

## COMMEMORATION OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Tuesday      Commemoration of the Faithful Departed  
Mar Gregorios (Bp, Ev.) 1902**

**Theme: Our fellowship in Christ with the faithful departed.**

M/EW	Psalm 90	L.S.	OT	Isaiah 25.6-9
	OT	Isaiah 25.6-9	Psalm	118.14-15, 17-21
	NT	2 Cor. 5.1-10	Epistle	2 Cor. 5.1-10
	and/or	John 11.21-27	Gosp.	John 11.21-27

**Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25, 26) (NRSV)**

In remembrance of the day when our dear ones departed this life, we organize a thanksgiving prayer or a memorial service and some of us also visit the cemetery to offer a prayer of thanksgiving at their grave. However, today as we commemorate the Faithful Departed - we look beyond our loved ones, who are in heavenly abode. Today, we join to commemorate all the faithful departed this life. We affirm our belief that having run their race and kept their faith, these faithful departed have entered unending joy in presence of God Almighty.

‘Commemoration of the Faithful Departed’, is also a day that reminds us that we need to face death one day. Thus, we need to use this time to amend our ways and lead an upright and God fearing life. So that after our death, we too, will join the fellowship of the faithful departed.

‘Commemoration of the Faithful Departed’ is also a time to affirm our faith in the resurrection of the body. The vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross has wiped away the penalty of sin. His resurrection from the dead has broken the bondage of death and given us a hope in life eternal. And it is by virtue of our faith in Jesus Christ that we can look beyond the realm of physical death. This is the promise we have received from our dear Lord, who said, “Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (Jn.11:25, 26).

**Prayer: To God be the glory, great things he hath done, so loved, he the world that he gave us His Son who yielded his life an atonement for sin, and opened the life gate that all may go in. Amen.**

## GENDER EQUALITY

**November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Wednesday**

MW	Ps. 9	Eccl.47.12-end	Luke 23.50-24.11	or Esther 5
EW	Ps. 10	Eccl. 48 2	Cor.12.1-10	or Esther 6

**The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” (Luke 24:5) (NRSV)**

Have we ever noticed that more often than not, all the important church committees will be dominated with men as members? The presence of the woman members will be few or nil. However, if one takes an account of the faithful people present during any Divine Service or in a cottage prayer meeting- women will most often, out number the men.

Those, who will only allow a subdued role to women in church activities, come up with strange arguments and exploit selected Pauline text to suit their own ideology. Perhaps, the best way forward is to develop a balanced view based on the role women played in Jesus’ earthly ministry.

Let us recall that God chose a woman, Mary, to give birth to Jesus Christ. While Religious leaders like Nicodemus (John 3) found it difficult to understand spiritual truths, it was a Samaritan woman (John 4) who not only realized that Jesus was the awaited Messiah but also brought others to faith (John 4:39-42). And in today’s gospel text, women became the first witness to Jesus’ resurrection. Yes, a careful unbiased study of the Bible will give us many more such examples where women too have played key role in God’s service.

It is important for us to realize that if women are devoid of assuming leadership or active participation in the church, then we would be restricting church’s potential to minister by around fifty percent!

**Prayer: Dear Lord, we apologies that nearly half of the church’s human resource has not been utilized to it’s fullest. Help us to amend our ways by preaching and practicing gender equality. Amen.**

## IN STRANGER'S COMPANY?

November 4<sup>th</sup>, Thursday

MW Ps. 16 Eccl.49 Luke 24.13-35 or Esther 7  
EW Ps. 17 Eccl.50.1-212 Cor.12.11-end or Esther 8

**“While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” (Luke 24:15, 16) (NRSV)**

Some of us can recall the old grandma's story of a noble king, who used to care for the wellbeing of his subjects. To know the struggles and concerns of the common people, the king would dress up in disguise and move around in market places to access the situation. On the basis of the first hand information, the king would take remedial measures to safeguard the interest of people.

The narrative in today's gospel has similar overtones. Cleopas and his friend have been disillusioned by Jesus' sudden and brutal death on the cross. They had much hope in Jesus but now all has come to a sad end (v.19-21). The 'resurrection' news brought by women has added to their confusion (v.22-24). All these things they were sharing with the resurrected Christ. But they do not recognize Jesus, as they took him to be a stranger. Jesus had to teach them through scriptures and take them through the 'upper room' experience before they could finally recognize him.

There is a possibility that we may be well versed with Jesus' teaching and empathetic to his suffering on the cross but have failed to have experienced the power and joy of his resurrection. Without this experience, our walk with Jesus would be no more than a journey with a stranger. Let us keep our spiritual eyes and heart open, to the divine direction, in all the stages of our life.

**Prayer: O, send thy Spirit Lord now unto me, that they may touch my eyes and make me see; show me the truth concealed within thy world and in thy book revealed I see the Lord. Amen.**

## SECOND LINE LEADERSHIP

November 5<sup>th</sup>, Friday

MW Ps. 16 Eccl.50.22-51.12 Luke 24.36-end or Esther 9.1-19  
EW Ps. 17 Eccl.51.13-end 2 Cor. 13 or Esther 9.20-10end

**“And he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24. 46,47) (NRSV)**

The gospels agree that Jesus was clear about his mission on earth and he also remained focused on the same. This means, that Jesus would have also known that after nearly three and a half year of ministry, he would need people to further his purpose on earth. Thus, during his earthly ministry, he identified and called his disciples, who were later to become Apostles of the Church. But before the second line leadership came into action, the 'prospective candidates' had to go through various phases of preparation.

After, these disciples were selected and called; Jesus made them undergo 'on site training' experience and also gave them 'practiced exposure' directly under him. Then they were tested during Jesus' passion and crucifixion and they under went appraisal during the aftermath of Jesus sacrifice on the cross and burial. Needless to say, all of them fared much less than what was expected of them!

