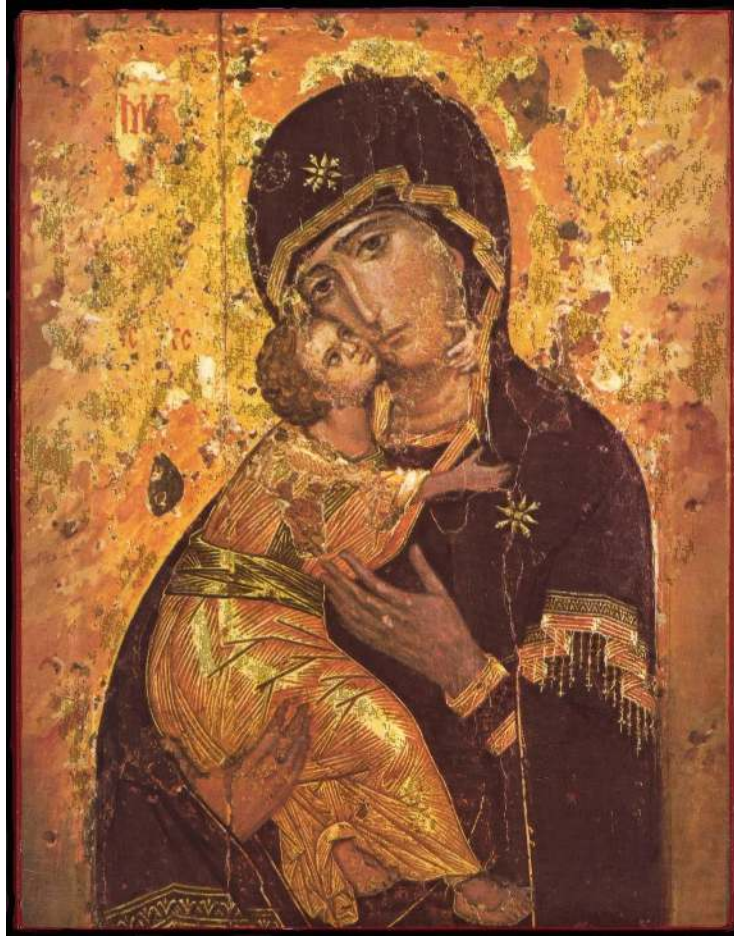




Diocese of South-West America
Sunday School

8th Grade Guide Us, O Lord



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LESSON 1 - JESUS CHRIST: PROPHET, PRIEST & KING

Objective: To understand how God used prophets, priests and kings to fulfill His will and how Christ is the Perfect Prophet, Priest and King.

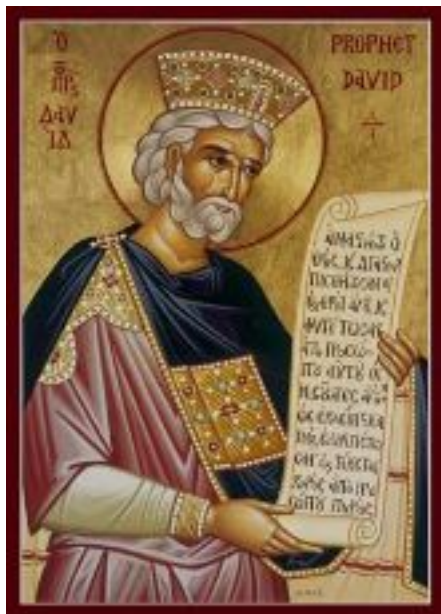
The Prophets

God spoke to the people of Israel through the prophets. The prophets had various backgrounds and were called to do many things. Samuel anointed kings, while Nathan and many others rebuked kings. They were the voice calling the children of Israel back to the Lord as they fell into sin over and over again. Many were jailed and threatened with death, yet they continued to obey the Lord and lived to serve Him. Although many prophets spoke and prophesied about the current situations they were in, their most significant task was to prophesy about the coming of the Messiah.

David

David was a shepherd boy when Samuel came to visit his father Jesse. The Lord had instructed Samuel to go to Bethlehem to find a new king to reign over Israel. When he saw the eldest son, Eliab, Samuel thought that he would be the Lord's chosen, but the Lord told him, "...For man does not see as God sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord sees into the heart" (**1 Kingdoms 16:7**). In today's world, it becomes easy to live a certain way when at school and in the presence of school friends.

but then completely change the way we act when we come to church or are in the presence of our church friends. It is important to remember that God is always looking at our heart and sees right through any ungentine actions.

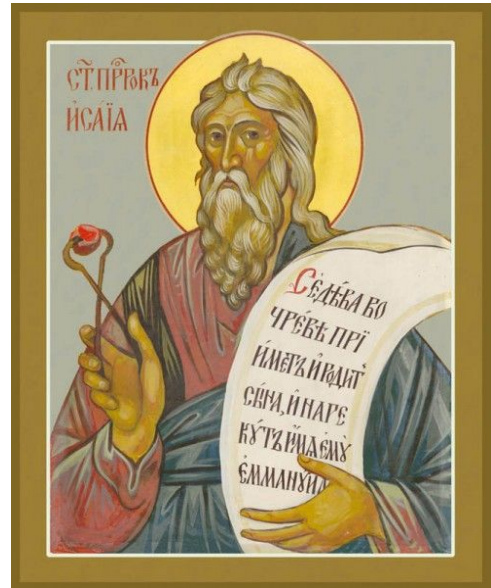


King David was a righteous man and although he sinned by sending Uriah to the front lines to be killed so he could marry Bathsheba, his Psalm of repentance (**Psalm 51, [Psalm 50 OSB]**) continues to serve as a model of true repentance for all of us.

Many of the other Psalms contain prophecies about the Messiah. In the second Psalm, David prophesied saying "The Lord said to Me 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You;'" (**Psalm 2:7**).

Isaiah

Isaiah had a different upbringing than David. Isaiah was of royal lineage and was brought up in the royal court. The Lord called Isaiah to service through a vision. Isaiah saw the Lord in glory sitting on His throne. He saw the seraphim shouting, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” (**Isaiah 6:3**). Isaiah realized that being a sinner, he was not worthy to be in the presence of the King, the Lord of hosts. Yet when the Lord asked, “Whom shall I send, and who will go to this people?”, Isaiah said, “Here I am, send me” (**Isaiah 6:8**).



In our lives, God calls us to serve in many different ways. Like Isaiah, we should offer ourselves as sacrifices to the Lord despite being sinners and trust that the Lord will guide us when we serve Him. A large portion of Isaiah’s prophecies are concerning Jesus Christ. He prophesied the virgin birth (**Isaiah 7:14**), talks about the Messiah as the Suffering Servant (**Isaiah 53**), and the Messiah as the Everlasting King (**Isaiah 11**).

Daniel

Daniel spent most of his youth in the royal courts of Babylon in captivity. He was able to attain high positions in the court and had a gift of interpreting dreams. Daniel also had visions concerning the end times and of the Trinity (Daniel 7).



The purpose of the apocalyptic visions is not to serve as guidelines to predicting when Christ will come again. It is rather to serve as a reminder that we must always be ready and focused on the Kingdom like the 5 virgins who were prepared for the bridegroom (Matthew 25).

Ezekiel

Ezekiel was the prophet during the reign of King Jehoiachin. He prophesied of the coming exile of the people of Israel which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar and the

Babylonians besieged Jerusalem. They took the people captive and later destroyed the temple and much of Jerusalem.

Jonah

Jonah was called by God to preach to the people of Nineveh. Jonah did not want to do that so he tried to flee by getting on a ship heading to Tarshish. Eventually Jonah was thrown off the ship and was swallowed by a great sea creature. He was in its belly for three days and three nights.



Jonah was a *type* of Jesus Christ, as Christ also died and rose again in three days, and also went into Hades to preach to the departed. After Jonah went to the preach to the Ninevites, the Lord saw their true change of heart and how they were seeking to turn away from their evil ways and decided not to punish them. The Ninevites were genuinely repenting and God was merciful.

Jesus Christ: The Fulfillment of Prophecy

The prophets foretold the coming Messiah to the people of Israel. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of their prophecy as He is Prophet, Priest and King.

In **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**, God tells Moses about the day when He “will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren.” Isaiah teaches that this coming Prophet will be taught by God (**Isaiah 54:13**) meaning that He will be taught by God in the flesh. This was not the case for any other prophet as all the other prophets were mere men and as the Coming Prophet would be God Incarnate. In the New Testament, Christ is recognized as the Prophet of whom Moses wrote. After the Feeding of the Five Thousand (**John 6:1-14**) and after Jesus was teaching, some people understood him to be that same Prophet. After Pentecost when St Peter was preaching in the temple, he directs the people to the passage describing the Prophet.

In **Psalms 109** (OSB), we see David prophesy about Christ as Priest. “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (**Psalms 109:4**). Melchizedek was King of Salem and a priest of God in Abraham’s time. Jesus Christ as priest belongs to the order of Melchizedek. This distinction is important because there is a difference between the priesthood of Levi and the priesthood of Melchizedek. The Levitical priesthood established by Aaron is limited because its members are mere human beings who are sinners. The only member of the priesthood of Melchizedek is Christ himself who was ordained by God himself and is the Sinless One.



Therefore He is the Perfect Priest who offers the perfect sacrifice. According to Mosaic Law, the high priest had to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people every year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). This sacrifice is imperfect and therefore had to be repeated.

When Christ as Priest offers Himself on the Cross, there is no longer a need for any more sacrifices. Jesus Christ's perfect offering atones for the sins of those before His time, during His time and even for those sins we have not committed yet.

Jesus Christ as King is seen throughout Scriptures. In the Old Testament, the Lord speaks to Jeremiah saying, "... I will raise up for David the Righteous Orient, and a King shall reign. He will understand and bring about judgment and righteousness on the Earth" (**Jeremiah 23:5**).

In the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Christ rides into the city as a humble king riding on a colt. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament which speak of the end times when Christ will come as a mighty King to destroy the forces of evil and judge us.

When we stand in church before the altar, we are standing before the throne of God. Who sits on a throne other than a king?

In the Holy Qurbana, when the deacon instructs us to bow our heads before the Merciful Lord, we pray, "*We bow our heads before Thee, our Lord and our God.*"



As the prophets in the Old Testament speak about the coming of Christ and point us to Him, let us worship our Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King.

LESSON 2- CHRISTOLOGY: THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Objective: To understand how the Councils of Jerusalem, Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus were utilized to preserve the True Teachings.

The Early Church started to flourish as the apostles spread the good news of the Gospel, baptized many and journeyed across the world. It was possible for the Church to have the same understanding of the faith as the disciples were teaching the same faith. The apostles, disciples and the bishops of the church were led by the Holy Spirit in understanding and in interpreting the faith. They prayed for guidance from the Holy Spirit who led their thinking and preserved their unity. However as the Church grew, there arose potential for different understandings of the faith as more and more leaders were appointed. Some leaders started to teach their own interpretation of the Faith instead of seeking the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Whenever any teaching arose that created controversy in the Church, the leaders of the Church assembled together and examined the different views and declared the true faith based on their discussions. It was important to discuss these new views so that no one was led astray by the new teachings and so that these new views did not change who the Person of Christ is.

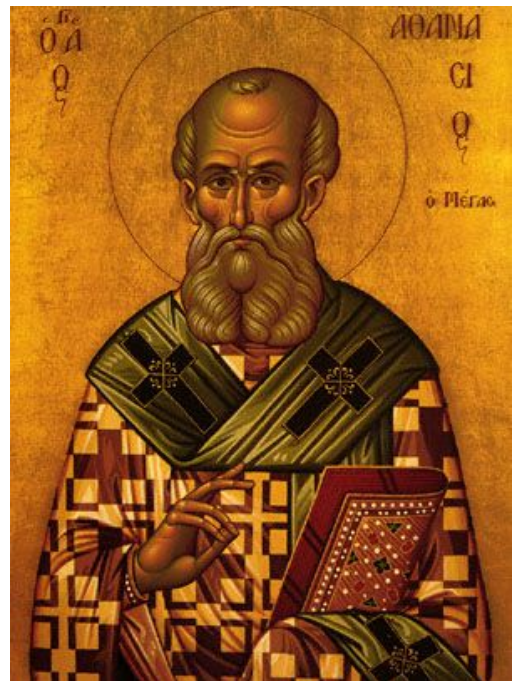
The Council of Jerusalem

As St Paul and Barnabas were preaching to the Gentiles in Antioch, there arose a problem as to the conversion of the believing Gentiles. The believing Jews from Judea came to Antioch and started teaching the Gentiles that they must be circumcised in order to be saved. St Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them and went back to Jerusalem to address the issue with the apostles and elders. The core issue was to address the relationship between the Old Testament Law and Christianity. Some of the believing Pharisees in Jerusalem agreed with the men saying that circumcision is necessary. After much debate, Peter and James reminded the Council that God had been working among the Gentiles and therefore there was no need for them to follow the Mosaic Law in order to be saved except for a few rules set by James, the archbishop of Jerusalem. This council set the precedent on how the Church would solve major disputes concerning the faith. The leaders of the Church came together to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with a desire to teach the true faith.

