



Sunday School Teachers Guide

**MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX
SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF
NORTH AMERICA**

June 2012

PREFACE

***Corinthians 15:58*"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."**

Dear Headmaster/Headmistress and Teachers,

When the current Sunday School Board took charge in 2010, one of the tasks that we took was to reach out to all the Headmaster, Teacher and prior Sunday Sunday Board members to find out what were some of the priority items that we could try to target. This was done via the surveys sent out to all the churches as well as various personal conversations. The opinion surveys of our HMs & teachers over the last two years clearly showed that the Teacher Support Program be a priority. Accordingly a two-pronged program was devised to address some of the basic needs of our teachers – webinar on Sunday School teaching methodologies by subject experts; and publication of a guide by collating templates and fundamentals of our faith and beliefs.

The webinar sessions were taken by Rev. Dr. George Paily and Mr. George Aramath, and on behalf of the Sunday School Board I register our gratitude to them.

The 'Sunday School Teachers Guide' is a compilation of templates and manuscripts put together with the help of several people. I would like to start off by thanking H.E. Mor Theethose Yeldho for his blessings and unconditional support. He was very supportive of the TSP as well as took time to go through the document line by line in order to provide valuable feedback. I would also like to thank our Rev. Fr. Dileesh Alias for his support as well. I need to provide special recognition to all the Headmaster and Teachers who provided the inspiration and feedback which helped frame this document. I would like to specially thank Dr. T. V. John, the MSOSSA director for his undying support of the Webinar as well as support for the development of this document. I would like to thank Mrs. Betsy Thotakat (Advisor), Mrs. Kusumam Daniel (Region 1 Director), Chevalier James John (Region 2 Director), Mrs. Janice Mathew (Region 3 Director), Mr. George Paily (Region 4 Director) and Mr. Shibu Kunneth (Region 5 Director) for all the time they took to attend meetings, provide input as well as help edit the document. I want to also give special thanks to Mrs. Janice Mathew (Region 3 Director) for her help with the colorful illustrations in the document. Finally, I would like to thank George Aramath who in addition to his help with the webinar also helped provide a lot of input as well as help edit this TSP document.

I would like to emphasize that this document is only a start to help provide a foundation for our Headmaster and Teachers. This will continue to grow as you all provide your constructive criticism. Both the templates and the General Information are put into one document to ensure it reaches out to all the Headmaster & Teachers. In the future, the templates can be separated and placed on the web after the first set of feedback as well as the content continues to grow.

I am very grateful to have been part of the MSOSSA Board and given the opportunity to work on this project. I thank the Lord and all of you in advance for your support and look forward to all your constructive feedback.

With Prayerful Regards,

Joseph Jeeth Thomas

Table of Contents

Sunday School Teacher Aids to Facilitate the Sunday School Teacher 4

Tips and Suggestions Provided by Teachers	4
2012 Sunday School Calendar Year Template.....	5
Attendance Sheet Template.....	6
Grading Sheet Template	7
Report Card Template.....	8
Links for General Sunday School Materials.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

General Knowledge for All Sunday School Teachers 11

General Facts about the Bible	11
Bible Vs. Science	12
Holy Confession	14
Faith	16
Church Traditions.....	17
Holy Bible	19
Dates/Day of Significance	20
Holy Lents	20
Different Kinds of Maranaya (Feasts of the Lord)	20
Prayer.....	21

Sunday School Teacher Aids to Facilitate the Sunday School Teacher

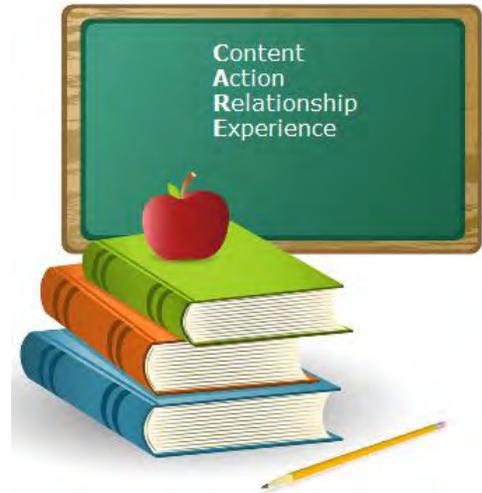
There are 4 Elements Essential for Effective Sunday School Class (CARE Approach)

Content: You need to understand the content of the chapter prior to coming to class to teach. Your level of understanding will go a long way with the students.

