

Taking into consideration the current COVID situation and restrictions around Church attendance, the Assigned Competitions (Drawing & Essay) for 2021 have been canceled.

For 2021 in lieu of competition, a Drawing Exhibition will be held during the month of August 2021 open to all Sunday School Grades. Topic and Guidelines on the Drawing Exhibition will be shared with the Churches through the Sunday School Area Coordinators. We encourage students to use the Diocesan quarterly newsletter as a platform for their creative writing.

We appreciate your prayers and understanding as we balance students' talents and safety.

Praising God through difficult times

O God, I praise you...
O God, Creator of our heaven and beautiful earth,
O God, Creator of both beautiful humans and animals,
O God, Creator of our church and our loved ones,
O God, You helped everybody in this earth during these difficult times,
Without you we would not be here right now, hence I praise.....



Joel Samuel Georgi
Grade 5
St. Mary's Orthodox
Church, Linden, NJ

O God, I praise you...
O God, Creator of all beautiful seas, flowers, plants,
O God, Creator of beautiful different seasons, so we know you and praise during snow, flowers, leaves and jingle bells..
O God, all beautiful things around me reflects you and your kindness
O God, You helped everybody in this earth during these difficult times,
Without you we would not be here right now, hence I praise.....

THE CHILD SPEAKS

"THROUGH THE ICONS OF CHRIST WE CONTEMPLATE HIS BODILY FORM, HIS MIRACLES, AND HIS SUFFERINGS, AND WE ARE SANCTIFIED" ~ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST



Stella Kuo Grade 1

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church,
 Staten Island, NY



Chris Heby Grade 3

SBGOC, North Plainfield, NJ



Alexa Thomas KG

SBGOC, North Plainfield, NJ

GOD'S RAINBOW PROMISE



Naomi Joseph Pre-K

St. John's Indian Orthodox Church,
 Delaware Valley, PA



Angela Mathew Grade 6

St George Orthodox Church,
 Staten Island, NY

MARY WITH CHILD



MOUNTAINS

Alan Joby Grade 4

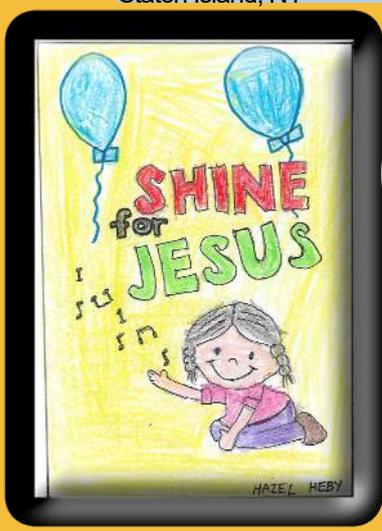
SBGOC, North Plainfield, NJ



ONE IN CHRIST

Aaron John Grade 5

St. Mary's Orthodox Church,
 Boston, MA



Hazel Heby KG

SBGOC, North Plainfield, NJ



THREE CROSSES

Mason Thomas Grade 3

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church,
 Staten Island, NY



Sign of the Times

Twenty twenty Anno Domini "in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Yet it seems as if His presence wasn't even there
The world was plunged into an abyss of no return
We had great expectations for this numerically momentous year
But it took us on a turbulent journey that won't be forgotten

Nicole Varghese
Grade 12
St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY



The fragility of mankind became apparent
How is it that a single minuscule virus had the capability
To bring the entire human race to its knees
To demonstrate how our intelligence lacks infinity
To prove that our ego cannot save us

Forest fires raged across the land
Our childhood idol fell from the sky
Injustice plagued the country
Learning became confined to pixelated screens
Violence and chaos erupted all around us

Fear and uncertainty continue to dominate thoughts and hearts
Countless deaths made us numb and insensitive
Homes became prisons and time became slower
We crave human contact and the sight of our loved ones
Faces are concealed by masks and we each remain in our own worlds

Six feet away became six feet under
Prayers crumbled and temptations became stronger
The gates of the House of God were closed depriving us of Body and Blood
Sleep was unknown to me as I stayed up and contemplated
Restlessness, day in and night out, persisted for eternity

Under the sparkle of starry night sky, I wondered about the vast heavens
Where is He? Has He given up on us? Is He watching the world from above?
In my inquiry, I felt hopeless because I was told to simply trust His plan
Which, in all honesty, is anything but simple to do
I contemplated God and the apocalyptic signs

We wait for the locusts, for the blood red water, for the darkness
Since it seems that we are cursed in our sinful abode by the divine
We continue to wait for God to save us and bring us salvation and hope
In our yearning for normalcy, we learn that nothing is forever
The journey still ensues and ironically, we await the end



Illustration by Ava Mathew

The Lord loves us

The lord loves us all
So he doesn't want us to fall
Jesus died on the cross
So we won't be at loss

The prophets paved the way
So we won't drift away
We must follow their word
To get closer to the lord

Disciples continued his teachings
To change people's feelings.
We should follow their instructions
To remove our afflictions

Just as the prodigal son
He accepts everyone
He wandered the ground
So we can be found

Jesus changed many lives
And taught us to forgive
We must forgive our enemies
And remove all our jealousies



Mariya George
Grade 7
St. Thomas Orthodox Church,
Yonkers, NY



DESCRIBING MUNDUKUZH Y ACHEN: "ACHEN WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ORGANIZING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE U.S. AND ESTABLISHED IT WITH OUT COMPROMISING ITS HIGH STANDARDS. IT IS HARD TO DESCRIBE HIM IN ONE SENTENCE BUT I STRONGLY BELIEVE IF HE DIDN'T TAKE THE PAIN AND INITIATIVE FOR AN EXCELLENT FOUNDATION WE WOULD NOT HAVE SUCH A GREAT SS SYSTEM NOW."

