

Orthodox Vacation Bible School 2020
Theme Book: Seniors

Fruits



OSSAE

Diocese of UK, Europe & Africa of Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church

THE INDIAN (MALANKARA) ORTHODOX CHURCH

Diocese of UK- Europe and Africa

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SOUK/20/007

01 March 2020

Blessings to the Vicars/Priests-in-Charge, Sunday School Teachers, Parents and Students:

Dearly beloved in Christ!

Sunday School is the cradle and foundation of our Church. With all gratitude to God Almighty We are overwhelmed to see the blessed functioning of the OSSAE activities in our diocese. We appreciate the Parents and Teachers for your vigour and commitment for providing the right spiritual nourishment for our young children.

OVBS indeed plays an inevitable role in the Sunday School activities. It brings up motivation and enthusiasm in young children to learn the Holy Book and Church's teachings. This year our OVBS classes will be conducted in all our Sunday School units during the months of May to July as per the convenience of individual units.

The theme for OVBS 2020 is "Discern the will of God." This is based on 1 Thessalonians 5:18 which says, "*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*" Let us remember and teach our children that Praising and Glorifying God is the corner stone of Christian Faith. Whatever we receive, whether it is as per your wish or not so comfortable to you, is the will of God which we shall adhere and accept in full spirit. We could see that Thanksgiving to God is very prominent throughout the Bible.

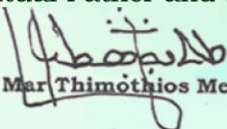
OSSAE diocesan Vice President Fr Anoop Abraham, Diocesan OSSAE officials and Sunday School Teachers are extensively contributing their wisdom and energy for the preparations for the sessions and it is well noticed that a song book will be published for this year's OVBS classes. The songs are well chosen and We are sure that it would be an added benefit and cheer for our children. Congratulation to the team behind this wonderful achievement.

We urge all the Parents and Sunday School teachers to encourage our children to attend the OVBS classes and be blessed.

We pray and extend best wishes for the success of OVBS 2020.

May God Bless you all!

Your Spiritual Father and Shepherd


+ Mathews Mar Thimothios Metropolitan

Foreword



Beloved Sunday School teachers, parents and my dear children,

First of all, I thank Our Lord Almighty for His kindness and mercy upon us during this pandemic. As we prepare ourselves for another OVBS, amidst all the joy and happiness of OVBS this year, we are also going through a very tough and sad situation. Let's seek the loving kindness of our Lord to overcome this, with all positiveness and Christian hope.

Orthodox Vacation Bible School is the season of fun, most of our children look year after year, but it's also a season of transformation and learning lessons that kids carry with them for the rest of their lives. Also, it is an opportunity for the church to teach children The Holy Bible and the Orthodox faith. This year we have an interesting theme for our OVBS "Discern the Will of God" from 1 Thessalonians 5:18 "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus". This verse gives an inspiring hope in perceiving, recognising and understanding the Will of God and giving thanks to God during a pandemic, which badly affects our life. If we belong to Christ, we have to renew our thankfulness by delighting to look into our heavenly Father's will he has revealed in the Scriptures. OVBS 2020 theme will help us to "Discern the Will of God" in our spiritual journey.

I take this opportunity to thank you all, especially our Diocesan Metropolitan H G Dr Mathews Mar Thimothios Thirumeni, all Vicars, OSSAE UK Director, Secretary, Treasurer, OVBS coordinators, District Inspectors, Head Teachers, Teachers, Volunteers and Parents, for your dedication, selfless work and support to OSSAE-UK and OVBS 2020. Special thanks to the team behind the song and theme books. Your every effort to support and nurture our children in Christ will be rewarded by Our Lord.

In our song book, as previous years, we have included official songs provided by OSSAE OVBS 2020 and a few English songs to make it more lively for our children. Each unit has the freedom to choose a number of songs from the song book based on their OVBS duration, however, prayer, marching and theme songs are mandatory to be taught in all units.

Even though we conclude our OVBS with a Holy Qurbana and rally every year, I would request vicars and head teachers to conduct OVBS 2020 based on the convenience available at individual churches i.e. using online medium or smaller groups depending on the situation.

Prayers and wishes for a blessed OVBS 2020.