The Council of Nicaea

In the fourth century, a priest named Arius started teaching that Jesus Christ the Son of God was a created being and was not God from the beginning. Therefore, after Christ was born into this world, Arius taught that he was not of the same essence as God the Father. This idea was a big problem for the Christian faith because it challenged the foundation of the faith which is the love of God. We believe in our God who loved mankind so much that He Himself became man and suffered and died for the sins of man so that we may be reconciled with God.

The Church in Alexandria tried to guide Arius back to the true Christian faith but Arius held to his teachings. Emperor Constantine called for a council in order to settle the dispute. In 325 A.D. three hundred and eighteen bishops and priests assembled from Churches all over the world in Nicea. At the council, there were lengthy discussions regarding the Arian teaching. St Athanasius, a deacon at the time, played a major role in fighting against the Arian teaching. The fathers of the Council, led by St Athanasius (pictured) proclaimed the faith of the Church in clear terms in what would be the first version of the Nicene Creed.



They taught: “We believe in one God. The Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

The Council of Constantinople

A new teaching arose concerning the Holy Spirit. Macedonius, a bishop, and his followers taught that the Holy Spirit was a created being and so was lesser than God the Father and God the Son. The second ecumenical council was called to address this issue. One hundred and fifty bishops attended the Council in 381 A.D. St Gregory of Naziansus, the Theologian, and St Gregory of Nyssa defended the Orthodox Faith by proclaiming the equal status of the Trinity. There is one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Council added to the Creed: “And in the One Living Holy Spirit, the life giving Lord of all, who proceeds from the Father: and who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets and the apostles. In the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, we confess one baptism for the remission of sins and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the new life in the world to come. Amen.”

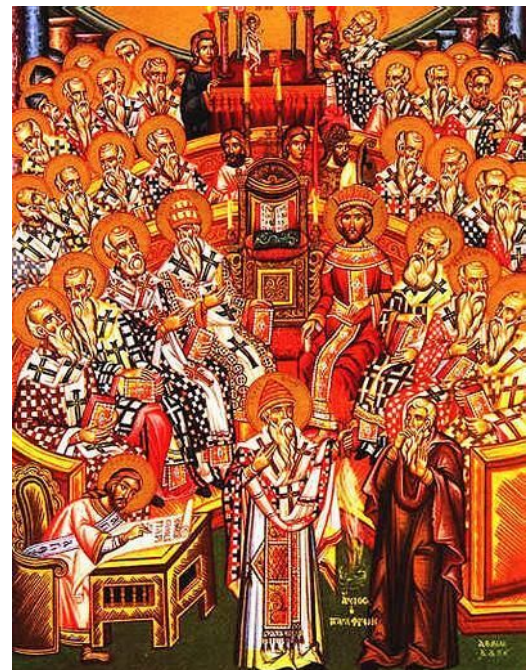
The Council of Ephesus

The third ecumenical Council was held in Ephesus in 431 A.D. Two hundred bishops gathered to discuss the teachings of Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople. His teaching was that St Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ but he was only a human being and God came and dwelt in Him later on. The Council led by St Cyril of Alexandria, declared Nestorius’ teaching as false and that Jesus Christ is one person - fully God and fully man. As St. Mary gave birth to God Himself, she is the Theotokos (Mother of God). This Council also decreed that there should be no more additions and deletions to the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed.

The Council of Chalcedon was convened to discuss the person of Christ and how He is fully man and fully God. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, along with all the other Oriental Orthodox Churches, does not recognize this council as we believe it did not clarify the mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, but rather confused the matter more.

Summary

A Great Ecumenical Council is not just a meeting of the leaders of the different Churches, but rather an extraordinary *synaxis* (or meeting) of all the Bishops of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to discuss a fundamental teaching that may be heresy and change the Apostolic understanding of who is Jesus .. this teaching of the person of Christ is what we have been handed down and kept unchanged through generations, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of all our faithful departed ancestors. As Orthodox Christians, we have never changed the teaching of who Jesus is so that we can work towards perfecting ourselves to be like Him.



LESSON 3- THE ORTHODOX FAITH

Objective: To understand how to approach the Orthodox Faith

The Orthodox Church is the same Church that Christ established in the New Testament. The description of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles is a description of our Church today! The origins of the Church and Faith can be traced back to the Apostles who were taught by Christ Himself.

The word “orthodox” literally means right belief or right praise. The Orthodox Church is defined by its liturgical life and its faithfulness to apostolic tradition. Our worship is based heavily off Scripture and tradition and we believe that we worship and pray in a similar fashion to the apostles.

After the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, the apostles and missionaries traveled through the known -world spreading the message of the Gospel. The Church grew and after major periods of persecution, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine.

Five major locations were established as centers for the faith: Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria and Constantinople. In the year 1054, the Roman church broke away from the unified church for various reasons including the role of the papacy (authority of the Pope). Many hundred years later, the Protestant church also broke away from the Roman Church. The teachings of that original Church have been maintained and that is what we know as Orthodoxy.

As described in the previous chapter, there were many teachings that arose which would have corrupted the Orthodox faith. The Church needed to defend the true teachings on the Person of Christ from any misunderstandings and heresies. The three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus defended and taught the true faith by establishing the Nicene Creed which we recite in our prayers daily. Each time we say the Nicene Creed, we are declaring the central statement of the Orthodox faith.

This faith is built on the foundation of Christ and His Apostles. Nothing has been added to our faith, and nothing more can be added. It is complete.

Worship in the Orthodox Church is focused on God. We see Him as our Almighty Creator and as our Father. We approach Him and participate in His Holy Body and

Blood when we celebrate the Holy Qurbana. We recognize that we are sinners and are broken in need of healing. Therefore, we come into the presence of God with awe, aware of our failings and His great mercy. As we participate in Christ's offering for us, we offer ourselves to God. In the Holy Qurbana, the priest prays, "Let us lift up our minds, our hearts and our thoughts to where Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father." We should do our best to give God our full attention and keep our minds and thoughts with Him as we lift up our heart to Him. We are offering our hearts up to God at this time. Is our offering a heart filled with wickedness; a heart filled with love for the world and its passions? Or do we offer a humble and repentant heart as we seek to love the Lord and love others? Orthodox worship is filled with repentance, gratitude and unending praise and is not focused on our own enjoyment, fulfillment, or fellowship.



Many have the idea that Orthodox worship is rigid, formal and boring. What we must remember is that Orthodox churches still use forms of worship that were practiced in the first centuries.

We sing most of the service, joining our voices in simple harmony to ancient melodies. We praise God along with the seraphim and shout, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty by whose glory the Heaven and earth are filled. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He who has come and is to come in the name of the Lord. Glory to be Him in the highest.” How can one say that worshipping the Creator of all things along with the angels is boring?



The Holy Qurbana is a mystery which we must approach with humility and a sense of wanting to learn. True Orthodox worship is comfortable, warm and joyful as it will be in His heavenly presence.

LESSON 4- WHO IS A CHURCH FATHER?

Objective: To understand the impact our Church Father had on our understanding of the Faith

In the Divine Liturgy of St Basil, the Church commemorates the principal Church fathers. The priest says: "Moreover, Lord, it is a commandment of Thine Only Begotten Son, to remember Thy Holy Saints. Remember, O Lord all the saints who have pleased Thee since the beginning: our holy fathers, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the evangelists, the preachers, the martyrs and the confessors...St.Stephen, the arch-deacon and first martyr, St. Mark, St. Severus the patriarch, the great teacher Dioscoros, St, Athanasius and St. Peter..."

Every Sunday and whenever we participate in the Holy Qurbana, we sing hymns that remind us that the faith we know today was preserved, defended and handed down to our generation by our forefathers. We sing, remembering **Hebrews 13:7** -

*"In oblations and in pray'rs
We remember our father, those who -
Taught us in their life to be -
The children of God
O Son of God raise them up -
In the heavenly kingdom with the -
Righteous and the just in the -
world which has no end"*

We remember the Saints and study their lives because they were men and women who exemplified Christ in the way they lived their life. The Saints are examples for us who show us that it is possible to live a life dedicated to God and to seek Him in all that we do. We seek their intercession because we believe that they are much closer to God than any of us and we trust that they will pray for us.

In the Compline Prayers of Friday, we pray: "If a servant has offended his Lord, he will go and take refuge in the friend of his Lord, and because of his prayer and supplication the Lord will forgive the offence of his servant and we, Lord, take refuge in Your Cross; May Your mercy come quickly to us."

As we take refuge in the Cross, we also take refuge in the Saints because they are also friends of the Lord who will pray and appeal to the Lord for us.

Apostolic Fathers

The apostolic fathers were those who lived in the time of Christ and in the following years. They were the apostles and the disciples of the apostles who received teachings from the lips of Christ Himself.

Among the apostolic fathers, we have St Ignatius of Antioch who was known as “Theophorus” or the Bearer of God. In **Matthew 18:1-5**, Christ called a little child to him and taught saying “...Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Tradition has it that St Ignatius was that child who Christ called as shown in the image. Another of the apostolic fathers is St Polycarp of Smyrna who was martyred. We also remember Clement of Rome as one of the Apostolic Fathers.



The Fathers of the Councils

The age of persecution came to an end with Emperor Constantine declaring Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. As the Church grew and gained more followers, heresies arose which were beginning to lead Christians astray. The fathers (as described in Lesson 2) defended the Orthodox faith against the heretics by coming together and declaring the true faith in the ecumenical councils.

These great fathers include St Athanasius, the “Defender of the Faith, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Cyril of Alexandria, the “Pillar of the Faith.” During the time period of the Councils (325 A.D. to 431 A.D.), the Church produced great teachers such as St. Basil, St John Chrysostom, St Gregory the Theologian (St Gregory of Naziansus). These fathers were instrumental in keeping and delivering to us the one genuine and uncorrupted faith.

The Monastic Fathers

Many fathers in the early church decided to leave the cities where they lived in order to seek God in another environment. Some went to the desert and became known as the

desert fathers. St Anthony , called the father of monks, was a leader in this movement of asceticism. These monks lived a life of doing physical labor and praying. They gained great knowledge and shared their wisdom with their followers. Once a brother came to see St Anthony and said, “Pray for me.” St Anthony replied, “I will have no mercy upon you, nor will God have any, if you yourself do not make an effort and if you do not pray to God.”

Among the other desert fathers are: St Basil of Cappadocia and St Ephrem the Syrian. These monks knew God and lived every moment for God by keeping their hearts pure and practicing self-control. We look at their lives and study their wisdom so that we also may learn to love God as they did.

Local Fathers

Each Church has its own record of great men. They left their impact on the life of their Church and became examples for others to follow.

The Coptic Church remembers St. Shenouda, the great monastic and national leader, and Abba Pishoi. In the mid-nineteenth century, Patriarch Cyril IV led the revival of the Coptic Church. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, Anba Abraam, Bishop of Fayoum, offered an example of piety and humility.

The Ethiopian Church always remembers Frumentius, known as Abba Salama, the first bishop of Axum, and St. Tekia Helmanot, the great monastic leader.

The Syrian Church always remembers St. Gregory Bar Hebraeus and St. Jacob Baradaeus as their local Fathers.

The Armenian Church recalls St. Gregory, known as the illuminator and the Church celebrates feasts commemorating his birth, persecution and the translation of his relics. The Church also remembers St. Mesrob, and St. Vartan.

LESSON 5- APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Objective: To explore the lives of two Apostolic Fathers and understand how they defended the Faith

The Apostolic Fathers are those Saints who learned the teachings of Christ from the Apostles themselves. This lesson will provide a glimpse into the lives of two of these Apostolic Fathers: St. Ignatius and St. Clement.

St. Ignatius

As mentioned in the previous lesson, tradition has it that St Ignatius is the child whom Christ set in the midst of the disciples as an example of humility. As Ignatius grew up, his love for the Lord increased and his faith grew. He wanted to use his life to teach people about Christ. He became the third bishop of Antioch succeeding St Peter and Euodios (one of the Seventy).

St Ignatius was zealous in his work and was known as Theophorus (bearer of God). He wrote letters to the Churches to strengthen the Faith as he learned it from the Apostles themselves. Through his life and teaching, he was able to win many pagan people to Christ.

