

Dearly Beloved,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

October 18, 2026, Fifth Sunday after the Feast of the Cross

Scriptural Readings:

• OT: Leviticus 2:1-3, Job 6:1-10, 2 Samuel 3:17-21, Isaiah 40:27-31

• NT: Acts 22:22-29, 1 Timothy 6:13-21, Holy Gospel St Matthew 23:1-12

Holy Gospel: St Matthew 23:1-12

23 Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, ²“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; ³so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. ⁴They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear,^[a] and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶and they love the place of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and salutations in the marketplaces, and being called rabbi by men. ⁸But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. ⁹And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. ¹¹He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; ¹²whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Reflections:

We live in times when religions are blamed for diverting people from the goal and purpose of life, instead causing them to become a burden, a threat and non sensical. Since the beginning of human life, agreements and disagreements about faith and practice existed. In the garden of Eden itself, the first humans on earth, despite being instructed by their Creator God, drifted away from their expected practice. They failed in their faith due to their greed and misconception about a greater life which caused death to creep in.

Faith in God was intended for life eternal. The same faith, that the first humans allowed to get tested, got distorted and thus disconnected them from the source of life. The word "religion" comes from the Latin noun *religio*, which meant in ancient life: setting respect for the sacred, awe of the gods, conscientious behaviour, and proper ritual observance. The word religion is a combination of two root words ‘re’ (again) and ‘legere’ (to read, gather, or trace). This involves a process of gathering knowledge and applying it to our daily life for a life of quality as by connecting to the Divine. It requires diligent, careful, and repeated attention to ritual duties, customs, and the proper execution of sacred rites. It emphasizes a spiritual bond or connection linking humanity back to God, or a sense of being constrained by moral and sacred.

The early Church fathers adopted and re-interpreted the term ‘religion’ to focus on a person's inner faith and relationship with the divine. Towards the 5th century, with the flourishing of "monastic life" of monks and nuns, religion meant more with its ascetic and ‘not of the world’ connotations. While temple worship and cultic rites were practiced, it was meant to pave a spiritual way of daily living by being aware of the vanity of the material world and about the temporality of all worldly glories. There is no native Hebrew word for ‘religion’ in the Torah or early Old Testament which points to the ancient life as they did not separate life into ‘religious’ and secular’ categories. For them life was an

integrated wholeness with faith, values, ethics, law, discipline and community living.

Here in the gospel text, Jesus was instructing the crowd and His disciples to have a reformed faith life by leaving behind wrong practices. He taught them to pray by calling out to God as 'OUR FATHER' which means we must have a personal connection and affection to God. External and superficial things that prevail as religious practices may not bring about a personal connection which is needed for a child of God to feel 'My God and my Lord' in all its intense and deep sense of relationship. There will never be a question or doubt: 'if there is God'.

Christ came to the world to reveal this close connection between God and His creation. How affectionately Christ always called Him, 'Abba Father'!!! There is nothing for us to pretend in showing faith. It is to practice and live accordingly. There will be humbling of the self, worshipping with complete surrender, feeling intense love and much joy of having the Father-and-child relationship with God and to have complete trust that everything will be taken care of by Him. It's how the command is meant to be practiced, "Love your Lord God with your whole mind and soul and worship Him alone."

FEASTS AND REMEMBRANCE:

- **October 07, Mar Sargis & Mar Bakos**
 - **October 12, HG Philipose Mar Dionysius IV, Metropolitan of Cheppad, 171st anniversary, entombed at St George OC, Cheppad**
 - **October 12, HG Yuhanon Mar Athanasius Episcopa, 46th anniversary, entombed at Bethany Asram, Perunad**
 - **October 14, St Athanasius of Alexandria**
 - **October 15, Mar Osio the Ascetic**
 - **October 18, St Luke the Evangelist**
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- ***Parish Nite 2026 Was a Wonderful Success — Sincere Thanks to All!***

We are thrilled to share that Parish Nite 2026 went wonderfully well! This year, we hosted a specially themed event with all presentations thoughtfully aligned around a central motif. Every organization staged their performances with excellence and beauty.

Using the same venue as in previous years greatly aided our planning, allowing us to seamlessly manage the layout and stage setup. The food was rich and tasty, and thanks to everyone's cooperation, we successfully finished the entire event right on schedule.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to:

Our Leadership: The honorable Treasurer Shibu Cherian, Secretary George M George were instrumental in bringing the sponsors and Managing Committee members for their guidance, strong support and were instrumental in organizing all facility requirements.

Organizational Leaders: For their coordination, follow-up, dedicated time, and active presence.

All Participating Organizations: Sunday School, MGOCSM, MGOCSM Alumni, OCYM, MMVS, SDOF, SJEF, Acolytes and Choir For their teamwork, planning, practice, hard work, and wonderful presentations. Despite various constraints, everyone managed to find time for multiple practice sessions.

Our Emcees: Three pairs of emcees (Aaron Liju & Serene Varghese, Anand Joseph & Santy Binu, Philip Philips & Jessie Vaidhyan) led the entire event seamlessly and sensibly. Because this was a thematic event, their narrations brilliantly connected every performance to the central theme.

