



A St. Gregorios Orthodox Syrian Church, Oak Park Publication

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JANUARY 2011

GREGORIAN GAZETTE

HAPPY
NEW YEAR

THE GAZETTE TEAM
WISHES ITS READERS
A BLESSED AND
PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

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Dearly Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, **St. Basil of Caesarea**,

The beginning of every New Year finds many people making resolutions to improve their lives. Some people make a resolution to strengthen their financial or professional standing. Others resolve to lose weight or stop a bad habit. And there are many people who express the desire to improve their relationships with their families or coworkers, to help the needy, or to pursue some other lofty goal in life.

While it is natural to make such resolutions at the beginning of a new year, it is also quite natural that, within a few weeks, such resolutions are broken or forgotten. Life returns to "normal," to the "status quo." During the subsequent months, little attention is paid to broken resolutions which, by the end of the year, have been thoroughly forgotten.

The very heart of the Gospel may be summed up into a single word: repent! To be a follower of Christ means to resolve to change our minds, our hearts, and our lives, resolving to discern not our own wills and desires, but the Lord's.

Resolving to live according to God's will and the example we have been given by Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is something that is not restricted to the beginning of the New Year, but is something that we have to face every day of our lives as Orthodox Christians. We are continually challenged to embrace change by growing stronger in our faith, by participating more regularly in the life of the Church, and by reaching out to others with compassion and love. As we begin every new day, we pray that our repentance will bring us into a more intense relationship with God and others, and even with ourselves, seeking to accomplish not our own wills, but the will of our Heavenly Father.

Wishing you a blessed New Year,

Ninan Achen



Fr. M. K. Thomas

Fr. V.M. Shibu

Liju Paul

Liju Varghese

Elizabeth Varghese

Gladstone Mammen

George Panicker

Joe Varghese

Peter Varghese

George Varghese (Publisher)

EDITORIAL BOARD

1. Saturday - New Year's Day

1 John 3:13-18, Romans 2: 28 - 3:8, St. John 15:5-19

Feast of Circumcision of our Lord;

Feast of the Cappadocian Fathers

Holy Qurbana and installation of 2011 Managing Committee

2. Sunday - Second Sunday after Christmas

1 John 3:21-24, Hebrews 11:23-31, St. Luke 4:40-52

Managing Committee Meeting after Holy Qurbana

3. Monday - 47th Memorial of HH Catholicos Baselious Geevarghese II

Koonan Cross Oath (Mattancherry St. George)

6. Thursday - Baptism of Christ (Denaha)**7. Friday - Feast of St. John the Baptist (Beheading)**

PHAT Meeting 7PM

8. Saturday - Feast of St. Stephen

KFC Kick-off 1-4PM @ church

9 . Sunday - First Sunday after Denaha

Acts 2:37-47, Ephesians 1:3-14, St. Matthew 4:12-22

14. Friday - MGOCSM Winter 2Day Conference 7PM @ church**15. Saturday - MGOCSM Winter 2Day Conference 10AM @ church****16. Sunday - Second Sunday after Denaha**

1 Peter 3:7-15, Hebrews 1:1; 2:4, St. John 1:43-51

22. Saturday - Second Memorial of HG Philipose Mar Eusebius

MMVS Regional Meeting; Sunday School Teachers Meeting

23. Sunday - Third Sunday after Denaha

Acts 17:16-34, 1 Corinthians 3:16-4:5, St. John 3:1-12

Sunday School Parents Teachers Conference

30. Sunday - Fourth Sunday after Denaha

Acts 18:1-4, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, St. Mark 6:1-6

St. Gregory Of Nyssa: Homilies on the Lord's Prayer

By - Elsy Stephen

A brilliant theological and philosophical mind, St. Gregory is known as one of the three great theologians of the Church. In the book, *"Homilies on the Lord's Prayer"* St. Gregory of Nyssa expounds on the meaning of the Lord's Prayer in the context of daily life, while also convincing Christians on the value of prayer as a crucial component of meaningful Christian life and spirituality. The following is a summary of St. Gregory's study of the Lord's Prayer.

