



Alexios Mar Eusebius
Metropolitan

MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA



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Blessings to our Cor-Episcopoi, Priests, Parish Managing Committee members, and all the faithful of our Diocese.

Dearly Beloved,

Our Diocese is blessed with a significant number of clergy who have accepted the call of God through the ordained ministry and have sacrificed much for the growth of our Church in North America. The responsibilities of a priest are many, and for the faithful, a priest is a spiritual father who attends to the many needs of his people.

Since the establishment of our Diocese, much discussion and studies have taken place regarding the welfare of our clergy including their salary and retirement benefits. At present, many of our priests in North America hold part-time or full-time secular jobs while serving as parish priests in order to support and provide for themselves and the needs of their family. In fact, the salaries of our priests are in great disparity, and there is no system in place to provide for those who enter into retirement. After a careful study of this matter by the Diocesan Council and their recommendation, we have decided to implement both a contributory clergy pension plan and an increase of the base salary for the priests of our Diocese.

First, the contributory clergy pension plan of our Diocese will take effect as of July 1, 2012. In order to start the process, each priest will be required to contribute a minimum of \$50.00 each month towards their retirement fund. This amount will be matched with an equal share of \$25.00 from both their respective parish and the Diocese. Thus, the total amount of contributions from the priest, parish, and diocese will total a minimum of \$1200 in a calendar year. Details of this program are provided in the attachment prepared by the Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Dr. Joy Pyngolil. We hope this new program will not be seen as a burden, but a small step towards investing in the future, especially in financially supporting our clergy once they reach the age of retirement.

Secondly, effective January 1, 2013, the minimum base salary for a parish priest will be \$2500 with other allowances and benefits that need to be provided. Parishes that are not presently meeting this requirement should begin by increasing the present salary of the parish priest by at least 15% annually beginning in January of 2013 so that this goal can be met by the year 2015. Parishes where the present salary is above this base level, there should be no reduction in the salary. Smaller parishes that are unable to reach this goal will be carefully considered on a case by case basis. We seek your whole-hearted cooperation and support in order to achieve this goal of providing the minimum base salary for every parish priest in our diocese.



These steps taken towards improving the welfare of our clergy are small, but they are the beginning steps we can take to achieve the greater goals of our diocese. Our priests must be supported in a way that is respectable and honorable to the calling they have received. We hope and pray our faithful will cooperate with us in this matter for the glory of God and His Kingdom.

May God Almighty lead us in the growth of our diocese and shower His blessings upon us all.

Your Shepherd in Christ,

Alexios Mar Eusebius,
Metropolitan