

1

2020
MY GREAT LENT
SCRIPTURE READINGS &
MEDITATIONS

WEEK I
FEBRUARY 23-29, 2020

Orthodox Outreach Ministry

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SCRIPTURE READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

Week 1 (February 23-29, 2020)

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FOREWORD

Dear friend in Christ,

The ‘2020 My Great Lent Scripture Readings and Meditations’ is a convenient booklet containing the scripture readings during the Lenten season according to the lectionary tradition of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

As Orthodox Christians, along with the continuous participation in the Holy Eucharist, spiritual nourishment through prayers, scripture reading, and personal meditation are essential for our growth towards Christ our God.

This booklet is set with two readings per day, and a brief introduction to the special days and Sundays of lent, along with a few prompts for meditation. This may also be used as supplementary material for the “My Great Lent Calendar 2020”.

We pray that this booklet will help in your Lenten journey and prepares you for a great transformation to partake in the joyous feast of resurrection of our Lord. We also hope that you will open your heart to the Word of God and allow Him to guide, strengthen, and assist you in all things you do.

May the almighty God make us all worthy to praise His Holy Name, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, one true God, all through the days of our life, and forever. Amen!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Renjan Mathew
St. Ignatious English Chapel
Dallas, TX

Aneede Sunday
(Sunday of commemoration of the departed faithful)
February 16, 2020

Sunday, February 23, 2020

PETURTHO/ KOTHNE

Thought for the day!

The Sunday before the Great lent is called the PETHRATHO Sunday. The Syriac word, 'Peturtho' means "looking back" or "reconciliation".

The Liturgical Season of Great Lent is one of the kinds of introspection- looking back to one's own life, and of real reconciliation.

The reading is from St. John 2: 1-11; which depicts the Marriage at Cana, where we can see the first sign of the Son of Human.

Jesus and his friends were invited to a wedding feast in the city of Cana. The mother of Jesus was also there, and she came to know that there was a problem with the supply of wine- they ran out of the wine.

When she knew this, she said to Jesus "they have no wine"; Jesus replied: O women, what have you to do with me; what does this mean?

Does it mean that he was so harsh and saying; who are you?

No. But it means "What you and I have to do with this;

It further means, never mind, don't be worried!

He further says, "My hour has not yet come"; which means "I must wait for the right opportunity".

Though Jesus tried to find excuses, his mother was so confident in him; she asked the servants to "do whatever he tells you". Mary was so confident; "do not worry, he will find some way".

The servants filled six stone jars with water, and Jesus said "Now draw some out...start serving"

Water was turned into wine; transformed into wine! And this became the first sign of Jesus and his disciples believed in him.

The take-home is, reconciliation and transformation will go hand in hand!

"If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9

Sunday, February 23, 2020

Morning: John 2:1-11

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. **3** When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” **4** And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” **5** His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” **6** Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. **8** He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. **9** When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” **11** Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

You may ask, “what am I running out of?”

What shortages are my family, my church, or my neighborhood likely to encounter?”

Tell Jesus about them.

What does Jesus ask you in response?

What act of obedience does Jesus ask of you so that the situation might be transformed?

Sunday, February 23, 2020

Evening: Luke 16:1-18

16 Then Jesus^[a] said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. **2** So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ **3** Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. **4** I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ **5** So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ **6** He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ **7** Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ **8** And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. **9** And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth^[b] so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.^[c]

10 “Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. **11** If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth,^[d] who will entrust to you the true riches? **12** And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? **13** No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the

other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”^[e]

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. 15 So he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God.

16 “The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force.^[f] 17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped.

18 “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

What’s the problem with trying to serve two masters?
How do you view your money? Is it yours, your creditor’s or God’s- you just manage it?
Who (or what) are some of the masters that you have served in the past?

Monday, February 24, 2020

SHUBKHONO

Thought for the day!

According to the liturgical calendar of the Syriac Orthodox Church the Service of Reconciliation (Shubhkono), is celebrated on the first Monday of Great Lent, after the canonical office of the 6th Hour.

This service is the preparation for Great Lent, and forgiveness is marked by 40 prostrations and the kiss of peace at the end of the service.

The Church begins Great Lent with the ‘Day of Forgiveness,’ and sets her journey into penitence.

With kneeling and prostration, her people look ahead to Kymtho (resurrection), the great feast of the Light.

Let us all ask forgiveness from everyone we may have wronged willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly so that our fast and prayers may be pleasing to God.

As a reminder one of the hymns in the Shubquono (Liturgy of Reconciliation) liturgy says,

“Brethren, let us love one another, for it is the completion of the commandments.”

