



The Stream

A monthly publication of the Diocese of South-West America

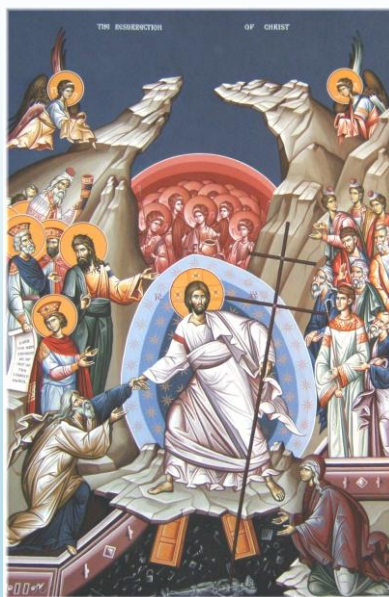
Mar - Apr 2014

April - May 2014

Vol.3 Issue 4



CHRIST IS RISEN!!!



"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

St. Mathew 28: 1-10



DIOCESAN CLERGY CONFERENCE AND DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY 2014

**Thursday & Saturday,
May 15 & 17, 2014:
Urshlem Indian Orthodox Center**

**Friday, May 16, 2014:
St. Gregorios, Houston**

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Do you have articles or news you would like to share in 'The Stream' newsletter? Would you like to share 'The Stream' with -your family and friends. Please e-mail us at thestreamdswa@gmail.com

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Metropolitan's Column

Metropolitan's Column

Dearly Beloved

The Diocese, having been formed in April 2009, has now completed 5 years by divine providence. Though half a decade is not a long period in the history of a Diocese, we live in a world where changes happen even before we complete a sentence about the present. As she makes her spiritual pilgrimage, the Church in North America faces different challenges since Western culture and oriental faith are at odds with each other in some of the practices of day-to-day life. The foundation of the Orthodox Church is rooted in the values laid down and upheld by the forefathers of the church and therefore they must be upheld and preserved. However, it is sometimes a challenge to explain certain age old faith matters to the generation of our time since those faith matters often contradict modern concepts of growth like individual freedom, consumerism and even our understanding of marriage and family.

The past 5 years of this Diocese mostly concentrated on its organization, with priority given to building its spiritual and administrative structure. We have succeeded in this task to a large extent through the cooperation of the devoted clergy and committed faithful of the church. In the coming half decade, we have to concentrate on the development of infrastructure envisioning the forthcoming 100 years of this diocese, while incorporating the spiritual and temporal growth of the various age groups of our faithful. The Malankara Orthodox Church has sprouted and is growing in the west, so there is a big task at hand to bring up its faithful within a different cultural milieu while maintaining the oriental theological perspective and approach to orthodoxy. I believe this challenge needs careful attention with adequate infusion of our energies and resources. If we bring this to fruition then the Malankara Orthodox Church has a bright future especially in North America and the heritage of St. Thomas and the Malankara Church will be able to stand with pride among other churches and traditions.

In this context the Clergy Conference and the Diocesan Assembly that meets from the 15th to the 17th of May has significant importance. This is the annual get together of the clergy and of lay representatives where they can think about the challenges we face, the strategies we need implement and the commitment we need to have for the sustainable growth of this Diocese and for the future of our Church in North America. *Urshlem*, the new Diocesan center, which is a clear indication of God's mercy on this church, is the venue for this gathering of clergy and assembly members from across the Diocese. We pray this Diocesan Assembly be fruitful with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and that culminates in good decisions for the bringing up of a culture-rich Oriental Orthodoxy in this part of the world that upholds the faith and traditions the church inherited from its forefathers.

Your shepherd in Christ,
Alexios Mar Eusebius

Ecumenical Corner

New Patriarch Elected For Syriac Orthodox Church

On March 31, 2014 at the St. Jacob Baradeus Monastery Atchaneh, Lebanon, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East conducted the election for a new Patriarch following the passing away of H.H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. In the conformity with the Constitution of the Syrian Orthodox Church, the members of the Holy Synod of Antioch convened and followed the procedures for electing a new Patriarch. His Eminence Mor Cyril Aprem Karim, Archbishop of the Eastern United States, was elected as the 123rd Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. Once the Patriarch-elect is installed he will be known as Moran Mar Ignatius Aphrem II Karim.