Action: Figure out the homework, supplement material, activity which will help the students' learning experience to be more interactive hands-on.

Relationship: A great teacher learns to form a strong bond with their students. The bond is formed by your sincere dedication to teaching, your willingness to go the extra mile if needed, as well as how you treat and get to know your students. Action speaks louder than words, and so your actions will invoke their response to your class.

Experience: The end goal for all teachers should be to not only cover the material in class but for students to get closer to God during the process. A great teacher can achieve this goal working closely with the students and parents to create an enriching experience. Not all kids are the same but with patience, love and care any teacher can make the students learning experience one to cherish.



Tips and Suggestions Provided by Teachers

- Always start your class with a short prayer and try rotating with the students.
- Always come prepared for the class
- Explain the purpose of the class
- Ask questions but also really listen to the students
- Be open, humble and respectful and have fun
- Let them teach while you observe
- Share your experiences
- Be aware that they look up to you as a role model
- Give assignments relevant to the topic from the book and outside materials s needed to help your students understand the material
- Always conclude with prayer



2012 Sunday School Calendar Year Template

The 2012 Excel Attached is pasted below and the document is also attached in order to tweak and use at the local church.

	A	B	C
1	2012 SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR		
2	1st Semester		
3	January	8	1st Day of Sunday School
4		15	
5		22	
6		29	No Sunday School
7	February	5	
8		12	
9		19	
10		26	
11	March	4	
12		11	
13		18	
14		25	
15	April	1	Palm Sunday
16		8	Easter
17		15	
18		22	
19		29	
20	May	6	
21		13	
22		20	
23		27	
24	June	3	
25		10	
26		17	
27		24	
28	Summer	VBS	
29	2nd Semester		
30	August	5	
31		12	Sunday School Reopens

Click on the Icon Below to open up the 2012 Sunday Calendar Year Template



2012 Sunday School
Calendar.xlsx

Attendance Sheet Template

The attendance sheet for 2012 is pasted below which has all the grades from Kindergarten to the 10th grade per tab. You can modify the document to insert days off for your local church as well as the final dates for the midterm and final exam as well as the **Teacher** name and **Student** name.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
19		29									
20	May	6									
21		13									
22		20									
23		27									
24	June	3									
25		10									
26		17									
27		24									
28	Summer	VBS									
29	2nd Semester										
30	August	5									
31		12	Sunday School Reopens								
32		19									
33		26									
34	September	2									
35		9									
36		16									
37		23									
38		30									
39	October	7									
40		14									
41		21									
42		28									
43	November	4									
44		11									
45		18									
46		25									
47											
48	December	2									
49		9	Final Exam								
50											
51											

Click on the Icon Below to open up the 2012 Sunday School Attendance Template



AttendanceSheet_2012.xlsx

Grading Sheet Template

The Grading Sheet for 2012 is pasted below that can be modified to be used for all ten classes. You can modify the document to update the grade and the Student names.

2012 SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson Plan						
Update Grade						
Grade					Student	Student
1st Semester	Date	Lesson	Quiz Test	Home work	Update Student Info	
1st Semester						
January	8					
	15					
	22					
	29					
February	5					
	12					
	19					
	26					
March	4					
	11					
	18					
	25					
April	1	Palm Sunday				
	8	Easter				
	15					
	22					
	29					
May	6					
	13					
	20					
	27					
June	3					
	10					
	17					
	24					
Summer		VBS				

2nd Semester						
August	5					
	12					
	19					
	26					
September	3					
	10					
	17					
	24					
October	1					
	8					
	15					
	22					
November	5					
	12					
	19					
	26					
December	3					
	10					
	17					
	24					
	8	Final Exam				

Grade 2 Final Score = 1st Semester Test score - 20% of (Quiz(2) + HW (3) + Student Score (25)) + 2nd Semester Test Score - 20% of (December not required)

The Point Distribution for Homework, Quiz and Exams can be entered here

Click on the Icon Below to open up the Lesson Plan



Sunday School Lesson Plan Template

Report Card Template

The template for the Report Card is attached below. The Church Name and the Church Icon should be customized for your local church. The Report Card system has been very successful in various churches where the parents and child were able to learn how they did compare to their peers as well as interact with the parents.

