



Diocese of South-West America
Sunday School

2nd Grade God Cares for Us



Table of Contents

Midterm Exam (December/January): Lessons 1-8

Final Exam (May/June): Lessons 9-16

	LESSON	PAGE
1	THE GOOD SHEPHERD	2
2	GOD CARES FOR HIS PEOPLE	4
3	THE PRODIGAL SON	7
4	GOD IS TRINITY	9
5	OUR SAVIOR	11
6	THE JESUS PRAYER	13
7	WE WORSHIP GOD	15
8	LOVE IN CHURCH	16
9	THE GOOD SAMARITAN	18
10	LOVE	20
11	THE STORY OF DANIEL	21
12	THE LORD'S PRAYER	24
13	ICON OF THE RESURRECTION	27
14	SAINT GREGORIOS	29
15	THE APOSTLES	30
16	SAINT THOMAS	32

LESSON 1 - THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*Jesus loves you, and you are as important to Jesus
as that one lost sheep is to the shepherd*

Once, there was a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One day, one of them was found missing. He was very sad about his lost sheep.

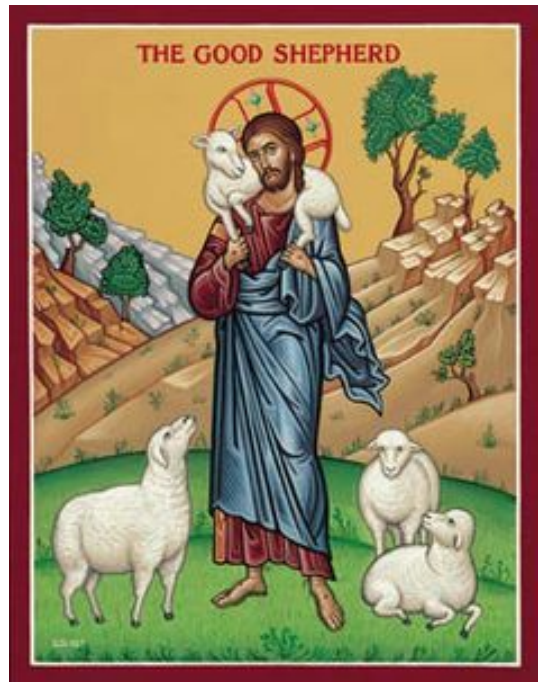
He left the remaining ninety-nine sheep and went in search of the lost one. He searched and searched and finally found the lost sheep. He held it on his shoulder and carried it to the remaining sheep.

He was very happy and he invited all his friends to share his joy as his lost sheep was found.

Jesus told this story to His disciples to help them understand why God had sent them. “The people of God are like a flock of sheep. They feel safe when they have a shepherd whom they know and trust. When somebody climbs the fence and does not come in through the door, he is a thief. The shepherd comes through the door. The guard opens the door for him and the sheep recognize his voice. The shepherd knows all of his sheep and calls each one by name, and they come to him for guidance. But they will never follow a stranger.”

The disciples did not understand what He was talking about. So Jesus said again, “I am the good shepherd. I know the sheep that are Mine, and My sheep know Me. I will never abandon them. I am ready to die for them. My sheep obey Me. I know each one of them and they follow Me.”

Jesus Christ is the good shepherd. He loves us very much. He came down to the earth from heaven in search of his lost sheep. (**John 10**)



When we repent and come back to the way of salvation, heaven will rejoice.

Jesus Christ says, "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (**Luke 15:7**)

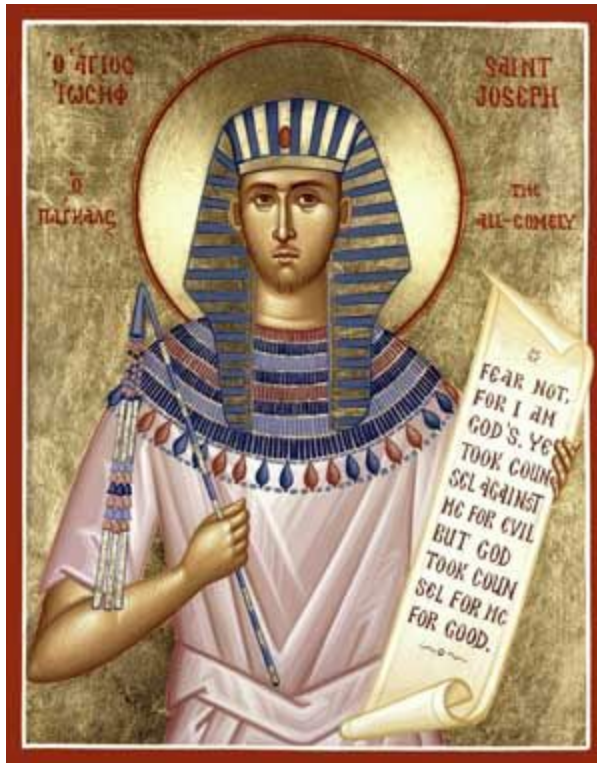


LESSON 2 - GOD CARES FOR HIS PEOPLE

The God of the Old Testament stories is the same God as the New Testament God as we see Him staying faithful to His people

God cares for Jacob's Family

Once there was a great famine in Canaan where Jacob and his family lived. They had no food at all in the whole land. Jacob heard that there were grains in Egypt so Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to collect grains for the family. The sons reached Egypt and presented their request to the governor. The governor was a good man and he gave them grains. The governor recognized them as his own brothers but he pretended that he was a stranger.