Special Acknowledgments & Appreciation:

***Ticket Sales:** Led and monitored by Shibu Koodal supported by Omana John and Bincy Babu.

*** Event Presentations Coordination:** Robi Rajan.

***Food Serving Supervision:** Rity Pappachan and Sen Mathew.

***Shaji Thomas :** Dismantling and putting back the furniture in place.

***Digital Display Panels & Video Transmission:** Handled by J&N Productions.

***Sound and Light:** Managed by Alex.

***Console & Stage Lighting:** Gijo Peter, Emil Kuruvilla, and Binu Joshua:

***A beautifully designed flyer for the program was thoughtfully crafted by Rijo Geevarghese.**

***Photo Booth:** Managed by MGOCSM.

***Video Recording:** Anoop, Soumya, and Anson.

***Sunday School/MMVS Choreography:** Jemy Anna Jose and Winnie Ann Thomas.

***Catering:** Provided by Tharavad Caterers (snacks and food).

***DJ:** Dibin.

***Registration Desk:** Managed by Daisy Mathew, Jitty Tom, Omana John, and Geetha Abraham.

***Script & Support:** Philip Philips for the initial script, and Reni Thomas for general presentation support.

***Media & Editing:** Joel Soney for brilliantly crafting and editing the audio-visuals—truly a tough job done exceptionally well. Jerry also deserves our sincere thanks for recording the SJEF and Acolytes' presentations.

***OCYM dance choreography.** -Reshma Jinson: for

*** OCYM Skit.**-Jinson K. Varghese :

***Missing child's family** - Jinu N. Jacob, Nisha Isac and Rehan K. Jinson for the

***Saviour Appearance.**- Sen Mathew: for the

***SDOF Video Editing.**- Samson Joseph :

Our Generous Sponsors: We extend our sincere thanks to our generous sponsors:

***Dr. Jobin Varughese - Toronto Metropolitan University Integrated Health Centre;**

***Sarah Bency John- Rite Gait Orthotics;**

***Shibu Cherian – Cheritek Consulting Inc;**

***Alex George- Airroute Travel & Tours;**

***Soney M John -Wealth management ;**

***Sanjeev A. Chacko- ACS Electrical Services & Control Engineering Inc;**

***Daisy Mathew-Desjardins Insurance Advisor.**

All Volunteers: All those who volunteered in seating arrangements at the venue, helping on the stage, supporting the practice sessions, cleaning up and anything in support to the Parish Nite 2026.

Our Parish Community: We wholeheartedly thank all our members for purchasing tickets, joining the celebration, and encouraging every performer with your warm cheers and applause.

Above All: We offer our deepest praise and thanks to the Almighty Lord for all His abundant graces and wisdom showered upon us. We look forward to the Parish Nite 2027!

Time Change: Sunday Morning Prayer starts at 08:30 am.

According to the Semi Annual GBM decision, morning prayer will start at 08:30 am on Sundays.

UPCOMING FEASTS & EVENTS:

- **October 24, Saturday, OCYM Fest -Thaalam 2026. Please look for updates.**
- **November 01, Koodosh Eetho Sunday, Sanctification of the Church**
- **November 08, Hoodos Eetho Sunday, Dedication of the Church**
- **November 07 Saturday & 08 Sunday, Feast of St Gregorios**

Pray for Peace in the Middle East and Gulf

The recent developments have caused more worries and fears about the long-lasting impact on life in the West Asia region. It has already affected thousands of people working there. Many have lost jobs, cost of living is going high with the oil price hike, companies are issuing termination letters, the situation is becoming scarier. We fervently pray for peace and cessation of attacks. Our prayers may work miracles through the Holy Spirit. May the Holy Spirit intervene and transform the minds of people in power.

Attention Please:

Parking: Please be considerate while parking our vehicles, only park at designated space. Leave reserved lots for the intended and kindly park within lines and markings leaving enough space for others to open their doors without scratching or hitting nearby parked vehicles.

AREA PRAYER MEETING:

If any family is willing to host prayer meetings, please reach out to the area coordinators or the parish office.

FOR OUR ATTENTION & TO NOTE:

Children, please occupy front benches during our Liturgical Services.

Kindly avoid crowding at the back of the church.

For assuring safety and undistracted worship space, we request all our members to proceed to the

front rows except those that are reserved for children when we enter the temple. It could be uneasy for our volunteers to guide them to the front during the service as it might cause distraction and noise. We avoid crowding at the entrance and stair areas due to safety concerns. Please be considerate of our senior members to help them find seats or while they try to access the washroom. A slip or a hit should be avoided in any circumstance. Please be watchful at the shoe rack area, which is also the entrance to both washrooms. We request parents to attend to their children not to pull the alarm lever at the back wall.

WEEKLY IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

October 17, Saturday:

MMVS Central Bible Exam @ 12:00 Noon

Sunday School Diocese of Canada – Written Competition

Time: 9:00 AM- 12:00 Noon

October 18, Sunday – in-person meetings/Events

Sunday School

OCYM Monthly Meeting

SDOF Monthly Meeting

LIVE streaming: All services are Live Streamed and are available.

Holy Liturgical Text for this Sunday

We will be using the Taksas of Mar Abraham this Sunday.

May the Gracious Lord keep us from all evil and heal the entire world.

Next Week

October 25, Sixth Sunday after the Feast of the Cross

Scriptural Readings:

- **OT: Genesis 42:29-36, Joshua 10:28-36, Zachariah 6:1-8, Isaiah 43:16-25**
- **NT: Acts 28:23-24, 1 Corinthians 5:6-13, Holy Gospel St Luke 18:18-27**

Yours in Christ

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