



A St. Gregorios Orthodox Syrian Church, Oak Park Publication

VOLUME:X ISSUE: VIII OCTOBER '11

GREGORIAN GAZETTE



Saint Basilios Eldho

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**MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH
DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA**
3rd Annual Conference & 80th Year (*Ashta Dashathi*)
Celebrations

**On Friday, October 7, 2011 from 2:00pm to
Saturday, October 8, 5.00pm**

**Theme: Sanctification by word of God and Prayer
1 Timothy 4:5**

CONFERENCE LEADERS

H.G. ALEXIOS MAR EUSEBIUS

**METROPOLITAN OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST
AMERICA**

H.G. MATHEWS MAR THEODOSIUS

METROPOLITAN OF THE DIOCESE OF IDUKKI

Rev. Dn. Sujit Thomas

St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Floral Park, NY

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Beena Poozhikunnel, Unit Secretary, Oak Park – 630-752-0672

ONAM @ ELGIN CENTER

On September 27th, over 200 parishioners gathered at the St. Gregorios Church Center in Elgin to celebrate the auspicious festival of Onam. Along with delicious food and a blessed time of fellowship, everyone enjoyed



competitive events such as sports, tug-of-war, and musical chairs as well as the traditional flower arrangements--pookalam. For those of you that missed out, be sure to come out next year and be a part of the festivities!

(See more pictures on page 12)

Fr. Ninan George
Liju Paul
Liju Varghese
Elizabeth Varghese

Gladstone Mammen
George Panicker
Joe Varghese
Peter Varghese

George Varghese (Publisher)

EDITORIAL BOARD

2. Sunday – 3rd Sunday after Festival of the Holy Cross
 Managing Committee Meeting 1PM
Acts 7:2-5, Romans 8:1-11, St. Mark 2:23-28
- 7-8 . Friday-Saturday – MMVS Diocesan Conference @ church
8. Saturday – Ecumenical Youth Conference @ Mar Thoma Church 9AM
 PHAT/WOW Meeting @ Oommen Residence (Elmhurst) 6PM
- 9 Sunday – 4th Sunday after Festival of the Holy Cross
Acts 21:17-26, 1 Corinthians 1:21-29, St. Luke 19:9-18
 Divyabodhanam
 MMVS Meeting
- 16 . Tuesday – Divyabodhanam evening class
15. Saturday – Holy Qurbana @ Elgin 9AM
16. Sunday – 5th Sunday after Festival of the Holy Cross
Acts 22:22-29, 1 Timothy 6:13-21, St. Matthew 23:1-12
- 19 .Wednesday –Willowbrook Bible Study
22. Sunday –FOCUS volunteer event 10AM
23. Sunday – 6h Sunday after Festival of the Holy Cross
 Senior Fellowship
 Teachers’ Meeting
 Ward 1 Prayer Meeting 6PM
Acts 21: 27 -40, 1 Corinthians 5: 6-13, St. Luke 18: 18-27
- 29 .Saturday – Holy Ordination of Deacon Diju Skariah @ St Gregorios Church, Bellwood
 Ward 3 Prayer Meeting 6.30PM
30. Sunday – Sanctification of the Church (Koodosh Etho)
 Perunaal Flag Hoisting after Holy Qurbana
1 Peter 2:1-12, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:15-20 St. Matthew 16:13-23
31. Monday – Perunnal Area Convention 7PM

Planning Ahead

- Nov1-4 - Perunnal Area Conventions 7PM
- Nov 2 - Feast of St. Gregorios of Parumala
- Nov 5 - Managing Committee Meeting 3PM;
 Evening Prayer & Devotional Address 7PM
- Nov 6 - Holy Qurbana & Perunaal Luncheon
- Nov 13 - Chicago Regional SS Teachers’ Meeting 3-7PM
- Nov 25 - Youth Thanksgiving Dinner
- Nov 26 - MGOCSM Basketball Tournament

A Fresh Look at Our Orthodox Christian Tradition

by Father Michael Stearns (Sts. Peter & Paul Greek Orthodox Church, Glenview IL)

Let me start by saying that what most of us consider Stewardship is really NOT! The truth is, we don't understand Stewardship, because we haven't been taught. The Church simply hasn't taken the time, or made the effort, to explain this essential part of Her Tradition.

When most Orthodox Christians hear the word "Stewardship," they think of the "financial system" that the Church has instituted in order to fund itself. Like the "dues" of yesteryear, "stewardship" has become some amount of money that we must pay in order to participate in the life of the Church. How often have families who have not been members for years, coughed up some quick cash, and labeled it "stewardship" so they can have their child Baptized?