He asked the brothers about their father and told them to leave one out of the ten brothers in Egypt until they come back for the grains next time. The governor also gave them special instructions to bring their brother, Benjamin, who was at home. On their journey home, they were surprised to see the money they had paid for the grains in Egypt being found along with the grains. The governor had returned the money along with the grains on purpose. The brothers did not know why he had done that.

As soon as they reached home, they informed their father Jacob of what happened. When the grains they brought from Egypt were finished, Jacob sent his sons again to Egypt. This time, he sent also his son Benjamin according to the governor's instructions. The governor welcomed them happily.

Do you know who this governor was? He was Joseph, the son of Jacob who was once sold to the Midianite merchants by his brothers. The brothers had told their father Jacob that Joseph was killed by wild animals. Jacob believed that his son Joseph was not living any more. The merchants sold Joseph to Potiphar of Egypt. Joseph was cast in

prison. But, when the king of Egypt realized Joseph was a very intelligent and capable man who was able to interpret dreams, he released Joseph and appointed him as the governor of Egypt.

At first, Joseph did not reveal his identity to his brothers. His brothers were surprised when Joseph revealed himself. As requested by Joseph, his father and his brothers came to Egypt and lived happily in the land of Goshen. See, how wonderfully the Lord cared for Jacob and his family! **(Gen: 45: 1 to 46: 7)**

God Listens to His People

God once appeared to Jacob in Bethel and said to him, "....your name will be Israel," and promised that he would inherit the land given to Abraham and Isaac, thus the children of Jacob were called Israelites. This incident happened prior to Jacob's journey to Egypt where he settled with his entire family under Joseph's care. The Israelites grew and increased in number.

A time came when the king of Egypt did not know about Joseph who was the governor during the time of Jacob's journey to Egypt. The people of Egypt became very mean to the Israelites. They wished to go back to their own land, the promised land of Canaan. But who would lead them? They prayed with tears to God for an answer, God raised Moses from among them as their leader.



Moses went to the king and requested to set the Israelites (God's people) free. The king did not agree with this. Then God sent ten plagues on the people of Egypt, but Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, still refused to free God's people.

Moses had directed the Israelites to kill a lamb in every home and smear its blood on the door of their homes. The destroyer passed over the homes of Israelites without hurting them. The destroyer entered the Egyptian homes and killed the first-born children. There was a loud cry throughout Egypt. Death entered the King's palace also, killing his firstborn son. The king and his officials were trembling, leaving the King no choice but to give permission to Moses and Aaron to leave Egypt with the Israelites.

Under the leadership of Moses, Israelites started their journey from Egypt. When they reached the banks of the Red Sea, the king's army came close to them. The Israelites

prayed to God and God asked Moses to stretch his staff toward the sea. The sea was then divided and the people were able to walk across on dry land. When the king's army came after them, and reached the middle of the sea, the waters came back together drowning and killing them all.

The Israelites continued their journey toward Canaan under the leadership of Moses. The Lord heard their cries and liberated them from their bondage in Egypt. **(Exodus 12, 13)**

God leads His people

Under the leadership of Moses, Israelites took about forty years to reach Canaan. They had to travel through the deserts and the Lord led them through the wilderness with pillar of clouds in the day and with bright fire in the night.

The journey through the desert made the people very tired. It was very hot and there was not enough food. People complained and talked badly of Moses. He prayed to God to give food to the people. The Lord heard his prayer. In the morning, they saw something thin and flaky on the surface of the desert. It was the food for them and they called it 'manna'. It tasted like wafers made with pure honey.

Moses told each person to only collect what they needed, and not to collect on the day of Sabbath. Some of them disobeyed and collected manna in excess which spoiled, and those who went to collect on the Sabbath did not find any. The Israelites ate manna for forty years until they reached the land of Canaan, where they settled.

The Lord led His people wonderfully through the desert. He gave them food and water in the wilderness. The Lord helped them meet all their needs.

As we have seen in these stories from the Bible, God truly cares for our us and He shows this to us by blessing us, providing us strength through difficult times, and loving us unconditionally! **(Exodus 16, 17)**

LESSON 3 - THE PRODIGAL SON

God wants you to come back to Him no matter what you have done; He is always ready to receive you with loving arms



There was a man who had two sons. One day, the younger son asked his father for his share of the property. His father gave him his share as requested. Soon after, the younger son sold all the property given to him by his father and left home with the money. He went to a country far away and spent all the money by living recklessly.

When he had no more money left, he was left with no food, shelter, or clothing and his friends left him, too. He found it very hard to live. He searched everywhere for work and found a job taking care of pigs. He ate the same bean pods as the pigs because no one gave him anything to eat. He was very sad and started thinking about his house and his father. He thought, 'All my father's hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am starving'. He decided to go back to his father. When he reached home, he planned to plead, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no more worthy to be called your son, please make me as one of your hired servants."

All this time, the father had been waiting for his son to come back any time. He welcomed, embraced, and kissed the son with utmost happiness. He brought the best robe for his son to wear, rings for his fingers, and shoes for his feet.

The father prepared a party and invited all his friends and relatives. He killed a calf and prepared a meal for everyone. The father said "My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." The elder son was not happy seeing all this, but all others were happy.

Jesus told the parable, "The Prodigal Son" to teach the people about the love of God.

