



GREGORIAN GAZETTE

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Advent – the Season of Anticipation and Hope

Fr. George Pulikkottil, D. Th.

The word **Advent** means 'coming' or 'arrival'. In the Orthodox Tradition, it means the period of fasting and preparation in connection with the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate. Scripture reading for Advent will reflect this emphasis on the Second Advent, including themes of accountability for the faithful at His coming, judgment on sin, and the hope of eternal life.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and congregations, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in all His power and glory. That acknowledgment provides a basis for heavenly ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. So, as the church celebrates God's coming into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself."

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing. There is a yearning for deliverance from the evils of the world, first expressed by Israelite slaves in Egypt as they cried out from their bitter oppression. It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet who have hope of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of oppressed slaves and brought deliverance! It is that hope which brings to the world the anticipation of a God who will rule with truth, justice and righteousness over His people and His world. We anticipate that once anticipated, and now anticipates anew, the reign of an anointed King, Jesus Christ, who will bring peace, justice and righteousness to the world. We also anticipate a judgment on sin and a calling of the world to repentance. We long for God to come and set the world right! Yet, as we anticipate, we also have the expectation of a coming judgment at the "Day of the Lord" when the light that we might want, because the penetrating light of God's will shine just as brightly on God's people.

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FROM FRONT PG Because of this important truth, especially in the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Season of Advent has been a time of fasting and penitence for sins similar to the Season of Lent. Of course, Advent is celebrated as a time of joy and happiness as we await the coming of the King; hence we [Sing Christmas Carols during Advent](#).

The spirit of Advent is expressed well in the parable of the bridesmaids who are anxiously awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom (Matt 25:1-13). There is profound joy at the Bridegroom's expected coming. And yet a warning of the need for preparation echoes through the parable. But even then, the prayer of Advent is still: Come, O Come, Emmanuel!

The beginning of Advent is a time for the [hanging of the green](#), decoration of the church with evergreen wreaths, boughs, or trees that help to symbolize the new and everlasting life brought through Jesus the Christ. The Advent wreath is a circular evergreen wreath with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the center.

The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. **Candles** symbolize the light of God's love to the world through the birth of His son. The **center candle** is white and is called the **Christ Candle**. It is traditionally lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The **central location of the Christ Candle** reminds us that the incarnation is the heart of the season, giving light to the world.

Advent is one of the few Christian festivals that can be observed in the home as well as at church. With its association with Christmas, Advent is a natural time to involve children in activities at home that directly connect with worship at church. In the home an Advent wreath is often placed on the dining table and lighted at meals, with Scripture readings preceding the lighting of the candles, especially on Sunday. A new candle is lighted each Sunday during the four weeks, and then the same candles are lighted at each meal during the week. In this context, it provides the opportunity for family devotion and prayer together, and helps teach the Faith to children, especially if they are involved in reading the daily Scriptures. It is common in many homes to try to mark the beginning of Advent in other ways as well, for the same purpose of instruction in the faith. Some families decorate the house for the beginning of Advent, or bake special cookies or treats, or simply begin to use table coverings for meals. An Advent Calendar is a way to keep the children involved during the entire season.

Whatever observations we do are fine, if it brings the message of the season into our minds and actions. So, let us try to observe advent-fasting and all other traditional ways to receive our Lord in our hearts; and be with Him in our day to day life. May God bless the whole world in this wonderful Season of the Feast of Nativity of our Lord.

Gazette Staff and Board

Fr. M. K. Thomas

Fr. George Pulikkottil

Liju Paul (Malayalam Ed.)

Liju Varghese (English Ed.)

1. Friday — 25 Day Advent Lent Begins**3. Sunday — St. Mary's visit to Elizabeth****General Body for Elections after Holy Qurbana**

Reading — I Peter 3:1 -7, I Timothy 2: 9-15, 3:11-13,
St. Luke 1:39-56

8. Friday — Bulls Charity Game @ 7.30PM**9. Saturday — Ecumenical Christmas Celebration @ 5PM**

Glenbard East High School 1014 S Main St., Lombard IL

10. Sunday — Birth of St. John the Baptist

Reading — I John 3:1-3, Ephesians 6:1-4, Colossians
3:20-21, St. Luke 1:57-80

17. Sunday — Annunciation to St. Joseph

Reading — I Peter 2:11 -17, Galatians 1: 11-24, St. Matthew 1: 18-25

23. Saturday — MGOCSM Basketball Tournament**24. Sunday — Sunday before Christmas**

Reading — Acts 3:16-26, Romans 4:13-25, St. Luke 3:23-38

25. Monday — Christmas Service @ 9.00AM (Yeldho)

Reading — I John 1:1-10, Galatians 3:23-4 :7, St. Matthew 2:1-12

30. Saturday — Family Night @ Church 6PM**31. Sunday — First Sunday after Christmas**

Reading — Acts 16:1-10, I Corinthians 10:1-13, St. Matthew
2:9-15,19-23

Planning Ahead

January 7– Holy Qurbana Readings: I Peter 3:12-17, Romans
8: 35-39, St. Matthew 14:1-2

