



WEEKLY THOUGHTS - JULY 23, 2021

Dearly beloved,

Sunday July 25th, Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Epistle Readings: Acts 28:11-22, 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Holy Gospel: St Luke 14:7-11

14. 7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, 8 “When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. 11 For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Reflection:

Everybody needs a place in this universe. History has seen many fights and protests to claim places where it was rejected or refused.

Freedom struggles in many countries were mainly because of the local people’s place taken away by intruders. Fights for equal rights also caused by social injustice, colour discrimination and gender inequality.

When God created Adam and Eve, they were properly placed in the garden of Eden. It has also been written that the tree of life and the tree of knowledge also had their specific place and it was not meant to be replaced by anyone’s ambition or greed. The prayer in Psalms to ‘restore’ (Psalm 60:1 - ‘You have rejected us, O God -now restore us’) is a huge cry that resonated millions of times in human history wherever people felt rejected or displaced by the dominating group.

Here in this gospel text, Jesus is referring to another tendency of humans that looks for the best and high place wherever they are. It is a search for a higher place, not just a space. They were attending a feast and people were reaching out to seats in the front row which was usually reserved for dignitaries and high invitees. When somebody takes the chair in the dignified row, it also conveys a message to others that they are less preferred and less privileged. If one has to belittle others in order to enjoy some privilege, it is not agreeable. One should also consider the possibility of getting humiliated in public by the organisers unintentionally or without choice as they will have to offer the right place to the higher guests and they can do it only by replacing the already seated.

Jesus neither wanted his disciples to be blamed for any violation in public nor to be ridiculed for their foolishness.

In this universe, every creation has its specific space, already intended by the Creator. It is humans, the crown of His creation, violates it and saddens the rest. As faith communities, churches have grown big in this world and occasionally there are violations of rights done by the believers. If we expand by encroaching, it is not growth but actions of greed which cannot be approved by God. If we love a life of modesty and justice, God shall place us in the right time, on the right scene.

Feasts:

July 20, St Elijah the Prophet

The exciting life of Elijah is recorded in the book of 1&2 Kings (1 Kings 17- 2 Kings 2). Elijah was a



man of God who preached against evil practices dominated in the social and religious life of his time for which he had to face life threats. The most amazing event in the life of Elijah is his ascension unto heaven on the chariot of fire. His spirit was transferred to his disciple Elisha and it was believed that the Messiah will have the spirit of Elijah and hence the scholars of the time enquired whether John the Baptist was the incarnation of Elijah to which John disagreed and attributed the Messiah role to Jesus the Christ (Lk 3:15-17). Elijah's heart melting prayer, "answer me O Lord..." (1 K 18:37) is the prayer in the Holy Liturgy, is powerful and highly invoking. There are many churches built in his name and believers find his intercession highly powerful and fruitful.

To our surprise, there is a picture of a Byzantine priest blessing toy cars in which children are sitting, on the feast day of St Elias. It is a lovely and beautiful act that really cares for little kids on the feast day of the Patron which will be remembered by the little ones. They are our heaven, these little ones! Whatever we do for them will bring in more of heaven into our midst! Would we ever say that this cannot be a serious act of sacrament? If not, what else could be considered one?! As Jesus said, let the little children go to Him through the provisions the church makes for them.

July 22, St Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene was a close associate of Christ and she had a lead role among the women disciples. Her name is mentioned many times in all the canonical gospels and she witnessed the major events in the life of Christ including his crucifixion and resurrection. Her brevity in following Christ and her deep devotion for her Master remain an inspiration to any follower. She is called 'apostle to apostles', 'heroine of faith' and many Gnostic writings have depicted her as the central figure. In a male dominant culture, she stands as a tower and the perfect example for the ministerial role of women. May her life of true witness inspire us.

July 23, HG Geevarghese Mar Diascoros, 22nd anniversary, entombed at Holy Trinity Ashram Ranny

He left his fortune in the banking sector to serve the church as a priest and later the first Metropolitan of Thiruvananthapuram Diocese. He founded the Holy Trinity Ashram Ranny, initiated many charitable and educational institutions. He was a well disciplined leader and a strong supporter of quality education. May his memory be eternal.

July 23, Fr R S Noronha, 85th anniversary, entombed at Brahmavar Cathedral

Fr Noronha is considered a saint who was a great educator, spiritual father, writer, and social reformer. Fr Noronha was very much loved by the residents of Brahmavar though he had to face many threats from other establishments. He was a devout Orthodox who kept his faith, disciplined in prayers and sacraments and motivated people to participate in prayers through conducting house visits.

Fr R Z Noronha belongs to the 'Shenvi' family (obtained from the word 'Shenoy,' meaning a teacher or scholar), who lived and ministered in Goa. He was impressed by the lifestyle and teachings of late lamented Metropolitan Alvares Mar Julius and after his consecration to bishopric Fr Noronha was entrusted with the responsibility of St Mary's Orthodox Syrian Cathedral Brahmavar where he is laid to rest.