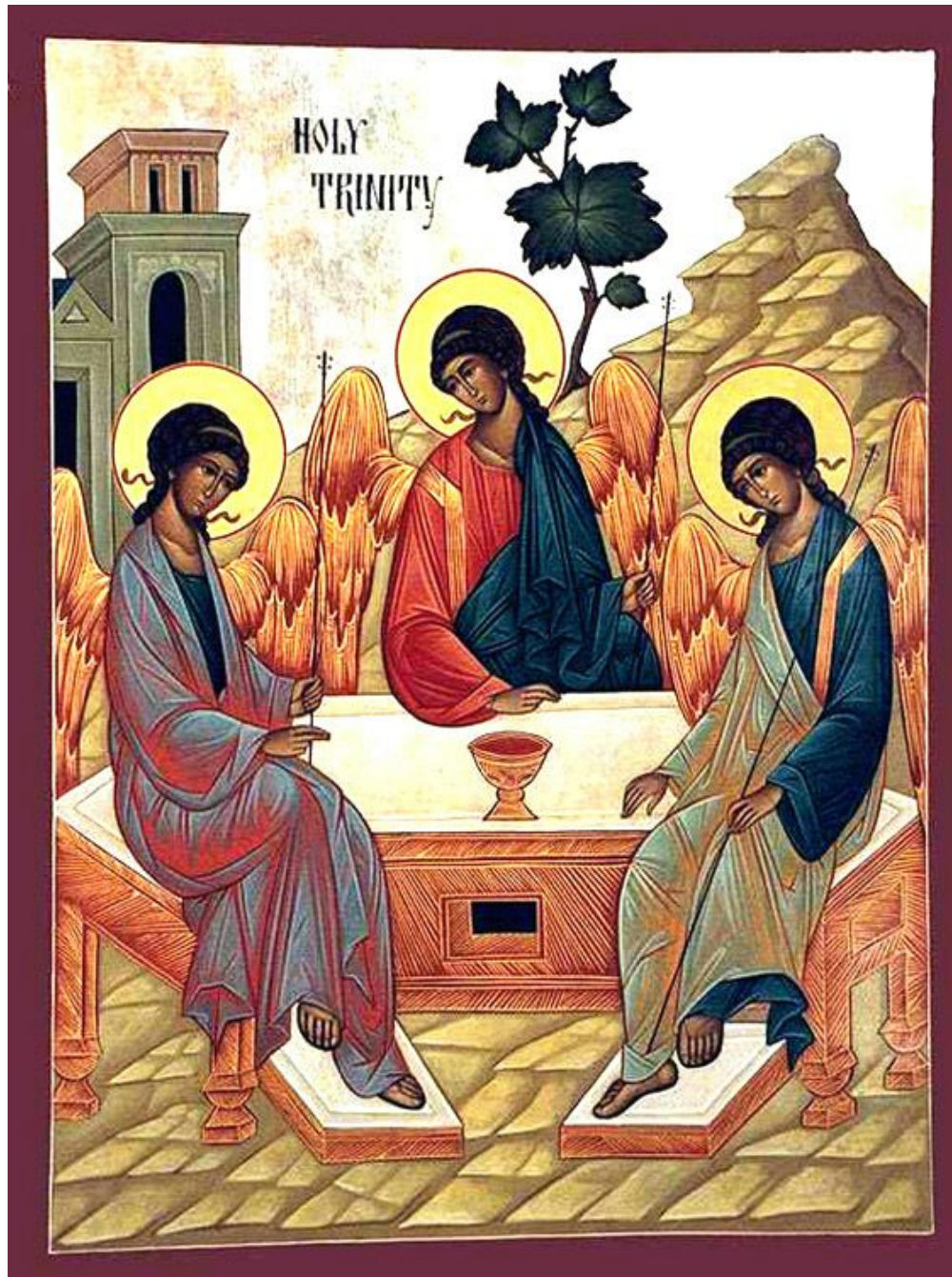
God loves everyone including you and me. Sometimes we are like the prodigal son, and sometimes we are like the older brother who was jealous of the love given to someone else.

But, God is love and He will accept anyone who is humble and comes back to God's house.



LESSON 4 - GOD IS TRINITY

*God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is Love;
He is three Persons in One*



There are three persons in one God. The three persons are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three persons were revealed at the time of the baptism of Jesus. Jesus was baptized at the river Jordan by John the Baptist. As Jesus came out of water, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit came down upon Him in the form of a dove. A voice then came from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. God is Trinity. The three are love, and the three are equal. But, in a way we can never explain, the three are One God. Through faith, we accept and believe this mystery.

We also know the Father sent the Son, the Son offered Himself as a sacrifice through His death on the Cross, and the Holy Spirit gives rebirth through faith, repentance, and love. But the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were always existing - there was no time when there was no Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.

Jesus died on the cross, resurrected on the third day and ascended to the presence of the Father. During His worldly mission, He had promised to send the Holy Spirit after His ascension. Jesus told His disciples to travel the world proclaiming His Good News after anointing them with the Holy Spirit. Jesus thereby gave them the authority to baptize those who believed in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

We pray to the Holy Trinity during Holy Qurbana. For example, the priest prays in Syriac, "*Shubaho Labo labro val rooho kadiso*," which means "*Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*"

In response to this we pray, "*Men olam adamola olam olmeen, Amen*" meaning "*from the beginning for ever and ever, Amen.*" We also make the Sign of the Cross to remember the Holy Trinity.

