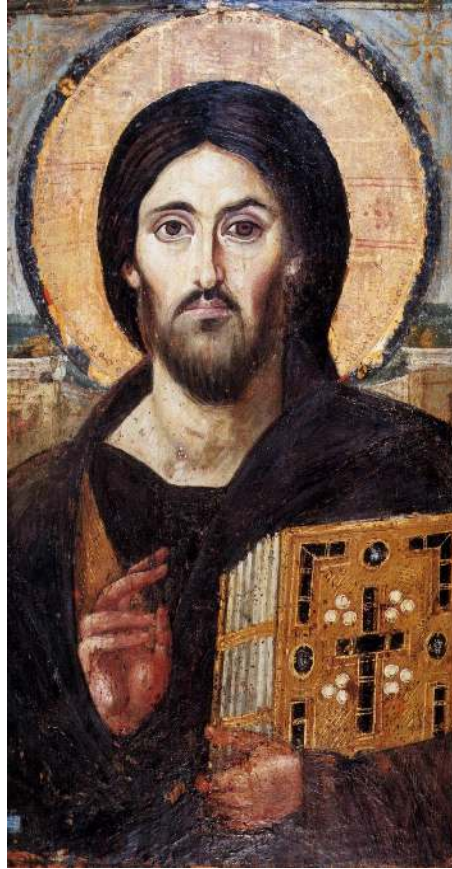




Diocese of South-West America
Sunday School

3rd Grade

The Life of Jesus



Table of Contents

Midterm Exam (December/January): Lessons 1-8

Final Exam (May/June): Lessons 9-16

	LESSON	PAGE
1	TRANSFIGURATION	2
2	FOLLOWING GOD	4
3	OBEYING GOD	6
4	THEOSIS: GOD IN US	8
5	PRAYER AND WORSHIP	10
6	GOD'S GIFTS	12
7	JESUS TEACHES US TO SHARE	14
8	THE KINGDOM OF GOD	16
9	MIRACLES OF HEALING	19
10	LAZARUS SATURDAY	22
11	HOLY WEEK	24
12	CHRIST IS RISEN!	28
13	MY LORD AND MY GOD	30
14	ASCENSION	32
15	THE HOLY SPIRIT	34
16	SAINT EPHREM	36

LESSON 1 - TRANSFIGURATION

Objective: To understand that through the Holy Spirit, we are able to be transfigured (transformed) into who we are called to be.



The word “transfiguration” means to change in appearance.

Jesus had asked Peter, John, and James to follow Him up onto Mount Tabor to pray. While He was praying, the disciples saw something amazing happen. Jesus began to change right before their eyes. His face was shining like the sun and His clothes were as white as light. The disciples were surprised to see two other men appear beside Jesus. They could not believe their eyes when they realized it was Moses and Elijah.

Do you remember Moses and Elijah?

Moses and Elijah had lived a long, long time ago, and now they were standing here with Jesus. They had walked in the ways of

God and wanted to be with God and live in His presence.

Suddenly, a bright cloud covered them and they heard a voice from above, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him" (**Matthew 17:5**). Hearing this, the disciples fell down and covered their faces. They were very scared, but when they looked up, only Jesus was there.

The transfiguration of Jesus Christ is the second time after His Baptism that the Holy Trinity – that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – were shown together. The dazzling light reminds us of the glory of God On Mount Tabor.



This glory was seen in Jesus, the Son of God. It also reminds us that through the Holy Spirit, we too can be transfigured into better people.

What do you think would happen if every day your whole brain, heart, and actions were totally focused on God?

What if you only did what God wanted you to do? Do you think that would be easy or hard?

Even though it can be hard, God gives us “do-overs” when we mess up. What we have to do is be truly sorry and ask Him to forgive us.

Sometimes it is difficult, but we can walk in the ways of God by doing everything He wants us to do. We can live as if we could see Him right beside us every minute. When we do that, we are living in God’s glory.

LESSON 2 - FOLLOWING GOD

Objective: To understand that we are called to follow and trust God.



One bright morning, two boats reached the shore of Lake Gennesaret. Simon was in one boat, while his friends, James and John, were in the other boat. There was a large crowd on the shore. While fishermen were washing their nets, Jesus got into Simon's boat and asked him to sail a little away from the land.

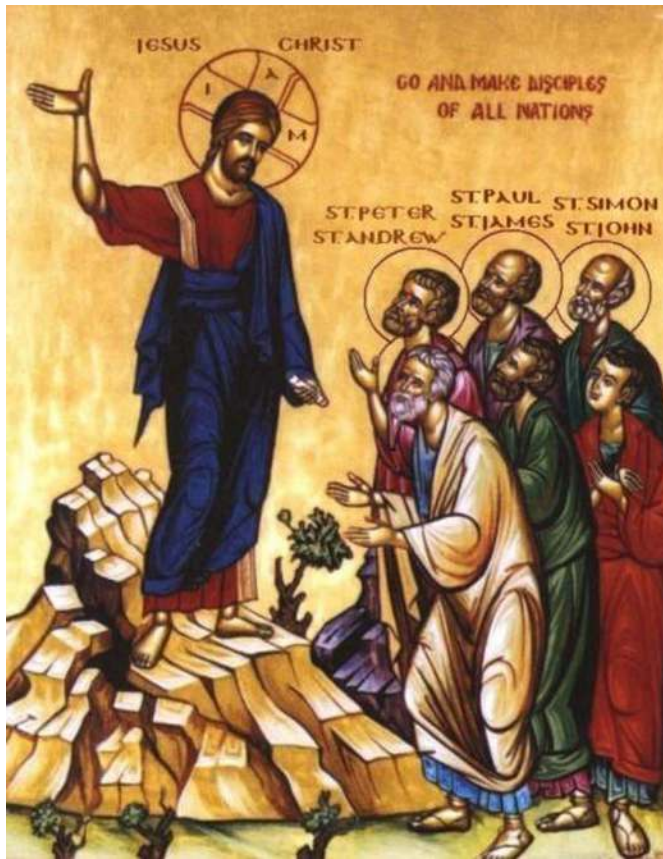
Jesus sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When Jesus finished, He told Simon to put his nets in the deep water. Simon replied saying, "Master, we worked all night and found no fish. But at Your word, I will let down the nets."

This time, the nets were so full that they found it difficult to pull them in! They called their friends in the other boat to come and help them. They came and helped and soon both boats were filled with fish, so much so that they were about to sink!