MATHAI CHACKO, LONG TERM ASSOCIATE OF MUNDUKUZH Y ACHEN AND PAST SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFICIAL IN DIFFERENT CAPACITIES



Liya Liju
Grade 9

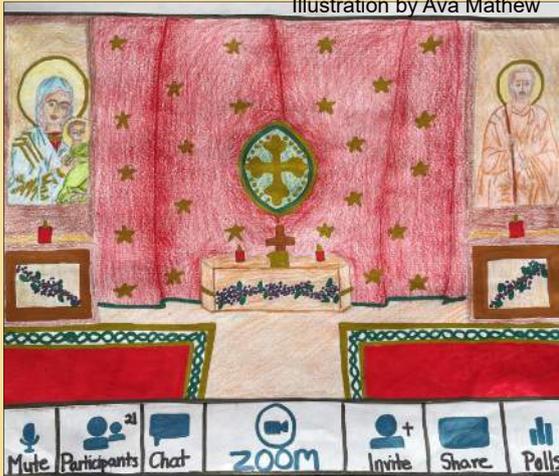
St. Mary's
Orthodox Church,
Boston, MA

“WORDS ARE TRULY THE IMAGE OF THE SOUL.” ST. BASIL THE GREAT

CHURCH SERVICES DURING PANDEMIC-ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

Amid a harsh global pandemic, church services were just one of the many daily activities brought to a halt, in addition to school, outdoor dining, recreational events, etc. Nevertheless, churches were able to continue their services through a virtual platform. At my church (Saint Stephen's Malankara Orthodox Church, Midland Park, NJ), we began by hosting video conference meetings to lead prayers, but we were unable to conduct Holy Qurbono. In the following weeks, two members of the church along with Achen went to church and streamed a recording of the Holy Qurbono for the church. Eventually, we moved to a group system that allows seventy-five people to come to church service each week. This paper will contrast the advantages and disadvantages of my experience during virtual church services.

Illustration by Ava Mathew



To begin, it is a true blessing that our church was able to continue our church services without any stops with the help of many people and their understanding of technology. We even expanded our prayer sessions to include a Friday Shehimo Prayer (Prayers of The Seven Canonical Hours), as well as Saturday Evening Prayer which over forty families attended! Furthermore, a greater number of families became involved in church programs through the assignments of singing songs, reading the Holy Bible, and readings of Psalms during the virtual prayer services. Additionally, establishing a “semi-hybrid model” for our church allowed everyone to attend church safely through their own choice.

Some disadvantages to virtual church experiences were that people are unable to enjoy the full church experience at home. Without attending church, there are no icons to admire and look at as we pray, no receiving of the Holy Qurbono, etc. This caused a partial alienation from the church as people were unable to quench the usual satisfaction by attending church.



Andrew Philip, Grade 10, St. Stephen's Church, Midland Park, NJ

Additionally, people would be unable to attend church during special festival days/ memorial prayer days during the hybrid-church model. The community-like feeling of church was also removed due to the fact that people couldn't see each other as often as before.

In conclusion, we are able to see the advantages and disadvantages of virtual church services. While an ideal situation would include everyone attending church together, we must learn to adapt to the different situations of the twenty-first century and make use of the opportunities we are given. As we slowly transition back to our daily lives, we applaud the efforts of many different people who helped establish video conference meetings, a hybrid-model, etc. which allowed people to attend church in the safest manner. As we move through this season of fasting and prayer, let us continue to grow our faith in Christ and peacefully overcome these trials and tribulations we currently face.

I CAN DO ALL THINGS IN CHRIST



Celine Abraham Grade 6

St. George Orthodox Church, Ridgefield Park, NJ

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

~ Philippians 4:13

This verse teaches us how believers of Christ can get through problems, and material things people want, by trusting in God to guide us to what we really need, and away from material things, money and to be happy with what we have. So by having the confidence to believe in God, people will be blessed by Him.

In life, we should be happy with what we have and to set our attention to positive things. St. Paul asked 2 Christian ladies named Euodia and Syntyche to settle their argument. This encouraged other Christians to act like faithful people, which was explained in Philippians Ch.4. It was also said in Philippians that he taught them to be happy with what they have.

In conclusion, we should strive to be happy with what we have, and pray for God's help. This is because if we believe in God, and trust him to guide us throughout life, he'll give us what we really need. Amen.

News

CHILDREN'S DAY AT JACKSON HEIGHTS

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Jackson Heights, NY presented their Children's Day virtual edition on Feb 14th Sunday evening. The vicar Rev. Fr. John Thomas welcomed the virtual audience in prayer. A host of cultural programs by the children presented the talents of the parish. The SS Director Rev. Fr. Shawn Thomas was the chief guest. Their entire program topping 2 hours is available on You Tube.

CONFESSION BOOTHS IN OUR CHURCH

My vision is to have a confession booth where parishioners can either confess their sins or seek advice.



Joslyn Mathew Grade 6 St. George Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

I thought of this idea when watching an Indian movie. In the church, the protagonist came up to this booth with the priest on one side, and the protagonist on the other. There was a wall in between both of them, and a speaker so the priest could hear the protagonist.

The protagonist confessed to the priest and asked him for advice, and the priest didn't know who he was speaking to

This booth is a great idea because the parishioner can speak to the priest without guilt or embarrassment because the priest would not know who he is talking to. If this booth is established, the person can confess and ask for advice. The priest will hear the confession and give advice without knowing who the person is. It's a win-win for all!

This is my vision for all the churches in our diocese and I hope this is strongly considered.

CHECK OUT GAMES N TRIVIA ON PG 15

REASONS FOR SUFFERING

I think that God allows suffering for quite a lot of reasons. During the past few years of my life, these are some things that I learned about suffering. The most important thing that we need to understand about suffering is that God allows suffering but he doesn't cause it. We cause our own suffering. Sometimes our actions or decisions or choices that we make lead to our suffering. This might not be true all the time but the majority of the time it seems to be true. So the big question for everyone is "why?". God allows suffering so that we can learn through those experiences and never repeat them. It helps us grow as individuals and be the best version of ourselves. I also think that suffering humbles us as it reminds us that we are not in control of our lives. I read the news about the 100 car accident in Texas. None of those people who died in that accident would have thought that it would be their last day and that was how they were going to die.

Next, suffering brings us closer to God. If we had everything in life, then it is less likely that we would involve ourselves in prayer and have a life that considers God as the most important person in our life. Suffering makes us turn to God. The Covid - 19 situation around the world in itself proves this. For me, this time has brought me closer to God. It's been a year since I've gone to school. A lot has changed in this past year. It is no secret that these times have been really hard. But prayer helps me stay strong and be hopeful. I've spent more time in prayer than I did before. Sometimes I used to skip prayer before but now I make sure that I've said my prayers before I go to sleep.