In the heaven, the angels are continuously praising the Lord. Prophet Isaiah observed this through a vision . Let us also praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - the Holy Trinity. **(Isaiah 6: 1 -7)**

LESSON 5 - OUR SAVIOR

Jesus Christ is our Savior who is eternal and existent even before creation

Coming of the Savior

When Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden because of their sin, the Lord promised a savior for his people, to redeem them from this sin. The people of Israel were eagerly waiting for the savior. This savior is Jesus Christ who defeated Satan through His passion, death, and resurrection.

Jesus Christ is the Lord who has come to save the whole world. Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, God promised a Savior for the world. It was through the prophets that God made this promise.

Prophet Isaiah said that the son of God would be "The prince of peace" who would bring true peace to the world (**Isaiah 9:6**). Isaiah was a prophet who lived about 700 years before Christ.

Isaiah had prophesied that the son of God would be born from a virgin. "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (**Isaiah 7:14**). St. Mary is the Mother of God. She conceived a baby from the Holy Spirit and He was Jesus Christ, our Savior (**Isaiah 9**).



The Handmaid of the Lord

We know that Jesus Christ was born from St. Mary as prophesied by prophet Isaiah. Gabriel, the angel of God, came before Mary while she was praying. Angel Gabriel told her that the son of God and the savior of the world would be born from her. Mary could not believe this. The angel told her, "Nothing is impossible for God." Mary believed this. She answered "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Here we see the strong faith of St. Mary.



Mary, who was pregnant, went to visit her relative, Elizabeth, who called Mary the "Mother of the Lord." Elizabeth told Mary, who had believed what the Lord had said to her, that she was blessed. A beautiful song by Mary praising the blessings of God can be seen in **Luke 1:46-55**.

God has raised Mary to such a level that all generations praise her as blessed. What is the reason for this? This is because of her humility. She was so humble that she considered herself as a handmaid of God. **(Luke 1:26-38)**

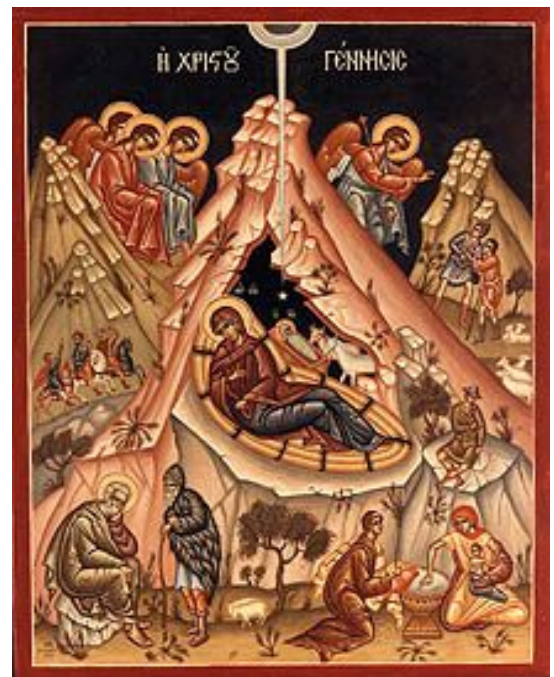
Birth of the Savior

Baby Jesus was born and was placed in a manger in Bethlehem. Shepherds in Jerusalem were the first to hear about the birth of Jesus. The angel of God said to them, "I am here with good news for you, Christ the Savior is born today in the city of David for you."

The angels sang together, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among men with whom he is pleased." The shepherds went to the manger, worshipped baby Jesus, and went back praising God.

The Jews had been waiting for a savior and were very delighted at the birth of Jesus. The Lord was born to the world as a man, to save mankind as a whole. Jesus is the Son of God.

Christmas is the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus. How gloriously we celebrate Christmas through decorations and carol singing during Christmas time. We do this to inform everyone the good news of the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **(St. Luke 2: 10-12)**



LESSON 6 - THE JESUS PRAYER

***“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner,”
is a prayer that we can memorize and say every day***

Have you seen a prayer rope? Some Christians wear them on their wrists to show they love Jesus.



In **Matthew 20:29-34**, Jesus was leaving Jericho when a blind man sitting by the roadside heard Jesus was passing by and cried out loud, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and heard the simple prayer through all the noise.

Jesus asked the man to come to him. The man cried to Jesus asking him to restore his sight. So Christ said, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; When all the people saw this, they gave praise to God.

The Jesus Prayer is similar to the one the blind man cried out to Jesus – “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The shorter examples of that are “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” or “Lord have mercy” (*Kurielaison*) and it is used with the prayer rope.

The Jesus prayer should be said at all times, reminding us to keep our mind on God and not fall into temptations. Not only does it help us focus during our prayers, but helps guide us in everything we do throughout the day.

St. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**). The Jesus Prayer is one that may be difficult to remember at first, but the more we practice the easier it will be to pray continue. The Saint tells us this is a great blessing, and it is worth working hard to remember it.

For Orthodox Christians, the Jesus Prayer plays an important role in our prayer life.

LESSON 7 - WE WORSHIP GOD

Like King David, we should bless the Lord at all times.

We should praise and worship God, who created us and protects us. We should praise Him daily. The book of Psalms contains praises of God written mostly by King David. David says, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (**Psalm 33:1 OSB**). In **Psalm 22:1 OSB**, David says "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want". The life of David was safe in the hands of his shepherd, the Lord. In all life situations, the Lord was with him, just like He is with us. We should praise the Lord when we wake up in the morning, when we go to bed, when we study, before we eat anything, and at all other times whether it be good times or bad. We must remember that the Lord created us in His image and for that, we should always praise Him.

