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HOPE • RESURRECTION • VICTORY

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Be Risen!

By: Fr. Thomas P. John (Vicar)

'God became man to make man God'. This 4th century statement by St Athanasius solved a heretic turbulence in the early church. The divine image humans possess has been clearly revealed by Christ through incarnation and resurrection. Man becoming God means living all divine virtues and actions including defeating death. God's image is the strong survival instinct in everyone. Christ is the hope one should always hold, the unstoppable energy that rips through any closed doors, the ultimate will power to win against thoughts that lead to depression and decay. New life emerges from destruction only through striving hard to overcome one's own negativity and to demolish walls of fear.

Freedom from bondage requires self-realization, then to sense possibilities and to take strength to break chains. Proper education, healthy interactions, wide reading, social actions, travels and other programs could equip one to fight against any forces. There can be anything (eg. writer's block) that suppresses creativity. One should recognize the right to live, find a place in the universe, understand the value of the self, find the purpose and meaning of life, and to explore possibilities to become victorious.

Through Christ, God has got united with humans which assures God's resurrecting possibility in everyone. All the inventions that happened in history were humans rising up from situations. Science, art, politics, religion, economy, health or in any field, certain rising ups emerged which led to new beginnings. The invention of Covid vaccine is an example for the resurrection against a lethal enemy that could have wiped away the human species from earth. Every such invention comes through Christ, the power of resurrection. There is a resurrection possibility in all life situations. Christian hope demands actions to rise up victorious! Let us be risen always!

Host-Guest Paradigm

The Right Setting for Resurrection

By: Fr Abraham Thomas

(Bishop Designate and Professor at Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam)

The invisible but connecting thread running through the articles presented here is 'hope and resurrection'. The titles assigned to each spiritual organization cannot be anything better. Blessed St. Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of the Genesis creation narrative could probably serve as an encapsulation for the wonderfully coined anthology of articles.

In Genesis chapter one, we see man and woman as the last of the creation. Gregory views this as if God became a wonderful host in setting everything in its proper place prior to the arrival of his dignified guests - man and woman. Precisely, contrary to the conventional modern time dictum which says God as the 'unseen guest' in the household, the Church Father is presenting God as the host of man and woman. This host metaphor of God could serve as a catalyst ingredient to all the topics selected here. For ecological sustainability, humankind should transcend the patronising attitude of ownership of everything. The moment we realise that we are guests of God in this world, the ownership goes to God. The host-guest paradigm will give space to us in making the results of scientific and technological advancements for the sustenance of the creation and not for its annihilation. The paradigm certainly reminds us of our role in not hoarding the wealth as the right to the resources are equal to all the guests.

Earth and women as victims of exploitation and in terms of inherent dignity have commonalities. Here too, the paradigm would give sense of direction. In a similar manner, for each sub theme God as guest in Genesis could be an inspiring metaphor.

The lost son in our Lord's parable had taken a convincing decision out of his distress that he 'will rise up' (Luke 15:18) and will go to the Father. 'Anastas' (having risen up) is the word used there. It is time to rise and return.

The Living Among The Dead

By: Reji Koduvath (Guest)

Today, we live in a world impacted by pandemic and natural disasters. We are all going through a difficult phase of our lives. Many are coping with complex personal environments and circumstances. This is where we need spiritual support to fill that vacuum left by the absence of God in us.

“When the going gets tough, the tough get going” was the catchline during our tough five weeklong Commando training, considered amongst the toughest in the world, designed to push the trainees, testing our physical and mental toughness to an extreme. Our training began at 2 AM with physical training, obstacle crossing, long marches up to 40 km, and ended at midnight with night navigation marches, raids, and ambushes – all while carrying our personal weapon – the rifle weighing over 5 kg and a 30 kg backpack.

This was where I needed someone to hold my hand, pat me on the back, encourage me to complete the tough tasks, push me from the back through those long endurance marches, etc. Here, my faith in Christ helped endure through it successfully. I found our Saviour, the Resurrected Christ there when and where I needed Him. Whatever physical and mental turbulence I was going through, He underwent many times more and emerged successful.

Timothy 2:3 says, *“Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”* The Bible does not offer you space to complain or crib. St Paul was beaten, persecuted, betrayed, drowned, and thrown into prison, still he never complained. Paul endured his perils by holding to his faith and belief in Jesus Christ. Did Jesus Christ ever complain even while He was dying on the cross?

The essence of resurrection is contained in the verse Luke 24: 5 where the angels at the tomb said to the women who went to anoint Jesus' body: "*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*" It happens to be the first spoken word after the resurrection of Christ.

This question led the women to understand the reality of resurrection. We must realise how pertinent it is in our daily lives. Resurrection celebrates the moment death was defeated and hope came alive. *If you are looking for Jesus among the dead, you will not find him, because he is not there.*

We often end up in failures, dissatisfaction, or burnout after the long and treacherous hours we put in. Often our efforts do not bring us a sense of achievement and fulfillment. This could be due to the lack of realisation as to how our effort may have helped others and not us. We place an unrealistic expectation on returns that will lead to frustration, anger, and disappointment. It is a way of seeking the living among the dead. Here we are not looking at the joy and happiness that our action has brought to someone else (living), but we are more concerned about what we will receive in return (dead).

We look for the dead weighing our success based on our achievements like bank balance, grades scored, promotions achieved, the brands of the clothes we wear, the car we drive and so on. We keep looking for self-worth in our personal image and some end up finding relief in drug and alcohol abuse, leading to addiction (further death) not liberty or freedom or solution to one's problems (mirage of living). For some, it leads to anxiety and fear, rather than joy and fulfillment of life.

Looking for the living among the dead also means looking for a spark or a ray of hope when everything around is grim and bleak. While on a military mission, driving on a Himalayan Mountain road at about 12,000 feet above sea level, the pickup truck with two soldiers ahead of me suddenly toppled to the side, because the road caved in. The pickup with every tumble lost each of its wheels, finally rested on a tree at about 1000 feet below. I ran out of the Jeep with my driver and two of my radio operators. We reached the vehicle to see the two soldiers badly injured, bleeding profusely. Upon seeing the state of the vehicle and the tumbles it took, I did not expect any survivors. Here I was 'Looking for the living among the dead' as hardly anyone survived such accidents in that area. We carried the two injured soldiers up the steep slope, shifted them to the nearest first-aid post to be evacuated by the Army Helicopter. They survived.

Until today, I do not know how we rolled down that steep slope, brought those soldiers up the mountain. Everything appeared to be a miracle, where the Resurrected Christ gave me the strength to execute the task. It saved the lives of two soldiers, but for us who participated in it, it was all some bruises left on our body by the bamboo which grew on the mountain slope. No one complained. We were all happy that we could save two lives. That is what soldiering is all about – Risking one's life to save others.

Whenever I passed on that road again, I felt the Resurrected Christ appearing before me.

This Easter, we must all look for our resurrected living Saviour, one who brings joy, life and hope, the one about whom the Prophet Isaiah said: "Those who hope in me will never be disappointed."

Children - Stewards of Earth

By: Aiden Anish - Grade 9 (Sunday School)

Every year on the 22nd of April we celebrate Earth Day, which reminds us about environmental protection. This day reminds us of human actions impacting earth, causing climate change and ecological degradation.

The Bible teaches us about protecting and respecting both the living and the non-living among the creation. God created humankind not to rule over the Earth; rather, to guard the environment where they sustain. The Book of Job tells us that humans must live in harmony with nature. This correlates to God's command to his children to take care of earth and protect it as it is owned by Him, not by humans. Psalm 24:1 and Leviticus 25:23 emphasize that Earth belongs to God and humans are dwellers or tenants. The Bible is telling us that living on the land is a privilege given by God and it is our sacred responsibility to take care of everything on it.

As Christians, we have the privilege of knowing the one who created the world. We have to stand up for conservation, a healthy planet, and recycling in order to sustain our mother earth, so there will be new life, rebirth, and renewal which symbolizes EASTER.

From an ecological perspective, we have to get engaged as environmental stewards. We could take care of the ecosystem by not swallowing up the world's natural resources but by only using what we need. We can sustain life in general by not killing nature, through conserving water, using long-lasting LED bulbs, energy savers, appliances etc. In our homes, we can allow food waste to turn to compost, and by doing that will protect our environment. When food decomposes it will turn into fresh new soil usable. Ecological Sustainability is not just for the benefit it provides for us today but also for the benefit of the future generations.

Guardians of the House

By: Jonathan Philip Philips - Grade 10 (Sunday School)

Genesis 1:21 says, “So God made man, in the image of God”

Genesis 2:15 reads, “then the Lord took the man He formed and put him in the garden to tend it and keep it”.