O God help us that our reconciliation with you and with our fellow beings help us to transform from what we are to what we are supposed to be, to be more like you!

Monday, February 24, 2020

Morning: Matthew 4:1-11

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3 The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” 7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; 9 and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” 11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

In what areas are you most likely to be tempted?
How are you planning to overcome your temptations?
How did Jesus overcome the temptations?
What has helped you overcome temptations when it comes?
Scripture, fasting, praying, telling someone, confession, or running away?

Monday, February 24, 2020

Evening: Matthew 18:12-35

12 What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. 14 So it is not the will of your^[a] Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

15 “If another member of the church^[b] sins against you,^[c] go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.^[d] 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

21 Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church^[e] sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven^[f] times.

23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents^[g] was brought to

him; 25 and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. 26 So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii;^[b] and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 31 When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32 Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. 35 So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister^[i] from your heart.”

Are you quick or slow to forgive others?

In refusing to be merciful to others, what do we deny ourselves?

What have you found helpful in forgiving those who have wronged you?

What is the connection between forgiveness, reconciliation, health and wholeness?

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Morning: Matthew 6:1-6

6 “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. **3** But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.[a]

5 “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. **6** But whenever 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.[b]

On a scale of one (out of obligation) to ten (out of joy) how would you rate your usual attitude toward giving?

What is the purpose of fasting?

In praying, what do you find your biggest challenge?

Where do you go when you need to pray?

How do you handle the almsgiving as part of your lent?

How is your church handling the process of giving? What role you have in it?

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Evening: Matthew 6:19-24

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^[a] consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust^[b] consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; 23 but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.^[c]

In our society how is success is generally measured?
What alternatives Jesus proposes with respect to treasures?
What is one thing you can do in this week to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness”?

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

Morning: Matthew 6:25-34

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,^[a] or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?^[b] 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God^[c] and his^[d] righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

What causes you the most worry?

Do you worry a lot?

What is God telling you through this passage about handling your particular worry or disappointment?

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

Evening: Matthew 7:1-12

7 “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. 2 For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. 3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s^[a] eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your neighbor,^[b] ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s^[c] eye.

6 “Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

7 “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

12 “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Read again, vs. 7 and 8, what that actually mean to you?
Do you jump into conclusions and judge others so often?
What prejudices and biases you have about others?
What can you do to not judge others?

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Morning: Matthew 7:13-27

13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy^[a] that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. 14 For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? 17 In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will know them by their fruits. 21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ 23 Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

What are some of the good fruits Jesus is looking for in you?
How can these fruits be cultivated in you?

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Evening: Matthew 5:17-26

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter,^[a] not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks^[b] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister,^[c] you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult^[d] a brother or sister,^[e] you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell^[f] of fire. 23 So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister^[g] has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister,^[h] and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court^[i] with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

How do we obtain a righteousness that surpasses that of Pharisees?

Out of the ten commandments, which are the most difficult for you, why?

In what ways anger and murder is connected?

Friday, February 28, 2020

Morning: Matthew 5:27-37

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.^[a] 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.^[b]

31 “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ 34 But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.^[c]

What characteristics distinguish a Christian from others?
Are you struggling with any of the moral challenges mentioned in the passage?

“Love your enemies” what comes to your mind first?

How can you cultivate and maintain the moral standards and expectations that Jesus is asking for?

Friday, February 28, 2020

Evening: Matthew 10:24-38

24 “A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! 26 “So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.^[a] 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 “Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. 34 “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Is Christ’s teaching uniting or dividing your family members?
How can you best represent to others that the kingdom of heaven is near?

Saturday, February 29, 2020

Morning: John 15:17-16:3

17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

18 “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If you belonged to the world,^[a] the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants^[b] are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. 21 But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’

26 “When the Advocate^[c] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

16 “I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. 3 And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me.

Is the world around you hates or loves you because of Christ?
Do you feel more like Jesus’s servant or acquaintance?

Saturday, February 29, 2020

Evening: John 4:46-54

46 Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. 48 Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you^[a] see signs and wonders you will not believe.” 49 The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my little boy dies.” 50 Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. 51 As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, “Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.” 53 The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he himself believed, along with his whole household. 54 Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

What motivates the royal official to travel so far?

What does this miracle tell you about Jesus?

When you bring problems to God, do you tend to accept his word or keep fretting and fussing?

Have you had any experience in your life that God did a miracle and kept His promise despite the circumstances that were seemingly impossible?

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