The Enthronement of the Patriarch will take place on May 29, 2014, Ascension of our Lord, at the Mor Ephrem Monastery in Ma'arat Sayyidnaya, near Damascus. Patriarch-elect Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II was born in Kamishly, Syria, on May 3, 1965. He entered St. Ephrem's Theological Seminary in Atchaneh, Lebanon, in 1977, following his primary schooling in Kamishly. Starting in 1982, he served the Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo, Syria, for two years under His Eminence Mor Gregorios Yuhanna Ibrahim. From 1984 to 1988, he pursued higher studies at the Coptic Theological Seminary in Cairo, graduating with a BA Degree of Divinity.

In 1985, he took the vows of a monk, submitting himself in the service of the Church. He was then ordained to the diaconate in Egypt, and later that same year, to the sacred priesthood in Kamishly. From 1988 to 1989, the monk-priest Aphrem served as both the secretary of the late Patriarch Mor Zakka I Iwas and as a teacher at St. Ephrem's Theological Seminary in Damascus, Syria.

In 1991, he entered St. Patrick's College in Maynooth, Ireland, where he received a License of Sacred Theology Degree, in 1992, and a Doctor of Divinity Degree in 1994, following a defense of his doctoral thesis on *Symbolism of the Cross in Early Syriac Christianity*. On Sunday, January 28, 1996, the monk-priest Aphrem was consecrated as Archbishop under the episcopal name Mor Cyril and became the Patriarchal Vicar of the new created Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church for the Eastern United States. Over the past decade, Mor Cyril established himself as an ecumenist, very much concerned about Christian Unity. He has served on both the Executive and Central Committees of the World Council of Churches, attending the 1991 Canberra, Australia WCC General Assembly, the 1998 WCC General Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe and the 2006 Assembly of Porto Alegre, Brazil, as a member of the Syriac Orthodox delegation. Moreover, he has been an active member of the Executive and Governing Boards of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA





Sooboro
Wednesday Prayer

Let us unite to pray for others!

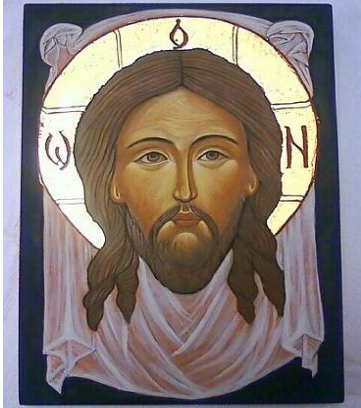
Tele-Prayer Meeting in Malayalam
 From 10:20am to 11:30am (CST) every Wednesday.
 Bible reading, hymns, devotional message,
 intercessory prayer for the needy & the sick.
 Please send prayer requests to: sooboro@ds-wa.org
 Phone #: (218) 632-0187
 Access code: 3703#



Holy Week Celebrations with Thirumeni and Around the Diocese



Faith Study

A Reminder To Ourselves - Rev. Fr. James Cheriyan, Vicar, St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Cleveland

Very often the forgetfulness of our true self leads us into being miserable human beings. We become people of hopelessness, despair and slaves of evil habits only because we fail to understand our making. How can evil reign over us without we letting him? We are people of power, because we are made in the image and likeness of God. We are people of love, people of faith, people of compassion, people who long for God....all because we are made in the image of a God who is source of all these qualities and that is why I said we are powerful than the weakness of our passions. Of course, being made of flesh, and with our interactions with the world, we tend to lose focus of our true calling and destiny, and this is precisely where we take the greatest fall in our lives. Our constant attachment to the detestability of the

