



# MA'ALTHO

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL DIGEST OF THE NORTHEAST AMERICAN DIOCESE



## WHY DO WE READ THE BIBLE?

DIRECTOR: REV. FR. TIMOTHY (TENNY) THOMAS



### Scripture Reading Protects Us

We read the Bible so that Christ Himself speaks to us as we prayerfully, daily, read and reread the Sacred Scriptures. Before reading, we should consciously ask Him to reveal Himself to us; and we should ask for His help to lay ourselves open to Him. In this way, we can come to live the Bible, much as the Bible permeates the words of all our services. Saint John Chrysostom reminds us, *“the devil definitely does not appreciate a believer engaging with the Holy Scripture, and that this is all the greater reason for us to do it.”*<sup>1</sup> The devil dislikes a believer engaging with the Holy Scripture because *“all of the Scriptures are a verbal icon of Christ.”*<sup>2</sup> Jesus Christ is our example in all things. His life is our standard. And if we want to live a Biblical life, daily Bible study must be our guard. Reading the Bible is a spiritual discipline, which means that we need to be disciplined in how we approach it. If you lack the desire to read the Bible, pray and ask that God would give us a desire for His word. Then, build a time into our day to read Scripture and make this time a priority.

### Scripture Reading Sanctifies Us

We are in the need of daily sanctification by the truth of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to do His work in each of us. This is a progressive work that will go on throughout our lives daily. We as Christians are set apart for God’s special use. Therefore, our values, goals and behaviors are distinct from the worlds.

The Word of God sanctifies us as we study, meditate, memorize and apply its truths to our daily life. Saint John Chrysostom says,

*“Moreover, if the Devil does not dare to enter into the house where the Gospel lies, much less will he ever seize upon the soul which contains such thoughts as these, and no evil spirit will approach it, nor will the nature of sin come near. Well, then, sanctify your soul, sanctify your body by having these thoughts always in your heart and on*



Illustration by Sarah Daniel

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This is a publication dedicated in memory of Very Rev. Thomas P. Mundukuzhy Cor Episcopa 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 Mundukuzhy 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 Mundukuzhy Achen's memory and what he stood for, inspiring us to continue dedicating our children before the Lord.

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*your tongue. For if foul language is defiling and evokes evil spirits, it is evident that spiritual reading sanctifies the reader and attracts the grace of the Spirit.”*<sup>3</sup> We grow in God’s grace through the knowledge of His truth. As we yield in obedience to His truth we are sanctified by the truth. As we hear the Word, we comprehend the truth and obey it. This changes our values, our lifestyle, and a behavioral change takes place. We are changed in our everyday practice. As we daily appropriate God’s Word we are sanctified by it.

## Scripture Reading Nourishes Us

When we eat physical food, we are supplied with the nutrients we need to live and be healthy. We get the energy to go to work, exercise, and spend time with family and friends. Conversely, when we skip a meal, we feel weak, tired, and even grumpy. And if we keep missing meals, we become susceptible to even greater problems, like illness. Similarly, when we eat spiritual food we are supplied to live our Christian life. But when we are away from God’s Word for a while, we can become spiritually weak, tired, and “grumpy,” or, unable to handle difficulties well. We become more susceptible to temptation, doubts, and other kinds of spiritual sickness. We simply do not have the means to cope with the many challenges that come into our lives as believers. It is very important, therefore, that we are supplied by reading and feeding on God’s Word every day. To maintain a healthy and even joyful Christian life, we need daily Bible reading to receive the spiritual nourishment in God’s Word for us. When we read the Bible, we are fed by God’s Word and supplied for our Christian life. Our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned this in Saint Matthew 4:4 when He said, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.”

## Scripture Reading Heals Us

The word of God brings healing. King Solomon says the words of God “...are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh” (Proverbs 4:22). The psalmist sings “...Your word has given me life” (Psalm 119:50). God’s Word has the power and authority to heal us and save us. God wants us to know His Word, believe it, and act on it. The Bible says that the Word of God is indestructible. Everything in the universe will, one day, corrode and pass away, but the Word of God is eternal, never-ending. The Bible is a medicine chest with remedies for grief and all troubles. Our father among the saints, John Chrysostom says, “*Listen, I entreat you, all that are careful for this life, and procure books that will be medicines for the soul...get at least the New Testament, the Apostolic Epistles, the Acts, the Gospels, for your constant teachers. If grief befalls you, dive into them as into a chest of medicines; take from there comfort for your trouble, be it loss, or death, or bereavement of relations; or rather do not merely dive into them but take them wholly to yourself, keeping them in your mind.*”<sup>4</sup>