It was only through the resurrection appearance that Jesus began to 're-motivate' them towards ministry (Luke24:36-41) and he also promised them the 'empowerment' of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:44-49). And when time was appropriate he 'withdrew' from them i.e. ascended into heaven (24:51). These timid disciples were to turn the world upside down. Jesus' second line leadership will soon be on the fore-front.

Let this be an example for our churches and institutions who are continuously struggling to prepare the second line leadership.

**Prayer: Dear Lord, your son prepared people who could carry His mission further, grant that we too learning form His example will prepare second line leadership. Amen.**

## TEMPLE OF GOD

November 6<sup>th</sup>, Saturday

MW	Ps. 18.1-24	Tobit 1 or Amos 1	Mk.11.15-19,27-end
EW	Ps. 18.25-50(om.v37-42)	Tobit or Amos 2	2 Col.1.1-14

**And he taught, and said to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.’” (Mark 11:17) (NRSV)**

When Jesus entered the temple of Jerusalem, what did he discover? To his great disappointment, he saw people buying and selling things, money changers and pigeon sellers etc. The Temple of God, a place for prayer and worship, had been turned into a market place. He overturned their tables and seats, drove them out and did not allow any one to carry anything through the temple. He cleansed the temple and guarded it further from people who wanted to pollute it by doing such things.

How about us? St. Paul says, “You are the temple of the living God.” Our body is the place of worship and prayer to God. However, if we do not take the spiritual care, it can become dirty, and defiled full of jealousy, evil desires, pride, selfishness etc. Today, it is believed that cleaning the house is a great stress buster. However, most of us do not get time for the everyday cleaning and wait for the holidays to finish the task. But by then it accumulates much dirt and dust and we regret of not spending daily time for it. When it comes to spiritual cleansing we can not wait to get rid of accumulated sins - once a while. Our Lord Jesus Christ has already washed us, with his most precious blood once and for all. Now it is our duty to keep it always clean. It has to be a day to day process. If our heart is full of sins and guilt, it is never too late to come before Christ and he can drive out every sin out of our heart that defiles his place of worship.

**Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for washing my sins away by the death of your dear Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Help me not to be lazy in keeping it pure and beautiful place of worship for you. Amen.**

## CWM SUNDAY

November 7<sup>th</sup>, Sunday

24 Sunday after Pentecost

**Theme: Resurrection and the life of the world to come.**

M/EW	Psalm 16	L.S.	OT Daniel 12.1-3
	OT Daniel 12.1-3		Psalm 16.1,8-11
	NT 1 Cor.15.12-26		Epistle. 1 Cor. 15.12-22
and/or	Luke 20.27-40		Gosp. Luke 20.27-38

**“Indeed they can not die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.” (Luke 20:36) (NRSV)**

Today the Church of North India celebrates the CWM Sunday. What is CWM? It is Council for World Missions, established in 1977, is a world wide community of Christian churches. Presently as many as 31 churches from all over the world are members of CWM. Church of North India is one of the member churches. What is the purpose of CWM? It is committed to share resources of money, people, skill and insights globally to carry out God's mission locally.

One may wonder, how churches from diverse backgrounds and different contexts can come together to be part of one community? Yes, there can be uniqueness in the institutional structure of the member churches. There is bound to be differences in the spiritual formation of local congregation depending upon their own existential issues. But what matters most is that, they all (i.e. individual members of these churches) are actually ‘children of God.’ (Luke 20:36). This great privilege we have received not by our own merits but by the grace of Lord Jesus.

It is appropriate, as the children of one God, as brother and sisters in Jesus Christ- we intercede and pray for all member churches of CWM. Let us hope that through the exchange programs and through sharing of resources - the body of Christ will be edified. Let us also pray that CNI would play a vital role in this initiative.

**Prayer: We pray for the work and ministry of CWM, especially in India, that your kingdom will be established through the witnessing acts of your children. Amen.**

## THE TRAP

November 8<sup>th</sup>, Monday

MW Ps. 22 Tobit 3 Mark 12.1-17 or Amos 3.1-8  
EW Ps. 23,24 Tobit 4.1-5.3 Col.1.11-23 or Amos 3.9-4.3

**Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marveled at Him.” (Mark 12:17) (NRSV)**

Jesus during his earthly ministry always faced opposition and problems from the Pharisees and the religious leaders. Why? Because they had difficulty in accepting the source of his authority. They tried to question him, trap him, and oppose him.

In today’s passage, religious leaders purposefully sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians with a disputed issue. They wanted to catch him on his words (vs. 13). They asked him if they, being Jews, should be paying tax to the Roman government or not? Jesus knew their intention and he asked them, “Why do you test Me?” In the earlier passage, in 11:27-end, we see the religious leaders asking Jesus directly about his authority. “And they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority to do these things?” (vs.28). In John 8:1-11, we read about another incident in which they brought a woman caught in the act of adultery before Jesus and asked him to judge her. They said, “Now, Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do you say?” this they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.” (vs.5,6).

In all these incidents (and many others) their intention was to trap Jesus and to find him guilty for punishment. But Jesus knew their evil motive and every time he answered these in such a manner that they ultimately became speechless, embarrassed, or amazed and finally left him alone. However, in all these incidents Jesus’ authority as the Son of God to cleanse the Temple of God and to forgive human sins was established.

We the followers of Christ are bound to face oppositions in one form or the other. We must learn from Jesus to be discerning and wise, to exercise God given authority to preach the gospel and carry out his ministry.

