



URAVA



PILLARS OF THE CHURCH

Cover Painting: By Ashwin Sam Varghese

This drawing depicts the in-depth bonding between Jesus and the Apostles.

The Apostles were often addressed by Jesus with profound teachings and guidance. Jesus mainly emphasized self-denial, carrying one's cross, and following him, which the apostles keenly observed.

Moreover, the main motive behind Jesus's speeches was to impart wisdom to his disciples and the crowd.

Additionally, Jesus commissioned his disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

His interactions with the disciples were filled with compassion, encouragement and transformative messages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Images of Christ!

By: Fr. Thomas P John (Vicar)

The word 'Apostle' means 'the one who is sent'. This indicates that someone is there to send someone, and someone is there to be sent - for a clear purpose. In connection with the title Apostle, we have a concern to use the word 'mission' to indicate their role, as the word in a religious or spiritual context could be associated with colonial mission carried out in the past in various parts of the world. People on such missions went about with the purpose of colonising the whole world and they used religion or faith or scripture as a tool. Under the pretext of such missions, they exploited, ruled and colonised various lands while the indigenous people of such lands underwent much suffering. These expeditions were sometimes called mission for Christ. People on such missions amassed all the wealth from the lands that they colonized while indigenous people who were enrolled into such missions lost their health, wealth, liberty and rights. Thus, the reality of a mission seemed different from what people initially perceived it to be. In such missions thus, there were gainers and sufferers. Due to this connotation with the word 'mission', the writer of this article would rather use words such as 'ministry' or 'service' as regards to the works of the Apostles.

Prior to attaining the title of Apostles, the band of twelve men who Jesus called had no idea about why they were called, what they would get or what was intended of that calling. They just responded to that call by joining Him in His daily activities. They moved around with Him, listened to Him, spoke with Him, observed Him, all of which marked the beginning of their apostleship. In doing so, they were joining Jesus in every possible way for a period that was to last for three years as if akin to a probationary or training period, likely, the longest such period seen. The length of this training or probation period should have been indicative that His initial call to them was for a purpose of an unprecedented kind.

Once they asked Jesus, "Lord, we have left everything, what would we get?" From that question we can infer that they had something valuable, reliable or relatable like a defined income, societal connections, familial responsibilities, various relationships etc. before they met Him and they wanted to know if giving up all that they had for His call was worth it. They were leaving behind all that was familiar and certain to follow an unfamiliar and uncertain path with Him. In one such moment of dilemma of weighing the pros and cons of following Christ, He responds to them saying: "Truly I tell you, in the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for the sake of My name will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life (Mt 19:28,29). There is no mention of Christ's throne being elevated above the others' so we could assume that their thrones would be at par with Christ's throne. They would represent the twelve tribes of Israel and they would look after the whole creation.

To attain that throne which would be given to them at the end, and not at the beginning, they would have had to go through many experiences, many learnings, many hardships, many questions which would mould them into who He wished for them to be - as seen to be fit for the thrones in His kingdom.

The journey of Apostleship began when they, who were physically active in this world, responded to the call of the divine and the unseen. When Jesus was in this world, Christ who was the logos, came into human form - unblemished and unpolluted without losing His essence while joining the physicality of creation. Even though He walked among people, He was the eternal logos. We see this at the resurrection too where He appeared to many at different places at the same time and could also appear in a closed meeting room as He came through so that they could touch Him, see Him and feel His presence in human form although He was fully astral or spiritual at the same time. True to His promise, "Until the end of time, I will be with you" (Mt 28:20). He is Emmanuel, He is with us, never to leave us.

Jesus' physical presence has been felt through centuries as He made Himself available to people as they wished to see Him. The Logos or the Word thus became flesh. The word was uttered, it was received by Mary and others who were most receptive, and in this form stayed with people as they witnessed many miracles through Him. This is recorded in the Old Testament as well. Whoever heard the Word, felt His presence with them. He walked with them. Throughout their journey in the wilderness to the promised land, He was with them - day and night- they sensed His presence, no one denied His leading. So, this was a perception as to how we relate to a person and how we feel about them. Depending on the capacity of a person to comprehend and depending on the need of the situation, He would make himself present - as visible or invisible, in person or in Spirit. Thus, by hearing and accepting the Word, by doing His work, by partaking in His ministry, by being with the needy and attending to them, His presence would be felt by people.

The ontological approach presents God the Logos as love. Nobody can become God in His essence. To address this impossibility, the provision was given. God is love; thus, by virtue of loving each other and practising love, we can feel His presence. Whoever practice love as revealed by Christ, can become Christ.

A person's journey to apostleship begins by accepting His call and walking with him until the end when they attain the throne, can be lengthy or short, depending on a single process - the transformation of the individual from 'having' to 'becoming'. That is the essence of Apostleship: we start with having Christ with us and we end with becoming Christ.

We can find this affirmation as summed up by St. Athanasius of Alexandria when he defined the mystery of incarnation, 'God became man, for man to become God'. When we join Him we would have everything as He provides and later we become what He provides. For instance, He said, I am the bread of life (Jn 6:35). The Apostles had that bread but eventually they became that bread just as He became bread for everyone. They became bread through their words, actions, sacrifices, deeds, healing, touch, helping and caring. Bread is for sustaining life - to nourish, nurture. Likewise, through their presence they were nourishing the whole world.

Jesus said - I am the light of the world. Since they were with Him, they were in the light. They had the light, and they enjoyed the light. However, later Jesus told them: "you are the light of the world...", again indicating of them that they had to become that light.

