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Metropolitan

MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA



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Blessings to our Cor-Episcopoi, Priests, Deacons, Diocesan Council Members, Malankara Association members, Diocesan Assembly members and all the faithful of our Diocese.

Dearly Beloved,

For some time now, we have been considering the need to start an orientation for students who are entering high school and college for the first time.

As we all know, the transition into a new school environment is never easy. As our children enter into high school, they will have to deal with numerous things like social acceptance, choosing new friends, and higher academic expectations. Once they begin college, they will experience the above mentioned and a new set of challenges including having to move away from home for the first time, making decisions on their own, and quite possibly being very distant from their home parish. There is also the reality that our kids will be more exposed to negative influences and peer pressure that may lead to engaging in relationships and the use or experimentation of drugs, alcohol, sex, etc. Many of our children also struggle with finding or improving their talents, choosing a career path, or even developing academic skills.

It is our desire to bring the realities of what they should expect when entering these critical points in their lives and how they can be better prepared for the challenges that may come their way. We believe it would be good to host an orientation camp or event for these students either at the parish or area level. At the very minimum, it can be two days event at one of our local parishes or can be held on a larger scale at a local conference or retreat center for more than two days. We can certainly use our own clergy or lay leaders who have already gone through the experience and can serve as positive role models, but it would also be good to avail the services of academic professionals and even career/guidance counselors.

Most of our children receive spiritual advice at the conferences, retreats, and other events arranged during the summer. This orientation is intended to go a bit further and address things like communication skills, how to use talents or pursue areas of interest, how to better academic skills, maintaining a relationship with the Church and immediate family, etc. The goal is to focus on strengthening areas such as their spirituality, emotional well-being, and academic success, which all contribute to a matured personality. The orientation should be arranged for both these age groups separately as the needs and topics are different.



It is also critical for our children to establish resources during these points in their lives. This includes a relationship with their parish priest who must be seen as their spiritual father as well as other people who they can seek counsel from. Our clergy or youth leaders should create a directory of information, especially of college students who will be moving away from home. The department of counseling should take initiative to support this effort and provide resources to our youth ministers in order to make regular contact and focus on building up our children in their career, spirituality, etc.

We are entrusting this task to all the clergy, Diocesan Assembly Members and Malankara Association Members to be sure an orientation to these age groups is implemented in all the areas of our Diocese by the cooperation and support of all our parishes. Small parishes located in remote areas can conduct it on their own or send their kids to the nearest area.

Your suggestions and feedback are welcome. We desire this to be an effective outreach to our children that hopefully will bring a greater awareness and understanding that will result in raising them up in a positive and matured way.

Your Shepherd in Christ,

Alexios Mar Eusebius
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