When Simon saw this, he fell down at Jesus' feet and cried, "O Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man!" Everybody was afraid. Then Jesus told Simon, "Do not be afraid!

From now on, you will catch men." Simon and his friends brought their boats to land. Then they left everything to follow Jesus.



This was the apostles' mission: they were sent out to catch men.

St. Cyril describes Jesus' call to the apostles to be not only limited to the apostles, but one that extends to us as well.

The sea represents the vastness of our sins. Just like fish living in the waters, we also dwell in our innumerable sins; and from which we are delivered into the path of salvation through the Church, that is represented by the safe haven of the boat.

But we must remember, the disciples only caught such large amounts of fish because they obeyed Jesus.

Jesus calls us to follow Him everyday!

Let us try to hear His voice and follow Him. Everytime we come to Church, we are hearing God's voice and choosing to follow Him.

LESSON 3 - OBEYING GOD

Objective: To understand that to follow God means to obey Him.



In the Bible, we can see many examples of people obeying God.

Noah obeyed God when he was asked to build an enormous ark. It took many days of hard work, but Noah obeyed. He took care of all the animals and birds on the ark and he always trusted that God was there for him.

It was because of Noah's obedience and strong faith, that God not only spared their lives from the dangerous flood, but provided for them through forty days.

We also know the story of Abraham, who obeyed God when he was asked to sacrifice Isaac, his only son.

Abraham obeyed God, even though he did not understand why God would have asked him to do such a thing. God was testing Abraham's faith, and wanted to see if Abraham would trust and obey Him.

Abraham passed this test when he almost sacrificed Isaac, and in the end, God provided him with a ram to be sacrificed, instead of Isaac.



Moses is another example of someone who obeyed God. Moses heard the voice of God through the burning bush that asked him to go to Egypt to rescue God's people. He also obeyed the will of God and led the Israelites to the promised land.

He was faced with several challenges along the way, from fighting the Egyptian armies to feeding the people, but he believed in God and always prayed to Him.

So God split the Red Sea, provided manna and quail, and took care of His people!



The stories of Noah, Abraham and Moses remind us that God promises to be there for those who obey Him and trust His commands. Even though sometimes we might not understand, God always has a plan for us when we do His will! We should always remember that God loves us and would never put us in harm's way.

In our everyday life, one way to obey God is to follow His commandments. One of the Ten Commandments is to obey your father and mother (**Exodus 20:12**). God has blessed us with parents to watch and take care of us. God helps our parents to know what is best for us. When we listen to and obey them, we are actually obeying God.

Jesus is the perfect example of obeying His Father in Heaven. Jesus came to this world, suffered, and died on the Cross – according to the will of His Father. He did not commit any sins or make any mistakes. He did not do anything wrong, yet He suffered and died on the Cross (**Isaiah 53:5-7**). Jesus died because He loved us, and so that we can live forever.

Obedience is a form of love. When we obey God, we show that we love Him and trust Him to take care of us. We must obey God, not because we fear Him, but because we love Him.

LESSON 4 - THEOSIS: GOD IN US

Objective: To learn about theosis and how to attain it.



What is the purpose of being a Christian?

The Church teaches us about Jesus and raises us as children of God with great love and care. We obey God's commandments and go to Church to worship Him. We do all of these things to become like God.

To be like God means to be perfect like Him (**Colossians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4**). We can remember St. Paul encouraging us to imitate him, just as he also imitates Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1**).

Becoming like Christ is the process of salvation that we have to constantly work for. This is not easy, but the Church helps us through the sacraments and the lives of the saints and church fathers.

The Church reminds us and helps us live the life of Christ through feasts, fasts, and sacraments; especially Holy Qurbana. Through the sacrament of Holy Qurbana, we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus within us, which helps us grow into His holiness.

All saints have acquired this holiness. St. Irenaeus wrote that God the Father uses His two hands - Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit - to mold people into His image. When someone lives his or her life as an example of this transformation, he or she is called a saint.

The Greek word "theos" means "God." "Theosis" means "becoming like God" (or becoming God), and is also known as deification. We can grow and learn the qualities and love of God, eventually leading to theosis.

When we are young, we copy our parents. As we grow older, we start to imitate our friends, super heroes, and celebrities. We do this so that we can become like them. We become Christians through baptism, so instead of looking at other people around us, we should look to Christ as the perfect and ultimate model of how we should think, act and behave (**Philippians 2:5-11**).

St. Athanasius wrote, “He became man that we might become divine.”



In other words, God became man through Jesus so that we may become like Him.

Other Church fathers, including St. Irenaeus, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ephrem, and St. Cyril of Alexandria taught this as well.

We also read about theosis in the Bible. Being created in the image and likeness of God (**Genesis 1:26**) means that all human beings have the potential to become like God.

“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (**Matthew 5:48**) is a difficult thing to do. This is why we always pray, “Kurielaison” or “Lord, have mercy.” We pray to God and continue to grow in the process of becoming like God. The Church is always there to help us and through it, we can receive the tools we need to help us grow into God’s holiness.

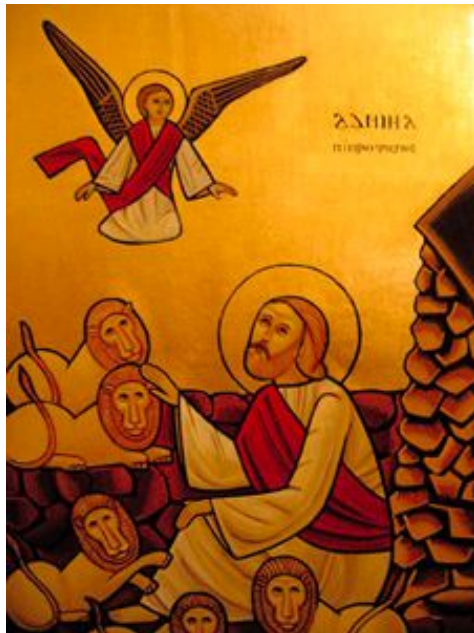
Becoming like Christ is something that we have to constantly work for and we know it is possible, because we have seen the lives of the saints.

Adapted from an article on the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church website http://malankaraorthodoxchurch.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=113&Itemid=248

LESSON 5 - PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Objective: To understand that prayer is an important part of our relationship with God, no matter what it looks like.

In the Bible, we read many stories of people who have spoken to God through prayer.