Jesus also said: I am the truth, life and resurrection. The Apostles became the truth, light and resurrection. Every 'I am' that He uttered, later the apostles became so. The truth which they became was them living out boldly that God is the eternal truth.

Kingdom of God is eternal truth. All other things will pass. Jesus said, I am the life. He gave life to many. Likewise in giving life to many and resurrecting many people, apostles became life. They offered resurrection too to people thus making themselves Resurrection. Eutychus was a young hearer whom Paul gave back life...

Toward the end of their life, when they became Christ-like, the world couldn't afford them. They had to take away the life of the apostles just as they took away the life of Jesus. To the persecutors, Christ and every Apostle was a threat. But the persecutions only caused more to join Apostleship.

By embracing Apostleship, they embraced Christ and were becoming Him. The number twelve is only a representation. The calling is unto all to become apostles.

May the Holy Spirit guide us and help us all.

The Holy Apostles + One

By: Lian Gijo / Kevin Vincent / Sam Assareymuriyil / Chris Varghese / Hannah Thomas / Binta Joshua / Joshua Thomas / Aiden Anish / Jonathan Philips / Aednah Anish / Jerusha Thomas / Jadon Koshy / Anya Varghese (MGOCSM)

The early Christian Church was shaped by the lives and teachings of the Twelve Apostles, chosen by Jesus Christ to spread His message of love, redemption, and salvation. Each apostle contributed to the growth of Christianity through their unwavering faith, dedication to spreading the Gospel, and willingness to sacrifice for their beliefs. Here, MGOCSM youth takes an effort to delve into the lives of these remarkable individuals and discover the timeless lessons they offer to believers today.

St. Peter - by Lian Gijo

St. Peter, the apostle was one of the 12 disciples chosen by Jesus and recognized as an influential figure in the early Christian church. Peter, also known as Simon Peter or Cephas, was called by Jesus to be the rock of the church stated in the gospel of Matthew 16:17 - 18. Peter was originally a humble fisherman along with his brother Andrew when Jesus called them both to take part in his ministry. Although Peter was a strong leader in the early church, he also had notable weaknesses such as denying Jesus three times before the crucifixion. Despite these flaws, Peter's unshakeable faith and leadership qualities distinguished him from the rest of his fellow disciples. In Christian tradition, Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven which symbolizes his importance in spreading the word of God after the ascension of Jesus. St. Peter played a pivotal role in the establishment and growth of the early church and continues to play a role in inspiring believers by strengthening their faith and to believe Jesus is the light even in the darkest times.

St. Andrew - by Kevin Vincent

Saint Andrew truly was a great saint. He was one of Jesus's twelve apostles and was the first apostle to be chosen by Jesus. He performed many miracles during his time as an apostle and was initially a disciple of John the Baptist. What I found particularly interesting about St. Andrew was that before he was martyred by crucifixion in Greece, he deemed himself unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as Jesus. He instead asked to be crucified on an 'X'-shaped cross. The reason this stood out to me was the fact that St. Andrew had such adoration and love for Christ that he felt unworthy to even die the same way as him. He sets the example for all members of the church to be like him in our love for Jesus and he helps us remember that we must always have devotion to our faith.

St. James the Great - by Sam Assareymuriyil

St. James the Great was the first among the twelve apostles to be martyred for his faith. St. James along with his brother John and father Zebedee were known Galilean fishermen until his life changed forever when Jesus called James and his brother to follow Him. St. James was bold and had strong faith, along with a reactive temper, this was true for both brothers; likely what gave them their nickname 'Sons of Thunder'. As part of Jesus's inner circle St. James was able to witness miracles such as the raising of Jairus' daughter, the Transfiguration and agony at the Garden of Gethsemane. Having witnessed such great miracles, and his time with Jesus, St. James had an undeniable faith and went on to become an inspiring example to the church, even today.

St. John - by Chris Varghese

St. John, known as the beloved disciple, was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. St. John and his brother St. James were the sons of Zebedee, often referred to as the "Sons of Thunder." This honorable saint is notable for his close relationship with Jesus, being present at key events like the Last Supper and Jesus' crucifixion. Additionally, he was the author of several books in the New Testament, including the Gospel of St. John, Epistles of St. John, and Revelation.

Just as St. John developed a close relationship with Jesus through personal experiences and teachings, we as disciples of Christ can also deepen our faith by studying Scripture, participating in Christian community activities, and embracing a life of prayer and service. Like St. John, we must strive to embody love, humility, and devotion to Christ, seeking to understand his teachings and share his message of salvation and redemption with others. He was the only apostle who was not killed, but exiled to Patmos where he met his natural end.

St. Philip - by Hannah Thomas

Philip the Apostle, also known as Philip the Evangelist, was one of the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus. He's often remembered for his role in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospel of John, where he plays a part in the feeding of the five thousand and questions Jesus about seeing the Father. After Jesus' ascension, Philip is said to have preached in Greece, Phrygia, and Asia Minor. Later traditions suggest he was martyred in Hierapolis. Philip's legacy is marked by his dedication to spreading the teachings of Jesus, particularly in regions beyond Jerusalem, contributing to the early growth of Christianity. His story is one of faith and commitment to his beliefs. His enduring impact resonates through centuries, inspiring believers to follow his example in spreading the message of Christianity effectively.