God created man as a representative of God on earth and he was mandated to tend and keep it.

It was not long ago; we saw how air and water of some of the most polluted cities of the world had cleared up during the Covid-19 lockdown tenure. Though Covid-19 was considered to be one of the worst pandemics that shook the world order in recent times, one could notice the positive effect the lockdown had on mother earth.

Even though man partially failed in keeping and taking care of the environment, we see that if left alone mother nature has a self-cleaning mechanism, by virtue of which the skyline cleared and the lost order can be restored to its full glory, as though the prior never existed.

We could compare the lock-down to the fasting time where we abstain from our normal state of affairs, which allows us to recuperate and regain our full glory. It is in human nature to sin. By fasting we are able to declutter and better visualise what God has in store for us.

We also saw that as soon as the lock-down was lifted, humankind went back to its old status, continuing to exploit the environment. However, at the end of the fast, we have a choice, when the ‘window’ of the lent is opened, we have two options – like the two birds in Noah’s ark, we can either be the Raven which looked for dirt and garbage or the dove that picked the fresh green olive leaf of peace. By choosing to exercise the practices of the dove, we can maintain the strength we gained through diligent fasting.

Heaven On Earth

By: Noah Anand Joseph - Grade 3 (Sunday School)

God created everyone and everything, and all that He created was good. He created human beings from the mud of the earth. So, God is our Father and the earth is our mother. God placed us as the Crown of all His creation and He asked us to take care of everything (Genesis 2:15). He made everything to be in perfect harmony, so that all of His creation can help each other and keep a balance as in a family.

What does ecological sustainability mean? It is a big word for me, but from what my parents and grandma explained to me, it means how to use all the blessings in nature that our Lord has given us, with thankfulness and wisdom. So, if God created everything that was good and made us too, to take care of it, why are we thinking about ecological sustainability? The reason is, we humans have failed in taking good care of the earth. We have used it greedily and selfishly, without being considerate of our neighbors; the air, water, plants, animals and so on.

How do we hurt our mother Earth?

- we rely on a lot of factories, cars and planes that produce smoke which pollutes the air;
- trees purify the air and provide habitat to many animals; these are being cut down to build man made structures
- we use a lot of plastic that contain chemicals harmful to animals and soil

The psalmist says in Psalm 24:1 “The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are his”. God made it all because He loves us and all His creation. Psalm 19:1 says that “How clearly the sky reveals God's glory! How plainly it shows what he has done!” All these verses show how great this world is so we should make sure not to destroy or harm it.

Here are some awesome and easy ways we children can care for the earth.

- plant more trees and plants;
- walk or ride a bike instead of a car for shorter distances;
- limit the use of gas-powered objects;
- limit the use of things made of plastic;
- reduce waste by reusing and recycling.

Most of the ecological problems are a result of our greed as we want more things, more comfort, and more pleasure; all at the cost of everything else that the Lord has blessed us with. Our Almighty has already provided us all that we need, in abundance, to live joyfully on this earth and He will faithfully continue to do so forever. So, we should all try to be less greedy, be thoughtful of how much we want and how much we use and think about how it affects nature.

Why do we have to take care of the earth? If we use everything on the planet selfishly now, there won't be anything good remaining for the future generation and that will cause a lot of sickness, misery and death. A healthy planet is one of the best gifts we can give to those who are yet to be born.

I pray and hope that all of us will see the great privilege that God has blessed us with; to do His work as the caretakers of God's creation, and to do our part by making heaven on earth.



*Drawing by
Angelmary Boban
Grade 5*

Science - A Tool For Resurrection

By: Eva Mathew (MGOCSM)

Scientists and researchers have discovered that a person's neurochemistry has the potential to be altered by changing one's mindset. Advances in healthcare, science and technology have made the medical experience far superior and more reliable. It gives patients hope for a better chance of survival by introducing new machines, medicines, and treatments that can save lives and improve their chances of recovery. However, while advanced technologies in hospitals give people a chance to live, the outcome may be different if they lose hope. Hope is a mindset that provides the motivation and courage required for success, and when people have hope, they also have faith. Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hopeful people believe that the future will be better and hope that they will be successful without any "proof". As Christians, our hope is in the second coming of Christ. Only then, good and evil / life and death will be separated, allowing the good to triumph and grow indefinitely.

The Nicene Creed clearly explains our orthodox faith, and we live by it every day. While faith can exist without hope; hope cannot exist without faith. Thomas Alva Edison, widely regarded as America's greatest inventor, is famous for claiming that he may hold the record for the most failed attempts before success on a single project, the functional light bulb. "I have not failed. I have just discovered 10,000 ways that will not work". After each setback, he did not give up hope, but instead faithfully persevered. This led to his victorious invention. Hope in God, combined with science, can provide a hopeful mindset, which is the best way for someone to heal and triumphantly restore life physically, spiritually, and mentally.

The Truth Of His Victory

By: Riya Mathews (MGOCSM)

Science and Religion oftentimes may seem incompatible, however, there are many instances where scientific theories and logic have supported certain aspects of the Bible and vice versa. We can even draw similarities between the two. Science and technology are foundational pillars in our society, as they provide positive changes to social life and help humanity thrive. Similarly, Jesus' resurrection remains the foundational pillar in the Christian faith as it affirms ultimate triumph of life over death.

Science in terms of healthcare allows much hope, safety and comfort; it gives people a second chance in life and improves the future. In the same manner, Jesus' resurrection gives us salvation and a new life, as we are freed from the hardships and sufferings of our sin.

In general, science stands for the *"intellectual and practical activity concerning the study of the structure of the physical and natural world."* Science has given way to so many revolutionary ideas and discoveries; it has helped humankind to make sense of numerous complex aspects of the world around us. Science has been one of the many helpful tools that humans use to comprehend the truth of the universe. Likewise, the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ has led to the evolution and growth of Christian faith itself. The followers of Jesus grew in number and in confidence as they came to know the extent of Christ's power. The resurrection of Christ inspired and empowered our beloved "scientists"- the Early Disciples - who later took it upon themselves to spread the Good News and help others understand the truth of the Messiah and Salvation. They taught the truth of His victory. *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit."* (1 Peter 3:18).

Lent – A Journey of Abstinence to Purity

By: Ann Varughese (OCYM)

Great Lent is a time for fasting and renewal of our faith in God. As Orthodox Christians, the church teaches us the importance of fasting – abstaining from good foods that we like and giving alms. God wants us to remove the chains of oppression and set ourselves free from those sinful bondages that hold us down. He asks us to open our doors to the downtrodden and to those in distress and worries. But are we truly fasting? While we fast we also get angry, go violent, we fight and we quarrel too. We see that our tolerance levels get reduced significantly; there is no love and harmony amongst ourselves as expected of the children of God.

Lent is a return from fraudulent and dishonest approaches to virtues and actions of divine compassion. If we take the Sun as an example – It gives light and warmth to everyone regardless of any good or bad in their character. Can we truly ever do this – treating everyone equally? Letting our light shine on everyone equally? How long can we claim or become ‘heroes’ for Christ’s sake if our thought process is darkened by futile actions and arguments?

When Jesus tells the parable of the camel and needle eye, this is what He wants us to do, denounce all our riches that make us spiritually numb; differentiate between mortal and immortal things, and walk in the Kingdom of God through a life of true faith. Fasting implores us to purify our prayers and petitions. “You ask for something but do not get it because you ask for it for the wrong reason—for your own pleasure” (James 4:3). Let us wash and cleanse our hearts with tears of repentance. Then probably, we may find a vacant place in our hearts for our neighbors, as our Lord commanded. If there is a provision for a personal note, I would admit that it was because my heart was occupied with unnecessary worries and anxieties, more of the self, that my neighbors were kept away from it. As our Lord has asked us to practice, ‘Let us love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us so that we may become the children of our Father in heaven.’ We can prove that any richness will never be a hindrance to our entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Rich Man Who Entered Heaven!

By: Mickey Chacko (OCYM)

It was a beautiful morning; the view from the terrace of his palatial villa was a sight to behold. Everything was perfect, “What could possibly go wrong in life?” Silas thought and a smile broke on his lips. Though it glowed his face, he also felt a pinch somewhere within. Suddenly he remembered that the local apothecary had given him another appointment “and this time he’d better fix it” he smirked.

Though his expertise was highly promising, Silas wasn’t convinced. Something was bothering him; however, he couldn’t place it. This was one of the many visits to the doctor’s shack and it has become a routine for years now. He couldn’t even remember when it all started. He had begun to lose hope. “Maybe it’s time”, he thought. “Arrghhh!” feeling irritated with himself he hurried off.

