

Dearly Beloved,

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

November 30, 2025, Sunday of Mary's visitation to Elizabeth, Yaldo Season

Scriptural Readings:

- OT: Genesis 27:22- 40, Exodus 19:1-13, Jeremiah 11:1-8, Isaiah 6:1-11
- NT: 1 Peter 2:6-10, Romans 1:1-15, Galatians 3:15-29,

Holy Gospel St Luke 1:39 - 56

Holy Gospel: St Luke 1:39-56

Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be^[a] a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." ⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,

⁵²he has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever." ⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

Reflections:

It was the meeting of two women, both going through their journey into motherhood in different ways. One was too old, and the other - too young. Their conception was beyond human and societal norms or expectations, yet they experienced an overwhelming joy by receiving the Grace of God. Age and profile were not a barrier for them to identify with each other. There was no sense of otherness. Rather, they connected seamlessly. No clash of cultures, interests, ego took place.

Neither did a sense of self righteousness take over the naïve cheer of their meeting. Elizabeth could have bragged about God finally blessing her in reward for her devout nature as she was aged and childless and must have suffered humiliation all through her life. Mary could have been overcome by self-blame or societal ridicule for conceiving before marriage. Regardless of their situations, both women rose above their situations and welcomed each other by praising God.

Elizabeth would give birth to John as told by the angel, a normal child with some exceptional qualities with a mission he had to undertake. Mary bore Jesus, God Himself. When they met, they both were aware of who they were carrying within them. Their footing was on two different levels. Yet when they met, they did as 'equals' and humbled themselves for each other.

Mary took the pain to travel to visit Elizabeth. Elizabeth greeted Mary with high reverence. Mary

stayed with Elizabeth to serve her older cousin. ***The more they were blessed, the greater they were humbled.*** *When there is a sense of the presence of God within, one would meet others with more respect and reverence.* It would never be deceptive, manipulative or fabricated. Relationships, friendships and fellowships can only be maintained with a sense of equality, acceptance and understanding in the absence of any dividing walls. Gossip, pride, the attitude of 'I'm better than them', lack of humility, jealousy and overriding ego never allow healthy connections. Practicing faith in God without shedding such rusting elements would never let a person grow spiritually. Being religious does not mean to be spiritual and being spiritual does not mean that one must be religious. Jesus and the prophets raised their voice against hypocrisy and religious atheism. "Their hearts are far from Me." (Isaiah 29:13) was retold by Jesus "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." (Mt 15:8). They were referring to highly religious and influential people who literally practiced seemingly tough rules and thus they felt perfect about themselves, but with no empathy and love.

The love and care that Mary and Elizabeth shared is the perfect example for any relationship. God dwelt in their meeting space, and they were keen to acknowledge the grace given by God. It was a 'Thanksgiving' meeting. The Holy Scripture asks us to thank God and rejoice in Him always. While praising God, these two women were aware about the challenges they would face in future. Their life was not easy. As Simon prophesied during the presentation of the infant Jesus at the Temple (Lk 2:35), they knew that they both would carry a sword in their hearts. **For any blessing to be received or enjoyed, a sacrifice or cost is borne.** Through the Holy Spirit, as assured by the angel at the visitation, they were able to carry the cross and accomplish their mission without feeling sad or depressed. For them, pain was only for good. With their absolute trust in God and by offering themselves to the purpose of God, both women contributed to the world as nobody else could. **Let them be our role models and motivation for us to look up to through living a meaningful and purposeful life. May the Holy Spirit empower us!**

FEASTS AND REMEMBRANCES:

- **November 24**, H.G Pulikkottil Joseph Mar Dionysius Metropolitan II, 209th anniversary, entombed at Old Seminary Kottayam
- **November 24**, H.G Dr Paulose Mar Gregorios Metropolitan, 29th anniversary, entombed at Old Seminary Kottayam
- **November 28**, Mar Jacob Bardaues & Mar Dionysius Barsleebe
- **November 29**, Mar Jacob of Serugh
- **November 30**, Feast of Andrew the Apostle
- **December 1-25**, Yaldo Lent (Breathnach nomp)

From our previous update:

SGOCT Parish Unit of St Dionysius Fellowship has been launched:

The first meeting of St Dionysius Fellowship was held on last Sunday. Office bearers were elected. There will be a formal inauguration of the newly formed organization after the Holy Liturgy on coming Sunday.

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS: Please note in your calendar

1. Christmas House Caroling & Church Carol Evening

- A. *Sunday, Nov 30- St George's Prayer: Brampton Area*
- 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*
- D. *Saturday, Dec 20- Carol Evening at Church starting with evening prayer at 06:00 pm followed by Carol singing, skits and presentations by organisations.*

2. 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

3. 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:

Prayer Meetings: The general body decided and agreed to have the meeting started in New Year 2026

Saturday, January 3, 2026: Prayer meeting at the residence of Sen and Loozy Mathew

Saturday, January 10, 2026: Prayer meeting at the residence of Manu and Elizabeth Abraham

Saturday, January 17, 2026: Prayer meeting at the residence of Alex George and Sosamma Alex.

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:

November 30, Sunday – in-person meetings

- Organizations meet after refreshment for quick planning for Christmas Carol Evening scheduled to be on Saturday December 20, 2025.
- 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 English Taks of Holy Fathers this Sunday.

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

Next Week

Dec 07, 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

Yours in Christ

Thomas John Achen

Email ID: fr.thomaspjohn@gmail.com

Mobile: (416) 570 5610

<https://www.sgoctoronto.org>