St. Bartholomew - by Binta Joshua

St. Bartholomew, known as one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, holds significant reverence in the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, part of the Malankara Church tradition. Revered as Mar Bartholomew Sleeha, he symbolizes unwavering faith and martyrdom. Tradition holds that he preached the Gospel in regions such as India and Armenia, spreading the message of Christ's love and salvation. His martyrdom, according to tradition, involved being flayed alive for his faith. In the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, St. Bartholomew's life and sacrifice inspire devotion and serve as a reminder of the enduring commitment to Christ amidst adversity.



St. Thomas - by Joshua Thomas

St. Thomas is best known for his initial skepticism regarding Jesus' resurrection. From then on, Thomas became a staunch believer and dedicated follower of Jesus. After Jesus' ascension, St. Thomas is said to have traveled to India to spread the message of Christ. Tradition holds that he arrived in the southern state of Kerala, where he is believed to have converted many people to Christianity and established seven churches. St. Thomas's feast day is celebrated on July 3rd and he is venerated as a saint and a powerful intercessor for believers. St. Thomas' life exemplifies key aspects of discipleship, including faith in the risen Christ, commitment to mission and evangelism, willingness to suffer for the sake of the Gospel, participation in Christian community, and bold witness to the transforming power of Jesus Christ. His example continues to inspire believers to follow Christ wholeheartedly and share his love with the world.

St. James, Son of Alphaeus - by Aiden Anish

A lesser-known follower of Jesus, James, son of Alphaeus, is sometimes called "James the Less." His life exemplifies the diversity of Jesus's followers, demonstrating that not every disciple was at the forefront. Similar to this, following Christ in the modern era emphasizes service, humility, and dedication rather than celebrity or respect. James the son of Alphaeus serves as an example of how every Christian, no matter how visible, makes a substantial contribution to God's kingdom. Like James, a disciple must follow Christ with all of their heart and serve others without reservation. This relationship serves as a reminder that the true meaning of discipleship is to live out Christ's teachings rather than pursue fame or recognition for oneself.

St. Matthew - by Jonathan Philips

Saint Matthew, one of the Twelve Apostles, started as a Jewish tax collector named Levi in Capernaum. As tax collectors were typically despised by Jews for their role in Roman rule, his decision to follow Jesus came as a surprise. Matthew's calling is significant as it shows Jesus's message of redemption and inclusivity. He wrote the first Gospel in the New Testament, detailing the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His Gospel, written in Aramaic, aimed to encourage early Christian converts and to spread Jesus's message to nonbelievers.

Tradition holds that after Jesus's ascension, Matthew preached in Palestine and possibly ventured to Ethiopia, Parthia, or Persia, though historical records are unclear. The Gospel of Matthew is believed to have been written between 42-50 AD, predating the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Saint Matthew's feast day is celebrated on September 21 in Western Christianity, and he is often depicted in Christian art with an angel, representing divine guidance in writing his Gospel.



Drawing By:
Jewel Gijo

Grade 8, Sunday School

St. Simon the Zealot - by Aednah Anish

Simon the Zealot, also known as Simon the Cananaean, was one of the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus Christ, demonstrating the inclusivity of Jesus' ministry by encompassing a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The title "zealot" distinguishes him from other people who are also named Simon in the New Testament. This title also suggests that before following Jesus, Simon had been involved in a movement that strongly opposed Roman rules. However, upon becoming a disciple of Jesus, Simon's zeal has been redirected towards spreading Jesus' message of love, peace, and redemption rather than advocating for violent resistance against Roman authority. His inclusion among the disciples showcases the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives among Jesus' followers, illustrating the transformative power of Jesus' teachings. In this way, Simon exemplifies the universal invitation extended by Jesus to all people, regardless of their backgrounds or past affiliations, to become disciples and participate in the mission of spreading the Gospel message of love, compassion, and redemption.

St. Judas Thaddeus - by Jerusha Thomas

St. Judas Thaddeus is often referred to as the "Patron Saint of the Impossible" due to the belief that he intercedes in particularly challenging or desperate situations. According to tradition, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, St. Thaddeus traveled to Mesopotamia to preach the gospel. St. Thaddeus continued his missionary work in the region, establishing Christian communities and baptizing new believers. He is said to have performed many miracles during his ministry, including healing the sick and driving out demons. St. Thaddeus's ministry eventually led to his martyrdom. His feast day is celebrated on August 21st, and he is revered as a powerful intercessor for those facing difficult or impossible situations. In summary, St. Judas Thaddeus' example as a disciple of Christ inspires believers to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, proclaiming the Gospel, performing acts of compassion and power, enduring suffering for the sake of Christ, and trusting in God's provision and care in all circumstances.

Judas Iscariot - by Jadon Koshy

In Orthodox Christianity, Judas Iscariot is viewed through the lens of the broader Christian narrative, emphasizing themes of betrayal, redemption, and the sovereignty of God. Judas's role in the betrayal of Jesus, though a tragic and significant event, is often contextualized within the framework of divine providence and human free will. While his actions led to Jesus' crucifixion, they were also foretold in Scripture, highlighting the complex interplay between human agency and God's ultimate plan for salvation. In Orthodox teachings, Judas serves as a cautionary figure, reminding believers of the dangers of greed, pride, and the consequences of turning away from faith. However, even amidst his betrayal, there is room for compassion and the recognition of his humanity, as Orthodox theology holds that God's mercy extends to all who seek forgiveness. Thus, Judas Iscariot represents not only a figure of treachery but also a symbol of the potential for redemption and the unfathomable depths of divine grace.