Silas looked unto the field and marvelled at the year’s harvest. It was the best the land had seen for ages. He felt so proud that he could double what his ancestors had produced. But in reality, even this thought had lost its charm. He was depressed. Judith, his wife, was the only daughter of the richest man in the neighbouring village. Her beauty was the talk of the town, and she had had suitors from near and far and yet she chose him. Marrying her was life’s best choice, but that too failed in keeping him happy. He knew she was worried. He would toss and turn, break a sweat and wake up at odd hours. Judith did not deserve this; it was definitely not what she had signed up for, realisation made him sadder. He was reminded of a Jewish young man, son of a carpenter, mentioned by Judith, who was said to have been healing the sick. Though he did not like the idea, he didn’t want to hurt her and thought of going up to meet this so-called ‘Son of God’. ‘Who knows, maybe it’s time’, he justified.

As he made up his mind and turned, there stood his brother – Rufus! “What do you want, Rufus? Haven’t I told you? I have nothing to do with you? I do not know you and I cannot help you.”

Rufus looked down and from his drooping eyes, tears dropped onto the land which was soon to be harvested. “Brother”, he tried to voice, “I know you don’t approve of me, but tell me how am I to be blamed for being born out of wedlock by your father? Where can I go now? Abba left us with nothing, and I need to buy land to bury my mother.” He fell on the ground and begged. “Merely a portion of your harvest will suffice to me. I can sell it and add to the little savings I have with me. Please brother!” he cried. But Silas had other things in mind and rushed away.

With an uncertain heart he pulled himself towards the hill where the man was meeting with people. Jesus- that’s his name. While approaching, he could hear the crowd cheering and talking. He looked for the man who had already conquered his wife’s beliefs. He could see him who had won the trust of many men and women, young and old and even children. He was surrounded by people asking questions and seeking healing. A group of children ran past, and they seemed to be the happiest in the world. Silas, for a moment, sensed the need of feeling free like them.

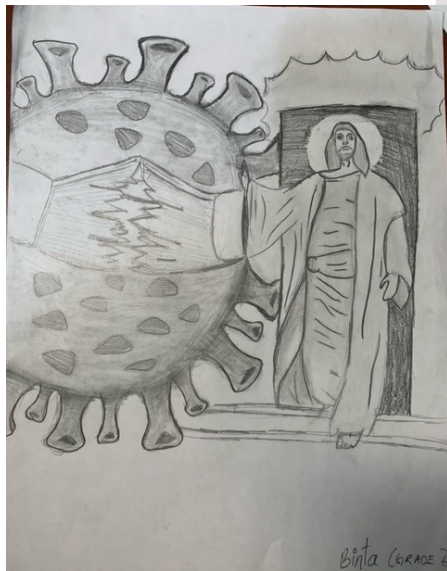
Some thoughts struck him. As he began to leave he heard, ‘Silas!’, he was sure someone had called his name. He turned and his eyes crossed with the most enchanting eyes he had ever seen. In those eyes he could see a fire that could consume all his problems. Or, has it already started working on him? He could sense some healing inside. He walked up to him and asked, “Good teacher, what good things shall I do that I may enter eternal life?” Jesus glanced at him with a smile and said, “Keep the commandments”, he continued “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, and you shall not bear false witness, honour your parents.” He then paused for a moment, looked at Silas the rich man who was bearing a poor soul within and said, “You shall love your brother as yourself”. It broke something inside Silas and his thoughts raced back to the field where his brother lay crying. He mumbled something under his breath “All these I have kept from youth” and he wished Jesus had not heard him. But Jesus rose and said “go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven”

Silas realised that he had found the cure for his unexplainable pain. Even when he owned everything, he couldn't own happiness, and isn't that what heaven actually meant? His life was a living hell. He sobbed and he turned away in shame as he couldn't face the man who saw him inside out.

"Rufus, Rufus" he ran and hugged his half-brother and begged for forgiveness. He gave him what he needed and much more to help him out of his struggle. Silas felt real joy for the first time in many years. He went to bed and slept like a child!

He wished to thank the miraculous healer, the Son of God. But by the time he had a chance, Jesus, who showed him the true meaning of heaven, was lying there on the cross at Golgotha dying for his brothers and sisters. Indeed, Silas was a camel burdened with a heavy load of luxury which was of no use to his sad life. The wealth couldn't give him peace but at the very moment when he let go of his pride and started to help his brother, he realised he was no longer the camel trying to enter the eye of the needle.

He looked at the crucified Saviour and prayed "Here I am my Lord, by taking care of my lesser privileged brother I have entered heaven!"



*Drawing by
Binta Joshua,
Grade 6*

True Meaning of Wealth

By: Vanessa James Skariah (OCYM)

What did Christ really mean “Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven”? Those who are wealthy are usually considered successful and have infinite opportunities. However, having wealth in this life doesn't necessarily mean that the wealthy have a fast pass to heaven. God does not care about the monetary wealth we possess but what He really cares about is whether we are spiritually wealthy.

We need to take the time to analyze our personal attachment to wealth - is wealth the only source of our happiness or do we find our happiness through Christ? Is wealth a distraction from focusing on God? Are we the only ones benefiting from whatever wealth we have or are we sharing it with those who need support?

Monetary wealth is a gift and opportunity from God to continue doing his good works and spreading this wealth with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Many of us work extremely hard to provide for our families with the basic necessities of life; home, food, education and experiences. Some of us may feel that despite our efforts it's never enough money to fulfill our wants. What we fail to realize at times is that even though we may not see ourselves as wealthy there is always someone that does. We live in a world where having more numbers in the bank correlates to an individual's happiness and opportunities. We should not forget that nothing is possible without God. One day we will all leave this earth as Christ did, and we have hope that we will be resurrected to eternal life with Him. When we leave this world, God will not ask us how much money we earned, how many vacations we took, or how much jewellery we had. Our entrance to eternal life is our faithfulness to God and how we treat others. *“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:19*

Building Resilience In Adversity

By: Jessie Vaidhyan (MMVS)

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “A woman is like a tea bag. You can’t say how strong she is until you put her in hot water”. Even though women are traditionally portrayed as the weaker sex, research has proven that when it comes to longevity, surviving extreme prematurity at birth, the weaker sex has the advantage. However, research has also shown lower mental resilience in women leading to higher rates of low self esteem, anxiety, depression and panic attacks.

Resiliency is the ability to rebound back from problems. The one factor that psychologists have said that improves resilience in times of adversity is faith along with hope. Faith in the ever-loving compassionate God gives us hope for the future. The best mantra to cope with life’s challenges is a conviction that God is our helper and therefore, we will not be afraid (Hebrews 13:6). Through faith we are not discouraged by failures, because we see God in all things. Faith renews us daily in the grace of God enabling us to move forward in life. Faith teaches us to forgive others as God has forgiven us, shedding past resentments of perceived wrongs. Through faith we share in God’s love and with a thankful heart find joy in the goodness of God all around us.

God as the potter is molding us, who are the clay, into beautiful figurines baked in the fiery kiln of life’s trials until we are fit to reside in the eternal dwelling place. Through prayer, fasting, vigil, worship and almsgiving mingled with love, we mold ourselves for the same. So let us place ourselves in God’s capable hands and say like St. Mary “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word”.

അത്ഭുത വനിത - പ്രതികൂലങ്ങളിലെ നേരിടലുകൾ

By: Jaya Mary Soney (MMVS)

Christ is risen. Indeed he is risen. 1.Cor 15:17- ക്രിസ്തു ഉയിർത്തിയിട്ടില്ല എങ്കിൽ നിങ്ങളുടെ വിശ്വാസം വ്യർത്ഥം. അതേ, മരണത്തെ ജയിച്ച ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ പുനരുത്ഥാനം ആണ് നമ്മുടെ വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനം. പുനരുത്ഥാനം നമ്മെ പ്രത്യാശയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു.

ആരാണു് ഒരു അത്ഭുത വനിത?