The Ranking is used to get an idea of where the student is ranked with their peers confidentially. **The Class Average is taken by summing up all the student's grades and dividing it by the total number of students.** This will also give an idea for example is a student got an 83 and the average is 90 that they need to work harder.

After the first Semester, the Teacher can enter the grades, rankings, class average with their comments about the student to the parents. The parents will need to sign and then return to the teacher.

At the end of the year, the teacher will enter in the 2nd half grades, total absences, tardiness, comments and the Final Grades at the very bottom. The parents will need to acknowledge and sign and once the teacher keeps a copy of the final report card in church, they can let the students keep the original copy.

This process has proven very effective in keeping the parents engaged and as a tool for evaluation when the parent/teacher meeting is held if needed.

YOUR CHURCH NAME SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (Under the Holy Apostolic See of Antioch and All the East) "FEAR OF GOD IS BEGINNING OF WISDOM"			
	STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT CARD: KINDERGARTEN-GRADE X		
Name	Grade	Teacher	
We believe much of your child's success depends upon close and continued communication between the Sunday School and the home. We invite you to share your comments and/or questions regarding this report by communicating with your child's teacher.			
EXAM RESULTS FOR MIDTERM:		RANKING IN CLASS:	CLASS AVERAGE:
1 st Term-Teacher Comment/Recommendation for Home Support			
Parent: _____		Date: _____	
EXAM RESULTS FOR FINAL:		RANKING IN CLASS:	CLASS AVERAGE:
2 nd Term-Teacher Comment/Recommendation for Home Support			
Parent: _____		Date: _____	
ABSENSES:		TARDIES:	
1 st Term:		1 st Term:	
2 nd Term:		2 nd Term:	
FINAL GRADE FOR YEAR:		RANKING IN CLASS:	CLASS AVERAGE:

Click on the Icon for the Report Card Template



Report Card
Template.docx

Online References and Resources

General Tools:

<http://www.akidsheart.com/>
<http://www.orientaltrading.com/>
www.kidssundayschool.com
<http://www.dltk-bible.com/>
<http://www.sundayschoolresources.com/>

Poems and Songs:

<http://www.dltk-bible.com/poems.htm>

Puzzle Maker:

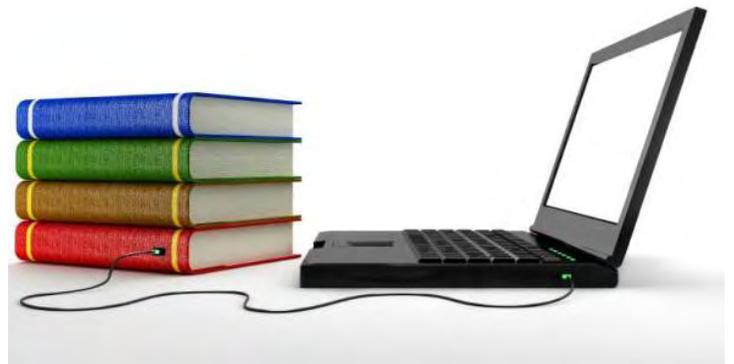
<http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/>

Syriac Orthodox Internet Resources

Syriac Orthodox Resources:
<http://sor.cua.edu/>

Syriac Christianity:
<http://www.syriacchristianity.org/>

Malankara World:
<http://malankaraworld.com/>



FAITH BASED LINK :