St. Paul - by Anya Varghese

My favorite Apostle, St. Paul, who is a towering figure in Christian history, captivates people with his transformative journey from persecutor to apostle. His prolific letters, profound theological insights, and unwavering commitment to spreading the Gospel shows across centuries. From his Damascus Road encounter to his missionary voyages, Paul's zeal and intellect shaped the early Church. His emphasis on grace, faith, and love as foundational to Christian life endures as a beacon of spiritual wisdom. Despite challenges and hardships, his resolve remained unshakeable. Through his writings, Paul continues to inspire millions, guiding believers to deeper understanding and devotion, making him a cherished favorite among the faithful.

The MGOCSM youth has attempted to put together their diverse perspectives, developing vibrant insights and understanding of each of the apostles. Each individual's unique viewpoint adds depth and resonance to our exploration of these amazing stories. As we journey forward together, let us cherish the opportunity to learn from one another and to grow in our shared commitment to embodying the teachings of Christ, ever inspired by the enduring legacy of the Apostles.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

- 1 John 4:7-9

Number 12

By: Liju Thomas Thakadiyel (OCYM)

In the tapestry of biblical symbolism, certain numbers weave through the narratives with remarkable consistency and significance. Among them, the number 12 stands as a beacon of divine order, completeness, and authority. From the Old Testament to the New, its recurring presence illuminates profound truths about God's governance, covenantal promises, and the establishment of His chosen people. Let us take on a journey through the sacred texts to unravel the rich tapestry of meanings woven around the number 12 in the Bible.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

The foundational significance of number 12 finds its earliest expression in the formation of the twelve tribes of Israel. Descended from the twelve sons of Jacob, these tribes symbolize the unity and diversity of God's chosen people. Each tribe carried its unique identity, yet together they formed a cohesive whole, reflecting the diverse yet unified nature of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel hold a central place in biblical history and theology, symbolizing the covenant relationship between God and His chosen people. According to the biblical narrative, the twelve tribes are descended from the twelve sons of Jacob, who was later renamed Israel. Each tribe represents a distinct lineage and is associated with specific characteristics, territories, and blessings. These twelve tribes formed the backbone of the nation of Israel, serving as the basis for its social, political, and religious structure. The significance of the tribes extends beyond their historical existence, as they also hold symbolic and prophetic meanings throughout the biblical narrative, particularly in the promises of restoration and the future establishment of God's kingdom.

The Twelve Apostles

In the New Testament, the symbolism of the number 12 finds new expression in the selection of the twelve apostles by Jesus Christ. These chosen disciples served as the pillars of the early Christian community, entrusted with the mission of spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Just as the twelve tribes represented the foundation of Israel, the twelve apostles formed the bedrock upon which the Christian church would be built.

The Twelve Apostles hold a significant place in Christian history and theology, as they were chosen by Jesus Christ to be His closest followers and to carry on His mission of spreading the Gospel message to the world. Their selection marked the beginning of a new era in the establishment of the Christian faith. Together, the Twelve Apostles formed the core of Jesus' earthly ministry and played a foundational role in the establishment and expansion of the Christian church.

Their diverse backgrounds, personalities, and experiences reflect the universal scope of Jesus' message and the inclusivity of God's redemptive plan for humanity. Through their preaching, teaching, and martyrdom, the apostles paved the way for the spread of Christianity to the ends of the earth, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to inspire believers to this day.

The Twelve Gates and Foundation Stones

The book of Revelation paints a vivid picture of New Jerusalem, adorned with twelve gates and twelve foundation stones. Each gate bears the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, while the foundation stones are inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles. This imagery signifies the complete inclusion of God's people, both from the Old and New Covenants, in the heavenly city. It speaks to the continuity of God's redemptive plan and the eternal significance of His covenantal promises.

The Twelve Gates

In Revelation 21:12-13, John describes the New Jerusalem as having twelve gates, each made of a single pearl, and each gate guarded by an angel. These gates are arranged in three gates on each of the four sides of the city, totaling twelve gates. Each gate is inscribed with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The symbolism of the Twelve Gates signifies the inclusivity of God's salvation. By naming the gates after the twelve tribes of Israel, the imagery suggests that salvation is offered to people from all nations and backgrounds. The gates, being made of pearls, symbolizes their preciousness and the purity of those who enter through them.

The Twelve Foundation Stones

Revelation 21:14 describes the twelve foundation stones of the city wall, with each foundation stone bearing the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The names of the apostles are listed in Revelation 21:14-19.

The significance of the Twelve Foundation Stones lies in their role as the solid and unshakable foundation of the New Jerusalem. By naming the foundation stones after the apostles, the symbolism emphasizes the foundational role of the apostles in the establishment and growth of the Christian church. Additionally, the diversity of the apostles' backgrounds and experiences reflects the unity of the church, built upon the teachings and testimony of these chosen messengers of Christ.

Overall, the imagery of the Twelve Gates and Foundation Stones in Revelation serves to convey the splendor and majesty of the New Jerusalem, the ultimate destination for believers who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. It underscores the universal scope of God's redemptive plan, the centrality of Jesus Christ, and the enduring legacy of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles in the fulfillment of God's purposes throughout history.

The Twelve Stars and Other Symbolic References

Further symbolism surrounding the number 12 abounds in the Bible. In Revelation, a woman adorned with twelve stars symbolizes the people of God, clothed in divine protection and authority. Additionally, Jesus' age of twelve when He astounded the teachers in the temple speaks to His early recognition of divine calling and wisdom beyond His years.