There is a story of an encounter between the Emperor Trajan and St Ignatius. On his way to fight the Persians, the Emperor Trajan passed through Antioch. There he met Ignatius and the following conversation took place:

Emperor Trajan: “Are you Ignatius Theophorus?”

St. Ignatius: “Yes”

Emperor Trajan: “What is the meaning of your name?”

St. Ignatius: “Bearer of God”

Emperor Trajan: “And do we not also bear our gods to the wars in order to be victorious?”

St. Ignatius: “How do you consider these graceless statues to be gods?”

Emperor Trajan: “Are you blaspheming against our gods?”

St. Ignatius: “Know oh king, that there is no God but one, the Creator of heaven and earth, and His Son, Lord Jesus Christ who became man in order to save us. If you believe in Him, you will be truly happy.”

Emperor Trajan: “Let us stop this senseless talk, and do what will save your life and win you favor in my sight: offer a sacrifice to my gods, and I shall make you the greatest of my priests.”

St. Ignatius: “May God increase your wealth, Oh King. But I cannot do what you ask, for I am the priest of my Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him alone I offer my daily sacrifices.”

The Emperor was livid and he condemned St Ignatius to face wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatre. When his Christian friends learned of his fate, they went to meet him on his final journey. As he passed through Smyrna, its bishops went out to meeting him along with delegations from nearby Churches. They were seeking his blessing and so he wrote to them a letter. The following excerpt is taken from that letter: "Let your holy war of life chasten hypocrites and evildoers. Conquer their hatred and unfairness by love and justice; their cruelty, by patience and prayer; and their treachery, by faithfulness. For the sake of Christ, bear injustice, loss, and persecution. Indeed, for His sake I bear all this, preferring my bonds to the treasures of the world. I rejoice in my sufferings for Him. Pray for me that I may find rest in heaven.”

He also wrote to the Church in Rome saying: “I am bound with chains for the love of Christ. But I fear that your love for me will bring me harm. I do not want you to prevent my death. For if I am deprived of martyrdom now, on account of your love, it may be very difficult to be martyred later. I long for martyrdom in order to prove myself a Christian, not only in word, but also in deed. Let me then be thrown to the beasts. And may the beasts eat up all my body, so that its remains will be burden to no one.”



When Ignatius had arrived in Rome, he prayed for the church there and blessed them. When he had finished praying, the soldiers took him to the amphitheatre before two hungry lions. The lions killed St Ignatius and only left his bones which were taken to Antioch.

St. Clement

St. Clement was born in Rome into a rich family. He received a proper education as a child and came to know of Christ through St. Paul. He wrote a biography of the disciples, showing how they were tortured by kings and rulers. He preached the Gospel in several cities, and many believed through him. After becoming bishop of Rome, he continued to lead many to the knowledge of Christ. St Paul mentions him in his epistle to the

Philippians. "...Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. (**Philippians 4:3**)."

He wrote many letters, teaching Christians and confirming them in the faith, which he had received from the apostles. After hearing about a division among the Corinthians, he wrote to them saying: "Humility was your distinguishing characteristic. In fact, you need to submit to one another, and to listen carefully to the teachings of Christianity. You used to pray for all the brethren, forgiving one another. But now I notice among you envy, clamor, and persecution. Righteousness and peace have left you, for you have abandoned the fear of the Lord, and are now walking in sin."

Emperor Trajan also confronted St Clement about his faith:

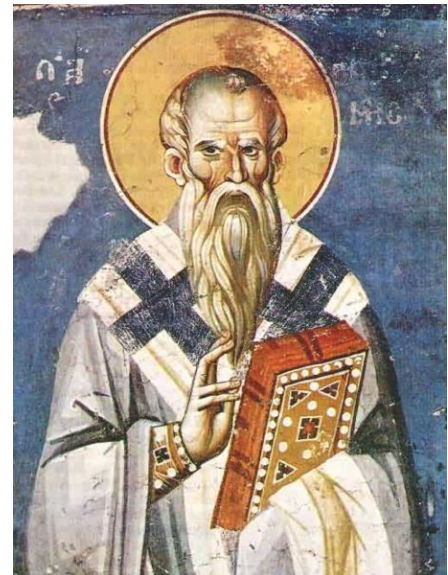
Emperor Trajan: "Are you still worshipping the crucified one?"

St Clement: "Yes."

Emperor Trajan: "Forsake Him, and kneel to our immortal gods."

St Clement: "Impossible! Can your so-called immortal gods save themselves if someone tried to steal them?"

The Emperor was furious and wanted to torture St Clement who is pictured on the right. But he feared the people of the city, so he banished the saint to a far off place near the Black Sea where he was forced to work the mines. He found many Christians there who were also banished. He ministered to them and confirmed them in the faith.



Water was not easily accessible to the people in exile. Clement prayed to God and the Lord guided him to a spring of water. They drank from it and praised the Lord. This incident brought many of the inhabitants of this place to the Lord Jesus. When the Emperor heard this, he wrote to the governor, giving orders for the torture of Clement. He was bound to an anchor and thrown into the Black Sea, and thus he received the crown of martyrdom.

These two fathers are two among the many examples of the Church Fathers who not only learned from the Apostles themselves but also passed the teachings onwards so that the True God would continue to be worshiped.

LESSON 6 - SAINT ATHANASIUS

Objective: To examine the life of St. Athanasius

Athanasius was born in Alexandria in 296 A.D. to pagan parents. His father died while he was a child and his mother sent him to one of the Christian schools. Although young, many started to learn of his growing love for Christ.

When Athanasius was fifteen years old, his mother took him with her to the Pope (Patriarch Alexander) asking to be baptized. Athanasius was later ordained as deacon by the Patriarch, and then as archdeacon. He was able to help the Patriarch who consulted him on theological matters until the Arian heresy appeared.

Arius was a priest from Alexandria who started teaching that God the Son was a created being and was not of the same divine essence as God the Father. The Church recognized the danger in this heresy spreading.

The great leaders of the Church led by St. Athanasius, who was still a deacon at the time, put all their efforts together to save the faith of the Church. The Council declared the faith of the Church in the Nicene Creed and declared Jesus Christ to be of the same essence as the Father. Although Arius was excommunicated and exiled, Arianism continued to be taught for the next fifty years. St. Athanasius spent the rest of his life struggling against this heresy, denouncing it with faith and courage.

After the death of Pope Alexander, St. Athanasius ascended to the see of St. Mark and became the new Pope of Alexandria and peace reigned in the Church. The peace, however did not last long, as Arius succeeded in convincing the Emperor of his views. The Emperor in his turn sent word to the Pope in this sense that he too may accept him, but the Pope refused this request arguing this way: "That which has been rejected by an ecumenical council, cannot be accepted except by the consent of another council." The emperor was enraged by the Pope's answer but the Pope met him and was able to convince the emperor.



The followers of Arius continued to fight Athanasius, convincing the emperor to exile him. A council was held at which false accusations were brought forth against Athanasius. His allegiance to the emperor was doubted and he was accused of murdering a bishop called Arsanius. The bishop was asked to hide but his conscience prevented him and he went to meet the representative of the emperor to unfold the whole matter to him. At the beginning of the council meeting, one of the conspirators held up a human arm which he claimed to be the arm of Arsanius and all accused Athanasius of the murder. While reading the charge, Arsanius himself appeared to show their wickedness and exposed their injustice.

The evil-doers struggled fiercely against Athanasius and the followers of Arius attacked him in several councils bringing many charges against him. He was accused of refusing to export grain to the emperor. As a result, the emperor exiled him to Treves in France. In his exile, Athanasius was well received, and during his sojourn there, he was able to teach and strengthen the local people in their faith. This was a good opportunity for him to write some important books.

Arius returned to Alexandria, but its inhabitants rejected him. The governor, fearing the revolt of the people, sent Arius back to the emperor in Constantinople with the purpose of getting the approval of the Pope on Arius' return. Athanasius prayed to God that He would solve the matter before Arius could kneel in the Church. On the day appointed for Arius to enter the Church, he was suddenly struck by some disease in the stomach and died.

This event greatly moved the emperor, drawing him towards Athanasius. On his death bed, the emperor decided that the Pope should return to his see. The happiness of the Alexandrians at seeing their father was beyond description, and they received him with rejoicing. The followers of Arius, however did not cease to fight Athanasius, and they persisted in their hatred conspiring against him. Athanasius's life was full of bitter times; once when he was told, "The world is all turned against you, Athanasius" and he answered, "Me too, I am turned against the world", so he was known as "Athanasius Contra-Mundum," meaning Athanasius defying the world.

After a life of a wonderful and continual struggle for the faith, Athanasius was victorious over the followers of Arius. He lived to see that day, when his struggle was at last rewarded. Thus, souls rested, and the faith started to take strong roots in the Churches due to his tears, his suffering and struggle. He was a chosen vessel to bear witness, and deserved to be called "The Apostolic," in likeness to the divine apostles. We are left with his sermons and important works which are in truth, a rich heritage for the Church.

LESSON 7- THREE HOLY HIERARCHS

Objective: To examine the lives of the Three Holy Hierarchs and the impact they had on Christian theology

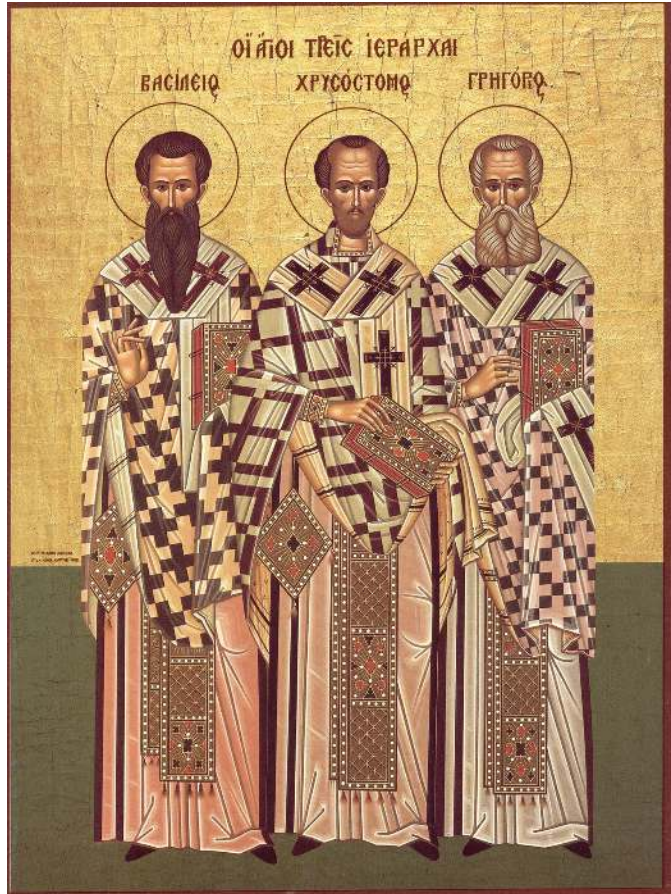
This lesson takes a look into the lives of the Three Holy Hierarchs along with another great father of the Church. The Three Holy Hierarchs refer to **St. John Chrysostom** (middle), **St. Basil the Great** (left), and **St. Gregory the Theologian of Naziansus** (right).

They were highly influential bishops of the early church who played pivotal roles in shaping Christian theology and are venerated not only within the Orthodox Church but also many other denominations including Catholicism and Anglicanism.

St. John Chrysostom

The Roman emperor had ordered the people of Antioch, a great city in Syria, to pay even more taxes than already required and they refused. "The taxes we pay do not leave us enough money to buy bread for our children", they cried. Then a crowd of hot-tempered people ran out into the streets and smashed the statue of the emperor. Soon general rioting began, stores were broken into, and the soldiers who were sent to establish order were beaten up. The emperor had punished cities before by ordering them to be destroyed.

The old Archbishop of Antioch did not wait for the Emperor's decision. He set out for Constantinople to plead with the Emperor being frightened of all that could happen. In those days, there was just one place where the believers could find some comfort. In the city cathedral, a priest named John was preaching daily. There was no other preacher like him. He comforted them and yet he made them see their own faults. He gave them courage and hope. The old Archbishop returned bringing with him the emperor's



forgiveness. The city would not be destroyed. The people would not have to suffer any more.

Who was that Father John who had kept up the people's courage, while making them see their faults? John was born in a rich family. He lost his father early, but his mother gave him a very good education and wanted to send him to a famous university to become a lawyer. But John wanted to become a monk and live in the desert spending all his time praying to God. He went to the desert and stayed there for eight years, until the bishop of Antioch told him to come back and serve as a priest in Antioch.

The name "Golden Mouthed Chrysostom" was given to him by a simple woman who heard one of his sermons: "Oh, Father, she said. "You are golden-mouthed and your words are beautiful. But your teaching is like a deep well and my mind is like a short rope. It is difficult for me to dip up the water of your wisdom." John remembered what the woman said. He gave up the difficult manner of speaking and started teaching in a simple way that went straight to the people's hearts. When John began to preach everyone was silent. His sermons were preserved because people wrote them down as he spoke.