Not only should we praise Him, but we should remember to thank Him for all He has blessed us with in our lives. In the Holy Qurbana, we assemble in the church and offer our thanks to God. We must develop a habit of thanking God for everything in our lives.

The Temple of God is where He lives. It is the place where God is worshipped. Solomon, the son of David was the first to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. Israelites came and met there, offering prayers and sacrifices including animal sacrifices. The greatest sacrifice was offered by Jesus Christ at Calvary.

St. Paul in **1 Corinthians 3:16** tells us, "You are the temple of God and the spirit of God dwells in you." We come to church and take part in the Holy Qurbana. We remember the birth, baptism, public ministry, death and resurrection, and await the glorious second coming of our Lord Jesus. As Jesus commanded, we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Qurbana. St. Paul requests that we offer our whole body as a sacrifice before the Lord. We belong to Him, and everything that we have, belongs to Him.



LESSON 8 - LOVE IN CHURCH

Our church is a place filled with love and peace of God; we can come to church to receive complete healing from sins



When we enter the Church, we have to remember that God is Love, and in God's House we have to make peace with our parents, our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, and our friends. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew that if we do not have the peace and love for others, we should go and make peace.

The place where God's glory lives is special. Church is the place that through miracle and mystery, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. It is where not only we, but also our faithful departed and all the angels join together to worship God. It is where the Holy Spirit abides within us and with all who believe in the Church. It is where at the Holy Altar the King of Glory Himself is present.

This is why we approach and say a prayer, and make the sign of the Cross – this is not a playground or some place where we talk and don't pay attention, it is where we pray with our brothers and sisters. The church is the place during Holy Qurbana where we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ that is the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist (or Communion), a mystery of love. For this we prepare, fast, pray, and forgive one another.

All the people in the Church – our friends, classmates, teachers, uncles, aunties, deacons, priests, and bishops – are part of one family after we are baptized. When we make the Kiss of Peace with each other, we remember that the Kiss of Peace started at the altar, where the hands of the priest kisses and holds the Body and Blood of Jesus. It is from Jesus that we are all one family, all together under the House of God.



Within the Church, there are many symbolic items like the Cross, the altar, the candles, the chalice, the baptismal font, icons, and the incense in the censer. As we stand praying inside the Church, we should look at all these symbols and remember how wonderful and loving God is. We are reminded through these symbols that He became a person in Jesus Christ to save us. We sing “*Kurielaison*” or “*Lord have mercy*” when we remember how good He is and how much He has done for us.



Sin can hurt us. So at Church, we can ask God for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Confession. When we decide to confess our sins to God, we sit with a priest (or Achen) and he helps us and blesses us. Even when it is not easy to love, the Holy Spirit helps us.

The Church is always a place for peace and love. What is the most important thing to do when we are in the house of our Heavenly Father? We pray, we learn about the Word of God, and we worship God. And when we receive the Holy Qurbana, we know Jesus tells us that whoever takes His Body and Blood will have Jesus living inside him. This allows us to be strong and be protected so that when we leave from Church, we know He is with us!



LESSON 9 - THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Jesus is the Good Samaritan that loves us and shows mercy and compassion upon us who are wounded by our sins

One day Jesus told this story:



A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They beat him up, took all of his belongings, and left him on the road half dead.

A priest from the temple of Jerusalem happened to be going down the same road. He saw the wounded man, but he walked by without doing anything.

Later, a servant from the temple came along the same road, too. He also saw the wounded man, but he walked by without helping at all.

Then a man from Samaria came by. People from Jerusalem didn't like Samaritans. In fact, they hated Samaritans and looked down on them.

But, when this Samaritan noticed the wounded man, he felt sorry for him. He went right over to him, washed his wounds, and bandaged them well. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to the nearest inn. He paid for a room and put the wounded man in bed and took care of him.

The next day the Samaritan had to leave for the rest of his trip. So he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, "Take good care of this man, and if you spend more I will pay you when I come back."

When Jesus finished this story, He said, "Let this Samaritan be an example to you. You must do the same." **(Luke 10:25-37).**

In this parable, the Inn is a symbol of the Church, a place where we can go to be taken care of. The Good Samaritan is a symbol of Jesus. When we look at all those who passed by the wounded man, we should ask ourselves if we are like everyone else who walked by or are we like the Good Samaritan who decided to take care of the man. The parable also shows that Jesus takes care of us regardless of who we are because He loves us.

LESSON 10 - LOVE

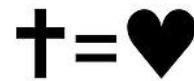
John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, He sent His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life”

Love means serving others:

- To serve means to do something good for someone, out of our love for them and for God.
- When we care for others, we are caring for Jesus. We should remember this whenever we see a person in need.
- God made people the same in many ways, and different in many ways.
- We should love people, even if we don't know them.
- We should help people in the Church.
- People in the Church can join together to help others who are in need.

Love means being respectful:

- Respecting other people is a way of telling them that they are important.
- Everyone deserves respect.
- We show our respect for the Cross by making the Sign of the Cross, putting it up on our walls, or wearing it on a chain around our neck. Seeing a Cross should remind us of Jesus' love for us.
- We also respect the saints, who were people who lived God's way. We remember the day the saint died as their Feast day, because on that day the saint went to heaven.
- We must treat our world with respect.



