

“Let the little children
come to me...”

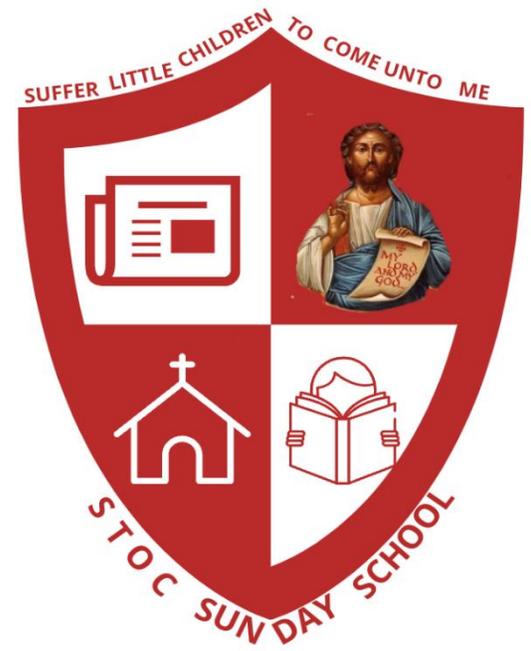
St. Matthew 19:14



JULY 10th, 2022- ISSUE 3

STOCSS REFLECTIONS

*A Magazine of the St. Thomas Orthodox
Church, Toronto, Sunday School*



REFLECTIONS

MESSAGE FROM VICAR

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (St. Matthew 19:14)

Greetings in the precious name of our Risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Children are fertile soil in which to plant the seeds of God. They have the amazing capacity to grow spiritually if they receive proper spiritual care and nourishment. Our Lord challenged his adult audience to become like children to inherit the kingdom of God. Children can amaze us one moment and in the next, frustrate us completely. That is why it takes a very special type of person and activity to work successfully with children.

Many times, children’s ministry is not properly valued, but in my opinion, it is one of the most important spiritual ministries of every Parish. If you can confirm a child’s heart for God while they are young and secure it through good teaching and opportunities to explore their talents, you will not lose them when they get older.

I am happy to see that our Sunday School is doing wonderful things such as; the Sunday School forum, OVBS and newsletter (*STOCSS Reflections*) apart from regular classroom activities. May God bless us to continue this.

In the service of our Lord,
Thomas George Achen

“LET NOTHING BE TAUGHT TO CHILDREN EXCEPT THOSE WHICH NOURISH
THE SOUL AND MAKE ONE A BETTER PERSON.” — ST. CYPRIAN

MESSAGE FROM SUNDAY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

As we begin our summer vacation, I would like to share a few thoughts on the small miracles we can experience in our everyday lives.

One day in a restaurant where people were eating breakfast, they began to hear the unrestrained laughter of a small child. As people looked, they saw a beautiful family sitting in the corner, enjoying time together. The patrons did not know what exactly the father said to his three-year old son, but the little boy was exploding with giggles, snorts, and squeals of laughter. The little boy's laughter was so infectious that his mom, dad, waiter, and even the customers around him quickly joined in on the spontaneous party of joy. His laughter was pure, inspiring, and holy.



We just witnessed a 'small miracle' and what a miracle it was! The joy of Heaven had touched our heart and we were filled to overflowing. The amazing thing about joy is that you can share it and not lose anything! In fact, when you share joy, you receive more back in return!

The Bible says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22.

As the little boy continued to pour "good medicine" into the world through his laughter, our weariness lifted, and our hearts were transformed. We should all be thankful to witness the miracle of a child's laughter.

I often think that we miss out on life's 'small miracles'. We have been so conditioned to see the grand, the large, and the impressive in our life that we miss out on the small and simple miracles that surround us every day. I wonder how our days would change if we paid attention to the small miracles that only Jesus can reveal to us.

Take a moment and think back over yesterday. Were there any small miracles that you can recall? Think about it and take a moment to savour them and most importantly to thank God for them. Some people instead of counting sheep, often count the blessings they have received and peacefully drift off to sleep.

I would like to wish you all a happy, safe and restful summer vacation. May we all take the time to reflect and appreciate the 'small miracles' that God continues to shower upon us, His children.

With Prayers,

Justin Alex

Principal, STOC Sunday School

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SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Academic Year 2021-2022

Thank you to all our teachers and students, as we have completed our 2021-2022 academic year. We will be on summer vacation between July-August and will resume classes for the next academic year in September.

Liturgical Song Training

We will continue to have our Liturgical Song Training sessions through the summer months. We thank our Choir Director Sujith Abraham and Sneha Varghese for their leadership during these sessions. All upcoming sessions will be advised via email closer to their planned dates.

Kerala Christian Ecumenical Fellowship Toronto, St. Thomas Day Celebrations

Our Sunday School will be participating in the Kerala Christian Ecumenical Fellowship (KCEF) Toronto, St. Thomas Day Celebrations. The ecumenical fellowship will be on Saturday, July 16th at CSI Church Toronto. Our Sunday School will be preparing a dance program.

Sunday School Pilgrimage/Picnic

Our Sunday School is planning to have a pilgrimage/picnic on Saturday, August 27th. More details to follow.

OVBS 2022

During the summer vacation, we plan to conduct our annual Orthodox Vacation Bible School (OVBS). OVBS is to be conducted from August 28th to September 4th. The theme for our 2022 OVBS is 'Our Lord Heals' taken from Psalm 41:4. More details to follow.

Northeast American Diocese Talent Competition

Our Sunday School will be participating in the Northeast American Diocese Talent Competition in two categories. The Quiz competition will be happening on October 22nd, 2022, and the Group song on November 19th, 2022.

***We thank our students and parents for their continued support of our various Sunday School Activities. If there are any questions or concerns regarding any of the above-mentioned activities, please contact our Sunday School principal.**

"I HAVE NO GREATER JOY THAN THIS, TO HEAR THAT MY CHILDREN ARE WALKING IN THE TRUTH."
— 3 JOHN 1:4

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY (JUNE 25th, 2022)- MR. KOSHY RAJAN

Through the blessings of God Almighty, and the participation of our Vicars and Diocesan delegates, our Diocesan Assembly was held on Saturday, June 25, 2022 at our Saints Basilios-Gregorios Orthodox Church of North Plainfield, New Jersey, under the chairmanship of His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovas.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Diocesan Assembly deliberated on various issues related to the progress and growth of our Diocese. The major decisions taken at this Diocesan Assembly:

- 1.) The accounts for the fiscal year 2021 to 2022 were approved.
- 2.) The budget for the fiscal year 2022 to 2023 was reviewed.