Johanna Biju
Grade 10
St. Stephen's
Orthodox
Church, Midland
Park, NJ

We got more time during this pandemic for prayer and other religious activities. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take your cross and follow me". The cross refers to our suffering. This means that we need suffering to be close to God and follow him. God allows suffering because he wants us to be like him. Jesus went through a lot of suffering in his life on the Earth, so to be like him and follow him he allows suffering.

Another reason that God allows suffering is so that he can use the suffering to bring good into our lives. An example from my life is that my dad had lost his job due to Covid-19. But then he got a way better job with lots of benefits and a job that he liked better. So if it weren't for Covid, my dad would have stayed in the same company for a long time which wouldn't be too good for him and he wouldn't be happy. So these are some of the reasons that I think God allows suffering. But even if we are in suffering, God is always there with us. God has a plan for each one of us which is for our good. So after a short period of suffering during this time, God will make everything for the best. Suffering will help us have a better relationship with God. God loves us all :)

CHRISTIANS ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

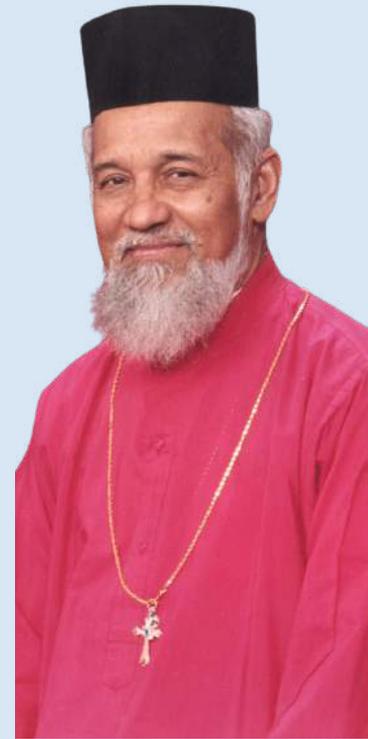
In the words of Christ himself, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16) But what does this mean? This paper will study the words of Christ to examine what he expects of us.

Firstly, we have to explain the physical properties of salt. Salt is a preservative. It keeps food from spoiling and keeps the food flavorful. Similarly, the church has a mission to enlighten the world and give it flavor. Likewise we have to keep our faith in God from spoiling. This is done by consistent prayers in order to keep up our faith. However, prayer should not be the sole action one does to preserve one's faith. Here are some ways in which we can be a form of salt on Earth. We can volunteer at food banks, help sick people at hospitals, and donate money for charities and organizations in need of assistance. By being the salt of the Earth, we will be able to carry out the mission of Christ himself. Without flavor in the world through preservatives such as salt, the world becomes bland.



Aaron Varghese
Grade 10
St. Stephen's
Church, Midland
Park, NJ

In conclusion, by following the words of Christ himself, we will be able to achieve eternal salvation. We must choose to be the "salt of the earth" and maintain a flavorful and preserving character in the world. We must make careful decisions and think just as Christ would, since we are responsible for carrying on the life of Christ himself. Similarly, our actions should represent the life of Christ. Just like Christ would do, we must show characteristics of forgiveness and selfless love. As true Christians, we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for others, regardless of the situation. By doing so, we will be able to complete the final mission of the human race and be pleasing in the presence of God.



Very Rev. Thomas P. Mundukuzhy was a revered priest of the Church, pastor, teacher and mentor to many of the current leaders of the Church, among both clergy and laity. He was the Sunday School Director and main driver of the united American Diocese since 1980 for over 30+ years.

A Graduate of St. Berchman's College, Changanacherry, Fr. Thomas had his theological training at Orthodox Theological College, Kottayam [Graduate in Sacred Theology] and Serampore University, Calcutta [external student for Bachelor of Divinity], he received vast training under His Grace Mathews Mar Athanasius, Metropolitan of the Diocese Outside Kerala and principal of Theological College, Kottayam [later His Holiness the Catholicos Basellos Mar Thoma

Mathews I] as Student, Personal Secretary and Secretary of the Office of the Diocese Outside Kerala and its Sunday School Director [current Dioceses of Bombay, Calcutta, New Delhi, Madras, America and Canada & the United Kingdom] for a dozen years.

Fr. Thomas was ordained as deacon in 1955 by the late His Holiness Basellos Geevarghese Catholicos. Ordained to the priesthood in 1966, and after serving in Kerala before travelling extensively all over India, he joined Syracuse University [New York] in 1967 and earned his Master's degree in Communications [Journalism]. As one of the early settlers from Kerala in the U.S. and one of the pioneers of the American Diocese, Achen travelled to most parts of America and Canada; also vicar of St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Syracuse [1967-till his passing], St. Gregorios, Toronto (1970-90), St. Gregorios, Kingston (1983), St. Mary's, Brooklyn (1991), and St. Paul's Congregation, Albany (1995, independently formed since 2005).

Achen was elevated to the position of Cor-Episcopa in 1981. A prolific writer, his many articles on several topics concerning the Church and society were published in the widely circulating daily news papers in Kerala, and later in internet media available at the time like ICON. Achen was also an author and publisher of a good number of Church publications. He worked as the Broadcasting Editor for NBC Television for several years in Syracuse NY. Achen used the reach and power of internet through ICON and other media to propagate his vision and mission for the Church, especially concerning children of the Church.

Mundukuzhy achen passed away on March 30, 2007 in New York at the age of 75. Achen has been entombed in Albany NY, where beside him his beloved Kochamma was also entombed a few years later.

The Diocesan Level Structure and organization of the Sunday School in North America took shape during achen's time. Several of the diocesan programs like Bible Quiz, Talent Competitions, Talent Shows, OVBS all began and flourished under his watch. People who worked with achen during the time have endearing memories of working with achen, some of them have shared their thoughts in this space. Mundukuzhy achen dedicated his life for the children of our diocese, and has been a pioneering force in the bringing together of our Sunday School ministry, as we know today. By virtue of being the director of Sunday school in the united diocese for such a long time, by translating several prayers into English when such translations were not easy to come by, by authoring books in English about the Church, acolytes, prayers, sacraments, etc when such books in English were not accessible, and focusing on the children in the midst of extreme existential challenges, achen's contributions in the growth of our Sunday School ministry has been crucial and the way God has used him in building up this ministry has been pivotal. May achen's memory be eternal and may achen's prayers for us be our strength.