What Must I Do to Be Saved?
<http://stignatious.com/salvation.htm>

40 Questions Answered:
<http://stignatious.com/40ques.htm>

FAQ of Orthodox Faith:
<http://www.malankara.com/church/faithfaq.html>

Nicene Creed Explained:
<http://www.malankara.com/church/nicenecreed.html>

Ann Teaches the Orthodox Faith:
<http://stignatious.com/annseries/annseries.html>

Questions & Answers (Coptic Orthodox Church):
<http://www.suscopts.org/q&a/>

Summary of the Orthodox Faith:
<http://www.oca.org/OCorthfaith.asp>

Greek Orthodox Articles on Faith: (Topics listed on left side menu)
<http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/>

I. Syriac Orthodox:

<http://www.syrianorthodoxchurch.org/store/books>

<http://www.syrianchurch.org/Books.htm>

II. Others:

St. Vladimir's Seminary Press:

<http://svspress.com/>

St. Tikon's Seminary Bookstore:

<http://stspress.com/>

Gorgias Press:

<http://www.gorgiaspress.com/bookshop/>

Light & Life Publications:

<http://www.light-n-life.com/>



General Knowledge for All Sunday School Teachers

General Facts about the Bible

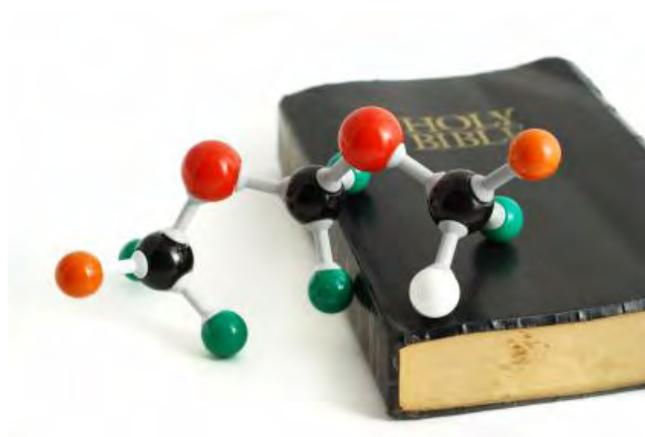


- ❖ The word **Bible** comes from the Greek word **biblia**, which means “books” which comes from another word, **byb/os**, meaning papyrus, a material books made in ancient times. The complete Bible was accepted in the 14th Century.
- ❖ The ancient Greeks obtained their supplies of paper from the port of Byblos, in what is now Lebanon. Their word for **book—biblion** (the singular form of **biblia**)—was derived from the name of this port, and from this we get our English word **Bible**, meaning the Book of books.
- ❖ The Bible includes two testaments—the Old and the New testaments. The word “**testament**” means “**will,**” “**covenant,**” or **agreement.**” The Old Testament was God’s **promise**, and the New Testament His **fulfillment** of the Covenant of Grace; His testimony and will concerning salvation through Jesus Christ. These two testaments form one complete book, the Book of books, the Bible.
- ❖ There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament that total to 66 total books in the Holy Bible. However recently 11 new books which are part of V. Rev Curian Corepiscopa Kaniampampil which are Tobias, Judith, Ester, Mahanyanam, Yeshu Bar Azira, Letter of Jeremiah, Baruk 1st and 2nd letter, Daniel (Susan), 1st Maccabiar, 2nd Maccabiar
- ❖ The Bible is written in both Hebrew and Greek. All the Old Testament books were first written in Hebrew while the New Testament was written in Greek with the exception of the Gospel of Mathew.
- ❖ The Books in the Bible that are recognized by our Church are collectively known as the Canonical books.
- ❖ Bible is the Revelation of God to man, through the prophets and Jesus Christ.
- ❖ The Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by over 40 different authors from all walks of life: shepherds, farmers, tent-makers, physicians, fishermen, priests, philosophers and kings. Despite these differences in occupation

and the span of years it took to write it, the Bible is an extremely cohesive and unified book.