Love means obeying the rules:

- Rules help us to live together. When we obey them, it shows that we care about ourselves and about each other.
- We follow rules in our Church because we love and respect God and others there.
- God gave us rules in the form of the Ten Commandments.
- Jesus taught us to follow these commandments, and that the greatest commandment is to love others.
- The Holy Cross is a symbol of love, because Jesus died on the Cross to save us. We celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross on September 14.

LESSON 11 - THE STORY OF DANIEL

Daniel was a man of great faith and prayer, and he is an excellent of example of a good Christian

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon and came to Jerusalem with his army to take the city. He chose servants from among the Israelites and wanted people who were smart enough to learn to read and write the Babylonian language. For three years the young men were taught all they needed to know in order to serve the king.

One of these young men was Daniel. He and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were chosen to serve the king. The king soon realized that these young men were much smarter than any of the others. They replied to all of Nebuchadnezzar's questions with wisdom and prudence (**Daniel 1**).

Holy Youths in the Fire

One day, King Nebuchadnezzar made a large gold statue and ordered, "All the people in my kingdom must bow down to this golden statue. All those who do not will be thrown into the furnace to die." Everyone bowed down to the statue except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who would bow down only to the God of Israel.

When the king heard this, he ordered them to be brought before him to the palace and said, "How dare you disobey my orders? Do you think that your Lord can save you if I throw you into the furnace?" The three young men replied, "If God wishes, He can save us from you and from the furnace. But even if He does not, we will not bow down to your golden statue." Then Nebuchadnezzar became furious and ordered the three of them to be thrown into the furnace. But God sent an angel who protected them from the fire. The king was terribly upset and cried out, "Didn't we



throw three men into the furnace? Why do I see four men walking around inside without getting burned?” The king ordered the furnace to be opened, and the three young men came out completely unharmed (**Daniel 3**).

Daniel in the lion's den

Nebuchadnezzar died and Darius became the new king. One of the most important men in his kingdom was Daniel, and Darius wanted to give him even greater power. The other men at court were jealous of Daniel and wanted to harm him. They knew that Daniel prayed only to the God of Israel and told the king, “Give an order that for forty days no one should be allowed to pray to any god or man except you, King Darius. All

those who will not obey will be thrown to the lions.” They knew that when the king gave an order it could not be changed, because it was the law.

The king agreed and announced the order to the whole kingdom.

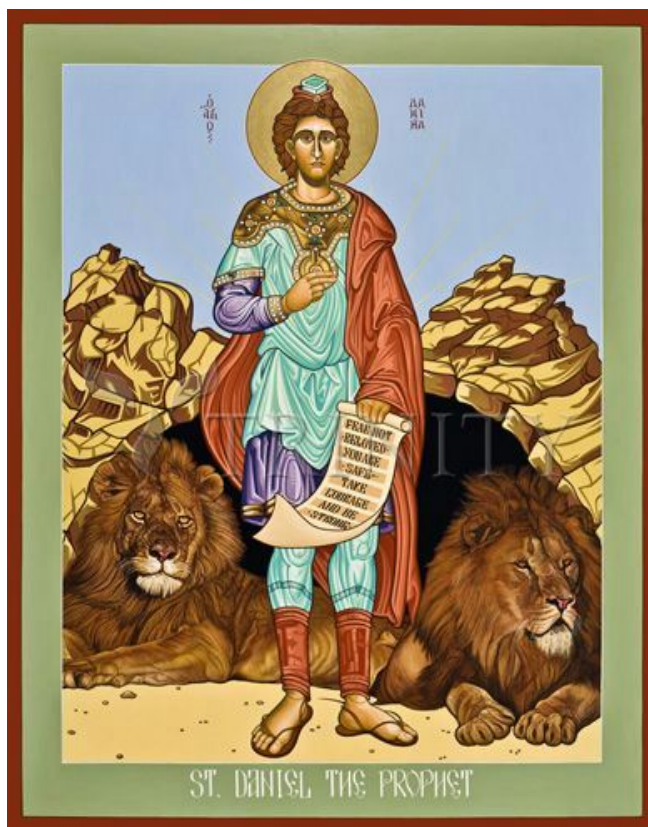
Now, Daniel often prayed to God: three times a day he knelt and prayed for protection and blessings. Even after the king's decree, he continued to pray.

When his enemies saw this they went to the king and said, “Daniel does not obey your order. He prays to his God three times a day.” The king was sad. He liked Daniel and wanted to forgive him. But Daniel's enemies said, “You know, O King, that none of your orders can be

changed.”

So King Darius had to throw Daniel into the pit with the hungry lions. The king could not sleep at all that night. In the morning, he got up very early and rushed to the lions' pit.

He cried out with a sad voice, “Daniel, did your Lord manage to save you from the lions?” Then Daniel replied, “My Lord has sent His angel to shut the mouth of the lions