John served as a priest in Antioch for eighteen years. Then he was consecrated Bishop of Constantinople. His task was even harder and he had a lot of business to attend to. He supervised all the work of the Church to help the poor, and he went himself into prison cells, into the worst city slums, to help, comfort and teach the people.

The emperor's wife was a conceited and arrogant woman. She resented the sermons of Archbishop John because she felt they were reproaching her; so she persuaded the Emperor to have John arrested and exiled to a distant country on the shores of the Black Sea. For three years, John remained in a little town there surrounded by the love and respect of all the people. "We would rather see the sun hidden, than have your golden-mouth silenced," they said. Then the emperor decided to send John further away and ordered his soldiers to treat him very harshly. They hurried him along their journey without mercy. One day, he couldn't go any further and stopped at the little chapel of a

martyred saint. That night the saint appeared to John, and asked for a priest to bring him Communion. Then he said quietly. "Glory be to God for all things." And the golden-mouth was still. They buried him in the tomb of the martyr. St. John did a great deal to establish the Order of Divine Liturgy called "The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom" which is still used in the Holy Qurbana to this day.

St. Basil the Great

In the year 357 A. D. a young man called Basil arrived in Athens from the distant city of Caesarea in Cappadocia. He had already distinguished himself in the schools of his own country and the teachers of the school of Athens quickly recognized the extraordinary qualities of his mind. But though Basil was eager to learn he was somehow different from the other students. After a few years, Basil felt that he had acquired all that the school of Athens could offer him. He did not return home but went to Egypt. There he visited the hermits who had begun to settle in the desert, devoting their time to prayer and spiritual life. Though his health was very poor, he had boundless energy.



Basil did not stay in Egypt very long. He had to go back to Caesarea to assist the bishop. Then he left again for his beloved desert, to an isolated spot not far from his home country. He did not remain there by himself; since other men joined him, Basil established a monastery, and was deeply impressed by the growth of this monastery. Basil brought his great spiritual experience and all his talents into practice in building up this kind of monastic life. He composed directions for the use of the monks, known as "The Longer Rule and The Shorter Rule."

After a few years, the bishop wrote to Basil, begging him to return to Caesarea to serve in the defense of the Church. Basil obeyed the call. He left his beloved monastery, and came back to serve the aged bishop until his death. He then was elected as bishop of Caesarea. A new field of work opened before Basil. No other bishop before him gave so much attention and thought to the Church's work for the poor. Infirmaries, orphanages, and schools were initiated by St. Basil. Help was given to all those who needed it. A tradition was established that the Church was to be responsible for helping those in distress.

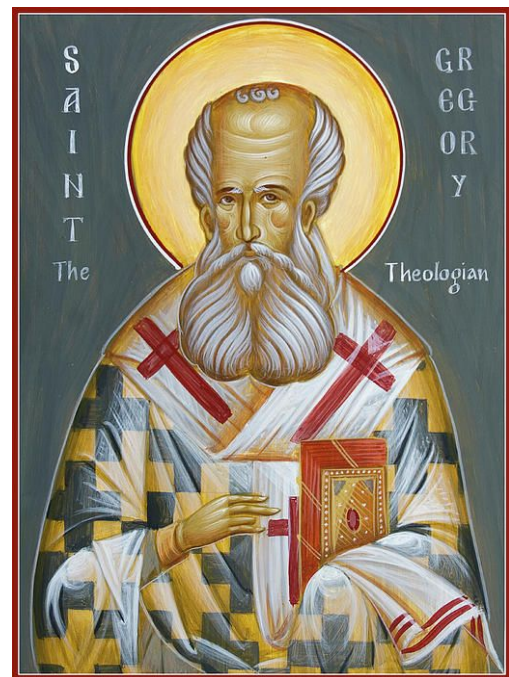
St. Basil's name is perhaps best remembered in our Church because of the liturgy which bears his name. Our spiritual father, the Catholicos of the East and the Supreme Head of the Indian Orthodox Church, always includes the name of Basil (i.e., Mar Baselios) as part of his formal name which reflects the love our Church has to St. Basil.

Throughout the eight years of his episcopacy, St. Basil defended the teachings of the Church on the Holy Trinity from the attacks of Arianism. Even the emperor turned to the side of Arianism, but St. Basil would not compromise on a single point of what he believed to be the holy truth either to please the emperor or to avoid division. "You can do nothing to me", he told the emperor, "Deprive me of wealth? I have none; send me into exile? I am in God's hand everywhere; torture me? I shall rejoice in suffering for Christ; kill me? You will reunite me with my Lord." In A.D. 379, he was heard in the prayer, saying, "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit." He departed peacefully and the sound of hymn singing accompanied him to his grave.

St. Gregory the Theologian of Naziansus

St. Gregory was born into a Christian family and was raised by very devout parents. His father was the the Bishop of Naziansus and was a saint along with St. Gregory's mother, St. Nonna. After starting his education in the nearby schools, St Gregory went to Athens to finish his studies where he also studied with St Basil the Great. Both friends longed after spiritual communion with God and understanding. After finishing his education in Athens, St. Gregory stayed as a teacher of rhetoric.

After returning to Naziansus, he was baptized by his father at the age of 33. He was also ordained to the Priesthood by his father against his will. When his father told him of his wishes for St. Gregory to become a bishop, St. Gregory left his home and accepted St. Basil's invitation to join him at his monastery in Pontus. St. Gregory stayed at the monastery for a few years and went back home to Naziansus when his brother passed away. The local church was in trouble as it was facing heresies and other troubles. He fought against heresy at his home and everywhere he served. He was called to the Council of Constantinople where he fought against the Macedonian heresies regarding the unequal status of the Holy Spirit. In this time, St



Gregory wrote many works regarding various subjects.

At the Second Ecumenical Council, St. Gregory was chosen to be the Patriarch of Constantinople. Certain bishops who had loyalties with another candidate refused to accept St. Gregory as Patriarch. He decided to resign his office for the sake of peace in the Church: “Let me be as the Prophet Jonah! I was responsible for the storm, but I would sacrifice myself for the salvation of the ship. Seize me and throw me.. I was not happy when I ascended the throne, and gladly would I descend it.”

St. Gregory returned to his home region and continued to fight against the heretics and encourage and strengthen the believers. He is honored with the title, “Theologian” also given to the Apostle and Evangelist St. John.

Controversy: The Greatest Among the Three

A controversy arose in Constantinople about who was the greatest - St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, or St. John Chrysostom.

As the people became more caught up in the dispute, which was far from promoting devotion to Christ and imitating the life of the Holy Saints, the three holy Hierarchs one night appeared in a dream to the Bishop of Euchaita and speaking with a single voice, they said: “As you see, the three of us are with God and no discord or rivalry divides us. Each of us, according to the circumstances and according to the inspiration that he received from the Holy Spirit, wrote and taught what befits the salvation of mankind. There is not among us a first, a second or a third, and if you invoke one of us the other two are immediately present with him. Therefore, tell those who are quarrelling not to create divisions in the Church because of us, for when we were on earth we spared no effort to re-establish unity and concord in the world.”

The three Hierarchs have taught us in their writings and equally by their lives, to worship and to glorify the Holy Trinity, the one God in three Persons.

LESSON 8 - ORIENTAL FATHERS

Objective: To examine the lives of four Holy Saints who are remembered during the Fifth Diptych during the Holy Qurbana.

The struggles of the Saints played an important role in the history of the Oriental Orthodox Church, and their teaching confirmed the original and true Christian faith. In this lesson, we will learn about a few of these Holy Saints - St. Dioscorus, St. Timothy, St. Philoxenos, and St. Severus, all who are remembered in name during the Fifth Diptych (thubden) during Holy Qurbana.

St. Dioscorus

In his youth, Dioscorus was the disciple of St. Cyril (“...the exalted and true tower”) and whom Dioscorus succeeded as Patriarch in 444 A.D.. This was a time of turmoil for the Church which was struggling against the rise of heresies, in particular, the Nestorian heresy.

Emperor Theodosius asked St. Dioscorus (pictured on the right) to hold the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 A.D. to discuss the case of Eutyches who had appealed for the reopening of his case after he was excommunicated for his heretical teachings by the Patriarch of Constantinople. In this council, Eutyches admitted that his teachings were heresy and was accepted by the Council. However, he again returned to his heresies and was once more excommunicated.

Bishop Leo of Rome had sent a message with his representatives to the bishop of Constantinople, known as the Tome of Leo, which says: “In truth, Christ came in both the Divine and Human forms; the former aroused wonder by the miracles he wrought, and the latter received the insults.” But this letter was not read at the Council.

Bishop Leo believed that St. Dioscorus and the other Council members had ignored his message and chose not to read it. Bishop Leo was not able to find peace until he was able to hold a counter council known as the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. At this Council, the representatives of Leo read the message from the Tome of Leo but St. Dioscorus



objected because he firmly believed that Christ was of one nature and not two natures as described in the Tome.

Although St. Dioscorus stayed true to the Faith, he was expelled from the Council by force and imprisoned in his house. He was exiled by the emperor and passed away in that exile. The Oriental Orthodox Churches do not accept the Council of Chalcedon and believe in the same faith as St. Dioscorus. Let us remember this Champion of our faith who stayed true to the right belief despite facing opposition from other Council members and the Emperor.

St. Timothy (Aelurus)

He was the Patriarch of Alexandria. He was given the epithet of "Aelurus" (weasel or cat) by his enemies because of his small stature. Timothy joined a monastery and became patriarch in 457 A.D. when Dioscorus had died in exile. The congregation and the clergy in Egypt had refused to recognize Proterius who had been appointed by the emperor as successor of Dioscorus.

Upon his accession, Timothy held a council with the purpose of denouncing the decisions passed by the council of Chalcedon, an act which greatly infuriated the Emperor who exiled him.

In his exile, Timothy wrote a large number of epistles in defense of Christ, repudiating Eutyches' heresy, and confirming that Christ took a human form similar to other men. Timothy was recalled to Alexandria by Emperor Basiliscus in A.D.475. He held a council attended by 500 bishops refuting and canceling the decisions of Chalcedon, and issued a statement which was unanimously accepted by all the eastern Churches. He died in peace in 477 A.D.

St. Philoxenos

St. Philoxenos is one of the prominent saints of the Syrian Church. Born in Tahl in Mesopotamia, the land "between the Two Rivers," he joined a monastery where he was instructed in Syriac and Greek studies; then he joined the ecclesiastical school at Edessa, where he perfected his knowledge by the theological studies he received. He attacked the Nestorian teachings which were being spread in Edessa.

Philoxenos was ordained bishop of Mabbug, in the Euphrates Valley in A.D.485. He was later exiled to Trachia, and imprisoned in a house with all its outlets shut and the house was set on fire. Thus the holy father was suffocated in his room and died for the faith. He was also an ardent defender of the one nature of Christ.

St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch

St. Severus was educated in Alexandria and attracted by the life of asceticism and worship, he became a monk. St. Severus went to Constantinople in A.D. 508 where he successfully secured the support of Emperor Anastasius for the Orthodox monks



oppressed on account of their belief in the One United Nature of Christ.

In 512 A.D., he became the See of Antioch. But in 518 A.D., when Justin became emperor, he deposed Severus who fled to Alexandria seeking refuge with Patriarch Timothy II. He made several attempts for reconciliation but they all failed and the Emperor had him excommunicated.

St. Severus is considered a great theological teacher who was particularly endorsed with the ability to expound and defend the belief of the One Nature which he elaborated and explained in over 125 treatises and 400 epistles.

May we continue to remember how these Church Fathers protected the Faith as we remember them by name with each celebration of the Holy Qurbana.

LESSON 9 : OTHER HOLY FATHERS

Objective: To examine the life of a monk and understand how their lives impacted the Church.

Since the beginning of Christianity, some Christians wanted to consecrate their lives fully to the life of worship. They left the ordinary life with all its occupations and lived in the deserts so that they could set themselves free with their Savior in continuous prayer, fasting, meditation, reading of the Bible and helping others. The ideal they strived for is purity of heart. As **Matthew 5:8** says, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” These Christians lived their life seeking to see God.