The Woman with Twelve Stars

In Revelation 12:1, John sees a vision of a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. This imagery symbolizes several things:

- The woman represents the people of God, often understood as Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament.
- The sun symbolizes the glory and radiance of God's presence.
- The moon under her feet represents victory over darkness and evil.
- The twelve stars symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve apostles, signifying the continuity and completion of God's covenantal promises.

The Twelve Months and Twelve Hours

In various passages throughout the Bible, the number twelve is also associated with timekeeping, such as the twelve months of the year and the division of the day into twelve hours. These references serve practical purposes in measuring time but also carry symbolic significance, highlighting the orderliness and completeness of God's creation and providential care.

In conclusion, the significance of the number 12 in the Bible transcends mere numerical value; it serves as a powerful symbol of divine order, completeness, and authority. From the twelve tribes of Israel to the twelve apostles and beyond, its presence weaves through the sacred narrative, illuminating the grandeur of God's redemptive plan for humanity. As we delve deeper into the biblical text, may we continue to uncover the richness of meaning embedded within the tapestry of numbers, symbols, and stories that comprise the Word of God.

The symbolism of the number twelve in the Bible conveys themes of completeness, divine governance, and covenantal promise. Whether represented by stars, tribes, apostles, or other symbols, the number twelve underscores the overarching narrative of God's redemptive plan unfolding throughout history, culminating in the ultimate victory of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.

Women and Apostolic Ministry

By: Mrudula Philip (MMVS)

The role of women in apostolic ministry is a topic of significant importance and considerable debate within Christian circles. As we explore this theme, it's essential to recognize the historical, theological, and contemporary perspectives that shape our understanding.

Historical Context

In the early Christian church, women played pivotal roles. The New Testament mentions several women who were influential in the spread of the Holy Gospel. For instance, Mary Magdalene is often referred to as the "apostle to the apostles" because she was the first to witness and proclaim the resurrection of Jesus (John 20:18). Priscilla, alongside her husband Aquila, was a prominent teacher who helped to instruct Apollos, a significant preacher of the early church (Acts 18:26). Phoebe is recognized as a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae and is commended by Paul in Romans 16:1-2 for her service to the church.

Despite these early examples, the formal recognition of women in apostolic roles has been contentious throughout church history. The patriarchal structures of ancient societies often led to the marginalization of women in many leadership roles, including those within the church.

Theological Perspectives

Theological arguments about women in apostolic ministry often hinge on scriptural interpretation. Some denominations adhere to a complementarian view, which holds that men and women have distinct but complementary roles in the church, typically reserving apostolic and pastoral positions for men. This perspective often cites passages such as 1 Timothy 2:12, where Paul writes, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet."

Conversely, egalitarian theology argues that men and women are equally capable and called to all forms of ministry, including apostolic roles. Proponents point to the broader context of scripture, such as Galatians 3:28, which states, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." They argue that the early church's inclusion of women in significant roles supports the view that gender should not limit ministerial opportunities.

Contemporary Developments

In recent decades, many Christian denominations have reevaluated the role of women in ministry. Some, such as the United Methodist Church, the Anglican Communion, and various Pentecostal movements, have ordained women as pastors and bishops. These denominations often highlight the gifts and calling of women and the need for a more inclusive approach to ministry.

All the churches highlight the presence and initiative of the Holy Spirit in the whole life of the church including various roles of ministry. Ordination becomes only a part of the life of the church. The church has made new provisions for women to get into administrative roles. Organizations have provisions for women leadership. Depending on how families and communities equip, women can be involved in wider reaching roles within and outside the faith communities.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite progress, challenges remain. In many parts of the world, cultural and theological barriers continue to restrict women's roles in ministry. Women in leadership often face opposition and must navigate complex dynamics within their congregations and broader church communities.

There should be a revival of the ministry of gospel with more women initiatives. We find very few preachers among women in the church whereas the early church had socially prominent women leave their comfort and got involved in the ministry. Apostles preferred to choose preaching of the Gospel and they initiated electing deacons to serve at the Lord's Table. St Paul in his preaching ministry included many couples and women to spread the word. There should be more women coming up to minister among women in their various challenging life settings.

In the future, there might be more significant opportunities for women. As more denominations and congregations recognize their contributions, there is potential for richer and more diverse expressions of faith. Women bring unique perspectives and gifts that can enhance the church's mission and ministry.

Conclusion

The role of women in apostolic ministry is a vital and evolving issue within the Christian faith. Historically, women have contributed significantly to the growth of the church, and contemporary movements are increasingly recognizing their potential in all areas of ministry. The role of women in the ordained ministry was put into practice with deaconesses in the early church. Orthodox churches follow the pattern of apostleship initiated by Christ. As the church continues to grapple with theological and cultural challenges, there might evolve an inclusive approach that honors the gifts and callings of all believers, regardless of gender. By doing so, the church can more fully reflect the diverse body of Christ and effectively fulfill its mission in the world.

Ministry in the Current Age

By: Molly Alex (Seniors Forum)

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

The word ministry is from the Greek word "Diakonia" meaning "to serve". We are called to serve God to accomplish God's purpose on earth, that is to spread the Good News of redemption of humankind through Christ and carry out His healing ministry, both physical and spiritual. Christ Himself provided the pattern for Christian Ministry by denying Himself, accepting suffering, and sacrificing His life to redeem humankind. His disciples followed His path and their testimony laid the living foundation of the Church. They became the pillars of the church. The church is meant to be the faithful image of Christ whose redeeming presence is therapeutic, healing and liberating. The whole church is invited to continue God's ministry. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession." (1 Peter 2:9). Today's church has to face many challenges.