- ❖ The terms *Old Testament* and *New Testament* originated with the prophet Jeremiah. When he spoke about the glorious future for Israel of which the prophets often spoke, he said that God would "make a new covenant with the house of Israel." Testament means "covenant," and Jesus of Nazareth, the long-awaited Messiah, made a new covenant with God's people. The books of the New Testament provide the fulfillment of the promises made throughout the Old Testament books.
- ❖ Most Jews of Jesus' day spoke Aramaic, a Syrian language similar to Hebrew that was commonly used at the time. Syriac is a dialect of this Aramaic language, Jesus surely studied the formal Hebrew of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Whether he could also speak Greek is unknown.

Bible versus Science



The purpose of the Bible is to reveal God's will to man. Bible is the foundation of our faith. Yet everything we believe in may not be found in the Bible. It is the word of God, written by ordinary people, but inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is said that, "This book will keep you away from sin, or sin will keep you away from this book." Bible is the manual for life. However, the truth and message of the Bible have inspired generations, and will continue to do so forever.

There are passages in the Bible that coincide with scientific principles that weren't widely accepted until hundreds of years after the Bible had been written. Here are some examples:

1. The Bible said the earth is round and is suspended in space:

In various verses, the Bible says the earth is round and that it is suspended in space:

"He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth..." (Isaiah 40:22, NIV). (By the way, the Hebrew language at that time did not have a word for "sphere," only for "circle.")

"He spreads out the northern [skies] over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing" (Job 26: 7, NIV).

2. The Bible described the Hydrologic Cycle:

In various passages, the Bible describes a hydrologic cycle, the process by which clouds are formed, rain is produced and ground water is replenished. Science made the same discovery in the 1600s, long after the Bible passages were written. Here are the related Bible verses:

"He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight" (Job 26: 8, NIV).

"He draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind" (Job 36: 27-28, NIV).

"The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again" (Ecclesiastes 1: 6-7, NIV).

3. The Bible stated that the stars cannot be counted:

For centuries, scientists and astronomers thought they could count the precise number of stars in the universe. Brahe, for example, said there were 777. Kepler claimed the total was 1,005. Hipparchus said there were 1,022 stars. Ptolemy raised the number to 1,056. Eventually, scientists, including the great Galileo, concluded that the stars could not be numbered, just as the Bible had always claimed:

"I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore" (Jeremiah 33: 22, NIV).

He took him outside and said, *"Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."* (Genesis 15: 5, NIV).

4. The Bible stated the existence of valleys and springs in the seas:

Only until the past few hundred years did people have the technology to discover that there are deep valleys and fresh water springs in the oceans. But the Bible always knew:

"The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the Lord. . . ." (2 Samuel 22: 16, NIV).

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month--on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. " (Genesis 7: 11, NIV).

5. The Bible stated that kind words and laughter are good for one's health:

In recent years, American newspapers have published various reports that laughter releases chemicals within a person's body that can contribute to one's health. And, that depression and stress can weaken the immune system and contribute to various health problems. But, the Bible knew of the health virtues of laughter roughly 3,000 years ago when the Bible's book of Proverbs was recorded:

"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."
(Proverbs 16: 24, NIV).

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."
(Proverbs 17: 22, NIV).

6. The Bible stated that stars differ from one another centuries before scientists reached the same conclusion:

Today we know that the stars in the skies are very different from one another, that they are made up of differing concentrations of different elements, and that they vary in their sizes, their ages and in their proximity to the earth. But the ancient people had no way to prove this. Even so, Paul, who received many insights from Yeshua, wrote a passage about 2000 years ago in the Bible's book of 1 Corinthians that said that the stars in the heavens did indeed differ from one another: *"The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor."* (1 Corinthians 15: 41).

Holy Confession

Sacrament of spiritual healing

Confession of our sins is basic and necessary. But Confession in Orthodox Tradition has always been face-to-face -- a hard journey!

What is Sin?

Sin, in literal translation, means "missing the mark." Not being where we should be. Where we should be, but are not, is in communion with God. So, for practical purposes, sin is separation from God. And, by definition, separation from God is death--because life can only exist where God is present.

Why Confess our sins?

-Jesus taught us to do so. In the Lord's prayer, we pray, "Forgive our debts and sins."

"Blessed are the ones whose sins are forgiven." Spiritual healing and renewal is more important than physical cleaning.