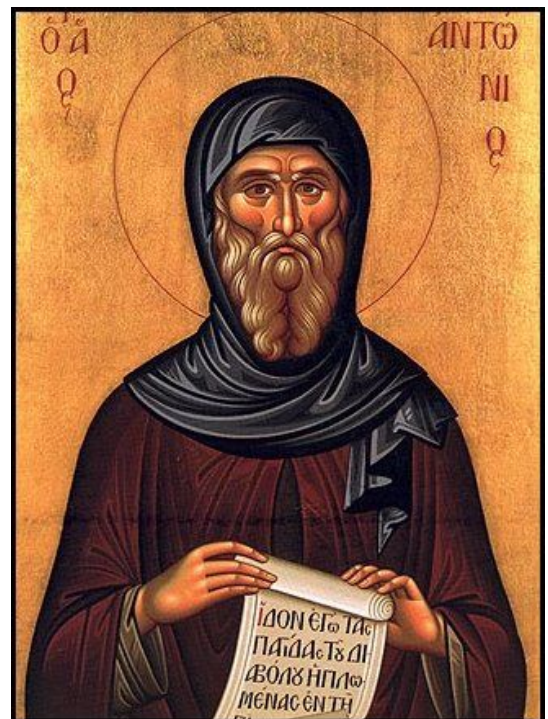
They were humble and silent individuals. The simplicity of their life shows the depth of their faith. When someone asked them a question, they replied in few words and to the point. They always preferred to give concrete examples. Their method of teaching was by telling simple stories.

This type of life is called Monasticism. The monk is a person who dedicates his entire life to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is dead to the world, in body and mind. He cares no more for money or position or house or family. He chooses to live in poverty and obedience to his elders. Humility and celibacy are fundamental rules for this type of life. Monasticism was first known in the Egyptian deserts where the great monastic leaders taught their disciples from all over the world. Many of those disciples returned to their own countries and founded new monastic orders in their Churches.

St. Anthony, the Father of Monasticism

Anthony was born of wealthy parents at Keman in Upper Egypt around 251 A.D. His parents died before he was eighteen. He was left alone and had to care for his younger sister.

One day when he went to the church, he listened carefully to the Gospel. The Gospel was from when Jesus was telling the rich man, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (**Matthew 19:21**). Anthony felt that these words were addressed to him personally



and he decided to obey His commandment. He sold his property and distributed all that he possessed to the needy and left a small property to his sister. He left his sister with a Christian family and went to the desert where he lived alone for twenty years as a hermit.

He divided his time between prayers and planting palm trees while ignoring the worries of the world in order to spend his life in prayer and meditation. He became famous for his ascetic life and many people followed him. His disciples built cabins around his cabin and he became their abbot (the head of the monks). They asked him for advice in spiritual matters, and gathered together on Sundays for the Holy Communion.

St. Anthony left his solitude and went into the city only twice: once to encourage the martyrs and stand by them in the law courts; and another time when he was more than ninety years old. He then went to support the Nicean faith against the Arian heresy. He was closely associated with St. Athanasius, in his struggle against Arianism. St. Anthony is known as "The Father of Monks".

St. George

St. George was born in Cappadocia (modern day turkey) to Christian parents. When his father died, George's mother returned to her native Palestine, taking George with her. George became a soldier in the Roman army and rose to the rank of tribune (a commander in the army). The emperor of that time, Diocletian (A.D. 245 - 313), began to persecute Christians at the beginning of the 4th century. George objected to this and resigned his military post in protest.

This infuriated the emperor who imprisoned and tortured George hoping he would deny his faith. It is said that he was dragged through the streets of Diospolis (now Lydda) in Palestine and beheaded. The emperor's wife was so impressed by George's resilience that she became a Christian for which she too was executed for her faith.

We remember him as a saint because no matter what earthly pleasure and promotion he was offered, he remained true and faithful to our Lord.

St. George is commonly known and depicted as a saint who fought against a dragon. In a village in Africa, there lived a dragon who ate many of the people who lived there. Those who could escape, fled into the city where they hoped to be protected by the city walls. In order to keep the dragon away from the city, two sheep were tied together and sent off in the direction of the dragon. This solution did not last very long as the city ran out



of sheep. The city people could not think of any other solution other than sacrificing a child everyday.

One day the lot fell on the king's daughter for her to be sacrificed. On the day when she was going to be offered to the dragon, St. George came to the city and upon hearing about what was going on, he decided to kill the dragon.

When he came upon the dragon, he fought with it in a great battle and finally stuck it with his lance. St. George and the king's daughter were able to tie up the dragon and bring into the city where St. George beheaded the dragon.

St. Menas

During the reign of Emperor Diocletian, there lived a man in Egypt named Audiksios. He was the governor of Mariot, which lies to the west of Alexandria. His wife, Aufimia, was barren. They were both righteous and loved God and persevered in prayer, fasting and the giving of alms. One day, Aufimia stood before the icon of the Virgin, and prayed fervently to God, asking for a son. She heard a voice saying, 'Amen'. She told her husband of what had happened and both of them rejoiced in the Lord.

In 285 A.D. Aufimia gave birth to a child whom she named Menas. His father taught him the holy precepts of the Church and the child increased in wisdom with God and man. When he was eleven, his parents died, leaving him a rich inheritance. He gave it all for the poor. He entered the army, and soon became famous among his companions for his diligence and noble spirit. When the worship of pagan gods was made compulsory by the emperor and as a result, persecution broke out, Menas left the army and went to the desert.

While Menas was praying one night, he saw the angels crowning the martyrs, and wished to attain their crown of victory. In the morning, he returned to the capital.



St. Menas proclaimed his faith publicly to the assembled multitude. The governor was furious and ordered his arrest. At his trial, the following conversation took place.

The governor: Come forward, flippant man, who are you?

Menas: I am the soldier Menas, servant of the Lord Jesus.

The governor: Why did you leave the army, and where have you been?

Menas: When I received your command to worship idols, I went to the desert to worship the living God. I didn't want my soul to perish with the wicked, but wanted to be saved as it is written, "Let not my soul be destroyed with the wicked, nor my life with the men of blood."

The governor: We have been informed of your father's position and of the prestige of your family. Repent of this evil, and you will be given an elevated position and great power.

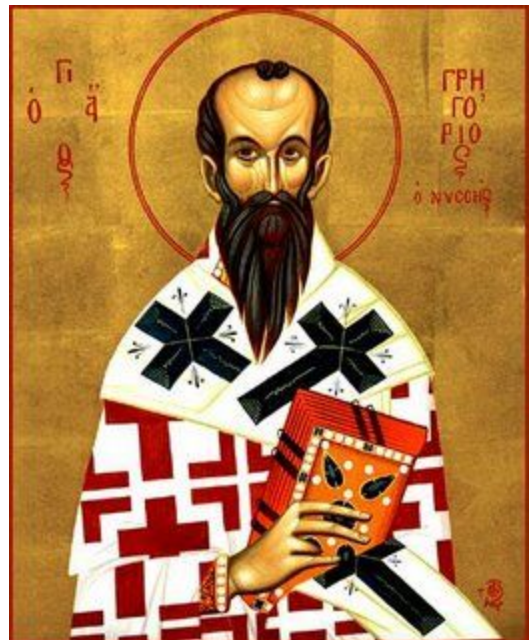
Menas: Such offers do not entice me. Therefore, do not waste your time trying to allure me.

The governor gave orders for his torture. Menas bore the pain bravely, and God strengthened him. Finally he was put to death, the decree being: "Since Menas the Christian soldier has refused to obey the emperor's command to sacrifice to our gods, his head shall be cut with the sword, and his body burnt with fire." In the place where he was martyred, Menas knelt and raised his eyes to heaven in prayer. The sword separated his head from his body and he won the crown of martyrdom in 309 A.D.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

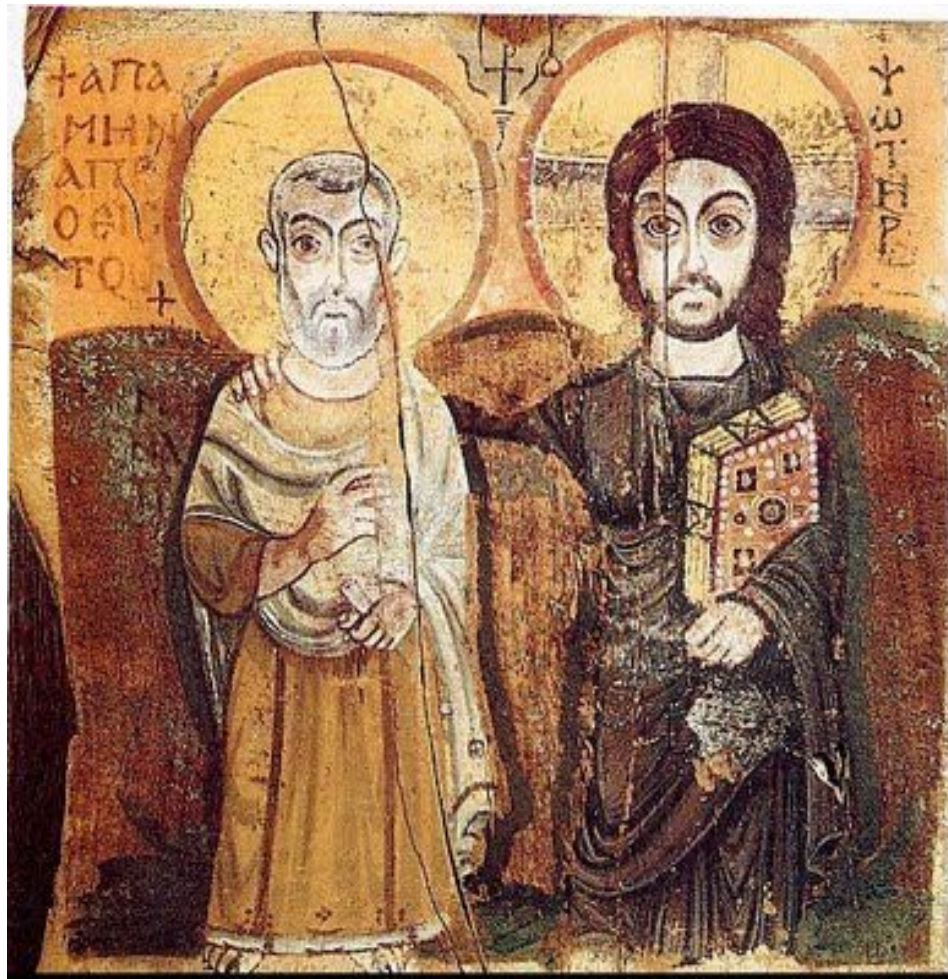
St. Gregory was the younger brother of St. Basil, and one of the three Cappadocian fathers. Gregory was attracted towards the monastic life, and joined the monastery in Pontus which had been founded by his brother, and became bishop of Nyssa in A.D.371. He fought Arianism and was thus exiled by Emperor Valens, and came back after the Emperor's death. Gregory traveled widely to teach, and attended a number of Church councils.

He was an eminent theologian with a wide scope of knowledge, and a prolific author on the subject of the Divine Trinity. He explained to the teachers of the Church how to explain the Trinity, the Incarnation, Salvation and the Holy Sacraments. Gregory wrote about chastity,



explaining that the spirit of the chaste person is united with Christ. He also left us a record of his wonderful sister Makrina whose life and thinking had greatly influenced him and the rest of his brothers. He also left a number of treasures on the conception of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Spirit. He distinguished himself at the Council of Constantinople where he defended the true faith.

May we remember the lives of these monks as we strive for the Kingdom.



LESSON 10 - ANAMNESIS

Objective: To define “Anamnesis” and explore how it relates to our experience of the Liturgy

The Greek word “anamnesis” translates most often to English as “remembrance”. In English, we can remember an event in a historical sense e.g., we remember September 11, 2001 as a sad day in American History when four passenger aircraft were hijacked by al-Qaeda terrorists and flown into buildings, destroying the World Trade Center and damaging the Pentagon. People born after 2001 are told of this event, and have a memory based on facts as well as witness from those who are familiar with the happenings of that day.

However, the remembrance of this tragedy is much stronger and more vivid for those who lived in New York City on September 11, 2001. For those who actually experienced the confusion and chaos, such as a survivor of the WTC, the memory becomes one that is so strong that he / she becomes forever changed because of the experience of that day.

The use of the Greek word *anamnesis* in the Holy Qurbana is for us to remember an event as if we were there – during the Holy Qurbana, we live the entire life of Christ - the Incarnation of our Lord, His Passion and Death, and the glorious Resurrection. As Christians, we experience the Mystical Supper and remember as One who lived, died and rose again with Him. As Orthodox Christians, the beauty and meaning of our Faith and teachings can never be appreciated to the fullest extent without an understanding of this Greek word.

"Anamnesis" is that memory formed when we live the event as if we were there. It is the memory that those who were in the building when the planes hit the twin towers will carry for the rest of their lives.

