

**Dearly Beloved,**

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

**January 25, 2026, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

**Holy Gospel: St John 3:1-12**

3 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicode'mus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew,<sup>[b]</sup> he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup>Nicode'mus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>8</sup>The wind<sup>[e]</sup> blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” <sup>9</sup>Nicode'mus said to him, “How can this be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

**Reflections:**

‘Born anew’ was the message given by the Lord to the world. It leaves too many possibilities to interpret, about how to be born again. Jesus’ words were not to be interpreted alone but were to be put into action. Here Jesus’ message to be born anew implied that a rebirth in water and Spirit had to be mandatorily experienced to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The book of Genesis begins with, ‘In the beginning, God created heaven and earth’. Thus, since the act of creation, humans and the rest of creation have been experiencing earth and its realities. A few may have sensed and experienced heaven too. Adam and Eve could enjoy heaven with their daily meetings with Yahweh. Heaven is where God is. Heaven is what one feels about God as His real presence, His graces and the various encounters one could have with angels or heavenly hosts. On their journey to the promised land upon being liberated from bondage, the people experienced God’s presence and leading through fire and cloud, by various miraculous provisions that God gave them with the leadership and actions of the vicar of God, Moses.

The prophets were there to remind people - of God and His will. The temple was their meeting place, to meet God through sacrifices and prayers and through various manifestations.

Balaam’s donkey spoke to him about the angel who was blocking his way to curse the people after taking bribes (Numbers 22). When he failed to recognize heaven, his donkey opened his

eyes and ears. Throughout history, we read of many instances when people experienced heaven either directly or through somebody who taught them to be aware of it. All miracles were intended to convey the message that heaven is watching them, and they should be aware of it. God wanted them to sense His presence and to feel responsible for their life and actions. It was basic human responsibility to experience both earth and heaven in their day-to-day life. Whenever they forgot this, God would remind them through occurrences or through messengers.

According to Jesus, both heaven and earth are at hand. When the ability to sense is lost, both - heaven and earth - become non sensical. People with leprosy who could not physically sense things on earth would have been able to see things. Both are realities. Humans may consume things without being aware of what and how they are made available. To experience anything, one would need to have the ability or keenness to sense it. It would depend on how our senses are developed. For instance, those who have lost their eyesight may develop other skills to the optimum level to survive. So, depending on the way senses are developed, one will recognize and experience things.

When Jesus spoke of the 'Father in Heaven', the angels and Holy Spirit, He knew what He was talking about. He was living it. There was no need for Him to conceptualize. He was the Son of God, one among the Holy Triune, the Co-Creator. He was incarnated to become human. By doing so, He was both in heaven and on earth, a man in whom God and human united, experiencing both terrestrial and celestial lives without any need to swap.

Jesus felt thirsty and hungry while multiplying five loaves to thousands. He touched the leper, blind, possessed, while feeling God flowing out from Him to them. He could taste wine in water, touch the dead one to say he was sleeping, sensing the life in the dead. He Himself had died and was risen. Heaven and earth worked in Him without any distancing from each other. It was such a perfect blending, union. According to Christ it was possible for every human to experience both as their ordinary realities. It was expected of everyone. When they were unable to make it, it was like having eyes but seeing nothing, not because of blindness but because of neglect. It was an error Jesus wanted to correct. It had to be normal to sense the divine in oneself. Hence, Jesus asked Nicodemus, being a teacher, why he was not recognizing. Humans are born with a divine sense, they are made in the divine image, then why can they not sense it? Why should there be a question: Is there a God?! Hence it was necessary to be reborn. It was similar to incubating. Taking back to the factory to reprocess it.

Water and fire refer to Holy Baptism, or a process initiated by God to regenerate and reactivate. To renew. It is not hard or impossible, but it is a simple washing of the body, mind and soul, to be cleansed from viruses using the initiatory antivirus sacramental process. Here a change of mind is required, a change of attitude is needed, a change that brings a new perception free from prejudice and pride. Being baptized members of the church, we can never say that we are unable to sense God and Heaven. If we don't feel them, we need a change as Nicodemus needed, not through another baptism but through a process of regeneration in the Holy Spirit which can happen only through repentance and submission. Nineveh Lent and Great Lent are in the offing now. They are meant for our regeneration. We run toward them looking forward to a rejuvenated ride with Christ!

