



MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA

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Blessings to the beloved Vicars of the Parishes, Priests of the locality, Cor-Episcopoi, Deacons, Kaisthanees, and faithful of all parishes in our Diocese of South-West America!

Dearly beloved,

The glorious feast of Nativity is finally here, the source of joy and spiritual exaltation for us. We believe that the birth in the flesh of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ, has set into motion the process of salvation. St. John Chrysostom describes the Nativity Feast as "*the foundation of all feasts*" indicating that all subsequent events in the life of our Lord, celebrated liturgically by the Church, find their commencement with the Incarnation and hence we as partakers of His divine image, first need to experience the incarnation of Christ within us to participate in the life of our Lord. Our hearts must become His abode, a place where His love, humility, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion can overflow and be fully experienced by our neighbor, as a demonstration of our real and genuine love for God.

Let us celebrate the Mystery of divine Incarnation by transforming ourselves from self-centeredness to selflessness, from materialism to minimalism and from greed to altruism. Let us celebrate in a way that differs from the world, as St. Gregory the Theologian teaches, "Let's celebrate not in loud festivals, but in a divine way, to celebrate not in a worldly way but in a way that surpasses the world. Not on our own, but with respect to God. Not with what's causing our illness, but our health and salvation. Not only with regard to the matters of our existence but also with the result of our renewal."

As we celebrate the Incarnation of the Son of God and await the New Year amid worldly unrest, illness and anxiety, let us be assured that God is with us as we read in prophetic book of Isaiah 43:2, "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you*". Let not our hearts be troubled, but find comfort in the peace that God gives not as the world and along with the angelic hosts cry aloud and proclaim: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will toward all men!*".

My prayers are with you, your families and all your loved ones. Let us pray for one another, for our Church, our Diocese, our parishes, for this nation, and for all those who are sick and ailing, and most importantly our children who are the future of our Church. We pray that the Almighty grants you all a Christmas of spiritual renewal and joy and a blissful New Year.

May the love of God the Father, grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with us forever and ever.

Urshlem Aramana, Beasley
December 24th, 2022

Metropolitan Dr. Thomas Mar Ivanios