As Fr. John Hainsworth, a priest in the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), explains - "Remembrance, therefore, cannot be understood as simply memory, however significant that memory may be; one cannot have a memory of an event that they had not been alive to witness. Rather, remembrance prescribed in Scripture can best be understood as the present participation in an event which has no relationship to time, but which arcs outside of the category of time. The fact that the Passover had happened in the past was irrelevant to the Jews of the Lord's time, since that event was a memorialized revelation of how God always deals with His people. To remember in the Scriptures is to act, and

therefore to remember God is to remember how He is acting now. Every battle becomes a battle with Pharaoh, the exile in Babylon becomes enslavement under Egypt from which God will free His people, and prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel can refer to God's mercy on the enslaved Israel as a reason that Israel should repent and be reconciled with their deliverer. But this can only be the case if biblical remembrance is understood not as memory but as revelation. Holy Week, Easter, and Liturgy is built on this ... if we don't get this, we miss the whole point."

Ever wonder why our Holy Qurbana is so long?

During Palm Sunday, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem as if it is happening right there in front of us. During Good Friday, we suffer the Passion of the Cross as if we were there - we even taste the bitter drink so that more of our senses can help in forming the memory that will be with us always.

And on Easter day, we along with all Orthodox Christians will cry out loud - CHRIST IS RISEN! It is not "Christ had risen" or that "Christ rose" - it is intentionally and beautifully in the present tense.

Every Holy Qurbana, the entire Scripture - Old and New Testament - happens before our very eyes in this way so we can experience the beautiful mystery of our God. More to the point, when we read Scripture in the Church in this mindset that it is happening right there, the Word takes a whole new meaning, a different significance.

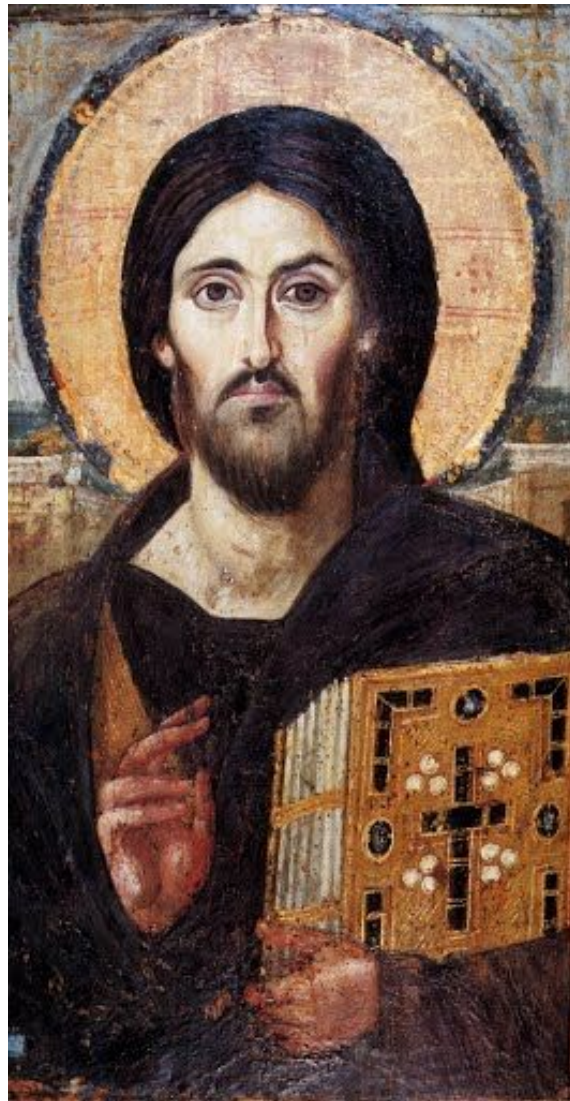
When the alter servers read from the writings of the Apostles, they end by saying "*Habibai Barekmor*" because it is the Apostle himself who had just spoke. When the Epistles of St Paul is read, we hear the words "Ahai Barekmor" because it is St. Paul speaking to us. And when the Priest reads the Gospel in the Church, it is Christ Himself speaking to us as if He was once again giving His sermon from the mount (Matthew Chapters 5-7).

For the Orthodox Christian, salvation is more than an idea or a philosophy - it is a person, and He is Jesus Christ. In order to be saved, we must literally become like Him (Theosis). But, in order to transform ourselves to be like Him, we need to walk His footsteps and remember that He is God, the eternal One (**John 1:1-5**). This is the importance of the Holy Sacraments that can only be received in the Church. Our responsibilities as Christians is not just to watch or acknowledge, but to participate and experience all that the Church gives in its present tense.

Anamnesis - an act that is not just simply remembering but to gain the experience and be affected to such an extent that we change ourselves and become like Him. But, to be perfect like Him (**Matthew 5:48**) takes a lifetime, and we will frequently and often predictably fail. This is why the cry of "Kurielaison" - Lord have Mercy! - accompanies every step of the Orthodox Christian on the path towards eternal life.

There is a popular Western song sung during Holy Week that contains a verse, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?".

In order to truly be Orthodox, our answer must be "yes". We are with Him, and await His Second Coming with trembling and fear for we know He is real as we experience Him in the present tense.



LESSON 11 : THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Objective: To explore the experience of fellowship within the Holy Eucharist

The offering of the Eucharist is divine and the heavenly realms are opened before us as we participate in the Sacrament. As we declare in the Nicene Creed, Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father. As we celebrate the Eucharist, Jesus Christ is being offered on the altar. Therefore, it is in Holy Qurbana that the gates of heaven are opened and we on the Earth are brought into heaven. It is here we experience fellowship with the angels and the saints.



The Eucharist is a fellowship between God and the believers, as well as a fellowship between the seen and an unseen Church, and a fellowship between those who struggle and the ones who have completed their struggle in faith.

If we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself present on the altar, then we consequently believe that the angels and archangels stand before Him, as we repeat in the prayers of the liturgy, in a heavenly fellowship.

St. John Chrysostom said, "...all the hosts of heaven attend and participate in the hymn of praise, and the place nearest to the altar is crowded with angels that make supplication with the priest,...and the fire of the Holy Spirit descends and behold the blood gushes from the side of the unblemished Lamb to be collected in the cup for our sanctification....therefore how do you, Oh Christian, dare to attend the offering without due reverence and awe,...for the Church is one other than heaven itself."

The prayers of the liturgy reveal the fellowship which exists between the living believers, and the departed believers. The Church prays for the forgiveness of their sins, invoking upon them the mercy of the Lord if at any moment of their lives they sinned.



We pray that the Lord may forgive them what they had forgetfully committed in His sight. When celebrating the Holy Qurbana, we leave the center aisle free because we believe that the departed are there worshipping with us.

LESSON 12 : ON FASTING

Objective: To examine purpose of fasting and how it impacts growth in Christ

Fasting is a medicine. But medicine, as beneficial as it is, becomes useless because of the inexperience of the user. He has to know the appropriate time that the medicine should be taken and the right amount of medicine and the condition of the body which is to take it, the weather conditions and the season of the year and the appropriate diet of the sick and many other things. If any of these things are overlooked, the medicine will do more harm than good. So, if one who is going to heal the body needs so much accuracy, when we care for the soul and are concerned about healing it from bad thoughts, it is necessary to examine and observe everything with every possible detail.

Fasting is the change of every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast is not the abstinence but the distancing from sins. Therefore, whoever limits the fast to the deprivation of food, he is the one who, in reality, abhors and ridicules the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. Which works? If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy. If you see an enemy, reconcile with him. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, do not be jealous of him! If you see a beautiful woman on the street, pass her by.

In other words, not only should the mouth fast, but the eyes and the legs and the arms and all the other parts of the body should fast as well. Let the hands fast, remaining clean from stealing and greediness. Let the legs fast, avoiding roads which lead to sinful sights. Let the eyes fast by not fixing themselves on beautiful faces and by not observing the beauty of others. You are not eating meat, are you? You should not eat debauchery with your eyes as well. Let your hearing also fast. The fast of hearing is not to accept bad talk against others and sly defamations.

Let the mouth fast from disgraceful and abusive words, because, what gain is there when, on the one hand we avoid eating chicken and fish and, on the other, we chew-up and consume our brothers? He who condemns and blasphemes is as if he has eaten brotherly meat, as if he has bitten into the flesh of his fellow man. It is because of this that Paul frightened us, saying: "If you chew up and consume one another be careful that you do not annihilate yourselves."

You did not thrust your teeth into the flesh (of your neighbor) but you thrust bad talk in his soul; you wounded it by spreading dis fame, causing inestimable damage both to yourself, to him, and to many others.

If you cannot go without eating all day because of an ailment of the body, beloved one, no logical man will be able to criticize you for that. Besides, we have a Lord who is meek and loving (philanthropic) and who does not ask for anything beyond our power. Because he neither requires the abstinence from foods, neither that the fast take place for the simple sake of fasting, neither is its aim that we remain with empty stomachs, but that we fast to offer our entire selves to the dedication of spiritual things, having distanced ourselves from secular things. If we regulated our life with a sober mind and directed all of our interest toward spiritual things, and if we ate as much as we needed to satisfy our necessary needs and offered our entire lives to good works, we would not have any need of the help rendered by the fast. But because human nature is indifferent and gives itself over mostly to comforts and gratifications, for this reason the philanthropic Lord, like a loving and caring father, devised the therapy of the fast for us, so that our gratifications would be completely stopped and that our worldly cares be transferred to spiritual works. So, if there are some who have gathered here and who are hindered by somatic ailments and cannot remain without food, I advise them to nullify the somatic ailment and not to deprive themselves from this spiritual teaching, but to care for it even more.

For there exist, there really exist, ways which are even more important than abstinence from food which can open the gates which lead to God with boldness. He, therefore, who eats and cannot fast, let him display richer almsgiving, let him pray more, let him have a more intense desire to hear divine words. In this, our somatic illness is not a hindrance. Let him become reconciled with his enemies, let him distance from his soul every resentment. If he wants to accomplish these things, then he has done the true fast, which is what the Lord asks of us more than anything else. It is for this reason that He asks us to abstain from food, in order to place the flesh in subjection to the fulfillment of His commandments, whereby curbing its impetuosity. But if we are not about to offer to ourselves the help rendered by the fast because of bodily illness and at the same time display greater indifference, we will see ourselves in an unusual exaggerated way. For if the fast does not help us when all the aforementioned accomplishments are missing so much is the case when we display greater indifference because we cannot even use the medicine of fasting. Since you have learned these things from us, I pardon you, those who can, fast and you yourselves increase your acuteness and praiseworthy desire as much as possible.

To the brothers, though, who cannot fast because of bodily illness, encourage them not to abandon this spiritual word, teaching them and passing on to them all the things we say here, showing them that he who eats and drinks with moderation is not unworthy to hear these things but he who is indifferent and slack. You should tell them the bold and daring saying that "he who eats for the glory of the Lord eats and he who does not eat for the glory of the Lord does not eat and please God." For he who fasts pleases God because he has the strength to endure the fatigue of the fast and he that eats also pleases God because nothing of this sort can harm the salvation of his soul, as long as he does not want it to. Because our philanthropic God showed us so many ways by which we can, if we desire, take part in God's power that it is impossible to mention them all.

We have said enough about those who are missing, being that we want to eliminate them from the excuse of shame. For they should not be ashamed because food does not bring on shame but the act of some wrongdoing. Sin is a great shame. If we commit it not only should we feel ashamed but we should cover ourselves exactly the same way those who are wounded do. Even then we should not forsake ourselves but rush to confession and thanksgiving. We have such a Lord who asks nothing of us but to confess our sins, after the commitment of a sin which was due to our indifference, and to stop at that point and not to fall into the same one again. If we eat with moderation we should never be ashamed, because the Creator gave us such a body which cannot be supported in any other way except by receiving food. Let us only stop excessive food because that attributes a great deal to the health and well-being of the body.

Let us therefore in every way cast off every destructive madness so that we may gain the goods which have been promised to us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Abridged from St. John Chrysostom's homilies on Fasting

LESSON 13 : LIFE OF PRAYER

Objective: To expand understanding of true prayer

Prayer should be the chief activity of a Christian's life. Prayer itself is an activity primarily of the soul and a condition of the heart that is acquired or developed through constant and regular practice. Prayer also involves our minds, our emotions, and even our bodies.

Yet, prayer in its truest form is not a time for us to simply list our requests to God. Prayer is not chiefly a time to ask for specific things or even a time to express to God our deepest hopes. Of course, we do pray for good things, for our loved ones, and for those matters that are most important to us and close to our hearts. However, prayer is a time to commune with God to enter into communion with Him and to establish and build an intimate relationship with Him. Prayer is more like the love that is shared between two close friends, a mother and a child, or a husband and a wife, than the making of a grocery list.

