



## WEEKLY THOUGHTS - NOVEMBER 13, 2020

Dearly Beloved,

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

**Sunday, November 15, Annunciation to Zachariah (Parents' Day)**

**Epistle Readings: 2 Peter 1:1-15, Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4**

**Gospel Reading, St Luke 1:1-25 NRSV**

1 Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, [a] to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. 5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. 7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. 8 Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. 10 Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. 11 Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16 He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." 18 Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." 19 The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

21 Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. 22 When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. 23 When his time of service was ended, he went to his home. 24 After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, 25 "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

### Reflections

This Sunday's reading is the introduction to the gospel of Luke. As we start reading, it introduces a priest couple who have lived their life pleasing God. They were just, obedient, and blameless.



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Hearing this, one would start assuming that such a couple had a 'worry-free' life. However, this is not the case. The reading describes the despair that they had from not being able to bear children. This makes us reflect on our definition of blessed. They were a perfect couple. Yet they couldn't get their biggest desire. Especially in their cultural setting, a couple without children was considered cursed. How did they manage through society's perspective of them? It is through their faith in God that they were able to survive. He was too old to carry out his ministry, but he had his inner spirit inspiring him to further deepen his dedication and devotion towards his Lord. They both never gave up serving the Lord, the Temple, and His people. Their faith in God was not dependent on God fulfilling their requests. It was easier for them to give up hope. In contrast, they surrendered more to God's will.

The Angel promising a child to Zachariah was not an answer to their prayer. Rather, it was through God's will to send His Only Begotten Son to redeem everyone. John had to come not to satisfy his parents but to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. We tend to look at God as if He is someone who gives us what we pray for. We seldom think of the salvation that God will bring to his creation. We often forget the fact that we are part of his plans and instead we think about how God will satisfy our needs. Zachariah and Elizabeth looked beyond their own life. They sensed their call towards the wider need of the world. Their view is reflected in the prophecy made by Zachariah after John was born: "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." (Luke 1:76-79). May we look upon our lives through the eyes of God who have created and molded us for his universal purpose!

## Feasts

### **November 13, St John Chrysostom the Golden Tongued (347-407 AD)**

St John Chrysostom was the Archbishop of Constantinople. He was a great theologian, philanthropist, orator, and writer. Due to the beauty of his discourses, he was called the 'Golden Tongued'. In his homily on Marriage, he has said: The affairs of the household will go well when its rulers are so well disposed of. In this way each man together with his wife and children will be able to finish the course of this life without fear and to enter the kingdom of heaven: which may we all attain, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his homily on St John 5:53, 54, he advises: "When we converse of spiritual things, let there be nothing secular in our souls, nothing earthy, let all such thoughts retire and be banished, and let us be entirely given up to the hearing the divine oracles only. For if at the arrival of a king all confusion is driven away, much more when the Spirit speaks with us do. We need great stillness and great awe..."

### **November 14, St Philip the Apostle**

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." (John 1:43). They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." (John 12:21). He is believed to be killed in Hierapolis, an ancient city in Greece. He proved his love and devotion to the Lord not only through his life but also through his martyrdom.



## **H E Archbishop Abune Melketsedek passes away**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has lost one of its most prominent hierarchs. His Eminence Archbishop Abune Melketsedek, one of the most prominent hierarchs of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, has passed away on Saturday 07th in his Archdiocese of California after a lengthy illness at the age of 97.

Abune Melketsedek, formerly called Liqe Siltanat Abba Habte Mariam Workineh, had served as the long time dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa. He was the second person to hold the title of Liqe Siltanat which was created for that position (the first was Abba Meliktu Jenbere who became Patriarch Abune Theophilos). He had also served Emperor Haile Selassie I as a special advisor on religious affairs. Furthermore, he was among the most powerful and prominent members of the clergy in the latter half of the Emperor's reign. He was also a prolific author throughout his life. He had to suffer imprisonment for seven years for his beliefs. Abune Melketsedek was based in Northern California but travelled extensively in his role as Secretary-General of the Exile Synod visiting its churches and playing an active role in the expansion of Ethiopian Orthodoxy across North America. He was instrumental in bringing reconciliation between the state authorities and the church. He was named titular Archbishop of California and served the church with the true witnessing of Christ.