Many people outside our faith wonder why we simply do not confess our sins in private "to God." The answer is very simple -- God already "knows" about our sins. Confession is a gift from God that allows us to not only confess our sins, but to receive the assurance of God's forgiveness and the spiritual guidance that we need to help us overcome these sins.

What is the relevance of confessing before a priest?

Confession is a three-step process. First, we must recognize our sins. As we get "holier," we see better and better how truly awful our life is, how truly estranged we are from God. Second, we must truly be sorry for the sins, and one of the true tests of our sorrow is the ability to confess those sins to another human being. We can be so prideful that we refuse to confess our sins because we are worried about what someone else might think about us. Finally, once our pride is defeated and the sin confessed, we must try to repent, overcome the sin and live a truly sinless life. Of course, the effort is in the struggle, since we cannot actually avoid acts of sin. But why should we confess to the priest?

1. Sin is, as we have said, separation. First of all, sin separates us from God. Sin keeps us from being who God intends us to be. The communion with God that was given on the first day of creation is fractured by sin, and eternal life can only be granted when that fracture is healed.

Confession to the priest overcomes and heals this because the priest is the sacramental presence of Christ in the Church. When someone confesses to the priest, he is confessing to God Himself, thereby healing the fracture which has occurred when someone sins. Our proper and intended relationship with God is restored when we confess to the priest.

2. Sin separates us from the Church. When we raise the consecrated bread off the paten just before Communion, the priest says "Holy things for the holy." No one is "sinless" when they receive the Holy Gifts, but when we progress beyond the "daily sins" or accumulate so many of them that our soul is burdened, we must confess them to restore our relationship with the Church. Our communion with the Church is fractured by sin, and healing can only take place when we bring our sin to the Head of the Church -- who is Christ. The priest is the sacramental presence of Christ in the Church, and to restore unity with the Church, we confess to him.
3. Sin separates us from each other. Nowhere is the lack of communion between us and God that happens because of sin shown better than in how estranged we are from each other. Sin destroys my relationship with the "other," and Christ Himself says that we can only know and love God when we know and love each other. So many of our sins are selfish, denying not ourselves, but the other.

We must confess our sins and repent of them to restore our relationship with the "other." In the early Church that was very simply done -- you stood up in the midst of the church community and confessed your sin, thereby healing that relationship with others. When problems with that system arose, the priest began to stand in the place of the community. So we also confess our sins to the priest

because he is a man, created and fallible just like everyone else -- standing in the place of everyone else.

When these three "healings" take place -- between me and God, between me and the Church, between me and everyone else -- then true healing begins, with the long struggle to overcome our sins and "be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect."

- Priests are authorized by Jesus to forgive the sins. Priests forgive our confessed sins under the authority given by God, and as His representatives.
- Counseling is part of confession. Priests can guide us to lead a different path. Their **presence is a symbol of God's presence in our lives**. Sacramental confession is possible only in front of a priest.
- Priests are trained to hear confession, and they are bound to keep the confession confidential.
- Psychological aspect of confession can relieve you from stress and the feeling of guilt.



Significance of confession

- It's a time for self examination
- It's an opportunity to reconcile with man and God.
- It must lead to a decision to make changes in our lives

Faith

❖ **Tenets of our faith:**

Nicene 'Creed' is the statement of our faith.

We believe in Holy Trinity, intercession of saints, prayer for the departed.

We do not believe in Filioque Clause (which says the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.) We believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the father.

The basis of our faith is the written Bible and the unwritten traditions and teachings of the Holy Fathers.