world and our constant detachment from the light of the Kingdom is the reason we become so confused in our identity as the children of God. Very often we buy the deception of the deceiver, that we are weak and that we cannot overcome the habits to which we have become slaves. Every time you face the devil whispering into your ears, the greatest lie, that you cannot break his bonds, curse him let him know that you belong to Christ and to Him alone. Speak to the devil with boldness that you have the Mother of God and the whole array of the blessed saints on your side who constantly intercede for you. We are weak to the passions as much as we allow ourselves to be exposed and overcome by them. True awareness of who we are and how God has made, and for what we have been fashioned, makes life so much easier (cf. I Corinthians 10:31). Instead of being puffed up with our immature ego, we should boast and find strength in the victory of Christ, over the evil one and death himself (cf. Galatians 6:14). As St. Isaac the Syrian says, no matter how broken we may seem to ourselves and/or to others, we are precious in the sight of our Maker and truly we find our peace and strength in Him, "The soul that loves God has its rest in God and in God alone. In all the paths that men walk in the world, they do not attain peace until they draw nigh to hope in God." (St. Isaac the Syrian, Homily 56, 89).

Around the Diocese

Dallas Area Orthodox Church Convention

Pictures From Dallas Area Orthodox Convention held on Friday April 4th - Sunday 6th, 201, Led by Rev Fr..Ninan V. George



Around the Diocese

MGOCSM Chicago Lenten Retreat

On Saturday, March 29th, 2014, approximately 30 of Chicago's MGOCSM members joined together at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Bellwood, IL in prayer, fellowship and eagerness to learn for the Annual MGOCSM Lenten Retreat. Continuing on the theme of "Ambassadors of Christ" taken from 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Rev. Fr. Christopher Mathew, area youth minister and Rev. Fr. Reji Mathew from Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam joined in providing the message of how one grows as an Ambassador of Christ during the Great and Holy Fast. The day began with music ministry, a large group session led by Rev. Fr. Christopher Mathew, ice breakers, lunch, a second large group session led by Rev. Fr. Reji Mathew and ended with a period of silence for personal reflection.

MGOCSM DEVOTIONALS

<http://www.mgoesmamerica.com/devotionals>

MGOCSM North America releases weekly devotionals based on the Gospel readings for each week. These devotionals are written by leaders of the Church- both clergy and lay leaders. This is a great way to revamp your week with self-reflection and in the word. Please subscribe and spread the word in your areas as well

Dallas Area MGOCSM Lenten Retreat 2014

On March 22nd, 2014, the MGOCSM of the Dallas/Oklahoma area had their annual Lenten Retreat at St. Mary's Valiyapally, Farmers Branch, Texas. The guest speaker was Rev. Fr. Zachariah (Diju) Skariah the Vicar of St. Gregorios Orthodox Church of Kansas City. The theme for this retreat was "Saved by the Cross", with the theme verse taken from 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Youth from all over the Dallas Area were in attendance, as well as Rev. Fr. Mat Alexander (Dallas/OK Area Youth

Minister), Rev. Fr. Thampan Varghese (Vicar, St. George Orthodox Church, Irving), and Rev. Fr. Raju Daniel (Vicar, St. Mary's Valiyapally, Farmers Branch). Diju Achen's messages about the power of the Cross and Mat Achen's workshop on Salvation were a pleasure to hear for all those who attended.



Around the Diocese

Houston MGOCSM Lenten Retreat

On April 5th, 2014 St. Gregorios MGOCSM held its annual Lenten Retreat. The Great Lent's solemnity and grave importance was brought to the attention of more than 100 youth from the Houston area MGOCSM and FOCUS, as they attended the Lenten Retreat hosted by the MGOCSM at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Houston. The event started with Morning Prayer and ended with evening prayer, dinner and candle vigil with confession given to anyone who was prepared.



Contrary to the retreat of last year, this year brought much more social events and more time spent together as one body of the Orthodox. The churches' youth gathered together to learn and share one message: the message of repentance and forgiveness portrayed in the bible verse St. John 5:9 "Do you want to be made well?". This bible verse was the main theme in this year's Lenten Retreat, and the orations, songs, group discussions, meditation, prayers, Q & A session and even the icebreaker had an important connection to this theme.