Yours in Christ

**Fr. Anoop Abraham Malayil
(Vice President OSSAE –UK)**

OVBS -2020 SENIORS

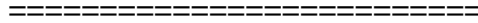
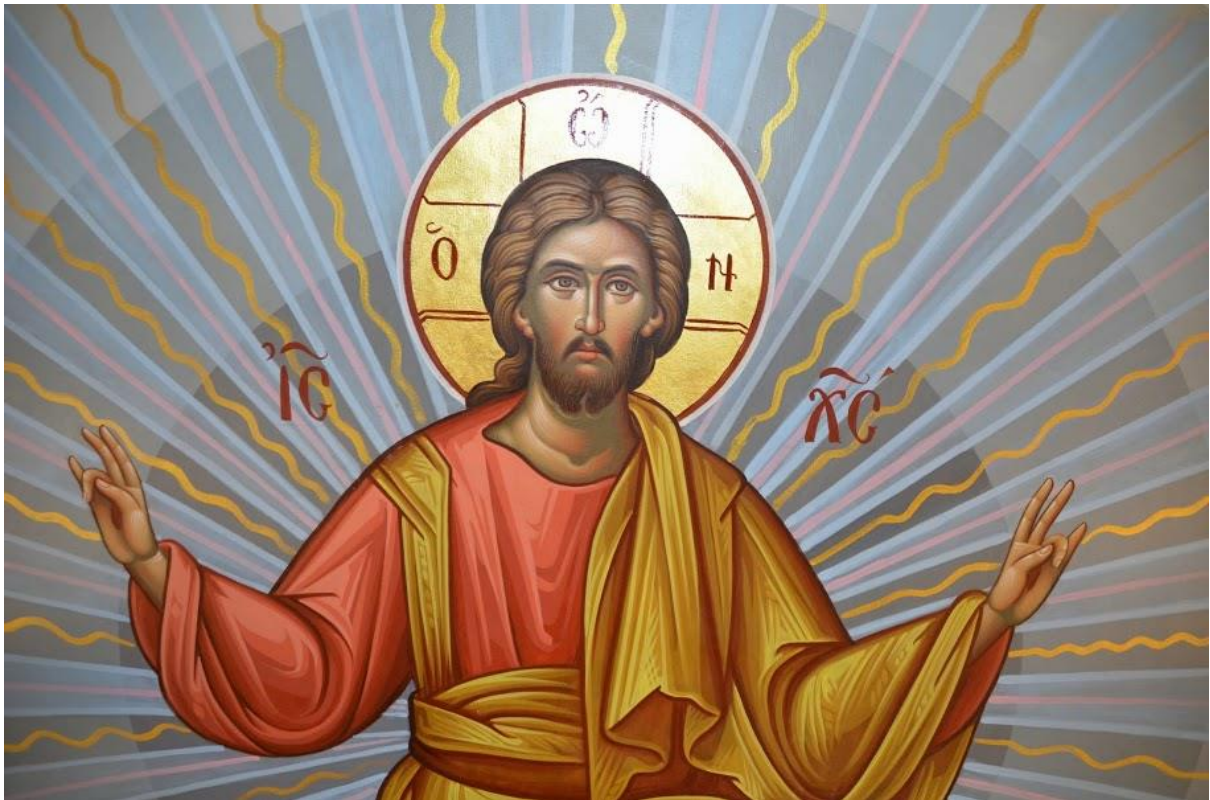


TABLE OF CONTENTS

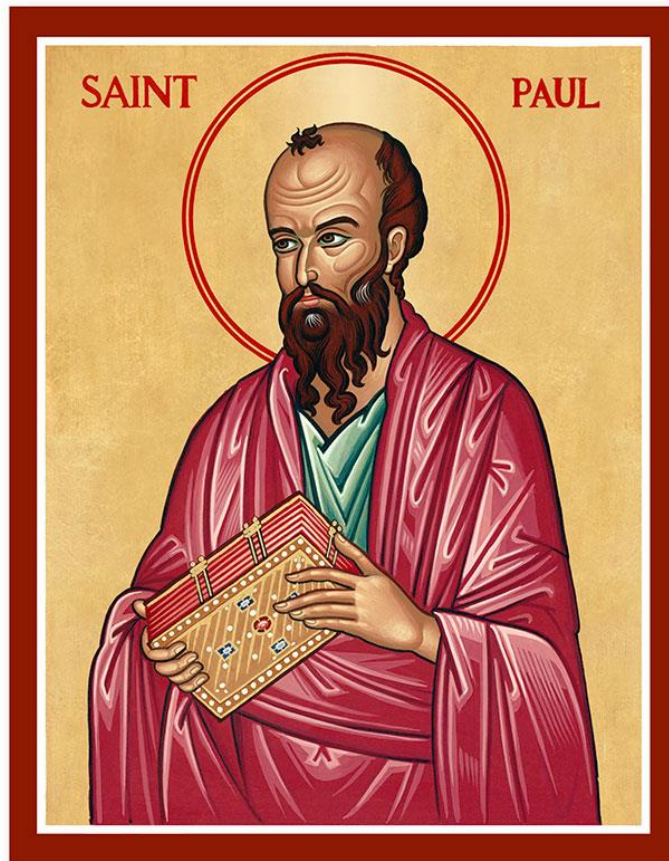
1. Introduction
2. Chapter 1 – What is prayer?
3. Chapter 2 – Will of God
4. Chapter 3 – How to Pray?