Among all the valuable things in life, nothing is superior to prayer. Divine grace has given us countless blessings. In return for all that we received, we have but one venue to exchange with our benefactor—prayer and thanksgiving.

St. Gregory has an extended and eloquent definition of prayer which in part reads: "Prayer is a seal of virginity, the fidelity of marriage, the weapon of travelers, the guardian of those sleeping, the courage of those awake, the comfort to prisoners, and the rest to the weary..."

Prayer is to speak with God, to behold invisible realities, to satisfy spiritual yearning. Prayer is equality with angels, progress in good things, overthrowing of evil, correction of sinners, enjoyment of present gifts, and assurance of future blessings.

One who departs from God can in all ways come under the influence of the adversary. One who does not unite himself with God through prayers is separated from God. (Luke- 18:11) Prayer guards prudence, moderates temper, retains vanity, cleanses from rancor, removes envy, destroys injustice, and corrects impiety. Prayer is the strength of the body, the prosperity of the house-hold, the good order of the city, the might of the kingdom, the victory in war, the security in peace, the unity of those divided, and the constancy of those united. For Jonah, prayer turned the whale into home. (Jon 2) Prayer brought Hezekiah back to life from the very gates of death. (2 Kings 20:1-11) To the Israelites, prayer raised up the banner of victory against the Amalekites. (Ex. 17:8-16)

The first discourse deals with the nature of prayer—why we need to pray, what is prayer, prayer as an expression of thanksgiving to God, and how we should understand the O.T. prayers against enemies.

In the second discourse, St. Gregory interprets the invocation “Our father who art in heaven”. The vision of ascent to God achieved through the knowledge of grace and of the teachings of Christ is the key to St. Gregorios spirituality and as well to his interpretation of the Lord’s prayer. St. Gregory states that the qualities of our lives— whether they are goodness, holiness, mercy or hatred, slander, and **(CONTD PG 6)**

greed—show whom we invoke when we say “father”. Do we truly invoke God or the Devil? According to the Apostle Paul, there is no communion between light and darkness. (2 Cor. 6:14) Through the example of the prodigal son, he shows how a sinner can return to his spiritual homeland and become a true son or daughter of God.

The third discourse on “Hallowed by Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come” begins with an allegorical interpretation of the vestments of the high priest in the Old Testament. For St. Gregory, the symbolic meaning of these vestments is to be found in the gifts and virtues which Christ bestows on his followers, and which ought to be exemplified especially by the ordained priests of the Church. Then there is the line “Thy Kingdom come”. St. Gregory says that when God’s Kingdom comes by the power of divine grace, all opposing evils “collapse into nothingness”. In the Divine Liturgy and other prayers of the Church, Christ is called the “Physician” of our souls and bodies. The Church Fathers have often spoken of salvation as therapy—a process from a state of sickness to a state of health. St. Gregory develops his Fourth Discourse based around these images, and expertly connects the two petitions about God’s will and daily bread. To pray that God’s will be done on earth is to invite the power of the divine as it will lead us to a state of health reflecting the life of heaven—love, purity, justice, holiness, and goodness. The will of God is to restore the health and salvation of human beings. Thus, Christ teaches us that we must ask

only for “bread”, namely the necessities of life and no more. We must concentrate on spiritual blessings according to his words: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these will be added to you” (Mt 6:33).

The last discourse takes up with the petitions, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”, and “Lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from the Evil One.” For St. Gregory, nothing expresses the greatness of forgiveness. By giving forgiveness, men and women can attain to God’s likeness and become, as it were, “gods” by sharing God’s attributes. St. Gregory contemplates the enormous debts we owe to God as a fallen humanity—deserting our place in paradise, defacing God’s image in us, and committing all manner of sin through the outward sense as well as from within the heart. Temptations are—“the evils of daily life”. They arise from our preoccupation with the things of the world which is in under the power of the Devil (1 Jn 5;19). The path to combating these temptations for St. Gregory is by removing oneself from worldly preoccupations yet not necessarily from the world itself. St. Gregory ends his meditations on the Lord’s Prayer by lifting up once again the ascetic vision of Christian life reminiscent of Christ’s words: “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few”.