Newly elected Diocesan Council for the term 2022 to 2027:

Diocesan Secretary: Rev. Fr. Dr. Varghese M. Daniel

Council Members:

Rev. Fr. V. M. Shibu
Rev. Fr. Vijay Thomas
Mr. Joby John
Mr. Oommen Kappil
Mr. Shane Oommen
Mr. Bijo K. Thomas

Diocesan Auditor:

Mr. John Thomas,
CPA



Along with other Canadian church representatives, from our church Rev. Fr. Dr. Thomas George, Mr. Koshy Rajan & Mr. Jerry Thomas Mani attended the diocesan meeting. By the grace of God, everything went well and the meeting completed successfully.

FEAST OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

On July 2nd and 3rd our parish celebrated the feast of our patron saint, St. Thomas the Apostle of India. On July 2nd after our evening prayer, retired IAS officer Mr. Jiji Thomson led our devotion. Mr. Thomson highlighted the importance of celebrating the feast of our spiritual father particularly as Christianity is a minority in India. He corrected the 'Doubting Thomas' title by referring to him as the Scientific Apostle who questioned in order to confirm his faith in the Resurrected Christ. Mr. Thomson reminded us all that the kingdom of God is within each one of us; this is evident through righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Roman 14:17). The kingdom rather than in a physical space is made manifest in the world through our deeds and actions for those in need. He reminded us to continue to keep focused as the Church on Christ rather than on personal and vain interests in order to make the kingdom known to others.



On July 3rd, Rev. Fr. Liju M. Varghese celebrated Holy Qurbana in the presence of Very Rev. Lazarus Ramban Corepiscopa and our vicar Rev. Fr. Dr. Thomas George. Lazarus

Rambachen gave the devotional message on St. Thomas who was commissioned by Christ to go to India, speaking of various traditional teachings of his missionary work. After The Divine Liturgy, we marched in the traditional Perunnal Rasa around our neighbourhood. As reminded by Thomas George Achen, the procession highlights two important aspects: our pilgrimage as sojourners towards the heavenly Jerusalem and, secondly, the dynamic rather than static nature of the Church in the world. The Perunnal festivities concluded with the final Benediction after which the congregation shared in the *Nercha* meal.



Perunnal is often translated as feast day, but another meaning can be seen as 'great' day, reiterating the importance of celebrating and finding reasons to be joyful. As we celebrated the feast of our Holy Father, we must remember his missionary work and the pride and joy we take in being called St. Thomas Christians. St. John Chrysostom stated, "Thomas, being once weaker in faith

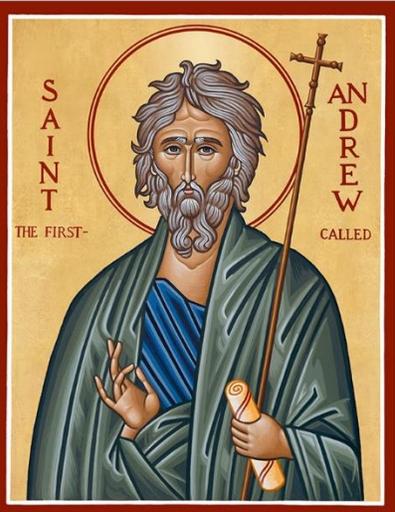
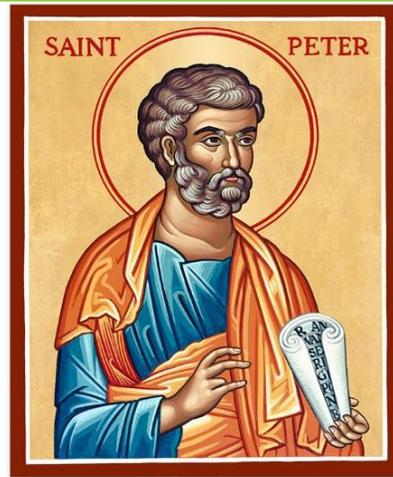
than the other apostles, toiled through the grace of God more bravely, more zealously and tirelessly than them all, so that he went preaching over nearly all the earth, not fearing to proclaim the Word of God to savage nations."

**Your mem'ry O St. Thomas, Be Kept here and in Heaven
May your pray'r be a help to those who honor your mem'ry
-Commemoration of the Saints Quqlion (Orupolingum...)**

THE HOLY APOSTLES

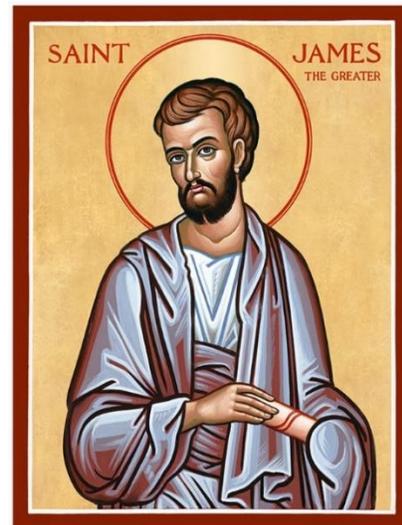
St. Peter (feast day: June 29) Simon was born in Bethsaida in Galilee and by trade was a fisherman. He along with his brother St. Andrew were disciples of Jesus, called to be fishers of men. Simon received the name *Kepa* (Aramaic for rock, *Cephas* in Greek) for his confession of faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. In Matthew 16:18, we read, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” Though he denied Christ three times prior to his crucifixion, he repented and was restored to his Apostolic office called to tend and care for the church (St. John 21:15-25). After the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Peter remained faithful to the point of martyrdom in Rome under Emperor Nero in 64 AD. By tradition, he is understood to have been crucified upside down. To read more on the life of St. Peter please click the below link:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2019/06/29/101841-the-holy-glorious-and-all-praised-leader-of-the-apostles-peter>

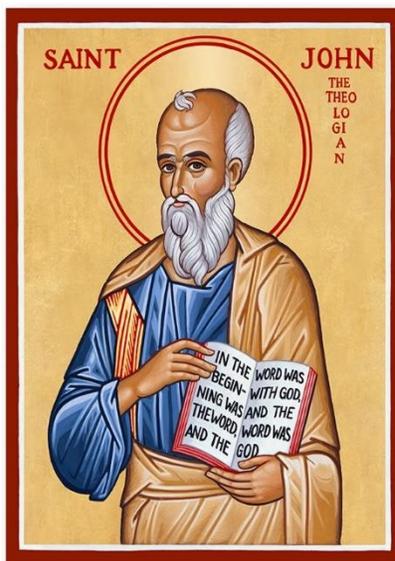


St. Andrew (feast day: Nov. 30) In John 1:35-42, we see that Andrew was first a disciple of St. John the Baptist prior to following Jesus, the Lamb of God. He is traditionally known as the ‘first called’ as Jesus *first* called him into the Apostolic ministry. Continuing from the same passage, we find that Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus to see the Messiah (John 1:41-42). During his missionary work, Andrew was persecuted by pagans, but nonetheless was able to establish various churches including the Church of Christ in Byzantium (later capital of the Roman empire, Constantinople). Several miracles were worked through Andrew as he healed many of various illnesses and diseases. Andrew is traditionally known to have been crucified on a cross in the form of an X while in the city of Patra. To read more on the life of St. Andrew please click the following link: <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/1999/11/30/103450-apostle-andrew-the-holy-and-all-praised-first-called>