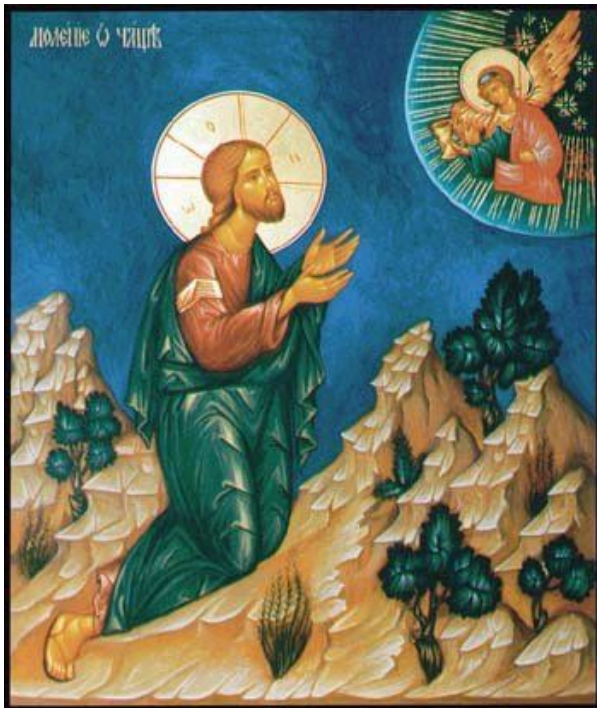
so they could not harm me, for I am innocent and have done nothing wrong.” Then the king was very pleased and ordered Daniel to be taken out of the pit. **(Daniel 6)**

Daniel tells of the coming of the Savior

Daniel had a vision that foretold the coming of our Savior: “On the clouds of heaven I saw someone coming who looked like a man; he was brought before the Pre-eternal God. He was given power and glory and kingship so that all people of every nationality and language will serve him. His leadership will be eternal and his kingdom will never be destroyed.” **(Daniel 7)**

LESSON 12 - THE LORD'S PRAYER

God wants to hear you talk to Him and He wants to see you pray the way He taught His disciples to pray using the Lord's Prayer



Prayer is talking to God, and God loves when we pray. The disciples, Jesus' closest friends, wanted to learn how to pray. The disciples were with Jesus all the time and were with Him when He went to pray. Yet, they were still not sure how to pray.

Jesus teaches we should pray with humility. God listens no matter if our prayers are long or short. God knows what we mean in our hearts even when we have trouble finding the right words.

Jesus also teaches us that we shouldn't 'show off' when we pray. God doesn't want us to pray just so people can see us, or pray loudly just so people will know we are praying. He loves when we pray in a quiet place with our own words and for our needs, what we are thankful for, praises, and what we're sorry for.

Jesus taught us a special prayer called The Lord's Prayer, which we should say often at home and at Church.

***Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our debts and sins as we
also have forgiven our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.
Amin.***

Let's understand each part of this special prayer that Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven

We start the prayer out this way so we know that we're praying to God. He is our heavenly Father, and we are His children.

Hallowed be Thy name

This means Holy is Your Name. Even though God wants us to call him Father, He is still God. It's sometimes really hard to understand who God is and what He's like. How did He make us? How is He perfect and never makes mistakes? God just wants us to remember that we need to treat Him super special because He is God and when we pray to Him we need to be respectful.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We should think all the time about living with God. This part means we are praying that people would live in peace and love with one another the way it is in heaven with God. It reminds us that we should be living the way God wants us to everyday.

Give us this day, our daily bread

God provides everything we need to live a life of a Christian. Too often we think about asking God to give us video games and princess dolls, but forget to thank Him for the food that we eat, the water that we drink, and even the air that we breathe. When we ask God for things, that means we trust Him and we'll leave the decision to God.

and forgive us our debts and sins as we also have forgiven our debtors.

This next part of the prayer is asking for forgiveness for our mistakes. Forgiveness means that we are sorry for something we've done and we don't want to do it anymore. But we also need to forgive people who have done wrong to us. Sometimes others hurt us very badly, so we need to ask God to help us forgive them because it's really hard or we don't want to. If we forgive others, God will forgive us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

This part of the prayer is really neat because it asks God to help us to know the right thing to do. He will protect us against the evil that is in the world and keep us away from it. Temptation is the idea that is in our heads, that might lead us to do the wrong thing, and we ask God to give us strength to listen to Him and do what is right.

***For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.
Amin.***

The last part of the prayer is the best part! We say out loud that God's kingdom will be forever. With God, we will always win!

We should not only say the Lord's prayer, but it's so important to think about what we are saying. When we pray, we should think about all the things we have to be thankful for and how God has given us everything we need. When we pray "forgive us our debts", we ask forgiveness for those things we did wrong including those that we may have forgotten.

Prayer is our special way of talking to God so remember to pray as many times as you can. God loves you and wants to know everything about you and how you're doing.

LESSON 13 - ICON OF THE RESURRECTION

The Icon of the Resurrection can help us understand the most important part of Jesus' mission on Earth, and many other icons help us understand people and stories of the Bible better, too



Holy Icons

Holy Icons help us in so many ways:

Icons remind us to pray, which is the most important thing in the world. We don't always see how, but our prayers make a difference on earth and in heaven.

Icons teach us how to be true followers of Christ by showing us scenes from the Bible and from the lives of the Saints. Icons keep our mind on God when we're praying. It is easy to get distracted when we pray, so having icons help keep our eyes and minds from wandering.

Icons give us humility. Just the fact that we have icons is a way of admitting that we need all the help we can get when it comes to staying close to God. If you want to be like God, be humble.

Holy Icon of Resurrection

The most important celebration or feast in the Church is Resurrection because at the center of Christianity is Jesus Christ and His Resurrection. St Paul teaches us that if Christ had not risen from the dead, then there would be no Christianity! (**1 Corinthians 15:14**).

In the Icon of the Resurrection, we see Jesus victorious over death where He is robed in Heavenly white, He is surrounded by a mandorla of star-studded light, representing the Glory of God. Christ is shown dramatically pulling Adam, the first man, from the tomb. Eve is to Christ's left, hands held out in supplication, also waiting for Jesus to act. This humble surrender to Jesus is all Adam and Eve need to do, and all they are able to do. Christ does the rest, which is why He is pulling Adam from the tomb by the wrist, and not the hand.