Daniel the Prophet was an example of this. With God's help, Daniel occupied a high position in the government of Darius, the Chaldean king. The leaders of the kingdom knew that Daniel was very faithful to God and was also well-liked by the king. They were jealous and wanted to get Daniel in trouble.

The men decided that the only way that Daniel would disobey the king was if there was a law against God. They went to King Darius and told him that he was so wonderful that no one should pray to anyone but him alone. The king agreed and made this the new law.

The law said that anyone who prays to any other god should be thrown into the lions' den. Daniel heard about the new law, but did not stop praying to God. He continued to go to his house and get down on his knees three times a day to pray and praise God, just like he always had. The other men went to Daniel's house and found him praying. They ran straight to King Darius and told him what they had seen. When the king heard this, he was very sad and worried. He really liked Daniel and did not want anything bad to happen to him. He tried everything he could to rescue Daniel, but the men reminded him of the new law. This meant that Daniel would have to be punished by being thrown into the lions' den.

The next morning, King Darius woke up and ran to the lions' den. As he arrived, he cried out anxiously, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?" All of a sudden, he heard Daniel say, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before Him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." The king was so happy and ordered that Daniel should be taken

from the den right away. When he came out of the den, he didn't even have a single scratch, because he trusted in and prayed to God. After seeing Daniel's trust in God, King Darius also believed in the living God of Daniel.

When we pray, we are speaking to God personally. We can speak to Him as we speak to our friends. Jesus loves us and will always listen to our prayers, whether we are praying alone or with others.

Another way to strengthen our relationship with God is through music.

Did you know that King David was a musician?

In his early days, even before he was enthroned as the king, young David would play his harp and sing praises to God!

We sing unto the Lord with a heart full of joy to express our thanks. Christians sang songs to praise God from the early days of the Church.

Even today our Church follows the liturgical prayers and songs handed down to us by our ancestors. These are the songs that we sing during Holy Qurbana and other sacraments.

We also have different songs for different feasts and other special occasions in our Church.

We believe that angels are continuously praising God by singing songs and we should follow by doing the same.



LESSON 6 - GOD'S GIFTS

Objective: To learn about God's gifts and how they help strengthen our relationship with Him.

During Holy Qurbana, we share the Gospel, which is the Good News about God.

During the first part of Holy Qurbana, we learn through the Epistle and Gospel readings. These Gospels share stories about Jesus' life. The Epistles are letters from the Apostles that help teach us how to live Christian lives.

During the second part of Holy Qurbana, the priest offers the gifts of bread and wine to God on behalf of the congregation. The Holy Spirit changes these gifts into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, to become the Holy Qurbana (also known as the Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist). In the Orthodox Church, this is a mystery and we should never try to explain how this beautiful transformation occurs - we just believe the Holy Qurbana is the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.



Throughout the Liturgy, we say many prayers and sing many songs praising God.

*Glory be to God on high
Honor be to His Mother,
Crowns of praise for the martyrs,
Grace and mercy to the dead
Halleluiah!*

*All shall worship and bless You
and each tongue confess Your name
For You give life to the dead
and good hope to those entombed
Halleluiah!*



God gave us the gifts of bread and wine; we give them back to God and He changes them into His life-giving Body and Blood for us. When we partake in Holy Qurbana, we are united with God and with one another.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a special service of healing and forgiveness through God's power. The priest anoints our bodies with a blessed oil. Through this process, the Holy Spirit once again comes back into our lives and helps us heal.

Another gift from God that we see is water. We need water to live, grow, and be clean. Our Church has a special service called the Blessing of the Water during Denaha, when we remember Jesus' Baptism. When the water is blessed, it becomes a holy gift for us. Being sprinkled with this holy water reminds us to keep our lives clean and away from sin, and to live the way God wants us to.

All these gifts help show us God's grace in different ways and help us be in communion with God and with others.

LESSON 7 - JESUS TEACHES US TO SHARE

Objective: To understand that we are called to help bring others to follow Christ.

When Christians share the Gospel, we are telling others about how Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. We can share the Good News with others through our words, actions, and prayers. Just like Jesus commanded His disciples to preach and heal (**Mark 6:7-13**), we are also called to bring others to follow Christ.

When Jesus fed the five thousand, He multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish to have enough for everyone. There were five thousand men, but even more women and children! We should remember to share our food with those who are hungry and may not be able to get food on their own. We see that Christ's power and authority are extended to those who suffer as He is moved with compassion.



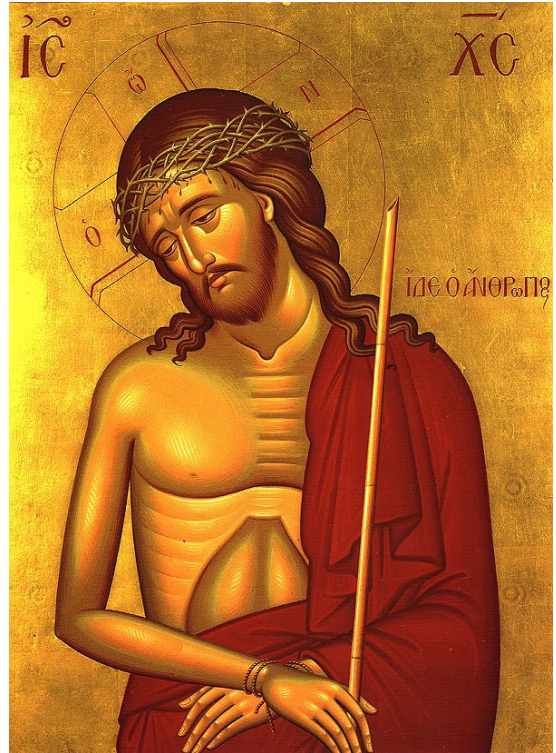
God humbled Himself and made a sacrifice for us to save us from eternal death, and this teaches us that sometimes doing the right thing is not easy, and we may have to make sacrifices too.

Have you ever been in a situation when you had to make a sacrifice because you knew it was the right thing to do?

God sacrificed Himself for us because He loves us, and if we love Him, we should try our best to follow His example.

We received God at Holy Baptism, and the Holy Spirit fills our heart with love and increases our kindness and closeness to each other.

We must choose to work with God and let the Holy Spirit transform us and be the light of the world just like the revelation of Christ at Transfiguration.



LESSON 8 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Objective: To learn about parables and how God used them to teach about His Kingdom.

Christ taught people about God's Kingdom using parables. A parable is a story to teach and make things easy to understand.

Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:3-23)

A sower went out to sow seeds in his field. As he sowed seeds, some fell beside a path and the birds came and ate them. Some fell on the rocky ground, where there was very little soil. The plants sprang up quickly but soon withered and died because the roots

were not strong.



Some seeds fell among thorns and the thorns choked the plants as they grew. Some plants however, fell in good soil and the plants produced corn, some a hundred grains, some sixty and others thirty.

The disciples didn't understand the meaning of the parable; so Jesus explained the meaning of this parable.

The seed is the Word of God. Those who hear the message but don't understand are like the seeds that fell on the path. In some people, the message will not last. These people are like the seeds that fell in the rocky ground; when trouble comes, the words will be forgotten. The seeds that fell among thorns stand for those who hear the message but worry about the earthly ways. These thoughts choke the message of God and cannot bear fruit. The seeds that fell on good soil represent those who hear the message and understand it. These people bear plenty of fruits. We should try to understand the word of God with great care; it must go deep into our heart.

In order to understand the word of God, we have to remove the evil thoughts from our mind. Then we will be able to produce good fruits like the seeds that fell in the good soil. Then we can be useful to our family, our church and to the society in general.

What Is The Kingdom of God? (Mt. 13:24-30; Mt. 13:47-50)

One day, Jesus told His followers a story about a man who sowed good wheat seeds in his field. One night, an enemy sowed weeds among the good seeds. The servants told the man that there were plenty of weeds in the field. But the man said to let the weeds and the wheat grow together until harvest. During the harvest, the weeds will be bundled up and burned and the wheat will be gathered and put in the barn.

Jesus explained to his disciples that there will be a final separation of good from evil just like the weeds that were separated from the wheat. At the end of the world, God will send angels to separate the good from the evil. Once the evil is destroyed, the good will shine in the Kingdom of God like the sun.

Jesus told his followers another parable about some fishermen; they threw their nets into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When the net was full they pulled the net to shore. They sat down and gathered the good fish into baskets and threw away the bad fish. Jesus explained that at the end of time, God will separate the good people from the bad. The evil will be punished and the good will rejoice in the kingdom of God.

We are the children of God and as such, we become the members of the kingdom of God. Satan will always try to sow seeds of evil in us but we should always be mindful about the end of time, when God will separate the good from the bad.

The Kingdom Grows and Spreads (Matthew 13:31-33)

Jesus taught about the parable of the mustard seed to show how the kingdom of God grows. The mustard seed is a tiny black seed but it grows into a big shrub with many branches and is full of flowers. The birds eat the fruit, build their nests, and rest on the branches. Jesus said the kingdom of God is like the mustard seed.

God's kingdom also began as a small unit with a few apostles to spread the good news all over the world. Now the kingdom is like the plant with millions of people who have joined the Church. As the tree gives food and shelter to the birds, the Church provides us with spiritual food.

St. Thomas came to India to preach the gospel. He planted the mustard tree in the land and it has continued to grow. The late Bishop Pathrose Mar Osthathios spent his life working among the outcast and poor people and thereby growing the kingdom of God. He baptized more than 20,000 people. Today, we can see many Christians and Christian

institutions all over the world. If we live in love, mercy, and goodness; the kingdom of God will grow through us.

What does the Kingdom of God Offer? (Lk. 12:15-21; Mt. 6:25-33)

Jesus explained his attitude towards wealth, through a parable. There was a rich man with plenty of fertile land. One year he got a rich crop from his land; in fact, his barns could not contain the grains he had harvested. He decided to tear down his barns and build larger ones so he could store all the grain and goods. And he said to his soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.'

God calls him a fool because if he was to die that night, who will own what he prepared? The rich man was interested in his material wealth but could not think of his death or the life after death. Jesus teaches us that riches are entrusted with us to serve others and that we should never put our trust in the material wealth.

Other than our material wealth, God has given us many talents. We have to use them for the good of others. The healthy can help the sick, the wise can teach others, the rich can help the poor, and we can pray for others. Let us really be rich in goodness and spirit according to God's will and give ourselves away in love and service to God and man so that we can grow our treasure in heaven.

What makes you worry? Another matter that Jesus teaches us is not to worry about earthly needs. He asks us to learn from the birds of the air and lilies of the fields. The Lord tells us to pay attention to the birds. They do not worry over what to eat. They do not have to sow or harvest food; the heavenly Father feeds them. We are God's children and are far more valuable to our Lord than the birds. If we leave our burdens to the Lord, he will ensure that we have plenty.

As for the lilies in the fields, they are beautiful. They do not work or make clothes for themselves. We should give up our worries about what we shall eat, drink, or wear. Our heavenly Father will look after us. Jesus tells us "First, seek His kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well." If we trust in God, He will provide us what we need.

LESSON 9 - MIRACLES OF HEALING

Objective: To learn about Jesus' miracles and to understand that He is the ultimate Healer.

Take Up Your Bed and Walk (Mt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12)

One day, Jesus returned to Capernaum. The news spread that He was at His hometown. Many people came to see Him. Jesus preached the word of God in all the places He went. The people were very eager to hear what Jesus was saying, and there was no place for others to get in.

There were four men who had a friend who was paralyzed and they all came to see Jesus. However, the crowd was so large that they could not enter the house. The four men had faith in the power of Jesus and their need to bring the paralyzed man to Him was so great that they thought of different ways to reach Him. The four men made an opening in the roof of the house, right above the place where Jesus sat and they let their friend down into the room by ropes.

Jesus was touched by the faith of these men. He looked at the man who was paralyzed and said, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Some teachers of the law who were sitting there in that room thought that what Jesus told was blasphemy. They believed that no one except God can forgive sins. Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked them, "Which is easier, to say, to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk?'"

To prove that He has authority to forgive sins on earth, Jesus said to the paralytic, "... Rise, take up your pallet and go home." The man suddenly got up, took up his bed and walked out! All those who watched were amazed. They praised God saying, "We never saw anything like this!"



If we go to Jesus with true faith, our sins will be forgiven and our diseases will be cured. The strong faith of the men resulted in the healing of the paralyzed man. We too can help others get better by praying for them, if we have total faith in His power.

Jesus Heals the Sick (Mk. 1:29-31; Lk. 13:11-13; Mt. 12:9-13)

One day Jesus was coming out of the synagogue in Capernaum. His disciples, James and John, were with Him. They entered the house of Simon Peter and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever. Those who were with Jesus told Him about her so He went to her bed, took her by the hand and lifted her up and the fever left her right away!