St. James the Greater (feast day: May 1) James and his younger brother St. John the Evangelist were given the nickname the Sons of thunder by Christ (Mark 3:17). These sons of Zebedee, along with St. Peter were present during the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:21–43), at the Transfiguration where Moses and Elijah stood with Christ on Mt. Tabor (Matthew 17:1–13), and were asked to remain in prayer during the night of Jesus’ arrest in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37). Traditionally, he is known to have preached the gospel in Spain prior to returning to Jerusalem. St. James was the first of the Apostles to die for their faith in Christ under King Herod Agrippa I of Judea, who persecuted the Church (Acts 12:1-3). To read more on the life of St. James the Greater please click the following link: <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2012/04/30/101248-apostle-james-the-brother-of-saint-john-the-theologian>

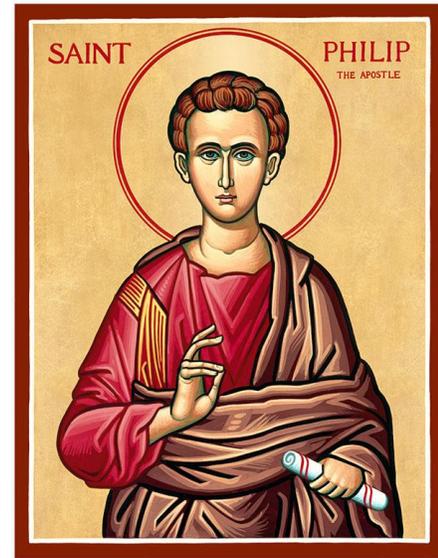


St. John the Theologian (feast day: May 8) St. John was the youngest of the Apostles often called the beloved disciple. He and his older brother James helped their father Zebedee as fishermen. John was commissioned by Jesus to care for His mother, St. Mary (John 19:26-27). Although he was persecuted for the faith, he is traditionally understood to be the only Apostle who did not experience martyrdom. Various miracles were worked through the beloved disciple as he cast out demons and healed the sick. John was eventually exiled to the island of Patmos, but he ultimately returned to Ephesus where he reposed in the Lord. The New Testament Canon contains a gospel, 3 epistles and the Book of Revelation which are traditionally understood to have been written by St. John the Evangelist. The gospel of St. John opens, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1:1-5).” The feast of St. John The Theologian and Evangelist is celebrated on May 8th. To read more on the life of St. John please click the following link: <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2021/09/26/102731-repose-of-the-holy-apostle-and-evangelist-john-the-theologian>



St. Philip (feast day: Nov. 14) Philip was born in Bethsaida of Galilee and preached in Palestine, Greece, Syria and Asia Minor. Many miraculous works were done through St. Philip as he baptized various pagan cities. John 14:8 reads, "Philip said to him [Jesus], "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" Traditionally, Philip is understood to have been crucified in the city of Phrygian Hieropolis, where he had healed and converted the wife of the city Prefect. To read more on the life of St. Philip please click the following link:

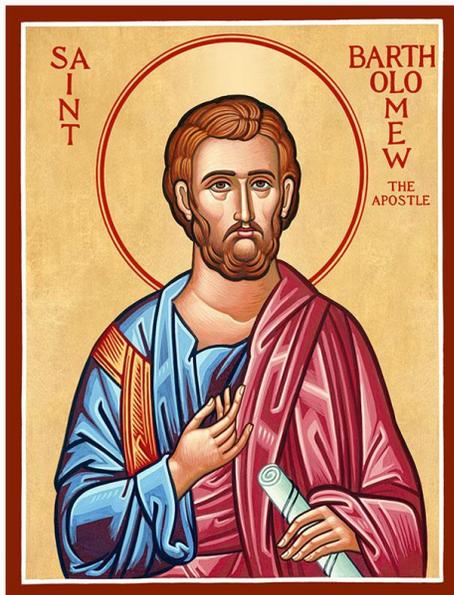
<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2008/11/14/103299-holy-all-praised-apostle-philip>



St. Bartholomew (feast day: June 11)

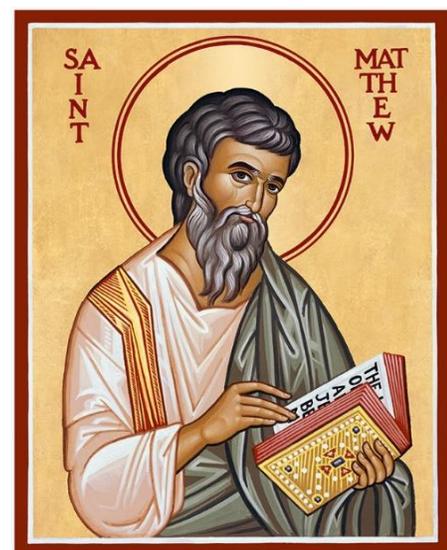
Bartholomew, also called Nathaniel, was born in Cana of Galilee. He was brought by his friend St. Philip to Christ after he questioned if anything good could come out of Nazareth (John 1:43-50). He is commonly associated with St. Philip as the two missioned together to preach the gospel. During such missions he was persecuted particularly in Hieropolis by pagan priests. He is traditionally known to have traveled to Armenia where he worked various miracles and was ultimately martyred. Prior to his death he was able to convert the Armenian king and his family as they were baptized which angered the pagans of the city. He is understood to have been beheaded after undergoing severe torture. To read more on the life of St. Bartholomew please click the following link:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2021/06/11/101690-apostle-bartholomew-of-the-twelve>



St. Matthew (feast day: Aug. 24)

Matthew originally called Levi, son of Alphaeus, was a tax collector in Capernaum. At the home of Levi, Jesus was questioned why he eats with sinners and tax collectors to which he responded, "It is not the