We extend our heartfelt condolence to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on the parting of such a true leader and shepherd. We join them in sharing their loss and sorrow. May the Lord further strengthen all the Shepherds and Flock of the church.

## **SGOCT Parish Virtual Town Hall Meeting on Sunday, November 22, 2020**

As we are aware, this year is coming to a close. We fear that under the COVID-19 restriction, we might not be able to convene the General Body Meeting based on the eligibility list. It will be quite unlikely to maintain the constitutional parameters without Holy Confession. We will not be able to come to church to participate physically too. We are planning to convene a virtual Town Hall meeting for all our members to come together for an update on parish activities. We would make a provision to share our thoughts and ideas on moving forward under the prolonged pandemic season. The virtual Town Hall meeting will be held on Sunday, November 22 starting at 3:00 pm. We wish that all our members join to see and greet each other and to share fellowship in Christ. This meeting will be on Webex. The link will be sent closer to the meeting day. Please keep the meeting in prayer.

## **Christmas Area Carol Service & Celebration**

Our Parish will be organizing a carol service at church on three consecutive Sundays starting on November 29th. Each Sunday will be for a different area. We will be following the past practice of carol singing dedicating to area members. The singing will be done at church after the Holy Liturgy. Families from the specific area can come to church and participate in Holy Qurbana and remain there for the carol service after. We may serve snacks if the respective area members can coordinate. Area coordinators will be contacting their area members to arrange the service. We can suggest carol songs. Donations are welcome and highly appreciated.

Christmas celebration shall be conducted on December 19th in the evening starting with evening prayer at 6:00 pm. Sunday School and other spiritual organizations should either sing or do presentations while maintaining COVID-19 protocols. All organizations are requested to come with their thoughts and ideas on how to take part. When the Lord was born, shepherds were offering him



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praises, magi offering gold, myrrh, and frankincense, Angels flew down and joined them. In the current situation, we gather to offer Him praises either physically or virtually. Let us invoke them to be pleased to join us!

## **Virtual Meetings**

Friday, November 13, NE American Diocese MMVS Retreat, 12:00-01:00 pm

Friday, November 13, SGOCT OCYM Meeting, 07:30-09:00 pm

Saturday, November 14, SGOCT Prayer Meeting, 07:00-08:30 pm

Sunday November 08, Sunday School Common Session 05:30pm, Staff Meeting 06:30pm

Friday, November 20, Sunday School Liturgical Session for Seniors, 06:00-07:00pm

## **MGOCSM Toronto, Virtual Fall Fellowship on Saturday, Feb 14**

As a follow-up to Kanesh, MGOCSM Toronto is organizing a fellowship talk series of which the first session will be on Saturday, November 14, 2020, at 11:00 am. The main speaker of this event will be Fr. Daniel (Dennis) Mathai leading on 'The Role of a Spiritual Father in our lives'. The meeting link shall be sent to MGOCSM members. Please look for it and attend.

## **Invite from St Thomas OC Toronto**

Please find an invitation from St Thomas Toronto. It would be beneficial for our members. Please respond if convenient:

The FOCUS group of the St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Toronto will be hosting a one-day virtual conference exploring the family unit and how it can be considered as a living church. The event is geared towards young couples, as well as individuals who are considering marriage.

Our guest speaker will be Rev. Fr. Anoop Thomas, vicar of St. Barnabas Indian Orthodox Mission, Washington D.C

Please join us on Saturday, November 21, 2020, at 11:00 am for online interactive discussions, Q&A, and liturgical prayer.

Please click on the following link to register:

<http://bit.ly/focusconference2020>

## **Parish Directory**

The Parish Directory will be delivered to our members in feasible ways.