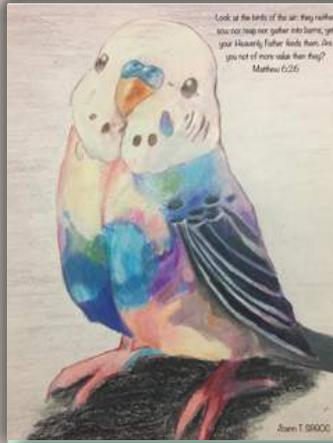
Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Matthew 6:26



Catherine Jolly George
Grade 6

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Linden, NJ

BIRDS IN THE SKY



Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Matthew 23:23



Joann Thomas
Grade 6

SBGOC, North Plainfield, NJ

BIRDS IN THE SKY

A UNIQUE PEN PAL PROGRAM- PG 17

FEEDING WESTCHESTER- PG 18



Chinnu Abraham
Grade 6

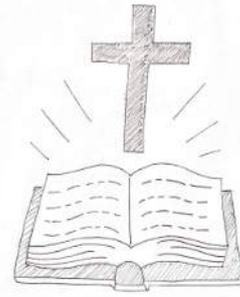
St. George Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

CROSS WITH FLOWER



FOLDED HANDS

CROSS AND BIBLE



Daniel Jacob
Grade 6

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Boston, MA

ASCENSION OF CHRIST

Phineas Kuo
Grade 4

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY



Christen Varughese
Grade 9

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Boston, MA



SNOWMAN

Hannah Thomas
Grade 6

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Boston, MA



Matthew 7:13-14



Neha Nibu
Grade 12

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY

THE NARROW GATE (ST. MATTHEW 7:13,14)

George Geevarghese, long time Sunday School board member and close associate of Mundukuzhy achen describing achen's life:

"This devoted clergy and servant of Christ, of blessed memory, can be considered as the most masterful of all individuals who have labored in the Sunday School Ministry in the whole of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, one who made it his singular mission and vision to build up the Sunday School Ministry in the undivided American Diocese, practically from nothing and I would call him the most consummate in the field."

SUNDAY SCHOOL DURING PANDEMIC-ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

The year 2020 changed the world in many ways, as many businesses shut down, schools closed, and churches were limited to a few people. Almost everything that we did in our daily lives became a virtual reality. We never expected our lives to change so drastically, however we had no choice but to adhere to the new rules that were placed for our safety. As a Sunday school student who attended Sunday school for over 10 years, virtual Sunday School was a huge shift for not only me, but for everyone. However with the global pandemic, virtual Sunday school was our only option for the children to learn about God. There are many advantages and disadvantages to virtual Sunday school.

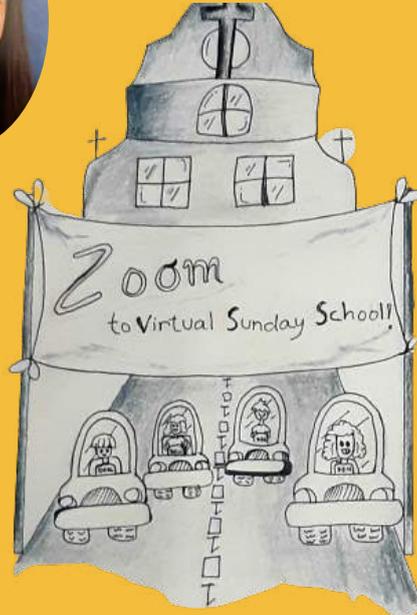


However, with the virtual Sunday school, we are able to attend in any bad condition (if there is wifi of course). Moreover another benefit during Sunday school is that we are able to observe the

Julia Mathew
Grade 10
St. Stephen's Church, Midland Park, NJ

Even though there are some advantages, there are several disadvantages too. For instance, virtual Sunday school does not feel like a real classroom setting since you are home and you are learning through a screen. Technical issues are also very common which can interfere when learning/doing work during virtual Sunday school. Moreover, learning through a screen can be very difficult since your focus may be on something else not related to Sunday school.

Although Sunday school this year is a lot different than any other years which could be challenging at times, there are a few benefits. For one, we are able to stay safe during a global pandemic. We are also able to attend virtual Sunday school in any bad weather condition. To elaborate, when we would attend Sunday school in person, many people would not come due to inclement weather.



whole church service. Prior to virtual Sunday school, we would always miss Morning Prayer and even a portion of the Holy Qurbana, especially during the midterm and final exams. Now that it is virtual, we are able to attend the whole church service since Sunday school is now in the afternoons.

Now that I have listed some advantages and disadvantages, I believe that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. I believe in person Sunday school is much better and effective compared to virtual Sunday school. It is a better environment to learn and any questions could be answered easily when the whole class is together. Also, it is much easier to interact with your classmates who could help you during a lesson.

Illustration by Sarah Daniel

THE LORD'S PRAYER

In the Bible, there are many prayers, hymns and psalms. But Jesus told his followers to 'pray like this' only after one prayer. When the disciples requested Lord Jesus to teach them how to pray, Jesus taught them the Lords' Prayer. This prayer was given by Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the redeemer of humanity.

Our Father who art in heaven (St. Matthew 6:9) means God, the creator of all living beings, is the father of the entire world.

When we pray Hallowed be Thy name (Mt 6:9), we get the strength to respect and acknowledge the name of God.

When we pray, thy kingdom come (Mt 6:10), we are praying for the divine grace to live as a spiritual person in the kingdom ruled by the Lord.

It is the wish of the Heavenly Father that each of us be born into this earth. To carry out this wish, God himself chose our parents on our behalf. When we honor our parents God himself is honored. When the parents are neglected or disrespected, God himself is disrespected. So, we pray, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10).

