

Dearly Beloved,

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

1.January 18, 2nd Sunday after Epiphany, Yaldo Season

2.Scriptural Readings:

- OT: Leviticus 22:26-33, Proverbs 8:22-9:9, Micah 4:13-5:8, Isaiah 51:1-8
- NT: 1 Peter 3:7-15, Hebrews 1:1-2:4, Holy Gospel St John 1:42-51

3.Holy Gospel: St John 1:42-51

³⁵The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ⁴²He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter^[3]).

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Beth-sa’ida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathan'a-el, and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶Nathan'a-el said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” ⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathan'a-el coming to him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” ⁴⁸Nathan'a-el said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” ⁴⁹Nathan'a-el answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” ⁵⁰Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.” ⁵¹And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

4.Reflections:

As a magnet attracts iron, Jesus drew everyone towards Himself. Science shows us various forces of attraction. Humans also attract. Their personality and charisma draw others to them. Gurus, sages, saints, ascetics, monks, great leaders and today's influencers would have many followers - hundreds, thousands or millions - according to their potential. What is it about them that draw people to them? What do people expect when they choose to follow someone? What is a broken world looking for? It would be two eyes glowing with compassion, arms ready to embrace, legs to co-travel, and a mouth that gives words of comfort and strength. Unto this expectation, as Jesus warned, there are fake people who are dressed in shepherd's attire but maybe filled with deception. Hence Jesus said that a true shepherd knows his flock and the flock recognize their master's voice to trustingly follow him.

Before Jesus' arrival, generations searched for true help. 'I look unto the mountains, from

'where could come my helper' was not only their prayer but also their real need. Many seemed to meet this need in the beginning but later disappointed. Kings turned out to be foes. Spiritual leaders claiming to be the Messiah failed before the people. They were either too selfish, not real or too lofty for the people to reach out to.

Jesus was the Son of God - in flesh and blood – ready to be accessed by anyone and everyone. He made himself available for that reason. Being the Co-Creator, He was the image and likeness in everyone. He was the seal of God the Father imprinted in the souls of all. Whoever born had Christ inbuilt in them. Through incarnation, this Image and Likeness in everyone got manifested identifying with all human situations except sinning. He was the mind or soul of everyone expressed outside as another human. He was perfect God and perfect human. It was easy for everyone to connect with Him. The poor saw themselves in Him. The marginalized went to Him without feeling any margin. The tender and weak could access Christ without waiting to become powerful. Men and women could equally relate to Him without difference. Kings and elites found him the wisest and the most royal. They all wanted Him to be their guest of honor. The learned could talk to him, the illiterate shared their thoughts without feeling any shame. Children found a playmate in him. The untouchable touched him without fearing social taboos and He held them in return. All differences blurred in His presence.

Jesus was a bridge, a channel, a ladder, a ground, a shelter and a friend. He did not look down on anyone, not even on the most sinful like the woman caught for stoning. He applied no restrictions. A bleeding woman felt that she could touch him and despite the crowd He sensed when His power flowed out to her. He identified with the crowd and the crowd identified with Him. He was one of them and they were one of Him. So, the leper thrown out of society could call out to Jesus for healing. The blind were able to see Him through His loving presence before they got their outer vision. Satan was trembling and falling. It was time for evil to wind up and good to flourish. Jesus called it the Kingdom of Heaven!!! His first message to the world was this - change your mind and step into the kingdom', because it was that close to everyone. It was not a lie. All who yielded to Jesus experienced the heaven He spoke about. They were able to share this kingdom with everyone around. Hence after He left, His disciples and followers could give heaven to everyone.

As Jesus said, heaven was not outside them but was within them. In essence, Jesus revealed heaven to everyone, previously hidden within themselves but now fully manifested. We could see this heaven in the preaching of the disciples, and in the apostolic writings. They all spoke and wrote about the love and sacrifice of the Lord. They shared it with everyone. The same way He was accessible, they all made themselves accessible and available.

Jesus calls us to be magnets to attract everyone for the sake of His Kingdom. He invites us to be healed and to heal the world. He never judged anyone, the same we should be. His sacrificial love is the only reason behind all charitable projects initiated by the churches across the globe. If anybody wonders why there are people leaving everything and getting into the ministry of healing and uplifting. What caused institutions such as Red Cross, Sisters of Charity, World Vision, hospitals, educational institutions, orphanages and care homes run by churches to hold on to these projects amid challenges other than the personality and life of Christ?! Many people initiated various projects individually to make heaven a possibility for the miserable.

