



## WEEKLY THOUGHTS - MAY 21, 2021

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

### Sunday May 23rd, Feast of Pentecost

**Epistle Readings: Acts 2:1-13, Galatians 5:16-26**

**Holy Gospel: St John 15:1-14**

15.1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.

### Reflection:

The day of the Feast of Pentecost has come. It is the day on which church was baptised in Holy Spirit. When Jesus appeared to the Apostles after resurrection, He breathed on them and said, "Receive Holy Spirit." On this day, it was fully known and revealed. In the Old Testament, Samson received Holy Spirit and he was able to show unusual power against his opponents. David received Spirit and he was able to kill a lion. Elijah had the Spirit which took him up to another realm of existence on the chariot of fire. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God did wonders in the lives of people. As it is visible in the book of Acts, the same Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, enabled the church to grow miraculously in an unwelcoming world.

Here in the Gospel text, Jesus converses with his disciples on how to live after Him leaving the world. He talks about pruning which is inevitable in spiritual life. In this competing world everybody, every system is trying to bring more fruits through their labours. To become more fruitful, one will have to allow being pruned or measured out. It can be painful, either suffering some loss or accepting some discomfort and the result will be of more joy. Jesus has clearly said that without Him one would never be able to accomplish anything. Here 'anything' refers to accomplishments in connection with the Kingdom of God. Without Christ, humans may achieve many things. But Jesus was talking about how to be spiritually fruitful in this world. He taught the disciples to love each other as love is absolute sacrifice for the good of others. Spiritual life is that which *practices* love and not just preaching or saying that we love. Love should be proved through what one intentionally loses or suffers for the sake of it. Though Jesus asked to obey His commands, He wanted it to be done with love. Life in Spirit is not just obeying a set of rules but revealing true love. When we fight for justice and reinforcing of laws and rules, true love should be given importance. Executing someone for



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violating Sabbath can be justified by the law but it does no good to the person. It could be easier to reinforce regulations whereas practicing of love will be hard. While we advance in all fields and fail to advance in love, it means that all religious practices are futile. Spirit of God works only through love.

## **Sunday May 23, Holy Liturgy of Pentecost, Morning Prayer at 08:30 am**

The Morning Prayer will start at 08:30 am followed by Holy Qurbana and the Liturgy of Pentecost. Please remember the start time and join virtually. Let us all pray for the rekindling of Holy Spirit in us.

### **Feasts:**

#### **May 16, HG Yuhanon Mar Severios Metropolitan, 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary, entombed at Koratti Zion Seminary**

He was proficient in Syriac language, also handled Malayalam and Sanskrit with ease. He was very conversant in Orthodox Bible doctrines. He found an ascetic model in Pampady Thirumeni and led a disciplined life. To make use of his scholarly knowledge of Scripture, faith, and heritage of our Church and pious lifestyle, he was given the position of Malpan in the Seminary. He translated the Lenten prayers, the Canonical prayers of priests, Nineveh Lent prayers, 'Yama Prarthanakal' and 'Rahasya Prarthanakal' into Malayalam. He was authoritative on the tradition, practice, worship, liturgy and order of the church and developed the rubrics (guidelines) for the feasts and sacraments (Sushrusa Samvidhanam). He was humble and a faithful servant of our Lord and also cared for his fellow beings.

#### **May 19, Punnathra Mar Dionysius III, 196<sup>th</sup> anniversary, entombed at Kottayam Cheriyaapally**

He was instrumental in establishing the Syrian Seminary at Kottayam, Kerala's first English educational institution. He also welcomed some of the first missionary teachers who arrived from England to teach in the seminary. During his time the Anglican missionaries maintained cordial relations with the Malankara Church. Rev Joseph Fenn and Rev Henry Baker were more prominent among them and Rev Fenn established schools near Churches (could be the reason schools were called 'Pallikkoodam'). Anglican missionaries in the early phase assisted in the theological education at the Seminary without interfering in the faith and administration of the Church. He also wished to remove certain erroneous teachings which had crept into the Malankara Church. He convened a meeting on Dec 03<sup>rd</sup> 1818 at Mavelikara to suggest improvements and appointed a six-member committee to rectify the unwanted practices.

During the time of Punnathara Mar Dionysius, the relationship with rulers of Travancore and Cochin was very cordial. Maharani Gowri Parvati Bai of Travancore gave a number of privileges to the Seminary. For the first time in Travancore, in 1818, Maha Rani appointed a number of Christians to serve as Judges. Though there is no comparison to Covid 19, in 1825 there was an outbreak of Cholera in Kerala which took away a number of lives. He too succumbed to the disease and passed away.

#### **May 20, Four Evangelists and All the Fathers of the three Ecumenical Synods**

Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the authors of the four Gospel versions of Christ, are remembered for their witness and documentation. Through their writings, they have given to the world the greatest written treasures for generations to cherish and follow. These four books have literally transformed the world for its good.

Along with Four Evangelist, all the fathers of the three Ecumenical Councils are also remembered. They are the saints of the early Church who courageously defended and zealously spread the true



doctrine of Christ. They prevented the spreading of false teachings and heresies. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Fathers of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus zealously guarded the true faith, to preserve it intact for future generations. They remain as foundational pillars always point to Christ and tell what it means to be a Christian.

