



## WEEKLY THOUGHTS - AUGUST 28, 2020

Dearly Beloved,

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

### 30th August, Third Sunday After Dormition of Mother Mary

#### Gospel Reading, St Mathew 17:22-27 RSV

22 As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, 23 and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were greatly distressed. 24 When they came to Caper’na-um, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, “Does not your teacher pay the tax?” 25 He said, “Yes.” And when he came home, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from others?” 26 And when he said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free. 27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

#### Reflections:

Jesus knew his mission and what he could expect from the world. He was expecting revolt from his people. Though he was aware of the consequences his ministry would bring, he never missed anything. He never feared taking challenges. He counted his days and used every opportunity he had to achieve more souls. In his eyes, he wanted to make an impact in the world within the limited time he had left. He never got tired or exhausted with his work. He had to use every minute of his life. Around this time, the disciples had thought that his increasing popularity would allow him to become a real leader who would claim the throne of David and rule the people. They had started building plans for themselves. In their opinion, increasing acceptance from society was a sign of getting into power. His words had shocked them when he said, “the Son of Man will be killed.” They never expected him to say anything like this. Peter had to warn him about using such words. However, Jesus rebuked Peter for his attitude towards an impending reality. Jesus did not want to run away, rather he was willing to face it. Hence, you don’t have to go into war and win to show the world that you are brave. Instead, your attitude proves it.

Then, there was the question of paying tax. Children are not liable to pay tax. Being the children of God, they didn’t have to pay a temple tax. The temple was their property. Yet, the Roman government was taking tax from people for “temple maintenance”. It was never used for temple maintenance but they were claiming it to prove their authority. The question raised by them was quite tricky. If Jesus said yes, then they would interpret him as a cheat. If he said no, they would inform the government that he was an anti-king. But what did Jesus do? He used that opportunity to teach people that they should obey the law of the land. While saying it, he also reminded them that as children, they have their duties and responsibilities towards God. As children of God, our duties don’t end with paying subscriptions or donations. Children are the inheritors. They will have to carry out what their Father has been doing. If God is the farmer, as his children we are supposed to keep the cultivation going. We should consider it further establishing His Kingdom. Every child is God’s ambassador. It is our primary duty to make sure justice and peace prevail, God’s love is revealed and shared, and



God's plan is conveyed and actualised. Whatever work we do, as followers of Christ, it is our primary call to witness Him through our life. Everything, including the work we do, the way we live, the words we talk, and the actions we take should reflect God's love and His Will. We cannot fail Him of His expectation for us. Like the coin had Caesar's imprint, we have His image and likeness printed on us. How could we forget and live otherwise?

## Feasts

### 24th August, Apostle St Matthias

He was not the direct disciple of Christ. He was the replacement for Judas Iscariot who had betrayed Jesus and went to hang himself. It was a great disaster for the early church. The first apostle himself failed in his mission and became a cause for their Rabbai's death. We might not be able to imagine the impact this had. Even until recently, the church didn't allow the burial of those who committed suicide, but it was not because of the reason or situation behind it. Committing suicide is a negation of God. After many thoughts and discussions, the church finally gave a provision for offering burial service to those who died of self-killing. Now, we have a burial liturgy made available for such needs. It was unimaginable for an apostle or even an ordinary believer of God committing suicide in those days. Judas was a strong person. So it had more of an impact on the faithful community. If we look at the way they handled it, it should serve as an example for the church to how any disappointing situation should be handled. They came together to find a solution. They didn't want to keep an open spot because of the loss of one among the twelve since they were called and numbered by their Lord. They discussed and submitted the issue in prayer seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was the promise given by Jesus. 7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convince the world.... 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (John 16:7,8,13). They had no choice of their own but to look for the Spirit's guidance. They prayed for the will of God to be revealed, casted a lot and the lot fell to Matthias. He was counted among the twelve. Still, the number was only twelve, no addition, no deletion. Matthias stood with the rest of Apostles with the same vigour and commitment. He has been following Jesus since the beginning of Jesus' ministry –John's baptism until the Ascension of the Lord-(Acts 1:21,22). But his presence was never notified or highlighted in the Gospel. Matthias was there in the upper room when the apostles received the overpowering of the Holy Spirit. He lacked nothing compared to the rest of the Apostles. He died a martyr, though there is no clear record of it. Matthias was the labourer who joined at the 11th hour and still was able to receive the same wage as we see in the parable said by Jesus (Mathew 20:1-16).