Ministry in the Postmodern Era

We are living in a fast-paced world, a globalized, multicultural, high-tech, ultra modern era. Church ministry is a teamwork including all its members, the priest, families, adults, youth, and children. The generation gap hinders this collective effort to an extent. The older generation glorify their past while trying to maintain what they have followed, practised, and learned in the past. They would try to pass on the same to the upcoming generations.

The younger generation has a legacy to continue but they live in the present context experiencing tremendous exposure to various cultures and ways of life. The present generation aspire and strive for intellectual growth, academic excellence, and achievements. One would tend to think, they are after momentous gains. Various pressures in the current life setting cause them to be seen as more dependent on technology, less sensible towards the Divine, easily vulnerable, fragile, and not keen on spiritual matters. The church must be able to satisfy the changing ministerial demands of the younger generation by taking conscious efforts and modifying the traditional way of ministry without losing its core.

God Almighty created this world for us to live, explore, discover, rediscover, and make progress, not to be stagnant, but to manifest God's Glory. We can see God's will and presence in everything, in the past, present and in the future, all as in accordance with His plan. Ephesians 11:1 says, "He works all things according to the council of His will." We are here to carry out His scheme of salvation in our lives. We must plead to God for the Holy Spirit to be poured upon us, to rise above all differences to bring both the old and the young together to carry out Christian ministry effectively.

Church and elders must be strong pillars to carry out the spreading of the Gospel. A greater responsibility is laid upon the church and elders to nurture the young generation in the right path to know their identity as the crown of creation, created in God's own image for a unique purpose and to make them aware of what is significant and what should be the supreme goal. The Lord has said "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33) and "Set your mind on things above not on the things on earth." (Colossians 3:2). Once they are convinced of the meaning and the purpose of their life, they will become ardent seekers of truth using all their resources, strength, knowledge, modern data, and strategies in the pursuit of attaining the supreme goal. The young generation can be given training on discipleship to be transformed and to become a transforming presence by knowing God's direction.

Ministry among the families

There has been a noticeable shift in family values leading to the erosion of traditional values in families and placing more emphasis on self gratification. As a result, there has been a tremendous increase of broken families, single parents, and victims of family problems. Members must be given awareness and proper insight about the Biblical root of marriage as a covenant. The Church should make efforts to accept and accommodate the troubled population, to guide, to serve as a solace and make itself a harbour for them.

Ministry through social media

Being aware of the benefits of social media, the Church must learn to tap into this resource to connect with new members. It can be used for strengthening the existing relationships and thereby expanding its reach, offer support, provide a platform for sharing, build fellowship, engage with community and positively influence the life of those who spend more time in the virtual world.

Global church ministry

Effective ministry is feasible only when the church takes initiatives in addressing crucial problems and crises such as environmental degradation, global warming, economic crises, wars, poverty, inflation, food insecurity, famine, financial crisis etc. The Church should also take new initiatives to reach out to people who belong to different cultural backgrounds and thereby spread the gospel and to reflect the love of God in the whole world. Additionally, the role of the church is to fight against injustice, oppression, and violence. While attempting to serve everyone, the church may encounter rejection, rebellion and hostility. However the church can not cease ministering and be passive observers about violations. It would be our calling to extend our help to the most vulnerable, oppressed, and silenced societies and communities as well.

We must act as the arms of Christ to embrace the whole world, breaking the boundaries to spread the love of Christ to all, to transform the entire creation, and to proclaim the good news. ***The Church should be a channel of peace, healing and liberation for which we must be the partakers of God to establish His kingdom on earth.***

Glory to God Almighty.

ἀπόστολοι (Apostoloi) He Knows us Well

By: Anand Joseph Thaliaparampil (Choir)

Who are they? They say they are chosen, picked and sent.
Sent off, by whom and why? Sometimes we seek to know the intent.
They can be chosen and handpicked by the One Himself.
Not knowing where they need to go but forgetting oneself.

Many questioned "why me Lord"?
He said, "I am with you, and you go where you are told.
Go spread the word around the world,
Speculation is not needed; it will all unfold."

Some may receive you well, some not so,
Like sheep among wolves, you will need to go.
You still are protected by the Almighty.
Still not sure, you ever regret this duty.

No gain without pain, that saying is true.
What is their gain in this? Some have no clue.
Like flowers so gentle and pleasant,
When crushed they still give out a beautiful scent.

Their life is a calling, a calling meant to change.
The change of life, or deed or act that's not strange.
It may seem hard for the weak and feeble.
We are His Chosen and Called People.

Listen closely for He is calling!
Like when morning comes all his creation is heeding.
When the world and whole universe stands witness,
For His Glory to be bestowed on us humans.