INTRODUCTION

Theme - 'Discern the will of God' (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians



St. Paul composed a letter to instruct and strengthen the faithful in Thessalonica to continue walking with Christ. Paul was impressed by the commitment of the Thessalonians to Christ and decided to compose a letter of thanksgiving. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians can be divided into two parts. In the first part (1 Thess 1:2–3:13), one finds sections of thanksgiving, Paul's defence of the true faith and a reference to the current problems within the community.

In the second part of the letter (1 Thess 4:1–5:25), one finds a set of exhortations. Paul reminds the community that they are called to practice the Gospel values in their daily lives. He stresses the norms and moral standards of Christian life that each one of them is called to practice. This can only be possible if each of them develops a personal relationship with God through Christ, which is strengthened by the coming of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, a perfect Christian life, that is, a life filled with a good ethical conduct, is a sign of one's Christian faith.

Chapter 1- Prayer

Objective: To understand the meaning of prayer, the importance of thanksgiving through prayer and how we pray as a church

Activity: **What is my purpose?**

List the purpose –**Drum Car Jacket Pen Television Picture of praying hands**
As the children show pictures of above. The handout has pictures of several different things. In a paper ask them to write what they think the purpose of the item is. Ask them to share the answers they came up with for prayer (the praying hands). List these on the board.

Introduction

This Year's Theme- 'Discern the will of God' (1 Thessalonians 5:18) give us three characteristics of a Christian church.

1. ***It is a happy Church.*** There will be an atmosphere of joy which makes its members feel that they are bathed in sunshine. True Christianity will make one feel happy and uplifted.
2. ***It is a praying Church.*** Our Church's prayers would be more effective if we remembered that "they pray best together who also pray alone". Prayer for the Orthodox is personal, yet communal.
3. ***It is a thankful Church.*** There is always something for which to give thanks; even on the darkest day there are blessings to count. We have to remember that, when we face the sun the shadows will fall behind us but when we turn our backs to sun the shadows will be in front of us.



We find one goal, one task, one life for the whole Church, for which the ordained and the non-ordained members work together in their respective roles. Each member of the Church has been called, appointed and sent by God to represent Jesus Christ and to do His mission in his or her respective life-situation. So it's important to thank God for everything that we belongs to and involved in.

According to the concept of thanks giving, we will have to understand the importance of prayer as it has been considered as the most accepted way of expressing thanks and how to prepare ourselves for the prayer as a regular practice of our life.

"Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:20

What is Prayer?

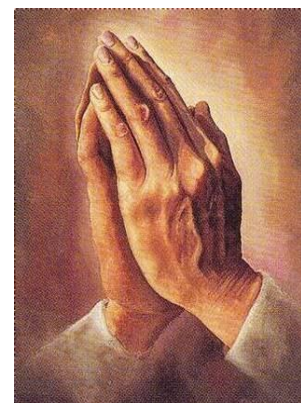
Prayer is a physiological process of our human body for the survival like breathing, we cannot survive without breathing. . When we breathe, air enters our lungs, cleanses the blood in our veins by relieving it of the carbon dioxide, and supplying it with oxygen. Imagine what will happen if we don't breathe for a few minutes? This will give us clear picture of an importance of the prayer in your spiritual life. Prayer is communication with God -opening ourselves to his kingdom of love. It is a practise of our life and in this relationship of love that we can be transformed into the image of God. Our daily prayers will give us an opportunity to become more like God, more loving, more wise, more powerful, more kind and good.

