



The Stream

A monthly publication of the Diocese of South-West America

November 2012

Vol. I Issue 05

On Fasting

St. John Chrysostom



Fasting is a medicine. But medicine, as beneficial as it is, becomes useless because of the inexperience of the user. He has to know the appropriate time that the medicine should be taken and the right amount of medicine and the condition of the body which is to take it, the weather conditions and the season of the year and the appropriate diet of the sick and many other things. If any of these things are overlooked, the medicine will do more harm than good. So, if one who is going to heal the body needs so much accuracy, when we care for the soul and are concerned about healing it from bad thoughts, it is necessary to examine and observe everything with every possible detail.

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MMVS 4th Annual Diocesan Conference



Our 4th Annual Conference was conducted from Friday to Sunday, October 12 -14, 2012 at St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Los Angeles, CA. The conference started at 8 AM on Friday, with registration. Around 170 members from twenty seven Churches of the 5 regions of our diocese participated. At 9.30 AM, the flag was hoisted. All

delegates to the conference dressed in the ethnic traditional Kerala saris were welcomed with colorful Thalapolies and 100 candle lights signifying the centenary of the Catholicate establishment. The conference formally started with the lighting of the Lamp by HG Mar Eusebius and other dignitaries. A melodious invocation to the Lord in the form of a prayer song was sung by the hosting Church, St Thomas, LA. Bible readings from the Gospel brought our spiritual perspective and faith into proper focus.

Rev. Fr George Paulose, Vice president, who has the unique distinction of spearheading four MMVS annual conferences in a row gave his welcome address encouraging each one to achieve the best possible. His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius, the founding Metropolitan of this diocese under whose shepherding, this spiritual organization have grown rapidly gave the presidential address, motivating the MMVS with inspiring words & encouragement to reach higher goals. Thirumeni stated that at the Diocese level, Morth Mariam Vanitha Samajam is the most active spiritual organization of our diocese and is the back bone of the diocese.

HG reminded that MOMS motto was "Pray Act and Shine". His Grace also praised all diocesan leaders and appreciated their hard work for the past three years. Mrs. Susan Thampan who has been the life of the MMVS & also the woman of the hour as the founding General Secretary for the past three years gave a brief introduction about the conference.

Conference Report cont'd p. 4



CATHOLICATE

CENTENARY

AND

1960TH YEAR

CELEBRATIONS

IN INDIA

NOV. 25, 2012



"O, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

Psalm 118:1

**HAPPY
THANKSGIVING**



***Nativity
(Yeldho)
Fast
Dec 1 - 25***

What's News this Month

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Ecumenical Corner

Pope Tawadros II chosen as the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria

On November 4, 2012, the Coptic Orthodox Church had chosen a new leader for their church in a solemn and grace filled service. After the passing of Pope Shenouda III back in March of this year, our brothers and sister of the Coptic church went through the process of finding the right person to lead the Church in Egypt and Coptic communities around the world. After a screening committee narrowed the name of candidates to 5, the representatives of the Coptic Church around the world, voted for the top 3 candidates. Then on Sunday November 4, their new Patriarch was chosen by lot, during the Holy Eucharistic service at St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. The names of the 3 candidates were placed in a glass chalice and sealed during the Holy Eucharist, and when appointed time came, a young blind folded boy picked the name of Bishop Tawadros to be the new Patriarch.

Pope Tawadros II was enthroned as the new Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria on Sunday November 18, 2012. On the invitation from the Coptic Church our church was represented by our Catholicos, His Holiness Baselios MarThoma Paulose II, and Bava Thirumeni participated in the Enthronement Service. H.G. Gabriel Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Trivandrum and President of the Ecumenical Relations Department, Rev. Fr. Dr. K.M. George, retired Principal of Orthodox Theological Seminary Kottayam, Rev. Fr. Abraham Thomas, Ecumenical Relations Secretary, Rev. Dn. Jiss Johnson, personal secretary to His Holiness, and Mr. Jacob Mathew, managing committee member, were part of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church delegation.

Let us pray for Pope Tawadros II, to Shepherd and lead the Coptic Church.