**Prayer: Almighty God, give me the power and wisdom of thy Spirit so that I may discern the wrong motives of people around me especially of those who hinder thy work, but help me to face them with your help and strength. Amen.**

## DON’T GET IT WRONG

November 9<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday

MW Ps. 25 Tobit 5.4-end Mark 12.18-27 or Amos 4.4-end  
EW Ps. 26,27 Tobit 6.1-1 2 Col.1.24-2.7 or Amos 5.1-15

**Jesus said to them, “Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God?” (Mark 12:24) (NRSV)**

It is possible that while trying to balance our work, responsibilities and commitment- we may end up compromising our time spend in reading and meditating on the Holy Bible. It is also true that some of us have never taken a serious initiative to go through the scripture on our own. Our understanding of Christian teaching may be a byproduct of our opinion that need not be biblically sound. Sadducees, who did not believe in resurrection (Mark 12:18), also failed to understand the scriptures (V.24). In fact, Jesus also saw them as those who have not experienced the power of God (V.24). Thus, they got it wrong!

Friends, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamental to Christian belief. Take out time to read what the scriptures teach on resurrection (suggested reading: Matthew 27:62-28:15; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-46; John 20:1-21 and I Corinthians 15:1-58). Also, the only way to hope in our bodily resurrection is to have faith in the power of God. Yes! God, who by His mighty power resurrected Jesus from the dead, is also able to take us through the resurrection experience. Let us not get it wrong. Let us take on the disciple to go to scriptures and also to trust and experience God’s power in our day to day affairs.

**Prayer: God, let your word be lamp to my feet and your power my strength. Teach me to trust you here, in this life, and continue the same, in the life hereafter. Amen.**

## ALMOST THERE

November 10<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday

MW Ps. 28,29 Tobit.6.13-7.8a Mark12.28-37 or Amos 5.16-end  
EW Ps. 31 Tobit 7.8b-8.3 Col.2.8-19 or Amos 6

**“...You are not far from the kingdom of God.” (Mark 12:34) (NRSV)**

Jesus is targeted with three questions in Mark’s chapter twelve. Initially, Pharisees and Herodians try to trap Jesus into the taxation issue with Caesar (Mk 12:14). Then Sadducees create a hypothetical situation concerning resurrection (Mk. 12:23). And finally, a scribe throws a question, “which commandment is the first of all?”

Apparently, it was the last of the three questions that received a sympathetic reply from Jesus. Scribe is told that the first commandment involves loving God (v.29). Jesus also goes on to declare the second commandment – that involves loving one’s neighbor (v.31). Further, Jesus clubbed these two commandments to be the greatest of all commandments (v.31b). The first commandment is ‘God -ward’ and the second is ‘Human –ward’. And it is the obedience to the first that we could remain faithful in the second. Yes! It is our love and commitment to God that is reflected in our service to our fellow brothers and sisters.

Jesus saw Pharisees and Herodians as hypocrites (v.15) and called Sadducees to be a mistaken lot (v.27). But Jesus upheld the Scribe as a wise person (v.34). However, Jesus told him, “You are not far away from the kingdom of God.” The Scribe knows and probably follows the stipulation of the law but the only thing he now requires is to accept Jesus as the Christ. He is almost there!!

How many of us are also like this Scribe. We are almost there! Yes, we are almost there when it comes to the kingdom of God. We have knowledge and we try to follow biblical teaching but the completeness will come only after personal interaction with Jesus. Don’t be almost there... enter the kingdom of God.

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine, for these all the follies of sin I resign; my gracious redeemer, my savior art thou, if ever I loved thee, Lord Jesus it is now. Amen.**

## HIGH LIFE

November 11<sup>th</sup>, Thursday

MW Ps. 30,32 Tobit 8.4-9end Col.2.22-3.4 or Amos 7  
EW Ps. 33 Tobit 10 Col.3.5-17 or Amos 8.1-10

**“When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed, with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4) (NRSV)**

Our society is divided into three classes-upper, middle and lower. Then there are those who are below the poverty line. There is constant struggle by those who are on the lower end to move upward. For those who are at the top, the desire is to consolidate themselves further. But when St. Paul was exhorting the congregation at Colossae, to “set ...minds on things that are above...” he was speaking about something beyond our economic or social status. St. Paul is trying to tell us that even though we have our temporal needs, we should be not confined to that kind of a life style. We should not be motivated by materialistic gains but be inspired by the Divine direction. Jesus said, “Seek for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matt.6:33).

We can be certain that if the affairs of our life are driven by kingdom concerns and its values, then God will take care of our day to day needs too! (Read Matthew 6:30). Does it mean that church’s social engagement is put to question- definitely not. Friends, kingdom values make it imperative for the church to stand for and with the downtrodden. It is not the drive to climb up the economic ladder that the church empathizes with the marginalized. It is the Divine enlightenment that motivates the church to work towards economic upliftment of the poor.

**Prayer: Almighty God, teach me that I may seek things that are above and from your given perspective, approach the concerns here below. Amen.**

## PRACTICING CHRISTIAN

November 12<sup>th</sup>, Friday

MW	Ps. 34	Tobit 11 or Amos 8.11-9.6	Col.3.18-4.6
EW	Ps. 35(om.v.4-8,26)	Tobit 12 or Amos 9.7-end	Col.4.7-end

**“Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one.” (Colossians 4:5,6) (NRSV)**

St. Paul in this passage exhorts the believers of Christ to practice Christian values in three aspects of their lives. Firstly, he talks about Christian values within the family. Relation between husband and wife has to be of mutual understanding and love. In today’s world where marriages are at the verge of breaking on little misunderstandings and the increasing acceptance of live-in –relationships. St. Paul encourages us, as the people of God, to be an example to married couples.

Another strong bond within the family is the relationship between parents and children. One of the ten commandments says, “honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” Exodus 20:12. Then St. Paul immediately warns the parents not to provoke their children. In the world where the distance between parents and children is widening, as people of God, we ought to build a bridge of mutual trust and understanding, obedience and respect.

