

Dearly Beloved,

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

December 07, 2025, Sunday - Birth of St John the Baptist, Yaldo Season

Scriptural Readings:

- **OT: Genesis 21- 9-21, Exodus 2:1-10, Ruth 4:13-22, Isaiah 62:1-12**
- **NT: 1 John 4:1-10, Galatians 4:18-30, Holy Gospel St Luke 1:57-80**

Holy Gospel: St Luke 1:57-80

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechari'ah after his father, ⁶⁰ but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." ⁶¹ And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." ⁶² And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marveled. ⁶⁴ And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵ And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; ⁶⁶ and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁶⁷ And his father Zechari'ah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, ⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷² to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, ⁷⁴ to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. ⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon^[a] us from on high ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Reflections:

The Holy Spirit fills us when we hunger and desire for the presence of the Lord within us. Zechariah was unable to speak for months before John the Baptist's birth. After the birth of John, Zechariah the priest now prophesied. It was a great day in history. It was the day when God made the impossible possible. Zechariah and Elizabeth were not medically or physically fit to bring forth a child. But the Holy Spirit made it possible.

If sin and fall were the biggest miseries of human life, with the birth of John, all the promises given through prophets about redemption and salvation were about to come true. This was the last prophesy about the coming of the Messiah. With John the forerunner now here, the Messiah would soon arrive. John stands next to the Redeemer. His parents did not pray for their child to be a forerunner to the Messiah. They only prayed for a child and for the salvation of the whole creation as an essential part of regular, unceasing prayer of the people of God. With the birth of John, Zechariah

and Elizabeth were holding several blessings together that they were ready to share with the world. They moved from barrenness to bountifulness. Their humiliation gave way to a humbling overwhelming joy. All blames of their sinfulness being the cause of their barrenness could now be withdrawn. What the neighbours had thought of them once as a cursed presence now turned out to be a blessed presence. They were isolated, but now no more. Neighbors joined them to celebrate John's birth. Their house of solitude now became a home of solace. Elizabeth's exasperation was replaced by elatedness, 'The Lord took away the disgrace I have endured among my people' (Lk 1:25). We do not know if their sadness of childlessness caused them to move to a hill country in a likely attempt to stay away from their own people's judging gazes. The only relative who could truly share their joy was Mary.

Are we feeling down or humiliated? Are we going through phases of hardship without knowing the reason? Are we experiencing neglect from our own people, colleagues, friends, neighbours, community? Do we think that our long-term prayers and wishes are not heard or granted? Have we reached a conclusion that there would be nothing for us to hope for? Is life going to be messier and chaotic? Are we too worried about our children? Do we feel that we are in the dark? Here we have the hope of a dawn sooner or later. It may be a bit late, but it will arrive. And once it is here, everything will change and transform. All our sorrows will give way to joy and cheer. There will be more praises than notes of sadness and tones of gloom.

What should we do when we are in distress? Keep praying. It could be traditional or extempore. Meditate on psalms and say the Lord's Prayer repeatedly. Never give up hope. Never doubt. General prayers can bring individual blessings and answers. If we think we do not know how to pray, not to worry. Pray the Lord's Prayer. Join the worship and go near to the Altar even if we do not understand anything. It was at the temple Zechariah had the visitation. The prayer, 'Lord have mercy' or 'Kurielaison' is the shortest and most powerful prayer. We plead for God's tender mercy which is exactly what the barren couple received. Whatever futility for which we be sobbing and crying, it could be solved by His mercy as it was for Zachariah and Elizabeth. We are here in this world for this as said by the Holy Spirit through Zechariah: 'we might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life (Lk 1:73-75). Hallelujah, His mercy endures forever!!!

FEASTS AND REMEMBRANCES:

- **December 1-25, Yaldo Lent, 'Irupathanchu nompu'.**
- **December 03, HG Thoma Mar Dionysius Metropolitan, 53rd anniversary, entombed at Mount Tabore Dayara, Pathanapuram**
- **December 04, Feast of Marth Barbara and Marth Juliana**
- **December 06, Feast of Mar Sokhe (Saint Nicholas- Santa Claus, Bishop of Myre)**
- **December 07 Sunday: Birth of John (Children's Day)**

Clergy Demise:

Rev Fr Saji Mathew Thannimoottil, (61yrs), senior priest of the Diocese of Mumbai, has passed away. The funeral service will be conducted on Monday Dec 08 at St Thomas Orthodox Church

Perinad, Ranny. Achen was a former member of the Sabha Managing Committee. He was serving the St Mary's Orthodox Church, Ullas Nagar, Mumbai. He has also served the parish in Bahrain from where we have members now at SGOCT. Achen had met with an accident and was hospitalised for a few weeks. It was the Lord's will to receive him to the heavenly abode. We pray for Achen's soul and for the family. May the Lord comfort him and strengthen the beloved ones. May his soul rest in peace.