Consistent members of the Church think of stewardship as their "regular" contributions to the Parish. In most cases, this is NOT real Stewardship either! These Parishioners are simply making donations to a tax-deductible charity, in order to receive some sort of "religious" benefit. It may sound harsh, but what is there to distinguish their contributions made to the Red Cross from those made to Holy Cross? Those contributions made once (or twice) a year, from our excess income, tiny when compared to our other expenditures, devoid of God's guidance and input, can in NO way be considered true Christian Stewardship!

What is Authentic Orthodox Christian Stewardship? First and foremost, it is the understanding and firm belief that everything, and I mean everything, belongs solely to God. You came into this world with nothing, and you will leave it the same way. What you have in your possession right now will be in someone else's hands when you're gone. Only God, the Creator of the world, and everything in it, is the One Who truly possesses anything.

Now that you have chosen to accept reality, a second question emerges. What about us? If everything belongs to God, what is our role within creation? God has created us to be caretakers, or Stewards, of His creation, which includes the material world. He has placed the whole world in our hands and given us a sacred responsibility. As His trusted servants, we are to be accountable to Him, but we will also be rewarded for our service. The more worthy we are found to be, the greater the reward, and the greater the responsibility. With your Baptism and/or Chrismation, like it or not, you were enrolled in service to Christ as a Steward.

FROM PG 4 You may be asking yourself, “What are my specific responsibilities?” God has given you a Stewardship over three specific areas in your life – Time, Talent, & Treasure. All three are gifts from God. He has first of all given you a certain amount of time on this earth. You did not determine when you were born, no more than you can determine when you will draw your last natural breath. Each of us is a unique creation, endowed with particular gifts and talents, specifically geared toward helping us accomplish our mission in life. All of us have been given, yes given, a certain amount of God’s material resources in order to sustain us in this materialistic world. Whether you slave away just to get by, inherited a bundle from your wealthy family, or find yourself somewhere in between, there is no doubt that the opportunities present in your life to make money come directly from God.

After giving us these three abundant blessings, God only has two expectations of His Stewards (3 for 2 – not a bad deal). First, that we use our gifts wisely, not wasting our Time, Talent, & Treasure. Second, that we give a portion of those gifts back to Him. The first expectation is usually understood fairly easily. The second however, seems to draw some confusion and cause quite a bit of stumbling in our effort to be good Stewards.

Once you realize that what you “have” really doesn’t belong to you in the first place, that you are just the caretaker of someone else’s goods (namely God), it becomes absurdly easy to give some of it back to Him! He was even kind enough to give us the Church for that very purpose! We therefore have a vehicle, in the Church, to offer back to God, in concrete ways, a portion of what He has blessed us with. For those who have traveled the road this far, the question in your mind right now is, “but how much?” How much are we called to return to God?

Like most Orthodox Christian Theological and Spiritual issues, the answer is – it depends. Yes, that’s right; Stewardship is both a theological and a spiritual issue! We have covered the theological aspect, that part pertaining to God. The spiritual part has to do with you! How much is your salvation worth? How much do you really love God? Where is the evidence in your lifestyle? I think all of us would agree that our eternal salvation is priceless by any worldly measure. Thankfully, that’s God’s free gift to us (no payment necessary). Our thanksgiving gifts to Him, for all that He has done, and continues to do, have everything to do with our spiritual maturity.

What we return to God in terms of our Time, Talent, & Treasure is the single greatest indicator of not only our Faith, but **CONTD PG 6**

FROM PG 5 our faithfulness as well! Our Stewardship is the evidence of Christ in our life! Now it is time for you, the reader, to put this into perspective in your own life. How much time out of each day do you devote to God? What ministries are you invested in? How much of your annual income do you contribute to the Church? Examine the balance sheet of your life in all three areas, and determine if there are things you are placing before God. Are we unwittingly worshipping temporal idols instead of the One True God?

Authentic Orthodox Christian Stewardship means putting God first. Putting God first takes sacrifice. Sacrificially offering back to God a portion of His blessings is our responsibility as Stewards of the Faith. How will you respond to the Church's call for your Stewardship Offering?



Feast of Saint Gregorios of Parumala

The annual feast of our Patron Saint, St Gregorios of Parumala will be commemorated from Sunday, October 30th to Sunday November 6, 2011. Our chief guests will be H G Alexios Mar Eusebius, Diocesan Metropolitan and our own Saju Semmassan presently serving as the Youth Minister of West Region in our Diocese.