Forgiveness can bring together the broken relations and distanced minds. To forgive is divine. We are eligible to receive 'Christ's body and blood' during the Holy Qurbana only if we have really forgiven others. Forgive our debts and sins as we have forgiven our debtors (Mt 6:12). By praying, lead us not into temptation (Mt 6:13), we ask to be released from all sinful temptations.

Asher Kalloor Varghese
Grade 7
St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Yonkers, NY

When we pray, Give us this day our daily bread (Mt 6:11), We are expected to ask for food not only for the bodily nourishment but also food for spiritual growth by the Holy Spirit. We should not fall into the temptations of satan. Hence, we pray to deliver us from the evil one. Lord's Prayer teaches us how to pray for the whole mankind and how the whole mankind is to be strengthened. "For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen".

A life according to this prayer is important for an Orthodox Christian. Thus, this prayer helps us to grow in virtues and attain eternal salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

It is essential to acknowledge the power of prayer, especially in a pandemic. As faithful Christians, we have learned at an early age how important prayer is in our earthly lives.

While we tried to incorporate prayer in our lives by attending church every Sunday, we had simply forgotten the true purpose and value of prayer until this year. When Covid-19 spread

Sara Mathew Grade 12
St. George Orthodox Church, Ridgefield Park, NJ

tremendously around the world, it had dramatically changed the course of our lives and made us abandon our old lifestyles, which resulted in the absence of church. Without church as the place of prayer, we had to accept our current situation and revert to praying at home daily like our ancestors in the past. Living under a pandemic has taught us that our connection with God is everlasting, no matter what challenges are brought in our lives. Our faith has not been shaken, but only strengthened.



"As a pioneer in our Sunday School, Achen's contributions will be remembered with utmost gratitude" ~Thomas George (Lal)
Sunday School Auditor, long term associate of Mundukuzhy achen.



Alvina Samson
 Grade 10

St. Gregorios
 Orthodox Church,
 Toronto, Canada



In preparation for Passion Week, we reflect on the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. This illustration is a depiction of the resurrection of Jesus Christ with Easter lilies symbolizing the gift of hope for new beginnings along with the faith that Christ has risen.



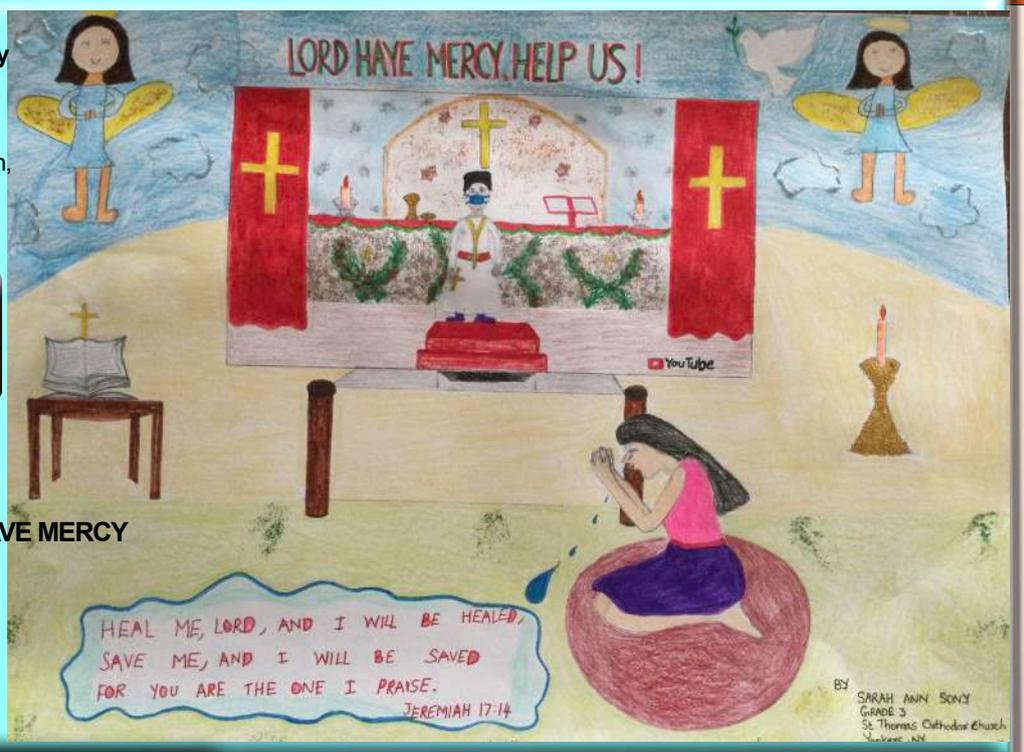
Hannah Jacob
 Grade 9

St. Mary's
 Orthodox Church,
 Boston, MA



Sarah Ann Sony
 Grade 3

St. Thomas
 Orthodox Church,
 Yonkers, NY



LORD HAVE MERCY

HEAL ME, LORD, AND I WILL BE HEALED,
 SAVE ME, AND I WILL BE SAVED
 FOR YOU ARE THE ONE I PRAISE.
 JEREMIAH 17:14

BY SARAH ANN SONY
 GRADE 3
 St. Thomas Orthodox Church,
 Yonkers, NY

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" St. John 14:6



RESURRECTION



Ava Mathew
 Grade 8

St. Thomas Orthodox
 Church, Hartford CT

THE GOOD SAMARITAN



Nevin Nebu
 Grade 4

St. Gregorios
 Orthodox Church,
 Staten Island, NY



The Good Samaritan

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. No other God
2. No idols
3. Don't misuse God's name.
4. Rest on the sabbath
5. Honor your parents.
6. Don't murder
7. No Adultery
8. Don't Steal
9. Don't lie
10. Don't covet



Alvin Benny
Grade 4

St. Thomas
Orthodox Church,
Hartford, CT

The Ten Commandments

- Thou shalt have no other gods before me
- Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
- Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy god in vain
- Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.
- Honor thy father and thy mother
- Thou shalt not kill
- Thou shalt not commit adultery
- Thou shalt not steal
- Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour
- Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.

