



## MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA

Urshlem, 3101 Hopkins Road, Beasley, TX 77417, USA

Office: (281) 403 0670 Fax: (281) 459 0814

Email: thomasmarivanios@gmail.com



Dr. Thomas Mar Ivanios  
Metropolitan



Email: metropolitan.dswa@gmail.com  
Website: www.ds-wa.org

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Malachi 2:7 – *“For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts”*

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

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Today, we wish to address a matter close to our heart – the appreciation of our priests. Saint John Chrysostom reminds us – *“...for the soul of the Priest ought to be purer than the very sunbeams, in order that the Holy Spirit may not leave him desolate, so that he may be able to say, Now I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me.”* Our priests are the tireless servants of God who play a pivotal role in our spiritual lives. They guide us, comfort us in times of sorrow, rejoice with us in times of happiness, and stand as beacons of faith and morality. Their dedication often goes beyond the call of duty: they are our spiritual leaders, counselors, and often, our fathers.

Since the beginning of the Malankara Orthodox Church in North America in the 1970s, the toil and hard work of our clergy made possible the growth and development of the Church as we see it today. The commitment of our priests in shepherding the flock entrusted to their care is a testament to the love and grace of God.

As we reflect on the services of our priests, we are reminded of Saint Paul’s words to the Thessalonians: *“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers”* (1 Thessalonians 1:2). It is important that the work and labor of love of all our priests do not go unnoticed. We are profoundly grateful for their sacrificial service, their pastoral care, and their unwavering commitment to the spiritual well-being of the faithful of the Holy Church. We also want to acknowledge and appreciate all the efforts taken by our faithful who stood by the clergy in establishing and nurturing the various parishes in the United States.

The two Sundays before the Great Lent, the Church commemorates the departed clergy and the departed faithful. This year on January 28 we remember with gratitude and joy the blessed service of all our departed clergy. Our diocese is truly grateful to our priests – both the living and the



departed, for dedicating their lives to serving God and guiding His flock. We humbly request each of you to include our priests and their families in your daily prayers. Pray for their strength, guidance, and the continual outpouring of God's grace upon them. Pray that they remain steadfast in their vocation and that their lives are filled with peace, joy, and spiritual fulfillment.

This year, as a mark of respect to our retired clergy we kindly request every parish to set apart the *Kohne* Sunday offertory along with their generous donations and the total collection to be sent to the Diocesan Headquarters at the very earliest. We request all to courteously donate to this cause annually so that we can support and offer them financial assistance. Let us, fervently and faithfully lift our priests and their families up in prayer, entrusting them to the loving care of our Heavenly Father.

May the love of God the Father, the grace of the Only-Begotten Son, and the fellowship and indwelling of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Urshlem Aramana, Beasley  
January 26, 2024

Metropolitan Dr. Thomas Mar Ivanios