*Following the Apostles Through Discipleship
by way of Sacraments & Ministry*

By: Jason Varghese (Acolytes)

Growing up in the Orthodox church, we were taught early in our Sunday school years about the importance of sacraments and ministry, and how they both played a role in our Christian faith. The celebration of the sacraments (such as Holy Baptism and Holy Communion) and the ministry of the Word help us grow in our personal relationship with God, and they serve as the essence of Christian discipleship – the same discipleship taught by Our Lord Jesus to His Apostles (known in the Bible as the Great Commission):

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28: 19-20)

As Christians, we have the responsibility to live out this same identity of sacrament and ministry through discipleship. This allows us to harness the same relationship the Apostles had in Christ and boldly minister Christ to the world. Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are central to Christian discipleship and were exemplified by the Apostles - *following Jesus and making disciples through fellowship in Jesus.*

Knowing that the sacraments are celebrated in Christ Jesus, allows us to be personally connected with Him as we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus we become empowered to minister His word. Let us look at the examples of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion in their roles in Christian discipleship.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul challenges us to be bold in our Christian discipleship by telling us to remember our Holy Baptism and our relationship in Jesus as he writes:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4)

This same message is reiterated again by St. Paul where he states:

“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27)

Therefore, we can see how the sacrament of Holy Baptism should empower us to live a life that glorifies the name of Jesus, as we live for Him and in Him. This is what the Apostles showed us through their lives and ministry as well.

St. Paul continues his focus on Christian discipleship by looking at the fellowship in Christ Jesus through the celebration of Holy Communion (The Lord's Supper). The Apostles understood how their spiritual nourishment and fellowship in Christ were strengthened through the remembrance of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20). This same fellowship in Christ is what we receive through Holy Communion, and allows us to boldly share Christ to others, as we are in union with Him. St. Paul addresses this when he wrote:

"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16)

Through these examples, we can see how the Apostles followed Christ Jesus, boldly making disciples through fellowship with Jesus in both sacrament and ministry. Let this be our example, as we continue to grow in our Orthodox Christian faith and share Christ in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our communities, and to the world.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

- 1 Peter 2:9

Sacraments & Ministry

By: Jinu Nellisseril Jacob (Acolytes)

The term 'Ministry in Christ' is an expression inspired from the Greek word 'Diakonia' – meaning 'to serve'. The life of our lord and savior Jesus Christ is the quintessence of Christian ministry. He came not to accept service but to serve (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45). It is our vocation to serve humanity with humility and love inspired from Christ (Matthew 20:26, Romans 1:1). Our vocation is fulfilled by serving the needs of society unconditionally.

The Ministry in Christ is not merely the obligation of the ordained officials within the body of Christ; rather we all are alike in our responsibility. It is through the ministry that we proclaim the gospel, the Kingdom of God manifests in our time, and indeed we glorify our Lord. Our social role has not much to do with the ministry in Christ; rather we can fulfill our vocation by embodying Christ in our life and become light of the world, or the city that is set on the hill.

God is the principal reality of our existence who called us, equipped us, and uses us as an instrument in His ministry. The inclination for alternative priorities deviates our life to practice idolatry. The diversity of the gifts and our ministry in Christ is enlightened by blessed St. Paul in the first letter to Corinthians (12:14). We must remember that we are members of the body of Christ; condescension and conceit have no place in the ministry of our lord; rather our roles are complementary and mutually fulfilling.

We have different purposes, and we serve differently in our ministry fulfilling the will of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. The scripture edifies us on the uniqueness of each gift and how we compliment each other in our ministry. A member of the body of Christ is not better or more important than another member, but we all are equal before God (Romans 12:3-6, 1 Corinthians 12:14-26).

The ministry of our Lord and Savior manifested not merely in the synagogue, but he ministered in homes, near the well, on the mountain, or even in casual conversations. The Apostles' ministry extended to every situation and circumstances that touched human life. Even whilst St. Paul was in prison or endangered by natural calamities; our Lord used the blessed apostle to fulfill the ministry. He proclaimed the gospel and regarded himself as "an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:20).

The ministry is what we do for God's glory based on where He has placed us, how He has gifted us, and what He has called us to do according to His infinite wisdom & for the proclamation of the gospel. It is the privilege of all believers to "serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

Hence ministry or service to God can be extended into the workplace, at home, helping the poor, sharing the gospel to a friend or strangers.

The sacramental mysteries of the church help us to participate in the reality of Christ through the church which is the body of Christ. In each holy Sacrament we all can contribute to its ministry in different ways.

Baptism: is a sacramental initiation into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, which at the same time accomplishes in us the effect of Christ's action. One is baptized into the community of Christian faith to share in life, its values, and its vision. Church members should pray for the child getting baptized and it's our ministry to upbring them in the faith and belief of our Church. In this sacrament, members of the church, especially family members of the child, should carry out the ministry by praying and taking lent till baptism day for the presence of the holy spirit for fulfillment of the sacrament.

Chrismation (Holy Myron): representing the Holy Spirit is administered to make the baptised the temple of God. The Holy Spirit already given in Baptism strengthens the faithful in chrismation. While baptism incorporates us into Christ's new risen existence, chrismation makes us partakers of his Holy Spirit, the very source of this new life and of total illumination. Holy Myron is used in two sacraments namely Baptism and consecration of Church.

Holy Confession: Essentially a healing ministry, since sin is viewed primarily as a disease that needs to be healed, rather than a crime that needs to be punished. Therefore, a regular self-examination and confession is essential for spiritual development and growth. The ministry that can be performed in this sacrament is to make church members aware about the importance of confession and outcome we experience after true confession in front of God, pray for others who have issues with us and reconcile with others. It is also a sacrament of reconciliation where the faithful and God are reconciled.