From our previous update:

Reunion of Churches at Iznik after 1700 years

On November 27, 2025, leaders of churches gathered at Iznik in Turkey, at the excavated foundation of the venue of the Council of Nicaea of 325 AD convened by Emperor Constantine, on the 1700th year since its commencement.

This commemoration event was hosted by HH Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant churches had their leaders participated. While offering prayers, the Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan HH Baselios Marthoma Mathews III started with 'Daiva Thirunamathinu Mahathwam Undayiriykutte' in Malayalam. At the ancient site, the voice of St Thomas' tradition was heard with all its affirmation and assurance. All leaders offered prayers. The Lord's Prayer and the Nicene Creed was prayed by all together. It was a unified single voice of Christians all over the world, indeed a glorious moment for all churches. Nicaea 325 was convened to solve the division among churches caused by heretical teachings. At the same site, after 1700 years, with the reunion of all churches, it was a call for unity. We hope and pray as the Lord prayed, "Father, they all may be one." (Jn 17:21), that unity of churches would become a reality soon.

Brampton Area House Caroling went well

We are grateful to all the Brampton homes for their gracious hosting of the carolers.

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS: Please note in your calendar

1. **Christmas House Caroling & Church Carol Evening**
 - A. **Sunday Dec 30- Brampton St George Area, Well Done!**
 - B. **Sunday, Dec 07- St Paul's Prayer: Scarborough, Durham, New Market, Markham Area**
 - C. **Sunday, Dec 14- St Mary's Prayer: Mississauga, Hamilton, Stonycreek Area**
2. **Saturday, Dec 20- Carol Evening at Church starting with evening prayer at 06:00 pm followed by Carol singing, skits and presentations by organisations.**
3. **Christmas, Dec 24 Wed, Evening Prayer at 05:30 pm followed by Divine Fire, Holy Qurbana and the Liturgy of Nativity**
4. **New Year 2026: Dec 31 Wed, Evening Prayer at 06:30 pm followed by Holy Liturgy**
5. **Feast of Epiphany: Jan 06, Holy Liturgy on Jan 05 Mon with Evening Prayer at 06:00 pm followed by Liturgy of Danaha and Holy Qurbana**

6. **Nineveh Lent: Jan 26 Monday – 28 Wednesday, Holy Liturgy on Wed 28th with Evening Prayer at 06:30 pm followed by Holy Qurbana**
7. **Great Lent: Feb 16- April 04**
8. **Easter: April 05 Sunday**

Urava Volume 7

URAVA Volume 7, based on the theme ‘the Council of Nicaea’, was released on October 25, 2025. Updated version with cover design chosen from the contest, additional articles, pictures from the Council of Nicaea event and drawings submitted for contest shall be made available soon.

Two contests for the journal with the title: “Nicaea 325 AD”:

1. Cover Page Icon Contest – open to all parish members ages 18+
2. Inner Page Drawing Contest – open to children

Attention Please:

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

Children at Parking Space: Please attend to children as it has been noticed that at times they play and run around within the parking lots, which may cause accidents and incidents. Please take care.

AREA PRAYER MEETINGS:

Details of upcoming meetings shall be announced later.

FOR OUR ATTENTION & TO NOTE:

Children, please occupy front benches during our Liturgical Services

Kindly avoid crowding at the back of the church. A few concerns.

- Due to safety concerns and for assuring an 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 would be a bit difficult for our volunteers to suggest moving to the front during the service as it would cause distraction and noise. We need to avoid crowding at the entrance and stair areas as this has raised safety concerns.
- Please be considerate to 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 our parents to attend our children not to pull the alarm lever at the back wall.

Hand Waving Machine & Common Absolution Prayer for all communicants

The hand waving machine has been installed at the church entrance for taking count of the communicants. Whoever wishes to take Holy Communion, upon entering the temple, please wave your hand once at the machine. Please be aware that after the Nicene Creed, the machine shall be disabled. Absolution shall be done during the morning prayer.

WEEKLY IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

December 07, Sunday – in-person meetings

- **Sunday School**
- **House Caroling after the refreshment.**

LIVE streaming has been reactivated: All services' Live Streaming is now available.

Holy Liturgical Text for this Sunday

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

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

Next Week

Dec 14, Sunday: Revelation to Joseph, Yaldo Season

Scriptural Readings:

- **OT: Genesis 37:5-11, 2 Samuel 22:26-51, Isaiah 45:18-25, 46:1-2**
- **NT: 1 Peter 2:1-10, Galatians 1:11-24, Holy Gospel St Matthew 1:18-25**

Yours in Christ

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