By Rohan



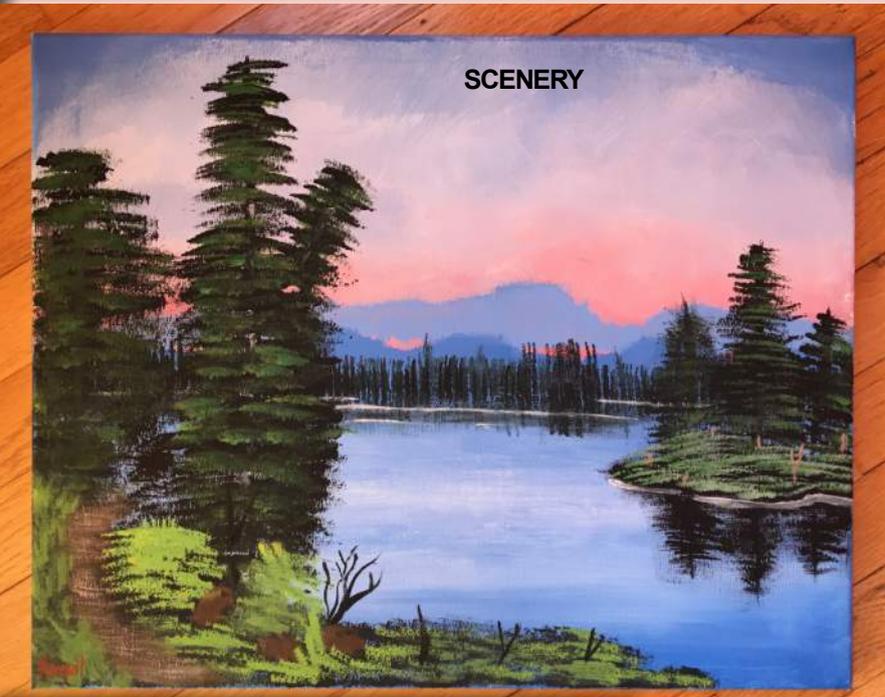
Abigail Thomas
Grade 12

St. Mary's
Orthodox
Church,
Boston, MA

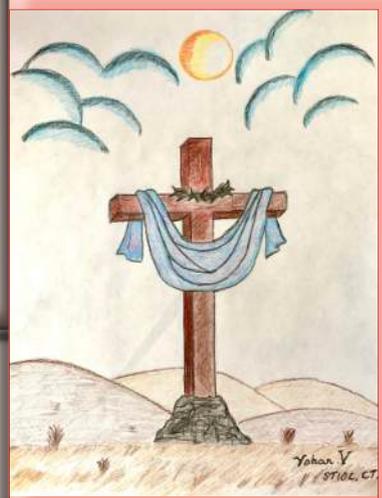


Rohan Chandy
Grade 4

St. Thomas Orthodox Church,
Hartford, CT



SCENERY



Yohan Varghese
Grade 6

St. Thomas Orthodox
Church, Hartford, CT

Hosanna!

Save us now Lord!

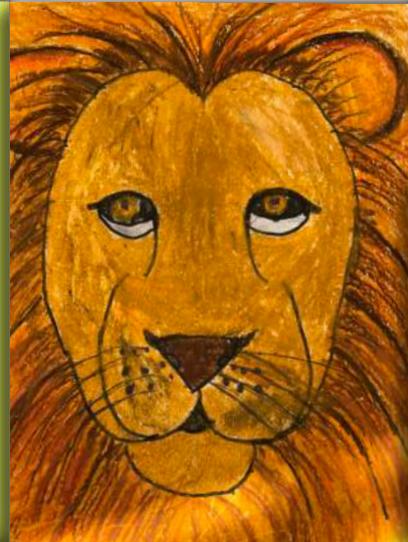
Hannah V. ST10ct



Hannah Varghese
Grade 3

St. Thomas Orthodox
Church, Hartford, CT

HOSANNA



Basil Thomas
Grade 3

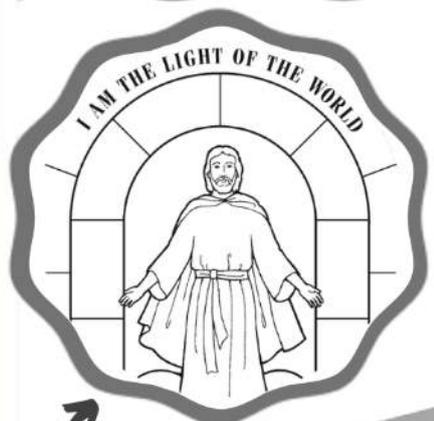
St. Mary's Orthodox
Church, Boston, MA

LION

And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.
(St. Mark 10:16)

Games and Trivia!

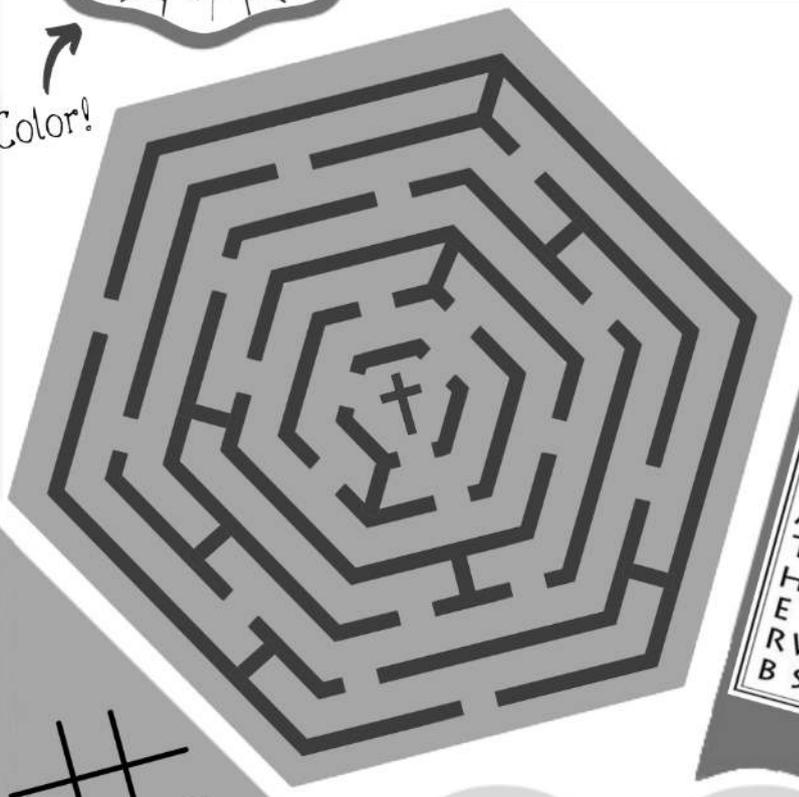
~Take a printout and play~



Color!