The emphasis on the Word of God is of the highest order in the Orthodox Church. Whether it is the prayer of the hours, the Holy Qurbana, the entire Liturgical Cycle of the Church is completely based on the Word of God. The Word of God is expected to be lived. Saint John Chrysostom says that, “*The Holy Scriptures were not given to us that we should enclose them in books, but that we should engrave them upon our hearts.*”<sup>5</sup> Let us all take up our Bible and read, and may the Word of God, alter our entire life. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths” (Psalm 118:105).

<sup>1</sup> Father Thomas Hopko, *How to Read the Bible*, AF Ministries Podcast – *Speaking the Truth in Love*, (October, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (St. Vladimir’s Press, 1998), 89.

<sup>3</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily XXXII on the Gospel of Saint John*.

<sup>4</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily IX on Colossians*.

<sup>5</sup> Father Anthony Coniaris, *Saint John Chrysostom Lectures on Preaching*, (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2018), 43.

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## ABOUT GOD

SANA VARGHESE, GRADE 7  
ST. JOHN'S ORTHODOX  
CHURCH, HAMILTON,  
ONTARIO, CANADA



God is our savior  
He is watching over us  
God loves everyone

God is there for us  
He helps us when we are in need  
I really do love God

God is almighty  
He sent His son to save us  
We love our Savior

A **Haiku** is a Japanese poetic form that consists of three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third.

## MOTHER AND CHILD

JOHAN SHINE, GRADE 5  
ST. JOHN'S ORTHODOX CHURCH,  
HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA



## ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE

NANMA SUSAN SIJU, GRADE 6  
ST. GREGORIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH,  
TORONTO, CANADA



## HOLY SCRIPTURE - OUR DAILY BREAD

JOTHAM MITHUN, GRADE 3  
ST. JOHN'S ORTHODOX CHURCH,  
HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA



The Holy Scriptures are very important to each one of us. The Holy Bible is considered the holy scripture for Christians. The Holy Bible gives us the guidance and inspiration to live a good life.

We all must read the Bible every day. Children under the age of 10 can read Psalms and Gospels as they are easy to understand. The Gospels consists of parables where we have morals by Jesus Christ. They also help us learn the life of Jesus Christ. The Holy Scripture is very fruitful in our daily lives as they enlighten us to walk and live with God. When we walk with God, we will not make many mistakes in our life, and we will learn to be obedient to everyone around us.

Let us all study, grow and live happily in this beautiful world that the Lord God Almighty has blessed us with by learning and following the Holy Scripture.



## INFORMATIONAL

Most of the Sunday Schools in the diocese would have reopened by now. Also most Sunday schools would be looking for having maximum in-person classes in the new year, if they have not started doing so already in the previous years, pushing the covid years firmly behind us.

The Curriculum committee, both dioceses and many volunteers have been tirelessly working through the summer vacation to get the lessons in all the textbooks ready before school reopens. All 16 lessons for all grades are now uploaded in Talmido. Also all lessons have undergone another level of review and editing. There obviously will need to be more editing and corrections to be done in the coming weeks and months. The year 2023-24 will also not have printed textbooks from the Diocese as we are still continuing a period of transition. Our director Tenny Achen has told us in the last teachers and Principals' meeting that he is working in the Curriculum committee to help simplify the lessons and trying to align the content with the Liturgical Calendar of the Church. Much work in this regard has been accomplished, but there is still some distance to go. Please have patience and bear with us.

A great new school year beckons. All the very best to all!



## ASSIGNED COMPETITION RESULTS

The Assigned Competition Results were declared in July.  
Please see the summarized results below.

Tier	Essay # of students	Drawing # of students
Gold	16	26
Silver	10	23
Bronze	12	45

The details have already been shared with the parishes through the respective Area Coordinators by Elizabeth Vaidhyan, the Assigned Competitions Coordinator

## EDITORIAL VOLUNTEERS

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ST. GREGORIOS ORTHODOX  
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## WHY ORTHODOXY? WHAT WILL KEEP YOU COMING BACK TO OUR ORTHODOX CHURCH?