Holy Eucharist: The Divine Liturgy or Holy Qurbano is the sacred rite by which the Orthodox Church celebrates the mystery of the Eucharist. The ministry that can be done here is to help each other understand the importance of each part of the Holy Qurbana. When people don't pay attention, teach them how important this sacrament is, offer a ride to someone who has difficulty coming to church to attend the Holy Qurbana. There are many ways we can help each other when we come for the Holy Qurbana.

Anointing of the sick: The prayer offered in faith will save the sick person and the Lord will raise the sick from bed, and will be forgiven any sins the person has committed (James 5:14-15). During this sacrament, the ministry that we can contribute is to pray for the sick person, for the family, for the mental strength of dear ones to handle the situation, console them, and serve them in the best possible ways.

PILLARS OF THE CHURCH

Priesthood: The priestly ministry of Christ is perpetuated in the Church by the ministerial priesthood, existing in the three essential ministries of bishop, priest and deacon. Church members can pray for the bishops, priests and deacons to have the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit during the ordination and rest of their service.

Marriage: The capstone of the family, the building block of human civilization. There is a special grace given in Christian marriage to experience the sacrificial love among the members of the family in the model of the mutual love between Christ and the Church. The ministry of Church members is to pray for the newly wedded husband and wife to lead a life in God and experience sacrificial love, purifying love, caring love, and unbreakable love. The ministry of parents and families is to pray for the holy ceremony rather than engaging in other celebrations. It is good to have some fun but prayers for the holy ceremony should be given the precedence, only then they can lead a beautiful life in the presence of God.

Therefore, ministries can be performed in different ways by all Church members in the holy sacraments. The whole Christian life must be seen as one great Sacrament whose different aspects are expressed in a great variety of acts, inside and outside of the Church. God serves through us; let us serve him by acknowledging his Lordship in our life.



Drawing By:
Nanma Susan Siju
Grade 6, Sunday School

The Apostolic Ministry: A Journey of Faith & Service

By: Emil Mathew (Acolytes)

The ministry of Jesus and His Apostles is a story that resonates through time, a narrative of faith, hope, and relentless dedication. It began with Jesus' command to His Apostles at the Last Supper, where He established the sacrament of communion and instructed them to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This was not just a call to speak but to act to heal, to rescue, to unbind, and to breathe new life into those who were spiritually 'dead.' This holistic approach to ministry was revolutionary, encompassing both word and deed.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Apostles faced a world of uncertainty. Their immediate response was to come together, often in secret, as it was dangerous to be known as followers of Jesus. Despite these dangers, they were compelled to celebrate the Eucharist, and after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, to preach openly. The Church began to grow, spreading to many places and far-off cities. The Apostles would travel great distances, often on foot or by sea, to meet with new believers and establish congregations. They also initiated fundraising to support their mission, a testament to their resourcefulness and commitment.

The Apostles, having been direct witnesses to Jesus' life and teachings, felt a deep responsibility to stay connected with the growing number of believers. They never abandoned the Eucharistic service, which was central to their faith. Recognizing the logistical challenges of returning to the city, they appointed deacons like Stephen to help. Thus, they managed two parallel ministries: the Eucharistic meals and the preaching ministry, which they carried out side by side. This practice of assigning ministries to new believers was innovative and ensured that the work of the Church continued to flourish.

Saint Paul spoke of the Gifts of the Spirit, acknowledging that each person had different talents—preaching, healing, exorcism, even raising the dead. Those who were involved in ministry were fully committed; it became an integral part of their lives.

Being part of the ministry of Christ, priests handle all sacramental administration with the involvement of the congregation. However, the spirit of the Apostolic ministry lives on through all the members of the church and in all services rendered by whoever is involved in various ministries. Many are in the medical field, bringing physical healing to the community, while others work in psychotherapy, counseling, and other therapeutic professions. Every profession, from construction to mathematics, has its place in the Lord's ministry.

Acolytes are another group deeply involved in the life of the church. They serve in many capacities, from cleaning to participating in church organizations, thus playing a crucial role in the ministry.

The message is clear: every faithful person can be a minister. We can make our ministry more effective in our respective fields of work, offering service to the needy with the help of the Holy Spirit. The faithful approach the altar during communion and return to the world to serve, filled with the Holy Spirit.

In essence, the commandments of Jesus—sacrament and ministry—are as alive today as they were in the time of the Apostles. Whether through the structured roles within the church or the daily acts of kindness by individuals, the spirit of the Apostolic ministry continues to thrive. It is a legacy of service, a call to action, and a reminder that in serving others, we follow the path laid out by Jesus and His Apostles.



Drawing By:
Ann Varughese

Which tribes did the Apostles of Christ hail from?

The Twelve Apostles of Jesus, chosen from various tribes of Israel, played pivotal roles in spreading the Gospel of Christ.

Understanding the tribal origins of these apostles provides a fascinating glimpse into their cultural and historical backgrounds. Each apostle's tribal lineage carries profound significance, shedding light on their individual characteristics and the broader tapestry of biblical narratives. Peter and Andrew, brothers, hailed from the Tribe of Zebulun. James the Greater and John, also brothers, were from the Tribe of Judah. Philip belonged to the Tribe of Issachar, while Bartholomew (Nathanael) was from Naphtali. Matthew (Levi) and James the Less were Levites. Thomas, Thaddeus (Jude), and Judas Iscariot were from the Tribe of Judah, and Simon the Zealot came from Ephraim.

These affiliations, based on traditional sources, highlight the diverse backgrounds of Jesus' closest followers.



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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 that 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 into 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 'Apostles - Pillars of the Church'