Prayer is an activity that can be highly structured and organized. However, prayer can also be a spontaneous cry or feeling of gratitude that literally springs from the depths of our souls. Our Church has many resources that can help us to build a strong and vibrant prayer life. We know that prayer is one of the chief activities of the Church's life and in fact prayer is what activates the Spirit of the Church. It is through prayer that the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the presence of God are made possible.

Private Prayer

"Rejoice always, pray unceasingly." **I Thessalonians 5:17**

"The ladder that leads to the Kingdom is hidden within your soul. Flee from sin, dive into yourself, and in your soul you will discover the stairs by which to ascend." St. Isaac the Syrian

Degrees or stages of prayer

Spoken or read prayer is performed by the body, consists of reading, standing, or making prostrations.

Prayer of the thoughts is mental prayer, when the mind has learned to focus completely on the words being prayed or read.

Prayer of the heart occurs when the mind and the heart become one, the heart is being warmed by the thoughts that existed formerly in the mind. During the Holy Qurbana, the celebrating priest asks the congregation, *“Up above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father, let our minds, thoughts, and hearts be at this hour”, and to this we respond, “Our minds, thoughts, and our hearts are with the Lord God!”*

Unceasing prayer - is it possible? St. Basil the Great taught, “This is how you pray continually – not by offering prayer in words, but by joining yourself to God through your whole way of life so that your life becomes one continuous and uninterrupted prayer.”

The Fathers of the Church also recommended "short arrow prayers" - "There is no need to use a lot of words. Just stretch out your hands and say – Lord, as you will and as you know best, have mercy on me. And if the conflict grows fierce, say – Lord help me. And He knows what we need and will show mercy on us.” St. Macarius of Egypt

The Jesus Prayer (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”) is another example of a short arrow prayer, and can be used along with a prayer rope to pray at home, in Church, walking, shopping, etc.

Communal Prayer

"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4.6-7)."

Communal prayer is prayer that involves the community. The most commonly known corporate prayer service is our Holy Qurbana. Of course our Church has many other services that are designed for the people of God (see below).

We know that Jesus taught his followers that they were to pray by themselves and in secret (Matthew 6.6). We also know that Jesus spent a lot of time praying by himself (Mark 1.35) but also praying in the Temple with other Jews (Luke 2.46). Jesus spent a part of almost everyday of his life in or around the house of God (John 18.20).

The Apostles did the same; they gathered to pray everyday (Acts 2.46), and specifically on the first day of each week, Sunday, the Lord's Day (Acts 20.7) to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. Praying as a community was very important to the Church, and Christians were

warned against drifting away from God's message through neglect and indifference (Hebrews 3.2).

Today, we must work very hard to keep an active prayer life. An active prayer life involves not only times dedicated to personal and private prayer but times set aside to pray with the community or friends and family. We truly cannot say we are Christians if we do not pray together in the house of God or together as Christians.

Praying as a community puts us in touch with the most basic and profound elements of our faith. In corporate prayer, the real presence of Christ is possible, "For when two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt 18.20)." Communal prayer also gives us an opportunity to learn and grow in our faith. Through corporate prayer we learn the prayers of the Church, which are ultimately the prayers of Christ Himself, since the Church is Christ's Body (Ephesians 1.23). Corporate prayer helps us to distinguish what is true from what is false, we learn true doctrine from the Church for She is, "the pillar and bulwark of the truth (1 Timothy 3.15)."

Summary

"Prayer is the test of everything. If prayer is right, everything is right." St. Theophan the Recluse

As we have established, prayer is communication with God. It is not one-way, but two-way communication. It is interpersonal, between God and us and us and God. This communication assumes that there is a relationship. From a Christian point of view, we begin this assumption of relationship with God, the Creator, who as Parent, as our Father, has created us out of love. As a Perfect, Loving Parent, God has given us life. Our response to God for this great gift is thanksgiving. Thus begins the interpersonal relationship between God and us and a cycle of giving and thanks, "eucharistia" or "eucharist" between the Divine and the human that is eternal in nature. It is a cycle of relationship that is constant and continuous. Now, out of God's love for us, He does not force this relationship on us. God's love for us is a free and unconditional gift, which is the meaning of Agape love. Our response of thanksgiving is optional. In other words, God's relationship with us is consistent. God's giving to us is constant. God's communication in love to us is continuous. But God does not force us to reciprocate. That is our free will choice to make.

Both personal or private prayer and corporate or communal prayer are necessary in a balanced manner in this thanksgiving cycle. You and I personally are invited to relate with our Lord, thanking Him for our life and for the gifts which each of us is blessed

with. No man or woman, however, is an island. We are NOT self-sufficient. We are dependent upon God and interdependent upon one another. Therefore, communal or corporate prayer is a quite natural part of life.

Time in our life is cyclical. Seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years and seasons repeat over and over again. Our opportunity is to respond to God's constant love and gift offerings in this cyclical manner. Ideally, every moment of our life includes a love awareness of God's Grace in our lives. As we inhale, we take in God's gift of life which is followed by an exhalation of thanksgiving.

Private prayer is about our personal relationship with our Lord. Communal prayer is of course about our prayers in Church, about our sacramental and liturgical life with the Body of Christ. It can also, however, be a prayer "where two or more are gathered in my name". It can be at a meeting. It can be with friends. It can be with family. In fact, our families are called to be a "church of the home" with prayer corners.

May daily prayer, private and communal, be the foundation of our life in relationship to God.

LESSON 14 : A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Objective: To examine the major orders of priesthood as the Scriptures and Traditions teach them

Priesthood is of two kinds: general priesthood and special priesthood. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (**Peter 2: 9**). The verse talks of general priesthood.

But, to act as the representative of Jesus Christ, special commission from the Lord is necessary. The authority to celebrate the Holy Eucharist was given only to the selected 12, who by Apostolic succession passed it on to the High Priests and Priests.

In the early days of Christianity, the apostles went to preach the Gospel to all nations as instructed by our Lord during His ministry. In every town, they appointed men of faith as bishops and gave them these instructions: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the Church of God which He obtained with the blood of His own Son" (**Acts 20:28**). "Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (**1 Peter 5:23**).

The bishops ordained priests and deacons to serve and teach (Ref. **Tit 1:5**). This was done by laying hands upon them and praying to the Lord to grant them the authority and the gift of priesthood through the Holy Spirit. This Holy Order of men who serve the Lord by their special vocation as the priest and shepherd. Priesthood is one of the seven major Holy Sacraments of our Church.

There are three major orders of priesthood:

The Bishop

The word 'bishop' comes from the Greek word "episcopos" meaning overseer. The bishop is the head of our Church. He is our representative to God and is also the representative of Christ to us. As St. Ignatius said, "Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather just as where Jesus is, there is the Universal Church". The bishop is chosen by the congregation and then presented to the other bishops who lay their hands on him and pray to God to grant him the gifts and authority of the Holy

Spirit, saying," Grant him, O Lord, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of power and consolation, the spirit of knowledge and piety. That in pure prayer, and illuminated heart in love he may raise the offering for the ignorance and sins of the people, and bring them back to Thy holy fold, that they may be one flock belonging to one shepherd".

The bishop is a shepherd of his diocese. He preaches, teaches, and administers all the sacraments. He cares for his people in every way and guards them against wrong ideas or doctrines. This is mentioned during the prayer of ordination: Be an imitator of Christ, the true shepherd, who did lay down His life for His sheep. Be a leader of the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a teacher of the young, a lamp to the world".

The Priest

The word priest comes from the Greek word "presbyteros" meaning elder. The priest is ordained by the bishop to watch over his parish as an honest steward watching over the mysteries of God. He is a pastor and shepherd who loves and cares for his people. He can administer all the sacraments of the Church except the Sacrament of Holy Orders. St. Ignatius describes the priests as the council of the apostles'. As the apostles were gathered around Jesus Christ and carried out His work, the priests are gathered around the bishop and help carry out his work.

The duties of a priest are contained in the prayer for ordination, as follows: "Our Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted you with His life-giving sacraments. Know that you carry upon your hand, Emmanuel who was carried by Simon, the priest. Guard these sacraments as the Cherubim guard the Tree of Life" "O Lord, fill him with Thy Holy Spirit, that he may be worthy to stand before Thine Altar; to proclaim the Gospel of Thy Kingdom; to minister to the word of truth; to offer unto Thee spiritual gifts and sacrifices".

The priest should be called and chosen by God. "And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was" (**Hebrew 5:4**).The priest should follow the example of Christ: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (**John 10:11**). He is ready to sacrifice his life unto death, to search for the lost sheep, to mend the broken homes, to strengthen the weak. In his struggle during his ministry, the priest offers himself as a sacrifice on the altar of witness.

The Deacon

Deacon is the name used for all those who are ordained before the ordination of priesthood. The term deacon however usually refers to a full deacon. The other orders

typically seen are reader and sub-deacon. Deacon comes from the Greek word “diakonos” meaning servant. The deacon should be a good servant of the Church. He bears the task of social service for widows, orphans, and poor people, and for different activities of the Church. St. Ignatius says that the deacons have the ministry of Jesus Christ who was the greatest servant. He gives himself completely to God and to his fellow beings.

Although these are the three major orders of priesthood, there is a bigger part to the royal priesthood. That is the laity. Through baptism we become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (**1 Peter 2:9**) We are called to be God’s people and we do not have to become priests and nuns to serve him; for all are called to serve.

We have seen that God has given different kinds of gifts and talents to the members of His Church. He has given these gifts to build up His Church and bring everyone to full life in Jesus Christ. Each one of us is given special gifts and talents that we must use in our daily life. We have to perform our duties as a teacher, a bishop, a priest, a nun, or as a good Christian father or mother, brother or sister, or child of God. If we put our trust in God and pray, "Thy will be done", we may discover our special gifts, and how God wants us to use our gifts. Do you remember the story of Mordecai whom God called to work as a guard in the King’s palace? He was able by his faith and courage to serve God and overcome the evil acts which were planned against the king and against God's people. Think of Esther, the orphan girl. She became queen and was able to perform a great role in saving the people. She was ready to sacrifice herself and her throne for serving God. Some of us will use our gifts as special services in the world. If we have talents as artists, musicians, doctors, teachers, merchants, or nurses we must try to develop and use them as best as we can to the glory of God.

Others may be called by God for special services in the Church, to serve His Church as bishops, priests or deacons, but, God has given the duty of service to all members of the Church. He has made us all members of His Church. He has made us all members of His royal priesthood. He has made us the people of God, His laity or laymen and laywomen. Everyone is first ordained in Chrismation to be a layman of God, one of God's own people. As laymen, we are called to offer our service of praise and glory to God forever. We are called to live in communion with God as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

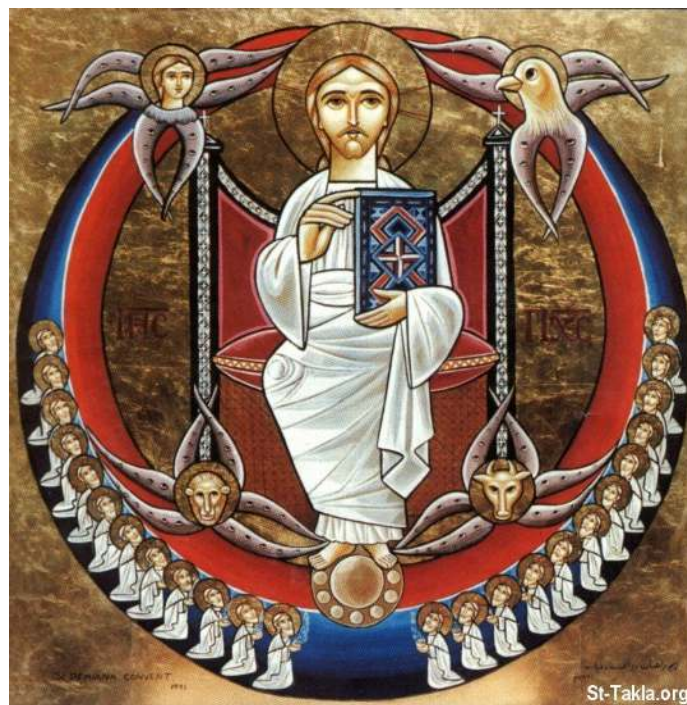
We are called to use God's gifts of the Holy Spirit all through our lives. In his models and images St. Paul mentioned in his letters to his disciple Timothy the ways of serving God

through one's vocation in life: thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed"(**1 Timothy 6:17-19**)
The father who cares for his family: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"(**1 Timothy 5:8**). The rich man who uses his wealth in good works: "As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty not to set their hopes on generous, for themselves certain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal.

The young men and women who preserve themselves pure: "if any one purifies himself from what is dishonorable, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work" (**2 Timothy 2:21**).