Bible Trivia:

- What kind of person was Boaz before he got married?
-Ruth-less
- Who was the first tennis player in the Bible?
-Joseph because he served in Pharaohs court
- What animal could Noah not trust?
-the cheetah



Bible Wordsearch

G	E	N	T	I	L	E	B	I	B	L	E	D
O	B	A	A	B	R	T	J	E	M	D	I	I
D	P	I	E	S	I	M	N	I	P	B	N	
T	E	M	P	T	A	T	I	O	N	J	A	H
H	R	P	S	H	L	H	R	P	I	E	P	O
E	S	R	A	L	V	E	A	N	S	R	T	L
F	E	A	C	E	A	H	C	A	T	U	I	Y
A	C	Y	R	H	T	O	L	Z	R	S	Z	S
T	U	E	I	E	I	L	E	A	Y	A	E	P
H	T	I	F	M	O	Y	J	R	H	L	N	I
E	E	S	I	N	N	A	J	E	W	E	H	R
R	W	E	C	L	F	A	I	T	H	M	L	I
B	S	J	E	S	U	S	C	H	R	I	S	T

TIC TAC TOE

Word Bank:

Jesus Christ Pray Miracle Salvation
 Faith Nazareth Jew Ministry
 Bethlehem Gentile Bible Holy
 Jerusalem Holy Spirit God the father
 Sacrifice Temptation Baptize

VISION ABOUT SUNDAY SCHOOL



As Orthodox Church Christians, our vision is to experience God's Kingdom through the Word of God in this world and eternal life in His Kingdom to come. Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he

Blessy Varghese
Teacher St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Yonkers, NY

should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. Sunday school takes care of the spiritual nurturing of the children by bringing

them up in the knowledge and fellowship of Jesus Christ and His Church. It aims at developing a society that believes in living with peace and harmony. Sunday school helps people from all age groups to adopt Godly principles such as practicing justice and mercy to everyone, pursuing righteousness and participating in the worship and activities of the church. My vision is to encourage individuals to be positive in life and avoid negativism around them. It is about instilling in the young minds, love and care towards others in society. The Sunday school education must focus on bringing about the spread of justice and equality in society. Sunday school enable our children to face the crises of life with courage and equanimity by following the path of God.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Aju Tharian, Northeast American Sunday School Secretary

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

Psalm 46:1-3

An invisible enemy attacked the whole world in March 2020. It was really sad to have educational institutions, religious institutions closed. Lockdowns were imposed. It affected a lot of people. Churches couldn't conduct church services during the Great Lent. A lot of people became sick with Covid-19, hospitals overflowed, and health care workers were overwhelmed.



Our Sunday school board also faced a lot of challenges due to the closing of churches; Sunday schools could not be conducted. However, within a few months with the help of technology, Sunday school classes could start virtually thru google meets and zoom. Even our diocesan board changed the way we conducted conference call. We made a move to google meets which enabled all board members to see each other and socialize. Unfortunately, we had to cancel Centralized Exams, Talent Competitions and Assigned Competitions.

TIME IS CLICKING!!!



Nisha George
Grade 4 Teacher St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Linden, NJ

When we were complaining about time management in dealing with physical, mental, and spiritual growth, Covid19 pandemic has made all of us escape from our busy schedules

and has forced us to utilize our

time in a better way. For many of us, this was the time to get stronger in faith and to get closer to God. This year should be a preparation year, to prepare us and to prepare others for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us fix our eyes to the one and only Lord Almighty and run our spiritual race. As the time is near, lets repent, pray fervently, spread the Gospel, and love one another. As Deuteronomy 6:7 says, “Impress them on your children. Illustration by Sarah Daniel



Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” and Proverbs 22:6 says “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” As a parent or a Sunday school teacher, it's a big responsibility for us to train the kids and prepare for the kingdom of God

according to His will. This will help the kids grow stronger in faith and boldly face the challenges of the world. When the world is going through lot of chaos and suffering let us submit our life to the Lord Almighty and live a life with purity without being influenced by the world's sins. As Psalms 119: 71 says, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes”. Let us encourage each other to live a life based on the word of God and stand out like a star in others' life resembling Jesus Christ.

“Mundukuzhy achen was most dedicated and committed in his work for the children, traveling miles, often taking copies of books himself for the children; most diocesan programs we see today were conceived under his watch”

-Leelamma Thomas, former Sunday School Secretary who worked closely with Mundukuzhy achen.

SUNDAY SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY IN DUBAI

Sunday School Anniversary 2020 was celebrated in St. Thomas Cathedral Dubai, UAE on Friday Jan 8th after Holy Qurbana adhering to the pandemic protocols. HG Dr. Yuhanon Mar Demetrius Metropolitan inaugurated the program virtually. Children from different grades exhibited their talents in forms of songs, skits, dances and crafts, all of which were depicted with enthusiasm and energy despite the virtual settings.

SUNDAY SCHOOL DAY IN VASCO, GOA

The Sunday School day was celebrated on 7th Feb, immediately after celebrating the Holy Qurbana in St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Vasco, Goa. The Sunday School flag was hoisted on the occasion. The message from OSSAE OKR president and director was conveyed. Different cultural programs by the children were highlights.

“FAITH IN ACTION IS LOVE, AND LOVE IN ACTION IS SERVICE” ~MOTHER THERESA

ACTS OF KINDNESS - A UNIQUE PEN PAL PROGRAM



Sunday School - St Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Church, Bensalem, PA

“Kindness is extending yourself in a way that uplifts another human being”

Globally, COVID-19 has impacted a lot of communities and one group that got affected the most are the seniors living in Nursing homes across the country. As a result of restrictions and social isolation, in order to keep them physically healthy & safe, their mental health has impacted significantly. They have limited interactions with each other and are not able to receive visits from family and friends.