Secondly, Paul encourages to practice Christian values at our work place. He speaks about the mutual relationship between the master and the servant. If you are working under some authority, submit to them, be loyal and sincere to them, do your work remembering that God is always and everywhere watching you. If your are in a higher authority, if you deal with your subordinates, be a true Christian be a witness to Christ as the servant leader exercise humility and impartiality.

Thirdly, Paul instructs us to practice the Christian values in the society. We as the people of God need to exercise gentleness in our conduct with others and also at the same time be wise and discerning.

**Prayer: Dear Lord, let me be known and remembered as a loving and practicing Christian in my family, my work place in your church and the society at large. Amen.**

## FACE TO FACE

November 13<sup>th</sup>, Saturday

MW	Ps. 36,37.1-11	Obadiah 1-10	2 John
EW	Ps. 37.12-end	Obadiah 11-end	John 14.1-14

**“Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.” (II John 12) (NRSV)**

Two years back, I was introduced to a social network site that facilitates to trace and re-unites with old/separated friends online. Since then, I have re-established my contact with those friends who were separated after graduating school and college. I am sure that many of us have had a similar experience. We are indebted to the internet for this unprecedented opportunity to get connected to old friends and acquaintances. But still there exists a desire to meet them in person, to meet them face to face. Unlike John’s time, today we have unlimited options to choose from when it comes to communication. But nothing has replaced the joy of meeting somebody in person!

Biblical teachings and Christian tradition has always emphasized on the corporate worship and fellowship. At my local parish we use news letter, SMS and email to enhance our connectivity, yet we always remember that nothing will replace the joy of corporate worship on Sunday. Remember, Sunday Divine Service provide us opportunity to come face to face with our brother and sisters in Christ, in the very presence of our God. Those who realize it- their joy is always complete.

**Prayer: Dear Lord, incline me to experience the joy that Christian fellowship brings; to come together face to face with your faithful people along with our thanks offerings. Amen.**

## UNITY SUNDAY

November 14<sup>th</sup>, Sunday      25 Sunday after Pentecost : Unity Sunday \*

**Theme: God upholds those who suffer for his sake.**

M/EW	Psalm	69.1-18L.S.	OT	Micah 7.1-4a,7-10a
	OT	Micah.7.1-10a	Psalm	35.11-14,17-18
	NT	2 Cor. 4.7-18	Epistle.	Romans 5.1-5
	and/or	Luke 21.5-19	Gosp.	Luke 21.9-19

*Notice of festival of Christ the Lord on 21 November*

**“This will give you an opportunity to testify.” (Luke 21:13) (NRSV)**

The persecution on the Christian community does not come according to their denominational affiliation. Persecutor will look at us as one people group- the church. But ironically, our creedal confession ‘One Holy Catholic Church’ is yet to find its true expression in our local congregations. However, there are evidences that God is still at work to answer the High Priestly prayer of Jesus- “that they may be one, as we are one.” (John 17:11). One such evidence is the formation of the Communion of Churches in India.

The journey taken up by the joint council of CNI, CSI and Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church towards greater unity, finally found it’s culmination in birth of Communion of Churches in India in 2004. And to mark this occasion, today, we celebrate the UNITY SUNDAY. Today, a special prayer will be offered during the Divine Service in all the churches of CNI, CSI and Marthoma. Now, we accept each other’s clergy, interpretation of the Scriptures, creeds and also mutually accept another’s Baptism, Eucharist and ministry.

A united church will find opportunity to testify about God not only during persecution but in other times as well. It should be our endeavor that Communion of Churches in India will be an example for other churches to follow, not only in India but also in the world.

**Prayer: In the world that is getting divided on issues and approaches, O Lord, we pray on this unity Sunday that the Church will emerge as an example of unity. Amen.**

## HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

November 15<sup>th</sup>, Monday

MW	Ps. 40	Nahum 1.1-15 & 2.2	3 John
EW	Ps. 41	Nahum 2.1, 3-12	John 14.15-end

**“For they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth.” (III John 7,8) (NRSV)**

“How can I help you”- a very familiar sentence that marks the end of a quickly delivered welcome note by a customer care executive. Most of these executives are rather eager to do their best to help us out with seemingly pre-decided solutions. But before this happens, one has to be fortunate enough to get connected on phone to an executive. Needless to say, phone lines to such service providers are usually busy and one may have to wait endlessly.

Have we ever wondered how God may be earnestly waiting for us to respond in supporting his work on the earth? Apostle John is reminding us that we ought to support those who are engaged in Christian ministry for the sake of Christ Jesus. Sadly, most of us take our own time to respond, to a support we ‘ought’ to have given, without fail.

How much monetary contribution can one continue to make for Christian ministry? Well, financial support is essential, yet it is only one of the various ways to support. What else can one do? One could volunteer personal skill or resource to enrich mission work. One could provide hospitality or even exchange words of encouragement. These and many other things we can do to become ‘co-workers’ with the truth.

**Prayer: God, So far I have always asked for my own needs. Today, I offer my support to your work O Lord, through my time, talents and tithe. Amen.**

## FRUITFUL FAITH

November 16<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday

MW	Ps. 42,43	Nahum 2.13-3end	2 Peter 1.1-19
EW	Ps. 44	Jonah 1.1-16	John 15.1-17

**“For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness.” (II Peter 1:5,6) (NRSV)**

Faith in Jesus Christ is an essential qualification to enter Christian life. St. Peter will go a little further to say that this faith in Jesus Christ is also 'precious'. Then, he points that this precious faith is not a thing to be preserved but it needs to produce fruits.

For our faith to be fruitful- it must be genuine. Our faith has to be of the same essence as that of the Apostles (v.1). Anything less would amount to a mere 'lip-service'. It would be like an attempt to look for a fruit in a tree that was never planted! To avoid such a disaster and to be fruitful- we must have true living- faith relationship with Jesus Christ. Secondly, our faith should continue to grow so that it produces more and more fruitful. How does faith grow? St. Peter is able to list out seven characteristics (I Peter 1:5,6) that stimulate are faith to grow and mature. These seven characteristics are: virtue, knowledge, self control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love.