വിശുദ്ധ വേദപുസ്തകത്തിൽ ഉള്ള അനേകം അത്ഭുത വനിതകളിൽ ചിലർ മാത്രമാണ് സാരാ, രുത്, അബീഗയിൽ, ദബോറ, എസ്ഥേർ, മാർത്ത, വിശുദ്ധ കന്യക മറിയം, ക്നാനായക്കാരി സ്ത്രീ എന്നിവർ. (Proverbs 12:4, സാമർഥ്യമുള്ള സ്ത്രീ ഭർത്താവിനൊരു കിരീടം. Proverbs 14:1, സ്ത്രീകളിൽ ജ്ഞാനമുള്ളവൾ തന്റെ വീട് പണിയുന്നു. Proverbs 19:14, ബുദ്ധിയുള്ള ഭാര്യയോ യഹോവയുടെ ദാനം. Proverbs 31:10, സാമർഥ്യമുള്ള ഭാര്യയെ ആർക്ക് കിട്ടും? അവളുടെ വില മുന്തിയും ഏറും.) സദൃശ്യ വാക്യത്തിൽ പറയുന്ന സാമർഥ്യവും ജ്ഞാനവും ഉള്ള സ്ത്രീകൾ ആവേണ്ട നമ്മൾക്ക്? പൗലോസ് ശ്ലീഹായുടെ ലേഖനങ്ങളിൽ നാം വായിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്, സ്ത്രീ സഭയിൽ മിണ്ടാതിരിക്കട്ടെ, പുരുഷൻ സ്ത്രീയുടെ തലയാണ് ...തുടങ്ങിയ ഉപദേശങ്ങൾ. എന്നാൽ അതൊക്കെ ആദിമ സഭയിലെ സാമൂഹിക വ്യവസ്ഥിതികൾ, ചുറ്റുപാടുകൾ എന്നിവയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ഉപദേശങ്ങൾ ആയിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് സഭയിലും സമൂഹത്തിലും സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് ഉയർന്ന സ്ഥാനം തന്നെയുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ വെല്ലുവിളികൾ ഏറ്റെടുക്കാൻ ഇപ്പോഴും നമ്മളിൽ പലർക്കും മടിയാണ്. ഭാഗ്യസ്ഥരണാർഹനായ പൗലോസ് മാർ ഗ്രിഗോറിയോസ് തിരുമേനി പറഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട്, പൗരസ്ത്യ സഭകളുടെ നിലനിൽപ്പിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനം സ്ത്രീകളുടെ പഠിപ്പിക്കൽ ശുശ്രൂഷ ആണെന്ന്.

ഇന്നത്തെ സൗകര്യങ്ങൾ ഒന്നുമില്ലാതെ കൂട്ടുകൂടുബങ്ങളിൽ ജീവിച്ച നമ്മുടെ പഴയ തലമുറയിലെ അമ്മച്ചിമാർ അത്ഭുത വനിതകൾ ആയിരുന്നില്ലേ? കേരളം സമ്പൂർണ്ണ സാക്ഷരത കൈവരിക്കുന്നതിനു മുൻപേ അവർ നമ്മുടെ ആചാരാനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളും പാരമ്പര്യവും മാത്രമല്ല വേദപുസ്തകവും പ്രാർത്ഥനാ പുസ്തകങ്ങളും വായിക്കുകയും പിൻതലമുറയെ പഠിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിരുന്നു. ഇല്ലായ്മകളുടെ നടുവിൽ, രണ്ട് ചില്ലികാശു നൽകിയ വിധവയെപ്പോലെ പിടിയരി ശേഖരിച്ച് ദാനധർമ്മങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യാൻ നമ്മെ പഠിപ്പിച്ചിരുന്നു അവർ. അടുക്കളയിൽ നിന്നും അരങ്ങത്തേക്ക് എന്നത് അമ്പർത്ഥം ആക്കിക്കൊണ്ട് ഇന്ന് പല സ്ത്രീകളും രാഷ്ട്രീയത്തിലും, തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിലും, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ രംഗത്തും ഉന്നത സ്ഥാനം വഹിക്കുന്നു. ചിലർ സ്വയം നയിക്കപ്പെടുന്നവർ ആവും, മറ്റ് ചിലർ ആരെങ്കിലും പ്രചോദിപ്പിച്ചാൽ മുന്നോട്ട് വരും, എന്നാൽ വേറൊരു കൂട്ടർക്ക് എന്നും അവരുടെ പുറന്തോടിനുള്ളിൽ തന്നെ ഇരിക്കാനാണ് ഇഷ്ടം.

ലോകത്തെ/സമൂഹത്തെ മാറ്റിമറിച്ച അത്ഭുത സ്ത്രീകളെ കുറിച്ച് ചിന്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ, നമ്മുടെ മനസ്സിൽ ഓടിയെത്തുന്ന ചുരുക്കം ചില പേരുകളാണ് ഫ്ലോറൻസ് നൈറ്റിംഗേൽ, ഇന്ദിരാഗാന്ധി, മദർ തെരേസ, മലാല യൂസഫ്, കിരൺ ബേദി, ദയാ ബായ് , സുഗത കുമാരി ടീച്ചർ, കൽപന ചൗള, പി.ടി. ഉഷ തുടങ്ങിയവർ. പരിമിതമായ വിഭവ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ ജനിച്ച് വളർന്നെങ്കിലും പോരാടാനുള്ള കരുത്തും അവസരങ്ങൾ എടുക്കാനുള്ള സന്നദ്ധതയും കാരണം വിജയിച്ച നിരവധി സ്ത്രീകളെ നമുക്ക് കണ്ടെത്താൻ കഴിയും. പൊള്ളലേറ്റവർ, ശൈശവവിവാഹത്തെ അതിജീവിച്ചവർ, ഗാർഹിക പീഡനം, ദാരിദ്ര്യം, രോഗം, ലിംഗ അസമത്വം, മറ്റ് നിരവധി സാമൂഹിക അനീതികളിൽ പെട്ടുപോയവർ എന്നിവർ ഇതിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു.

പ്രതികൂലതകളെ ധീരതയോടെ അതിജീവിച്ചവർ ആണ് അത്ഭുത വനിതകൾ എങ്കിൽ നമുക്ക് ചുറ്റും ധാരാളം ജീവിക്കുന്ന ഉദാഹരണങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ട്. അകാലത്തിൽ മക്കൾ നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടവരെ, ഗുരുതരമായ രോഗം, ഒന്നിനുപുറകെ ഒന്നായുള്ള ശസ്ത്രക്രിയകൾ എന്നീ പ്രയാസങ്ങളിൽ കൂടി കടന്നു പോകുന്ന മക്കളുടെ അമ്മമാരെ ഒക്കെ എനിക്കറിയാം. അവരെക്കെ നിരാശയുടെ പടുകുഴിയിൽ ആണ്ടുപോകാതെ സമൂഹത്തിനു നന്മ ചെയ്ത് ജീവിക്കുന്നത് കാണുമ്പോൾ വളരെ സന്തോഷം തോന്നാറുണ്ട്. കുറച്ച് നാളത്തേക്ക് വളർത്താൻ തന്ന കുഞ്ഞിനെ ദൈവം തിരികെ വിളിച്ചാൽ കൊടുക്കണം എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ അമ്മ എന്റെ മനസ്സിൽ അത്ഭുത വനിത ആണ്. ഈയിടെ ഇറങ്ങിയ 'ഉയരെ' എന്ന മലയാള സിനിമ ഒരു വനിതയുടെ ഉയിർത്തെഴുന്നേൽപ്പിന്റെ കഥയാണ്. താഴ്ന്ന ജീവിത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും സ്വപ്രയത്നം കൊണ്ട് IAS officers ഒക്കെ ആയവരുടെ ജീവിത കഥകൾ നാം സമൂഹ മാധ്യമങ്ങളിൽ വായിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടല്ലോ. നാം ഓരോരുത്തരിലും ഒരു തീ കെടാതെ ബാക്കിയുണ്ടാവും. ഒരു പ്രതിസന്ധിക്കും പ്രയാസങ്ങൾക്കും അണയ്ക്കാനാവാത്ത ഒരു തീ നാമോരോരുത്തരിലും ഉണ്ട് . ആ തീയെ കണ്ടെത്തി അണയാതെ സൂക്ഷിക്കുക..

ഇന്ത്യയുടെ പ്രസിഡന്റ് ആയിരുന്ന ഡോ. എ . പി . ജെ അബ്ദുൾ കലാം പറഞ്ഞത് പോലെ, "എല്ലാവരും ഒരുപോലെ കഴിവുള്ളവർ ആകണമെന്നില്ല. എന്നാൽ സ്വന്തം കഴിവുകളെ വികസിപ്പിച്ചെടുക്കാനുള്ള അവസരം ഏവർക്കും ഒരുപോലെ ആണ്. സ്വപ്നം കാണുക, ആ സ്വപ്നങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ച് ചിന്തിക്കുക, ആ ചിന്തകളെ പ്രവർത്തിയിലൂടെ സഫലമാക്കുക. നിങ്ങൾക്ക് സൂര്യനെപ്പോലെ പ്രകാശിക്കണമെന്ന് ആഗ്രഹമുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ, ആദ്യമെ സൂര്യനെപ്പോലെ എരിയാൻ സാധിക്കണം".