During the prayer we could cleanse the accumulated impurities of our life and we are energised with power to live a good, kind and holy life. Prayer is not a matter of asking God for all kinds of things; some of us speak to their earthly father only when they need money. We should not become like them in relation to our heavenly Father as the relationship is valuable in itself, as in all true love. It is not what we get out of it that matters, but the fact that we are in communion with our loving Heavenly Father. In fact, when we do request anything from God, our main request is mercy. We beseech Christ for mercy and compassion for the sins that we have committed against Him.

In our Orthodox tradition, we give only secondary importance to intellectual teaching. The most important thing is to participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church, in worship and prayer. We grow in divine Wisdom as we separate ourselves from evil and grow closer to God.

"Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all." 1 Chronicles 29:11

Task for the Day: Assess your prayer life and illustrate it in minimum of 100 words.



MEMORY VERSE

**"May my prayer be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like the
evening sacrifice."
Psalm 141:2 NIV**

Chapter 2 – Why pray?

Objective: To understand the reason and need to pray

Activity: Display the following items on a table

Telephone Newspaper Letters & Envelopes Road Map Radio

As the children arrive, give them a sheet of paper and ask them to list what they think the items on the table have in common. Just before class starts let the kids know that all the things displayed on the table are used to communicate with each other. Today our lesson is about another way we communicate. More specifically, it is about how we communicate with God.

Prayer ... world's greatest wireless connection

There is a notion that everything that happens to us is God's will. That is certainly not what meant in Christian life and it's our responsibility to give thanks for everything.

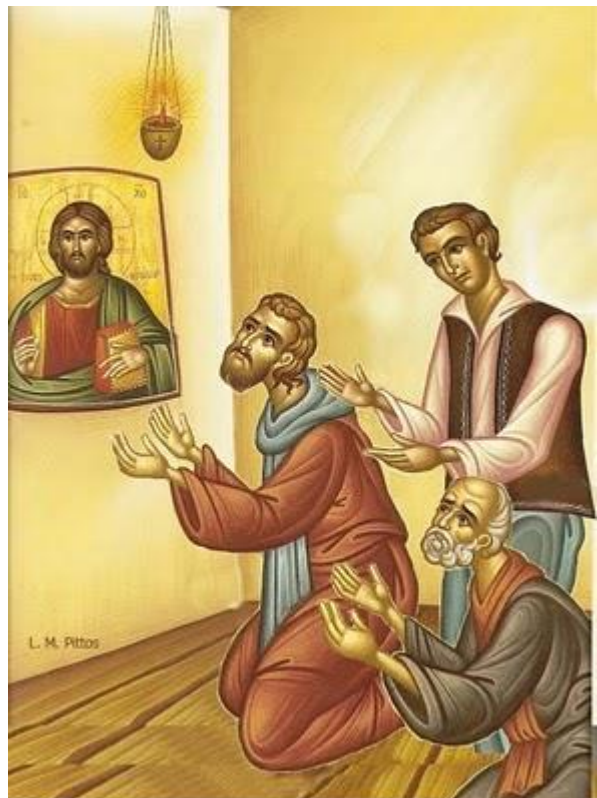
There are few questions will rise when we go deep into the subject of prayer.

1. Does God not know what we need, even before we ask him?
2. Why does He want us to ask?
3. Does prayer change God's will in any way?
4. Can my prayer change the future that God has already determined?

There is an answer in the bible itself (St. Mathew 6:8) 'your Father knows what you need before you ask Him'.

But we will have to identify the good things which are required for the society. Our will should not be inclined towards evil, but to intensely desire for the good. In this context, prayer has a major role in our daily life.

This contains a warning that our prayer should not be a mere presentation of a list of our needs before God. Even though we can say that presenting our need before God is an expression of our trust in Him, yet the goal of prayer in the Christian tradition is our growth in goodness. God wants us to know what is good for others as well as for ourselves, and insists that we should not lean towards evil.



Christ says: "Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect." The ultimate purpose of man, therefore, is to become perfect in God, through love. That is, to attain perfect, selfless love of God. Through prayers we become like God.