Finally, those who have a fruitful faith will also be visionaries. We need to look ahead and not just attend to immediate needs. Visionaries are able to lead and guide the people of God to face newer challenges and also prepare them to overcome obstacles. We must seek God's blessings, so that our faith should be genuine and fruitful.

**Prayer: O, let me see thy footsteps and in them plant mine own, my hope to follow daily is in thy strength alone; O, guide me, call me, draw me, uphold me to the end; and then in heaven receive me, my savior and my friend. Amen.**

## OPINIONS DO MATTER

November 17<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday

MW	Ps. 45	Jonah 1.17-2end	2 Pet.1.20-2.10a
EW	Ps. 46,47	Jonah 3&4	John 15.18-16.4a

**“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions.” (II Peter 2:1) (NRSV)**

The role of the prophets and the teachers is to contribute towards the growth and edification of the church. A congregation that is nurtured this way will be able to be an effective witness in the world. However, the presence of false prophets and false teachers can cripple the entire congregation. Since these false prophets and false teachers have been part of the local fellowship, it is not always easy to identify and to deal with them. They may appear to base their teachings on the Bible but they use the Bible only to justify and support their own opinion.

Their teaching may appear to be attractive and even convincing. Yet a careful look will reveal that how Biblical teachings and tradition Christian understanding has been twisted, compromised and diluted. They have tendency to bring out insufficiency in Jesus' redemptive work; distort the understanding of triune God and usually they lead a morally corrupt life.

These false prophets and teachers are doomed to eternal condemnation. But we need to guard ourselves. We should not be swayed by new interpretation but let the scripture be interpreted in light of the whole scripture and in guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer: O God, protect us from the harm that false prophets and false teachers bring. May we be rooted firmly on sound biblical truths. Amen.**

## U TURN

November 18<sup>th</sup>, Thursday

MW	Ps. 48	Lam.3.34-end	2 Pet. 2.10b-end
EW	Ps. 49	Lam.4.1-11	John 16.4b-22

**“For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment that was passed on to them.” (II Peter 2:21) (NRSV)**

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near,” announced Jesus on the inauguration of his earthly ministry (Mt.4:17). Biblical scholars agree that the New Testament usage of the word ‘repent’ is influenced by the Old Testament understanding of the same word. That is, repentance is not merely feeling sorry or to change one’s mind but as a point of turning around, a complete alteration of the basic motivation and direction of one’s life (NBD, IVP).

According to Matthew’s account, the first disciples to experience this phenomena, soon after the call of repentance, were Peter and Andrew (Mt.4:18-20). Peter turned around from his business (a fisherman) to work for God (to become fisher of people). He continued on the same path until Jesus’ crucifixion because after this, St. John’s gospel (21:1-8) indicates that, Peter was perhaps going back to his business! But before he could take the U turn, Jesus reminded him to keep on following him (John 21:19).

Peter would recall with regret the step he was about to take. Therefore, Peter chastens those who once having repented and turned to God-are now making a grave mistake by taking a U turn to the old defiled life (II Peter 2:20,21). Today, it is a warning and reminder to us that having turned to God let us be careful not to turn back.

**Prayer: Almighty God, I have turned to you and I wish to follow you always. Prevent me from turning back. Amen.**

## IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

November 19<sup>th</sup>, Friday

MW	Ps. 50	Lam.4.12-end	2. Peter 3
EW	Ps. 51	Lam. 5	John 16.23-end

**“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.” (II Peter 3:10) (NRSV)**

This chapter is one of the most beautiful passages on the Lord’s second coming. And it reveals few interesting characteristics of our long awaited hope. Firstly, we are told that the delay, in Lord’s second coming, exhibits God’s patience. God, in his infinite mercy, is giving us opportunity to repent (v.9). Therefore, Peter calls Lord’s patience as our salvation (v.15).

Secondly, the delay in the second coming our Lord does not dilute the ‘certainty’ of his return. Peter writes, “but the day of the Lord will come” (v.10). This assurance should shield us from all those teachings that are denying this hope (cf. v.3-5).

Finally, Peter calls us to be diligent from Lord’s appearance. We should be diligent in our preparedness as the appointed day will come like a thief- when we least expect (v.10b). We should be diligent in our conduct so that we are found worthy of God’s holiness (I Peter 1:15,16; II Peter 3:14). And we should be diligent is never loosing hope but waiting with expectation ‘for new heaven and new earth’ (v.13).

**Prayer: And Lord, Haste the day when the faith shall be sigh, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll, the trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend, even so it is well with my soul. Amen.**

**GET INVOLVED  
UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY**

**November 20<sup>th</sup>, Saturday                      Thomas a Kempis (Monk, Mystic), 1471**

MW	Ps. 52	Prov. 25.1-22	Eph.3.1-13
EW	Ps. 53,54(om.v.5)	Prov. 26	Eph.3.14-end

**“Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of boundless riches of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:8) (NRSV)**

It was after his first missionary journey with Barnabas that Paul became instrumental in helping Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to accept the fact that Jesus Christ is the savior of whole human race and not just of Jewish community. Soon Paul was to become an apostle to those other than Jews (usually referred to as gentiles in the New Testament) because he believed that he has received special calling and empowerment to share gospel with them. And he continued this mission against all odds. The Epistle to the Church at Ephesus is believed to have been written by Paul from a prison in Rome.

Paul's burden for gentiles inspired him to be involved for their spiritual upliftment. Do you have a burden for a people group or an issue? If not- today is the day to get involved with issues concerning children.