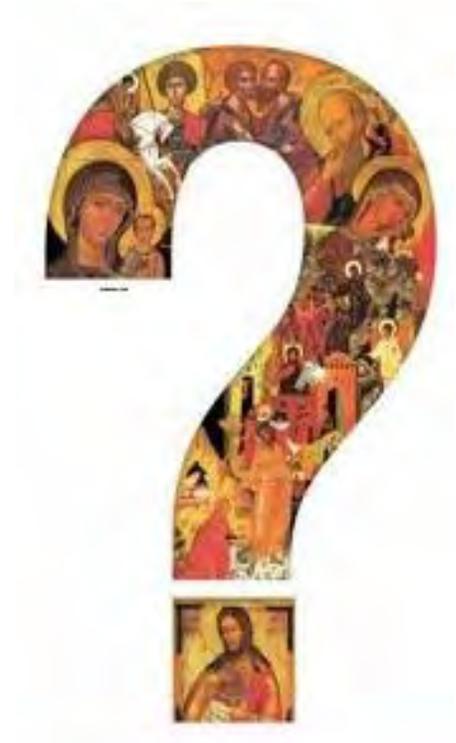
❖ **4 fundamental characteristics (signs) of the church (mentioned in the Nicene Creed)**

1. Catholic
2. Apostolic
3. Holy
4. The One church

Church Traditions

What is the significance of Traditions?

The holy Bible is the foundation of our faith. However, over the years since the time of the apostles, church accepted many Jewish traditions (fasting), new apostolic traditions (breaking of the bread/Qurbana on Sunday), regional traditions (Rasa, minnu kettu), and even created new traditions (Perunnal celebrations, Thanksgiving) etc.



Are these practices biblical? Not all practices are recorded in the Bible. But they are not against the truth and teachings of the Bible. The Bible as we know it today was fully accepted only in the 14th century. That means there was a time when there was no Bible. What we learned from the mouth of the Apostles and our holy fathers are relevant even today. The Bible was once destroyed in Russia. Still the Church existed always. Specific answers to problems we face today may not be directly addressed in the Bible. But the Bible gives you the guidance to address any kind of problems we would face anywhere. There is nothing wrong with starting a new tradition, or accepting an old tradition as long as it is not against the teachings of the Bible.

7 Rules of the Church

1. Must participate in Holy Qurbana on Sundays and other Maranaya days.
2. All Lents decided by the church should be observed.
3. Should observe Wednesday and Friday as lent days.
4. Confess sins before a priest.
5. Have Holy communion regularly.
6. During lent and Sundays married people should refrain from contact.
7. Offering, one tenth of income should be given to the church.

Holy Bible

The Bible is literally defined 'Book'. It is a collection of 66 books containing the Words of God written by prophets, kings, and the disciples of Jesus Christ, all under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

OLD TESTAMENT[covenant]: Covenant (promise) of God made with man about his salvation before the coming of Christ.

I. Five Books of Moses:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

II. Historical Books:

Stories of Judges, Priests, Prophets, and Kings who lead the Israelites.
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra,
Nehemiah, Ester

III. Poetical Books:

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

IV. Prophetical Books:

Reveals the will of God to man through His various prophets.
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,
Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT[covenant]: The agreement God made with man about his salvation. Marvelous story of Jesus and the forming of the early church.

I. Four Gospels:

Mathew, Mark, Luke, John

II. Acts of the Holy Apostles:

Acts

III. Thirteen Epistles (letters) of St. Paul:

Romans, 1 & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I &
II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews

IV. Eight General Epistles (letters) written by the Apostles of Christ:

James, I & II Peter, I-III John, Jude

V. Book of Revelation:

Revelation of God to St. John
Revelation

Note: All 66 Books listed above are the common books that we have accepted we common used. However recently 11 new books were added that are listed below which are the Apocryphal books accepted by our Holy Church:

Tobias, Judith, Ester, Mahanyanam, Yeshu Bar Azira, Letter of Jeremiah, Baruk 1st and 2nd letter, Daniel (Susan), 1st Maccabiar, 2nd Maccabiar

Dates/Day of Significance

1. **Birth of Jesus/'Yeldo/Christmas:** December 25
2. **Danaha/Epiphany:** Jan 6
3. **Annunciation to St. Mary:** March 25 (9 months before Dec. 25)
4. **3-day Fast (Nineve Fast)**
5. **3-day Fast/Fast of the Apostles**
6. **5-day Fast/Assumption of St. Mary:** August 10-15
7. **10-day Fast/Fast of the Advent:** December 15-25
8. **50-day Fast/Great Lent:** Begins 3rd Sunday after 3-day Fast (1st Sun after the 3-day Fast is the Sunday of all departed priests, 2nd Sunday is the Sunday of all the departed, followed by Kothine Sunday.)