2011 Managing Committee Members

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Secretary:	Mr. Saji Korah
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Auditor:	Mr. John Mulanthara
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Youth Member:	Mr. Gibson Mammen
Youth Member:	Ms. Elizabeth Varghese

Please keep this year's managing committee members in your valuable prayers, that God may strengthen them to work in His vineyard and for His glory and praise.

We discussed the genealogy of Christ at the third Teachers Meeting of the academic year 2010-2011 held on Friday, December 17th, at the residence of Jocelyn Varghese. The Bible study was led by Ninan Achen.

The Old Testament starts with the genealogy of creation. The Jews gave importance to genealogy and always referred to the Patriarchs. Heritage, lineage and roots were considered important in those times. We study genealogy to establish: 1) Jesus is the Son of God (St. Matthew lists in descending order while St. Luke lists in ascending order- deductive and inductive approach); 2) Jesus is the answer to all dreams - He is the Messiah; 3) Prophecy of Messiah is fulfilled in Jesus Christ – He is born per the prophecy and all the Old testament prophecies are fulfilled in the Messiah; 4) Incarnation of Jesus Christ was an historic event; 5) Kingly lineage of Jesus was established (King David); 6) To show the cosmic nature of the Salvific act of Jesus Christ – He was born for all; and 7) To show the eternity of the Son of God. St. John presents a theological perspective of the genealogy.

It is interesting to note here that four women, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba are mentioned in the genealogy. St. Matthew's gospel was mainly to the Jews while St. Luke's main audience was the Gentiles at that time. Some interesting characteristics need to be noted as we study the genealogy- 1) Jesus Christ has a human lineage like us. 2) Genealogy reduces barriers at different levels; maintaining balance between gentiles and Jews and bringing men and women together. 3) It stated that salvation is for all. He came to save the sinners.

Jesus Christ came to save the entire world and established the Kingdom of God. On losing the image of God in us, we go into slavery. When we come closer to God, He lifts us up. When we sin, we are taken away from God. We have to be with God though living a sacramental life in the Church and prayer to retain His image in us. Study of genealogy impresses upon us that we are part of a great chain and that each chain is important to make the whole chain strong. Genealogy establishes that we are part of His life.

Sisters in Christ,

We were blessed to have our last meeting of 2010 in the presence of our Eusebius Thirumeni, Shibu Achen and Ninan Achen.

Thirumeni's message was inspiring to the ladies who attended. The message emphasized on the importance of the mother's role in a child's life. He talked about the parable of the Prodigal son (St. Luke 15:11-32) and the parable of the two sons (St. Matthew 21: 28-32). From the two parables, we can see that there is no mention of the presence of a mother in their lives.

If a mother is present, she will always correct her sons when they talk back to their father and children will think of their mother's correction in the future. When a baby is born, a mother teaches the child to pray, sing praises to God and this we remember the rest of our lives. Just the same, Jewish women would teach their children before they went to bed to say, "Father, into your hands; I commend my spirit." To this day, they do this. Mother Mary taught Jesus the same words and Jesus' last words on the cross was **"Father into your hand I commend my spirit."**

A mother's influence in a child's life is very important. So, we should be greatly involved in their life and help them with not only their physical well being but their moral and spiritual development also.

On behalf of the 2010 committee, we want to thank all of you for your cooperation and prayer for finishing this year in such a blessed manner. We want to thank Thomas Achen and Shibu Achen for all the messages they prepared for each month based on the theme of that month. We praise God for all the blessings He showered upon us this past year. We also seek His guidance and blessings for the New Year. The MMVS committee of 2010 sends their NEW YEAR wishes to all the women of Oak Park Church.

Humbly in Christ,

2010 MMVS Committee

MMVS 2011

An MMVS Chicago Regional meeting is scheduled to be held at our Church on January 22nd Saturday from 10am to 1pm. MMVS members from the other three Chicago area churches will be attending this meeting. Rev Fr. Ninan V George will be the main speaker. We request all our MMVS members to come and participate in this event.