## **May 21, Queen Helena**

St. Helena, the mother of St. Constantine the Great, was born to Christian parents of humble social means. They brought her up in Christian faith, taught her the doctrines of the Church and the religious ethics. She was married to Constantius I, emperor of Byzantium. She gave birth to Constantine who became the first Christian Emperor. She raised him up well, and taught him philosophy, wisdom, and knighthood. Constantine showed his mother great honor and respect, granting her the imperial title 'Augusta'. Till the time of Constantine, Christianity was an illegal religion persecuted everywhere at least for three hundred years. However, the Word of God continued to spread throughout the Empire. Constantine was keen on defending the Christian faith and declared it to be the official faith of the Roman Empire, through issuing the Edict of Milan in 313. This guaranteed religious tolerance. He convened the Council of Nicaea. Behind his mission works for the church there was the influence of his mother.

St Helena was not only a devoted Christian, but also made use of her influence to spread the faith. She went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and searched for the wood of the Cross of Christ. She found it along with the other two crosses and not far from it, she found a board with the inscription (INRI) ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body. She was also keen on helping the poor and carried out many charity works.

## **Very Rev Sylvanos Ramban departs**

Very Rev Sylvanos Ramban, Superior of St Paul's Ashram & Balagram, Puthupadi, left for his heavenly abode on 18 May 2021. He lived a selfless life for the poor and the needy. He was involved in all the projects of the Church Mission Board and St Paul's Mission Centre. May his life inspire our youngsters to spare their lives for serving the needy.

## **Hearty Congrats to Binu & Santy ! Warm Welcome Jordan !**

Binu Koshy and Santy (B 08) have been blessed with a baby boy named Jordan this morning. We praise and thank God for His precious gift. Hearty Congrats to the blessed parents! Jadon and Jeremy, the elders, are excited to have their younger brother Jordan to join and play with them!

## **OCYM launches New Immigrant Helpline**

Please find communication from Suna Cherian, our parish OCYM Secretary:

We are very pleased to announce that our parish OCYM unit has initiated a new Immigrant Assistance Helpline to offer necessary support to new immigrants. We are very delighted to welcome all newcomers to Canada. With this helpline, we are providing guidance to immigrants from diverse backgrounds positively transit to a new life in Canada. The services include guidance or assistance in knowing the city, finding temporary or permanent accommodation, finding relevant networks and service centers for employment, getting to know our churches and our community in Toronto, transportation to church for Holy Liturgy and other church related activities, getting referrals to programs and services for immigrants or any other possible assistance required. Please be advised that we do not do any immigration process. It is solely for the people who have already earned their immigrant status. We understand the importance of protecting your personal information. We do not collect any financial information from you. The information we collect about you is exclusively for



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the purpose of providing you with meaningful and relevant data. Those who would require any assistance prior to their arrival, can send us an email at [newimmigrants@sgoctoronto.org](mailto:newimmigrants@sgoctoronto.org). They can also visit our website at <http://sgoctoronto.org/ocym/> for more details.

## **OCYM Charity to Covid affected spots in Kerala**

We have transferred \$500/- to OCYM Idukki Diocese to distribute essential food kits in the affected spots. It will be distributed on the Feast of Pentecost as our gesture of solidarity and oneness in Spirit. Sincere thanks to our members who contribute towards this cause.

## **Divyabodhanam**

OCYM has organised Divyabodhanam theological training sessions for our members. It is a two year academic program which covers ten books on various topics in connection with Orthodox Christian living. They include study on Old Testament, New Testament, Epistles of St Paul, Christian Theology, Church and Faith, Sacraments, Church History, Counselling, Other Religions and Environment. The texts are prepared by theologians and professors which can empower us and help to know what we actually believe. This course can clear our doubts regarding faith and practice and also illumine our lives through divine wisdom. This is meant for all members and it will give deeper understanding of the Bible and spiritual life through church.

The next Divyabodhanam session will be on Friday May 28, 2021 at 07:30 pm. The Book for discussion will be 'In the Fullness of Time'. Those who haven't joined yet, please feel free to join the next session.

The access link is:

<https://stgregoriosorthodoxchurchoftoronto.my.webex.com/stgregoriosorthodoxchurchoftoronto.my/j.php?MTID=ma4049ee04ee15dddb0a3576f9d56aa6d>.

## **MMVS Charity**

Our parish MMVS is raising fund to help one local charity in Canada and one or two in Kerala preferably to women shelters. Khadija Kathy Ali, the Coordinator of Engagement and Volunteers of Earnestine's Women's Shelter Mississauga will be attending the next MMVS meeting to talk on their project. All the women members of our parish are requested to join the meeting. It will be highly appreciable if we could contribute to this cause.

## **Virtual Meetings ahead**

Friday May 21, NEAD MMVS Retreat, 12:00 – 01:00 pm

Friday May 21, SS Liturgical Session for Seniors, 06:00 – 07:00 pm

Saturday May 22, SGOCT Choir, 04:30 – 06:30 pm

Saturday May 22, SGOCT Prayer, 07:00 – 08:30 pm

Sunday May 23, MGOCSM, 07:00 – 08:30 pm

Friday May 28, Divyabodhanam, 07:30 – 09:00 pm

## **Liturgical Text for this Sunday**

This Sunday, we will be using the Taksa of Abraham Nahasirthono. The prayers will move us. Please attend to it.

## **Please see below the Link for Live Streaming**

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



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

Yours in Christ,

Thomas John Achen

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