നിയോഗങ്ങളെ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ് രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുക. "യഹോവയെ കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നവർ ശക്തിയെ പുതുക്കും. അവർ കഴുകന്മാരെപ്പോലെ ചിറകടിച്ചു കയറും" എന്ന് നമ്മൾ യേശു പ്രവചനത്തിൽ വായിക്കുന്നുണ്ടല്ലോ. താലന്തുകളുടെ ഉപമയിലെ പോലെ നമ്മുടെ കഴിവുകൾ വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കാൻ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് നമ്മെ ഓരോരുത്തരെയും സഹായിക്കട്ടെ എന്ന് ആശംസിക്കുന്നു.

Woman, Know that thou are a wonder!

By: Beena Mathew (MMVS)

From dawn of time, she has been around
As a mother, a sister, a daughter, or a friend
All roles she strives to perfect
To create perfection among imperfections
With immense endurance among adversities
Woman, know that thou are a Wonder!

As a mother she has always shown
Her willingness to give up her time and energy
With kindness and tenderness
She gives her untiring love
All that she does any expectations
With a hope in her Savior, she moves on!
Woman, know that thou are a Wonder!

As a sister, she reminisces all those moments
Of childhood laughter, sobs, and fights
And the times when they dreamt together
And now that all of them have left their nest
And have flown far away from each other
She is still there to lent them a shoulder
So that they can lean on, while she listens
Into His hands does she submit them all
With a word of prayer and a Hope that they will be safe!
Woman, know that thou are a Wonder!

As a daughter, she always has a word or two
For those who nurtured her!
To them she is always their li'l angel.
A quick call home - to hear that voice at the other end
'Child, Are you well?'
Is quite the cure, when anguish seeps in,
Daughter, know that their prayer keeps you going!
Woman, know that thou are a Wonder!

As a friend - she longs to reach out
To someone that yearns for a little help
And to console a friend in despair
She says a silent Prayer -
In Him - she puts her faith
In Him - who trampled death
She knows that He will Heal!
She knows that He will watch!
Woman, know that thou are a Wonder!

Weary though she is
As she walks into the world
Just like a river that flows into the ocean
She melts into the depths of expectation
She knows no rest until the destination is reached.
Deep in her heart a voice is Heard
"Cast your burdens and Follow me"
Woman, know that thou are a precious gift from Above!
Woman, know that thou are a Wonder!

Unfailing Faith

By: Jacob Mathew & Mercy Mathew (Seniors Forum)

What in the world am I doing here? Why is this happening to me? Does this question trouble us at times? Do we feel like exploring nature, seeking a bigger sense and meaning to our life? Then, we are in the mode of spirituality.

What is Spirituality? As defined by the nurses, Ruth Beckmann Murray and Judith P. Zenter, "Spirituality dimensions tries to be in harmony with the universe and strives for answers about the infinite and comes into focus, when the person faces emotional stress, physical illness and death. I felt this explanation apt, as one explores their connection to the world during these moments. We recognize that there is somebody, a greater power, that controls everything. We try to find divinity in everything. We may call it 'nirvana', especially after going through an emotionally stressful moment in our life.

According to Webster dictionary, faith is having total allegiance to a person or belief and trust in something for which there is no proof. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Do we want to be spiritually aware or deeply faithful? Both claim to give us peace but what gives us real peace? Being spiritual is a fashion today, particularly when we want to sound intellectual, or engaged in transcendental meditation with the creator or just to be politically correct. To a few, it could be a moment of enlightenment of divine presence, but for the majority it could be a confused state of mind.

Elizabeth Gilbert, the famous author, who wrote the book 'Eat, Pray and Love' explains her quest for spirituality while travelling through Italy, India and Indonesia trying to find out what gives real peace. In Italy, she tried to find pleasure in food, which ultimately led to an increase of 23 lbs. In India, she took a trip to devotion, chanting mantras on the Himalayas and realised that it still left her with a vacuum. In Bali, she finally falls in love with a Brazilian businessman, whom she later married and divorced.

Spiritual person tends to find instant peace in connecting to the world, but as soon as reality hits, that peace might vanish like a mirage. One may not gain lasting peace in a spiritually aware state. However, having a faith filled life where God is always at the centre, we obtain total peace as we are never left alone.

In John 14:18, God promises that "I will never leave you as orphans, I will come to you". In Romans 8:28, it says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose," thus giving us the assurance and peace of mind that we will never be left alone, when the going gets tough. As we face challenges everyday, like Covid and now with the war in Ukraine, being faithful to God is the clear choice. The tomb is empty, Christ is risen and has overcome the world!



*Drawing by
Jeana Jinu,
Grade 8*

Home, The Haven Of Faith

By: KT George (Seniors Forum)

In the 1940s, my mother became very ill, abandoned by doctors and lying on her deathbed at home. My mother's mother was a great believer. She was always beside her daughter, praying very passionately and devoutly. One day grandmother went out of her daughter's room to rest for a while. When she returned, she found her daughter sitting up in her bed, talking happily. The news spread like wildfire. The villagers flocked home. They needed to know what happened. Mother said, "I was approaching death. The angel of death came to me with a black and horrible face. Immediately, a figure in the form of brightly shining light came to me. Angels escorted around. An angel held a rose-like vessel in his hand. The brightly shining figure poured water from that vessel into my mouth with his shining hand. He poured twice. When it came to pouring for the third time, another hand tapped this hand to stop. During this time the angel of death gradually disappeared. Now I feel healed and healthy." After this vision, she lived for about thirty more years.

When we think of the resurrection this Easter, I am reminded of the faith and spirituality of my grandmother. Her prayers were inspired by the firm belief that the risen Lord would give her daughter a new life, both physical and spiritual. So, what is faith and what is spirituality?

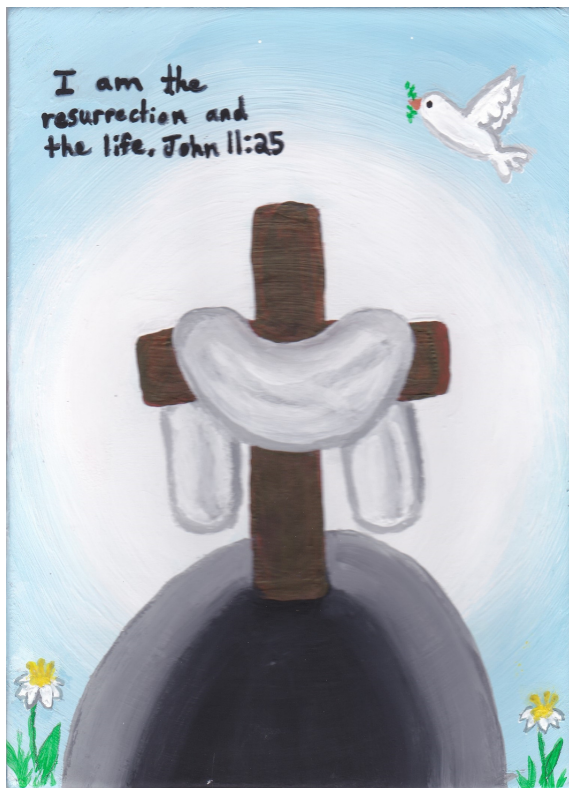
The primary importance and definition of faith are that a person must have a strong sense of belief in whatever the object of their faith is. They become faithful upon practicing this belief. We, as Christians, believe that the Risen Lord is our Saviour in whom we can trust. This faith gives us strength in challenging times and guides us when we feel lost or at crossroads. In fact, for us Christians, the Holy Bible is primarily about faith. The Bible teaches us about faith by multiple references. Among them are: Romans 10:17, Galatians 2:16, Hebrews 10:38, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 3:26, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Peter 1:7, Colossians 2:7, 1 John 1:9. All these references show us many aspects of faith. Spirituality is being in faith. Knowing of faith is fundamental for spirituality or religion. Religion is 'doing' in faith. But people can be spiritual or religious and still have a faith that is not reflected upon.

Prayer is the most essential element in Christian belief, not just to communicate with God, but to prepare our mind to have a just life in a just society. Our faith can provide the resources and fortitude to face up the challenges in daily lives. Faith provides a healing process, both physically and spiritually when faced with insurmountable difficulties. "If you believe, you will receive whatever you wish for in prayer." (Matthew 21:22)

For many notable people, faith is not just a noun, but a 'verb' too. For Florence Nightingale and Mother Teresa who cared for the sick and destitute; for Millard and Linda Fuller who gave away all their wealth to help the needy and founded Habitat for Humanity to build houses for the poor and spread the movement to some 70 countries and 2.5 million homes; for Martin Luther King Junior who became a martyr for defending the dignity of man; and for countless others, faith propels them to serve humanity through the love of God.

We Christians believe that faith in Jesus gives us spiritual bliss. What about other faiths? What about atheists? Do they experience spiritual richness while practicing mindful meditation without ever believing in God? Can an atheist attain salvation while doing the work of Mother Teresa? What faith gives people the right to kill each other in Russia induced Ukraine war? These are questions worth exploring for answers.