On a Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching in a synagogue. There was a woman who for eighteen years had a 'spirit of infirmity'. Her back was bent down and could not stand up straight. Jesus saw her and had pity on her. He called her and said, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." He laid His hand upon her and immediately she was able to stand up straight. She praised God with all her heart.

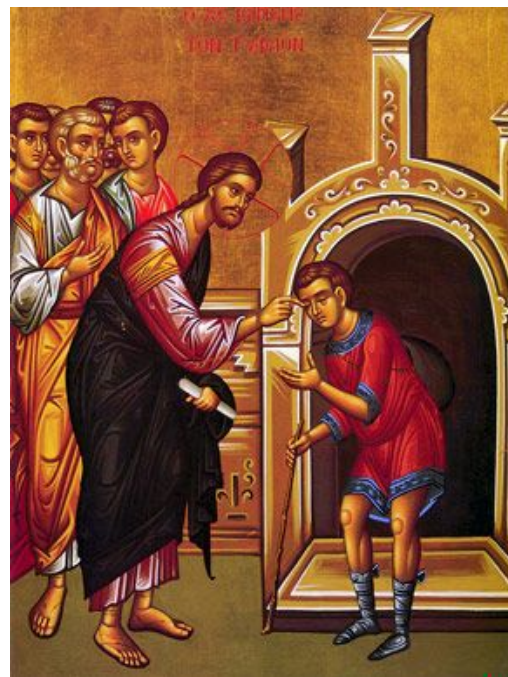
On another Sabbath day, Jesus entered a synagogue and taught. There was a man whose right hand was withered. The Pharisees were watching to see whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus knew their thoughts and asked them, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and it was normal like the other hand.

Jesus always had sympathy for the sick and He felt the pain they suffered and He always helped. We should also help in whatever way we can, besides keeping them in prayer.

Your Faith Has Made You Well (Mark. 10:46-52)

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking with his disciples along the street of Jericho. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he began to cry out, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" Many people told him to be silent, but he cried out even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus heard the cry of the blind beggar He stopped and told the people to bring the beggar to him. The people said to the beggar: "Don't be afraid - He is calling for you!"



Bartimaeus jumped up and came to Jesus. Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The beggar asked Jesus to give him sight. Jesus took pity on him and said, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." Quickly, his eyes were opened and he could see the people around him! He was full of joy and he praised God. He followed Jesus down the road.

If we have have faith and trust in God, no matter what we need help with, He can heal us.

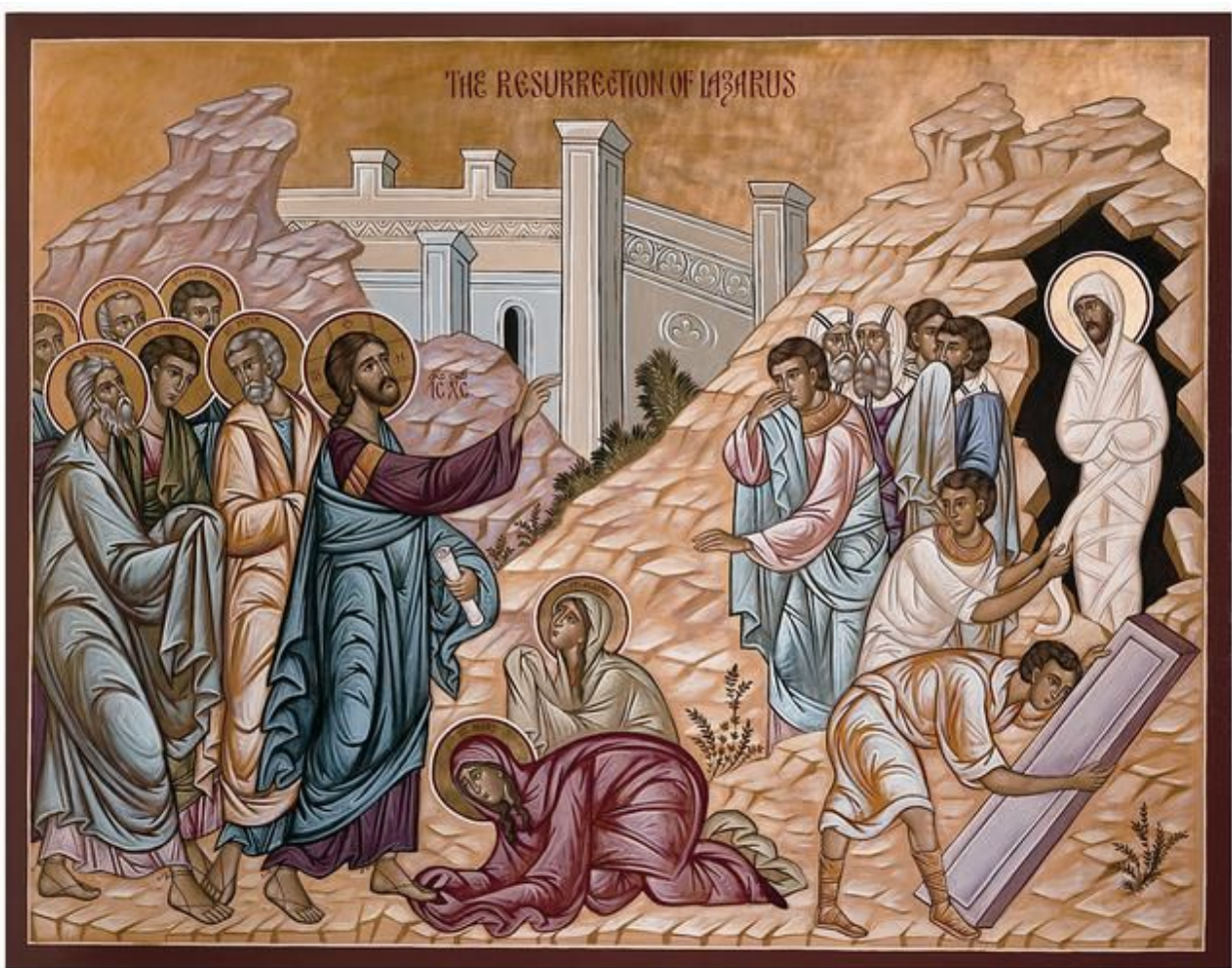
Just like Bartimaeus praised God, we should also glorify Him!