### 29th August, Beheading of St John the Baptist

St. John the Baptist came to reveal the Messiah to the world. He came with that one sole purpose and he accomplished the mission in the exact way God wanted him to do. After he finished his mission, he didn't wait, instead, he left the scene. He lived a martyr sacrificing all his comforts and needs and he died a martyr too. He taught the world how a devotee or apostle could dedicate his/her life for the revealing of God and how to refrain from establishing oneself. He said, "He should increase, I decrease." (John 3:30). This is the mantra of Christian living. When you decrease, He increases in everything. It is the absolute absence of ego. Whoever grows into Divine likeness, at some point the ego will disappear. It will be like getting beheaded and regrowing a new head. It means the whole



thinking and a change in view of something totally new. The head stands for the ego. Ravana, the mythical character in Hindu Purana, had ten heads. It showed his pride and ego. He even challenged Rama the Lord, which means his ego was more grown than his faith and devotion to his Lord. In that sense, martyrdom is necessarily not always physically dying or getting killed. Martyrdom is something essential for our faith life. It is something one should grow into spiritually and denounce one. This is what Jesus commanded. "Whoever wish to follow Me, let them denounce the self, take up their cross and follow Me." (Mathew 16:24). As John the forerunner did, let every believer grow into the likeness of God and be disappeared into His personality. This is the martyrdom the world needs now.

### **August 24, HG Thomas Mar Athanasios Metropolitan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary, Entombed at Bethel Aramana Chapel, Chengannur**

He was an educator and initiated many institutions for the benefit of wider society. He was a good administrator who helped bring more discipline in the church. He spent time promoting education to the underprivileged in the state of Gujarath. He also served as the Secretary of the Holy Episcopal Synod. He kept a healthy relation with political leaders and faith communities. His presence helped in further building the ecumenical relations of the church. May his memory be a blessing for us.

### **Happy Onam!**

Any event of history or any ideology becomes widely accepted and popularised by its relation to ordinary people and their lives. In that respect, Onam the festival of Kerala or Malayalees, comparably a small community in the world has become a globally acknowledged and celebrated festival. The concept or theme it carries makes it acceptable to everyone despite culture, language, or geographical setting. Onam has its focus on equality and oneness among humans as a single entity. Although a king has been positioned in the centre it is not a celebration of royalty. Rather, it is the prioritisation of humanity over kingship. Mahabali was the king who had to yield to the cunningness of an elite called Vamana who appeared small in stature but grew to a high measure which even the whole universe couldn't contain him. If we look at the history of colonisation, capitalism or corporate establishments, they all looked naive in the beginning but eventually grew into universal formations. If we look at the pandemic we are experiencing now, it had a small start but now it has grown big enough to consume the whole world. Mahabali obeyed Vamana because of his kindness and compassion. While being charitable, he didn't bother to act wisely. Vamana appeared as a refugee and asked for some space to place his foot. After persuading him to agree, he grew big and the space he asked for had become as wide as the world. This is an example of cultural or political invasions that have happened in history. Mahabali was honest to himself and he had kept his word. Whereas, Vamana stepped on him and pushed him underground. In other words, he was buried. Yet, Mahabali with the consent of Vamana was allowed every year to see his people. Onam is the coming back of the king to his people. It is the coming back of equality and justice. Let us greet each other and hold on to the concept of social equality and unity. Let us also remember that we have a 'Mahabali' (the word means great sacrifice) who sacrificed himself on the cross. He has promised us to come back. We live in that expectation and we administer the Holy Eucharist in remembrance of His second coming! Let us resonate with prayer in the book of Revelation, Lord, come, Maranatha! (Revelation 22:20). He has said, "Yes, I am coming soon." Happy Onam!!!