Christ is the guiding force to millions even in this current age of all advancements in science,

technology, space travel and artificial intelligence. (I wonder why it is written AI as if it is the god of the future world?!) Is God replaceable? It is unto 'Him' that all knees shall bend. The world would see it. If the world is taking away God from it now, then His Second Coming would happen soon!!! As Jesus promised, the whole world would see it as He will appear in the sky! Nothing can unsee Christ. He will claim all that belongs to Him and no power would be able to hold it. Why? Because His glorious and the most powerful coming would be through His love!!! Who else can do it? Who can love as He loves?! Christ is the God of Love, hence the apostle said, GOD IS LOVE!!! To this image of love, Christ invites us. He is calling us to love to become that love! Let us not linger anymore but run into His arms now. In His love, we shall joyously live and grow.

5.FEASTS AND REMEMBRANCES:

- **January 15, Feast of Theotokos for Seeds**
- **January 15, Commemoration of St Paul the Ascetic of Thebes**
- **January 18, Commemoration of St Samuel, St Simon, Abba Anthony**
- **January 18, HG Michael Mar Dionysius Metropolitan, 70th anniversary, entombed at Panampady**

6.Condolences:

With profound sorrow, we extend our deepest condolences to the family of Ajith Philip Manjadiyil and Nisha Isac on the passing away of Nisha's beloved father, Thazhethil John Isac (73), Padipurackal Thazhethil, who was called home to the Lord on Saturday morning (IST). We humbly pray that the Almighty God grant eternal rest to the departed soul and comfort, strength, and peace to the grieving family.

The funeral service was held on Wednesday Jan 14 at 03:00 pm at St George Orthodox Chapel Cemetery, Pattoor, Thiruvananthapuram

7.Welcome Newborn: Elijah

We joyfully congratulate Jesley Liza Jacob and Mathew Varughese (Vinu) (Directory Reference: M14) on the arrival of their second baby boy Elijah V. J. Mathew on Saturday morning at Credit Valley Hospital, Mississauga. We thank and praise the Lord for His wonderful graces. Jeremy the elder is excited to have his baby brother.

8.Mississauga Area Prayer Meeting:

Mississauga Area prayer meeting at Manu P. Abraham & Geetha's Res went well. Thanks to Manu & Geetha for hosting and thanks to our members in the area for their participation.

9.UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS: Please note in your calendar

- a. Nineveh Lent: Jan 26-Monday to Jan 28-Wednesday: Holy Liturgy on Wed, Jan 28th with Evening Prayer at 06:30 pm followed by Holy Qurbana
- b. Great Lent: Feb 16- April 04
- c. Easter: April 05-Sunday

10.SDOF project: Share the Warmth

St Dionysius Fellowship Toronto initiated winter clothe donation will be closing this Sunday. Please bring usable jackets and warmers, washed-dried-neatly folded, place in the large box kept at the parish hall.

11.MGOCSTM Toronto will be hosting a Sports Day on Saturday, January 17 from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Coptic Orthodox Church of Virgin Mary & St. Athanasius. A day of fellowship and sportsmanship. Requesting everyone's prayers and support to make this event a great success.

12.Vicar on Holiday:

The vicar will be away on his India visit until Feb 12th, will be available on phone, mail, WA or text. Please feel free to connect for any pastoral assistance. Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Thampan has kindly agreed to cover all Sundays and other feast days. If we have any clergy support in person required, please reach out to the parish office. Please keep the vicar's travel in your prayers.

13.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.
- **Winter Conditions:** Please exercise caution in the parking lot, as certain areas may be slippery due to sudden drop in nighttime temperatures.
Kindly ensure that you wear proper winter footwear suitable for icy and slippery conditions while outside.

14.AREA PRAYER MEETINGS: Please bring your Holy Bible and song books for the prayers on:

15.Saturday, Jan 17, Scarborough Area, Sonny Thomas & Julie's Res, 27 Dunwell Crescent, Ajax from 04:00 to 06:00 pm.

16. 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.

17.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.

18.WEEKLY IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

Sunday School: January 18 – in-person monthly meetings after refreshment

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

20.Holy Liturgical Text for this Sunday

We will be using the Taksa of Mar John Chrysostom this Sunday.

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

21.Next Week

January 25, Sunday: 3rd Sunday after Epiphany, Yaldo Season

Scriptural Readings:

- OT: Joel 2:21-3:8, Jeremiah 31:1-12
- NT: 1 Peter 2:1-10, 1 Corinthians 3:16-4:5, Holy Gospel St John 3:1-12

Yours in Christ

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