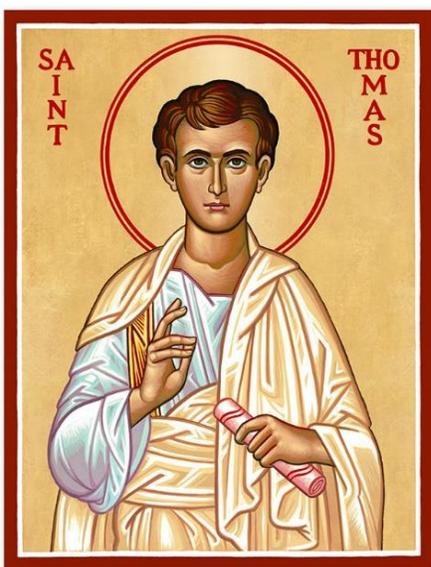
healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32). Matthew eventually preached the gospel in Syria, Persia and particularly in Ethiopia. In the first gospel of the New Testament, St. Matthew speaks towards the Jews who were waiting for the Messiah, highlighting Jesus to be that one foreseen by the prophets. The Evangelist speaks on the Prophetic, Kingly and Priestly role fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The genealogy presented in the gospel of Matthew begins with Abraham, father of the Jewish people, linking Christ to the chosen people of God. The gospels of Sts. Matthew, Mark & Luke are commonly referred to as the synoptic gospels for their similar *view* in presenting the good news of Jesus Christ. To read more on the life of St. Matthew the Evangelist please click the below link:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2007/11/16/103313-apostle-and-evangelist-matthew>

St. Thomas (feast day Dec. 21)

Thomas was born in Pansada of Galilee and was a fisherman by trade. He is often called Didymos or Twin (e.g. John 11:16). After the Resurrection, Thomas was not present with the other Apostles when Jesus appeared before them. The following week Christ appeared before them and asked Thomas to place his fingers in His wounds to which he responded, "My Lord and My God" (John 20:28). Thomas missioned to Palestine, Mesopotamia, China and our native land of India where he preached the gospel, established churches, converted and baptized the locals. Traditionally, it is understood St. Thomas arrived in Kerala, India around 52 AD and eventually was martyred in 72 AD. His icon commonly depicts him standing with a spear highlighting his martyr's death. We are proudly called St. Thomas Christians for the tireless effort of our Apostolic Father who worked to preach the gospel in Malankara. St. John Chrysostom stated, "Thomas, being once weaker in faith than the other apostles toiled through the grace of God more bravely, more zealously and tirelessly than them all, so that he went preaching over nearly all the earth, not fearing to proclaim the Word of God to savage nations." To read more on the life of St. Thomas please click the below link:

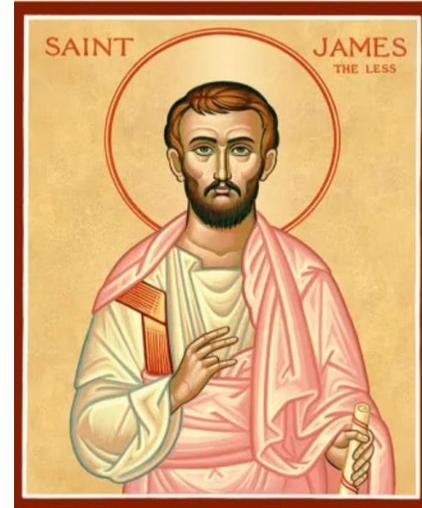
<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2009/10/06/102885-holy-glorious-apostle-thomas>



St. James the Son of Alphaeus (feast day: Oct. 23)

Traditionally James is known to be the brother of St. Matthew the Evangelist. He along with St. Andrew went on missions to Judea, Edessa and Gaza to proclaim the gospel. Throughout their journeys they healed the sick, converted the pagans and established churches. St. James was eventually martyred according to tradition in Ostrachina of Egypt. He was crucified by pagans for his faith in Christ. His feast is celebrated on Oct. 23th. He is commonly referred to as James the Lesser or Less as to not be confused with St. James the Greater (brother of St. John the evangelist). To read more on the life of St. James, the Son of Alphaeus please click the below link:

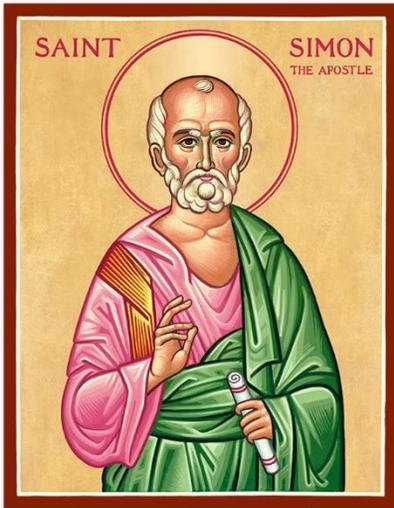
<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2013/10/09/102916-apostle-james-son-of-alphaeus>



St. Simon the Zealot (feast day: May 10)

Simon was from Cana of Galilee and is traditionally understood to have been the bridegroom at the Wedding of Cana where Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-11). He is also commonly called the Zealot as per the gospel of St. Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13. His zeal stems from his deep faith in Christ and willingness to follow Him and preach the gospel. He is not to be confused with fellow Apostle, Simon Peter the brother of St. Andrew. Traditionally, Simon of Cana was martyred in Persia. The church celebrates his feast on May 10. To read more on the life of St. Simon the Zealot please click the below link:

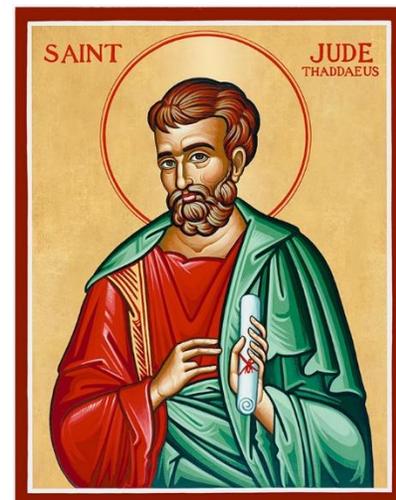
<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2017/05/10/101337-apostle-simon-the-zealot>



St. Labbaeus (feast day: Aug. 19)

Labbaeus also called Jude or Thaddaeus was one of the apostles of Christ. The epistle of Jude in the New Testament is attributed to this apostle. He preached the gospel in areas such as Arabia, Syria and Edessa. In his epistle we read about the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Last Judgement. Traditionally it is understood he was