The main highlight of the day was the large sessions held by the main guest speaker, Rev. Fr. Matt Achen from Dallas, as he took center stage in the orations given to the youth concerning the need to have a prolonged faithful mind and heart, ready to confess and be made well. One main motif that was presented throughout his presentation was that of the tree, symbolizing ourselves, and the need for the tree to draw in good water as opposed to that of the sewage, so it may grow strong, not rotten. Fr. Matt Achen also spoke concerning the chain of good virtues and the chain of bad virtues, and how once you have at least one virtue it can lead to another virtue, be it good or bad. The Lenten Retreat is a period of time when the youth can gain the true water and nourish their spiritual lives as well as take a step back from the world surrounding them, retreating instead to the church. Another main highlight of the day was the song sessions held by the Rev. Fr. Shawn Achan, who with his patience and amazing talents taught the youth to sing songs from the Lenten Period. The songs were in Malayalam, and Fr. Shawn Achan was able to teach the youth the meanings and tunes for each song. By the end of the session, the youth had mastered the songs as well as the meanings. Prayers, meditation, and confession left a profound result on the members of this retreat. Prayer and meditation (candle vigil) was led by St. Gregorios vicar, Rev. Fr. P. M. Cheriyan. Confession was conducted by Rev. Fr. Mammen Achan, Rev. Fr. Jake Achan, and Rev. Fr. Joel Achan. There was also a question and answer session, and the general questions asked by the youth were answered by the remarkable Achans: Rev. Fr. Mammen Achan, Rev. Fr. P. M. Cheriyan, and Rev. Fr. Cheriyan Achan.

Slootho

Tuesday Prayer

Let us come together for
fellowship and intercession!

Tele-Prayer Meeting in English

From 9:05 pm to 9:35 pm (CST) every Tuesday.

Slootho prayer, Devotional message,

Intercessory prayer for the needy & the sick.

Please send prayer requests to: slootho@ds-wa.org

Phone # (218) 632-0187

Access code: 3703#



Know Our Parish

St. Mary's Orthodox Mission Center of Central Florida

808 4th Street, Orlando, FL 32824

www.stmarysorlando.com



With the blessings of H G Alexios Mar Eusebius Metropolitan of the Diocese of South West America, on 14th of August 2013, Rev Fr. Johnson Punchakonam was appointed as the first vicar of St. Mary's Orthodox Congregation, Orlando, and the congregation began to grow through his able, enthusiastic, and dedicated leadership.

All the pioneer members of this congregation were associated with the St. Pauls Orthodox Church, Orlando. Two years back, 11 families from this parish organized a new congregation in the holy name of St. Mary's, the Theotokos, and started the St. Mary's Orthodox Mission Center of Central Florida on 18th August 2012.

By the Grace of God almighty, on 19th December 2013 a few among the congregation bought a beautiful Parish building complex (2672 sq. feet) with an independent Auditorium (1564 sq. Feet) with 87 cents of land at 808, 4th Street, in central location at Orlando, 4 miles away from International Airport. We celebrated the first Christmas service in the new parish building by the vicar Fr. Johnson Punchakonam. Now, Holy Liturgy is celebrated twice a month in

our newly purchased parish building at 808, 4th Street, Orlando.

All the spiritual organizations function here regularly and earnestly. This year an annual retreat was conducted by the diocesan Metropolitan His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius.

With a great sense of joy and with grateful heart we acknowledge the services of all clergies, served as Priest-in-charge: Rev. Fr. George Daniel, Rev. Fr. George Paulose, for their support and leadership.

The earnest prayers, untiring dedicated works of its members have facilitated the fast growth of this congregation

Would you like to include your parish in the KNOW OUR PARISH column of our Diocesan Newsletter 'The Stream' ?

With the approval of the vicar please send 2 or 3 pictures and a short write up mentioning the history and spiritual activities of the parish to thestreamdswa@gmail.com

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