Through Christ, those who follow Him will share the experience of God's deifying grace that is manifested by the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints. With prayer we can change reality; God has given us that power. But this power is not available to us until we become more godlike. That is why the prayers of the saints are more effective than our own prayer - because they are more god like than we are. If the power to change the world by our will is in the hands of evil men, they will make the world evil. When we pray with love and faith, without selfishness or pride, our prayer can change reality which cannot be explained by science. He can make prayer achieve 'miracles' of healing and transformation which cannot be explained by science.

Our Lord has used metaphors that 'you are the salt of earth' or 'you are the light of earth' (Matthew 5:13, 14) indicating the relations and commitment a Christian has towards the community. As a Christian we should represent ourselves as ones with Jesus Christ in the society. Prayer has a major role to transform us more like him and thereby we could be the good and represent the God within the community. In prayer, we are never alone; not even alone with God. Especially in communal prayer, we commemorate all those who are members of the church, for it is as a member of the church, which is the Body of Christ, that we pray, and the other members are always with us.

Prayer makes our relationship with God stronger. Could you imagine trying to have a best friend without communicating with them? Prayer is seeking God and His direction for our lives. Praying also helps keep us out of trouble. Jesus told us to pray, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." (Matthew 26:41)

Task for the Day: List the good/bad things happened in your life from your friends during the last year.

MEMORY VERSE

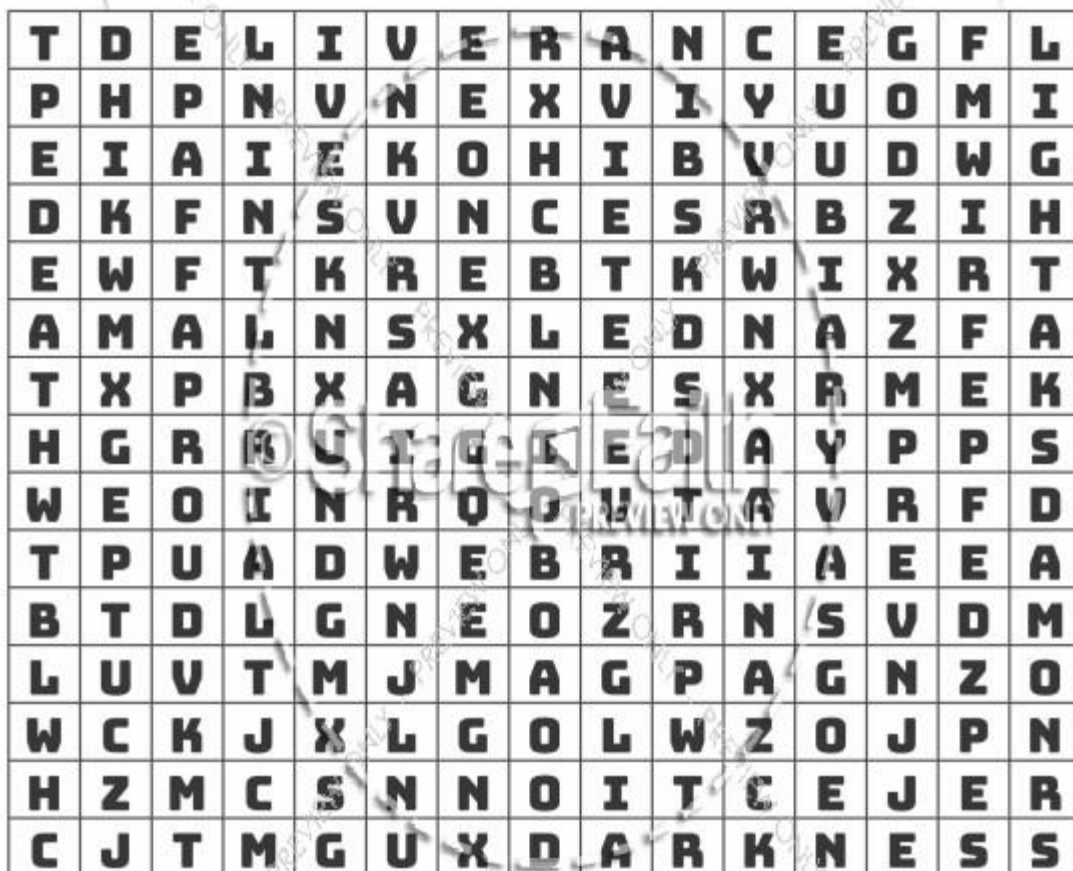
**"You will seek me and find me when you seek me
with all your heart" Jeremiah 29:13 NIV**



SONG OF THANKSGIVING



Discover the hidden words.



