



Alexios Mar Eusebius
Metropolitan

MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA



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Blessings to our Cor-Episcopoi, Priests, Deacons, Parish Managing Committee members, and all the faithful of our Diocese,

Dearly Beloved,

The Great Lent has once again come upon us and with it comes a great opportunity to engage in a life-changing spiritual retreat of repentance, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Fasting is our opportunity to live more simply. It is the conscious act of simplifying our worldly life to make room for God. Jesus Christ tells us, "When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites ..." (St. Matthew 6:16). We must live simply, eat simply, and put aside distractions and temptations of the flesh so that we can quiet our souls and listen to the voice of God.

During the time of Great Lent, it is important for us to practice almsgiving and see it as an opportunity for us to reach out to others in the love of Christ. It is not simply about giving money; it is about giving of oneself. It is our chance to live out our faith in a concrete, substantial way. During this Lenten Season, the saints of our Church encourage us to do even more works of charity than we do usually. The holy fathers direct us to use the money we have not spent on the rich foods from which we are abstaining to help feed the poor and hungry.

My dear children, this Lenten season is the perfect time to cleanse our souls of all that has accumulated over the past months and to say with the prodigal son, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee." If we do not give up our sins in confession, they remain ours. They remain within us, polluting and destroying our souls. We must pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to create an awareness of our sins so that we might experience true repentance during this Lent. We urge all our faithful to receive the Sacrament of Confession and partake in the Holy *Pessaha*. We should also make ourselves worthy to participate in the passion, death, and great feast of the resurrection of Christ.

May the Lord our God be pleased with our fasting, prayers, charity and repentance and have mercy upon us through all the days of our lives.

Your Shepherd in Christ,

Alexios Mar Eusebius,
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