LESSON 10 - LAZARUS SATURDAY

Objective: To understand that Jesus is the Son of God and even has power over death.

Two miles east of Jerusalem, in a village called Bethany, there lived Martha, Mary and their only brother Lazarus. They were a happy family. Jesus used to visit them often and loved this family very much. Through the story of Lazarus, Jesus proved he was truly the Son of God.



One day, Lazarus fell sick. The two sisters sent message to Jesus, telling Him that their brother was sick. Jesus did not go there immediately. He said that this is for the glory of God; that the Son of God may be glorified by means of this incident. Jesus reached Bethany four days after the death of Lazarus. He was told that Lazarus had been already in his tomb for four days.

When the sisters heard that Jesus was coming, they ran to meet Him. Martha wept and said to Him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus said to her that her brother would rise again. She responded that she knew he would rise again in the resurrection. At this, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Mary also came to Jesus and wept. Jesus was so moved by their sorrow that He also began to cry.

Jesus and the crowd which followed Him went to the tomb in which Lazarus was buried. They removed the stone and opened the tomb. Jesus lifted his eyes to Heaven and prayed and cried aloud "Lazarus, come out." The dead Lazarus came out alive! Those who saw this believed in Jesus and praised God. Through this miracle, Jesus was able to prove that He had power, even over death. Our Lord can give new life to us who maybe dead because of sins.



The Orthodox Church celebrates the Raising of Lazarus on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, as here we see God who loves man and raises him up from the dead. In the same way, Jesus' death on the Cross and His Resurrection made us all rise from the dead, as by His death, our death is no longer forever. Death is destroyed!

LESSON 11 - HOLY WEEK

Objective: To learn about Jesus' life during Holy Week.

Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1-16)

After raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus went to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, He went to the town of Bethphage where the people gave Him a royal reception. The disciples brought Jesus a donkey and a colt and put their garments on them. Jesus sat on the donkey and rode towards Jerusalem. As the people saw Jesus, they cheered for Him. Some of them spread their clothes on the path. Others cut branches of trees and put them on the road. Small children with olive branches in their hands shouted with joy. They cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"



On Palm Sunday we have a procession around the church remembering the procession that Jesus led in Jerusalem. We are all happy to go in procession singing songs and worshipping God. Thus, we are also receiving Jesus in His majesty. With great joy we should welcome Him into our heart.

The Jewish leaders did not like the people singing Hosanna to Jesus. They wanted Jesus to silence them. But Jesus said, "I tell you, if they were silent, the very stones would cry out." Jesus entered the temple of Jerusalem like a king. He was angry with the people who were dishonoring the temple. He drove out all those who were buying and selling. He overturned the tables of moneychangers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers." This incident made the leaders of the Jews His greatest enemies and they wanted to destroy Him. They met together and planned to find fault with Him and kill Him.

Holy Week (Mt. 26: 6-28)

After Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders were plotting to kill Him. They wanted to find fault in Jesus. They were looking for any reason to arrest Him.

It was during this time that Jesus went to the home of a man called Simon, who was once a leper and who was healed by Jesus. While He was eating, a woman came into the house with a bottle of very expensive perfume and poured it on His head. The disciples took offense to this and said, "Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor." Jesus said that this was done as a preparation for His death and burial. He knew that His enemies were planning to kill Him, but He was not afraid of death.

During this time, Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, went to the chief priests and told them he will deliver Jesus to them. For this action Judas was offered thirty pieces of silver. A person who lived with Jesus for three years and whom Jesus loved and trusted to become one of His disciples, turned out to be so ungrateful. We should always think whether we are thankful to Jesus or are we ungrateful to Him. Jesus had His ministry for about three years and was very popular among the people. While he had many followers, some people were jealous and did not like Jesus. They were not able to do anything in public, because of His supporters, so they decided to do it in secret.

Holy Thursday (Mt. 26:14-56)

All of you might have seen the picture of the last supper of Jesus. The feast of Passover was observed in every Jewish family. They remembered the delivery of their forefathers by God from slavery in Egypt. Jesus also wanted to observe the Passover with His disciples, so a large furnished upper room was arranged for it.



In the evening, Jesus and His disciples sat down to eat the Passover. Knowing about His death, Jesus told His disciples about the one who would betray Him. During supper, our Lord took bread, blessed it, and gave it to the disciples. Jesus said, "Take, eat, this is my body." Then He took up the cup, blessed it, and gave to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Thus, Jesus established the Holy Qurbana. When we eat and drink the body and blood of our Lord through Holy Qurbana, we become part of the Lord.

Jesus in Prayer (Matthew 26: 30-50)

After the last supper, Jesus and his disciples went to Mount Olives. Jesus told the disciples that all of them would desert Him because of their connections with Him. After hearing this, Peter told Jesus, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall

away." Jesus told Peter that before the rooster crows that night, he would deny Him three times. This can be seen to be fulfilled when Peter denied of knowing Jesus three times (John 18:15-27).

Then Jesus and His disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane. He took with Him Peter and two sons of Zebedee, James and John. Jesus was very troubled and sorrowful. Jesus told them to stay awake while he went to pray. After praying, Jesus came to them and found them sleeping. He was troubled at this and asked Peter, why he couldn't stay up for one hour.

Again, Jesus went to pray and asked them to stay awake and not give into temptation. However, after coming back from prayer Jesus found them sleeping for the second time. This happened again after Jesus came back from praying a third time. This time He came back and said to the disciples, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners,"

By the time Jesus finished the prayer, Judas and the leaders of the Jews reached the place. Judas came forward and kissed Jesus. This was a sign to let them know that He was the master. Men behind him caught hold of Jesus, bound Him and led Him away for trial.

During the most needed time, even the closest to Jesus wasn't able to provide Him comfort. Instead, they denied knowing Him and gave into worldly temptations. As Jesus has said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Many times during our life, we go through many troubles. However, God gives us strength to overcome these troubles. He provides us comfort through prayer.

Good Friday (Mt. 27: 11- 23; Mt. 27: 51-60 or John 19: 38-42)

Good Friday is the day on which Christ was crucified and died for the sins of human race, thus redeeming us from ultimate punishment.

In that morning the leaders of the Jews took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman Governor. They brought many charges against Jesus. Pilate found out that He had not done anything wrong punishable by death, so he wanted to let Jesus go. However, the people were shouting, "Crucify him!" Pilate tried all means to set Jesus free but the



people cried aloud against Jesus. So Pilate permitted them to crucify Jesus.