But for me at this time of Easter, my grandmother's faith in Jesus 'resurrected' our mother to be with us for another 30 years. Mother had another near-death experience for a second time and through my grandmother's prayer, she lived. The third time she was sick, grandmother wasn't there and mother entered eternal life - all within the 30 years and in accordance with the original vision.



*Drawing by
Serene Varghese,
Grade 5*

Earth: The Holy Altar

By: Santosh Varghese (Acolytes)

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein”. (Psalm 24:1-3)

In agreement with the psalmist, everything that belongs to earth lines up to indicate a true replica of the things that we find on the Holy Altar viz. Holy Elements, Cross, Candles, Gospel table, Sosappa, and Kabilanas.

The body and blood of Christ are represented by the human sufferings of children, widows, families, elders, youngsters, whose lives are broken due to reasons including, but not limited to war, famines, unemployment, lack of medical support. They are broken more or less like the body of Christ, standing witness against the tormentors and waiting for our support.

All the churches on the earth indicate the victorious cross of our Lord, that strengthens us daily to fight against the evils of the world and provides us with the necessary fellowship with God and humans.

Candles represent the martyrs who laid down their lives for God. They are bright examples for us to follow by lighting our paths and showing us the detours and signs during our journey on earth.

Gospel table stands for the never-ending recital of the living word of God from all worship places around the world, from all religions and all walks of life.

Finally, Kabilanas are the forests, mountains, rivers, lakes and oceans that cover the Earth. Sosappa stands for the blue sky, universe and galaxy that makes this whole earth look beautiful. Kabilanas and Sosappa are together trying to save this earth from pollution, green gases, ozone damages, and deforestation.

“For men may come and men may go, but I go on forever” as sung by Alfred Lord Tennyson. Similarly, the earth goes on generation after generation, our prayers, and our sacrifices on this big Holy Altar that we call home will go on forever until our Lord returns again.



*Creation by
Jerusha Thomas,
Grade 8*

A Return To Eden

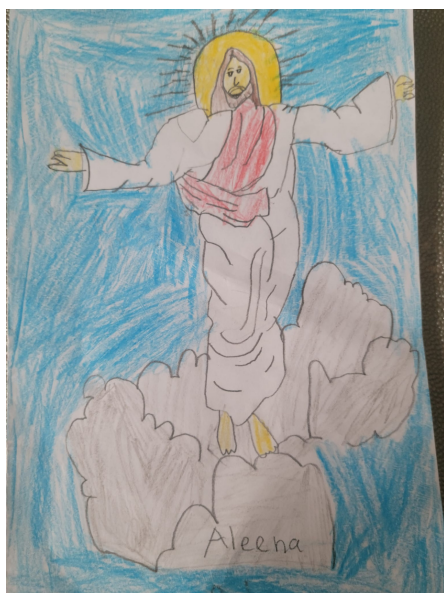
By: Anish Mathew (Acolytes)

The Scripture says, God the Father Created Heaven and Earth. He created the Garden of Eden on Earth for humankind and the rest of creation to live with God. However, human sin destroyed the plan. They were banished due to their disobedience and disconnected from the Divine. God did send his only Begotten Son to Earth to be sacrificed for their redemption from sins. His resurrection has given new hope and enhanced the return of the human race to God and Eternal Life. The Holy Altar promises us the hope that resurrection to eternal life, a life forever with God is possible for all humankind both living and departed.

In Christian tradition, people live a life that is turned towards God with worship and offerings done in the Church, centered around the spoken word of God. The most sacred place in the church is the Sanctuary and Holy Altar, an elevated part which resembles Heaven. Heaven is primarily where God dwells, where there is peace, love, fellowship, and reconciliation. Altar gives people the hope that we should love and reconcile with each other while we are in this world.

According to the holy scripture, Altar represents the sacrificial table of Abraham's complete submission and absolute faith in God. It is a reminder that all what is in our possession is not ours and everything that belongs to us is meant for God. Dr Geevarghese Mar Osthathios Thirumeni's vision of 'Classless Society' is more relevant here - "Everything visible and invisible belongs to God the creator, Father, and is intended for all his children". "Just as the Holy Trinity is distinct, but One, we are all Equal and One in Christ, Sharing everything in Freedom, and establishment of Peace and Justice in the world". Everything in the world could be understood as an offering placed on the earth table, which is the Holy Altar of God.

When looking at Earth as a Holy Altar, the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, describes a vision of a new re-created Heaven descending to Earth. It conveys the hope that everything among the creation gets healed and renewed and the world becomes a beautiful heaven where God lives with us as in the Garden of Eden. It essentially means a return to Eden, where humankind reconciled with God, and of course, with one another.



*Drawing by
Aleena Thakadiyel,
Grade 1*

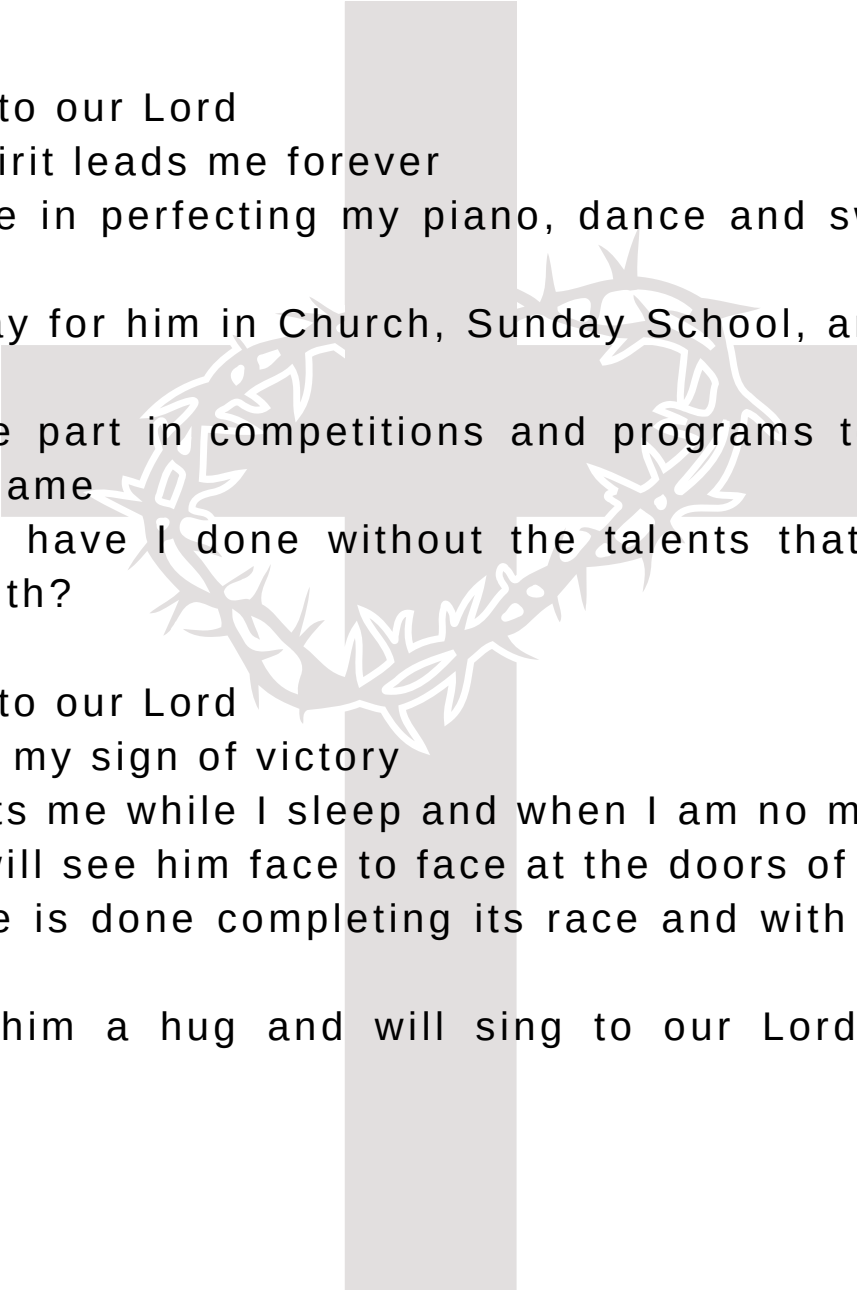
Let Us Sing To Our Lord

By: Anya Varghese (Choir)

Let us sing to our Lord
His love endures forever
He makes me strong, wise and smart
To do my studies, work and play
While I am at school, at the gym and on the field
What would have I done without his grace?