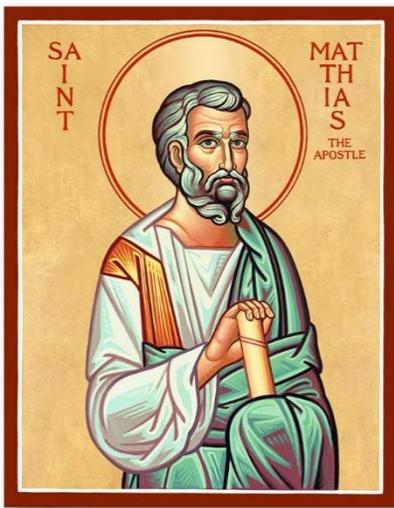
martyred in Armenia around the year 80 AD. He is not to be confused with Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. It was later in his life that he turned to Jesus and began to follow Him as one of the twelve. The church celebrates his feast on August 19. To read more on the life of St. Jude please click the below link: <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2007/06/19/101752-apostle-jude-the-brother-of-the-lord>



St. Matthias (feast day: August 9)

Matthias was born in Bethlehem of Judah. After the Resurrection, Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus (Acts 1:12-26). During his ministry he journeyed to Amasea, Ethiopia and Macedonia to preach the gospel. He endured great persecutions, but was preserved by the Lord. Traditionally, he is understood to be one of the 72 evangelists Christ sent out to preach the gospel (Luke 10:1-23. Many miracles were worked through Matthias as he converted many to faith in Jesus. He is understood to have died around the year 63 AD. To read more on the life of St. Matthias please click the below link:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2017/08/09/102243-apostle-matthias-of-the-seventy>

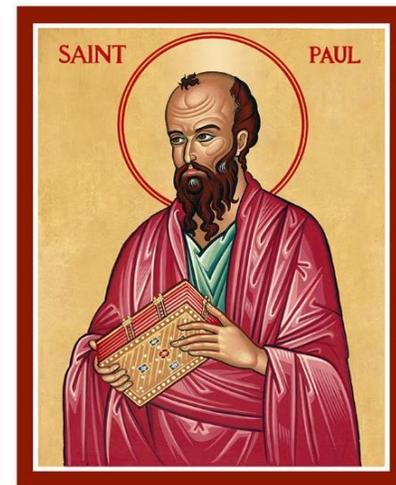


St. Paul (feast day: June 29)

Reading the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles we are able to see the conversion, missionary work and persecution endured by the Apostle Paul. He was born a zealous Jew from Tarsus, becoming well educated in the law. He was a Pharisee who tried to destroy the Church. On his road to Damascus, he encountered Christ in a vision and turned from being a persecutor of the Church to one of her greatest witnesses. He is known as the Apostle to

the Gentiles for his fervent work in gentile lands such as Corinth and Colossi. His epistles highlight the various pastoral issues plaguing various churches he helped establish. He, along with St. Peter is known as the chief of the Apostles for their fervent work and care for the Church. He was martyred in Rome during the persecution of Nero around the year 68 AD. St. Paul reminds us that we are the body of Christ, though comprised of various members, called to bear witness of His truth in the world (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). To read more on the life of St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles please click the below link:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2000/06/29/101842-the-holy-glorious-and-all-praised-leader-of-the-apostles-paul>



BISHOP CANDIDATES PROFESSED TO THE MONASTIC ORDER

On Thursday, June 2nd, 2022, six of the seven newly elected candidates for the Episcopate were professed to the monastic order at St. Peter and St. Paul Indian Orthodox Church (Parumala Seminary). In the Orthodox tradition, prior to being elevated to the episcopate, candidates are required to be monks. Monastics are not married, avoid certain foods, do not hold any secular jobs and live either in community with other monks or in isolation. In our tradition, a monk can be identified by their head covering (eskimo) which contains 13 crosses representing the 12 Apostles and Christ (image to the right). This eskimo or schema highlights a monk's continued mental and physical focus on God and the Church. One of most well-known Christian monks is St. Anthony the Great (251–356 AD) who upon hearing the gospel sold his possessions and fled into the deserts of Egypt to grow spiritually. Many imitated Anthony by following the monastic life, while others often came to learn and be spiritually nourished from this Holy Man of God.



The six new monks include as per photo with H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews III and Very Rev. Fr. Kuchuparambil Geevarghese Ramban from left to right: Very Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Ramban, Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Ramban, Very Rev. Fr. Abraham Ramban, Very Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Ramban, Very Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Ramban & Very Rev. Fr. Zacharia Ramban. The Elevation to the Episcopate will be held on July 28th at St. Mary's Indian Orthodox Cathedral Pazhanji.



*Photo Credits GregorianTV

*"MAKE YOUR HEART A MONASTERY. THERE SOUND THE SEMANTRON,
THERE CALL YOUR VIGIL, CENSE AND WHISPER CEASELESS PRAYERS.
GOD IS NEXT TO YOU."*
— ST. LUKE THE SURGEON

1st MEMORIAL H.H. MORAN MAR BASELIOS MARTHOMA PAULOSE II

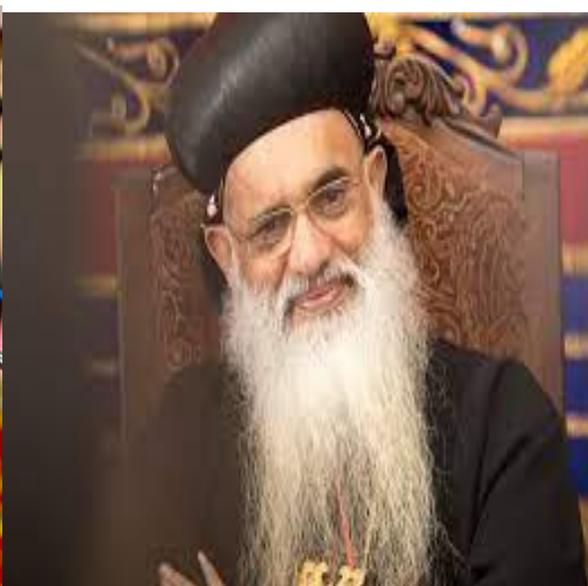
On July 12th, the Church remembers H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Paulose II. It is the 1st anniversary of his falling asleep in the Lord. Thirumeni served the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church as the Catholicos of the East & Malankara Metropolitan from 2010-2021. Prior to being elevated as the 8th Catholicos, he served as the first Metropolitan of the newly formed Kunnamkulam diocese in India.



He was born on August 30th, 1946 in Thrissur, Kerala. From a very young age, he became involved in liturgical service, attending Church regularly, and serving in the Holy Altar. After completing his undergraduate studies with a B.Sc in Physics, he joined the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam. He was ordained as a subdeacon and finally a priest by the well-known Malpan (Syriac Teacher), H.G. Yuhannon Mar Severios. At the young age of 36, the then Fr. K.I. Paul was elected by the Malankara Syrian Christian Association to be a bishop, taking the name H.G. Paulose Mar Milithios. In 2006, Thirumeni was chosen to be the next Bava as Catholicos Elect H.B. Paulose Mar Milithios. On November 1st, 2010, in the presence of his predecessor the 7th Catholicos H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Didymos I, Thirumeni became the 91st Primate of the Apostolic throne of St. Thomas.