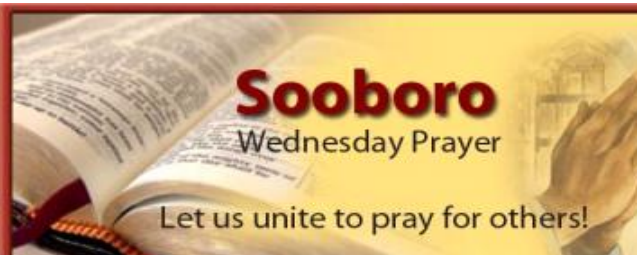


Seasonal Potpourri

**P
O
E
T
R
Y**

Emotions spread, Emotions grow
 All emotions are different with its own glow
 But there is one emotion that only you can control
 Amazingly soft, Wondrously slow
 my it's a miracle that grows
 To have it in you is a monument, But to believe in it is treasure
 This emotion can break through any and every kind of wall if you just believe
 Sharing this emotion with you
 Makes me want to go through and show you who you are in this world with me at
 Your side and this emotion within you, Before it perishes
 Show you an emotion that is different from all.....**HOPE!!!**

~A poem by Christina Elson~



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#



On Fasting - cont'd from p.1

Metropolitan's Column

The Holy Church has begun a new liturgical year. The liturgical calendar guides the faithful in the practices of spiritual life in the Church. Certain days are set apart for the commemoration of events in the salvation history of man, assigning pre-eminence to the events associated with the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Scripture reading has great meaning in our path towards being like Christ, and every Sunday the Gospel reading builds on both the previous readings as well as the feasts for the year.

The liturgical year always begins with the Feast of Sanctification (Koodosh Etho) followed by the Feast of Dedication (Hoodosh Etho). The Church Fathers have carefully arranged these two feasts at the outset in order to prepare the faithful for participation in the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul reminds us that we are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in us (1 Corinthians 3:16). Thus, as members of the Church we have the faithful responsibility to cleanse and purify ourselves, renew our commitment to God, and rededicate our souls, for we the people of God make up the Church.

As we prepare ourselves to celebrate the great feast of the Nativity of our Lord, let us wholeheartedly participate in the upcoming lent by not only abstaining from restricted food items but also fasting from unpleasant speech, thoughts and actions that may be displeasing to God.

May the Holy Spirit guide us to repentance and enable us to live a life in devotion to God Almighty.

*Your Shepherd in Christ,
Alexios Mar Eusebius*

Fasting is the change of every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast is not the abstinence but the distancing from sins. Therefore, whoever limits the fast to the deprivation of food, he is the one who, in reality, abhors and ridicules the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. Which works? If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy. If you see an enemy, reconcile with him. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, do not be jealous of him! If you see a beautiful woman on the street, pass her by.

In other words, not only should the mouth fast, but the eyes and the legs and the arms and all the other parts of the body should fast as well. Let the hands fast, remaining clean from stealing and greediness. Let the legs fast, avoiding roads which lead to sinful sights. Let the eyes fast by not fixing themselves on beautiful faces and by not observing the beauty of others. You are not eating meat, are you? You should not eat debauchery with your eyes as well. Let your hearing also fast. The fast of hearing is not to accept bad talk against others and sly defamations.

Let the mouth fast from disgraceful and abusive words, because, what gain is there when, on the one hand we avoid eating chicken and fish and, on the other, we chew-up and consume our brothers? He who condemns and blasphemes is as if he has eaten brotherly meat, as if he has bitten into the flesh of his fellow man. It is because of this that Paul frightened us, saying: "If you chew up and consume one another be careful that you do not annihilate yourselves."

You did not thrust your teeth into the flesh (of your neighbor) but you thrust bad talk in his soul; you wounded it by spreading disface, causing unestimatable damage both to yourself, to him, and to many others.

If you cannot go without eating all day because of an ailment of the body, beloved one, no logical man will be able to criticize you for that. Besides, we have a Lord who is meek and loving (philanthropic) and who does not ask for anything beyond our power. Because he neither requires the abstinence from foods, neither that the fast take place for the simple sake of fasting, neither is its aim that we remain with empty stomachs, but that we fast to offer our entire selves to the dedication of spiritual things, having distanced ourselves from secular things. If we regulated our life with a sober mind and directed all of our interest toward spiritual things, and if we ate as much as we needed to satisfy our necessary needs and offered our entire lives to good works, we would not have any need of the help rendered by the fast. But because human nature is indifferent and gives itself over mostly to comforts and gratifications, for this reason the philanthropic Lord, like a loving and caring father, devised the therapy of the fast for us, so that our gratifications would be completely stopped and that our worldly cares be transferred to spiritual works. So, if there are some who have gathered here and who are hindered by somatic ailments and cannot remain without food, I advise them to nullify the somatic ailment and not to deprive themselves from this spiritual teaching, but to care for it even more.