SARA STANLEY, ST. GREGORIOS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, WASHINGTON DC



As one grows up, it is common to question beliefs and values. Especially as youth in a time where information is spread quickly, it can be extremely easy to let go of one's morals. Whether it be religious or corporal, college is a time when these doubts are often emphasized. As I go to college this coming fall, I am sure that I may run into such periods of doubt. However, I am confident that my belief in the Orthodox Church will remain strong as my experiences within the church are unlike any other I will ever encounter. This has helped me answer the question, "Why Orthodoxy?"

Specifically, why is Orthodoxy so unique? Taken literally, the word "orthodox" means true or correct doctrine. However, the idea of Orthodoxy being the correct doctrine does not rely solely on fact. Orthodoxy involves principles of thanksgiving, service, and compassion. Orthodoxy teaches us to give back to our own kind and support one another, celebrating humanity's true purpose as intended. In John 14:6, Jesus Christ says that he is "the way, the truth, and the life." By standing strong in our Orthodox faith, we too are following the footsteps of Christ in such truth.

As an Orthodox Christian, the church has provided me with a connection to God that is both deep and meaningful. From a religious perspective, Orthodox church services are truly unique; rich and encapsulating hymns, services, and traditions have been passed down and honored among the community of faithful believers, giving the Orthodox Church a sense of honor, continuity, and true unity between God and the church. More than just a religion, Orthodoxy fully involves us within our world; it is through such service that we are able to see God's grace and love in those around us, working to better ourselves and our communities.

As I go to college, I know the foundation I have built with the help of the Orthodox church will prepare me for the obstacles and challenges I will face while away from home. Even through stressful situations, knowing that I have a strong support system that I can rely on will allow me to push past initial difficult times. Within the Orthodox church, my peers and I have been granted more than a religion and belief. We are given a family that is both spiritual and compassionate. During my time at St. Gregorios, I have personally felt the love and support of each and every member. I am confident and assured of the fact that this guidance will carry on while I am in college and throughout my entire life.

I will keep coming back to the Orthodox Church, as the morals and lessons I have learned have prepared me not only for the present day, but for all difficult situations I will encounter in the future. Whether these struggles be academic, social, or spiritual, the Orthodox Church provides a safe haven in which I am able to learn and grow. Being a part of the Orthodox church has given me a true sense of belonging and purpose. Not only have I strengthened my relationship with God, but I have become someone who grows and learns from my struggles and mistakes.

Ultimately, the Orthodox Church means being a part of a community that not only shares the same faith, but grows on the same morals and values. Each member of the church has provided me with guidance, love, friendship, and support, all of which have allowed me to become the person I am today and grow both spiritually and corporally. My own life has been enriched by such a community, and that's what will keep me coming back. The church has so much to offer, all of which is certainly not limited to spirituality. Through rights and wrongs, the church allows me to constantly learn and grow, becoming an individual who is more Christ-like. Especially at St. Gregorios, church and Orthodoxy are one tight-knit community. To me, the Orthodox Church is more than a faith: it is a true family.

*Sara Stanley is a high school graduate, and a member of St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church in Washington, D.C. in Area 6. She wrote this essay as a submission for the Julia Samuel Scholarship competition, which is conducted each year to benefit the class of graduating high school seniors. The prompt for this year is "Why orthodoxy? What will keep you coming back to our Orthodox Church?" In September, Sara will pursue a Biology premed track at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY.*

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# OOMMEN CHANDY - The Friends He Made With Unrighteous Mammon

EDITORIAL



St. Luke 16 has this very interesting parable by Jesus Christ - of the unjust steward. When the steward realizes that his job is in danger, he uses the influence and the power he has at his disposal to create friends, even though unjustly, and that seminal act proves beneficial to him.

The life and death of Shri. Oommen Chandy, the two time chief minister of Kerala, the people's leader and Orthodox believer from Puthupally, reminds us of this parable. Thousands of people showed up to pay tribute to him when he passed away last July, and people continue to flock to his tomb. Who are these people? The vast many are the people whose life he had touched while he was the chief minister and the people's representative. These were the friends he had made using the power and influences at his disposal, using his worldly position, something which maybe described as "unrighteous mammon" in some ways (because they relate to the fallen world); and so these friends now were coming back to remember him, pray for him and intercede for him to be received into the "everlasting home" that Christ spoke of in his parable.