January 14– MGOCSM Council Meeting Chicago

January 20– Sunday School Teachers Meeting

January 21– Sunday School Parent Teachers Meeting after
Holy Qurbana

Prayer Requests—Please send your prayer requests to www.1church.org/prayerteam.html. We will join you in bringing your requests before God. Questions or prayer requests - Please contact:

Julie Polachira-815.295.2469; jpolachira26@yahoo.com

Stacy Thomas-847.722.0446; stacy_thomas79@yahoo.com

Original articles from church members are always solicited, please submit your articles to info@gregoriangazette.com.

Detroit Conference: "Roots" - Alwin Joy

On November 10, 2006, fifteen members of MGOCSM from St. Gregorios Oak Park and Bellwood drove to Warren, Michigan, a city very near Detroit to attend the "lock-in" conference. We arrived in Warren in the early morning hours on Saturday. I was perplexed by how the church would be able to accommodate such a large number of people. From the outside, the church seemed like a small school. But as we headed towards our rooms, there were countless number of rooms, removing my doubts of the building being able to accommodate all of us. Even though it was a lock-in conference, there was flexibility in allowing the kids to go home. We were accommodated in three rooms during our stay, two for the boys and one for the girls. We slept in our sleeping bags and woke up early for Morning Prayer.

The conference's main speaker was Dn. Gheevarghese John who spoke about the "roots" of Christianity. He tried to relate how a strong foundation (roots) enables us to overcome our struggles and difficulties in life. The roots are meant to assist a Christian to stick to his or her faith and belief and not fall into sin. Semassen also spoke about how tradition is revealed in scripture. Semmassen also emphasized during Sunday service that we are not just Christians because people call us Christians. Instead we are Christ's witnesses.

Other activities at the conference included games. As part of ice breakers, an individual would say something and any who shared the thing in common would have to move seats till there was only one person left and then the game would be repeated.

CONTD**PG 5**

FROM PG 4 They also had a variation of paper, scissors and rock but with wizard, giant, and elf. That was entertaining. There were several other games in small groups as well. The Chicago group attended Sunday service and then returned home in the evening. The trip was a great opportunity to meet many people from other Churches and see how MGOCSM is working in their community. A slideshow of our experience has been posted under Google video with the search: "MGOCSM." We were all blessed to have attended the Detroit "Roots" Conference. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to St. Thomas Orthodox Church of India in Warren, Michigan for all their hard work in organizing this conference and the hospitality extended towards the Chicago delegates. We also would like to thank Gheevarghese Semmassen and Rev. Fr. Philip Jacob for their hard work and support. Please continue to pray for MGOCSM Detroit and for the building project of St. Thomas Church in Warren as they are planning to add another section to their Church.

MGOCSM will be holding it's 4th annual basketball tournament on Saturday, December 23rd from 12:30pm to 6:30pm at the Elk Grove Park District:

1000 Wellington Ave.
Elk Grove, IL 60007

Churches involved in the tournament include two teams from our church along with St. Gregorios Bellwood, St. Thomas, St. Peter, St. Mary's and St. George. Please come out for a time of fun and fellowship! If you have any questions regarding the tournament, please contact Eugene Yohannan or Alwin Joy.

Carol Schedule 2006:

- 
- 12/3/06 Sunday: **Green Oaks, Gurnee, Lake Villa, Waukegan**
12/10/06 Sunday: **Morton Grove, Niles, Glenview, Des Plaines**
12/16/06 Saturday: **Addison, Bloomingdale, Elmhurst, Northlake, Stonepark, and Villa Park**
12/17/06 Sunday: **Chicago, Skokie, Morton Grove East**
12/23/06 Saturday: **Mount Prospect, Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Hoffman Estates, Schaumburg, Elgin,**

Sunday School
Learning to Live the Life

Classes are scheduled to be held on Sunday December 31. Encourage your children to prepare. The Charity Drive Academic year has been launched. The target is to collect \$1,500. Part of the amount goes towards educating a boy and girl at Bethel in India. The first collection day will be January 14. All the students are requested to bring whatever they collected on Sunday January 14. Parents are reminded that the Sunday School classes start at 8.45 AM on Sundays. So, please bring your children accordingly. The second Parents Teachers Meeting will be held on Sun Jan 21 immediately after Holy Qurbana. All Parents are requested to plan to attend.

