



WEEKLY THOUGHTS - JULY 17, 2020

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

Sunday 19 July 2020, 7th Sunday after Pentecost

Holy Gospel, St Mark 3:20-30 RSV

20 and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for people were saying, “He is beside himself.” 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Be-el’zebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” 23 And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house. 28 “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— 30 for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Reflections:

It is necessary to understand a person before making any public comments about them. Jesus was a point of attraction in society during his time. Wherever he went, a large gathering would follow. People were looking for him for the benefits it would bring. They were fascinated by his soothing and encouraging words and his caring way of dealing with them. He gave them the freedom they all had in his presence, as well as obviously the miraculous power they could witness. He never made any mandate on how people could reach him. He was easily accessible. Even the poorest of them had nothing to fear about meeting him and approaching him. They did not need any mediums. It was so upsetting for the religious leaders who witnessed his increasing popularity. They always chased him to find fault with his words and deeds. They knew, if they did prove his words as blasphemy, people would have rejected him. Here his family members scolded him for the inconvenience it brought when he entered a house. They were using their freedom to advise him to control his life. They were worried about the increasing rivalry developing against their family members.

Pharisees wanted to use the opportunity to worsen this by further adding ‘he was possessed by demons and Beelzebub was acting on his behalf in his healing works. Beelzebub was the Lord of Flies in the Baal worship tradition. In contrast to the Holy Trinity, there was an evil trinity too- Lucifer the king of fallen angels, Beelzebub the lord of flies, Leviathan the sea monster or Astaroth the great duke of hell. This concept may have its variants in the ancient Middle East religious culture. The Bible includes the first appearance of Beelzebub in the 2nd book of Kings chapter 1. King Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room and got injured. He did send messengers for taking counsel from the oracle of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, for healing. This diversion from faith caused God to punish Ahaziah with death. This happened in the time of Prophet Elijah. Pharisees wanted to convey the strong message that if Jesus was depending on Beelzebub, what happened to Ahaziah shall be the fate of him and also of those who follow him. They were wisely using the traditional fear of the people to defame Jesus and his ministry. This text points to the need of



ST. GREGORIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH OF TORONTO

(Since 1969)

6890 Professional court, Mississauga, Ontario, L4V 1X6, Canada



vigilance that the faithful should have in life. It is easy to get diverted from our goal and right destiny through yielding to false messages. In the history of the Church, many had left the true faith falling prey to absurd teachings and joined faith groups with no foundation. Ancient churches had always focused on Christ and His life. New age evangelism tends to spread more of escaping the cost of Christian living and to enjoy prosperity. Faith has become the best entrepreneurship in the current world with its focus on economy eventually growing into the status of a corporate business. Sacrifice of Christ has no role in this trending. The real Beelzebub might be bursting into laughter for the new gains of souls!

This text demands a few things. Firstly, we should take in account Jesus' words and acts rather than manipulative interpretations made by people with vested interests. Secondly, the Church has the authentic way of interpreting the Holy Scriptures. The Church has taught us how to look at Christ through the right way based on ancient spiritual wisdom. We need to use our power of discernment in accepting new thoughts or teachings. Last of all, just as unnecessary interpretations brought divisions in the early church, it can apply in our time too. Jesus states Whatever caters to division (if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand. Mark 3:26) even the demons won't agree. How careful the believers should be?

Feasts:

15th July: Feast of St Kuriakose (Cyricus) and Marth Yolitha (Julitta). They lived in Tarsus and were put to death in AD 304. Kuriakose was only three years old. He confessed his faith in Christ even after being threatened by the Governor. His mother made no effort to save him by denouncing Christ. We might wonder why people choose dying rather than disowning the Lord. We may also look for psychological reasons behind this. It is the real faith. They had found living their faith and dying for it more worth than escaping death by compromising. Faith becomes stronger than breathing. Though they all died, their faith remains alive! It is the story of a mother and son who lived and died for the sake of Christ. It is a story of a family that planned more on Christian living than planning for a secure and safe future without Christ. Being a mother, she could have given more focus to her son's future. She wished more to see Christ living through her son's sacrifice than seeing him growing unaffected. A fourth century story of faith can challenge the faith of the current generation easily. Though the human race advanced in many areas with new technological tools, we cannot claim the same progress in faith and spirituality. Early Christian believers had nothing to do with structures and institutions whereas we have been spending our time and talents arguing for material possessions while failing in true Christian living. May the blessed remembrance of these martyrs inspire us further in spiritual living.

St Abhai: The Syriac Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on July 15th. He is said to have lived for 100 years. He is a patron saint against poisonous reptiles. In principle, a saint is the person who stands against all kinds of venomous instincts. May his remembrance intercede for us.

Virtual Meetings scheduled for this weekend:

Saturday 18 July, 11:00 am, Sunday School Liturgical Class on Holy Qurbana Contnd..

Saturday 18 July, 07:00-08:30 pm, SGOCT Prayer Meeting

We do continue live-streaming of Holy Liturgy on Sundays and Feast days. Please access the link for joining virtually https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDT7tcyQw1yZ1_yCG9AWStA.



Peace Garden

We do hope that by the end of July we will have the Peace Garden Phase One completely planted. Sincere thanks to all members who have contributed towards this project. Our church is beautiful indeed. Peace Garden shall add to its greater beauty!

Directory Update Form

Sincere thanks to our members who have returned the forms updated. We are about to finish collecting updates soon. All beloved members are requested to send the forms back without delay. Information received late cannot be included in the new Directory, we do fear.

Liturgical Text for this Sunday

We will use the Taksa of Abraham Nahasirthono this Sunday. All prayers are beautiful and deeply moving. Please be attentive to it.

New Normal:

Everybody speaks about how the 'New Normal' human race should prepare for the life ahead. It is assumed that COVID-19 shall remain in the world and we would need to rearrange life accordingly. The concept of normal is something we have adjusted. This is life on earth constantly evolving. We have thought that we are keeping things normal in the universe. Life is nothing but the unexpected mostly. It is for us humans to cope and adjust with changes instead of describing it to be normal or abnormal. As St Paul said, we need to be adaptable to life situations. 'I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.' (Philippians 4:12)

Holding you all in prayers

Yours in Christ

Thomas John Achen

Fr Thomas P John

fr.thomaspjohn@gmail.com

+1 (416) 570 5610