## **Plaque of Contributors**

As we have planned earlier, the names of those who have contributed towards the Church Renovation Project shall be exhibited on plaques in the church basement area. We have different categories based on the total amount given, starting with a \$5000 contribution. It may be feasible for those who have already contributed below \$5000 to pay the rest and get into the list. Those who wish to upgrade could make the rest of the payment corresponding to the category they wish to be in. For those who haven't contributed yet, there is still time to contribute and have their names inscribed on the plaque. November 30, 2020 will be the deadline for finishing the payment. It will be a great support to our parish especially during this prolonged Pandemic period. Each dollar will be carefully spent for the



best of purposes. Please make use of this opportunity to declare our love, dedication, and solidarity towards our Parish.

The list of eligible members whose names will be inscribed on the plaque has been posted on the parish notice board in the basement. For any clarification, please check and contact the Treasurer at (647) 887 4010.

### **Articles required for the church**

I am really glad about the inquiries made by a few of our members after sending the request to buy church articles. We have purchased a Baptismal Font, Crystal Containers, Candle Wick Holder, and Taksa Stand. We are searching for options for Silver Paten and Chalice (The Church doesn't encourage using plated grail and paten for health reasons), Candle Stands, Wooden Box for keeping the crystal jars, Reliquaries - 'Arulikka' with space for keeping icons or relics which we carry during Perunnal Processions, Candle table with offertory box, etc. There will be options available. Prices can vary depending on our selection. Those who wish to donate, please call or text (416) 570 5610 to choose which way you could contribute.

### **Happy Diwali**

Deepavali, the 'festival of lights' is traditionally a Hindu festival. However, all communities in India and other countries celebrate around the world. One of the most significant of all festivals, Diwali is celebrated as a symbol of peace and joy, to mark the victory of good over evil, and light over darkness every day.

On Diwali, houses are cleaned and people decorate every corner with lights, lamps, diyas, and candles. According to Hindu mythology, it is believed that many centuries ago, on this day, the Prince of Ayodhya (a city in modern-day UP) Lord Rama, had returned home with his wife Sita and younger brother Lakshmana after spending 14 years in exile, and upon clashing with - and defeating - the evil forces of the King of Lanka, Ravana. As such, the people of Ayodhya had welcomed the trio with great enthusiasm. They had lit lamps and diyas, a tradition that has continued to date.

The significance of lights is that they help people to clear their shadows of doubt, cast away their inner negativity, and usher in everything positive. It is also symbolic of the victory of inner good over inner evil. (Courtesy; Indian Express)

Please find a few Diwali funny messages:

“On the occasion of Diwali, I wish the government would give us a Diwali gift by waiving off our electricity bills during the festival of lights. Happy Diwali.”

“The occasion of Diwali is a reminder to all of us that today we have all the reasons to not let our neighbors sleep in peace. Warm wishes on Diwali to all.”

“As we clean our houses before the advent of Diwali, we must also clear the browsing history of our mobile phones to get ready for Diwali functions. Happy Diwali.”



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“On the occasion of Diwali, I just want to remind you to put aside all your dieting plans and indulge in the most awaited feast for the season. Happy Diwali to you.”

Happy Diwali to all our Friends! Let there be light (Gen 1:3) !!!

## **Consecration of the New MarThoma Metropolitan**

HG Gevarghese Mar Theodosius will be consecrated as the new MarThoma Metropolitan tomorrow (Saturday 14th) of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. May we all pray for him. We also pray for the flock of the church. May the Holy Spirit empower the new shepherd in ministering God's Kingdom. Let us hope that his ministry shall cater to fraternity and reconciliation among all churches. Hearty Congrats to the most respected Thirumeni!

## **Liturgical Text for this Sunday**

We will be using the Taksa of St John Chrysostom. It is the commemoration week of this Saint. Please feel his soul through his text.

## **Please find the Link for Live Streaming**

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDT7tcyQw1yZ1\\_yCG9AWStA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDT7tcyQw1yZ1_yCG9AWStA)

## **COVID-19 Guidelines**

It is highly disappointing to see Ontario is entering the Red Zone with COVID-19's rising numbers. Let us be more cautious while keeping ourselves without losing confidence. Please be assured that God shall be our protector and guardian. As our ancestors always tend to say, we could also say, 'Let His Will be Done'. He will spread His wings to keep us safe.

May the Gracious Lord keep us from harm and heal the whole World.

Yours in Christ

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