Today is the Universal Children's Day. In 1954, the General Assembly of the United Nation recommended that this day may be devoted to activities promoting welfare and wellbeing of the children of the world. Government of India has many schemes for children especially for their education and health. Primary education is being made available to all but what is the qualitative outcome? Basic health facilities are being promised but do they actually reach the needy children? Think and reflect what can you do at your end to make a difference in life of at least one child?

**Prayer: Dear Lord, as St. Paul was committed to Gentiles, so may I get involved in the issues concerning children with your grace and power. Amen.**

**THE KINGLY GLORY OF JESUS ON THE CROSS**

**November 21<sup>st</sup>, Sunday    Last Sunday after Pentecost : Christ the Lord**

**Theme: The kingly glory of Jesus on the Cross.**

M/EW	Psalm 74	L.S.	OT Isaiah.28.14-17 or
	OT	Isaiah 28.14-17	33.17-22
	NT	Phil. 3.17-4.1	Psalm 77.3,7-8,10-14
	and/or	Luke 23.32-43	Epistle. Phil 3.17-4.1
			Gosp. Luke 23.32-43

*Notice of festival of Advent*

**“Truly I tell you; today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) (NRSV)**

If ever you happen to be in the Diocese of Delhi, CNI, do take out time to visit the Cathedral Church of the Redemption. There, at the altar of the Chapel of the Ascension, is placed a cross with the image of Christ Jesus carved on it. What makes this cross unique is that the image of Christ has been draped in the kingly attire with a majestic crown on Jesus' forehead. To me, it reminds that post resurrection- cross has become the symbol of victory of Jesus Christ, who is the king of kings and Lord of Lords. Yes, this cross wonderfully depicts the kingly glory of Jesus on the cross.

One of the thieves, mentioned in the gospel portion today, probably was able to behold this spiritual truth and it changed his destiny. Firstly, the thief had a true repentance and a great realization. It is the presence of the sinless Messiah that he realized his sinfulness (Lk.23:40, 41) and repented. And beyond Jesus' death on cross, he visualized Jesus' kingdom. Secondly, beholding the kingly glory of Jesus, he made a humble request. He did not want anything more but that Jesus would 'remember' him in his kingdom. Finally, in this kingly glory, Jesus gave this thief - joy and honor. Jesus told him, "...today you will be with me in Paradise."

Isn't it amazing that even on the cross, Jesus promises his divine fellowship to the penitent thief. What would be your request to the king of kings on this festival of Christ the Lord?

**Prayer: Praise my soul, the king of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored forgiven, who like me his praise should sing? Praise him! Praise him. Praise the everlasting king. Amen.**

## AT JESUS' FEET

November 22<sup>nd</sup>, Monday

MW	Ps. 57,61	Dan.7.1-14	Rev.1.1-19
EW	Ps. 62	Dan.7.15-end	Rev.1.19-2.11

**“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last.” (Revelation 1:17b) (NRSV)**

The book of Revelation is the record of St. John's vision that God gave him concerning the end times. In the very beginning of this spiritual experience as soon as John sees Christ, he falls at his feet. At the feet of Jesus, John realized Jesus' glory and majesty.

There are many records in the New Testament about varied experience that people had at the feet of Jesus.

- a) At the feet of Jesus, Mary understood God's word. As Mary preferred to listen to Jesus' teaching (Lk10:39), so we must separate time for meditation and prayer.
- b) At the feet of Jesus, we can come with hope. Jairus was not disappointed when he came to Jesus pleading for his daughter healing. (Mk.5:22-24, 35-43). We too should come to Jesus' feet in our difficult times with faith and hope.
- c) We must come at the feet of Jesus to offer our gratitude and thanks. We often come at Jesus' feet with our needs and supplication but often forget to thank him. The classic example of the healing of 10 lepers, where only one returns to thank Jesus- illustrates this point well.

Let us make it a discipline to come at the feet of Jesus- to worship him, to learn his teaching, to present our needs and also with our thanks offerings.

**Prayer: Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet, or we'll walk by his side on the way, what he says we will do, where he sends we will go, never fear only trust and obey. Amen.**

## THE BIGGEST SEARCH EVER

November 23<sup>rd</sup>, Tuesday

MW	Ps. 63(om.v.9-11)	Dan.8.1-14	Rev.2.12-end
EW	Ps. 64	Dan.8.15-end	Rev.3.1-13

**“... and all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.” (Rev. 2:23) (NRSV)**

“I am unable to answer this question, can I access the internet to find it,” asked my nine year old son, who wanted to finish his science home work. Friends, search engines are able to providing more information than we could really comprehend on any given subject. The search option in our own PC enables us to trace down a forgotten life. Even before these search options were available, in fact right from the time of creation- God has been on the search. What has He been searching? Well! He has been searching human mind and hearts (Read Psalm 44:21, I Chronicles 28:9, Jeremiah 17:10). This is and would perhaps remain the biggest search ever! Even now, God is searching our minds and hearts! This is not an end in itself. God is also accumulating the 'data' because He will use these facts to decide what we deserve in eternity.

Friends, it is possible that we may put up a good face and impressive conduct before people. We might succeed in doing so but this will not hold good before God. God is concerned about our inner being and one can not put a veil because He is able to pierce through our real self. The Advent season is fast approaching; it is giving us an opportunity to incorporate necessary correction at the earliest.

**Prayer: Search me, O God, and know my heart today; Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts I pray; See if there be some wicked ways in me, cleanse me from all my sins and set me free. Amen.**

## DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

November 24<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday

MW	Ps. 65	Dan.9.1-19	Rev.3.14-end
EW	Ps. 66,67	Dan.9.20-end	Revelation 4

**“Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.” (Revelation 3: 20) (NRSV)**

Apostle John recorded the message to the seven churches in the book of the Revelation. Today's text is the message to the seventh church i.e. the church at Laodicea. Though it is a centre of commerce yet spiritually poor; leading in ophthalmologic facilities yet spiritually blind and a production house for black wool yet lacking spiritual white robes to cover themselves (v.17, 18). Moreover, like any cosmopolitan city, they had become inhospitable to the travelers. Therefore, Jesus offers remedies for all their problems and also offers divine fellowship (v.20).

