



Alexios Mar Eusebius  
Metropolitan

# MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

## DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA



3703 Chesterdale Drive  
Missouri City, Texas, 77459  
Office: (281) 403-0670  
Fax: (281) 459-0814  
dswadiocesanoffice@ds-wa.org  
www.ds-wa.org

DSWA/C/15/2012

November 28, 2012

Blessings to our Cor-Episcopoi, Priests, Deacons, Managing committee Members and all the faithful of our Diocese.

Dearly beloved,

We have entered into a period of lent for the next 25 days in preparation for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is important to note that during any Lenten period, external fasting alone is not enough. In addition to restricting our food intake, we must also apply ourselves to internal fasting, which consists of resisting such things as hatred, dishonesty, anger, greed, and other such vices. During this lent, as at all times, we must also show works of love and mercy to our fellow beings, doing all we can help to those in need and in sorrow. The major themes that we learn from the story of the Nativity including the humbleness of the royal birth, obedience of childhood, and sufferings of a good parent should be meditated upon and put into practice during this season. Our parishes also have the traditional practice of carol rounding and other celebrations. Let this be a reminder that the purpose of caroling or anything that we do should be for the sole purpose of bringing glory to God's name.

Every year during this season, we also exhort our faithful on concerns which are important to our religious and personal life. This year, we would like to focus on the role of a choir, especially in our liturgy. The Holy Church has been blessed with beautiful, poetic, and meaningful hymns and prayers that are intended to direct people towards an encounter and experience of Christ. Nowadays, we have observed that a few church choirs are using various tones that are quite different from the traditional tones of the Church. This creates a problem as the congregation is unable to follow, and it does not fit within the proper flow of the liturgy. Moreover, sound systems, microphones, and instruments that are being used are drowning out the voices of the congregation, which should not be the case. In addition to all this, instruments that are played while the chief celebrant is chanting prayers have become increasingly distracting.

We appreciate the efforts of our choir members who have come forward to use their God-given talents and better the worship experience. Since a choir has the higher calling to lead the congregation in singing, we encourage choir members to take the time to learn and implement the traditional tones of the church and to be observant that what is done is not a distraction for other people during worship. Along with the celebrant and the congregation, the choir should also face towards the East as it has always been in practice.

We take this opportunity to extend our love, prayers and blessings for this lent and hope that everyone will have a blessed feast of the Nativity of our Lord and a blessed New Year. Along with the angelic hosts, let us cry aloud and proclaim: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will toward all men!"

Your Shepherd in Christ,

Alexios Mar Eusebius  
Metropolitan