For there exist, there really exist, ways which are even more important than abstinence from food which can open the gates which lead to God with boldness. He, therefore, who eats and cannot fast, let him display richer almsgiving, let him pray more, let him have a more intense desire to hear divine words. In this, our somatic illness is not a hindrance. Let him become reconciled with his enemies, let him distance from his soul every resentment. If he wants to accomplish these things, then he has done the true fast, which is what the Lord asks of us more than anything else. It is for this reason that he asks us to abstain from food, in order to place the flesh in subjection to the fulfillment of his commandments, whereby curbing its impetuosity. But if we are not about to offer to ourselves the help rendered by the fast because of bodily illness and at the same time display greater indifference, we will see ourselves in an unusual exaggerated way.

---Continued on p. 8

MMVS Diocesan Conference-*cont'd from p. 1*

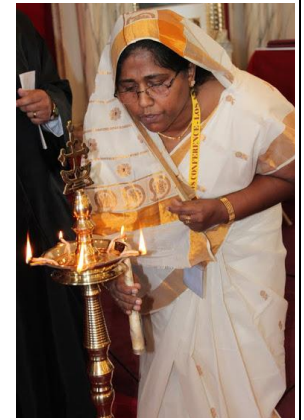
The leaders of the conference were Rev. Dr. O Thomas & Mrs. Ammini Daniel. Thomas Achen's speech was based on the theme "show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds" taken from Titus 2:7. Achen gave the keynote address which focused on this Biblical teaching. Achen's speech was very profound, informative and entertaining; his session full of humor which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. Achen's teaching style was a reflection of the personality and charisma that made him Professor, Director General of OSSAE, Director of Prathyasha and also earned him the best Counselor title. His words were laced with the profundity of theological insight but distilled for the common person. Mrs. Ammini Daniel's speech was on women empowerment. Are we trying to be like Jesus? Are we trying to look at Jesus & trying to live were the verses that touched everybody. Mrs. Ammini Daniel spent time expounding the necessity of a Christ centered approach when dealing with the concept of Women Empowerment. Given the strident advances that women have made in the past decade, Mrs. Daniel placed the movement within a Christian framework thereby elucidating the differences between a secular feminist approach and a Christ centered biblical empowerment of women.

The delegates became rejuvenated with the melodious devotional singing sessions in between led by St. Thomas Church, LA. A condolence message was read by the Midwest regional secretary, Mrs. Mariamma Panicker remembering all the departed souls of the previous year. Also all sick people were remembered during the noon prayer. Quiz competition was conducted & 18 Churches from all the five regions participated answering questions from Joshua, 2 Timothy, Titus & on Holy Qurbana. Congratulations to St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Chicago. They secured the first prize at the Quiz competitions correctly answering all the questions.

A business session was also conducted. The Annual report and accounts for the year 2011- 2012 was presented and passed. New regional secretaries, Auditor & Treasurer were elected. His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius at the business meeting praised the leadership team of 2012 for their dedication & outstanding commitment. Dr. Sajani George spoke in the health class about Osteoporosis and made ladies aware on how to cope with this health condition & the dietary requirements for the same. Talent Competitions were conducted by Mrs. Ammini Thomas, South regional secretary. Top winners from four regions participated in the competition. The songs and speeches presented by our ladies contained powerful and inspiring messages.

All first place winners were acknowledged with Prizes. Bible reading, morning, noon and evening prayers were part of the program.

New office bearers, Vice President Rev. Fr Rajesh K John and General Secretary, Mrs. Santamma Mathew took over charge of their positions as of October 14th, 2012. Rajesh Achen's song class added spice to the program. A Bible portion pickup was done, and Suja Rajan won the Prize. A panel discussion was arranged and delegates were given an opportunity to ask questions. New women Church Officials were also acknowledged as this is the first conference organized after getting the synod permission of women becoming Church leaders. Thirumeni clarified the quiz & talent competition rules. He asked that we continue these competitions as a means for studying our faith, Bible and songs. Prizes were distributed for the regional & diocese quiz winners, Talent Competition winners and Annual Exam winners. All diocese



MMVS Diocesan Conference - cont'd



central committee leaders were acknowledged for their dedicated service for the last three years and presented with plaques. Everybody enjoyed the indoor & outdoor games as well as the cultural presentations from the regions that brought out the creativity, originality & hidden talents of our members. The generous nature of our MMVS members was reflected in the sponsorship of one room in the new building at Orthodox Theological seminary, Kottayam in the name of late HG Gheevarghese Mar Ostathios with a check of \$4000 being given to Thomas Achen.