Word Bank

LIGHT

DARKNESS

THANKSGIVING

DEATH

SAVED

DELIVERANCE

PROUD

ARROGANT

REJECTION

GOD

NOMADS

SWAMP



Chapter 3 - How to Pray

Objective: to understand and learn how to pray

Activity : Ask students to write as many ways they can think of that they can pray, such as how, where or when. After the opening prayer, have a short discussion about their suggestions.

‘Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you’. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1. Rejoice always: It is not only rejoicing in happy things, but in sorrows also. The Christian can enjoy always because their joy isn't based in circumstances, but in God. Circumstances change, but God doesn't.
2. Pray without ceasing: Christians are to pray continually. We can't bow our heads, close our eyes, and fold our hands without ceasing, but those are customs of prayer, not prayer itself. Prayer is communication with God, and we can live each minute of the day in a constant, conversation with God.
3. In everything give thanks: We don't give thanks for everything, but in everything. There are few methods can be followed when you are an young as a worshipper.

Prayer has to be learned, and never give up just because you do not succeed in the first attempts. Prayer is a spiritual skill to be acquired by regular practice. We have to keep up with the practice, even if you do not feel like it, or enjoy it. The idea is not to limit ourselves to just praying before bed or right when we wake up. Rather, we should start feeling the need and desire to pray all throughout the day. Our life as a Christian should be organized around prayer. It is not simply to follow a rule for the sake of following it. Rather, prayers are a tool to strengthen our communion with our Lord and Saviour. There are many great examples of people praying to God in the Scriptures. St. Paul bows his knees (Ephesians 3:14), showing his sincerity in his desire to pray for his readers and prays to the Lord, to whom the heaven and earth belongs (Ephesians 3:15). We have to let ourselves go, relax, trust in God to support you and teach you how to pray.

We have to develop the discipline of prayer through fasting and self-control. People never become spiritually free and good like God until he learns to control his own inner drives and passions. We have to use our whole body and even material things in the service of prayer. Prayer is an act of the whole man, body, soul and spirit. *And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you* (Mt 6.5–6).

We have to keep the balance between communal prayer and personal prayer. A human is not only an individual, but he/she is a member of the Body of Christ. Therefore it is important for us to come into the presence of God regularly as a community - as a family as a youth group. On the other hand, we have to develop personal prayers which will enlighten our spiritual life as we have every right to speak to god at anytime.



Our prayer should be nourished by the reading of the scriptures and meditation. It's an essential factor to understand the word of Jesus Christ to his disciples which will guide us to identify the good and evil in the society. All these rules are to help you to become a praying Christian. However, prayer can never be isolated from the common worship of the Eucharist and from the continuous, active compassionate love for your fellowmen. Let us all pray: "Lord, Teach us to pray".

Task for the day:

- Study the life of a Saint who is mentioned in the 5th Thubden or Litany of the Holy Qurbana. What characteristics or aspects of the Saint can you personally relate to?
- Have students discuss the different elements of prayer and how love for others creates unity in the Church and ultimately with Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Have students make a mental list of people they need to pray for and have them spend 5 minutes in silence praying for them.

MEMORY VERSE

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Feedback: 'Changes in your prayer life after this vacation bible School.'

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- 4. H.G.Paulose Mar Gregorios., 2009. Mission of the church, Gregory of India Study Kottayam.*

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-daily-cycles-of-prayer/hours-compline-and-nocturne>

Author:-

- **Mr. Linz Aynattu
(St. Thomas IOC, Liverpool)**

Acknowledgement



All OVBS participants, head teachers, teachers, coordinators, music teachers, parents and volunteers, Let us praise and thank our Almighty God for guiding us in all our centralized Sunday school activities within UK and Ireland. This is our eighth successive centralized OVBS programme. Considering the unique needs of our children growing up in the UK and Ireland, similar to previous years, the OVBS scheme has been developed and modified by incorporating some changes to make it an enjoyable experience for the children but keeping the essential and core components from OSSAE.

First of all, I would like to express my humble gratitude to H.G. Dr Mathews Mar Thimothios, our Diocesan Metropolitan and president for OSSAE-UK & Ireland for the blessings and invaluable guidance to all our Sunday school activities in this region.