Surrounding the victorious Christ are John the Baptist and the Old Testament Prophets and Kings. They were those who died before Christ's Resurrection and were waiting in Hades for the coming of their Messiah. Now they are freed from this underworld and mingle freely with Christ and His angels.

And what of Hades or Sheol, the place of the dead? It is destroyed! This is shown by the broken doors (which is often placed as an X) under the feet of Jesus. He destroys death so quickly that the robes of Christ is blowing upward. The underworld is shown with scattered broken chains and locks; it is still there but in ruin. The power of death to keep people is gone. There are no chains and no locked doors. If we raise our hands and look for Jesus, he will lift us from the grave.

We should listen closely to the songs during Resurrection, which all joyfully sing the triumph of our Lord! After Easter, when we see other Orthodox Christians, we happily say to each other "Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!"

LESSON 14 - SAINT GREGORIOS

Saint Gregorios was a man of great faith, and he is a man that we can look at as a great example of a true Christian



St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios, also very well known as Parumala Thirumeni, is the first canonized Christian saint from India. He was born on June 15, 1848 to a priestly family. Thirumeni became a deacon at the age of ten, a priest at the age of eighteen, and a bishop at the young age of twenty eight.

Parumala Thirumeni dedicated his life to serving others and was a master of the Syriac language. He lived a prayerful life, believing that “prayer brings truth, religious faith, honesty, and respect among the people.”

Every day, he would wake up at four am for prayers and strictly followed the church practices of praying seven times a day. Since his childhood, Thirumeni observed all the lents of the church and fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Thirumeni brought joy to the people who met him and touched the lives of many who were in need. He showed love and prayed for the ill, the poor, and the needy, regardless of their caste. Because of his service to the community, he gained respect from not only Christianity, but also other religions.

Parumala Thirumeni passed away after being very ill on November 3, 1902, at the age of fifty four. Thirumeni was and still is a great inspiration for all, and his life shows us that trusting in God and believing that He is there for us, will get us through the best of times and the most difficult of times.

Just as Thirumeni did, there is a responsibility in all of us to do God’s will and love everyone regardless of who they are and where they are from.

LESSON 15 - THE APOSTLES

The Apostles were also dear friends of Christ so we can trust them to be builders of the Church we are a part of today



Jesus had twelve disciples who were known as apostles. The meaning of the word *apostle* is “to send” and Jesus did just that.

The oldest apostle was Peter and the youngest was John. Besides Peter, James and John, the sons of Zebedee could witness the transfiguration. The Gospel according to St. John was written by this disciple.

All the disciples surrendered everything before Jesus. They followed Jesus giving up everything they had. They were with Jesus throughout His public ministry. They witnessed Jesus' miracles and His preaching of the kingdom of God. They witnessed Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. However, Judas, one among the disciples, betrayed Jesus. In Judas' place, Matthias was selected by the eleven apostles after the ascension of Jesus Christ.

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the disciples waited for the Holy Spirit as the Lord had promised them. They prayed for the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Through the Holy Spirit they received power and courage.

St. Thomas, one among the disciples, came to India and established our Church. It is this disciple who put his finger into the nail prints of Jesus.

St. Paul is also considered as an apostle even though he was not one among the twelve apostles. Paul had seen the resurrected Jesus and became foremost among the builders of the church. The church is built upon the foundation of apostles (**Ephesians 2:20**).

What are some ways you can follow the path of some of Jesus's apostles? Let us proceed in the footprints of the apostles who loved the Lord.

LESSON 16- SAINT THOMAS

St. Thomas brought Christianity to India, and we are the fruit of his missions



Saint Thomas the Apostle (called Didymus which means "the twin") was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, many call him 'doubting Thomas' because he doubted Jesus' resurrection when he was first told by the other Apostles (**John 20:19-29**). But his confession of faith, "My Lord and my God," on seeing Jesus' wounded body is the strongest proclamation of Christ as man and God. St. Thomas further had so much faith that he travelled the farthest of all the Apostles, and reached the shores of India to bring the Gospel, the Good News of our salvation, to our ancestors.

St. Thomas came to India in 52 A.D. and introduced Christianity to India. He reached the coast of Kerala (Malabar) and preached the Gospel to India. He had baptized many people and appointed the first priests of our Church. He died in India as a martyr in 72 A.D.

St. Thomas is our spiritual father and patron saint of many of our parishes.

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

The name of our Church is the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, or also known as the Indian Orthodox Church.

Our Church has many Dioceses, primarily in India, mainly in the state of Kerala. We have bishops, priests, and parishes almost every where in the world. The supreme head of our Church, His Holiness Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II, is the Catholicos who resides at Devalokam Aramana, Kottayam, India.



The American Diocese was established in 1979 with H.G. Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios as its first Diocesan Metropolitan. In 1992, H.G. Mathews Mar Barnabas became the Diocesan Metropolitan with the Bishop's House in New York.

The American Diocese was divided into two in 2009. Together, the Northeast American Diocese and Southwest American Diocese have parishes in most of the fifty states of the U.S.A. and in a number of Canadian provinces.

His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos is the Diocesan Metropolitan of the North-East Diocese, and the Bishop's House is in New York.

Our Bishop and Shepherd is His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius, who is the Diocesan Metropolitan of the South-West Diocese. Urselem is the Bishop's House and is located in Houston, Texas.