Let us sing to our Lord
His care enables me forever
He makes me safe, pure and holy
To praise, worship and glorify his wonderful name
While I am sleeping, traveling or helping my mom
What would have I done without his blessings?

Let us sing to our Lord
His Holy name protects me forever
He makes me feel safe from the evil terrors and unwanted thoughts
So I can offer myself as a dwelling for him
While I go around doing my daily chores, and biking with my dad
What would have I done without his amazing love?



Let us sing to our Lord
His Holy Spirit leads me forever
He helps me in perfecting my piano, dance and swimming
lessons
So I can play for him in Church, Sunday School, and in my
prayers
While I take part in competitions and programs to glorify
his mighty name
What would have I done without the talents that he has
gifted me with?

Let us sing to our Lord
His cross is my sign of victory
That protects me while I sleep and when I am no more
So when I will see him face to face at the doors of Heaven
After my life is done completing its race and with a crown
on my head
I will give him a hug and will sing to our Lord forever
more.

നമ്മുടെ കർത്താവിനു പാടുവിൻ

By: Liza Thomas (Choir)

മലങ്കര സഭക്ക് പുരാതന കാലം മുതൽ ലഭിച്ച സുറിയാനി പാരമ്പര്യം നാം ഇന്നും കൈമുതലായി സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. അതിൽ ഏറ്റവും അഭിമാനിക്കാവുന്ന ഒന്നാണ് നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനസംഗീത പാരമ്പര്യം.

സുറിയാനി ഭാഷ ആദിമകാലത്തുണ്ടായിരുന്ന പ്രധാന ഭാഷകളിൽ ഒന്നാണ്. സുറിയാനി ഭാഷ ഉണ്ടായത്, അരാമ്യ ഭാഷയിൽ നിന്നാണ്. നോഹിന്റെ മകനായ ശേമിന്റെ അഞ്ചാമത്തെ പുത്രനായ ആരാമിന്റെ സന്തതിപരമ്പരകൾ സംസാരിച്ചിരുന്ന ഭാഷയായിരുന്നു ആരാമ്യഭാഷ. ക്രിസ്തുവിനു മുൻപ് സിറിയയുടെ കിഴക്കുഭാഗവും വടക്കൻ ഇറാക്കും ചേർന്ന ഭാഗത്തായിരുന്നു ആരാമ്യ ഭാഷ കൂടുതലായി ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരുന്നത്. പിന്നീടത് പലസ്തീനിലേക്ക് വ്യാപിച്ചു. നമ്മുടെ കർത്താവ് സംസാരിച്ചിരുന്നതും ഈ ഭാഷ തന്നെയായിരുന്നു. പിന്നീട് അറബികളുടെ മുന്നേറ്റത്തോടെ അരമായ എന്ന പേര് മാറി സുറിയാനി എന്ന പേരിലാവുകയും ചെയ്തു. നമ്മുടെ കർത്താവ് സംസാരിച്ച ഭാഷയായതുകൊണ്ടും സംഗീതപരമായി ഹൃദ്യവും ആരാധനയ്ക്ക് യോജിച്ചതും സാധാരണക്കാർക്ക് ലളിതമായി പാടുവാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നതും ആയതുകൊണ്ടും സുറിയാനി സഭകൾ ഈ ഭാഷ ഇന്നും കാത്തു സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്നു.

നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനയിൽ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന പാട്ടുകൾ എല്ലാം ഒന്ന് വിശകലനം ചെയ്താൽ ഇവയെല്ലാം ആരാധനാസംഗീതത്തിൽ വളരെ ഉന്നതമായ സ്ഥാനത്തു നിൽക്കുന്നതാണെന്നു മനസിലാക്കാൻ സാധിക്കും. കാരണം, പാടുംതോറും മാധുര്യം ഏറുന്ന ഈ പാട്ടുകളെല്ലാം നമ്മുടെ പിതാക്കന്മാർ പണ്ട് ആശ്രമങ്ങളിലും, ഗൃഹങ്ങളിലും, മണലാരണ്യങ്ങളിലും, വളരെ പ്രാർത്ഥനയോടും ജാഗരണത്തോടും ഇരുന്ന് ദൈവികമായി അവർക്ക് ലഭിച്ച ദൂതുകളെ, പദ്യങ്ങളാക്കി മാറ്റിയവയാണ്. അതുകൊണ്ടു തന്നെ സുറിയാനി ആരാധനാസംഗീതങ്ങൾ ദൈവശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെയും അദ്ധ്യാത്മികതയുടെയും കലവറയാണ്. ഇതിന്റെ ഉള്ളടക്കം എപ്പോഴും വേദപുസ്തക സംഭവങ്ങളാണ്. ഗദ്യ പ്രാർത്ഥനകളെക്കാൾ അർത്ഥസമ്പുഷ്ടിയുള്ളതും ദൈവ സാന്നിധ്യ ബോധം നമ്മിൽ ഉണ്ടാക്കുവാനും മാനസികമായി തളർന്നും വിഷമിച്ചും ആരാധനക്കെത്തുന്നവരുടെ ഹൃദ്യങ്ങളെ ദൈവസന്നിധിയിലേക്ക് എത്തിക്കുവാനും ഈ ഗീതങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ സഹായിക്കുന്നു.

നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനാ സംഗീതം ഇത്രയും ശ്രേഷ്ഠമായത് അനേക പിതാക്കന്മാരുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം കൊണ്ടാണ്. ഇതിനുവേണ്ടി പരിശ്രമിച്ച പിതാക്കന്മാരിൽ ഒരാളായ മാർ അപ്രെം, സുറിയാനി സഭയുടെ തുണ്ട്, വി. റൂഹായുടെ കിന്നരം, വിശ്വാസ സംരക്ഷകൻ എന്നീ പേരുകളിൽ അറിയപ്പെടുന്നു. ഇദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ ഗീതങ്ങൾ നാം എല്ലാ ശുശ്രൂഷകളിലും ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു. അതുപോലെ തന്നെ മാർ ബാലായി, മാർ യാക്കോബ്, അന്ത്യോഖ്യയിലെ മാർ ഇസഹാക്ക്, എഡേസ്സായിലെ യാക്കോബ്, ശെമവൂൻ കൂക്കോയോ, അന്ത്യോഖ്യയിലെ സേവേറിയോസ് എന്നീ പിതാക്കന്മാരെല്ലാം നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനാ സംഗീതത്തിന് ഏറെ സംഭാവന ചെയ്തവരാണ്.

നമ്മുടെ സഭയുടെ ആരാധനയുടെ പാട്ടുകളെ പറ്റി ചിന്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ, നമ്മിൽ ചിലർക്കെങ്കിലും പരിചിതമായ പേരാണ് എക്കാറാ എന്നത്. എക്കാറാ(Octoechos) എന്നാൽ എട്ടുനിറങ്ങൾ എന്നാണ്. പിതാക്കന്മാർ എക്കാറാ പ്രമാണത്തിൽക്കൂടി നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനയിലെ മിക്ക പാട്ടുകളും എട്ട് വിധത്തിൽ പാടുവാൻ ചിട്ടപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നത് ആരാധനയുടെ ഭംഗിക്കും പുതുമയ്ക്കും, ചൊല്ലുന്ന ആളിനും കേൾക്കുന്നവർക്കും ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന വിരസത ഒഴിവാക്കുന്നതിനും വേണ്ടിയാണ്. എട്ട് രാഗങ്ങളുടെ (നിറങ്ങളുടെ) ആരോഹണാവരോഹണം എട്ട് വിധത്തിലാണ്. ഒരു രാഗം മറ്റൊരു രാഗത്തിൽ നിന്നും വ്യത്യസ്തമാണ്. ഇതിൽ ഓരോ രാഗങ്ങൾ (Tunes) സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്ന അന്തരീക്ഷവും വ്യത്യസ്തമാണ്. ചിലത് സന്തോഷത്തിന്റെതാണെങ്കിൽ, മറ്റു ചിലത് സന്താപത്തിന്റെയും മറ്റു ചിലത് അനുതാപത്തിന്റെയും ആണ്. ആത്മീക വർദ്ധനയ്ക്ക് ഉതകുന്ന രാഗങ്ങളും ഇതിൽ ഉൾപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

എട്ട് നിറം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതിന് പ്രത്യേക കാനോൻ ഉണ്ട്. ഒരാഴ്ചയിൽ രണ്ട് നിറമാണ് നാം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത്. നിറം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത്, ഞായറാഴ്ച സന്ധ്യ പ്രാർത്ഥനയോടെ ആയിരിക്കും. അപ്പോൾ ഞായറാഴ്ച ഒന്നാം നിറമാണെങ്കിൽ അന്ന് സന്ധ്യ മുതൽ തിങ്കളാഴ്ച ഒൻപതാം മണി നമസ്കാരം വരെ ഒന്നാം നിറം തന്നെയായിരിക്കും. വീണ്ടും തിങ്കളാഴ്ച സന്ധ്യ നമസ്കാരം മുതൽ അഞ്ചാം നിറം ആരംഭിക്കും. വീണ്ടും ചൊവ്വാഴ്ച സന്ധ്യയിൽ ഒന്നാം നിറം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു. അങ്ങനെ അടുത്ത ഞായറാഴ്ച സന്ധ്യ നമസ്കാരത്തിന് രണ്ടാം നിറവും തുടർന്ന് വരുന്ന തിങ്കളാഴ്ച ആറാം നിറവും ആണ് നാം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത്.