Sunday schools in UK and Ireland are greatly indebted to Central OVBS committee headed by H. G. Dr Gabriel Mar Gregorios, President OSSAE; Rev. Fr. Dr.Varghese Varghese, Director General OSSAE; Rev. Fr. Mathew Koshy, OVBS Director; Dr. Ipe Varghese, General Secretary OVBS; Prof. Dr. Cherian Thomas, Publication Officer; Prof. K.V. George, OSSAE Executive Officer for providing us with OVBS central curriculum and song book of OSSAE.

My sincere gratitude to Rev. Fr. Anoop Malayil Abraham, Vice President OSSAE-UK & Ireland for his inspirational leadership and encouragement specifically towards OVBS and generally to all Sunday school activities within UK and Ireland region.

I whole heartedly thank Rev. Fr. Aashu Alexander for spending his valuable time and effort in preparing the synopsis and reviewing all theme books.

Kindly join me to convey our hearty gratitude to Mrs. Merlin Robin (St. Thomas IOC, Cambridge), our OVBS Coordinator and Mrs. Sony Jerrin (St. John The Baptist IOC Stoke-on-Trent), OVBS Assistant coordinator for their valuable contribution and painstaking efforts especially in compiling OVBS theme books and song book for UK and Ireland as well as in the procurement and distribution of OVBS materials to all participating units. Specially acknowledging all the Sunday school teachers and students assisted them. Also passing our sincere gratitude to all the students who sent drawing book covers.

Extending a big thanks to Suresh Daniel, Secretary of OSSAE-UK & Ireland for his support in preparation of this years' OVBS. Also remembering Mr. Baby Cherian, our dear treasurer for his support in OVBS activities.

Similar to previous years, the OVBS Theme books have been prepared exclusively for OSSAE-UK & Ireland by Sunday school teachers from different units. I hereby sincerely thank all teachers who wrote and reviewed the lessons namely

Seeds [Beginners]

- **Authors**—Mr. Biju Mathew, Dr. Deepa S Joseph, Mrs. Rini Mathew and Mrs. Sony Jerrin (St. John The Baptist IOC Stoke-on-Trent)
- **Reviewer**— Mrs. Lisha Simon (St Gregorios IOC, London)

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- **Reviewer–Mrs. Roshnnie Manoj (St Gregorios IOC, London)**

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- **Reviewers–Mrs. Anuja S Joseph (St Gregorios IOC, London)**

Flowers [Intermediates]

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- **Mr. Saju K Chacko, Mrs. Bincy Binu, Mr. John Mathew (St. Thomas IOC, Dublin)**
- **Dr. Febe Francis, Mr. Prince Mathew, Mrs. Rajee Mary Joseph (St. Gregorios IOC, Waterford).**
- **Reviewers– Mr Joshi Eapen (St George IOC, Manchester)**

Fruits [Seniors]

- **Author–Mr. Linz Aynattu(St Thomas IOC, Liverpool)**
- **Reviewers–Mr. Shaji Varghese (St George IOC, Manchester)**

Sunday school activities in UK and Ireland are strengthened and led by all our vicars, district Inspectors, Sunday School head teachers, teachers, talent competition coordinator, volunteers and parents working at different capacities within limited resources and in various circumstances. I thank each and everyone for their commitment, dedication and efforts for making our children grow in Orthodox faith enabling them to serve God in the true Christian way.

A special mention to Mrs. Gincy Shine Panicker [Holy Trinity IOC, Cork] for composing three songs for this year's OVBS.

We have chosen a few out of the 21 cover page designs received from our children. Sincerely thanking all the students, parents and teachers for showing interest.

Finally, I would like to thank all Sunday school children in all units for their enthusiasm and spirit; Sunday school teachers, music teachers, and OVBS unit coordinators for their commitment; head teachers and district inspectors for their dedication; volunteers and parents for their motivation; OSSAE-UK & Ireland executive committee members for their outstanding support; and Church managing committee of various units for jointly working with Sunday school teachers to make this OVBS a grand success.

May God Almighty continue to shower His Blessings in all our activities in future and help us to work together for His Glory and spiritual growth of our students!

Yours in Christ

Simon Chacko | Sunday School Director-UK& Ireland| sundayschool.iocuk@gmail.com)