Oommen Chandy was without doubt a shrewd politician which helped him rise up the ranks in Kerala politics. But the one character trait of his that has come to the fore is his compassion and care for the common man and his willingness to use his worldly position to help them. The great lesson we can take away from the life of this veteran politician and fellow Christian is how we must look to apply Christian values while being engaged in the secular world. When we become successful in our life, let us remember to use our success and position in this world for the good of others as well, so that we make them our friends, and so that their prayers and good wishes may help us in our own salvation. May the memory of Shri Oommen Chandy be eternal.

# IN MEMORIAM

## *HG Zachariah Mar Anthonios*



Senior Bishop and former Metropolitan of Kollam Diocese His Grace Zachariah Mar Anthonios passed away on on August 20 2023 at Mar Anthonios Dayara in Anicadu, Pathanamthitta in Kerala. He had also served the Kochi diocese. He was 77 years old. He had been undergoing treatment for different ailments since a long time. He had stepped down from his positions in the Diocese last year. Thirumeni was known for his simple way of life.

## *Rev. Fr. Dr. Samuel K. Mathew*



Rev. Fr. Dr. Samuel K. Mathew, former vicar of St. Mary's Orthodox Church of Philadelphia, passed away on July 31 2023 due to a heart attack. He was 74. Father Mathew served as therapist, chaplain,

and counselor for over four decades. He was an army veteran who gave spiritual care and pastoral counseling for soldiers, trauma victims, psychiatric patients, families, and staff at hospitals, other medical facilities, and Army bases in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Indiana, North Carolina, Kentucky, and elsewhere. His funeral was conducted with full military honors.

## *Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel*



Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel (Leeson Achen) passed away on August 18, 2023. He was 43. Achen served as assistant vicar

at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Cherry Lane and as Vicar at St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church of Greater Washington; St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church of Hartford, Connecticut; and Mar Gregorios Orthodox Syrian Church of India, Staten Island. Within his short time in ministry, achen was able to make huge impacts in the life of many, especially the young ones in the diocese.

May God grant rest to these faithful shepherds.

May their memory be eternal!

# KNOW YOUR AREA: AREA 7



Dr. Jinsy Mathew  
Area 7 Coordinator



Philadelphia is one of the most historically significant cities in the United States and has served as the nation's capital until 1800. **Area 7-Philadelphia** mostly referred to as Philly area consists of Sunday schools from 8 Parishes. The eight Sunday schools are St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Unruh, St. Mary's Cathedral Huntingdon Valley, St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox, Bensalem, St. George Orthodox Fairless Hills, St. Mary's Orthodox Devereaux Ave, St. Luke's Mission, Bensalem, St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox, Mascher St, St. John's Indian Orthodox, Delaware Valley. Approximately 450 children and 100 teachers belong to Area-7 Sunday school under the leadership of 8 Principals and Vicars of respective Parishes. The children and teachers participate actively in parish, area, and diocesan activities throughout the year. Each summer, we conduct Area OVBS with over 250 children from all the 8 Parishes. Individual parishes and as an area, children and teachers participate in local charity activities and various other activities driven towards serving the community. Annually, we conduct an area level Teacher's fellowship which is participated well. Overall, there is tremendous teamwork and dedication among all 8 parishes in Sunday school activities. As an area, it is a blessing to serve the Lord through Sunday School ministry.

**A Back To School meeting with all Teachers and Principals of the Diocese was conducted online in the afternoon of September 9 Saturday. Over 130 teachers participated. The meeting lasted close to 2 hours**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### BIBLE QUIZ

Bible Quiz will be held online on October 7 2023. The Quiz will be on Acts of the Apostles. 32 parishes have registered for the Bible Quiz. Practice sessions for volunteers and participants are planned. Please look out for messages from Area Coordinators.

### TALENT FEST

Sunday School Day of Fellowship to be held in person on October 28 at St. Thomas Orthodox Church (Unruh Ave) in Philadelphia, PA. Group Song exhibition, Talent show are among performances planned.

### VOLUME 3 ISSUE 4 DEADLINE: NOV 19

Please send in articles, drawings, poems for Issue 4 Volume 3 by the deadline of Sunday, Nov 19, 2023. The theme chosen for the year 2023 is the The Holy Scriptures 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 theme. Please send your picture in image format with the submission along with full name, grade\title and parish information. For drawings, please remember to send an appropriate title.

Send in all entries to [neadssnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:neadssnewsletter@gmail.com).