The soldiers removed His clothing and put a scarlet robe upon Him. They made a crown of thorns and put it on His head. They led Jesus away to Mount Calvary or 'Golgotha', a place outside Jerusalem, where they crucified Jesus. Jesus was on the cross for three hours and suffered great pain. Two robbers were also crucified on either side of Jesus. When Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks were split. Tombs were opened and the dead rose up.

In the evening, Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and asked him for the body of Jesus. He got permission. Another friend of Jesus, Nicodemus who had once come to Jesus at night to avoid being seen by the Jews, also joined Joseph, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes for preparing the body for burial. They took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen clothes with the spices. Then they laid the body in a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Then they rolled a huge stone against the door of the tomb.

All over the world, the Christians remember this great event of history on Good Friday. We take part in the worship on that day with fasting and prayer. Thus, we participate in the sufferings of our Lord. He suffered all these to make us free from our sins.

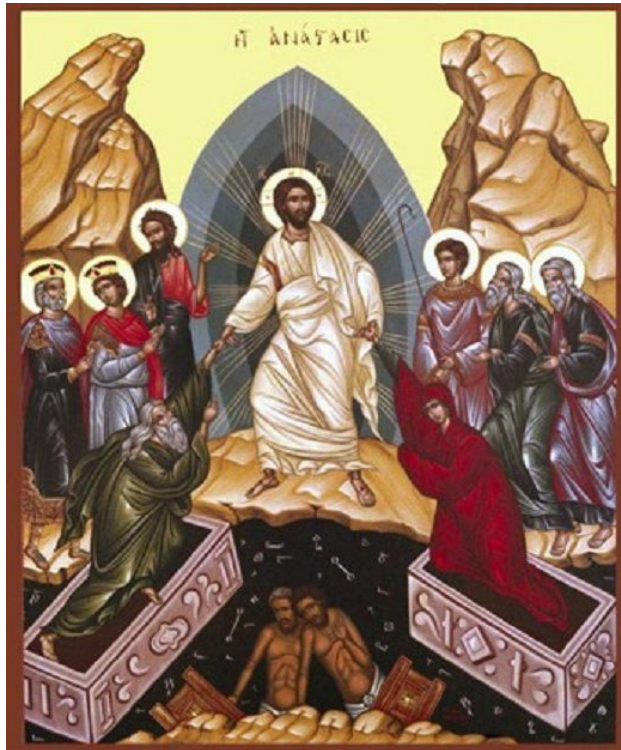
Holy Saturday (Matthew 27: 62-66)

Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday. The next day was the Sabbath of the Jews. The leaders of the Jews suspected that the disciples of Jesus would steal His body from the tomb. So the leaders went to Pilate and requested him to arrange soldiers to watch over the tomb. Pilate sent soldiers and got the tomb sealed up and set guard over it. Jesus went down under to preach to the souls of the dead. In the songs of the service on Saturday it is mentioned that when Jesus went to the souls of the dead, they received Jesus and sang Hosanna with great joy. Jesus told them that He had suffered and died to liberate them from the slavery of sin.

We observe Holy Saturday by remembering the departed souls in the Holy Qurbana. We offer special prayers for all our departed ones. So the whole Church, both living and departed, join together in that great service. That is why we believe that the departed souls are also with us when we are worshipping God.

LESSON 12 - CHRIST IS RISEN!

Objective: To learn about the Resurrection and understand that Jesus is all-powerful.



After the Sabbath, early in the morning on Sunday, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb of Christ. Suddenly there was a great earthquake. An angel came down from heaven. He rolled back the stone of the tomb and sat upon it. He appeared as bright as lightning. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has been raised, as he said."

Isn't that amazing? Jesus Christ had risen from the dead! We learned that Jesus had power over death when He raised Lazarus, and here we see that He can overcome anything.

The women ran away in great joy to inform the disciples. The soldiers who guarded the tomb were filled with fear at the sight of the angel. Some of them fell down. Some others ran to the high priests and told this news. Those who crucified Jesus were full of shame because Christ had risen from the dead. The risen Jesus appeared to the disciples several times.

Easter is a feast of great joy! The angels sang songs when Jesus rose from the dead. The disciples and those who loved Him were all full of joy. We sing songs in the church during the Easter service, proclaiming the Resurrection with joy.

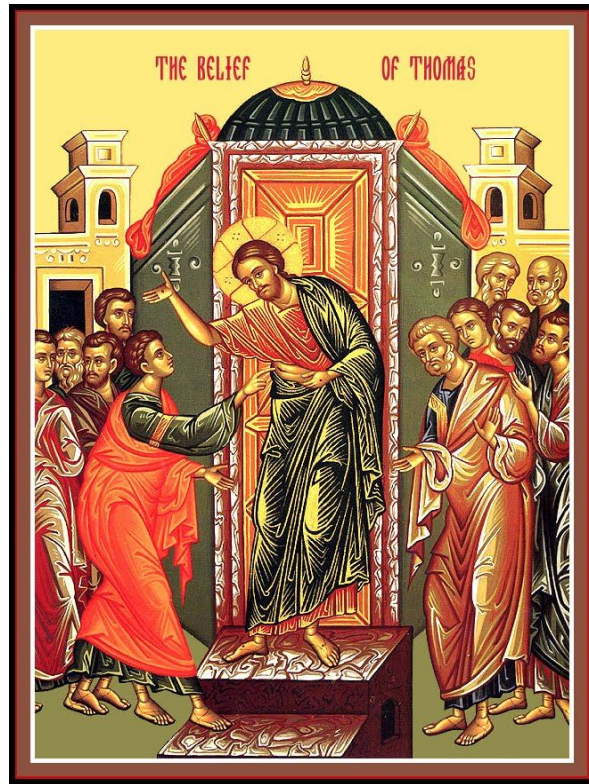
*Behold, O Mary, I am the Gardener!
I am the Great One who planted Paradise!
Behold, O Mary, I am the Revival!
The Resurrection and the Life of all!
Mary, I am He who was crucified
Do not come near me, for I have not ascended
The women announced to all the apostles
That I have risen from the tomb, in glory!*

We also declare, "We believe and confirm that He has truly risen from the dead." It is on Sunday, the first day of the week, that our Lord rose from the dead. Therefore, Sunday is observed as a holy day by all Christians.

When we greet each other on Easter, we should say, "Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!"

LESSON 13 - MY LORD AND MY GOD!

Objective: To understand that we should have faith in God and declare Him as our Lord.