Mrs. Susan Thampan gave the vote of thanks. The conference ended with confession being led by Very Rev. Gheevarghis Aroopala Corepiscopa and the celebration of Holy Qurbana on Sunday. Specials thanks to all MCs Mrs. Bijy Zachariah, Mrs. Sheeba George, Mrs. Gigi Simon, Mrs. Santamma

Mathew, Mrs. Sally John, Mrs., Aleyamma Thomas, Mrs. Puspa Thomas & Mrs. Betty Gladstone. Per Rev Fr. Johnson Punchakonam, we expect the meetings proceedings to be telecast by Orthodox TV. The leadership and guidance to the organization of the conference was provided by the MMVS Central Committee led by the Diocese Metropolitan - H.G Alexios Mar Eusebius, Rev Fr. George Paulose - Vice President, Susan Thampan- General Secretary and Laly Vadakedam -Treasurer, Betty Gladstone- Talent And Exam coordinator, Amminikutty Jeevan- Auditor and all Regional, Area and Unit Secretaries. Special mention must be made of the strong support and encouragement given by Very Rev. Gheevarghis Aroopala Corepiscopa, Rev Fr Rajesh K John, Rev Fr. Philip Abraham, Rev Fr. Johnson Punchakonam & Rev. Dn Saju Varghese. The year 2011 – 2012 in the MMVS history is a testimony to the grace of God working through the charismatic leadership of Eusebius Thirumeni, Paulose Achen and Sally Kochamma in coordinating the activities and thus bringing together 47 MMVS units at the parish level in the Diocese. The extra ordinary efforts of all the leaders and servants in this ministry in making this conference a memorable and blessed event are appreciated. We praise and glorify God for the joint efforts of the three hosting Churches in the Los Angeles area (St. Thomas Orthodox Church, LA, St. Gregorios Church Bellflower, & St. Mary's Orthodox Church LA)for their hard work and excellent arrangements in relation to the conduct of the conference and the food, and coming together through different sub committees for registration, accommodation, transportation, food, choir medical, and publicity under the leadership of the Achens : Rev Fr. Yohannan Panicker, Rev. Fr. Philip Abraham & Rev. Dn. Saju Varghese. MMVS Members enjoyed the sightseeing tour arranged at the beginning of the conference. We appreciate St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Los Angeles and its dedicated team for hosting the conference and doing their best to make this conference a blessing to all who attended. May we continue to work together for His glory.



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.
Soothoro 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#




From Around the Diocese

Interim Consecration and Feast of St. Gregorios, Oak Park now in Elmhurst

Through the blessings of God Almighty, we at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Oak Park now Elmhurst came together in His Holy Church to dedicate the new facility at Elmhurst to God. Despite all the ups and downs, God has remained faithful, making 2012 a remarkable and blessed year. As we have been blessed to enter His gates, let us continue to praise and glorify God with thanksgiving. As we move forward, we remember the words of Saint James in his Epistle, *"every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*

H.G. Alexios Mar Eusebius (our Diocesan Metropolitan), H.G. Dr Gabriel Mar Gregorios (Metropolitan of Trivandrum Diocese), H.G. Dr Abraham Mar Seraphim (Metropolitan of Bangalore Diocese and our former Assistant vicar), Rev Dr M K Thomas our former Vicar, Rev Fr Daniel George our former Vicar, Rev Fr Ninan George Vicar, Rev Fr Ham Joseph, Rev Fr Abi Chacko and Rev Dn Saju Varghese; clergy who have served us in the past along with Rev Fr Paul Issac and Rev Fr T E Issac - priests serving in our parish, Rev Fr Christopher Mathew, Youth Minister of the Chicago area, and Rev Dn George Poovathoor, MOSC Managing Committee member led the Initial consecration service of the new church facility in Elmhurst on Sunday October 28th evening. The new facility was purchased at a cost of \$2.2 million and has built up area of about 24,000 square feet comprising of a Sanctuary which can accommodate about 600 persons including the balcony, 15 classrooms for Sunday school including a Teachers resource center, an auditorium that can seat about 250, a conference room that can



accommodate about 75, besides having offices for the Vicar, officials and staff, meeting rooms, and information and reception lounge. The facility is on a plot of about 2 acres having parking for about 110 cars. The consecration service was followed by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and a public meeting to celebrate the dedication of the new premises to Him. We were also blessed by the presence of Ecumenical Council Clergy members besides the participation of over 700 Brothers and Sisters in Christ from Churches in the Chicago land area at this consecration and dedication service. The inauguration of the weeklong celebration of the feast of St. Gregorios was also done with flag hosting at this time.