Beena Poozhikunnel (MMVS Secretary 2011)

Kids' Corner



HG Philipose Mar Eusebius was born on June 16, 1931. From 1954 to 1962 he was an employee of Southern Railway and in 1962 he resigned from the Southern Railway employment and began his theological studies, obtaining his B.D. from Serampoor University, his M. Th. from U.T. College Bangalore and his Post Graduate Diploma in Theology from Geneva University.

He was ordained as deacon on December 21st of 1972 and as priest on June 7th two years later. During this period he was noted for his spiritual leadership and served as General Secretary of MGOCSM, Secretary / Superior of Thadakam "Kristhushishya Ashram", Lecturer of Calcutta Bishops College, Secretary of Andhra Cyclone Relief Activities, and Professor for Church History in Orthodox Theological Seminary. On May 14th, 1983, he was ordained as a 'Ramban' by the then Catholicose Designate HG Mathews Mar Coorilose (now Catholicose and Malankara Metropolitan HH Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews II) at Parumala. On May 15th two years later, he was ordained as an Episcopa and given the name Philipose Mar Eusebius by Catholicose HH Baselios Marthoma Mathews I at Puthiyakavu St. Mary's Orthodox Church. From August 1st of that year, he was designated as Assistant Metropolitan of Thumpamon Diocese and from 1990 onwards he became the Metropolitan of Thumpamon Diocese. On January 22nd, we celebrate the second anniversary of his departure from this world.

Let us seek Thirumeni's intercessions to God as we also keep him in our prayers.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

01/02 Kripa Poozhikunnel

01/28 Kevin Panicker

01/02 Joshua George

01/31 Sheena Panicker

01/06 Nirali Easo

01/31 Preethu Alex

01/07 Justin John

Happy Birthday

01/11 Sharon Mathew

01/27 Nathan Kuruvilla

To You!



Also called **Saint Basil the Great** (329-379) was one of the towering giants of ancient Christianity, born in a Caesarea, Cappadocia, Turkey, into the wealthy Christian family of Basil the Elder, and Emelia. Elder Basil's family was an old Christian family of wealth and distinction, with a remarkable religious history. It was a large household, consisting of ten children, the parents, and Basil's grandmother, Macrina the Elder. His parents were known for their piety, and his maternal grandfather was a Christian martyr, executed in the years prior to Constantine's conversion. Four of Basil's siblings are known by name, and considered to be saints by various Christian traditions. His older sister **Macrina** the Younger was a well-known nun. His elder brother **Peter** served as bishop of Sebaste in Armenia, and wrote a few well-known theological treatises. His brother **Nauratius** was an anchorite, and inspired much of Basil's theological work. Perhaps the most influential of Basil's siblings was his younger brother **Gregory**. Gregory of Nyssa was appointed by Basil to be the bishop of Nyssa, and he produced a number of writings defending Nicene theology and describing the life of early Christian monastics. With his life-long friend, Gregory of Nazianzus and his brother Gregory of Nyssa, he makes up the trio known as '**The Three Cappadocians Fathers**', far outclassing the other two in practical genius and actual achievement. St. Basil the Great was one of the most influential of the Greek Fathers of the Church during the 'Golden Age of the Fathers' (4th - 5th Centuries).

For some years, he followed the monastic way of life. He vigorously fought the Arian heresy. He became Archbishop of Caesarea in 370. Monks of the Eastern Church today still follow the monastic rules which he had laid down. His ability to balance his theological convictions with his political connections made Basil a powerful advocate for the Nicene position. He ranks after Athanasius as a defender of the Oriental Church against the heresies of the fourth century. The liturgy named after him is one of the principal liturgies of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. He had a strong practical sympathy with the poor and downtrodden and was merciless towards the enormities of the wealthy. He passed away in 379 AD, Jan 1. On Jan. 1 our Church also commemorate the Cappadocian Holy Fathers, who were teachers and doctors of the Holy Church.

-Jacob P Varghese, Sharjah

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