Firstly, Christ takes an initiative to make a loving appeal to each individual at the church at Laodicea. Christ presents himself as the one who is standing at the door, knocking and waiting for a response. Similarly, Jesus takes initiative to have fellowship with us but are we willing to respond?

Secondly, Christ expects a hearty welcome and meaningful fellowship. The degree of warmth expressed at our welcome in any house indicates the worth of our visit. Jesus too can notice this in our response! Moreover, in line with Jewish culture, Jesus does not want a formal meeting but an intimate fellowship. This is fulfilled in the imagery of dining together. Yes! Our fellowship with God should be intimate and warm, devoid of elements of superficiality or willingness. May God enable us to grow in divine fellowship day by day.

**Prayer: We thank you for taking the initiate to have fellowship with us! We commit to grow intimately in our relationship with you. Amen.**

## BEING WORTHY FOR ONE WHO IS WORTHY INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

November 25<sup>th</sup>, Thursday      John of the Cross (Monk, Mystic), 1591

MW	Ps. 68(om.v.21-23)	Dan.10.1-11.1	Rev.5
EW	Ps. 69(om.v.22-28)	Dan.11.2-19	Rev.6.1-11

**“And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” (Revelation 5:9) (NRSV)**

Apostle John, in his vision, breaks into tears (v.4) because there was no one worthy to open the scroll and to break the seal (v.2). Then one of the elder gave him hope. John is assured by the elder (v.5) that the lamb (v.6) i.e. Jesus Christ is worthy to do the needful. What made Jesus Christ worthy? It is by virtue of his sacrifice on the cross, to ransom humankind for God that he is found worthy (v.9).

One can presume that John would later recollect and relate to what he has already written in his gospel in 3:16 and 10:10. God's divine plan through Jesus Christ is to assure life in abundance, both here and hereafter. While one can be certain that we will experience the abundance in it's fullness after this life, there are certain issues that have to be addressed, to experience a trace of that experience here and now.

One such issue is highlighted today by United Nation. 25<sup>th</sup> November is observed as the 'International Day for the Elimination of violence Against Women'. Indian culture claims to honor woman as mother, it claims to care for her as sister and also claims to protect her like a daughter but the regular incidents of female infanticide, feticide, dowry, rape and gender discrimination etc. indicate that reality is totally opposite. On this day, let us commit to do our part to prevent these atrocities against women.

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, enable me to work towards elimination of violence against women, so that I may be found worthy to find favor in the sight of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## BRANDED

November 26<sup>th</sup>, Friday

MW	Ps. 70(om.v.12)	Dan.11.20-39	Rev.6.12-7.8
EW	Ps. 71	Dan.11.40-12.4	Rev.7.9-end

**“Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.” (Revelation 7.3) (NRSV)**

The vision of St. John highlights, how the chosen people of God will be protected, against the great destruction that will engulf the earth and the sea. We are told that they will be ‘marked’ as those who are special to God. These ‘marked’ people are special because they have been chosen by God to carry out his mission.

Bible tells us that God sends out his chosen people at every age of human history. We need to keep on praying that our leaders should also be God’s chosen. Secondly, these ‘marked’ people have been given the title to be ‘servants of God’. Greek word used here is ‘slave’ i.e. the ‘marked’ people are actually ‘slaves’ of God. They are those who have been purchased with a cost (i.e. with the blood of Jesus Christ) and now their only task is to carry out the will of their master. Christian ministers must always remember that slavery to Christ Jesus is the perfect freedom. Finally, these ‘marked’ people also need to undergo tribulation. The destruction of the earth and sea has been paused only ‘until’ the servants of God are marked with seal on their forehead. Then the tribulation has to follow even on those who are ‘marked’. But we can rejoice because our God will never leave us alone in difficult situation, so that we continue to carry out God’s mission and bring glory to his name.

**Prayer: Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come, ‘tis grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home. Amen.**

## THRONE OF GRACE OR JUDGEMENT SEAT

November 27<sup>th</sup>, Saturday

MW	Ps. 72	Dan.12.5-end	Rev. 8
EW	Ps. 73	Malachi 2.16-4.2	Rev. 9 or Proverbs 16.1-9

**“And the smoke of the incense, with; prayer of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the Angel.” (Rev.8:4) (NRSV)**

When we enter the church, we are conscious of the fact that we are at place of worship, a place where there is the presence of God. Also, while the corporate worship is going on, we too, simultaneously, continue with our own individual supplications. And finally we approach the altar to partake in the Holy Eucharist, we remember what all our dear Lord achieved for us on the cross and then we pause, for a moment or so, to offer a special prayer. The prayer offered at the altar, where presence of God has become ‘more’ real; is done with a certain definite hope that it will ascend to God’s throne of grace. Thus, we are assured of a timely and favorable answer.

It is important for us to realize that God’s throne, which is today, the throne of grace and mercy (Heb.4:16) will one day transform into the judgment seat (II Cor.5:10). In Rev.8:3-5, Apostle John is witnessing this very transition. The throne of grace and mercy is soon going to become the source of God’s intensified judgments that will be hurled to the earth (Read Rev.8:5ff). And thus we need to be prepared to amend our ways before this inevitable transition. If we are those who have reaped the benefit of the throne of grace, then we will also be able to face with boldness the judgment seat.