The bishop who is a good shepherd: "Now a bishop must be above reproach, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher... no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money" (**1 Timothy 3:2,3**)

The person who seeks the righteous life: "But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness" (**1 Timothy 6:11**).
Questions: "...that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised" (**2 Corinthians 5: 15**).



LESSON 15 - ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

Objective: To examine the life of St. Cyril of Alexandria and how he defended the Faith

In each Holy Qurbana, we remember St. Cyril as “*the exalted and true tower, who clearly expounded and declared the Incarnation of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who took flesh.*”



But who was St. Cyril?

St. Cyril of Alexandria was the Pope of Alexandria at the time Alexandria was at its height in influence and power within the Roman Empire. Cyril wrote extensively and was a leading protagonist in the Christological controversies of the 4th and 5th centuries. He was a central figure in the Council of Ephesus in 431 which led to the deposition of Nestorius as Archbishop of Constantinople. Cyril is among the patristic fathers, and his reputation within the Orthodox Christian world has led to his acquiring the title "Seal of all the Fathers."

Cyril was born about 378 A.D. in the small town of Theodosios, Egypt. His mother's brother, Theophilus, was a priest who rose to the powerful position of Pope of Alexandria. His mother remained close to her brother and under his guidance Cyril was well educated. His education showed through his knowledge, in his writings, of Christian writers of his day, including Eusebius, Origen, Didymus, and writers of the Alexandrian church. He showed a knowledge of Latin through his extensive correspondence with the Bishop of Rome, Pope Celestine.

He was tonsured a reader by his uncle, Theophilus, in the Church of Alexandria and under his uncle's guidance advanced in knowledge and position. After Theophilus, Cyril was made Pope on October 18, 412.

His early years as pope were caught up in the problems of a cosmopolitan city where the animosities among the various Christian factions, Jews, and pagans brought frequent violence. In addition, there was the rivalry between Alexandria and Constantinople and a clash between Alexandrian and Antiochian schools of ecclesiastical reflection, piety, and discourse. These issues came to a head in 428 A.D. when the See of Constantinople became vacant. Nestorius, from the Antiochian party, was made Archbishop of Constantinople on April 10, 428, and stoked the fires by denouncing the use of the term Theotokos as not a proper rendition of Mary's position in relation to Christ.

Thus, Cyril and the Alexandrian party crossed swords with those of the Antiochian party in the imperial home court. After much infighting, Augusta Pulcheria, older sister of the Emperor Theodosius II, sided with Cyril against Nestorius. To rid himself of Cyril, Nestorius recommended to the emperor a council in Constantinople. But, when Theodosius called the council it was in Ephesus, an area friendly to Cyril. After months of maneuvering the Council of 431 ended with Nestorius being removed from office and sent into exile.

Cyril died on June 27, 444 A.D., and is remembered as a strong voice in upholding the Apostolic understanding of Christ and the Holy Theotokos.

LESSON 16 : MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH FATHERS

Objective: To examine the lives of the Malankara Orthodox fathers and how they led lives of example

St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala

In the latter part of the 19th century A.D., there lived a holy man on a haunted island called Parumala on the banks of River Pampa in Kerala, India. He was powerful like Prophet Elijah and zealous like John the Baptist. Many years after his death on November 2, 1902, he became the first saint canonized by the Church. Now, Geevarghese Mar Dionysius of Vattasseril is also canonized as a saint.

Parumala Thirumeni was born on June 15, 1848 in the Chathuruthy family of Kochu Mathai and Mariam in Mulanthuruthy, Kerala. After the birth of their 5th child, his mom passed away. After the early days of education Kochu (as he was called as a child) was educated by a Malpan (teacher) Geevarghese of Chathuruthy, Kochi. He was ordained as a deacon on 14 September 1859 at the age of 10.

Malpan Geevarghese became ill with smallpox. On the eighth day when the Malpan passed away, Deacon Geevarghese fell ill. During this time, he had a vision of St. Mary consoling him and exhorting him to dedicate the rest of his life to the Lord. Very soon, the deacon recovered.

At the age of 18 in A.D. 1865 he was ordained as a priest. His Grace Joseph Mar Dionysius raised him to the order of a ramban (monk) in A.D. 1872. The Patriarch of Antioch, H.H. Moran Mar Ignatius Peter consecrated four metropolitans at Paravoor Jacobite Church, Kerala on 10 December 1876. The youngest among them was Geevarghese Ramban who was named Mar Gregorios. Because of his age everybody called him "Kochu Thirumeni" (Young Bishop). Mar Gregorios served as secretary and translator of the Patriarch and witnessed the historic Mulanthuruthy Synod resolution of A.D. 1876 signed between Syrian Orthodox Church in India and Holy Throne of Antioch and All the East. Mar Gregorios was appointed the bishop of Niranam. He



started a monastery at Parumala. At the Parumala Seminary, he led an ascetic life. He woke up at four in the morning and spent his entire day in prayer and teaching the deacons till around midnight. On Wednesdays and Fridays and Lenten days, he would fast till evening besides observing his own special fasts. In his own words *"Prayer brings truth, religious faith, honesty and respect among the people."*

Kochu Thirumeni became sick after blessing a marriage at Veeyapuram church. Even from the beginning of his illness he knew that he was in his last days. He left his earthly abode at midnight on November 2, 1902. He was proclaimed as a saint in A.D. 1947 by the Indian Orthodox Church. There are many instances that proved his saintliness. Thousands of the faithful received favors and blessings through his intercession. The entire Church celebrates his memory. It is a major feast day in Parumala Church, where his holy remains are entombed. His tomb and birthplace are centers of pilgrimage. There are also many parishes in America which have Saint Gregorios as their patron saint.

Thirumeni's life contributions defended and preserved the church that we are part of today. From keeping the faith fervently and praying seven times a day to caring for all people Christian or not, high class or low class, he showed a love for humanity that truly reflects the love Christ had. He was a man whose example we can follow today. As a teacher he taught more with his action than he did his words. His disciples include St. Dionysius of Vattasseril and His Holiness Baselius Geevarghese II.

St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius of Vattasseril

Saint Geevarghese Mar Dionysius of Vattasseril (Vattasseril Thirumeni), was the Malankara Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church for twenty-five years. He was known as Malankara Sabha Bhashuran (The Great Luminary of Malankara Orthodox Church) in recognition of his rich contribution to the Church. Later on, he was proclaimed as a saint.

Thirumeni was born to Joseph Vattasseril of Mallappally and Eliamma Kolathu Kalathil of Kurichy, on 31 October, 1858. Following his elementary education at C.M.S. Middle School in Mallappally, he completed his High School education from C.M.S. High School, Kottayam. In 1876 A.D., while still a high



school student, he was ordained as a sub-deacon by His Holiness Pathrose Patriarch.

Thirumeni studied at the Orthodox Theological Seminary (Old Seminary), Kottayam for four years. Geevarghese soon became a great Syriac scholar under the careful guidance of His Grace Gregorios of Parumala who taught him at the Seminary. In A.D. 1879 Thirumeni was ordained as full deacon and in 1880 he was ordained as a priest by Parumala Thirumeni. By A.D. 1880, Thirumeni had become an authority in the Syriac, Church History, Faith and Doctrine, the Church Fathers and Theology. In recognition of his expertise in Syriac and Theology he was designated as Malankara Malpan.

He spent his spare time reading, studying and thinking. He wrote Doctrines of the Church. He also used his scholarship to edit and publish the order of Church worship to be used by the laity as an aid for participation in worship. He was appointed as Principal of M.D. Seminary, Kottayam. In A.D. 1903, he was blessed as a Ramban (monk). He also served as the Manager of Parumala Seminary. In 1908 A.D. he was consecrated as Geevarghese Mar Dionysius. He served as the Assistant Malankara Metropolitan. He became the Malankara Metropolitan in A.D. 1909 and served and led the Church in that capacity until his death in A.D. 1934 when the Church triumphed in establishing the official constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

During the period of his service as the Malankara Metropolitan, the Church was undergoing internal conflicts with two factions of the Church challenging each other over temporal matters. Though the Patriarch of Antioch asserted both spiritual and temporal authority over the Malankara Church, the Royal Court (of the British Government) granted the Patriarch only the spiritual authority. This was the primary issue for which the two sides approached the judiciary. In A.D. 1934, the Court rejected all appeals from the Patriarchal side, thus recognizing the authority of the Malankara Metropolitan and Catholicos over the entire Church. Vattasseril Thirumeni was instrumental in establishing the Church Constitution of 1934 which is the legal document on the authority of the Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan that has been referred to, by the present day Indian judicial system.

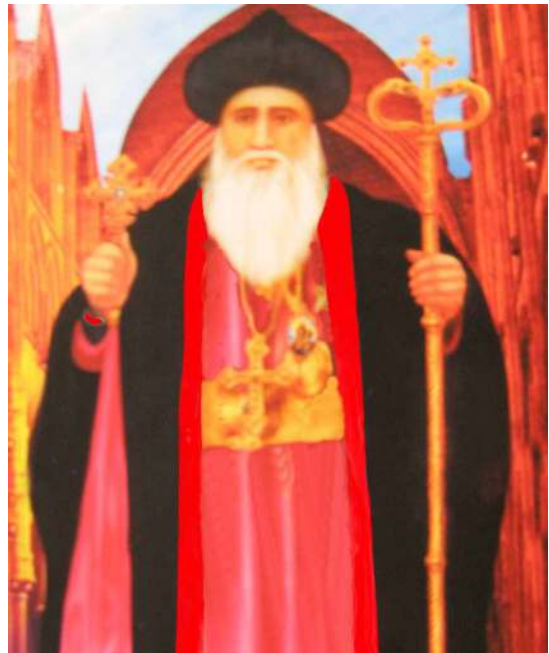
Vattasseril Thirumeni was a good orator, well aware of the importance of the vitality and moral persuasiveness of words when delivering the speeches to the faithful. In addition to not publicizing his own spiritual advancement, he also avoided spiritual hypocrisy and arrogance throughout his life. Prayer and fasting were the pillars that were Vattasseril Thirumeni's spiritual foundation. In addition to the liturgical hours of prayer, Thirumeni spent much time in private prayers and silent meditations behind closed doors and away from the attention of people. In spite of his busy schedule, he was

also able to focus on three to four lessons from the Holy Bible everyday. He was a living saint. He followed Christ's instruction to pray in private and not to show people when in prayer.

St. Yeldo Mar Baselios

Yeldo Mar Baselios was born in A.D. 1593 in a village called Kooded (now known as Karakosh near Mosul in Iraq) where St. Smooni and her 7 children suffered martyrdom. At a young age he joined the Mar Bahnan Monastery and became a monk. In A.D. 1678 he was consecrated Maphryono (Catholicos) by the Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mar Ignatius Abdul Masiha I.

In A.D. 1685 at the age of 92, the Holy Father started the difficult mission to India at the request of Mar Thoma II of the Malankara Orthodox Church in India. The Maphryono was accompanied by his brother Jemma, Mar Ivanios Episcopa and two monks Yovey and Mathai. Fearing Portuguese persecution, they took a lengthy route of traveling to Thalassery, moving around incognito and finally reaching Kothamangalam in Kerala on September 14, 1685. He was canonized as a Saint in 1947 along with Parumala Thirumeni.



His mission was to reorganize the Syrian Christians, and train them in their faith. The excessive influences of the Portuguese elements had forced the Syrian Christians to slowly drift away from their ancestral precepts and ethos. Mar Thoma II needed assistance. Knowing about the situation prevailing in Malankara, Maphryono (Catholicos) Mar Baselios Yeldho volunteered for the service, relinquishing his administrative charge at home.

Soon after reaching Kothamangalam, he consecrated Mar Ivanios as Episcopa and gave him the title, Mar Ivanios Hidayuttullah (guidance of God). On September 27th, he received the last sacraments of anointing with oil. Two days after this, on September 29, 1685, in the afternoon, the saintly father departed for his heavenly abode. Feast of Saint Yeldo Baselios Bava is celebrated in the Cheriapally Mar Thoma Church at Kothamangalam with spiritual grandeur every year on October 2 and 3. In northern Kerala parishes, it is very common practice among the faithful to name their newborn babies as 'Eldho or 'Basil' during baptism. The parents believe that by doing so, the saint

will protect their children from all evils.

The lives of our church fathers show how to be living examples of Christ. They followed Christ's example in daily prayer, fasting, and truly loving all neighbors as oneself. Even with their busy schedules they found time to be alone with God. We need to remember that God is a relationship that needs to be built. Just like a good friendship needs time and active participation to flourish, so does the relationship with our heavenly Father. This can be achieved through prayer, fasting, helping the poor, quiet time alone, forgiving an enemy and even through a kind word when someone deserves a mean one. For He waits knocking at the door of your heart and will only enter if you let him in.