HG Gabriel Mar Gregorios led the Area prayer and convention conducted at Elgin Church center on Wed Oct 31. This was followed by HQ being celebrated at the new facility on Thu Nov 1st evening led by Rev Dr O Thomas, Professor at Orthodox Theological Seminary and Sunday school Director General.

Thomas Achen also led the devotional message on Sat Nov 3. Gregorios Thirumeni led the devotional message on Fri evening Nov 2nd and the blessing of the Sunday school Class rooms, Auditorium and Administrative offices. The 110th Annual feast of our Patron Saint, Mar Gregorios of Parumala was celebrated on Sunday Nov 4th with about 600 faithful coming together and celebrating the Divine Liturgy under the leadership of Gregorios Thirumeni and our Achens. The celebration ended with a love feast at around 2pm.

At this time of completing the transition from Oak Park to Elmhurst in a smooth and organized manner, we praise and glorify God for all His blessings on the parish. May God bless us to continue our tireless efforts and dedication towards sustaining the growth and well-being of our parish so that we grow spiritually in His love and fellowship and grow closer to Christ and His Kingdom. Let us continue to remember our parish in our daily prayers, so that God continues to guide us to move forward in unity and peace. We in humility conclude by quoting the words of St. Paul from Philippians 4:13: *"We do all things through Christ who strengthens us"*

Spiritual Organizations Anniversary at St. Gregorios, Austin, Texas

The anniversary of spiritual organizations was celebrated at St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on Saturday, October 27th. The meeting was presided over by H.G. Dr. Zacharia Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of the Adoor Diocese. Vicar, Rev. Fr. Sam Mathew gave the welcome speech and Sunday school principal, Mr. Thomas Daniel gave the vote of thanks. Sunday school children and adults performed several programs.



OCYM Dallas - Christian Parenting in Modern Culture



OCYM Dallas Area conducted their first conference at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church on November 3, 2012 from 1400-1700. The key note speakers were Rev. Fr. Mathews George, OCM South West Diocese Vice President, Rev Fr. James Cheriyan,, Asst Vicar, St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Detroit, and Dr. Benji Kurien, Asst Professor in Psychiatry, UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas. The conference was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. C.G. Thomas. Fr. Mathews George emphasized in his speech that parents should be aware of their responsibilities, authorities and greatness that God has given to them in the parenting process.

Fr. James Cheriyan conducted his class based on parenting. The first and foremost formula of parenting is a "spiritual calling." He talked about the shift that happened in parenting in our culture. He talked about his personal experience of parenting he had from his parents who were immigrants from Kerala. He compared it with the parenting in the present day that is going on with the children in our culture that are born and raised in USA. Fr. James explained about the main three types of parenting. They are survival parenting, default parenting, and intentional parenting.

Among these three types of parenting, the one that is widely chosen in this country and is found beneficial for the children is intentional parenting.

The seven steps of intentional parenting are

- Use of every opportunity to create memories for the children, and teaching them the traditions in the family and culture
- Helping them find a role model in their life
- Indulge in kid's world
- Do not impose anything to them, explain it to them
- Help them set goals in their life
- Find activities that engage their brains
- Make home a free place for them to share their thoughts and feelings

Dr. Benji Kurien talked about "Raising Kids in America" He focused the first part of the class in identifying signs of depression among kids, which may be slightly different than in adults. The factors which the

parents should notice is their change in their interests, sleep pattern, level of guilt, their energy levels, concentration patterns, appetite, and suicidal ideations on higher levels such as teenagers. He explained the level of depression among Asian-American kids, the gender differences in depressive kids, and age levels of depression. Dr. Benji also explained the child development stages, and the role of parents in different levels of child development. He concluded the class by explaining the various psychological issues faced by teenagers and the parent's role in helping them overcome it. After the two sessions, there was a question hour, where everyone in the dais was allowed to ask questions they had related to parenting and psychological issues. ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), depression through heredity, and implementing restrictions were discussed in detail. Rev Fr. Mathews George also gave his ideas on these topics. Behavioral therapy and its implementation in these situations were discussed in detail.