July 25, Mar Epiphanius of Cyprus

Mar Epiphanius was the bishop of Salamis, Cyprus. He was a strong defender of Orthodox faith for which he had to encounter severe challenges and threats. He has authored many books in defence of faith. Within the faith, there were clashes of ideas for which one had to be really keen and theologically sound to take position. It was not an easy task to deal with the clashing schools of thought and he was strong in his conviction.



ST. GREGORIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH OF TORONTO

(Since 1969)

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Condolences

1) Fr Yohannan Mulamoottil

Fr Yohannan Mulamoottil, a senior priest of Kollam diocese has passed away at Kundara. The funeral service was conducted at St Thomas Orthodox Valiyapally, Kundara on Wednesday July 21. He was a dedicated teacher and an efficient community leader. May his soul find rest in the heavenly court.

2) Dr Prasad Abraham

We grieve on the passing away of Dr Prasad Abraham (69 years) on July 19th, Monday in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. He was a strong supporter of the Malayalee Community in St. Louis and helped many families with their health care needs. He also played an instrumental role in establishing the St. Mary's Orthodox Church in St. Louis. Dr. Prasad contributed to the Malankara Orthodox Church tremendously. He administered heart surgery for three bishops of Malankara, His Grace Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews II and His Holiness Marthoma Didymus I. He will forever be remembered for his contributions to the Malankara Orthodox Church as well as for his kindness, compassion and outstanding service. May his soul rest in peace.

MMVS Diocesan Programs

Bible Quiz: Saturday, October 02

Annual Conference: Saturday, October 09

Bible Study: Every Thursday 8.30 - 9.30 pm. The study is based on the books Amos – Malachi led by Rev Fr VM Shibu (Vicar, St Gregorios Orthodox Church Bensalem)

Virtual Meetings ahead

Friday, July 23 – Divyabodhanam meeting, 07:30 – 09:00 pm

Friday, July 23 – NEAD MMVS Friday Retreat, 12:00 – 01:00 pm

Saturday, July 24 – SGOCT Prayer, 07:00 – 08:30 pm

Sunday, July 25 – MGOCSM meeting, 07:30 – 09:00 pm

Soonoyo Retreat organised by SGOCT MMVS – Saturday August 14

Our parish MMVS has organised a retreat for all our members during Soonoyo lent on Saturday August 14, 09:30 am – 12:00 noon. Mrs Merlin T Mathew will be leading the retreat. Merlin Kochamma is a well known speaker and a spiritual guide highly in demand. Let us keep the retreat in prayer. We wish that the retreat will be a great blessing and an occasion for our spiritual renewal. Please remember the date and join.

Church General Cleaning (Saturday, July 17) at 09:00 am

The church general cleaning really went well. We had a lot of members come in to volunteer. It started at 09:00 and finished only by 05:45 pm. All had to work hard to clean up all areas and storage spaces. Everybody including our smart kids found themselves at work without any break. We do thank and highly appreciate all the spiritual organisations for their participation and for everyone's hard work. I think we should come together at least quarterly to clean up. It is the Lord's house and our spiritual home too.

KCEF observance of St Thomas Day

Our church presented a talk show in the St Thomas Day programs by the Kerala Christian Ecumenical Fellowship (KCEF) on July 17. Thanks to the students participated in our program and to



MGOCSM / OCYM for coordinating the program. You can watch the programs on the Youtube channel 'Kerala Christian Ecumenical Fellowship Toronto'.

Eid-Ul-Adha- Bakra Eid Mubarak

Muslims all around the world celebrated Bakra Eid on July 21st. This festival commemorates Abraham's sacrifice of his only son. This great sacrifice is recorded in both the Holy Bible (Genesis 22) and Holy Quran. It has been said as a test initiated by God and Abraham proved his perfect faith and absolute obedience by offering his only son to be slain. An angel intervened to stop him from killing his son and instead guided him to find a ram caught by its horns in a bush. God accepted his sacrifice and counted it as the sacrifice of his son though the son was not slain. Here the actual sacrifice was done within the mind of Abraham when he obeyed God's command. It reveals that the thought behind every action and the honesty of heart counted as real than the action. Abraham's sacrifice is aligned with God the Father sacrificing His only Begotten Son on the cross which is the example of perfect obedience of the Son as well as the willingness of the Father. For the church, this festival is highly important for its Theological and Christological significance. May we together greet our Muslim brothers and sisters worldwide on the festival of Eid-Ul-Adha!

Pray for China Flood Victims

The flood in China, Germany, Belgium, heat waves in North America, landslides and weather disruptions everywhere increase concern about global warming. No place on earth is left unaffected by this crisis. Disaster management and weather alerts do their role, however it will not change the upcoming danger. Every individual should act wisely and do their best to solve this. Faith communities can play a major role in addressing this universal crisis. We should seriously think and act without delay.

Let us pray for the flood victims. May the Lord intervene and keep everyone safe.

Liturgical Text for this Sunday

This Sunday, we will be using the English Taksa of St James.

Please see below the Link for Live Streaming

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDT7tcyQw1yZ1_yCG9AWStA

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

Yours in Christ,

Thomas John Achen

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