Holy Lents

The church has designated 5 Lents (Fasting)

[More info: <http://www.syrianorthodoxchurch.org/library/essays/fasting>]

1. **Nineveh Lent- 3-day Fast:** In memory of Jonah remembrance of how the people in Nineveh were saved through prayer and fasting.
2. **Great Lent: 50-day Fast/Great Lent:** Begins 3rd Sunday after 3-day Fast (1st Sun after the 3-day Fast is Christ's victory over Satan (Sunday of all departed priests, 2nd Sunday is the Sunday of all the departed, followed by Kothine Sunday.)
3. **Sleeha (Apostles): 3-day Fast** remembering Apostles including St. Paul, observed from June 16-29 - in memory of the Apostles who built the church.
4. **Shunoyo: 5-day Fast/Assumption of St. Mary:** August 10-15- show respect for St. Mary
5. **Eldho- 10-day Fast (Advent):** December 15-25 preparation to celebrate the birth Jesus Christ.



Different Kinds of Maranaya (Feasts of the Lord)

Feast means 'big day' and 'maranaya feast' means a big day related to Christ. These days are considered dedicated to Christ. **Sunday is the Lord's Day (a maranaya day).** That day should be set apart to attend church, teach and learn at Sunday school, preach the gospel and get involved in humanitarian activities. Since that day the day of rest from worldly activities and to the dedication **to God's work, Sunday is the 'Sabbath Day' of the church.** The church has decided upon certain days related to the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ as maranaya feast days. These days should be considered like Sunday's. There are days which are considered along with two other maranaya feast days. So maranaya feast days are of three kinds:

1. Significant days in the life of Jesus, which are celebrated like Sunday's.

1. Circumcision day – January 1
2. Deneha - FEAST OF BAPTISM OF CHRIST (January 6)
3. Mayalto (entering the temple) – February 2
4. Suboro(vachanippu -Annunciation to St. Mary) - March 25
5. Transfiguration day - (FEAST OF THE TENT) AUGUST 6
6. Sreeba feast (Exaltation of the Cross)- SEPTEMBER 14
7. Birth of Christ (yeldho) (CHRISTMAS) – DECEMBER 25
8. Hosana (Palm Sunday)
9. Passover
10. Good Friday
11. Kemthya (Resurrection) - Thursday which comes forty days after the resurrection Sunday
12. Sulokho (Ascension to heaven)
13. Pentecost - the Sunday which comes 10 days after the Ascension Day

2. Days to be considered along with maranaya

- 1) Shunoyo (death of Mother Mary)
- 2) Remembrance day of St. Peter and St. Paul
- 3) Remembrance day of St. Thomas (Duk rono – for India)

3. Days to be celebrated like maranaya

Remembrance Day of the Saint on whose name the church is dedicated should be celebrated as maranaya in that particular church. Also, 40th Friday of the Lent, days of the Passion (hasa week), Holy Saturday and MidLent are to be celebrated as maranaya days.

Prayers

Prayer has 3 parts- Lord's Prayer

1. Praise
2. Pleading
3. Thanksgiving

Prayers answered in 3 ways:

1. So let it be - Yes
2. No
3. Be patient – wait

The Monastic tradition of our Holy Church use the Hours uses the Hours of Prayer, which takes place 7 times a day

1. Evening
2. Soothara (night)
3. Mid-night
4. Morning
5. Third hour
6. Noon
7. Ninth hour

Note: Due to convenience prayers have been consolidated to a minimum of 2 times per day (morning/evening) 3 times during lent (morning, noon, evening)



Deadly Sins:

1. Pride
2. Jealousy
3. Anger
4. Laziness
5. Miser
6. Greed
7. Evil wish
8. Non repentance

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other Gods before me
2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that in the earth beneath or that in the water under the earth
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord, you God in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
5. Respect your father and mother
6. You shall not kill
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
10. You shall no covet anything that is your neighbors.