~~The MMVS General Body Election 2007 will be held on Sunday, December 31, immediately after Holy Qurbana. Please contact your ward representative for more information.~~

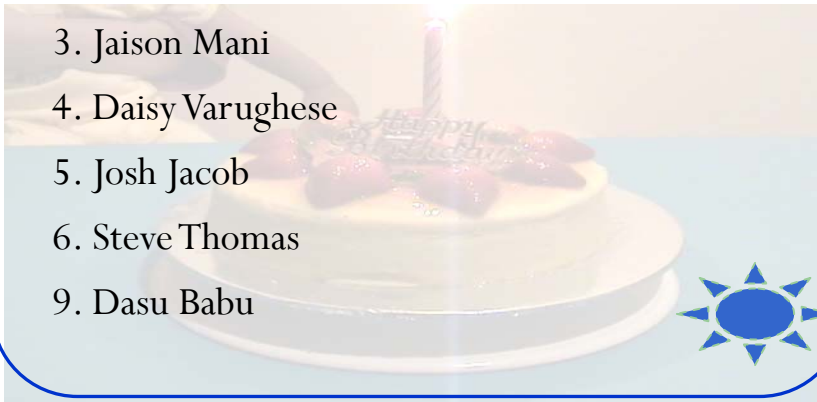
**Divyabhodhanam**

The summary papers must be done before Christmas. Classes will start the first Sunday of January due to the Christmas Caroling in December. During that time, please take time to study for the papers and finish them. Please contact Mr. George Molayil, Ms. Marykutty Mathews, or George Achen for more information.

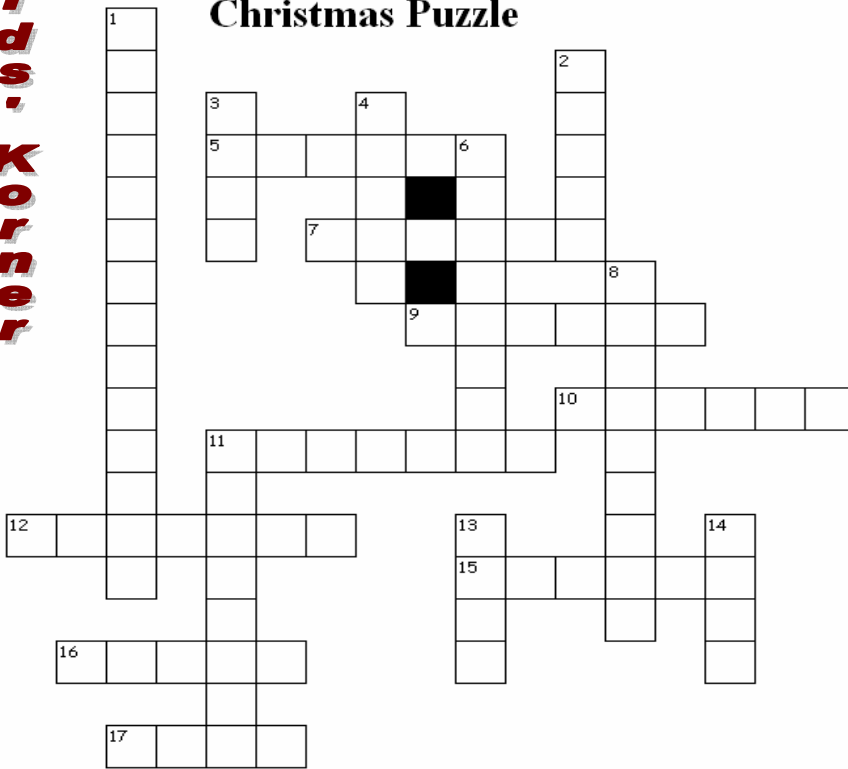
DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday!

1. Sumit Liju
3. Jaison Mani
4. Daisy Varughese
5. Josh Jacob
6. Steve Thomas
9. Dasu Babu



Christmas Puzzle



Across:

- 5. God's messengers to Shepherds
- 7. Jesus' earthly father
- 9. "Away in a _____"
- 10. Song of God
- 11. This is used in the censor during Liturgy
- 12. People who gave gifts to Jesus
- 15. Coming or arrival
- 16. King of the Jews
- 17. Ornament metal predominantly used by Indian women

Down:

Contest is open to Sunday School students only. If multiple submissions have the same number of correct answers, the prize winner will be selected at random. Please submit the entries with your name in the Gregorian Gazette Submissions box in the library.

Congratulations to last month's prize winner, Grace Ann Gheevarghese! Answers to last month's quiz:

- 1) June 15, 1858 in Mulunthuruthy, 2) Kochu Mathai & Mariam, 3) 10, 4) 18, 5) 28, 6) Kochu

The Gregorian Gazette Board and Staff

wish you a

Merry Christmas

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A Blessed New Year!



Group picture of the November 2006 Holy Land Trip.

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