Your comments and feedback are most appreciated. Please send them to [neadssnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:neadssnewsletter@gmail.com)

Please adhere to the 300 word limit. Long articles may be returned back without publishing. The number of pages may be restricted with a view to sustain readability, so not all articles received may make it to the next issue of the newsletter.

Please always copy your area coordinator in all your communications, so that the area coordinator can track the progress of your entry.

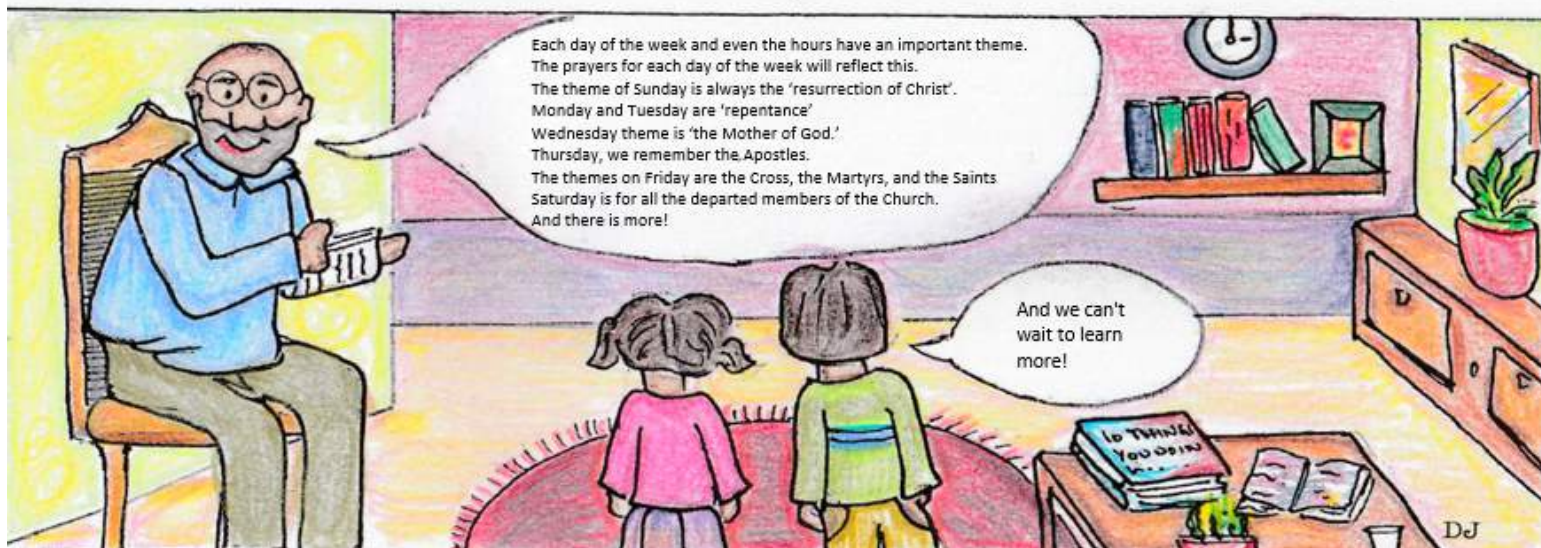
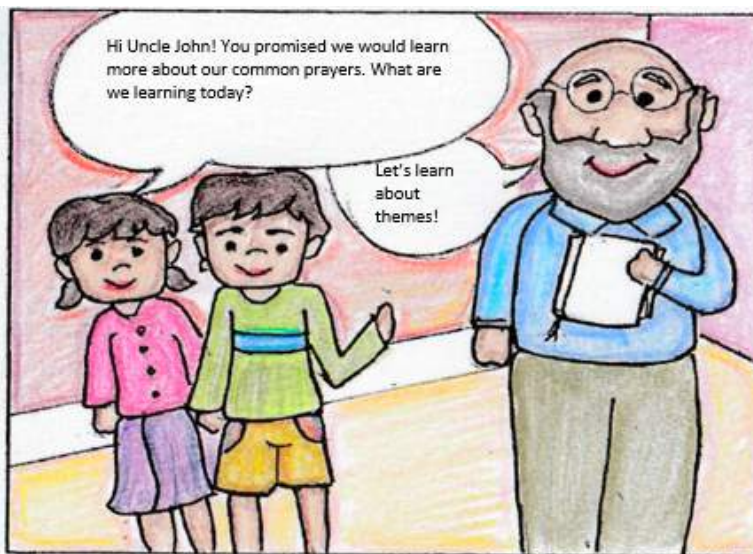