സഭയുടെ കലണ്ടർ അനുസരിച്ചു "കുദോൾ ഈത്തോ" ഞായറാഴ്ചയാണ് തുടങ്ങുന്നത്. അന്ന് നിറം ഒന്നിൽ തുടങ്ങുന്നു. എന്നിരുന്നാലും ഒരു സഭാ വർഷത്തിൽ നാലു പ്രാവശ്യം നിറം പുതുതായി തുടങ്ങണം എന്നുണ്ട്. അതുകൊണ്ട്, കുദോൾ ഈത്തോ

മുതൽ ജനന പെരുന്നാളിന് മുൻപുള്ള ഞായറാഴ്ച വരെ നിറങ്ങൾ അതിന്റെ ക്രമം അനുസരിച്ചു പോകും.

എന്നാൽ ജനന പെരുന്നാളിന് ശേഷം വരുന്ന ഞായറാഴ്ച വീണ്ടും നിറം ഒന്നിൽ തുടങ്ങേണ്ടതാകുന്നു. അത് മൂന്ന് നോമ്പുവരെ തുടരും.

നിനുവാ നോമ്പിന്റെ പേത്തൂർത്താ ഞായറാഴ്ച ആറാം നിറം ആയിരിക്കും ആരംഭിക്കുക.

വലിയ നോമ്പ് ആരംഭിക്കുന്ന ഞായറാഴ്ച വീണ്ടും ഒന്നാം നിറം ആരംഭിക്കും.

മലങ്കര ഓർത്തഡോക്സ് സഭയുടെ ആരാധനയുടെ നിറവ്, അതിന്റെ മഹത്വം അനുഭവിക്കുവാൻ നമുക്ക് സാധിക്കുക, അതിൽ മുഴുവനായി ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചു, അതിൽ സമർപ്പിച്ചു നിൽക്കുന്നവർക്ക് മാത്രമാണ്. അല്ലാത്തവർക്ക് ഒരുപക്ഷെ അതൊരു അധരവ്യാധിമമോ മറ്റൊന്നെങ്കിലുമോ ആയിരിക്കും.

കുറേ വർഷങ്ങൾക്ക് മുൻപ് ആരാധനാ വിഷയത്തിൽ പണ്ഡിതനായ ഒരു ഫ്രഞ്ചു കത്തോലിക്കാ വൈദികൻ മലങ്കര ഓർത്തഡോക്സ് ആരാധനയിൽ സംബന്ധിച്ച ശേഷം മറ്റൊരു വൈദികനോട് ഇങ്ങനെ പറയുകയുണ്ടായി, നമ്മുടെ സഭയിലെ ആരാധനയിൽ ദൈവത്തെപ്പറ്റിയുള്ള ചില കാര്യങ്ങൾ പ്രസ്താവിക്കുകയാണ്, എന്നാൽ ഇവിടെ ഓർത്തോഡോക്സ് ആരാധനയിൽ ദൈവത്തെ നേരിട്ട് കണ്ട് സംസാരിക്കുകയാണ്. അതെ അതുതന്നെയാണ് സത്യം, ദൈവത്തെ മുഖാമുഖം ദർശിച്ചു സംസാരിക്കുന്നതാണ് ഓർത്തോഡോക്സ് ആരാധനയുടെ സവിശേഷത .

റഷ്യൻ ഓർത്തഡോക്സ് സഭ ഉണ്ടായതിനെപ്പറ്റിയും ഒരു കഥയുണ്ട്. പുറജാതിക്കാരനായിരുന്ന വ്ളാഡിമർ ലോകത്തിലെ ഏറ്റവും ഉത്കൃഷ്ടമായിരുന്ന മതം സ്വീകരിക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുകയും വിവിധ മതങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റി പഠിക്കുവാൻ ദൂതന്മാരെ ലോകത്തിന്റെ വിവിധ ഭാഗങ്ങളിലേക്ക് അയക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. അവരിൽ ചിലർ ബൾഗേറിയയിലെ മുസ്ലിമുകളെ കണ്ടുമുട്ടി. ചിലർ ജർമ്മനിയിലും റോമിലും ഉള്ള കത്തോലിക്കാ ദേവാലയങ്ങൾ സന്ദർശിച്ചു. ഇവിടെ ഒരിടത്തും വ്ളാഡിമറിന്റെ ദൂതന്മാർക്ക് ആരാധനയിൽ ഒരു മനോഹാരിത കണ്ടെത്തുവാൻ സാധിച്ചില്ല. എന്നാൽ കോൺസ്റ്റാന്റിനോ നോപ്പിളിൽ എത്തിയ ദൂതന്മാർ അവിടുത്തെ സോഫിയ ദേവാലയത്തിൽ എത്തി ആരാധനയിൽ സംബന്ധിച്ചു. ആ കുർബാനയിൽ പങ്കെടുത്ത ദൂതന്മാർ വ്ളാഡിമറിനെ അറിയിച്ചത്, ഞങ്ങൾ ഭൂമിയിലായിരുന്നോ സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലായിരുന്നോ നിന്നതെന്ന് ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് തന്നെ അറിയുമായിരുന്നില്ല എന്നാണ്. എന്നാൽ ഒരു കാര്യം ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് മനസ്സിലായി, ഇവിടുത്തെ ആരാധനാ സമൂഹത്തിൽ ദൈവം വസിക്കുന്നു, ഇവരുടെ ആരാധന ലോകത്തുള്ള മറ്റെല്ലാ ആരാധനകളെക്കാളും ശ്രേഷ്ഠമാണ്. അങ്ങനെ ദൂതന്മാരുടെ ഈ വാക്കുകളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ ഓർത്തഡോക്സ് സഭയിൽ ആകൃഷ്ടനായി വ്ളാഡിമർ സ്നാനം ഏൽക്കുകയുണ്ടായി.

പൗരസ്ത്യ ആരാധനയെ മനോഹരമാക്കുന്ന വിവിധ ഘടകങ്ങളുണ്ട്. രൂചിച്ചറിയേണ്ട ആത്മീയ മാഹാത്മ്യം നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനയ്ക്കുണ്ട്. ആരാധനാ സമൂഹത്തിലെ അംഗമായി ആരാധനയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ മാത്രമേ നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനയുടെ വൈശിഷ്ട്യം നമുക്ക് ആസ്വദിക്കാനാവൂ. നമ്മുടെ ആരാധന ഗീതങ്ങളുടെ പരമലക്ഷ്യം ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കുകയാണ്. അതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെ നാം ചൊല്ലുന്ന എല്ലാ ഗീതങ്ങളും ആത്യന്തികമായി ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കുന്ന സങ്കീർത്തനങ്ങളായി തീരണം. അല്ലാതെ മനുഷ്യന്റെ വൈകാരിക സംതൃപ്തിയല്ല. അതുപോലെതന്നെ മനുഷ്യരെ സംയോജിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഘടകമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുവാനും സംഗീതത്തിന് കഴിയും.



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WH RENOVATION & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

‘Urava’ is conceived to provide a platform to interact and share views on various themes of relevance from time to time.

This journal is a product of the brilliant contributions from all our Spiritual organizations during the Great Lent 2022, amidst all constraints.

We sincerely thank:

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All Parish Members

Let us together follow Christ our Savior, on his way to
the cross and share the joy of resurrection.

Christ is Risen. Indeed, He is Risen.

With Warm Regards,
OCYM Team & Editorial Board

Urava means an ever flowing source of water. It could be the beginning point of a large stream which can quench the thirst of whoever is approaching.

This literary initiative by OCYM aims to provide enlightening thoughts and ideas to thirsty souls for their spiritual edification. This will serve as a hub for writers and thinkers to express their views and share their insights for the vibrant life of our community.

This project showcases what more we could achieve when our entire church comes together to create something unique.

Through these pages, our beloved members share their musings, reflections and testimonials for this issue's theme 'Hope, Resurrection and Victory'.

Initiated by SGOCT OCYM

