



MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA

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No: 21/2024

Dearly beloved in Christ,

A new liturgical season awaits us from *Kothine* Sunday (Wedding at Cana), February 11 onwards. The Great Lent inaugurates the 50-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. During this blessed season, the forms and spirit of the Lenten worship are beautifully portrayed by the Church, our mother. The most important of all expressions during this time is repentance which is adorned with fasting, prostrations, meditations, gift of tears, etc. The Church calls us to have a long and sustained spiritual effort that requires us to deepen our faith, re-evaluate, and transform.

Christ began his public ministry with the message, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mathew 4:17). Repentance is a deep desire, a true yearning for God, and his righteousness for the true life. While sin invokes the deep guilt of 'alienation from God,' from the joy of communion with Him, from the real life as created and given by God, repentance is the realization and regaining of that lost spiritual beauty, and like the prodigal son described in Luke 15:11-32, to go back home, to the real life, to that something beautiful, to fill it with meaningful love, and joy. This is true as our holy father, St. Ephrem understands and teaches us that 'desire' is the first symbol of repentance. We should throw away our useless passions and journey to God.

My beloved, both the old and young, this Lenten season let us spend more time praying, reading the Scriptures with meditations, night vigil, and noon-day 40 prostrations, rather than being immersed and busy in other social activities. We should hold the knowledge and prayer of our Jesus Christ when we work, dine, or spend time with our families. Let us excel in our spiritual life turning all attention and focus to Christ. Let us welcome Christ in all our doings. Also, always remember the journey of Great Lent ends with Easter. After the gruesome and sad moments of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into the bliss of Resurrection. The promise and taste of the *New Life* that was lost but regained can be achieved through our repentance. The entire worship of the Great Lent is organized around Easter as we celebrate the splendor of the Kingdom of God, the glory of victory, and 'death is no more.' Work tirelessly for your spiritual life and hence we pray that the victory of Christ and the spirit of his resurrection be with us all.

May the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with us forever and ever.

Urshlem Aramana, Beasley
February 08, 2024

Metropolitan Dr. Thomas Mar Ivanios