## FEASTS AND REMEMBRANCES:

- **January 21, HG Philipose Mar Eusebios Metropolitan, 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary, entombed at Mar Basil Aramana Chapel, Pathanamthitta**
- **January 22, Marthoma VIII, 210<sup>th</sup> anniversary, entombed at Puthencavu Cathedral**
- **January 23, Mar Augen the Ascetic**
- **January 25, All Holy Fathers and Teachers of Faith**
- **January 25, Pethurtha Sunday prior to Nineveh Lent**
- **January 26, HH Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, entombed at Mt Horeb Asram, Sasthamkottah**
- **January 26, HG Paulose Mar Athanasios Metropolitan, 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary, Thrikkunnathu Seminary, Alwaye**
- **January 26, India Republic Day**
- **January 29, Feast of St Jonah the Prophet, St Severus, Patriarch of Antioch**

## Condolences:

With profound sorrow, we express our deepest condolences on the passing away of Mrs. Aleyamma Simon (94), Thengumthottathil, Pathanamthitta, on January 17th in India. She was the beloved mother of Varghese Simon (Benoy) and the loving mother-in-law of Anita Varghese (Directory Reference: V02). The funeral service was held on Wednesday January 21 at St. Stephen's Orthodox Cathedral, Makkamkunnu, Pathanamthitta. We pray for the departed soul. May the merciful Lord comfort her soul and strengthen the family members through His Holy Spirit.

## From our previous update:

Scarborough Area Prayer went well, thanks.

Scarborough Area prayer meeting at Sonny Thomas & Julie's residence went well. Thanks to Sonny & Julie for hosting and thanks to our members in the area for their participation. We had the blessed leadership of Rev. Fr. Mathew Thomas, who is there to help us always as he enlightened the gathering through his prayers and devotional talk during the meeting. Sincere thanks to Achen for his benevolent presence.

## UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS: Please note in your calendar

1. **Nineveh Lent: Jan 26-Monday to Jan 28-Wednesday: Holy Liturgy on Wed, Jan 28<sup>th</sup> with Evening Prayer at 06:30 pm followed by Holy Qurbana**
2. **Great Lent: Feb 16- April 04**
3. **Easter: April 05-Sunday**

SDOF Toronto project: Share the Warmth

St Dionysius Fellowship Toronto initiated a winter clothes donation that ended on last Sunday. We were able to fill couple of huge boxes with usable jackets and warmers, washed-dried-neatly folded.

On Thursday, January 22, SDOF members had the opportunity to visit the LOFT location and personally handover the donated winter clothing. Loft provides people facing complex mental health services, physical, addiction and behavioral challenges, supportive housing for youth, adults and seniors across Ontario.

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church of Toronto (SDOF) sincerely thank the program coordinator Allan Thayil George and the LOFT staff members for the wonderful welcome they extended to our members. Moreover, LOFT Community Services presented us with a "Certificate of Appreciation" for the generous donation of clothing to the residents.

Sincere thanks to all who have brought winter clothes. We highly appreciate SDOF for this great timely initiative.

Let us think about continuing this project in coming years.

**Vicar on Holiday:**

The vicar will be away on India visit until Feb 12<sup>th</sup>, 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, pls reach out to the parish office. Please keep the vicar's travel in your prayers.

**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 MEETINGS:** Please bring your Holy Bible and song books for the prayers on:

- Upcoming Prayer meeting schedules shall be updated soon.

**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:**

**January 25, Sunday – in-person monthly meetings after refreshment**

- Sunday School
- OCYM meeting
- MGOCSM monthly meeting

**Please check with organizational secretaries, whether meetings would happen or not, depending on the weather.**

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

#### **Holy Liturgical Text for this Sunday**

**We will be using the Taksa of Mar Dionysius Barsleebi this Sunday. Please note, though it's the fourth Sunday, *the service will be in Malayalam.***

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

#### **Next Week**

**February 01, Sunday: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Yaldo Season**

#### **Scriptural Readings:**

- **Holy Gospel: St Mark 6:1-6**
- **OT: Deuteronomy 18:9-16, 1 Samuel 16:1-13**

**Yours in Christ**

**Thomas John Achen**

**Email ID: [fr.thomasjohn@gmail.com](mailto:fr.thomasjohn@gmail.com)**

**Mobile: (416) 570 5610**