## **Good Bye OVBS 2020; See you in 2021 at Church!**

It was awesome! It was never felt that everything was virtual! The kids enjoyed it, teachers loved it, parents appreciated it, and God blessed us! Our children are talented, receptive, curious, attentive, communicative and bold. As I have mentioned in the valedictory meeting, we tend to think OVBS is meant to teach the children. But in reality, it is more for us elders to learn from them. The theme was 'We are one in Christ'(Galatians 3:28). While giving them lessons and training, we witnessed how they really are united to one another! We had only two days for the OVBS program. In the two days, our kids were in closed rooms to be in the dark of inconvenience and discomfort of learning, but on the third day....they came out with their wonderful reflections!!! It was like a resurrection! We cannot think anything better than what they have created!

I would like to thank our organisers, teachers, parents, MC Members, technical support team, and our beloved children for their participation, involvement and support. We have a wonderful team of teachers who took the pain to prepare lesson plans and equip the children with an excellent training module. We are a blessed parish. Let us thank God for guiding and illumining us.

## **MGOCSM Kanesh**

MGOCSM Kanesh 2020 will be this Saturday. I do hope, all our MGOCSM members have their names registered. Please pray for the meeting.

## **Sunday School New Academic Year**

Sunday School's new academic year will be starting soon. Date shall be announced.

## **Sunday School Text Books Return**

After enquiring with the Diocesan centre, we have been informed that no Sunday School texts will be available as hard copies. We have no option other than making the used books available. We will need them before starting the academic year. May I remind our parents and students to please arrange to send in the used books. Either you could send it through members who will be coming to church or you may bring it in directly.

## **'Ettunompu' (8 days Lent of St Mary)**

September 1-8 is Ettunompu. Though it is not canonically recognised, most of the faithful observe it. The church has high reverence towards Mother Mary. We find her intercession so powerful. Let us observe this lent and keep the whole world in prayer. May we all seek her intercession for healing and rising up of the whole world from Covid 19. There will be Holy Qurbana on Monday, September 7<sup>th</sup> with evening prayer starting at 07:00pm. Those who wish to send their names for intercession; please send it by Monday morning.

## **SGOCT MMVS 'Ettunompu' Retreat on Friday, September 04, 09:30-12:00**

SGOCT MMVS is organising 'Ettunompu' vigil, fasting, retreat and prayer on Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, starting at 09:30 am to finish with noon prayer at 12:00 pm. It will be a virtual meeting through Webex. The link will be sent soon.

## **MMVS NE American Diocese Friday Retreats**

Northeast American Diocese is starting Friday Fasting Prayer from today onwards. Every Friday 12:00 to 01:00 will be the virtual Zoom meeting. The link shall be sent to our Samajam members.



## **Gregorian Seniors Forum Get-Together at Peace Garden on Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 05:00pm.**

The Gregorian Seniors Forum was planning a gathering at the Peace Garden on Thursday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> and was given a notification. Please note that it has been moved to Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>. The gathering will start at 05:00pm. Please remember to bring chairs and foldable tables.

### **Virtual Meetings**

Saturday, August 29, MGOCSM Virtual Kanesh

Saturday, August 29, SGOCT Prayer Meeting, at 07:00-08:30pm

Tuesday, September 01, SGOCT Sunday School Teachers Meeting

Friday, September 4, SGOCT MMVS Retreat, at 09:30am -12:00pm

### **Liturgical Text for this Sunday**

We will be using the Taksa of Mar Julius this Sunday. Please be keen on how it is unique with its prayers.

Please find the link of live-streaming of Holy Liturgy

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

### **Sad Parting**

With profound grief, may it be announced that Mr K Thomas, the beloved brother of Mr K T George (Dir Ref: K 01) has passed away in India at 03:00pm on August 28<sup>th</sup>. His 87<sup>th</sup> Birthday was on August 27<sup>th</sup>, just the day before his parting. He was predeceased by his only son and son in law. He is survived by his wife and two daughters and other close family members. The funeral is tentatively scheduled for the coming Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup> at his home parish, St Mary's Oorslem Orthodox Church, Puramattom. K T George was fortunate to see his brother and to stay with him for a few months during his previous visit to India.

May we together pray for the departed soul and also pray for the family members. May the Lord's loving presence comfort and strengthen everyone.

Holding you all in prayer

Yours in Christ

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