The conference was concluded with a photo session and a business meeting where the office bearers of the Dallas Area OCM were elected. Mr. Shibu Mathew - Coordinator, Mr. Johnson Jacob - Secretary, and Mrs. Diana Shinoy - Joint Secretary for the year 2013. The conference was blessed with the presence of Rev. Fr. John Kunnathusseril, Rev Fr. Raju Daniel, Rev Fr. C.G. Thomas, Rev Fr. Rajesh John & Rev Fr. Mat Alexander.

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All-Saints Day- St. Gregorios, Houston



Celebrated on November 1st, All Saints Day, a day in which all the saints of the church, who in their humility, selfless love, and sacrifice is commemorated. This day which was known as All Hollows in England, is celebrated all over the world in many countries and churches by most Christians, and the eve of All Saints Day became known as Halloween. Although this day was once spent reflecting on the lives of the great men and women of the church who sacrificed their lives for their faith, in most places, the true meaning of this day has been forgotten.

In America, many children go "trick-or-treating" and dress up in various costumes; this idea came from the Middle Ages when poor people begged for "soul cakes" and received doughnuts if they agreed to pray for the souls of the departed; the costumes were developed to mock the evil spirits. (The Solemnity of All Saints Day) In a mission to change this "American tradition", and to hold fast to the Orthodox Faith that was handed down to us by our saints, All Saints Day Celebration was celebrated by St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Houston, Texas. Under the leadership of the Vicar, Rev. Fr. P. M. Cheriyan, and our Youth Minister,

Rev. Dn. Daniel (Dennis) Mathai, the Sunday School students joined together to give reverence to those who lived lives well-pleasing to God on October 27 2012. The MGOCSM of the parish took the main leadership by putting together the All Saints Day Celebration. The celebration opened with prayer, followed by skits performed by the high school students, games, and the young children sharing what they have learned about the Saint they dressed up as. The little children dressed up as their assigned saint and shared about the life of their saint, and the action they took to fulfill their Christian duty, service, and their joy and pride in carrying the cross. Each high school class that was assigned a saint, performed a play, acting out the life of their assigned saint and reflected upon the blessings and service the saints gave to the church and her people. Dn. Daniel Mathai spoke about the importance and history of the All Saints Day, and how it should be commemorated. The celebration of the great saints of our church concluded with evening prayer, followed by dinner.

The All Saints Day Celebration was a great success, teaching and reflecting upon the lives of our saints, and encouraging us all to live up to the standard set by the men and women who took up the cross daily and sacrificed their whole lives serving the church, for the glory of God and His Kingdom.

On Fasting - cont'd from p. 3

For if the fast does not help us when all the aforementioned accomplishments are missing so much is the case when we display greater indifference because we cannot even use the medicine of fasting. Since you have learned these things from us, I pardon you, those who can, fast and you yourselves increase your acuteness and praiseworthy desire as much as possible. To the brothers, though, who cannot fast because of bodily illness, encourage them not to abandon this spiritual word, teaching them and passing on to them all the things we say here, showing them that he who eats and drinks with moderation is not unworthy to hear these things but he who is indifferent and slack. You should tell them the bold and daring saying that "he who eats for the glory of the Lord eats and he who does not eat for the glory of the Lord does not eat and pleases God." For he who fasts pleases God because he has the strength to endure the fatigue of the fast and he that eats also pleases God because nothing of this sort can harm the salvation of his soul, as long as he does not want it to.

Because our philanthropic God showed us so many ways by which we can, if we desire, take part in God's power that it is impossible to mention them all. We have said enough about those who are missing, being that we want to eliminate them from the excuse of shame. For they should not be ashamed because food does not bring on shame but the act of some wrongdoing. Sin is a great shame. If we commit it not only should we feel ashamed but we should cover ourselves exactly the same way those who are wounded do. Even then we should not forsake ourselves but rush to confession and thanksgiving. We have such a Lord who asks nothing of us but to confess our sins, after the commitment of a sin which was due to our indifference, and to stop at that point and not to fall into the same one again. If we eat with moderation we should never be ashamed, because the Creator gave us such a body which cannot be supported in any other way except by receiving food. Let us only stop excessive food because that attributes a great deal to the health and well-being of the body.