Thirumeni and Semmassan will be the main speakers at the area evangelistic meetings. The week long Perunnal Celebration will start with Flag Hoisting on Sunday October 30 and conclude with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana led by HG Mar Eusebius on Sunday, November 6 followed by lunch. During the week in the evenings, we will have area conventions and prayer meetings at 5 major locations. Ninan Achen and all the ministries of the Church welcome the wholehearted participation of the faithful to Perunnal activities. Let us study the life of Parumala Thirumeni during this period and understand the transformation that he brought on the Church and the society through his live witness of Christ. May God bless us to understand the mind of Christ through the eyes of Parumala Thirumeni and may we be lifted up to witness Christ to our community.

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HG Alexios Mar Eusebius & Sub-Deacon Saju Varghese



St. Baselios Eldho

HH Eldho Mar Baselios was born in Iraq. In AD 1678, he was consecrated Catholicos. In AD 1685, at the age of 92, he travelled to India to assist Mar Thomas II of our Church to reorganize the Syrian Christians and train them in their faith. He reached Kothamangalam, Kerala on Sep 14, 1685. But soon he fell ill. He consecrated Mar Ivanios as Episcopa and entered into eternal rest on Sep 29, 1685. He is entombed at the Mar Thoma Church in

Kothamangalam. Eldho Mar Baselios was canonized as a Saint along with Parumala Thirumeni by our Church in 1947.

The Sanctification of the Church



The Church calendar begins this year on Sunday October 30 with the sanctification of the Church. To sanctify means to purify, to make holy. The Church is the body of Christ. This is the temple of God where God abides and this temple, us; belongs to God. The Triune God is Holy. For God to abide in us, we His people must be holy. None can behold God without sanctification (Hebrews 12:14) the church being the Body of Christ is intrinsically holy. Holiness of the church is imparted to and shared by the members of the church, through the sacraments

(Mysteries). The first two Sundays of the liturgical year – the Feast of Sanctification (Qoodosh Etho) and the Feast of Dedication (Hoodos Etho) can be considered as a time for preparation for entry into the Liturgical Year. The liturgical year that is just about to end; the theme in our Parish was the developing the mind of Christ. We have together tried to take the first steps of infancy in this process. If we have fallen, we need to re-examine ourselves (sanctify or purify) and get up and walk again - dedicate and witness. May God strengthen us in this process of theosis.



MGOCSM will be having its first Friday Night of the 2011/2012 year on Friday, October 14th at 7pm at St Gregorios, Oak Park. As the tradition has it, the theme for the new year will be revealed. If you think you know the theme, you'll be given the chance to guess and if you're right, a special prize will be awarded to you!!! So tell your friends and come out for an evening of food, fellowship, mystery and excitement! Need a ride? Have a question? Contact the core team via email - mgoesm.chicago@gmail.com - and they'll be sure to help you out.



The annual MGOCSM Chicago Bears Coat Drive will take place from Sunday, October 2nd to Sunday, November 27th. There will be a box located in the basement of the church where you can donate new or *lightly used* coats and/or jackets. All of the donations will be taken to a local Jewel Osco, where the Salvation Army will then

distribute the coats and jackets to people in need throughout the Chicagoland area. Please contact Sam Panicker with any questions or concerns. **Have a heart and do your part to help out our brothers and sisters in need today!**



As the season of fall dawns upon us, the colors of the leaves change, the temperature drops a little with each passing day, the air becomes crisper and cooler, and students return back to school. Some venture out for the very first time, whether to kindergarten or college, while others return to pursue even higher levels of education. It is important to understand that whichever stage of education they may be in, that they study to fulfill the plans God has in store for them. Our students are called to be responsible stewards of the talents, intelligence and opportunities God has blessed them with. Keeping this in mind, please keep all of our students in your daily prayers that God may continue to grant them the strength, endurance and wisdom to triumph through this academic year.

“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” - James 1:17

YOUTH: On Saturday October 8th, PHAT and WOW will be having a combined session led by Deacon Sujit Thomas at the residence of Alex and David Oommen (565 N. Howard Ave., Elmhurst) We will start at 6pm and will have fabulous food, fantastic fellowship and a spectacular study - so don't miss out! Questions? Need a ride? Shoot an email to st.gregorios.youth@gmail.com and we will be sure to make arrangements. See you there! *Please continue to keep the various youth ministries in your prayers, as well as all the youth participating and leaders teaching.*

KFC year 2011 -2012 has been launched. The KFC team has been restructured with the induction of Merrin Thomas and Rekha George as leaders. The KFC team as part of the continuing process of the understanding of the sacraments is now studying Holy Qurbana. The session on Aug 20 tried to explain the equipments and vestments used in the Holy Qurbana and what are its symbolic interpretations and understanding. . The second session on Sep 24 covered the preparation part as well as significance of the HQ. We appreciate the dedicated effort of the team in working with the children of 3rd thru 8th grade in this ministry of Sunday school. The next KFC session will be on Sat Oct 22 at 10.00 am and will continue with the study of Holy Qurbana.