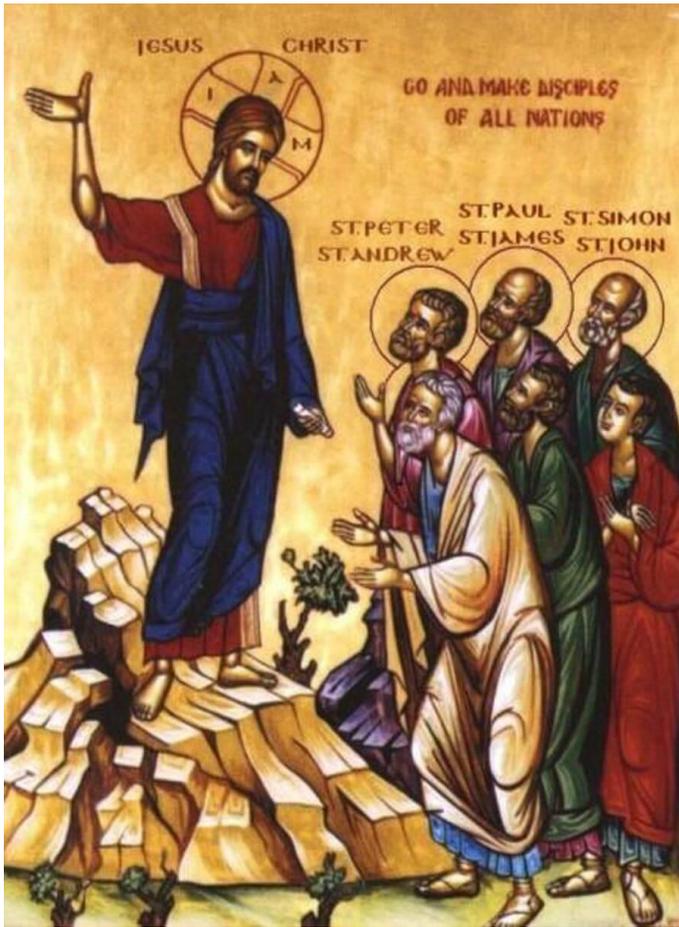
Thirumeni worked hard to further our Inter-Church relations particularly amongst the various Oriental and Eastern Orthodox communities. On several occasions, various Patriarchs, bishops, priests and lay representatives alike have been graciously hosted by Thirumeni during their stay in India. Thirumeni was able to make several Pastoral visits to the Churches across the world, including here in North America. In

2015, His Holiness along with our diocesan Metropolitan H.G. Zachariah Mar Nicholovas visited Canada to consecrate the newly renovated church building of St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church, Toronto. In addition to his pastoral responsibilities, Thirumeni was well known for his humanitarian efforts in working for the poor by establishing various charities and aid programmes for those in need. During his leadership; women were given voting rights in the parish assembly allowing *all* parish members the opportunity to actively participate in the life of the Church. Even though Thirumeni was undergoing cancer treatment, he remained a faithful servant of God, praying and interceding on behalf of his spiritual flock. He is buried at the Devalakom Catholicate Palace along with the various Prelates of our Church. May his prayers continue to be a stronghold for us all!



OUR CHRISTIAN MISSION- BR. SANJAY MATHEW

“As you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” (Matthew 10:7). This is one of the commands Christ gave his apostles, as he was preparing them for their earthly ministry. The word *apostle* comes from the Greek word *apostolos* meaning to be sent off. As Christians today, we too are commissioned by Christ to be his witness and to spread His Gospel. Often, we associate the commission of Christ to preach his Gospel as something that is solely the work of the clergy. This attitude by the faithful could lead to *clericalism* and could in turn make people feel distant from the Church or become a passive member of the Church. But as Christians, we are not called to be receivers only but rather called to become active, integral members of the Church. In the book of Revelation, the angels call out to the Church in Laodicea as they lacked zeal. “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!” (Revelation 3:15). Throughout the scriptures, we see the prophets, apostles and other followers of God actively working for Him. So how can we as Christians be a witness of Christ and not just hearers but doers of the Word in the Body of Christ? (James 1:22–25)



For us to be active members of the Church, we need to have an intimate and personal relationship with Christ. This means we need to have an active spiritual life where we are consistently in communication with God. It is through this communication we will grow in relationship with Our creator to understand His purpose for our lives. As we are members of His creation, He has a specific mission and purpose for our lives. Often times, we are not aware of this purpose because we are blinded by the world and its wealth. To understand God’s will in our life and in the life of the Church,

it is important that our earthly ministry is grounded in prayer. It is through prayer we get to know God. In Jeremiah, we see people praying and asking for God’s will, ‘Pray that the Lord your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do’ (Jeremiah 42:3). These prayers will also instill humility in us, as we trust God and His plan in our lives. Here, we show a certain vulnerability, accepting the fact that not everything is in our control; we learn to rely upon God and to seek His plan for our lives. It is important that we approach the earthly ministry with this humility, as it will teach us to cooperate with others. When we examine the beatitudes in Matthew 5, God promises His kingdom and abundance to the people who are humble and listen to Him.

Our calling to preach the Word of God does not mean we have to do “extraordinary” things. It does not mean we have to perform the same miracles which the apostles did in the first century, nor does it mean we all have to step into different leadership positions within the Church. Although we have a responsibility to use our talents and skills for the Glory of God’s kingdom, this responsibility does not mean we do extraordinary things everyday. As Christians, we can live our vocation through simple acts of kindness. This kindness can be shown to our family, friends, our fellow parishioners and in large to others. Mother Theresa advised: “Do small things with great love.” Every time we show love and kindness to others, we are mirroring Christ and His life to others. As such, through our actions people get to know about Christ and His Gospel.