# ZACH & ZOIEY

## OUR PRAYER HOURS



DIVYA JOSEPH, TEACHER  
ST. JOHN'S ORTHODOX CHURCH,  
DELAWARE VALLEY, PA



August 1-15 every year is the period of the 15 day fast, or the fast of Dormition of the Mother of God. August 15 is then celebrated as the Soonoyo Perunnal, the falling asleep of the Theotokos, which is celebrated as a Maranaya Perunnal (Feast of the Lord). The 15-day fast a canonical fast in the Church. September 8 is celebrated in the Church as the Nativity of the Mother of God.



# OVBS 2023

Some glimpses of OVBS conducted from across the diocese



# OVBS 2023



Philadelphia Area



Linden, NJ



Mount Olive, NJ



Staten Island, NY

## HOLY SCRIPTURE

MARIAMMA THOMAS, TEACHER 6TH GRADE  
ST.GREGORIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH,  
RALEIGH, NC

### What Is Scripture?

Scripture is the Holy writ or sacred writing of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Christian Scripture is the Bible, a collection of books – examined, scrutinized, compared, measured, and approved by the elected members (canonical) of the universal church -written by forty or more writers over a thousand years.

God is the subject and hero of the Bible; the Holy Spirit inspired all writings. God communicates to humans through Scripture. God speaks through the individuals and events in the book. As the Bible was written hundred of years ago, it is our duty to glean over the verses, and seek to incorporate its message in our lives.

### How is it written?

The body of the written work is a literature wonder. Literature has its own frame of cultural references, ground rules, strategy, and purpose. The literary type by which the writer formed the writing, its use (function), and the background (what caused the report) denotes the **genre**. We must be literally or linguistically competent to understand what we read on a page.<sup>2</sup>

God chose to reveal Himself through various genres so that we may think deeply and understand the background of the written genre and thus understand its context.

The biblical genre includes Narratives or Prose, Poetry, Prophecy, and Wisdom literature. There are quite a few sub-divisions of these genres also in Scripture.

The Old Testament has different kinds of **narratives**. The next time we read, let us try and find out what type of narratives are those that we read.

Imagine a stage setup and see who the characters are and their purpose.

There are **historical stories of battles, reports, dreams, memoirs**, etc. Children can delight in the levels of David killing Goliath or Elijah's visit to the widow in Zarephath. As adults, the Scripture **demand our response** through understanding and commitment to God.

**Poetry** in Scripture uses imagery and figurative wordplay. **Prophetic books** include events that happened in the life of a prophet and God's amplified messages, and **prophecy of salvation**.

# Officials' Corner



Illustration by Ava Mathew  
The writing in Hebrew refers to "The Holy Writ"

If we do not put our hearts and minds into what we read, it will be like clanging cymbals giving no meaning.

The New Testament writers used Old Testament Scripture to support their statements in the New Testament (try to find out what they are). Jesus used Old Testament verses to refute Satan's deadly arrows. Everything falls into place when we read conscientiously connecting the Old Testament writing with the New Testament verses.

### Why is it written?

God loves humanity. His only plan is to get us back from Satan's grip (redeem) after our ancestors' mistrust in the Garden of Eden. God reveals Himself in each event and narrates those through human authors **for the coming generation** to know how God walked with His people while still taking care of His people and His only intention is **to save us**. We must repeatedly read Scripture and spiritually join Him for us to lead a holy life.

Every word in the Holy Scripture is God-breathed – the Holy<sub>3</sub> Spirit inspired the writing and is alive; we must use them daily. For a believer who trusts in the Lord, the Scripture acts like a two-edged sword examining and piercing the deepest thoughts, correcting **and teaching** the believer.<sup>4</sup> This is why we must diligently read the Scripture regularly and always consult God's words when in need. We must **apply what we read** in the Scripture in our lives.

<sup>1</sup> NIV., 2 Timothy 3.14-15

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to Biblical Interpretation., William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., 3 rd ed., 418-419.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy 3.16-17.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew 4.12.

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is celebrated in the Church every September 14 as a Maranaya Perunnal (Feast of the Lord). This also marks the beginning of the "Sleebea" season in the Church.