**Prayer: Early in the morning we make our prayer to you, O Lord; surely, you will hear our voice. Amen.**

## BE PREPARED AT ALL TIMES FOR THE LORD'S APPEARING

**November 28<sup>th</sup>, Sunday**                      **4 Sunday before Christmas (Advent 1)**

**Theme: Be prepared at all times for the Lord's appearing.**

M/EW	Psalm	96	L.S.	OT	Isaiah 2.2-4
	OT	Isaiah 2.2-4		Psalm	96.7-13
	NT	Romans 13.11-14		Epistle.	Romans 13.11-14
	and/or	Matthew 25.1-13		Gosp.	Matthew 25 1-13

*Notice of festival of Inauguration of C.N.I. on 29 November and Andrew, Apostle & Martyr on 30 November*

**“Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” (Matthew 25:13) (NRSV)**

From today, we enter one more season of Advent. To many of us, this is the announcement of feasting and celebration that may culminate on Christmas or continue till Epiphany Sunday. However, Advent, like Lent, is also a season of fasting and preparation. It is a time that we need to pause in presence of God, reflecting on our life and witness. Specifically, it is a reminder that let us not be unprepared for Jesus' second coming, the way people were unprepared when he came on first Christmas. Thus the theme for today is 'be prepared at all times for Lord's appearing'.

The parable of the ten virgins is told to communicate the same message. Jewish wedding will have two parts. The bridegrooms and his friends will go to bring the bride from her house. Then both, with a great procession, will return to the bridegroom's place for marriage celebrations. It was during this wedding procession, did one required lamps. But five of the ten virgins missed the opportunity because of their 'un-preparedness' to sustain their lamps in the face of delay. As Christians, we have been awaiting Jesus' second coming for over two thousand years now. There is a danger that some of us may loose our focus or ignore to be alert. We are reminded to be prepared because Lord may appear anytime!

**Prayer: O God, strengthen us that we may be ready with our lamps brightly lit to join the greatest banquet ever. Amen.**

## THANKSGIVING FOR OUR UNITY IN CHRIST

**November 29<sup>th</sup>, Monday**                      **Inauguration of the Church Of North India**

**Theme: Thanksgiving for our unity in Christ.**

M/EW	Psalm	122	L.S.	OT	Ezekiel 37.15-22
	OT	Ezekiel 37.15-22		Psalm	122.1-2, 6-9
	NT	Ephesians 4.1-6		Epistle	Ephesians 4.1-6
	and/or	John 17.18-26		Gosp.	John 17.18-26

**“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” (John 17:18) (NRSV)**

Today we, as the members of Church of North India, praise God for his faithfulness in enabling us to complete forty years of unity, witness and service. It was on this day, in 1970, that Church of North India was born when six churches entered into union. It is a day to remember with thankfulness the role and contribution of all those people of God, who worked towards this union and also those who have ensured that this unity is strengthened.

Biblically, number 'forty' is associated with almost each new development in human history through Divine Intervention. The flood experience (Gen.7:17); Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex.24:10); Israel in wilderness (Num.32:13) are a few famous illustrations that how significant are 40 days and 40 years in the Biblical history. While many parallels can be drawn, it may be worth while to see the significance of this number in Jesus' earthly ministry and it's relevance to Church of North India.

Firstly, Synoptic gospels agree (Mtt.4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13) that Jesus inaugurated his earthly ministry after 40 days (and nights!) of preparedness that included fasting and overcoming temptations by Satan. Similarly, having passed through season of shadow and sunshine, Church of North India should treasure the varied experiences in these 40 years, as preparedness for greater challenges ahead. Much of these challenges have been enlisted in our mission priorities during the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century (visit [www.cni.org](http://www.cni.org))

Secondly, after resurrection Jesus continued to appear to the forty day-speaking about the kingdom of God, turning their sorrow into joy and promising them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Church of North India must continue to yield to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to promote kingdom values,

especially through its ministry among women, youth and children and it's engagement with struggles of the marginalized and downtrodden.

**Prayer:** Now, thank we all our God with hearts, and hands and voices, who wondrous things hath done, in whom his world rejoices; who, from our mother's arms hath blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love and still is ours today. Amen.

## THANKSGIVING FOR ANDREW'S CALL AND WITNESS TO JESUS

November 30<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday

Andrew, Apostle & Martyr

Theme: Thanksgiving for Andrew's call and witness to Jesus.

M/EW	Psalm 67	L.S.	OT	Zech. 8.20-23
	OT	Zech. 8.20-23	Psalm	65.1-2, 5-8
	NT	Romans 10.5-18	Epistle	Romans 10.9-18
	and/or	John 12.20-26	Gosp.	John 12.20-26

**“Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Phillip went to and told Jesus.” (John 12:22) (NRSV)**

The Synoptic gospels record very little detail about Andrew, however, the information recorded by Apostle John in his gospel, reveals remarkable things about Andrew.

Firstly, Andrew was eager to be in the company of the Lord. Andrew was one of the disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35-37, 40). When John the Baptist pointed him to Jesus (the Lamb of God), Andrew and his friend were quick to follow him. He was also equally responsive to the specific call he received (along with Peter) to become fishers of people (Matt. 4:18-20) i.e. to be one among the twelve disciples of Christ Jesus.

Secondly, Andrew was eager to bring others to Jesus. Soon after his first interaction with Jesus Christ, he immediately brought Peter (then Simon) to Jesus (John 1:42). According to William Temple, this act of Andrew is ‘perhaps...is as a great service of the church, as even a man did.’ Rightly so, Peter would later be the prime leader in the early church. Further, he is equally keen that Greeks from Jerusalem are able to meet Jesus (John 12:20-22). According to tradition, St. Andrew was probably crucified in Achaia but his witness would always be a living example.

Do we harbor the eagerness like St. Andrew to be in fellowship with our Lord? Will we be eager to bring others to Jesus as St. Andrew did?

**Prayer:** O God, grant that we may be quick to respond to your call and with equal vigor bring others to you. Amen.