As Christians we have to ask ourselves how we can reflect Christ and His Gospel to others in our daily life; i.e. through our actions, words etc. If a particular action does not really reflect Christ, then we have to ask ourselves what the purpose of such an action is in our lives. This does not mean we are forbidden from having leisure and entertainment. But our life must be rooted in the life of Christ. Then we can live out our vocation as Christians in our daily life.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS- MS. SHEILA KURIAN

In the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Easter (Lk 24:28-35), two disciples invite a man they do not know – or so they think – to dine with them. As he goes in “to stay with them” (v. 29), he sits at table with them and takes the bread, blesses and breaks it, and gives it to them (v. 30). Here, in this moment, “their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.” (v. 31). What happened here? Let us go back, briefly, and recall that Jesus encountered these two disciples on the way to Emmaus, as they were discussing the recent events in Jerusalem (vv. 13-16) and they were ‘downcast’. Jesus, as He so often does in Gospel encounters, meets these disciples of His and asks them what’s going on. We see in this account that Jesus, out of love, meets his followers where they are – geographically and metaphorically - so that He may lift them up to be with Him.



After their recounting of the events of recent days, Jesus reveals how the Scriptures tell of Him and how the Christ must suffer, explaining the Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The Word of God, Jesus, opens his Word to His followers so that they and, eventually, all His disciples might learn that the mystery of the Incarnation was veiled in the Old Testament, to be revealed in the light of the New (St. Augustine paraphrased). Even so, Cleopas and his friend do not yet “see” who is before them. They come to know Jesus, to have Him revealed to them, in the breaking of the bread, i.e. the Qurbana. And their response? As late in the day as it was, they returned to Jerusalem, revitalized, renewed, and joyfully testifying to the Eleven and their companions, affirming the bodily Resurrection of their Lord. This was confirmed by those in Jerusalem, who had heard Simon’s testimony. The joy of meeting Christ in the Qurbana spills over into testimony of this revelation so that the faith of all might be affirmed.

In prayerfully examining the story of these two disciples’ encounter with Jesus, we find a model for contemplating the mystery of the Qurbana: we, the body of Christ, are called together by his Spirit so that the divine Wayfarer can “walk at our side, opening to us the Scriptures and leading us to a deeper understanding of the mysteries of God.” [Pope John Paul II, MND, 2]. Christ, in revealing himself through the Eucharistic meal with the two, thereby reveals that the Qurbana for them and for all his followers is a mystery of faith. In participating in this mystery, we, who are present because the Holy Spirit in love has called us forth¹ to gather in faith, are joined together as the mystical Body of Christ, with Christ himself as the Head and we, his members. Thus, are we invited into true, loving communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whereby we are being transformed to be Christ in the world.



***“Though the fiery ones fear to gaze – upon the Lord
You have seen Him- in Bread and Wine – on the Altar”***

– Communion Hymn (Agnimayanmaar)

¹ When the two disciples recall the events that have just taken place, they remind each other: “Were not our hearts burning within us?” This is the Holy Spirit inwardly working so as to prepare them to perceive and to receive the mystery of Christ before them.

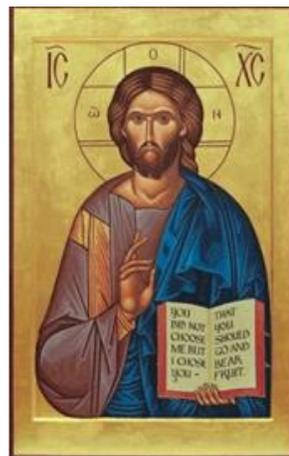
ICONS: THEIR USE IN ORTHODOX WORSHIP- MR. VARGHIS MATHEW

Orthodox Christianity has some unique practices and they may be unfamiliar to anyone outside the ancient faith. Orthodox Christians use images known as icons, which are representations of religious content, meant to help one in prayer. An icon is a sacred image used for religious devotion. Icons depict representations of Biblical scenes from the life of Jesus Christ, historical events in the life of the church, and portraits of the Saints. They are usually two-dimensional images that can be made of paint, mosaic, embroidery, carving, engraving, or other methods².

The Bible teaches us in Mark 12:30 that "...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your *mind*, and with all your strength." The Orthodox Church seeks to help us embrace this aspect of our human nature, and so our church structure and our divine services engage us very effectively in order that our whole person may be focused on God.

Icons first came into existence in Syria and Egypt.³ Christian tradition, dating from the 8th century, identifies St. Luke the Evangelist as the first icon painter. One of the oldest icons of Jesus, entitled *Christ the Pantocrator* (see icon right), is found at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, Egypt which was from the 6th century AD.⁴

The most common icons include Christ, Mary, Saints, angels or narrative scenes, usually from the Bible or the lives of Saints. Icons help center a person's attention to the worship of God Himself in with the communion of those represented in these icons. Icons are not just pretty pictures – they remind us of the individuals or events that they represent and that these people are worshipping with us.⁵ Ultimately icons help direct our thoughts to God.



Icon: Christ the Pantocrator

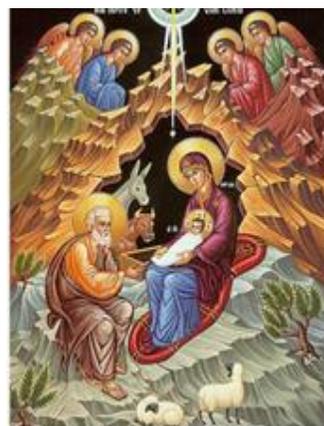


Icon: Christ and Mother of God

Icons are used to bring the worshippers into the presence of those who are in Heaven. The Orthodox believe these icons do more than visually remind the viewer of the fact that there are Saints in Heaven; we believe that these icons act as 'a window into Heaven' through which we see those Saints, Christ, and the Mother Mary. It is for this reason that God the Father is traditionally not represented in icons because He has never shown His form to man and therefore man should not try to represent His form in icons.

Because of the connection which these sacred pictures have with their subjects Orthodox Christians venerate them, but do not worship them. This is important to note; we worship only the One, True God in the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, just as Orthodox Christians still living on earth greet one another with a kiss of peace, they also venerate the icons of those who have passed on.

To recapitulate: holy icons serve several purposes, and what follows is to name but a few: (1) they increase the beauty of a church, and help draw us into an attitude of worship; (2) they instruct us in matters pertaining to our faith and remind us of our faith; (3) they lift us up to the ones whom they symbolize; (4) they teach us to live like the holy persons depicted on them; (5) they help to transform us and sanctify us; (6) they serve as a means of worship and veneration.⁶ So next time you are at Church or in your prayer corner of your home, let the holy icons transform your prayer and worship experience.