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# Officials' Corner

**OOMMEN CHANDY- AN UNDECLARED SAINT FROM KERALA**  
**DR. ABEY.K.THARIAN**  
**PRINCIPAL, ST. STEPHEN'S ORTHODOX CHURCH,**  
**MIDLAND PARK, NJ**



Late Mr. Oommen Chandy (1943-2023)

Although we are living in America, our roots are in India specifically the state of Kerala. Some of us were born and brought up outside Kerala and our knowledge of the state is limited. Here in America, we are all Malayalees and enjoy our culture and food. Our prayers and traditions are linked to our Indian roots. Two Kerala born saints (St.Gregorios of Parumala and St.Dionysius Vattasseril) lived in the last century who were role models for our church and others in the society. However, what is the status of our church now? Are we producing any saints or people like that? The answer to this question comes in the form of a pious Malankara Orthodox Christian Mr. Oommen Chandy, a well known politician and former chief minister of the state of Kerala.

Born on October 31, 1943, in a humble village called Puthuppally (Kottayam District) in Kerala, Oommen Chandy's journey from modest beginnings to the echelons of political power is a testament to his determination and commitment to public service. He belongs to St.George Orthodox Church, Puthuppally, Kottayam. His entry into politics was marked by his affiliation with the Indian National Congress (INC), a party deeply rooted in the ideals of secularism, social justice, and economic progress. Chandy's early years in politics were marked by his grassroots work, connecting with the people, and understanding their issues and aspirations. He was elected to the legislative assembly and represented the same seat for the past 53 years. He became cabinet minister in different roles and was the chief minister of the state twice.

Oommen Chandy passed away recently on July 18, 2023 at the age of 79. His funeral procession from the state capital, Thiruvananthapuram (formerly Trivandrum) to his hometown took more than thirty long hours. Distance from Thiruvananthapuram to Kottayam is about 150 kilometers (94 miles). Usually we can cover this distance in four hours by car. His funeral procession took such a long time because large crowds, irrespective of their religion, caste or social status assembled on both sides of the Main Central (MC) road to see his body for the last time. People loved him so much irrespective of their political, religious or social status because of his selfless service and kindness towards them.

Percentage of Christians in India is only 2.3 and Kerala is one of the prominent states in India with a good number of Christians. We are proud to claim the ancestry of St.Thomas because we believe St.Thomas came to the region of Kerala in AD 52. However, in Kerala, Christians are only 18.4%, which is lower than the Hindu and even the Muslim population. Among the different Christian denominations in Kerala, Orthodox Christians (Jacobite & Orthodox combined) are only 16%. We have to appreciate the work and success of Oommen Chandy in this context. He was a genuine humanitarian loved by all.

His home parish, St.George Orthodox Church in Puthuppally is a well-known ancient church and a pilgrimage center. The vicar of this church is Rev. Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese, who is also currently the Sunday school Director General of our Malankara Orthodox Church. In a recent interview, he suggested that priests and even bishops should learn from Oommen Chandy's humble nature and work ethics. People in the street are demanding sainthood for Oommen Chandy. Hundreds of people are visiting his tomb every day. Many are travelling from faraway places to visit his tomb, which is located in the church premises. Puthuppally church is going to be a more popular pilgrimage center.

Although Oommen Chandy was a busy politician, he found time to attend Holy Qurbana every Sunday and even Holy week services including the long Good Friday service. During the church services, he did not utilize any extraordinary security protection as the chief minister of the state, but participated just like any other member of the church.

Oommen Chandy's life is a guide to all people including politicians and religious leaders. He showed Christian way of life through his everyday actions more than through his words. His leadership style was marked by accessibility and inclusiveness. He was known for his open-door policy, which enabled citizens to voice their concerns and seek remedies directly. Chandy's legacy also extends to his commitment to ethical governance. In an era where corruption and malpractice often tarnish the political landscape, Chandy's reputation for clean and transparent governance stood out as an inspiration. His personal integrity and dedication to the welfare of the people earned him respect across party lines.

Status of Christians, especially that of the Orthodox Christian community in Kerala definitely elated from the life and legacy of Mr. Oommen Chandy. **Although our church cannot easily declare him a saint soon**, he is a saintly figure in the minds of thousands of people in Kerala. As a Christian community, it is desirable to introduce such God fearing public personalities in our church to our younger generation. Our Sunday school curriculum should include lessons about such pious personalities who show exemplary Christian life in the modern era. This will instill a belief in our children that saintly life is possible even today for anyone who leads a simple and dedicated Christian life.