Our Sunday school students took it upon themselves to perform a virtual Christmas program at Woodbourne Nursing Home in Bensalem, PA. This program lifted their spirits and brought lot of smiles on the elderly. In order to continue to address their loneliness, Sunday School Mission Team launched the PEN-PAL program with the residents of the Nursing home. Sixteen residents of the Nursing home have been paired with 16 of our students and they exchange letters frequently. The letters from the students are reviewed by some of our teachers, before sending the soft copy over and vice-versa.

Nursing home directors have conveyed that their residents deeply appreciate the program and have benefited a lot. They are able to share the stories of their life, hobbies and passion. They look forward to receiving the letters from their student partners.



This program has also positively though inadvertently, impacted our student volunteers. Students have reported great sense of purpose, love, kindness and impact on their own well-being by staying connected.



Glory be to God, that our children are able to shine His light upon those in need. Hope this act of kindness will be an inspiration to others.

STORY OF THE QUARTER

One of our Sunday Schools, St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY, had a very interesting assignment for its students.

The media being full of depressing and negative news, the good things that happen in daily life, are often forgotten. A few weeks ago, the principal Linda John asked the students to research 3 things in the media that were POSITIVE news. The end result was awesome as seen in the following examples:

A police officer who needed a kidney transplant received one, voluntarily donated by a person he had arrested 8 years earlier.

A woman in NJ who is 102 years old, survived cancer, the Spanish Flu, and COVID.

In 2021, India will start its 3rd mission to the moon.

Jackson Heights put together a "community fridge" to help those in need.

These positive stories, and more, were enlightening, and they brought out to students the awareness that there are a lot of good happening in the world – every day. Linda watched the faces of the students as they shared these stories -- they were memorable moments, she said!

Thank you Linda for creatively infusing positive energy in your Sunday School at this time, and for sharing your story with us. For its uniqueness, creativity and for the positive energy it spreads, this story is picked as our **story of the quarter**.

Logo Competition!

CAN YOU HELP MAKE LOGO CHOICES FOR OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL?

Best logo will win a prize of:

\$100

CRITERIA:

1. Should be created in Vector graphics. Preferably Illustrator
2. Original source files should be provided
3. Multiple source versions need to be provided
 - a. Color version
 - b. Greyscale version
 - c. Black & white
4. Multiple Formats need to be provided
 - a. .jpg and
 - b. .png
5. Color space used should be
 - a. CMYK

Design by Alina Tharian

"Mundukuzhy Achen has been the forerunner of American Diocese Sunday Schools, as an institution, with his unparalleled and genuine commitment and dedication to serve his Master, and to spread the Word among our children to bring them and their teachers to be imitators of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

~ Korah Mani, Curriculum Coordinator, long term associate of Mundukuzhy achen.

FEEDING WESTCHESTER

St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians (9:6-8), "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Leaning into this inspirational and guiding verse, our Sunday School partnered with **Feeding Westchester** (<https://feedingwestchester.org/>), a network that assists those in need of food recovery in the county of Westchester, NY.



MaryAlina Vettichira-Mathew
Principal

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Parkhill, Yonkers NY

From pasta dinners to hot chocolate bags, and oatmeal packs, we kept social distancing measures, and identified three students to serve as drop-off location leaders in various parts of city to make it easier to collect the 75 bags we virtually prepared together.

I sat down with our students of various ages to tap into their hearts and minds on what this charitable endeavor meant to them. Here's what they had to say:

"When I was packing my bag, I feel that we don't appreciate the food we are blessed with, when there are people who can barely get a proper meal. My brother and I also prayed for the people who were to receive them, so that their life would get better" said, **Nayana Zachariah**, Grade 9.

As our bright 6th grader, **Mathew Thomas** commented, "The world may need to rely on non-profits more especially after layoffs and financial struggles, and this can cause extra pressure on charities across the world. Together, let's change this situation and change the lives of the people who need us the most!"

The pandemic of 2020 has given us cause for pause. As we prepare our souls during this Great Lent, we are presented with the opportunity to teach our children that when serving others, we are serving Jesus. Let us open our hearts, awaken our spirit, and seek out opportunities to give back in our own backyards and earn the grace of our Lord.



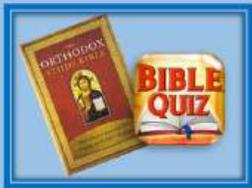
Announcement
ORTHODOX SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF THE EAST
NORTHEAST AMERICAN DIOCESE

SUNDAY SCHOOL TALENT COMPETITIONS 2021

Learn the **Word of God**, learn **liturgical songs**

BIBLE QUIZ

(VIRTUAL)
OCTOBER 2021
DATE & TIME TBA



One *3-student team* per Sunday School

GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

GROUP SONG

(VIRTUAL EXHIBITION)
NOVEMBER 2021
DATE & TIME TBA



One song per Sunday School - minimum 3 students

LITURGICAL SONG IN ENGLISH OR MALAYALAM (max 3 minutes)

Via ZOOM

Registration will **BEGIN SOON**

Guidelines will be **PUBLISHED SHORTLY**

LENTEN SUGGESTIONS FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN



This is the time of our Great Lent. We encourage everyone to follow our church lent traditions especially in terms of food restrictions. This may be challenging for many children. But there are many other things children can take care and practice during this time. Let the lent season be a blessing for everyone. Some of the suggestions are given below:

Do not waste your food. Think about the people around the world struggling to get enough food

Clean up your own room and organize your study table and work area

Abey.K.Tharian, Principal

St.Stephen's Orthodox Church, Midland Park, NJ

Help your parents with house hold chores

Reduce energy waste by which switching off lights and appliances when not in use

Save some funds and donate it to legitimate charitable organizations

Reduce time spent in social media and other electronic gadgets

Recycle plastic and other materials and save the planet

Respect and help your elders and teachers

Communicate with your friends and help them in their need

Do simple exercises daily and stay healthy

Try to fast by skipping a meal at least once a week if possible

We are facing a global pandemic. Find some time to reflect on the sufferings of people around the globe and spend few minutes for personal prayer.