Icon: Orthodox Nativity Scene

"The invisible things of God have been made visible." – St. John of Damascus

² <https://www.saintjohnchurch.org/why-orthodox-christians-kiss-icons/>

³ https://mosc.in/the_church/liturgy/liturgy-and-spiritual-practices

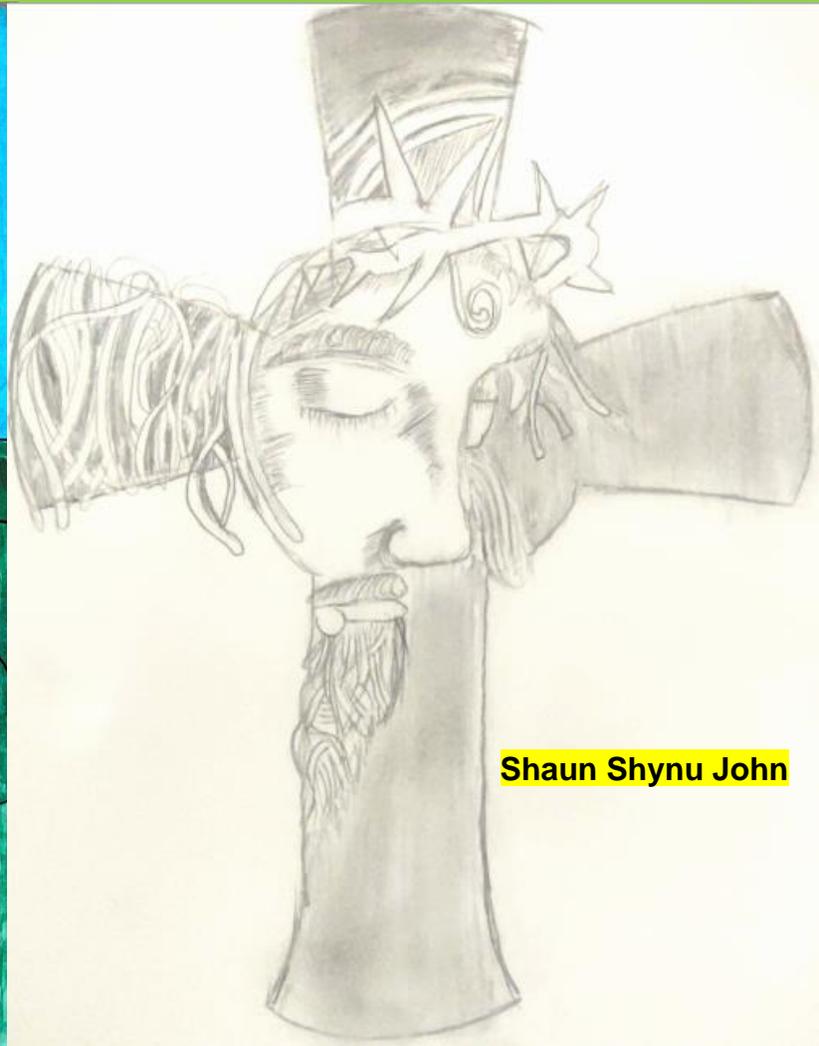
⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_Pantocrator_\(Sinai\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_Pantocrator_(Sinai))

⁵ "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,^[a] and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us..." [Hebrews 12:1]

⁶ http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/icon_function.aspx

ART GALLERY

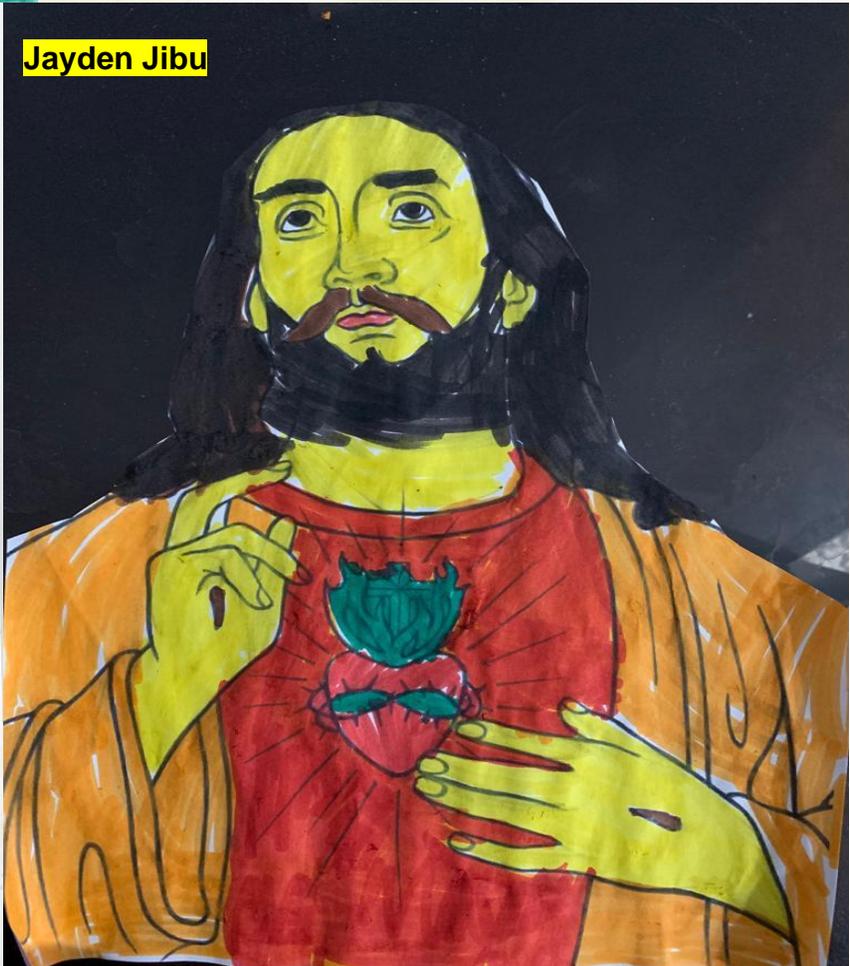
Hannah Varghese



Shaun Shynu John



Jayden Jibu



KING SOLOMON-THE WISE KING OF ISRAEL



GRADE 7: ALEN, AYANA,
JULIA, LEANNE & JOANN



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RESOURCES

Important Links:

Indian Orthodox Sunday School Northeast American Diocese - <https://nesundayschool.org/>

IOSS NE American Diocese Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/IOSS.NEAMERICANDIOCESE/>

Ministry of Liturgical Resource Development - <https://www.youtube.com/c/LiturgicalResourceDevelopment/videos>

Orthodox Terminology - <https://stgregorioscathedral.com/orthodox-terminology>

How to make the sign of the Cross ?



From the forehead to the chest, as the Lord descended from heaven to earth to save us.



With the right hand, place the Thumb, First and second finger together.



From Left to Right,
We who were children of the left because of Adam's sin,



became children of the right, by His death on the Cross.



This represents the Holy Trinity:
God the Father ,
God the son,
God the Holy Spirit

~ St Severus of Antioch

Graphē