FROM PG 10 students at the same age level as well a mentoring attitude in the older students. The leadership to the whole initiative are coming from the Post Senior class (each student will be a head boy or a head girl) and the senior class (students will be Prefects of that house). The present Post senior class consists of Merrin Thomas, Basil Alias, Gregory George and Lincy Panicker. The advisory team on the house system is led by Mathew Mani (Nuni), Melvin Thomas and Joe Varghese. Ninan Achen continues to guide us though his enthusiastic leadership, keen involvement and motivational messages in all the activities and programs. Please visit <http://stgregorioschicago.org/sundayschool.html> to view the Sunday school activities and the calendar. Please keep the activities of the Sunday school in mind as you plan your vacations, particularly our Children's camp: NUHRO (2nd thru 8th grade children) is scheduled to be held from Thu June 14 to Sun June 17 of 2012. The organizing structure of the competitions has been changed keeping in tune with the house system. The competitions will be scheduled separately on 2 separate Saturdays as indoor (Song, speech and Bible verse, etc.) and outdoor (sports ...). Tentative dates are given in the calendar.

Our next Teachers meeting will be on Sunday Oct 23 after Holy Qurbana.

Diocese: Teachers Notes and Syllabus (lesson plan) including prayers and worship hymns with references to notes in the Orthodox Study Bible and other websites like mosc.in, ds-wa.org, and <http://neamericandiocese.org> have been released. We hope this will help the Teachers, students and parents in better understanding Christ and Orthodoxy.

Regional: John Simon, Principal, St. Thomas Orthodox Church Sunday School has been appointed as the new Sunday School Midwest regional coordinator for the Chicago and St. Louis area.

2011 Diocesan Centralized written competitions of the Chicago region will be held on Sat Oct 15 at our Church from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm. The event categories are Bible Quiz, Essay writing, Story writing, Poetry writing, and Drawing. We will hold a Sunday School Teachers' conference on Nov 13, Sunday, from 3 to 7 p.m. The goal is to reenergize the teachers with a sense of their mission, and also allow them to interact with teachers of the same class so as to share ideas.

Parish: The new academic year started with a cook out on Sat Aug 27 at Berens Park, Elmhurst. This was followed by Teachers meeting where the Teachers came together to study Jesus Christ – the Teacher as they prepared for the new academic year. The Bible study was led by Melvin Thomas. Classes started on Sun Sep 11 with the Teachers coming together in the Church to pray as a team, followed by the morning gospel message being given by Rev Fr John Kunnathu and Joe Varghese. The second Teachers meeting was held on Sat Sep 24. The Bible study led by Joe Varghese was on the parable of the prodigal son. The teachers reflected on the infinite love of God the father, the self realization of the mistake, the process of repentance and how we must have humility to forgive.

We had the first parents Teacher conference Sun Sep 25 after Holy Qurbana. Around 50 % of the parents attended. This year, we are excited to have launched the new house system. Students from PreKG to the Senior class are divided into 4 houses. Students of each class will become members in the different houses. The four houses are St. Athanasius (Green), St. Ephrem (Yellow), St. Ignatius (Red) and St. Chrysostom (Blue). The competitions and participation in class and extracurricular activities by the students would bring in positive points to the house of the student. The house system is expected to develop team spirit, healthy competitions, upliftment of students and bonding between

Kids' Korner



SUNDAY SCHOOL 2011-2012

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

10/01 Varghese, Jocelyn
 10/02 George, Jacob
 10/03 Chacko, Sharon
 10/03 Samuel, Rubin
 10/06 Varghese, Shawn
 10/08 George, Nina M
 10/09 Issac, Ansu
 10/10 Mathew, Tarun Thomas
 10/10 Philip, Jovanna M
 10/11 Mathen, Tristan K
 10/12 Panicker, Sonia
 10/13 Samuel, Roshen
 10/15 Mani, Matthew K
 10/15 Mulanthara, Gina Merin

10/19 Koshy, Paul
 10/21 Molayal, Mathew G
 10/21 Geevarghese, Hope
 10/22 George, Neha Elza
 10/24 Varghese, Ephraim Binu
 10/25 Thomas, Sean
 10/26 Thomas, Merrin C
 10/31 Panicker, Jilu I

Happy Birthday

To You!



*Onam
Celebrations at
St. Gregorios
Church Center,
Elgin*



Published By Rev. Dr. M. K. Thomas Library,
St. Gregorios Orthodox Church,
1125 N. Humphrey Ave, Oak Park, IL 60302
Tel: (708) 848.4120 Web: www.stgregorioschicago.org