

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

(Catholicate of the East)

Diocese of South-West America

2711 Creek Terrace Dr. • Missouri City, TX • 77459 • Ph: 281.403.0670

Alexios Mar Eusebius

Metropolitan



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

It was indeed a great blessing when both the Ad-Hoc Committee and the clergy of our Diocese met on the weekend of August 7-8, 2009 in Houston. It was not only a time for spiritual renewal through a retreat, but an opportunity for everyone to gather and discuss the initial plans and goals for the newly formed Diocese. The following is a summary of the discussions at the meeting and the approved decisions.

- 1) The 2009-2010 Diocesan budget was proposed and passed by the Ad hoc committee. A copy of the approved budget is attached with this Kalpana.
- 2) For the purpose of coordinating spiritual activities and conferences more effectively, the Diocese has been demarked into five regions. They are as follows: Midwest Region, Northwest Region, South Region, Southeast Region, and West Region. The parish listing for each region is attached with this Kalpana.
- 3) It has been a long cherished dream for many to see a new Diocese formed that would cater to the spiritual needs of the people in this part of America. While the Diocese has been formed, we have the responsibility to carry out that dream. It has been decided that Diocesan Day will be celebrated annually on the first Sunday of June. Each individual plays a role in the growth of this Diocese. As the children of God, we have been greatly blessed to live in this country and enjoy the monetary rewards of our hard labor. What we receive is given to us by God, and it is through tithing we give back unto God for the Glory of His name. Thus, it has been decided that each family should contribute a minimum of \$100 annually to the Diocesan fund beginning in 2010. For the year 2009, a minimum of \$75 (60 + 15) should be collected per family for the establishment and initial running expenses of the Diocese. Ten percent of the total amount collected each year will be set apart for charity projects and mission work of the Diocese.
- 4) The family & youth conferences have been a great source of spiritual strength for the people of our Diocese. It gives an opportunity for everyone to gather in an environment where we can form spiritual and social bonds. It was suggested that both the regional and national conferences must continue as a time for spiritual renewal and unity. Therefore, family & youth conferences will be conducted

annually in each of the five regions. A national Diocesan conference will be conducted once in every three years, and no regional conferences will be held during that year. The next Diocesan level conference is scheduled to be held in the year 2012.

- 5) At the recommendation of the Ad-Hoc committee and the clergy of our Diocese, we have established a new Department of Counseling. It is a known fact that our churches and homes are filled with issues that need to be addressed, including but not limited to marriage and family conflict, alcohol and substance abuse, depression and other related problems. It is our hope that through the establishment of this new Counseling Department, we can introduce the need for counseling and work to provide help to those in need. A team of counselors have been appointed to serve and set up new programs for the Diocese. Our long term-goal is to establish a full counseling center with complete resources and programs for the varying needs.
- 6) Both the Ad Hoc Committee and clergy expressed the need to develop a Diocesan Center from where we can reside and carry out the administration and daily spiritual needs of the faithful in our Diocese. As you all know, the current Bishop's Residence is a temporary home being leased until May of 2010. Both the Ad Hoc Committee and the clergy felt the need to shift the Bishop's Residence to a place of our own. While it will take some more time to accomplish and build a full Diocesan Center, we have approved the proposal to purchase a house in Houston as the Bishop's Residence. It is not our desire to carry a financial burden at the start of a new Diocese. However, we have been assured that there would be full cooperation and support from all the people of our Diocese who are blessed and desire to give to such projects. For the successful completion of this project, A minimum one-time amount of \$200 per family should be collected towards this project in each parish and sent to the Diocesan office at the earliest.
- 7) The American Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church has been dissolved and two new Dioceses have been formed: Diocese of North East America and Diocese of South-West America. Both the committee and clergy expressed concern regarding the past where issues regarding the incorporation of parishes resulted in bitter experiences. It was suggested that there must be uniformity in the incorporation of all parishes of the Diocese. Therefore, each parish must be affiliated to the new Diocese and meet the requirements in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Church. A model of the Bylaw is attached with this Kalpana and the Managing Committee should make the necessary amendments to have a uniform incorporation law for all the Churches of this Diocese.
- 8) A concern was discussed that there is a need to improve the celebration of Catholicate Day in our Parishes. Catholicate Day is a day to remember our forefathers who struggled and fought for preserving our birthright of freedom and identity as the disciples of St. Thomas, the apostle of Christ who brought us Gospel in India. Also it is the time to pledge and declare our support to the Catholicate and the Holy Episcopal Synod. Many parishes have failed to see the importance of this day and overlook their identity as part of a global Church. It is disappointing to also see that our Diocese is not fulfilling the anticipated target amount of collection for each year. Beginning this year, each family should contribute a minimum of \$25 towards the Catholicate Day fund. The total amount from each parish should be sent to the Diocesan office no later than September 30th of each year. We will properly account for the contributions and send to Devalokam from the Diocesan Office.
- 9) Much time was taken to discuss the needs of the growing generation of our Diocese. By the grace of God, our Diocese has been blessed to witness more than ten individuals who have dedicated their lives for the ordained ministry. While youth ministry is a focus of the Diocese, a little more time is necessary to formalize and structure the positions for ministry. However, the current seminarians of

our Diocese will be available during their three month summer vacation each year to intern at a parish. If a parish is interested in having a seminarian at their parish during the summer of 2010, they should contact the Diocesan Office for details.

It has been a great joy for us to visit many of the regions and parishes of our Diocese over the course of this summer and see the enthusiasm of our people. We are hoping to visit the remaining parishes and areas in the near future. It is our desire to see the continued prayerful and financial support of all the members to carry out the vision for this new Diocese. Let us move forward and work together to achieve the many projects and future goals for our Diocese.

May the Triune God bless you all and give you a Peaceful and Prosperous Life.

Your Shepherd in Christ



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