After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples many times. The disciples were sure that their Lord had risen from the dead. When He first appeared to the disciples, Thomas was not there. When the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, Thomas said, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in His side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, the disciples were together again and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were closed. Jesus stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing."

Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

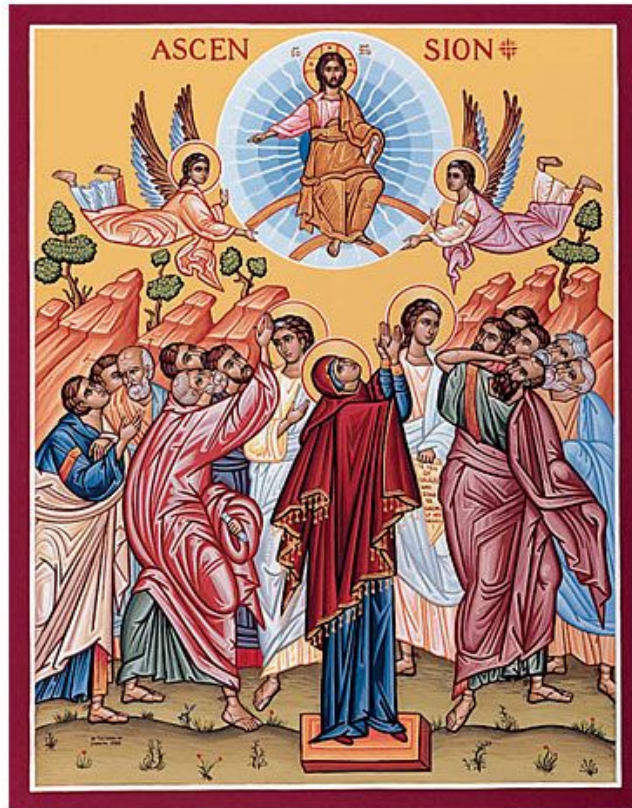
Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

The Sunday after Easter Sunday is called New Sunday. We remember the appearance of Jesus to Thomas on this day. Thomas declared Jesus as his Lord and God. The words of Thomas are very important because it establishes his deep faith in Jesus, the Lord and God. This is also the clearest confession of Christ's divine nature.

We should try our best to have faith. Just like St. Thomas, we should declare that Jesus is our Lord and our God.

LESSON 14 - ASCENSION

Objective: To understand that, as Christians, we are waiting for Jesus' second coming with hope and prayer.



After His resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with His disciples. He taught His disciples about the kingdom of God. He appeared to over five hundred people. Now it was time for Him to go back to His Father in Heaven. By His death on the Cross and coming back to life, He saved mankind from sin and death.

Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives near Bethany. There, He raised His hands and blessed them. He said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." As Jesus uttered these words, a bright cloud covered Him.

Thus, when the disciples were looking up, Jesus ascended into Heaven.

Then two angels in white robes appeared. The angels said to the disciples, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."

The disciples of Jesus were happy to hear that their Lord would come back. We all hope for the return of our Lord Jesus. It is a promise and it will take place. We should wait with hope and prayer, trying our best to be ready always.



LESSON 15- THE HOLY SPIRIT

Objective: To understand that we have been given the Holy Spirit, one of the greatest gifts of all.



After the ascension of Jesus, His disciples waited in Jerusalem. On a Sunday, on the festival of the Pentecost, the disciples and many believers came together for worship. Suddenly, there was a sound like the roaring of a mighty wind. It filled the house where they were sitting. Then they saw tongues of fire and were all filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages.

The men who had come from different countries in the world gathered together when the disciples spoke. All the people who spoke different languages could hear the speech in their own language. Some of them blamed that the disciples were drunk. Then Peter stood up and spoke to the crowd. He told them of prophets who had prophesied this event. He also told them about Jesus of Galilee.

When the Jews heard Peter's words, they asked Peter and the other disciples, "Brothers what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The people heard this and believed in Jesus. Three thousand people were baptized that day and they became the members of the Church.

Each one of us has received the Holy Spirit when we were baptized. We also experience the presence of Holy Spirit in the Holy Qurbana.

When we participate in the Holy Qurbana, the Holy Spirit is coming down from heaven and we are filled with the power of the Spirit.

LESSON 16- SAINT EPHREM

Objective: To understand that, as Christians, we are waiting for Jesus' second coming with hope and prayer.



St. Ephrem was born in 306 A.D. at Nisibis in Mesopotamia (which is now Syria) and was born in a pagan family. Pagans are people who believe in false gods. When he was a teenager, he heard St. James preach about how Jesus had died for us, so we could be saved. At the age of eighteen, he asked to be baptized and joined to the Church.

St. Ephrem then went into the hills, found himself a cave near the city of Edessa in Syria and became a hermit. His clothes were just patched rags and he ate any fruit, vegetable or edible leaves that he could find.

St. Ephrem became angry easily, but prayed sincerely about it. He slowly learned to control his temper. People who met him thought he was just naturally very calm. He often went to preach in Edessa and Nisibis. When he spoke about God's judgment, the people wept.

He would tell them that he was a great sinner. He really meant it, too, because although his sins were small, they seemed very big to him. When St. Basil met him, he asked, "Are you Ephrem, the famous servant of Jesus?" Ephrem answered quickly, "I am Ephrem, who walks unworthily on the way to salvation." Then he asked for and received advice from St. Basil on how to grow in the spiritual life.

Ephrem was made deacon of Edessa and spent his time writing spiritual books. He wrote in several languages - Syriac, Greek, Latin and Armenian. These works are so beautiful and spiritual that they have been translated into many languages and are read even today.

St. Ephrem also wrote hymns for public worship and introduced singing during the worship. These hymns became very popular. As the people sang them, they learned much about the faith. That is why he is called "the harp of the Holy Spirit." Because he was such a great teacher through his writings, in 1920 he was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. St. Ephrem died in June of 373 A.D. at Edessa (which is now in Iraq).

We use the prayer poem of St. Ephrem in our daily evening prayers of Compline:

"Lord, thy mercy on us cast ... Mercy show and grant our need."

The following prayer of St. Ephrem is also used during the Great Lent:

*"O Lord and Master of my life, give me not the spirit of sloth, idle curiosity, meddling,
lust for power and idle talk.*

But grant unto me, Thy servant, a spirit of chastity, integrity, humility, patience and love.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see mine own faults and not to condemn my brother, for blessed art thou unto the ages of ages.

Amen."