Let us therefore in every way cast off every destructive madness so that we may gain the goods which have been promised to us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Abridged from St. John Chrysostom homilies "On Fasting"

Know our Parish

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Sub-Editors

George Panicker,

Ms. Davina George,

George Varghese

James Varghese,

Johnson Varghese

Diocese of
South-West America
3703 Chesterdale Dr.
Missouri City, TX • 77459

PHONE

(281) 403-0670

FAX

(281) 459-0814

E-MAIL

dswadiocesanoffice
@gmail.com



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St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst, IL

(www.stgregorioschicago.org)

St. Gregorios Orthodox Church was established as a member parish of the American Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in February 1978, with the proclamation by the then (and the first) Metropolitan of the Diocese, the late lamented H.G. Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios. The original congregation of about 30 members (and their families) came together in the name of our Patron Saint Mar Gregorios of Parumala, for worship and celebration of the Holy Eucharist in Evanston, Illinois under the leadership of our first Vicar, Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Aroopala. After several years of search, an adequate and convenient place of worship was found in 1984 at Oak Park, Illinois. While situated in Oak Park, over the years; the church grew in both membership and spirit. After several years of leading and serving the parish, Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Aroopala left for Houston and Rev. Fr. Daniel George took over as the second Vicar. Daniel Achen led had served for a few years, until Rev. Dr. M.K. Thomas took over as the next Vicar. It was in 1993 that HG Mathews Mar Baranabas became the American Diocese Metropolitan and appointed Thomas Achen to our church.

Thomas Achen led the parish in the Orthodox Christian path for over 16 years. Under his leadership, the parish got a revived spiritual life, with active Bible Study groups and regular family prayer meetings. Several youth ministries serving the spiritual needs of the young members of the church have been started and are continuing to thrive. During the tenure of Rev. Fr. M.K. Thomas, we have been divinely blessed to have three young priests serve us as Assistant Vicars, two of whom have gone on to become Bishops of the church. They are: Rev. Fr. V.M. Abraham (now H.G. Dr. Abraham Mar Seraphim, Metropolitan of Bangalore Diocese), Rev. Fr. George Pulikkottil (H.G. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Yulios, Metropolitan of Ahmadabad Diocese) and Rev. Fr. V.M. Shibu.

Upon the retirement of Rev. Fr. M.K. Thomas in 2010, our current spiritual leader Rev. Fr. Ninan V. George was appointed as the Vicar by H.G. Alexios Mar Eusebius, the Metropolitan of the newly formed Diocese of South-West America.

Over these years, the membership of the parish continued to grow beyond the capacity of the Oak Park facility, which prompted us to begin the search for a better facility at a more central location to all the members. By God's grace, we were able to find a church facility in Elmhurst, Illinois suitable for our parish in every way and at a central location to our



members. The facility was purchased with the collective efforts of the entire parish. The building was consecrated for conducting the Holy Eucharist on October 28th, 2012 by the Diocesan Metropolitan, HG Alexios Mar Eusebius assisted by H.G. Abraham Mar Seraphim and H.G. Gabriel Mar Gregorios (Metropolitan of Thiruvananthapuram Diocese).

We also take this opportunity to lift up each and every one in our parish, family, parents and children who through their hard work, prayerful presence, financial contributions and all other support and willingness worked together to come to this stage of the development of the parish. We also remember all our spiritual fathers as well as all the other clergy and seminarians, who have guided us and been instrumental in the growth and development of the parish. We also acknowledge the role of all spiritual ministries, past and present; the Managing & Vision Committee, Sunday School, MMVS, OCYM, FOCUS, Senior Fellowship, Acolytes, Library, Divyabodhanam, MGOCSM, Youth, PHAT, WOW, Webmasters, the choir, and all other ministries and others who have through their leadership and service molded our church as she stands today. We currently have about 165 member families. Our young members have started taking active roles in the activities and leadership of the church. One of our children, Rev. Dn. Samuel Varghese (Saju Semmassan), is serving the church as a Deacon currently serving as Youth Minister, West Region and another one, Mr. Arun Varghese, is currently studying in the Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam.

We thank and praise the Lord God for the blessed ways in which He has led us this far and ask Him to continue guiding us to help us grow in His Spirit as a worshipping and witnessing community so that we may glorify Him in all our deeds and actions.